

SPSV Bulletin

2021

December 2022



Bulletin Topics:

- Overall SPSV Fleet Numbers
- Vehicle Licences Issued
- SPSV Fleet Profile
- SPSV Driver Licences
- SPSV Contact Management
- Compliance
- Compliments and Complaints
- Advisory Committee on Small Public Service Vehicles

Glossary

SPSV	Small Public Service Vehicle (Taxi, Hackney or Limousine)
Taxi	<p>An SPSV which can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ply for hire (be hailed on the street); or • stand for hire at taxi ranks; or • be pre-booked by or for a passenger. <p>It must carry prescribed branding on its front doors and be fitted with a taximeter, printer and roof sign. It can use bus lanes when hired.</p>
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 only for a designated local pick up area 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.
Low emission vehicle (LEV)	Low emission cars produce fewer emissions than your average car on the road. In Ireland, low emission cars are those with CO2 exhaust emissions of 50 g/km or less.
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.
Maximum Permissible Age (MPA)	The maximum permissible age of an SPSV refers to the age of a vehicle beyond which that vehicle may not be licensed as an SPSV of the relevant vehicle licence category.
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

About this SPSV Bulletin

Welcome to NTA's SPSV bulletin on the small public service vehicle (SPSV) sector. It focuses on statistics for taxis, hackneys and limousines, together with NTA's activities as a regulator.

What is a small public service vehicle (SPSV)?

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

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

What regulations cover the SPSV sector?

SPSV regulation aims to ensure that passengers have a safe vehicle for their journey. This means that there is appropriate insurance in place, and the driver has been vetted by An Garda Síochána. In the case of taxis, it also means that the system used to charge passengers is clear, transparent and fair. While there are many aspects to regulation, passenger safety is the foundation.

The sector is regulated under the following acts and laws:

- The Consolidated Taxi Regulation Acts 2013 and 2016
- The Taxi Regulation (Small Public Service Vehicle) Regulations 2015 and 2016
- The Taxi Regulation Act 2013 (Maximum Fares) Order 2017
- COVID-19 emergency measures enacted throughout 2020 & 2021 by both the Department of Health and NTA

Who are NTA?

NTA is a statutory body established by the Minister for Transport on 1 December 2009. On 1 January 2011, the Commission for Taxi Regulation became part of NTA, and we became responsible for the regulation of the SPSV sector. This includes small public service vehicles, along with their drivers, owners and associated services such as booking services.

What is NTA's role in the SPSV Industry?

NTA is the licensing authority for SPSVs and dispatch operators (booking service providers). This includes granting, renewing and where needed revoking licences for each vehicle and dispatch operator. We are also responsible for:

- All associated licensing, inspection and compliance activity
- Issuing SPSV driver identification cards
- Providing SPSV Driver Skills Development Programme

Each licence must be renewed at least every year, allowing us to monitor the quality of the vehicles and services provided.

To operate as an SPSV:

- The vehicle must be licensed as an SPSV
- The driver must have a SPSV licence and standard driving licence.

An Garda Síochána is the licensing authority for SPSV drivers and is responsible for vetting drivers. The NTA administers the SPSV driver licensing system on behalf of An Garda Síochána and provides the driver testing regime.

NTA are responsible for setting the National Maximum Taxi Fare. This applies only to taxi journeys as taxis may be hired on the street or hired from a rank with no advance booking (public hire).

It does not apply to hackney and limousine journeys as they are pre-booked (private hire) and, therefore, both passenger and driver have agreed the journey details and fare.

We review the maximum taxi fare every two years to monitor and adjust for rising costs and market changes in the taxi industry.

The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic

During 2020 the SPSV industry was impacted heavily by the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects are still seen throughout 2021. The overall SPSV fleet size decreased by 11% between December 2019 and December 2021. While most of this occurred throughout 2020 at the height of the pandemic the fleet decreased by 2% in 2021. For the latter part of 2021 the fleet increased each month, indicating the beginning of recovery within the industry.

Following on from measures implemented by NTA in 2020 to assist the SPSV industry in meeting the challenges posed by the pandemic, NTA carried out the following measures in 2021, including:

Engagement with industry and stakeholders

- Engaged with the industry individually and through our website, providing advice and assistance on all aspects of operation. We shared information about financial supports available to the SPSV industry and regular updates to the SPSV Industry Information Note (COVID-19) with the latest advice on all SPSV COVID related matters.
- Frequent engagement with the Advisory Committee on SPSVs and the Department of Transport, specifically including responses, challenges and actions arising from COVID-19.
- Provided over 40 information updates to the SPSV industry via text message, email and our website.

Direct interventions to help SPSV operators

- Waiver of standard licence renewal fees for 2021.
- Extended the maximum permissible operational age of vehicles enabling them to remain in the fleet up to the end 2021.
- Extending the period which an SPSV can rest in inactive-expired status from 12 months to 24 months.

- Provided electric vehicle and wheelchair accessible vehicle grant schemes.
- Completing rolling surveys of driver and user experiences in COVID-19.
- Re-opened SPSV Driver Entry Testing as soon as possible while keeping in line with HSE COVID-19 guidelines.
- Motor Tax Refund Scheme launched September 2021 allowing an SPSV licence holder could apply to NTA within 30 days of their Motor Tax Issue date for a refund.
- Waiver for initial NCT for all SPSV operators launched September 2021.
- Ensured SPSV licence holders were prioritised in NCT centres.

Introduction of COVID-19 related regulation

We made four temporary regulations during 2021.

- Two of these measures related to ensuring no taxi or hackney reaching its maximum permissible age between 13 March 2020 and 31 December 2022 would have to exit the fleet until 2023;
 - Small Public Service Vehicle (Emergency Measure COVID-19) Regulations 2021 - [12/05/2021]; and
 - Small Public Service Vehicle (Emergency Measure COVID-19) (Maximum Permissible Age) - [21/09/2021] Regulations 2021.

These measures amended Regulation 31 of the Taxi Regulation (Small Public Service Vehicle) Regulations 2015.

- The third measure enacted a regulation to waive standard vehicle licence renewal fees during the period 1 January and 31 December 2022; waive late renewal fees until 30 June 2022; and reduce late renewal fees from 01 July 2022 to 31 December 2022;
 - Small Public Service Vehicle (Emergency Measure COVID-19) (Fees) Regulations 2021 - [19/07/2021].
- The fourth measure enacted a regulation to extend the period in which an SPSV vehicle licence can rest in 'Inactive' status from 12 to 24 months;
 - Small Public Service Vehicle (Emergency Measure COVID-19) (Expired Licence) Regulations 2021 - [19/07/2021]

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Overall SPSV Fleet numbers

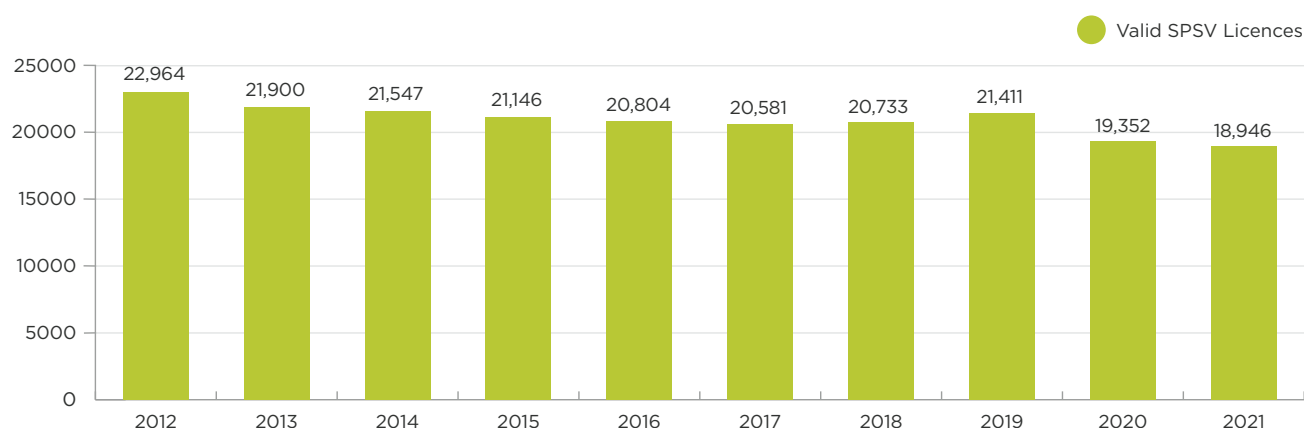


Between 2012 and 2018 the overall SPSV fleet numbers declined by 9.7%. Thereafter, we can see the industry beginning to grow with both 2018 and 2019 bringing an increase in licences. 2019 saw the reduction from 2012 decreasing to 6.7%. However, the COVID-19 pandemic was a significant factor in a further reduction since then with an 11.5% decline in fleet numbers since 2019. Table 1 and Figure 1 illustrate the changes in SPSV licence numbers from 2012 to 2021.

