



Tackling Root causes Upstream of Unhealthy Urban Development

Elephant in the Road

Dr David Williams – University of Bristol
UTSG, University College Dublin, 26 June 2025



ChatGPT (2025)



University Consortium



Local Authority Partners



Collaborators



Supporters



The Elephant in the Road

The Elephant is Trampling Us

Feeding the Elephant

Taming the Elephant

Post-Elephant Future for Transport
Research

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The Elephant in the Road

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Unhealthy Urban Development



THE GLOBAL GOALS For Sustainable Development



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International Journal of Environment and Health > 2023 Vol.11 No.1

Title: Motonormativity: how social norms hide a major public health hazard

Authors: Ian Walker; Alan Tapp; Adrian Davis

Addresses: School of Psychology, Swansea University, Swansea, SA2 8PP, UK ' Bristol Business School, University of the West of England, Bristol, BS16 1QY, UK ' Bristol Business School, University of the West of England, Bristol, BS16 1QY, UK; Transport Research Institute, Edinburgh Napier University, Edinburgh, EH11 4BN, UK

Abstract: Decisions about motor transport, by individuals and policy-makers, show unconscious biases due to cultural assumptions about the role of private cars - a phenomenon we term motonormativity. To explore this claim, a national sample of 2157 UK adults rated, at random, a set of statements about driving ("People shouldn't drive in highly populated areas where other people have to breathe in the car fumes") or a parallel set of statements with keywords changed to shift context ("People shouldn't smoke in highly populated areas where other people have to breathe in the cigarette fumes"). Such context changes could radically alter responses (75% agreed with "People shouldn't smoke..." but only 17% agreed with "People shouldn't drive..."). We discuss how these biases systematically distort medical and policy decisions and give recommendations for how public policy and health professionals might begin to recognise and address these unconscious biases in their work.

Keywords: transport; sustainability; active travel; physical activity; public health; unconscious bias; prejudice; decision-making; cultural influences.

DOI: [10.1504/IJENVH.2023.135446](https://doi.org/10.1504/IJENVH.2023.135446)

International Journal of Environment and Health, 2023 Vol.11 No.1, pp.21 - 33



Being Trampled

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Being Trampled – Social Exclusion

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Giulio Mattioli @giulio_mattioli@urbanists.social
@giulio_mattioli

...

Every time large cities consider introducing some restriction on car, some argue that that would be particularly unfair against the poor.

But in large cities the vast majority of the poor have no car, while the vast majority of the rich have one. See data from Germany

Basis: Households (Germany)

summarized regional statistical area type (7 categories):

- city region - metropolis

rows %	Total		Car in HH yes/no		
	base weighted	base unweighted	no	Yes	not specified
economic status of the household					
very low	2,158	1,117	73%	27%	0%
low	4,514	2,586	62%	38%	-
middle	14,750	13,089	43%	57%	0%
high	7,245	9,299	28%	72%	-
very high	2,176	3,390	18%	82%	-

