



# Vehicle Licensing Statistics: Quarter 1 (Jan - Mar) 2017

## About this release

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

For a more detailed commentary on vehicle registration statistics, see the [annual release](#).

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

Except where otherwise stated, the statistics in this release all refer to Great Britain. However, the underlying data set was expanded to cover UK data during 2014.

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

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**Next Release:**  
**September 2017**



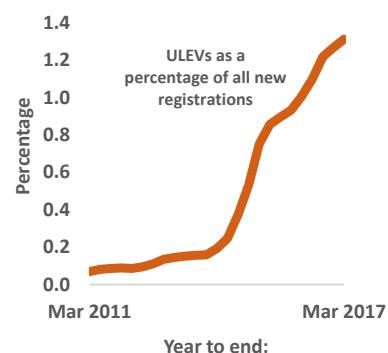
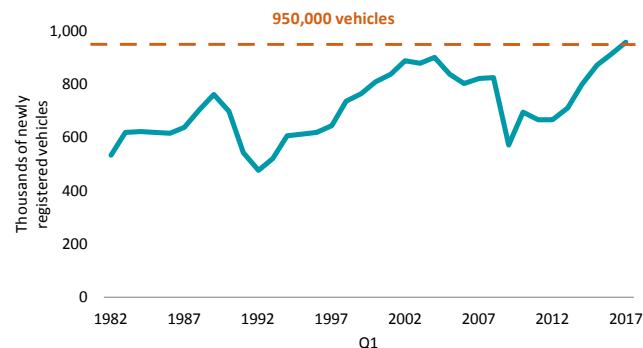
NEW

**January to March 2017 saw the highest number of new registrations ever recorded in the first quarter, in Great Britain, at 959,000.**

This was 4.6% higher than the previous peak in 2015.

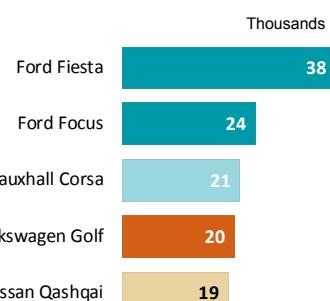
This increase was in part affected by an increase in new registrations ahead of changes to excise duty introduced in April 2017.

During January to March 2017, over 13,800 new **ultra low emission vehicles** (ULEVs) were registered in the United Kingdom, an increase of 17% of the same period in 2016.



NEW

The most popular new car model in Great Britain in January to March 2017 was the Ford Fiesta (38,000), followed by the Ford Focus (24,000), the Vauxhall Corsa (21,000).



