



Published by

giz Deutsche Gesellschaft
für Internationale
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH



Summary of **Landscape**

Analysis of Transport Safety in the Garment Sector *in Myanmar*

A group of people, including a woman in the foreground and a man in the background, are in a workshop or factory setting. The image is overlaid with a teal semi-transparent rectangle containing text. The woman in the foreground is wearing a dark t-shirt with 'EXO DOSE' and a graphic. The man in the background is wearing a light-colored shirt with a geometric pattern. The overall scene is dimly lit, with some light coming from the left.

Disclaimer

This report was prepared by AIP Foundation. It is an independent report. The views expressed herein are the authors' own and do not necessarily represent the official views of GIZ or the German government. This publication has been produced with the assistance of H&M and Primark through their financial support, feedback on content and factory access.

This publication presents a summary of the main findings and recommendations. If you are interested in the detailed landscape study, please write an email to ei.tun@giz.de to receive the full study.



Key messages



A lack of road infrastructure policies, inadequate enforcement and dangerous road alignments have contributed to unsafe road conditions in Myanmar.



As a result of unsafe driving practices, turnover and absenteeism at work increase while labour supply and productivity decrease.



Lacking strong legislative framework and funding, road safety management in Myanmar has been fragmented. While road safety policies have improved, none protect workers from accidents while commuting.



Workers and drivers understood the dangers of speeding and drink-driving and the importance of wearing helmets. Only 33% of workers and 32% of drivers received road safety training, yet enthusiasm for learning more about it is high.



A survey among Myanmar garment workers shows that most of them commute with collective transportation vehicles organised and funded by the factories.



While Myanmar has demonstrated a commitment to improving road safety management, there is an urgent need for national and local government to demonstrate leadership and collaborate to introduce road safety policies that meet international standards.



Workers' road safety continues to be a concern, especially since 66% of workers reported that their collective drivers exhibited unsafe driving behaviours associated with speeding, dangerous overtaking and drink-driving.



Factory management, brands, researchers and development organisations should join forces and promote evidence-based interventions to improve transport safety of garment workers.



Setting the scene

Myanmar loses an estimated 10,540 lives to road crash injuries and fatalities annually (WHO, 2018). A combination of poor road infrastructure, gaps in legislation and poor enforcement of traffic laws has resulted in weak road safety management and high risks for vulnerable road users.

Road traffic injuries and fatalities not only severely impact the victims and their families, they also affect factories through turnover and absenteeism and have adverse economic consequences due to a loss of effective labour supply and productivity. Previous research estimates an economic loss of 3-5% of GDP in low- and middle-income countries (WHO, 2015).

Several high-profile and tragic incidents involving the death of factory workers have prompted a much-needed increase in attention to the safety of commuting garment factory workers. They are particularly vulnerable to road crashes as they continue to travel on dangerous roads without the necessary safety measures. As the textile and garment industry accounts for over 30% of export revenues in Myanmar (EuroCham, 2019), employing 560,000 workers (EuroCham, 2019), improving the safety of workers in this sector is a growing priority.

Although the transport safety of factory workers has emerged as a key area for improving workers' safety, existing research on the topic in Myanmar remains limited. This study attempts to increase road safety knowledge for garment factory workers and inform future recommendations and programmatic interventions.

This study presents a detailed analysis of the current situation of road/transportation safety among garment workers in Myanmar. It identifies and calls attention to the key risk factors and challenges that impede safe transportation and endanger the wellbeing/lives of garment workers in Myanmar. Finally, this study provides recommendations for relevant stakeholders and decision-makers, as well as brands and development partners, on how to tackle the identified challenges in order to improve transport safety among garment workers.