Columns: all cases

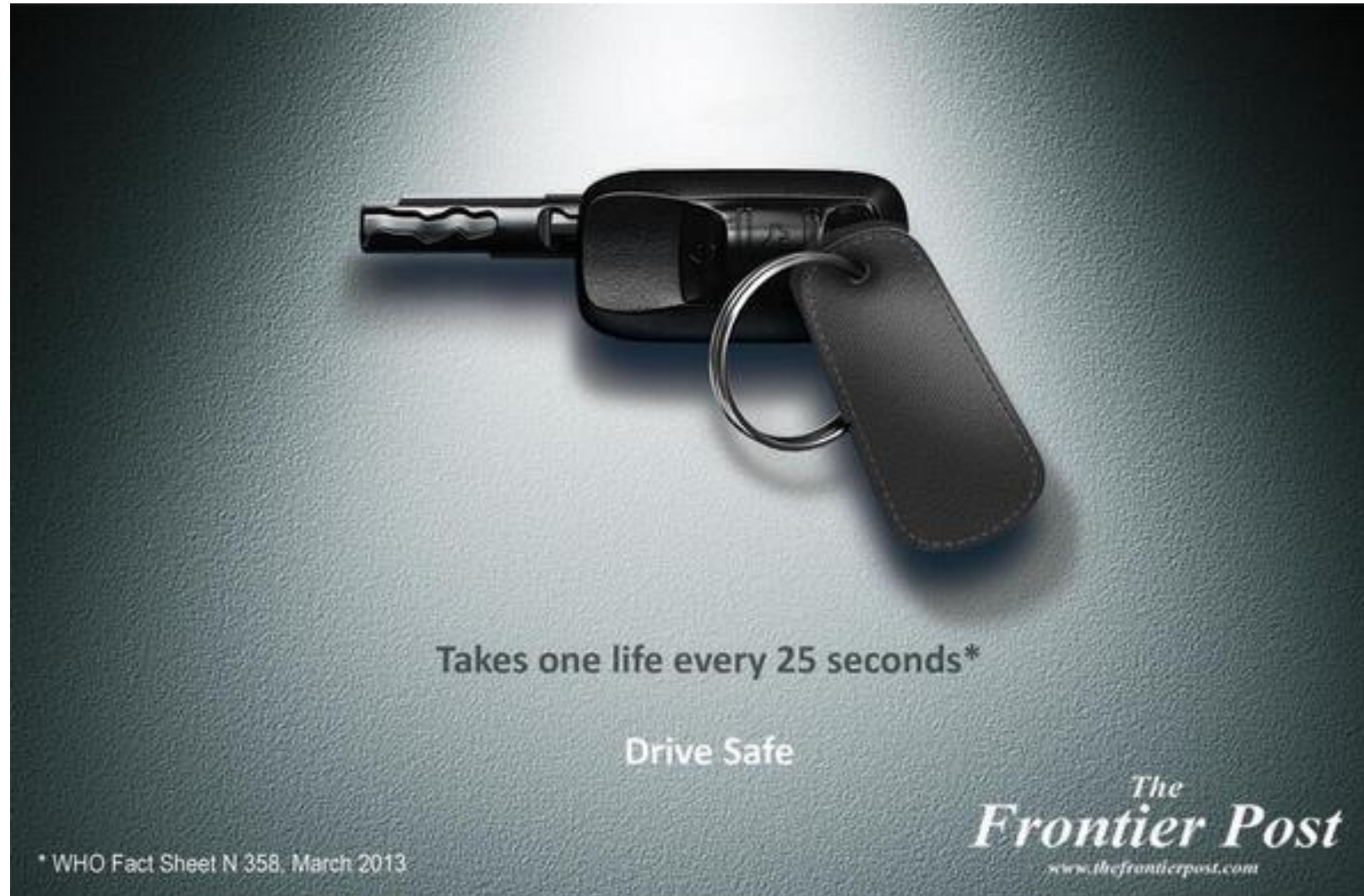
Rows: all cases

Subdivision: all cases

Source: @giulio_mattioli (2023) [Giulio Mattioli on Twitter: "Every time large cities consider introducing some restriction on car, some argue that that would be particularly unfair against the poor. But in large cities the vast majority of the poor have no car, while the vast majority of the rich have one. See data from Germany https://t.co/0PIZmxeldt" / Twitter](https://t.co/0PIZmxeldt)

Being Trampled - Fatalities

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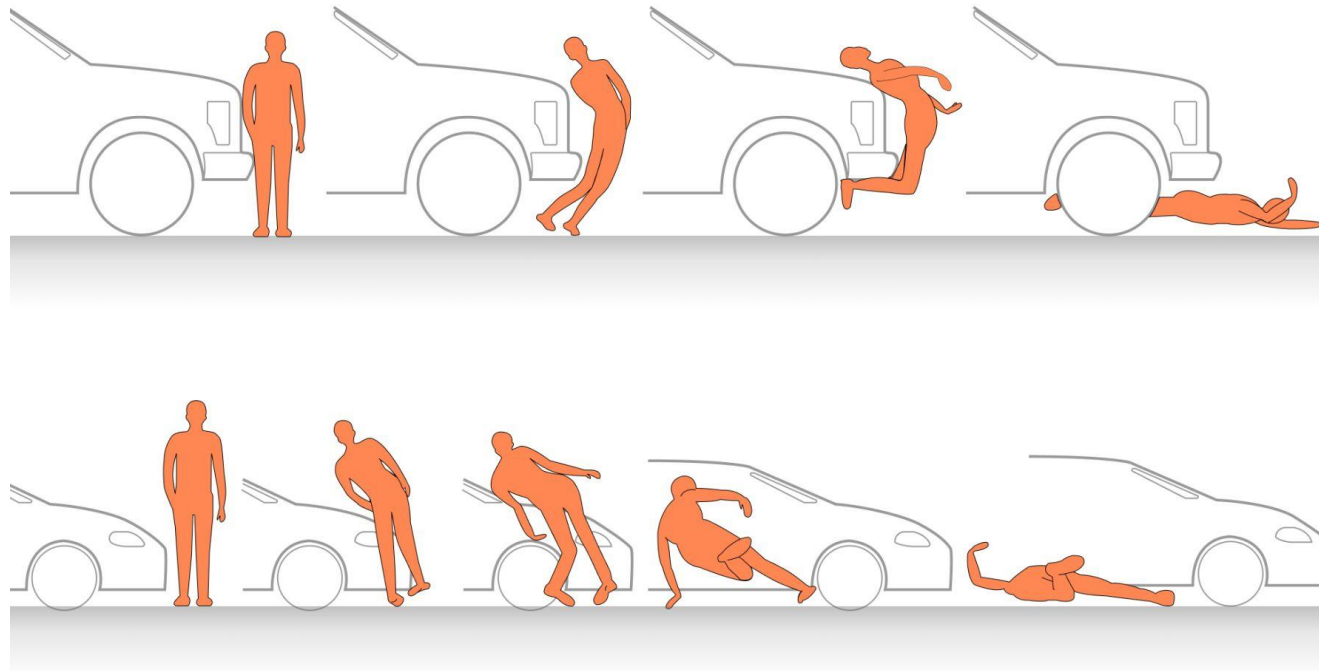
Source: @fietsprofessor (2023) [Cycling Professor](#) 🚲 on Twitter: "Kills one person every 25 seconds... <https://t.co/Pff9OetPlb>" / Twitter

