



STELLAR RISE FOR OUTBOARD SALES

As global outboard sales reach record highs we look at current and future global trends and how the arrival of diesel will affect the market

- Outboard sales rising in the USA and Europe, partly driven by a shift in consumer demand from cruisers to day boats
- Demand for high performance engines increases
- High demand for powerful diesel outboards predicted, particularly in commercial, defence and superyacht markets

As marine propulsion trends go, the outboard engine's rise to superstar status has been quite phenomenal over the last ten years. A sizeable shift in the type of boats consumers want is certainly a contributing factor. With time at a premium, shorter excursions are becoming more popular and users are increasingly looking for fast, easy-to-handle dayboats.

Why are outboards so popular today?

Versatility

Many boatbuilders point to the enhanced versatility provided by outboard power. Unlike inboards, they can be trimmed for optimal performance or to allow users to venture into shallower waters and raised right out of the water when not in use to reduce corrosion in salt water.

Improved performance & reliability

Significant technological advances over the last 10-15 years, and the advent of four-stroke engines and direct fuel injection two-strokes, have resulted in lighter engines with better reliability, increased fuel efficiency, easier maintenance and all-round user-friendliness.

Ease of use

Today's time-strapped boater is less willing to spend time learning the intricacies of seamanship, so modern integrated system features like digital throttle and shift, automatic trim and digital positioning systems make getting afloat with an outboard far more straightforward.

Twin, triples & quads

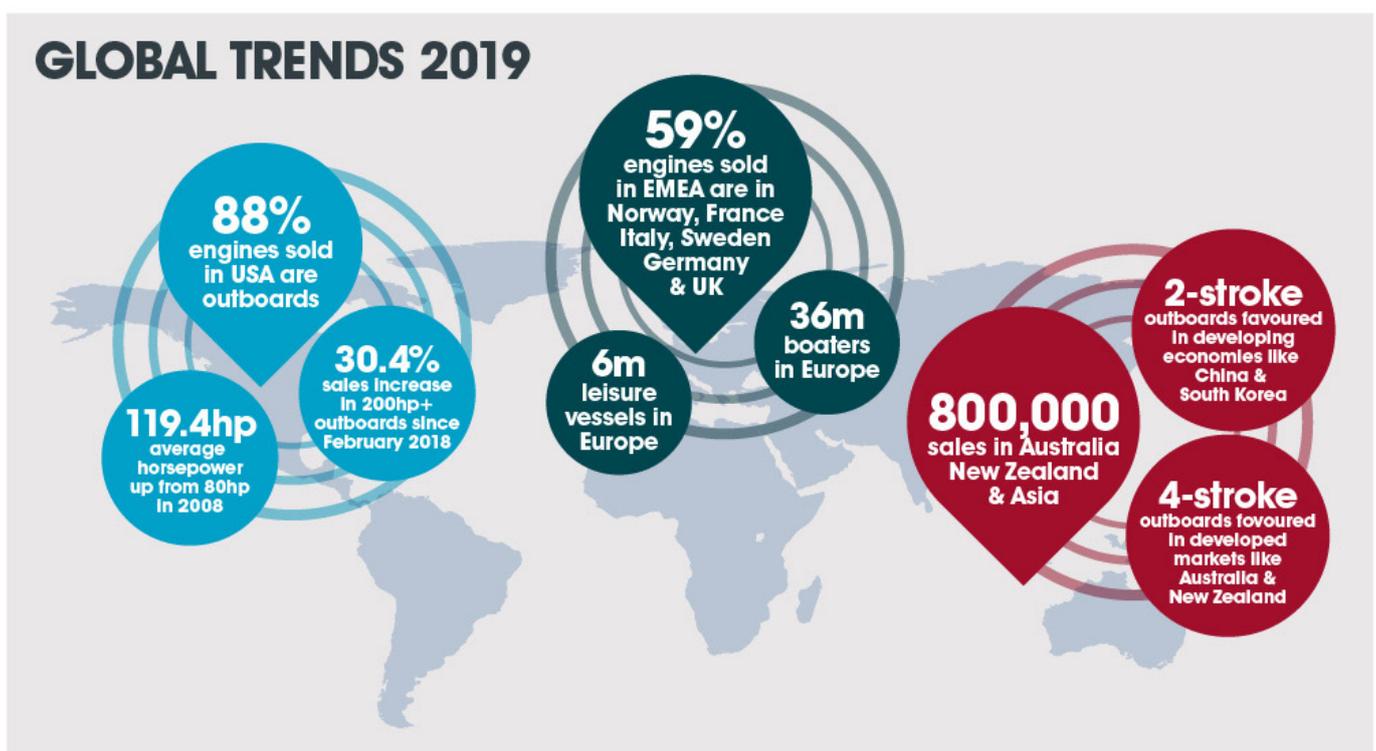
Multiple outboards on the stern will drive a boat more speedily than an inboard, due to the beneficial power-to-weight ratio. Using more than one engine also provides the certainty that if something goes wrong with one engine, you can always use the other to get home safely.



