

# DfI Driver, Vehicle, Operator, and Enforcement Statistics

## Quarter Three: October to December 2022

**Issue number:** 33

**Date of publication:** 1 March 2023

**Theme:** Travel and Transport

**Coverage:** Northern Ireland

**Produced by:**

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

**Contact:** Manny Fitzpatrick

**Telephone:** 02890 547934

**Email:** [DVA.Statistics@nisra.gov.uk](mailto:DVA.Statistics@nisra.gov.uk)

**Website:**

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

## **Key Findings**

- During quarter three October to December 2022, DVA delivered 290,462 vehicle tests, the highest quarterly count on record.
- Private car full tests conducted this quarter is at an all-time high of 209,340.
- Over 13,310 vehicles failed to attend a booked vehicle test, the highest on record which equates to 4.5% (290,462) of all vehicles tested this quarter.
- Online internet bookings accounted for over 94% of all vehicle test applications, the remaining 6% made via DVA call centres.
- DVA delivered 22,026 theory tests the highest quarter three count since the start of this series in 2012/13.
- The DVA conducted 17,483 driving tests this quarter, the highest quarter three count on record in over ten years.
- Driver Licensing online applications processing performance in the first three quarters of 2022/23, remained above the target level of 95% at 99.7%, 99.2% and 99.6% respectively.
- Progress made during the last quarter of 2021/22 continued into the first three quarters of 2022/23, with performance levels for driver licensing paper applications above the 90% target at 94.3%, 96.0% and 98.3% respectively.
- At the end of December 2022, there were 7,802 licensed taxi drivers, a fall of 1.7% (137) relative to the end of September 2022 (7,939).
- DVA were active across the full range of enforcement activities in quarter three, with 835 enforcement checks, 86 fixed penalty notices issued totalling £8,720, 13 joint operations with PSNI, and 4 cross border operations with An Garda Síochána. There were 16 spot checks on school buses this quarter, 6 successful convictions the value of court fines and costs amounting to £5,040.

## Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Key Findings	2
Introduction	4
1. Vehicle Testing	5
2. Vehicle Licensing and Registration	9
3. Driver Theory Testing	12
4. Driver Practical Testing	15
5. Driver Licensing	19
6. Road Transport Licensing	21
7. Enforcement & Compliance	23
8. DVA Target Monitoring	25
Notes	26

## **Introduction**

This is the thirty third 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, operators in the area of regulation and enforcement during quarter three of 2022/23. This covers the period from 1 October 2022 to 31 December 2022.

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).

---

<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.

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.

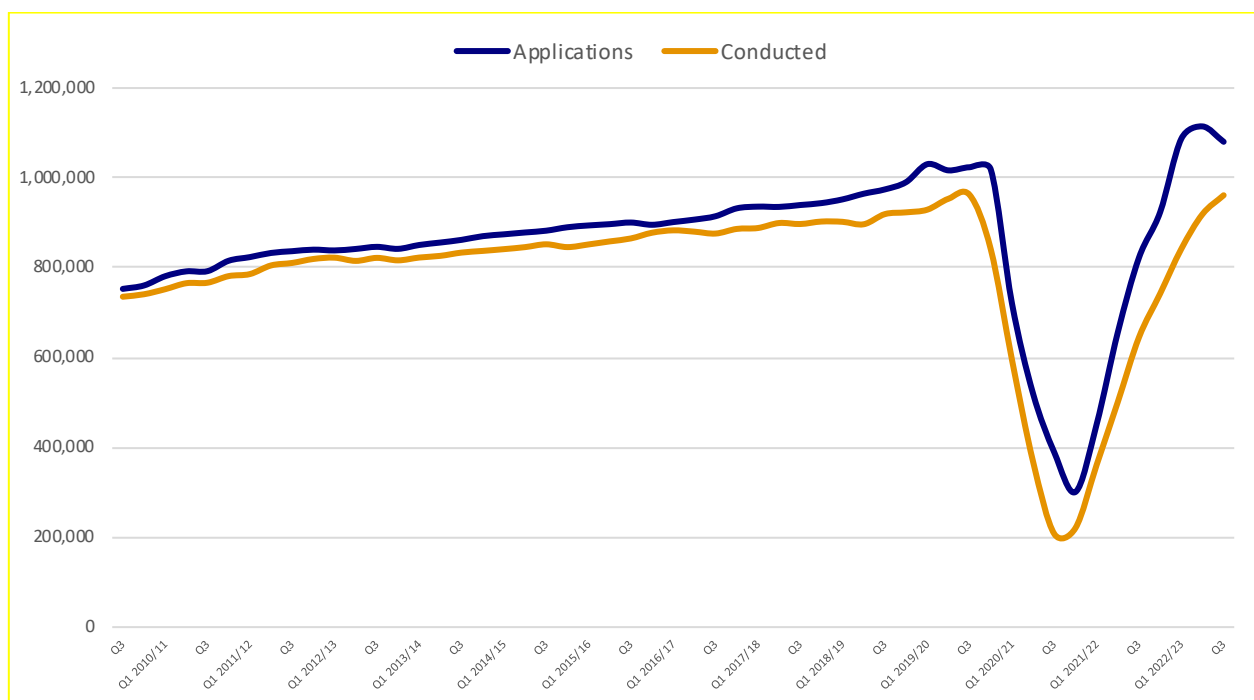
For the latest news and updates, please visit the Motoring page on the NIDirect website<sup>2</sup>.

## Vehicle Test Applications

From October to December 2022, the DVA received 257,204 applications for a vehicle test, 13% (36,670) lower than the previous quarter (296,874) (table 1.3). Figure 1.1 details the rolling four quarterly count for full vehicle test applications and full vehicle tests conducted, full vehicle tests conducted returning to levels being achieved prior to the pandemic.

The majority (83.2%-213,878) of vehicle test applications were full tests. The most common vehicle test-category was private cars, accounting for 82% of all test applications (174,876).

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



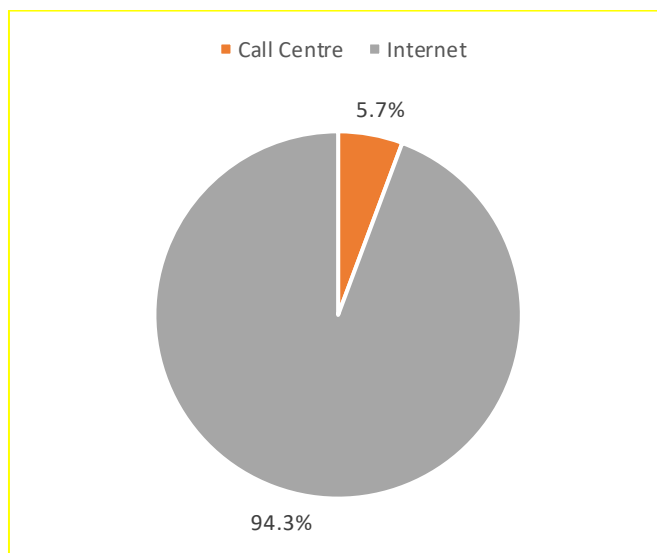
Note that figures for vehicle test applications include taximeter tests and those for vehicle tests conducted do not.

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

## Booking Method

During quarter three of 2022/23 all vehicle test applications were made via the DVA online booking facility or using DVA call centres. The most popular method used was online booking which received just over 94% (242,592) of all vehicle test applications, with almost 6% (14,612) of vehicle test applications made via DVA call centres. This is the fifth quarter in a row online vehicle test bookings have exceeded 90% of all vehicle test bookings (figure 1.2 and table 1.4).

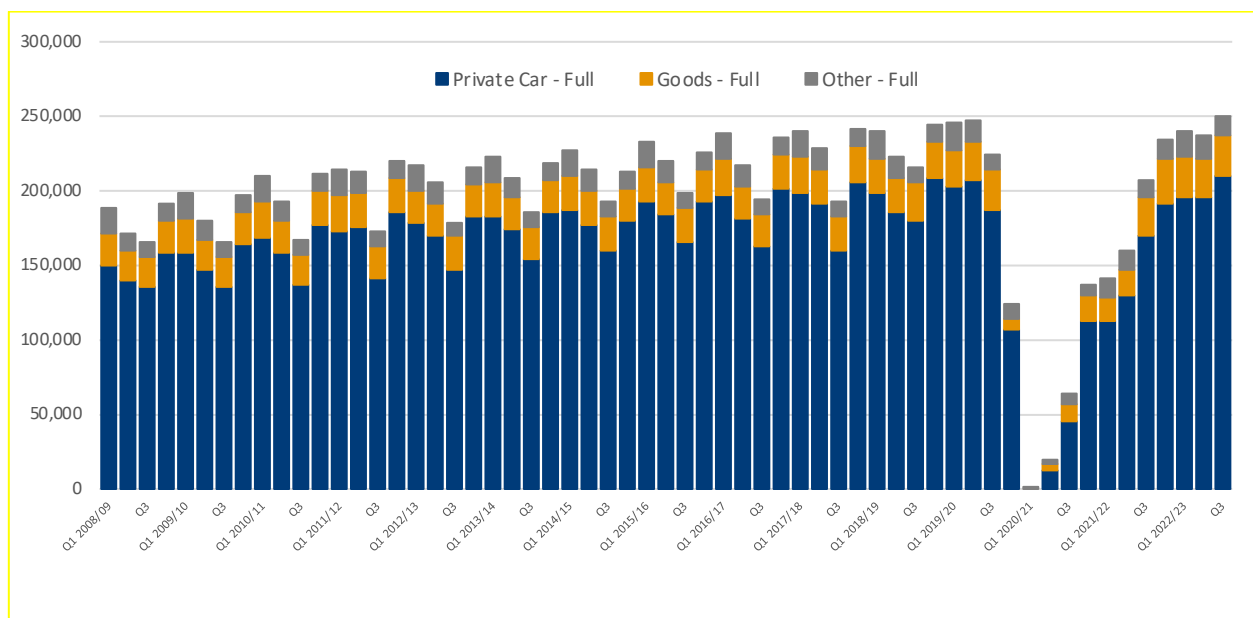
Figure 1.2: Vehicle Test Applications by Booking Method.