Being Trampled - Fatalities

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Higher bonnets more often knock pedestrians under the vehicle rather than deflect them



Source: Ptak (2019). A new method to assess pedestrian kinematics. Transport, Vol 34 Issue 1. These images reflect collisions in urban areas where 70% of pedestrian fatalities are recorded (typical speed < 50 km/h)



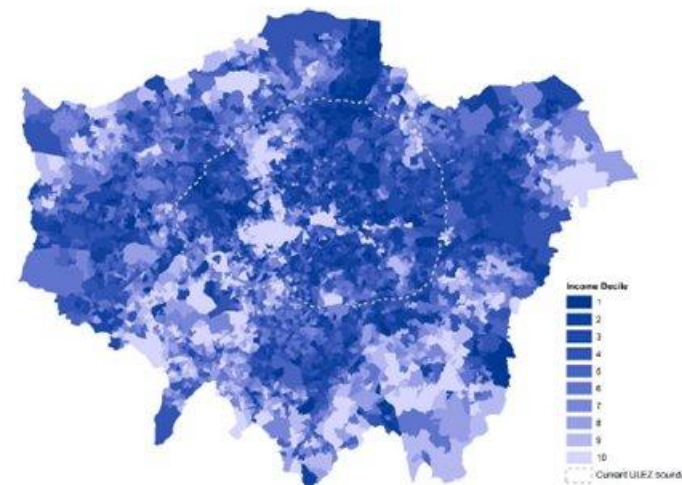
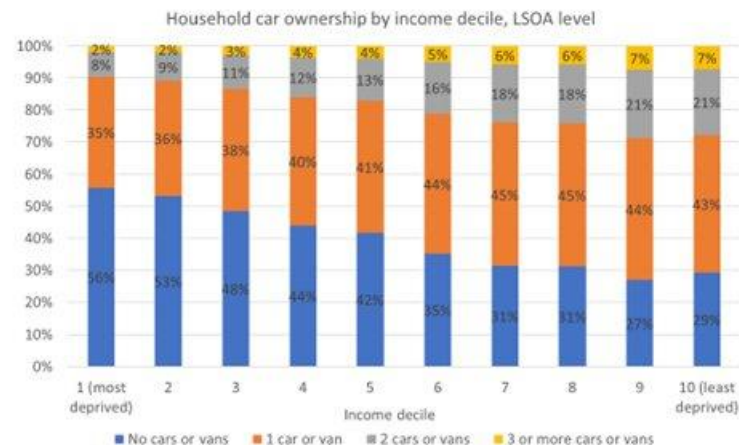
Source: Ptak (2019) [View of Pedestrian safety: a new method to assess pedestrian kinematics](#)

Being Trampled – Air Pollution

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Income deprivation (MHCLG2019) and car ownership (Census 2021)



Car ownership
decreases as income
deprivation
increases

- This graph and map show the income deprivation only.
- Combining the income deprivation data with the Census 2021 car ownership at LSOA level shows that car ownership increases in households with lower levels of income deprivation. In the most income deprived decile, 56% of households do not own a car or van, compared to 29% of households in the least income deprived decile.
- Households in less income-deprived areas are more likely to own two or more cars or vans. In the most deprived decile, this is 10% of households and in the least deprived decile it is 28%.
- The map shows the spatial distribution of income deprivation.

Source: @willnorman (2023) [Will Norman on Twitter: "New: Toxic air is harming all Londoners' health, but analysis of census data shows it's the poorest who suffer the worst consequences of pollution & are much less likely to own a car. 56% of households with the lowest incomes don't own a car vs 29% in the least deprived areas. https://t.co/RCzdpsrhxn" / Twitter](#)