Global trends for 2019

Outboards now make up the majority of global engine sales, ranging from two-stroke engines popular in poorer emerging markets to the more complex four-stroke models that dominate maturer markets in both Europe and the USA.

A move to single fuel policies to promote safety in the commercial, armed forces and superyacht markets is expected to drive strong global sales of high-powered diesel outboards. The lower total cost of ownership and greater fuel efficiency – 25% better than its gasoline equivalent for Cox’s CXO300 – mean these newly emerging diesel outboards are likely to be the engines of choice for commercial users who are also impressed by their high torque and long range.



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80% High-powered outboard sales have grown 80% since 2008.

Let’s take a closer look at the driving forces behind the rise in outboard ownership and how this breaks down across the continents.



USA

The USA is the largest single market for outboard engines, with sales of higher powered outboards (200hp+) growing annually for the last seven years. Total outboard sales across the nation reached a 12-year high in 2018 according to the National Marine Manufacturers' Association (NMMA), while the International Council of Marine Industry Associations (ICOMIA) reports that 88% of all engines sold in the US are now outboards. Higher powered outboard sales have grown over 80% since 2008, when the level was at 33,000 units. This is largely due to the renewed popularity of larger pontoon and centre console boats. The NMMA reports that in 2018, engines of 200hp or more accounted for 25% of the market and sales in this range have doubled over the last five years. These figures look set to rise even higher during 2019 as the NMMA has just released data showing shipments of outboard motors rated above 200hp were up 30.4% year-to-date through February.

Among the trends noted in the USA is a move towards the use of outboards on ever larger vessels such as the HCB 6500 Estrella, the world's largest outboard centre console yacht, fitted with a bank of five engines on her stern. Power levels have also increased; the average horsepower of US outboards in 2008 stood at 80 and grew to 119.4 by 2018.

Predicting substantial interest in diesel outboards following the introduction of higher-powered models over the past couple of years, Dan Gribble, CEO of the California-based marine engine distributor Boatswain's Locker, commented: "Considering the already significant presence of high-horsepower gasoline outboards within our territory, together with the demand for more power, greater reliability and superior fuel economy, the opportunity for high-powered diesel outboard is tremendous."

Western Europe

Europe has also seen a rise in demand for fast, sporty day boats and weekend cruisers with a greater amount of deck space, powered by high-horsepower outboards. If they are only out for a day, many users want to be able to get places fast. And, just as outboard sales in the US are clearly thriving, they are also growing fast in Europe which is seen to hold huge market potential, containing an estimated 36 million boaters and around six million leisure vessels.

Trade industry representatives in France, Germany, Italy, Turkey and the UK all reported in IBI's 2018 European Market Round-up that they had seen strong growth in the sale of outboard-driven vessels such as RIBs and small motorboats. The German watersports association BVWW noted a trend towards "small, outboard-powered motorboats that can be easily handled", while Carla Demaria of the Italian trade association UCINA noted sales of outboard-powered motorboats and multihulls were "excelling" due to the availability of engines with "greater thrust".



According to ICOMIA, in 2017, the two largest European markets for outboards were Norway and France, followed by Italy, Sweden, Germany and the UK. These top six markets account for 59% of the combined EMEA region. However, unlike the US market, outboard sales in EMEA are currently more concentrated in the lower power ranges. Outboard engines below 27hp accounted for 65% of sales in 2017, with engines in the 8-16hp bracket being the top sellers.

Again, fast, reliable diesel outboards are expected to be in high demand in Europe. Aline Villeneuve from one of France's marine industry giants, Fenwick, explained: "We think diesel outboards have been long required by the French market and especially by the military, superyacht tender builders or, more generally, professional users such as fishermen or transport companies."

Rest of the World

Across the rest of the world - including key markets in Australia, New Zealand and Asia - outboard sales account for sales of approximately 800,000 units according to ICOMIA's Marine Engine Committee (IMEC) and the NMMA.

The fastest growing markets outside of the USA and EMEA are in Asia's developing economies such as China, South Korea, Singapore, Malaysia and Inonesia, sales to these markets are dominated by the sale of two-stroke engines predominantly driven by owners of fishing fleets, while the sales of the more complex four-stroke outboards are favoured by the more developed markets.



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