

Taxi Bulletin 2020

October 2021

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	An SPSV which can: • ply for hire (be hailed on the street); or • stand for hire at taxi ranks; or • be pre-booked by or for a passenger. 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.
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.
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 (“NTA”). It focuses on statistics for taxis, hackneys and limousines, together with NTA’s associated activities as Regulator.

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 (SPSVs) 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 Taxi Regulation (Small Public Service Vehicle) Regulations 2015 and 2016, the Taxi Regulation Act 2013 (Maximum Fares) Order 2017 and a number of COVID-19 emergency measures enacted throughout 2020 by both the Department of Health and NTA. 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 and assessed by An Garda Síochána as a suitable person to provide this public transport service 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 foundational elements, focusing on passenger safety and protection.

In Ireland, 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); and
- Limousine.

NTA is the licensing authority for SPSVs and dispatch operators (booking service providers). This includes the granting, renewal 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 SPSV driver’s licence, together with a standard driving licence. An Garda Síochána is the licensing authority for SPSV drivers. NTA administers the application processes, including the provision of the SPSV Driver Skills Development Programme, and renewal processes, together with the issue of SPSV driver identification cards. Vetting is the responsibility of An Garda Síochána.

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, therefore, both passenger and driver are aware of the journey details and fare agreed for that journey in advance. 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.

COVID-19

Whilst the purpose of this bulletin is to provide a statistical overview, a review of 2020 would not be complete without reference to COVID-19 and the devastating impact which the pandemic has had on the SPSV industry. Persistent closures of the hospitality and travel sectors, the widespread transition to remote working, and the behavioural shift towards walking and cycling have all contributed to the vastly reduced demand for SPSV transport with the resultant dramatic reduction in the earning capacity of SPSV operators.

To assist the SPSV Industry in meeting the challenges posed by the pandemic, NTA undertook a number of measures in 2020, including:

- Extensive engagement with the industry individually and through our website, providing advice and assistance on all aspects of operation including temporary postponement of activities and available HSE and DEASP assistance, together with the regularly updated *SPSV Industry Information Note (COVID-19)* providing the latest advices on all SPSV COVID related matters;
- Deferral of renewal dates of vehicle licences due to renew from 13 March to 12 June 2020 by three months;
- Ensuring the prioritisation of SPSV licence holders in NCT centres;
- Increasing the methods by which SPSV operators could break a “Driver to Vehicle Link” to include email, as well as online, telephone, SMS and App;
- Provision of *Advisory Guidelines on Temporary COVID-19 Dividing Screens*;
- Engaging with insurance providers and facilitating reductions to *Social, Domestic and Pleasure (Private) cover or Fire and Theft (parking up) cover* only with associated premium reductions;
- Suspension of SPSV licences for underinsured operators, which would ordinarily have left operators open to prosecution and requiring a full NCT and an SPSV suitability inspection prior to returning to operation;
- Reopening of standalone SPSV inspection centres as required and use of some forecourts, manned by NTA personnel, to assist operators directly;
- Frequent engagement with the Advisory Committee on SPSVs and the Department of Transport, specifically including responses and actions on foot of the *“Small Public Service Vehicle Industry Proposals for Industry Recovery - Advisory Committee on Small Public Service Vehicles response to Covid-19”*;
- Participation with regulators in other jurisdictions to learn and advise on best practice;
- Engagement with other transport operators and with suppliers and designers of personal protective equipment in relation to face visors/masks/coverings, gloves, screens, sanitisers and other COVID-19 related safety equipment;

- Introduction of hand sanitiser points at major transport interchanges where SPSV passengers transit to or from other modes of transport;
- Facilitating the Fáilte Ireland SPSV Driver Infection Prevention Control training programme;
- Radio, press and social media campaigns regarding mandatory face coverings following the enactment of the Health Regulation for mandatory face coverings in SPSVs on 03 December 2020.



Additionally, and in accordance with its powers under Sections 7 and 20 of the Taxi Regulation Acts 2013 & 2016, NTA made three time-bound regulations during 2020. Two of these measures temporarily amended Regulation 31 of the Taxi Regulation (Small Public Service Vehicle) Regulations 2015 thus extending the maximum permissible age requirements up to and including 31 December 2021, by one year. The third measure gave effect to the standard vehicle licence renewal fee waiver specified by Minister Ryan in his 2021 Budget speech and also implemented reductions in the late renewal fees payable during 2021.

NTA also provided in excess of 50 information updates to the SPSV industry via SMS, email and our website.

1

Overall SPSV Fleet numbers

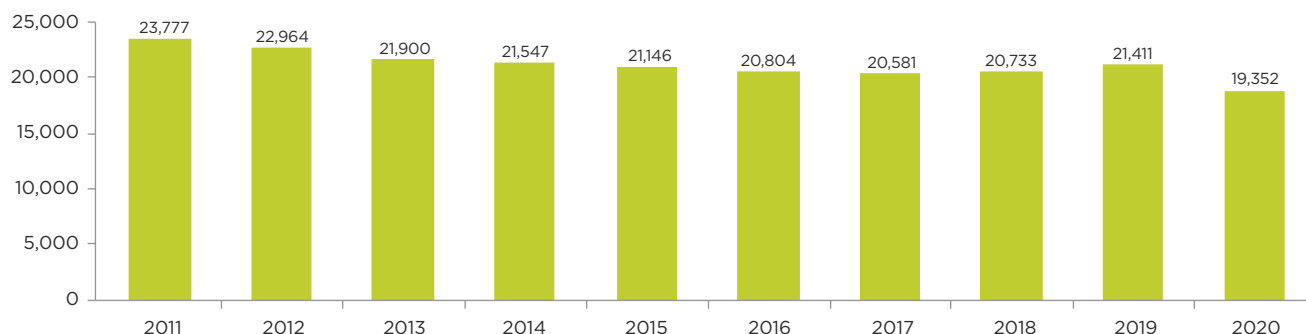


SPSV fleet numbers declined year-on-year between 2008 and 2017 as a result of both higher vehicle standards, driver testing requirements and reduced customer demand levels during the economic recession. Whilst this downward trend was reversed in both 2018 and 2019, the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic to Ireland in early 2020 was a significant contributing factor in the nearly 10% decline in fleet numbers recorded at year-end. Table 1 and Figure 1 illustrate the changes in SPSV licence numbers from 2011 to 2020.

