

# DfI Driver, Vehicle, Operator, and Enforcement Statistics

## Quarter Four: January to March 2022

**Issue number:** 30

**Date of publication:** 25 May 2022

**Theme:** Travel and Transport

**Coverage:** Northern Ireland

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## **Key Findings**

For the 2021-22 financial year, the DVA conducted just over 894,120 vehicle tests, 89.5% of the number conducted in 2019-20 (999,320).

During quarter four of 2021-22 (January to March), the DVA conducted just over 277,370 vehicle tests (full tests and retests). This is 30,350 (12%) higher than the previous quarter (247,015), and 21% (47,210) above the previous 5-year quarterly average (230,160). As usual, the majority of tests conducted (82%) were full tests for private-cars (227,110).

At the end of September 2021 there were just over 1,249,000 licensed vehicles in Northern Ireland, a small increase from the previous quarter (1,248,600), and continuing the increasing trend from quarter two of 2020-21. The overwhelming majority (81.3%) of licensed vehicle were private cars (1,016,091).

In 2021-22, the DVA conducted just over 89,520 theory tests, the highest on record. Prior to the pandemic, volumes ranged from 69,950 in 2015-16 to 72,250 in 2018-19.

The DVA conducted just over 65,190 driving tests during 2021-22, the highest on record since 2010-11.

The DVA carried out 277,510 ordinary licensing transactions during 2021-22, which was 15% above that in 2019-20 (241,315).

At the 31 March 2022, there were just over 1,131,290 full and eligible licence holders with private-cars/light vans entitlement, an increase of 0.6% compared with the previous quarterly total (1,124,800). This is another quarterly increase and reflects the continuing upward trend in driving tests conducted.

The number of licenced taxi drivers at the end of March 2022 (8,152) has fallen by 7% (629) relative to the same period in 2021 (8,781).

Total vehicle checks in 2021-22, at 2,714 were 54% of the equivalent volume in 2019-20 (5,060).

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 thirtieth 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 four of 2021-22. This covers the period from 1 January 2022 to 31 March 2022. Due to the transfer of vehicle licensing functions to DVLA, the data in the corresponding section (page 8) is from 1 July 2021 to 30 September 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 this area are presented in section two.

For further information and guidance on this publication, please see the User Guidance document, available on our website<sup>1</sup>.

## **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).

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<sup>1</sup> <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.

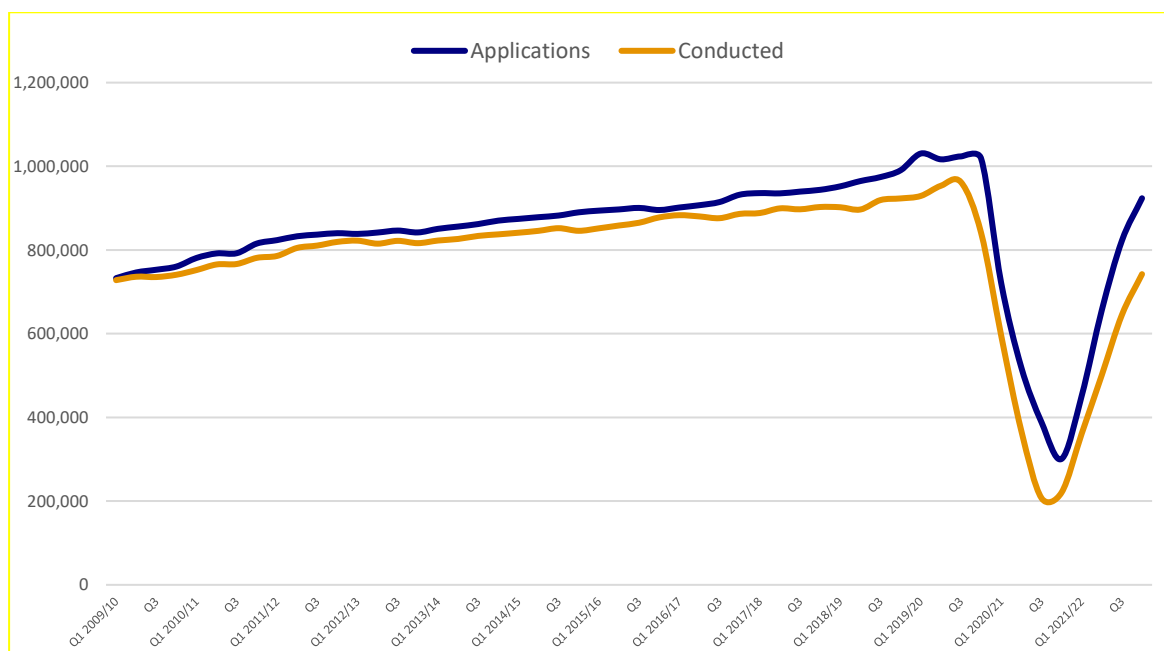
Following the outbreak of COVID-19, the DVA suspended all vehicle testing from 24 March 2020, and began issuing temporary exemption certificates (TECs) to all customers. The DVA resumed IVA testing on 1 June 2020, whilst the testing of priority vehicle groups commenced on 20 July 2020. Priority vehicle 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 2020, 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 website<sup>2</sup>.

## Vehicle Test Applications

From January to March 2022, the DVA received just over 337,850 applications for vehicle tests, just over 16% (47,650) above the average volume received during the same period for previous five years (290,200) (table 1.3). The majority (86%) of vehicle test applications were full tests rather than re-tests (14%), and private cars (81%) were the most common application test-category.

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



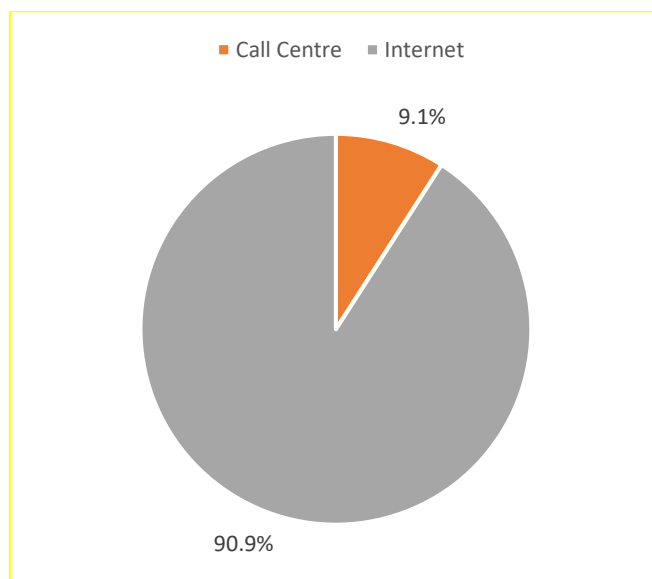
Note that figures for vehicle test applications include taximeter tests and those for vehicle tests conducted do not.

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

## Booking Method

During quarter four, all vehicle test bookings were via the Internet or the Call Centre. The most popular booking method was internet booking which received 90.9% of all applications during this quarter, and 9.1% made by Call Centres. (figure 1.2 and table 1.4).

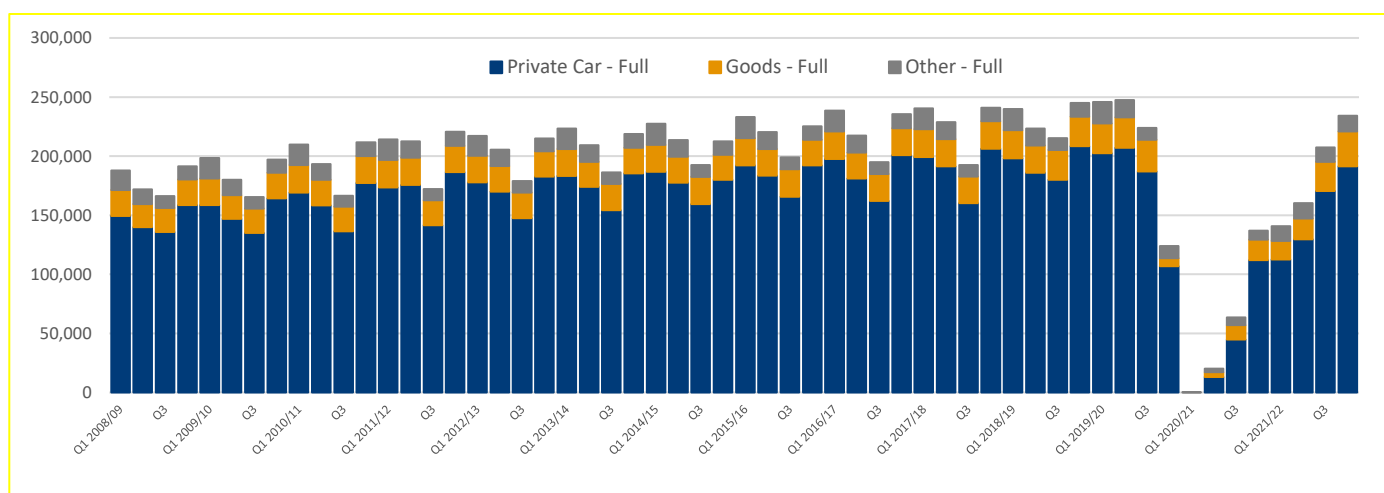
Figure 1.2: Vehicle Test Applications by Booking Method.



