

2021 Mixer Driver Recruitment and Retention Survey

Executive Summary

National Ready Mixed Concrete Association



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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September 2021

Barbi Brown, U.S. Concrete, Inc.
NRMCA Workforce Development Committee Chairman

Steven Antonoff, CalPortland Company
NRMCA Workforce Development Committee Vice-Chairman

Gary Mullings, NRMCA
Executive Vice President, Operations and Compliance
Division Head

Eileen Dickson, NRMCA
Vice President, Education
Liaison to the Workforce Development Committee

National Ready Mixed Concrete Association
66 Canal Center Plaza
Suite 250
Alexandria, VA 022314
703-706-4800
www.nrmca.org

The *2021 Mixer Driver Recruitment and Retention Survey Executive Summary* reports five-year national trends from 19 of the 31 questions and represents 34% of NRMCA's estimated 75,000 mixer drivers. Layoff and departure data fell within past the past seven years' trends, therefore, none of the survey findings could be attributed to COVID-19 pandemic pressures.

In the five years represented in this survey, NRMCA calculates ready mixed concrete production grew 9% while the mixer driver population held steady at about 75,000, perhaps suggesting why 68% of survey participants report they lost business due to their company's driver shortage. Another 2021 takeaway is data continues to swing far more among the survey's eight regions than among the survey's five company size categories.

The industry hired approximately 34% (25,500) of the U.S. mixer driver pool, 2% less than hired in 2019, as well as in 2018. About 10% of hires were rehires. The annual vacancy rate grew by 3%.

Finding drivers with ready mixed concrete experience remained the biggest hiring challenge. In the past three years, producers willing to hire new CDLs grew from 51% to 59%, although the actual number hired remained 7% annually. In the past four years, producers willing to hire 18-21 year old CDLs increased 21%, but regional differences were dramatic, from a 98% high in the Midwest/Great Lake region, to an 11% low in the southeast. Willingness to hire 18-21 year old CDLs was roughly equal by company size data.

Mixer drivers' median age was 47.0, older than the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) 2020 estimated median age of material moving workers at 41.4 years and 46.0 years for durable goods manufacturing: "cement, concrete, lime, and gypsum products". Tenure median continued at 7 years, while tenure for all American workers was 4.1 years, as reported by the U.S. BLS.

While the hire rate dropped, the turnover rate increased, and for the fifth year, now at 35%. About one-third of the mixer driver population quit or was dismissed, an increase of 2%. Approximately 26,500 left; 71% had more than one-year's tenure. Nationally, 60% of those who left quit, yet quit rates swung markedly by region.

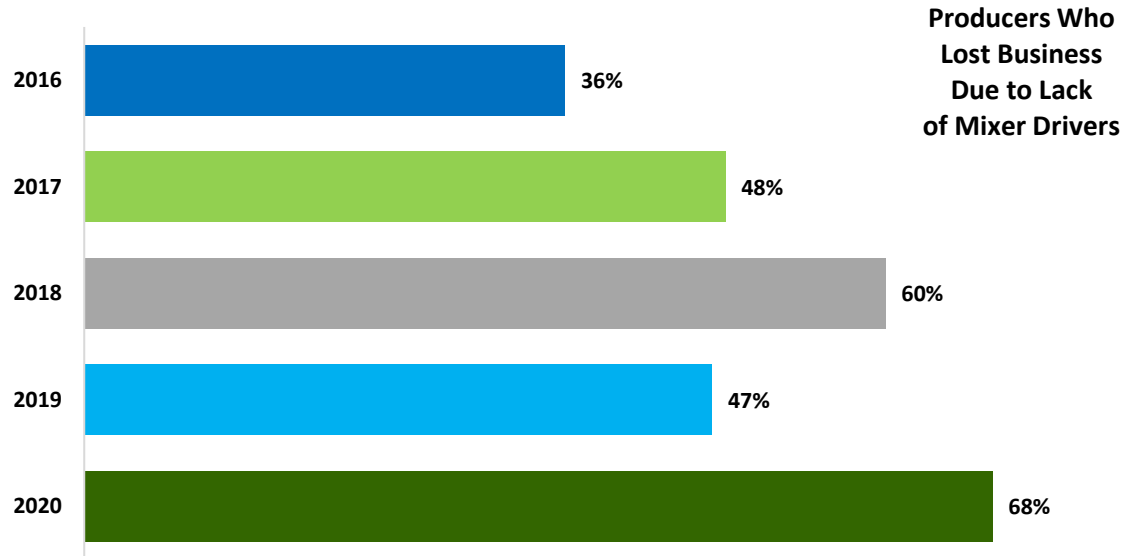
For the sixth year, inconsistent daily schedules and higher pay elsewhere remained the top two reasons drivers quit. When asked where former employees went, the first place response was their drivers left the industry yet still took a short-haul commercial driving job. In second-place was taking a job with a competitive producer, with an 8% differential between the two. They both have been the top two responses for the past six years.

With the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's (FMCSA) Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse in effect for a year, this survey collected data relating to positive results in drug and alcohol screening. While only 1% of all mixer drivers were dismissed, 48% of producers reported dismissing drivers.

Survey respondents represent their company and report on their driver-employees. The full report consists of 31-questions, including a national analysis, as well as breakdowns by region and company size (reported in cubic yardage categories) for the survey year as well as five-year trends. The full report can be download by all NRMCA members on NRMCA's website (www.nrmca.org) through the member portal.

