



Electric vehicle purchase and customer service difficulties brought before The Motor Ombudsman

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Problems experienced by buyers of electric vehicles reach The Motor Ombudsman to aid resolution...



- Issues encountered at the point of sale, and the customer service received post-purchase, were the leading reasons for consumers bringing an electric vehicle (EV)-related complaint to The Motor Ombudsman in 2021
- Vehicle range and battery issues drove the smallest proportion of EV disputes last year
- A full refund for the price paid for an electric vehicle was the most requested resolution to a complaint by EV owners



The Motor Ombudsman tells us:

London, 01 February 2022 The Motor Ombudsman, the Ombudsman dedicated to the automotive sector, has reported that a third (33%) of disputes submitted by consumers in relation to the purchase or ownership of an electric vehicle (EV), to its dispute resolution service in 2021, were due to an issue at the point of sale, or because of the customer service they had subsequently received after buying the car from a business.

EV buyers who brought their complaints to The Motor Ombudsman over the course of last year, were driven by factors such as vehicle delivery delays, being overcharged versus pre-agreed prices, having vehicle registration issues on collection, and their concerns not being resolved by the retailer to their satisfaction.

Problems relating to a specific area of an EV or its on-board systems accounted for the source of the remainder (67%) of disputes submitted by consumers. For example, software glitches drove the second biggest cause of complaints in relation to an electric vehicle (13%), with updates and system errors sparking customer discontent. Similarly, 12% of the difficulties highlighted by consumers in 2021 resulted from the car not charging to its full potential, with component-specific problems relating to the charging flap and socket also brought to the fore.

Similar to the vehicle exterior (11%) where bodywork defects were reported on delivery, the interior was also not spared from consumer complaints (9%). Sub-standard audio quality from the in-car entertainment unit, inaccurate satellite navigation systems, as well as incorrect and missing cabin equipment, were all subjects of dispute for the consumer. The vehicle chassis area and propulsion equally plagued consumers (9%), with stalling due to electric motor faults, and suspension and braking failures, amongst the more prominent issues.



In contrast to the high proportion of customer service and point of sale concerns, batteries and range drove the smallest proportion of EV complaints to The Motor Ombudsman last year at 7% and 6% respectively. In respect to the battery, malfunctions included a single case of a vehicle fire, with parts delays, and lower specification battery replacements, amongst the incidences logged by EV buyers. The principal concern with the range was the delivery of lower-than-advertised mileage on a full charge, a particular issue for EV owners residing in rural areas who rely on being able to drive a significant distance after plugging in.

With the UK's electric vehicle parc being relatively new, and there being fewer moving parts compared to a car powered by an internal combustion engine, service and repair concerns in relation to EVs were not seen as a prominent issue by consumers in 2021. This is in contrast to around 1,700 service and repair cases which were passed to The Motor Ombudsman's dispute resolution team last year, due to a problem in conjunction with a petrol, diesel or hybrid vehicle.

“A full refund please...”



From the individuals who submitted a complaint in relation to an issue with their electric vehicle during 2021, a full refund for the price paid for their car was the most requested resolution to their dispute (22%), with a replacement vehicle, a free-of-charge repair, and an expansion of the terms to cover the cost of the rectification of a mechanical problem not covered by the existing warranty, each accounting for around 15% of the resolutions requested. Less than 10% asked for compensation in light of the problems that had occurred, with an apology seen as the least favoured award out of those sought by motorists.

Furthermore, for those motorists who applied a monetary amount to their ideal resolution to bring their electric vehicle complaint to a close, the average claim equated to £10,700. This is more than double the claim value seen across The Motor Ombudsman's four Codes of Practice during the first half of last year (£4,085), which is likely due to the initial outlay for a zero emission vehicle often being higher than that for an equivalent petrol or diesel model.

Bill Fennell, Chief Ombudsman and Managing Director of The Motor Ombudsman, said: "Electric vehicles account for a relatively small proportion of the overall disputes that we see on an annual basis. Our latest data analysis for 2021 provides a snapshot of the principal issues affecting the customer's EV purchase and ownership journey, and where complaints are arising. It's interesting to note that many of the EV disputes being raised are around point of sale issues and the quality of service received, complaints which are equally seen with traditional internal combustion-engined vehicles." Bill added: "While EVs remain a small proportion of the total vehicle parc, vehicle registrations are increasing year-on-year. As such, it is likely that the volume of consumer complaints will rise in line with this trend. We will therefore continue to identify the key areas of consumer dissatisfaction to drive ongoing improvement across the sector."

To view the dedicated category on electric vehicles on The Motor Ombudsman's Knowledge Base, visit [electric-vehicles](#).



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About The Motor Ombudsman

The Motor Ombudsman is the fully impartial Ombudsman dedicated solely to the automotive sector, and self-regulates the UK's motor industry through its comprehensive Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI)-approved Codes of Practice. Thousands of businesses, including vehicle manufacturers, warranty product providers, franchised dealers and independent garages, are accredited to one or more of the Codes, which drive even higher standards of work and service, and give consumers added protection, peace of mind and trust during the vehicle purchase and ownership experience.

For more information on The Motor Ombudsman, visit www.TheMotorOmbudsman.org.