3.1 million vehicles were registered for the first time in Great Britain during 2017, 6% lower than during the previous year.

During 2017, over 53,000 new ultra low emission vehicles (ULEVs) were registered in the United Kingdom, an increase of 27% on 2016. New registrations of ULEVs have been rapidly increasing since 2014.

There was a sharp decline in the number of diesel cars being registered in 2017, down 17% compared to 2016. This was the main contributor to the decline in overall vehicle registrations.
During 2017, 3.1 million vehicles were registered for the first time in Great Britain.

This was the first decrease in number of new registrations since 2011. It was 5.9% lower than during 2016, but still 4.3% higher than in 2014. Looking at 12-month rolling totals, there were fewer vehicles registered for the first time each month in 2017 from the year ending April 2017 onwards.

This trend might be due, in part, to the change in the amount of Vehicle Excise Duty due for newly registered cars, which came into force on 1st April 2017. This change generally made both the first year and subsequent years of tax more expensive for low emission, non-electric cars.

The economic downturn during the recession of 2008/9 affected the new registration figures which fell to 2.37 million in 2009. The number of new registrations was also affected during the recessions of the early 1980s and 90s.

Northern Ireland

In 2017, there were 67 thousand vehicles registered for the first time in Northern Ireland, which is 6.3% lower than in 2016. The total was made up of 55 thousand cars, 7 thousand light goods vehicles, and 5 thousand other vehicles.

European Union

New passenger car registrations across the European Union as a whole increased by 3.4% in 2017, according to provisional figures from the European Automobile Manufacturers’ Association. This was largely due to strong increases in Italy (+7.9%) and Spain (+7.7%), followed by France (+4.7%) and Germany (+2.7%). The majority of the EU27 countries saw an increase in registrations, with large decreases only for the UK (-5.7%) and Ireland (-10.4%).

The UK remained the second largest new car market in Europe in 2017, after Germany. The UK accounted for 17% of new cars registered in the EU in 2017, compared with 14% in 2009.

Vehicle type

Cars typically make up the majority of new registrations. During 2017, 81% of new registrations were cars, 12% were light goods vehicles (LGVs), 2% were heavy goods vehicles (HGVs), and 4% were motorcycles. Overall, there were 2.5 million cars, 360 thousand LGVs, 50 thousand HGVs, and 110 thousand motorcycles first registered in 2017.

Figure 1: Vehicles registered for the first time by body type, Great Britain, 2017

- **Cars**: 80.9%
- **LGVs**: 11.7%
- **HGVs**: 1.6%
- **Motorcycles**: 3.7%
- **Buses & coaches and Other vehicles**: 0.3% / 1.8%
The charts to the right show indexed trends in new registrations for each major vehicle type, on the same scale. The impact of the recession in late 2008 and 2009 can be seen.

The number of **cars** registered for the first time in 2017 was 5.9% down on 2016. This was the first time since 2011 that the number of cars newly registered had fallen compared to the previous year. This is largely due to the fall in new diesel car registrations. See the section Vehicles and the environment for more details.

The number of **LGVs** registered for the first time in 2017 was 3.8% down on 2016. The number of newly registered LGVs has begun to fall following annual increases of over 10% between 2012 and 2015. The 2008/09 recession had a bigger impact on LGV registrations than those of other vehicles (except HGVs).

The number of **HGVs** registered for the first time in 2017 was down 1.2% on 2016. However, the number of HGVs newly registered has increased in five of the last seven years. The number of HGVs newly registered has never returned to the record number in 2005 of 57 thousand vehicles.

New registrations of **motorcycles** fell relatively rapidly in the first few years of the last decade, before levelling off. The onset of the recession saw a further decrease, followed by a period of relative stability. The number newly registered in 2017 was down 17.8% on 2016. This follows three years of growth exceeding 10% per year but is still 37.1% lower than the record number in 2001.

New **bus & coach** registrations increased relatively rapidly up to 2003. While they dropped off less sharply than those of LGVs or HGVs at the onset of the 2008/09 recession, they have been steadily falling since 2003. The number newly registered in 2017 was down 13.0% on 2016. However, this was 36.1% below the record number recorded in 2003.
At the end of 2017, there were 37.7 million licensed vehicles in Great Britain, which is a 1.3% increase compared to the previous year.

