

Truck Drivers

- Are there enough now?
- Will there be enough in the future?
- What factors and strategies influence driver availability?
- What policies should be reflected in the State Freight Plan?

Current Assessment

As supply chains broke under increasing stress in 2021, reporters frequently identified lack of truckers as a critical weak link. They were bolstered by an October 2021 assessment by the American Trucking Associations (ATA), which stated that the industry was short 80,000 drivers – an all-time high for its annual assessments. Further, the ATA report projected the shortfall would climb to 160,000 drivers by 2030.

The report identified three major factors – and one smaller factor – as the drivers of the employment gap. The three larger factors include retirements (accounting for over 400,000 positions), industry growth (about 200,000 positions), and “drivers pushed out of the industry” (due to driving records, failed drug tests, and other regulatory factors; also accounting for about 200,000 positions). Drivers leaving before retirement accounted for just under 100,000 positions. The study declared the long-haul for-hire market as being the sub-sector most vulnerable.¹

While the pandemic has affected the pool of qualified available drivers, the sector has suffered from longer-standing issues. These include a turnover rate that was 90 percent higher than the retail sector, with high burnout and low levels of replacement. A by-the-mile pay system means time spent waiting at warehouses or terminals for the loading or unloading of containers is usually uncompensated. Others complain about the impact of brokers on driving assignments for the spot market.² One university economist identifies the trucking issues as an outgrowth of deregulation of interstate trucking in 1980, including exemptions from the Fair Labor Standards Act. Under these conditions, drivers record many hours fewer than those worked, and do not earn overtime pay.³ In 2019, the average annual driver pay was \$43,600. One analysis found median wages for truck drivers decreased by an average of 21 percent since 1980; in some markets, the decrease was as much as 50 percent.⁴

Beyond the pay issues are those that relate to lifestyle and family connections. Long-haul drivers can be away for three weeks, then home for three or four days before returning to the road. On the road, drivers report working up to 14 hours per day, even with the 11-hour per day hours-of-service limitations. Poor diets and a sense of ‘captivity in the cab’ were also identified.⁵ Retirements number 1,200 per week; the average age of a trucker is 49.⁶ Long-term, this has produced annual turnover rates at large trucking companies of 94 percent for the period between 1995 and 2017, documenting the duration of the problem. One-third of drivers quit within their first three months on the job.⁷

¹ [ATA Driver Shortage Report 2021 Executive Summary.FINAL .pdf \(trucking.org\)](#)

² <https://www.latimes.com/politics/story/2021-12-07/facing-record-labor-shortages-trucking-firms-battle-fiercely-for-drivers>

³ [Trucker shortage? It's a point of debate amid supply chain jam - Roll Call](#)

⁴ [Trucking CEOs, Economists Settle Debate on the Truck Driver Shortage \(businessinsider.com\)](#)

⁵ [Truck Drivers Aren't Surprised There's a Trucker Shortage \(businessinsider.com\)](#)

⁶ [As US continues to experience truck driver shortage, Diesel Driving School sees record enrollment \(channel3000.com\)](#)

⁷ [There is no truck driver shortage in the US — Quartz \(qz.com\)](#)

Contrarian Assessments

There are many observers and researchers who believe the problems with truck driver availability are overstated. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) projects employment of Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers will increase by six percent between 2020 and 2030 (about 122,000 additional employees). This growth is on average with other occupations. Over the decade the BLS projects 231,100 job openings each year (an opening rate of between 11 and 12 percent each year).⁸ Delivery Truck Drivers are projected by the BLS to see a ten percent growth between 2020 and 2030, an increase of about 101,000 jobs.⁹ In recent years, state governments have issued more than 450,000 new commercial driver's licenses each year, according to the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators.¹⁰

