



The Crime of Speeding

March 2016

Key Points

- Speeding increases both the risk of a crash and it's severity
- Speeding remains widespread, with only a slight decline seen in recent years
- Enforcement is rare, relative to the extent of speeding on our roads
- Police guidelines allow for high levels of speeding (and increased risk) before drivers are prosecuted at court
- Very few drivers are banned as a result of speeding
- Government focus should be on encouraging greater compliance with speed limits:
 - Use of speed limiters on vehicles of government and its contractors
 - Increased resources for enforcement
 - Reduced leeway for excess speed in Police Guidelines
 - Greater use of average speed cameras
 - Tougher penalties for persistent/worst offenders

1 Impacts of speeding

Collisions occur more often in faster traffic and where there is greater variation in speeds. A study by the Transport Research Laboratoryⁱ found that

- there was a "robust general rule" of a 5% reduction in collisions for each 1 mph reduction in average speed.

On busy main roads in towns with high levels of pedestrian activity, wide variations in speeds, and high collision frequencies, potential gains from speed reduction are even greater – 6% collision reduction/ mph. Drivers going 25% above the average speed increased their risk of involvement in a collision by more than 500%. (Select Committee on Transport, 2002)ⁱⁱ

The severity of collision is directly related to the speed of impact. An overviewⁱⁱⁱ of studies of pedestrians hit head on, found that fatalities at 30mph varied from 7% to 14% and at 40 mph from 25% to 60%. Older pedestrians were found to be particularly vulnerable.

Speeding is a lead factor in contributing to collision. Police STATS19 records for England & Wales in 2014, reported speeding involved in over 27% of fatal crashes with

- *exceeding the speed limit* 254 times (16.5% of fatal crashes), and
- *travelling too fast for conditions* was involved 169 times (11%).

In contrast, drink driving, drug driving and mobile phone use are recorded as contributory factors in 8%, 3% and 1% of fatal crashes respectively^{iv}. DfT believe all these factors, including speeding, are under-reported^v.

Reducing speeds would have multiple benefits beyond the casualty reduction. Lower traffic speeds bring many other benefits: less congestion; less air pollution and CO2 emissions; stronger communities; more walking and cycling; and reduced obesity^{vi}.

2 Incidence of speeding

Speeding is widespread. Nearly two thirds of all casualties and nearly a third of all fatalities occurred on 30mph roads^{vii}.

Speeding on these roads remains very common, with 45% of car drivers exceeding the limit when traffic flow is unimpeded.

Despite decades of publicity campaigns and enforcement, speeding has only marginally decreased. On 30mph roads, the proportion of cars

exceeding the limit by 5mph in free flow traffic fell from 19% in 2006 to 15% in 2014.

Over 1 in 7 drivers will still choose to go 35 mph in a 30mph limit

On 40mph roads in the same period, the fall was from 10% to 7%^{viii}. But the numbers that continue to speed remain high.

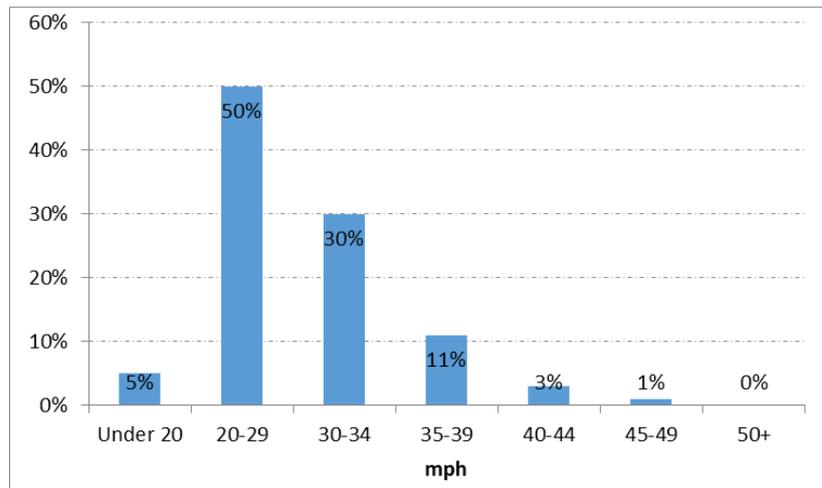


Figure 1 Distribution of speeds in free flow traffic, 30mph limit

3 Speed enforcement

Government policy, as seen with police enforcement of speeding, prioritises training for “errant drivers” and reserves penalisation (FPN and court) for the “reckless and dangerous”.

