

Title	THE IMAGE OF THE ROAD FREIGHT TRANSPORT AND WAREHOUSING INDUSTRY
Authors	Julian Allen, Maja Piecyk
Number (ENG-TR)	ENG-TR.029
Date	January 2023
ISSN	2633-6839

THE IMAGE OF THE ROAD FREIGHT TRANSPORT AND WAREHOUSING INDUSTRY

Briefing Report

Technical Report ENG-TR.029

January 2023

Julian Allen and Maja Piecyk

University of Westminster

This briefing report has been produced as part of the Centre for Sustainable Road Freight (SRF – EPSRC grant number EP/R035148/1). Further details about the SRF project are available at: <http://www.csrf.ac.uk/>

Allen J., M. Piecyk †

**The Image of the Road Freight Transport and Warehousing
Industry – Briefing Report**

Technical Report: ENG-TR.029

January 2023

ISSN Number: 2633-6839



Centre for Sustainable Road Freight

Department of Engineering
University of Cambridge
Trumpington Street
Cambridge
CB2 1PZ

Heriot-Watt University
Edinburgh Campus
Edinburgh
EH14 4AS

University of Westminster †
309 Regent Street
London
W1B 2HW

www.sustainableroadfreight.org.uk

1. Introduction

The quality, speed and reliability of road freight transport and logistics services in the UK has improved greatly over recent decades through a mix of technological, operational and regulatory improvements. The UK's economy and society are highly dependent on the availability of goods and services that these freight transport services provide. As McKinnon (2006) has shown, major disruption to road freight transport operations would result in our current quality of life only being maintained for a few days. For instance, after a two-day lack of supply most perishable short shelf-life products would be unavailable in supermarkets and construction work would have ceased on most building sites, and after five days virtually all manufacturing industry would have ceased and there would be major disruptions in hospitals (McKinnon, 2006).

However, despite these advances in logistics and road freight transport services and the benefits that these have provided society, the image of the industry tends to be largely negative. Following Brexit, the Covid-19 pandemic, and tax changes for self-employed workers in 2021 workforce shortages in the logistics industry, from warehouse operatives to vehicle drivers, became greater than ever in the UK. For a long period of time, the average age of heavy goods vehicle (HGV) drivers had been increasing due to recruitment and retention difficulties with younger workers. In addition, representation in logistics roles among women and those from ethnic minorities has remained far lower than in many other industries and in the general population (Piecyk and Allen, 2021). This shortage of labour, together with worker strikes resulting from pay offers that fail to keep up with the cost of living in 2022 is placing modern supply chains under greater strain than ever, thereby jeopardising the provision of goods and services as and when required.

The shortage of logistics workers is affected by both recruitment and retention rates. Many factors influence people's decisions to both enter and remain in the logistics industry including pay, working conditions, and career progression prospects (Piecyk and Allen, 2021). An often overlooked factor in considering the perceived attractiveness of any given industry is its image and the ways in which this affects the perception of the general public, who in turn decide what career path to follow and impart their views and opinions to family and friends.

This report considers the image of the road freight transport and warehousing industry in the UK, the factors that have contributed to this image and the effects of this image on public perception. It has been produced as part of the Centre for Sustainable Road Freight (SRF – EPSRC grant number EP/R035148/1). Further details about the SRF project are available at: <http://www.csrf.ac.uk/>

2. Public perception of the UK road freight transport and warehousing industry

A key factor that is regularly given high importance in research into worker shortages in road freight transport and warehousing is that of the image of the industry with the general public. Research dating back as far as the 1960s found that more goods vehicle drivers felt that the public had a negative attitude towards their industry than felt the public had a positive attitude (Hollowell, 1968). Comments made by respondents about how they felt their occupational status was perceived included, "A driver is just a glorified labourer", "They've got a funny idea about drivers, they think we're all crooks and layabouts", "They think you're not clean because you're a lorry driver, in a lot of places they don't want to know you", and "They think that lorry drivers are the scum of the earth because we live rough and stop in towns with women" (quoted in Hollowell, 1968). Reasons that respondents who thought the public had a negative view of them gave for these views included status problems in their industry, and perceived improper behaviour of drivers.

A 2005 survey found that 69% of company respondents thought that the logistics industry had a negative image with the general public, while only 15% thought that it did not (Skills for Logistics, 2005). A 2007 survey of those working in the industry (comprising predominantly managers and directors but also drivers, operatives and administrators) found that approximately one-third of

respondents thought that the industry's image was the most important barrier to new recruits joining the logistics industry. Respondents felt that the media and employers were approximately equally to blame for the poor industry image (mentioned by 33% and 31% of respondents respectively), followed by education system (22% of respondents). Only 14% of respondents believed that employees were the cause of the poor image. In addition, 48% of respondents had been verbally abused while driving for work and 50% had been victims of a "road rage" incident (Skills for Logistics, 2007). The then chairperson of Skills for Logistics spoke of the image problems facing the industry stating that if not addressed they would affect future growth and profitability in the industry due to difficulties in recruiting employees with suitable skills, knowledge and enthusiasm. He commented that, "Those of us working within the industry know that the traditional public perception of dead-end jobs, greasy overalls and low pay is no longer valid – but unless we do more to convince outsiders that the industry provides a vast range of exciting and varied career opportunities we're unlikely to close the skills and vacancies gaps that currently exist. In fact, these gaps are predicted to get worse" (Skills for Logistics, 2006).

In 2009, Logistics UK (which was called the Freight Transport Association or FTA until 2020) commissioned qualitative and quantitative research to examine public attitudes towards the logistics sector. This comprised focus groups with the general public as well as questions included in the face-to-face TNS omnibus survey from a representative sample of 2,000 adults from across the UK (Freight Transport Association, 2010). This research indicated that the public's current knowledge and understanding of the logistics industry was modest. Many participants admitted that they took the benefits of freight transport and logistics for granted and had rarely, if ever, considered the mechanics of how the industry functioned in order that they could access goods and services. The research highlighted the extent to which the general public perceived road freight transport as being the entire logistics industry and used road freight as a means by which to consider and assess logistics as a whole. Many involved in the research believed that freight transport only involved the large-scale movement of goods, on a national and international level and were unsure whether or not local goods movements, the use of vans and activities such as postal deliveries, and one-off movements such as removals should be thought of as freight transport. When asked, participants said that they obtained knowledge of the freight industry through documentaries, news and direct experience on the road. News stories concerning freight mentioned by participants included the fuel crisis, stowaways on lorries, oil tankers spilling their loads, project development work on a new 'super' lorry, and local news on road damage caused by heavy goods vehicles. The majority of news stories mentioned by respondents provided negative images of the industry. No mention was made of the impression formed by other media such as film, television and music. Participants expressed frustrations with freight transport, the three most common of which were: congestion, road safety, and environmental concerns. Overall, freight transport was generally accepted as a 'necessary evil' by the public who understood that the results of this activity were largely to their benefit (TNS/BMRB, 2009).

