



2008 AARP Driver Safety Program Course Evaluation

December 2008



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Executive Summary

Background

The AARP Driver Safety Program is the nation's first and largest classroom course for drivers age 50 and older. The program has served over ten million people since its inception in 1979. The program was created to encourage safe driving among people age 50 and older. The course teaches participants the effects of aging on driving behaviors and how to adjust driving behaviors to accommodate for these changes.

Most courses are taught in two four-hour sessions. In addition, an online course is available for those interested in taking the course via the web. For research purposes, only those who participated in the classroom course are included in this study.

Key Findings

- Almost all of the participants (93%) indicated that they had changed at least one of the key driving behaviors as a result of the DSP course.
- Many participants reported changing multiple behaviors. The average number of behaviors changed was seven.
- The most common behaviors changed were *always checking blind spots* (73%), *following distance and space cushion* (65%), and *paying more attention when entering or exiting highways* (60%). The least cited behavior changed was *considering limiting or stopping your driving* (9%).
- The majority of participants have taken the DSP course more than one time. Participants who had taken the DSP course more than once tended to report more behavior change than those who had taken the class for the first time in 2008.
- Older participants tended to change their driving-related behaviors more so than younger participants. For example, participants over the age of 75 (13%) were more likely than those between the ages of 45-64 (7%) and those between the ages of 65-74 (6%) to say they *considered limiting or stopping their driving*.
- The majority of participants received an insurance discount for taking the AARP DSP Course. In fact, more than half indicated that an insurance discount was the primary reason for taking the course.
- Satisfaction in the DSP course is very high. Almost all of the participants indicated that they would be likely to take the course again and also recommend the course to friends and family.

- The DSP class has a very positive impact on AARP membership as approximately one-third (32%) of non-member participants said they would be *more likely* to join AARP as a result of the DSP class.

Conclusions

The 2008 AARP Driver Safety Course was successful both in changing driving-related behaviors and achieving participants' satisfaction of the course. Almost all of the participants changed at least one behavior, many of whom changed more than one driving-related behavior. There also appears to be differences in terms of behavior change among different groups of respondents. For example, repeat participants and older participants seem to report more behavior change. This finding may provide support for the idea of tailoring different DSP courses towards different groups of people.

Satisfaction in the DSP course is very high along with intentions for recommending the course to friends and family. This assumption is supported by the fact that the majority of graduates have taken more than one driver safety course. Since it seems that repeat graduates are changing behavior more so than first-time participants, it is important that graduates do enroll in a DSP course in the future.

In sum, the DSP course is an effective means of teaching older adults about safe driving principles. The graduates appear to take the information seriously and have made positive changes to their driving habits. Satisfaction in the course and AARP, in general, is high. Many respondents indicated that they would renew their membership as a result of the course. Most importantly, in terms of member growth, a third of respondents indicated that they would be more likely to join AARP as a result of the course. We know that approximately half of older adults who take the DSP course are non-members therefore this presents an excellent opportunity to attract future members to AARP.

Methodology

Data for this study was collected via a mail survey of DSP program participants. AARP selected a random sample of 10,000 participants who took the DSP course between the months of May through August 2008. The surveys were sent to participants during the last week of September with a self-enclosed, postage-paid return envelope. Completed surveys were received by 5,404 participants resulting in a 54% response rate.

It is important to note that some percentages may total more than 100 because respondents were able to provide more than one response for certain questions. For example, the question regarding the 17 key driving behaviors asks participants to note all behaviors they have changed. Therefore it is expected that the percentages would total well more than 100.

General Driving Behaviors

The 2008 participants reported a great deal of confidence in their driving abilities. Respondents were asked to rate their driving abilities on a scale of “1” to “7” with “7” being extremely confident. The average rating was 6.22. Most importantly, more than three-quarters (82%) of respondents indicated that the information they learned in the DSP course has prevented them from being in a car accident.

