

DfI Driver, Vehicle, Operator, and Enforcement Statistics

Quarter One: April to June 2026



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Key Findings

- During April to June 2026, the DVA delivered approximately 276,011 vehicle tests, maintaining a high level of operational output.
- Of all vehicle tests conducted during April to June 2026, 84.6% (233,576) were full tests and 15.4% (42,435) were retests, reflecting the continued delivery of core statutory testing services.
- Over the same period, 10,551 vehicles failed to attend their test appointment, a reduction of 22.4% (3,039 fewer) compared with April to June 2025 (13,590). This reduced the 'failed to attend' rate from 4.5% to 3.7%, indicating improved attendance and better utilisation of available appointments.
- Vehicle testing demand remained robust during April to June 2026, with 305,412 applications, an increase of 4.9% (14,162) compared with April to June 2025 (291,250). Online applications accounted for 97.0% (296,369) of all applications, providing customers with efficient access to services.
- In April to June 2026, the DVA conducted 18,092 driving tests, an increase of 5.4% (928) compared with April to June 2025 (17,164), continuing the upward trend in testing activity.
- Demand for driving tests remained strong during April to June 2026, with 22,090 applications, up 12.1% (2,385) in April to June 2025 (19,705), representing the highest quarterly level in recent years.
- Over the quarter, 571 candidates failed to attend a driving test, representing 3.2% of all scheduled tests (18,092 conducted plus 571 failed to attend). This was 3.4% higher (19 more FTAs) than in April to June 2025 (552), although attendance rates remained high overall.
- During April to June 2026, the DVA delivered 26,567 theory tests, an increase of 15.2% (3,497) compared with April to June 2025 (23,070), highlighting continued growth in demand for theory testing services.
- Theory test demand remained elevated during April to June 2026, with 32,225 applications, an increase of 17.8% (4,864) compared with April to June 2025 (27,361), representing one of the highest quarterly totals on record.
- During the quarter, 4,197 customers failed to attend a theory test, representing 13.6% of all scheduled tests (26,567 conducted plus 4,197 failed to attend). This was 33.2% higher (1,047 more) than in April to June 2025 (3,150) but remained broadly in line with recent attendance patterns.
- Driver licensing services continued to perform strongly, with 99.5% of online applications processed within target times (target 95%) and 99.4% of paper applications within target (target 90%). In addition, 81.2% of all driver licensing transactions were completed online, supporting efficient and accessible service delivery.
- Also, during April to June 2026, DVA compliance and enforcement teams carried out 428 roadside enforcement checks, issued 234 fixed penalty notices totalling £33,030, secured 53 convictions, participated in 4 cross border operations plus 14 joint operations with the PSNI, and carried out safety and licensing checks on 20 buses. This activity demonstrates a targeted compliance approach aimed at promoting safer road use across Northern Ireland.

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Introduction

This is the forty-seventh edition of the quarterly publication DfI Driver, Vehicle, Operator, and Enforcement Statistics. The statistics reported within this publication include summary key business volumes and transactions for drivers, vehicles and operators in the areas of licensing, regulation and enforcement during quarter one of 2026/27, covering the period from 1 April 2026 to 30 June 2026.

This release presents statistical information for the volumes of activities under the following business areas:

- Vehicle testing;
- Vehicle licensing and registration;
- Driver theory testing;
- Driver practical testing;
- Driver licensing;
- Road transport licensing (i.e. buses, heavy goods vehicles and taxis);
- Enforcement and compliance;
- DVA target monitoring, and
- Driving and Motorcycle Instructors

DVA systems provide the majority of data, although we also source some from within the wider Department for Infrastructure and from DVSA (Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency). In addition, while the DVA is no longer responsible for vehicle registration and licensing with the transfer of those functions to DVLA in Swansea in July 2014, statistics relating to this area are presented in section two.

For further information and guidance on this publication, please see the User Guidance document, available on our website¹.

Background

The *Driver and Vehicle Agency* (DVA) is an executive agency within the *Department for Infrastructure* (DfI). The DVA was formed on 1 April 2007 as part of the Review of Public Administration, through a merger of two existing Agencies, namely the *Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency* (DVTA) and *Driver and Vehicle Licensing Northern Ireland* (DVLNI).

¹ <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/driver-vehicle-agency-activity-statistics>

Vehicle testing forms the most significant aspect, in terms of volumes, of the work of the Operations Directorate in DVA.

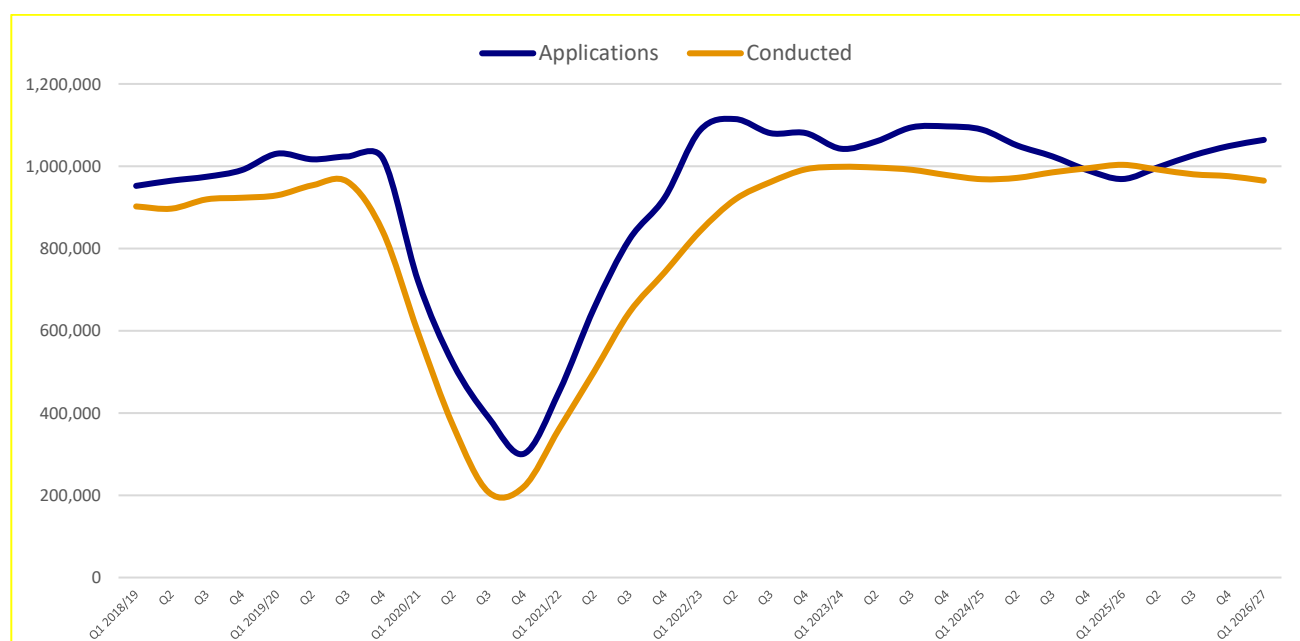
Vehicle Test Applications

From April to June 2026, the DVA received 305,412 applications for a vehicle test (full and retest), which is 4.9% (14,162) more than for the same quarter in the previous year (291,250 in Q1 2025/26), but 26,105 fewer than in the previous quarter (331,517 in Q4 2025/26) (Table 1.3). Application levels remained elevated, continuing the pattern of strong demand for vehicle testing seen over recent quarters.

For financial year 2025/26, 1.23 million vehicle test applications were made to DVA, relative to 1.17 million in the previous year, an increase of 5.5% (63,886) for this period (Table 1.3).

In 2025/26 most vehicle test applications were for full tests, which accounted for 85.3% (1.05 million) of all vehicle test applications, the remaining 14.7% (180,387) being vehicle retest applications (Table 1.2). Figure 1.1 below details the rolling four quarterly count for full vehicle test applications and full vehicle tests conducted to the end of December 2025.

Figure 1.1: Full Vehicle Tests – Applications and Conducted (Rolling 4-Quarter Total)



Please note that figures for vehicle test applications include taximeter tests but those for vehicle tests conducted do not.

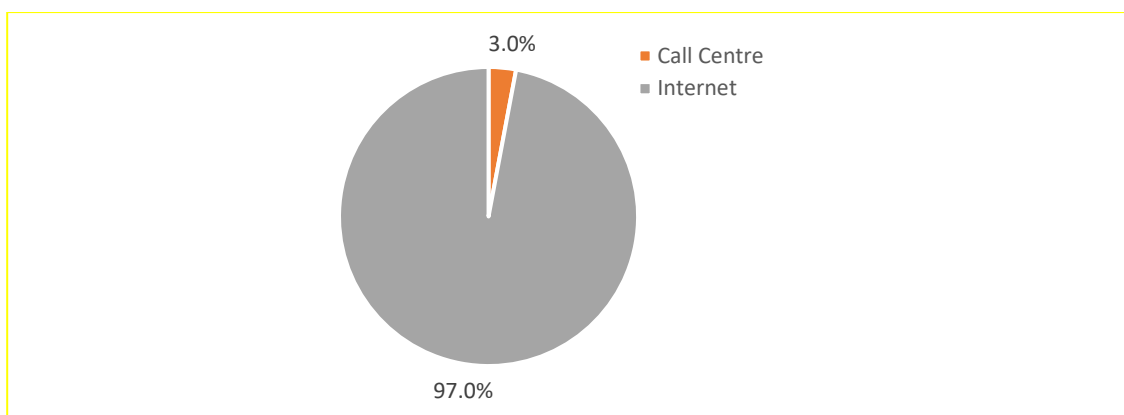
Booking Method

In the first quarter of 2026/27, online vehicle test booking applications accounted for 97.0% (296,369) of all test applications (305,412), remaining the predominant booking method and broadly unchanged from the previous quarter (97.1%). The remaining 3.0% (9,043) of bookings were made via DVA call centres (Figure 1.2 and Table 1.4)

In 2025/26 of the 1.23 million vehicle test applications, 96.7% (1.19 million) were made using the DVA online booking system, compared with 95.8% in the previous year, and 72.8% in 2018/19.

This is the eleventh consecutive quarter in which online booking applications have exceeded 95% of all vehicle test bookings (Table 1.4).

Figure 1.2: Vehicle Test Applications by Booking Method.

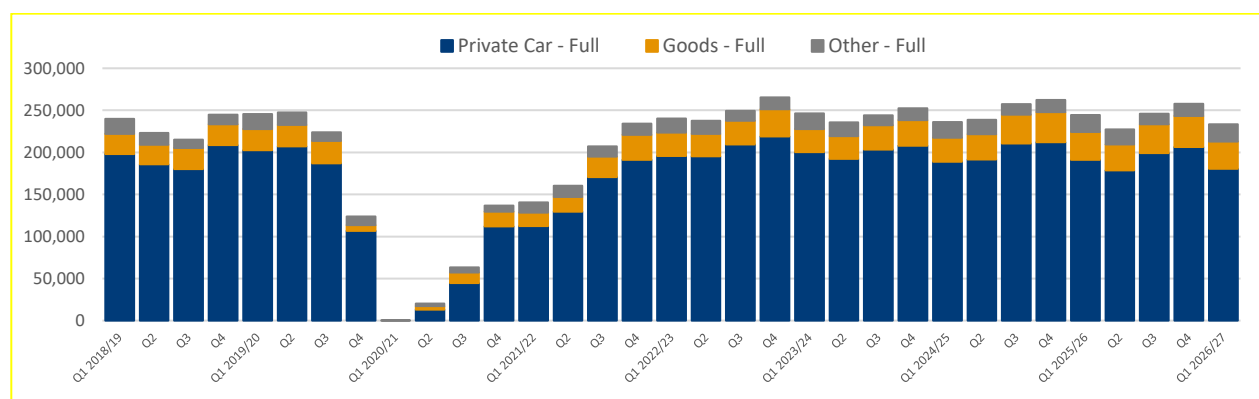


Vehicle Tests Conducted

During the latest quarterly period, April to June 2026, the DVA delivered 276,011 vehicle tests (full and retest), which is 4.2% (12,015) lower than the same quarter in 2025/26 (288,026) (Table 1.7). Despite the decrease, the DVA conducted over a quarter of a million vehicle tests during the quarter, helping to meet continued high levels of demand for vehicle testing services.

From April 2025 to March 2026, DVA delivered approximately 1.149 million vehicle tests, over 15 thousand lower than the number recorded in 2024/25 which is the highest annual volume on record. Most vehicle tests conducted in 2025/26 were full tests, accounting for 85.0% (975,736) of all tests with the remaining 15.0% (172,807) being vehicle retests (Table 1.5). Most full tests were for private cars, accounting for 79.5% (775,623) of all full tests conducted (Table 1.5 and Figure 1.3).

