

July 2012 Auto Sales

This summer's auto sales continue at a pretty good clip, but that doesn't mean there's equanimity in the results of the various automakers. The industry's annualized sales rate in July again was over 14 million units. That's not bad, considering that 2011 ended with 12.8 million new vehicles sold. July's pace was also 9% ahead of last year's. But last summer, as you'll recall, was a highly atypical time, when the Japanese earthquake and tsunami caused severe product shortages for Toyota and Honda (and also Infiniti and Subaru), which created an opening for their U.S. and Korean competitors. Today, the Japanese are back to full strength, and the easy times for their competitors are over. Thus, we see declines for General Motors and Ford — although not for Chrysler — and Hyundai/Kia notched only a small increase. The good news for all the players is that transaction prices remain strong. Low interest rates are helping to offset those costs for buyers, and strong used-car values are helping to keep monthly payments manageable for those who lease.

JULY 2012 SALES RESULTS AND PERCENT CHANGE VERSUS JULY 2011.

GENERAL MOTORS -6% After two monthly sales increases, General Motors declined in July. Only Cadillac, with the arrival of the XTS, bucked the downtrend. GM blamed the decrease on reduced fleet sales but a reinvigorated Toyota and Honda surely were a factor as well.

Chevrolet -7% After selling more than 30,000 copies of the Malibu last month, sales were less than half of that in July (or -37% versus July last year), although GM cited low inventories. That was likely not a factor for the Cruze (-39%), however. In better news, the Spark ignited 1460 sales, the Volt did 1849, and the Sonic was over 6000. Trucks were flat overall, with the addition of the fleet-only Captiva Sport helping to offset declines for the Silverado (-13%) and the Traverse (-60%).

GMC -9% Like Chevrolet, GMC saw a big surge in demand for its big vans, which more than doubled, but a drop in sales of its big pickups (-12%). The Acadia (-29%) fell significantly but the smaller Terrain was up a bit (+4%).

Buick -15% With LaCrosse sales off by a third and the Regal down by half, the Verano in July became the bestselling Buick sedan. Had the Enclave (-29%) dropped a little bit more, the Verano could have been the bestselling Buick, period.

Cadillac +21% The XTS — but not yet the ATS — has arrived at Cadillac showrooms, and it added 1739 to the division's total last month. That didn't comprise Cadillac's total sales increase, though, as the SRX (+19%) and the Escalade (+18%) also lent a hand.

FORD MOTOR COMPANY -4% Like General Motors, Ford sold fewer new cars and trucks in July than it did last July. And like General Motors, Ford pointed to reduced fleet sales. Competition, however, is definitely heating up, although Ford has a couple of key new products in the just introduced Escape and the soon-to-arrive new Fusion.

Ford -4% Unlike last month, it was Ford trucks that were down in July, while cars managed a small gain. The loss of some 6000 sales from the discontinued Ranger pretty much accounted for the drop in truck volume. The Escape was down (-12%) but still managed to be the bestselling SUV. On the car side, the Fusion (+21%) and the Taurus (+40%) both did well again, joined this time by the Focus (+11%).

Lincoln -11% Lincoln slipped in July — worst, percentage-wise, was the MKS (-20%) and the best was the MKT (+57%).

