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Produced by:

DVA Statistics,
Driver and Vehicle Agency,
Hydebank House,
4a Hospital Road,
Ballydoughan
Belfast,
BT8 8JL

Contact: Philip Ward

Telephone: 02890 816389

Email: dva.statistics@nisra.gov.uk

Website:

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

Key Findings

- In the third quarter of 2024/25 the DVA delivered 267,253 vehicle tests, 221,438 (82.9%) full tests and 45,815 (17.1%) retests.
- 13,652 vehicles failed to attend a booked vehicle test this quarter, 14.5% (1,950) more than the same quarter the previous year (11,924). This is the second most recorded in the time series, second only to that of the 15,501 reported between January and March 2023 (15,501).
- There were 267,253 vehicle test applications this quarter, a decrease of 7.6% (22,027) compared to the same period in 2023/24 (289,280).
- For all vehicle test applications made this quarter, 96.0% were booked using the DVA online booking system, relative to 95.4% and 94.3% for the same quarter the previous two years respectively.
- The DVA conducted 16,802 driving tests, which is 4.1% (655) more than for the equivalent quarter in 2023/24 with 84.4% (14,181) of these being for private cars.
- There were 16,579 applications for a driving test this quarter, relative to 16,304 for the same quarter last year, an increase of 1.7% (275).
- This quarter 583 candidates failed to attend a booked driving test, 32 more than the 551 who failed to attend for the same period in 2023/24.
- The DVA delivered 22,410 theory tests this quarter, a rise of 7.9% (1,645) relative to the 20,765 tests conducted in the same quarter of 2023/24.
- There were 3,191 customers that failed to attend a booked theory test this quarter, which represents approximately one in seven of all theory tests conducted during this period.
- Online driver licensing application performance at 98.9% for the quarter was well above the 95% target level for online applications.
- Paper driver licensing applications performance at 95.4% was almost 5 percentage points above the 90% target level.
- Into the third quarter of this financial year, 71.8% of all driver licensing transactions were carried out using the DVA online applications facility.
- At the end of December 2024, there were 1,184,605 full and eligible licence holders with private car/light vans entitlement, which is the highest on record.
- DVA were active across the full range of enforcement activities this quarter having checked 606 vehicles, issued 174 fixed penalties notices totalling £27,050 in fines, completed 19 joint operations with the PSNI and 2 cross border operations with An Garda Síochána.

Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Key Findings	<u>2</u>
Introduction	<u>4</u>
1. Vehicle Testing	<u>5</u>
2. Vehicle Licensing and Registration	<u>10</u>
3. Driver Theory Testing	<u>13</u>
4. Driver Practical Testing	<u>16</u>
5. Driver Licensing	<u>21</u>
6. Road Transport Licensing	<u>23</u>
7. Enforcement & Compliance	<u>25</u>
8. DVA Target Monitoring	<u>27</u>
9. Driving and Motorcycle Instructors	<u>28</u>
Notes	<u>29</u>

Introduction

This is the forty-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, operators in the area of regulation and enforcement during quarter three of 2024/25. This covers the period from 1 October 2024 to 31 December 2024.

Please note that DVA services were impacted by industrial strike action on 22 September 2023 and 18 January 2024, and so testing volumes for these months are lower than would have been the case had these been routine working days.

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;
- DVA target monitoring, and
- Driving and Motorcycle Instructors

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 website¹.

Background

The *Driver and Vehicle Agency* (DVA) is an executive agency within the *Department for Infrastructure* (DfI). The DVA was formed on 1 April 2007 as part of the Review of Public Administration, through a merger of two existing Agencies, namely the *Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency* (DVTA) and *Driver and Vehicle Licensing Northern Ireland* (DVLNI).

¹ <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/driver-vehicle-agency-activity-statistics>

Vehicle testing forms the most significant aspect, in terms of volumes, of the work of the Operations Directorate in DVA.

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 that 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. There are currently no restrictions on vehicle testing related to the pandemic. For the latest news and updates, please visit the Motoring page on the NIDirect website².

Temporary Exemption Certificates (TECs) – Private cars only. From 1 June 2024, private cars that were first registered between 1 June 2019 and 31 May 2020 or between 1 June 2017 and 31 May 2018, and have a valid Northern Ireland MOT will be given a Temporary Exemption Certificate (TEC). This means they will not need a vehicle test (MOT) for 12 months from the date their current certificate expires. These certificates will impact to reduce vehicle test applications and vehicle tests conducted volumes whilst exemption certificates remain valid.

Vehicle Test Applications

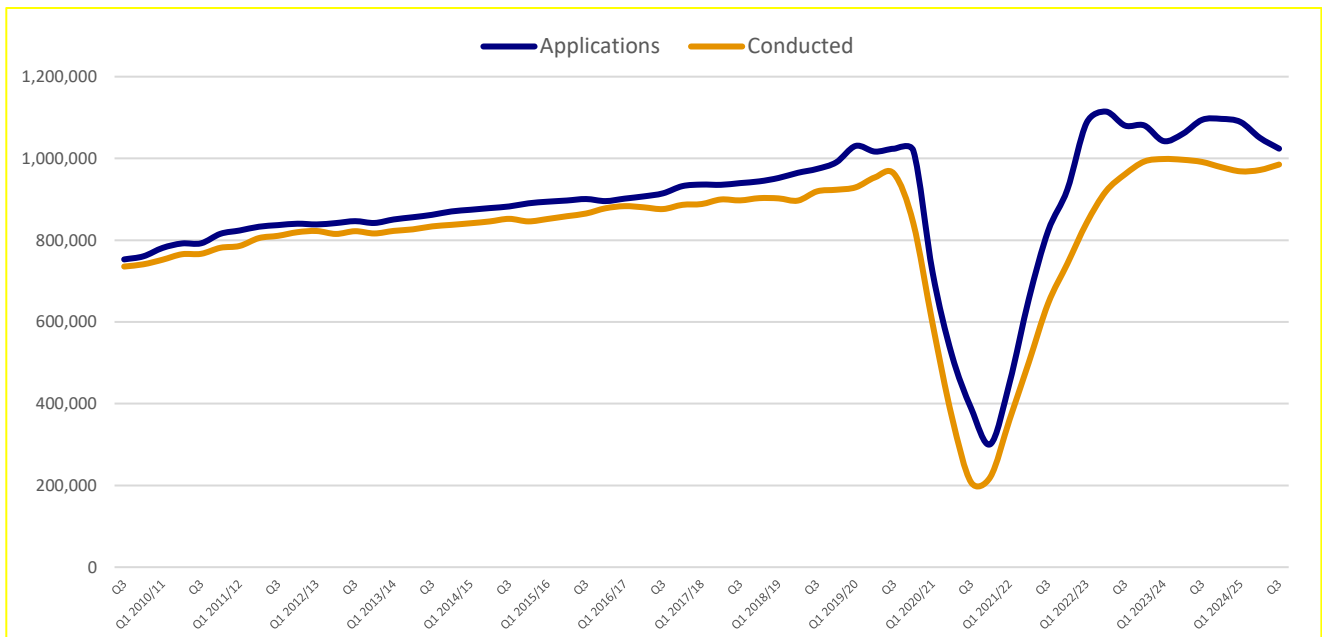
From October to December 2024, the DVA received 267,253 applications for a vehicle test (full and retest), which is just under 8% (22,027) fewer than for the same quarter the previous year 2023/24, and almost 13,000 lower than the previous quarter (279,547) (Table 1.3).

For financial year 2023/24, 1.26 million vehicle test applications were made to DVA, relative to 1.25 million in the previous year, an increase of 1.0% (12,780) for this period (Table 1.3).

In 2023/24 most vehicle test applications were for full tests, which accounted for 86.8% (1.097 million) of all vehicle test applications, the remaining 13.2% (167,080) being vehicle retest applications (Table 1.1). Figure 1.1 below details the rolling four quarterly count for full vehicle test applications and full vehicle tests conducted to the end of December 2024.

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

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



Please note that figures for vehicle test applications include taximeter tests but those for vehicle tests conducted do not.

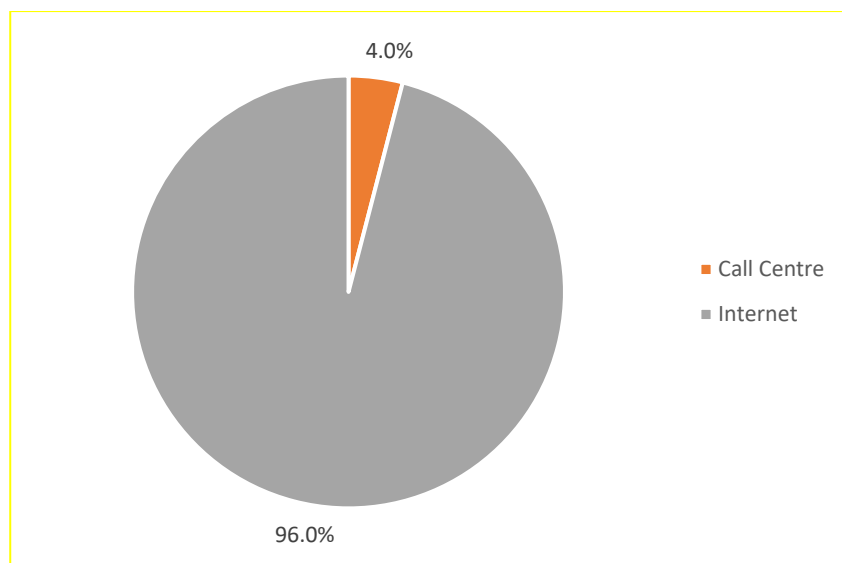
Booking Method

In the third quarter of 2024/25, online vehicle test booking applications accounted for 96.0% (256,473) of all test applications (267,253), a small 0.3 percentage point increase relative to the previous quarter at 95.6%. The remaining 4.0% (10,780) of bookings were made via DVA call centres (Figure 1.2 and Table 1.4).

In 2023/24 of the 1.26 million vehicle test applications, 95.0% (1.20 million) were made using the DVA online booking system, compared with 93.2% in the previous year, and 72.8% in 2018/19.

This is the thirteenth consecutive quarter in which online booking applications have exceeded 90% of all vehicle test bookings (Table 1.4).

Figure 1.2: Vehicle Test Applications by Booking Method.

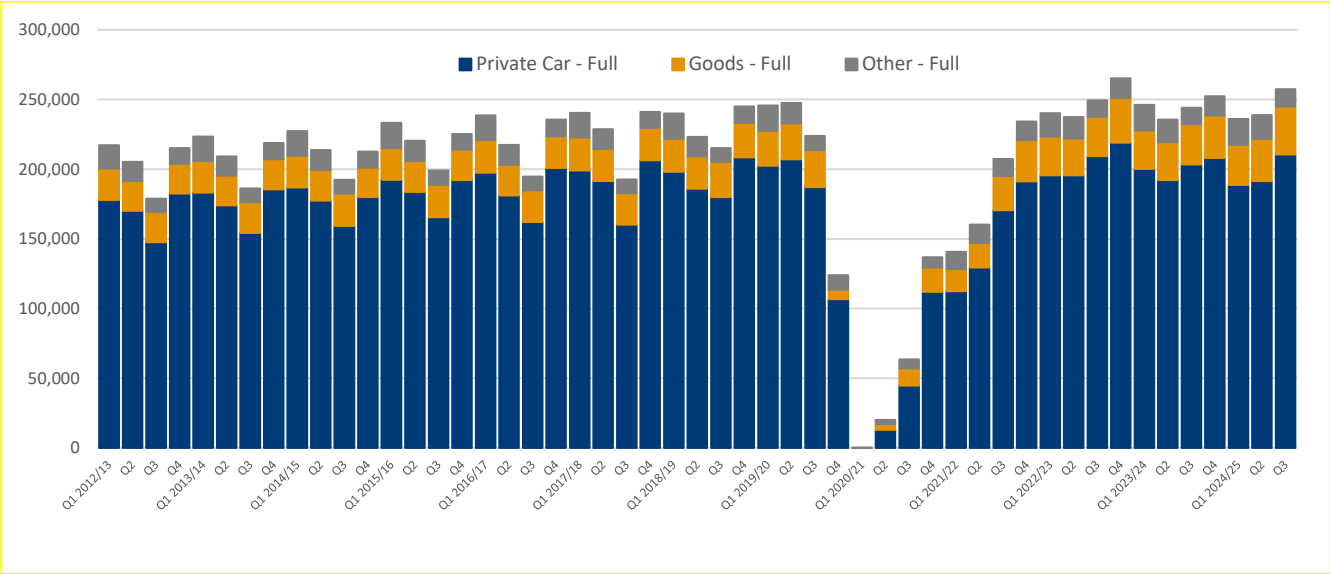


Vehicle Tests Conducted

During the latest quarterly period, October to December 2024, the DVA delivered 301,907 vehicle tests (full and retest), which is 6.4% (18,114) higher than the same quarter in 2023/24 (283,793). (Table 1.7).