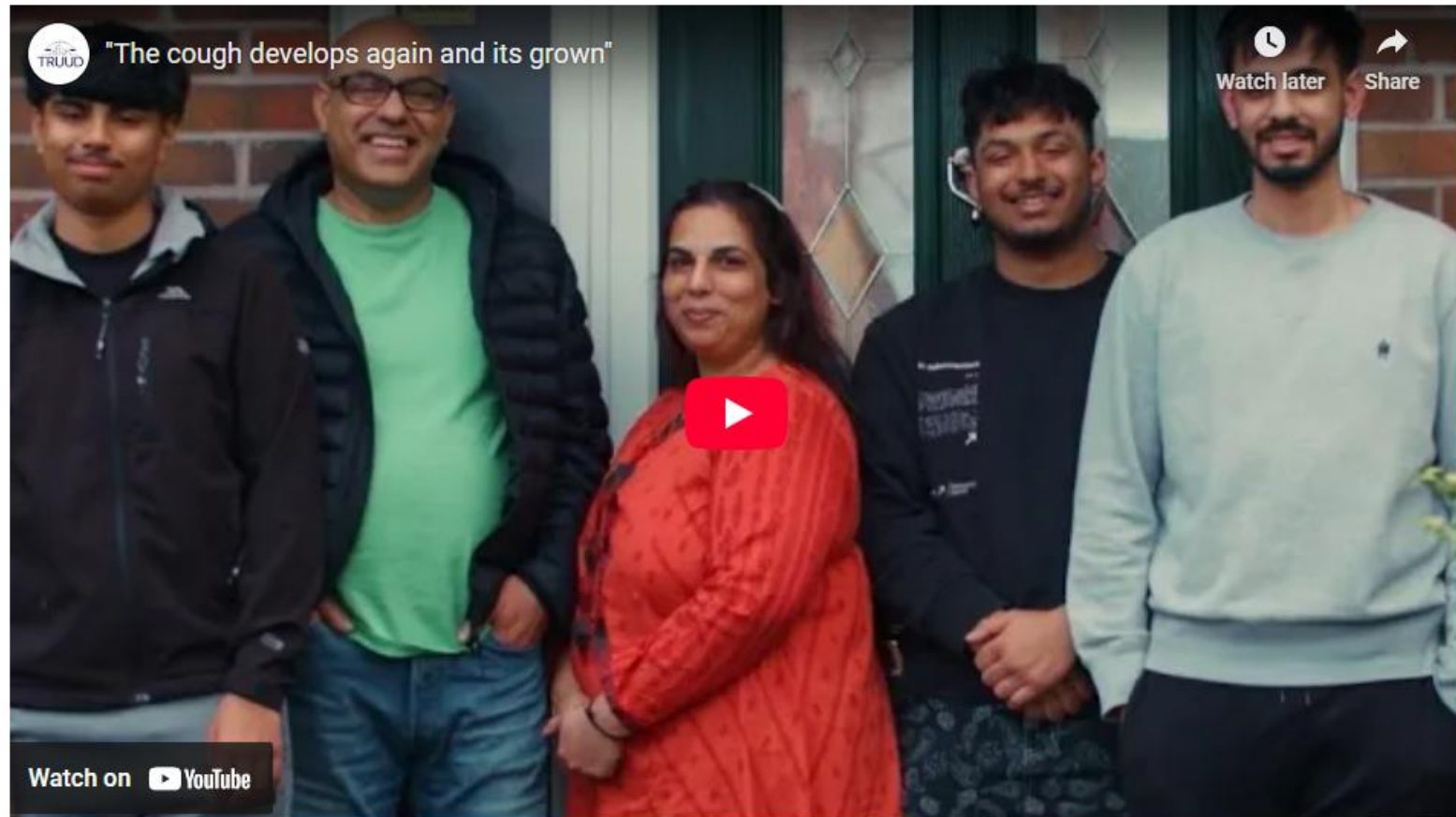
Being Trampled – Noise Pollution

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“When he moves back home, the cough develops again and it’s grown and grown”

Shakar and his family living with noise and air pollution



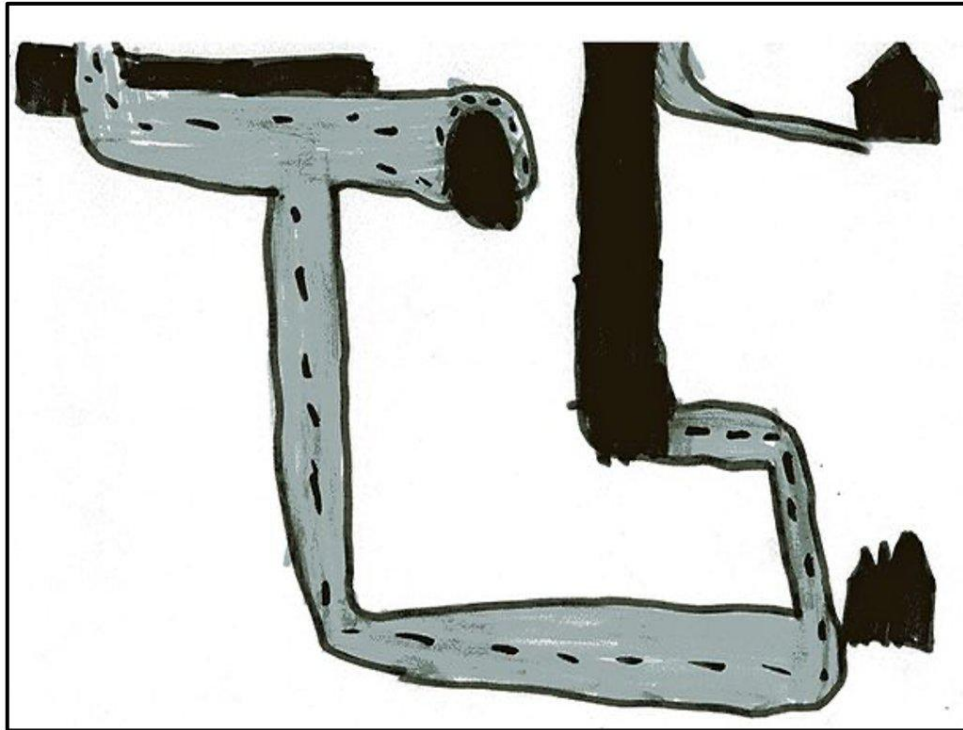
Source: TRUUD (2024) [The lived experience](#)

