



Department for Transport

Vehicle Licensing Statistics: Quarter 4 (Oct - Dec) 2015

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 from the web site.

It is based on administrative data held by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA).

Except where otherwise stated, the statistics all refer to Great Britain. However, the series has been expanded to cover UK data.

For further details please refer to the Background Information section below and the separate [Technical Notes](#).

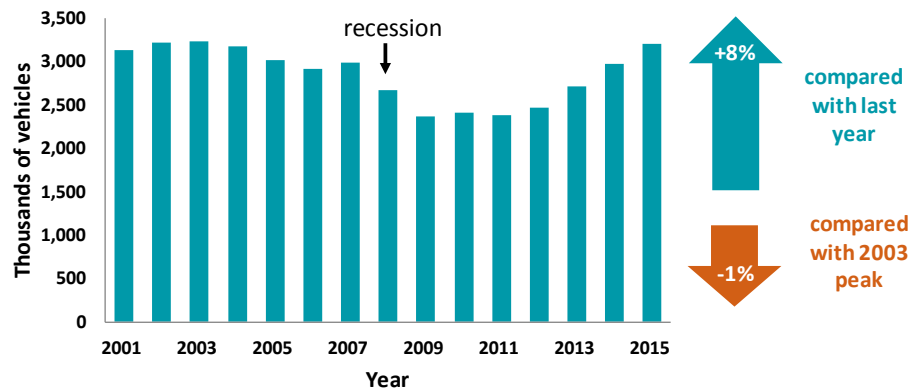
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3.21 million vehicles were registered for the first time in Great Britain during 2015, the first year since 2005 that new registrations have exceeded 3 million.

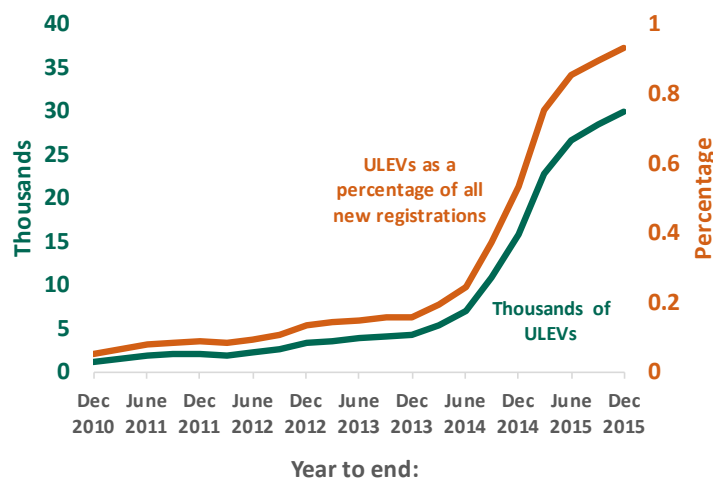
This was 8% up on the previous year, and only 1% lower than in the peak year of 2003.

Vehicles registered for the first time, GB: 2001-2015 [\[veh0150\]](#)



In the year to the end of December 2015, 29,963 new **ultra low emission vehicles** (ULEVs) were registered for the first time in the United Kingdom. This represented 0.9% of all new registrations, compared with 0.5% one year previously.

New Ultra Low Emission Vehicle registrations, UK: 2010 - q4 2015



General Context

The number of licensed vehicles and number of vehicles registered for the first time are influenced by the general economic climate in Britain and further afield. New registrations reduced for some time after the 2008-9 recession began, and have only recently returned to pre-recession levels. During this period the licensed vehicle stock, continued to grow, but more slowly than before or after.

New car registrations across the European Union as a whole increased by 9.3% in 2015 according to the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association. The UK was the second largest new car market in Europe in 2015, after Germany. The UK accounted for 19% of new cars registered in the EU in 2015, compared with 20% in 2014, 17% in 2012 and 14% in 2009.

Licensed vehicle numbers

At the end of 2015 there were 36.5 million vehicles licensed for use on the roads in Great Britain, of which 30.3 million were cars.

The total number of licensed vehicles has increased in every year since the end of the Second World War except 1991.

From 1994 to 2007, the annual growth in licensed vehicles averaged 650,000 per year, although from the mid-2000s it had already begun to slow somewhat.

Following the recession of 2008-9 it slowed further, but did not stop, averaging 170,000 a year between 2007 and 2012. Since 2012, the average growth has been 650,000 per year.

