

An Assessment of Philippine Media Coverage on Road Crashes & Road Safety

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Introduction

The Philippines is an island archipelago made up of over seven thousand islands, with a population of over 100 million people,¹ making it the twelfth most populous country in the world. The landscape is incredibly diverse, with mountains, coastal regions, rural, undeveloped, and highly modern and urbanized areas alike. More than 40% of Filipinos live below the international poverty level (surviving on less than \$2 per day).²

In 2013, there were 7.69 million registered vehicles in the country, or nearly one vehicle for every eight Filipinos.³ Every day, millions of Filipinos travel across the country's 270,000 kilometers of roads. Because of this, traffic-related deaths and injuries are a growing threat to public health in the country.

One person is killed in a road crash in Metro Manila every 21 hours, according to statistics from the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority.⁴ These casualties come from the 90,258 road crash incidents recorded in 2014⁵ involving all manner of road crashes, from multiple

1 "Philippine Population Hit 100 Million on July 27." Republic of the Philippines Department of Health – Commission on Population NCR. Commission on Population, 27 July 2014. Web. 12 July 2015. <http://ncr.popcom.gov.ph/attachments/category/13/rpfp_info_magazine.pdf>.

2 "Poverty Headcount Ratio at \$2 a Day (PPP) (% of Population)." The World Bank. The World Bank, 25 April 2010. Web. 12 July 2015. <<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.2DAY>>.

3 "National Quickstat June 2015." census.gov.ph. Philippine Statistics Authority, June 2015. Web. 12 July 2015. <<http://census.gov.ph/content/national-quickstat-june-2015>>.

4 "Did You Know: 2014 Road Accidents in Metro Manila." Inquirer.net. Philippine Daily Inquirer, 12 May 2015. Web. 12 July 2015. <<http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/690709/did-you-know-2014-road-accidents-in-metro-manila>>.

5 Ibid.

collisions to hit-and-runs. That figure is for the capital region alone, and does not include the many other crashes that happen on national highways and other roads in rural areas.

Statistics from the Department of Transportation and Communication paint an equally dismal picture. Their “Decade of Action for Road Safety” report⁶ revealed that between the years 2011 and 2020, about 300,000 people would die due to road crashes.⁷ That death toll is equivalent to that of about 47 Typhoon Haiyans—one of the strongest tropical cyclones in human history, and widely covered by the media both locally and abroad. Yet the public does not seem as alarmed about road safety, and the dangers leading to injuries and casualties, as they are about other public health concerns. Road crashes, it seems, are an ever-present danger that people do not give much attention to, until an incident happens to them or to someone they know.

Filipinos are also avid news consumers and web users. Between 2008 and 2013, the Philippines boasted the fastest-growing internet population in the world, rising by over 500% during that period.⁸ Today, 37% of Filipinos have access to the internet,⁹ and four of the top 25 most-visited websites in the Philippines are local news websites.¹⁰

6 Estoquia, Aileen. “UN Decade: Road Safety as a Way of Life.” GMA News Online 27 April 2012, Nation sec. Web. 12 July 2015. <<http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/256432/news/nation/un-decade-road-safety-as-a-way-of-life>>.

7 Ibid.

8 Mander, Jason. “As the Internet Turns 25, China Has 2.5 times More Users than US.” Global Web Index. Global Web Index, 12 Mar. 2014. Web. 12 July 2015. <<http://www.globalwebindex.net/blog/internet-turns-25>>.

9 “Internet Users (per 100 People).” The World Bank. The World Bank, 23 Apr. 2010. Web. 12 July 2015. <<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.P2>>.

10 “Top Sites in the Philippines.” Alexa. Alexa. Web. 12 July 2015. <<http://www.alexa.com/topsites/countries/PH>>.

In the media, road crash reports and other land transportation issues are presented alongside stories on politics, crime, and economics. But rarely do the reports go deeper than the typical spot news about traffic congestions and multiple-car collisions. More in-depth discussions of road safety issues are hardly seen, and usually surface only after a particularly tragic crash, or during intense vehicular traffic seasons, like long weekend breaks or holidays.

But the media interest is there. Based on our sample, we estimate that nearly one in six news reports filed on three national news websites in 2014 were about land transportation. This consistent reporting provides a good start for raising the level of awareness on road safety and sharing that awareness with audiences. This study, therefore, aims to examine how road safety issues are currently presented in the media, what methods of reporting can be improved, and how media can play a role in setting the agenda for public conversations and concerns about road safety issues.

Objectives

This media assessment aims to do the following:

1. Review the road safety coverage of Philippine media and study how crashes and other related issues are presented to the public;
2. Assess the news coverage of road safety issues in the Philippines in order to organize successful training programs and improve coverage; and
3. Recommend messages and materials that will be relevant to road safety workshops for media.

Scope of the Study

This research will review the road safety coverage from three news outfits in the Philippines. In particular, it will focus on articles and video reports from the following popular websites:

1. ABS-CBNNews.com

ABS-CBNNews.com is the official news website of the TV network ABS-CBN, one of the two most-watched television networks in the Philippines. On the internet traffic analytics website Alexa.com, the website was the most fifth visited website in the Philippines as of July 10, 2015.¹¹ The site contains news articles, other text reports, and video reports. Many of the news articles and videos on the site are also based on reports that come from the network's TV newscasts and cable news channel, radio stations, and regional stations.

2. GMANetwork.com/news (GMA News Online)

GMA News Online is the official website of GMA Network, the other of the two most-watched TV networks in the Philippines. Also according to Alexa, as of July 10, 2015, the website was the twenty-second most-visited website in the Philippines, and runs articles and videos. Like ABS-CBNNews.com, GMA News Online also carries news reports based on the network's TV newscasts, radio stations, and regional stations.

¹¹ "Top Sites in the Philippines." Alexa. Alexa. Web. 12 July 2015. <<http://www.alexacom/topsites/countries/PH>>.

3. Inquirer.Net

Inquirer.net is the online counterpart of the Philippine Daily Inquirer, which cites itself as the Philippines' most read national broadsheet. It has a daily circulation of 260,000 copies.¹² As of July 10, 2015, Alexa ranked Inquirer.net as the country's tenth most visited website.¹³ The website has an online editorial team separate from its print counterpart.

These media types were included in the content scan:

TEXT – Any article, including news, in-depth reports, commentaries, and columns

VIDEO – News report segments from uploaded TV newscasts

This study encompasses the websites' contents from the dates of January 1, 2014 to December 31, 2014.

12 "Philippine Daily Inquirer." Facebook. Philippine Daily Inquirer. Web. 12 July 2015. <https://www.facebook.com/PhilippineDailyInquirer/info?tab=page_info>.

13 "Top Sites in the Philippines." Alexa. Alexa. Web. 12 July 2015. <<http://www.alexa.com/topsites/countries/PH>>.

Research Methodology

To gather the sample data, the research team first identified keywords that would help determine which published content should be included in the study.

Identification of Keywords

We prepared sets of English and Filipino keywords related to land transport and road safety. The keyword groups included, but were not limited to, the following words. A few samples for illustration:

Keywords related specifically to road crash incidents

English: *crash, accident, collision*

Filipino: *bangga, salpukan, karambola*

Keywords describing possible outcomes of a road crash incident

English: *dead, fatality, injured*

Filipino: *patay, sugatan*

Keywords for vehicle types and other related automobile descriptors

English: *bus, truck, motorcycle, riding-in-tandem*

Filipino: *jeep, pasahero, drayber, kolorum*

Keywords for roads and different road conditions

English: *road, highway, traffic, congestion*

Filipino: *daan, lubak, rehabilitasyon, kumpuni*

Keywords for specific cities and major highways

EDSA, C-5, SLEX, NLEX, Manila, Makati City, Quezon City

Keywords for government agencies in charge of land transport issues

LTO, LTFRB, DOTC, MMDA

Data Scraping and Relevance Ranking

For Text Articles

We created software to scan the websites for all text reports published between January 1 and December 31, 2014. All reports extracted, including their metadata, were saved into a database.

We then scanned the reports for words from the identified keyword groups. We assigned each report a relevance ranking based on the number of keyword groups it contained. Reports with more keyword groups were assigned higher relevance ranking. Any reports with at least two keyword groups were considered relevant and included in our initial sample.

From the initial sample of 2,337 relevant articles, we performed a manual review to exclude irrelevant reports, such as international news reportage, or articles that mentioned the keywords but were not about land transportation or road safety. Finally, the top 774 highest-ranked articles were included in our sample for qualitative review.

For Videos

We executed a similar process for videos. After collecting a database of videos, we scanned them for titles containing any one of four targeted keyphrases: “road accidents,” “accidents,” “mga aksidente,”¹⁴ and “road safety.” We then manually removed any irrelevant articles from that sample. Approximately 179 videos were included in our final sample.

14 “Mga aksidente” is Filipino plural for “accidents.”

Qualitative Review

From the total sample of 2,516 reports we ranked, we selected 953 reports (both text and video) for qualitative review. This included 774 text reports with the highest relevance ranking, and all 179 video reports.

Three qualitative analysts examined each piece of content and answered a web-based survey about each report. The team's responses to the survey were saved to the database and later analyzed.

The survey included the following questions:

1. What type of report is it?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Straight News | <input type="checkbox"/> In-Depth or Explanatory Report |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feature Article | <input type="checkbox"/> Others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commentary or Editorial | |

2. What is the dominant topic of the report? (Tick all that apply)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Road crashes | <input type="checkbox"/> Driver education or training |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Formulation of legislation/
local ordinances | <input type="checkbox"/> Reports on traffic congestion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Enforcement of existing laws/
ordinances | <input type="checkbox"/> Traffic advisories |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Road safety as a public health
issue | <input type="checkbox"/> Automobile industry
standards |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Road infrastructure (repair,
maintenance) | <input type="checkbox"/> Speed limit enforcement |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Use of helmets |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Seatbelt use |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Others |

3. Is this story about a specific road crash incident?

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (Proceed to Number 4) | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
|--|-----------------------------|

4. If this is a report about a road crash, how many vehicles were involved?

5a. What categories of transportation are involved in the incident?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Private use vehicle | <input type="checkbox"/> Public utility vehicle |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial use vehicle | <input type="checkbox"/> Others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Government use vehicle | |

5b. What types of vehicles are involved in the incident?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bicycle | <input type="checkbox"/> School bus |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Motorcycle | <input type="checkbox"/> Armored vehicle |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Car | <input type="checkbox"/> Ambulance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Van | <input type="checkbox"/> Taxi |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Truck | <input type="checkbox"/> Bus |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jeepney | <input type="checkbox"/> Asian Utility Vehicle (FX) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Multi-cab | <input type="checkbox"/> Others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Habal-habal ¹⁵ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tricycle ¹⁶ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kuliglig ¹⁷ | |

6a. How many victims were killed in the car crash?

6b. How many of the fatalities were described in further detail and how?

7a. How many victims were injured in the car crash?

7b. How many of the injured were described in further detail and how?

15 Habal-habal: A Filipino motorcycle-taxi, or a motorcycle that has been modified with improvised seating to accommodate more than two riders.

16 Tricycle: A motorcycle modified by the addition of a sidecar and roof for the driver.

17 Kuliglig: A two-wheeled trailer pulled by a two-wheeled tractor in the front; originally used only in rural areas but now also in cities.

