



Department for
Infrastructure

An Roinn

Bonneagair

www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

DfI Driver, Vehicle, Operator, and Enforcement Statistics

Quarter One: April to June 2021

Issue number: 27

Date of publication: 2nd Sept 2021

Theme: Travel and Transport

Coverage: Northern Ireland

Produced by:

DVA Statistics Branch,
Driver and Vehicle Agency,
Annex 4, Belfast Test Centre,
66 Balmoral Road,
Belfast,
BT12 6QL

Contact: Manny Fitzpatrick

Telephone: 02890 547934

Email: DVA.Statistics@nisra.gov.uk

Website:

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



Key Findings

- During quarter one of 2021-22, the DVA conducted just over 175,100 vehicle tests (full tests and retests). This is 18,300 (12%) higher than the previous quarter (157,000), and 77.3% of the previous 5-year quarterly average. The majority of tests conducted (64.3%) were full tests for private-cars (112,600).
- During January to March 2020, the DVLA registered just under 13,000 new vehicles for the first time in Northern Ireland. This is just over 9% less compared with the same period in 2019 (14,500), and is the lowest quarter four total since 2009. This is the second quarter in a row that alternative-fuel cars have out-sold diesel cars.
- There were just below 1,228,000 vehicles licensed in Northern Ireland at 31 March 2021, a slight increase (0.7%) compared with the previous quarter (1,220,000), and continuing the increasing trend from quarter 2 of 2020-21. The overwhelming majority (82%) of licensed vehicle were private cars.
- From April to June 2021, the DVA received just under 26,600 theory test applications. This is over six times the previous quarter (4,300) and the highest for a single quarter in our series. During the same period, DVA delivered just over 23,000 theory tests, again the highest for a single quarter since 2009.
- From April to June 2021, the DVA received just over 23,100 applications for a driving test, the highest recorded for a single quarter since our series started in 2008. For the same period, DVA conducted over 13,300 driving tests, just over 91% of the equivalent number in 2019-20 (14,500).
- The DVA carried out just over 69,000 ordinary licensing transactions during April to June 2021. This is the highest number of ordinary driver licensing transactions since 2018, and is more than double the volume of transactions compared to the same quarter in 2020-21.
- At the 30 June 2021, there were just over 1,099,700 full and eligible licence holders with private-cars / light vans entitlement, an increase of 1.5% from the previous quarter. This is the first increase for several quarters, and reflects the recent upward trend in driving tests conducted.
- At the end of June 2021, there were just over 8,550 licensed taxi drivers, a fall of 2.6% on the previous quarter. The downward trend in licensed taxi vehicles continues, and stands at just below 8,100 vehicles.
- During this quarter, DVA checked 858 vehicles; of these, the largest volume was for heavy goods vehicles, accounting for over three in five of all vehicles checked. Enforcement checks this quarter are 25% higher than the last quarter and seem to be trending back to levels recorded prior to COVID-19.
- In response to the pandemic, the DVA has continued to review its performance targets. For driver licensing this quarter, online application performance was 98.5% processed within five days (against a target of 95%), whilst paper application performance was 91.0% processed within ten days (against a target of 90%).

Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Key Findings	2
Introduction	4
1. Vehicle Testing	5
2. Vehicle Licensing and Registration	9
3. Driver Theory Testing	12
4. Driver Practical Testing	14
5. Driver Licensing	18
6. Road Transport Licensing	21
7. Enforcement & Compliance	24
8. DVA Target Monitoring	26
9. Driving and Motorcycle Instructors	27
Notes	28

Introduction

This is the twenty-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 and in the area of regulation and enforcement during quarter one of 2021-22. This covers the period from 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021. Due to the transfer of vehicle licensing functions to DVLA, the data in the corresponding section (page 8) is from 1 January 2021 to 31 March 2021.

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; and
- DVA target monitoring;

DVA systems provide the majority of data, although we also source some from within the wider Department for Infrastructure. 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 these areas 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, and by extension, the DVA as a whole.

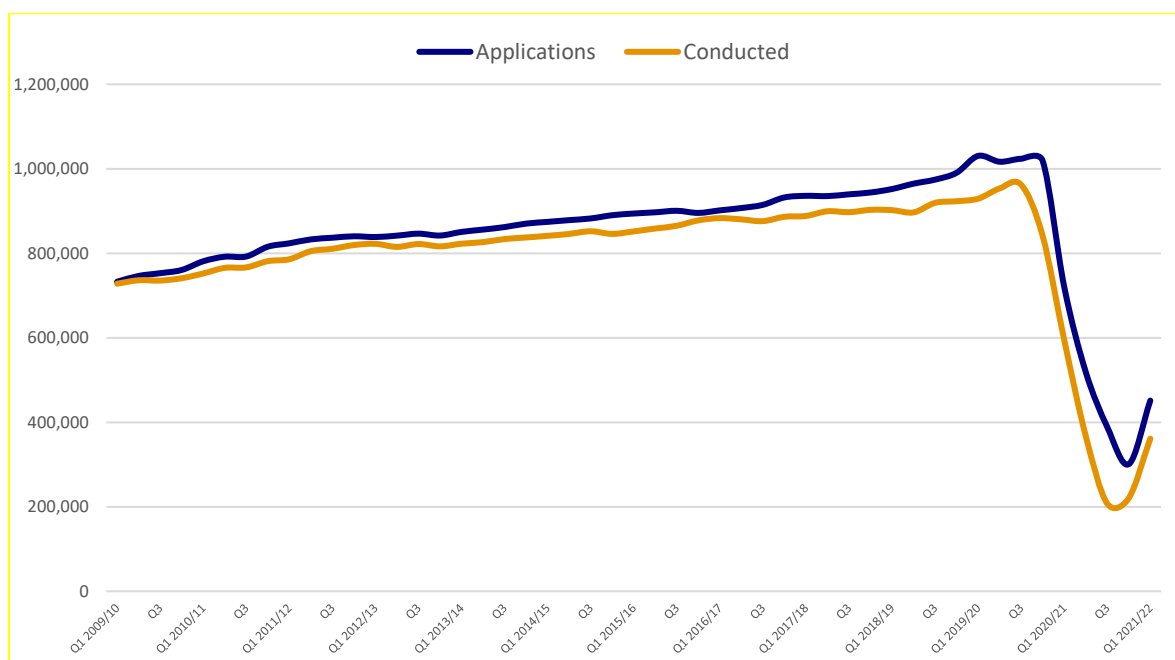
Following the outbreak of COVID-19, the DVA suspended all vehicle testing from 24 March 2020, and began issuing temporary exemption certificates (TECs) to all customers. The DVA resumed IVA testing on 1 June, whilst the testing of priority vehicle groups commenced on 20 July. Priority vehicle groups include taxis and buses due a first time test, vehicles not previously registered in Northern Ireland, vehicles with an MOT expired by more than 12 months (that includes vehicles previously declared SORN), and those sold by car dealerships. Testing of further vehicle categories began on 1 September, including four-year-old private cars and motorcycles, three-year-old light goods vehicles, all heavy goods vehicles, and trailers. The restrictions during the winter did not directly curtail vehicle testing, although additional deep-cleaning and social distancing have reduced capacity across the test centres. Further vehicle categories returned to the testing regime in March 2021, along with changes to the length of TECs being issued.

For the latest news and updates, please visit the Motoring page on the NIDirect website².

Vehicle Test Applications

From April to June 2021, the DVA received just over 186,600 applications for vehicle tests, approximately 76% of the usual average volume received during the same period for previous five years (table 1.3). The majority (81%) of vehicle test applications are full tests rather than re-tests (19%), and private cars (79%) were the most common application test-category.

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



Note that figures for vehicle test applications include taximeter tests (circa 1,300 tests per quarter, pre-pandemic), and those for vehicle tests conducted do not.

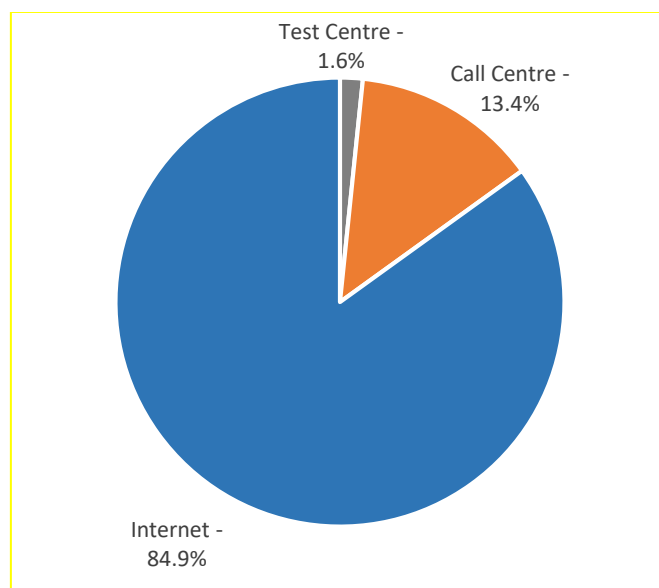
Booking Method

The most popular booking method for vehicle test applications was the internet booking system, which received 84.9% of all applications during the quarter (figure 1.2 and table 1.4). This is the largest proportion on record and applications online via the internet have consistently trended

² <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-and-motoring>

upwards over the past five years, up by over 30 percentage-points since our time series began in 2015.

