

Notes and Definitions: Vehicles



This section provides notes and definitions for the vehicle statistics tables including data relating to vehicle registration and licensing, vehicle testing, driving license holding and car usage. These data are part of Transport Statistics Great Britain published on 15 December 2011.

Notes and Definitions Include:

- Information on sources
- Information on “accuracy”.
- Definitions.
- General information for the tables including links to background information.

Vehicle registration and licensing

TSGB Tables TSGB0901 – TSGB0907

Current taxation class groupings

The current taxation class groupings presented within this section are as follows:

Private and light goods (PLG): This is by far the most common tax class, currently covering almost 89 per cent of licensed vehicles. This tax class primarily consists of cars and light vans but can include other vehicles used only for private purposes. Tax bands for cars within PLG depend on engine size for vehicles first registered before March 2001, while the tax bands for cars registered after March 2001 are based upon levels of CO₂ emissions, with lower rates for cleaner vehicles.

Motorcycles, scooters and mopeds: This tax class includes all motorcycles and similar vehicles, but excludes tricycles which have their own tax band. The rates of tax payable depend upon engine size.

Goods vehicles: Vehicles that have a gross weight of over three and a half tonnes and are used for carrying goods are taxed in this class. Generally, the rate of tax payable depends on the maximum gross weight and the axle configuration of the vehicle. Since 1999, reduced rates have been available for vehicles that create less pollution.

Public transport vehicles: This category covers buses and coaches with more than eight seats (excluding the driver) used for commercial purposes. Vehicles not used for commercial purposes (e.g. school minibuses) would be licensed in the PLG tax class. The rate of tax payable is dependent upon the number of seats in the vehicle. As with goods vehicles, reduced rates for vehicles that create less pollution have been available since 1999.

Crown and exempt vehicles: This group includes vehicles which are exempt from vehicle excise duty. This can be for a variety of reasons, including vehicles driven by disabled drivers, emergency and crown vehicles and vehicles manufactured before 1973.

Special vehicles group: This group includes works trucks, road rollers, mobile cranes, digging machines and showman's vehicles.

Other vehicles: This group includes three wheeled cars and vans, recovery vehicles, general haulage vehicles and tricycles.

Changes in the taxation system over time

There have been several changes to the vehicle taxation system in recent years which are particularly important when interpreting the time series presented in Tables TSGB0901 and TSGB0902. These are as follows:

From 1 October 1982: All general goods vehicles weighing less than 1,525 kgs in unladen weight were transferred from the 'goods' taxation group to the 'private and light goods' group. This has resulted in a discontinuity in the data presented for both taxation groups between 1981 and 1982.

From 1 October 1990: All general goods vehicles weighing less than 3,500 kgs in gross vehicle weight were transferred from the 'goods' taxation group to the 'private and light goods' group. This has resulted in a discontinuity in the data presented for both taxation groups between 1989 and 1990.

From 1 July 1995: Major changes were made to the taxation system with the intention of simplifying the taxation structure. These changes included:

- farmers and showmen's vehicles were transferred from the goods taxation group into the 'other vehicles' group.
- cars and motorcycles over 25 years of age were transferred from the 'private and light goods' and 'motorcycles' taxation group to the 'crown and exempt' taxation group. Since 1998 only vehicles built before 1973 have been included in the 'crown and exempt taxation group
- public service vehicles with fewer than eight seats were transferred from the 'public

transport vehicles' taxation group into the 'private and light goods' taxation group.

Due to these changes there is a discontinuity between the figures presented in Tables TSGB0901 and TSGB0902 for all taxation groups between 1994 and 1995

Methods of measurement

Licensed vehicles: Since 1978, data relating to the number of licensed vehicles has been calculated through an analysis of the records held centrally by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) as at 31 December each year. Prior to this, statistics on licensed vehicles were calculated through a sample of vehicle records held by local taxation offices and included vehicles licensed for at least one month during the third quarter of the year.

Newly registered vehicles: Statistics relating to new vehicle registrations are calculated through a complete analysis of new registrations and include all vehicles newly registered in the calendar year.

Further details can be found in the [Vehicle and Licensing Statistics: Notes and Definitions](#) document.

Vehicle roadworthiness testing

TSGB Tables TSGB0908 – TSGB0912

The statistics presented within these tables have been provided by the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA), contact: 01792 543382.

Trailer tests: Although there is no registration system for trailers which carry goods, there is still a requirement to have them tested each year under the DfT's plating and testing scheme.

MOT tests: Since 2006/07, these statistics have been based on an analysis of all MOT tests carried out in the financial year. In 2005/06, the statistics were based on approximately 50 per cent of all tests carried out while, prior to this, the statistics were based on a 2 per cent sample of vehicle tests.

Passenger service vehicle tests: EEC Directive 77/143 stipulated that all class VI (Public Service Vehicles) in use for more than one year must have undergone a road-worthiness examination by 1 January 1983 and be subject to an annual inspection thereafter. To meet this deadline, statutory testing of class VI vehicles commenced on 1 January 1982.

Heavy goods vehicle tests: Vehicles subject to plating and testing have to undergo a test when they are one year old and are tested annually thereafter; the term 'first test' refers to the first test of a vehicle in a particular year. The figures quoted cover the 52 week period ending on the Friday which precedes the first Monday in April.

Private motoring

Households with regular use of cars: NTS0205 (TSGB0913)

Data from 1961 onwards are derived from household surveys. Figures for earlier years are estimates. Also, see notes to NTS9902.

Private motoring: NTS9902 (TSGB0914)

The mid-year estimates of the percentage of households with regular use of a car or van in NTS9902 are based on data from the National Travel Survey.

The percentage of driving license holders in NTS0201 is based on data from the NTS, and the estimated number of license holders is based on the mid-year resident population estimates from ONS.

Annual mileage of 4-wheeled cars: NTS0901 (TSGB0901)

These figures are based upon annual estimates for each purpose (commuting, business and other private) per vehicle as reported by participants in the National Travel Survey (NTS). The data are for 4-wheeled cars only. Company cars provided by an employer for the use of a particular employee (or director) are included, but cars borrowed temporarily from a company pool are not.

Further details can be found in the [National Travel Survey: 2010: notes and definitions](#) document.

Car Driving Tests: TSGB0917

The statistics presented within these tables are provided by the Driving Standards Agency, contact: 0300 200 1122.

These notes and definitions relate to the detailed statistics (tables and charts) on “vehicles” that can be found on the [Vehicle statistics](#) web page, table numbers [VEH0102](#), [VEH0103](#), [VEH0152](#), [VEH0153](#), [VEH0203](#), [VEH0204](#), [VEH0506](#), [National Travel Survey](#) page for [NTS0205](#), [NTS9902](#), [NTS0201](#), [NTS0901](#); and Transport Statistics Great Britain tables TSGB0908 to TSGB0912 and TSGB0917. These tables form the [vehicles chapter](#) of Transport Statistics Great Britain.