

DfI Driver, Vehicle, Operator, and Enforcement Statistics

User Guidance



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This guidance supports the latest statistics presented in the *DfI Driver, Vehicle, Operator, and Enforcement Statistics* publication¹. It includes data sources, descriptions and supplementary background information, which you should consider when using information from the publication.

DVA statisticians have published a Data Quality Assessment report detailing information users may find helpful on the quality of the data. In addition, we also invite feedback from users on the Data Quality Assessment report. Please see the report, which you can find at the following web address:

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/driver-and-vehicle-statistics-northern-ireland-administrative-data-quality-assessment>

Please note that the data quality assessment and user guidance reports will both be reviewed and updated in 2026/27.

¹ Available from our website at <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/driver-vehicle-agency-activity-statistics>.

1. User Guidance – Vehicle Testing

Vehicle testing forms the most significant aspect, in terms of volumes, of the work of the Operations Directorate in DVA, and by extension, the DVA as a whole.

Vehicle testing includes the periodic inspection of cars, lorries, buses, taxis, motorcycles and other vehicles to ensure compliance with statutory roadworthiness standards, the testing of taximeters and individual vehicle approval tests for one-off builds and imports.

The vehicle testing function is carried out by DVA-employed vehicle examiners across fifteen vehicle test centres in Northern Ireland. Maintenance of the vehicle testing equipment, including the provision of calibration, is currently provided by MAHA Ireland Ltd. The IT infrastructure to support the delivery of testing is maintained as a managed service by Fujitsu Ltd.

Data Source and Coverage

The data were extracted by NISRA statisticians from the DVA's in-house *B&R* system using inbuilt system reports. This system enables further disaggregation of the test volumes to be carried out on a consistent basis.

The statistics cover all applications for full vehicle tests and re-tests carried out in NI during the quarter, broken down by the broad test category. In addition, information is also presented on the number of tests actually provided by DVA. These figures include those tests where the customers failed to attend (FTA) but which DVA had to provide a test appointment. For the tests that were carried out, information is presented on the outcome of the test in the form of the pass-rate.

Guidance

A description of the aggregations used to combine individual test types into common categories is included in Appendix A (Vehicle Test Classifications).

The pass-rates presented are derived using data on the actual outcome of the test, for completed tests only. Tests abandoned for any reason are counted as a failed test.

It is important to be aware that pass-rates, even within the same test category, may not be directly comparable between test centres. This is due to differences in the underlying make-up of the local fleet with regard to such factors as vehicle age and miles completed.

Whilst the DVA conducts vehicle test at all fifteen test centres throughout Northern Ireland, not every centre carries out the full range of tests.

In April 2009, the *Single Vehicle Approval (SVA)* (originally introduced in May 1998) was replaced by the *Individual Vehicle Approval (IVA)*. The *Motorcycle Single Vehicle Approval (MSVA)* was introduced on the 8th August 2003.

In 2016, we conducted a harmonisation of testing categories, primarily focusing on the SVA and IVA categories for the tests conducted tables. The substantial increase in IVA numbers is because of a clearer identification of IVA test classes. This has also resulted in the reclassification of a small number of tests from the heavy goods, trailers, and omnibus to the IVA classification.

The reclassification of categories within the vehicle testing tables has no impact on the overall totals for each quarter.

Taximeter Testing - Since 31 May 2016, it was a legal requirement for all Class A and B taxis to have an approved taximeter and printer fitted. Enhanced enforcement action relating to these requirements commenced on 1 October 2016, however, DVA enforcement officers adopted a light touch approach up until the 1st October 2016 provided the driver could prove they had booked a taximeter test date or taximeter fitment date prior to 1 October 2016. The taximeter test is a separate test to the taxi vehicle test. Once tested and sealed by the DVA, no further taximeter test is necessary, provided the taximeter remains sealed and no modification has been made to the taximeter, its equipment, or the vehicle that would affect the taximeter settings.

Due to the structure of the data extraction reports, DVA statisticians cannot extract the numbers of taximeter test applications from the overall vehicle test applications figures. This means that while taximeter tests are presented separately from all other categories for tests conducted and FTAs, DVA statisticians are unable at present to do the same for vehicle test applications.

Data Quality Assessment

Very Good – all data in the vehicle testing section were derived from a single administrative system (B&R) with full coverage and incorporating various validation checks. This single system approach means that the additional disaggregation's can be performed on the testing data (such as breakdowns by test categories, pass-rates, etc.) on a consistent basis from a single source.

2. User Guidance – Vehicle Licensing & Registration

Prior to July 2014, the Vehicle Licensing team within DVA carried out the licensing and registration of vehicles, the collection and enforcement of vehicle excise duty (“motor tax”) and the sale and transfer of registration marks in Northern Ireland. From July 2014, responsibility for vehicle registration and licensing in NI transferred to DVLA in Swansea.

The statistics presented in this section, for the period up to and including June 2014, were derived from the *Northern Ireland Vehicle Information System* (NIVIS). This system was used to maintain a record of all licensed vehicles in NI, including those that have a valid Statutory Off-Road Notification (SORN). On completion of the migration of NI records to DVLA in Swansea, NIVIS was closed down.

DVA statisticians now receive, on a quarterly basis, NI specific quality-assured vehicle registration and licensing extracts from the DVLA/DfT. DfT make these extracts available to DVA statisticians after the routine publication of the related DfT statistical release ‘*Vehicle Licensing Statistics*’².

These extracts are used to produce vehicle registration and licensing Official Statistical series similar to those published to date by the DfI with the exception of transaction data. A service level agreement agreed with DfT provides a schedule for continued receipt of NI related data extracts by DVA statisticians to allow continued publication of these statistics. The publication of vehicle registration data will now have a single quarter lag. This production schedule and the new enhancement in the receipt of quarterly licensed and SORN vehicle data will allow a wider scope of vehicle licensing and registration data to be produced on a quarterly basis.

