

THE WORKHOUND REPORT

# HOW TO DISRUPT TURNOVER



- 2021 -

UNCOVERING THE AT-RISK WORKFORCE:  
THE MID-YEAR DRIVER  
FEEDBACK TRENDS ANALYSIS

Based on more than 24,000 anonymous comments from over 10,000 workers, WorkHound's 2021 mid-year trends report highlights the importance of communication, employee outreach, equipment equity, and relationships within an organization. Fleets can heed these insights to develop a more satisfied driver workforce — and a healthier company overall.

# Table of Contents:

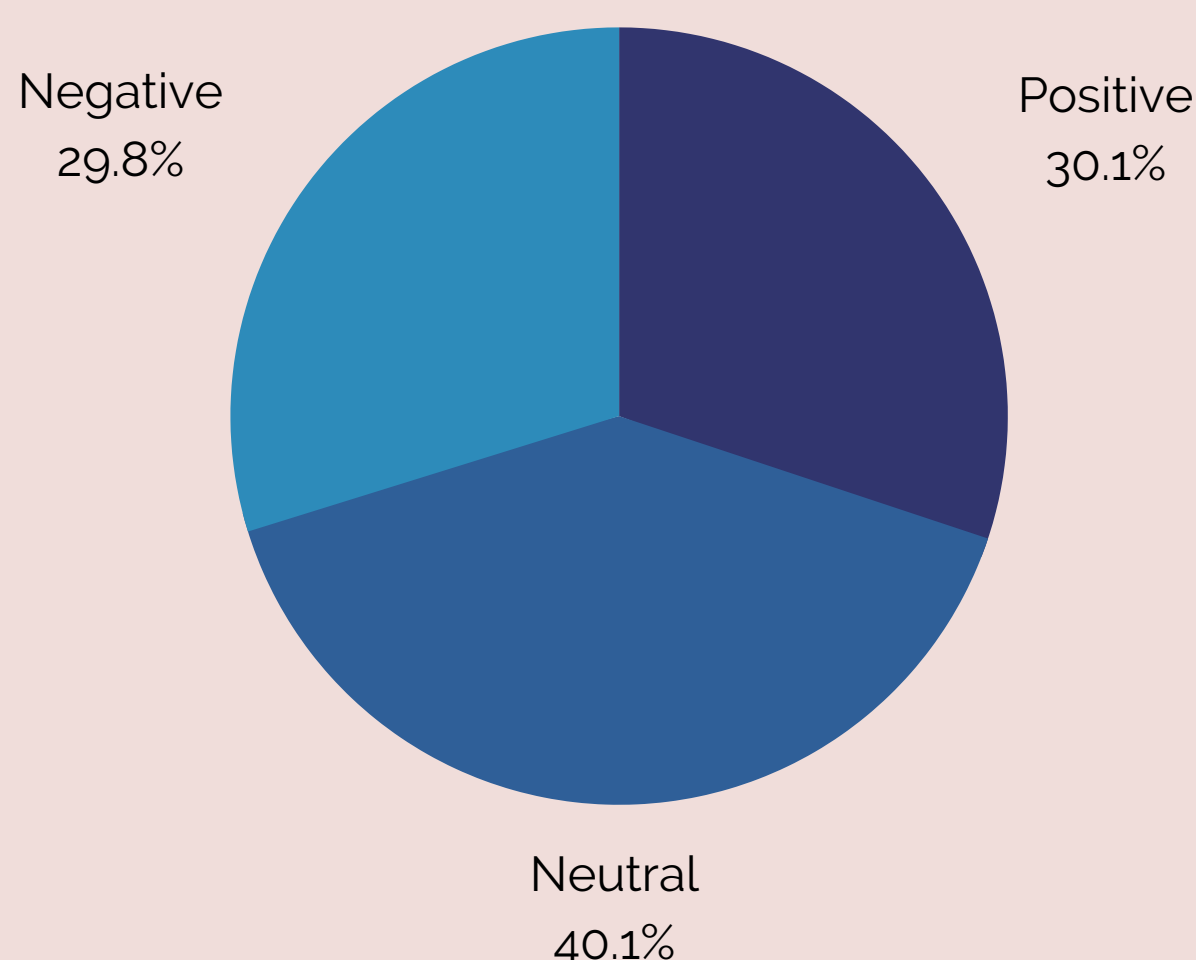
2.....	Summary
3.....	People, Relationships, & Communication
4.....	Equipment & Logistics Outrank Pay
5.....	The Small Carrier Advantage
6.....	Sound off - Raw Driver Insight
7.....	WorkHound's Methodology & Mission

**What factors make truck drivers leave their fleet? What do they report being most unhappy about? What makes them satisfied with their work and their employers? What are some communication gaps fleets miss? Most importantly, how can carriers intervene to shore up these issues before a driver quits?**

These are the key questions and themes WorkHound, a real-time employee feedback platform, seeks to document in its 2021 Mid-Year Driver Feedback Report by compiling and analyzing commentary and data from more than 10,000 workers, mostly truck drivers but including dispatchers and maintenance technicians, at 77 motor carrier employers.

