Is 20 plenty? A review of recent 20mph speed zone interventions

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# Abstract

All mode fatality data suggests the UK has a good road safety record compared with the rest of Europe. However, the UK also has a relatively low rate of active transport (walking and cycling), which could partly account for the low fatality rate. Surveys suggest the low rate of active transport is a result of the perceived danger of walking or cycling, due to fast moving motor traffic. This observation has driven a growing trend to reduce the default urban speed limit from 30 mph (48 km/h) to 20 mph (32 km/h). The reduced speed limit will encourage more people to choose active transport as a result of changing the perceived danger on the roads, argue proponents of this "20's plenty" campaign. Theoretical studies have shown that the 10mph reduction would help to save lives as a result of improved safety with cyclists and pedestrians being the main benefactors.

To test the theory that a reduction in road speed will lead to a lower incident rate amongst cyclists and pedestrians, this paper uses the official stats19 dataset on police reported incidents. Two types of natural experiment were conducted: 1) the crash rate of 'intervention zones' was compared with geographically and socio-demographically similar 'control zones' and 2) the crash rate before and after road speed interventions were compared on specific roads. This 2 phase methodology provides new insight into the effectiveness of the "20's plenty" campaign and reducing urban speed limits for sustainable transport overall.