The effects of the Covid pandemic on driver availability are being addressed by the marketplace, researchers observe. BLS data as recent as November 2021 finds that monthly employment levels in trucking were within one percent of pre-pandemic levels; for short-haul drivers, the data tallies 16,000 more than pre-pandemic. Multiple observers note the high turnover levels (consistently greater than 90 percent), with drivers leaving the workforce due to working conditions and pay among challenges to retention. Industry observers in trucking and academia quantify a shortage of long-distance drivers between 10,000 and 20,000 at the end of 2021, with one academic noting that a record number of new trucking companies were formed in the second quarter of 2021. This new pool of start-up companies targeting spot-market freight was noted as one likely factor for truck drivers leaving and/or not applying for company jobs.¹¹

Just prior to the onset of Covid, a study published in the Monthly Labor Review of BLS examined the labor market for truck drivers, using data from the period between 2003 and 2017. The researchers tracked truck driver movement to and from other occupations. The study found higher earnings per hour are a key driver of worker exits from trucking, and that the highest levels of employee turnover exist in long-distance truckload segments. The researchers suggest that the tight cost structures for these markets directly affect driver retention. Overall, their conclusions were that the labor market for trucking is "tight," but resilient, with labor supply responding to labor demand over time.¹² Further, the driver availability challenge is impacting long-haul driving the most; per BLS, there were 16,000 more short-haul drivers at the end of 2021 than at the start of the pandemic.¹³

Convoy, a digital freight matching service that connects drivers and loads, conducted its own analysis and also concluded that available driver staffing levels are sufficient. Their study points to the rapid growth of independent owner-operators and the re-incorporation of companies that had shut down in the first phases of the pandemic.¹⁴ Convoy also noted the high "quit rate" of employees moving from one employer to another, the lag between short-term demand for employees from spikes in product orders and long-term sustained demand, and the limited use of other strategies to improve driver efficiency.¹⁵

⁸ [Heavy and Tractor-trailer Truck Drivers : Occupational Outlook Handbook: : U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics \(bls.gov\)](https://www.bls.gov/occupational-outlook-handbook/2020/09/01/heavy-and-tractor-trailer-truck-drivers)

⁹ [Delivery Truck Drivers and Driver/Sales Workers : Occupational Outlook Handbook: : U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics \(bls.gov\)](https://www.bls.gov/occupational-outlook-handbook/2020/09/01/delivery-truck-drivers-and-driver-sales-workers)

¹⁰ [There is no truck driver shortage in the US — Quartz \(qz.com\)](https://www.quartz.com/story/2021/08/11/no-truck-driver-shortage-us)

¹¹ [Experts Say American Trucker Shortage Is Overblown \(businessinsider.com\)](https://www.businessinsider.com/experts-say-american-trucker-shortage-is-overblown)

¹² <https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2019/article/is-the-us-labor-market-for-truck-drivers-broken.htm>

¹³ [Experts Say American Trucker Shortage Is Overblown \(businessinsider.com\)](https://www.businessinsider.com/experts-say-american-trucker-shortage-is-overblown)

¹⁴ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/edgarsten/2021/12/08/convoy-economist-says-trucker-shortage-is-overblown/>

¹⁵ [Three glaring problems with 'driver shortage' narratives | Overdrive \(overdriveonline.com\)](https://www.overdriveonline.com/news/three-glaring-problems-with-driver-shortage-narratives)

Factors Affecting Driver Availability

As introduced above, many factors have been cited as contributing to truck driver availability. The following are brief summaries of the most frequently mentioned issues,

Pay (and Other Employment Options)

In 2020, the median annual salary of truck drivers was \$47,130, an increase of \$3,500 from 2018. This amounts to \$22.66 per hour, if calculated at a 40-hour week. However, taking into account wait times and other delays on top of driving, 60-hour weeks are common. This brings the effective hourly pay to just over \$15 per hour – on a par with retail employment. Other sources, such as Glassdoor.com, find the average base pay (as of September 2021) was \$57,451. Indeed.com listed average base salaries at \$68,056 per year. The higher averages correlate to more experience and endorsements (such as HAZMAT); entry/early career pay is in the \$38,000 to \$48,000 range.¹⁶ Further, anecdotal statements by some truckers claim that pay in 2020 was just \$4,000 more – in nominal dollars – than in 2005.¹⁷

