

Discussion: Does Speeding Save Meaningful Time?

Most drivers believe that speeding significantly cuts travel time. Intuitively, going faster *should* get you there sooner, and technically it does. But *in practice*, the **time savings are much smaller than most people think**, especially when you consider safety risks and real-world traffic conditions.

What Research and Data Tell Us

Time Savings Are Small Over Typical Trips

Transport researchers and traffic safety experts have quantified how much time you actually save by increasing speed:

- **British Department for Transport (DfT) study:** Increasing speed from **30 mph to 36 mph (a 20% increase)** only reduces travel time by about **3 minutes on a 10-mile trip**.
- A similar analysis shows that for *longer trips*, the **time saved is proportionally small** relative to the risk:
 - On a **60-mile trip**, increasing average speed from **60 to 70 mph saves about 12–15 minutes**. This is roughly a **20–25% speed increase for ~20% time savings if possible** (often impossible due to traffic).
- **Daily Savings:** A five-week study of over 100 drivers found that the average driver saves only 26 seconds per day (roughly 2 minutes per week) by speeding.
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26476194/>

Key takeaway: **Doubling speed does *not* halve travel time** when you include traffic flow, signals, road conditions, and congestion.

Why Time Savings Are Limited in Real Driving

Basic Math Facts:

- **Commute Impacts:** For a typical 15-mile commute, speeding by 10 mph over the limit saves approximately:
 - 5 minutes when the limit is 35 mph.
 - 3 minutes when the limit is 50 mph.
 - 2 minutes when the limit is 65 mph.

Also, several real-world factors further limit the time saved:

- **Congestion:** In heavy traffic, speeds collapse toward the average regardless of posted limit.
- **Signals and intersections:** You still must stop at lights and stop signs, whether you were going 5 mph or 15 mph faster beforehand.
- **Speed variability:** Faster cars often encounter slower traffic or enforced limits, reducing effective top speed.
- **Safety margins:** Faster driving increases the need for larger gaps and more cautious following. This can negate any time saved.

Safety and Cost Considerations

Crash Risk Increases Dramatically with Speed

Multiple studies show:

- **Every 1 mph increase in average speed raises the risk of a crash by about 3%** and the risk of injury crashes by about 4–5%.
- Fatality risk increases *exponentially* with speed. Even modest speeding can turn a survivable crash into a deadly one.

<https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/documents/health-topics/road-traffic-injuries/3146-wbk-speed-mgmt-2nd-edition-131023-electronic.pdf>

<https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/research/safety/98154/speed.cfm>

- **Crash Risk:** Speeding was a factor in **29% of all traffic fatalities** in 2020, resulting in over 11,000 lives lost in the U.S. alone.

<https://rosap.ntl.bts.gov/view/dot/77397>

Other Hidden Costs

Speeding also imposes other costs:

- **Higher fuel consumption = Financial loss.** Driving at 75 mph instead of 65 mph can reduce fuel economy by **15% to 20%**, potentially adding over \$400 in annual fuel costs for the average driver.
<https://www.consumerreports.org/cro/news/2009/09/tested-speed-vs-fuel-economy/index.htm>
- **Greater vehicle wear and tear.**
- **More frequent insurance claims.** [NHTSA](#) estimates the economic cost of speeding-related crashes at **\$40.4 billion per year**.
- **Speed impairs the driver.** Less reaction time, less vision, longer braking distances, and crashes are more forceful and likely to be fatal.

These costs are often ignored in the idea that “speeding saves time.”

Smarter Alternatives to Save Time:

- Use GPS to navigation apps to help avoid traffic congestion and road construction.
- Leave 10-15 minutes earlier than planned.
- Drive in the carpool lanes (if requirements are met) or use toll roads.
- Keep your vehicle maintained.

Summary: What the Evidence Shows

Factor	Perceived	Reality
Extra travel time savings	Large	Small (often minutes)
Safety risk	Underestimated	Significant increase
Cost impact	Rarely considered	Meaningful (fuel, maintenance, insurance)

Video resource: ["The Surprising Math Behind Why Speeding Doesn't Always Make Sense"](#)

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever calculated how much time you really saved by speeding on a regular commute?
 2. Do you think it's worth the added crash risk for a few minutes of travel time? Why or why not?
 3. If the average daily time savings is only 26 seconds, why does speeding feel so much more effective to the person behind the wheel?
 4. How do traffic conditions (e.g., congestion) change the real benefit of speeding?
 5. What alternatives or technologies can be used to save time without speeding?
 6. How can public messaging better correct the misconception that "speeding saves lots of time"?
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