



Department for Transport

Vehicle Licensing Statistics: 2019 Quarter 1 (Jan - Mar)

About this release

This release presents the latest statistics on licensed motor vehicles. It is part of the [Vehicle Statistics](#) series. Detailed [data tables](#) are available online.

These statistics are based on administrative data held by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA).

Except where otherwise stated, the statistics refer to Great Britain. UK data is available from July 2014.

More detailed commentary can be found in the [annual release](#).

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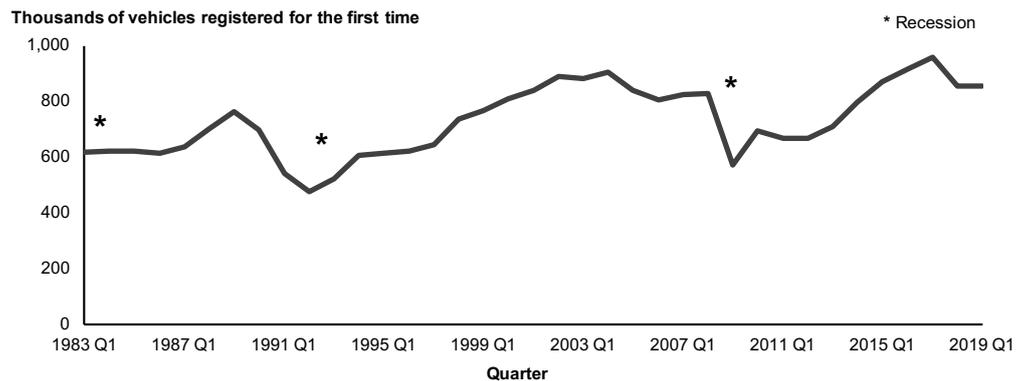
ULEVs

Ultra low emission vehicles (ULEVs) are vehicles that emit less than 75g of carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the tailpipe for every kilometre travelled.

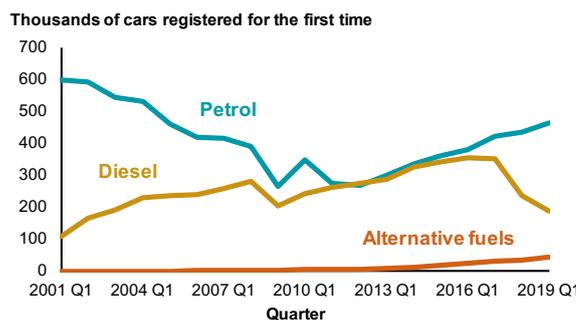
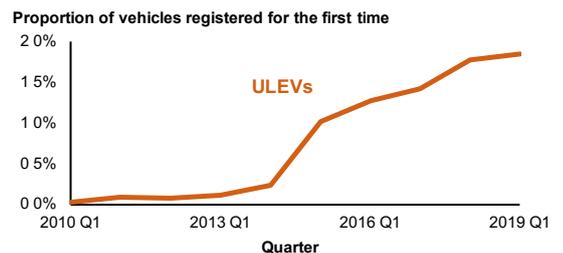
Next published:
September 2019



857 thousand vehicles were registered for the first time in Great Britain during 2019 Q1, broadly the same as during 2018 Q1.



During 2019 Q1, 15,853 **ultra low emission vehicles (ULEVs)** were registered for the first time in Great Britain, an increase of 4% on 2018 Q1. ULEVs made up 1.9% of all new registrations.



The number of **diesel** cars registered for the first time in Great Britain during 2019 Q1 declined by 20% compared to 2018 Q1. There was a 6% increase in the number of **petrol** cars over the same time period.



The most **popular** new car models in Great Britain in 2019 Q1 were the Ford Fiesta (23,000), the Vauxhall Corsa (17,000), and the Volkswagen Golf (17,000).



At the end of March 2019, there were 38.4 million licensed vehicles in Great Britain, an increase of 1.4% compared to the end of March 2018.

Vehicles registered for the first time

During 2019 Q1, 857 thousand vehicles were registered for the first time in Great Britain.

The number of new registrations was 0.3% higher than during 2018 Q1 but 10.7% lower than during 2017 Q1. The bulk of new registrations occurred during March, which accounted for 65% of all new vehicle registrations in 2019 Q1.

