



Home > Report on operations > [Industry Overview](#)



Industry Overview

Vehicle Segments and Descriptions

We manufacture and sell passenger cars, light trucks and light commercial vehicles covering all market segments.

Passenger cars can be divided among seven main groups, whose definition could slightly vary by region. Mini cars, known as “A segment” vehicles in Europe and often referred to as “city cars,” are between 2.7 and 3.7 meters in length and include three- and five-door hatchbacks. Small cars, known as “B segment” vehicles in Europe and “sub-compacts” in the U.S., range in length from 3.7 meters to 4.4 meters and include three- and five-door hatchbacks and sedans. Compact cars, known as “C segment” vehicles in Europe, range in length from 4.3 meters to 4.7 meters, typically have a sedan body and mostly include three- and five-door hatchback cars. Mid-size cars, known as “D segment” vehicles in Europe, range between 4.7 meters to 4.9 meters, typically have a sedan body or are station wagons. Full-size cars range in length from 4.9 meters to 5.1 meters and are typically sedan cars or, in Europe, station wagons. Minivans, also known as multi-purpose vehicles, or MPVs, typically have seating for up to eight passengers. Utility vehicles include SUVs, which are four-wheel drive with true off-road capabilities, and cross utility vehicles, or CUVs, which are not designed for heavy off-road use, but offer better on-road ride comfort and handling compared to SUVs.

Light trucks may be divided between vans (also known as light commercial vehicles), which typically are used for the transportation of goods or groups of people and have a payload capability up to 4.2 tons, and pick-up trucks, which are light motor vehicles with an open-top rear cargo area and which range in length from 4.8 meters to 5.2 meters (in North America, the length of pick-up trucks typically ranges from 5.5 meters to 6 meters). In North America, minivans and utility vehicles are categorized within trucks. In Europe, vans and pick-up trucks are categorized as light commercial vehicles.

We characterize a vehicle as “new” if its vehicle platform is significantly different from the platform used in the prior model year and/or has had a full exterior renewal. We characterize a vehicle as “significantly refreshed” if it continues its previous vehicle platform but has extensive changes or upgrades from the prior model.

Our Industry

Designing, engineering, manufacturing, distributing and selling vehicles require significant investments in product design, engineering, research and development, technology, tooling, machinery and equipment, facilities and marketing in order to meet both consumer preferences and regulatory requirements. Automotive original equipment manufacturers, or OEMs, are able to benefit from economies of scale by leveraging their investments and activities on a global basis across brands and models. The automotive industry has also historically been highly cyclical, and to a greater extent than many industries, is impacted by changes in the general economic environment. In addition to having lower leverage and greater access to capital, larger OEMs that have a more diversified revenue base across regions and products tend to be better positioned to withstand industry downturns and to benefit from industry growth.

Most automotive OEMs produce vehicles for the mass market and some of them also produce vehicles for the luxury market. Vehicles in the mass market are typically intended to appeal to the largest number of consumers possible. Intense competition among manufacturers of mass market vehicles, particularly for non-premium brands, tends to compress margins, requiring significant volumes to be profitable. As a result, success is measured in part by vehicle unit sales relative to other automotive OEMs. Luxury vehicles on the other hand are designed to appeal to consumers with higher levels of disposable income, and can therefore more easily achieve much higher margins. This allows luxury vehicle OEMs to produce lower volumes, enhancing brand appeal and exclusivity, while maintaining profitability.

In 2014, 84 million automobiles were sold around the world. Although China is the largest single automotive sales market, with approximately 18 million vehicles sold, the majority of automobile sales are still in the developed markets, including North America, Western Europe and Japan. Growth in other emerging markets has also played an increasingly important part in global automotive demand in recent years.