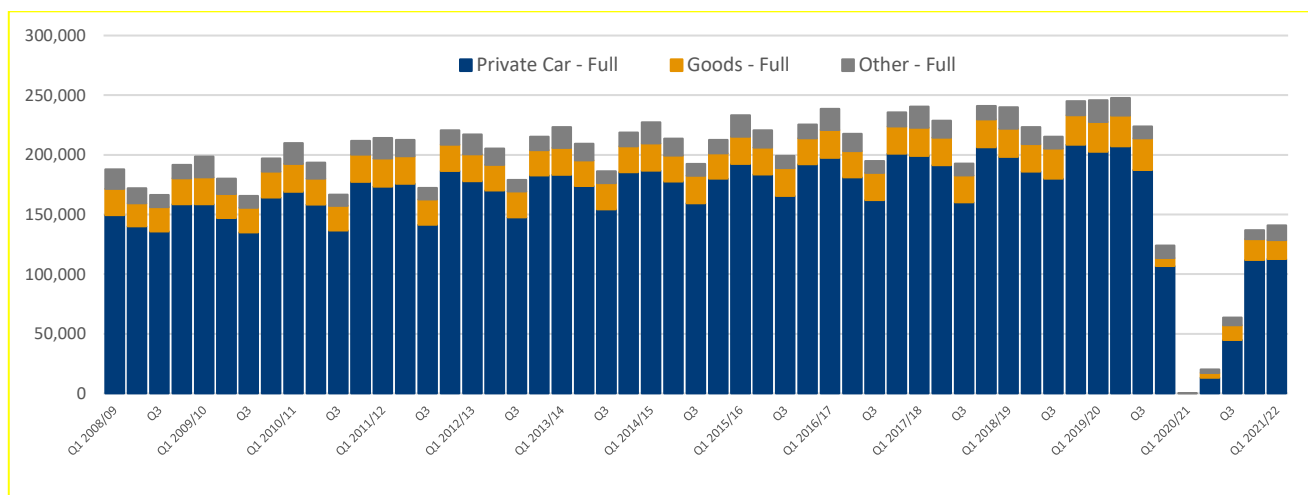
Figure 1.2: Vehicle Test Applications by Booking Method



Vehicle Tests Conducted

During quarter one of 2021-22, the DVA conducted just over 175,100 vehicle tests (full tests and retests). This is 18,300 (12%) higher than the previous quarter (157,000), and 77.3% of the previous 5-year quarterly average (table 1.7 and figure 1.3). As usual, the majority of tests conducted (64.3%) were full tests for private-cars (112,600).

Figure 1.3: Full Vehicle Tests Conducted



For the 2020-21 financial year, the DVA conducted just under 252,000 vehicle tests, a quarter of the number conducted in 2019-20.

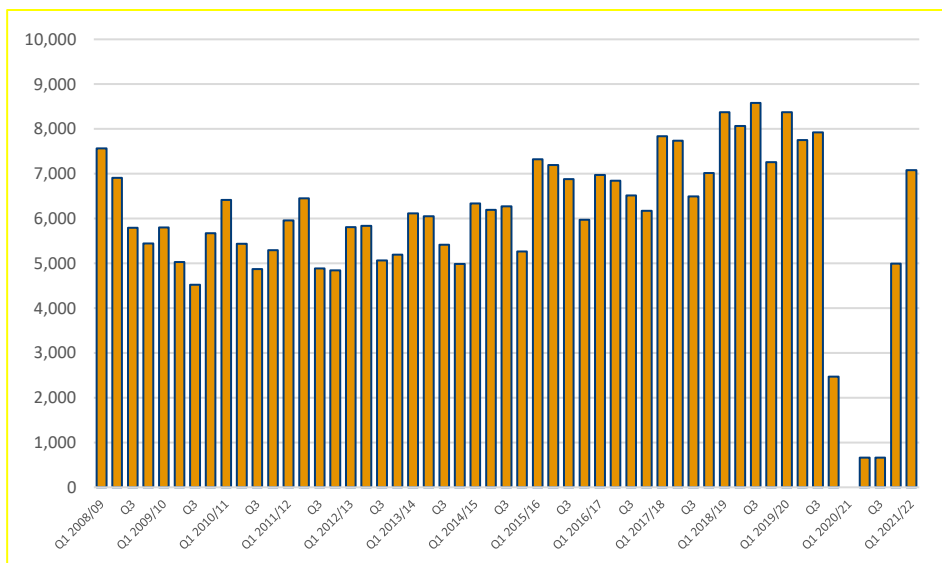
The steady increase in vehicle test applications seen in the trend series prior to the COVID-19 pandemic can, in the main, be explained by the increasing number of licensed cars in Northern Ireland, which has risen by 8.7% over the past five years (see table 2.13). In addition, owners seem to be keeping their vehicles for longer, as the proportion of cars of MOT-age has risen by nearly 6 percentage-points over the past five years, whilst the average age of a licensed car has risen from 7.7 to 8.4 years over the same period. Together, this resulted in approximately 99,000 (14%) additional private cars requiring a test in 2020 compared to 2015. It is too early to say what impact the pandemic will have on these trends long term, as people’s lifestyles, work pattern and car-usage will inevitably change.

Failed to Attends

Just under 7,100 vehicles failed to attend for a booked vehicle test during the quarter (table 1.10 and figure 1.4). This equates to 4.0% of conducted tests during this period.

For the full financial year, 2020-21 over 6,300 vehicles failed to attend, a 76% decrease compared to 2019-20, and the lowest annual figure in our time series. These missed tests equate to over 2,000 working-hours of time lost.

Figure 1.4: Vehicle Tests – Failed to Attend



Vehicle Test Pass-Rates

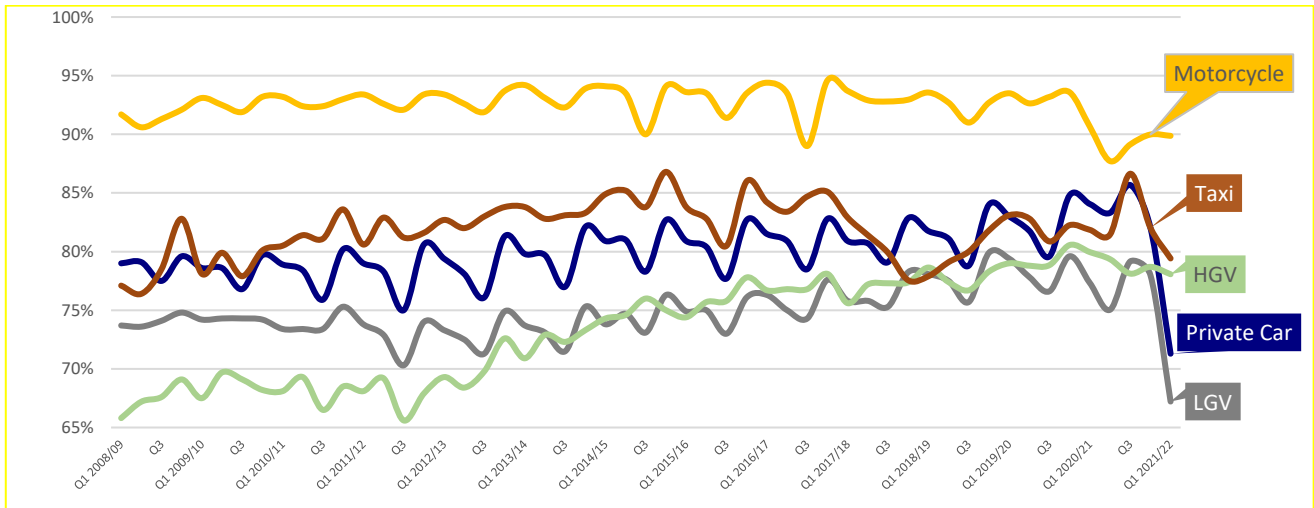
In quarter one, the overall pass-rate for full tests was 72.6% (table 1.11 and figure 1.5). This is the lowest pass-rate since 2008. However, we need to be careful with this comparison, as due to the TECs issued during 2020 and 2021, the mix of vehicles tested was substantially different from previous quarters (age and body type in particular). The recent drop in vehicle test pass-rates would suggest that people have not maintained their vehicles during periods of exemption.

For the previous full financial year, the overall pass-rate for full tests was 82.7%, the highest annual pass-rate on record, albeit with the same caveat on the mix of vehicles as above. This annual pass-rate for full tests varied by category, from 78.1% for light goods to 89.1% (for categories where there were at least 2,000 tests) (table 1.11).

The pass-rate for re-tests during quarter one was 93.1%, which is similar to previous quarterly trend (table 1.12).

For the 2020-21 financial year, the re-test pass-rate was 93.5%, a small decrease on the 93.8% recorded in 2019-20. Similar to full tests, the re-test pass-rate varied by category, from 91.2% for light goods to 94.2% for private cars (for categories where there were at least 1,000 tests).

Figure 1.5: Full Vehicle Test Pass-Rates



Vehicle Tests by Test Centre

The busiest test centre was Newtownards, which conducted over 22,100 tests during the quarter. The quietest centre was Omagh, having conducted just under 6,900 tests during the April to June period (table 1.14).

Whilst the overall pass-rate for private-car full tests during quarter one was 71.3%, this ranged from a high of 78.2% in Belfast (Balmoral) to a low of 62.7% in Larne (table 1.14). This is the third consecutive quarter that Belfast (Balmoral) has had the highest pass-rate, a description that has applied for the majority of the last seven years.

As with the overall pass-rate, we need to be careful making comparisons like this due to the different mix of vehicles tested across test centres during this quarter.

Vehicle Licensing and Registration

Vehicle Licensing is the responsibility of DVLA in Swansea, following the transfer of this work from DVA in July 2014.

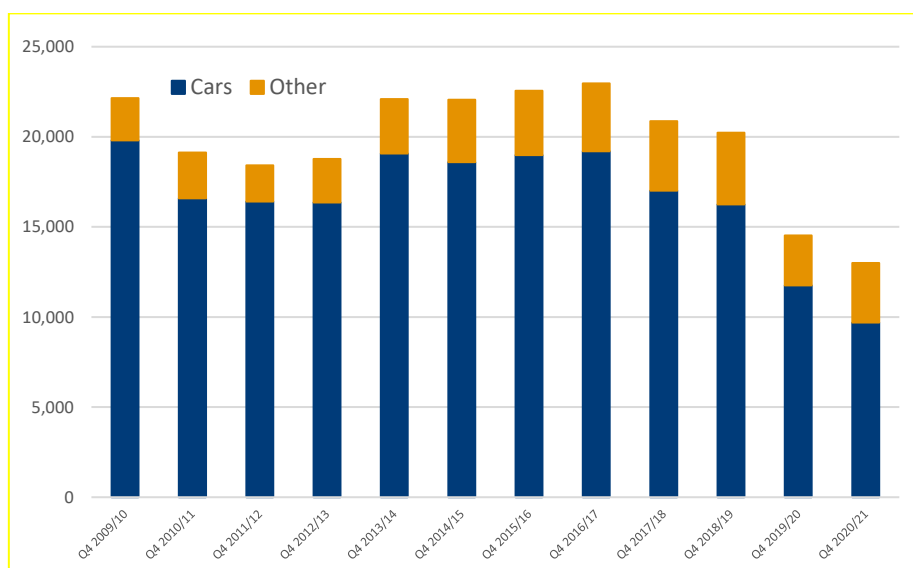
Vehicle Registrations

During January to March 2020, the DVLA registered just under 13,000 new vehicles for the first time in Northern Ireland. This is just over 9% less compared with the same period in 2019 (14,500), and is the lowest quarter four total since 2009. Private car first registrations accounted for almost 75% of all new vehicle registrations during quarter 4. (table 2.1).