From April 2023 to March 2024, DVA delivered approximately 1.139 million vehicle tests, the second highest annual volume since 2008/09, but below that achieved the year before (1.156 million). Most vehicle tests conducted in 2023/24 were full tests, accounting for 85.9% (978,481) of all tests with the remaining 14.1% (160,512) being vehicle retests (Table 1.5). Most full tests were for private cars, accounting for 82.2% (803,831) of all full tests conducted this year (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 which has risen by 8.7% over the five years to 2020-21. This upward trend in vehicle ownership has continued through the post covid era and as at the end of June 2024 there were 1.047 million registered private cars in Northern Ireland (Table 2.13).

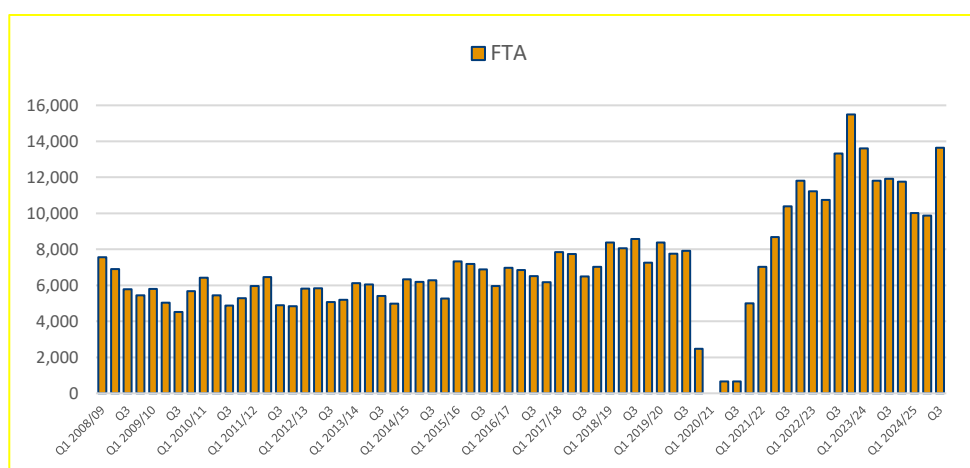
In addition, owners are keeping their cars for longer, as the average age of car stock has continued to increase in recent years to a high of 9.5 years at the end of June 2024, the highest on record. This has resulted in increased numbers of cars and other vehicle types that require DVA vehicle testing services, as detailed in the vehicle tests conducted statistics within this report and tables.

Failed to Attend

This quarter, 13,652 customers failed to attend a booked vehicle test, 14.5% (1,728) higher than the same quarter the previous year (11,924) (Table 1.10 and Figure 1.4). This equates to 4.5% of all conducted tests during this period relative to 4.2% for the same quarter of 2023/24.

For the full financial year 2023/24, 49,101 vehicles failed to present for vehicle testing, the second highest on record, and representing 4.3% of all vehicle tests conducted this year.

Figure 1.4: Vehicle Tests – Failed to Attend



Vehicle Test Pass-Rates

The overall pass-rate for full vehicle tests between October and December 2024 was 81.3%, slightly below that of July and September 2024 (82.1%) and the same quarter last year (82.6%) (Table 1.11 and Figure 1.5).

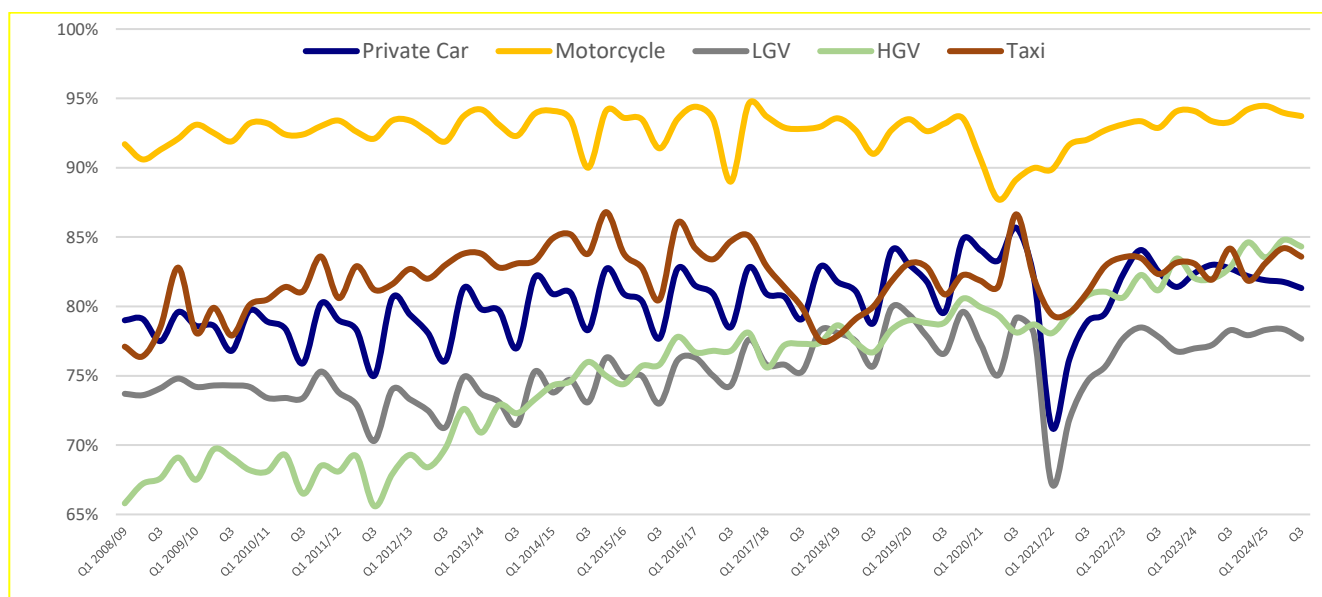
The pandemic era drop in pass-rates would suggest that vehicle owners did not maintain their vehicles during periods of test exemption, although vehicle test pass rates since 2022/23 seem to have trended to and slightly above pre-pandemic levels. This is also the case for private car full tests, with pass rates slightly above 81.0% from the first quarter of 2022/23 onwards.

In financial year 2023/24, the overall pass-rate for full tests was 82.5%, relative to 82.4% for the previous year, and this was on a par with pass levels obtained pre-pandemic era. Pass rates for full tests, varied by test category, from 77.6% for light goods vehicles to 93.8% for motorcycles, with 82.9% for heavy goods vehicles and 82.6% for private cars (for categories where there were at least 2,000 tests), all of which were the same as or slightly above those obtained in the previous year, 2022/23 (Table 1.11).

The overall pass-rate for vehicle retests this quarter at 95.0% is the highest on record being slightly above both the 94.8% for the previous quarter, and 94.8% pass-rate for the same period in 2023/24 (Table 1.12). The current quarterly retest pass rate is comparable to historical re-test pass rates, which maintained very stable levels of approximately 93%-94% over a long period of time prior to the pandemic (Table 1.12).

For the 2023/24 financial year, the overall re-test pass-rate of 94.5% is the highest annual pass rate on record (Table 1.12) and is just over one percentage point higher than for 2021/22 (93.4%). As with full tests, the annual re-test pass-rate varied by category, from 91.2% for LPCV to 94.9% for private cars and 95.6% for motorcycles, for vehicle test categories where there were at least 1,000 tests. Retest pass rates for larger volumes of retests were slightly above those for the previous year (Table 1.12).

Figure 1.5: Full Vehicle Test Pass-Rates



Vehicle Tests by Test Centre

The busiest test centre for vehicle testing during 2023/24 was Newtownards which conducted 134,910 full tests during the year, of which 89.3% (120,519) were for private cars (Table 1.15). Omagh test centre conducted the fewest number of full vehicle tests during this period at 33,953.

Pass rates by test centres for private cars at the end of the third quarter of 2024/25, ranged from 78.4% in Ballymena to 86.5% in Belfast (Balmoral), and 81.3% across all test centres (Table 1.14). Differences in pass rates for private cars and other vehicle types within and between test centres may arise due to several interacting factors including, for example, differences in vehicle ages and the behaviour of customers in terms of vehicle maintenance.

Vehicle Licensing and Registration

Vehicle Licensing for Northern Ireland since July 2014 has been administered by the Driver and the Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) in Swansea.

Vehicle Registrations

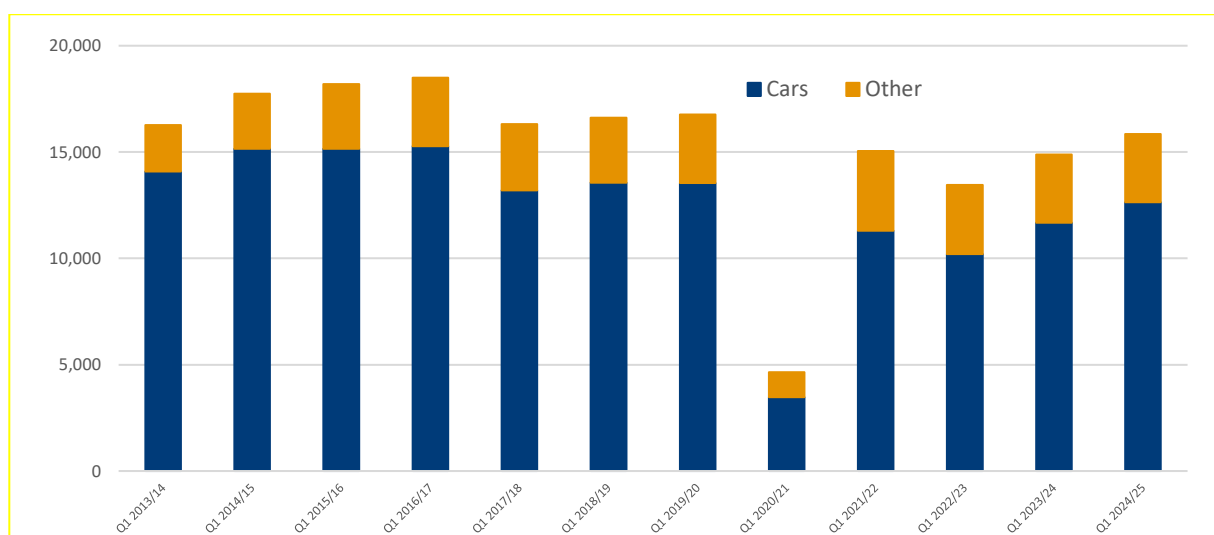
In October 2024, the DVLA changed their release schedule due to resource pressures resulting in fewer updates of vehicle licensing statistics until mid-2025. As a result of this, vehicle licensing data for 2024/25 won't be published until our quarter one 2025/26 report scheduled for release in September 2025. See [Department for Transport Forthcoming Publications - GOV.UK](#) for more information.

