



**TRANSPORT  
SCOTLAND**  
CÒMHDHAIL ALBA

# Scottish Transport Statistics 2021

## Road Transport Vehicles

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# 1. Introduction

This chapter provides information about the numbers of road transport vehicles, such as new registrations, numbers licensed by taxation group and council area, ages, cylinder sizes, methods of propulsion, gross weights of Heavy Goods Vehicles, seating capacity of public transport vehicles, licensing figures for taxi and private hire cars and their drivers and numbers of wheelchair accessible taxis.

It also provides statistics of the most popular cars, results of the road vehicle testing scheme (MOT), driving tests, driving licence holders, households with the regular use of a car (from the Scottish Household Survey), the number of Blue Badges issued and information about motor vehicle offences recorded by the Police.

## Key Points

- **There were 3.04 million vehicles licensed for use on the roads in Scotland in 2020 (the highest number on record), of which 83 per cent were cars.**
- **Over three quarters (76%) of the adult population (17+) held a full driving licence in 2020.**
- **Eighty one per cent of households had access to one or more cars or vans in 2020; over one third (36%) of households had access to two or more cars or vans.**

# 2. Main Points

## Vehicles Licensed

2.1 The total number of new motor vehicles registrations in 2020 was around 160,926, 27% less than in 2019 and 23% less than 2010. (*Table 1.1*) During the UK lockdown (which applied from 23 March 2020), vehicle dealerships and showrooms were required to close, removing the main method by which new vehicles are sold in Scotland. This was lifted in Scotland on the 29<sup>th</sup> June. However local restrictions may have applied at later points in the year.

2.2 New registrations of cars in 2019 accounted for around 127,739 of these, around 50,000 (28%) less than in 2019, and 49,000 (28%) less than 2010. Of all new registered vehicles in 2020, 90,000 (56%) were petrol-propelled, and 47,000 (29%) were diesel-propelled. The remaining new vehicles registered in 2020 were mostly electric or hybrid-electric vehicles, both these groups have seen steady increases in new registrations in recent years. In the last 10 years, only 2011, 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016 saw more new diesel vehicles registered than petrol vehicles. More detailed data on vehicles registered in 2020 by body type and propulsion is included in Chapter 13. (*Table 1.1*)

2.3 The total number of vehicles licensed was 3.04 million in 2020, slightly higher than 2019 and 13% higher than in 2010. The number of private and light goods vehicles in 2020 was 2.7 million, slightly less than 2019 and 15% higher than 2010. (*Table 1.2*)

2.4 Glasgow had the largest number of vehicles licensed as at the end of 2020 (238,001), followed by Fife (213,972) and Edinburgh (202,319) - based on the postcode of the registered keeper. Per head of population (aged 17+), Dundee had the third lowest figure behind Edinburgh and Glasgow. Dundee had 438 vehicles for every 1,000 people aged 17+, Glasgow was lowest at 374. Vehicle ownership per head was much higher in rural areas – Renfrewshire had 796 vehicles per 1,000 people aged 17+ , Orkney had 774 and Stirling had 758, the three areas in Scotland with the highest vehicle ownership by population. The Scotland average was 654 per thousand. The pattern for car registrations was similar with Glasgow lowest, but Renfrewshire had the highest figure per thousand population at 687, followed by Stirling at 620. The effect of the registration of company car fleets can be seen: Renfrewshire accounted for 26 per cent (43,876) of all the company cars registered in Scotland, compared to 5 per cent of all cars. (*Table 1.3*)

2.5 Excluding Edinburgh and Angus, there were 7,745 taxis and 10,566 private hire cars licensed in Scotland based on figures provided by Scottish local licensing authorities during October-November 2021. The figures show that of the 7,745 licensed taxis, 3,288 (42%) are wheelchair accessible. The proportion of wheelchair accessible vehicles varies across different authority areas. (*Table 1.4*)

2.6 The average age of private and light goods vehicles in 2020 was 7.6 years, slightly higher than last year, and continuing a trend of increasing average age since 2007. The average age of private and light goods vehicles continued to be lower in Scotland than for Great Britain as a whole. In 2020 the average age of these vehicles in Great Britain was 8.3 years. (*Table 1.6*)

