



**TRANSPORT  
SCOTLAND**  
CÒMHDHAIL ALBA

# Scottish Transport Statistics 2023

## Road Transport Vehicles

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## 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 3.09 million vehicles licensed for use on the roads in Scotland in 2022 (the highest number on record), of which 82 per cent were cars.**
- **Almost three quarters (73%) of the adult population (17+) held a full driving licence in 2022.**
- **Seventy five per cent of households had access to one or more cars or vans in 2022; two fifths (40%) of households had access to two or more cars or vans.**

## Main Points

### Vehicles Licensed

The total number of new motor vehicles registrations in 2021 was around 181,351, 13% more than in 2020 and 10% less than 2011. (*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.

New registrations of cars in 2021 accounted for around 138,437 of these, around 11,000 (8%) more than in 2020, and 29,000 (17%) less than 2011. Of all new registered vehicles in 2021, 91,000 (50%) were petrol-propelled, and 49,000 (27%) were diesel-propelled. The remaining new vehicles registered in 2021 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 2021 by body type and propulsion is included in Chapter 13. (*Table 1.1*)

The total number of vehicles licensed was 3.06 million in 2021, slightly higher than 2020 and 14% higher than in 2011. The number of private and light goods vehicles in 2021 was 2.7 million, slightly more than 2020 and 14% higher than 2011. (*Table 1.2*)

Glasgow had the largest number of vehicles licensed as at the end of 2021 (239,008), followed by Fife (214,965) and Edinburgh (204,163) - 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 444 vehicles for every 1,000 people aged 17+, Glasgow was lowest at 376. Vehicle ownership per head was much higher in rural areas – Renfrewshire had 798 vehicles per 1,000 people aged 17+ , Orkney had 782 and Stirling had 775, the three areas in Scotland with the highest vehicle ownership by population. The Scotland average was 559 per thousand. The pattern for car registrations was similar with Glasgow lowest, but Renfrewshire had the highest figure per thousand population at 678, followed by Stirling at 626. The effect of the registration of company car fleets can be seen: Renfrewshire accounted for 25 per cent (42,817) of all the company cars registered in Scotland, compared to 5 per cent of all cars. (*Table 1.3*)

Excluding Clackmannanshire, there were 9,271 taxis and 12,438 private hire cars licensed in Scotland based on figures provided by Scottish local licensing authorities during 2022. The figures show that of the 9,271 licensed taxis, 4,381 (47%) are wheelchair accessible. The proportion of wheelchair accessible vehicles varies across different authority areas. (*Table 1.4*)

The average age of private and light goods vehicles in 2021 was 7.3 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 2021 the average age of these vehicles in Great Britain was 8.6 years. (*Table 1.6*)

There were 5,436 licensed operators of heavy goods vehicles in Scotland in December 2023 and 631 public service vehicle licence holders. Most HGV operators had few (if any) vehicles specified on the licence: 3,497 had 0-2 vehicles, 888 had 3-5 vehicles and 458 had 6-10 vehicles. Only 69 operators had between 51 and 100 vehicles specified on the licence as at December 2023. (*Table 1.10*)

The most popular new car sold in Scotland in 2022 was the Vauxhall Corsa with a market share of 5.4%. The top 5 most popular models had a total market share of 14% and the top 10, 22%. (*Table 1.11*)

## **MOTs and Driving Tests**

In 2022/23, about 31% of cars tested in the road vehicle testing scheme (MOT) were unsatisfactory, as were 12% of motor cycles. About 12% of cars tested had unsatisfactory suspension, 10% had unsatisfactory brakes and 10% had unsatisfactory

lamps, reflectors and electrical equipment (a vehicle with more than one type of fault is counted against each of them). Six per cent of motorcycles tested had unsatisfactory lamps and reflectors, 3% had unsatisfactory brakes and 2.2% had unsatisfactory structure and attachments. *(Table 1.12)*

There were 135,026 driving licence practical tests conducted in 2022 compared to 116,368 in 2021. The pass rate was 5% lower at 50%. The test centre at Benbecula Island and Isle of Tiree both had the highest pass rate (86%), though only 84 and 7 tests were conducted respectively. However, Pitlochry had the highest pass rate for centres where at least 100 tests were conducted (59%), while the lowest was at Glasgow (Shieldhall) (37%). *(Tables 1.13 & 1.14)*

The Scottish Household Survey results for 2022 showed that 73% 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, the difference between the proportions increased with age. For the 30-39 age group in 2022, the difference was 5 percentage points more for women. For 70-79 year olds there was a difference of 23 percentage points (men: 85%, women: 62%), and 40 percentage points for those aged 80+ (men: 73%; women: 33%). *(Tables 1.16 and 1.17)*

SHS results also showed that the percentage of people holding a full driving licence tended to increase with household income. In 2022, 76% of adults aged 17+ living in households which had an annual net income of between £25,000 and £30,000 held a full driving licence. In contrast, only 52% of adults who lived in households with an annual net income of up to £15,000 held a full driving licence.

License possession was also more likely in rural areas. In 2022, 65% of adults aged 17+ living in large urban areas held a full driving licence compared with 86% 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**

The Scottish Household Survey shows that 75 per cent of households had access to one or more cars in 2022. Two fifths (40%) 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)*

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 2022, family (small or large) and large adult households were most

likely to have access to at least one car (large family: 93%, small family: 92%, large adult: 89%). (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 (57%). The SHS also showed that 33% of large adult and 15% of large family households had 3 or more cars available for private use in 2022. (*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*)

Only 46% of households whose net annual income was up to £10,000 had one or more cars available for private use, compared with at least 79% of households whose annual net income were above £25,000. Sixty four per cent of households in large urban areas had cars, compared with 88-89% of those in rural areas. (*Table 1.20*)

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*)

There were 283,654 Blue Badges on issue in Scotland at the end of March 2023. 136,857 were issued to recipients of allowances or grants which provide an automatic entitlement to a Blue Badge, 144,635 were issued on a discretionary basis to other people with a permanent or substantial disability, and 2,162 were issued to institutions. (*Table 1.21*)

## Motor Vehicle Offences

The numbers of road traffic crimes and 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.

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.

This exercise identified a number of anomalies affecting comparability of the time series. These anomalies mean that Statistics on road traffic offences prior to 2013-14 cannot be compared to data from 2103-14 onwards. 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](http://webarchive.org.uk)).

The total number of road traffic offences recorded in 2022-23 was 109,320 and the total number of road traffic crimes recorded in 2022-23 was 57 (Table 1.22).

The total number of road traffic offences recorded decreased by 2% between 2021-22 and 2022-23; changes in these figures may arise because of changes in the level of enforcement or police deployment.



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