This section includes the latest available vehicle licensing data for Northern Ireland covering the period from April to June 2024. During April to June 2024, the DVLA registered 15,842 new vehicles to Northern Ireland, 16.4% (3,117) fewer than the previous quarter (18,959) but 6.4% (957) more than the same quarter in 2023 (14,885) (Table 2.1) (Figure 2.1). Please note that new vehicle registrations exclude vehicles previously registered with the DVLA whose ownership transferred to Northern Ireland during the latest quarter. Taking these vehicles into account, the total number of first-time registrations to Northern Ireland this quarter was 15,957 compared to 19,046 for the previous quarter.

Private cars accounted for 12,641 (79.8%) of all new vehicles this quarter (15,842), which is slightly above the 79.0% for the previous quarter (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 this period when many vehicle dealerships were either closed or operating at reduced capacity to ensure social distancing.

For financial year 2021/22, there were 38,464 new private car registrations in Northern Ireland, 24.3% lower than 2018/19 (50,799) and the lowest financial year total in our series, excluding the pandemic dominated year 2020/21 (Table 2.1). There was a total of 41,189 new private car registrations in the financial year 2022/23, an increase of 7.1% (2,725) from 2021/22 (Table 2.1)

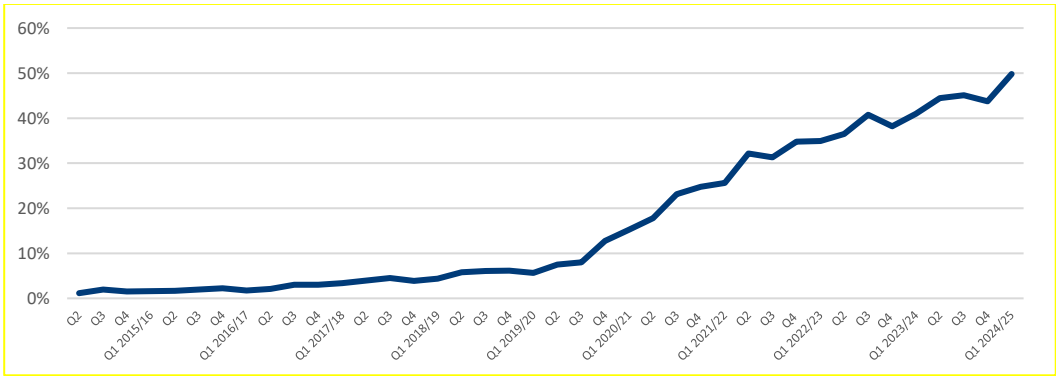
Figure 2.1: New Vehicle Registrations



Top makes for private car first time registrations in quarter one 2024/25 were Volkswagen at 10.5%, just above Hyundai at 7.8%, followed by Toyota and Ford at 7.5% and 6.3% respectively (Table 2.3).

Grey was again the most popular choice of colour for new private cars this quarter, accounting for 27.0% (3,415) of all new car registrations (12,641); Black (18.3%) and Blue (16.8%) 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 fuel³ has increased substantially over the last number of years, rising from 5.8% in quarter two of 2018/19 to a new high of 49.8% in quarter one of 2024/25. Over the same period, the proportion of new diesel cars has declined from 36.5% to 6.8%. This is the fifteenth consecutive quarter that alternative-fuel cars have out-sold diesel cars, in this quarter 6,295 compared with 854 respectively.

Licensed Vehicles

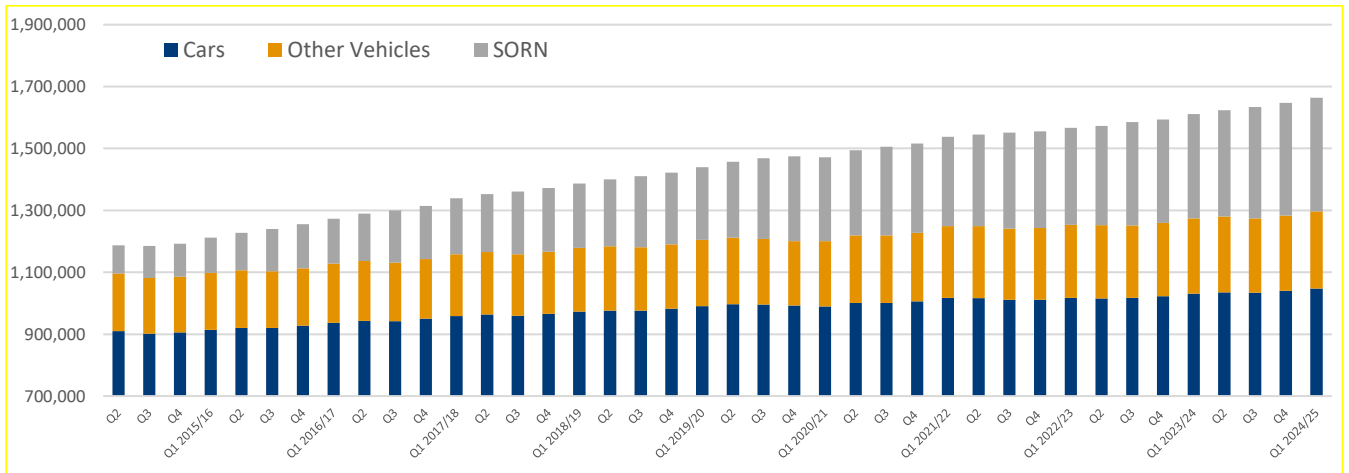
At the end of June 2024 there were 1,296,672 licensed vehicles in Northern Ireland, a rise of 1.0% compared to the previous quarter (1,283,707) and the highest licensed stock volume on record (Table 2.13)

At the end of this quarter, just over 8 in every 10 (80.8%) licensed vehicles was a private car (1,047,461). Private car stock is the highest on record and has risen by 0.7% since the quarter ending March 2024 and is 1.6% (16,046) higher compared to the same quarter in 2023 (1,031,415) (Table 2.13).

Just over 367,680 vehicles had a SORN at the end of March 2024, up by 1.1% (4,030) relative to the previous quarter (363,652). At the end of the current quarter Sorned vehicles represent 22.1% of all vehicle stock in Northern Ireland (1,664,354) (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.

³ Alternative-fuel vehicles are 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.

Figure 2.3: Northern Ireland Vehicle Stock

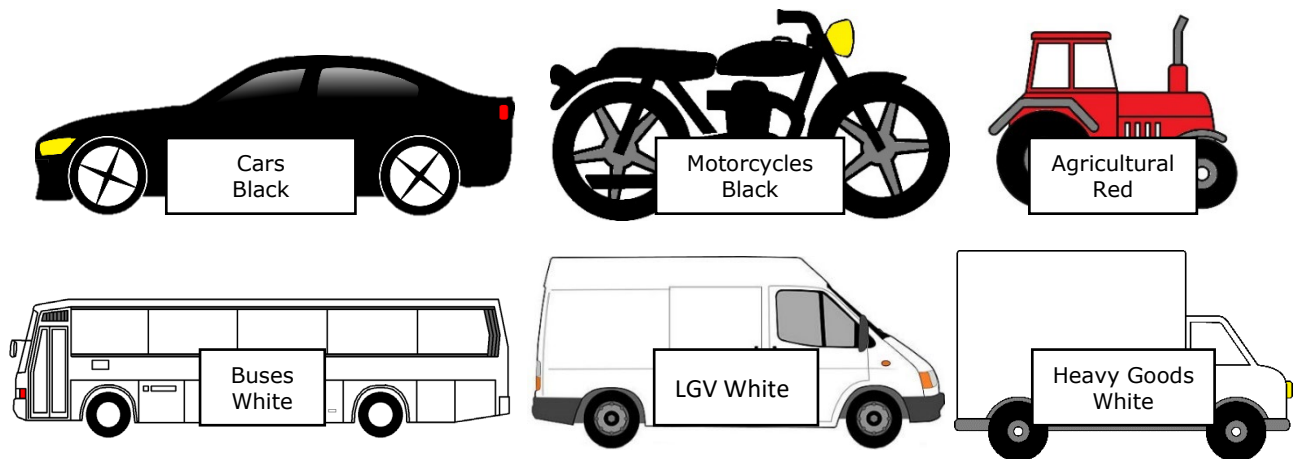


As of 30 June 24, the average age of a licensed vehicle in Northern Ireland was 9.93 years, a small increase on the 9.86 years at the end of the previous quarter in March 2024.

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

- Cars – 9.5 years
- Motorcycles – 14.4 years
- Light Goods – 9.1 years
- Heavy Goods – 10.2 years
- Buses – 10.6 years
- Agricultural – 21.9 years
- Other – 11.1 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 this trend.



3 **Driver Theory Testing**

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) administers driver theory testing under contract with the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) within the Department for Infrastructure (DfI).

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 relating to driver theory testing, please visit the Driver Theory Testing pages on the NIDirect website⁴.

Theory Test Applications and Tests Conducted

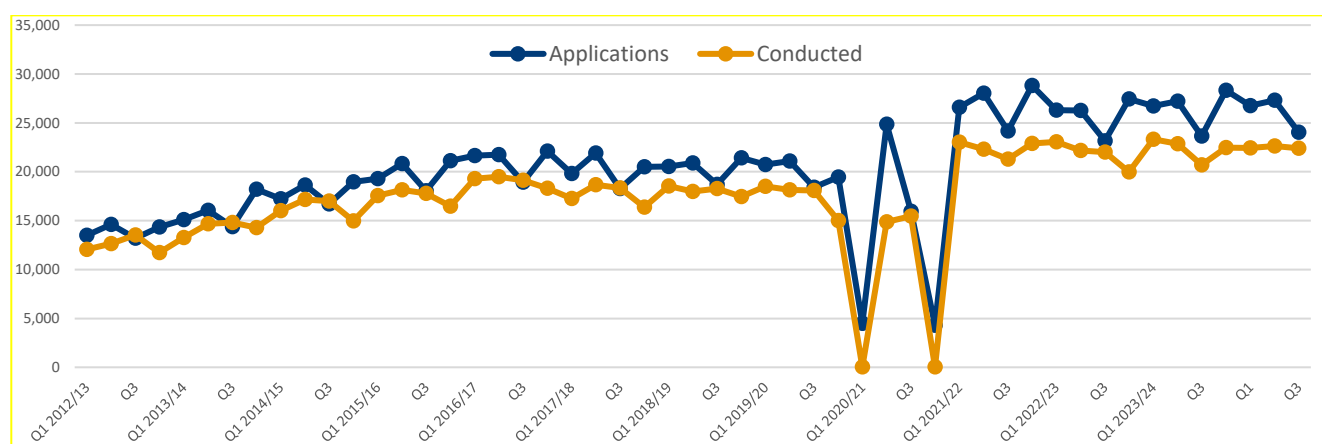
From October to December 2024, the DVA delivered 22,410 theory tests, 7.9% (1,645) more than for the same quarter the previous year in 2023/24 (20,765) (Table 3.2; Figure 3.1).

In the 2023/24 financial year DVA conducted 89,650 theory tests which is 2.6% (2,236) more than in 2022/23 (87,414) and the highest annual total on record from 2009/10. Pre-pandemic annual theory test volumes ranged from 49,969 in 2012-13 to 76,216 in 2016-17.

