Direct Line & Brake Reports on Safe Driving 2009-2012 REPORT THREE

Speed

Produced by:

Brake
stopping the carnage
supporting the victims
www.brake.org.uk

Working in partnership with:

direct line
INTRODUCTION

Julie Townsend, Brake’s campaigns director, says:

“Speed, and how we control it, is probably the most hotly debated road safety topic. A few vociferous anti-speed camera campaigners continue to dispute the relationship between speed and the deaths and injuries that happen every day on our roads.

Yet the relationship between speed and road safety is thoroughly evidenced and indisputable. We know that if we slow traffic on a particular road, we reduce the frequency and severity of crashes. We know that if you drive faster, you have less time to react to unexpected hazards, and you will hit harder if you do crash. For these reasons, speed is a factor in all deaths and injuries on our roads. And for these reasons, controlling and reducing speeds is vital for safety – especially the safety of our most vulnerable road users, such as children on foot.

This survey shows that we have a culture of speeding in the UK. Almost all drivers speed at one time or another – so despite the clear link between speed and safety, speed limits are probably the most widely breached safety law on our roads.

The question is, how do we turn this around and make speeding the exception rather than the norm? These survey results send a clear message to Government on what needs to be done. The majority of drivers say that enforcement of speed limits is key to changing behaviour, with many more saying that they would be influenced by tougher penalties. Drivers have also indicated that they would support lower speed limits on many roads.

Yet at the time of writing, speed enforcement is under threat due to funding cuts, and the Government has as yet failed to outline its plans in relation to speed limits. We hope this report will help to persuade policy makers on the need to ensure limits are enforced and to lower default limits. Speed continues to plague our communities – it’s high time we took decisive action to prevent further unnecessary tragedies like those contained in this report.”

Andy Goldby, Direct Line’s director of motor underwriting, says:

“Speed continues to be a major cause of death on UK roads and is a contributory factor in almost all casualties. This is why we have speed limits: they are there for a reason, not to hinder or for the sake of it, but to keep road users, especially vulnerable road users like pedestrians, safe.

As this research reveals, more than half of all drivers have broken the speed limit in 30mph zones, roads that tend to be in built up areas where pedestrians cross the road and children walk to school or play near by. Drivers know speeding is wrong, but they still go ahead and do it. However, we have the dichotomy that drivers say they believe speed limits should be reduced, but admit to breaking limits themselves. They need to take responsibility for their own actions and drive within speed limits at all times.

Those who speed always seem to feel they have a good reason to break the law. Everyone appears to know speeding is wrong, but there is a double standard here, as for many it seems to be wrong only when other drivers do it.

Drivers need to think about their actions, how speed affects their reaction times and how more likely they are to crash or kill somebody. If drivers think that speed limits are too high it doesn’t mean they can’t take it upon themselves to drive more slowly. While some individuals call for fewer speed cameras on the roads, our view is very clear: speed cameras only catch those who speed. So for those who adhere to the law they are not an issue and if everyone obeyed the law we would not need them. We believe there is a need for continued education on the dangers of speeding, and zero tolerance is required for those who flout speed limits.”

About this report

This is the third in a series of nine reports on safe driving by Brake and Direct Line. It examines the attitudes of 942 drivers and motorcycle riders towards speeding, overtaking, enforcement and Government policies on road safety.

The report is based on a survey of drivers and riders carried out by Brake volunteers in 2009-10, at a range of locations across the UK. Every effort was made to ensure that a wide variety of people responded. Repeating some questions from a survey carried out in 2004 by Brake and Green Flag has enabled some analysis of how driver attitudes and behaviour have changed over the intervening period.

Brake thanks all volunteers who helped conduct the survey and collate the results.

For other reports in this series visit www.driverpoll.com.
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Do you keep a safe distance?

Q1: Within the past 12 months on motorways, how often have you left less than a two-second gap between your vehicle and the one vehicle in front?

