

Tesla fell just short of delivering 500,000 vehicles in 2020

Tesla fell just shy of hitting CEO Elon Musk's goal of delivering 500,000 vehicles in 2020, the company announced Saturday, having shipped a record 499,550 throughout the year – or 99.91 percent. Tesla said the final tally could vary by as much as 0.5 percent, though, so it's possible that it will eclipse the 500,000 mark by the time it reveals the ultimate figures in its full year results, due out at the end of January.

Either way, that's more than double what the next-largest sellers of electric vehicles did in 2020, like China's BYD or Germany's Volkswagen. And it's a remarkable recovery for Tesla considering the impact the coronavirus pandemic had on its operations during the first half of the year. While Tesla said in January 2020 that it expected to "comfortably exceed" Musk's goal of shipping 500,000 cars worldwide by the end of the year, the company had to close its new factory in China as well as its vehicle plant in Fremont, California for several weeks as the virus spread.

So proud of the Tesla team for achieving this major milestone! At the start of Tesla, I thought we had (optimistically) a 10% chance of surviving at all.
<https://t.co/xCqTL5TG1E>

– Elon Musk (@elonmusk) January 2, 2021

Musk maintained that Tesla would still be able to reach his

goal, and the company followed suit, especially after it launched the Model Y SUV ahead of schedule in March. Tesla delivered 88,400 vehicles in Q1, and 90,650 vehicles in Q2. In October, Tesla said it delivered 139,300 vehicles during the third quarter, slightly better than the 137,000 Wall Street had expected. It also had its fifth consecutive profitable quarter in Q3. All of this helped send the company's stock price into the stratosphere, making it the most valuable automaker on the planet.

Tesla ostensibly met the 500,000-car goal with another classic end-of-quarter push, one that even saw the company's chief designer Franz von Holzhausen out delivering cars. Musk himself prodded Tesla workers last week to go "all out" to hit the mark. "This is a great milestone to rally the company around achieving," he wrote. "All the critics who, as recently as two years ago said that we'd never make it, also called our target of half a million in 2020 'impossible.' The heck with them, we are doing it!"

Tesla said Saturday that it ultimately produced 179,757 vehicles in the fourth quarter and delivered 180,570, bringing its totals to 509,747 and 499,550 for the year, respectively. The company wound up selling around 130,000 more vehicles than it did in 2019.

The self-imposed 500,000-car sales goal is part of Musk's attempt to drag the auto industry into the clean energy age, though it is more modest a bar than he once set. Musk had once predicted Tesla would deliver 1 million vehicles in 2020. But he later backed away from that number after the company ran into trouble ramping up production of its first mass-market electric car, the Model 3.

"So proud of the Tesla team for achieving this major milestone! At the start of Tesla, I thought we had (optimistically) a 10% chance of surviving at all," Musk tweeted Saturday. "Tesla is responsible for 2/3 of all the

personal & professional pain in my life combined. But it was worth it."

<https://www.theverge.com/2021/1/2/22210191/tesla-delivery-goal-elon-musk-vehicles-2020>