8. Is this article part of ongoing or follow-up coverage of a single incident?

9. Did the report identify the potential cause(s) of the road crash?

- Alcohol
- Drugs
- Fatigue
- Lack of driver education
- Speeding
- Mobile phone use while driving
- Lack of proper road signs
- Poor road conditions
- Poor visibility/lack of lighting
- Road obstruction
- Loss of brakes
- Dilapidated vehicle
- Entire vehicle combustion
- Others

10. What is the location of the road crash?

Province _____

City/municipality (Field) _____

Specific location (Field) _____

11. What time of day did the accident take place?

12. Does the report relate the accident to a broader cause or mention a larger context?

13. What solutions are discussed? (Tick all that apply)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Enforcement of speed limits | <input type="checkbox"/> Improvement of mass public |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reduction of speed limits | transport infrastructure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Improvement of traffic | <input type="checkbox"/> Installation of road signs |
| enforcement | <input type="checkbox"/> Improved visibility or |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stricter driver license | accuracy of road signs |
| regulation | <input type="checkbox"/> Stricter automotive industry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stricter public transport | standards |
| franchise regulation | <input type="checkbox"/> Safer vehicle technology |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Improvement of working | <input type="checkbox"/> Improved vehicle |
| conditions in transport sector | maintenance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Implementation of safety | <input type="checkbox"/> Road user education |
| inspections on public | <input type="checkbox"/> Use of helmets |
| transport | <input type="checkbox"/> Use of seatbelts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Improvement of road | <input type="checkbox"/> Avoiding mobile phone use |
| infrastructure | while driving |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Improvement of | <input type="checkbox"/> Use of child restraints |
| infrastructure for pedestrians | <input type="checkbox"/> Improvement of post-crash |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Improvement of | emergency response |
| infrastructure for cyclists | <input type="checkbox"/> Others |

14. Are there statistics mentioned in the report?

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|

15. What scope of statistics on road safety are used?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> City or municipality wide | <input type="checkbox"/> International |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regional | <input type="checkbox"/> Others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> National | |

16. Who are some of the institutions or organizations cited as sources in the report?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> World Health Organization | <input type="checkbox"/> Academic institutions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Philippine National Police | <input type="checkbox"/> Philippine National Police |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Metropolitan Manila
Development Authority | <input type="checkbox"/> Highway Patrol Group |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Department of Transportation
and Communication | <input type="checkbox"/> Land Transportation Office |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Department of Health | <input type="checkbox"/> Land Transportation
Franchising and Regulatory
Board |
| <input type="checkbox"/> National Statistics
Coordination Board | <input type="checkbox"/> Others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Non-government
organizations | |

17. Does the report mention any agency/group as bearing responsibility for road accidents/improving road safety? (Tick all that apply)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle users | <input type="checkbox"/> Transport sector leaders |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public officials | <input type="checkbox"/> Transport sector workers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Government agencies | <input type="checkbox"/> Others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Civil society | |

18. What is the tone of the report?

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral | <input type="checkbox"/> Pessimistic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Optimistic | <input type="checkbox"/> Advocating Change |

19. Who is being held liable for the road crash?

Rater's Notes

Limitations of the Study

The content sample reviewed in the study came from the three mentioned websites. Only articles and videos available on these websites as of April 2015 were included in the review. However, website content can easily be changed. We could not control for any alterations to, or removals of, these reports since they were published and included in our study.

Keywords identified by the research team determined the list of content included in the study. However, any keyword-based sample collection method is inevitably imperfect. There may have been some relevant reports that did not contain the keywords and were therefore missed during the data scraping. We also found that some reports in our sample were not actually about road crashes, road safety, or land transportation, though they did match our keywords. In our qualitative sample, we eliminated these articles manually as we came across them.

Another limitation we faced is that the news websites do not make traffic statistics for individual pages publicly available. For this reason, we had to analyze these reports independent of their audience reach, such as webpage visits or hits, social media shares and virality, or the number of comments.

While we attempted to gather videos from both GMA News Online and ABS-CBNNews.com, we were eventually only able to gather videos from GMA News Online since our data scraping software was interrupted by frequent timeout errors from ABS-CBNNews.com.

In addition, we faced challenges in ranking the relevance of videos based on how many keyword groups they contained. Video reports had short headlines and very little text versus articles, which contained hundreds of words. In the end, we used a more targeted set of keywords to select the videos.

Lastly, the same set of criteria was used in the qualitative surveys of both text and video reports. This study did not look at criteria specific to video, such as the quality of footage and total running time.

Areas for Further Study

Given our limitations for this study, we can recommend several areas for potential future research on how Philippine media covers road safety.

Future researchers can collect a broader sample of data, making it inclusive of television reports, radio broadcasts and other print media such as tabloids. While online access is rising in the Philippines, most Filipinos still do get their news from traditional media. Radio, in particular, is a medium that many drivers and passengers listen to while on the road.

Studies that focus on emerging media, such as blogs and social media, might also serve as important barometers of how ordinary citizens are currently talking about the subject. Social media is becoming an increasingly important form of communication in the Philippines, as more young people turn away from newspapers and TVs and toward their smartphones instead. It may also be interesting to look at how citizen journalists are contributing to reporting on road safety.

Definition of Terms

1. Road Crash: A road crash is a collision between a vehicle and another vehicle, a person, an animal, road debris or any other stationary obstruction on the road, which may result in death, injury, or damage to property.

2. Road Safety: Road safety refers to measures and methods for reducing the risk of being injured or killed on the road.

3. Articles: Articles are news reports, opinion columns, and other written work in text form, published in print or online.

4. Video Reports: Video reports are TV newscast segments available for viewing online.

5. Straight News Reports: Also known as spot news or hard news, straight news reports are stories written about events as they occurred.

6. Commentary or Editorial: Commentary pieces, also called editorial pieces or opinion pieces, weave the writer's point of view into the story.

7. News Features/In-Depth Reports: A story is considered a news feature or an in-depth report if it tackles news events in greater detail, presented in a more creative manner.

8. Data Scraping: A process of extracting data from websites using computer programs .

9. Relevance Ranking: The process of arranging a set of data into a particular order based on certain criteria to determine its connection to a study.

10. Traffic Congestion: Traffic congestion is a condition wherein vehicles travel at slower speeds due to increased vehicular volume on the road.

11. Colorum: Vehicles are tagged “colorum” or “kolorum” in the Philippines when they are used as public utility vehicles, but are operating without licenses from land transportation franchising authorities.

12. Road Rage: Road rage is hostile or aggressive behavior by a driver of a vehicle toward another vehicle driver or any other person on the road.

13. Truck Ban: The truck ban refers to a local ordinance in the city of Manila. In an effort to decongest the streets, officials prohibited the travel of large cargo trucks during particular hours of the day.

14. Metropolitan Manila Development Authority: The MMDA is a government body overseeing urban development in the National Capital Region.

15. Department of Transportation and Communications: The DOTC is an executive department of the Philippine government responsible for the improvement and maintenance of transportation and communication systems in the country.

16. Land Transportation Office: The LTO is an agency of the government under the Department of Transportation and Communications. Its task is to oversee all matters related to land transportation in the Philippines, including vehicle registrations and the issuance of drivers' licenses.

17. Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board: The LTFRB is a branch of the DOTC overseeing public land transportation services, including regulations on public transport franchises and other public transport-related issues.

18. Department of Public Works and Highways: The DPWH is a branch of government that oversees all projects related to public works, like public road construction and maintenance.

19. Road user: A person who uses the road.

20. Road user group: Categories of road users, including, but not limited to, vehicle users like drivers and passengers, or non-motorized vehicle users, such as pedestrians or bystanders.

Analysis Outputs

Topline Data

Of the 13,529 articles that were published on the three websites in 2014, around 2,337 reports contained keywords from one keyword group, while 1,950 contained keywords from at least two keyword groups.

Based on this information, we estimate that between 14% to 17% of the articles published on these three websites were about land transportation.

Of this number, our team selected the top 900 reports with the highest relevance ranking for qualitative review. During the course of our review, we eliminated international reports and reports that were not about land transportation at all. This elimination reduced our volume of text articles to 774.

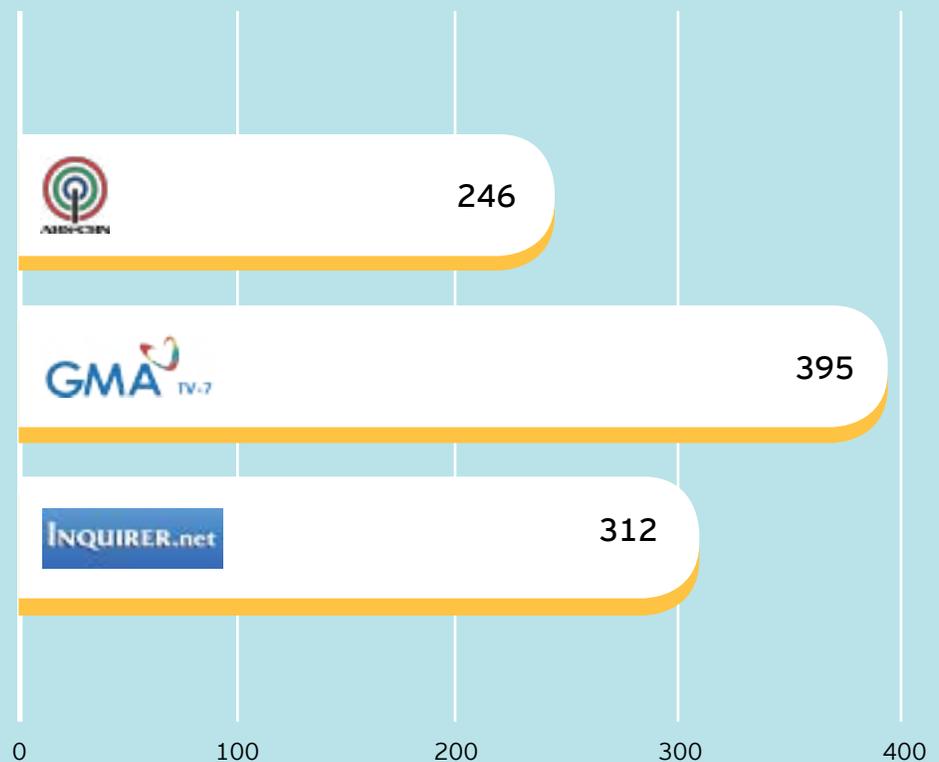
In addition, we included 179 online videos from GMA News Online that contained at least one of four key phrases: “road accidents,” “accidents,” “mga aksidente,” and “road safety.”

In total, our qualitative sample was composed of 953 reports, including 774 text and 179 video reports.

Breakdown by Media Agency

Around 395, or 41.4% of the reports were by GMA Network. Two hundred forty six, or 25.8% of the reports were by ABS-CBN, and 312, or 33.5% of the reports were by the Philippine Daily Inquirer.

MEDIA AGENCIES

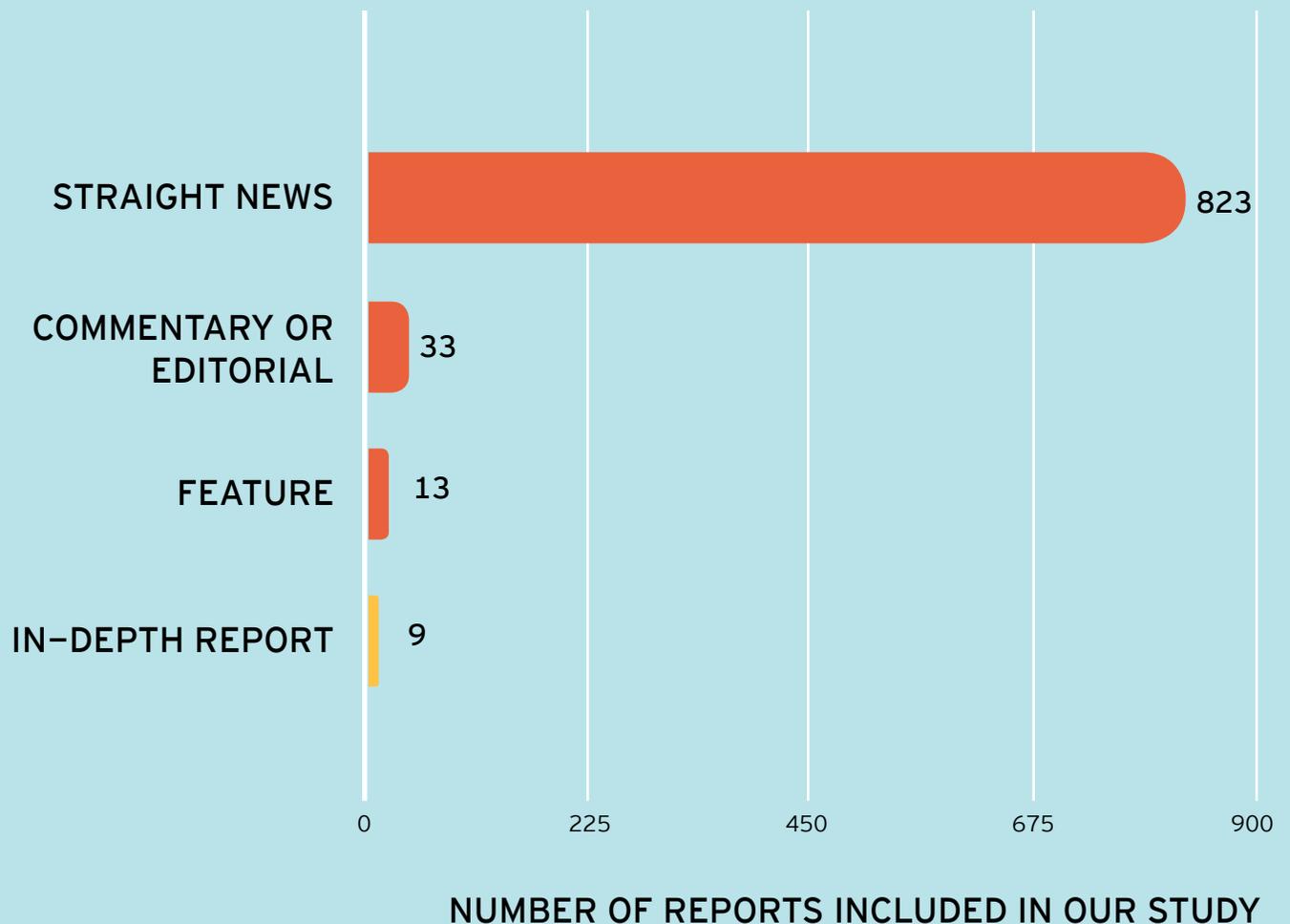


NUMBER OF REPORTS INCLUDED IN OUR STUDY

Breakdown by News Report Type

The vast majority of the reports were straight news reports, followed by smaller numbers of commentaries and news features.

