



Taxi Statistics 2019

September 2020



Bulletin Topics:

- SPSV Fleet Numbers
- SPSV Fleet Profile
- Vehicle Licences Issued
- SPSV Driver Licences
- SPSV Contact Management
- Compliance
- Compliments and Complaints



Glossary

SPSV	Small Public Service Vehicle (Taxi, Hackney or Limousine)
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 roof sign. It can use bus lanes when working
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
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
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
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 means SPSV services are not provided
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
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
Dispatch operators	Those who provide a booking service or other facility to arrange SPSV journeys



Introduction

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

The National Transport Authority (“NTA”) is a statutory body established by the Minister for Transport on 1 December 2009. On 1 January 2011, NTA 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 consolidated Taxi Regulation Acts 2013 and 2016, together with the Taxi Regulation (Small Public Service Vehicle) Regulations 2015 and 2016 and the Taxi Regulation Act 2013 (Maximum Fares) Order 2017. Unlike many comparable jurisdictions, SPSV services are regulated at a national level in Ireland.

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, focusing 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 three broad categories of SPSV:

- Taxi (standard and wheelchair accessible)
- Hackney (standard, wheelchair accessible and local area)
- Limousine

NTA is the licensing authority for SPSVs and dispatch operators (booking service providers). This includes the renewal, suspension and revocation of each vehicle and dispatch operator licence, together with all associated licensing, inspection and compliance activity.

Each licence requires renewal on at least an annual basis, allowing NTA to monitor the quality of the vehicles and services provided.

The operation of an SPSV 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, together with 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 valid for a period of up to five years. NTA, working closely with An Garda Síochána, administers the application and renewal processes, together with the issue of SPSV driver identification cards to be displayed on the dashboard of the vehicle when operating. Vetting remains the responsibility of An Garda Síochána.

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 applicant wishes to operate. NTA provides and manages this Skills Development Programme.

NTA is responsible for setting the National Maximum Taxi Fare. Only taxi journey fares are controlled by way of a maximum ceiling. This is because taxis may be hailed on the street or taken from a rank with no prior booking (public hire). All hackney and limousine journeys are pre-booked (private hire) and, a maximum taxi 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. Therefore, both the passenger and the driver are aware of the journey details and fare agreed for that journey in advance.

1

SPSV Fleet numbers

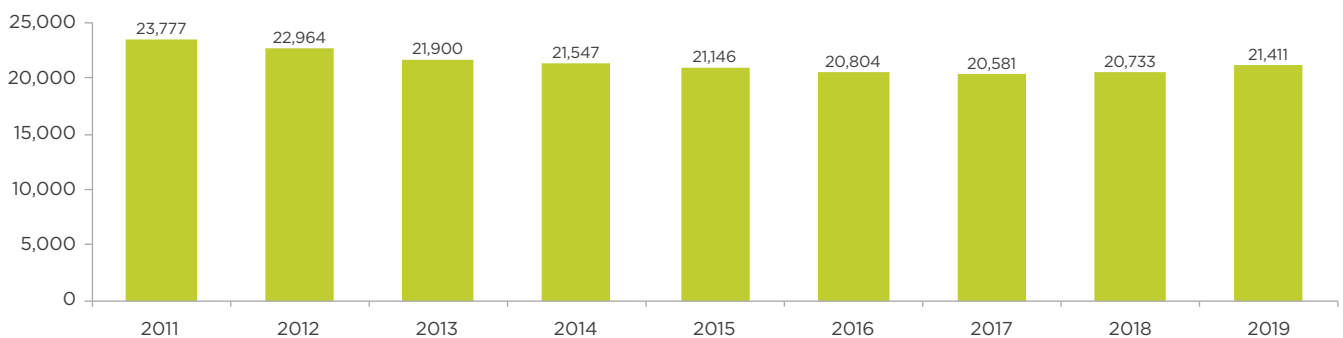


In November 2000 there was a liberalisation of SPSV licensing, which removed the regulatory provisions involving quantitative restrictions (capping on numbers) on the licensing of taxis and hackneys. The years following saw an increase of over 100% in the number of vehicle licences issued, from 13,637 in 2000 to a peak of 27,429 just before the Irish economy entered recession in 2008. The difficult economic environment and ensuing reduction in customer demand, together with higher vehicle standard and driver testing requirements, led to a reduction in the overall fleet by nearly 25% to a total of 20,581 vehicle licences as at 31 December 2017. However, this downward trend was reversed in 2018, with SPSV licences numbering 21,411 in 2019. Table 1 and Figure 1 illustrate the change in the numbers of SPSV licences from 2006 to 2011.