Table 1: Small Public Service Vehicle Licences by Year, 2011 - 2020

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
2020	19,352

Figure 1: Small Public Service Vehicle Licences by Year, 2011 - 2020



2

Vehicle Licences Issued



Since 08 June 2010, under the Taxi Regulation Act 2003 (Grant of Taxi Licences) (Amendment) Regulations 2010, all new taxi and hackney licences issued must be 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. Under the same regulation, the transfer of taxi licences was prohibited for new vehicle licences and limited to once for taxis already in the fleet. This prohibition was extended to all SPSV licences in 2014. New vehicle licences are also issued for limousines and local area hackneys.

Table 2 below reflects the licences issued figures for the period 2011 to 2020. The availability and amount of the WAV grant schemes greatly influenced the number of new vehicles being licensed on an annual basis since 2014; see Table 4: Grant Assisted Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles 2014 – 2020. However, the 2020 figure of 568 represents a 56% reduction on the 2019 figure for new licences. This decline is again attributable to the coronavirus pandemic and its impact on demand for services as well as activities relating to the licensing of new SPSVs.

Table 2: New Vehicle Licences Issued by Year and Category, 2011 - 2020

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
2020	0	0	146	404	12	6	568

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SPSV Fleet Profile

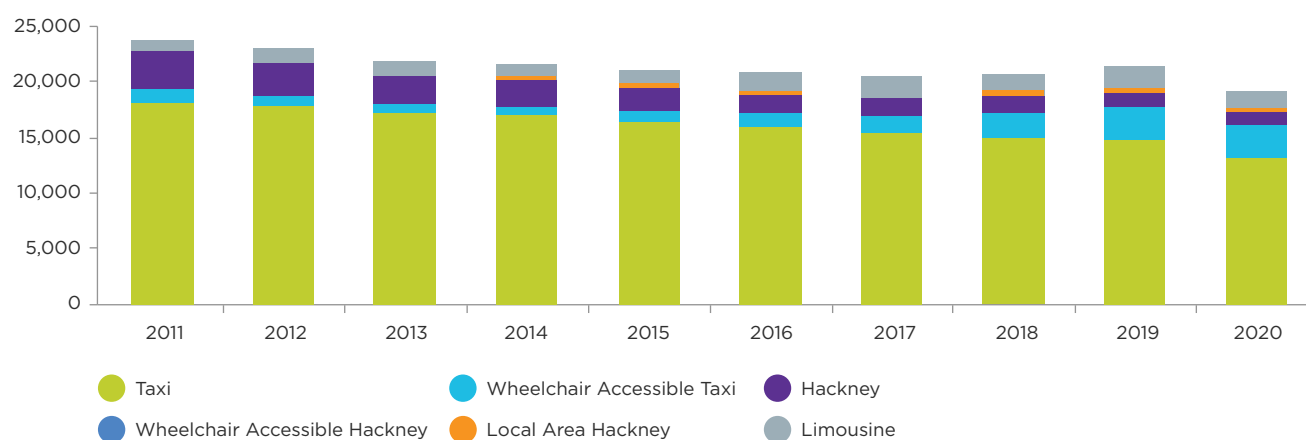


Table 3 and Figure 2 provide further analysis of the change in vehicle licence numbers across each of the SPSV categories since 2011.

Table 3: SPSV Fleet by Vehicle Category by Year, 2011 - 2020

	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
2020	13,255	3,015	1,115	118	21	1,828	19,352

Figure 2: SPSV Fleet by Vehicle Category 2011 to 2020



Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles

In April 2014, the regulations relating to the size specification for Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAV) were revised to enable operators purchase smaller vehicles. This regulatory revision was part of a wider suite of initiatives undertaken by NTA to increase the number of WAV within the SPSV fleet. Additionally in July 2014, a grant scheme was launched to assist licence holders in the purchase of WAV. The WAV grant scheme, which has operated each year since 2014, has assisted in funding 2,962 vehicles to date. Whilst the duration of the scheme was shorter in 2020 than in previous years, 264 grants were disbursed with each grant bringing either a new vehicle into the fleet or enabling replacement of an older licenced vehicle to enhance the quality and safety of same. As at end 2020, 15.5% of the SPSV fleet (3,133) were wheelchair accessible vehicles, a 268% increase on the 2014 figure of 850. NTA remains committed to increasing the number of WAV within the SPSV fleet.

Table 4: Grant assisted Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles 2014 - 2020

	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

Electric Small Public Service Vehicles

One of NTA's strategic objectives is to provide high quality, accessible, sustainable transport connecting people across Ireland. NTA is committed to working with both the Department of Transport and the SPSV industry to achieve a greener, more sustainable fleet.

In furtherance of aim, an Electric Small Public Services Vehicle (eSPSV) grant scheme was launched in 2018 by the Department of Transport and administered by NTA. Prior to introduction of the 2018 scheme, there were five sustainable vehicles (battery electric powered) in the national SPSV fleet. The Scheme operated again in 2019 and 2020 with the number of sustainable vehicles in the fleet standing at 78 on 31 December 2020.

In his 2021 Budget, and in recognition of the important role played by small public service vehicles in making public transport more sustainable, Minister for Transport, Eamon Ryan committed €15m to assisting the SPSV industry in transitioning to fully electric and zero-emission capable vehicles including wheelchair accessible vehicles.

