

Monthly Market Intelligence

The latest insight from the UK's largest new and used car platform.

MARCH 2026

 Autotrader

Used and new car market off to a solid Q1 as buyers remain engaged.

New car registrations



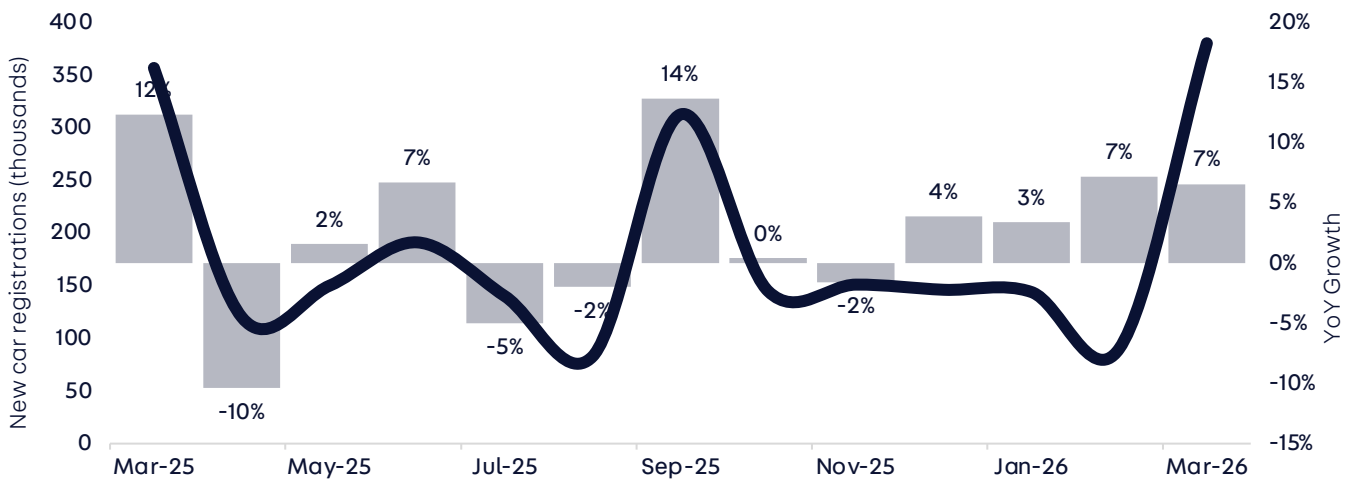
March new car registrations increased 7%, reaching their highest level since 2019. Q1 rose 6% YoY, narrowing the gap to 2019 levels to just 12% below. Private registrations, which had seen little growth since the pandemic, rose 10% in Q1, while fleet grew 3%. Electric cars saw the highest ever volume month but remain below ambitions at a 22% Q1 share. Meanwhile, PHEVs continued their strong run, jumping 47% to secure a 13% share.

380,627

New car reg. (SMMT)

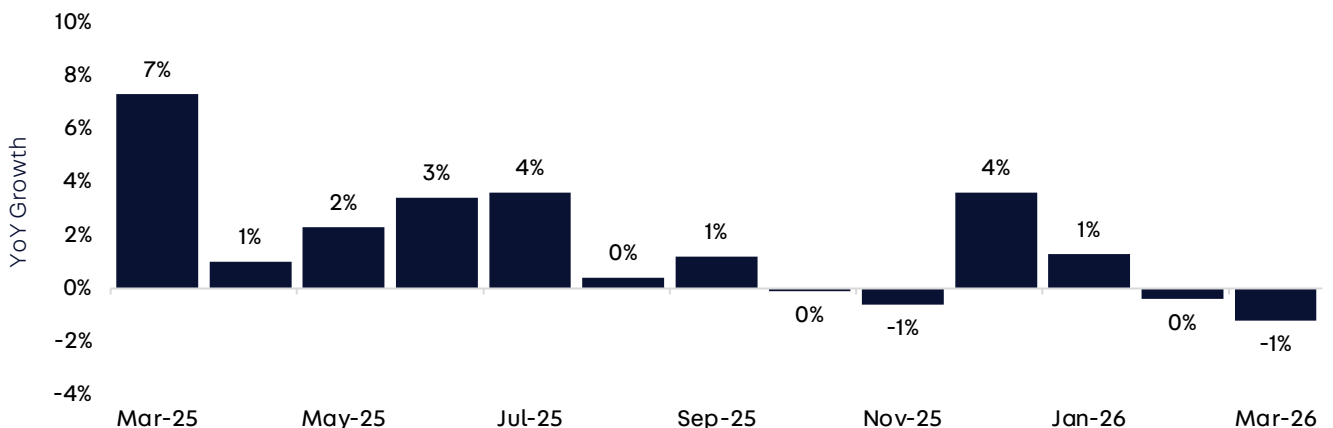
+6.6%

(vs. March 2025)