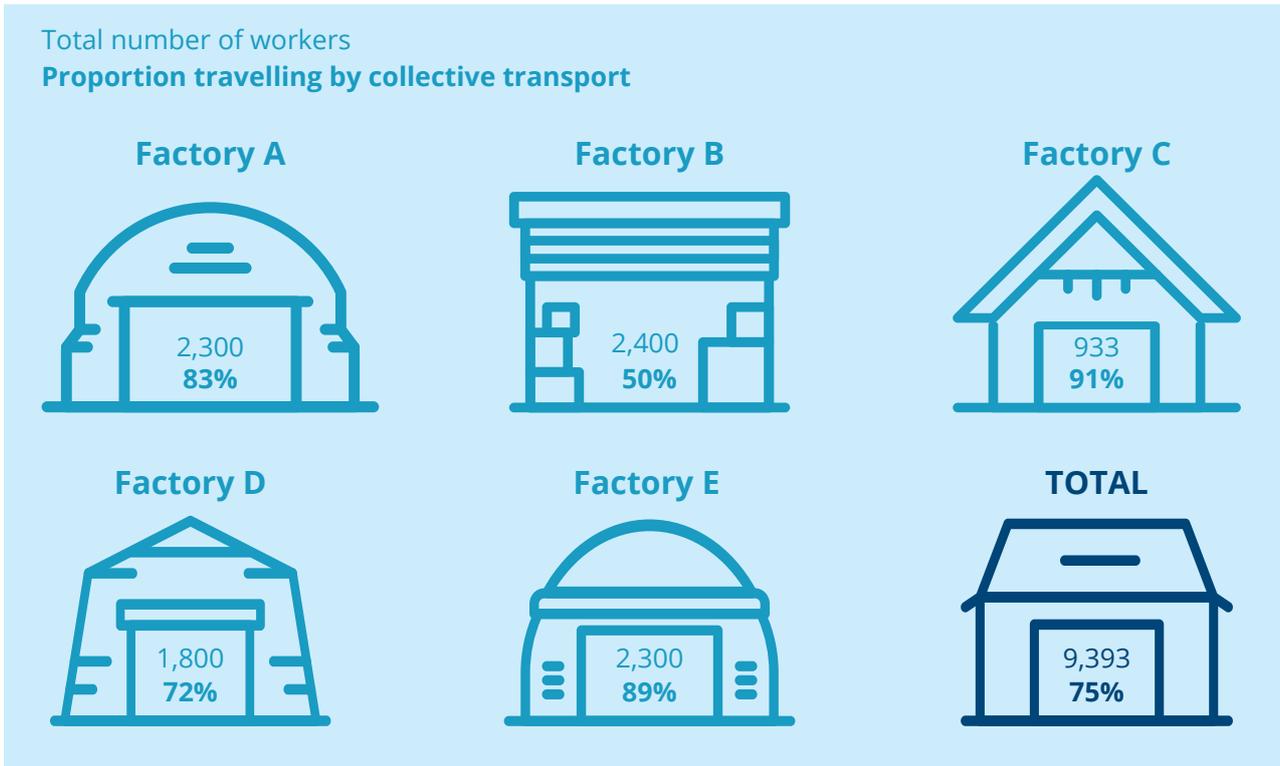


Methods

The study applied a mixed-method research design combining quantitative and qualitative research methods. The research process included desk research as well as field research, which was conducted from November to December 2019 at five factories across Myanmar.

The desk research consisted of a comprehensive literature review and a mapping of existing policies and regulations related to transport safety. Quantitative data collection included structured questionnaire surveys with 200 garment factory workers and drivers to determine current transport use and routes and measure knowledge, attitudes and behaviours (KAB) towards transportation and road safety. Filmed observations of 60 minutes for each of the five factories provided data on the actual helmet wearing rates of workers commuting by motorcycle and assessed passenger loads and transport safety of workers using collective transportation. Qualitative data included focus group discussions with six to 10 factory workers and collective transport drivers at each factory to assess key road safety issues in factories. Key informant interviews (KIIs) were held with one factory manager and one factory health staff member at each factory.