REPORT TYPES



Breakdown by Topic

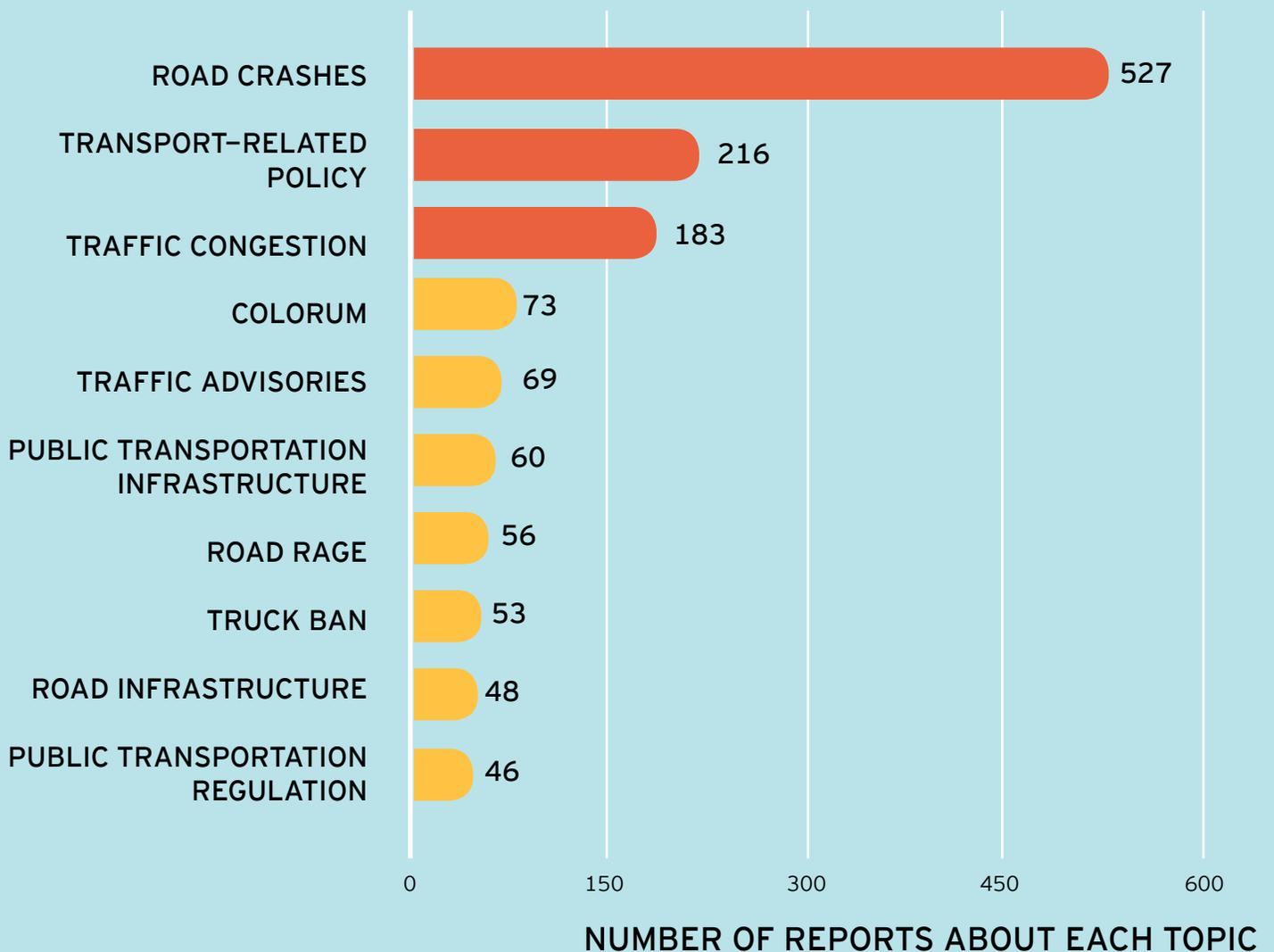
In our survey, we identified 12 land transportation-related topics that we expected to occur within the reports. The raters selected the topics they felt were most dominant in each individual report.

1. Road Crashes
2. Formulation of legislation/local ordinances
3. Enforcement of existing laws/ordinances
4. Road safety as a public health issue
5. Road infrastructure (repair, maintenance)
6. Driver education or training
7. Reports on traffic congestion
8. Traffic advisories
9. Automobile Industry standards
10. Speed limit enforcement
11. Use of helmets
12. Seatbelt use

However, the raters were also given an empty field in which to input other topics that were not among the original twelve. This gave us the flexibility to generate topics as we observed them.

As long as a topic was included in some way in the report, we attached a label. It should be noted that our labels did not reflect which topics were more dominant than others in each individual report. Also during the analysis, we combined some topics that were very similar. For example, we combined “Formulation of legislation/local ordinances” and “Enforcement of existing laws/ordinances” into “Transport-Related Policy.”

10 MOST FREQUENT TOPICS



The most common topic included road crashes, which were present in over half of the reports. These encompassed reports about specific and single road crash events, follow-up reports on high-profile road crash events, reports that combined information about several road crashes at once, and reports about road crashes in general.

Other popular topics included traffic congestion and transportation policy.

Analysis on Road Crash Event Reports

Of the 953 reports we surveyed, over half—497—were about specific road crash events. While most reports were about only one event each, some road crashes were covered multiple times. As we examined them, we labelled reports that appeared to be about the same road crash incident. In total, these 497 reports contained information on 299 unique road crash events.

Out of
 **953** 
text and video reports

497 reports
were about

299 unique
road crash events.



If a report was about a specific road crash, we reviewed the report for specific types of information that are related to road crashes. These details included:

- Number of fatalities
- Number of injured
- Road user groups, ages, and genders of fatalities
- Road user groups, ages, and genders of injured
- Vehicle types involved in the incident
- Number of vehicles involved in the incident
- Time of event¹⁸
- Location of incident, including:
 - Region
 - Province
 - City
 - Specific street

If the crash reports contained any of the above information, we noted it in our survey.

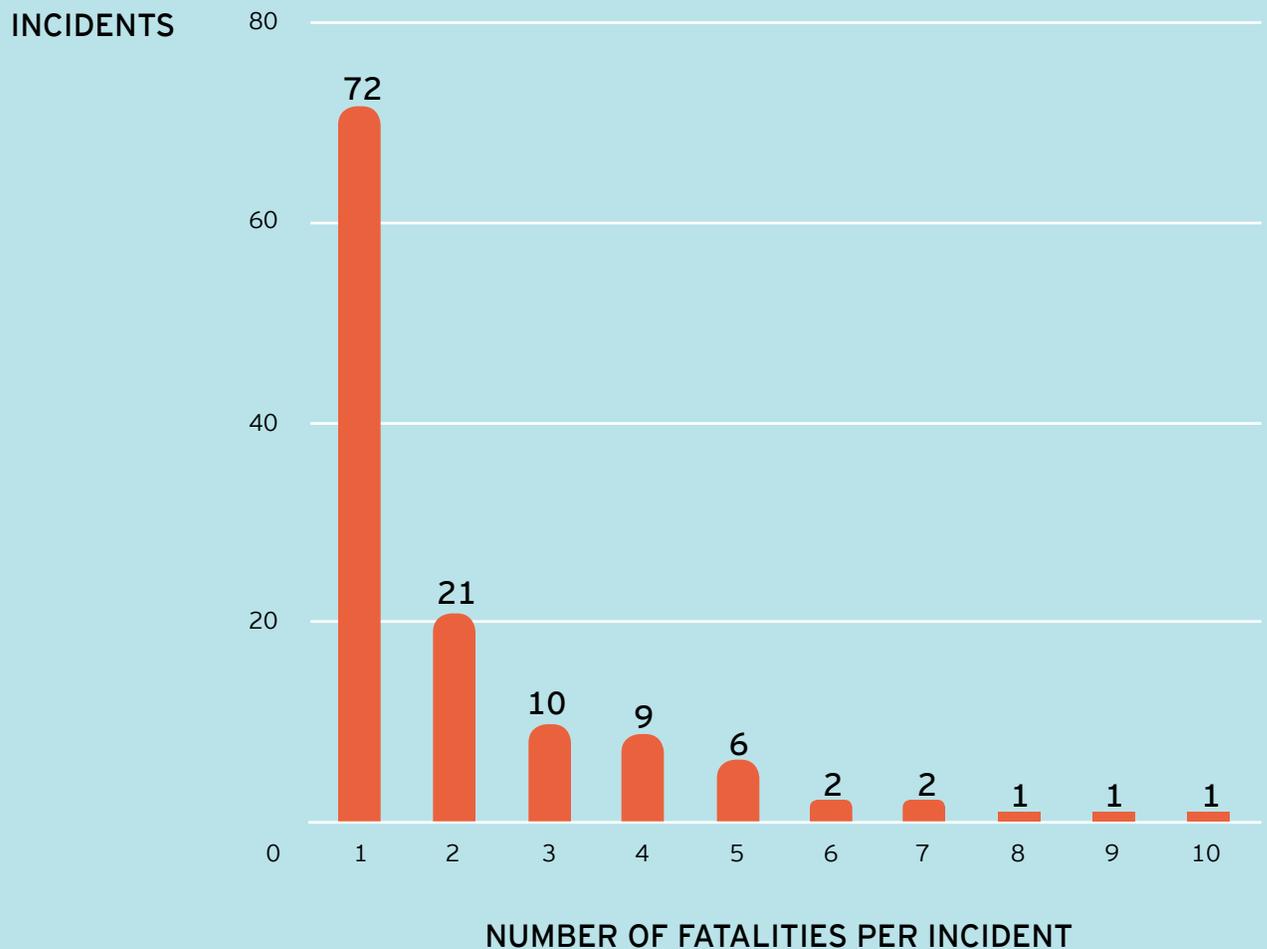
Not all road crash reports had complete information. In some cases, several details were unknown. Later during the analysis process, if there were several reports about the same event, we combined information from those reports to generate a single set of data about that event.

¹⁸ In some cases, the report gave an exact time of the event, such as 4:00 a.m. or 9:00 p.m. In other instances, the time of day was related in a more general way, such as "morning" or "before dawn."

Fatalities

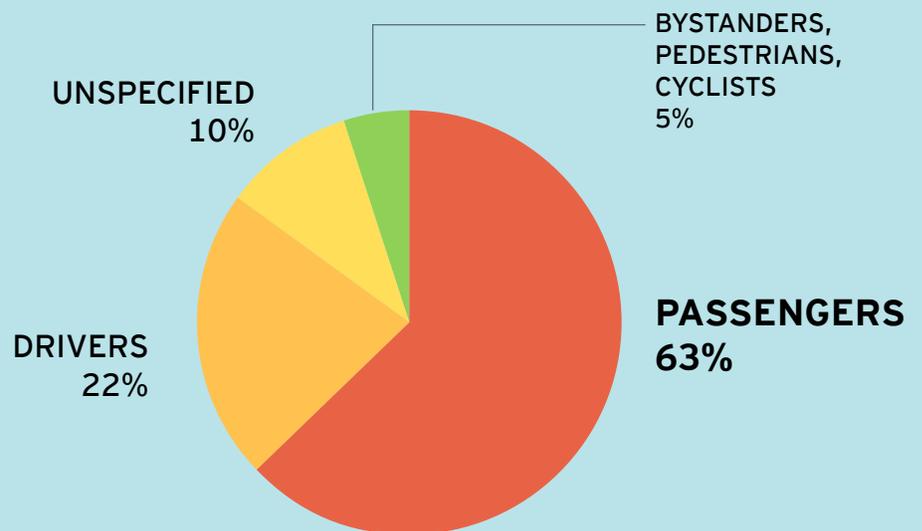
Of the 299 incidents covered by the reports in our sample, about 41.8%, or 125 of the incidents were fatal. There was a total of 285 fatalities reported in our sample, and most of these (260) had more detailed demographic information in the reports. Most of the incidents had only one fatality each.