TOYOTA MOTOR SALES +26% Toyota continues to notch big percentage increases over its depressed, year-ago levels, although this month's percentage increase is not nearly as big as July's. **Toyota +24%** The Camry (+11%) stayed out in front as America's bestselling passenger car, and even pulled ahead of the Chevy Silverado pickup to be the number-two nameplate overall. The aging Corolla/Matrix (+35%) couldn't catch the new Honda Civic, but is still doing incredibly well. The now-expanded Prius family doubled last year's numbers, and in so doing passed the RAV4. **Lexus +25%** The new GS, the ES (+32%), and the RX (+35%) are leading the charge at Lexus. The LS (-14%) and the CT (-4%) look weak. **Scion +97%** Unlike last month, the FR-S sports car was not the bestselling Scion in July, as the xB (+43%), the xD (+37%), and the tC (+27%) all recorded gains. Add in the iQ's 557 units, and Scion volume doubled. **CHRYSLER GROUP +13%** Unlike its domestic brethren, Chrysler was able to keep the positive sales numbers going in July. The company also announced a big jump in profits for the second quarter. So while fleet sales and substantial incentives are certainly part of the mix, they evidently are not such a huge part that they've devastated Chrysler's profit margins. **Chrysler +35%** Once again, all three Chrysler nameplates moved ahead, but this time they were much more in synch, with the 200 up 43%, the 300 up 41%, and the Town & Country notching a 25% gain. **Dodge +6%** The Dart is slowly ramping up, and is still nowhere near the volumes that the Caliber did a year ago. Good thing the Charger (+21%) and the Avenger (+43%) are on the rise. Trucks were hurt by the demise of the Nitro and a drop-off in the Durango (-49%). The Grand Caravan (+43%) and the Journey (+69%), however, were more than able to offset those declines. **Jeep +7%** As was the case at Dodge, Jeep's rising and falling models worked out to a small gain for the division overall. On the plus side, we had the Grand Cherokee (+22%), the Liberty (+34%), and the Patriot (+28%); on the minus side were the Wrangler (-15%) and the Compass (-8%). **Ram +15%** The former Dodge Ram moved up from 10th place last month among all nameplates to 7th place overall. **Fiat +22%** Fiat sales were better than a year ago, but not quite as good as May or July. **AMERICAN HONDA +45%** Honda continues to post big percentage increases over its tsunami-depressed year-ago figures. **Honda +46%** The Civic (+79%) was America's bestselling small car, and the Accord (+70%) moved up into second place among all passenger cars. Other Hondas bouncing back were the Odyssey (+89%), the CR-V (+47%), and even the Ridgeline (+160%). However, Honda's hybrids, the Insight (-58%) and the CR-Z (-62%) are fading fast. **Acura +36%** The new RDX and the ILX are doing well for Acura, but the ZDX sank into the double digits. **HYUNDAI-KIA +5%** It was a record July for both Hyundai and Kia, but coming off big year-ago volumes, that didn't make for a big percentage increase. **Hyundai +4%** Hyundai claimed to have low inventories of the Accent (-24%), the Sonata (+1%), and the Elantra (+22%), although Elantra sales increased anyway with the addition of the coupe and the GT hatchback. The Genesis (-12%) was off slightly, perhaps losing some customers to the new Azera. The Santa Fe was down (-43%) going into its new-model changeover but the other two SUVs were up. **Kia +6%** Again this month, the Optima (which doubled) and the Rio (which more than tripled) kept things moving