**During Jan to Mar 2017** 52.2% of newly registered cars were petrol and 43.7% diesel.



NEW

**At end of Mar 2017** **37.5 million** Vehicles licensed for use on roads in Great Britain

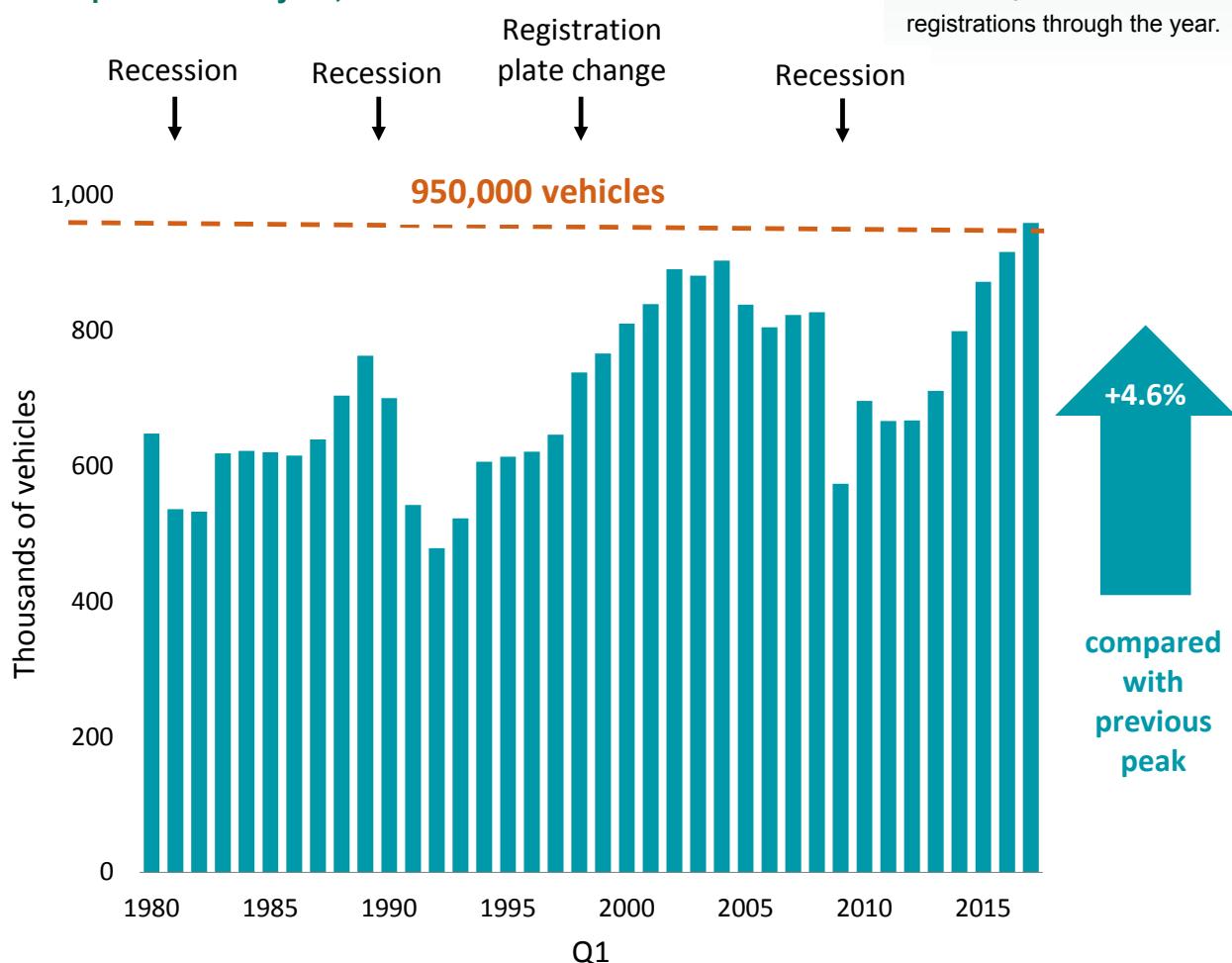




From January to March 2017, 959,000 vehicles were registered for the first time in Great Britain. This was the first time the number of new registrations in the first quarter of the year exceeded 950,000.

It was 4.6% up on the same quarter of the previous year which was the previous highest number recorded. This growth was attributed in part to an increase in the new registrations of cars (in particular those in lower emission bands) ahead of changes in VED introduced in April 2017. The timing of the Easter holidays, which took place in March in 2016 rather than April this year, also had an effect.

**Figure 1: Vehicles registered for the first time, GB: first quarter of the year, 1980-2017**



In each year since 2011, there has been a year-on-year increase in the number of new registrations in the first quarter.