## Vehicle Tests Conducted

During quarter three DVA delivered 290,462 vehicle tests (full and retest), the highest quarterly count on record since this series began in 2008/09 (table 1.7). Most of these were full tests which accounted for 86% (249,463) of all vehicle tests conducted; of the 249,463 full tests conducted, 84% (209,340) were for private cars. The number of private car full tests conducted this quarter is also at an all-time high (table 1.5 and figure 1.3).

Figure 1.3: Full Vehicle Tests Conducted



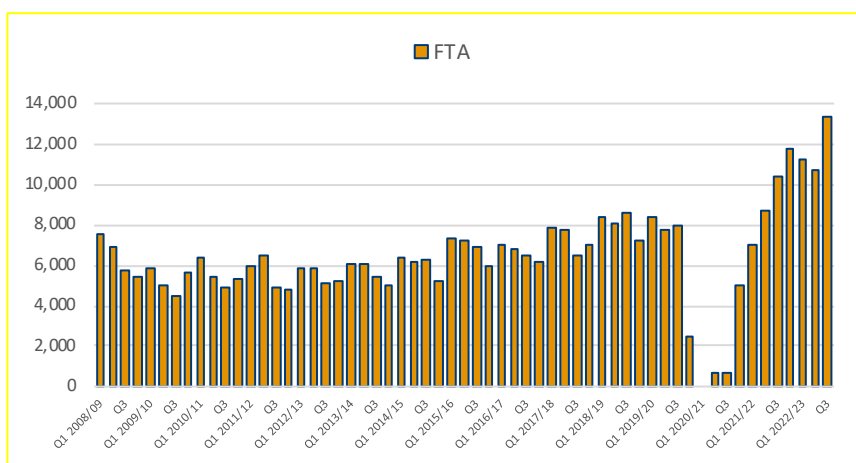
The steady increase in vehicle test applications seen in the trend series prior to the COVID-19 pandemic can, in the main, be explained by the increasing number of licensed cars in Northern Ireland, which has risen by 8.7% over the past five years (see table 2.13) to 2020-21. In addition, owners seem to be keeping their vehicles for longer, as the proportion of cars of MOT-age has risen by nearly 6 percentage-points over the same 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 and other relevant changes will have on these trends long term, as people's lifestyles, work pattern and car-usage will inevitably change.

## Failed to Attend

This quarter 13,319 customers failed to attend for a booked vehicle test (table 1.10 and figure 1.4). This equates to 4.5% of all conducted tests during this period (290,462).

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

Figure 1.4: Vehicle Tests – Failed to Attend



## Vehicle Test Pass-Rates

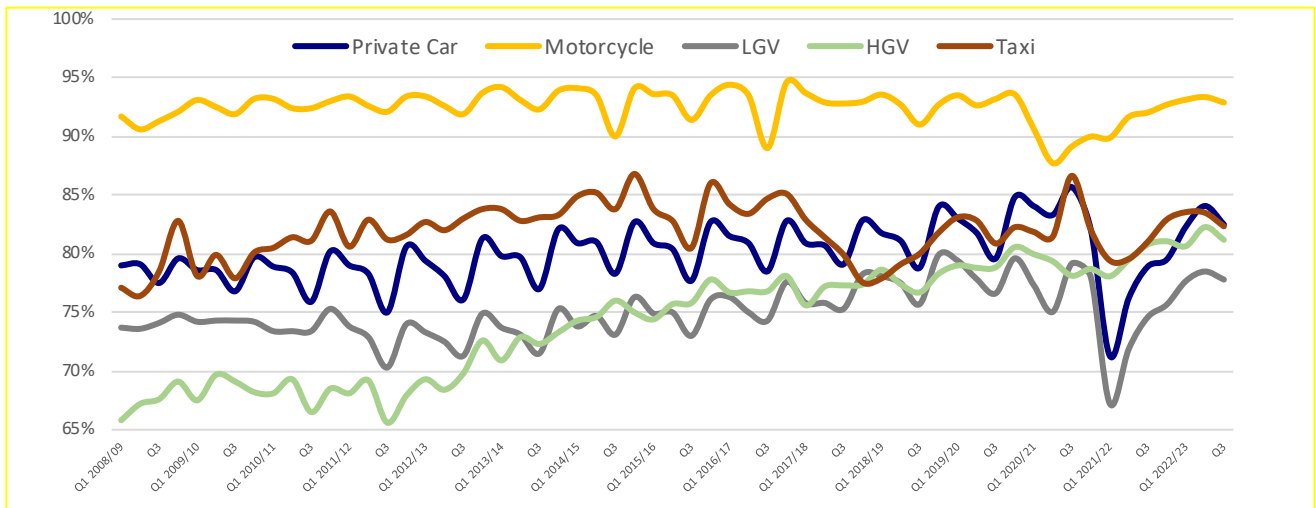
In terms of annual trend, for 2021-22, the overall pass-rate for full tests was 77.6%, five percentage points lower than in 2020-21 (82.7%) which was the highest annual pass-rate on record. The 2021-22 annual pass-rate for full tests varied by category, from 73.3% for light goods to 91.5% for motorcycles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

For the third quarter of 2022/23 the overall pass-rate for full vehicle tests was 82.3%, slightly below the 83.9% achieved in quarter two. This pass-rate is on a par with quarterly pass-rates in 2021-22 (table 1.11 and figure 1.5). The pandemic era drop in pass-rates would suggest that vehicle owners did not maintain their vehicles during periods of test exemption, though vehicle test pass rates seem to have trended back to pre-pandemic levels.

The pass-rate for vehicle re-tests this quarter was 94.5%, the same as for quarter two. This is also on a par with historical quarterly re-test pass rates which maintained very stable levels of circa 93% and 94% over a long period of time prior to the pandemic (table 1.12).

For the 2021/22 financial year, the overall re-test pass-rate of 93.4% was consistent with previous annual pass rates. As with full tests, the annual re-test pass-rate varied by category, from 91.8% for light goods to 93.7% for private cars – this is for vehicle test 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 for vehicle testing during quarter three was Newtownards, having conducted 28,314 full tests for private cars, an increase of just under 6% (1,600) relative to the 26,720 full tests conducted in quarter two; Omagh, which is a smaller centre, conducted 7,966 this quarter compared with 7,739 in quarter two, up by 3% between quarters (table 1.14).

The overall full test pass rate for private cars fell slightly between quarters from 84.1% to 82.5% in quarter three; pass rates by test centre within this category ranged from a low of 77.2% in Larne to a high of 88.4% in Belfast (Balmoral) (table 1.14). This is the tenth consecutive quarter that Belfast (Balmoral) has had the highest full test private car pass-rate. Differences in pass rates may arise due to several factors including for example the mix of vehicles tested within and between test centres.



## **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

Please note that vehicle licensing data for October to December 2022 will not be available until late in May 2023 and will be published at the earliest opportunity thereafter. This section relates to the period from July to September 2022.

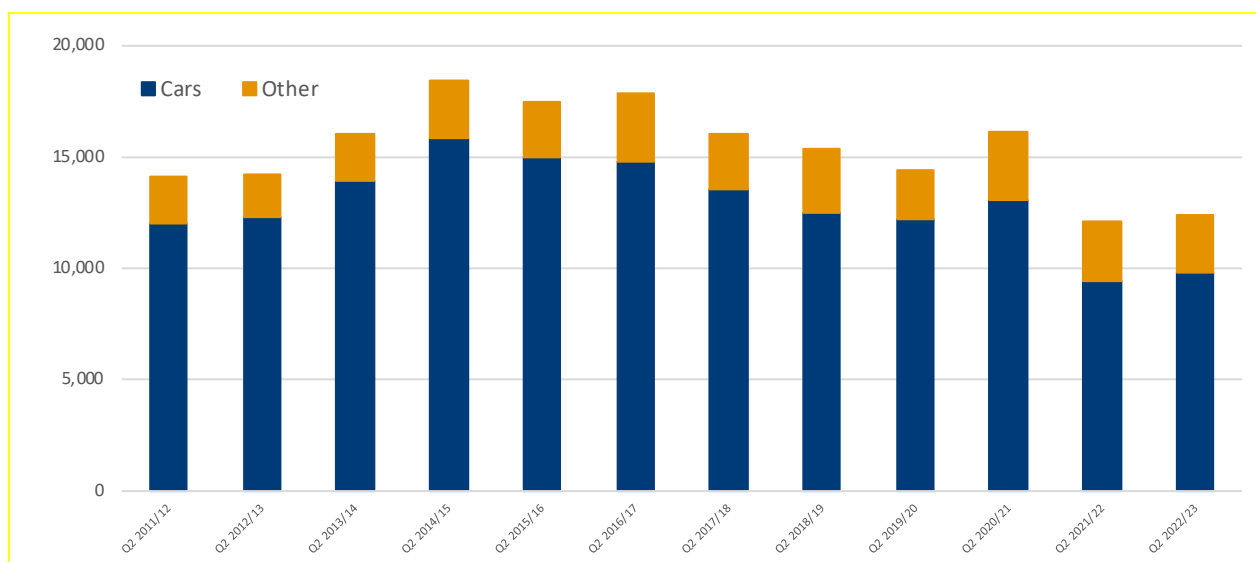
During July to September 2022, the DVLA registered 12,444 new vehicles to Northern Ireland, 7% (1,007) fewer than the previous quarter (13,451), but slightly higher compared with quarter two of 2021/22 (12,094) (table 2.1) (figure 2.1). Please note that new vehicle registrations exclude vehicles previously registered with the DVLA but whose ownership transferred to a postal address in Northern Ireland during the latest quarter. Taking these vehicles into account, the total number of first-time registrations to Northern Ireland in quarter two one was 12,544 compared with 13,560 in quarter one and 12,216 in quarter two of 2021/22.

