



THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
CENTER FOR TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH

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Chapter 1. Driver License Renewal in Texas

The Texas State Legislature mandated that the Department of Public Safety (DPS) conduct a study through a third party to evaluate a) the management and operating structure of the Driver License Program, b) three options for operating the program in the future, and c) methods for incentivizing online driver license and ID card renewals. The Center for Transportation Research (CTR) at the University of Texas at Austin was contracted through a competitive proposal process to conduct this study. As part of this study CTR evaluated the current methods available to the public for renewing driver licenses without visiting a Driver License Office, including online, by phone, and by mail. This report outlines the reasons deemed as significant in determining how customers choose to renew their driver licenses based on a survey conducted by CTR and recommends options for incentivizing online renewals.

1.1. Incentivizing Online Renewal in Other States

Other states have started using remote methods to handle large crowds at driver license offices. Table 1.1 shows how several states have begun to incentivize and facilitate online renewal for driver licenses. These states were selected for this review because of similar population and city densities compared to the state of Texas.

| Table 1.1 Regulations of Interest in Various States | |
|---|--|
| State | Regulations of Interest for Online Driver license Renewal |
| California | Requires driver license renewals every five years. Allows consecutive online renewals for residents given no address change. This state requires in-person renewals only every 16 years according to federal law. (1) |
| Colorado | Requires driver license renewals every five years. Customers of all ages can renew online. Online renewals are only allowed if previous renewal was conducted in-person, similar to the state of Texas. Allow online submission of vision certificates. However, customers over the age of 65 are allowed consecutive online renewals and only have to renew in person every 16 years. (2) |
| New York | Requires driver license renewals every eight years. Allows residents to submit eye exam documents online, through an <i>Online Vision Registry</i> connected to licensed optometrist offices, allowing customers even with eye problems to renew online. To implement in Texas, Texas must invest in online document submittal platform. New York residents cannot renew consecutively online as the renewal period is eight years.(3) |
| Illinois | Requires driver license renewals every four years. Allows consecutive online renewal for residents with a <i>Safe Driving Record</i> , meaning no traffic violation for four consecutive years. This state requires in-person renewals only every 16 years according to federal law. (4) |
| Maryland | Requires driver license renewal every eight years. Customers of all ages are allowed to renew online. Vision providers can submit vision certificates |

| State | Regulations of Interest for Online Driver license Renewal |
|-------|---|
| | directly to Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration. Online renewals are only allowed if previous renewal was conducted in-person, similar to the state of Texas. (5) |

These regulations for online renewal could be useful in Texas. According to federal law, a license must be renewed in-person every 16 years, and with Texas' 8-year renewal period, consecutive remote renewals are impossible. Other states like California and Illinois can allow consecutive remote renewals because of their shorter renewal times. Customers can renew several times remotely without disobeying the federal law.

However, other states with an eight-year renewal period have allowed electronic submission of vision certificates. By partnering with vision providers, Maryland, New York, and Colorado have further minimized the list of reasons for having to renew in person. Texas requires customers to renew in person if there are any changes to eyesight or provide proof of eye doctor appointment with documentation. Texas does not have a method of virtual document submittal, so this may require additional software and security measures.

California is also investing in a technology overhaul of the Driver License Division of their Department of Motor Vehicles to improve an outdated website and remote renewal platform. These improvements are to encourage more usage of the online platform to ease crowds at DMV locations. New York has also invested in advertising the online renewal method on the main page of the DMV website. The option to renew is the front and center of the home page and uses phrases like, "It's Easy!" and "Why wait? Renew instantly" to incentivize customers to use the online platform. This marketing and advertisement of the remote platform is unique in that other states do not showcase this option to the same extent on the home page that New York does. Advertisement of the remote platform would be beneficial in Texas, as many customers indicated in the comment section of the survey that they were unaware of the option to renew remotely. The DLD may consider whether methods that have been implemented by other states are potential options for Texas.

1.2. Survey Overview

This task aims to determine the motivations and reasons behind why Texans choose a particular method to renew their driver license or ID card. CTR conducted two surveys from November 2019 through May 2020 of driver license and ID card customers to obtain information on their experiences and opinions. Invitations to take the original survey were emailed to about 7,700,000 Texas residents using the email addresses customers provided to DPS during driver license or ID card application. One of the surveys was a shorter, supplemental survey was also created to ask more specific questions about why customers chose a particular renewal method.

The shorter survey was sent to a subset of the larger survey email population, including only customers that renewed their license during the period January 2019–September 2019, comprising

approximately 2,096,00 customers. The CTR study team determined that the nine-month window was appropriate to get a broad view of DPS experiences from individuals who had recently renewed their driver license or ID card, thus gathering current information. The invitation incorporated in the email that distributed the survey link indicated the clear purpose of this new survey to the customers. This tech memo only focuses on the findings of the shorter, supplemental survey.

1.2.1. Timeline

Beginning on December 12, 2019, the shorter, supplemental survey regarding driver license renewal was emailed in batches to approximately 1,984,605 Texas residents that renewed their driver license in the previous 9 months. The first batches were sent in groups of 55,000 emails every week through February 2020 using the Qualtrics™ system. The email distribution limit for UT was then increased to 1.7 million emails at one time and were distributed through the Qualtrics™ email system on March 19, 2020.

1.3. Survey Results

In total, there were 35,283 respondents for the shorter, supplemental survey out of 1,984,605 survey invitations, indicating a ~1.7% response rate. Initial predictions by Qualtrics technical support estimated a 20% response rate. The lower-than-expected response rate can be partially attributed to emailed surveys being sent directly to recipient's spam folder by certain email service providers, reducing awareness of the survey. Other issues include a) concerns by survey email recipients about a potential phishing scheme, b) potential confusion about receiving two different surveys that were both related to the Driver License Program, c) the winter holidays taking people away from their computers, and d) the onset of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) taking the public's attention elsewhere. The CTR team did include a contact email address in the body of the email message that allowed recipients to contact team members to verify the legitimacy of the survey or to ask questions. Though an accurate count was not maintained, the team did receive numerous emails requesting verification or to ask questions. Though the number of surveys received was less than anticipated, responses throughout the ~35,000 surveys were consistent. The sample size is very large and sufficient to produce reliable results.

However, unfinished responses were not considered in the final analysis. This is because respondents who answered the first questions, but not later questions, would skew the final calculated percentages of the later questions. Considering the survey responses, treating responses as percentages, and assuming the population of driver license and ID card customers for the January 2019–September 2019 time period is approximately normally distributed with respect to age, errors associated with estimated population percentages are generally less than plus or minus 1%.

1.3.1. Database Cleaning Methodology

The following attributes were considered to remove ‘careless’ surveys and, thus, to produce a high-quality dataset for the analysis:

- Inappropriate Language or Unrelated Comments: If the comment in the open-ended answer box used vulgar or aggressive language, the entire survey was removed from the database. If the comment talked about unrelated topics, the entire survey was removed from the database.
- Time: If the survey was completed in less than ten (10) seconds, the answers were deemed as not usable data and removed from the database.
- Completion: All unfinished survey responses were removed from the database.

After database cleaning, 29,613 responses were used for analysis purposes and to determine the distribution of responses for each survey question.

1.3.2. Renewal Methods Chosen

The survey addressed two primary issues: First, which of the four potential methods—in person, online, by phone, or by mail—did the respondent choose to renew their license? And secondly, why did the respondent renew using the option they chose?

Of the remote renewal options—online, mail-in, and phone—online is overwhelmingly more popular than the other two remote renewal methods. However, Table 1.2 highlights that ~75% of DPS customers renewed their Texas driver license in person rather than using a remote method.

Table 1.2 Percentages of Respondents by Renewal Methods

| Method | Percentage | Count |
|------------------|------------|---------------|
| In Person | 74.97% | 22,200 |
| Online | 22.84% | 6765 |
| By Phone | 0.26% | 78 |
| Through the Mail | 1.92% | 570 |
| Total | | 29,613 |

Such a heavy demand for in-person visits leads to longer wait times and ultimately frustration for those needing to renew. In fact, the mail-in method and phone method combined account for only about 2% of total driver license renewals, as indicated by the survey. The Sunset Advisory Commission indicated that about 20% of the 7 million calls to the DLD each year are answered (6). The low popularity of phone renewal can be attributed to lack of reliability. Also, not all of these phone calls ended in a driver license renewal (Sunset Advisory Commission 2018–2019).

1.3.2.1. Survey Renewal Methods by Age

The current age distribution of the Texas population old enough to drive is shown in Figure 1.1 and the age distribution for the comprehensive, primary survey is shown in Figure 1.2. The largest fractions of survey respondents are in the 60–69-year-old age group followed by the 50–59-year-old age group, indicating these respondent groups are over-represented compared to the state’s population. The slightly skewed shape of the respondent age group distribution is likely a result of several respondent characteristics. The email database used for identifying those who would receive a survey invitation included every customer who renewed his or her license in the past nine months and who also included his or her email in the DLD application contact information. The survey invitation had a risk of being sent to the spam folder across the range of email servers used by respondents. A person’s inclination to examine their spam folder is influenced by a variety of factors: email server, mail application used, and personal folder settings. Additionally, different email servers likely serve different age populations. However, the uneven distribution might be indicative of older populations having a stronger sense of efficacy in government.

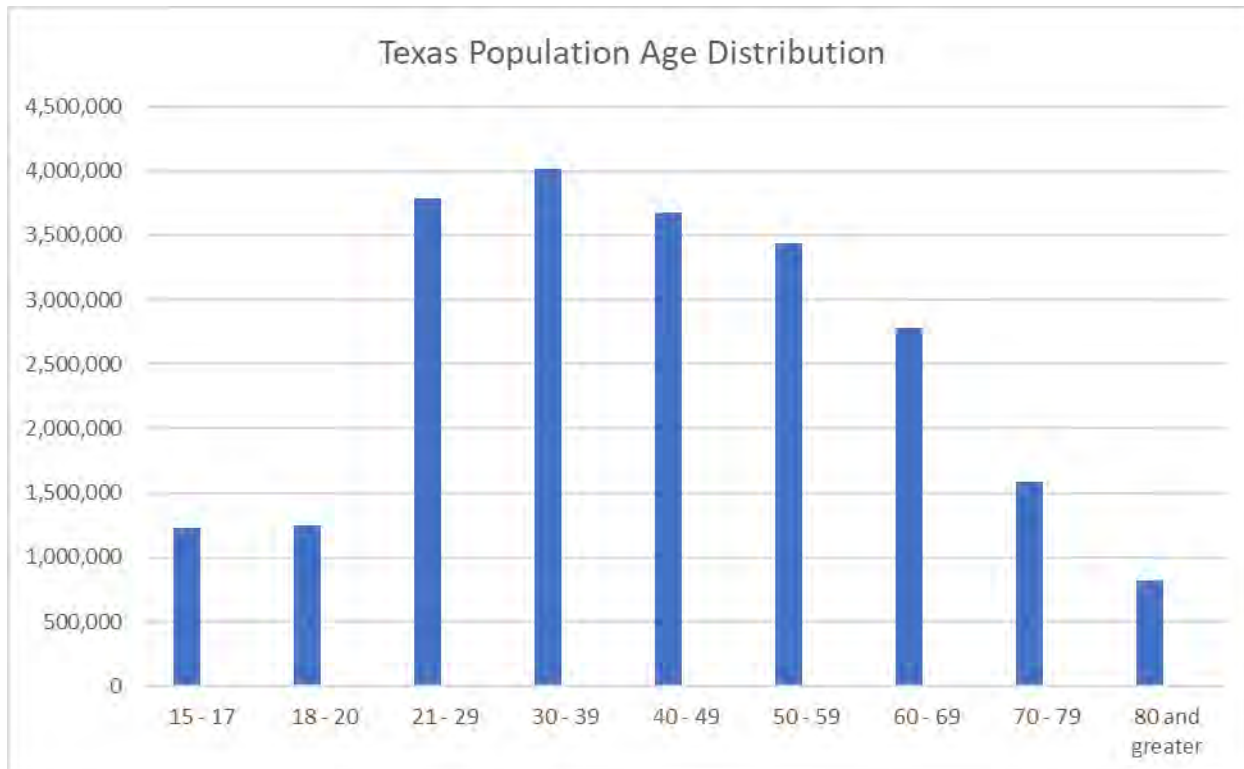


Figure 1.1 Age Distribution of the Texas Population Old Enough to Drive

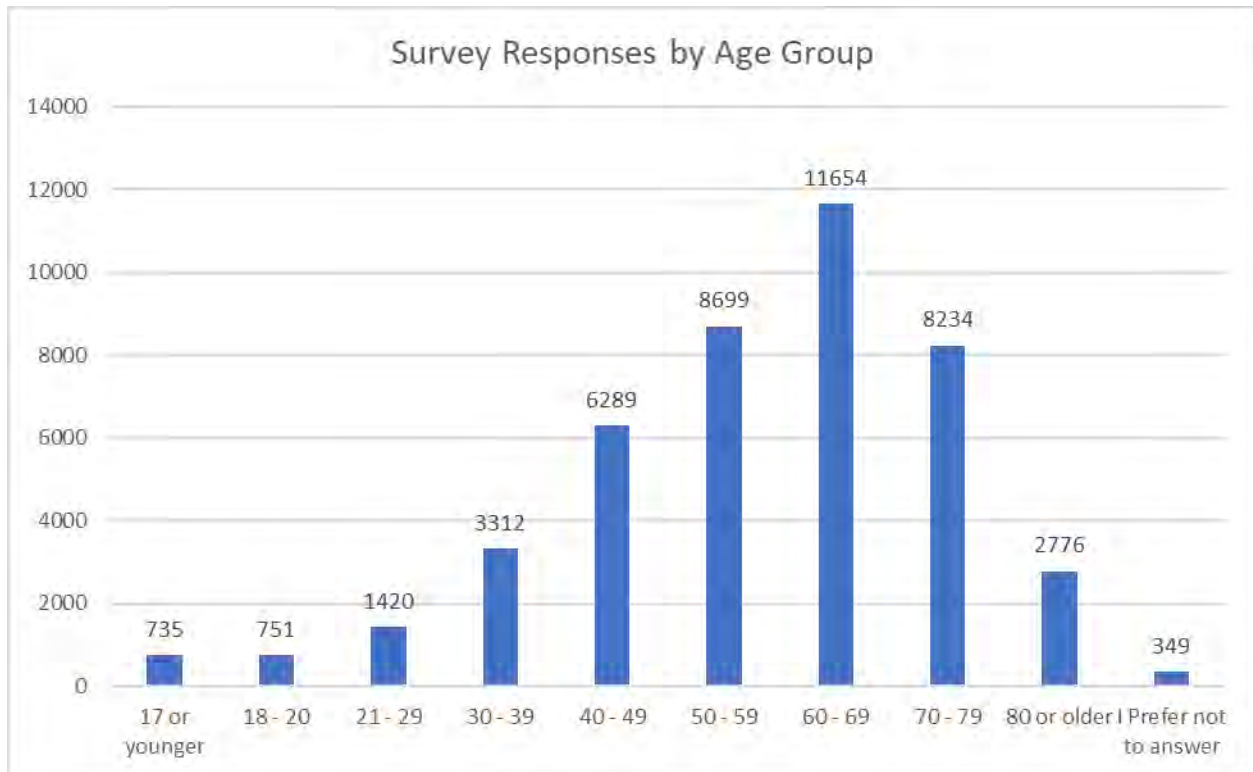


Figure 1.2 Customer Experience and Opinion Survey Respondents by Age Group

The breakdown of respondent ages for the smaller, supplemental survey also distributed resembles closely the breakdown for the larger customer service survey (Figure 1.2). Furthermore, despite uneven age distribution, each age group has significant enough representation to make this survey useful in terms of data analysis.

The respondents were split into three different age groups: 18–39 years of age, 40–69 years of age, and 70 and above. Most respondents are in the 60–69-year-old age group, followed by the 50–59 group. This grouping was chosen to show an overview of how each generation has chosen to renew their driver licenses. Figure 1.3 shows an overview of renewal methods by generational age groups. For the online renewal method, the 40–69 group is the largest fraction, but it is only about 4% larger than the other two age groups. In fact, when presented using these age groups, there is very little difference across age groups within any renewal method.

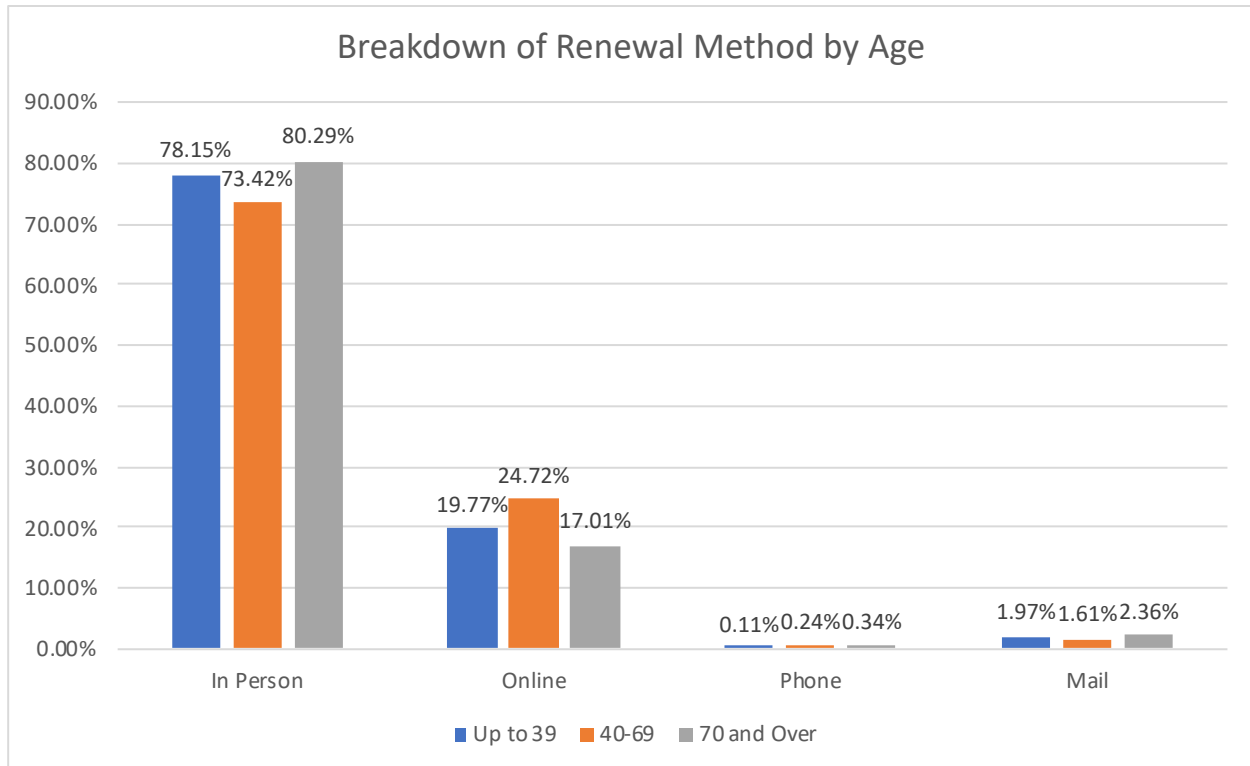


Figure 1.3 Renewal Method by Age Group

As indicated in Figure 1.3, the in-person method is most prevalent. Additionally, as indicated in Figure DD through Figure GG in Appendix C, the distributions of age for any renewal method are similar except for persons greater than 80 years, who cannot renew remotely. Additionally, five respondents indicated that they renewed online and marked that they were under 18 years old—two conditions that contradict each other (less than 0.02% of total survey response). These responses were kept because they took the time to give feedback on the online system and did not appear blatantly careless.

