

RBH Mindset

JUNE 2023

“It’s too expensive”

“What if I run out of battery?”

“The infrastructure isn’t good enough yet”



Dispelling myths
around electric vehicle
ownership
in the UK

The UK loves electric cars. The evidence is infallible. YouGov polls show that 70% of us think they're a great idea, and 60% of us say we're likely to buy one. However, these percentages don't seem to lead to conversion. Though there has been a 40% increase in the UK registrations of full electric vehicles, there remains a clear divide as more than 83% of the market is still non-electric.

The barriers to electric car ownership haven't shifted dramatically in the mainstream press for the past five years. We've all heard the same excuses time and time again:

"It's too expensive."

"The infrastructure isn't there yet."

"What if I run out of battery?"

So, instead of going further and further into the detail of these barriers, this report is going to look at the true anxiety behind purchase, the insights that could be used to overcome them and even some of the more bizarre elements we know users are petrified of that never get spoken about from our research.

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Let's start with the fun stuff then, shall we? At RBH we built a chatbot for a large automotive brand specifically for the launch of an electric vehicle, into the luxury market. It was aimed at dispelling myths around electric vehicle ownership. At the same time, it gave us valuable first-person insight into how people feel about electric cars in a specific luxury segment.

We're not talking about 'got the latest iPhone, VR headset, TikTok trend, oat-milk-drinking fashionista environmentalists. No, we're talking about a predominantly 45+ audience with a mix of old and new money.

With thousands of records on what people are asking about electric cars in the UK, from a non 'early adopter' audience that is used to engaging with a brand from a luxury (rather than innovation) perspective, we began collating some of the more interesting issues that cropped up.

1. Can I charge my phone or will it drain the EV's battery?
2. Can I charge it in the rain?
3. What happens if they overheat? Will they catch on fire?

Yes, these were genuine concerns. And here is how we worked to dispel them.

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1.

You can fully charge an iPhone from 0% to 100% 5,374 times on a Tesla Model 3 (for example) before it runs out of battery. With an iPhone able to play back 29 hours of video, you could theoretically watch 155,846 hours of movies – or 48,200 views of 'Titanic', all the way through, credits and all – on a single charge of that Model 3.



2.

The unhappy association of electricity and water seems to have caused some anxiety in electric car considerers, perhaps along the lines of the image of a toaster in a bathtub. However, there is no risk of charging your electric or hybrid vehicle in the rain – even in Britain. The charging points and cables are thoroughly tested and contain numerous safety features to ensure they are fully weatherproof. In fact, a car such as the Nissan Leaf could be entirely submerged under a metre of water for 30 minutes before any sort of electrical or motor fault would occur.

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3.

Electric vehicles are less likely to catch fire than their fossil fuel-powered counterparts. In fact, a study by the National Fire Protection Association found that electric vehicles are 1.5% as likely to do so. That means you're more likely to get struck by lightning or be killed by a swarm of bees than it is for your electric car to catch alight.





And now on to the more conventional misconceptions about EV ownership.

4. “I can’t afford an electric vehicle”



As with petrol and diesel cars, electric vehicles vary in price massively. There is a range of both budget and high-end options, suitable for every lifestyle. However, initial purchase costs aside, the running costs of an electric vehicle are considerably lower. An electric vehicle owner will save an average of £1,200 a year on fuel costs, compared to petrol/diesel car owners. That’s a whopping 353 Tesco meal deals (providing you have a Clubcard, of course).

On top of this, electric vehicle owners may not even have to spare the cost of charging their vehicles at home. As of March 2023, there are over 33,000 electric vehicle charging points at workplaces in the UK, saving the owner money on both installation and electricity costs.

There are also several government incentives available to electric car owners, including a £2,500 grant towards the purchase of an electric vehicle, and funding of up to 75% of the installation of a charging point at your home.

So, people might think that they can’t afford to buy an electric vehicle, whereas really, they can’t afford not to.

5. “The infrastructure isn’t good enough yet”

Infrastructure. This is one of the most common reasons people give for not taking the plunge with an electric vehicle. There are not enough charging points available to enable them to seamlessly switch to electric. However, under scrutiny, this argument crumbles. Looking at a map of charging points across the UK – there is barely a patch that isn’t saturated with pin drops.