Used car sales (Year-on-year)

Used car transactions fell slightly, down 1% YoY, with Q1 overall flat based on stock removed from Autotrader*. In Q1, Franchises dipped 1% YoY while Independents rose 1%, a performance comparable with last year's stronger Independent growth. Electric cars had a strong quarter, with transactions up 39%. March was particularly healthy, rising 54% YoY and accounting for just under 1 in 10 sales, the highest share on record.

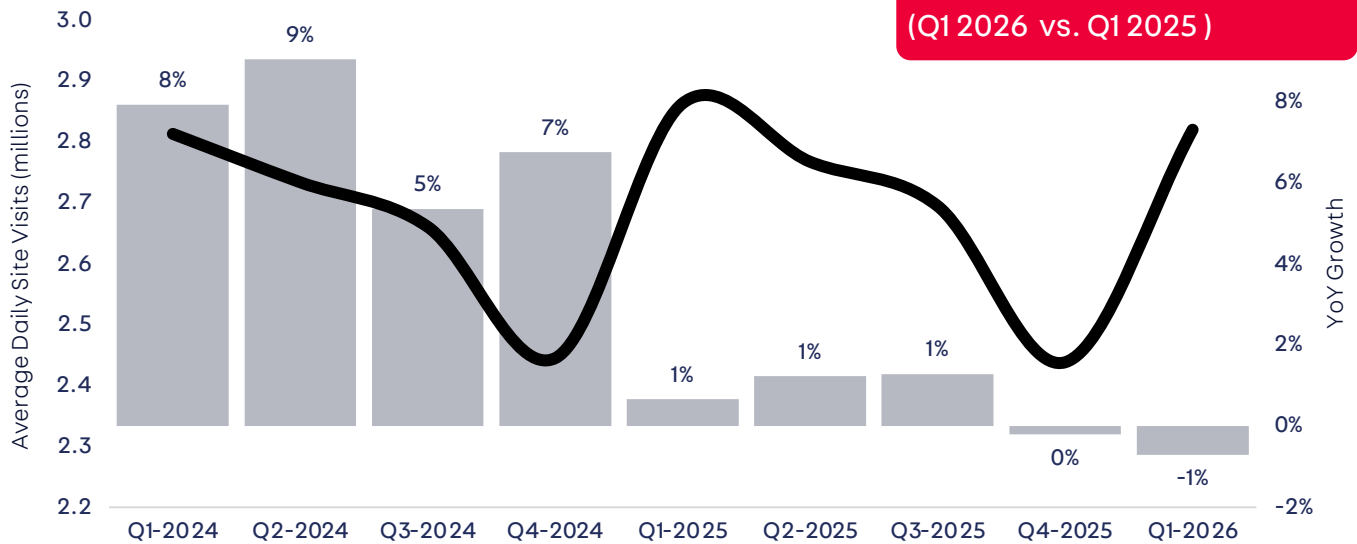


*Data based on vehicles removed from Autotrader. We assume that the vehicle is sold on the last day we saw it on our site. Strong historical correlation to official SMMT used car transactions and retailer data. Ongoing improvements to the data means historic figures may change slightly each month.

Site visits to Autotrader remain resilient, down just 1% in Q1 against a strong prior year, and 1% above Q1 2024 and 7% ahead of Q1 2023. Engagement continues to hold up despite external pressures, including geopolitical tensions and a dip in GfK consumer confidence to -21 (down 2pts YoY). Importantly, purchase intent remains strong, with 73% of consumers planning to buy within six months¹.

