

DfI Driver, Vehicle, Operator, and Enforcement Statistics

Quarter Two: July to September 2021

Issue number: 28

Date of publication: 5 April 2022

Theme: Travel and Transport

Coverage: Northern Ireland

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Key Findings

- During quarter two of 2021-22, the DVA conducted just over 194,800 vehicle tests (full tests and retests). This is 19,700 (11%) higher than the previous quarter (175,100), and 88.0% of the previous 5-year quarterly average (221,445). The majority of tests conducted (81.3%) were full tests for private-cars (158,458).
- During April to June 2021, the DVLA registered just over 15,100 new vehicles for the first time in Northern Ireland, 2,000 more than the previous quarter (13,100). Private car first registrations accounted for almost 75% (11,300) of all new vehicle registrations during this quarter. This is the third consecutive quarter that alternative fuel cars have out sold diesel cars.
- At the end of June 2021, there were just over 1,248,600 licensed vehicles in Northern Ireland, an increase of 2.3% (28,600) compared with the previous quarter (1,220,000), and continuing the increasing trend from quarter two of 2020-21. The overwhelming majority (81.4%) of licensed vehicles were private cars (1,017,400).
- From July to September 2021, the DVA received just over 28,000 theory test applications, the highest for a single quarter going back to 2012. During the same period, DVA delivered just over 22,300 theory tests, the second highest for a single quarter since 2009.
- From July to September 2021, the DVA received just over 19,300 applications for a driving test; for the same period, DVA conducted over 17,600 practical driving tests, which is 22% (3,200) above the equivalent number in 2018-19 (14,400).
- The DVA carried out just over 73,550 ordinary licensing transactions during July to September 2021, the highest number of ordinary driver licensing transactions since 2017-18, and almost 9% (5,900) higher compared to the same quarter in 2018-19 (67,600).
- At the 30 September 2021, there were just over 1,112,200 full and eligible licence holders with private-cars/light vans entitlement, an increase of 1.1% (12,500) compared with the previous quarterly total (1,099,700). This is the second quarterly increase in a row and reflects the recent upward trend in driving tests conducted.
- The number of licensed taxi drivers fell for another quarter by 105 (1.2%), to 8,450 as at the end of September 2021, the lowest number of taxi drivers recorded since our series began in 2013.
- During this quarter, DVA checked 605 vehicles; of these, the largest volume was for heavy goods vehicles (including trailers), accounting for over three in five of all vehicles checked. Enforcement checks in this quarter were lower than last quarter but almost double that for the same period in 2020 (310).
- In response to the pandemic, the DVA has continued to review its performance targets. For driver licensing this financial year 2021-22, online application performance was 98.1% processed within working five days (against a target of 95%), whilst paper application performance was 78.3% processed within ten working days (against a target of 90%).

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Introduction

This is the twenty-eight 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 two of 2021-22. This covers the period from 1 July 2021 to 30 September 2021. Due to the transfer of vehicle licensing functions to DVLA, the data in the corresponding section (page 8) is from 1 April 2021 to 30 June 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 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 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.

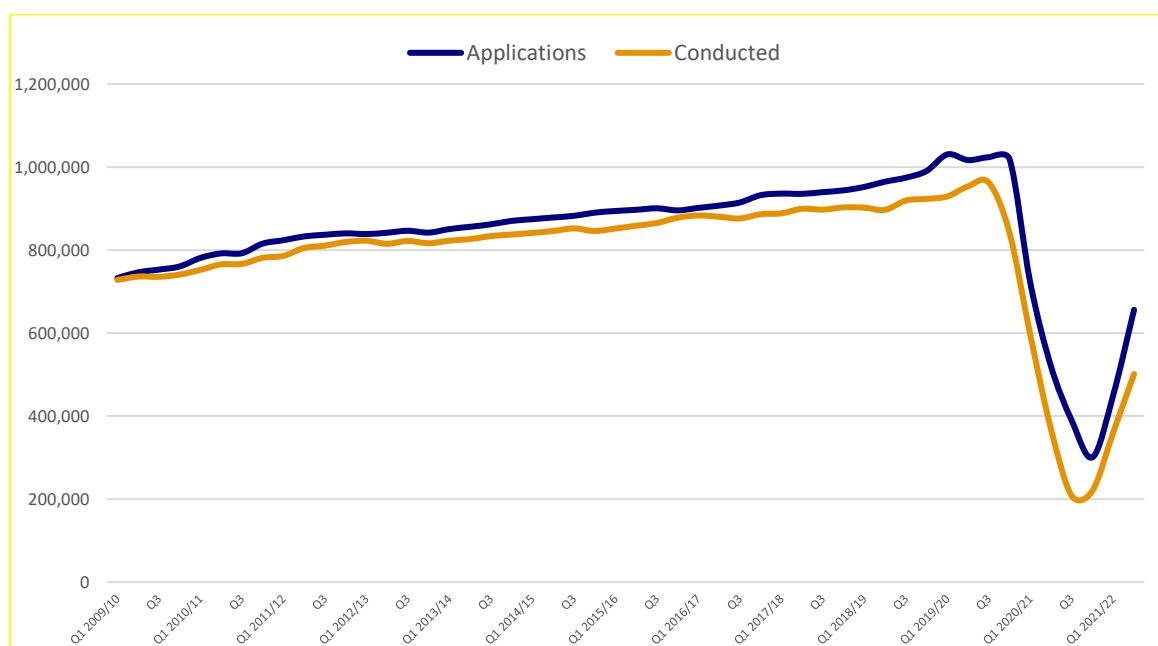
Following the outbreak of COVID-19, the DVA suspended all vehicle testing from 24 March 2020, and began issuing temporary exemption certificates (TECs) to all customers. The DVA resumed IVA testing on 1 June, whilst the testing of priority vehicle groups commenced on 20 July. Priority vehicle groups 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 July to September 2021, the DVA received just over 267,400 applications for vehicle tests, approximately 18% above the average volume received during the same period for previous five years (226,800) (table 1.3). The volumes in quarter 2 2020/21 were much lower than pre-covid years. The majority (87%) of vehicle test applications were full tests rather than re-tests (13%), and private cars (83%) were the most common application test-category.

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

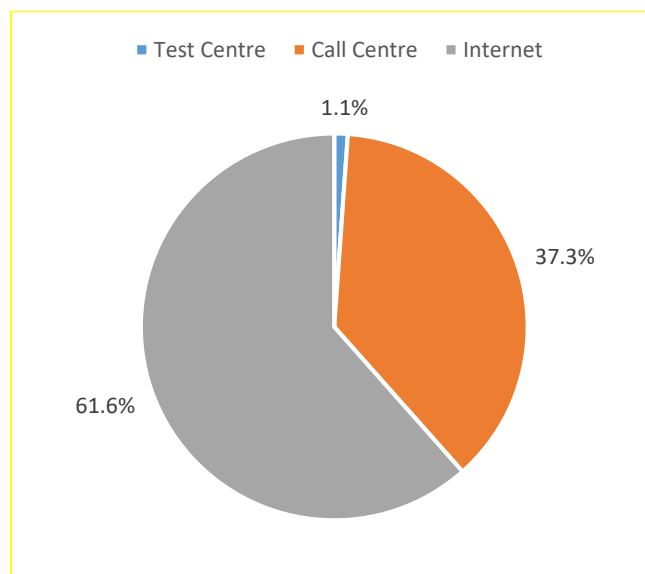


Note that figures for vehicle test applications include taximeter tests (circa 1,300 tests per quarter, pre-pandemic), and those for vehicle tests conducted do not.

