

Drive
SAFE

Work
SAFE

Live
SAFE

FACTS ABOUT SENIORS AND DRIVING

How many senior drivers are there?

It is estimated that more than 40 million older adults will be licensed drivers by 2020. Census projections predict that the over-85 population in the country may exceed 10 million by 2030. By that time, some health experts believe, that age group may be as mobile and healthy as today's 65-year olds.

What kind of drivers are senior drivers?

Older drivers have a lifetime of driving experience. But several functions do decline as we age. Declining vision, flexibility and reactions take a toll. Try not to make generalizations. Keep in mind, everyone ages at a different rate. What's true for one 70-year-old driver may not be true for another 70-year-old driver. In general, seniors drive less than other age groups and tend to drive when conditions are safest.

Physical changes that may affect seniors' driving abilities:

- **Declining Vision.** This is the big one. Vision provides as much as 85 percent of the information we need behind the wheel. But vision begins to deteriorate at age 40.
- **Light:** The amount of light needed to drive doubles every 13 years. Older drivers need more light to see than younger drivers do.
- **Focus:** The older you get, the longer it takes your eyes to change focus from near to far— say, from looking at the rear view mirror to checking the next intersection. Depth perception declines. Peripheral vision narrows. Eyes are more sensitive to glare. Colors become harder to see.
- **Diminished strength and flexibility:** Weaker muscles, reduced flexibility and limited range of motion can affect seniors' ability to turn a steering wheel, look over their shoulder, or flip between the brake to accelerator pedal. Seniors who walk less than a block a day, feel pain going up or down stairs or have recently fallen might not have the strength and flexibility to handle the small movements fast enough for safe driving.
- **Decreased reaction times:** Driving requires attention to dozens of simultaneous activities, which can be challenging for drivers as they age. Seniors can get confused trying to read lots of signs and unfamiliar street markings. Freeway interchanges become increasingly intimidating.

[On the Go! Resource for Seasoned Drivers](#)

Acknowledgments:

[National Safety Council](#)

[Centers for Disease Control](#)

[American Automobile Association](#)

[National Institute on Aging](#)



MINNESOTA SAFETY COUNCIL

Making Minnesota a Safer Place to Live
mssc@minnesotasafetycouncil.org

minnesotasafetycouncil.org © Minnesota Safety Council, Inc.