Keeping a two second gap between your vehicle and the vehicle in front is vitally important as it is your braking space in a crisis. Dropping back increases visibility, allowing you to spot hazards ahead and drive more smoothly. Despite this, more than half of all respondents admitted to breaking the two second rule and more than one in five did so at least once a week.

- 6% said they broke the two second rule daily or more than once a day
- 8% said they did this several times a week
- 8% said they did this about once a week
- 12% said they did this about once a month
- 19% said they did this less than once a month
- 44% said they never broke the two second rule
- 2% did not answer

Do you stay within the limit?

Q2: Within the past 12 months on any roads, have you broken the speed limit even once in the following circumstances?

Nine in ten respondents admitted to breaking speed limits in the past 12 months for a range of excuses. Speeding even a little over the limit can mean you won’t stop in time to save a child’s life. More than half of drivers said they break speed limits when overtaking. If you have to speed to overtake, you shouldn’t do it. Many deaths on rural roads are in head-on overtaking collisions.

- 53% said they broke the limit when overtaking
- 37% said they broke the limit when there was not much other traffic around
- 35% said they broke the limit when confident they could drive safely at a higher speed
- 30% said they broke the limit when late, or on a tight schedule
- 27% said they broke the limit when traffic around them was already breaking the limit
- 13% said they broke the limit when they thought the limit was too low
- 10% said they had not broken the limit in any of these situations

71% of respondents said they had broken limits in more than one of these situations.

THE FACTS: SPEEDING DRIVERS

A report by the Department for Transport in 2010 showed that:
- 48% of car drivers exceed limits on 30mph roads and 18% break limits by more than 5mph.
- 23% of car drivers exceed limits on 40mph roads and 8% break limits by more than 5mph.
- 9% of car drivers exceed limits on single carriageways and 1% break limits by more than 10mph.
- 42% of car drivers exceed limits on dual carriageways and 10% break limits by more than 10mph.
- 52% of car drivers exceed limits on motorways and 16% break limits by more than 10mph.

THE FACTS: SPEEDING OFFENCES

- Speeding accounted for 54% of all fixed penalty notices issued for motoring offences in 2008. That’s nearly 1.2 million tickets, 15% fewer than 2007. Of these, safety cameras provided evidence for 84%.
- 148,000 speeding offences were tried in a magistrates’ court in England and Wales where the average fine for speeding in 2008 was £137.

Q3: Within the past 12 months, how often have you driven at 35mph or faster in a 30mph zone?

64% of all crashes happen on 30mph roads which are more likely to be shared with vulnerable road users such as children on foot or bike and the elderly. Speed limits on some roads around schools and homes are being reduced to 20mph in a bid to reduce the death toll, but many are still far too high at 30mph or even 40mph. At speeds of 35mph or more, it is extremely unlikely that a driver will stop in time if a child runs out. Despite all the evidence showing the risks involved in speeding at 35mph in a 30mph zone, 72% of respondents admitted to doing this.

- 6% said they had driven at 35mph or faster in a 30mph zone daily or more than once a day
- 15% said they did this several times a week
- 15% said they did this about once a week
- 13% said they did this about once a month
- 23% said they did this less than once a month
- 27% said they never did this
- 1% did not answer

Figure 1: Why drivers broke the speed limit in the past 12 months

Figure 2: Drivers who did 35mph or more in 30mph zones
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ADVICE: TOWNS AND VILLAGES

Many speed limits around schools, shops and houses are 30mph, which is a dangerous speed for people on foot and bicycles, particularly children and the elderly. Drive at 20mph or slower to give yourself time to react. If you are travelling above 20mph you won’t be able to stop in time if a child runs out three car lengths ahead; and hitting a child at any speed can be lethal. Children make mistakes but they don’t deserve the death penalty.

FACTS: URBAN ROADS

- 64% of all crashes that result in injury happened on urban roads in 2008.
- 87% of all pedestrian casualties occurred on urban roads in 2008, that’s 24,862 people.
- Of pedestrian casualties on all roads, 36% of people killed or seriously injured had not reached their 20th birthday and a further 22% were aged 60 or older.