During
2019 Q1



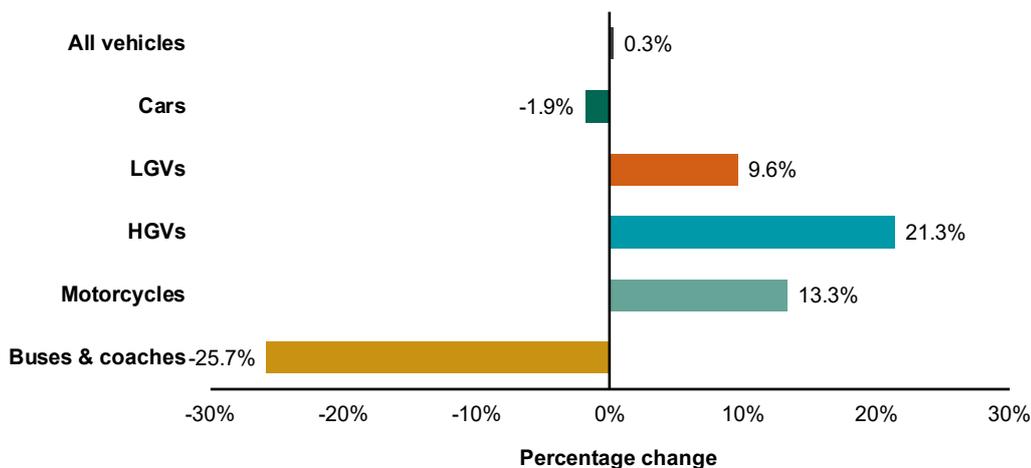
857,000 vehicles registered for the first time in Great Britain

Body type

Cars registered for the first time declined by 1.9% in 2019 Q1 compared to 2018 Q1. Buses & coaches had a decline of 25.7% over the same period, with 514 fewer registrations. This decline was driven by a fall of 49.4% in new registrations of minibuses, with other buses & coaches increasing by 14.1%.

All other body types saw an increase in 2019 Q1. Heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) had the largest increase (+21.3%) followed by motorcycles (+13.3%) and light goods vehicles (LGVs) (+9.6%).

Figure 1: Annual percentage change in vehicles registered for the first time by body type, Great Britain, 2019 Q1



Cars make up the majority of new registrations. In 2019 Q1, there were 694,000 cars (81.0%), 104,000 LGVs (12.1%), 13,000 HGVs (1.6%), 30,000 motorcycles (3.5%), and 15,000 other vehicles (1.8%) registered for the first time.

Northern Ireland

During 2019 Q1, there were 20,600 vehicles registered for the first time in Northern Ireland, which was 3.5% lower than in 2018 Q1. This contrasts with the 0.3% increase in Great Britain.

There were 16,500 cars (80.1%), 2,600 LGVs (12.7%), 400 HGVs (2.1%), 500 motorcycles (2.4%), and 600 other vehicles (2.7%) registered for the first time in Northern Ireland in 2019 Q1.

Updated tables

Detailed new registrations data tables updated this quarter:

All vehicles types: [VEH0150, 0160, 0161 & 0170](#)

Cars: [VEH0253 & 0256](#)

Registration plates

Up to 1998, new registration plates were issued once a year in August, causing a peak in new registrations in the third quarter.

Since 1999, new plates were issued twice a year, in March and September. This changed the distribution of new registrations through the year, with peaks in the first and third quarters.

Motorcycles

Motorcycle registrations are highly seasonal as they are much more likely to be driven in the second and third quarters of the year.

The National Travel Survey provides more information on [motorcycle use](#).

Vehicles and the environment

New diesel car registrations continue to fall in Great Britain, contrasted by increases for petrol and alternative fuel cars.



There was a 20% decline in the number of diesel cars being registered for the first time in 2019 Q1 compared to 2018 Q1, to 188,000 cars, which is below the 2008/09 recession dip and similar to 2003 Q1 registrations.

This was the second year of double-digit decline, following the 33% decrease in new diesel car registrations in the year to 2018 Q1. Since 2017 Q1, new registrations fell by 47% with 165,000 fewer diesels being registered for the first time in the first quarter.

