



national consumer agency
gníomhaireacht náisiúnta tomhaltóirí

putting **consumers** first

National Consumer Agency

Survey of Driving Lesson Costs

April 2011





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1 Introduction

This document presents the results of a National Consumer Agency (NCA) nationwide survey of driving instructors, collecting data regarding the cost of driving lessons and investigating issues associated with the new requirement for Learner Permit applicants to complete an Essential Driver Training (EDT)¹ programme, which came into effect on April 4th 2011.

This survey is the latest in a rolling series of NCA administered pricing and price display surveys, following recent investigations of GP/Dentist fee levels and price display, babycare product prices, branded grocery prices, domestic heating product prices (oil and wood pellets), and charges of crèche based childcare providers. Through providing timely information regarding the prices of important consumer purchases, the NCA seeks to promote competition and to support the operation of transparent, healthy markets for the benefit of consumers and businesses alike.

The Road Safety Authority (RSA) announced the introduction of a Graduated Driving Licence system for Ireland on 1st September 2010 with an implementation date of 4th April 2011 for mandatory driving lessons for new first time licence holders. With effect from April 4th 2011, all Car – Category B Learner Permit applicants in Ireland are required to complete the new Essential Driver Training (EDT) programme before being eligible to apply for a driving test. This new system is operated under the direction of the RSA and is designed to improve road safety, through teaching fundamental driving skills to learner drivers. The programme is structured around 12 lessons or modules. RSA guidance indicates that completion of all 12 modules should be possible over 12 hours of tuition.

The NCA believes it is reasonable to assume that each learner will progress at the pace most appropriate to their driving confidence, appreciation of the key learning points and appetite to complete the programme. Therefore 12 hours may be seen as the mandatory minimum

¹ The RSA has detailed information on its website: <http://www.rsa.ie/en/RSA/Learner-Drivers/Driver-Training/Car-Training-EDT/>

number of lessons required, with some students requiring additional lessons and practice hours. Correspondingly the costs associated with completion of the programme can be significant.

For this reason, the NCA considers it important for consumers to have an appreciation of the current costs associated with learning to drive. In addition, the Agency believes that consumers should have access to information to enable them to understand the intent behind, the detail of and the costs associated with this new driver safety initiative. The NCA urges the RSA, Driving Schools and Approved Driving Instructors to build on efforts made to date in order to ensure that consumers understand the requirements of the programme, what choices are available to them to complete it and what they should expect in terms of driving skills and outcomes at the end of the EDT programme.

The Driving Instructors and, where relevant their associated Driving Schools, surveyed for this study are not named, nor is any detail which might enable their identification provided. The purpose of this survey is neither to promote nor discourage consumers from using any particular Driving Instructor over another. Its objective is to provide consumers with up to date and accurate information regarding driving lesson price levels in Ireland in particular in the context of the new Essential Driver Training (EDT) programme.

The report is divided into this introduction, a methodology section plus two further sections as follows:

- Section 3 presents the results of the survey of driving instructors and
- Section 4 presents a summary of the findings from the survey.

The Agency would like to thank the driving instructors surveyed for their co-operation in the course of this study.

2 Methodology

The National Consumer Agency undertook a telephone survey of driving instructors on the 5th and 6th April 2011 to determine the price of a one-hour driving lesson and the cost of multiple lessons in the context of the recently introduced Essential Driver Training (EDT) programme. The methodology used is outlined in this section.

A list of driving instructors was compiled using the Road Safety Authority's register of Approved Driving Instructors (ADI)² for 12 distinct "areas" across the country. In line with the standard approach of the NCA in such studies, the areas were chosen due to their geographical spread and their urban nature. In the Greater Dublin Area, four areas were selected in order to represent a reasonable cross-section of the capital.

The telephone survey was conducted anonymously. Each driving instructor was asked for the price of a one-hour lesson in their car (manual drive) and the cost for 5, 10 or 12 lessons, as applicable. Instructors were told that the learner driver would go to the driving instructor's place of work or pick-up location (it was indicated by some instructors that they would pick the learner up, but that this did not impact on the price once it was within their area). The quotes collated for the purpose of this report captured the first price stated, without bargaining. Quotes have not been audited in any way; they were taken in good faith and at face value.

A total of 228 driving instructors were selected to be surveyed, across the 12 areas, see Table 1 below. Prices were received from 130. Pricing information could not be obtained from 98 driving instructors for the following reasons:

- Phones were not answered/went to an answering machine
- The driving instructor was no longer in business

² <http://www.rsa.ie/RSA/Learner-Drivers/Finding-an-instructor/Find-an-instructor/>



Table 1 Number and Areas Surveyed

		Instructors Contacted	Quotes Received
1	Athlone	12	10
2	Cork City	21	11
3	Dublin 15	20	10
4	Dublin - Artane/Santry	18	10
5	Dublin - Churchtown/Dundrum	15	10
6	Dublin - Tallaght	24	12
7	Dundalk	19	10
8	Galway City	20	13
9	Limerick City	19	12
10	Sligo	18	11
11	Tralee	20	11
12	Waterford City	22	10
Total		228	130

3 Driving Lessons Survey – Results

Detailed results of the telephone survey of the cost of a driving lesson from an Approved Driving Instructor (ADI) are presented in this section. The results are a summary of the prices of driving lessons from the 130 ADIs who provided responses to NCA staff on 5th and 6th April 2011.