Private cars accounted for 9,772 (78.5%) of all new vehicle registrations (12,444), the second lowest number on record for quarter two since 2009/10, and 432 (4.2%) fewer compared with the previous quarter (10,204) (table 2.1).

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).

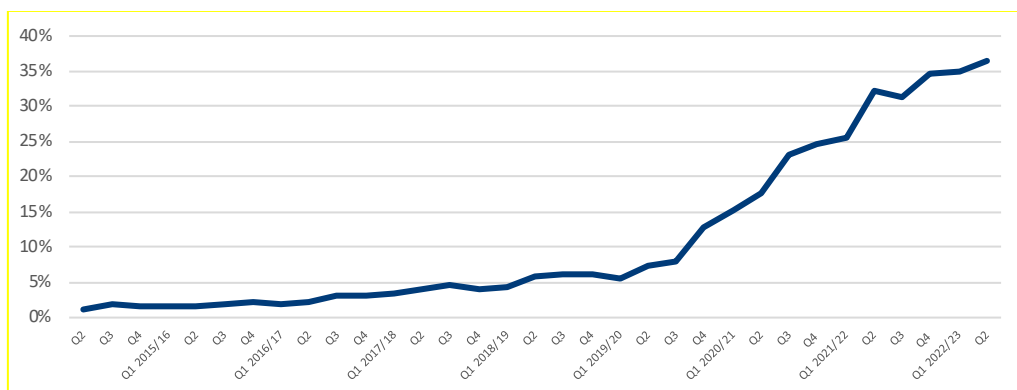
Figure 2.1: New Vehicle Registrations



Top makes for private car first time registrations in quarter two (9,788) were Ford at 12.2% (1,194), Hyundai at 10.1% (984), Volkswagen at 8.6% (842) followed closely by Toyota at 8.5% (828). (table 2.3).

Grey was again the most popular colour for new private cars this quarter, accounting for 24.1% (2,360) of all new car registrations (9,772); Blue (18.1%), White (17.6%), Black (16.2%), and Red (10.7%) respectively were the next most popular colours.

Figure 2.2: Proportion of New Car Registrations using Alternative Fuels



The proportion of new cars registered in Northern Ireland using alternative-fuel<sup>3</sup> cars has increased substantially over the last number of years, rising from 5.8% in quarter two of 2018/19 to its current high of 36.5% for the latest quarter of 2022/23. Over the same period, the proportion of new diesel fuelled cars has declined from 36.5% to 11.6%. This is the eighth quarter in a row that alternative-fuel cars have out-sold diesel cars.

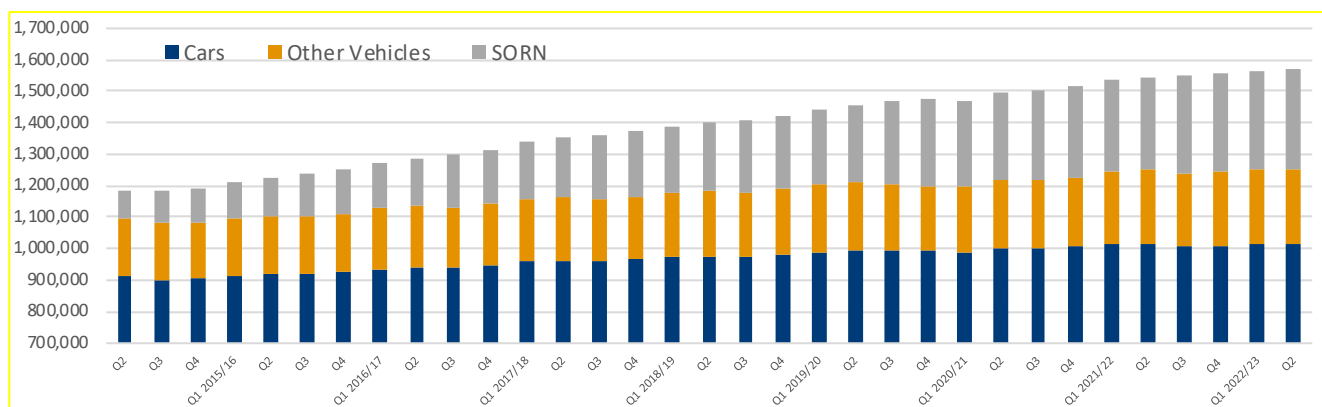
## Licensed Vehicles

At the end of September 2022, there just over 1,252,760 licensed vehicles (excluding SORN) in Northern Ireland, 0.7% less compared with June 2022 (1,253,590). This is the first drop in quarterly licensed vehicle stock since the third quarter of 2019/20. It is the second highest quarterly licensed stock volume on record since 2014/15 (1,096,250) (table 2.13).

At the end of this quarter, just over 8 in every 10 (81.1%) licensed vehicles were private cars (1,015,730) Private car stock has increased by 11.6% (105,460) since quarter two of 2014/15 (910,270) (table 2.13).

Over 319,900 vehicles had a SORN at the end of September 2022, representing 20% of all vehicle stock in Northern Ireland (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 year-on-year increases in SORN from quarter four of 2013/14 onwards, both in Northern Ireland and Great Britain.

Figure 2.3: Northern Ireland Vehicle Stock



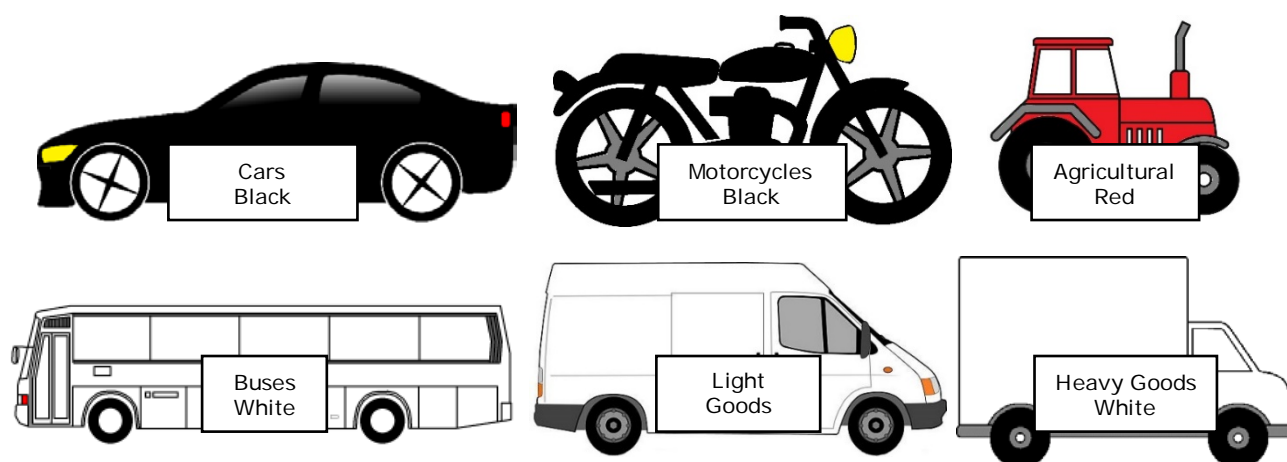
<sup>3</sup> Alternative-fuel vehicles are those able to use a range of alternatives to purely petrol or diesel fuel, including gas, electricity, or a combination such as gas bi-fuel and hybrid-electric.

As of 30 September 2022, the average age of a licensed vehicle in Northern Ireland was 9.48 years a small increase from the previous quarter (9.38 years).