Should users require this information prior to DVA statisticians being in a position to publish NI level information, they are free to contact DfT/DVLA directly to request the earlier release of specific information, either by email at vehicles.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk or by telephone 02079 443077.

The transfer of vehicle licensing to DVLA has given rise to some definitional/classification changes which users need to be aware of and there may also be some small impact with respect to NI coverage in cases where the keepers postcode is missing.

Data Sources and Coverage

The data presented up to July 2014 was extracted from NIVIS. Following the transfer of vehicle licensing functions to DVLA, data presented after this date are based on data extracts from the DVLA administrative system provided to DVA statisticians by DfT.

The statistics cover all applications for vehicle registration transactions carried out by DVLA for vehicles registered in NI during the quarter. DVA statisticians generate the tables from the extract provided by DfT.

Due to the timing of the release of the extracts from DfT, the first registration and licensing tables will necessarily lag behind the period being reported on for all other tables. For example, the publication relating to quarter two (July to September) will normally contain registration/licensing statistics for quarter one (April to June). The statistics for quarter two will instead be reported in the quarter three publication.

Guidance

The transfer of vehicle licensing to DVLA has given rise to some definitional/classification changes which users need to be aware of and there may also be some small impact with respect to NI coverage in cases where the keepers postcode is missing. The potential impact is likely to be a reduced count in the NI vehicle licensing and registration figures, this will be influenced by the following factors:

1. Where a vehicle was relocated from GB to NI and subsequently re-registered in NI, this vehicle was included in DVA registration statistics as being registered in NI for the first time. However, under a UK integrated licensing system, there will no longer be first registrations that are solely referenced with respect to NI. All first registrations will now be with reference to the UK as a

² Available from the Department for Transport at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/vehicles-statistics>.

whole, i.e. a vehicle first registered in GB and subsequently used in NI will no longer be counted as a NI first registration. A NI first registration will now only be recorded as such if that vehicle has never previously been registered anywhere else in the UK. All registrations are now recorded by DVLA in Swansea. Using quarterly data for the 12 months to June 2014 we estimate that the numbers of vehicles originally registered in GB then moved to NI and captured as a new registration in NI as approximately (per quarter) 8-9,000 cars, 1,100-1,200 light goods, 4-500 heavy goods, 350 agricultural vehicles and 200 motorcycles. This unavoidable definitional change will introduce a discontinuity into our series, which will be clearly highlighted in the relevant tables and charts.

2. From July 2014 the registered keepers postcode will be used by DVLA to identify NI vehicles, which when missing is not a comprehensive means of reporting all NI registered vehicles. However, at the point of system migration, all NI missing postcodes were assigned a dummy postcode to indicate that the registered owner resided in NI. Going forward, however, if a postcode is missing on a record then it will simply be identified as "missing" in any geographic analysis and will not be attributable to any individual country. This is what currently happens with English, Scottish or Welsh registrations where postcode is missing. Because of the mitigating action of including a dummy postcode prior to transfer, which would otherwise have affected around 1%-2% of NI records, it is expected that the future impact will be minimal.
3. The former '*general haulage and special types*' classification was retitled to '*other vehicles*', to bring it into line with the category presentation used within DfT. The category now includes special purpose vehicles, taxis, tricycles, not recorded and others.
4. There may also be some minor impacts around the classification and coding of different vehicle types associated with the change of administration of NI vehicle data from DVA to DVLA in July 2014. While this is impossible to quantify, as the team responsible for coding/classifying vehicle registration in NI is no longer available to provide advice on their historical categorisations, we do not expect this to be a significant issue. This is particularly so with regard to the main vehicle categories although it may, however, have a disproportionate impact on the smaller volume vehicle categories.

The first registration figures presented in the tables detail both new and used vehicles, including imported vehicles, which have been registered for the first time in the United Kingdom and with a NI registration address. While we will continue to publish NI related vehicle registrations figures, full responsibility for this information lies with the DfT and DVLA.

Evidence suggests that licensing of motorcycles is seasonal; where large numbers of motorcycles are SORN during winter months but become licensed again during the summer months.

The number of SORN vehicles, as seen in table 2.13, are not a subset of licensed vehicles and are in addition to the licensed vehicle totals.

Data Quality Assessment

Very Good – all data in this section on vehicle registrations up to transfer of the function to DVLA were derived from a single administrative system (NIVIS) with full coverage and incorporating various validation checks. Responsibility for vehicle licensing in NI moved to DVLA during July 2014 at which point the NIVIS system was closed down. Data presented on extracts provided by DfT are subject to a number of internal validation and audit checks.

Further details regarding the data in this section can be found on the DfT website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vehicles-statistics-guidance>

3. User Guidance – Driver Theory Testing

The DVA has responsibility for the theory test element of the overall driving test process. Since 4th September 2021, the test has been administered in Northern Ireland by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) under contract with the DfI through DVA. Prior to this date, the driver theory test was administered by Pearson VUE.

The statistics presented in this section are derived from the returns provided by DVSA to DVA on both applications received and tests carried out.

Data Source and Coverage

NISRA statisticians generate the statistics from the returns provided to DVA by DVSA on both applications received and tests carried out.

Data covers all applications for the driving theory tests³ carried out in NI during the quarter, broken down by the test category. In addition, information is also presented on the number of tests actually carried out. The figures for tests carried out do not include those tests where the customers failed to attend (FTA) but which DVA nevertheless still had to provide a test appointment. Information is presented on the outcome of the test in the form of the pass-rate as derived from the actual outcome of the test.

Guidance

Touch screen theory tests began on 1st January 2000, initially with just a Multiple Choice element, whilst the Hazard Perception element was introduced later on 6th January 2003. The number of questions and pass-mark for each section varies dependant on the test category⁴.

From 6th April 2003, an amendment to the *Motor Vehicles (Driving Licences) Regulation (NI) 1996* means that those wishing to take a practical motorcycle test will have to pass the relevant theory test regardless if they currently hold a full category B driving licence.

The Taxi theory test was introduced for new entrants to the industry on 31st October 2014.