Autotrader site visits

Average daily site visits, year-on-year



New car activity

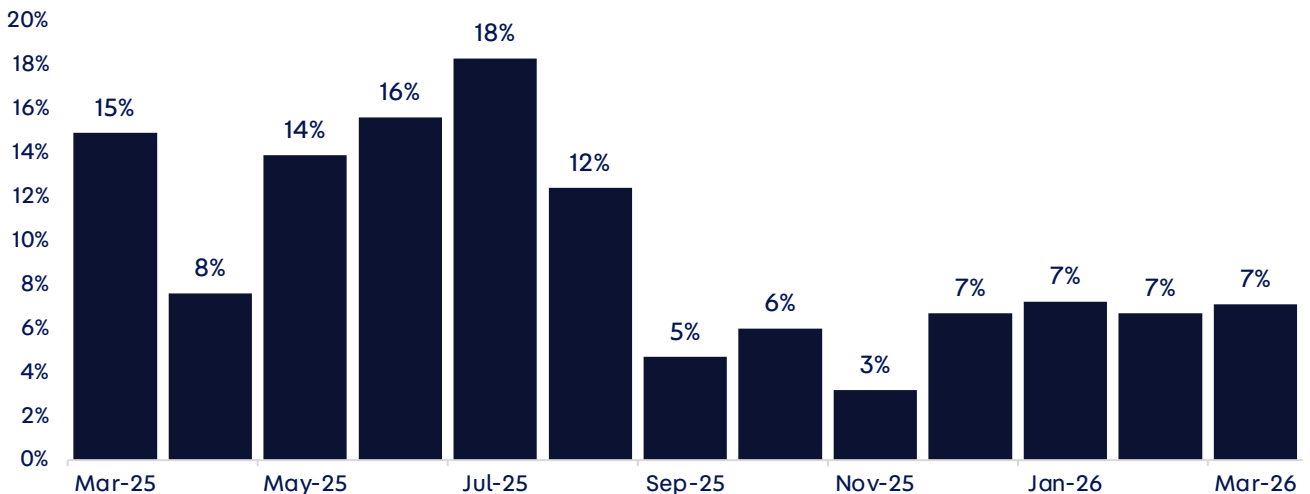
New car visits rose 7% YoY supported by retailers boosting stock visibility during the Q1 plate change. Discounts intensified, reaching 10.9% amid growing competition for private buyers. Most fuel types saw higher year-on-year discounting, except plug-in hybrids at 8.7%, while EVs led at 12.8%, helping lift their enquiry share to nearly 1 in 4 - its highest level in recent years.

+7%
New car visits (vs. Mar 2025)
-0% MoM

24%
EV lead share
+3.1ppts MoM

Autotrader new car visits*

Year-on-year



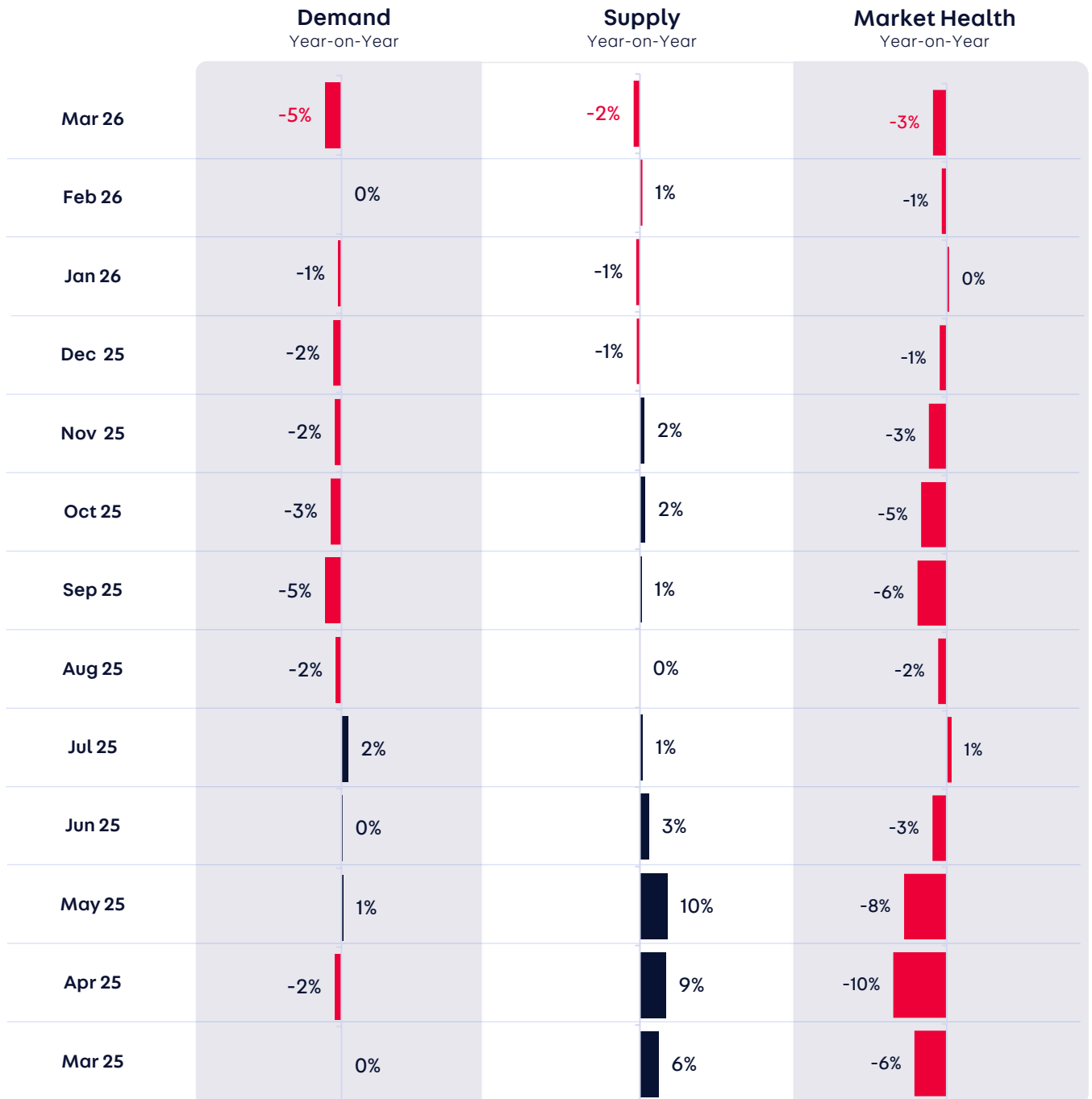
*Please note some previous months have been revised to reflect updated data and ensure accuracy

