



Context: How participants view speed in the broader road safety landscape

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Speeding is common – and easily justified

While this research focused on average speed safety cameras, participants often situated their responses within a wider view of road safety.

- Some participants felt that speeding was not a significant issue and/or had a tolerance for speeding that they considered did not endanger others.

Speeding itself is less likely to cause a crash unless you're speeding where it isn't safe. On some highways here you could safely do 140 if you were the only car on the road. (South Island, male, distance travelled varies)

I'm not too bothered [about speeding]. It's just people that go real stupid speeds. It's okay to go a little bit above the speed limit - like 110 - where it's not going to annoy anybody else. But if you're right up the back of another car and you're speeding, that's just not okay. I see speeding happening a reasonable amount. I'd say 70% sit 5ks above the speed limit. I think that's okay. (South Island, female, 300-399km per week)

- Other road safety risks - including impaired driving, distraction (especially mobile phone use), driver inexperience with New Zealand roads, tailgating, poor indicating, driving too slowly and driving aggressively - were frequently identified as equal or greater threats.

Shocking, especially Tauranga ... a lot of impatience, a lot of road rage. (North Island, female, <100km per week)

We tend to be quite pushy drivers and don't have a lot of patience for other people. (South Island, female, 300-399km per week)

You see countless people a day still on their cell phones. Just people's lack of awareness I think, from a safety perspective, just what else is going on outside of their car. (South Island, female, <100km per week)

- Participants in provincial and rural areas felt road safety issues such as poor road maintenance, driver fatigue and unique conditions such as stock on the road or black ice were of greater risk than speed.
- Some participants noted that speed alone isn't always the problem, it's how people drive at speed, or whether the limits are sensible in the context. Concerns were raised about inconsistent or inappropriate speed limits for the road condition.
- Some noted that they had adjusted their driving in relation to speed over time, particularly after having children.

Support for enforcement closely tied to perceptions of fairness and transparency

- Despite the justifications for speeding, most acknowledged that speed increases the severity of crashes, and saw reducing speeds, especially in high-risk areas such as near schools, sharp bends, or near road works, as a legitimate safety measure. Participants were more accepting of enforcement in these contexts, where the safety rationale felt obvious.

I think there are a few stretches of road that could do with it [speed cameras]. [If] people know that they're not being monitored by police or cameras, they take advantage in some of those residential areas. (South Island, female, <100km per week)

- Support for speed enforcement was closely tied both to attitudes to speeding and also to their sense of fairness, transparency and legitimacy. Participants were more likely to accept or support enforcement measures when they believed the approach was clearly explained, consistently applied, and focused on real risk reduction, not just technical compliance or revenue generation.

If people know what's expected and it's consistent, then I'm fine with it. It's when they spring it on you that I get annoyed. (South Island, female, <100km per week)

I have a bit of an ambivalent view [of speeding enforcement]. I think at times it can be just revenue, bringing in money for the government. But at other times I think it's really useful. (South Island - rural, female, 400-499km per week)

- Some were frustrated at what they considered to be inconsistent and poorly marked speed limits, and roads with frequent, abrupt (and perceived to be unjustified) speed limit changes - which they felt contributed to unintentional speeding.

The speed zones, if they are there, they are right at the bend. You think you've come from a 50, you turn, you might have looked to your right and you could have totally missed that the speed limit has changed. (South Island, female, <100km per week)

- Signage was seen as crucial in deterring speeding and enhancing legitimacy. Some felt that driver education through visible signage should come before penalties

It shouldn't be just about the fine. It's about making people understand why speed matters. (North Island - rural, female, 500+km per week)

Widespread cynicism towards fixed speed cameras

- Fixed and mobile cameras were often described using negative language - "sneaky," "cash grab," or "gotcha" - and were often perceived to be placed to catch drivers out rather than to improve road safety. These sentiments stemmed from experiences where cameras appeared unexpectedly or were placed just beyond changing speed zones.

When they're hidden and you don't know why they're there, it feels like a trap. (North Island, female, 200-299km per week)

- Participants were also cynical about fixed cameras, noting that once drivers learn where they are, they slow down for the split second when they are passing then speed up, so have no impact on road safety or behaviour change.

People know where the fixed cameras are. They slow down for them and then they're back up to whatever speed they want to do. Pointless! (North Island, male, 500km+per week)

- Drivers want enforcement to match real risk. There was strong sentiment that minor infringements in safe conditions shouldn't be penalised, however, support for speed cameras increased when enforcement was clearly linked to safety outcomes - such as placement near schools or in high crash areas.

I think they're great. I think that they will deter speeding, especially around the suburbs, around near schools. (South Island, male, 500km + per week)

Going 105km/h on an empty road is not the same as hooning through a school zone. (South Island, male, distance travelled varies)

- Participants also identified that clearly communicated camera locations and thresholds would help maintain legitimacy and public trust. There was repeated concern about being surprised by enforcement rather than informed in advance.

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Attitudes to speeding and enforcement, and implications for average speed cameras

Attitudes

- Speeding is often seen as situational – e.g., overtaking, running late, open roads – rather than inherently dangerous.
- Many feel comfortable exceeding the limit by a small margin, particularly on motorways and quiet roads.
- Some see existing speed camera enforcement as revenue-focused rather than safety-focused.
- Perceived legitimacy of enforcement depends heavily on the perceived fairness and clarity of speed limits and signage.

Implications

- Communications should acknowledge that some drivers view small breaches as acceptable and explain why average speed enforcement addresses risk across the full route, not just at one point.
- Messaging should highlight the safety rationale for enforcement – countering perceptions that it is revenue-driven.
- Clear, consistent signage is essential to maintain perceptions of fairness and legitimacy.
- Education materials should explain how average speed cameras differ from single-point cameras, reducing opportunities to ‘game’ the system.
- Campaigns should address situational speeding, using real-life examples that resonate with rural, urban, and high-frequency drivers.

Objective 1



Awareness and understanding of average speed cameras

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Low baseline awareness of average speed safety cameras

- Most participants had not heard of average speed safety cameras before the interview. This meant many initially misunderstood how the system worked, thinking it was just “another speed camera.”

I've never heard of that - average speed? I thought the camera just flashes you if you're speeding past it. (North Island, male, 100-199km per week)

Never heard of them before you mentioned it. I just thought a speed camera was a speed camera – one photo, one fine. (North Island, male, 500km+per week)

- Those who were cynical about whether speed cameras lead to behaviour change felt average speed cameras might be just another form of revenue gathering.

We all know that speeding's not good but this sounds like just another revenue thing from them. (North Island, female, 200-299km per week)

- A small number had heard of similar systems overseas (e.g. Australia or the UK) and understood the general concept, but generally only vaguely. Even among this group, details about calculation methods, thresholds, and location signage were unclear. Awareness that trials were underway in New Zealand was almost non-existent except for the participant in Northland.

I saw them in England years ago, but I don't know exactly how they work here – do they average every car, or just the ones speeding? (North Island, female, 200-299km per week)

- A small group had heard of average speed cameras only very recently, either through the media or from family members.

I just read about it on a news thing in our local paper, saying that they're going to trial them around here somewhere. Something to do with AI and they take the average speed. I just kind of skipped over it. (North Island, female, <100km per week)

I think the point of them is they take a photo of your car or license plate at the start of wherever it is and then also at the end. And then over that time they record the time you take to travel a certain distance. To be honest I didn't actually know about them before my Dad told me. (North Island, female, 18-24 years, 200-299km per week)