Table 1: Small Public Service Vehicle Licences by Year, 2011 - 2019

Year	SPSV Licences
2011	23,777
2012	22,964
2013	21,900
2014	21,547
2015	21,146
2016	20,804
2017	20,581
2018	20,733
2019	21,411

Figure 1: Small Public Service Vehicle Licences by Year, 2011 - 2019



2

SPSV Fleet Profile

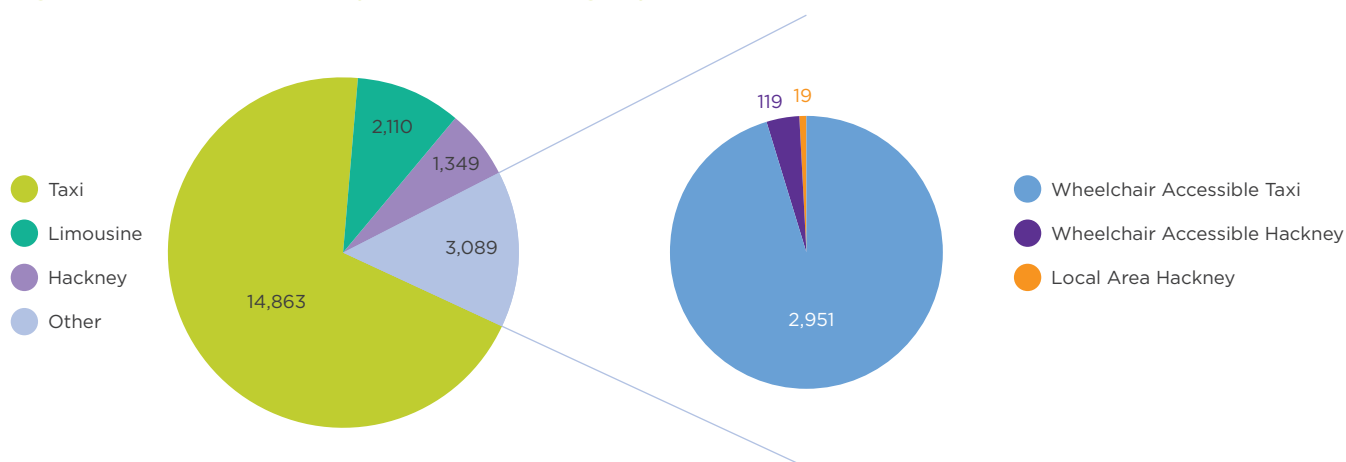


Table 3 and Figure 2 show the change in the number of vehicle licences across each SPSV category since 2011.

Table 3: SPSV Fleet by Vehicle Category by Year, 2011 - 2019

Year	Taxis		Hackneys			Limousines	Total
	Standard	Wheelchair Accessible (WAT)	Standard	Wheelchair Accessible (WAH)	Local Area (LAH)		
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
2017	15,490	1,471	1,631	84	11	1,894	20,581
2018	15,064	2,115	1,477	105	13	1,959	20,733
2019	14,863	2,951	1,349	119	19	2,110	21,411

Figure 2: SPSV Fleet by Vehicle Category 2019



Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles

In June 2014, 4% of the SPSV fleet was wheelchair accessible (850 vehicles). At the end of 2019, on foot of two major NTA initiatives, this had increased to over 14% (3,070) of the fleet being wheelchair accessible, surpassing Government’s two phase policy to achieve a target of 10% of taxis and hackneys being WAVs by 2020, with the full taxi and hackney fleet to be wheelchair accessible by 2035.

