Some people believe that older drivers pose a large threat to others on the road. While certain high-profile crashes have indeed had tragic outcomes and garnered significant media attention, they do not represent the majority of older drivers. Researchers at the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety help to dispel this common myth about older drivers.

Per mile driven, people in their 40s, 50s, and 60s are among those least likely to crash.

- Drivers in their 70s get into about the same number of crashes per mile driven as do drivers in their 30s.
- On average, drivers in their mid- to late-80s still have lower crash rates per mile driven than drivers in their early 20s, and roughly half the crash rates of teenagers.

Teen drivers cause more fatal crashes than do senior drivers.

- Drivers ages 65–69 have the same fatal crash involvement rate as drivers in their 30s.
- Even 75-year-old drivers have fatal crash rates equivalent to those of drivers in their late 20s.
- In fact, it is not until age 85 and older that drivers begin to experience the highest rate of fatal crash involvement of any age group.

While it is true that older drivers are involved in more fatal crashes in relation to how much they drive, that does not mean that they are the biggest threat to you and me.

- Beginning at age 65, a pattern emerges with older drivers that becomes more pronounced over time: they become much more of a danger to themselves than to others (see the chart on reverse side).
- Fatal crash involvement rates skyrocket for those over age 85 because they are much more likely to die when they do crash, not because they pose a great risk to others.
- The primary danger facing older drivers is fragility, which refers to the increasing inability of bones and tissue in aging drivers to withstand injury due to a crash.¹
- Compared to experienced middle-aged drivers, research has found that 60–95 percent of the higher death rates per mile driven for older drivers can be attributed to fragility that makes surviving a crash more difficult.
- By comparison, 95 percent of the higher death rates for drivers younger than 20 compared with middle-aged drivers is due to their over-involvement in crashes.²
Even though older adults are among the safest drivers, these data still reveal a devastating problem: older drivers are, themselves, at greater risk on the roads, and their safety is a major concern.

In the face of such risks, older drivers tend to be very responsible: they use their seatbelts more than younger drivers, they tend to avoid driving in higher-risk situations (such as at night or in rain), and they are less likely to drink and drive or be otherwise impaired.³

For more information visit SeniorDriving.AAA.com.

References
2. Li, Guohua, Elisa Braver, and Li-Hui Chen. “Fragility versus excessive crash involvement as determinants of high death rates per vehicle-mile of travel among older drivers.” Accident Analysis and Prevention (March 2003); Volume 35, Number 2, pp. 227–235