



# Taxi Statistics for Ireland



## Bulletin Topics:

- Overall SPSV Fleet Numbers
- Vehicle Licences Issued
- SPSV Fleet Profile
- SPSV Driver Licences
- SPSV Contact Management
- Comments and Complaints
- Compliance Activity

# Small Public Service Vehicle Statistics for Ireland 2016

## Glossary

<b>Dispatch operators</b>	Those who provide a booking service or other facility to arrange SPSV journeys
<b>Hackney</b>	An SPSV which must be pre-booked and cannot ply for hire on the street or stand at taxi ranks. The fare for the journey must be agreed in advance with the customer. Hackneys may not use bus lanes and may not be fitted with a taximeter
<b>Limousine</b>	An SPSV evidently suited by reason of its style and condition to be used for ceremonial, corporate or other prestige purposes, which must be pre-booked and cannot ply for hire on the street or stand at taxi ranks. The fare must be agreed in advance. Limousines may not use bus lanes and may not be fitted with a taximeter
<b>Local Area Hackney (LAH)</b>	A hackney licensed for a designated pick up area (usually with a radius of 5-7km from the applicant's residence) specifically to address transport deficits that would otherwise not be addressed in certain rural areas, particularly where lack of commercial viability for a full time SPSV service means such services are not provided
<b>SPSV</b>	Small Public Service Vehicle
<b>Taxi</b>	An SPSV which can ply for hire on the street or stand for hire at taxi ranks or be pre-booked by or for a passenger. It must carry prescribed branding and be fitted with a taximeter, printer and roofsign. It can use bus lanes when working
<b>Wheelchair Accessible Hackney (WAH)</b>	A hackney which meets a number of additional vehicle specifications designed to allow use by at least one person seated in their wheelchair with at least one other passenger
<b>Wheelchair Accessible Taxi (WAT)</b>	A taxi which meets a number of additional vehicle specifications designed to allow use by at least one person seated in their wheelchair with at least one other passenger
<b>Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV)</b>	An SPSV which meets a number of additional vehicle specifications designed to allow use by at least one person seated in their wheelchair with at least one other passenger

# Introduction



This statistical bulletin is a publication of the National Transport Authority. It focuses on statistics for taxis and other small public service vehicles.

The National Transport Authority (the “Authority”) is a statutory body established by the Minister for Transport on 1 December 2009. On 1 January 2011, the Authority subsumed the Commission for Taxi Regulation, and became responsible for the regulation of the small public service vehicle sector, i.e. small public service vehicles, together with their drivers, owners and associated services, including booking services. The regulatory framework for the industry comprises the Taxi Regulation Acts 2013 and 2016, together with Taxi Regulation (Small Public Service Vehicle) Regulations 2015 and the Taxi Regulation Act 2013 (Maximum Fares) Order 2015. Unlike many analogous jurisdictions, SPSV services are regulated at a national level.

The rationale for SPSV regulation is to ensure that passengers have a safe vehicle for their journey, with appropriate insurance in place, driven by a driver who has been vetted by An Garda Síochána and, in the case of taxis, with a pre-established and verified charging system. While there are many other aspects to the overall regulatory system, these are the foundation elements, focussing on passenger safety and protection.

In Ireland, small public service vehicles (SPSVs) are public transport vehicles with seating for up to eight passengers in addition to the driver. There are currently six categories of SPSV:

- Taxi
- Hackney
- Wheelchair Accessible Taxi
- Wheelchair Accessible Hackney
- Local Area Hackney
- Limousine

The Authority is the licensing authority for SPSVs and dispatch operators. This includes the granting and renewal of vehicle and dispatch operator licences, together with all associated licencing, vehicle inspection, technical and compliance activity. These licences require renewal on at least an annual basis, allowing the Authority to monitor the quality of the vehicles and service provided.

The operation of an SPSV vehicle not only requires that the vehicle is licensed as an SPSV but that the driver is the holder of a valid SPSV driver’s licence as well as a standard driving licence. An Garda Síochána is the licensing authority for SPSV driver licences. A current SPSV driver licence permits the holder to drive all categories of SPSV and is normally valid for a period of five years. The Authority, working closely with An Garda Síochána, administers the application and renewal processes, together with the issue of SPSV driver identification cards. Vetting remains the responsibility of An Garda Síochána.