3.1 Cost of 1-Hour Lesson

Table 2 and Figure 1 present the cost of a one-hour driving lesson, showing the average price, the maximum, minimum and range nationally and for the 12 individual areas surveyed.

The average price across all survey locations for a driving lesson is €33³. The difference between the maximum and minimum price nationally is €20, with prices ranging from €25 to €45. The lowest price recorded, €25, was found in four locations, Galway City, Tralee, Limerick City and Waterford City areas. The highest overall price, €45, was surveyed in Dublin, in the Churchtown/Dundrum area.

Looking in further detail at the average price quoted per area:

- The **highest average** price (**€37**) was recorded in the Dublin Churchtown/Dundrum area
- The **lowest average** price (**€31**) was recorded in the Dublin – Artane/Santry and Limerick City areas.

³ Figures are rounded to the nearest euro.

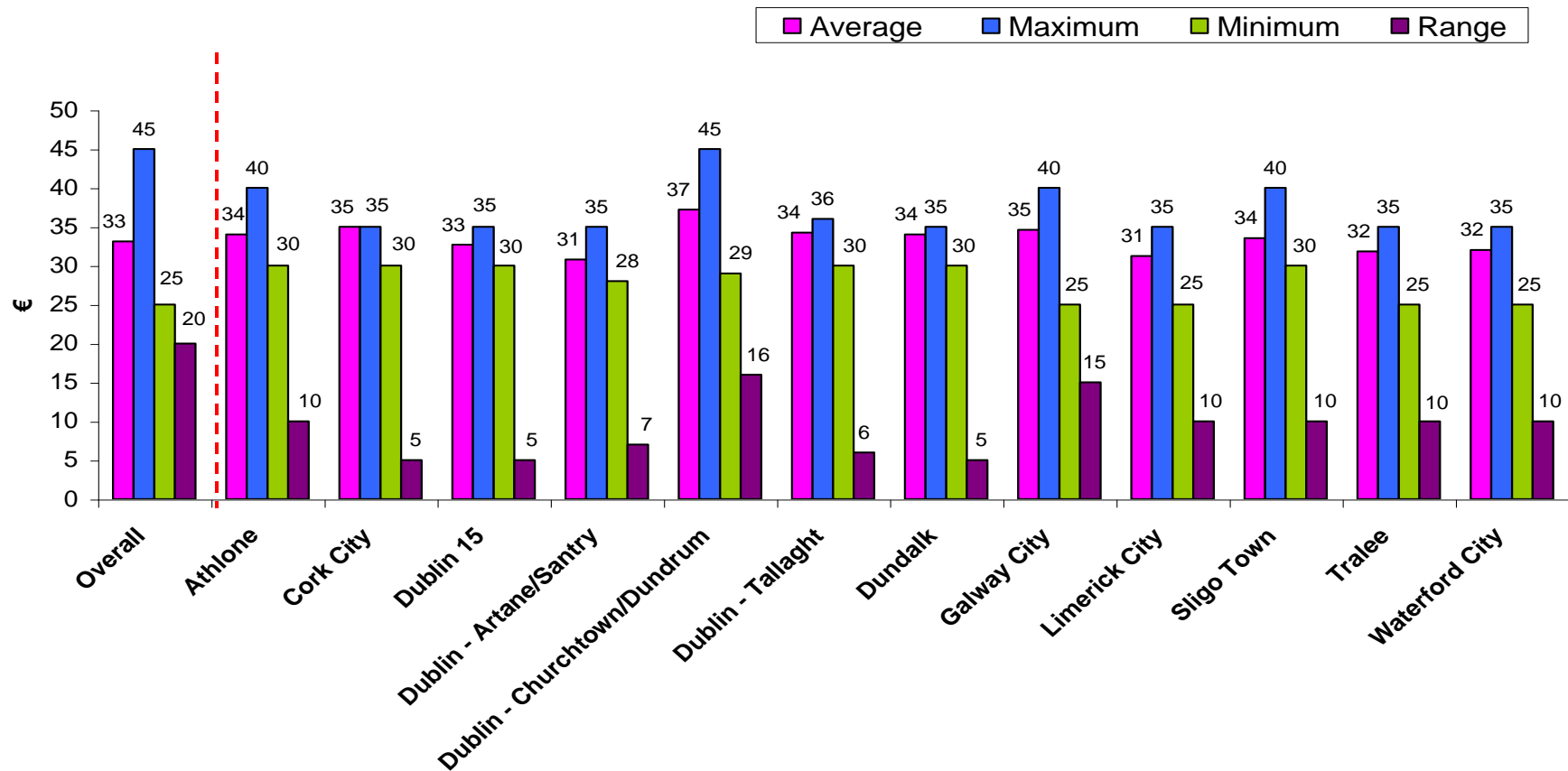
Table 2 Average Price, Maximum Price, Minimum Price, Range – 1 Hour Lesson