Figure 1.3: Full Vehicle Tests Conducted



The steady increase in vehicle test applications seen before the COVID-19 pandemic can largely be explained by growth in vehicle ownership. This upward trend has continued in the post-pandemic period, with the number of licensed private cars in Northern Ireland increasing from 1.006 million at the end of 2020/21 to 1.082 million at the end of 2025/26, an increase of 7.5% over five years (Table 2.13). Continued growth in the licensed car fleet is likely to contribute to sustained demand for vehicle testing services.

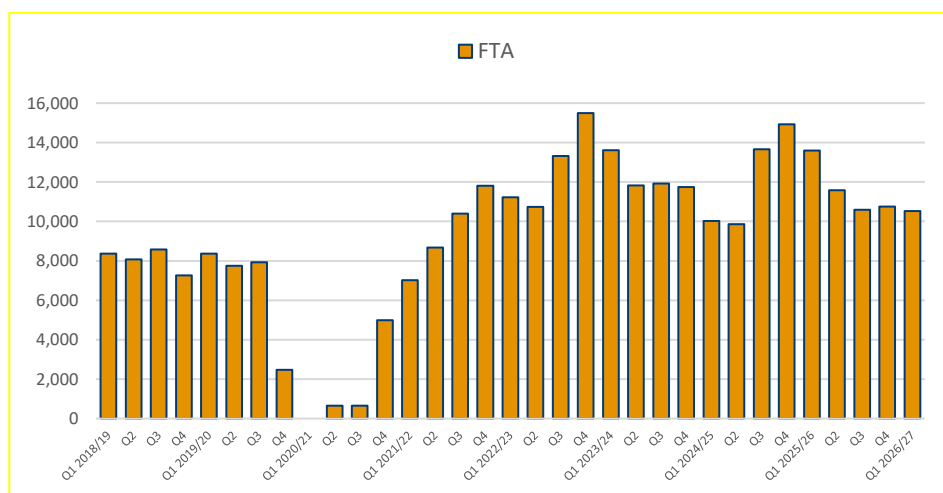
In addition, motorists are keeping their cars for longer, with the average age of licensed cars reaching 9.8 years at the end of March 2026. Combined with growth in the number of licensed vehicles, this is likely to support continued demand for DVA vehicle testing services.

Failed to Attend

During the latest quarter, 10,551 customers failed to attend a booked vehicle test, 22.4% (3,039) fewer than the same quarter in 2025/26 (13,590) (Table 1.10 and Figure 1.4). The proportion of missed appointments also fell, with FTAs accounting for 3.8% of all conducted tests, down from 4.7% in the same quarter of the previous year.

For the full financial year 2025/26, 46,510 vehicles failed to present for vehicle testing, the fourth highest on record, and representing 4.0% of all vehicle tests conducted this year.

Figure 1.4: Vehicle Tests – Failed to Attend



Vehicle Test Pass-Rates

The overall pass rate for full vehicle tests between April and June 2026 was 80.7%, an increase from 80.2% in the previous quarter, but slightly lower than the 81.0% recorded in the same quarter of 2025/26 (Table 1.11 and Figure 1.5).

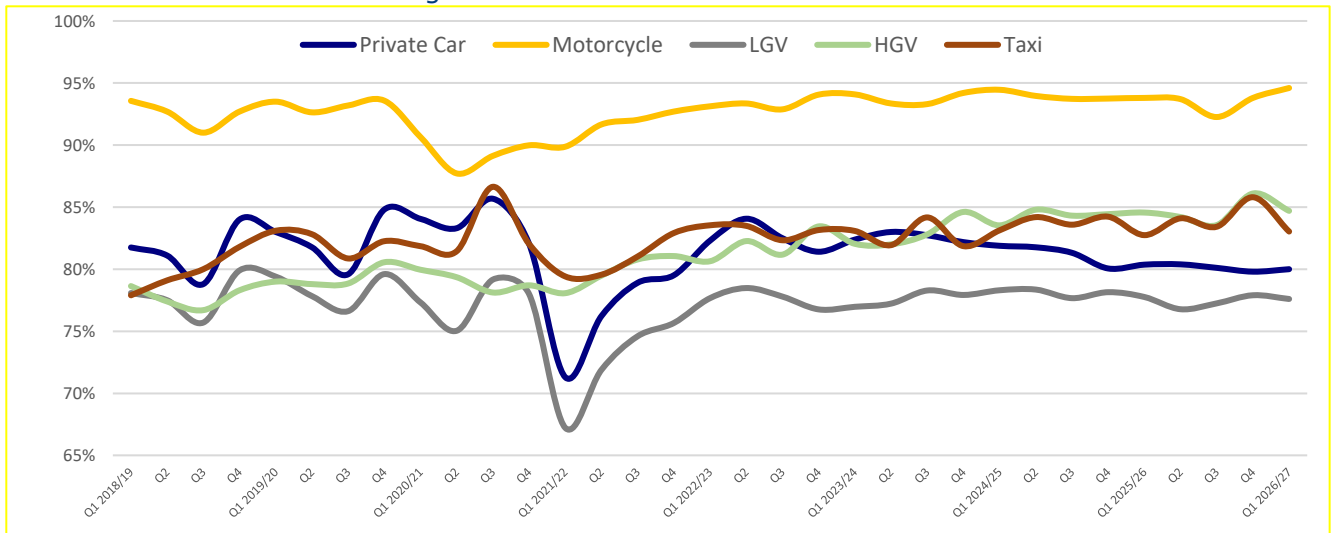
The reduction in pass rates observed during the pandemic period suggests that some vehicle owners may not have maintained their vehicles adequately during periods of test exemption. However, since 2022/23, pass rates have generally returned to, and in some instances exceeded, pre-pandemic levels. This pattern is also evident for private car full tests, where pass rates have remained close to or above 80% since the first quarter of 2022/23, including 80.0% in the latest quarter.

In financial year 2025/26, the overall pass-rate for full tests was 80.6%, relative to 81.5% for the previous year, which is on a par with pass levels obtained pre-pandemic era. Pass rates for full tests, varied by test category, from 77.5% for light goods vehicles to 93.6% for motorcycles, with 84.6% for heavy goods vehicles and 80.1% for private cars (for categories where there were at least 2,000 tests). (Table 1.11).

The overall pass rate for vehicle retests during April to June 2026 was 94.2%, slightly lower than both the previous quarter (94.8%) and the corresponding quarter of 2025/26 (94.3%) (Table 1.12). Despite this small decrease, retest pass rates remain high and broadly in line with the stable levels of around 93% to 94% observed over a long period prior to the pandemic (Table 1.12).

For the 2025/26 financial year, the overall re-test pass-rate of 94.5% is slightly below the 94.8% recorded for 2024/25 which is the highest annual pass rate on record (Table 1.12). As with full tests, the annual re-test pass-rate varied by category, from 90.1% for LPCV to 94.7% for private cars and 96.9% for motorcycles, for vehicle test categories where there were at least 1,000 tests. (Table 1.12).

Figure 1.5: Full Vehicle Test Pass-Rates

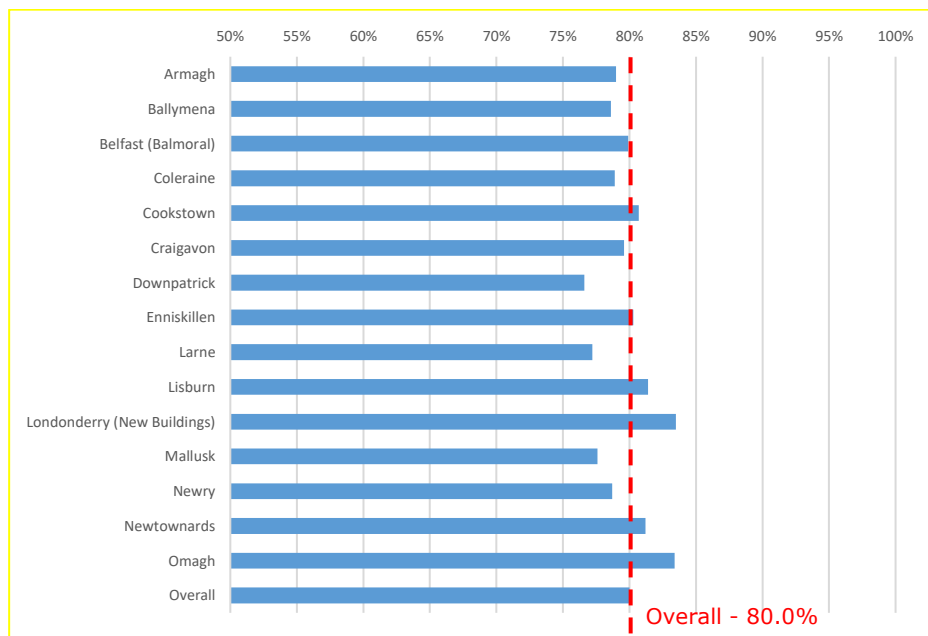


Vehicle Tests by Test Centre

The busiest test centre for vehicle testing during 2025/26 was Newtownards which conducted 121,692 full tests during the year, of which 87.7% (106,706) were for private cars (Table 1.15). Omagh test centre conducted the fewest number of full vehicle tests during this period at 36,790.

Pass rates for private car full tests during the first quarter of 2026/27 ranged from 76.6% in Downpatrick to 83.5% in Newbuilding, compared with an overall average of 80.0% across all test centres (Table 1.14). Differences in pass rates for private cars and other vehicle types within and between test centres may arise due to a range of interacting factors, including variations in vehicle age profiles, vehicle condition and maintenance practices, and customer behaviour.

Figure 1.6: Vehicle Test Pass-Rates by Test Centre



Vehicle Licensing and Registration

Vehicle Licensing for Northern Ireland since July 2014 has been administered by the Driver and the Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) in Swansea.

Vehicle Registrations

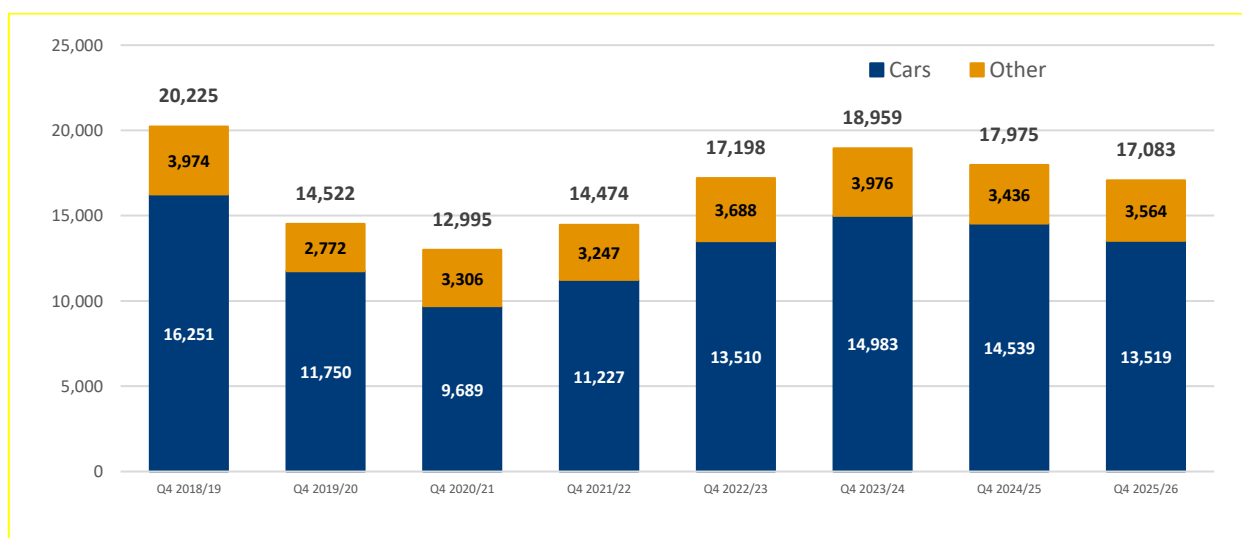
This section includes the latest available vehicle licensing data for Northern Ireland covering the period from January to March 2026.

During this quarter, the DVLA registered 17,083 new vehicles to Northern Ireland, 54.7% (6,042) more than the previous quarter (11,041) and 5.0% (892) fewer than the same quarter in 2024/25 (17,975) (Table 2.1) (Figure 2.1). Please note that new vehicle registrations exclude vehicles previously registered with the DVLA whose ownership transferred to Northern Ireland during the latest quarter. Taking these vehicles into account, the total number of first-time registrations to Northern Ireland this quarter was 17,211, compared with 11,144 in the previous quarter.