The Authority also provides the Skills Development Programme for SPSV operators which is designed to assist SPSV operators to develop the range of skills needed to operate in the SPSV industry on a day-to-day basis. New applicants for an SPSV driver’s licence must complete the Skills Development Programme and pass the SPSV Driver Entry Test, which comprises two modules covering both regulatory industry knowledge and area knowledge for the county in which the entrant wishes to operate.

The Authority is responsible for setting the National Maximum Taxi Fare. Only taxi journey fares are controlled by way of a maximum ceiling, on the principle that all other journeys (hackney/limousine) are pre-booked with a pre-arranged fare. A fare review is carried out approximately every two years to monitor and adjust for changes in the operating costs and market environment facing the taxi industry. Maximum taxi fares had been unchanged since 2008. In 2015, on foot of the 2014 review recommendations, a fare increase of approximately 4% on average was applied, coupled with a simplification of the fare structure. This was implemented through the Taxi Regulation Act 2013 (Maximum Fares) Order 2015. A review is currently underway for the 2017-2018 period.

1

# Overall SPSV Fleet numbers



The years following the liberalisation of the SPSV industry saw an increase in the number of vehicle licences, rising from 13,637 in 2000 to a peak of 27,429 just before the Irish economy entered severe recession in 2008.

Since then, reduced customer demand, and higher vehicle standards and driver testing requirements, led to a reduction in the overall fleet by 24% to a total of 20,804 active vehicle licences as of 31 December 2016. Table 1 and Figure 1 illustrate the change in the numbers of active SPSV licences from 2007 to 2016.

Figure 1: Active Small Public Service Vehicle Licences by Year, 2007-2016

## Active SPSV Licences

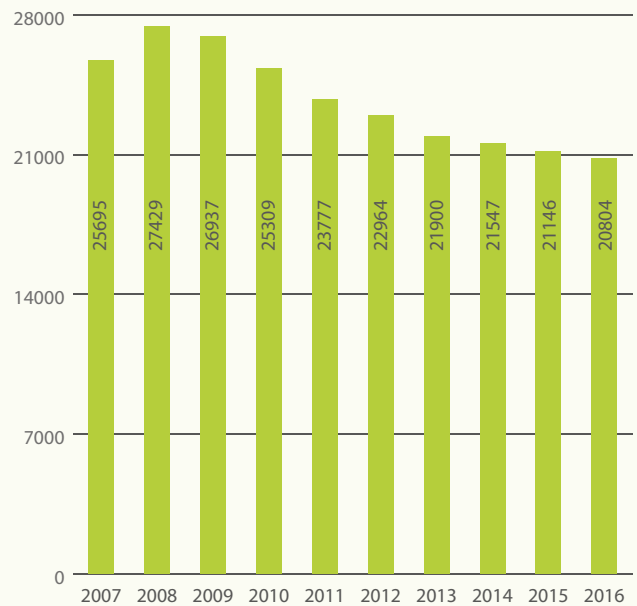


Table 1: Active Small Public Service Vehicle Licences by Year, 2007-2016

Year	Active SPSV Licences
2007	25,695
2008	27,429
2009	26,937
2010	25,309
2011	23,777
2012	22,964
2013	21,900
2014	21,547
2015	21,146
2016	20,804

## 2

## Vehicle Licences Issued



New standard taxi and hackney vehicle licences have not issued since 8 June 2010. New vehicle licences issue for wheelchair accessible taxis, wheelchair accessible hackneys, limousines and local area hackneys. From June 2010 to 2016, 2,026 new limousine, local area hackney and wheelchair accessible vehicle licences were issued. Table 2 below gives the annual figures, available from 2007.

Table 2: New Vehicle Licences Issued by Year and Category, 2007 - 2016

New Vehicle Licences Issued							
Year	Taxi	Hackney	Limousine	WAT	WAH	LAH	Total
2007	2,565	1,187	386	331	0	0	4,469
2008	1,701	841	213	281	0	0	3,036
2009	193	369	110	155	0	0	827
2010	24	107	97	76	0	0	304
2011	0	0	130	28	4	0	162
2012	0	0	164	28	11	0	203
2013	0	0	177	16	6	0	199
2014	0	0	190	52	5	7	254
2015	0	0	269	157	18	13	457
2016	0	0	293	261	22	2	578

## 3

## SPSV Fleet Profile



Table 3 and Figure 2 show the change in the number of active vehicle licences across each SPSV category since 2006.