For the remote renewal options, some age groups were more likely to choose one method over the other. All age groups used the in-person method more than the remote methods (see Figure 1.4 and Figure 1.5). Figure 1.5 shows the fraction of respondents that selected a particular remote renewal type by age group. Considering mail-in renewals, the 8.51% of all 18–20-year-old customers reported renewing by mail the last time they did a transaction. The fractions reporting mail-in renewal for all other age groups were much smaller. The survey did not ask the survey respondent to identify why they chose a specific renewal method in their own words, so the reason why 18–20-year-olds are more likely to renew by mail than all other age groups is not clear. However, this finding is statistically significant (CL = 95%, p-value <0.000001). For online renewals, the 21–29 and the 50–59 groups were more likely to select this option compared to all other age groups (CL = 95%, p-value <0.000001).

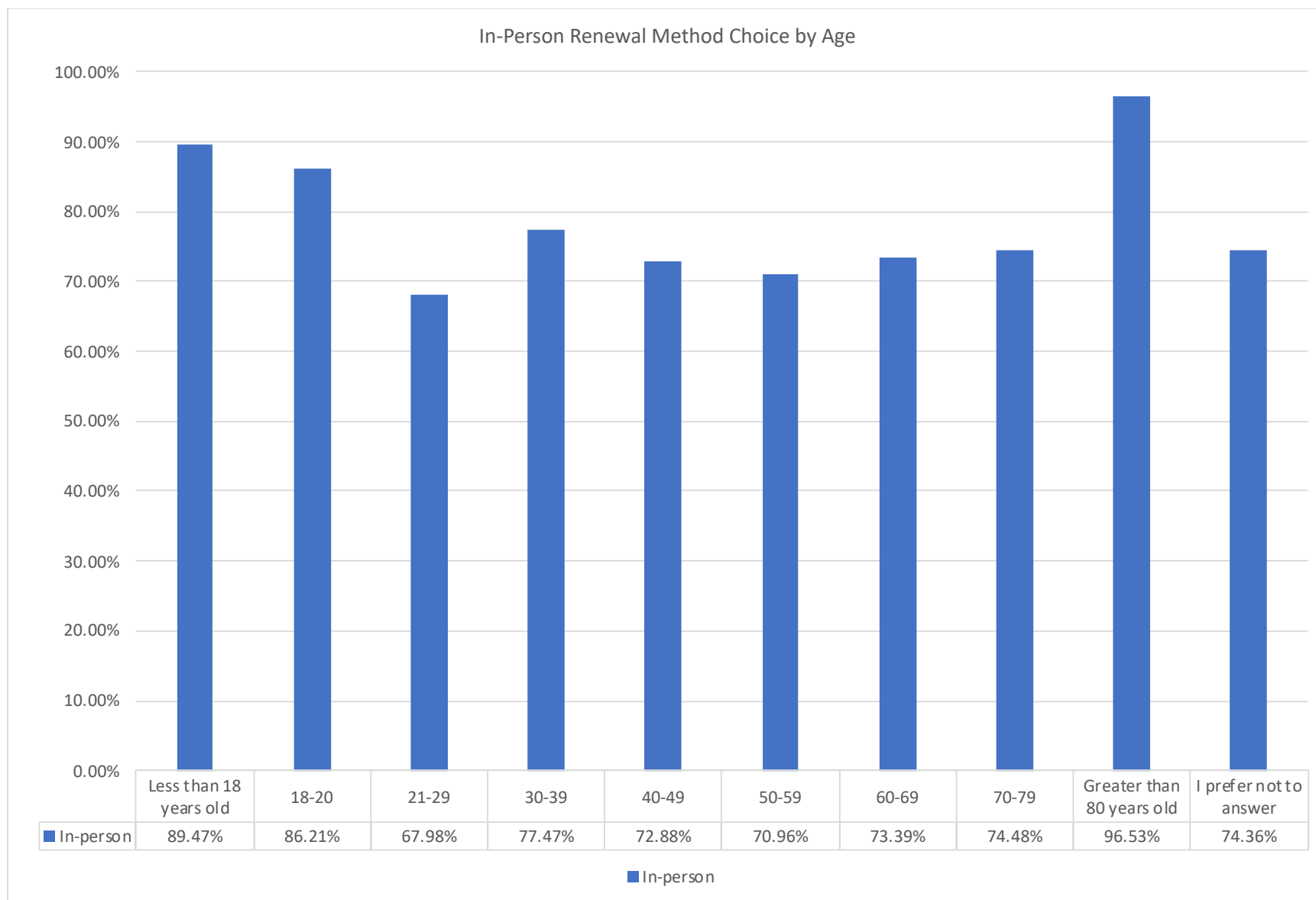


Figure 1.4 In-Person Renewal Choices by Age

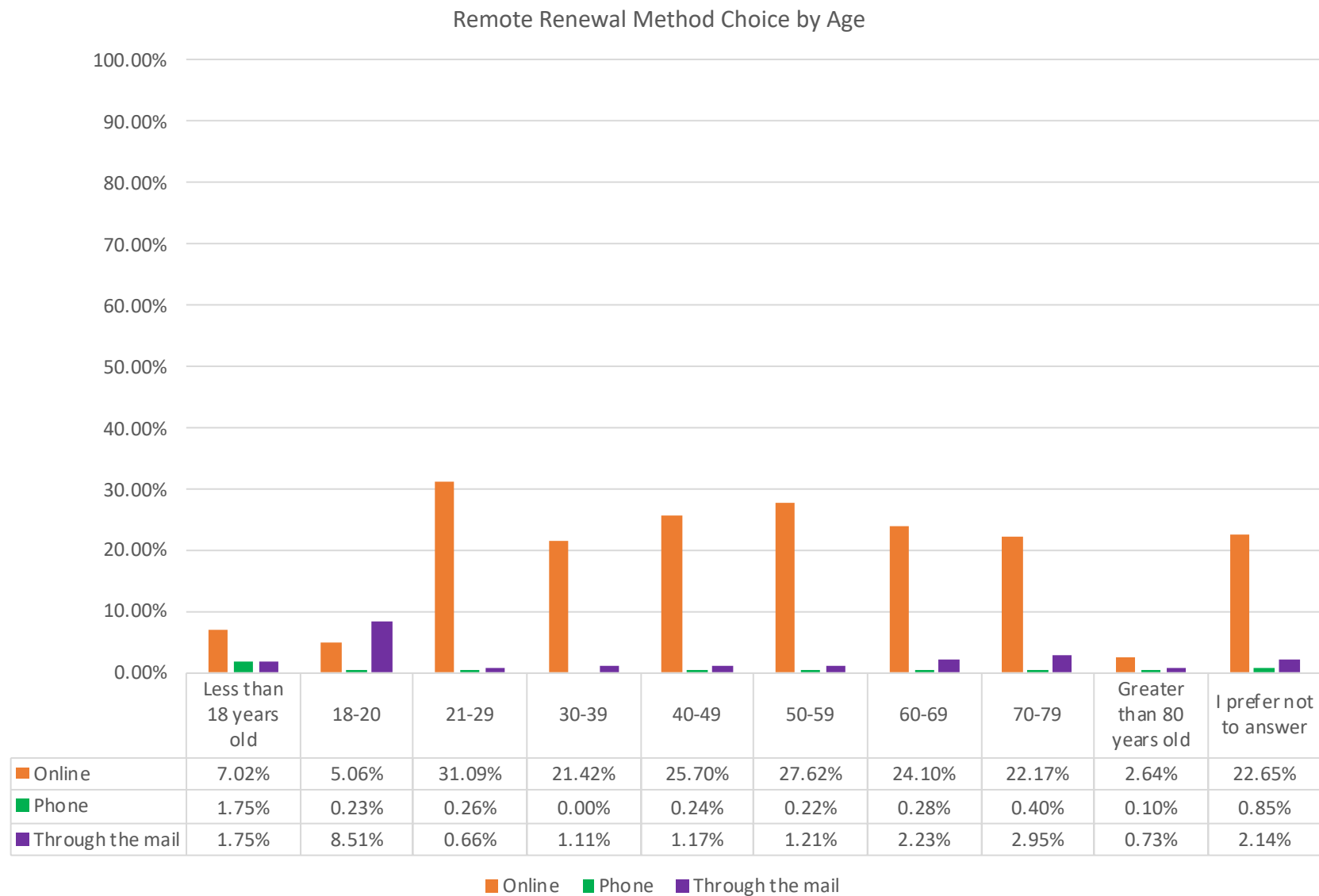


Figure 1.5 Remote Renewal Method Choice by Age

1.3.3. Eligibility for Remote Renewal

If each driver uses a remote method when eligible, then a little less than two million customers could renew their license without visiting a DPS office each year. In this survey, about 62% of respondents indicated they were not eligible for remote renewal because customers must renew in person every other time. According to survey results, the 30–39-year-old age group is significantly more likely to indicate not knowing if they were eligible to renew remotely than all other age groups. The 70–79 group is significantly more likely to indicate needing to visit in person to receive a REAL ID compared to all other age groups. Eligibility requirements are found online but the important ones to note for remote renewal potential are the following:

You have a Class C, CM or M driver license. You cannot renew a Class A, Class B or commercial driver license online. You renewed your driver license in person at a driver license office last time.

According to the Sunset Advisory Commissions 2018–2019 Report, there are about 20 million licensed drivers in Texas, and each person must renew his or her license every 8 years. The number of years for renewal was increased from 6 to 8 years during the last legislative session. This means about 3.3 million drivers renew their driver licenses every year by some method. Respondents to this survey indicate about 62% are not eligible for remote renewal (respondents who indicated they were not eligible for remote renewal, plus those who tried but failed, and those who thought they must renew in person to get a REAL-ID license). During a meeting with DLD executive management and staff, the study team was told that DLD estimates about 52% of all customers are qualified for online renewal.

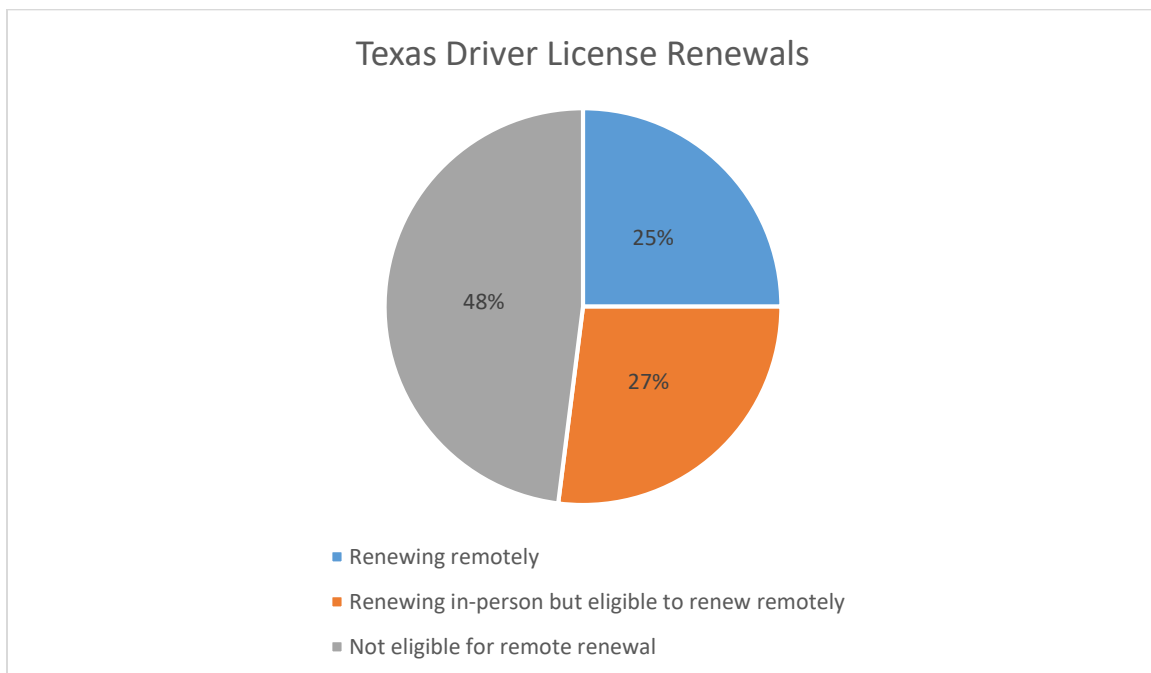


Figure 1.6 Driver License Renewal Breakdown

Therefore, a significant fraction of people (~27%) could be renewing their driver license remotely but are not. As indicated in Figure 1.6, approximately 25% are actually renewing remotely (Table 1.2 survey result is about 23%).

1.3.3.1. Missing Eligibility Requirements

The DLD web site provides the instructions for renewing online or by phone. Note that only Class C, CM, or M licenses can be renewed online, and the driver's age must be between 18 and 79 years. In addition, ID cards can be renewed online if the qualifications are met. Figure 1.7 shows a screen capture of the eligibility requirements posted on the DPS website.

Texas driver license

1. You renewed your driver license in person at a driver license office last time.
2. You have a Class C, M, or CM driver license. You cannot renew a Class A, Class B or commercial driver license online.
3. Your driver license either expires in less than two years, or has been expired for less than two years.
4. You are at least 18 years of age and your driver license is not a provisional or learner license.
5. You are younger than 79 years of age.
6. Your vision and your physical and mental conditions have not changed in a way that affects your ability to drive safely since your last renewal.
7. Your license is valid (not suspended or revoked), and you do not have any warrants or unpaid tickets. To verify your eligibility, visit our [License Eligibility](#) page.
8. Your Social Security Number is already on file.
9. You are a U.S. citizen.
10. You have in your possession your most recently issued driver license, the audit number from the card, or answer security questions to verify your identity.

Texas Identification Card

1. You renewed your ID card in person at a driver license office last time.
2. Your ID card either expires in less than two years, or has been expired for less than two years.
3. You are 18 years of age or older.
4. Your Social Security Number is already on file.
5. You are a U.S. citizen.
6. You have in your possession your most recently issued driver license, the audit number from the card, or answer security questions to verify your identity.

If you meet the requirements for the card you are trying to renew, you must have the following to complete the renewal process:

1. Your current driver license or identification card (the one you are renewing)
2. A printer or email address to print or email your temporary driver license and payment receipt, if you renew online. No temporary driver license or receipt will be issued when renewing by phone
3. A valid credit card (MasterCard, Visa, Discover or American Express)
4. The last four digits of your Social Security Number

Figure 1.7 Remote Renewal Eligibility Requirements on the DPS Website

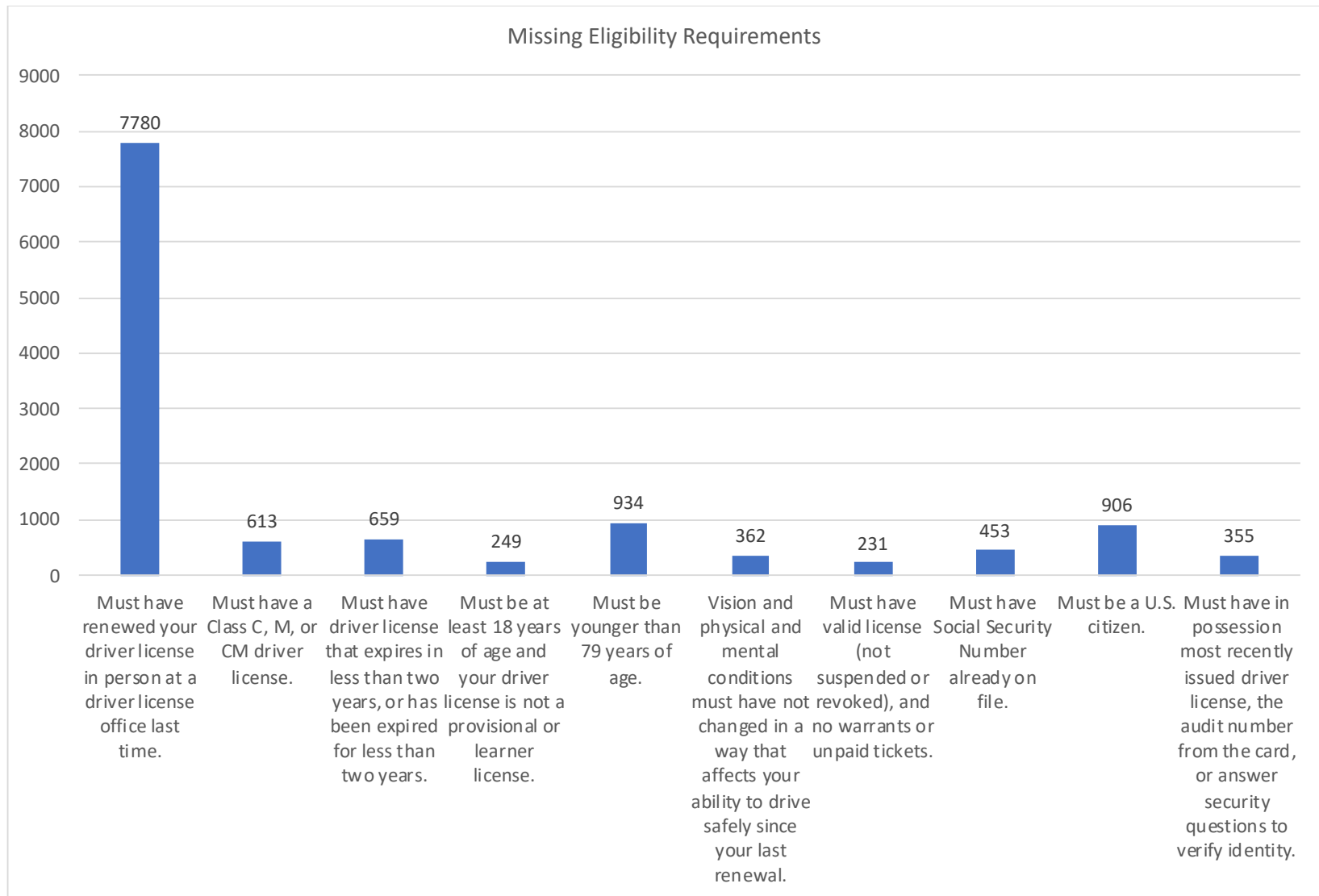


Figure 1.8 Respondent Reported Missing Requirements for Remote Renewal

Survey respondents that indicated they were not eligible to renew remotely were asked to identify which of the requirements listed in the DPS website they did NOT meet. Clearly, the majority indicate that having to renew in person every other time is the most common reason for not being eligible in Figure 1.8. As mentioned in Section 1.1, other states have relaxed the requirements for coming into a driver licensing office or DMV to help better serve customers. Relaxing the ‘renew in person every other time’ requirement by allowing consecutive remote renewals with proof of an eye exam and/or a safe driving record has the maximum potential for reducing in-person office visit demand.

