

## ***There is no driver shortage***

I'm going to contradict what I've only recently put in writing, so let me explain: my conclusion is that **most** people who have gone to some cost, time and effort to get qualified as HGV drivers do not use those qualifications. While I continue to be very concerned about the driver age profile, I now disagree with some of my previous conclusions, including that driver numbers have become a national issue. In part, I fell into a trap of believing that what some parties in our industry were saying. I'm now back where I started, believing that our industry needs to stop moaning and put its money where its mouth is.

I said before that this was about attracting fresh blood, but it appears that this is not the case. There are 80K drivers in the age band 25-44 who are ready to go – they have an LGV licence and they have a DQC, they just don't choose to use them – they're keeping their hand in "just in case". And there are another 90K in the 25-34 age bracket with LGV entitlement and with apparently no need to do much more than a week's training (without a test) to get a DQC.

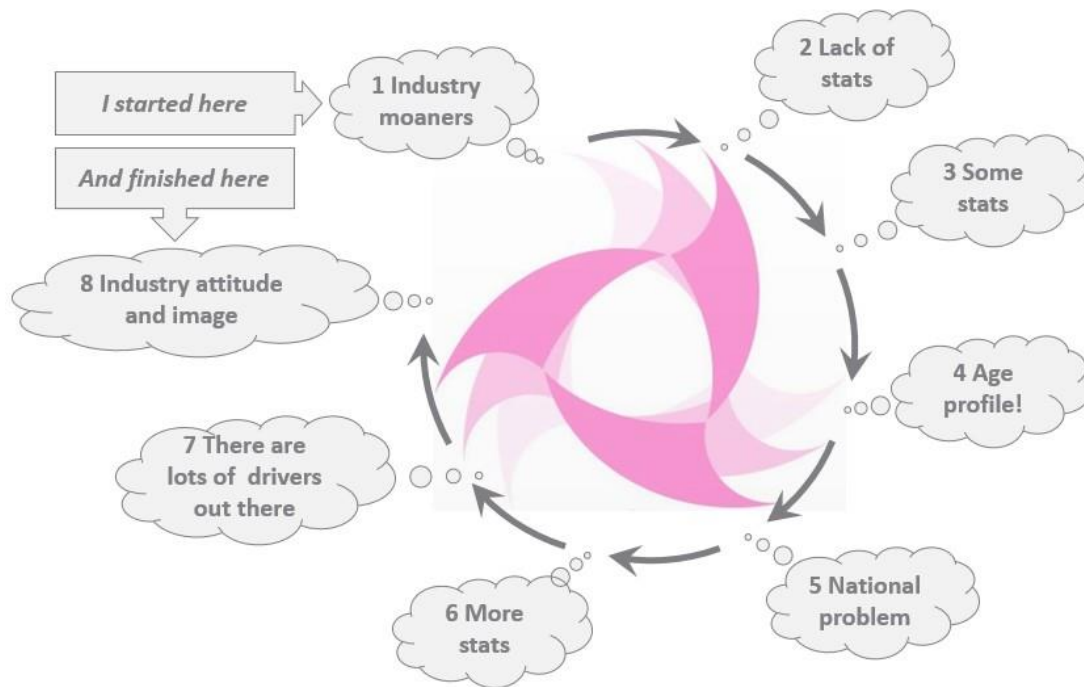
This is about re-inspiring people who took their licences and couldn't hack the job for whatever reason. If it were just one or two people, then you could put it down to their own unrealistic expectations, but it looks like there's tens, even hundreds, of thousands - our industry isn't just less attractive to younger people, it's not that attractive to any age group. So how do we get some of those qualified people to come and drive a truck?

Although there's not much we can do about the legislative burden that drivers have to shoulder these days, there are things that our industry can do for itself. As I've said before, it involves looking after drivers – giving them self-respect by paying them an attractive rate for sensible hours, and providing some decent facilities at DCs and out on the road. We need to ask ourselves how many older drivers would come into the industry today, particularly as agency drivers. Increased wages and training need to be built into increased operating costs and charges for transport need to go up.

Alan White, MD of Fresh Express, has current operational experience and, in response to a previous piece I published on LinkedIn, he wrote: "What are we going to do about the driver shortage...? Well to start, change your pay and conditions, invest in your workforce and understand your business cost base - rather than being a fiver cheaper than Joe Bloggs Haulage". Fresh Express has the right attitude, walks the walk, and doesn't suffer any shortage.

So how and why have I changed my mind? In the January 2016 edition of Focus ([http://bit.ly/CILTFocus\\_DriverShortage](http://bit.ly/CILTFocus_DriverShortage)), the Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport journal, I said that I'd asked DVLA for the data for all C and C+E drivers with DQCs in five-year (or smaller) age bands. And I'm very grateful for another

prompt and helpful response – more on those stats very shortly. First, a bit about what has turned out to be quite a journey for me – indeed I’ve gone round in a complete circle and ended up pretty much where I started ...but much better informed and with access to more detailed statistics than the industry has had before. I’ve summarised my journey in this diagram:

