



Taxi Statistics for Ireland



Bulletin Topics:

- Overall SPSV fleet numbers
- Vehicle licences issued
- SPSV fleet profile
- SPSV Driver licences
- Calls to the SPSV information line
- Comments and Complaints
- Compliance Activity

Small Public Service Vehicle Statistics for Ireland 2015

Glossary

Dispatch operators	Those who provide a booking service or other facility to arrange SPSV journeys
Hackney	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
Limousine	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
Local Area Hackney (LAH)	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
SPSV	Small Public Service Vehicle
Taxi	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
Wheelchair Accessible Hackney (WAH)	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
Wheelchair Accessible Taxi (WAT)	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
Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV)	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.

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. During 2015, 3,086 entry tests were taken by 1,458 candidates wishing to become licenced SPSV drivers, a 24% increase on 2014 figures. Almost 40% of the 2015 candidates were successful, 563. The average amount of times the test was taken to achieve a pass mark was 2.33, with 47% of successful candidates passing on their first attempt.

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 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.

The majority of the statistics in this bulletin cover the decade to 2015 – on occasion records are not available for the earlier years.

1

Overall SPSV Fleet Numbers



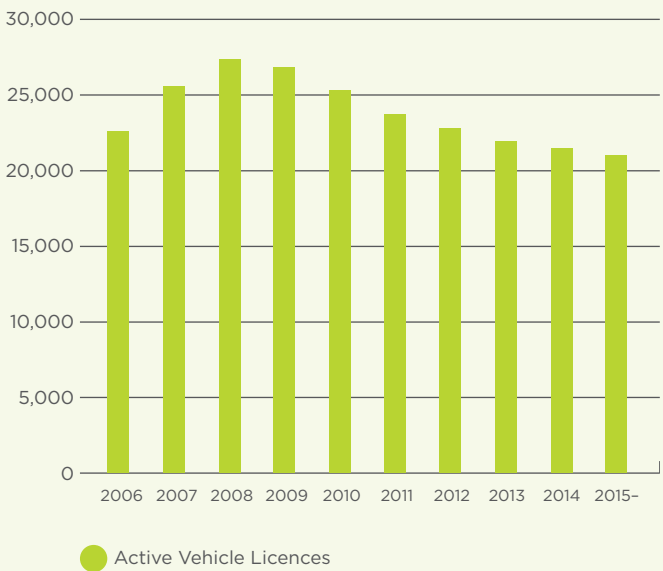
The years following the liberalisation of the SPSV industry saw an increase in the number of vehicle licences, rising from 13,637 in 2000 to a peak of 27,429 in 2008.

Since then, with the commencement of the economic recession and reduced customer demand, together with higher vehicle standard requirements, the overall fleet size has decreased by 23% to a total of 21,146 active vehicle licences as of 31 December 2015. Table 1 and Figure 1 illustrate the change in the numbers of active SPSV licences from 2006 to 2015.

Table 1: Active Small Public Service Vehicle Licences by Year, 2006-2015

Year	Active SPSV Licences at 31 December
2006	22,580
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

Figure 1: Active Small Public Service Vehicle Licences by Year, 2006-2015



2

Vehicle Licences Issued



From 08 June 2010, standard Taxi and Hackney licences were no longer issued and the only licence categories available for issue have been Limousine, Local Area Hackney and Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle licences. From 2010 to 2015, **1448** new Limousine, Local Area Hackney and Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle licences were issued. Table 2 below gives the yearly issue figures, available from 2007.

Table 2: New Vehicle Licences Issued by Year and Category, 2007-2015

New Vehicle Licences Issued							
Year	Taxi	Hackney	Limousine	WAT	WAH	LAH	Total
2007	2,565	1,187	386	331	0	0	4,439
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



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 23% from the peak of 2008 to the end of 2015. Standard Taxi licences declined from 19,577 in 2008 to 16,460 in 2015, a reduction of 16%. Standard hackney licences declined from 4,914 in 2008 to 2,081 in 2015, a reduction of 57%. Limousine numbers have increased by 17% between 2008 and 2015.

