

FMI NEWS February 1st 2014

News gathered from press releases, Headlineauto, Motoring4Media, IAAF e-Bulletin and AM-online during January 2014

Nodding off at the wheel

Male drivers are being urged to get plenty of sleep and take regular breaks, as research from Brake and Direct Line reveals a horrifying 45% admit 'head-nodding' at the wheel - meaning they have been asleep briefly, risking appalling crashes.

Brake and Direct Line's survey reveals:

- One in three drivers overall (31%) admit 'head-nodding' at the wheel - nearly half (45%) of male drivers and one in five (22%) female drivers.
- One in 14 drivers overall (7%) admit actually 'falling asleep' at the wheel - 14% of male drivers and 2% of female drivers.
- Almost half (49%) of drivers admit driving after less than five hours' sleep - not nearly enough for safe driving. Again, this is more common among men (55%) than women (45%).

Many drivers aren't aware that if you 'head nod' (also called 'micro-sleeps') you have already nodded off, putting yourself and others in a huge amount of danger. Micro-sleeps can last from two to 30 seconds, meaning that a frighteningly large number of drivers have been temporarily out of control of their vehicles.

Tired driving kills at least 300 people on UK roads every year, with a devastating impact on families across the country - although the actual figure could be much higher as driver tiredness can be hard to prove as a cause of crashes.

Brake urges all drivers to help stamp out devastating crashes by making a [pledge](#) to always getting a good night's sleep before driving, taking two-hourly breaks, and pulling over somewhere safe as soon as safe to do so, if feeling tired.

Brake also calls on the government to run more campaigns to raise awareness about the dangers of driving when tired and how to avoid it, as well as calling on them to conduct a review of safe stopping places on motorways, ensuring there are enough to enable drivers to take regular breaks.

These survey results come from section 5 of the Direct Line and Brake report on safe driving, 2012 - 2014 Fit to drive. The survey consisted of 1,000 drivers and was conducted by Redshift Research. [Read the report.](#)

New Year's motoring resolutions

Half of drivers (49%) have made a New Year's motoring resolution and most of the resolutions are to drive less or to drive more economically, safely, or courteously in 2014, according to an AA Populus poll of 17,629 AA members.

At a time when the high cost of motoring is hitting drivers' pockets, the top three driving resolutions were all linked to efforts to save money by driving more economically, walking more or driving less.

The AA Top Ten Resolutions were:

14% said they would try to drive more economically. 18-24 yr olds were most likely to cite this (19%).

11% said they would try to walk more. This was more popular amongst females (15%) than males (10%) and most popular in Scotland (14%).

6% said they would drive less often. Those over 65yrs were most like to support this (7%).

5% said they would cycle more. Most popular in the flatter eastern region (7%).

4% said they would drive more safely. Drivers from Northern Ireland were most likely to support this (8%).

3% said they would try not to exceed the speed limit. Highest in Wales (4%).

3% said they would try to be more courteous on the roads.

1% (257 drivers) said they would be less aggressive on the roads.

1% (84 drivers) said they would use a hand-held mobile less often.

1% (75 drivers) said they would be more courteous to cyclists.

(42% said they would not make a New Year's Resolution about driving and 8% said they would not make one of the resolutions above).

Cheaper Fuel Tops British Motorist's Wish-List

Supporting the AA Survey results show cheaper petrol and diesel tops the annual Be Wiser Insurance Motoring Wish-list 2013. Nearly two-third (58%) of British motorists put cheaper fuel at the top of their list above all else.

Each year Be Wiser Insurance asks motorists to decide what they would put at the top of their motoring wish-list. This year cheaper fuel won out significantly against all other choices including removal of all pot-holes, scrapping of speed cameras and even luxuries such as personalised number plates.

Mark Bower-Dyke, chairman of Be Wiser insurance, comments:

"Even with the small dip in fuel prices this year it's not enough to make people feel comfortable spending what they are forced to at the pumps. The price of living has gone up across the board, and expensive fuel feels like adding a tax to everything you do."

This change can be seen most drastically when compared to previous years when pot-holes have been the top issue for motorists - but this year only a quarter (24%) put their complete removal from our streets at the top of their list. In 2012 over half (57%) of British drivers chose the disappearance of potholes at the top of their wish-list.

It's clear that petrol prices play on the motorist's mind much more this year - it's certainly not that British roads are now of a dramatically better quality. A mere 2% desired any car-based gadgets in their stocking this year such as speed camera sensors, parking sensor or heated seats. Similarly only 1% wished to

have a personalised number plate. Only 9% wanted to remove all traffic calming measures or scrap speed cameras. This is a significant drop compared to the 12% who wished for the disappearance of speed camera in 2012.

Inconsiderate drivers a big worry for motorists

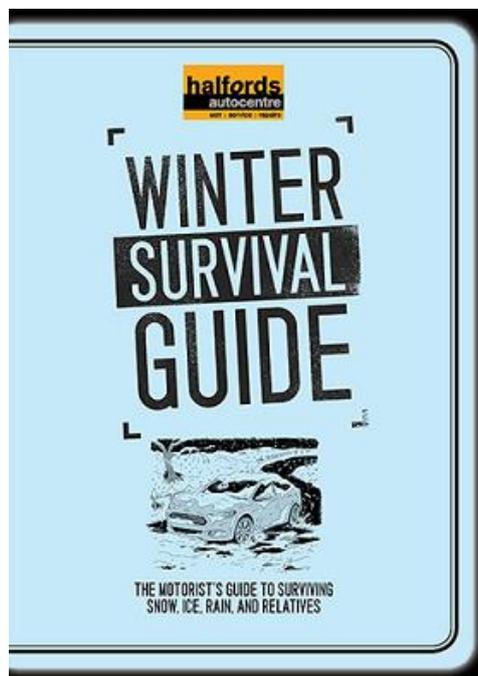
However, a study by Halfords Autocentres into how winter affects motorists found that drivers are also concerned about the levels of impatient, aggressive and inconsiderate driving – which they say increases at this time of year.