Figure 1: Licensed vehicles in GB: Q4 1994-Q4 2015

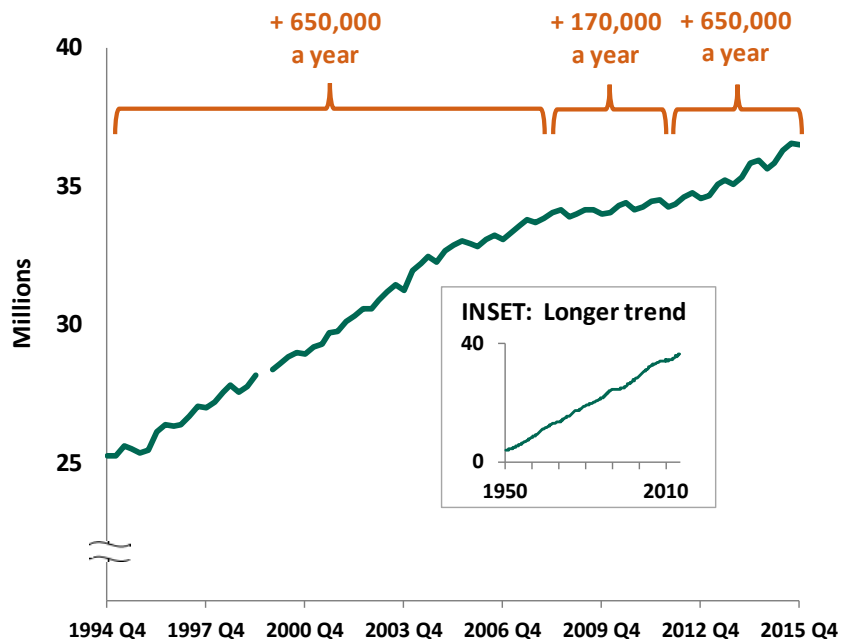
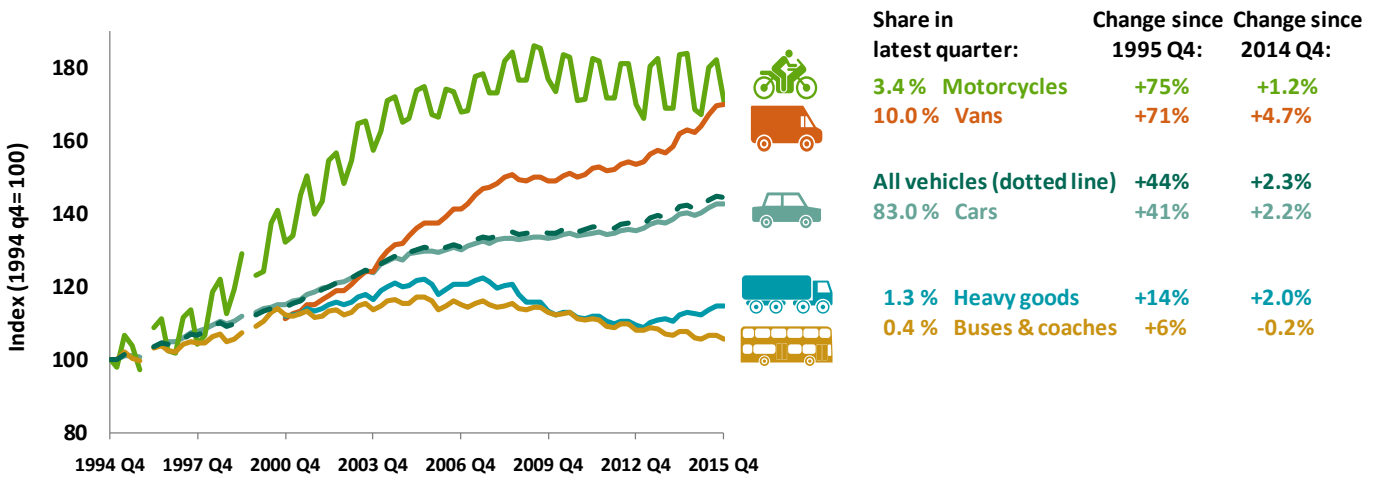


Figure 2: Licensed vehicles by type, GB: Q4 1994 - Q4 2015



The recent increases in vehicle numbers have been driven largely by cars and vans.

The numbers of **licensed cars** increased by 2.2% between December 2014 and December 2015, the fastest year-on-year increase since December 2004.

Van numbers were up 4.7% over the same period. This year-on-year increase is the highest since June 2005.

Motorcycle numbers rose by 1.2% over the last year, and are now 3.5% lower than the peak December figure in 2009.

Since the end of 1995, the number of licensed cars in Great Britain has increased by 41%, while the number of vans has increased by 71% and the number of motorcycles by 75%.

The number of **HGVs** in December 2015 was 2.0% up on December 2014, but remained 5.4% below the peak in 2007. However, there is some evidence of hauliers using fewer, larger HGVs (and more large vans), so this reduction in numbers does not necessarily indicate a fall in road freight carrying capacity.

The number of **buses and coaches** fell by 0.2% from December 2014 to December 2015 continuing a ten year decline. There are now 8.8% fewer buses and coaches than in 2005, when the number peaked.

Tables

Detailed vehicle stock data tables:

All vehicles types: [VEH0101 to 0131](#)

Cars: [VEH0202 to 0221](#)

Motorcycles: [VEH0301, 0303, 0306 to 0311 and 0341](#)

Light Vans: [VEH0402 to 0411](#)

HGVs: [VEH0504 to 0525](#)

Buses & Coaches: [VEH0601 to 0611](#)

3.21 million vehicles were registered for the first time in Great Britain in 2015.

This was the highest annual total since the peak year of 2003, and just 1% below that year (when there were 3.23 million registrations).

The economic downturn from late 2008 affected the new registration figures from then onwards, but a downward trend was already apparent before that.

The new registration figure for October to December 2015 at 674,000 was the highest quarter 4 figure since 2001.

A 'Vehicle Scrappage Scheme' for cars and vans helped to boost first registrations between May 2009 and April 2010, and may also have had the side effect of slightly depressing registrations briefly either side of this period if prospective buyers changed their plans to take advantage of the scheme.