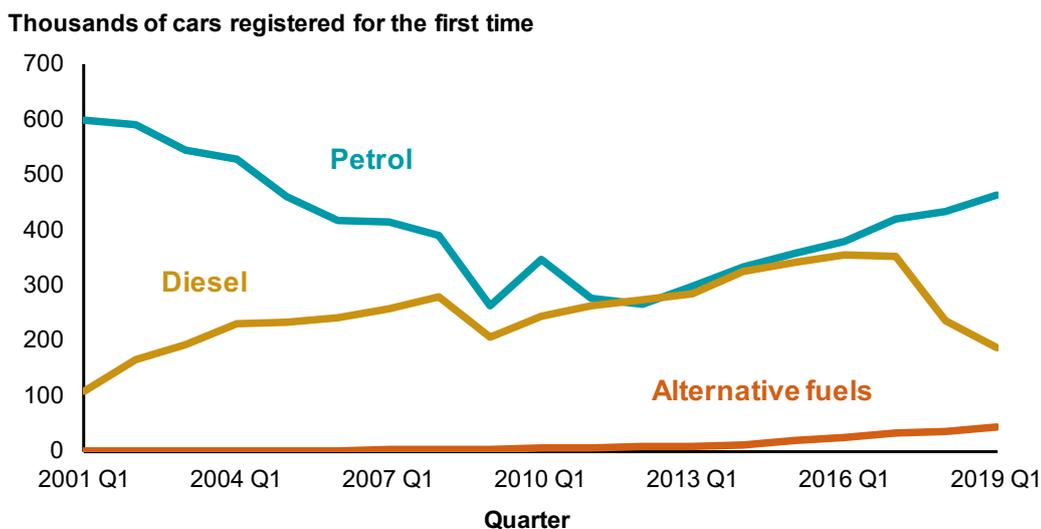
Diesel cars accounted for 44% of all new car registrations in 2017 Q1, which has dropped to 27% in 2019 Q1.

New car registrations

Annual change in 2019 Q1

Diesel	Petrol	Alt. fuel
-20%	+6%	+18%

Figure 2: Cars registered for the first time by fuel type, Great Britain, 2001 Q1 to 2019 Q1



In contrast, there was an increase in the number of petrol cars being registered for the first time in 2019 Q1, a rise of 6% to 463,000 cars compared to 2018 Q1.

Alternative fuel cars continued to see a large increase in 2019 Q1, a rise of 18% up to 43,000 cars. The majority (64%) of these registrations were hybrid electric cars.

The increase in alternative fuel cars was mixed between different fuel types. Compared to the previous year, the number of battery electric cars (+71%) and hybrid electric cars (+24%) both increased, whereas the number of plug-in hybrid electric cars (-15%) and range-extended electric cars (-39%) both decreased.

Key events surrounding the decline in new diesel car registrations

November 2017: Transport for London announces the “world’s first [Ultra-Low Emission Zone](#)” - although new diesel cars would not be charged under the current plan.

July 2017: [UK Plan for Tackling Roadside Nitrogen Dioxide Concentrations](#) is announced, ending the sale of all new conventional petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2040.

April 2017: changes are introduced for newly registered car [tax bands and rates](#).

Alternative fuel

Alternative fuel vehicles are those that can be powered by something other than petrol or diesel fuel, including hybrid electric, battery electric, gas, gas bi-fuel, and hydrogen / fuel cell electric.

Updated tables

Detailed fuel and environment data tables updated this quarter:

ULEVs: [VEH0130, 0131, 0132 & 0170](#)

Cars: [VEH0203, 0206, 0253 & VEH0256](#)

LGVs: [VEH0403 & 0453](#)

Ultra low emission vehicles continue to show growth in the UK.