NUMBER OF INCIDENTS PER FATALITY COUNT

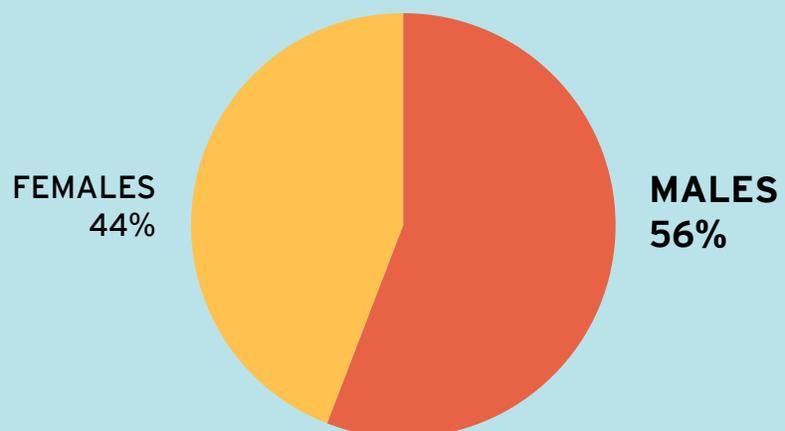


Among the 260 known fatalities, the majority—63%—were passengers, followed by drivers at 22%, and bystanders, pedestrians and cyclists at five percent. For the remaining ten percent, the road user group was unknown or unspecified. The media reports identified the genders of around half the fatalities (134 out of 287). Among the fatalities whose genders were named, there were only slightly more men than women fatalities— 75 male compared to 59 female.

FATALITIES BY ROAD USER GROUP

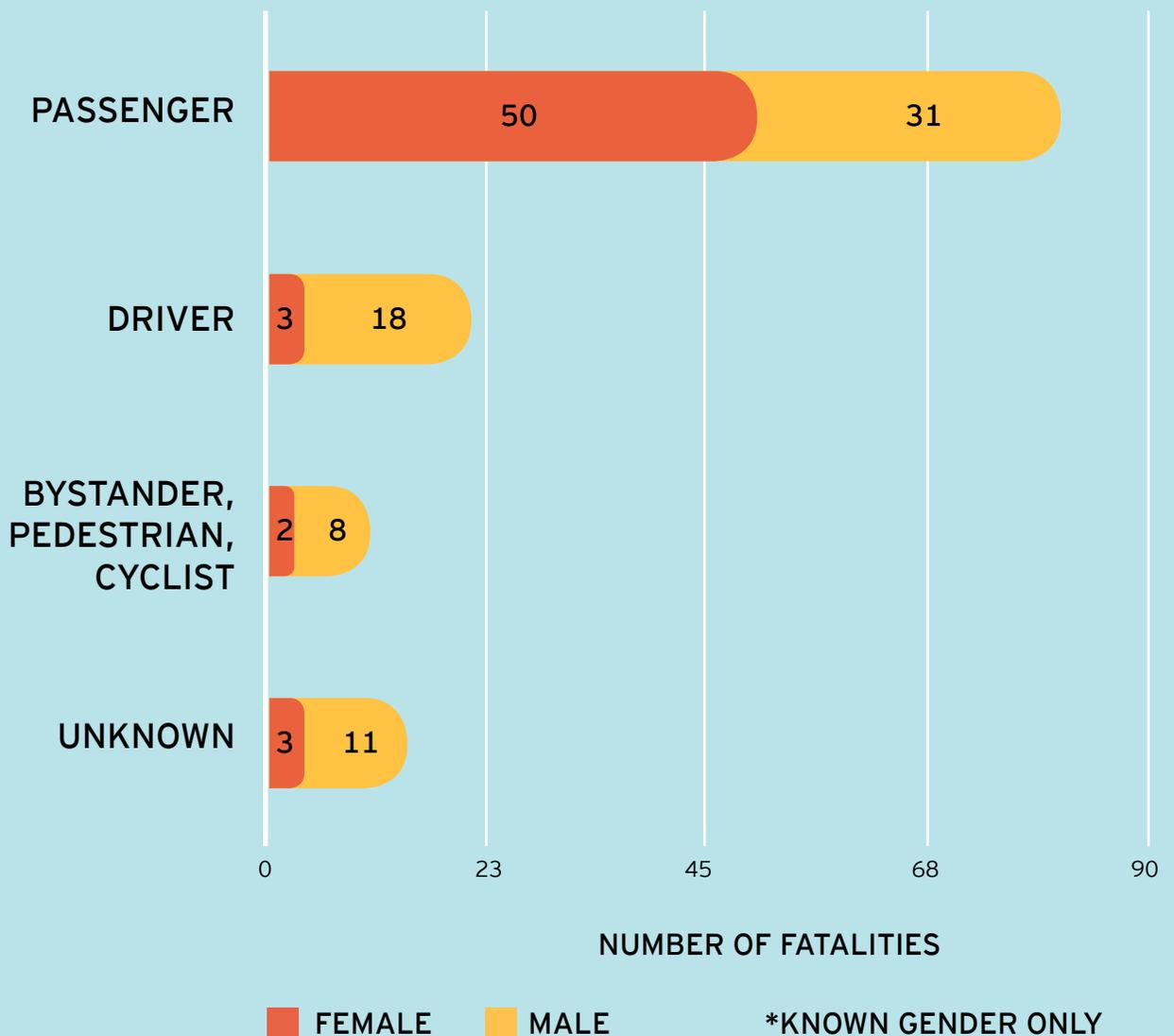


FATALITIES BY GENDER



However, within road user groups, the gender distributions were more skewed. Male fatalities clearly outnumbered female fatalities in all road user groups except for passengers.

BREAKDOWN OF FATALITIES BY ROAD USER GROUP AND GENDER



Injured Persons

As expected, there were more injured persons than fatalities in the reported incidents. For every person killed in a media-reported road crash incident, roughly five more people were reportedly injured.

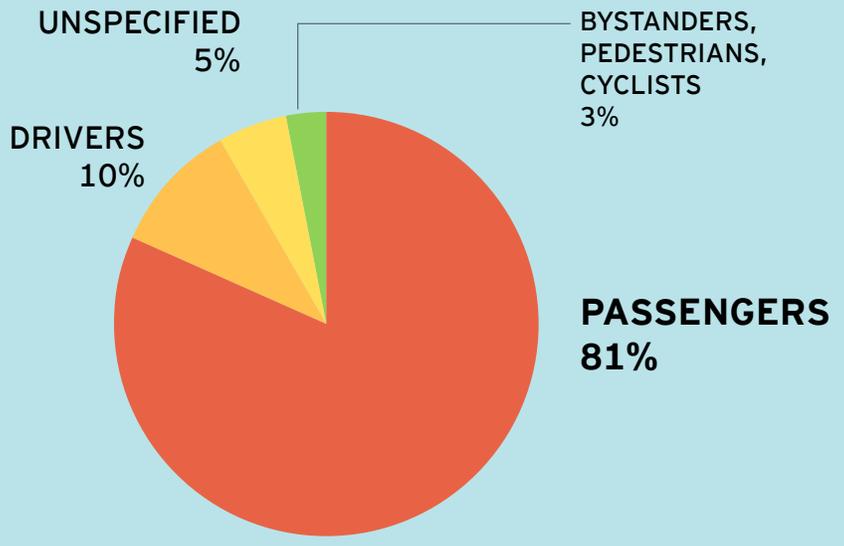
Of the 299 reported incidents, 193 incidents, or 64.5% had at least one injured person. There was a total of 1,545 injured persons. The media provided demographic and road user group information on only 1,020 injury victims.

As with fatalities, the majority of injured victims were passengers—over 80 percent.

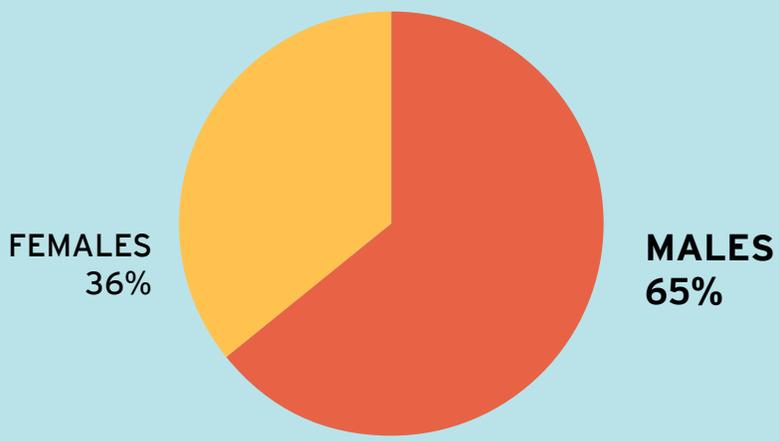
Reports on injuries included fewer details of gender. The media named the genders of only one in five injured persons. Among those for whom gender was noted, men clearly outnumbered women 64.5% to 35.5%. Within the available information on road user groups, men also outnumbered women among the injured. Among injured drivers, there were no reported female victims.

Fewer than five persons were injured in over half of these incidents, with most incidents having only one or two injured persons.

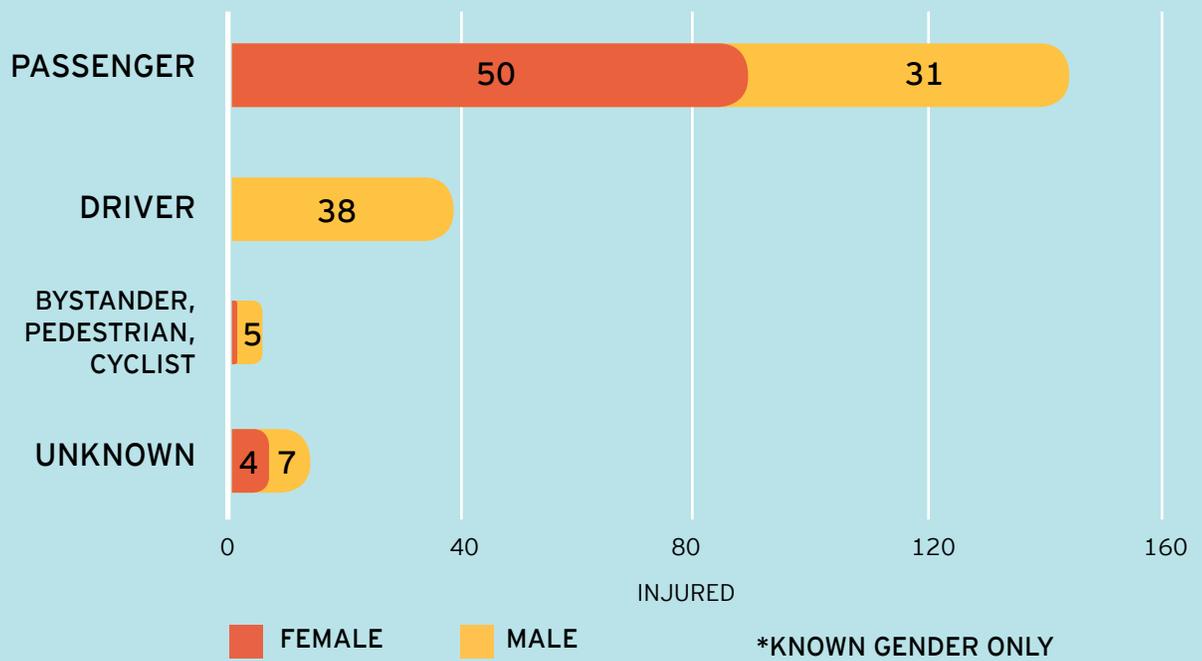
INJURED BY ROAD USER GROUP



INJURED BY GENDER



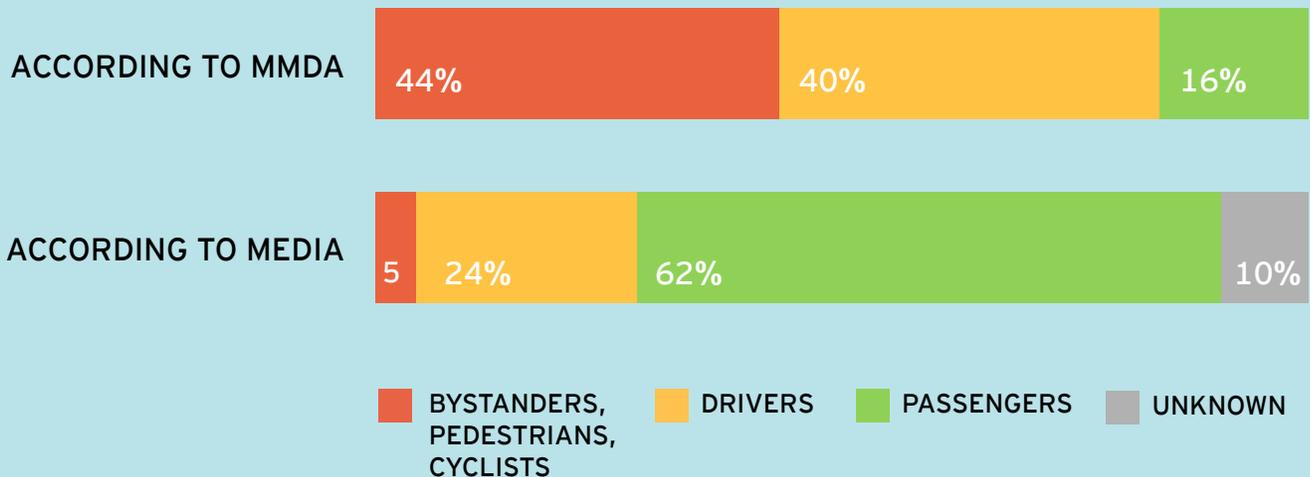
INJURED PERSONS: BREAKDOWN BY ROAD USER GROUP AND GENDER