Table 1: Valid Small Public Service Vehicle Licences by Year, 2012 - 2021

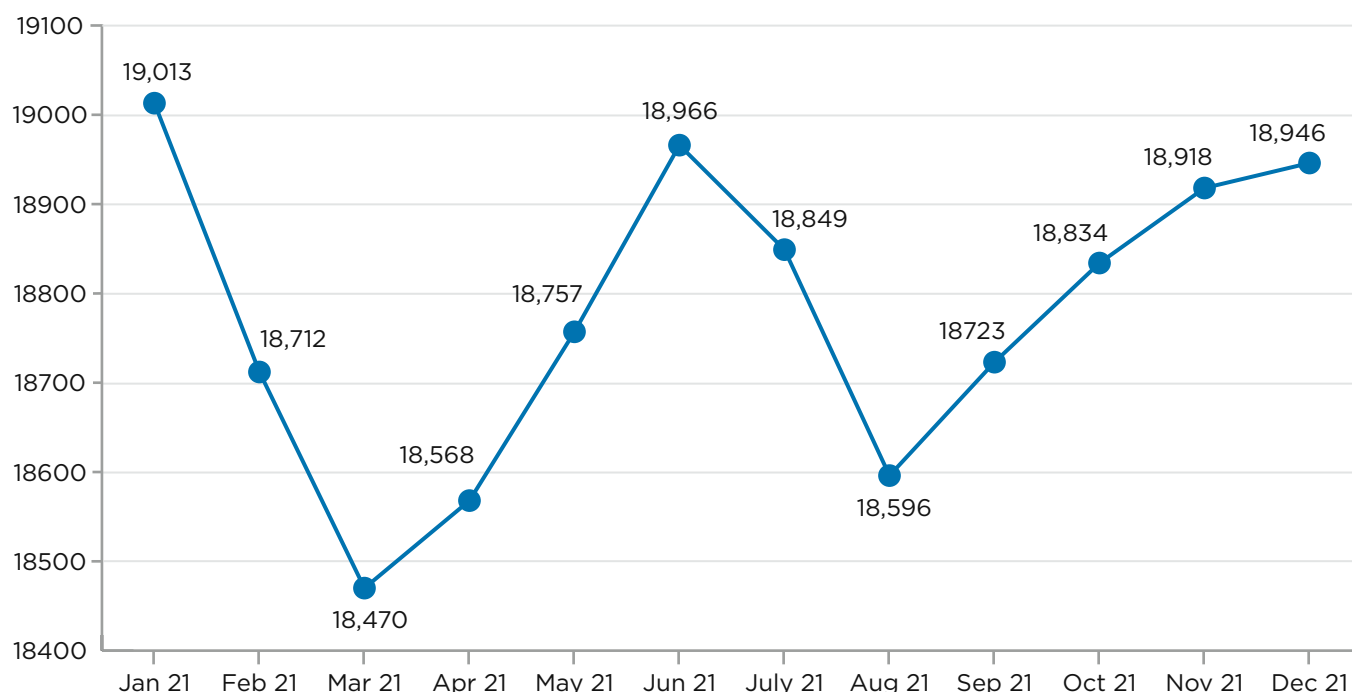
Year	SPSV Licences
2012	22,964
2013	21,900
2014	21,547
2015	21,146
2016	20,804
2017	20,581
2018	20,733
2019	21,411
2020	19,352
2021	18,946

Figure 1: Valid Small Public Service Vehicle Licences by Year, 2012 – 2021



Most of this 11.5% decline occurred in 2020 (9.6%) at the height of the pandemic and although there was a further decrease in 2021 (2%), the pace slowed significantly compared to 2020. For the latter part of the year, the fleet began to increase month-on-month as demonstrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Valid Small Public Service Vehicle Licences by Month, 2021



Small Public Service Vehicle Licence States

Broadly speaking, all SPSV licences exist in one of three states:

- **Current / Active** (also referenced as **Valid**): Where SPSV licences are current or active, the associated vehicles may be used for the carriage of passengers for hire or reward (all other regulatory requirements being met).
- **Inactive**: This means that the SPSV licence has expired. However, the licence holder is entitled to apply for a replacement, within twenty-four months of the expiry date (COVID-19 emergency measures enacted in July 2021 changing this period from twelve months to twenty-four months)
- **Dead**: The SPSV licence can no longer be reactivated.

Table 2: Inactive SPSV Driver & Vehicle Licences

SPSV Licence Type	State	31st December 2020	31st December 2021
Driver	Inactive	1,995	1,513
Vehicle	Inactive	2,634	3,270

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Vehicle Licences Issued



Since June 2010, all new taxi and hackney licences issued must be for Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAV). This is under the Taxi Regulation Act 2003 (Grant of Taxi Licences) (Amendment) Regulations 2010.

Licences for non-wheelchair accessible vehicles which were part of the SPSV fleet before June 2010, may remain associated with these vehicles on each change of vehicle on that licence. New vehicle licences are also issued for limousines and local area hackneys.

Under the same law, the transfer of a licence has been prohibited for all new SPSV licences granted since June 2010. This was extended to all SPSV licence holders in 2014. Therefore, to enter the industry for a first time with your own vehicle you must do so with a WAV, limousine or local area hackney. The only exception applies to those who do so via the Section 15 process where an SPSV licence holder appoints someone who can apply to take over that licence in the event of the original licence holder's death.

Table 3 below reflects the number of new licences issued for 2012 to 2021. The Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle grant was introduced in mid-2014 and as demonstrated in the table below this greatly influenced the number of new vehicles being licensed every year since 2014; see Table 5: Grant Assisted Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles 2014 – 2021.

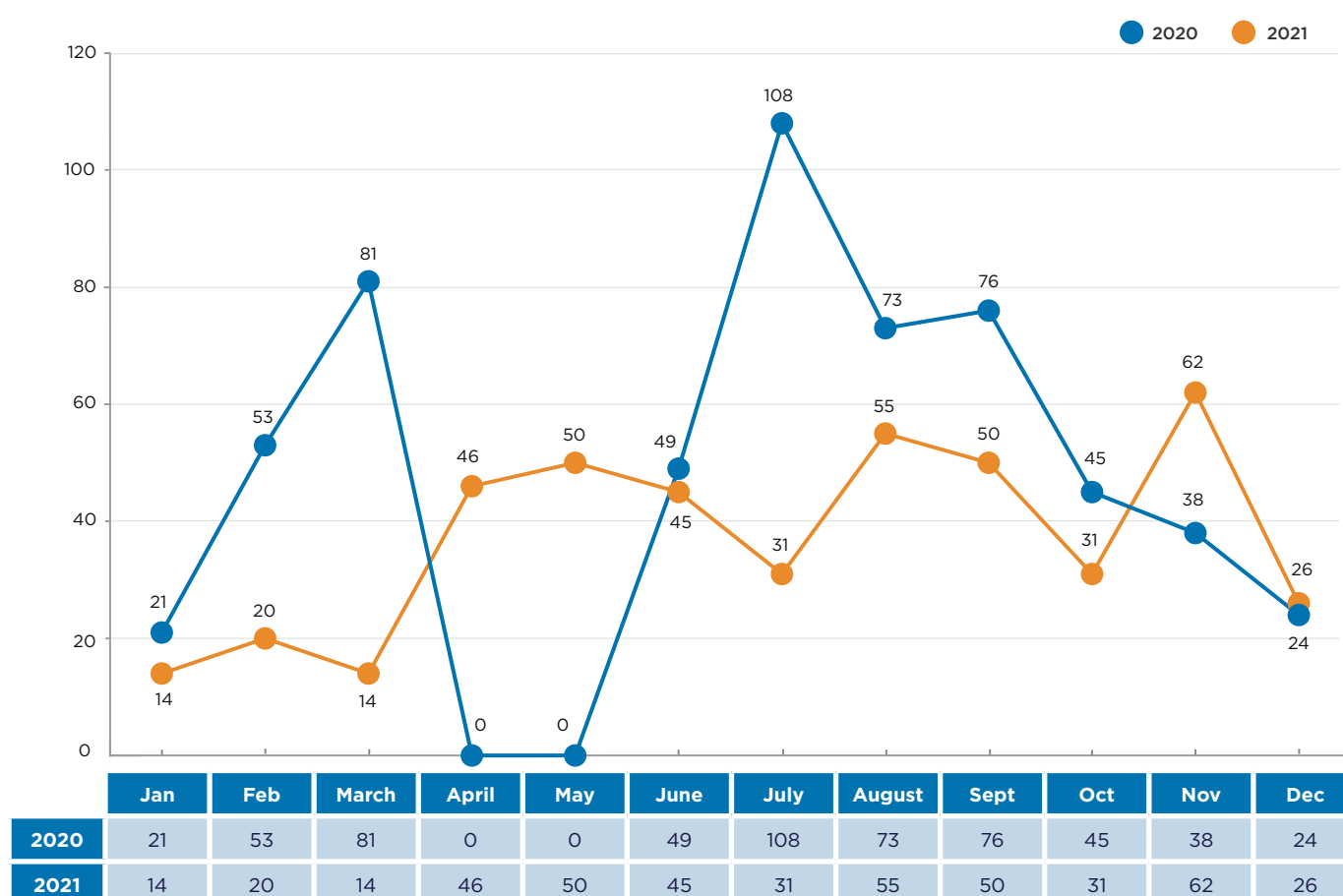
Table 3: New Vehicle Licences Issued by Year and Category, 2012 - 2021

New Vehicle Licences Issued							
Year	Taxi	Hackney	Limousine	WAT	WAH	LAH	Total
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
2020	0	0	146	404	12	6	568
2021	0	0	122	292	27	3	444

Main point for 2021

New licence numbers have increased steadily since 2012. 2018 and 2019 specifically were peak years on foot of NTA's 2018 recruitment campaign for new industry entrants. However, the impact of the decimation of passenger numbers during the COVID-19 pandemic is clearly evident with the 2021 new licence figures dropping back to reflect those of 2015. This is expected to turn upwards again when travel restrictions are lifted and the industry recovers. Figure 3 below, which echoes the journey of the pandemic's restrictions, illustrates the licences issued monthly for 2020 and 2021.