The theory test has changed since 23rd January 2012. It now contains multiple-choice questions, which are no longer published in learning materials. The reason for this move is to encourage learners to develop their understanding as well as knowledge of safe driving theory.

If a driver has completed the standard case study test for one of the licence categories LGV or PCV, they may take the conversion test for the other licence category i.e. PCV or LGV. The conversion tests contain only questions specific to the particular licence category and do not include the common topic areas for these categories.

Data Quality Assessment

A review of data quality assessment will be carried out on theory testing data in 2023/24. Provisionally data assessment is Good – all data in the theory test section were derived from a single administrative system with full coverage and incorporating various validation checks.

³ Tests included in this section are categories A, B, C, and D, CPC Module 2 and taxis. We have excluded ADI and AMI tests; you can find details of these in section 9 of our quarter four report.

⁴ You can find further details on the make-up of each test at <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/driving-theory-test>.

4. User Guidance – Driver Practical Testing

DVA provides a wide range of driving test categories for testing learner drivers and motorcyclists to ensure that they meet the required standard of competence necessary to drive safely on public roads.

Seventeen test centres throughout Northern Ireland conduct practical driving tests, although not every centre carries out the full range of practical tests.

Driver testing, along with vehicle testing, falls under the remit of the Operations Directorate.

Data Source and Coverage

The data were extracted by NISRA statisticians from the *B&R* system using inbuilt system reports. This system enables further disaggregation of the test volumes to be carried out on a consistent basis.

The statistics cover all applications for full driving tests carried out in NI during the quarter, broken down by the broad test category. In addition, information is also presented on the number of tests actually provided by DVA. These figures include those tests where the customers failed to attend (FTA) but which DVA had to provide a test appointment. For the tests that were carried out, information is presented on the outcome of the test in the form of the pass-rate.

Guidance

A description of the aggregations used to combine individual test types into common categories is included in Appendix B (Driver Test Classifications).

The pass-rates presented are derived using data on the actual outcome of the test. The overall pass-rate takes no account of differences between the driving experiences of individuals presenting for testing at each test centre. Differences in NI and GB pass-rates do not take account of differences in traffic volume or complexity of road networks.

Both the current NI and GB motorcycle driving licence tests contain two test modules, both of which must be completed successfully to attain the licence. Module 1 is an off the road manoeuvring test which must be successfully passed, before undertaking module 2 which is the road driving test. When the candidate has successfully completed module 1, they may undertake module 2. The 2-module test was first introduced in NI on the 8th December 2008 and in GB on 27th April 2009. Both the NI and GB figures in this publication are the module 1 and module 2 tests combined i.e. number taking module 1 tests + number taking module 2 tests and number passing module 1 + number passing module 2. In NI, from February 2011, learner moped and motorcycle riders have to complete a compulsory basic training (CBT) course with an approved motorcycle instructor (AMI) before they can take their practical test.

The taxi driver theory and practical driving tests were introduced for new entrants to the taxi industry on the 31st October 2014.

Note that unlike vehicle tests, there are no re-tests for driving tests. If a candidate fails a test, they must apply for a full test again. For this reason, there are no data on driving test re-tests.

Data Quality Assessment

Very Good – all data in the driver testing section were derived from a single administrative system (B&R) with full coverage and incorporating various validation checks. This single system approach means that the additional disaggregation's can be performed on the testing data (such as breakdowns by test categories, pass-rates, etc.) on a consistent basis from a single source.

5. User Guidance – Driver Licensing

The DVA's Driver Licensing division is responsible for licensing drivers in Northern Ireland. The DVA issues and, where appropriate, withdraws licences in respect of drivers of cars, motorcycles, goods vehicles, buses, and other vehicles.

Driver licences are split into two main categories: ordinary licences and vocational licences. Ordinary licences are those used by the majority of road users. In contrast, vocational licences are required for those who drive for a living, for example, bus and lorry drivers.

Licence holders are required to maintain a valid, up to date licence relating to their present home address. Any routine changes to this information should be provided to DVA. The period for which licences are valid varies by category, so there are different patterns in the renewal cycle for each licence type, dependent on the lifespan of the licence.

Changes in the makeup of the population can have a significant shift in the types of transactions being required. Over the coming years, Northern Ireland is forecast to have a higher number of older people together with a smaller number of young people, both factors that are likely to impact on the future profile of driver licensing transactions.

Data Source and Coverage

The data presented for driver licensing, prior to the 21st November 2016, were extracted from the *Northern Ireland Driver Licensing System* (NIDLS). On the 28th November 2016, this was replaced when the new driver licensing IT system, *Driver Licensing System* (DLS), became operational. The data were provided to NISRA statisticians from the DLS system using inbuilt system reports.

The statistics in this report cover all driver licensing transactions carried out by DVA for drivers in NI during the quarter. Where figures relate to transactions during the period, those transactions relate to licenses issued and as such a completed licensing transaction, and will not mirror applications received.

This report also includes data on the total driver licence stock in NI broken down by the age of the licence holder and their level of entitlement, as at the quarter end.

Guidance

There is a requirement to renew your licence at set periods depending on the licence categories held and medical circumstances. For most categories, this renewal period is 10 years. Figures for expiry/optional renewals transactions include both provisional and full licence types. There is a significant cyclical pattern for such transactions relating to a shift to a 10-year renewal period. The period of validity of a driving licence changed from 3 years to 10 years in 1985. This leads to a 3-year peak renewal period each mid-decade – in this case from 1st January 2015 to 31st December 2017.

Since 8th June 2015 in GB (but not NI), the paper counterpart to the driving licence is not valid and is no longer issued by DVLA (see driving licence changes <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/driving-licence-changes>). However, some NI customers mistakenly believed the changes in GB applied also in NI and destroyed the paper part of their driving licence. When this was needed again later, many customers had to apply to DVA for a letter of entitlement in lieu of the paper part of their license. This may help to explain the increase in these volumes during the first quarter of 2016-17, compared with the same period the previous year.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Minister for Infrastructure announced plans to extend expiring driving licences automatically. The new arrangements came into effect on 4 June 2020, when the new EU Regulations became law. Initially for those licences expiring between February and August 2020 and for an additional seven months, this was later extended to include all licences expiring through the remainder of 2020, and for eleven months rather than seven. This had the effect of reducing the number of driving licence renewals received by the DVA during this period.