I. Recruitment

Impacting recruitment efforts, 68% of producers reported they lost business solely because they did not have enough mixer drivers to deliver concrete. The question's response rate was 97%.



Vacancy

Vacancy is defined as a company's unmet labor demand. The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) states a company's vacancy rate is the result of employee turnover plus creation of new positions. Response rate was 93%.

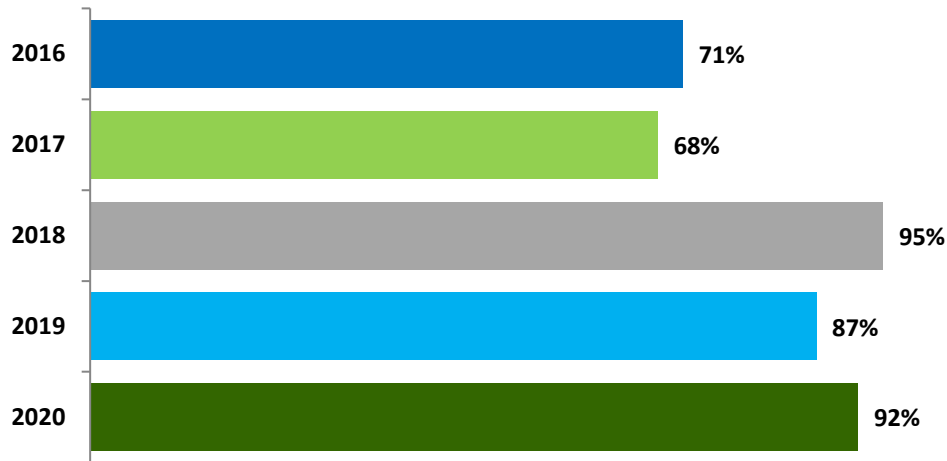
The US Bureau of Labor Statistics annual Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS) had large movement early in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but data started to return to pre-pandemic levels by mid-year. Nevertheless, job openings are still higher when compared with historical levels.

Equally, producers reported no large swings but had a higher 2020 vacancy rate, at 10.9%. There were 8,240 vacancies on April 30, 2021, the last day of the survey. To calculate the mixer driver vacancy rate, 8,240 was divided by the average number of drivers on May 1, 2020 and April 30, 2021.

How many vacant full-time mixer driver jobs did you have open on the last day of the survey?

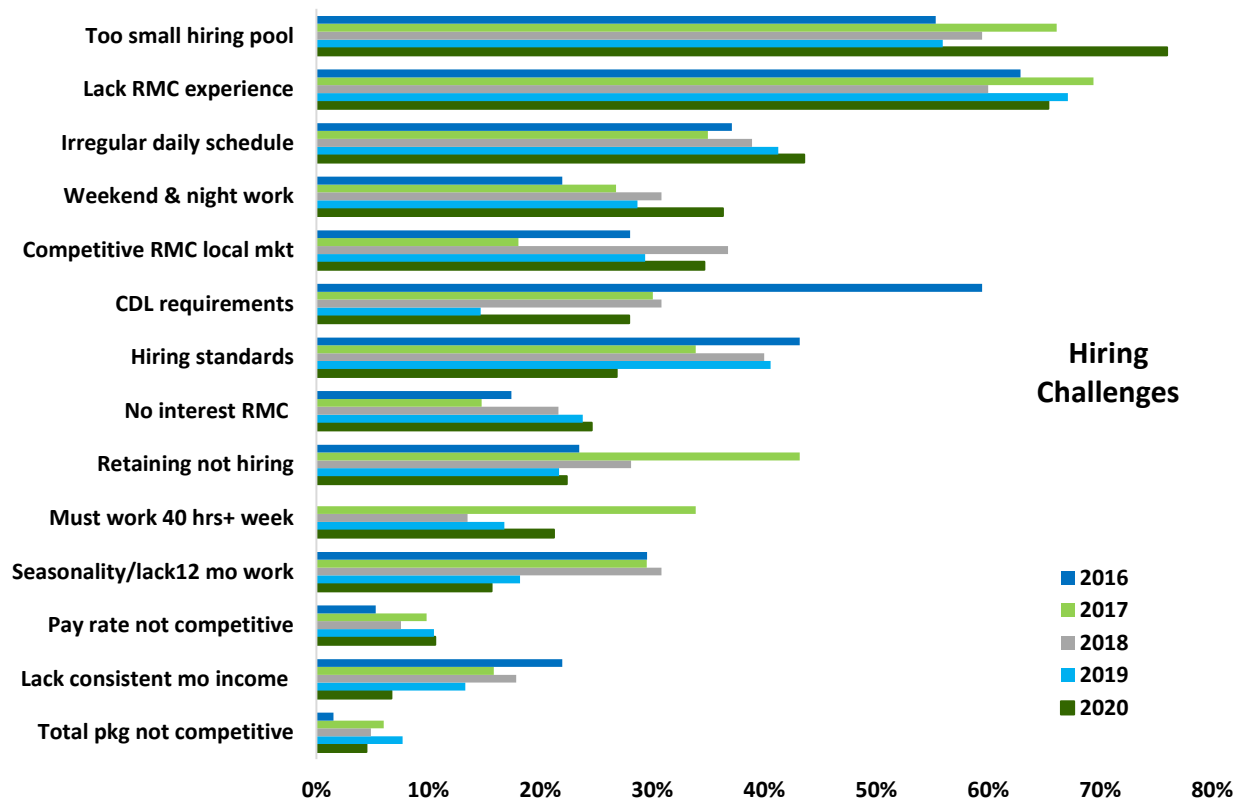
National	Total Vacant	% Total US Driver Pool	Vacancy Rate	% Companies w Vacancies	Average	Median	High	Low
2016 driver population 75,000	3,423	4.6%	4.6%	71%	8	4	70	0
2017 driver population 75,000	7,068	9.6%	9.6%	68%	11	4	232	0
2018 driver population 77,000	9,886	12.8%	13.1%	95%	18	6	417	0
2019 driver population 75,000	6,014	8.0%	8.0%	87%	13	5	144	0
2020 driver population 75,000	8,240	11.0%	10.9%	92%	15	7	176	0