The total number of SPSVs in the Irish fleet declined, by 24%, from the peak of 2008 to the end of 2016. Taxi licences increased from 16,414 in 2006 to 17,146 in 2016, an increase of 4.5%. Hackney licences declined from 4,147 in 2006 to 1,907 in 2016, a reduction of 54%. Limousine numbers, however, have increased by 52% between 2006 and 2016.

Table 3: SPSV Fleet by Vehicle Category by Year, 2006-2016

	Taxis		Hackneys			Limousines	Total
	Standard	Wheelchair Accessible	Standard	Wheelchair Accessible	Local Area		
		(WAT)		(WAH)	(LAH)		
2006	15,098	1,316	4,147	n/a	n/a	1,146	21,707
2007	17,992	1,504	4,868	n/a	n/a	1,331	25,695
2008	19,577	1,600	4,914	n/a	n/a	1,338	27,429
2009	19,565	1,570	4,497	n/a	n/a	1,305	26,937
2010	18,920	1,401	3,772	n/a	n/a	1,216	25,309
2011	18,101	1,227	3,241	4	n/a	1,204	23,777
2012	17,750	1,077	2,866	14	n/a	1,257	22,964
2013	17,136	898	2,532	18	n/a	1,316	21,900
2014	16,899	889	2,281	34	7	1,437	21,547
2015	16,460	969	2,081	48	17	1,571	21,146
2016	15,961	1,185	1,838	69	10	1,741	20,804

Figure 2: SPSV Fleet by Vehicle Category 2016

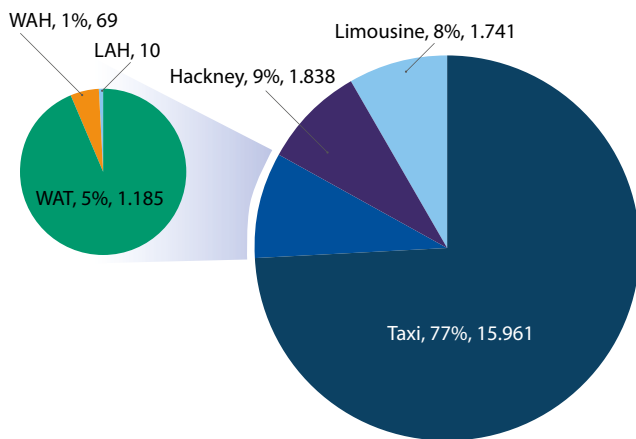


Table 4 Wheelchair Accessible Grants 2014 - 2016

	Grants	Capital (euro)	New WAV to Fleet	Upgrade of WAV within Fleet
2014	128	€19,000	92	36
2015	153	€71,000	134	19
2016	335	€1,987,500	284	51

### Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles

From a peak of 1,600 wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAV) in 2008, the number of accessible hackneys and taxis reduced by 43% to 916 in 2013 and that trend was reversed with 1,254 WAVs in the fleet by the end of 2016. In 2014, the regulations relating to the size specifications for WAVs were revised, which meant that operators could purchase smaller vehicles than previously. Overall, WAVs constitute approximately 6% of the SPSV fleet. The Authority remains focused on increasing this percentage.

As part of the effort to increase the number of WAVs available in the fleet, the Authority launched Grant Schemes in 2014, 2015 and 2016 to assist with the purchase of WAVs for use as small public service vehicles. Each grant brought either a new vehicle licence into the fleet or upgraded an older vehicle already on a licence to enhance the quality and safety of the fleet. The vehicles upgraded were aged an average of eight years younger than those on the licence already.

### Vehicle Age Profile

The Taxi Regulation Acts 2013 and 2016 require the Authority to seek to promote the provision and maintenance of quality services by small public service vehicles and their drivers. Reflecting this objective, setting an age limit for small public service vehicles is considered to be appropriate on both safety and quality grounds. Table 5 below demonstrates the age profile of the SPSV fleet at 31 December 2016.

