Older Pedestrians and Road Safety

Research debrief

April 2013
Background to the research
Background

- TfL are committed to improving the safety of older pedestrians, who account for a disproportionate level of pedestrian deaths in London.

- Pedestrians casualties aged 60 years and over represented 14% of all pedestrian casualties of known age, however fatalities in this group represented 45% of all fatal pedestrian casualties of known age (1).

- This over-representation highlights the fact that older pedestrians are at greater risk when involved in an accident.

- TfL are considering a range of initiatives and communications activity to reduce the older pedestrian KSIs figures. 2CV has conducted this research to further explore the needs and behaviours of older pedestrians in London and assist in the development of ideas.

(1) Source: ACCSTATS, 2009-2011
Objectives

The overall objective is to explore how to best communicate with older pedestrians, in order to help to reduce casualties

In more detail, research is required to:

1. Understand the views of older audiences about being pedestrians in London

2. Explore attitudes to road safety in terms of how important it is to them, how at risk they feel and the factors that influence their sense of risk and vulnerability

3. Explore what communications work best with this audience with regards to messaging, channel, partnerships, tone, etc
Methodology

- 5 x expert interviews
  - 2 from the Road Death Investigation unit (1 Senior Investigating Officer; 1 Accident Reconstruction Expert)
  - 3 from Age UK (Brand manager, London co-ordinator, Behaviour change expert)

- 6 x 1-hour accompanied journey & depths

- 6 x focus groups (1 or 1 ½ hours depending on age)
  - Please see breakdown of groups in Appendix

Short pre-task
(completed by all group respondents)
Headlines from the research
Headlines from the research

- Older people do not tend to feel they are any more vulnerable than any other pedestrians, unless they have a specific reason for feeling this way
  - They tend to feel more at risk from other pedestrians and the state of the pavements than from crossing the road
  - Crossing the road is something they have done all their lives; few have changed their approach to it in any significant way despite changes in infrastructure and road use
  - Many will ‘chance it’ by not using formal crossings, often on busy roads; Police see this as the most dangerous behaviour

- Communications around road safety need to...
  - **Target them subtly**, as part of a wider audience or via relevant partnership organisations
  - **Tell them something new**, to capture attention and avoid patronising them
  - **Present them with objective and inarguable information**, so that they know it applies to them
  - **Be hard-hitting yet positive**, via a solution or call to action
The context of being an older pedestrian in London
Age is objective; feeling ‘older’ is subjective

- The experience of getting older is subtle and not necessarily top of mind or embraced
- Physical experiences are those issues most likely to make people feel old:
  - Sense of slowing down
  - Aches and pains
  - Health issues
  - Landmark ages (e.g., 80)
- Those most likely to express a strong sense of aging have typically experienced a fundamental life-change:
  - Loss of a partner
  - Major health problem/operation
  - Loss of mobility
  - Cessation of driving

Differentiating factors

GENDER
- Men seem less inclined to consider the impact of the aging process: sense of bravado

AGE
- 65-74s only starting to accept it and often discuss older people as separate from themselves

Older people don’t necessarily feel older or particularly different from those around them
Older pedestrians do not see themselves as a unique group in London

- The same journeys for many of the same reasons
- They have the same habits, good and bad, that they have always had
- They feel they have the same attitudes to safety

For some, this is borne out in their lifestyle

- Still driving
- Using transport network to cross London
- Out and about every day
- Sometimes walking fairly long distances

Others have adapted their activity levels to their ability levels

- Walking shorter distances
- Relying more on public transport (esp. buses)
- More cautious about when then go for a walk

(Appplies to ‘old old’ group regardless of age, though more common among 75+)

Mindsets are similar to those they’ve always had regardless of activity levels and mobility
Older Pedestrians: Research Debrief

Reasons for walking are influenced by age

- **Time**: They have more time to make these journeys, and do so more often
- **Driving ability**: Some now walk because they can no longer drive
- **Routine**: Many have a daily/weekly routine which includes walking
- **Health**: A number ensure they walk regularly for health reasons
- **Pleasure**: Some clearly see walking as an end point in itself
- **Independence**: Walking represents a level of freedom and self-sufficiency which is important to many

Older pedestrians often seem more reliant on being a pedestrian; for some it is a fundamental part of their lifestyle
Older pedestrians tend to have a distinct set of concerns about being a pedestrian in London

