



# We are all (only) human: Understanding motivations for speed choices on the road

Dr Judy Fleiter



GLOBAL  
ROAD SAFETY  
PARTNERSHIP

The Global Road Safety Partnership is hosted by:



# GRSP

- Hosted by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland
- Founded in 1999
  - IFRC's 1998 *World Disasters Report* identified catastrophic number of traffic injuries & deaths & dramatic consequences on people & their livelihoods
- Member-based organisation



# OUR VISION

A world free of road crash death & injury

# OUR MISSION

The sustainable reduction of road-crash death & injury, with a focus on low- & middle-income countries



# We are only human

## 4 Key Challenges



- 1: Humans are not good at assessing risk
- 2: Laws are not always seen as fair or necessary
- 3: Changing attitudes and behaviours takes resources & time
- 4: Human beings and human behaviour are complex and motivated by many things

## Challenge 1: Humans are not good at assessing risk



- **Lack of understanding of risks on the road**
  - The 'speed paradox'
    - we believe speeding is dangerous but we still speed
- **Examples of poor risk assessment:**
  - Stopping distances → vehicle speed
  - Level of impairment → alcohol, drugs, fatigue, distraction
  - Impact of Kinetic energy:
    - ability to hold/protect a child during a crash
    - amount of damage to the body when force is applied

# We are only human

Lots of things have developed over time to improve road safety:

- Vehicles
- Road surface and design
- Technology

But one thing remains the same...



# Assessing risk of damage to our body from physical forces



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The human body has not evolved to a point where it can protect itself in the event of a road crash. If it had, we might look like this:



<https://youtu.be/vdf4fNkMMA8>

## Challenge 2: Laws are not always seen as fair or necessary



- **If we don't understand the risks we face on the road:**
  - we may not agree that laws are necessary (e.g. reduced speed limits)
  - we may not believe there is a need to change our behaviour
- **Explaining risks & options to keep people safe can help**
  - Public education
  - Police communication - for example:
    - Explain why enforcing the law
    - Explain how a helmet can protect head and brain
    - Safety cameras, not speed cameras
  - Driver/rider training
  - Important that people in power (including police) are seen to obey laws



## Challenge 3: Changing attitudes and behaviours takes resources and time



- Evidence demonstrates that robust police enforcement + sustained communications can change behaviour
- Sometimes, behaviour changes first, then attitudes and public acceptance changes later

# Example of Change

## Process

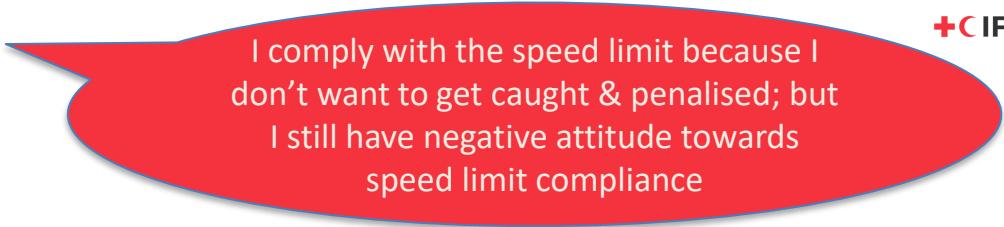
Behaviour change



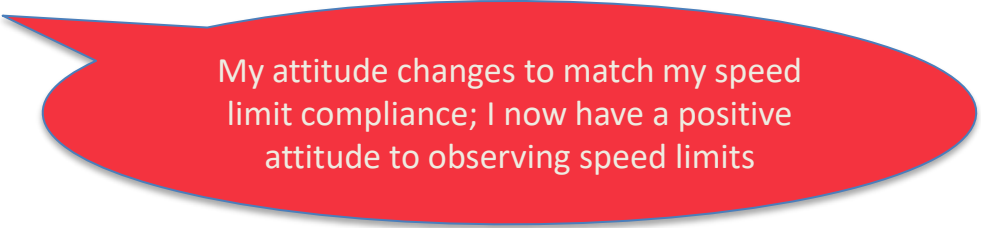
Attitude change



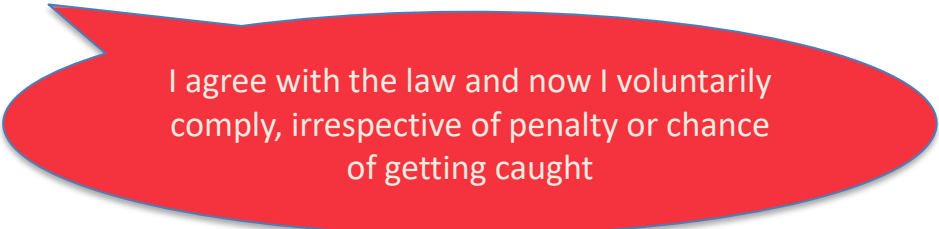
Moral acceptance of the law  
& voluntary compliance



I comply with the speed limit because I don't want to get caught & penalised; but I still have negative attitude towards speed limit compliance



My attitude changes to match my speed limit compliance; I now have a positive attitude to observing speed limits



I agree with the law and now I voluntarily comply, irrespective of penalty or chance of getting caught



# Creating a moral imperative to comply



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- Sustained enforcement + education have helped change societal attitudes
- Enforcement can assist with long term behaviour and attitude change
- Enforcement can help change the behaviour of people whose attitudes haven't changed yet



## Challenge 4: Human beings and human behaviour are complex



- **Risky road use can be linked to addiction:**
  - Alcohol addiction -> Drinking driving
  - Drug addiction -> Drug driving
- **Educating someone does not mean they will change**
  - Telling novice drivers about risks does not mean they avoid risk taking
  - School-based education alone will not reduce road trauma
- **We are motivated by many things...**

## Challenge 4: Human beings and human behaviour are complex



- **Motivations for speeding:**
  - Sensation seeking & risk taking
  - (Mis)Perceptions:
    - *time saving; I can control the vehicle; I can decide what is safe*
  - Influence of peers
  - Fatalistic beliefs
  - Concerns for personal safety (e.g. car jacking)
  - Perceptions of enforcement tolerances (e.g. de facto speed limit)
  - Repeat speeding (high-range) linked with other traffic & criminal offending
  - Community norms...

## Challenge 4: Human beings and human behaviour are complex

- **Motivations for speeding:**
  - **Community norms**
    - *'Everybody speeds'*
    - *Your 2018 Free Speed Study shows this is NOT TRUE!*
    - **% Speeding:**
      - *Rural Roads 27%*
      - *Motorways 23%*
      - *Regional 80kph 50%*
      - *Urban roads 52%*
      - *Dual Carriageway 100kpm 44%*



# We are all (only) human...final thought



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A Safe System should account for human frailty and our capacity to make mistakes....



**What system would we have created for ourselves?**

# REFERENCES

Eprints repository: [https://eprints.qut.edu.au/view/person/Fleiter,\\_Judy.html](https://eprints.qut.edu.au/view/person/Fleiter,_Judy.html)

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# GLOBAL ROAD SAFETY PARTNERSHIP



## E-MAIL

[grsp@ifrc.org](mailto:grsp@ifrc.org)  
[judy.fleiter@ifrc.org](mailto:judy.fleiter@ifrc.org)



## WEBSITE

[www.grsproadsafety.org](http://www.grsproadsafety.org)

Thank you very much for your attention.