



Department for Transport

# Vehicle Licensing Statistics: 2019 Quarter 3 (Jul - Sep)

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

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.

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## Ultra low emission vehicles (ULEVs):

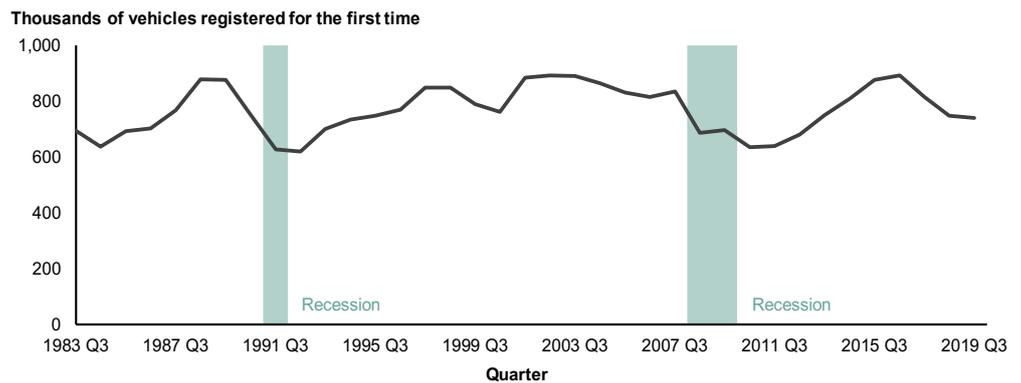
Vehicles that emit less than 75g of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) from the tailpipe for every kilometre travelled.

**Alternative fuel:** Vehicles powered by something other than petrol or diesel.

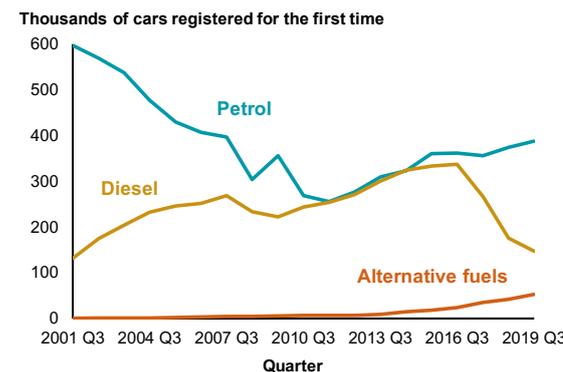
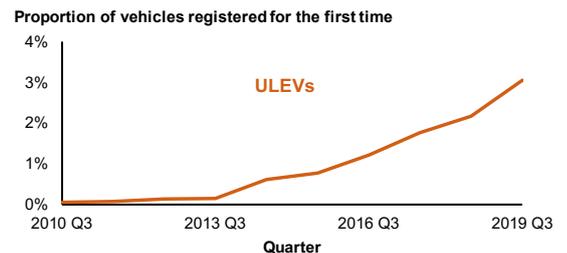
**Next published:**  
April 2020



**740 thousand vehicles were registered for the first time in Great Britain during 2019 Q3, 1% fewer than during 2018 Q3.**



**During 2019 Q3, 22,596 ultra low emission vehicles (ULEVs) were registered for the first time in Great Britain, an increase of 39% on 2018 Q3. ULEVs made up 3.1% of all new registrations.**



The number of **diesel** cars registered for the first time in Great Britain during 2019 Q3 declined by 16% compared to 2018 Q3, to the lowest Q3 number since 2001. There was a 27% increase in the number of **alternative fuel** cars over the same time period.



The most **popular** new car models in Great Britain in 2019 Q3 were the Ford Fiesta (21 thousand), the Vauxhall Corsa (17 thousand), and the Volkswagen Golf (15 thousand).



At the end of September 2019, there were 38.9 million licensed vehicles in Great Britain, an increase of 1.3% compared to the end of September 2018.



## Vehicles registered for the first time

**During 2019 Q3, 740 thousand vehicles were registered for the first time in Great Britain.**

The number of new registrations was 1.0% lower than during 2018 Q3 and 9.3% lower than during 2017 Q3. Over half (55%) of new registrations in 2019 Q3 occurred in September, largely due to the release of “69” registration plates.

Cars make up the majority of new registrations, accounting for 79.6% of all new registrations in 2019 Q3.

