



The Factors That Actually Affect Driver Retention



In 2022, Tenstreet collected driver survey data that illuminates two different ways carriers can understand driver complaints and take steps to address problems drivers report.

Analyzing both of these metrics, provided through our **Insights** service, can help carriers formulate a better strategy for how to handle driver feedback, and which driver complaints are most important to consider. Insights includes reporting that can help identify the top driver complaints at a company as measured by both key metrics, giving carriers a clearer picture of where they can see the greatest gains when considering changes to make.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Newly hired drivers' biggest issues center around adequate preparation during orientation and clarity around what to expect on the road.**
- **Newer drivers (45 days into tenure) report the most issues around promises being broken and unmet or inaccurate expectations.**
- **Tenured drivers are most concerned with pay and with balance around their lives outside of work.**

Tenstreet's unique **Insights Index Rank** method of assessing driver complaints gives carriers unprecedented clarity into the reasons that drivers actually leave and what to work on to achieve better retention rates.

The data below represents our findings on the most common complaints drivers voice at different stages of their careers and highlights important takeaways in how carriers should think about their driver feedback.

METHODOLOGY

To conduct this assessment, we analyzed data from multiple carriers across three different driver survey types:

➤ FIRST IMPRESSIONS SURVEYS

which assess a driver's satisfaction with onboarding and his or her first few days at a carrier.

➤ EARLY EXPERIENCE SURVEYS

which assess driver satisfaction over the first 45 days with a carrier.

➤ ONGOING EXPERIENCE SURVEYS

which assess driver satisfaction at regular intervals throughout a driver's employment.

This data was then summarized and compared according to two metrics, Mean Rank and Insights Index Rank, to help carriers better understand what drivers think and which issues they value most.

Analysis Method 1: Mean Rank

A **Mean Rank** is based on a simple average of drivers' ratings of how well their carrier is performing on certain issues. **Mean Rank** is valuable as an overall estimator of your drivers' opinions about how well you are doing on these issues. Issues on which drivers think you are performing poorly would get a low rank and would be an area to work to improve.

Analysis Method 2: Insights Index Rank

Insights Index Ranks are calculated using an average of drivers' ratings (like Mean Rank) as well as **correlations to commitment**.

To assess **commitment** across answers, we asked drivers two commitment questions on each survey - "Do you intend to stay with your carrier for a month?" and "Do you intend to stay with your carrier for a year?". Drivers that answered no to these questions - indicating that they don't intend to stay with their carriers for long - were given low commitment scores. Drivers that answered yes were given high commitment scores.

Correlations to commitment indicate how important each issue is to the carrier's drivers. The stronger the correlation, the more likely drivers are to leave if a carrier is performing poorly on an issue. Issues on which drivers think you are performing poorly, and that are more important to drivers (i.e., have stronger correlations to commitment), would get a low rank and would be a high-priority area to work to improve.

First Impressions Survey Results

The chart below details the results of our First Impressions survey across our survey population on items carriers should work on, according to their drivers.

The **Ranked by Performance** column is displaying the results based on the **Mean Rank**, and the **Ranked by Performance and Importance** column is displaying the results based on the **Insights Index Rank**. The percent in these columns indicate the percent of the carriers that had the item show up in their top 3 items to work on.

The **Difference** column highlights the percentage spread between the results in the Ranked by Performance and Ranked by Performance and Importance columns.

The **Importance** column is the correlation to commitment described above; a measure of how much value drivers place on the issue addressed by a given question.

First Impression Survey Results

Percent of Times Item was Included in the 'Top 3 Items To Work On'		(Ranked by Mean)	(Ranked by Mean & Correlation to Commitment)		
		Ranked by Performance	Ranked by Performance & Importance	Difference	Importance
V1	Overall, my recruiter's explanations were clear.	15%	30%	-15%	0.65
V2	Overall, my recruiter treated me well.	0%	0%	0%	0.55
V3	My Recruiter clearly explained what kinds of runs/routes I would make.	40%	25%	15%	0.58
V4	Overall, I am happy with what I learned in orientation.	5%	30%	-25%	0.69
V5	The orientation prepared me well to work for this company.	65%	70%	-5%	0.68
V6	What I learned in orientation was consistent with what my Recruiter told me.	25%	70%	-45%	0.66
V7	In orientation I learned what the dispatch process would be like.	90%	55%	35%	0.59
V8	In orientation I learned about my pay/settlements.	80%	20%	60%	0.57

From the Ranked by Performance column, we can see that for drivers who are brand new to their carrier, the top issues reported were **better instruction on the dispatch process** (appeared in a carrier's top 3 issues 90% of the time), **clarity around pay/settlements** (80%), and **feeling prepared by the orientation process** (65%). These were the issues newly hired drivers brought up most frequently as sources of dissatisfaction, and they indicate that carriers should focus on making sure processes like dispatching and pay/settlements are clear to drivers before they leave the terminal so drivers can get a strong start at their new employer.