Figure 3: Vehicles registered for the first time, GB: 2001-2015

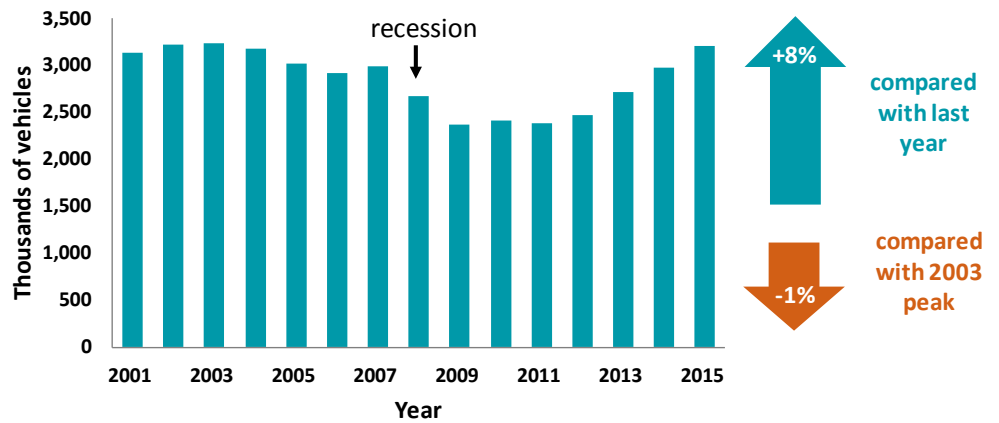
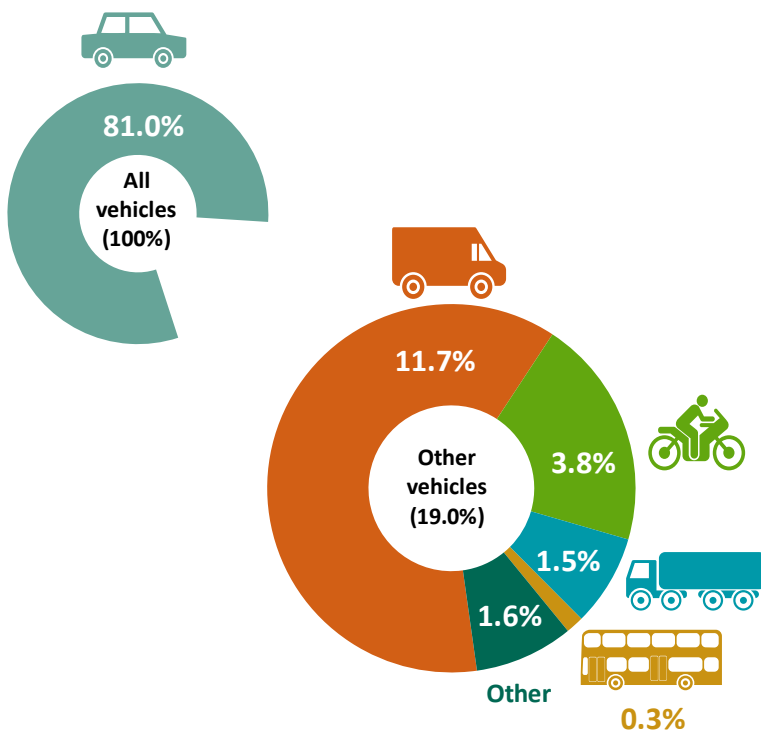


Figure 4: New registrations in Great Britain in 2015, by vehicle type



Tables

Detailed new registrations data tables:

All vehicles types: [VEH0150 to 0170](#)

Cars: [VEH0252 to 0261](#)

Motorcycles: [VEH0323 and 0324](#)

Light Vans: [VEH0452 to 0454](#)

HGVs: [VEH0554 and 0556](#)

Buses & Coaches: [VEH0651 and 0654](#)

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 October to December 2015 was up 4% on the same quarter of 2014 at 535,800. The last three years have seen a sustained period of growth. The shorter surge in car registrations during 2010 reflects the effect of the vehicle scrappage scheme mentioned above.

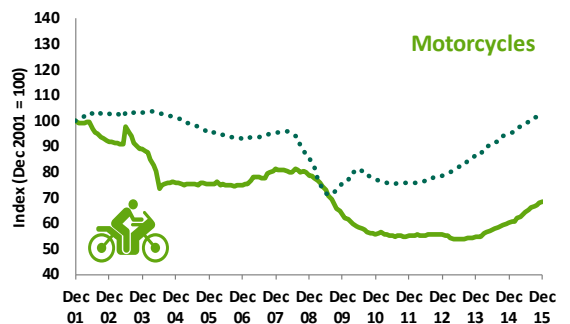
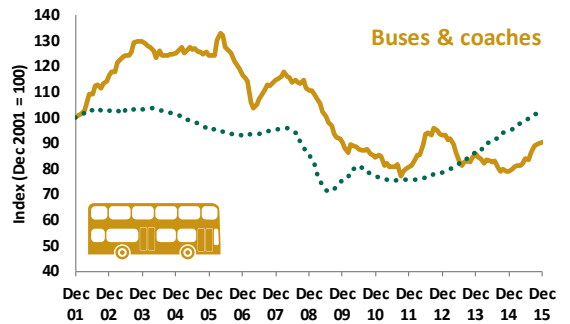
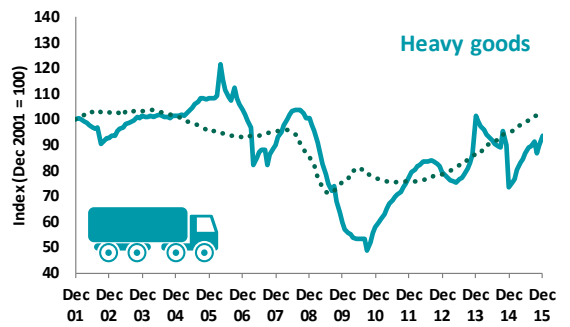
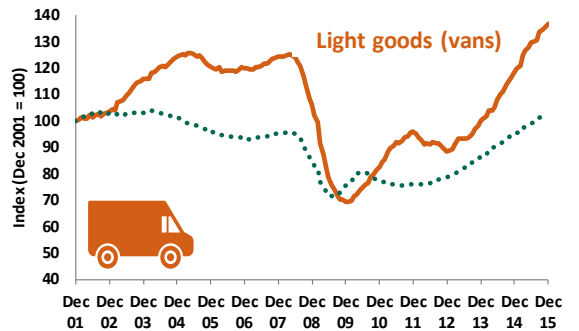
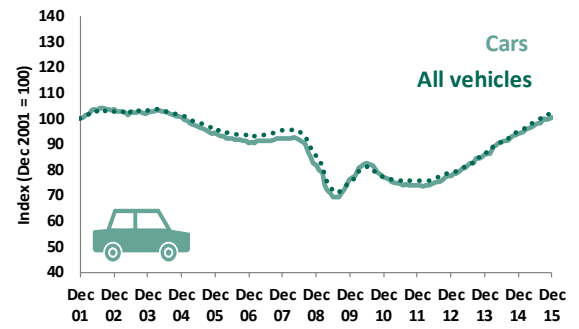
The number of **vans** registered for the first time in October to December 2015 was up 10% on the same quarter of 2014 at 88,600. The recession had a bigger impact on van registrations than those of other vehicles (except HGVs), but the last three years have seen relatively rapid growth.