## Vehicle Tests Conducted

During quarter four of 2021-22, the DVA conducted just over 277,370 vehicle tests (full tests and retests). This is 30,350 (12%) higher than the previous quarter (247,015), and 21% (47,210) above the previous 5-year quarterly average (230,160) (table 1.7 and figure 1.3). As usual, the majority of tests conducted (82%) were full tests for private-cars (227,110).

Figure 1.3: Full Vehicle Tests Conducted



For the 2021-22 financial year, the DVA conducted just over 894,120 vehicle tests, 89.5% of the number conducted in 2019/20 (999,320).

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) to 2020-21. 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

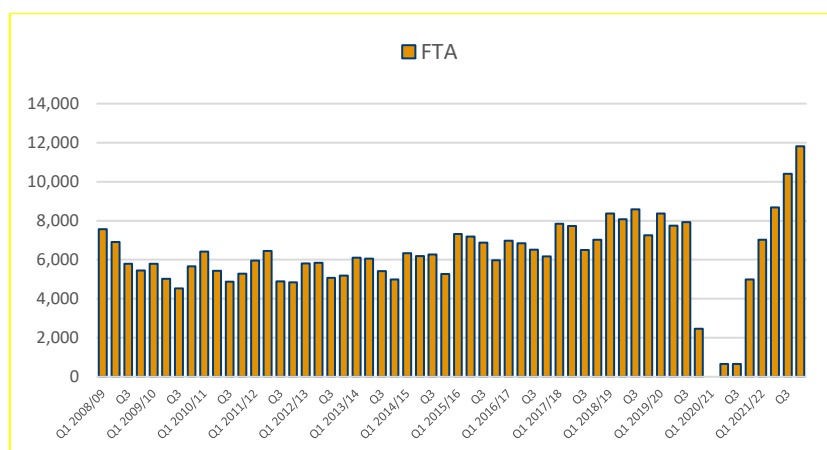
risen from 7.7 to 8.4 years over the same period. Together, this resulted in approximately 99,000 (14%) additional private cars requiring a test in 2020 compared to 2015. It is too early to say what impact the pandemic will have on these trends long term, as people's lifestyles, work pattern and car-usage will inevitably change.

## Failed to Attend

Just over 11,800 vehicles failed to attend for a booked vehicle test during quarter four (table 1.10 and figure 1.4). This equates to 3.5% of all conducted tests during this period.

For the full financial year, 2021-22 just over 37,900 vehicles failed to attend for testing, 17% higher compared to 2018-19, and the highest in our series.

Figure 1.4: Vehicle Tests – Failed to Attend



## Vehicle Test Pass-Rates

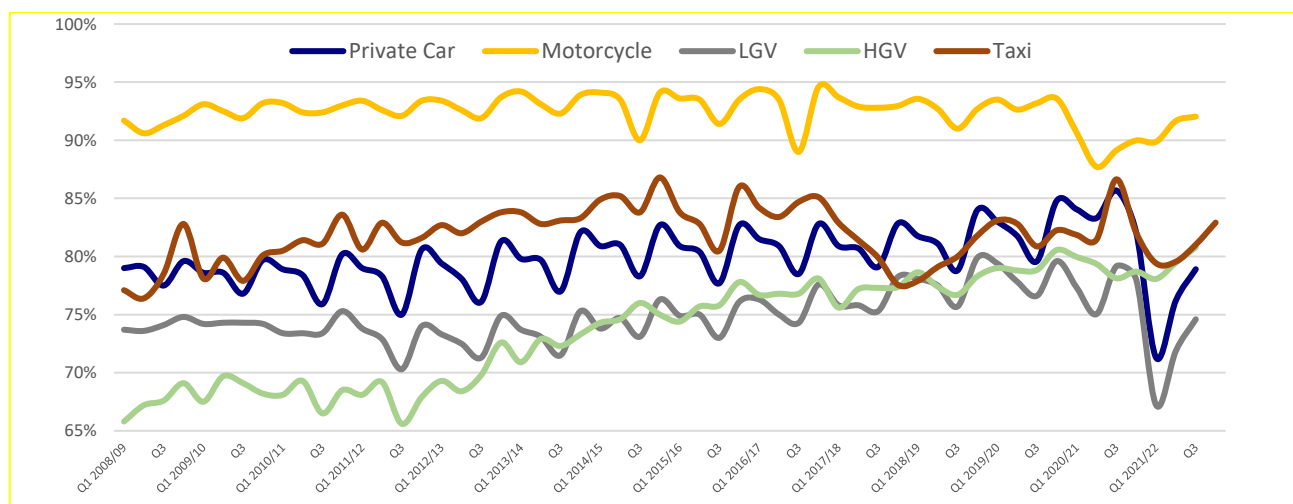
In quarter four, the overall pass-rate for full tests was 79.6% half a percentage point increase from quarter three (79.1%) and continuing the upward quarterly trend during 2021-22. (Table 1.11 and figure 1.5). The covid era drop in vehicle test pass-rates would suggest that vehicle owners did not maintained their vehicles during periods of test exemption, though pass rates in 2021-22 seem to be trending back to pre-covid levels.

For 2021-22, the overall pass-rate for full tests was 77.6%, five percentage points lower than in 2020-21 (82.7%) which was the highest annual pass-rate on record. The 2021-22 annual pass-rate for full tests varied by category, from 73.3% for light goods to 91.5% for motor cycles (for categories where there were at least 2,000 tests) (table 1.11).

The pass-rate for re-tests during quarter four was 93.6%, very similar compared with other quarterly pass rates in 2021-22. (table 1.12).

For the full 2021-22 financial year, the overall re-test pass-rate of 93.4% was consistent with previous annual pass rates. Similar to full tests, the annual re-test pass-rate varied by category, from 91.8% for light goods to 93.7% 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 during quarter four was Newtownards, having conducted just over 27,100 full tests, whilst Omagh was the quietest centre with just over 6,790 full tests conducted during the same period. (table 1.14).

Whilst the overall pass-rate for private-car full tests during quarter four increased slightly to 79.5% from 78.9% in quarter three, pass rates by test centre ranged from a high of 85.4% in Belfast (Balmoral) to a low of 74.1% in Larne (table 1.14). This is the sixth 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

Please note it was not possible to update Section 2 vehicle licensing registration for October, November and December 2021, as licensing data for this period was not available to DVA. This section will be updated at the earliest opportunity. Check our website for details.

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

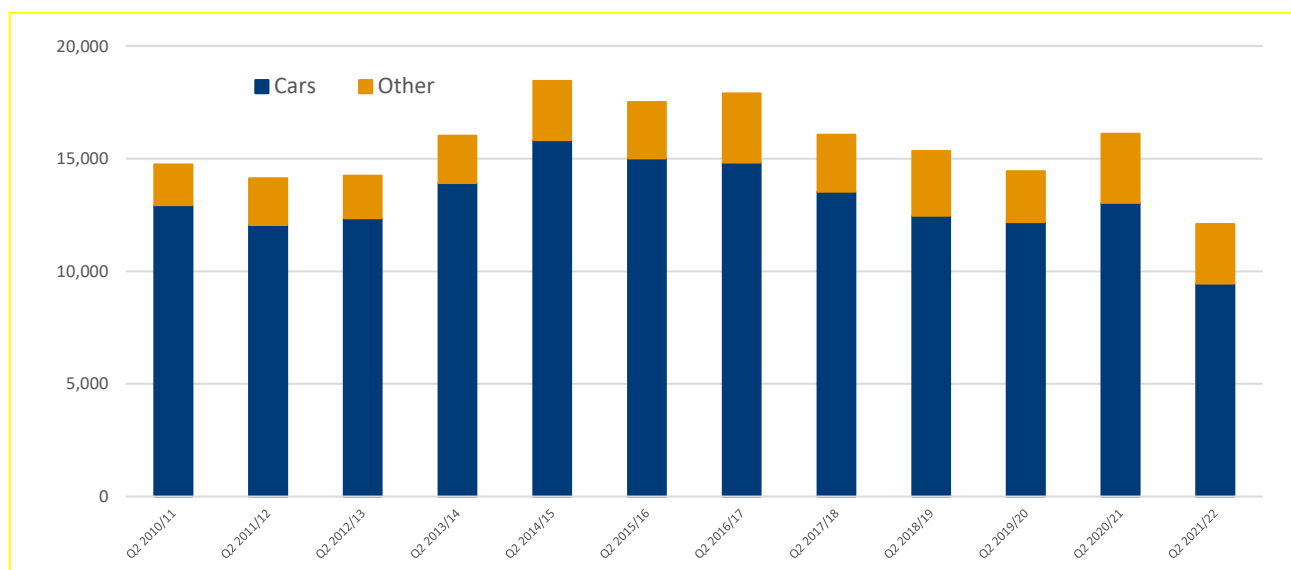
### Vehicle Registrations

During July to September 2021, the DVLA registered just over 12,210 vehicles for the first time in Northern Ireland, just over 2,900 less than the previous quarter (15,140). Private cars accounted for almost 78% (9,470) of all first time 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

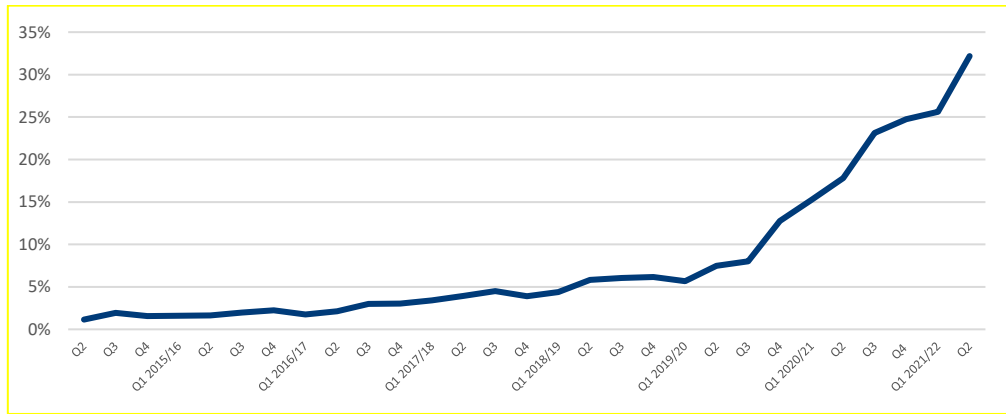


The top make for cars registered for the first time during July to September 2021 was Volkswagen, accounting for over 1,000 registrations, followed by Toyota, Kia and Hyundai (table 2.3).

