

# BMW's March car sales break all monthly records

## China overtakes U.S. as biggest market in first quarter

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FRANKFURT -- BMW said first-quarter new-car sales were the highest ever on the back of March sales that broke all previous records as its three largest markets posted double-digit growth.

China overtook the United States as the group's largest single market in the first quarter, cementing its place as the biggest driver of growth for the premium car industry.

Group sales, including the Mini and Rolls-Royce brands, increased by 12 percent last month to 185,728, bringing the cumulative tally so far this year to 425,528 for an overall gain of 11.2 percent.

BMW said March sales eclipsed the previous monthly record from last June, thanks to strong showings for its 1 series volume model and a good start for the revamped 3 series.

"These outstanding results are due to our attractive, young model range and our strategy of healthy, balanced growth across the globe," said BMW sales chief Ian Robertson in a statement on Wednesday.

"We aim to continue the momentum with additional new models this year, such as the BMW 6 Series Gran Coupe and a model revision of the flagship BMW 7 series," he said.

BMW reaffirmed its plans to grow faster than the market and achieve new record sales for its brands.

Group sales in China grew 41.1 percent to 30,593 last month and by 36.8 percent to 80,014 for the quarter. In the United States, March sales climbed 13 percent to 29,806 and 16.6 percent to 75,729 for the quarter. Volume in Germany increased 11.6 percent to 30,981 in March and by 2 percent to 66,222 for the quarter.

Last week, Robertson told reporters at the New York auto show that the company enjoyed all time high sales in the first quarter with over 400,000 vehicles delivered to customers.

The BMW brand held off rival Audi in their neck-on-neck race for the top spot in the industry. On Tuesday Audi said it sold 346,100 cars in the first quarter, only about

10,000 fewer than the BMW brand. Mercedes-Benz followed with 313,902 vehicles sold in the first three months.

BMW brand sales were up 13.4 percent to 134,895 in March and 11 percent to 356,548 for the first three months.

Mini sold 32,421 cars last month, up 5.6 percent, and 68,210 in the quarter, an increase of 12.1 percent.

Rolls-Royce sales rose 6.5 percent to 770 cars in the quarter. BMW did not give March sales for the brand.

*Source: Reuters, Automotive News Europe research*

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