Table 3: SPSV Fleet by Vehicle Category by Year, 2006-2015

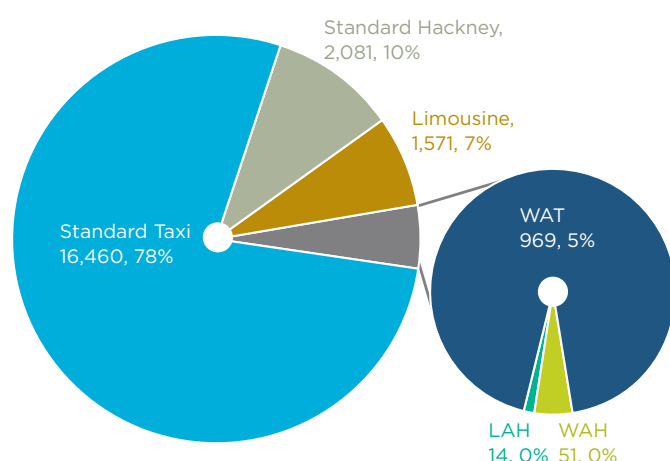
Year	Taxis		Hackneys			Limousines	Total
	Standard	WAT	Standard	WAH	LAH		
2006	15,098	1,316	4,147	n/a	n/a	1,146	21,707
2007	17,992	1,504	4,868	n/a	n/a	1,331	25,695
2008	19,577	1,600	4,914	n/a	n/a	1,338	27,429
2009	19,565	1,570	4,497	n/a	n/a	1,305	26,937
2010	18,920	1,401	3,772	n/a	n/a	1,216	25,309
2011	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	51	14	1,571	21,146

Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles

The decline in wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs) to the end of 2015 was 36% from a peak of 1,600 vehicles in 2008. Overall, WAVs constitute approximately 5% of the SPSV fleet. The Authority is focussed on increasing this percentage. In 2014, the regulations relating to the size specification for Wheelchair Accessible Taxi and Hackney vehicles were revised, which meant that operators can now purchase smaller and less expensive vehicles than previously.

As one part of the effort to increase the number of WAVs available for hire, in each of 2014 and 2015, the Authority launched a grant scheme to assist with the purchase of WAVs for use as small public service vehicles. The 2014 WAV Grant Scheme issued 128 grants (€819,000), introducing 92 new vehicle licences to the fleet with the remainder being conversions or upgrades of existing vehicles. The 2015 WAV Grant Scheme built on that, issuing 153 grants (€871,000), bringing 134 new vehicle licences to the fleet.

Figure 2: SPSV Fleet by Vehicle Category 2015



In 2015, 27 applications were received of which 5 were fully approved and 4 were approved in principle with 7 being returned as incomplete applications. The remaining 11 applications were refused, with the main grounds for refusal being the presence of an existing licenced taxi or hackney service within the area covered by the application. The fully approved applications covered rural areas in Donegal (2) and Mayo (3).

Vehicle Age Profile

The Taxi Regulation Act 2013 requires 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 4 below demonstrates the age profile of the SPSV fleet at 31 December 2015.

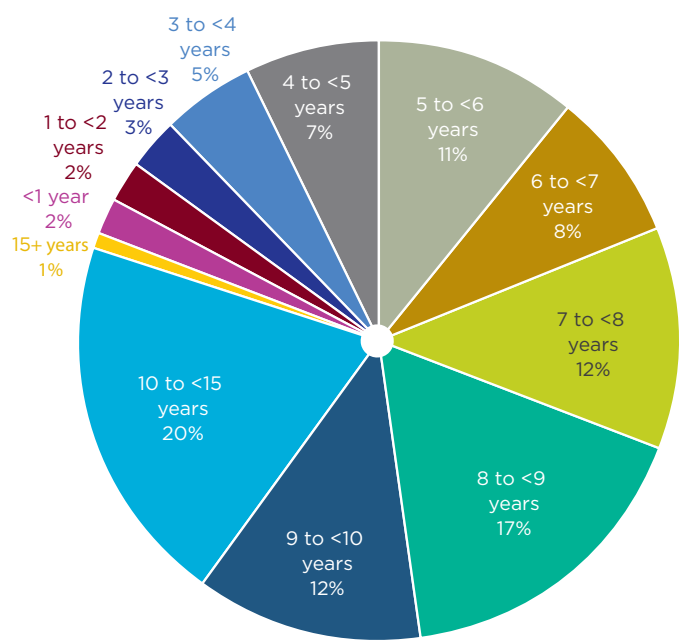
Local Area Hackney Licence

The licensing of a local area hackney vehicle and driver is intended to address transport deficits that would not otherwise be addressed in certain rural areas. It is a special purpose licence limited to certain rural areas which are likely to be too small to support a full-time taxi or hackney operation, and which are too far from adjacent centres to be serviced by taxis or hackneys from those adjacent centres. Under the applicable legislation, the Authority is permitted to grant this low cost, local area licence only if it is satisfied that the public transport needs of the area can be met uniquely through the granting of this local area licence. Unlike a normal SPSV driver's licence, this licence does not require a driver to pass an area knowledge test as the area in which pickups are permitted is mapped to approximately a 5-7km radius from the applicant's home.

