



**WOMEN IN  
TRUCKING**

**Addressing Gender Bias  
and Harassment in the  
Trucking Industry**

**Whitepaper Safety & Harassment Series**

# Addressing Gender Bias and Harassment in the Trucking Industry

## Introduction

The Women In Trucking Association (WIT) is America's leading industry association for women in the trucking industry. With more than 6,000 members in 10-plus countries around the world, the mission of WIT is to encourage the employment of women in the trucking industry, promote their accomplishments, and minimize obstacles they face. From educating women about the benefits of becoming a truck driver to ensuring companies adopt best practices to ensure proper recruitment, training, and safety protocols, WIT is on the front lines of advocating, protecting, and promoting the need for more inclusivity in the trucking industry.



From July through September 2021, WIT conducted a driver safety and harassment survey to gain perspectives from professional drivers about their perceptions and experiences involving safety and harassment of women in the North American trucking industry. WIT conducted this survey to provide added context to its most recent 2019 WIT Index (conducted by FreightWaves), which found that women comprised 10.2 percent of the industry's driver workforce. When asked about the most critical aspect the trucking industry should focus on to increase the percentage of drivers in the industry, safety tied for family/home time as females' top response.

Prior to deploying this survey in 2021, WIT was aware that a lot has changed over the past two years since the

previous survey, with unique change driven by the COVID-19 pandemic. The North American trucking industry has gradually come to a consensus on the need to address this homogeneity problem and has taken strides to correct it. Recent U.S. Department of Labor data indicates that there has been an 88 percent increase in female drivers since 2010. At the same time, however, the Department of Labor found that women still currently comprise under 8 percent of all drivers, sales workers, and truck drivers. These figures suggest that, while the industry is moving in the right direction, stakeholders need to do more to encourage female participation in the industry. The most recent WIT survey sought to determine what has changed for better or worse since 2019 while exploring what further steps the industry can take to increase gender inclusivity.

From educating women about the benefits of becoming a truck driver to ensuring companies adopt best practices to ensure proper recruitment, training, and safety protocols, Women In Trucking is on the front lines advocating, protecting, and promoting the need for more inclusivity in the trucking industry.

*“Being a professional driver is no longer a gender-based job. But men in this industry are not being widely retrained or held accountable for being disrespectful [or worse], and behavior needs to change. If we do not tolerate bad behavior, it will eventually change.”*

Anonymous  
female driver

A key learning from this study is that while companies with for-hire or private fleets have taken steps to reduce sexual harassment or gender bias through formal policies, training and sensitivity programs, there remains a lot of work yet to be done in these areas. In fact, approximately 30 percent of the professional drivers participating in this WIT survey were either unaware of their company's harassment policies or stated their employer did not have them in place.

This research project is to benchmark the magnitude of the problem of sexual harassment and gender bias, and to identify opportunities for ways to minimize harassment and gender bias in the transportation workplace.

## Demographics

There were 436 professional drivers who completed this survey. Approximately 66 percent were female, 32 percent were male, and nearly 2 percent identified as non-binary. Approximately 77 percent of respondents identified their race as White; 15 percent identified themselves as Hispanic, Native American, Asian, or other; and another 8 percent identified their race as Black. A vast majority of respondents (approximately 95 percent) hold a Class A or Class B driver's license.



A large percentage of respondents (nearly 37 percent) were highly experienced, with more than 20 years of professional driving experience. An additional 23 percent had 10 to 19 years of experience. Another 34 percent had between 1 to 9 years of experience. Nearly 6 percent were new to the professional, with less than one year experience.

Naturally corresponding with the level of experience as a professional driver, a majority of respondents (approximately 74 percent) were more than 50 years of age. Another 23 percent were between the age of 35 to 49 years. Approximately 3 percent were younger than 25 years of age.

A significant percentage work for a for-hire trucking company (47 percent) and nearly 27 percent work for an Owner/Operator. An additional 11 percent work for a private fleet, and an additional 15 percent work drive for a third-party logistics provider or other type of company.

What type of routes do respondents typically run? A vast majority drive long-haul over-the-road (nearly 74 percent), while another 22 percent are involved in short-haul driving assignments. Nearly 16 percent are involved in pick-up and delivery.