In sum, via the WorkHound platform in the first six months of 2021, those 10,000 drivers submitted nearly 25,000 comments about their fleet employers, their miles and pay, positive and negative communication, equipment, home time, and more.

WorkHound's 2021 mid-year analysis reveals unsurprising, yet highly actionable insights for motor carriers of all sizes.



**Positive, Neutral, and Negative?**  
While it's widely assumed that most driver feedback is highly negative (this feedback is being tracked with turnover and retention in mind after all), the truth is that worker feedback has always been nearly balanced equally between positive, neutral, and negative in sentiment.

In truth, "negative" feedback has always ranked last among the three sentiments. What we know is this: Workers want to provide actionable and resourceful feedback, and so they do.



## People, relationships, and communication matter most.

Nearly 40% of comments designated as “Praise” for fleet employers by their workers related to people (drivers’ co-workers and managers) and positive communication from their fleets — such as regular outreach, recognition for the employee, thorough and complete information, or simply checking in.

**Communication and relationships can make or break a fleet’s retention efforts** and overall worker satisfaction. The most satisfied and most invested workers report feeling connected to other people in their company and that they receive regular, personal communication from their supervisors or other fleet personnel.

On the flip side, communication issues plague the most dissatisfied workers — and those most likely to quit. At-risk workers, those with the lowest satisfaction scores, made 178% more comments about communication than their satisfied peers through 2021’s first six months.

WorkHound’s analysis found the effects of poor communication with drivers and disrespectful interactions from other staff can be damaging and irreparable. Drivers who feel unheard and unseen quickly become at-risk workers. Poor communication makes them feel undervalued and has a lasting and substantial effect on drivers’ emotional, physical, and financial well-being.

More than half of the nearly 3,000 comments filed about communication were negative, and only a sliver was positive. The rest were categorized as neutral.

**Fleets can fix these communication issues** by working to train drivers’ supervisors and managers, as well as dispatchers, to actively treat drivers with respect, listen to their concerns, and, quite simply, take drivers seriously.

Personal, frequent communication goes a long way in creating satisfied workers. Something as simple, and obvious, as supervisors knowing their drivers’ names, or not, leaves lasting marks positively or negatively.