Figure 3: New Vehicle Licences Issued by Month, 2020 - 2021



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SPSV Fleet Profile

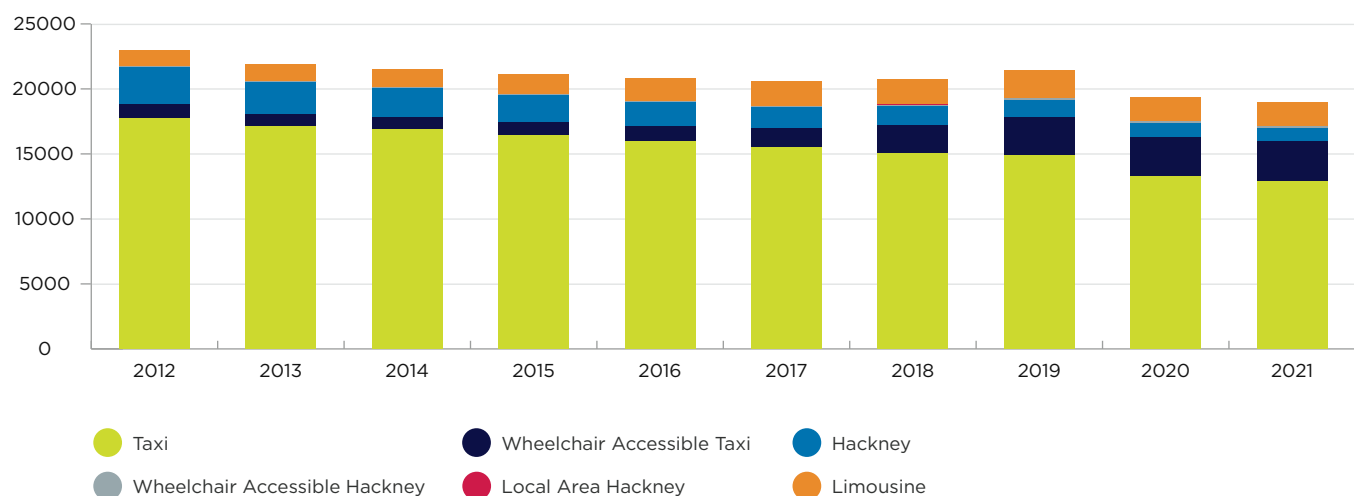


Table 4 and Figure 4 provide further analysis of the change in vehicle licence numbers across each of the SPSV categories since 2012.

Table 4: SPSV Fleet by Vehicle Category by Year, 2012 - 2021

	Taxis		Hackneys			Limousines	Total
	Standard	Wheelchair Accessible (WAT)	Standard	Wheelchair Accessible (WAH)	Local Area (LAH)		
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
2020	13,255	3,015	1,115	118	21	1,828	19,352
2021	12,861	3,118	1,025	132	21	1,789	18,946

Figure 4: SPSV Fleet by Vehicle Category 2012 to 2021



Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles

In April 2014, the regulations for the size specification for Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAV) were changed to enable SPSV operators to buy smaller vehicles. This regulatory revision was part of NTA initiatives to increase the number of WAV within the SPSV fleet.

In July 2014, a grant scheme was launched to assist licence holders to purchase a WAV. The WAV grant scheme, which has run each year since 2014, has assisted in funding 3,343 vehicles to year end 2021. The 2021 WAV scheme opened in March and 379 grants disbursed with each grant bringing either a new vehicle into the fleet or enabling the replacement of an older licensed vehicle to enhance the quality and safety of same.

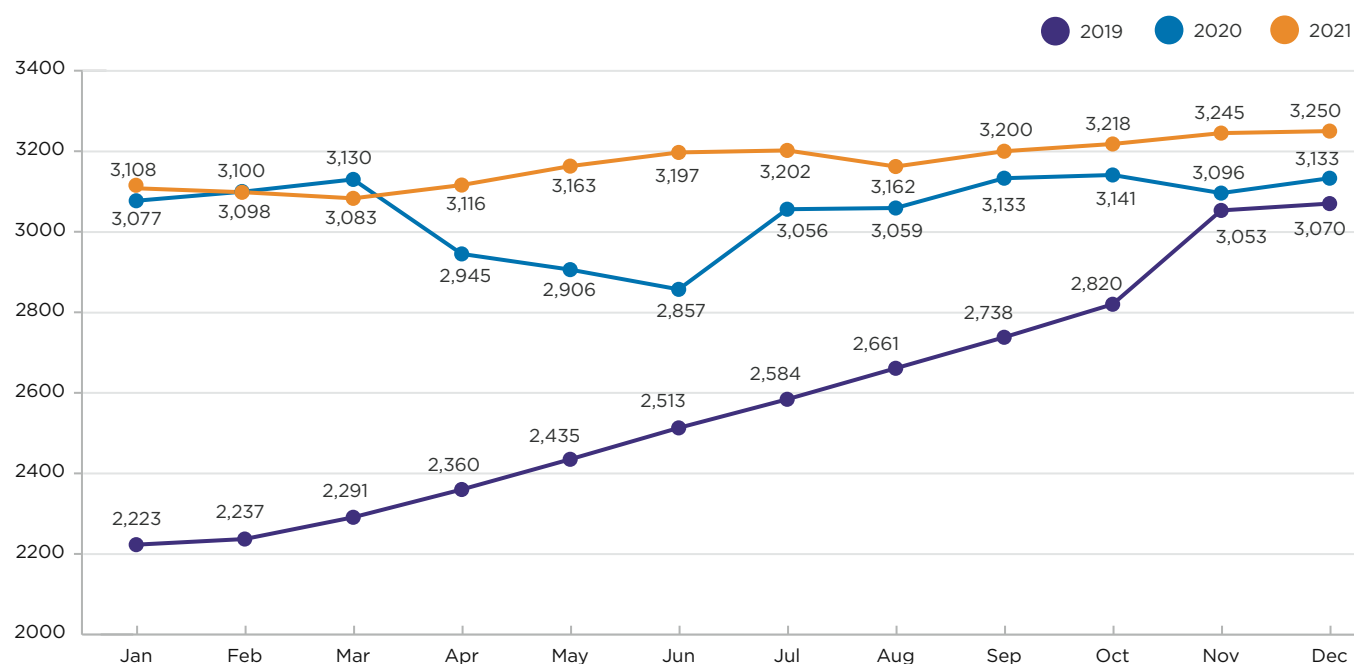
Main point for 2021

As at December 2021, 17% of the SPSV fleet (3,250) were wheelchair accessible vehicles, a 282% increase on the 2014 figure of 850. NTA remains committed to increasing the number of WAV within the SPSV fleet having set a core action to increase the WAV fleet by 25% from those in active status on 31 December 2021 (3,250) by 31 December 2025.

Table 5: Grant assisted Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles 2014 - 2021

	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
2020	264	€1,240,500	227	37
2021	379	€1,605,500	271	108

Figure 5: Wheelchair Accessible Licences by Month, 2019 - 2021



Electric Small Public Service Vehicles

One of NTA's strategic objectives is to provide high quality, accessible, sustainable transport connecting people across Ireland. To help achieve this, an Electric Small Public Services Vehicle (eSPSV) grant scheme was launched in 2018 by the Department of Transport and administered by NTA. Prior to the 2018 scheme, there were five sustainable vehicles (battery electric powered) in the national SPSV fleet.

Minister Ryan committed €15m to this scheme in 2021, a significant increase compared to the €500,000 for 2019 and the €1m for 2020.

Main point for 2021

As of 31 December 2021 there were 674 fully electric sustainable vehicles as part of the fleet and a further 2,800 hybrid vehicles alongside this.

Table 6: Low Emission Vehicle (LEV) Numbers as of December 31, 2021

Fuel Type	Number in the Fleet
Electric	674
Petrol/Electric	2,763
Plug-in Hybrid	37
Total	3,474

The eSPSV Grant 2021 scheme proved very popular with 1,490 applications received from 25 counties, 936 of which were from Dublin.

Table 7: Overview of eSPSV Grant per Year, 2018 - 2021

	Grants	Grants - Finance	New eSPSV	New eSPSV to Fleet - Finance	Replacement eSPSV	Replacement eSPSV to Fleet - Finance
2018	46	€279,000	3	€12,000	43	€267,000
2019	35	€189,000	2	€8,500	30	€180,500
2020	20	€159,000	0	€0,000	20	€159,000
2021	689	€13,332,500	1	€20,000	688	€13,312,500

Vehicle Age Profile

In the context of the SPSV Industry and in accordance with Regulation 31 of the Taxi Regulation (Small Public Service Vehicle) Regulations 2015 the "maximum permissible age" of a vehicle means the age of a vehicle beyond which that vehicle may not be licensed as an SPSV of the relevant vehicle licence category. Once a vehicle reaches its maximum permissible age, the licence holder may not apply to NTA for the renewal of an SPSV licence on that vehicle. A younger replacement vehicle must be purchased, and both a roadworthiness test (NCT) and an SPSV initial suitability test completed.

