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UK Car Sales August 2026

Published: September 4, 2026
Author:
Online version: https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/uk-car-sales-august-2026/

UK production line; SMMT image.

Robin Roberts (and WheelsWithinWales) writes…

It has again been a very strong month for BEVs, and Kia has led the way as it prepares to launch its new small EV2 series.

The New Automotive Electric Car Count indicates:
– Strongest August for BEV registrations: BEVs captured 30% of all new car registrations in August 2026, with sales surging 30% year-on-year – spurred in part by shifting fuel market dynamics.
– Record Month for Electric Vans: BEV vans reached an all-time high 17% market share, comfortably outperforming the real-world ZEV Mandate target of 15.7%.

– ZEV Mandate Surplus: Strong year-to-date BEV performance (25.5% vs. the 24.6% effective target) has generated a significant system-wide surplus of compliance credits, led by brands like Tesla and BYD.
– Top Brand Rankings: Kia retained the top spot for monthly BEV registrations for the second consecutive month, with electric vehicles representing a record 45% of its total registrations.

August registrations were actually the highest since the two-plate system was introduced with a boost of 13.7%, said the SMMT this morning.

Registrations reached 94,236 last month with fleets taking 10.1% more to 57.2%, private business accounted for 40.8%, a 19% jump on the same month last year.

PHEV rose the most to 14.5%, hybrids 12.7% and BEVs soaked up 29.8%.

Wales enjoyed the biggest rise in registrations last month by 23.6% to 3,070 new cars.

Best sellers in August in UK & Wales

Ford Puma	MG HS
Jaecoo 7	Ford Puma
MG HS	Kia Sportage
Jaecoo 5	MG ZS
Kia Sportage	Qashqai
Omoda 5	Omoda 5
Mini Cooper	Hyundai Tucson

Ford Kuga	Toyota Aygo X
MB CLA	Ford Kuga
Vauxhall Frontera	Kia Picanto

Despite the rising number of low emission vehicles, their percentage overall remains well below the Government's 33% mandate and this is causing concerns in the Treasury, Environment Department and manufacturers' boardrooms.

Welcoming the August boost, the SMMT boss Mike Hawes said the real test will come with this month's registrations and the industry still needed the public to feel confident facing charging network and financial support or incentives. The Government's decision to take another look at the zero mandate is also a key factor to future growth.

The news comes just a week after the SMMT revealed that new car production was down in July and before the seasonal shutdown throughout the industry in August.

- UK vehicle production down -11.6% in July to 63,655 units, driven by weaker exports and summer shutdown timings.
- Car production falls -10.6% while CV output declines -34.4%.
- Electrified model production records first rise of the year with four in 10 cars built either EV or hybrid.
- Sector welcomes ZEV Mandate review, calling for meaningful reform alongside action on energy costs and trade threats to safeguard UK investments.
The decline reflects weaker exports, down -15.9% to 47,377 units, as well as earlier scheduling of routine summer maintenance shutdowns at some plants.

SMMT chief executive Mike Hawes said, "Output could still reach one million units by the turn of the decade, but only if the UK addresses its competitiveness and secures fresh model investment.

Government's recently launched ZEV Mandate review is welcome, providing an opportunity to make meaningful reforms to the regulation that, with stronger market enablers, would help reduce the high cost of selling EVs in the UK, which is currently a major deterrent for global investors."

Structural reform of industrial energy costs is also needed as, despite the forthcoming British Industrial Competitiveness Scheme (BICS), they will remain some 60% higher than Europe's. At the same time, government must address the double threat to UK-EU automotive trade posed by the European Commission's 'Made in the EU' proposals, which could make UK-produced vehicles uncompetitive in European markets, as well as the tougher rules of origin requirements under the EU-UK TCA – the Brexit deal – which come into force in January.