One frequently cited factor is how promised annual pay doesn't match reality, especially when the rate is reduced by waiting at loading docks, in congested traffic, or in other delays. By comparison, jobs of comparable skills and labor, such as construction, offer better options (including being home at night). Consistency is also mentioned, as swings in consumer demand mean drivers hired in peak periods get layoffs (or at least less paid work) in slower times. Some companies garnish paychecks from drivers to cover the costs of training. One arrangement – where truckers pay lease-to-own arrangements on trucks from the companies for which they drive – has been the subject of litigation. In some cases, drivers owed the company more at the end of the pay period than the wages earned.¹⁸

Countering the statements of poor pay are assertions by truck schools, which state most graduates have multiple job offers upon completion, with a starting salary between \$50,000 and \$65,000 per year. False perceptions have made the job look less attractive, they say.¹⁹ Further, tight markets have led to many recruiters targeting drivers with higher wages and four-figure signing bonuses. Average wages rose 15 percent in one year at one profiled firm.²⁰

Lifestyle

Truck drivers face a well-documented group of occupational issues, including stress from time pressures and limited social support, which can generate unhealthy outcomes from anxiety and fatigue to sleep deprivation and diabetes. These may be factors in the lack of women drivers; women drivers are three times more likely to smoke than other women in the U.S. workforce. Lack of respect from male drivers also is a significant issue; 60 percent feel they are treated with less dignity, while a different survey found women drivers rated their sense of job safety at only 4.4 on a 1-10 scale. The percentage of women in the workforce has increased in recent years, however, as more support networks are established. The Women in Trucking Association in 2019 concluded that women are now one in ten drivers.²¹

¹⁶ [Can Truckers Earn Over \\$100K? - TruckersTraining](#)

¹⁷ [Take It From a Trucker: There's No Trucker Shortage. It's a Pay Shortage | Opinion \(newsweek.com\)](#)

¹⁸ [‘Indentured servitude’: low pay and grueling conditions fueling US truck driver shortage | Supply chain crisis | The Guardian](#)

¹⁹ [Trucker Shortage Fueled by Misconceptions Over Pay, Conditions: Expert \(businessinsider.com\)](#)

²⁰ [Facing labor shortages, trucking firms battle for drivers - Los Angeles Times \(latimes.com\)](#)

²¹ <https://www.ccjdigital.com/workforce/article/15287494/understanding-female-driver-needs-key-to-recruiting-and-retention>

In addition to the long periods of time away from family for long-haul drivers, the out-of-pocket costs drivers face include meals, showers, and other incidentals.²² Harsh weather is also a challenge, especially in the Upper Midwest.²³ Access to routine health care also can be a concern. One profiled driver said he had to reschedule optometry appointments for three years due to his irregular schedule.²⁴

Larger fleets have paid increasing attention to driver lifestyle improvements. These include shorter haul lengths, more predictable scheduling, increased in-cab comforts (such as refrigerators, satellite TV and radio), paid motel stays, drop-and-hook deliveries/pickups, dietary consultations, and regular driver meetings that allow drivers to give management actionable feedback. The presence of ELDs has given drivers increased leverage for on-road time and scheduling expectations and promises.²⁵

Federal Regulations

Federal programs to test drivers for banned substances have also pared back the available workforce. As of October 2021, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) reported that its Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse testing program for drivers with CDLs had placed 91,370 drivers into disqualification status due to positive drug tests; 53 percent of these were for marijuana or THC-related violations. Another 13 percent refused to take the test and were thus disqualified. Of those disqualified, only 18,926 applied for reinstatement.²⁶

The ATA report also identified drug testing as a critical issue; with several states legalizing marijuana use, users do not pass drug tests. Driver losses were also attributed to operational inefficiencies such as congestion and lack of predictable and proximate truck parking availability at the end of driving shifts. Federal prohibitions on drivers under 21 being allowed to drive across state lines, COVID-related workforce exits, and lack of driver training opportunities during the pandemic were also cited as negatively affecting driver availability.²⁷