Rory Carlin from Halfords Autocentres said, *"From our survey drivers are noticing a general lack of courteous driving at this time of the year. It seems that the festivities take their toll on the nation's road manners and tempers flare leading to less kindness and unselfish behaviour from some motorists."*

Almost a quarter of motorists (23%) who took part in the research said they felt that unfriendly, bad tempered behaviour – such as failing to allow drivers out at junctions, lane hogging and not indicating – is a major issue during the winter months.

One in five motorists (20%) also felt that there was a rise in aggressive and impatient driving – such as tailgating, speeding and using car horns or lights to intimidate other road users.

Rory Carlin added, *"We know that winter road conditions are a cause for concern amongst motorists but they also feel that ill-mannered and aggressive behaviour by other drivers is making things worse. As 2014 starts a good resolution would be for all drivers to be more considerate."*



Wet, dark and slippery conditions mean more than a third of motorists are anxious or genuinely frightened about driving at this time of year – so to arm motorists with information on how to stay safe Halfords Autocentres has worked

with former SAS Sergeant Major and survival expert John 'Lofty' Wiseman to create a handy Winter Survival Guide.

The Winter Survival Guide for motorists provides advice on everything from how to avoid a skid and remaining calm in traffic to administering first aid. To read the Winter Survival Guide or download a free copy click [HERE](#). To watch the first film in the accompanying Halfords Autocentre Survival Series click [HERE](#)

Pothole danger increases

But despite moving down the previously mentioned Be Wiser wish list potholes are becoming a serious problem. Britain's pothole strewn roads are leaving motorists with an annual bill of £1.2 billion for suspension, steering and wheel repairs – a rise of 16% in just 12 months. With heavy rain continuing to erode the surface of Britain's roads, new figures from Halfords Autocentres reveal that more than 8.9 million vehicles have suffered steering or suspension damage as a result of potholes over the past year.

Dangerous potholes reported to hard-up councils have increased by 18% over the past 12 months according to motoring and cycling websites monitoring this issue and estimates from the Asphalt Industry Alliance suggest that the UK's roads are pitted with as many as 2 million craters.

Rory Carlin from Halfords Autocentres explained: *"The surface of our roads is deteriorating to the point where drivers are now likely to encounter a potentially damaging pothole during most journeys - with rain-filled holes being harder to see and avoid. In a new car a small pothole can damage wheels, tyres and shock absorbers but with large numbers of drivers keeping their cars for longer and cutting back on routine maintenance older, less well maintained cars are even more vulnerable."*

Rectifying the damage caused by potholes can be unexpectedly costly, with an average repair bill of £140, and insurance companies attribute as many as one in five mechanical vehicle failures to pothole-related damage. Some regions had far higher incidences of pothole damage than others - with drivers on the south coast collectively being hit hardest with an £85 million repair bill, closely followed by motorists in Kent and the East Midlands who pay around £78 million and £75 million respectively.

The Government and local authorities are now spending almost £1 billion a year on highway maintenance but, despite repairing more than 2.2 million potholes a year, experts believe that fixing the backlog could take more than 10 years. Rory Carlin added: *"Cutting back on car maintenance is a false economy because it increases the risk of damage to a vehicle going unnoticed as well as the likely repair costs to rectify it. If you hit a pothole it is always worth getting an expert opinion – even if there are no immediate after-effects such as unexplained noises or wheel damage."* www.halfordsautocentres.com

Cars dominate commute to work

The RAC has confirmed that the majority of people in England and Wales commute to work by car or van. As such, its "Car and the Commute" report has revealed that - of the 26.5 million workers aged 16-74 - 57.5% favour such a vehicle and give a further 5.1% a lift. The third most popular option is walking (10.7%) followed by: bus, minibus or coach (7.3%), train (5.2%), underground, metro, light rail or tram (3.9%), bike (2.9%), motorcycle, scooter, moped (0.8%) and taxi (0.5%). The rest predominantly work from home or travel via an unspecified means.

Now, it would be fair to assume that a higher percentage of the workers that live in rural areas commute by car compared to their urban counterparts that have better public transport. That is true - but the gap is small. As such, 68.7% of rural workers drive their car and 4.7% catch a lift. In comparison - excluding the capital city - the urban figures are 61.1% and 6%, respectively. Even in London that has traffic problems and a congestion charge, 28% of workers use their car and offer 1.7% a lift.

These statistics confirm the public's love of cars even though the cost of motoring has risen significantly in recent years. As such, the RAC Report has revealed that between October 2003 and October 2013 the price of fuel/motor oil rose by 75.5%. This far exceeded the overall cost of living rise as measured by the Retail Price Index (38%). Furthermore, the cost of insurance and maintenance increased beyond the rate of inflation.

<http://www.motoring.co.uk/car-news/rac-confirms-cars-dominate-commute-to-work-60017>

One in five drivers is over 65

According to the Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM), the number of drivers over 65 reached 7,191,192 in November 2013. This makes up for 19 per cent of all drivers with full driving licences. The figures come from driving licence data published by the DVLA in December 2013. They also show that:

- There are 4,068,498 drivers over the age of 70.
- There are 1,101,779 drivers over the age of 80.
- 195 drivers are over 100 years old

Of the drivers over 65, 367,711 or five per cent have points on their licence. For drivers over seventy the figure is 195, 773 or five per cent with points. 35,498, three per cent of drivers over 80 have points.

However, this compares favourably with middle-aged drivers. The age group most likely to have points on their licence is 42 year-olds. Of the 816,915 licence holders in that group, 82,929 or 10 per cent have points.