Being Trampled – Mental Health

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Children's drawing of their trip to school



DRIVEN TO SCHOOL



WALKING TO SCHOOL

Source: @fietsprofessor (2023) [Cycling Professor](https://t.co/UR6MLkBZ7n) 🚲 on Twitter: "Driving kids to school by car is not only bad for their health, their fitness or the safety of all other children. It also deprives children from a rich experience of their direct surroundings! (via @MargritStamm) <https://t.co/UR6MLkBZ7n>" / Twitter

Being Trampled - Obesity

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Feeding the Elephant

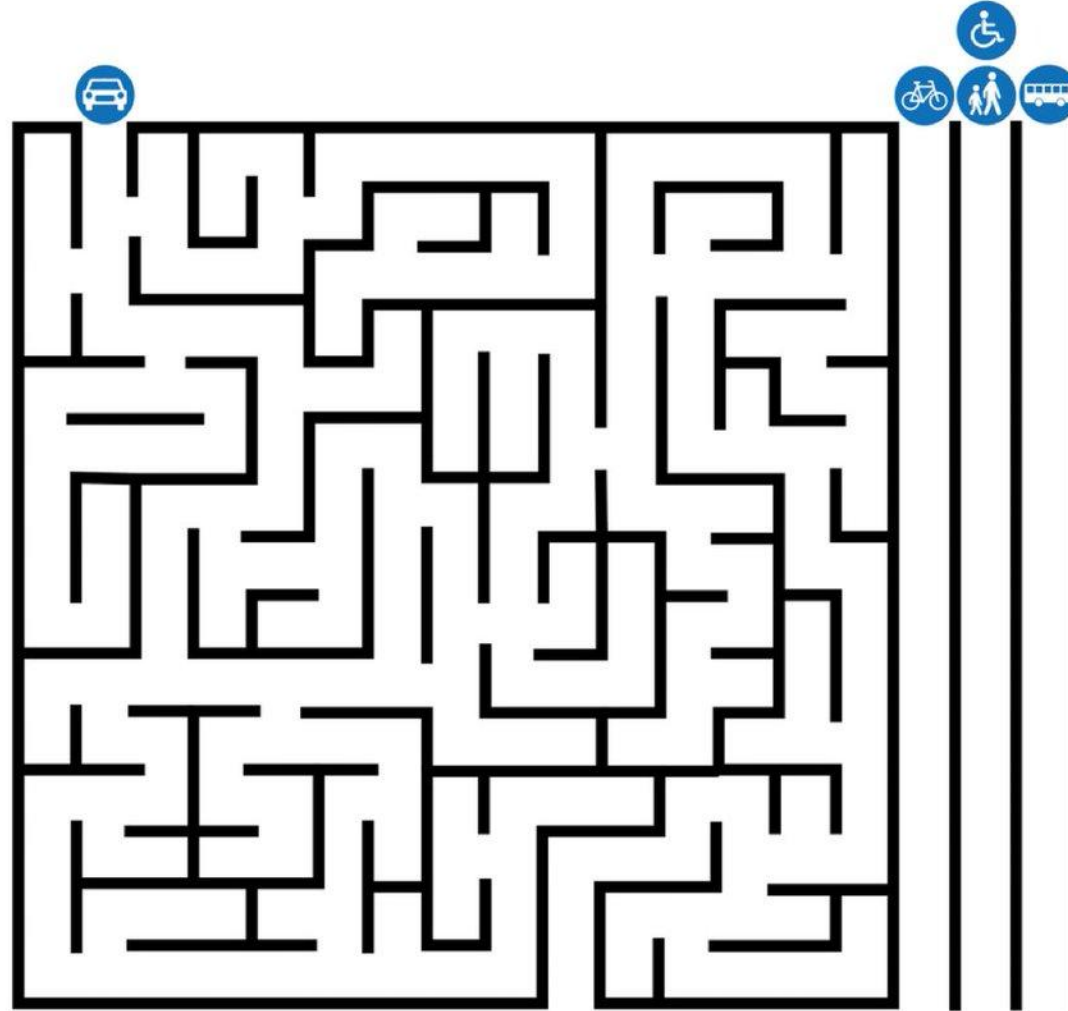
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Feeding the Elephant - Planning

