



Driver Speeding Behavior in 20 mph School Zones

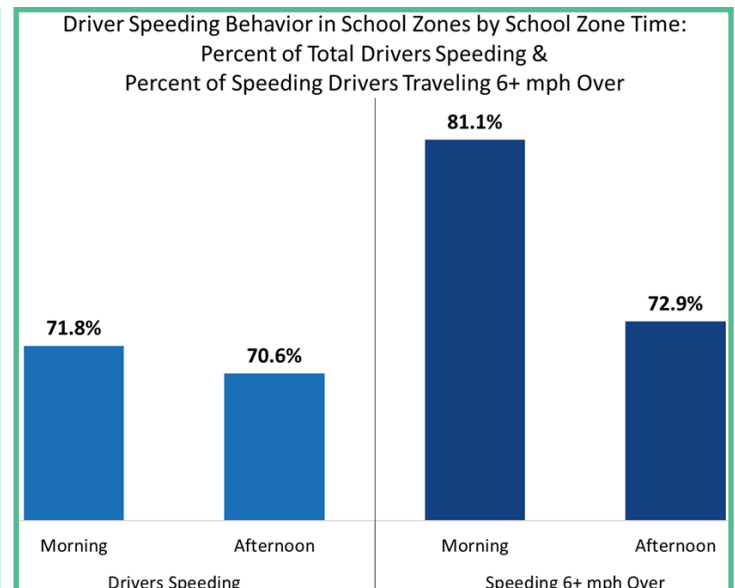
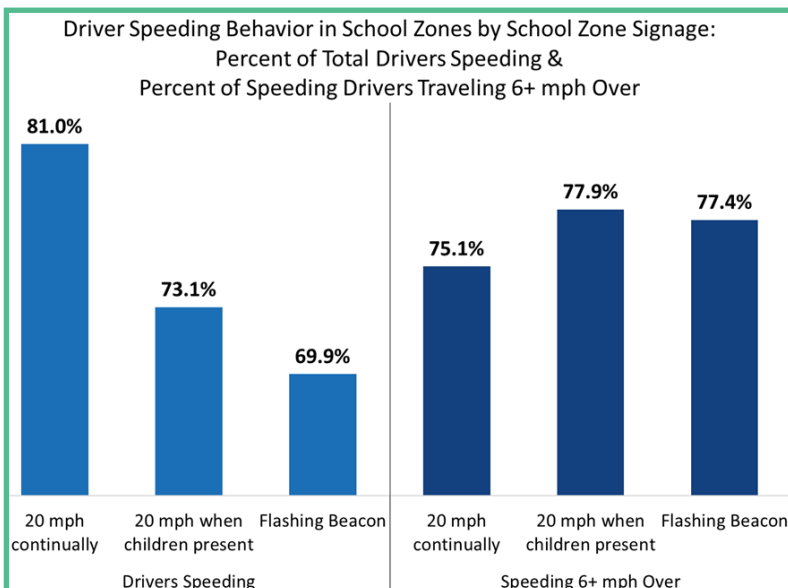
Travel Speed is the primary factor influencing pedestrian injury outcomes due to the kinetic energy transfer from a vehicle striking a human. A vehicle traveling 30 mph has a 7-10 times higher likelihood of inflicting injury than a vehicle traveling 20 mph and takes twice the distance to stop. For example, if a pedestrian is in the road three car-lengths ahead, a driver traveling 20 mph will be able to stop but a driver traveling 25 mph would hit the pedestrian and still be traveling 18 mph at impact, roughly the same kinetic energy as a child falling from a second story window. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, driver speeding behavior in Washington has skyrocketed and is one of the most deadly factors involved in the increase of traffic fatalities.

School Zone Signage indicating reductions in posted speed limits to 20 mph influenced driver speeding behavior. School zones with flashing beacons and/or speed feedback signs had lower rates of driver speeding behavior than school zones posted for 20 mph at all times (permanent posted speed reductions) or school zones with signage indicating 20 mph when children are present. However, the proportion of speeding drivers traveling 26 mph or greater did not vary among the type of school zone signage (see figure below). One school had an active speed camera (speeding citations issued by mail) and less than one in ten drivers exceeded the 20 mph limit at that location, one of the lowest rates of driver speeding behavior recorded during the survey.

WTSC Driver Speeding Survey

In 2022, 139 schools across the state opted-in to participate in a driver observation survey of speeding behavior. Trained observer teams visited each school to document the school zone setting, signage, and used radars to collect driver travel speeds during morning or afternoon school zone hours. The surveys were completed in October 2023. Each participating school received a summary of their results (<https://wtsc.wa.gov/school-zone-speeding/>). Among participating schools, 118 have school zones with permanent or temporary posted speed reduction to 20 mph. These schools are included in this brief.

