

For those drivers that hate speeding tickets—raise your right foot

Most of us agree that speeding is a bad thing, but we manage to justify it if we're short on time

As you've more than likely seen in the newspapers and on television lately, the local police are out in force these days, diligently pointing radar guns and catching all those nasty, problem speeders.

Now, based on what the surveys tell us, this activity should be met, perhaps not with shouts of joy, but at least with nods of approval from the citizens of Manitoba. After all, nearly 75 per cent of Manitobans we recently surveyed confidently responded that speeding on our streets and roads is a serious or at least somewhat serious problem.

Indicating an even stronger support and understanding of road safety, 88 per cent of those surveyed also felt that a driver exceeding the speed limit was more likely to wind up in an accident. And they are right, by the way.

Now, before we move on, let's take the survey results and apply them to the driving population as a whole. Not only because it's statistically correct to



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do so, but also because I'm running out of creative ways to say "those surveyed" and "the respondents stated."

"Pemby 500"

That being said, if the majority of the population thinks that speeding is bad with a capital B, and that drivers who do speed are more likely to wind up with dented fenders or worse, then why do I feel like I'm driving to work in the Pembina 500 each morning? And why does almost everyone howl with righteous indignation when ticketed for speeding?

Unfortunately, speeding is a very personal and subjective driving behaviour. For some reason we

rationalize it, personalize it, explain it away, and justify it more than any other behaviour on the road.

Even though almost three quarters of the population believe speeding is a negative driving behaviour, many, perhaps even unknowingly, write a little mental "note to self" and add an "unless" to the end their opinions, and therein lies one of the problems.

Case in point: as I mentioned above, 75 per cent clearly stated speeding was a dangerous problem on Manitoba roads BUT... 80 per cent also said they'd step on it if they were late, if they were "forced to." So, everyone trots readily over to the Dark Side when racing against the clock.

Here's another odd rationale we found was applied to the "speed or not to speed" question. It goes something like this: the higher the speed limit, the more "acceptable" it is to go 20 km over it. Conversely,

the lower the speed limit, the "worse" it is to speed through at 20 clicks over. Now, before I go on, I must add that very few of those who felt it was "acceptable" went on to state that it was actually "all right." Thankfully!

So, at any rate, we also have the perception out there that it's not as bad to break the law and drive over the speed limit if you're already moving at a good clip.

Flawed argument

Another popular justification for speeding is that it's okay to drive with the speed of traffic - in fact, that it's dangerous for drivers not to speed up and keep up. This is a really common—if flawed—argument. Subscribers to this school of thought often take a "one-two" approach, following up the "speed of traffic flow" hook with the "speed limit is too low, anyway" jab.

Now, let's pick a few people from that 75 per cent of drivers who are dutifully

following the speed limit... "unless." And let's have them get caught.

Based on the three rationales outlined here (and these are just three of many), it's safe to say that these drivers will be outraged because they didn't think they were "really" speeding. And that takes us right back to the subjective nature of the whole problem.

We've talked about how perception influences whether drivers choose to drive over the limit, and how they rationalize their actions. Next week, we'll talk about the speeding issue itself; the physics behind the wheel, the costs and the culprits.

In the meantime, be **RoadWise**.

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