Comparison with MMDA Data

We compared our data on victims with real-world data from the 2014 Metro Manila Accident Reporting and Analysis System (MMARAS). We do this comparison with some caution, since road crash data in media reports also includes incidents outside Metro Manila. Gaps between MMDA and media information can be treated as areas for further investigation. For example, in the dataset from the MMARAS, nearly half of the fatalities in road collisions were pedestrians. In contrast, barely five percent of traffic fatalities reported in our media sample were pedestrians. This disparity suggests that the media may be underreporting pedestrian fatalities and injuries.

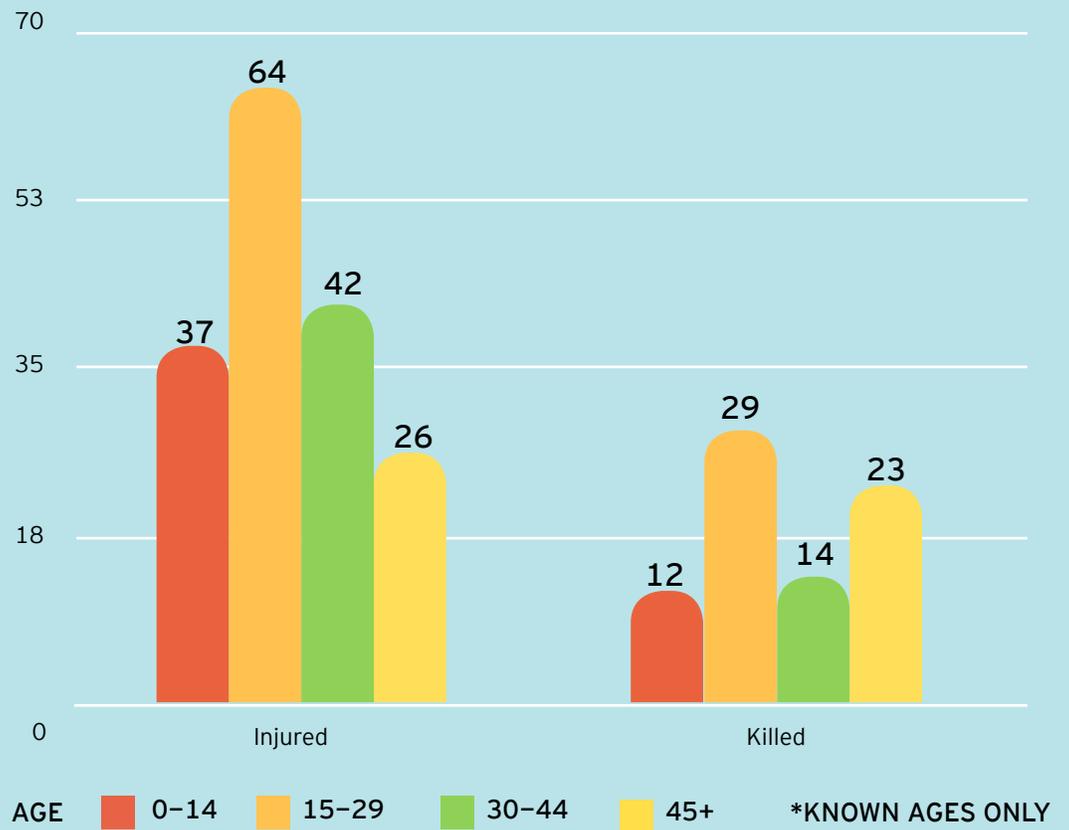
ROAD CRASH FATALITIES: BREAKDOWN BY ROAD USER GROUP



Victim Ages

Victim ages were reported only 11% of the time for the injured and 27% of the time for the fatalities. Whenever ages of victims were reported, the majority were between 15 and 29 years old, both among the injured and fatalities. This finding is consistent with World Health Organization data, which names road crashes as the leading cause of death worldwide for young people aged 15 to 29.¹⁹

AGE BRACKETS OF ROAD CRASH VICTIMS

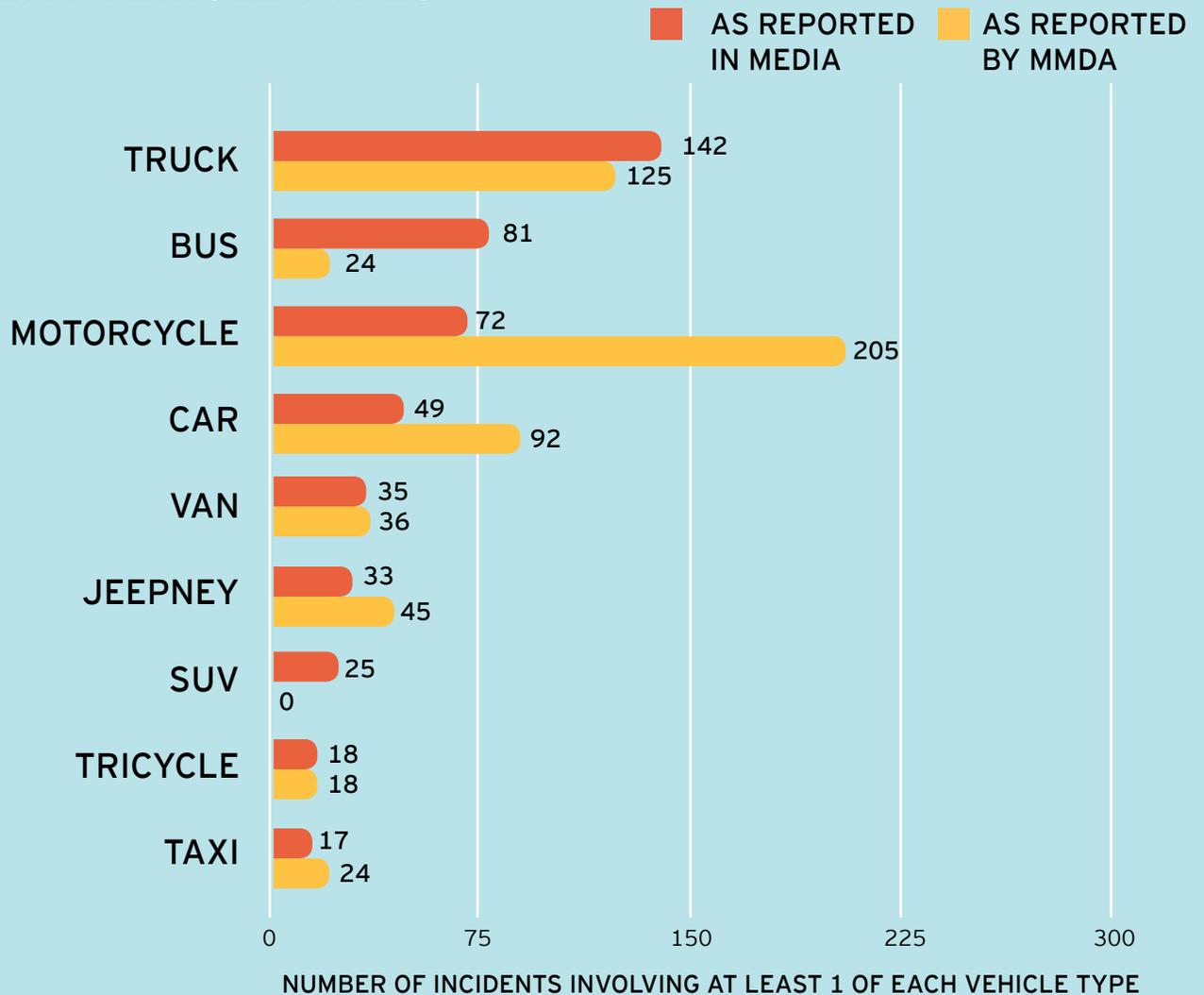


¹⁹ "Road Traffic Injuries." WHO. World Health Organization, 7 May 2012. Web. 12 July 2015. <<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs358/en/>>.

Vehicles

We also examined the types and numbers of vehicles most frequently noted in the reported road crashes. The types of vehicles most frequently involved in media-covered road crash incidents were trucks, buses, and motorcycles. Trucks were the predominant vehicles involved in media-reported road crashes, followed by buses and then motorcycles.

FREQUENCY WITH WHICH REPORTED INCIDENTS INVOLVE DIFFERENT VEHICLE TYPES



By contrast, MMDA's 2014 data on road crash incidents identified motorcycles, trucks, and cars, in descending order, as the vehicle types most frequently involved in traffic incidents.

Based on our comparison, it's possible that the media is underreporting motorcycle crashes. One possible reason: for crashes involving large vehicles like trucks and buses, the damaged vehicles often remain on the road for a longer period of time, unlike smaller vehicles, which can be easily cleared. A longer clean-up time gives media agencies a longer window of time to cover the incident.

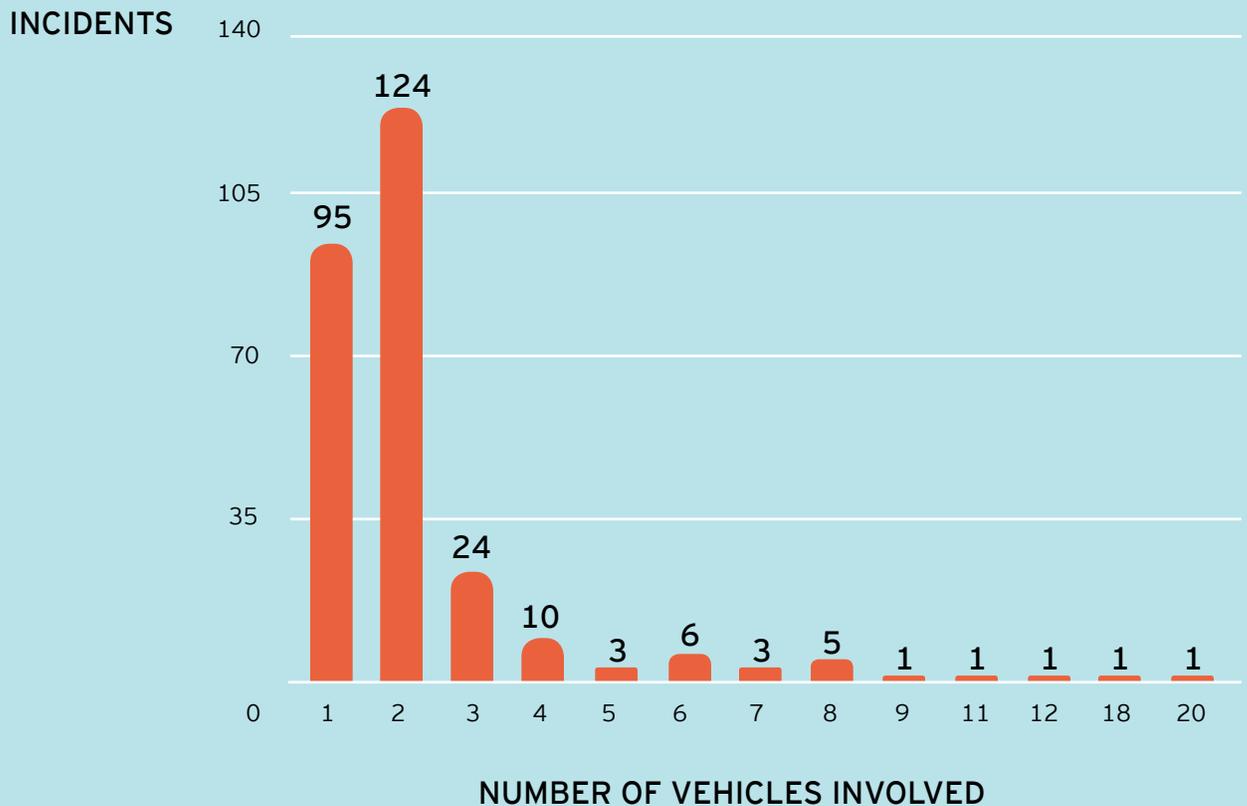
Number of Vehicles Involved

The majority of reported road crashes involved only one or two vehicles. In fact, the two most fatal crashes reported during our research period were single-vehicle crashes involving passenger buses.