Companies with End-of-Year Vacancies



Industry Hiring Challenges

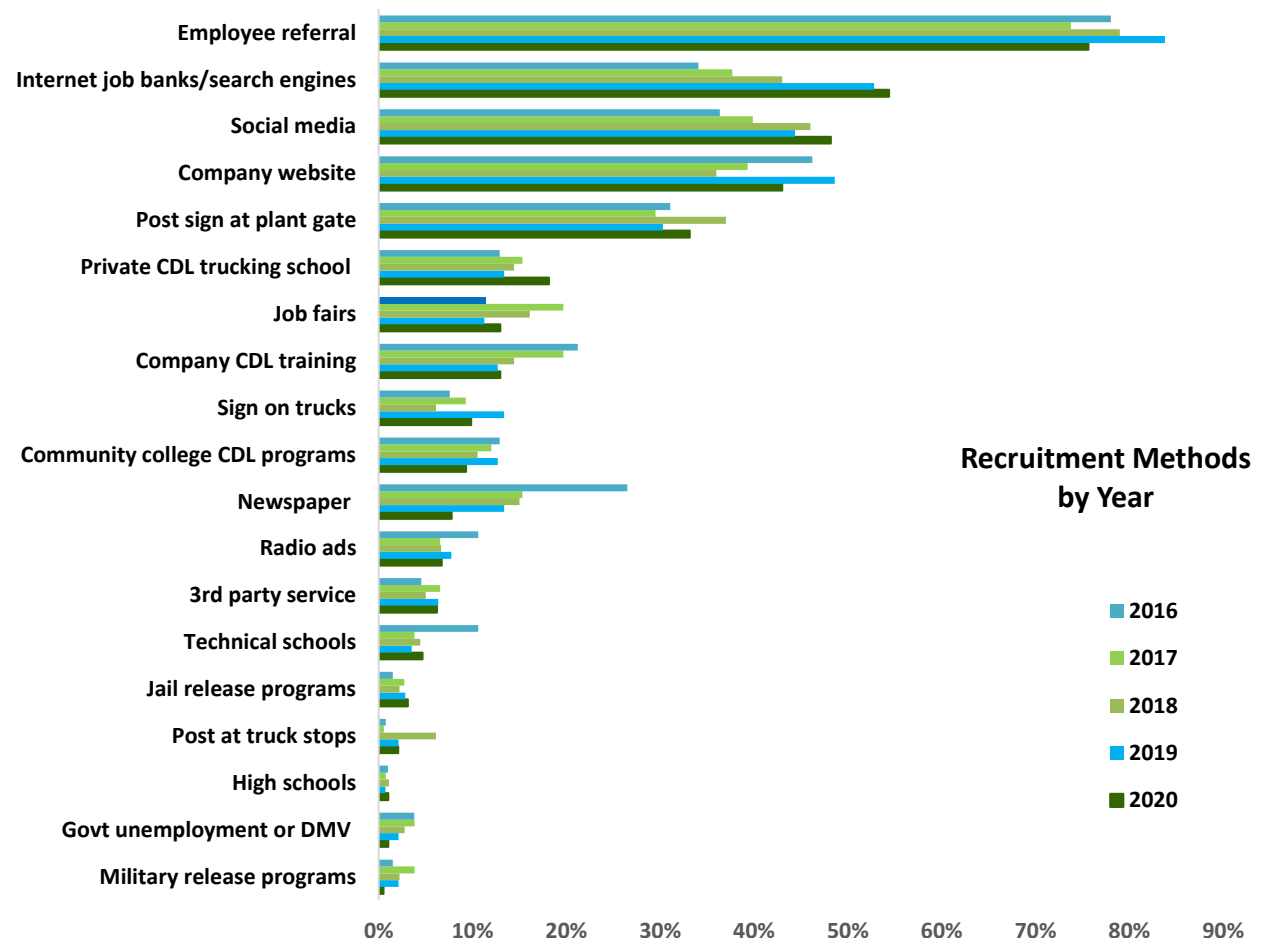
NRMCA asked survey respondents what their biggest challenges were when hiring mixer drivers. Response rate was 90%. A five-year comparison follows:



Industry Recruitment Methods

After understanding the challenges, the survey analyzed how producers addressed them when recruiting. The survey listed 19 recruitment methods adapted from those commonly used across all industries, as reported by SHRM and revised by NRMCA's Workforce Development Committee to dovetail with the ready mixed concrete industry. Finding show there has been little movement in the number of avenues producers used to solicit mixer driver job candidates.

