

4. Market

BMW broke the mould when it launched the X5 in 1999. The decision to break out of the 3, 5 and 7 Series cast has been subsequently justified by buoyant sales. The number of similar concept products now on offer, following the X5's market introduction to the large 4x4 arena that previously only offered hardcore off-roaders, is further flattering proof of the model's success. Step forward a decade and BMW has rewritten the 4x4 rule book once again. The BMW X6 is the first car of its type in the premium market and offers customers an enticing blend of coupé styling and four-wheel-drive capability and practicality.

The rationale for the BMW X6 is best appreciated when viewed in terms of the choice between the BMW 3 Series Saloon, Touring, Coupé and Convertible. People buy all four versions of the 3 Series depending on their circumstances and desires. The same will apply to the BMW X6 when compared with other BMW X models.

The BMW X6 is undeniably a niche car. However, research has shown that three key buyer profiles exist:

- Buyers who want the command driving position an xDrive product provides, but who also aspire to the sporting style of a coupé.
- Early adopters. BMW broke the mould when launching the X5 and the interest for that model came from early adopters looking for something different. BMW X6 customers will come from a similar demographic.
- The BMW X5 or other Sports Activity Vehicle owners whose families have left home and still want a similar car, but one that doesn't scream 'family'.

Historically, BMW X products have proved popular with new car buyers as the table overleaf indicates. The desirability of BMW X product is backed up by the knowledge that a BMW X5 3.0d is the third biggest selling new vehicle at BMW dealerships*. The BMW X3 2.0d is also popular being the ninth best selling new vehicle.

*Note: In 2007 the BMW 320d Saloon accounted for 12,015 sales, BMW 520d Saloon 8,365 sales and the BMW X5 3.0d 6,233 sales.

BMW UK expects to sell approximately 2,300 X6s in a full year, with the X6 xDrive30d and the X6 xDrive35d accounting for approximately 85 per cent of sales. To put this sales outlook into perspective the table below outlines the popularity of the other X models in the BMW range.

Model	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
BMW X5	469	5,650	6,665	8,536	8,421	10,808	6,254	7,202
BMW X3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	6,711	7,536	7,616	4,888

The BMW X6 sits alongside these models to offer buyers something totally unique. The majority of buyers are expected to be conquest sales from rival manufacturers. High on customers shopping lists will be the bold styling and the advanced drivetrain and chassis.

Tim Abbott, Sales Director at BMW UK, said: "BMW sales have grown exponentially in the last decade from 64,013 in 1997 to 121,831 in 2007. Key to this growth has been our ability to introduce niche vehicles to cater for our growing and more demanding customer base. The BMW X6 is a logical progression. There is a market for this type of vehicle and BMW expects two thirds of buyers to be conquest customers from other manufacturers."

A new nomenclature

Given the proliferation of BMWs producing varying outputs from the same capacity engine, a new solution had to be found for the naming of a vehicle. New models will now adopt 'virtual capacity'. For example, the 325d, 330d and the 335d are all powered by a 3.0-litre diesel engine. When looking at the X6 xDrive30d and the xDrive35d both follow this path. The addition of xDrive to the vehicle name underscores the four-wheel-drive capability.

5. Design

The design and concept of the new BMW X6 sets a new course for Sports Activity Vehicles. Never before in the premium segment has the command driving position of a 4x4 model been combined with the sporting, elegant lines of a coupé. The reason? The same reason that the BMW 3 Series Coupé and Touring models can happily co-exist together to deliver a bespoke design solution to those with specific motoring requirements. Hence the birth of the Sports Activity Coupé.

In its design the BMW X6 showcases all the typical BMW design signatures while adding a new distinctive look. It has been crafted to be stylish, sporting and with a powerful presence. At 1,983mm, the BMW X6 is 50mm wider than a BMW X5 and it is 23mm longer at 4,877mm. Its dimensions give the model a dramatic footprint and create a striking appearance.

At the front, large air intakes positioned far to the outside clearly indicate the cooling requirements of the powerful engines. The air intakes are split horizontally by bars in aluminium colour surrounding the round fog lamps to visually enhance the width of the car. The traditional BMW kidney grille is the largest of any previous or current BMW, and needs to be to feed the engine with the required volume of air. This, combined with the pronounced contours on the bonnet and large, standard specification xenon headlights, enhances the imposing on-road presence.

At the rear, the view is split by horizontal lines and broad shoulders giving the back of the BMW X6 a wider, hunkered down look. Even the rear lights highlight the unique character of the BMW X6, re-interpreting the typical L-shape of a BMW X model and adding a dynamic, flowing look. Extra ground clearance, strikingly-designed wheel arches, four doors, the large rear tailgate as well as the high waistline, bear a clear resemblance in style to BMW's other X models.

The unique proportions of the BMW X6 stand out particularly from the side. The short front body overhang emphasises the dynamic character of the vehicle, the roofline tapering out gently to the rear and the long body overhang at the rear end give the BMW X6 its stretched coupé silhouette. The roof is at its highest point directly over the front row of seats.

Inside, the coupé ethos is carried over with the BMW X6 having accommodation for the driver, front passenger and dedicated two seats for passengers in the rear. A storage compartment separates the two rear seat passengers. Like all BMW X models, the new Sports Activity Coupé offers an elevated, command seating position giving the driver an even better feeling of security and visibility.

