



# Seatbelts and the dynamics of policy and practice: Revisiting successful behavioural change

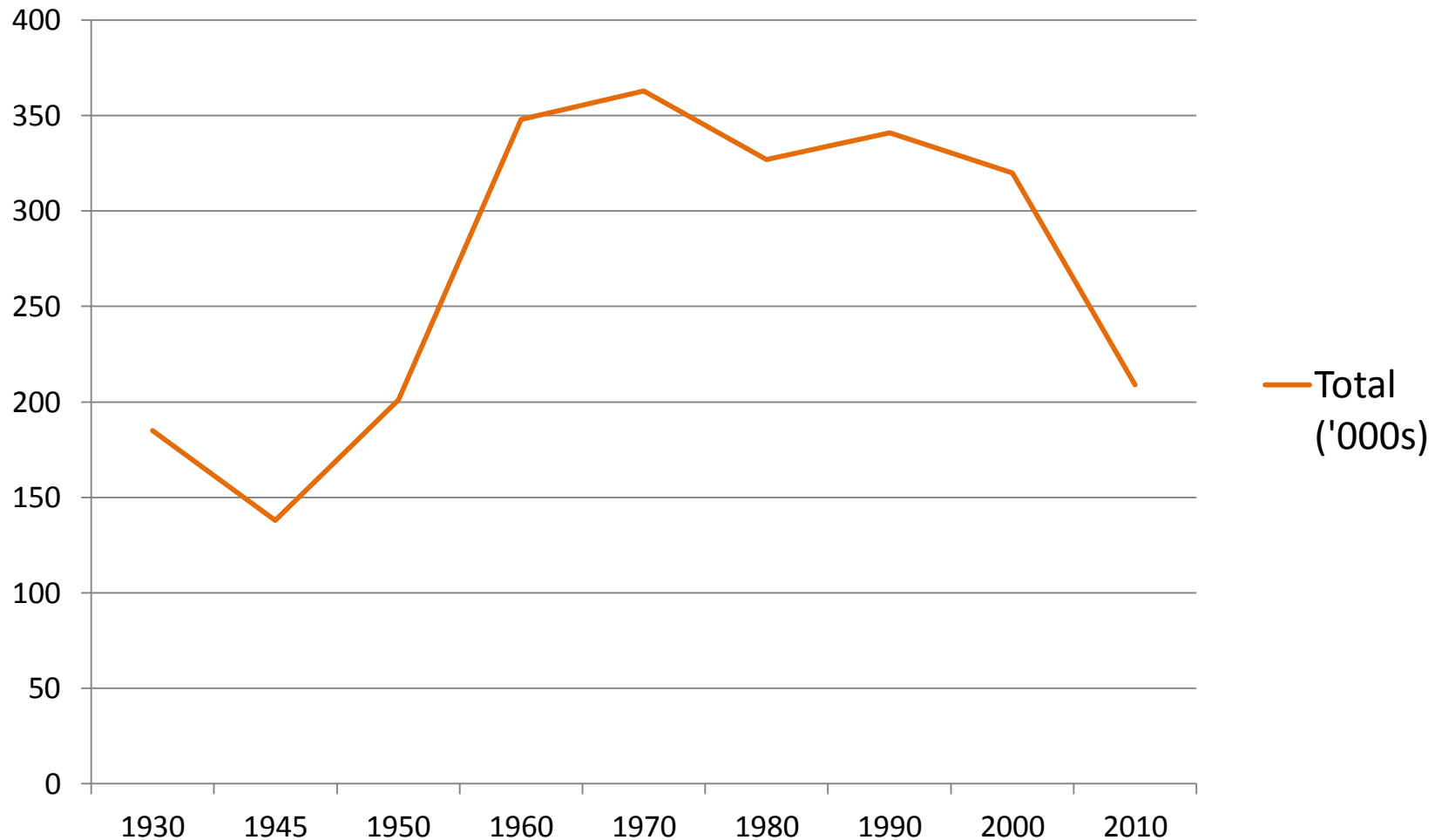
Nicola Spurling and Andrew McMeekin

Manchester Institute of Innovation Research & Sustainable Practices Research Group