The DVA received 24,041 theory test applications this quarter, which is 1.4% (338) more than the 23,703 for the same quarter the previous year, and 11.9% (3,261) fewer than applications received during the second quarter of 2024/25 (27,302) (Table 3.1, Figure 3.1)

Private cars accounted for almost nine in every ten theory test applications (85.3%) and the same for theory tests conducted (86.3%) during the third quarter of 2024/25 (Table 3.1 and 3.2).

Figure 3.1: Theory Test Applications and Conducted



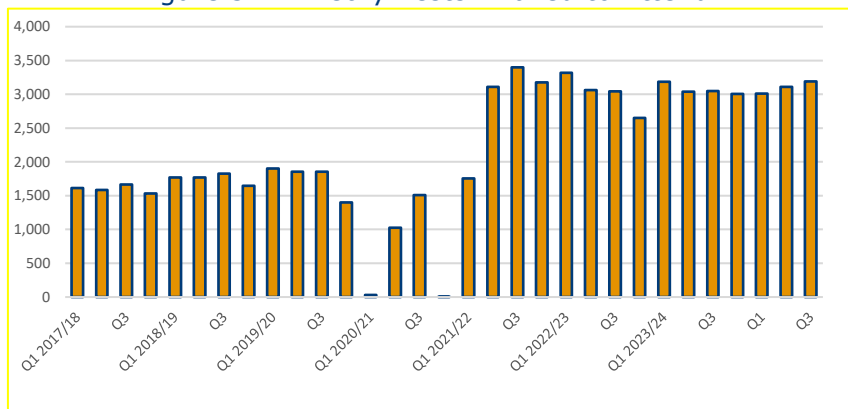
⁴ <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/driving-theory-test>

Failed to Attend

During this quarter, 3,191 customers failed to attend a booked theory test. This represents 14.2% of all theory tests conducted during this period (Table 3.3 and Figure 3.2).

In financial year 2023/24, 12,289 customers did not attend a booked theory test, the highest on record, and representing 13.7% of all theory tests conducted in the same period (89,650).

Figure 3.2: Theory Tests - Failed to Attend



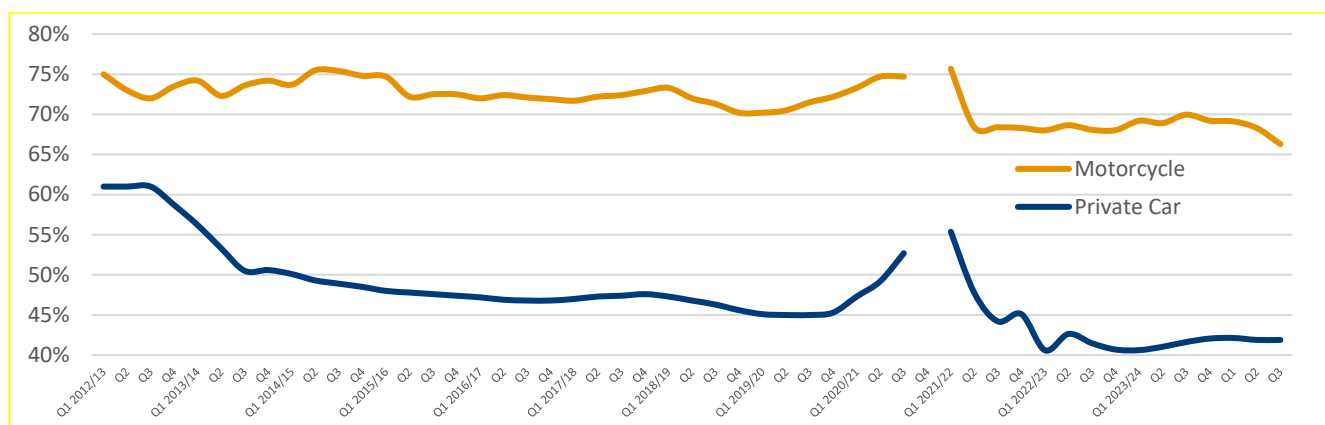
Theory Test Pass-Rates

In 2023/24 financial year, the theory test pass-rate for private cars was 42.1% an increase of 1.4 percentage points relative to the pass rate in 2022/23 of 40.7%, but lower than annual pre-pandemic pass rates which were at the mid 40 percents (Table 3.4). At the end of the third quarter of 2024/25 the theory test pass-rate for private cars stood at 41.1%, relative to 41.7% for the equivalent quarter the previous year.

The annual motorcycle theory test pass-rate in 2023/24 was 69.2% up by 1.2 percentage points from 2022/23 (68.0%). This is still somewhat short, though, of the percentages achieved during pre-pandemic levels in 2019/20 when the pass-rate was 72.2%. Higher pass-rates for motorcycles relative to cars, may in part be due to candidates having already taken a private-car theory and driving tests. The motorcycle pass rate for this quarter of 2024/25 was 59.7% which is the lowest on record and more than 11 percentage points lower than the 71.0% achieved in the third quarter of 2023/24.

Whilst not directly comparable due to the nature and purpose of the tests, the pass-rate for the taxi theory test in 2023/24 was 29.2%, an increase of 3.3 percentage points from 2022/23 (25.9%) and similar to the level of 31.5% obtained in 2019/20 (Table 3.4). The latest quarterly pass-rates for PCV (Module 2) and LGV (Module 2) were 63.1% and 70.0% respectively (Table 3.4). Figure 3.3 displays the rolling four quarter averages for private car and motorcycle theory testing.

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

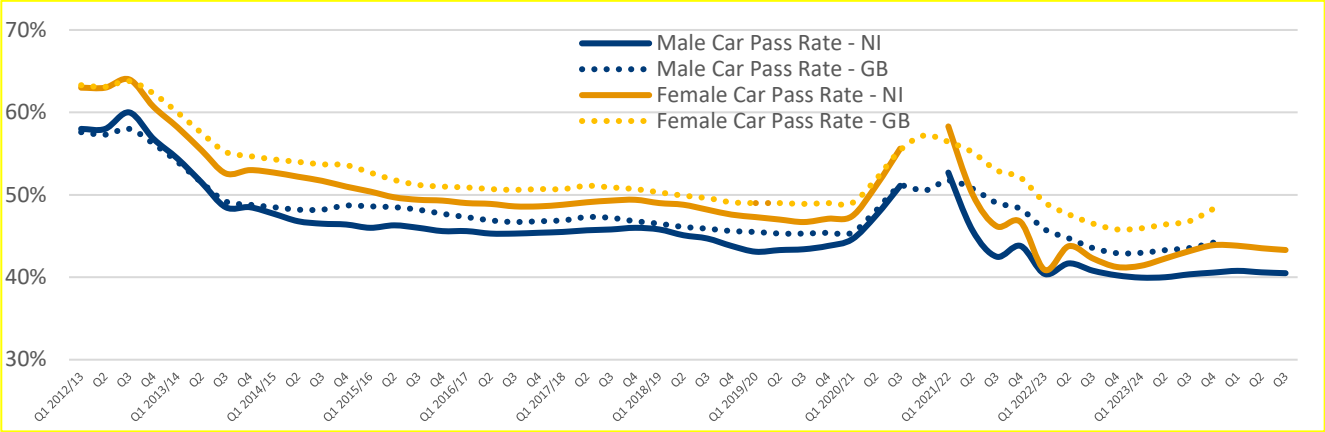


Continuing the trend over the past decade, theory test pass-rate by gender for private cars has shown females with higher test pass-rates than males (Table 3.7).

For 2023/24 financial year the pass-rates were 43.9% for females and 40.6% for males, a difference of 3.3 percentage points, which is higher than the 1.0 percentage point difference in 2022/23. Although pass-rates had been gradually decreasing from 2012 to 2020, since the resumption of theory testing in 2020, data would suggest that pass-rates for both genders have decreased coming out of the pandemic period and that the gender gap between females and males remains but may be trending back to pre-pandemic levels. There is insufficient data to conclude conclusively that there is a permanent reduction in the gender gap level in private car theory pass rates. Both 'gender-gap' and post-pandemic pass-rate trends are similar to those in Great Britain for the period for which we have comparable data (Figure 3.4).

For the twelve months to the end of December 2024, private car theory test pass-rates stood at 43.3% and 40.5% for females and males respectively, with an overall pass-rate of 41.7%. The latest equivalent figures for GB to the end of March 2024, are higher for females, males and overall, at 48.3%, 44.2% and 46.0% respectively (Table 3.7).

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 until 20 November, again for a third time between 27 November and 10 December. The most recent suspension began on 23 December 2020, reopening on 23 April 2021. During quarter four, only off-road motorcycle and certain LGV tests were able to continue. DVA are currently testing across all driver test categories.

For the latest news and updates, please visit the Practical Driving Test page on the NIDirect website⁵.

Driving Test Applications and Tests Conducted

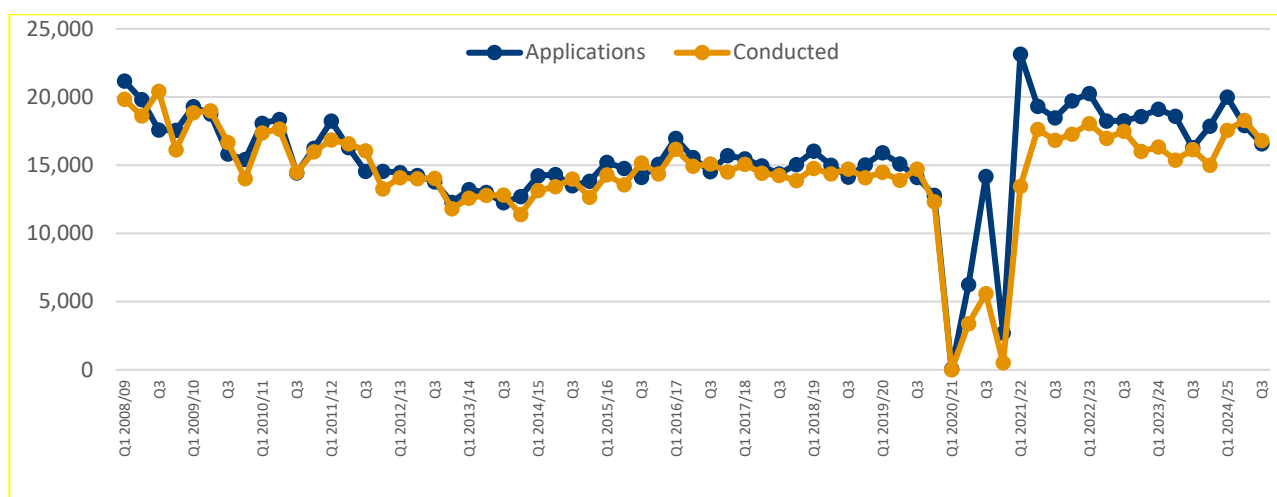
Please note that DVA services were impacted by industrial strike action on 22nd September 2023 and 18th January 2024 so testing volumes for these periods are lower than would have been the case had these been routine working days. The DVA conducted 16,802 driving tests in the third quarter of 2024/25, compared with 16,147 for the same quarter last year, an increase of 4.1% (655) between these two equivalent periods (Table 4.3 and Figure 4.1).

At the end of the third quarter of 2024/25, the DVA had received 16,579 applications for a driving test, an increase of 1.7% (275) relative to the same quarter in 2023/24 (16,304).

In 2023/24 financial year, the DVA delivered 62,874 driving tests, 8.3% (5,666) lower than the number of tests delivered in 2022/23 (68,540), but 13.4% (7,431) higher than pre-pandemic levels in 2019/20 (55,443). Just over 8 in every 10 driving tests conducted in 2023/24 were for private cars (51,562) (Table 4.3).