In April 2014, the regulations relating to the size specification for WAVs were revised, which meant that operators could purchase smaller wheelchair accessible vehicles. WAVs must now accommodate the driver plus a person travelling in their wheelchair plus at least one other adult passenger and, when not carrying a person in a wheelchair, 3 passengers in addition to the driver. In July 2014, an annual grant scheme was commenced which financially assisted potential licence holders to purchase WAVs. Each grant brought either a new vehicles into the fleet or enabled replacement of older licenced vehicles to enhance the quality and safety of the fleet.

Table 4: Grant assisted Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles 2014 - 2019

	Grants	Capital	New WAV to Fleet	Replacement of WAV within Fleet
2014	128	€819,000	92	36
2015	153	€871,000	134	19
2016	335	€1,987,500	284	51
2017	284	€1,747,500	233	51
2018	761	€3,366,000	679	82
2019	1,039	€4,420,000	907	132

Vehicle Age Profile

The consolidated Taxi Regulation Acts 2013 and 2016 require NTA 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. In general, taxis and hackneys must be less than 10 years old and of a condition and quality suitable to provide SPSV services. However, a certain class of taxis and hackneys are permitted to operate up to 15 years of age. Vehicles are inspected at least annually to ensure standards and quality remain at an appropriate level. Table 5 demonstrates the age profile of the SPSV fleet at 31 December 2019.

Table 5: Age Profile of the SPSV fleet at 31 December 2019

	Taxi	WAT	Hackney	WAH	LAH	Limousine	Total
< 1 year of age	262	154	26	9	1	89	541
1 to < 2 years of age	413	230	49	17	0	138	847
2 to < 3 years of age	710	286	100	19	0	213	1,328
3 to < 4 years of age	1,357	280	144	18	2	199	2,000
4 to < 5 years of age	1,759	290	136	12	2	178	2,377
5 to < 6 years of age	2,170	461	178	11	4	152	2,976
6 to < 7 years of age	2,003	424	133	8	1	144	2,713
7 to < 8 years of age	1,824	336	188	6	3	113	2,470
8 to < 9 years of age	1,595	198	155	10	3	78	2,039
9 to < 10 years of age	1,220	65	85	4	3	75	1,452
10 to < 15 years of age	1,550	158	155	5	0	543	2,411
15+ years of age	0	69	0	0	0	188	257
Total	14,863	2,951	1,349	119	19	2,110	21,411

3

Vehicle Licences Issued



Since 08 June 2010, all new taxi and hackney licences issued have been associated with wheelchair accessible vehicles. Licences for non-wheelchair accessible vehicles which were part of the SPSV fleet prior to June 2010, may remain associated with such vehicles on each change of vehicle on that licence. New vehicle licences are also issued for limousines and local area hackneys. Table 2 below gives the annual figures from 2011.

Table 2: New Vehicle Licences Issued by Year and Category, 2011 - 2019

New Vehicle Licences Issued							
Year	Taxi	Hackney	Limousine	WAT	WAH	LAH	Total
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
2017	0	0	290	345	21	1	657
2018	0	0	236	713	25	4	978
2019	0	0	309	944	28	8	1,289

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 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 valid for a period of up to five years. NTA, 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 SPSV driver licences was 27,328 at the end of 2019, an increase of 3.6% from the previous year. As with the vehicle fleet profile geographically, the majority of drivers (56%), hold a Dublin licence entitlement. The number of new drivers entering the SPSV industry increased significantly from 823 in 2017 to 1,168 in 2018 and to 1,693 in 2019. A total of 55 SPSV driver licences were formally surrendered in 2019, compared to 105 the previous year. In addition, 872 drivers allowed their licences to lapse permanently in 2019, compared to 354 in 2018.