Other regulatory challenges have come for drivers who operate across national borders. In January 2022, Canada established rules requiring vaccines for all workers in federally regulated industries, including trucking. This rule applies to all drivers, not just those with Canadian licensing. Further, the U.S. has established a similar requirement for truckers entering the U.S. Estimates are that this rule would lead to 15,000 to 30,000 Canadian drivers leaving the trucking sector.²⁸

The FMCSA also has new Entry-Level Driver Training (ELDT) regulations that take effect on February 7, 2022. These regulations establish minimum training requirements for certain CDL and endorsement applicants, from providers that meet applicable Federal and State requirements. This training would need to be completed before a CDL candidate could take the required skills or knowledge test. This rule

²² <https://www.marketwatch.com/story/lobbyist-for-truckers-on-the-driver-shortage-if-the-job-that-youre-offering-sucks-is-the-solution-really-go-find-more-suckers-or-should-you-improve-the-job-11637268123>

²³ <https://www.postbulletin.com/business/behind-the-wheel-trucking-industry-faces-its-own-shortage>

²⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/09/us/politics/trucker-shortage-supply-chain.html>

²⁵ <https://www.ttnews.com/articles/fleets-turn-attention-driver-lifestyle>

²⁶ [Industry Recruiters Express Concern Over Truck Driver Shortage, Lack of Candidates | Transport Topics \(ttnews.com\)](#)

²⁷ [ATA Driver Shortage Report 2021 Executive Summary.FINAL .pdf \(trucking.org\)](#)

²⁸ [Group warns that up to 30,000 truckers will immediately quit over vaccine mandates in January \(cdllife.com\)](#)

was established in December of 2016; it was initially scheduled to take effect in 2020.²⁹

The greatest rule change, however, was part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. It establishes an apprenticeship pilot program for drivers between 18 and 21 to operate in interstate commerce. At time of passage, 49 of the 50 states allowed drivers under 21 to operate heavy-duty trucks within their states. The new pilot requires younger drivers to complete 400 hours of on-duty time and 240 hours of drive time with a professional driver that is at least age 26, has five years of experience, and a very good driving record. Younger drivers will be limited to operating commercial vehicles with automatic or semi-automatic transmissions, active braking collision mitigation systems, forward-facing video cameras, and top speeds of 65 miles per hour.³⁰

Delays at Destinations

One of the growing concerns is the time drivers are “off-duty” at shipping or receiving locations. If a company does not charge the cargo owner for excessive wait time, the cost of delay is borne by the drivers. At a driving speed of 60 MPH and a rate of \$3.00 per mile, every hour spent on the dock corresponds to \$180 of lost driver compensation. Electronic Logging Devices (ELDs) make it easy to calculate available driver time and assess detention fees for excessively long periods at docks.³¹

In testimony to the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure on November 17, 2021, Dr. David Correll of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Center for Transportation and Logistics summarized his work researching truck drivers over a four-year period. His research determined that the hours-of-service time allotted to drivers is inefficiently used, with only 6.5 hours spent driving out of an available 11 hours. This equates to 40 percent of trucking capacity being underutilized. He attributed much of the delay to detention at the pickup and delivery locations, with warehouse staffing and scheduling (for loading/unloading of trailers) not coordinated with truck arrival times. In examining the claims of trucking being short 80,000 drivers, he calculated that only a slight increase in efficient use of driver schedules (18 minutes more of driving time) would add capacity equivalent to those 80,000 drivers. He concluded the current supply chains needed to be more respectful of truck driver working hours, and recommended the government collect, standardize, and assess data on detention times at shipping and receiving locations.³²