Private cars accounted for 13,519 (79.1%) of all new vehicle registrations during the quarter, remaining the largest vehicle category by a considerable margin. While registrations have generally recovered from the exceptionally low levels recorded in early 2020/21, the sharp decline observed during that period remains directly related to the COVID-19 pandemic and does not reflect vehicle purchasing behaviour before or after the associated restrictions.

During financial year 2025/26, there were 44,713 private car registrations in Northern Ireland, a 9.4% decrease compared with 2024/25 (49,333) (Table 2.1). While UK vehicle registrations were broadly stable during 2025, registrations in Northern Ireland declined over the same period. The lower level of registrations may reflect a combination of local market conditions, consumer demand and the timing of vehicle purchases. It may also reflect continuing changes in purchasing patterns, including a shift away from petrol and diesel vehicles towards alternatively fuelled vehicles.

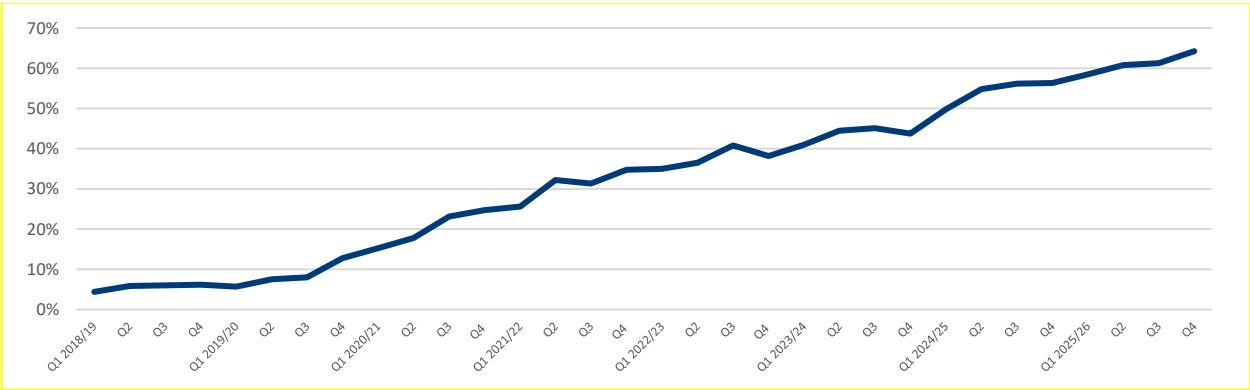
Figure 2.1: New Vehicle Registrations



Top makes for private car first-time registrations in the fourth quarter of 2025/26 were Volkswagen (9.6%), followed by Kia (8.1%), Ford (7.3%), Hyundai (6.7%) and BMW (6.6%) (Table 2.3).

Colour preferences among newly registered private car buyers continue to favour a relatively narrow range of colours. Grey remained the most popular choice during January to March 2026, accounting for 25.3% of all new cars, followed by black (19.5%) and blue (17.1%). White remained the fourth most popular colour at 14.9%, while red accounted for 8.4% of registrations. Green, although still representing a relatively small share of the market, made up 6.2% of registrations, with silver accounting for 6.0%. Overall, new car buyers continue to favour a relatively narrow palette of darker, largely monochrome colours compared with the broader licensed vehicle fleet, where older red and silver vehicles continue to represent a larger share of vehicles in use.

Figure 2.2: Proportion of New Car Registrations using Alternative Fuels



The proportion of new cars registered in Northern Ireland using alternative fuel has continued to increase in recent years, reflecting the sustained shift away from traditional combustion engines. Having accounted for 5.7% of new car registrations in Q1 2019/20, alternative fuel vehicles accounted for 64.2% of new registrations in Q4 2025/26. Over the same period, the share of new diesel cars fell from 36.0% to 6.0%. This is now the twenty-second consecutive quarter in which alternative fuel cars have outsold diesel models. During January to March 2026, 8,684 alternative fuel cars were newly registered compared with 805 diesel cars.

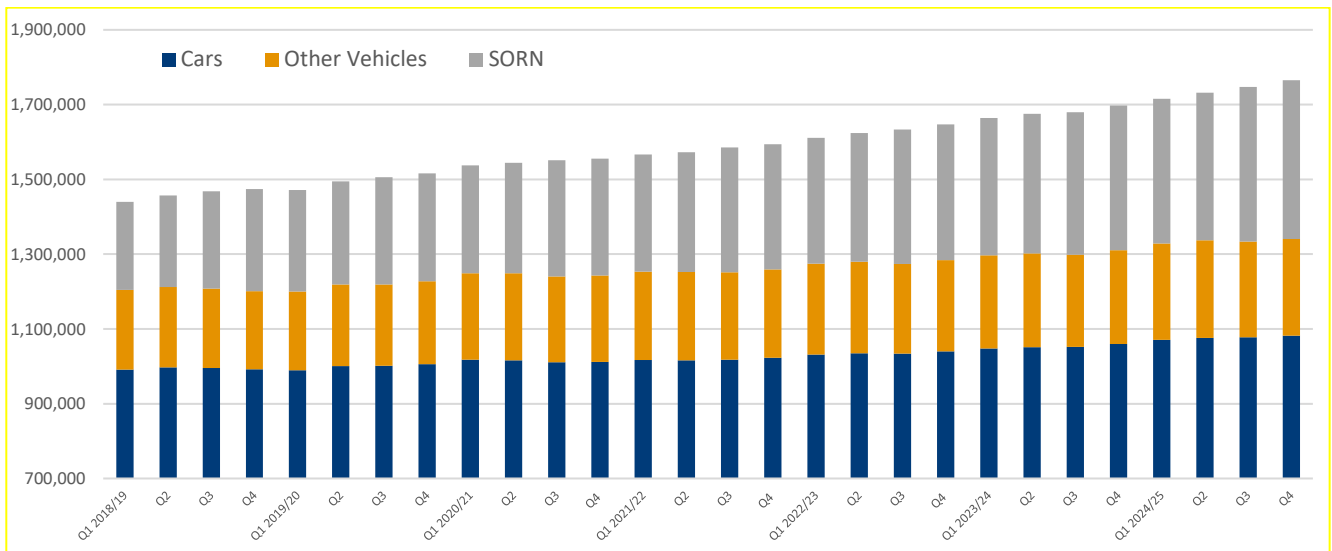
Licensed Vehicles

At the end of March 2026, there were 1,340,878 licensed vehicles in Northern Ireland, an increase of 0.53% (7,041) from the previous quarter (1,333,837) (Table 2.13). Following a slight decrease in the previous quarter, the number of licensed vehicles increased during January to March 2026, reaching the highest level recorded in the series and continuing the overall long-term growth in the licensed vehicle stock.

Just over eight in every ten (80.7%) licensed vehicles were private cars (1,081,812). Private car stock reached a record high during the quarter, increasing by 0.42% (4,513) since December 2025 and by 2.06% (21,848) compared with March 2025. Private cars continued to account for the vast majority of licensed vehicles in Northern Ireland and were a key contributor to the overall growth in licensed vehicle stock during the quarter (Table 2.13).

A total of 424,703 vehicles had a SORN (Statutory Off-Road Notification) at the end of March 2026, representing 24.1% of the overall vehicle stock (1,765,581 licensed plus SORN vehicles) (Table 2.13). The number of SORN vehicles increased by 2.73% (11,277) from the previous quarter and continues the long-term growth observed since the introduction of continuous SORN

Figure 2.3: Northern Ireland Vehicle Stock



Emerging Trends in the Fleet

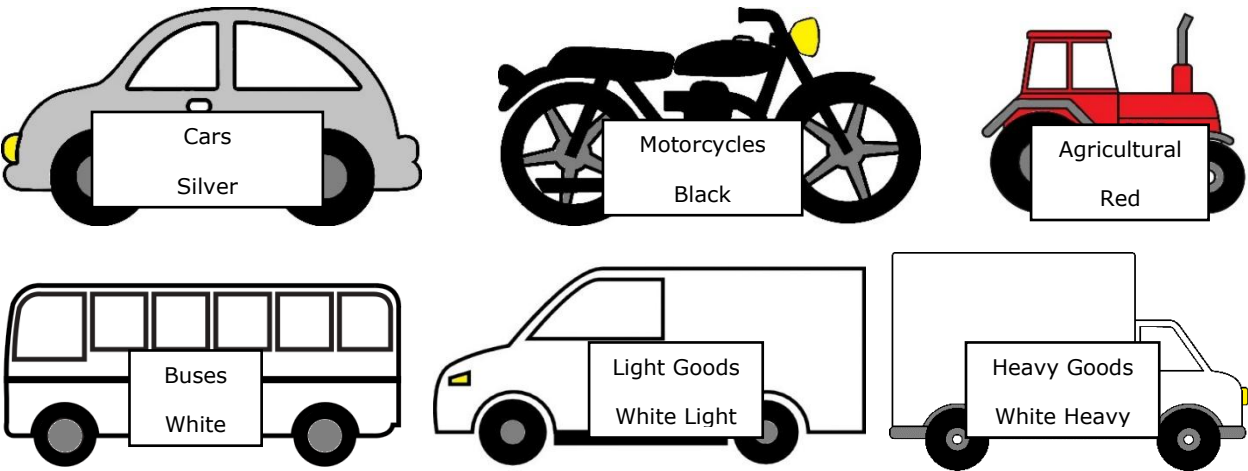
The make-up of Northern Ireland's vehicle fleet continues to evolve. The number of licensed diesel private cars has gradually declined in recent years, while diesel light goods vehicles have continued to increase. At the same time, alternatively fuelled vehicles accounted for 64.2% of new car registrations in Q4 2025/26, while diesel vehicles accounted for just 6.0%. During January to March 2026, 8,684 alternatively fuelled cars were newly registered compared with 805 diesel cars. These trends suggest a gradual change in the composition of the vehicle fleet, with growth in alternatively fuelled vehicles occurring alongside differing fuel preferences between private and commercial vehicle users.

Average Age of the Licensed Fleet

As of 31 March 2026, the average age of licensed vehicles in Northern Ireland was 9.71 years. Average ages varied by body type:

- Cars – 9.8 years
- Motorcycles – 14.9 years
- Light goods vehicles – 9.3 years
- Heavy goods vehicles – 10.2 years
- Buses – 11.4 years
- Agricultural vehicles – 22.0 years
- Other vehicles – 10.9 years

Monochrome colours continued to dominate the licensed vehicle fleet, with white, grey and black remaining the most common colours across private cars and commercial vehicle types. Agricultural vehicles were an exception to this trend, with red accounting for around two-fifths of the agricultural fleet and remaining the most common colour in this category.



At the end of March 2026, Northern Ireland's licensed vehicle fleet reached a record high of almost 1.35 million vehicles, with private cars accounting for more than 80% of all licensed vehicles. The average age of licensed vehicles exceeded 10 years, while alternatively fuelled vehicles represented almost two-thirds of new car registrations during the quarter. These trends indicate that the vehicle fleet continues to grow, age and evolve, with increasing uptake of alternatively fuelled vehicles. Given that private cars are first subject to MOT testing at four years old and light goods vehicles at three years, before requiring annual tests thereafter, the expanding and ageing vehicle fleet is also likely to increase demand for periodic roadworthiness testing in the years ahead.

3 Driver Theory Testing

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) administer driver theory testing under contract with the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) within the Department for Infrastructure (DfI).

Due to the outbreak of COVID-19, the DVA suspended all driver theory testing between 20 March 2020 and 6 July, and again from 26 December until 22 April 2021.

For the latest news and updates relating to driver theory testing, please visit the Driver Theory Testing pages on the NI Direct website².

Theory Test Applications and Tests Conducted

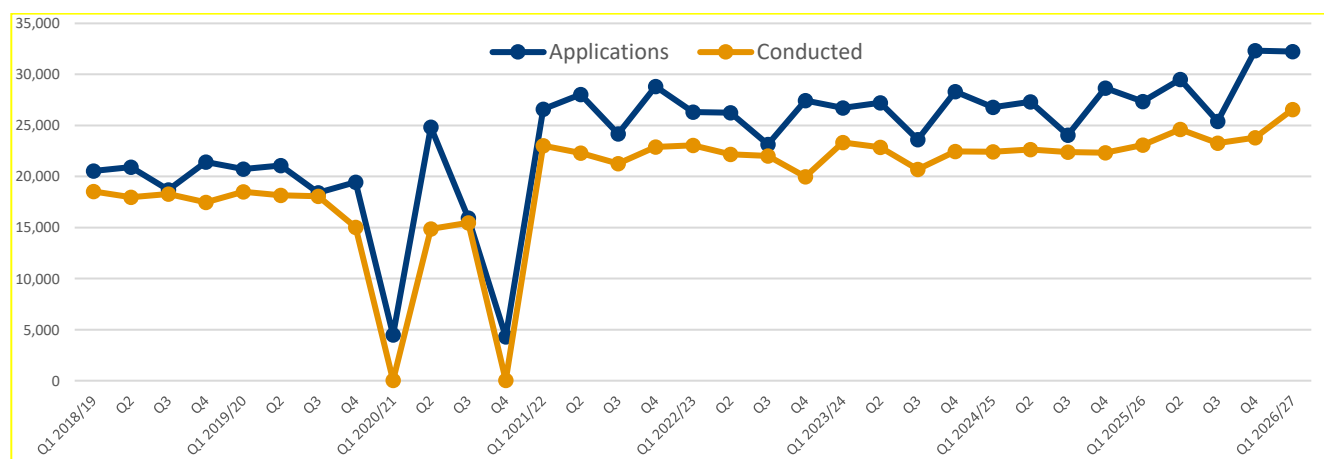
For Q1 2026/27 (April to June 2026), the DVA delivered 26,567 theory tests, an increase of 15.2% (3,497 tests) compared with the same quarter of 2025/26 (23,070 tests). This was the highest first-quarter total recorded in the post-pandemic period shown in the series (Table 3.2; Figure 3.1).