This recent downward trend in new vehicle registrations has almost certainly been due to the second COVID-19 lockdown in autumn/winter 2020, as most dealerships were either closed or operating at reduced capacity to ensure social distancing.

For the 2020 calendar year, there were approximately 36,200 new private car registrations in Northern Ireland. This was 28.1% lower than in 2019, and the lowest annual total in our time series.

Figure 2.1: New Vehicle Registrations

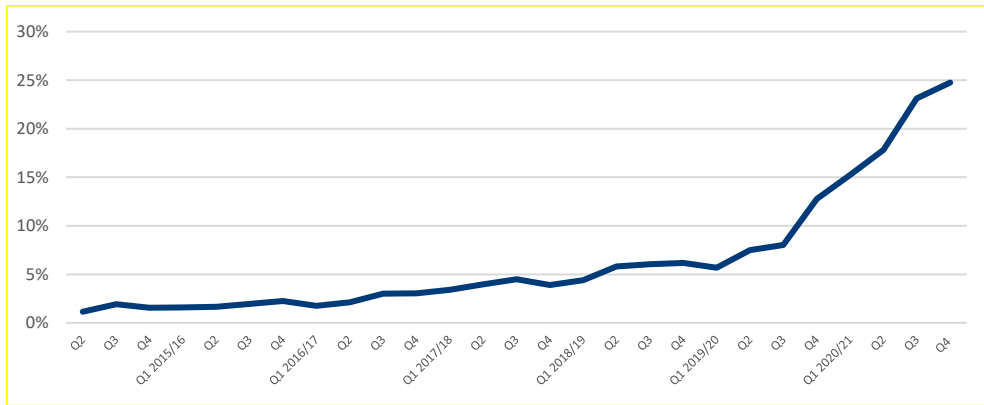


The top make for cars registered for the first time during January to March 2021 was Volkswagen, accounting for just under 1,100 registrations, followed by Ford, BMW, Toyota and Nissan (table 2.3).

For the full calendar year 2020, the most popular make was Ford, followed by Volkswagen, Toyota, Hyundai, and Audi. More than one out of every ten new cars was a Volkswagen.

This quarter, Grey was again the most popular colour for new cars, accounting for 22.4% of all new registrations. Blue (19.9%), White (18.5%), Black (17.2%), and Red (10.9%) were the next most popular colours.

Figure 2.2: Proportion of New Car Registrations using Alternative Fuels



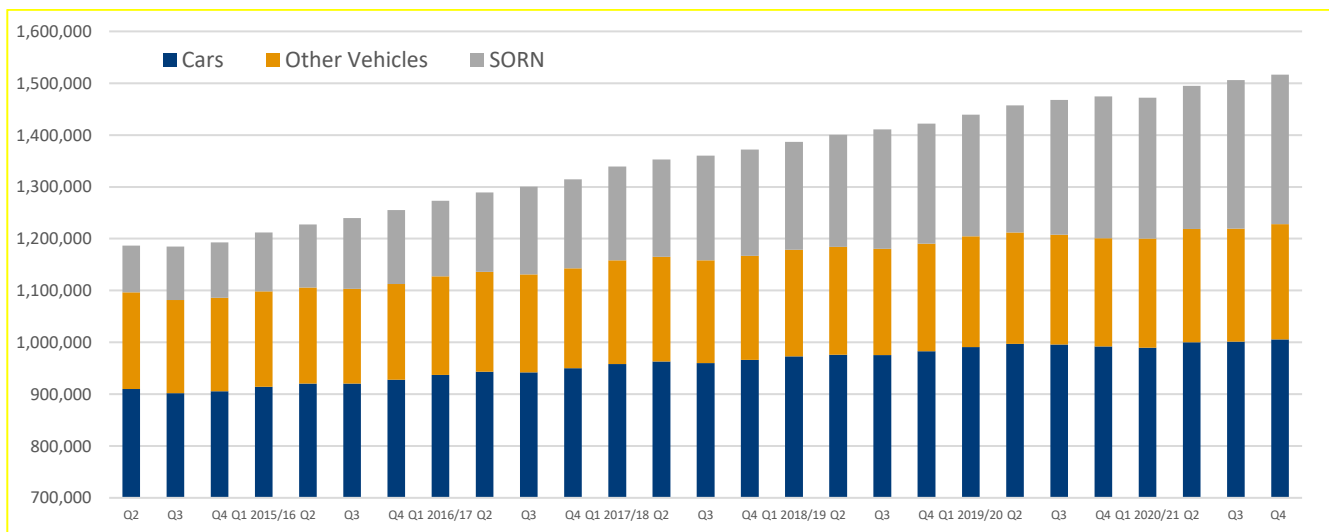
The proportion of newly registered alternative-fuel³ cars has increased substantially over the last two years, from 6.2% in quarter four 2018-19, to 24.7% in the equivalent period in 2020-21. Over this same period, the proportion of diesel cars has continued to decline, from 33.3% to 20.8%. This is the second quarter in a row that alternative-fuel cars have out-sold diesel cars.

Licensed Vehicles

There were just below 1,228,000 vehicles licensed in Northern Ireland at 31 March 2021, a slight increase (0.7%) compared with the previous quarter (1,220,000), and continuing the increasing trend from quarter two of 2020-21. The overwhelming majority (82%) of licensed vehicle were private cars.

Approximately 288,600 vehicles had a SORN at the 31 March 2021, representing just below 24% of the total vehicle stock (table 2.13). It should be noted that since December 2013, *continuous SORN* was introduced so a SORN declaration from then onwards lasts until the vehicle is re-taxed, sold, permanently exported or scrapped. This has resulted in significantly higher year-on-year increases from quarter four 2013-14 onwards, both in Northern Ireland and Great Britain.

Figure 2.3: Northern Ireland Vehicle Stock



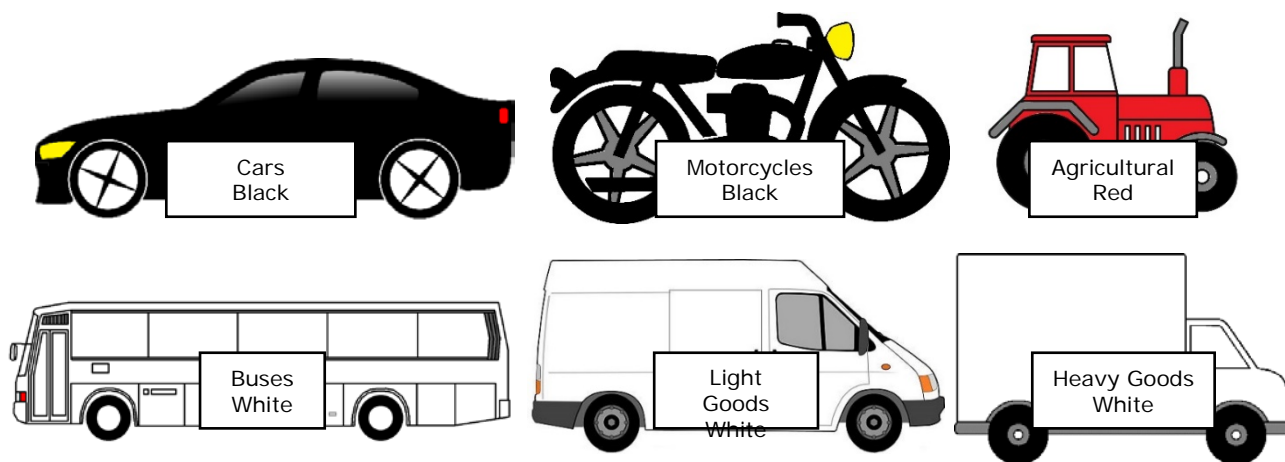
³ Alternative-fuel vehicles are those able to use a range of alternatives to purely petrol or diesel fuel, including gas, electricity, or a combination such as gas bi-fuel and hybrid-electric.

As of 31 March 2021, the average age of a licensed vehicle in Northern Ireland was 8.6 years, a slight drop from last quarter (8.9 years).

However, there is some variance in average age for different body-types:

- Cars – 8.1 years
- Motorcycles – 13.4 years
- Light Goods – 8.1 years
- Heavy Goods – 9.4 years
- Buses – 9.8 years
- Agricultural – 20.8 years
- Other – 10.0 years

Similar to the new registrations for licensed vehicles the most popular colours for each body-type are notably monochrome, with only the stereo-typical 'big red tractor' bucking the trend:



3 Driver Theory Testing

The DVA has responsibility for the theory test element of the overall driving test process. Pearson VUE administers the test in Northern Ireland under contract with the DfI through DVA.

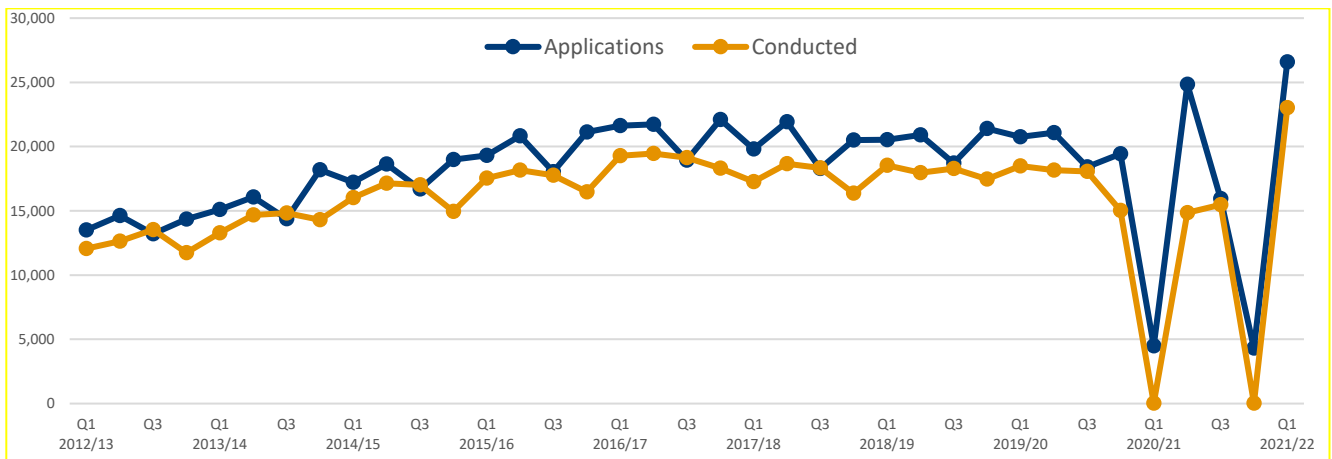
Due to the outbreak of COVID-19, the DVA suspended all driver theory testing between 20 March 2020 and 6 July, and again from 26 December until 22 April 2021. For the latest news and updates, please visit the Driver Theory Testing page on the NIDirect website⁴.