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Source: @_dmoser (2022) [Daniel Moser - dmoser@mastodon.social on Twitter: "Brilliant 🧠 21st Century Urban Mobility Planning HT @colvilleandersn https://t.co/XH7TH7AyOA" / Twitter](https://t.co/XH7TH7AyOA)

Feeding the Elephant - Infrastructure

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Source: @adamxyglis (2016) [Adam Zyglis on Twitter: "Slow roll... @TheBuffaloNews #Buffalo #NewUrbanism #SlowRoll #CompleteStreets https://t.co/kbw0DHF0x2 https://t.co/2W3zA65GWd" / Twitter](https://t.co/kbw0DHF0x2)

Feeding the Elephant - Maintenance

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Elina Seppänen, Jarkko Karjalainen ja Selma-koira seuraavat säätilaa Oulun Konetyön tallilla linatissa. Kuva: Pasi Rytinki

Source: City of Oulu (2023) [Oulu's world reputation as a master of winter maintenance is being built by an SME in linatti - Mun Oulu](#)

Feeding the Elephant - Taxation

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Taming the Elephant

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Taming the Elephant – Amsterdam 1978

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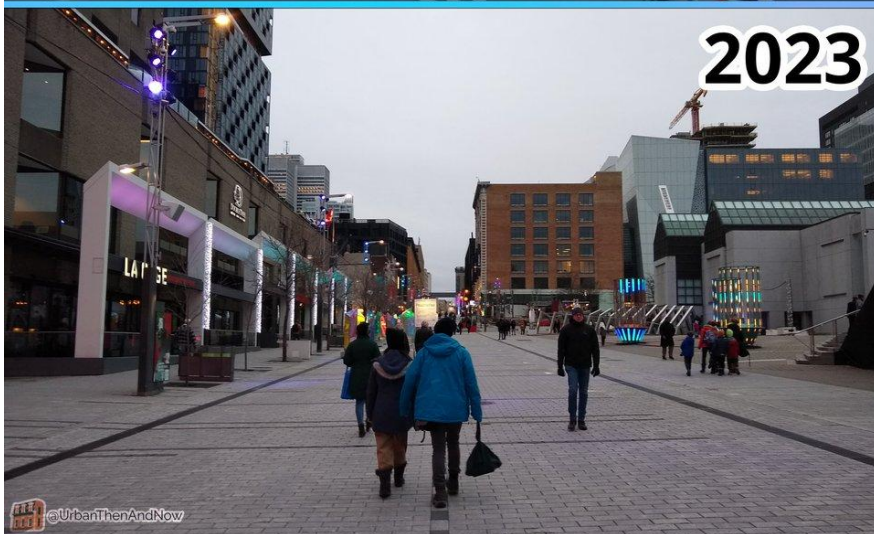
Source: @fietsprofessor (2022) [Cycling Professor](#) 🚲 on Twitter: "'We can't change our city...we are not Amsterdam!' Well. So wasn't Amsterdam! It took vision, political will and consistent steps into a new direction. ~Kinkerstraat, 1978 <https://t.co/WbPCeJ8YGY>" / Twitter

Taming the Elephant – Business Support

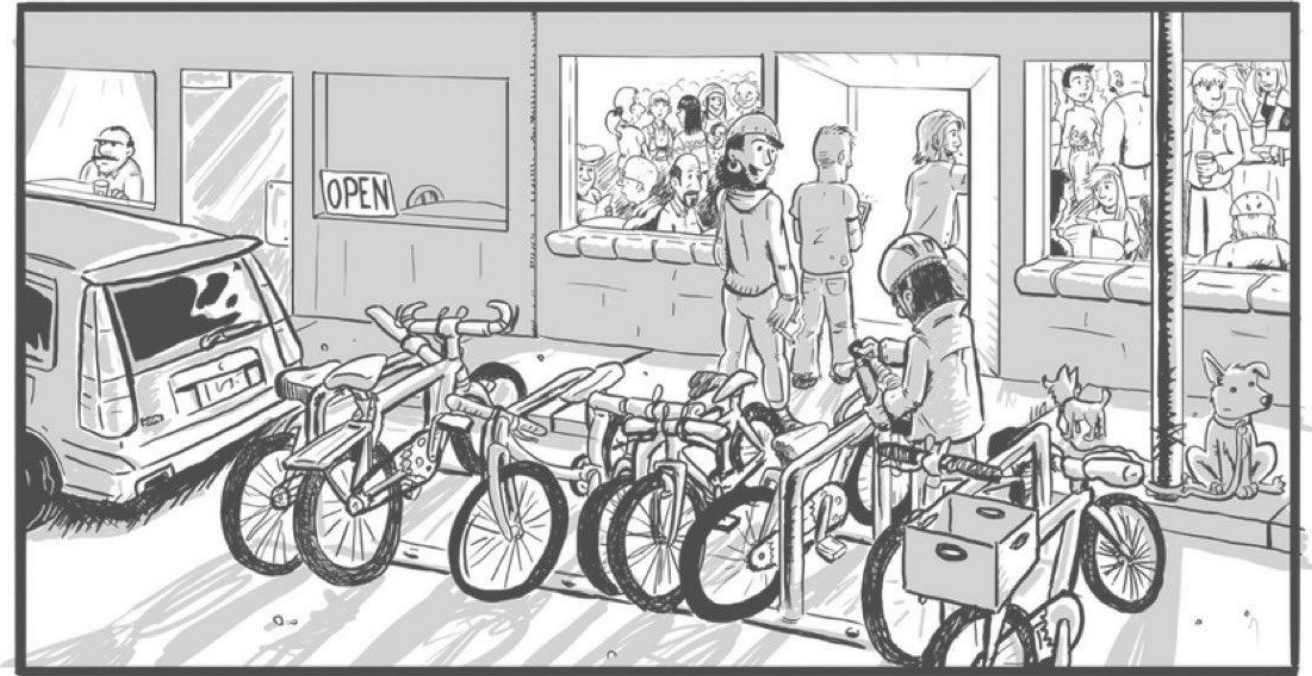
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2009