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 22.3% of all new registrations; Blue (19.5%), White (18.7%), Black (16.2%), and Red (12.6%) were the next most popular colours.

Figure 2.2: Proportion of New Car Registrations using Alternative Fuels



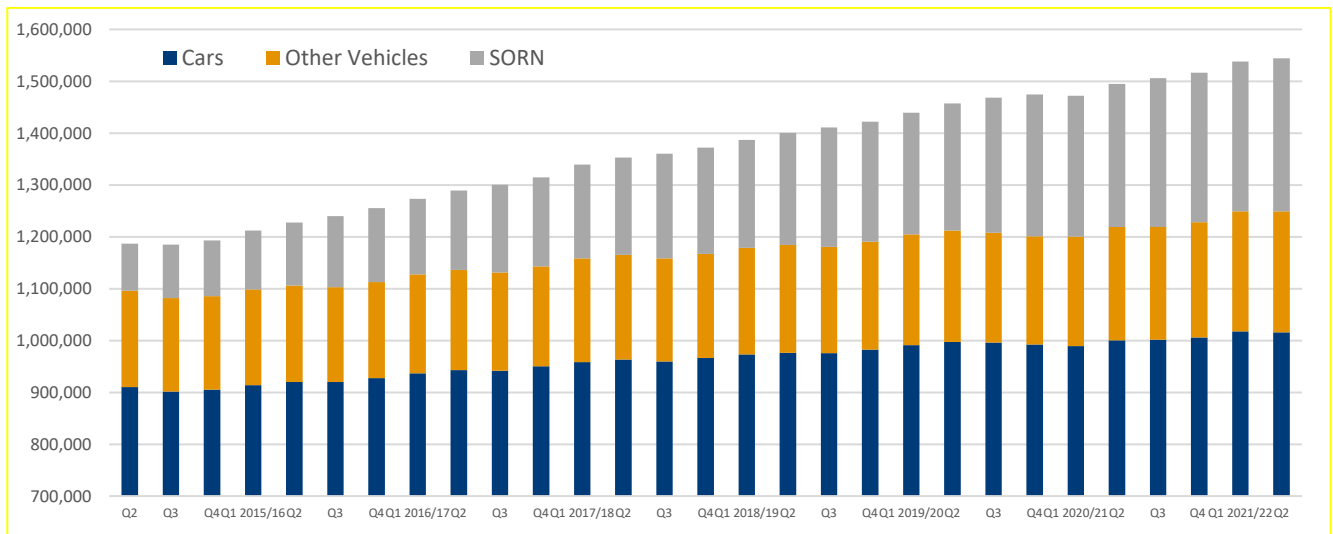
The proportion of newly registered alternative-fuel<sup>3</sup> cars has increased substantially over the last two years, from 6.2% in quarter four 2018-19, to 24.7% in the equivalent period in 2020-21. Over this same period, the proportion of diesel cars has continued to decline, from 33.3% to 20.8%. This is the fourth quarter in a row now that alternative-fuel cars have out-sold diesel cars, accounting for 32% and 13% respectively of new cars registered between July and September 2021.

### Licensed Vehicles

There were just over 1,249,000 licensed vehicles in Northern Ireland at the end of September 2021, a small increase from the previous quarter (1,248,600), and continuing the increasing trend from quarter two of 2020-21. The overwhelming majority (81.3%) of licensed vehicle were private cars (1,016,091).

Over 295,400 vehicles had a SORN at the end of September 2021, representing just below over 19% 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



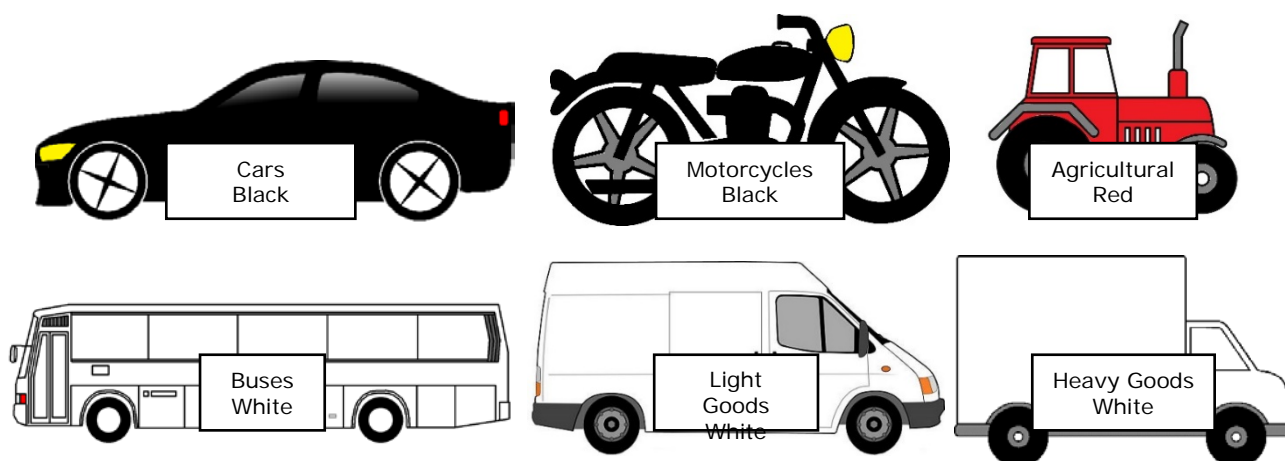
<sup>3</sup> Alternative-fuel vehicles are those able to use a range of alternatives to purely petrol or diesel fuel, including gas, electricity, or a combination such as gas bi-fuel and hybrid-electric.

As of 30 September 2021, the average age of a licensed vehicle in Northern Ireland was 9.1 years a small increase from the previous quarter (8.6 years).

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

- Cars – 8.7 years
- Motorcycles – 14.1 years
- Light Goods – 8.6 years
- Heavy Goods – 10.0 years
- Buses – 10.4 years
- Agricultural – 21.2 years
- Other – 10.8 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.



**Please note that theory-testing data for 2021-22 is provisional and pass rates are only partially complete for this period. This section will be updated at earliest opportunity. Check our website for details.**

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 website<sup>4</sup>.

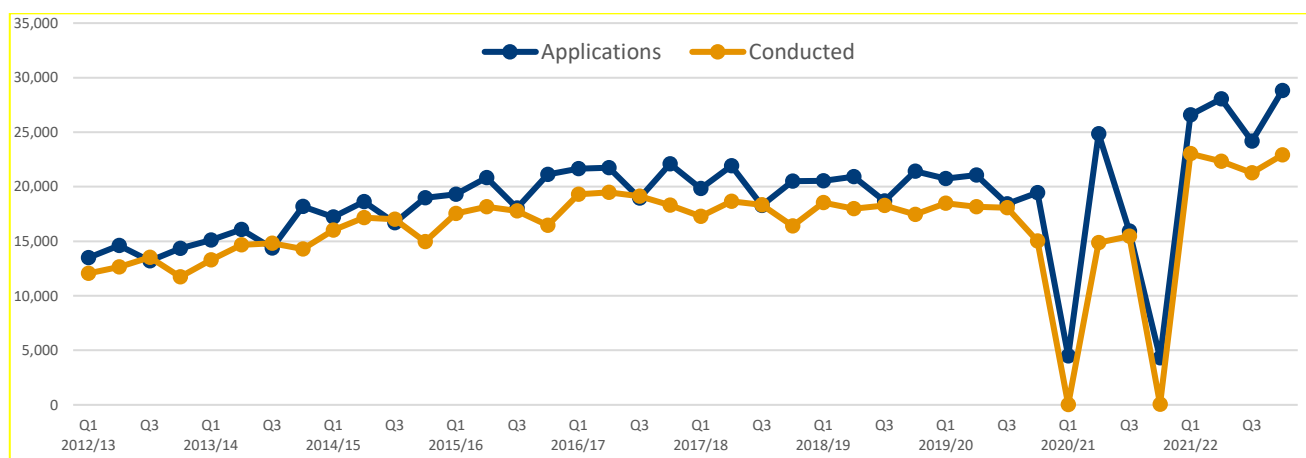
## Theory Test Applications and Tests Conducted

From January to March 2022, the DVA received just over 28,820 theory test applications, the highest for any quarter four in our series back to 2012-13 (figure 3.1). During the same quarter 22,900 theory tests were delivered, again the highest quarter four volume since 2009-10 (table 3.2).