1.3.3.2. Improving Knowledge of Eligibility Criteria

The main suggestion for increasing the numbers of remote renewals is better communication with the public about who can and who cannot renew via remote methods, particularly for the REAL ID compliant licenses. The following question was provided to obtain information on user perceptions of their eligibility for use of remote renewal methods. Respondents to the smaller survey were given the following question with eight choices (see Figure 1.7) and were asked to select all that apply to them (see Appendix B for full question).

For the last time you renewed your license, which of the following statements apply to you?

Responses to this question are shown in Figure 1.9 and indicate that about 35% who visited a driver license office in person needed to do so, or thought they needed to do so, to receive a REAL ID compliant driver license. This was calculated by summing the number of respondents who selected the choice regarding REAL IDs, as well as those who selected that they were not eligible but also wrote in the comment section that this was due to REAL ID requirements. About 20% of respondents also indicated that knowledge of requirements for REAL ID compliant licenses was problematic. This was estimated by summing the number of respondents who indicated confusion in the survey comment section, or that they tried to renew virtually but eventually went in person.

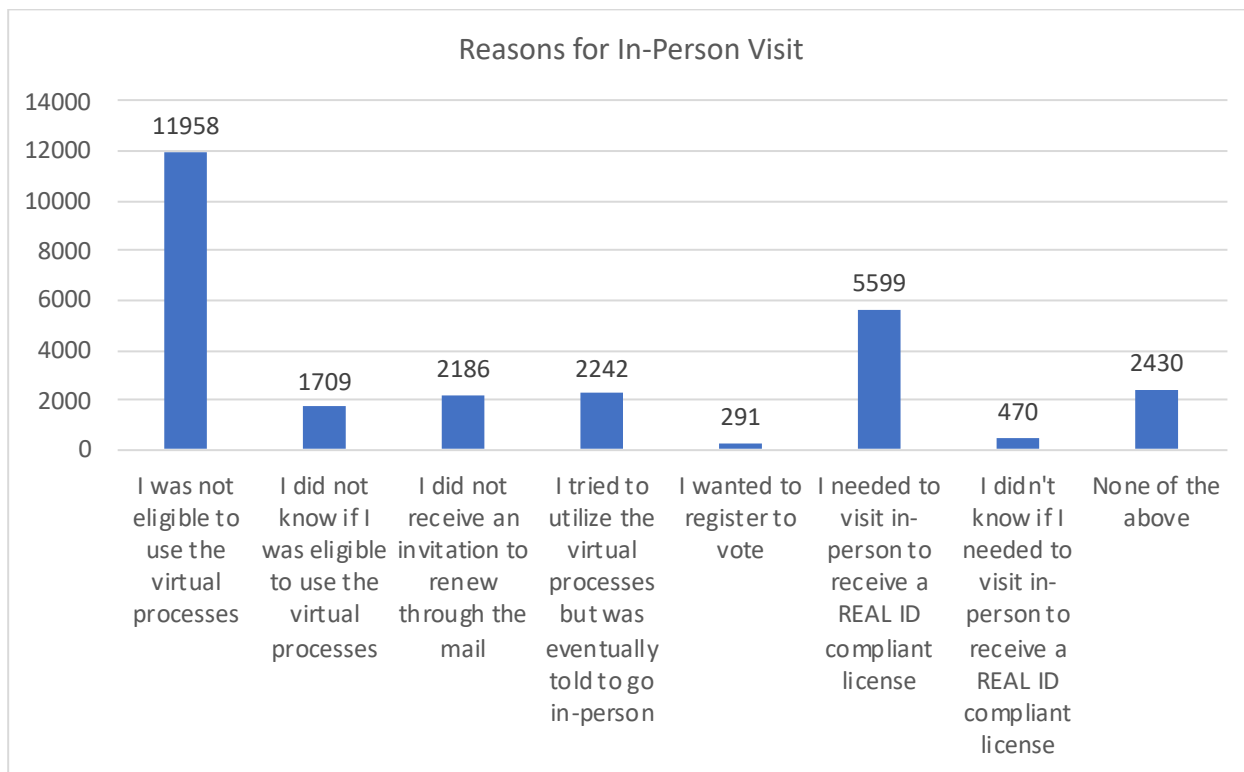


Figure 1.9 Respondent Reported Reasons for Not Renewing Remotely

While only 8% of respondents were unsure if they needed to renew in person, most of the respondents who claimed they renewed in person because they needed a REAL ID used the comment section to indicate that it was unclear whether or not an in-person visit was required. Almost 1,600 respondents (over 5%) indicated they did not know if they were eligible to use remote options. While the DPS website includes information about the REAL ID laws and who is eligible, the link to this information is not obvious on the website, and the use of legal jargon is problematic for many Texas citizens. Also, the REAL Document Check Application does not tell users whether they are lacking a specific document. A simpler website could help people find information regarding renewal eligibility criteria more easily.

Remote renewal eligibility criteria, which directly impacts driver license office demand, should be presented in a way that is very easy to find and that requires a minimal number of mouse clicks. The DLD website could include a set of tips or frequently asked questions (FAQs) near the lists describing remote renewal criteria. Figure 1.10 provides an example of tips embedded into instructions, as taken from the Department of Homeland Security's webpage on Citizenship Evidence.

Tips for submitting your citizenship evidence

- Submit your original evidence of U.S. citizenship.
- Submit a photocopy of the front (and back, if there is printed information) of your original evidence of U.S. citizenship.
- Photocopies must be: legible, on white 8.5"x11" standard paper, black and white, and single sided.
- In some cases, you may be able to submit a certified copy of your citizenship evidence. A **certified copy** is any document that has the seal or stamp of the official issuing authority.
- If you don't want to submit a photocopy of your citizenship evidence, you may submit a second certified copy of your citizenship evidence, which we will keep. If you don't submit a photocopy or a second certified copy of your citizenship evidence, your passport processing could be delayed.
- You cannot submit digital evidence of U.S. citizenship (e.g. electronic or mobile birth certificate) when applying for a U.S. passport. You must continue to submit your physical evidence of U.S. citizenship and a photocopy of it.

Figure 1.10 Example of Tips Provided on the DHS Website

Another method that could reduce in-person visits to a driver license office would be a closely monitored and reliable hotline or live chat feature on the DPS website, so customers can ask about specific situations, including their eligibility to renew online, by phone, or by mail. However, a user-friendly hotline or live chat operation can be very expensive if trained personnel operate the system and the system operates many hours per day. Communication through a website is much less expensive since virtually all costs are expended on the website design and there is almost no incremental cost associated with increasing numbers of users. Another issue to consider is that hotline and live-chat operators would need to have ensure access to DLD records without violating laws regarding access to personal/confidential information.

Prioritizing communication with the public about customer options is the crux of customer service, and it should be a priority of the DLD moving forward. With the onset of COVID-19, the REAL ID timeline was extended to October 2021, so this information will be continuously useful.

1.3.4. Access to Remote Renewal Methods

While this survey showed most customers had reliable internet and access to a computer, accessibility of other remote methods should not be forgotten, as the DLD must be customer-service-oriented. Over 97% of customers who used a remote method chose to use the online renewal system. Another 378 customers reported they decided to renew in person after attempting to use the phone method, because the phones were not answered, or the hold times exceeded their expectations. Customers also noted that the mail-in renewal service would sometimes require

months to receive the new license, causing them to use the in-person method the next time or advising friends and family members to avoid the mail-in service.

Several respondents reported difficulty using the online platform with different internet browsers. For example, customers pointed out problems with using the DPS online renewal platform on Safari and Internet Explorer, browsers that are typically used by older populations. About 25% of respondents aged 60–80 who used the online platform reported that the platform must be more user-friendly. While 85% of respondents did not cite lack of online access as a motivation for selecting the in-person method of renewal, for those customers without reliable access to internet, a computer, or a printer, or for those who would rather speak to a person over the phone, phone and mail-in renewal services should be continued. While this population does not represent a large percentage of the respondent population, as indicated in Figure 1.11, access is an important part of prioritizing customer service and the needs of the public.

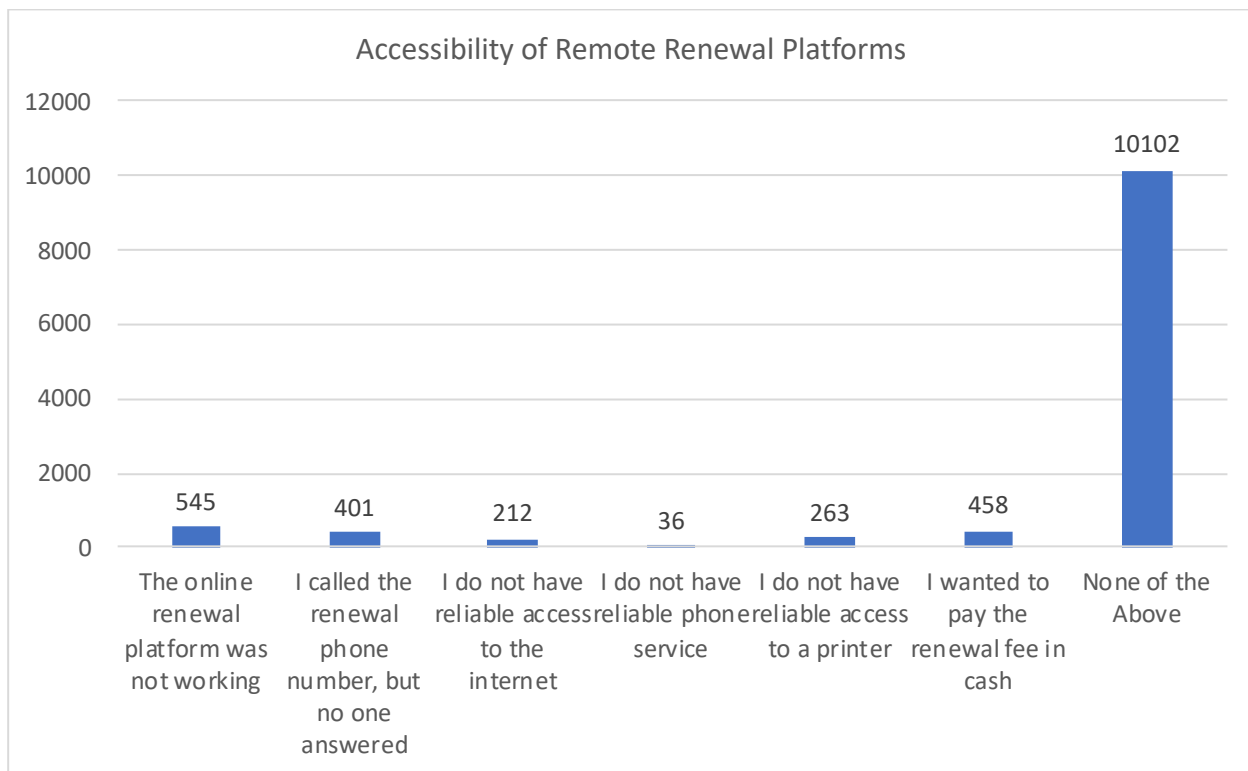


Figure 1.11 Accessibility to Remote Renewal Platforms

To increase the number of customers using the remote systems, the website/online renewing system should function in a very user-friendly way. Changes to website design and adaptability to a variety of devices could help customers finding the information they need. Currently, the website has small fonts and does not highlight or include the word ‘Eligibility’ in many of the section headers describing eligibility criteria for various types of transactions (see Figure 1.7 for an example). Including ‘Eligibility’ as a header title where it is being described would help the information pop out for someone quickly scanning a website they are unfamiliar with. Additionally, an increasing number of people are using their mobile phones to find information on

the internet. An adaptable page that would work with a wide variety of screen sizes and devices (tablet, computer, iPhone, Android, etc.) would help Texans more easily obtain the information they need.

1.3.5. Other Reasons for Renewing in Person

Through the survey question asking for any additional comments, respondents offered a few insights as to why they chose the in-person method for driver license renewal. Some people simply prefer to transfer money and important documents in person. For example, one respondent entered:

“I just like doing everything in person. I like to see who I am talking with, and who I am exchanging money with.”

Survey comments described the online platform as outdated and confusing. Customers also noted that the platform did not work on certain browsers, motivating customers to renew in person even though they are aware of and trust the online method. Furthermore, many third-party websites are extremely misleading, leading customers to believe these for-profit private organizations are a state agency; after finally after discovering the truth, these customers tend to mistrust all remote systems.

1.3.6. Opinions on Remote Renewal Platforms

The following sections review the results from respondents that indicated that they used one of the three remote renewal platforms. Respondents that indicated renewing through mail were asked, for example:

What did you think of the online renewal process? Choose all that apply.

Nearly identical wording was used for gathering respondent perceptions of the other two methods of remote renewal (see Appendix B). Figure 1.12 through Figure 1.14 summarize the results.

1.3.6.1. Online Renewal

Customers were asked to select the statements that apply to them regarding the online renewal process. The following subsections compare the responses among the age groups for the 22.84% of respondents that indicated they renewed online. See Figure 1.12 for the detailed response breakdown by age.

1.3.6.1.1. Survey statement: “The online renewal platform was user-friendly”

Overall, 71.3% of survey respondents that renewed online indicated the online platform was friendly. Respondents belonging to the 60–69 and 70–79 age groups had the highest fractions reporting friendliness (up to 73.7%). Out of those that renewed online, these older groups are significantly more likely to agree with this statement compared to all younger age groups (CL = 95%).

1.3.6.1.2. Survey statement: “The online renewal platform was easier than visiting a DPS office”

For this question, 84.1% of total respondents indicated that this statement applied to them. The 60–69 and 70–79 age groups had the highest fractions reporting the online method is easier than the in-person method (up to 86.3%). Both age groups are significantly more likely to select this statement over all younger age groups (CL = 95%), with the exception of the 21–29 age group.

1.3.6.1.3. Survey statement: “The online renewal platform saved me time”

Overall, 74.6% of respondents selected this statement. For this statement, the 21–29 and the 50–59 age groups indicated time savings more frequently than did the other age groups (up to 76.3%).

1.3.6.1.4. Survey statement: “My eligibility to use the online platform was clear to me”

Comprehensively, 58.7% of total respondents indicated that this statement applied to them. The 70–79 and 60–69 age groups are mostly likely to agree with this statement (up to 64.1%). Additionally, age groups falling in the 50–79 range are significantly more likely to select this statement over all other younger age groups (CL = 95%). People belonging to the 50–79 age group that renewed online and selected this statement provided comments such as the following:

- Expand online renewal.
- Online renewal is a win-win process for all.
- Online license renewal was quick and easy!
- I’m just sad that I can only renew online once.

1.3.6.2. Mail-in Renewal

Customers were asked to select the statements that apply to them regarding the mail-in renewal process. There were 1.92% of survey respondents that indicated they renewed by mail. The only age group with fewer than 20 responses is the 21–29 group (only 5 responses). The 30–39 age group had 22 responses. Given the small representation in the 21–29 age group, there is not enough information to make conclusions about the experience that group has with mail-in renewal in this survey sample. See Figure 1.13.