The total number of licensed vehicles has increased in practically every year since the end of the Second World War.

From 1997 to 2007, the annual growth in licensed vehicles averaged 670 thousand per year, although from the mid-2000s it had already begun to slow somewhat.

Following the recession of 2008-9, growth slowed further, but did not stop, averaging 170 thousand per year between 2007 and 2012. Since 2012, the average growth has been 640 thousand per year, but is starting to slow with the reduction of new registrations.

Figure 3: Licensed vehicles in Great Britain, quarterly, 1997 Q4 to 2017 Q4

Vehicle type

Cars make up the majority of licensed vehicles. At the end of 2017, 83% of licensed vehicles were cars, 10% were LGVs, 1% were HGVs, and 3% were motorcycles. Overall, there were 31.2 million cars, 3.9 million LGVs, 500 thousand HGVs, and 1.2 million motorcycles licensed at the end of 2017.

Figure 4: Licensed vehicles by body type, Great Britain, 2017
In the year to December 2017, the stock of licensed vehicles increased by 1.3%. However, not all vehicle types saw an increase.

The largest percentage increase was for light goods vehicles at 3.1% followed by heavy goods vehicles at 1.2% and cars at 1.1%. Motorcycles decreased by 1.2% over the same period, while buses & coaches fell by 1.9%.

Over the last twenty years, vehicle stock has increased by 40%. The largest increase was for LGVs at 75%, followed by motorcycles at 64%. Growth in HGVs was 15%, but buses & coaches fell by 1%.

At the end of 2017, the numbers of licensed cars and LGVs were at their highest ever levels. The numbers of motorbikes, HGVs and buses & coaches, on the other hand, remained below their peak levels, which they reached between 2004 and 2007.

The number of licensed motorcycles fluctuates considerably by quarter, with higher numbers licensed at the end of June and September compared to the end of March and December. This is consistent with riders typically licensing their motorcycle for 6 months during the summer months but not during winter.
Regional analysis

The total number of vehicles licensed at the end of December 2017 in the UK was 38.9 million, of which:

- 32.2 million (83%) were registered to an address in England;
- 1.9 million (5%) were registered to an address in Wales;
- 3.0 million (8%) were registered to an address in Scotland;
- 1.1 million (3%) were registered to an address in Northern Ireland;
- 0.7 million (2%) were between keepers or their country is unknown.

Figure 7: Map of number of licensed vehicles per 1,000 head of population by local authority, United Kingdom, 2017

The number of registered vehicles per 1,000 residents was markedly lower in London (351 vehicles per 1,000 people) than in any other English region or country, reflecting its highly urbanised nature.

There was less variation between the other regions, with the rate being highest in the southern English regions (of which the South West was highest at 719) and lowest among the northern English regions (of which the North East was lowest at 516).

These variations are also seen in the number of registered cars and LGVs. There are much lower rates of registered motorcycles per 1,000 people in Scotland (13) and Northern Ireland (12) compared to the UK average (19). However, the number of heavy goods vehicles registered per 1,000 people was much higher in Northern Ireland (13) than in Great Britain (8).
The proportion of the licensed car fleet that is made up of diesel and alternative fuel vehicles has continued to grow.

A range of factors have been driving changes in the fuel type, efficiency and emissions of the vehicle fleet. Cars with smaller engines or which use diesel rather than petrol tend to have better fuel efficiency, so are cheaper to run. Cars with lower carbon dioxide ($CO_2$) emissions fall in cheaper Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) bands. In addition, legally binding EU-wide $CO_2$ emission targets for manufacturers give them added incentives to bring lower emission vehicles to the market.

Despite having always been the most common fuel type for cars, accounting for 59% of all licensed cars at the end of 2017, the number of licensed petrol cars peaked in 2004 and has decreased each year since. There were 18.3 million petrol cars licensed at the end of 2017, which is 17% lower than the 2004 peak.

