

2011 DfT figures show no evidence of increased road danger on roads with 20mph limits

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DfT casualty figures for 2011 show that as the total number of 20mph roads increases, so do the total number of casualties, but this is not evidence of increased danger.



Those who want to keep motor vehicle speeds high in town centres and where people live have jumped on the DfT statistic¹ showing an increase of 24% in total casualties on 20mph roads between 2010 and 2011. Over the same period, total casualties on 30mph roads reduced by 1%. Some sections of the media have initially concluded that this indicates that 20mph limits are a cause for concern. But what they have not considered is that between 2010 and 2011 there was a **large increase in the number of roads that have had their speed limit changed from 30mph to 20mph**. Local authorities around the country have been adopting 20mph as the default limit for urban roads and in some areas 70% of all roads now have a 20mph limit. Hence without reference to the total number of miles of 20mph roads in 2010 and 2011 no conclusion can be drawn from these particular statistics.

What we do know is that after extensive research and often large scale pilots many of our most iconic cities have already concluded that 30mph is no longer an acceptable speed limit for most of their urban streets. These include Bristol, Oxford, Cambridge, Bath, Newcastle, Portsmouth, Edinburgh, York, Lancaster, Liverpool, Brighton, as well as complete counties such as Lancashire and Bath & NE Somerset. They are doing so because there is ample evidence that 20mph limits create a better road environment for all users, especially pedestrians and cyclists. Those seeking justification for high vehicle speeds on roads are failing to make a convincing case against the abundance of evidence in support of lower speed limits.

It is because such counties as Lancashire have changed the speed limit on most of their residential roads in the last 3 years that there will inevitably be an increase in casualties on 20mph roads as the total road length increases.

Other research in the Grundy (2009) study of 20 mph zones in London² came to the conclusion that "20 mph zones are effective measures for reducing road injuries and deaths", with a 42% reduction in road casualties, after adjustment for underlying time trends.

Rod King, founder of 20's Plenty for Us commented:-

"Rather than jumping to conclusions on the basis of minimal evidence, those interested in reducing danger on our roads should be a little more analytical in their assessment of any trends. As roads are transferred from 30mph to 20mph we will not eliminate casualties, and there will inevitably be increases as the total miles of 20mph roads increases. But all the evidence, including the Laws of Physics, shows that danger to all road users reduces. The real concern from these statistics is that pedestrian casualties rose by 12% in 2011 and as most of these were on 30mph roads then it really makes the case for more widespread adoption of 20mph limits"

20's Plenty For Us campaigns for a 20mph default speed limit in residential streets without physical calming. www.20splentyforus.org.uk To find out more then please contact us:-

¹ <http://assets.dft.gov.uk/statistics/tables/ras30006.xls>

² <http://www.bmj.com/content/339/bmj.b4469.full>

Rod King
Founder & Campaign Director
20's Plenty for Us
rod.k@20splentyforus.org.uk
07973 639781

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To find out more then please contact us**

Anna Semlyen
Campaign Manager
20's Plenty for Us
anna.s@20splentyforus.org.uk
07572 120439