

★ ★ ★ ★ Senior Safety & Mobility

Older American Drivers and Traffic Safety Culture: A LongROAD Study FACT SHEET

One in six drivers on U.S. roads today are 65 years of age or older. Though generally a very safe group of motorists, older Americans may be more likely to have a medical condition or use medications that can affect their driving. Moreover, as people age, fragility begins to make crash survival and recovery more difficult. As such, finding ways to keep seniors safe and mobile is among the AAA Foundation's top priorities.

New Study: Older American Drivers and Traffic Safety Culture (Available [Here](#))

Overview

- **Objective:** Examine the extent and nature of the variability in driving behaviors and safety-related attitudes among drivers ages 65-69, 70-74, and 75+.
- **Methods:** Analyzed weighted data for 1,793 respondents age 65 and older from the AAA Foundation's 2011, 2012, and 2013 Traffic Safety Culture Index surveys.

Key Findings – Support for Safety Interventions

- **License Renewal Laws for Senior Drivers:** Over 70% of respondents supported requiring drivers age 75 and older to renew their license in person. Similarly, more than 70% supported requiring drivers age 75 and older to pass a medical screening at renewal. Support for these measures was greatest among drivers age 75+ at 79% for in-person renewal and 77% for medical screening.
- **Speed Cameras:** A majority of respondents in each age group supported using speed cameras to ticket driving 10 mph over the limit in residential areas and urban areas, although those 75+ were more likely to support both than 65-69 and 70-74 year olds. Support for using speed cameras on freeways to ticket driving 15 mph over the limit was lower than for other speed camera locations and did not vary among the age groups.
- **Phone-Related Laws:** Most respondents expressed support for laws against texting/emailing while driving and talking on a hand-held phone while driving, with those 75+ most likely to support both.
- **Red Light Cameras:** Respondents 75+ were more likely to support red light cameras in both urban and residential areas than those respondents aged 65-69 and 70-74.



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Seniors face serious driving safety and mobility issues.



- **Impaired Driving Laws:** More than 60 percent of respondents supported lowering the legal limit for blood alcohol content while driving in the U.S. from .08 g/dL to .05 g/dL with little variation among groups. Respondents' support neared 90% for requiring alcohol ignition interlock devices, including for first-time offenders. Support for requiring ignition interlock technology in all new cars was slightly lower and varied by age group, with 87% of those 75+ expressing support versus 77% of 65-69 year olds and 78% of 70-74 year olds.

Key Findings – Attitudes Towards Driving Behavior

A vast majority of respondents strongly disapproved of all unsafe driving behaviors included in the survey, however respondents 65-69 were slightly more accepting of some unsafe driving behaviors:

- **Speeding:** Respondents overwhelmingly disapprove of speeding, whether on freeways, in residential areas, in urban areas, or in school zones.
- **Cell phone use:** Nearly 100% of respondents disapproved of texting/e-mailing while driving, and this did not vary by age group. Disapproval of talking on a hand-held phone while driving was slightly lower, and respondents age 70-74 and 75+ were more likely to disapprove than drivers 65-69 (91% and 90% vs. 84%).
- **Red Light Running:** Virtually all respondents disapproved of a driver running a red light when one could have stopped safely.
- **Impaired Driving:** Nearly 100% of all three age groups of older respondents disapproved of driving under the influence of alcohol, marijuana, or both, as well as drowsy driving.

Key Findings – Engagement in Unsafe Behaviors

Self-reported behavior behind the wheel **in the past month** varied among the three age groups:

- Self-reported speeding was common among all 3 age groups: 42-46% reported having driven 15 mph hour over the limit on freeways and 41-48% reported having driven 10 mph over the limit on residential streets.
- Fewer than 10% of respondents in each age group reported having read or typed texts/emails while driving, with drivers 65-69 were more likely to report both than drivers in the 2 older age groups. Drivers 65-69 were also more likely to report talking on a cell phone while driving than the older age groups, (52% of drivers 65-69 vs. 45% of those aged 70-74 and 34% of those aged 75+).
- While 31-38% of drivers reported having driven through a red light when they could have stopped safely at least once, only 1% reported having done this fairly often or regularly.
- Drivers ages 75+ were more likely to report drowsy driving than the 2 younger age groups (29% of drivers 75+ vs. 22% of those aged 65-69 and 23% of those aged 70-74).
- Most older drivers reported always wearing a seatbelt while driving, however, drivers 75+ were the most likely to report having driven without wearing a seatbelt (25% of drivers 75+ vs. 18% of those aged 65-69 and 16% of those aged 70-74).

For more information on this study and the AAA Foundation's other senior safety research and materials, please visit AAAFoundation.org.

Established in 1947 by AAA, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety is a not-for-profit, publicly funded, 501(c)(3) charitable research and educational organization. The AAA Foundation's mission is to prevent traffic deaths and injuries by conducting research into their causes and by educating the public about strategies to prevent crashes and reduce injuries when they do occur. This research is used to develop educational materials for drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists and other road users. Visit www.AAAFoundation.org for more information.

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