

Experience Isn't Enough

Rethinking driver safety for older adults

Emily Cota
Staff Writer

By the time most of us turn 16, getting a driver's license feels like a major milestone. We study online, take the written exam, complete driver's education and finally gain the independence we have been waiting for. Two years later, we renew that license online with the click of a button. But what happens decades later when eyesight worsens, reflexes slow and memory becomes less sharp? Right now, nothing about the renewal process changes. Shouldn't the same system that tests young drivers also make sure older drivers are still capable of staying safe on the road?

Each day, 25 older adults are killed and more than 740 are injured in crashes, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Drivers over age 70 should be required to retake a driving test — both written and on the road — to ensure safety for themselves and others. This argument is not meant to shame older adults, but to acknowledge that cognitive and physical abilities naturally change with age. While many seniors remain responsible and attentive drivers, it is unrealistic to assume skills learned decades ago will stay sharp for life.

Teens must pass multiple tests to obtain a license, yet older adults face almost no requirements as they continue driving. Car crashes are a leading cause of death globally, and doing everything possible to prioritize safety should be the standard. Retesting is not

systems, touchscreens, electric vehicles and faster traffic flow all require focused attention and quick reaction times. A simple assessment would confirm whether older drivers can handle today's environment safely.

Some may argue that retesting older adults is

Age 60: Still Smooth

discriminatory and ageist. They say age does not equal incompetence, and they are right. Plenty of 80-year-olds drive better than some younger adults. But evaluations would simply confirm that seniors remain confident and capable behind the wheel. It is not about taking away independence. It is about

Age 75: Time for A Checkup!



By 2030, more than 70 million Americans will be over age 65, and most will still hold driver's licenses, according to the American Automobile Association. That is a significant number of people sharing the road with younger drivers, cyclists and pedestrians.

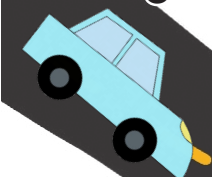
Everyone has the same goal: to get home safely. Retesting older drivers is not an insult. It is an act of care for both seniors and the community around them.

Driving is a privilege that comes

Age 30: Confident Driver

with enormous responsibility. Just as young drivers must prove they are ready, older drivers should prove their continued ability. Holding every driver to the same safety standards is not ageist. It is common sense.

Age 16: Cautious Driver



punishment. It is protection.

According to the CDC, 5,502 individuals age 70 or older died in car crashes in 2023 — a 46 percent increase over the past 50 years. Meanwhile, driving conditions have changed dramatically: navigation

ensuring safety. And if a driver truly believes in their ability, passing a test should not be a problem.

Senior Roadway Deaths Up 40% in Ten Years

According to the NSC injury facts, the number of motor-vehicle deaths involving drivers and other road users age 65 and older increased slightly in 2023 to 9,587, from 9,545 in 2022. Over the last decade, the number of deaths has increased by 40%.