And for younger drivers the figures are 3, 339, 826 licence holders, 270,817 with points, or 8 per cent. This supports research by the IAM that shows that older drivers are in fact safer than many other drivers. Where older drivers have slower reaction times, they use their experience on the road to compensate by driving at slower speeds on all occasions and allowing more space between them and other road users. <http://data.gov.uk/dataset/driving-licence-data>.

Scrapping hard shoulders on motorways

Road safety and breakdown cover specialist, GEM Motoring Assist, has joined the debate about the Highways Agency's plans to scrap portions of our motorway hard shoulders. This will include some of the most densely used parts of the M25, the M1 and the M6.

"The idea behind these plans is to keep roads flowing more freely to ease congestion, which is great in principle but there are obvious and worrying concerns," says David Williams MBE, chief executive of GEM.

"Since 2005, an increasing number of UK motorways have been re-classified as 'Smart Motorways', which use what was previously the hard shoulder as a traffic lane to assist traffic flow during certain times of the day."

"Unfortunately, when the system is in operation, a vehicle breaking down no longer has an immediate traffic-free area in which to stop. Ideally the driver will be able to reach one of the many refuge areas built into the system at frequent intervals. However, this is not always possible and if unlucky, a driver may find it necessary to stop in the middle of the traffic flow which is likely to be unnerving for even an experienced driver; even though Smart Motorways are constantly monitored, so if a driver doesn't make it to a refuge area, help will arrive very quickly."

Here are some useful guidelines to follow in the event of a breakdown on a motorway:

- Breaking down on the side of the road can be extremely hazardous. Consider your own safety first – if possible get your vehicle to one of the safety points
- Switch on your hazard lights and pull onto the hard shoulder as far as possible and turn your wheels away from the road. **Do not** attempt to put a warning triangle up on a motorway
- Ideally, all passengers should get out of the vehicle. Ensure they leave by the nearside door, and then wait behind the barrier and as far away from the road as possible
- For your own safety you should wear a fluorescent reflective jacket or tabard - it is now illegal in some countries not to wear one
- Call for assistance on the nearest emergency telephone as this will help the emergency services locate you accurately and help you quickly
- Do not try to cross the carriageway
- Keep passengers well away from the carriageway and children under control
- You must leave animals in the vehicle or, in an emergency, keep them under proper control on the verge
- Do not attempt even simple repairs and do not leave the car bonnet open

Visit www.motoringassist.com/leaflets to download the GEM Motorist Breakdown and Emergency Guide.

Thoughts on reducing speed limits on motorways

The Alliance of British Drivers rejects a Highways Agency proposal to reduce the motorway speed limit on more than 30 miles of the M1 in Derbyshire and South Yorkshire.

The Highways Agency (HA) has begun a consultation on reducing the motorway speed limit to 60mph on the M1 between junctions 28 (South Normanton) and 35A (north of Sheffield), a distance of around 31 miles. The stated reason is to improve air quality in the vicinity of the motorway and prevent concentrations of nitrogen dioxide and particulates from exceeding EU standards, which could lead to fines being imposed. In fact, most of the motorway south of Sheffield passes through predominantly rural areas, and it is only the section that runs between Sheffield and Rotherham, from junctions 33 to 35 (about 6 miles) that comes close to a large urban area.

It should be obvious that a reduction in the speed limit from 70 to 60mph will have a negligible impact on air quality. If the hard shoulder is put in use as a running lane (part of this plan), lanes 1 and 2 of the four lanes in each direction (i.e. the former hard shoulder and 'slow' lane) will be occupied mostly by heavy goods vehicles, coaches and those drivers of light vehicles who are travelling below 70mph anyway. Heavy vehicles, which produce the greatest quantities of nitrogen dioxide and particles, are already limited to speeds below 60mph, so their emissions will be unaffected. Most of the vehicles travelling at 70mph will be in lanes 3 and 4, closest to the central reservation and furthest from any roadside development.

ABD chairman Brian Macdowall comments, *"Motorways are the main transport arteries of the nation and are vital to the economy. The Government should be raising motorway speed limits, not reducing them. Air quality is important, but it has improved massively in recent years and will continue to do so, as newer, cleaner vehicles replace older ones. The EU's air quality targets must not be used as an excuse to reduce speed limits or abandon vital road improvement schemes. If this proposal goes ahead, it will be the thin end of a very large wedge. It should be scrapped immediately."*

www.gov.uk/government/consultations/m1-junctions-28-to-35a-maximum-mandatory-speed-limit

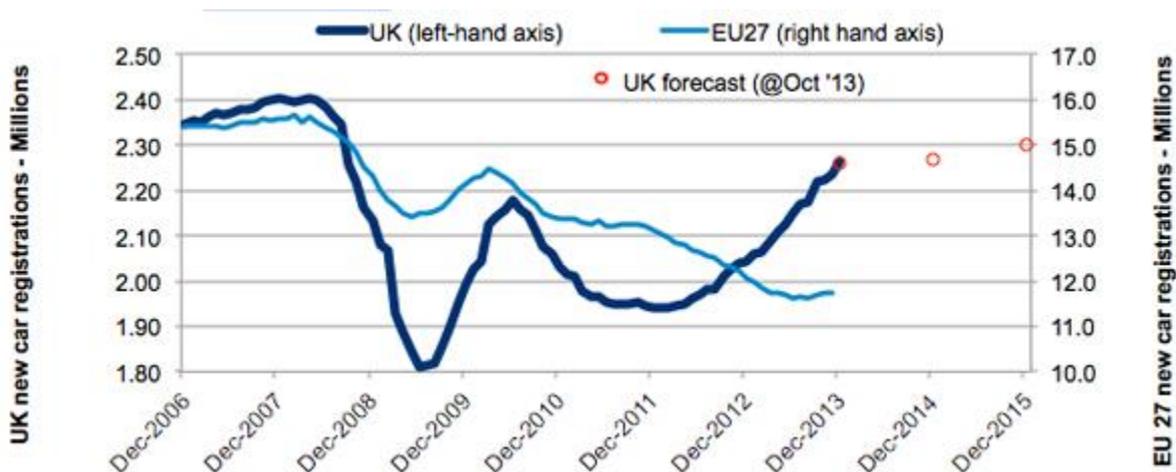
Five year record for UK new car market

The 2013 new car market recorded best performance in five years;

- 2,264,737 cars registered in 2013, up 10.8% on 2012 and exceeding SMMT's 2.25 million forecast for the year.
- 2013 hits highest annual registration total since 2007 as December achieves 22nd consecutive monthly rise.
- On average, an additional 600 extra cars registered per day in 2013 than in the previous year.
- UK firmly secured as Europe's second largest car market and only one to grow consistently throughout the year.
- 2014 market expected to stabilise with sustainable growth of around 1% over the year.