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

Booking Method

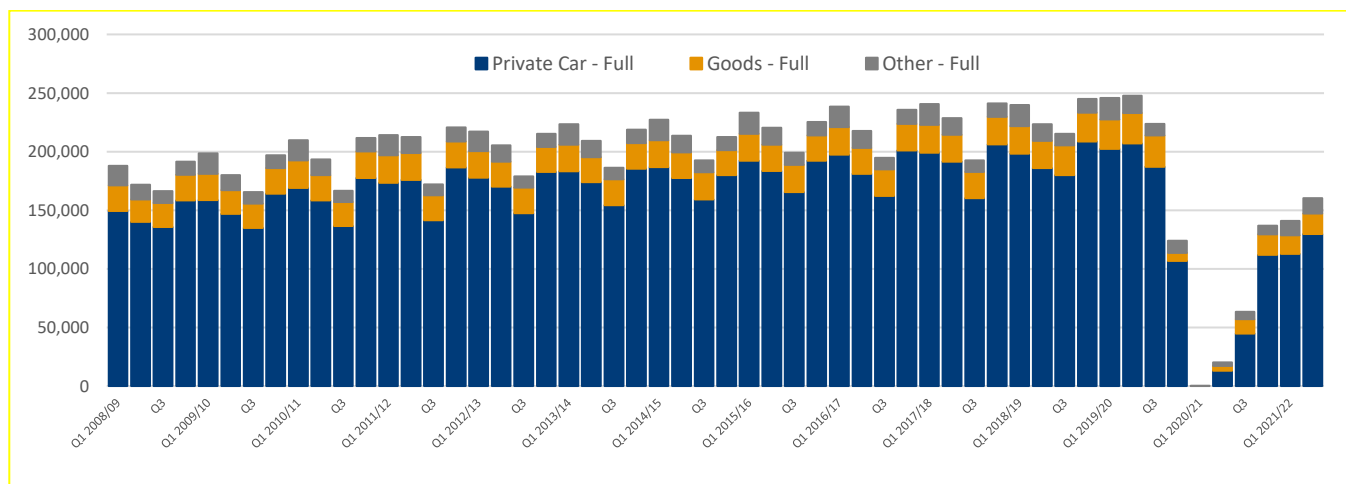
The most popular booking method for vehicle test applications was the internet booking system, which received 61.6% of all applications during the quarter (figure 1.2 and table 1.4). This is a drop of 20 percentage points from quarter 1 (84.9%). Applications by Call Centre in percentage terms have increased by 20 percentage points from 13.4% to 37.3%. Figure 1.2: Vehicle Test Applications by Booking Method.



Vehicle Tests Conducted

During quarter two of 2021-22, the DVA conducted just over 194,800 vehicle tests (full tests and retests). This is 19,700 (11%) higher than the previous quarter (175,100), and 88.0% of the previous 5-year quarterly average (221,445) (table 1.7 and figure 1.3). As usual, the majority of tests conducted (81.3%) were full tests for private-cars (158,458).

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

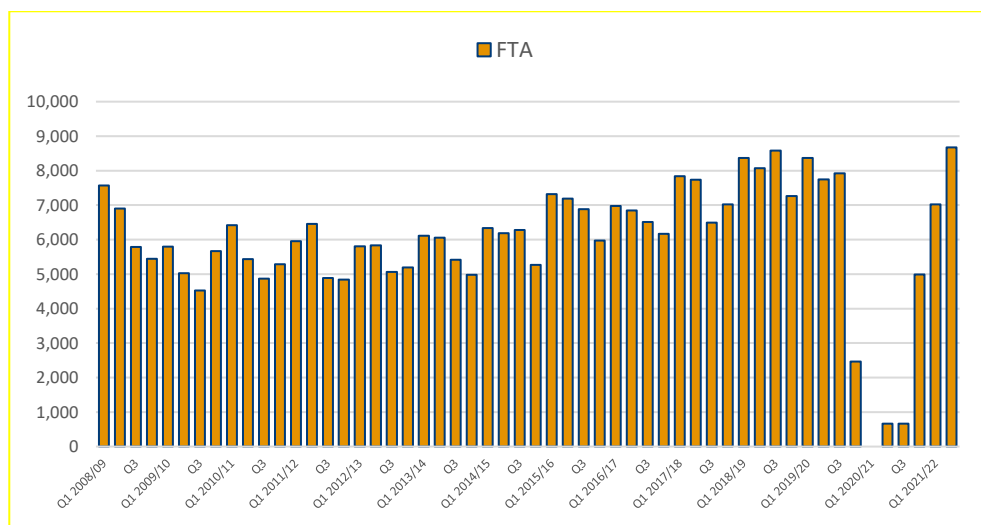
(14%) additional private cars requiring a test in 2020 compared to 2015. It is too early to say what impact the pandemic will have on these trends long term, as people's lifestyles, work pattern and car-usage will inevitably change.

Failed to Attends

Just under 8,680 vehicles failed to attend for a booked vehicle test during the quarter (table 1.10 and figure 1.4). This equates to 4.4% 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

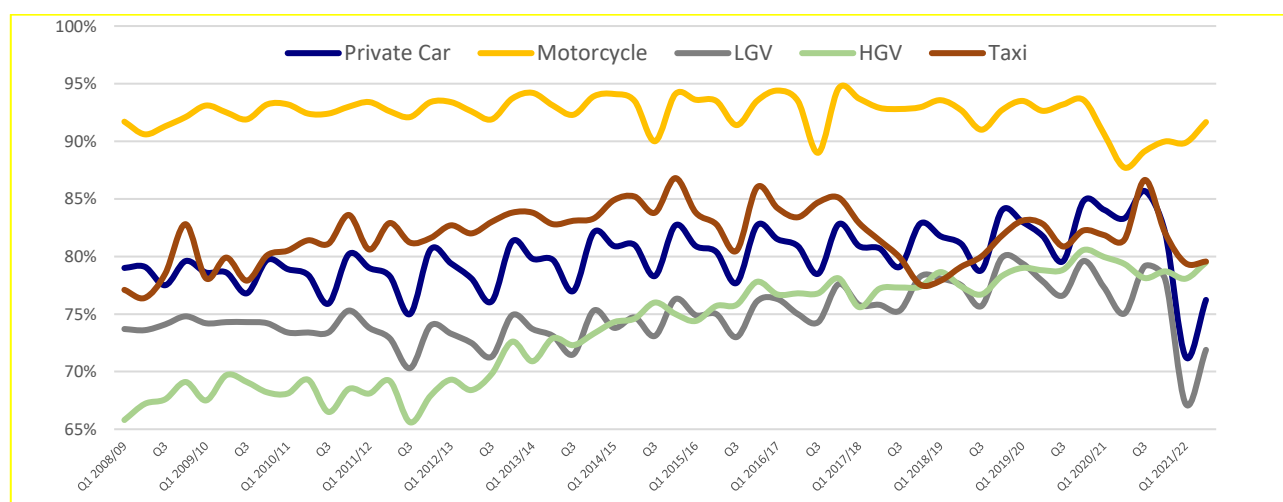
In quarter two, the overall pass-rate for full tests was 77.0% a 5 percentage point increase from quarter one (72.6%) (Table 1.11 and figure 1.5). The recent covid era drop in vehicle test pass-rates would suggest that people have not maintained their vehicles during periods of test exemption.

For the previous full financial year 2020-21, the overall pass-rate for full tests was 82.7%, the highest annual pass-rate on record, within the context of covid and the impact this had on the mix of vehicles presenting for testing. 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 92.9%, which is almost the same as quarter one (93.1%) and very consistent with 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 two has increased to 76.2% from 71.3% in quarter one, this ranged from a high of 80.0% in Belfast (Balmoral) to a low of 69.4% in Larne (table 1.14). This is the fourth consecutive quarter that Belfast (Balmoral) has had the highest pass-rate, a trend 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 recent quarters.

Vehicle Licensing and Registration

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

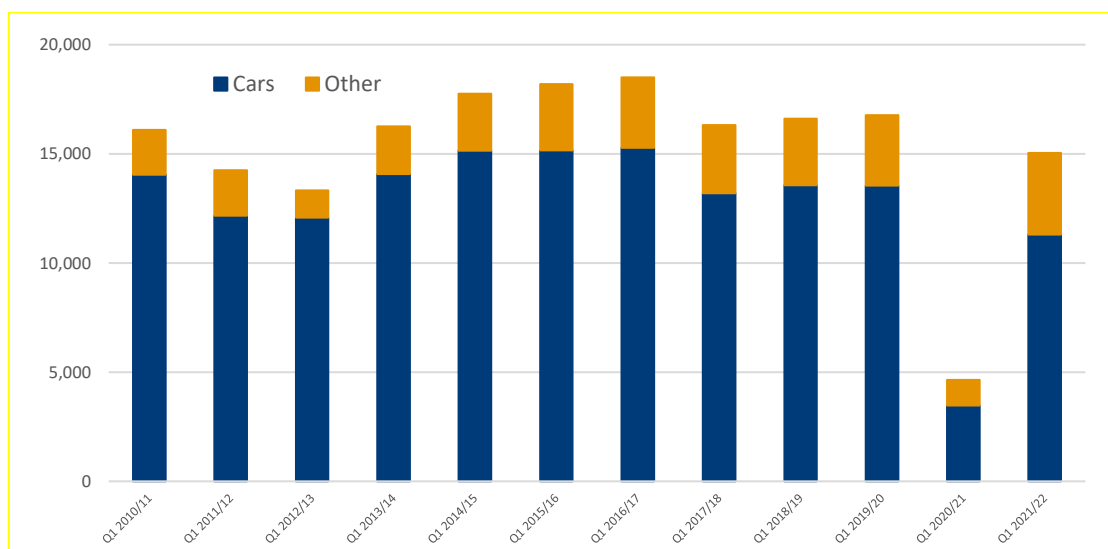
Vehicle Registrations

During April to June 2021, the DVLA registered just over 15,100 new vehicles for the first time in Northern Ireland, 2000 more than the previous quarter (13,100). Private car first registrations accounted for almost 75% (11,300) of all new vehicle registrations during this quarter. (table 2.1).