Vehicle Age Profile

As deemed appropriate on both safety and quality grounds, the Taxi Regulation Act 2003 (Suitability Inspection and Annual Licence Renewal Assessment of Small Public Service Vehicles) Regulations 2010 first established an age limit of less than 10 years old for new small public service vehicles. The consolidated Taxi Regulation Acts 2013 and 2016 require the NTA to seek to promote the provision and maintenance of quality services by small public service vehicles and their drivers. In furtherance of this, Regulation 31 of the Taxi Regulation (Small Public Service Vehicle) Regulations 2015 continued the age limit for taxis and hackneys as, in general, less than 10 years old and always of a condition and quality suitable to provide SPSV services. A certain class of taxis and hackneys (those that are wheelchair accessible) are permitted to operate up to 15 years of age. No maximum permissible age is prescribed for limousines in recognition of both the vintage nature of many of these vehicles, and the reduced mileage undertaken by virtue of their ceremonial and prestigious roles. Some limited exceptions, specifically concerning vehicles associated with SPSV licences prior to 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 at least annually to ensure standards and quality remain at an appropriate level.

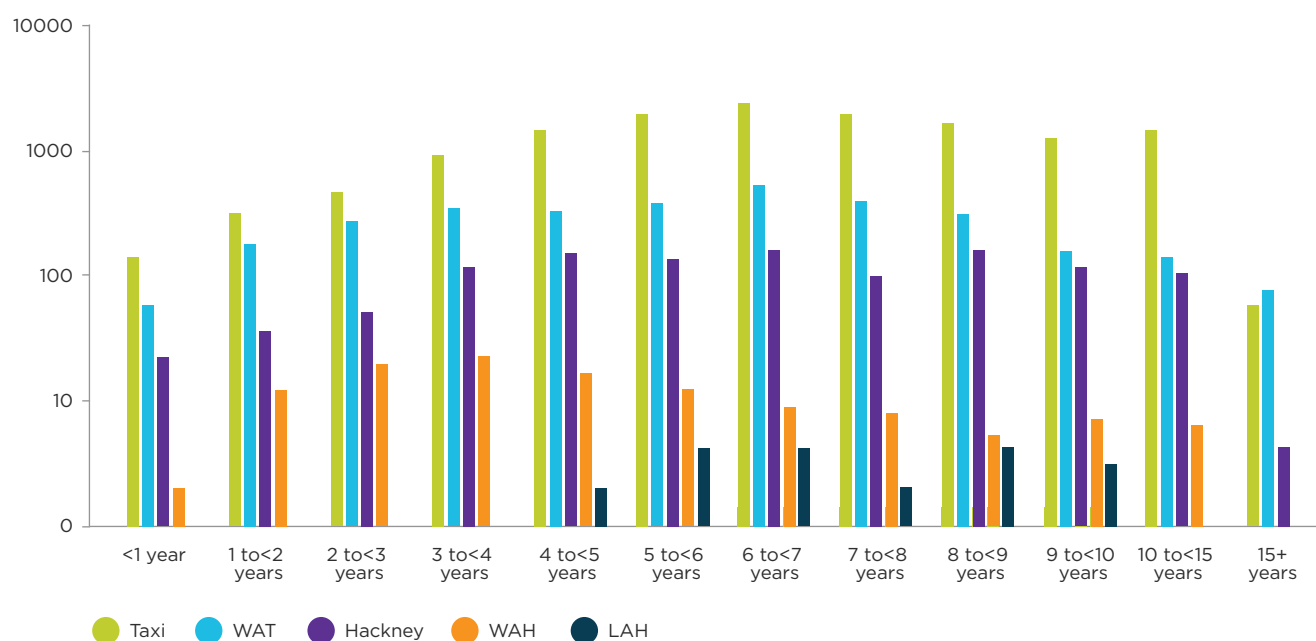
In response to the very specific challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic during 2020, NTA enacted two measures temporarily amending Regulation 31 of the Taxi Regulation (Small Public Service Vehicle) Regulations 2015 and thus extending the maximum permissible age requirements of eligible vehicles by one year. All eligible vehicles must still successfully complete both a roadworthiness and an SPSV suitability inspection every six months, to ensure standards and quality remain at an appropriate level.

Table 5 demonstrates the age profile of the SPSV fleet as at 31 December 2020.

Table 5: Age Profile of the SPSV fleet at 31 December 2020

	Taxi	WAT	Hackney	WAH	LAH	Limousine	Total
< 1 year of age	139	57	22	2	0	38	258
1 to < 2 years of age	299	178	35	12	1	92	617
2 to < 3 years of age	457	260	51	19	0	130	917
3 to < 4 years of age	877	335	112	21	1	190	1,536
4 to < 5 years of age	1,437	314	141	16	2	186	2,096
5 to < 6 years of age	1,828	346	132	12	4	152	2,474
6 to < 7 years of age	2,196	495	151	9	4	124	2,979
7 to < 8 years of age	1,835	378	94	8	2	119	2,436
8 to < 9 years of age	1,556	289	154	5	4	88	2,096
9 to < 10 years of age	1,150	154	115	7	3	70	1,499
10 to < 15 years of age	1,426	136	104	6	0	460	2,132
15+ years of age	55	73	4	1	0	179	312
Total	13,255	3,015	1,115	118	21	1,828	19,352

Figure 3: Age Profile of the Taxi and Hackney Vehicles at 31 December 2020



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 and is normally valid for a period of five years. An Garda Síochána completes a personal suitability assessment (vetting process) on each applicant for a new licence or a renewal of a licence previously held.

Since 2009, new applicants for an SPSV driver licence must complete an SPSV Driver Skills Development Programme and pass the Driver Entry Test, provided by NTA, which comprises two modules covering both regulatory industry knowledge and area knowledge for the county in which the applicant 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.