	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
% Reporting	97%	94%	98%	100%	96%
Average Methods Used	3	3	3	3	4
Median	3	3	3	3	3
1 Method	18%	1%	17%	2%	11%
5+ Methods	26%	30%	26%	26%	26%



Hiring Analysis

The percent of a producer's new hires falls in the low-to-mid 30% of the mixer driver national population over the past five years. Response rate was 100% for all five years.

New Hires as Percent of Total Driver Pool



Producers willing to rehire former employees and new CDLs is about the same over the past three years, yet each category represents a small percentage of those hired.

How many of last year's hires were REHIRES?

National	Total Rehired	% Rehire to Full-time Hire	% Rehires to Driver Pool	% Producers Who Rehired Drivers
<i>2018 driver hire 28,282</i>	<i>2,674</i>	<i>9.5%</i>	<i>3.5%</i>	<i>56%</i>
<i>2019 driver hire 27,330</i>	<i>2,262</i>	<i>8.3%</i>	<i>3.0%</i>	<i>60%</i>
<i>2020 driver hire 27,330</i>	<i>2,453</i>	<i>9.6%</i>	<i>3.3%</i>	<i>62%</i>

How many mixer drivers hired were newly licensed CDL's?

National	Total New CDL Hire	% New CDLs to Total Full-time Hire	% New CDL Hires to Driver Pool	% Producers Who Hired New CDLs
<i>2018 total hire 28,202</i>	<i>2,158</i>	<i>7.7%</i>	<i>2.8%</i>	<i>51%</i>
<i>2019 total hire 27,330</i>	<i>1,932</i>	<i>7.1%</i>	<i>2.6%</i>	<i>56%</i>
<i>2020 driver hire 27,330</i>	<i>1,828</i>	<i>7.2%</i>	<i>2.4%</i>	<i>59%</i>

II. Retention

Staffing Level

The population in the survey has been stable for five years. In all five years, response rate was 100%.

Question	Survey Total	% of Driver Pool	Average	Median	High	Low
# Full time drivers on 1.1.16	20,721	28%	151	68	1,343	0
# Full time drivers on 12.31.16	22,352	30%	163	66	1,604	0
Question	Survey Total	% of Driver Pool	Average	Median	High	Low
# Full time drivers on 1.1.17	19,742	26%	108	44	1,249	0
# Full time drivers on 12.31.17	19,167	26%	105	46	996	0
Question	Survey Total	% of Driver Pool	Average	Median	High	Low
# Full time drivers on 5.1.18	23,643	31%	126	43	1,446	0
# Full time drivers on 4.30.19	24,510	32%	130	45	1,518	0
Question	Survey Total	% of Driver Pool	Average	Median	High	Low
# Full time drivers on 5.1.19	21,695	29%	144	52	1,516	5
# Full time drivers on 4.30.20	21,386	29%	142	58	1,521	5
Question	Survey Total	% of Driver Pool	Average	Median	High	Low
# Full time drivers on 5.1.20	25,565	34%	128	47.5	1,572	0
# Full time drivers on 4.30.21	25,314	34%	127	51.5	1,542	1

Staffing Demographics

Age

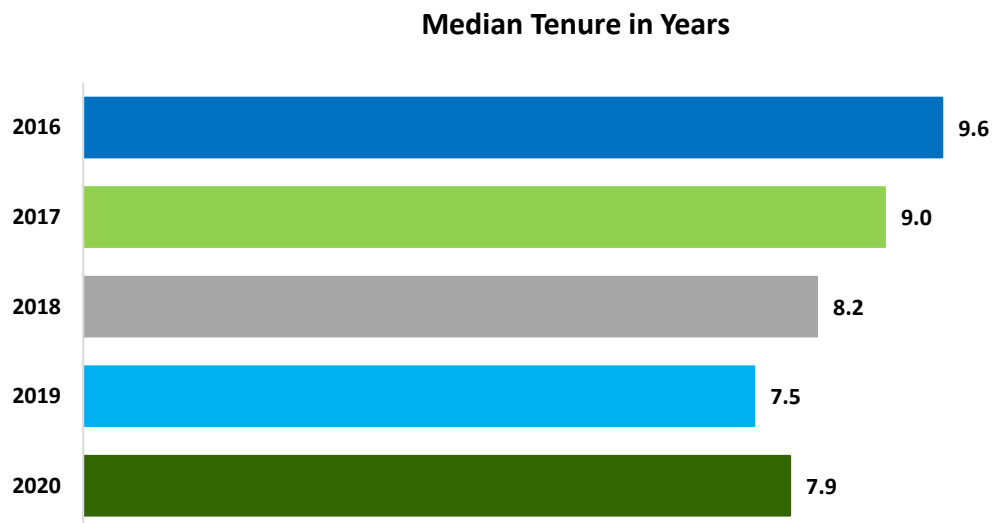
In the past five years, generally, the average and median age of mixer drivers has been relatively stable.

Age by Year	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average
National	46.4	46.5	46.3	46.4	46.9
	Median	Median	Median	Median	Median
National	47.0	46.0	46.0	47.0	47.0

Mixer drivers' median age was 47.0 years old, older than the U.S. BLS 2020 estimated median age of "material moving workers" at 41.4 years, 46.0 years for "durable goods manufacturing: 'cement, concrete, lime, and gypsum products'", and 47.2 years for "truck transportation workers". The U.S. BLS reported the median age for a full time working male in 2019 was 41.9 years. The U.S. BLS only reports median. Response rate was 97%.

