



Image: Getty

Dec 07, 2020 00:00 GMT

Sales of pure electric cars double in 2020 at diesel and petrol's expense

Despite the pandemic, more than twice the number of battery electric vehicles have so far been sold this year compared to the whole of 2019 while fewer than half the number of diesel cars were sold this year, RAC analysis of new industry data shows.*

Between January and November 2020, figures from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) show that 86,291 pure electric cars were registered, up from 37,850 during the whole of 2019. Diesel sales, while still

substantially higher, fell sharply over the same period – down 58%, from 583,488 in 2019 to just 246,389 so far this year.

Compared to November 2019, sales of battery electric cars more than doubled last month – from 4,652 to 10,345 (122% increase). Sales of battery electrics represented 5.8% of all vehicles registered in 2020 compared to 1.6% last year. The RAC estimates that since 2010 a total of 185,137 pure electric cars have been registered for use on the UK's roads, along with 223,384 plug-in hybrid cars.

When looking at battery electric and plug-in hybrid sales together, a similarly striking picture emerges. November saw more plug-in electrified vehicles sold than diesel ones (18,062 compared to 15,925). This is the first month this has happened, excluding April 2020 when dealer activity all but ceased as a result of the first coronavirus restrictions.

RAC data insight spokesman Rod Dennis said:

“We may well now be reaching a watershed moment when it comes to new car sales in the UK – taking the anomalous month of April aside when dealers were forced to shut because of the pandemic, November saw more plug-in cars registered than diesel cars. The rise in demand for plug-in electrified vehicles appears to partly be taking place at petrol and diesel's expense, with the latter as a result of concerns over harmful nitrogen dioxide emissions.

“As we move beyond the pandemic, 2021 is set to be a critically important year when it comes to understanding the appetite drivers have for ‘going electric’. With more electric cars coming onto the market, it will be interesting to see if this rise in sales will be sustained or whether the negative economic outlook has the unfortunate effect of quelling demand.

“The rise in the number of battery electric cars on our roads is also now beginning to translate into more breakdowns for our patrols to deal with. Fortunately, we are well positioned to cope with this demand as 80 of our patrol vans are now fitted with [lightweight mobile charging units](#) for drivers who reach a faulty charge point or who run out of charge for any other reason. In the event an electric car or an SUV needs to be recovered, half of all our patrol vans are equipped with our market-leading [‘all-wheels-up’ recovery system](#).”

Track the UK's progress towards zero-emissions driving in charts using [the RAC's 'Road to Electric' webpage](#).

Notes to Editors

The press office email address is press.enquiries@rac.co.uk. **Please note:** the press office is unable to help with individual customer enquiries - please visit the [RAC contacts page](#) to find the right contact.

ISDN radio studio facilities are available for interviews Monday to Friday.

About the RAC

The RAC provides complete peace of mind to 12m UK private and business drivers, whatever their motoring needs. Its services include:

- **[Breakdown assistance](#)**. Its highly-skilled, 1,600-strong branded patrol workforce attends more than two million breakdowns every year, fixing on average four out of five vehicles at the roadside. The RAC's patrol fleet is one of the most advanced in the UK, and was the first to roll out both an [All-Wheels-Up recovery system](#), allowing the vast majority of vehicles to be recovered from a single patrol van, and [EV Boost](#) mobile electric vehicle charging units
- **[Insurance](#)**. The RAC is a top-five [car insurance](#) broker having surpassed the 500,000 policies-in-force milestone in 2018. It also offers ['black box' telematics policies](#), as well as home and travel insurance
- **[Other motoring services](#)**. The RAC leads in the development of new solutions for business, fleets, electric vehicles and future car technology. Its additional products and services include a [personal loans offering](#), a [used car buying website](#), [vehicle inspections and checks](#), [legal services](#) or up-to-the-minute [traffic and travel information](#). It also has a network of [Approved Dealers](#) and [Approved Garages](#) which combine the trust of RAC brand with local service and convenience

The RAC also works to support the interests of its members and UK drivers on the most important motoring issues which it identifies via the annual [RAC Report on Motoring](#) and the RAC Opinion Panel. The Report on Motoring is the longest running analysis of driver opinion in the UK having been published every year since 1989.

For more information about the RAC, visit the [RAC website](#).

Contacts



RAC Press Office

Press Contact

press.office@rac.co.uk

Emails monitored during normal office hours. For breakdown queries, call 0330 159 0740

ISDN number on request