Table 6: SPSV Driver Licences by year, 2011 - 2019

Year	Driver Licences
2011	38,499
2012	34,679
2013	31,186
2014	29,457
2015	27,440
2016	26,420
2017	26,012
2018	26,373
2019	27,328

Figure 3: SPSV Driver licences by year, 2011 - 2019

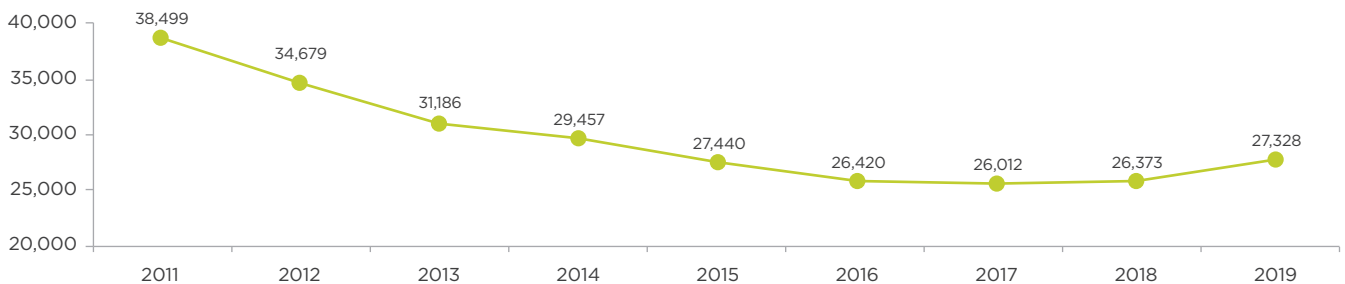


Figure 4: Age Profile for SPSV Driver Licences at end 2019

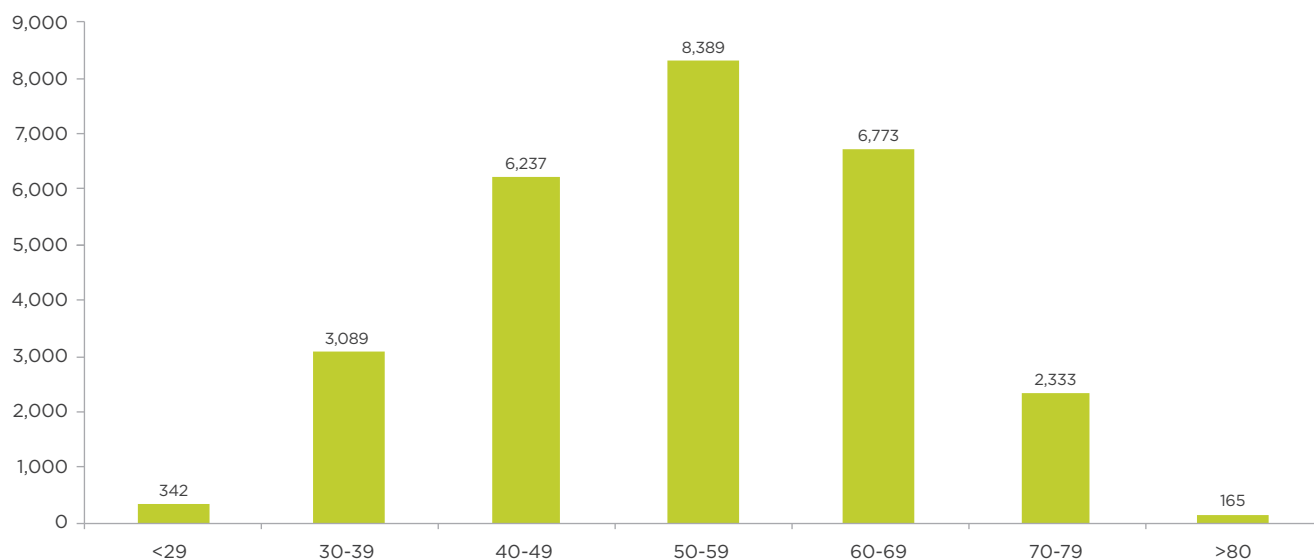
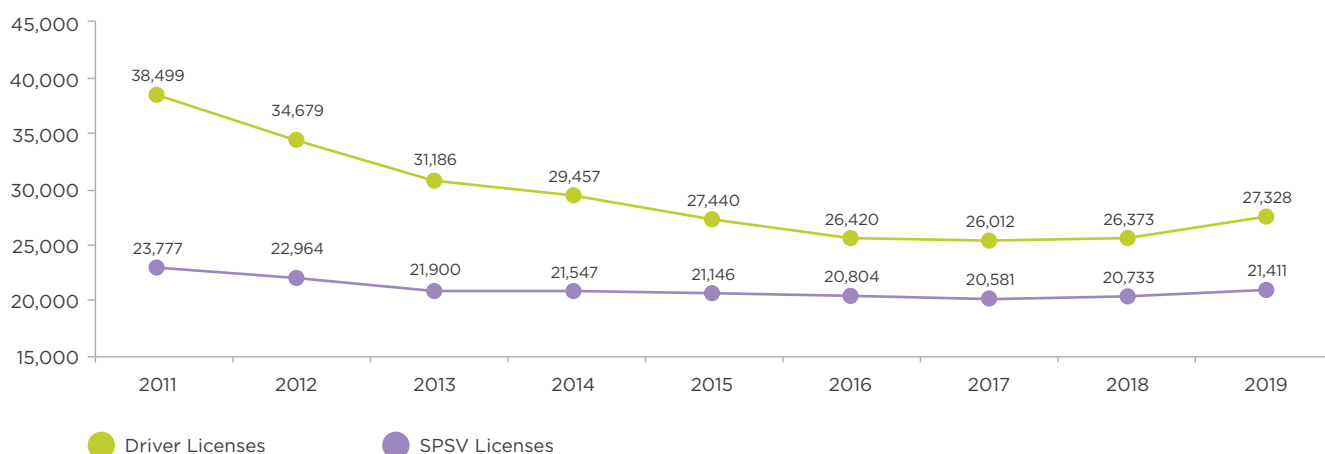


