



# Taxi Statistics for Ireland



## Bulletin Topics:

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





# 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, which had taken over from the local authorities in 2004, 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. The regulatory framework within which the SPSV industry operates comprises the Taxi Regulation Act 2013 and associated regulations. In April 2014, the Authority implemented new small public service vehicle regulations which consolidated all secondary legislation relating to the licensing of the small public service vehicle sector – the Small Public Service Vehicle (Consolidation and Reform) Regulations 2014.

In Ireland 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, and
- Limousine

The Authority is the licensing authority for small public service vehicles and dispatch operators. This includes the grant 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.

## 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) 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>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
<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

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 both standard driving licences and 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 maintains 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 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 2014, 2,494 entry tests were taken by 1,227 candidates wishing to become licenced SPSV drivers. The test success rate was 22%.

The statistics in this bulletin begin in 2010 for the most part and cover the period 2010 to 2014 inclusive. Some data from prior to 2010 is included in order to provide a historical perspective.

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# Overall SPSV Fleet Numbers



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

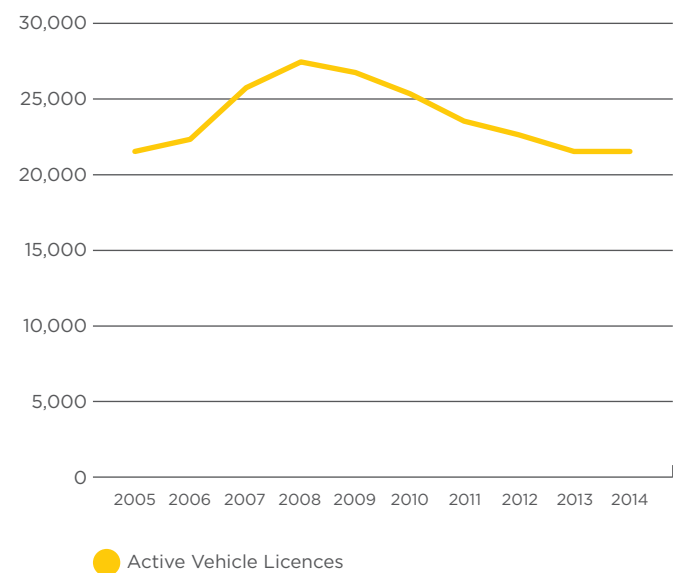
Since then, with the commencement of the economic recession and falling customer demand along with the higher vehicle standard requirements, the overall fleet size has decreased by 21.5% to a total of 21,547 active vehicle licences as of December 2014.

Table 1

Year	Active Vehicle Licences at 31 December
2005	21,888
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

Table 1 and Figure 1 illustrate the change in the numbers of SPSVs since 2005.

Figure 1 Active Vehicle Licences at 31 December



# 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 2014, 818 new Limousine, Local Area Hackney and Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle were issued.

Table 2 and Figure 2 below give the yearly issue figures.

Figure 2 New Vehicle Licences Issued

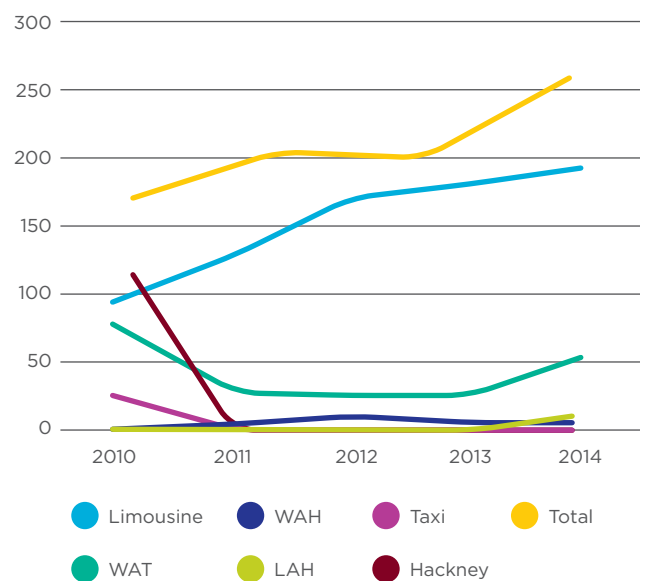


Table 2 New Vehicle Licences Issued

Year	Taxi	Hackney	Limousine	Wheelchair Accessible Taxi	Wheelchair Accessible Hackney	Local Area Hackney	Total
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

## 3

## SPSV fleet profile



Table 3 and Figure 3 below show the change in the number of active vehicle licences numbers across each SPSV category since 2008.