## Changes in VED bands

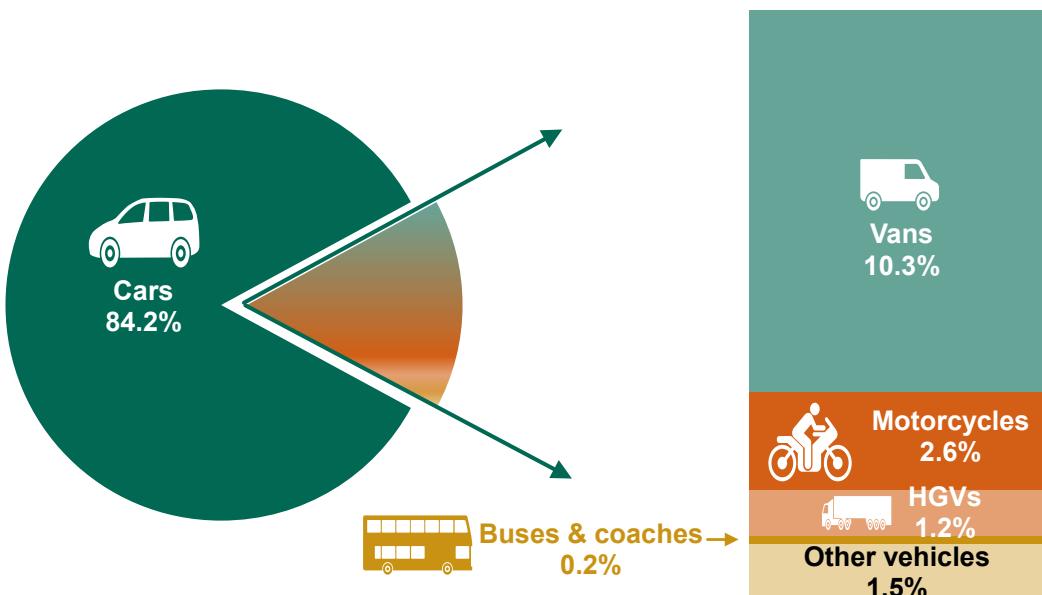
Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) is charged on vehicles registered in the UK.

For cars licensed after March 2001, VED is charged in bands on the basis of their CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. New tax rates apply for cars newly registered after April 2017 - see [Vehicle Tax Rate Tables](#) for further details.

## Change of registration plates

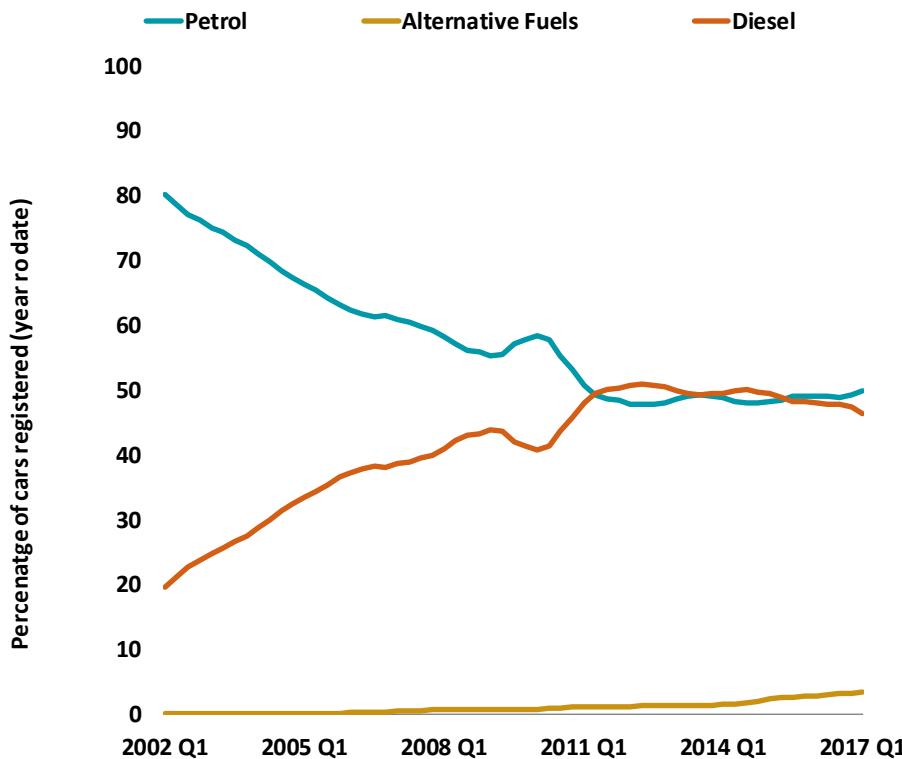
Up to 1998, new registration plates were issued once a year in August, causing a peak in registrations in that month. In 1999, this was changed to twice a year, in March and September. This changed the distribution of new registrations through the year.