In a 2015 survey conducted by the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (CILT) approximately 60% of respondents thought that the image of the industry was an important factor in the driver shortage, with the only factor gaining a higher response being the training and costs associated with obtaining a driving licence (Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport, 2015). In a survey of 1,300 HGV drivers carried out in 2018 only 34% of respondents agreed with the statement "I believe my role is seen as a profession by the general public" (Talent in Logistics and Pertemps Driving Division, 2018).

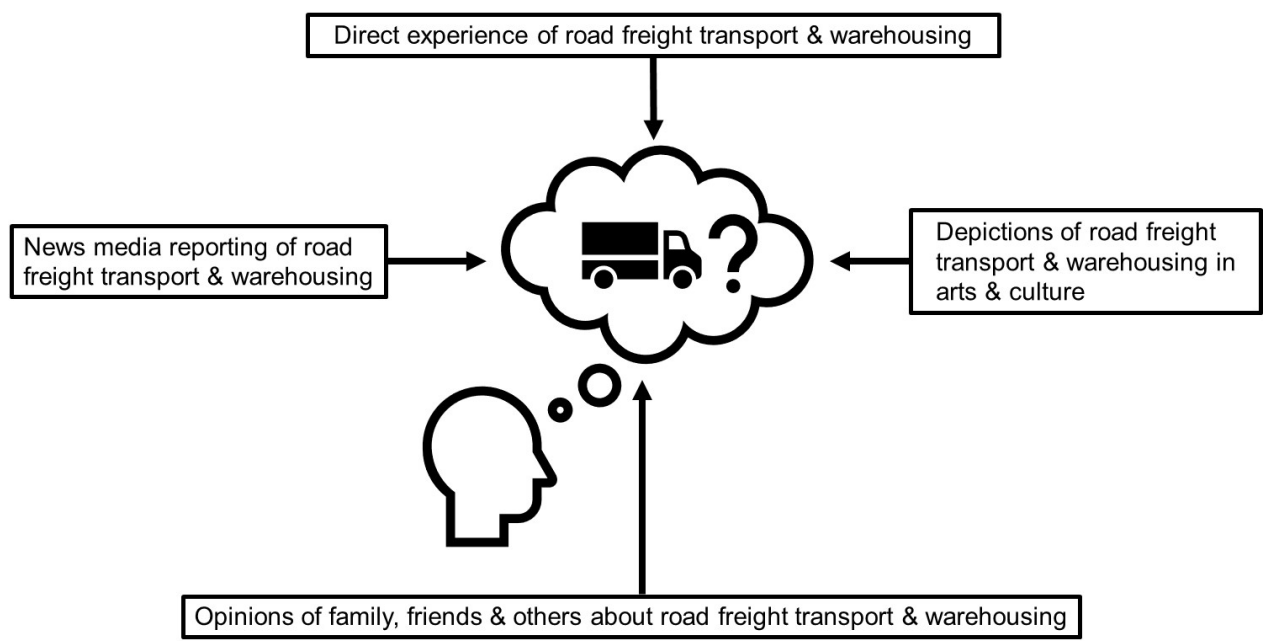
As the research summarised above indicates, the negative public perception of the UK freight industry is long-standing. This poor perception of the industry is likely to have an important deterrent on recruitment. Research commissioned by Logistics UK in 2016 into public perception of the industry asked 2,000 members of the public on a scale of 0 to 10 how likely they were to recommend a career in the logistics industry to friends and family (where 0 was "not at all likely", and 10 was "extremely" likely). Only 6% of respondents provided a score of 9 or 10 (deemed by the survey team to be "promoters"), 13% of respondents provided a score of 7 or 8 (deemed by the survey team to be "passives"), and 55% of respondents provided a score of 0 to 6 (deemed

by the survey team to be “detractors”). This gave a very low overall “Net Promoter Score” of -49. Among those aged 16-24 the Net Promoter Score was even lower (-57). This indicates that the respondents did not perceive working in the logistics industry as an attractive option (DJS, 2016; Freight Transport Association, 2016). Meanwhile, in a 2018 survey of HGV drivers only 31% of respondents agreed with the statement, “I would recommend a driving career to my family members and friends” (Talent in Logistics and Pertemps Driving Division, 2018).

3. The negative image of the road freight transport and warehousing industry

Whilst respondents in several surveys mention this negative perception of the industry, which in turns affects recruitment rates, little discussion is providing of the details of this image and how it has arisen. Public perception of the road freight transport and warehousing industry is informed in several different ways (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Factors in the public perception of road freight transport & warehousing industry



Each of these ways in which the public obtains insight and information about the industry are informed by several sources as shown in Table 1.

In research commissioned by Logistics UK in 2009, participants said that they obtained knowledge of the freight transport industry through documentaries, news and direct experience on the road. News stories concerning freight transport mentioned by participants included the fuel crisis, stowaways on lorries, oil tankers spilling their loads, project development work on a new ‘super’ lorry, and local news on road damage caused by heavy goods vehicles. The majority of news stories mentioned by respondents provided negative images of the industry. No mention was made of the impression formed by other media such as film, television and music. Participants expressed frustrations with freight transport, the three most common of which were: congestion, road safety, and environmental concerns. Overall, freight transport was generally accepted as a ‘necessary evil’ by the public who understood that the results of this activity were largely to their benefit (TNS/BMRB, 2009).