"With its best year since a pre-recession 2007, the UK new car market has helped stimulate the country's economic recovery," said Mike Hawes, SMMT Chief Executive. "While the European market is only now showing signs of improvement, the UK has consistently outperformed the rest of Europe with 22 consecutive months of growth. The 10.8% increase in 2013 reflects the attractive financial offers available, as well as increased demand for more technologically advanced new cars. We expect new car registrations to remain stable in 2014 as customers return to a more regular replacement cycle."

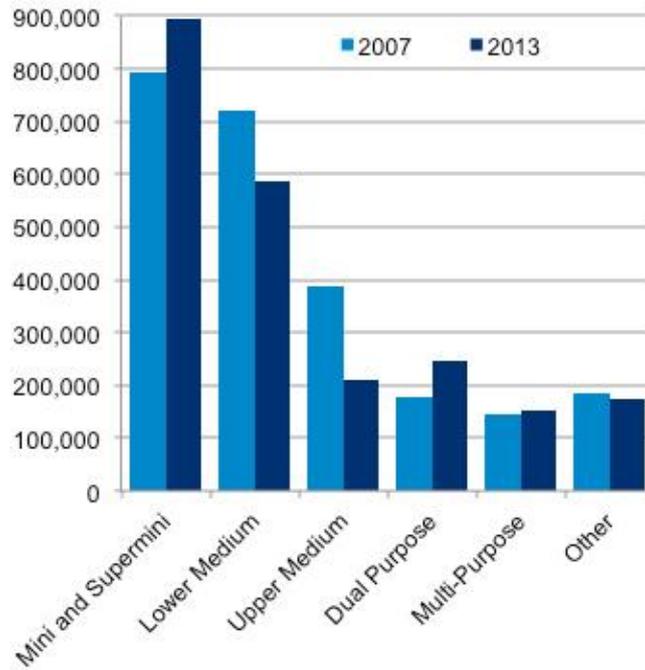
**UK and EU27 new car registrations
- rolling year total December 2006 to date**



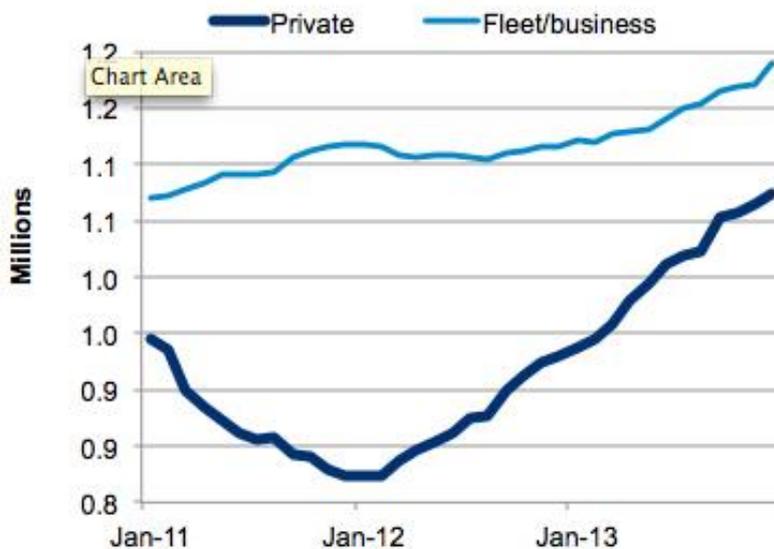
- Since 2007, the UK market has seen a shift away from the Upper Medium segment towards smaller cars in the Mini and Supermini segments, as well as the MPV and Dual Purpose segments.
- Change in buying patterns has been driven by demand for smaller, more fuel-efficient models, as well as the greater versatility offered by vehicles in Dual Purpose and MPV segments.
- Dual Purpose sales overtook Upper Medium volumes in 2013 to become the third largest segment.
- The Supermini segment remains the largest by volume, with a market share in 2013 of 35.9%.
- All sales types recorded growth in 2013, although it was the private sector which saw the largest volume gain.
- Improving consumer and business confidence, after an extended hold-off period and a competitive market place helped fuel sales growth.
- Increase in private registrations accounted for two-thirds of overall market growth. In 2013 private buyers accounted for 47.5% of the market, up from 45.5% in 2012.
- Registrations of hybrid and plug-in cars rose 20.5% in 2013 to 32,715 units.
- In 2011, plug-in vehicles (pure electric, plug-in hybrids and range extenders) accounted for 4.5% of combined plug-in and hybrid sales; this increased to 11% in 2013.
- Within the past two years the number of plug-in models on sale has increased from six to 17.

- The UK has been a key market in an otherwise subdued European economic marketplace. In 2013, the UK consolidated its position as the second largest market in Europe (after Germany).
- Data to November shows the UK market up 9.9%, or over 190,000 units. The EU27 market as whole was down 2.7% or over 300,000 units.
- The Spanish market, supported by its own scrappage scheme, saw volumes rise 2.1% in 2013, while the German, French and Italian markets all fell.

