



Understanding Older Drivers: An Examination of Medical Conditions, Medication Use, and Travel Behavior

April 2014

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through research
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Background


- **One-in-six** drivers on U.S. roads are 65 or older
- Drivers 65+ are generally a **very safe group** of motorists; however, as people age:
 - ✓ They are more likely to have medical conditions or use medications that may impair driving; and
 - ✓ Increasing fragility makes crash survival & recovery harder

Key Questions

- How can we support the twin goals of **safety** AND **mobility** for older persons?
- What can we learn currently about the relationships between medical conditions/medication use and driving behavior/mobility?


The Study

Seniors face serious driving safety and mobility issues.



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Conditions, Medication Use,
and Travel Behavior**

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- Published April 2014
- Establishes baseline knowledge to inform large ongoing AAA Foundation study of older drivers



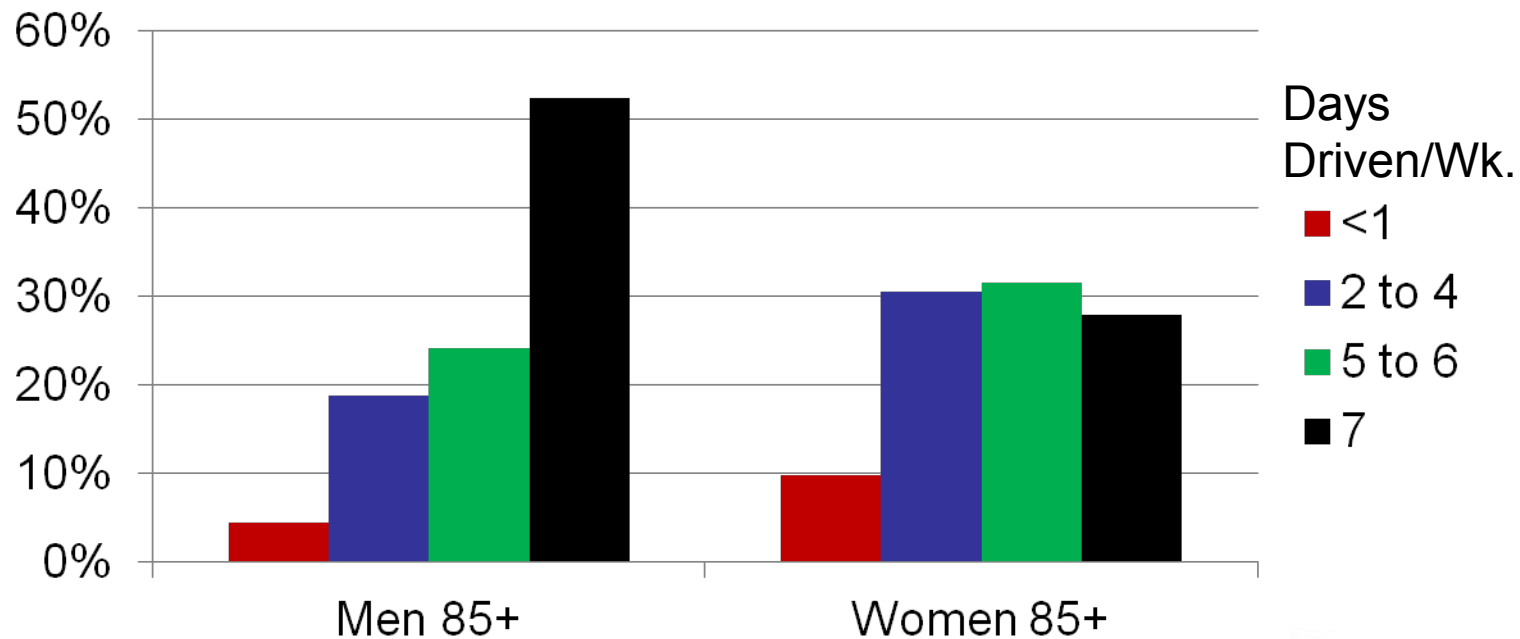
Methods

- Tabulated and analyzed data from 2 nationally-representative studies:
 - ✓ 2009 National Household Travel Survey (NHTS)
 - ✓ 2011 National Health and Aging Trends Study (NHATS)