## Gender Bias & Harassment

Gender bias and harassment has been a primary concern of current and prospective female truck drivers. As such, it was also a primary focus of this WIT survey.

While most respondents indicated that the trucking industry is a fair and safe one for women to be employed within, over 50 percent also reported falling victim to harassment at some point in the past or knowing of someone who has. These statistics indicate that, while the industry has made great strides in fostering more diversity and inclusion, it still has ways to go to ensure all women in the workplace receive fair and equal treatment.

Leveraging the responses to our survey, we identified several gaps and vulnerabilities in industry stakeholders' current corporate policies and operational practices that have inadvertently allowed gender bias and harassment in the workplace to persist. We have outlined several ways that the industry can address these concerns to create fairer and more respectful work cultures for all.

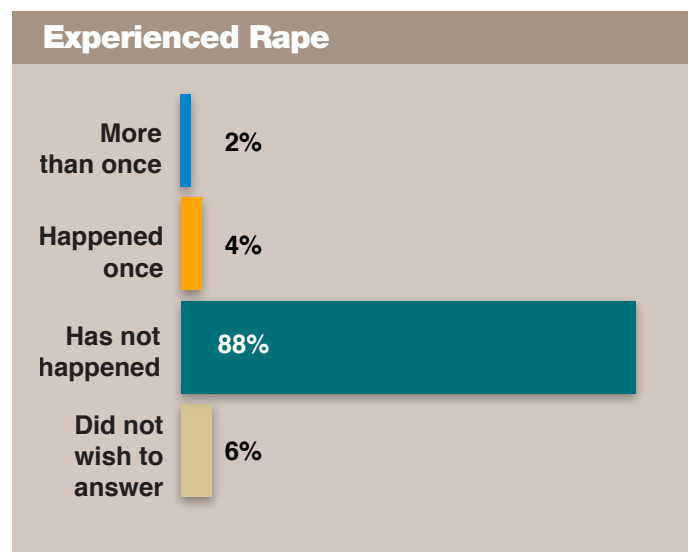
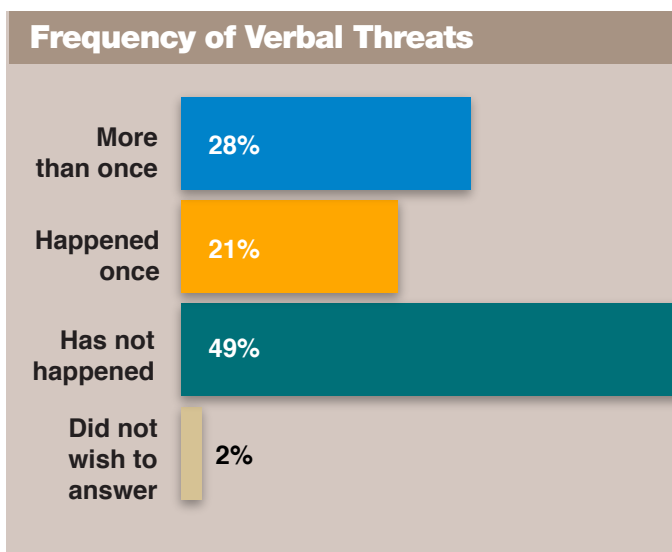
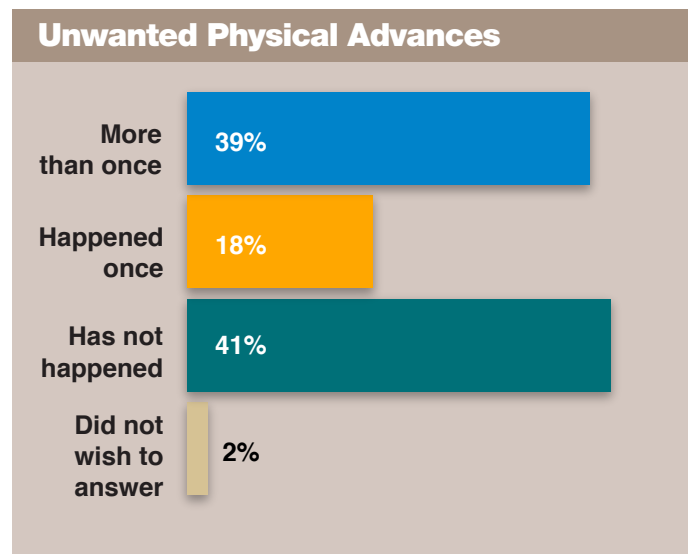
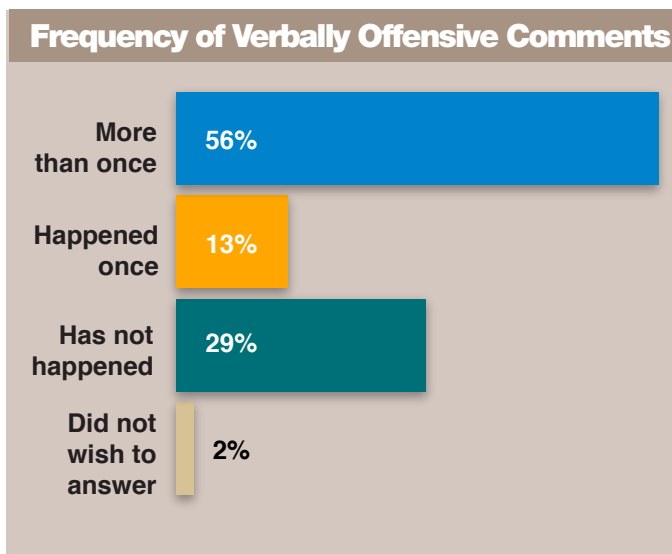
Female respondents reported that within the past five years they experienced physical violence while on the job: Approximately 6 percent reported they have been raped while another approximately 18 percent said they have been threatened with a weapon.