Figure 5: Comparison of SPSV Driver and Vehicle Licences 2011-2019



NTA 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 passengers in any county who have not pre-booked the service, he/she must have passed the area knowledge test for that county. It is possible to be licensed for several counties.

During 2019, 5,099 Entry tests were taken by 2,620 candidates wishing to become licenced SPSV drivers. The average amount of times the test was taken to achieve the pass mark was 1.4, with 57% of successful candidates passing on their first attempt and a further 17% successful on their second attempt. Of the unsuccessful candidates, 79% did not attempt a second test.

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SPSV Contact Management



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

In 2019, over 270,000 licensing notifications were issued to industry members in writing and more than 120,000 telephone calls were handled, the bulk of which were from industry members. Table 7 and Figure 6 detail the total calls by year and the split between industry and consumer calls.

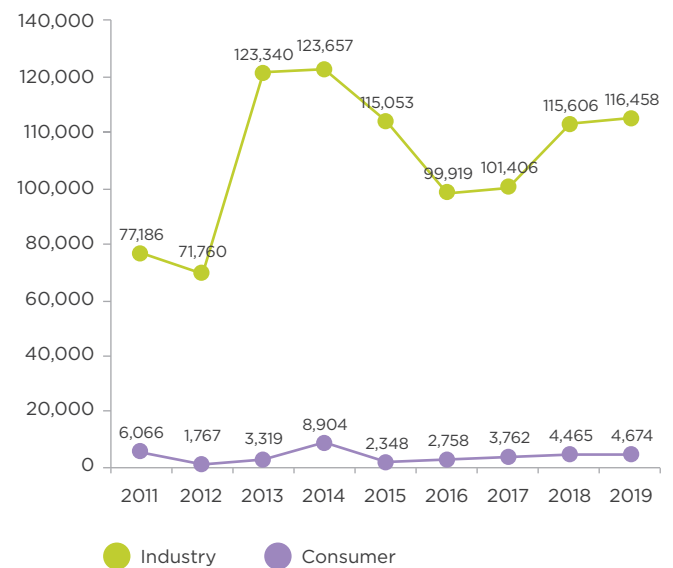
In 2019, 4% of calls came from the public. The top three consumer queries related to lost property, complaints and general enquires.

