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Dangerous drivers and traffic congestion are seen as major problems, according to BC drivers

Almost all love convenience of having a car, but half say it is a struggle to pay the bills attached to a car

Three-quarters believe cars will still be with us 100 years from now with new technology replacing gas-powered engines

May 27, 2006: According to a new survey of drivers in British Columbia, the most important issues related to driving are dangerous drivers and traffic congestion. In fact, two-thirds (65%) say that unsafe drivers are a critical problem that requires immediate action (32%) or is a significant problem that needs to be dealt with soon (33%). Traffic congestion (52%; critical problem 24%, significant problem 28%) comes in second place, followed by air quality (41%; critical problem 15%, significant problem 26%). Just under three-in-ten (28%) describe the amount of land committed to roads and parking lot as critical (10%) or significant problem (18%). The survey was conducted by **Innovative Research Group** on behalf of the **British Columbia Automobile Association (BCAA)**.

Further, approximately two-thirds (63%) of BC drivers agree that 'more and more it seems when people get behind the wheel of their cars, they drop all their manners' and become much nastier. An equal proportion (63%) say the issue of bad drivers makes them 'crazy'. However, just 16 per cent report being nervous when they drive.

Despite the problems of driving, such as congestion and dangerous drivers, over nine-in-ten (94%) say they 'love the convenience of having a car to get around', while approximately three-quarters (71%) agree that their 'life would be turned upside down if [they] did not have a car'. Further, almost as many (68%) say that 'one of the real pleasures in life is driving on an open road' and a majority (56%) view driving alone as a time to relax and have a break. While they may enjoy their vehicles and driving in general, just one-third (36%) report that their car is their 'pride and joy'.

However, despite the enjoyable aspects of having a car, there are some downsides. For instance, half (52%) of respondents agree that 'it is a struggle to pay all the bills that come with owning a car.' In addition to the monetary costs of owning a vehicle, there are also the environmental concerns. A majority (55%) of BC drivers concur with the statement that 'cars are an environmental plague on

this planet', while three-quarters (73%) disagree with the proposition that cars are really not much of an environmental problem.

However, while they may think about the environmental impact, only three-in-ten (30%) say that "every time I use my car I feel guilty about the impact I am having on the environment." Further, three-quarters (75%) agree with the statement that "I know driving a car is bad for the environment, but there are a lot of other things that are much worse."

Finally, when asked about what the future may hold for vehicles over the next 100 years, over three-quarters (78%) believe that 'cars will remain our main mode of personal transportation, but powered by new technology such as hybrid-electric engines or hydrogen fuel cells.' This compares to just one-in-ten (10%) who say that "cars will be forced out of cities in favour of public transit, walking and cycling." Further, just one-in-twenty (6%) believe 'cars will be replaced by some other form of personal transportation'. Just five per cent believe things will continue on as now with cars with gas-powered engines remaining as our main mode of personal transportation.

Methodology

These are the findings of a study conducted by Innovative Research Group on behalf of the British Columbia Automobile Association. A random sample of 619 drivers in British Columbia was interviewed by telephone between April 27th and May 4th, 2006. A sample of this size is considered accurate to within $\pm 3.9\%$, 19 times out of 20. Data was weighted according to the 2001 Census to reflect the actual demographic breakdown.

Detailed Findings

Perceived Problems

Two-thirds (65%) say that unsafe drivers are a critical problem that requires immediate action (32%) or is a significant problem that needs to be dealt with soon (33%). Traffic congestion (52%; critical problem 24%, significant problem 28%) comes in second place, followed by air quality (41%; critical problem 15%, significant problem 26%). Just under three-in-ten (28%) describe the amount of land committed to roads and parking lot as critical (10%) or significant problem (18%).