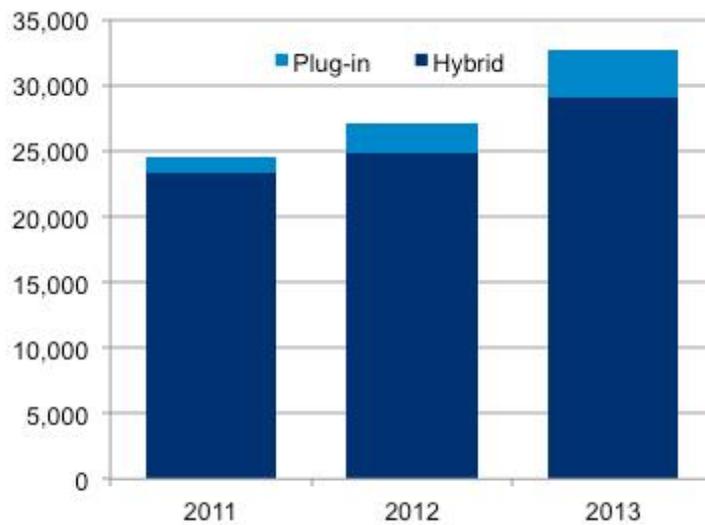
Registrations by segment type



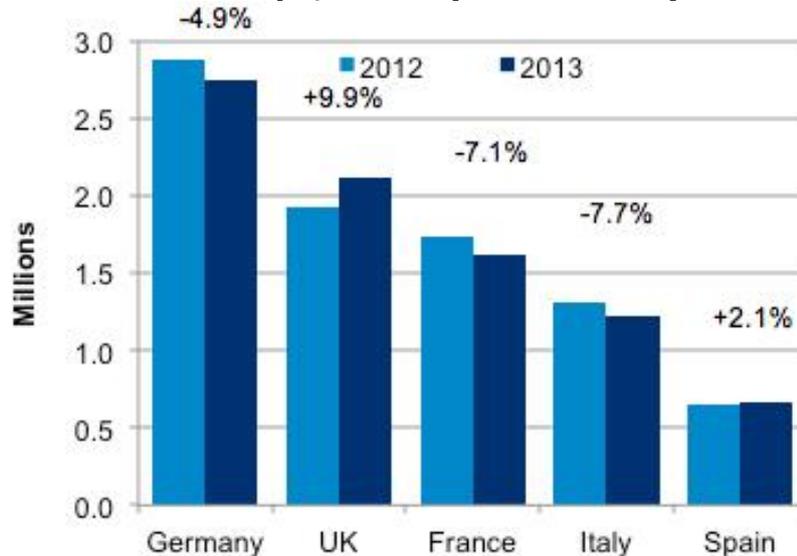
Registrations by sales type, rolling annual total, January 2011 to date



Registrations of hybrids and plug-in cars



Registrations in Europe, January-November (Source: ACEA)



[SMMT new car registrations - data for December and full year 2013 \(.xls\)](#)

Used car values reach record levels

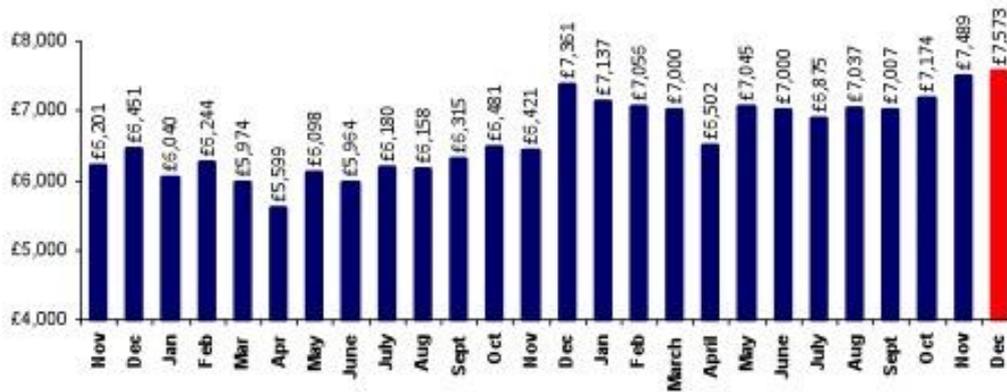
Used car values continue to rise in the used car market according to BCA's latest Pulse report, as December 2013 achieved the highest monthly average since Pulse began reporting in 2005.

BCA's data shows that average values rose to a new high in December as used cars averaged £7,573 across the board, a month-on-month rise of £84 (1.1%) compared to November. Year-on-year, December 2013 was ahead by £212 or 2.8%. Average mileage and age both rose slightly over the month as BCA sold a higher percentage of dealer part-exchange vehicles.

Year-on-year table: All cars

All cars	Avg Age	Avg Mileage	Avg Value	Sale vs CAP
Dec 2012	57.40	55,591	£7,361	96.14%
Dec 2013	60.69	57,067	£7,573	96.80%

Average Used Values - All Sectors - 2011 - 2013 by Month

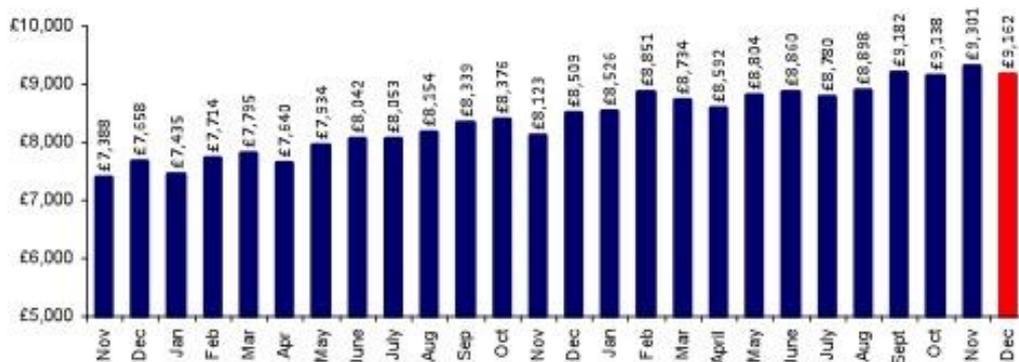


Fleet & lease cars averaged £9,162 in November, the second highest value on record despite falling by £139 (1.5%) over the month. Values were up by £653 (7.6%) year on year. CAP performance fell back from last month to 95.84% but was ahead year-on-year. Retained value against original MRP (Manufacturers Retail Price) was down a point compared to November, but up year-on-year.

