

Compliance with reduced speed limits at roadworks: What can we learn from other speeding attitudes and self-reported behaviours?

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Abstract

To understand factors associated with self-reported compliance with reduced speed limits at roadworks, the Department of Transport and Main Roads added roadworks items to its annual Road Safety Perceptions and Attitudes Tracking Survey. Self-reported compliance with reduced speed limits at roadworks was better when workers were present, at sites the respondent was not familiar with, and when other motorists were complying with the speed limit. Survey results will be further analysed to enhance our understanding of speeding at roadworks, its relationship with other risky driving behaviours, and to inform the identification and evaluation of interventions.

Background

Evidence shows that many motorists disregard reduced speed limit signage at roadworks sites, putting the safety of traffic controllers, road workers and other road users at risk. The Department of Transport and Main Roads is committed to ensuring the effectiveness of traffic management at roadworks, including consistent and credible speed limits and signage, enforcement, and better education for road users explaining the need to slow down at roadworks. To inform this work, and complement anecdotal and other sources of information about speeding at roadworks, a need to collect and analyse Queensland data was identified.

Method

The Department of Transport and Main Roads commissions the Road Safety Perceptions and Attitudes Tracking Survey to monitor trends over time for a variety of road safety topics. The survey uses an online panel to recruit a representative (in terms of the gender, age and regional characteristics of licence holders) sample of 600 Queenslanders over the age of 16 who have ever held a licence. Data collection typically occurs in April and May of each year. Three items about travel speeds through roadworks sites were included in the 2015 survey to measure:

- Self-reported frequency of exceeding reduced speed limits at roadworks in eight circumstances (road workers present/not, length of site less than/more than 1km, whether the site was familiar or not, and compliance/non-compliance of other motorists)
- Agreement with six statements about speeding at roadworks
- What would encourage them to slow down at roadworks (this question was only presented to those who indicated they exceeded the limit in at least one of the circumstances in the first question. Response options were presented, in addition to a free text field for “other” responses, with multiple responses permitted).

Results

Self-reported compliance with reduced speed limits at roadworks sites varied by circumstances, and was better when workers were present, at sites the respondent was not familiar with, and when other motorists were complying with the speed limit. The length of the site did not influence compliance.

Among the 463 respondents who indicated that they exceeded the reduced speed limit at roadworks sites at least occasionally for one or more of these circumstances, the most common factors likely to encourage them to slow down were the presence of road workers (57%), if reduced speed limits were understandable based on the prevailing road conditions (50%), and more signage throughout the site to remind them of the reduced limit (48%). The most common suggestion in the “other” responses was removing the reduced speed limit signs when work was not occurring / workers were not present.

Conclusions

Survey data will be further analysed to profile individuals likely to exceed reduced speed limits at roadworks sites, and compare roadworks item responses with other items, such as attitudes towards speeding more generally, and speeding in school zones (where presence of children is an important signal to slow down). Survey data will be used to enhance our understanding of speeding at roadworks sites, and inform the identification and evaluation of interventions.