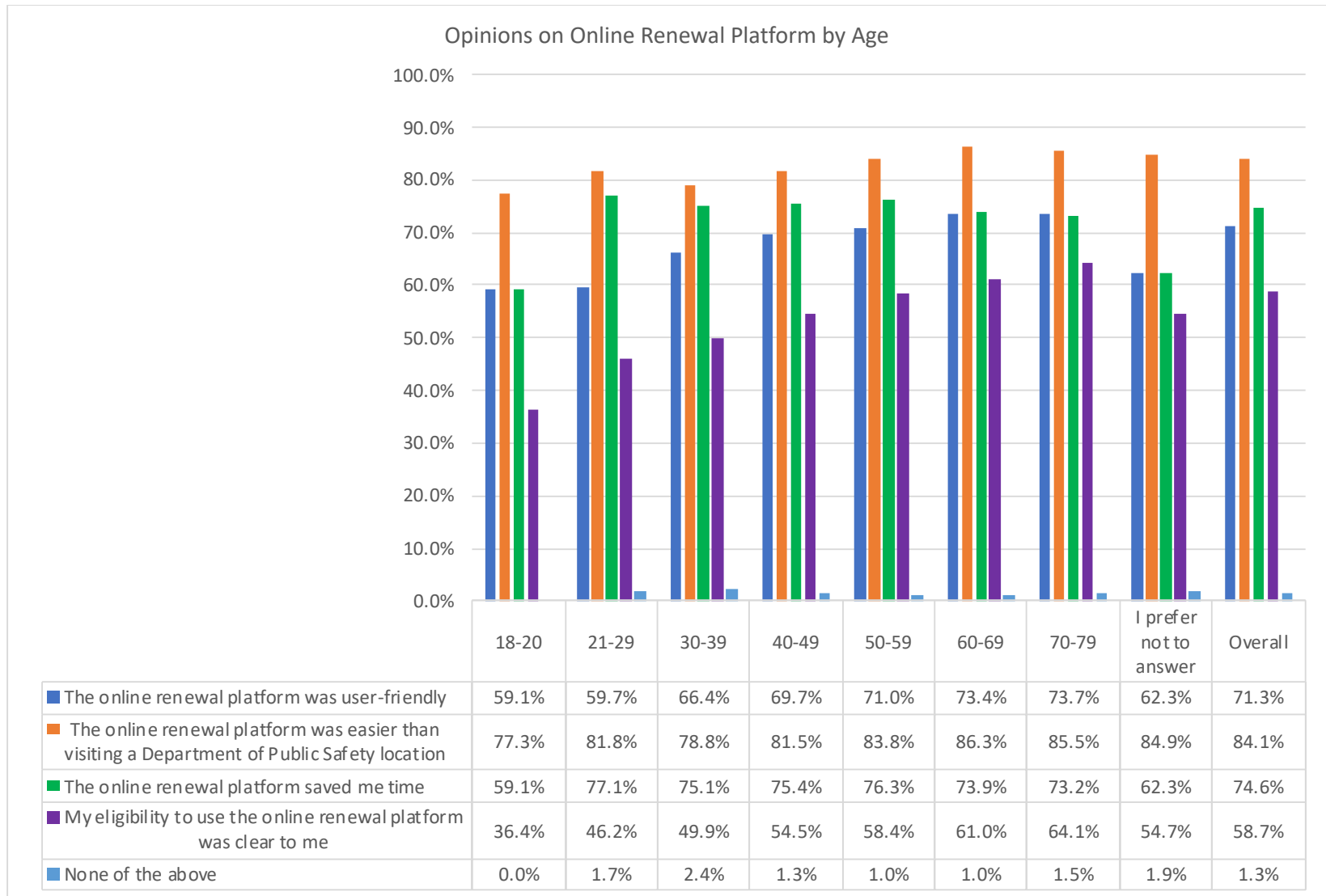


Figure 1.12 Opinions on Online Renewal Platform

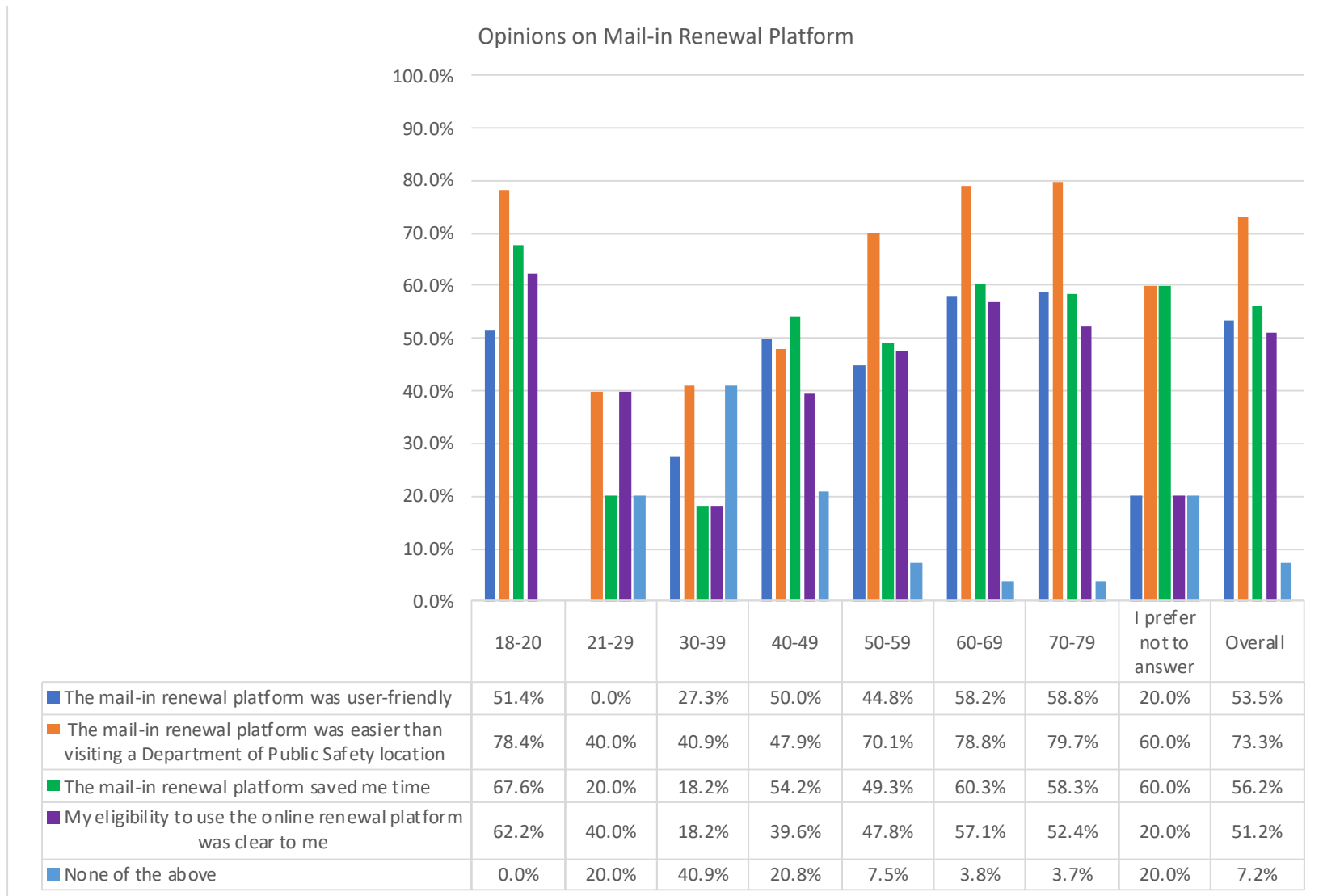


Figure 1.13 Opinions on Mail-in Renewal Platform

1.3.6.2.1. Survey statement: “The mail-in renewal platform was user-friendly”

Overall, 51.4% of survey respondents that renewed by mail indicated the mail-in platform was friendly. Respondents belonging to the 60–69 and 70–79 age groups had the highest fractions reporting friendliness (up to 58.8%) followed by those in the 40–49 age group. Out of those that renewed using the mail-in option, the older groups (40–79) are significantly more likely to agree with this statement over those younger than 40 (CL = 95%).

1.3.6.2.2. Survey statement: “The mail-in renewal platform was easier than visiting a DPS office”

For this question, 73.3% of total respondents indicated that this statement applied to them. The 60–69 and 70–79 age groups had the highest fractions reporting the mail-in method is easier than the in-person method (up to 79.7%). Both of these age groups are significantly more likely to select this statement over all younger age groups (CL = 95%). One reason, perhaps, for older generations reporting the mail-in option is easier than visiting an office is because they have more opportunities to renew their license. Younger people have not had to renew their license very many times comparatively and might not have had an in-person renewal experience that they would deem as being more difficult than the mail-in method.

1.3.6.2.3. Survey statement: “The mail-in renewal platform saved me time”

Overall, about 56% of respondents selected this statement. For this statement, the 18–20 group indicated time savings more than the other age groups, followed by the 60–69 and the 70–79 age groups. These age groups are significantly more likely to select this statement than those in the 30–39 age group (CL = 95%).

Very few comments were received from people 18 to 20 years old who agree that mail-in renewal saves time. One comment did offer additional insight as to why this younger 18–20 age group indicates mail-in saves time more frequently than all the other age groups: renewal by mail allows a person to both register to vote and renew their driver license at the same time.

People that did not agree with this statement and renewed by mail offered the following comments:

- The renewal process through the mail took too long—over 5 weeks.
- We’re a military family so we’re forced to renew via mail. The process took four months after they received my paperwork.
- Please remember many folks like me are active-duty military stationed overseas and need to renew...please make it user friendly!
- I had no choice but to use the mail in service as an active duty member living outside the state.

There are many comments from active-duty military or people living overseas who have no option but to mail-in their renewal. The biggest complaint is how long the mail-in process takes, with multiple respondents mentioning that the process took over a month to complete. People who are active-duty military living overseas have no option but to renew online. One respondent (military, living out of state) noted that certain requirements were not listed on the website, such as needing to send a passport picture with the initial application. Presently, the DPS's website does not provide any guidance on sending new photographs for the mail-in renewal option.

1.3.6.2.4. Survey statement: *"My eligibility to use the mail-in platform was clear to me"*

About half of the total mail-in renewal respondents agreed with this statement. Again, the 18–20 group indicated time savings more than the other age groups, followed by the 60–69 and the 70–79 age groups. People in the 30–39 age group were significantly least likely to agree with this statement compared to people over 50.

1.3.6.3. Phone Renewal

Customers were asked to select the statements that apply to them regarding the phone renewal process. Only 0.26% of survey respondents indicated they renewed by phone (less than 0.3%). It is very important to note that this a small percentage of the responses, and the total count in each age category is less than 20 in almost all the age groups. Given the small representation in each group, the rest of the discussion will focus on the overall picture.

While only a miniscule fraction of remote renewals, some customers prefer the phone method over online and mail-in methods. Comments received included mentions of being happy with the phone process and that it was easier than doing it online. Customers frustrated with the phone renewal process mentioned that the automated prompts move too quickly, and they needed more time for the check-out process.

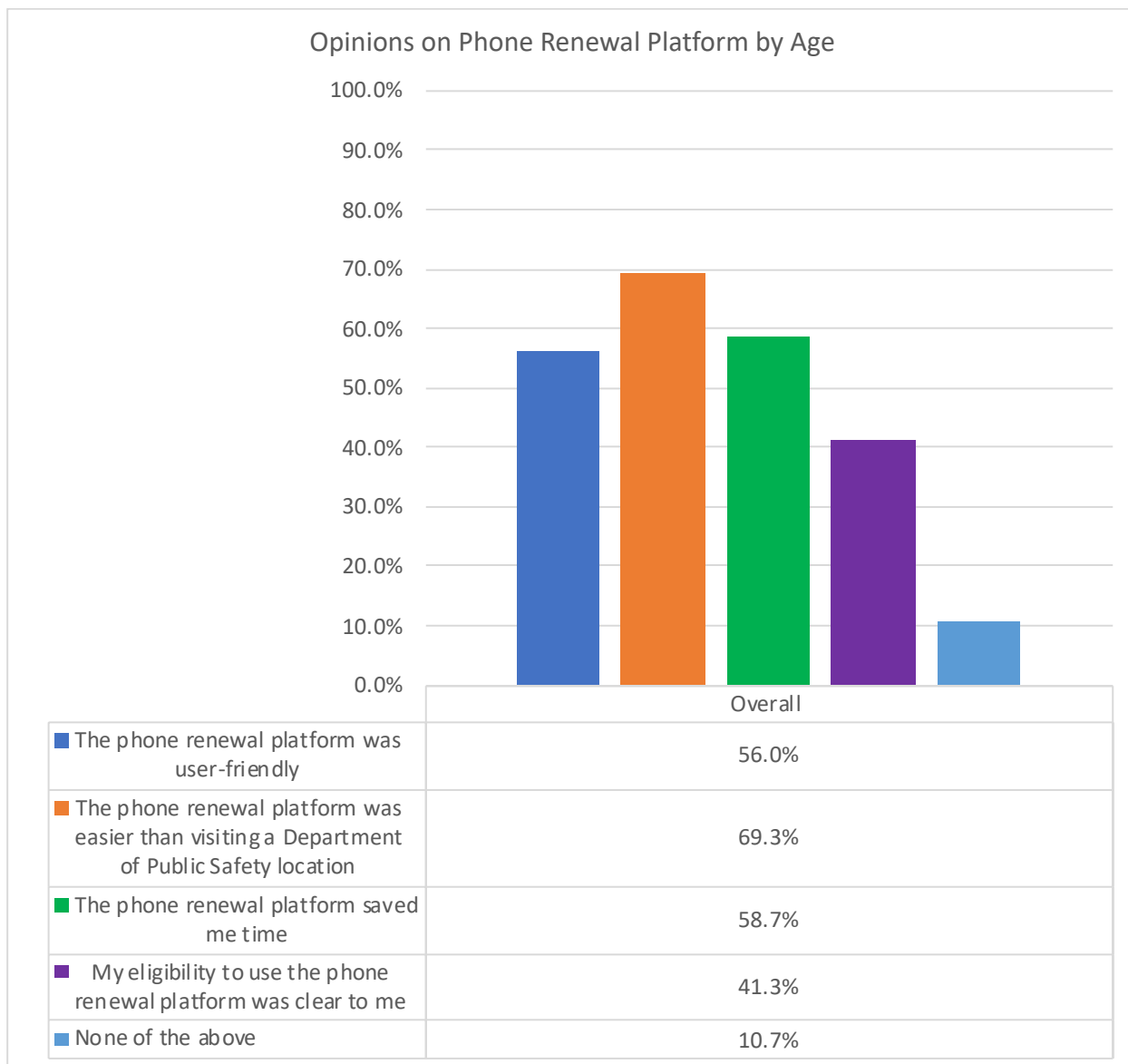


Figure 1.14 Overall Opinions on Phone Renewal Method

1.3.6.4. Renewal Fees

DPS lists fees related to getting a new driver license and for renewing a driver license. On the website, it mentions that a \$1 administrative fee is included in all the fee amounts listed in the fee schedule. The \$1 administrative fee is not charged on transactions conducted through mail. Perhaps more customers would renew online if the administrative fee were removed—similar to how DMV charges \$1 less for online vehicle registration renewals.

1.4. Summary and Recommendations

According to the survey results, only about 2% of respondents reported using phone or mail methods while 75% of renewals were completed in person overall. The online method of renewal

is the only one of the four methods that offers significant promise as a means of improving DLD customer service without large cost increases. Information provided by DLD indicates that about 50% of renewal customers are qualified for remote renewals. If the current 25% remote renewals could be increased to 50%, approximately one million annual visits to DLD offices could be eliminated.

The customer experience and opinion survey found the following:

- Only about half the customers who renewed remotely thought the instructions regarding eligibility were clear. For each of the online, mail-in, and phone renewals sub-groups, 58.7%, 51.2%, and 41.3%, respectively, agreed that eligibility was clear.
- With respect to the **online renewal method**, the 21–29 and the 50–59-year-old age groups are more likely to select this option compared to all other age groups. Agreement with the statement that the platform is user-friendly and that it is easier than visiting a DPS office generally increase with age. That is, those 60 and older were significantly more likely to agree.
- While **mail renewal method** makes up less than 2% of remote renewals, this is a critical method for Texans who are active-duty military and living overseas. Less than 30% of respondents under 40 years old agreed that the mail-in renewal process was user-friendly and saved time.
- The **phone renewal method** only makes up less than 0.3% of remote renewals, but some customers prefer this method. About 55% of those that renewed by phone agreed with the statement that the process is user-friendly.
- Less than 2% of respondents indicated the online platform was not working or that the renewal phone number was not answered.

Based on these facts, CTR offers the following recommendations for increasing the number of online renewals:

- **Improve the DLD website to maximize clarity and ease of use.** Re-designing the front page of the DLD website to include larger fonts, fewer words, and clear direction to answers to the more frequently asked questions should be a top priority. Ensuring the website is also smartphone-friendly is important.
- **Provide clear statements of requirements so that users can determine their eligibility online.** Including tips or notes about frequent problems located near the lists describing renewal requirement could be helpful. The word ‘Eligibility’ above sections describing eligibility for various transactions is missing and should be added to section headers. Compliance with REAL ID rules can complicate the renewal process. For those not qualified for remote renewal, the website should tell users what primary or alternate documents will be required for an in-person visit.

- **Aim to reduce mistaken use of third-party website pop-ups to renew driver licenses.** Many third-party websites appear in search results when searching for “Texas Driver License Renewal” and cause confusion or may even spread wrong information. Consider steps that would result in the DLD website appearing at the top of a search list for selected key word searches related to Texas driver licenses or ID cards.
- **Improve clarity of the mail renewal method and improve processing speed.** The mail renewal is necessary for Texans that are active-duty military or living overseas. If they do not qualify for online renewal, then by-mail is their only option. Many military respondents mentioned the excruciatingly many-month-long process to renew by mail in the survey. Respondents cited the troubling lack of clarity on the DPS website regarding requirements for new pictures and document notarizing.
- The dedication to customer service shown by the maintenance of these services should **build trust with the public**, therefore enticing them to trust and use the remote systems.
- **Assure customers that the system is encrypted and highly secure.** Some people do not believe conducting business online is as safe as conducting business in person. Spreading the message that conducting a renewal transaction online (through DLD’s .gov website) is just as secure as doing a renewal transaction in person is essential.

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Appendix A. Recommendations to Improve Texas Driver License Division Online Experience

A.1 Purpose and Benefits of Online Driver Licensing Services

Agencies that provide driver license and identification card (ID card) services, such as the Texas Department of Public Safety's (TxDPS) Driver License Division (DLD), operate websites that allow residents to conduct transactions online and provide information regarding in-person services. In Texas, residents use dps.texas.gov to access several online DLD services, subject to specific eligibility. The website also lists information about office locations, hours, procedures, and making in-person appointments.

Today, people expect the same, or better, quality of digital services from government agencies as they do from private companies. A driver license agency's website must achieve two goals. First, the main priority should be providing easy access to online services. Second, the website should eliminate barriers to accessing in-person services for those who cannot conduct their business online by providing information about office locations, hours, required documents and paperwork, and other relevant rules and regulations for in-person office visits. The website should provide both online and in-person services with a high level of accessibility and ease of navigation. The public's expectations and standards for government websites are high because these websites often are the main portal to accessing the services tax dollars pay for. Further, Texas saves money and improves customer service overall by improving its online driver license experience.

Currently, Texans can renew licenses and ID cards, update addresses, replace lost or stolen cards, request a driver record, and update emergency contacts online. However, residents are subject to specific eligibility requirements for those online services, as detailed in Table C.

Table C Online Driver License Services Available to Texas Residents

| Task | Eligibility Requirements/Limitations/Required Documents |
|---|--|
| Renew driver license or ID | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you have a driver license AND an ID card, you must visit a Driver License Office to surrender one of the cards before you are eligible for online transactions. • Your last renewal must have been completed in person at a Driver License Office. • Your driver license or ID card either expires in less than two years or has been expired for less than two years. • You are at least 18 years of age and your driver license is not a provisional or a learner license. • Your browser supports 128 bit encryption. • You are a U.S. citizen. • Your Social Security number is on file with DPS. • You are 78 or younger. (People 79 or older must renew driver licenses in person.) • You are renewing a Class C, M, or CM license. (Class A and B licenses and commercial driver licenses cannot be renewed online.) • There is no change in your vision or physical or mental condition since your last renewal that would affect your ability to operate a motor vehicle. • You have no outstanding traffic tickets or warrants, and your license is not suspended or revoked. |
| Replace or change address on driver license or ID | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your driver license, commercial license, or ID card is not expired. If your card is expired, you can only change your address if you also renew at the same time. You cannot replace an expired card. • You are at least 18 years of age and your driver license is not a provisional or learner license. • Your browser supports 128 bit encryption. • You are a U.S. citizen. • Your Social Security number is on file with DPS. • Your license is not suspended or revoked. |

| Task | Eligibility Requirements/Limitations/Required Documents |
|--|--|
| Obtain a REAL ID compliant license or ID | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To get a REAL ID compliant license, you must visit an office in person with relevant documents proving citizenship, residency, identity, Social Security number, and insurance • If you do not have a REAL ID compliant indicator on your driver license or ID card, you may be eligible to renew online or request a replacement online for another card that is not REAL ID compliant |
| Request driver record | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You have a Texas driver license or ID card • You have a valid Social Security number • You are requesting a Texas Driver Record for non-commercial or commercial Texas driver license or ID card • Browser must support 128-bit encryption • You need access to email address and/or printer |
| Pay fee for Driver Improvement, Safety Responsibility, Administrative License Revocation, and Educational Programs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You have a Texas Driver License or ID Card • You have a valid Social Security number • You cannot pay 'Failure to Appear/Failure to Pay' court fees through online services |

The information about renewals in Table A was located by clicking from the home page on *More Online Services*, then *Renew your driver license or ID*. This brings the user to a separate page that requires login. On the sidebar of this page, there is a specific link titled *Eligibility*, which details who is eligible to renew online.ⁱ

A.1.1 Online services save money and improve customer service

Online renewal of driver licenses, as well as services conducted outside of driver licenses offices (DLO), are in general less expensive per transaction than services conducted in person at DPS offices. In-office transactions, by one national estimate, are three to four times more expensive than online or phone transactions.ⁱⁱ Increasing rates of online transactions can save taxpayer dollars.

Increased rates of online transactions improve the overall customer service experience in a variety of ways. When more customers use online options for transactions, fewer customers are waiting in line at offices and booking in-person appointments. This leads to less crowding, shorter wait times, and overall higher satisfaction rates. A modern, user-friendly, and fully functional website also can increase customer satisfaction with transactions that must happen in-office due to eligibility requirements, such as applying for a REAL ID compliant license for the first time. Clear, easy-to-locate information about the necessary documentation for completing the most common transactions would improve the speed and efficiency of these transactions, and would reduce wait times, repeat visits, and confusion.