Theory Test Applications and Tests Conducted

From April to June 2021, the DVA received just under 26,600 theory test applications. This is over six times the previous quarter (4,300) and the highest for a single quarter in our series going back to 2012 (figure 3.1). During the same period, DVA delivered just over 23,000 theory tests, again the highest for a single quarter since 2009 (table 3.2).

For the 2020-21 financial year, the DVA conducted just over 30,400 theory tests, a decrease of 56% compared to last year and the lowest annual total in our time series, as closures and social distancing measures reduced capacity at the testing centres. Prior to the pandemic, volumes had been broadly consistent over the previous five years.

Figure 3.1: Theory Test Applications and Conducted



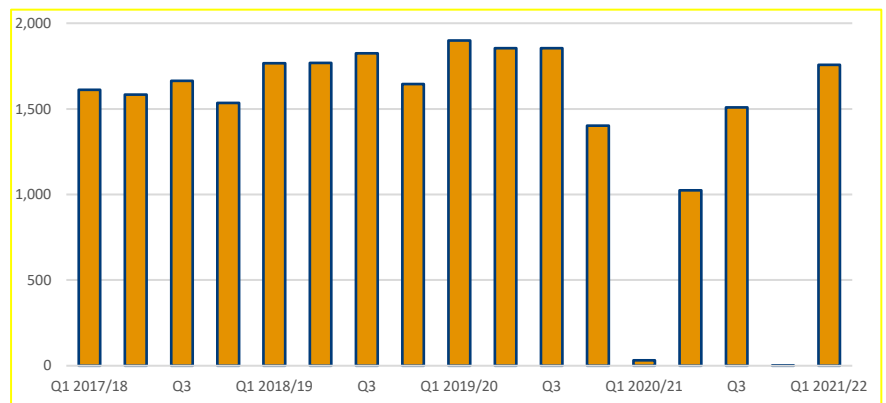
For both theory test applications and conducted, tests for private-cars account for almost nine of every ten of all applications or tests conducted.

Failed To Attends

During this quarter, just over 1,700 customers failed to attend a booked theory test (table 3.3 and figure 3.2).

This is just over 68% of the 2020-21 financial year, when approximately 2,560 customers failed to attend.

Figure 3.2: Theory Tests - Failed To Attend



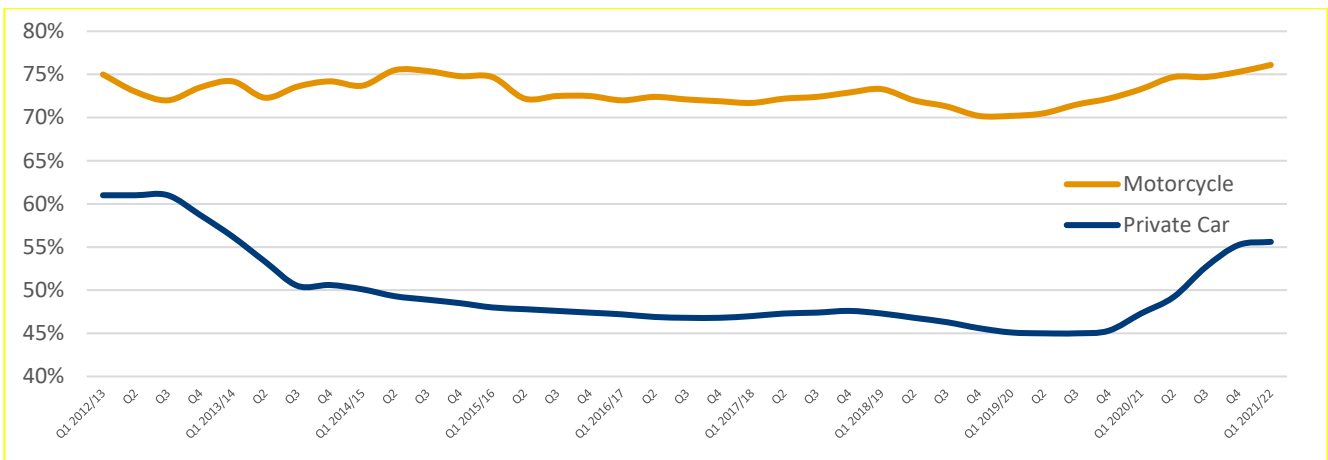
⁴ <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/driving-theory-test>

Theory Test Pass-Rates

The pass rate for all theory tests conducted between April and June 2021 was 55.6%, for private cars, 76.1% for motor cycles and 23.9% for taxis.

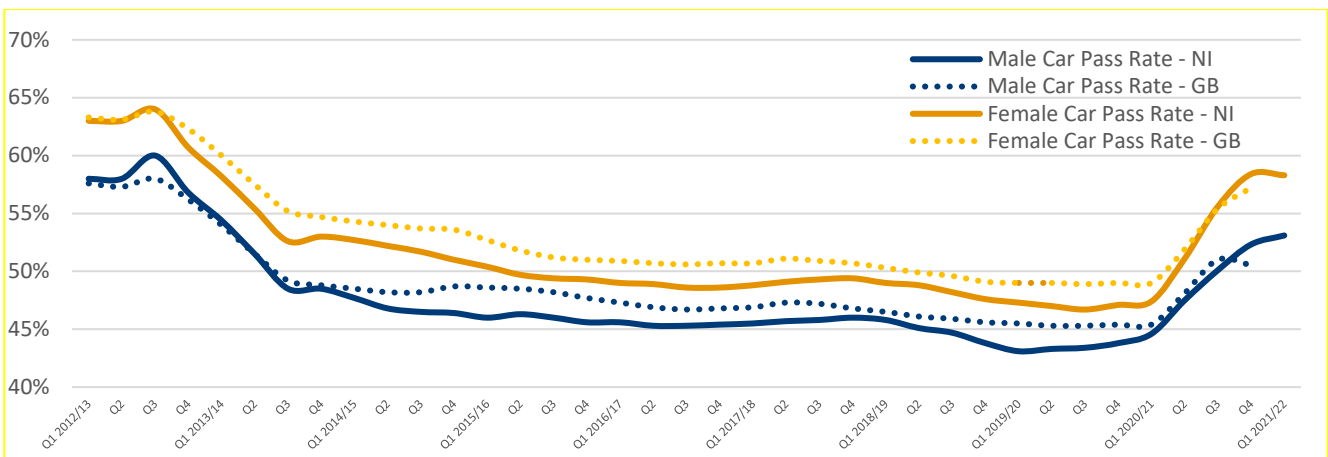
For the full 2020-21 financial year, the theory test pass-rate for private-cars was 55.2%, an increase of 9 percentage-points on the pass-rate last year, and the second highest annual pass-rate in our time series. For the motorcycle test, the pass-rate was 75.2%, reflecting the fact that those taking the motorcycle test will usually have already taken the private-car test. This was an increase of 3 percentage-points compared to 2019-20 and the highest annual motorcycle pass-rate in our time series. Whilst not directly comparable due to the nature and purpose of the tests, the pass-rate for the taxi theory test was 19.8%, a decrease of almost 12 percentage-points compared to last year, and the lowest annual pass-rate for four years.

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



Continuing the trend over the past decade, the theory test pass-rate by gender for private-car drivers showed that females consistently have a higher pass-rate than males (table 3.7). For the 2020-21 financial year, the pass-rates were 58.4% for females and 52.3% for males. Although the pass-rates had been gradually decreasing from 2012 to 2020, since the resumption of testing in summer 2020, pass-rates for both genders have increased substantially. Quarter 1 figures indicate that this trend for females may be starting to turn (58.3%) but is still rising slightly for males (53.1%). It is too soon to say whether this is indicative of a change in the underlying trends or just an effect of the pandemic. Both the 'gender-gap' and post-pandemic trend are similar to those seen in Great Britain (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.

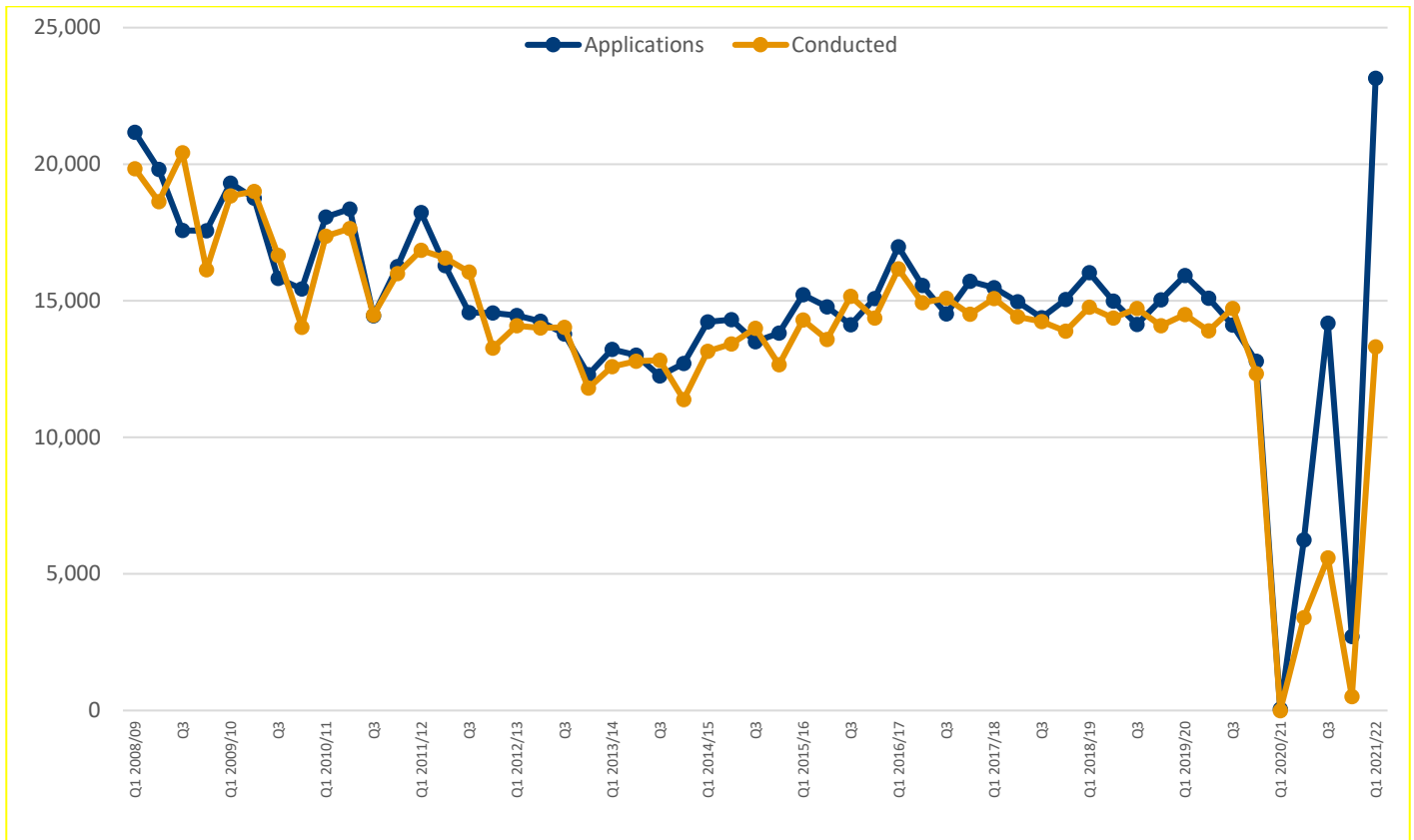
Following the outbreak of COVID-19, the DVA suspended all driver testing from 20 March 2020 until 5 October, again from 17 October and 20 November, again for a third time between 27 November and 10 December. The most recent suspension began on 23 December, reopening on 23 April 2021. During quarter four, only off-road motorcycle and certain LGV tests were able to continue. For the latest news and updates, please visit the Practical Driving Test page on the NIDirect website⁵.