By December 2017 there were 12.4 million diesel cars, accounting for 40% of all licensed cars, up from only 11% in 1997. There were only 492 thousand alternative fuel cars licensed by December 2017, but this was up 27% over the year.

**Figure 8: Newly registered cars, by propulsion type, Great Britain, 2001 to 2017**

There was a sharp decline in the number of diesel cars being registered for the first time in 2017, down 17% compared to 2016. This was the main contributor to the decline in overall vehicle registrations.

Diesel car registrations in the first quarter (Jan-Mar) of 2017 were comparable to those in 2016. However, in the three later quarters, the number of registrations was more than 20% lower each quarter compared to the same quarter in 2016. This dramatic change in behaviour could be attributed, in part, to the changes in VED introduced in April 2017 as well as the announcement in July 2017 to end the sale of all new conventional petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2040.

**End of new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2040**

On 26th July 2017, the government confirmed that it will end the sale of all new conventional petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2040, as part of the UK Plan for Tackling Roadside Nitrogen Dioxide Concentrations.

It is possible that this had an impact on the figures shown here.

For more information, please see: [https://www.gov.uk/government/news/plan-for-roadside-no2-concentrations-published](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/plan-for-roadside-no2-concentrations-published)
Ultra low emission vehicles (ULEVs)

In the United Kingdom, 53,203 ultra low emission vehicles (ULEVs) were registered for the first time in 2017, up 27% from 41,837 in 2016. This accounted for 1.7% of all new vehicle registrations - up from 1.2% one year previously and 0.9% two years before.

Most of this increase has been due to vehicles eligible for plug-in car and van grants. New registrations in 2017 included 46,058 cars and 1,241 LGVs of models that were eligible for these grants, which was 89% of all ULEVs registered for the first time.

The most common generic models of ULEV registered for the first time in 2017 were the Mitsubishi Outlander with 7,408, followed by the BMW 3 Series with 5,871 and the Nissan Leaf with 5,665.

Figure 9: Map of licensed Ultra Low Emission Vehicles per 1,000 head of population by local authority, United Kingdom, 2017 [Revised]

The local authority with the highest number of licensed ULEVs per person was Peterborough with 45 per 1,000 people, followed by Slough with 30 per 1,000 people. Regionally, the highest value was seen in the West Midlands with 3.4 ULEVs per 1,000 people.

The vast majority of ULEVs are hybrid electric or pure electric, as the use of battery energy reduces CO₂ emissions. At the end of 2017, 64% of licensed ULEV cars were petrol hybrid and 35% were pure electric in the UK. The remaining 1% were diesel hybrid and other technologies.

Figure 10: Licensed Ultra Low Emission Cars by propulsion type, United Kingdom, 2017

What are plug-in grants?

Plug-in car and van grants started in Jan 2011 and Feb 2012 respectively, with major changes in Mar 2016. They provide a grant towards the cost of new qualifying models - see Plug-in car and van grants for further details.
During 2017, 83% of cars registered for the first time were in one of the lowest five old Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) bands (A to E, up to 140 g/km), including 57% in Band C or lower and 15% in Band A. Whilst the majority of newly registered cars have been in lower bands for a number of years, this has only recently had an impact on licensed cars in general.

Note that from April 2017 (beginning of 2017 Q2), the VED bands for new cars changed to require much smaller CO₂ emissions to be in the lower bands, whilst making the higher bands larger.

The average CO₂ emissions from cars registered for the first time in 2017 increased by 1% compared to 2016, to an average figure of 121 g/km. One of the many contributing factors to this is an increase in the proportion of larger cars being registered with higher emissions.

The average CO₂ emissions increased for new petrol cars by 1.4% up to 127 g/km and for new diesel cars by 2.9% up to 124 g/km.

The average CO₂ emissions from LGVs registered for the first time in 2017 fell by 5% compared to 2016, to an average figure of 165 g/km. This is lower than the 2017 EU LGV manufacturer target of 175 g/km.

Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) is charged on vehicles registered in the UK.

For cars licensed after March 2001, VED is charged in bands on the basis of their CO₂ emissions. From April 2017 new tax rates apply for cars newly registered after that date — see Vehicle Tax Rate Tables for further details.
The commercial fleet and company car market is a primary driver of new registrations for cars.

