

# Vehicle Licensing Statistics Quarterly Bulletin

## Statistical Release

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# Vehicle Licensing Statistics, Great Britain: Quarter 1 2013

This publication presents information on motor vehicles in Great Britain that were licensed on 31 March 2013 (the end of quarter 1), or were registered for the first time during quarter 1 (January to March 2013).

The statistics are derived from data held by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA), which administers vehicle registration and licensing records in Great Britain.

### The key findings from the Vehicle Licensing Statistics: Quarter 1 2013 include:

- There were 34.6 million vehicles licensed for use on the roads in Great Britain on 31 March 2013. Of these vehicles, 28.8 million were cars. The all vehicle figure represents a 0.8 per cent increase on the quarter 1 2012 figure.
- The numbers of licensed heavy goods vehicles, buses & coaches and motorcycles have been on a generally downward trend since the recession of 2008-09, and the rate of increase in other types of vehicles has slowed. But the previously increasing trends for all vehicle types had already moderated somewhat several years earlier in the mid-2000s.
- A total of 711 thousand vehicles were registered for the first time in Great Britain during quarter 1 2013. This represents a 6.5 per cent increase in the number of first registrations from quarter 1 2012. There have now been seven consecutive quarters with year-on-year increases, of which the latest is the largest. The number of new registrations in 2013 is the largest first quarter number since 2008 but it is 14% less than the number in 2008.
- During quarter 1 2013, a total of 837 new ultra-low emission vehicles were registered for the first time (in the UK). Of these, 679 were cars or quadricycles, up from 371 in quarter 1 2012.
- Average CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from new cars fell from 131.6 g/km in quarter 4 2012 to 129.7 g/km in quarter 1 2013. This is the first quarter in which CO<sub>2</sub> emissions have fallen below 130 g/km.

## 1. General context

The number of licensed vehicles and number of vehicles registered for the first time continue to be affected by the general economic climate in Britain and further afield. New registrations remain lower than they were before the recession began, so the licensed vehicle stock, while continuing to grow, is growing more slowly.

However, while new car registrations across the European Union as a whole fell by 8 per cent in 2012 according to manufacturers' data, the UK was the only major EU market to show growth. This put the UK ahead of France in 2012 as the second largest new car market in Europe, after Germany.<sup>1</sup>

The numbers of licensed goods vehicles and buses & coaches tend to be more affected by the fluctuations of the economy than any other vehicle type.

## 2. Licensed vehicle stock

- There were 34.6 million vehicles licensed for use on the roads in Great Britain on 31 March 2013. Of these vehicles, 28.8 million were cars.
- The total number of vehicles in quarter 1 2013 was 0.3 per cent higher than at the end of quarter 4 2012 and 0.8 per cent higher than at the end of quarter 1 2012. There is seasonality in quarterly licensed vehicle figures, with more vehicles being licensed and used during the summer months than in the winter months. This quarter continues the year-on-year increases that have happened every quarter since quarterly data were introduced in 1994.
- The number of licensed cars was 0.9 per cent higher at the end of quarter 1 2013 than it was at the end of the same quarter in 2012. As with total vehicles, the number of licensed cars has risen year-on-year since the start of the series in 1994. Similarly, aside from during 2009, the number of licensed light vans has increased every year; with the number at the end of quarter 1 2013 up 1.4 per cent on a year previously.
- Although the numbers of cars and light vans continue to increase, the current growth rates are historically quite low. These vehicle types account for nearly 93 per cent of all licensed vehicles, therefore the trend in the total number of licensed vehicles is similar. Since mid-2008, the year-on-year increase in the number of licensed cars has averaged 0.5 per cent per quarter. Between 1994 and mid-2008 the year-on-year increase averaged 2.2 per cent.

