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fact sheet

Eight in 10 UK people want 20mph speed limits where people live¹.

An increasing number of local authorities agree. 12.5 million people now live in areas that have got, or are planning to introduce, widespread 20mph limits².



Brake, the road safety charity, alongside a number of other charities, is campaigning for towns, cities and villages everywhere to GO 20, so everyone can benefit from safer streets for walking and cycling, and healthier, happier lifestyles.

Why GO 20?

Safer streets:

- Every day five children and 19 adults are killed or seriously injured while walking or cycling on UK roads³: every casualty is devastating.
- Reducing limits from 30mph to 20mph has been shown to reduce casualties⁴.

- At 20mph, drivers have more time to react: at 20, your stopping distance is about half that at 30⁵.
- Children benefit especially, as they struggle to judge the speed of vehicles over 20mph, so often make mistakes crossing roads with faster traffic⁶.



Cheap travel:

- 20mph limits enable more people to walk, cycle and access public transport without feeling endangered, so it helps everyone get about as cheaply as possible.



Healthy lifestyles:

- 20mph limits make people feel safer, which encourages walking and cycling.
- Eight in 10 people think there would be more walking and cycling if their local roads were safer⁷.

- Where widespread 20mph limits have been introduced, walking and cycling has increased⁸.
- Walking and cycling helps tackle obesity, heart disease and other health problems: regular exercise reduces premature death by 20%⁹.



Happy communities:

- 20mph limits can help turn streets from soulless thoroughfares to social spaces people can enjoy.
- Lower traffic speeds and volumes help improve the 'sociability' of streets: people get out more and better know their neighbours^{10,11} and local shops receive more visitors on foot, bike or public transport¹².



Less pollution:

- More people walking and cycling means less traffic.
- 20mph limits reduce pollution by causing vehicles to travel at a more consistent speed, with less speeding up and slowing down^{13,14}.



Unaffected journeys:

- As 20mph limits cause vehicles to travel at a more consistent speed, journey times are barely affected; in fact, they may be smoother, less stressful, and use less fuel.
- This can be good news for people travelling by bus as well as by car. 20mph trials in Bristol found bus journey times did not increase¹⁵.



Cost savings:

- As well as inflicting terrible suffering, every road death costs our society £1.7 million¹⁶. Fewer casualties mean less strain on the NHS and emergency services and less devastation to families.
- More walking and cycling means better health and prevention of illnesses¹⁷, saving the taxpayer.
- 20 limits can help businesses, especially in ailing town centres, by increasing footfall.
- Introducing 20mph limits pays for itself many times over. In Bristol, for every £1 spent on 20mph limits they saw a return of £24.72 through increased walking and £7.47 through increased cycling¹⁸.



End notes

1. Eight in 10 back 20mph limits as charity takes campaign to parliament, Brake, 2014
2. It's Time for 20 – Time for DfT to end the needless imposition of 20mph repeater signs and be more flexible, 20's Plenty for Us, 2014
3. Reported road casualties Great Britain 2013 annual report, Department for Transport, 2014
4. 20mph speed reduction initiative, Scottish Executive Central Research Unit, 2001
5. The Highway Code, Driving Standards Agency, 2007
6. Reduced sensitivity to visual looming inflates the risk posed by speeding vehicles when children try to cross the road, University of London, 2011
7. Eight in 10 back 20mph limits as charity takes campaign to parliament, Brake, 2014
8. Citywide Rollout of 20mph speed limits, Bristol City Council Cabinet, 2012
9. At least five a week – evidence on the impact of physical activity and its relationship to health – a report from the Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health, 2004
10. The contribution of good public spaces to social integration in urban neighbourhoods, Daniel Sauter & Marco Hüttenmoser, Swiss National Science Foundation, 2006
11. Driven to excess, Joshua Hart, University of the West of England, 2008
12. Business profit from 20mph limits, 20's Plenty for Us, 2012
13. Environmental effects of 30 km/h in urban areas – with regard to exhaust emissions and noise, The Swedish National Road and Transport Research Institute, 1999
14. An evaluation of the estimated impacts on vehicle emissions of a 20 mph speed restrictions in central London, Centre for Transport Studies, Imperial College London, 2013
15. 20mph speed limit pilot areas: monitoring report, Bristol City Council, 2012
16. Reported road casualties Great Britain 2011, Department for Transport, 2012
17. At least five a week – evidence on the impact of physical activity and its relationship to health – a report from the Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health, 2004
18. Citywide Rollout of 20mph speed limits, Bristol City Council Cabinet, 2012