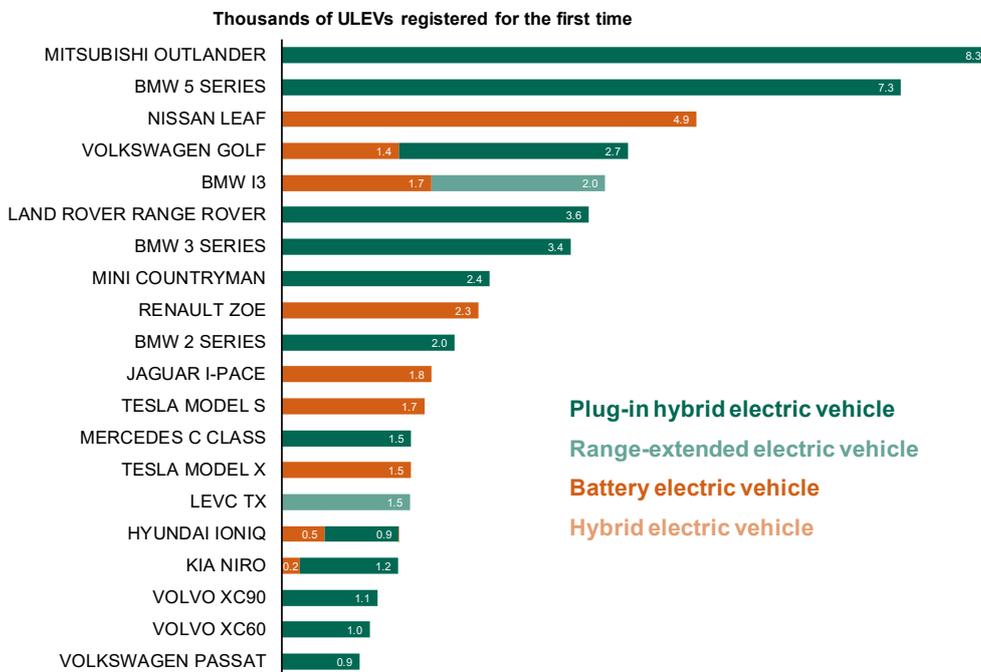
In 2019 Q1, 16,082 ULEVs were registered for the first time in the United Kingdom, up 4% on 2018 Q1 and 16% on 2017 Q1. ULEVs accounted for 1.8% of all new vehicle registrations; this was also 1.8% in 2018 Q1 and was 1.4% in 2017 Q1.



Out of all ULEVs registered for the first time, 43% were eligible for plug-in grants, comprising of 6,203 cars, 628 light goods vehicles, and 136 motorcycles that were eligible for these grants.

During the year ending March 2019, the most common generic model of ULEV registered for the first time in the UK was the Mitsubishi Outlander with 8,281 vehicles, followed by the BMW 5 Series with 7,254 vehicles and the Nissan Leaf with 4,854 vehicles.

Figure 3: Top 20 generic models for ULEVs registered for the first time by fuel type, UK, year ending March 2019



Average CO₂ emissions of cars registered for the first time continue to increase in Great Britain.



Average CO₂ emissions from cars registered for the first time were steadily falling since 2003, but began to rise from mid-2016 through to August 2018.

This increase was broadly due to a shift towards registering larger cars (which have higher emissions) and increases in emissions for popular petrol car models.

The introduction of WLTP caused a marked increase in average CO₂ emissions. However, changes from September 2018 are not directly comparable with previous periods.

Key events surrounding the uptake of new ULEV registrations

October 2018: The government announced that [changes would be made to the plug-in car grant](#), focusing on battery electric vehicles.

July 2018: [Road to Zero Strategy](#) is announced, confirming the government's ambition to see at least half of new cars to be ultra low emission by 2030.

2011/2012: [plug-in car and van grants](#) are introduced, reducing the cost of new qualifying models. These were expanded to cover more body types in March 2016.

Measuring CO₂ emissions

The following main methods have been used to determine car CO₂ emissions in the UK.

New European Driving Cycle (NEDC): Original lab test based on theoretical behaviour.

Worldwide Harmonised Light Vehicle Test Procedure (WLTP):

More advanced lab test to replace NEDC, based on real driving data.

For tax and monitoring purposes, vehicles tested under WLTP are provided with a "NEDC correlated" figure using a tool developed by the European Commission. These figures are not directly comparable with NEDC figures in these statistics.

Total licensed vehicles

At the end of March 2019, there were 38.4 million licensed vehicles in Great Britain, a 1.4% increase compared to March 2018.