This recent downward trend in new vehicle registrations compared to pre-covid era 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

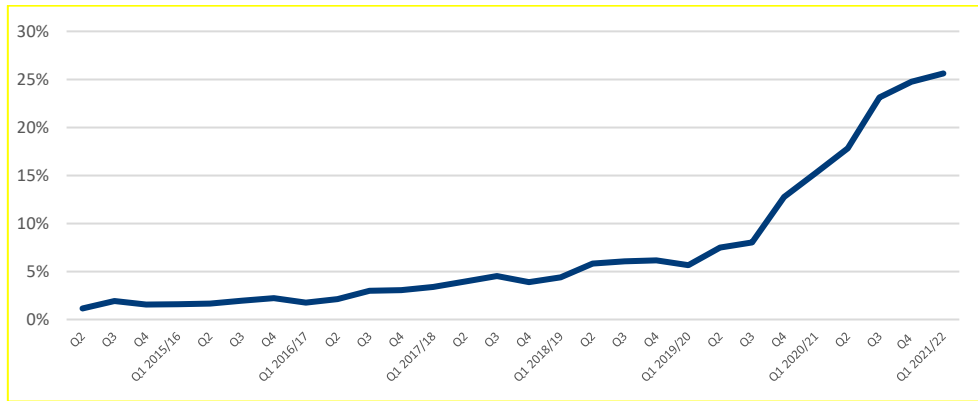


The top make for cars registered for the first time during April to June 2021 was Ford, accounting for over 1,200 registrations, followed by Volkswagen, Ford, Toyota and Audi (table 2.3).

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 22.0% of all new registrations; Blue (20.0%), White (18.8%), Black (15.7%), and Red (12.4%) were the next most popular colours.

Figure 2.2: Proportion of New Car Registrations using Alternative Fuels



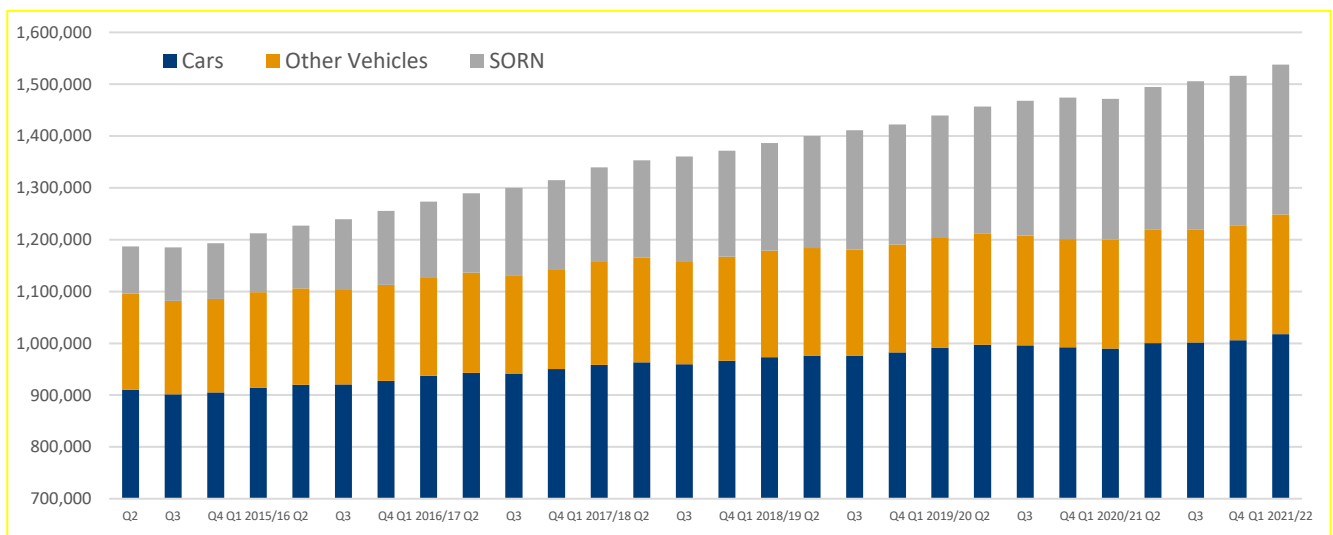
The proportion of newly registered alternative-fuel³ cars has increased substantially over the last two years, from 6.2% in quarter four 2018-19, to 24.7% in the equivalent period in 2020-21. Over this same period, the proportion of diesel cars has continued to decline, from 33.3% to 20.8%. This is the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

Licensed Vehicles

There were just over 1,248,600 licensed vehicles in Northern Ireland, an increase of 2.3% (28,600) compared with the previous quarter (1,228,000), and continuing the increasing trend from quarter two of 2020-21. The overwhelming majority (81.4%) of licensed vehicle were private cars (1,017,388).

Approximately 289,000 vehicles had a SORN at the 20 June 2021, representing just below over 23% 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



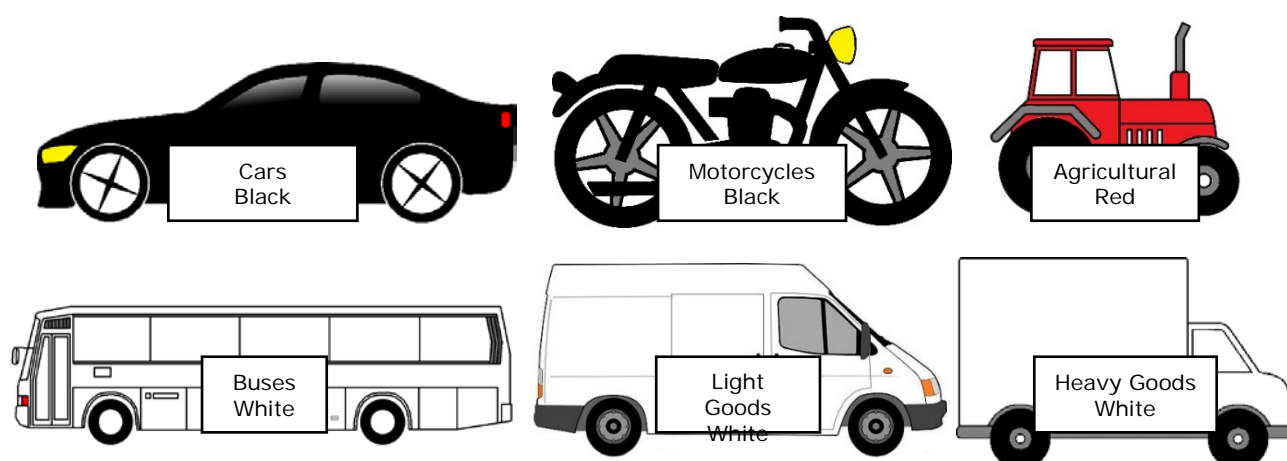
³ Alternative-fuel vehicles are those able to use a range of alternatives to purely petrol or diesel fuel, including gas, electricity, or a combination such as gas bi-fuel and hybrid-electric.

As of 30 June 2021, the average age of a licensed vehicle in Northern Ireland was 8.6 years, same as the last quarter.

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

- Cars – 8.6 years
- Motorcycles – 14.0 years
- Light Goods – 8.6 years
- Heavy Goods – 10.0 years
- Buses – 10.1 years
- Agricultural – 20.2 years
- Other – 10.7 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.



