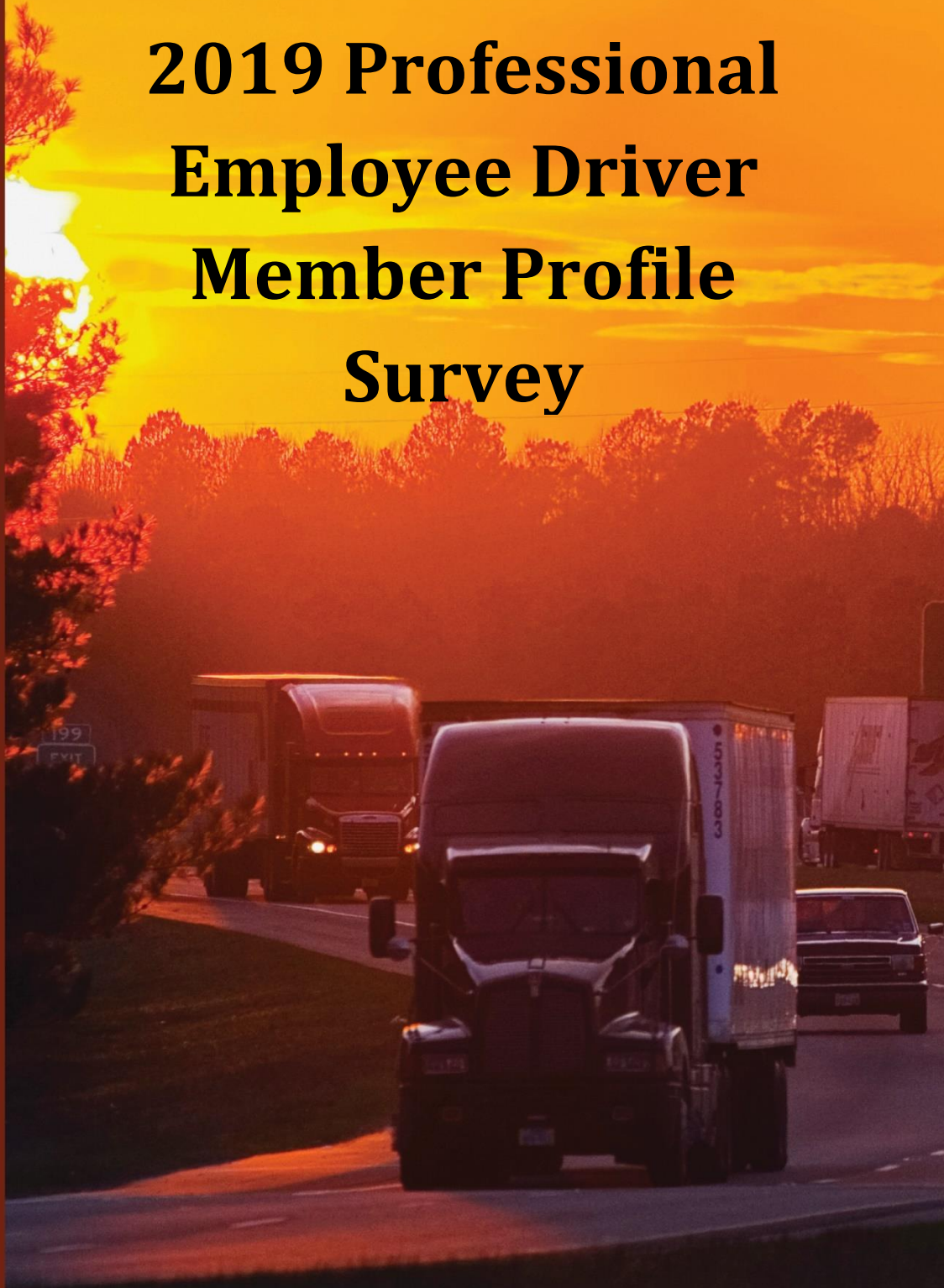
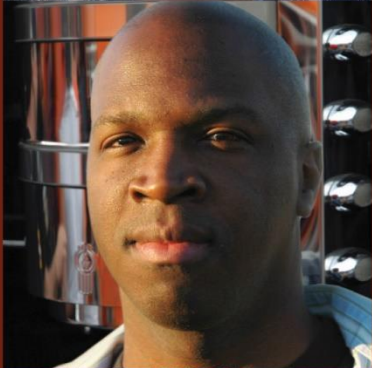


**Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association Foundation**  
*A subsidiary of Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association Inc.*

# 2019 Professional Employee Driver Member Profile Survey



05/17/19



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**May 2019**



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## Introduction

Today, numerous government agencies hold joint responsibility for governing the trucking industry, including the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which promulgated a new rule in April 2017 effecting the sanitary transportation of human and animal food products. However, other organizations, such as the American Trucking Association (ATA), the Alliance for Driver Safety and Security (Trucking Alliance), and the Truckload Carriers Association (TCA), also have a strong influence upon the industry.

