

# Will Ride-Hailing Enhance Mobility for Older Adults? A California Survey

Project 1815  
September 2020

Asha Weinstein Agrawal, PhD, Manish Shirgaokar, PhD, Aditi Misra, PhD,  
Martin Wachs, PhD, and Bonnie Dobbs, PhD

This study explored the potential for ride-hailing services like Lyft and Uber to help meet the travel needs of older Californians, with a focus on answering four specific questions:

1. To what extent do older adults use ride-hailing?
2. What barriers do older adults perceive to using ride-hailing?
3. Would new service features make ride-hailing more attractive to older adults?
4. What personal characteristics (socio-demographic factors, attitudes towards technology, and community type) are correlated with ride-hailing?

## Study Methods

An online survey was completed by 2,917 California adults aged 55 and older. This age range was chosen to include current adults 65 years of age and older, plus individuals who will move into this age group in the coming decade. The respondents are representative of the California population in terms of basic socio-demographic characteristics including age, gender, race, and annual household income.

*... roughly 4 million Californians 55 and older have experienced ride hailing at least once.*

## Findings

The study results include the following key findings.

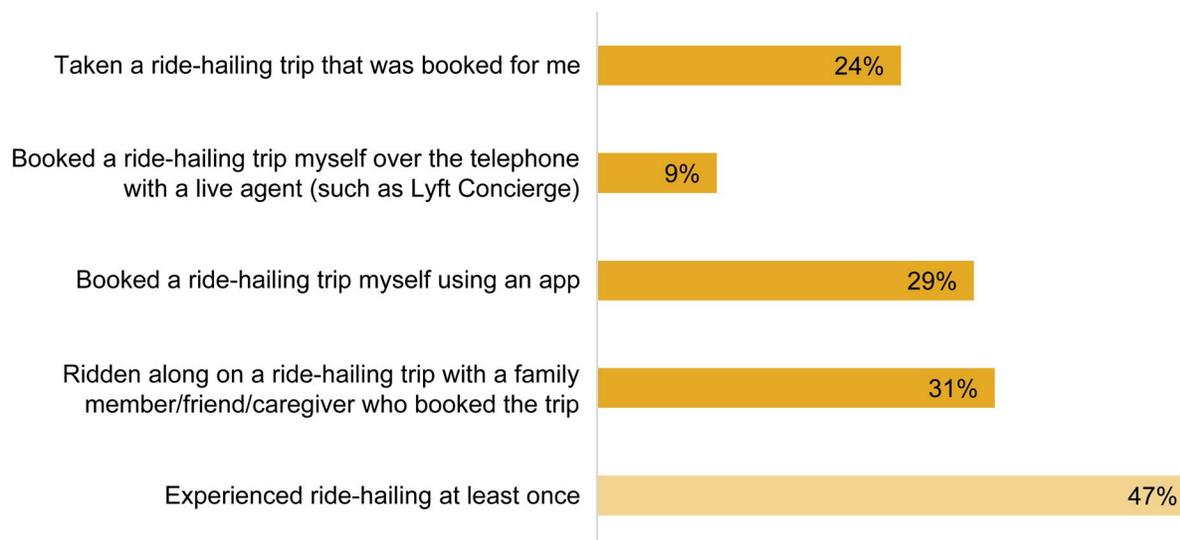
**Older online adults are currently ride-hailing—and will likely do so in greater numbers in coming years.** Close to half of survey respondents had experienced ride-hailing (47%) and almost a third (29%) had booked a ride themselves. Even among the oldest age group surveyed, those 75 and older, 42% had experienced ride-hailing, 25% had booked

a ride, and 37% had a ride-hailing app. Generalizing these results to the California population, roughly 4 million Californians 55 and older have experienced ride-hailing at least once and 2.6 million have booked rides themselves either online or by phone.

**A diverse group of older online adults ride-hail, although certain subgroups are notably more likely to ride-hail.** The study found that a widely diverse group of online older adults had tried ride-hailing. Although ride-hailing is most common among older adults who have higher-incomes, are more educated, are comfortable with online financial technology, ride public transit, and live in urban or suburban communities, respondents who did not share those characteristics also ride-hail. For example, 20% of respondents living in small towns had booked a ride themselves, compared to 36% of respondents living in urban communities.

**The majority of older online adults are comfortable with current ride-hailing service features.** The survey found that 63% of respondents were somewhat or very comfortable riding with a driver they did not know, 51% were somewhat or very comfortable with riding after dark, and 51% were somewhat or very comfortable with sharing credit-card information with the ride-hail company. Somewhat fewer respondents were somewhat or very comfortable taking a shared ride-hailing trip with a stranger, though close to half (45%) were comfortable with this feature.

**Older online adults would value new service features like getting more help with booking and taking ride-hailing trips, accessible vehicles, and new payment options.** With respect to the process of booking and taking ride-hailing trips, 70% of respondents would value having a company helpline



### Different Ways the Respondents Had Experienced Ride-Hailing

to call if that option were made available, and 63% would value the option to book the trip over the phone with a live agent. Also, 60% of respondents would value having a driver trained to help older passengers, and 43% said they would value having an accessible vehicle option. With respect to payment options, the idea of having a pro-loaded ride-hailing payment card unlinked to a bank account unlinked to a bank account or credit card was quite popular, with 61% of respondents indicating support for the option. Far fewer respondents (35%) said that they value the option to receive a paper bill from the driver, which the passenger could pay in cash at a local store

#### Implications

The study found that ride-hailing is already a potential mobility option for a large and diverse group of older adults in California, so public agencies and nonprofits may wish to pursue programs and policies that help facilitate ride-hailing for older adults. New service options that ride-hailing providers could offer to make ride-hailing more useful for older adults include having a phone option for booking and managing rides, drivers trained to help seniors, and the option to pay for rides with a ride-hailing card unlinked to a bank account or credit card.

#### About the Authors

Asha Weinstein Agrawal, PhD, is Professor of Urban & Regional Planning at SJSU; Manish Shirgaokar, PhD, is Assistant Professor of Urban & Regional Planning at the University of Colorado Denver; Aditi Misra, PhD, is Assistant Research Scientist at the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute; Martin Wachs, PhD, is Distinguished Professor Emeritus at UCLA; and Bonnie Dobbs, PhD, is Professor of Family Medicine at the University of Alberta, Canada.

#### To Learn More

For more details about the study, download the full report at [transweb.sjsu.edu/research/1815](https://transweb.sjsu.edu/research/1815)



MTI is a University Transportation Center sponsored by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Research and Technology and by Caltrans. The Institute is located within San José State University's Lucas Graduate School of Business.