Advice from ACPO suggests that drivers going substantially above the limit may be allowed to attend a Speed Awareness Course (SAC). If they have already done so in the previous three years, they will be given a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) and points on their

Table 1 ACPO Speeding Guidance

Speed Limit	Device Tolerance	FPN when education not appropriate	Speed awareness, if appropriate		Automatic Court Summons
			From	To	
20 mph	22 mph	24 mph	24 mph	31 mph	35 mph
30 mph	32 mph	35 mph	35 mph	42 mph	50 mph
40 mph	42 mph	46 mph	46 mph	53 mph	66 mph
50 mph	52 mph	57 mph	57 mph	64 mph	76 mph
60 mph	62 mph	68 mph	68 mph	75 mph	86 mph
70 mph	73 mph	79 mph	79 mph	86 mph	96 mph

licence. Beyond a defined threshold, they should face an automatic court summons, see banding above.

The effect of the 30 mph banding is that motorists do not face a summons to court until they are travelling at 50mph. At this speed they have more than doubled their risk of a collision simply due to their speed alone and their differential speed will raise this risk further.

The impact on pedestrian fatality risks can be seen using the formula calculated by Davis^{ix}, see Figure below. This shows three curves -- for elderly, adults and children -- representing the risk of pedestrian fatality (Y-axis) when in a frontal collision with a car at different speeds (X-axis).

At the 30 mph limit, adults pedestrians should have a fatality risk of around 7%.

But “errant” motorists, i.e. those being offered training, can travel at speeds that increase this risk to 48%, and no one will routinely face an automatic summons until they have increased fatality risk to 83%.

