

Wide Area 20mph Limits Raise Cycling and Walking Levels by over 20%

(updated Nov 2012)

Slowing speed limits from 30mph to 20mph has contributed to increasing cycling and walking by over 20%. 20mph increases physical activity and reduces traffic. Cyclist casualties fall.

20's Plenty



Where People Live

Bristol found of its 20mph limits, using a mean of a 23% increase in walking and a 20.5% increase in cycling that for each £1 spent the return on investment for walking is £24.72 and cycling is £7.47ⁱ. Cyclist casualty numbers fall by around 40% following wide area 20mph limits. The choice to walk or cycle is complex. It involves factors like access to a working bike, health, overcoming fear, distance, route knowledge, convenience, weather, topography and cycle parking. Traffic speeds are a major barrier to choosing to walk or cycle. Perception of risk is strongly involved in the “how shall I get there?” decision.

Traffic speeds and volumes are inversely related to walking and cycling levels. As one side of the equation rises, the other falls. Cutting traffic speeds and volumes promotes walking and cycling and bring public health gainsⁱⁱ and is accentuated by critical mass effects. With more cyclists or walkers, safety increases due to their visibility and popularity, making drivers more aware of vulnerable road users.

The key prerequisite for sustainable and active travel is to create conditions whereby walking and cycling are more attractive than car use. Methods that nudge people towards active travel include increasing the percentage of local roads where speeds are limited e.g. to 20mph (30km/h)ⁱⁱⁱ. This can be done affordably with signage, engagement and without road humps. In Europe 30km/h speed limits are essential to sustainable policies in Denmark, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden.

In Portsmouth, which implemented 20mph limits on 94% of its roads in 2008, over 40% of respondents said that “there has been a safer environment for walking and cycling; and as a result, around a third of respondents felt that there had been an increase in pedestrian and cyclist activities in local areas”^{iv}.

Health professionals realise that lower traffic speeds are foundational to increasing “active travel” leading to fitter communities. Evidence that 20mph limits improve public health is substantial^v. The Association of Directors of Public Health with the National Heart Forum have a positive position statement on the benefits of a default 20mph limit for residential and urban areas^{vi}.

Give people a real choice in how they travel by removing the fear of fast traffic from community streets. The authorities of over 8 million people have committed to do so. Has yours?

ⁱ https://www.bristol.gov.uk/committee/2012/ua/ua000/0726_7.pdf

ⁱⁱ Jacobsen,PL; Racioppi,F; Rutter,H (2009) Who owns the roads? How motorised traffic discourages walking and bicycling, Injury Prevention, v15, pp369-373.

ⁱⁱⁱ Oja,P; Vuori,I (2000) PROMOTION OF TRANSPORT WALKING AND CYCLING IN EUROPE: Strategy Directions, European Network for Promotion of Health-Enhancing Physical Activity. <http://www.panh.ch/hepaeurope/materials/HEPA%20Walking%20and%20Cycling%20Strategy%20.pdf>

^{iv} <http://www2.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roadsafety/speedmanagement/20mphPortsmouth/>

^v Literature review on the public health impact of implementing 20mph policies (Greater Manchester Public Health Practice Unit, Sep 2011)

^{vi} http://www.adph.org.uk/files/ourwork/policies/NHF_PositionStatement20mph_2010.pdf

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Feedback We welcome your response to this Briefing. **20's Plenty For Us** campaigns for a 20mph default speed limit in residential streets without physical calming. www.20splentyforus.org.uk
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