Hannah Hudson, age 12

Hannah Hudson was killed in June 2009, on the pavement just metres from her house when a speeding car lost control and ploughed into her. She was thrown 27 metres by the force of the impact. She died of a broken neck and fractured skull. She was just 12 years old and was on her way to school when her life was so brutally ended. Her killer was racing another car.

Q4: Within the past 12 months, how often have you driven above 60mph on a rural road (not dual carriageway or motorway)?

Twice as many crashes occur on urban roads as rural roads, but despite this nearly two thirds of road deaths happen on rural roads. Speed limits on rural roads are often far too fast for safety. Many fatal crashes occur because drivers or riders take bends too fast or overtake in dangerous places. Despite the additional hazards of bends, brows, hidden junctions and narrow lanes, more than half of respondents admitted to speeding at more than 60mph on rural roads.

- 3% said they had driven above 60mph on a rural road daily or more than once a day
- 7% said they did this several times a week
- 10% said they did this about once a week
- 11% said they did this about once a month
- 20% said they did this less than once a month
- 48% said they never did this
- 1% did not answer

LOST LIFE

Robert Weir, age 17

Robert Weir was walking home in the evening with his friend along the A511 in Leicestershire. The road had stretches without pavements and no streetlights as is common on country roads. Despite their care to keep to the side and keep safe, Robert was hit by a speeding lorry that careered into him. Robert was taken to hospital but later died of his injuries. Mrs Weir described her son as a talented musician with a budding musical career. She said “It’s hard to accept that some random stranger caused my son’s death and wrecked our happy family life through such stupid and criminal behaviour as speeding.”

ADVICE: RURAL ROADS

Country roads often have speed limits that are far too high, dangerous sharp bends, and unexpected hazards. You never know when a cyclist, horse rider or jogger will be round the corner or over the next brow. When passing people on foot, bikes and horses, slow right down and give them plenty of space. Never risk overtaking on rural roads unless you are overtaking a very slow moving vehicle such as a tractor, the road is clear and straight, and you won’t have to drive at excessive speeds or above the limit to do it. Otherwise, just hang back from the vehicle in front and enjoy the journey.

FACTS: RURAL ROADS

- 66% of road deaths happened on rural roads in 2008 despite only 36% of crashes occurring there.
- Pedestrians on rural roads are more vulnerable as vehicles are travelling faster, bends may be sharper and there are often no pavements.
- Pedestrians hit on a rural road are nearly three times as likely to be killed as pedestrians on urban roads.

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LOST LIFE
Q5: Within the past 12 months, how often have you driven at 80mph or faster on a 70mph motorway or dual carriageway?

Many drivers believe motorways are safer than other roads because there are fewer hazards. However, crashes on motorways often occur at very high speeds and involve multiple vehicles, increasing the likelihood of death and serious debilitating injury. Of the people we questioned, nearly two thirds admitted to driving at 80mph or faster on motorways or dual carriageways.

- 4% said they had driven at 80mph or faster on a 70mph motorway or dual carriageway daily or more than once a day
- 11% said they did this several times a week
- 8% said they did this about once a week
- 15% said they did this about once a month
- 23% said they did this less than once a month
- 37% said they never did this
- 2% did not answer

![Figure 4: Drivers who did 80mph or more on motorways and dual carriageways](image)

**ADVICE: RURAL ROADS**

At motorway speeds you have less time to react. Always keep at least two seconds from the vehicle in front, four in wet weather and ten or more in icy conditions. Change lanes only when absolutely necessary and as little as possible, thinking carefully about the speed of traffic and space around you. Never exceed the speed limit on a motorway – the faster you travel, the longer it takes to stop and the harder you will hit.

**FACTS: MOTORWAYS**

- Almost one in five fatal crashes on motorways involve four or more vehicles. These kinds of crashes cause multiple deaths and injuries, and the resulting congestion and tailbacks may cause further crashes.
- 12% of all crashes that caused injury on motorways resulted in death or serious disabling injury such as paralysis or brain damage, making motorway crashes 40% more likely to result in death or severe debilitating injuries than crashes that result in injury on other roads.

