

Road Traffic Accidents in Uganda

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Abstract

Accidents occur all over the world in different forms, caused by many factors. Like many developing countries, the rates of accidents are on the rise. I was motivated to write this article to create awareness and also to add my voice to the many others, in order to reduce the road carnage. Accidents cause loss of lives, physical, emotional, social and economic effects for all involved.

I carried out a number of interviews and literature review on the subject. I similarly delved into police crime reports and The Traffic and Road Safety Act of 1998. The result of this research is that road accidents can be reduced if drivers can be disciplined and follow the law, road infrastructure networks to cater for the increased vehicular traffic on the narrow roads.

This research took me about 50 days which included waiting for return of questionnaires. The survey was supported by Survey Monkey, a free online resource.

Keywords: road accident, survey, Uganda, statistics.

1 INTRODUCTION

Well as road accidents and fatalities are decreasing in the West, in Uganda and other developing economies they are increasing exponentially. Uganda's Traffic and Road Safety Act, 1998 (Amendment) Act, 2020 among the provisions, prescribes speed limits and prohibits disobeying signs and signals, driving while talking on phone and eating, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, failing to stop at pedestrian crossings and so on. Others include; drifting into another lane and reckless driving. Despite the legislation that protects users, road accidents in Uganda continue to be a challenge. At independence in 1962, there were about 12,000

vehicles in Uganda. Today there are over 2.3 million vehicles and an estimated one million motorcycles.

Uganda's road infrastructure is generally unsafe. Most of the roads are single carriageway without a median, many with steep shoulders and with few opportunities for overtaking, resulting in many head-on collisions. Also most roads lack facilities for nonmotorized users. the rate of motorization has doubled from an estimated 635,556 vehicles in 2010 to an estimated 1,228,425 in 2014. Currently, there is an estimated motorized traffic of 8,500 million vehicle-km per year from 3,755 million vehicle km in 2003. [1] Rising traffic congestion has led to passengers preferring to use commercial motorcycles (boda bodas), which are unsafe and unregulated.

Tab. 1 Survey Participants by Age and Road User Category.

Age group	Survey Participants		Road user category	Survey Participants	
	No.	%		No.	%
18 to 24	3	3.6	Pedestrian	11	13.3
25 to 34	27	32.5	Passenger (taxi/bus)	31	37.3
35 to 44	16	19.3	Passenger (commercial motorcycle)	8	9.6
45 to 54	11	13.3	Cyclist	5	6.0
55 to 64	17	20.5	Commercial motorcycle rider	3	3.6
65 to 74	9	10.8	Motorcar driver	25	30.1

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2. METHODOLOGY

This article is based on a document review as well as remote structured interviews. These interviews were conducted using survey monkey. A total of 83 respondents participated in the survey, 38.6 percent (32) of whom were women. The majority of the survey participants are in the age group of 25 to 34 (33%). With regards to road user category, most participants are primarily

passengers of either taxis or buses (37%) or motor car drivers (30%) (see Tab. 1).

3. PREVALENCE OF ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

While they do not provide a complete picture, the Uganda Police annual crime reports contain data of reported cases of road traffic

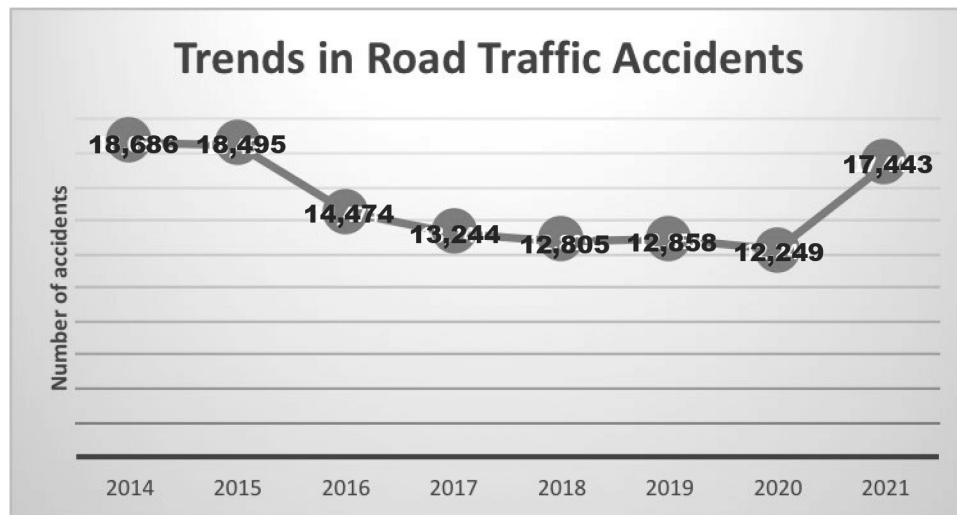


Fig. 1 Shows that most road accidents in Uganda are serious. Furthermore, that more than two out of 10 accidents result in death. There is likely to be underreporting largely because the Uganda police reports capture data of the deaths occurring at the site of the accident [1–8].