forward for Kia; all other models were down. NISSAN NORTH AMERICA +16% Nissan wasn't laid low by the Japanese disaster a year ago, but still managed a pretty large percentage gain. One secret behind its success: industry analysts calculate that Nissan spent more on incentives than any other major manufacturer. Nissan +25% The new Altima is here and it ignited a 25% increase in sales, but that total still had Nissan's midsize sedan in third place behind the Camry and Accord. A redesigned Versa sedan also gave that model a lift (+39%). Models that gained without much news included the 370Z (+19%), the Rogue (+17%), and the Frontier (+16%). Conversely, the Cube (-49%) fell precipitously, and the Leaf (-58%) is getting trounced by the Chevy Volt. Infiniti +57% G-whiz: Infiniti's mainstay model leapt in July (+64%); add 2000 units with the new JX, and Infiniti has no trouble racking up a big percentage increase despite declines for all its other entries. DAIMLER-BENZ +6% Mercedes-Benz +4% Just like last month, Mercedes' gain wasn't great but it was enough to outsell a stagnant BMW. Deliveries of the fashionable new SL rose by a factor of four, but those of the less-fashionable SLK dropped by 79%. Of the sedans, the E-class and the S-class are stagnant but the C-class climbed (+24%). After popping last month, the soon-to-depart R-class dropped back in July. The Sprinter, however, sprinted ahead (+27%), as did the GL (+32%), but despite a redesign, the M-class slowed (-36%). Smart +139% The Smart fell back from its white-hot July but is still doing way better than a year ago. Maybach +33% Get 'em while you still can! 4 Maybachs were sold last month. VOLKSWAGEN GROUP +28% The Volkswagen Group continues to outpace the industry and pick up market share. Volkswagen +27% The Passat still is posting huge percentage gains over its dead-in-the-water predecessor, but its 9007 July sales are down about 1000 units from what they had been recently. The Beetle continues to add about 3000 units per month, and the Tiguan (+26%) and the Golf (+14%) increased. The biggest-volume car, the Jetta, dropped a bit (-13%), as did the CC (-27%) and the Eos (-54%). Audi +28% What's up at Audi? Plenty: the A3 (+49%), the A4 (+52%), the A5 (32%), the A6 (67%), and, to a lesser degree, both SUVs. The laggards are the A8 (-11%), the R8 (-33%), and, surprisingly, the A7 (-19%). Bentley +21% BMW GROUP +4% Again it was Mini that pushed the BMW Group into positive territory. BMW -1% What's the deal at BMW? The redesigned 3-series — sedan anyway — was down again (-11%) while the far-from-fresh 7-series suddenly surged (+159%). One suspects the economics of lease offers at play. More predictable was the revamped 6-series (+51%) turning more heads, while the no-longer-new Z4 (-62%) languished. Mini +15% The regular Minis were up 12% but the Countryman blew that out of the water with its 59% increase. Rolls-Royce +7% SUBARU +16% The new Impreza is running well ahead of its predecessor (+68%). In other new-model news, the BR-Z is selling at only one-third the rate of the FR-S, but that may be due to the FR-S getting into dealers first. Oh, and Subaru still sells the Tribeca, but in July it sold one-third fewer than last year. MAZDA -7% The decline at Mazda would have been a lot worse if it weren't for the arrival of the CX-5. Certainly, the new Mazda6 can't arrive soon enough (the current model's sales fell by half) but it's still months away. All other Mazdas declined except for the Miata (+4%). VOLVO

+2% Volvo's newest models both made some headway in July. The XC60 (+73%) actually made a lot of headway, while the S60 (+22%) trailed along in its wake. All other Volvos were down — none more so than the S80 (-50%). JAGUAR LAND ROVER +14% Jaguar +3% Jaguar was able to reverse last month's slide, thanks to its sedans, both the big XJ (+9%) and the XF (+3%). The XK coupe/convertible (-17%) were no help at all. Land Rover +18% The Evoque continues to be the big news at Land Rover, although the company did manage to sell a few more examples of the LR2 (+33%) than last year. MITSUBISHI -47% July saw big declines all around for Mitsubishi, although the Outlander Sport fell by only 7%. Sales of the battery-powered "i" car held steady at 33 units. PORSCHE +1% Sports cars were the heroes at Porsche, although the brand's overall performance wasn't very heroic. The new Boxster (+77%) had the biggest percentage gain, followed by the new 911 (+43%). The Panamera was flat and the Cayenne declined (-17%). SUZUKI -7% The SX4 compact, the Kizashi sedan, and the Equator pickup all dropped compared to last year. The Grand Vitara increased (+23%), but not enough. TOP 10 BESTSELLING NAMEPLATES IN JULY1. Ford F-series 49,3142. Toyota Camry 29,9133. Chevrolet Silverado 28,9724. Honda Accord 28,6395. Nissan Altima 26,6026. Honda Civic 25,0047. Dodge Ram 23,8248. Toyota Corolla/Matrix 23,6409. Ford Fusion 23,32610. Ford Escape 21,572