For 2025/26, the DVA conducted 94,763 theory tests, up 5.5% (4,927) from 89,836 in 2024/25, and the highest annual total on record in the series. Before the pandemic, annual theory test volumes ranged from 49,969 in 2012/13 to 76,216 in 2016/17, showing that annual volumes in recent years have remained well above pre-pandemic levels.

Applications also increased during the quarter. From April to June 2026, the DVA received 32,225 theory test applications, 17.8% (4,864) more than in the same quarter of 2025/26 (27,361), although 0.3% (102) fewer than in the previous quarter (32,327) (Table 3.1; Figure 3.1). Demand for theory testing remained strong, with both applications received (32,225) and tests conducted (26,567) reaching their highest first-quarter levels in the post-pandemic period shown in the series.

Private cars continued to account for the majority of theory testing activity. From April to June 2026, private car applications made up 86.1% of all applications, while private car tests conducted accounted for 86.4% of all theory tests delivered (Table 3.1 and Table 3.2).

Figure 3.1: Theory Test Applications and Conducted



* figures from 2024/25 include ADI/AMI theory tests

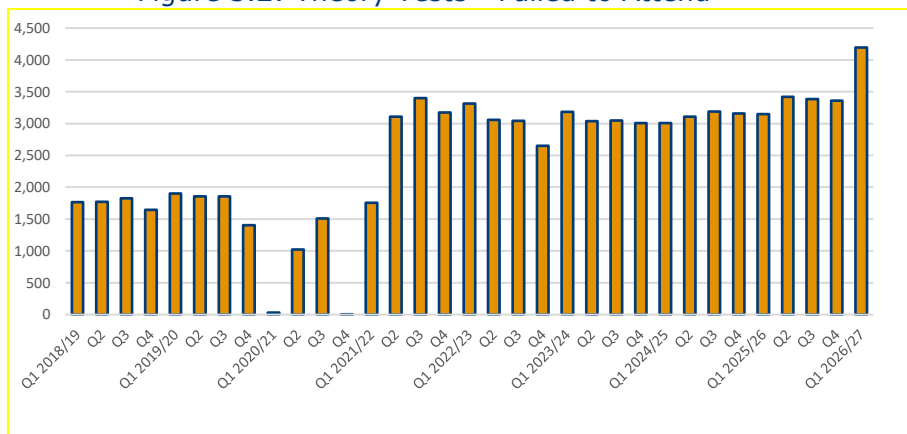
² <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/driving-theory-test>

Failed to Attend

From April to June 2026, 4,197 customers failed to attend a booked theory test, equivalent to 15.8% of all theory tests conducted during the quarter. This was the highest quarterly total of failed-to-attend appointments recorded in the post-pandemic period shown in the series (Table 3.3; Figure 3.2).

Across the year, 13,318 customers failed to attend a booked theory test, representing 14.1% of all theory tests conducted in 2025/26.

Figure 3.2: Theory Tests - Failed to Attend

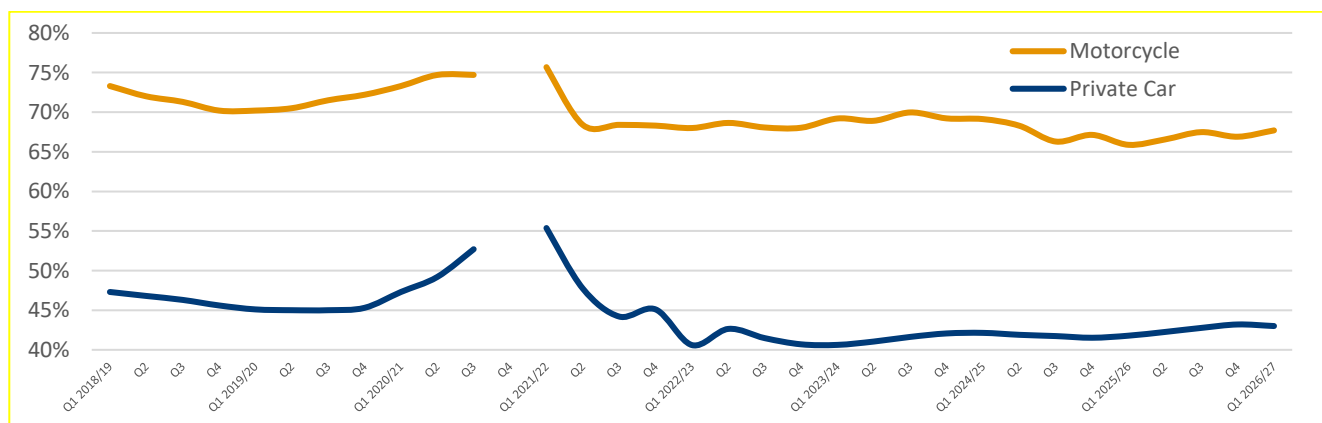


Theory Test Pass-Rates

The private car theory test pass rate in Q1 2026/27 was 43.1%. On a rolling four-quarter average basis to the end of June 2026, private car pass rates were 44.5% for females, 40.9% for males and 42.4% overall (Table 3.4; Table 3.7).

The motorcycle theory test pass rate in Q1 2026/27 was 67.0%, broadly in line with recent quarters. The corresponding pass rates for PCV CPC Module 2 and LGV CPC Module 2 were 67.6% and 68.8% respectively, while the taxi theory test pass rate was 27.1% (Table 3.4).

Figure 3.3: Theory Test Pass-Rates (Rolling 4-quarter Averages)



Continuing the trend observed over the past decade, private car theory test pass rates remained higher for females than for males. On a rolling four-quarter average basis to the end of June 2026, the female pass rate was 44.5%, compared with 40.9% for males (Table 3.7).

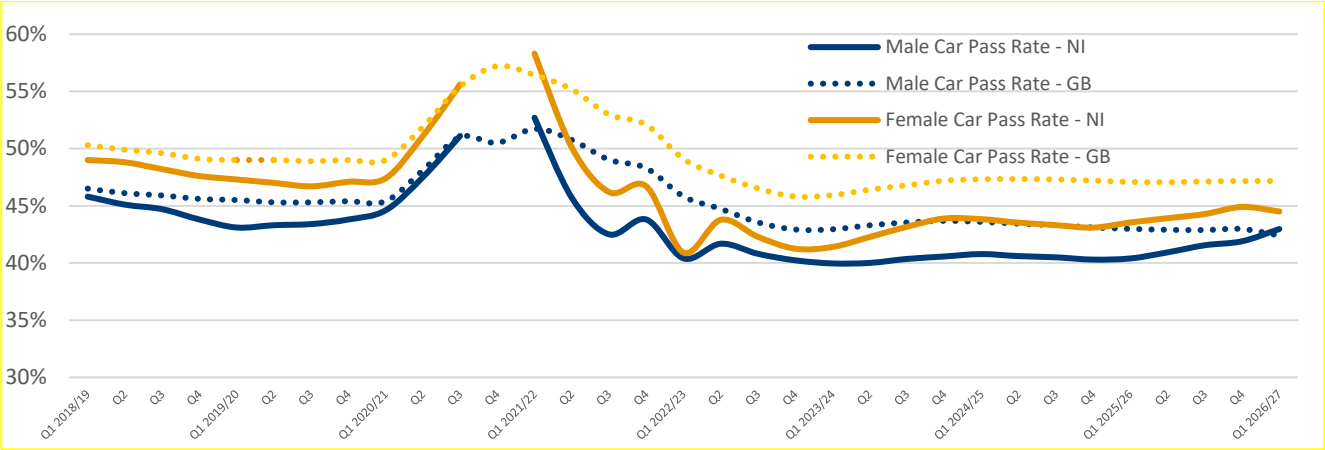
In the 2025/26 financial year, the private car theory test pass rate was 43.2% with the gender split being 44.9% for females and 41.9% for males, giving a difference of 3.0 percentage points. This represents a slightly wider gap than the 2.8 percentage point difference recorded in 2024/25, but remains within the range observed in recent years.

Pass rates for both genders declined gradually between 2012/13 and 2019/20, before falling further during the period immediately following the resumption of theory testing after the pandemic. More recent data indicates that pass rates for both males and females have begun to recover, although they remain below pre-pandemic levels. The gender gap has persisted, with

females continuing to record higher private car theory test pass rates than males. While year-to-year fluctuations in the size of the gap are evident, there remains insufficient evidence to conclude that there has been a sustained or permanent change in the gender differential in private car theory test pass rates. (Table 3.7).

Where comparable data is available, the overall pattern of higher female pass rates and the post-pandemic trajectory of pass rates for both genders are broadly similar to those observed in Great Britain, although pass rates in Great Britain tend to be higher overall (Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4: Private Car Theory Test Pass-Rates by Gender (rolling 4-quarter averages)



4 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.

Driving Test Applications and Tests Conducted

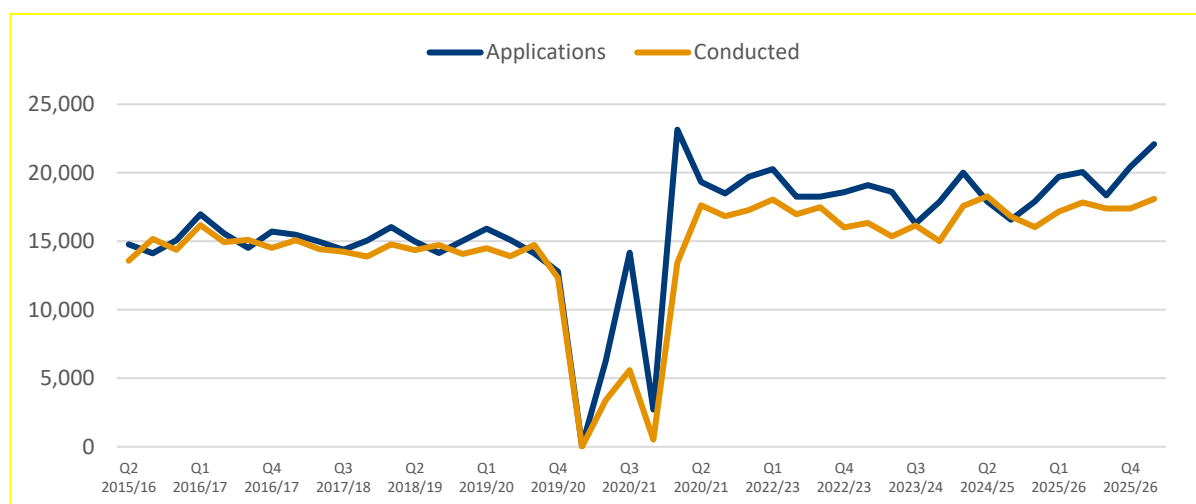
DVA conducted 18,092 driving tests in the first quarter of 2026/27, an increase of 2.7% (471 tests) compared with the 17,621 conducted in the previous quarter, and 5.4% (928 tests) higher than the 17,164 conducted in the same quarter of 2025/26 (Table 4.3 and Figure 4.1).

At the end of the first quarter of 2026/27, the DVA had received 22,090 applications for a driving test, an increase of 12.1% (2,385) compared with the 19,705 applications received in the same quarter of 2025/26. This was the highest number of applications received in a quarter since April to June 2021/22, when 23,151 applications were recorded.

In the 2025/26 financial year, the DVA delivered 70,023 driving tests, 1.9% (1,323) higher than the number of tests delivered in 2024/25 (68,700), and the second highest annual total on record since 2008/09. Just over 8 in every 10 driving tests conducted in 2025/26 were for private cars (58,424) (Table 4.3).

