The Rise of Chinese OEM

China is the largest automotive market in the world. With over 23 million vehicles registered in 2024, it alone accounts for approximately 30% of global annual registrations. Until 2022, the Chinese market was predominantly led by foreign OEMs, making it a critical volume hub for foreign automotive brands such as Volkswagen, Toyota, and Honda.

However, after the COVID-19 pandemic Chinese brands started to advance. By 2023, their combined volumes had reached parity with foreign brands, and in 2024, they held 59% of the local market share.

In 2023, BYD overtook Volkswagen, becoming the top-selling brand in China and in 2024 BYD has secured the 6th position globally among automotive groups by volume.

Rather than competing head-to-head with foreign OEMs on traditional combustion platforms, Chinese manufacturers strategically embraced electrification early on, using it as a lever to leapfrog legacy players. While many international brands continued to treat BEVs as a long-term alternative to ICE vehicles, Chinese OEMs fully committed to New Energy Vehicle ("NEV") development, investing heavily in innovation, vertical integration, and product diversification. This put China in the enviable position of being able to lead the market in the manufacture of NEV's, most of these being battery electric (BEV's) and plug-in hybrid vehicles (PHEV's).

While Chinese brands have continued to expand their presence in the domestic market, they have also experienced significant growth in exports between 2019 and 2025. This surge has been driven by rapidly increasing production capacity, which not only supports high volumes in the domestic market but also enables a strategic shift toward international opportunities.

We have seen that growth here in New Zealand. In May 2022 RedBook had 8 Chinese brands in the database and between them there were 46 models of vehicle. In December 2025 that has swelled to 21 different brands and 109 different models. So far in 2026 another brand has come on board with 3 models.

The year-on-year growth between 2024 and 2025 also shows how the Chinese brands have surged into the NZ market. Below are the Top10 growth by percentage, the top six of which are all Chinese brands:

Brand	2025 Sales	2024 Sales	YoY Growth %
JAECOO	978	237	312.66%
BYD	3786	968	291.12%
LDV	1408	751	87.48%
OMODA	828	468	76.92%
MG	4183	3062	36.61%
GWM	3787	2896	30.77%
MAZDA	4950	3882	27.51%
TESLA	1592	1286	23.79%
BMW	1786	1483	20.43%
AUDI	1303	1101	18.35%

These brands are taking market share away from the dominant brands in the NZ market, with Ford, Mitsubishi, Kia and Suzuki all losing market share between 2024 and 2025.

Brand	2025 Sales	2024 Sales	YoY Growth %	2025 Market Share %	2024 Market Share %	Market Share Change %	2025 Rank	2024 Rank	Rank Change
TOYOTA	33019	30143	9.54%	23.95%	23.44%	0.52%	1	1	0
FORD	15674	17839	-12.14%	11.37%	13.87%	-2.50%	2	2	0
MITSUBISHI	14095	14122	-0.19%	10.22%	10.98%	-0.75%	3	3	0
KIA	8937	8661	3.19%	6.48%	6.73%	-0.25%	4	4	0
SUZUKI	5014	5246	-4.42%	3.64%	4.08%	-0.44%	5	5	0
MAZDA	4950	3882	27.51%	3.59%	3.02%	0.57%	6	8	2
NISSAN	4806	4328	11.04%	3.49%	3.36%	0.12%	7	6	-1
HYUNDAI	4333	4075	6.33%	3.14%	3.17%	-0.02%	8	7	-1
MG	4183	3062	36.61%	3.03%	2.38%	0.65%	9	11	2
GWM	3787	2896	30.77%	2.75%	2.25%	0.50%	10	12	2
BYD	3786	968	291.12%	2.75%	0.75%	1.99%	11	22	11
LDV	1408	751	87.48%	1.02%	0.58%	0.44%	20	26	6
CHERY	1032	0	0.00%	0.75%	0.00%	0.75%	23	0	0
JAECOO	978	237	312.66%	0.71%	0.18%	0.53%	24	44	20
OMODA	828	468	76.92%	0.60%	0.36%	0.24%	27	33	6
VOLVO	715	738	-3.12%	0.52%	0.57%	-0.06%	28	27	-1