

RAA Member Panel

Older Drivers

In November 2018, RAA conducted a survey of Members aged over 65 years seeking responses regarding the driving behaviour of older drivers. The sample size was 769 individuals based on the total number of responses received.

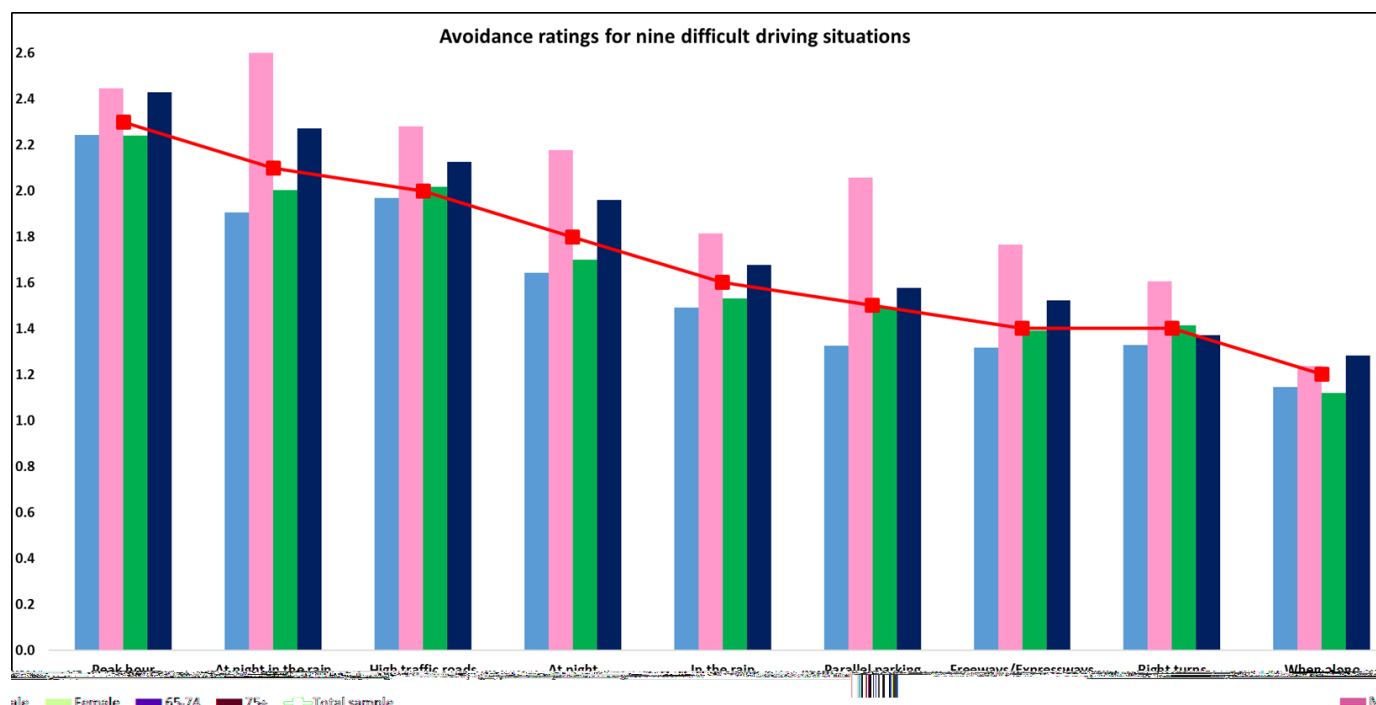
The main objectives of the survey were to:

- Investigate situational avoidance (self-regulation), driver behaviour and stressful on-road situations.
- Gauge interest and uptake of continuing education, specifically driver refresher courses.
- Investigate attitudes towards driving cessation.
- Investigate uptake and perceived importance of in-vehicle technologies by the older population.

