

## Critical Issues in Trucking Workforce Development

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From delivering critical medical supplies for hospitals to dropping off packages on our doorstep, the millions of truck drivers in the nation serve a critical function in our daily lives. The number of heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers has increased from fewer than 1.6 million in 2012 to a projected 2 million drivers by 2026. Truck drivers are in high demand. How can we fulfill this need? This white paper identifies critical issues facing trucking workforce development in California and future research opportunities to address them.

Please note that this research was conducted before the COVID-19 crisis.

### Study Methods

To identify research opportunities in the industry, the authors synthesized available research including government reports, peer-reviewed academic research, and industry publications. Researchers attended relevant sessions at the Transportation Research Board (TRB) Annual Meeting in January of 2020. They also conducted interviews with key national and state industry leaders, a renowned labor economist, and other relevant experts.

## Findings

Key findings regarding the pressing issues facing the state trucking industry include 1) the apparent shortage of drivers may be a byproduct of “churn” and infrastructure capacity issues (examples include the negative effects of global alliances at the ports and the inefficient use of hours of service); 2) Those entering the truck driving profession tend to be in their 30s with previous work experience not in the industry; 3) Trucking automation and platooning are far in the horizon and will not affect the demand for truck drivers; and 4) With new technology required for transparency, speed, accuracy, and collaboration in transportation and logistics, we need new workforce training opportunities for trucking establishments.

*Issues in trucking like “churn” and workforce training must be addressed to keep this critical industry efficient and booming.*

## Policy Recommendations

The most pressing issues facing California trucking industry workforce development can be coalesced into two overarching research opportunities:

1. Reframing Opportunities with New Messaging:  
The Future Outlook for Jobs in the Trucking Industry
2. Re-examining the Audience: Attracting, Training, and Retaining Truck Drivers

Based on our research and findings, we need to develop marketing, training, and retention strategies specific to the identified entering demographic of truck drivers. This method will address the need to reframe opportunities for workforce development. Second, we need to create more accurate messaging to the public about the future of trucking industry jobs. This second plan of action addresses the public and media’s view of the industry issues and helps attract and retain new drivers.

Through research and development, we can successfully fulfill the present and future demands of the California trucking industry and keep the state’s goods moving.

## About the Authors

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## To Learn More

For more details about the study, download the full report at [transweb.sjsu.edu/research/1941](https://transweb.sjsu.edu/research/1941).



The California State University Transportation Consortium (CSUTC), led by the Mineta Transportation Institute, fosters synergies across the entire California State University system to conduct impactful transportation research and engage in workforce development initiatives that increase mobility of people and goods and strengthen California’s economy.