

China auto sales rise 7.9 percent in May as electrics surge

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China's auto sales rose 7.9 percent in May from a year earlier as purchases of electric and gasoline-electric hybrid vehicles more than doubled to 102,000, an industry group reported Tuesday.

Sales of SUVs, sedans and minivans rose to 1.9 million, according to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers. Total [vehicle sales](#), including trucks and buses, rose 9.6 percent to 2.3 million.

Year-to-date sales rose 5.1 percent to 9.9 million, rebounding from 2017's annual growth of just 1.4 percent.

Sales of electric and gasoline-electric hybrids rose 126 percent over a year earlier. Through May, sales of electrics and hybrids rose 142 percent to 328,000.

Beijing has spent heavily to transform China into the world's biggest electric car market and is preparing to enforce sales quotas to press global automakers to speed up development.

The Finance Ministry says auto import duties will be reduced from 25 percent to 15 percent on most vehicles, effective July 1. That followed pledges to buy more U.S. goods and end restrictions on foreign ownership in the industry.

Ford Motor Co. responded by announcing a cut in prices of imported models. But [industry analysts](#) say automakers including Ford, General

Motors Co. and Volkswagen AG are likely to gain little in sales, because most of their vehicles sold in China are produced in local factories.

The tariff cut is likely to benefit high-end European and Japanese brands such as BMW AG, VW's Audi unit and Toyota Motor Co.'s Lexus that import more of their vehicles, as well as Tesla, the electric car brand that has no China factory, according to industry analysts.

— Nissan Motor Co. sales rose 14.3 percent to 128,059. For the five months through May, sales gained 10.8 percent to 589,409.

— Toyota sales rose 10.9 percent to 122,400. Year-to-date sales gained 10.9 percent to 562,200.

— Volkswagen AG said May sales rose 4.1 percent to 251,600. Sales so far this year are up 7.9 percent at 1.2 million.

— BMW AG said sales of BMW and MINI brand vehicles shrank 10.1 percent to 45,860. Year-to-date sales were up 2.5 percent at 248,870.

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