

New-Car Sales To Fall 0.3 Percent In March 2015; First-Quarter Sales Best Since 2007, According To Kelley Blue Book

American Honda Benefitting from Growth in Utility Models; Luxury Utility Segment on the Rise

IRVINE, Calif., March 26, 2015 /PRNewswire/ -- [New-vehicle sales](#) are expected to decline 0.3 percent year-over-year to a total of 1.53 million units in March 2015, resulting in an estimated 16.9 million seasonally adjusted annual rate (SAAR), according to Kelley Blue Book www.kbb.com, the only vehicle valuation and information source trusted and relied upon by both consumers and the automotive industry. The projected slight decline in volume in March largely is due to one fewer Saturday this month compared to last year.

"Similar to last year, winter weather had a negative impact on new-car sales in February," said Alec Gutierrez, senior analyst for Kelley Blue Book. "Consumers then returned to the market in a big way last March, and we expect a similar, though less pronounced, bump in sales this March, too. Auto sales are currently being led by pickup trucks and sport utility vehicles, which is good news for the automakers focused on these segments, as these are typically their most profitable units."



First-quarter sales should total 3.93 million units, up from 3.74 million units a year ago, for a 5.1 percent improvement. This will be the best first quarter since 2007. Total sales in 2015 are projected to hit 16.9 million overall, a 2.5 percent year-over-year increase and the highest total since 2005, when sales fell just shy of 17 million units.

Key Highlights for Estimated March 2015 Sales Forecast:

- In March, new light-vehicle sales, including fleet, are expected to reach 1,530,000 units, down 0.3 percent from March 2014 and up 21.9 percent from February 2015.
- The seasonally adjusted annual rate (SAAR) for March 2015 is estimated to be 16.9 million, up from 16.4 million in March 2014 and up from 16.2 million in February 2015.
- Retail sales are expected to account for 81.5 percent of volume in March 2015, up from 80.5 percent in March 2014.

Toyota to Continue Strong Sales Run; American Honda Benefitting from Strong Growth in Utility Models

[Toyota Motor Company](#) is expected to continue its gains from last month by capturing the most market share in March 2015. Toyota is off to a fast start this year with especially strong sales of its [SUV](#) lineup, which is up more than 20 percent in the first two months of the year.

"Kelley Blue Book also expects to see growth in March from American Honda, which has seen a dip in car sales this year, but excellent growth among its utility models like the Honda CR-V," said Tim Fleming, analyst at Kelley Blue Book. "With the upcoming redesign of the mid-size Pilot scheduled for this summer, gaining momentum in these segments is vital for Honda."

Manufacturer	Sales Volume ¹			Market Share ²		
	Mar-15	Mar-14	YOY %	Mar-15	Mar-14	YOY %
General Motors (Buick, Cadillac, Chevrolet, GMC)	256,000	256,047	0.0%	16.7%	16.7%	0.0%
Ford Motor Company (Ford, Lincoln)	234,000	243,417	-3.9%	15.3%	15.9%	-0.6%
Toyota Motor Company (Lexus, Scion, Toyota)	223,000	215,348	3.6%	14.6%	14.0%	0.5%
Fiat Chrysler (Chrysler, Dodge, FIAT, Jeep, RAM)	196,000	193,915	1.1%	12.8%	12.6%	0.2%
Nissan North America (Infiniti, Nissan)	142,000	149,136	-4.8%	9.3%	9.7%	-0.4%
American Honda (Acura, Honda)	138,000	133,318	3.5%	9.0%	8.7%	0.3%
Hyundai-Kia	119,000	121,782	-2.3%	7.8%	7.9%	-0.2%
Volkswagen Group (Audi, Volkswagen, Porsche)	53,000	54,830	-3.3%	3.5%	3.6%	-0.1%
Total ³	1,530,000	1,534,107	-0.3%	-	-	-

¹ Historical data from OEM sales announcements

² Kelley Blue Book Automotive Insights

³ Includes brands not shown

Luxury Utility Vehicles on the Rise; Pickup Trucks Among Top Performers

Small and mid-size utility vehicles will continue to set the pace for the industry in March, with

expected growth of 2.3 and 1.1 percent, respectively. Small luxury utility models are on the rise as well, as many brand-new models such as the Lexus NX, Mercedes-Benz GLA-Class and Lincoln MKC are selling well in their first few months on the market.

"After SUVs, the most growth in the industry will sit with pickup trucks," said Gutierrez. "Following the recent introduction of GM's mid-size pickup trucks, the Chevrolet Colorado and GMC Canyon, overall truck market share has risen 1 full percentage point, from 13.6 to 14.6 percent. Even with the extra competition, sales of GM's full-size trucks are growing by double-digits, signaling the underlying strength of the market."

Segment	Sales Volume ¹			Market Share		
	Mar-15	Mar-14	YOY %	Mar-15	Mar-14	YOY %
Mid-Size Car	226,000	235,604	-4.1%	14.8%	15.4%	-0.5%
Compact Car	220,000	224,693	-2.1%	14.4%	14.6%	-0.2%
Compact SUV/Crossover	190,000	185,684	2.3%	12.5%	12.1%	0.4%
Full-Size Pickup Truck	185,000	185,504	-0.3%	12.1%	12.1%	0.0%
Mid-Size SUV/Crossover	165,000	163,200	1.1%	10.8%	10.6%	0.2%
Total ²	1,530,000	1,534,107	-0.3%	-	-	-

¹ Kelley Blue Book Automotive Insights

² Includes segments not shown

There are 25 sales days in March 2015, compared to 26 sales days in March 2014. All percentages are based on raw volume, not daily selling rate.

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