

Chicago Ridehail: Drivers

Updated monthly to track basic trends

July 29, 2026

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Table 1: Chicago ridehail drivers at a glance

Metric	Value	vs last month	vs a year ago
Average trips per day	240,398	-3.1	Active drivers
			58,357
			-0.7

Table 2: Chicago ridehail drivers

1 Introduction

Chicago publishes three data sets about Transportation Network Providers operations in the city. This notebook uses the [Drivers](#) data set. All three are updated monthly.

The data includes all “transportation network companies” (TNCs), but the large majority are Uber trips, specifically UberX trips. Observations about TNCs probably apply to Uber.

This notebook queries the Drivers data set to check monthly trends. It hopes to capture both sudden changes and continuing trends in the overall ridehail landscape in Chicago. The data set does not include earnings data or driver time spent en route to pick up passengers or waiting for a trip request: it’s basically about the number of drivers working and the number of trips they take each month.

I download the Drivers set as a CSV file and load it into a DuckDB database. After download, remove some obvious gaps and errors (like drivers with a start date before 2011, or drivers with a start date after the month reported).

In this notebook, “drivers” = “active drivers”, which is to say drivers who have driven at least one trip in a given month.

1.1 The month at a glance

Table [1](#) summarizes the headline numbers for in June 2026, alongside how each has moved compared to last month and to a year earlier. Any driver who completes 240 or more trips is considered “Full time”: see Figure [5](#) for more details on this choice.

Of the 60,993 drivers active in June 2025, an estimated 55.4% are now inactive, in June 2026.

2 The ridehail market

2.1 Trip volume

Figure 1 shows the total number of trips, displayed as “trips per day” average for each month.

There are a few periods:

1. Expansion until about 300,000 daily trips at the beginning of 2018
2. Flatlining at around 300,000 trips per day during 2018 and 2019
3. Covid-driven collapse in early 2020 followed by steady recovery.
4. A plateau, starting in 2024, at about 250,000 trips per day, still somewhat less than the peak period of 2018-2019.

250,000 trips per month is equivalent to just over 10,000 per hour, or about 175 per minute.

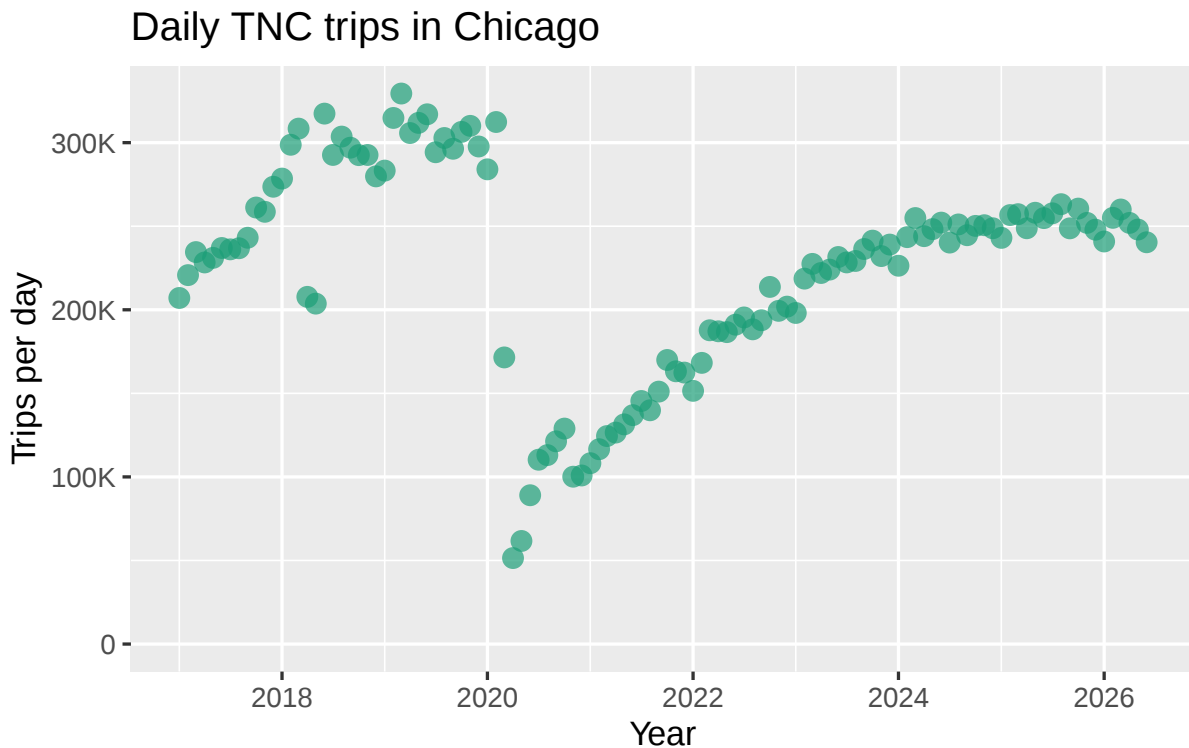


Figure 1: Average number of daily trips in each month

2.2 Driver population

Figure 2 shows the total number of active drivers each month (drivers who have driven at least one trip).