For the 2021-22 financial year, the DVA conducted just over 89,520 theory tests, the highest on record. Prior to the pandemic, volumes ranged from 69,950 in 2015-16 to 72,250 in 2018-19.

Private-cars account for between eight and nine of every ten theory test applications and theory tests conducted.

Figure 3.1: Theory Test Applications and Conducted



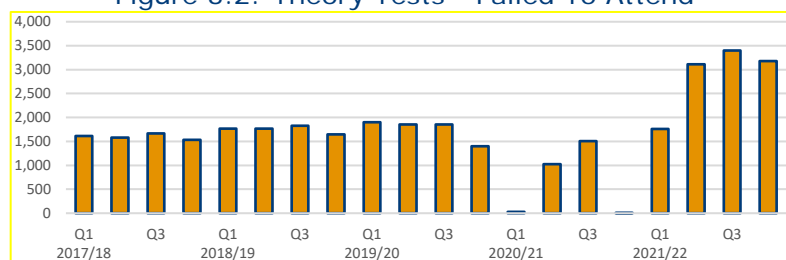
<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/driving-theory-test>

## Failed To Attend

During this quarter, just over 3,170 customers failed to attend a theory test. (table 3.3 and figure 3.2).

This is the second highest on record for a single quarter.

Figure 3.2: Theory Tests - Failed To Attend

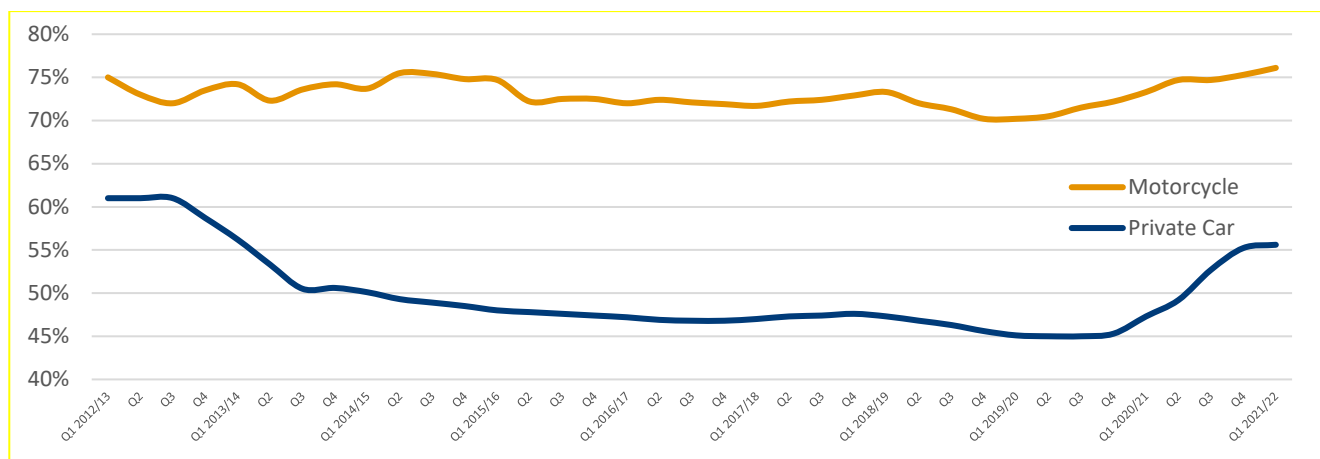


## Theory Test Pass-Rates (refer to notes on page 28)

The pass rate for all theory tests conducted between October and December 2021 was 44.2%, for private cars, 68.4% for motor cycles and 21.8% for taxis.

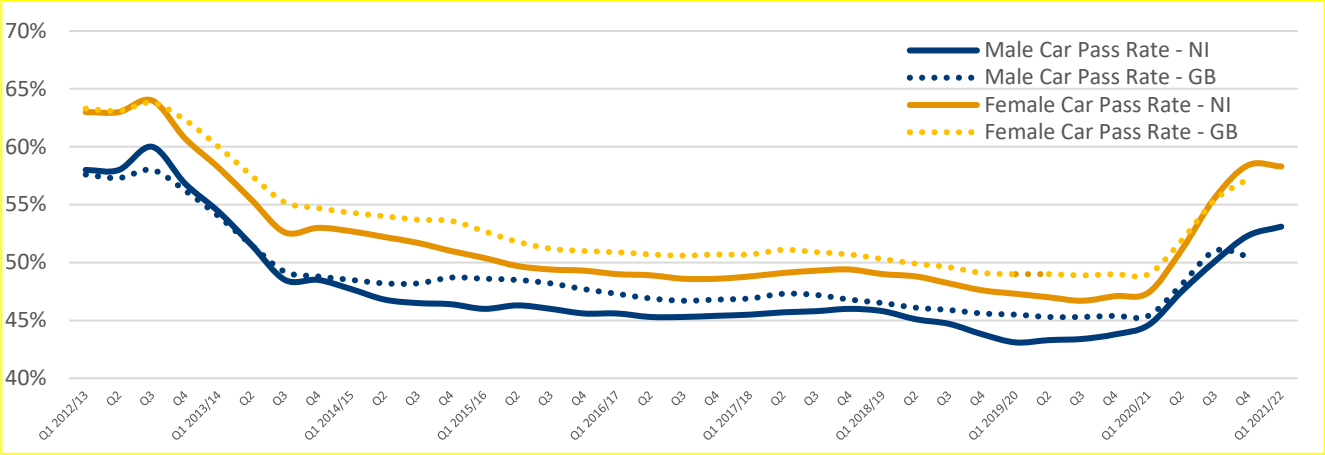
For the full 2020-21 financial year, the theory test pass-rate for private-cars was 55.2%, an increase of 9 percentage-points on the pass-rate last year, and the second highest annual pass-rate in our time series. For the motorcycle test, the pass-rate was 75.2%, reflecting the fact that those taking 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). It has not been possible to update this graphic, as the data required is not available.

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.

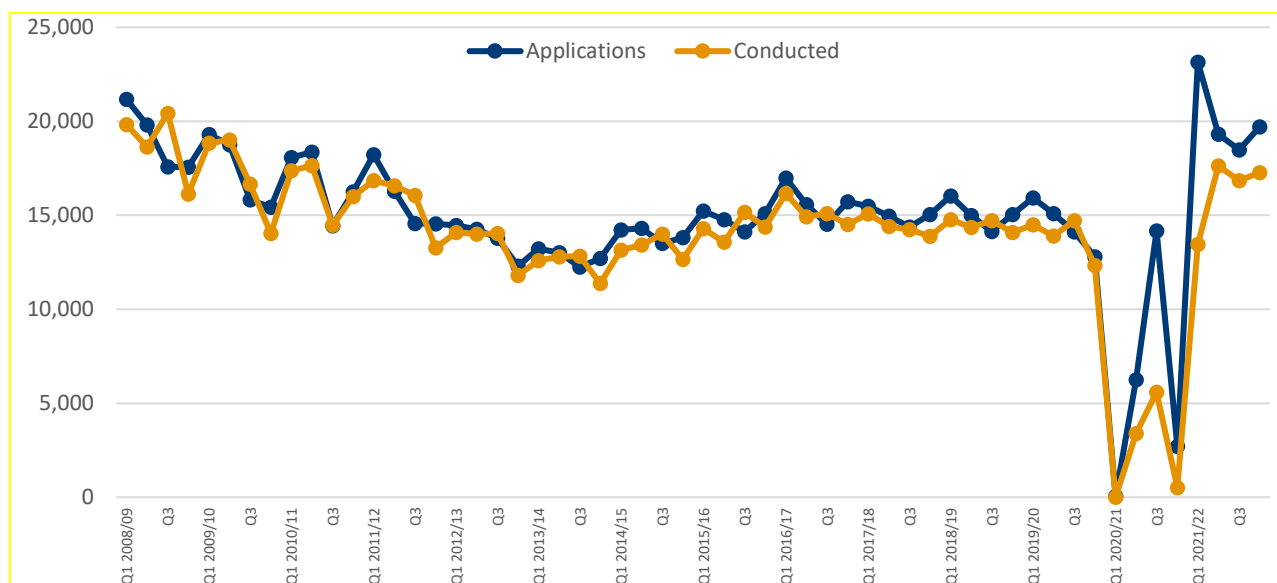
Following the outbreak of COVID-19, the DVA suspended all driver testing from 20 March 2020 until 5 October, again from 17 October and 20 November, again for a third time between 27 November and 10 December. The most recent suspension began on 23 December, reopening on 23 April 2021. During quarter four, 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 website<sup>5</sup>.

### Driving Test Applications and Tests Conducted

From January to March 2022, the DVA received just over 19,710 applications for a driving test, (table 4.1 and figure 4.1); for the same period, 17,270 practical driving tests were conducted, which is 23% (2,180) above the equivalent number in 201 In 2021-22, DVA conducted just over 65,190 driving tests, the highest on record since 2010-11.8-19 (14,080). In 2021-22, DVA conducted just over 65,190 driving tests, the highest on record since 2010-11.