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Key Findings – Licensing & Travel Patterns

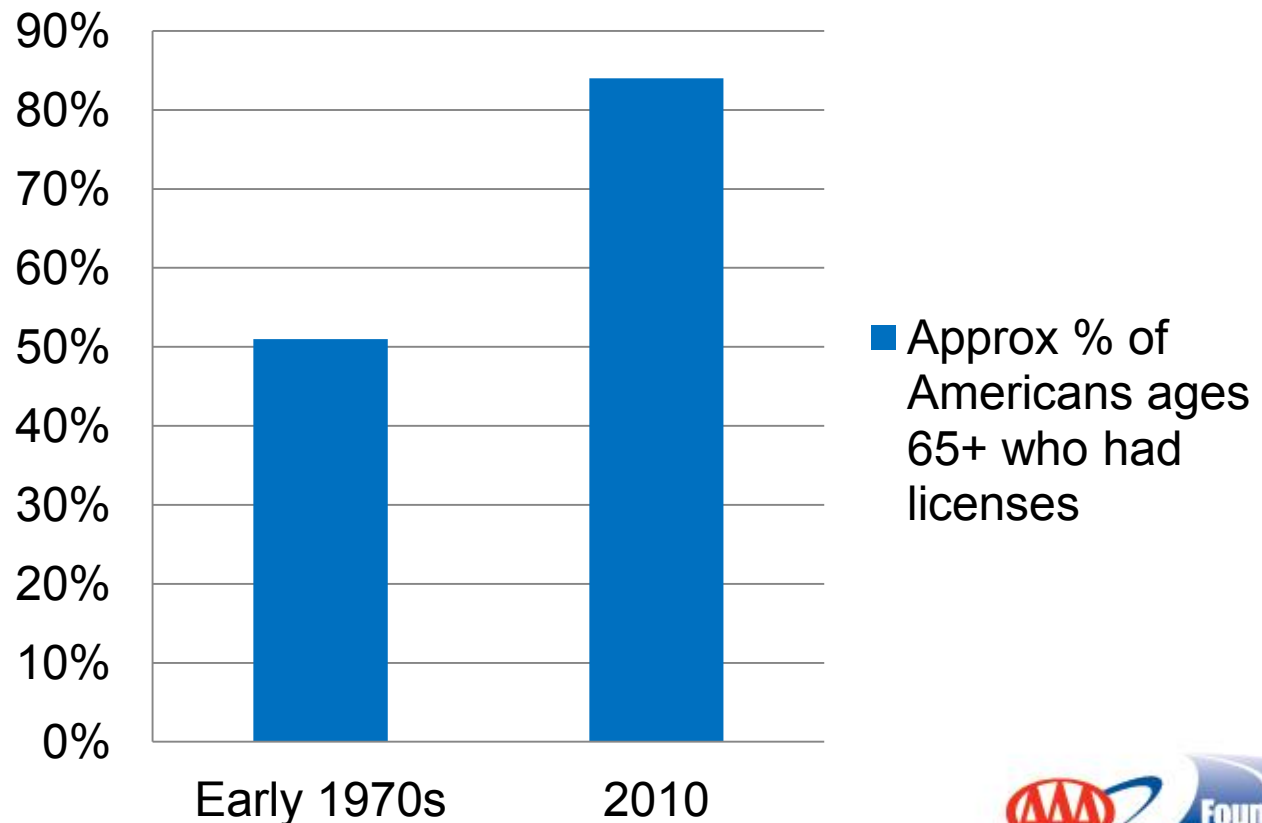
- Older drivers are an **active group**: ~75% of men & 60% of women ages 85+ drive 5+ days per week