Driving Test Applications and Tests Conducted

From April to June 2021, the DVA received just over 23,100 applications for a driving test, the highest recorded for a single quarter since our series started in 2008 (table 4.1 and figure 4.1). For the same period, DVA conducted over 13,300 driving tests, just over 91% of the equivalent number in 2019-20 (14,500).

Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, the trends for both applications and tests conducted over the past five years had remained relatively steady.

Figure 4.1: Driving Test Applications and Conducted



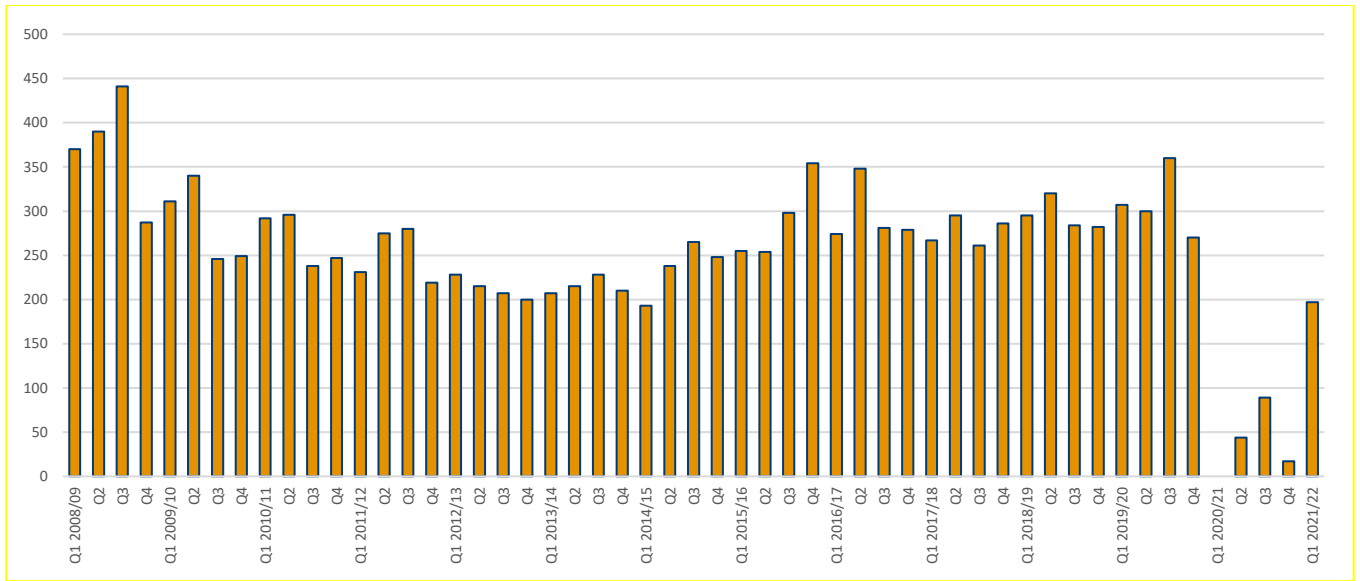
Failed to Attends

During quarter one 2021-22, there were 197 appointments where customers failed to attend (table 4.4). These account for 1.5% of the conducted tests during the quarter.

⁵ <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/book-your-practical-driving-test-online>

During the full financial year, there were 150 missed appointments, accounting for 1.6% of the tests conducted during that year.

Figure 4.2: Driving Tests – Failed to Attend

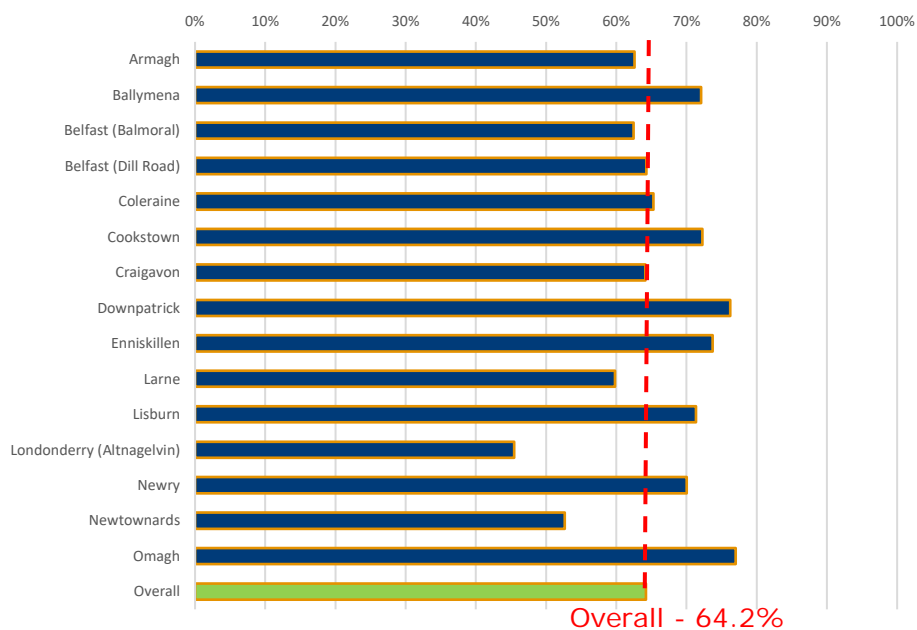


Driving Tests by Test Centre

For the full financial year 2020-21, the test centre that conducted the largest number of driving tests was Belfast (Balmoral), whilst Enniskillen conducted the fewest (table 4.7b). This trend continued into the first quarter of 2021-22, when again Balmoral with just over 1,550 vehicle tests conducted the highest number of tests across all test centres, though Omagh at 360 recorded the fewest number of tests this quarter.

By test centre and using a 4-quarter rolling average, the pass rates for private cars ranged from 45.5% in Londonderry (Altnagelvin) to 77.0% in Omagh. At least part of the difference in test outcomes between test centres will be due to the differential driving ability and experience of candidates presenting for testing, while other relevant factors will be specific to the test centre such as local driving conditions.

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



Driving Test Pass-Rates

For April to June 2021, the pass-rate for private-car driving tests was 63.5%, up by 8.6 percentage-points compared with the 54.9% average of the five years prior to the pandemic (table 4.5).

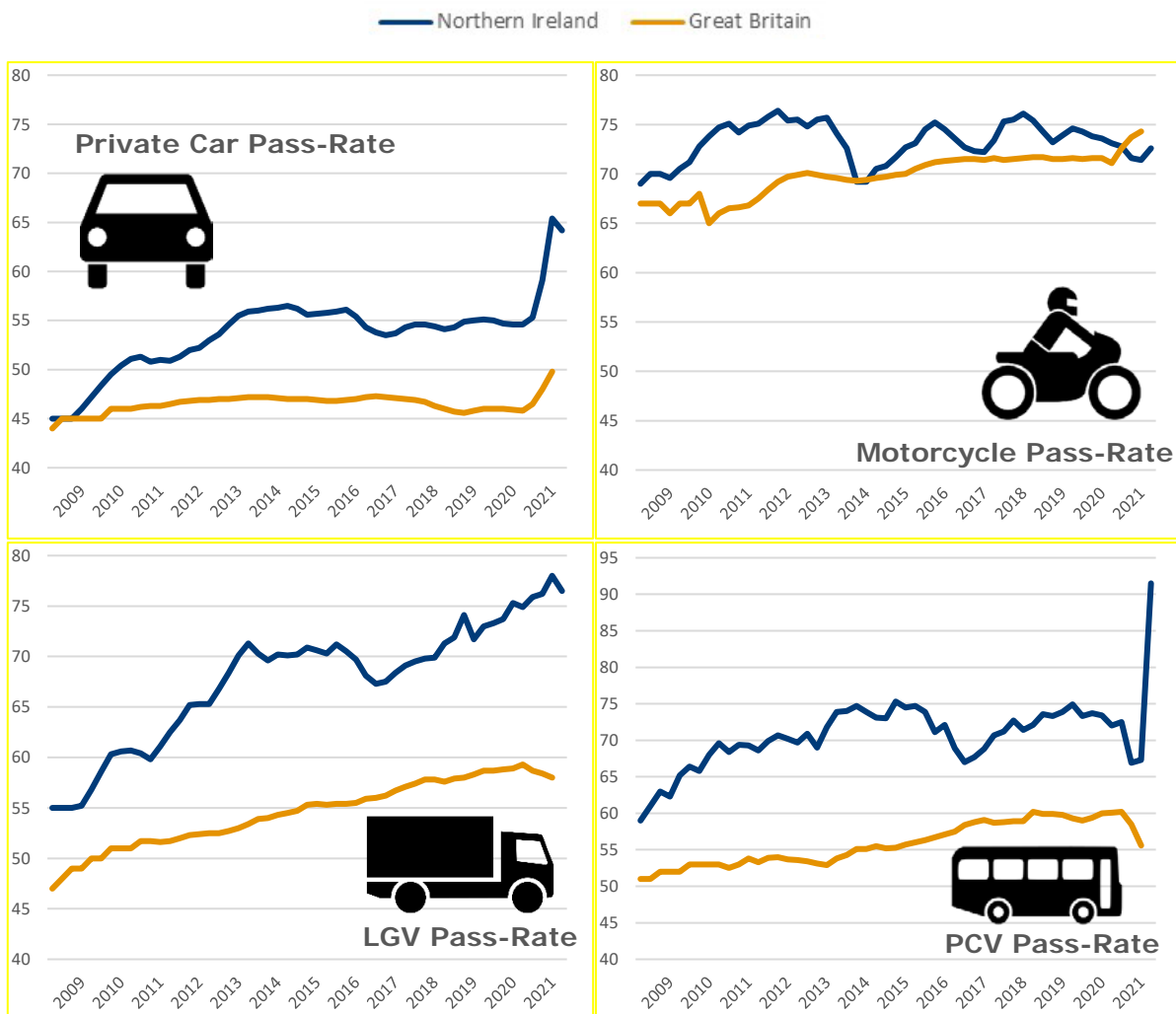
Prior to the pandemic, pass-rates for all categories of vehicle remained broadly unchanged over the five years up to the onset of Covid restrictions in 2020. It is too soon to say whether this is indicative of a change in the under-lying trend or just a temporary effect of the pandemic.