Self-regulation by older drivers

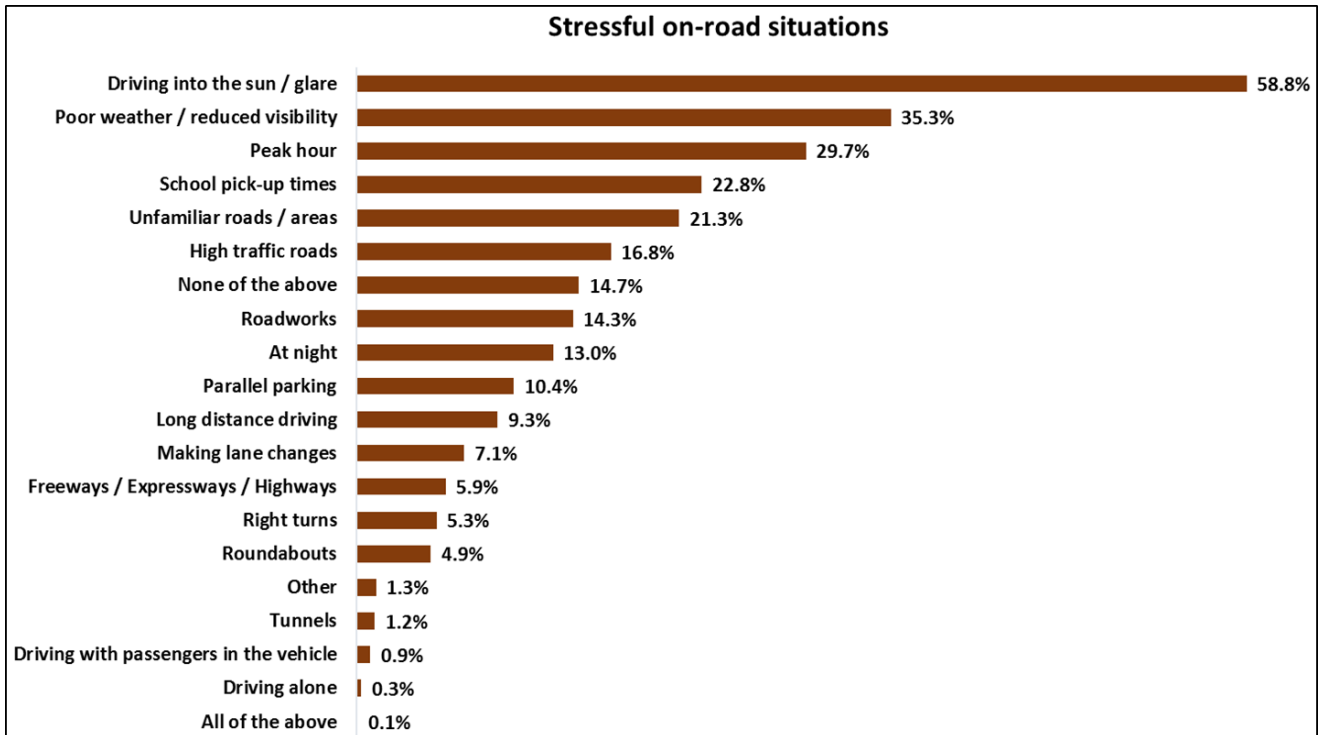
Respondents were presented with nine driving situations and asked to rate their likelihood of avoiding each. The driving situation which is most likely to be avoided is peak hour, followed by at night in the rain. The situation least likely to be avoided is driving alone.

The results were further analysed by demographic variables which identified that female drivers and (to a lesser extent) those aged over 75 years, were more likely to avoid each of the situations described. In fact, female drivers were more likely to avoid driving at night in the rain than at peak hour, and were also wary of parallel parking.



