# Elderly UK adults feel isolated as driving becomes less accessible



A recent survey has revealed that a significant number of elderly individuals in the UK feel socially isolated due to their inability to drive. The poll, commissioned by Nissan and featuring responses from 1,000 adults aged 70 and over, indicates that one in four seniors experiences feelings of isolation linked to their driving status. Of those still behind the wheel, over half (53 per cent) express anxiety about losing their independence once they can no longer drive.

The research highlights that concerns about transportation are particularly pronounced in rural areas, where 36 per cent of non-drivers feel disconnected socially, compared to just nine per cent of non-drivers in urban settings. The survey also reveals that 63 per cent of respondents do not wish to rely on others for mobility.

In response to these findings, Nissan is actively exploring autonomous vehicle technology as a potential solution. The company's research indicates that 20 per cent of older people would accept a ride in a self-driving car to maintain their independence. In Bedfordshire, 93-year-old Brad Ashton, a retired comedy scriptwriter, recently had the opportunity to test drive an autonomous Nissan Leaf. Speaking about the experience, Ashton stated, “New technology like this is fantastic and it’s important to embrace it,” adding that his car is essential for his mobility, particularly as local public transport options are limited and not suitable for his wife.

The test drive, which took place around the village of Cranfield, was part of Nissan's 'evolvAD' project, which has logged over 16,000 miles of autonomous driving across various terrains in the UK, with no reported accidents. David Moss, senior vice president of research and development at Nissan, remarked on the importance of this technology, saying it could provide enhanced mobility options for elderly and disabled individuals. He emphasised that the project not only aims to improve road safety by significantly reducing human error but also strives to facilitate greater mobility access for those who might struggle due to age or location.

In light of the survey findings, it seems that many elderly people are not averse to technology. Approximately 42 per cent use social media platforms like Facebook to maintain connections, while 40 per cent are utilizing technology to combat loneliness. However, 35 per cent expressed a desire to learn more about technology to enhance their ability to stay connected.

Ashton voiced a positive outlook on the future of autonomous driving, suggesting that it could significantly benefit those who primarily rely on cars for social interaction and daily activities, particularly in less accessible areas. He also humorously noted the potential for future driverless cars to locate parking spaces, indicating a vision for technology that addresses everyday needs.

This ongoing research and public engagement signify a growing interest in how technological advancements, particularly in autonomous vehicles, may impact the independence and social connectedness of older populations in the years to come.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.racfoundation.org/motoring-faqs/mobility> - This URL provides information on the mobility of older people in the UK, including the proportion of older individuals holding driving licenses and the impact of driving on their independence.
* <https://www.gbnews.com/lifestyle/cars/elderly-drivers-driving-licence-requirements-proposals> - This article discusses the current rules and proposed changes for elderly drivers in the UK, highlighting concerns about safety and independence.
* <https://roadsafetygb.org.uk/news/motorists-think-senior-drivers-should-retake-their-test-survey-suggests/> - This survey suggests that many UK drivers believe senior drivers should retake their driving tests at a certain age, reflecting concerns about safety and ability.
* <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/travel-mobility/driving/older-drivers/> - This resource from Age UK offers guidance on driving for older people, including advice on maintaining independence and assessing fitness to drive.
* <https://www.gov.uk/driving-licence-renew> - This official UK government page explains the process for renewing a driving license, including the requirements for drivers over 70.
* <https://www.nissan.co.uk/innovation/autonomous-driving.html> - Nissan's page on autonomous driving technology highlights their efforts to develop vehicles that can enhance mobility for elderly and disabled individuals.