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

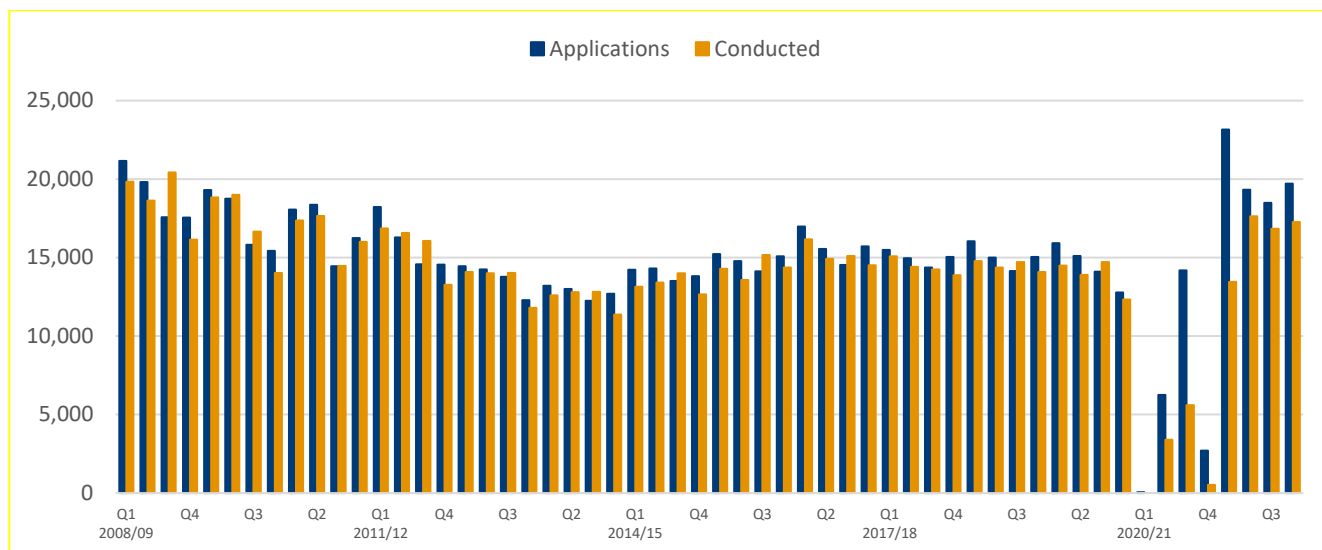


<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/book-your-practical-driving-test-online>

## Failed to Attends

In quarter four 2021-22 there were just over 680 appointments for which customers failed to attend a booked practical driving test (table 4.4). This is lower than the previous quarter (720) but relatively high compared with FTA in pre-covid years. The 680 FTA in quarter four was equivalent to 3.5% of conducted practical tests during this quarter. In 2021-22, there were just over 2,110 missed practical driving test appointments, the highest on record back to 2008-09.

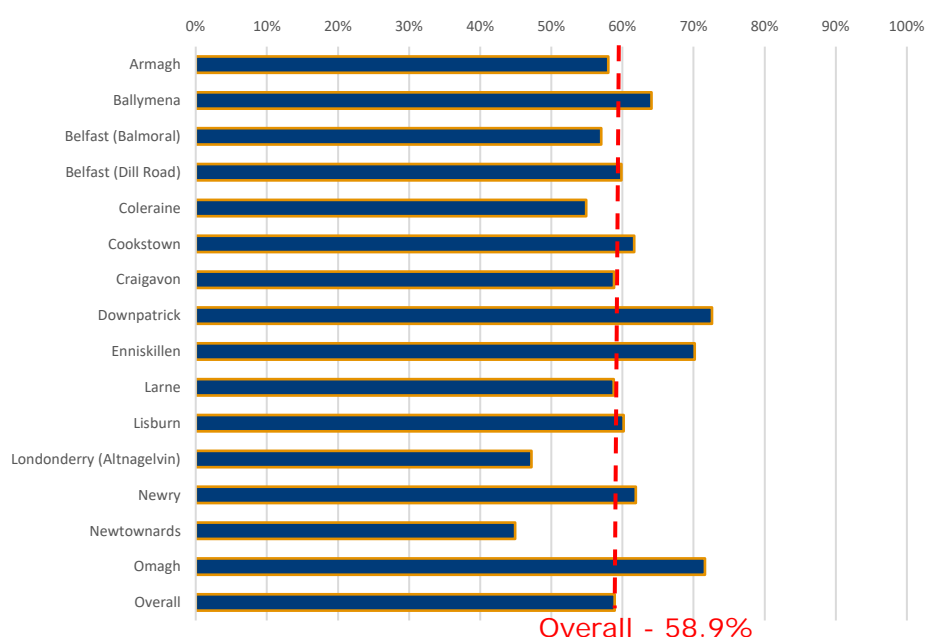
Figure 4.2: Driving Tests – Failed to Attend



## Driving Tests by Test Centre

The number of driving tests conducted for private cars during quarter four 2021-22 ranged from a high of 1,524 at Newtownards to a minimum of 595 at Downpatrick. By test centre and using a 4-quarter rolling average, the pass rates for private cars ranged from 47.2% in Newtownards to 72.6% in Downpatrick. 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, Q4 (Rolling 4-quarter Averages)





## Driving Test Pass-Rates

For January to March 2022, the pass-rate for private-car driving tests was 56.1%, taking it back to comparable levels pre-covid in 2019-20 when the quarter four pass rate was 55.0%.

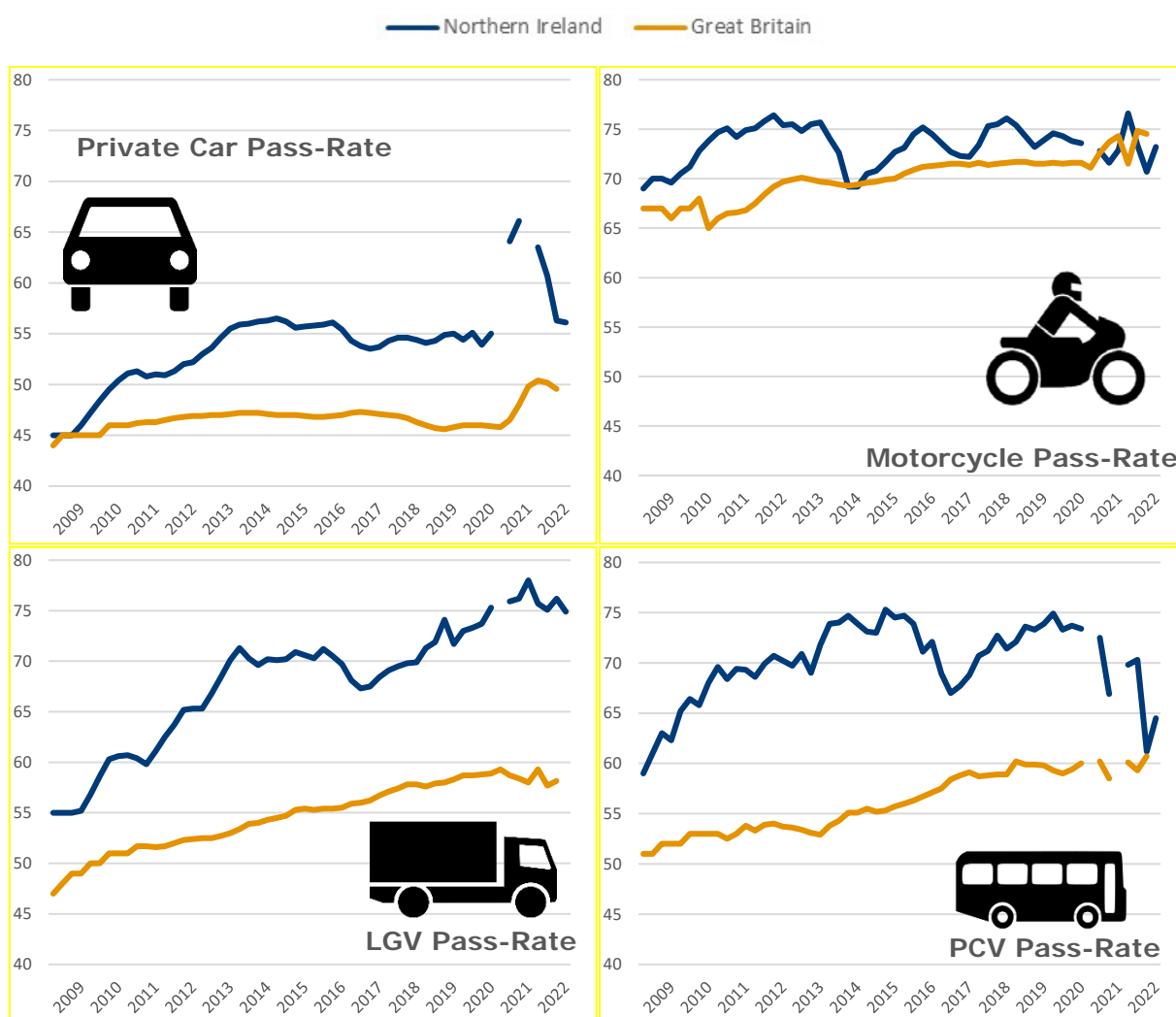
Prior to the pandemic, pass-rates for all categories of vehicle remained broadly unchanged over the five years up to the onset of Covid restrictions in 2020. Although pass-rates for private cars reached a high of 66% in quarter three of 2020-21, pass rates for this category have been trending downwards since then and returned to pre-covid levels in both quarter three and four of 2021-22. The spike in pass rates for private cars seems to have been a temporary effect related to the pandemic. (table 4.5)