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

- Cars – 9.00 years
- Motorcycles – 14.2 years
- Light Goods – 8.8 years
- Heavy Goods – 10.2 years
- Buses – 10.0 years
- Agricultural – 21.4 years
- Other – 10.9 years

As with new registrations for licensed vehicles the most popular colours for each body-type are notably monochrome, with as always 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

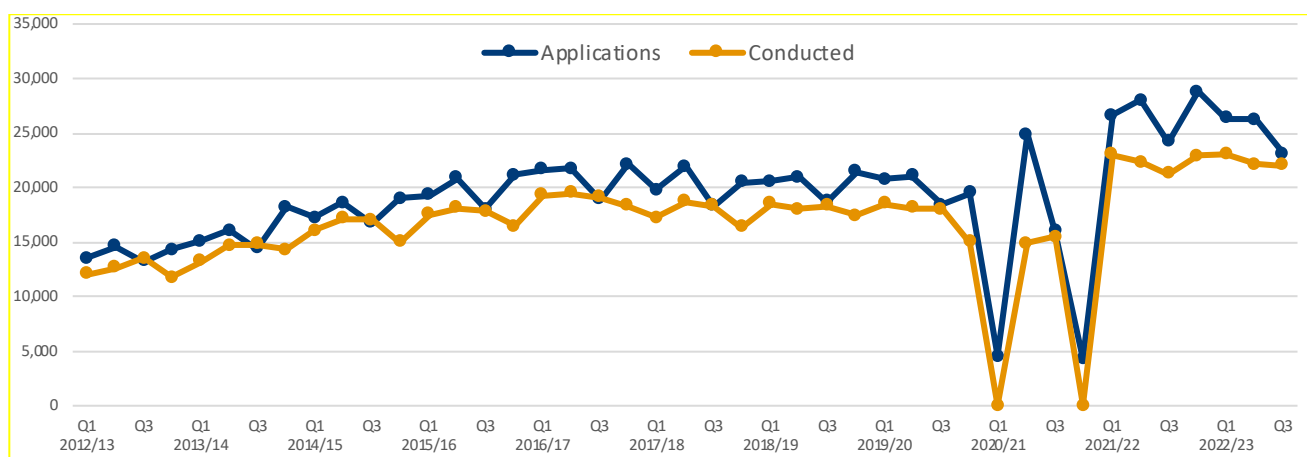
From October to December 2022/23 the DVA delivered 22,026 theory tests the highest quarter three level achieved since the start of this series in 2012/13 (table 3.2) (figure 3.1).

For the 2021-22 financial year, the DVA conducted just over 89,520 theory tests, the highest on record for a single year. Pre-pandemic, test volumes ranged from 69,950 in 2015-16 to 76,200 in 2016-17.

The DVA received 23,128 theory test applications, 12% (3,126) lower than the previous quarter (26,254) (table 3.1).

Private cars accounted for just over eight in every ten theory test applications (84%, 19,537) and theory tests conducted (84%, 18,711).

Figure 3.1: Theory Test Applications and Conducted

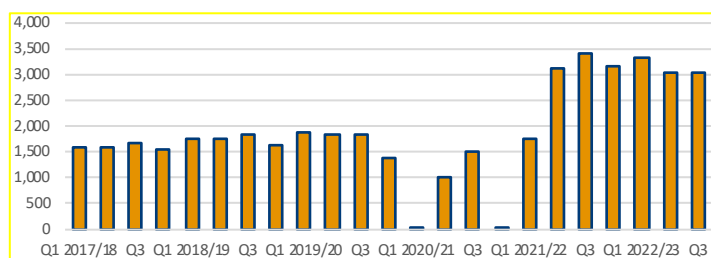


<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/driving-theory-test>

## Failed To Attend

During this quarter, 3,044 customers failed to attend a booked theory test (FTA) (table 3.3 and figure 3.2). This represents 14% of all theory tests conducted during this quarter (22,026).

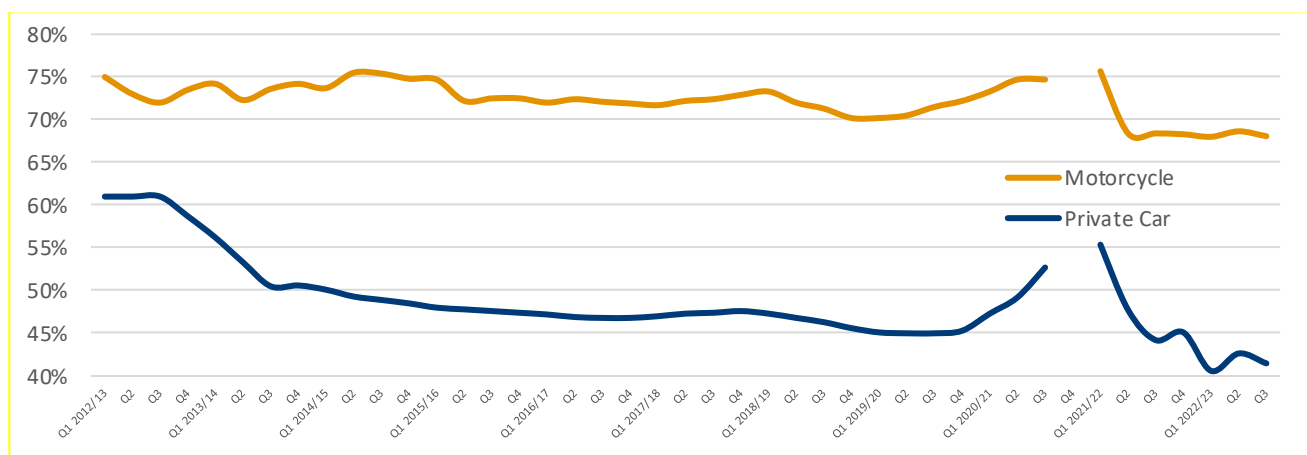
Figure 3.2: Theory Tests - Failed To Attend



## 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.

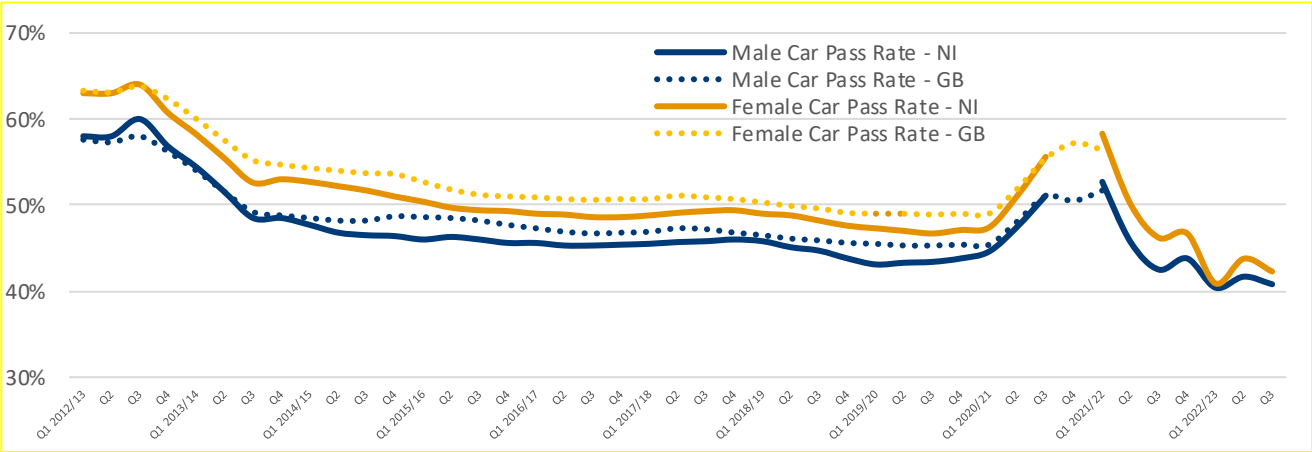
Figure 3.3: Theory Test Pass-Rates (Rolling 4-quarter Averages)



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 quarter three figures suggests that pass-rate trend for males and females has turned slightly downward to 40.8% and 42.3% from 41.7% and 43.8% respectively in the previous quarter (figure 3.4). There is insufficient data to conclude there is a permanent change to the gender gap in theory pass rates by gender. Both 'gender-gap' and post-pandemic pass-rate trend are similar to those in Great Britain to the period we have comparable data (figure 3.4). Please note 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 driver test categories.

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

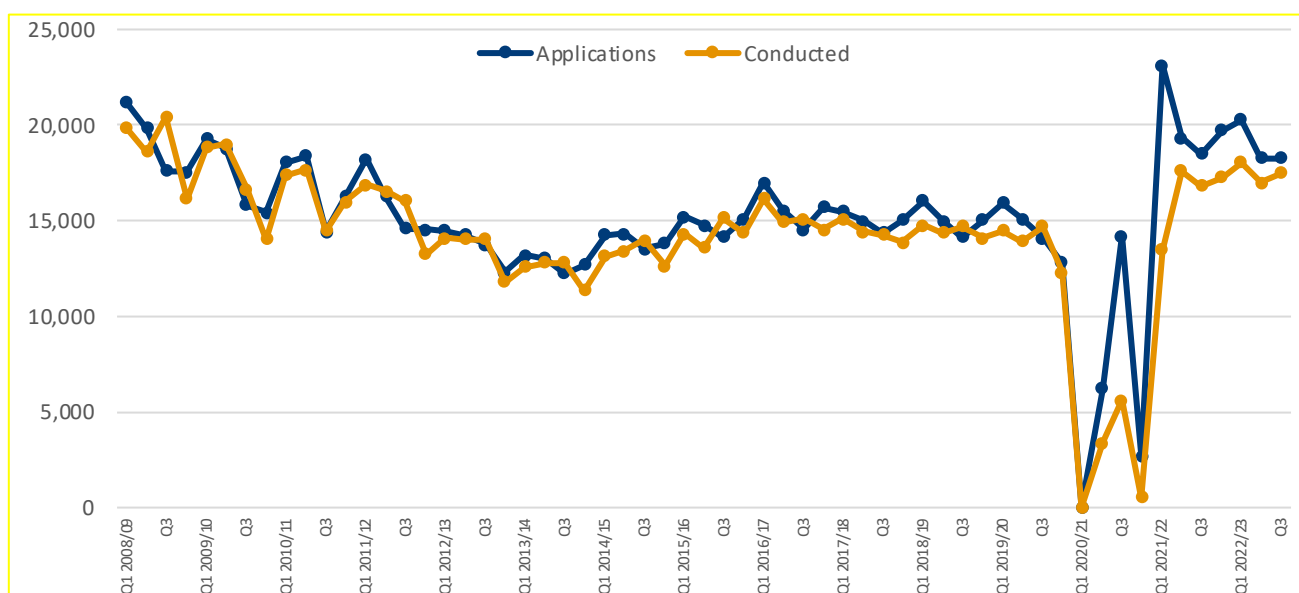
### Driving Test Applications and Tests Conducted

The DVA delivered 17,483 driving tests this quarter, the highest on record in over ten years. Just over 8 in every 10 driving tests conducted were private cars (82.6% - 14,443) (table 4.3).