The trends for all drivers have some similarities and differences to the trips:

1. Expansion until early 2018.
2. Flatlining during 2018 and 2019 at about 70,000 drivers.
3. Covid-driven collapse in 2020, slightly less dramatic than the collapse in trips.
4. Steady recovery since then, levelling off at about 60,000 active drivers: slightly fewer than before Covid.

Regarding the outliers in Q2 2018, there is a note on the City of Chicago web site:

[S]ome vehicle records for Q2 2018 (April-June) were reported for the quarter as a whole, rather than for individual months. For purposes of this dataset, those records have been assigned to 2018-06 (June). Therefore, some caution in interpreting this month and the quarter as a whole is advised.

3 Driver activity

3.1 Trips per driver

Figure 3 shows the average (mean) number of monthly trips per active driver in Chicago, which has stayed consistent at 125 to 150 trips per month, over a long period, with the major deviation being the Covid collapse. A more detailed picture of driver activity is given below.

3.2 Drivers, by trips driven

There is no one Uber driver. To understand how Uber operates, it helps to know what the range of driver participation is. Some drive only occasionally, some drive full time.

Figure 4 shows driver activity by number of trips per driver. Most drivers give only a few trips, but there are a small number of drivers who give many trips.

TNC active drivers in Chicago

Active drivers are those who drive at least one trip in the month

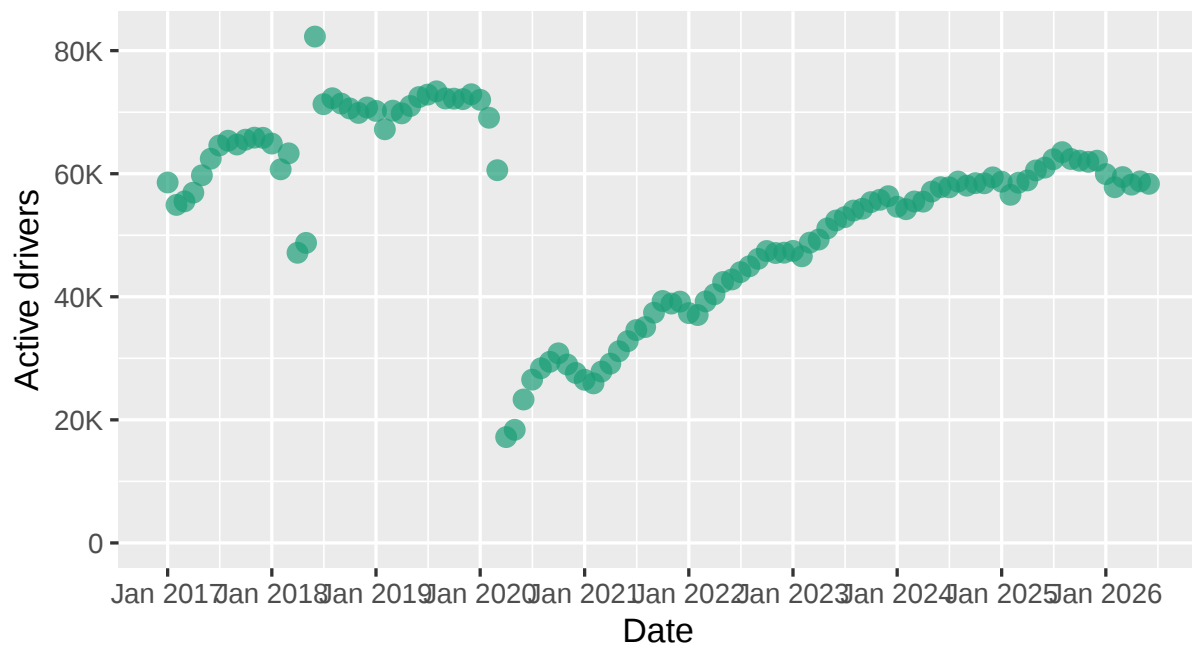


Figure 2

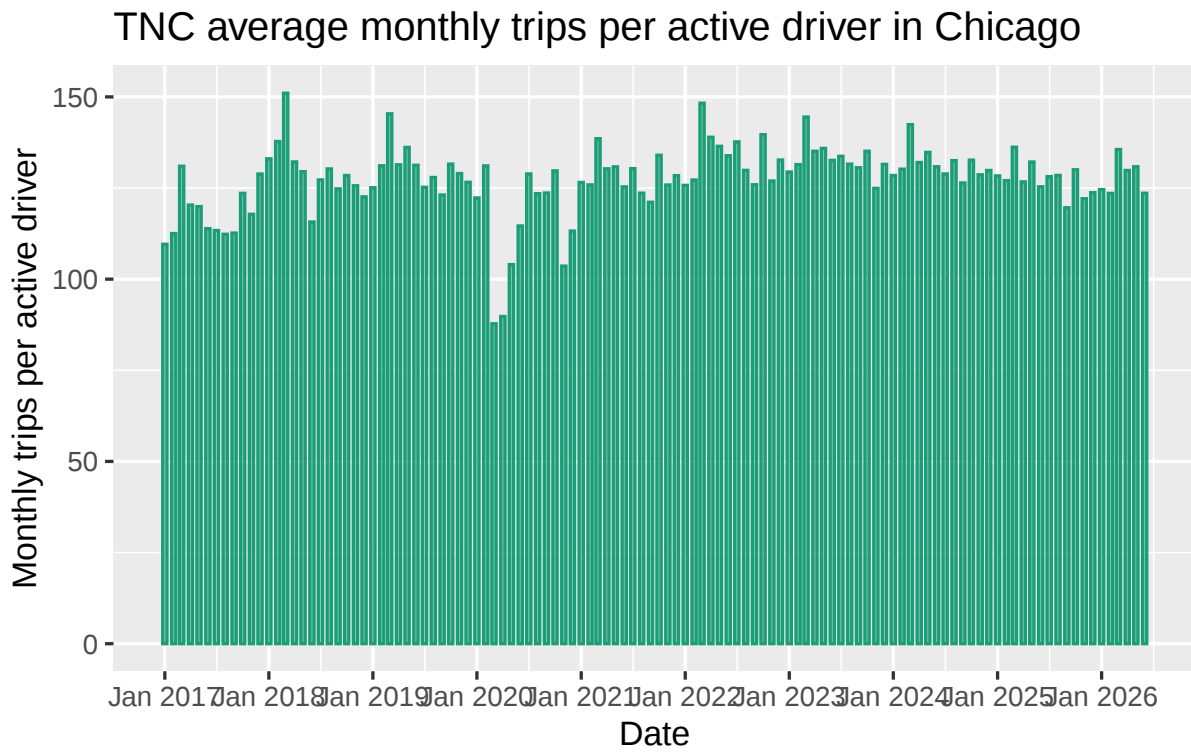


Figure 3

Distribution of drivers, by number of trips in the month, for 20
The large number of inactive drivers, with no trips at all, is not shown.

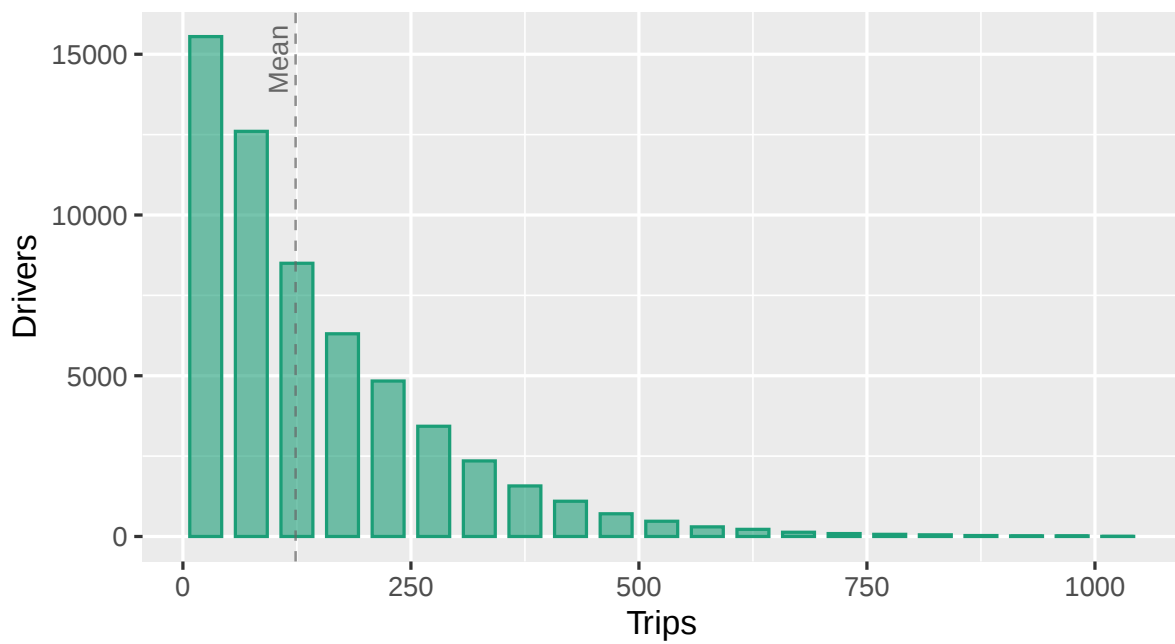


Figure 4

For June 2026, of the 86,195 total drivers, 27,838 (32.3%) took no trips at all, leaving 58,357 (67.7%) active drivers.

3.3 Categorizing drivers

To look at driver activity in more detail, it helps to categorize drivers as “full-time” or “part-time”. The line dividing the two is inevitably artificial, but it still helps to make sense of the driver population.

The Chicago data set does not provide driver times on the platform. The nearest we get is the number of trips in the month.

Using an average of 20 minutes per trip (from the Trips data set) and a utilization rate of 66% (a generous estimate from Fehr & Peers) gives two trips per hour. A 30 hour week translates into 60 trips, which is about 250 trips per month.