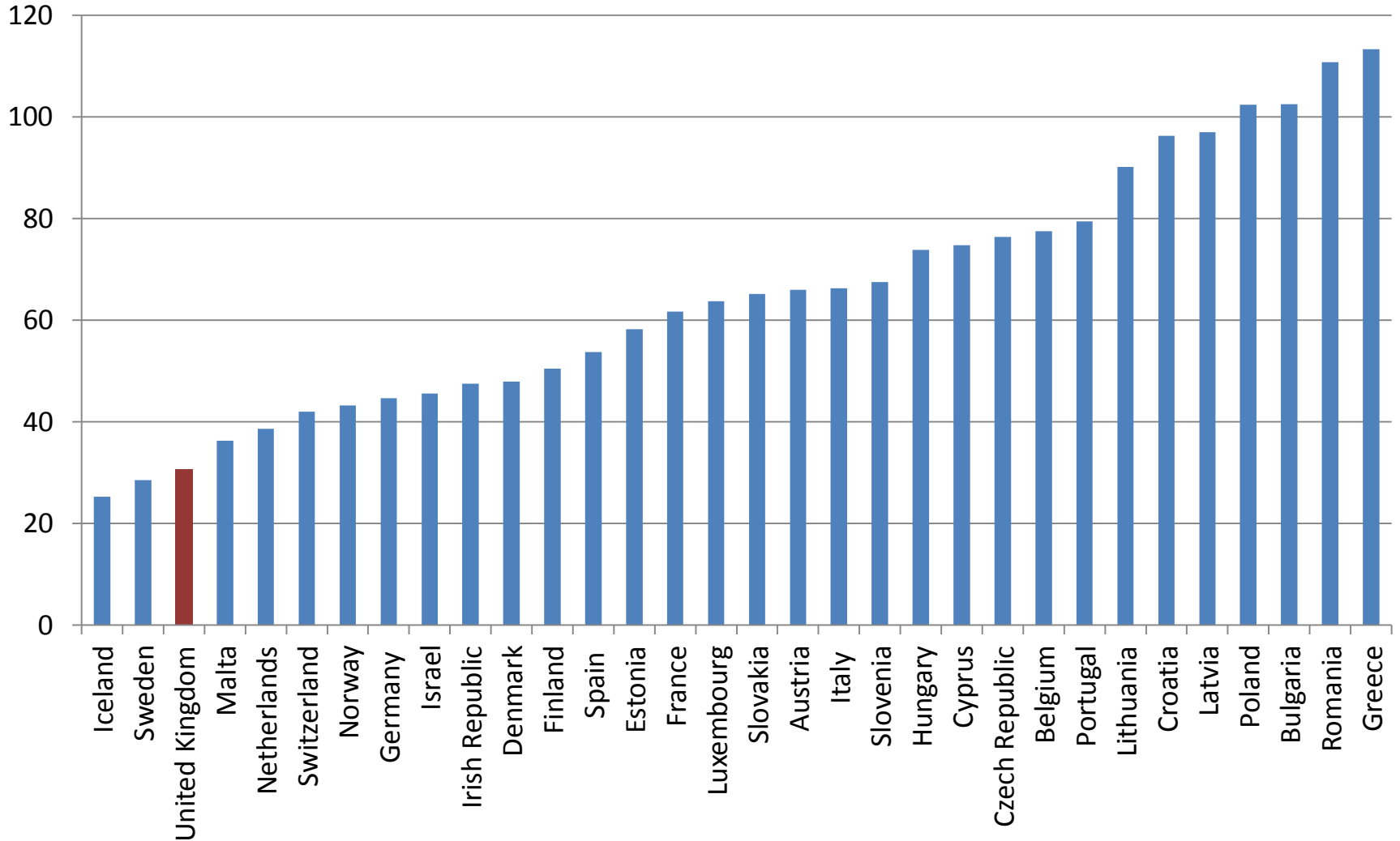
Contact: [nicola.spurling@mbs.ac.uk](mailto:nicola.spurling@mbs.ac.uk)

# Road safety: A policy success story?

Great Britain injuries and fatalities in road traffic accidents since 1930 (Dept of Transport stats)