Letters of entitlement can be supplied by the DVA at a cost of £7.50 to the customer. Customers use them as confirmation of their driving entitlements for such things as car hire or other third party transactions, which require confirmation of driving entitlements.

Identity checking involves the checking of customer identification e.g. passport as part of the process in issuing a new driving licence. These identity checks are conducted by DVA staff at centre counters or via a postal service.

Provisional motorcycle entitlement is granted with provisional car entitlement (although under the Third Driving Licence Directive, some of the motorcycle entitlements may have future start dates, dependent upon the licence applicants' age).

A 16 year old may apply for a provisional licence and take their test when they are 16 if they are in receipt of the enhanced rate of the mobility component of Personal Independence Payment (PIP). There is additional scope for a 15 year old in the same circumstances to apply for and receive their provisional licence prior to their 16th birthday; however, the entitlement on the licence will only become effective on their 16th birthday.

The presence of valid driving entitlement does not mean that all individuals are actively driving.

A driving licence will give entitlements to drive various types of vehicle, depending on the type of licence applied for and the qualifications of the licence holder. Some licence entitlements provide the holder automatically with either full or provisional entitlement to drive certain other vehicle types.

Provisional motorcycle entitlement, where the holder is aged 16 or over and with a completed CBT, entitles learners to ride, with L plates, a moped up to 50cc. Provisional motorcycle entitlement also entitles learners, once the holder is aged 17 or over, and again with a completed CBT and L plates, a light motorcycle up to 11kW and 125cc.

Figures provided in tables 5.4 to 5.7 should not be summed with each other, as each individual table relates to a specific driving entitlement. As such, an individual may appear in one or more of tables 5.4 to 5.7 if their licence provides entitlement to drive a number of vehicles.

Tables 5.8 (i) to (iii) provide information on the numbers of individuals with car licence entitlements by age band and as a proportion of that age band from the 2019 NI Mid-Year Population estimates. These tables differ from tables 5.4 (i) to (iii) in that table 5.4 totals individuals with the entitlement only, while table 5.8 uses these totals to determine the proportions within each age band have car licence entitlements, based on 2019 mid-year estimates (latest available at time of production).

Information on the 2019 NI Mid-Year Population Estimates is taken from the National Statistics source:

<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/population/mid-year-population-estimates>

Data Quality Assessment

Very Good – the data in this report, up to the 21st November 2016, on driver licensing were derived from a single administrative system (NIDLS) with full coverage and incorporating various validation checks.

From the 28th November 2016, data on driver licensing were derived from the DLS, a single administration system with full coverage and incorporating various validation checks. While the migration of data from NIDLS to the DLS did not give rise to issues with the transaction data, a small number of differences within the driver entitlement stock figures required further investigation. NISRA statisticians are confident that the figures presented from the DLS system are accurate and reflect the entitlements within the NI population. In the small number of entitlement categories where differences were identified between the NIDLS and DLS extracts, it has not been possible to clarify the reasons for these differences as the NIDLS system has been turned off and access is no longer possible for further investigation. Users should be aware that entitlement figures drawn from NIDLS extracts and the new DLS system are not directly comparable.

6. User Guidance – Road Transport Licensing

The Passenger Transport Licensing division in DVA is responsible for issuing (and, where appropriate, withdrawing) licences in respect of taxi operators, vehicles, and drivers and also bus operators and vehicles.

Responsibility for licensing goods vehicle (HGV) operators' transferred to the Transport Regulation Unit (TRU) with the introduction in June 2012 of the *Goods Vehicle (Licensing of Operators) Act (NI) 2010*. The TRU, as part of the former DoE, transferred to the new DfI on 9th May 2016.

Data Source and Coverage

All data about taxis is sourced from the DVA's *Taxi Licensing Information System* (TLIS). Data cover all licensing transactions for taxi drivers, vehicles, and operators.

All data about buses is sourced from the DVA's in-house databases. Data cover all bus operator and vehicle licensing transactions.

Prior to the 14th November 2016 goods vehicle operators' licences were extracted from the *Operator Licensing Business System* (OLBS) using the *Corvu* management information system. From the 14th November 2016, goods vehicle operators' licences are extracted from the *Operator Licensing and Compliance System* (OLCS) using the *Jasper* management information system.

Guidance – Taxis

For taxi vehicles, this covers both the old *Public Service Vehicle* (PSV) Licences and the new taxi licences. The new taxi licence test replaced the PSV test on the 31st May 2016. In both cases, the issuing of such a license entitles the vehicle to be used for taxi-purposes and is renewed annually.

The taxi licence system has four classes of taxi:

- Class A - Taxis previously PSV-licensed as '*Private Hire*' and '*Public Hire Outside Belfast*';
- Class B - Taxis previously PSV-licensed as '*Belfast Public Hire*';
- Class C - Taxis previously PSV-licensed as '*Private Hire*'. Examples of Class C taxis are vehicles used for chauffeur services, weddings, funerals and courtesy transport;
- Class D - Taxis previously PSV-licensed as a '*Taxibus*'.

With the introduction of the new taxi licence test on the 31st May 2016, this has resulted in the presentation of two differing groups of classifications for a licensed taxi vehicle in our table. Taxis retained their old classification until they reached their test renewal date, after which they were reclassified on the new system. This change can be seen in table 6.2 in the figures for 2016-17 and early 2017-18.

The taxi driver licence relates to an individual driver, permitting them to use a licensed taxi in the transportation of fare-paying passengers. A taxi driver licence is normally valid for 5 years.