The Ranked by Performance and Importance column tells a similar story, with **feeling prepared by the orientation process** (70%), **consistency between what a recruiter said and what a driver learned in orientation** (70%), and **better instruction on the dispatch process** (55%) landing at the top of the list when correlating answers to commitment. By this measure, if carriers want to work on the issues that have a bigger impact on new drivers' intention to stay with them for a significant amount of time, they should focus on consistent communication between what a driver hears from a recruiter and during orientation so that drivers feel prepared to get on the road.

The value of looking at both metrics is clear when examining the Difference column. "In orientation I learned about my pay/settlements" appeared in the top 3 items to work on 80% of the time in the Performance column. In the Performance & Importance column, this issue only appears 20% of the time in the top 3 (so the difference is 60%). Essentially this means that while drivers are experiencing confusion around pay/settlements, this confusion is less likely to be a reason that drivers actually quit. Conversely, lack of consistency in messaging between recruiting and orientation ranked highly as a reason for dissatisfaction in the Performance and Commitment column, indicating that drivers are often dissatisfied and more likely to quit because of this issue.

Early Experience Survey Results

The chart below details the results of our Early Experience survey across our survey population on items carriers should work on, according to their drivers.

Percent of Times Item was Included in the 'Top 3 Items To Work On'		(Ranked by Mean)	(Ranked by Mean & Correlation to Commitment)	Difference	Importance
		Ranked by Performance	Ranked by Performance & Importance		
V1	My experiences with this carrier match the expectations I had when I first started.	95%	79%	16%	0.73
V2	The kinds of runs/routes I make is what I was told when I started.	58%	37%	21%	0.66
V3	The explanation of my pay/settlements was accurate.	74%	26%	47%	0.60
V4	It is easy to communicate with the people I work with at this company.	21%	37%	-16%	0.68
V5	People I work with at this company keep their promises.	63%	68%	-5%	0.68
V6	My dispatcher(s) treats me with respect	0%	5%	-5%	0.63
V7	Overall, the people I work with treat me well.	0%	26%	-26%	0.71
V8	Overall, I am happy with the dispatcher(s).	0%	21%	-21%	0.67

The Ranked by Performance column indicates that for drivers who have been with their carrier for 45 days, the top issues reported were **issues around carrier experiences matching expectations (95%)**, **inaccurate explanations of pay/settlements (74%)**, and **employees not keeping their promises (63%)**. As the issues drivers brought up most frequently, these recurrent problems suggest that carriers dealing with drivers who are still getting up and running should focus on making sure employees accurately communicate what a driver's experience will be before he gets on the road, and that they make sure not to promise things they can't deliver on once the driver is on the road.

The Ranked by Performance and Importance column sees similar complaints in its top two slots but provides more nuance in secondary issues with drivers. The top issues when also taking commitment into account are **issues around carrier experiences matching expectations (79%)** and **employees not keeping their promises (68%)**, but a wider range of complaints take up secondary slots. The Ranked by Performance column gives the impression that carriers don't need to worry about employees treating drivers well or disrespectful dispatchers at all, but by assessing drivers' commitment, we see that focusing on elements like respectful dispatchers and being treated well by employees may have a bigger impact on new driver retention. This suggests that creating an honest and consistent experience for drivers that starts with every employee of your company will help drivers feel more stable.

The most differentiated stat in this chart can be seen in the responses to the question "The explanation of my pay/settlements was accurate" - while it was the second-highest reported complaint by volume, its actual weight with drivers lagged behind issues with clarity around routes the driver would be assigned to and the ability to communicate with employees at the company, according to the Ranked by Performance column. In other words, while many drivers are frustrated with the accuracy of pay/settlement, they are less likely to quit for that reason.

Ongoing Experience Survey Results

The chart below details the results of our Ongoing Experience survey across our survey population on items carriers should work on, according to their drivers.

