



Drivetrain problems to the fore in Motor Ombudsman figures

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Drivetrain components top causes of service and repair disputes brought to The Motor Ombudsman in Q1...



- Vehicle drivetrain components were the source of more than half (58%) of the service and repair disputes brought by customers to The Motor Ombudsman in the first quarter of this year
- Problems with a vehicle's bodywork, and parts associated with the chassis, were responsible for causing 18% and 11% respectively of the consumer complaints logged with the Ombudsman between January and March 2021
- Over a third of individuals (37%) stated that they ideally wanted a full refund as their ideal form of resolution to their dispute with an accredited business



London, 27 April 2021 The Motor Ombudsman, the Ombudsman dedicated to the automotive sector, has reported that faults and failures associated with a drivetrain component of a vehicle were the cause of the majority of service and repair disputes submitted by consumers to its Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) service during the first quarter of 2021.

Where a customer specified the mechanical part they deemed to be the problem, more than half (58%) were related to the vehicle's drivetrain, a minimal decrease on last year's figure of 59% for the same January to March period. Within the drivetrain category, the intake manifold was the biggest area of concern with nearly a fifth (18%) of individuals stating that they had a problem with this component, taking over from the timing chain, which was the main bone of contention during the opening quarter of 2020. Issues with the car's battery (7%), turbo (7%) and oil pump (7%), which included quality concerns and failures, contributed to just over 20% of the drivetrain-related disputes which were logged with The Motor Ombudsman at the beginning of this year.

Concerns with a car's exterior were the second largest source of service and repair disputes brought to The Motor Ombudsman by consumers at 18% overall. Mirroring the trend at the start of the 2020, the quality of the paintwork emerged once again as the most significant bodywork problem in the first quarter of 2021. However, it encouragingly accounted for a smaller percentage of the concerns raised by consumers in this category, down from 41% in the first three months of 2020, to 27% for the same period this year.

Tyres were the principal driver of the chassis issues reported by consumers, making up 42% of complaints in this category versus 69% in the opening quarter of 2020. This component failing and not being fit for purpose were amongst the reasons for customers filing a complaint, with alloy wheels leading to a further 23% of chassis disputes that were brought to the attention of The Motor Ombudsman between January and March 2021, up from 16% a year earlier.



From the individuals who specified their preferred form of resolution to bring their dispute to a close, over a third (37%) requested a full refund for a service, or repair work that had been carried out on their vehicle, with more than a quarter (29%) wanting a free-of-charge repair to put right perceived diagnosis or workmanship issues. Furthermore, the average consumer claim value for a service and repair dispute stood at just over £2,000 in the first quarter, up around £450 from the figure seen during the opening months of 2021.

Bill Fennell, Chief Ombudsman and Managing Director of the Motor Ombudsman, said: “With a car made up of a multitude of components and moving parts, the service and repair complaints that we receive from consumers vary significantly in both their scope and complexity. Identifying the key trends of what is causing disputes across our Codes of Practice, and sharing what we are seeing across the automotive sector, is one of our main roles as an Ombudsman. This ultimately allows us to feed back this data to the industry and help our accredited businesses to make further improvements with their products, services and processes for the benefit of consumers.”

For more information on The Motor Ombudsman’s Motor Industry Code of Practice for Service and Repair, visit TheMotorOmbudsman.org/consumers/our-codes-of-practice/service-repair-code.

Sources of vehicle issues and consumer complaints during the first quarter of 2021 Table 1.

Type of issue reported by consumer	Percentage of overall service and repair issues reported by consumers in Q1 2021
1. Drivetrain	58%
2. Vehicle exterior	18%



3. Chassis	11%
4. Electrical systems	7%
5. Vehicle interior	4%
6. Security	1%
7. Vehicle accessories	1%

Table 2.

Type of issue reported by consumer	Component(s) causing the largest proportion of disputes by issue type
1. Drivetrain	Intake manifold (18%)
2. Vehicle exterior	Paintwork (27%)
3. Chassis	Tyres (42%)
4. Electrical systems	Head unit / infotainment and satellite navigation system / wiring loom (25% each)
5. Vehicle interior	Seats (35%)
6. Security	Keys (43%)
7. Vehicle accessories	Parking sensor (50%)



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The Motor Ombudsman is the fully impartial Ombudsman dedicated solely to the automotive sector, and self-regulates the UK's motor industry through its comprehensive Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI)-approved Codes of Practice. Thousands of businesses, including vehicle manufacturers, warranty product providers, franchised dealers and independent garages, are accredited to one or more of the Codes, which drive even higher standards of work and service, and give consumers added protection, peace of mind and trust during the vehicle purchase and

ownership experience. For more information on The Motor Ombudsman, visit www.TheMotorOmbudsman.org.