¹Source: Autotrader Consumer Survey Data (n=1561)

The overall market is steady, but with rising petrol prices electric has seen significant growth with demand rising 49% MoM and 30% YoY. March is typically the fastest selling month of the year, and this trend continues, with cars moving as quickly as last year on 25 days, led by petrol and full/mild hybrids on 24 days - highlighting the continued strength of traditional fuel types alongside surging EVs.



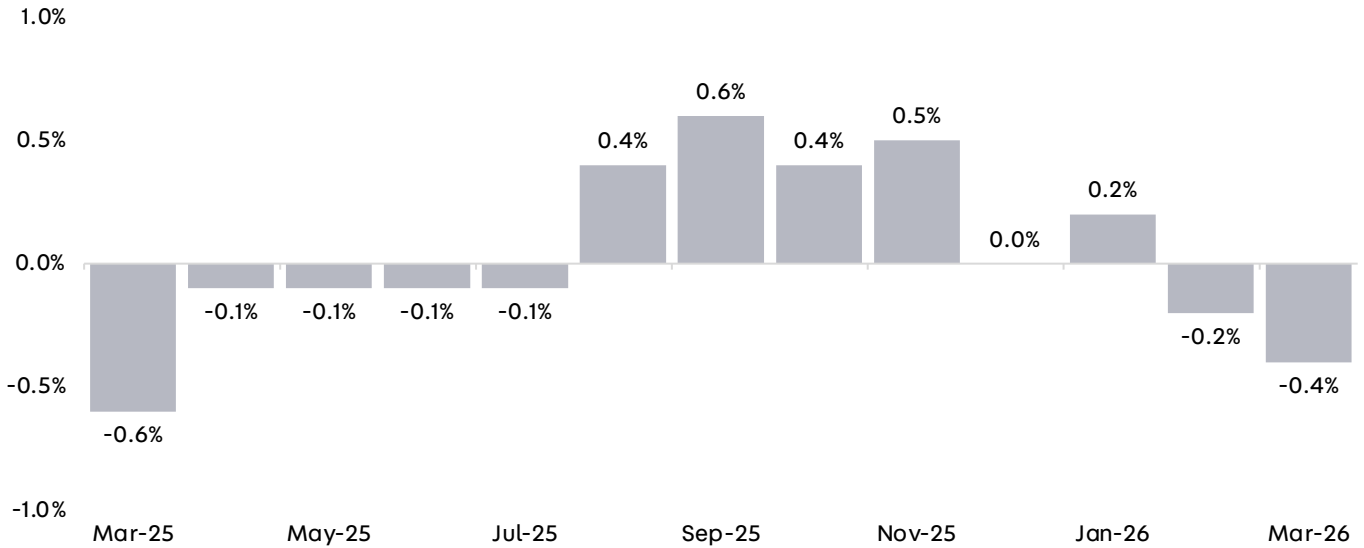
The Market Health metric shows the ratio of supply vs. demand compared to the previous year



Used car prices showed continued stability, slightly down -0.4% YoY. ICE cars remain resilient, delivering positive price growth, while EVs have entered a third month of softening after Q4 returning stock placed downward pressure on pricing. Rising supply within younger age cohorts is continuing to weigh on prices, whereas older cars (10+ years) are seeing strong price growth, driven by sustained demand.

