



INSIGHT REPORT:

Used car purchase disputes raised by consumers in 2025



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OVERVIEW



Used car purchases readily account for the largest proportion of consumer disputes seen by The Motor Ombudsman's Alternative Dispute resolution service each year. They fall under the scope of the body's comprehensive Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI)-approved Motor Industry Code of Practice for Vehicle Sales.



Thousands of vehicle retailers across the UK are currently accredited to the Code and are listed on TMO's Business Finder:

[TheMotorOmbudsman.org/
Business-Finder](https://TheMotorOmbudsman.org/Business-Finder)

NEW CONSUMER CASE VOLUMES



Year	Volume of used car purchase cases opened by consumers*	Used car purchase cases as a percentage of total opened by consumers during the year	Annual UK used car transactions (source: SMMT)
2025	18,570 (+14% v 2024)	40% (of 46,092)	7,807,872 (+2% v 2024)
2024	16,317 (+59% v 2023)	40% (of 40,367)	7,643,180 (+5.5% v 2023)
2023	10,262 (+41% v 7,285 in 2022)	41% (of 24,880)	7,242,692 (+5.1% v 2022)

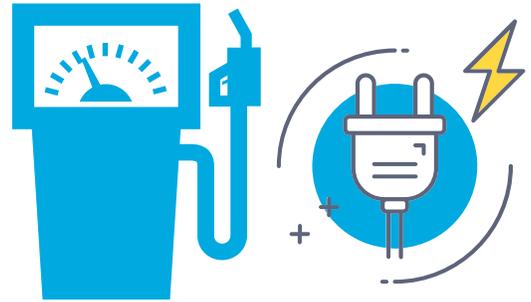
Assumptions for increasing volume of used car disputes brought to consumers year-on-year:

- The cost-of-living crisis adding financial pressure on motorists, increasing the likelihood of complaints
- Raised awareness of The Motor Ombudsman amongst consumers
- Rising used car transaction volumes in the UK

On average, used car purchase complaints brought to The Motor Ombudsman represent less than 1% of annual used UK car transactions

* Figures relate to used car purchase disputes raised by a consumer with a business

SOURCE OF USED CAR DISPUTES BY FUEL TYPE



	Vehicle fuel type	% of disputes
	Petrol	46% (46%)
	Diesel	40% (45%)
	Hybrid	8% (5%)
	Electric (EV)	6% (4%)

(Figures in brackets denote 2024 data)

TOP 10 DRIVERS OF USED CAR PURCHASE DISPUTES

Source / issues*	2025	2024
Customer service	40% 	12%
Engine	35% 	58%
Vehicle exterior	5% 	7%
Fuel & emissions systems	4% 	3%
Electrical systems & wiring	4% 	3%
Tyres & brakes	3% 	3%
Transmission	2% 	4%
Interior	2% 	2%
Steering	1% 	1%
Clutch	2% 	1%

*Issues refer to faults and failures. Arrows denote (2025 v 2024 change)

Data taken from a sample of 1,000 used car disputes submitted by consumers in 2025

KEY DISPUTE SOURCES BY AREA

*Please note that the sources of issues reported on this graphic are some of the principal concerns highlighted by consumers within their case submissions, and the lists are not exhaustive

1. CUSTOMER SERVICE (40%)

- Incorrect mileage readings and tax bands stated at point of sale
- Delays to parts supply for repairs
- Vehicles sold with undisclosed changes
- Retailers not responding to customers
- Sellers not disclosing stolen vehicles
- Vehicles being damaged during repairs
- Warranty coverage differing after purchase

2. ENGINE (35%)

- Sheared cylinder head bolts
- Starter motor failures due to rusting
- Timing tensioner pulleys detaching
- Cracks developing in engine blocks
- Excessive oil consumption
- Timing chain failures
- Oil pump failures seizing crankshafts
- Head gasket failures after low mileage

3. VEHICLE EXTERIOR (5%)

- Tailgates not opening due to cold weather
- Wheel arch and door panels detaching
- Faulty panoramic roofs
- Sunroofs becoming inoperational
- Leaking windscreens causing water ingress
- Front wings rusting after a few months of ownership

4. FUEL & EMISSIONS (4%)

- Fuel pumps failing without warning
- Cars breaking down due to fuel leakages
- Contaminated fuel systems
- White smoke emanating from the exhaust
- Diesel Particulate Filters (DPFs) blocking
- Exhaust Gas Recirculation system faults

5. ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS (4%)

- Continuous intermittent locking issues
- Excessive power draining from batteries
- Alarms activating due to sensor faults
- Incorrect external temperature readings
- Loom faults causing airbag malfunctions
- Multiple sensor faults
- Lights staying on in error

6. TYRES & BRAKES (3%)

- Tyre pressure loss due to cracked alloys
- Faulty valves not allowing tyre inflation
- Cars sold with differing tyre sizes
- Tyres of the wrong specification fitted
- Grinding brakes
- Warped and worn brake discs
- Seized brake callipers

FOR MORE INFORMATION



FIRST EDITION



[TheMotorOmbudsman.org/
Used-Cars](http://TheMotorOmbudsman.org/Used-Cars)