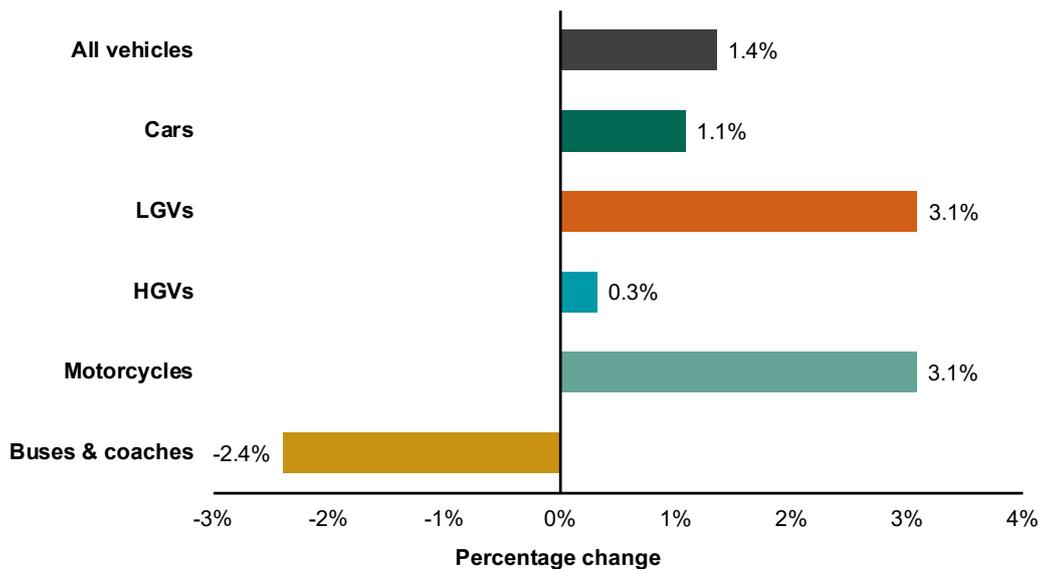
The total number of licensed vehicles has increased in practically every year since the end of the Second World War.

At end of
Mar 2019



38.4 million
vehicles licensed
for use on roads
in Great Britain

Figure 4: Annual change in licensed vehicles by body type, Great Britain, end of March 2019



Body type

Cars make up the majority of licensed vehicles. There were 31.7 million cars (82.5%), 4.1 million LGVs (10.6%), 0.5 million HGVs (1.3%), 1.3 million motorcycles (3.3%), and 0.9 million other vehicles (2.4%) licensed at the end of March 2019.

All body types apart from buses & coaches saw an increase since the end of March 2018. The largest percentage increase was for both LGVs and motorcycles at 3.1%, followed by cars at 1.1%, and HGVs at 0.3%. Buses & coaches fell by 2.4%, which reflects the decline in new registrations.

Northern Ireland

At the end of March 2019, there were 1.2 million licensed vehicles in Northern Ireland, which is an increase of 2.0% compared to the previous year.

The distribution of vehicles by body type was broadly similar to Great Britain. There were 980,000 cars (82.5%), 120,000 LGVs (10.1%), 24,000 HGVs (2.1%), 23,000 motorcycles (1.9%), and 41,000 other vehicles (3.4%) licensed at the end of March 2019 in Northern Ireland.

How are these different from new registrations?

Figures on licensed vehicles have slower variations compared to vehicles registered for the first time as there are many more vehicles that remain licensed over the year.

Updated tables

Detailed licensed vehicle data tables updated this quarter:

All vehicles types: [VEH0101, 0104, 0110, 0120 to 0123, 0128 to 0131 & 0132](#)

Motorcycles: [VEH0301](#)

Motorcycles

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.

The National Travel Survey provides more information on [motorcycle use](#).

Car makes and models

Ford was the most common make for new car registrations in Great Britain during 2019 Q1, followed by Volkswagen and Vauxhall.



During 2019 Q1, the top five makes were Ford (10%), Volkswagen (8%), Vauxhall (8%), Mercedes-Benz (7%), and BMW (7%), accounting for 40% of all new car registrations. This is similar to the distribution during 2018 Q1, except that BMW replaced Audi.

There were 24 makes with over 10 thousand cars registered for the first time each, accounting for 96% of all new car registrations.

For total licensed stock at the end of March 2019, the top five makes were different to new registrations, namely Ford (13%), Vauxhall (10%), Volkswagen (9%), BMW (6%), and Audi (5%), which accounted for 43% of all licensed cars.