Figure 3: Age Profile of the SPSV fleet at 31 December 2016 (excluding limousines)

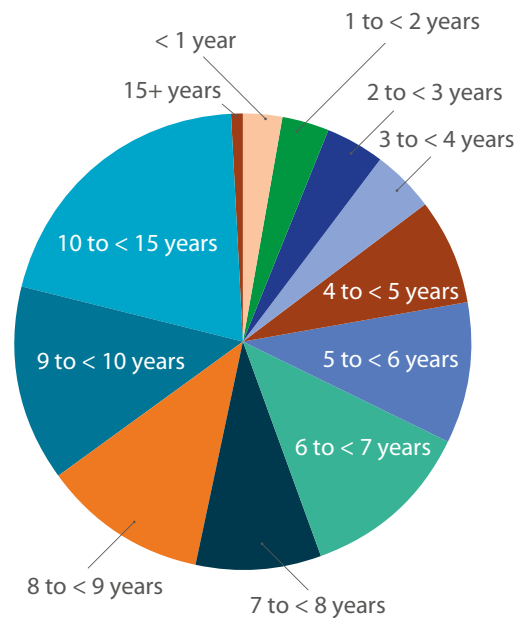


Table 5: Age Profile of the SPSV fleet at 31 December 2016

	Taxi	WAT	Hackney	WAH	LAH	Limousine	Total
< 1 year of age	388	108	70	9	0	99	674
1 to < 2 years of age	490	64	47	7	0	84	692
2 to < 3 years of age	607	80	82	8	0	84	861
3 to < 4 years of age	708	56	79	4	1	96	944
4 to < 5 years of age	1,222	72	141	7	0	104	1,546
5 to < 6 years of age	1,562	167	170	12	2	76	1,989
6 to < 7 years of age	2,105	85	152	7	2	74	2,425
7 to < 8 years of age	1,479	40	143	5	3	58	1,728
8 to < 9 years of age	1,886	65	259	3	1	177	2,391
9 to < 10 years of age	2,248	93	303	3	1	265	2,913
10 to < 15 years of age	3,266	232	392	4	0	450	4,344
15+ years of age	0	123	0	0	0	174	297
Total	15,961	1,185	1,838	69	10	1,741	20,804



## 4

## SPSV Driver Licences



The operation of an SPSV vehicle not only requires that the vehicle is licensed as an SPSV but also that the driver is the holder of a valid SPSV driver's licence as well as a standard driving licence. An Garda Síochána is the licensing authority for SPSV driver's licences. A current SPSV driver's licence permits the holder to drive all categories of SPSV and is normally valid for a period of five years. The Authority, working closely with An Garda Síochána, administers the application and renewal processes, together with the issue of SPSV driver identification cards. Vetting remains the responsibility of An Garda Síochána.

The number of active SPSV driver licences was 26,420 at the end of 2016. As with the vehicle fleet profile geographically, the majority of drivers (54%), hold a Dublin licence entitlement. The number of new drivers entering the SPSV industry remains relatively stable year on year with 519 new driving licences issued in 2015 and 548 new driving licences issued in 2016. 112 SPSV driver licences were formally surrendered in 2016 compared to 122 the previous year.

Table 6: Active SPSV Driver Licences by year, 2007 to 2016 (end of year)

Year	Active Driver Licences
2007	43,262
2008	46,845
2009	47,222
2010	42,605
2011	38,499
2012	34,679
2013	31,186
2014	29,457
2015	27,440
2016	26,420

The number of active SPSV driver licences has reduced by 44% from the peak of 47,529 in May 2009, which was prior to:

- a rise in SPSV driver licence renewal fees from €3 to €250 for a five year SPSV driving licence;
- a rise in SPSV driver licence application fees from €12 to €250 for a five year SPSV driving licence; and
- the introduction of the Skills Development Programme for SPSV operators.

Figure 4: Active SPSV Driver licences by year, 2007 to 2015.