Provision of the Skills Development Programme ceased in mid-March 2020 on public health advice arising from the COVID pandemic. Notwithstanding this, a total of 1,247 Driver Entry Tests were undertaken by 874 candidates prior to closure of the programme. The average amount of times the Driver Entry Test was taken to achieve the pass mark was 1.3, with 62% of successful candidates passing on their first attempt and a further 15% successful on their second attempt.

854 new driver licences were issued by An Garda Síochána in 2020, 278 relating to Driver Entry Tests passed in 2020, the remainder mostly attaching to Driver Entry Tests passed in 2018 and 2019. The number of SPSV driver licences surrendered during 2020 was 163, an increase of 196% on the 2019 figure of 55. A further 641 SPSV drivers allowed their licences to lapse permanently in 2020 (compared with 872 in 2019), with 6,204 licences entering the permitted one year inactive status in 2020.

As at 31 December 2020, there were 26,105 licenced SPSV drivers within the State, a decrease of 4% on the 2019 figure of 27,321. The majority of these SPSV drivers (57%) hold a Dublin licence entitlement.

Table 6: SPSV Driver Licences by year, 2011 - 2020

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
2020	26,105

Figure 4: SPSV Driver licences by year, 2011 – 2020

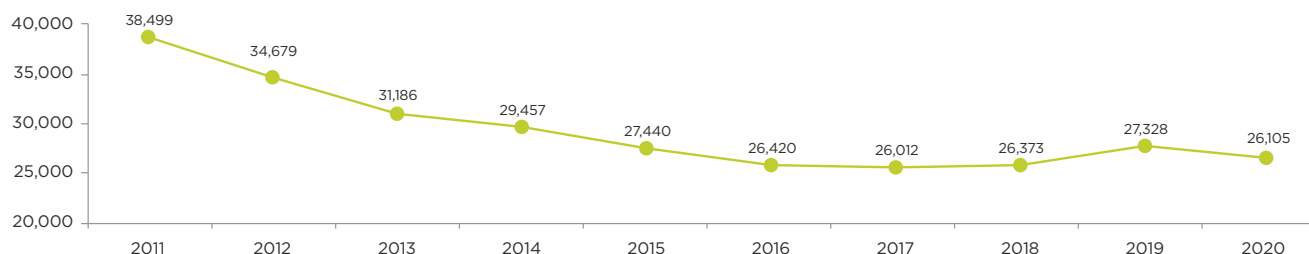
Current Driver Licences

Figure 5: SPSV Driver Age profile as at end 2020

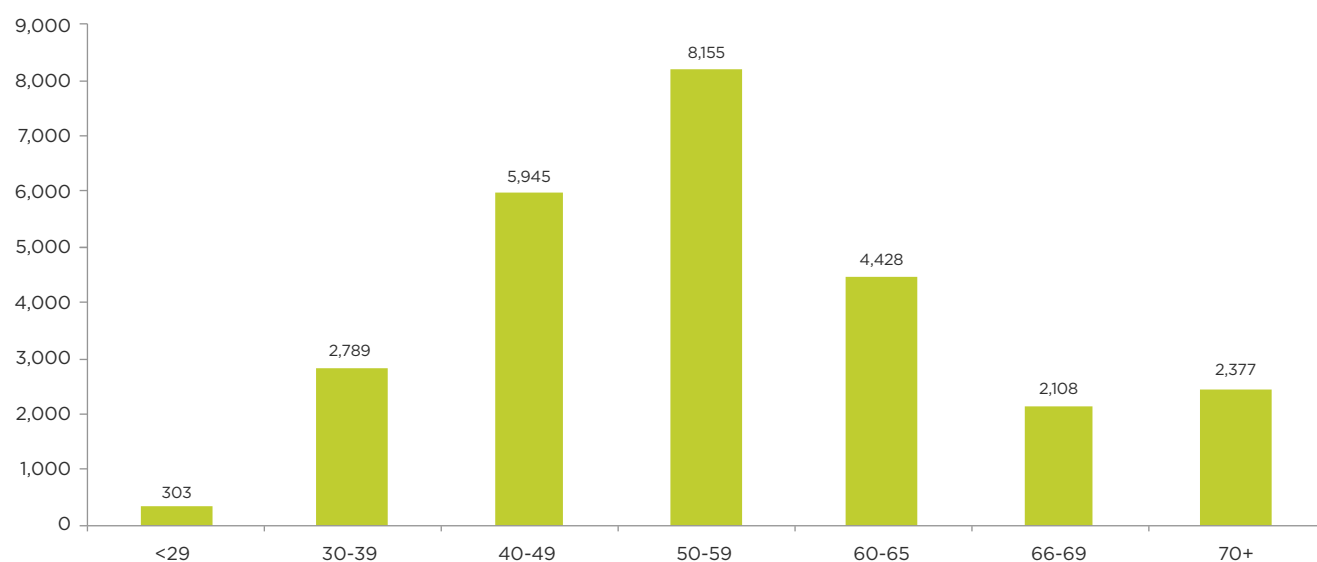
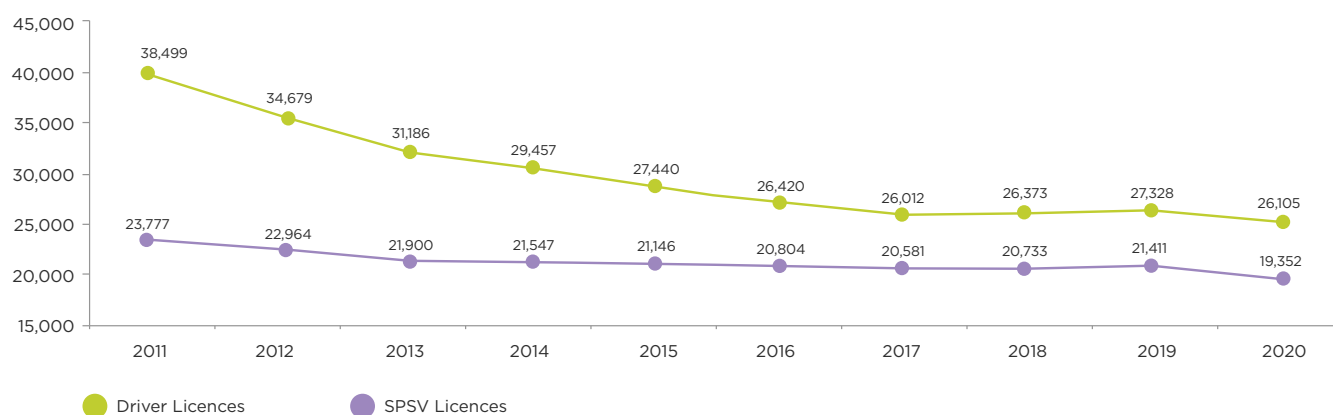


