

December CV registrations confirm another exceptional year

- Year ends with 7.4 per cent growth for December, 2.8 per cent YTD.
- Highest ever December, greater than last December's previous record.
- YTD CV registrations up 2.8 per cent at 322,258 vehicles.
- Nine months this year see registrations grow on 2001.
- Light CV registrations up 8.8 per cent for the month, 4.8 per cent for year.
- October and November's rebound in truck registration growth fades.
- Remarkable 53 per cent surge in fare stage PSV registrations in December.

New CV registrations in the United Kingdom				
	December	% change	YTD	% change
Total	22,731	7.4%	322,258	2.8%
Light CVs	18,863	8.8%	266,346	4.8%
Trucks	3,540	-1.7%	51,920	-6.6%
Buses & coaches	328	49.1%	3,992	6.1%

'2002 was another exceptionally good year for CV registrations,' said SMMT chief executive Christopher Macgowan. 'The December figures were even higher than last year's previous record. This unexpected outcome took the full year total to 322,258 units. This is the third biggest annual total ever, behind the all time records of 371,104 in 1989 and 356,783 in 1998.'

He continued, 'Some economic uncertainties lie ahead, but 2002 will be remembered as a year that confirmed the relatively buoyant and stable demand for CVs. This is an excellent reflection of a good year for the UK new CV market. Demand for heavy vans has again been the basis of the market's development, with continuing strong demand for car type pick-ups. As anticipated, truck demand weakened in 2002, but it too has recently stabilised.'

UK commercial vehicle registrations continued the rally after the September set-back and ended the year on a high note. The year end total of 322,258 is comfortably up on the 2001 figure of 313,411. The December 2001 total of 21,161, a tough target to beat, was bettered despite the mixed economic context and many analysts' rather gloomy views for 2003.

The general expectation for the year ahead is much as it was at the beginning of 2002, with demand weakening to around the 300,000 mark. Whether the market will again deliver further upside surprises in 2003 remains to be seen, but the downside risks are growing more prominent.

Over the year decline was more typical than growth for truck registrations. October and November saw that trend reversed, but December, typically a weak month for registrations, failed to match the recent turnaround. Short term trends look uncertain with weaker demand possible at the lighter end of the truck market.

Van registrations at the heavier end, especially between 2.6 and 3.5 tonnes, surged back in December after a sluggish November. This was the major influence on growth for the month and the year as a whole. The contrast between growth in heavier van registrations and the drop for lighter vans in the weight range 1.8 to 2.6t gvw was again clear in December. The latter saw a year on year decline of 43.4 per cent, while the former saw an increase in registrations of 24.5 per cent.

Registrations at the heavier end, 2.6 to 3.5 tonnes may have reached a plateau, but at 11,474 they are still virtually double the December figures for 1997 and 1998. Clearly there has been a structural shift on both supply and demand sides of the LCV market.

Light CV registrations up 8.8 per cent

Light CV registrations were 8.8 per cent up at 18,863 units in December compared with the previous December. The YTD total is a strong 4.8 per cent ahead of 2001.

Heavy vans in the weight range 2.6 to 3.5t gvw grew by 24.5 per cent to 11,474 units. For the YTD they were 8.7 per cent up, accounting for 46.2 per cent of all CVs.

Light, car-derived van registrations grew by 3.8 per cent this December, and as in October and November, further trimmed the YTD drop to 2.5 per cent.

Car type pick up registrations, in the 1.8 – 2.6t gvw range, grew, just 12.1 per cent in November. For December they were back at a growth rate of 42.5 per cent. The growth rate for 2002 was 75.4 per cent. 4x4 utility registrations were up 27.2 per cent for the month and 11.3 per cent for the year.

New truck registrations down 1.7 per cent

December's registrations failed to match the recent recovery in October and November. Contraction was more typical for rigids, especially those up to 15t gvw. Heavier trucks, particularly artics, did much better with growth of 7.4 per cent in December, but registrations are down by 8.2 per cent for the year.

Total truck registrations are 6.6 per cent down for the year as a whole, but the rate of decline has slowed over the past three months. The year end total was 51,920, of which 16,785 were artics.

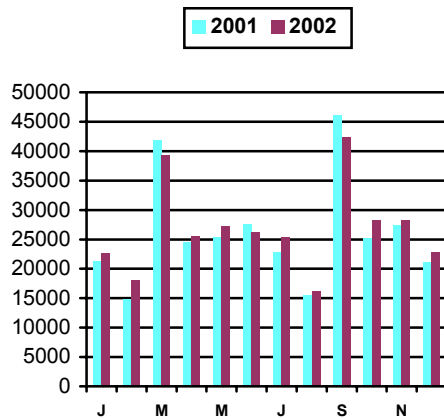
Bus registrations up by 49.1 per cent in December

December's bus and coach registrations surged-back after decline in November. Bus registrations were almost wholly responsible for the surge; up by 103 units. Relatively strong bus registrations in London continue to balance much weaker demand in the rest of the country. This 'London' effect will almost certainly continue into 2003, may gather strength and could set a longer term pattern for other major cities.

Coach registrations were up by five units to 31 over the same month last year. Coaches had kept overall registrations ahead of the year to date total for 2001. For the year to November coach registrations were up 122 vehicles, buses were down by 1 unit. By December coach registrations were up by 127 and buses up by 102. Total bus and coach registrations ended the year at 3,992, well in excess of earlier industry expectations.

**If you have any questions, please call Robin Dickeson
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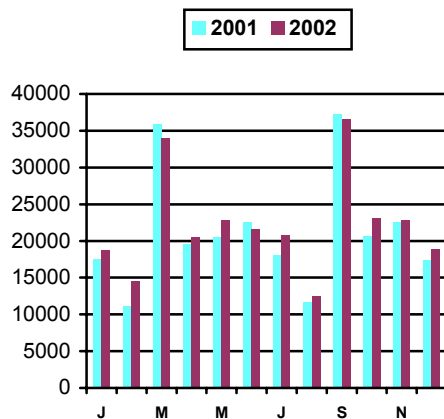
All new CV registrations Jan 2001 to date



December 2002 CV registrations up 7.4 per cent:

- Growth was mainly focused on heavy vans, but artics, fare stage PSV some rigids and other LCV performed well.
- YTD volumes up 2.8 per cent.
- December market caps an exceptional year, where growth defied expectations.

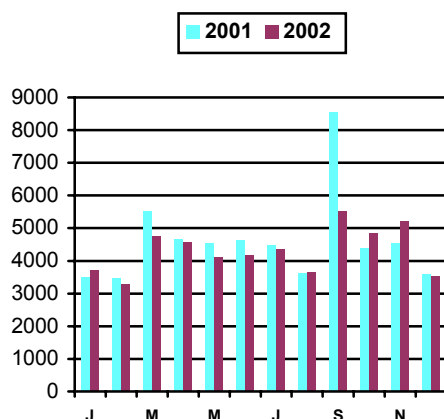
All new lcv registrations Jan 2001 to date



December's LCV registrations up by 8.8 per cent:

- Heavy van growth of 24.5 per cent and 8.8 per cent for year.
- Recent 4x4 registration growth erratic, but returns.
- Pick-ups grow 42.5 per cent and 75.4 per cent for year.
- LCV Growth of 4.8 per cent for 2002 to 266,346 units.

new truck registrations Jan 2001 to date



Truck registrations fall 1.7 per cent in December and 6.6 per cent for 2002 as a whole:

- Growth for artics at December contrast with falls for most rigids, especially up to 15t.
- Rigids down 5.2 per cent for the whole year; all artics fall by 8.2 per cent, two axle artics fall by 21.2 per cent