# Rate of road deaths (2010) per million population, European Comparison (Dept of Transport stats)



# Seatbelts: A behaviour change success story?

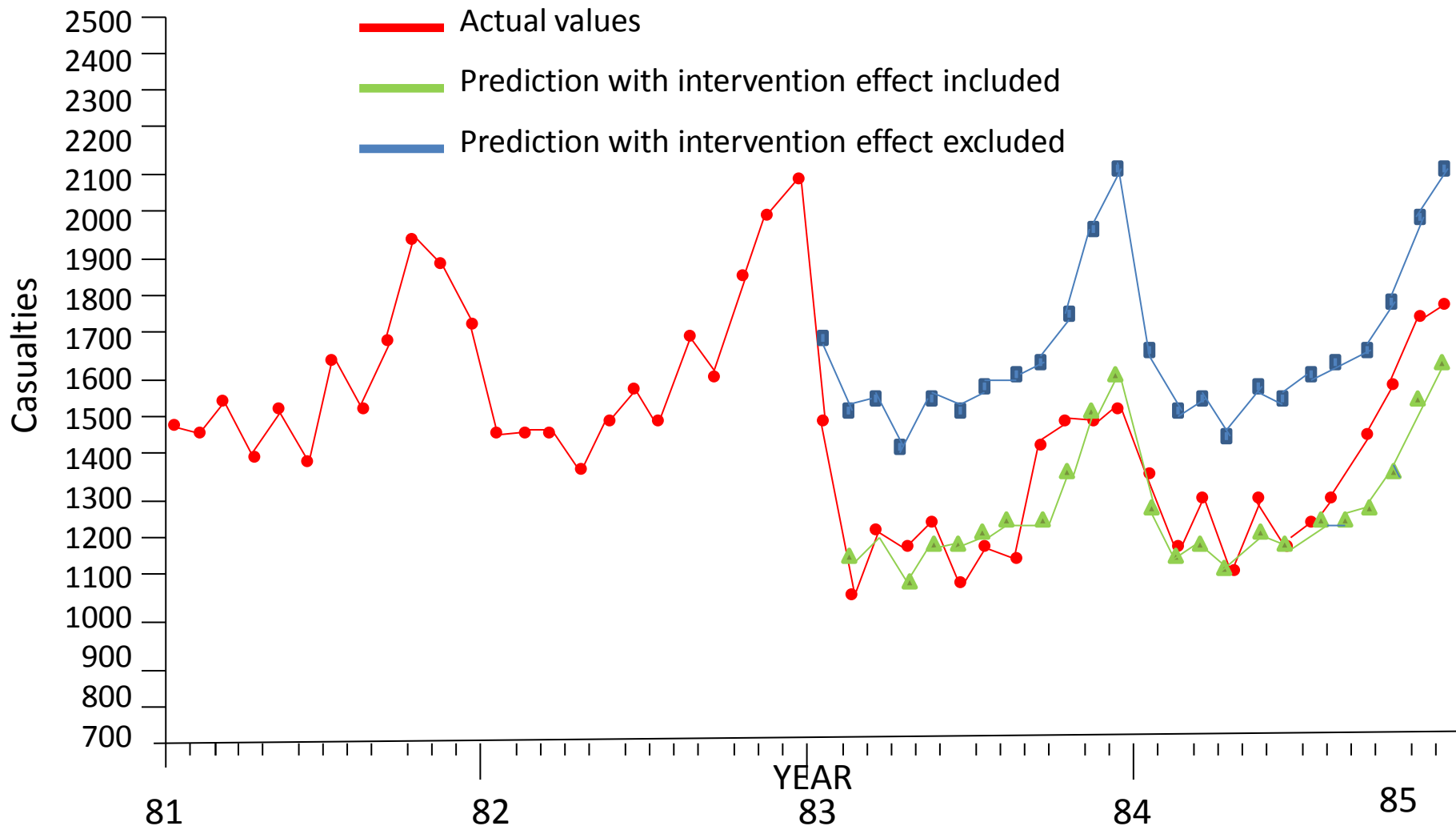
- Legislation made the wearing of seatbelts compulsory in 1983.
- By Feb 1983 there was high compliance of 90% of car drivers (Harvey and Durbin, 1985) - compliance levels have remained high since that time.
- Over the past 25 years estimated that wearing a seatbelt has saved at least 60,000 lives and stopped 600,000 severe injuries.