![Figure 5: Drivers who admit to speeding above 35, 60 or 80mph](image)

**LOST LIVES**

Arron Peak, 10, and his younger brother Ben, eight, were killed in a horrific smash on the M6 in the early hours of 7 June 2008. They were on their way to Silverstone race track for a day out, with their dad Phil Peak, 37, and friends of the family Phil Bennett and his two children, Luke, 15, and Jaxon, eight. The driver of another car was driving at 90mph on very little sleep and at twice the drink drive limit when he hit them from behind. Phil Peak suffered extremely serious injuries, including a broken neck and back, five broken ribs, swollen lungs and blood clots. Phil Bennett’s back was broken. Luke and Jaxon, who were both injured, found themselves lying in the car with their young dead friends and their fathers unable to help.

**IN THE PAST SIX YEARS...**

- More drivers now admit to speeding at more than 35mph in a 30mph zone. (72%, compared to 68% in 2004). However, the number of drivers who said they did this daily, or more than once a day, has nearly halved, from 11% in 2004 to 6%, which could be due to the greater prevalence of speed cameras at present.
- Exactly the same proportion of respondents, 51%, admitted to speeding above 60mph on a rural road in 2010 and 2004. More promisingly, the number of drivers who do this daily, or more than once a day, has halved since 2004.
- Speeding at more than 80mph on motorways or dual carriageways was admitted by 62% of drivers, compared to 59% in 2004. There was no significant change in distribution of the frequency of drivers taking this risk since 2004.
- Only 6% of drivers said they had not broken speed limits in the past 12 months in any of the situations we asked them about. This proportion of drivers has remained the same since 2004.
Do you overtake safely?

Q6: Many drivers break speed limits when overtaking other vehicles. Within the past 12 months, how often have you done this in a 30mph zone?

Urban roads are populated by every type of road user, from children on foot to articulated trucks. Because of this, overtaking at speed on urban roads is incredibly dangerous. Yet nearly half (45%) of respondents admitted to speeding in a 30mph zone in order to overtake. More than one in seven said they did so more than once a week.

- 2% said they had broken speed limits when overtaking in a 30mph zone daily or more than once a day
- 5% said they did this several times a week
- 8% said they did this about once a week
- 9% said they did this about once a month
- 22% said they did this less than once a month
- 54% said they never did this
- 1% did not answer

Q7: Within the past 12 months, how many times have you broken the speed limit when overtaking on a 60mph rural road (not dual carriageway or motorway)?

Many fatal crashes on rural roads are caused by drivers overtaking dangerously and at speed. Despite this, nearly half of drivers said they had broken the speed limit when overtaking on rural roads and more than one in five drivers did this at least once a month.

- 1% said they broke the speed limit when overtaking on a 60mph rural road daily or more than once a day
- 4% said they did this several times a week
- 8% said they did this about once a week
- 10% said they did this about once a month
- 24% said they did this less than once a month
- 52% said they never did this
- 1% did not answer

Q8: Within the past 12 months, how often have you overtaken when there was a chance you could have hit something you couldn’t see?

Overtaking when you cannot see what is coming is appallingly dangerous. Drivers who do this are playing Russian roulette with their lives and the lives of other road users. Incredibly, around one in eight drivers admitted doing it and one in 20 said they did this at least once a month.

- Less than 1% said they overtake blind daily or more than once a day
- 1% said they do this several times a week
- 1% said they do this about once a week
- 3% said they do this about once a month
- 7% said they do this less than once a month
- 87% said they never do this
- 1% did not answer

CASE STUDY: Nick Bennett, seriously injured age 18

Nick had recently passed his driving test when he tried to overtake two cars at once. He thought he could speed past them and get back in lane before the three ton truck coming the other way would reach him. He judged it wrong and severely twisted him brain stem in the crash, which affects his mobility, speech and nervous system. He has to use a wheelchair to get around and needs help with everyday tasks like getting dressed and preparing meals. Nick volunteers for Brake, warning other drivers about the dangers of taking risks behind the wheel.

