

# Older drivers steer their way to safer conditions

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Credit: University of Western Sydney

Older drivers at risk of crashes are ready to avoid potentially dangerous situations like peak hour and night-time travel after taking a safe driving program targeting their age group, according to a Western Sydney University study.

Over the last decade in Australia, the total road deaths have risen for people aged 65 and older, despite an overall reduction in total annual

road fatalities.

By 2030 there will be over half a million people over the age of 65 driving on Australian roads.

To test whether educational programs targeting older drivers could help reduce crashes, the study conducted by the University and The George Institute for Global Health (opens in new window), adopted the KEYS safe driving program to an Australian setting and measured whether it helped older drivers pinpoint the risks to their safety.

"In the study, we worked with drivers aged 75 and over to provide information about seven high risk driving situations, such as driving at night and in the rain, driving on highways and motorways, as well as driving in school zones," says Dr Kristy Coxon from the school of Science and Health at Western Sydney University.

"We then attached GPS devices to their cars, and collected and analysed the data to see whether the program altered their driving behavior."

The research found the average yearly distance travelled among the 380 participants who completed the study was 7,280 km.

The participants who engaged in the program were more than one and a half times likely to regulate their driving patterns.

"These changes included steps outlined in the program, such as driving at night and at peak times, as well as avoiding right hand turns into oncoming traffic and driving alone."

The study also revealed older drivers who sat for the safe driving intervention reported an increased readiness to alter their time spent on roads.

Dr Coxon believes as a result, the study shows the pressing need for more transport options so seniors do not become isolated from their community.

The study, Effects of a safe transport educational program for [older drivers](#) on driving exposure and community participation: A [randomized controlled trial](#), has been published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*.

As a result of these findings, Dr Coxon is undergoing more research to find out what extent age has an effect on [driving](#) habits.

**More information:** Kristy Coxon et al. Effects of a Safe Transportation Educational Program for Older Drivers on Driving Exposure and Community Participation: A Randomized Controlled Trial, *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* (2016). [DOI: 10.1111/jgs.14550](#)

Provided by University of Western Sydney

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