

DERRIÈRE LES APPARÉNCES

#2

MAY 2025

seniors

**who didn't want
to celebrate
their birthday**



In Western Europe, aging population is becoming as important of an issue as the ecological and digital transitions. In France, between 2010 and 2021, the number of people aged over 60 (3.1 million) has increased more than the overall population (2.7 million). The number of 75 to 84 years-old will increase by 50% between 2020 and 2030, from 4 to 6 million people. This sharp increase will have an impact on the way Keolis addresses passengers.



« FRANCE IS
AGING AND
WE'RE LOOKING
AWAY

KEO
SCOPIE

IMAGINING TOMORROW'S MOBILITY

1. So far so good : Denial of aging

A study by the Silver Economy reveals the difference in perception between real age and perceived age. This difference increases with age, and is greater for intellectual age. The gap with intellectual age is seven years at age 50 (a 50-year-old senior perceives himself to be 43), and sixteen years at age 80. The age gap for physical age is smaller: a 50-year-old senior feels 47 years old (three years younger), and an 80-year-old feels 71 years old (nine years younger). This perception influences their expectations in terms of mobility, housing and adapted infrastructures.



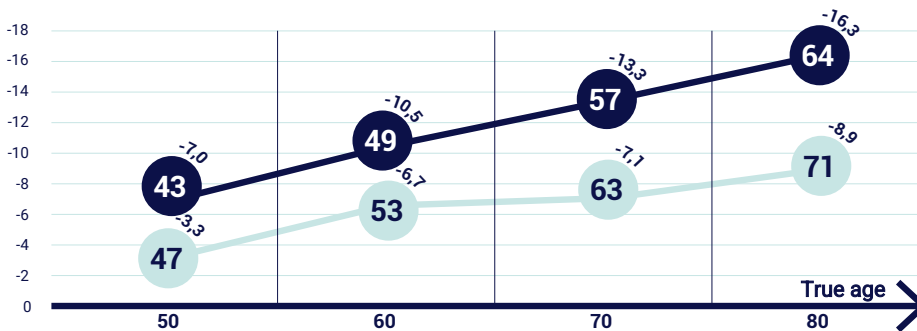
"My 104-year-old mother doesn't use a cane, because canes are for old people!"

In many ways, the boundaries of old age are being redrawn. In the study carried out by Keolis at the end of 2024, participants were almost unanimous: it's not so much age that makes a senior as their state of fitness, autonomy and possible projection into the future. Many of them refuse to fall into a category that assigns them to frailty. "I'm a dynamic retiree and I intend to stay that way for a long time, because old age is in the mind," sums up one participant. "So far, so good," says another. The people we interviewed live from day to day as if this will continue for a long time to come. This desire to escape age-related restrictions is accompanied by a very particular relationship with time. Many aspire to a life free of the constraints that still exist: medical appointments, looking after grandchildren, associative commitments... This is not empty time, it's time "reinvested", but according to their own rules.



"I'm a dynamic retiree, and I plan to stay that way for a long time, because age is just a number"

What dominates is the desire to stay in motion. "Nothing has changed, it's the same as before". For the participants in the study, it's not a question of denying age, but of neutralizing its most stigmatizing effects. We remain active, visible, useful - not just for ourselves - but as an act of resistance, facing a society that often invisibilizes the elderly. This also explains the unease some people may feel about seniors living together. Living with "old people" means seeing each other in Through the prism of aging - an unflattering mirror, sometimes considered brutal. What many people are looking for is not so much generational seclusion as an extension of their active adult lifestyles, in mixed, lively, stimulating environments. "I prefer to see people younger than me because people my age are always complaining: 'it hurts here, or here'... I used to have one or two friends like that in my circle who I don't see anymore".



Source: "Baromètre Qui sont les Seniors en 2023" / IFS - GPMA - Baromètre Seniors
- February 2023 - <https://www.silvereco.fr/qui-sont-les-seniors-en-2023/311609912>

> A 70-year-old senior feels physically like a 63-year-old and intellectually like a 57-year-old.

2. Seniors anchored to their living environment

In France, the vast majority of elderly people continue to live at home. At the age of 90, 75% of them still live at home. It's only from the age of 98 onwards that half of all women live in retirement home. Although these establishments house some 600,000 people, they remain the exception rather than the rule. As soon as they retire - and even more so as they get older - seniors anchor their everyday life

in their close living environment ; shopping in local shops, visit the same specialized stores, choosing activities by their proximity. This lifestyle corresponds to a strong desire not to leave the place where they live, for economic, emotional or practical reasons, or simply out of attachment to the area. Staying at home is also explained by the idea that "leaving is too expensive",



"I'm well settled, if life allows me to go on like this, I'll stay here."

but above all through a network of ties built up over time: friends, family, habitus so many powerful anchors that make leaving unthinkable, especially when you're alone. Even though retirement could be the ideal time to move in terms of And while we've always tried to find the right "timing", most of the couples we've met have seen their plans for a new life derailed by their now more limited financial resources.