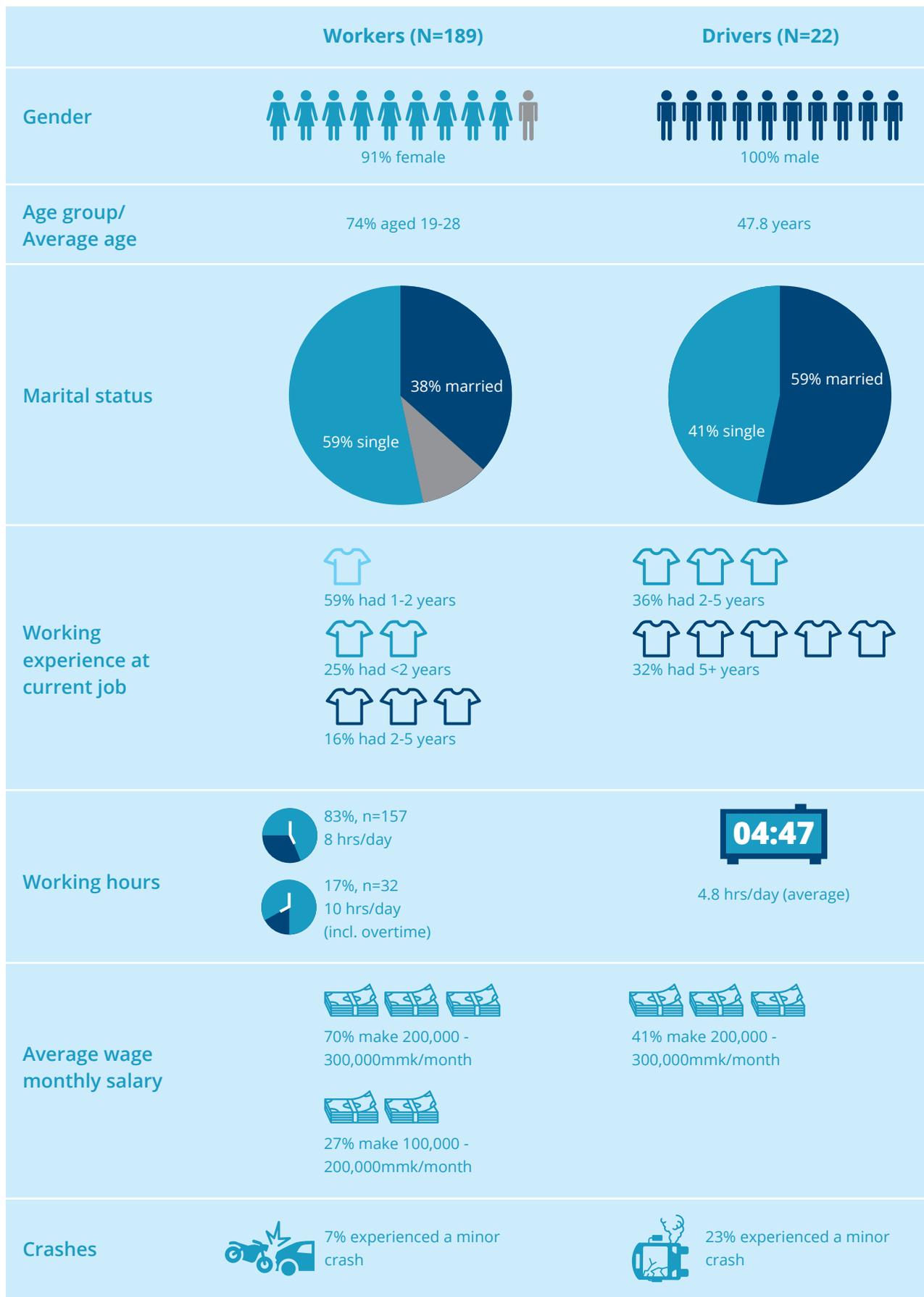
Basic information on factories in Myanmar



Source: Google Maps

Field participants in Myanmar

A total of 211 respondents from five garment factories participated in the study, including 189 factory workers and 22 drivers.



Main findings

Road safety policies in Myanmar

In Myanmar, a lack of road infrastructure policies, inadequate enforcement and dangerous road alignments have contributed to unsafe road conditions for pedestrians and drivers or passengers of two- or three-wheelers.

In 2014, the Myanmar Road Safety Action Plan (MRSAP) 2014–2020 announced government efforts to reduce total road fatalities by 50% by 2020, targeting issues such as helmet use, seatbelt-wearing and unlicensed driving. Additionally, there is no specific government policy for improving road safety in industrial zones in Myanmar, threatening the safety of commuting factory workers (Asian Development Bank, 2016). Furthermore, the national budget lacks funding for the road safety strategy. Dangers of collective transport for factory workers include overcrowded buses, inadequate driver training and a lack of transport after working hours. Current labour laws in Myanmar fail to prioritize factory employee road safety during their commute to and from work, a growing policy concern in the garment industry (Asian Development Bank, 2016).