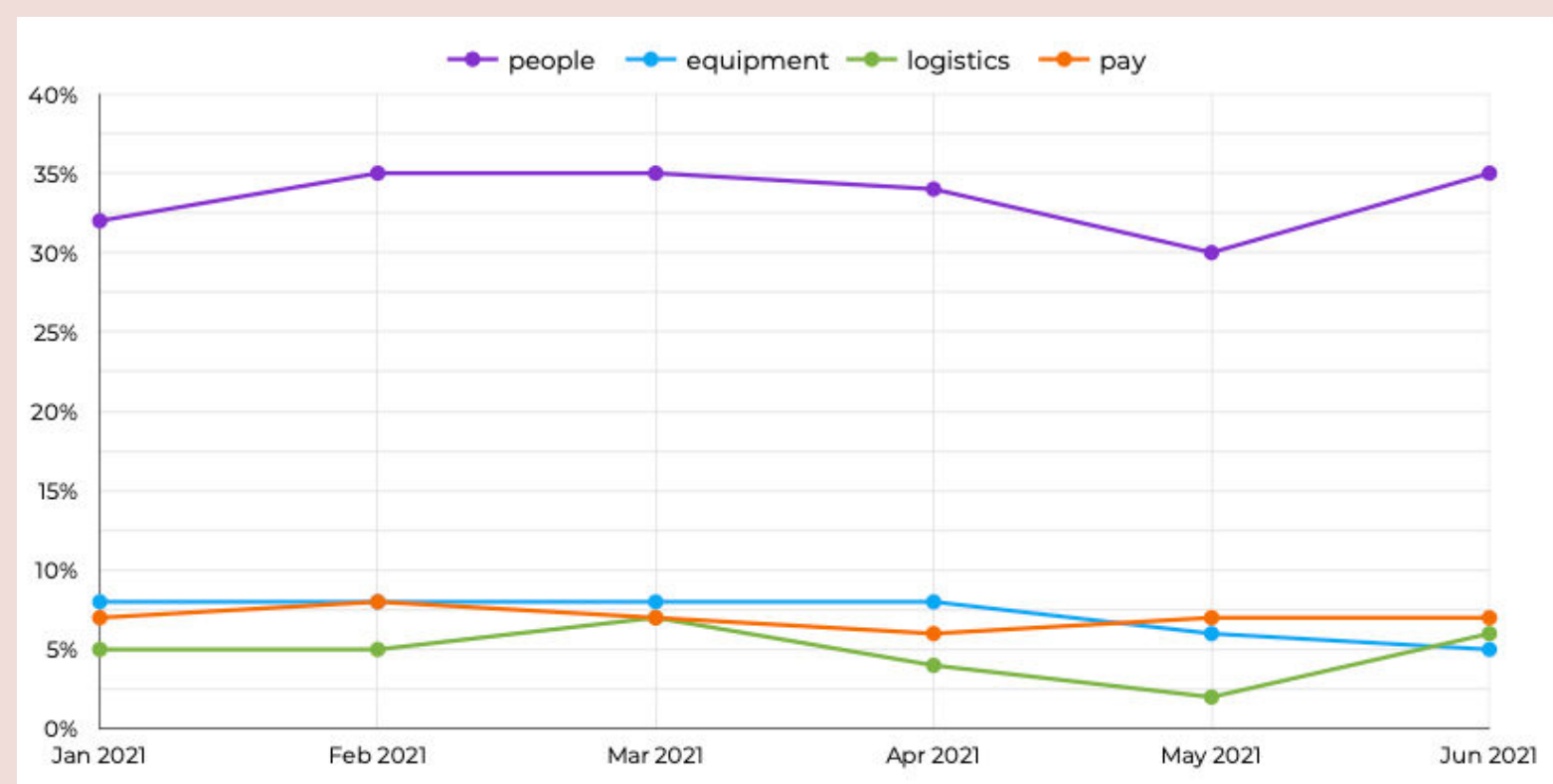
Encourage fleet personnel to reach out to drivers (by name) regularly with positive feedback, rather than drivers only hearing from their supervisors when there’s a problem or something goes wrong.

Proper communication and relationships build invested drivers — that is, drivers that are satisfied with their jobs and feel a commitment to staying with their employer. That’s not to say they don’t offer criticism or negative comments. Rather, they feel like advocates of their fleet and offer constructive feedback intended to plug holes and address negative experiences they’ve identified. They’re also the most likely to refer other drivers to your fleet.

Lastly, communication can be a catch-all that keys fleets in on issues across the board, such as those about equipment, pay, operational issues, or other neglected problems. For example, nearly 40% of comments so far in 2021 about pay were questions, meaning that issues with pay may not be about the wages themselves, but rather a communication breakdown, a dropped ball in repairing an error, or confusion about pay calculations.

### People, not problems.

Companies that focus on creating healthy communication and relationships with their workers stand a better chance at creating satisfied, invested workers than do companies that simply focus on trying to fix problems, or only reaching out to drivers when there is a problem.



As this chart shows, the overwhelming plurality of “Praise” comments by workers about their employers in the first half of 2021 were about people — positive relationships, strong communication with their supervisors, or being acknowledged and feeling appreciated.



## Equipment and logistics can outrank pay.

Driver pay raises are one of the most common approaches fleets take in their recruiting and retention efforts. However, drivers through the first half of 2021 sounded off more frequently on concerns around equipment and logistics than pay.