IN THE PAST SIX YEARS...

- More drivers break speed limits when overtaking in 30mph zones (45% compared to 41% in 2004).
- The proportion of drivers who break speed limits when overtaking on rural roads has fallen slightly from 50% in 2004 to 47%. The proportion of drivers who do this daily has fallen from 3% in 2004 to 1%.
- Although the proportion of drivers willing to gamble their lives by overtaking blind has stayed at 12%, the frequency which they do this has slightly fallen.
- Drivers who admit to speeding in at least one of the situations described has risen to 94% from 88% in 2004.
Do you feel pressured to drive faster?

Q9: Within the past 12 months, how often have you felt under pressure from other drivers to drive faster?

With such high levels of speeding on the roads it is not surprising that nearly two in three drivers feel pressured by other drivers to go faster. One in three respondents experiences this at least once a week.

- 5% said they felt pressured from other drivers to drive faster daily or more than once a day
- 18% said they felt this several times a week
- 12% said they felt this about once a week
- 14% said they felt this about once a month
- 14% said they felt this less than once a month
- 35% said this had not happened to them
- 1% did not answer

Q10: How often did this pressure make you drive faster?

When pressured by other drivers to go faster, 58% of respondents have reacted by speeding up. By going faster, they put themselves and other road users at risk. More than a third of drivers said this happened once a month or more.

Of drivers who answered yes to Q9 (613 in total):

- 1% said pressure from other drivers made them drive faster daily or more than once a day
- 7% said this happened several times a week
- 12% said this happened about once a week
- 15% said this happened about once a month
- 23% said this happened less than once a month
- 40% said this had not happened to them
- 2% did not answer

What if you knocked someone over?

Q11: If a car hits a pedestrian at 20mph, what do you think the pedestrian’s chance of survival would be?

Drivers are unaware of the difference that slower speeds make to a pedestrian’s chance of survival if they are hit. Two thirds of respondents overestimated the likelihood of death if a pedestrian was hit at 20mph. Nearly one in five thought that the pedestrian only had up to a 25% chance of staying alive. In reality, hit a 20mph, a pedestrian has a 95% chance of surviving, albeit possibly with very serious life-changing injuries.

This misconception may go some way to explaining why so many drivers break speed limits on 20mph and 30mph roads. If drivers don’t understand the life saving difference that driving a few miles per hour slower makes, they feel less motivation to stick to limits.

- 1% thought a pedestrian would have no chance of survival
- 6% thought a pedestrian would have a 1-10% chance of survival
- 10% thought a pedestrian would have an 11-25% chance of survival
- 16% thought a pedestrian would have a 26-50% chance of survival
- 32% thought a pedestrian would have a 51-75% chance of survival
- 30% thought a pedestrian would have a 76-99% chance of survival
- 4% thought a pedestrian would have a 100% chance of survival
- 1% did not answer

Q12: If a car hits a pedestrian at 40mph, what do you think the pedestrian’s chance of survival would be?

On average drivers thought that hitting a pedestrian at 40mph was three times as likely to cause death as hitting them at 20mph. In actual fact, driving at 40mph, twice the speed, increases the chance the pedestrian will die by nearly six and a half times. A pedestrian hit at 40mph has only a 15% chance of survival.

- 19% thought a pedestrian would have no chance of survival
- 28% thought a pedestrian would have a 1-10% chance of survival
- 31% thought a pedestrian would have a 11-25% chance of survival
- 13% thought a pedestrian would have a 26-50% chance of survival
- 6% thought a pedestrian would have a 51-75% chance of survival
- 2% thought a pedestrian would have a 76-99% chance of survival
- Less than 1% thought a pedestrian would have a 100% chance of survival
- Less than 1% did not answer

IN THE PAST SIX YEARS...