Cars registered for the first time declined by 0.5% in 2019 Q3 compared to 2018 Q3. Bus & coach registrations fell by 15.6% over the same period, continuing a long term trend following a reduction in minibus registrations. Both light and heavy goods vehicles saw a large decrease of 3.6% and 10.7% respectively. The decrease for heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) was likely affected by the large increase in the previous quarter ahead of the introduction of mandatory smart tachographs.

**During 2019 Q3**



**740 thousand** vehicles registered for the first time in Great Britain

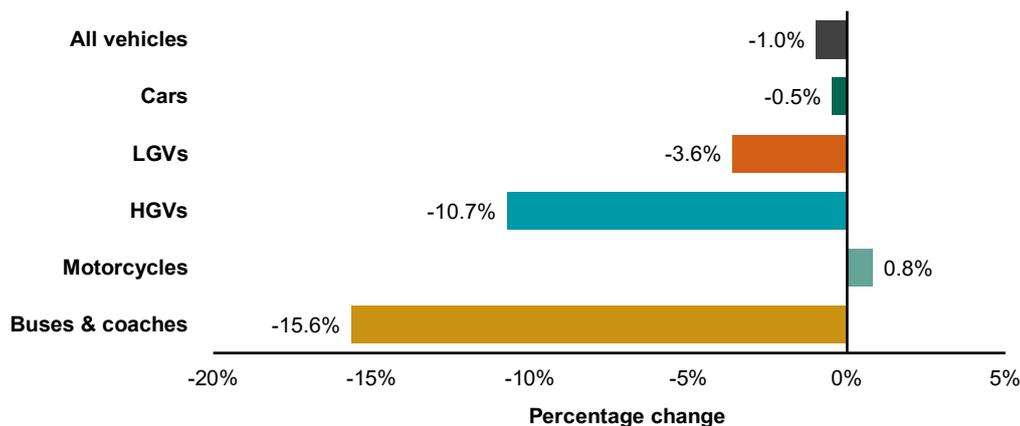
### Updated tables

Detailed new registrations data tables updated this quarter:

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

Cars: [VEH0253 & 0256](#)

**Figure 1: Percentage change in vehicles registered for the first time compared to 2018 Q3 by body type, Great Britain, 2019 Q3**



Although the number of new registrations can vary considerably each quarter, the [total vehicle stock](#) varies much more slowly as there are many more vehicles that remain licensed over the year.

**Table 1: Vehicles registered for the first time by body type, with previous year and total stock comparison, Great Britain, 2019 Q3**

	2019 Q3		2018 Q3		Total stock at the end of September 2019
	New registrations	Percentage of all new registrations	New registrations	Percentage of all new registrations	
Cars	589	79.6	592	79.2	31,976
Light goods vehicles (LGVs)	92	12.4	95	12.7	4,137
Heavy goods vehicles (HGVs)	10	1.4	11	1.5	504
Motorcycles	33	4.4	32	4.3	1,342
Buses & coaches	2	0.2	2	0.3	154
Other	15	2.0	15	2.0	768

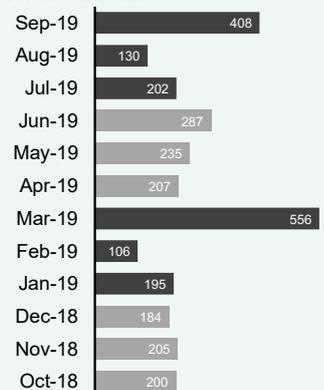
### Monthly seasonality

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.

### INSET: Vehicles registered for the first time by month, Great Britain, 12 months to September 2019

Thousands of vehicles registered for the first time



# New car registrations by fuel type

## New diesel and plug-in hybrid electric car registrations decline in Great Britain, with increases seen for petrol and battery electric cars.



There was a 16% decline in the number of diesel cars being registered for the first time in 2019 Q3 compared to 2018 Q3, to 148 thousand cars, which is below the 2008/09 recession dip and similar to 2001 Q3 registrations. New petrol car registrations increased by 4% over the same period.

