



Statens vegvesen



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Drivers 65+

Program

2007 - 2009

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Why focus on mature drivers now?



The community conserves valuable resources because older people can be self-sufficient when they are mobile. In addition they are often good helpers to others, they can help significantly with transportation, such as collecting the grand-children and driving family and friends from place to place.

Many of these people have received little or no training in current traffic regulations. We also know that many of the skills that are important in traffic can be diminished with increasing age. The consequence of this can be more traffic accidents.

The need for the car increases

The car is a ticket to freedom! It makes an active life possible and can counteract isolation and loneliness.

The car provides the freedom to decide for oneself when and where to travel, independent of others. This is especially important when the development of our commu-

nity had led to many people living greater distances from their families, shopping centres and other services. Many get great enjoyment from helping with voluntary work and doing favours for others.

Important task for society

It is important to ensure mobility for people of all ages, with or without cars. With a lack of mass transportation and great distances, a car is often the only option of maintaining mobility for older people. By driving, many older people help each other with the daily shopping.

It is in the best interests of older people and their loved ones that a car can be used, as long as it is not at the cost of traffic safety. The authorities must develop a traffic system suitable for older people. It is also important to create a system that makes it possible to drive even when there are some health restrictions.

Today there are more elderly drivers in the traffic than ever before and the number will rise in the years to come. At the beginning of 2007, there were 439 351 people over the age of 65 with a driver's license. This is an overall increase of 33 percent over the last ten years.

Background:

The program for older drivers was included in State Directive no. 37, the Norwegian Road and Road Traffic Plan 1998-2007, and has now been implemented in the National Plan of Action for Traffic Safety on the Road 2006-2009.

Organisation:

Responsibility for the training and information proposal for the elderly was given in 1999 to a resource group in the Norwegian Public Roads Administration, Region South. This resource group coordinates the work on a national basis and is advisor to the Roads Directorate, both its regional and district offices.

The department will modify information, training and the traffic systems so that older people can maintain their freedom of movement as drivers as long as it is defensible with regard to safety.

At each district office there is a contact person who is responsible for the work. In each region, there is a coordinator.

A reference group consisting of representatives from the departments and organisations involved gives advice and assists in the work as it progresses.



It was good to freshen up my driving knowledge. I recommend Drivers 65+ to everyone.

Vidar Lønn Arnesen

Few accidents, but high injury risk



This can of course be the result of women driving less often than men and driving more in areas of dense population where there is a greater risk of collisions. However in the age group 75+, men have a higher risk than women in the same age group. Many men continue to drive even when they become very old.

Within each age group there are large individual differences. Older people are not necessarily safer in traffic if they leave the car at home. The injury risk for older pedestrians and cyclists is significant. Seen from a statistical perspective, it is higher than what they would have had as motorists.

We take our traveling habits with us ...

Today 60 percent of those over the age of 65 hold a driver's license. There is reason to believe that this percentage will increase up to 80 percent and then level out. The number of people over the age of 65 has risen and this indicates that there will be a large increase in the number of older drivers on the roads in the coming years. In particular, it is women over 65 holding a drivers license that will especially increase in number.

Studies of travelling habits show that the older people of the future will use the car more than the older people of today.

Our society is based on car use for both daily shopping and to participate in social activities. Of those who have cars, men make use of the car in 84 percent of all travel and women 75 percent. This also includes travel where the man is a passenger in the car.

Older people's qualifications as drivers

With an increase in years there can easily arise a disparity between the demands traffic places on the driver and their ability to meet

them. A reduction in accident risk among older drivers can be achieved by reducing or eliminating this disparity between demand and ability.

This can be done in two main ways. The first is to reduce the demands of negotiating traffic by simplifying the road system. The other is to either update drivers skills, or find or remove drivers that have a particularly high accident risk from the system or both.

In the light of the fact that older people have reduced physical tolerance, the importance of finding measures that reduce the possibility of older drivers becoming involved in traffic accidents is critical.

