

COVID - INDUSTRY & CONSUMER RESEARCH: SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2021

A confidential telephone survey of drivers nationwide and an online survey of consumers were carried out in September/October 2021 to establish the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic covering areas such as supply, demand, customer satisfaction, insurance, operational expenses and COVID safety measures, together with other topical items.



TAXI OPERATOR KEY FINDINGS:

- 86% of drivers are working. The drivers that took part in this survey are working on average of 4.4 days per week. Respondents also stated their average working hours at 32 hours per week.
- Almost 9 out of 10 drivers currently offer cashless payments.
- 7 in 10 drivers believe the majority of passengers wish to pay with card.
- Although 91% of vehicle licence owners know **about Section 15 Licence nomination**, 22% have lodged the nomination form to NTA. The only lawful way a licence can

be transferred is through the two-part nomination and assignment process.

- 78% of vehicle licence holders are aware they can rent out their vehicle when they retire (or at any time) with 32% saying that they are likely to do so.

CONSUMER KEY FINDINGS:

- 27% of users are projecting an increase in taxi usage within the coming month.
- 92% of users during the pandemic felt safe from Covid when travelling in taxis.
- 80% of users believe a cashless payment option should be available in all taxis.
- Before the Covid pandemic 68% of users surveyed used cash exclusively to pay for taxis. This has now reduced to 26%.
- Day-of-week usage shows higher weekend usage on Saturdays in particular, and more trips between 10pm and midnight.

The findings of the recent surveys carried out in September/October will be published on NTA's website in due course. Findings from previous surveys can be found [here](#).

FACE COVERINGS REMAIN MANDATORY

Since 3 December 2020 the use of face coverings by SPSV passengers and operators has been mandatory whilst the vehicle is occupied by a passenger. The Minister for Health has drafted further Regulations to extend the period of effect of the Health Act 1947 (Section 31A – Temporary Restrictions) (Covid-19) (Face Coverings in Small Public Service Vehicles and Certain Premises) Regulations 2020 until 9 February 2022.



'RECONNECTING WITH' CAMPAIGN – TAXI GLAM

In September, Transport for Ireland (TFI) launched the 'Reconnecting with' campaign promoting public transport usage including SPSVs. With many public transport users having reduced passenger journeys over the past number of months, the objective of the campaign is to promote and encourage a return to using SPSVs. The campaign has been advertised on public transport, bus shelters, social media, radio, newspapers and online.



YOUR DUTIES TO PASSENGERS WITH DISABILITIES

Wheelchair Users

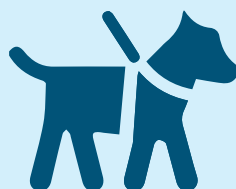
Regulation 37 of the Taxi Regulation (SPSV) Regulations 2015 is clear that WAV drivers must give priority to passengers with disabilities, including passengers who wish to travel in wheelchairs. This also means that WAVs must be ready to take passengers who wish to travel in wheelchairs at all times when operating.

Guide Dogs or Other Assistance Dogs

Regulation 39 is also clear that a driver shall not refuse to carry a guide dog or other assistance dog accompanying a person with disabilities on a journey. The only exception to this regulation is on medical grounds, where the driver has submitted prior written evidence, which has been accepted by NTA, that the driver is unable

to carry such a dog. The dog shall travel free of charge. Guide dogs and assistance dogs wear an identifying harness. It is important to allow the passenger to direct the dog themselves.

Where these regulations are not followed a fine will issue or the driver will be prosecuted directly by NTA in the District Court for up to €2,500 per offence.



MOTOR TAX REFUND SCHEME FOR SPSVS

The Motor Tax Refund Scheme for SPSVs commenced on 1 September 2021. For SPSV Motor Tax payments made on or after the scheme start date, a licence holder may apply to NTA for a refund of that €95. Applications must be received within 30 days of the Motor Tax issue date, and a certificate must be submitted to NTA to support the application. Further information can be found [here](#).



NCT FEE WAIVER SCHEME

The NCT Initial Test Fee Waiver Scheme also commenced on September 1. Since that date, more than 3,400 free bookings have been made, meaning 20% of vehicle licence holders have benefitted. Current SPSVs presented for the NCT will receive this test for free between 1 September 2021 and 31 August 2022. Further information can be found [here](#).

VEHICLE AGE LIMITS

As in 2021, no taxi or hackney will have to leave the fleet because of age in 2022, all other licensing conditions being met, following the enactment of the Small Public Service Vehicle (Emergency Measure COVID-19) (Maximum Permissible Age) Regulations 2021.

These emergency regulations permit a one-year extension to the final operation date of vehicles due to reach their final date of operation/maximum permissible age in 2022, for the first time or having been catered for by previous COVID-19 Emergency Measures. NTA communicated individually with all SPSV licence holders that received an extension to their final operation date.

RENTING A LICENCED SPSV

78% of SPSV licence holders who took part in the latest surveys stated they were aware they could rent their licenced SPSV, however only 32% indicated they were likely to so on retirement, stating the reason as “*too much hassle*”.

To rent an SPSV, the licence holder:

1. Is the only person able to conduct licensing transactions;
2. Must provide and maintain appropriate SPSV insurance;
3. Must ensure that each person driving is a licensed SPSV driver;
4. Must keep a record of the name, address, contact number and licence details of each driver; and
5. Notify NTA of the rental, either using NTA’s online system, or by calling the SPSV Information Line on 0818 064 000.

The rental of an SPSV licence only (without the insured vehicle) is prohibited at law.