A.2 Best Practices for Improving Online User Experience

Without comprehensive user experience testing, it is difficult to objectively recommend best practices for specifically improving DLD's website to increase online transaction rates. However, several best practices are broadly recommended for all service-centric government websites. The following best practices, including examples from other states' driver license agency websites, should be used to improve the design and functionality of DLD's website, regardless of which agency houses the Driver License Program. Best practices include:

- Grouping website functions into small number of categories on the home page (i.e., Services Offered, General Information, and REAL ID Changes);
- Minimalistic design of the home page to help lead customers to the correct, more detailed sub-page;
- Large fonts and use of negative space; and
- Clear differentiation between clickable and non-clickable text/buttons.

These improvements would make the website more accessible and user-friendly, and could help increase rates of online transactions, thereby saving money and improving customer service.

A.2.1 Use accessible design targeted at most common interactions

Research around user-friendly government websites consistently cites design simplicity, focus on priority customer functions, and structures based on user themes—not government department structures—as the keys to good customer service and accessibility.ⁱⁱⁱ

The DLD should design its website to guide customers to the most used tools and processes with minimal effort. For DLD customers, accessing online services to renew or update a license, finding information about required documents to complete an in-person transaction, and accessing information about local offices are likely the top three website functions.

While links to these functions are all available on DLD’s website, the front page contains significantly more than just this information, and it could be improved by more prominently displaying large text links to priority information. This would help customers quickly and easily find the information that they are most likely looking for. Figure O shows the DLD home page, including one image linked directly to “Driver License Services and Appointments,” which takes the user to a longer page with an FAQ on appointments and some information about license renewal. The remaining links on this home page, featured only as small text links, offer an abundance of information without clear organization, including several different links that take users to the exact same pages, multiple ways to access Frequently Asked Questions, and little delineation between the most commonly used services and additional information. The “What’s New” section highlights the most recently updated pages but is not organized in a way that would be logical for a user, jumping from commercial driver license information to REAL ID Act details to information about paying surcharges. Information about “What’s New” is also unlikely to provide significant value to a customer, as they are simply looking to access the specific information they need to complete a given transaction, regardless of whether the information is new or not.

The DLD website also does not use a consistent design for clickable links. For example, it’s not immediately clear that the Sticky Note on the home page (Figure O) is clickable. Clickable text is featured in multiple colors, including blue, green, and white. Even for users experienced with online interfaces, this could be confusing. DLD’s website has minimal white (negative) space, instead filling much of the front page completely with links and images.

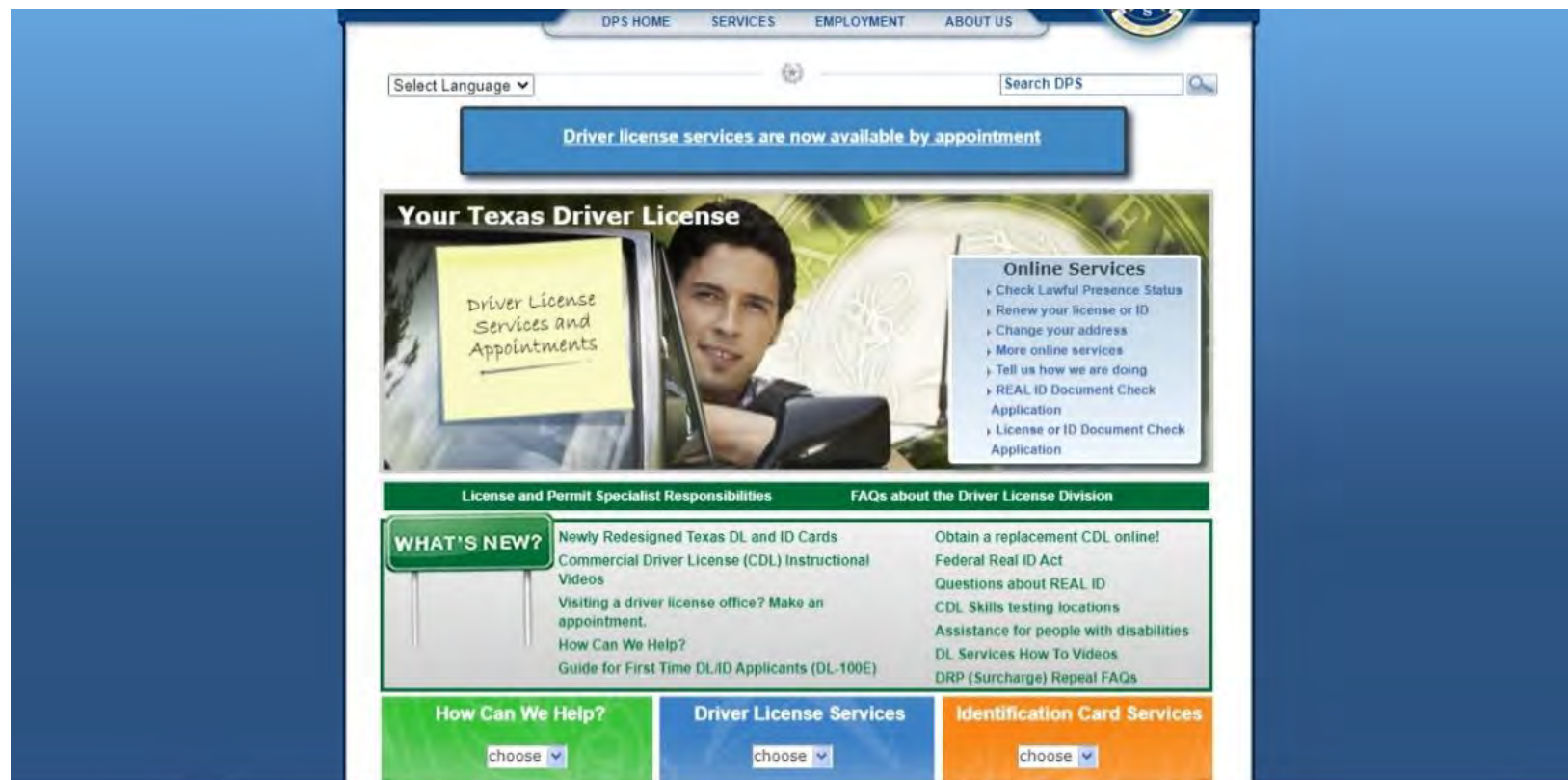


Figure O DLD's Home Page

Many agencies design their home pages to prioritize simplicity, highlight the main services the website is used for, and provide easy pathways to find more information. The home page should immediately meet the needs of the most common type of visitors and focus on serving those users exceptionally well rather than attempting to provide all users all the information they might be seeking. It should present this information simply and without clutter. Following are examples from other states' driver license agencies.

- Figure P shows the California Department of Motor Vehicles website. In June 2020, this website highlighted three priority transactions on its front page: access to online services, COVID-19 updates, and REAL ID information. These three transactions are likely of most interest to users of this website, and featuring them clearly in large, clickable links makes navigation easy for the majority of users. Clickable links, whether text or images, are featured in the color blue and underlined for clarity.
- Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) website shown in Figure Q includes three main services highlighted in singular links on its front page, as well as a fixed drop-down menu with those links at the top of every page called the *I want to...* menu. This home page is clearly organized by transaction type. All clickable links on the RMV site are colored blue, and the fonts are large, with significant white space between links.
- Georgia's Department of Driver Services, seen in Figure R, has a similarly minimalistic design, with large icons linking to key information and minimal text. Its clickable links are all featured in white.

All of these states' websites use significant amounts of negative space, large fonts, and consistent colorcoding and style. The DLD website would benefit from these design features, as they improve clarity, navigability, and user-friendliness.

The home page of the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles website, shown in Figure E, prioritizes wayfinding, directing users to the most relevant and most often used pages on its site. The DMV website has a clear *Most Visited* section, and targets sections to primary user groups—motorists, car dealers, and motor carriers—so users can self-select which information is relevant to them. This design structure aligns with the concept of designing websites around user themes as opposed to simply government department structures. It understands that motorists, dealers, and motor carriers have different needs, and focuses on providing information for those user types. It also has separate subpages for priority information, like office closures related to COVID-19 and a calculator for estimating car value. The DMV is also in the process of redesigning its website to improve its functionality further.

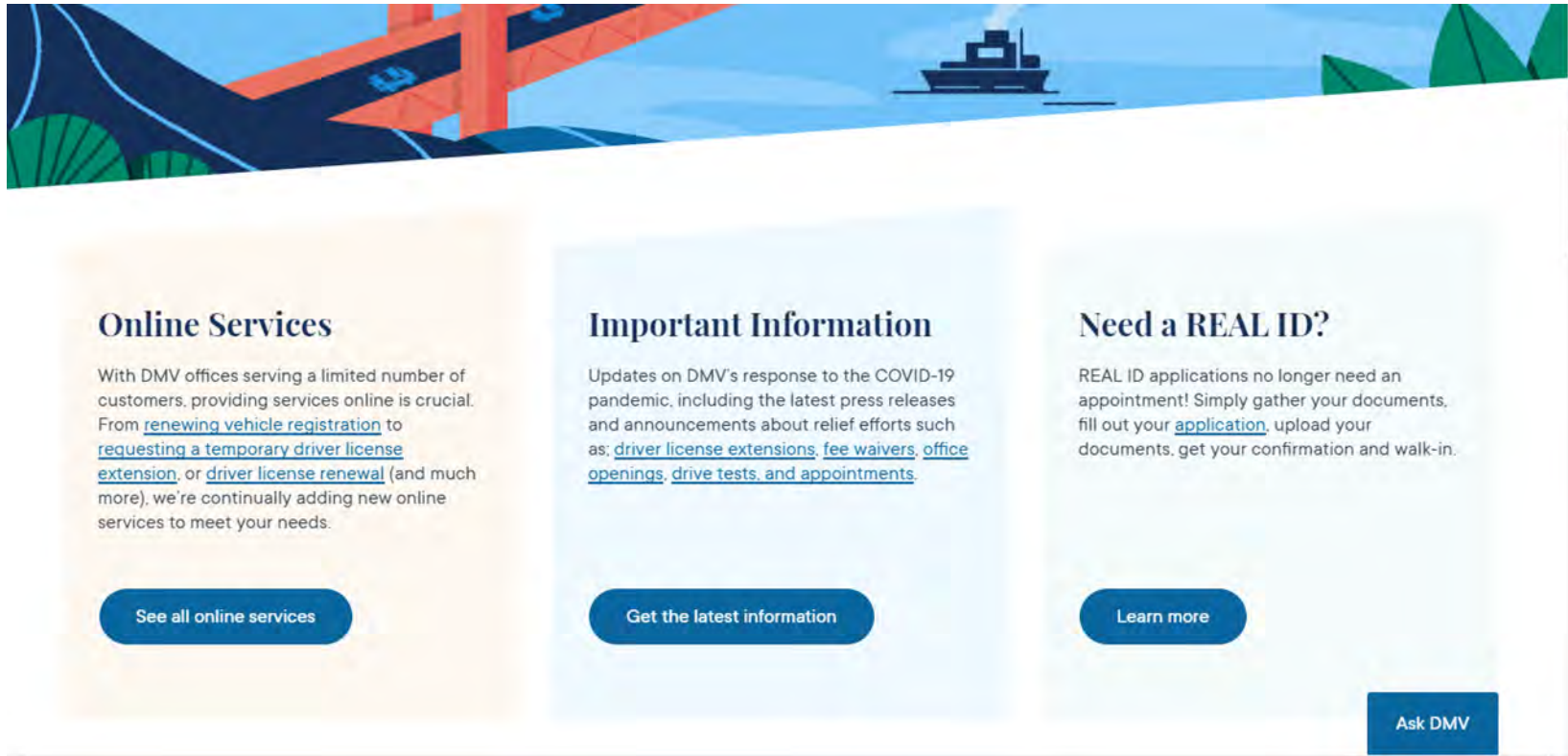


Figure P California DMV Website Home Page

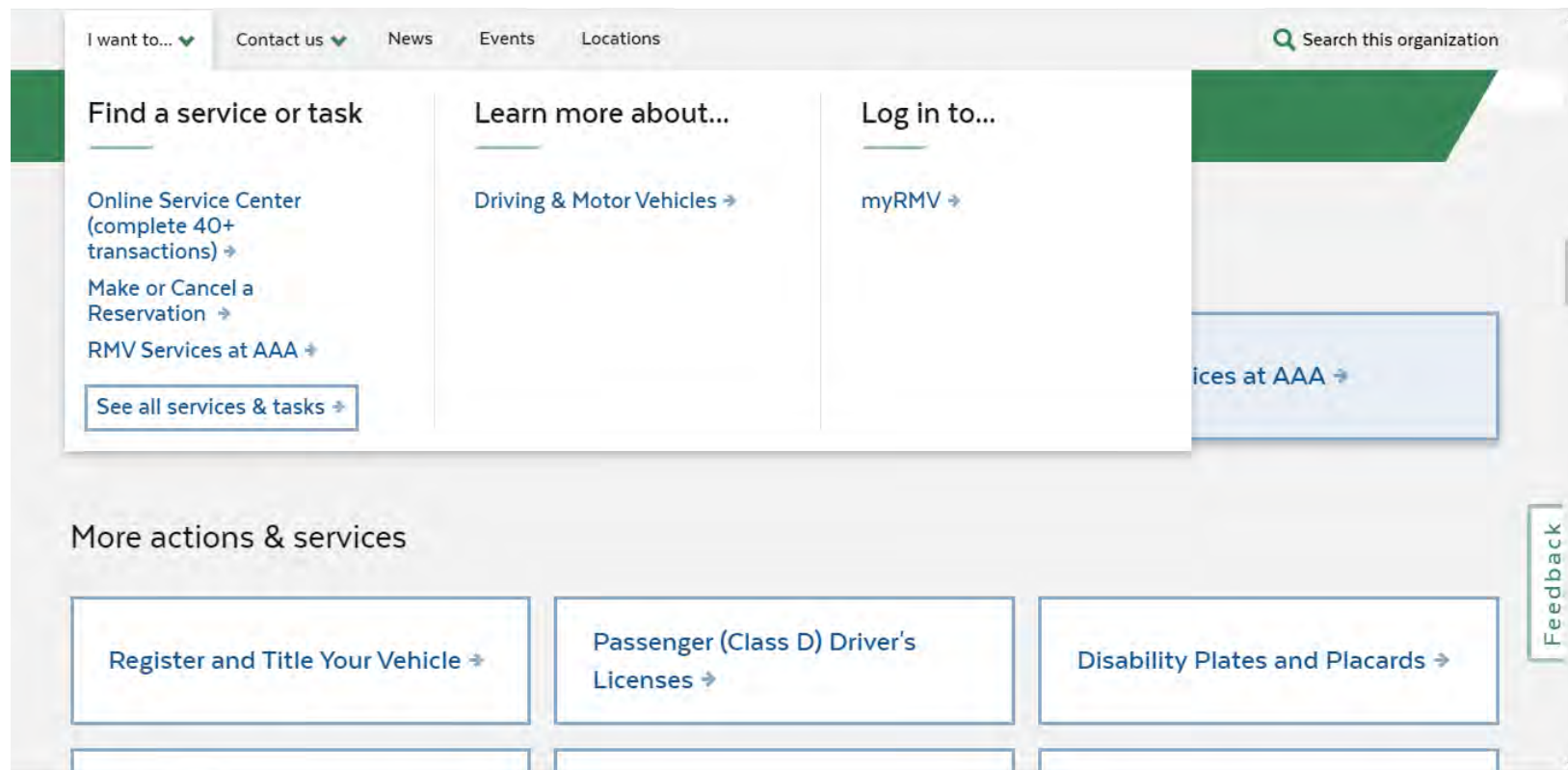


Figure Q Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles Home Page

Appointments

SCHEDULE
APPOINTMENT

Online Services

Manage your license or ID
with an online account.

LOGIN/CREATE
ACCOUNT

Renew

You can renew your driver's
license as early as 150 days
before it expires, and as late as



Skip A Step (Save
Time!)



Schedule a Road
Test



Locations



What do I need
to bring?



Figure R Georgia Department of Driver Services Home Page

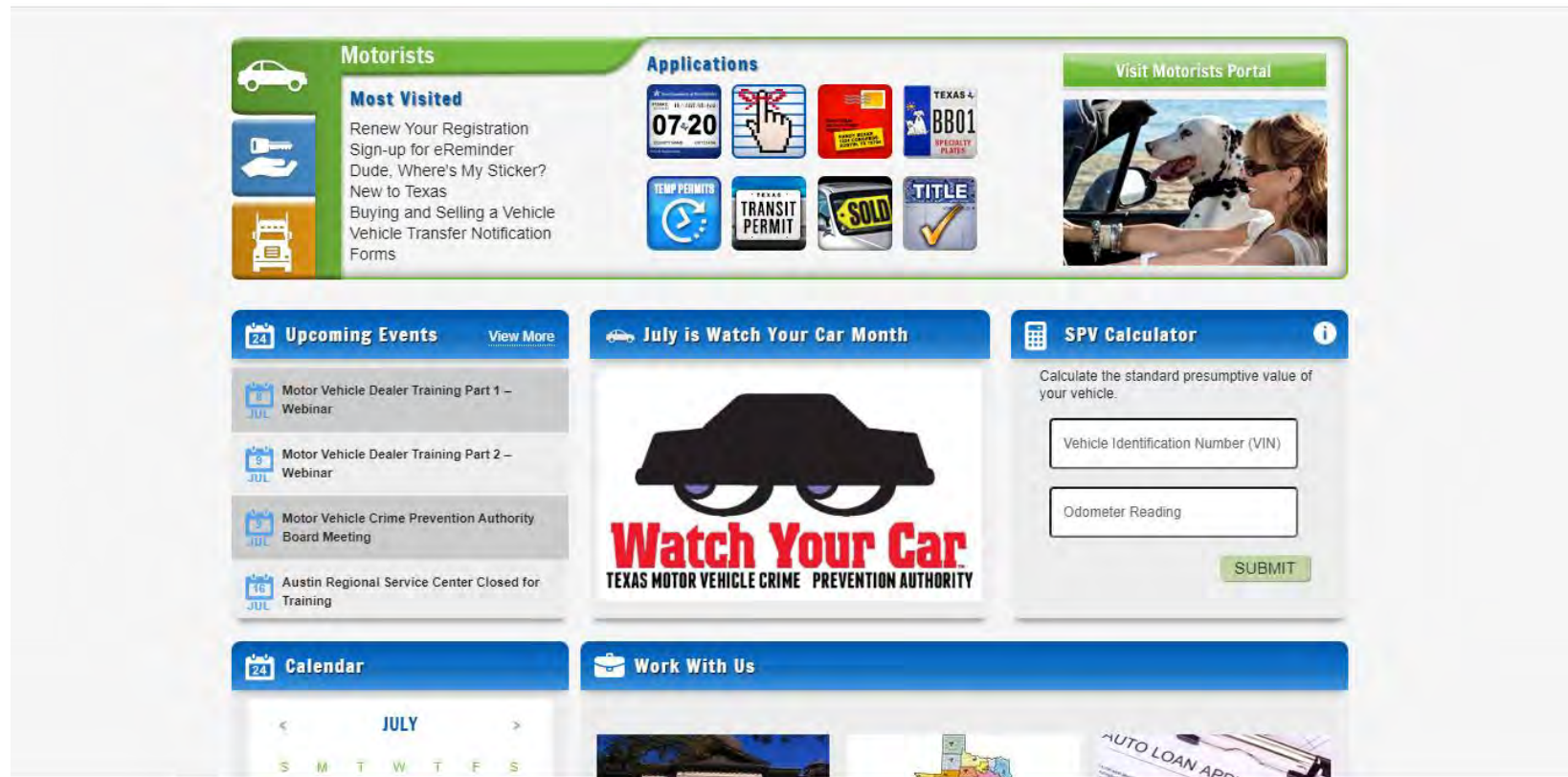


Figure S Texas DMV Home Page

Having users self-select a major type of activity out of a very short list from the home page, which would then lead to a more detailed secondary sub-page would be helpful. For example, DLD could implement sub-pages after a user has clicked *Renew or Acquire a License* on the home page, offering different subpages for different user types on secondary pages, separating information out more clearly for teen drivers, residents new to Texas, Texas ID or license renewals, commercial drivers, and any other sub-divisions that make sense. By organizing the home page in this way, DLD would be more clearly delineating information that already exists on its website, but currently exists in a maze of webpages that users might find difficult to navigate.

