

Understanding Retired Drivers: Research results of a study among recently retired drivers

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How older people assess their driving ability, make decisions about whether to continue to drive and how they adjust to life without the car are all key issues in the complex area of older road user safety and mobility. RACV undertook a small-scale research study involving 125 people aged over 65 who had recently stopped driving. The study involved both qualitative and quantitative components.

The results of this study reveal that the transition to non-driver is a major step in people's lives, which often equates to a loss of independence and spontaneity. While many respondents (63%) stated that they had regulated their driving before giving up, once people had stopped they had increased difficulty visiting friends, relatives, and in doing everyday things like the shopping. The extent to which people cope with driving cessation appears to be influenced by whether they were involved in the decision to stop driving and whether they have support from family and friends to provide alternative transport. Taxis and lifts from others were the main transport options used by retired drivers, as buses and trains were regarded as being difficult to use and access. Respondents noted that useful alternative transport initiatives would include discounted taxi fares and more community based options such as car pools and community transport services.

In conclusion, more emphasis should be placed on developing initiatives to support older people and their families as they make the transition from driver to non-driver and in the provision of alternative transport options.