Based on a rolling 4-quarter average, the pass-rate for private-car driver testing was 64.2%, a fall of less than one percentage point from the previous quarter 65.4%. This is still much higher compared with pre-Covid when pass rates were typically 54%-55%. (table 4.10 and figure 4.4). The spike in pass rates for PVC is likely due to reduced volumes of testing in this quarter.

Using rolling 4-quarter averages pass-rates across all four main vehicle categories are higher than the pass-rates in Great Britain. The exception to this is for motor cycles with the GB (74.3%) pass rate now slightly above that for NI (72.8%) - though the figure for GB lags one quarter behind that for NI, as the Q1 figure for GB is not available at the time of publication (table 4.10 & figure 4.4).

Part of the difference between NI and GB pass-rates may be attributable to regional driving conditions including the volumes of traffic and complexity of available road networks for testing.

Figure 4.4: Driving Test Pass-Rates (Rolling 4-quarter Averages)

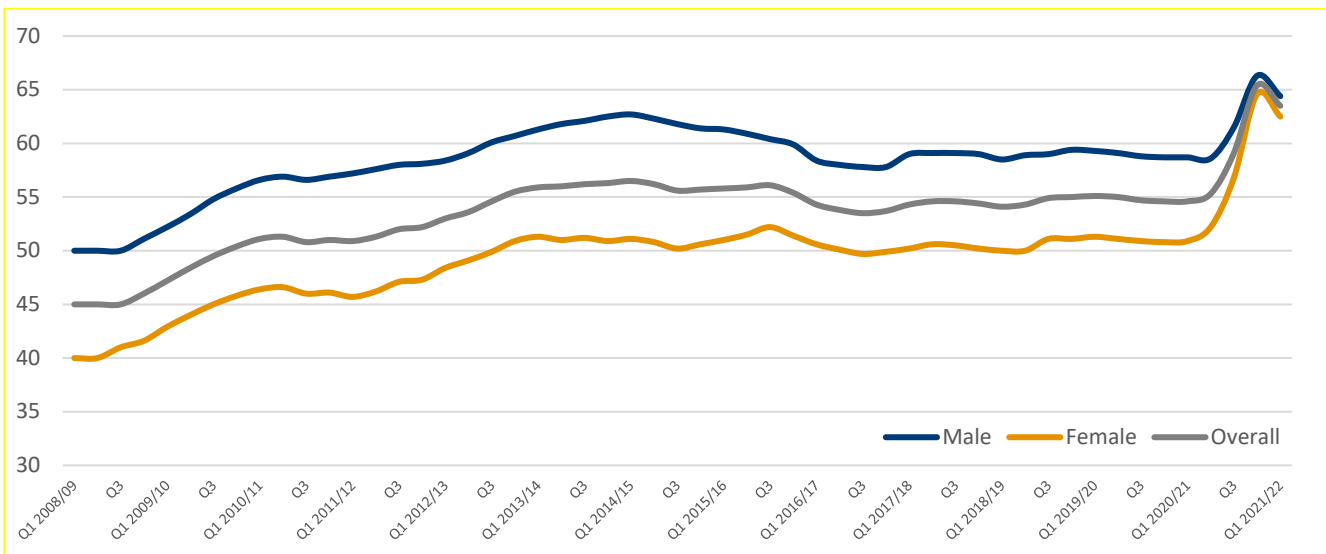


Driving Test Pass-Rates by Gender

A clear 'gender-gap' is apparent in Northern Irish test pass-rates, using a four-quarter rolling average, albeit one that has narrowed considerably during 2020 and into the first quarter of 2021 (table 4.10 & figure 4.5).

Over the last twelve months, males had a 1.8 percentage-point higher pass-rate compared to females for the private-car driving test. This gap had remained relatively consistent prior to 2020, in the 7.8 to 8.8 range; however, since testing resumed during summer 2020 the gap has shrunk to the lowest figure in our time series. This gap is now substantially narrower than the 6.2 percentage-point gap present in the Great Britain statistics. As with the overall pass-rate, it is too soon to say whether this is indicative of a change in the under-lying trend or just an effect of the pandemic.

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



Whilst similar gender gaps in favour of males are also apparent in Great Britain for cars and motorcycles, in contrast to Northern Ireland the GB pass-rates for large goods vehicles are higher for females. Without a detailed understanding of the profile of candidates presenting for these categories of tests, it is difficult to contextualise why these differences by gender and UK location may occur.

Most test centres offering private-car driving tests also showed this same disparity, to varying degrees, with Lisburn (78.2% v 65.3%) showing the widest gender-gaps in favour of males. In contrast, Armagh (61.0% v 64.5%) showed a large gender-gap in favour of females (table 4.7c).

5 Driver Licensing

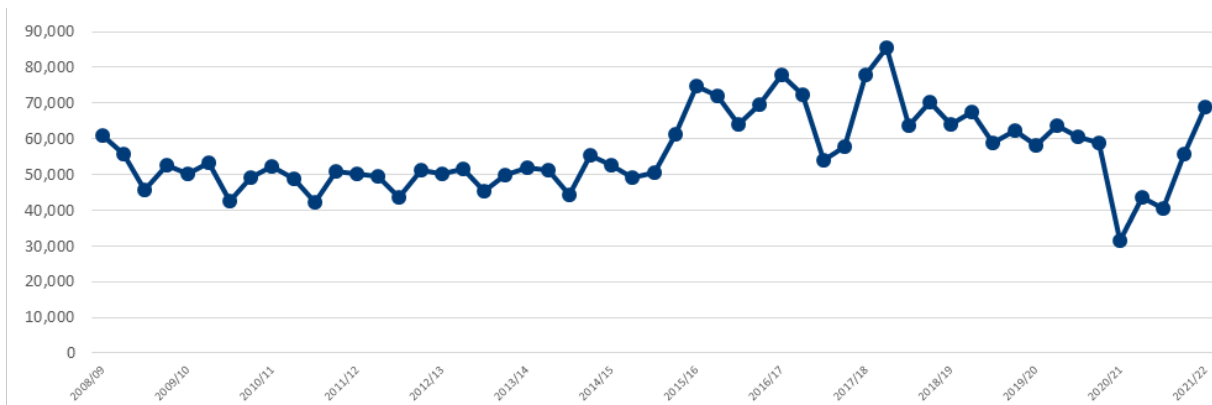
The DVA's Driver Licensing division is responsible for licensing drivers in Northern Ireland. The DVA issues and, where appropriate, withdraws licences in respect of drivers of cars, motorcycles, goods vehicles, buses, and other vehicles.

On 27 March 2020, the DVA suspended the processing of all paper renewal applications and temporarily closed down the driver licensing office. From the end of April, the DVA began processing applications from Group 2 (lorry/bus) applicants and those from front line workers. Only applications received online were processed in this period. From June 2020, the DVA began the process of resuming driver licensing services (bar the counter service, which remains closed) and is now working to process all applications it receives.

Driver Licensing Transactions

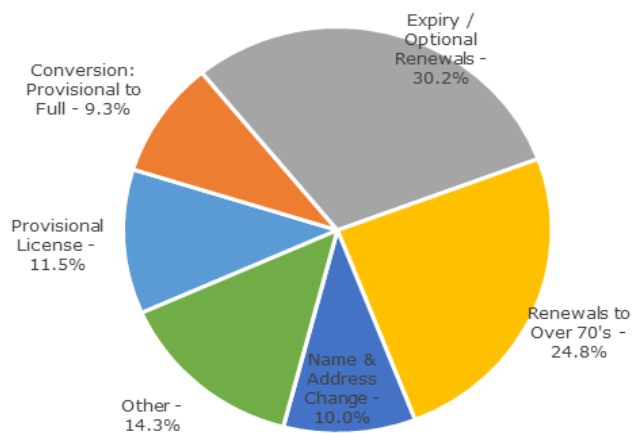
The DVA carried out just over 69,000 ordinary licensing transactions during April to June 2021 (figure 5.1). This is the highest number of ordinary driver licensing transactions since 2018, and is more than double the volume of transactions compared to the same quarter in 2020-21.

Figure 5.1: Driver Licensing Transactions



The number of ordinary first licences ('provisional licences') issued in quarter one 2021-22 (7,939) was 6 times higher than the figure for those issued during the same period in the previous year (1,247) (table 5.1). This is the second highest number of provisional licenses issued in our time series.

Figure 5.2: Driver License Transactions by Type, Quarter One, 2021-22



In quarter one 2021-22, the DVA carried out 4,712 vocational licensing transactions, an increase of 33% on quarter four of the previous financial year, and over double of the same figure for the corresponding period in 2020-21 when the figure stood at 2,312 (table 5.2).