Security

Obstacles

State of pavements/roads

Other pedestrians

Crossing the road rarely seen as a major concern
Road safety among this audience
Crossing the road rarely regarded as an issue in itself, though there are associated concerns

Few feel that they have changed their approach to crossing the road over the years

- Strong sense that they are just as good as they always were
- Some argue that older people are better at crossing as they;
  - Have years of experience
  - Tend to take more care
  - Focus on the job in hand
- Bad habits may also be unchanged over the years
  - Not always using crossings
  - ‘Chancing it’ on main roads

...but crossing the road has changed

- Pedestrians and traffic are far busier, more distracted and faster
- Lack of courtesy; more likely to receive abuse while waiting/crossing
- Drivers seem more dangerous and less familiar with road rules
- Far more likely to disobey ATS than they once were (esp. cyclists)
- Roads are often unmaintained
- Less time allowed at crossings

Good and bad habits remain relatively unchanged despite an increasingly competitive and combative crossing experience
Road safety seen as a matter of common sense and experience

**Experience as a pedestrian**

You have to take so much care at zebra crossings - they just don't stop now
Female, 65+

There are 3 crossings on Portsmouth road, but down ordinary streets there are none
Female, 65+

I still remember the Tufty Club rules
Female, 75+

**Experience as a driver**

I told my wife – if I'm knocked over sue them for everything because it won't be my fault
Male, 75+

I'm well aware of the stopping distances
Male, 65+

At this stage in the game, a broken bone is a disaster
Male, 75+

**Knowing the area**

Responding to increased pace and volume of traffic

**Road safety campaigns over the years**

Natural caution as a result of getting older
Crossing at a formal crossing is ideal but not guaranteed

Widely regarded as the most sensible (and preferred) option

**BUT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not always possible</th>
<th>Not always practical</th>
<th>Not always safest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some routes will not have crossings available</td>
<td>This can involve walking 100m+ out of their way</td>
<td>Many have experienced drivers disobeying lights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Does not appear to be a result of not knowing where crossings are</em></td>
<td>…not to mention another 100m to come back</td>
<td>Although uncommon, this is thought to be a definite risk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Police find it frustrating that their collision reports regularly refer to nearby crossings that could have been used
- Yet older pedestrians are arguably the least able/motivated to walk out of their way to use them
There is little/no sense of increased vulnerability due to age

‘Dashing’ and ‘darting’ are used liberally and sometimes with little consideration of mobility

Sometimes, if I want to go to a shop and it’s directly opposite, I’ll just nip across
Female, 85, Walking with a stick

Even though it’s a main road, I do prefer to dart over instead of going all the way to the crossing and all the way back
Female, 75+

There is often the suggestion of a slightly cavalier attitude to risk

I have to admit, I will chance it if it seems easier
Female, 65+

Although the risks are acknowledged, they are often downplayed and described in casual terms

I know I’m naughty – and my husband used to tell me off for it – but it’s just easier to pop over
Female, 75+

Many will discuss their crossing behaviour in the same terms they have used throughout their lives
Older people are very aware of the vulnerabilities of other pedestrians

- Boys are the worst, they’re followers – one will run across and the others will blindly follow. 
  Female, 65+

- Groups of young people are often too busy talking - they’re not paying attention. 
  Male, 75+

- She won’t be able to see much with that scarf around her face! 
  Female, 75+

- That’s a bit risky. She could easily trip on that bag strap, and she doesn’t have a spare hand to break her fall! 
  Male, 65+

- Parents with young kids tend to be distracted. In a split second the child could break free. 
  Female, 75+

- He’d be pretty safe, because he knows his limits. He probably goes on the same walk every day. 
  Male, 65+

- Well she’s blind and he’s deaf! 
  Male, 65+
Older people widely see themselves as less vulnerable than many other audiences

- **Distracted people**
  - Not concentrating
  - Not looking

- **Young people in general**
  - Walking in groups
  - Easily distracted
  - ‘Herd mentality’

- **Limited vision**
  - Clothes
  - Accessories
  - Health

- **People with children**
  - Attention focused elsewhere

- **Older people**
  - Slower, less mobile
  - Falls a greater risk
Messaging preferences
NB: Age UK follows particular guidelines for talking to an older audience

**Tone**
- Positive and incorporate humour where appropriate
- Avoid stereotyping and patronising

**Imagery**
- Always use positive images
  - ie avoid victimhood or helplessness
  - Be realistic but avoid showing people looking fragile
- Use intergenerational images

**Copy**
- Clear and legible;
  - Avoid small font sizes
  - Avoid using copy over images or a strong colour

**Voice-overs**
- Ensure voice-overs (TV or radio) are not too fast – repeat any essential information

Responses from older people themselves appeared to confirm much of Age UK’s approach
Preferred communications do not speak to them as ‘older people’

- When asked (in the pre-task) to identify comms that they feel are aimed at them, many are drawn to fairly mainstream examples...

