Garage labour rates reach record high of £215 an hour

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The maximum cost of an hour of a garage mechanic's time has reached an unprecedented new high of £215, according to Warranty Direct's annual labour rates study.

Overall, the UK's average labour rate, for main dealer and non-franchised workshops combined, stands at £74.33. Data from more than 10,000 cases was analysed.

Of the 67 counties included in the study, London is the most expensive place to fix a car, at an average £91.99 an hour (franchised and non-franchised garages combined).

The highest individual hourly garage labour rate can also be found in the Capital. One franchised workshop in West London was found to be charging £215 an hour, the highest rate ever recorded by Warranty Direct in the 11 years of the study. Two other garages were billing at more than £200 an hour.

The South East dominated the top 10 dearest regions, with Surrey and Middlesex taking second and third positions. Only South Glamorgan in Wales – a county which includes the city of Cardiff – was not a region surrounding London.

The North of England and Scotland made up the majority of the least expensive places to fix your car, with County Antrim in Northern Ireland and Cornwall in the South West completing the most frugal 10.

Top 10 most expensive regions for garage labour rates (franchised and non-franchised combined)

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REGION AVERAGE COST FOR AN HOUR'S LABOUR (£) % DIFFERENCE TO 2013
London £91.99 3.0%
Surrey £85.83 1.7%
Middlesex £85.17 2.5%
South Glamorgan £83.43 10.0%
Berkshire £81.75 1.7%
Kent £80.81 1.6%
Essex £80.63 -0.5%
Hertfordshire £80.62 -0.4
Buckinghamshire £79.51 -0.9%
West Sussex £77.76 2.4%
Top 10 least expensive regions for garage labour rates (franchised and non-franchised combined)

REGION AVERAGE COST FOR AN HOUR'S LABOUR (£) % DIFFERENCE TO 2013
Angus £58.46 -5.8%
East Lothian £60.28 -6.2%
County Durham £62.45 -9.2%
Ayrshire £65.18 -2.8%
Humberside £65.32 -3.5%
North Yorkshire £65.43 -3.1%
County Antrim £65.69 -3.7%
South Yorkshire £65.98 -5.1%
Cumbria £66.34 -6.7%
Cornwall £66.45 2.9%

The biggest risers and fallers were Cleveland in the North East, where average bills were up 15% year-on-year and Warwickshire, which saw rates drop by 10%. The average price change across the country was a 0.29% increase.

The price gap between franchised and non-franchised was also evaluated. In this year's study, the average main dealer hourly rate (£92.11) was 44.9% more than the average non-franchised rate (£63.56).

In 2006, franchised premises were 83% dearer than non-franchised, meaning that the price gap between main dealers and independent garages has closed up by almost 40% over eight years. This is largely due to an increase in the average rate at independent premises, up from £49.61 in 2006 to £63.56 an

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hour to 2014, whilst main dealers have remained more steady, increasing from £91.07 to £92.11 over the same period.

Price difference between non-franchised & franchised (2006-2014)

2006 +83.57%
2007 +78.91%
2008 +70.23%
2009 +60.71%
2010 +62.06%
2011 +57.93%
2012 +48.56%
2013 +44.22%
2014 +44.9%

Warranty Direct managing director, David Gerrans, said; “While labour rates remain fairly steady, London continues to set new benchmarks for the cost of getting car repairs, with a jaw-dropping rate from one garage that would have many motorists rubbing their eyes in disbelief.

“The shrinking price difference between main dealers and non-franchised workshops could be due to the increasing popularity of dearer fast-fits and auto centres that seem to be taking business away from less expensive independents, as well as the advent of manufacturer schemes that offer discounts for older cars and help keep the overall franchised rate down.”

Warranty Direct (www.warrantydirect.co.uk) is the UK’s leading direct-to-consumer insurer for car, van and bike mechanical and electrical failures.

ENDS

For further information, please contact:
Debbie Beale
Tel: 0208 541 3434
Mob: 07766 088 713
E-mail: debbie@performancecomms.com

Dom Vizor
Tel: 0208 541 3434
E-mail: dom@performancecomms.com

Launched in 1997, Warranty Direct www.warrantydirect.co.uk was the first direct consumer Warranty Company to operate in the UK. It was the first to offer cover against failures caused by ‘wear & tear’ and pioneered warranty cover against faults found during MOT and service procedures. It has also spearheaded several major motoring campaigns, most notably regarding the state of the UK’s potholed roads and the cost of the hourly labour rate for workshop mechanics. It is owned by Cardif Pinnacle, a trading style of Pinnacle Insurance plc and subsidiary of global banking house, BNP Paribas.

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