Table 1: Ways in which the general public receive information and form perceptions about the road freight transport and warehousing industry

Types of insight and information	Sources of insight and information
Direct experience of road freight transport	Obtained while: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the road network (driving and parking) • Receiving deliveries at home and work • Seeing deliveries/collections made elsewhere
Opinions of family, friends and others about road freight transport	In spoken and written form: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those working in the industry • Those not working in the industry
News media reporting of road freight transport	Range of topics includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road collisions and casualties involving goods vehicles • Behaviour of those who drive goods vehicles • Criminality among road freight operators • Use of goods vehicles in illegal immigration • Role of goods vehicles in humanitarian acts • Role of goods vehicles in our quality of life • Unusual events involving goods vehicles
Depictions of road freight transport in arts and culture	Range of forms includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Television and film • Books and other writing • Art • Comedy • Music

4. News media reporting of road freight transport and warehousing operations

The reporting of stories covered by news media outlets (including television, radio, newspapers, magazines and online news channels and publications) and how they portray these stories also affects the public perception of the road freight transport and warehousing industry. News reports about the industry and HGVs tend, in the main, to focus on stories about HGV and van drivers and often portray them negatively. These include news reporting and stories concerning: i) road collisions and casualties involving goods vehicles, ii) illegal and negligent behaviour by particular HGV drivers, iii) criminality among road freight operators and drivers, and iv) the use of goods vehicles in illegal immigration.

News organisations (broadcast, print and online media) often report stories about road collisions involving HGVs that result in cyclist injuries and fatalities. For instance, in London the Evening Standard has covered many such incidents over the last decade, giving them prominent, often front page, coverage. The newspaper campaigned for The Mayor of London to investigate the over-involvement of HGVs in such fatalities and to put in place measures to address this. In other cases, major incidents resulting in pedestrian fatalities make national headlines (such as the refuse lorry that collided with pedestrians in the city centre of Glasgow on 22 December 2014 killing six people and injuring fifteen more).

Reports about HGV drivers behaving illegally and negligently at the wheel often receive widespread media coverage, especially when such incidents involve collisions and casualties. Such stories often focus on drivers watching films, using telephones, engaging in some other activity that distracts them, or subject to illegal levels of alcohol whilst driving. Examples include the driver who in 2017 crashed into a car at the Dartford Crossing on the M25 while watching television, killing a car driver (BBC News, 2019b). The media also reports on criminal behaviour among some road freight transport operators, especially in relation to breaches of vehicle safety. For instance, in 2017, the BBC Radio 4 investigative programme, *File on 4*, reported on such so-called 'Rogue Hauliers' who repeatedly flouted vehicle maintenance requirements (*File on 4*, 2017).

Over the last decade, the media has also covered many stories about migrants attempting to stow away on HGVs waiting in French ports to cross the English Channel and of HGV drivers who have been prosecuted for knowingly bringing migrants into the UK illegally. The most notorious such case involved the 39 Vietnamese people who lost their lives after suffocated inside a container transported by road Belgium to Purfleet in Essex in 2019. At the court case, two of those who played leading roles in the people-smuggling operation (one of whom operated a freight transport business that supplied the vehicles and drivers) were jailed for 20 and 27 years respectively, while two lorry drivers were also jailed for 18 years and 13 years respectively (BBC News, 2021a).

The media has also always continued to note that some of this country's worst-ever serial killers were goods vehicle drivers and repeats this fact at every opportunity. For instance, when Peter Sutcliffe, commonly referred to as the Yorkshire Ripper died in prison in 2020, reports of this and his ghastly deeds 45 years earlier pointed out that he had been an HGV driver (BBC News, 2020a). Similarly, continued reporting of the murders committed fifteen years ago by Steve Wright, known as the Suffolk Strangler, constantly refers to his former job as an HGV driver and his work as a forklift truck driver at the times he carried out the killings (McVeigh, 2008).

The term 'White Van Man' is commonly used to refer to drivers of vans and is often used in a derogatory manner to create a stereotype of a threatening, working-class male driver who has an aggressive driving behaviour and a rude disposition. The term is supposed to have been first coined in 1997 by radio broadcaster Sarah Kennedy (Social Issues Research Centre, 1998). The first written citation of the term appeared in the *Sunday Times* in 1997 (Oxford English Dictionary, 2022). Dictionary definitions of the terms include: i) "a male driver of a (typically white) delivery or workman's van, esp. when regarded as an aggressive or bad driver; (hence) a driver of such a van regarded as a social type, usually characterized as an ordinary working man with forthright views" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2022), ii) "a male van driver, often of a white van, whose driving is selfish and aggressive" (Collins Dictionary, 2022), and iii) "a man who drives a van in a careless or dangerous way" (Macmillan Dictionary, 2022).

As a result of the aggressive and dangerous image of the van and its driver projected by the media both are often perceived by the public as just as potentially dangerous as the lorry and its driver. Given the ubiquity of vans in the UK (they are eight times more populous than lorries) and their predominant use in urban and residential areas, car drivers and other members of the public are far more likely to come into contact with vans, giving more frequent opportunities for feelings of concern and fear if such perceptions are held.

More neutral news stories covered by the media about the road freight industry and HGVs concern lorry queues on roads, driver shortages and vehicle load spillages. Recent, high-profile media story concerning lorry queues happened in December 2020 when about 6,000 HGVs queued on the M20 and at Manston Airport in Kent, waiting to cross the Channel to France. This had occurred due to French authorities requiring drivers to test negative for Covid-19 before being allowed into the country (BBC News, 2020a). The HGV driver shortages in summer 2021 that resulted in delays to goods movements and shortages of certain products in supermarkets received widespread, continued media attention and was an important factor in panic buying of consumer goods.

Media coverage of vehicle load spills is also commonplace, with this sometimes being employed to humorous effect. A recent example of this was the collision involving two HGVs on the A14 in Cambridgeshire which resulted in tomato puree escaping from one vehicle and olive oil from the other onto the road, turning it red, and a lengthy road closure (BBC News, 2021b). This led to the media engaging in numerous puns such as "it was suitable for traffic to passata safe distance", "you may have to drive pasta this", "a disaster, puree simple", "it took a while for the traffic to ketchup", and "that it was fortunate that the crash didn't take place at Spaghetti Junction".

More positive news by the media about road freight transport can involve stories about the involvement of companies and HGV drivers in the humanitarian supply of goods to disaster zones and the role of the logistics industry in supplying the goods and services that support our quality of life. For instance, when the plight of children in Romanian orphanages were reported by the UK media thirty years ago, many charities were established to provide them with the goods they needed. This resulted in many HGV journeys from Britain to Romania to supply the aid that charities had raised, such as the convoy of 25 HGVs that departed from Edinburgh carrying medicine and clothing in February 1990 and widespread reporting of this (The Herald, 1990).