In 2017, 58% of all car first registrations were made by companies. However, the proportion of company registered cars in the whole of the licensed car stock was much lower, at only 8.9%. This indicates that cars tend to move quite swiftly from the company market to the private market.

The percentage of company registered cars in the fleet in 2017 was slightly lower than the recent peak of 9.0% in 2016, but has remained relatively stable around 8-9% since 2002.

The number of female registered keepers of cars has increased by 61% since 1997, compared with an increase of only 22% in male keepers. Women now account for 39% of registered keepers of privately registered cars, compared to 33% in 1997.

It is estimated that there were around 7.7 million transfers of keepership of used cars during 2017. The great majority of these transfers will be second-hand vehicle sales.

Over 6.0 million cars (15%) changed hands at least once during the year and almost 0.8 million (2%) changed hands more than once.

Car transfers made up 83% of all vehicle transfers, with around 900 thousand light goods vehicles (10%) and 500 thousand motorcycles (5%) changing hands during 2017.
The top five makes (Ford, Vauxhall, Volkswagen, BMW, and Audi) accounted for 44% of all licensed cars at the end of December 2017 in Great Britain.

Ford accounted for 14% of all cars and Vauxhall for 11%. Peugeot was in the top 5 at the end of 2016, but has been overtaken by Audi, due to a fall of 5% in the number of Peugeot cars licensed.

There were twelve makes with over 1 million cars each on the road, and together these accounted for 73% of all licensed cars.

For new car registrations during 2017, there was a different top five makes, namely Ford, Volkswagen, Vauxhall, Mercedes-Benz, and BMW, which accounted for 41% of all new car registrations.

Figure 16: Top five makes of cars out of newly registered cars during 2017 and those licensed at the end of 2017, Great Britain

The Ford Fiesta was the most common new registration in 2017 with 93 thousand registered for the first time. This was followed by the Volkswagen Golf with 76 thousand, and the Ford Focus with 69 thousand.

At the end of December 2017, there were 1.5 million Ford Fiesta cars licenced, followed by the Ford Focus with 1.3 million and the Vauxhall Corsa with 1.1 million.

Figure 17: Top five models of cars out of newly registered cars during 2017 and those licensed at the end of 2017, Great Britain

The most common newly registered light goods vehicle was the Ford Transit, with 103 thousand registered for the first time, making up 28% of all newly registered light goods vehicles. For motorcycles, it was the BMW R 1200, with 4,500 registered for the first time.
Other vehicle types

The vast majority of licensed LGVs are diesel powered, with 96% using diesel at the end of 2017.

This is a marked increase compared to 20 years previously, where only 64% of light goods vehicles used diesel in 1997. This rapid move to diesel can be seen in the new registration figures, where over 95% of newly registered light goods vehicles have been diesel each year since 2001. In 2017, there were 3.9 million light goods vehicles registered in Great Britain.

At the end of 2017, the average gross vehicle weight for licensed HGVs was 22.3 tonnes, 24% higher than in 1997.

There were 499,400 heavy goods vehicles registered in Great Britain in 2017. Out of these, 22% had a gross vehicle weight of over 41 tonnes – hardly any fell into this category prior to 2001 when the general weight limit for articulated vehicles was increased from 41 to 44 tonnes.

Since 1997, there has been an increase in the number of licensed motorcycles with larger engines.

In 1997, motorcycles over 500cc only accounted for 39% of all licensed motorcycles. In 2017 they accounted for 55%.

Most of the 64% increase in licensed motorcycle numbers over the last 20 years, from 0.8 million to 1.2 million, is attributable to those over 500cc, with a further contribution from bikes in the 51 to 125cc category.

There were 158,400 buses & coaches registered in Great Britain in 2017. Of these, 30% were single-deck buses or coaches, 15% double-deckers, and 55% minibuses.

What is a minibus?

In these statistics, a minibus is a vehicle with between 9 and 16 passenger seats. More would be classified as a bus or coach, while less would be classified as a car or taxi.
Vehicle age profiles

The average age of licensed cars and LGVs at the end of 2017 was 8.1 years.