The number of **HGVs** registered for the first time in October to December 2015 was up 9% on the same quarter of 2014 at 14,200. This is the highest quarter 4 increase since 2001, except for 2013 when there was a rise in new registrations before new environmental standards (Euro 6) came in in January 2014.

New **bus and coach** registrations increased relatively rapidly up to 2003. While they dropped off less sharply than those of vans or HGVs at the onset of the recession, they have not increased since. The number newly registered at 2,200 in October to December 2015 were 9% up on the same quarter of 2014 but 28% lower than the same quarter in 2004.

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. Over the last three years new registrations have been rising again. The total of 23,000 new registrations in October to December 2015 is the highest quarter 4 number since 2008.

Figure 5: Vehicles registered for first time, by vehicle type: GB, 2001 - Dec 2015. 12-month rolling averages (index Dec 2001=100)



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 (CO₂) emissions fall in cheaper Vehicle Excise Duty (car tax) bands. In addition, legally binding EU-wide CO₂ emission targets for manufacturers give them added incentives to bring lower emission vehicles to the market.

The proportion of the licensed car fleet that is made up of diesel and alternative fuel vehicles has continued to grow.

By December 2015 there were 11.4 million **diesel** cars, accounting for 37.8% of the total, up from only 7.4% in 1994. There were only 310,000 **alternative fuel** cars licensed by December 2015, but this was up 25% over the year.

Tables

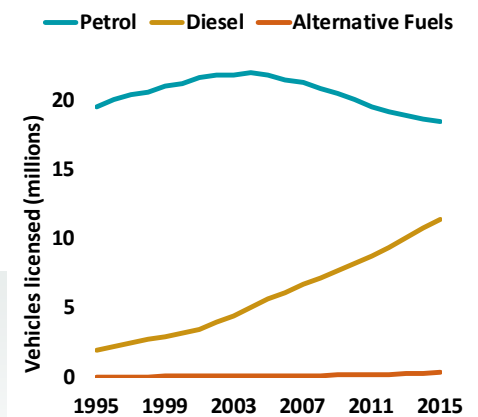
Detailed environment data tables:

Cars: [VEH0203, 0206, 0253 and 0256](#)

Light Vans: [VEH0403 and 0453](#)

ULEV: [VEH0130 and 0170](#)

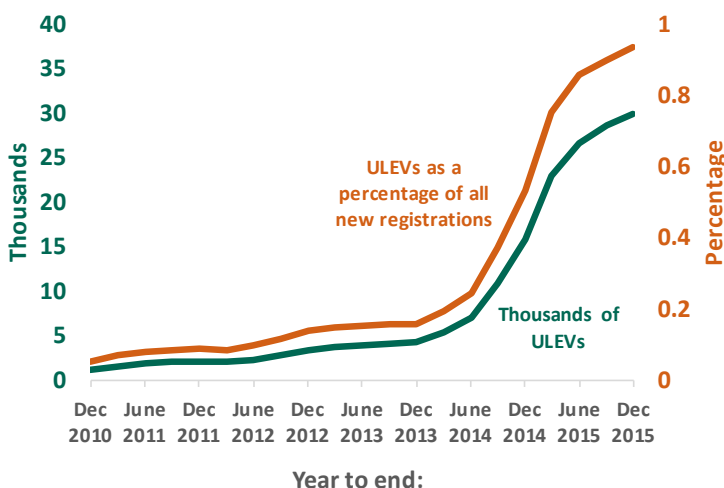
Figure 6: Licensed cars by propulsion type, GB 1995 - 2015



What are alternative fuel vehicles?

Alternative fuel vehicles are those able to use a range of alternatives to purely petrol or diesel fuel, including gas, electricity, or a combination such as gas bi-fuel and hybrid electric.

Figure 7: New Ultra Low Emission Vehicle registrations, UK: 2010 - 2015



During 2015, 29,963 new **ultra low emission vehicles (ULEVs)** were registered for the first time, up 89% from 15,833 during 2014. This amounted to 0.9% of all new vehicle registrations - up from 0.5% one year previously and 0.2% two years before.

In total, 7,561 new ULEVs were registered for the first time in the United Kingdom in October to December 2015, up 24% from 6,111 in the same quarter of 2014.

Most of this increase has been due to vehicles eligible for plug-in car and van grants. New registrations in October to December 2015 included 6,625 cars and

What are Ultra Low Emission Vehicles?

Ultra low emission vehicles are those with emissions of CO₂ below 75 g/km, or fully electrically powered.

169 vans of models that were eligible for these grants, 14% up on the same period in 2014. The growth in ULEVs is being influenced by new models coming into the market, and increasingly, competitive pricing. The models with the most registrations in the latest quarter were the Mitsubishi Outlander with 2,378, followed by the Nissan Leaf with 953 and the Renault Zoe with 939.

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 October to December 2015, 82% of newly registered cars fell into one of the lowest five **Vehicle Excise Duty** bands (A to E, up to 140 g/km), including 58% in Band C or lower and 19% in Band A. It takes much longer for these lower emissions bands to work their way through the car stock as a whole, because of the length of time older cars remain in use, but by the end of 2015 42% of all licensed cars fell Band E or lower, compared with under 1% in 2001.

What are VED bands?

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 - see [Vehicle Tax Rate Tables](#) for further details.