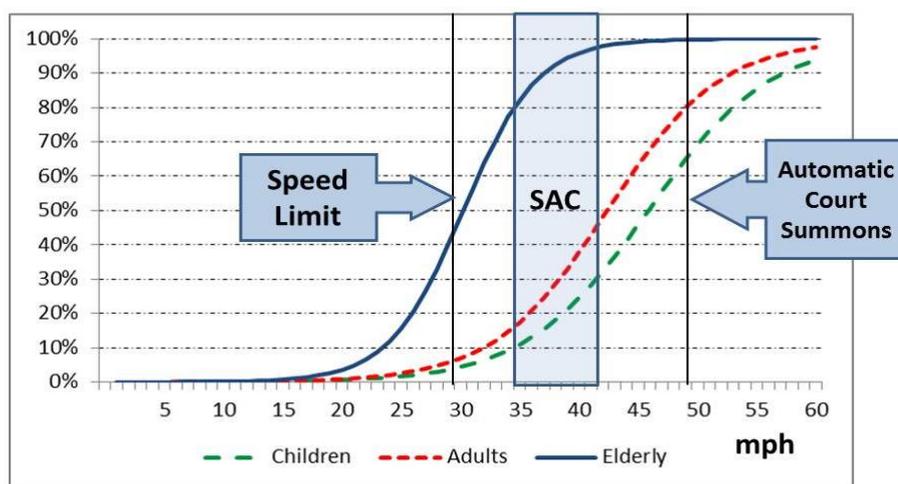


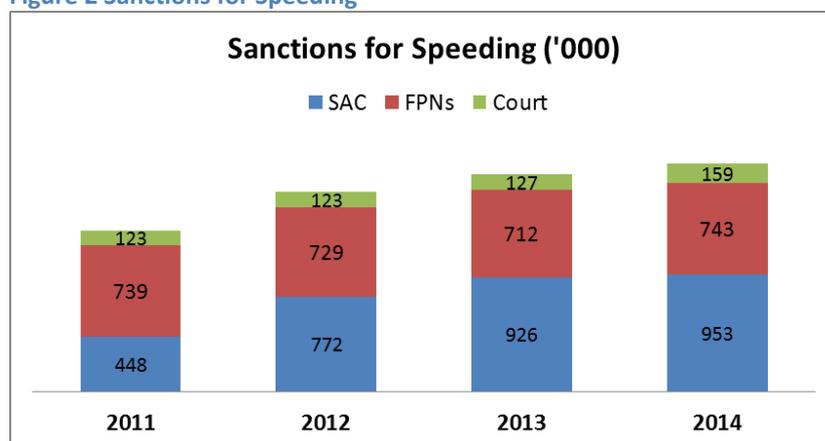
Figure 1 Probability of pedestrian fatality, ACPO speeding guidance (30 mph)

This wide tolerance of speeding means most speeding drivers receive either a FPN or attend a SAC. See distribution between these outcomes below.

In the last four years, the number of drivers attending SACs has more than doubled. FPNs have remained broadly constant and drivers attending court have increased (29%).

As a result of this “balanced approach”, only around 9% of drivers caught speeding are prosecuted at court.

Figure 2 Sanctions for Speeding



Penalties for Speeding

Drivers attending a speed awareness course have to pay for it themselves, typically around £100. The minimum FPN for speeding is a £100 fine and 3 penalty points. The points stay on the driver’s licence for four years from the date of the offence. In October 2014, 1.6 million (7%) male drivers and 0.7 million (3%) female drivers had points on their licence for speeding^x.

Of the 159,000 attending court, 93% were convicted. Nearly all these received a fine (average £179). Only a tiny fraction (2.4%) of these received a ban, nearly always for 6 months or less. Only 10 drivers were given an additional driving test requirement. And, these are the penalties for extreme speeding.

4 RoadPeace calls

Our justice system is too lax on speeding. It is rarely enforced and receives light penalties. ACPO guidance on speed limit enforcement allows far too much leeway for excessive speeding. Rather than observing their primary duty – the protection of the public, the police allow motorists to considerably escalate the risks to the public before taking them to court.

This sends the wrong message to drivers. A tougher approach on speeding is required. Speeds should be brought more closely in line with the posted limit, reducing both the average speed and the speed variance.

Until speeding can be designed out with compliance achieved through speed limiters, we need:

- Speed compliance being a key objective of the government’s road safety policy (as in Sweden), with police guidelines revised.
- More enforcement, both camera and manual, and with 20mph roads, is needed.
- Training of judiciary and revised sentencing guidelines with more driving bans given for speeding.
- Greater transparency of enforcement efforts to tackle speeding, including with charging decisions and sentencing decisions. Our justice system should be clear on that it does not tolerate speeding
- Use of speed limiters on vehicles of government and its contractors
- Tougher penalties for persistent/worst offenders

ⁱ Taylor, M. C., Lynam, D. A. and Baruya, A. (2000), TRL Report 421 – The Effects of Drivers' Speed on the Frequency of Road Accidents. Crowthorne: TRL

ⁱⁱ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200102/cmselect/cmtlgr/557/55705.htm#n17>

ⁱⁱⁱ D.C.Richards (2010) Relationship between Speed and Risk of Fatal Injury: Pedestrians and Car Occupants Road Safety Web Publication No.16, Transport Research Laboratory, Department for Transport: London

^{iv} DfT (2015) RAS50001, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/ras50-contributory-factors>

^v Detailed comparison of STATS19 and in depth collision data records to OTS. Published Project Report PPR 513, Linking accidents in national statistics to in-depth accident data by D C Richards, R E Cookson and R W Cuerden (TRL, 2010).

^{vi} Danny Dorling, 20mph Speed Limits for Cars in Residential Areas, by Shops and Schools; If you could do one thing...” Nine local actions to reduce health inequalities

^{vii} DfT (2015) RAS10001,

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/10121/ras10001.xls

^{viii} <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/spe01-vehicle-speeds>

^{ix} Davis, G. A. (2001) Relating severity of pedestrian injury to impact speed in vehicle pedestrian crashes. Transportation Research Record, 1773, 108–113.

^x Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (2014) FOIR4226, 23 October 2014