Speeding in school zones is especially concerning considering the higher than usual volume of pedestrian traffic combined with high volumes of vehicle traffic, especially during drop off/pick up times. The 2022-2023 driver speeding observation survey revealed that most drivers exceed 20 mph school zone speed limits. Overall driver speeding rates were similar for morning and afternoon school zone times, however the proportion of speeding drivers traveling greater than 26 mph in the school zone was higher during the morning school zone hours (see figure below).



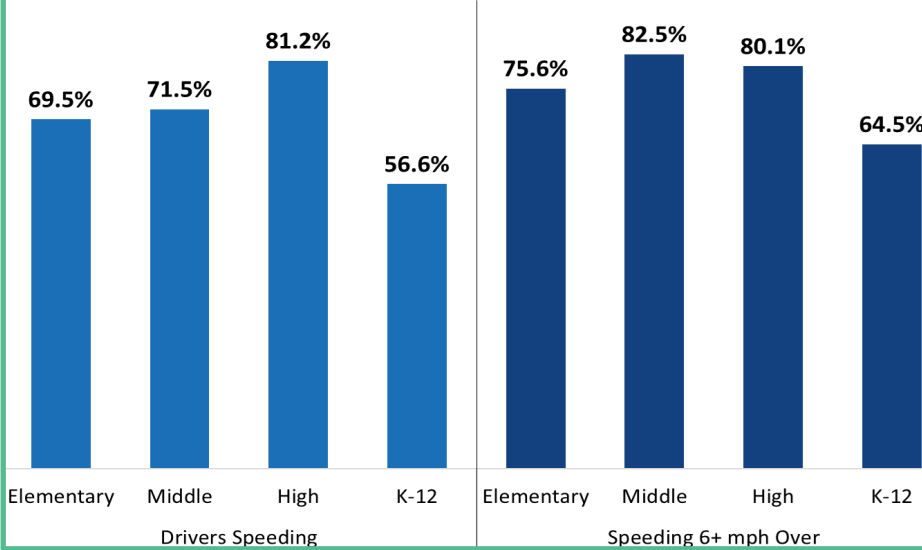


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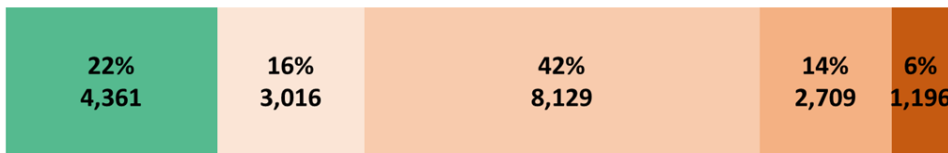
Schools included in the survey with permanent or temporary speed reductions in school zones to 20 mph are described here (118 schools):

- * 60 Elementary, 27 Middle, 23 High, and eight K-12 schools from 39 school districts.
- * 70 morning and 49 afternoon school zones.
- * 25,853 driver travel speed observations were collected; 931 bus drivers (see page 3) and 24,922 vehicle drivers (19,411 drivers passing by the school; 5,511 drivers entering/exiting the school).

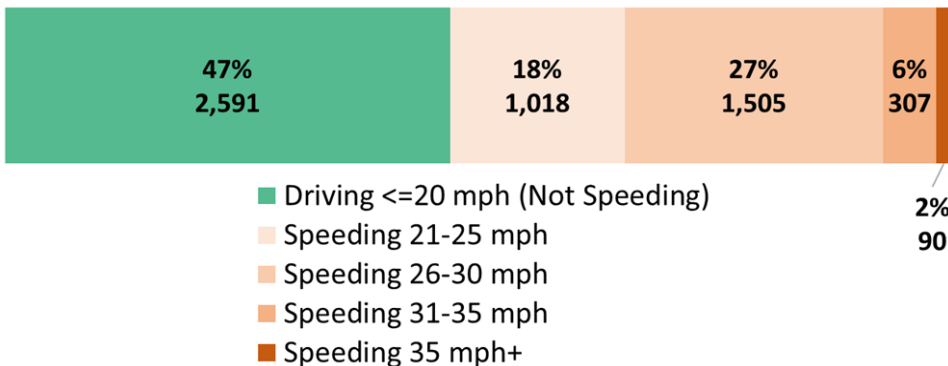
Driver Speeding Behavior in School Zones by Type of School:
Percent of Total Drivers Speeding &
Percent of Speeding Drivers Traveling 6+ mph Over



Driver Speeding Behavior in 20 mph School Zones:
Drivers Passing the School: Percent Observed and Total Number



Driver Speeding Behavior in 20 mph School Zones:
Drivers Entering/Exiting the School: Percent Observed and Total Number



Did you know?