The Driver Safety Program course was successful in changing respondents’ driving-related behaviors. Respondents were asked to comment on 17 key driving behaviors and indicate whether or not they have changed in that regard as a result of what they learned in the DSP class. Almost all of the participants (93%) indicated they had changed at least one driving behavior with many indicating that they changed multiple behaviors. The average number of behaviors changed was seven.

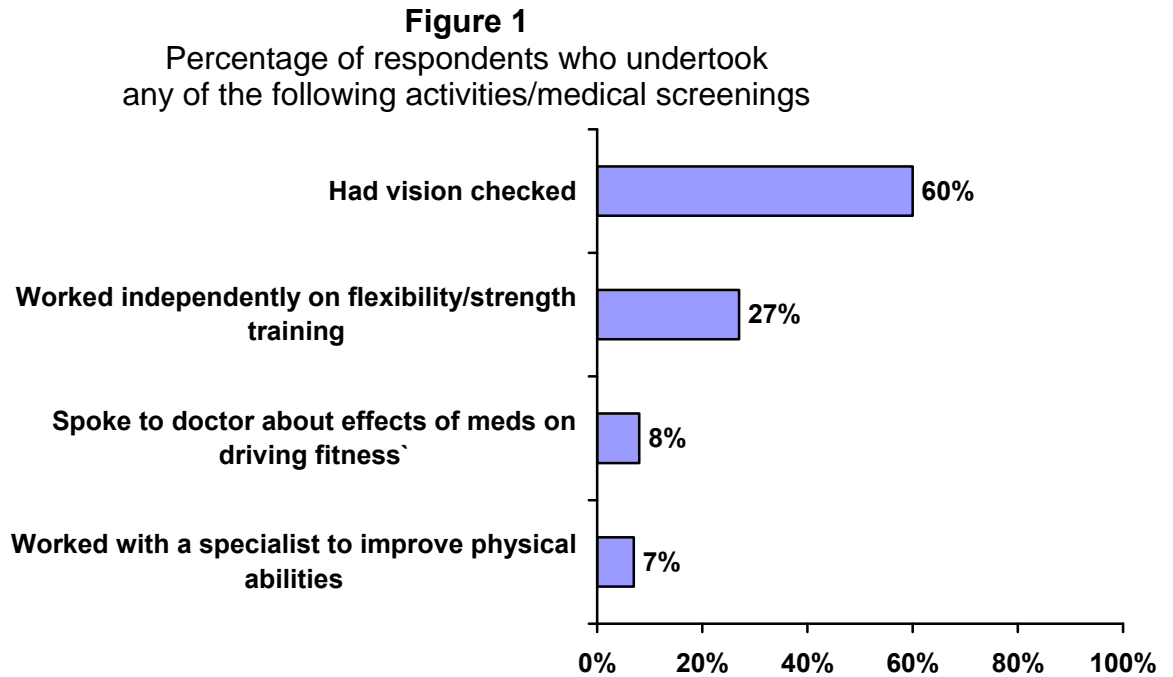
The most frequently reported changed driving behaviors were *always checking blind spots* (73%), *following distance and space cushion* (67%), and *paying more attention when entering or exiting highways* (65%). Not surprisingly, the least cited behavior changed was *considering limiting or stopping your driving* (9%). Table 1 presents the percentages for all 17 key driving behaviors.

Table 1
Percentage of respondents who changed the following behaviors

Behavior	Percentage who changed
1. Always checking blind spots	73%
2. Following distance and space cushion	67%
3. Paying more attention when entering or exiting highways	65%
4. Keeping your eyes moving/scanning traffic	54%
5. Yielding right of way	54%
6. Looking for safety features when buying a car	52%
7. Being aware of where you park	51%
8. Turning in general	43%
9. Limiting driving in bad weather	43%
10. Using anti-lock brakes properly	40%
11. Learning medications effects on driving	39%
12. Limiting use of cell phones while driving	38%
13. Always using safety belts	35%
14. Avoiding left turns	28%
15. Limiting your travel on highways and freeways	25%
16. Limiting times when you drive	23%
17. Considering limiting or stopping driving	9%

Source: 2008 AARP Driver Safety Program Course Evaluation, December 2008

Participants were asked whether or not they engaged in any driver fitness activities/screenings such as working with an occupational therapist or having their vision checked. Most participants did not engage in these activities with the exception of having their vision checked (60%). Figure one shows the results in more detail.