Industry members use the SPSV Information Line for driver and vehicle licensing matters, together with booking vehicle inspections and industry/area knowledge tests. SPSV drivers must notify NTA when they are operating a vehicle – commonly known as ‘linking’ – so that they will appear on the Driver Check App. This is a public safety App which may be downloaded to any smartphone to allow intending passengers obtain real time licensing and NTA registration confirmation, including a photograph of the driver with whom they are about to travel. There is also a facility to email the licensing details to a friend and to report any driver/vehicle who is not registered with the NTA through the App. The top three industry queries for 2019 were vehicle licence booking inspections, general driver licensing queries and general vehicle licensing queries.

Table 7: Calls to the SPSV Information Line by Year and Source 2011 - 2019

Year	Industry Members	Consumers	Total calls
2011	77,186	6,066	83,252
2012	71,760	1,767	73,527
2013	123,340	3,319	126,659
2014	123,657	8,904	132,561
2015	115,053	2,348	117,401
2016	99,919	2,758	102,677
2017	101,406	3,762	105,168
2018	115,606	4,465	120,071
2019	116,458	4,674	121,132

Figure 6: Calls to SPSV Information Line by Year and Source 2011 - 2019



6

Compliance



NTA continues to focus on education, deterrence and enforcement measures to maintain high levels of compliance by SPSV operators with the regulatory framework. During 2019, NTA's compliance team included 23 authorised persons who engage in compliance activities across the country. This team consisted of 7 employees of NTA and 16 authorised persons employed under an outsourcing contract.

Compliance activities include vehicle and driver licensing mobile checks, roadside vehicle and driver audits, investigating consumer complaints and participation in multi-agency compliance operations (e.g. with An Garda Síochána (National Roads Policing Bureau and National Immigration Bureau), the Revenue Commissioners and the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection).

Since July 2015, Compliance Officers have been able to undertake real-time mobile checks of SPSVs observed operating. This bespoke tool has enabled Compliance Officers to check each SPSV remotely, including the status of both driver and vehicle licence in real time, and then focus comprehensive face to face audits on vehicles and drivers where potential compliance issues are identified. This system has resulted in a marked increase of authentications of SPSVs observed operating with a minimum of disruption to compliant operators and their passengers.

Mobile Checks, Face to Face Audits and Fixed Payment Notices

Over 190,000 mobile checks were undertaken during 2019, encompassing 19,460 individual vehicles, which represents 91% of licenced vehicles. Following these checks, Compliance Officers undertook over 14,000 face to face audits at the roadside, and 1,600 Fixed Payment Notices ("on the spot fines") were issued for a variety of offences. In 2019, Compliance Officers opted to undertake an audit following approximately 7% of mobile checks and, arising from these audits, detected offences which warranted the issuing of a fine in just under 11% of cases.

Approximately 90% of Fixed Payment Notices issued were paid promptly in 2019, with the remainder being referred for court prosecution. The single largest category of notices issued (approximately 28%) related to drivers "failing to notify details of the vehicle being operated". SPSV Drivers are required by law to notify the NTA of the vehicle being operated. This data supports the Driver Check App, which allows passengers or intending passengers to check the licence status of their chosen vehicle and driver.

Table 8: SPSV Checks, Audits and Fixed Payment Notices 2011 - 2020

Year	No. of checks	No. of roadside audits	Fixed Payment Notices
2011	N/A	9,477	386
2012	N/A	15,142	165 ¹
2013	N/A	18,103	835 ²
2014	N/A	42,722	1,369 ³
2015	29,123	11,765	692
2016	90,243	12,012	1,099
2017	151,561	10,959	1,512
2018	199,369	17,610	1,878
2019	196,868	14,589	1,600

1 Final year of single fixed penalty of €250

2 Introduction of gradual penalties from €40 to €250

3 15 additional Compliance Officers from April 2014

Prosecutions

In 2019, 257 offences were prosecuted, of which 212 cases were by way of direct prosecution for a breach of legislation, outside of a failure to pay a Fixed Payment Notice. Of these direct prosecutions, 28 cases involved the offence of not holding a valid SPSV Driver's Licence, 51 cases for not holding a valid SPSV Vehicle Licence and 36 cases where the offender held neither a valid SPSV Driver nor Vehicle licence. 7 cases were prosecuted for a licence holder allowing another person to operate without a valid licence. 42 cases were prosecuted for various other regulatory breaches. 93 further cases were brought for the non-payment of Fixed Payment Notices. In total, more than 91% of cases presented by NTA were successful.