Safe traffic is dependent on a driver's perception, processing what their senses perceive, the ability to evaluate, consider the right decisions and to act accordingly. Both with normal aging and with illness there is a reduction in these functions that are necessary for safe driving. This can help to explain why there is an increase in accident risk among the older drivers.

Older people are more susceptible to illnesses that can affect mental and physical functions. Use of medications can also be a contributing cause of higher accident risk. Many adapt to their own limitations. Some stop driving, and others avoid driving under difficult conditions. However, some remain unaware of their limitations. They can have an unrealistic idea of their own driving ability and the risk they pose in traffic.

Personal vehicle drivers killed and injured per million kilometres in 2001 divided into men and women

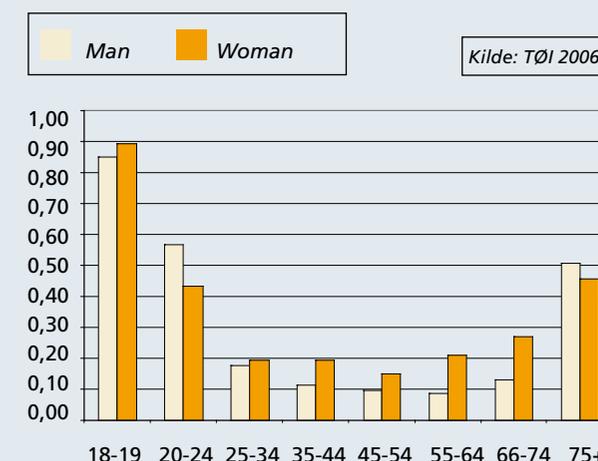


Figure 1 shows that it is young drivers that have the highest risk of being killed or injured. The age group 18-22 years is particularly affected.

Share of population over 65 with an auto driver's license 1980-2005. Percent

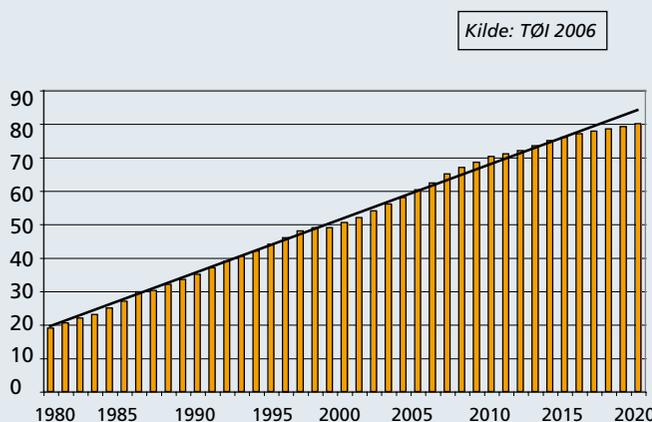


Figure 2 shows that since 1980 there has been an even rise of the share of people over 65 who hold a driver's license.

Objectives and work assignments 2006-2009

The Norwegian Public Roads Administration has a vision of zero killed and zero permanently injured in traffic. This vision is built on three cornerstones: ethics, science and responsibility.

- Each and every person is irreplaceable
- People's physical and mental conditions are known and shall be the basis for developing the road system
- The drivers and the government have a joint responsibility for traffic safety

Main goal

Our goal is to increase safety in traffic and to preserve mobility for older people. Efforts are directed at four main tasks: Training, communication, health and a modified road system.

1. Training

The State Dept. of Roads and Highways offers the refresher course, Drivers 65+, in all districts. The course is coordinated centrally by a resource group and is followed up locally by the district contact with the district offices and regional offices. The target participation rate should be 20 percent of all drivers 70 years old and over.

A network of course arrangers has been established around the entire country and driving school teachers with special qualifications are responsible for the instruction. The instruction material has been especially tailored to the needs of the target group in relation to its design and delivery.

Emphasis has been placed on developing good technical and academic plans based on



voluntary participation. It is important that the courses are an enjoyable experience and that no one is afraid of being subjected to an exam or losing their driving license.

