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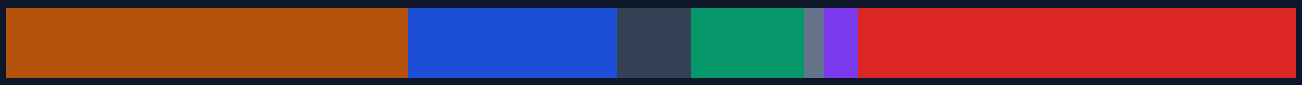
RESEARCH

Annual Cost of Motoring

The whole bill for a year on the road - August 2026



PETROL CAR, A YEAR

£3,484

6,200 miles, all costs

DIESEL CAR, A YEAR

£3,855

8,300 miles, all costs

ELECTRIC CAR, A YEAR

£3,635

same 6,200 miles, charged at home

BIGGEST SINGLE COST

£1,183

depreciation, the invisible line

Prepared by findpetrol.co.uk Research

Published 31 August 2026, fuel at this edition's 5 weekly snapshots

Methodology: findpetrol.co.uk/reports/methodology

Every component sourced: our collection, GOV.UK, ONS, ABI, Which?, Auto Trader, Ofgem, Zapmap.

Executive summary

A typical petrol car - 6,200 miles a year - costs £3,484 to run for a year at August 2026 prices, of which the fuel drivers watch so closely is £1,085: about 31%. The biggest single cost is the one with no weekly price and no bill: depreciation, £1,183 of the year, 34% of everything. Add the duty and VAT inside every litre - £536 - plus £200 of vehicle tax, and tax and depreciation together are more than half the cost of motoring.

A diesel car, doing its typical 8,300 miles, costs £3,855 - the extra miles and the extra 21.1p a litre more than offset its slower depreciation. And an electric car doing the same 6,200 miles as the petrol car costs £3,635 charged at home on the standard rate - within £152 of the petrol bill. In 2026 the three ways of powering a car converge: vehicle tax is now the same £200 for almost everyone, the insurance gap has narrowed to tens of pounds, and where an electric driver charges matters more than anything else - £121 a year on an overnight tariff against £1,382 on public rapid chargers.

Every line below names its source beside its figure, and the assumptions - a mid-life car, a mid-tier breakdown policy, 8% a year of value lost - are stated where they are used, because they move the bill by hundreds of pounds. The one number we would underline: buying new costs £6,536 a year in depreciation alone over the first three years, five times the mid-life rate.

The edition's figures

Measure	Figure	Detail
Petrol car, total annual bill	£3,484	fuel £1,085 of it
Diesel car, total annual bill	£3,855	fuel £1,468 of it
Electric car, total annual bill	£3,635	home charging on the price-cap rate
Cheapest way to power the same miles	£121	EV on an overnight home tariff
Dearest way to power the same miles	£1,382	EV on public rapid chargers
Tax inside the petrol bill	£536	duty 53.0p/l plus 20% VAT
Biggest single cost, petrol	£1,183	depreciation, mid-life, 8% a year
New-car depreciation, first 3 years	£6,536 a year	on a £43,405 car
Fuel basis	5 weekly snapshots	August 2026, final

The three bills, side by side

The same seven lines for each profile: a typical petrol car (6,200 miles), a typical diesel car (8,300 miles) and a typical electric car doing the same 6,200 miles as the petrol car, charged at home on the standard price-cap rate. Depreciation assumes the average used car of each fuel type at the mid-life rate of 8% a year. Sources sit under the table.