Year-on-year used car retail price growth

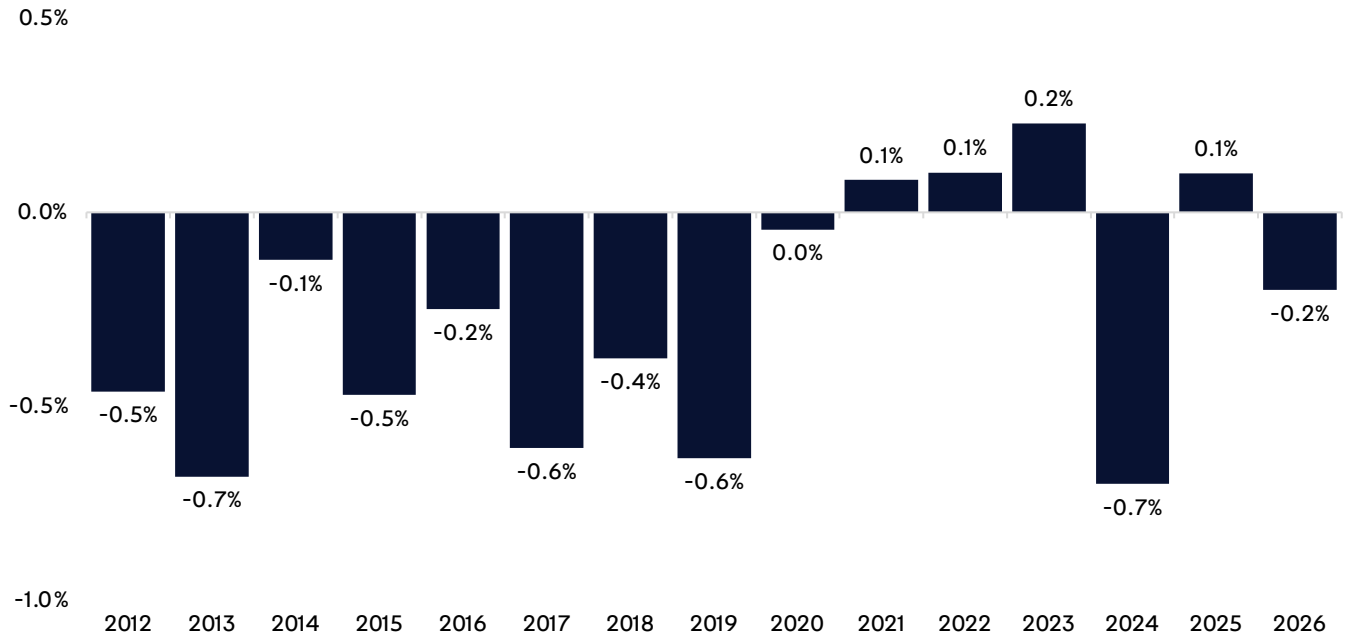
Like-for-like basis



March's pricing behaviour marked a return to pre-pandemic norms. Pre-2020, prices declined -0.4% on average (2011-2019), vs -0.1% post-pandemic (2020-2026). All age cohorts reflect this trend, returning to softer pricing adjustments in 2026. Most fuel types also follow this pattern, but EVs diverge, with larger declines (-1.3% pre vs -1.5% post), and a -1.3% movement in 2026 as they deviate from the overall market.

