If the average person is asked to assess their own driving skills, most will give themselves an above average rating. By definition, half of all drivers are below average, but most people lack the self-awareness to realize this due to a cognitive bias known as illusory superiority.

Every year since 2008, the American Automobile Association (AAA) has conducted a survey in which they determine drivers' attitudes and behaviors in regard to traffic safety. They have confirmed what most of us already suspected: You're a terrible, hypocritical driver.

The report summarizes its findings bluntly:

> The current traffic safety culture... might be characterized most appropriately as a culture of indifference, in which drivers effectively demonstrate a “Do as I say, not as I do” attitude. For example, substantial numbers of drivers say that it is completely unacceptable to drive 15 mph over the speed limit on freeways, yet admit having done that in the past month.

In keeping with the illusion of superiority, 83% of drivers rate themselves as somewhat more or much more careful than other drivers; roughly 16% saw themselves as average; and merely 0.7% rated themselves as somewhat less careful. (Though we know these people exist, nobody rated themselves as much less careful!)
When asked more specific questions, however, these self-confident drivers admitted to engaging in various kinds of dangerous behaviors at least once in the 30 days prior to the survey. For instance, almost half admitted to driving more than 15 mph over the speed limit on a freeway; nearly one-third texted or sent an e-mail; 17% drove without a seatbelt; more than one-quarter were so tired they could barely keep their eyes open; and 36% blew through a red light. In the past year, more than 1 in 8 admitted to driving when they might have been legally intoxicated, and 5% admitted to smoking pot before driving.

Perhaps it should not come as a surprise that, at least once in their lives, about 19% of drivers have been involved in a crash that put somebody in the hospital. We should be grateful it isn't much higher. Self-driving cars can't come soon enough.