

Identification of Safety Issues of Older Drivers Using Survey Data

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In the past, many research studies have analyzed crash data to identify various factors contributing to older-driver over-involvement in crashes. However, it is also necessary to identify other types of safety related information which cannot be extracted from crash data, such as exposure to different weather and road conditions, difficulties associated with vehicle maneuvering, modifications made to driving patterns, etc., which might be playing a significant role in older-driver safety. Therefore, a questionnaire was prepared and a survey was conducted to identify those issues and difficulties highlighted in crash data. Based on the responses, a detailed examination was done to understand different behavioral changes in older drivers with respect to various conditions.

Based on the survey results it was found that most of the older drivers have more than fifty years of driving experience and their seat belt usage was also found to be high. Left turns appear to be the most challenging maneuvering task. Analysis based on age revealed that level of difficulty associated with older drivers increase with age and similarly, preference to avoid demanding conditions, such as snowy weather, nighttime driving, and use of freeways has also increased with aging. Older drivers older than 70 years were highly involved in crashes and those with elevated income levels and education had higher involvement in crashes. Older male drivers indicated higher levels of difficulties in stopping, stopped waiting to turn, or slowing down situations. On the other hand, females showed higher levels of difficulty associated with identifying speeds and distance of oncoming traffic compared to males. Findings of this study could be used to develop more focused programs towards improving older driver safety.

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