“The notable success of this example of behaviour change can be attributed to: clear and unambiguous legislation; clearly evident benefits; high quality media campaigns preceding and accompanying legislation; vociferous support outweighing the presence of vociferous opposition. “(Avineri et al, 2009:5)

What explanations for this observable large-scale change in behaviour, in which wearing seatbelts became a normal, taken-for-granted aspect of driving a car?

# Seatbelts: A behaviour change success story?

Car drivers killed and seriously injured from Harvey and Durbin, 1985:206

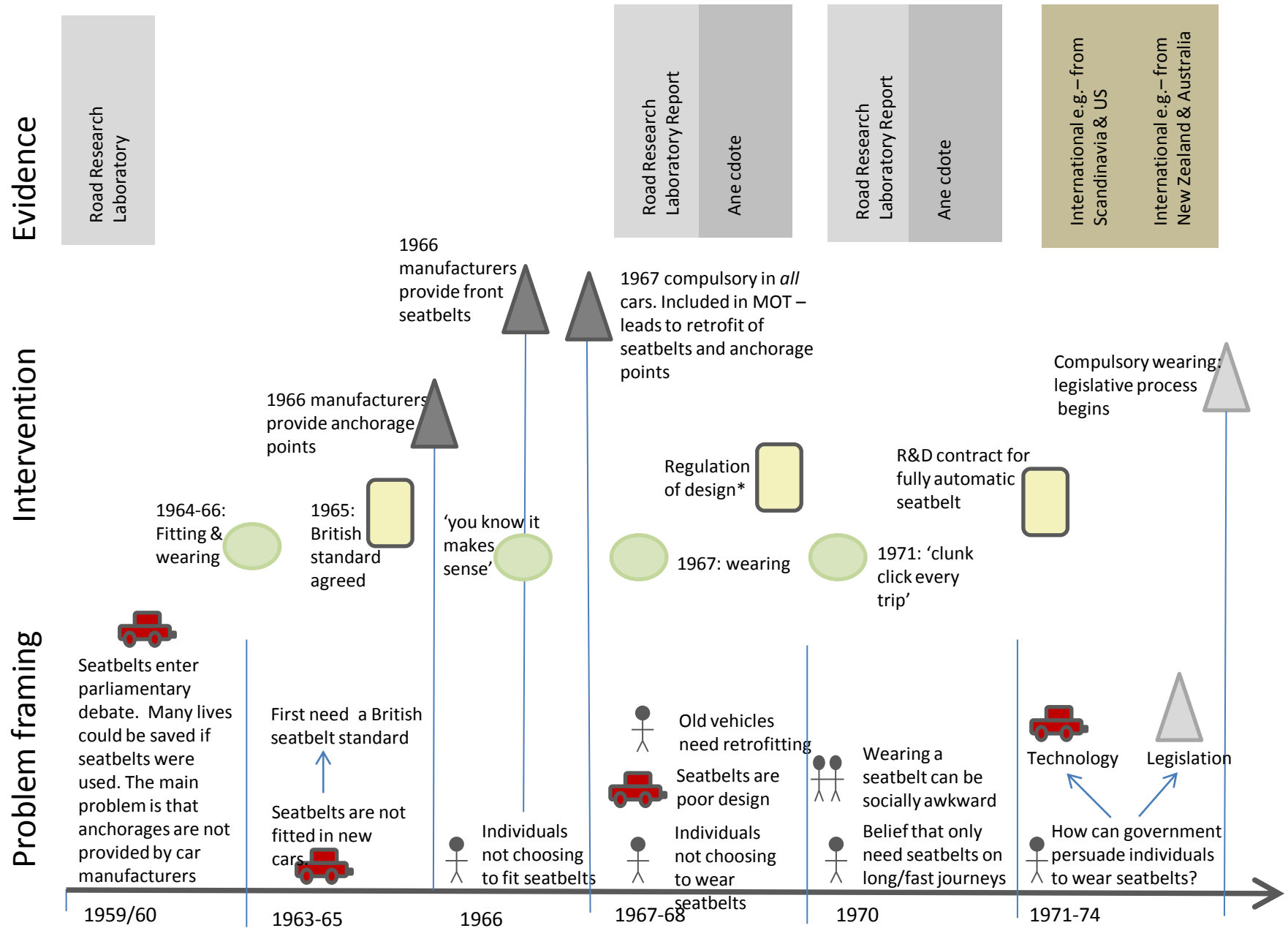


# Our research








- What happened in the case of seatbelts? – policy debate, intervention and the practice of driving.