From October to December, the DVA received 18,257 applications for a driving test slightly more than the previous quarter (18,249) (table 4.1 and figure 4.1).

Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, 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



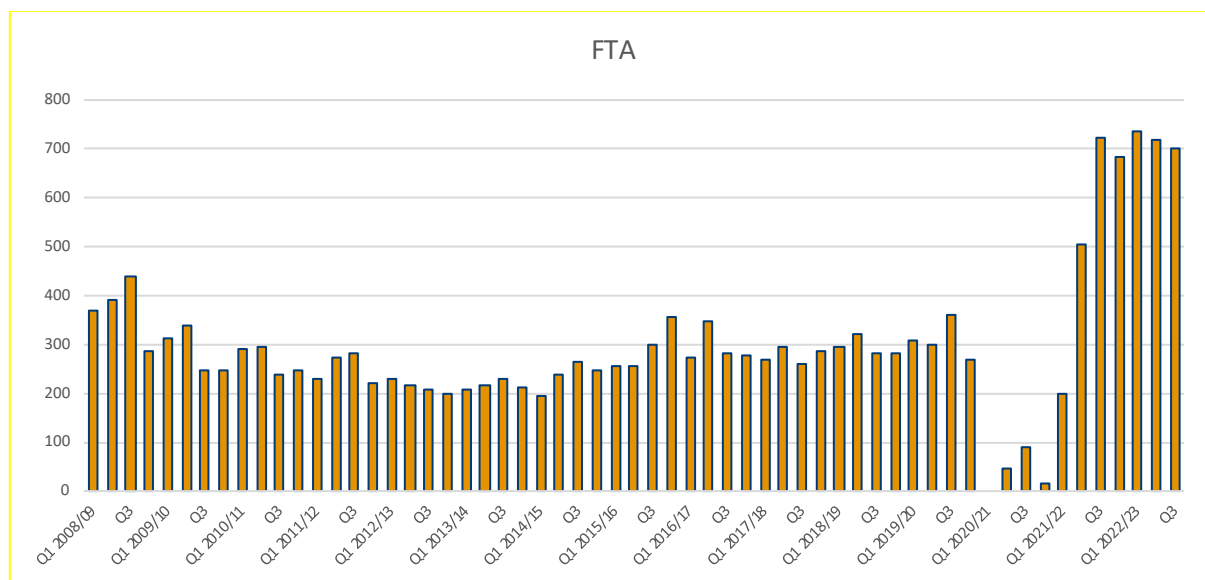
<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/book-your-practical-driving-test-online>

## Failed to Attend

In quarter three there were 702 driving test appointments where customers failed to attend (FTA) a paid for driving test. This is the fourth highest FTA on record for a single quarter going back to 2008/09 (table 4.4 and figure 4.2). These 702 FTA equate to 4.0% of all practical driver testing this quarter (17,483).

In 2021-22, there were just over 2,110 missed practical driving test appointments, the highest on record back to 2008-09.

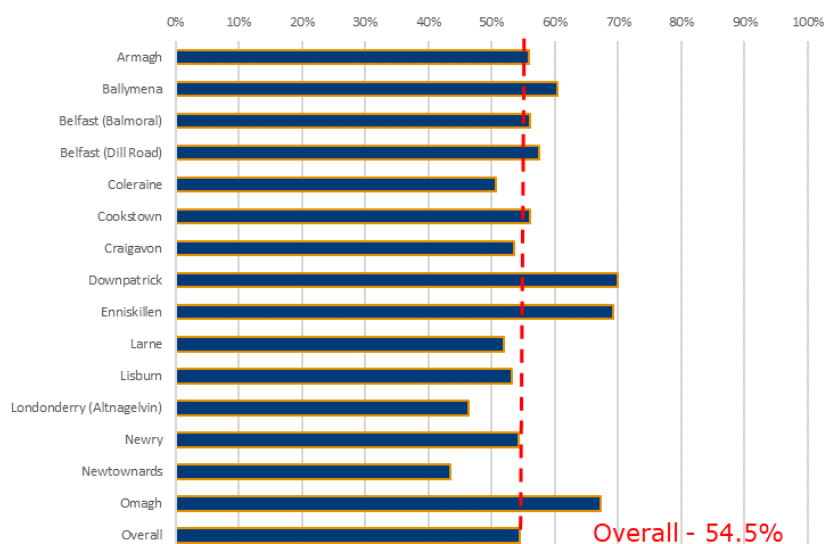
Figure 4.2: Driving Tests – Failed to Attend



## Driving Tests by Test Centre

The number of private cars driving tests delivered in quarter three ranged from a high of 1,519 at Larne to a low of 424 at Enniskillen. Across test centres and using a rolling 4-quarter average, the pass rates for private cars ranged from 43.5% in Newtownards to 69.2% 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 each 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

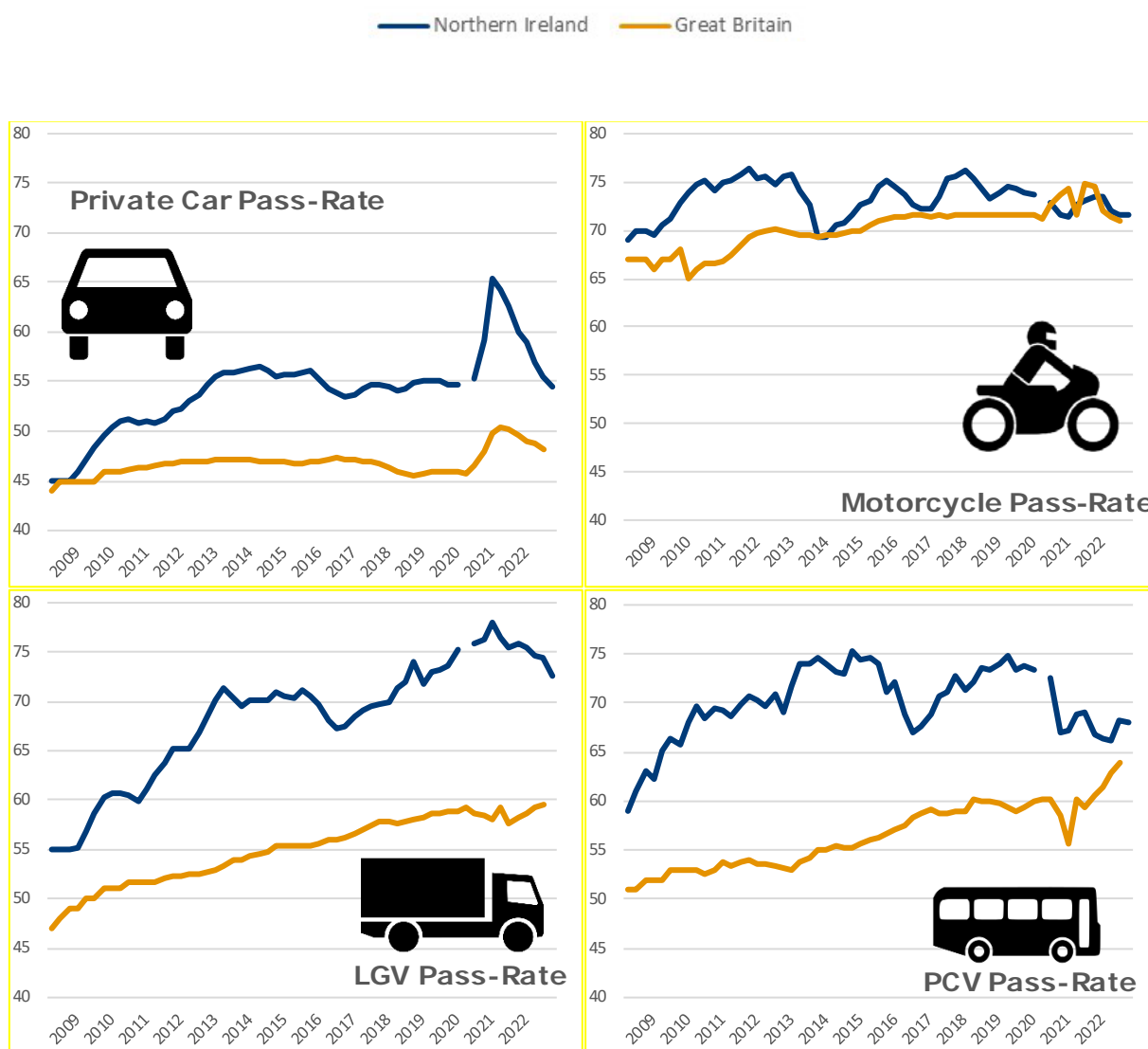
For October to December 2022, the private car overall pass rate was 52.4%, two percentage points lower relative to 54.6% for the previous quarter (table 4.5).