Table 3

Year	Taxis		Hackneys			Limousines	Total
	Standard	Wheelchair Accessible	Standard	Wheelchair Accessible	Local Area Hackney		
2008	19577	1600	4914	n/a	n/a	1338	27429
2009	19565	1570	4497	n/a	n/a	1305	26937
2010	18920	1401	3772	n/a	n/a	1216	25309
2011	18101	1227	3241	4	n/a	1204	23777
2012	17750	1077	2866	14	n/a	1257	22964
2013	17136	898	2532	18	n/a	1316	21900
2014	16899	889	2281	34	7	1437	21547

The total number of SPSVs in the Irish fleet declined by 21% from the peak of 2008 to the end of 2014. Standard taxi licences declined from 19,577 in 2008 to 16,899 in 2014, a reduction of 14%. Standard hackney licences declined from 4,914 in 2008 to 2,281 in 2014, a reduction of 53%. Limousine numbers have remained relatively stable over time with an increase of 7% between 2008 and 2014.

### Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles

The decline in Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles to the end of 2014 was 42% from a peak of 1,600 vehicles in 2008. Overall, wheelchair accessible vehicles constitute only 4.3% of our SPSV fleet. The Authority introduced a Grant Scheme in 2014 to assist with the purchase of wheelchair accessible vehicles. The Scheme ran from July 2014 to year end and 128 grants were issued nationwide totalling €819,000. The Scheme allowed 62 new licence holders to enter the industry, with 92 new vehicles being added to the fleet. The success of the Grant Scheme was due in a significant part to changes in 2014 to the regulations around the specification for

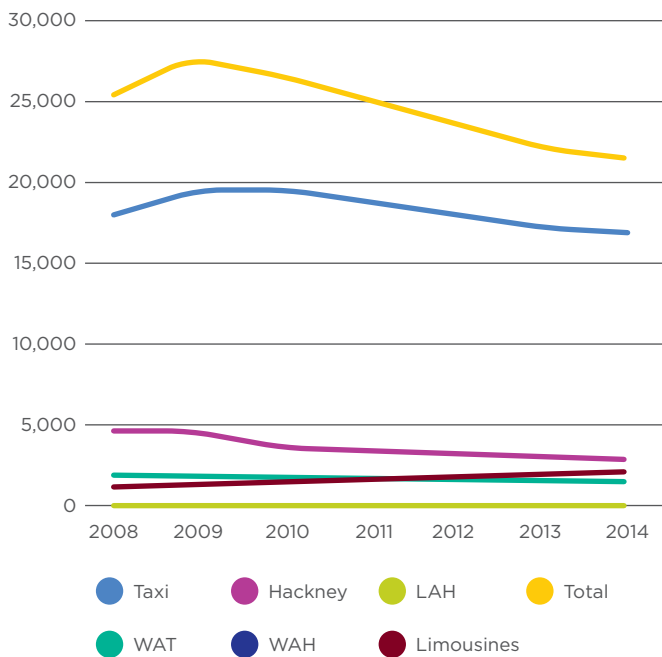
wheelchair accessible taxi and hackney vehicles, which meant that operators could purchase smaller and less expensive vehicles than previously.

### Local Area Hackney Licence

The Authority commenced the licensing of local area hackney services in 2014. 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.

In 2014, 40 applications were received of which 7 were fully approved and 17 were approved in principle. The remaining 16 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 Clare (2), Carlow, Kilkenny, Galway, Tipperary and Westmeath.