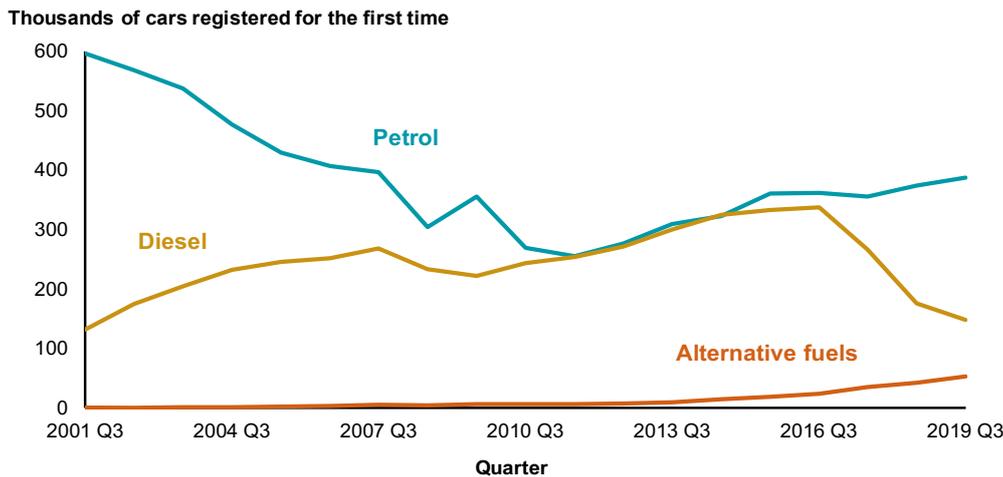
There have now been three successive years of double digit percentage point declines for diesel cars, which has seen the share of new car registrations which are diesel falling to 25% in 2019 Q3 from 47% in 2016 Q3.

### New car registrations

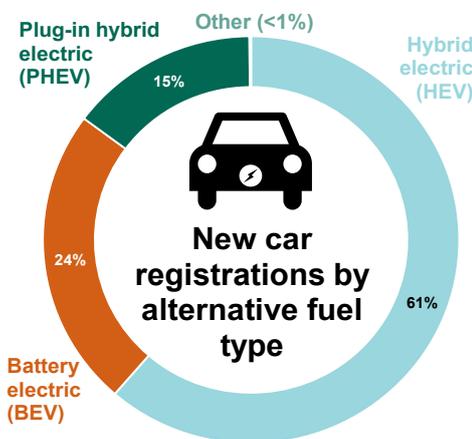
Annual change in 2019 Q3

**Diesel** **Petrol** **Alt. fuel**  
**-16%** **+4%** **+27%**

**Figure 2: Cars registered for the first time by fuel type, Great Britain, 2001 Q3 to 2019 Q3**



**Figure 3: Cars registered for the first time by alternative fuel type, Great Britain, 2019 Q3**



Alternative fuel cars continued to see increases in 2019 Q3, a rise of 27% up to 53 thousand cars, but the relative increase varied between different fuel types.

Compared to 2018 Q3, the number of battery electric cars more than tripled (+234%), affected by the release of Tesla Model 3 and strong growth for other popular models. Hybrid electric cars increased by 22% over that period, whereas the number of plug-in hybrid electric cars decreased by 27%.

### Key events surrounding the decline in new diesel car registrations

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

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.

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.

### 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 bi-fuel, gas and hydrogen / fuel cell electric.

### Updated tables

Detailed fuel data tables updated this quarter:

Cars: [VEH0253](#)

# Ultra low emission vehicles (ULEVs)

This section relates to the United Kingdom rather than Great Britain.