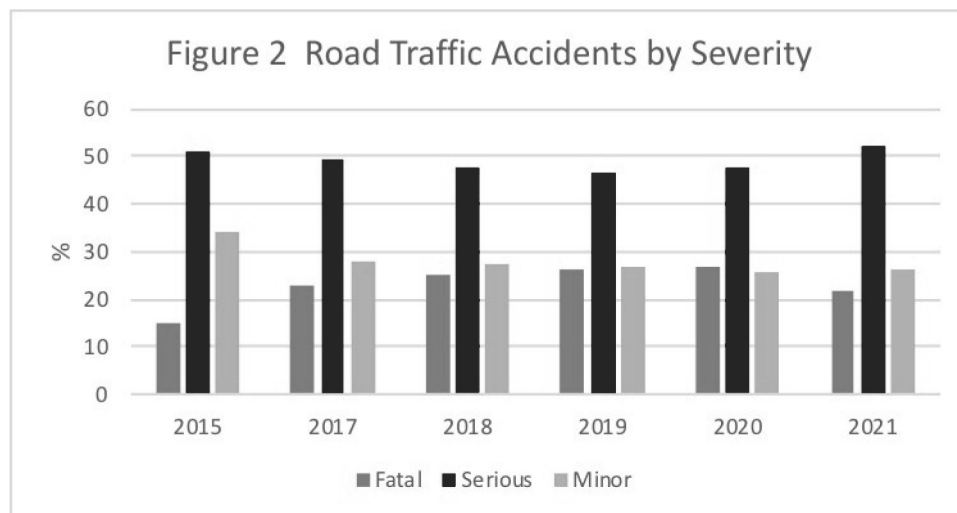


Fig. 2 Road Traffic Accidents by Severity [1–8].

crashes, which are indicative of the situation. According to the police reports, the number of crashes reduced from 18,686 in 2014 to 12,249 in 2020. This represents a reduction of 34.4 percent over a six-year period. As Fig. 1 shows, there was a surge in accidents 2021 representing an increase of 42.4 percent from the previous year [1–8].

The risk of dying due to a road traffic accident in Uganda is higher (27.4 per 100,000) than the Africa region average of 26.6 per 100 000 population. Moreover, the likelihood is three, five

and seven times higher than Europe, Canada and Netherlands, respectively (Tab. 2).

4. PERCEIVED CAUSES OF ROAD ACCIDENTS

According to the online survey, the perceived main causes of road traffic accidents in Uganda are over speeding (27%), reckless commercial motorcyclists (22%) and drunk driving (15%). Non-

Tab. 2 Risk of Road Death by Selected Country [9].

	Number of Road Deaths		
	Per 100,000 inhabitants per year	Per 100,000 motor vehicles per year	Total latest year
Global	18.2	–	1,350,000 (2016)
Africa	26.6	574	246,719 (2016)
Europe	9.3	19	85,629 (2016)
Canada	5.8	8.9	2,118 (2016)
Netherlands	3.8	6	648 (2019)
United States of America	12.4	14.2	39,888 (2018)
Kenya	29.1	640.7	12,891 (2013)
Rwanda	32.1	3521.1	3,782 (2013)
Tanzania	32.9	1073.7	16,211 (2013)
Uganda	27.4	836.8	10,280 (2013)

adherence to lane driving and overtaking in a wrong manner is also very common particularly amongst the “entitled” class. These have motorcades or leading security vehicles with sirens that chase other users off the roads for them to drive past. These include government officials, top police and army personnel, ministers, politicians especially of the ruling party, big business moguls, children of leading party officials etc. Because of the scare of the sirens, other motorists get involved in accidents as they try to get out of the way on the narrow roads.

Roads are poorly constructed and are not maintained. There is also inadequate road furniture such as traffic signals and street lighting. Rail crossings are also another cause of accidents. Errant drivers don’t usually stop at railway crossings because there are no barriers. Most times they end up by being crashed by fast moving speeding trains. The roads are also overcrowded with vehicles,

pedestrians, commercial motorcycles, etc. Most roads were built for the 12,000 cars of the early sixties against today’s over 2 million vehicles! The traffic jams caused by the narrow roads cause vehicles to use pedestrian sidewalks causing accidents in the process. The lack of dedicated pedestrian walkways complicates the situation even further. Inclement weather, particularly heavy rains cause low visibility and floods.

Lastly, corruption also contributes too many accidents on Uganda’s roads. Cars in dangerous mechanical conditions, over speeding vehicles, overloaded cars and other vehicles unfit for the roads can pay their way to operate on the roads. The police accept gratification and allow these vehicles on the roads which end up being involved in accidents. Unqualified drivers/riders without driving licenses pay their way through the corrupt officers.

Tab. 3 Perceived Major Causes of Road Traffic Accidents in Uganda.

Road user category	Survey Participants	
	No.	%
Over speeding	22	26.5
Reckless commercial motorcyclists	18	21.7
Drunk driving	12	14.5
Poor road design and maintenance	7	8.4
Corrupt traffic officials	7	8.4
Indiscipline on the road	5	6.0
Avoiding safety gears such as seat belts and helmets	4	4.8
Vehicles in dangerous mechanical condition	3	3.6
Lack of pedestrian walkways	3	3.6
Bad weather	2	2.4

Source: Online survey.

5. CAUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Government should enforce the Traffic and Road safety Act.
- Corrupt Police officers should be apprehended and punished.
- Government should prioritize improving the road network and infrastructure.
- Enforce the law allowing only entitled people to have lead cars (President, Vice President, Prime Minister, Speaker of Parliament and Chief Justice).

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Tab. 4. Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_traffic-related_death_rate.

Year	Number of Accidents						
	Total (No.)	Fatal		Serious		Minor	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
2014	18,686	–	–	–	–	–	–
2015	18,495	2,749	14.9	9,422	50.9	6,324	34.2
2016	14,474	–	–	–	–	–	–
2017	13,244	3,051	23.0	6,530	49.3	3,663	27.7
2018	12,805	3,194	24.9	6,085	47.5	3,526	27.5
2019	12,858	3,407	26.5	5,992	46.6	3,459	26.9
2020	12,249	3,269	26.7	5,803	47.4	3,177	25.9
2021	17,443	3,759	21.6	9,070	52.0	4,616	26.5

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