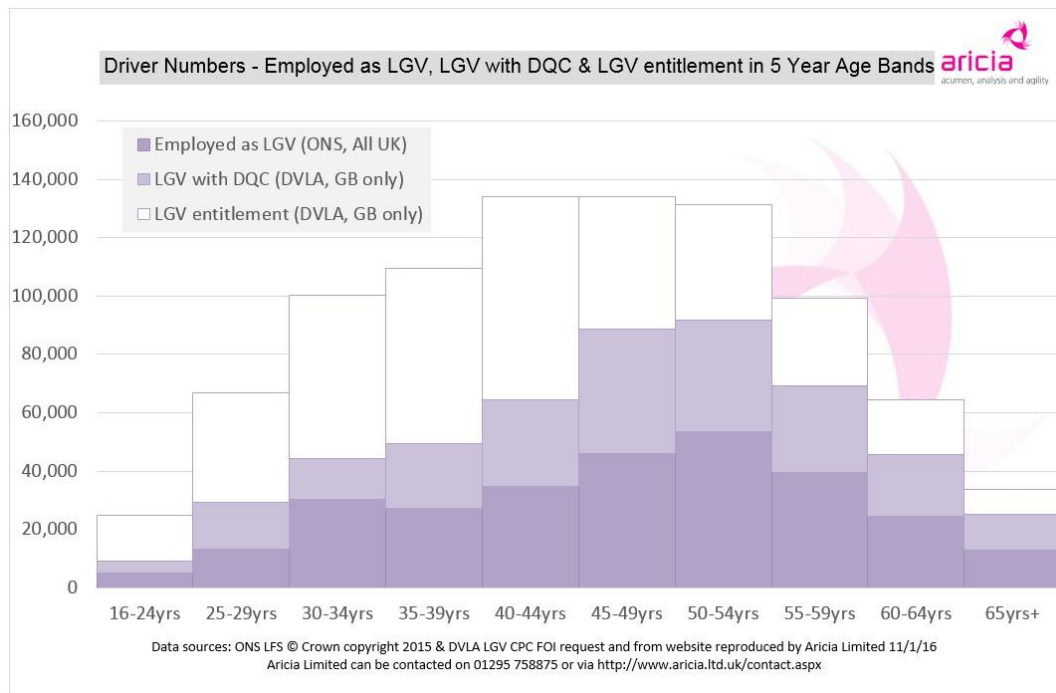


I’ll be straight, I hadn’t fully grasped just how unattractive our industry is. So I was sceptical about the DVLA LGV entitlement figures to start with, to the extent that I didn’t put them in my latest Focus article. But with the DQC figures, which DVLA provided just before Christmas, and answers to my questions at the start of the new year, I now have a picture which uses all the available data and seems to me to make sense. I’ve combined these various sources of data into the graph on the next page.

What this graph shows:

- The purple elements of the bars, at the bottom of the graph, show the ONS Labour Force Survey data that is already included on our website and recently published in Focus (but at a different scale so that I can fit in the other elements of data above it). This data is for people who say that they are employed as LGV drivers in a sampling survey for June to September 2015 for the whole UK: [http://bit.ly/ONS\\_DriverAgeStats\\_Aricia](http://bit.ly/ONS_DriverAgeStats_Aricia)

- The lighter lilac elements in the middle, combined with the purple, show the DVLA DQC data that I've just obtained. It shows drivers with C-only or C+E entitlement who have driver qualification cards - this data is GB only, so it's not completely accurate as a representation. I'm happy to share this data, but I can't provide a link right now - it will only be published on the government's website if it's felt to be of general interest.
- The white elements at the top, combined with both the purple and lilac, show the DVLA LGV entitlement data. It shows drivers with C entitlement, which will include those with C+E, and again this data is GB only. The main proviso is that this will include people with LGV entitlement who don't require CPC/DQC as they are currently serving in the military, and are therefore not available for civilian work right now – if anyone has some stats on that, I'd be interested in them. It is for October 2015 and is freely available on the government's website:  
[http://bit.ly/DVLA\\_DriverAgeStats\\_Govt](http://bit.ly/DVLA_DriverAgeStats_Govt)



An alternative way of describing this graph would be to say that:

- The purple bars are the number of people in the UK who describe themselves as HGV drivers
- The lighter lilac bars are the number of people (roughly, as GB only) who do not describe themselves as HGV drivers, but who do have a DQC – in other words, people who could work as an HGV driver right now if they wanted to
- The white bars at the top are the number of people (again, roughly as GB only again and with the proviso described above) who do not describe themselves as HGV drivers, who do have HGV entitlement, but don't have a DQC – in other words, people who could work as an HGV driver provided they did a week's CPC training and got their DQC sorted out.

One of the paragraphs in the most recent Focus article I wrote got a bit mangled in the editing phase, and the relevance of the link at the end of the article wasn't explained – it originally said: "...we don't just need to respect driver time, but to respect drivers themselves. Anyone who thinks that the industry doesn't need to improve needs to have a read of the serious posts (most are) following the blog that this link takes you to, and don't just glance at a couple, keep on reading" **\*See below**

I have returned to believing that the solution is in our industry's own hands. Logistics needs to become the industry of choice. And its custodians need to recognise the real issues - many of our industry leaders are in denial.

13 January 2016

**\*Unfortunately the original link to the Skills for Logistics website is no longer live. However, since then Transport Operator has carried at least two pieces on this subject and each have garnered many driver comments, which continue to make similar points: <http://bit.ly/TransportOperatorFeb2016> and <http://bit.ly/TransportOperatorMar2016> - added 5 March 2017**

If you'd like a speaker on the topic of driver numbers and age profiles, get in touch: Kirsten Tisdale, 01295 758875, [kirsten@aricia.ltd.uk](mailto:kirsten@aricia.ltd.uk)