Figure 6: Comparison of SPSV Driver and Vehicle Licences 2011-2020



5

SPSV Contact Management



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

In 2020, almost 700,000 notifications were issued to industry members in writing and more than 93,000 telephone calls were received, the bulk of which were from industry members. Whilst the calls received figure fell in 2020 overall due to the decline in both demand for, and supply of, SPSV services as a result of the COVID pandemic, unprecedented monthly volumes were recorded throughout certain months of the year. Table 8 and Figure 7 below detail the total calls per year and provide a breakdown of industry and consumer calls for 2020.

Table 7: Breakdown of notifications issued:

	Industry Updates	SPSV Notifications	Licensing Notifications	Total
Email	182,043	152,495	61,846	396,384
Post	0	340	23,241	23,581
SMS	258,994	15,416	0	274,410
Total	441,037	168,251	85,087	694,375

Table 8: Calls to the SPSV Information Line by Year and Source 2011 - 2020

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
2020	92,748	1,095	93,843

Figure 7: Calls to SPSV Information Line by Year and Source 2011 - 2020



Figure 8: Calls to SPSV Information Line Comparison 2019 & 2020

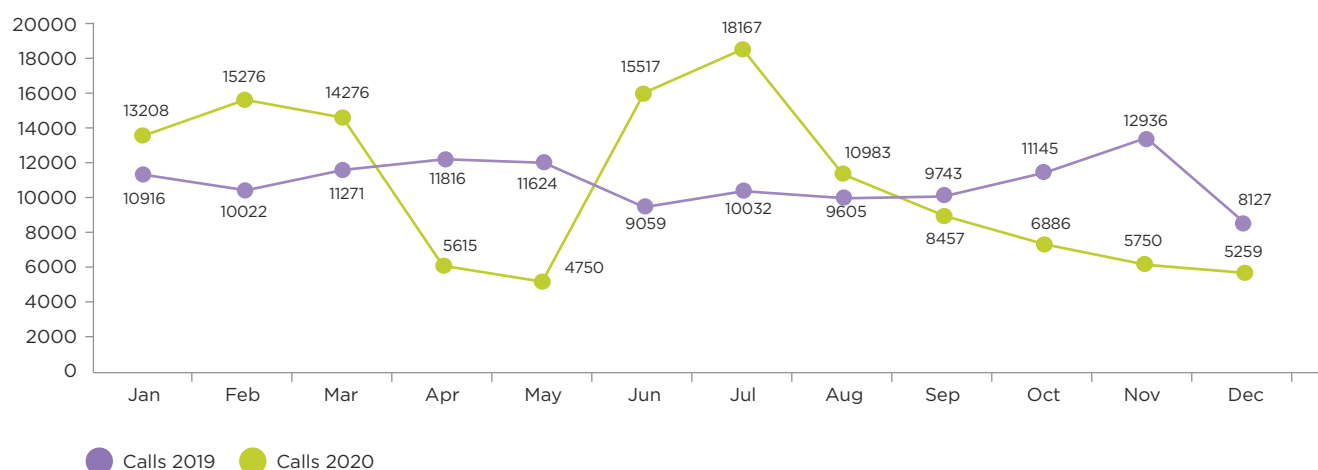
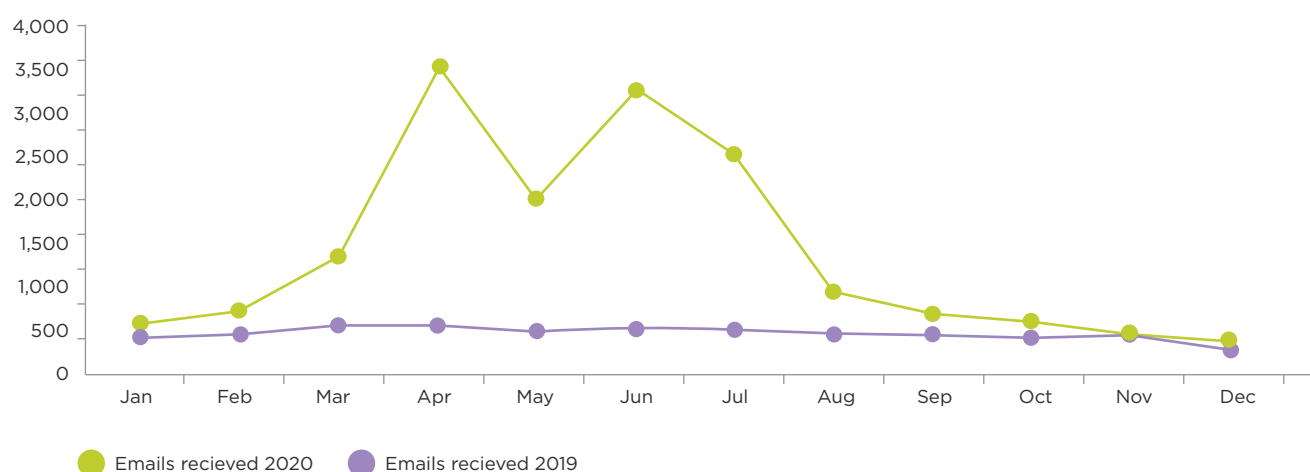