One subset of drivers has been severely affected by supply chain congestion and delays: drayage drivers for intermodal containers at ports and terminals. Wait periods of three to four hours were routine in late 2021, reducing the number of loads a drayage driver could move from three per day to one per day – effectively cutting pay by two-thirds. In the worst cases, five-mile lines and eight-hour waits were experienced. The delays also lead to missed gate appointments, terminals not accepting empty return containers, and other circumstances where they are turned away without a load. Delays also lead to missed warehouse appointments. Many of these drivers are seeking to get paid per hour rather than per load.³³ As of January 2022, drayage truckers who work for one carrier, XPO Logistics, are petitioning to

²⁹ [Here's what you need to know about the Entry-Level Driver Training rule going into effect in February 2022 \(cdllife.com\)](#)

³⁰ [2022 regulations outlook: After a slow 2021, feds could be busy next year | FleetOwner](#)

³¹ [Could eliminating overtime exemption solve truck driver shortage? | Commercial Carrier Journal \(ccjdigital.com\)](#)

³² [2021-11-17 Hearing Testimony - David HC Correll UPDATED.pdf \(house.gov\)](#)

³³ [Truckers Wait Outside Ports for up to 8 Hours Without Pay \(businessinsider.com\)](#)

unionize. These drivers claim they are not independent contractors but are beholden to schedules and routes determined by XPO.³⁴

Federal Policy Response

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) of 2021 included several items that may help address the availability of truck drivers. Perhaps the most prominent is the previously mentioned three-year pilot program based on the DRIVE-Safe Act, authorizing up to 3,000 18- to 20-year-old drivers at any one time to undergo advanced safety training to allow them to operate in interstate commerce. The BIL also establishes a Women in Trucking Advisory Board for the FMCSA and funds a US DOT advertising campaign to promote workforce needs in trucking and other transportation sectors. The BIL also grants livestock haulers additional mileage to be able to make their deliveries, even if their hours-of-service have expired.³⁵

Apart from the BIL, the Biden Administration has developed a Truck Action Plan as an outgrowth of the Supply Chain Disruptions Task Force, which found the pandemic had brought out enduring problems, including the aging workforce, unpaid waiting time, and high turnover rates. The Administration's planned short-term responses include providing resources and funding to help states expedite the CDL process, expanding a registered apprenticeship program, and outreach to veterans as recruitment for new drivers. Longer-term efforts include launch of the Driving Good Jobs initiative. This program intends to find ways to recruit new drivers from underrepresented communities and create a task force to investigate predatory truck leasing arrangements.³⁶

Members of Congress are seeking additional actions through the Department of Labor, using that agency's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to prioritize applicants seeking to become truck drivers. The WIOA provides access to job training for dislocated workers, low-income individuals, and out-of-work youth. As of December 2020, almost 22,000 workers had been recipients of such training through the program. Members of Congress were seeking to streamline and expedite the WIOA process.³⁷

Other Strategies to Improve Available Workforces

Training

Many driver training schools closed or operated on a limited basis in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic. Most of those are returning to more "normal" operations and enrollment. One California school reported enrollment growth of 20 percent, prompting it to expand to night classes. It noted its limited from further expansion by the availability of instructors.³⁸

In Wisconsin, at least 13 driver training programs are identified, in locations from Kenosha to Rice Lake. Eight of these programs are offered through local technical colleges.³⁹ At the Fox Valley Technical College, training for semi drivers runs for eight weeks and costs \$1,830. As of November 2021, the school reported a wait list. Many larger companies offer in-house training and guaranteed pay; this puts

³⁴ [LA port truckers seek to unionize in new gig work showdown | AJOT.COM](#)

³⁵ [Infrastructure bill brings help for truck driver shortage \(nationalhogfarmer.com\)](#)

³⁶ [The Biden administration wants to boost the number of truckers : NPR](#)

³⁷ [letter to dol secy. walsh on trucking shortage final signed.pdf \(house.gov\)](#)

³⁸ [Truck driver shortage: Trucker schools report spike in enrollment \(usatoday.com\)](#)