The average HGV is slightly newer, while buses & coaches, motorcycles, and taxis were, on average, somewhat older.

Figure 20: Age of licensed vehicles by body type and propulsion type, Great Britain, 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vehicle Type</th>
<th>Under 3 years old</th>
<th>3 years old or more</th>
<th>Average age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Petrol Cars</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diesel Cars</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hybrid or Electric Cars</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petrol LGVs</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>28.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diesel LGVs</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HGVs</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buses &amp; coaches</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motorcycles</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxis</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

About 16% to 18% of cars, LGVs and HGVs were over 13 years old, this proportion rising to 23% for taxis, 27% for buses & coaches and 36% for motorcycles.

Petrol cars are generally older, with an average age of 9.1 years, compared with just 6.6 years for diesel cars. Hybrid or electric cars are much newer with an average age of 3.5 years.

Figure 21: Licensed cars and LGVs by date of first registration and propulsion type, 12-month rolling figures, Great Britain, 2017

The number of diesel and petrol cars newly registered in each year were similar between 2011 and 2016.

In 2017, and before 2011, the number of petrol cars newly registered was significantly higher than the number of diesel cars.

This has had an effect on the mix of older vehicles still on the road. 42% of petrol cars licensed at the end of December 2017 were first registered in 2007 or before compared to only 25% of diesel cars.
About these statistics

Almost all the statistics in the vehicle licensing statistics series are derived by Department for Transport statisticians from extracts of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) vehicle database. The main purpose of the database is to administer vehicle registration and licensing records in the United Kingdom.

For further information, please see the detailed technical notes. There is also a Statement of Administrative Sources for the DVLA vehicles database.

Request for feedback

We welcome any feedback on these statistics, to ensure future releases best meet user needs. Feedback can be provided by email to vehicles.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk.

In particular, this release includes extra information on ULEVs. We would welcome your comments on the improvements made.

Strengths and weaknesses of the data

The DVLA database can be regarded as being virtually complete in terms of the number of licensed vehicles and vehicles with a SORN (Statutory Off-Road Notification). However, there will be some errors in some of the specific details of individual vehicles, mostly less important details.

The Department for Transport estimates that under 2% of the vehicles records have an inaccuracy in one of the variables used for the statistics published. Other factors to consider in interpreting these statistics include: changes in legislation, revisions to the series, seasonal variation which affects some vehicle types, vehicle excise duty evasion and other types of failure to inform DVLA of relevant facts about the status of a vehicle, and the fact that foreign registered vehicles may also use UK roads without being registered with DVLA. Most of these factors will only have a marginal effect for most uses of the data.

In July 2014 vehicle and registration services for Northern Ireland were centralised at DVLA, where these services for Great Britain were already administered. This created a single vehicle register for the United Kingdom, in place of separate registers for Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

As a result of these changes, the coverage of the vehicle licensing statistics tables was expanded to cover UK as well as GB where practical. Because of the greater availability of GB time series data, this statistical release will continue to focus mainly on GB rather than UK results for the time being.

For further information, please see the detailed technical notes.

Users and uses of these statistics

A separate note on this is available from the vehicles statistics guidance web page.

National Statistics

All of the statistics published in this series are National Statistics, apart from the exceptions listed on the collection page. Vehicles statistics were assessed by the UK Statistics Authority and
confirmed as National Statistics in April 2012. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference.

Details of ministers and officials who receive pre-release access to these statistics up to 24 hours before release can be found in the pre-release access list.

Next Release
Vehicle Licensing statistical releases are published quarterly. The next is due in June 2018. The Quarter 4 release for each calendar year is accompanied by a larger set of data tables and more detailed commentary.

In addition a single table of monthly new vehicle registrations is released on the series page on the second Thursday of each month.

Any updates to these plans will be advertised via the DfT statistical publications schedule.

Release of DfT Statistics publications
To hear more about DfT statistics publications as they are released, please follow us on Twitter via our @DfTstats account: https://www.twitter.com/DfTstats. TWITTER, TWEET, RETWEET and the Twitter logo are trademarks of Twitter, Inc. or its affiliates.