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

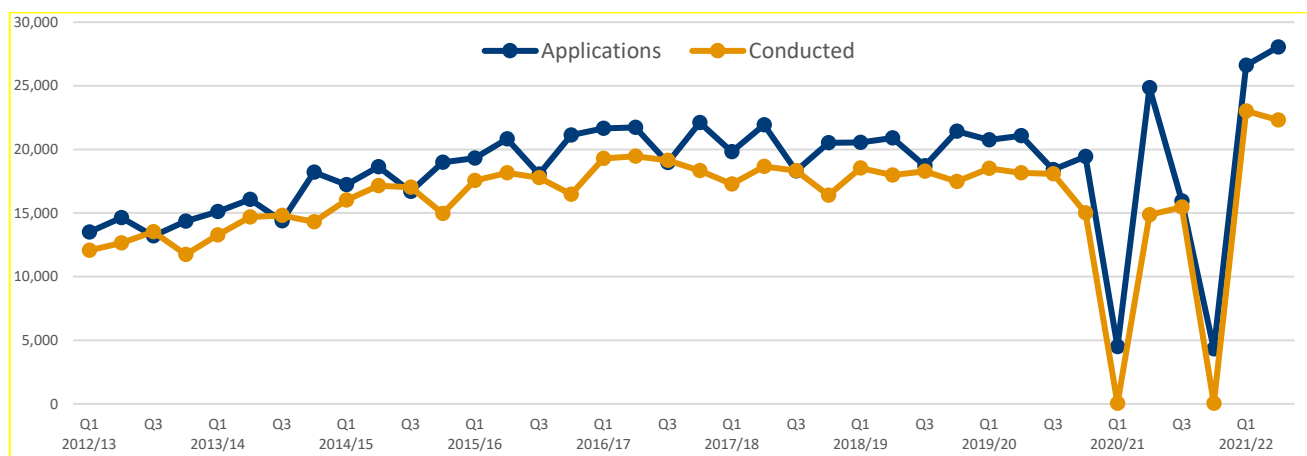
Due to the outbreak of COVID-19, the DVA suspended all driver theory testing between 20 March 2020 and 6 July, and again from 26 December until 22 April 2021. For the latest news and updates, please visit the Driver Theory Testing page on the NIDirect website⁴.

Theory Test Applications and Tests Conducted

From July to September 2021, the DVA received just over 28,000 theory test applications. This is the highest for a single quarter in our series going back to 2012 (figure 3.1). During the same period, DVA delivered just over 22,300 theory tests, the second 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



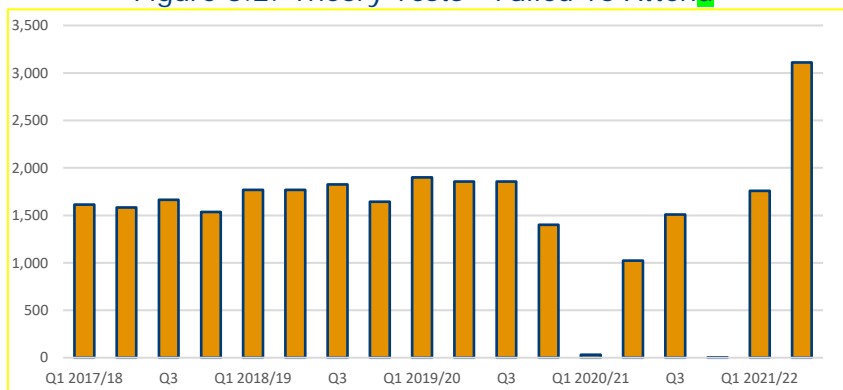
For both theory test applications and conducted, tests for private-cars account for almost nine of every ten of all applications or tests conducted.

Failed To Attends

During this quarter, just over 3,109 customers failed to attend a booked theory test (table 3.3 and figure 3.2).

This is the highest on record for a single month.

Figure 3.2: Theory Tests - Failed To Attend



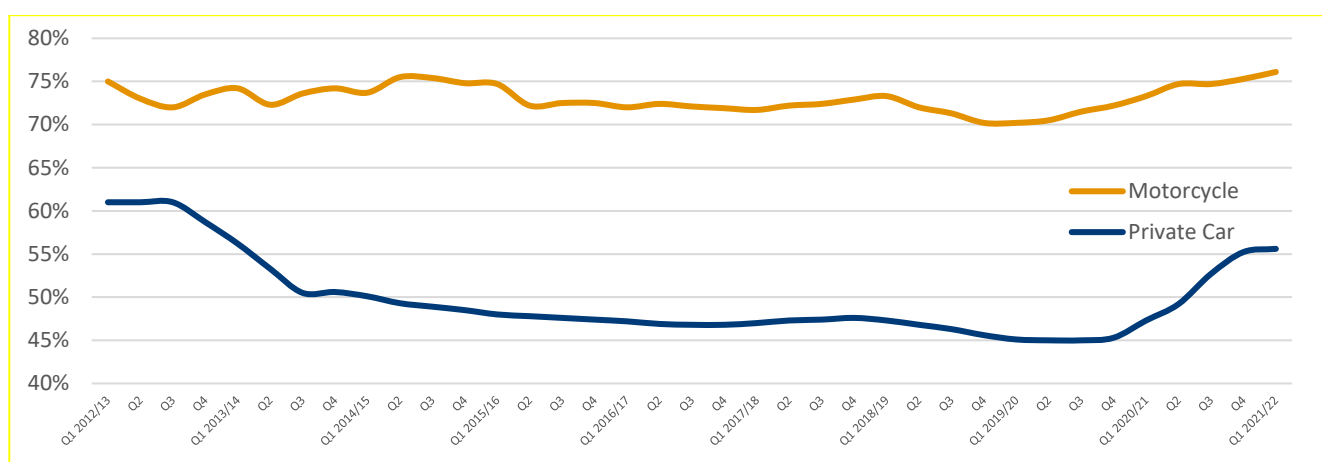
⁴ <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/driving-theory-test>

Theory Test Pass-Rates (refer to notes on page 28)

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.

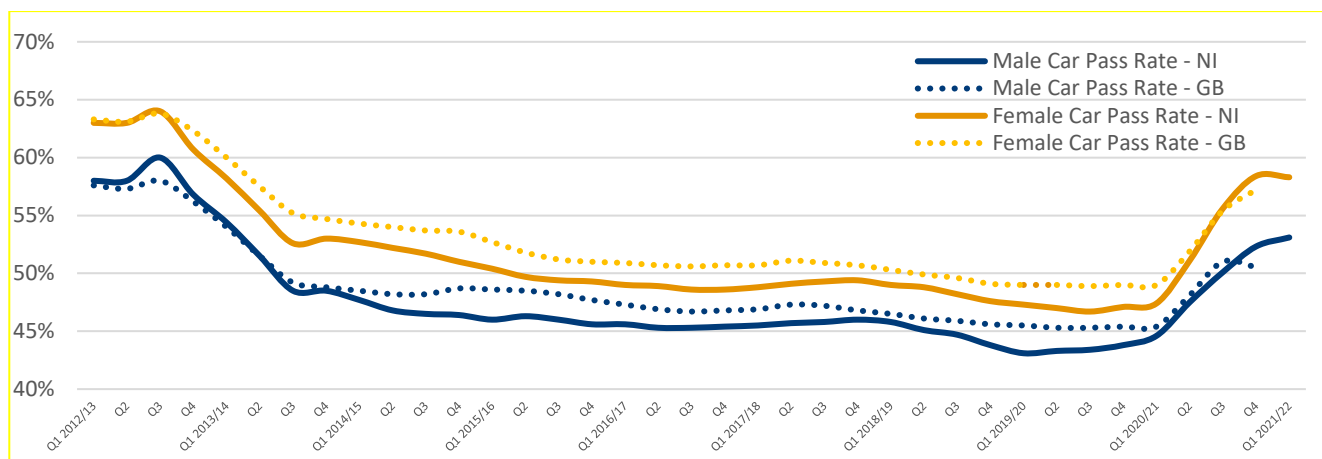
For the full 2020-21 financial year, the theory test pass-rate for private-cars was 55.2%, an increase of 9 percentage-points on the pass-rate last year, and the second highest annual pass-rate in our time series. For the motorcycle test, the pass-rate was 75.2%, reflecting the fact that those taking 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 under-lying 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.