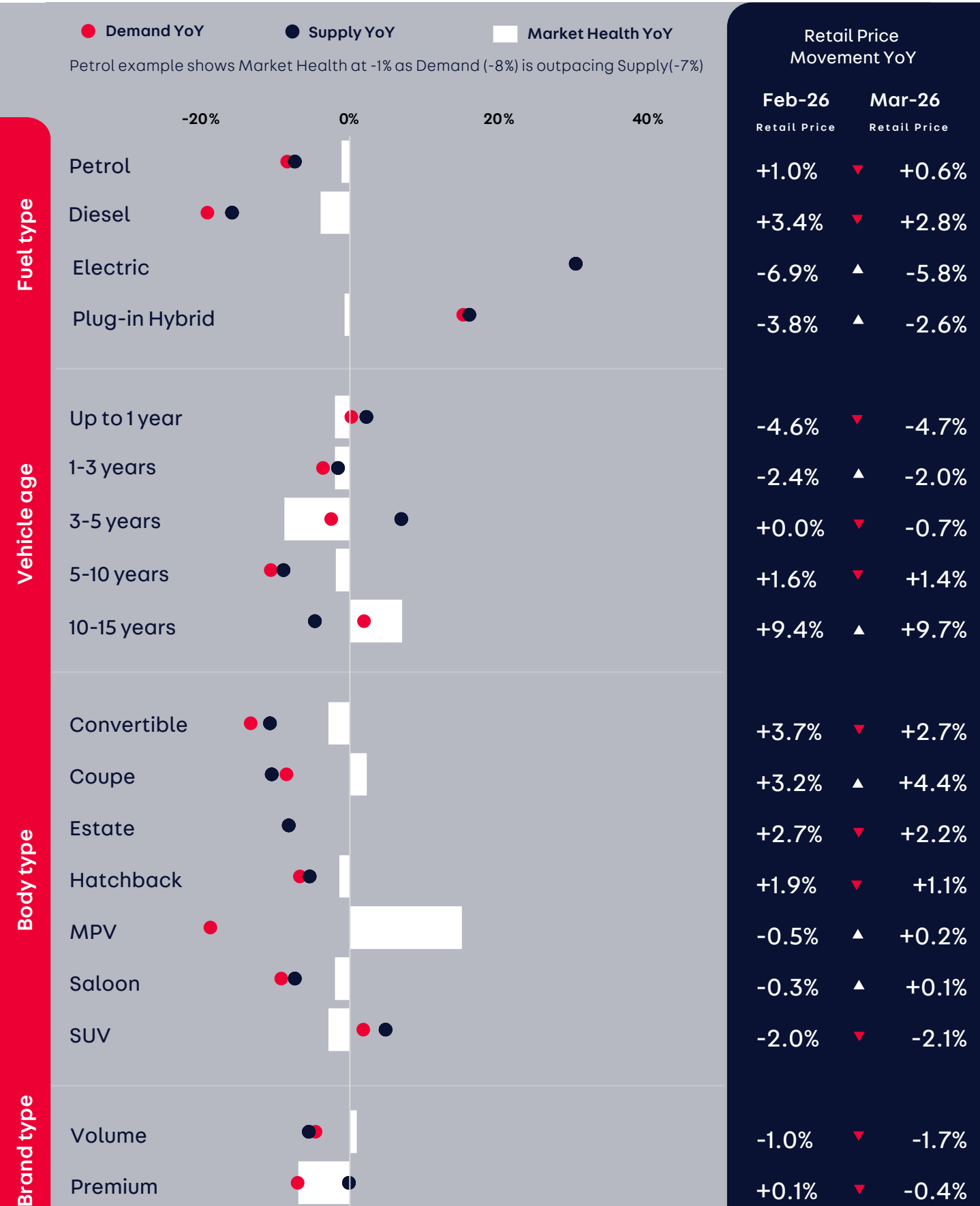
Month-on-month used car retail price growth: March

Like-for-like basis



(YoY growth)

Charts show Market Health (blue bar), Demand (red) and Supply (white), with pricing movements. The monthly movement of retail prices is illustrated by blue/red arrows.



In focus this month

Different strategies driving growth in the private new car market.

Private market bounces back



250,094

Q1 2026 private registrations (SMMT)

614,854

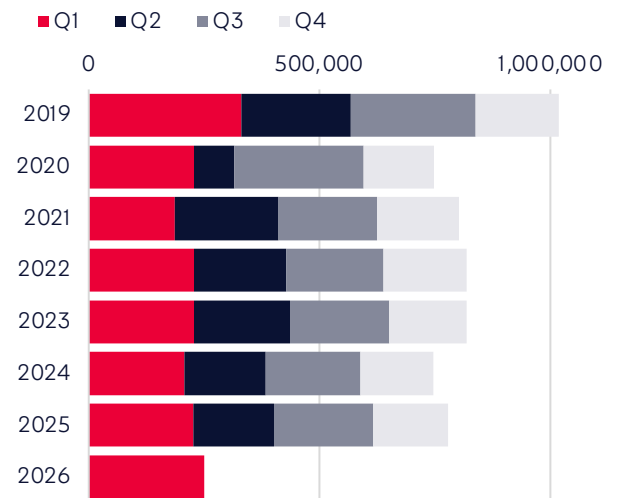
Q1 2026 total registrations (SMMT)

The March plate change and opening Quarter are a strong indicator of the health of the market, particularly in the Private sector.

