

Why don't people want to be HGV drivers?

There is a driver crisis, but we need to tackle it rather than exaggerate - we need to make the jobs attractive. There are over 940K people with HGV licences and up to date medicals. This includes over 100K people aged 25-45 with C+E licences who choose not to use them. This is a crisis, not a shortage.

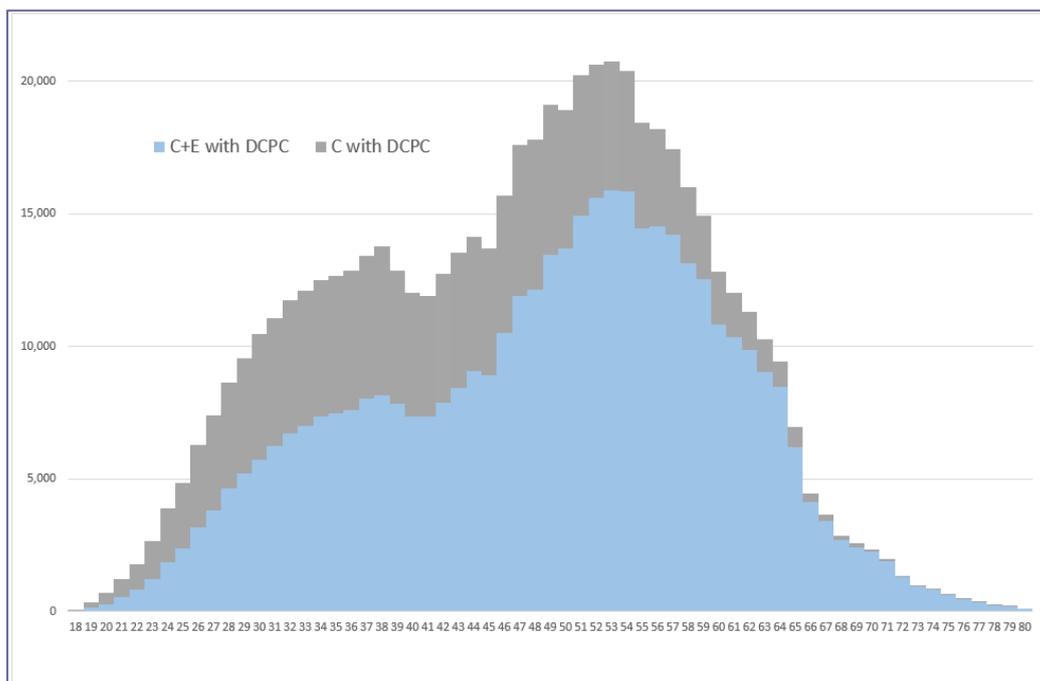
I've been sitting on some statistics since late September, but have been stirred into action by a couple of things happening in quick succession:

- An industry contact asking for a copy of a presentation I did in 2016 – here it is for anyone else who is interested: <http://bit.ly/2016DriverNosEtcPres>
- The latest CILT Focus repeating industry figures about driver ages, vacancies etc that need to be challenged or put in context
- Oh, and it's Saturday, but it's pouring with rain so I have time to actually do this thing!

I need to say very early on that I don't doubt that Brexit is going to considerably exacerbate the current problem, but this is a crisis of attraction and retention, not numbers per se.

I also need to say that I still tend to use the term HGV because of the confusion possible with LGV (**Large** versus **Light** Goods Vehicle in different contexts). There's also industry confusion over whether that includes C1 - I always use HGV to mean C and C+E drivers (not including C1), but I've had sight of calculations from one of the trade associations which compared a mix of trucks that included C1, but driver numbers that didn't!