**Figure 2: Vehicles registered for the first time,  
GB: January to March 2017; by vehicle type**



Of the new registrations between January and March 2017, 84% were cars, 10% were vans and 6% were motorcycles, HGVs, Buses & coaches and other vehicles.

**Figure 3: Percentage of cars registered for the  
first time, GB: Year to date; 2002 q1 to 2017 q1**



The proportion of newly registered cars that are petrol and diesel has changed significantly over the last fifteen years. In the year to 2002 Q1, 80.2% of newly registered cars were petrol. This fell to 47.8% by 2014 Q3 before rising 50.0% in the year to 2017 Q1. Diesel cars comprised only 19.7% of newly registered cars in the year to 2002 Q1 rising to 50.9% by 2012 Q2 before falling back to 46.4% in the year to 2017 Q1. Alternative fuel vehicles accounted for 0.1% in the year to 2002 Q1 rising steadily to 3.6% by 2017 Q1.

#### Tables

Detailed new registrations statistical tables updated this quarter are:-

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

Cars: [VEH0253 and 0256](#)



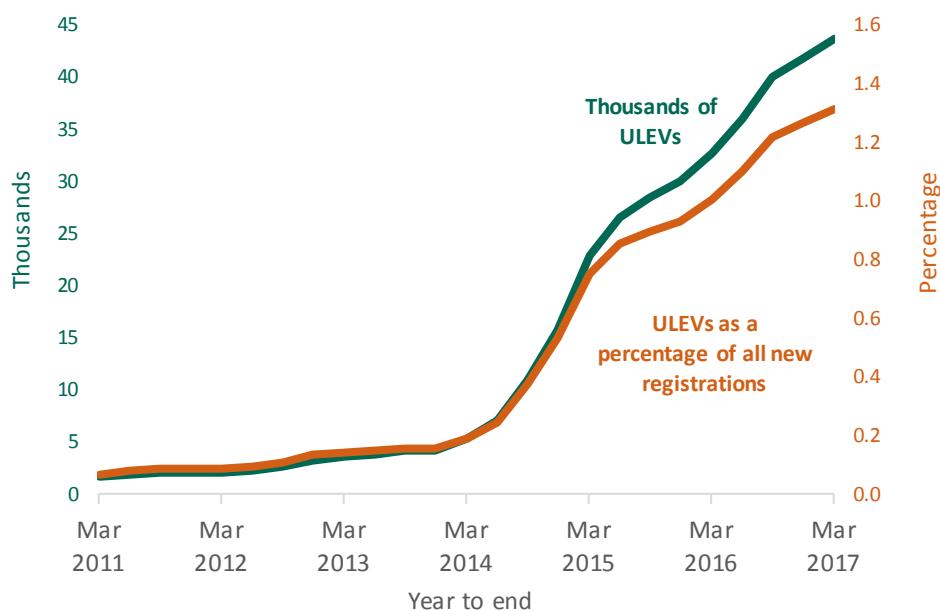
In the year to March 2017, 43,819 new **ultra low emission vehicles** (ULEVs) were registered for the first time in the United Kingdom, an increase of 34% on one year before and 91% on two years previously.

## What are Ultra Low Emission Vehicles?

Ultra low emission vehicles are those with emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> below 75 g/km, or fully electrically powered.

**Figure 4: New Ultra Low Emission Vehicle registrations, UK: 2011 Q1 - 2017 Q1**

During the year to end of March 2017, ULEVs represented 1.3% of all new registrations, compared with 1.0% over the previous year, and 0.8% over the year before that.



Most of the increase in ULEV registrations has been accounted for by vehicles eligible for plug-in car and van grants. New registrations in the year to March 2017 included 37,917 cars and 1,093 vans of models that were eligible for these grants, 24% up on the year to March 2016.

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 year to March 2017 were the Mitsubishi Outlander with 7,572, followed by the Nissan Leaf with 5,535 and the Mercedes C350 with 5,164.

## What are plug-in vehicles and grants?

A plug-in vehicle is one that can be recharged from an external source of electricity. It may be powered by a battery only, or by a combination of battery and a conventional internal combustion engine (a plug-in hybrid).