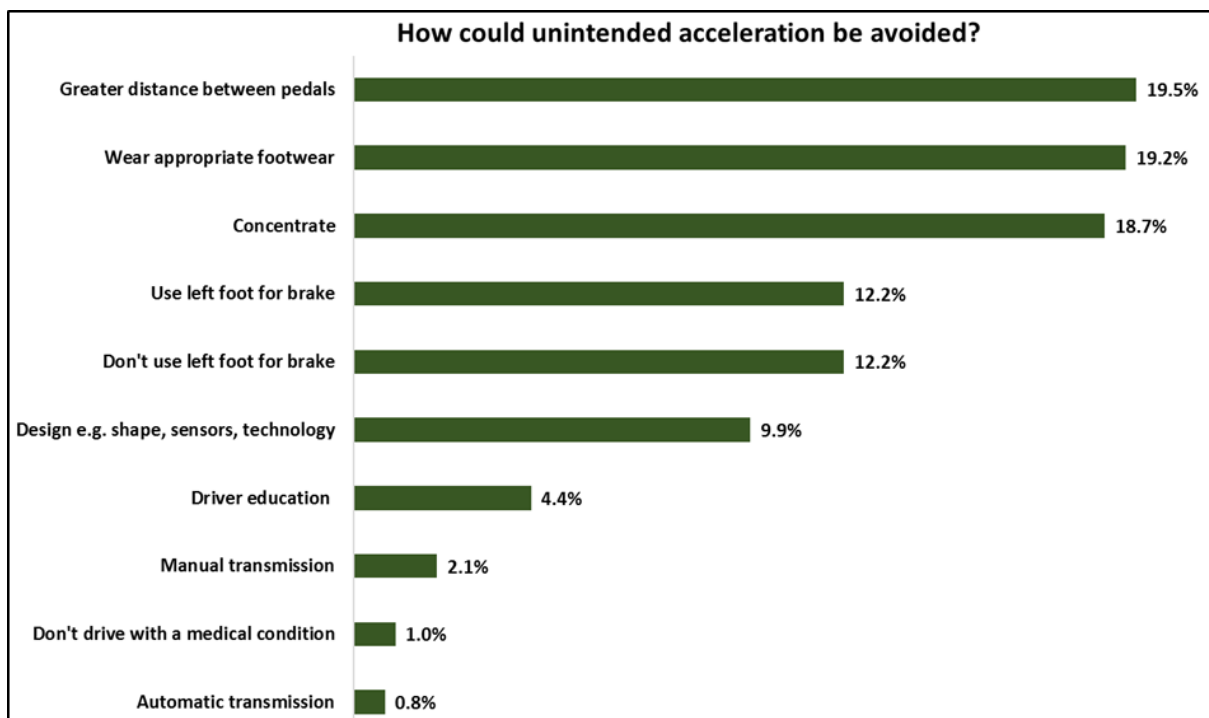
Respondents were able to provide comment on 'other' driving situations which they tend to avoid. Of the responses received, most mentions were for driving in poor weather conditions, in which fog and strong winds were most often described. This was followed by school pick-up and drop-off times, and driving on country roads particularly at dawn or dusk.

Respondents were asked to select which situations they find most stressful when driving. Almost 60% of respondents indicated that they find driving into the sun/glare the most stressful, followed by a third of respondents who find driving in poor weather (35.3%) and peak hour (29.7%) stressful. The situations least likely to cause stress in older drivers were driving alone, driving with passengers, and tunnels.