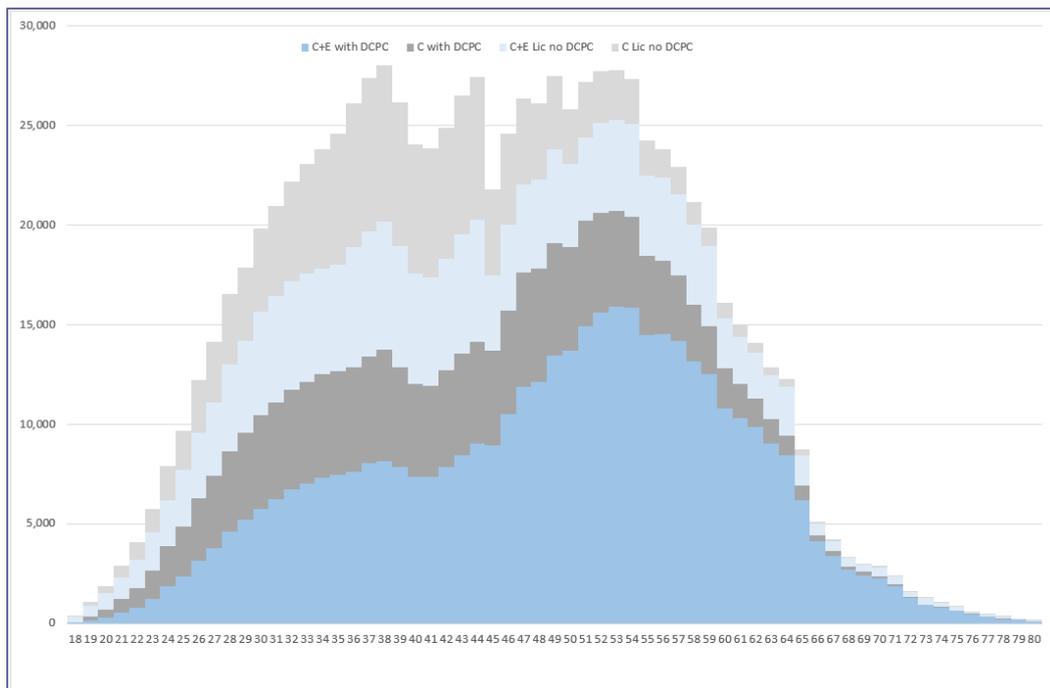
This update uses a combination of freely available data openly published on the web and also data I've obtained through a Freedom of Information Request. The most recent figure published by the Office for National Statistics for the number of people working as, what is described as, large goods vehicle drivers is 323K for Q2 2018 (April to June). Both the sets of data (no of C and C+E licences in total and no of C and C+E drivers with DCPCs) used for the various graphs are August 2018.



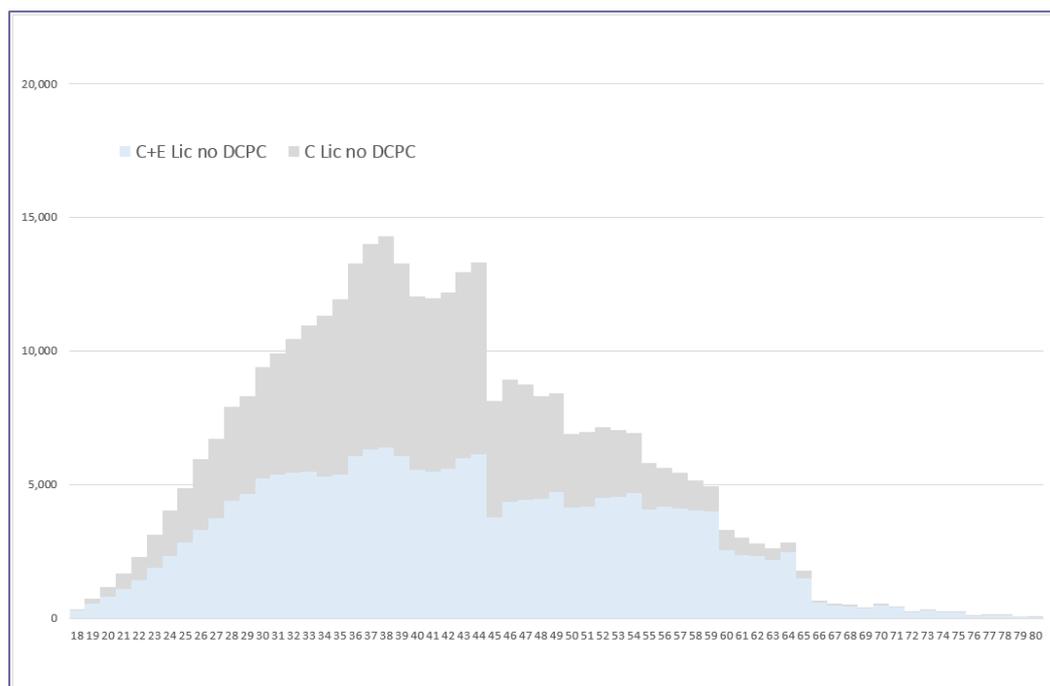
What this first graph shows, is the number of people who had a licence, medical **and** DCPC in August this year – this is the FOI data I requested. Each column represents the number of drivers of that age. I've chopped off the tail on this graph – of the more than 590K C and C+E drivers with DCPCs, there are 194