Post-pandemic, Private new car market growth has been subdued - but Q1 offers renewed optimism with 10% YoY growth and the highest figure since 2020.

Total registrations are still 12% below 2019 levels, however, driven by a 24% shortfall in Private sales, with Fleet broadly in line - ongoing efforts to drive Private demand remain essential.

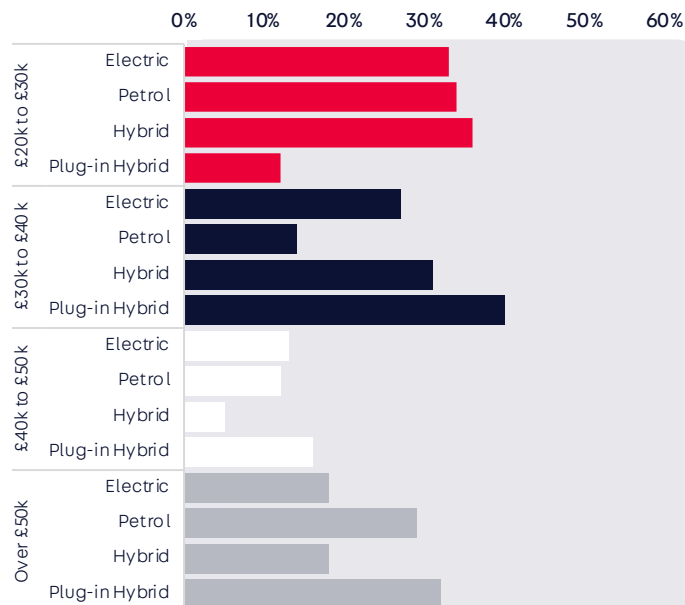
Private new car registrations. SMMT.



Affordability vs premium



Share of new car enquiries by price band. 2026 Q1 Autotrader.



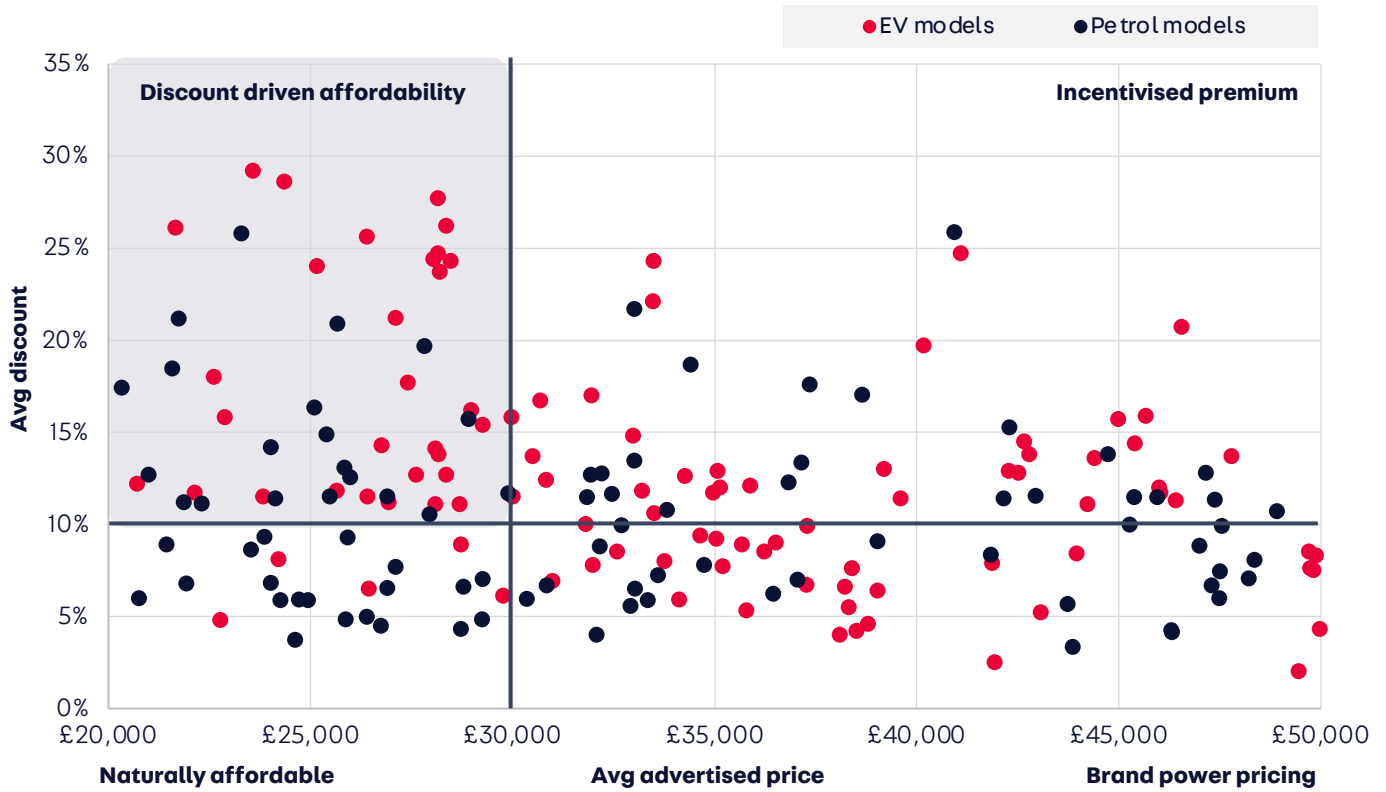
The new car market sees a clear split between more accessible pricing and premium purchases, with the middle £40k to £50k price range attracting lower interest.