Figure 8:
New car registrations by VED band, 2003 - 2015

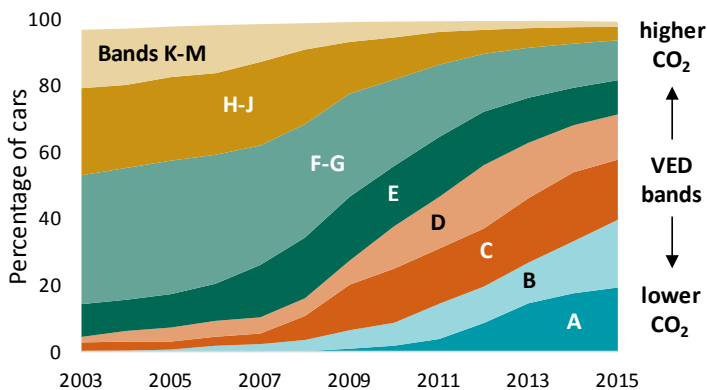


Figure 9:
Licensed cars by VED band, 2001 - 2015

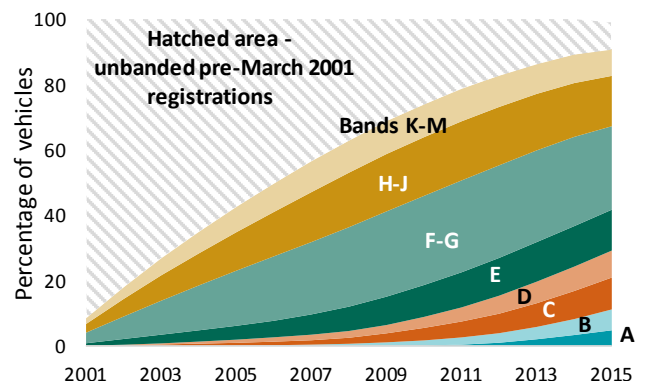
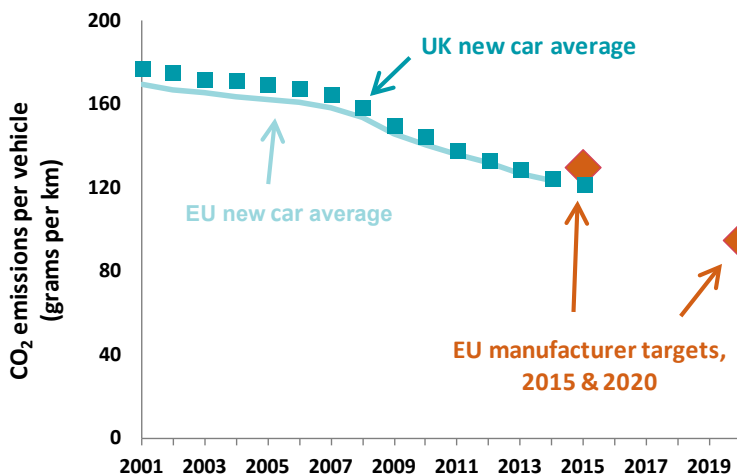


Figure 10: New car CO₂ emissions, UK 2001 - Q4 2015

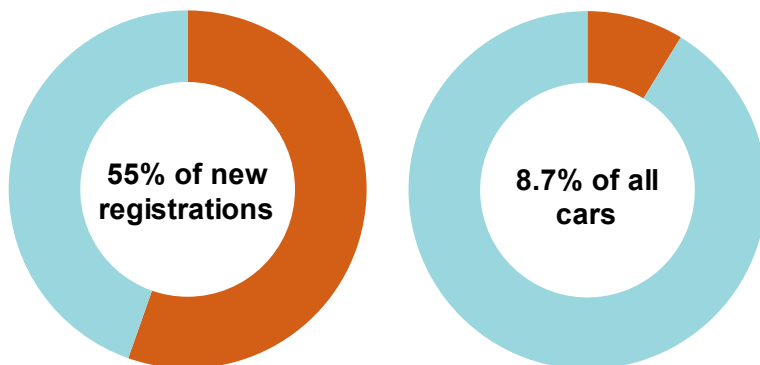


The average CO₂ emissions from cars newly registered in October to December 2015 fell by 2% from the same period in 2014 to an average figure of 121 g/km. Since 2001 the average emissions of new cars has fallen by 32%.

Cars and their owners

The commercial fleet and company car market is a primary driver of first registrations. In 2015, 55% 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 8.7%. This indicates that cars tend to move quite swiftly from the company market to the private market.

Figure 11: Proportion of cars that are company owned: 2015



The percentage of company registered cars in the fleet is up slightly from a minimum of 8.1% in 2010, having previously declined from a peak of 10.5% in 1997.

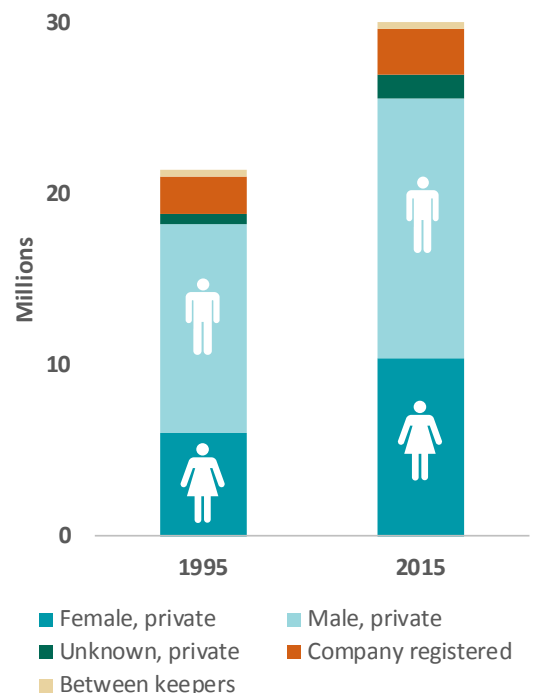
The number of female registered keepers of cars has increased by 72% since 1995, compared with an increase of only 24% in male keepers. Women now account for about 40% of registered keepers of privately registered cars.