In other licensing activity, the number of letters of entitlement issued during the quarter (3,813) was 20% higher than in quarter one 2020-21 (table 5.3). Conversely, the volume of identity checks (9,659) is nearly six times higher than the same quarter last year.

Driver Licence Stock

At the 30 June 2021, there were just over 1,099,700 full and eligible licence holders with private-cars / light vans entitlement, an increase of 1.5% compared with the previous quarterly total (table 5.9 and figure 5.4). This is the first increase for several quarters, and reflects the recent upward trend in driving tests conducted.

The number of people holding a provisional licence for private-cars / light vans has increased slightly for the second quarter in a row from approximately 111,600 to 112,000. This is the largest number of provisional licences in our time series.

The number of people aged 65 and over holding, a full licence decreased by almost 4,000 in the past twelve months, with the total now approximately 218,000 individuals. Proportionally, those licence holders aged 65 and over account for just below 20.0% of the driver licence stock.

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

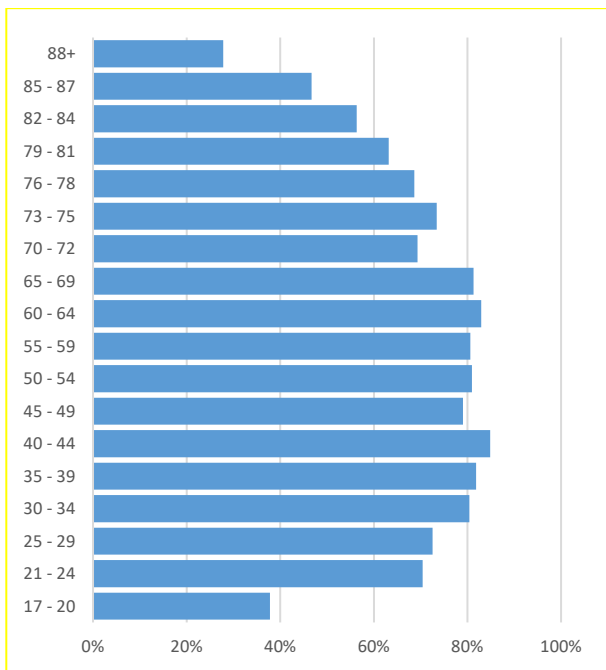


Figure 5.4: Full Car Licence Holders in Northern Ireland

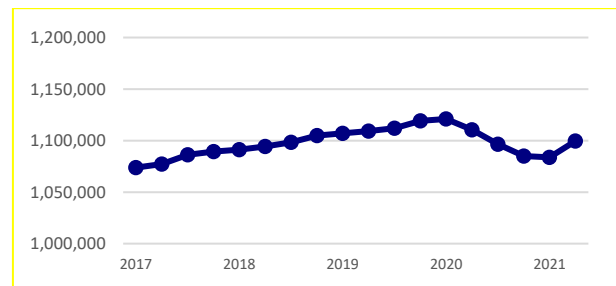
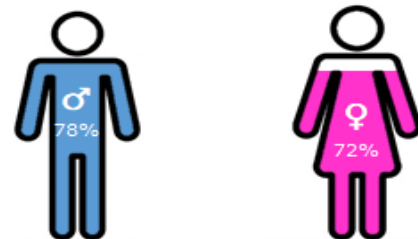


Figure 5.5: Proportion of Population with a Full Car Licence – by Gender



An estimated 74.5% of Northern Ireland’s adult population (i.e. aged 17 or over) had a full and eligible licence for private cars / light vans, based on the latest Mid-Year Population Estimates⁶ (table 5.8i). This is small percentage point increase since the previous quarter. For males, the estimated figure was 77.5%, which is six percentage-points higher than the 71.6% seen for females.

⁶ Available from the NISRA website at <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/population/mid-year-population-estimates>.

6 Road Transport Licensing

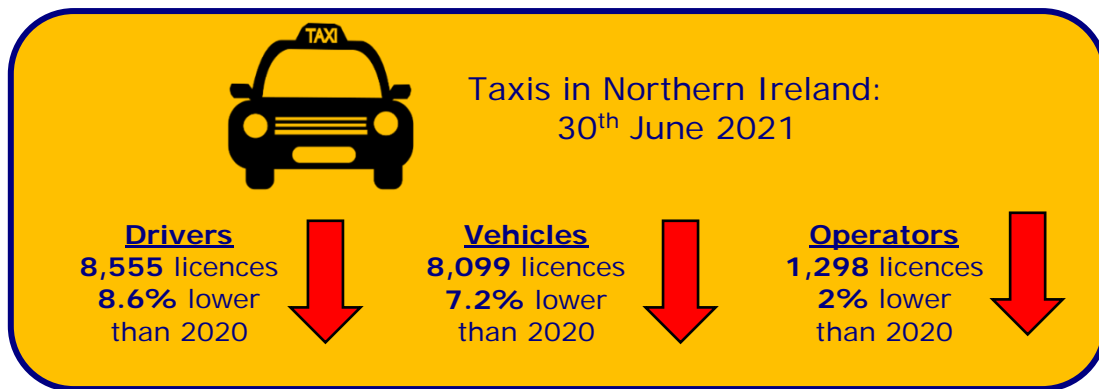
The Passenger Transport Licensing division in DVA is responsible for issuing (and where appropriate, withdrawing) licences in respect of taxi drivers and bus operators. Goods licensing is the responsibility of the Transport Regulation Unit in DfI.

Whilst the majority of the division has continued to operate during the COVID-19 restrictions, the DVA suspended the division's reception and counter services on 27 March 2020.

The NI Assembly designated taxi drivers as key workers, and so taxi driver licensing has continued to operate throughout the pandemic. Similarly, the DVA has maintained bus and taxi operator licensing services throughout. All bus and taxi vehicle licences expiring between 10 March 2020 and 31 May 2021 have been, or will be, automatically renewed for an additional twelve months, at no cost to the owner.

For the latest news and updates, please visit the Motoring page on the NIDirect website⁷.

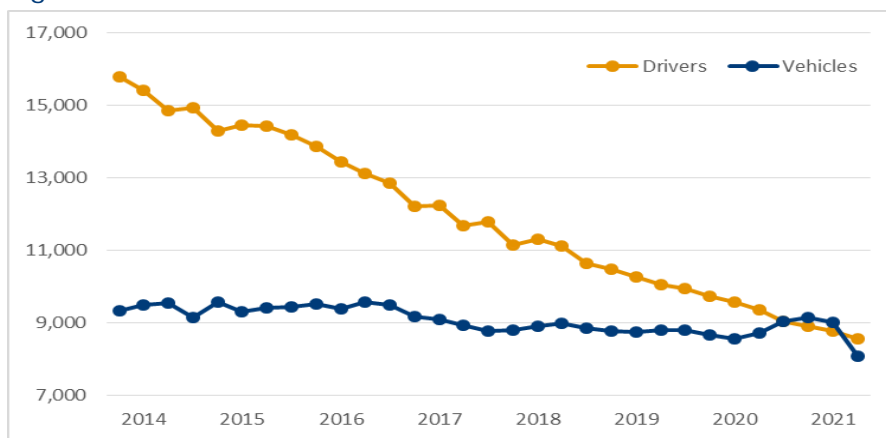
Taxi Licensing



The DVA issued 1,944 vehicle licences for taxis during April to June 2021, the lowest number of licences for taxis issued in quarter one in our time series, although this was related to the advance renewal of expiring licences during the previous quarters. The vast majority of these were 12-month exemption certificates rather than normal licenses (table 6.1).

Between April to June 2021, there were 450 taxi driver licences were issued, which is the highest number issued since the COVID-19 pandemic began and it is more than double the number issued compared to 2020-21 quarter one.

Figure 6.1: Licensed Taxi Driver and Vehicle Volumes



At the end of June 2021, there were just below 8,100 licensed taxi vehicles, the lowest number since our series began in 2013 (table 6.2 and figure 6.1). The number of licenced taxi drivers has fallen by 2.6% (226) since the previous quarter, and at 8,555 likewise is the lowest number in our series from 2013.

These taxi vehicles were affiliated to 1,298 licensed taxi operators, of which 87% are small operators, i.e. can only list up

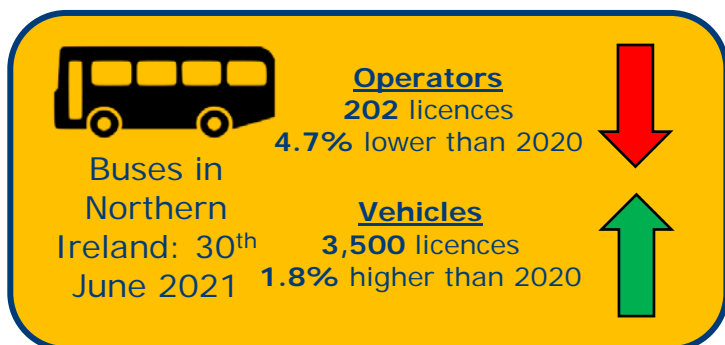
⁷ <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-and-motoring>

to two taxis on the licence (table 6.2). This is a 2% decrease compared to the same point in 2020, and the second lowest figure in our time series.

Bus Licensing

The number of licensed buses at the end of June 2021 was exactly 3,500, up 2% on the figure on the equivalent date in 2020 (table 6.3).

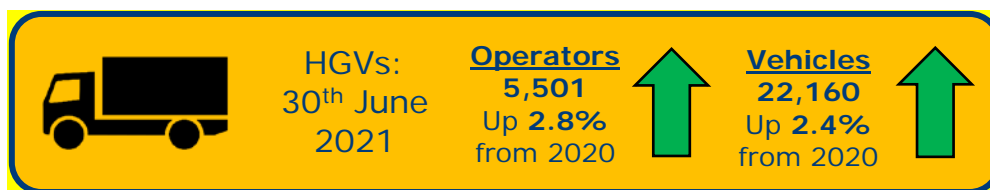
The DVA issued 895 bus vehicle licences during this quarter (table 6.1).



At the end of June 2021, there were 202 bus operator licences in force, down 4.7% from the amount recorded last year (212), and the lowest total for over four years (table 6.3). During April to June 2021, the DVA processed 51 bus operator licences.

Goods Licensing

The number of goods vehicle operator licences in force at the end of June 2021 was 5,501, an increase of 2.8% on last year. The number of standard international licences continues to increase, with the figure of 1,906 accounting for a series high 34.6% of all goods vehicle operators.



Associated to these operators, at the end of June 2021, were 22,160 heavy goods vehicles. This is an increase of 2.4% when compared with the same period in 2020.

