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TITLE: An Evaluation of California's Drivers Licensing Examination

DATE: March 1976

AUTHOR(S): Dell R. Dreyer

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PROTECT OBTECTIVE:

To assess the ability of the written knowledge test and the drive test to screen out accident-prone drivers; to provide descriptive data on the licensing process, with particular interest in the performance of older drivers.

SUMMARY:

During two 2-week survey periods, data were collected on a total of 8,905 California driver's license applicants. Only the written test appeared to have some predictive validity-better performance tended to be associated with fewer accidents and convictions. Females tended to do better on the written test, worse on the drive test, and have fewer accidents than males.

The percentage of applicants licensed within 6 months of the survey date (the normal retention period for driver's license applications at that time) was 75%, 95%, and 91% for first-time, out-of-state, and renewal applicants, respectively. Within two years of the survey date, the percentage licensed had increased to 95%, 99%, and 96%, respectively.

Older renewal applicants performed worse on both the written and drive tests than did those who were younger. There was no difference in the percentage ultimately screened out by the written test for different age groups. The drive test did apparently prevent a larger percentage of older applicants from getting their licenses renewed.

IMPLEMENTATION STATUS OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

No action was recommended, as changes in both written and drive tests had occurred since data collection for this study. These changes were critically evaluated in subsequent studies (see Selective Testing project series: Harrington, Report #44; Carpenter, Reports #52, #61, #63, #65; Ratz, Reports #62, #64).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

None.