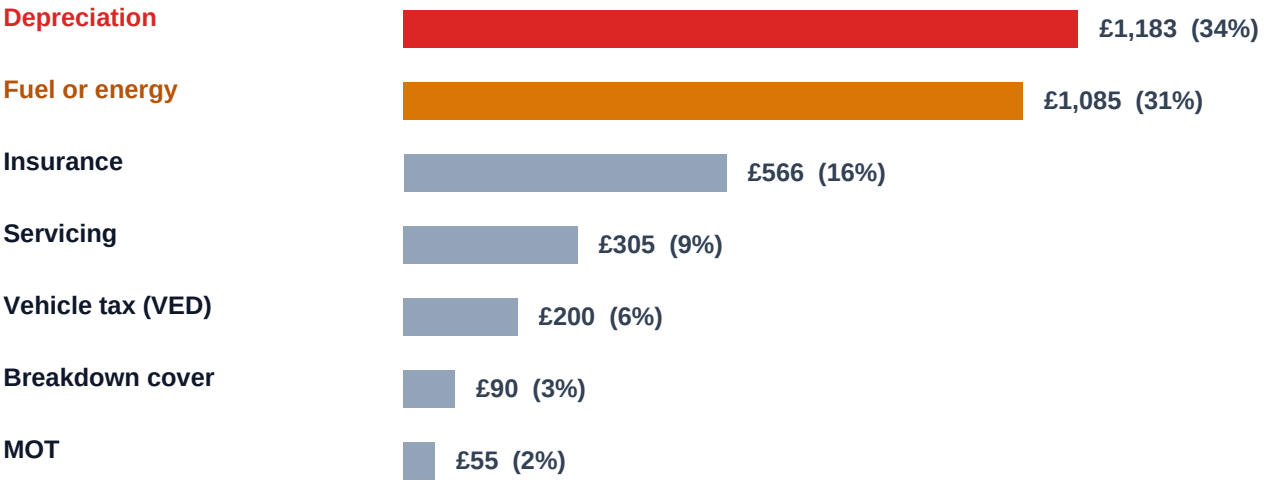
Insurance is the ABI average premium paid (Q2 2026); the electric line uses the MoneySuperMarket EV index median.

Cost line	Petrol	Diesel	Electric	Share, petrol
Fuel or energy	£1,085	£1,468	£455	**31%**
Insurance	£566	£566	£557	**16%**
Vehicle tax (VED)	£200	£200	£200	**6%**
Servicing	£305	£350	£283	**9%**
MOT	£55	£55	£55	**2%**
Breakdown cover	£90	£90	£90	**3%**
Depreciation	£1,183	£1,127	£1,996	**34%**
Total, a year	**£3,484**	**£3,855**	**£3,635**	**100%**

Read down the electric column and the story of 2026 appears: energy £455 against £1,085 for petrol, servicing £283 against £305, vehicle tax identical - and then depreciation £1,996 against £1,183, because the average used electric car is worth £10,164 more than the average used petrol car and still loses value faster over its whole life. The electric car wins the running costs and loses the balance sheet.

Where the money goes

The petrol bill's seven lines, largest first. Together the two costs that never appear on a receipt - depreciation and the duty and VAT inside the pump price - are £1,719, or 49% of the year.



Inside the £1,085 fuel line sit £536 of duty and VAT - 53.0p a litre of fuel duty frozen until 31 December 2026, plus VAT at 20% on the whole pump price. Add the £200 of vehicle tax and the state's share of the petrol bill is £736 a year, before a single mile of wear. The diesel driver pays £870.

This is why watching the pump matters less than it feels: a 5p saving on a litre, across 671 litres, is £34 a year - real money, but the average new-car buyer loses more than that every month to depreciation (£545 of it).

The electric car, priced honestly

The same electric car - 1,727 kWh a year at HMRC's sales-weighted fleet efficiency of 3.6 miles per kWh - powered four ways. Domestic electricity carries no VAT from 1 October 2026 to 31 March 2027, which the price-cap rate already reflects.

How it is charged	Energy cost, a year
Home, on the price-cap rate	**£455**
Home, on an overnight EV tariff	**£121**
Mostly home (80%), public standard (20%)	**£550**
Public rapid chargers only	**£1,382**

An 11-fold range between the cheapest and dearest way to power the identical car: £121 against £1,382. An electric driver without a driveway, forced onto public rapid chargers, pays £1,261 a year more for the same miles - more than a typical petrol car spends on fuel altogether. Where you charge has become the single biggest swing in the cost of motoring.

What has equalised elsewhere: vehicle tax is now £200 a year for electric cars from their second year (April 2025 ended the exemption - a first-year EV pays just £10), the insurance gap has narrowed to about £9 against the market average, and used electric values turned positive in 2026 after 40 months of falls - three-to-five-year-old EVs averaged £20,351 in August, up 9.4% on the year. What has not: the average used EV is still worth £10,164 more than the average used petrol car, so 8% a year of depreciation costs £813 more.

Depreciation, the invisible line

No invoice arrives for depreciation, which is exactly why it survives as the biggest cost of motoring. This report prices it on the average used car of each fuel type (Auto Trader Retail Price Index) at the industry's standard mid-life curve:

Basis	Avg used value	Rate a year	Depreciation	Share of its bill
Petrol car, mid-life	£14,782	8%	**£1,183**	**34%**
Diesel car, mid-life	£14,087	8%	**£1,127**	**29%**
Electric car, mid-life	£24,946	8%	**£1,996**	**55%**

The curve is not flat: the standard industry path is about 27% lost in the first year, 15% in the second, 12% in the third, easing to 8% at mid-life and 5% beyond seven years. A five-year-old car is close to the cheapest motoring there is.

