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Transportation-Related Behaviors and Attitudes: A Survey of Florida's Aging Road Users

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Current Situation

Florida has long been a popular destination for older Americans, many of whom settle in the state, giving Florida the largest percentage of residents over 65 years of age of any U.S. state. As we age, our abilities such as visual acuity, hearing, or reaction time can change and impact our safe driving skills. The Florida Department of Transportation has a dedicated program to address the safety and mobility needs of this important and growing sector of Florida's population. FDOT's Safe Mobility for Life Program in partnership with the Pepper Institute on Aging and Public Policy at Florida State University formed the statewide Safe Mobility for Life Coalition (SMFLC). SMFLC brings together a variety of organizations such as AARP Florida, the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, the Florida Department of Elder Affairs, plus representation from stakeholders including law enforcement, aging service providers and health care. Working together, they discuss and develop a variety of resources to improve the safety, access, and mobility needs of Florida's aging road users.

Older Floridians are a diverse group and, in order to guide the development of educational materials and resources, it is important to understand their attitudes and opinions about transportation issues.

Research Objectives

Florida State University researchers conducted a statewide online survey of Floridians aged 50 and older. The 2020–2021 Safe Mobility for Life Survey was a follow-up to, and extension of, a 2017 survey.

Project Activities

The goal of the survey was to help identify transportation issues faced by older Floridians and guide the SMFLC in developing strategies and resources to address these issues. Behaviors and attitudes of interest included use of various transportation options, planning for retirement from driving, self-assessment of driving behavior, and others. The survey was updated based on a literature review. For example, the 2017 survey had only one question on self-assessed driving ability, while the 2020–2021 survey included 17 questions on this topic.

The survey was conducted for four months beginning with a kick-off during Older Driver Safety Awareness Week in early December 2021. The survey was also promoted through emails to SMFLC members, on the SMFLC website, and in other communications likely to reach older Floridians. Most respondents were located near Florida's capital in Leon County and in surrounding counties. Additional efforts to engage participants throughout Florida resulted in a more evenly distributed final sample of 4,275 participants.

Most respondents reported ease getting where they need or want to go and that driving was, by far, their primary transportation mode, followed by walking and getting rides from family. Most respondents viewed driving as central to maintaining their independence and social connections and felt it would be difficult to get around if they could no longer drive. However, few respondents had planned for such a time.

Respondents tended to rate their driving ability favorably, except at night. Many respondents reported high levels of hurricane preparedness, and few respondents had used SMFLC resources. The results show the need to promote planning for retirement from driving, knowledge of alternative transportation options, improvements that would make using different modes more appealing, addressing gaps in hurricane preparedness, and awareness of SMFLC.

Project Benefits

Understanding the attitudes of older adults can help focus the development and distribution of resources and materials to address improve their safety and mobility needs as they use Florida's roadways.

For more information, please see www.fdot.gov/research/.



Driving is important to older Floridians, but changes to abilities can put us at risk as we age.