Source: 2008 AARP Driver Safety Program Course Evaluation, December 2008

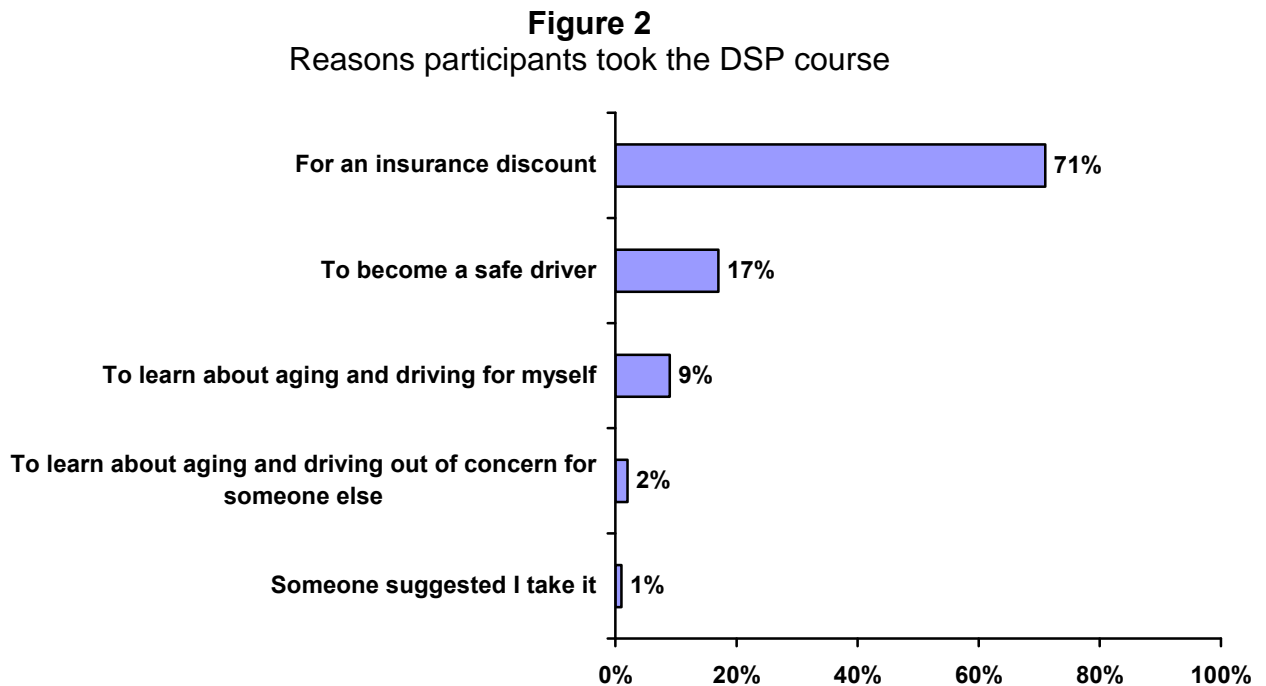
The DSP course suggests making certain vehicle adjustments that may enhance individual driving abilities. The most commonly reported vehicle adjustment was *adjusting the mirrors* (45%) followed by *adjusting the seat/steering wheel position* (21%).

Satisfaction with AARP & the Driver Safety Program Course

Almost one-third (30%) of participants reported taking the DSP class four or more times suggesting a high level of satisfaction with the course. The majority of participants (88%) said they would be *extremely likely* (58%) or *very likely* (30%) to take the DSP course again. In fact, seven in ten (72%) participants had taken the class more than once. Similarly, most participants said they would be *extremely likely* (57%) or *very likely* (36%) to recommend the course to family or friends.