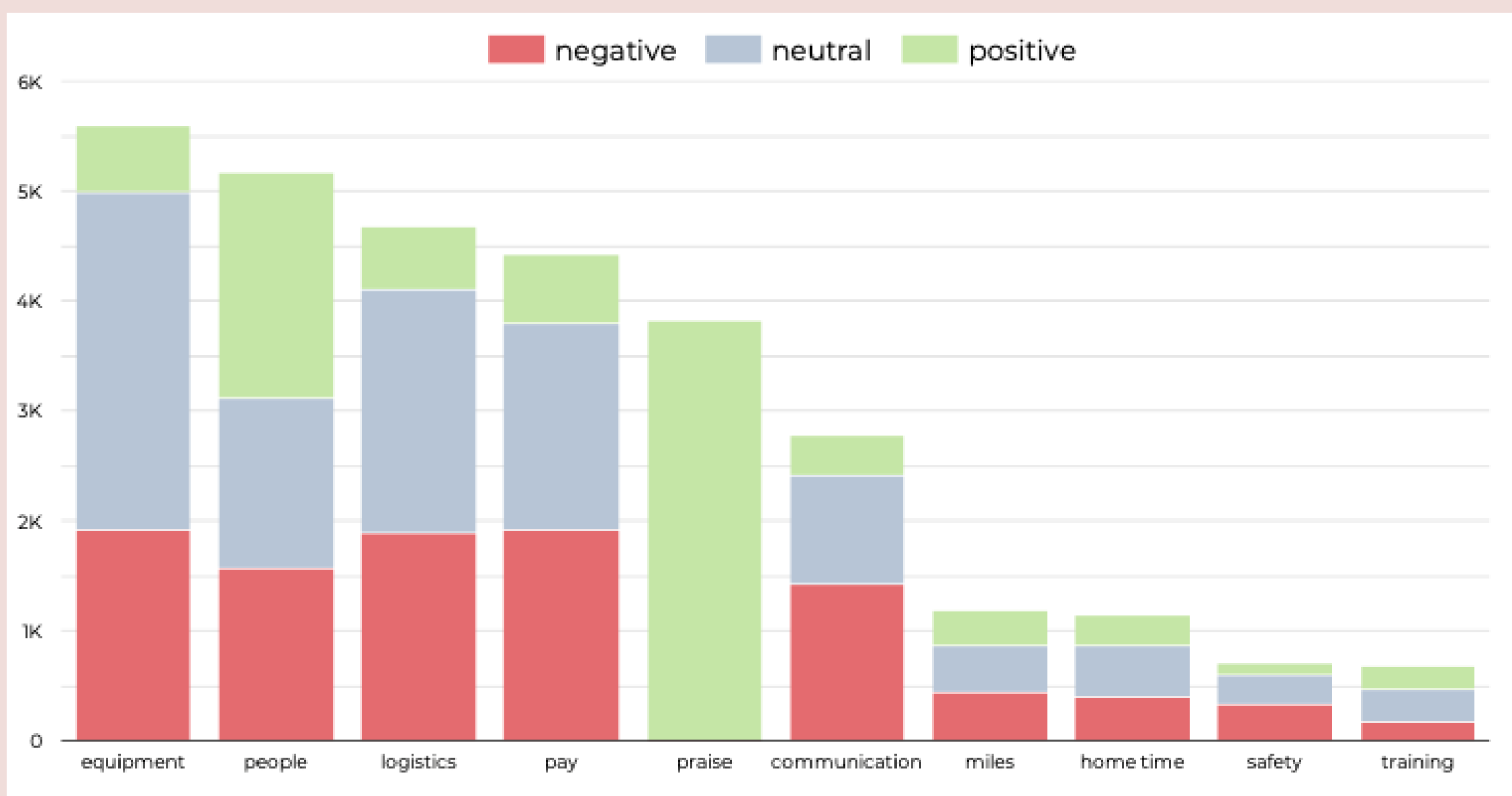
Nearly a quarter of the 24,600 comments filed by drivers in the first half of 2021 related to equipment — and only a fraction of those comments were positive.

For example, drivers use equipment as a proxy for how much their company appreciates them, and more tenured drivers perceive it as unfair when fleets hand newer equipment to new drivers as a recruiting tactic, while leaving tenured drivers with older equipment.

Another key area of concern related to equipment: Drivers feel like in-cab cameras and other monitoring systems are an intrusion of privacy and make them feel disrespected and insulted.

Regarding logistics, drivers obviously value home-time and appreciate efforts by their fleet to recognize work-life balance. But the logistics category is broader than just home-time — logistics feedback relates to details about load details, route planning and scheduling, or communication breakdowns between load planners and drivers.

**Ensuring proper communication on these issues can create more satisfied, invested drivers, perhaps more than simply boosting per-mile wages.**



**Weighing pay as a priority.** Nearly a quarter of all comments from the first half of 2021 related to feedback about drivers' equipment. Comments categorized as related to people and logistics ranked second and third, with pay — often a popular talking point circling driver retention issues — ranking just fourth in terms of comment frequency.

## The small carrier advantage.

WorkHound's 2021 mid-year trends report found a documented advantage for smaller companies in maintaining driver satisfaction and preventing unnecessary resignations.