All taxi drivers must either work for a licensed taxi operator, or apply for a taxi operator licence. A taxi driver may hold an operator's licence to which they may be affiliated as a taxi driver. The two types of operator's licence are:

- Small operator - can only list up to two taxis on the licence;
- Large operator - can operate three or more taxis as long as these are listed on the licence.

The DVA issues taxi operator licences for fixed periods of one, three, or five years. The duration of the licence is the decision of the applicant.

Further information on taxi licensing is available on the NI Direct website at:

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/driving-living/driving-or-operating-taxis-and-buses>

Guidance – Buses

The '*PSV Vehicle Licence – Omnibus*' relates to a vehicle seating more than eight persons in addition to a driver and the licence is renewed annually.

The movement in '*Bus Operating Licence - Vehicle*' licences between quarters can be because of the timing of receipt, processing and issuing of licences for larger fleet customers. The period in which they are captured for statistical presentation can vary between months and as such can create an apparent distortion in the quarterly figures.

Guidance – Goods

Since June 2012, freight operators are licensed under the *Goods Vehicle (Licensing of Operators) Act (NI) 2010*, up until this date having been licensed via the *Transport Act 1967*.

Goods Operators can hold the following types of licence:

- *Restricted* licence – for those who carry their own goods or materials in connection with their trade or business. This licence covers all transport operations in the UK;
- *Standard (National)* licence - for those who carry their own goods or materials in connection with their trade or business and/or carry goods for hire or reward. This licence covers all transport operations in the UK;
- *Standard (International)* licence - for those who carry their own goods or materials in connection with their trade or business and/or carry goods for hire or reward. This licence covers all transport operations in the UK and throughout Europe.

On 1st July 2012, responsibility for freight operator licensing transferred to the newly formed *Transport Regulation Unit (TRU)*. DVA supports TRU in the delivery of its functions through the provision of operator repute checks, referrals, public inquiry briefs, and operating centre assessments.

The TRU was formed to exercise the functions of the *Goods Vehicle Licensing of Operators Act (Northern Ireland) 2010*. This legislation was brought in at the request of the freight industry, public representatives and consumer organisations to help improve road safety and compliance with vehicle and licensing requirements by NI heavy goods vehicles. TRU issues and regulates operator licences and holds public hearings on matters pertaining to operator licensing. It seeks to ensure that licence holders meet the standards set for entry into the commercial vehicle operator industry and seeks to minimise the environmental and road safety impact around goods vehicles operating centres. Taxi and bus operator licensing is the responsibility of the DVA.

Data Quality Assessment

Good – all data in this report on road transport licensing is derived from administrative systems with full coverage and incorporating various validation checks.

Please note that due to changes in the DVA Transport Licensing System, licenses issued for this quarter and going forward are counted with respect to when relevant licences are created. This change was made for operational reasons to improve customer services and the collation of these statistical series. There has been no significant impact or need to alter historical figures arising from these changes.

7. User Guidance – Enforcement & Compliance

DVA Enforcement falls within the Agency's Compliance and Enforcement directorate. Roadside Enforcement is responsible for the enforcement of legislation pertaining to roadworthiness standards and licensing requirements at the roadside.

Enforcement section carries out the majority of its work within the bus, goods vehicle and taxi industries. Enforcement staff have the power to stop vehicles at the roadside and inspect them for both roadworthiness defects and for various traffic offences. Enforcement officers can also visit operators' premises and inspect both vehicles and documentation.

Data Source and Coverage

Data cover all applications for all checks carried out by DVA enforcement officers, either as part of targeted operations or in the data gathering stages of the compliance surveys. The data presented in the following section is extracted from the enforcement database *Enforcement Live* using predefined built in reports.

Information on prosecutions is based on data received from the NI Courts and Tribunals Service.

Guidance – Table 7.1

Trailer checks are included as part of the heavy goods vehicles check totals but are also presented as a category in their own right. A trailer check is a separate check but is included as part of the HGV total whenever they are present e.g. a HGV with a cab and trailer will be counted as two checks.

Different type of enforcement notices are possible:

- *V1/V2 Prohibition Notices* address a range of serious faults including for example defective brakes, defective tyres etc.;
- *VT5 Defect Notices* address a range of less serious faults including for example defective lights, emergency door buzzers, and tachographs;
- *V27* relates to vehicle license or roadworthiness certificate suspension.

Guidance – Table 7.2

The table provides detail of files referred to the PPS and number of convictions within the quarter. However, a file referred to PPS may or may not result in a conviction in the same quarter, as there may well be a lag period before a case reaches court proceedings. The figures presented cannot be used together to derive a conviction rate for the period.

The report also includes figures for the number of fixed penalties issued by the enforcement officers and the total value of these penalties. Introduced in 2011, the '*Fixed Penalty and Deposit Scheme*', aids the enforcement of relevant offences by enabling DVA enforcement staff to offer fixed penalties to offenders instead of a potential prosecution at court. Relevant offences are prescribed in the legislation, and can attract a penalty ranging from £30 to £300.

There are different types of fixed penalty:

- *Fixed Penalty Notice - Endorsable (Type A)*: These are utilised for those offences that attract penalty points on an offenders driving license;
- *Fixed Penalty Notice - Non Endorsable (Type B)*: These are utilised for those offences that do not attract penalty points on an offenders driving license;
- *Financial Penalty Deposit Notice - Endorsable (Type D)*: When a driver is unable to provide enforcement officers with a satisfactory UK address where they can be found in connection with any proceeding and the offence attracts penalty points then they will be required to pay an immediate financial penalty – paid at the roadside;
- *Financial Penalty Deposit Notice - Non Endorsable (Type F)*: When a driver is unable to provide a satisfactory UK address where they can be found in connection with any proceedings and the offences do not attract penalty points, they will be required to pay an immediate financial penalty at the roadside;

- *Court Financial Penalty Deposit Notice (Type L)*: When a driver is unable to provide a satisfactory UK address where they can be found in connection with any proceeding, and if the multiple nature or seriousness of the offence(s) warrants a court hearing, a notice is issued and the driver will be required to pay an immediate financial penalty deposit at the roadside, equal to a set figure of £300 per offence (maximum of 3 offences = £900).