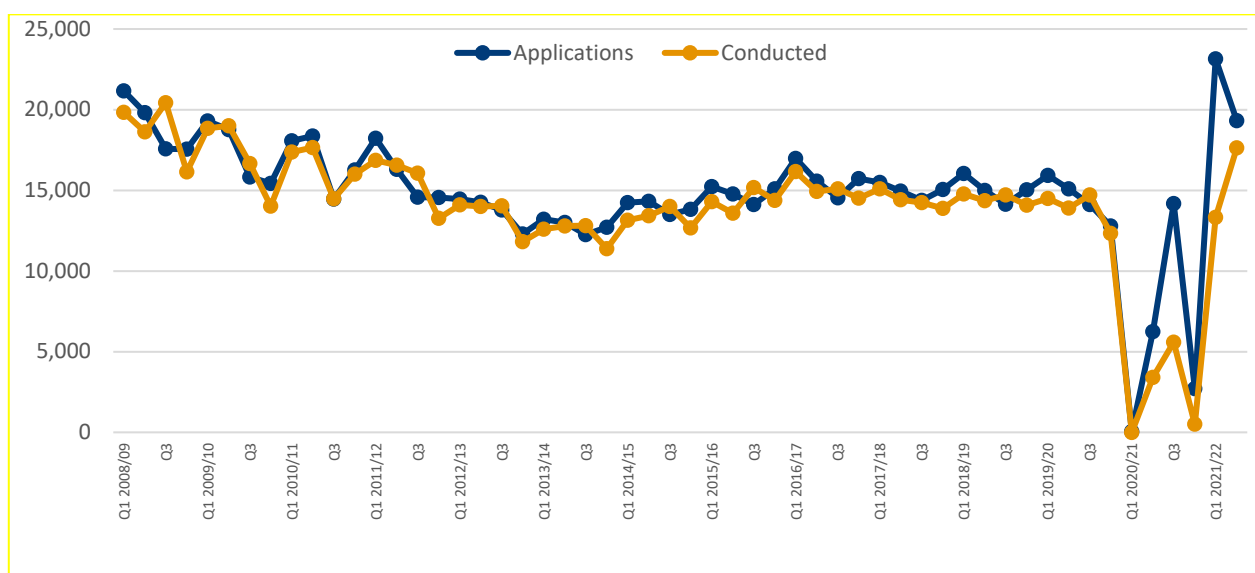
Following the outbreak of COVID-19, the DVA suspended all driver testing from 20 March 2020 until 5 October, again from 17 October and 20 November, again for a third time between 27 November and 10 December. The most recent suspension began on 23 December, reopening on 23 April 2021. During quarter four, 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 July to September 2021, the DVA received just over 19,300 applications for a driving test (table 4.1 and figure 4.1); for the same period, DVA conducted over 17,600 practical driving tests, which is 22% (3,200) above the equivalent number in 2018-19 (14,400).

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



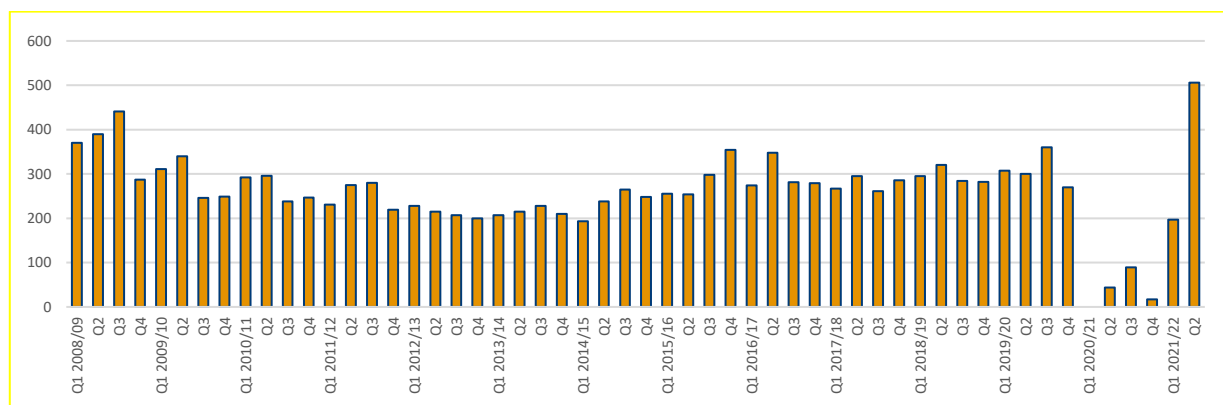
⁵ <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/book-your-practical-driving-test-online>

Failed to Attends

During quarter two there were just over 500 appointments where customers failed to attend (table 4.4). This is the highest number of FTA recorded in our series back to 2008-09. These accounted for 2.8% of the conducted tests during the quarter.

During the full financial year 2020-21, there were 150 missed appointments, accounting for 1.6% of the tests conducted during that year.

Figure 4.2: Driving Tests – Failed to Attend

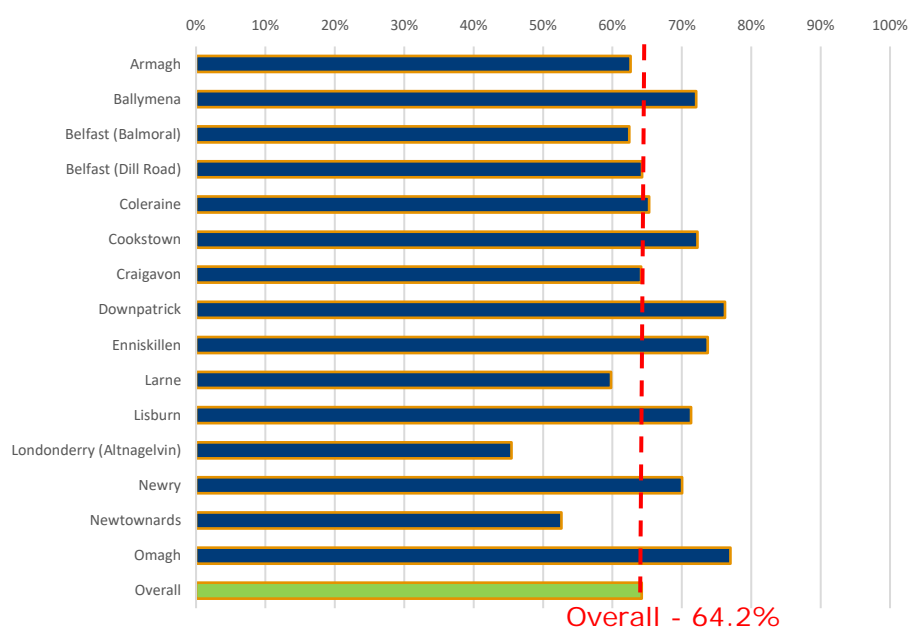


Driving Tests by Test Centre

The number of driving tests for private cars conducted during quarter two ranged from a high of 2,100 at Balmoral (Belfast) to a low of 641 at Downpatrick.

By test centre and using a 4-quarter rolling average, the pass rates for private cars ranged from 46.7% in Londonderry (Altnagelvin) to 76.0% in Omagh. At least part of the difference in driving 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 July to September 2021, the pass-rate for private-car driving tests was 63.1%, compared with the 54.9% average of the five years prior to the pandemic (table 4.5).

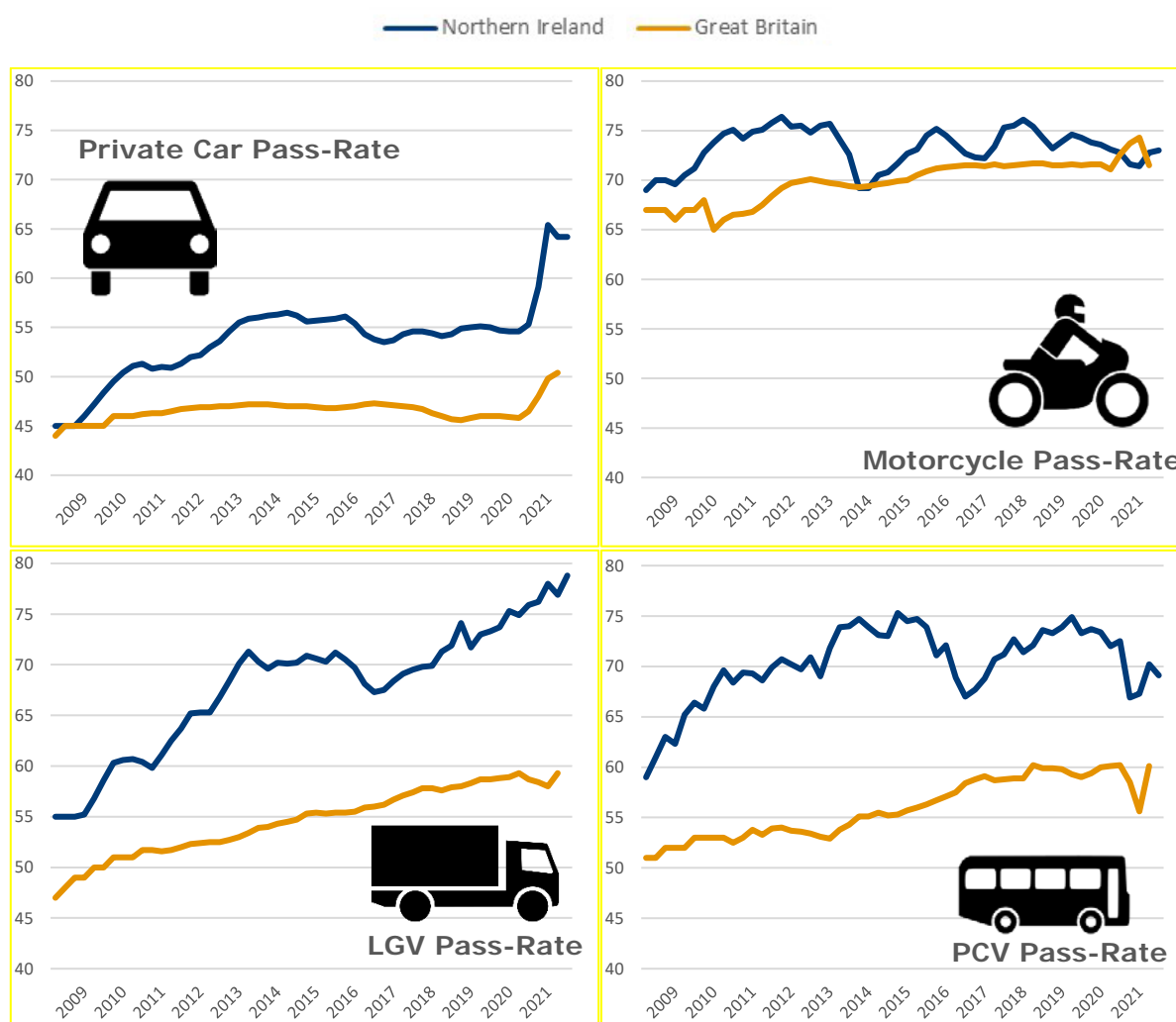
Prior to the pandemic, pass-rates for all categories of vehicle remained broadly unchanged over the five years up to the onset of Covid restrictions in 2020. It is too soon to say whether this is indicative of a change in the under-lying long term trend or just a temporary effect of the pandemic.

