

# STREETS FOR LIFE: #LOVE 30

## EVIDENCE TO TACKLE MISCONCEPTIONS



Streets for Life  
#Love30

[unroadsafetyweek.org](http://unroadsafetyweek.org)



THE GLOBAL GOALS  
For Sustainable Development

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## MYTH: 30 KM/H LIMITS DON'T MAKE A DIFFERENCE

## FACT: LOW SPEED STREETS SAVE LIVES

Evidence from around the world shows that low speed streets reduce the risk of serious injuries and save lives. In Tanzania, AMEND's SARSAI has been shown to cut road injuries by as much as 26% and has now expanded to 50 high-risk school areas in 9 countries.<sup>1</sup> In Toronto, Canada, road crashes fell by 28% since speed limits were reduced from 40 to 30 km/h in 2015, which led to a reduction in serious and fatal injuries by two thirds.<sup>2</sup> In Colombia, Bogota has included 30km/h zones in a package of measures in its Speed Management Plan that have reduced traffic fatalities by 32%.<sup>3</sup> A study from London found that lower speed limits (in this case 20mph zones) were associated with a 42% reduction in road casualties,<sup>4</sup> while in Bristol the introduction of 20mph limits was associated with a 63% reduction in fatal injuries between 2008 and 2016.<sup>5</sup>

Other studies suggest that there can be a casualty reduction of up to 6% for each 1 mph speed reduction for urban roads.<sup>6</sup> Overall, the WHO have concluded that an increase in average speed of **1 km/h** results in a **3%** higher risk of a crash and a **4 to 5%** increase in fatalities.<sup>7</sup>

Above 30 km/h impact speeds, pedestrians are at considerably greater risk of death. This is even greater for the young and elderly. In the distance a 30km/h car can stop, a 50km/h car is still driving.<sup>8</sup> Higher speeds narrow motorists' peripheral vision and impact their reaction times.<sup>9</sup>





**MYTH: 30 KM/H LIMITS ARE NOT POPULAR**

**FACT: PEOPLE CONSISTENTLY SAY THEY WANT LOWER SPEEDS WHERE THEY LIVE**

Over many years, surveys from around the world have consistently shown that the majority of people agree that 30 km/h is the correct speed limit for residential roads. Indeed, low speed streets help reduce congestion and are widely popular. A recent global YouGov poll in 11 countries for the Child Health Initiative found that 74% of people supported restrictions on streets around schools if it allowed children to walk or cycle to school more safely, including limits on speed.<sup>10</sup> In UK surveys, 70% of motorists say that they agree that 20 mph (30 km/h) is the right limit for streets where people live.<sup>11</sup> Surveys in Scotland suggest 65% are in favour, and one in four people think that it would make them more likely to walk or cycle in their everyday life.<sup>12</sup> Evidence also suggests rapid acceptance across Europe.<sup>13</sup>



There are also significant health benefits from slowing traffic, including supporting a shift to active lifestyles through walking and cycling. The social interactions that people have with others on the street are important for building community and collective wellbeing. Slower traffic also reduces road danger, improves noise and social cohesion.<sup>14</sup>

**MYTH: 30 KM/ H LIMITS WILL INCREASE JOURNEY TIMES**

**FACT: IN URBAN AREAS, JOURNEY TIMES ARE MORE INFLUENCED BY OTHER FACTORS**

In urban situations, the peak speed between congestion points or junctions rarely impacts on journey times. Real-world tests have shown across most typical urban journeys, the time difference between driving at a maximum of 30 km/h or 50km/h is minimal.<sup>15</sup> Congestion and time spent waiting at traffic signals are often more significant on journey times than the speeds that vehicles travelling between them. Areas designed for slow moving vehicles can also potentially eliminate the need for some traffic signals, creating a more equal relationship between road users who yield for each other<sup>16</sup>.





**MYTH: 30 KM/H LIMITS ARE ONLY FOR CERTAIN COUNTRIES**

**FACT: LOW SPEED STREETS ARE EFFECTIVE IN ANY CONTEXT**

Although many of the countries that have pioneered the effective road safety approaches are high income countries, low speed streets are possible for any country to implement, no matter their level of development or number of vehicles. 30 km/h zones have been successfully set in neighbourhoods in Africa,<sup>17</sup> North America<sup>18</sup>, Asia<sup>19</sup>, Europe<sup>20</sup>, Latin America<sup>21</sup> and Australasia<sup>22</sup>. In many cases, these have started around schools, such as Amend's project in Tanzania, which won the prestigious Ross Prize for Cities,<sup>23</sup> and in Zambia which has recently introduced lower speed limits around schools and areas with high pedestrian flow.<sup>24</sup>

**MYTH: 30 KM/H LIMITS ARE ANTI-MOTORIST**

**FACT: LOW SPEED STREETS HELP CUT CONGESTION AND CREATE HEALTHIER STREETS FOR EVERYONE TO ENJOY**

Low speed streets can actually make life better for motorists. Safer roads will help shift some shorter urban trips away from private vehicles, reducing congestion and the associated emissions. Air pollution affects all road users, but professional drivers are disproportionately exposed to it, increasing their health risks.<sup>25</sup> Many major motoring groups support low speed zones; for example the RAC called for them to be introduced in Australia.<sup>26</sup>





**MYTH: 30 KM/H LIMITS ARE JUST TO GAIN INCOME FROM FINES**

**FACT: ENFORCEMENT IS ONLY NEEDED IF PEOPLE ARE TRAVELLING AT DANGEROUS SPEEDS**

30 km/h limits are set because it is the maximum speed that can be safe for where traffic mix with vulnerable road users. It also creates a more appropriate place for people to choose to walk, cycle and shop.

Ideally roads should be self-enforcing, designed in such a way that direct vehicles to travel at slower speeds. There are a variety of ways this can be done, such as speed warning signs, road markings, road humps and other traffic calming features. Such measures can be low cost, and many have significant other benefits for improving the street scene, such as enabling space for trees or planters, and marking routes for pedestrians.<sup>27</sup>



Enforcement for people who do not comply is a secondary issue and not a motivation to set a correct speed limit.

**MYTH: 30KM/H LIMITS INCREASE VEHICLE EMISSIONS**

**FACT: WHILE THE RELATIONSHIP IS COMPLEX, ANY IMPACTS ON POLLUTION ARE LOW (AND OFTEN SHOW NO NET IMPACT), WHILE THE SAFETY BENEFITS ARE SIGNIFICANT**

The relationship between speed and emissions is complex, particularly at low speeds. It depends on many factors, including vehicle type, temperature, and road layout.<sup>28</sup> However, in low speed streets, vehicles tend to move more smoothly, with fewer accelerations (which is linked to exhaust emissions in internal combustion engine vehicles) and decelerations (which can cause tyre wear and associated particulate matter), leading to lower pollution. Speed bumps may lead to small, local increases in pollution due to increased acceleration and braking, but the impact of these is low. A recent study of 20mph zones in London found no net negative impact,<sup>29</sup> the same finding as an earlier study of a 30km/h zone from Belgium.<sup>30</sup>

Lower speed, safer streets encourage a shift from vehicle use to walking and cycling, particularly as part of a wider network of routes.<sup>31</sup> And less vehicles will mean a reduction in air pollution and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (even from electric vehicles), as well as wider health benefits from increased physical activity.



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