



Media Information

Multiple Driving Personalities Clash on Europe's Roads

Research conducted by the LSE and Goodyear reveals seven driving personalities

Brussels, Belgium, August 13, 2015 – Whether on summer holidays, or commuting to work, the time people spend on the road can be a stressful and frustrating experience, as indicated by social psychologists from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE).

An ongoing study on the social psychology of road safety conducted jointly by LSE and tire manufacturer Goodyear, has identified different ways that people respond when they interact with other drivers on the road. These are based on how they deal with their own feelings and their uncertainty as to the behavior of other road users.

Through focus groups and in-depth interviews with European drivers, researchers found seven personalities frequently manifest themselves:

- 1) **The Teacher**: needs to make sure other drivers know what they have done wrong and expects recognition of his/her efforts to teach others.
- 2) **The Know-it-all**: thinks he/she is surrounded by incompetent fools and contents themselves with shouting condescendingly at other drivers while being protected in their own car.
- 3) **The Competitor:** needs to get ahead of all other drivers and is annoyed when someone gets in the way of that. He/she might accelerate when someone tries to overtake them or close a gap to prevent anyone from getting in front of them.
- 4) **The Punisher**: wants to punish other drivers for any perceived misbehavior. Might end up getting out of his/her car or approaching other drivers directly.
- 5) **The Philosopher:** accepts misbehavior easily and tries to rationally explain it. Manages to control his/her feelings in the car.
- 6) The Avoider: treats misbehaving other drivers impersonally, dismisses them as a hazard.
- 7) **The Escapee:** listens to music or talks on the phone to insulate him/herself. Escapees distract themselves with selected social relationships so that they do not have to relate to any of the other drivers on the road. It's also a strategy for not getting frustrated in the first place.

These 'driving personalities' emerge in different situations when drivers interact with others on the road.

"Much of the time we can sit happily in the comfortable bubble of our car, but around any corner we may have to interact with other drivers. This makes the road a challenging and uncertain social environment. While we may worry about others' driving, this research suggests that their behavior also depends on what we do. We create the personalities that we don't like. From a psychological point of view, these different types of personalities

The Punisher: "I eyeball people all the time." – Focus *Group driver*

The Philosopher: "Most of the time I don't get stressed. Everybody is just in a hurry." – Focus Group driver

represent different outlets that drivers use to deal with their frustrations and strong feelings. We are





not always entirely one or the other. Depending on the situation and the interaction with others, most of us will find several of these profiles emerge," explained Dr. Chris Tennant, social psychologist, who is leading the research project at LSE.

The Avoider: "Annoying drivers are a hazard to me, I need to move away from them." – Focus Group driver

"Most of these behaviors can lead to dangerous situations on the road. Understanding what type of behavior we exhibit and what situations provoke it is a first step for all of us to better control it, thereby creating a safer driving environment for ourselves and others on

the road. Besides effective enforcement of laws against aggressive driving; education and life—long learning remain the most powerful public strategies to address this social and emotional aspect of driving and to achieve the greatest improvements in road safety," recommended Olivier Rousseau, Goodyear vice president consumer tires in Europe, Middle East and Africa.

The personality types emerged out of the first part of the joint research project, which takes a qualitative look into driving behavior through focus groups and in-depth interviews. With the research, LSE and Goodyear are seeking to identify how drivers influence each other's behavior on the road.

The Escapee: "I love to get in my car and just go about my business and do what I need to do." – Focus *Group driver*

The second part of the project is a pan-European study across 15 countries. The final results and analysis of the European-wide study are expected in October.

About Goodyear

Goodyear is one of the world's largest tire companies. It employs approximately 67,000 people and manufactures its products in 50 facilities in 22 countries around the world. Its two Innovation Centers in Akron, Ohio and Colmar-Berg, Luxembourg strive to develop state-of-the-art products and services that set the technology and performance standard for the industry.

About LSE

The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) is one of the foremost social science universities in the world. LSE is a specialist university with an international intake and a global reach. Its research and teaching span the full breadth of the social sciences, from economics, politics and law to sociology, anthropology, accounting and finance. Founded in 1895, the School has an outstanding reputation for academic excellence. 16 Nobel Prize winners have been LSE staff or alumni. The School has a cosmopolitan student body, with around 9,500 full time students from 140 countries. LSE has a staff of over 3,000, with about 46 per cent drawn from countries outside the UK.

Notes for editors

Data from prior research on young drivers (under 25):

- 65% of young drivers have more in-car distractions today than ever before
- 40% of young drivers are willing to take more risks
- 29% of young drivers are less likely to follow the advice they received during driver training





- 29% of young drivers do not see the value in driving lessons
- 76% of driving instructors want parents to set a better example for their children

The latest edition of Goodyear's White Paper 'Driving Safety First: Improving road safety for novice drivers,' can be downloaded <u>here</u>.

The full results of previous road safety surveys commissioned by Goodyear are available on request.

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