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Key Findings – Licensing & Travel Patterns

- Older driver **licensing rates** have increased sharply:

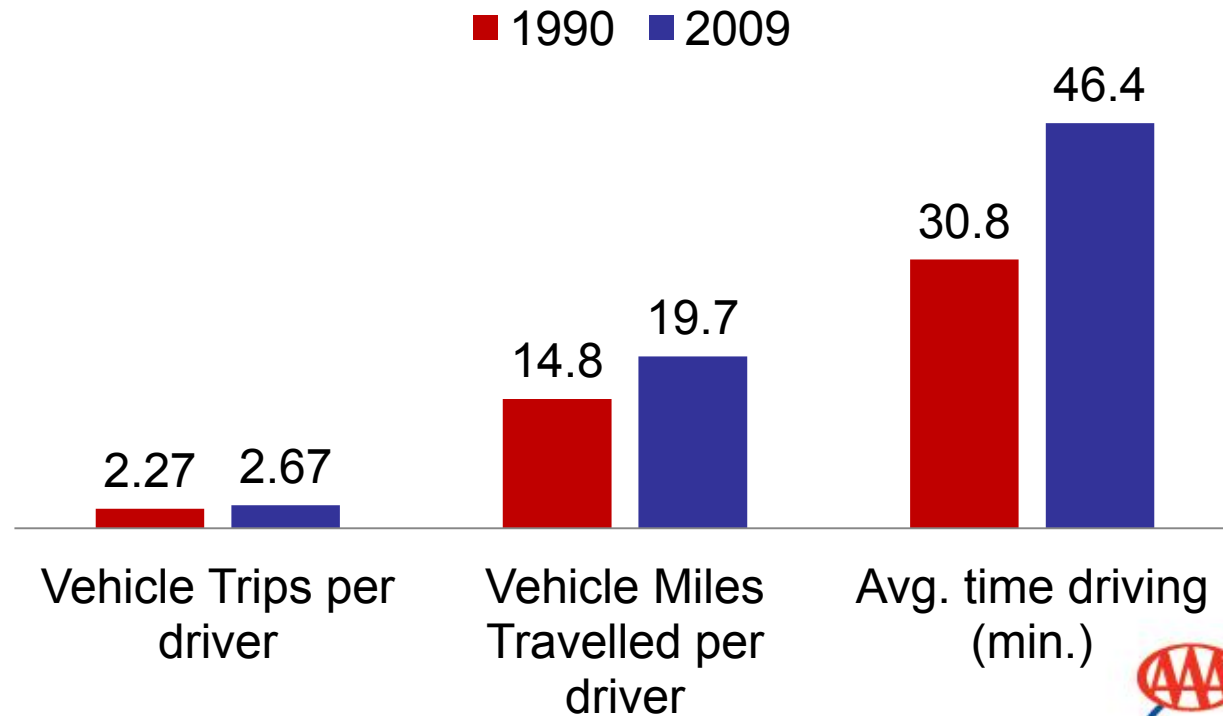


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Key Findings – Licensing & Travel Patterns

- By any measure, **automobility** of older Americans increased from 1990 to 2009:

Daily Travel Patterns of Drivers 65+



Key Findings – Medical Conditions & Medication Use

- Older drivers significantly **more likely to report medical condition** than younger drivers
 - ✓ Even youngest group of older drivers (65-69) are twice as likely to have medical condition as drivers ages 24-64

Key Findings – Medical Conditions & Medication Use

- **Medication use is high** among older drivers
 - ✓ Over **90%** take Rx medications
 - ✓ Over **2/3** of those who take any medications take multiple medications