2023



HOW'S BUSINESS?

1/7/10

Source: Taras Grescoe (2024) <https://x.com/grescoe/status/1850160616356319448?s=43>

Source: @UrbanThenAndNow. (2023) [FuckCars on Twitter: "Montreal, Canada. Every business on this street went bankrupt after they banned the cars. 🐘 https://t.co/lrbEJ8PLle" / Twitter](https://t.co/lrbEJ8PLle)

Taming the Elephant – Public Transport

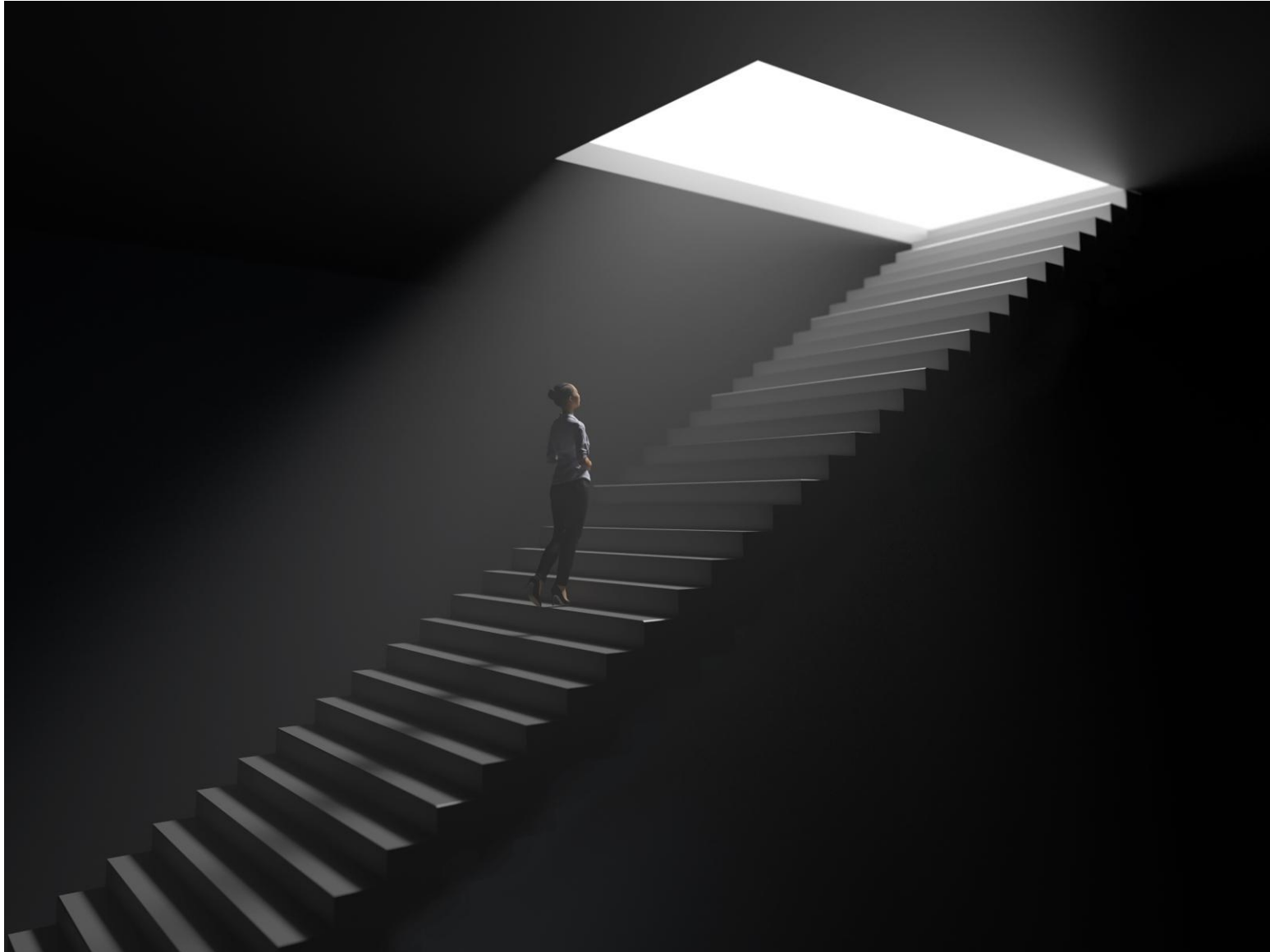
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Source: @urbanthoughts11 (2023) [21st Century City](https://t.co/sSBI8fUN9J) on Twitter: "Move people, not vehicles. <https://t.co/sSBI8fUN9J>" / Twitter