2.7 There were 5,592 licensed operators of heavy goods vehicles in Scotland in December 2021 and 699 public service vehicle licence holders. Most HGV operators had few (if any) vehicles specified on the licence: 3,599 had 0-2 vehicles, 940 had 3-5 vehicles and 484 had 6-10 vehicles. Only 73 operators had between 51 and 100 vehicles specified on the licence as at December 2021. (*Table 1.10*)

2.8 The most popular new car sold in Scotland in 2020 was the Vauxhall Corsa with a market share of 4.1%. The top 5 most popular models had a total market share of 14% and the top 10, 23%. (*Table 1.11*)

## **MOTs and Driving Tests**

2.9 In 2020/21, about 33% of cars tested in the road vehicle testing scheme (MOT) were unsatisfactory, as were 13% of motor cycles. About 13% of cars tested had unsatisfactory suspension, 12% had unsatisfactory brakes and 11% had unsatisfactory

lamps, reflectors and electrical equipment (a vehicle with more than one type of fault is counted against each of them). Seven per cent of motorcycles tested had unsatisfactory lamps and reflectors, 3% had unsatisfactory brakes and 2.4% had unsatisfactory structure and attachments. *(Table 1.12)*

2.10 Due to the Covid-19 pandemic there were only 31,592 driving licence practical tests conducted in 2020 compared to 123,000 in 2019. The pass rate was 5% higher at 53%. The test centre at the Fraserburgh had the highest pass rate (83%), though only 114 tests were conducted. However, Fraserburgh also had the highest pass rate for centres where at least 100 tests were conducted (83%), while the lowest was at East Kilbride (39%). *(Tables 1.13 & 1.14)*

2.11 The Scottish Household Survey results for 2020 showed that 76% of adults over the age of 17 held a full driving licence. Although men were more likely to hold a full driving licence than women in all age groups except 50-59, the difference between the proportions increased with age. For the 50-59 age group in 2020, the difference was 2 percentage points more for women. For 70-79 year olds there was a difference of 36 percentage points (men: 93%, women: 57%), and 22 percentage points for those aged 80+ (men: 74%; women: 52%). *(Tables 1.16 and 1.17)*

2.12 SHS results also showed that the percentage of people holding a full driving licence tended to increase with household income. In 2020, 91% of adults aged 17+ living in households which had an annual net income of over £50,000 held a full driving licence. In contrast, only 57% of adults who lived in households with an annual net income of up to £10,000 held a full driving licence.

2.13 License possession was also more likely in rural areas. In 2020, 70% of adults aged 17+ living in large urban areas held a full driving licence compared with 87% of those living in 'Remote Rural' areas (the Scottish Government urban/rural classification system used in the Survey is described in the road transport vehicles section of the user guide). *(Table 1.16)*

## **Car Availability**

2.14 The Scottish Household Survey shows that 81 per cent of households had access to one or more cars in 2020. Over a third (36%) of households had access to two or more cars. *(Table 1.19)* These estimates were similar to results from the Scotland Census 2011, which suggested that 69% of households have access to one or more cars, with 27% having two or more cars. The Census also showed that slightly fewer men (21 per cent) than women (26 per cent) aged 16 and over lived in households with no cars or vans available. *(Table 1.23)*

2.15 The Scottish Household Survey also shows how the percentage of households with a car available for private use varies between different household types, income bands and type of area. In 2020, family (small or large) and large adult households

were most likely to have access to at least one car (large family: 97%, small family: 95%, large adult: 95%). (note definitions of family types are included in the road transport vehicles section of the user guide) Least likely to have access to a car were single adult households (55%). The SHS also showed that 42% of large adult and 18% of large family households had 3 or more cars available for private use in 2020. (*Table 1.20*) The 2011 Census showed that married or cohabiting families with dependent children were most likely to have access to a car, at 92%, and single pensioner households were the least likely, at 36%. (*Table 1.24*)