In 2023/24, the DVA received 71,882 applications for a driving test, which is 4.6% (3,468) lower than the previous year 2022/23 (75,350), but 24.1% (13,963) higher than pre-pandemic levels in 2019/20 (57,919). Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, trends for both test applications and tests conducted over the previous five years had remained relatively steady, but post pandemic increased applications reflected higher numbers of young people presenting for a driving test, although recent trends suggest that driver tests conducted may be returning to higher levels than those in pre-pandemic years, reflecting a sustained increase in underlying demand for driver testing.

Figure 4.1: Driving Test Applications and Conducted



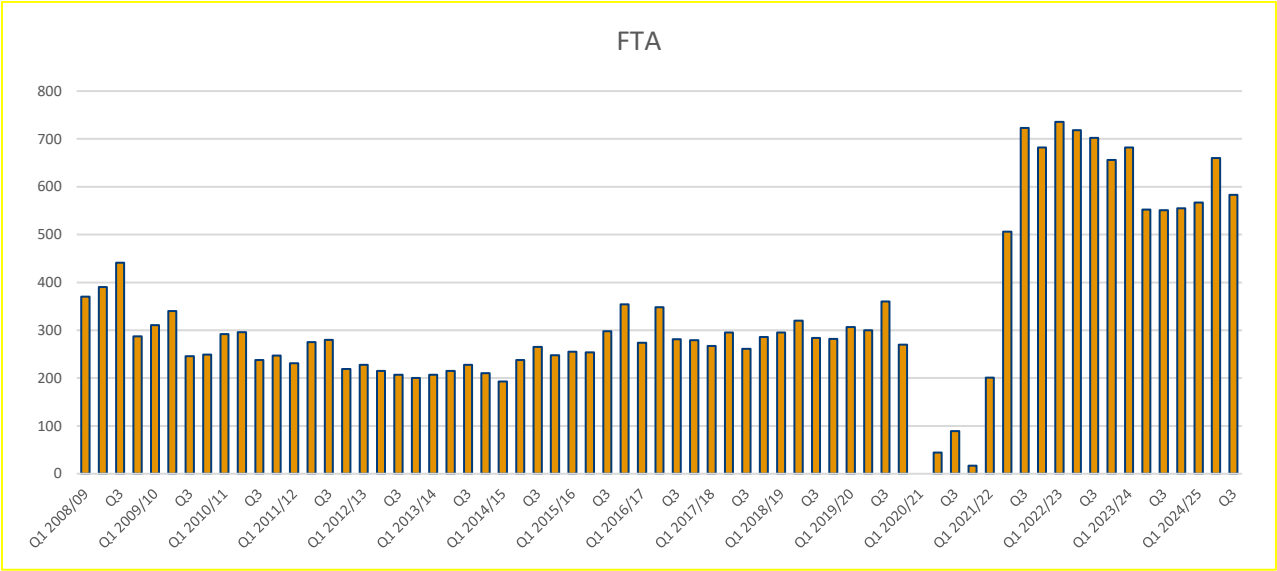
⁵ <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/book-your-practical-driving-test-online>

Failed to Attend

In this the third quarter of 2024/25, there were 583 driving test appointments for which customers failed to attend (FTA) a paid for driving test, 5.8% (32) more than for the same quarter in 2023/24 (551) (Table 4.4 and Figure 4.2).

In financial year 2023/24, a total of 2,340 candidates failed to present for their driving test, the second highest on record, and representing 3.7% of all driving tests conducted in this period (62,874) (Table 4.4).

Figure 4.2: Driving Tests – Failed to Attend

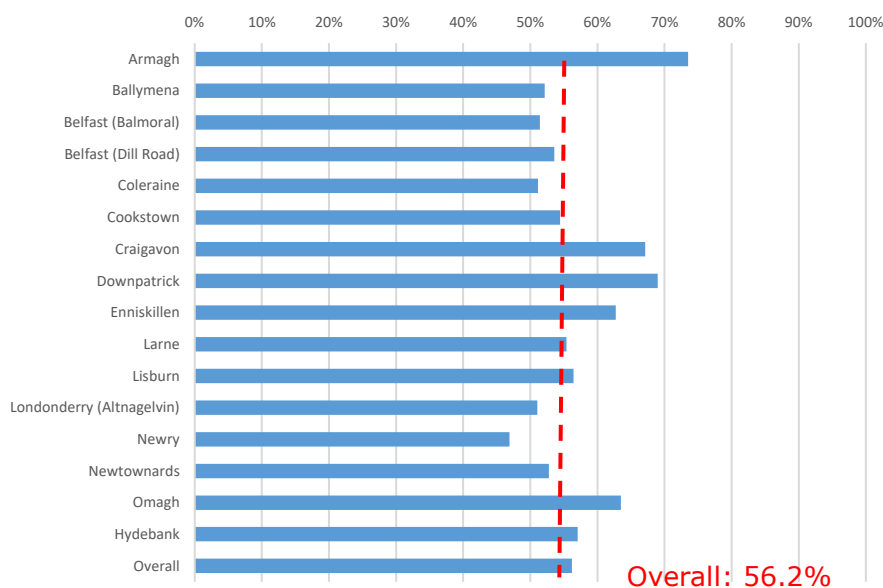


Driving Tests by Test Centre

The number of private car driving tests delivered this quarter ranged from 419 in Armagh to 1,470 in Newtownards and 1,543 in Larne (Table 4.6). Across all test centres and using a rolling four-quarter average, pass rates for private cars driving tests ranged from 46.9% at Newry to 73.5% at Armagh, relative to average of 56.2% for all test centres (Table 4.7b).

At least part of the difference in driving test outcomes between test centres will be due to differential driving ability and learning 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, Q1 (Rolling 4-quarter Averages)



Driving Test Pass-Rates

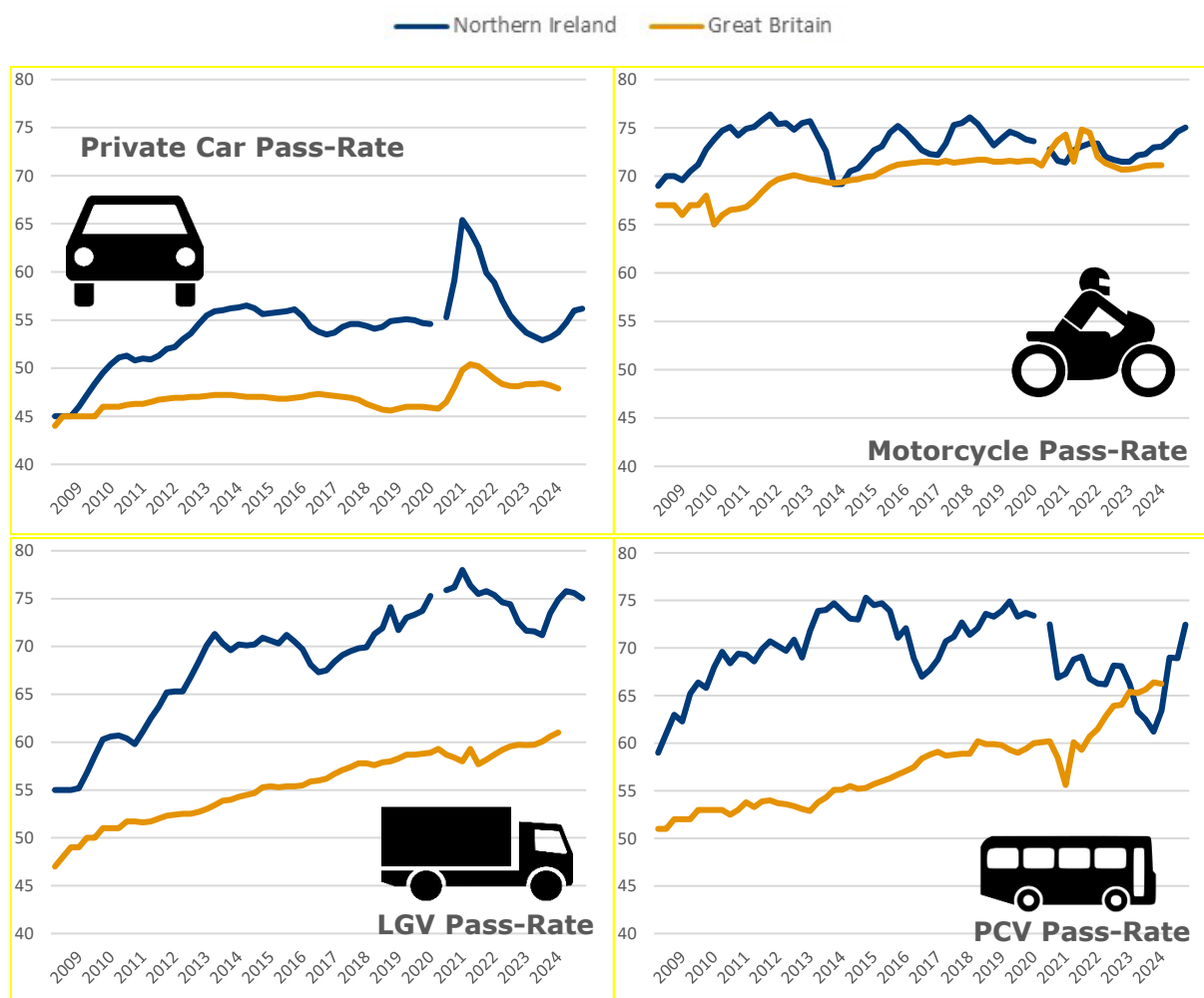
From October to December 2024, the private car driving test pass-rate was 54.5%, relative to 53.6% for the same quarter in 2023/24, and 57.9% for the previous quarter July to September 2024 (Table 4.5).

Prior to the pandemic, pass-rates for all test 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 66.1% in quarter three of 2020-21, pass rates for this category have been trending downwards 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 56.2% for this quarter, which is 3 percentage points above that for the equivalent figure at the end of quarter three in 2023/24 (53.2%). The rolling four quarter average pass rate is now comparable to pre-pandemic pass-rates of typically 54%-56% (Table 4.10 Figure 4.4)

Using the same rolling 4-quarter average, pass-rates for private cars and LGV are generally higher in Northern Ireland compared with the equivalent rates in Great Britain where we have comparable data, and overall rates are slightly higher here than in GB for motorcycle tests (Table 4.10 & Figure 4.4). Pass rates for PCV in 2023/24 are slightly lower for NI than GB, reflecting the downward trend in PCV pass rates seen in NI in recent years. 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 (Table 4.10).

Figure 4.4: Driving Test Pass-Rates (Rolling 4-Quarter Average)



Driving Test Pass-Rates by Gender

Historically to pre-pandemic years, a clear 'gender-gap' was apparent in private car driver testing pass-rates, based on a four-quarter rolling average. Since driving testing resumed in the summer of 2020, this gap has narrowed considerably and remained much lower throughout 2022/23, to the end of 2023/24 and into the third quarter of 2024/25.

