



OLDER DRIVERS

North Carolina ranks fifth-highest in the U.S. for the percentage of fatal traffic accidents involving older drivers, a nonprofit transportation research group reports. The number of older drivers who are involved or killed in traffic crashes is rising even faster than the number of people who are 65 or older, says the report by TRIP, a Washington, D.C.-based group that evaluates economic and technical data on surface transportation. North Carolina ranks ninth nationally for the number of licensed drivers -- nearly 1.4 million -- who are 65 and older. But the state ranked fifth for the number of traffic fatalities that involved at least one older driver -- 285 -- in 2016.

The forty-six million Americans 65 or older comprise 15 percent of the population, TRIP says. By 2060, their proportion of the population is expected to reach 24 percent. Nearly 80 percent live in car-dependent places such as suburbs and rural areas, the group says. The report attributes the rising number of fatalities involving older drivers, in part, to physical frailties that make them less likely to survive a crash. While older drivers tend to be more cautious than most on the road, they're also likely to have poorer eyesight, reaction time, cognitive ability and physical dexterity, it says. "An additional two million people are expected to call North Carolina home by 2030, with nearly one-third of these individuals aged 65 years or older. TRIP's report highlights the need for increased safety measures on all of North Carolina's roadways, which should be a top priority" for the North Carolina Department of Transportation," Gary Salamido, vice president of Government Affairs for the North Carolina Chamber, said in a statement.

Source – The Charlotte Observer