The most frequent vehicle combinations in reported road crashes are:

1. Trucks and motorcycles.
2. Trucks and other unspecified vehicles.
3. Buses and motorcycles.

INCIDENT BREAKDOWN BY NUMBER OF VEHICLES INVOLVED



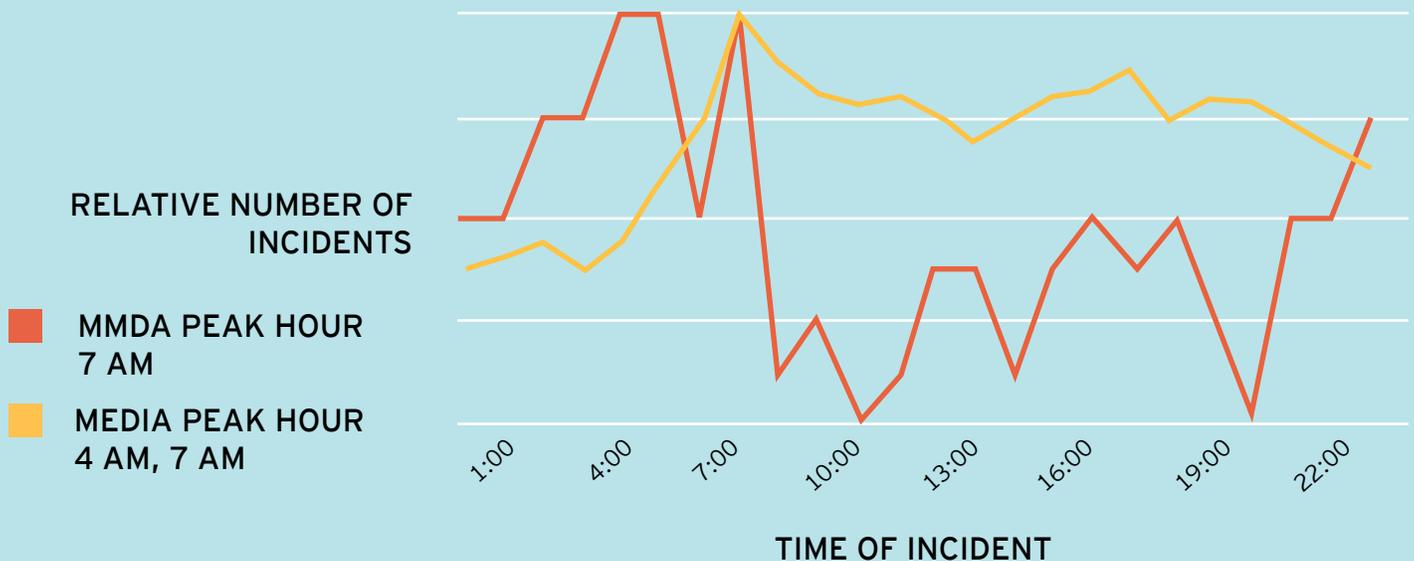
Time of Incidents

Most news reports consistently reported the time of day that an incident took place, and its exact location.

According to our data, most reported road crashes occur in the early morning, between 5:00 a.m. and 7:00 a.m., dipping slightly during midday, and rising again toward the evening. Even when a news report did not cite the specific time a crash occurred, the words “morning”, “night”, and “before dawn” were among the most frequent descriptors.

This is consistent with 2014 data from the MMDA, which also shows 7:00 a.m. to be the peak time for road crash incidents. Early morning hours are when rush hour is about to begin, but there are not yet enough vehicles on the road to slow down one’s speed. Also, many commercial trucks—the vehicles most frequently involved in accidents—tend to travel at night in order to make early morning deliveries.

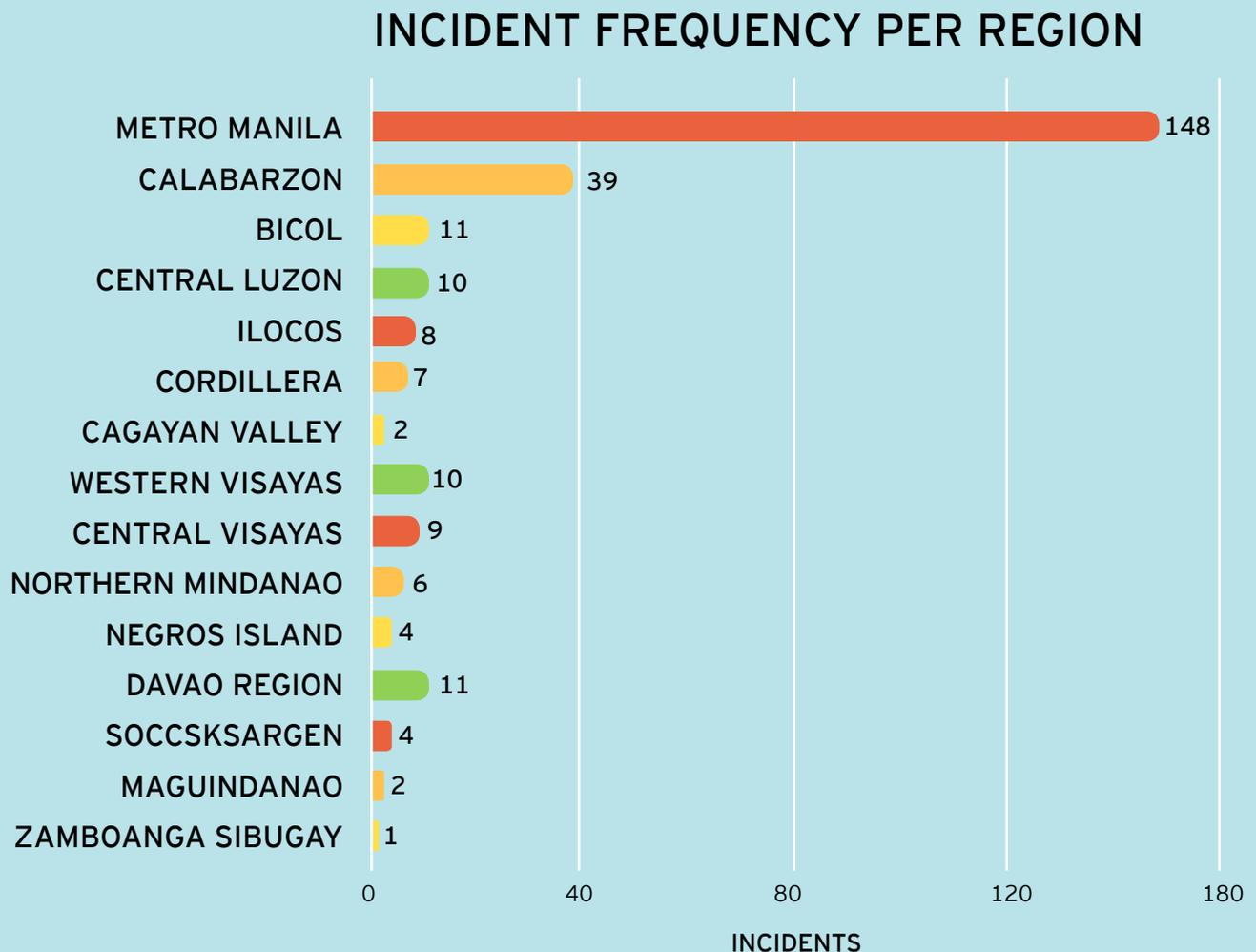
HOURLY FREQUENCY OF INCIDENTS



Incident Locations

Over 50% of the reported traffic collisions took place within Metro Manila, the country's largest and densest urban center, and also home to the main offices of the three news agencies included in our study.

Other hotspots for reported road crashes were the Cavite-Laguna-Batangas-and-Rizal region, also known as Calabarzon, the region closest to Metro Manila. The Davao region and Western Visayas regions were the third and fourth most frequent locations, which might be attributed to fact that Cebu City and Davao City, the two biggest urban centers outside of Luzon, are in those regions.

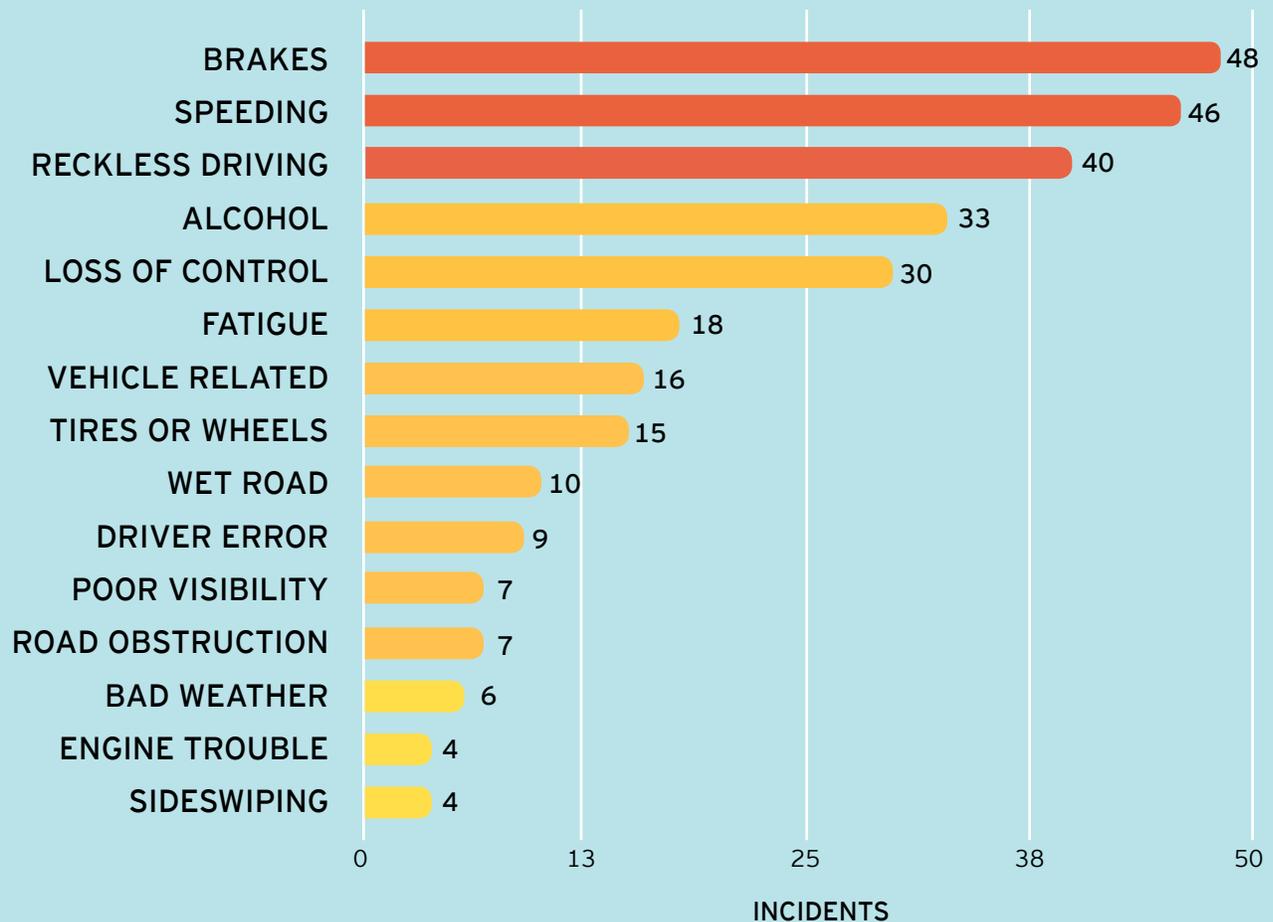


Causes or Risk Factors

Many of the road crash reports attempt to explain the risk factors that may have caused the crash. Members of the media often interview the driver(s) of the vehicle(s), witnesses to the events, traffic enforcers, or policemen about what may have caused the collision.