2.16 Only 50% of households whose net annual income was up to £10,000 had one or more cars available for private use, compared with at least 88% of households whose annual net income were above £25,000. Seventy two per cent of households in large urban areas had cars, compared with 91-96% of those in rural areas. (*Table 1.20*)

2.17 The car ownership statistics from the SHS can be supplemented with information on equalities from the 2011 Census. This shows that the proportion of households with no car or van available was generally higher for those where the Household Reference Person (HRP)<sup>1</sup> was from a minority ethnic group; within this group it was highest for households where the HRP was from the 'African' (60 per cent) or 'Caribbean or Black' (49 per cent) ethnic groups. Additionally, of the 473,000 people in households who had a long-term health problem or disability that limited their day-to-day activities a lot, 46 per cent lived in households with no cars or vans available. The corresponding proportion was 34 per cent for the 523,000 people whose day-day activities were limited a little and 19 per cent for the 4.2 million people who had no limiting long-term health problem. (*Table 1.25*)

2.18 There were 230,644 Blue Badges on issue in Scotland at the end of March 2021. 115,370 were issued to recipients of allowances or grants which provide an automatic entitlement to a Blue Badge, 113,064 were issued on a discretionary basis to other people with a permanent or substantial disability, and 2,210 were issued to institutions. (*Table 1.21*)

## Motor Vehicle Offences

2.19 The numbers of motor vehicle offences recorded by the police include offences in respect of which either the police or the procurator fiscal made a conditional offer of a fixed penalty (mainly *moving* vehicle offences). They do not include *stationary* vehicle offences which are dealt with by the police or traffic wardens by means of fixed penalty notices (mainly parking offences).

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<sup>1</sup> The 'Household Reference Person', or HRP, was introduced in the 2001 Census to replace the concept of the 'head of the household'. This allows a household to be further characterised using the properties of the HRP. The HRP is taken as the adult in the household with the highest economic activity – if the two people have the same economic activity then the oldest becomes the HRP.

2.20 Following the establishment of Police Scotland, data for 2013-14 onwards are returned from one central unit within Police Scotland using their management information system. Prior to 2013-14, data were returned by the eight legacy police force areas. An extensive quality assurance exercise was carried out by the Scottish Government to ensure that the dataset produced from the new system is consistent with data returned from the legacy police forces.

2.21 This exercise identified a number of anomalies affecting comparability of the time series resulting in breaks in the series. Further information about these discontinuities can be found in the Technical report, entitled Recorded Crime: Comparability of Police Scotland and Legacy Force Data, available from [Technical Report on the Comparability of Recorded Crime Data \(webarchive.org.uk\)](#).

2.22 The total number of motor vehicle offences recorded in 2020-21 was 116,054 (*Table 1.22*).

2.23 This year is the first full year to include the two new offences: *driving or being in charge of a motor vehicle with concentration of a specified controlled drug above a specified limit*. These were introduced due to changes to the Road Traffic Act 1988 which came into force on 21st October 2019. 2,491 of these new offences were recorded in 2020-21. While offences of driving or being in charge of a motor vehicle while impaired through alcohol or drugs already existed, evidence of impaired driving is not required for the new offences. This may have resulted in additional offences being recorded in relation to drug driving.

2.24 The total number of motor vehicle offences recorded decreased by 5% between 2019-20 and 2020-21; changes in these figures may arise because of changes in the level of enforcement or police deployment. It should also be noted that the nationwide lockdowns and other measures put in place to limit social contact during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic are very likely to have had a significant impact on the type and volume of offences recorded in the 2020-21 figures. However, some caution is advised before necessarily attributing all of the changes to this situation. The largest decreases were for other speeding offences (21% decrease from 18,784 to 14,900, failing to stop after an accident offences (22% decrease from 15,503 to 12,015) and no test certificate offences (14% decrease from 14,987 to 12,910). The largest increases were for Third party insurance offences (30% increase from 15,276 to 19,818) and Driving license offences (31% increase from 5,718 to 7,467 (*Table 1.22*)).



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Published by Transport Scotland, March 2022

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