Unintended acceleration

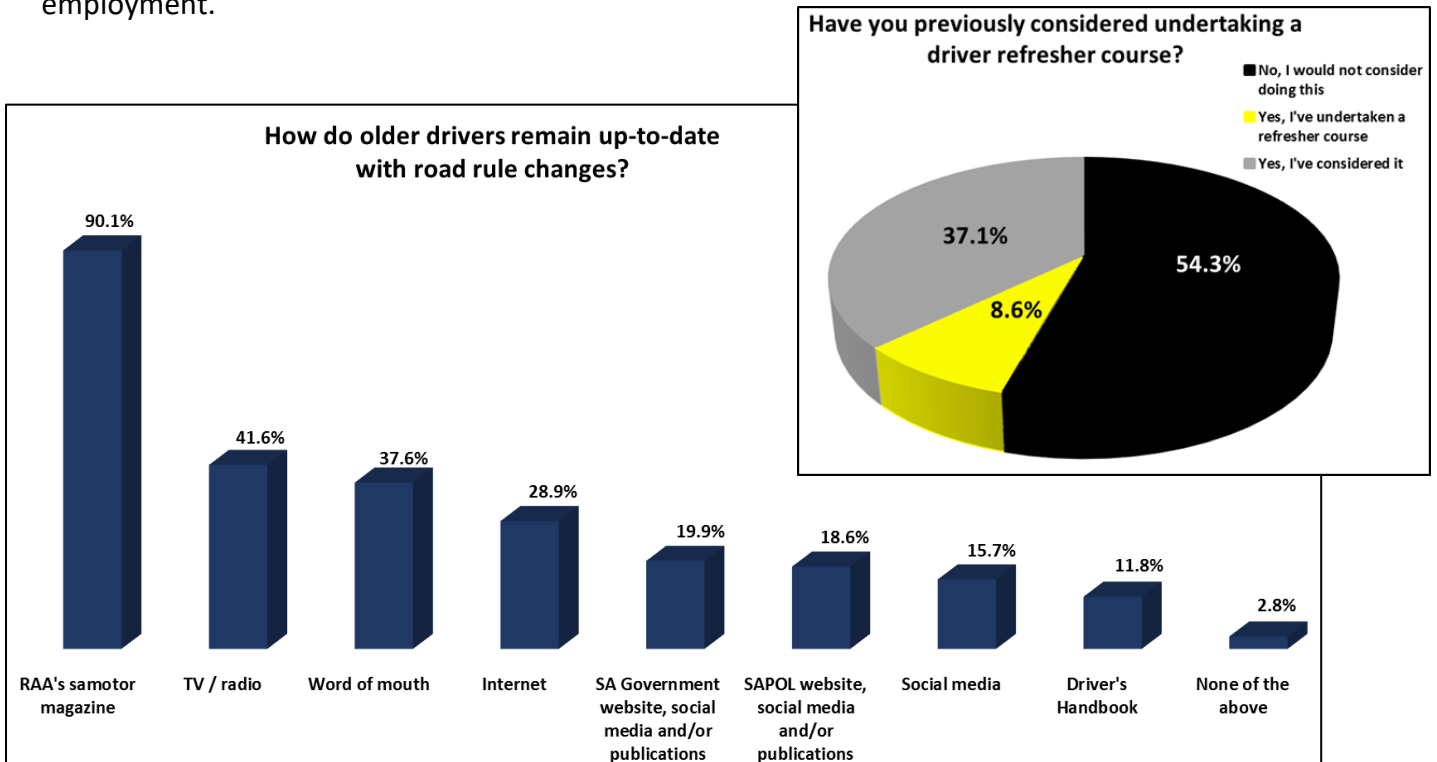
Unintended acceleration (mistaking the accelerator pedal for the brake pedal) can be an issue for some drivers. Survey respondents were able to provide suggestions on how pedal error may be avoided. Of the comments received, the majority of suggestions were for a greater distance between the pedals (19.5%), followed by ensuring drivers wear appropriate footwear (19.2%). Many also believe that a lack of concentration can be a main contributor (18.7%). In regards to the operation of the pedals, it was a 50/50 split on whether to use the left foot or not for braking (12.2%).



Education

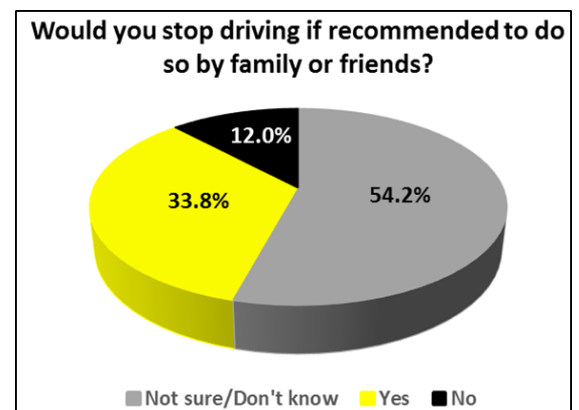
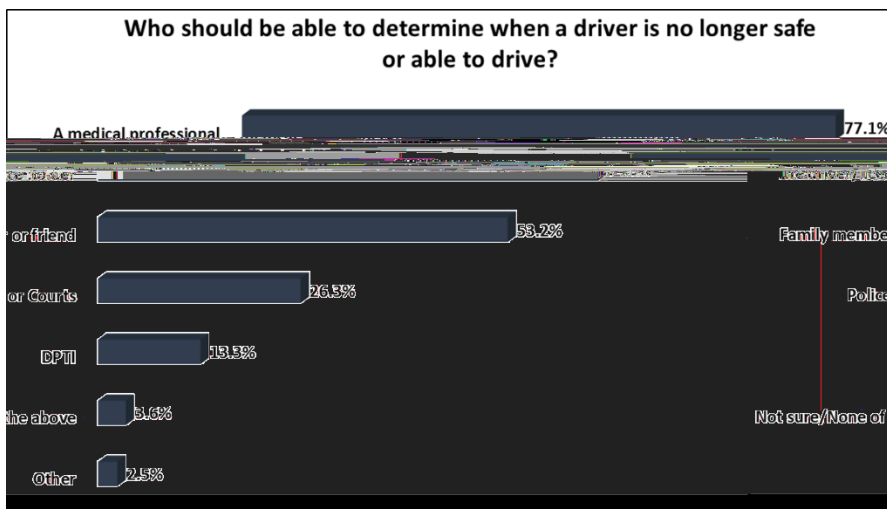
Respondents were asked how they maintain their knowledge of the road rules and remain abreast of any changes. The majority of respondents indicated that RAA's magazine was their main source of road rules information (90.1%). For around 40% of people, the TV/radio (41.6%) or word of mouth (37.6%) is how they remain up-to-date. Surprisingly, only 1 in 10 refer to The Driver's Handbook to ensure their knowledge of the road rules remains updated.