**Drivers at smaller trucking companies, those with fewer than 200 workers, feel more satisfied in their jobs,** offer more praise about their motor carrier employers, and report being more engaged and invested in their work and their fleet than their counterparts at larger trucking companies. This emphasizes the need for additional retention-focused resources at companies with larger fleets.

Drivers at smaller companies also reported they're less likely to job hop and more inclined to help their carrier employers shore up perceived negative experiences.



## The small carrier advantage, cont'd.

Nearly 39% of comments about small companies (those with fewer than 200 workers) are positive, compared to just 28% at fleets with more than 500 workers. Medium-sized companies, those with between 200 and 499 workers, fell in the middle, with 32% of comments received being positive.

Likewise, the reverse is true — **smaller carriers received fewer negative comments than their large and medium-sized counterparts.** At smaller fleets, just 26% of comments were negative, compared to 30% at larger companies and 32% at medium-sized carriers.

Drivers at smaller fleets scored around 7.2 out of 10 on a scale of worker satisfaction developed by WorkHound. This scale offers a rating between 1 and 10, 1 being the least satisfied, and 10 being the most. Larger companies lag in this indicator, with drivers at those companies scoring at 6.2 out of 10.

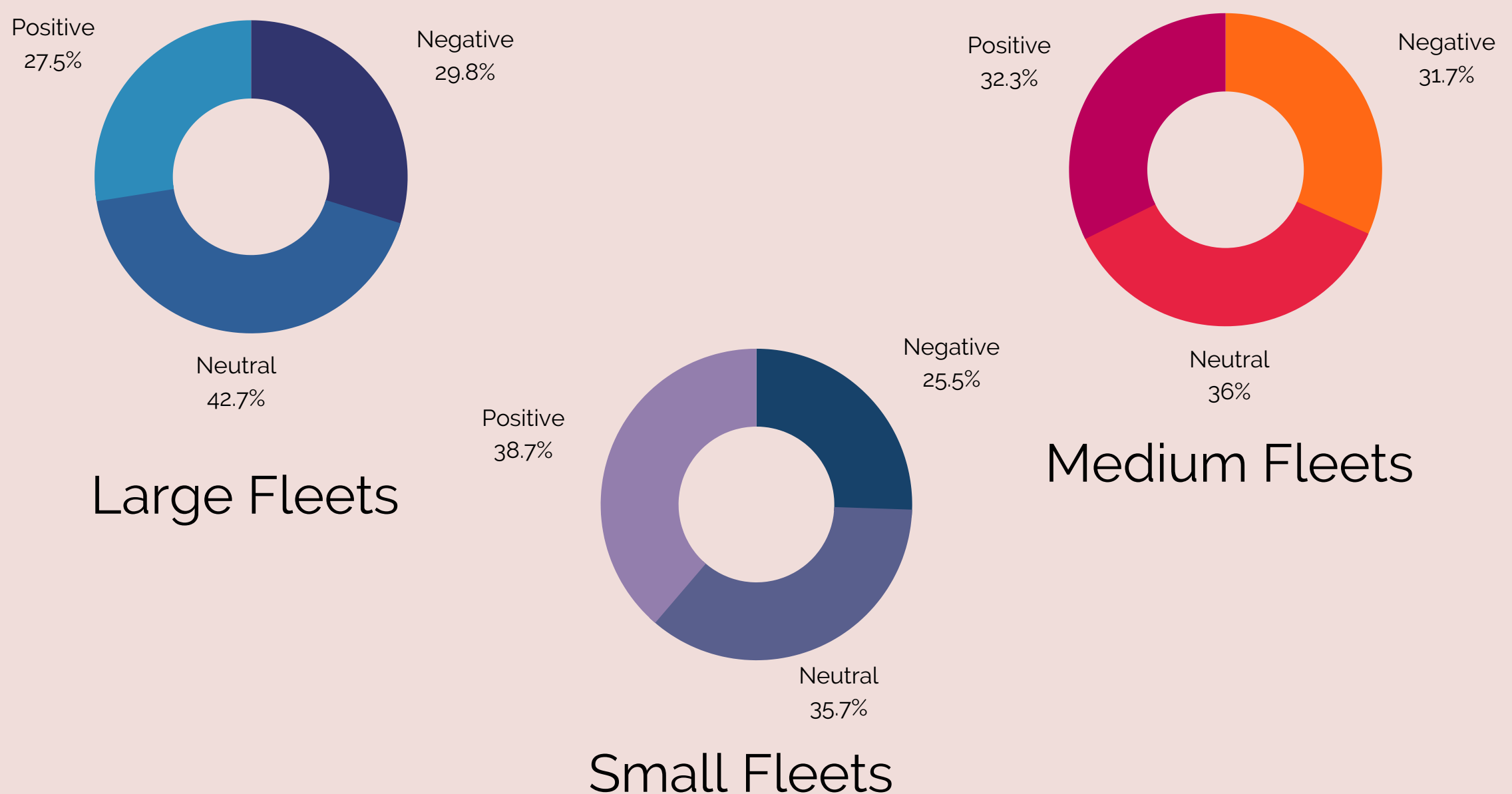
These insights aren't meant to pick on larger carriers, but rather reveal areas where they might be able to take cues and strategies that small carriers use effectively to enhance drivers' experiences and, thus, boost their worker retention efforts. These insights can also help larger carriers that use the WorkHound platform to intervene and potentially stave off dissatisfied drivers from quitting.

