

What About Age?

The likelihood of a given pilot becoming involved in an accident can be estimated in a number of ways: total time and recent experience perhaps are the most popular throughout the industry. But can age also have an impact?

Most formal studies conducted to determine the relative safety of older vs. younger pilots were designed with airline pilots and the Age 60 (now 65) rule in mind. Meanwhile, the AOPA Air Safety Institute (ASI) published a summary of related research and made some recommendations in its *Aging And The General Aviation Pilot* publication.

The ASI publication basically notes meaningful conclusions are hard to come by for a number of reasons, including potential shortcomings of NTSB data. According to ASI, two studies conducted in the 1980s are perhaps the most broad-based. “These publications analyzed accident data for several groups of pilots with different characteristics—age, certificate level, profession, medical certification, total time, and recent experience—and found multiple interactions between the various factors. Very generally speaking, older pilots with low total and recent flight time tended to fare worse than their younger counterparts of similar experience, while older pilots with high total and recent flight time did as well or better.”