5. Depictions of the road freight transport and warehousing industry in the arts

The road freight transport and warehousing industry has been portrayed in various forms of the arts, including film and television drama, literature and other writing, music, visual art, and comedy. These depictions have a bearing on media representations, and hence public perception, which then, in turn, informs further cultural depictions in a circular process, with each constantly informing and reinforcing the other. Given its modal dominance in domestic logistics operations, when it has attention paid to it in the arts this is usually focused on road freight transport operations.

Three negative tropes can be identified in the cultural portrayal of the road freight transport industry that date back many decades: i) a white, male, working-class image of the freight transport industry and those working in it who can be represented as anti-authoritarian, 'macho' and/or outsiders, ii) illicit and criminal associations of the industry and the deviance of some of those working in it, and iii) the threat and menace posed to other road users, society and the environment. Each of these representations in the arts and culture is considered below.

HGV drivers have long been represented in the arts as anti-authoritarian outsiders, remote from the rest of society. This remoteness from other road users the rest of society and is related to the perceived 'otherness' of someone who drives for a living, potentially living on the road, in a vehicle that is appreciably different in size and weight from those of other road users. The anti-authoritarian status is perceived as a rebellion against authority figures especially the police and other law enforcement agencies. The white, working-class image of the HGV driver stems from the lack of gender and ethnicity balance ever since the establishment of the motorised road freight transport industry. Much of this image relates to the long-distance HGV driver and was fostered in cultural representations from the 1930s onwards in film and music.

The portrayal of the road freight transport industry with criminality takes several forms: illegal vehicle operations in which the rules and regulations of the industry are flouted, involvement in the theft of loads, the smuggling of goods and people trafficking, involvement in prostitution, and in rape and murder. In some depictions it is the owner of the freight transport company that is exhibiting criminal behaviour, in others it is the employees, especially drivers, and/or union members. In addition, some plots involve the use of goods vehicles by criminal gangs carrying out armed robberies.

One of the earliest depictions of the road freight industry in British literature that includes several of these strands is the novel 'They Drive by Night' written by James Curtis in 1938. It relates the story of an ex-convict Shorty who goes on the run following the murder of his girlfriend by someone else. It contains vivid descriptions of the HGV drivers on the Great North Road, their slang, the transport cafes they frequent, and the prostitutes who plied their trade to their lorry driving

community. It was made into a British film in 1940. The British film 'Hell Drivers' (1957) depicts an ex-convict trying to go straight, who finds himself driving for the unscrupulous boss of an aggregate transport business that underpays workers, provides dangerous, poorly maintained vehicles and requires them to break speed limits and driving regulations. As well as criminality and corruption, the film portrays male aggression and rivalry between drivers. The British crime film 'The League of Gentlemen' (1960 - based on a novel by John Boland) tells the story of former army officers plotting to rob a bank. They use a rented warehouse to prepare for the robbery and steal cars and an HGV. The plot of the French film 'The Wages of Fear' (1953 - based on a novel by Georges Arnaud) focuses on the exploitation of migrant labour to drive HGVs carrying highly inflammable nitro-glycerine over poorly maintained mountain roads. The 2019 British film 'Sorry We Missed You' depicts a hard-up, self-employed delivery driver under pressure to make deliveries in the given time and receiving fines from the boss he works for when he makes errors or is late. He is also the subject of robbery and assault in the course of his work. The film also draws equivalences between the male delivery driver and his female care worker wife, both under substantial working pressures without employment rights. His delivery work, which requires the use of the car his wife needs for her care work, draws the family into violent conflict. The BBC TV situation comedy 'Going Straight' (1978 - a spin-off from 'Porridge') depicts Ronnie Barker as Fletcher and Richard Beckinsale as Lennie after their release from prison, with the latter having become an HGV driver and in a relationship with Fletcher's daughter.

Another BBC comedy, 'Not The Nine O' Clock News', the cast of the satirical sketch show which ran from 1979 to 1982, performed a song entitled 'I Like Trucking' which parodied the supposed aggression and machismo of HGV drivers and the threat they posed to other road users. In this sketch, HGV drivers sit at the wheel of their vehicles and sing about their exploits of causing traffic collisions while keeping a tally of the number and type of casualties caused, placing stickers showing their scores on their side of their cabs. In one of the verses we are told: "The greatest kick in trucking comes from knocking down a biker, / Or swinging round a roundabout and picking up a hiker, / You're chatting up that piece of skirt who's sitting by your side, Then pop the crucial question - a ride for a ride?" In the punk film 'Jubilee' (1978 - directed by Derek Jarman) Adam Ant, playing the part of a musician called Kid, includes a concert in which he performs a track called 'Plastic Surgery' which contains the lyrics: "Such a shame you had that crash / That will teach you to drive flash / And a lorry hit you at full power / Your blood gushing like a shower." It continues: "Plastic surgery, it's so plastic / Plastic surgery, fantastic." The Smiths' 1986 hit single 'There is a Light That Never Goes Out', which has become something of an anthem for the depressed and doom-laden, contains a chorus in which Morrissey sings: "And if a double-decker bus crashes into us / To die by your side is such a heavenly way to die / And if a ten-tonne truck kills the both of us / To die by your side, well, the pleasure, the privilege is mine." Alan Bennett's 'The Lady in the Van', which was first published as an essay in 1989 and was turned into a book in 1990, a stageplay in 1999, a radio play in 2009 and a film in 2015, is based on the author's real-life unusual relationship with an elderly, eccentric tramp who lives in a dilapidated van full of old clothes, plastic bags and half-eaten food in the street outside his house. Although Bennett shows the van dweller kindness and compassion, she receives abuse and threatening behaviour from neighbours and the general public.

Negative representations of road freight drivers, trucks and trucking business are even more commonplace in American culture, much of which has been made widely available in the UK. Two novels by A.I. Bezzerides ('The Long Haul' published in 1938 and 'The Thieves Market' published in 1949) are both based on the American trucking industry, with the author using his first-hand working experience to relate tales of long-distance tiring, unsafe driving, poorly maintained trucks, and the dishonest business owners and intermediaries who underpay and mislead drivers. Both novels were made into films, the former of which (confusingly also entitled *They Drive By Night* starring Humphrey Bogart) became a major success with American audiences in 1940.

Later American films using similar images of the long-distance outsider male trucker standing up to the police and other authority figures, criminality and high speed chases include 'Smokey and The Bandit' (1977), 'Convoy' (1978), 'Over the Top' (1987). Other American films depicting

corruption and criminality in road freight transport include: 'White Heat', (1949 - starring James Cagney), 'F.I.S.T.' (1978 starring Sylvester Stallone), 'Black Dog' (1998 starring Patrick Swayze), 'Armored' (2009 starring Matt Dillon), and 'Snitch' (2013 starring Dwayne Johnson).

