

Reader Survey Results

I'LL FOREGO MY USUAL rambling this month so that I can share the results of our recent readers' survey with you. There is so much information that I won't attempt to provide it all, but just the most pertinent. As of yesterday, we'd received over 2500 returns, which dwarfs the surveys that are done by much bigger-circulation magazines in our publishing house. You obviously really care, and we really appreciate that you do.

First off, the median age of our readership is now 52.67 years. I won't say "years-old," as I believe motorcycling has kept me younger than my years, and I hope it does for you, too. By the way, that number is nearly the same as it was five years ago, so even though our loyal readers age, we are attracting younger subscribers as well.

How many motorcycles do you own? The median is 2.37, a very high number.

How many have you owned in your life? The average is again high, at 10.40 machines, with responses ranging from one to as high as 100.

How many years have you been reading MCN (including the *Road Rider* years)? The mean is 8.57, suggesting an enormously loyal following, which certainly makes me feel humble, to be at the helm of such a venerable ship. And, we've actually got a few readers who've been with us since our very first issue, bless your hearts.

The mileage ridden in a year ranged all over the map, but the average is just shy of 10,000, again a sign of how seriously our readership takes their riding.

Here's a particularly interesting question; "What make(s) of motorcycles do you own?" You might well expect Honda to be on top, as the largest manufacturer, and you'd be right, with 49.6% indicating Big Red. However, the next largest group was a remarkable 27.5% favoring BMW. This is more than 13 times the brand's market share, so we know BMW riders tend to be our kind of people. Next is Harley-Davidson with 19.8%, and that number has gone up since our last survey, indicating that despite some complaints of Harley bashing, a lot of you want to know the things your dealers would like hushed up. Yamaha was next with 17.9%, Kawasaki with 14.3%, Triumph with 7.4%, Ducati with 3.8%, KTM with 2.0%, Buell with 1.9%, Moto-Guzzi with 1.6%, with literally dozens of other brands at less than 1%. (Note that again, several of these smaller brands recorded far larger numbers than their manufacturer's market share, indicating very discriminating tastes in our readership.)



The most popular organizations that you belong to include the AMA at 68.6%, BMWMOA at 21.6%, HRCA at 17.2%, HOG at 15.5%, GWRRRA at 12.8%, BMWRA at 7.1% and ABATE at 7.0%.

What sort of riding you do is another especially interesting question. Commuting takes the top spot, not surprisingly, with 47.37%, but Touring is right behind, with 43.73%. Sport-touring was answered by 30.96%. Weekend Sport Riding was reported by 25.97%. City Cruising was next with 17.70%, with Racing noted by 15.01%. Organized Rides and Events were next with 13.26%, with the category Other escaping our easy labels at 16.92%. The surprise here was how high the number of Sport and Racing riders are, which belies the old assumption that Touring is primarily what MCN is all about. We'll continue to do our best to remember that most of you have a variety of rides in your garage. Naturally, the numbers add up to more than 100% as a result.

"How do you normally buy your bikes?" 69.6% said, "New, from a dealer," while 39.2% said, "Used, from a private party" and 13.0% said, "Used, from a dealer."

Here's another fascinating statistic. As a group, you do 51.99% of the maintenance on your machines. As a former mechanic myself, I really like that.

The areas you indicate as those you are most likely to modify on your bikes are: Comfort/Ergonomics 86.3%, Suspension and Handling 40.7%, Engine performance 35%, Cosmetic (paint, chrome, etc.) 32.6% and Brakes at 23.5%. This indicates a sophisticated appreciation for functional improvements especially—another good

sign. Again, dozens of items were mentioned, but those categories received less than 1% of the total.

We asked if the purchase of any one of your bikes was influenced by MCN, and 44.1% said "yes." And when we asked if your purchase of aftermarket accessories was influenced by our reviews, the answer was 80.6% "yes." Again, very gratifying.

Some of the questions we asked were to help us with our circulation efforts, and your answers did just that. But you'll forgive us if we don't give away the farm by sharing it all with potential competitors.

We asked if your friends turned to you for advice in buying decisions, and 64.1% said "yes." You are clearly influential people.

Here's one that blew our minds: "Do you share your subscription with one or more friends?" 48.1% said "yes," meaning that our readership is that much higher than our subscriber base, or roughly 75,000 per month! No wonder we hear so many stories about the effect of a positive review in MCN on a company's product sales.

The question of whether you'd like the magazine more if we were in color seems to have deserved more explanation. Some of you were obviously afraid that meant we'd convert to advertising. No way, but we did note that you want us to resist any change that would drive up subscription prices. We hear that loud and clear.

Only 28.7% would like to have back issues available on CD, but that's still something to consider, as it's still a big number.

Perhaps the most important question on the survey was, "How do you rate your general satisfaction level with MCN?" A generous 51.6% rated us "Excellent" with 38.0% giving us a "Very Good," for virtually 90% of the total, while 9.1% said "Good," 0.9% said Fair, and 0.4% said "Poor," with none "Unacceptable."

We value your honesty, and now know what we can do to improve. Although your brief comments at the end of the survey forms showed you overwhelmingly approve of our efforts, and are very happy with the magazine the way it is, you have also given us many valuable suggestions. Many thanks to those of you who took time and trouble in answering the survey.

To be given such a strong report card makes us very proud. We'll strive to stay worthy of your faith in us. Thanks again!

DAVE SEARLE

—Dave Searle
Editor