Around a third of interest for EVs, petrol and hybrids is concentrated in the £20k to £30k band, while 40% of plug-in hybrid demand falls within the £30k to £40k range.



Electric cars are offering the largest discounts of any fuel type, averaging 12.8% compared with 11.3% for petrol, working harder than ever to remain competitive in the affordable end of the market. Some electric models see discounts as high as 29%.

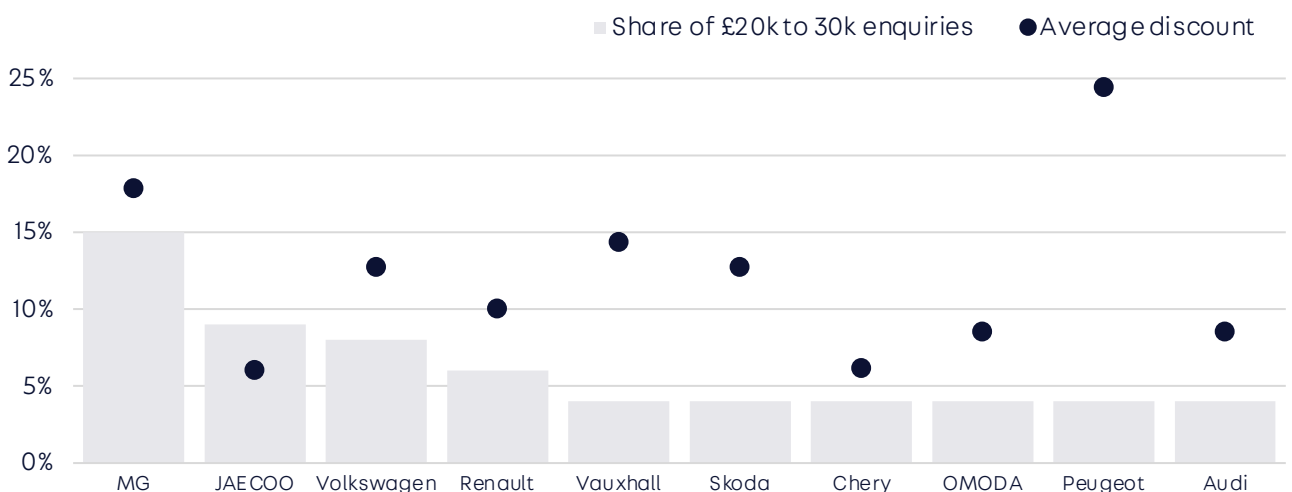
New car models by discount and avg advertised price. 2026 Q1 Autotrader.



Split strategies drive £20k-£30k

Not all brands in the £20k to £30k price range are slashing prices to compete, with many focused on solid pricing and strong value. Newer players like JAECOO, Chery and OMODA are reaching healthy £20-£30k enquiry share with low levels of discounting.

Top 10 most enquired upon brands in £20k to £30k price range. 2026 Q1 Autotrader.



Your feedback is important to us.
Scan the QR code to leave a comment, ask
a question or suggest an *in Focus* topic!



 Autotrader Insight