

German car sales plunge on virus woes

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New car sales in Germany posted their worst first-quarter performance since national reunification in 1990 owing to the coronavirus pandemic, official data showed Wednesday.

A total of 656,452 new cars were registered between January and March

in Europe's largest car market—down 6.4 percent on the same period in 2020 and around 25 percent lower than in 2019, the KBA transport authority said.

"The first quarter of 2021 was down 16 percent" on the 10-year average, the VDIK car importers' federation said in a statement.

"There hasn't been a worse first quarter since we started compiling statistics," it added.

Compared with March 2020 when shutdown measures triggered a historic 37.7-percent plunge in new car sales, registrations climbed last month 35.9 percent to 292,349—still 15 percent below the pre-crisis level.

"The growth in March only exists on paper," VDIK president Reinhard Zirpel said.

"We have been confronted with an extremely weak market since the beginning of the year."

Zirpel said the industry, which is central to the German economy, "did not at all expect the first quarter of 2021 to be even darker than the already extremely bad period the previous year".

Domestic production jumped 29 percent to 373,900 units in March month-on-month, the VDA said. During the first quarter, it marked an eight-percent decline.

Exports also decreased by nine percent during the [first quarter](#) compared with the same period in 2020.

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