

6 ADAPTING ONE'S DRIVING HABITS TO ACCOMMODATE AGE-RELATED CHANGES

By **Sylviane Lafont**,

Researcher in epidemiology,

TS2¹ Department, UMRESTTE² Laboratory

As they age, individuals experience a reduction in their physical, sensory and cognitive capacities. In some cases this reduction is slight, but in others they are more marked. This can impair individuals' driving capacities. In response to this reduction, most older drivers modify their driving habits. Recently, IFSTTAR has studied how this process, known as the "self-regulation of driving", differs between men and women.

Identifying the factors that impact self-regulation of driving

As they age, older drivers implement driving self-regulation strategies. Examples of these include reducing the mileage they drive, avoiding what they deem to be difficult driving situations, even to the point of giving up driving completely.

Laetitia Marie Dit Asse, a doctoral student at IFSTTAR, has studied the sensory, physical and cognitive deficits which prompt older male and female drivers to modify their driving habits, and those which have not been observed to lead to any change in driving activity^a.



* But where are they?
We said 10 o'clock in front
of the night club!
Send Ethel or Diedre a #bus
timetable or a #Hubert!!

This research was also very much concerned with the question of driving cessation among male and female drivers presenting with early stage dementia. The research was conducted on a group of almost 10,000 older persons who were monitored in the framework of a very large research project that INSERM has been conducting since 2000.

Women stop driving earlier

The research has found that when they feel their capacities are diminishing, women reduce their driving distances more, and do so earlier, than men. Men usually wait until they are confronted by a disease before they reduce their journeys^b.

In the case of dementia, the vast majority of drivers, both male and female, who develop the syndrome stop driving earlier. However, women give up driving on average 4 years before diagnosis, compared with 2½ years for men. At the time of diagnosis, 45% of men and 74% of women have already stopped driving. Three years after diagnosis the probability of having ceased to drive is the same for both men and women^c.

Thus, men and women do not approach the self-regulation of driving in the same way, either in the context of normal or pathological ageing. In contrast to men, women stop driving before the impairments affect their driving capacities or their day-to-day activities. Other factors remain to be investigated, for example personality, gender stereotypes, life or health events, the role of helpers and the perception of age-related deficits. Taking into account these specificities is essential in the advice that should be given in order to help older drivers stop driving.

1. TS2: Transport, Health, Safety Department

2. UMRESTTE: Epidemiological Research and Surveillance Unit in Transport, Occupation and Environment

Further readings

a. Marie Dit Asse L, (dirigée par B. Laumon et encadrée par S. Lafont). *Régulation de la conduite automobile des hommes et des femmes âgées*. Ifsttar, Bron-Lyon. Thèse de doctorat - Spécialité Épidémiologie et Santé Publique - Université Claude Bernard Lyon 1, 31 mars 2015.

b. Marie Dit Asse L, Fabrigoule C, Helmer C, Laumon B, Lafont S. *Automobile driving in seniors: Factors affecting driving restriction in men and women*. *Journal of American Geriatrics Society*. 2014, 62(11): 2071-8

c. Marie Dit Asse L, Fabrigoule C, Helmer C, Laumon B, Berr C, Rouaud O, Auriacombe S, Lafont S. *Gender effect on driving cessation in pre-dementia and dementia: results of the 3C population-based study*. *International journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*. August 23 2016: 10.

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