It is estimated that there were roughly 7.7 million transfers of keepership of used cars during 2015. It is not possible to identify the precise reason for the transfer of keepership from the DVLA data, but a significant majority of these transfers will be second-hand vehicle sales. Over 6.8 million cars changed hands at least once during the year and almost 0.8 million which changed hands more than once.

Who is a registered keeper?

Every registered vehicle, unless it is in the process of changing hands, has a registered keeper, whose details are held by DVLA. Aggregated, anonymised information extracted from the keeper details can provide useful pointers to how the vehicle fleet is being used, although it must be borne in mind that the registered keeper of a vehicle is not always the person who uses it, and the vehicle is not always based at the keeper's contact address. This is particularly true for company or fleet vehicles.

Figure 12: Cars by registered keeper, GB



Makes and models of cars

The top five makes (Ford, Vauxhall, Volkswagen, Peugeot and BMW) accounted for 45% of all licensed cars at the end of December 2015 in Great Britain. Ford accounted for 14% of all cars and Vauxhall for 12%.

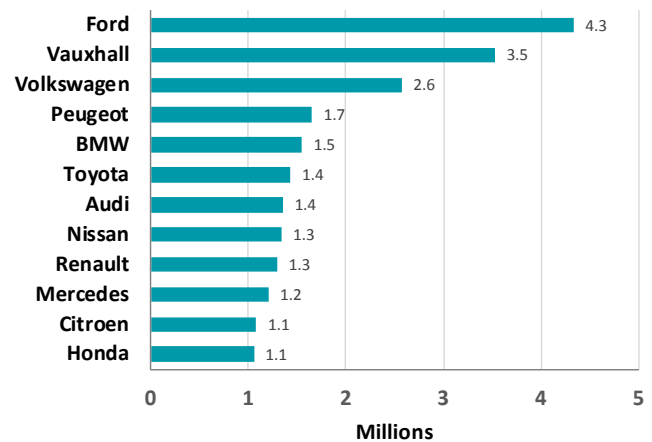
There were twelve **makes** with over 1 million cars each on the road, and together these accounted for 74% of all licensed cars.

Both Ford Fiesta and Ford Focus had 1.4 million cars licensed. The Fiesta was marginally ahead of the Focus reversing the order of 2014.

The Ford Fiesta was the most common **new registration** in 2014 with 131 thousand registered for the first time. This was followed by the Vauxhall Corsa with 90 thousand, the Ford Focus with 82 thousand and Volkswagen Golf with 75 thousand.

Ford, Vauxhall, Volkswagen, Audi and Nissan accounted for 35% of the new car registrations in 2015.

Figure 13: Licensed cars, top 12 makes, GB: Q4 2015



Tables

Detailed make and model data tables

[VEH0120, 0121, 0124 to 0129, 0160, 0161](#)

Figure 14: Licensed cars, top 20 models, GB: Q4 2015

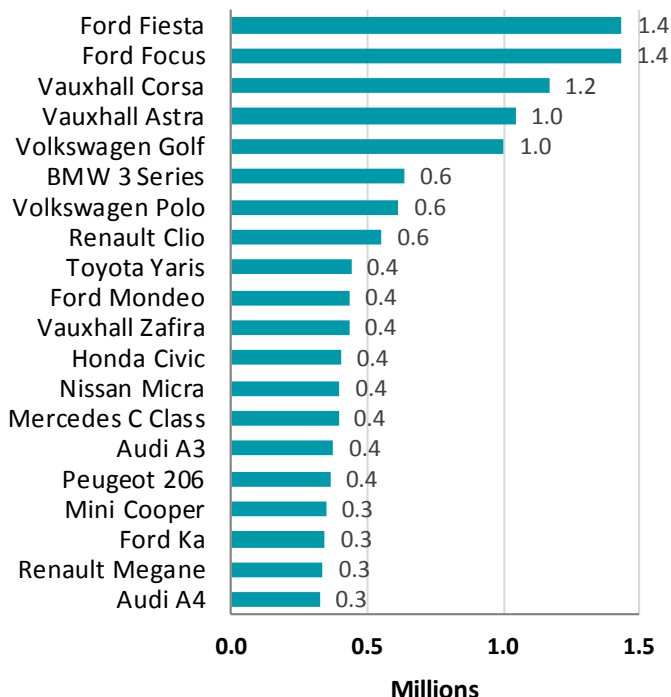
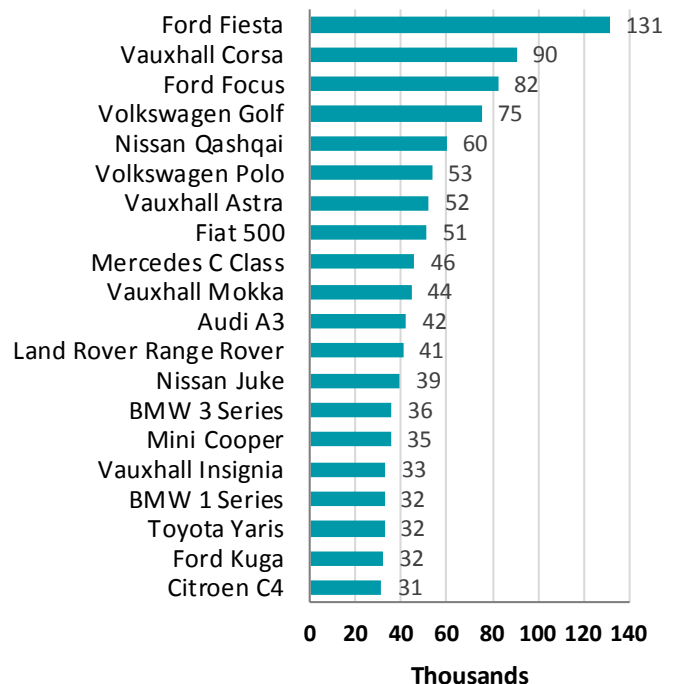


Figure 15: New Registrations of cars, top 20 models, 2015



Other vehicle types



In 1995, there were 2.1 million vans registered in Great Britain of which 56% were diesel. By 2015 there were 3.6 million vans, of which the vast majority (96%) were diesel powered.