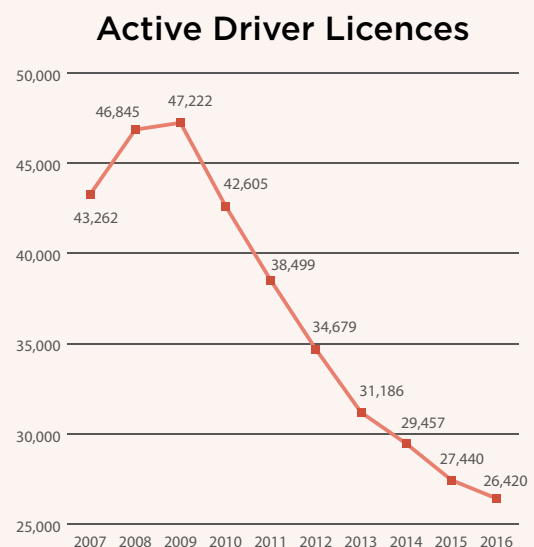
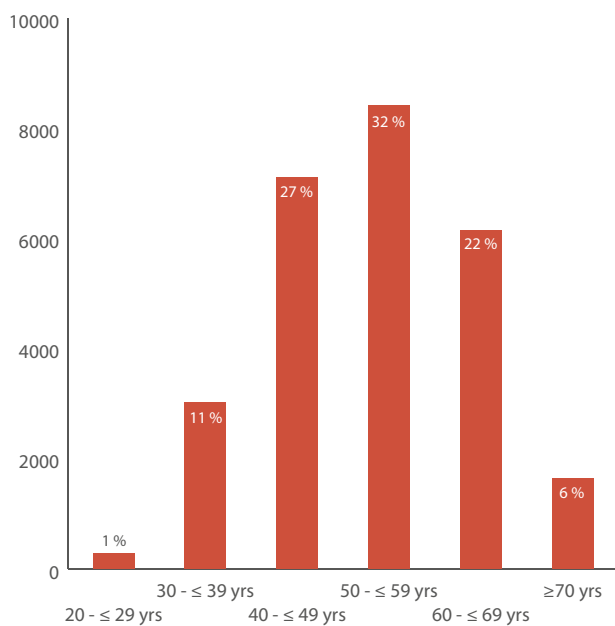


Figure 5: Age profile for SPSV driver licence holders at end 2016



The Authority also provides the “Skills Development Programme” for SPSV operators which is designed to assist SPSV operators to develop the range of skills needed to operate in the Irish SPSV industry on a day-to-day basis. New applicants for an SPSV driver’s licence must complete the Skills Development Programme and pass the SPSV Driver Entry Test, which comprises two modules covering both regulatory industry knowledge and geographical knowledge for the county in which the entrant wishes to operate. If an operator wishes to pick up non-pre-booked passengers in any county he/she must have passed the area knowledge test for that county. It is possible to be licensed in several counties.

During 2016, 3,204 entry tests were taken by 1,352 candidates wishing to become licensed SPSV drivers, an 8% increase on 2015 figures. Almost 43% of the 2016 candidates were successful, 580. The average amount of times the test was taken to achieve a pass mark was 3.03, with 32% of successful candidates passing on their first attempt and a further 24% successful on their second attempt. 57% of those candidates who failed the test on their first attempt did not try again.

# 5

## SPSV Contact Management



The Authority operates an SPSV Information Line for SPSV industry members and consumers, together with a variety of online and traditional post channels of communication.

In 2016, over 620,000 licensing notifications were issued to industry members in writing and over 100,000 telephone calls were handled by our outsourced service providers, the bulk of which were from industry members. Table 7 and Figure 6 details the total calls by year and the split between industry and consumer calls.

Table 7: Calls to the SPSV Information Line by Year and Source 2007-2016

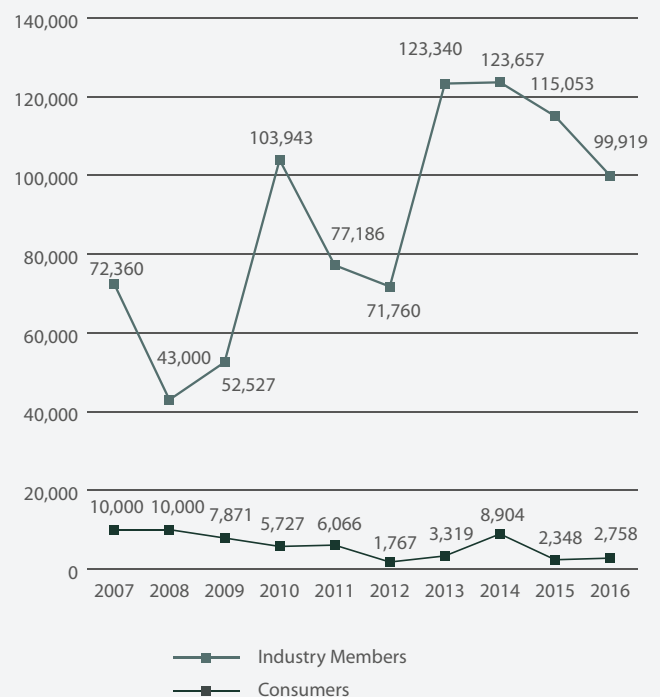
Year	Total calls	Industry Members	Consumers
2007	82,360	72,360	10,000
2008	53,000	43,000	10,000
2009	60,398	52,527	7,871
2010	109,670	103,943	5,727
2011	83,252	77,186	6,066
2012	73,527	71,760	1,767
2013	126,659	123,340	3,319
2014	132,561	123,657	8,904
2015	117,401	115,053	2,348
2016	102,677	99,919	2,758