- ⇒ Overall, driver speeding behavior is very high, nearly three of every four drivers observed in school zones were exceeding the posted speed limit of 20 mph.
- ⇒ The proportion of drivers speeding in elementary and middle school zones were slightly lower than speeding in high school zones. Among the eight K-12 schools included in this report, just over half of the observed drivers were exceeding 20 mph.
- ⇒ The proportion of drivers traveling greater than 26 mph was slightly lower in elementary school zones compared to middle and high school zones.
- ⇒ Drivers passing through school zones were more likely to be speeding than drivers observed entering or leaving the school.
- ⇒ Traffic backups can mitigate higher travel speeds in school zones, however individual acts of driver aggression increased at sites with drop off/pick up traffic impeding regular traffic through the area.

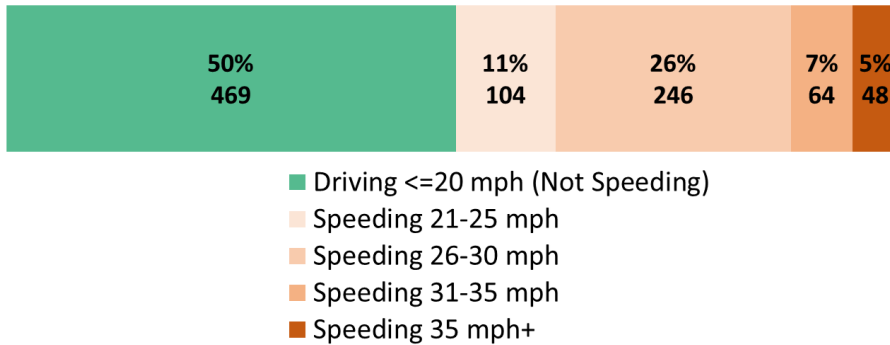


Bus Driver Speeding Behavior in 20 mph School Zones

School Bus Drivers have an opportunity to and should be setting the example regarding travel speeds in school zones. At a minimum, a school bus driver will slow the speeds of all following vehicles when they themselves travel at or below 20 mph. Overall, school bus drivers observed in the survey were less likely to speeding than other drivers either passing by the school (78% speeding) or entering/exiting the school (53% speeding), however half of the school bus drivers observed in the survey were exceeding 20 mph in active school zones, a total of 462 speeding school bus drivers.



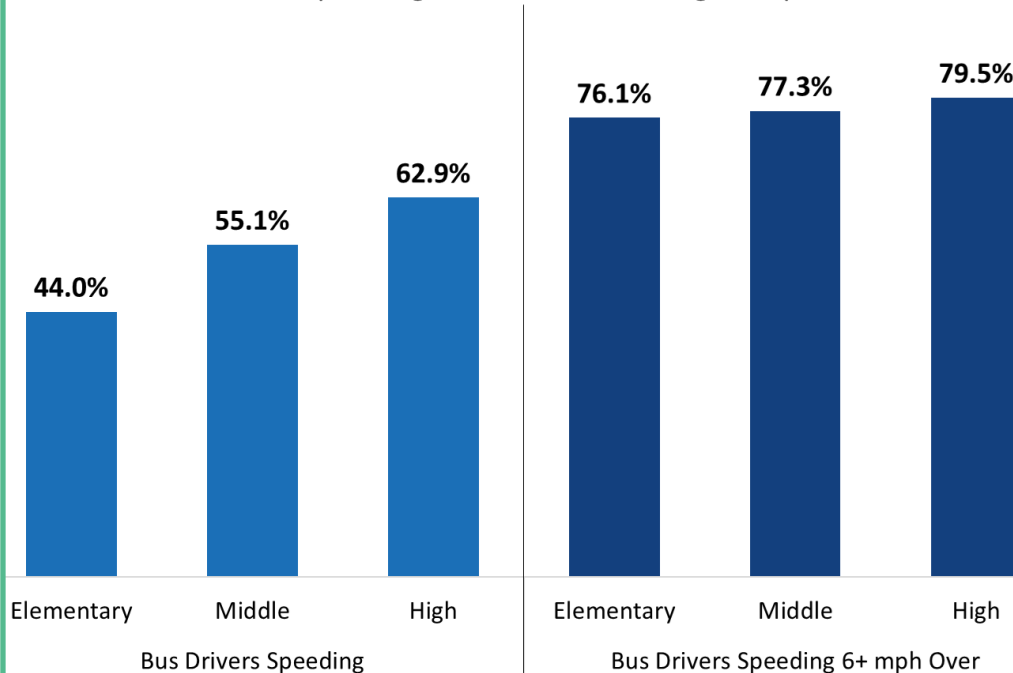
School Bus Drivers Speeding Behavior in 20 mph School Zones:
Percent of School Bus Drivers Observed and Total Number



Did you know?