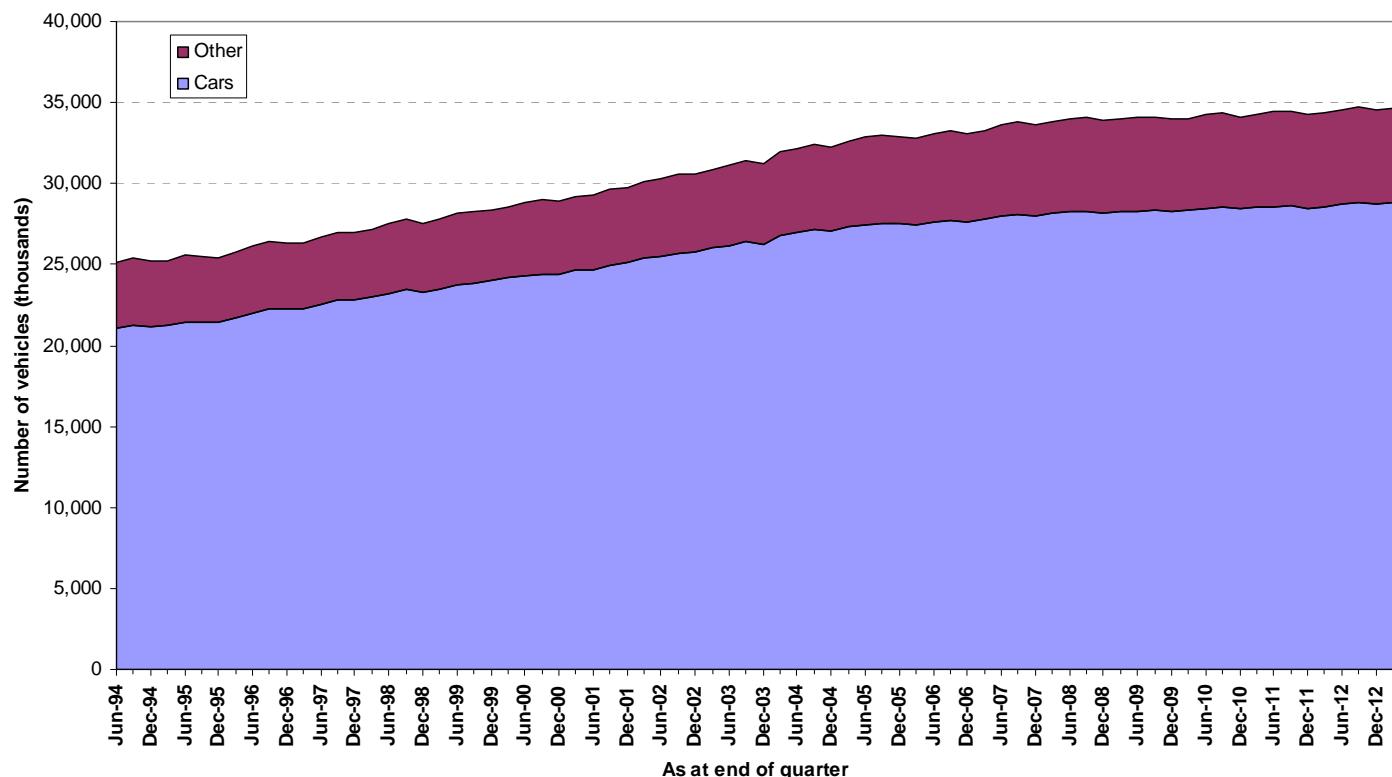
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<sup>1</sup> European Automobile Manufacturers' Association (ACEA) data <http://www.acea.be/collection/statistics>

## Licensed vehicles: Great Britain, 1994 to 2013 Q1

(Vehicles web table veh0101)

