

# DfI Driver, Vehicle, Operator, and Enforcement Statistics

## Quarter One: April to June 2022

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## Key Findings

- During quarter one of 2022/23, the DVA delivered 282,200 vehicle tests (full tests and retests). This is almost 2% (4,823) higher than the previous quarter (277,377) and just over 61% (107,272) above the number of vehicle tests delivered in the same quarter in 2021/22 (174,928).
- The number of full vehicle tests delivered in quarter one was 240,188, which is almost 71% (99,563) above the number of full tests conducted in the first quarter of 2021/22 (140,625).
- Just over 11,210 vehicles failed to attend for a booked vehicle test during quarter one. This equates to 4% of all conducted tests during this period.
- From April to June 2022/23 the DVA delivered 23,053 theory tests, the highest quarterly volume in our series going back to 2012/13.
- In quarter one of 2022/23, the DVA conducted 18,059 driving tests, the highest number of practical driving tests conducted in a single quarter since 2009/10, and 34% (4,610) above the equivalent quarter in 2021/22.
- Driver licensing online performance in the first two quarters of 2022/23, from April to June, and July to September, remained above the target level of 95%, at 99.7% and 99.2% respectively.
- Progress made during the last quarter of 2021/22 in processing driver licensing paper applications has continued into the first two quarters of 2022/23, with performance above the target level of 90% for both quarters, at 94.3% and 96.0% respectively.
- In the first quarter of 2022/23, the DVA were active across the full range of enforcement activities, with 544 vehicles checked, 37 fixed penalty notices issued totalling £6,730, 2 joint operations with PSNI, 7 cross border operations with An Garda Síochána, and 7 spot checks on school buses carried out. There were 38 successful convictions this quarter.
- The proportion of newly registered alternative-fuel cars has increased substantially over the last two years, from 15.3% in quarter one of 2020/21 to its current high of 35.0% in the equivalent quarter in 2022/23. Over this same period, the proportion of new diesel cars has continued to decline, from 27.5% to 13.9%. This is the seventh quarter in a row that alternative-fuel cars have out-sold diesel cars. However, the latest quarterly figures suggest that the uptake in alternate fuel new cars may be slowing down.

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## **Introduction**

This is the thirty first 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 2022/23. This covers the period from 1 April 2022 to 30 June 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.

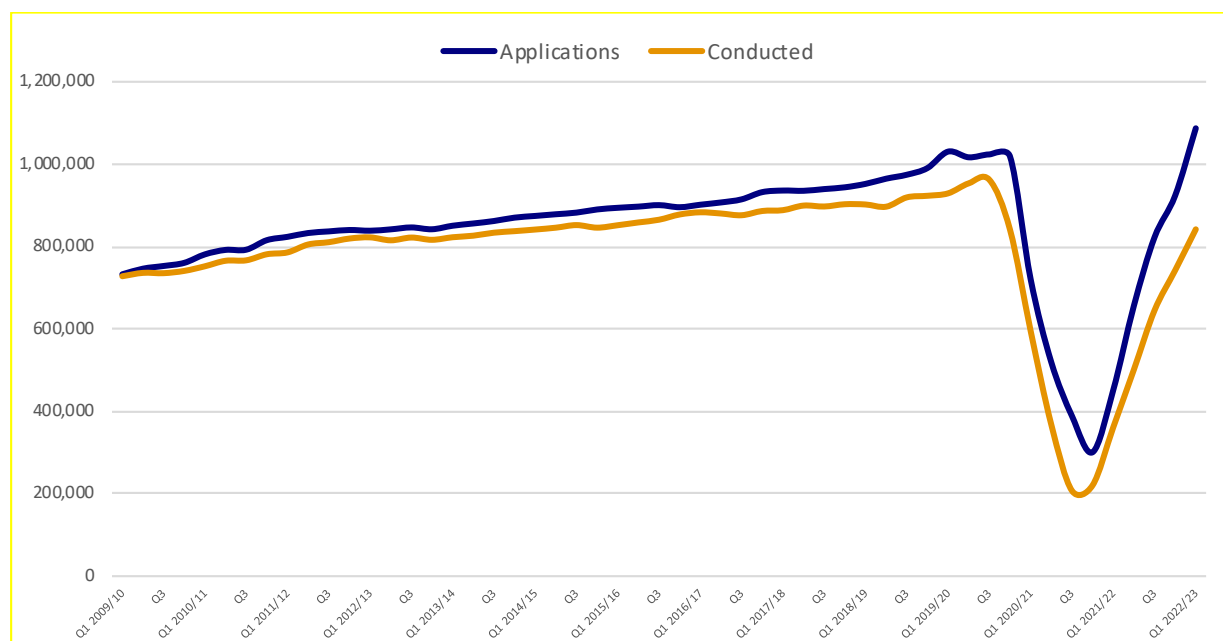
For the latest news and updates, please visit the Motoring page on the NIDirect website<sup>2</sup>.

## Vehicle Test Applications

From April to June 2022, the DVA received just over 356,320 applications for vehicle tests, 5% (18,471) higher the previous quarter (337,850) (table 1.3). Figure 1.1 details trend in the rolling 4 quarterly count for full vehicle test applications and vehicle tests conducted, with tests conducted gradually trending back to the levels being achieved prior to the pandemic.

The majority (88%) of vehicle test applications were full tests rather than re-tests (12%), and private cars (83%) were the most common application test-category.

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



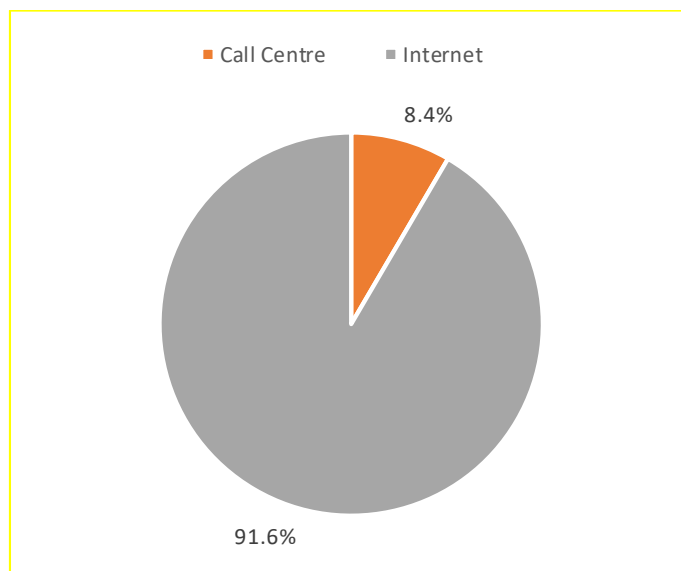
Note that figures for vehicle test applications include taximeter tests and those for vehicle tests conducted do not.

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

## Booking Method

During quarter one of 2022/23 all vehicle test bookings were made via the DVA Internet booking facility or using the DVA Call Centre. The most popular booking method was online internet booking which received almost 92% of all vehicle applications made during this quarter, with 8.4% made by Call Centres. This is the third quarter in a row that online vehicle test bookings have exceeded 90% (figure 1.2 and table 1.4) of all vehicle test bookings.

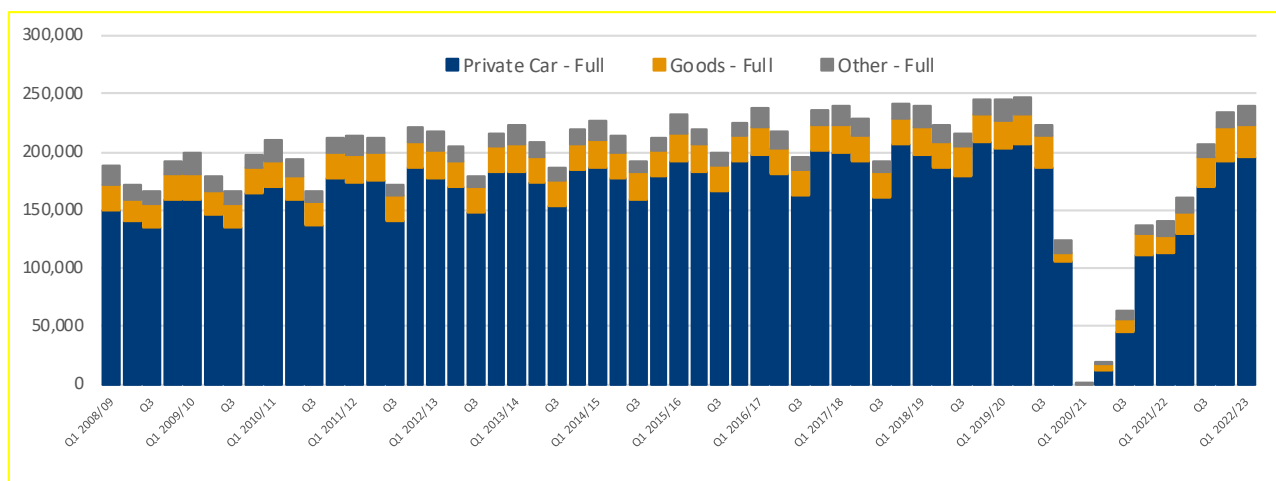
Figure 1.2: Vehicle Test Applications by Booking Method.



