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Study: High Rate of Wisconsin Fatal Crashes Involve Elderly

A study shows Wisconsin has the highest rate for fatal crashes involving elderly drivers in the country.

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MADISON, Wis. (AP) — A study shows [Wisconsin](#) has the highest rate for fatal crashes involving elderly drivers in the country.

The study conducted by TRIP, a national transportation research group, found 26 percent of fatal crashes in Wisconsin in 2016 involved someone 65 years or older. That's despite the state having a lower percentage of older drivers compared to "A lot of Americans 65 and over are very active, they're leading very mobile lives, and it's critical they maintain that as long as they can safely do so. But what we recognize at the same is a significant increase in the number of traffic fatalities that are occurring," said Frank Moretti, TRIP director of policy and research.

David Pabst, safety director for the state's Department of Transportation, told Wisconsin Public Radio that it's "an alarming statistic" and "a serious problem."

But he said people ages 65 to 70 generally have good driving skills and few accidents. They also travel fewer miles.

Elderly drivers' health is more fragile so they're more likely to have serious or fatal injuries in a crash. Pabst said people should decide whether to continue driving based on their vision, muscle dexterity, reaction time and any medical conditions.

"We need to encourage people to get cars that work for them as they age," said Pabst.

Nearly a quarter of Wisconsin's population is estimated to be 65 or older by 2040.

"It is important we consider this demographic shift and its impact on safety and mobility," said Mark O'Connell, executive director of the Wisconsin Counties Association. "This means more user-friendly roads for those able to drive and public transportation or shared-ride services for those who cannot, or choose not to drive themselves."

The report also recommended improving road safety by making signage lettering larger and brighter, lengthening merge lanes, and hosting education and training programs for older drivers.