## Perceptions

### ***Do professional drivers believe the trucking industry is fair to and safe for women?***

Over 55 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that trucking is a safe industry for women to be employed in. Less than 18 percent disagreed with that statement.

At the same time, a concerning number of respondents reported experiencing harassment and knowing of others who experienced harassment while on the job. Nearly 70 percent of respondents reported that someone had said something verbally offensive to them while on the job. Approximately 49 percent reported being verbally threatened at least once, while approximately 57 percent reported receiving unwanted physical advances while working.



\*Within past 5 years

Over 64 percent of respondents know of someone that has been the subject of verbal abuse while on the job. Over 55 percent reported that they know someone who was verbally threatened, while over 52 percent reported knowing someone that has received unwanted physical advances while working.

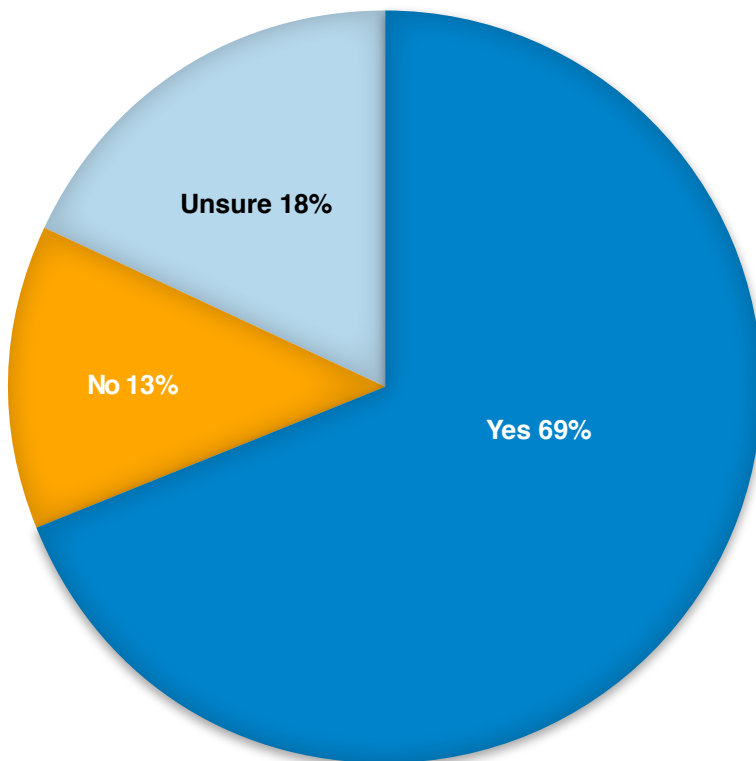
## Corporate Policy Recommendations

### ***Implement and enforce workplace harassment policies.***

Over 37 percent of respondents reported their company either not having a harassment policy or being unsure of whether their company has one.