Based on a rolling 4-quarter average, the pass-rate for private-car driver testing remained unchanged from the previous quarter at 64.2%. This is still much higher compared with pre-Covid times when pass rates were typically 54%-55%. (table 4.10 and figure 4.4).

Using rolling 4-quarter averages pass-rates across all four main vehicle categories were generally much higher than the pass-rates in Great Britain, except for Motor Cycles where the pass rates were relatively similar. Figures for GB lags one quarter behind those for NI (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 driver testing.

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



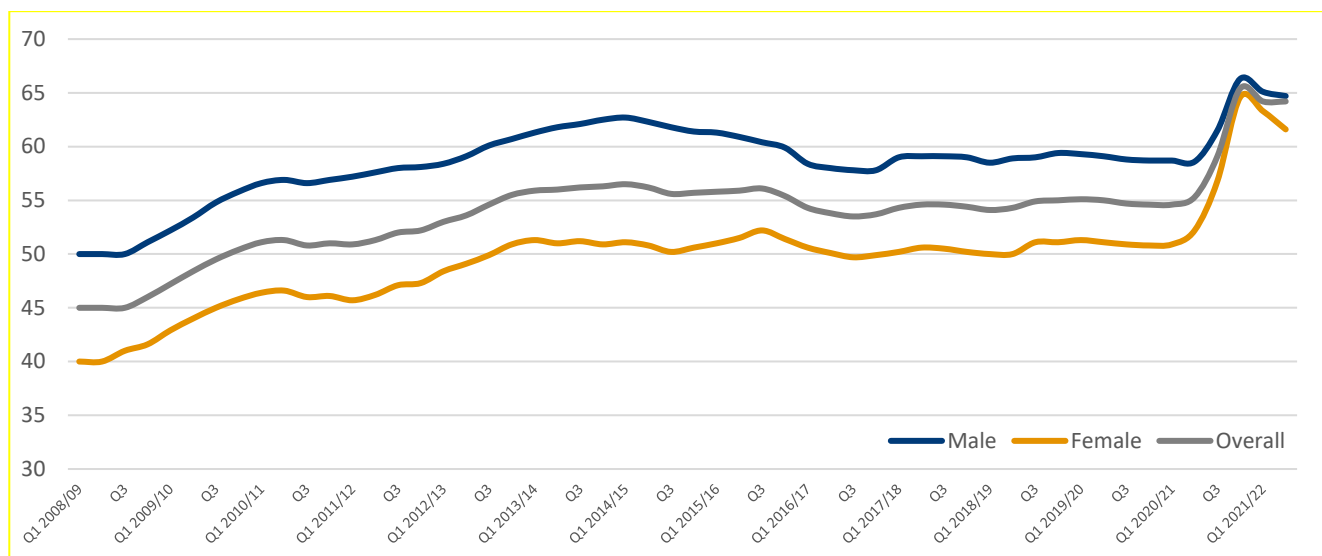
Driving Test Pass-Rates by Gender

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 second quarter of 2021 (table 4.10 & figure 4.5).

Over the last twelve months, males had a 3 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 below half this level. 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.

Most test centres offering private-car driving tests also showed this same disparity, to varying degrees, in favour of males. In contrast, several test centres in this quarter showed a gender-gap in favour of females (table 4.7c), for example, Armagh, Ballymena, Coleraine and Larne.

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 consistently 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.

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, at that time) and is now working to process all applications it receives.

Driver Licensing Transactions

The DVA carried out just over 73,550 ordinary licensing transactions during July to September 2021 (figure 5.1), the highest number of ordinary driver licensing transactions since 2017-18, and almost 9% (5,900) higher compared to the same quarter in 2018-19 (67,662).

Figure 5.1: Driver Licensing Transactions

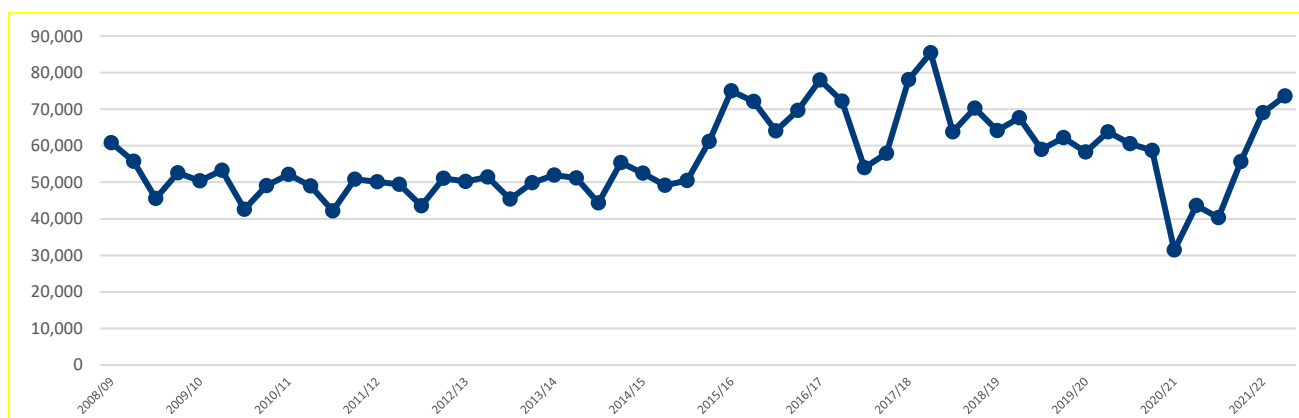
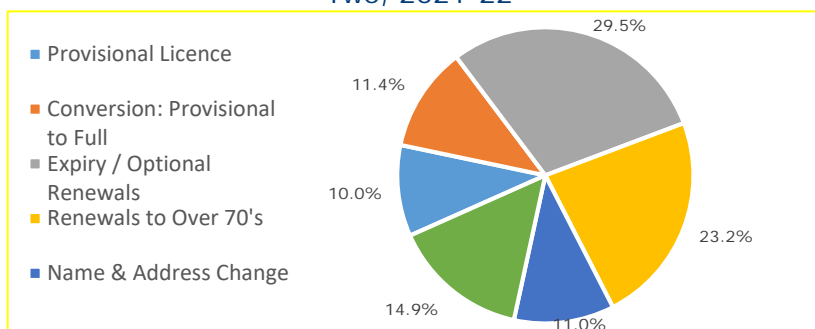


Figure 5.2: Driver License Transactions by Type, Quarter Two, 2021-22

The number of ordinary first licences ('provisional licences') issued in quarter two 2021-22 was 7,330. (table 5.1).



In quarter two 2021-22, the DVA carried out just over 5,000 vocational licensing transactions, an increase of 6% (325) on the previous quarter, and significantly higher than the number issued in the same corresponding period in 2020-21 when the figure stood at 2,744 (table 5.2).

In other licensing activity, Go Backs increased by almost 36% (2,400) from 6,709 to 9,111 in quarter two (table 5.3).

Driver Licence Stock

At the 30 September 2021, there were just over 1,112,200 full and eligible licence holders with private-cars/light vans entitlement, an increase of 1.1% compared with the previous quarterly total (1,099,713) (table 5.9 and figure 5.4). This is the second quarterly increase in a row 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 decreased slightly from 112,000 to 111,000. This is still a significant increase in numbers since the first quarter of 2020-21 (97,000).

