

Test Your Transportation Knowledge

HIGHLIGHTS

Introduction

Presents assumptions concerning the needs for and access to transportation options

Misleading Assumptions

Reviews assumptions about the cost of driving, availability of transit options, and family members and caregivers as potential transportation providers

Test Your Database

Includes fifteen statements to “test” your knowledge about older adult transportation, older drivers, and general transportation services

Database Answers

Provides brief answers to each of the fifteen statements

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please visit the numerous fact sheets and exercises in addition to the planning, implementation, and evaluation sections of the TurnKey Kit.

INTRODUCTION

There are many false assumptions about transportation for older adults. This is especially true with respect to their need for, ability to, and use of transit services when they no longer drive. You may find it helpful to test your transportation knowledge as you consider organizing and/or providing transportation to older adults.

Three Misleading Assumptions

1. It is much less expensive for an older adult to own and drive a car than to try to use transit options that are available in their community.
2. When it is necessary for older adults to discontinue driving (because of physical or mental limitations that make driving difficult or impossible), any transportation option will enable them to get where they need to go.
3. Community transportation options may not be necessary because families and caregivers will provide transportation services for their care recipients.

These and other assumptions lead to misconceptions about older adult drivers and their safety, and about the availability and usability of transportation options for older adults who no longer drive. Many of these issues are addressed in this True and False/Questions & Answers.

References for the answers to these and other transportation topics can be found on the websites listed on the last page.

TRUE OR FALSE STATEMENTS ABOUT TRANSPORTATION FOR OLDER ADULTS

1. T F Transportation is sometimes called “the tie that binds” because it encourages older people to stay in their homes.
2. T F Most older adults are seriously restricted from traveling long distances due to chronic conditions.
3. T F The greatest concern older adults express about stopping to drive is the loss of their independence.
4. T F The average adult aged 70-74 can expect to drive for eleven or more years and then depend upon other transportation services for six to ten years.
5. T F Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of accidental death among older adults.
6. T F A driver’s chronological age is not a good predictor of his or her driving ability.
7. T F Once they stop driving, older adults generally rely on public transit to get where they need to go.
8. T F When they retire from driving, older adults consciously try to spend the amount of money they save on alternative transportation options.
9. T F Community transportation options are seldom necessary because families and caregivers provide transportation services for their care recipients.
10. T F Older adults take 97% of their rides on public transit services.
11. T F The transit industry is known to have a poor safety record.
12. T F Since most people change residential locations in their older age, they are able to relocate close to transportation service alternatives to the automobile.
13. T F Paratransit (specialized transportation) is used by most older adults who are eligible for these services.
14. T F Non-driving older adults are less likely to participate in society than are older adults who drive.
15. T F All it takes for transportation options to be “age friendly” is that public or other transportation services are available.

ANSWERS TO T & F STATEMENTS

- 1. False** Transportation has been called “the tie that binds” because it binds people to life sustaining activities, not because it binds them to their homes.
- 2. False** Only 3% of adults aged 65-74 have chronic conditions that restrict traveling within their own neighborhood. While this figure climbs to 24% among the 85 plus age group, the majority in this age group can continue to travel beyond their neighborhoods.
- 3. True** It is clear from research (including multiple focus groups with current drivers, retired drivers, and caregivers) that driving is often equated with the feeling of independence.
- 4. True** Male and female drivers age 70-74 have a life expectancy of 18 and 21 years respectively. On average, men and women can expect to drive for 11 years and then be dependent on alternatives to the automobile for the remaining 6 and 10 years of their lives.
- 5. True** In a two-car crash, if one driver is 65 or older, he or she is 3.5 times more likely to be killed and 4 times more likely to be injured than a younger driver due to fragility in later life. One reason is that vehicle designs can be less accommodating to the physical characteristics of the aged. The deployment of air bags may, for example, save lives among most population groups, but can contribute to higher injury and death rates among the elderly. Each year, about 7,000 Americans age 65 and older die in motor vehicle crashes.
- 6. True** By itself, chronological age is a poor predictor of driving performance. There is significant variability in the age and rate of decline in critical driving skills. Many older adults continue to be capable and safe drivers and have a safety advantage afforded by their maturity and experience behind the wheel.
- 7. False** In addition to public and community transit, other transportation options may be available to older adults. These can include transit provided by human service organizations, volunteer and community groups, hospitals and health centers, older adult programs, and faith organizations.
- 8. False** According to AAA, in 2018, it cost an average of \$8,848 per year to own and operate a new vehicle. However, it appears that few older adults translate the money they save by no longer driving (or owning a car) to paying for transportation options.
- 9. False** Almost half of all caregivers in the US are employed full-time and may not be able to provide all the rides needed by their care recipients who no longer drive. Thus, the care recipients will most likely need to rely on other transportation options that are available in their community or reduce out-of-home trips when options are not available.
- 10. False** Public transportation is the most traditional form of alternative transportation. When it is available, it is often not used by older people. One important reason is that over one-third of American households do not have public bus service within two miles of their homes. Thus, many older adults are more likely to walk to their destination than to use public transit.

- 11. False** According to a study reported in the 2014 *Journal of Public Transportation*, the risks associated with traveling by car or truck are roughly 60 times greater than travel by public transportation on a bus.
- 12. False** More than 90% of Americans retire in place (in the same community and often at the same address at which they lived before retirement). Consequently, close to two-thirds of the current cohort of older adults live in the suburbs or in rural areas where they moved as younger members of the work force. These low-density areas may offer relatively few transportation alternatives to the automobile.
- 13. False** On average, less than 20% of those eligible for specialized transportation in mid-sized cities are registered for these services. In large cities, the figure is 22%. Moreover, riders using these services rarely use them to make more than 40% of their trips.
- 14. True** Compared with older drivers, older adults who do not drive have a decreased ability to participate in their community. Research indicates that each day, they make 15% fewer trips to the doctor, 59% fewer shopping trips and visits to restaurants, and 65% fewer trips for social, family, and religious activities.
- 15. False** To be “age-friendly” public and other transportation services need to be available, accessible, acceptable, adaptable, and affordable. These criteria for age friendliness are often referred to as The 5A’s of Age-Friendly Transportation. Additional information about the 5A’s can be found in this Turnkey Kit.

Web Addresses for References and Related Information

Data for the above true/false statements and additional information on older adult driver safety and transportation options can be found on the websites below.

- AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety: www.aaafoundation.org
- American Public Transportation Association: www.apta.com
- National Center for Injury Prevention and Control: www.cdc.gov
- National HighwayTraffic Safety Administration: www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov
- Surface Transportation Policy Project: www.transact.org
- National Center on Caregiving: www.caregiver.org
- National Institute on Aging: www.nia.nih.gov
- Bureau of Labor Statistics: www.bls.gov
- Community Transportation Association of America: www.ctaa.org
- **Shepherd’s Centers of America: www.shepherdcenters.org**