³⁹ <https://schneiderjobs.com/truck-driving-jobs/inexperienced/find-truck-driving-school/state/wi>

smaller companies at a disadvantage for recruiting entry-level drivers.⁴⁰ The Diesel Truck Driving School, east of Sun Prairie, offers a four-week course that qualifies students to take the CDL test. The increasing use of automatic transmissions in trucking is making the job less intimidating.⁴¹ In addition, some companies offer “finishing programs” that pair trainees with experienced drivers to learn how to handle increasingly challenging driving situations.⁴² One of those programs also employs a behavioral assessment test to gauge the likelihood of job success.⁴³

In Florida, the FleetForce Truck Driving School has partnered with the Florida Trucking Association (FTA) through which companies that are FTA members will offer fully paid tuition to potential drivers who seek to obtain CDLs and join the truck driving workforce. The \$6,500 cost of the four-week course had been seen as a barrier to entry. In some cases, students will be receiving a paycheck during training and/or signing bonuses from the company to which they commit.⁴⁴ Tre Williams, CEO of FleetForce, noted that after the 160 hours of training, new drivers are typically paired with an experienced driver for an additional 10 to 12 weeks of “finishing,” to gain further skills and critical thinking necessary to be a safe driver. Williams noted 1,200 drivers leave the workforce every week through retirements and other attrition. Anticipated retirements comprise 54 percent of the anticipated 1.1 million new drivers needed over the next ten years, he added.⁴⁵

One private-sector example may serve as a model for the industry to consider replicating. Darrel Harris, President of Yellow Corp., is the first black president of a major trucking company. He is leading a program, “Drive for Diversity,” to recruit more non-white drivers from urban areas. The initial efforts are being made through Chicago-area job fairs; if those succeed, plans are to expand to five other communities.⁴⁶

Autonomy

Perhaps the most-anticipated change in truck driver demand is projected to come through automation, with connected (trailing trucks following a human-driven lead truck) and/or automated (fully operational driving without a human operator) functions. With current technology, the features function most regularly as a driver assist, mitigating collisions and potentially helping newer drivers become more confident and acclimated to driving, shortening training hours needed from an experienced driver.⁴⁷

One system, Nauto, uses 26 algorithms to examine video data in real time and sets off alarms when safety issues are detected – whether due to external activity or driver behavior. Other telematics detect hard braking, speeding, or rapid acceleration to identify risky driver behavior. These systems cost between \$350 and \$500 per vehicle and have been reported to be successful in reducing incidents.

⁴⁰ https://www.ehextra.com/news/truck-driver-shortage-fuels-bonuses/article_9b635950-9feb-5493-ba1a-7f668e52b140.html

⁴¹ <https://www.channel3000.com/as-us-continues-to-experience-truck-driver-shortage-diesel-driving-school-sees-record-enrollment/>

⁴² <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/wisconsin-based-trucking-company-prioritizes-training-for-the-next-generation-of-truckers-301409665.html>

⁴³ <https://www.ccdigital.com/workforce/recruiting-retention/article/15064234/predictive-tools-help-trucking-industry-find-new-drivers>

⁴⁴ Transport Topics, December 13, 2021, p. 10

⁴⁵ <https://www.marketplace.org/2021/12/08/employers-scramble-to-find-more-truck-drivers-amid-shortage/>

⁴⁶ [Opinion | The trucking industry is in crisis. Here's how government can help. - The Washington Post](#)

⁴⁷ <https://www.ccdigital.com/equipment-controls/article/15280243/what-truck-drivers-can-expect-with-autonomous-trucks>

Another system set for initial delivery, Locomation, uses connected vehicle technology to pair trucks on long-distance routes. Drivers are in both units, but while the CV technology is deployed, the driver in the training unit is not operating, thereby off-the-clock for HOS regulations. Periodically, drivers swap leads, allowing the paired team to operate up to 22 hours.

