



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

20mph

Frequently Asked Questions





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Background.

On 17th September 2023, a 20mph speed limit for drivers will come into force on 'restricted roads' across Wales. 'Restricted' roads have street lights placed no more than 200 yards apart. They are usually located in residential and built-up areas with high pedestrian activity. There is a notable difference between the characteristics of a 20mph speed limit and a 20mph zone. 20mph limits are areas where the speed limit has been reduced to 20mph, but there are no physical measures to reduce vehicle speeds within the area. In contrast, 20mph zones use traffic calming measures to make the zones self-enforcing.

FAQ Guide.

The Frequently Asked Questions below provide answers to the most common questions asked about the change to the default speed limit from 30mph to 20mph across Wales. This document will be circulated to Local Authorities, stakeholders, partners, and the media. It serves to outline the policy, the rationale behind its introduction, implementation plans, and the findings from the trial areas as well as data pertaining to potential benefits and impacts.

The Welsh Government's Frequently Asked Questions and answers on the change to 20mph default speed limit on restricted roads, can be found here:

<https://www.gov.wales/introducing-20mph-speed-limits-frequently-asked-questions>

FAQs.

Why is the policy being introduced in the first place?

From the international evidence base it can be concluded that, on average, a person is around five times more likely to be killed when hit by a vehicle travelling at around 30mph than they are from a vehicle travelling around 20mph.¹

According to the Traffic Orders & 20mph Public Attitudes Survey 2020², almost seven in ten Welsh adults (68%) were very or fairly concerned about cars or other vehicles driving too fast generally (rising to 73% of those with children aged under 16 in their household).

The Welsh Government believes that introducing a 20mph default speed limit on restricted roads, which are generally residential roads and busy pedestrian streets, across Wales will also lead to the following benefits:

¹ Hussain, Q., et al, "The relationship between impact speed and the probability of pedestrian fatality during a vehicle-pedestrian crash: A systematic review and meta analysis", *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, (2019)

² Beaufort Research, "Welsh Government - Public Attitudes to 20mph", (2022)

- **saving lives** and **reducing the risk** and severity of injuries from collisions between vehicles and vulnerable road users
- making streets safer for **playing, walking and cycling**
- encouraging more people to make more **sustainable travel choices**
- making Wales **more attractive** for our communities
- bringing **physical and mental health** benefits
- reducing **noise pollution**, promoting **cleaner air** and bettering the environment

The **legislation was approved by the Senedd** in 2022.

My local area already has reduced speeds of 20mph. Is it part of this initiative?

Many local authorities have already introduced 20mph speed limits across the country due to the recognised benefits and public support. Additionally, as part of the first phase of the 20mph rollout, 8 settlements chose to take part and make their default speed lower:

- Abergavenny and Severnside, Monmouthshire
- North Cardiff
- Buckley, Flintshire
- Cilfrew Village, Neath and Port Talbot
- St Dogmaels, Pembrokeshire
- St Brides Major, Vale of Glamorgan
- Llanelli North, Carmarthenshire

The initial monitoring report from these first areas has been published³ and shows slower driving speeds, increased levels of walking and cycling and minimal impact on journey times.

Where else have 20mph speed limits been introduced in the UK?

20mph speed limits are in force in **many of the medium and larger cities in England and Scotland**. In areas like Central London, half of the largest 40 urban authorities in the UK, and whole rural councils (such as the Scottish Borders, Lancashire, Cheshire West and Chester) have already made 20mph the default speed limit for residential streets. Oxfordshire and Cornwall are also introducing a county-wide 20mph limit for such roads.

How do people feel about 20mph speed limits in communities where they have been introduced in Wales?

The response to 20mph speed limits in the UK has been largely positive. According to the public opinion survey⁴ carried out in Wales in September 2022, almost two-thirds of people supported the lower speed limit, with a further 62% wishing 'everyone would slow down a bit on the roads' and 55% agreeing that 'streets would be a lot nicer for pedestrians with a 20mph speed limit'.

³ Transport for Wales (TFW), *Default 20mph speed limit on restricted roads Phase 1 Interim monitoring report*, (2022)

⁴ Beaufort Research, (2022)

Other feedback from correspondence received by the Welsh Government suggested that people living on 20mph streets soon get used to, and appreciate, the reduced traffic speed.

If 20mph limits are there in part to protect children, why can't the 20mph limit be set up as a timed limit near schools, during school hours only?