Although the same proportion of drivers feels under pressure from other drivers to go faster (64%), more drivers now react by speeding up than they did in 2004. (58% compared to 49% in 2004).
FACTS: THE PHYSICS OF SPEED

- A car driven at 20mph or lower can stop in 12 metres or less (about three car lengths), giving the driver a good chance to brake and stop in time if a child runs out ahead of them.
- If the car was being driven at 30mph, and a child ran out 12 metres in front, it would still be travelling at about 27mph when it hit the child. The child is likely to suffer death or serious injury from the impact, which is equivalent to the impact speed reached by a child falling backwards off a third floor balcony (a drop of about 7.3m).
- At any speed of 40mph or higher the distance will entirely be taken up with thinking time and you will be unable to slow down at all. So if you drive at 40mph and a child steps out three car lengths in front of you, you will hit that child at 40mph.

Q13: Do you worry that your child may be hit by speeding traffic when on foot or bicycle and not with you?

The vast majority of parents who also drive worry for their children’s safety on roads. Yet, amazingly, of the parents who said they worried for their children’s safety on foot and bike, 69% also admitted to speeding at 35mph or faster in a 30mph zone in the past year, 47% broke speed limits when overtaking in 30mph zones and 81% admitted to speeding on any type of road in the past year. Parents who worry about their own child’s safety are actually putting children at risk on the roads.

615 respondents had children and answered this question. Of those:
- 71% said yes
- 14% said no
- 9% said they didn’t let their children walk or cycle unaccompanied because they were too young
- 2% said they didn’t let their children walk or cycle unaccompanied because of other fears for their safety
- 4% did not answer

Q14: Do you think there should be 20mph limits outside schools?

Research shows that 20mph limits reduced road casualties by 42% after adjustment for underlying trends and that the reduction is greatest for deaths and serious injuries rather than slight injuries. When it comes to the roads outside schools, less than one in twenty drivers objected to 20mph limits.

- 92% said yes
- 4% said no
- 1% said they don’t know
- 3% did not answer

What do you think about speed limits?

Q14: The Government is proposing more 20mph limits in urban areas with high numbers of people on foot and bicycles. Do you think this will reduce road casualties?

Less than a third of respondents did not believe that 20mph limits would reduce casualties on the road, while the majority knew that they would. The evidence is clear that 20mph limits, even without enforcement, reduce speeds and casualties.

- 56% said yes
- 27% said no
- 16% said they did not know
- 2% did not answer
Q16: Do you think there should be 20mph limits around homes?

More than twice as many drivers supported 20mph limits around homes than objected to them.

- 60% said yes
- 25% said no
- 8% said they don’t know
- 8% did not answer

Q17: Do you think there should be 20mph limits near shops?

20mph limits around shops were also popular. A majority of drivers believe that a maximum speed limit of 20mph is appropriate on roads around shops.

- 57% said yes
- 25% said no
- 9% don’t know
- 9% did not answer

Q18: Do you think there should be 20mph limits in all urban areas used by high numbers of people on foot and bicycles?

At 20mph, it is much more likely that a driver will have time to stop suddenly to avoid hitting a pedestrian altogether. This is one reason why Brake believes that the default urban speed limit should be cut to 20mph. This seems politically feasible as 20mph limits have widespread support with the public. Only a quarter of drivers were against 20mph limits in all urban areas that are frequently used by vulnerable road users.

- 56% said yes
- 24% said no
- 10% said they don’t know
- 9% did not answer

Q19: The Government is proposing more rural roads are reduced from 60mph to 50mph limits. Do you think this will reduce road casualties?

More respondents believed that lowering limits on urban roads would reduce casualties than lowering limits on rural roads (56% compared to 44%). However, in both cases, significantly more drivers agreed that lowering limits would reduce road casualties than disagreed.

- 44% said yes
- 38% said no
- 17% said they do not know
- 1% did not answer

Q20: What speed limit should there be on rural roads (not dual carriageways)?