Any attempt to divide the distribution into categories is a bit arbitrary, but this section shows a few categorization schemes.

3.3.1 Seattle classification

The Seattle classification of Hyman et al to map that onto the Chicago data. The categories are:

Category	Trips	Estimated hours / week
1	< 40	< 5
2	41 – 160	5 – 20
3	161 – 240	20 – 30
4	241 – 320	30 – 40
5	> 320	> 40

The proportion of Casual drivers fell off quickly from 2016 to 2018, and the number of part-time (160-240) and full-time drivers rose. Since then, the composition has changed only a little.

Figure 5 uses 250 trips per month to separate full-time and part-time drivers, or about 31 hours per month, to show how the market is divided between the two groups (or ends

Table 4: Full-time
drivers,
June
2026

Measure	Value
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of the spectrum). It shows that even though full-time drivers make up less than a fifth of all drivers, they are responsible for about half of all trips. The statistics have remained remarkably constant over time.

Full-timers and part-timers are both essential to Uber and Lyft’s ability to deliver the volume of trips they handle. But these two groups do not always share the same interests.

Full-time ridehail drivers in Chicago

Full timers (over 250 trips per month) are a small fraction of drivers, but driv

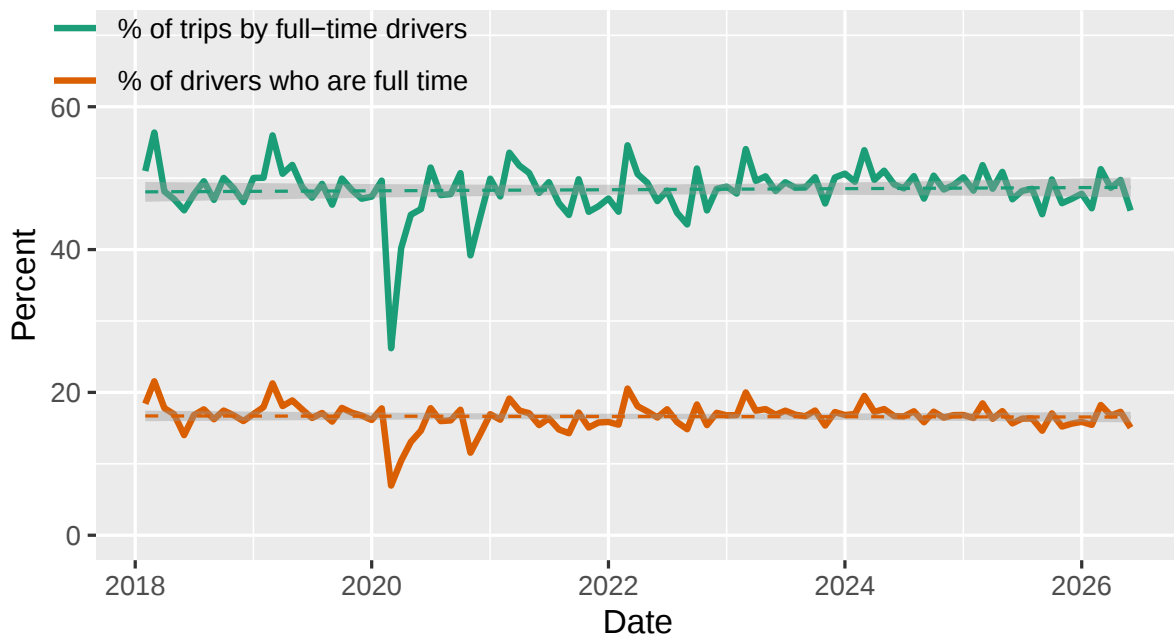


Figure 5

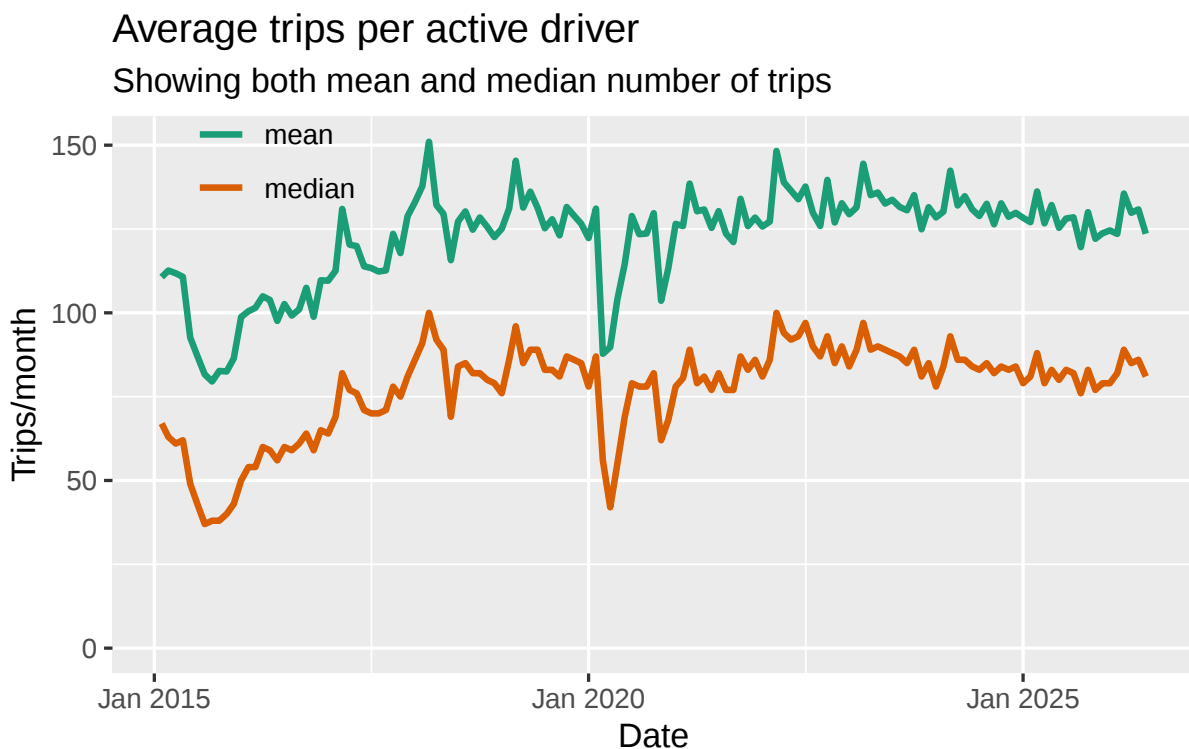
Here are the values for the most recent month:

