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FATAL CRASHES INVOLVING OLDER DRIVERS INCREASING PARTLY DUE TO RAPIDLY GROWING NUMBER OF OLDER AMERICANS; IMPROVEMENTS TO NATION’S TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM COULD IMPROVE TRAFFIC SAFETY FOR OLDER DRIVERS AS WELL AS ALL MOTORISTS

Eds. TRIP’s report identifies states with highest number and share of older drivers, states with highest fatality and crash rates involving older drivers, strategies to help aging motorists remain mobile, and recommended transportation improvements. Info-graphics for the report can be downloaded [here](#).

Washington, DC – While the number of older Americans continues to grow at a significant rate, the number of older drivers involved or killed in fatal traffic crashes is growing even faster, finds a new report from TRIP. With older Americans leading more mobile and active lifestyles than previous generations, it is critical that the nation adopt traffic safety improvements that will make our roads and highways safer not only for older drivers, but for all drivers.

The report, “[Preserving the Mobility and Safety of Older Americans](#),” was released today by [TRIP](#), a national non-profit transportation research group based in Washington, D.C. According to the report the number of fatalities in crashes involving at least one driver 65 and older increased 22 percent from 2012 to 2016, (the overall number of fatalities in the U.S. increased 11 percent during that time), and the number of drivers 65 and older killed in crashes increased 21 percent from 2012 to 2016.

The TRIP report details states in the top 20 in the number of traffic fatalities involving drivers 65 or older, the increase in fatalities involving drivers 65 or over from 2012 to 2016, the number and proportion of licensed drivers 65 and older, increases in licensed drivers 65 and older from 2012 to 2016, the increase in fatalities involving at least one driver 65 and older from 2012 to 2016, and the number of drivers 65 and older killed in crashes. Data for each state can be found in the report’s [appendix](#).

RANK	STATE	NUMBER OF FATALITIES INVOLVING AT LEAST ONE 65+ DRIVER	STATE	PERCENTAGE OF FATALITIES INVOLVING AT LEAST ONE 65+ DRIVER	STATE	NUMBER OF LICENSED DRIVERS 65+	STATE	PERCENTAGE OF LICENSED DRIVERS 65+
1	Florida	682	Wisconsin	26%	California	3,999,876	West Virginia	25%
2	Texas	568	Minnesota	25%	Florida	3,341,250	Arkansas	23%
3	California	554	Kansas	25%	Texas	2,544,333	Florida	23%
4	Georgia	299	Nebraska	24%	New York	2,442,349	Maine	23%
5	North Carolina	285	Rhode Island	24%	Pennsylvania	1,911,928	Vermont	22%
6	Pennsylvania	267	Maine	23%	Ohio	1,616,214	Oregon	22%
7	Ohio	250	Oregon	23%	Illinois	1,507,439	Delaware	21%
8	Tennessee	233	Pennsylvania	22%	Michigan	1,432,987	Pennsylvania	21%
9	Illinois	232	Tennessee	22%	North Carolina	1,376,260	Alabama	21%
10	Michigan	231	West Virginia	22%	Georgia	1,186,660	South Dakota	21%
11	New York	222	Ohio	22%	New Jersey	1,153,534	Montana	21%
12	Missouri	206	New Jersey	22%	Virginia	1,087,440	Minnesota	21%
13	Arizona	179	Missouri	22%	Tennessee	1,035,885	South Carolina	20%
14	Kentucky	178	Michigan	22%	Washington	970,075	New York	20%
15	Alabama	161	New York	22%	Massachusetts	921,308	Ohio	20%
16	Indiana	161	Iowa	22%	Arizona	899,807	Michigan	20%
17	South Carolina	160	Florida	21%	Indiana	848,297	Oklahoma	20%
18	Wisconsin	159	Illinois	21%	Alabama	837,360	Rhode Island	20%
19	Virginia	151	Kentucky	21%	Missouri	830,871	Hawaii	20%
20	Mississippi	141	Arkansas	21%	Wisconsin	817,848	Mississippi	20%

According to the TRIP report, an estimated 46 million Americans are 65 or older, accounting for 15 percent of the total population. By 2060, the number of Americans 65 and older will more than double and their proportion of the total population will reach 24 percent. In the last decade, the number of licensed drivers 65 and older increased 38 percent and the proportion of licensed drivers 65 and older rose from 15 percent to 19 percent.