The DSP course appears to have a positive effect on AARP membership. The majority of participants said they would be *more likely* (43%) or *as likely* (54%) to renew their AARP membership as a result of the DSP course. Likewise, one-third of non-members (32%) said they would be *more likely* to join AARP and six in ten (60%) said they would be *as likely* to join.

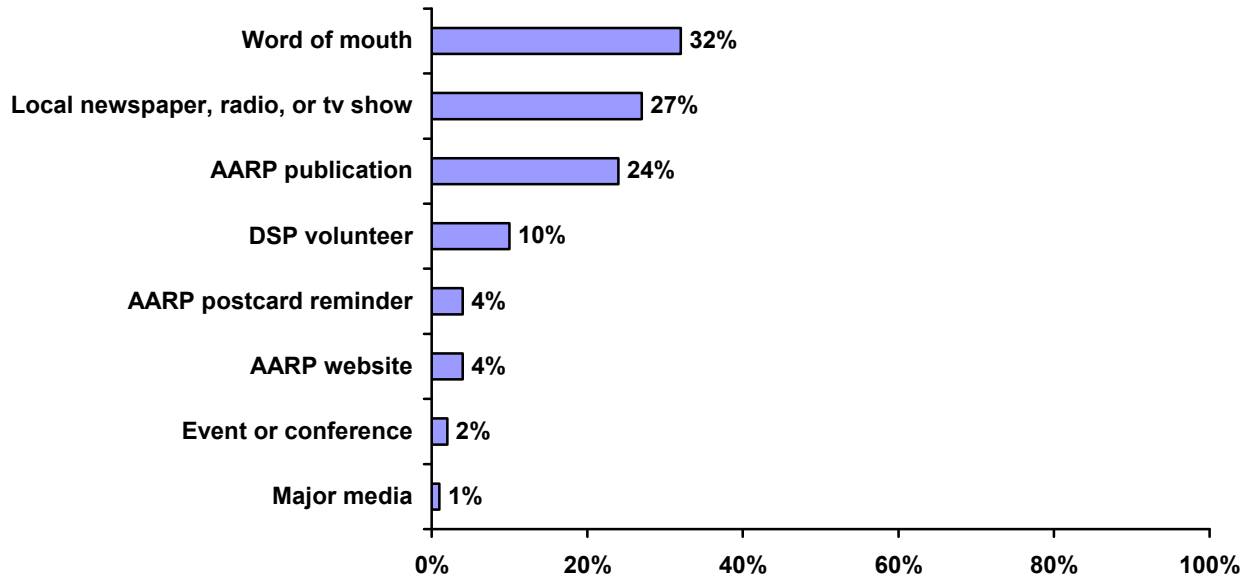
Almost all of the respondents (94%) reported that they received an auto insurance discount as a result of taking the DSP course. In fact, seventy-one percent of respondents indicated that the insurance discount was the primary reason they took the course (Figure 2).



Source: 2008 AARP Driver Safety Program Course Evaluation, December 2008

When asked how they learned about the DSP course, respondents indicated many different ways, including *word of mouth*; *via a local newspaper, radio, or television show*; and in an *AARP publication*, to name a few (Figure 3).

Figure 3
Ways in which respondents learned about the DSP course



Source: 2008 AARP Driver Safety Program Course Evaluation, December 2008

First-time course takers vs. repeat participants

In the past, we have learned that repetition produces a greater degree of behavior change. To examine this issue again, we looked at differences between participants who had only taken the class one time and those who had taken the class two or more times.

Seven in ten first-time participants (73%) said they felt the class prevented them from being in a traffic accident compared to more than eight in ten (85%) of repeat participants. The results suggest that repeat participants were more likely than first-time participants to indicate they changed most of the key driving behaviors (Table 2).