A different company is marketing a Level 4 autonomy system, which is projected to be fully operational by 2024. Existing testing has reached 3.7 million miles and focuses on automating the “middle miles” where trucks are operating primarily on controlled-access highways and/or in rural areas. This company, TuSimple, intends to operate as a carrier, discounting the prevailing freight charges by eliminating the driver costs for the “middle miles.” As of December 2021, 24 states allow Level 4 autonomous semi truck operation. One of the hurdles for autonomous technology will be cost; a January 2021 DOT report suggests only 48 percent of trucking firms would be able to buy the technology in the decade after it becomes available.⁴⁸ One autonomy firm noted that even without full autonomy, systems can be deployed to drayage or other controlled environments, freeing up those drivers to other operations.⁴⁹

Expanding Driver Recruitment

In addition to the programs in the BIL that reach out to younger drivers, female drivers, and veterans, efforts are underway to recruit drivers from other groups. One article highlighted efforts to support Latinas in entry to the driving workforce.⁵⁰ Another surprising pool is older drivers who are changing careers or even retired from other jobs.⁵¹

One group that has had a growing presence in the pool of truck drivers is immigrants. As of 2021, 18.6 percent of truckers are immigrants. One article noted recruiters reaching out as far as South Africa to recruit potential drivers.⁵² Trucking companies can use the H-2B visa program to hire foreign commercial truck drivers. Temporary hires can work for 12 months, and up to three years with documented need. The hiring company needs to obtain a labor certification from the U.S. Department of Labor to be eligible for the program. A separate program, the EB-3 Immigrant visa, allows employers to designate prospective employees for permanent resident status. This program takes longer and is more costly but is also more permanent. The U.S. government recognizes CDLs issued by Canada and Mexico, allowing credentialed drivers from those nations to begin driving faster.⁵³

One of the barriers to recruiting this pool of drivers are closures of consulates and land borders due to Covid; however, the net international migration levels were already falling between 2015-16 (1.05 million) to 2019-20 (477,000) before falling further in 2020-21 (247,000).⁵⁴

There are other barriers to expanding the potential driver pool. For younger drivers, safety has been a frequent concern; teenagers crash rates are four times higher than older drivers.⁵⁵ Safety concerns are among the top barriers to increasing women in driving. Female drivers polled overwhelmingly feel

⁴⁸ [Transportation Trends For 2022 And Beyond: Can Autonomy Safely Address The Driver Shortage? \(forbes.com\)](https://www.forbes.com/sites/transportation-trends-for-2022-and-beyond-can-autonomy-safely-address-the-driver-shortage/)

⁴⁹ <https://www.ccjdigital.com/equipment-controls/article/15114755/ancillary-technology-most-immediate-benefit-of-driverless-tech>

⁵⁰ <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/latin-trucking-talk-jobs-industry-rcna5862>

⁵¹ <https://www.freightwaves.com/news/seniors-to-the-rescue-new-truckers-over-50-could-solve-driver-shortage>

⁵² [Freight Outfits Tap Immigrant Truck Drivers Due to Increase in Driver Jobs - TruckersReport.com \(thetruckersreport.com\)](https://www.truckersreport.com/news/freight-outfits-tap-immigrant-truck-drivers-due-to-increase-in-driver-jobs/)

⁵³ [Could U.S. Immigration Help Solve Need To Recruit 1 Million New Truck Drivers Over Next Decade? \(forbes.com\)](https://www.forbes.com/sites/could-u-s-immigration-help-solve-need-to-recruit-1-million-new-truck-drivers-over-next-decade/)

⁵⁴ [Net International Migration at Lowest Levels in Decades \(census.gov\)](https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2019/immigration/net-international-migration-at-lowest-levels-in-decades.html)

⁵⁵ [Teen Truck Drivers Seen as Way to Alleviate Shortage | Transport Topics \(ttnews.com\)](https://www.ttnews.com/articles/teen-truck-drivers-seen-as-way-to-alleviate-shortage)

unsafe at truck stops and rest areas; most also said there were risks in their cabs and at shipper/receiver facilities. Barely more than half (54 percent) believe trucking is safe for women; nearly 18 percent do not think trucking is a safe industry for women.⁵⁶