Year-on-year table: Fleet & lease

Fleet/ Lease	Avg Age (months)	Avg Mileage	Avg Value	Sale vs CAP	Sales vs MRP
Dec 2012	39.52	47,024	£8,509	95.38%	40.94%
Dec 2013	39.60	46,940	£9,162	95.84%	41.32%

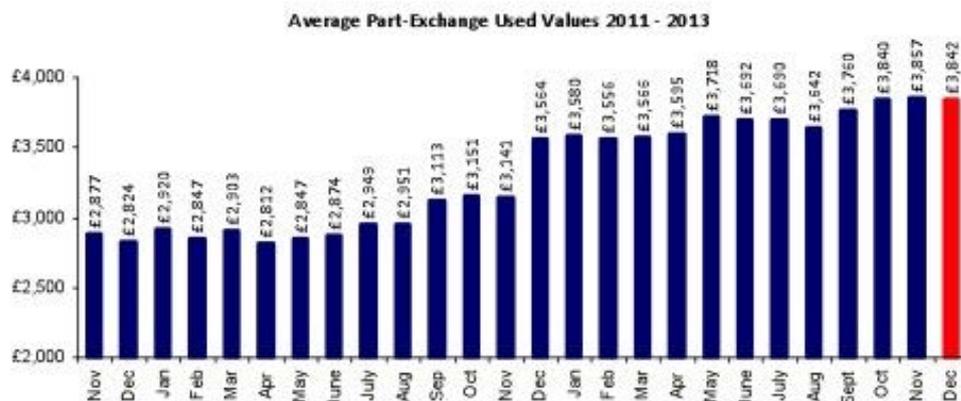
Average Fleet & Lease Used Values at BCA - 2011 to 2013



Average dealer part-exchange values fell by just £15 (0.4%) in December, following three consecutive months of record prices. Year-on-year, values were ahead by £278 (7.8%) compared to December 2012 with average age rising and mileage falling marginally over the year. CAP performance improved to 95.15% in December, up slightly compared to November but down, year-on-year.

Year-on-year table: Part-Exchange

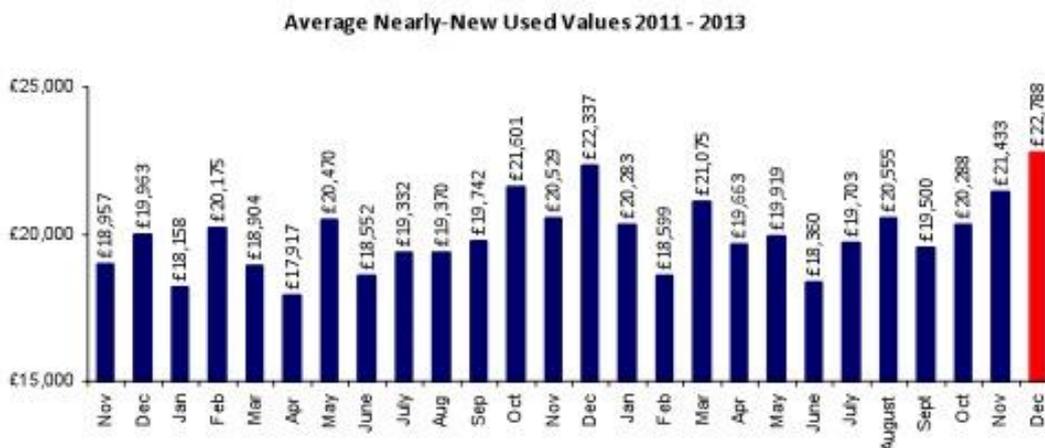
Part-Exchange	Avg (months)	Age	Avg Mileage	Avg Value	Sale vs CAP
Dec 2012	87.65		73,784	£3,564	95.45%
Dec 2013	88.43		73,744	£3,842	95.15%



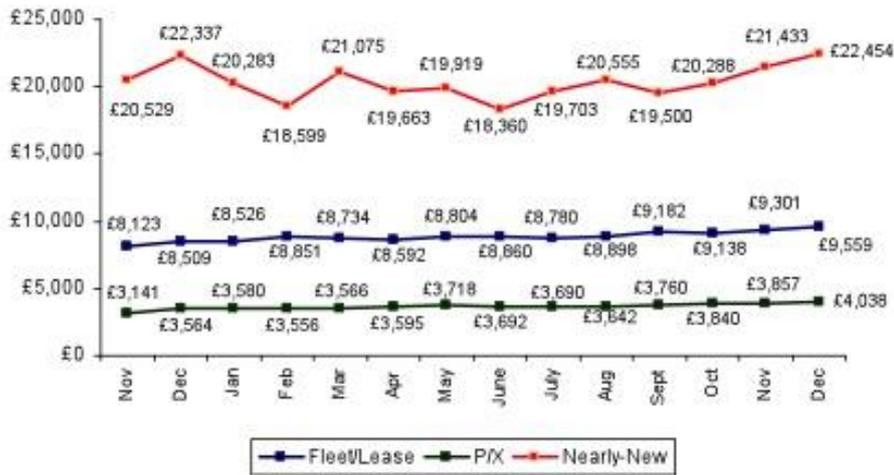
Nearly new values reached record levels in December at £22,788, but volumes remain very low and

model mix remains the most significant price factor.

