

# ★ ★ ★ ★ Senior Safety & Mobility

## FACT SHEET

### Driving Cessation and Health Outcomes for Older Adults: A LongROAD Study

#### **Background**

- The number of older drivers on the road is continuing to increase in the United States.
  - The proportion of the population aged 65 years and older will increase from 13% in 2010 to 20% in 2040.
  - Of the 39.5 million adults aged 65 and older in the U.S., 81% hold a driver's license.
- Declining health is known to be associated with driving cessation in older adults.
  - This is due to age-related declines in health, physical, and cognitive functions.
- It is less clear what impacts driving cessation may have on subsequent health and well-being in older adults.

#### **Objective**

- To better understand the research literature on the consequences of driving cessation in older adults.

#### **Methods**

- A systematic literature review, including a narrative and a meta-synthesis was conducted on previously published studies pertinent to the health consequences of driving cessation.
  - Quantitative data for drivers aged 55 and older
  - Cross-sectional, cohort, or case-control designs
  - Had a comparison group of current drivers
- Identified through a comprehensive search of bibliographic databases
- Sixteen studies met the inclusion criteria

#### **Key Findings**

##### Physical Health

- Former drivers had markedly low participation in outside activities and diminished productivity in daily life activities compared to current drivers.

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Seniors face serious driving safety and mobility issues.

- The association between driving cessation and reduced physical functioning was strong in longitudinal studies even after adjusting for socio-demographic factors and baseline health.

### Depressive Symptoms

- Overall, driving cessation almost doubled the risk of increased depressive symptoms in older adults (OR= 1.91, 95% CI 1.61-2.27).
  - Four of the studies reported significantly greater depressive symptoms in drivers who gave up their keys, after adjustment for potentially confounding factors.

### Social Health

- Social health refers to the capacity to interact in society, which can be measured by social engagement, social contacts, and satisfaction with social roles and social support.
- One study found that driving cessation was associated with a 51% reduction in the size of social networks of friends and relatives over a 13-year period.

### Cognitive Decline

- Several studies found that in general, former drivers had accelerated cognitive decline over a 10-year period compared with active drivers even after controlling for baseline cognitive function and general health.

### Entry into Long-Term Care

- One study found that former drivers were nearly 5 times as likely as current drivers to be admitted to long-term care (LTC) facilities.
  - After adjusting for marriage or co-residence, there was still a strong association.

### Increased Risk of Mortality

- A number of studies found that driving cessation was a strong predictor of 3-year mortality risk, as non-drivers were four to six times as likely to die as drivers, after adjusting for baseline psychological, general health, sensory, and cognitive abilities.

### ***Implications***

- Driving cessation in older adults appears to contribute to a variety of health problems, particularly depression.
- To mitigate the potential adverse effects of driving cessation on health and well-being in older adults, intervention programs ensuring safe mobility and social functions may be needed.

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For more information on this study and the AAA Foundation's other traffic safety research and materials, please visit [AAAFoundation.org](http://AAAFoundation.org).

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