- There are significant differences in the views of drivers depending on their location in the province. For example, drivers in the lower mainland suburbs (41%) are more likely to view traffic congestion as a critical issue than are those in either the City of Vancouver (23%) or in the rest of the province (12%). On the other hand, the view that air quality is a critical issue is greater in the City of Vancouver (23%) than outside of the lower mainland (11%).
- However, drivers throughout the province are equally likely to say that unsafe drivers in their community are a critical problem (City of Vancouver 34%; lower mainland suburbs 32%; outside lower mainland 31%).
- The size of vehicle driven does not appear to affect views on how critical each issue is, with one exception. Respondents who drive full-sized cars, vans, trucks or an SUV (36%) are more likely than those who drive small economy cars (26%) to say that unsafe drivers in their community are a critical problem.

Road Rage

Approximately two-thirds (68%) of BC drivers agree that “more and more it seems when people get behind the wheel of their cars, they drop all their manners and become a much nastier person”. In total, three in ten (31%) disagree.

- Agreement with this position is higher among those who drive mid-sized cars (73%) than those who drive full-sized cars, vans, trucks or SUVs (63%) or economy cars (55%).
- This view is more likely to be shared by drivers in Vancouver (69%) than those outside the lower mainland (60%).

The issue of bad drivers makes just under two-thirds (63%) ‘crazy’ while one-third (32%) disagree with this suggestion.

- Drivers in Vancouver (71%) are more likely to agree that bad drivers make them ‘crazy’, than those in the rest of the province (61%).
- This feeling declines with age. While approximately three-quarters (75%) of those under 35 agree with this proposition, agreement declines to less than half (48%) of those 65 and older.

Despite the issue with bad drivers, just 15 per cent report being nervous when they drive, while eight-in-ten (82%) say they do not get nervous when they are driving.

- Women (19%) are more likely to report being nervous when driving than men (11%).

Freedom and Control: The Driving Experience

Despite the problems of driving, such as congestion and dangerous drivers, over nine-in-ten (94%) say they ‘love the convenience of having a car to get around’, compared to just four per cent who disagree.

- Location seems to play a part in agreement with this suggestion. Those outside of the lower mainland (96%) are significantly more likely to agree with this idea than those in the City of Vancouver (89%).

Approximately three-quarters (72%) agree that their ‘life would be turned upside down if [they] did not have a car’. Just over one-quarter (28%) disagrees with this statement.

- Not surprisingly, this belief is significantly stronger among drivers outside of the lower mainland (77%) and the lower mainland suburbs (75%), where public transit is less frequent, than by those within the City of Vancouver (45%).
- Respondents who drive for personal use, at least 3 times a week (95%) are more likely to agree with this suggestion than are those who drive infrequently (86%).

Seven-in-ten (68%) drivers say that ‘one of the real pleasures in life is driving on an open road’ compared to one-quarter (23%) who disagree with this suggestion.

- This feeling is more likely to be held by men (76% vs. 61% of women) and those outside of the lower mainland (74% vs. 64% in the lower mainland suburbs and 58% in Vancouver).

A full majority (55%) view driving alone as a time to relax and have a break, while four-in-ten (38%) disagree.

- Regionally, this viewpoint is more likely to be held by those outside of the lower mainland (60%) compared to drivers within the City of Vancouver (47%).

The Car as Status Symbol

While they may enjoy their vehicles and driving in general, just one-third (35%) report that their car is their 'pride and joy'. A majority (56%) do not feel this way.

- Drivers under 35 years of age (47%) are the most likely to say that their car is their pride and joy, while those 65 and older (42%) come a close second. This compares to those aged 45 to 54 (33%), 55 to 64 (28%) and finally those aged 35 to 44 (21%).
- Regionally, drivers in the Vancouver (27%) are less inclined to describe their vehicles as their pride and joy than are those in the suburbs (36%) or outside the lower mainland (38%).

Cost of Car Ownership

Despite the enjoyable aspects of having a car, there are some downsides. For instance, half (52%) of respondents agree that 'it is a struggle to pay all the bills that come with owning a car.' Four-in-ten (41%) disagree with this suggestion, while five per cent neither agree nor disagree.