## Vehicle Tests Conducted

During quarter one of 2022/23, the DVA conducted 282,200 vehicle tests (full tests and retests). This is almost 2% (4,823) higher than the previous quarter (277,377) and just over 61% (107,272) above the number of tests conducted in the same quarter in 2021/22 (174,928). This is also the fifth quarter in a row that vehicle tests conducted have increased since quarter four of 2020/21 (table 1.7). As usual, the majority of tests conducted (85%) were full tests (240,188), of which 81% were for private-cars (195,565). The number of full tests conducted has increased every quarter for the last five quarters and is almost 71% (99,563) above the number of full tests conducted in the first quarter of 2021/22 (140,625) (table 1.5 and figure 1.3).

Figure 1.3: Full Vehicle Tests Conducted



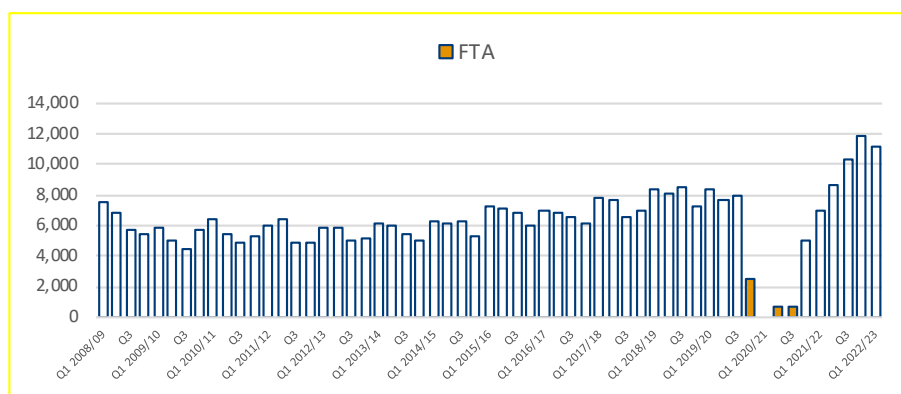
The steady increase in vehicle test applications seen in the trend series prior to the COVID-19 pandemic can, in the main, be explained by the increasing number of licensed cars in Northern Ireland, which has risen by 8.7% over the past five years (see table 2.13) to 2020-21. In addition, owners seem 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 Attends

Just over 11,210 vehicles failed to attend for a booked vehicle test during quarter one (table 1.10 and figure 1.4). This equates to 4% 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

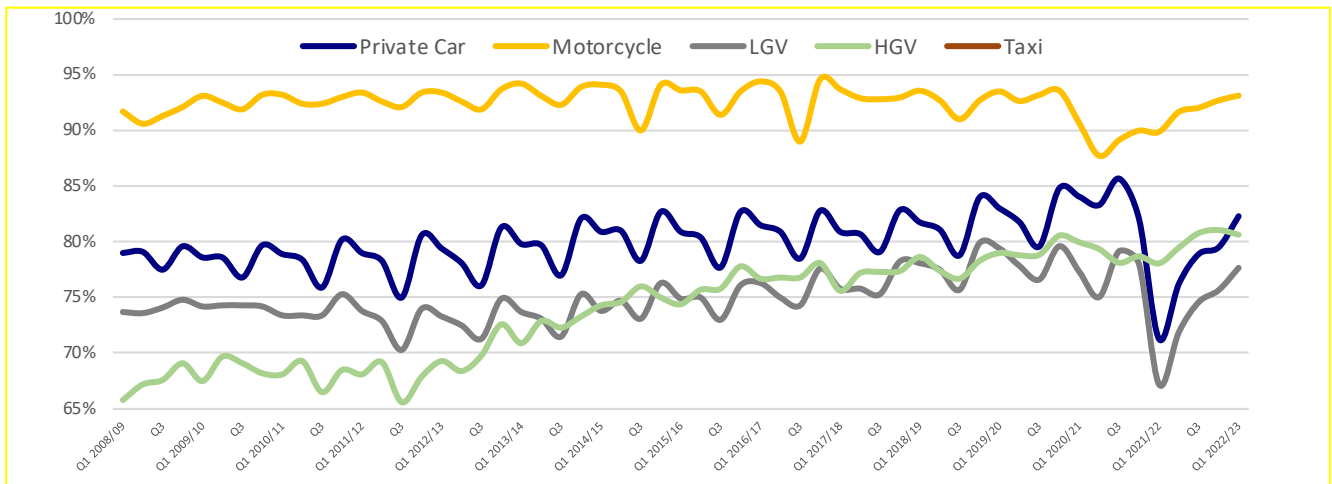
For this the first quarter of 2022/23, the overall pass-rate for full tests was 82.3% almost three percentage points higher than the last quarter of 2021/22 (79.6%) and continues the upward trend in pass-rates during 2021-22. (Table 1.11 and figure 1.5). The pandemic era drop in vehicle test pass-rates would suggest that vehicle owners did not maintain their vehicles during periods of test exemption, though pass rates in 2021-22 and in the first quarter of 2022/23 seem to be trending back to pre-pandemic 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 this quarter was 94.1% compared with 93.6% the previous quarter and very similar to 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 one 2022/23 was Newtownards, having conducted just over 25,280 full tests, whilst Omagh which is a smaller centre conducted just over 7,450 full tests for private cars during the same period. (table 1.14).

Whilst the overall pass-rate for private-car full tests during quarter one increased to 82.3% from 79.5% in the previous quarter, pass rates by test centre ranged from a high of 88.0% in Belfast (Balmoral) to a low of 78.2% in Larne (table 1.14). This is the eighth 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

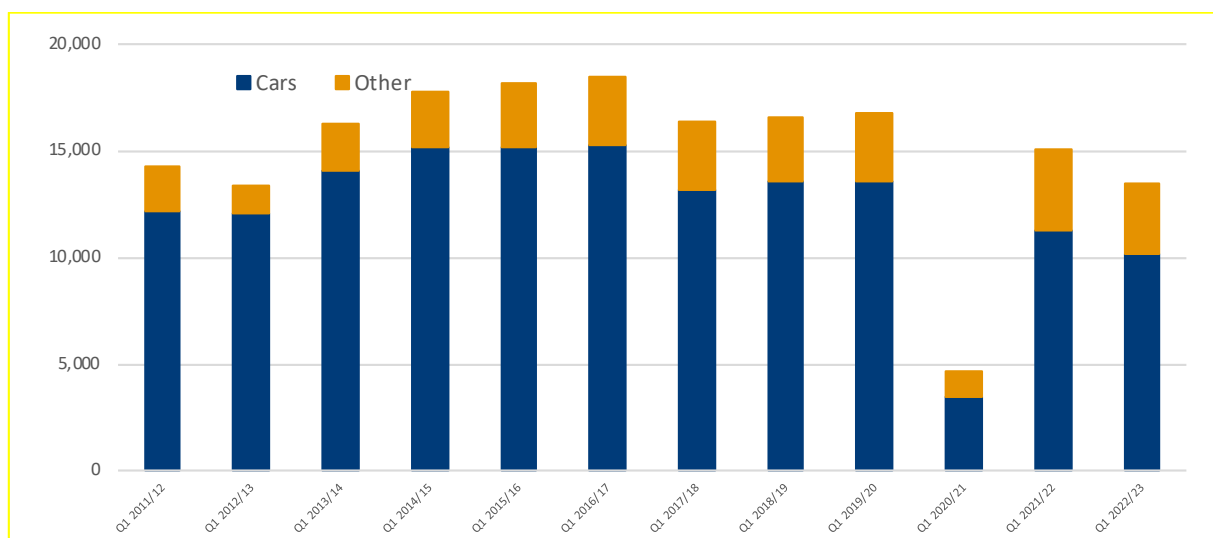
During April to June 2022, the DVLA registered 13,451 new vehicles to Northern Ireland, 7% (1,023) less than the previous quarter (14,474) (table 2.1) (figure 2.1). Please note that new vehicle registrations excludes vehicles that had already been registered with the DVLA but whose ownership transferred to a postal address in Northern Ireland during this quarter. Taking these into account the total number of first time registrations in quarter one was 13,560.

Private cars accounted for 10,204 (75.8%) of all new first time registrations the lowest on record since 2009/10-excluding quarter one of 2020/21.

The noticeable drop in new vehicle registrations in quarter one of 2020/21 is directly related to the pandemic and is not reflective of changes in customer buying behaviour prior to or post the Covid period when many vehicle dealerships were either closed or operating at reduced capacity to ensure social distancing.