When asked whether they had previously considered undertaking a driver refresher course, the majority of respondents indicated that they would not consider doing this (54.3%). Less than 10% of respondents indicated they had previously undertaken a driver refresher course, with many doing so as part of their employment.



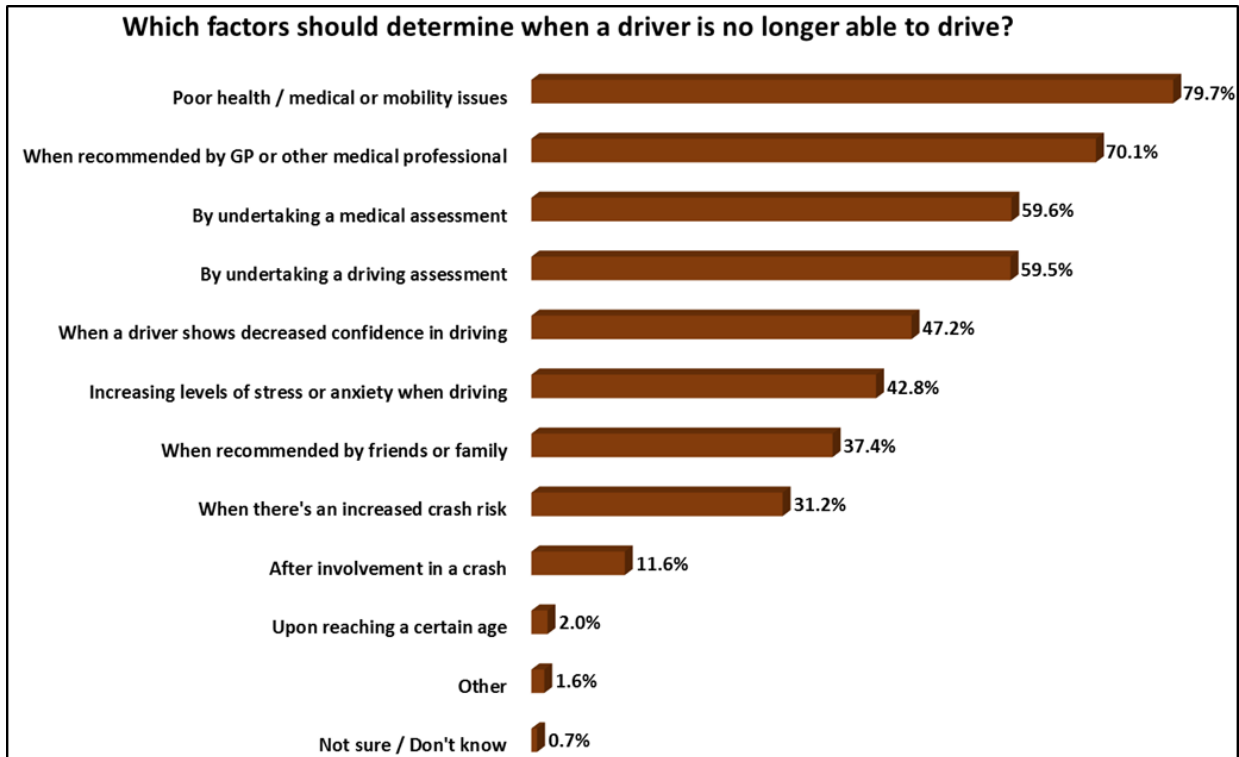
Driving cessation

To ascertain the factors involved in the decision to relinquish a driver's licence, respondents were first asked their opinion on who should determine when a driver is no longer considered safe or able to drive. More than 75% of respondents feel it should be up to a medical professional to determine, while around 65% believe the individual concerned should be able to decide when they are no longer able to drive. More than half of respondents (53.2%) indicated that a friend or family member should be able to determine the individual's driving ability.