The movement in enforcement activities between quarters can be because of the timing of operations. The period and volumes in which they are captured for statistical presentation can vary between months and as such can create an apparent distortion in the quarterly figures. Users may wish to view annual figures on enforcement activities to see a full reflection of performance over the course of a year.

Guidance – Table 7.3

'*Cross Border Operations*' are operations carried out by DVA in conjunction with the Road Safety Authority in Ireland along with PSNI and An Garda Síochána. '*Joint Operations*' are carried out by DVA in partnership with the PSNI.

Guidance – Table 7.4

DVA carry out a range of unannounced spot checks on buses at the roadside and at operator premises in order to assess vehicle roadworthiness. These procedures are laid down under *European Directive 2000/30/EC (as amended)* and include consideration of the following items:

Vehicle identification; braking equipment; steering; visibility; lighting, lamps, reflectors and electrical equipment; axles, wheels, tyres and suspension; chassis and chassis attachments; tachograph, speed limiter and other equipment; and nuisance issues such as emissions and oil/fuel spillage.

Data Quality Assessment

Very Good – all data in the Enforcement section were derived from a single administrative system (*Enforcement Live*) with full coverage and incorporating various validation checks.

8. User Guidance – DVA Target Monitoring

For 2020-21, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the DVA has developed new targets through which it monitors performance. The previous reported targets for Driver and Vehicle testing are no longer applicable, although the prior statistics for these remain in table 8.1.

Data Source and Coverage

NISRA statisticians extract the data for the two driver licensing targets from the DLS administrative database.

The data presented in this section related to the historic driver and vehicle testing targets was extracted from the *B&R* system using inbuilt system reports. This system enables analysis and interrogation of the data to be carried out on a consistent basis.

Guidance – Driver Licensing

There are two driver licensing targets, both calculated in the same manner:

1. Process 95% of complete online driver licensing applications within 5 working days;
2. Process 90% of complete paper driver licensing applications within 10 working days.

The second of these targets relating to paper applications has had different target levels, from 80% to 95% for specific periods; for example in 2019-20, the threshold was 95% and prior to this it had been 80%.

For 2018-19 and earlier, there was a single driver licensing target looking at all eligible records together. Neither of the two new targets is directly comparable to the previous target.

Since 2018-19, all driver licensing targets have been calculated using all eligible transactions. In 2017-18 and earlier, a daily random sample was extracted and analysed to calculate the performance. The information on confidence intervals and sample sizes for this old method can be found in table 8.2.

Data Quality Assessment

Very Good – all data related to both the current and former targets was derived from single administrative systems (*B&R* for driver and vehicle testing; *DLS* for driver licensing). Each has full coverage and incorporating various validation checks. This single system approach means that measurement against the target can be carried out on a consistent basis from a single source.

National Statistics Status

Note that these performance indicators have been added to the report since National Statistics accreditation was achieved. Having discussed this with the Office for Statistical Regulation (OSR), it has been agreed that both the vehicle testing and driver testing waiting time targets fully comply with the National Statistics standard. However, whilst the driver licensing processing time targets met many aspects of the Code of Practice, more investigation of the processes and quality checks associated with the new *Driver Licensing System* (*DLS*) would be required before it could be similarly deemed fully compliant. In the interim, this indicator will continue to have the status of Official Statistics and this has been highlighted in the relevant section of the report.

9. User Guidance – Instructor Registration

DVA carries responsibility for the maintenance of the Approved Driving Instructor (ADI) Register and the Approved Motorcycle Instructor (AMI) Register.

To keep both of these registers up to date, DVA:

- Processes applications from people who wish to become ADIs or AMIs;
- Tests potential candidates and assess their suitability to be on the register;
- Checks tuition standards via check tests carried out with Instructors; and
- Takes appropriate action when ADIs or AMIs fail to meet the required standards.

This section is only available annually, in the quarter 4 report.

Data Source and Coverage

Data cover the total number of registered instructors on both the Approved Driving Instructor Register and the Approved Motorcycle Instructor Registers, together with the a breakdown by gender. Further information is provided on the number of instructors who are removed by DVA from the registers in each year, and the number of check tests (the tests carried out by DVA to ensure that appropriate standards are being met) which DVA carry out on the instructors. Information is also presented on the pass-rates for instructors for the various tests that applicants for the registers are required to take.

The data presented in the report is extracted from the ADI and AMI registers held by the DVA Driver and Vehicle Standards team.

Guidance

The approved Motorcycle Instructors Register was introduced in Northern Ireland on the 29 November 2010.

Data Quality Assessment

A new system to support the administration of approved driving and motorcycle instructors was introduced in 2024 and some of the data relating to volumes as of May 2024 was not reliable enough to include in the quarter four DVA National Statistics report. The technical problems relating to this issue are being resolved by those contracted to deliver and support this system for DVA. This section will be updated at the earliest opportunity.

Downgraded to partially good – all data in this section are derived from a single administrative system with full coverage. Registration and testing statistics are derived from the instructor administrative system and are underpinned by well-established quality assurance procedures, manuals and audit controls. Standard booking procedures and online access controls help to minimise the risk of data manipulation. There is potential for distortion of instructor test outcomes through inconsistent application of test standards by examiners, however, as these tests are carried out by supervising examiners this is not considered a significant issue with respect to data quality.

Statistical Notes

National Statistics

On the 24 March 2015, the UK Statistics Authority accredited this series as National Statistics. National Statistics are accredited official statistics. These accredited official statistics were independently reviewed by the Office for Statistics Regulation in March 2015. They comply with the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics. The OSR website contains further details at: [Accredited official statistics – Office for Statistics Regulation \(statisticsauthority.gov.uk\)](http://statisticsauthority.gov.uk). Our statistical practice is regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR).

OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics that all producers of official statistics should adhere to.