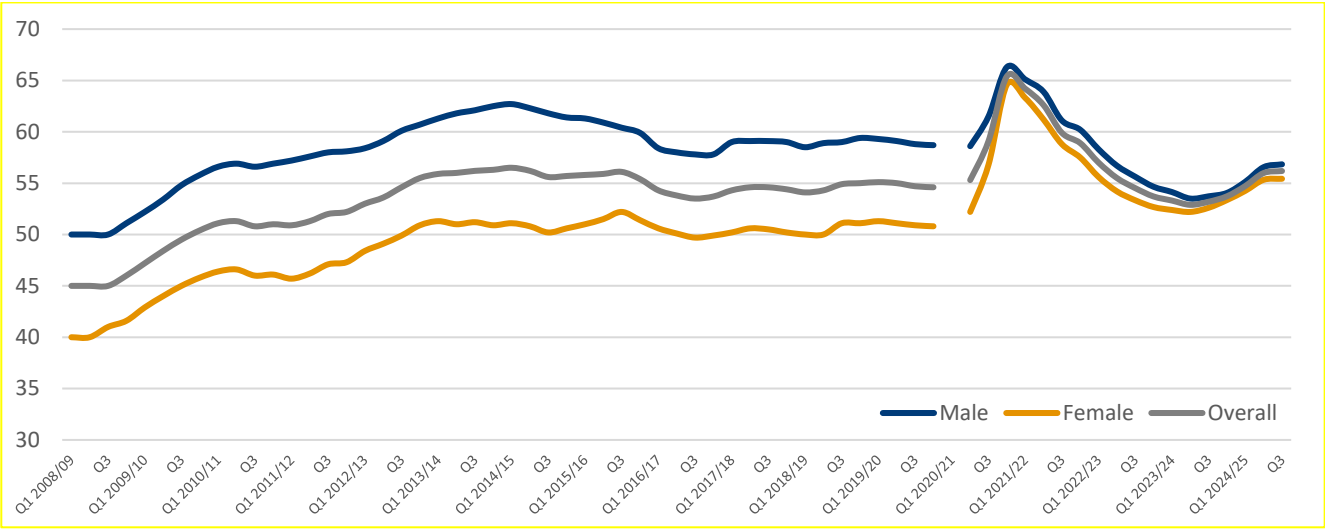
To the end of December 2024, the rolling four-quarter average car test pass-rate for males was just over one percentage point higher than for females, at 56.8% and 55.4% respectively; this compares with 53.7% and 52.6% to the end of December 2023, and 55.6% and 53.3% to December 2022 (Table 4.10 and Figure 4.5).

This gender gap is also now substantially narrower than the 6 to 7 percentage point gap present in Great Britain (GB) statistics pre-pandemic. The gap in GB between males and females has also reduced from over 5 percentage points in quarter one of 2021/22 to 2.6 percentage points in last quarter of 2023/24 (Table 4.10). GB data is not available to allow comparison over four quarters to the end of quarter three in 2024/25 (Table 4.10).

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.

Most test centres offering private car driving tests show this gender gap disparity, to varying degrees. However, based on the same four-quarter rolling average, pass-rates for private car testing for females were higher than those for males in five testing centres, with the highest percentage point differences in Armagh (77.6% against 70.1%) and Cookstown (52.8% against 56.8%). Other centres where female pass rates were higher than those for males were Downpatrick, Newtownards and Hydebank (Table 4.7b).

Figure 4.5: Private Car Driving Test Pass-Rate by Gender Q1 (Rolling 4-Quarter Averages)



Whilst a gender gap in favour of males is also apparent in Great Britain for private cars, motorcycle pass rates are in fact similar with rolling four-quarter average pass rates for males and females at 71.1% and 71.4% respectively to the end of quarter four 2023/24 (Table 4.10). This is in marked contrast to Northern Ireland where motorcycle pass-rates differences between males and females are relatively large and have remained so post pandemic, with pass-rates of 76.1% and 65.2% respectively at the end of this quarter into 2024/25, representing almost 11 percentage points of a difference between the two.

However, in contrast to Northern Ireland, GB pass-rates for large goods vehicles are consistently higher for females relative to males, typically showing a 5 to 6 percentage point difference, though this gap seems to be trending up recent years. The latest figures for GB to the end of quarter four 2023/24 shows the rolling four-quarter average pass rates for females at 66.9% compared with 60.3% for males, a difference of 6.6 percentage points (Table 4.10).

5 Driver Licensing

The DVA is responsible for driver licensing in Northern Ireland. DVA issues and, where appropriate, withdraws driver licences in respect of drivers of private cars, motorcycles, goods vehicles, buses, and other vehicle types.

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 that year they 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 now processes all driver licensing applications it receives.

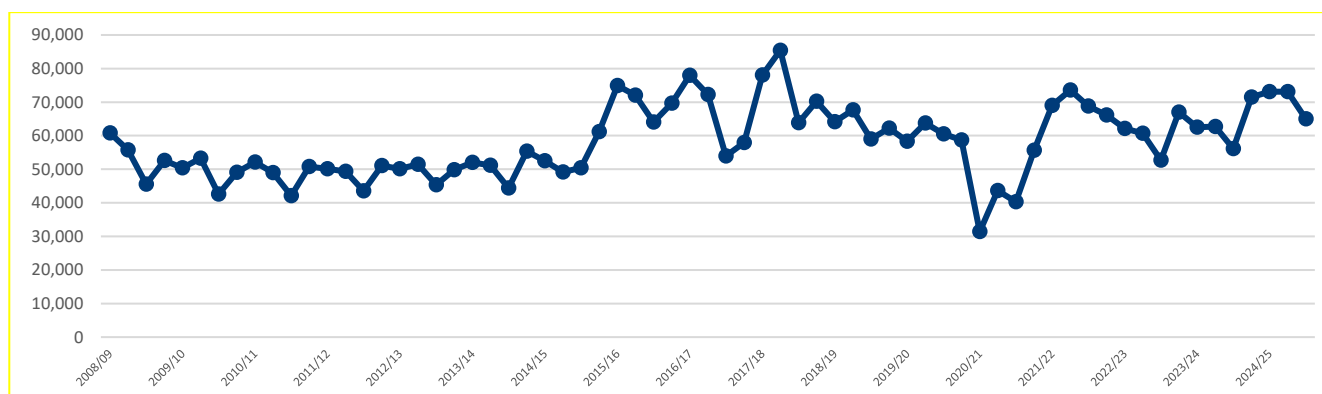
There is a new table detailing online transactions as a percentage of all equivalent transactions during the first quarter of 2024/25 and for financial year 2023/24. Please refer to Table 5.3a Driver Licensing Online Transactions.

Driver Licensing Transactions

Ordinary driver licensing transactions during 2023/24 totalled 252,820, over 4% (10,178) above that for 2022/23 (242,642) (Figure 5.1).

In the third quarter of this year, 2024/25, the DVA completed 65,003 ordinary driver licensing transactions, which is almost 16% (8,915) more relative to same quarter for the previous year (56,088) (Table 5.1).

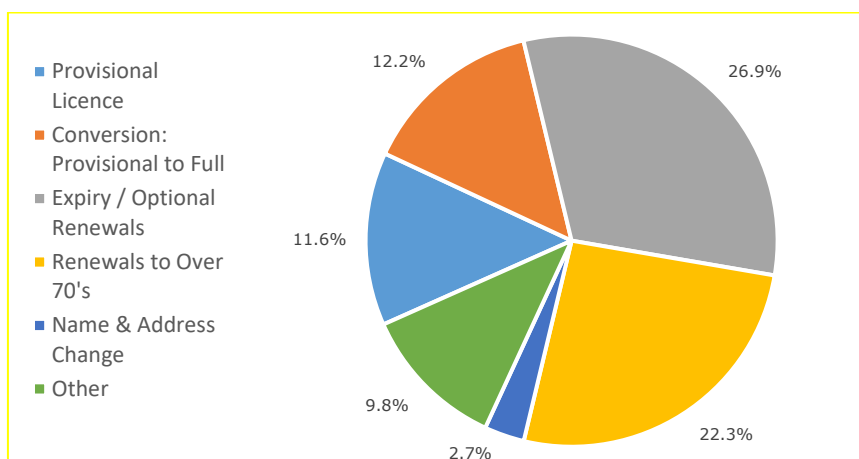
Figure 5.1: Driver Licensing Transactions



The number of Ordinary first licences (*provisional licences*) issued in this quarter was 7,567, with 17,485 expiry/optional renewals, and 14,469 renewal licences issued to people aged over 70 years old.

Expiry/Optional Renewals accounted for 26.9% (17,485) of all ordinary licensing transactions followed by Renewals to over 70's at 22.3% (14,469) of all Ordinary Licences transactions (Table 5.1 and Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2: Ordinary Driver License Transactions by Type



In 2023/24 DVA completed 20,130 vocational driver licensing transactions, the second highest on record since 2008/09. In this quarter the DVA completed 4,509 vocational transactions, 21.5% (1,232) fewer than for the equivalent quarter in 2023/24 (5,741) (Table 5.2). In 2023/24, 76% of all renewal licence applications were made using the DVA’s online driver licensing facility, with 68% of all ordinary and vocational licence applications being made this way. For October to December 2024 this had increased to 78% of all renewal licences and 72% for all relevant licensing applications being made online.

Driver Licence Stock

At the end of December 2024, there were over 1.184 million full and eligible driver licence holders (excluding provisional licence holders). This is the highest on record and represents 76.0% of the population aged 15 years and over (Table 5.4).

The number of provisional licence holders with private car/light van entitlement decreased relative to the previous quarter from 110,017 to 109,638 at the end of December 2024, a fall of just over 0.3% (379). This is the third consecutive drop in this figure after being on the rise quarter on quarter for over a year, since that of December 2022 (Table 5.8).

Driver licence holders aged 65 years and above with full private car/light van entitlement accounted for 21.5% (250,973) of all licence holders with this entitlement (1,167,693) (Table 5.4).

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

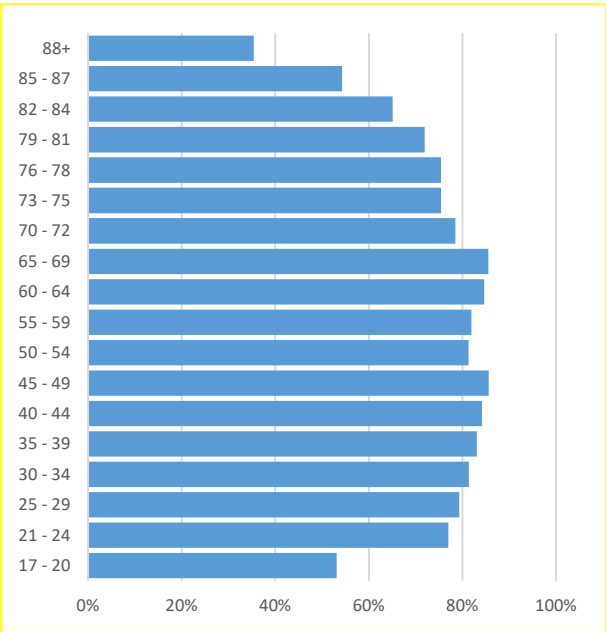


Figure 5.4: Full Car Licence Holders

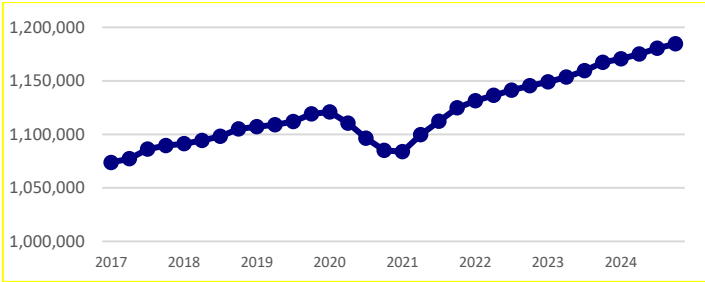
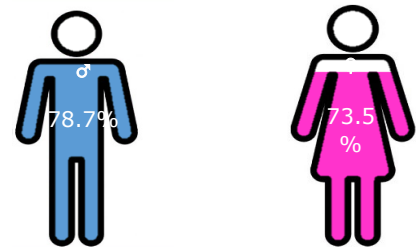


Figure 5.5: Proportion of Population with a Full Car Licence – by Gender



At the end of December 2024, an estimated 76.0% of Northern Ireland’s population had a full and eligible private car/light van drivers licence entitlement. This is based on the latest published NISRA mid-year population estimates for 2023⁶ (Table 5.8). For males and females, the equivalent percentages were 78.7% and 73.5% respectively (Figure 5.5).