Table 2

Differences between first-time course takers and repeat participants on key driving behaviors changed¹

Driving behavior	Total Changed %	First-time participants ^a (N=1,481)	Repeat participants ^b (N=3,892)
Always checking blind spots	73%	72%	74%
Following distance and space cushion	67%	67%	67%
Paying more attention when entering or exiting highways	65%	63%	66%
Keeping your eyes moving/scanning traffic	54%	52%	54%
Yielding right of way	54%	51%	56%^a
Looking for safety features when buying a car	52%	48%	54%^a
Being aware of where you park	51%	44%	53%^a
Turning in general	43%	41%	44%
Limiting driving in bad weather	43%	34%	47%^a
Using anti-lock brakes properly	40%	37%	40%^a
Learning medications effects on driving	39%	34%	40%^a
Limiting use of cell phones while driving	38%	37%	39%
Always using safety belts	35%	31%	36%^a
Avoiding left turns	28%	20%	31%^a
Limiting your travel on highways and freeways	25%	17%	28%^a
Limiting times when you drive	23%	14%	27%^a
Considering limiting or stopping driving	9%	7%	9%^a

Source: 2008 AARP Driver Safety Program Course Evaluation, December 2008

¹ **Bold face** percents in columns (which represent demographic subgroups) are significantly higher than percents in adjacent columns. Superscripts (^{a/b/, c/d, e/f}) indicate those columns in which there is a statistically significant difference.

Age and gender differences

We looked at gender differences on all 17 key driving behaviors and a few significant differences emerged between these sub groups. Women (28%) were more likely than men (19%) to say that they have *limited their driving on highways and free ways*, whereas men (42%) were more likely than women (36%) to say they have *limited their use of cell phones while driving* (Table 3).

Numerous significant differences emerged between age groups and tendency to have changed key driving behaviors. In general, older respondents (participants 75 years of age or older) were more likely than younger respondents to say they have changed their driving behaviors as a result of the course (see Table 3).

Table 3
Percentage who have changed the key driving behaviors²
By age and gender

Behavior	Gender		Age		
	Male ^a (N=2,106)	Female ^b (N=3,192)	45-64 ^c (N=929)	65-74 ^d (N=1,979)	75+ ^e (N=2,385)
Always checking blind spots	72%	75%	73%	72%	75%
Following distance and space cushion	69%	66%	71%^e	67%	66%
Paying more attention when entering or exiting highways	65%	65%	64%	62%	68%^d
Keeping your eyes moving/scanning traffic	52%	55%	53%	51%	57%^e
Yielding right of way	58%^b	52%	52%	54%	56%
Looking for safety features when buying a car	52%	53%	42%	42%	46%
Being aware of where you park	46%	53%	46%	49%	54%^c
Turning in general	45%	43%	42%	42%	46%
Limiting driving in bad weather	41%	45%	32%	40%	51%^{cd}
Using anti-lock brakes properly	37%	41%	40%	37%	42%
Learning medications effects on driving	42%^b	37%	33%	37%	43%^c
Limiting use of cell phones while driving	42%^b	36%	39%	37%	39%
Always using safety belts	38%^b	32%	31%	31%	39%^{cd}
Avoiding left turns	28%	29%	23%	25%	34%^{cd}
Limiting your travel on highways & freeways	19%	28%^a	14%	19%	34%^{cd}
Limiting times when you drive	23%	23%	14%	20%	30%^{cd}
Considering limiting or stopping driving	9%	9%	7%	6%	13%^d

Source: 2008 AARP Driver Safety Program Course Evaluation, December 2008

² **Bold face** percents in columns (which represent demographic subgroups) are significantly higher than percents in adjacent columns. Superscripts (^{a/b, c/d, e/f}) indicate those columns in which there is a statistically significant difference.

Changes from 2007 to 2008

The DSP survey was revised in 2008 to improve the language of the behavior change measure therefore it makes comparisons between the two years somewhat difficult. When a question is asked slightly differently, it can influence the participants' responses.

During both years, almost all of participants indicated they changed at least one key driving behavior. However, differences did emerge on the number of participants who changed each individual driving behavior. In 2008, a greater percentage of participants reported changing most of the 17 key driving behaviors. For instance in 2007, forty-nine percent of participants indicated that they have paid more attention when entering or exiting the highway compared to 65% of 2008 participants.

