

## Preparing for driving cessation: More thought than action

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### Abstract

Driving cessation is a difficult topic that many older drivers avoid, however being prepared for transport dependence may mitigate the negative outcomes associated with driving cessation. In a population based survey 1181 older drivers reported their level of contemplation and planning for driving cessation. Socio-demographic, health characteristics, and transport use were compared between those who had given driving cessation no thought (pre-contemplators), thought about it (contemplators) and made plans (active planners). Active planners were a small minority, were older, and reported poorer health than the other groups. 46% had not thought about driving cessation at all.

### Background

For older drivers the possibility of no longer being able to drive can be a difficult, emotional and often avoided topic, especially when there appear to be few alternatives. Preparing for life as a non-driver, much like preparing for life after retirement from work, may assist older people make an easier transition and mitigate some of the negative outcomes associated with driving cessation. These include increased risk of depression (Chihuri et al., 2016), reduced activities outside of the home (Marottili et al., 2000), and increased mortality (Edwards, Perkins, Ross, & Reynolds, 2009). This presentation will describe 1. the extent to which older drivers are thinking about and planning for driving cessation; 2. what plans they are making; 3. the characteristics of those who are planning for cessation compared to those not planning for, or contemplating, giving up driving.

### Method

Population based telephone survey of 1181 older drivers (in New Zealand) recruited through stratified random sampling, aged 65 - 96 years. Measures included each participant's level of contemplation and planning for stopping driving, socio-demographics and health (e.g., health status, quality of life, mobility), current transport use, and perception of driving ability becoming a problem within five years.

### Results

Almost half (46%) of older drivers had given no thought to the possibility of having to stop driving (pre-contemplators). Of the remaining older drivers, 81% had given it some thought but had not made any plans (contemplators) and 19% had made plans for the possibility of not driving (active planners). Compared to pre-contemplators and contemplators, higher proportions of active planners were older, female and widowed/single. They were more likely to report worse health, moderate/severe mobility problems, and two or more chronic health conditions. Higher proportions of active planners were already using mobility scooters and community transport, however the overall use of alternative transport was low and driving was the primary mode of transport for all older drivers. One third of active planners anticipated having problems with their driving within the next five years. Fewer contemplators (17%) and pre-contemplators (7%) expected to have problems.

## Conclusion

In car dependent societies like Australia and New Zealand planning may ease the transition out of licensure, and reduce negative impacts. Although half of older drivers had given some thought to no longer being able to drive, very few had made any plans for this. Those that had made plans were older, more likely to be female and reported poorer health. The results from this study are consistent with prior research which indicates few drivers are planning for how they will meet their transport needs once they are transport dependent, even when they expect their driving ability to become an issue. Future research with this cohort of older drivers will measure outcomes following driving cessation to understand the influence of planning and the types of plans made, on success in adapting to life as a non-driver.

## References

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