3.4 Mean and median number of trips per driver

Although there is no “one type of Uber driver”, averages may still be useful to track trends.

?@fig-trips-per-driver-sql shows both the mean and median trips per active driver. The mean (which we showed above) is the total number of trips divided by the total number of drivers. The median is the number of trips for a “typical driver”, in the middle of the driver population.

Both the mean and median trips per month have been consistent for some time, showing that the basic nature of the driver population has been roughly unchanged for several years.

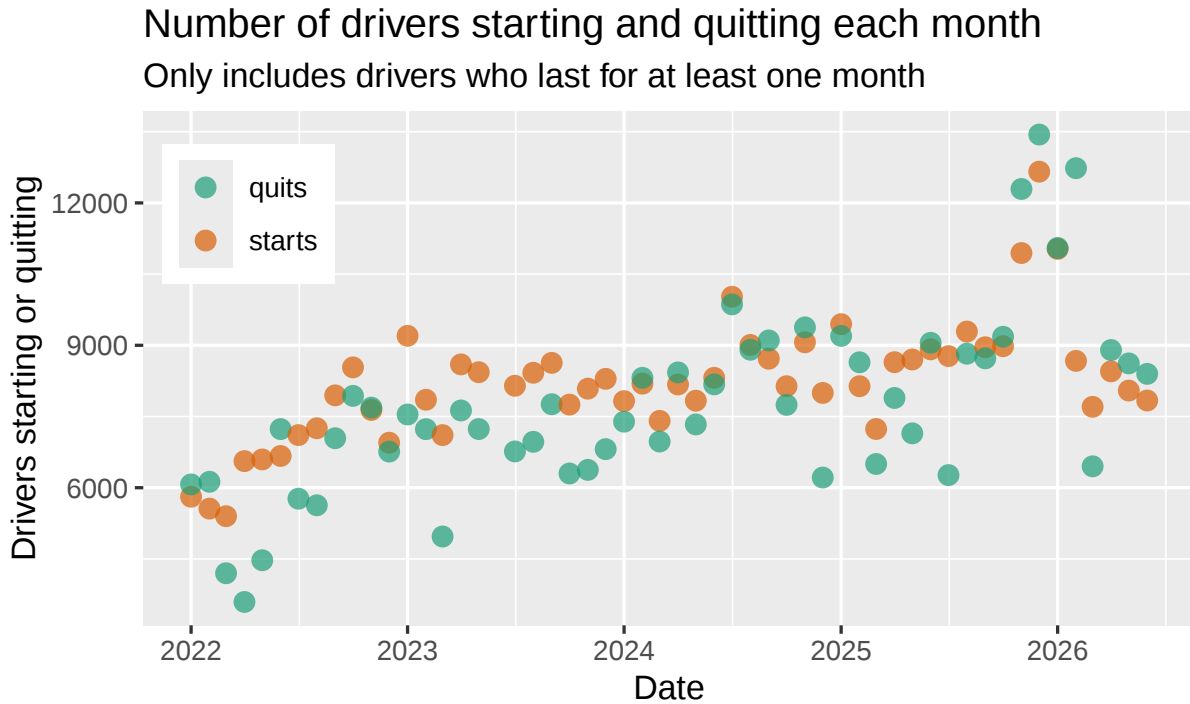


4 Driver longevity and churn

Although the driver population may look the same now as it did years ago, that doesn't mean it's the same drivers. In this section we look at how long drivers stay on the platform, and how the churn affects passenger experience.

4.1 New starts and quits, by month

The change in driver numbers is the difference between the number that start work on a TNC platform and those that quit. Figure 6 shows both of those numbers over recent years. This continual flux of drivers in and out of the market shape other charts, below.