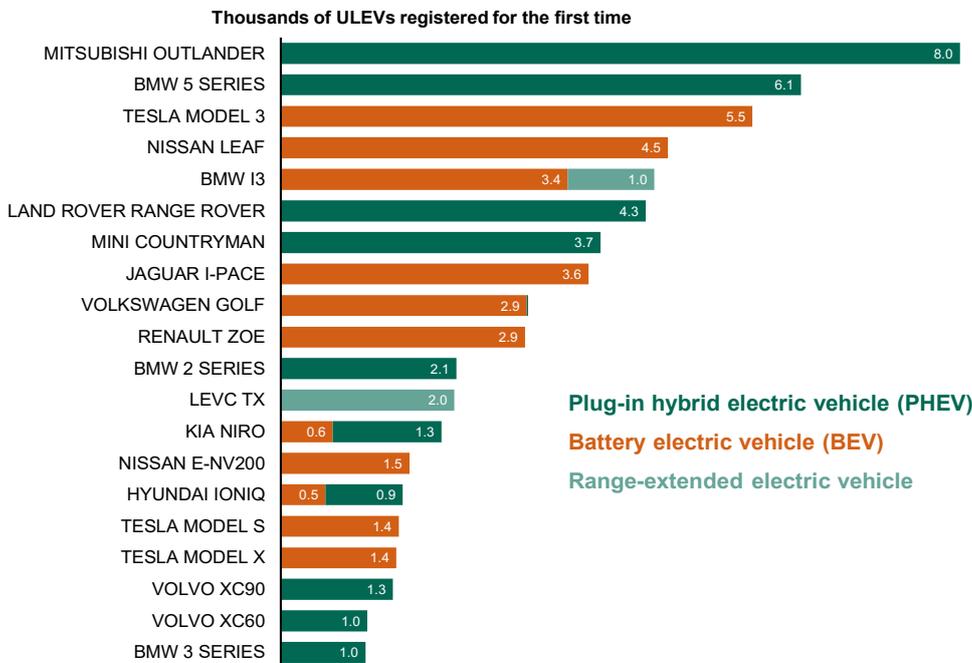
## Large increases in new battery electric ULEVs push overall new ULEV numbers up in the UK.



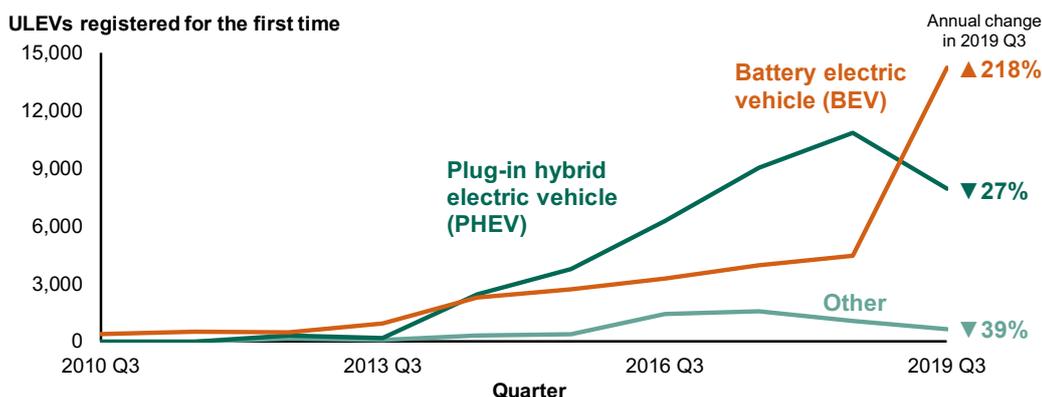
In 2019 Q3, 22,836 ULEVs were registered for the first time in the United Kingdom, an increase of 39% on 2018 Q3 and 56% on 2017 Q3. ULEVs accounted for 3.0% of all new vehicle registrations, up from 2.1% in 2018 Q3. The increase in ULEVs this quarter was affected by the release of the Tesla Model 3, which accounted for 23% of all new ULEV registrations in 2019 Q3.

For the year ending September 2019, the most common generic model of ULEV registered for the first time in the UK was the Mitsubishi Outlander with 7,959 vehicles, followed by the BMW 5 Series with 6,096 vehicles and the Tesla Model 3 with 5,527 vehicles.

**Figure 4: Top 20 generic models for ULEVs registered for the first time by fuel type, UK, 12 months to September 2019**



**Figure 5: ULEVs registered for the first time by fuel type, UK, 2010 Q3 to 2019 Q3**



### Key events surrounding the uptake of new ULEV registrations

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.

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.

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

### Reported CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of new cars

Cars registered for the first time have a reported CO<sub>2</sub> emission rating. This is used for tax and emissions purposes.

The introduction of the Worldwide Harmonised Light Vehicle Test Procedure (WLTP) has led to changes from September 2018 being not directly comparable with previous periods.

### Updated tables

Detailed environment data tables updated this quarter:

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

Cars: [VEH0256](#)

## Total licensed vehicles

At the end of September 2019, there were 38.9 million licensed vehicles in Great Britain, a 1.3% increase compared to September 2018.

