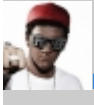


That the speed limit on roads should be abolished



nzlockie (PRO)

Hi everyone and welcome to this WODC round! I thank my opponent for agreeing to debate this scintillating resolution and wish him well!

Today's resolution argues that **the speed limit on roads should be abolished**. I, of course, am entirely FOR this resolution for several reasons - which I will outline once I've established the exact model I'm proposing we adopt.

The Model:

- **All speed limits are abolished on roads except in Urban areas and "special circumstance" areas such as school zones.** This provides obvious benefits to the driver, as they will be able to get where they are going faster. Limitations will be placed in Urban areas purely due to safety concerns for the higher number of Pedestrians and Cyclists.
- **Driver's licenses are SIGNIFICANTLY harder and more expensive to obtain, requiring regular practical and theory retesting. Formalised reaction time testing is introduced with a minimum standard required.** Driving oneself is not a RIGHT, it is a privilege. Primarily this has been done for safety reasons, but it has several fringe benefits, mostly stemming from the fact that there will be less drivers on the road. At this stage, there's no advocacy for the legal driving age to be raised, the licence to drive should be directly connected to the person's ability to safely pilot a car.
- **Fuel prices are raised with the extra tax going directly to improving roading.** Poor roading is a **major contributor** to crashes. Ensuring that we have competent driver's on our roads is one thing this model addresses, but improving the road surface is just as important. Fuel prices are also being raised to encourage economic driving practices as the norm, since cars run most efficiently at **between 40 and 50mph**.
To manage the impact of raising fuel prices on the economy, careful monitoring will decide the discount awarded to other road users - Public Transport, Road Shipping etc.
- **Speed limits can/will be imposed on certain classes of Driver's Licence.** For example, a new driver may have a starting limit of 60 mph placed on their licence. Heavy traffic will certainly have a limit imposed on their licence. Driving above these limits can constitute

certainly have a limit imposed on their license. Driving above these limits can constitute Dangerous Driving and the offender can be prosecuted.

Aims of the Model:

- **Reduce the number of Accidents.** This is achieved by reducing the number of vehicles on the road, improving the state of the roads themselves and raising the minimum level of competence of the Drivers.
- **Reduce the Environmental Impact.** This is achieved by reducing the number of vehicles on the road and financially encouraging the use of economic driving. Raising fuel prices should also encourage the development and use of alternative fuels.

Reasons why we support this model:

This house acknowledges the environmental impact the increase of oil burning cars have, although it also recognises that the exact extent of this impact is widely [disputed](#). For this reason, the **primary** reason we support this model is that we believe it will result in safer roads and less accidents.

Evidence?

Obtaining evidence of the impact of raising or lowering the speed that drivers travel on a road is notoriously difficult. The problem is not getting the stats - that's easy. There are stats which show that faster speeds equal more accidents and stats which show that increasing or even removing speed limits actually reduces the number of crashes. The problem is interpretation and correlation. There are so many factors that go into a crash - road conditions, weather conditions, visibility, driver's ability - it could be argued that ALL of these are more important factors than the actual speed the driver was travelling. Intoxication, animals on the road, driver distraction... the list goes on. Add to this that many of these things can only be guessed at after the fact. For this reason, linking deaths or accidents to speed alone is an exercise in futility.

Instead we have these two truths:

- Several studies, including [this one](#), show that drivers with more ability exhibit safer driving practices. This model supports this. In this context, speed limitations should be imposed based on individual ability rather than anything else.
- Several studies, including [this one](#), show that driver distraction is a leading cause of accidents

on our roads. [This review](#) finds that the sheer number of road signs are making our roads less safe now as they are a distraction for drivers. This model would allow the driver to simply concentrate on the business of driving to the conditions rather than constantly checking to see what speed they "should" be driving

In terms of safety on the road and reducing the number of accidents, it is this side's contention that the answer is **to limit speed by individual driver's ability**, coupled with the other points in this proposed model.

Vote PRO - We will get you there faster.



CJKAllstar (CON)

Rebuttal

[The following text is severely distorted and illegible due to a rendering error.]

+ Aims of the Model:

- Reduce the number of Accidents
- Reduce the Environmental Impact

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Meeting the Resolution:

In his round my opponent has questioned my side's argument as not directly addressing the resolution. If his claim is upheld then this should be a clear loss for our side. Although I'm happy that the judges can make the connection, I'd like to just begin this round by clarifying this for my opponent's sake.

The resolution which my side is arguing is **the the speed limit on roads should be abolished**. As PRO my job is to present a convincing argument for this action to take place. There are three main parts to my side's argument:

Motivation: WHY challenge the status quo in this regard? What benefits do we get from buying into this premise?