For the 2021/22 financial year, there were 38,464 new private car registrations in Northern Ireland, 24.2% lower than in 2018/19 (50,799) and the lowest annual total in our series (table 2.1),

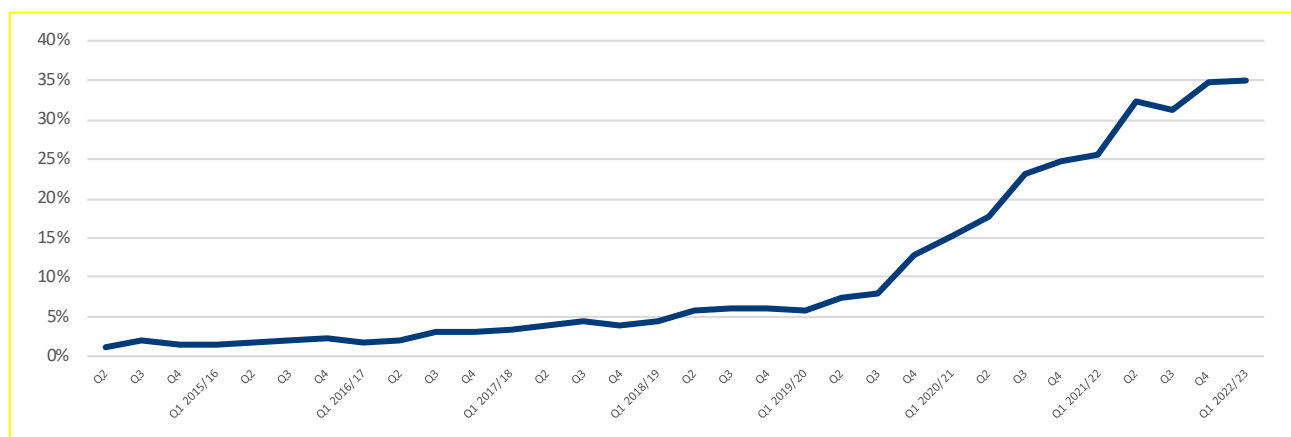
Figure 2.1: New Vehicle Registrations



The top makes for cars registered for the first time in quarter one were Ford at 12% (1,200), Hyundai at 8.5% (869), Volkswagen at 8.0% (819) and Toyota at 7.5% (769) (table 2.3).

Grey was again the most popular colour for new cars, accounting for 24.1% of all new registrations; Blue (18.7%), White (18.3%), Black (15.1%), and Red (11.4%) were the next most popular colours.

Figure 2.2: Proportion of New Car Registrations using Alternative Fuels



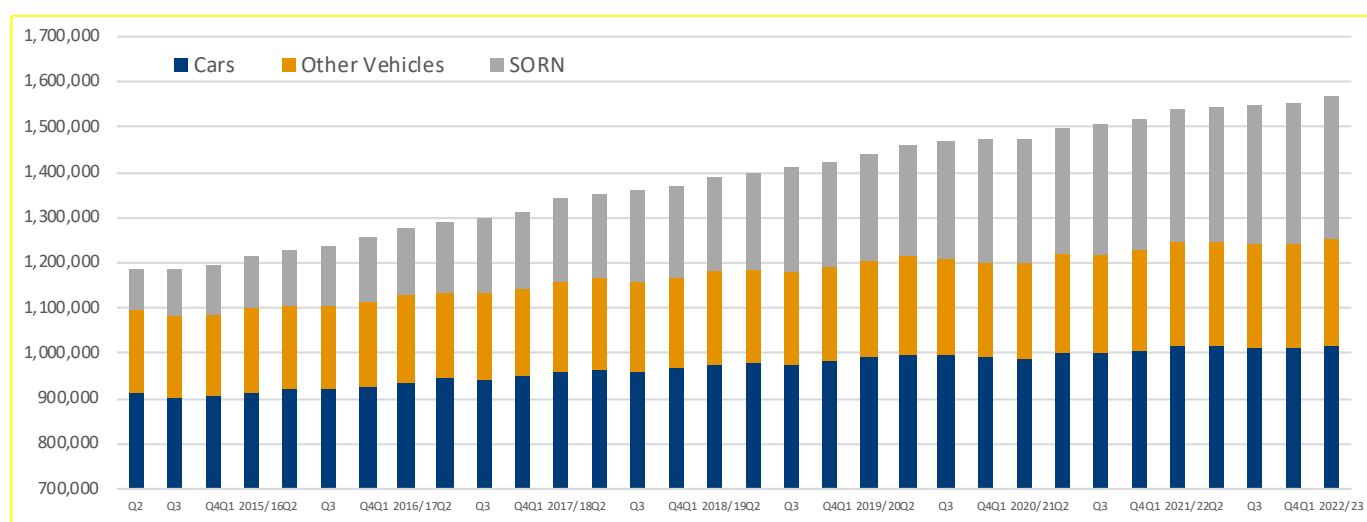
The proportion of newly registered alternative-fuel<sup>3</sup> cars has increased substantially over the last two years, from 15.3% in quarter one of 2020/21 to its current high of 35.0% in the equivalent period in 2022/23. Over this same period, the proportion of new diesel cars has continued to decline, from 27.5% to 13.9%. This is the seventh quarter in a row from quarter two of 2020/21 that alternative-fuel cars have out-sold diesel cars. However, the latest quarterly figures suggest that the uptake in alternate fuel new cars may be slowing down.

### Licensed Vehicles

Tat the end of June 2022, there were just under 1,253,600 licensed vehicles (excluding SORNeD vehicles) in Northern Ireland, a 0.8% increase from the previous quarter (1,242,650), which continues the upward trend from quarter two of 2020-21. As with previous quarters the majority of licensed vehicles (81.1%) were private cars (1,017,066) (table 2.13).

Over 312,770 vehicles had a SORN at the end of June 2022, representing 20% 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



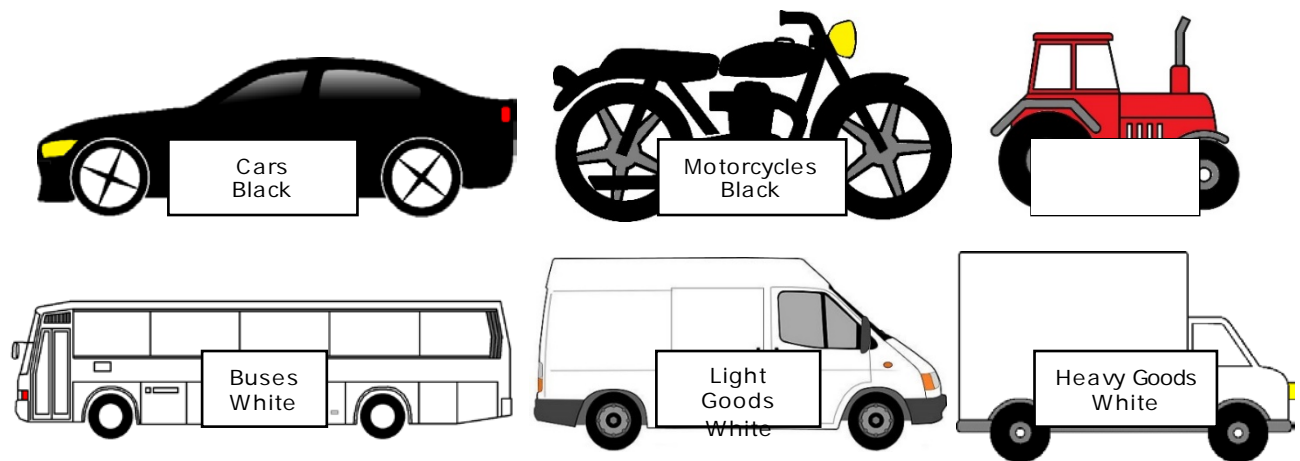
<sup>3</sup> Alternative-fuel vehicles are those able to use a range of alternatives to purely petrol or diesel fuel, including gas, electricity, or a combination such as gas bi-fuel and hybrid-electric.

As of 30 June 2022, the average age of a licensed vehicle in Northern Ireland was 9.38 years a small increase from the previous quarter (9.25 years).

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

- Cars – 8.9 years
- Motorcycles – 14.1 years
- Light Goods – 8.7 years
- Heavy Goods – 10.1 years
- Buses – 9.7 years
- Agricultural – 21.4 years
- Other – 10.9 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 some theory-testing data from 2021-22 onwards is provisional and pass rates are only partially complete for this period. This section will be fully 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

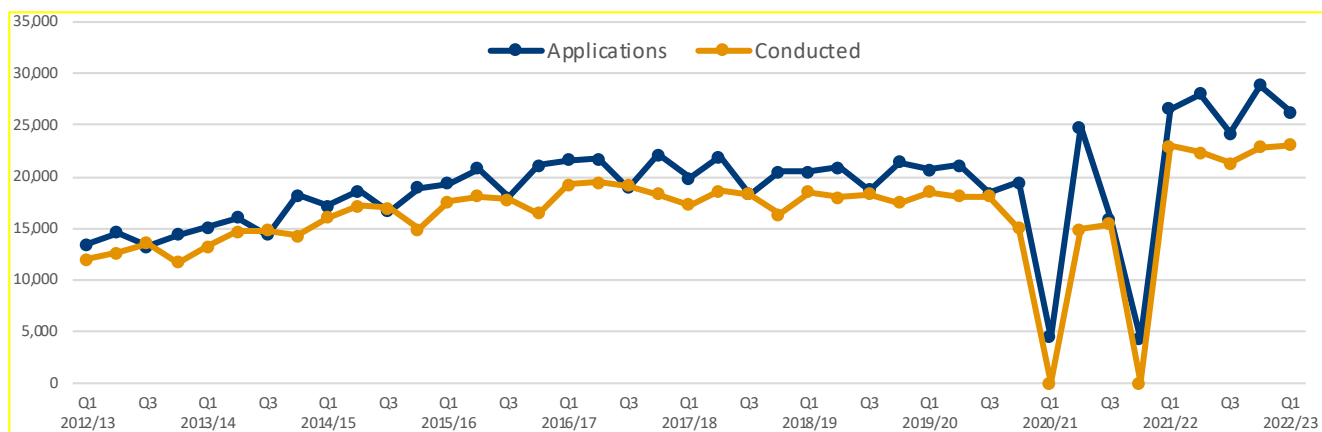
From April to June 2022/23 the DVA delivered 23,053 theory tests, the highest quarterly volume in our series going back to 20012/13 (table 3.2) (figure 3.1).