Prior to the pandemic, pass-rates for all categories of vehicle remained broadly unchanged over the five years up to the onset of Covid restrictions in 2020. 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 (table 4.5).

Using a rolling 4-quarter average, pass-rates for private-car driver testing dropped from 65.4% in quarter four of 2020/21 to 57.0% in quarter one of 2022/23 and 55.5% for this quarter. The rate is now comparable to pre-pandemic rolling 4 quarter pass-rates of typically 54%-55% (table 4.10 and figure 4.4).

Using the same rolling 4-quarter average, pass-rates across the main four driver test categories are generally higher in Northern Ireland compared with the equivalent rates in Great Britain. The exception to this Motorcycles, where the gap has flipped in favour of 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 road networks for driver testing.

Figure 4.4: Driving Test Pass-Rates (rolling 4-quarter average)



## Driving Test Pass-Rates by Gender

Historically up to pre-pandemic a clear 'gender-gap' is apparent in private car driver testing pass-rates - based on a four-quarter rolling average. This gap narrowed considerably during 2020 and remained much lower into quarter one of 2022/23 and again in quarters two and three (table 4.10 & figure 4.5).

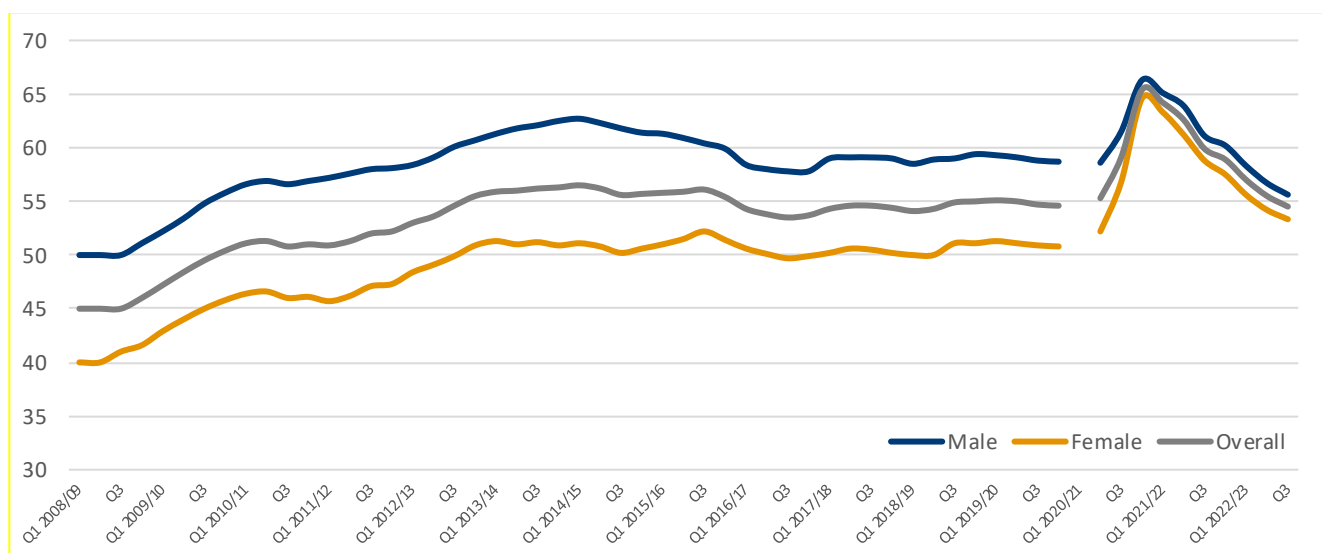
Over the last twelve months, males (55.6%) had a higher pass-rate than females (53.3%) for private car testing, a gap of just over 2 percentage points. This gap remained relatively consistent prior to 2020 but was much higher in the 7.8 to 8.8 percentage point range; however, since driver testing resumed in the summer of 2020 this gap has shrunk and remained below half this level.

This gender gap is also now substantially narrower than the 6.2 percentage-point gap present in the Great Britain (GB) statistics pre-pandemic. The gap in GB between males and females has also reduced from over 5 percentage points in quarter 1 of 2021/22 to just over 4 percentage points in quarter two of 2022/23 (table 4.10) - GB quarter three figures are not detailed on figure 4.5, nor is GB data available to allow comparison over 4 quarters to the end of quarter three 2022/23.

It remains too soon to conclude if this narrowing of the gender gap is indicative of a permanent reduction or if this gap will revert to pre-pandemic levels. Without a detailed understanding of the profile of candidates presenting for testing it is difficult to contextualise why differences in pass rates by gender and location persist in the way that they do.

Test centres offering private car driving tests show this gender gap disparity, to varying degrees. However, some test centres show a gender gap in favour of females; for example, based on the same 4 quarter rolling average, pass-rates for private car testing for females were higher than those for males in Newry (56.1%f v 52.6%m), Craigavon (53.6%f v 53.4%m) and in Newtownards (43.9%f v 43.2%m) in the four quarters to the end of quarter three 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 private cars and motorcycles, in contrast to Northern Ireland, GB pass-rates for large goods vehicles are consistently higher for females relative to males, typically showing a 4-5 percentage point difference favouring females; the latest figures for GB for quarter two 2022/23 report the pass rates for females at 63.9% compared with 59.1% for males (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 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 during this period. From June 2020, the DVA began resuming all driver licensing bar counter service at that time, and processes all driver licensing 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).

In the third quarter of 2022/23, DVA completed 52,684 ordinary driver licensing transactions, 13% (8,064) fewer than the previous quarter (60,740) (table 5.1).

Figure 5.1: Driver Licensing Transactions

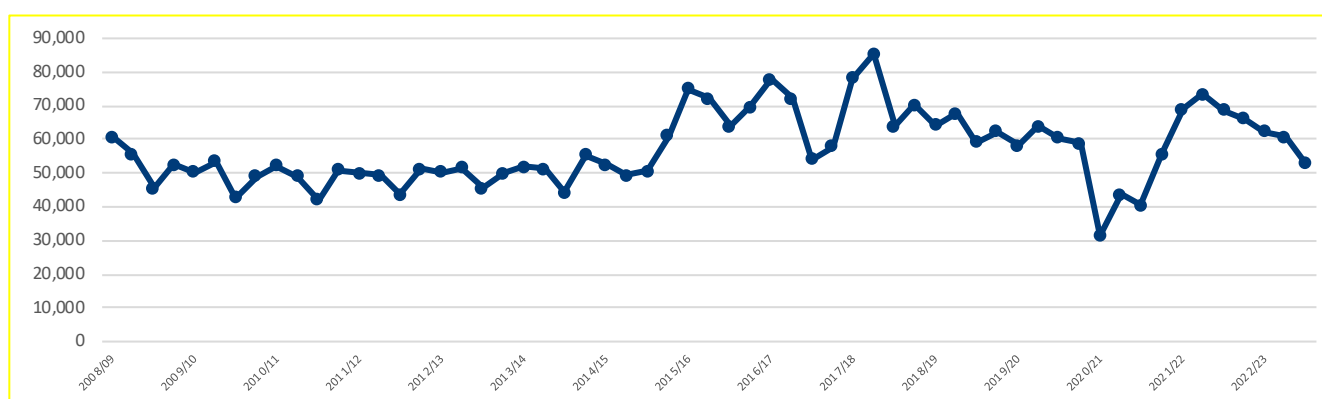
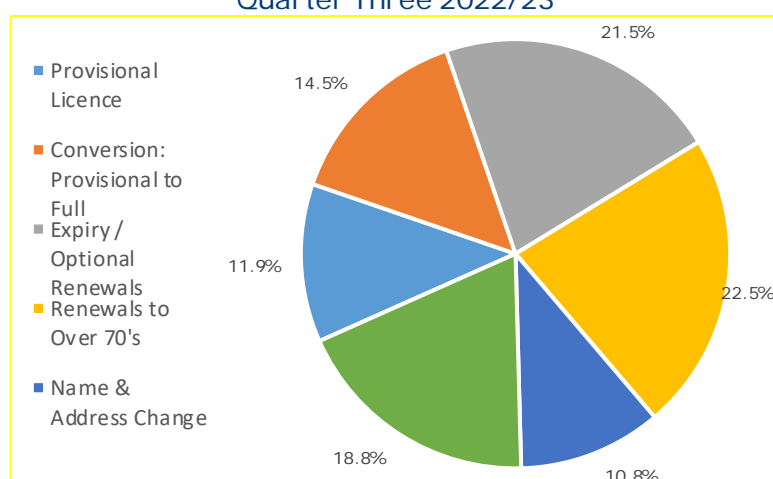


Figure 5.2: Ordinary Driver License Transactions by Type, Quarter Three 2022/23

The number of Ordinary first licences ('provisional licences') issued in quarter three was 6,288, just under 15% (1,079) lower compared with quarter two (7,367) (table 5.1).