Nearly-new	Avg (months)	Age	Avg Mileage	Avg Value	Sale vs CAP
Nov 2013	8.00		8,748	£22,788	101.49%



Average Used Values by Sector



For further information on this report contact: bca.co.uk

Tips when buying used cars

According to HPI, taking advice from friends or tips from the wrong people can lead used car buyers to believe common misconceptions. *"No matter how many years go by, we still see many used car buyers falling for the same tricks or believing the same car buying myths, which can see them losing money on vehicles that looked like a bargain,"* says Shane Teskey, Senior Consumer Services Manager of HPI. *"We've taken the top used car buying myths and we're blowing them wide open. Armed with our latest tips, consumers can avoid being duped by used car fraudsters and minimise the risk of throwing their money away on a bad set of wheels."*

Myth 1 -You've paid for it so you own it.

When you've paid the money and have the car and keys in your possession, you are the registered keeper, which makes you the legal owner of the car.

Myth-buster - Not necessarily. Registered keeper is NOT the same as legal owner. If the car is stolen or still on finance, it technically belongs to someone else (the original keeper, or the finance house). You might be the registered keeper, but you are not the legal owner and you stand to lose the car and the money you paid for it.

Myth 2 - It's such a bargain; you'll need to move fast!

A car is advertised at £12,000, but you know it should be worth around £15,000 - that's a real bargain and you need to move fast to snap it up.

Myth-buster - Be suspicious. If you were the seller, would you knock the car down to a bargain price and make less than you could? There's probably something fishy going on. It is very likely that the car is either mechanically very suspect or could even be stolen/cloned. Ask lots of questions, and if you're still unsure, walk away.

Myth 3 - It's illegal to sell a car that's been written-off

A written-off car must be scrapped, and should never be on the road again.

Myth-buster - Wrong. Any vehicle that has been declared a total loss (often referred to as "a write-off") by an insurance company has been done so because the insurer believes it is not economical to repair the vehicle. This may be either because the repair itself outweighs the current value of the vehicle, or the cost of any replacement vehicle for the period would end up outweighing the value of the vehicle. When the vehicle is written off, it is placed into an industry recognised damage classification, depending on its condition. A or B category write-offs are vehicles which it is recommended should have been crushed and never returned to the road, Category C and D vehicles can be returned to the road, but buyers must be sure that they are roadworthy before they drive them.

Myth 4 - Buying at a 'mutually convenient' public location is safe

A seller wants to meet me halfway so I can view the car. We've arranged to meet at a motorway service station. Isn't that kind of them?

Myth-buster - Buyer beware. This is a common ruse used by criminals selling stolen or cloned vehicles. If you're buying privately, you should always view the car at the registered keeper's address, as detailed on the V5. Never buy a car in a service station, a car park, a lay by or a pub car park (unless the seller is the Landlord!)

Myth 5 - A spouse can sell a car on behalf of their wife / husband.

Myth-buster - when buying privately only buy a vehicle from the registered keeper otherwise it is technically classed as stolen as the partner has no legal right to sell the vehicle. Ask for ID and compare it to the V5 documentation. If there are discrepancies you're not happy with, find another vehicle to buy.

Shane Teskey concludes, *"One in 3 vehicles checked with HPI have a hidden history and fraudsters are coming up with new tricks all the time, helping them make a fast profit and leaving buyers severely out of profit. We urge consumers to use their head and always walk away if a deal feels too good to be true - it probably is".*

"Before parting with any cash, consumers should conduct a proper vehicle check, such as the HPI Check. The HPI Check includes a mileage check against the National Mileage Register as standard, which holds over 160 million mileage readings. HPI also confirms whether a vehicle is currently recorded as stolen with the police, has outstanding finance against it or has been written-off, making it the best way for consumers to protect themselves from unscrupulous sellers. In addition, the HPI Check is the only check that comes with a £30,000 Guarantee, in the event of the information it provides being inaccurate, offering added financial peace of mind to used car buyers." www.hpicheck.com

On the same topic MyCarCheck.com has saved millions of people from making an expensive used car mistake. The company reports a 'dramatic rise' in checks flagging up finance issues during 2013 and says this trend is only likely to increase during 2014 as Personal Contract Purchase (PCP) increases in popularity.

Figures from the Finance & Leasing Association (FLA) show that PCP grew by 54% in the new car finance market and 46% in the used car finance market in August 2013 compared to the same month the previous year. By contrast, HP grew by just 1% in the new car market and by 21% in the used car market.

Roger Powell, Divisional Head at CDL Vehicle Information Services (which owns MyCarCheck.com), commented, *"The key thing for used car buyers to recognize is that the registered keeper of a vehicle – the name on the V5C form, the logbook – is not necessarily the legal owner. Unlike a personal loan, under both PCP and HP the finance company often retains legal ownership of the vehicle"*.

"Unfortunately, many motorists presume they are free to sell the vehicle on so long as they keep up the monthly payments. They are not. The car is not theirs to sell and doing so is illegal. Then there are criminals who do this kind of thing deliberately".

"Our business is all about providing up-to-date information to help secondhand car buyers make the right choices. This used to be about confirming if a car had been written-off, stolen or clocked. Today, a major part of what we do is checking that vehicles don't have a finance agreement registered".

www.MyCarCheck.com

Driverless cars

An article by Professor Jim Saker of Loughborough University Business School highlighted that the concept of the driverless car is now firmly on the Government agenda and in the public domain. In July, the Department for Transport announced that driverless cars would be tested on UK roads by the end of this year. The UK announcement follows public trials in other parts of the world. The US is leading the way, with three states – Nevada, Florida and California – all having passed legislation allowing autonomous cars.