- ⇒ Half of school bus drivers observed in the survey were traveling greater than 20 mph in the active school zone.
- ⇒ Three-fourths of speeding school bus drivers were traveling greater than 26 mph in school zones. Forty-eight school bus drivers (5 percent of all school bus drivers observed) were traveling greater than 35 mph in active school zones with posted limits of 20 mph.

Bus Driver Speeding Behavior in School Zones by Type:
Percent of Total Bus Drivers Speeding &
Percent of Speeding Bus Drivers Traveling 6+ mph Over



Speeding behavior among school bus drivers was lowest in elementary school zones, higher in middle school zones, and highest in high school zones (see chart on the left). This is similar speeding behavior observed among other drivers in school zones. However, if a school bus driver was speeding, the proportion traveling greater than 6 mph over the 20 mph posted speed limit did not vary based on the type of school zone (elementary, middle, or high school zone).

For more information, please contact (360) 725-9860.

<https://wtsc.wa.gov/dashboards/school-zone-speed-survey/>



Reduce Travel Speeds in Your Community

Traffic Safety is Important to Everyone

Driving the speed limit reduces risk of injury and serious harm for drivers, passengers, and pedestrians. Make a deliberate choice to slow down, focus only on driving, and consistently wear a seat belt to demonstrate you care. Traffic safety culture is driven by daily choices. Together we make the roads safer for our children and youth!

Tell the Story Connect with concerned stakeholders and decision makers to slow speeds and mobilize your community. Share your data, issue a call to action, and engage community members:

- ⇒ Brainstorm solutions with your school board, city council, or county commissioners after a data presentation. Parents will also be interested!
- ⇒ Share [safety messages](#) in your social media to promote a traffic safety culture in school zones and other places children and youth visit in your community.
- ⇒ Use data to craft a competitive Safe [Routes to School grant](#) to make infrastructure changes to improve safety.
- ⇒ Provide and collect a [parent-teen driving agreement](#) when students apply for a school parking permit to promote safe driving expectations
- ⇒ Adopt the free peer-to-peer [Teens in the Driver Seat program](#) to reduce risks and raise cash funds for your school club.
- ⇒ Encourage drivers 16-25 to use the free [You in the Driver Seat app](#) to earn free gift card rewards for safe driving. [Provide your mailing address](#) to request app cards to share with teens.



Slow Speeds to Keep Kids Safe

Speeding increases danger for everyone crossing streets or driving, walking, or rolling to school. Take these steps to slow down and improve student safety:

- ◇ Support a student safety patrol program. The [AAA Safety Patrol Operations Manual](#) and the [School Zone Safety Curriculum Kit & Resource Guide](#) are excellent tools.
- ◇ Apply for [WTSC mini-grants](#) to fund school crossing guard programs or for local law enforcement to purchase equipment for school zone speed enforcement.
- ◇ Use this data brief and the [Speed Safety Cameras Readiness Guide](#) to educate and support decision makers to adopt automated enforcement to slow speeds around critical places kids live, learn, play, and travel.
- ◇ [Explore lowering speeds](#) to 20 MPH on school walk routes to protect school children and families.
- ◇ Engage teens with [traffic safety contests and scholarships](#) with cash awards!



Additional Resources

Additional Online Resources

- ⇒ Use the [Walkability Checklist \(Spanish\)](#) to decide if your neighborhood, school walk route, or community is a friendly place to walk. Your school zone speeding data may help you take steps to make walking and riding in your community safer.
- ⇒ Talk with preteens and teens using these talking points to [Prevent Teen Pedestrian Crashes](#). How long has it been since you earned your driver's license? Things may have changed since then.
- ⇒ Find [US Department of Transportation funding](#) to support increased safe bike and pedestrian pathways to where teens and families want to go. Use the [Let's Get Together: A Guide for Engaging Communities and Creating Change](#) to incorporate allies outside your learning community.
- ⇒ Get to know and work with your [regional Target Zero Manager](#), a traffic safety professional interested in your community and your safety! They are willing partners and have resources to promote traffic safety for everyone.
- ⇒ Use the WTSC Statewide Speed Observation Survey [Results](#) and the WTSC School Zone Observation Survey [Results](#), including this brief, for grant applications.
- ⇒ Visit the WTSC Patient Driving Community Resources [Page](#).