For example, from the home page, it takes three clicks to get to a page dedicated to drivers over the age of 79 seeking to renew. Information about getting a Texas license as a new Texas resident can be accessed from the front page only by clicking on *More Online Services*, then scrolling down and opening a PDF document. With Texas growing at a rapid rate, this information could be more accessible. In a website design that organizes information first by transaction type and then by user type, the click path to access information on getting a license as a new Texas Resident might be simply clicking *Renew or Acquire a License* and then *New Texas Resident*.

Some states help users find the information most relevant to them with a guide or questionnaire, such as the state of New York, which asks a series of questions to direct users to the information most relevant to them when they are seeking to renew a license. This questionnaire, seen in Figure T, guides users through a series of questions to determine if they can or cannot conduct their desired transaction online, and which specific documents they will need to complete their transaction. Figure U shows a similar questionnaire found on the DLD site to help residents collect the correct forms to obtain a REAL ID form at a DLO, but it could expand this tool to help with more transactions.

The DLD website currently provides key information and updates on its front page, but should make priority services more central, organizing information first by transaction type and then by customer type.

This information should be presented with larger fonts, sparser design using more white space, and a less cluttered home page to help Texans navigate quickly to the information that they are most likely looking for. Larger fonts, less text, and consistent colorcoding for clickable links make a website more accessible for all users, in particular older users who may be inexperienced with web interfaces or visually impaired.

Welcome to DMV's Document Guide

Let us help you prepare for your office visit! The DMV Document Guide will walk you through what you need to bring to the office to make your visit a success. It will only take a couple of minutes. When you are finished, you will have a detailed checklist of documents to bring with you to the DMV. Let's get started!

Visit the [DMV website](#) for more information and services.

Find Proofs For Services

All fields are required.

I want to

- ☒ Get, change or renew a license, permit or non-driver ID
- ☐ Get a registration and / or get a title

Continue ➔

[Show Disclaimers:](#)

[DMV Home](#) ↗

Quick Links:

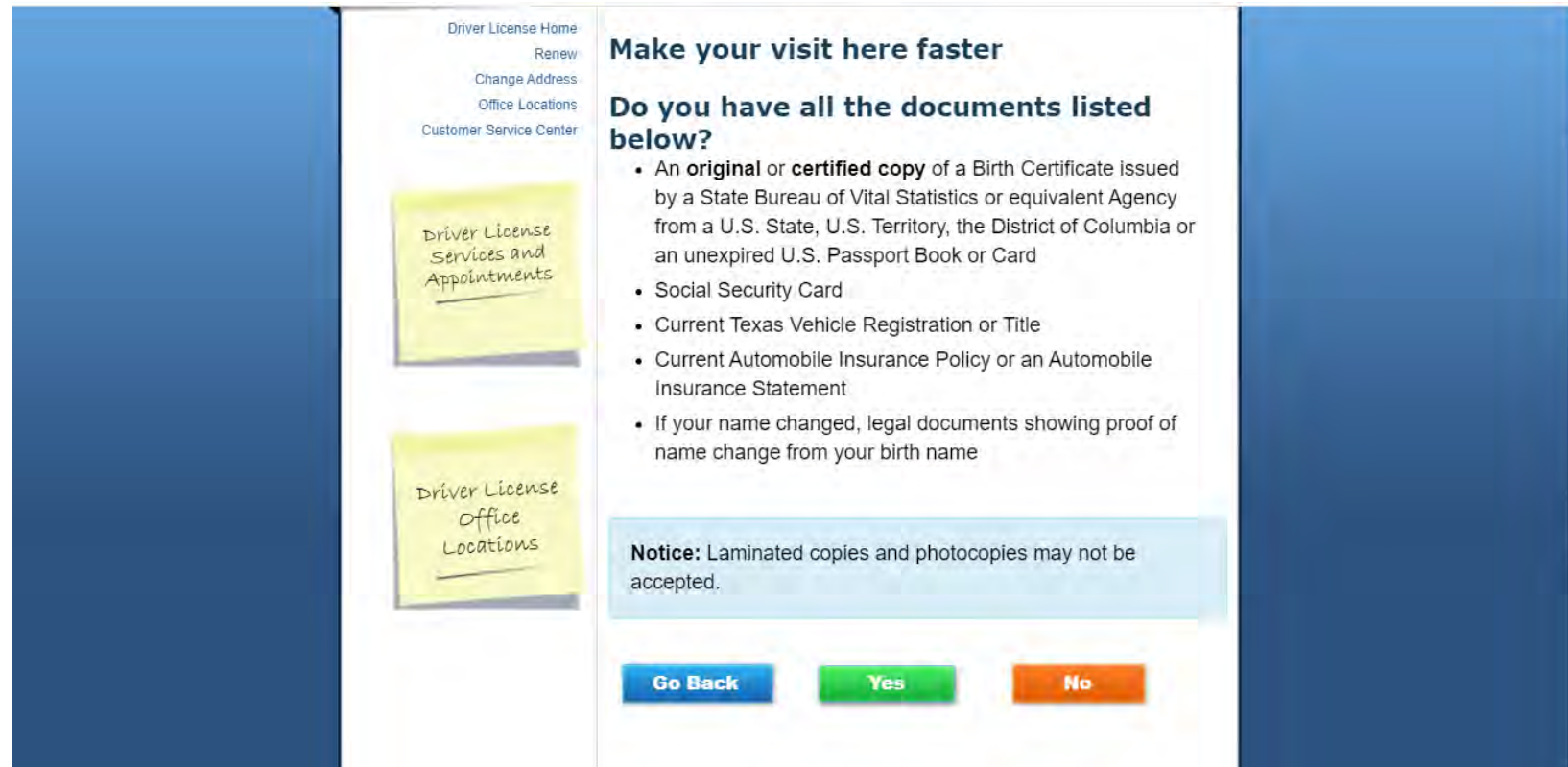
[Receive Email / Text Reminders](#) ↗

[E-ZPass](#) ↗

[Military Veteran Resources](#) ↗

[Privacy & Security](#) ↗

Figure T New York State DMV Document Guide



Driver License Home
Renew
Change Address
Office Locations
Customer Service Center

Driver License Services and Appointments

Driver License Office Locations

Make your visit here faster

Do you have all the documents listed below?

- An **original** or **certified copy** of a Birth Certificate issued by a State Bureau of Vital Statistics or equivalent Agency from a U.S. State, U.S. Territory, the District of Columbia or an unexpired U.S. Passport Book or Card
- Social Security Card
- Current Texas Vehicle Registration or Title
- Current Automobile Insurance Policy or an Automobile Insurance Statement
- If your name changed, legal documents showing proof of name change from your birth name

Notice: Laminated copies and photocopies may not be accepted.

[Go Back](#) [Yes](#) [No](#)

Figure U DLD's REAL ID Guide

A.2.2 Provide multiple channels for contacting DLD

Currently, Texans can contact the DLD through phone, email, and regular mail. These channels of communication are not prominently featured on the home page, and a user must click through a drop-down menu and locate the correct number and email in a list of all DPS department phone numbers, seen in Figure V. To better serve customers, the driver license website should prominently link to relevant contact information on the front page and include more alternatives for communication with customer service representatives. Emails are submitted through a *Contact Us* form on DLD's website. However, the current language on the *Contact Us* email page asks customers to "please allow four to five working days to receive a response," which likely pushes more people over to the already overburdened call center.










| | | |
|---|-----------------------|---|
| Austin Headquarters | (512) 424-2000 | - |
| Capitol Service - Parking Administration | (512) 936-2207 |  |
| Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) | (512) 424-2790 |  |
| Crime Laboratory Service | (512) 424-2105 |  |
| Crime Records - Fingerprint Service and Criminal History | (512) 424-5079 | - |
| Criminal Investigations Division - Chief's Office | (512) 424-2130 | + |
| Criminal Investigations Division - Drug / Gang / Human Trafficking Programs | (512) 424-5046 | - |
| Criminal Investigations Division - Polygraph School | (512) 424-7958 | - |
| Criminal Investigations Division - Special Investigations Program | (512) 424-5046 | - |
| Driver License Customer Service | (512) 424-2600 |  |
| Drug Trafficking | (800) 868-6274 | - |
| Emergency Assistance | 911 | + |
| Handgun Licensing | (512) 424-7293 |  |
| Headquarters Security | (512) 424-2290 | - |
| Highway Patrol Contacts and locations | Contact Us | - |
| Human Resources Bureau | (512) 424-5900 | + |
| Marijuana Cultivation | (800) 868-MARI (6274) | - |
| Media and Communications Office | (512) 424-2080 |  |
| Metals Registration | (512) 424-7293 |  |
| Missing Persons Clearinghouse | (800) 346-3243 | - |
| Motorcycle Safety Unit | (800) 292-5787 |  |
| Precursor Chemical | (512) 424-7293 |  |
| Public Information Act | - |  |

Figure V Texas DPS Phone and Email Directory

Omnichannel contact centers, which offer multiple ways to connect with an agency, are becoming increasingly more common in public digital spaces. Live chat functions, which allow a person to chat directly with a customer service specialist in their web browser, are a favored form of communication for many people. One study by EConsultancy found that 73% of customers using live chat for private sector transactions were highly satisfied, compared to just 61% of customers using email and 44% using phone.^{iv}

Implementing a modern contact center would boost call deflections and allow DLD employees to provide customer service help through cost-efficient digital communication channels. For example, The State of Tennessee boosted customer support by offering its 6.6 million residents

and 120,000 businesses support across chat, phone, and email through a strategic contact center, and saved a quarter million dollars in annual maintenance fees by making the switch^v. Contact centers can handle calls plus emails, chats, Tweets, and Facebook messages all from a single, organized dashboard provided by proprietary software.

According to conversations with staff, DLD has begun considering including live chat functions on its website to provide immediate, responsive answers to customers looking for help. This live chat function, which many other states have already implemented, would allow customer service representatives to handle multiple customers at once and take some of the burden off call centers. It also would further use the digital platform in a way that many users already are familiar with through commercial websites. While there are some security limitations regarding completing transactions via live chat for driver license services, many customer questions and concerns could be resolved quickly through live chat. Any department that takes on driver license services should continue moving forward with DLD's plan to incorporate live chat functionality in its website.

California implemented a chat function using a bot, essentially working as a more advanced search function. Figure W shows that this service appears on the page as a pop-up chat box, allowing a user to stay on the page they were looking at while simultaneously asking the chat bot questions. In Texas, the Attorney General's Office uses a live chat function in its Child Support Division, allowing Texans to create a secure account online to work directly with a child support agent via live text chat. This function requires a person to log in for security reasons.

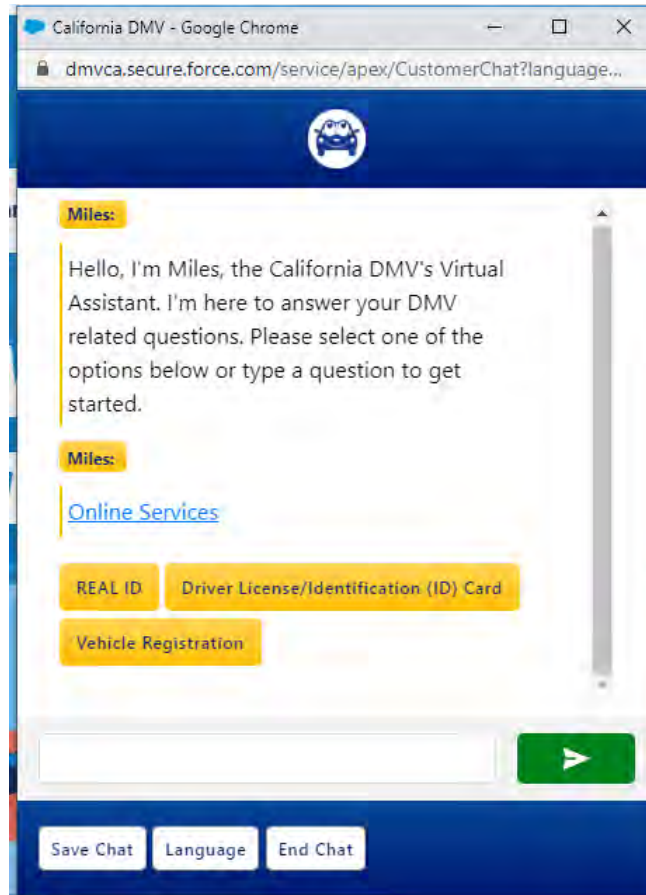


Figure W California DMV Chat Bot

Omnichannel communication should also incorporate social media platforms. A McKinsey study found that the percentage of people who used Twitter at some point for a customer service inquiry increased by 70% in 2014.^{vi} This number is only increasing, as younger generations who grew up as digital natives begin to seek government services.

Some government agencies have customer service agents monitoring social media platforms so they can respond to residents where they are most likely to post—on Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram. Beyond assisting residents directly with transactions, many agencies use their social media accounts to provide important updates about wait times, opening and closing hours, changes in regulations, and other urgent and pressing matters. California's DMV operates a Twitter account, seen in Figure X, which posts updates regularly, including office closings, updates to regulations, and public service announcements encouraging online renewal. California's DMV Twitter account, which has posted over 66,000 times since the account, was created in 2008.

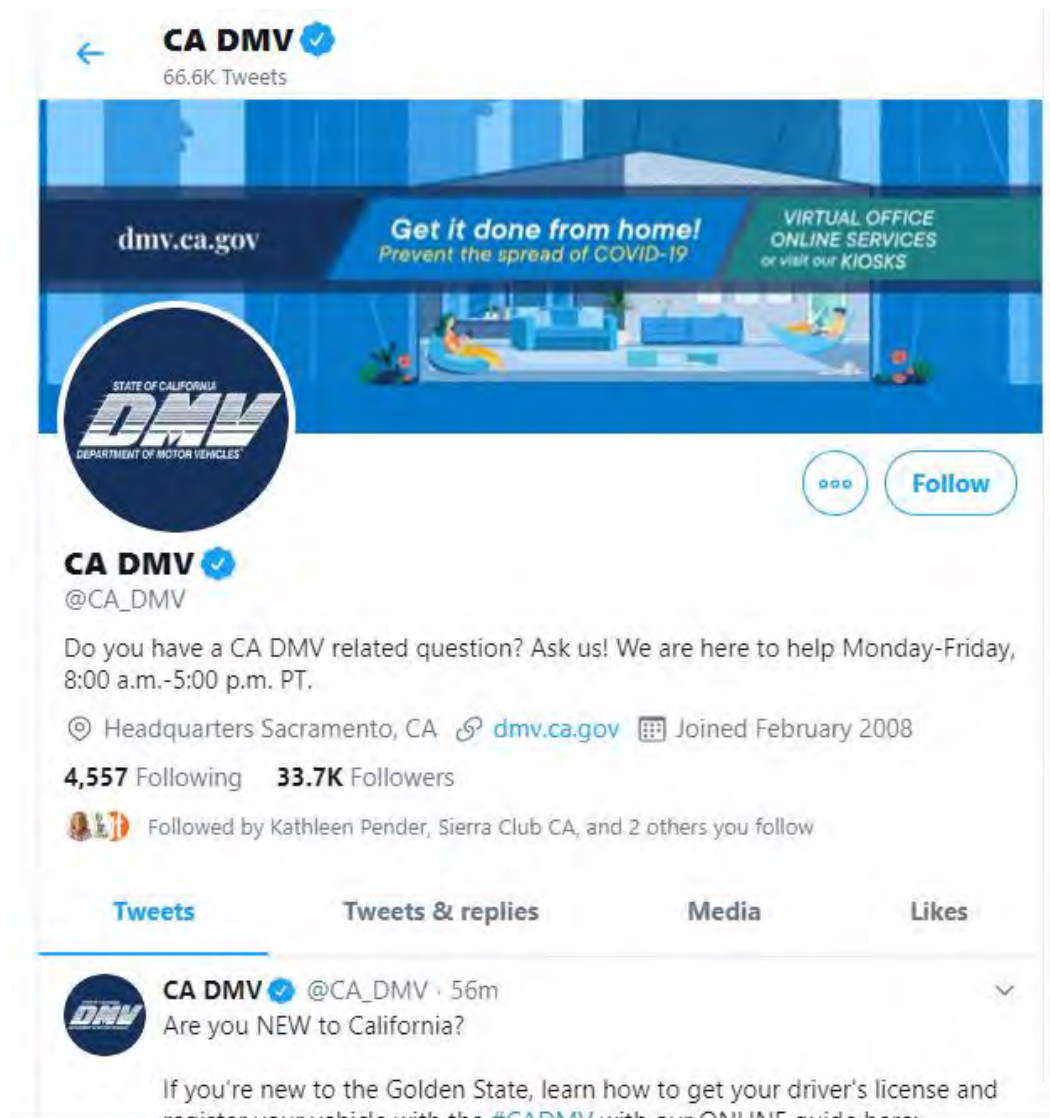


Figure X California DMV Twitter Account

Texas DPS has a Twitter account, seen in Figure Y, that has over 93,500 followers, but lacks customer engagement and publication creation. Given the diverse range of issues that DPS handles and prioritizes in Texas (including Amber and Silver Alerts, general updates from the state, and safety and health public information campaigns), driver license updates are a small fraction of all the information updates DPS shares on its social media. This account was also created in 2008 and has posted only just under 18,000 times; the vast majority of these posts are retweets (that is, sharing a tweet originally posted by another account) from other state agencies.



Figure Y Texas DPS Twitter Account

Customers frequently engage with DPS’s Twitter, but receive little to no engagement. Recently, the customer engagement and response rate on Texas DPS’s Twitter feed has been zero. For example, for the period of July 1, 2020, through July 8, 2020, DPS received 1,791 tweets and did not respond to a single one.

Retweeting is the only major Twitter activity for the Texas DPS account, showing that no active information campaigns have been designed to specifically disseminate information about DPS-specific issues. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, which has changed driver license expiration dates, DPS did not write a single tweet in the month of June 2020. Information about the major change to driver license expiration dates was tweeted only once as a publication on March 20, 2020; buried by retweets; and never tweeted as a publication again. While they retweeted information from

other Twitter accounts, DPS has neglected to create content of their own and virtually muted the little content they have created.