For safety and quality grounds, new small public service vehicles must be less than 10-years old to operate. Wheelchair accessible taxis and hackneys can operate up to 15-years old. No maximum age is set for limousines due to the vintage nature of many of these vehicles, and the reduced mileage they do due to their ceremonial and prestigious roles. Some limited exceptions, specifically concerning vehicles associated with SPSV licences before the introduction of the Taxi Regulation (Small Public Service Vehicles) Regulations 2015, apply to these timeframes. All vehicles must pass both a roadworthiness and a suitability inspection every year.

Shortly after the arrival of COVID-19 to Ireland and following public consultations, NTA enacted two emergency measures in May and December 2020 due to the enduring adverse economic consequences of the COVID pandemic on the SPSV industry. These Regulations were:

1. The Small Public Service Vehicle (Emergency Measure COVID-19) Regulations 2020 (which concerned 763 taxis and hackneys due to reach their maximum permissible age during the period 13 March 2020 to 31 December 2020); and
2. The Small Public Service Vehicle (Emergency Measure COVID-19) (No. 2) Regulations 2020 (which concerned 1,756 taxis and hackneys due to reach their maximum permissible age during the period 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021).

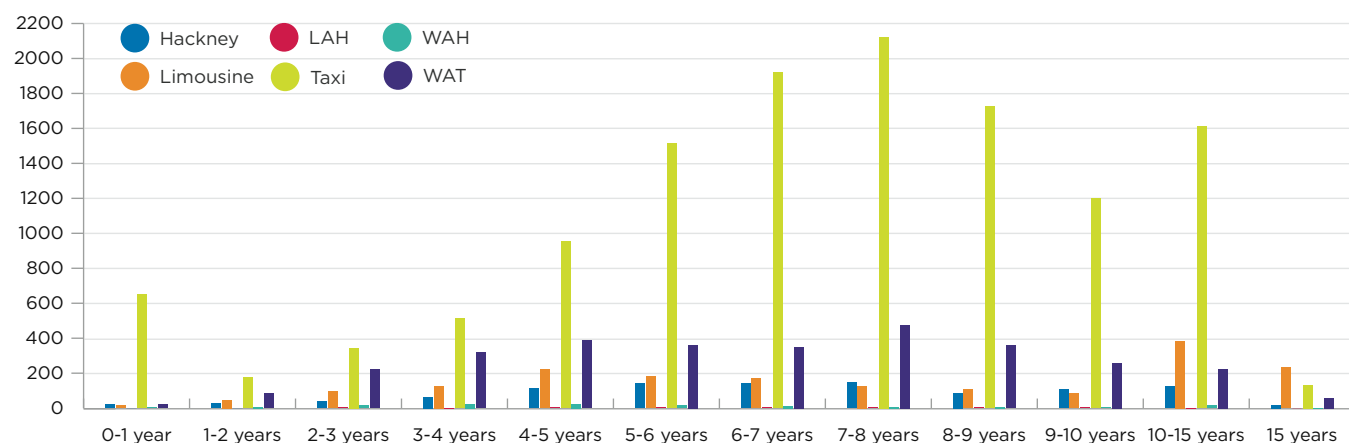
Given the unexpected delays in vaccination rollout at the time and the travel restrictions which continued to severely impact on SPSV licence holders, in May 2021 NTA enacted further emergency regulations. This revoked the two-abovementioned instruments and ensured that no small public service vehicle would reach its maximum permissible age during 2021 (Small Public Service Vehicle (Emergency Measure Covid-19) Regulations 2021).

In light of the ongoing nature of the pandemic NTA enacted a further measure in September 2021. This repealed the Small Public Service Vehicle (Emergency Measure Covid-19) Regulations 2021 and provided emergency COVID-19 protection to the 2,095 vehicles due to reach their maximum permissible age during 2022 for the first time, as well as further protection to the 2,030 vehicles who availed of the previous measures and were then due to reach their amended maximum permissible age in 2022. As a result, no vehicle had to be replaced in the fleet in 2021 due to age with the same considerations extending to the following year. Regardless of these emergency measures, all vehicles were required to undergo an inspection for suitability at least once a year.

Table 8: Age Profile of the SPSV Fleet at 31 December 2021

Year(s) of	Taxi	WAT	Hackney	WAH	LAH	Limousine	Total
Less than 1	650	21	20	2	0	15	708
1 to 2	175	82	27	6	0	47	337
2 to 3	344	223	37	17	2	97	720
3 to 4	511	320	64	24	1	126	1,046
4 to 5	955	386	111	23	3	220	1,698
5 to 6	1,515	361	140	16	3	180	2,215
6 to 7	1,919	349	141	12	2	170	2,593
7 to 8	2,122	475	148	7	4	126	2,882
8 to 9	1,726	359	87	6	2	108	2,288
9 to 10	1,200	259	107	4	3	83	1,656
10 to 15	1,611	224	125	14	1	384	2,359
15+	133	59	18	1	0	233	444
Total	12,861	3,118	1,025	132	21	1,789	18,946

Figure 6: Age Profile of the Taxi and Hackney Vehicles at 31 December 2021



4

SPSV Driver Licences



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 (taxi, hackney and limousine). The licence is valid for a period of up to five years and can remain in inactive-expired status for one year after which it cannot be renewed.

As part of this licensing process An Garda Síochána are responsible for vetting each applicant for a new licence or a renewal and completing all validation on the application. They grant, revoke or refuse licences. NTA are responsible for the SPSV Driver Skills Program for new applicants, taking payments and issuing receipts, issuing driver ID & display cards, updating the public register and maintaining the driver to vehicle links database.

SPSV Driver Entry Test

As part of the SPSV Driver Skills Program the SPSV Driver Entry Test was introduced in 2009 which, in the interest of fairness, meant there was one standard process for all applicants nationwide. Previously each jurisdiction had their own test. The SPSV Driver Entry Test is designed to verify that all new entrants to the industry are familiar with the regulatory framework for the SPSV industry, as set out in the Taxi Regulation Acts 2013, and 2016 and the Taxi Regulation (Small Public Service Vehicle) Regulations 2015 and 2016. It focuses on good practice in the industry, the driver's rights along with the rights of the customer.

It also allows the potential licensed driver the opportunity to demonstrate that they have a good working knowledge of the county in which they wish to stand or ply for hire as per the legal requirement. The overall purpose is to offer any potential licensed driver the tools needed to provide an effective and efficient service to the public.

The test has two modules, the Industry Knowledge module and the Area Knowledge module and comprises of 90 randomly generated, multiple-choice questions.

The Industry Knowledge module relates to regulations and good practice in the SPSV industry, as set out in The Official Manual for Operating in the SPSV Industry available on the NTA website. This is the only study material for this module, no other source is required.

The Area Knowledge module is for the county chosen by the candidate when booking the test. The content relates to that county only and focuses on direct routes, major landmarks, transport hubs and so forth. To pick up passengers on the street drivers must have passed the area knowledge test for that county. It is possible to be licensed for several counties. All information regarding the area(s) a driver is licensed to operate is available for passengers to check via the Transport for Ireland, Driver Check App.

Main points for 2021

NTA had temporarily stopped providing the Skills Development Programme in mid-March 2020 on public health advice arising from the COVID pandemic. In May 2021 the programme reopened but at a reduced capacity to allow increased social distancing in the centres. Despite this, 2,549 SPSV Driver Entry Tests were completed by 1,288 candidates aiming to join the industry. On average, it takes 2.9 attempts to pass the SPSV Driver Entry Test although of those who do pass 34% did on the first attempt and 25% on the second.

Table 9: SPSV Driver Entry Tests Delivered May – Dec 2021

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
SPSV Driver Entry Test	Closed due to Covid-19				183	461	340	292	354	311	336	272	2,549

An Garda Síochána issued 541 new driver licences in 2021. 378 of these related to Driver Entry Tests passed in 2021.

The number of SPSV driver licences surrendered during 2021 was 20, a decrease of 57% on the 2020 figure of 46. A further 1,651 SPSV drivers allowed their licences to lapse permanently in 2021 (compared with 645 in 2020), with 1,513 licences sitting at the permitted one year inactive status on 31 December 2021.

2019 saw an increase in SPSV driver licences as a result of a NTA driver recruitment campaign ran in 2018. The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on driver numbers as a result of travel restrictions and the closure of the hospitality sector. 2020 saw a 4.4% decrease on 2019 figures. While the decrease slowed significantly in 2021 as at 31 December 2021, there were 25,426 licensed SPSV drivers, a decrease of 2.6% on the 2020 figure of 26,105. The majority of these SPSV drivers are licensed for Dublin accounting for 1.5%.

