

Lifespan attitudes and self-serving evaluations about older drivers



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Objective

> Investigation of general population's attitudes about older drivers and road-safety measures aiming at them

Introduction

- ☐ Driving is a complex activity (sensorial, physical, cognitive, and psychological) that may put older drivers in difficulty.
 - -> Could easily trigger an awareness of their age-related changes (AARC).
- AARC: Experiences that make a person aware that his or her behavior/performance have changed with aging (Diehl & Wahl, 2010).
- Moreover, older drivers are surrounded both by negative and positive stereotypes about their driving skills, e.g., quickly overwhelmed, slow, more peaceful, etc. (Joanisse, Gagnon, & Voloaca, 2012).
- ☐ Specific coercive measures to increase road safety aiming at them, e.g., medical examination (OECD, 2011).

What are the general population's attitudes about older drivers? Which road-safety measures aim at them?

Method

☐ Participants: 350 adults with a driving license aged between 19 and 88 (mean age = 49.4 years) and 52.6% were women.

☐ Measures:

A 20-item self-report questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale (1 = "don't agree at all" to 5 = "fully agree") about:

Stereotypes about older drivers (k = 12)

Negative stereotypes (e.g., "older drivers cause more accidents than younger drivers")

Positive stereotypes (e.g., "older drivers comply exactly with the speed limits").

- Coercive measures to increase road safety (k = 8)

E.g., "older drivers should pass a road safety training frequently".

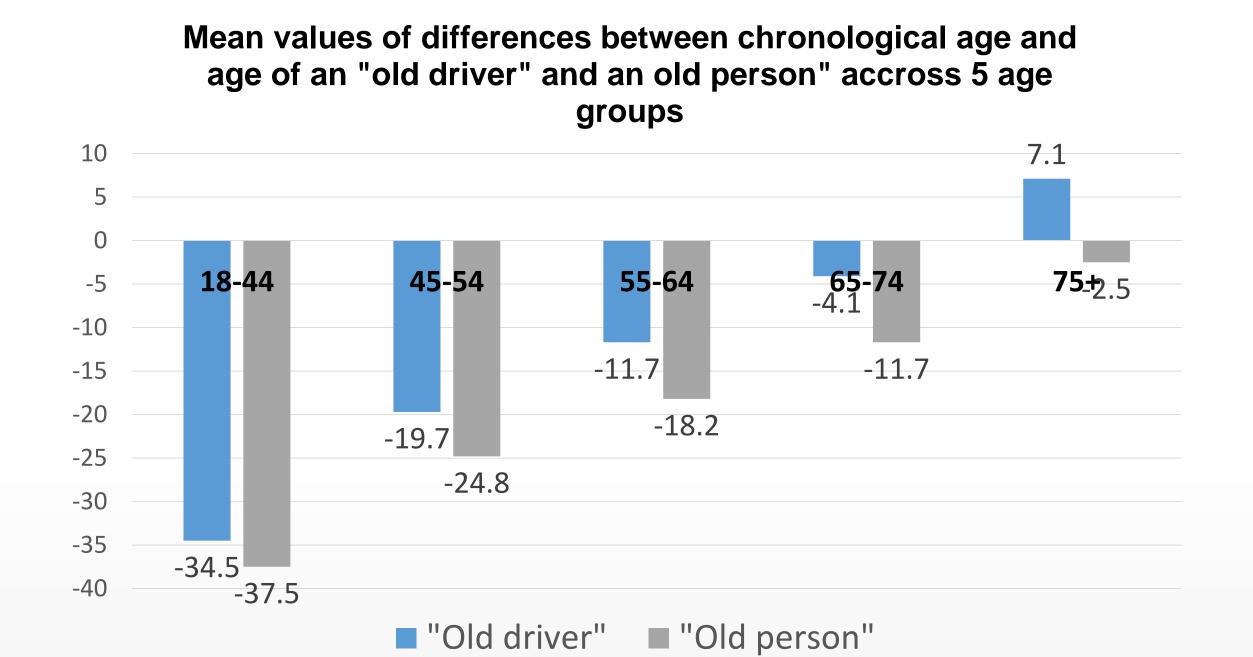
Other measures: Subjective age estimates

- 1) "At what age do you estimate that a driver is old?"
- 2) "At what age do you estimate that a person is old?"

Results **Negative stereotypes** Older drivers react more slowly than younger drivers Older drivers tie up traffic The increase of older drivers may pose a potential safety threat Older drivers overestimate their driving capability Older drivers make more driving errors than young drivers Older drivers cause more accidents than younger drivers Older drivers are quickly overwhelmed with the traffic situation **Positive Stereotypes** Older drivers are more peaceful Older drivers have the most experience in traffic Older drivers are more thoughtful than younger drivers Older drivers are the most reasonable drivers Older drivers comply exactly with the speed limits 2.5 **Measures to increase road safety** The automobile facturer should provide the technology to enable... In case of noticeable excessive demand, older drivers should... Drivers over 65 should pass a roadworthiness test every two years The drivers' licence of people over 75 should be automatically... Older drivers should not be permitted to drive during darkness Older drivers should only do short trips by car Older drivers should pass a road safety training frequently The driver licence should be suspended by the first signs of dementia Fully agree Don't agree at all

Subjective age estimates

The estimated age for an "old driver" was lower than for an "old person" (69.8) versus 75.8), t(348) = -12.31, p < .001.



Prediction of stereotypes/agreement with measures

Negative stereotypes: predicted by agreement with measures to increase road safety (β = .43; p < .001), positive stereotypes (β = -.16; p < .001), chronological age (β = -.34; p < .001), and difference "age – old person" (β = -.20; p = .01),

Positive stereotypes: predicted by agreement with negative stereotypes (β = -.27; p < .001).

Agreement with measures: predicted by agreement with negative stereotypes $(\beta = .54; p < .001)$, difference "age – old driver" $(\beta = .28; p < .001)$ and chronological age (β = - .22; p = .03).

Conclusion

- Results revealed an overall rather positive view of older drivers and a low agreement with coercive road-safety measures.
- "Aging" is perceived as more precocious for "old drivers" than for "old persons" and this difference increases with age.
- Agreement with negative stereotypes and road safety coercive measure decreases with age whereas agreement with positive stereotypes increases with age \rightarrow presence of self-serving evaluations in older drivers.
- ⇒ Road safety measures should avoid focusing solely on chronological age to circumvent negative stereotyping with aging and unjustified driving cessation



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Joanisse M, Gagnon S, Voloaca M (2012). Overly cautious and dangerous: An empirical evidence of the older driver stereotypes. Accident Anal Prev 45:802-810

OECD (2001). Aging and transport: mobility needs and safety issues. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. http://www.oecd.org/sti/ transport/roadtransportresearch/2675189.