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Independent forecourts leading on fairer pump prices, RAC analysis shows

Just 10% (407) of a sample of more than 4,500 UK forecourts are charging a fair price for petrol and diesel, with the vast majority of these being independently owned sites rather than major fuel retailers, new [RAC Fuel Watch](#) analysis of Experian Catalist price data shows.*

The RAC believes that retailers should be charging nearer to 174p for a litre of unleaded to reflect wholesale prices over the last two weeks, well down on the current average of 188p – yet its analysis of data shows that only 157

petrol stations are selling a litre at between 170.9p and 179.9p. Of these, 125 are independently owned petrol stations, 28 are major supermarket sites and four are owned by oil companies. The remainder – some 4,436 (or 96%) of all the sites sampled – are selling unleaded at 180p or more a litre, way over what the RAC believes is reasonable based on the wholesale price.

The situation is hardly better when it comes to diesel, with the current average price of a litre standing at 196p. Taking the average delivered wholesale price over the last fortnight of 150p, plus 7p retailer margin and 20% VAT should give a pump price of around 189p per litre – yet just 250 out of 4,805 forecourts are selling at a price of between 180p and 189.9p. Interestingly, 192 of these are independently owned with just 43 being run by major supermarkets and 15 being oil company owned.

While it's encouraging to see more independents undercutting the biggest retailers, traditionally the supermarkets have led the fuel market with the cheapest pump prices. At the moment however, the average price of a litre of petrol and diesel at the big four supermarkets is only around a penny lower than the UK average when it's historically been around 4p.

The RAC continues to urge all retailers – but especially the larger supermarkets that sell the most fuel – to cut pump prices now to reflect the fact the wholesale cost of both petrol and diesel have been falling for six straight weeks now, as a result of the lower oil price.

RAC fuel spokesman Simon Williams said:

“In this most expensive of summers, drivers need all the help they can get to keep their spending down so we applaud those retailers who are doing the right thing for their customers and charging a fair price for petrol and diesel, more in line with the lower wholesale costs.

“Weekly wholesale petrol prices – that's the price retailers pay to buy the fuel – have fallen by a massive 17p a litre, from a weekly average of around 152p at the start of June to just 135p this week. Yet average pump prices have reduced by a paltry 4p. It's time for every retailer to do the right thing and cut their prices to more reasonable levels.

“Our analysis of this new data shows something else that is very telling. It

appears to be the case that it's no longer the big four supermarkets that lead on price, but instead smaller independent sites that are prepared to buck the national forecourt trend. Certainly, the days of fuel 'price wars' – where the supermarkets simultaneously cut their prices and made a big deal of doing so – appear to be well and truly over. Instead, supermarkets seem to prefer to battle over grocery prices which, while helpful, is ignoring the huge sums households are having to fork out for fuel to keep their cars running.

“Last month, the cost of filling a typical 55-litre family-sized car with petrol rose by a record £9.12, with diesel just behind at £8.59. For a car that does 40 miles to the gallon, that means it costs a driver around 22p for every mile they drive – up from around 16p at the start of the year. Drivers are desperate for some relief at the pumps yet, with a few notable exceptions, few retailers seem to be willing to price their fuel fairly.

“Drivers who fill up at supermarket forecourts have every right to feel let down that they are being charged well over the odds for petrol and diesel right now.”

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* Analysis of Experian Catalist fuel price data for 18 July 2022, covering petrol sold at 4,593 forecourts and diesel sold at 4,805 forecourts. UKPIA reports there are around 8,300 forecourts in total in the UK

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About the RAC

The RAC, an iconic UK brand, provides complete peace of mind to 13 million UK private and business drivers, whatever their motoring needs. As well as its premium nationwide breakdown assistance service – with an expert branded patrol workforce attending more than two million breakdowns every year – it offers a wide range of market-leading products across insurance, legal services, vehicle inspections and service, maintenance and repair. The RAC is also at the forefront in helping drivers make the switch to electric vehicles and leads in the development of new solutions for businesses and OEMs, partnering with the best in the motoring and mobility space.

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