Figure 9: Comparison of volume of emails received 2019 & 2020

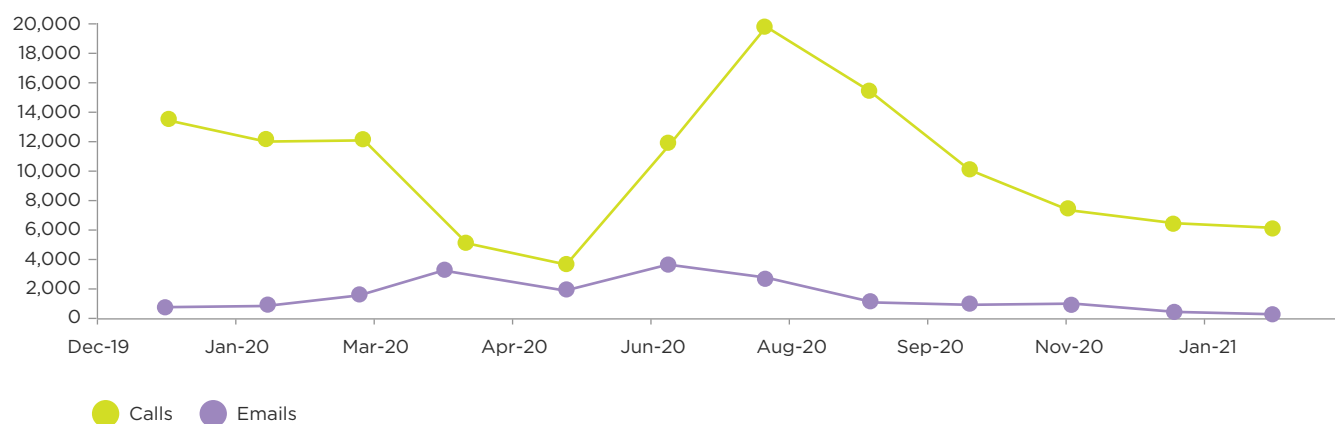


In 2020, 1.2% of all calls came from the public, compared to 3.8% in 2019. This reduction in consumer queries to the SPSV Information Line is likely attributable to the reduction in travel as a result of public health guidance and travel restrictions. As in previous years, the top three consumer queries related to lost property, complaints and general enquires.

Industry members use the SPSV Information Line for driver and vehicle licencing matters and to arrange vehicle inspections and industry/area knowledge tests. Whilst the COVID pandemic was a pervading theme in the majority of calls, the top three industry queries for 2020 were vehicle licence booking inspections, general driver licensing queries and general vehicle licensing queries.

The graph below illustrates the impact of the COVID pandemic and the resultant restrictions on industry communication patterns throughout 2020.

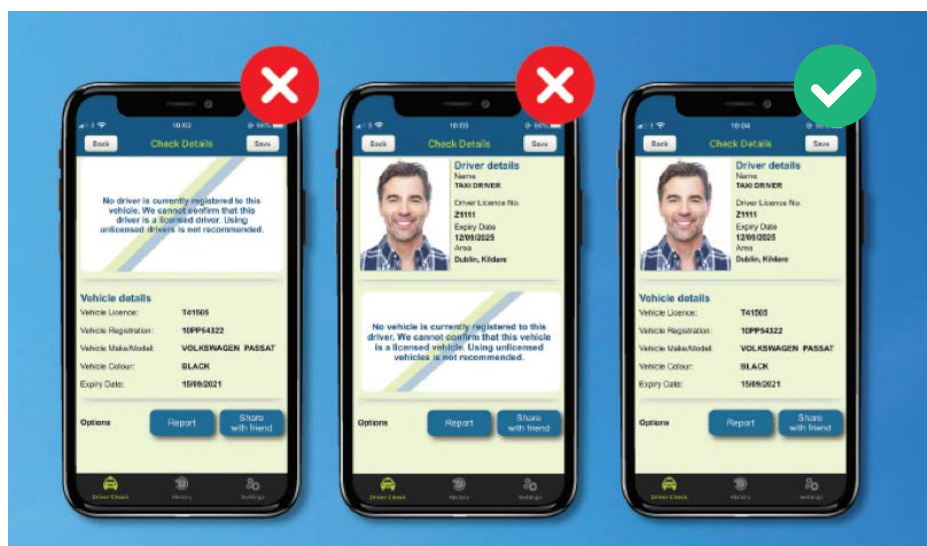
Figure 10: Industry Communications 2020



Driver Linking

There is a legal obligation on SPSV drivers to notify NTA when they are operating a vehicle – commonly known as ‘linking’ – to ensure that they will appear on the online public SPSV Register and on the Driver Check Application (‘App’). The Driver Check App 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. The purpose of the App is to provide reassurance to the consumer.

Any driver or vehicle not showing as registered with NTA at the time of operation can be reported to NTA through the App. Our compliance team then investigates all such reports taking action as appropriate. The App also has functionality to send the licence details (without photograph) to an email address to advise the details of the SPSV journey in real time. This can also be useful in instances of lost property. All of Ireland’s taxis, hackneys, limousines and all SPSV drivers are covered by this App.



6

Compliance



Education, deterrence and enforcement measures continue to be the primary tools used by NTA to ensure high levels of compliance by SPSV operators with the regulatory framework.

During 2020, NTA's compliance team comprised up to 23 authorised persons who engaged in compliance activities across the country; 7 employees of NTA and up to 16 authorised persons provided under an outsourced services contract. All members of An Garda Síochána are also empowered to investigate and prosecute all SPSV offences as authorised persons under the Taxi Regulation Acts 2013 and 2016.

Compliance activities included contactless line of sight vehicle and driver licence checks, face-to-face roadside vehicle and driver audits, covert and overt detection operations, investigating consumer complaints and participation in multi-agency compliance operations, for example, with An Garda Síochána (National Roads Policing Bureau and National Immigration Bureau), the Revenue Commissioners and the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.