Demographic characteristics of the respondents

- Thirty-seven percent of respondents were between the ages of 65-74 and 45% were 75 and older. Only 18% of respondents were under the age of 65.
- Sixty percent of the respondents were female and 40% were male.
- The majority (83%) of respondents were retired or not employed, 8% were working full-time, and 9% indicated that they worked part-time.
- Ninety-four percent of the respondents indicated they were White/Caucasian, 3% were African-American, and 1% were Asian.
- The respondents also had very high self-perceptions of their health. When asked to describe their health, 68% reported *excellent* or *very good*, 28% indicated *good*, and 4% indicated *fair* or *poor*.

Summary and conclusions

The 2007 AARP Driver Safety Course was successful both in changing driving-related behaviors and achieving participants' satisfaction of the course. Almost all of the participants changed at least one behavior, many of whom changed more than one driving-related behavior. There also appears to be differences in terms of behavior change among different groups of respondents. For example, repeat participants and older participants seem to report more behavior change. This finding may provide support for the idea of tailoring different DSP courses towards different groups of people.

Satisfaction in the DSP course is very high along with intentions on recommending the course to friends and family. This assumption is supported by the fact that the majority of graduates have taken more than one driver safety course. Since it seems that repeat graduates are changing behavior more so than first-time participants, it is important that graduates do enroll in a DSP course in the future.

It is clear from this study as well as previous studies that the AARP Driver Safety Program attracts an older group of participants. The majority of survey participants were over the age of 65 and retired or non-working. We also know that the online driver safety program attracts a younger cohort of participants. It may be helpful to devise ways in which we can attract younger participants to the classroom course and vice versa.

In sum, the DSP course is an effective means of teaching older adults about safe driving principles. The graduates appear to take the information seriously and have made positive changes to their driving habits. Satisfaction in the course and AARP, in general, is high. Many respondents indicated that they would renew their membership as a result of the course. Most importantly, in terms of member growth, a third of respondents indicated that they would be more likely to join AARP as a result of the course. We know that approximately half of older adults who take the DSP course are non-members therefore this presents an excellent opportunity to attract future members to AARP.

Appendix A: Annotated Questionnaire

2008 AARP DRIVER SAFETY PROGRAM ANNOTATED QUESTIONNAIRE

(N=5404)

1. How many **total** hours was the course that you took?

Eight hours	82%
Four hours	18%

2. How many **total** times have you taken the AARP Driver Safety Program course?

One time	28%
Two times	22%
Three times	20%
Four or more times	3%

3. How did you learn about the AARP Driver Safety Program course?

AARP Publication	24%
AARP Website	4%
AARP Postcard Reminder Notice	4%
Local newspaper, radio, or television	27%
Major media (USA Today, television programming, talk show)	1%
Event or conference	2%
Word of mouth	32%
AARP Driver Safety Program volunteer	10%
Insurance company	19%
Other	20%

4. What is the **primary** reason you took the (most recent) AARP Driver Safety Program course?

For an insurance discount	71%
Someone suggested that I take it	1%
To learn about aging and driving for myself	9%
To learn about aging and driving out of a concern for someone else	1%
To become a safer driver	17%
Other	2%

5. Did you receive an auto insurance discount as a result of taking the AARP Driver Safety Program course?

Yes	94%
No	6%

6. **Approximately how much will you save on your automobile insurance for the next 12 months?**

\$1 to \$49	46%
\$50 to \$99	35%
\$100 to \$149	13%
\$150 to \$199	3%
\$200 or more	3%

7. **How likely will you be to take the AARP Driver Safety Program course again?**

Extremely likely	58%
Very likely	30%
Somewhat likely	8%
Not very likely	3%
Not at all likely	1%

8. **Would you prefer to take the AARP Driver Safety Program course again using an online version or in a classroom setting?**

Classroom	88%
Online	12%

9. **How likely are you to recommend this course to friends or relatives?**

Extremely likely	57%
Very likely	36%
Somewhat likely	6%
Not very likely	1%
Not at all likely	<1%

10. **Typically, how many days per week do you drive?**

Every day	45%
4 to 6 days	36%
1 to 3 days	17%
Less than once a week	2%
I no longer drive	<1%

11. **On average how many miles do you drive per week?**

0 – 24 miles	13%
25 – 49 miles	30%
50 – 99 miles	31%
100 – 199 miles	20%
200 or more miles	6%

12. Please rate your overall confidence in your driving abilities using a 7-point scale where “1” is not at all confident and “7” is extremely confident.