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

For quarter one of 2022/23 the DVA received 26,308 theory test applications, just under 9% (2,520) lower than for the previous quarter (table 3.1).

Private-cars account for over eight in every ten theory test applications and theory tests conducted.

Figure 3.1: Theory Test Applications and Conducted

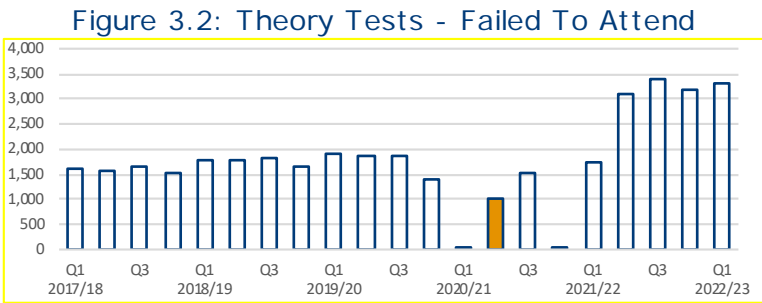


<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/driving-theory-test>

Failed To Attends

During this quarter, just over 3,316 customers failed to attend a theory test. (table 3.3 and figure 3.2).

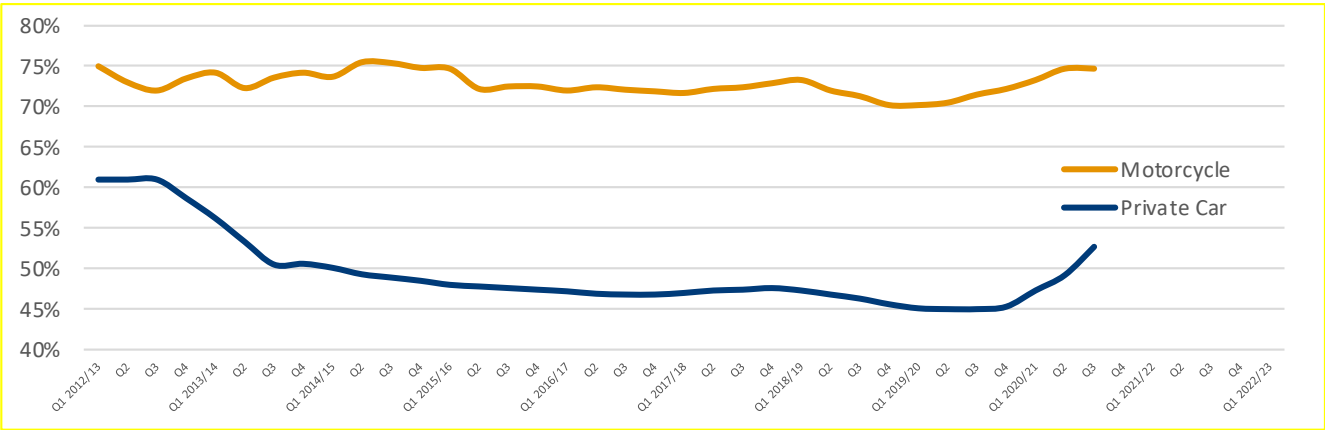
This is the second highest on record for a single quarter.



Theory Test Pass-Rates

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 the previous 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 2019/20, and the lowest annual pass-rate for four years.

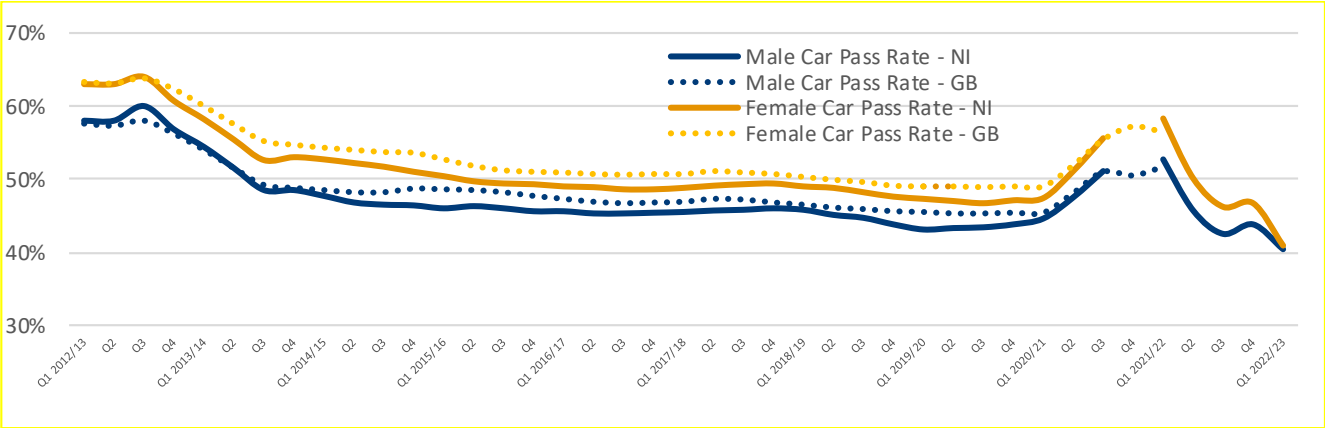
Figure 3.3: Theory Test Pass-Rates (Rolling 4-quarter Averages)



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, partial and provisional data suggests that pass-rates for both genders have decreased coming out of the pandemic period.

Provisional quarterly figures to date suggests that the trend for females and males has turned downward (figure 4.3). There is insufficient reliable data at the moment to say whether this is indicative of a permanent change in the under-lying trends or an effect of the pandemic. Both the 'gender-gap' and post-pandemic trend are similar to those seen in Great Britain (figure 3.4). Please note that it has not been possible to update figure 4.3 for GB 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. DVA are testing across all test categories.

For the latest news and updates, please visit the Practical Driving Test page on the NIDirect website<sup>5</sup>.

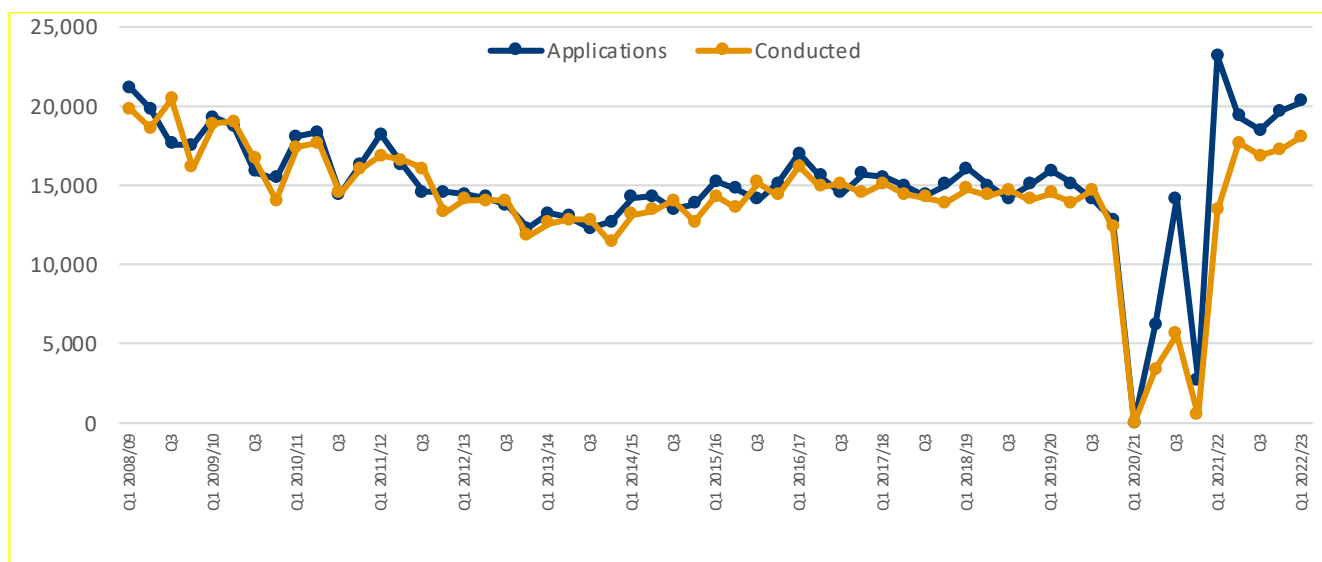
### Driving Test Applications and Tests Conducted

In quarter one of 2022/23, the DVA conducted 18,059 driving tests, the highest number of practical driving tests conducted in a single quarter since quarter two of 2009/10, and 34% (4,610) above the equivalent quarter in 2021/22 (13,449) (table 4.3).