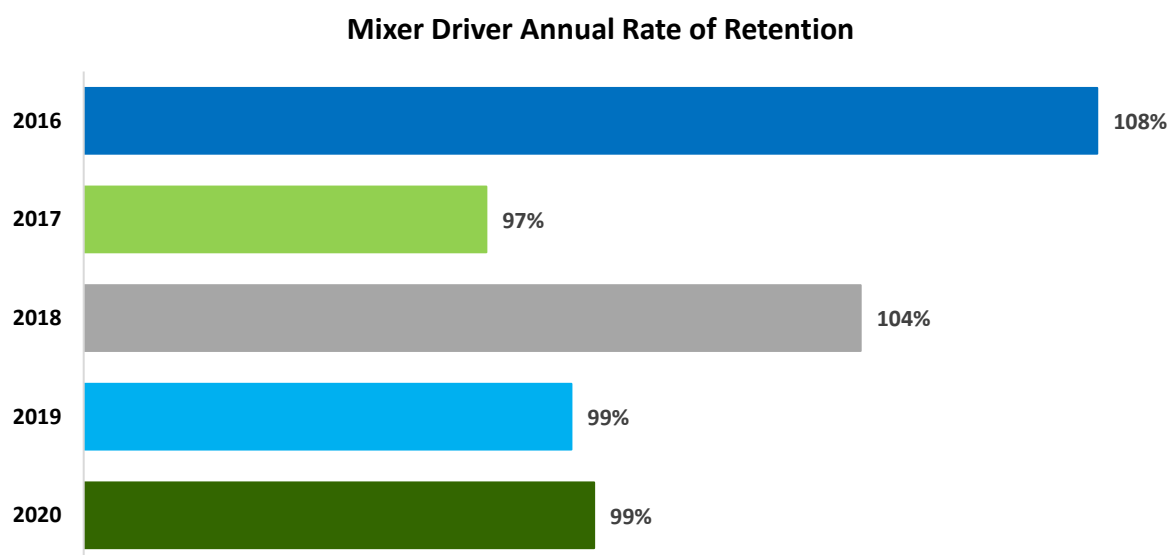
Tenure

Mixer driver tenure, that is, the length of company employment in years slightly increased last year.

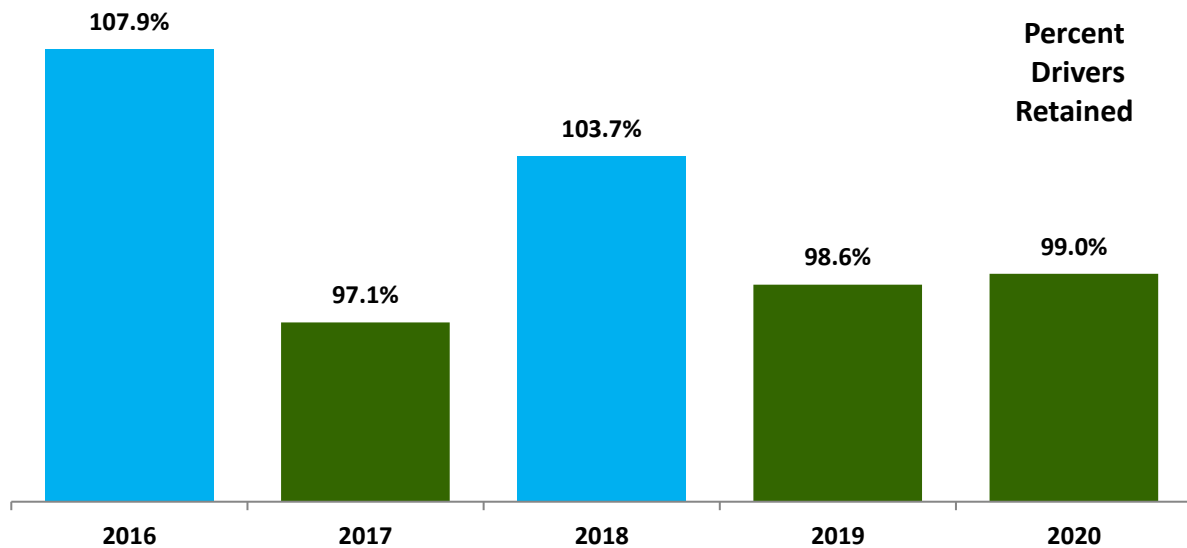


Rate of Retention

The rate of retention, also called the “stability index,” measures the retention of a specific group of employees over a specified period. To ascertain the success of that endeavor, the Society for Human Resource Management set a protocol, called the *rate of retention*. It is calculated by taking the number of “stayers” at the end of the calculation period divided by the number of employees at the beginning of the calculation period. It is reported as a percentage.



In the 2021 survey, the 25,314 drivers employed on April 30, 2021 were divided by the 25,565 drivers employed on May 1, 2020. The decrease of the survey pool's mixer drivers between those two dates was -1.0%, or a retention rate of 99.0%



Turnover Rate

Turnover tells an employer how many times a single position was occupied by a different employee throughout the designated period. It looks at the company's employee volatility or "churn."