Table 9: Prosecutions by Offence Category 2019

Category		Cases
Unlicensed SPSV Operation	No Driver and no vehicle licence	36
	No Driver licence	28
	No Vehicle licence	51
	Allow an unlicensed driver/vehicle to operate/Failure to keep accurate records	7
Overcharging (Addition of unwarranted 'extras' to fare)		3
Vehicle unfit for carriage of passengers		2
Illegal display of taxi sign/Failure to remove signage from unlicensed vehicle		27
Advertising an unlicensed SPSV service		2
Exceeding the maximum number of passengers		4
Hackney/Limousine standing for hire		4
Failure to pay Fixed Payment Notice		93
Total		257

	Total offences prosecuted	Unpaid FPNs prosecuted
2011	88	34
2012	86	39
2013	59	22
2014	80	33
2015	253	154
2016	208	77
2017	262	112
2018	326	114
2019	257	93

7

Compliments and Complaints



During 2014, NTA introduced improved website contact forms and email arrangements to make it easier for consumers to submit compliments or complaints about taxi, hackney, limousine and dispatch operator services nationwide. This, together with enhanced consumer education, have had a positive impact leading to an increase in both the compliments and complaints received.

All feedback is reviewed by a member of NTA's compliance team. Compliments are highlighted in the quarterly SPSV Industry Updates to members. Following a preliminary investigation of each complaint, 47% received in 2019 could not proceed any further. The reasons further action was not taken included:

- genuine mistake or misunderstanding by either party;
- no offence having been committed;
- the complainant deciding not to pursue the complaint when contacted;
- the complainant not providing contact details;
- anonymous complaints; or
- the operator not being correctly identified.

In the remainder of cases, the compliance actions included issuing an operator with advice, a formal warning, a fine 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 Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

There are five categories of complaint which can be dealt with by NTA 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"> • 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 poor hygiene
Overcharging and other matters relating to fares	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • failure to issue a receipt • €2 booking charge being added incorrectly 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • location of logos, stickers or advertisements • content of logos, stickers or advertisements • leaflets or other advertising matter

There was 1,383 complaints received in 2019, an increase of 5.4% on 2018.

Table 10: Complaints by month 2019

Category	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Grand Total
Condition, roadworthiness and cleanliness of the vehicle	7	8	3	8	4	6	8	7	4	3	11	9	78
Conduct, behaviour and identification of an SPSV driver	26	27	51	36	43	45	64	45	35	40	42	42	496
Hiring and booking of the SPSV	9	19	22	16	30	31	17	24	23	23	22	41	277
Identification and general appearance of the SPSV	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Overcharging and other matters relating to fares	29	33	46	39	28	40	52	38	44	53	68	59	529
Grand Total	71	87	124	100	105	122	141	114	106	119	143	151	1,383