Number of licensed vehicles, Great Britain, quarterly

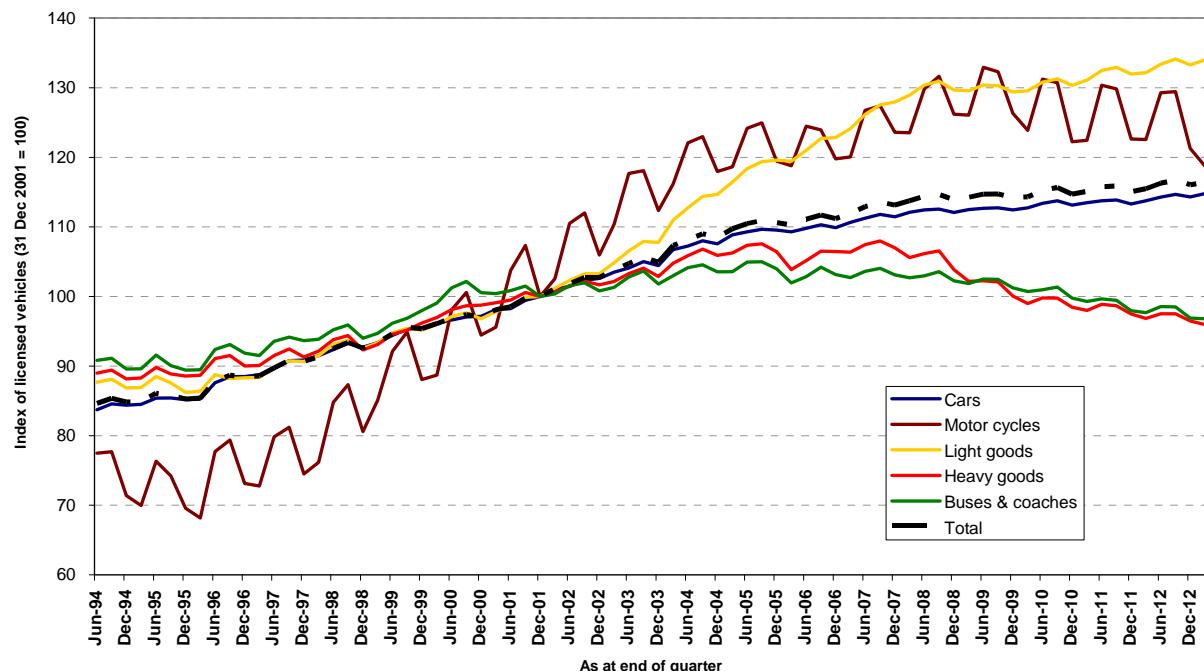


- The numbers of licensed light goods vehicles have increased by 1.4% and cars by 0.9 per cent over the year to end quarter 1 2013. The numbers of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) and buses / coaches have both decreased by 0.9 per cent over the same period. The numbers of motorcycles decreased by 3.1%.
- The prevailing economic situation has a noticeable influence on trends in the number of licensed vehicles, especially commercial vehicles. The numbers of licensed HGVs, buses & coaches and motorcycles and have been on a generally downward trend since the recession of 2008-09, and the rate of increase in other types of vehicles has slowed. However, it should be noted that the previously increasing trends had already started to moderate to some extent for all vehicle types several years earlier, around the mid-2000s.

## Licensed vehicles by body type (indexed): Great Britain, 1994 to 2013 Q1

(Vehicles web table veh0101)

