

Bogus analysis of DfT casualty figures by Institute of Advanced Motorists

A 20's Plenty for Us Press Release – July 2014 www.20splentyforus.org.uk/PRel/bogusIAMrep.pdf

IAM analysis of DfT casualty figures for 2013 show that as the total number of 20mph roads increases, so do the total number of casualties, but their conclusion that this is evidence of increased danger shows a woeful lack of understanding of statistics.



If you measured the number of casualties in two adjacent town (say A and B) in 2012 and 2013 then you can compare how their roads are getting safer over that time. However if 2012-13 you changed the boundary between A and B so that now many of the roads were in A rather than B you would expect the casualties in town A to have increased. But if you kept no records of how many roads were in A or B or when they were transferred then it would be difficult to conclude anything from the figures.

Around the country most of our iconic towns and cities are changing the limit on roads from 30mph to 20mph. Hence the total length of 20mph roads is increasing and 30mph decreasing. It therefore comes as no surprise to find that the total casualties on 20mph roads has increased (by 20%) in 2013 and decreased on 30mph roads (by 7%). In fact with 20% of the UK now in local authorities currently making most roads 20mph this is entirely expected. DfT record no statistics on the total length of 20mph or 30mph roads and hence any conclusion that this increase reflects any increased danger would not have any foundation.

The IAM have just issued a press release that concludes from these statistics that “20mph roads are not delivering fewer casualties”. A similar conclusion was made by the Sun in August 2012 from the 2011 DfT casualty report. The BBC “More or Less” program then felt that this was such a blatant misrepresentation that they featured the story in a programme. Their conclusion was that the claims were “phonus ballonus” and without a consideration of how the number and length of 20/30mph roads had changed then no conclusions could be made as to whether setting a 20mph limit made the roads more dangerous.¹

One valid statistic that can be gleaned from the 2013 casualty figures is the risk of death for casualties in 20mph and 30mph roads. On 20mph roads in 2013 there were 6 deaths out of 3,164 casualties (0.2%) whilst on 30mph roads there were 538 deaths out of 111,186 casualties (0.5%). Hence on a 30mph road any casualty is 2.5 times more likely to result in a fatality than on a 20mph road.

Rod King MBE, Founder and Campaign Director of 20's Plenty for Us commented:-

“We are amazed and disappointed that the Institute of Advanced Motorists should make such a woeful mistake in their conclusions from the DfT statistics. In fact, wherever 20mph limits have been piloted, on looking at the casualties in detail, councils have concluded that there was a positive effect on road safety and subsequently widened the implementation across most areas. Now 20% of the UK population live in towns, cities or villages where the Traffic Authority is convinced that 20 is plenty for most streets. The IAM conclusion is bogus and reflects a poor understanding of either the changing numbers and success of 20mph limits or basic statistics”

¹ See http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/radio4/moreorless/moreorless_20120817-1630a.mp3 12:20min in 20's Plenty For Us campaigns for a 20mph default speed limit in residential streets without physical calming. Web www.20splentyforus.org.uk Twitter @20splentyforus