New study suggests automation will not wipe out truck-driving jobs

June 18 2019

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While stories in the media present automation as having the potential to eliminate large swaths of jobs in the near future, a new study by researchers Maury Gittleman and Kristen Monaco argues otherwise.

These authors found that the employment loss among U.S. truck drivers will be significantly less than the 2-3 million reported by some media accounts. They found that three factors attributed to the inflation of this report:

- The count of truck drivers is increased due to a misunderstanding of its occupational classification used in federal statistics
- Truck drivers do more than drive and these non-driving tasks will continue to be in demand
- Some segments of trucking will be easier to automate than others

Expanding off this last point, their research suggests while autonomous trucks will change how goods travel through the nation's transportation system and impact how trucks and cars interact on major freight corridors, not all trucking will be easily automated. Technology will transform the existing design of the trucking industry but will not eliminate the need for all truck drivers. Long-haul trucking (which constitutes the minority of jobs) will be easier to automate than short-haul trucking (in which the bulk of the employment lies). Their conclusions stress the need for paying close attention to the breadth of tasks performed, as well as certain factors that may impact the ease of automation.

This article, "Truck-Driving Jobs: Are They Headed for Rapid Elimination?" was recently published in *ILR Review*.

More information: Maury Gittleman et al, Truck-Driving Jobs: Are They Headed for Rapid Elimination?, *ILR Review* (2019). DOI: 10.1177/0019793919858079

Provided by SAGE Publications

Citation: New study suggests automation will not wipe out truck-driving jobs (2019, June 18) retrieved 6 May 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2019-06-automation-truck-driving-jobs.html

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