- **Messaging:** Simple, informative messages tend to be preferred
- **Tone:** Clear, friendly and authoritative
- **Channel:** Newspapers and magazines are particularly popular; no clear consensus though general tendency towards Mail, Express and local papers; leaflets also popular, but only if actively selected (eg in Doctor’s waiting room)
Age-related communications are well received when done well, but risk various pitfalls

- Advertising aimed at older audiences often discussed negatively and dismissed

- Clichés they have tired of include:
  - Overtly-posed aspirational imagery
  - Unrealistically youthful models
  - Reinforcing sense of helplessness or incapacity
  - Dull colour schemes and visuals

- This audience is sensitive to being:
  - Patronised
  - Victimised
  - Labelled as stereotypically ‘old’
Communications need to reflect reality of aging in a positive way

The most compelling examples speak to their needs and offer solutions

Upfront about age-related issues without being negative

...offering them advantages linked to their age

And are delivered by credible, well-known organisations
Imagery needs to be aspirational and/or realistic and avoid clichés

Simple, realistically aspirational imagery works well

Images of older people work best if they are...

Natural and not stereotyped or obviously posed
NB: Particularly important if covering negative/sensitive subjects

Positive

Intergenerational
Existing older pedestrian leaflet was criticised

“wisdom of your years” appreciated by some, but often ignored

Information here and throughout is thought to be sensible yet also very basic. Leads some to feel patronised, especially with references to old-age ‘accessories’ such as glasses and hearing aids.

…and don’t put peas up your nose either! Do they think we’re children? Female, 75+

Images come across as artificial and overtly posed:
- Models who don’t look like real people
- Overly ‘youthful’
- Happy in a very posed fashion
- Clichéd London imagery
Road safety communications
### Stimulus: Message territories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Message</th>
<th>Derived from police interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always use a crossing when there is one to cross the road</td>
<td>HGVs may not see you – don’t cross in front of them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look out for traffic when there isn’t a crossing on which to cross the road</td>
<td>Vehicles on main roads are going faster than you think</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedestrians are three times more likely to be killed if they do not use a crossing to cross the road</td>
<td>A short walk to a crossing is worth the extra effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedestrians are three times safer using a crossing than not using one</td>
<td>Do you know where your local crossings are?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stimulus: Facts and statistics from desk research

**Accident stats**

Around 60% of all pedestrian casualties involve a car. The most common collision occurs when a pedestrian does not use a formal crossing and approaches the road from the same side as the oncoming vehicle.

Accidents that involve a pedestrian being struck by a vehicle which is turning or reversing is much higher amongst people aged 65+.

The majority of 65+ pedestrians killed or seriously injured occurred where there was no crossing within 50 meters.

**Eyesight / mobility**

People aged 65+ are less able to notice movement or to track objects moving at high speed, which affects reaction to vehicles as they start to move as well as the ability to follow the path of fast-moving vehicles.

Between the ages of 60 and 80, the amount of light needed for detection after the eyes have become fully adapted to darkness more than doubles.

Most pedestrians who are struck by cars do not see the vehicle that hits them at all, and many report that they looked but did not see it.

**Vulnerability**

Incidences of severe trauma increase significantly with age, starting at 7.4% in the paediatric group and increasing to 23.7% amongst those aged 65+.

Although they represent the smallest number of pedestrian casualties, pedestrians aged 75+ have the highest risk of death following an accident.

**Experiences / strategies**

Pedestrians aged 65+ spend more time looking at the ground on the approach to and while crossing the road and less time studying the traffic.