Contents adapted to the local area

Our experience is that these are some of the things that the participants want to know more about:

- right of way
- roundabouts
- road marking
- traffic signs
- traffic light crossings
- highways
- light usage
- overtaking
- parking regulations

The participants are encouraged to bring up special traffic situations from their local area. The instructor involves the participants in open discussion and uses pictures from local traffic conditions so that everyone can find the situations more easily recognisable. In

most places the course is divided into four meetings during the day, in all 12 hours. In addition, the participants receive an offer to go out with an instructor on a drive, either as a passenger or as a driver. Extra refresher hours in the car can be arranged with the instructor as needed.

The State Dept. of Roads and Highways will evaluate the establishment of Internet-based instruction or other suitable teaching forms for the course in order to reach more people.

Evaluation shows effects

In 2004 and 2005 (TØI 2006), the Transport Economic Institute evaluated the Drivers 65+ course (Is one a better driver after the refresher course? TØI report 841/2006). The evaluation showed very good results. Figure 3 shows that prior to participating in Drivers 65+, men who had signed up for the course had as much accident risk as men who had not. The study showed that both groups had increased accident rates a year after, but the increase was lower for those who had participated in the course. This means that the male participants had reduced their accident risk by 18 percent after completing the Drivers 65+.

Figure 4 shows that before the Driver 65+ course was completed, women that had signed up for the course had a higher accident risk than women that had not signed up. One year after the course was completed, this picture was turned upside down. The group that had participated in the course had a reduction in accident risk, while women who had not participated had a drastic rise in accident risk. This means that the female participants reduced their accident risk by 70 percent, when taking into account the rise of accident risk levels of the control group who did not participate.

Change in accident risk amongst the test and control group

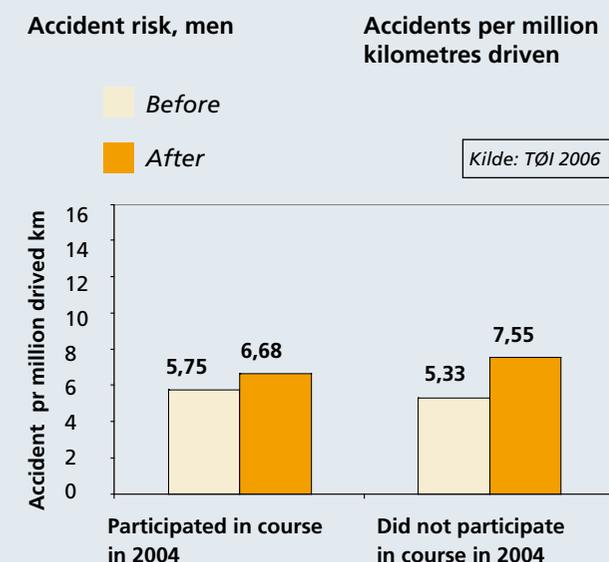


Figure 3. Accident risk before and one year after course participation for male participants of Driver 65+ course compared with men that had not taken the course.

Accident risk, woman

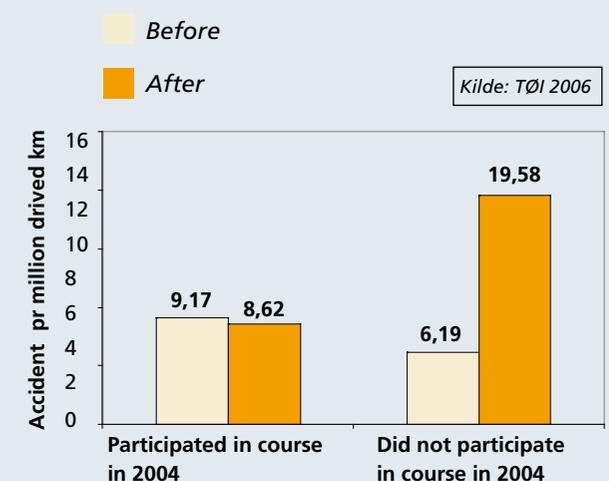


Figure 4 Accident risk before and one year after course participation for women that had participated in the Driver 65+ course compared with women who did not participate in the course.

