

ROAD SAGE

Most Canadians say they are good drivers, but admit to pulling moves that would enrage them

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SPECIAL TO THE GLOBE AND MAIL

PUBLISHED YESTERDAY

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Pollara Strategic Insights recently released the results of its February “Rage Index.” The research firm had 1,510 randomly selected adults complete an online survey designed to measure the country’s mood. The Pollara February edition zeroed in on the [“Road Rage Index”](#) to discover how angry Canadians are on the highways.

Respondents were asked the question “How would you rate your driving abilities?”

- 86 per cent said average (43 per cent) or above average (43 per cent).
- 12 per cent said they didn’t drive.
- 53 per cent of men said they were above average.
- 33 per cent of women said they were above average.
- Out of the entire sample, 1 per cent of drivers “rated their driving abilities as below average.”

I feel qualified to weigh in on the findings. Along with being the Road Sage columnist, I have an extensive science and math background, having successfully completed all math and science courses offered in the late 1980s by Nepean High School in Ottawa up to Grade 11. I would have passed Grade

12 Biology and Chemistry, but I failed (Biology with a 42 and Chemistry with a 47) because my teachers were jealous of my natural gifts.

If we believe Pollara Strategic Insight's findings (which I do) then we can conclude:

- 13 per cent of respondents told the truth: the 12 per cent who don't drive and the 1 per cent who said they were "below average."
- 86 per cent lied.
- Canadian women are less likely to lie than Canadian men.

Let's begin with the 1 per cent, the folks who admitted they were below average. To quote Nick Carraway, the narrator of *The Great Gatsby*, to his paramour Jordan Baker, "You're a rotten driver. Either you ought to be more careful or you oughtn't to drive at all."

Driving is dangerous and requires skill. If you know you are bad, stop.

Imagine asking a surgeon, "How would you rate your surgery abilities?" and getting the answer "Oh, I'm below average."

Imagine asking a knife-thrower, "How are your knife-throwing abilities?" and getting the reply "Not great. Knife-throwing-wise I rate my ability as below average."

[In our self-driving future, why must we corrupt cars by turning them into offices?](#)

We should reserve some empathy for the 1 per cent. They face a steep challenge. If only there was some way to improve one's driving ability. If only there were schools available nationwide that offered classes and lessons that allowed one to develop and improve one's driving skills. We can only dream...

At least the 1 per cent were being honest.

The 86 per cent who claimed to be average and above average were either willfully deceitful or deluding themselves. Sixty-four per cent of drivers who said they were enraged by those who blow through red lights, speed, fail to signal or tailgate admitted to doing at least one of the very acts they despise. Forty-five per cent admitted to driving too fast. Sixteen per cent admitted to driving too slowly. Of the "above average" drivers, 52 per cent said they drove too fast, and 11 per cent said they don't let people merge.

In other words, these drivers are “above average” at being “below average.”

My analysis of the data reveals a correlation between the self-awareness of Canadian drivers and the paradox found in the Second World War-era novel *Catch-22*. In Joseph Heller’s 1961 absurdist masterpiece, pilots who are deemed to be suffering from insanity are not required to fly bombing missions. Captain John Yossarian, the book’s protagonist, does not want to fly and claims insanity, but is told by camp psychiatrist “Doc Daneeka,” that there is a catch.

[What’s old is new when it comes to battling auto theft](#)

“Sure there’s a catch. *Catch-22*. Anyone who wants to get out of combat duty isn’t really crazy.”

Pilots who maintain they are insane are considered sane because only someone who was insane would want to risk his life, so they must keep flying. Pilots who do not maintain they are insane are never evaluated and must keep flying. Yossarian must keep flying.

Let’s apply the *Catch-22* paradox to the Pollara Strategic Insight survey.

- Respondents who said they “don’t drive” told the truth and should not be driving.
- Respondents who said they were “below average” told the truth and should not be driving.
- Respondents who said they were “average” lied or are delusional and are “below average” and should not be driving.
- Respondents who said they were “above average” really lied or are really delusional and are “below average” and should not be driving.

Conclusion: 100 per cent of Canadian drivers should not be driving.

That’s some catch, that *Catch-22*.

To borrow a line from Mr. Heller, “It’s the best there is.”

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/drive/mobility/article-most-canadians-say-they-are-good-drivers-but-admit-to-pulling-moves/>