Another stream of American films takes as their theme sex workers' relationships with goods vehicle drivers (including 'Truck Stop Women' (1974), 'The Great Smokey Roadblock Trailer' (1977), 'What Alice Found' (2003) and 'Chop Shop' (2008). 'Thelma & Louise' (1991) subverts this genre by depicting a dirty, rude HGV driver who makes sexually obscene gestures to the eponymous female lead characters. They get their revenge by pretending to be interested in him, before blowing up his petrol tanker. Several American horror films have depicted HGVs and their drivers as killing machines including 'Duel' (1971 - directed by Stephen Spielberg), and 'Jeepers Creepers' (2001). 'Terminator' (1984 - starring Arnold Schwarzenegger) depicts a cyborg from the future attempting to use an HGV to kill a human resistance fighter and the person he is battling to save to preserve the human race. The HGV and cyborg driver are therefore both depicted as killing machines. Later films in the 'Terminator' franchise continued using similar truck chase scenes. The Stephen King short story 'Trucks' (1973 – and made into the film 'Maximum Overdrive' in 1986) relates the story of people trapped in a truckstop when HGVs seemingly come to life of their own volition and then attempt to kill every human they can find. Another theme of American trucking movies includes plots centred on drivers who are serial killers (including 'Joy Ride' (2001) and 'Suspect Zero' (2004).

Several American and Canadian films have depicted lorry drivers as heroes working in a corrupt and criminal industry such as 'White Line Fever' (1975), 'Breaker! Breaker!' (1977) and 'High-Ballin' (1978). The 2008 film 'Trucker' subverts the independent male cowboy / truck driver image, by telling the story of a female truck driver leading a wild lifestyle of drinking and one-night stands who has to forego her wild living for the sake of her son.

A large body of songs about American trucking began to appear from the late 1930s on (commencing with Cliff Bruner's 'Truck Driver Blues' in 1939). The vast majority of these were in the country music genre, which was a rural style, and which thereby helped rural white male truckers to maintain their rural identity in an increasingly urban industrial world. Many of the songs portrayed the HGV driver as an independent wanderer and free spirit (Hamilton, 2008). During the 1960s and 1970s American country music began to depict the trucker as a tough, male working-class hero descended from the cowboy of the Old West (Hamilton, 2008). The country hit 'Papa and Mama' (1992 - Garth Brooks) features a trucker's son recounting a tragic night in his childhood on which his jealous father purposefully crashed his truck into a motel room where his wife was having an extramarital affair, killing her and resulting in him going to prison. One of the first American chart hits to contain lyrics about a traffic collision involving an HGV is the American top-ten hit 'Black Denim Trousers and Motorcycle Boots' (by The Cheers in 1955). It tells the story of a motorcyclist who ignores his girlfriend's fears not to ride one night ("I've got a feeling if you ride tonight I'll grieve"). He races off on his motorbike and, "hit a screamin' diesel that was California bound."

Films often provide the only occasion on which the general public get to see inside warehouses. However, the warehouse is typically portrayed as a place of crime and violence in which fights, shootouts and torture are conducted. The use of warehouses can be traced back many years in films such as the 1960 action comedy heist 'The League of Gentlemen' in which a Lieutenant-Colonel upset about his redundancy from the army recruits a gang to carry out a bank robbery; they plot their raid from a rented warehouse. Over time, the scenes that take place in warehouses have become increasingly violent with the torture and murders of suspected informants in 'Reservoir Dogs' (1992), and the shootouts and subsequent torture and immolation of the vigilante Big Daddy in 'Kick Ass' (2010) by the criminals he has pursued. An internecine warehouse shootout between rival gangs is portrayed in the Hong Kong action thriller 'Hard Boiled' (1992). Warehouse-based drugs and arms deals resulting in shootouts and killings are central to 'Layer Cake' (2004) 'Baby Driver' (2017), respectively. Industrial buildings and warehouses are key locations for chase scenes in the Terminator film and television franchise (1984 onwards). The

final scene in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981) shows the crate containing The Ark of the Covenant that Indiana Jones has recovered from the Nazis, thereby preventing them from gaining its invincible power, stacked among numerous other crates in a large warehouse.

Positive representations of the road freight transport and industry in the arts are far scarcer. Several appear in British publications and TV for children. From 1960 to 1962 the weekly *Eagle* comic contained the 'Knights of the Road' strip. This followed the adventures of 'Sir' Ted Knight, a lorry driver and his younger brother Frank, who were partners in a road haulage business with the motto 'Go Anywhere – Carry Anything'. It portrayed the brothers as courteous and helpful gentlemen. 'Truckers' is a children's fantasy book by Terry Pratchett (published in 1990). It features a race of tiny people from another world called the 'Nomes' who now live a hidden life on earth beneath the floorboards of a department store. However, the store is due to be demolished and they have to leave and go outside into a mystical place they have never visited before. They escape by stowing themselves away on a truck. 'Bob the Builder', a British cartoon series for young children first launched in 1999, tells stories about Bob a building contractor, who is assisted by a variety of anthropomorphised work-vehicles which include Packer, a red articulated lorry, Dodger, a blue and white pickup truck, and Tumbler, a green and yellow concrete transporter truck. In each episode, Bob and his team carry out construction and repair work and show that co-operation and conflict resolution can lead to positive outcomes. Similarly, the 2006 American children's film 'Cars' (by Pixar and Disney) features a wide range of anthropomorphic vehicles including Mack, a 1980s articulated truck that is prone to falling asleep at the wheel. In the 2001 film 'Monsters Inc.' the monsters (who are scared of children) have an energy production plant powered by children's screams which contains a warehouse in which millions of doors are stored that are portals to children's bedrooms. In the 'Transformer' range of children's toys which first appeared in the 1980s, Optimus Prime is a laser gun carrying robot that transforms into an articulated HGV. He is the heroic, compassionate leader of the Autobots, a group of heroic Transformers who attempt to destroy the evil forces of the Decepticons. The toys were followed by several 'Transformer' movies in which Optimus Prime appeared.

