



Ontario's Senior Drivers – An Overview of Programs, Policies and Challenges

Safety Policy and Education Branch
Ministry of Transportation of Ontario

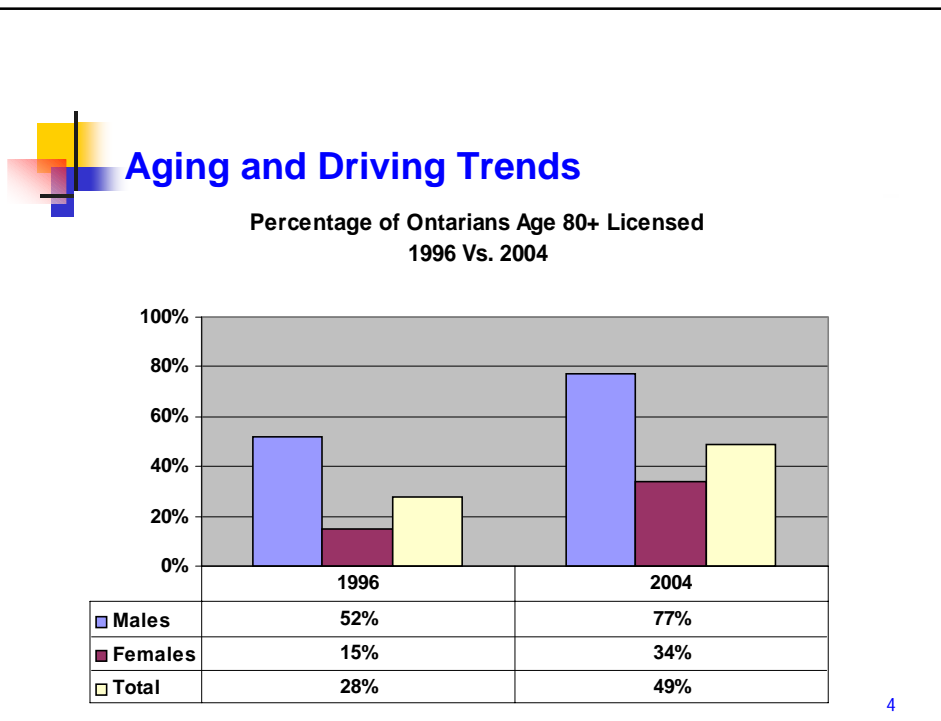
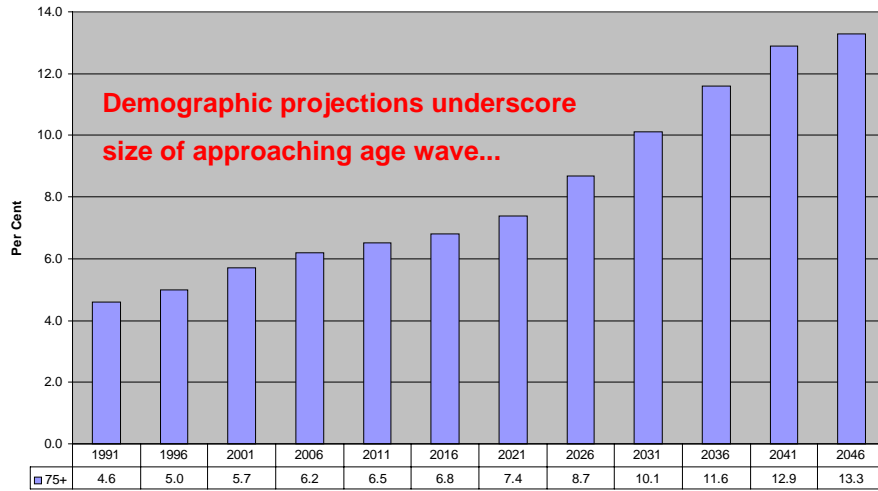
AAMVA/CCMTA Aging Driver Conference
Austin, Texas
March 4-6, 2006