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

Road Transport Licensing

The Passenger Transport Licensing division in DVA is responsible for issuing and withdrawing licences in respect of taxi drivers and bus operators. The Transport Regulation Unit within DfI is responsible for goods vehicle licensing in Northern Ireland, and not the DVA.

Whilst most 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 website⁷.

Please note that due to changes in the DVA Transport Licensing System, licenses issued for this quarter and going forward are counted with respect to when relevant licences are created. This change was made for operational reasons to improve customer services and the collation of these statistical series. There has been no significant impact or need to alter historical figures arising from these changes.

Taxi Licensing

Taxi Vehicles

During 2023/24 the DVA Public Transport Licensing Division issued 7,858 taxi vehicle licences, 7.9% (577) above the equivalent number in 2022/23 (7,281) (Table 6.1). At the end of December 2024, licensed taxi vehicle stock stood at 7,221, relative to 7,106 at the same time for the previous year, and 7,223 for the previous quarter (Table 6.2 and Figure 6.1).

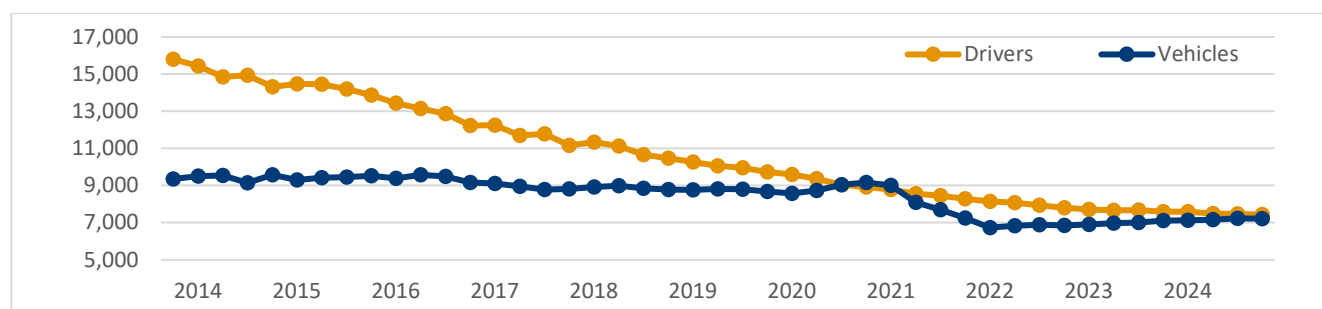
Taxi Drivers

In 2023/24 DVA issued 1,976 taxi driver licences, compared to 1,535 at the end of 2022/23, up by 28.7% (441) during this period (Table 6.1). In the third quarter of the current financial year (2024/25) DVA issued 504 taxi driver licences compared to 461 for the equivalent quarter in 2023/24 and 538 for the previous quarter (Table 6.1). At the end of this quarter there were 7,431 licensed taxi drivers, down by 2.0% (154) relative to the end of quarter three for 2023/24 (7,585), and the lowest on record (Table 6.2 and Figure 6.1).

Taxi Operators

As with taxi drivers, the numbers of taxi operators have been trending downwards in recent years, falling by 10 operators from 1,127 at the end of 2022/23 to 1,117 at the end of 2023/24. For 2024/25, the number has fluctuated, falling to 1,108 at the end of June 2024, the lowest on record before rising slightly by 16 operators to 1,124 at the end of quarter 2 and then falling by ten to 1,114 for this current quarter to December 2024 (Table 6.2).

Figure 6.1: Licensed Taxi Driver and Taxi Vehicle Volumes



⁷ <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/motoring>

Bus Licensing

Bus Vehicles

In 2023/24, DVA issued 3,590 public service vehicle (bus) licences, an increase of 3.4% (118) relative to 2022/23 (3,472) (Table 6.1). The number of licensed bus vehicles at the end of this quarter was 3,429 compared with 3,348 for the same quarter the previous year, which is the highest since that of the 3,489 recorded to the end of June 2022 (Table 6.3).

Bus Operators

During financial year 2023/24, DVA issued 4,261 bus operators' licences in respect of bus vehicles, 4,241 international and 20 national, compared with 3,134 in 2022/23 of which 3,073 and 61 were international and national respectively. (Table 6.1)

At the end of December 2024 there were 200 licensed bus operators, the same number recorded as last quarter and relative to 191 for the period ending December 2023 (Table 6.3).

Goods Licensing

There were 5,390 licensed goods operators at the end of December 2024, which is 1.0% (52) more than at the end of the same quarter the previous year (5,338), and 259 more than that of quarter one (5,131) which was the lowest on record within the last ten years. Associated with the 5,390 operators were 21,967 goods vehicles, of which 11,642 (53.0%) were standard international, 1,864 (8.5%) standard national and 8,461 (38.5%) restricted (Table 6.4).

7 Enforcement & Compliance

Compliance and Roadside Enforcement within the DVA is responsible for the enforcement of legislation pertaining to roadworthiness standards and public transport licensing 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 enforcement services, whilst protecting officers, drivers, and operators from risks of infection.

During the third quarter of 2024/25, DVA compliance and roadside enforcement teams were active across the full range of enforcement activities, having checked 606 vehicles, issued 174 fixed penalty notices amounting to £27,050 in fines, carried out 19 joint operations with the PSNI, 2 cross border operations with An Garda Síochána, and undertook 59 spot checks on school buses (Table 7.1 to Table 7.4).

Enforcement Activities

Enforcement checks during 2023/24 (2,761) were almost 5% (133) fewer than in 2022/23 (2,894), but they remained well below levels achieved prior to the pandemic at circa 5,000 checks per annum. There were 606 spot checks this quarter 14.4% (87) above the 519 for the same quarter in 2023/24 (Figure 7.1 and Table 7.1).

Figure 7.1: Vehicle Checks

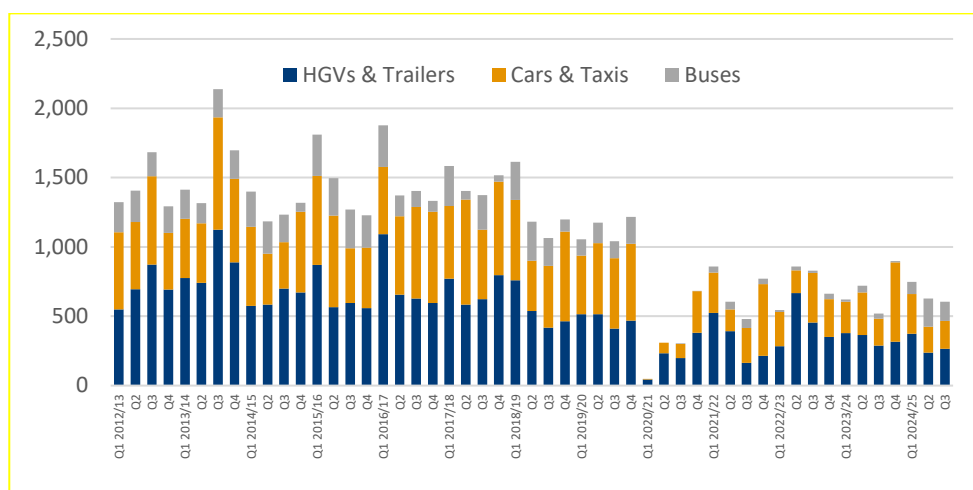
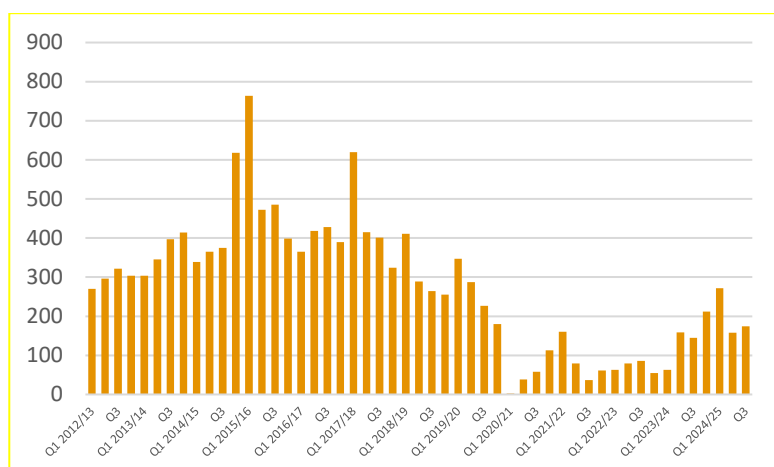


Figure 7.2: Fixed Penalties Issued



Enforcement officers in 2023/24 issued 579 fixed penalty notices which is more than double that for 2022/23 (283) but below half that for 2018/19 (1,219). The total value of fixed penalties issued in 2023/24 amounted to £81,230 in fines.

In the third quarter of this financial year 2024/25, DVA issued 174 fixed penalty notices amounting to £27,050 in fines relative to 158 and £28,590 respectively for the previous quarter (Figure 7.2 and Table 7.2).

Figure 7.3: Convictions

There were 73 successful convictions during 2023/24 the same as in 2022/23.

This period to December 2024 saw 29 convictions in respect of 85 offences, relative to 33 convictions and 66 offences respectively for quarter two 2024/25 (Table 7.2 and Figure 7)

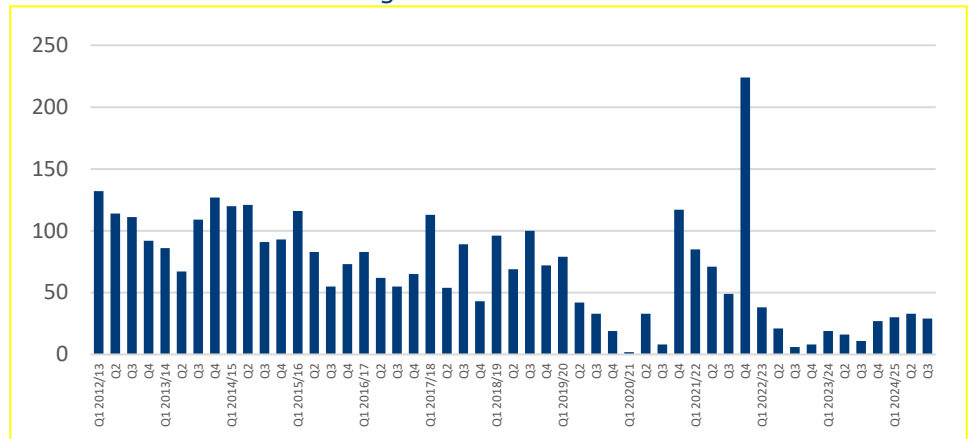
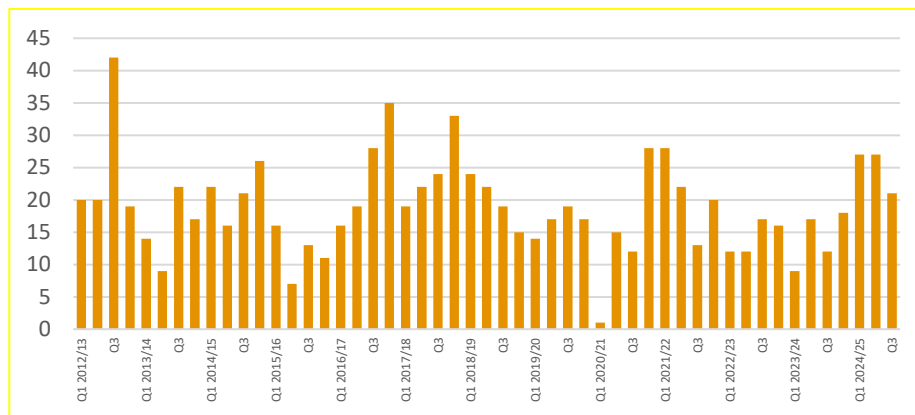


Figure 7.4: Joint and Cross-Border Operations

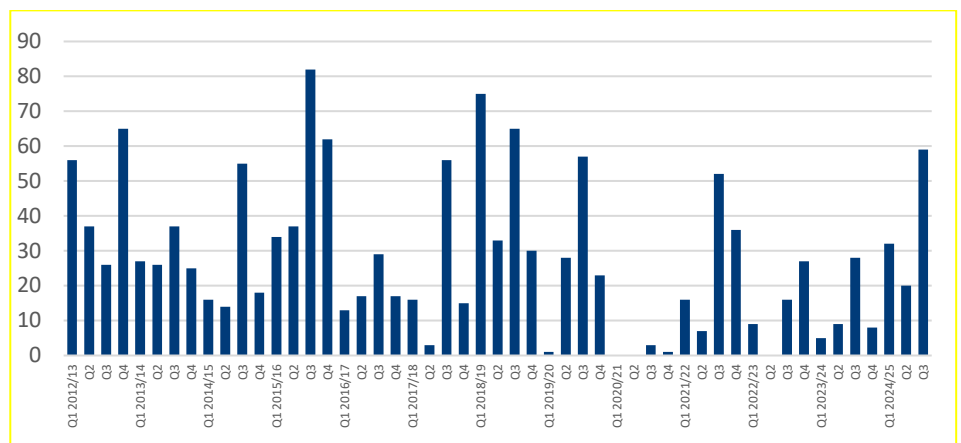


During 2023/24 there were 39 DVA joint operations with the PSNI, relative to 36 for 2022/23.