Post-Elephant Future for Transport Research

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Low Traffic Neighbourhoods

Research report

March 2024



[DfT](#), 2024



[BBC](#), 2024



[BBC](#), 2022



[ITV](#), 2022

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W > News > Latest Wales News > 20mph Speed Limit

Every driver would save £50 if UK followed Wales with 20mph speed limit, says top insurer

The insurance company said they had seen a 20% drop in claims for car accidents in Wales since the nationwide limit was introduced a year ago



[Comments 72](#)

NEWS By [Cathy Owen](#) Breaking News Editor

22:30, 08 Sep 2024

The average driver could make £50 saving per year on their car insurance premium if 20mph zones such as those introduced in Wales a year ago were rolled out in towns and cities across the UK. That is according leading insurer esure who say they are already seeing the benefits of the limits.

esure
GROUP

[Esure](#), 2024

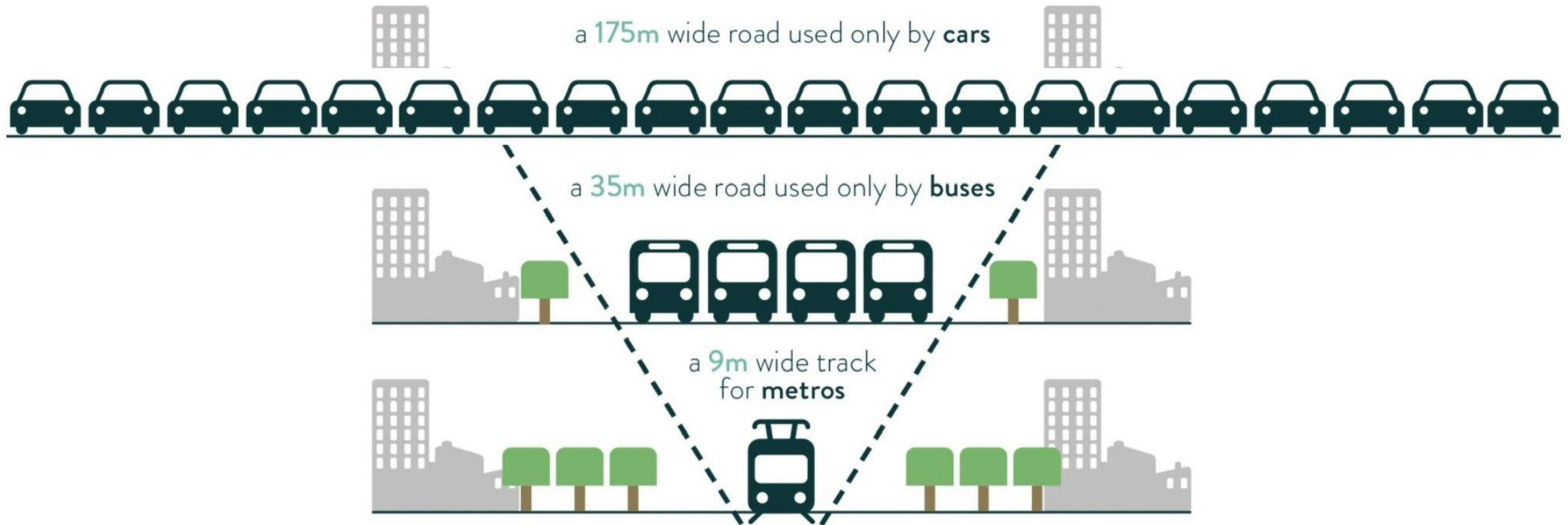
[Wales Online](#),
2024

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To carry **50,000 people** per hour per direction,
a city needs...



Source: @fietsprofessor (2023) [Cycling Professor](https://t.co/T8v3emE78x) on Twitter: "Can you think about a less efficient way to transport people through your city than cars? <https://t.co/T8v3emE78x>" / Twitter

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by the UK Prevention Research Partnership, an initiative funded by UK Research and Innovation Councils, the Department of Health and Social Care (England) and the UK devolved administrations, and leading health research charities.