While pedestrians aged 65+ spent more time deciding when to cross the road, they were more likely to find themselves caught in traffic.
Road safety messages need to tell people something new

‘Common sense’ messages can be rejected for saying nothing new; they also risk patronising the audience

...yet those that build on such messages with new or interesting information can be engaging

Always use a crossing when there is one to cross the road

Look out for traffic when there isn’t a crossing on which to cross the road

Pedestrians are three times more likely to be killed if they do not use a crossing to cross the road

Pedestrians are three times safer using a crossing than not using one

HGVs may not see you – don’t cross in front of them
On balance, solutions are more motivating than fear

Pedestrians are three times more likely to be killed if they do not use a crossing to cross the road

Significant impact because…
- Many feel that they need scaring out of their current attitudes
- It reinforces what they already know
- The statistic is unsurprising yet still shocking
- It is a motivating reason to use a crossing where possible

Pedestrians are three times safer using a crossing than not using one

More powerful in some ways…
- It positions marked crossings as a solution to a recognisable problem
- The fear factor is implied rather than explicitly stated
- ‘Three times safer’ speaks to the more cautious nature of many older people without singling them out
Statistics and facts can be a powerful way of engaging this audience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MORE ENGAGING</th>
<th>LESS ENGAGING</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Shedding new light on or reframing what they already know</td>
<td>• Age-related but subjective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Collisions are most common when pedestrians do not use marked crossings</td>
<td>• Over 65s are less able to track objects moving at high speed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Age related without alienating</td>
<td>• Overly scientific or abstract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Over 75s represent the smallest number of collisions, but the highest risk of death</td>
<td>• Between 60-80 the amount of light needed after darkness more than doubles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Objective and inarguable</td>
<td>• Confusing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Risk of severe trauma increases significantly with age</td>
<td>• Most pedestrians struck by cars did not see the vehicle that hit them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Surprising</td>
<td>• NB: Engaging, but liable to divert attention to other matters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Accidents involving a pedestrian struck by a vehicle that is turning or reversing are far higher among 65+</td>
<td>• Majority of 65+ KSIs occurred where there was no crossing within 50m</td>
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For maximum impact with this audience, a message needs to meet three key criteria

- Objective and inarguable
- Interesting/useful Information
- Positive solution / call to action

If it conflicts with individual experience it can be rejected too easily

It needs to give people an idea of what to do, rather than simply provide information
Barriers to road safety messaging

- **Road safety is common sense**
  - There is a risk of patronising people by telling them what they already know

- **Older pedestrians aren’t the only people crossing the road**
  - They don’t want to feel that they are being singled out for special information and are sensitive to other audiences thinking they are less able

- **Older pedestrians aren’t perceived as the problem**
  - Many assume that drivers and certain other pedestrians are the key cause of collisions

- **Personal experience is difficult to argue with**
  - People feel that they know what they are doing, and that this is based on many years’ experience

- **It is too easy to be negative**
  - Road safety discussions can all too easily focus on the repercussions of a collision, which seems likely be a turn-off for some
Potential levers to work with

- **Falls/broken bones**
  - The impact of falling is inarguable and increasingly a worry as people get older; most will be open to communications aiming to prevent such a situation
  - Ideally this needs to be evidence-based to avoid patronising/victimising older people

- **Grandchildren**
  - Many say they always abide by the rules when out with children
  - There may be value in encouraging them to consider why they would act differently on their own

- **Acknowledging the sense of heightened awareness they feel they have**
  - Rather than challenging this, it may be useful to embrace it and point out what they may have already observed
    - *(eg the way other pedestrians cross at unmarked crossings, regardless of traffic)*

- **Empathy with concerns over courtesy and rule-breaking**
  - Communications that share their concerns over the perceived attitudes of road users are likely to be well received, especially if they offer a solution

- **Using driving as a comparator**
  - Talking to them as drivers, or as people who understand driving, may encourage some to engage more with road safety messages
Appropriate partnerships may contribute to stand out, credibility and engagement

- Provenance of information on road safety regarded as important:
  
  - May deal with the after effects of a collision, so clearly appropriate
  - Used to receiving information relating to various aspects of lifestyle
  - Liable to turn to posters, leaflets in such settings whilst waiting
  
  - A familiar source of information for some
  - Clearly targeting older people on relevant issues; have ‘permission’ to do so
  - ‘Age Concern’ still referred to by some (esp. men) so can be seen as focused on ‘old old’, deprived and immobile
  - Saga perceived by some as sending ‘too many’ communications
  
  - Makes sense given their involvement in London’s transport
  - Many outer Londoners didn’t consider themselves to live ‘in London’ and therefore struggled to see the relevance to TfL
  - Little sense of adding legitimacy or credibility
  - Dial-a-ride rarely thought relevant to walking (focus on immobility assumed)
  