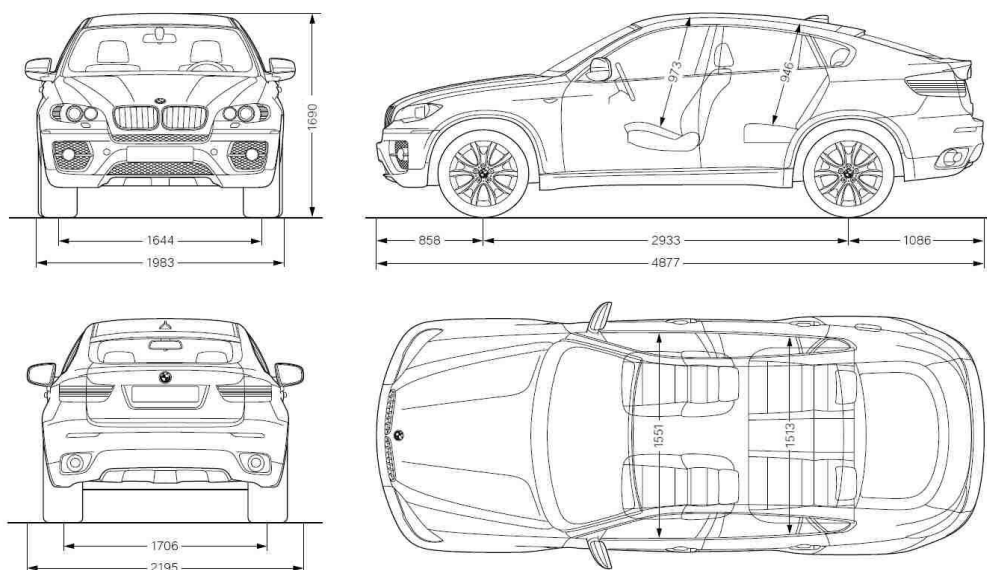
The BMW X6 offers a sports steering wheel with shift paddles as standard. Another interior sporting feature is the knee pads on the centre console that offer both the driver and front passenger additional support and stability.

The coupé lines might indicate a lack of interior headroom, but that assumption would be wrong. An unusually generous feature for a coupé is the substantial headroom at the rear of 946mm giving even tall passengers maximum comfort at all times. Part of the design teams' challenge was to ensure that BMW's Head of Design, Adrian van Hooydonk, could comfortably fit his 6ft 4inch frame into the rear seats. Incidentally, the BMW X6 has more headroom in the back seats than the Mercedes Benz C Class Saloon. (946mm vs 942mm).

The boot offers a capacious 570 litres, far more than the space usually available in a coupé and more than many conventional 4x4 competitors. This enables four passengers in a BMW X6 to each take along a set of golf bags in the boot. The boot contents are covered by a concertina cover to offer security and easy access. It can also be folded flat and stored if needed. To increase luggage capacity even further, the rear seat backrest folds down in a 60:40 split to offer a maximum of 1,450 litres.

A two-stage gas spring featured as standard allows the driver and his passengers to determine the final position of the tailgate when open according to their requirements. This avoids the risk of damage, for example, when opening the hatch in an indoor car park with a low ceiling.

Dimensions



6. Q & A

This is a new section to a BMW press pack, the content of which is based on an interview between a journalist and Martin Sloan, the Product Manager for BMW X products in the UK. The aim of the section is to provide you with the answers to pointed questions that may not be outlined elsewhere in the press pack and for quotes that can be used in your articles.

What is the point of the X6? An X3, X5, 3 Series Touring and 5 Series Touring between them cover off practicality, four-wheel-drive, dynamic driving and the high up driving position.

The sales growth at BMW in the last 10 years has been all about bringing to market new, niche vehicles that specifically target what certain customers are after. The BMW X6 is just another step in this philosophy. The models you mention all cater to different people even though there might be some cross over. The BMW X6 is aimed at customers who like the high up, command driving position, but appreciate the attributes of styling and performance that are synonymous with a coupé. The BMW X5 is closest to the X6 in terms of positioning, but the X6 has several unique selling points aside from styling – namely Dynamic Performance Control, a more sports-oriented gearbox and a full range of turbocharged engines, two of which don't feature on the X5.

Why does the X6 only have four seats?

The BMW X6 is part coupé and all of our coupés have four seats. The other main consideration is that the buyer profile is different too. For example, the BMW X5 can come with five or possible seven-seat configurations. The BMW X6 will be bought more by two person households so the number of seats is not a high factor in the purchasing decision. They are more like to be taking friends to the cinema, than ferrying children to football training.

The BMW X5 is a big car already, but the BMW X6 has an even bigger footprint. Is there really a need to build and sell such cars in the UK?

The BMW X6 might appear an imposing car but that is more down to the styling. By comparison it is smaller in length than an Audi A6 and occupies a footprint barely 500 cm² larger than that car.

You say this is the first time a range has been produced that is all powered by turbocharged engines. Why is this?

This is partly to do with packaging requirements, but the main reason is to achieve our targets for lowering emissions while still improving other performance figures. Additionally, BMW no longer regards turbocharging petrol engines with suspicion, having mastered the art using innovative technology such as high-precision direct injection to great critical acclaim.

Dynamic Performance Control makes an obvious difference to the performance of an X6. What is the weight penalty and will it appear on any other products?

The extra weight of the system is 12kgs and that includes all the extra wiring and control unit. This is a small price to pay for the on-road benefits achieved. We are rightly proud of this new differential, but there are no plans, as yet, for it to be introduced onto other models.

Is Dynamic Performance Control better than the variable M differential that is fitted as standard to all M cars and, if so, will these models get this feature in future?

The unique differential fitted to all M cars is still superior when it comes to pure traction as it can develop up to 100 per cent locking action. Dynamic Performance Control is nearly as good though in regards to this, but it performs better on a four-wheel-drive platform which has a natural tendency to understeer. Dynamic Performance Control eliminates this for a truly responsive feel.