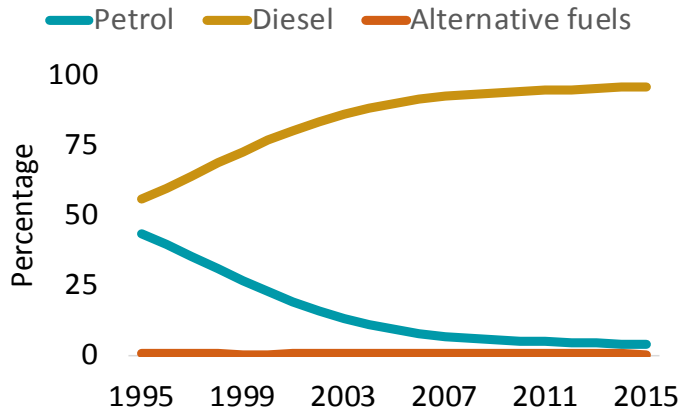
What are vans and HGVs?

In these statistics, goods vehicles with a gross vehicle weight up to 3.5 tonnes are referred to as 'vans' or light goods vehicles, and those with a gross vehicle weight over 3.5 tonnes as 'HGVs' or heavy goods vehicles.

What is gross vehicle weight?

Gross vehicle weight is the maximum permissible weight for a vehicle, including its load.

Figure 16: Licensed vans by propulsion type: GB, 1995 - 2015



There were 483,400 heavy goods vehicles registered in Great Britain in 2015. Their average gross vehicle weight in 2015 was 21.8 tonnes, compared with 17.7 tonnes in 1994. In 2015, 21% 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.

Figure 17: Licensed HGVs by gross weight: GB, 1995 - 2015

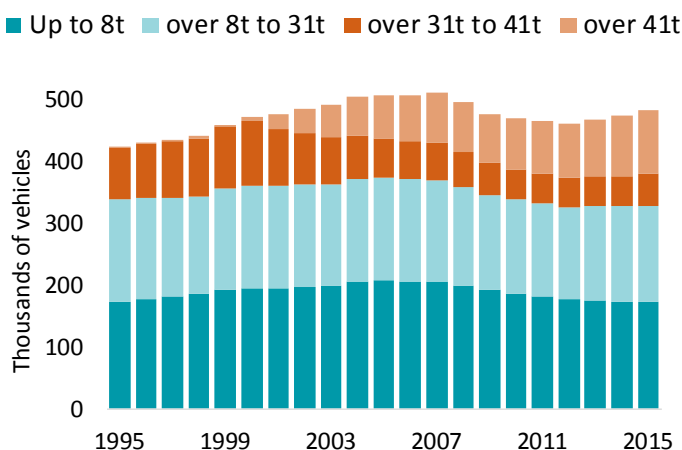
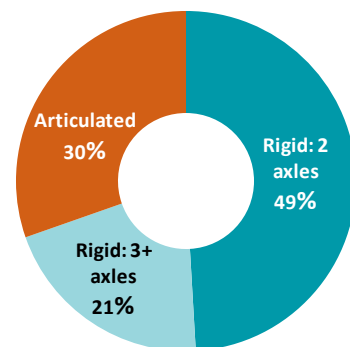


Figure 18: Licensed HGVs by configuration: GB, 2015

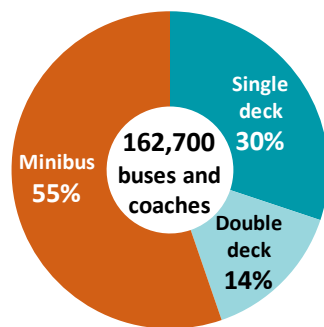


Just under half (49%) of HGVs at the end of December 2015 were 2 axle vehicles, while 30% were articulated vehicles and 21% were rigid (that is, non-articulated) vehicles with more than two axles.



There were 162,700 buses and coaches registered in Great Britain in 2015. Of these, 30% were single-deck buses or coaches, 14% double-deckers, and 55 minibuses.

Figure 19: Licensed Buses & coaches, GB, 2015



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.

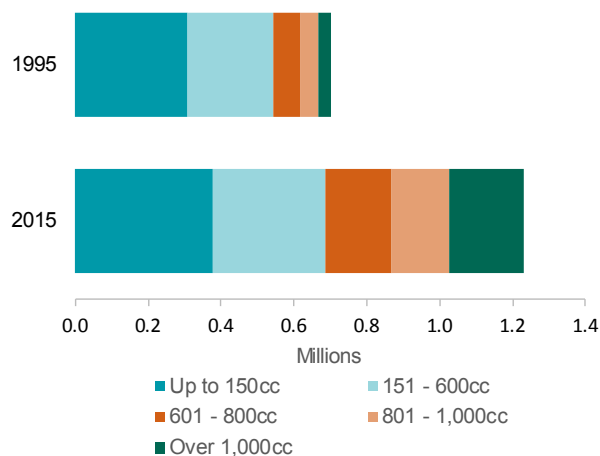


Since 1995, there has been a great increase in the number of larger motorcycles.

In 1995, motorcycles over 600cc only accounted for 23% of all licensed motorcycles. In 2015 they accounted for 44%.