3. Walking to stay alive



"I keep moving, even if physically I don't do things at the same pace as before: I don't walk. not at the same speed, I have problems with dizziness and my biggest fear is falling."

Mobility is not a luxury for the elderly: it's a prerequisite for their autonomy. It enables resilience against the insidious process of people gradually giving up certain activities, such as gardening, going out in the evening, walking in town - because the body tires or the environment is no longer perceived as safe. The participants we met were very insistent on the need to get out on foot regularly: "You can't escape the fact that your body ages, but you can maintain it by going for a walk."

However, according to the Broussy report "We'll grow old together",

in the 65+ age group, nearly a third of people do not leave their homes on any given day. This rate rises to 30% over a full week for those aged 85 and over. It's a concern for participants: "I make an effort to walk. For example, I go to my bank downtown; I could do it on the Internet, but it gives me the opportunity to walk."

With half of all people over 75 suffering from long-term illness, the quality of the environment plays a key role. It's not enough to want to move. It's all about feeling capable and safe. A sidewalk that's too high, a bus that brakes suddenly, poorly designed stairs... and mobility becomes a source of anxiety. Public transport has a social role to play. Provided they are designed to reassure, they can become a lever to avoid becoming stuck in his own house

4. Seniors and public transport: The divorce?

Again, according to the Broussy report, only 5% of journeys by people aged 65 and over are made by public transport, compared with over 8% for the population as a whole. This low use does not reflect a lack of need, but rather a form of distance, sometimes a lack of confidence, in a system perceived as un reassuring.



"Taking the bus gets more complicated as you get older. You've hardly set foot on the bus when it starts up suddenly."

Travelling by bus or metro requires a physical, mental and social agility that not everyone has: navigating connections, anticipating stops, understanding timetables, deciphering ticketing... all obstacles that become obstacles. Then there's the jolting, the jostling, the fear of falling, the anxiety of not getting off in time. And yet, the bus can also be a relief, an alternative to driving fatigue. This contrast expresses the ambivalence: public transport is useful, and sometimes indispensable for accessing the city center, but it is considered unreliable, irregular and, above all, ill-suited to age-related frailties. The streetcar benefits from a more soothing image: level access, better legibility,



"I take the buses a lot less. We're too shaken up."

a transport mode that breaks down physical and mental barriers. However, the feeling of insecurity, particularly at night, also limits its use: "When you're on your own, the streetcar is still less safe than the car. Nevertheless, hybrid uses are emerging: public transport used to complement walking or driving, depending on ability and mood. We walk on the way out "because we're in shape"; we take the bus on the way back "because we're tired". The bus then becomes a punctual but precious aid. The true potential of public transport for seniors lies in this complementarity - not in a strict logic of substitution. Provided that we reassure, adapt and make use of public transport more fluid.

5. The challenge of keeping in touch digitally

For many seniors, the hyperconnected society marks a break in human relations, as one of the participants in the Keolis survey testifies: "In public transport, young people don't always get up, and we can't ask anything because they're all on their phones. Generally, I don't say anything because I don't want to make a fuss"

And yet, seniors are not rejecting technology. They recognize its virtues - for keeping in touch, for information, for orientation. The figures confirm this challenge. According to the Keolis digital study (2024), 88% of 65-74 year-olds and 84% of those aged 75 and over have access to Internet at home.

Yet only 66% of the over-75s use the Internet daily, compared with over 90% of the under-50s. Like 87% of the French population, most seniors believe that digital tools makes travel easier. Mobility websites and applications are among the most frequently used, particularly for trip preparation and reassurance. Even if it's not always easy for them, and they sometimes need support. One participant sums up a fairly common state of mind: "I feel a bit out of touch, but I try anyway."

CONCLUSION

Supporting the change of pace



It would be simplistic to regard senior citizens as a homogeneous group. Between the ages of 65 and 90, people's backgrounds, needs and abilities vary considerably. This diversity calls for differentiated responses.

As long as they remain independent, seniors share the expectations of other citizens: to be able to go out, to participate, to choose. Mobility plays a key role here. It's more than just getting around: it's a lever for autonomy, social cohesion and dignity.

A stop 100 meters away, public transport at different times of the day and year, clear information, an attentive driver, these are the details that make the difference between a possible exit and a silent renunciation.

Providing accessible, reassuring and permanent mobility means offering people who are aging the chance to remain present in the city. It means delaying dependency, avoiding isolation and prolonging freedom.

Growing old doesn't mean stopping. It's a change of pace. It's up to Keolis to keep up.