

SIX TOP TRUCKING INDICATORS TO FOLLOW

We're living in an era of data overload. From the micro to macro level, never before has so much information been at your fingertips. Want to know how many hard-braking incidents you had today? There's software that can tell you. Wondering what's the average speed in the country's worst freight bottlenecks? There's research that can answer that, too.

While access to statistics is convenient, the sheer volume of reports and figures at your disposal can make it difficult to pick out those most relevant to a given situation. And having command of the right numbers and spotting trends is vital to making smart business decisions.

Honing in on particular factors affecting the entire economy can offer even more insight. Keep tabs on goods-producing employment, which leads directly to truck freight. Find this in the monthly [ADP Employment Report](#). The housing market, which is at the beginning of a growth cycle, and changes in commodity prices also impact the trucking industry. Watch the [U.S. trade deficit](#), too. When imports increasingly outpace exports, economic growth is usually sluggish and freight numbers weakened. Here are six top trucking-industry indicators and indices to follow:



FTR TRANSPORTATION INTELLIGENCE'S TRUCKING CONDITIONS INDEX

This index, published monthly, summarizes the trucking industry's status at a glance. Among the things it takes into account: freight statistics, fleet utilization and rates, trucking cost and productivity trends, driver supply issues and regulatory impacts.

FREIGHT RATES

[DAT Solutions](#) offers weekly updates on spot market and contract freight rates, broken down by van, flatbed and reefer rates.

DRIVER ABILITY

The number of people employed in the trucking industry and truck driver turnover rates can tell you a lot about the state of the industry. The U.S. Department of Labor's [monthly employment report](#), which includes the number of employees added or lost in truck transportation, is a helpful tool. The [American Trucking Associations \(ATA\)](#) releases quarterly information on driver turnover.

FUEL PRICES

As one of your biggest operating expenses, diesel costs have a huge bearing on your profit margins. A resource for quickly viewing current prices and trends is the U.S. Energy Information Administration's [Gasoline and Diesel Fuel Update](#).

FREIGHT TONNAGE/VOLUME

This is the rising or ebbing tide that's closely linked to the health of the overall economy. [ATA's](#) monthly For-Hire Truck Tonnage Index offers a wealth of data, comparing each month's performance to the previous month's and to the same month in the preceding year. The organization outlines other trends as well. [DAT's North American Freight Index](#) offers insights into spot-market freight volume, providing month-over-month and same-month trends for all three truckload segments: van, reefer and flatbed.

INVENTORY-TO-SALES RATIO FOR U.S. RETAILERS

Excess stock decreases truck tonnage. The monthly inventory-to-sales ratio is available in the U.S. Census Bureau's [Retail Trade Report](#).