From April to June 2022, the DVA received 20,268 applications for a driving test, 2.8% (788) higher than the previous quarter (19,710), but 12% (2,883) lower than for the same quarter in 2021/22 (23,151) (table 4.1 and figure 4.1).

Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, the trends for both test applications and tests conducted over the past five years had remained relatively steady, but post pandemic increased applications reflect higher numbers of young people presenting for a driving test.

Figure 4.1: Driving Test Applications and Conducted



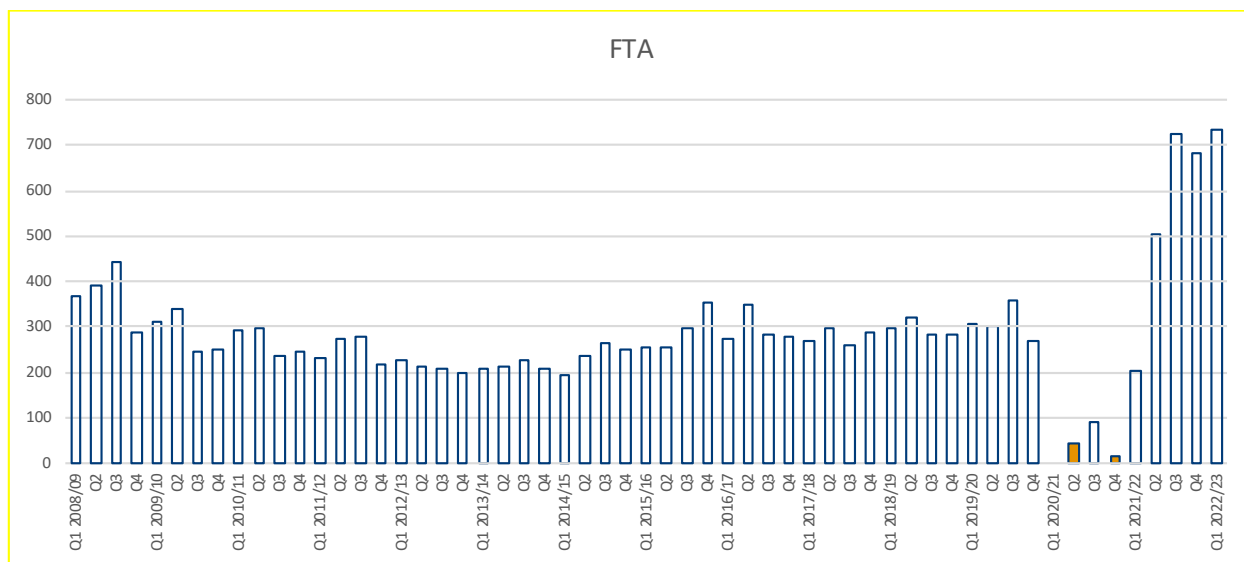
<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/book-your-practical-driving-test-online>

## Failed to Attend

In quarter one there were 736 driving test appointments for which customers failed to attend a booked practical driving test, the highest on record for a single quarter going back to 2008/09 (table 4.4 and figure 4.2). The 736 FTA in quarter one is equivalent to 4.1% of all 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.

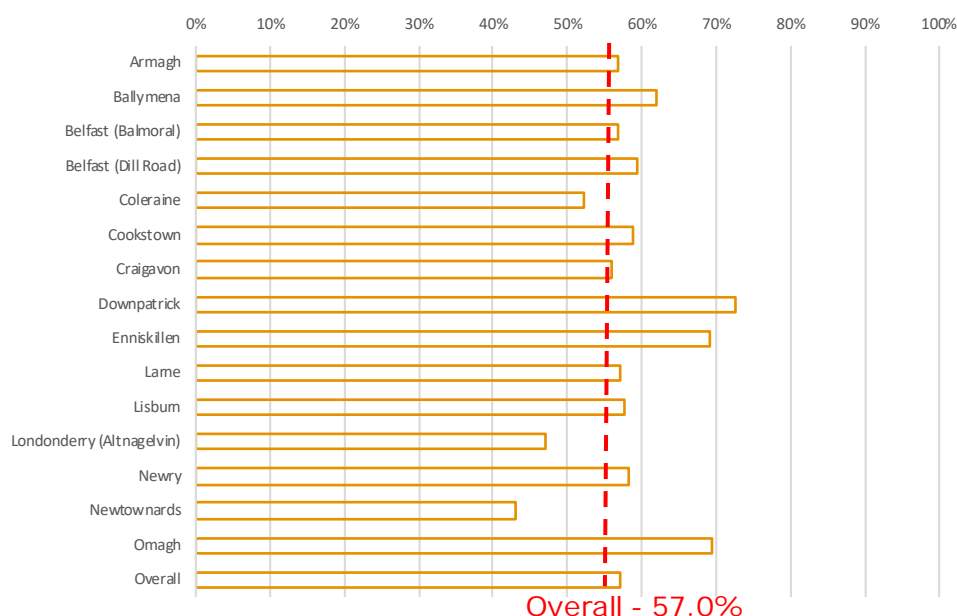
Figure 4.2: Driving Tests – Failed to Attend



## Driving Tests by Test Centre

The number of driving tests conducted for private cars during quarter one 2022/23 ranged from a high of 1,777 at Newtownards to a minimum of 492 at Enniskillen. By test centre and using a 4-quarter rolling average, the pass rates for private cars ranged from 42.8% in Newtownards to 71.6% 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 April to June, the pass-rate for private car driving tests was 54.9%, slightly lower than 56.1% for the previous quarter, and trending back to comparable rates pre-pandemic in 2019-20 when the annual pass rate was 54.6%.

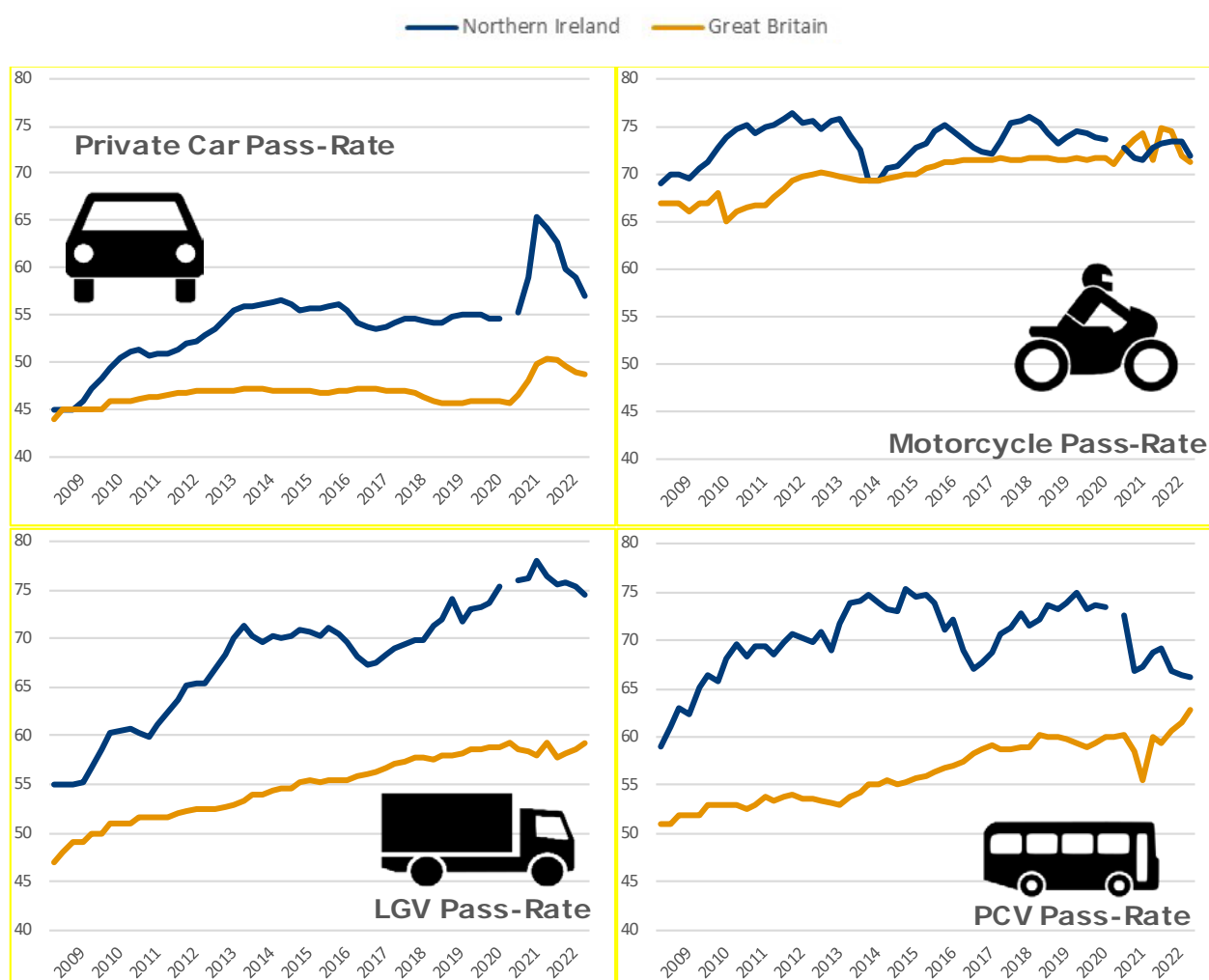
Prior to the pandemic, pass-rates for all categories of vehicle remained broadly unchanged over the five years up to the onset of Covid restrictions in 2020. Although pass-rates for private cars reached a high of 66% in quarter three of 2020-21, pass rates for this category have been trending downwards since and seem to have returned to pre-covid levels. 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 has dropped from 65.4% in quarter four of 2020/21 to 57.0% in quarter one of 2022/23, which is comparable to pre-pandemic 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 are generally higher than the equivalent pass-rates in Great Britain, except for Motor Cycles, which are similar to and sometimes lower than 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 volumes of traffic and the complexity of available road networks for driver testing.