Table 10: Valid SPSV Driver Licences by Year, 2012 - 2021

Year	Driver Licences
2012	34,679
2013	31,186
2014	29,457
2015	27,440
2016	26,420
2017	26,012
2018	26,373
2019	27,328
2020	26,105
2021	25,426

Figure 7: Valid SPSV Driver Licences by Year, 2012 - 2021

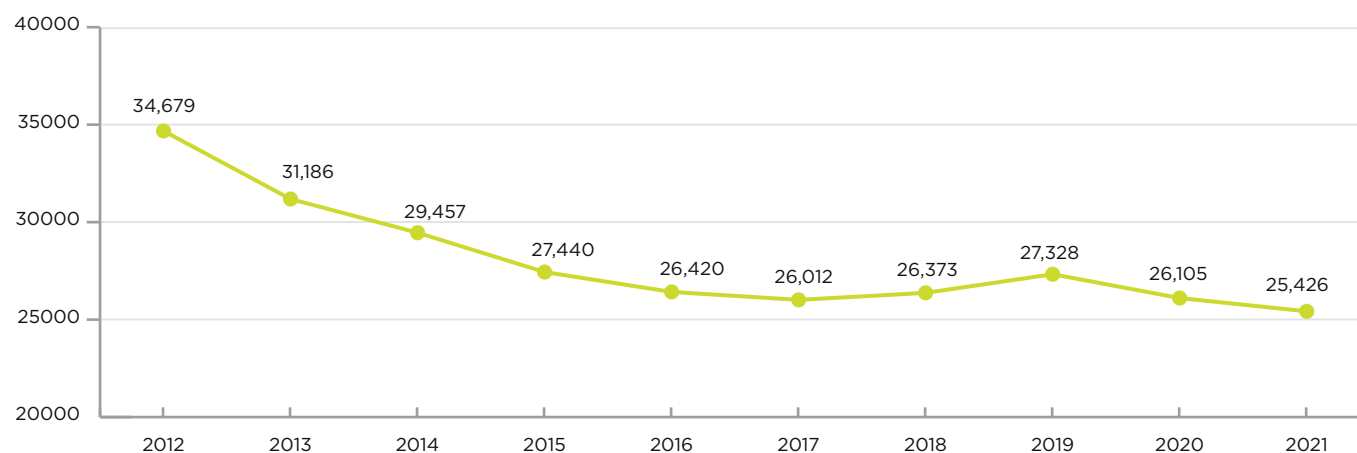


Figure 8: SPSV Driver Age Profile as at 31 December 2021

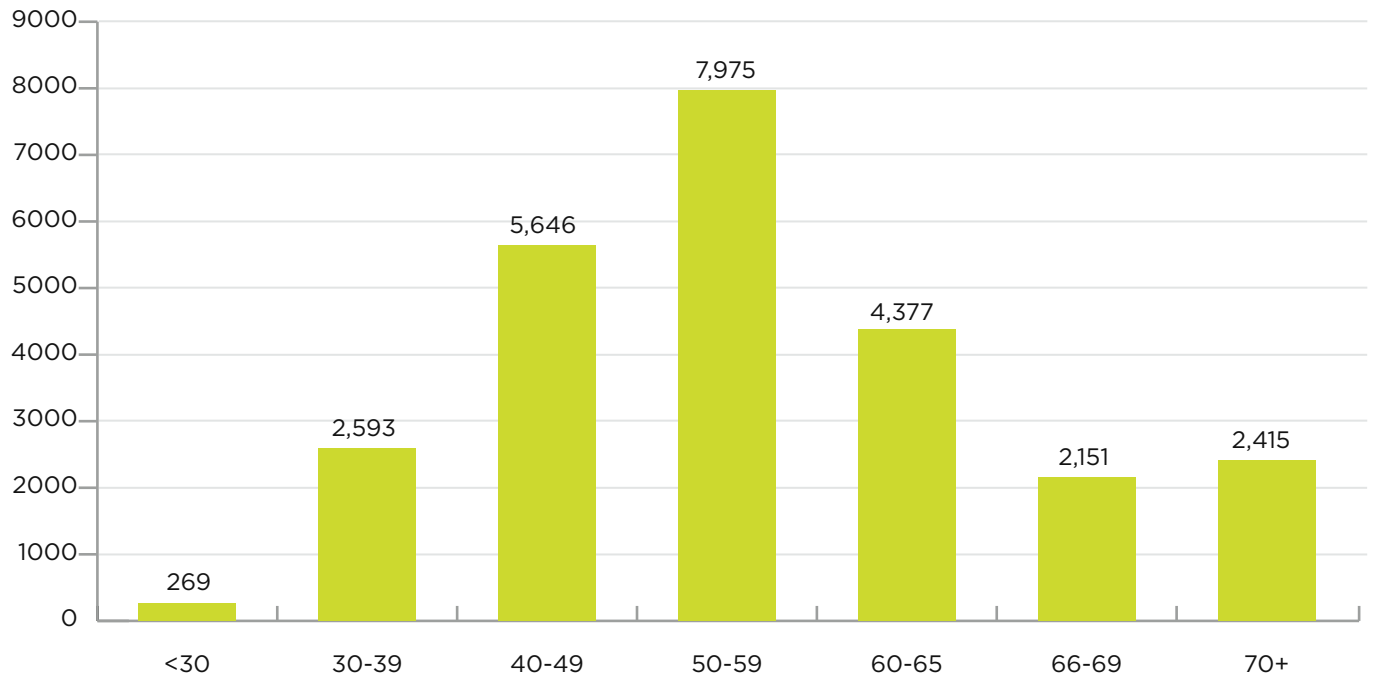
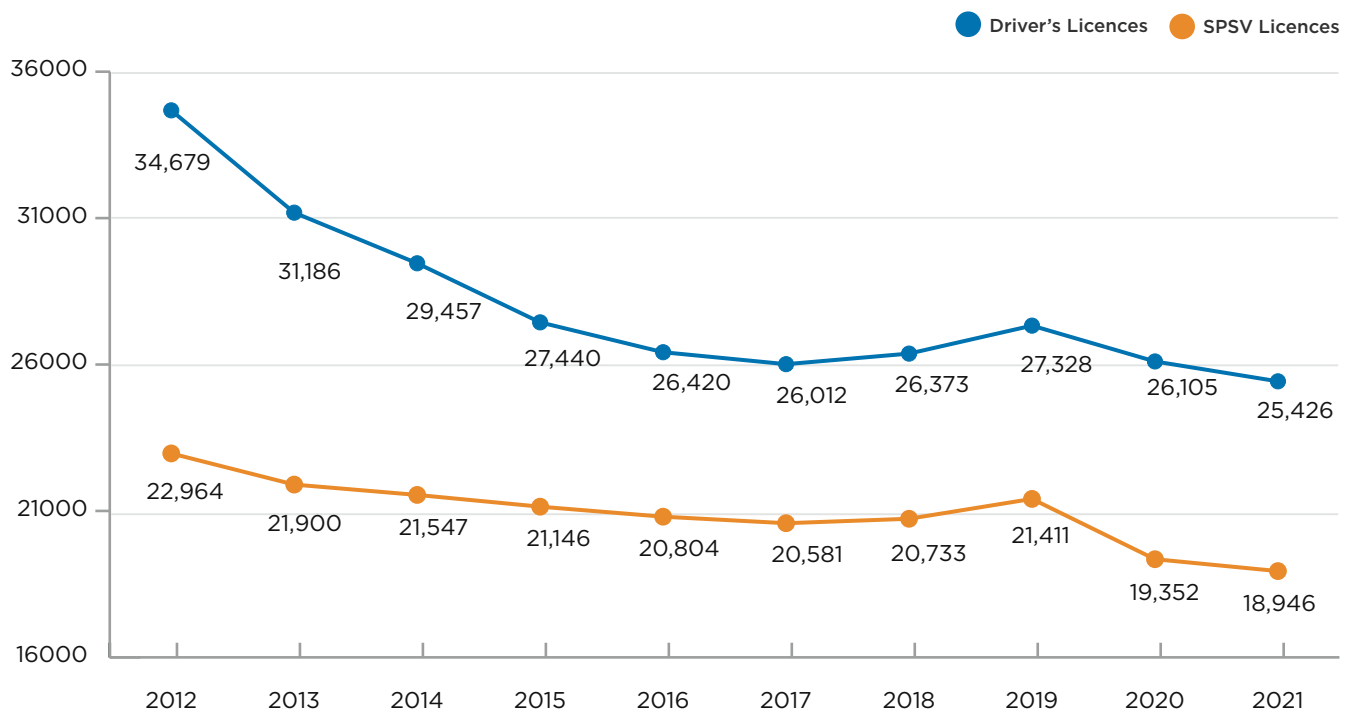


Figure 9: Comparison of SPSV Driver and Vehicle Licences 2012-2021



5

SPSV Contact Management



NTA operates an SPSV Information Line for both SPSV industry members and consumers. This compliments our online and traditional channels of communication such as email and post.

In 2021, we sent almost 700,000 notifications were to industry members in writing and received more than 97,000 telephone calls, the majority of which were from industry members.

Table 11: Breakdown of Notifications Issued

	Industry Updates	SPSV Notifications	Licencing Notifications	Total
Email	129,954	137,827	127,719	395,500
Post	0	160	17,474	17,634
SMS	271,775	12,894	0	284,669
Total	401,729	150,881	145,193	697,988

Table 12 and Figure 10 below detail the total calls per year and provide a breakdown of industry and consumer calls for 2021.