The 2013 BBC comedy drama series 'Truckers' depicted life among a family-run road freight company based in Nottingham. It depicts the physical and emotional isolation of HGV driving, even in a world that is ever-more highly connected by technology and social media. It reflects the strain this isolation of HGV driving places on personal relationships, which leads to the collapse of the main character's marriage. Several television documentaries have depicted the life of freight transport workers. From 2010, Channel Five broadcast a reality documentary series entitled 'Eddie Stobart: Truckers and Trailers' which depicted life in the eponymous freight transport company. Each episode featured a different vehicle type in the fleet as well as non-road modes. While the majority of the programme follows drivers, it also shows the work of route planners, warehousing staff, vehicle washers and management. The programme ran for seven series over four years. In 2019, TV channel Yesterday broadcast a six-part series that documented a family road freight company that transports railway trains on specialist HGVs. Meanwhile, 'Ice Road Truckers', which first aired in 2007, showed the difficulties involved in transporting loads by goods vehicle over frozen lakes, known as ice roads, in Canada's Northwest Territories. The programme depicted the harsh working conditions as a driver in this environment, including night driving, the extreme cold, and the concentration problems involved but did so in a positive and respectful manner.

In the 1990s BBC situation comedy 'Only Fools and Horses', the star, Del-Boy Trotter, operates a run-down Reliant Regal three-wheel van for his dubious 'wheeler-dealer' business. The van has become something of a star in its own right, but whether it represents a positive depiction of freight transport is questionable.

6. Direct experience of road freight transport and warehousing operations

Using data for the Labour Force Survey, Logistics UK has estimated that there were approximately 240,000 HGV drivers and 300,000 van drivers in the UK in 2021. In addition, there were approximately 400,000 management and administrative staff, 170,000 postal and parcel sector workers, and approximately 490,000 warehouse workers and fork-lift drivers. Therefore, there were about 1.6 million people directly working in identifiable logistics roles (Logistics UK, 2021a). This is equivalent to approximately 5% of the total UK workforce. Survey work in 2016 with 2,000 people found that 5% of respondents reported currently working in the logistics industry and 10% had done so at some point in their lives (DSJ, 2016). All of these people will have formed views about the industry from their involvement in these occupations. The remaining 90% of the UK population have no direct work experience in the industry. For them, their direct experience of freight transport and warehousing operations will consist of: i) using the road network on which they share the road and kerbside parking capacity with drivers of goods vehicles, ii) receiving deliveries at their homes and workplaces, iii) seeing deliveries/collections being made elsewhere such as when walking and shopping. These experiences will play a role in the beliefs and feelings that the public with no work experience have about the road freight and warehousing industry.

Research with road users has shown that people driving motor vehicles are involuntarily thought of and described in vehicular terms, as machines, (i.e. as goods vehicles or cars) even when the drivers are visible. By contrast, physically vulnerable road users (i.e. pedestrians and cyclists) are described by road users in human terms (i.e. as a pedestrian or a cyclist) reflecting a fundamental difference in how distinct types of road user are perceived and mentally processed (Walker, 2005).

An online survey conducted by Volvo Trucks in 2017 with 2,100 road users (including car drivers, bus drivers, motorcyclists, cyclists and pedestrians) investigated road user perceptions of HGVs. Sixty one percent of respondents said that they felt that HGVs represented a serious safety risk to them while on the road (with 13% rating this risk as “very serious” and 48% as “fairly serious”). Among cyclists the numbers were higher, with 77% of them stating that HGVs posed a serious safety risk to them. Seventy five percent of respondents felt more at risk from HGVs on single carriageway roads than on dual carriageways and motorways (Volvo Trucks, 2017).

The top concern about HGVs among all respondents was about not being seen when driving near them, with 50% of respondents rating this highest. In addition, 36% of respondents thought that HGV drivers seem inconsiderate of other road users. Twenty one percent of respondents felt that HGV drivers paid insufficient attention to the road, with 6% describing HGV drivers as untrustworthy. Despite their concerns about the safety risks posed by HGVs, almost all respondents (96%) felt that HGV driving requires significant skills and training (Volvo Trucks, 2017).

Research into road users’ perceptions of safety was carried by TRL for Highways England using qualitative focus groups including car drivers, motorcyclists and HGV drivers. Most participants reported having feelings of being uncomfortable when driving near to HGVs and other larger vehicles. Some participants described intense emotional reactions in these situations. Despite these feelings of being unsafe around HGVs, these same participants reported that, due to their additional training and experience to anticipate and respond to risks, HGV drivers adapted their behaviour to attempt to ensure the safety of those around them (Posner et al., 2019). This research therefore also distinguishes between road users’ feelings about HGVs and the drivers of these vehicles.

A development in recent years in the UK has been the upsurge in the number of people living in vans (Paton, 2019). These people have decided to live in one due to the high cost of housing and/or as a means of providing them with an alternative lifestyle in which they can easily relocate their place of residence. Although there has always been a small number of people who have lived nomadic lifestyles in vans and other vehicles (including caravans, camper vans, mobile homes and trucks) especially from Romany traveller and so-called ‘New-Age’ communities, the number

of people adopting this lifestyle has increased markedly in the last couple of years, most often due to the unaffordability of housing. There has also been an increase in the number who choose to live in vans for short periods while taking holidays, thereby allowing themselves to avoid the need to rent expensive holiday accommodation or pay expensive campsite fees. This has led to car parks and lay-bys close to beauty spots becoming heavily congested with such vehicles in the summer period and was especially noticeable in the UK during Covid-19 lockdowns when many hospitality venues were forced to close. The growing interest in 'wild camping' seems to be further fuelling this trend. Those living in vans and parking in residential streets and rural beauty spots are sometimes finding themselves in disagreements and conflicts with residents and locals who dislike this occurrence in their neighbourhood. Although those living in vans often do not use the van as part of their work but only as their home, it can contribute to a wider dislike and general mistrust of vans and their users.

7. Opinions of family, friends and others about road freight transport and warehousing

The beliefs of the general public about the road freight transport and warehousing industry are also informed by the views expressed by their friends and family. Where their significant others have been employed in the industry at some point (approximately 10% of the population have been), these opinions will be partly based on their accounts of their direct working experience.

The views held by the general public about road freight transport can also be informed by what is expressed by others beyond their immediate friends and family. This can include their experiences of hearing or reading about the insights of those working in the industry (such as events and workshops run in schools and colleges by freight transport companies or trade associations), websites and providing information by trade associations and professional bodies and charities (such as the websites 'Think Logistics' and 'Road to Logistics' which provide logistics careers information and advice), memoirs written by those who have worked in the industry, and discussions taking place on online chatrooms and message boards by current road freight transport workers). It can also come from hearing or reading the views of campaigners who hold negative views about the industry, such as anti-road building, road safety and environmental campaigners and rail freight lobbyists, some of whom disparage the road freight industry. The public is also increasingly exposed to the views expressed on social media, both by those they do and do not personally know.