This survey's mixer driver turnover rate was calculated by dividing the total of all drivers who left by the average number of mixer drivers on the first day of the survey, May 1, 2020, and on the last day, April 30, 2021. By a small margin, more drivers left than were hired. It is the highest percentage of drivers leaving in five years, quit and released combined, at 33.8%, equating to the highest annual turnover rate of 35.2%. Note that the U.S. BLS continually reports the quit rate increased the past 10 years due to a tight labor market. Response rate was 99%.

How many full-time mixer drivers left your company between the 1st day of the survey and the last day?

National	Total left	% Total US Driver Pool	Turnover Rate	Average	Median	High	Low
<i>2016 driver population 75,000</i>	<i>18,676</i>	<i>24.9%</i>	<i>25.8%</i>	<i>41</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>494</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>2017 driver population 75,000</i>	<i>22,151</i>	<i>29.5%</i>	<i>29.1%</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>617</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>2018 driver population 77,000</i>	<i>25,031</i>	<i>32.5%</i>	<i>33.1%</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>674</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>2019 driver population 75,000</i>	<i>25,201</i>	<i>33.6%</i>	<i>33.4%</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>419</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>2020 driver population 75,000</i>	<i>25,314</i>	<i>33.8%</i>	<i>35.2%</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>869</i>	<i>0</i>

Below reports a comparison (permanently quit and released) between tenured drivers and new hire turnover within the same year. The number is a composite of drivers who quit and permanently released. Please see above for the estimated mixer driver population by year.

National	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Total Mixer Driver Departures	26,493	25,201	25,031	22,151	18,676
- New Hires Left Same Year	7,576	6,491	9,785	6,746	4,818
- Drivers 1+ Years Tenure Left	18,917	18,710	15,246	15,405	13,858
% Drivers 1+ Years Tenure Left to Total	71%	74%	61%	70%	74%

Voluntary (Quits) Turnover Rate

The voluntary turnover rate was calculated by taking the number of quits divided by the average of the total of drivers on May 1, 2019 and April 30, 2020. Response rate was 99%.

How many full-time mixer drivers quit your company between the 1st day of the survey and the last day?

National	Total left	% Total US Driver Pool	Voluntary Turnover Rate	Average	Median	High	Low
2016 driver population 75,000	10,667	14.2%	14.8%	24	8	330	0
2017 driver population 75,000	13,738	18.3%	18.0%	20	6	386	0
2018 driver population 77,000	16,693	21.7%	22.0%	29	9	419	0
2019 driver population 75,000	15,866	21.2%	21.0%	30	11	419	0
2020 driver population 75,000	15,981	21.3%	21.2%	28	9	455	0

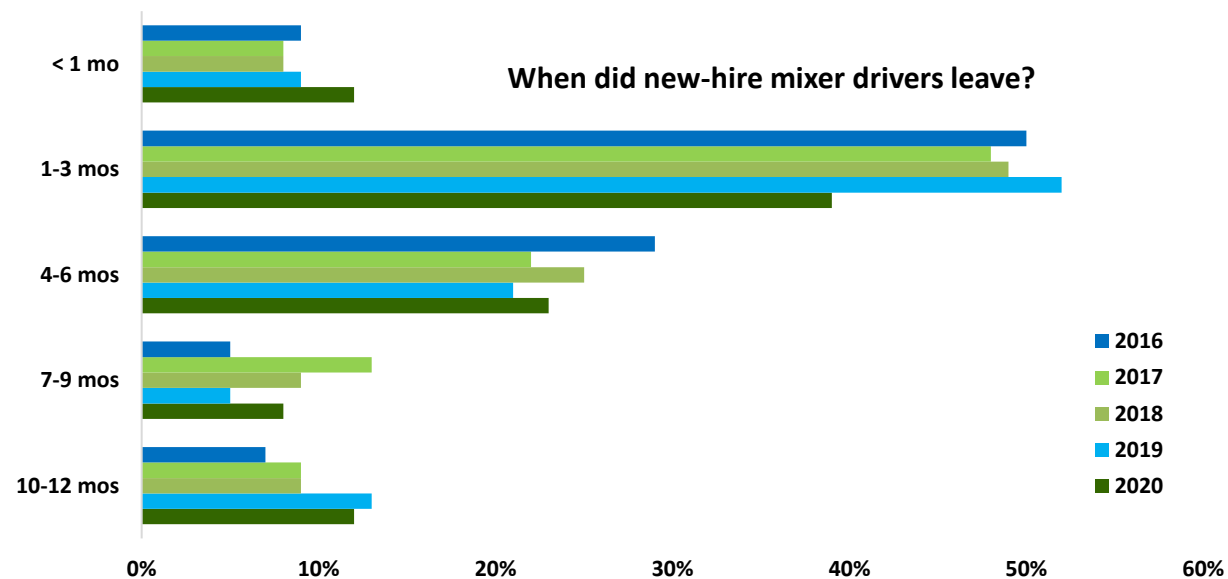
New Hire Voluntary (Quits) Rate

Last year saw an increase in new-hire quits.

How many full time mixer drivers HIRED last year also QUIT last year?

National	Total Hired	Total New Hire Quit	Hired/Quit Turnover Rate	% New Hire Quit to Total Quit	Average	Median	High	Low
2016 driver population 75,000	20,297	4,818	24.0%	45.2%	11	4	183	0
2017 driver population 75,000	23,384	6,746	28.8%	49.1%	10	3	145	0
2018 driver population 77,000	28,202	9,785	34.7%	58.6%	17	5	322	0
2019 driver population 75,000	27,330	6,491	23.8%	40.9%	13	5	245	0
2020 driver population 75,000	25,495	7,576	29.7%	47.4%	13	4	207	0

Further insight shows while the first six months were critical, the first three months are even more so.