Table 4: Age profile of the SPSV fleet at 31 December 2015

	Taxis	WAT	Hackney	WAH	LAH	Limousine	Total
< 1 year	309	47	44	5	0	67	472
1 to < 2 years	369	56	47	6	0	58	536
2 to < 3 years	411	33	50	3	2	55	554
3 to < 4 years	827	34	107	8	0	75	1051
4 to < 5 years	1,238	67	132	6	0	70	1513
5 to < 6 years	1,895	61	141	6	2	65	2170
6 to < 7 years	1,404	38	140	5	4	48	1639
7 to < 8 years	2,008	75	280	3	2	166	2534
8 to < 9 years	2,914	103	402	4	2	269	3694
9 to < 10 years	1,981	95	283	3	2	205	2569
10 to < 15 years	3,104	258	455	2	0	323	4142
15+ years	0	102	0	0	0	170	272
Total	16,460	969	2081	51	14	1571	21146

Figure 3: Age profile of the SPSV fleet at 31 December 2015 (excluding limousines)



4

SPSV Driver licences

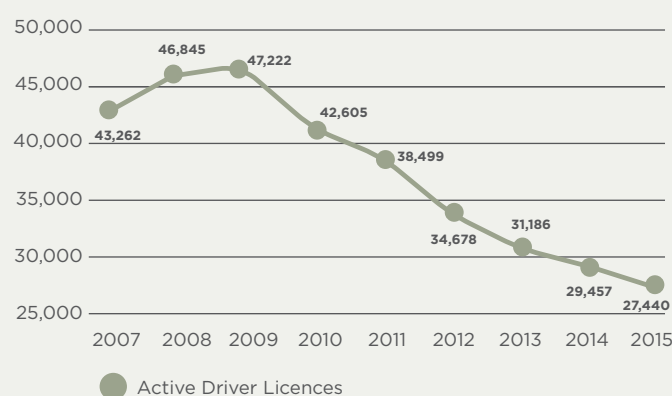


The number of active SPSV driver licences has reduced by 42% from the peak of 47,529 in May 2009 to a level of 27,440 at the end of 2015. As with the vehicle fleet profile geographically, the majority of drivers, approximately 53%, hold a Dublin licence entitlement. Furthermore, there has been a decline in the number of new drivers entering the SPSV industry, with 473 new driving licences issued in 2015. 122 SPSV driver licences were formally surrendered in the same period.

Table 5: Active SPSV Driver Licences by Year, 2007 to 2015

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

Figure 4: Active SPSV Driver Licences by Year, 2007 to 2015



5

Calls to the SPSV Information and Booking Line

The Authority operates an SPSV Information Line for SPSV industry members and consumers.

533,400 calls were handled by this service over the past 5 years, the bulk of which were from industry members. Table 6 and Figure 5 detail the total calls by year and the split between industry and consumer calls, available from 2007.

Table 6: Calls to the SPSV Information Line by Year and Source, 2007-2015

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

In 2015, approximately 2% of calls came from the public. The top three consumer queries related to lost property, complaints and general enquiries.

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 2015 were requests for assistance with driver to vehicle links, vehicle licence booking inspections, and general vehicle licencing queries.



Industry calls from 2013 onwards have increased substantially. This reflects the 2013 legal obligation for each SPSV driver to create a link in the Authority's database between him/her and the vehicle being operated at any time, which can be completed by telephone, text, website or smartphone app. This linking allows potential customers to verify, through the public facing Driver Check App, that both the vehicle and the driver are licenced by the Authority.

Figure 5: Calls to the SPSV Information Line by Year and Source, 2007-2015



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.

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

All feedback is reviewed by a member of the Authority's compliance team. Following a preliminary investigation more than half of the submissions received in 2015 were closed under the categorisation of "no further action" by the Authority. The reasons included genuine mistakes 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; the operator not being identified; or the submissions being comments/compliments rather than complaints. In the remainder of cases, the compliance actions included 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.