Table 1. General road safety policy/intervention in Myanmar (as of 2018) [1]

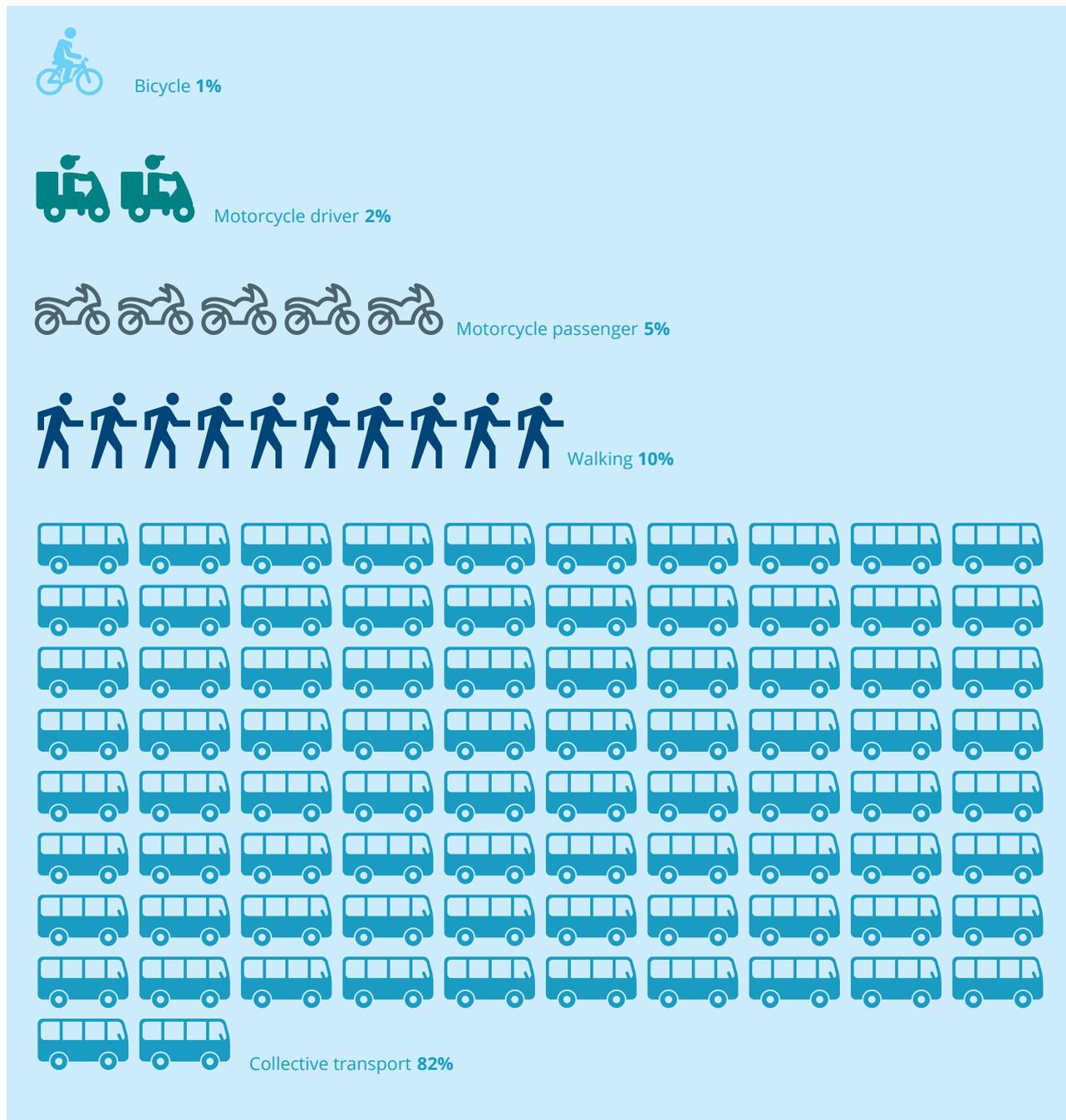
General Road Safety Policy	Y	N	Quality	Enforcement
Funding in the national budget		✓		
National road safety strategy	✓		Good, but no funding available	
Use of star rating for existing and new road infrastructure	✓		Good, but poor maintenance	
Vehicle safety standards applied		✓		
National emergency care access phone number for post-crash care	✓			
National speed law	✓		Inadequate	Average
National drink and drug driving law	✓		Inadequate	Average
National motorcycle helmet law	✓		Inadequate	Average
National seatbelt law	✓		Good	Average
National child restraint law		✓		
National law on mobile phone use while driving		✓		

Source: WHO Global Status Report 2018

Transportation usage

The majority of respondents (81%) in Myanmar commute to work by collective transport provided by the factories. The factories individually arrange collective transport for their workers by contracting car ferry companies. As participating factories worked with ferry owners or companies to rent collective transport vehicles and to contract transport drivers, factories did not hire or manage drivers directly. However, as factories are customers of the ferry owners and companies, factories do have economic leverage to communicate complaints from factory workers related to unsafe vehicles or unsafe driving behaviours and request action (i.e. warning drivers, changing drivers or changing vehicles).