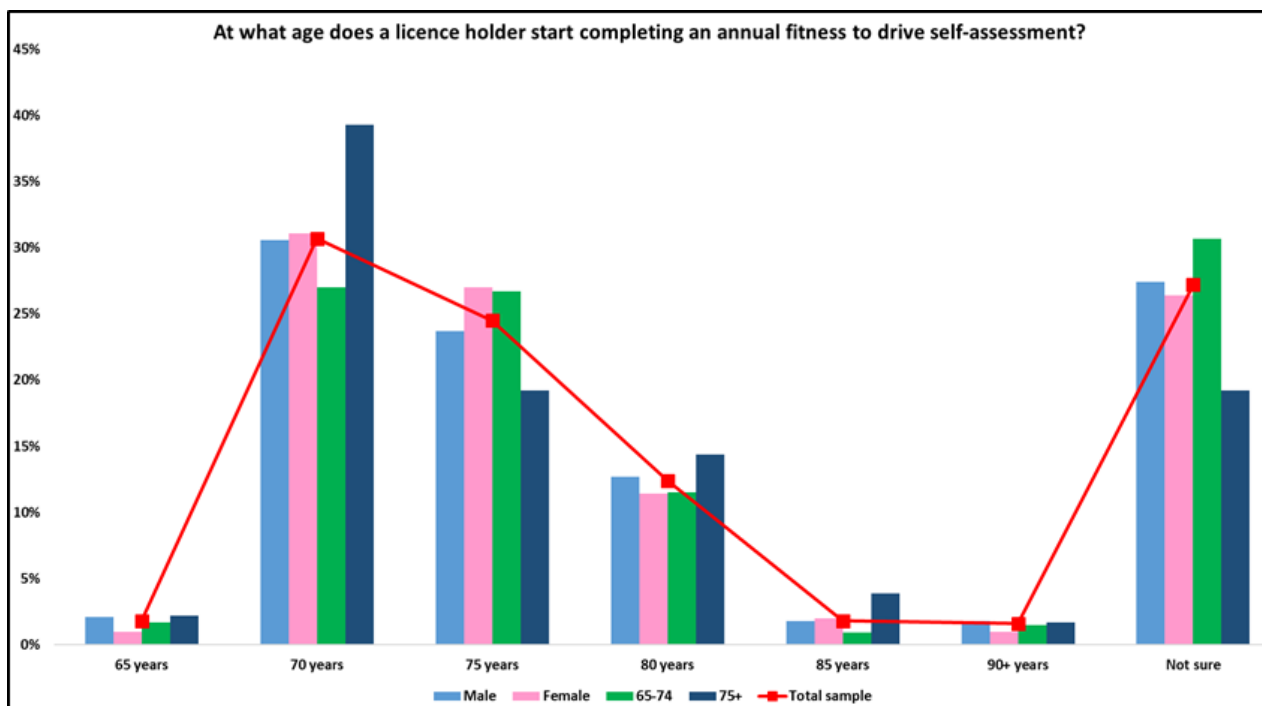


In response to whether they would stop driving if a friend or family member suggested they do so, the majority of respondents (54.2%) indicated they weren't sure, while 33.8% indicated that they would cease driving upon receiving the recommendation.

Driving cessation was further investigated by asking respondents which factors should be used when determining if a driver should relinquish their licence. Approximately three quarters of respondents feel the decision should be based on poor health/medical or mobility issues (79.7%) and/or when recommended by a GP or medical professional (70.1%). More than 50% of people feel that a medical assessment and/or driving assessment should be used in the decision process.