Table 12: Calls to the SPSV Information Line by Year and Source 2012 - 2021

Year	Industry Members	Consumers	Total calls
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
2020	92,748	1,095	93,843
2021	95,951	1,109	97,103

Figure 10: Calls to SPSV Information Line by Year and Source 2012 - 2021

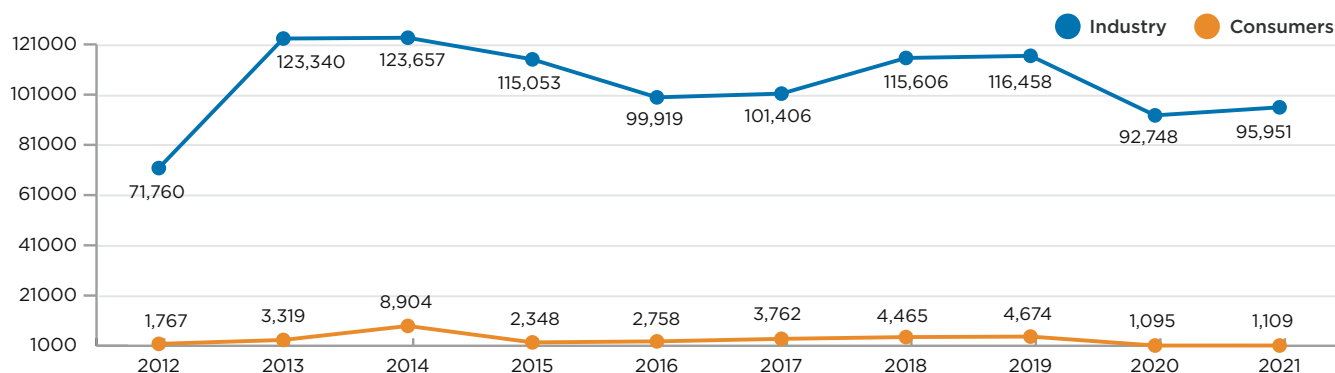
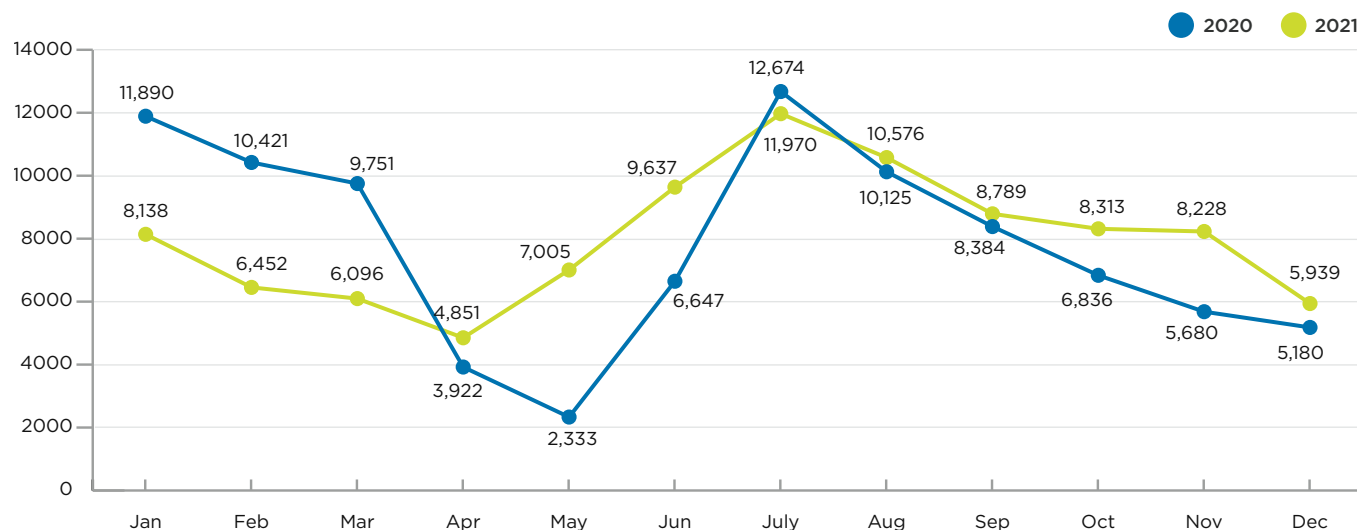


Figure 11 below details the overall call trends in 2021 compared to 2020. These remained consistent over both years.

Figure 11: Calls to SPSV Information Line Comparison 2020 & 2021



In 2021, 1.1% of all calls came from the public which is comparable to 2020 (1.2%). In 2019 this was 3.8% of overall calls received but this reduction in consumer queries to the SPSV Information Line is likely attributable to the reduction in travel as a result of COVID-19. As in previous years, the top three consumer queries related to:

- Lost property
- General enquires
- Fare query

Industry members use the SPSV Information Line for driver and vehicle licencing matters such as arranging vehicle suitability inspections and making SPSV Driver Entry Test bookings. The top licencing industry queries were:

- Vehicle licence renewal bookings
- Driver to vehicle link requests
- Vehicle licence unsuccessful renewal bookings

The graph below illustrates the industry communication patterns throughout 2021.

Figure 12: Industry Communications 2021

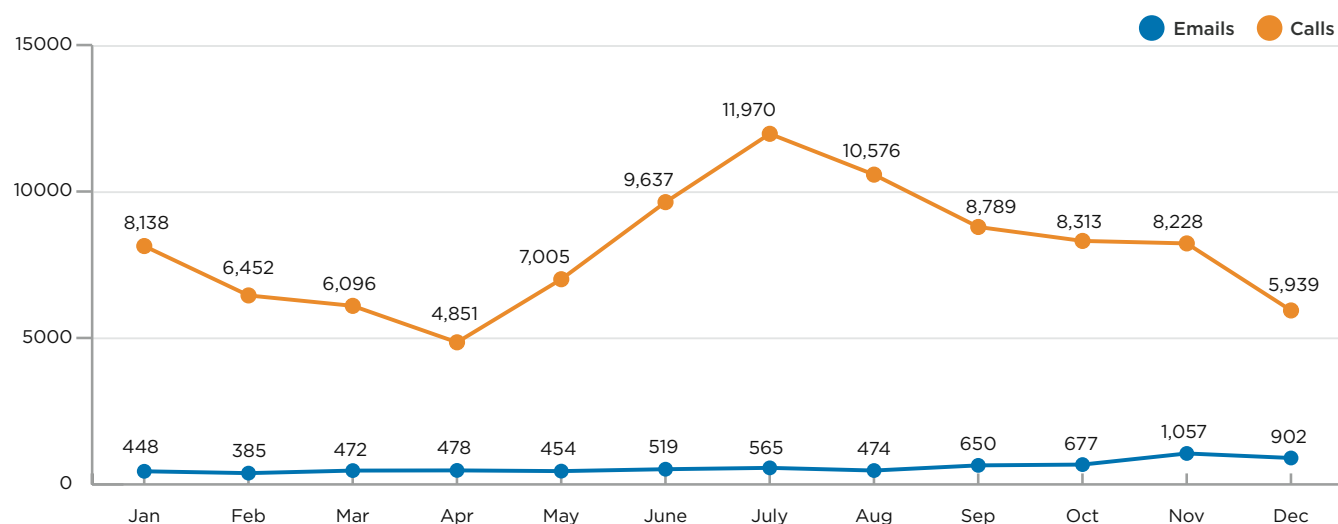
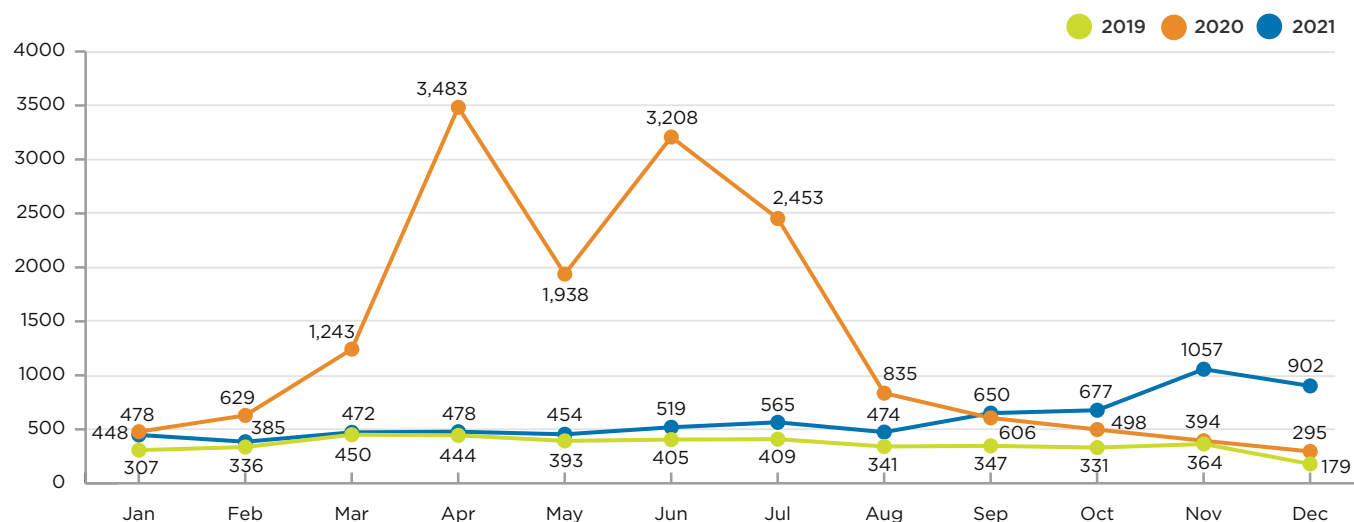


Figure 13 below illustrates the volumes of emails received from 2019 to 2021. 2021 saw a return to pre-COVID trends for emails.