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



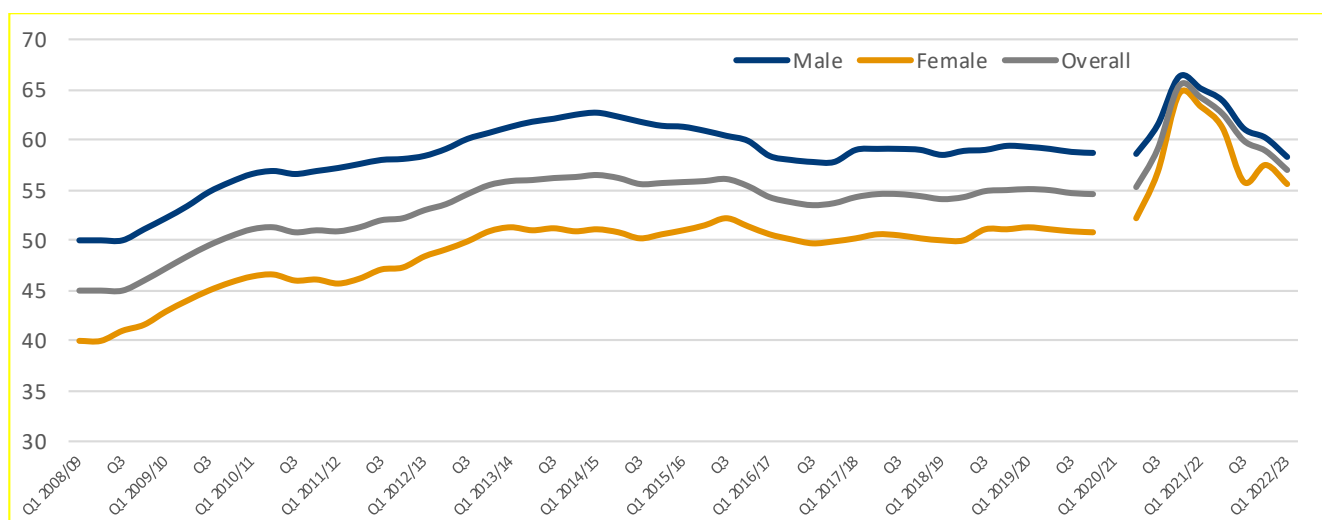
## Driving Test Pass-Rates by Gender

Historically to pre-pandemic years a clear 'gender-gap' is apparent in test pass-rates, using a four-quarter rolling average, albeit one that has narrowed considerably during 2020 and has remained lower into quarter one of 2022/23 (table 4.10 & figure 4.5).

Over the last twelve months, males (58.3%) had a three percentage-point higher pass-rate compared to females (55.6%) 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 this gap has shrunk to below half this level. This gender gap is also now substantially narrower than the 6.2 percentage-point gap present in the Great Britain statistics pre-pandemic. The gap in GB between males and females has also reduced from almost 6 percentage points in quarter 1 of 2021/22 to just over 4 percentage points in quarter one of 2022/23 (table 4.10). 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 longer temporary outworking effect of the pandemic. Without a detailed understanding of the profile of candidates presenting for testing it is difficult to contextualise why these differences in pass rates by gender and location persist in the way that they do.

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; for example based on a 4 quarter rolling average, pass-rates for private car testing for females were higher than those for males in Newry (59.3% v 57.3%) and Larne (57.2% v 56.8%) in the four quarters to the end of quarter one in 2022/23 (table 4.7b).

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 (table 4.10).

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.

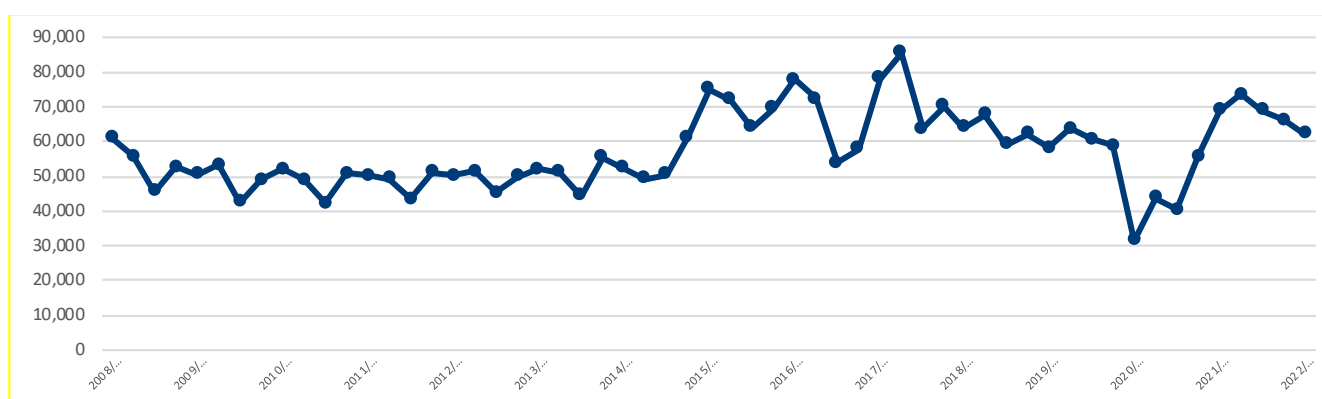
On 27 March 2020, the DVA suspended the processing of all paper renewal applications and temporarily closed down the driver licensing office. From the end of April, the DVA began processing applications from Group 2 (lorry/bus) applicants and those from front line workers. Only applications received 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 continues to process all applications it receives.

## Driver Licensing Transactions

Ordinary licensing transactions during 2021/22 totalled 277,510 the highest on record for a single year, and 15% above that in 2019-20 (241,315) (figure 5.1).

Relatively good performance was maintained going into the first quarter of 2022/23 with just over 62,170 Ordinary licensing transactions carried out during April to June, a fall almost 6% (3,949) relative to the last quarter of 2021/22 (66,123) (table 5.1).

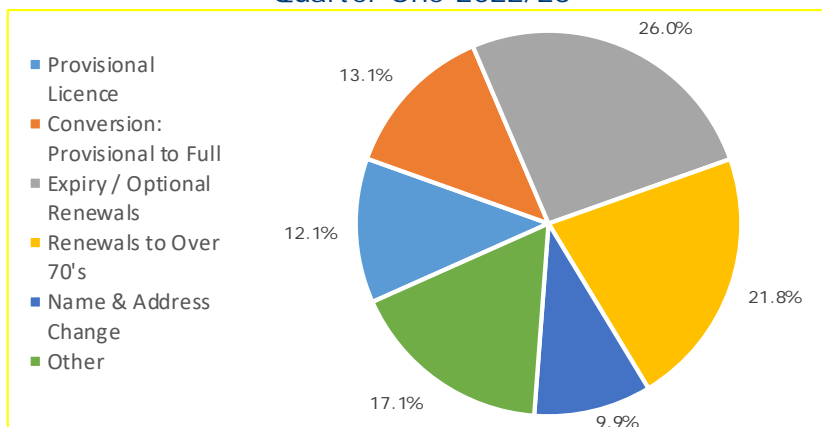
Figure 5.1: Driver Licensing Transactions



The number of Ordinary first licences ('provisional licences') issued in quarter one at just over 7,540, was the second highest on record highest since 2008-09. (table 5.1).