Renewals to over 70's accounted for just over 22% (11,85) of all all ordinary licensing transactions during quarter three (52,684) (figure 5.2).



In quarter three of 2022/23 the DVA carried out just over 4,200 Vocational driver licensing transactions, and just above 14,150 transactions for the first three quarters of 2022/23 (table 5.2). Almost 17,590 'Other' licensing transactions were completed in quarter three, totalling to just over 57,000 year to date to the end of December for 2022/23 (table 5.3).

## Driver Licence Stock

At the end of December 2022, there were 1,145,565 full and eligible driver licence holders with private/light van entitlement, a second quarterly increase of 0.4% (4,338) relative to the end of September 2022 (1,141,227). This continues the recent upward trend since quarter two of 2020/21 (1,086,306) (table 5.4).

The number of provisional licence holders with private car/light van entitlement decreased from 109,088 to 107,579 respectively, a fall of 1.3% (1,509) between quarter two and quarter three. This continues the recent downward trend in provisional driver licence holders since the last quarter of 2020/21 (113,341) to the end of December 2022.

Driver licence holders with full private car/light van entitlement, aged 65 and above accounted for 233,075 or just over 20% of all licence holders within this category (1,132,110).

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

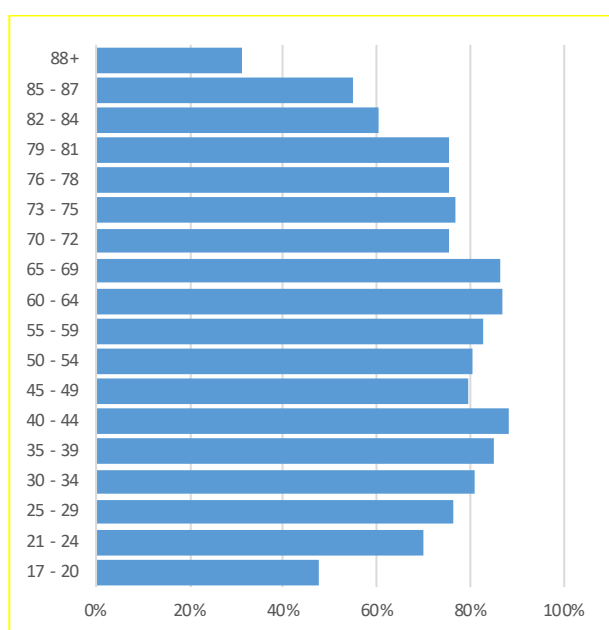
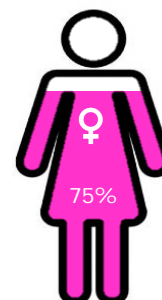
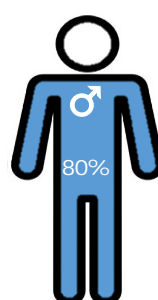
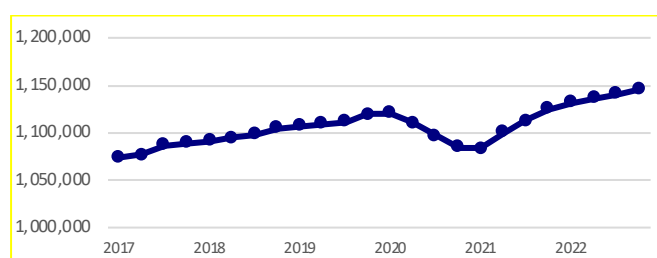


Figure 5.4: Full Car Licence Holders in Northern Ireland



At the end of December 2022, an estimated 77.6% of Northern Ireland's adult population, aged 17 or over, had full and eligible private car/light van drivers licence entitlement. This is based on 2020 mid-year population estimates<sup>6</sup> (table 5.8). For males and females, the equivalent percentages were 80% and 75% respectively (figure 5.5).

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

## **Road Transport Licensing**

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

In the third quarter of 2022/23, October to December 2022, 1,822 taxi vehicle licenses were issued, 6.5% (127) fewer than quarter two (1,949) (table 6.1).

At the end of December 2022, licensed taxi vehicle stock stood at 6,851 compared with 6,895 in quarter two (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, a drop of 20% (420).

In the third quarter of 2022/23 DVA issued 409 taxi driver licenses, 40 (10.8%) more than the second quarter (369) (table 6.1).

At the end of December 2022, there were 7,802 licensed taxi drivers, another fall of 1.7% (137) relative to the end of September 2022 (7,939). This continues the steady downward trend in the numbers of taxi drivers since 2013 (table 6.2 and figure 6.1 below).

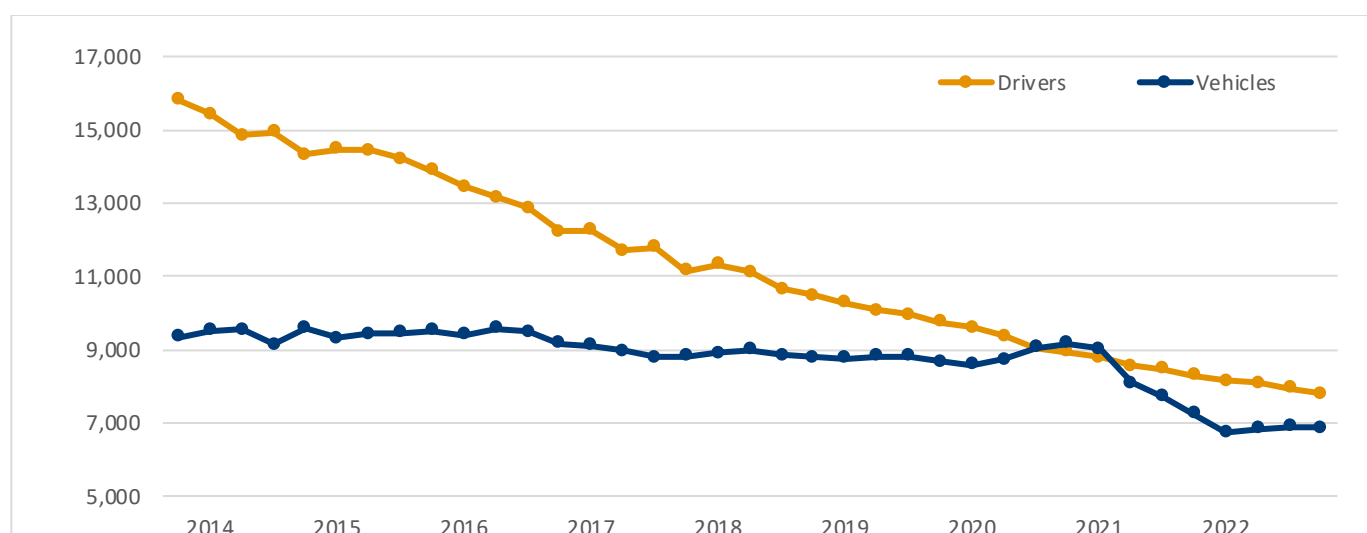
#### Taxi Operators

At the end of quarter three 2022/23, 6,851 taxi vehicles were affiliated to 1,243 licensed taxi operators, of which 87% (1,080) were small operators. Small operators can only list up to two taxi vehicles on their operator's license. The number of taxi operator licenses fell by 24 from 1,267 to 1,243 at the end of December 2022. As with taxi drivers, the number of licensed taxi operators has been trending down for several years (table 6.2).

---

<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 796 bus vehicle licenses in quarter three, October to December 2022/23, compared with 732 in quarter two July to September 2022/23, an increase of 9% (64) between these two quarters (table 6.1).

The number of licensed bus vehicles at the end of December 2022, was 3,338, down just over 2% (80) from September 2022 (3,418) (table 6.3).

### Bus Operators

At the end of December 2022, there were 191 licensed bus operators, one more than at the end of September 2022 (190) (table 6.3).

During October to December 2022, the DVA processed 41 bus operator licenses, 10 more than the previous quarter (31) (table 6.1).

## Goods Licensing

### Operators and Vehicles

The number of goods vehicles operator licences in place at the end of December 2022 was 5,586, 22 fewer than at the end of September 2022 (5,608). Associated to these 5,586 operators were 22,444 goods vehicles, 10 fewer vehicles compared with the previous quarter (22,476) (table 6.4).

The number of standard international operator licences has risen fallen for the third consecutive quarter from 1,953 at the end of March 2022 to 1,917 at the end of December 2022, a fall of 1.8% (36) operators within this group.

At the end of the third quarter of 2022/23 there were 3,326 operators with restricted licenses, which is slightly lower than the 3,335 at the end of September 2022 (table 6.4).

## 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 several 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 third quarter of 2022/23, the DVA were active across the full range of enforcement activities, with 835 vehicles checked, 86 fixed penalty notices issued totalling £8,720, 13 joint operations with PSNI, and 4 cross border operations with An Garda Síochána. There were 4 spot checks this quarter and DVA obtained 6 successful convictions relating to 20 offences the value of court fines and costs amounting to £5,040.

### Enforcement Activities

During this quarter, DVA checked 835 vehicles; of these, the largest volume was heavy goods vehicles (including trailers), accounting for 454 (54%) of all vehicles checked. Enforcement checks in quarter three (853) were lower than the previous quarter at 857 (figure 7.1) (table 7.1).