Figure Z Recent Texas DPS Tweet using Hootsuite

Twitter accounts are an easy way to share information with the public, but not the only way. Instagram and Facebook are also cheap and easy to use options that can connect driver license services with a broad range of the public. Consistent use of social media management software like Khoros, Sprout Social, and Hootsuite, which allow users to post simultaneously across multiple platforms, could be a helpful asset to share driver license information quickly and efficiently.

The few tweets that are written by DPS rather than retweeted are sometimes posted by an iPhone, computer, and other times by Hootsuite. As of July 8, 2020, the last time DPS used a social media management tool, Hootsuite, was on May 19, 2020 (Figure Z). Use of the Hootsuite tool has been very inconsistent on the Twitter feed, again highlighting the lack of targeted information campaign planning. While Texas DPS has used Hootsuite before, they do not use it consistently or efficiently to convey a message across multiple platforms, instead often posting directly to Twitter.com.

The public would benefit from a dedicated social media presence for driver license services. A dedicated driver license Twitter account could quickly disseminate information to Texans, and could divert customer phone calls regarding general questions from the currently over-burdened DLD call center through tweet or direct message function. If the agency were to respond to a customer's question through a tweet, any other customers who have the same question could quickly see the answer. An active Twitter presence with a greater focus on content creation would help with the spread of important information.

A.2.3 Adopt a mobile-adapted design

Currently, the DLD website is not mobile-adapted, so its size and structure will not scale to accommodate smaller screens. On a mobile phone or tablet, the website appears the same as on a desktop, as seen in Figure AA. This lack of adaptability presents several challenges for mobile users: small text is smaller, documents that must be accessed through PDF cannot be accessed easily on phones, and overall usability of the website is significantly impacted. Websites that are mobile-optimized appear differently on a cellphone screen than on a desktop screen, and thus tend

to include less information on the home page, fit the size of a mobile screen, and prioritize the information that might be most relevant to mobile users. Arizona's Motor Vehicle Services website is mobile adapted, making fonts larger, resizing images for a mobile screen, and prioritizing key information.

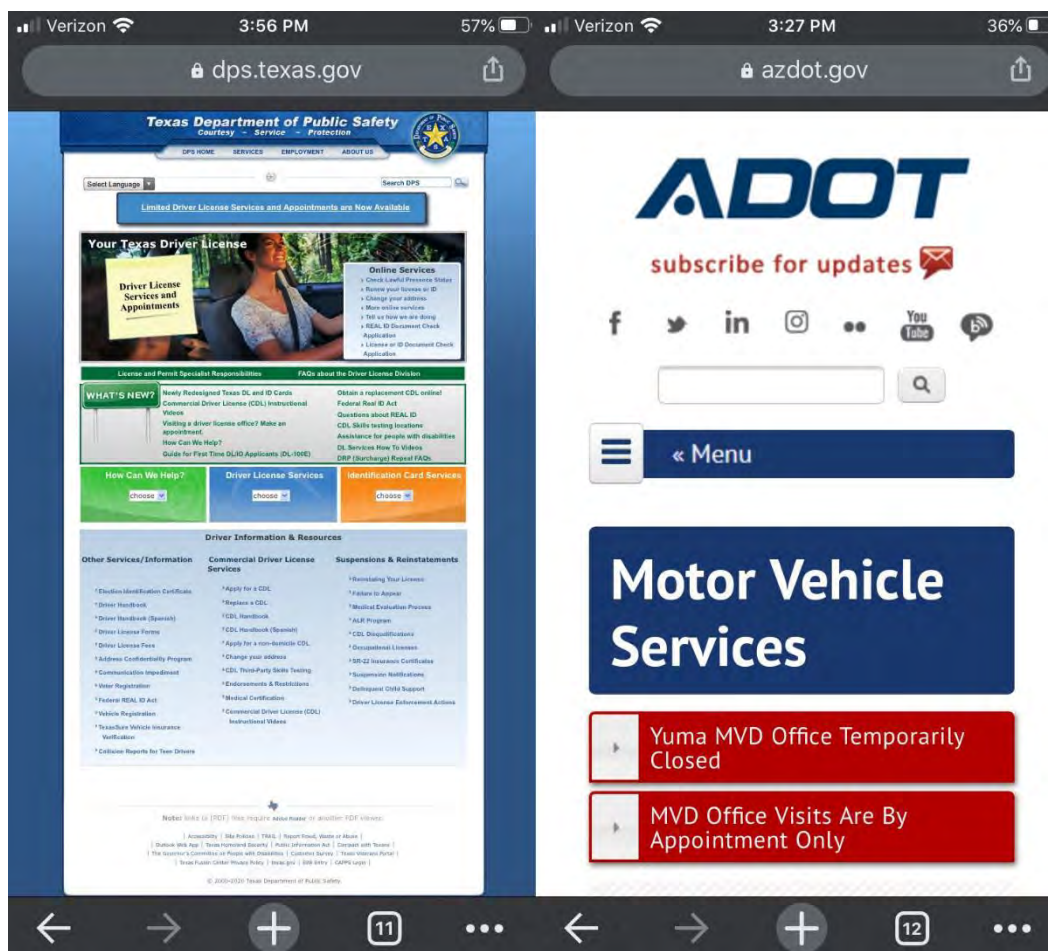


Figure AA Texas DLD (left) and Arizona MVS (right) Websites on Mobile

Today, data shows that nearly 50% of traffic to government websites comes through smartphones or tablets.^{vii} In 2018, in response to this growing trend in communication, the federal government passed the [21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act \(IDEA\)](#), which requires that “new Federal government websites and digital services be mobile-responsive and that existing sites and services be prioritized for an update.”^{viii}

A mobile-friendly website means that more people will be able to access driver license services in the form that is easiest, most accessible, and most useful to them. Research has found that some services are more commonly conducted on mobile devices, and DLD could conduct user research to determine which pages Texans are most likely to visit on their phones versus on their desktops. This research would help better optimize the website for how people use it.

A.2.4 Provide more services online

Some states' driver license agencies have increased their online transaction rates by broadening the scope of transactions that can be conducted online. Conversations with DLD staff revealed that their agency has begun pursuing some of these options, including exploring options to allow residents to upload new license photos via a web application securely.

Some residents must visit DLD office locations because they need to update their vision information and take an official eye exam. In Texas, all new drivers must pass this vision test, which can be conducted in-office by DLD staff, or it can be conducted at a licensed optometrists office, and then verified with documentation in a DLD office. Older residents seeking to renew a license must also verify their vision either in person at a DLO or through an optometrist. This physical documentation must be brought in to a DLO and cannot be submitted online. New York State allows residents to submit these documents online, through an *Online Vision Registry* connected to licensed optometrists offices.^{ix} Maryland operates a similar program, with the aim of decreasing in-person visits to its Motor Vehicle Administration offices.^x However, DLD has cited the difficulty and ongoing cost of certifying, verifying, and developing relationships with the many potential optometrists offices in Texas that could conduct these vision tests.

Currently, Texans must renew their license in person every other cycle. This is due to federal requirements for REAL ID, which state that licenses must be renewed in person with physical documents every 16 years. Because Texas allows residents to go up to eight years between renewals, every second renewal will always need to be conducted in person. The federal government has begun to consider options for allowing online verification of documents for REAL ID purposes, but this consideration is only in its earliest, information-gathering stages and not yet implemented.^{xi}

A.2.5 Encourage online transactions with public service announcements

Many state driver license administrations encourage and incentivize online transactions over in-person transactions, due to the cost savings and increased customer satisfaction. Advertising, which really amounts to public service announcements, can inform residents of the benefits to conducting driver license transactions online. South Dakota's Department of Public Safety, which houses that state's driver license services, ran public service ads with a *Skip the Trip* message, seen in Figure BB, encouraging residents to renew their licenses online. Colorado similarly ran advertising encouraging residents to *Save Time, Renew Online*, seen in Figure CC, and has featured its governor in ads.

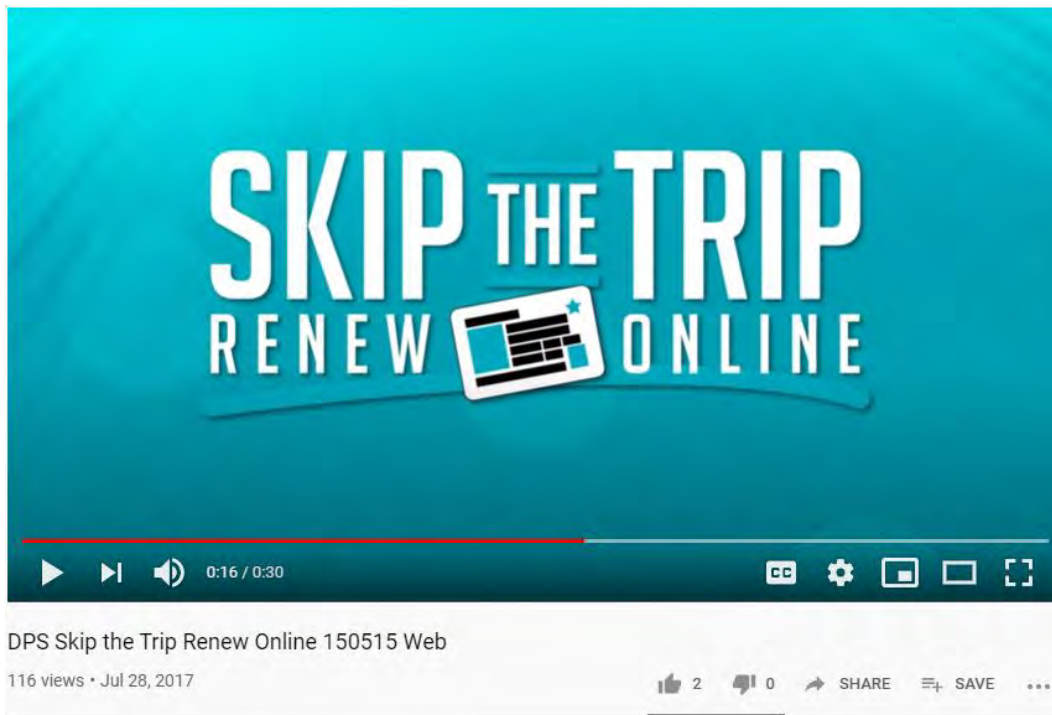


Figure BB South Dakota DPS "Skip the Trip" PSA

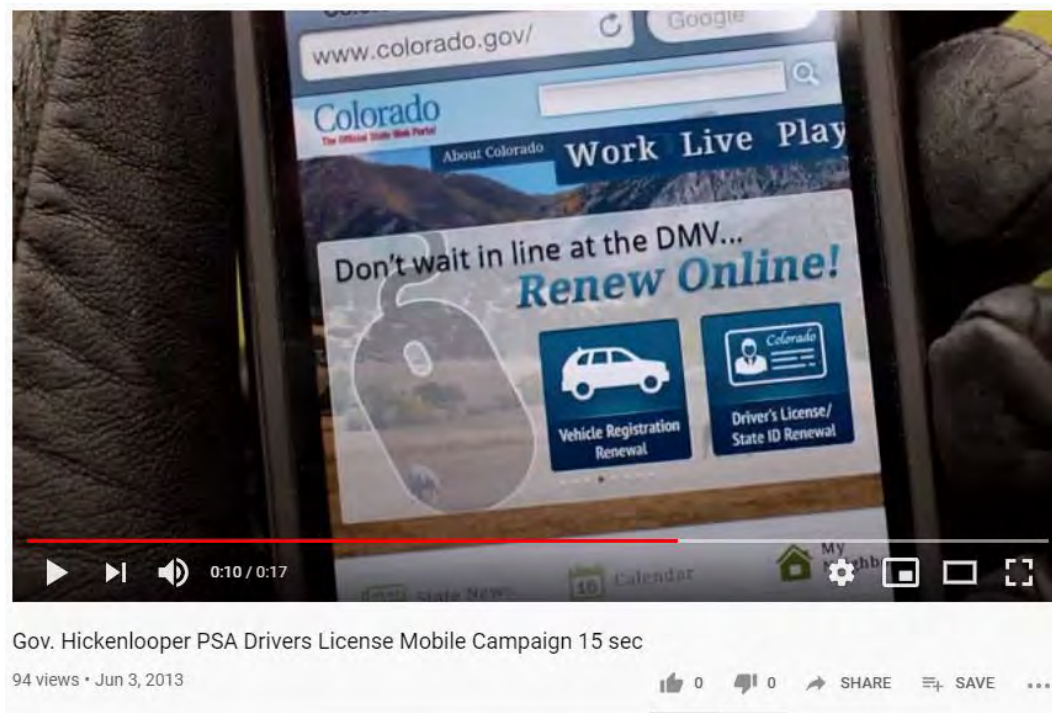


Figure CC Colorado Renew Online PSA

Such public service announcements also could serve to inform citizens about important changes in office hours and openings. During the COVID-19 pandemic, DLD offices in Texas have been closed or operating with limited hours. This information was shared on the DLD website, via email and press release, and in some social media posts through the Texas DPS pages. However, many residents still did not get this information, and according to DLD staff, still arrived at office locations. A deeper investment in public service announcements for driver license services might help ameliorate this problem. Social media, such as the DPS Twitter account, could be a useful tool for disseminating public service announcements quickly and affordably.

A.3 Barriers and Limitations to Increasing Rates of Online Adoption

Texas government agencies may have some limitations regarding spending appropriated dollars on advertising. However, a review of the relevant government code suggests that, with appropriate contracts, DLD could spend money on public service announcements provided via television, billboards, or radio to encourage online renewal. Sec. 2113.011 of the Texas Government Code does state that, “A state agency may not use appropriated money to...maintain a publicity office or department; employ an individual who has the title or duties of a public relations or press agent; or...pay a public relations agent or business.”^{xii} However, acknowledging the need to keep the public apprised of “accurate, authentic information concerning events that affect the public welfare, or that are of public interest,” DLD does operate a Public Information Office. The government code does allow the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to purchase “broadcasting and periodical” information to advertise information relevant to TxDOT, including “other matters of interest and value to the public and highway users.”^{xiii} TxDOT may also “join with another agency of this state in publishing informational publicity material under this section.”^{xiv} Through contracts, the DLD could partner with TxDOT to share relevant information for drivers regarding online license renewal.

Further, a driver license department could use cheaper alternatives, like social media or campaigns featured on their own website, to share images or catchphrases to highlight the benefits of online renewal and services to residents.

The capacity for DLD to expand online driver services might be limited by security concerns. Citizens’ documents must be verified and confirmed as authentic before they can be used to apply for a driver license. Photographs uploaded online by customers must be verified using secure and reliable facial recognition. As a part of DPS, DLD has been equipped to review and understand these security concerns, and any agency that might administer driver license services in the future would have to similarly take these considerations seriously.

A.4 Recommendations

To improve the online experience for driver license customers and increase the rate of online transactions, CTR recommends 1) improving website clarity and organization, 2) increasing

customer engagement on social media, and 3) employing a more proactive and strategic approach to communication with the public.

Any agency that administers driver license services should undertake robust user experience testing for the website. Understanding customer needs and identifying the most frequently visited pages, points of confusion, and most useful tools to clarify the process of completing transactions online or in-person will help shape the investment in website updates. DLD has already begun to explore many of the options suggested above, and this momentum should continue.

Social media is currently being underused, despite providing an efficient and affordable communication tool. With DPS's existing large following, DLD could use Twitter to conduct active information campaigns. Instead, DPS's Twitter feed is largely retweets and other DPS information, with driver license information posted only rarely. By focusing on spreading information about changes to DLO hours, services, as well as changes to regulations, customers could be better informed and better prepared to conduct transactions either online or in person.

Clarifying the options for advertising DLD's online services and leveraging public service announcements and social media to inform Texans about driver license services should also be a priority. Clearer and more consistent messaging around the benefits of online services has helped other states increase rates of online renewal, and any barriers to such messaging should be clearly understood by the administering agency and the Legislature.

The above best practices are just some options for how the DLD online user experience could be improved. This listing is not comprehensive, and further research into user experience, including focus groups and user testing, will help any agency operating a Driver License Program create a more useful, efficient, and customer-service-centered experience.

Appendix B. Survey with Survey Logic

Driver License Renewal Method Survey

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Q1 The University of Texas Center for Transportation Research is conducting a study to help improve the license renewal process with the Texas Department of Public Safety. This 5-minute survey is being sent to you because you renewed your license in the last twelve months, and it focuses on why you chose a certain method of renewal (in-person/online/phone/by mail). Please answer to the best of your ability. Your time and effort are greatly appreciated.

Q2 Have you ever renewed your Texas driver license?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Display This Question:

If Have you ever renewed your Texas driver license? = Yes

Q3 Please help us confirm that we have received responses from all age groups by indicating your age group below.

- ☐ Less than 18 years old (1)
- ☐ 18-20 (2)
- ☐ 21-29 (3)
- ☐ 30-39 (4)
- ☐ 40-49 (5)
- ☐ 50-59 (6)
- ☐ 60-69 (7)
- ☐ 70-79 (8)
- ☐ Greater than 80 years old (9)
- ☐ I prefer not to answer (10)

Display This Question:

If Have you ever renewed your Texas driver license? = Yes

Q4 For the last time you renewed your Texas driver license, how did you complete the renewal process?

- ☐ In-Person (1)
- ☐ Online (2)
- ☐ Phone (3)
- ☐ Through the mail (4)

Display This Question:

If Have you ever renewed your Texas driver license? = Yes

And For the last time you renewed your Texas driver license, how did you complete the renewal process... =
Online

Q5 What did you think of the **online renewal process**? Choose all that apply.

- ☐ The online renewal platform was user-friendly (1)
 - ☐ The online renewal platform was easier than visiting a Department of Public Safety location (2)
 - ☐ The online renewal platform saved me time (3)
 - ☐ My eligibility to use the online renewal platform was clear to me (4)
 - ☐ None of the above (5)
-

Display This Question:

If Have you ever renewed your Texas driver license? = Yes

And For the last time you renewed your Texas driver license, how did you complete the renewal process... =
Phone

Q6 What did you think of the **phone renewal process**? Choose all that apply.

- ☐ The phone renewal platform was user-friendly (1)
 - ☐ The phone renewal platform was easier than visiting a Department of Public Safety location (2)
 - ☐ The phone renewal platform saved me time (3)
 - ☐ My eligibility to use the phone renewal platform was clear to me (4)
 - ☐ None of the above (5)
-

Display This Question:

If Have you ever renewed your Texas driver license? = Yes

And For the last time you renewed your Texas driver license, how did you complete the renewal process... = Through the mail

Q7 What did you think of the renewal process **through the mail**? Choose all that apply.

- ☐ The mail-in renewal process user-friendly (1)
- ☐ The mail-in renewal process was easier than visiting a Department of Public Safety location (2)
- ☐ The mail-in renewal process saved me time (3)
- ☐ My eligibility to use the mail-in renewal process was clear to me (4)
- ☐ None of the above (5)

Display This Question:

If Have you ever renewed your Texas driver license? = Yes

And For the last time you renewed your Texas driver license, how did you complete the renewal process... = In-Person

Q8 For the last time you renewed your Texas driver license, which of the following statements regarding your eligibility to renew apply to you?

