

Blue Badge Scheme Statistics: 2011/12



Notes and Definitions

This document provides information about DfT statistics on parking badges for disabled people (“Blue Badges”). These badges are issued by local authorities to disabled people with severe mobility problems, as well as to organisations concerned with the care of disabled people.

These Notes and Definitions include:

1. Information on the Blue Badge scheme
2. Blue Badge survey
3. Data processing and imputation
4. Population data
5. Future changes to Blue Badge statistics

The Department for Transport carries out an annual survey of the number of blue badges issued by local authorities in England. The badges may remain valid for a three-year period so the survey shows a rolling total of those on issue.

1. Information about the Blue Badge Scheme

There are two main categories for eligibility for a Blue Badge, those that are “eligible without further assessment” (previously known as the automatic criteria) and those that are “eligible subject to further assessment” (previously known as the discretionary criteria). Organisations are also able to apply for a Blue Badge, and are subject to their own criteria.

‘Eligible without further assessment’

People who may be issued a badge without further assessment are those who are more than two years old and fall within one or more of the following criteria:

- Receives the Higher Rate Mobility Component of the Disability Living Allowance;
- Receives a War Pensioner’s Mobility Supplement;
- Is registered blind; or
- Has been awarded a lump sum benefit at tariffs 1-8 of the Armed Forces Compensation scheme and certified as having a permanent and substantial disability which causes inability to walk or very considerable difficulty in walking.

Applicants are required to provide proof that they satisfy one or more of the above criteria, and must agree to identity and residency checks before their local authority can issue a badge.

‘Eligible subject to further assessment’

People who may be issued a badge subject to further assessment by the local authority are those who are more than two years old and fall within one or more of the following criteria:

- Drives a vehicle regularly, has severe disability in both arms and is unable to operate or has considerable difficulty in operating all or some types of parking meter; or
- Has a permanent and substantial disability which causes inability to walk or very

considerable difficulty in walking.

In addition, children under the age of three may be eligible for a badge if they fall within either or both of the following descriptions:

- A child who, on account of a condition, must always be accompanied by bulky medical equipment which cannot be carried around with the child without great difficulty; or
- A child who, on account of a condition, must always be kept near a motor vehicle so that, if necessary, treatment for a condition can be given in the vehicle or the child can be taken quickly in the vehicle to a place where such treatment can be given.

In these cases, applicants are required to undergo mobility assessments in order to determine their eligibility, unless it is self-evident that the applicant meets the eligibility criteria.

In the past assessments could be carried out in a variety of ways including desk-based assessments, by an independent mobility assessor or by the applicant's GP. However, recent reforms introduced in 2011, now require that the decision to issue a badge to an individual applying because of a 'permanent and substantial disability that causes inability to walk or considerable difficulty in walking' be confirmed by an independent medical assessor¹.

Organisations

Badges are issued to organisations for use in a motor vehicle or vehicles when they are being used to carry disabled people who would themselves be eligible for a badge. An 'organisation' is defined as an organisation concerned with the care of disabled persons, to which a disabled person's badge may be issued in accordance with section 21(4) of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. Examples of organisations that may be eligible include residential care homes and hospices².

2. The DfT Blue Badge Survey (STATS104)

The Blue Badge survey is sent out annually by the Department for Transport to all 152 upper tier local authorities in England, and is the key data source for the Blue Badge statistics.

The survey is split into five main sections, where local authorities are asked to provide figures on:

- Number of badges issued within the year by eligibility criteria;
- Number of badges that are currently on issue by eligibility criteria;
- Number of applications received, and how many of these were new applications;
- Number of mobility assessments that were carried out, broken down by type of assessment; and
- Number of badges that were reported stolen or lost, withdrawn badges and prosecution figures.

¹ For more details on these reforms please see [The Disabled Persons \(Badges for Motor Vehicles\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) \(No.2\) Regulations 2011](#) and Chapter 4 of [The Blue Badge Scheme Local Authority Guidance \(England\)](#).

² For more information please see Chapter 5 of [The Blue Badge Scheme Local Authority Guidance \(England\)](#).

A blank questionnaire is available here:

<http://assets.dft.gov.uk/statistics/series/disabled-parking-badges/questionnaire-2012.pdf>

A copy of the guidance notes provided to local authorities completing the questionnaire can be found here:

<http://assets.dft.gov.uk/statistics/series/disabled-parking-badges/guidance.pdf>

Changes to the survey content

The survey design has been revised several times over the years, to reflect changes in the information required for development and monitoring of policy relating to Blue Badges.

A summary of these changes is listed here:

- Prior to 2007/08 authorities were only required to answer questions regarding badges that had been issued in the year. Questions concerning total badges issued in the year were introduced in the 2008/09 survey and this data has been collected in every year since then.
- Figures on renewal applications were collected up to the 2009/10 survey, but from 2010/11 questions were modified to instead ask about total and new applications (renewal applications figures can be calculated as the difference of the two).
- From 2010/11, the survey asked local authorities for more detailed information on mobility assessments. They were required to specify how many of the total mobility assessments were carried out on a new applicant, and which assessment type was used.

Reforms to the current administration process of the Blue Badge Scheme will have an effect on future surveys. For more information on this please see section 5 below.