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.

## Tables

Detailed environmental statistical tables updated this quarter are:-

ULEV: [VEH0130, 0131 and 0170](#)

CO<sub>2</sub> cars: [VEH0256](#)



At the end of March 2017 there were 37.5 million vehicles licensed for use on the roads in Great Britain, of which 31.1 million were cars.

In the year to March 2017 the stock of vehicles increased by 2.2%. This is the sixth consecutive quarter that year-on-year increases have exceeded 2%. This also occurred in two quarters of 2014 but had not previously been seen since 2005.

In March 2017, the numbers of licensed cars and vans 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 2009.

In the year to March 2017, the largest percentage increase was for vans at 4.0% followed by cars at 2.0%. Motorcycles increased only by 1.5% over the same period while buses & coaches fell by 0.7%.

Over the last twenty years, vehicle stock has increased by 42%. The largest increase was for vans at 76%, followed by motorcycles at 70%. Growth in HGVs was low at 14% and buses & coaches was only 3%.

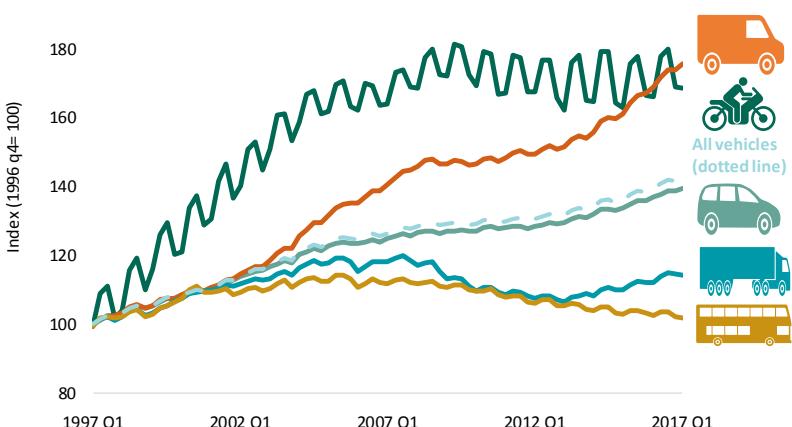
## Tables

Detailed vehicle stock statistical tables updated this quarter are:-

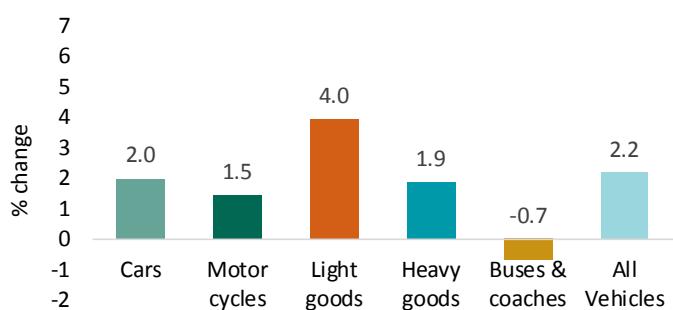
All vehicle types: [VEH0101, 0104, 0110, 0120 to 0123, 0128 to 0131](#)

Motorcycles: [VEH0301](#)

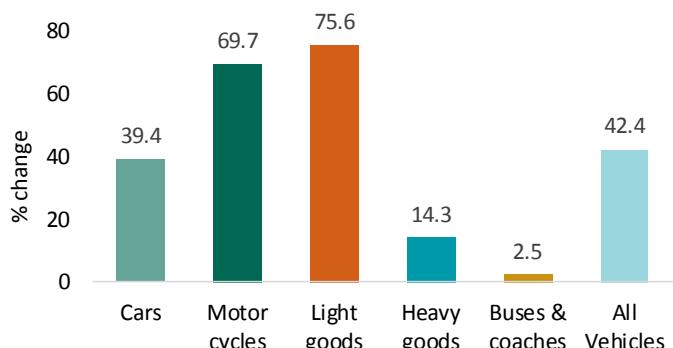
**Figure 5: Licensed vehicles by type, GB: 1997 Q1 - 2017 Q1**



**Figure 6: Change in licensed vehicles in GB, up to March 2017:  
Over last year**



**Over last 20 years**



## Makes and models of cars



### Makes

Ford, Vauxhall, Volkswagen, Mercedes and Nissan accounted for 41% of the new car registrations in January to March 2017.