Category	Sample complaint
Condition, roadworthiness and cleanliness of the vehicle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> interior or exterior dirt or staining malodour rubbish or deleterious matter
Conduct, behaviour and identification of an SPSV driver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> failure to prominently display the required driver identification acting in a manner that is perceived to be a nuisance or a danger to any person malodour or hygiene
Overcharging and other matters relating to fares	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> failure to issue a receipt overcharging or no change route selection taximeter not working or not used
Hiring and booking of the SPSV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> refusal of fare, typically due to the short nature of the intended journey unavailability of wheelchair accessible vehicles poor service from a dispatch operator late arrival of pre-booked vehicle
Identification and general appearance of the SPSV ¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> location of logos, stickers or advertisements content of logos, stickers or advertisements leaflets or other advertising matter

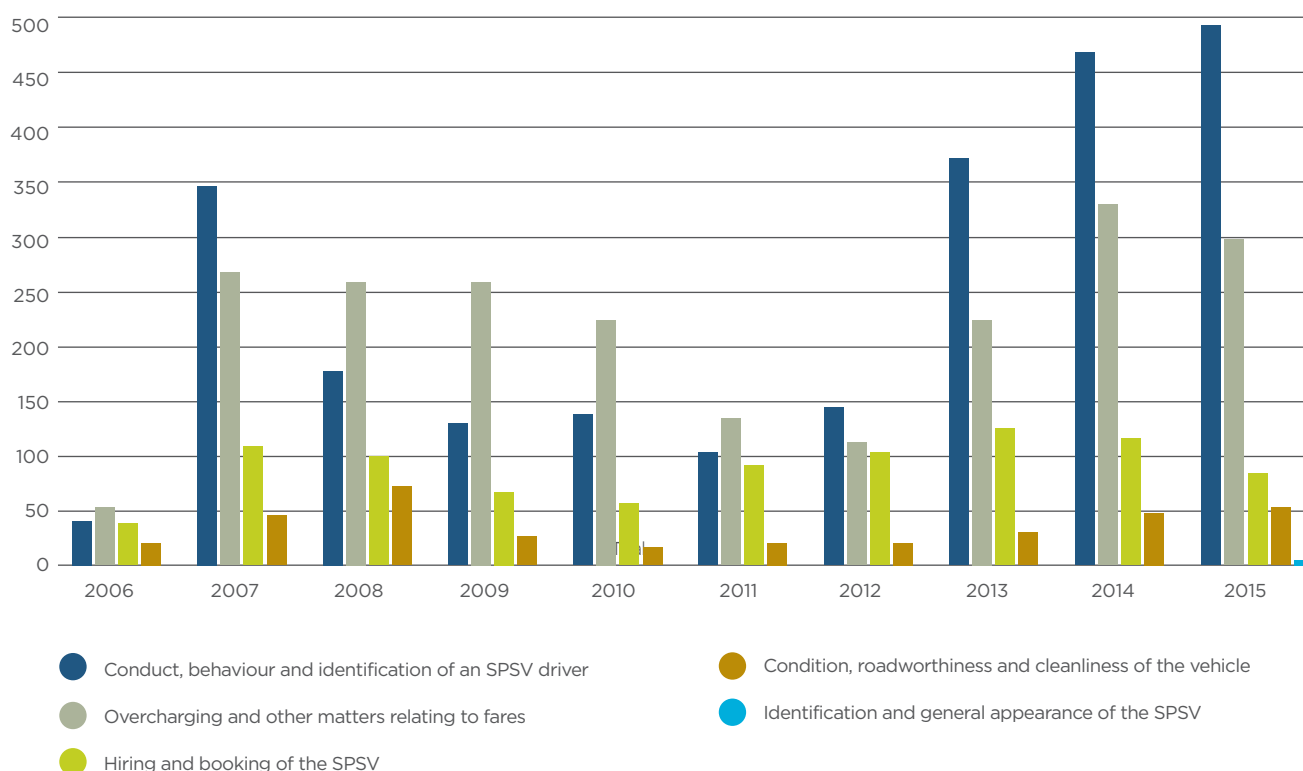
1. Complaint category introduced in 2014

Table 7: SPSV Services' Complaints Received by Category and Year, 2006 to 2015

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Conduct, behaviour and identification of an SPSV driver	39	343	175	126	136	103	141	369	465	491
Overcharging and other matters relating to fares	51	267	257	257	222	132	110	221	327	297
Hiring and booking of the SPSV	36	107	101	67	59	90	104	122	113	83
Condition, roadworthiness and cleanliness of the vehicle	19	46	68	26	16	21	22	30	47	53
Identification and general appearance of the SPSV	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	4
Total	145	763	601	476	359	346	377	742	952	928

Note: Complaints process introduced in 2006 and Compliance Officers first employed in 2007.