Figure 13: Comparison of Volume of Emails Received 2019, 2020 and 2021

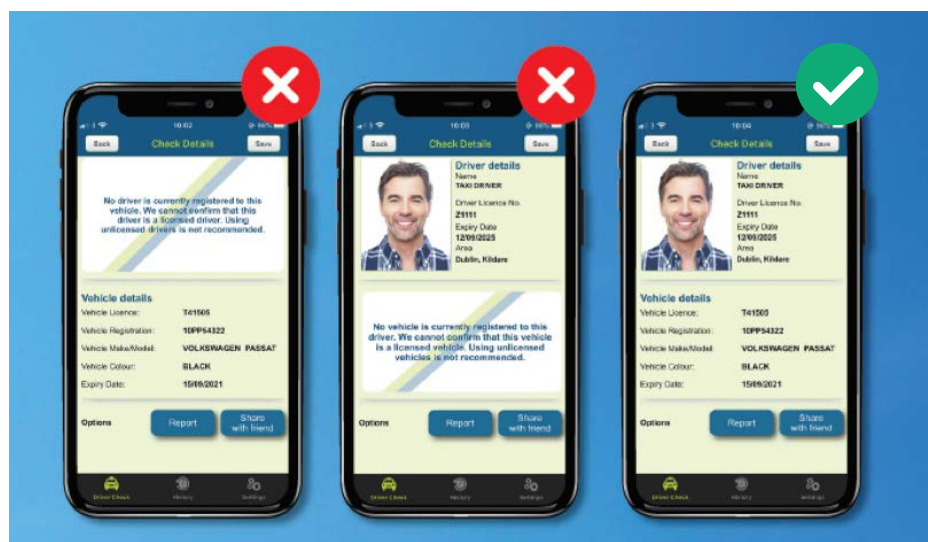


Driver Linking and the Driver Check App

When a SPSV driver starts working and operating their vehicle, they are legally required to notify NTA and ensure that their driver and vehicle details will appear on the online public SPSV Register and on the Driver Check App. This is commonly known as driver linking. Upon issuing of a new licence NTA send a notification outlining how to register for the SPSV Online Services where these links can be managed directly by the licence holder.

The Driver Check App is a consumer public safety app and may be downloaded to any smartphone. It allows passengers to receive real-time licensing information, including a photograph of the driver they are about to travel with. If a passenger notices that a driver or vehicle are not showing as registered with NTA when in use, they can report it to NTA through the App. Our compliance team then investigates all such reports and takes action as appropriate.

The passenger can also use the app to share the licence details (without driver photograph) to a friend's email address to outline the details of the SPSV journey in real time. This can also be useful for finding lost property. All of Ireland's taxis, hackneys, limousines and all SPSV drivers are covered by this App and its function it to keep passengers safe.



6

Compliance



NTA ensures SPSV operators comply with regulations through education, deterrence and enforcement. During 2021, NTA's compliance team was made up of 23 authorised persons:

- 7 were employees of NTA
- 16 were subcontractors

Gardaí can also investigate and prosecute all SPSV offences.

How we check that SPSV operators are complying

Our compliance activities included:

- Contactless line-of-sight vehicle and driving licence checks
- Face-to-face roadside vehicle and driver audits
- Covert and overt detection operations
- Investigating consumer complaints
- Taking part in multi-agency compliance operations, for example, with:
 - An Garda Síochána (National Roads Policing Bureau and National Immigration Bureau)
 - Revenue
 - the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection

Impact of COVID-19

Whilst still below the pre-COVID trends there was an increase in the number of checks and audits carried out in 2021 compared to 2020. This was a result of restrictions being eased gradually when compared to the severe 'lockdowns' in 2020. The decrease in Fixed Payment Notices (FPNs) in 2021 compared to the previous year is a reflection that restrictions existed throughout the full year, as opposed from March onwards as was the case in 2020. The impact on the industry dictated that enforcement should be an extremely light instrument in all but the more serious cases of 'law breaking'.

Contactless Checks, Face-to-Face Audits and Fixed Payment Notices

Over 185,585 vehicle and driver licence checks were carried out during 2021 on 15,284 individual vehicles (81% of valid SPSV licences throughout the year).

Compliance Officers carried out 5,068 face-to-face audits at the roadside. These audits were carried out with protocols developed to address the ongoing pandemic in 2021.

As a result of these compliance activities, 157 Fixed Payment Notices (on the spot fines) were issued for offences cited in Schedule 8 to the Taxi Regulation (Small Public Service Vehicles) Regulations 2015. This figure has greatly decreased due to COVID-19, however comparisons to previous year's show that 2021 took the approach of 'educating and informing' licence holders during the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, for those who decided not to comply, once these approaches were exhausted, they were liable for Fixed Payment Notices. The achievement of compliance was the principle aim, recognising many SPSV operators had stopped working for prolonged periods due to the pandemic.

In 2021 the greatest proportion of fines issued, 24%, concerned SPSV drivers "standing for hire at a place other than an appointed stand". A further 17% of fines issued relate to drivers "failure to notify details of small public service vehicle being operated" to the NTA, in line with their legal obligations. Drivers must supply this information to support the Driver Check App, which allows passengers or intending passengers to check the licence and NTA operation status of the vehicle and driver.

88% of Fixed Payment Notices issued were paid promptly in 2021, with the remainder being referred for court prosecution in the District Courts nationwide.

Table 13: SPSV Checks, Audits and Fixed Payment Notices 2012 - 2021

Year	Contactless checks	Roadside audits	Fixed Payment Notices
2012	N/A	15,142	165
2013	N/A	18,103	835
2014	N/A	42,722	1,369
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
2020	102,773	3,707	494
2021	185,585	5,068	157

Criminal Prosecutions

NTA began 153 prosecutions in 2021.

- 105 were direct prosecutions for breaches of SPSV legislation
- 48 arose from alleged offences, which attract Fixed Payment Notices, where the defendant chose not to pay the fine but rather to have the case heard before a judge

Of these 105 direct prosecutions cases:

- 14 were for not holding a valid SPSV Driver and Vehicle licence
- 33 were for not holding a valid SPSV driver licence
- 13 were for not holding a valid SPSV vehicle licence
- 12 were for a licence holder allowing another person to operate their vehicle without a valid SPSV driver licence or the vehicle itself being unlicensed at the time of service provision
- 33 were for various other regulatory breaches

The NTA was successful in 91% of cases presented in 2021.

Not all cases when successfully prosecuted result in a criminal conviction being recorded by the court. The court may decide that the appropriate penalty is a fine, charitable donation and/or costs against the accused. The accused may not receive a formal criminal conviction due to the impact of such a conviction on their life.

Table 14: Prosecutions by Offence Category, 2019 - 2021

Offences		2019 Cases	2020 Cases	2021 Cases
Operation of unlicensed SPSV	No driver and no vehicle licence	36	15	14
	No driver licence	28	18	33
	No vehicle licence	51	41	13
	Allow an unlicensed driver/vehicle to operate/failure to keep accurate records	7	16	15
Overcharging (addition of unwarranted but legal 'extras' to a fare)		3	3	2
Vehicle condition		2	0	1
Duties of drivers of SPSVs		0	8	1
Illegal display of taxi sign/Failure to remove signage from unlicensed vehicle		27	16	16
Advertising an unlicensed SPSV service		2	3	5
Exceeding the maximum number of passengers		4	1	0
Knowingly giving false or misleading information to an authorised person		0	3	5
Hackney/limousine standing for hire		4	3	0
		164	127	105
Additional Prosecutions				
Fixed Payment Notice Offences Prosecutions		93	34	48
Total		257	161	153

Table 15: Prosecutions by Offence Category, 2020 - 2021

Offences	2020	2021
• Failure to comply with vehicle standards	2	9
• Removal of tamper-proof disc from SPSV	1	0
• Failure to display in-vehicle information	3	1
• Failure to comply with taxi roof sign requirements	4	8
• Failure to notify details of SPSV being operated	12	12
• Failure to comply with taximeter requirements	1	5
• Failure to print and offer a receipt	1	2
• Unreasonable refusal to carry a passenger	4	2
• Standing for hire in a taxi otherwise than at an appointed stand	6	2
• Displaying unauthorised sign on a hackney or limousine		1
• Standing at appointed stand while vehicle is not available for hire		1
• Failure to display driver ID		2
• Failure to operate taximeter while taxi is on hire		1
• Operating taximeter while taxi is standing for hire or plying for hire		2
Total	34	48



Compliments and Complaints



NTA receive complaints and information through reports from:

- Members of the public
- Licensed operators
- An Garda Síochána
- Other agencies
- NTA Compliance Officers

Every complaint and report received is assessed and investigated if there is any evidence to suggest that an offence may have been committed.

We encourage consumers to submit compliments or complaints about taxi, hackney, limousine and dispatch operator services via our website contact forms, email, post, and our confidential telephone service.

Investigating complaints helps to protect the compliant majority of the SPSV industry and provide a level playing field. Compliments received are highlighted in the quarterly SPSV Industry Updates to licence holders.

There are five categories of complaint which can be dealt with by NTA under Section 64 of the Taxi Regulation Acts 2013 and 2016.