As of March 2023, there are 42,566 public electric vehicle charging points across the UK. That’s more charging points in the UK than there are McDonald’s in the whole world. And that’s not including the aforementioned workplace charging points.

With the government investing £1.3bn into electric charging infrastructure, by the end of 2023, there will be more public electric vehicle charging points than there are pubs in the UK.

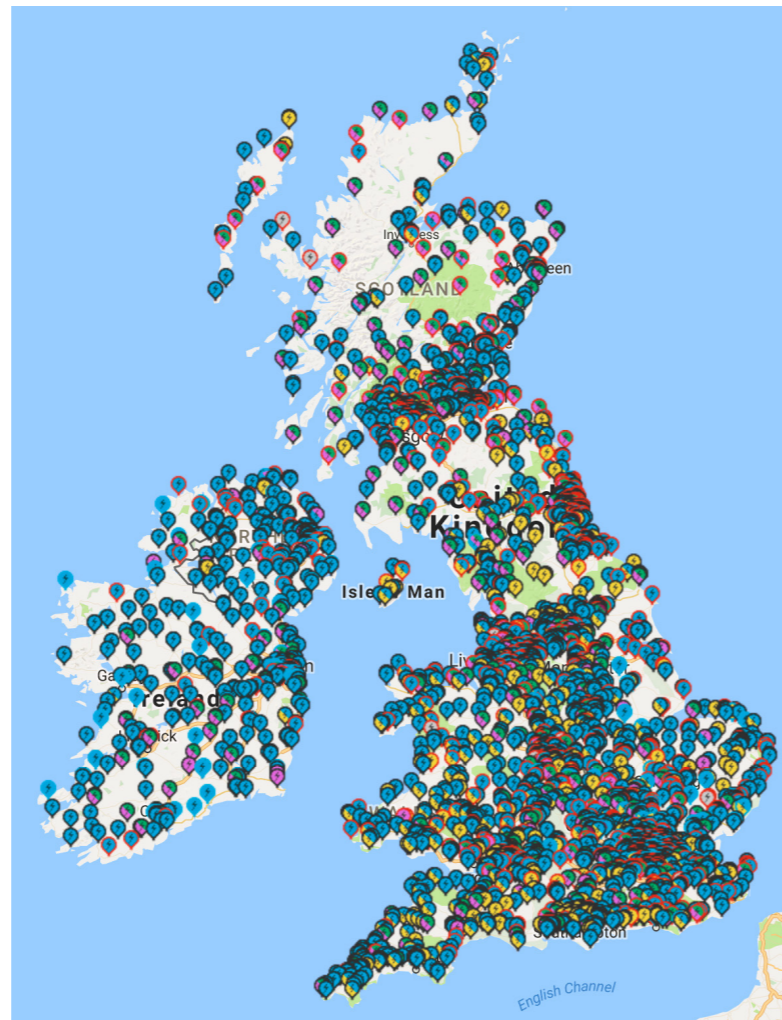


Image source: electrek.co



6. “What if I run out of battery?”

Another common concern we hear time and time again is that electric cars are no good for long journeys. However, the average range of an EV is 211 miles on a single charge – the distance from Manchester to London. And if you’re going further than that, it is very unlikely that you won’t be near a charging station at some point on your journey.

But then you get the typical complainers: “I don’t want to have to stop for hours in a service station whilst I wait for my car to charge.” Whilst it might take a few hours to charge your vehicle to 100%, most vehicles reach 40% charge in just 15 minutes. That’s enough to get you all the way down to Southampton in the time it takes for you to grab a coffee and a bathroom break at the motorway services. And, unless you have a superhuman bladder, it’s likely you’re going to need that break before your car runs out of battery.



Wrapping UP

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This is by no means an exhaustive list of the general population's perceptions of EVs in the UK. It is merely designed to show that in dispelling any myths that create barriers, brands should do so by using surprising pieces of insight, or by creatively weaving facts and figures together to form a compelling argument.

We know from research that humans can't handle more than 32 pieces of information in our minds. We've tried here to demonstrate how when we shift the narrative on electric vehicles, we should do so in a creative and relatable manner – instead of via WLTP ranges with large asterisks sitting alongside.

To find a team who can help you creatively break down barriers like these, look no further than RBH Creative Communications.

Electric vehicles in the UK

If you're keen to keep
your brand working smart
and turn these insights
into something powerful,
get in touch with RBH by
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