In 2025/26, the DVA received 78,555 applications for a driving test, which is 8.5% (6,147) higher than the previous year 2024/25 (72,408), and 35.6% (20,636) higher than pre-pandemic levels in 2019/20 (57,919). The sustained increase in applications since the pandemic suggests that demand for driving tests may be exceeding pre-pandemic levels. The planned introduction of the Graduated Driver Licence (GDL) in October 2026 may also have influenced some people to apply for their test ahead of the policy change, contributing to higher volumes this year.

Figure 4.1: Driving Test Applications and Conducted

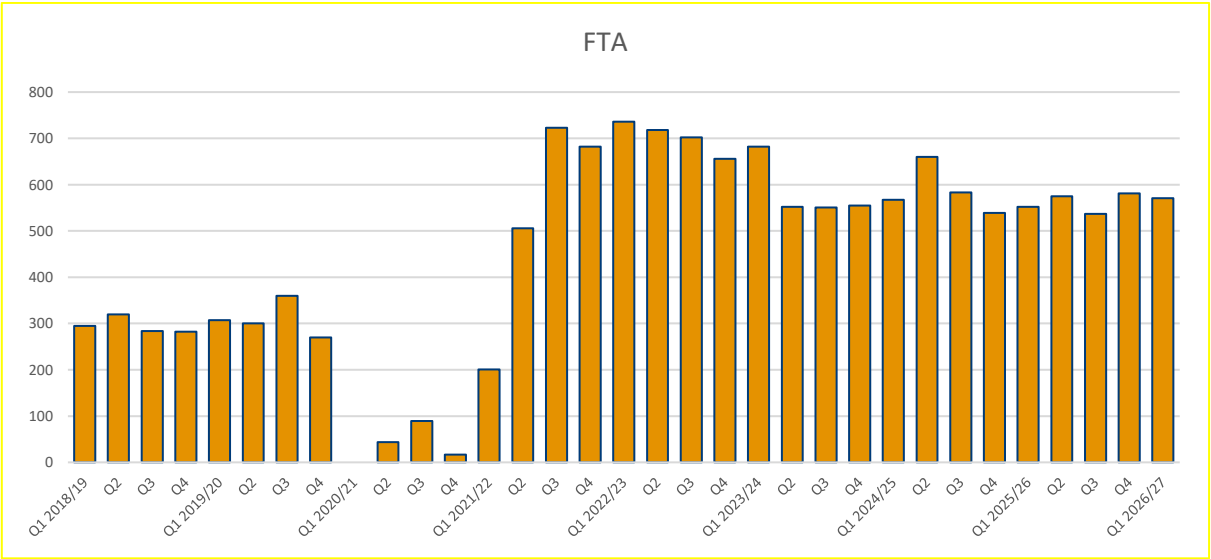


Failed to Attend

In the first quarter of 2026/27, there were 571 driving test appointments for which customers failed to attend (FTA) a paid-for driving test, an increase of 3.4% (19) compared with the 552 recorded in the same quarter of 2025/26 (Table 4.4 and Figure 4.2).

In financial year 2025/26, a total of 2,245 candidates failed to present for their driving test representing 3.2% of all driving tests conducted in this period (70,023) (Table 4.4).

Figure 4.2: Driving Tests – Failed to Attend

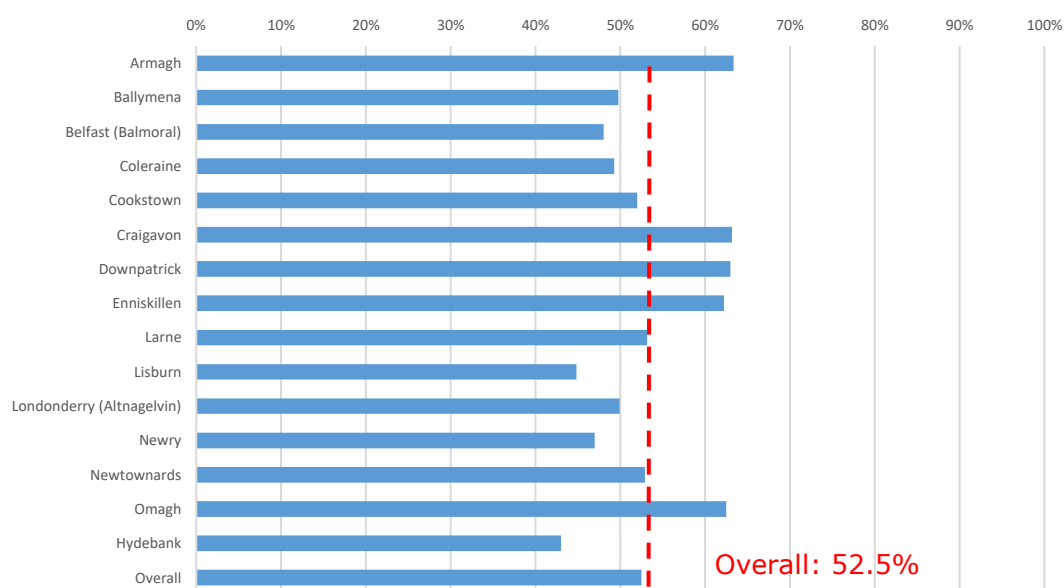


Driving Tests by Test Centre

The number of private car driving tests delivered this quarter ranged from 463 at Enniskillen to 1,656 at Newtownards, with 1,549 delivered at Balmoral (Table 4.6). Across all test centres and using a rolling four-quarter average, pass rates for private car driving tests ranged from 43.0% at Hydebank to 63.4% at Armagh, relative to an average of 52.5% across all test centres (Table 4.7b).

At least part of the variation in driving test outcomes between test centres will reflect differences in the driving ability and learning experience of candidates presenting for testing. Other factors, such as local driving conditions and the characteristics of the road network around individual test centres, may also contribute to differences in pass rates.

Figure 4.3: Private Car Driving Test Pass-Rates by Test Centre, Q1 (Rolling 4-quarter Averages)



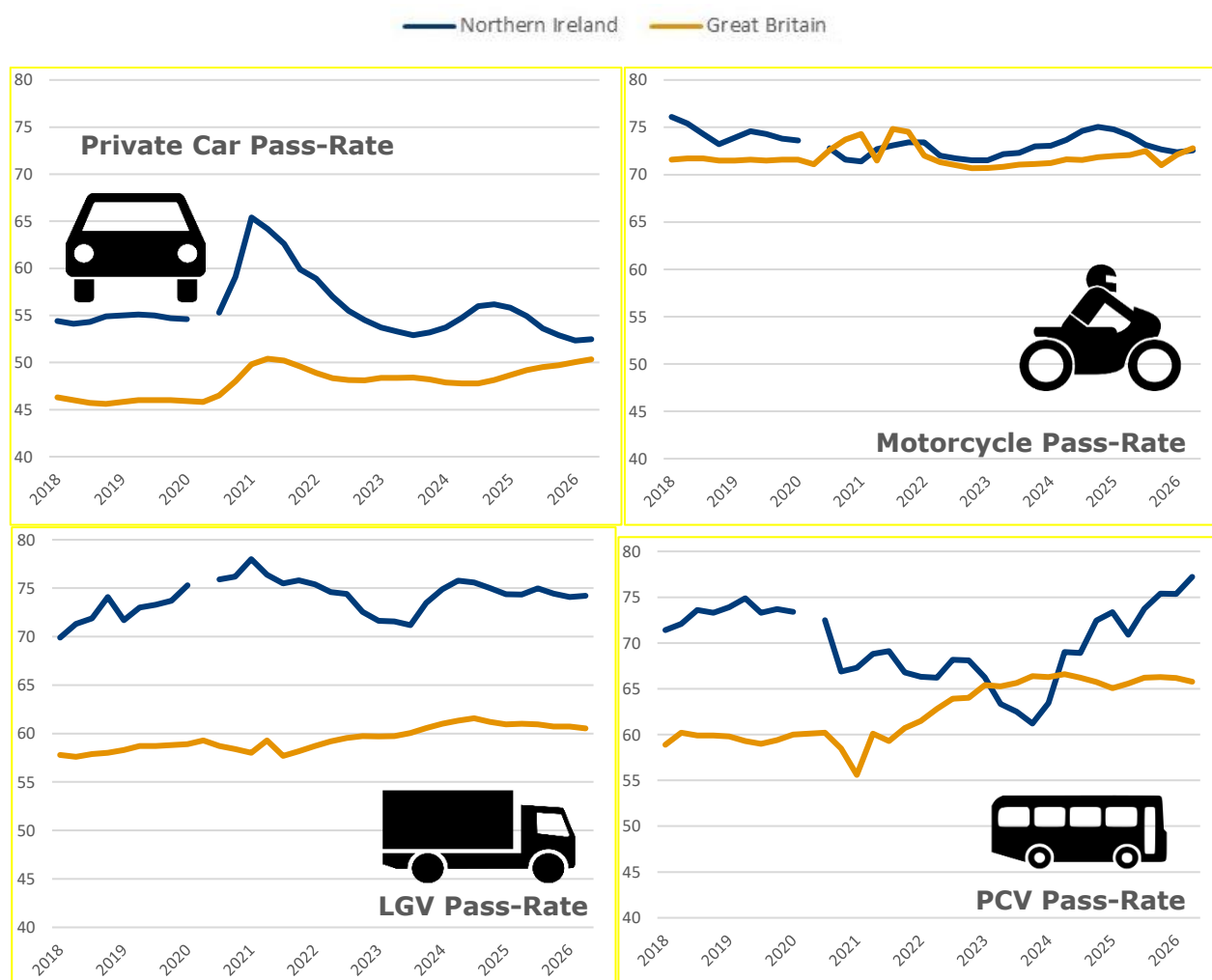
Driving Test Pass-Rates

The private car driving test pass rate was 54.0% during the first quarter of 2026/27, compared with 53.5% in the same quarter of 2025/26 and 51.2% in the previous quarter (January to March 2026) (Table 4.5).

Prior to the pandemic, pass rates for private car driving tests generally increased, reaching a peak of 65.4% on a rolling four-quarter basis during 2020/21. Since then, pass rates have trended downward as testing volumes returned to more typical levels. Despite a slight increase in the latest quarter, the rolling four-quarter average private car pass rate stood at 52.5%, down from 55.8% at the end of 2024/25 and below the levels typically observed immediately before the pandemic (Table 4.10 and Figure 4.4).

Using a rolling four-quarter average, pass rates for private cars (52.5%), motorcycles (75.0%), LGVs (74.3%) and PCVs (77.2%) remain higher in Northern Ireland than the equivalent rates reported for Great Britain where comparable data are available (Table 4.10 and Figure 4.4). At least part of these differences may be attributable to regional factors such as traffic volumes, road layouts and other local driving conditions experienced during driver testing.

Figure 4.4: Driving Test Pass-Rates (Rolling 4-Quarter Average)



Driving Test Pass-Rates by Gender

To the end of June 2026, the rolling four-quarter average private car driving test pass rate was 52.1% for males and 52.9% for females, compared with 55.2% and 54.6% respectively at the end of June 2025. Female pass rates have now exceeded male pass rates on a rolling four-quarter basis for three consecutive quarters, following the first occurrence of this in the quarter ending December 2025. The latest figures suggest that the historical gap in driving test pass rates between males and females has narrowed and reversed, with females now achieving a slightly higher pass rate than males (Table 4.10 and Figure 4.5).

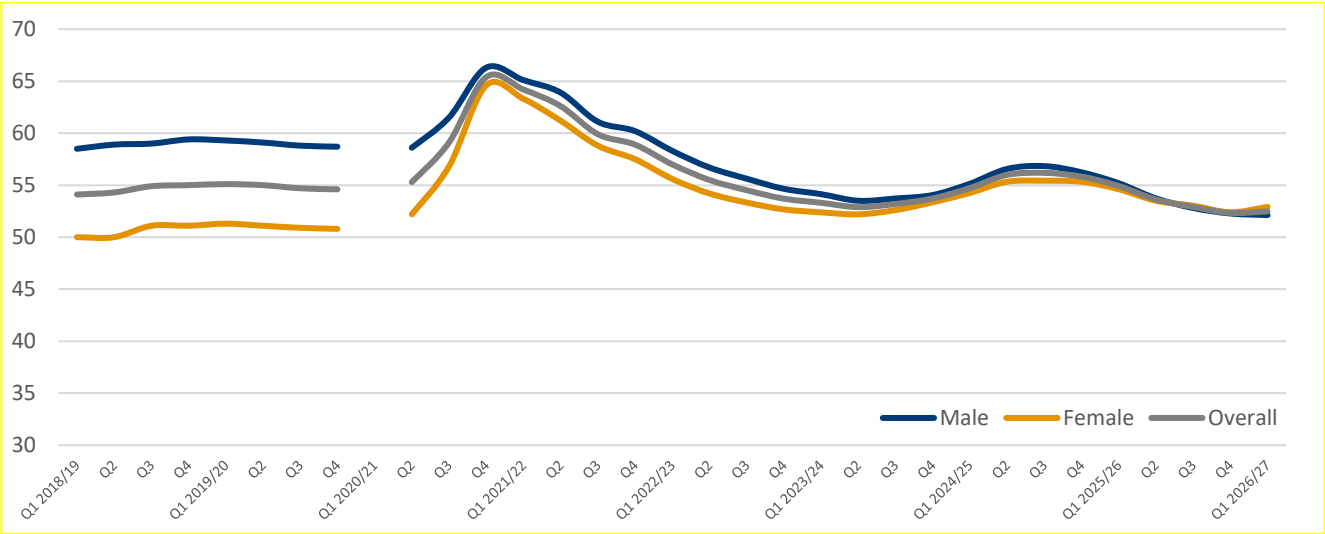
Based on the same rolling four-quarter average, pass rates for private car driving tests were higher for females than males in 9 of the 15 test centres undertaking private car testing. The largest differences were observed in Armagh, where female pass rates exceeded male pass rates by 8.9 percentage points (68.3% compared with 59.4%), and Hydebank, where the corresponding difference was 4.2 percentage points (45.4% compared with 41.1%). Higher pass rates for males were recorded at Coleraine, Enniskillen, Larne, Londonderry (Altnagelvin), Cookstown and Newry (Table 4.7b).

