# A quarter of HGV drivers feel lonely while others record bad health and sleep due to working conditions

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A recent national HGV driver well-being survey has unveiled shocking stats highlighting the poor conditions which affect drivers' health.

The recent HGV driver shortage has been well documented and, specialist national logistics recruitment company, Employ Recruitment, has released the results of a well-being survey which documents 27% of drivers feel stressed and almost a quarter experience loneliness.

The Office of National Statistics recently documented a decrease in drivers resulting in the highest number of vacancies in the transport and storage sector ever recorded. Whilst the salary banding has been addressed which has helped to stabilise figures, money isn't the only answer.

According to research by Clemes et al (2019, British Medical Journal), HGV driving is considered one of the most hazardous occupations with higher than-average rates of obesity and related conditions, in comparison to other occupational groups. The study considered HGV driving not to be conducive to a healthy lifestyle due to shift work, sleep issues, isolation, sedentary nature, unhealthy diet and lack of opportunity to exercise. It also suggested very little had been done to promote the health/well-being of HGV drivers and that they had been somewhat neglected.

Another recent article by former senior traffic commissioner Beverley Bell, calling for employers to agree to a Code of Conduct for the treatment of their drivers directly supports the findings of Employ Recruitment's survey.

Beverley concluded in her article that drivers just want to be respected, which is a sentiment reflected in some of the additional comments supplied by drivers taking part in the survey. Sadie Weston, MD of Employ Recruitment said: "The driver crisis has happened already, this is being addressed. What isn't being addressed enough collectively is their working conditions which will ultimately help with driver retention.

"This survey highlighted many concerns, sparking a new well-being campaign but one thing that stood out to me was that many drivers commented and emailed to say they appreciated being asked and listened to."

Part of the problem, which has resulted in a 23% decrease of drivers since the beginning of the pandemic, is working conditions, as well as low wages. Sadie has been leading a "driver centric" business and didn't need a global pandemic to recognise a need to focus on driver support and to treat people properly.

The churn rate during the pandemic in the under 30s was 67%. There had been a steady growth of around 1500 per year over the decade preceding the pandemic, from 15,000 in 2010 to a peak of 31,000 in Q1 2020, followed by a precipitous drop to 13,000 at the end of 2021.

Possible reasons for this, identified by Kieran Smith, CEO of Driver Require Ltd, who has also been working to improve conditions for drivers are:

- Money is not a primary motivator for this age group
- Long shifts, unsociable hours and the way drivers are spoken to
- Inadequate coaching following test

These recent reports sparked a need for a driver-led survey of this nature and Sadie added: "Drivers had been taken for granted but now they're in demand, change is happening, and this survey proves that money isn't everything.

"This survey brings to light the conditions drivers face day to day and will serve as a vehicle for change in the industry."

The main findings of Employ Recruitment's HGV Driver Well-Being Survey show that almost a quarter of drivers admitted to being an unhealthy weight, 16% acknowledged they don't have a healthy diet, and 33% confessed they don't eat five portions of fruit and veg per day.

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Sadie commented: “This needs addressing, as this corroborates an article released by the British Medical Journal last year, stating *a junk food diet may increase the risk of dangerous driving among truck/lorry drivers by boosting fatigue**.”

Further to the physical health concerns, 24% of drivers stated they feel lonely regularly, 24% said they neither agreed nor did they disagree, leaving less than 50% of drivers who confidently answered that they don’t experience loneliness on the job.

Sleep is also an issue with HGV drivers both on and off the job. 51% agreed that they don’t sleep well in the vehicle cabin and 48% said they struggle with sleeping when doing shifts with unsociable hours.

Sadie added: “Whilst most people understand that lack of sleep and unhealthy diets can affect concentration, in an industry where this is imperative to life, more effort from industry needs to be made to make improvements for drivers.”

Further to these results, the survey reported that 27% of drivers feel very stressed and 20% experience back issues.

The overall summary of the report showed the following findings:

- Drivers want shorter more sociable working hours with regular start times
- Drivers want better facilities including clean toilets / washing areas, secure parking, better rest areas and better access to healthy snacks
- Help with their diet and exercise including more accessible information and access to gym / swimming facilities

These findings have led to a new campaign which is being launched to support the safety and well-being of HGV drivers around the UK.

Sadie said: “Employ Recruitment has released these figures in a bid to encourage industry players to improve practice for their driving staff which will in turn help with the shortage.”

A report by the Driver Require Think Tank, “The Answer to the UK’s HGV Driver Shortage”, shows that by mid-2021 70,000 drivers had left the industry and that this recovered to a deficit of 40,000 towards the end of the year. Kieran stated that “the HGV driver shortage had moved from “critical” to “severe” level, but that we should not be complacent. The key challenge is the unacceptable level of churn in the Under 30 age group, and despite significant improvements to HGV Test capacity, we won’t resolve the shortage if we don’t address the churn.”

Whilst the number of test passes has increased from an average of 3500 to 5000 per month in Q4 2021, retention is still a problem.

Sadie added: “It is a great shame to lose skilled and experienced drivers and we want to help retain and re-attract those drivers back into the industry.

“Whilst it feels that the shortage is going away, we must recognise that demand is low and we will feel the pinch again in summer when drivers go on holiday, however the real problem will be next year when demand returns to normal levels if wages are cut and conditions not improved.”

Employ Recruitment is looking to address change in the industry by creating a Well-being Programme. By encouraging sponsorship by stakeholders including driving agencies, logistics companies, training provider and service stations, drivers can access a much-needed well-being package.

Sadie commented: “The well-being campaign will give so much back to the driving community who just want to be recognised. Wages have increased but that’s just part of it, they want better working conditions and fairer treatment. Drivers leave because of lack of care in the industry,” – something Sadie is working hard to change.

Sadie and her team have put the health and well-being of their drivers first from the beginning and only work with employers who look after their drivers. The company is working to give drivers access to resources that will support their mental and physical well-being.

Employ Recruitment is releasing a series of information packs covering topics such as best service stations, information on diet, exercise and weight, resources available to support mental health and more. The company is also campaigning to improve facilities at service stations.

Get in touch with Sadie at Employ Recruitment to find out how you can join the campaign to improve driver well-being: www.employrecruitment.co.uk/contacts/

To read the full survey findings visit: www.employrecruitment.co.uk/well-being-survey-results/

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For further press information, contact Kirsty Rushton: kirsty@plinkfizz.com / 01782 630 777

Press information:

Employ Recruitment UK has specialised in the recruitment of HGV and LGV drivers in temporary and permanent roles since 2005. Its foundation was built on compliance for better safety of everyone and a supportive approach to their drivers. They recently invested in DRS software which amongst other things, eradicates human error, ensuring no driver can be placed on shift illegally.

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