Based on a rolling 4-quarter average, the pass-rate for private-car driver testing dropped from 64.2% in quarter one to 58.9% in quarter four of 2021-22, falling back to pre-covid pass-rates of 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 higher than the equivalent pass-rates in Great Britain, except for Motor Cycles, which are similar to those in GB. (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)



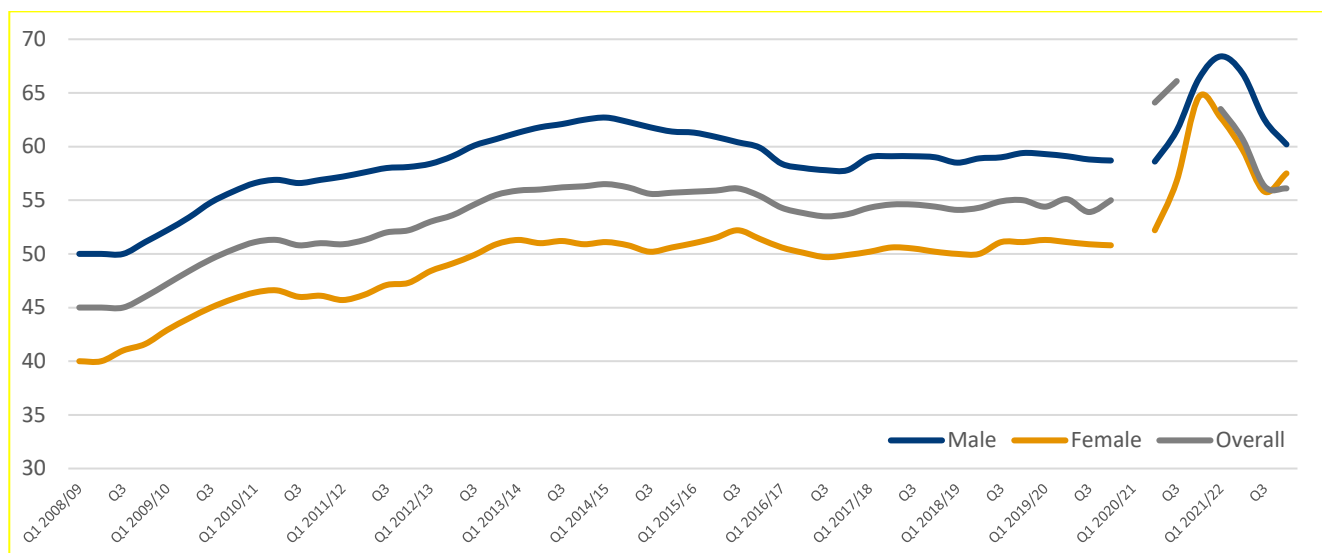
## Driving Test Pass-Rates by Gender

Historically to pre-pandemic years a clear 'gender-gap' is apparent in test pass-rates, using a four-quarter rolling average, albeit one that narrowed considerably during 2020 and has remained like this into the fourth quarter of 2021-22 (table 4.10 & figure 4.5).

Over the last twelve months, males (60.2%) had an almost three percentage-point higher pass-rate compared to females (57.5%) 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. It remains too soon to conclude if this narrowing of the gender gap is indicative of a change in the under-lying trend or a temporary effect of the pandemic.

Most test centres offering private-car driving tests also showed this gender gap disparity, to varying degrees. However, some test centres continue to show a gender-gap in favour of females (table 4.7c).

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 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 66,120 ordinary licensing transactions during January to March 2022, 277,510 in 2021-22, which was 15% above that in 2019-20 (241,315) (figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1: Driver Licensing Transactions

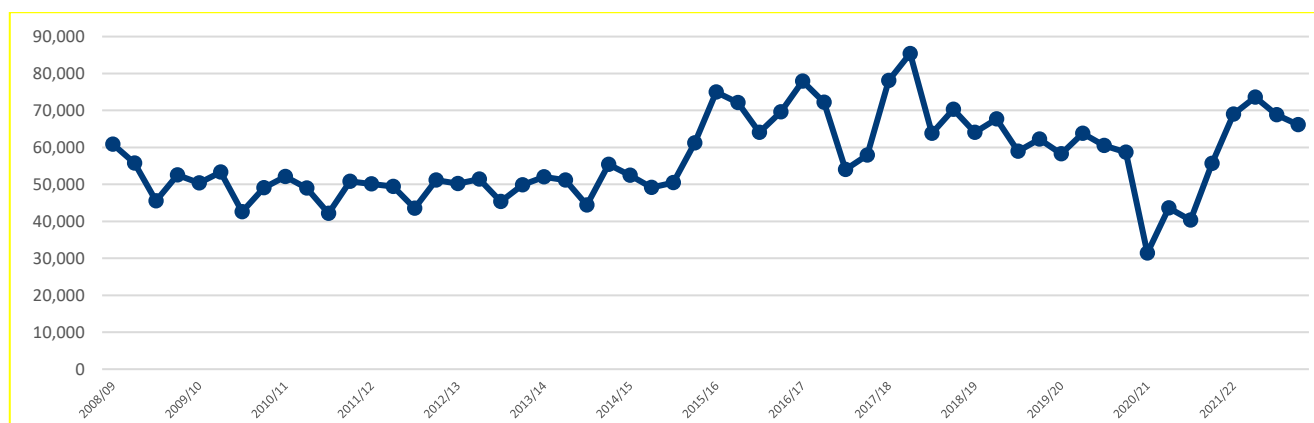
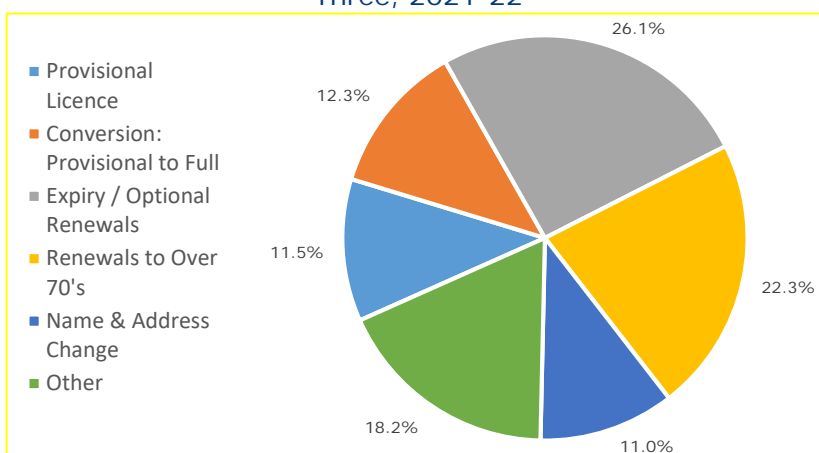


Figure 5.2: Driver License Transactions by Type, Quarter Three, 2021-22

The number of ordinary first licences ('provisional licences') issued in quarter four was just over 7,620, the highest since 2008-09. (table 5.1).



In quarter four, DVA carried out just over 5,010 vocational licensing transactions, the highest for quarter four since 2008-09. (table 5.2). In 'Other' licensing activity, DVA recorded over 22,370 transactions, the highest quarter four volume since 2017-18. (table 5.3).

Driver Licence Stock

At the 31 March 2022, there were just over 1,131,290 full and eligible licence holders with private-cars/light vans entitlement, an increase of 0.6% compared with the previous quarterly total (1,124,800) (table 5.9 and figure 5.4). This is another quarterly increase and reflects the continuing upward trend in driving tests conducted.

The number of people aged 17 and over holding, a provisional licence for private-cars / light vans has decreased by 0.8% from 111,490 to 110,630. 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 over 20.2% (228,740) of the driver licence stock.

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

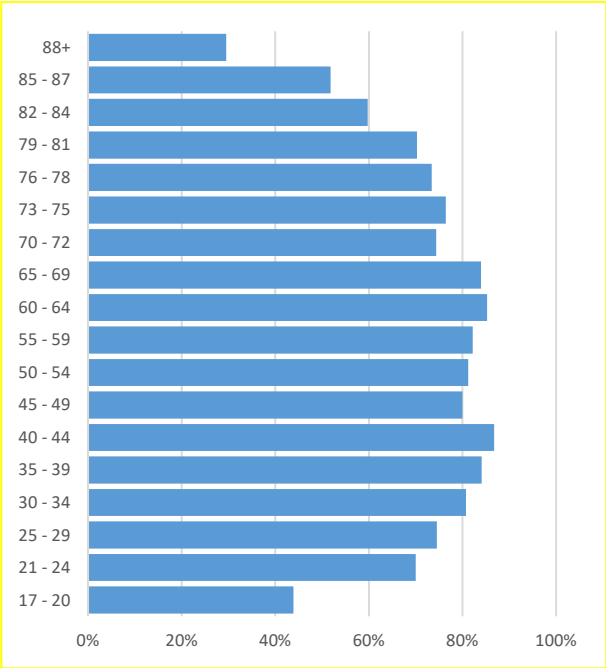


Figure 5.4: Full Car Licence Holders in Northern Ireland

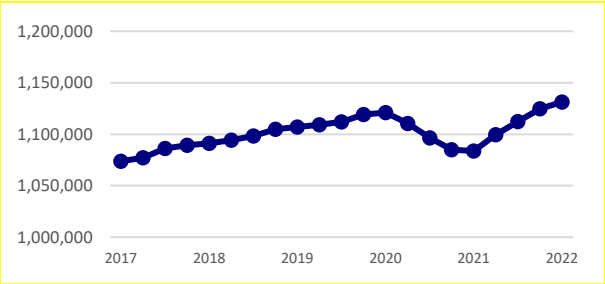


Figure 5.5: Proportion of Population with a Full Car Licence – by Gender



An estimated 74.3% 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 Estimates<sup>6</sup> (table 5.8). This is small percentage point increase on the previous quarter (73.9%). For males, the estimated figure was 77%, six percentage-points higher than 73% for females.