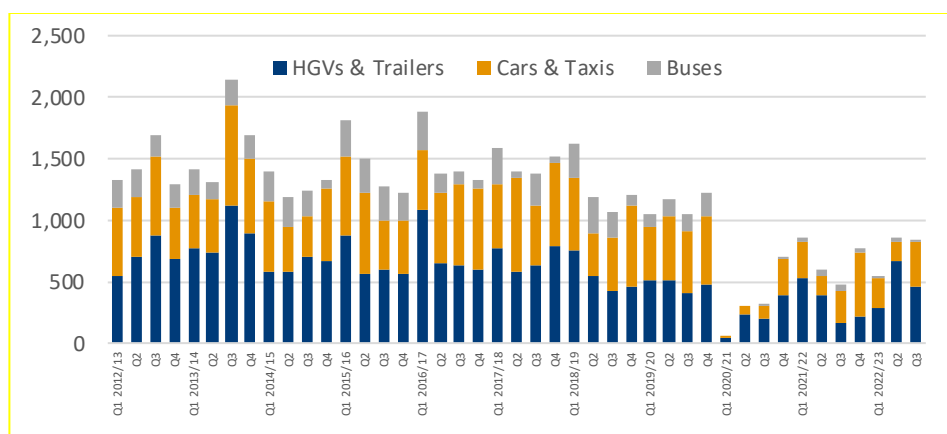
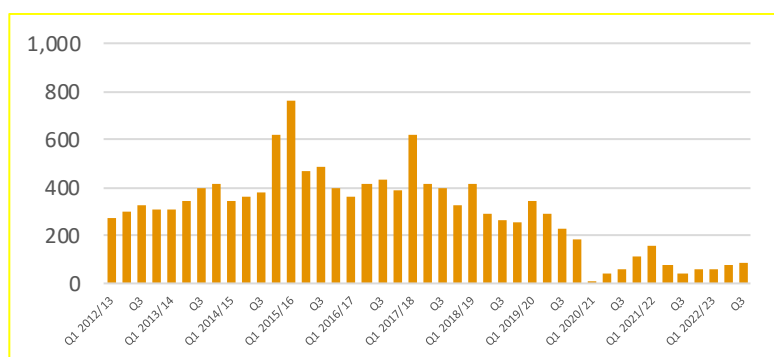


Figure 7.2: Fixed Penalties Issued



DVA enforcement officers issued 86 fixed penalty notices during this quarter, compared with 79 for the previous quarter. Annually fixed penalties in 2021-22 at 337 were below the number issued in 2019-20 (2,041). The total value of fixed penalties issued in this quarter was £8,720 (figure 7.2 and table 7.2).

Figure 7.3: Convictions

There were 6 successful convictions in quarter three, compared with 21 in quarter two. Annually, convictions stood at 429 in 2021/22. (table 7.2 and figure 7.3).

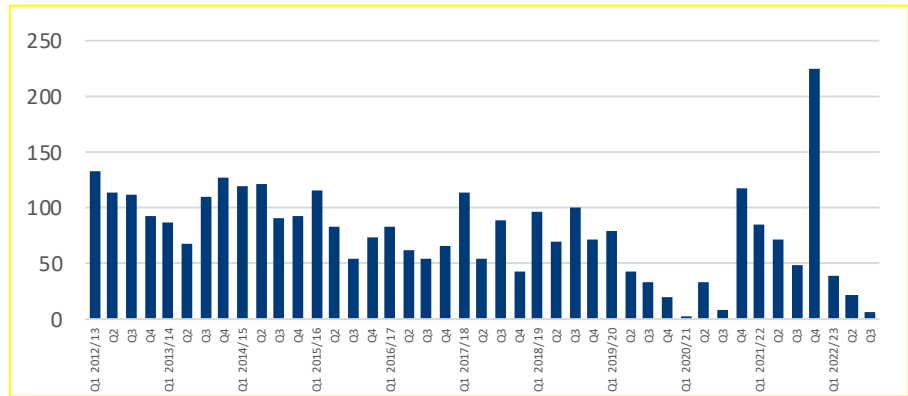
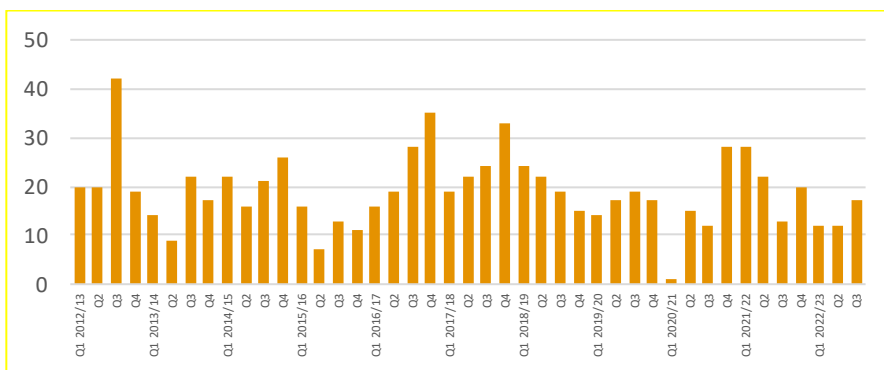


Figure 7.4: Joint or Cross-Border Operations

During this quarter enforcement teams carried out 13 joint operation with the PSNI. , There were 62 in 2021/22 (table 7.3 and figure 7.4). There were 4 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 16 spot checks on School Buses this quarter, the highest quarterly volume in 2022/23 (table 7.4 and figure 7.5).

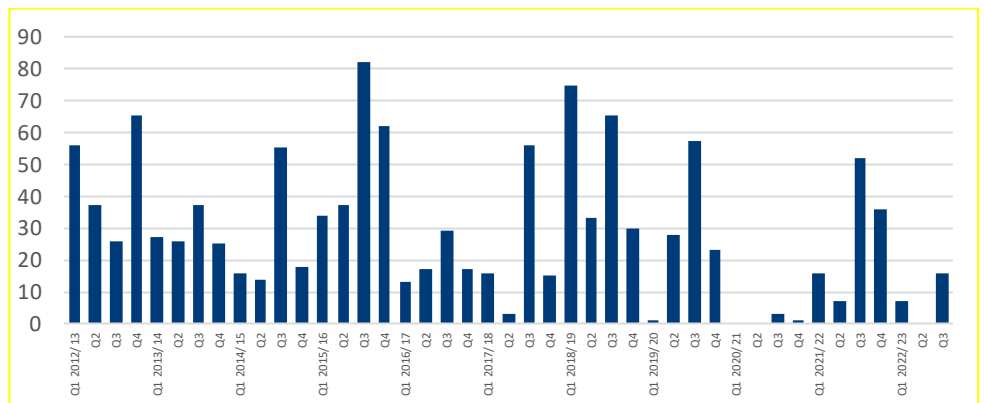


Figure 7.5: School Bus Checks



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 three quarters of 2022/23, from April to December, remained above target levels at 99.7%, 99.2% and 99.6% respectively. Year to date performance to the end of quarter three at 99.5% also exceeded the 90% target level. On a monthly basis, performance was over 99% for eight of the first nine months of this financial year, 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 three quarters of 2022/23, with performance levels for paper applications at 94.3%, 96.0% and 98.3% respectively. Year to date performance to the end of quarter three at 96.1% also exceeded the 90% target level. On a monthly basis, performance for the latest quarter exceeded target levels month on month ranging from 97.9% to 98.6%, keeping performance levels above target for each month in quarters two and three of 2022/23 (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 three.

Figure 8.1: Online Driver Licence Application Waiting Time Performance

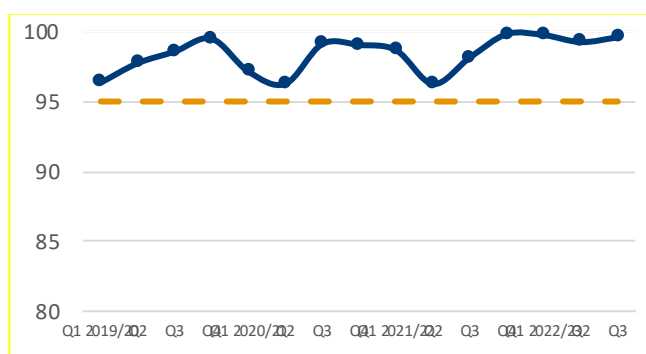
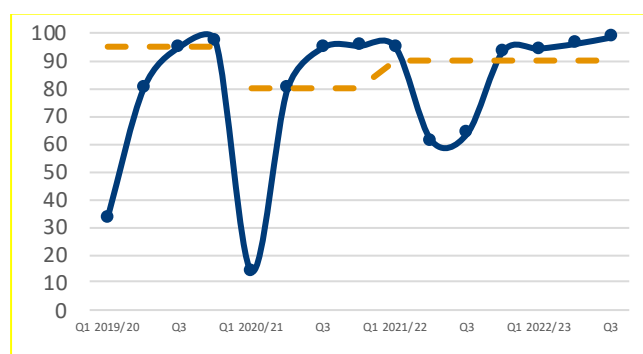


Figure 8.2: Paper Driver Licence Application Waiting Time Performance



(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.

## Copyright statement



Crown copyright 2023

You may re-use this information (excluding logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence v.3. To view this licence visit:

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/>

Alternatively, email:

[psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk)

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