Figure 1. Modes of transportation used by surveyed garment workers in Myanmar



Factory-arranged collective transportation is free of charge and arranged twice a day at official work arrival and departure time. Workers must make their own arrangements to travel from their home to established pick-up points where factory car ferries collect the workers. The most common types of collective vehicles were large Toyota Dyna trucks which can transport around 35 passengers (38%), buses/coaches (34%) and other trucks (23%).

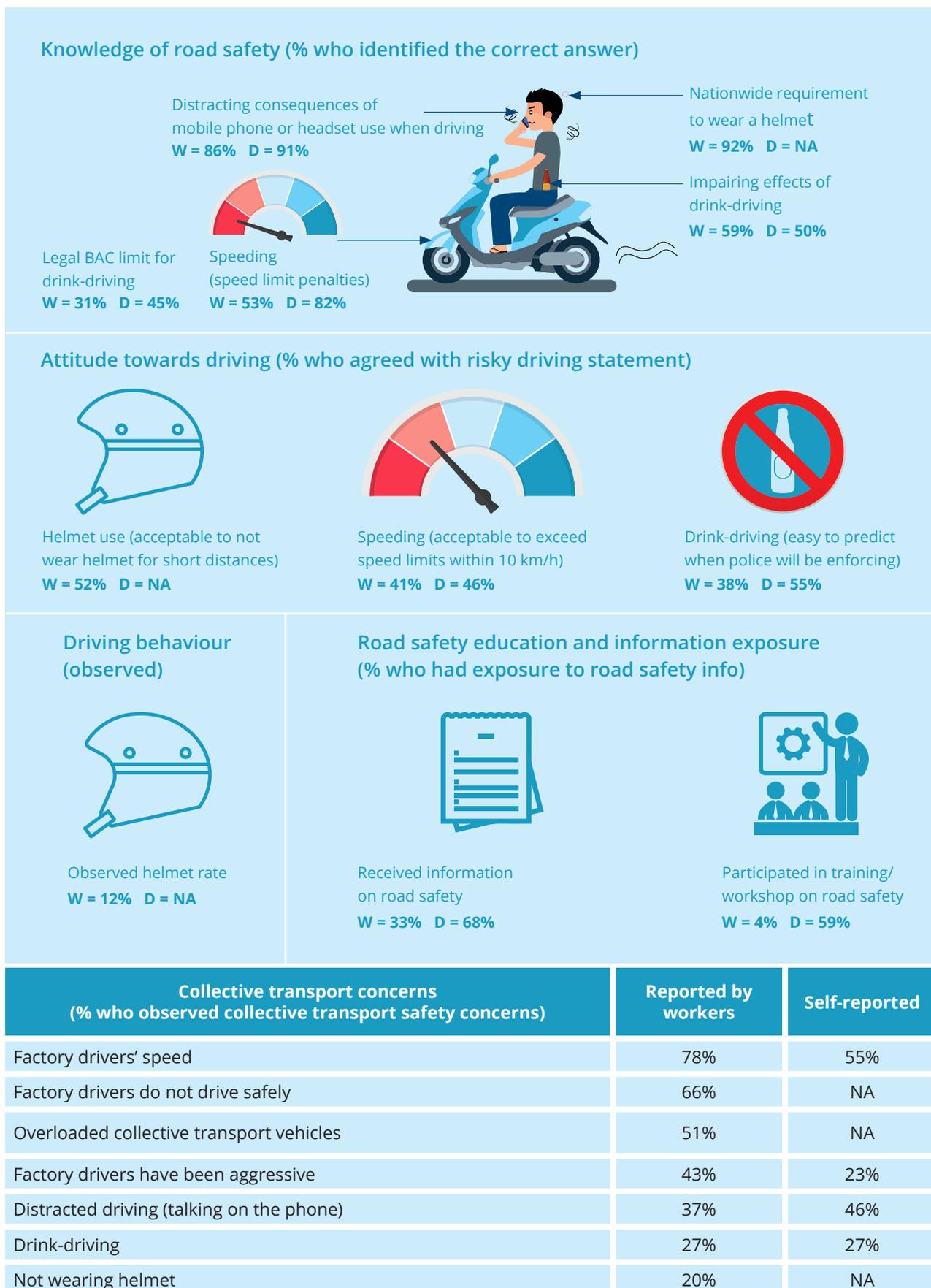
Reasons for choosing the collective vehicles or ferries arranged by factories included cost savings (55%), transport being free of charge (39%), lack of other alternatives (19%) and other reasons (26%) such as a long distance between the factory and their home, time efficiency and convenience that the factory had arranged this method for its workers. For those factory workers who chose other types of transportation, reasons included the proximity of the factory to their residence, reducing their need to rely on collective transport (10%) and desire to travel independently (5%).