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

## **6** Road Transport Licensing

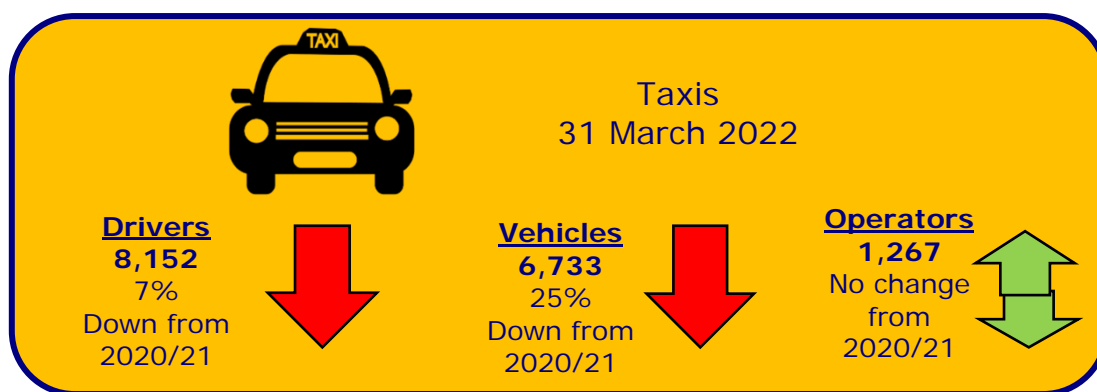
The Passenger Transport Licensing division in DVA is responsible for issuing (and where appropriate, withdrawing) licences in respect of taxi drivers and bus operators. Goods licensing is the responsibility of the Transport Regulation Unit in DfI.

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 were renewed automatically 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 website<sup>7</sup>.

### **Taxi Licensing**



The DVA issued 1,794 taxi vehicle licenses during March to January 2022, compared to 1,837 the previous quarter. The recent drop in taxi licenses issued related to the advance renewal of expiring licences during previous quarters. The majority of these were 12-month exemption certificates rather than normal licenses (table 6.1).

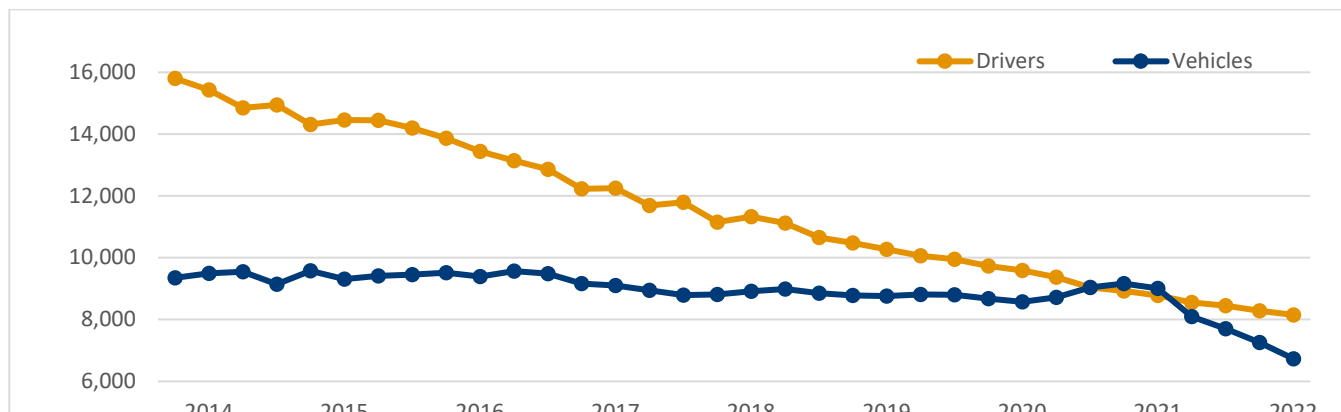
Between January and March 2022, 415 taxi driver licences were issued, a small drop from quarter three (421), and lower relative to taxi driver licenses issued pre-COVID-19 in 2019-20.

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

At the end of March 2022, there were 6,733 licensed taxi vehicles, the lowest number since our series began in 2013 (table 6.2 and figure 6.1). The number of licensed taxi drivers has fallen for another quarter by 137 (1.6%) to 8,152 the lowest in our series from 2013.

The 6,733 taxi vehicles were affiliated to 1,267 licensed taxi operators, of which almost 87% (1,098) were small operators, i.e. can only list up to two taxis on the licence (table 6.2).

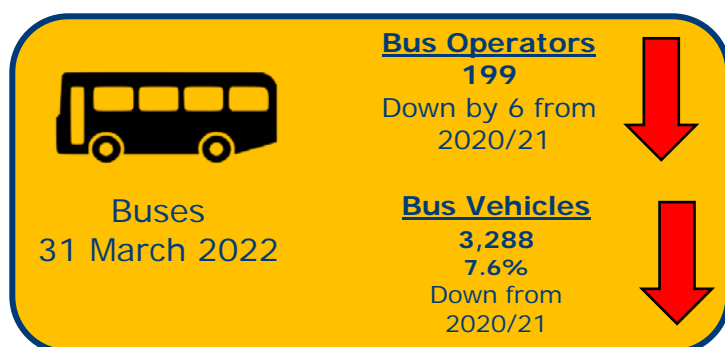
Figure 6.1: Licensed Taxi Driver and Vehicle Volumes



## Bus Licensing

The number of licensed buses at the end of March 2022 was 3,288 down 46 (1.3%) on the previous quarter (3,334) (table 6.3).

The DVA issued 901 bus vehicle licenses compared with 851 in the previous quarter (table 6.1).



At the end of March 2022, there were 199 bus operators, almost the same as the previous quarter (197). (table 6.3).

During January to March 2022, the DVA processed 36 bus operator licences, compared with 40 in quarter three.

## Goods Licensing

The number of goods vehicle operator licences in force at the end of March 2022 was 5,587, an increase of 131 (2.4%) on same quarter last year (2021). The number of standard international licences continues to increase to 1,953 at the end of this quarter and the highest in our series from 2012-13. Associated to these 5,587 goods operators, were 22,455 heavy goods vehicles, an increase of 483 (2.1%) goods vehicles compared with the same period in 2020/21 (21,972).



## 7 Enforcement & Compliance

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

COVID-19 presented a number of challenges for enforcement activity. The directorate 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 771 vehicles; of these, the largest volume was heavy goods vehicles (including trailers), accounting for 215 (28%) of all vehicles checked. Enforcement checks in this quarter were higher than last quarter at 480.

Vehicle checks in 2021-22, at 2,714 were 54% relative to 2019-20 (5,060). (table 7.1).

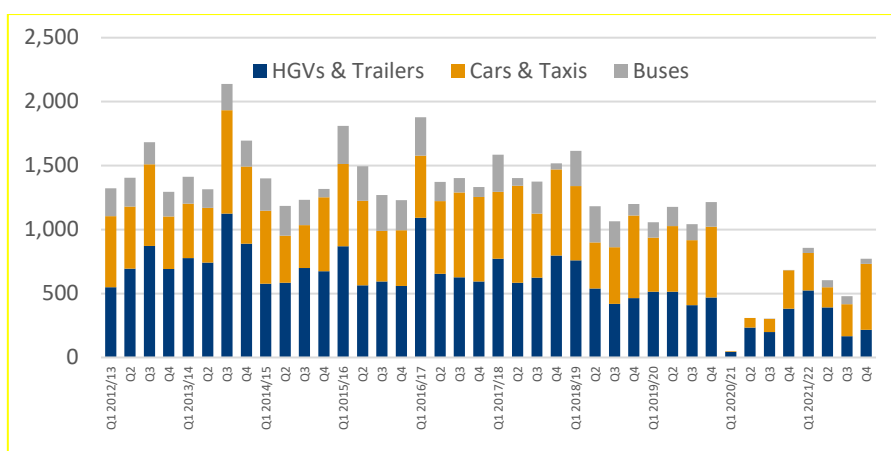
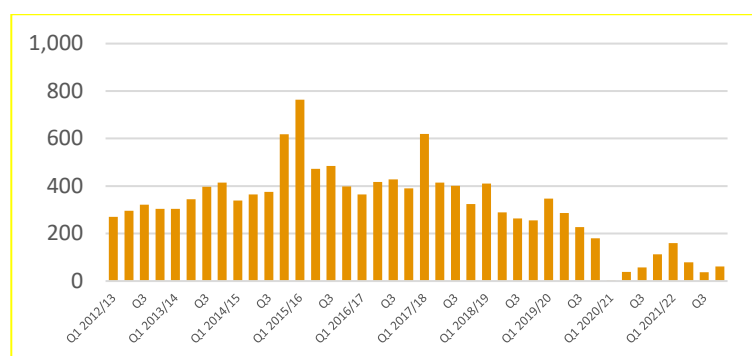


Figure 7.2: Fixed Penalties Issued



DVA enforcement officers issued 61 fixed penalty notices during this quarter. Annually fixed penalties in 2021-22 at 337 were well below those issued in 2019-20 (2,041) (table 7.2 and figure 7.2).

