

Wide Area 20mph Limits Raise Cycling and Walking Levels By Up To 12%

(updated Mar 2012)

Slowing speed limits from 30mph to 20mph contributes to increasing cycling and walking by up to 12%. 20 mph increases physical activity and reduces traffic.

20's Plenty



Where People Live

Bristol City Council report that walking and cycling increased by up to 12%ⁱ. A choice to walk or cycle is complex. It involves factors like access to a working bike, health, overcoming fear, distance, route knowledge, convenience, weather, topography and cycle parking. Traffic speeds are a major barrier to choosing to walk or cycle. Perception of risk is strongly involved in the "how shall I get there?" decision.

Traffic speeds and volumes are inversely correlated to levels of walking and cycling. As one side of the equation rises, the other falls. Interventions to cut traffic speeds and volumes promote walking and cycling and bring public health gainsⁱⁱ accentuated by critical mass effects. With more cyclists or walkers, safety increases due to their visibility and popularity, making drivers more conscious of vulnerable road users.

The key prerequisite for sustainable travel is creating the conditions in which walking and cycling are more attractive than car use. Methods that pull people toward active travel include increasing the percentage of the local road network where speeds are limited e.g. to 20mph (30km/h)ⁱⁱⁱ. This can be done affordably with signage, engagement and without road humps. In Europe 30km/h speed limits are essential to sustainable travel policies in Denmark, Belgium, Germany, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden.

In Portsmouth, which implemented 20mph limits on 94% of its roads in 2008, over 40% of respondents stated that "there has been a safer environment for walking and cycling; and as a result, around a third of respondents felt that there had been an increase in pedestrian and cyclist activities in local areas."^{iv}

Health professionals see lower traffic speeds as a foundation for increasing "active travel" leading to healthier communities. The balance of evidence supporting the introduction of 20 mph limits to improve public health is substantial^v. The Association of Directors of Public Health with the National Heart Forum have a "position statement" on the benefits of a default 20mph limit for residential and urban areas.^{vi}

Its time to give people a real choice in how they travel by removing the fear of fast traffic from community streets. The authorities of over 7.5 million people have committed to do so. Has yours?

ⁱ Cycling City project and Active Bristol / Monitoring by Bristol City Council

<http://www.betterbybike.info/sites/default/files/attachments/Cycling%20City%20end%20of%20project%20report.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Jacobsen, PL; Racioppi, F; Rutter, H (2009) Who owns the roads? How motorised traffic discourages walking and bicycling, Injury Prevention, v15, pp369-373.

ⁱⁱⁱ Oja, P; Vuori, I (2000) PROMOTION OF TRANSPORT WALKING AND CYCLING IN EUROPE: Strategy Directions, The European Network for Promotion of Health-Enhancing Physical Activity.

<http://www.panh.ch/hepaeurope/materials/HEPA%20Walking%20and%20Cycling%20Strategy%20.pdf>

^{iv} <http://www2.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roadsafety/speedmanagement/20mphPortsmouth/>

^v Conclusions of literature review on the public health impact of implementing 20mph policies (Greater Manchester Public Health Practice Unit, September 2011)

^{vi} http://www.adph.org.uk/files/ourwork/policies/NHF_PositionStatement20mph_2010.pdf

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Feedback We welcome your response to this Briefing. **20's Plenty For Us** campaigns for a 20mph default speed limit in residential streets without physical calming. www.20splentyforus.org.uk

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