

## **Traffic Psychology: The importance of psychological assessment, risk behavior and driver's perception**

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### **Summary Presentation**

The main objective of this presentation is to report the data obtained in Portugal, with a study to 574 participants, during the end of 2012 and all the 2013, in a specializing company in driver psychological assessment. Respondents subjects were drivers and/or learner drivers of G2 when obtaining the license or renewing it from 50 years old onwards, drivers in categories B and BE who drove ambulances, fire engines, taxis, or who wanted to transport school children, materials considered dangerous or must had the equivalence to the Portuguese License. All subjects were subject to mandatory psychological evaluation in accordance with the legally established criteria (Decree-Law (313/2009 of 27 October).

The Traffic Psychology has therefore grown over the years as an area of research and application, which has seen the development of several theoretical models. Despite this long path in which the traffic psychology has evolved and obtained recognition at present, increasingly the necessity of psychological evaluation for fit to drive. These questions are primarily based on the validity of psychological tests used and the psychologist's ability to assess the candidate's profile. Despite some uncertainties, the community at large is aware that the psychological evaluation is essential to select drivers, as it ensures the existence of specific parameters to assess and measure (Gouveia, Silva, Silva, Andrade, Son and Costa, 2002).

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In 2002, Gouveia et al., found that the population in general considers the effective psychological assessment, although some consider it unnecessary. According to the authors, perhaps because it makes time consuming and costly license. Also Lamounier and Rueda (2005) found that most of their sample considered relevant psychological evaluation and, moreover, the people believes that this kind of evaluation allows to identify risk factors which may lead to decrease high accident rates. Furthermore, the authors aimed to understand whether those who obtained driving skills most valued psychological assessment than those who renewed, and verified that the candidates for driving defend more psychological assessment than the actual drivers.

In Portugal the assessment of drivers aims to analyze perceptive-cognitive, psychomotor and psychosocial aspects, aiming to select individuals who are in fact psychologically able to the practice of a safe and responsible driving.

Our goal was to assess the existence of a causal relationship between what are the expectations and opinions of candidates and effective drivers regarding the mandatory psychological assessment to obtain or revalidate certain driving titles and their effective behavior on the road. For this, we considered as effective indicator the number of infractions that subjects reported that have committed since have their driving license. We considered here all types of road offenses however making after the distinction between what is considered minor, serious or very serious under the current Portuguese law. With this study, we want to present the opinions of drivers and future drivers about the importance of psychological assessment and the psychologist's role, trying to understand if those which record more offender's behaviors are those who much devalue this type of assessment.

Thus our ambition is to contribute to the development and dignifying of an area with widespread impact globally and reflect on the need of the existence of a psychological evaluation that is common across Europe.....

**Author's CV:**

Maria de Fátima Pereira da Silva, Coimbra (Portugal) is a consultant in Traffic Psychology since 1989, she is member of Traffic Psychology International (TPI) and the German Society for Traffic Psychology (DGVP). She has been a Professor at the Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra (Portugal) since 1999, and a CEO in the human resources company "InOutCister, Lda" since 2007 where she assumes the coordination of training courses and psychological assessment of drivers. She is part of the Committee of Experts for defining the rules of evaluation of drivers in Portuguese Association Psychologists.