For example, larger companies are much less likely to receive praise from their driver employees. In WorkHound's analysis, the Praise theme ties heavily to company culture. Comments designated as "Praise" generally acknowledge a fleet's culture or show that drivers feel appreciated or respected.

**The lack of praise at large companies indicates an area that can be improved** by focusing more on people and less on problems as they pop up. Again, connecting with workers more frequently in positive ways pays major dividends in worker satisfaction.

Rather than only reaching out to drivers when something goes wrong, focus on proactive communication and showing drivers appreciation, an area where workers say smaller carriers outperform larger fleets.

Smaller companies have an inherent advantage in one of the most vital components of company culture — people and relationships. But it doesn't mean larger carriers can't create a culture that makes drivers feel connected and respected.



### Large fleets' praise gap.

Comparing "Praise" — that is, positive comments from workers about their fleet employers — small companies fared much better than their larger counterparts.

The disparity in positive and negative comments reveals a challenge, but also an opportunity, for larger fleets to better connect with their drivers on a personalized basis.



## Sounding off — Raw driver comments as insight into 2021 trends.

Here's a peek at some of the most representative comments from the nearly 25,000 that WorkHound received from drivers in the first half of 2021:

### Negative:

“Asked two weeks ago for time to see my sister...my girlfriend died, no time off, my truck broke down and [they're] blaming me...when I ask to be off I should be able to, when [my] significant other dies. Dispatcher doesn't answer his phone. I leave messages but still get yelled at. My last trip with [this company], things keep getting worse. [I] liked working for them, but it's time to take care of me and my family.”

“No communication with staff. Nobody will call me back when I call them. Only time I hear from anyone is to yell and scream at me. Nobody has a nice thing to say when they call me...I'm seriously thinking about quitting my job.”