The gender gap is also now substantially narrower than the 6 to 7 percentage point gap present in Great Britain (GB) statistics pre-pandemic with the difference between males and females reducing from over 5 percentage points in quarter one of 2021/22 to 1.7 percentage points in the second quarter of 2025/26, the most recent quarter available (Table 4.10).

It remains too soon to conclude whether the recent reversal of the historical gender gap is indicative of a lasting change or whether pass rates will converge towards pre-pandemic patterns. Without a detailed understanding of the profile of candidates presenting for testing, it is difficult

to contextualise why differences in pass rates by gender and location persist in the way that they do.

Figure 4.5: Private Car Driving Test Pass-Rate by Gender (Rolling 4-Quarter Averages)



Whilst a gender gap in favour of males remains apparent in Great Britain for motorcycle driving tests, pass rates are relatively similar and are now slightly higher for females than males. In contrast, Northern Ireland continues to exhibit a more pronounced gender difference. Based on a rolling four-quarter average to the end of June 2026, the motorcycle pass rate for males in Northern Ireland was 75.0%, compared with 62.2% for females, a gap of 12.8 percentage points (Table 4.10). This difference has persisted throughout the post-pandemic period and remains substantially larger than that observed in Great Britain.

In contrast to Northern Ireland, GB pass rates for large goods vehicle (LGV) driving tests are consistently higher for females than males. Historically, the difference has typically been around five to six percentage points, although the gap has widened in recent years. The latest available figures for Great Britain show female pass rates continuing to exceed those for males by a notable margin. While differences between males and females are also evident in Northern Ireland, the direction and size of the gap have varied over time and have not shown the same consistent pattern observed in Great Britain (Table 4.10).

5 Driver Licensing

The DVA is responsible for driver licensing in Northern Ireland. DVA issues and, where appropriate, withdraws driver licences in respect of drivers of private cars, motorcycles, goods vehicles, buses, and other vehicle types.

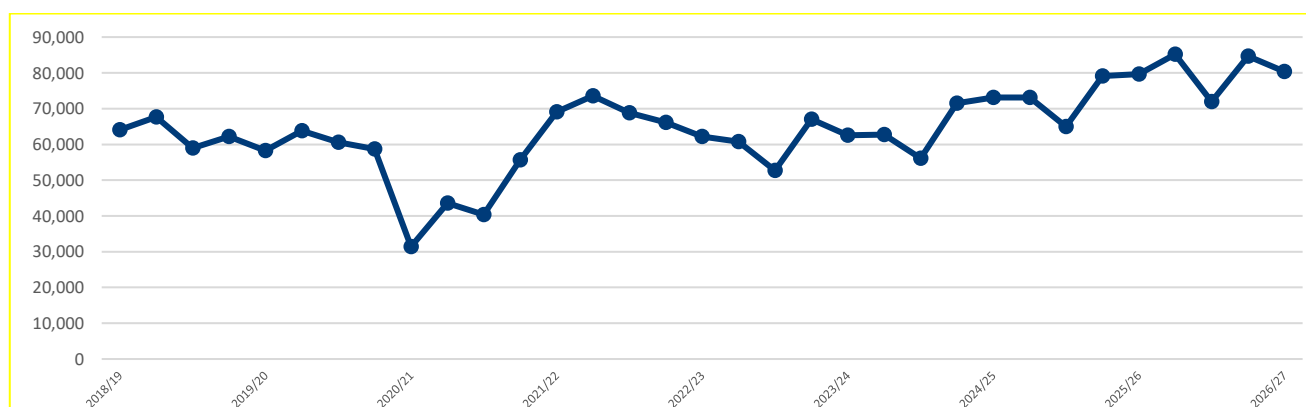
On 27 March 2020, the DVA suspended the processing of all paper renewal applications and temporarily closed the driver licensing office. From the end of April that year they began processing applications from Group 2 (lorry/bus) applicants and those from front line workers. Only applications received online were processed during this period. From June 2020, the DVA began resuming all driver licensing bar counter service at that time and now processes all driver licensing applications it receives.

Driver Licensing Transactions

Ordinary driver licensing transactions during 2025/26 totalled 321,366, the highest ever recorded annual figure, and 10.7% (31,044) above that for 2024/25 (290,322) (Figure 5.1).

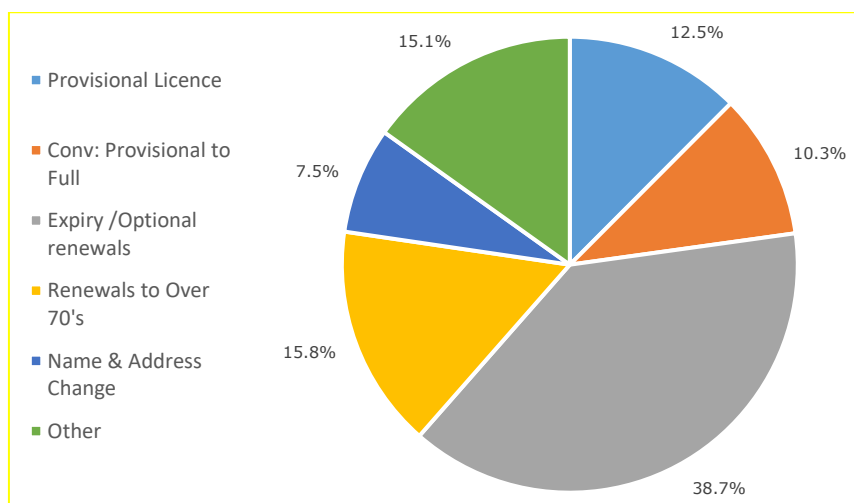
In the first quarter of this year, 2026/27, the DVA completed 80,396 ordinary driver licensing transactions, which is 1.0% (769) more than the same quarter of the previous year (79,627) (Table 5.1). While the year-on-year increase was modest, transaction volumes remained at a historically high level, with Q1 2026/27 recording the highest first quarter total in the series shown.

Figure 5.1: Driver Licensing Transactions



Most ordinary driver licence transactions were renewals, with expiry/optional renewals (31,098; 38.7%) and renewals to the over 70s (12,740; 15.8%) accounting for over half (54.6%) of all activity. Provisional licences (12.5%), conversions from provisional to full licences (10.3%) and name and address changes (7.5%) were the next most common transaction types, with the remainder comprising medical renewals, replacement licences and exchange licences.

Figure 5.2: Ordinary Driver License Transactions by Type



In 2025/26 DVA completed 15,572 vocational driver licensing transactions, the lowest annual total since 2020/21 when 11,443 were recorded. In the first quarter of 2026/27, the DVA completed 4,812 vocational driver licensing transactions, an increase of 24.2% (938 more transactions) compared with the same quarter in 2025/26 (3,874) (Table 5.2).

The percentage of online transactions continues to increase. In 2025/26, 84% of all renewal licence applications were submitted using the DVA's online driver licensing facility, with 77% of all ordinary and vocational licence applications made online. In the first quarter of 2026/27, the corresponding figures increased to 87% and 81% respectively, the highest quarterly proportions since these statistics were first published in 2024/25.

Driver Licence Stock

At the end of June 2026, there were over 1.2 million full and eligible driver licence holders (excluding provisional licence holders), the highest figure recorded in the series (Table 5.8).

There were 116,180 provisional licence holders with private car/light van entitlement, the highest figure recorded in the series and an increase of 1.2% (1,418) compared with the previous quarter (114,762). Driver licence holders aged 65 years and above accounted for 22.0% (265,165) of all full and eligible private car/light van licence holders (1,206,812) (Table 5.4).

Figure 5.3: Proportion of Population with a Full Car Licence – by Age

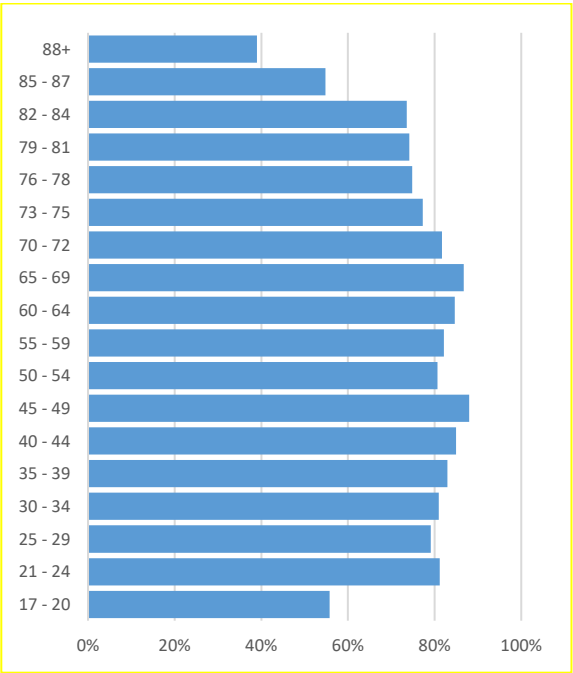


Figure 5.4: Full Car Licence Holders

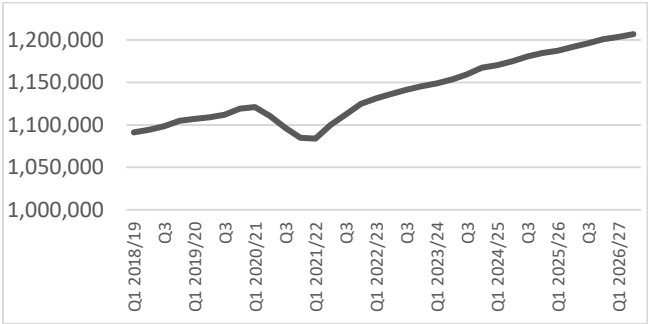
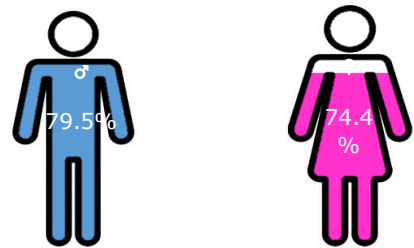


Figure 5.5: Proportion of Population with a Full Car Licence – by Gender



At the end of June 2026, an estimated 76.9% of Northern Ireland's population held a full and eligible private car/light van driving licence. The corresponding proportions for males and females were 79.5% and 74.4% respectively (Figure 5.5). These estimates are based on the latest published NISRA mid-year population estimates (Table 5.8).

The Passenger Transport Licensing division within the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) is responsible for issuing and withdrawing licences for taxi drivers and bus operators. Responsibility for goods vehicle licensing in Northern Ireland lies with the Transport Regulation Unit within the Department for Infrastructure (DfI), rather than the DVA.

Please note that licence counts are based on the date when the relevant licences are created. This approach was introduced as part of an internal operational update implemented by the DVA to improve customer service processes and enhance the consistency of statistical reporting. Although this change refined how licensing activity is recorded, it has not had any significant effect on historical figures, and no revisions to previously published data have been required.

Taxi Licensing

Taxi Vehicles

In 2025/26, the DVA issued 8,526 taxi vehicle licences, which is 305 more than in 2024/25. This represents a 3.7% increase on the previous year's total of 8,221 licences (Table 6.1).

At the end of June 2026, licensed taxi vehicle stock stood at 7,440, an increase of 169 vehicles (+2.3%) compared with 7,271 at the same point in the previous year. Vehicle stock also increased by 33 vehicles (+0.4%) compared with 7,407 at the end of March 2026 (Table 6.2 and Figure 6.1).