Expiry/Optional renewals accounted for almost 22% (16,161) of all ordinary licensing activity during quarter one. (figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2: Ordinary Driver License Transactions by Type, Quarter One 2022/23



In quarter one the DVA carried out 5,219 Vocational licensing transactions, the second highest on record since the last quarter of 2018/19 (table 5.2), and in 'Other' licensing activity DVA recorded 21,352 transactions, a drop of 4.6% (1,022) compared with the last quarter of 2022/22 (table 5.3).

## Driver Licence Stock

At the 30 June 2022, there were 1,136,411 full and eligible licence holders with private-cars/light vans entitlement, an increase of 0.4% (4,504) compared with end of March 2022 (1,131,299) (table 5.9 and figure 5.4). This continues the recent upward trend in entitlement in this category since quarter two of 2020/21 (1,086,306) (table 5.4).

The number of people aged 17 and over holding a provisional licence for private-cars / light vans has decreased by 0.8% (946) from 110,639 in the last quarter of 2021/22 to 109,639 at the end of June 2022. This continues the fall in provisional licence holders from the last quarter of 2020/21 (113,341) to date (table 5.4). Proportionally, licence holders with private car/light van entitlement aged 65 and over accounted for just over 20.2% (229,308) of the driver licence stock.

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

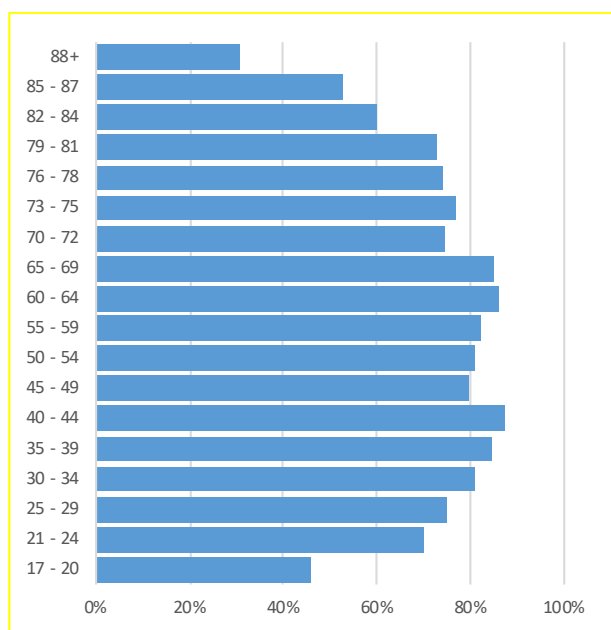


Figure 5.4: Full Car Licence Holders in Northern Ireland

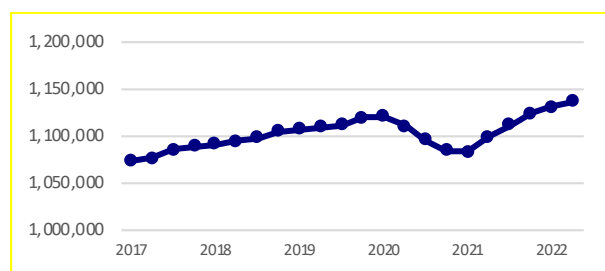
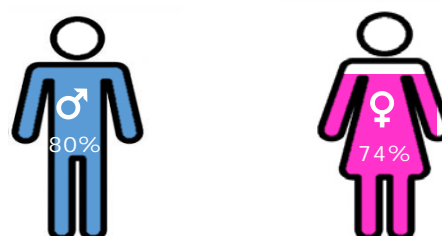


Figure 5.5: Proportion of Population with a Full Car Licence – by Gender



An estimated 74.6% 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 (74.2%).

For males, the estimated figure had increased to 80% from 77%, six percentage-points higher than 74% for females. (figure 5.5)

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

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 Department for Infrastructure.

Whilst the majority of the division continued to operate during COVID-19 restrictions, the DVA suspended for a limited period 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 continued to operate throughout the pandemic. Similarly, the DVA 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**

### **Taxi Vehicles**

During the financial year 2021/22 the DVA issued just over 7,400 taxi vehicle licenses, compared with 8,625 in 2019/20 the last 'normal' year of operation prior to the Covid pandemic.

In the first quarter of 2022/23, April to June, just over 1,620 taxi vehicle licenses were issued, compared with just over 1,790 in the last quarter of 2021/22, a drop of just over 9% (167) between the two quarters. (table 6.1).

At the end of the first quarter of 2022/23, licensed taxi vehicle stock stood at 6,828, an increase of 1.4% (95) from the previous quarter. (figure 6.1).

### **Taxi Drivers**

During the financial year 2021/22 the DVA issued almost 1,680 taxi driver licenses, compared with 2,100 in 2019/20.

In the first quarter of 2022/23, just over 370 taxi driver licenses were issued, compared with 415 in the last quarter of 2021/22, a drop of just over 9% (39) between the two quarters. (table 6.1).

At the end of June 2022, there were 8,077 licensed taxi drivers, which continues the steady downward trend since 2013 though the rate of decline has fallen this quarter compared with the previous quarter. (table 6.2 and figure 6.1 below).

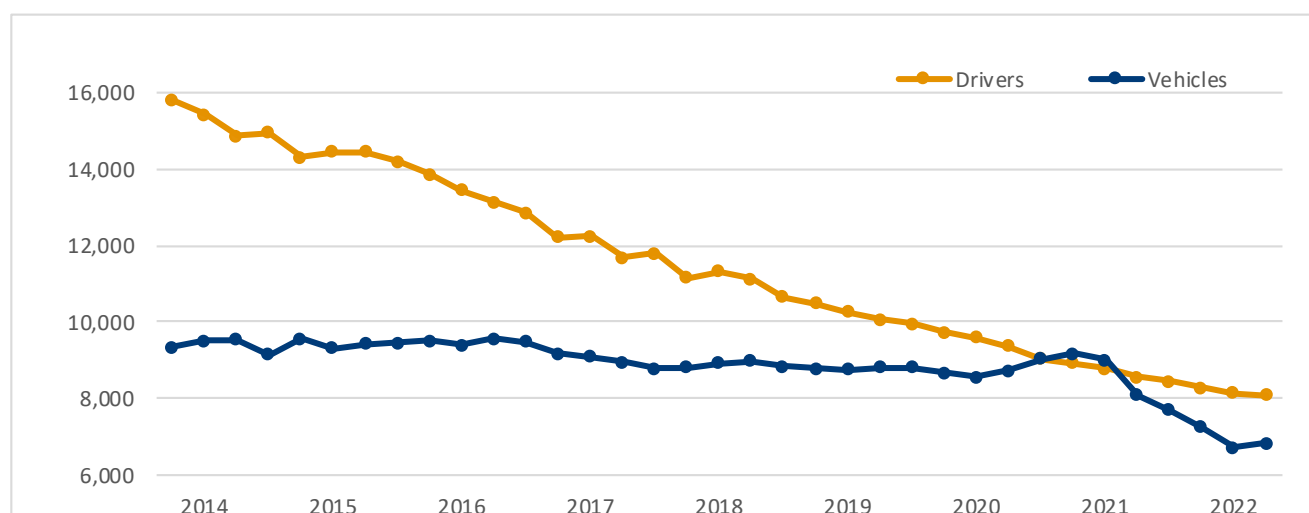
### **Taxi Operators**

At the end of the first quarter of 2022/23, 6,828 taxi vehicles were affiliated to 1,260 licensed taxi operators of which almost 87% (1,095) were small operators, i.e. can only list up to two taxis on the licence. The number of taxi operator licenses fell by 7 compared with the previous quarter (1,267). As with taxi drivers, the number of licensed taxi operators has been falling for a number of years, though there may be some sign this quarter that the decline is slowing compared with previous quarters. (table 6.2).

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

Figure 6.1: Licensed Taxi Driver and Taxi Vehicle Volumes



## Bus Licensing

### Bus Vehicles

The DVA issued 1,052 bus vehicle licenses this quarter compared with 901 in the previous quarter, an increase of 16% (151) between quarters. (table 6.1).

The number of licensed bus vehicles at the end of June 2022 was 3,489, up by just over 6% (201) on the previous quarter (3,288) (table 6.3).

### Bus Operators

At the end of June 2022, there were 196 licensed bus operators, a slight reduction compared with the previous quarter (199). (table 6.3).

During April to June 2022, the DVA processed 43 bus operator licences, compared with 36 in the previous quarter. (table 6.1)

## Goods Licensing

### Operators and Vehicles

The number of goods vehicles operator licences in force at the end of June 2022 was 5,601, an increase of 14 on the last quarter of 2021/22: associated to these 5,601 operators were 22,532 heavy goods vehicles, an increase of 77 vehicles compared with the previous quarter (22,455). (table 6.4)

The number of standard international operator licences has fallen slightly for the first time since 2012/13, from 1,953 at the end of the last quarter in 2021/22 to 1,943 at the end of June 2022. (table 6.4).

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.

In the first quarter of 2022/23, the DVA were active across the full range of enforcement activities, with 544 vehicles checked, 37 fixed penalty notices issued totaling £6,730, 2 joint operations with PSNI, 7 cross border operations with An Garda Síochána, and 7 spot checks on school buses carried out. There were 38 successful convictions this quarter relating to enforcement cases.