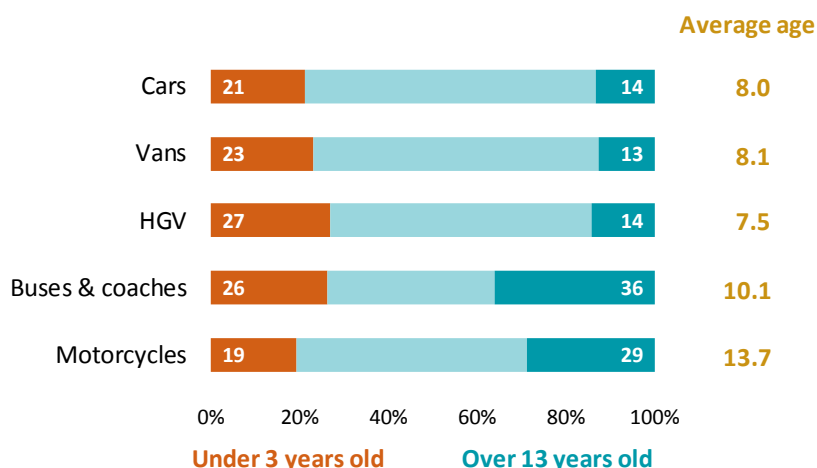
Most of the 75% increase in motorcycle numbers over the 20 years, from 0.7 million to 1.2 million, is attributable to the increase in larger bikes.

Figure 20: Licensed motorcycles by engine size: GB 1995 and 2015



Vehicle ages and transfers

Figure 21: Licensed vehicles by age: GB, 2015



The average age of licensed cars at the end of 2015 was 8.0 years. The averages for vans and HGVs were quite similar, while buses and coaches and motorcycles were on average somewhat older.

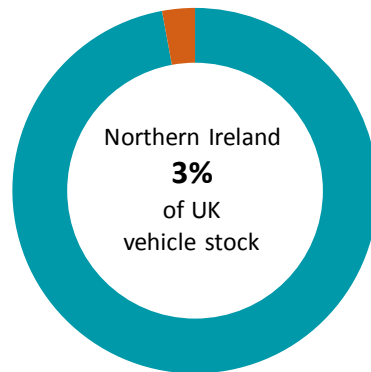
About 13 to 14% of cars, vans and HGVs were over 13 years old, this proportion rising to 29% for motorcycles and 36% for buses and coaches.

It is estimated that there were roughly 9.2 million transfers of keepership of used vehicles during 2015, most of which will have been second-hand vehicle sales. About 7.1 million vehicles changed hands at least once during the year, and almost 1 million changed hands more than once.

United Kingdom data

As a result of the changes described to the right, data for the United Kingdom (Great Britain + Northern Ireland) have been included in the data tables for this series.

The total number of vehicles licensed at the end of December 2015 in the UK was 37.6 million, of which 1.1 million (3%) were registered to an address in Northern Ireland.



Within Great Britain, 31.0 million vehicles were registered in England, 2.9 million in Scotland and 1.8 million in Wales.

The number of registered vehicles per 1,000 residents was markedly lower in London (358 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 696) and lowest among the northern English regions (of which the North East was lowest at 505).

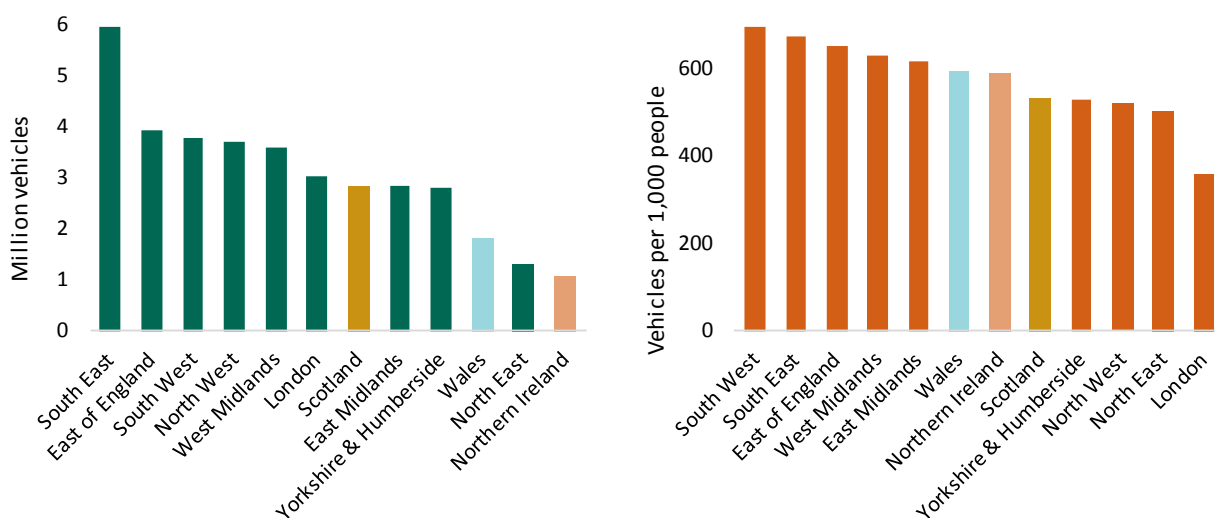
Addition of Northern Ireland data to this series

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 has been 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.

Separately from this GB/UK statistical series, [DOE Northern Ireland](#) will continue to publish statistics for vehicles registered in Northern Ireland.

Figure 22: Licensed vehicles by country or English region, UK: Q4 2015



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.

What data tables go with this release?

For the full list of tables published this year, please see the Vehicles Tables [Index](#).

For further information, please see the detailed [Technical Notes](#). There is also a [Statement of Administrative Sources](#) for the DVLA vehicles database.

Next Release

Vehicle Licensing statistical releases are published quarterly. The next is due on 9 June 2016.

The Quarter 4 release for each calendar year (such as this one) is accompanied by a larger set of data tables, and the commentary in the release is also more extensive to reflect this. In the other quarters a smaller set of key tables is updated, and the accompanying release is shorter, focussing on key recent trends rather than more general patterns which are covered in the Quarter 4 release.

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](#).

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.

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. 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 [series 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](#).