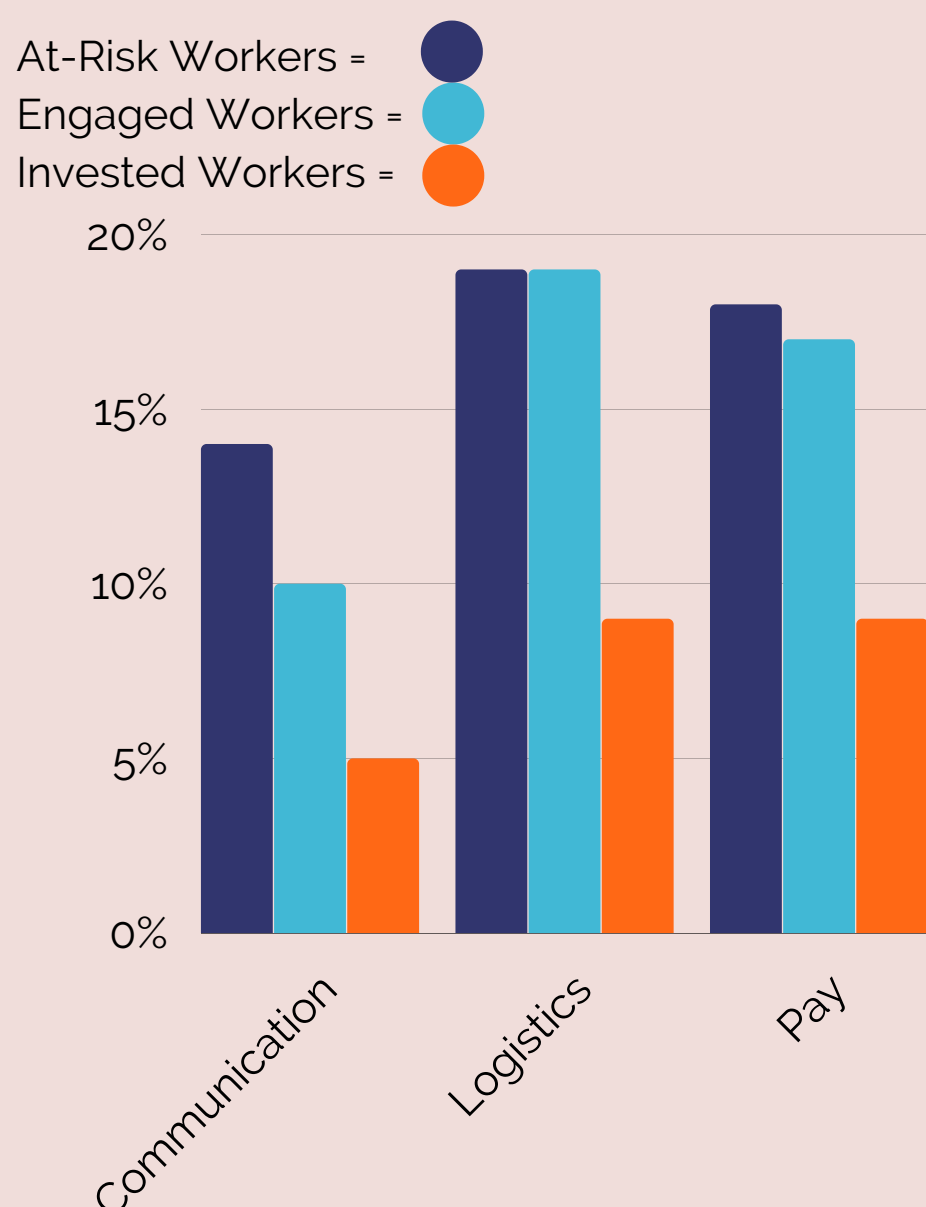
“Right now I am completely and thoroughly disheartened with this company. I have almost no communication from my fleet manager...I've been trying to get my pay corrected for a month and if they aren't going to correct it, to at least tell me why.”

“Why doesn't dispatch acknowledge the decline button on workflow? Also shouldn't we know who is sending us our loads? We don't! We cannot use PS to email individual users either. We need better communication!”

“Standard answers from HR. You don't think we haven't talked to fleet leaders, management, etc. Absolutely no change. If you truly are looking to change, you have to listen and react! Look at your turnover in the field and in the office. Times have changed and [company] needs to take a hard look at the office. Without the drivers, no [company]. Stop with the standard answers we have heard for years and fix what we are saying.”

“We don't know how to use our computer system' is never an acceptable answer for why a driver lost hundreds of dollars. Ever. Period. Honest communication would get you guys so much further than shady excuses. Blaming the driver just degrades morale and ruins any motivation. It's really sad that this has happened enough times to make me willing to complain.”

“Stop giving our personal phone numbers to brokers! They are blowing up our personal phone numbers during all hours!!! This interrupts my sleep, and it's very angering when my sleep is disturbed! If they want to know where their load is then they need to call dispatch, not us!”



### Identifying themes among three types of workers.

As this graph shows, logistics outranks pay as a negative experience for workers — ones that could create unhappy, at-risk workers. WorkHound identifies in its analysis three types of driver employees: Invested workers, engaged workers, and at-risk workers. Invested workers are satisfied with their jobs and feel a commitment to staying with their employer. That's not to say they don't offer criticism or negative comments.

Rather, they feel like advocates of their fleet and offer constructive feedback intended to plug holes and negative experiences they've identified. They're also the most likely to refer other drivers to your fleet. Engaged workers, meanwhile, simply see their work as business as usual. They're neither truly satisfied or dissatisfied in their jobs, but they do provide relevant and actionable feedback.

