



BRSI

Summary

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Results of the first speed measurement in Belgium

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Complete report available in Dutch and French:

Rijden bestelwagens te snel? Resultaten van de eerste snelheidsmeting van bestelwagens in België.

Les camionnettes roulent-elles trop vite ? Résultats de la première mesure de la vitesse des camionnettes en Belgique.

Objective and methodology

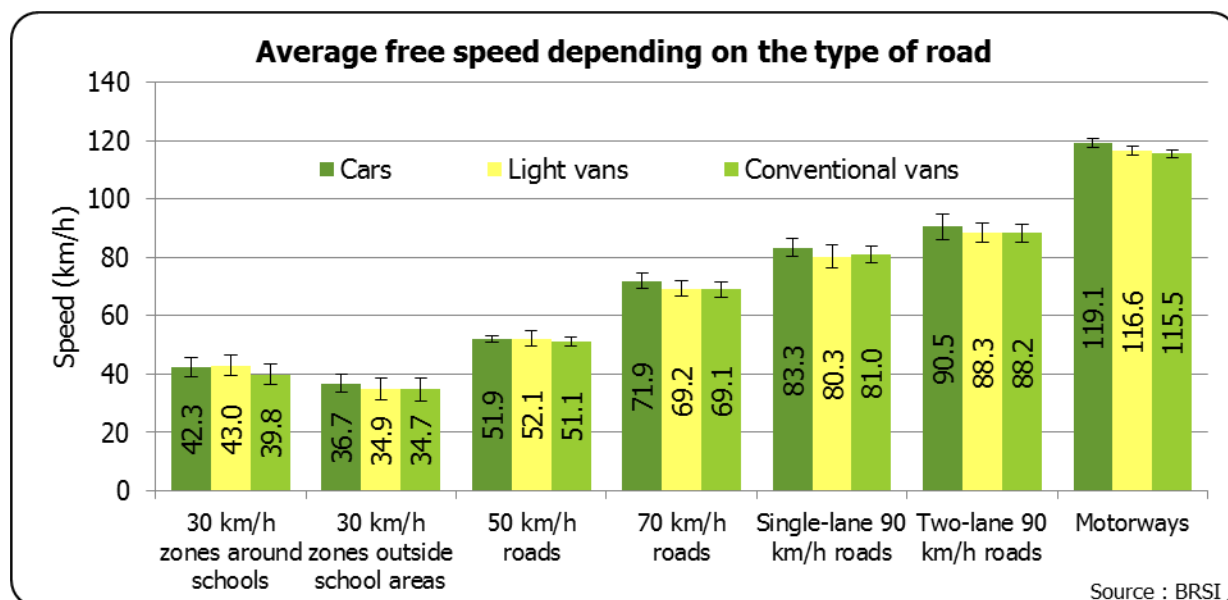
In October 2013, the BRSI developed the first national measurement of the behaviour of van drivers in relation to speed. This measurement was intended to fill the gaps in objective information on the subject, while vans, in fact, represent an increasing share of transport modes in Belgian traffic. Different findings in accident statistics suggest that the speed of vans could be a point of focus for road safety.

An innovative data collection method has been put in place compared to the previous behavioural measurements of the BRSI. The investigators visited 257 places on the Belgian road network to measure the speed of vans by means of SpeedLasers. Measurements were carried out from the side of the road or from bridges above motorways. The locations were chosen so as to obtain representative indicators for 7 different road types in Belgium and regionally. The investigators measured the speed of two types of vans: "light" vans (vehicles with a wheelbase similar to that of cars, but in a "utility" configuration) and "conventional" vans (other vehicles of less than 3.5 t used to transport goods). Cars travelling on the same roads were also measured in order to make up a control group as a basis for comparison. The investigators also took note of whether or not the vehicles were travelling at free speed (speed not restricted by a vehicle ahead of the measured vehicle).

Main outcomes

The behavioural measurement revealed that **the light and conventional vans were not driving faster than cars. This was the case on any of the road types.**

Overall, **the differences in terms of average speed between cars and vans are low**, especially in built-up areas. On roads with a speed limit of 70 km/h and motorways, the average speed of light and conventional vans is however significantly lower than those of cars, even if the differences are only 2 to 3 km/h. The differences between vans and cars are a little more pronounced when the proportion of drivers driving above the speed limit is taken into account. On roads with a speed limit of 70 km/h and 90 km/h, the percentage of offenders among motorists is 10 points higher than among drivers of vans.



In absolute terms, the average speed of vans remains nevertheless too high. Their average speed is greater than the speed limit in urban areas and very close to the limit on roads with a speed limit of 70 km/h and 90 km/h with double lanes. This is reflected by the high percentage of offences: more than 50% in urban areas and between 30% and 40% on roads with a speed limit of 70 km/h or more (with the exception of single-lane roads with a speed limit of 90 km/h). The problematic road types are therefore the same for vans as those that had been identified for cars during previous behavioural measurements by the BRSI.

The average speeds in the Brussels-Capital Region are generally lower than those of the other two regions. However, there is no significant difference between Flanders and Wallonia, with the exception of single-lane roads with a speed limit of 90km/h where vans drive slower in Flanders than in Wallonia.

The comparisons made between the results of this measurement and those obtained in the past by means of a very different method yet with the same objective, are very consistent. Combined with the satisfactory manner in which the measurement campaign took place, this observation encourages further behavioural speed measurements in the future by applying the same methodology.

Conclusion

This study shows that the speed behaviour of van drivers is not worse than that of motorists. However, speeds attained by van drivers remain high in absolute terms (one third is driving faster than the speed limit). This result is a cause for concern given that other studies by the BRSI have highlighted the fact that van drivers are more likely than motorists to drive under the influence of alcohol or use a mobile phone without a hands-free kit. Their accident risk will therefore be higher at equal speeds. In addition, the consequences of accidents involving vans are more serious than those of car accidents, particularly because of the heavier weight of vans. Despite this increased accident risk and its potentially higher severity, we are not actually seeing van drivers adapt their speed behaviour in accordance with the risk.

Speed in general, and that of vans in particular, must remain a high point of priority for road safety. However, with the minimal differences in behaviours displayed by van drivers compared to motorists, we do not recommend any particular awareness-raising or enforcement actions focused on vans only. As for other professional drivers, however, it is important that the companies employing van drivers focus on their safety, namely by raising awareness of the increased risks generated by excessive speed, and more particularly during the transportation of a heavy load.

The BRSI must continue to measure the behaviour of van drivers as they constitute an increasingly large proportion of the road traffic. Similar behavioural measurements must be reproduced in the future. However, they must also be used to collect additional information on other road users. Given that the methodology introduced in this behavioural measurement has proven to be effective, it would be appropriate to use it again in the future, particularly to measure the speed of motorcyclists, which is a significant category of road users for which no objective data on actual speeds exist in Belgium.



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