How do best prepare drivers leaving motorways for rural roads?

Transitions in a safe road system

Drivers leaving motorways for rural roads maybe unprepared for hazards

Methods

50 participants with a full drivers licence completed the two part study

1. TRG Simulator drive
   - Participants drove 32 roads
   - Roads represented the six “official” road categories
   - Range of posted speed limits (30-80 km/h)

2. Picture sorting
   - Participants sorted photos of the roads into piles that were similar
   - Then provided a brief description of each of their piles

3. Road Rating
   - Participants rated the same 32 road photos for:
     - Comfort
     - Difficulty
     - Familiarity
   - They also rated:
     - What speed they would choose
     - The safe speed
     - The actual speed limit

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Through experience drivers develop their own MENTAL CATEGORIES about different road types.

Categories are influenced by:

- Road Width
- Houses
- Footpaths
- Driveways

Drivers speed choices are influenced by their road categories

Drivers’ road categories align with what drivers thought the speed limits were (not drivers the official speed limit)

Mismatches between actual speed limits and drivers categories lead to:

- Speed limit being harder to remember
- Increased likelihood of speeding

Drivers’ road categories were NOT well aligned with the official categories

Conclusions

New Zealand drivers distinguish different types of urban roads and use them to choose the speeds they drive.

It is important to consider how drivers categorise roads when altering speed limits to help drivers choose the right (or safe) speed.

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