Figure 3 SPSV Fleet Categories  
2008 - 2014





## 4

# Driver Licence Numbers

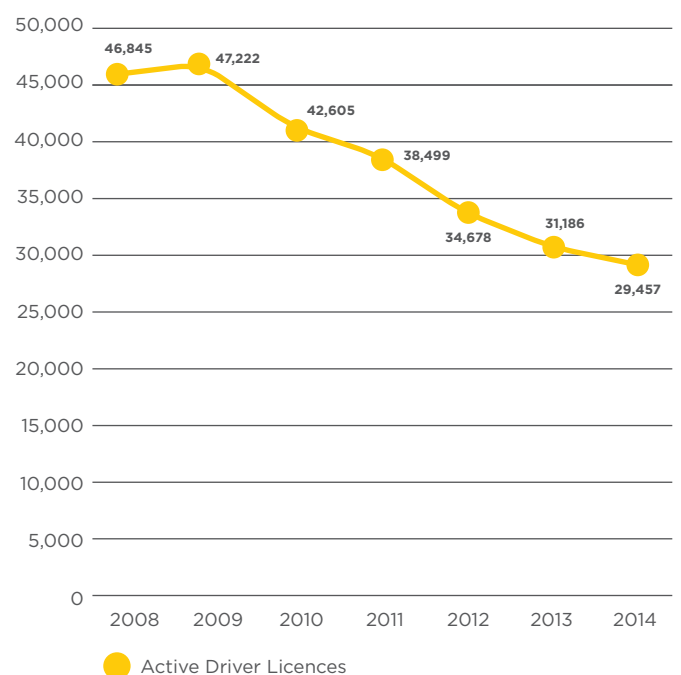


The number of active driver licences has reduced by 38% from the peak of 47,529 in May 2009 to a level of 29,457 at the end of 2014. As with the vehicle fleet profile geographically, the majority of drivers, 54% approximately, hold a Dublin licence entitlement. Furthermore, there has been a decline in the number of new drivers entering the SPSV industry, with only 528 new driving licences issued in 2014. 390 SPSV licences were formally surrendered in 2014. Table 4 and Figure 4 illustrate this decline.

Table 4

Year	Active Driver Licences
2008	46,845
2009	47,222
2010	42,605
2011	38,499
2012	34,678
2013	31,186
2014	29,457

Figure 4 Driver Licence Profile



# 5

## Calls to SPSV Information Line



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

Almost 416,000 calls were received by this service over the past 4 years, the bulk of which were from industry members.

Table 5 and Figure 5 below shows the total calls per year and the split between industry and consumer calls from 2011.

Table 5

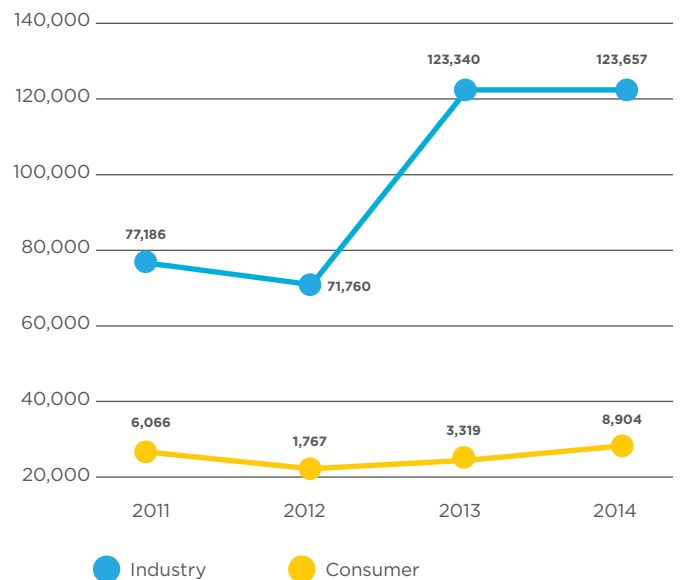
Year	SPSV Information line, call totals	Industry	Consumer
2011	83,252	77,186	6,066
2012	73,527	71,760	1,767
2013	126,659	123,340	3,319
2014	132,561	123,657	8,904
<b>Totals</b>	<b>415,999</b>	<b>395,943</b>	<b>20,056</b>

Approximately 20,000 calls were made to the consumer line in the past 4 years. The top three consumer queries for 2014 were; lost property, complaints and general enquiries.