At end of Sept 2019

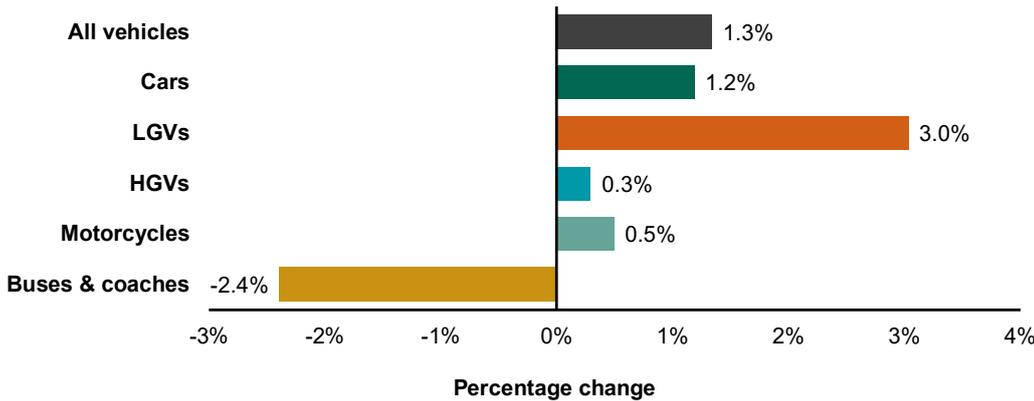
38.9 million

vehicles licensed for use on roads in Great Britain



The total number of licensed vehicles has increased in all but one year (1991/92) since the end of the Second World War.

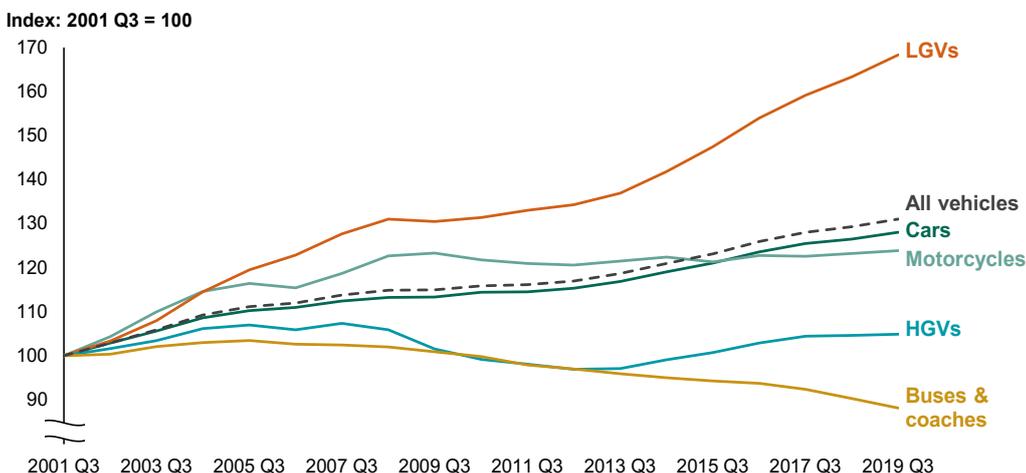
Figure 6: Annual change in licensed vehicles by body type, Great Britain, end of September 2019



Cars make up the majority of licensed vehicles. There were 32.0 million cars (82.2%), 4.1 million LGVs (10.6%), 0.50 million HGVs (1.3%), 1.3 million motorcycles (3.5%), 0.15 million buses & coaches (0.4%), and 0.77 million other vehicles (2.0%) licensed at the end of September 2019.

All body types apart from buses & coaches saw an increase in overall registered vehicles since the end of September 2018. The largest percentage increase was for LGVs at 3.0%, followed by cars at 1.2%, and motorcycles at 0.5% and HGVs at 0.3%. Buses & coaches fell by 2.4%, which reflects the decline in new registrations.

Figure 7: Index of licensed vehicles at the end of the quarter by body type, Great Britain, 2001 Q3 to 2019 Q3



### 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 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 Q3, followed by Mercedes-Benz and Volkswagen.



During 2019 Q3, the top five makes were Ford (10%), Mercedes-Benz (8%), Volkswagen (8%), Vauxhall (7%), and BMW (7%), accounting for 40% of all new car registrations. This is similar to the distribution during 2018 Q3, except that Volkswagen was in fifth place.

