

Uneven wear: Health and wellbeing of professional truck drivers from interviews with drivers and family members.

"I'm not a truck driver, I'm a transport driver... I am a professional driver and I'll always consider myself that". Driver 14

Plain language summary

Truck driving is the most common work for Australian males, with 1 in 33 men being a driver. It is known that driving a truck carries risks to both physical and mental health. Even though we know about these challenges, we do not know how they impact the drivers and their families. We interviewed 17 drivers and 9 family members across Australia, to find out their experiences.

After analysing the interviews, we found seven key areas of impact that drivers experienced:

1. Drivers talked about the things that impact their physical health, like not having access to eat good food or get a good sleep.
"The biggest issue with drivers is just food and the availability of fresh, good food on the road"
Driver 03
2. They discussed and the challenges around coping with stress on the road and what got them through the tough times.
"They might go home with a short fuse and not realise that that's part of their mental health"
Family Member 07
3. Work had a big impact on relationships with family and friends, and changed how drivers fitted in with their family and friends.
"Myself and my ex-wife separated... because I was away so much" Driver 03
4. Drivers described themselves as being the "lowest in the food chain". Some workplaces were better than others.
"They like to try and yell, rant and rave down the phone at me" Driver 01
5. Drivers wanted to be able to manage their own rest. Regulations can mean drivers are required to rest when alert and drive when sleepy.
"They don't understand our job and they don't understand that we need the ability to be able to make decisions for ourselves" Driver 15
6. Drivers described full parking bays, dangerous roads and dirty facilities.
"[You] arrive [at the parking bay for your planned stop], it's full of caravans... [you have to keep driving to the next bay], 'Here's a fine, I'll see you in court' " Driver 05
7. Drivers feel that the public don't respect them and what they do.
"We get blamed for the accident whether it's our fault or not." Driver 12

A balance is needed across all of these important seven areas for health and wellbeing, otherwise it would be like driving on flat tyres or causing uneven wear.

Drivers talked about things that made easier to be healthy as well as things that made it harder.

Makes it easier to be healthy		Makes it harder to be healthy	
	having connections to help with mental health - like talking to family and friends	✘	Unrealistic demands that decrease control over work
	having different ways to cope and being able to enjoy the good things about work	✘	Financial pressure to be on time and for the lowest cost
		✘	Not being respected for the work that they do

		✘	Support systems that don't match what they need
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The drivers mainly talked about the negative things about their job and the bad impact that these had on their health. They also said that change needed to cover three areas: drivers, the companies and regulators.

If we are going to improve the health and wellbeing of professional truck drivers across Australia, we need to work out what programs will help their physical and mental health. Whatever those programs are, they need to apply to drivers, companies and the whole industry.

This report would not be possible without the contribution of the professional truck drivers and family members who agreed to be interviewed. Thank You!

If you experience any discomfort after reading this information, or want to improve your physical or mental health, please schedule an appointment with your GP, speak to your local health professional or search online for professional psychological services in your area.

You can access immediate support through [Mensline](#) (call 1300 78 99 78), [Lifeline](#) (call 13 11 14) or [Beyond Blue](#) (call 1300 224 636).

If you or your organisation would like to know more about what the transport industry is doing to improve mental health, please visit [Steering Healthy Minds](#) or [Healthy Heads in Trucks and Sheds for two new initiatives focused on mental health](#).

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