Industry members use the SPSV Information Line for driver and vehicle licensing questions, together with booking vehicle inspections. Some 395,943 calls were made to the Industry line in the past 4 years. The top three industry queries for 2014 were: assistance with driver to vehicle links, transfer of SPSV vehicle licences and payments for driver licensing applications. Industry calls in 2013 and 2014 were substantially higher than in earlier years reflecting the new requirements on each SPSV driver to contact the Authority to create a recorded link between him/her and the vehicle they are operating at any time. This allows customers to verify, through the Driver Check App, that a vehicle has been correctly registered and that the driver holds the appropriate licence to operate the vehicle. In cases where the details on the App do not match

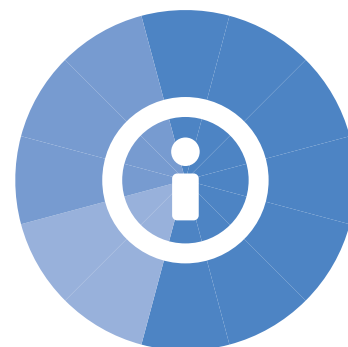
the customer’s understanding, the App can be used to report any discrepancy to the Authority and the passenger may choose another vehicle for their journey. In 2014 the App was downloaded on 14,226 occasions.

Figure 5 SPSV Information Line



## 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 more than half of the submissions received in 2014 were closed under the categorisation "no further action" by the Authority. The reasons 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; the operator not being identified; or the submissions being comments/compliments rather than complaints. In the remainder of cases, the compliance actions included the issuing the errant operator with advice, a formal warning, a fixed payment penalty or a summons for prosecution.

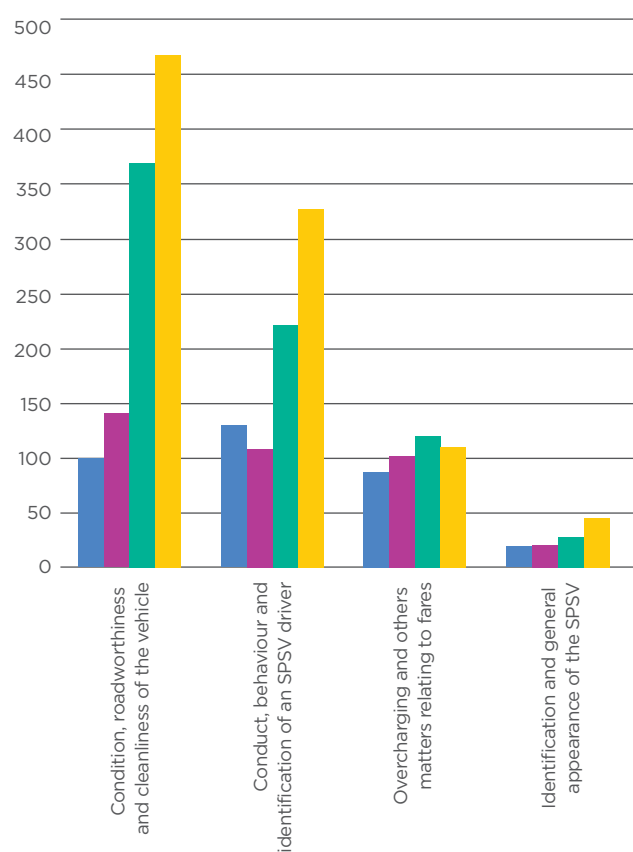
There are five categories of complaint which can be dealt with by the Authority under Section 64 of the Taxi Regulation Act 2013.

