

An aerial, high-angle photograph of a city street grid at night. The streets are illuminated by streetlights, and the buildings are lit up with various colors, including blue and yellow. The overall scene is a dense urban environment.

Truck Shortage is Real and the impact it may have in the future

Ryan Garratt

Truck Shortage is Real

*Trucker shortage once again
seen as #1 industry issue*



For those who make their living in the trucking sector, the driver shortage is a well-known issue, and it's one that hasn't gone away, even in the face of plenty of attention over the years. In fact, despite the many other issues now facing the industry as a whole, experts still say there's no bigger problem than driver turnover and the inability to replace those professionals.

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It's worth noting, however, that many of the other issues cited in the latest American Transportation Research Institute annual survey of common problems likely create the pressures that exacerbate the driver shortage. For instance, the No. 2 most commonly cited issue from respondents was the new regulatory situation around hours of service. This has long been acknowledged as something that leads pro haulers to seek other opportunities, due largely to frustration or confusion.

Meanwhile, driver compensation ranked third, with employers expressing concerns that pay rates are rising too quickly, while drivers are worried they still won't be able to keep up with their ever-mounting expenses, the report said. Coming in fourth on the list was driver detention and similar delays, which have long been cited as a source of great inefficiency.

"While 2018 was an incredible year for trucking, we've seen some challenges in 2019 and certainly finding and retaining qualified drivers remains at the top of the list for our industry," said Barry Pottle, ATA Chairman and president and CEO of Pottle's Transportation. "ATRI's analysis reveals the interconnectedness of these top issues and provides a roadmap for how motor carriers and professional drivers believe we should move forward as an industry."

How it's shaping up

The latest data from the American Trucking Associations shows that today, there are almost 61,000 fewer drivers than the industry really needs, but that the shortage is only likely to become more prominent in the years ahead. That number could rise to as much as 100,000 by 2023, and 160,000 through 2028. It's estimated that the industry would need to attract some 110,000 new drivers per year to overcome these issues, both addressing the current shortage and replacing the expected turnover of current operators.

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One of the biggest problems - cited over and over by industry insiders - is the average driver's age today is about 46 years old and even those coming into the industry as newcomers are already 35. The problem, then, is attracting people in their 20s to the sector, and some would even like to see federal law changed so 18-year-olds could at least start training for the job.

What's the impact?

Many smaller companies in particular seem to be taking a hit as a result of the driver shortage, according to AgWeb. Many can't keep up with larger firms when it comes to offering higher pay and better benefits, and even those that can are likely dealing with more demand for business than they can handle.

With all that in mind, companies that need to retain drivers in particular would be wise to make sure they're not just offering higher salaries or better benefits, but also more perks like extra nights at home or preferred routes.

Some companies find additional drivers by engaging external recruiters or driver agencies to help manage the talent pool. These additional sources provide a stronger reach to candidates in addition to your company's and in most cases help fill open positions.