

New car registrations soar 674% compared with same time last year

New car registrations soared by 674% in May compared with the same month last year, when the UK was in the midst of a strict lockdown and showrooms were shut.

But compared to May 2019, before the pandemic struck, new registrations are down by 14.7%, and 13.2% on the 10-year May average, according to data from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT).

Nearly 14% of all new cars registered this year have been electric or hybrid models, according to industry figures, a number that has been steadily rising.

There were 156,737 new cars registered in May, the first full month this year that showrooms have been open.

Sales were driven by business fleet demand, and were in line with the most recent industry outlook, published in April, which predicted that the sector would see about 1.86 million registrations by the end of 2021.

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There have been a total of 723,845 registrations so far this year.

“With dealerships back open and a brighter, sunnier, economic outlook, May’s registrations are as good as could reasonably be expected,” said Mike Hawes, chief executive of the SMMT.

“Increased business confidence is driving the recovery, something that needs to be maintained and translated into private consumer demand as the economy emerges from pandemic support measures,” he said.