The automotive industry is highly competitive, especially in our key markets, such as the U.S., Brazil and Europe. Vehicle manufacturers must continuously improve vehicle design, performance and content to meet consumer demands for quality, reliability, safety, fuel efficiency, comfort, driving experience and style. Historically, manufacturers relied heavily upon dealer, retail and fleet incentives, including cash rebates, option package discounts, guaranteed depreciation programs, and subsidized or subvented financing or leasing programs to compete for vehicle sales. Since 2009, manufacturers generally have worked to reduce reliance on pricing-related incentives as competitive tools in the North American market, while pricing pressure, under different forms, is still affecting sales in the European market since the inception of the financial crisis. However, an OEM’s ability to increase or maintain vehicle prices and reduce reliance on incentives is limited by the competitive pressures resulting from the variety of available competitive vehicles in each segment of the new vehicle market as well as continued global manufacturing overcapacity in the automotive industry. At the same time, OEMs generally cannot effectively lower prices as a means to increase vehicle sales without adversely affecting profitability, since the ability to reduce costs is limited by commodity market prices, contract terms with suppliers, evolving regulatory requirements and collective bargaining agreements and other factors that limit the ability to reduce labor expenses.

OEMs generally sell vehicles to dealers and distributors, which then resell vehicles to retail and fleet customers. Retail customers purchase vehicles directly from dealers, while fleet customers purchase vehicles from dealers or directly from OEMs. Fleet sales comprise three primary channels: (i) daily rental, (ii) commercial and (iii) government. Vehicle sales in the daily rental and government channels are extremely competitive and often require significant discounts. Fleet sales are an important source of revenue and can also be an effective means for marketing vehicles. Fleet orders can also help normalize plant production as they typically involve the delivery of a large, pre-determined quantity of vehicles over several months. Fleet sales are also a source of aftermarket service parts revenue for OEMs and service revenue for dealers.

Financial Services

Because dealers and retail customers finance the purchase of a significant percentage of the vehicles sold worldwide, the availability and cost of financing is one of the most significant factors affecting vehicle sales volumes. Most dealers use wholesale or inventory financing arrangements to purchase vehicles from OEMs in order to maintain necessary vehicle inventory levels. Financial services companies may also provide working capital and real estate loans to facilitate investment in expansion or restructuring of the dealers' premises. Financing may take various forms, based on the nature of creditor protection provided under local law, but financial institutions tend to focus on maximizing credit protection on any financing originated in conjunction with a vehicle sale. Financing to retail customers takes a number of forms, including simple installment loans and finance leases. These financial products are usually distributed directly by the dealer and have a typical duration of three to five years. OEMs often use retail financing as a promotional tool, including through campaigns offering below market rate financing, known as subvention programs. In such situations, an OEM typically compensates the financial services company up front for the difference between the financial return expected under standard market rates and the rates offered to the customer within the promotional campaign.

Many automakers rely on wholly-owned or controlled finance companies to provide this financing. In other situations, OEMs have relied on joint ventures or commercial relationships with banks and other financial institutions in order to provide access to financing for dealers and retail customers. The model adopted by any particular OEM in a particular market depends upon, among other factors, its sales volumes and the availability of stable and cost-effective funding sources in that market, as well as regulatory requirements.

Financial services companies controlled by OEMs typically receive funding from the OEM's central treasury or from industrial and commercial operations of the OEM that have excess liquidity, however, they also access other forms of funding available from the banking system in each market, including sales or securitization of receivables either in negotiated sales or through securitization programs. Financial services companies controlled by OEMs compete primarily with banks, independent financial services companies and other financial institutions that offer financing to dealers and retail customers. The long-term profitability of finance companies also depends on the cyclical nature of the industry, interest rate volatility and the ability to access funding on competitive terms and to manage risks with particular reference to credit risks. OEMs within their global strategy aimed to expand their business, may provide

This site uses cookies to give you a better experience of navigation. Continuing navigation without changing your browser settings, you agree to receive all cookies on the site. To learn more, please read [our Cookie Policy](#)

OK

No