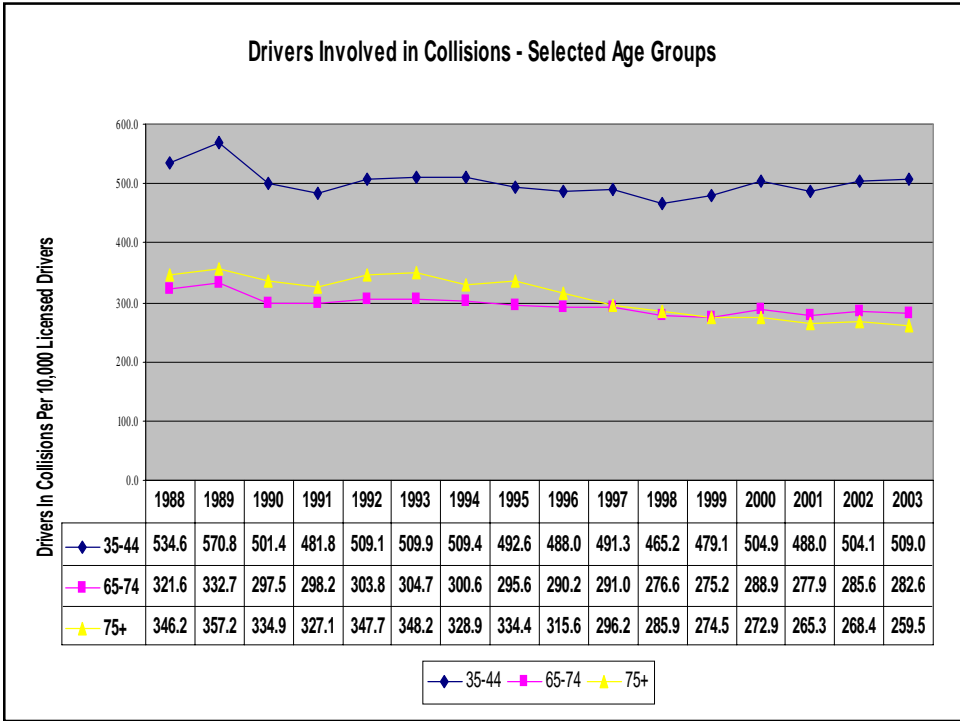


Aging and Driving Trends

- Seniors – rapidly growing segment of Ontario driver population
- Drivers aged 80 and over licensed in 1996: 77,489
- Drivers aged 80 and over licensed in 2005: 210,328
- Two year licence renewal cycle beginning at age 80 with one-half of cohort renewed each year; about 85,000 senior drivers (80 and over) undergo licence renewal each year

Percentage of Ontario Population Aged 75 and over
 Source: Research Institute for Quantitative Studies in Economics and Population
 McMaster University





Current MTO Programs

- Comprehensive approach to screening for high-risk senior drivers
 - Licensing decisions are never made based on age alone

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Current MTO Programs

80 and Over Licence
Renewal Program

70 and Over Collision
Program

Physician Mandatory
Reporting Program

65 and Over Commercial
Driver Licence Renewal
Program

Driver Assessment Referrals

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Age 80 and Over Licence Renewal

- Drivers age 80+ renew licences every two years
- Renewal requirements:
 - Vision test
 - Knowledge test
 - Driver record review
 - Group Education Session (GES)
 - Road test, if necessary
- Program revised in 1996 from mandatory annual road test

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Age 80 & Over Licence Renewal

Group Education Session

- GES Sessions delivered across province and provided free of charge
- Maximum 15 participants
- 90 minutes long
- Driver's participation in session observed for signs of cognitive impairment

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Age 80 & Over Licence Renewal

Group Education Session

- GES are interactive seminars on senior driver topics:
 - Driving situations that are high-risk for seniors
 - Physical changes related to aging
 - How changes affect driving
 - Ways to reduce collision risk
- Consultant experts in gerontology and adult education principles retained in December, 2003 to review program and submitted final report in March 2004.

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GES Enhancements

- The enhanced education session will provide more information on age-related changes that can affect driving, high-risk driving situations for seniors, ways to adapt, and rules of the road/traffic signs that are more relevant to seniors' driving habits.
- Presentation of information has also been enhanced to improve understanding and retention.
- Enhanced education session and hand-out materials pilot-tested in MTO's four regions. Feedback has been incorporated into the new GES curriculum. All counsellors trained on the new GES curriculum.
- Better visual design used in new slides (bigger fonts, use of colour, illustrations, appropriate reading level, positive tone). Animated traffic scenes used to illustrate proper driving techniques.
- Slides and booklet provide updated information on rules of road, traffic laws, traffic signs, high risk situations related to actual senior driver collision risk and more driving tips.
- Materials are more responsive to seniors' needs and interests with more information on age-related factors affecting driving, ways to compensate, and general information impact of medications on senior driving.
- The new materials also give more emphasis to monitoring warning signs, self-regulation and knowing when to stop driving.