Excludes June 2023: starts/quits more than 10 MAD from the median, a likely reporting artifact.

Figure 6

4.2 Drivers quitting the platform

Figure 7 shows how long drivers last on the platform. It shows what percentage of drivers are still working after a number of months, adding up numbers for all starting months since 2016.

The increase in number of drivers in the first month is reflects onboarding time: the chart displays all activer drivers and compares the number to the “driver_start_month” in the data set. Each driver has a “driver_start_month”, but some do not start driving

on the platform until the following month and hence only appear in the data set with a lag of one.

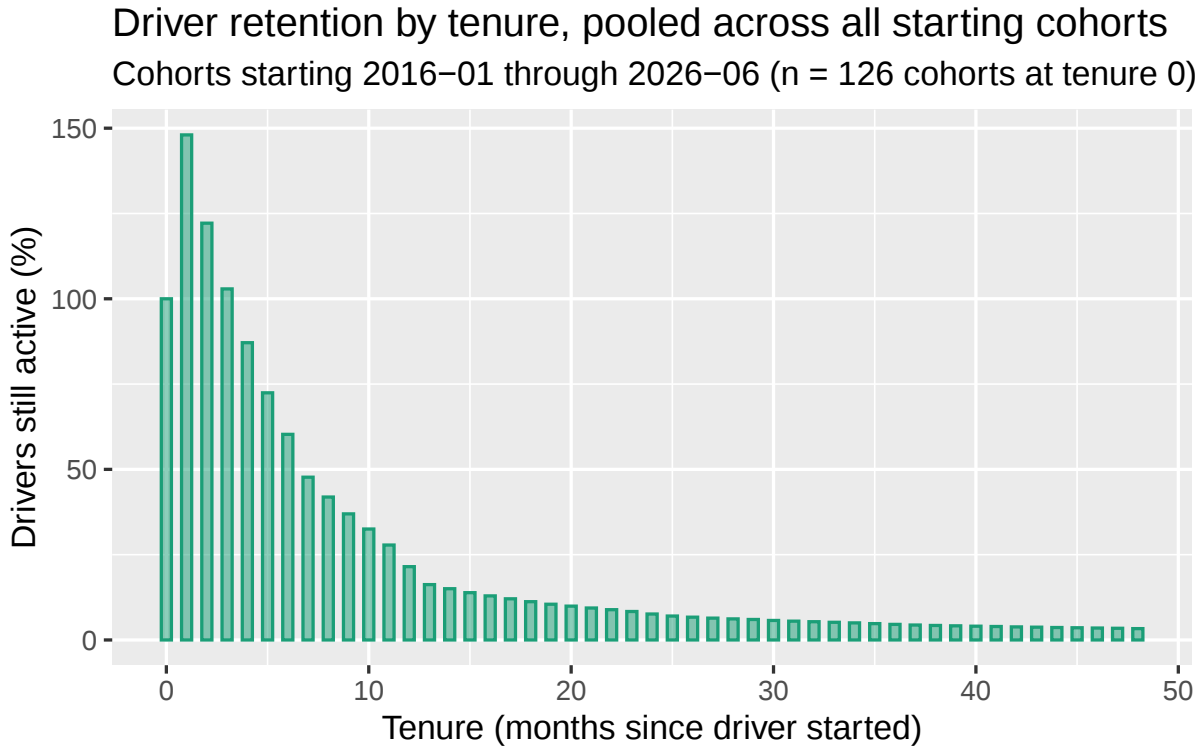


Figure 7

?@fig-driver-churn-facet shows how many drivers quit over their first year. The proportion is calculated by taking the number of drivers who start in a given month and who have trips in the month one year after that, and dividing by the number of drivers who start in a given month and who are present one month after that.

In recent years, fewer than 20% of drivers stay longer than a year.

4.3 Current driver population by longevity

Figure 8 shows the driver population for the most recent month in the data set, and shows the distribution of drivers, by longevity, on the platform in that month.

- The biggest single group of drivers are those new to the platform.
- The typical driver has been on the platform for less than a year.
- The average driver longevity is just over two years.