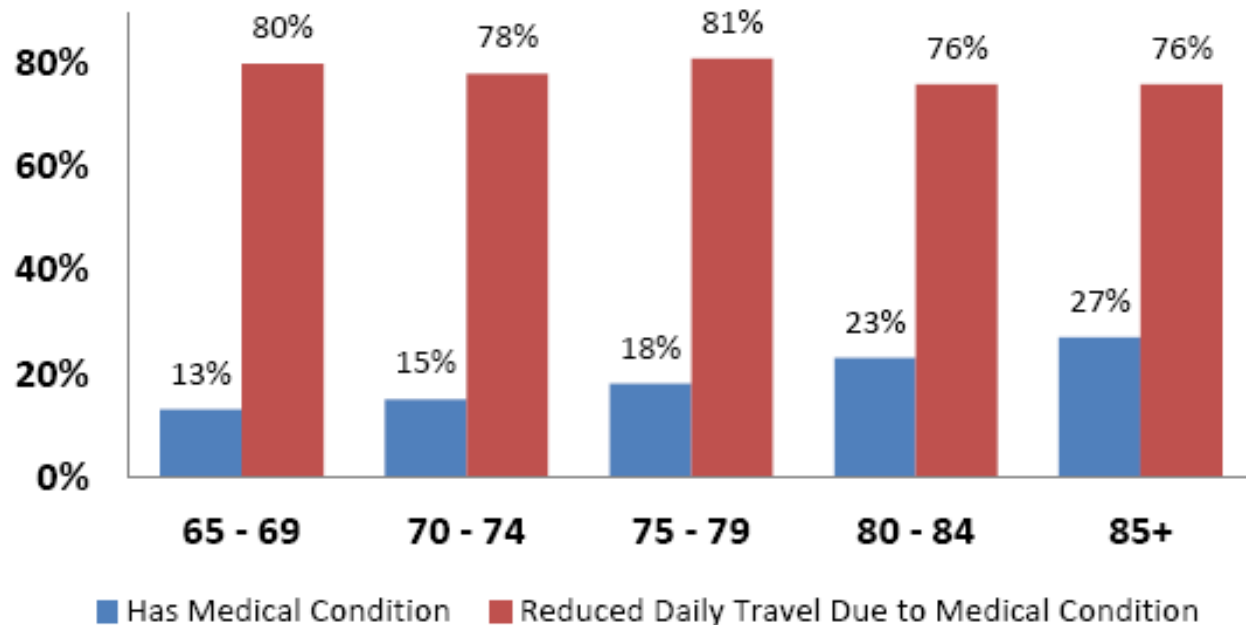
Key Findings – Medical Conditions & Medication Use

- **Gender differences** are very large
 - ✓ Women without a medical condition drive less than men *with* a medical condition
 - ✓ Women with a medical condition or who use medications are more likely to limit their driving than comparable men are
 - ✓ Women are more likely to report medical conditions or medication use

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Key Findings – Medical Conditions & Medication Use

- Older drivers who have a medical condition or use medications are more likely to **self-regulate** their driving



Key Findings – Medical Conditions & Medication Use

- **Income** plays a role that deserves exploration in future research
 - ✓ Self-regulatory behavior declines with increasing income, even among those with a medical condition or who use medications
 - ✓ Women 65-69 with incomes under \$13,000 were 62% more likely to restrict nighttime driving than women of the same age with incomes over \$70,000

Discussion

- Driving is a privilege; mobility is a right
- Seniors are among the safest road users; e.g.:
 - Low incidence of distraction
 - High prevalence of seatbelt use
 - Elevated fatal crash rates due mainly to *fragility*, not higher crash likelihood
- However, there are clearly complex relationships between medical conditions, medication use, travel behavior, gender, income, etc.
- AAA Foundation is studying this in greater depth over the next several years

For more information, or to see
the full report, please visit
www.AAAFoundation.org



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Established in 1947 by AAA, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety is a not-for-profit, publicly funded 501(c)(3) charitable research and education 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.

The Foundation is supported by donations from AAA/CAA Clubs, AAA/CAA members, and other organizations associated with AAA/CAA.