- What are the implications of this intervention for practices other than the ‘target’ practice?
- How do interventions related to seatbelts fit into road safety interventions more broadly?

Parliamentary papers – the journey of seatbelts through parliamentary debate.  
Literature on road safety research and road safety policy – the other interventions (of varying type and scale) that happened across this period.  
Road safety statistics – the changes in accidents, fatalities and injuries of different road users across the period.

# The journey of seatbelts through UK parliament



# Contd...

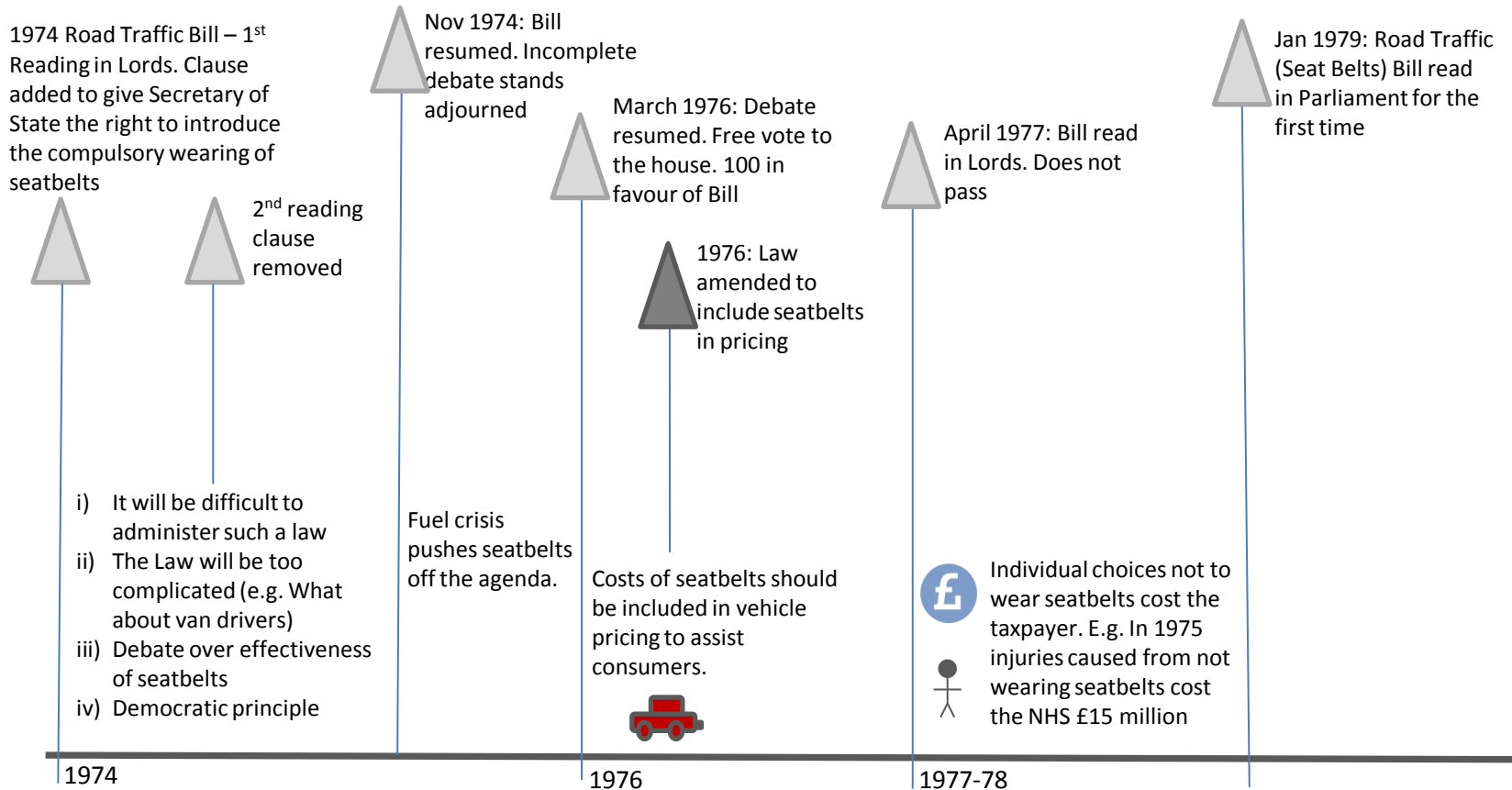
-  Legislation
-  Design standards/regulations
-  Public information campaign
-  Car/seatbelt manufacturers
-  Social norms
-  Individual attitudes/behaviour/choice
-  Taxpayer

