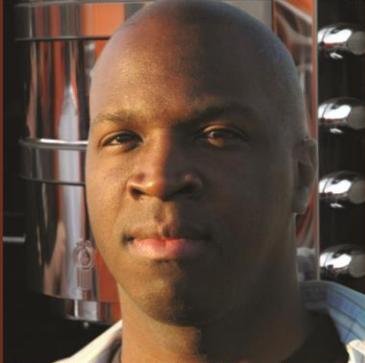




**Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association Foundation**  
*A subsidiary of Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association Inc.*



# 2018 Owner-Operator Member Profile Survey



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## Profile of the Owner-Operator

The typical owner-operator member of OOIDA is a Caucasian male, 53 years of age, standing 5 feet 10 inches tall, and weighing 223 pounds, which results in a body mass index (BMI) of 32. Although BMI has several limitations, as it does not take into account a person's body composition, age, or gender, it is often the measurement of choice to determine overall health. According to the National Institute for Occupational Health and Safety (NIOSH), 26 percent of truck drivers are overweight (BMI 25.0-29.9) and 64 percent are obese (BMI >30.0).<sup>1</sup> It has long been demonstrated by medical studies that the sedentary lifestyle of a trucker can lead to many health issues, including weight gain, diabetes, and hypertension.

In January 2014, NIOSH published a study entitled *The National Survey of U.S. Long-Haul Truck Driver Health and Injury*, which found that 32% of drivers have hypertension.<sup>2</sup> In the 2018 Survey, 43 percent of the respondents stated that they took maintenance type prescriptions. Of those drivers that took prescriptions, most indicated that they were for high blood pressure. The subject of driver health, which has affected the trucking industry for several years, continues to remain an area of concern as 31 percent of owner-operators do not have a health insurance plan.

The majority of owner-operators continue to enter into the industry from blue-collar occupations such as farming, construction, manufacturing, etc., while others indicated that they chose to drive a truck either due to their upbringing as a multiple generation truck driver or due to their career in the military. In fact, 26 percent of the respondents stated that they had served in the military at some point in their life with the Army, Navy, and Air Force being the top three branches.

The average member has been involved in the trucking business for almost 30 years, and has been an owner-operator for nearly 20 years. During this time, the typical owner-operator has accumulated approximately 2.6 million miles of driving, most of which was without a Department of Transportation reportable accident<sup>3</sup> resulting in 47.7 crashes per 100 million vehicle miles traveled, or almost 3.5 times below the national crash rate for the overall trucking industry.

The owner-operator generally owns one truck, although the number of small fleet owners has increased from 2 percent in 2016 to 5 percent in 2018. The average price for a new vehicle was over \$150,000, whereas the cost for a used was nearly \$50,000. The majority of owner-operators however have paid off their truck while very few have entered into a lease purchase plan. Most operate a Class 8 truck with a gross vehicle weight of 33,001 pounds or more. The average engine continues to have an excess of over 450-horse power, equipped with a 13-speed transmission, and received 6.2 miles per gallon.

Additional to the one truck, most owner-operators under their own authority owned at least one trailer. Members indicated that a new trailer typically costs approximately \$54,000, compared to \$25,000 for a used trailer. Both the owner-operator under their own authority and the leased on owner-operator

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<sup>1</sup> W. Karl Sieber et al., *The National Survey of Long-Haul Truck Driver Health and Injury*, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (2014).

<sup>2</sup> *The National Survey of Long-Haul Truck Driver Health and Injury*

<sup>3</sup> A DOT reportable accident is a crash that resulted in either (1) a fatality, (2) an injury receiving treatment immediately away from the accident scene, or (3) disabling damage to any vehicle involved

primarily pulled a dry van trailer, while fleet owners generally pulled refrigerated trailers. All segments indicated that they predominantly haul general freight.

For those owner-operators under their own authority, a majority have established their business as a sole proprietorship. Moreover, they primarily utilize brokers to obtain freight. Whereas leased-on owner-operators focus chiefly on freight rates, the amount of freight, and the type of payment before signing on with a carrier. The typical leased-on operator has been with their present carrier between 2 and 5 years.

Overall, the owner-operator drives solo rather than in a team operation and operates mainly in the north and south central regions of the United States. He or she drove 100,000 miles last year while 18,000 of those miles were deadhead miles, representing 18 percent of all miles driven. Most drove between 501 and 1,000 miles for a typical load's length of haul followed by 101-500 miles and 1,001 miles or more. These trips necessitated being away from home for more than 250 nights per year.

The gross income for the owner-operator under their own authority was nearly \$170,000. However, he or she typically accumulated a gross expense of almost \$116,000 per year, with a large portion attributed to fuel (\$42,742),<sup>4</sup> maintenance (\$21,000), tires (\$6,000), and tolls (\$2,500). After figuring for all miles driven in the previous year, those under their own authority received an average *net* income of \$0.56 per mile, while leased-on owner-operators earned \$0.54 per mile. The most common type of compensation for the leased on owner-operators was a percentage of the line haul followed by payment per mile.

Although the prevalence of technology has grown in the trucking industry over the years, the owner-operator segment of the industry remains vastly different from that of the large motor carriers. When asked if they had collision mitigation technology equipped on their truck, such as automatic emergency braking, etc., 89 percent of members stated they did not. Moreover, the vast majority also do not have a maximum speed setting on their truck, i.e. a speed limiter. For those few who did, the maximum setting was 74 miles per hour.

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<sup>4</sup> 100,000 miles per year ÷ 6.2 miles per gallon = 16,129 gallons of tractor fuel. 16,129 gallons × \$2.65 (the average cost per gallon of diesel fuel in 2017 according to U.S. Energy Information Administration) = \$42,742