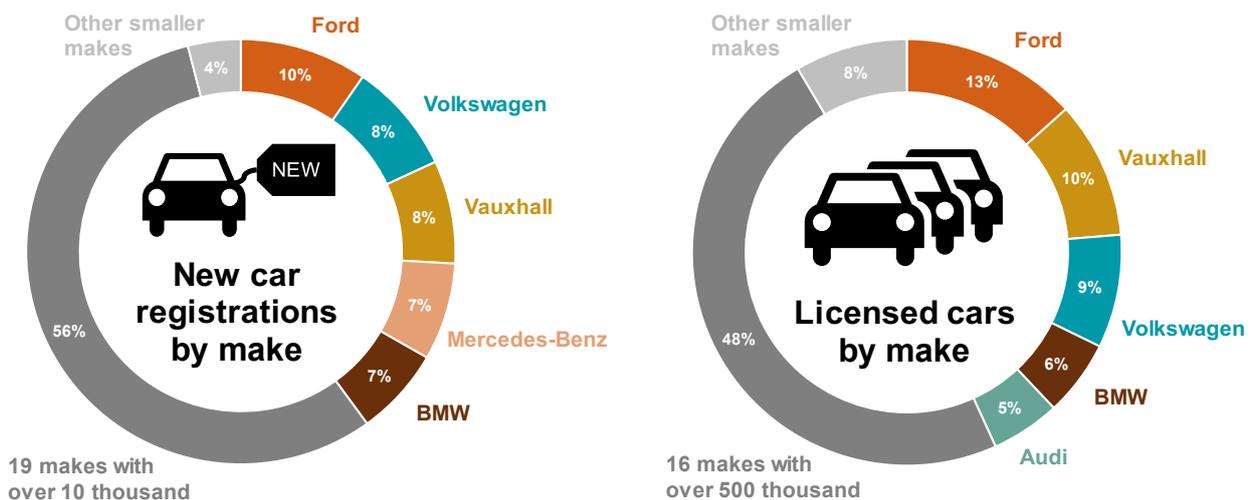
There were 21 makes with over 500 thousand licensed cars each, accounting for 92% of all licensed cars.

Updated tables

Detailed make and model data tables updated this quarter:

[VEH0120 to 0129, 0160 & 0161](#)

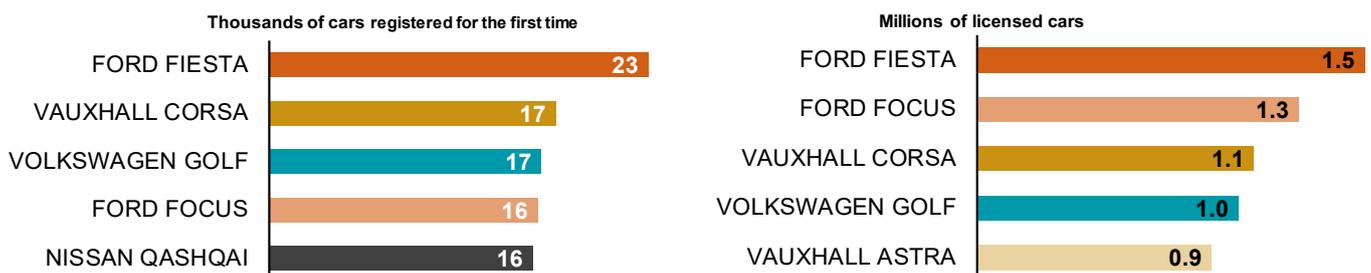
Figure 5: Top five makes for cars registered for the first time during 2019 Q1 and for those licensed at the end of 2019 Q1, Great Britain



The Ford Fiesta was the most common new car registration in 2019 Q1, with 23,000 registered for the first time. This was followed by the Vauxhall Corsa and Volkswagen Golf both with 17,000.

At the end of March 2019, the most common licensed car was the Ford Fiesta, with 1.5 million cars licenced, followed by the Ford Focus with 1.3 million, and the Vauxhall Corsa with 1.1 million.

Figure 6: Top five generic models for cars registered for the first time during 2019 Q1 and for those licensed at the end of March 2019, Great Britain



Background notes

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.

A separate note on users and uses of these statistics is available from the vehicles statistics information [web page](#).

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.gov.uk.

Strengths and weaknesses of the data

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

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;
- ▶ Foreign registered vehicles may also use UK roads without being registered with DVLA;
- ▶ Vehicle excise duty evasion.

Most of these factors will only have a marginal effect for most uses of the data.

Geography

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 now. For further information, please see the detailed [technical notes](#).

National Statistics

These statistics were designated as National Statistics in April 2012. There are a few exceptions listed on the [collection page](#).

National Statistics are produced to the high professional standards set out in the [Code of Practice for 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 release is due in September 2019. The Quarter 4 release for each calendar year is accompanied by a larger set of data tables and more detailed commentary.

Any updates to these plans will be advertised via the [DfT statistical publications schedule](#).

Release of DfT Statistics publications

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