Buying new: the first three years

Average new petrol car (advertised)	**£43,405**
Lost over the first three years	**£19,607 (45%)**
Depreciation per year, years 1-3	**£6,536**
Same car, years 4-9, at 8% a year	**about £1,904**

For the first owner of the average new petrol car, depreciation alone is £6,536 a year - roughly double this report's entire mid-life petrol bill. The second owner of the same car inherits the cheap years.

The fuel line, region by region

Our own contribution: the petrol line of the bill in each region, at this edition's pump prices (the same 5 weekly snapshots behind the UK Fuel Price Index). The range across the whole country is smaller than a month of depreciation on a new car.

Region	Petrol (p/l)	Fuel bill, a year	vs UK average	Share of income
North East	160.2p	£1,075	-£10	5.2%
Wales	161.1p	£1,081	-£4	5.0%
Yorkshire and The Humber	161.2p	£1,082	-£3	4.9%
West Midlands	162.3p	£1,089	+£4	4.9%
North West	161.4p	£1,083	-£2	4.8%
East Midlands	161.8p	£1,086	+£1	4.8%
Northern Ireland	154.1p	£1,034	-£51	4.6%
Scotland	162.9p	£1,093	+£8	4.5%
South West	162.2p	£1,089	+£4	4.2%
East of England	162.9p	£1,093	+£8	4.1%
South East	163.2p	£1,095	+£10	3.7%
London	162.5p	£1,090	+£5	3.0%

From Northern Ireland at £1,034 to South East at £1,095: a £61 spread on the year. The last column is where the real difference lives - the share of regional income that fuel takes - and it is the subject of our Regional Fuel Affordability report.

Methodology

Fuel and energy

Petrol and diesel: our own weekly collection, the same 5 snapshots behind the UK Fuel Price Index and the Regional Fuel Affordability report, averaged station-weighted across the UK (petrol 161.7p, diesel 182.8p a litre this edition). Consumption: DfT National Travel Survey 2024 mileage at Which? real-world economy - 6,200 miles at 42 mpg (petrol), 8,300 at 47 (diesel). Electric: the same 6,200 miles as the petrol car at HMRC's sales-weighted 3.59 miles per kWh; prices from the Ofgem price cap (26.32p/kWh from 1 October 2026, domestic electricity at 0% VAT to 31 March 2027), published EV overnight tariffs (about 7p/kWh) and the Zapmap Charging Price Index (July 2026) for public charging.

Insurance, tax, MOT

Insurance: the ABI Motor Insurance Premium Tracker average premium actually paid, Q2 2026 (£566); electric cars use the MoneySuperMarket Electric Car Insurance Index 2026 median (£557). VED: the 2026/27 standard rate of £200 (GOV.UK), which now applies to petrol, diesel and - from a car's second year - electric alike; a first-year electric car pays £10. MOT: the statutory maximum £54.85 (GOV.UK), unchanged since 2010. Breakdown cover is a stated assumption: £90 for a mid-tier policy (roadside, home start, national recovery) at current AA and RAC rates.

Servicing and depreciation

Servicing: the Which? car survey of 63,334 owners (published 1 October 2026), 5-to-9-year-old cars - petrol £305, diesel £350, electric £283 a year. Repairs and tyres are excluded on purpose: they vary too widely between cars to average honestly. Depreciation is a stated assumption, not a statistic: the average used car of each fuel type (Auto Trader Retail Price Index - petrol £14,782, diesel £14,087, electric £24,946) at the industry's standard mid-life curve of 8% a year.

What this is not

This is the bill for typical, stated profiles - not a survey of what households spend. Parking, tolls, congestion charges, fines, finance costs and insurance excesses are outside it. Fuel prices move weekly and this edition's are final for a closed month. Depreciation assumptions move the totals by hundreds of pounds: at 5% (older cars) the petrol bill falls to about £3,040, at 12% (newer cars) it rises to about £4,075.

Using this data

These figures are free to use in articles, research and reporting. We ask only that you credit findpetrol.co.uk and link to this report, so readers can see the current figures and the method behind them.

Suggested citation

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