

Truck-tistics

Trailer Shipments: Up or Down in 1999?

DEPENDING on who one believes, trailer shipments either set a record or declined 21% in 1999.

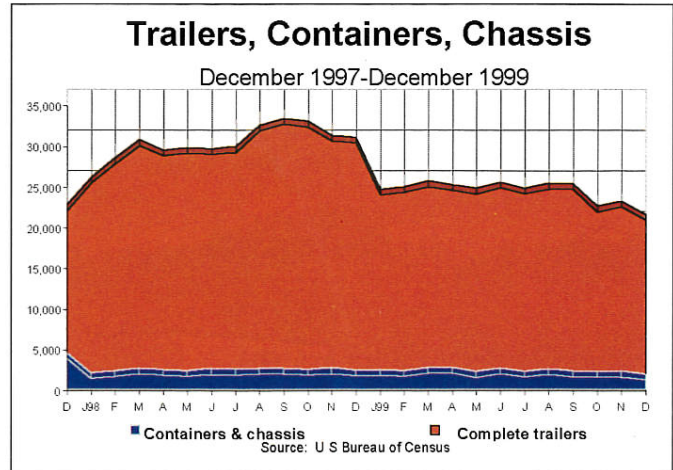
Manufacturers shipped an estimated 272,629 complete trailers during 1999, according to the sum of the 12 monthly reports published by the US Bureau of Census for the year.

At first glance, this represents a 21% decline from the preliminary totals for 1998. However, most of the people who track the trailer industry do not believe that the industry shipped 344,049 complete trailers in 1998 as the preliminary figures indicate.

Beginning in January 1999, the Census Bureau changed the way it conducts its monthly survey. Since then, monthly totals have been noticeably lower. Normally the Census Bureau adjusts the preliminary totals during the summer of 1999, but as of mid-February, no adjustments to the 1998 estimates had been published. As a result, comparing 1999 preliminary totals with those of 1998 is probably misleading. Private research companies are indicating that 1998 was not quite as good, and 1999 was not quite as bad as the Census figures indicate. One scenario is that the industry exceeded 1998 shipments, giving trailer manufacturers their second record year in a row.

An analysis of the preliminary figures for 1998 and 1999 can be found in the accompanying table.

On a month-to-month basis, trailer shipments were at their lowest levels in almost three years, according to Census reports. Manufacturers shipped an estimated 19,820 complete trailers in December, down 8% from November. It was the first time since February 1997 that the industry failed to ship at least 20,000 trailers in a month. How strong have shipments been in recent years? Until 1994, manufacturers had reached the 20,000 mark only twice—both times in 1979.



Record Truck Sales

Truck sales continued at record levels. According to figures compiled by Ward's Communications, truck dealers sold the following during 1999:

Class 1 trucks (GVW ratings of 6,000 pounds or less)—sales of 4,944,097, up 7% from 1998.

Class 2 trucks (GVW ratings of 6,001 to 10,000 pounds)—sales of 2,364,042 units, up 16% from 1998.

Class 3 trucks (GVW ratings of 10,001 to 14,000 pounds)—122,408 units sold, a 19% increase.