In 2016, 1.2% of calls came from the public. Top three consumer queries related to lost property, complaints and general enquires.

Industry members use the SPSV Information Line for driver and vehicle licensing questions, together with booking vehicle inspections and industry/area knowledge tests. The top three industry queries for 2016 were requests for assistance with driver to vehicle

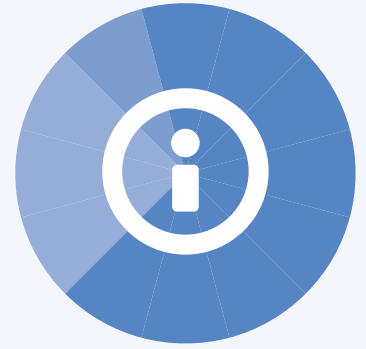
links, vehicle licence booking inspections, and general vehicle licensing queries.

Figure 6: Calls to SPSV Information Line by Year and Source 2007-2016



## 6

# Comments and Complaints



During 2014 the Authority introduced improved website contact forms, email and telephone arrangements to make it easier for consumers to submit comments or complaints about taxi, hackney, limousine and dispatch operator services nationwide. This had a positive impact leading to a significant increase in comments and complaints received.

All feedback is reviewed by a member of the Authority's compliance team. Following a preliminary investigation, almost half of the complaints received in 2016 did not proceed any further. The reasons further action was not pursued included genuine mistake or misunderstanding by either party; no offence having been committed; being unable to proceed as the complainant did not provide contact details or decided not to pursue the complaint when contacted; or the operator not being correctly identified. In the remainder of cases, the compliance actions included the issuing an operator with advice, a formal warning, a fixed payment penalty or a summons for prosecution.

Any allegations of traffic violations or criminal acts are referred to An Garda Síochána; those of an SPSV driver smoking in an SPSV to the Office of Tobacco Control; and allegations of suspected social welfare fraud to the Department of Social Protection

There are five categories of complaint which can be dealt with by the Authority under Section 64 of the Taxi Regulation Act 2013.

Table 8: Comments & Complaints 2016

Category	Sample complaint	Number
<b>Conduct, behaviour and identification of an SPSV driver</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>failure to prominently display the required driver identification</li> <li>acting in a manner that is perceived to be a nuisance or a danger to any person</li> <li>malodour or poor hygiene</li> </ul>	444
<b>Overcharging and other matters relating to fares</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>failure to issue a receipt</li> <li>overcharging or no change</li> <li>route selection</li> <li>taximeter not working or not used</li> </ul>	348
<b>Hiring and booking of the SPSV</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>refusal of fare, typically due to the short nature of the intended journey</li> <li>unavailability of wheelchair accessible vehicles</li> <li>poor service from a dispatch operator</li> <li>late arrival of pre-booked vehicle</li> </ul>	172
<b>Condition, roadworthiness and cleanliness of the vehicle</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>interior or exterior dirt or staining</li> <li>malodour</li> <li>rubbish or deleterious matter</li> </ul>	34
<b>Identification and general appearance of the SPSV</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>location of logos, stickers or advertisements</li> <li>content of logos, stickers or advertisements</li> <li>leaflets or other advertising matter</li> </ul>	0
<b>Total</b>		998

Table 9: Comments &amp; Complaints by month in 2016

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total 2016
<b>Conduct, behaviour and identification of an SPSV driver</b>	29	20	31	47	31	18	37	45	43	52	47	44	444
<b>Overcharging and other matters relating to fares</b>	21	31	22	25	27	25	27	45	35	26	36	28	348
<b>Hiring and booking of the SPSV</b>	9	10	6	6	14	10	20	17	13	24	16	27	172
<b>Condition, roadworthiness and cleanliness of the vehicle</b>	0	1	2	5	4	1	4	3	4	7	2	1	34
<b>Identification and general appearance of the SPSV</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	59	62	61	83	76	54	88	110	95	109	101	100	998

