

Toyota remains top in global vehicle sales, beats VW, GM

January 21 2015, by Yuri Kageyama



In this Feb. 4, 2014 file photo, visitors inspect cars on display at a Toyota gallery in Tokyo. Toyota Motor Corp. stayed at the top in global vehicle sales in 2014, but is pessimistic about this year. The Japanese automaker sold 10.23 million vehicles, beating out Volkswagen and General Motors to take that auto industry crown for the third year straight. Toyota was less upbeat about the future, expecting to sell fewer trucks and cars this year, at 10.15 million vehicles, down 1 percent year-on-year, according to numbers released Wednesday, Jan. 21, 2015. (AP Photo/Koji Sasahara, File)

Toyota Motor Corp. stayed at the top in global vehicle sales in 2014, taking that auto industry crown for the third year straight, but was less

upbeat about this year.

The Japanese automaker sold 10.23 million vehicles, beating out Volkswagen and General Motors. But it expects to sell fewer trucks and cars this year, forecasting [sales](#) will fall 1 percent year-on-year to 10.15 million vehicles, according to numbers released Wednesday.

The drop is largely due to a projected 9 percent plunge in Japan sales. Japan sales had been inflated in the early part of last year ahead of a sales tax hike. Overall, the Japanese auto market is weakening because of population decline.

Toyota expects overseas sales to grow 2 percent this year to more than 8 million vehicles from 7.9 million vehicles last year.

Volkswagen AG of Germany sold 10.14 million vehicles in 2014, up 4 percent from the previous year. Detroit-based General Motors Co. was third at 9.92 million vehicles, a company record and 2 percent higher than its tally in 2013. GM gave its numbers earlier this month.

Selling 10 million vehicles around the world in a year is a milestone for major automakers. And the race is intense as automakers increasingly compete in new markets.

Toyota's sales grew 6 percent in the U.S. from the previous year, 13 percent in China, and 10 percent in Brazil, according to the maker of the Camry sedan, Prius hybrid and Lexus luxury models.



In this June 30, 2014 file photo, a man, left, checks Toyota cars parked before being loaded onto a cargo ship for export at Yokohama port, near Tokyo. Toyota Motor Corp. stayed at the top in global vehicle sales in 2014, but is pessimistic about this year. The Japanese automaker sold 10.23 million vehicles, beating out Volkswagen and General Motors to take that auto industry crown for the third year straight. Toyota was less upbeat about the future, expecting to sell fewer trucks and cars this year, at 10.15 million vehicles, down 1 percent year-on-year, according to numbers released Wednesday, Jan. 21, 2015. (AP Photo/Koji Sasahara, File)

Toyota suffered a setback in 2011, when its production was hobbled by the earthquake and tsunami in northeastern Japan. But it made a comeback as No. 1 in 2012.

GM had been the top-selling automaker for more than seven decades until being surpassed by Toyota in 2008.

But it is Volkswagen that has been racking up stellar growth in recent years, beating GM last year and in 2013. But that year, GM would have won if both companies had been compared without the sales of industrial

truck brands, which GM doesn't make.

Last year, Volkswagen outsold GM even without its heavy trucks, which totaled 199,900 vehicles. Toyota's Hino division, which makes trucks, sold 168,000 vehicles last year.

Toyota executives purposely exude a low-key approach about their global ambitions, stressing the company just wants to make and sell one car at a time.

That humility has been even more pronounced after the automaker was slammed with a massive recall scandal, fines from U.S. authorities and many lawsuits, especially in the U.S. since 2009.



In this May 8, 2014 photo, visitors look at cars displayed at a Toyota gallery in Tokyo. Toyota Motor Corp. stayed at the top in global vehicle sales in 2014, but is pessimistic about this year. The Japanese automaker sold 10.23 million

vehicles, beating out Volkswagen and General Motors to take that auto industry crown for the third year straight. Toyota was less upbeat about the future, expecting to sell fewer trucks and cars this year, at 10.15 million vehicles, down 1 percent year-on-year, according to numbers released Wednesday, Jan. 21, 2015. (AP Photo/Koji Sasahara, File)

But Toyota is eager to elevate its brand to more than a maker of reasonably priced, reliable products with race cars and luxury models that can help shed its previous staid and boring image.

It is also a leader in green technology, having scored success with its Prius gas-electric hybrid, and is now banking on an even more futuristic technology called fuel cells.

It delivered a fuel cell car to the Japanese prime minister last week, and is rolling out the Mirai fuel cell, which means "future," overseas later this year.

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