Following a period of decline between 2020/21 and 2021/22, licensed taxi vehicle stock has increased steadily since 2022/23. At the end of June 2026, there were 7,440 licensed taxi vehicles, the highest stock level recorded since September 2021 when 7,703 vehicles were licensed (Table 6.2).

Taxi Drivers

During 2025/26, the DVA issued 1,574 taxi driver licences, a decrease of 464 licences (-22.8%) compared with 2,038 issued in 2024/25 (Table 6.1).

Looking over the longer term, the number of licences issued for taxis has fallen since the start of the series in 2013/14 and remained below pre-pandemic levels since 2020/21 (Table 6.1). Licensed taxi driver stock has also more than halved since the 15,802 recorded back in 2013/14, however there are signs that the numbers of licences for both drivers and vehicles have stabilised and are starting to increase gradually, with the 7,586 taxi driver licences recorded at the end of June 2026 being the fifth quarter on quarter increase for this figure (Table 6.2).

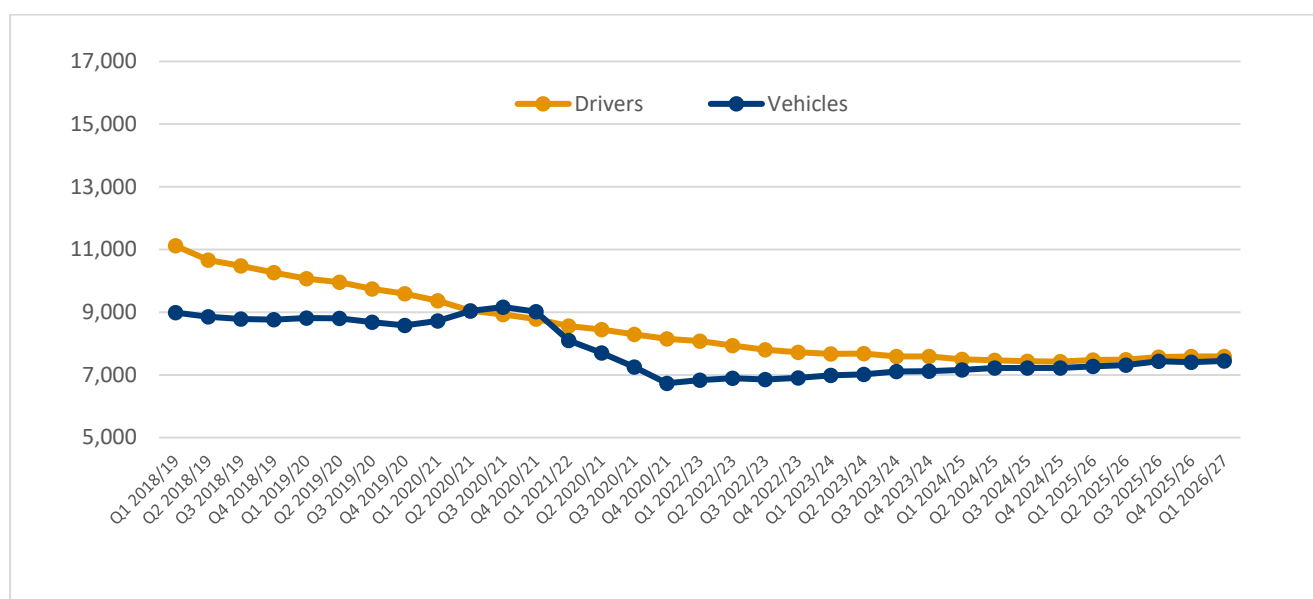
Taxi Operators

Taxi operator numbers declined steadily in recent years, falling from 1,267 at the end of 2021/22 to 1,117 at the end of 2023/24, and then to 1,109 at the end of 2024/25. This represents a reduction of 158 operators (-12.5%) over the three-year period (Table 6.2).

More recently, there have been signs of recovery in operator numbers. Taxi operator stock increased from 1,109 at the end of March 2025 to 1,123 at the end of December 2025, before easing slightly to 1,113 by the end of March 2026. Growth continued into the first quarter of 2026/27, with operator stock reaching 1,131, an increase of 18 operators (+1.6%) compared with the previous quarter (Table 6.2).

Despite this recent growth, the number of licensed taxi operators remains well below levels observed prior to 2020/21. While operator numbers have increased in recent quarters, they remain substantially lower than those recorded earlier in the series (Table 6.2).

Figure 6.1: Licensed Taxi Driver and Taxi Vehicle Volumes



Bus Licensing

Bus Vehicles

Over recent years, the number of public service vehicle (bus) licences issued has shown some volatility, with a marked fall in 2021/22 followed by generally higher levels in subsequent years. In the first quarter of 2026/27, the DVA issued 1,038 bus vehicle licences, a decrease of 4 licences (-0.4%) compared with 1,042 issued in the equivalent quarter of 2025/26 (Table 6.1).

At the end of June 2026, the number of licensed bus vehicles stood at 3,528, an increase of 18 vehicles (+0.5%) compared with 3,510 at the same point in the previous year. Although below the peak of 3,599 recorded at the end of December 2020, the latest figure remains relatively high by historical standards and is the highest June quarter figure recorded in the series, suggesting a sustained recovery and continued stability in the licensed bus fleet (Table 6.3).

Bus Operators

Over the longer term, the number of bus operator licences issued has shown notable variation. In the first quarter of 2026/27, the DVA issued 62 bus operator licences, an increase of 12 licences (+24.0%) compared with the 50 licences issued in the equivalent quarter of 2025/26 (Table 6.1).

At the end of June 2026, there were 223 licensed bus operators, representing the highest level recorded since the 237 recorded at the end of March 2016. This represented an increase of 2 operators (+0.9%) compared with the previous quarter and 15 operators (+7.2%) compared with the 208 recorded at the end of June 2025 (Table 6.3).

Taken over a longer timeframe, bus operator numbers have generally increased since 2021/22, rising from 199 operators at the end of March 2022 to 223 operators at the end of June 2026. This broadly aligns with the higher levels of operator licence issuance observed in recent years (Tables 6.1 and 6.3).

Goods Licensing

At the end of June 2026, there were 5,205 licensed goods vehicle operators, an increase of 68 operators (+1.3%) compared with 5,137 recorded at the same point in the previous year (Table 6.4). These operators held 22,342 licensed goods vehicles, of which 52.8% were standard international, 8.7% standard national and 38.5% restricted.

Both operator and vehicle numbers have remained relatively stable in recent years. While operator stock has fluctuated around the 5,100 to 5,600 range since 2021/22, the number of licensed goods vehicles associated with operators has generally remained above 22,000 and stood at 22,342 at the end of June 2026 (Table 6.4).

Over the longer term, licensed goods vehicle operator numbers have remained below the peak levels recorded during the mid-2010s. In contrast, the associated goods vehicle stock has increased gradually since 2023/24 and remains close to the highest levels recorded within the series, indicating continued stability in the licensed goods vehicle fleet (Table 6.4).

Enforcement & Compliance

General Compliance and Roadside Enforcement within the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) is responsible for enforcing legislation relating to roadworthiness standards and public transport licensing at the roadside.

Enforcement Activities

Following 1,573 enforcement checks undertaken during 2025/26, enforcement activity remained below the levels typically recorded prior to the pandemic. During the first quarter of 2026/27, DVA enforcement teams carried out 428 checks, 8.7% (41) fewer than in the corresponding quarter of 2025/26 (469 checks) (Figure 7.1 and Table 7.1).

Figure 7.1: Vehicle Checks

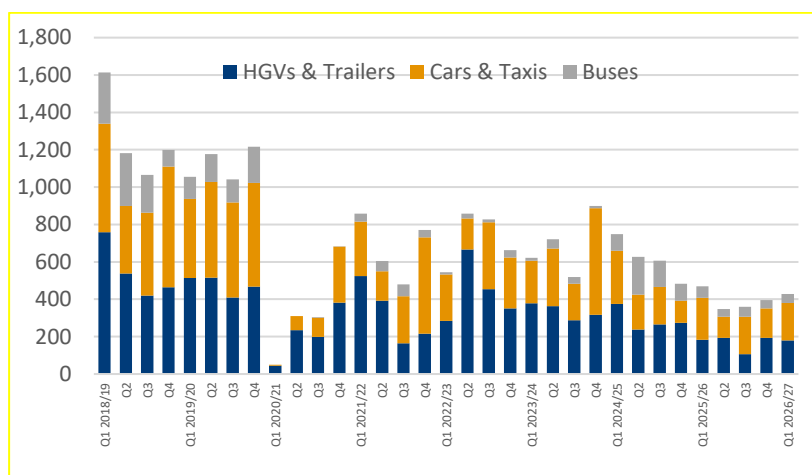
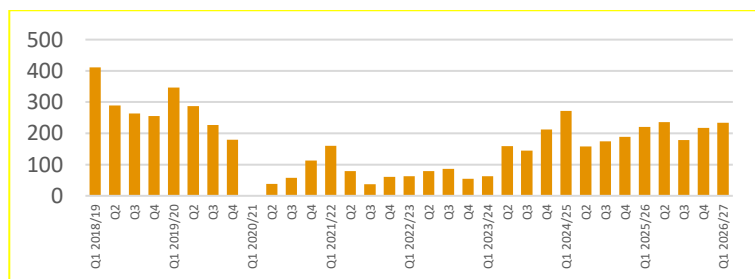


Figure 7.2: Fixed Penalties Issued



Following 853 fixed penalty notices issued during 2025/26, with a total value of £124,200, DVA issued 234 fixed penalty notices in the first quarter of 2026/27. These notices had a total value of £33,030, up from 217 notices valued at £27,930 in the previous quarter (Figure 7.2 and Table 7.2).

In the first quarter of 2026/27, there were 15 convictions relating to 53 offences, compared with 21 convictions covering 46 offences in the previous quarter and 29 convictions relating to 78 offences in the corresponding quarter of 2025/26 (Table 7.2 and Figure 7.3).

Figure 7.3: Convictions

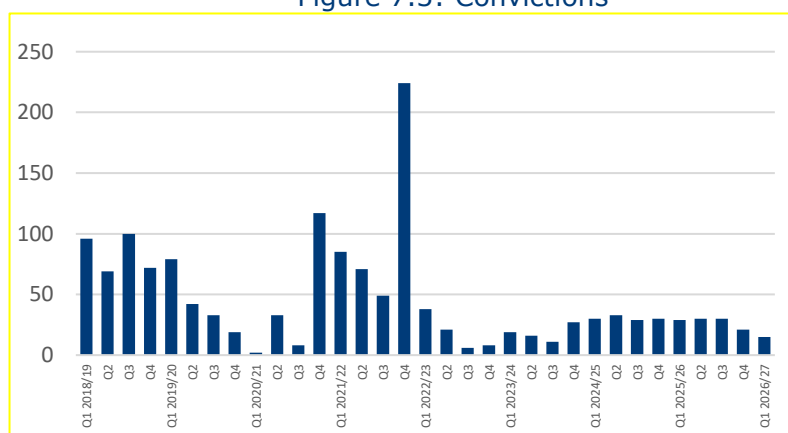
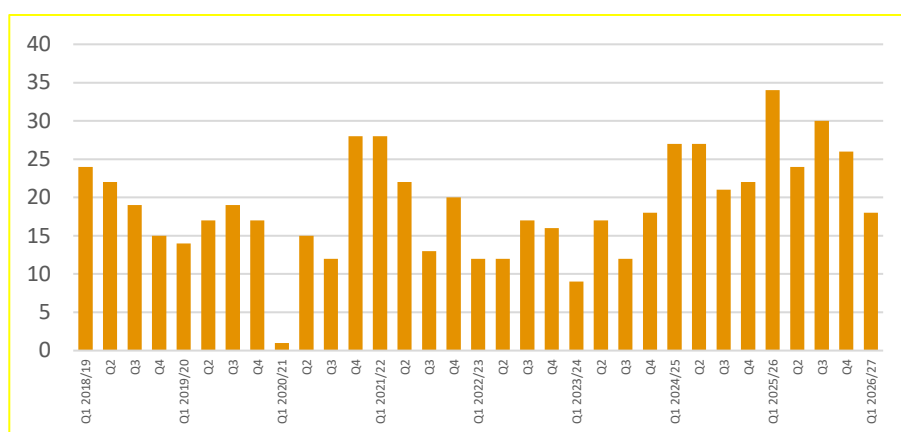


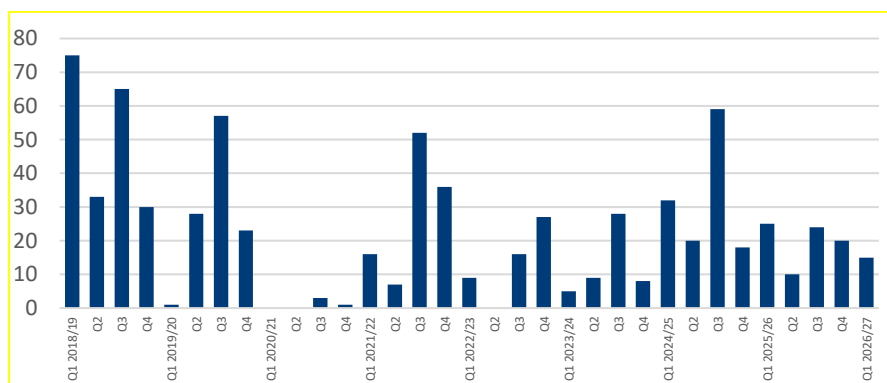
Figure 7.4: Joint and Cross-Border Operations



During 2025/26, DVA participated in 97 joint operations with the PSNI, an increase from 80 in 2024/25. During the first quarter of 2026/27, enforcement activity included 14 joint operations with the PSNI alongside 4 cross-border operations involving the PSNI, the Road Safety Authority and An Garda Síochána (Table 7.3 and Figure 7.4).

