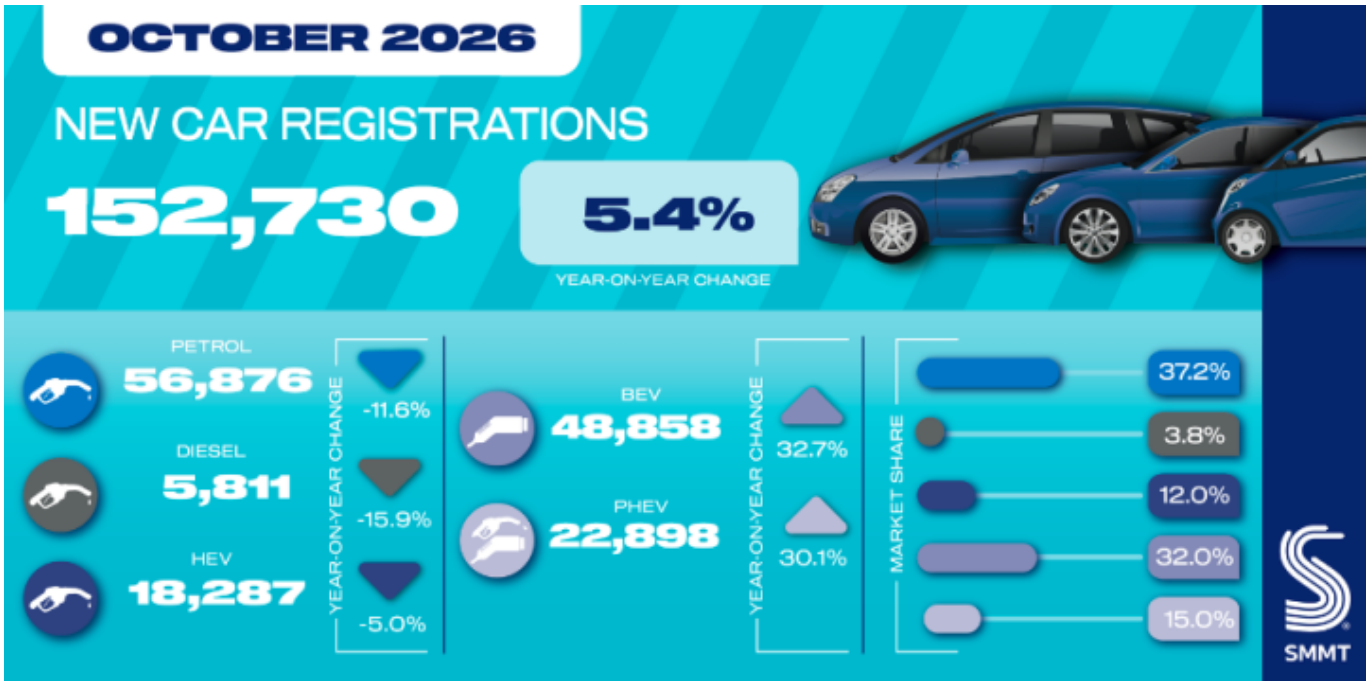
October 2026 new car registrations climb – for now

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Robin Roberts (and WheelsWithinWales) reports...

The UK new car market rose 5.4% to 152,730 registrations in October, according to the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders.

The performance marks the 11th consecutive increase, albeit at around half the growth rate seen across the first 10 months of the year after a bumper number-plate change September.

Growth was recorded across all sales types. Fleet registrations rose 5.4% to 89,985 units, accounting for 58.9% of the market, while private demand increased 4.1% to 58,229 units and a 38.1% share. Business registrations climbed 24.5% to 4,516 units.

In Wales, registrations went up just 3.6% to 5,217 new models with the MG HS topping demand over the Ford Puma and Vauxhall Corsa.

Plug-in hybrid (PHEV) and battery electric (BEV) cars accounted for all of the growth. PHEV registrations rose 30.1% to take a 15.0% market share, while BEV deliveries increased by 32.7% to secure 32.0% – their highest share this year as manufacturers intensified efforts to bring registrations closer to the annual mandated target, repeating the pattern of the previous two years.

Hybrid (HEV) volumes declined for a second month, down -5.0%, but, together, electrified cars accounted for almost six in 10 (59.0%) registrations.

More than half a million (503,805) BEVs have been registered this year, up 30.4% on a year ago. Manufacturers are backing the transition with major investments in technologies, factories and workforces worldwide, including £14.3 billion committed to UK EV manufacturing since 2020.

That investment has delivered more than 180 BEV models to the current market, offering an average range in excess of 300 miles on a single charge.

Manufacturers need to make a return on such investments to fund future products and jobs. Yet the ZEV Mandate targets were set in very different global and domestic economic conditions, and manufacturers have since been forced to spend billions on discounts, low and 0% finance, deposit contributions and even subsidised charging to incentivise sales beyond underlying demand.

Doing so on brand new electric models undermines the UK’s attractiveness as a market and manufacturing location, eroding profitability, with a long-term consumer detriment as lower trade-in values leave owners less able to afford their next car.

Despite the billions in incentives, including government’s Electric Car Grant, BEV share is expected to reach 27.2% this year against the 33% ZEV Mandate target, according to the

latest market outlook.

The gap is also set to widen next year with a 32% share expected against a 38% target. By 2028, BEV share is expected to reach 37.5% – 14.5 percentage points behind the 52% mandated, more than double this year's shortfall.

The industry is therefore urging government to make substantive changes to the targets, revising them down so they better reflect demand, alongside full flexibilities throughout the regulation to bridge the remaining gap. Last week's Budget contained little to drive the market.

Indeed, the confirmation of a new EV-specific tax (eVED) from 2028 and proposed regulation to retain VAT on public charging at 20% while domestic use is currently VAT-free sends mixed messages to consumers. Policy must make switching easy, with long-term certainty on grants and other incentives, disincentives removed, and public charging made cheaper and more accessible. A healthy market is vital to decarbonisation and to the UK's £85 billion automotive industrial base on which 188,000 jobs depend.

Mike Hawes, SMMT Chief Executive, said, "Almost one in three new cars registered in October was electric – great progress in the transition, but one that comes at enormous cost.

The industry and government are spending billions to help drivers switch, but that support cannot be sustained indefinitely with the gap to mandated targets set to more than double by 2028, just as a new EV-only tax is introduced. Higher targets may force supply, but they do not create demand. The ZEV Mandate review must deliver substantive reform effective immediately to ensure we have a healthy market and an attractive pitch to investors."

Dealers see this as a good sign.

'The latest figures are a positive sign for franchised dealers, with sustained activity in showrooms helping to support confidence across the sector,' said Sue Robinson, Chief

Executive of National Franchised Dealers Association.

Private registrations rose by 4.1% to 58,229 units, reflecting continued consumer demand, while fleet registrations increased by 5.4% to 89,985 units. Business registrations rose by 24.5% to 4,516 units, contributing to the overall performance of the market.

UK top ten	October registrations	Wales top ten
Jaecoo 7		MG HS
Ford Puma		Ford Puma
VW Golf		Vauxhall Corsa
Mini Countryman		MG S9
Kia Sportage		Hyundai Tucson
Mini Cooper		Jaecoo 7
Nissan Qashqai		Mini Countryman
MG HS		Kia Sportage
Audi A3		BYD Sealion 5
Jaecoo 5		Peugeot 2008