The top five makes (Ford, Vauxhall, Volkswagen, BMW and Peugeot) accounted for 44% of all licensed cars at the end of March 2017 in Great Britain. Ford accounted for 14% of all cars and Vauxhall for 11%.

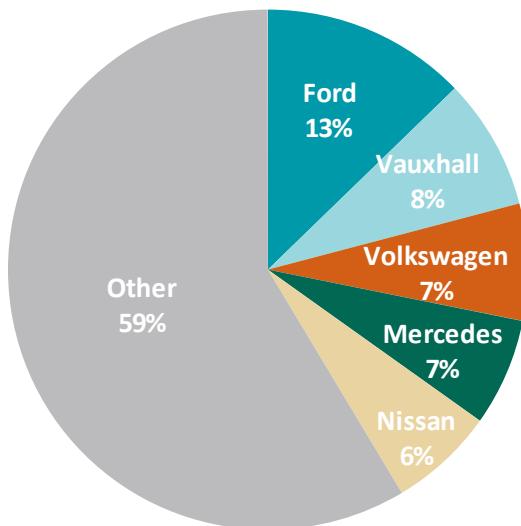
### Tables

Detailed make and model data tables

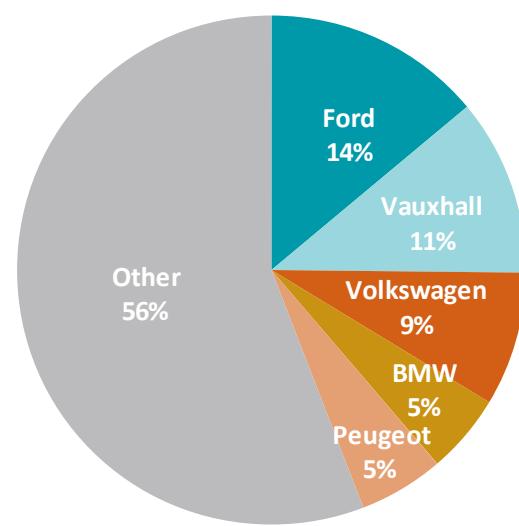
[VEH0120](#), [0121](#), [0128](#), [0129](#),  
[0160](#), [0161](#)

**Figure 7: Top 5 makes of cars, GB**

New cars, January to March 2017



All licensed cars, March 2017



### Models

The Ford Fiesta was the most common new registration car model from January to March 2017 with 38,000 registered for the first time. This was followed by the Ford Focus with 24,000.

The most common models licensed at the end of March 2017 were the Ford Fiesta with 1.5 million cars followed by the Ford Focus with 1.4 million.

**Figure 8: Top 5 models of cars, GB**  
New cars, January to March 2017

All licensed cars, March 2017

	Thousands	Millions
Ford Fiesta	38	1.5
Ford Focus	24	1.4
Vauxhall Corsa	21	1.2
Volkswagen Golf	20	1.0
Nissan Qashqai	19	1.0
Vauxhall Astra		

### 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.

### 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.

### What is the full list of tables updated as part of this release?

- veh0101: number of licensed vehicles by body type
- veh0104: number of licensed vehicles by region
- 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 (UK data)
- veh0131: number of plug in cars and vans by upper and lower tier local authority.
- 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)
- veh0253: first registration of cars by propulsion type
- veh0256: first registrations of cars by CO<sub>2</sub> emission band
- veh0301: number of licensed motor cycles

## Users and uses of these statistics

A separate note on [vehicles statistics guidance](#) is available.

## 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](#).

## Next Release

Vehicle Licensing statistical releases are published quarterly. The next is due on 14 September 2017. The Quarter 4 release for each calendar year (released in April) 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](#).

## 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](mailto:vehicles.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk).

## Release of DfT Statistics publications

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