- Drivers under 45 years of age (61%) are more likely to say that it is a struggle to pay all the bills associated with owning a car, compared to those aged 45 to 54 (47%), 55 to 64 (41%) and those 65 and older (40%).
- Women (58%) are more likely to agree with this suggestion than are men (46%).

Cars and the Environment

In addition to the monetary costs of owning a vehicle, there are also the environmental concerns. For instance, a majority (55%) of BC drivers concur with the statement that 'cars are an environmental plague on this planet' compared to two-fifths (40%) who disagree with this proposition.

- Two-thirds (64%) of Vancouver drivers agree with this viewpoint, compared to just over half in the suburbs (53%) and outside of the lower mainland (54%).
- Drivers under 35 (66%), between 35 and 44 (63%) and seniors (58%) are more likely to agree with this proposition than are middle-aged drivers (45 to 54: 40%; 55 to 64: 48%).
- There appears to be a connection between the type of car normally driven and agreement that cars are an environmental plague on this planet. Drivers of economy cars (62%) are more likely to agree than are those who drive mid-sized cars (56%) or full-sized cars, vans, trucks or SUVs (50%).

Along the same vein, three-quarters (73%) of BC drivers disagree with the proposition that cars are really not much of an environmental problem. This compares to one-quarter (24%) who say they don't think cars are really much of an environmental problem.

- Interestingly, those who drive vehicles that consume higher amounts of fuel, such as full-sized cars, trucks, vans or SUVs (71%) are as likely to disagree with this statement as are those who drive economy (73%) or mid-sized (76%) cars.
- Infrequent drivers (85%) are more likely to disagree with this proposition than are those who drive for personal use at least three times per week (71%).

Despite appreciating the impacts vehicles have on the environment, drivers in British Columbia do not appear to connect those impacts to their own actions. Just three-in-ten (30%) say that “every time I use my car I feel guilty about the impact I am having on the environment.” By comparison, two-thirds (64%) disagree with this statement.

- Drivers in the City of Vancouver (41%) are more likely to agree with this viewpoint than are those in the suburbs (31%) or outside of the lower mainland (26%).
- Seniors (75%) are more likely to disagree that every time they use their car they feel guilty about the impact they are having on the environment.
- Those who drive large full-sized cars, trucks, vans or SUVs (68%) are more likely to disagree with this proposition than are those who drive mid-sized (61%) or small economy (60%) cars.

Further, three-in-four BC drivers (75%) agree with the statement that “[they] know driving a car is bad for the environment, but there are a lot of other things that are much worse.” Meanwhile, one-in-five (20%) disagree with this position.

- Drivers in the lower mainland suburbs (78%) and outside of the lower mainland (76%) are more likely to concur with this viewpoint than are drivers in Vancouver (68%).
- Frequency of driving also appears to make a difference in agreement. Those who drive for personal use at least once a day (77%) or at least three times per week (76%) are more likely to hold this position than are those who drive less frequently (65%).
- The size of vehicle normally driven does not appear to make a difference in agreement with this view.

Looking Ahead: The Future of Cars

Finally, when asked about what the future may hold for vehicles over the next 100 years, over three-quarters (78%) believe that ‘cars will remain our main mode of personal transportation, but powered by new technology such as hybrid-electric engines or hydrogen fuel cells.’ This compares to just one-in-ten (10%) who say that “cars will be forced out of cities in favour of public transit, walking and cycling.” Further, just one-in-twenty (6%) believe ‘cars will be replaced by some other form of personal transportation’. Just five per cent believe things will continue on as now with cars with gas-powered engines remaining as our main mode of personal transportation.”

- Women (82%) are more likely than men (74%) to say that gas-powered cars will be replaced with new power technology cars.
- Infrequent drivers (69%) are the least likely to believe that gas-powered cars will be replaced by newer technology cars in the future.

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