Longevity of active drivers reported in June 2026

Mean start time=May 2024; mean longevity=25 months; median longevity

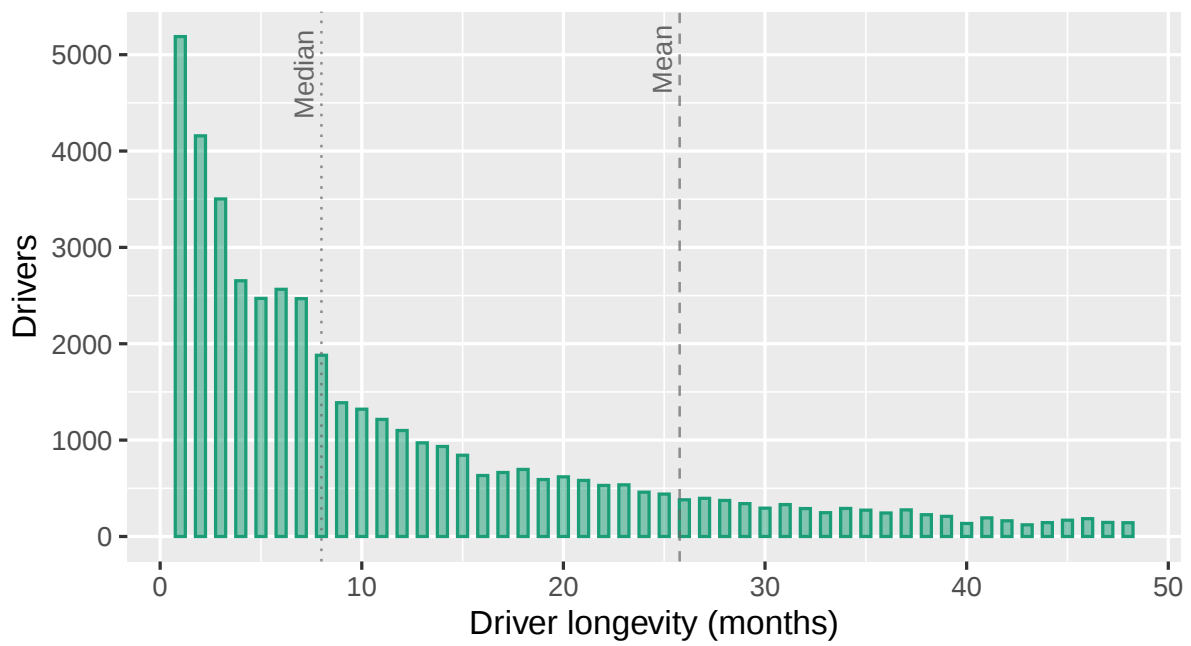


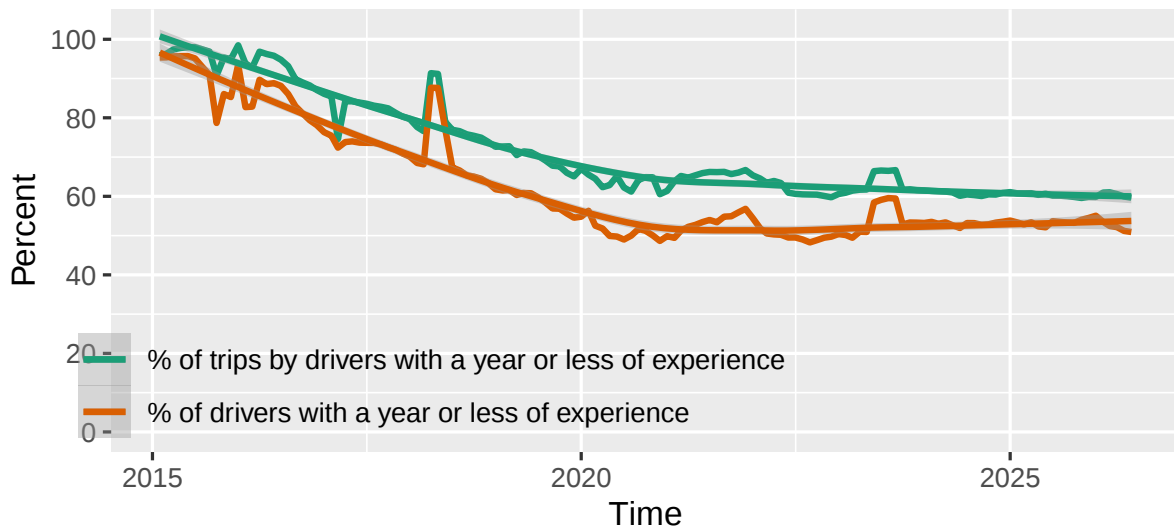
Figure 8

4.4 The evolution of longevity

It can be easier to interpret this if we lump drivers into new or long-term workers, based on whether they have been on the platform for more or less than a year.

New drivers in Chicago

Drivers with a year or less on the platform still make up over half of all drive and provide over half of all trips.



Ride hailing was still new and fast-growing in 2016, so there were few long-term drivers. Since then, the churn of incoming and leaving drivers has evened out.