	Price (€)			
	Average	Maximum	Minimum	Range
Overall	33	45	25	20
Athlone	34	40	30	10
Cork City	35	35	30	5
Dublin 15	33	35	30	5
Dublin - Artane/Santry	31	35	28	7
Dublin - Churchtown/Dundrum	37	45	29	16
Dublin - Tallaght	34	36	30	6
Dundalk	34	35	30	5
Galway City	35	40	25	15
Limerick City	31	35	25	10
Sligo Town	34	40	30	10
Tralee	32	35	25	10
Waterford City	32	35	25	10

Examining the range, i.e. the difference between the maximum and minimum price quoted for any given area, the data shows that:

- 7 of the 12 areas had price variation of €10 or more; with the Dublin Churchtown/Dundrum area recording the highest variation of €16 within an area.
- Three areas, Cork City, Dublin 15 and Dundalk, had price variations of just €5 between the highest and the lowest quotes.

Figure 1 Average Price, Maximum Price, Minimum Price and Range for 1 Hour Driving Lesson



3.2 Cost of Multiple Lessons

Information in relation to the cost of multiple lessons was also sought to ascertain the level of discounts applied, if any, when multiple lessons were booked and also to gauge the cost of 12 Essential Driver Training (EDT) lessons.

It was found that the discount offered on buying a number of lessons varied from no discount offered to cases where a 25% discount was proposed. It was found that the level of discount given by a number of ADIs was discretionary. Instead of monetary discounts some ADIs offered an extra “free” lesson when multiple lessons were purchased.

Insufficient data at an area level is available to make categorical statements as regards the extent of discounts offered. However, using data collected nationwide, it can be stated that based on a total of 48 “aggregate” prices quoted, at a national level the average price for 10 lessons purchased in one block is €301, which represents a discount of over 11% on the average individual lesson price provided by the same driving instructors. Prices for 10 lessons, where such a bundle price was quoted, ranged from a low of €230 in the Dublin 15 area to a high of €360 in the Dublin - Churchtown/Dundrum area.

The average price nationally for 5 lessons (based on 49 quotes) is €153, which represents a discount of over 9% on the average individual lesson prices provided by the same driving instructors. Nationally, prices for 5 multiple lessons ranged from €125 (Dublin - Artane/Santry, Dublin - Tallaght, Limerick, Galway and Waterford areas) to €200 (Dublin - Churchtown/Dundrum area).

As regards the EDT Programme (4th April 2011), the recent nature of its introduction meant that a proportion of the driving instructors contacted had not, as of April 5th and 6th, formulated a bundle price or indeed a business approach to managing the requirements of the programme. Forty-two driving Instructors quoted a defined price for the 12 EDT lessons.

Nationally the average price quoted for the 12 EDT lessons (based on 42 quotes received) is €365, which represents a discount of 10% on the individual lesson prices provided by the same driving instructors. The price of the 12 lessons ranged from a low of €300 (Dublin – Artane/Santry, Dublin – Tallaght and Waterford areas) to a high of €480 (Galway City area).

4 Key findings

The NCA conducted a telephone survey of 228 Approved Driving Instructors on 5th and 6th April 2011 in 12 urban areas across the country. 130 quotes were collected. The survey sought to quantify the price levels for a one-hour lesson and for multiple lessons purchased at one time, including the new EDT programme, which is modelled on a 12 lesson structure.

- The average price nationally for a one-hour driving lesson was found to be €33, with the **highest average** price (**€37**) recorded in the Dublin - Churchtown/Dundrum area.
- Nationally, a variation in price of €20 was found in relation to a 1-hour driving lesson, with the **highest** price recorded (**€45**) in the Dublin - Churchtown/Dundrum area and the **lowest** price recorded (**€25**) in four areas; Galway, Tralee, Limerick and Waterford.
- 7 of the 12 areas surveyed had a **price variation** of **€10 or more**; with the Dublin - Churchtown/Dundrum area recording the **highest variation** within an area of **€16**.
- A number of driving instructors offered discounts when purchasing multiple lessons, in certain cases the level of discount appeared to be discretionary. For those who provided defined multiple lesson prices, on average discounts in the region of 10% were available.
- Other incentives/discounts included: first lesson “free” or at a reduced rate; additional free lesson when purchasing multiple lessons; free pre-test at the



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completion of a block of lessons; discounted student rates and motor insurance offers.