Survey response rates

The survey is not compulsory and in each year some authorities do not provide figures. The table below shows the full or partial response rates (i.e. the number of authorities providing some information) over time. However response levels vary considerably by question, and in many cases will be considerably lower than the overall response rate.

Survey reporting period	Response Rate
2006/07	69%
2007/08	76%
2008/09	85%
2009/10	78%
2010/11	78%
2011/12	86%

3. Data processing and imputation

Data provided by local authorities can vary in quality between authorities and from year to year. Local authorities use different systems to record these data, and follow different procedures and practices. This means that some authorities are unable to provide accurate responses for all of the questions in the survey, and therefore data validation and imputation processes are required in compiling the blue badge statistics.

Data checking and cleaning

After completing the survey, a range of consistency checking measures is employed on each local authority's data, including:

- All data is compared to previous submissions received as far back as 2007, which allows unusual trends and figures to be spotted. In the event that data or trends do not seem accurate, the figures are queried with the local authority.
- The number of badges issued in the year is compared to the number of badges currently on issue. It is expected that badges issued in a year will account for approximately one third of the total badges on issue.
- The number of badges issued in the year is checked against the number of applications received and those that were successful.

In the event that data or trends seem inaccurate, figures are queried with the local authority. This helps determine whether there is a genuine explanation. If data are still considered incorrect, they will be removed and figures will be imputed before being used in national and regional totals.

Imputation methods

Where no data are available for an authority, where some individual items of data are not available, or where data checking identifies inconsistencies which cannot be resolved through querying with the relevant local authority, data need to be imputed to produce aggregate totals at the England or regional level. This involves estimation using figures that have been supplied in previous years, or responses to other questions in the survey where a partial response has been provided by the authority (for example, the number of badges on issue can be estimated from the number issued in year).

The table below shows the proportion of the annual estimates accounted for by imputation rather than direct measurement from 2008/09 to 2011/12.

Comparison of the proportion of imputed data used in annual estimates from 2008/09:

Year	On Issue (% imputed)	Issued (% imputed)
2008/09	39%	42%
2009/10	41%	38%
2010/11	37%	28%
2011/12	36%	29%

Revisions

On occasion, imputations for earlier years can be improved using directly-reported data for later years, resulting in revisions to back-data. Although national trends are rarely affected substantively, this can cause some fluctuations in figures at regional level.

In producing the 2011/12 statistics, figures have been subject to more substantive data checking and cleaning processes than in earlier years, and the imputation method has been reviewed. As a result there have been revisions to data back to 2008/09 (the first year in which data on badges issued in year was collected). These revisions have not affected trends significantly, although the estimated total number of badges on issue has increased slightly. Users should be aware of the break in the series when looking at trends starting before 2008/09.

Data quality and availability

Data on the number of badges on issue, and the number of badges issued each year, is published for each year in which it has been collected (tables DIS0101 to DIS0103 and DIS0111). Although there are fluctuations in the quality of data provided by local authorities, at aggregate national level the figures shown are believed to be sufficiently reliable for monitoring broad number and trends. However, figures below national level (in tables DIS0104 to DIS0107) should be interpreted carefully as missing or inconsistent data can have more impact at that level.

Due to difficulties in obtaining and estimating certain items of data, aggregate totals are not currently produced for some of the areas about which local authorities are asked for information, such as application data and assessments. It may be possible to publish these in the future, please see section 5 below for more information.

Information collected this year on number of prosecutions carried out and the number of badges lost, stolen or withdrawn for misuse, is available at local authority level (in table DIS0301). These are outside the scope of National Statistics, and aggregate totals are not given due to concerns about completeness.

4. Population data

Figures for population and retired population are taken from Office for National Statistics mid-year population estimates (for years to 2010) and projections (for 2011). Population estimates at mid-year 2011 were unavailable at the time that the 2011-12 Blue Badge statistics were compiled. Population figures for 2001 onwards will be updated as a result of the 2011 Census, and will be published by the Office for National Statistics over the next year.

Figures for the disabled population automatically entitled to a Blue Badge come from three sources:

- The population receiving the higher level of the Disability Living Allowance is taken from the Department for Work and Pensions cases in payment Caseload. For 2011/12 these figures are taken at November 2011, for 2010/11 at November 2010.
- The population receiving War Pensioners Mobility Supplement is supplied by Defence Analytical Services and Advice (DASA), and is the population at 31 March 2012 for the 2011/12 data, and 31 March 2011 for the 2010/11 data.
- The registered blind population is taken from the National Health Information Centre 2011 report of people registered as blind and partially sighted. These figures are updated every three years so 2011 figures were used for 2011/12 and 2010/11, and 2008 data were used for 2009/10 and 2008/09.

5. Future changes to Blue Badge statistics

The Blue Badge Improvement Service (BBIS) is a new service that has been available to all local authorities in England since 1 January 2012. It provides a number of core services, including a central database of all Blue Badges on issue and key information on badge holders. Further information on BBIS is available at <http://www.dft.gov.uk/topics/access/blue-badge>.

The introduction of BBIS will have implications for data providers and users of Blue Badge statistics. Detailed information on these implications can be found here:

<http://assets.dft.gov.uk/statistics/series/disabled-parking-badges/blue-badge-stats-from-2012.pdf>

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