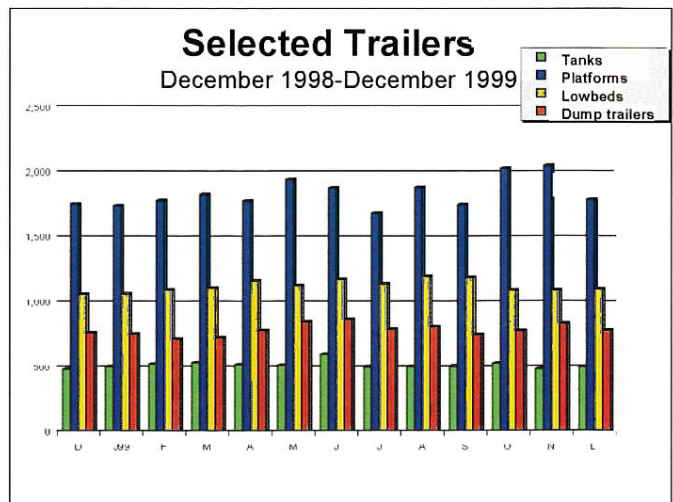
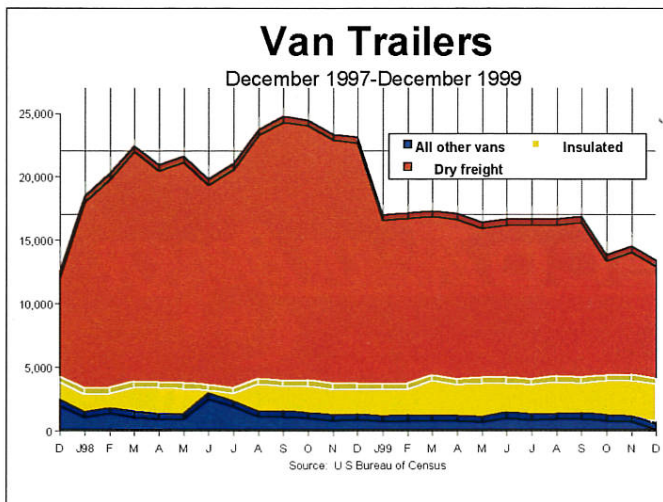
Class 4 trucks (GVW ratings of 14,001 to 16,000 pounds)—sales of 49,423 trucks, up 14% from 1998.

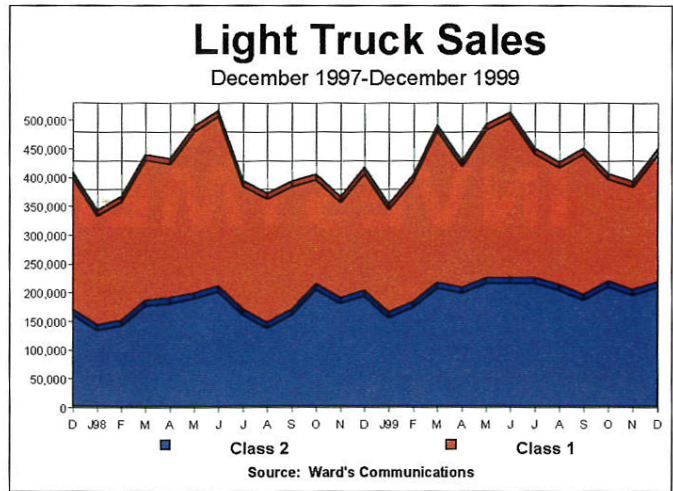
Class 5 trucks (GVW ratings of 16,001 to 19,500 pounds)—30,353 trucks sold, a 21% increase.

Class 6 trucks (GVW ratings of 19,501 to 26,000 pounds)—48,115 units sold, up 53%.

Class 7 trucks (GVW ratings of 26,001 to 33,000 pounds)—sales of 131,263, a 17% increase from 1998.

Class 8 trucks (GVW ratings above 33,000 pounds)—263,136 trucks sold, up 26%.





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Trailer Shipments 1998 vs 1999

	1999	1998	Percent Change	Monthly Average
Complete trailers	272,629	344,049	-21%	22,719
Total vans	213,785	284,106	-25%	17,815
Insulated	34,772	29,854	16%	2,898
Livestock	1,618	1,781	-9%	135
Dry freight	170,503	240,860	-29%	14,209
Open tops	6,892	8,032	-14%	574
Tanks (total)	6,084	6,062	0%	507
Flammable liquids	1,928	1,847	4%	161
Chemical & acid	1,995	2,560	-22%	166
Asphalt	724	457	58%	60
All other tanks	1,437	1,198	20%	120
Bulk commodity	1,971	1,938	2%	164
Pole & logging	1,212	2,067	-41%	101
Platforms	22,008	21,573	2%	1,834
Lowbeds	13,404	12,845	4%	1,117
Dump trailers	9,309	10,022	-7%	776
Auto transporters	212	173	23%	18
All other trailers	4,644	5,263	-12%	387
Containers & chassis	19,616	20,814	-6%	1,635
Dollies, converter gear	2,693	3,906	-31%	224

Source: US Bureau of Census preliminary reports