While these various agencies and organizations have a strong presence in the trucking, they seldom attempt to gather the opinion of the actual driver when conducting or considering various rulemakings and or research. Instead, many lawmakers, regulators, and researchers too often neglect the voice of both the owner-operator and the professional employee driver, even though they are the individuals most affected by regulatory changes.

The Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association (OOIDA or Association), which is the largest non-for-profit association representing over 160,000 small business owners and professional truck drivers, is perhaps the only organization that exclusively fights for the rights of all truck drivers. Therefore, in order to gather both information and the professional opinion of the truck driver, the one who truly drives the economy and represents the industry, the OOIDA Foundation (OOFI), a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation which fights for the rights of truckers through research and education, has reached out to both the owner-operators and the professional employee drivers (PEDs).

Unknown to a large portion of the trucking industry, OOIDA's membership is comprised of approximately 15,000 PEDs, which OOFI defines as an employee of a motor carrier who does not own their own truck or trailer. After several years of increased PED membership, OOFI conducted its first survey of PEDs in 2007. The purpose of the survey was to gather valuable and accurate information in order to provide a platform in which drivers could express their views and expertise on a variety of issues affecting their particular segment of the industry to federal, state, and local agencies. This is the seventh edition of the *Professional Employee Driver Member Profile Survey* (PED Survey). OOFI currently conducts the PED Survey every two years on odd numbered years.

## Profile of the Professional Employee Driver

The trucking industry refers to the OOIDA PED member as either a hired driver or a company driver. The typical PED member of OOIDA is a Caucasian male, 58 years old, weighing 223 pounds, and standing five feet and ten inches tall, resulting 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. When asked about exercise, 35 percent indicated that they exercise regularly, which is almost a 17 percent decrease from 2017, with most working out four days a week.

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 percent of drivers have hypertension.<sup>2</sup> In the 2019 PED Survey, 54 percent of the PEDs stated that they took maintenance type prescriptions, a slight increase from 2017. Of those drivers who took prescriptions, most indicated that they were for high blood pressure and or high cholesterol. Despite the common perception that a majority of truck drivers smoke, it is interesting and important to note that only 19 percent of PEDs responded that they do so, representing a 42 percent decrease since 2007.

When considering work experience, the average PED entered the industry at nearly 30 years of age and has been driving a truck for approximately 26 years. Around 48 percent of the drivers stated that they had been an owner-operator at some point in their professional trucking career, with few actually planning to become an owner-operator ever again. Moreover, while 96 percent of the trucking industry is comprised of carriers with 20 or fewer trucks, only 35 percent of PEDs drive for such a carrier. Rather, 66 percent drive for carriers with 21 trucks or more.

Most members received some form of training before entering into the industry, whether it was from a family member, friend, or commercial-driving school. The average training period was between three to four weeks with 100 hours of behind-the-wheel training. While the overall crash rate for the trucking industry is 164.9 crashes per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT), OOIDA PED members have consistently been among the safest drivers in the nation with a rate of 32 crashes per 100 million VMT, which is five times better than the national average. In fact, after figuring for all miles driven in 2018, OOIDA PED members traveled on average roughly 2.6 million miles between accidents. More than half of the drivers attribute their safety record to the training they received.

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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*

The most common method of compensation continues to be on a per mile basis, for which the median wage was roughly \$0.50. Although the per mile median wage increased nine cents from 2017, the PED member only earned \$4,000 more in 2019 after considering the number of miles driven and adjusting for inflation. Nevertheless, a Business Insider analysis showed that median wages for truck drivers have decreased 21 percent on average since 1980 after adjusting for inflation. In some areas, they have declined as much as 50 percent.<sup>3</sup>

Overall, the average PED member drove nearly 92,000 loaded miles in 2018, representing a 6 percent decrease from 2016. Drivers incurred a majority of these miles in the north and south central regions of the United States. The typical length of haul continues to be between 500 and 1,000 miles regardless of carrier size. Members also indicated that they were away from home between 200 and 300 nights per year and have over 2 million miles in their career.