I addressed this by showing many benefits achieved both directly and indirectly as a result of adopting the proposed model which includes dropping posted speed limits on our roads.

- **Drivers can get to where they are going faster.** (DIRECT BENEFIT) *It could also be argued that this contributes to less cars being on the road as well.*
- **Speed Signs will be eliminated resulting in less Driver distraction.** (DIRECT BENEFIT) *Driver distraction was shown to be a leading cause of road accidents.*
- **Accidents will be reduced.** (INDIRECT BENEFIT) *It was shown that by reducing driver distraction and allowing drivers to focus on the task of driving from A to B, accidents will be reduced.*
- **Environmental Impact of cars will be reduced.** (INDIRECT BENEFIT) *As most cars will burn more fuel at higher speeds, drivers who wish to drive faster will soon be demanding development of alternative fuels. This point is amplified by the total model my side is proposing.*

Judges will note that indirect benefits in this case are still very much relevant due to the nature of the resolution.

CAN this even be implemented? The predictable attack to my side of the resolution is that removing a speed limit will increase the number of road accidents... in fact that's exactly what my opponent has done! Part of my burden of proof had to include demonstrating the viability of my proposal to succeed. In short, I needed to show HOW this resolution was both reasonable and practical.

I feel like the model I have presented - while certainly not the only option - does paint a clear

I feel like the model I have presented – while certainly not the only option, does paint a clear picture of how attaining the benefits of having no speed limit on the roads can be achieved, while not only maintaining but actually improving on the existing road safety record.

What potential harms arise from this action and how can they be mitigated? Due to the short nature of this debate, I didn't want to wait for my opponent to bring up the harms. We all knew what angle his side would be arguing anyway, and I plan to address his specific points in my rebuttal in just a second. My plan was therefore to directly address the elephant in the room. I began by explaining that pure stats can be especially misleading in this debate, due to the sheer number of factors that come to play in a car crash. I listed several of these factors and many more of them were mentioned and expanded upon in my source materials. To quote from one of them, a 25 page report on the effectiveness of driver training by an established British University, the author is speaking about the difficulties associated with drawing conclusions from accident statistics:

"Firstly, there are well-established problems in the reliability of accident records that lead to difficulties in using accident rates as a criterion measure (Wahlberg, 2003). Secondly, an accident may be the result of several events that might be due to factors not considered during the driver-training course under study. Thirdly, accident frequency is an unreliable criterion given the fact that accidents are comparatively rare events when considering the prevalence of everyday risk taking."

The Effects of Driver Training on Simulated Driving Performance

[The following text is a corrupted scan of the source material and contains no legible information.]

In all, I feel that given the time constraints placed on this house, packaging my argument as a model was the cleanest and clearest way to prove this resolution. Judges will now have a very clear idea of the benefits to be had if speed limits as we know them today are abolished, and should rest comfortable in the knowledge that any potential harms have been identified and dealt with.

Rebuttal:

In his round, CON has predictably come out with some tired old contentions. He has them all listed under one heading so for your convenience, I'm going to list and address them separately. I'm going to head them in nasty angry red to subliminally leave you with the feeling that he is an angry nasty man who wants you to be late to your thing. Grrr. Angry face.

(Please don't fall for this trick Judges, I've met CON and he's a lovely guy who definitely wishes you well with your thing and probably wishes he could argue the easier side of this resolution. Unfortunately this was a randomly assigned topic and we both just have to play the hand we're dealt.)

1.

2. **1. People are law abiding people in general.** This was premise one of his syllogism. It is quickly and easily dealt with by the numbers, ironically, using the exact topic we're debating here today! [This study](#) of British motorists found that over 80% of motorists between 30-39yrs admitted to breaking the speed limit. The other age groups surveyed were not much better at 70-72%. I checked and it turns out that obeying the posted speed limit in Britain IS in fact a law. This makes CON's premise false right out the gate. **His conclusion that people will adhere to the speed limit is demonstrably false.** In my first round I alluded to the fact that drivers who are speeding due to the fact that they are late for their thing are more likely to be distracted as they watch for cops. Freeing them from this worry allows them to focus more on their driving.