66% of road deaths happened on rural roads in 2008, despite only 36% of crashes occurring there. Sharp bends on rural roads can hide horse riders, cyclists and slow moving tractors so drivers need to be able to stop quickly – travelling at 60mph it will take a driver 73 metres to stop. That’s the length of more than three tennis courts. At 40mph that distance is halved. 70% of respondents agreed that speed limits should be lower than the national speed limit on most rural roads.

- 42% said 50mph
- 28% said 40mph
- 28% said 60mph
- 2% did not answer

How should speed limits be enforced?

Q21: Which of the following would persuade you personally to take more care on the road?

Nearly half of drivers would take more care if penalties were tougher. In order to persuade drivers of the seriousness of traffic offences, penalties should be increased with the possibility of a custodial sentence or permanent ban for the most persistent offenders.

- 63% said more enforcement, such as traffic police and cameras
- 46% said tougher penalties for traffic offences
- 26% said more Government advertising on road safety
- 6% said none of the above would persuade them to take more care

FACTS: SPEED CAMERAS

- An independent four-year evaluation commissioned by the Department for Transport found that:
  - Vehicle speeds at speed camera sites dropped by about 6% following the introduction of cameras.
  - At fixed camera sites there was a 70% reduction in vehicles breaking the speed limit and a 91% reduction in people exceeding the limit by 15mph or more.
  - After allowing for long term trends in crash reductions, there was a 22% reduction in injury crashes at the sites and a 42% reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured.
  - They also found that the public supported the use of safety cameras for targeted enforcement.
FACTS: SPEED CAMERAS (continued)

- All money raised from speed cameras in fines is given to the Treasury. Local authorities therefore have no incentive to place cameras other than to improve road safety.
- In 2009 the Home Office type-approved average speed cameras to enforce speed limits on 20mph roads. Initial trials are underway in the London Boroughs of Camden, Hackney, Southwark, and Waltham Forest.
- In 2010 the coalition government announced that the Specific Road Safety Grant paid to Councils to fund road safety initiatives, including the maintenance of speed cameras, would be slashed by 40% effective immediately. As a result, County Councils across the country responded by cutting back road safety services. Fixed and mobile speed cameras were scrapped in Oxfordshire as a direct response and other Councils announced that they were turning off some or all of their fixed speed cameras. Some Road Safety Partnerships closed down.

Q22: What colour do you think speed cameras should be painted?

More than one in five drivers agreed that speed cameras should be painted grey so that speeding drivers are less able to slow down for them then speed up again afterwards. Brake believes that visibly posting speed limits, so drivers know the law, is more important than making speed cameras more visible. If you stay within the limit, you do not need to spot cameras and you will not be penalised.

- 64% said yellow or another bright colour so drivers do know their locations
- 23% said grey or another inconspicuous colour so drivers don’t know their locations
- 12% said they did not know
- 2% did not answer

Q23: Do you use a sat-nav or other similar gadget to warn you to slow down for speed cameras?

One in five drivers tries to avoid detection for speeding by using mobile technology to warn them of speed cameras ahead. Drivers who do this are only motivated to stick to limits by the fear of being caught. That’s why it is important to also use mobile camera equipment and visible policing to enforce speed limits and deter drivers who have no intention of sticking to limits, or, even better, have a system of satellite-controlled speed limiters in all cars that prevent drivers going above the limit (see next question).

- 21% said yes
- 76% said no
- 3% did not answer

Q24: Would you object to a gadget being fitted to your vehicle that would prevent you from speeding?

The same technology that some drivers use to avoid speed cameras can be used to warn drivers when they exceed limits or even limit drivers’ speed to the speed limit on the road. This is called Intelligent Speed Adaptation and may in the future provide a viable alternative to speed enforcement through cameras. Half of drivers would accept a device that limited their driving to the speed limit.

- 50% said no
- 47% said yes
- 3% did not answer

Speeding and the law

Q25: If you had to decide how the legal system should punish a driver whose speeding had killed someone, what penalty would you give them?

Although 94% of respondents admitted to speeding, they also believed that the law should be tough on drivers whose speeding had killed someone. One in four drivers thought that a prison sentence of 15 years or more was appropriate and 60% of respondents thought that 10 years or more would be just. This is suggestive that drivers do not equate their own speeding with the potential to kill.