Figure 7.5: School Bus Checks

During the first quarter of 2026/27, DVA completed 15 school bus spot checks. This was lower than both the 20 checks undertaken in the previous quarter and the 25 checks carried out in the corresponding quarter of 2025/26 (Table 7.4 and Figure 7.5).



DVA Target Monitoring

In 2020/21, and in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the DVA developed new targets through which it monitors driver licensing processing times and performance. The previous reported targets for Driver and Vehicle Testing are no longer applicable or reported, and there has been an adjustment to the target for Paper Driver Licensing. For information, the previously reported statistics for the old targets are included in Table 8.1. The revised targets are as follows:

1. *Online Driver Licensing* - Process 95% of complete online driver licensing applications within 5 working days.
2. *Paper Driver Licensing* - Process 90% of complete paper driver licensing applications within 10 working days.

Driver Licensing

Online

Online processing for driver licensing applications remained consistently strong in 2025/26, with 99.4% of applications issued within five working days. This was 4.4 percentage points above the 95% target level for the year and broadly in line with performance in 2024/25 (99.5%), representing a marginal decrease of 0.1 percentage points year on year.

Quarter 1 2026/27 saw continued strong performance in online driver licence application processing, with 99.5% of applications completed within the 5-working-day target, exceeding the target level of 95%

Paper

In 2025/26, paper application performance also remained strong, with quarterly delivery ranging between 93.6% and 99.6%, and full-year performance of 95.8% exceeding the 90% target by 5.8 percentage points.

Paper driver licence application processing remained above target in Q1 2026/27, with 99.4% of applications completed within 10 working days, 9.4 percentage points higher than the 90% target (Figure 8.2, Table 8.1).

Figure 8.1: Online Driver Licence Application Waiting Time Performance

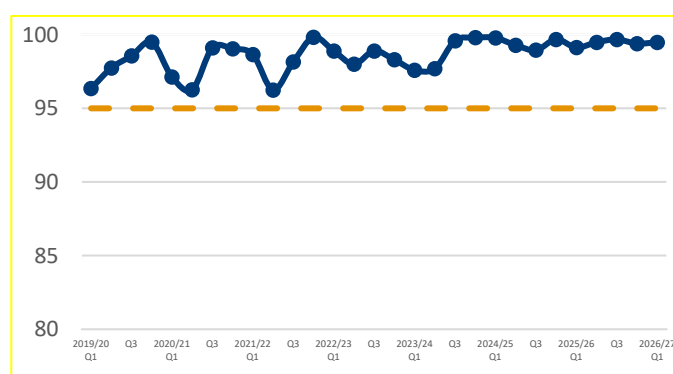
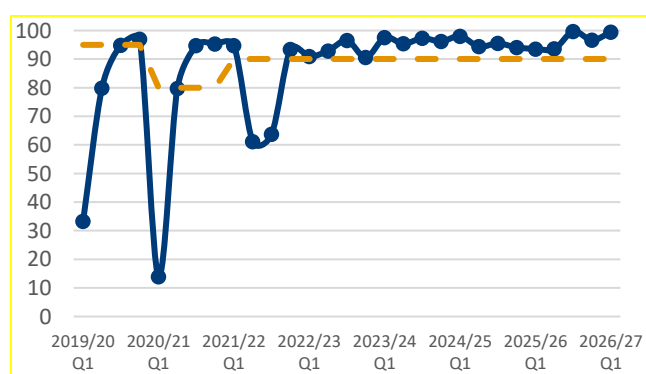


Figure 8.2: Paper Driver Licence Application Waiting Time Performance



(Note: This section is not currently designated as Accredited Official Statistics, but it continues to be published with Official Statistics status).

The DVA is responsible for the maintenance of Approved Driving Instructors (ADI) and Approved Motorcycle Instructors (AMI) registers. In Northern Ireland, recent developments affecting Approved Driving Instructors (ADIs) and Approved Motorcycle Instructors (AMIs) have largely been operational rather than regulatory in nature. These include the continued recovery of driver testing services following pandemic disruption, the expansion of testing capacity (including the opening of Hydebank House test centre in 2024), and the introduction of the Approved Instructor System (AIS) to support digital administration of instructor licensing. While these changes have influenced how instructors interact with the system, there have been no major recent reforms to the qualification framework or broader regulatory environment.

Volumes.

As of 31st March 2026, 954 ADI were registered with DVA, an increase from 920 at the end of 2024/25, but 80 fewer than the 1,034 registered at the end of 2019/20.

Please note that the development of a new Approved Instructor System (AIS) in 2023/24 has enabled DVA to create automated reporting, which classifies the data differently to before. However, this new method does not impact previously published ADI figures (Figure 9.1) (Table 9.1).

Of the 954 ADI registered at the end of 2025/26, 82.6% (788) were male and 17.4% (166) were female, a proportion that has remained broadly unchanged over the past ten years.

There were 72 new ADI registrants in 2025/26, up from 63 in 2024/25, with 38 leaving the register during this period. This represents a net increase in ADI numbers following declines in recent years; however, given continued high levels of demand for driver testing (Table 4.3), and ongoing pressures within the testing and instructor qualification system, it remains difficult to fully explain the longer-term downward trend in Approved Driving Instructors.

There were 54 registered AMI at the end of 2025/26, slightly above the 52 registered in 2024/25. As in previous years, there has been no noticeable downward trend in AMI numbers, which have remained relatively stable (Figure 9.2).

Fig 9.1: Approved Driving Instructors in Northern Ireland

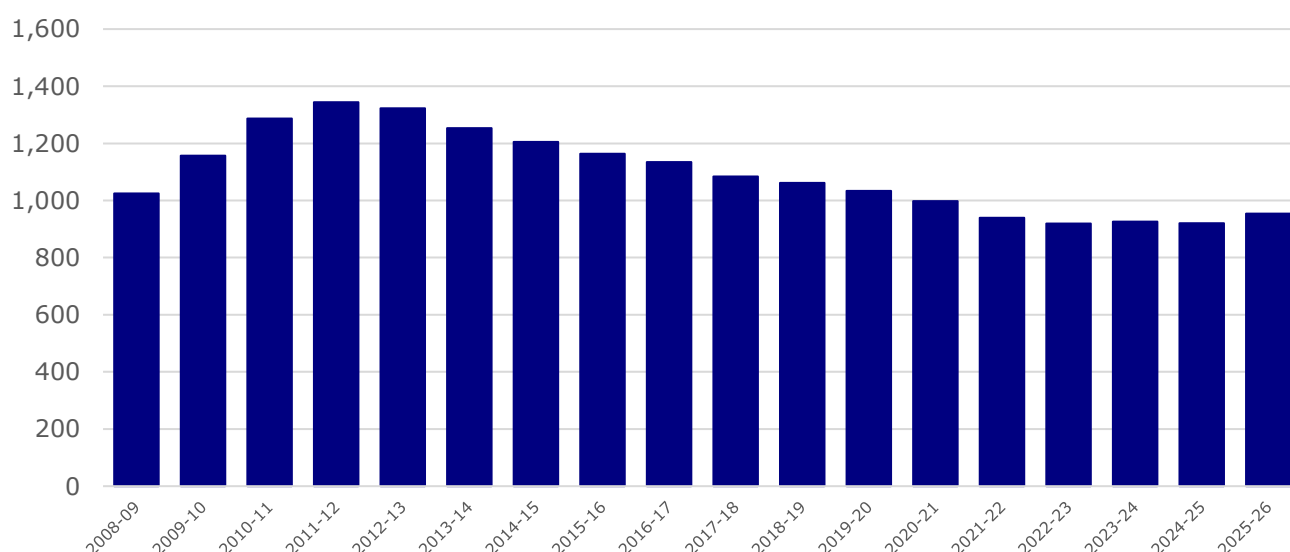
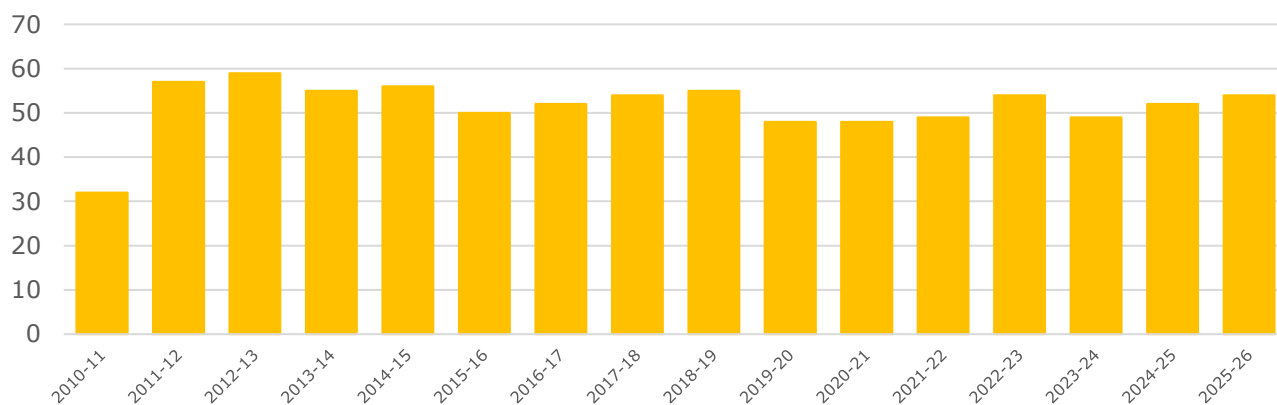


Fig 9.2: Approved Motor Cycle Instructors in Northern Ireland



Test Volumes & Pass-Rates

The number of candidates undertaking each element of the ADI assessment process during 2025/26 increased compared with 2024/25. The number taking the Theory and Hazard Perception test rose from 233 to 265, while Driving Ability increased from 111 to 123, and Instructional Ability from 108 to 121 (Table 9.3).

The pass rate for the Theory & Hazard Perception test in 2025/26 was 38%, while pass rates for the Driving Ability and Instructional Ability tests were 72% and 39% respectively, compared with 36%, 74% and 43% in 2024/25.

As in previous years, changes in pass rates should be interpreted with caution, as year-to-year movements may reflect small number variability across each stage of the assessment process (Table 9.3 and Table 9.4).

Notes

These statistics are classed as accredited official statistics, meaning they meet the highest standards set out in the UK Statistics Authority's Code of Practice for Statistics. They were independently reviewed by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) and judged to deliver trustworthy, high-quality, and valuable information for the public.

The Code of Practice was updated in October 2025 (Edition 3.0). The latest version places strong emphasis on:

Trustworthiness – statistics produced independently, free from political influence.

Quality – accurate, reliable data supported by strong methods and quality assurance.

Value – statistics that provide clear insight and support informed public discussion.

It also highlights the importance of transparent communication and making sure users' needs are at the centre of statistical decisions.

You can read more about the Code at the UK Statistics Authority's Code website:

<https://code.statisticsauthority.gov.uk>

How We Work

Our statistics are produced by DVA statisticians who work independently and follow the standards of the Code. We carry out regular checks to make sure our data remains accurate and useful.

If at any point we believe the statistics may not fully meet these standards, we will raise the issue with OSR. Accreditation can be removed and later restored if concerns arise and are resolved.

Changes to the Report

This report now includes some target monitoring measures. OSR has confirmed that the Vehicle Testing and Driver Testing Waiting Time targets meet the Code's standards.

However, the Driver Licensing processing-time measures require further review before they can be accredited. For now, these remain official statistics rather than accredited official statistics.

We clearly label this within the report so users understand the distinction.

Contact Us

We welcome your feedback on these statistics or how we apply the Code of Practice.

Email us: DVA.Statistics@nisra.gov.uk

Contact OSR: regulation@statistics.gov.uk or visit the OSR website.

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