# GPS technology boosts driving independence for older adults



A recent study from the University of East Anglia (UEA) highlights the significant role of GPS navigation systems in supporting elderly drivers, particularly those over 65 years of age. The findings suggest that these technological tools could enable older individuals to retain their driving licences for extended periods, thereby helping them maintain their independence on the roads.

The research indicates that older drivers, particularly those experiencing cognitive decline associated with ageing, often encounter difficulties with spatial orientation. This condition can lead to reduced driving frequency, as individuals may feel less confident navigating, especially in unfamiliar areas. Senior author Professor Michael Hornberger, from UEA's Norwich Medical School, commented on the importance of this issue, stating, "Driving is usually the preferred mode of transport among older adults, and it can be vital for maintaining independence, quality of life, wellbeing, and cognitive health as we age." He further noted that understanding how to keep older drivers safe on the road is increasingly crucial due to the growing ageing population.

Lead author Dr Sol Morrissey, from UEA's School of Health Sciences, elaborated on the study's focus, explaining that GPS navigation systems can reduce the cognitive load involved in navigation. "We know that using a Sat Nav system can alleviate the cognitive demands of navigation when driving, particularly when visiting less familiar destinations," added Dr Morrissey. This technological support has seen a rise in popularity among older drivers, prompting the research team to explore its effects on driving behaviour and safety.

The study involved 895 drivers from the UK, aged over 65, with a mean age of 71. Participants provided information on their driving habits, sense of direction, and the usage of GPS devices. The results revealed that a significant majority of older drivers utilise navigation assistance for at least some journeys, and many depend on GPS for their entire trip when travelling to new locations.

Professor Hornberger noted, "Older people with a poorer sense of direction rely more on Sat Navs. But the really important thing we found is that those who use GPS tend to drive more frequently than those who do not, suggesting that these tools help mitigate against spatial orientation difficulties and help maintain driving mobility."

In conclusion, the findings suggest that providing support through GPS navigation could enhance the driving independence of older adults, allowing them to remain safely on the roads for longer periods.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.hellorayo.co.uk/greatest-hits/west-norfolk/news/uea-research-sat-navs-keep-older-people-driving-longer/> - This article provides details about the research from the University of East Anglia showing how Sat Navs help older people maintain driving independence by alleviating cognitive demands during navigation.
* <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2025/04/250403143713.htm> - This source reports on the UEA study, highlighting how GPS navigation supports older drivers by mitigating spatial orientation difficulties and maintaining mobility.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - Although not directly available, this source is mentioned as the original provider of the article discussing the role of GPS in supporting older drivers.
* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-> - This is not a specific link but could provide general information on health and cognitive decline, which relates to older drivers and GPS usage.
* <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/driving-in-the-uk-when-visiting-from-abroad> - This source provides general guidelines on driving in the UK, which indirectly supports the discussion on older drivers and their reliance on GPS.