## Enforcement Activities

During this quarter, DVA checked 544 vehicles; of these, the largest volume was heavy goods vehicles (including trailers), accounting for 284 (52%) of all vehicles checked. Enforcement checks in this quarter were lower than the previous quarter at 771.

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

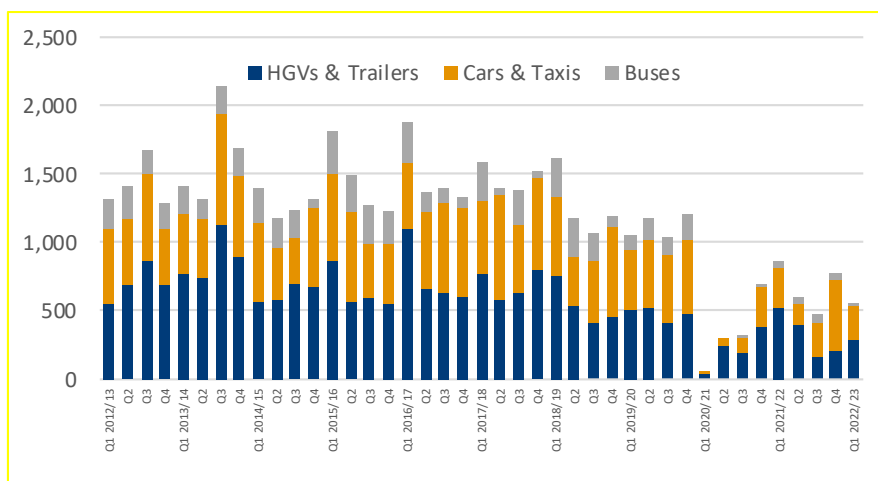
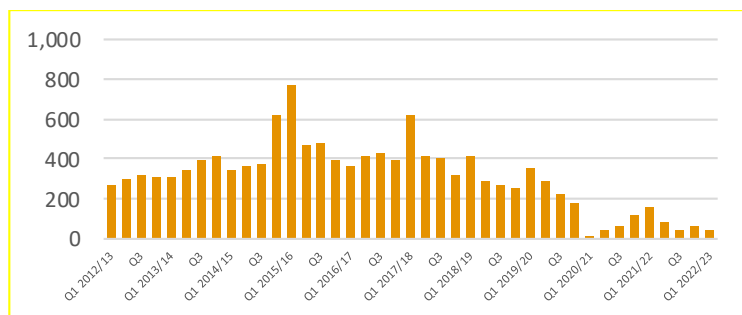


Figure 7.2: Fixed Penalties Issued



DVA enforcement officers issued 37 fixed penalty notices during this quarter, compared with 61 in the last 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 this quarter was £6,370.

Figure 7.3: Convictions

There were 38 successful convictions during quarter one of 2022/23. Annually, convictions stood at 429 in 2021/22. (table 7.2 and figure 7.3).

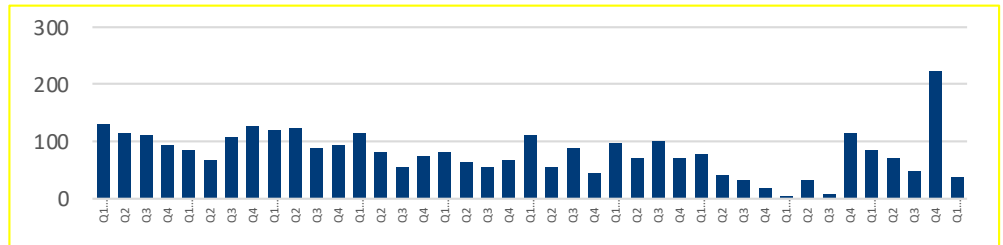
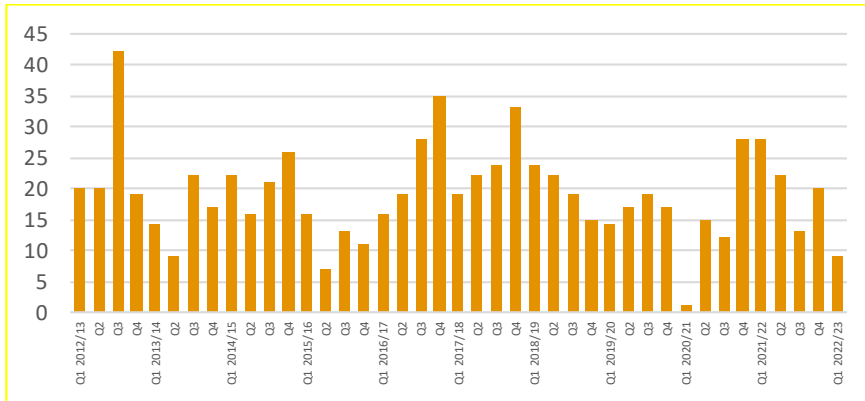


Figure 7.4: Joint or Cross-Border Operations



During this quarter enforcement teams carried out 2 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 7 spot checks on School Buses carried out by Enforcement Officers throughout the region in quarter one, 111 in total for 2021/22 (table 7.4 and figure 7.5).

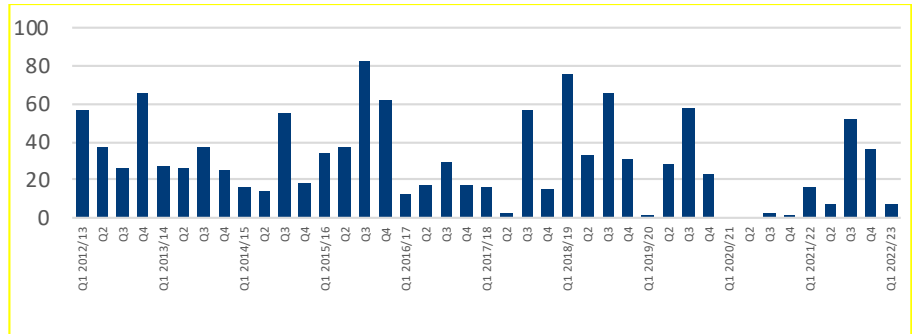


Figure 7.5: School Bus Checks



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. For information, the previously reported statistics for the old targets are included in table 8.1. The revised targets are as follows:

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

## Driver Licensing

Online 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%.

Online performance in the first two quarters of 2022/23, from April to June, and July to September, remained above the target level at 99.7% and 99.2% respectively. Year to date performance to the end of quarter two at 99.5% also exceeded the target. On a monthly basis, performance was over 99% for each of the first five months across both quarters and just below 99% for the last month of quarter two (please note monthly performance against target is not detailed in table 8.1 or in figure 8.1).

Paper applications performance for financial year 2021-22, at 78.3% was below the target level of 90.0%, though performance finished above target and on a high of 93.4% in the last quarter of the year.

Progress made during the last quarter of 2021/22 has continued into the first two quarters of 2022/23, from April to June, and July to September, with performance above the target level of 90%, at 94.3% and 96.0% respectively. Year to date performance to the end of quarter two at 95.1% also exceeded the target. On a monthly basis, performance ranged from 92.3% to a high of 98.6% and was above target for each month across both quarters (please note monthly performance against target is not detailed in table 8.1 or in figure 8.1).

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

Figure 8.1: Online Driver Licence Application Waiting Time Performance

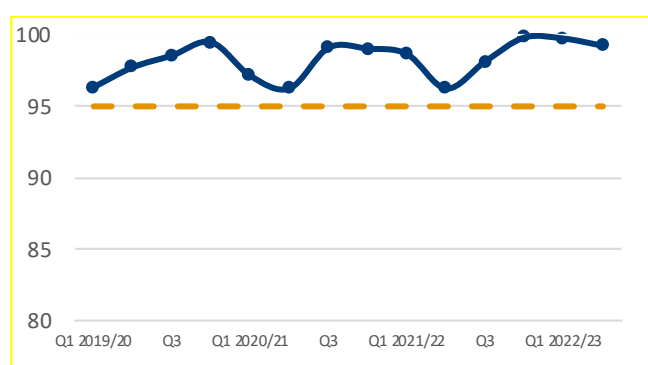
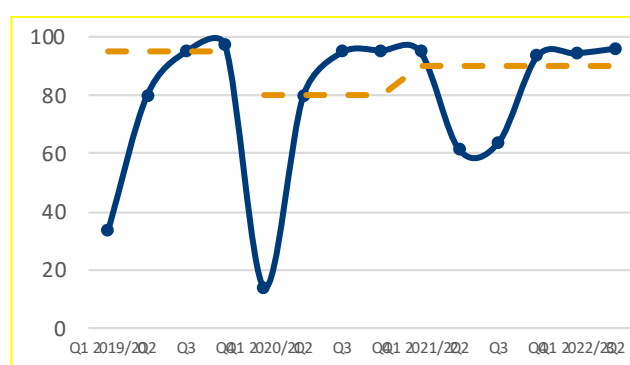


Figure 8.2: Paper Driver Licence Application Waiting Time Performance



(Note 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.

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