

# DRIVING ON URBAN ROADS

How we come to expect the 'correct' speed

How do drivers describe and categorise the different roads they drive?

## Methods

55 participants with a full drivers licence completed the three 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.



For each of the following three questions circle the number that best describe the road in the photo above.

1. Comfortable 1 2 3 4 5 Uncomfortable

2. Easy 1 2 3 4 5 Difficult

3. Familiar 1 2 3 4 5 Unfamiliar

What speed would you choose on this road? \_\_\_\_\_ km/h

What is a safe speed on this road? \_\_\_\_\_ km/h

### 3. Road Rating

Participants rated the same 32 road photos for:

- Comfort
- Difficulty
- Familiarity

They also rated:

- What speed they would chose
- The safe speed
- The actual speed limit

## Drivers' Road Categories

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

Categories are influenced by:



Drivers speed choices are influenced by their road categories



Driver's road categories align with what drivers thought the speed limits were (not always the official speed limit)



Mismatches between actual speed limits and drivers categories lead to

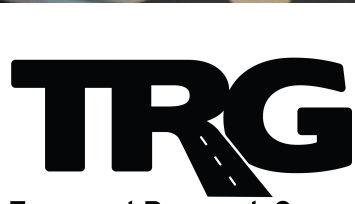
- Speed limit being harder to remember
- Increased likelihood of speeding



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.



Research was funded by the Automobile Association Research Foundation and the NZ Transport Agency