

# No, 20mph limits won't solve the Covid-19 Crisis...but

20's Plenty for Us Briefing March 2020

[http://www.20splenty.org/covid-19\\_and\\_lower\\_speeds](http://www.20splenty.org/covid-19_and_lower_speeds)

The current Covid-19 Crisis is of major concern and governments are looking at ways to protect their population and reduce the number of deaths from this new threat. We are not advocating 20mph limits as a cure, but we believe there is good evidence of how communities already implementing strong 20mph and 30km/h policies can better protect the public in such a crisis.

## 20's Plenty for Us

...making your place a better place to be

This February 130 Nations supported the Stockholm Declaration which mandates “*a maximum road travel speed of 30 km/h (20mph) in areas where vulnerable road users and vehicles mix in a frequent and planned manner*, except where strong evidence exists that higher speeds are safe, noting that efforts to reduce speed in general will have a beneficial impact on air quality and climate change as well as being vital to reduce road traffic deaths and injuries”<sup>1</sup>. 30km/h limits as a default are also supported by WHO, OECD, ETSC, iRAP, the Global Network of Road Safety Legislators and so many Public Health organisations and NGOs<sup>2</sup>.

Road casualties are bed blockers that take up a bed or Intensive Care Unit which would otherwise be available for Covid-19 patients. In 2018 there were 73,000 injuries on 30mph roads. 13,000 serious – 1,083 a month. That amounts to many thousands of nurses and doctors perpetually coping with predictable and avoidable road injury. Reducing urban speeds to 20mph has been shown to reduce road casualties by 42%<sup>3</sup>. Those communities with low speed environments have greater emergency health care resilience for Covid-19 from lower road casualties.

Covid-19 crisis attacks lung health. The better the air quality in our cities, towns and villages then the better our lungs can cope with reduced functionality. Lower urban and village motor speeds encourage active and pedestrians and cyclists are exposed to less pollution than those within motor vehicles. Reaching 30mph in a motor vehicle takes 2.25 times the energy required to reach 20mph. And with repeated acceleration and braking for lights, congestion, crossings, etc, then maximum speed becomes a major factor in “real-world” pollution. It also hardly increases journey times which are more determined by how long we are stopped rather than how fast we drive between stops.

And those communities that succeed in increasing active travel with a foundation of 30km/h or 20mph limits also have a far healthier population that is fitter and more able to resist diseases such as Covid-19. In UK we are far too dependent upon private car transport for mobility with many obesity-inducing practices which reduce population resilience to chronic diseases such as Covid-19. And fewer cars will combine with lower speeds to reduce road casualties even further.

Rod King MBE Founder of 20's Plenty for Us said

***“No-one is suggesting that setting a default reduction in 30mph or 50km/h limits to 20mph or 30km/h would solve the Covid-19 crisis. But reducing car crash bed occupancy could both prevent road casualties and enable lives to be saved in the beds and ICUs they would not need to occupy. Default 30mph and 50km/h limits are being scrapped in major cities around the world and with best practice now mandating lower speed limits, reducing speed limits could well prove an aid in coping with the Covid-19 crisis. We don't expect 20's Plenty to be seen as one of the most important weapons in the fight against Covid-19, but as the scale of the crisis unfolds it may be an incremental, affordable and practical initiative that can help save lives and play a contribution to protecting public health and reducing the impact of Covid-19.*”**

***And of course, there all the long term benefits beyond Covid-19 for a more positive present and future.”***

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.20splenty.org/global\\_ministers\\_mandate\\_20mph](http://www.20splenty.org/global_ministers_mandate_20mph)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.20splenty.org/duty\\_of\\_care\\_mandates\\_20mph](http://www.20splenty.org/duty_of_care_mandates_20mph)

<sup>3</sup> <http://content.tfl.gov.uk/20-mph-zones-and-road-safety-in-london.pdf>

20's Plenty for Us campaigns for a 20mph default speed limit in built up areas without physical calming.

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