Proportionally, those licence holders aged 65 and over accounted for just below 20.0% (221,000) of the driver licence stock.

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

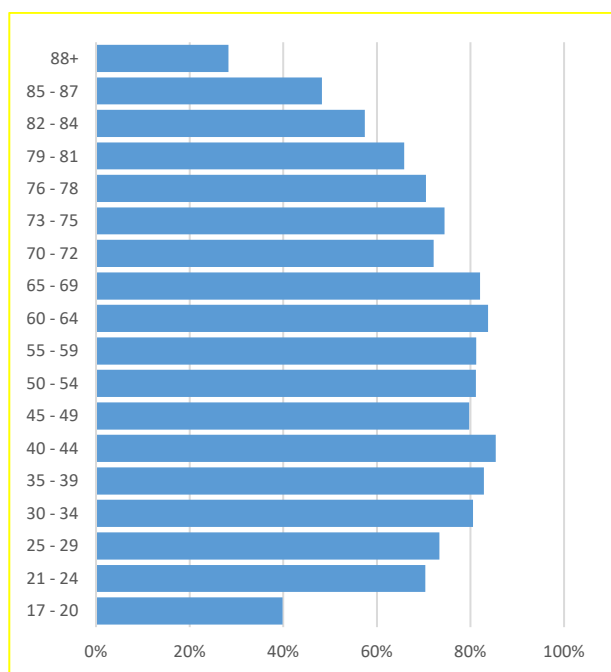


Figure 5.4: Full Car Licence Holders in Northern Ireland

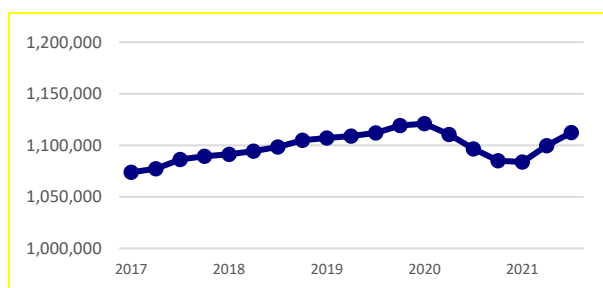
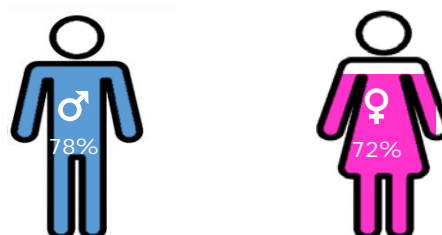


Figure 5.5: Proportion of Population with a Full Car Licence – by Gender



An estimated 73.0% 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 decrease since the previous quarter (74.5%). For males, the estimated figure was 78%, some six percentage-points higher than 72% for females.

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

Road Transport Licensing

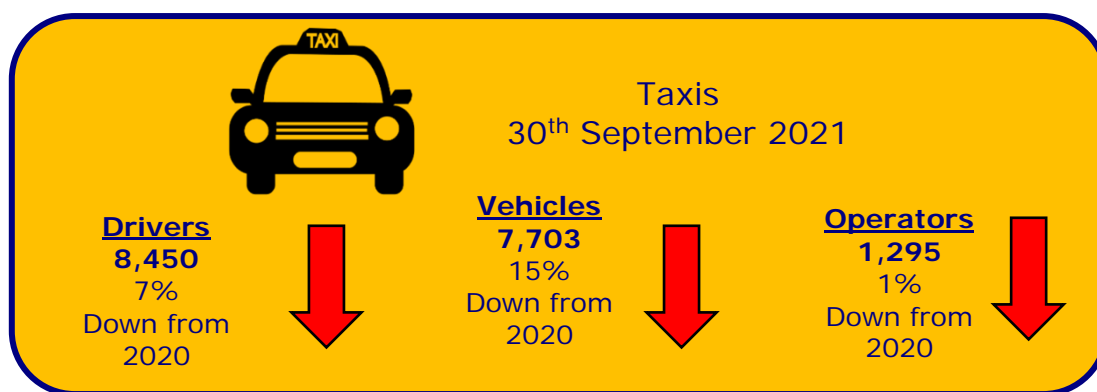
The Passenger Transport Licensing division in DVA is responsible for issuing (and where appropriate, withdrawing) licences in respect of taxi drivers and bus operators. Goods licensing is the responsibility of the Transport Regulation Unit in DfI.

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.

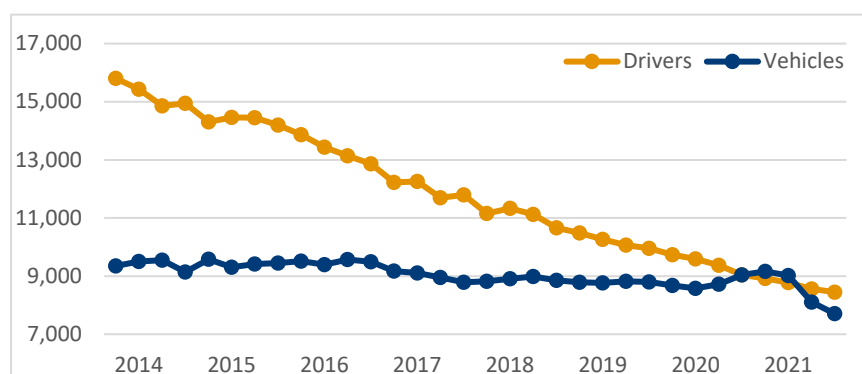
Taxi Licensing



The DVA issued 1,834 vehicle licences for taxis during July to September 2021, compared with 1,944 in quarter one. The recent fall in numbers of vehicle licenses issued 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 July and September 2021, DVA issued 393 taxi driver licences, a small reduction from quarter one (450) which saw the highest number issued since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

Figure 6.1: Licensed Taxi Driver and Vehicle Volumes



At the end of June 2021, there were just over 7,700 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 for another quarter by 105 (1.2%) and at 8,450 is the lowest number in our series from 2013.

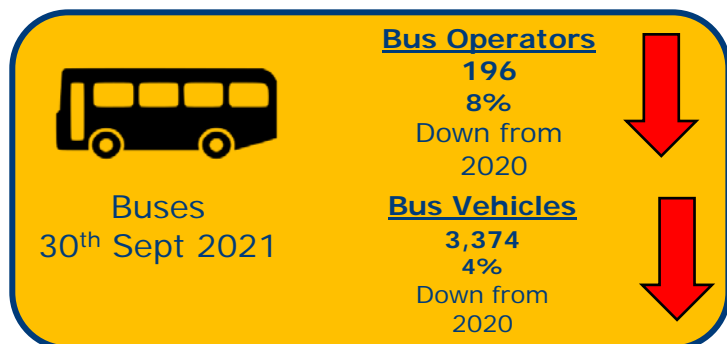
These taxi vehicles were affiliated to 1,295 licensed taxi operators, of which almost 87% are small operators, i.e. can only list up to two taxis on the licence (table 6.2). This is the second lowest figure in our time series.

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

Bus Licensing

The number of licensed buses at the end of June 2021 was exactly 3,374, down 126 (4%) on the previous quarter (3,500) (table 6.3).

The DVA issued 744, bus vehicle licences compared with 895 in the previous quarter (table 6.1).



At the end of September 2021, there were 196 bus operators, continuing the downward trend from quarter four in 2019-20; and the lowest number of bus operators for over four years (table 6.3).

During July to September 2021, the DVA processed 46 bus operator licences, compared with 51 in quarter one.

Goods Licensing

The number of goods vehicle operator licences in force at the end of September 2021 was 5,526, an increase of 2.5% on same quarter last year. The number of standard international licences continues to increase, with the figure of 1,916 accounting for a series high of 34.7% of all goods vehicle operators.



Associated to these goods operators, were 22,274 heavy goods vehicles, an increase of 1.8% 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 presented 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.

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 605 vehicles; of these, the largest volume was for heavy goods vehicles (including trailers), accounting for over three in five of all vehicles checked. Enforcement checks in this quarter were lower than last quarter but almost double that for the same period in 2020 (310).