In this quarter, DVA conducted 19 joint operations with the PSNI and 2 cross border operations with the PSNI, the Road Safety Authority, and An Garda Síochána (Table 7.3 and Figure 7.4).

Figure 7.5: School Bus Checks

In 2023/24 DVA carried out 50 School Bus checks relative to 52 in 2022/23. There were 59 spot checks on School Buses in this the third quarter of 2024/25, the highest in a quarter since the 65 carried out between October and December 2018. (Table 7.4 and Figure 7.5).



DVA Target Monitoring

In 2020/21, and in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the DVA developed new targets through which it monitors driver licensing processing times and performance. The previous reported targets for Driver and Vehicle Testing are no longer applicable or reported, 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 processing for driver licensing applications in 2023/24 at 98.7% was 3.7 percentage points above the 95% target level for the year. Quarterly performance reached over 97.0% in every quarter and over 99.0% for the latest two quarters standing at 99.8% at the end of quarter four. Into the third quarter of 2024/25 online driver licensing application performance at 98.9% continued to exceed the target level of 95% by 3.9 percentage points (Figure 8.2) (Table 8.1).

Paper applications performance was 96.5% for 2023/24 financial year, 6.5 percentage points above the 90% target level, and higher than the 92.6% achieved the previous year in 2022/23. Quarterly performance was above target for each quarter in 2023/24 ending the year at 96.2% for quarter four and never dropping below 95.0% for any quarter within this year. Paper driver licensing applications performance at 98.0% for quarter 1 2024/25 was the highest on record but has since dipped to 95.4% for this period to December 2024, although still 5.4 percentage points above the 90% target level (Figure 8.2) (Table 8.1).

Please note that reported performance levels include a small number of records potentially outside the scope of the target, meaning that actual performance against target is being slightly under-reported. Work remains ongoing to identify and account for these records in future reporting.

Figure 8.1: Online Driver Licence Application Waiting Time Performance

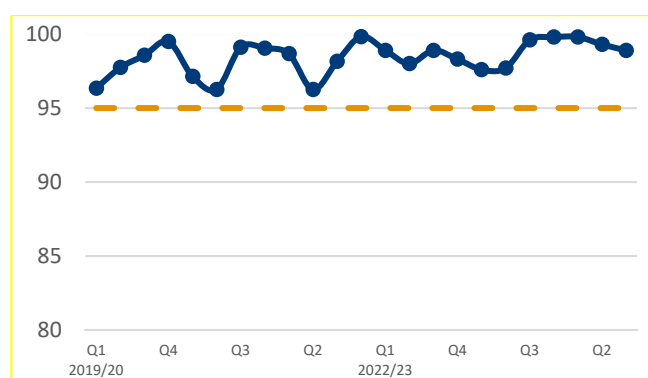
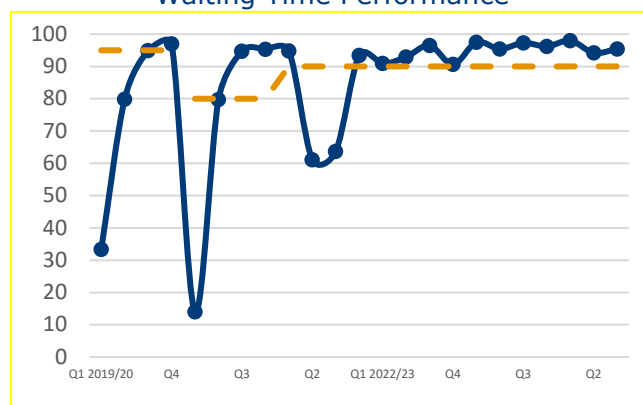


Figure 8.2: Paper Driver Licence Application Waiting Time Performance



(Note this section does not have National Statistics accreditation but continues to have Official Statistics status).

The DVA is responsible for the maintenance of Approved Driving Instructors (ADI) and Approved Motorcycle Instructors (AMI) registers. Please note that the next update to this section will be when the quarter four report for 2024/25 is published in May/June 2025.

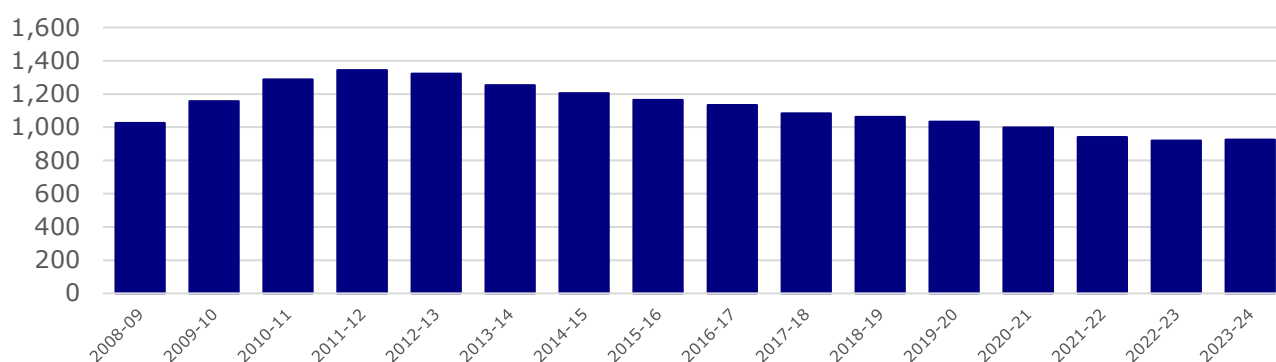
Volumes.

As of 31st March 2024, 926 ADI were registered with DVA, slightly more than the 919 for the end of 2022/23, and over 100 fewer than the 1,034 registered at the end of 2019/20. Please note that the development of a new Approved Instructor System (AIS) has enabled DVA to create automated reporting which classifies data differently to before. However, this new method does not impact previously published ADI figures (Figure 9.1) (Table 9.1).

Of the 926 ADI registered at the end of 2023/24, 83.8% (776) were male and 16.2% (150) were female: a proportion that is broadly unchanged over the past ten years.

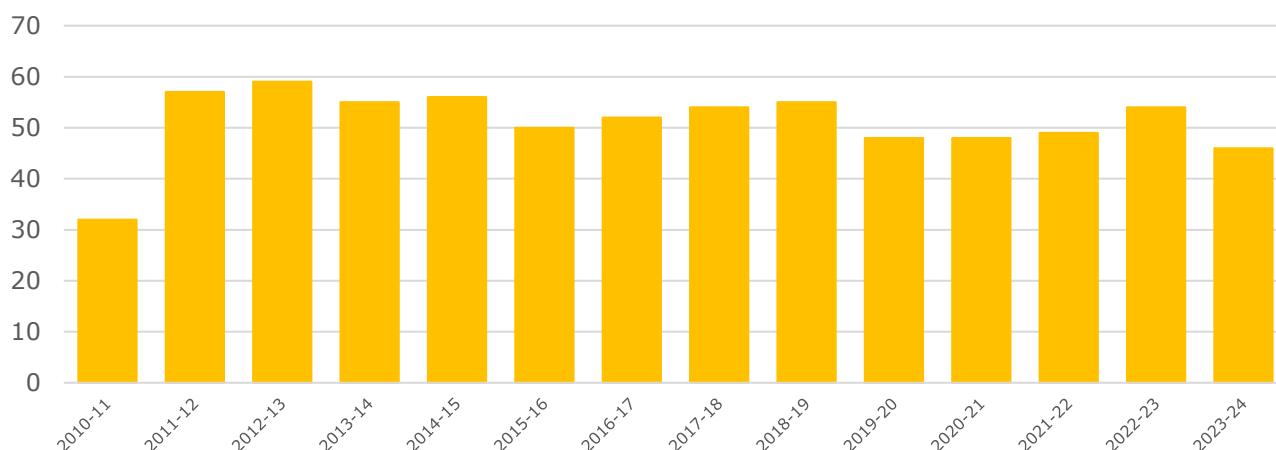
There were 38 new ADI registrants this year (2023/24), up by 28 on 2022/23 (10), with 71 leaving the register during this period. Given recent increased levels of demand for driver testing (Table 4.3) it is difficult to explain the downward trend in Approved Driving Instructors over recent years.

Figure 9.1: Approved Driving Instructors in Northern Ireland



There were 49 registered AMI at the end of 2023/24, slightly below the 54 registered in 2022/23 and unlike ADI there has been no noticeable downward trend in AMI over the last several years which has remained relatively stable (Figure 9.2).

Figure 9.2: Approved Motor Cycle Instructors in Northern Ireland



Test Volumes & Pass-Rates

The numbers undertaking each exam-element of the ADI assessment process during 2023/24 were higher than for the previous year 2022/23 for Theory and Hazard Perception and Instructional Ability with respective increases from 150 to 241 and 48 to 102 respectively. Numbers taking the Driving Ability element of the process fell by 1 from 108 to 107 in the same period (Table 9.3).

The pass-rate for the Theory & Hazard Perception test in 2023/24 was 37%, and 75% and 48% for the Driving Ability and Instructional Ability tests respectively, relative to 47%, 56% and 38% respectively in 2022/23. Note that changes in pass-rates from year to year may be due to small number variability for each test within the assessment process (Table 9.3 and Table 9.4).

Notes

National Statistics

On the 24 March 2015, the UK Statistics Authority accredited this series as National Statistics. National Statistics are accredited official statistics. These accredited official statistics were independently reviewed by the Office for Statistics Regulation in March 2015. They comply with the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics and should be labelled 'accredited official statistics'. The OSR website contains further details at: [Accredited official statistics – Office for Statistics Regulation \(statisticsauthority.gov.uk\)](https://www.statistics.gov.uk/publication/driver-and-vehicle-statistics-in-northern-ireland). 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>. DVA statisticians produce them free from any political interference and undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs.

Our statistical practice is regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR).

OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics that all producers of official statistics should adhere to.

You are welcome to contact us directly with any comments about how we meet these standards, at: DVA.Statistics@nisra.gov.uk.

Alternatively, you can contact OSR by emailing regulation@statistics.gov.uk or via the OSR website.

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 be deemed 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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