Knowledge, attitude, behaviours (KAB) survey results of workers and drivers in Myanmar

The survey shows that both garment workers and drivers have limited knowledge about road traffic laws and regulations, especially specific topics such as speed limit, distracted driving behaviours and overloading. However, the attitude of both drivers and workers towards learning more about road safety is overall positive. Many drivers and workers, however, still agreed with statements such as 'speeding is acceptable' or 'not wearing a helmet for short distances is acceptable.' The most common driver safety risks that workers reported include speeding, vehicle overloading, drink-driving and using mobile phones. Filmed observations at each factory showed that the overall helmet wearing rate among workers across all five factories is very low (12%).



Figure 2. KAB survey results of workers (W) and drivers (D) in Myanmar



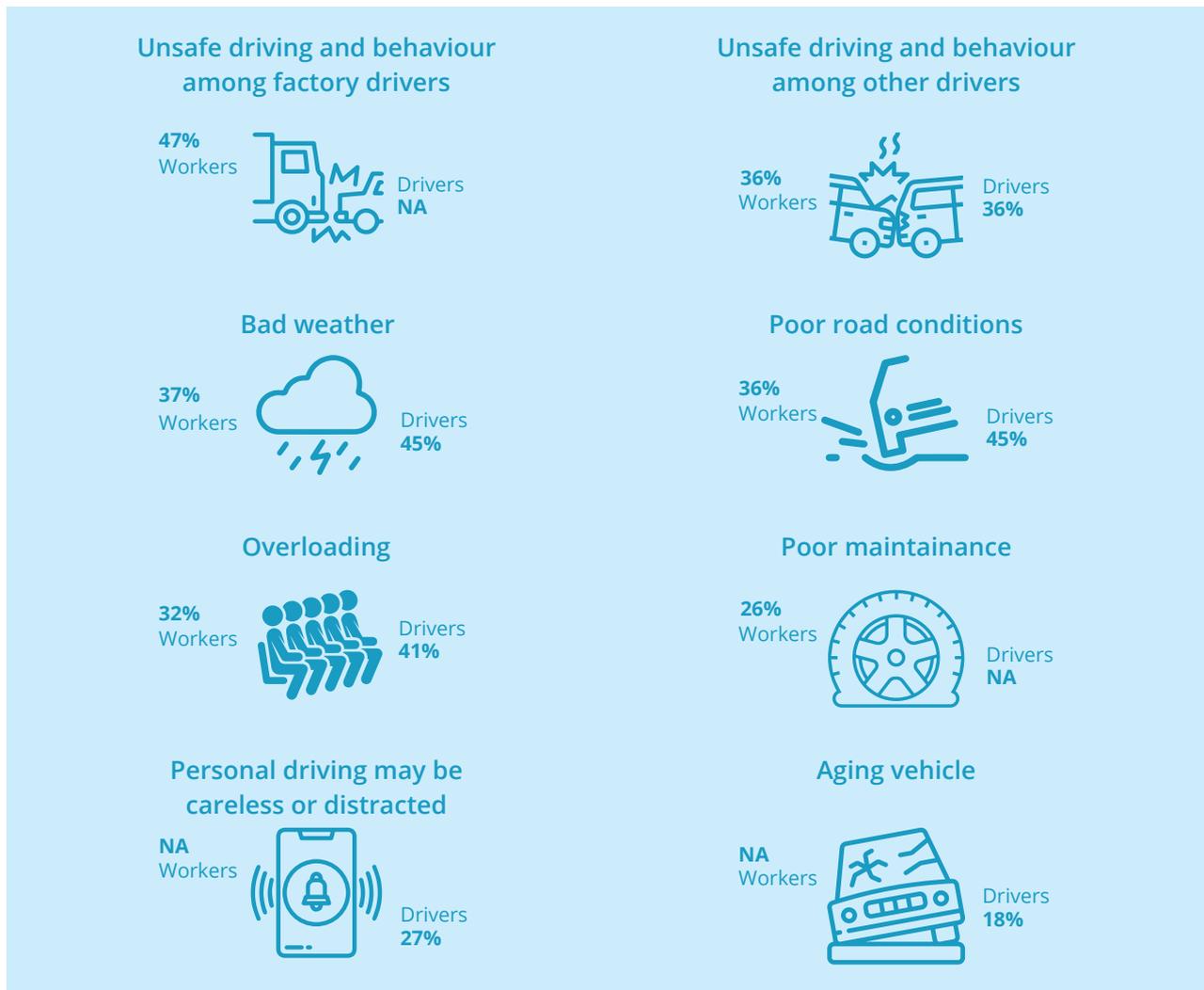
Road safety concerns of workers and drivers in Myanmar