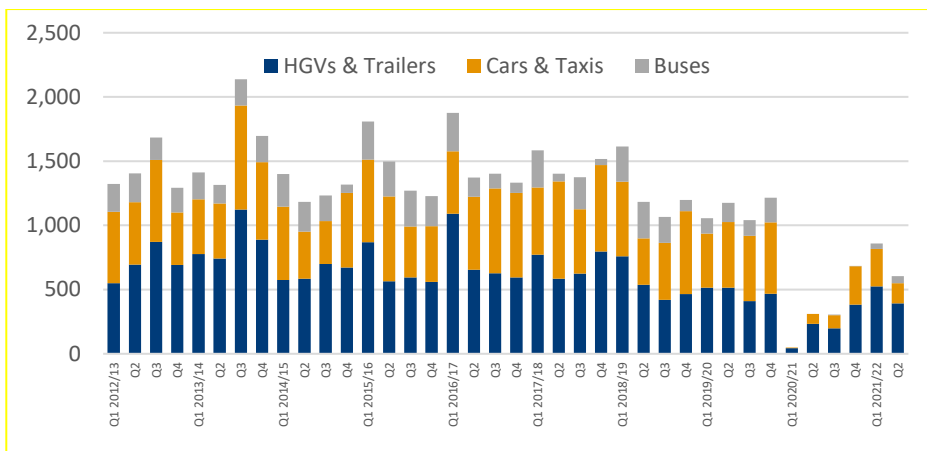
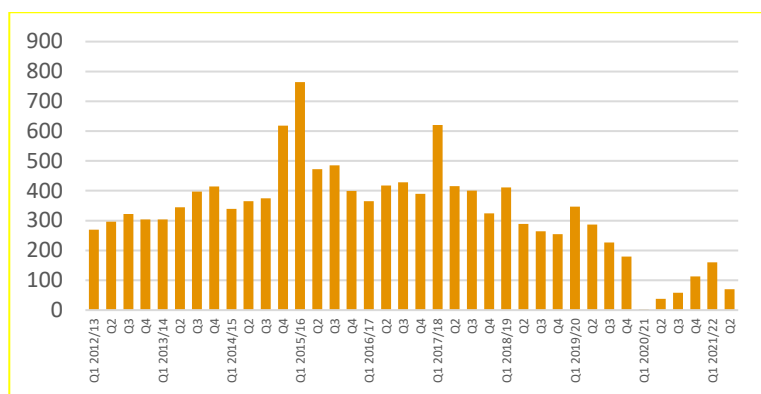


Figure 7.2: Fixed Penalties Issued



DVA enforcement officers issued 79 fixed penalty notices during this quarter (table 7.2 and figure 7.2). Whilst this was significantly more than last year's quarter two (38) it is consistent with reductions in vehicle checks relative to pre-covid times. The total value of these fixed penalties issued was £38,660.

There were 71 successful convictions during July to September, accounting for 220 offences. From these cases, the DVA received £38,660 in court fines and costs (table 7.2 and figure 7.3).

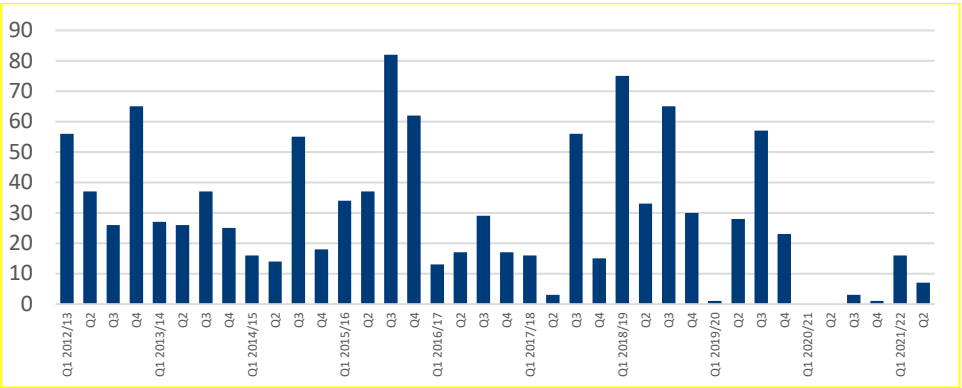
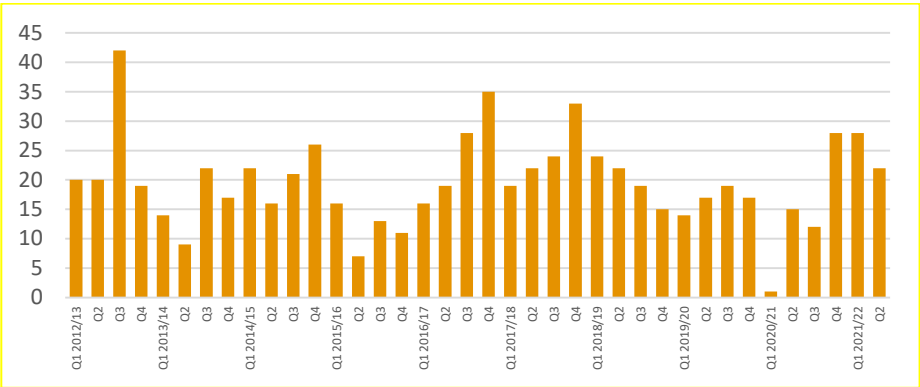


Figure 7.3: Convictions

Figure 7.4: Joint or Cross-Border Operations



During July to September 2021, enforcement teams carried out 15 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 7 spot checks on School Buses carried out by Enforcement Officers throughout the region in quarter two (table 7.4 and figure 7.5).

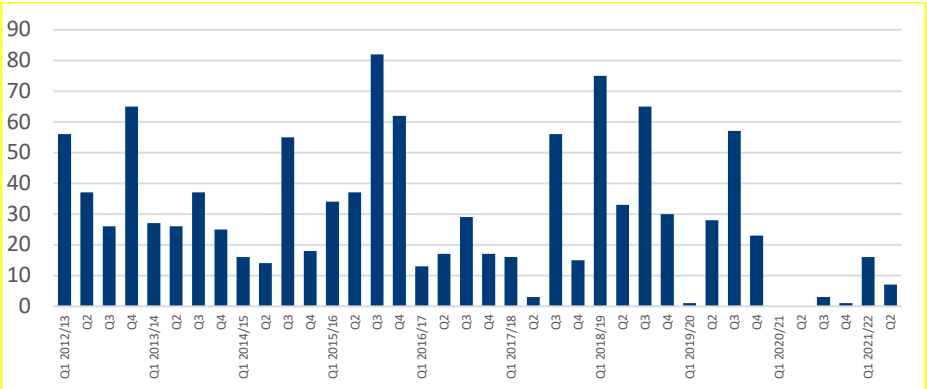


Figure 7.5: School Bus Checks

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 every quarter in 2021-22 was above the agency target of 95%, and in quarter four (January to March, 2022) stood at 99.8%. Online applications performance for financial year 2021-22, was 98.1%.

Paper application performance was more variable compared to online applications, and was below the agency target of 90% in quarters two (61.1%) and three (63.7%); quarter one performance was above target at 91.0% and performance finished on a high of 93.4% in quarter four. Paper applications performance for financial year 2021-22, was 78.3%.

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

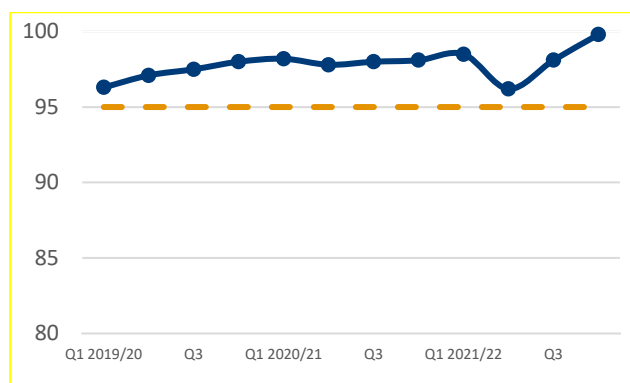
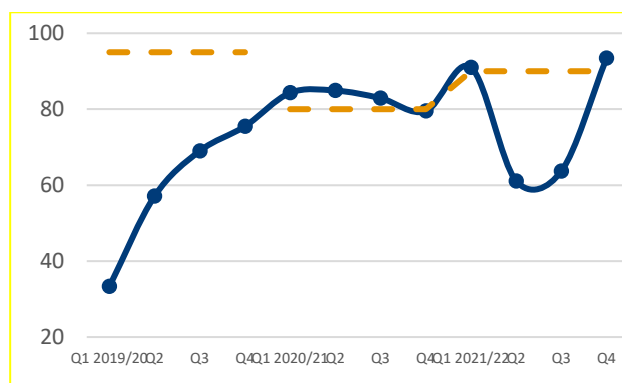


Figure 8.2: Paper Driver Licence Application Waiting Time Performance



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

Notes

Theory Testing Data

Theory-testing data by gender and outcomes (pass/fail) had not been validated in time for publication within this report. Tables detailing these data will be released at the earliest opportunity.

DVA Target Monitoring

As target monitoring data was available for quarters two, three and four for 2021-22, in accordance with the code of practice it was decided to publish this information now and prevent further delay in releasing these important metrics into the public domain.

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.

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