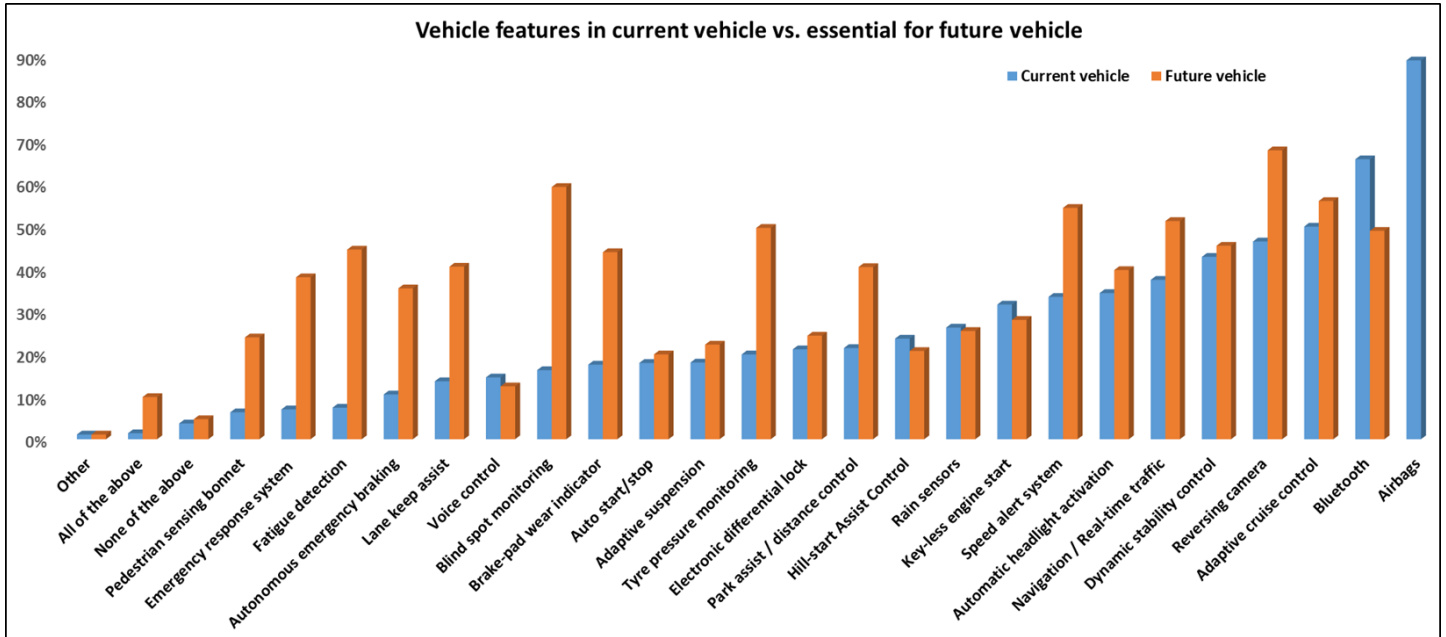


When asked at which age a driver with a 'c' class (car) licence who doesn't have any existing medical conditions must start completing an annual fitness to drive self-assessment, the majority of respondents weren't aware of when this is required. A third of respondents incorrectly answered 70 years (30.7%), with only a quarter of respondents correctly indicating 75 years of age (24.5%).



Vehicle features

Respondents were asked to indicate which in-vehicle technologies they have in their current vehicle, and which they would consider essential in their future vehicle purchase decisions. Interestingly, while 65% have Bluetooth in their current vehicle, only 49% would consider this feature essential in future vehicle purchases. A similar trend was shown for key-less engine start, rain sensors, hill-start assist control and voice control in which those who currently have the technology may not consider it an essential feature in future vehicle purchases.



The majority of respondents indicated they were moderately-extremely confident with using in-vehicle technologies such as Bluetooth, GPS and reversing cameras (71%), while only 5% indicated they were not at all confident.

When presented with new technology, most respondents admitted to referring to the owner's manual for instruction on the use of in-vehicle technology (80.5%), while a large proportion will also work it out themselves (57.2%) or with the help of the dealer/vehicle manufacturer (54.2%).

The vehicle feature considered most important to older drivers when considering a new car purchase is safety features, followed by reputation, reliability and warranty. The features considered least important in the purchase decision are seating capacity and performance, speed, power. Females tend to place a greater importance on fuel economy and ease of parking when looking to buy a new car. While those aged 75+ are the most likely to consider an automatic transmission as an important feature.

Importance of vehicle features when making a purchase decision