“Some of the workers and staff have been robbed on the public bus and lost all of their property. Some of them are so afraid to travel by public transportation.” (Factory workers and driver focus group discussion)

Unsafe driving behaviours are explained by limited knowledge and awareness among drivers, coupled with a lack of road infrastructure such as traffic lights, traffic warning signs, footbridges and pedestrian crossings. Workers revealed that their top traffic safety concerns were dangerous road user behaviour of factory drivers and other drivers, unsafe infrastructure, lack of traffic police and weak police enforcement, unsafe vehicles and overloading, and unsafe commute due to robbers or sexual harassment on public transport.

Nearly half of the workers had spoken directly to drivers or factory managers about unsafe driving practices. For those that did not speak up, reasons included a fear of drivers, assumptions that other people would complain on their behalf and the gender difference (almost 90 percent of workers in this survey were women while all of the drivers were men). To improve commuting safety, both workers and drivers self-reported a commitment to safer driving practices. These commitments could be encouraged with programmes that empower workers to raise their voices and reduce the gendered power dynamic, training provided by factories, road infrastructure improvement, as well as government action to strengthen traffic law enforcement.

Figure 3. Road safety concerns of surveyed workers and drivers in Myanmar



Recommendations

Country-Specific Recommendations for Myanmar

To local government and public-private partners for road modifications: Greater investment by the local government and public-private partners to modify roads by establishing safe walkways for pedestrians and designated public transport pick-up and drop-off zones.

To factories for requiring driver licensing and providing training: To ensure public safety, factories must require collective drivers to hold a valid driving license for operating heavy vehicles and show a good understanding of traffic laws. Drivers need to be educated on general road safety laws and especially on factories' own transport safety policies and procedures, including the need for regular maintenance of collective vehicles to ensure safe transport of workers. Drivers need to be held accountable for the transport safety of workers and face disciplinary action when policies and processes are violated.

To factories for monitoring vehicle overloading: As vehicle safety continues to be a priority in Myanmar, adequate measures need to be put in place to avoid vehicle overloading that places passengers at risk of serious harm during a road crash, particularly passengers who stand during the ride and have no seatbelts to protect them. Factories need to monitor transportation load during pick-up and drop-off times and regularly request feedback from workers about their concerns by having a focal point of contact for workers to report unsafe drivers' behaviours.



General Recommendations

To local and national governments:

- Local and national governments should **work collaboratively and establish political will** to improve existing policies and gaps in both road safety and occupational health/safety across the country.
- Policies should be developed based on the analysis of shortcomings and gaps presented in this report. Legislators and government agencies should **commit sufficient funding and staff** to conduct internal assessments of existing policy frameworks and strategies, particularly those impacting industrial zones.
- Policies should **align with international standards** while being relevant to the local context. This needs to be coupled with **effective and consistent enforcement** strategies to ensure high compliance by the general public and relevant stakeholders.

To road safety organisations/experts in collaboration with trade unions:

- **Continuous advocacy** should be conducted by road safety experts and industry partners to influence local governments on strengthening road safety laws across the country with particular attention to industrial zones.
- While policy improvements and programmatic interventions are essential, they need to be linked with **effective public education campaigns** to establish real change. Regular public awareness campaigns targeting both factory workers and the general public on transportation safety—including any changes in legislative and enforcement policies—are critical for influencing and improving road safety behaviours and attitudes. Such campaigns should be informative, easy to understand and widely distributed across diverse communications platforms (e.g., social media, media, billboards) to reach a majority of the population.
- **Tailor communications to be context-specific** per the preferred channels shared by workers in this study: e.g. video clips on TV or on social networks (Facebook, YouTube), face-to-face training workshops, lunch break training sessions and workplace posters/banners/fliers. Workers said that they would like union representatives and factory managers to deliver road safety information to them.