Ongoing Experience Survey Results

Percent of Times Item was Included in the 'Top 3 Items To Work On'		(Ranked by Mean & Correlation to Commitment)		Difference	Importance
	(Ranked by Mean)	Ranked by Performance	Ranked by Performance & Importance		
V1	Overall, the people I work with treat me well.	0%	0%	0%	0.69
V2	It is easy to communicate with the people I work with at this company.	9%	27%	-18%	0.69
V3	People I work with at this company keep their promises	55%	64%	-9%	0.66
V4	People I work with at this company recognize me when I do a good job	64%	27%	36%	0.58
V5	Overall, I am happy with the dispatcher(s).	0%	9%	-9%	0.65
V6	Overall, I have a good work-life balance.	36%	55%	-18%	0.61
V7	Overall, I like how safety is handled.	9%	9%	0%	0.61
V8	Overall, I have had good experiences picking up and dropping off loads.	9%	0%	9%	0.54
V9	Overall, I am able to handle the daily issues of life on the road.	0%	0%	0%	0.53
V10	Overall, I am happy the process of getting pay/settlement.	9%	0%	9%	0.57
V11	Overall, I am happy with the fairness of the pay/settlement.	55%	18%	36%	0.57
V12	This company gives me enough pay/settlement.	82%	45%	36%	0.58
V13	Overall, I am happy with the work I get.	9%	45%	-36%	0.71

The Ranked by Performance column indicates that in routine check-ins with drivers over the course of their tenure with a carrier, the most frequently reported issues are **dissatisfaction with the amount of pay (82%)**, **lack of recognition at work (64%)**, **employees not keeping their promises (55%)**, and **the fairness of pay (55%)**. For more tenured drivers, issues around pay arose frequently in complaints - likely because drivers who are more experienced have a stronger sense of their worth and what they should be making - though interpersonal issues come up often at this level as well. These findings indicate that feeling like a carrier is being honest and recognizing the skill of its employees remains important for long-term driver satisfaction.

The Ranked by Performance and Importance column offers a different perspective. The highest-ranking issues when driver commitment was factored in are **employees not keeping their promises (64%)**, **lack of work-life balance (55%)**, **dissatisfaction with the amount of pay (45%)**, and **dissatisfaction with the work a driver is given (45%)**. Pay is a frequently discussed topic in the world of retention and is often the reason blamed for a driver's departure. While being paid well is still important in keeping skilled drivers for the long haul, pay dissatisfaction is less likely to be the actual tipping point that sends someone out the door. Promises being kept is the highest-ranked factor, suggesting that long-term drivers expect a high level of trust in their companies and feel highly dissatisfied when promises are not delivered on. Work-life balance and satisfaction with the work itself are highly ranked issues as well, indicating that drivers who are building a longer-term career in trucking need their jobs to be compatible with their lives. Money alone is not enough.

Compensation complaints represent the largest difference between how often they're reported and how much they actually affect job satisfaction. Other interesting stats to note are a high incidence of drivers reporting feeling a lack of recognition, despite this being a less important factor, along with the increased importance of work satisfaction even though it shows up less often in drivers' top 3 issue lists. These differences seem to suggest that while not feeling recognized can indicate to a driver that he isn't valued, he is less likely to be bothered by this fact if the work itself satisfies him day-to-day.

Key Takeaways for Carriers

Both measures of driver satisfaction tell important stories when carriers are planning to address driver complaints. Issues that come up again and again, like those that have a high Mean Rank, are worth paying attention to as

they are being felt across a carrier's driver population and suggest an underlying issue that might appease drivers if it is improved.

The Insights Index Rank is a more nuanced tool that can show carriers the issues that are more likely to lead to a driver quitting. Working on these issues is where carriers will see the most results in terms of better retention rates, longer driver tenures, and recruiting dollars saved.

Based on our findings, carriers not using survey tools within their own fleet can take guidance from these general trends and keep the following in mind:


- Newly hired drivers' biggest issues center around adequate preparation during orientation and clarity around what to expect on the road, so carriers should work to ensure driver communication is consistent between departments, setting drivers up for success.
- Newer drivers (45 days into tenure) report the most issues around promises being broken and unmet or inaccurate expectations, so carriers should work on cultivating trust with these drivers by being as transparent as possible and making sure drivers understand what's expected of them.
- Tenured drivers are most concerned with pay and with balance around their lives outside of work, so carriers should make sure skilled drivers are adequately compensated for their expertise and that they are given sufficient work-life balance to make a driving career sustainable long-term.

Carriers who use Tenstreet's **Insights** tool receive individualized reporting that details their drivers' top reported issue both by Mean Rank and by Insights Index Rank, helping them to determine which issues come up most frequently and which issues are the most common causes of driver departures so they can determine where to focus their energies when making plans to improve.

Learn more from Tenstreet about using Insights data to help with driver retention



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