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.

COVID-19 continues to present a number of challenges for enforcement activity. The directorate has successfully applied a range of solutions, including the creation of a segregated sterile interview facility within a liveried van to enable staff to conduct an enforcement service, whilst protecting officers, drivers, and operators from the risk of infection.

Whilst service delivery continues to be constrained by a requirement for officers to exercise 2m social distancing at all times, procedures developed over the last number of months continue to be applied enabling enforcement officers to undertake vehicle checks in a safe and controlled manner. The DVA continues to develop and revise risk assessments in-line with the latest PHA guidance, to ensure the safety of staff, drivers, and operators.

Enforcement Activities

During this quarter, DVA checked 858 vehicles; of these, the largest volume was for heavy goods vehicles, accounting for over three in five of all vehicles checked. Enforcement checks this quarter are 25% higher than the last quarter and seem to be trending back to levels recorded prior to COVID-19.

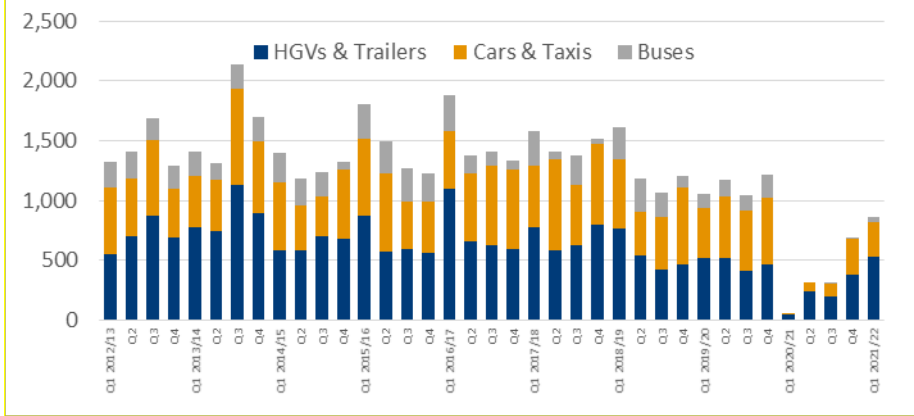
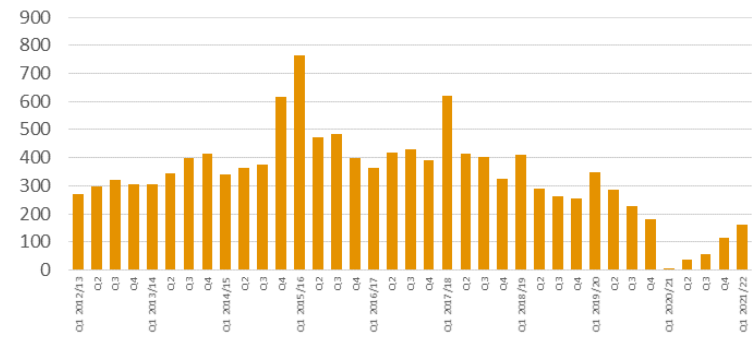


Figure 7.2: Fixed Penalties Issued



DVA enforcement officers issued 160 fixed penalty notices during this quarter (table 7.2 and figure 7.2). Whilst this was significantly more than last year’s quarter one, it is the second lowest number of fixed penalties issued for this quarter. The total value of these fixed penalties issued was £40, 957.

There were 85 successful convictions during the quarter, accounting for 268 offences. This was the third largest quarterly total for over six years. From these cases, the DVA received £40,975 of court fines and costs (table 7.2 and figure 7.3).

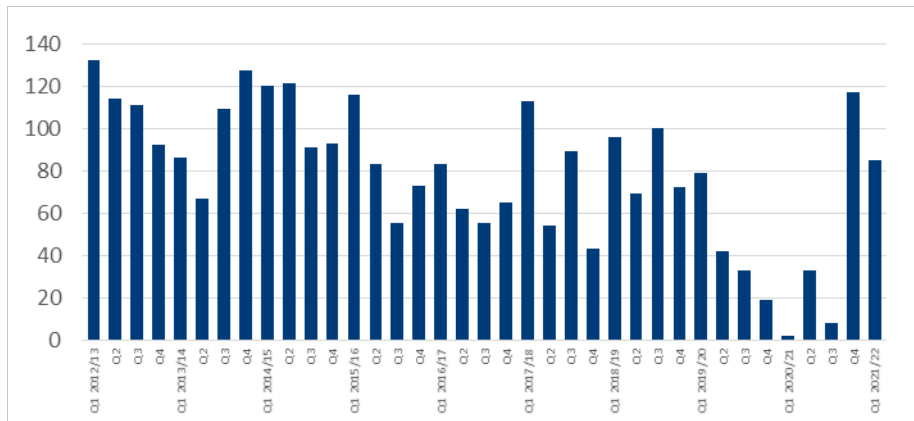
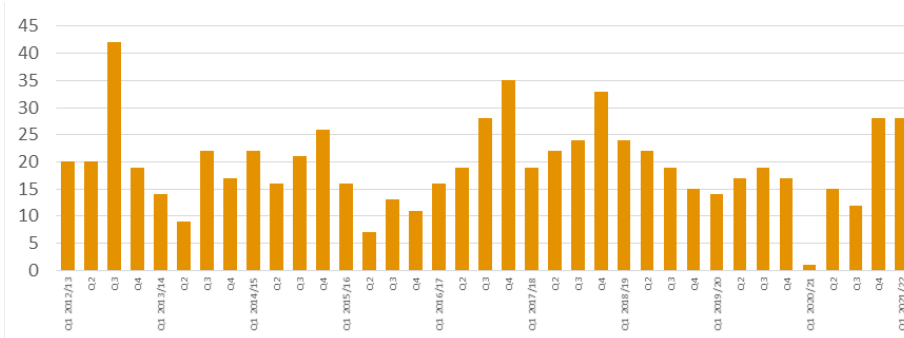


Figure 7.3: Convictions

Figure 7.4: Joint or Cross-Border Operations



During April to June 2021, enforcement teams carried out 21 joint operations with the PSNI (table 7.3 and figure 7.4). They also carried out 7 cross border operations in conjunction with the Road Safety Authority in Ireland, along with PSNI and An Garda Síochána.

There were 16 spot checks on School Buses carried out by Enforcement Officers throughout the region in quarter one (table 7.4 and figure 7.5).

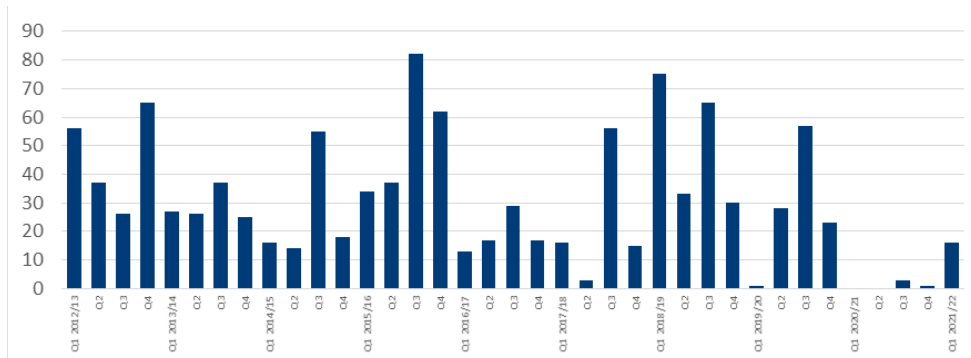


Figure 7.5: School Bus Checks

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, and there has been an adjustment to the target for Paper Driver Licensing. 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 application performance for 2021-22 quarter 1 April to June was 98.5%, exceeding the Agency target of 95%, and a slight increase on the 98.1% reported for the last quarter of 2020-21.

Paper application performance was 91.0% for this quarter, a significant improvement from the 79.9% reported for quarter 4 of 2020-21; this represents an increase in performance of just over 11 percentage points, and 1 percentage point above the 90% target.

Please refer to section five of this report for more commentary regarding driver licensing during the quarter.

Figure 8.1: Online Driver Licence Application Waiting Time Performance

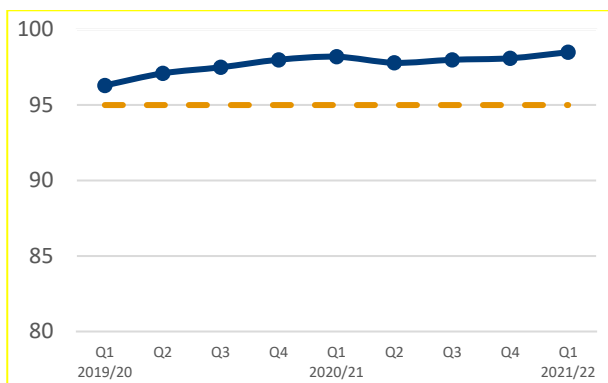
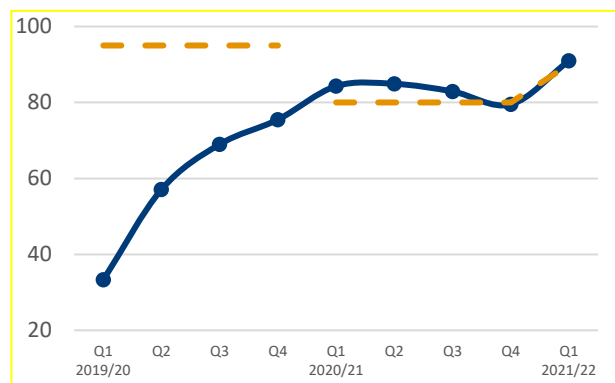


Figure 8.2: Paper Driver Licence Application Waiting Time Performance



(Note that the indicators in this section do not yet have National Statistics accreditation, although continue to have Official Statistics status).

Notes

National Statistics

On the 24 March 2015, the UK Statistics Authority designated this series as National Statistics. This means the Authority has certified them as compliant with its Code of Practice for Official Statistics. You can find both the assessment report and letter of confirmation on the UK Statistics Authority website at <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/driver-and-vehicle-statistics-in-northern-ireland>.

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality, and public value. DVA statisticians produce them free from any political interference and undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They were awarded National Statistics status 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 further details, see <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-research/code-practice-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.

Copyright statement



© Crown copyright 2021

You may re-use this information (excluding logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence v.3. To view this licence visit: <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/>

Alternatively, email:

psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

Where we have identified any third party copyright information, you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.