The list below names the media's most commonly cited causes for road crashes. These are not exclusive categories, since various causes can be used to describe a single incident. Also, some causes seem to overlap, such as "reckless driving" and "driver error." Many of the terms are also vague, such as "loss of control."

FREQUENCY OF CITED ROAD CRASH CAUSES

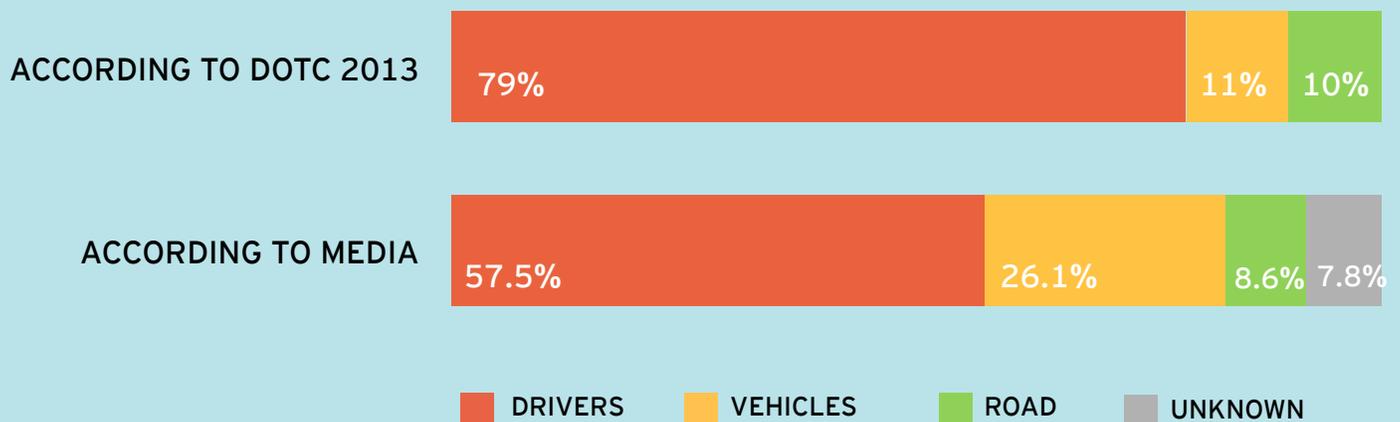


These terms do not truly describe what really causes road crashes, but rather shed light on how the media and their sources understand (or misunderstand) why crashes happen.

We also grouped the specific causes into broader groups: driver-related, vehicle-related, and road-related causes. Driver-related causes are those that have specifically to do with the condition or behavior of the driver. Vehicle-related causes have to do with the mechanical condition of the vehicle. Road-related causes have to do with external conditions.

For example, “reckless driving” is squarely a driver-related issue, while “loss of brakes” is a vehicle-related issue. Most news reports emphasized driver-related risk factors. This is consistent with 2013 DOTC data that also attributes 79% of crashes to driver error.²⁰

MEDIA VS. DOTC DATA ON ROAD CRASH CAUSES



²⁰ “Road Safety in the Philippines: Country Report.” United Nations ESCAP (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific). UNESCAP, 8 May 2013. Web. 12 July 2015. <<http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/2.19.Philippines.pdf>>.

Quality of Coverage

We also studied the quality of media coverage of road safety and land transportation issues.

In particular, we examined:

1. The number and kinds of road crashes that were covered more extensively than others, and their corresponding news life cycles.
2. How media reports provide context to road crashes by relating them to broader patterns or trends.
3. How the media covers road safety solutions.

Finally, we made recommendations for improving coverage and suggestions for further study.

Ongoing Coverage

While the vast majority of crashes were reported only once or twice, some incidents were covered extensively by the media. The top two most frequently-covered incidents were covered over 30 times each, and account for 37% of all the reports in our sample.

To glean insight into what kinds of road crash stories attract more media attention, we looked for commonalities among the most frequently covered road crash events. However, a caveat: we hesitate to make foregone conclusions based on such a small sample size. These are our theories, which should be investigated further to be considered definitive.

Rank	Incident	# of Reports	Fatalities	Description
1	Bontoc bus tragedy	61	15	On February 7, 2014, a public bus carrying 47 passengers from Manila to Bontoc in the Cordillera region of Northern Luzon fell into a ravine, killing 15 and injuring 32 passengers. Among the fatalities was a well-known Filipino comedian, Tado Jimenez.
2	Maserati incident	31	0	The driver of a luxury Maserati vehicle allegedly assaulted a traffic enforcer who had flagged him for a traffic violation.
3	Don Mariano Skyway bus crash	12	21	In December 2013, a public bus fell off an elevated highway in Taguig City in Metro Manila, killing 21 people and injuring at least 18. The event came to be known in the media as the Don Mariano Skyway incident, named for the company that operated the bus and the name of the highway on which it took place.
4	Bryan Gahol crash	12	2	Bryan Gahol, a well-known former Philippine Basketball Association player, died in a multiple-vehicle road crash along a major expressway in Metro Manila.
5	Hit-and-run of Sonny Acosta	10	1	A Metro Manila traffic enforcer was killed by a private vehicle in a hit-and-run incident.
6	President Aquino convoy overtaking	6	0	A sportscar driver got a ticket for overtaking Philippine President Benigno Aquino III's vehicle convoy.
7	Guagua dump truck crash	5	0	Part of a mini-dike was damaged when a dump truck ran off the road in Guagua, Pampanga, a province north of Manila.
8	Albay bus crash	4	4	A teacher and three children were killed when a bus smashed into a concrete wall in Albay, Bicol.
9	University of the Philippines professor road rage incident	4	0	A university professor and her family filed a complaint with the police after a road rage incident allegedly involving a local politician.
10	Corimba bus-jeepney collision	4	0	Seven people were hurt when the jeepney they were riding overturned after being hit by a public bus.

We see that the following factors may have attracted more frequent media coverage of a road crash event. Highly-covered road crashes may have any combination of these factors, with no single factor being the most influential.

1. Number of fatalities

Does the increased number of fatalities increase the coverage of a particular crash? Yes and no.

On one hand, the two most fatal incidents covered in 2014 were also among the most frequently reported. These events were the Bontoc bus tragedy and the Don Mariano Skyway crash. The Don Mariano Skyway crash, the most fatal incident in our sample, killed 21 people and received a total of 12 news reports, ranking number three in the most reported topics. The Bontoc bus tragedy claimed the lives of 15 people and appeared in the news 61 times, topping the list of most the reported road events.

On the other hand, there were some road crashes with high fatalities, but they were not in the top ten list of most frequently covered crashes.

The most notable example is a crash that killed 15 high school-aged children in the town of Buguias, Benguet, in the mountainous Cordillera region several hours north of Manila. In September 2014, the children were riding home from school when their vehicle fell into a ravine. Though the youth of the victims would seem to compound this multi-casualty tragedy, the crash generated only three reports—a paltry number, compared to the scope of coverage received by the Bontoc bus crash, even if the same number of victims were killed in both events.

Furthermore, five out of the top ten most-covered crashes did not have any fatalities at all. This suggests that there are other factors, beyond body count, that motivate media interest in certain crashes.

2. Proximity to Metro Manila

Proximity to Manila clearly affects the media coverage of an incident. Seven out of the top ten most frequently covered incidents happened in Metro Manila, while the rest happened in other provinces in Luzon, the Philippines' most populated island. None of the top ten most-covered events happened in the Visayas or Mindanao.

The headquarters of the news organizations we assessed are all located in Metro Manila. Naturally, most of their resources and manpower would be concentrated in this area, making incidents that occur in or around it easier to cover.

That said, one might wonder why the top event, the Bontoc bus crash, was covered so extensively, despite having occurred over 400 kilometers from Manila. Aside from its high number of fatalities, another explanation may be that the bus had originated from Manila, and carried many passengers from Manila, some of whom were personally known to some members of the national media.

Proximity is not just a matter of physical distance, but also of social connection. In contrast, the less-covered Buguias crash, though it had the same number of victims as the Bontoc crash, involved a rural vehicle and young, rural victims, who were largely disconnected from the region and residents of Metro Manila.

3. Availability of images

The availability of images may also play a role in the prioritization of the incidents. News agencies, particularly television, favor reports that have visual elements, such as photographs or video footage. The more images available for a specific incident, and the more dramatic the images, the more likely it is for journalists to report it.

In relation to the previous factor—proximity to Manila—events that take place near Manila are more likely to be videoed or photographed by national media.

Several of the reports in the top ten did not have any fatalities, but did have readily-available, dramatic images. These include the Guagua dump truck incident, in which nobody was seriously hurt, yet a camera crew had been on site at the time of the incident and captured footage of the truck as well as live interviews with the people involved.

The Corimba bus incident also had no fatalities. However, it did involve a jeepney completely “turning turtle,” with its roof on the road and wheels in the air, which provided for dramatic images. Also, it took place along Commonwealth Avenue in Quezon City, a highway that has long been dubbed by media as a “killer highway” because of the many accidents that reportedly occur there.

4. The celebrity factor

Another factor can be the prominence of victims or persons involved in the incident. The more well known the victim is, the more likely it is for an incident to be covered. For example, the fourth most reported incident involved Bryan Gahol, a former Philippine Basketball Association player who, in April 2014, was killed in a multiple-vehicle road crash along a major expressway in Metro Manila. Gahol was fairly well known to Filipinos who followed his 1990s career in the PBA.

The most reported incident of the year, the Bontoc bus tragedy, resulted in the death of a popular TV personality, Tado Jimenez.

Another event among the top ten most covered was not even a road crash, but merely a traffic incident: the report on President Aquino's convoy being overtaken by a sportscar. Of course, because the President was involved, this event received numerous reports even if nobody was hurt.

5. The drama element

Another key factor could be the presence of observable conflict or drama in particular incidents. If there is an element of conflict that news producers can portray—or even highlight—in their reports, they are more likely to cover an incident extensively. This may be one reason why three of the top ten most frequently reported news events were road rage stories.

For example, the conflict between the driver of a Maserati luxury sports car and a rank-and-file traffic enforcer seemed ripe for ongoing coverage. It presented the tried-and-tested dramatic narrative of rich versus poor, amidst the ongoing wealth gap in the Philippines. Despite the fact that no one was killed or severely injured, the incident generated more than thirty reports, making it the second most-reported road incident of 2014.

The rich-versus-poor narrative also lent significance to a subsequent tragedy covered multiple times by the media, involving another MMDA enforcer. Sonny Acosta was run over and killed by the driver of a private vehicle he had stopped for a traffic violation. MMDA enforcers are widely known to have lower salaries than many owners of private vehicles in Metro Manila, so local media may have attempted to highlight deeper class tensions within the country through repeated coverage of this deadly incident.

6. Public interest

The media may also be more interested in incidents that involve public transportation. Four of the most-covered events involved public buses, even though most of the reported incidents overall involved commercial trucks. Not only are more people hurt in bus crashes, but many consumers of mass media are also people who use buses and other forms of public transport on a daily basis. News coverage of major bus crashes often evolve into coverage of how the bus operators are being held liable, or how the government is improving regulation of public transport.

Another reason why the Bontoc bus crash was perhaps more reported than the Buguias crash is that the former involved public bus, whereas the vehicle in the Buguias crash was privately owned. For the potential of dramatic media framing, there is more conflict in stories where there are clear antagonists, especially if these antagonists are in a position of power, such as bus company owners and drivers, whose decisions directly affect the commuting public every day.

In contrast, the driver of the Buguias van was a private citizen who had offered a ride to the children to relieve them from their long walk. It was an act of individual kindness turned tragic, but it did not involve the operator of a public vehicle every commuting citizen might use.

How Coverage of High-Profile Crashes Evolves

Some journalists refer to these high-interest road crashes as “stories with legs,” because they can be covered multiple times, from many different angles. This gives them a longer “shelf life” on the news agenda. We also looked at the lifecycles of particular incidents or issues, and what kinds of stories evolved from them as they stayed on the news agenda longer.

The media lifecycles of high-profile incidents usually begin with the initial reports, which contain the most basic news details: who, what, where, when. As the news calendar moves forward, journalists produce more follow-up reports that provide more detailed analyses of the incident, or updates on ongoing investigations, including reports on those possibly responsible.