2. Communication



Goal

All drivers over 65 shall be made aware of the course on offer and 20 percent of the 70 year olds and over will participate in the course.

Communication measures shall be developed that contribute to the education, increased consciousness about driving and suitable skills among those who choose not to attend the course.

Drivers 65+ shall present The State Dept. of Roads and Highways in a positive way. Driving and skills shall be a theme where older people meet and be a part of public debate.

Strategy

It is emphasised that much of the communication with older people shall occur locally where they live and where the course is held.

At the same time, due to resource considerations, it is sensible that a part of the support activities are planned and conducted from a central area.

The message shall be communicated both nationally and locally through several paid and unpaid channels to ensure that the target group is reached and understands the message. Continual evaluation of the effectiveness of the message will ensure an optimal combination of activities.

Message

Our main message is that one is a better driver by refreshing one's own knowledge and by being conscious of one's own limitations. Further, the following shall be emphasised in the framework of the message:

1. Freedom, enjoyment and safety
2. Mobility
3. The course is voluntary – no exam, no one loses their driver's license
4. The target group shall be represented positively

Younger drivers should be aware of, and respect, the limitations of many older people in traffic.

Proposal

The Norwegian Public Roads Administration will market the course, Driver 65+, via relevant media that are used by the target group.

Main proposal

A course invitation will be sent to all drivers 65+ holding a license. This will be repeated for those who reach 70, where they will also be reminded that a valid certificate from their doctor must be present when they drive. This will be sent out as a letter, along with an accompanying brochure that explains part of the contents of the course.

Central activities:

1. Own profile program for Driver 65+ to ensure uniform communication
2. Updated material available for the districts
3. Press activities directed to the local and national media
4. Announcements in magazines and papers that are especially aimed at the target group, (e.g. *Us over 60, Retirement and Senior*).

Local activities

1. Cooperation with Council for the Aging, retirement associations etc.
2. Placards and brochures at old age homes, retirement centres, doctors' offices, traffic stations, libraries etc.
3. Local editorial references
4. Announcements in the local press
5. Announcements on local TV in some areas

For more information:
www.vegvesen.no/65pluss



3. Health conditions



In Norway drivers over 70 must have a valid doctors' statement when they drive to show that they fulfil the driving license requirements for sight, health and fitness. Without such a statement the license is invalid.

Research shows that some illnesses that affect older people reduce functions that are important to safe driving. This means that health, as much as age, can impose increased risks on driver safety.

The health regulations in the driving license instructions have been developed to protect the community and secure traffic safety. The doctor has an important responsibility to evaluate if the applicant meets the requirements.

Both the driver and the doctor are required to report if the health requirements are no longer being fulfilled. The State Dept. of Roads and Highways and the Social and Health Directorate will then take a closer look as to how the health requirements will be followed up.

The State Dept. of Roads and Highways will evaluate the possibility of using standard tests in connection with medical checkups, where it can be determined if the older drivers are acceptable as a driver or if they should be checked more thoroughly.

Physical and cognitive impairments can bring about a considerable increase in risk for accidents. Future rules, routines and division of responsibility for the evaluation of driving rights in such cases should be clarified. For less serious impairments there is a desire to clarify alternatives with limitations to driving rights. The car's importance for the individual's welfare will be emphasised in these evaluations. Extensive cooperation is required between several stakeholders to find good specific solutions for the individual.

4. Human factors: Standards for road design, signage and marking

The purpose of the project is to evaluate current dimensioning standards for the road system in the Nordic countries. It uses human factors as its perspective, and aims to suggest improvements. The project is particularly focused on elderly road users' capacities and limitations.

The aim is to find out how roads and road equipment should be developed in order to fit the older driver's abilities. The project

began in 2005 and is expected to end in 2008. The State Dept. of Roads and Highways will evaluate the preparation of a handbook for road planners about safety for older people. The road traffic law and traffic regulations will be evaluated with reference to the need of older people for relevant information.

