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May sees worst increase in price of petrol in at least 18 years

Motorists suffered the worst monthly rise in the average price of petrol in at least 18 years* with 6p a litre being added at the pumps in May, new [RAC Fuel Watch](#) data reveals.

Unleaded shot up from 123.43p to 129.41p, taking the cost of filling up a 55-litre family car to £71.18 – an increase of £3.29 in just one month.

While the average price of a litre of diesel endured a slightly greater monthly increase of 6.12p – from 126.27p to 132.39p – it was the second worst rise

since the start of 2000, as it was fortunately some way behind the 8.43p increase seen 10 years ago in May 2008 (120.83p to 129.26p). The May 2018 rise has made the cost of a tank of diesel for a family car £3.37 more expensive at £72.81.

The RAC Fuel Watch data also shows the average prices of both petrol and diesel have gone up every single day since 22 April, adding 8p a litre in the process – the longest sustained price increase since March 2015.

In May the big four supermarkets raised petrol by 5.49p a litre and diesel by 5.88p while on the motorway, service stations added 6.37p to unleaded, taking it to 144.75p a litre, and 6.69p to diesel making it an eye-watering 147.80p a litre – 15p a litre above average UK prices for both fuels.

The forecourt increases have been driven by a jump in the price of oil, coupled with a weakening of the pound against the dollar. Oil broke through the \$80 a barrel mark twice in May – something which has not been seen for three and a half years (since 12 November 2014).

Overall, May saw a 3% increase in the price of a barrel of oil (from \$74.31 to \$76.39) and a 2% drop in the value of the pound against the dollar (\$1.35 to \$1.33), making the wholesale price for retailers more expensive as fuel, like oil, is traded in dollars.

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RAC fuel spokesman Simon Williams said: “May was a hellish month for motorists. Sadly, they have been besieged by pump price rises for three months with nearly 9p a litre being added to petrol since the beginning of March.

“The rising oil price together with a weaker pound is a punitive combination for anyone that drives regularly. For many people there is little alternative to the car for the majority of journeys they have to make so it is therefore very difficult to avoid feeling the pinch of rising pump prices.

“In the last week of May the oil price cooled a little to \$76 a barrel which is slightly better news for motorists as the RAC’s two-week forecast is currently showing that average prices may even reduce by a penny or so. While this isn’t much, and could easily change in response to oil trading this week, it is at least a sign that the constant rise in forecourt prices may have stopped for the time being.

“Looking at the bigger picture, there is talk that OPEC – the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries – may agree at its meeting on 22 June in Vienna to change its tack of restricting oil supply. The group, together with Russia, have been limiting production with a view to removing the long-term oil glut. This strategy has been successful and, as intended, caused the barrel price to rise. If a decision is taken to increase supply it may provide some much-needed relief for motorists at the pumps in the UK.”

Regional fuel price variation

The North West experienced the biggest rise in petrol prices with a litre going up 5.98p in May to 128.72p. Northern Ireland saw the smallest increase at 5.07p a litre, although unusually their unleaded was not the cheapest in the UK as that honour went instead to the North East with a litre costing 128.24p at the end of May. The South East once again was the most expensive place to buy petrol with a litre averaging 129.83p.

Looking at diesel, drivers in Wales endured the greatest increase on the forecourt with a litre jumping by 6.07p to 132.03p. The North East and South East had the smallest rise at 5.66p, but a litre of diesel in the South East is the most expensive in the UK at 132.73p.

Regional average unleaded pump prices**

Unleaded	01/05/2018	30/05/2018	Change
UK average	123.43	129.14	5.71
North West	122.74	128.72	5.98
East Midlands	123.24	129.20	5.96
Yorkshire And The Humber	122.57	128.42	5.85
West Midlands	122.99	128.80	5.81
Scotland	123.21	129.01	5.80
South West	123.55	129.35	5.80
Wales	123.18	128.88	5.70
South East	124.19	129.83	5.64
East	123.88	129.43	5.55
London	124.22	129.74	5.52
North East	123.09	128.24	5.15
Northern Ireland	123.32	128.39	5.07

Regional average diesel pump prices**

Diesel	01/05/2018	30/05/2018	Change
UK average	126.27	132.06	5.79
Wales	125.96	132.03	6.07
Scotland	126.40	132.35	5.95
South West	126.48	132.33	5.85
Yorkshire And The Humber	125.46	131.28	5.82
East	126.74	132.54	5.80
North West	125.92	131.72	5.80
West Midlands	125.73	131.53	5.80
Northern Ireland	125.31	131.05	5.74
East Midlands	126.23	131.91	5.68
London	126.90	132.57	5.67

North East	125.65	131.31	5.66
South East	127.07	132.73	5.66

Notes to Editors

* UK average fuel prices quoted in the RAC Fuel Watch May 2018 report are based on Experian Catalist data from 1 to 31 May 2018. RAC Fuel Watch began tracking prices from January 2000.

** Regional fuel price data was analysed from 1 to 30 May 2018.

About the RAC

First formed in 1897, the RAC has been looking after the needs of its members and championing the interests of motorists for more than 120 years.

Today it has more than eight million members and is one of the UK's most progressive motoring organisations, providing services for both private and business motorists. Whether it's [roadside assistance](#), [insurance](#), [buying a used car](#), [vehicle inspections and checks](#), [legal services](#) or up-to-the-minute [traffic and travel information](#) – the RAC offers a solution for all motoring needs. The RAC is committed to making motoring easier, safer, more affordable and more enjoyable for drivers and road users.

The RAC is the motorist's champion and campaigns to support the interests of its members and UK motorists at a national level. This includes voicing concerns about the increasing cost of motoring, particularly the price of fuel and the high level of tax levied on it, advancing levels of road safety, and supporting the needs of all drivers, from young to old.

The RAC's annual [Report on Motoring](#) – first published in 1989 – is one of a kind and provides a clear insight into the concerns and issues facing today's motorists.

For the very latest news on UK fuel prices, check [RAC Fuel Watch](#). It provides a comprehensive guide to the latest UK unleaded petrol and diesel prices – both at the wholesale level and at the pump - and tracks these prices daily to

help drivers check if the price they pay to fill up is a fair one.

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