- ☐ I was not eligible to use the virtual processes (1)
- ☐ I did not know if I was eligible to use the virtual processes (2)
- ☐ I needed to visit in-person to receive a REAL ID compliant license (7)
- ☐ I didn't know if I needed to visit in-person to receive a REAL ID compliant license (8)
- ☐ I did not receive an invitation to renew through the mail (3)
- ☐ I tried to utilize the virtual processes but was eventually told to go in-person (4)
- ☐ I wanted to register to vote (5)
- ☐ None of the above (6)

Display This Question:

If Have you ever renewed your Texas driver license? = Yes

And For the last time you renewed your Texas driver license, how did you complete the renewal process... = In-Person

And For the last time you renewed your Texas driver license, which of the following statements regard... = I was not eligible to use the virtual processes

Q9 Below are the requirements for virtual renewal. Please select the criteria for virtual renewal that you did **NOT** meet:

☐ Must have renewed your driver license in person at a driver license office last time (1)

☐ Must have a Class C, M, or CM driver license (2)

☐ Must have driver license that expires in less than two years or has been expired for less than two years. (3)

☐ Must be at least 18 years of age and your driver license is not a provisional or learner license. (4)

☐ Must be younger than 79 years of age. (5)

☐ Vision and physical and mental conditions must have not changed in a way that affects your ability to drive safely since your last renewal (6)

☐ Must have valid license (not suspended or revoked), and no warrants or unpaid tickets (7)

☐ Must have Social Security Number already on file. (8)

☐ Must be a U.S. citizen. (9)

☐ Must have in possession most recently issued driver license, the audit number from the card, or answer security questions to verify identity. (10)

Display This Question:

If Have you ever renewed your Texas driver license? = Yes

And For the last time you renewed your Texas driver license, how did you complete the renewal process... = In-Person

And For the last time you renewed your Texas driver license, which of the following statements regard... != I was not eligible to use the virtual processes

Q10 For the last time you renewed your license, which of the following statements regarding the **accessibility** of the renewal platforms apply to you?

- ☐ The online renewal platform was not working (1)
- ☐ I called the renewal phone number, but no one answered (2)
- ☐ I do not have reliable access to the internet (3)
- ☐ I do not have reliable phone service (4)
- ☐ I do not have reliable access to a printer (5)
- ☐ I wanted to pay the renewal fee in cash (6)
- ☐ None of the above (7)

Display This Question:

If Have you ever renewed your Texas driver license? = Yes

And For the last time you renewed your Texas driver license, how did you complete the renewal process... = In-Person

And For the last time you renewed your Texas driver license, which of the following statements regard... != I was not eligible to use the virtual processes

Q11 For the last time you renewed your license, which of the following other statements apply to you?

- ☐ I needed to visit in-person to receive a REAL ID compliant license or ID (1)
- ☐ I did not know if the virtual processes would ensure a REAL ID compliant license (2)
- ☐ I had questions about the process that could only be answered in-person (3)
- ☐ I wanted to take a new picture for my renewed license (4)
- ☐ I did not know the virtual processes were available to me (5)
- ☐ In-person renewal felt more secure than the virtual processes (6)
- ☐ It was difficult to understand how to renew via the virtual processes (7)
- ☐ None of the above (8)

Q14 Thank you for your time. If you have any additional comments about why you chose a certain method of renewal (in-person/online/phone/by mail), please enter them here.

End of Block: Default Question Block

Appendix C. Renewal Distributions by Age

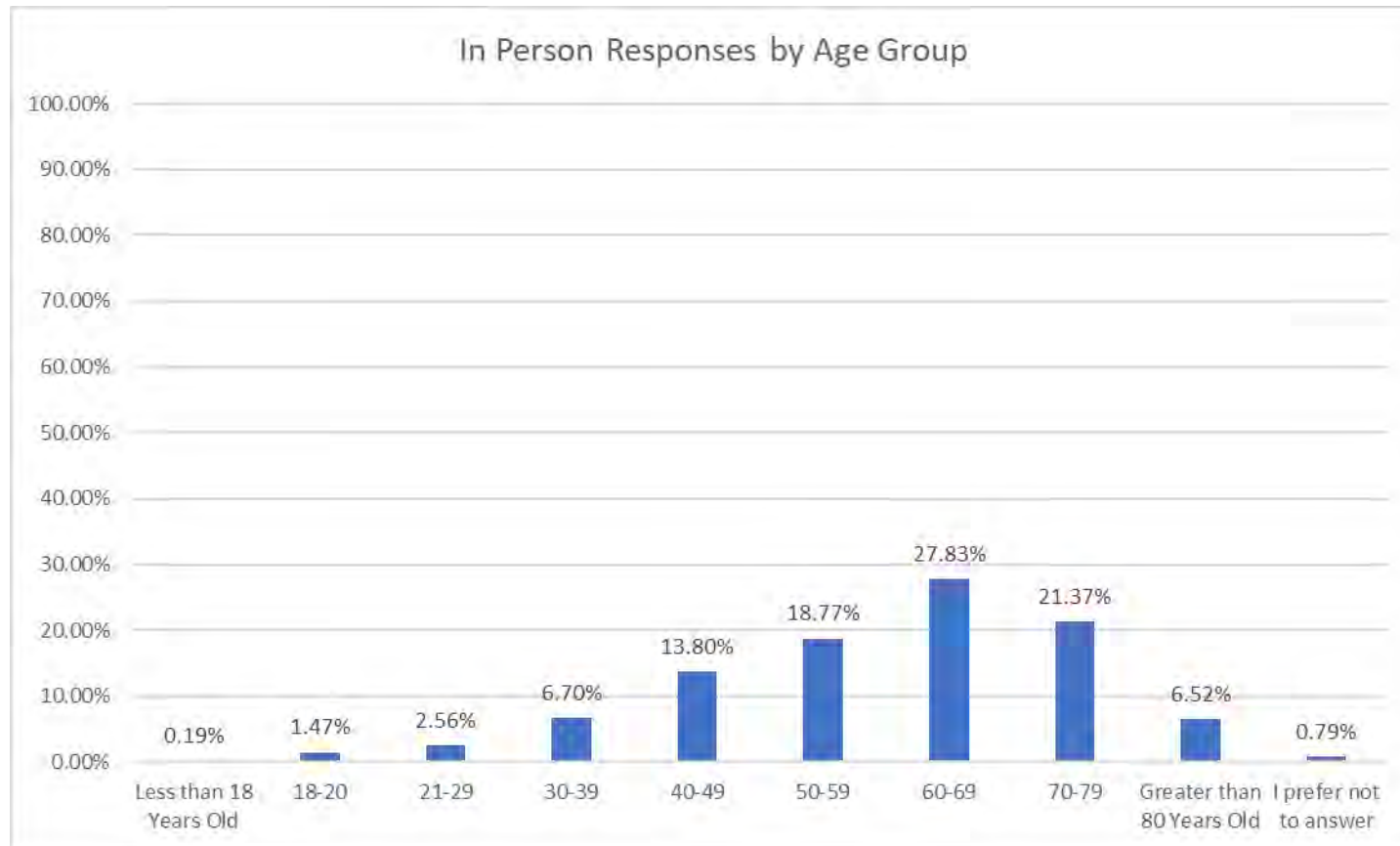


Figure DD In-Person Renewal Distribution by Age (75% of respondents used this method)

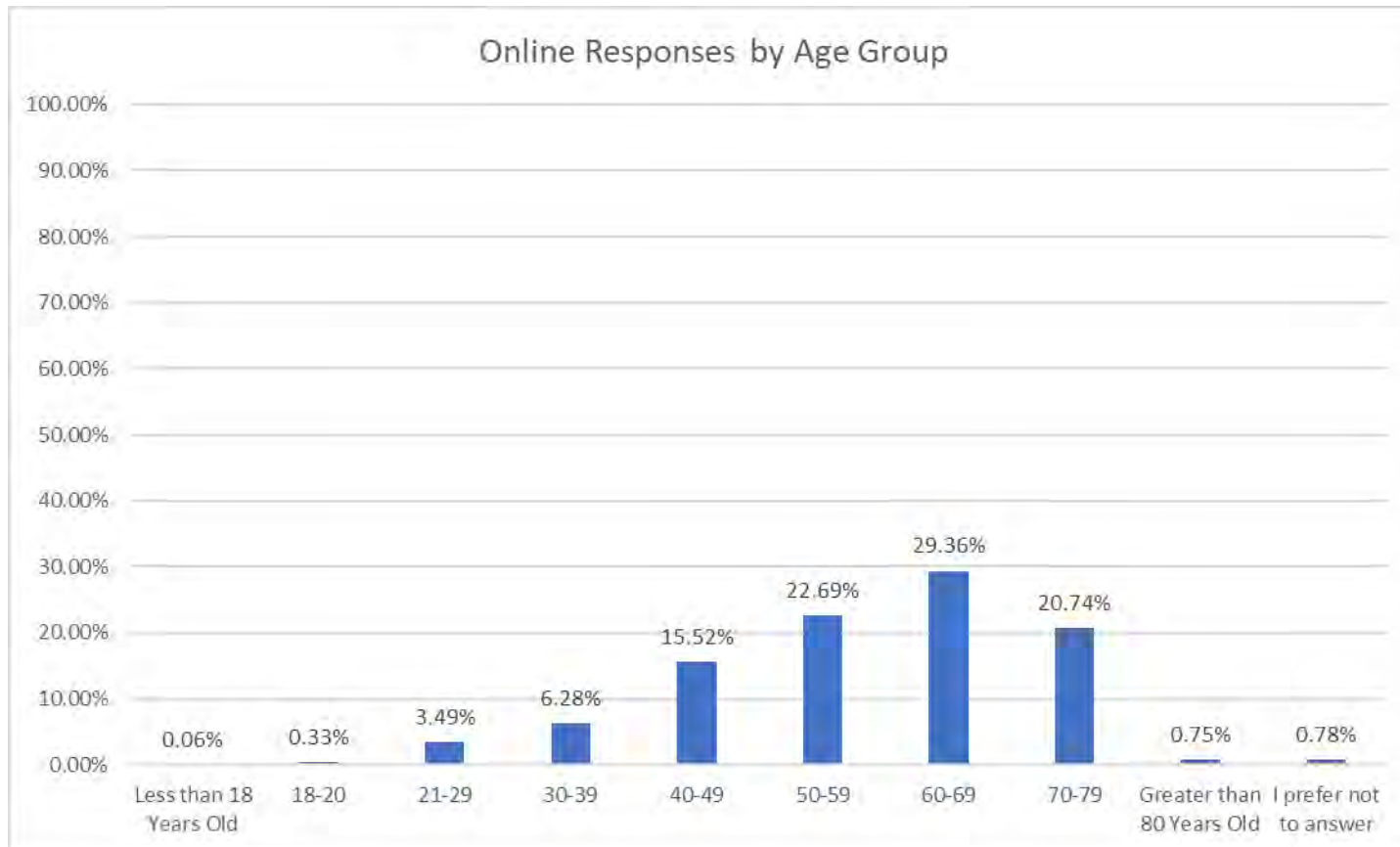


Figure EE Online Renewal Distribution by Age (23% of respondents used this method)

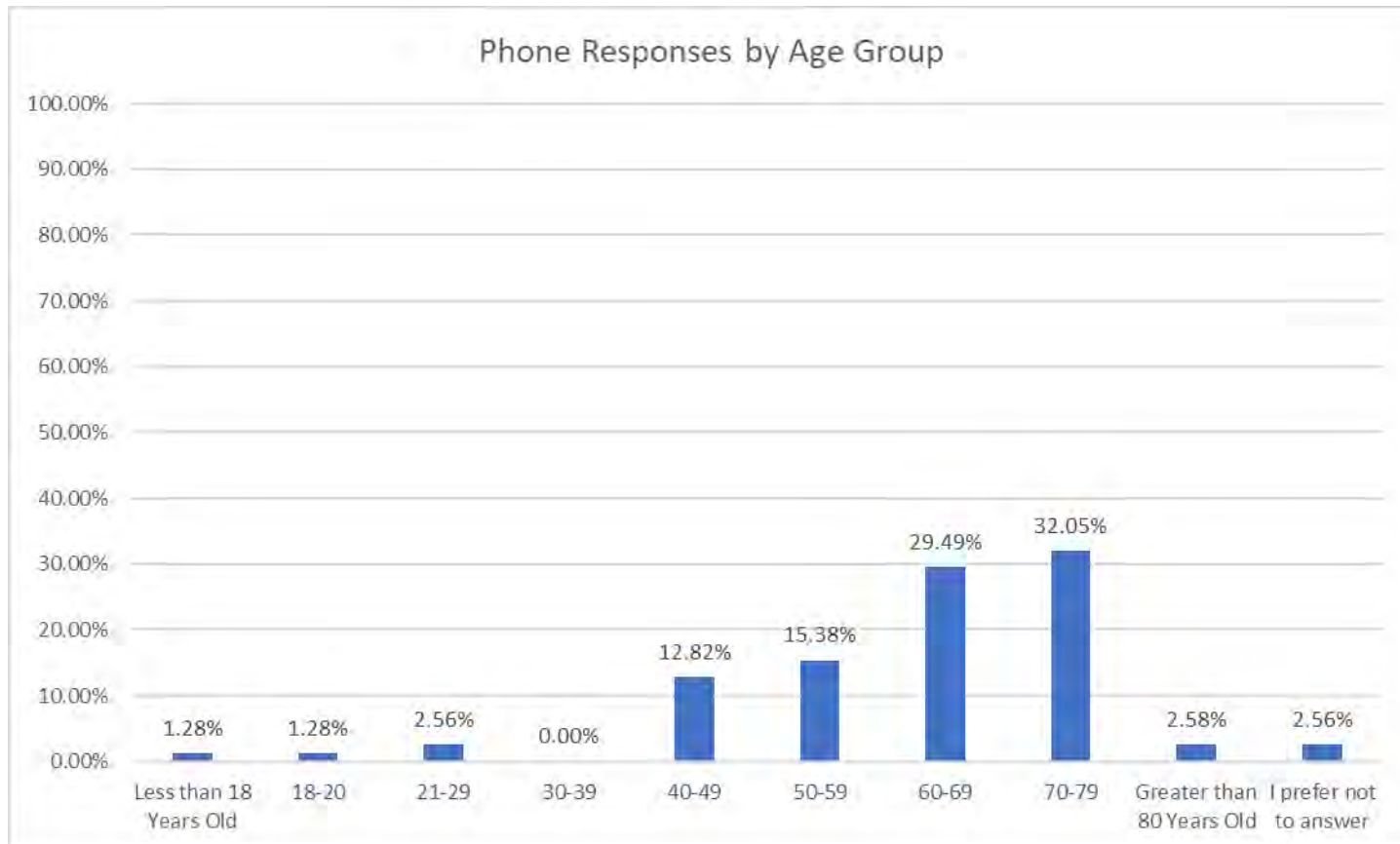


Figure FF Phone Renewal Distribution by Age (0.26% of respondents used this method)

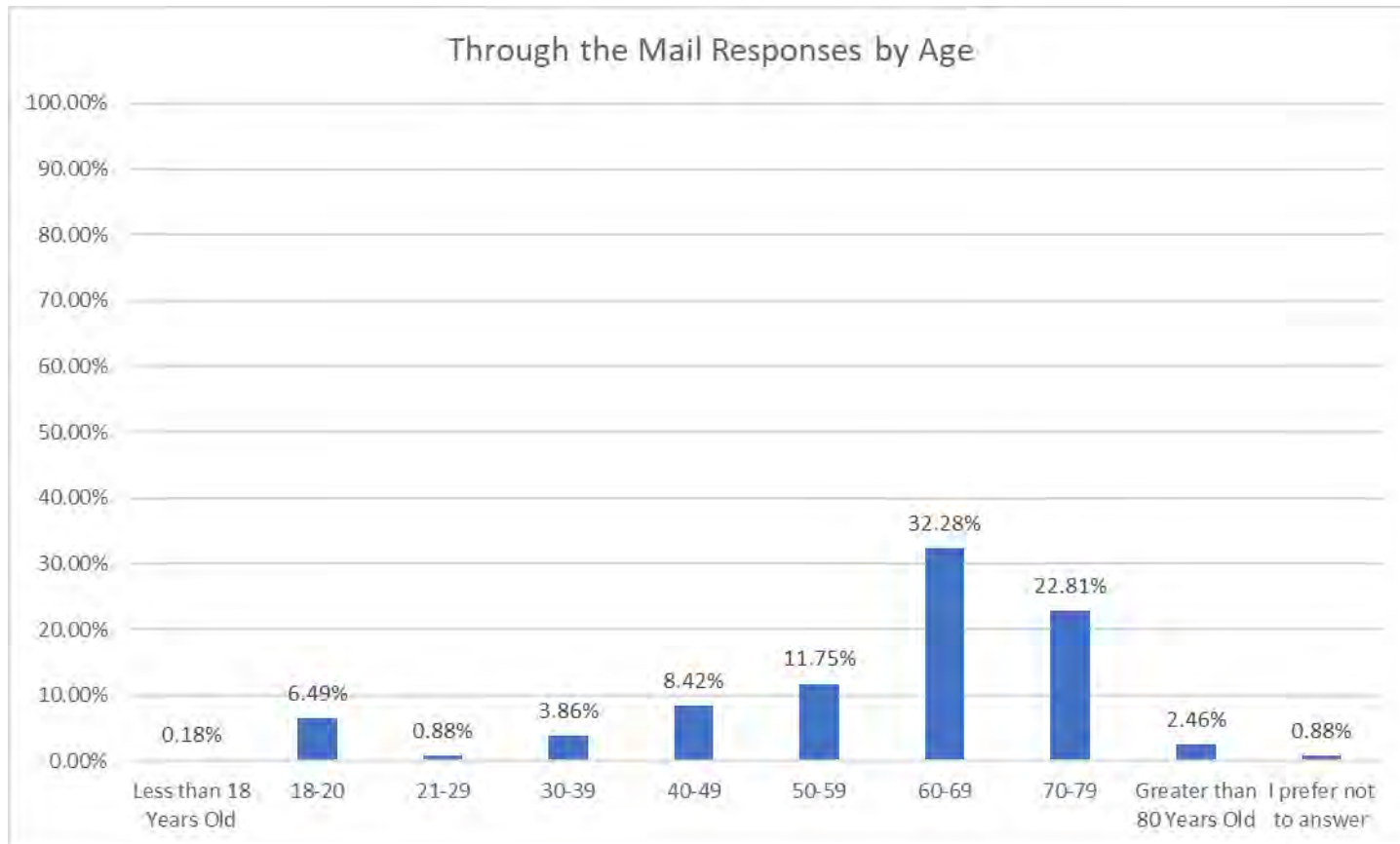


Figure GG Mail-in Renewal Distribution by Age (1.9% of respondents used this method)

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- ^{xiii} TRANSPORTATION CODE. SUBTITLE A. TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION CHAPTER 204. TRAVEL INFORMATION Sec. 204.001
- ^{xiv} TRANSPORTATION CODE. SUBTITLE A. TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION CHAPTER 204. TRAVEL INFORMATION Sec. 204.006