- 24% said more than 14 years in jail
- 16% said 10 to 14 years in jail
- 20% said five to 10 years in jail
- 14% said two to five years in jail
- 10% said six months to two years in jail
- 8% said up to six months in jail
- 3% said no jail term, just a fine
- 6% did not answer

FACTS: SENTENCING

- In 2004, the Labour Government increased the maximum sentence for causing death by dangerous driving from 10 to 14 years in line with public opinion.
- In 2008, they introduced a new charge of causing death by careless driving to prevent distracted drivers who kill walking away from court with just a fine. The maximum sentence is five years.
Speeding and the law

Q26: If you had to decide how the legal system should punish a driver whose overtaking on a blind bend had killed someone, what penalty would you give them?

99% of drivers who answered this question thought that a custodial sentence was appropriate. Nearly one third of respondents thought that more than 14 years in jail was a suitable term. In reality, the 14 year maximum penalty for death by dangerous driving is very rarely given out by judges. A sentence of five or six years or less is much more likely and, since changes to legislation in 2003, most offenders will automatically be released once they have served half their sentence. The law is much more lenient with dangerous drivers who kill than the respondents in this research.

- 32% said more than 14 years in jail
- 20% said 10 to 14 years in jail
- 18% said five to 10 years in jail
- 14% said two to five years in jail
- 7% said six months to two years in jail
- 4% said up to six months in jail
- 1% said no jail term, just a fine
- 4% did not answer

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT

Speed limits

- Cut the default urban speed limit from 30mph to 20mph.
- A positive interim step would be to encourage and enable more local authorities to implement widespread 20mph limits through improved Government guidance and funding.
- Reduce the default speed limit on rural single carriageway roads to 50mph, with lower limits on roads with particular risks.
- Ensure that speed limits are always clearly signposted and remove restrictions that make it difficult for local councils to erect repeater signs in urban areas.

Education

- Aim to make speeding socially unacceptable through investment in more high-profile advertising and publicity campaigns. This should include specific campaigns on the risks and consequences of speeding and overtaking on different types of road, and should specifically target young drivers, at-work drivers and motorbikers.
- Make road safety education compulsory in schools, including on the risks and consequences of speeding.

Speed cameras

- Use the revenue from speed camera fines to fund fixed and average speed cameras (both new cameras and maintenance of existing cameras), as well as other carefully research road safety measures – this expenditure should be published annually by the Department for Transport.
- Publicise and encourage the use of average speed cameras for 20mph zones which were type approved by the Home Office in late 2009.
- Publish and publicise speed and casualty reduction data for all safety camera partnerships on an annual basis.
- Equip all police forces with portable radar guns to survey speeds for concerned communities if it is felt that limits are being broken.

Enforcement

- Review the penalty points system for speeding offences and ensure a larger number of points are awarded for more serious speeding offences.
- Significantly increase the level of fines handed out for speeding offences.
- Make a driving bans a minimum period to ensure they are an effective enforcement measure.
- Fund the development of a digital speed limit map of the UK so that Intelligent Speed Adaptation can be piloted as a method of controlling speed, with a view to encouraging its widespread use.
End Notes

4. Road Casualties Great Britain 2008, Department for Transport, 2009
5. ibid
6. ibid
7. ibid
8. ibid
9. ibid
10. 20mph speed limits on residential roads: The Portsmouth City Council experience, Presented by Atkins Research Group Inc and Portsmouth City Council at Brake’s Third International Conference on Speed, 13 May 2010.
11. Effect of 20mph traffic speed zones on road injuries in London, 1986-2006: controlled interrupted time series analysis, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, 2009
12. Road Casualties Great Britain 2008, Department for Transport, 2009

For advice on safe driving, general information on road safety and details of road safety campaigns and events, visit www.brake.org.uk or www.roadsafetyweek.org.uk

For more information on Government campaigns on safe driving, visit the Department for Transport’s Think! website, www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk

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