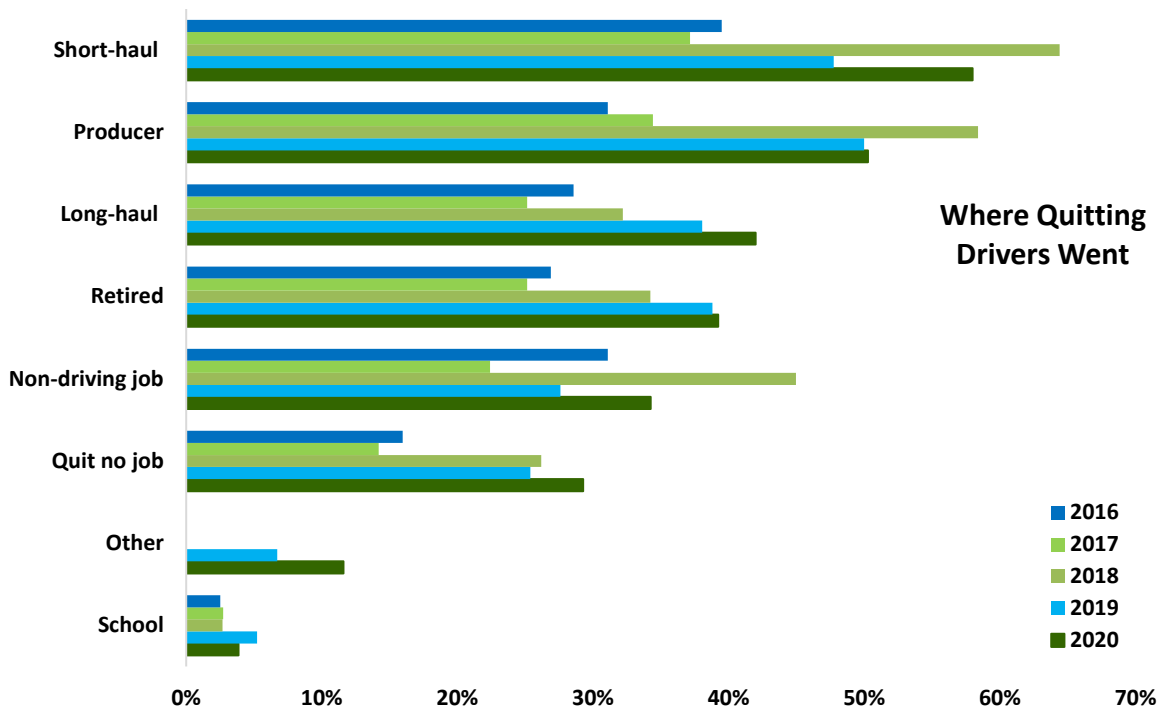


Why Mixer Drivers Quit

Respondents were asked to rank the top five reasons their mixer drivers quit. Generally, there was consistency over time. **RED** ranked **first**; **BLUE** ranked **second**; **GREEN** ranked **third**.

What are the top 5 reasons your mixer drivers quit?

	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Inconsistent daily schedule	65%	62%	60%	42%	60%
Higher pay	56%	63%	64%	58%	42%
Reason not listed	48%	36%	44%	15%	33%
Working weekends	46%	33%	38%	28%	33%
Retired	40%	22%	31%	28%	32%
Job stress	39%	15%	29%	22%	24%
Issue w company policy	38%	29%	25%	27%	27%
Lack steady 12 mo income	34%	31%	37%	39%	49%
Quit before issue solved	33%	19%	22%	27%	30%
Wants only driving duties	31%	13%	26%	21%	16%
Working nights	31%	21%	25%	22%	25%
Moved	31%	14%	24%	26%	21%
Better employment package	30%	28%	30%	24%	29%
Seasonality/lack 12 mo work	29%	17%	30%	26%	26%
CDL issues	26%	8%	25%	21%	21%
Supervisor issues	24%	10%	23%	17%	13%
Lack of advancement	24%	8%	21%	14%	15%
Lack of training	18%	4%	14%	10%	7%
Felt unsafe	17%	2%	14%	9%	7%

