Speed

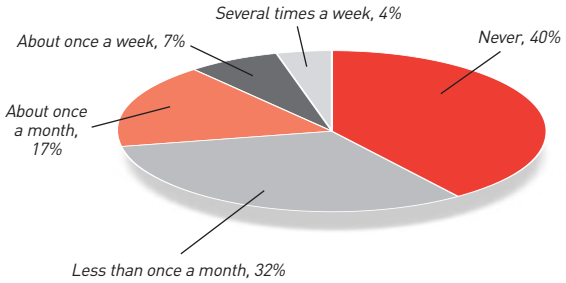
MOTORWAY DRIVING

Q1: Within the past 12 months, how often have you driven at 80mph or faster on a 70mph motorway or dual carriageway?

Six in ten (60%) admit breaking the speed limit by 10mph or more in the past year, with almost three in ten (28%) doing so monthly or more. Men were the worst offenders, with almost seven in ten (69%) doing 80mph or more, and more than a third (36%) doing so at least monthly, compared with just over half (53%) and two in ten (22%) women, respectively.

- 40% said never
- 32% said less than once a month
- 17% said about once a month
- 7% said about once a week
- 4% said several times a week or more

Figure 1: within the past 12 months, how often have you driven at 80mph or faster on a 70mph motorway or dual carriageway?



THE FACTS: MOTORWAY SPEED

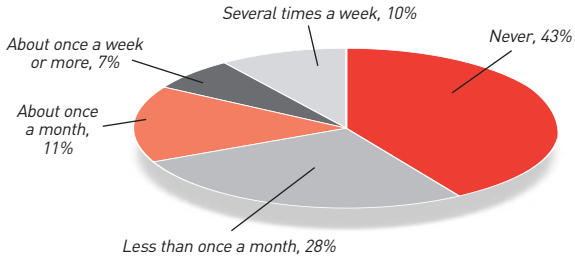
- Due to the way they are designed, and the fact there are fewer unexpected hazards, motorways have lower crash rates per mile travelled than other road types. However, when crashes do occur, often related to bad weather, queues, or debris on the road, the consequences are more likely to be fatal due to the high speed of traffic. Crashes on 70mph roads are more than twice as likely to result in death as crashes on roads with lower speed limits.[1]
- If you need to stop suddenly while driving at 70mph, you will travel 21 metres while you're thinking, before you even hit the brakes. And you'll travel that distance in less than a second. Your total stopping distance at this speed is 96m, or 21 car lengths.[2]
- Increases in speed on motorways, which some drivers may consider small, can make a massive difference in stopping distances and crash likelihood. At 80mph, stopping distances are 27% greater than at 70mph (122 metres compared to 96 metres). Research shows reducing the average speed on a road by just 1mph is likely to reduce the frequency of crashes by 5%.[3]
- In the USA, a report by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety found that in states that raised limits from 65mph to 75mph the death rates rose by 38% on these roads.[4] Germany, which has autobahns famous for their lack of speed limits, has a death rate on these roads that is 75% higher than comparable roads in the UK.[5]
- Higher speeds on motorways lead to increased fuel consumption and carbon emissions. Vehicles travelling at 80mph use 10-20% more fuel than those travelling at 70mph.[6]

Q2: Within the past 12 months on motorways, how often have you left less than a two-second gap between your vehicle and the vehicle in front?

In the past year, almost six in ten (57%) admit leaving less than the recommended two-second gap between themselves and the vehicle in front, with almost three in ten (28%) doing so monthly or more. This leaves insufficient time to react in an emergency, risking devastating high speed crashes, especially when combined with the widespread speeding identified above.

- 43% said never
- 28% said less than once a month
- 11% said about once a month
- 7% said about once a week
- 10% said several times a week or more

Figure 2: Within the past 12 months on motorways, how often have you left less than a two-second gap between your vehicle and the vehicle in front?



Speed

In the past four years

Compared to when Brake and Direct Line conducted a similar survey in 2010, the numbers who admit to driving at 80mph or more on motorways has stayed almost unchanged, from 61% to 60%. However, the numbers doing so monthly or more have decreased significantly, from four in ten (38%) to three in ten (28%). Similarly, those admitting to breaking the two-second rule have increased slightly, from 54% to 57%, but those doing so monthly or more have decreased from 34% to 28%.

ADVICE FOR DRIVERS: THE TWO-SECOND RULE

It is vital to keep at least a two-second gap behind the vehicle in front – this is your braking space in a crisis. In wet weather or poor visibility, extend your gap to four seconds and never hang on to the lights of the vehicle in front. You will be too close for safety and not 'reading the road' for yourself. Dropping back helps you to spot hazards and drive more smoothly. The rule works at all speeds, not just on motorways.

Q3: Within the past 12 months, have you ever felt concerned about drivers driving too close behind you on motorways?

In the past year, almost all (95%) felt concerned, at least occasionally, by drivers too close behind them on motorways. More than four in ten (44%) felt concerned every time or most times they drove on a motorway. These drivers may in turn be intimidated into driving too fast or dangerously close to the vehicle in front.

- 16% said yes, every time
- 28% said yes, most times
- 30% said yes, sometimes
- 21% said yes, occasionally
- 5% said no, never

LOST LIVES

Amy Upcraft, 19, was killed by a speeding driver on a dual carriageway on 3 March 2004. She was driving to work in the outside lane of the 70mph A47 in Norfolk. Just five minutes from her home, a lorry pulled out to overtake a moped and hit her, sending Amy spinning across the carriageway and into the central reservation.

Amy was initially unhurt, but because it was such a busy road, she was frightened to get out of the car, and the driver's door was jammed. She put her hazard lights on, called for rescue and then called her mum, Liz, to let her know she was unharmed. Amy's step-dad, George, rushed to her rescue and when Liz rang Amy again and got no reply, she followed him. When Liz arrived, she was met by carnage and the sight of her only daughter lying dead, still trapped in her car. A van had smashed into Amy's car, killing her as she waited for help.

At the inquest Liz heard that the van driver, Glenn Paraman, was travelling at 83-85mph when he hit Amy. If he had been under the 70mph limit, he may have seen and avoided her.

Liz Voysey, Amy's mum, said: "Amy was my only daughter. She was, and still is, utterly precious to me. I was so angry at the driver who killed her. Other drivers saw Amy, slowed down and went around her. But because he was speeding, the driver who killed her lost valuable seconds he should have used to observe the situation and take action, as all the other drivers had. Just by slowing down and staying within the limit, this driver could have avoided killing an innocent young woman."

End notes

1. *New Directions in Speed Management: A Review of Policy, Department for Transport, 2000*
2. *Stopping distances as contained in the Highway Code, Department for Transport, 2012*
3. *New Directions in Speed Management: A Review of Policy, Department for Transport, 2000*
4. *Relation of Speed and Speed Limits to Crashes, Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, 2005*
5. *Increasing the motorway speed limit, PACTS, 2004*
6. *Third Progress Report to Parliament, Committee on Climate Change, 2011*