

*A Contribution to Statistics by Wislawa Szymborska*

Out of a hundred people  
those who always know better  
-- fifty-two  
  
doubting every step  
-- nearly all the rest,  
  
glad to lend a hand  
if it doesn't take too long  
-- as high as forty-nine,  
  
always good  
because they can't be otherwise  
-- four, well maybe five,  
  
able to admire without envy  
-- eighteen,  
  
suffering illusions  
induced by fleeting youth  
-- sixty, give or take a few,  
  
not to be taken lightly  
-- forty and four,  
  
living in constant fear  
of someone or something  
-- seventy-seven,  
  
capable of happiness  
-- twenty-something tops,  
  
harmless singly, savage in crowds  
-- half at least,  
  
cruel  
when forced by circumstances  
-- better not to know  
even ballpark figures,  
  
wise after the fact  
-- just a couple more  
than wise before it,

taking only things from life  
-- thirty  
(I wish I were wrong),

hunched in pain,  
no flashlight in the dark  
-- eighty-three  
sooner or later,

righteous  
-- thirty-five, which is a lot,

righteous  
and understanding  
-- three,

worthy of compassion  
-- ninety-nine,

mortal  
-- a hundred out of a hundred.  
Thus far this figure still remains unchanged.

~ Wislawa Szymborska ~

*(Poems: New and Selected, trans. by S. Baranczak and C. Cavanagh)*

[http://www.panhala.net/Archive/A\\_Contribution\\_to\\_Statistics.html](http://www.panhala.net/Archive/A_Contribution_to_Statistics.html)