# 7

## Compliance Activity



In 2016, the Authority continued to focus on education, deterrence and enforcement measures to maintain high levels of compliance by SPSV operators with the regulatory framework. During 2016, the Authority’s compliance team comprised 24 authorised officers who could engage in compliance activities across the country. This team consisted of 9 employees of the Authority and 15 authorised officers employed under an external outsourcing contract with SGS Ireland Limited.

Compliance activities included vehicle and driver licensing checks, roadside vehicle and driver audits, investigating consumer complaints and participation in multi-agency compliance operations (e.g. with An Garda Síochána, the Revenue Commissioners and the Department of Social Protection).

Using a bespoke application, Compliance Officers are now able to undertake rapid, real-time checks of SPSVs observed operating. The introduction of this application in July 2015, which was an enhancement to the existing system where each roadside audit was recorded, has enabled Compliance Officers to check each SPSV, including the status of both driver and vehicle licence in real time, and then focus the more comprehensive audits on vehicles and drivers where compliance issues are identified. These checks have resulted in a marked increase of checks of SPSVs observed operating with a minimum of disruption to compliant operators and their passengers. Over 90,000 checks were undertaken throughout 2016, representing 18,804 individual vehicles, or over 90% of licensed vehicles. Compliance Officers elected to undertake 12,012 formal audits at the roadside following these checks and 1,099 Fixed Payment Notices were issued for a variety of offences. In 2016, Compliance Officers opted to undertake a full audit in approximately 13% of checks and, arising from these audits, detected offences which warranted the issuing of a Fixed Payment Notice in 9% of cases.

The highest volume of fixed payment notices issued (approximately 51%) related to drivers failing to notify details of the vehicle being operated. This offence arises in connection with the legal requirement for a licensed driver to register the licensed vehicle being driven with the central database system managed by the Authority. This database supports the Driver Check App, which allows passengers or intending passengers to assess the licensed status of their chosen vehicle and driver and to email a chosen third party with those details. Fixed Payment Notices issued by the Authority have 82% payment conformity; the remainder proceed to court for prosecution.

Table 10: SPSV Checks, Audits and Fixed Payment Notices

Year	No. of checks	No. of roadside audits	Fixed Payment Notices
2014	N/A	28,291	1,369
2015	29,123	11,765	692
2016	90,243	12,012	1,099

In 2016, 131 court cases brought were by way of direct prosecution for a breach of the legislation outside of Fixed Payment Offences/on the spot fines, following specific operations and detection by Compliance Officers. Of those, 49 cases were prosecuted for not holding a valid SPSV Driver’s Licence, 32 for not a valid SPSV Vehicle Licence, 14 for not having either a SPSV Driver’s Licence or a SPSV Vehicle Licence and 15 for allowing an unlicensed driver or vehicle to operate. In addition, 21 cases were prosecuted for other breaches of regulations and 77 further cases were brought for the non-payment of Fixed Payment Notices. In total, more than 92% of cases presented by the Authority were successful.

Table 11: Prosecutions 2016 by Offence Category

Prosecutions 2016 by Offence Category		Number	%
Unlicensed SPSV Operator	No Driver Licence	49	24
	No Vehicle Licence	32	15
	No Driver and No Vehicle Licences	14	7
	Allow an Unlicensed Driver/Vehicle to Operate	15	7
Dispatch Operator		2	1
Unfit Vehicle		4	2
Driver Behaviour		1	0.5
Obstructing an Authorised Person		1	0.5
Exceeding the Maximum Passengers Allowed		1	0.5
Use of Signage/Identification on an Unlicensed Vehicle		9	4
Advertising an Unlicensed SPSV Vehicle/Service		3	1.5
Failure to Pay Fixed Payment Penalty		77	37
<b>TOTAL CASES</b>		208	100

**DOWNLOAD THE Driver Check App**

- ✓ Check the licence details of the vehicle and driver
- ✓ View photograph of the authorised driver
- ✓ Send report if details are incorrect
- ✓ Email trip details to a friend

**TRAVEL SAFE**

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