The total value of fixed penalties issued in 2021-22 was £35,280.

Figure 7.3: Convictions

There were 224 successful convictions during quarter four of 2021-22. Annually, convictions stood at 429 in 2021-22, compared with 173 in 2019-20. (table 7.2 and figure 7.3).

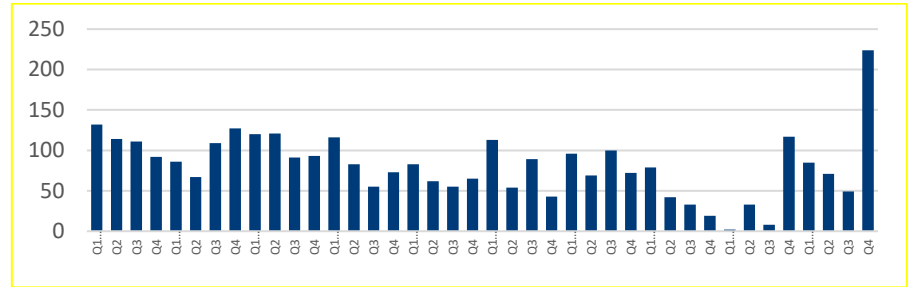
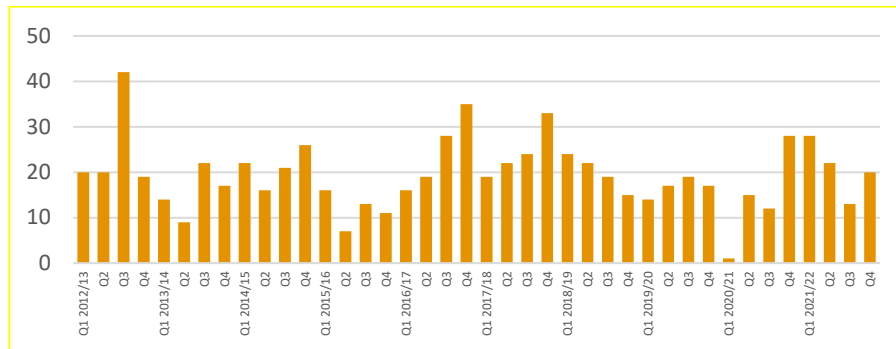


Figure 7.4: Joint or Cross-Border Operations



During quarter four enforcement teams carried out 13 joint operations with the PSNI, and 62 in 2021-22 (table 7.3 and figure 7.4). There were 7 cross border operations this quarter in conjunction with the Road Safety Authority in Ireland, along with PSNI and An Garda Síochána, 21 in total for 2021-22.

There were 36 spot checks on School Buses carried out by Enforcement Officers throughout the region in quarter four, 111 in total for 2021-22 (table 7.4 and figure 7.5).

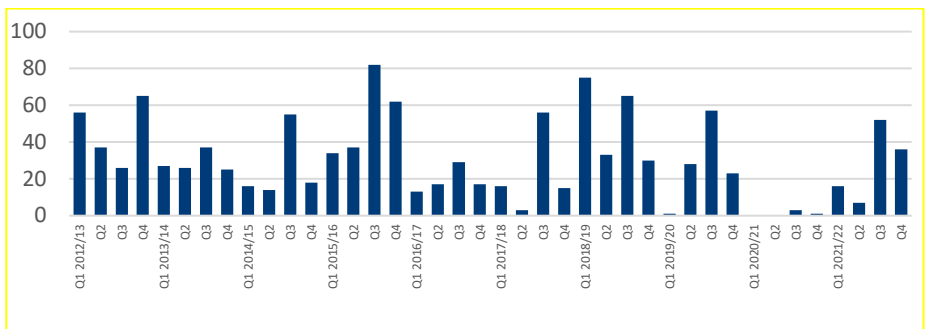


Figure 7.5: School Bus Checks



## **DVA Target Monitoring**

For 2020-21, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the DVA 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.

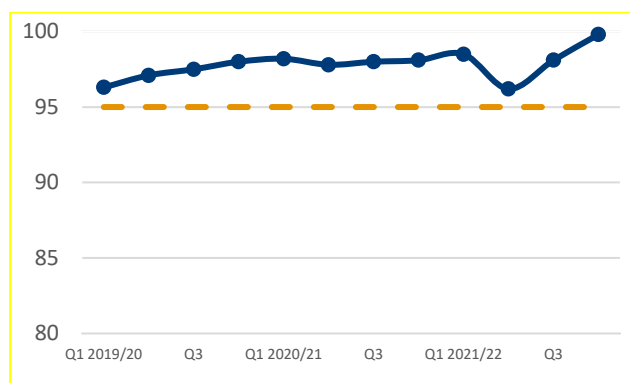
### Driver Licensing

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%.

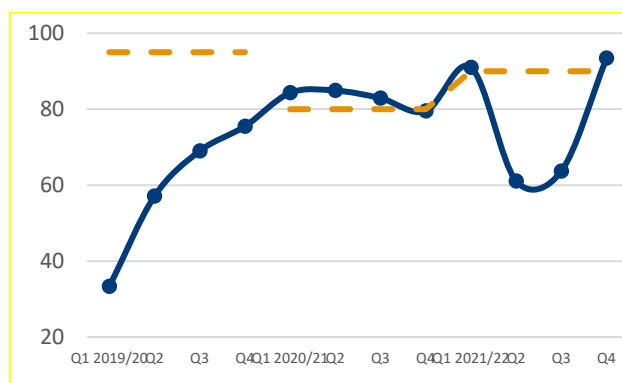
Paper application performance was more variable compared to online applications, and was below the agency target of 90% in quarters two (61.1%) and three (63.7%); quarter one performance was above target at 91.0% and performance finished on a high of 93.4% in quarter four. Paper applications performance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

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

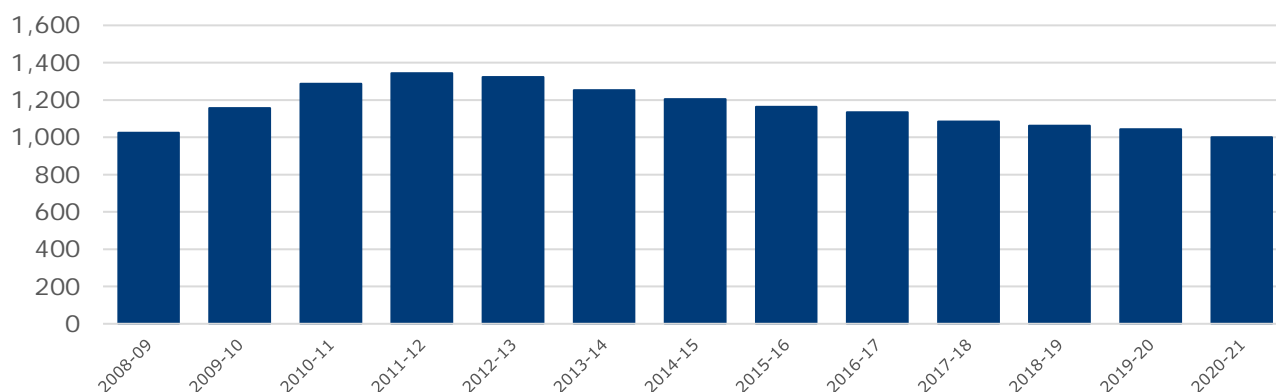
**Please note that data for approved driving and motorcycle instructors for 2021-22 was not validated in time to be released with this report. This section will be updated at the earliest opportunity. Check our website for details.**

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

### Volumes

As of 31 March 2021, there were 1,001 Approved Driving Instructors registered in Northern Ireland, representing a 4.0% reduction on the number registered a year ago. This is the ninth successive fall in numbers, from the peak of 1,344 registered in 2011-12. Of these Driving Instructors, 84% were male: a proportion that is broadly unchanged over the past ten years. There were 8 new registrants this year, a fall of 56% on last year, and the smallest number recorded in our time series. Falling numbers taking the driving test (table 4.3) from 2008-09 to 2011-12, combined with the economic climate, increasing motoring costs, and demographic changes may all have contributed to a lower demand for instructors.

Figure 9.1: Approved Driving Instructors in Northern Ireland



The number of Approved Motorcycle Instructors remains substantially lower, with 48 registered as of 31 March 2021, 19% reduced from the peak in 2012-13.

### Test Volumes & Pass-Rates

Due to the COVID-19 restrictions throughout the financial year, only 10 candidates were able to undertake the Theory & Hazard Perception test with none able to take either the Driving Ability or Instructional Ability test.

## 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.

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