  - More polarising as a potential partner
  - Clearly focused on order and safety on the roads
  - …but some have poor perceptions of effectiveness and there is an inherent link with the negative aspects of road safety
Channels need to conform to certain key requirements

Ensure that they do not feel singled out
- Most assume mainstream media will be most appropriate for this reason
- **Partnerships** with relevant organisations will be a subtler, less obvious means of targeting them

Avoid being too intrusive
- Email and direct mail are rejected by most for feeling invasive or for ‘flooding’ them
- **Newspapers** and **magazines** preferred because they can choose whether or not to read them

Engage with them when they are most receptive
- General acknowledgement that they are sometimes looking for something to read in certain circumstances
- Doctor/medical appointments are particularly seen as a point when they are actively looking for **leaflets**

Reach them when they need it most: in the moment
- Commonly thought that advertising where the behaviours take place would make sense
- **Bus-stop posters** seen as a sensible location

Localised channels **theoretically** a good idea
- Seems sensible to feature highly localised messages in their areas
- Yet not all read **local papers** and a number reject **local commercial radio stations**
Summary and Recommendations
Communications on road safety need to take into account the following:
- Older pedestrians do not believe that they are that different to, or any more vulnerable than, other pedestrians
- Their concerns about safety as a pedestrian tend to focus far more on the experience of walking on the pavement, and related obstacles, than crossing the road
- Their attitude to crossing the road is probably more cautious than might be expected of others, yet in terms of bad habits, largely unchanged

Older people in general do not want to be communicated with as old people
- They are relatively ad-savvy and are aware of the stereotypes and clichés that proliferate
- They are also sensitive to being patronised
- It seems likely that a road safety campaign aimed exclusively at older people is likely to fall foul of both of these issues

Crossing at marked crossings is clearly an important behaviour to change but it is entrenched and there are various practical obstacles, not least the fact that it is physically more arduous to do so
- Watching out for reversing vehicles could be another behaviour to address, but it may be worth exploring further whether this is definitely an issue among this audience
Recommendations (1)

- Targeting older people needs to be achieved…
  - **by addressing all pedestrians:** so they do not feel singled out
  - **by stealth:** through partnerships with age/health or other appropriate organisations
  - **by appealing to their unique concerns:** the hectic pace of London’s streets, a perceived drop in courtesy, the prevalence of obstacles on the pavements and security in general

- They do not reject road safety messages outright, but to engage with them they will need…
  - Other pedestrians to be (ostensibly) targeted before them
  - A clear, compelling reason to consider and change their behaviour
  - To hear something beyond the familiar ‘green cross code’ messages
    - Ideally something new
    - …and based on facts/evidence
  - To be presented with a persuasive argument that cannot be responded to subjectively
Recommendations (2)

Messages

- Behaviour change (e.g., using marked crossings) will ideally be part of a larger drive to change the behaviour of all pedestrians.
- Should reframe existing common sense knowledge, be based upon objective facts and provide a positive solution.
- Potential message areas (apart from crossing the road at unmarked crossings) include:
  - Crossing in front of HGVs
  - Crossing in front of static traffic
  - Safe crossing at marked crossings
  - Compelling reasons for walking further to a crossing, and how to mitigate this.

 Partners

- Both Age UK and NHS are credible and appropriate partners to work with.

Channels

- Leaflets in GP waiting rooms
- Bus stop ads
Appendix
# Methodology & sample

**5 x expert interviews**

| 2 x Policing/accidents | 3 x Communications and Aging |

**6 x accompanied journeys**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Depth</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>SEG</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>65-74</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>BC1</td>
<td>Kingston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>65-74</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>C2DE</td>
<td>Harrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>75+</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>BC1</td>
<td>Harrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>75+</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>C2DE</td>
<td>Kingston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>75+</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>C2DE</td>
<td>Richmond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>75+</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**6 x co-creation groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
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<td>Harrow</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*65-74 groups (1 ½ hour); 75+ groups (1 hour)

**Additional criteria:**
- Separate groups by gender, female skew to reflect longer life expectancy
- 50/50 split of BC1/C2DE based on previous occupation
- Mix of ‘old-old’ and ‘young-old’ in each group based on attitude and activity levels
- Sample will include some people who have mobility, visual or hearing impairments
- Overall sample will include a small number of people who also drive a car
- Research conducted by 2CV in March 2013