Survey work commissioned by Logistics UK in 2016 into public perception of the industry involving 2,000 respondents drawn from the general public asked them to provide three words or short phrases to describe lorry drivers. Positive terms repeatedly provided by respondents included, "hardworking", "dedicated", "professional", "skilled", "reliable", "careful" and "experienced", while negative terms provided repeatedly included, "arrogant", "inconsiderate", "rude", "overworked", "tired", "driving too fast" and "driving too slow". Overall, 60% of the words provided by respondents to describe drivers were positive, while 40% were negative (DSJ, 2016; Freight Transport Association, 2016).

During the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown between March and May 2020 in the UK, a grassroots social movement called 'Clap for our Carers' led to households being encouraged to come to the front of their homes on Thursday evenings at 20:00 to show support and appreciation for NHS workers. This became increasingly popular across the country. Within a couple of weeks of its initiation, the key workers being applauded were extended to include delivery drivers, waste collectors and essential shop workers. This may have helped some of those taking part to reappraise the role and importance of freight transport workers. However, the focus of the vast majority of the media reporting of this activity remained directed at healthcare workers.

8. Efforts to change the public perception of the road freight transport and warehousing industry

Most of the participants in focus group discussions commissioned by Logistics UK in 2009 (who were drawn from the general public) were not keen to learn more about the operations of the freight transport industry and did not support the idea of a public information campaign, some even viewing any such future effort by the industry as a means to hide or limit the damage the industry was causing (TNS/BMRB, 2009). Despite these opinions, Logistics UK launched the 'Love Logistics' campaign in 2010. This comprised short films on different sectors of the freight transport industry (including milk distribution, concert tour logistics, healthcare logistics, and the distribution of televisions). Logistics UK hoped that these films would help improve public understanding of the role played by logistics in terms of the positive impact it has on their day-to-day lives and thereby improve the image of the road freight transport and logistics industry (Freight Transport Association, 2010a). The Communications Director explained that Logistics UK hoped that this campaign would also assist in promoting logistics as a career choice, "We're keen for a career in logistics to be seen as one of first choice rather than last resort. Get children excited about logistics and they're going to want to work in it." (Stanton, 2010).

Skills for Logistics, the sector skills council for the industry, also attempted to improve the image of freight transport and logistics by establishing a National Advisory Council in 2010 which was intended to provide, "advice and guidance as to how it (Skills for Logistics) directs its activity at both strategic and technical levels, and to provide support and guidance on improving the industry image". It also established a programme called 'Delivering Your Future' in which logistics-related curriculum materials were developed and school pupils were provided with information about the range of career opportunities available with a website developed for this purpose (Skills for Logistics, 2010a). However, Skills for Logistics ceased to exist in 2014 and its remit was not transferred to any other organisation by UK Government.

Efforts focused on worker recruitment to the road freight transport and warehousing industry in recent years have included a campaign established in 2015 by the RHA in partnership with Jobcentre Plus entitled 'Driving Britain's Future' (which gave jobseekers the opportunity of work experience in the industry), and the 'Warehouse to Wheels' apprenticeship scheme promoted by CILT and run with them by logistics businesses to encourage existing warehousing staff to pursue a career as a goods vehicle driver (RHA, 2015; Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport, 2016). The Road Haulage Association (RHA) has also organised a so-called 'National Lorry Week' for several years which aims to raise awareness of the sector and the working opportunities to the public which included presentations in schools (RHA, 2015, 2021). Logistics UK has run 'Discover Logistics Careers' events in collaboration with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in efforts to assist industry recruitment (Logistics UK, 2021b).

'Road to Logistics' is an industry-led national, not for profit logistics training organisation established in 2016 to promote recruitment into the transport and logistics industry and to provide assessment and training to recruits (Road to Logistics, 2022). A so-called Trailblazer Group for apprenticeships in the logistics and transport sector was established as part of the Apprenticeship Levy by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education and the Education and Skills Funding Agency. In this scheme levies on freight transport and logistics businesses are made available for logistics apprenticeships in vehicle driving, air freight operations, freight forwarding, warehouse work and other supply chain roles. However, it has been noted that in the four years to 2021, By the end of 2021, the industry contributed £700 million in Apprenticeship Levy, "yet it is doubtful whether it will have recovered as much as £150 million from logistics-based Apprenticeships" (French, 2021).

Since 2021 and the onset of an acute HGV driver shortage, the UK Government has taken several actions to attempt to attract recruitment to road freight transport driving. These include: creating a new 'HGV Skills Bootcamps' to train approximately 11,000 more people to become HGV drivers in England, launching new Large Goods Vehicle Driver and Urban Driver apprenticeships,

expanding the Department for Work and Pension's driver training pilot provided through Jobcentre Plus to bring jobseekers into the industry, provided grant funding to Road to Logistics to train ex-offenders to drive HGVs, and to Think Logistics which is working to attract young people to the profession (Department for Transport, 2022).

In 2022, Logistics UK and the CILT established the 'Generation Logistics' campaign in 2022 with the aims that it would "bring the industry together, shift perceptions of the industry, and encourage the next generation of logistics workers to engage with the opportunities available and keep the nation's supply chain protected." The campaign is intended to "shine a light on the sector like never before, bringing unprecedented visibility of the importance of its workers as well as raising the profile of logistics companies and addressing their recruitment gaps". The activities including engagement events and promotional activities "will target the next generation of logistics workers.....The industry has a heavy male bias, not just on the frontline with drivers but across all roles and levels. We must address this, as well as increasing our diversity/attracting talent representative of the nation our sector serves" (Logistics UK and Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport, 2022). Initially a 12-month programme, it is an industry-led campaign funded by sponsorship from member businesses, with the support of the UK Department for Transport.

However, the efforts by industry and Government in recent years summarised above have focused primarily on worker recruitment, rather than the industry's image and public perception of it. A focus on these latter issues is likely to be important in efforts to encourage youngsters and adult workers to positively choose and embrace a career in road freight transport and warehousing (or logistics more widely) instead of doing so as a result of a lack of alternative options.