VEHICLE OWNERSHIP

Regulations 13, 14 and 16 of the Taxi Regulation (Small Public Service Vehicle) Regulations 2015, require that either evidence of vehicle ownership or evidence of legal entitlement to use of the vehicle for a period of not less than 12 months is provided to NTA for licensing.

Since 1 September 2021, original vehicle registration certificates or other evidence of legal entitlement to the use of a vehicle as an SPSV, have been recorded as part of all SPSV suitability inspections in the same way as insurance certificates. Please ensure the necessary documentation is presented at your suitability inspection. If you have any queries please email taxis@nationaltransport.ie.

WAV21: WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE VEHICLE GRANT SCHEME

By the beginning of November 720 applications had been received to the WAV21 Grant Scheme with approximately €1.3m of funding being paid to applicants. Uptake of the WAV Grant has meant that 17% of the fleet is now wheelchair accessible.

A WAV Grant will be available in 2022. NTA will publish further details in due course.

ESPSV21: ELECTRIC VEHICLE GRANT SCHEME

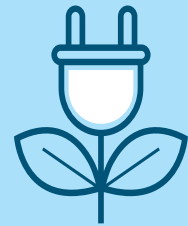
The Department of Transport closed the eSPSV21 Grant Scheme to new applications on 30 September because all of the €15 million funding provided had been allocated to applicants.

All applicants offered grants before that date will, of course, continue to be processed as normal. The eSPSV21 Scheme received a total of 1,488 applications, and, at the beginning of November approximately €8.5 million had been paid to applicants with the remainder of funding allocated to applicants with current provisional grant offers.

The Department confirmed that applicants for the eSPSV Grant 2021 who hold a current provisional grant offer but whose vehicles have been delayed, can apply for an extension until 31 March 2022. NTA has since been in direct

contact with all eligible applicants with details on how to request an extension. All submitted extension requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and NTA will contact applicants to confirm the outcome of their extension requests.

The Department of Transport has confirmed that an eSPSV Grant will run in 2022. Further information regarding eSPSV22 will be published on the NTA website when received.



DRIVER CHECK APP

NTA reminds all SPSV operators of their responsibility to ensure they have an active driver to vehicle link when operating an SPSV. Linking information feeds into the Driver Check App used by the public to ensure that the vehicle and driver they intend to use are licensed and registered with NTA.

NTA provides a number of ways to keep this operational data up to date. Further information on maintaining driver links, including how to register for SPSV Online Services and SMS linking, can be found [here](#) or by calling the SPSV Information Line.



COMPLIANCE OPERATIONS

In line with the further easing of restrictions and the increased activity within the hospitality sector, licence holders are reminded of their ongoing obligations to operate in compliance with the Taxi Regulation Acts, and all associated regulations and orders. NTA Compliance Officers and Gardai will continue to undertake roadside enforcement activity to ensure the high standards of the SPSV industry are upheld.

NTA reminds all licence holders that before returning to operation you must ensure that both the SPSV driver and vehicle licences are valid and in date and a driver to vehicle [link](#) has been created. It is not lawful to operate an SPSV unless the vehicle has been licensed by the NTA and the driver has been granted a licence from An Garda Síochána. Further information on operational requirements can be found [here](#).

Further information on NTA Compliance can be found [here](#).

LOST PROPERTY

As the festive season draws closer and an increase in the use of SPSVs is anticipated, the possibility of passengers mislaying their belongings in SPSVs is likely to increase. Any property left in your vehicle by a passenger should be delivered either to a designated Garda Station (Dublin), or the local Garda Station, as soon as possible.

There are five designated stations within Dublin for lost property: Finglas, Irishtown, Shankill, Store Street and Tallaght.

Thank you to all the drivers who have gone out of their way to reunite passengers with their lost property.

NATIONAL MAXIMUM TAXI FARE REVIEW

NTA has engaged economic consultants to commence the National Maximum Taxi Fare Review process, to assess the changes in taxi operating costs and the market facing the industry.

NTA undertook a fare review in 2019 with the objective of making a new maximum taxi fares order in June 2020. The arrival of COVID-19 halted this enactment. As a result of the pandemic's devastating impact on the SPSV industry and consumer sentiment, the Advisory Committee on SPSVs and taxi industry representatives recommended that no increase be implemented in 2020. The Department of Transport and NTA supported this recommendation.

Maximum taxi fares were last increased by an average of 3.22% per journey in February 2018, so 2018 is the relevant year for comparison now. This period is all the more significant within the environment of COVID.

The objectives of the Maximum Fare Review are to:

- Estimate the average activity level of taxis in a year based on survey data directly from taxi drivers and data from the Central Statistics Office (CSO);
- Update each element of the Taxi Cost Index (TCI), including the fixed and running costs of an average taxi and labour costs; and
- Determine whether there should be any change in maximum fares chargeable by operators.

NTA will keep operators updated as the review progresses, with the usual industry and user surveys commencing in the first quarter of 2022, with a full update of fixed and running taxi costs being completed in parallel, without the COVID industry supports being factored in. A public consultation will follow the publication of the report, with operator and user submissions invited for the consideration of the NTA Board.

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR OPENING HOURS



The SPSV Information Line and Inspection Centres will be closed on the 27th and 28th December. They will operate reduced hours on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve.

NTA encourages you to keep up to date on industry matters by visiting the [SPSV Latest News](#) section of the website and to maintain adherence with Government and Public Health guidance.

Wishing you a safe and peaceful Christmas from the National Transport Authority.