1-Not at all confident	<1%
2	<1%
3	<1%
4	2%
5	12%
6	45%
7-Extremely confident	40%

13. As a result of what you learned in this or previous AARP Driving Safety course(s), have you changed the following driving habits?

Limiting times when you drive	23%
Avoiding left turns	28%
Looking for safety features when buying a car	53%
Always checking your blind spots	73%
Limiting your travel on highways and freeways	25%
Paying more attention when entering or exiting highways	65%
Yielding right of way	54%
Turning in general	43%
Following distance and space cushion	67%
Using anti-lock brakes properly	39%
Keeping your eyes moving/scanning traffic	54%
Limiting driving in bad weather	43%
Being aware of where you park	51%
Learning medications effects on driving	39%
Always using safety belts	35%
Limiting use of cell phones while driving	38%
Considering limiting or stopping your driving	9%

14. Since taking the course, have you felt that the information you learned has helped prevent you from being involved in a traffic incident?

Yes	82%
No	18%

15. How have your driving skills changed over the past 5 years?

Have improved	38%
No change	56%
Have gotten worse	6%

16. Has anyone ever suggested that you either stop driving or cut back on driving in certain conditions, such as driving at night?

Yes	8%
No	92%

17. Who suggested that you either stop driving or cut back on driving in certain conditions?

Adult child(ren)	3%
Spouse	3%
Other family members	1%
Physician	1%
Friends	1%
Other (<i>Please specify : _____</i>)	7%

18. Have you undertaken any of the following activities/medical screenings to improve your driving fitness?

Worked independently on flexibility and/or strength training	27%
Spoken with your doctor about the effects of medications on your driving fitness	8%
Had your vision checked	60%
Worked with an occupational therapist, trainer, or other specialist to improve physical abilities	7%
Other (<i>Please specify : _____</i>)	3%
None of the above	30%

19. Have you made any changes to your vehicle as a result of the AARP Driver Safety Program Course?

Adjusted the mirrors	46%
Adjusted the seat/steering wheel positions	21%
Added any hardware to facilitate safe driving (e.g., pedal extender)	1%
Considered purchasing another vehicle with more safety features (e.g., airbags, electronic stability control)	6%
Other (<i>Please specify : _____</i>)	3%
None of the above	42%

20. Are you (or your spouse) currently a member of AARP?

Yes	83%
No	17%

21. As a result of taking the AARP Driver Safety course, are you more likely, as likely, or less likely to renew your AARP membership?

More likely	43%
As likely	54%
Less likely	3%

22. As a result of taking the AARP Driver Safety course, are you more likely, as likely, or less likely to join AARP?

More likely	32%
As likely	60%
Less likely	8%

23. As a result of taking the AARP Driver Safety course, are you more likely, as likely, or less likely to consider other services that AARP offers members?

More likely	24%
As likely	65%
Less likely	10%

24. How would you describe your overall health?

Excellent	18%
Very good	50%
Good	28%
Fair	4%
Poor	<1%

25. What is your age? Are you...?

Less than 45	<1%
45 and 54	2%
55 and 64	15%
65 and 74	37%
75 and 84	37%
85 or older	8%

26. Are you currently employed?

Yes, full-time	8%
Yes, part-time	10%
No, not employed (including retired)	83%

27. Are you male or female?

Male	40%
Female	60%

28. Are you Hispanic, of Spanish descent, or Latino?

Yes	2%
No	98%

29. What best describes your race?

White	94%
Black/African American	3%
Asian Pacific Islander	1%
Other	2%



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