Media producers typically churn out human-interest stories about victims. Examples include dramatic survivor accounts, reports that talk about the impacts of injuries, or the loss of life for casualties and their surviving family members. Often, ongoing coverage also includes the government’s responses to the incident, which may range from offering support to victims, expressing outrage or condemnation, or urging relevant agencies to conduct further investigations.

Framing the Issue

The media not only chooses what road crash incidents to think about, but also how to think about them. “Journalists must constantly decide which facts to include or emphasize, whom to use as sources, and what is really ‘at issue’²¹ in reporting a story,” of Sara Tiegreen and Elana Newman of the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma. “These choices combine to create a frame that both supports the story (like the frame of a house) and defines what belongs inside (like a picture frame), and thereby signals what news consumers should find important.”²²

To understand how the Philippine media frames road crash stories, we analyzed

1. the language that reports used to describe road crashes
2. how often reports related incidents to existing or emerging patterns of events
3. how often reports used statistics
4. what sources were frequently cited, and
5. how often reports presented possible solutions to traffic-related deaths and injuries.

21 Gamson, W. A. and Modigliani, A. “Media discourse and public opinion on nuclear power: A constructionist approach.” *American Journal of Sociology*, 95: 1–37. 1989. Print.

22 Tiegreen, Sara, and Elana Newman. “How News Is “Framed”” Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma. Columbia Journalism School, 1 Apr. 2008. Web. 12 July 2015. <<http://dartcenter.org/content/how-news-is-framed>>.

Road crashes as “accidents”

This choice of language—the word “accident”— reveals how media often frames road crash incidents as isolated, unpreventable events.

Many road safety advocates and experts urge the media and the public to use the phrase “road crash” instead of accident. We found that 26% of the reports in our sample referred to road crash incidents as “accidents.” The word “accident” refers to an incident that is unplanned and happens by chance.

Through a simple change of language, the media can frame road crashes as preventable incidents with available solutions, rather than as unavoidable tragedies.

Relating incidents to a broader pattern

We found that only a tiny percentage of the road crash reports were contextualized. In fact, out of 953 reports, only 54 reports, or six percent, related incidents to a pattern. Of these, only 33, or three percent, provided statistics. This lack of context shows that the media treats road crashes as isolated unfortunate events, not part of a pervasive problem.

Among the few reports that did use statistics, the scope of the statistics were usually regional, location-specific, or city- or municipality-wide statistics on road crashes.

Scope of statistic	Number of reports
Regional	13
Location or street specific	9
City or Municipality	8
National	5
Not Specified	2

Sources

Of course, one of the reasons for the lack of statistics may simply be the lack of available data from credible sources. Large gaps exist in the Philippine government's current methods of gathering data on traffic-related deaths and injuries.

Among the institutions most frequently cited as sources in road crash reports were the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA), followed by the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB), city or municipal governments, and the Land Transportation Office (LTO).

The frequency with which journalists rely on the police and traffic enforcement as sources again shows that road crashes are treated in an episodic manner, in which the only information consists of the simple facts of an event. We hardly encountered any reports in which road safety experts or advocates were also interviewed.

Increasing the use of statistics may therefore be as simple as giving journalists more access to this statistical information and these experts.

Institution	# of Reports in which source is cited
PNP	168
MMDA	162
LTFRB	99
City or municipal government	44
LTO	42
DOTC	29
Transport Groups	28
Office of the President	24
Highway Operators	23
Non-Gov't Organizations	19

Solutions

Only 131, or 14% of the reports in our sample discussed or mentioned road safety solutions. Most of the time, the media discussed ways of making roads safer in follow-up reports on specific high-profile road crash incidents. For example, many of the follow-up reports on frequently-reported bus crashes are about measures that the government is taking to hold accountable erring bus companies or prevent similar tragedies in the future.

Among the 14% of reports that did refer to any solutions to traffic related deaths, these were the commonly mentioned solutions:

Solution	Number times media reports referred to related solution
stricter public transport franchise regulation	37
improvement of traffic enforcement	34
road user education	20
improvement of road infrastructure	19
implementation of safety inspections on public transport	16
improved vehicle maintenance	14
improvement of mass public transport infrastructure	13
enforcement of speed limits	11
improvement of infrastructure for pedestrians	6
use of seat belts	5

We also grouped these specific solutions into five broader categories: safer road management, safer road infrastructure, safer road users, safer vehicles, and better post-emergency care. These five “pillars” provide the framework for national activities that will be conducted by countries participating in the United Nations’ Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020.²³

5 Pillars of Road Safety

Intervention	Number of times media reports referred to related solutions
Safer Road Management	109
Safer Road Infrastructure	57
Safer Road Users	49
Safer Vehicles	33
Post-Emergency Response	4

Most of the solutions reporters mentioned fall under safer road management. These usually pertain to the improved enforcement of traffic rules, more road regulations, and stricter oversight of public transport operators.

Journalists also mention safer road infrastructure. In particular, reports refer to the improved maintenance of highways and expressways, the installation of barriers and speed sensors, and the repair of potholes and removal of road obstructions.

23 “Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011–2020.” WHO. World Health Organization, 8 January 2011. Web. 12 July 2015. <http://www.who.int/roadsafety/decade_of_action/plan/en/>.

Road user education was only mentioned in 20 reports despite the fact that 79% of road crashes are caused by driver error. Meanwhile, the media is largely silent about the formulation and implementation of safety and manufacturing standards for vehicles, the use of helmets and seatbelts, campaigns for pedestrian welfare, or the improvement of emergency response systems.

Examples of Contextualized and Solutions-focused Reporting

There were a few news reports from our sample that can serve as examples of contextualized or solutions-focused reporting. Many such reports came in the wake of highly-covered road crashes like the Bontoc bus crash, and focused on how the government should be held accountable for preventing such incidents.

Two ABS-CBNNews.com reports summarized the responses of social media users to road-safety-related discussions facilitated through the network's highly-rated nightly TV newscast, TV Patrol. In one report, social media users were asked to share how they think reckless driving can be curbed ²⁴ while another report asked for viewers' opinions on the effectivity of government regulations on public buses. ²⁵

24 "How to Straighten Up Reckless Drivers." ABS-CBN News. ABS-CBN Corporation, 6 March 2014. Web. 12 July 2015. <<http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/nation/metro-manila/03/05/14/how-straighten-reckless-drivers>>.

25 "Netizens Share Opinions on Current LTRFB Regulations." ABS-CBN News. ABS-CBN Corporation, 11 February 2014. Web. 12 July 2015. <<http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/nation/metro-manila/02/11/14/netizens-share-opinions-current-ltrfb-regulations>>.

One Inquirer report called on the government to take a more preventive approach to ensuring the roadworthiness of public utility vehicles.²⁶ The article quoted a business leader for saying, “Had the LTFRB and LTO done their jobs, that is, monitoring round-the-clock the franchises and operations of bus companies, then serious road accidents involving buses and other public utility vehicles could have been prevented.”

A focus on prevention rather than reaction can be delivered by media. One report, aired on GMA-7’s morning newscast, News To Go, identified 21 crash-prone locations in Metro Manila that also happen to be school zones.²⁷ The report also included statistics on how many people have been victims of road crashes in those locations, and called for stricter road safety measures near schools. The report was put together by a research unit in GMA News that focuses specifically on data gathering and analysis.

26 Esplanada, Jerry. “Gov’t Transport Regulators Blamed for Deadly Accidents.” Inquirer News. Philippine Daily Inquirer, 12 Feb. 2014. Web. 12 July 2015. <<http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/577430/govt-transport-regulators-blamed-for-deadly-accidents>>.

27 David, Kara. “21 Paaralan, Malapit Sa Mga Accident-prone Area | Video.” GMA News Online. GMA Network, Inc., 18 June 2014. Web. 12 July 2015. <<http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/video/207837/newstogo/21-paaralan-malapit-sa-mga-accident-prone-area>>.

Recommendations

In other countries where multi-sectoral efforts have been taken to reduce traffic-related deaths and injuries, there have been successes. In Vietnam, helmet use among motorcycle riders rose from a mere 40% before 2007 to 95% by 2009. And in Russia, seatbelt use increased from 48% to 92% following a social marketing campaign and community activities.²⁸

For similar progress to be made in the Philippines, the media will play a crucial role in galvanizing public support for such efforts. But as our analysis makes clear, contextualized presentations of road safety issues are currently rare exceptions rather than the general rule. There are far more news articles that discuss road crashes as isolated events. Only a rare few reports frame road crashes as part of systemic problems that require systemic solutions.

The media has a tremendous opportunity to lead the discussion on road safety and to frame it in a way that helps the public to see the importance of the issue, understand its real impact on their lives, and to both call for and support systemic solutions.

The way journalists cover road crashes, road safety, and land transportation issues can be greatly improved. While high-profile road crashes are opportunities to raise public awareness about road safety, the media need not wait for a bus full of people to get hurt before reporting on this issue. Instead of relying on formulaic methods of reporting road crashes as events, the media must do more stories that frame road safety as an urgent and important problem, and provide audiences with information they need to take action.

28 "SAVING LIVES AND REDUCING INJURIES BY IMPROVING ROAD SAFETY POLICY AND PRACTICE." Bloomberg Philanthropies. Bloomberg, 19 May 2014. Web. 12 July 2015. <<http://www.bloomberg.org/program/public-health/road-safety/#progress>>.

Here we list our recommendations for journalists who want to broaden and deepen their reporting on this issue. Road safety advocates can support journalists by guiding them towards the information and expertise they need.

Use credible statistics from which patterns or trends may be inferred.

Seek out various sources of data such as the World Health Organization, road safety advocates, and academic institutions. For example, media outfits can mine the MMDA accident database to identify accident-prone areas in Metro Manila. As of the writing of this report, the Department of Transportation and Communication is also working on a centralized, open-source database for all Philippine accident data. Data-savvy journalists can mine this dataset for patterns that can make interesting stories.

Report on the systemic causes of road crashes, traffic-related deaths and injuries.

Journalists can also relate patterns in road crash data to associated risk factors. For example, why are road crashes more frequent in some places or among certain types of vehicles compared to others? Why are certain types of road users more at risk than others? How do common causes of road crashes relate to specific weaknesses in government regulation of transportation?

Report on legislation or policies related to road safety, or the lack thereof.

Help people and decision makers to understand these policies, why they exist, how they need to be implemented, and what the gaps are. For example, even though the Philippines has a seat belt law, many Filipinos still rarely use seat belts. Many vehicles don't even have them.

In fact, the jeepney, a form of transportation that is practically iconic of Manila, lacks seat belts by design. How can seat belt or helmet laws be improved to actually become enforceable?

Provide audiences with useful and practical information that they can use to make themselves and others safer on the road.

Don't just inform, educate. For example, what are some best practices that motorcycle and vehicle drivers need to know to keep themselves safe on the road? What maneuvers are unsafe and should be avoided? What do the different road signs mean and why is it important to follow them? How can commuters tell if a public vehicle is roadworthy? And what can they do to hold transport operators accountable in case these vehicles are not roadworthy?

Report on the needs and concerns of vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, cyclists, children, and the elderly.

For example, why are there so many pedestrians among traffic-related fatalities? Are there more pedestrian deaths in areas that lack sidewalks? If such is the case, can building sidewalks save lives? What can be done to make school zones safer? If child restraints are one way of preventing traffic-deaths among children, what types of child restraints should be made available in public transport?

Look outside Metro Manila.

Strengthen reporting on this issue in the provinces. How do patterns in road crashes that occur in Cebu or Davao differ those that happen in Metro Manila? What are road crash trends in rapidly urbanizing areas? How about road crashes in rural areas compared with urban areas? What's being done to improve safety of road infrastructure in the provinces? What are the safety records of vehicles unique to rural areas, such as "kuliglig" or even "habal-habal?"

Report on how road traffic deaths and injuries impact people economically, psychologically, developmentally.

Find ways to relate road safety to broader developmental issues. For example, media rarely looks at the economic impact of traffic-related deaths and injuries. Road crashes are a leading cause of death among young adults, who are often breadwinners for their families. Yet while the economic impact of traffic congestion is often reported, the economic impact of traffic-related deaths and injuries is not. How do these sudden losses affect families in the short and long term? How do road traffic deaths and injuries burden health care systems?

Report on solutions.

The news rarely empowers audiences with the information they need to take action. Yet there are proven ways of making roads safer and reducing deaths. Journalists can educate the public about best practices in road safety, both locally or in other countries. Are there other countries that are similar to the Philippines and that have managed to save lives on the road? How did they do it, and can we do the same things here? What kind of political process will it take for these solutions to be implemented locally?

As far as framing the issue, media producers must seize hold of their many opportunities to report road safety stories with all of their available thoroughness, context, intelligence, and insight.

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