Figure 6: SPSV Services Complaints Received by Category and Year, 2006 to 2015



7

Compliance Activity



During 2015, the Authority continued its focus on education, deterrence and enforcement measures in order to achieve improved compliance by operators with the relevant regulations.

The Authority compliance team includes 22 authorised officers (seven Authority employees and 15 outsourced contractors) who undertake nationwide compliance activities to include licencing checks and roadside vehicle and driver audits, together with the investigation of consumer complaints. An average of 4,855 licencing checks are carried out monthly, with an average of 980 roadside audits of drivers and vehicles completed each month also. Table 7 and Figure 6 show the licencing checks, roadside audits and fixed penalty notices issued since 2007.

Table 8: Licencing Checks, Roadside Audits and Fixed Penalty Notices Issued, 2007 - 2015

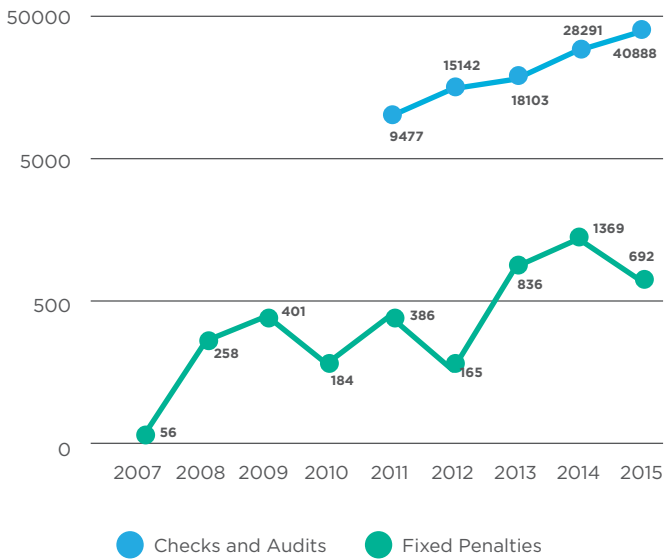
Year	Checks and Audits	Fixed Penalties
2007	Not Recorded	56 ²
2008	Not Recorded	258
2009	Not Recorded	401
2010	Not Recorded	184
2011	9,477	386
2012	15,142	165
2013	18,103	836 ³
2014	28,291	1369 ⁴
2015	40,888	692

2 Fixed payment notices introduced in November 2007

3 Introduction of graduated fixed payment penalties - €40 to €250

4 15 Outsourced Compliance Officers added in April 2014

Figure 7: Checks, Audits and Fixed Penalties Issued, 2007 - 2015



In 2015, 253 cases were prosecuted by the Authority. Among the cases prosecuted, 87 (35%) related to the detection of unlicensed SPSV operators and 154 (60%) were for non-payment of fixed payment penalties.

Table 9: Prosecutions 2015 by offence category

Prosecutions 2015			
Category		Number	Percentage
Unlicensed SPSV operator	No driver licence	34	13%
	No vehicle licence	17	7%
	No driver and no vehicle licence	27	11%
	Allowing an unlicensed driver to operate a vehicle	9	4%
Advertising/Promoting an unlicensed SPSV service		7	3%
Dispatch Operator providing a booking to an unlicensed operator		1	0.5%
Unlawful use of SPSV identification		3	1%
Charging more than the maximum fare		1	0.5%
Failure to pay Fixed Payment Penalty		154	60%
TOTAL		253	100%

DRIVER CHECK APP



The Driver Check App allows a passenger to check the licence details of both a vehicle and its driver, and to see an ID photo of the licenced driver authorised to drive that particular vehicle. All details can be checked by a customer before they get in the vehicle.

The passenger may also simply forward these details (minus the photo) to a friend, keep a record of the checks they have completed, or, if the details are unavailable or incorrect, report any inconsistencies to the Authority's compliance team for follow up – all of which will reassure customers that they are travelling safely, and that there is a record of their trip.

The Driver Check App is easy to use; all a consumer has to do is launch it on their phone, and then input one of the following:

- 1) Ordinary vehicle registration number;
- 2) Vehicle licence number – displayed on roof-sign and on door signs; or
- 3) Driver licence number (displayed on the ID card on the dashboard of the vehicle).

This App is free to download from Apple's App Store and the Android's Google Play Store.



Further Information and Media Enquiries:

Sara Morris
t: + 353 (0) 1 8798346

National Transport Authority
Dún Scéine
Harcourt Lane, Dublin 2
t: +353 1 879 8300
f: +353 1 879 8333
www.nationaltransport.ie