As a result of State public health requests and advice to “Stay at home” during COVID, demand for SPSV services fell substantially in 2020 with many drivers ceasing to operate for extended periods of time or at all. This decline in vehicles on the street, resulted in a greater focus on non-contact compliance activities, such as SPSV driver and vehicle licence checks and investigation of consumer complaints, from the end of March. The ability of Compliance Officers to undertake real-time mobile checks of SPSVs observed operating, using a bespoke application (‘iCabs’) was particularly beneficial during 2020 in the context of the physical distancing requirements arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

Over 102,000 vehicle and driver licence checks were undertaken during 2020 in respect of 14,000 individual vehicles (72% of the fleet throughout the year).

Compliance Officers undertook 3,707 face-to-face audits at the roadside, predominantly prior to the commencement of COVID-19 restrictions.

As a result of the compliance activities undertaken, 494 Fixed Payment Notices (on the spot fines) were issued in respect of those offences cited in Schedule 8 to the Taxi Regulation (Small Public Service Vehicles) Regulations 2015. Whilst this figure represents a significant decline on the 2019 figure of 1,600, it is reflective of the impact which the SPSV pandemic had on the industry and passenger demand during 2020.

As in 2019 the greatest proportion of fines issued, 26%, concerned SPSV drivers “failing to notify details of the vehicle being operated” to NTA, in accordance with their legal obligations. As previously outlined, this data supports the Driver Check App, which allows passengers or intending passengers to check the licence and NTA notification of operation status of their chosen vehicle and driver.

Approximately 82% of Fixed Payment Notices issued were paid promptly in 2020, with the remainder being referred for court prosecution in the District Courts nationwide.

Table 9: SPSV Checks, Audits and Fixed Payment Notices 2011 - 2020

Year	Contactless checks	Roadside audits	Fixed Payment Notices
2011	N/A	9,477	386
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

Criminal Prosecutions

NTA initiated 161 prosecutions in 2020, of which 114 were direct prosecutions for breaches of SPSV legislation. The remainder arose from purported 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 direct prosecutions, 33 cases involved the offence of not holding a valid SPSV driver licence, whilst 54 cases involved the offence of not holding a valid SPSV vehicle licence. 12 cases were prosecuted 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. A further 30 cases were prosecuted for various other regulatory breaches.

Successful prosecution of criminal offences is contingent on the required evidential standard being proved. That burden of proof, “beyond a reasonable doubt”, is the highest standard of proof in our judicial system. NTA was successful in 91% of cases presented in 2020.

Not all cases when prosecuted, even where the facts of the evidence are found by the judge to be proven, 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, without a formal criminal conviction attaching, given the impact of such a conviction on an individual.

Table 10: Direct Prosecutions by Offence Category 2020

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

Table 11: Fixed Payment Notice Offences Prosecutions 2020

Offences	2020
• Failure to comply with vehicle standards	2
• Removal of tamper-proof disc from SPSV	1
• Failure to display in-vehicle information	3
• Failure to comply with taxi roof sign requirements	4
• Failure to notify details of SPSV being operated	12
• Failure to comply with taximeter requirements	1
• Failure to print and offer a receipt	1
• Unreasonable refusal to carry a passenger	4
• Standing for hire in a taxi otherwise than at an appointed stand	6
Total	34



Compliments and Complaints



Complaints and information are received by way of reports from licenced operators, An Garda Síochána and other agencies or members of the public, together with the direct covert and overt operations of NTA Compliance Officers. Every complaint and report received is investigated.

NTA continues to encourage consumers to submit compliments or complaints about taxi, hackney, limousine and dispatch operator services nationwide via our website contact forms, email or post. NTA also provides a Confidential Telephone Service. These measures help 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	- interior or exterior dirt or staining - malodour - rubbish or deleterious matter - Covid-19 hygiene concern
Conduct, behaviour and identification of an SPSV driver	- 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	- failure to issue a receipt €2 booking charge added incorrectly - route selection - taximeter not working or not used
Hiring and booking of the SPSV	- 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	- location or content of logos, stickers or advertisements - leaflets or other advertising matter

As a result of the dramatic reduction in both demand for and supply of SPSV services in 2020 owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of customer complaints received during the year fell sharply. A total of 466 complaints were received in 2020, representing a 66% drop on the 2019 figure of 1,383.

As can be seen from the table below, the majority of complaints received (almost 85%) fell within two categories. Whilst 43% of complaints concluded with the SPSV operator being issued with a fine, a warning, advice or a summons for prosecution, 49% 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 when contacted by NTA's compliance team;
- 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 2020 were referred to other agencies such as An Garda Síochána, the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and the Office of the Revenue Commissioners. The final 4% of cases received in 2020 remain ongoing at the time of writing.

Table 12: Complaints by month 2020

	Jan 20	Feb 20	Mar 20	Apr 20	May 20	Jun 20	Jul 20	Aug 20	Sep 20	Oct 20	Nov 20	Dec 20	Total 2020
Vehicle Condition	1	4	1	0	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	1	11
Driver Behaviour	33	51	23	2	5	6	16	14	11	12	10	21	204
Fare Matters	37	37	22	5	3	2	10	16	19	17	4	17	189
Hiring Matters	12	17	15	1	0	0	4	1	5	0	1	5	61
Identification	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total	83	109	61	8	8	9	32	31	36	29	15	45	466