Although OOIDA PED members continue to operate safely, the overall trucking industry has experienced an increase in crashes every year since the implementation of FMCSA's Compliance, Safety and Accountability (CSA) Program in 2010. This concerning trend has, in part, helped to push developments in automated vehicle technologies and advanced driver assistance systems. Although items such as speed limiters, which are used to govern the top speed of a truck, electronic logging devices, forward warning collision, lane departure warning, etc., have been around for years, companies are now starting to couple the technologies together. In fact, 40 percent of members indicated they have some form of driver assist technology. While very few members experience any safety benefits related to speed limiters, 42 percent stated that some of these other technologies do improve safety.

However, with an increase utilization of technology comes also the possibility of increased micro-management. Not only by the motor carriers, but by the brokers, shippers, and receivers as well. In fact, 45 percent of members indicated that their carrier requires the tracking of their load. Mostly because of the request of the broker, shipper, or receiver. Moreover, some drivers are still experiencing harassment from their carrier, whether it be to drive when they felt the road conditions were unsafe, or to drive when they felt too tired to do so. When asked if any carrier has ever audited and changed their logs, 22 percent said yes, an increase of 57 percent from 2017. Though the ELD Final Rule technically allows carriers to edit their drivers' log in certain circumstances, they are required to have the driver sign-off on the changes. However, of those who had their log changed, 40 percent said their carrier did not ask them to sign-off on it.

The typical PEDs continues to drive a truck with a gross vehicle weight over 33,000 pounds. However, there were some noticeable differences in the truck. For example, the model year of the truck continues to grow younger, perhaps indicating that carriers are switching out their fleets even sooner than in

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<sup>3</sup> Rachel Premack, "Truck driver salaries have fallen by as much as 50% since the 1970's – and experts say a little-known law explains why," *Business Insider* (Sep 26, 2018)



previous years. Moreover, the number of members driving a truck with an automatic or partial transmission has grown to 40 percent, surpassing all other transmission types.

## 2019 Professional Employee Driver Member Profile Results

The *2019 PED Member Profile Survey* represents the seventh in a series of member profile surveys since 2007. These seven surveys, which span a twelve year period, have either confirmed static trends, such as the vast majority of the trucking industry is male, or have assisted in shedding light on new and current trends, for an example, the steady and quick increase in the utilization of technology and personal devices by drivers such as tablets and smartphones. Therefore, through this anonymous survey, OOFI has been able to track the dramatic changes in the driver segment of the industry.

Frequently, OOFI is asked (1) who are the members of OOIDA, (2) what is their professional experience, and (3) what do they believe is important in initiating change in the trucking industry. The purpose of the PED Survey is to gather sufficient information in order to address these questions so that OOIDA can more accurately communicate the professional opinions of the driver with federal, state, and local agencies. Regrettably, most studies focus almost exclusively on the large carrier owners, business managers, dispatchers, and safety directors for information on various economic and regulatory issues. Hence, the PED Survey is critical in gaining a better understanding of the industry from the drivers' perspective.

Again, this survey is unique in that it represents the men and women who truthfully drive the economy and embody the trucking industry. It appears that few lawmakers and regulators have an adequate understanding of the many difficulties associated with being a driver.

Thus, OOFI has continued to conduct these member profile surveys in order for OOIDA to present the collective voice of the driver on issues specific to him or her. For organizational and analytic purposes, OOFI has separated the survey questions into the following six distinct sections:

1. **Personal Information:** The section consists of questions on the demographics of the PED members, such as gender, age, ethnic background, education level, marital status, etc. The section also covers past work experience.
2. **Driving Experience:** The section includes specific questions to the PEDs' work experience in the trucking industry, such as information on the drivers' current and past motor carrier(s). The section also touches on issues regarding driver training and driver compensation.
3. **Your Health and Coverage:** The section presents questions related to the overall health of the average PED, including exercise and smoking habits. The section also contains questions concerning health insurance and sleep apnea screening.
4. **Business Technology:** The section addresses the PEDs' utilization of various apps, including the use of OOIDA's free online education material.

5. **The Truck You Drive:** The section asks PEDs about the type of commercial motor vehicle they drive, such as model year and transmission, as well as their carrier's utilization of technology and operational practices, including speed limiters and driver assist systems.
  
6. **The Trailer You Pull:** The section briefly touches on the type of trailer the PEDs pull, including if they are currently driving a longer combination vehicle.