over 80. What the graph illustrates is the age profile of people who choose to keep their licences completely live, with a median age of 51 for C+E (shown in blue) and 42 for C only (shown in grey) – given that we’re told many people can’t really get going with a driving career until 25, the average age you might be hoping for is c45. But the graph above doesn’t show anything like the complete picture.

If you add in people with driving licences and medicals, but who don’t have DCPCs, you get a median age of 48 for C+E and 41 for C only. All of the people in the lighter parts of the graph below (over 350K - light blue for C+E and light grey for C only) have gone to the trouble of taking and passing an HGV test, but who haven’t then taken the one week’s training (with no test) that would allow them to use that licence:



If we have a look at just those people who have licences and medicals, but haven’t chosen to take their DCPC, we get this next graph:



Yes, some of them will be in the military etc, but the extent to which this group doesn't require the licence at all can be seen from the sharp drop off at 45, when the requirement for repeat medicals starts - they've taken a licence, but they don't need/choose to use it.

So how do we attract them back to our industry? Attracting drivers is not just a problem in the UK - here's a link to a recent report about the largest US trucking company putting up wages:

<http://bit.ly/USDriverPay>

BUT it's not just about wages. I've said this before and I'll say it again, it's also about how we treat drivers. I personally think that a key issue for our industry was the removal of the 12.5 hour spreadover all those years ago, which resulted in managers and customers forgetting to value driver time and, in turn, drivers losing control of their lives. Here's three of the most current comments below an article in which Transport Operator expanded on some of my previous analysis in 2016:

<http://bit.ly/TransportOperatorFeb2016>



Ex Driver
MAY 5, 2018 AT 1:59 PM

I can only echo the sentiments above from all the other drivers.

I got out after nearly 20 years of HGV driving and having seen how the real world operates 'outside' I wish I had never sat in a truck in the first place.

To all the people thinking of a paying £££ for a 'career' in driving...Don't!

I'm about 40 quid a week worse off now working as a labourer, but am working the best part of 15-20 hours a week less- I'll let you do the sums there.

It's been a real eye opener to see how people with real trades operate- Lorry driving isn't a trade, don't kid yourself.

A brickie/plasterer can earn more in 7 hours on site whilst having a laugh with his mates (and using the toilet whenever he likes) than a lorry driver can earn in a 15 hour shift with a night out on top of that.

I know there are a lot of people out there desperate to earn a living and feed their families but I can't think of a more toxic industry than that of haulage. It's crap!



Leighton Nugent
OCTOBER 1, 2018 AT 12:28 PM

I do this job part time (have my class 1 but work at class 2 work) and take my hats off to the guys who do full time. A big aspect, little discussed is the impact the job can have on relationships. A modern marriage won't last long when the person driving is hardly ever at home; moreover, and not even earning a great wage. PAYE is crap and self employed loose out on benefits and holiday pay etc. The only way to change things is to up the pay massively and with that, the status of drivers will rise in the mind of people accordingly.