The **20mph default speed limit aims to protect children regardless of the time, day or proximity to a school**. Whereas timed limits only protect children near their school, default 20mph limits will protect children when leaving or returning home, regardless of the proximity to the school. 20mph speed limits mean safer streets, encouraging children to walk or cycle to and from school. Moreover, the policy is designed not only to protect children, but all road users.

How will a lower speed limit promote walking and cycling?

Lower speeds mean that people should feel more comfortable walking and cycling and make it safer for children to walk to school. One in three Welsh adults said that 20mph speed limits would increase their likelihood of walking more often, while around one in five (22%) said that they would be more likely to cycle more⁵. The lower speed limit also aims to help older people, disabled people, or people with additional needs feel more able to travel independently.

There is evidence from across the world that vehicle speed is one of the main reasons why people do not walk, cycle, or allow their children to walk or cycle to school. In the UK, evidence from initial pilot schemes in Bristol and Edinburgh both reported positive results. The piloting of 20mph in Bristol found small increases in walking and cycling. Similarly, self-reported increases in walking and cycling were also noted after implementation of the pilot 20mph speed limit in Edinburgh⁶.

Streets that enable and encourage active travel are key to delivering the aspirations of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales), which aims to ensure improvement to the lives of both current and future generations. It also helps to deliver the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013, which aims to make walking and cycling the most natural and normal ways of getting around. Planning Policy Wales places walking and cycling at the top of its transport hierarchy and states that people-oriented streets are fundamental to creating sustainable places. In addition, the National Transport Delivery Plan aims for 'walking and cycling to become the normal choice for shorter journeys', due to the benefits active travel has on health, environment and the economy.⁷ Increasing active travel will also contribute to Net Zero Wales Plan's target of an average 37% reduction in carbon emissions as part of the Carbon budget 2 (2021-2025).⁸

How will the 20mph limit improve social cohesion?

The policy aims to increase active travel by creating a safer environment for all road users, this in turn will provide more opportunities for people to meet in their communities. Possible increases

⁵ Beaufort Research, (2022)

⁶ Welsh 20mph Task Force Group, "Final Report", (2022)

⁷ National Transport Delivery Plan (2022) <<https://www.gov.wales/national-transport-delivery-plan-2022-2027>>

⁸ Welsh Government, *Climate change targets and carbon budgets* (2021)
<<https://www.gov.wales/climate-change-targets-and-carbon-budgets>>

in social interaction (such as with neighbours) due to more walking and cycling, and consequent incidental social connectivity could lead to health improvements. There is clear evidence that more social connectivity, including friendships and acquaintances, protects against death from all causes. This protection is as much as 50% higher for those with greater social connections.⁹

Will a reduced speed limit improve safety?

The evidence is clear, decreasing speed limits reduces collisions and saves lives. In 2018, the OECD reported that research consistently shows that lower speeds reduce deaths and injuries, not least because there is more time to react but also because of reduced harm from impact.¹⁰ From the international evidence base it can be concluded, on average, a person is around five times more likely to be killed when hit by a vehicle travelling at around 30mph than they are from a vehicle travelling around 20mph.¹¹

A recent public health study estimated that the 20mph default speed limit could result in:

- 6 to 10 lives being saved
- 40% fewer collisions
- 1200 to 2000 less people being injured every year.¹²

The most robust data on the effect of 20mph limits on reducing speeds and casualties can be gained through the evaluation of their extensive application across Bristol. The estimated total number of injuries avoided across the city each year is 4.53 fatal, 11.3 serious, and 159.3 slight injuries. Further analysis of Bristol injury data highlights a general reduction in injuries and suggests evidence of a city-level reduction in fatalities of 63%.¹³

More recently, data from TFL shows that since 20mph limits were introduced on key roads in London in 2020, the number of overall collisions reduced by 25%. Collisions involving vulnerable road users decreased by 36 % and collisions involving people walking decreased by 63%, while collisions resulting in death or serious injury reduced by 25 %.¹⁴

⁹ Welsh 20mph Task Force Group, (2022)

¹⁰ International Transport Forum/OECD, "Speed and Crash Risk", (2018)

¹¹ Hussain, Q, et al, (2019)

¹² Jones, S., Brunt, H, "Twenty miles per hour speed limits: a sustainable solution to public health problems in Wales", *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, (2017)

¹³ Bornioli et al, "Effects of city- wide 20 mph (30km/hour) speed limits on road injuries in Bristol, UK", *Injury Prevention*, (2020)

¹⁴ Transport for London, "New data shows significant improvements in road safety in london since introduction of 20mph speed limit", (2023)

<<https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2023/february/new-data-shows-significant-improvements-in-road-safety-in-london-since-introduction-of-20mph-speed-limits>>

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