Category	Sample complaint
Condition, roadworthiness and cleanliness of the vehicle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● interior or exterior dirt or staining</li> <li>● malodour</li> <li>● rubbish or deleterious matter</li> </ul>
Conduct, behaviour and identification of an SPSV driver	<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 hygiene</li> </ul>
Overcharging and other matters relating to fares	<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>
Hiring and booking of the SPSV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● refusal of fare, typically due to the short nature of the intended journey</li> <li>● poor service from a dispatch operator</li> <li>● late arrival of pre-booked vehicle</li> </ul>
Identification and general appearance of the SPSV	<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>

Table 6 Complaints about SPSV services

	2011	2012	2013	2014
Condition, roadworthiness and cleanliness of the vehicle	103	141	369	465
Conduct, behaviour and identification of an SPSV driver	132	110	221	327
Overcharging and other matters relating to fares	90	104	122	113
Hiring and booking of the SPSV	21	22	30	47
Identification and general appearance of the SPSV	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>377</b>	<b>742</b>	<b>952</b>

Figure 6 Complaints about SPSV services by year



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.

# 7

## Compliance Activity



In 2014 the Authority placed an increased focus on education, deterrence and enforcement measures in order to achieve improved compliance by operators with the relevant regulations.

During the course of the year the Authority appointed and trained an additional 15 authorised officers to undertake compliance activities to include roadside vehicle and driver audits, together with investigation of consumer complaints. This brought to 23 the number of dedicated SPSV compliance officers. In August, a new legal prosecution services team was appointed and the Authority completed an overhaul of its internal compliance systems and processes.

As a result of these increased resources there was a 56% increase in the number of formal checks of operators in 2014. Furthermore, there was a 100% increase in the number of fixed payment notices issued outside Dublin leading to a much greater volume of prosecutions in courts nationwide.

In 2014, 80 cases were prosecuted by the Authority. Of the cases prosecuted, 46 (58%) were related to the detection of unlicensed SPSV operators, 33 (41%) were for non-payment of fixed payment penalties and 1 case of a driver failing to comply with an authorised person.

Table 7.1 Roadside vehicle checks and Fixed Penalties Issued

Year	Roadside Audits	Fixed Penalties
2011	9,477	386
2012	15,142	165 <sup>1</sup>
2013	18,103	836 <sup>2</sup>
2014	28,291	1369 <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Final year of single fixed penalty of €250

<sup>2</sup> Introduction of graduated penalties from €40 to €250

<sup>3</sup> 15 additional Compliance Officers from April 2014

Figure 7 Roadside vehicle checks and Fixed Penalties Issued

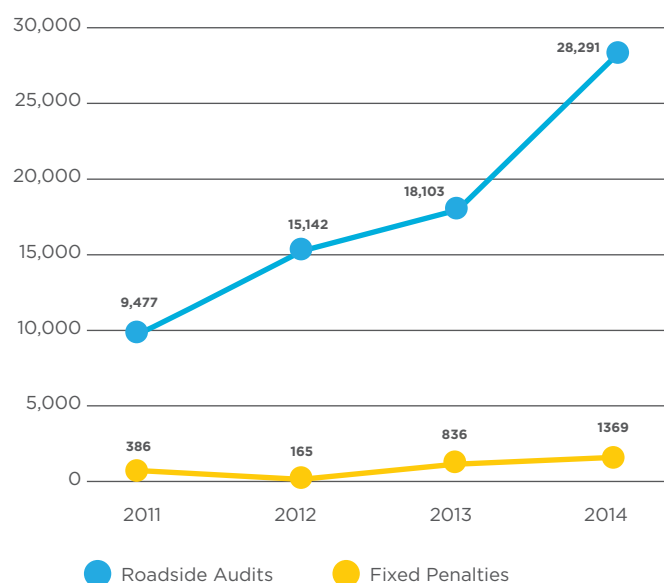


Table 7.2 Prosecutions 2014 by offence category

Prosecutions 2014				
Category			Number	Percentage
Unlicensed operator	SPSV	No driver licence	21	26%
		No vehicle licence	16	20%
		No driver and no vehicle licence	6	8%
		Allowing an unlicensed driver to operate a vehicle	3	4%
Failure to pay Fixed Payment Penalty			33	41%
Failure to comply with an authorised person			1	1%
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>80</b>	<b>100%</b>



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