One private-sector example may serve as a model for the industry to consider replicating. Darrel Harris, President of Yellow Corp., is the first black president of a major trucking company. He is leading a program, “Drive for Diversity,” to recruit more non-white drivers from urban areas. The initial efforts are being made through Chicago-area job fairs; if those succeed, plans are to expand to five other communities.⁵⁷ Another potential pool of underutilized employees could be individuals released from prison. One firm, Checkr, specializes in training and placing these 77 million “hidden workers” under a comprehensive program called “fair chance hiring.”⁵⁸

Increased Truck Parking

In a survey of commercial drivers, two factors tied as the top concerns: driver compensation and truck parking. Research by ATRI found 44 percent of drivers said truck parking has become much harder or somewhat harder to find in recent years. Trucker diaries compiled in 2016 testify to use of unauthorized, undesignated parking, even as those diaries found drivers to be spending an average of 56 minutes per day looking for parking. Of note, this concern did not make the top ten factors in a parallel survey of motor carriers.⁵⁹ Although this issue has been raised by policy makers, the new Bipartisan infrastructure Law does not have a separate funding set-aside for truck parking.⁶⁰ A separate piece of legislation, HR2187, the Truck Parking Safety Improvement Act, is getting bipartisan consideration. It would dedicate \$755 million to projects that increase parking capacity for truckers; eligible projects could not charge for parking.⁶¹

Reducing Delay Time at Terminals and Docks

In the previously mentioned ATRI survey, detention times were identified as the number two-ranked concern of drivers. Drivers waiting to take on loads absorb the costs of waiting and may be out of duty time before they leave. The U.S. DOT stated truck drivers lose between \$1.0 and \$1.3 billion in earnings because of detention time. Many warehouses only schedule one shift, and if drivers arrive later in that shift, they may miss the opportunity to have their loads addressed.⁶²

One emerging practice that may partially address the challenge of detention is “drop and hook,” in which the driver drops the trailer at its destination and picks up a different trailer ready to go to its next destination.⁶³ The firm Convoy has one marketplace that projects a shortening of wait times at docks from an average of three hours to less than one hour.⁶⁴

⁵⁶ <https://cdllife.com/2022/nearly-1-in-5-female-drivers-dont-think-trucking-is-a-safe-industry-for-women/>

⁵⁷ [Opinion | The trucking industry is in crisis. Here’s how government can help. - The Washington Post](#)

⁵⁸ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/edgarsten/2021/12/08/convoy-economist-says-trucker-shortage-is-overblown/>

⁵⁹ [The huge disparity between fleets/operators' truck parking concern | Overdrive \(overdriveonline.com\)](#)

⁶⁰ [Lobbyist for truckers on the 'driver shortage': 'If the job that you're offering sucks, is the solution really go find more suckers, or should you improve the job?' - MarketWatch](#)

⁶¹ <https://landline.media/resurrected-truck-parking-bill-a-glimmer-of-hope-for-trucking-industry/>

⁶² [House Transportation Committee hears a blunt assessment of the 'driver shortage' | Overdrive \(overdriveonline.com\)](#)

⁶³ [Convoy Economist Says Trucker Shortage Is Overblown \(forbes.com\)](#)

⁶⁴ [Announcing Convoy Go, a nationwide Drop & Hook marketplace | Convoy](#)

Conclusion

The data available seem to indicate that what has been identified as a truck driver shortage is more accurately defined as an imbalance of trucker schedules and conditions. All drivers, especially long-distance and drayage drivers, have been stressed by the jump in consumer demand for goods during the pandemic. While driver compensation and employer-provided amenities have seen marked improvements in recent years, especially for larger fleets, many inefficiencies remain – including limited truck parking, detention time, and roadway congestion. In light of these inefficiencies, the pay-per-mile model for drivers is being criticized as untenable in the future. Technologies for connected vehicles may offer some long-term benefits for safety but are unlikely to completely address workforce needs. Driver recruitment and training efforts have seen expansion to non-traditional groups, but enduringly high rates of employee turnover will need to be reduced for truck driving to meet increasing volumes of freight shipments.