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GES Enhancements – Implementation Timeline

- **June 2004** – GES counselors received training on the new curriculum.
- **July/August 2004** – Additional minor revisions to GES presentation completed.
- **September 2004** – Revised material finalized, sent for translation into French.
- **February 2005** – Purchased new vision testing equipment and projectors for the GES.
- **July, 2005** – Revised program fully implemented across the province.

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GES Enhancements

Curriculum Information

- Revised curriculum information currently available on-line at MTO web site:
 - <http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/dandv/driver/senior/senior.htm>
- Participant booklet available for downloading in pdf format

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Age 80 and Over Licence Renewal

- In the period 1997-2003, **average fatal collision involvement rate per 10,000 licensed drivers aged 80** and over was 35 per cent lower than it was between 1988 and 1995 (under the previous senior driver program).
 - 80 and over licence renewal program not the only factor. Fatal collision involvement rate has been dropping for all drivers; factors include increased seat belt use, less drinking and driving, graduated licensing programs).
- **Rate of fatal collisions involving seniors** continues to be higher than that of the general driving population, due in part to seniors' physical frailty.
 - In 2003, fatal collision involvement rate for drivers aged 80 and over was 1.80 per 10,000 licensed drivers compared to 1.17 for drivers of all ages.

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Age 70 and Over Collision Program

- 70 and over collision program requires drivers aged 70 and over to be vision, knowledge and road-tested if they were involved in a collision and convicted of a collision-related offence.
- Affected drivers notified of this requirement when ministry receives conviction data; if these drivers do not agree to be re-tested, their driver's licences are cancelled.

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Driver 70+ population	675,905	695,572	718,185	737,717	754,521
Drivers notified	4,932	5,413	7,198	7,440	4,817
Percentage	0.73%	0.78%	1.00%	1.01%	0.64%

- Failure results in licence cancellation – failure to pass only road test results in G1 licence

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Physician Mandatory Reporting

- Under Section 203 of the Highway Traffic Act there is a duty to report to MTO patients aged 16 and over with medical conditions that may make driving dangerous
 - Similar requirement for optometrists under Section 204
- Reports assessed for degree of risk, actions taken:
 - Immediate licence suspension
 - Referral to Medical Advisory Committee
 - Further evaluation

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Age 65 & Over Commercial Drivers

- Truck and bus drivers age 65+ renew licence annually
- Renewal requirements:
 - Vision test
 - Knowledge test
 - Road test
 - Satisfactory medical report
- Licence downgraded to Class G or D if requirements failed

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Driver Assessment Referrals

- Drivers with medical conditions may be referred to, or may wish to voluntarily attend, 28 approved driver assessment centres in Ontario
- Evaluations performed by occupational therapist
 - Medical assessment (brief medical history)
 - Clinical evaluation (physical, vision & cognitive assessments)
 - On road evaluation
- Licensing decision based on full evaluation:
 - Suspension
 - Maintain licence
 - Conditional licence – adaptive device conditions only
 - Retraining

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Next Steps

- Participating in **CanDRIVE** (national research project); goal to develop an evidence-based clinical decision rule for physicians to identify at-risk drivers needing further evaluation
- Consulted with Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services and police services to develop a standard form police can use to report drivers suspected of medical impairment
- Continuing to review best practices in other jurisdictions to identify potential senior driver program improvements
 - This includes exploring options for the conditional licensing of drivers with functional impairments
- Looking forward to reviewing information and recommendations from this important conference

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Conclusions

- Drivers aged 80 and over fastest growing segment of Ontario driver population
- Ontario has a comprehensive set of programs designed to promote the safety and mobility of a growing senior driver population
- 80 and over licence renewal program offers unique mix of education and driver screening
- Many older drivers compensate well for declining abilities -- they are responsible and show excellent judgement

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Conclusions

- Fatal collision involvement rate for senior drivers has been decreasing, but they remain over-represented in fatal collisions
- Older drivers with declining abilities related to medical conditions continue to pose greatest challenge