Older Americans are more mobile and active than ever and want to maintain that lifestyle for as long as possible. Among those 65 and older, 90 percent of travel takes place in a private vehicle and 79 percent live in car-dependent suburban and rural communities. The quality of life of older Americans is closely tied to their level of mobility.

“As transportation agencies work to reduce fatalities and serious injuries among older drivers, we are able to implement safety improvements that assist all road users,” said Rudy Malfabon, director of the Nevada Department of Transportation and chair of the [American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials](#) Committee on Highway Traffic Safety. “Wider lane striping, larger sign lettering, and more prominent milepost signage are just a few of the strategies that benefit older road users as well as all motorists and first responders. These efforts help us move toward our vision of zero traffic fatalities.”

Older drivers face a number of challenges on the road. Their higher instance of fatalities is partly attributable to physical fragility that makes surviving a crash less likely than younger drivers. While they tend to be more cautious and avoid risks on the road, older drivers may face physical challenges that make driving more difficult, including diminished eyesight, reaction time, cognitive ability and muscle dexterity.

“Freedom of mobility is a cherished, lifelong right. We owe it to the generation that built our nation’s highway system to further enhance the safety and convenience of our transportation system to meet the mobility needs of older Americans,” said Greg Cohen, president and CEO of the [American Highway Users Alliance](#), an organization that advocates on behalf of motorists, truckers, and other drivers. “Making roads safer and supporting the development of emerging transportation options and technology will enhance the mobility of older Americans and the general population.”

Older Americans who cease or limit their driving still have options available for maintaining their mobility, though some may come with challenges and drawbacks. Transit systems can benefit older Americans, though robust transit options may not be available in the rural areas where many live, and transit use requires being able to get from home to the pick-up location and from the drop-off to the final destination. Ride sharing services can also help close the mobility gap for older Americans. But, less than one-third of Americans over 65 own a smartphone, which is a prerequisite for using many ridesharing services. Advancements in self-driving and connected vehicle technology may eventually allow older Americans to retain the convenience of private vehicle travel after they are no longer able to drive. However, the timeline for the widespread use of self-driving and connected vehicles is uncertain, and their adoption by older drivers may be slower than that of the general population.

The TRIP report offers a set of recommendations to improve the mobility and safety of older Americans. Many of these recommendations are designed to reduce the consequences of driving errors, making roads safer for all Americans. TRIP’s recommendations include the following. An expanded list can be found in the report.

- **SAFER ROADS:** clearer, brighter and simpler signage with large lettering; brighter street markings, particularly at intersections; widening or adding left-turn lanes and extending the length of merge or exit lanes; adding roundabouts where appropriate; adding rumble strips; and system planning and design to accommodate technology needs of connected and self-driving vehicles.
- **SAFER ROAD USERS:** promoting education and training programs for older drivers.
- **SAFER VEHICLES:** implementing self-driving and connected vehicle technology as well as vehicle safety features that address aging-related deficits, improving vehicles to help withstand and avoid crashes.
- **IMPROVED CHOICES:** ensuring public transit routes, vehicles, facilities and stops are easily accessible and accommodating to older or disabled passengers; and expanding non-traditional approaches tailored to the needs of older adults.

“The rapidly growing ranks of older Americans will far outpace previous generations with their level of mobility and activity. Serving their mobility needs will require a transportation system that includes safer roads, safer vehicles, safer drivers and improved choices,” said Will Wilkins, executive director of TRIP. “Additional federal, state and local transportation funds can help not only older drivers, but all drivers.”