Although the idea of driverless cars is not new, it is only since 2000 that the technology has been available to make them viable. So far, Google has led the way with a prototype fleet of Toyota Priuses covering more than 300,000 miles on public roads. The initiatives have concentrated on adapting existing cars, although Ford, BMW, Audi and Volvo among others have started developments that could potentially lead to the production of specialised vehicles for the mass market.

One of the most significant pieces written on the subject was published on November 25 in the New Yorker magazine headlined 'Auto Correct – Has the self-driving car at last arrived?' The author, Burkhard Bilger, starts by berating the current state of driving by saying that 'human beings make terrible drivers. They talk on the phone and run red lights, signal to the left and turn to the right. They drink too much beer and plough into trees or veer into traffic as they swat at their kids... Of the 10 million accidents that Americans are in every year, nine-and-a-half million are their own damn fault.' He argues in support of the technology, quoting Google's product manager for autonomous driving, Anthony Levandowski, who says the Google car drives more defensively than people do, rarely coming within two seconds of the car ahead.

Levandowski argues that the fear of the driverless car is irrational. *"Once you make the car better than the driver, it's almost irresponsible to have him there. Every year we delay the more people will die"*.

The driverless car presents a number of challenges to our industry. If the autonomous car does take off, there are big issues about liability and insurance. If a driverless car can never be responsible for a crash unless the technology fails, will it be the manufacturer who is liable or potentially a dealer who services the vehicle?

As these cars are introduced, we will have a mixed economy on the road, with some vehicles human-driven and others not. The assumption will be that the driven cars will be the accident-causers and insurance premiums will rise.

From a dealer perspective, the driverless car could potentially be programmed to dutifully turn up for its regulation service whether the 'passive driver' wanted it or not.

The technology exists and some of it is already available in the UK, with a number of the upmarket brands offering cars with collision avoidance technology and automatic braking. The automatic parking of cars has been available for some time on mid-range vehicles.

The difficulty with the concept is the rationale behind the Government thinking. They see it as a way of improving safety, but also reducing congestion. This is the part that is difficult to understand. By having safety-first cars all leaving the same distance between each other, the need for more roads will be inevitable. Traffic flows would slow to allow for greater margins of error. One of the ways in which our cities continue to move is by people making decisions to take alternative routes to avoid congestion. I am sure that a computer is quite capable of plotting an alternative route, but if it relies on the current level of satellite navigation technology linked to postcodes I fear we could all end up in cul de sacs with the autonomous vehicle refusing to turn around. Humans have a capacity to adapt that computers do not.

Car makers 'need to plan for car-less cities'

Here is another even more extreme view about the future. Tackling the pollution and congestion problems of global cities as they expand will be as important to car makers as it is to city planners and governments according to Dr Robin Daniels, chief executive of smart mobility experts, Magma Innovations. He says, *"In December Madrid announced that 24 major streets are to be 'radically overhauled', with car lanes removed, bike lanes added and trees planted to make them cool and shady," and this will lead to a new hierarchy in which pedestrians come first, then public transport, then bikes, then cars. Overall, 66 per cent of the affected street surface in Madrid will be given over to people on foot. Meanwhile the automotive OEMs are, by their own admission, struggling to define their role in these integrated and connected cities of the future"*.

He highlighted the issues facing the industry after comments by Ford CEO Alan Mulally during the recent Detroit Motor Show in which he indicated that Ford would look to play a bigger role in public transport vehicles and integrated transport solutions.

Daniels said, *"While Ford's own role is far from clear, Mr Mulally said that more cars are certainly not the answer to cities' problems of pollution, congestion and the associated economic impact. A combination of legislation, public opinion and hard commercial realities will mean that only those car companies who tackle this head-on, will survive in anything like their current form"*

"Those car companies who recognise that they have a potential role in the provision and delivery of transport as a service and in mixed-use, multi-modal solutions, will come out on top. It's not simply about protecting their current position, but leading the way in the multi-trillion dollar global future-cities sector."

With Madrid's government reporting a 2.5 per cent reduction in car use during 2012, the writing appears to be on the wall.

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Insurance Documents No Longer Needed To Tax Cars

Motorists are no longer required to have their insurance documents inspected before receiving a tax disc. Why? Because this occasional check has been replaced by the Continuous Enforcement Scheme. This enables the Driver Vehicle Licensing Agency to check for compliance regularly by cross referencing the Registered Keeper Database with the Motor Insurance Database. If a car is uninsured its keeper receives a reminder in the post. This is the chance to comply without penalty.

However, if no action is taken the offender receives a one hundred pound fixed penalty notice. This, in turn, can be followed by clamping, impounding and/or prosecution. Court penalties include points on the licence, a fine and disqualification. Furthermore, the Continuous Enforcement Scheme minimises the benefit of a popular scam. This requires the motorist to purchase motor insurance so that he/she receives official documents through the post/online. The crook then cancels the policy, claims a refund and retains the paperwork that – until now – could be used to tax a vehicle. So, whereas this documentation still has merit it is of far less value to those with unscrupulous intentions.

The Continuous Enforcement Scheme is part of a package to remove red tape. Let us consider the other elements. Motorists that own vehicles that are not in use must – as has been the case for years – complete a Statutory Off Road Notification (SORN). However, this is now a one-off rather than an annual process. Vehicles simply remain legally off the road until taxed, sold or scrapped. Furthermore, the paper tax disc for windcreens will be consigned to history from October 2014.

But this will not be the end of Vehicle Excise Duty - so motorists will continue to pay to keep cars on the road. This initiative will come into effect for two reasons.

Firstly, the paper disc is simply a receipt that can be checked by the police to ensure vehicles are taxed. But this paper trail is superfluous as vehicles are monitored by a camera system that determines – via registration plates – whether the tax has been paid. The Driver Vehicle Licensing Agency complements such checks via a monthly scan of its database then sends fines to non-compliers. Furthermore, the government has confirmed that drivers will soon be able to pay road tax by direct debit which should make life simpler for millions of people.