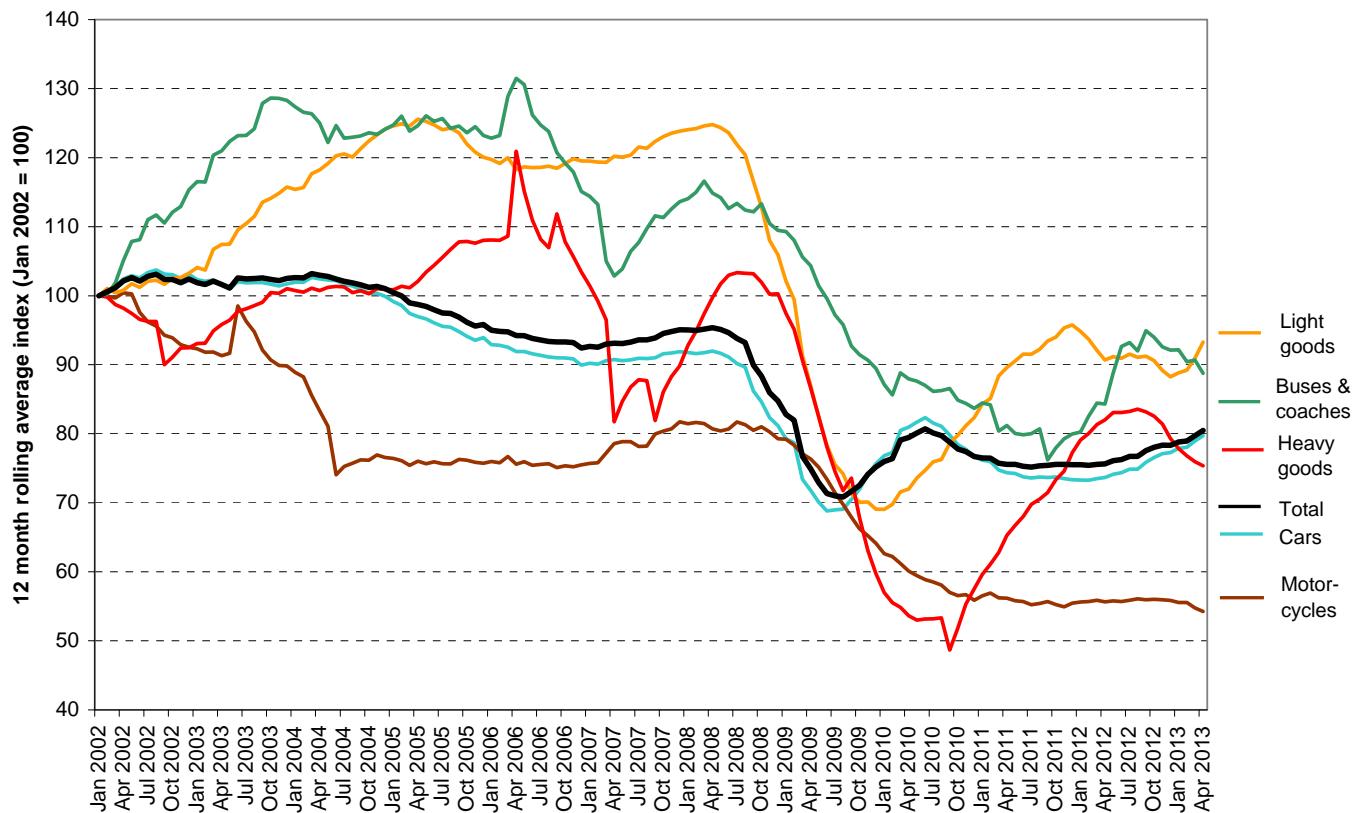
Index of licensed vehicles by body type, GB, quarterly



## 3. Vehicles registered for the first time

- A total of 711 thousand vehicles were registered for the first time in Great Britain during quarter 1 2013. This represents a 6.5 per cent increase in the number of first registrations from quarter 1 2012. The last seven quarters have now shown year-on-year increases in the number of first registrations. Before this, apart from the period from mid 2009 to mid 2010, which was affected by the Vehicle Scrappage Scheme<sup>5</sup>, the last quarter showing year-on-year growth was quarter 1 2008.
- During quarter 1 2013, 594 thousand cars were registered for the first time. This was a 7.8 per cent increase on the same period in 2012. The last four quarters have all seen year-on-year growth of over five per cent. Aside from the mid 2009 to mid 2010 period affected by the Vehicle Scrappage Scheme, there have only been three other quarters with this level of growth since the series started in 2002.
- The number of vehicles registered for the first time is usually higher in quarters 1 and 3 than it is in quarters 2 and 4. This is influenced by the release of new number plates in March and September.

**Vehicles registered for the first time in Great Britain: Jan 2002 to Apr 2013 (12 month rolling average, indexed to January 2002)**  
 (Vehicles web table veh0150)