You are welcome to contact us directly with any comments about how we meet these standards, at: DVA.Statistics@nisra.gov.uk.

Alternatively, you can contact OSR by emailing regulation@statistics.gov.uk or via the OSR website.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. National Statistics status is awarded following an assessment by the Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is a producer's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

The Department further demonstrates its commitment to the Code of Practice by publishing a series of supporting statements related to its use of administrative data, publication strategy, confidentiality arrangements, revisions policy, customer service and complaints procedure. For details, see:

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-research/code-practice-official-statistics>

Note, that since the report achieved National Statistics accreditation, we have added the section on target monitoring. We discussed these with the Office for Statistical Regulation (OSR), and it was agreed that both the old Vehicle Testing and Driver Testing Waiting Time targets fully complied with the National Statistics standard. However, whilst the two Driver Licensing processing time targets meet many aspects of the Code of Practice, more investigation of the processes and quality checks associated with the new *Driver Licensing System* would be required before the OSR could deem them fully compliant. In the interim, these indicators will continue to have the status of Official Statistics and we have highlighted this in the relevant section of the report.

Revisions Policy

We do not undertake any scheduled revisions; any revisions to these figures will only be made by exception as and when required.

In circumstances where figures need to be revised users will be notified and any revisions will be explained in terms of why a revision was required, the period covered, the tables affected and the impact of revisions on trend and other related figures.

Revisions are part of our obligations under the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Further details on our revisions policy and supporting statements relating to Official Statistics are available on our website. Please click the link below.

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/statements-and-assessments>

Uses of the Data

The DVA uses the information contained within this report to monitor business volumes, plan for staffing requirements, and to report to the DVA Senior Management Board in their oversight capacity.

Since first publication in 2012, this report has become increasingly useful for DfI in developing and monitoring vehicle testing, driver testing and licensing policy. It also provides a window on DVA activities to the general public and is now the official source of such information for use in answering Assembly Questions, Freedom of Information requests and other ad-hoc queries from interested parties.

Other agency uses of the data include manpower and capacity modelling, as well as broader departmental use with regard to road safety and associated departmental policy and research e.g. graduated driver licensing.

Outside interest in the data includes areas such as academic research on emissions, the driver pass-rates by gender, economic research using vehicle information as an economic indicator, and economic blogs.

General interest research briefs will be available on the DfI website. Please see the following link:

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-research/research-0>

Additional Data Sources

From Northern Ireland:

Travel Survey

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/travel-survey-northern-ireland>

Vehicle Kilometres Travelled

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/annual-road-traffic-estimates>

From the UK:

Driving tests, Theory tests and Instructor statistics

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/driving-test-statistics-drt>

Driving Licence holders

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/nts02-driving-licence-holders>

Vehicle statistics

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/vehicles-statistics>

Vehicle sales and registrations from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders

<https://www.smmmt.co.uk/vehicle-data/>

MOT testing data for Great Britain

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/mot-testing-data-for-great-britain>

National Travel Survey

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-travel-survey-statistics>

Bus statistics

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/bus-statistics>

Taxi statistics

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/taxi-statistics>

Commercial Vehicle Fleet Compliance Check reports

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fleet-compliance-checks-summary-reports>

From the Republic of Ireland:

Driver and Vehicle Testing statistics

<https://www.cso.ie/en/databases/rsai/>

Driver licensing statistics

https://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Database/eirestat/Driver%20and%20Vehicle%20Testing%20Statistics/Driver%20and%20Vehicle%20Testing%20Statistics_statbank.asp?SP=Driver%20and%20Vehicle%20Testing%20Statistics&Planguage=0&ProductID=DB_RSA

Vehicle licensing statistics

https://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Database/eirestat/Vehicle%20Licensing%20Statistics%20Annual%20Series/Vehicle%20Licensing%20Statistics%20Annual%20Series_statbank.asp?SP=Vehicle%20Licensing%20Statistics%20Annual%20Series&Planguage=0

Driver Testing Pass-rates

<http://www.rsa.ie/en/RSA/Learner-Drivers/The-Driving-Test/Driving-Test-Centre/Pass-Rates/>

Vehicle Testing Pass-rates

<https://www.ncts.ie/1127>

Bus and Taxi statistics

<https://www.nationaltransport.ie/publications/statistics/bulletins/>

From Europe:

Vehicle statistics (Eurostat)

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/transport/data/database>

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Stock_of_vehicles_at_regional_level

https://ec.europa.eu/transport/facts-fundings/statistics/pocketbook-2017_en

Appendix A: Vehicle Test Classifications

| Type | B&R Category |
|-------------|---|
| CDG | CDG (HGV) CDG (Trailer) |
| Heavy Goods | Artic 2 Artic 2 -RPC/VED Artic 3 Artic 3 - RPC/VED Breakdown Vehicle Heavy Motor Car / Truck Dual Purpose Vehicle HGV2 HGV2 - RPC/VED HGV3 HGV3 - RPC/VED HGV4 HGV4 - RPC/VED MOT Other Road Construction Vehicle Tower Vehicle VED/RPC (S) |
| Light Goods | Light Goods Light Goods - Other |
| LPCV | LPCV / 17-35 Seatbelt LPCV / Minibus (more than 8 passenger seats) LPCV / Minibus 9-16 Seatbelt LPCV / Minibus 9-16 Seatbelt RPC LPCV / Minibus RPC LPCV / 36+ Seatbelt |
| Motorcycles | Motorcycle - Other Motorcycle I Motorcycle II Quadricycle Tricycle |
| Omnibus | Initial Bus Test Initial Bus Test DDA General accessibility only General and wheelchair accessibility Initial Bus Test 17-35 seatbelt Initial Bus Test 36+ seatbelt Omnibus 17-35 Seatbelt Omnibus 36+ Seatbelt Omnibus 9-16 Seatbelt Omnibus First Time Omnibus Standard Omnibus Standard Articulated PSV DDA Dual schedule (General AND Wheelchair) Retest Omnibus Standard Dual DDA Omnibus Standard Single DDA |
| Private Car | Private Car Private Car - Other |