Figure 7: Complaints by category received 2017 to 2019

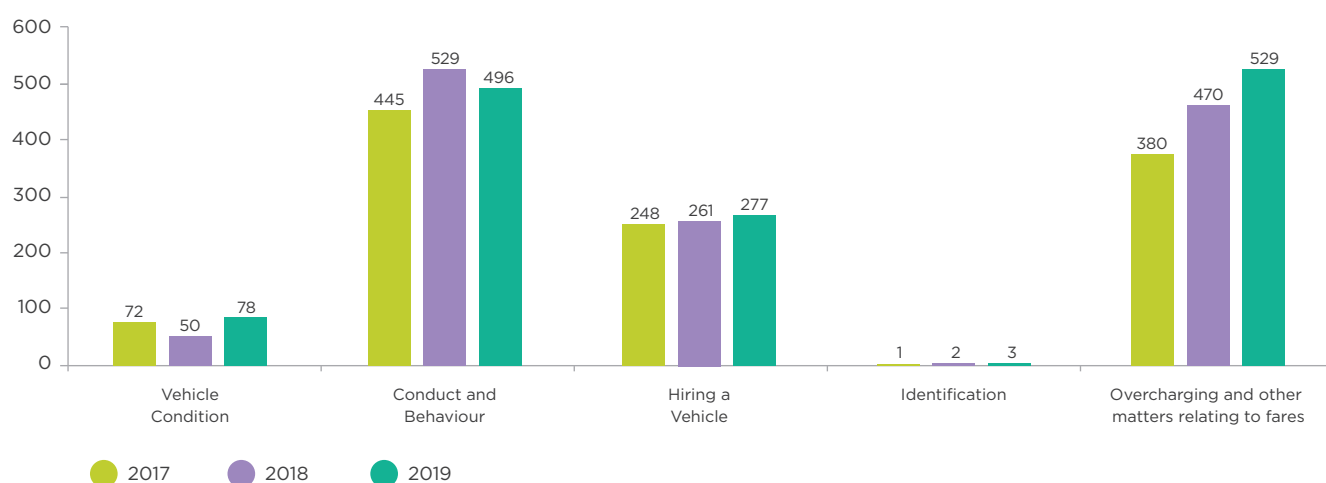
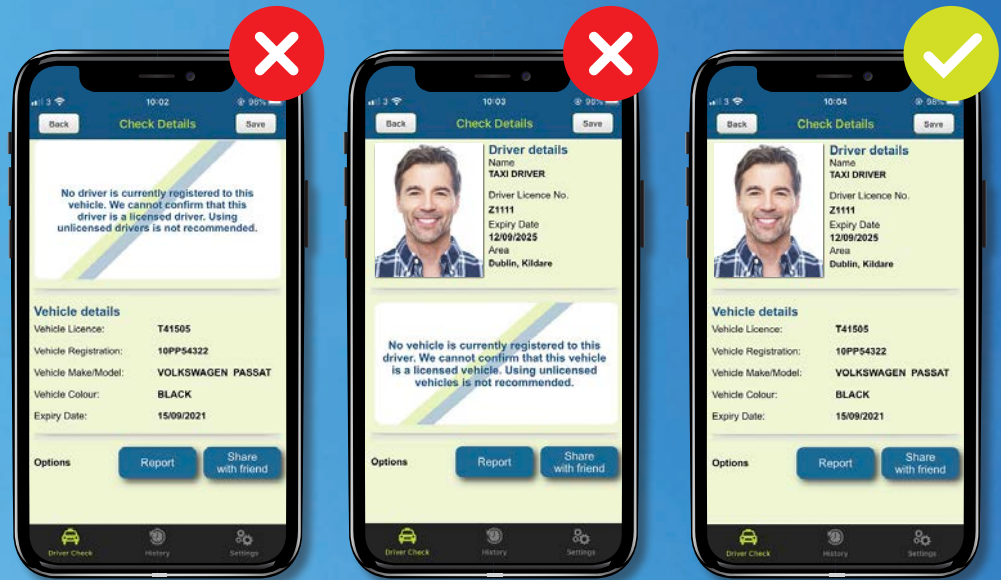


Table 11: Complaints by category from 2011 to 2019

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Condition, roadworthiness and cleanliness of the vehicle	21	22	30	47	53	34	72	50	78
Conduct, behaviour and identification of an SPSV driver	103	141	369	465	491	444	445	529	496
Overcharging and other matters relating to fares	132	110	221	327	297	348	380	470	529
Hiring and booking of the SPSV	90	104	122	113	83	172	248	261	277
Identification and general appearance of the SPSV	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3
Total	346	377	742	952	924	998	1,146	1,312	1,383



To link:



SPSV Industry App

Download on the
App Store

ANDROID APP ON
Google play

spsvonline.nationaltransport.ie

Text - 51444

Industry information line - 0761 064 000



The Driver Check App is an invaluable safety feature for passengers. Drivers are required by law to notify NTA when they are operating a taxi, hackney or limousine - colloquially it's called "linking". A link will break if the vehicle on the licence changes (new car) or if your SPSV driver or vehicle licence expires at any stage.



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