To fashion brands:

- **Set high worker safety standards for factories** to secure their partnership, with an opportunity to collaborate such that brands can support factories as they commit to high occupational safety standards, outline an implementation plan and execute with results.
- **Fund deployment of specific annual training sessions** provided to factory managers on the importance of worker safety and road safety.
- **Play an important role in advocacy to national and local governments** to prioritize legislation around road safety and industrial zones, arguing that this legislation will not only improve citizens' lives, but also contribute to national economic growth.
- **Work collaboratively with factory leadership** to address infrastructural barriers and identify top infrastructural issues of the local context—such as poorly maintained roads, a lack of signage or overcrowded vehicles.
- **Provide factories with additional financial support required**, as part of corporate social responsibility efforts, to implement programme interventions.
- These recommendations will be difficult to achieve as a single brand but could be accomplished more quickly by **fostering inter-brand cooperation to maximize the effectiveness** of each strategy and gain more comprehensive results.

To garment factory management:

- **Develop a comprehensive workplace Policies and Procedures Manual** that addresses occupational health and safety risks (including workers' commutes) as well as strategies to avoid and manage those risks. **Medical insurance and support policies** for workers to return to work after occupational accidents in the workplace or injuries outside the workplace (such as road crashes) should also be incorporated.
- **Develop an anonymous risk register and whistleblower protection policy** for workers to record risks as they arise without fear of losing their jobs. Factories can promote effective grievance mechanisms for workers to know they have been heard and their concerns are taken seriously. Factories could further create **mechanisms of social dialogue and regular feedback** with employees in order to be made aware of risks early.
- **Inform all staff about these policies** as well as their rights and responsibilities in keeping the work environment safe.
- Appoint an **occupational health and safety person-in-charge** to **continuously monitor risks** and work with managers to **identify solutions** to those identified risks. Alternatively, form the respective Occupational Safety and Health Committee comprising of an equal number of employer and worker representatives on condition that the number of workers in factory exceeds the number determined by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population. The Occupational Safety and Health of female workers shall be considered when forming such a committee.
- Commit to **sharing road safety resources with workers through proactive communication**. As noted in the recommendations, factory workers in Myanmar shared that they prefer communication through the following channels: video clips on TV or on social networks (Facebook, YouTube), face-to-face training workshops, lunch break training sessions and workplace posters/banners/fliers. Workers said that they would like union representatives and factory managers to deliver road safety information to them.

To researchers:

- **Conduct additional research on the evolving topic of garment workers' transport safety** to promote future evidence-based interventions. Given the shortcomings of existing research to support the development of adequate road safety interventions in the garment sector, ongoing research is needed to understand localized and sector-wide risks, general needs and barriers from workers' perspectives, and appropriate evidence-based interventions.
- **Conduct assessments of existing policy frameworks and strategies**, particularly those impacting industrial zones.

To international development organisations and multilateral stakeholders:

- Foster **strong stakeholder engagement and consistent collaboration** with stakeholders across all levels of service in order to achieve measurable and sustainable progress in the garment sector's transportation safety environment, including local and national government, the private sector, road safety experts and NGOs, trade unions, traffic police, factory leadership and factory workers.
- **Fund future interventions and research** in collaboration with the stakeholders listed above in order to support them in their specific roles toward road safety.

References

1. World Health Organization, Global Status Report on Road Safety 2018. 2018: Geneva.
2. World Health Organization, Global Status Report on Road Safety 2015. 2015: Geneva.
3. EuroCham Myanmar, EuroCham Myanmar Garment Guide 2020. 2019: Yangon.
4. Asian Development Bank, Myanmar Transport Sector Policy Note Road Safety. 2016: Manila.



Published by

Deutsche Gesellschaft für
Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Registered offices

Bonn and Eschborn, Germany

Promoting Sustainability in the Textile and
Garment Industry in Asia (FABRIC)

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
3rd Floor, Uniteam Marine Building
84, Pan Hlaing Street, Sanchaung Township
11111 Yangon, Myanmar

www.giz.de/myanmar
giz-myanmar@giz.de
eike.feddersen@giz.de

As at

November 2020

Design and layout

Inspiral Creative

Photography

May Mar Aung: front cover, page 3,
Sabrina Asche: page 6, 13, back cover
War War Aung: page 4-5, 11
Ye Mon Aung: page 14-15

Text

Text based on findings by AIP Foundation