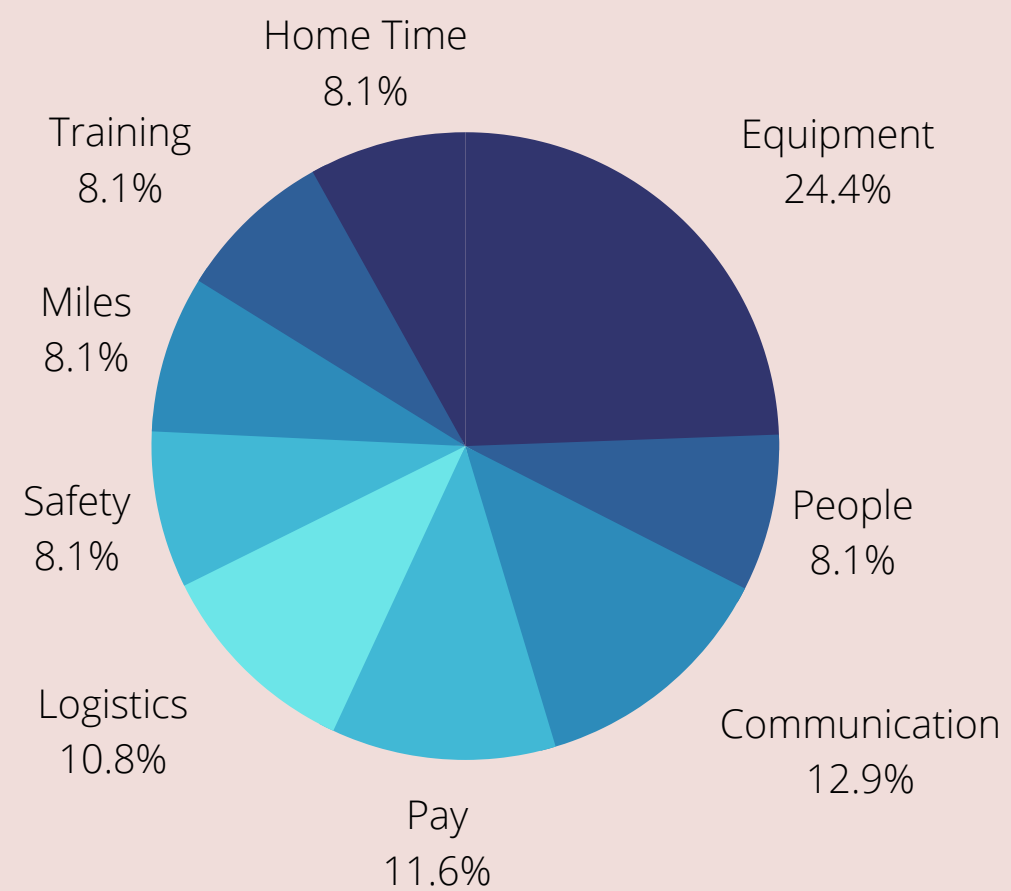
At-risk workers feel deeply dissatisfied with their jobs and their employers and likely are on their way to leaving. But they also present the best retention opportunity for fleets, as their feedback can highlight persistent problems that go unaddressed.

Likewise, fleets can take lessons from their feedback to prevent other workers from moving into the at-risk, unsatisfied category. At-risk workers do not equate to bad workers. Rather, they could be safe, hard-working drivers who simply do not feel their concerns are heard by their fleet and their managers — and that their issues do not matter and generally go unaddressed.



**This pie chart breaks out the negative comments by invested workers based on comment type.**

Consistent with the theme of the mid-year 2021 conclusions, equipment, logistics, communication, and people make up the large majority (upwards of 75%) of concerns and focus of that feedback — well outpacing pay.



**Positive:**

“I get along well with my dispatcher. He is quick to help when I run into issues and plans my next load promptly and provides me with all the needed details. I don't feel like a truck number and I'm treated like a human being, and I'm treated with a positive attitude. All I ask of in this industry is to handle the issues as they arise and to treat me respectfully.”

“My driver manager always reminds me if I need to get home time...I love this company because there is great team of people managing this operation.”

“The best management we ever had! Communicates with drivers and resolves issues! Dispatch team has been great as well.”

“[My managers] are some of the best people I could work for. In a male-dominated career they have always shown me the utmost respect. They make me want to work even harder for [the company]...They are always there when you need them.”

“I work a job that I enjoy and I have a driver manager that works with my needs. If he can't accommodate a certain situation, he doesn't beat around the bush and lets me know if something is possible or not.”

“Never have I worked for a company that cares [so well] for their drivers. The CEO will call to check on the driver personally, and to congratulate them on a job well done.”



## The WorkHound Methodology and Mission

WorkHound feedback is requested with open-ended questions — not surveys — via a link accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Workers are sent the link once a week via a text message. The goal is to create a real-time feedback loop, in which workers provide their comments anonymously — the good, the bad, and the ugly — and then companies take action on that feedback. Lastly, to bring the feedback loop full circle, companies can then share with their employees the actions they've taken to address feedback.

**Have Questions?  
Reach out & Ask:**



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