Figure 11: Complaints by category received 2018 to 2020

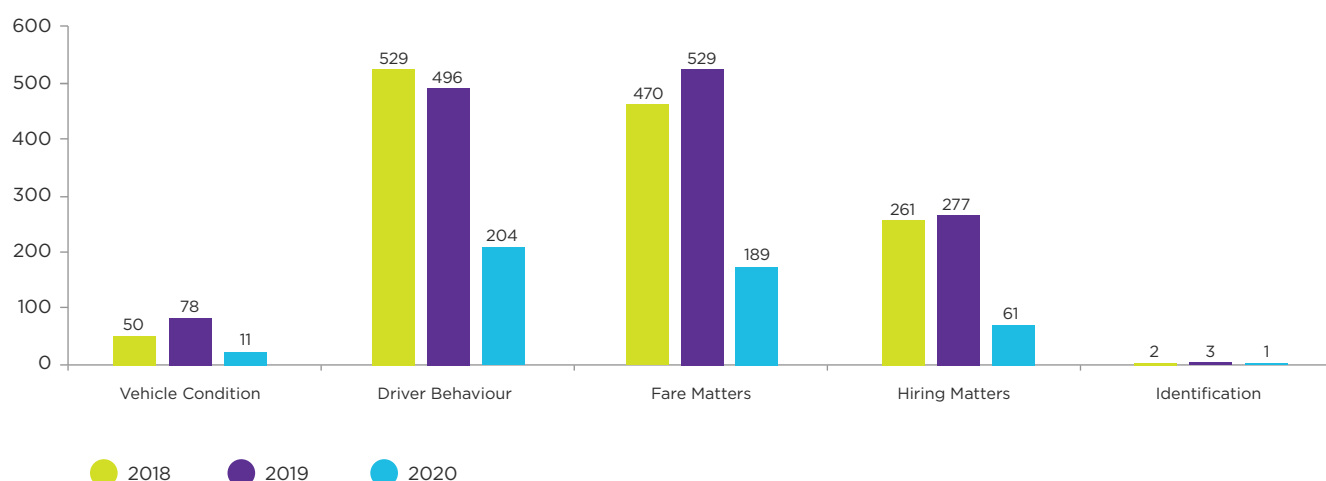


Table 13: Complaints by category from 2011 to 2020

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Condition, roadworthiness and cleanliness of the vehicle	21	22	30	47	53	34	72	50	78	11
Conduct, behaviour and identification of an SPSV driver	103	141	369	465	491	444	445	529	496	204
Overcharging and other matters relating to fares	132	110	221	327	297	348	380	470	529	189
Hiring and booking of the SPSV	90	104	122	113	83	172	248	261	277	61
Identification and general appearance of the SPSV	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	1
Total	346	377	742	952	924	998	1,146	1,312	1,383	466

8

Advisory Committee on Small Public Service Vehicles

Established in accordance with Part 9 of the Taxi Regulation Acts 2013 and 2016, 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;
- small public service vehicle and driver interests;
- the interests of persons with disabilities;
- the interests of tourism,

or has, in the opinion of the Minister, a special interest or expertise in matters relating to the functions of NTA, the Advisory Committee or related matters. Positions on the Advisory Committee are by Ministerial appointment only. Each member may serve a three-year term. Reappointments are permitted.

The membership of the Advisory Committee on Small Public Service Vehicles during 2020 is outlined below:

Chairperson: Mr. Cornelius O'Donohue

Representing	Ordinary Member
Small Public Service Vehicles	Mr. Kevin Finn
Small Public Service Vehicles	Mr. Alan Fox
Small Public Service Vehicles	Mr. John Murphy
Small Public Service Vehicles	<i>Mr. David McGuinness (resigned August 2020)</i>
Local Authorities	Ms. Mary Henchy
An Garda Síochána	Superintendent Thomas Murphy
Consumers	Mr. James Cawley
Consumers	Position Available
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	<i>Mr. Christopher Kitchin (resigned February 2020)</i>
Special interest or expertise	<i>Position Available</i>
Other (Small Public Service Vehicles)	<i>Mr. Michael Barrett (resigned August 2020)</i>

Section 73 of the Taxi Regulation Acts prescribes the functions of the Advisory Committee. In accordance with this provision, the Advisory Committee is tasked generally with advising NTA or the Minister, as appropriate, in relation to matters relevant to the SPSVs and their drivers.

In the context of NTA, the Advisory Committee may provide advice in relation to proposals for licensing or SPSV regulations, matters relating to the delivery of quality services and any other matters related to the functions of the Authority or submitted for advice with the exception of individual cases.

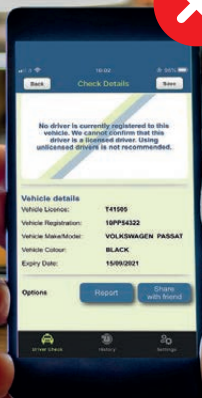
With regard to the Minister, the Advisory Committee may provide advice in relation to policy relevant to SPSVs and their drivers, proposals for legislation or regulations submitted to them for advice, the assignment of specific functions relating to the industry and other matters of relevance to the effective performance of the Advisory Committee or NTA of its functions.

The Advisory Committee met on 11 occasions during 2020, with multiple sub-committee meetings throughout the year. During its initial meetings in 2020 (January and February), the Advisory Committee's work focused on the draft SPSV Industry Strategic Review. However, following the arrival of coronavirus into Ireland, this work was paused to enable the Advisory Committee focus on examining measures which might assist the industry in recovering from the devastating impact of the pandemic. On the 25th June 2020, the Advisory Committee met with the then Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, Shane Ross, and NTA to discuss both the impact of COVID-19 on the SPSV industry and its preliminary proposals for facilitating recovery.

Following this and further engagement with the Department for Transport and NTA, the Advisory Committee's document, 'Small Public Service Vehicle Industry/ Proposals for Industry Recovery - Advisory Committee on Small Public Service Vehicles response to Covid-19', was finalised. This paper was central to discussions between NTA and the Department of Transport in the latter half of 2020 and was discussed at length with Minister for Transport, Eamon Ryan during his meetings with the Committee on the 29th October 2020.

It is anticipated that the Committee's focus will return to the SPSV Strategic Review as COVID restrictions ease in 2021.

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