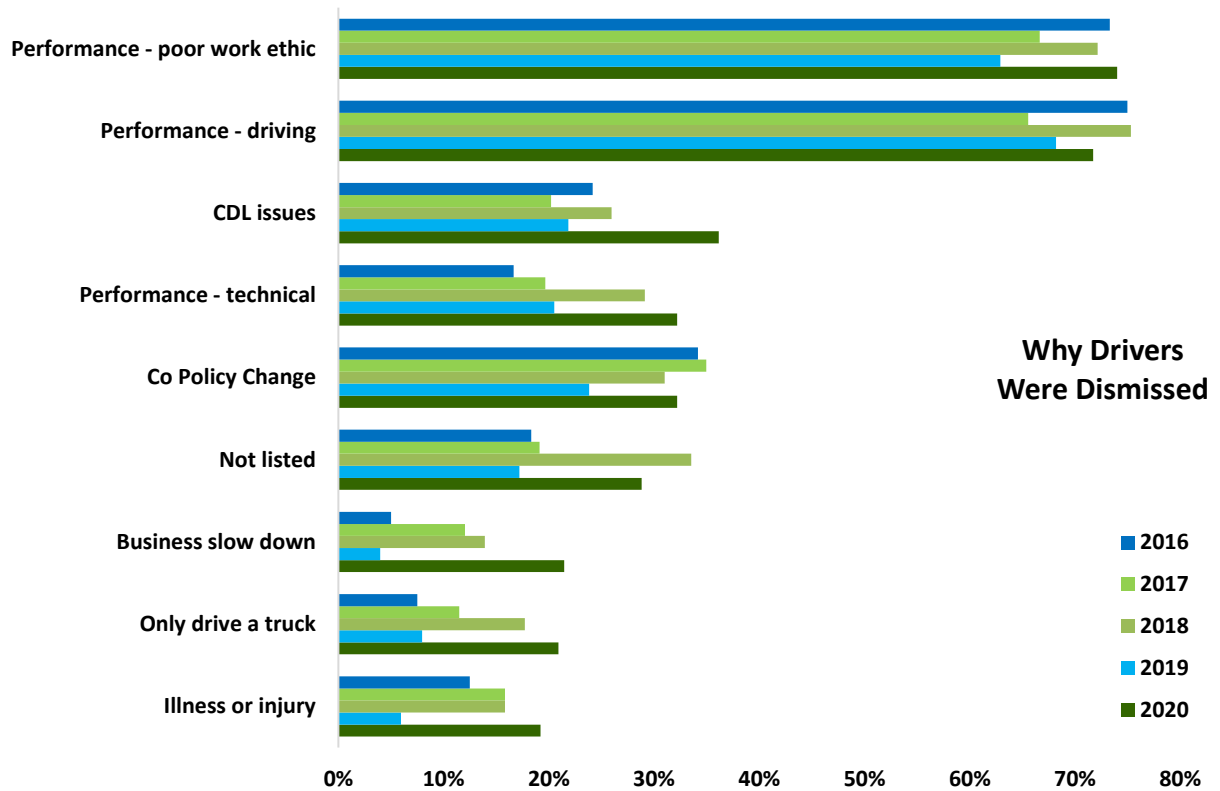


Involuntary Turnover

The involuntary turnover relates to the employer's decision to release a mixer driver. This coupled with the lay-off analysis showed no large movement that could be contributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. The rate was calculated by taking the total number of involuntary separations divided by the average number of mixer drivers on May 1, 2019 and April 30, 2020. The question's response rate was 97%.

**How many full-time mixer drivers were involuntarily released?
Include permanently released and temporary layoffs.**

National	Total left	% Total US Driver Pool	Involuntary Turnover Rate	Average	Median	High	Low
2015 driver population 75,000	8,446	11.3%	11.7%	18	4	377	0
2016 driver population 75,000	6,144	8.2%	8.5%	14	6	121	0
2017 driver population 75,000	6,331	8.6%	8.4%	9	3	127	0
2018 driver population 77,000	7,596	9.9%	10.0%	13	5	255	0
2019 driver population 75,000	8,280	11.0%	11.0%	16	5	405	0



Epilogue

Reasons for the mixer driver shortage are numerous, some presented in this survey, yet there are other factors, too. The ready mixed concrete industry's experiences are backed by The Conference Board's comprehensive report, US Labor Shortages: Challenges and Solutions, where, "85% of companies in 'mostly blue-collar industries' report recruiting and retention difficulties. If left unchecked, today's conditions could easily develop into one of the worst labor shortages in the last 50 years."

NRMCA members report a lack of awareness of the job itself, starting at the high school level when other industries recruit non-college bound seniors. Recent literature shows younger age groups who might have gravitated to commercial driving discovered the expanding warehousing sector, which is friendlier to work-life balance. This couples with the fact that the ready mixed concrete industry does not have the tradition of growing-their-own, as other skilled, licensed trades. Additionally, for those youngsters interested in short haul driving jobs, they and their employers must deal with Amazon's aggressive recruiting as well as the fact that 18-21 year old licensed commercial drivers cannot cross state lines (yet). Furthermore, for producers who are not self-insured, they are influenced by coverage rates for younger drivers as well as by years of experience requirements. Finally, producers must be aware of the impact of the new federal requirement where drivers must pass pre-employment and random drug screenings.

According to the National Association of Publically Funded Truck Driving Schools, the average age for a new truck driving student is 30 years old+, meaning the person is on a new career path, perhaps their third or fourth. CDL schools closed in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, graduating at least 50% fewer drivers. Nevertheless, for the near future, this should not affect producers; the industry hires few new CDLs, equating to just 7% of total the total annual hire, each year for the past three years.

Throw into the pot the younger generations' population numbers are not as large as retiring boomers or Gen Xers, the labor market is much more competitive on every front. Correspondingly, there is lots of research showing a reduction of younger males participating in the labor market, thereby significantly reducing the supply of workers in occupations that typically hire young and less-educated workers. Finally, it appears a year of COVID-19 has the working population redefining essential job factors, TBD.

Thoughtfulness toward a host of challenges for such a dominate work classification in the ready mixed concrete business will be necessary for it to remain healthy.

Annually, NRMCA's Workforce Development Committee conducts the Mixer Driver Recruitment and Retention Survey in early summer; the report is released in early fall. Participation is open to the entire ready mixed concrete industry.