- Aside from the effects of the two recent recessions, first registrations have generally been on a downward trend since the mid 2000s. The first registration figures for cars and total vehicles are 16 per cent lower and 15 per cent lower respectively for quarter 1 2013 than they were for quarter 1 2001.
- The decrease in numbers of motorcycles being registered for the first time is even more marked. 40 thousand motorcycles were registered for the first time in quarter 1 2001. By quarter 1 2013, this had fallen by 46 per cent to 22 thousand.
- The average CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from new cars continues to fall. The average emissions of cars registered in quarter 1 2013 was 129.7 g/km (the first quarter this has fallen below 130 g/km), down from 131.6 g/km for quarter 4 2012 and 134.7 g/km for quarter 1 2012. Since the first quarter of 2003, the average emissions from new cars have fallen by 43 g/km, a decrease of around 25 per cent. Much of this fall has been driven by tighter environmental regulations, emissions targets imposed on manufacturers, and demands by consumers for cars with higher fuel efficiencies / lower vehicle excise duty rates.
- During quarter 1 2013, a total of 837 new ultra-low emission vehicles<sup>6</sup> was registered for the first time. These figures are for the UK as a whole. This was an increase of 53 per cent from 546 in the same quarter of the previous year. The number of ultra-low emission cars and quadricycles among these increased from 371 to 679 over the same period. The plug-in car and van grants,

which started in January 2011 and February 2012 respectively, are likely to have made a major contribution to this increase<sup>7</sup>. The first registrations in quarter 1 2013 included 625 cars and 52 vans which were eligible for the grants. An increase in supply of electric cars to the UK market will have also played a part.

- The most popular car registered for the first time during the first 3 months of quarter 2013 was the Ford Fiesta, with 33.2 thousand new registrations. The Ford Focus and Vauxhall Corsa came next with 24.5 thousand and 24.3 thousand respectively, followed by the Vauxhall Astra (16.9 thousand) and Volkswagen Golf (15.8 thousand).
- The Peugeot 208 and the Volkswagen Up have been the most popular new car models that have appeared on the market since January 2012, with Peugeot 208 achieving 27 thousand new registrations and Volkswagen Up 20 thousand over the last fifteen months.

## 4. 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. DfT estimates that under 2 per cent 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 Northern Ireland and foreign registered vehicles may also use British roads without being registered with DVLA. Most of these factors will only have a marginal effect for most uses of the data.

For further information see the Notes and Definitions available at <https://www.gov.uk/transport-statistics-notes-and-guidance-vehicle-licensing>.

## 5. Background notes

1. The Vehicle Licensing Statistics web page at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport/series/vehicle-licensing-statistics> provides further detail of the key findings presented in this statistical release and statistics on other vehicle topics.
2. The following tables have been updated as part of this release:

veh0101	number of licensed vehicles by body type
veh0110	number of SORN vehicles by body type
veh0120	number of licensed vehicles by make and model
veh0121	number of SORN vehicles by make and model
veh0122	number of licensed vehicles by postcode district
veh0123	number of SORN vehicles by postcode district
veh0128	number of licensed vehicles by generic model name
veh0129	number of SORN vehicles by generic model name
veh0130	number of licensed ultra-low emissions vehicles (GB data)
veh0150	first registrations by body type
veh0160	first registrations by make and model
veh0161	first registrations by generic model name
veh0170	first registrations of ultra-low emission vehicle registrations (UK data)
veh0256	first registrations of cars by CO <sub>2</sub> emission band
veh0301	number of licensed motor cycles
3. 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.
4. Details of ministers and officials who receive pre-release access to these statistics up to 24 hours before release can be accessed from the [Vehicle Licensing Statistics web page](#).
5. Further information about what the Vehicle Scrappage Scheme was is available at [http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/www.direct.gov.uk/en/motoring/buyingandsellingavehicle/adviceonbuyingandsellingavehicle/dg\\_177693](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/www.direct.gov.uk/en/motoring/buyingandsellingavehicle/adviceonbuyingandsellingavehicle/dg_177693). The scheme ran between May 2009 and April 2010.
6. The Department for Transport uses the term 'ultra-low emission vehicles' to refer to vehicles with significantly lower levels of tailpipe emissions than conventional vehicles. All vehicles with fully electric powertrains and cars with tailpipe emissions below 75 g/km of CO<sub>2</sub> are included.
7. Further information on the Plug-In Car Grant is available at [http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Environmentandgreenerliving/Greenertravel/Greencarsanddriving/DG\\_191976](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Environmentandgreenerliving/Greenertravel/Greencarsanddriving/DG_191976).