Volkswagen was in fifth place.

There were 20 makes with over 10 thousand cars registered for the first time each in 2019 Q3, accounting for 89% of all new car registrations.

For total licensed stock at the end of September 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.

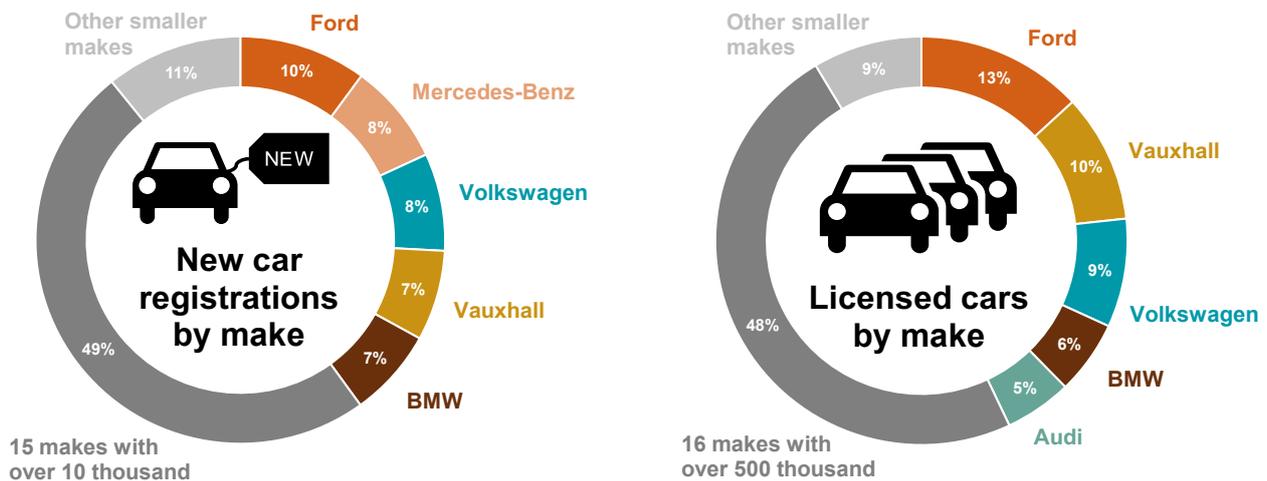
There were 21 makes with over 500 thousand licensed cars each, accounting for 91% of all licensed cars.

#### Updated tables

Detailed make and model data tables updated this quarter:

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

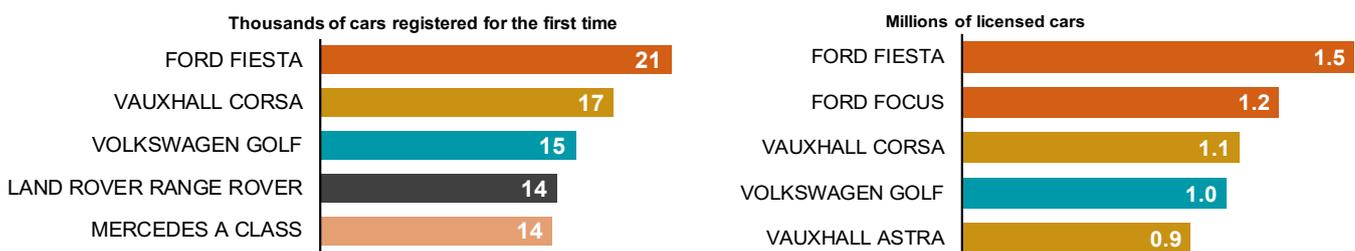
**Figure 8: Top five makes for cars registered for the first time during 2019 Q3 and for those licensed at the end of September 2019, Great Britain**



The Ford Fiesta was the most common new car registration in 2019 Q3, with 21 thousand registered for the first time. This was followed by the Vauxhall Corsa with 17 thousand and the Volkswagen Golf with 15 thousand.

At the end of September 2019, the most common licensed car was the Ford Fiesta, with 1.5 million cars licenced, followed by the Ford Focus with 1.2 million, and the Vauxhall Corsa with 1.1 million.

**Figure 9: Top five generic models for cars registered for the first time during 2019 Q3 and for those licensed at the end of September 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](mailto: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 April 2020. 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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