Speculation

Anecdote

Philosophy of law and democracy

NHS Statistics





# Evaluating interventions: dynamic practices

(1966) Unsuccessful?

**From June 30th, all 1966 cars must have seat belts**

**must have-by law.**

**you know it makes sense.**

(1983) Successful?

**Clunk-Click becomes law from January 31st.**

**Until then, its perfectly legal to smash your face in.**

**Clunk-Click. The law of survival.**

# Evaluating interventions: dynamic practices

(1966) Unsuccessful?

**From June 30th,  
all 1966 cars  
must have  
seat belts**



**must have-by law.**

**you know  
it makes sense.**



**BMC STATIC FRONT SEAT BELT**  
Manufactured by Kangol Magnet Ltd., Worldwide Patents applied for



# Evaluating interventions: dynamic practices

(1983) Successful?



Don't make your child's car seat ride and protect him or her in a crash.

Clunk-Click is the only car seat buckles that are designed to hold the child in place and protect him or her in a crash.

**CLUNK-CLICK!**

Clunk-Click is the only car seat buckles that are designed to hold the child in place and protect him or her in a crash.

As a parent, you want to do the right thing for your child. Clunk-Click is the only car seat buckles that are designed to hold the child in place and protect him or her in a crash.

**Clunk-Click becomes law from January 31st.**

**Until then, its perfectly legal to smash your face in.**

When the current law expires, you'll be the victim of a crash. Clunk-Click is the only car seat buckles that are designed to hold the child in place and protect him or her in a crash.

**CLUNK-CLICK!**

Clunk-Click is the only car seat buckles that are designed to hold the child in place and protect him or her in a crash.

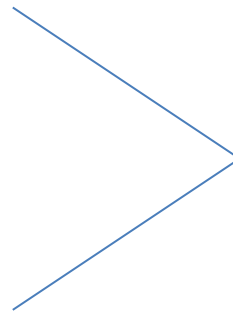
As a parent, you want to do the right thing for your child. Clunk-Click is the only car seat buckles that are designed to hold the child in place and protect him or her in a crash.

**Clunk-Click. The law of survival.**

# Evaluating interventions: dynamic practices

Models based on the assumption that all other aspects of driving practice would remain the same

Models based on the assumption that relationship of driving to other practices would remain the same



**making seatbelts compulsory reshaped driving practice** which overall became faster, associated less with awareness and care, more with speed.

