

China plug-in cars top 60% of sales for the first time as combustion market collapses

"The age of combustion only, is over."

Ray Brennan May 23, 2026

China's auto market just crossed a major symbolic line: For the first time, plug-in vehicles made up more than 60% of all new car sales in a single month.

But the milestone wasn't driven only by [electric vehicle](#) growth. It also came as gas-powered vehicle sales fell sharply, signaling a deeper shift in the world's biggest auto market.

A post in [r/electricvehicles](#) highlighted April sales data relayed by [CleanTechnica](#) that showed plug-in cars reached a record 61% share of China's new vehicle market. Battery-[electric vehicles](#) accounted for 42%, while plug-in hybrids made up 13% and extended-range EVs added another 6%.

According to the [Reddit post](#), overall vehicle sales in China fell 22% year over year to about 1.4 million units. [Internal combustion engine vehicles were hit hardest, plunging 37% compared to the same month last year.](#)

[Pure EVs were the standout.](#) Even after the end of a purchase-tax exemption that had helped fuel earlier demand, BEV sales still rose 2% year over year to 579,000 units.

The Reddit summary also said China's year-to-date plug-in share has now reached 49%, with BEVs alone at 32%, and predicted plug-ins could end the first half of the year above the 50% mark.

[China is the world's largest car market, so changes there can ripple through global automaking, energy demand, and vehicle pricing. When plug-in cars gain market share that quickly, it puts more pressure on automakers still relying heavily on gas-powered models.](#)

The details are especially striking because this wasn't just a story of EVs booming thanks to subsidies. The post noted that incentives are less generous now, yet fully [electric cars](#) still grew while combustion models cratered.

That dynamic led some Reddit commenters to argue that the real industry problem may no longer be EV overcapacity, but too much production tied to older gas technology. As one commenter put it, "this looks a lot more like combustion over-capacity."

Higher EV volumes can help bring down costs, expand model options, and accelerate improvements in charging and battery technology. It also means less tailpipe pollution in dense urban areas, where air pollution can have major health consequences.

Several forces appear to be pushing the transition forward in China. The Reddit discussion pointed to high gas prices, a steady stream of new EV models, and restrictions on gas-car ownership in some major metro areas that make plug-in vehicles more attractive.

The mix inside the plug-in category is shifting, too. Early in the year, plug-in hybrids gained ground while fully electric sales softened, but April reversed that trend. The post said BEVs claimed a 68% share of plug-in sales in April, above the year's 65% average.

China's exports are also helping spread that momentum. The Reddit summary said plug-ins made up a record 53% of Chinese auto exports in April, or roughly 406,000 units, suggesting overseas markets are also being affected by the country's EV-heavy production pipeline.

More competition typically means more affordable options. If you're shopping for a car, comparing total ownership costs between electric and gas models — including fuel, maintenance, and incentives in your area — may increasingly favor going electric.

One Reddit user commented: "The age of combustion only, is over." Maybe not yet, but it does appear to be on its way out.

Article link: <https://www.thecooldown.com/green-business/china-auto-market-plug-in-vehicles-sales/>

(AA note: The hand writing is on the wall for combustion engines. Why dig up ancient fossil fuels, burn them, creating GHG emissions that are warming the whole planet, when we could be fueling our cars with clean, inexhaustible wind and solar, backed by batteries? Instead of embracing the obvious need to change, our govt. gave away the EV market to China while forcing coal plants that the owners did not want to keep open, to reopen and continue spewing CO2 into the atmosphere???. Why would we do that? Oil company money – not the welfare of Americans.)