While most of the trucking industry recognizes the problem of gender bias and harassment and has already taken corrective measures, many stakeholders have yet to codify their concerns into official corporate policy. Others have yet to enforce said policies to a degree where it has become recognized by employees.

### Companies with a Harassment Policy



To incite a meaningful corporate culture change, all companies should create tailored gender bias and harassment plans that outline with specificity what is and isn't tolerated in the workplace and what consequences will come from violating the policy.

To protect whistleblowers and foster environments that encourage victims and witnesses to come forward, all gender bias and harassment policies should also guarantee that employees who report gender bias and/or harassment won't suffer adverse job consequences.

Companies should communicate their gender bias and harassment policy to employees annually, not just at training.

### **Implement same-gender training programs.**

While industry stakeholders' principal goal should be to minimize workplace inequities by changing the dynamics of their institutional cultures, they must also crack down on the top areas where gender bias and harassment are perpetuated. Implementing same-gender training represents an ideal place to start.

Driver training often requires spending long periods with a member of the opposite gender alone, including sleeping in the truck cab. As such, it's no surprise that respondents indicated that it represents a top industry safety risk for women.

Respondents gave sharing a truck cab with a member of the opposite gender an average safety rating of just a 5 out of 10. More than 42 percent reported being aware of someone who has experienced harassment or assault while sharing a cab with an opposite gender trainer.

Yet more than 33 percent of respondents indicated that none of the companies they have ever driven for had offered same-gender training programs.

Implementing same-gender training will eliminate one of women’s leading industry vulnerabilities, resulting in female truckers feeling safer and more secure and more women joining the industry in the years to come.

## Employ more women in management roles.

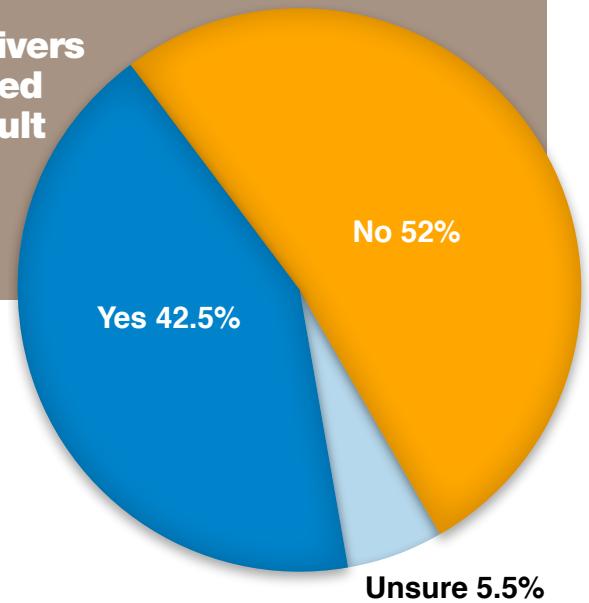
Company leadership staff that includes appropriate gender representation of its employee base is far more equipped to understand, address, and correct the many ways gender bias and harassment persist in the workplace.

In recent years, trucking companies have provided women more management and senior executive roles than ever before; that said, more can still be done to ensure appropriate representation.

In 2021, of 16 publicly traded motor carriers, women comprised 23 percent of the board director seats and 15 percent of the leadership executive positions (a significant increase from nine percent in 2020). Only one among this group of motor carriers had no women serving on their board of directors, but four motor carriers still had no female executives on their management team.

Further closing this gender leadership gap will help companies remain knowledgeable of and ahead of the curve in addressing their employee base’s recurring gender bias and harassment concerns.

**Are You Aware of Drivers who have Experienced Harassment or Assault when Sharing Cab with Opposite Gender Trainer?**



## Conclusion

While the trucking industry should be proud of the significant strides it has made in fostering gender inclusivity over the last four years, our 2021 survey makes it clear that gender bias and harassment remains a significant concern for female drivers that’s deserving of all stakeholders’ time and attention.

By further addressing the many ways that gender bias and harassment persist, trucking companies will not only create fairer, more diverse, and more wholesome work cultures, but they will also encourage more women to enter the industry, thereby resolving many of the employee shortage and supply chain problems that the industry currently faces.



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