

Driver Courtesy on Decline In BC

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Half (49%) Say Drivers in Their Community are Less Courteous than Five Years Ago

British Columbians Tend to See Themselves as More Courteous than Other Drivers on the Road

A new Ipsos Reid poll in British Columbia, conducted on behalf of ICBC, shows that many BC drivers believe that driver courtesy has declined in their community in the past five years. The poll also shows that many British Columbians think that they personally are more courteous than other drivers on the road.

Change in Courtesy in Past Five Years

Half (49%) of BC drivers say that over the last five years, drivers in their community have become less courteous. This compares to only 3% who say that drivers have become more courteous and 46% who say driver courtesy has stayed about the same.

A perception that driver courtesy has worsened is more prevalent among Lower Mainland drivers (55% say less courteous) than among Interior/North drivers (43% say less courteous) and Vancouver Island drivers (39% say less courteous).

British Columbians give other drivers in their community an average letter grade of C+ for being courteous on the road. Only one-third (32%) of drivers give other drivers in their community a grade of A or B for courtesy. Almost half (46%) give other drivers in their community a grade of C, while 21% give other drivers a grade of D or F.

Ratings of other drivers in the community are slightly worse in the Lower Mainland (average grade of C) than in the Interior North (average grade of C+) or Vancouver Island (average grade of C+).

British Columbia drivers are more positive in their assessments of their own behaviour at being courteous on the road. In fact, British Columbia drivers give themselves an average letter grade of B+, or a full letter grade better than they assigned to other drivers in their community. Most drivers (82%) graded themselves as either an A or B. Just 16% gave themselves a grade of C and only 1% gave themselves a low grade of D or F.

Across all regions of the province, drivers gave themselves a full letter grade better than they gave to other drivers. Self ratings were slightly worse in the Lower Mainland (average grade of B) than in the Interior/North (average grade of B+) or Vancouver Island (average grade of B+).

Prevalence of Discourteous Behaviours

The vast majority of drivers (94%) report experiencing at least some type of discourteous behaviour from other drivers in the past three months. The most common behaviours experienced from other drivers include signalling late or not at all (82%), tailgating (73%), not being allowed to merge (63%) and being cut off (48%).

British Columbia drivers are much less likely to say that they have shown a lack of courtesy to other drivers in the past three months. Four-in-ten (40%) drivers say they haven't done any of the 12 tested discourteous behaviours in this timeframe. The most frequently admitted to behaviours include honking at others in anger (25%), signalling late or not at all (17%), tailgating (10%) and not allowing others to merge (9%).

Paying Courtesy Forward

British Columbians believe that showing courtesy to others will encourage everyone to become more courteous. More than eight-in-ten drivers (83%) agree with the statement that "If I show someone courtesy on the road, they're more likely to be courteous to someone else," including three-in-ten (31%) who "agree strongly". Only 14% of drivers disagree with statement, including just 3% who "disagree strongly".

The Importance of the Wave

British Columbia drivers overwhelmingly use a wave as their acknowledgement to other drivers who show them courtesy (e.g., letting you merge in front of them) on the road. Nine-in-ten (91%) drivers say they are most likely to wave, as compared to 4% who smile and 3% who give a head nod. Only 2% of drivers admit they generally don't acknowledge other drivers who show them courtesy.

British Columbians also want other drivers to acknowledge them when they show courteous behaviour. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of BC drivers say it is important to them that other drivers acknowledge their courteous driving behaviour with a wave, head nod, smile or some other signal, including two-in-ten (20%) who say this reinforcement is “every important”. Three-in-ten (31%) say this acknowledgement is “not very important” and only 4% say it is “not at all important”.

Receiving an acknowledgement such as a wave is more important to women (70% say it is important) than to men (58% say it is important).

These are the findings of an online Ipsos Reid poll of 899 adult British Columbia drivers (drive at least one hour per week) conducted using Ipsos Reid’s online household panel between June 9 and 12, 2011. A survey with an unweighted probability sample of this size and a 100% response rate would have an estimated margin of error of ± 3.3 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

The margin of error would be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual BC population according to 2006 Census data.

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