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 • Covid-19 hygiene concern
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 to cause offence to any person • Malodour or poor hygiene • Failure to wear a face covering
Overcharging and other matters relating to fares	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to issue a receipt • €2 booking charge added incorrectly • 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 a wheelchair accessible vehicle • Late arrival of pre-booked vehicle • Refusal of booking due to Covid-19
Identification and general appearance of the SPSV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location or content of logos, stickers or advertisements • Leaflets or other advertising matter

Main points of 2021

A total of 560 complaints were received in 2021, representing a 20% increase on the 2020 figure of 466. It is worth noting that 2020 did see a decrease in complaints due to the dramatic reduction in both demand for and supply of SPSV services in 2020 owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst 2021 is an increase on the previous year, the overall totals were almost 60% lower than the 2019 pre-COVID total. This is a result of the on-going impact and restrictions still in place due to the pandemic.

As can be seen from the table below, the majority of complaints received (just over 79%) fell within two categories. 'Conduct, behaviour and identification of an SPSV driver' make up almost 41% and 'Overcharging and other matters relating to fares' make up the remaining 38%.

Table 16: Complaints by Category, 2012 - 2021

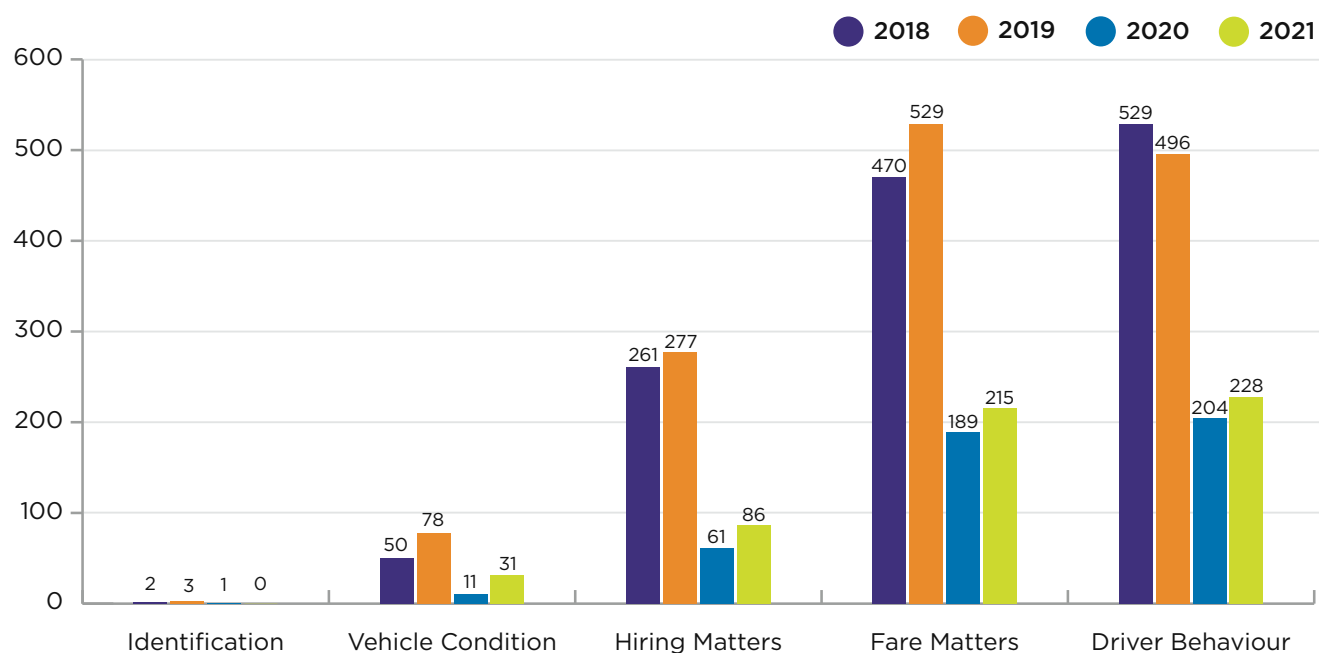
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Condition, roadworthiness and cleanliness of the vehicle	22	30	47	53	34	72	50	78	11	31
Conduct, behaviour and identification of an SPSV driver	141	369	465	491	444	445	529	496	204	228
Overcharging and other matters relating to fares	110	221	327	297	348	380	470	529	189	215
Hiring and booking of the SPSV	104	122	113	83	172	248	261	277	61	86
Identification and general appearance of the SPSV	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	1	0
Total	377	742	952	924	998	1,146	1,312	1,383	466	560

- Whilst 38% of complaints concluded with the SPSV operator being issued with a fine, a warning, advice or a summons for prosecution,
- 54% did not proceed following investigation. The reasons further action was not taken, included:
 - Mistake or misunderstanding on the part of the complainant;
 - The complainant chose not to pursue the complaint;
 - The complainant did not provide correct contact details; and
 - No evidence of any offence on the part of the driver.
- Another 4% of those complaints received in 2021 were referred to other agencies, following an initial investigation, such as:
 - An Garda Síochána
 - The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection
 - Revenue Commissioners.
- The final 4% of cases were referred back to Dispatch Operators to resolve through their own complaints processes.

Table 17: Complaints by Month 2021

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Vehicle	1	0	0	0	2	3	4	4	3	5	5	4	31
Driver	8	7	13	10	9	20	29	25	19	29	31	28	228
Fare Matters	11	9	5	4	4	9	32	19	32	31	32	27	215
Hiring	1	2	1	1	3	5	10	6	7	14	20	16	86
Identification	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	21	18	19	15	18	37	75	54	61	79	88	75	560

Figure 14: Complaints by Category Received, 2018 - 2021



8

Advisory Committee on Small Public Service Vehicles

What is the Advisory Committee on Small Public Service Vehicles?

The Advisory Committee on Small Public Service Vehicles comprises a chairperson and 17 ordinary members. Each ordinary member represents prescribed interests, for example the interests of:

- Consumers
- SPSV
- Persons with disabilities
- Tourism
- Or in the opinion of the Minister for Transport, the ordinary member has a special interest or expertise in matters relating to the functions of NTA, the Advisory Committee or related matters.

This committee was established in 2016 in accordance with Part 9 of the Taxi Regulation Acts 2013 and 2016. Positions on the Advisory Committee are appointed by the Minister only. Each member may serve a three-year term with reappointments permitted.

The membership of the Advisory Committee on Small Public Service Vehicles during 2021 is outlined below:

Chairperson: Mr. Cornelius O'Donohue

Representing	Ordinary Member
Small Public Service Vehicles	Mr. Kevin Finn
Small Public Service Vehicles	Mr. Shajedul Chowdhury
Small Public Service Vehicles	Mr. John Murphy
Small Public Service Vehicles	Mr Francis Doheny
Local Authorities	Ms. Mary Henchy
An Garda Síochána	Superintendent Tom Murphy
Consumers	Mr. James Cawley
Consumers	Ms Michelle Reid
Persons with Disabilities	Ms. Joan Carthy
Business	Ms. Ann Campbell
Older Persons	Mr. Peter Fleming
Tourism	Mr. Al Ryan
Special interest or expertise	Mr. James O'Brien
Special interest or expertise	Mr. Noel Ebbs
Special interest or expertise	Ms. Fiona Brady
Special interest or expertise	Position Available

What is the function of the Advisory Committee?

In general, the Advisory Committee is tasked with advising NTA or the Minister, as appropriate, on matters relevant to the SPSVs and their drivers. These functions are set out in Section 73 of the Taxi Regulation Acts.

With regard to NTA, the Advisory Committee may provide advice on:

- Proposals for licensing or SPSV regulations
- Matters relating to the delivery of quality services
- Any other matters related to the functions of NTA or submitted for advice with the exception of individual cases

With regard to the Minister, the Advisory Committee may provide advice on:

- Policy relevant to SPSVs and their drivers
- Proposals for legislation or regulations submitted to them
- The assignment of specific functions relating to the industry
- Other matters of relevance to the effective performance of the Advisory Committee or NTA

Main points of 2021

The Advisory Committee met on 10 occasions during 2021. COVID-19 and its impact on the industry was the primary focus of the committee during 2021. Specifically in relation to how industry members could be supported to remain in the industry. The multiple public consultations and regulatory measures implemented by NTA were also discussed with members of the board in this forum.

The Advisory Committee met with Minister for Transport Mr. Eamon Ryan on 29 April and 25 November 2021 where, among other items, they discussed issues facing drivers returning to work during COVID-19 and the eSPSV grant scheme and infrastructure roll out to support e-vehicles.

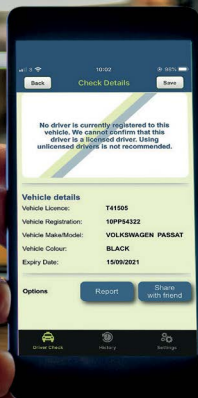
All minutes for these meetings are published online at the following link:-

<https://www.nationaltransport.ie/about-us/advisory-committee-on-spsvs/>

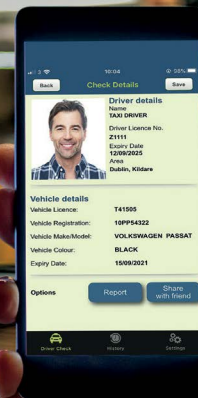
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Report and take a different vehicle.



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Get the **TFI Driver Check App** and get the reassurance that you are travelling with a licenced and registered driver.

- View a photograph of the registered driver and licence details.
- Click *Report* to alert us to unregistered operators.
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All taxis, hackneys, limousines and their drivers, nationwide, are covered.



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