References

BBC News (2019a) Harry Clarke 'sorry' for Glasgow bin lorry 'accident', 15 December, BBC News. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-50799362>

BBC News (2019b) Dartford Crossing death crash lorry driver watching TV, 8 April, BBC News. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-kent-47857774>

BBC News (2020a) Yorkshire Ripper Peter Sutcliffe dies, 13 November, BBC News. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-54874713>

BBC News (2020b) Kent lorry chaos: Truckers warned of Christmas in their cabs, 24 December, BBC News. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-kent-55434966>

BBC News (2021a) Essex lorry deaths: Men jailed for killing 39 migrants in trailer, 22 January, BBC News. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-essex-55765213>

BBC News (2021b) Tomato puree spillage closed A14 in Cambridgeshire, 2 June, BBC News. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cambridgeshire-57329077>

Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (2015) CILT Driver Shortage Crisis 2015 Report, Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport. https://www.ciltinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/cilt_drivershortage-crop.pdf

Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (2016) Oral evidence to the Inquiry into Skills and workforce planning in the road haulage sector, House of Commons Transport Select Committee. <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/transport-committee/road-haulage-sector-skills-and-workforce-planning/oral/28333.html>

Collins Dictionary (2022) Definition of White Van Man, Collins. <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/white-van-man#:~:text=White%20Van%20Man%20in%20British,driving%20is%20selfish%20and%20aggressive>

Department for Transport (2022) UK government action to reduce the HGV driver shortage, Department for Transport. <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/hgv-driver-shortage-uk-government-response/about>

DJS (2016) Freight Transport Association Research into Public Perceptions of the Image of the Logistics Industry, DJS. https://www.djsresearch.co.uk/images/DJS_Research_FTA_Presentation_PP_09-03-16_FINAL.pdf

File on 4 (2017) Rogue Hauliers, 12 March, BBC Radio 4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08gxx7h>

French, J. (2021) Written evidence submitted by Mr Jim French MBE (RDF0021), , Inquiry into Road freight supply chain, House of Commons Transport Select Committee. <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/41025/html/>

Freight Transport Association (2010) Logistics Report 2010, Freight Transport Association.

Freight Transport Association (2016) The Skills Summit 2016 Report, Freight Transport Association.

<https://logistics.org.uk/CMSPages/GetFile.aspx?guid=fe2cbdbb-a353-44d6-83bf-f9490648bb0e&lang=en-GB>

Hollowell, P. (1968) The Lorry Driver, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Logistics UK (2021a) Skills and Employment Report 2021, Logistics UK.

<https://logistics.org.uk/CMSPages/GetFile.aspx?guid=24a6a7cd-351e-471b-bc7a-8550a8264537&lang=en-GB>

Logistics UK (2021b) Written evidence submitted by Logistics UK (RDF0013), Inquiry into Road freight supply chain, House of Commons Transport Select Committee.

<https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/41017/html/>

Logistics UK and Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (2022) Generation Logistics Sponsorship Prospectus, Logistics UK.

<https://logistics.org.uk/CMSPages/GetFile.aspx?guid=50779ac6-8cc3-481f-a9a3-551998134130&lang=en-GB>

Macmillan Dictionary (2022) Definition of White Van Man, Macmillan.

<https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/white-van-man#:~:text=People%20who%20drive%20vehicles%20for%20pleasure%20or%20work>

McKinnon, A. (2006) Life without Trucks: The Effects of the Disruption of Road Freight Transport on a National Economy. *Journal of Business Logistics*, 27 (2), pp.227-250.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2158-1592.2006.tb00224.x>

McVeigh, K. (2008) 'My anger is buried deep inside', 21 February, *The Guardian*.

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2008/feb/21/suffolkmurders.ukcrime1>

Oxford English Dictionary (2022) Definition of White Van Man, Oxford University Press.

Paton, G. (2019) Vans are just the job as a second home, 21 October, *The Times*.

Piecyk, M., and Allen J. (2021), Understanding and Addressing HGV driver Shortages in the UK, Technical Report CUED/C-SRF/TR19, Centre for Sustainable Road Freight.

<https://www.csrf.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/SRF-HGV-Driver-Shortage-Draft-Report-30-09-2021.pdf>

Posner, R., Christmas, S., Cooper, A., Shepherd, J., and Helman, S. (2015) Perceptions of safety: findings from focus groups, Published Project Report PPR953, TRL.

https://trl.co.uk/uploads/trl/documents/PPR953_Perceptions-of-safety_FINAL.pdf

RHA (2015) Written evidence from the Road Haulage Association (RHS0016), Inquiry into Skills and workforce planning in the road haulage sector, House of Commons Transport Select Committee.

<http://data.parliament.uk/WrittenEvidence/CommitteeEvidence.svc/EvidenceDocument/Transport/Road%20haulage%20sector%20Skills%20and%20workforce%20planning/written/23241.html>

RHA (2021) National Lorry Week 2021, RHA

<https://www.nationallorryweek.co.uk/>

Road to Logistics (2022) About us, Road to Logistics.

<https://www.roadtologistics.org/about-us/>

Skills for Logistics (2005) Survey of employers of LGV drivers 2005, Skills for Logistics.

Skills for Logistics (2006) Why is the Public Face of Logistics White, Middle Aged and Male?, Press Release 11 April, Skills for Logistics.

Skills for Logistics (2007) Image Survey Results, Skills for Logistics.

Social Issues Research Centre (1998) Renault Master White Van Man Study, Social Issues Research Centre.
http://www.sirc.org/publik/white_van_man.html

Talent in Logistics and Pertemps Driving Division (2018) Driving Engagement in Logistics, Talent in Logistics.
https://www.pertemps.co.uk/media/2629/til-white-paper_driving-eng

The Herald (1990) Convoy heads for Romania with aid for the orphans, 17 February, The Herald.
<https://www.heraldsotland.com/news/11982686.convoy-heads-for-romania-with-aid-for-the-orphans/>

TNS/BMRB, 2009, Public attitudes to the logistics sector, report for the Freight Transport Association, BMRB.

Volvo Trucks (2017) Road Safety is Down to Us All: The Only Acceptable Number of Accidents in Traffic is Zero.
<https://www.volvotrucks.co.uk/content/dam/volvo/volvo-trucks/markets/uk/aboutus/aboutusimages/safety/Road%20safety%20is%20down%20to%20us%20all.pdf>

Walker, I. (2005). Road users perceptions of other road users: Do different transport modes invoke qualitatively different concepts in observers? *Advances in Transportation Research*, 6A(a), 25-36.