Steve Linton
OCTOBER 15, 2018 AT 2:06 PM

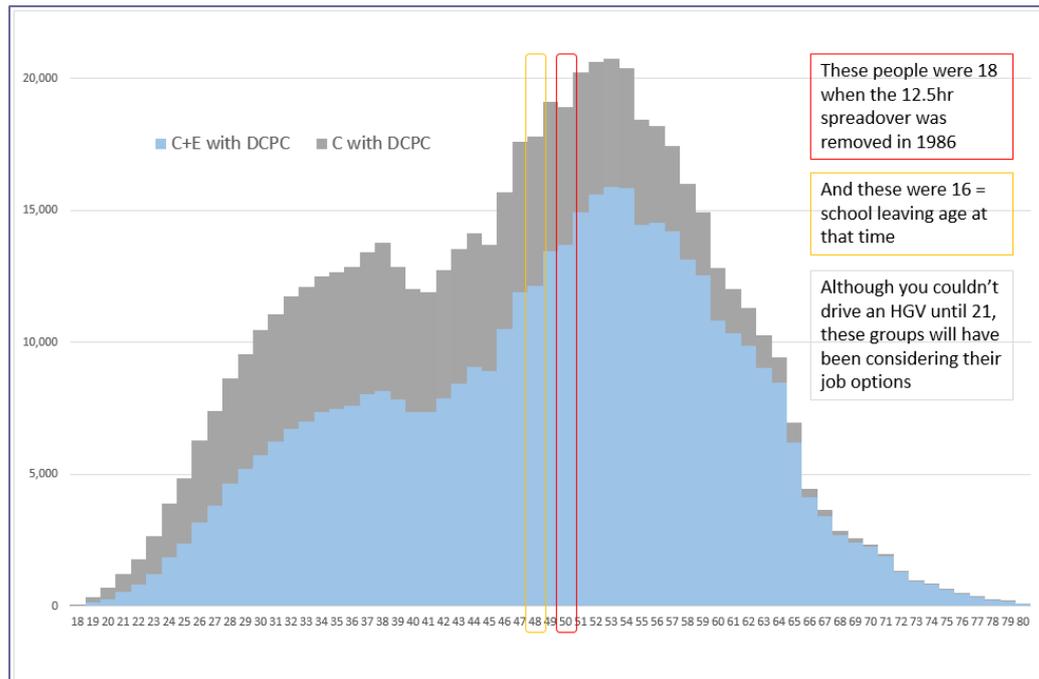
I passed my tests in 2016 both 1st time .

I will never drive a truck again .

- 1.too many disrespecting planners -Tm's bullies(legally phoning you knowing you are driving) calling you all the time even though they have you on trackers .
2. Assessments every year just like driving tests for the same job ..ott .
- 3.rubbish pay
- 4.Recruitment agencies charging £20 ph and trying everything to oay you through scamming umbrella schemes and ending up with around £8 ph .
- 5.Cpc is a disgraceful rip off .You learn nothing
- 6.parking ,You have no where to park and this robbing country allow motorway services to rip off drivers for food and £26 night to get zero security .
- 7.the roads are woefully crowded with foreign drivers who have not taken a test here .
- 8.sleeping in a tin can for £20 a night is pathetic .Make the managers do it for£ 20
- 9.Fines fines fines for doing a low payed horrible job .
- 10.Stress is a killer

What an absolutely awful job ,Hated by the ublic treated like a dog .If you are going to spend £3k get a digger licence .never ever try haulage .It is run by greedy accountants ,And horrible people Never again.

Here's the first graph again, but showing that the start of the decline in people wanting to work as HGV drivers coincides roughly with the removal of the spreadover – it may be just a coincidence:



Lastly, there's those vacancy stats I see bandied around in the trade press – where do they come from? The most recent figure from the Office for National Statistics for July – September this year was 41K. That is not just for HGV drivers, but for the whole of transport and storage – so including van drivers, passenger transport, pickers and packers, etc etc. It *is* true that in September there were only 315 jobseekers in the whole UK looking for work as HGV drivers.

Yes, there is a driver crisis, but we need to tackle it rather than exaggerate – if you've got a proper vacancy then advertise it and make the jobs attractive. Going back to the quotes I included, you could dismiss a couple of them as moaners if you like, but look at any driver forum or discussion and you will find many coherent people who used to work as HGV drivers ...and who now do something different! There are over 940K people with HGV licences and up to date medicals. This includes over 100K people aged 25-45 with C+E licences but no DCPC. This is a crisis, not a shortage.

November 2018
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v2 - small grammatical change to avoid any misunderstanding

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Who am I? I'm a logistics consultant - I do anything in logistics and supply chain that requires:

- Mathematical analysis and modelling – I put facts and figures round changes that directors are thinking about so they can make that decision with confidence
- Geographical analysis - looking at customer locations and logistics networks on maps etc - also useful for marketing, service engineers...
- Industry research – this update is a good example of digging out data, but it could also be reporting on developments in a particular area of interest, to help you focus your time

I'm always looking for projects, so if you think I can help you then please do get in touch!