2. The stats prove that: 67% of road accidents happen on roads with no permanent speed limit. Nice stat. When you actually read the article it says,

"A 2008 report by the European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) found that of the 645 road deaths in Germany in 2006, 67% occurred on on motorway sections without limits and 33% on stretches with a permanent limit. The fact that 33% of German motorways have a permanent limit and 67% have either a temporary limit or none means that these figures, at first glance, show that having a speed limit does not the lower the number of fatalities on motorways. But as ETSC note: 'this similarity of percentages takes no account of traffic volumes on different sections.'" - CON's source

So to be clear, they're saying that one third of the deaths occurred on one third of the motorways. Two thirds occurred on the other two thirds of the motorways. This hardly proves ANYTHING and **even the original stats gatherer concluded that these numbers did not indicate a correlation between the speed limited sections and the open speed sections.**

Here's another stat for you from the same ETSC. More than **5 times** the number of deaths mentioned here took place on rural roads. during this same period. These 645 deaths actually only accounted for approximately 12% of Germany's totals. Rural roads, (the vast majority of which have speed limits!) accounted for 60%.

I said I could produce counter stats and here's one for you: Utah experimented with repealing the maximum speed limit on some of its roads. This comprehensive study compared stats before and after and concludes, "*These results show an adverse effect on crash occurrence for subsets of crash types and highways, but do not show a major overall effect of NMSL repeal and increased speed limit on crash occurrence on Utah highways.*" - *Effect of repeal of the national maximum speed limit law on occurrence of crashes, injury crashes, and fatal crashes on Utah highways*, by [some guys](#).

3. The stats prove that: Increasing the speed limit resulted in a 3.2 increase in deaths. Again, nice stat. Again - it is just a number. Here's a counter stat for you: [This report](#) by the Federal Highway board of the USA shows that in fact deviations BELOW the posted speed limit actually result in MORE accidents than those deviations above the limit. They even drew a graph!

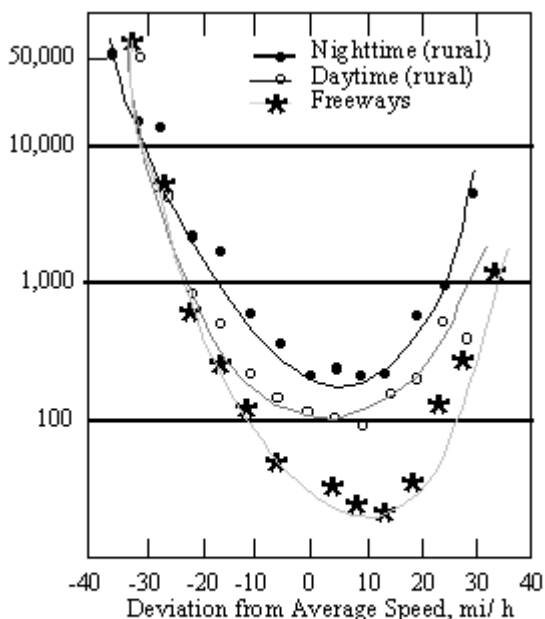


Figure 1. Crash involvement rate by deviation from average travel speed (from Solomon, 1964, and Cirillo, 1968).

In fact the graph shows that for most types of roads, the absolute safest speed to drive is slightly over the posted limit. Keep reading, it gets better...

4. If people are given the autonomy to go as fast as they want, they will surpass the

speed at which it is necessary for survival, control and the safety of us: Really? Germany has sections of the Autobahn that have no posted speed limit. People are literally allowed to go as fast as they like. Turns out that they actually travel just as safely as they do in the sections where the speed limit IS posted. This has already been demonstrated from CON's own stat which showed that the total number of deaths per distance is actually equal across all of Germany's highways.

An extra element to this particular point from CON is that he's assuming that there IS an ideal speed for us to travel. If that's the case, I'd like to know why that speed has remained largely unchanged despite dramatic improvements in vehicle safety and technological advances such as ABS and ESP which aid us to drive defensively.

In fact it turns out that, backed up by [this source](#), the initial speed limit in the USA was actually born from a need to be more efficient with fuel consumption, rather than the safety aspect my opponent seems to favour. This naturally begs the question why it hasn't been changed as cars have gotten more fuel efficient and why there is a speed limit for electric cars at all!

Conclusion:

As I welcome CON to bring his final conclusion round as well, I'd like to remind the judges that statistics in this debate should be closely examined for the strength of correlation more so than usual. As stated in my initial round, there are a huge number of factors which come into play during a crash. For this reason my side has resisted the urge to bring this form of evidence to the table. Instead we have presented clear benefits, confronted and dealt with the potential harms and then illustrated one example of how the whole system could work.

For years we've been told that it is speed that kills, when the truth is somewhat less black and white. All studies agree that the driver plays the single most important part in most crashes. Sticking with the speed limit as a method of achieving safety is futile. It's time we abolished the whole system and placed the onus where it ought to be placed - on the driver's individual ability.

Vote for PRO - your thing is important to us and we will make sure you get there quickly and safely.