Figure 9

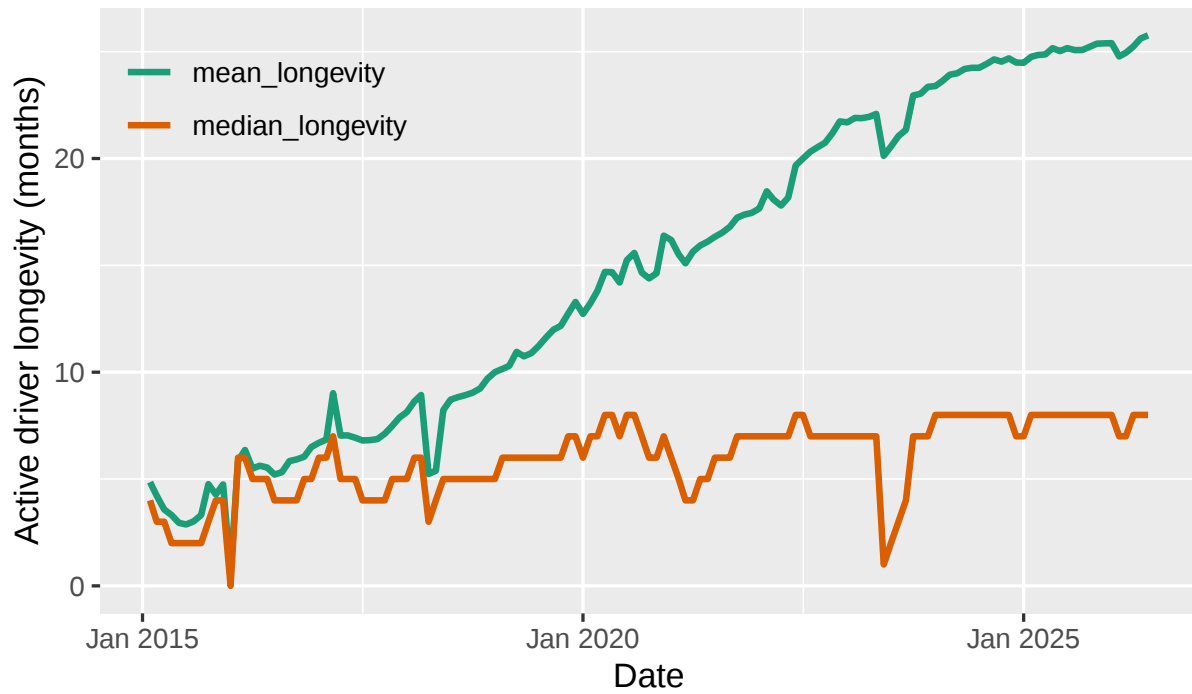
4.5 Driver mean and median longevity over time

Both mean and median longevity (below) confirm the observation that the driver population has been on the platform for longer, over time, albeit with a major Covid interruption.

The Chicago data does not allow us to see whether drivers have gaps in their work: we just have a first month they are recognized and the reporting month.

The typical driver has now been on the platform for almost a year. Drivers who drive more trips have, on average, been on the platform just a little longer.

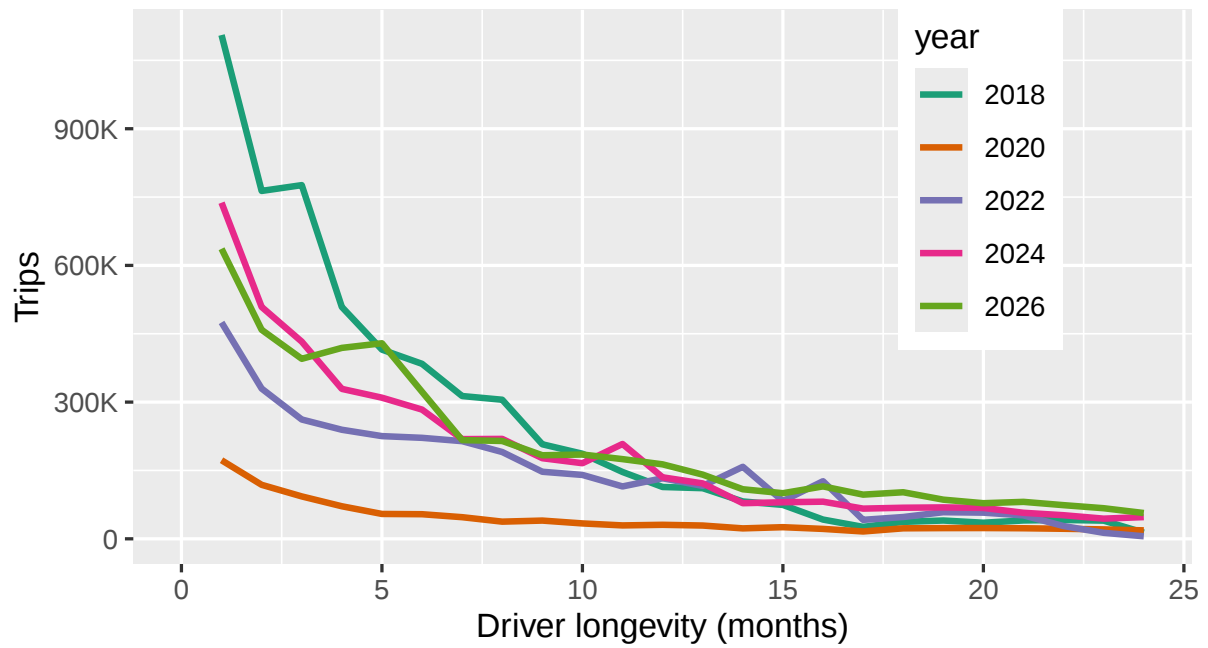
Chicago active driver longevity



4.6 Trip distribution

In a given month, how many trips are given by drivers with a residency of X months?

The evolution of driver longevity



Now do this over all months, not just an individual month, summing over the longevity of the driver.

Number of trips, by driver longevity, for all trips since 2016
Mean longevity = 23 months