| Type | B&R Category |
|---------|---|
| IVA | Heavy Goods N2-max mass >3.5t but not exceeding 12 Heavy Goods N3-max mass >12t Bus M2 (max mass not exceeding 5 tonnes) Bus M3 (2 axle, max mass exceeding 5 tonnes) Bus M3 (3 axle, max mass exceeding 5 tonnes) Free M2,M3 Light Trailer O2-max mass >0.75t but not exceeding Heavy Trailers O4-max mass >10t Heavy Trailers O3-max mass >3.5t but not exceeding Light Trailer O1-max mass < 0.75t Free O1,O2,O3, O4 Basic IVA, M1 (Kit Car) Basic IVA, N1 (Kit LGV) Free M1 Free N1 Free N2,N3 Standard IVA, M1 (Production Car) Standard IVA, N1 (Production LGV) |
| SVA | Partial MSVA (pre) SVA 2 Wheeled moped/motorcycle SVA Low Powered Moped SVA 3 or 4 Wheeled moped/motorcycle SVA Enhanced with Model Report SVA Enhanced without Model Report SVA MC Retest SVA Production Vehicles SVA Retest (Basic/Enhanced) SVA Retest vehicle with ECWVTA & no Cert. of Conf. SVA Basic SVA SVA Basic SVA Å» Kit Car/Disabled Person Vehicle SVA Basic SVA Å» Production Vehicle/Other |
| Taxi | Stretched Limousine - Taxi Taxi Stretched/Heavy Taxi Taximeter |
| Trailer | One Axle Trailer Two Axle Trailer Three Axle Trailer Trailer - Other |

| | |
|-------------------|-----------|
| Taxi ¹ | Taximeter |
|-------------------|-----------|

Notes:

1. The taximeter test is separate test to the taxi vehicle test and is not a vehicle roadworthiness test.

Appendix B: Driver Practical Test Classifications

| Type | B&R Category |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Private Car | Motorcar |
| Motorcycles | Moped ¹ Off-Road Moped ¹ Light Motorcycle (75cc to 120cc) ¹ Off Road Light Motorcycle (75cc to 120cc) ¹ Motorcycle (over 120cc but less than 125cc) ¹ Off Road Motorcycle (over 120cc but less than 125cc) ¹ |
| | Moped ² Off-Road Moped ² Small Sized Motorcycle (120cc to 125cc) ² Off-Road Small Sized Motorcycle (120cc to 125cc) ² Medium Sized Motorcycle (395cc) ² Off-Road Medium Sized Motorcycle (395cc) ² Large Sized Motorcycle (595cc) ² Off-Road Large Sized Motorcycle (595cc) ² Extended Motorcycle ² |
| LGV | Goods Vehicle 3500kg-7500kg Goods Vehicle 3500kg-7500kg + Trailer over 750kg Goods Vehicle over 7500kg + Trailer over 750kg Large Goods Vehicle over 7500kg |
| PCV | Minibus 9-16 seats Motor Vehicle + Trailer over 750kgs Motor Vehicle with over 8 passenger seats |
| Miscellaneous Test Categories | Agricultural Tractor Extended Motorcar Show + Tell Large Goods Vehicle over 7500kg Show + Tell Motor Vehicle with over 8 passenger seats Tracked Vehicle Motorcar + Trailer over 750kgs |

Notes:

1. Pre 19th January 2013 test categories;
2. Post 19th January 2013 test categories;
3. From 2013-14 these B+E tests have been subsumed within the '*Miscellaneous Test Categories*'. In publications prior to 2013-14, tests relating to category B+E (Car + Trailer) were contained in the LGV classification. The historical back series has been reconstituted to include B+E tests within the '*Miscellaneous Test Categories*'.

Appendix C: Glossary

| <i>Abbreviation</i> | <i>Meaning</i> |
|---------------------|---|
| ADI | Approved Driving Instructor |
| AMI | Approved Motorcycle Instructor |
| B&R | Booking Services Project |
| CDG | Carriage of Dangerous Goods |
| CPC | Certificate of Professional Competence |
| CR | Continuous Registration |
| DfT | Department for Transport |
| DfI | Department for Infrastructure |
| DoE | Department of the Environment |
| DSA | Driving Standards Agency |
| DVA | Driver and Vehicle Agency |
| DVLA | Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency |
| DVSA | Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency |
| EU | European Union |
| FABS | Freight and Bus System |
| FOPS | Foreign Operator Payment System |
| FPN | Fixed Penalty Notice |
| FTA | Failed to Attend |
| HGV | Heavy Goods Vehicle |
| IVA | Individual Vehicle Approval |
| LGV | Large Goods Vehicle |
| LPCV | Large Passenger Carrying Vehicle |
| (M)SVA | Motorcycle Single Vehicle Approval |
| NIDLS | Northern Ireland Driver Licensing System |
| NISRA | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency |
| NS | National Statistics |
| OLBS | Operator Licensing and Business System |
| OLCS | Operator Licensing and Compliance System |
| ONS | Office for National Statistics |
| OS | Official Statistics |
| PCV | Passenger Carrying Vehicle |
| PSV | Public Service Vehicle |
| RD | Refer to Drawer |
| RDS | Replacement Driver System |
| RTLD | Road Transport Licensing Division |
| SORN | Statutory Off Road Notification |
| SVA | Single Vehicle Approval |
| TLIS | Taxi Licensing Information System |
| TRU | Transport Regulation Unit |

Other Terminology

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Go Back | A licensing transaction where the documentation is incomplete or inaccurate and needs to be returned to the applicant |
| Letter of Entitlement | A transaction where DVA staff issue a letter, which confirms the driving entitlements of the customer. |
| Identity Check | A transaction where DVA staff check the identity of an individual prior to issue of a driving licence. |
| V10 | Vehicle Licence Application form |

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This publication is also available at:

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/driver-vehicle-agency-activity-statistics>

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