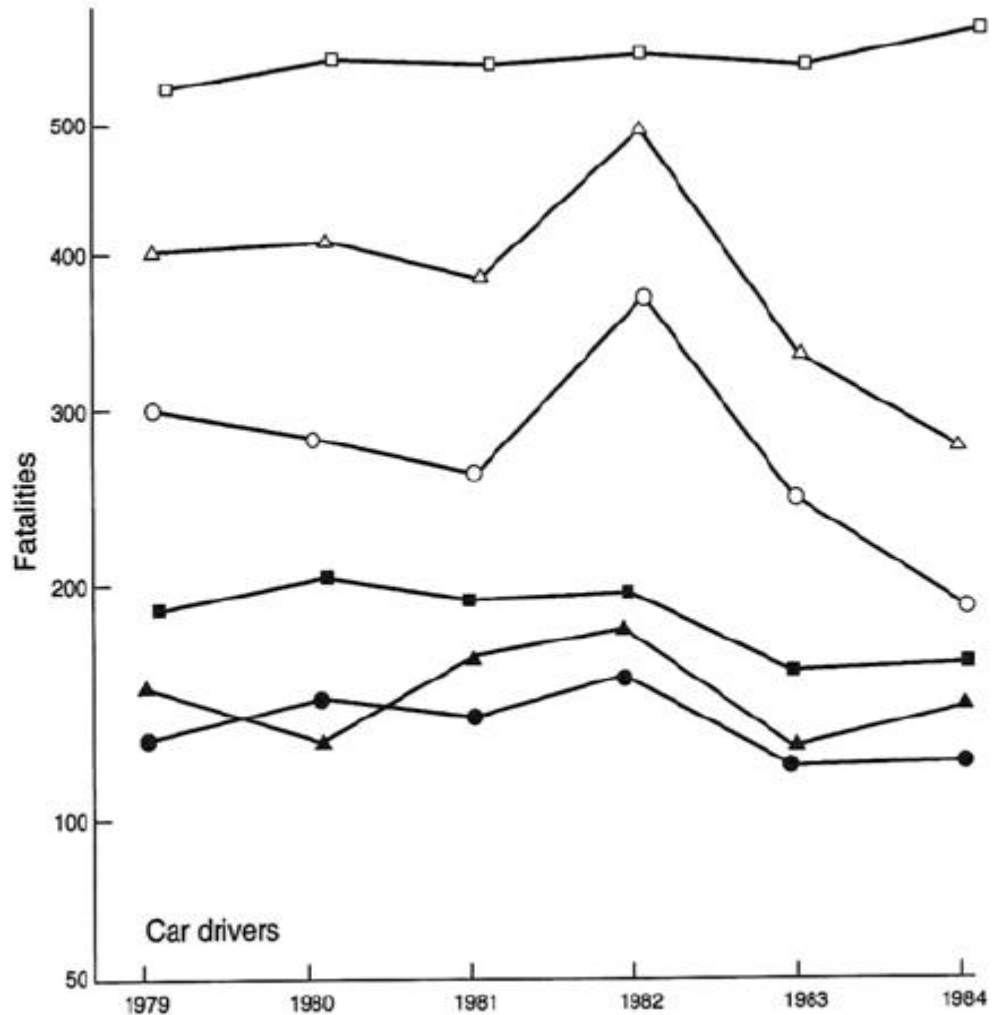
“Taking those indirectly affected by the law, our model gave an increase of 27 per cent for rear seat passengers, 8 per cent for pedestrians and 13 per cent for cyclists.” (Harvey and Durbin, 1985)

“...the law had no effect on total fatalities, but was associated with a redistribution of danger from car occupants to pedestrians and cyclists” (Adams, 2006:145)

# Evaluating interventions: multiple interventions in practice



“... The decrease in road deaths between 10 at night and 4 in the morning was 23 per cent, while in all other hours it was only 3 per cent – in line with the prevailing trend”  
(Adams, 2006:143)



# Multiple forms of intervention in practice

A very brief history of government road research/intervention:

1935-1945

## Road materials

- skidding
- dust
- road quality

1945-1965

## Road Design

- road layout
- The width of streets
- curvature and gradient of road
- quality of surface
- flow/speed of traffic
- pedestrian crossings

1965-1975

## Vehicle Design

- Anti-locking brakes
- fitting safety harnesses i.e. seatbelts
- recognised importance of vehicles for injuries.

## Road Design

- effects of street-lighting
- removal of skidding accident black spots
- building bypasses
- Improving junctions
- Effects of speed limits

## Individual

- effect of drink driving

To be contd...

# Interventions in practice

Framing road safety and the seatbelts case as interventions in practice highlights:

- Intervention isn't 'one-off' but has a before and an after within the dynamics of practice
- Intervention doesn't only affect the 'target practice' but also the other practices with which the target practice interconnects
- That the behaviour change success of seatbelts legislation was a small part of a much bigger picture that included road engineering, road planning and design, vehicle design, as well as individuals' performances