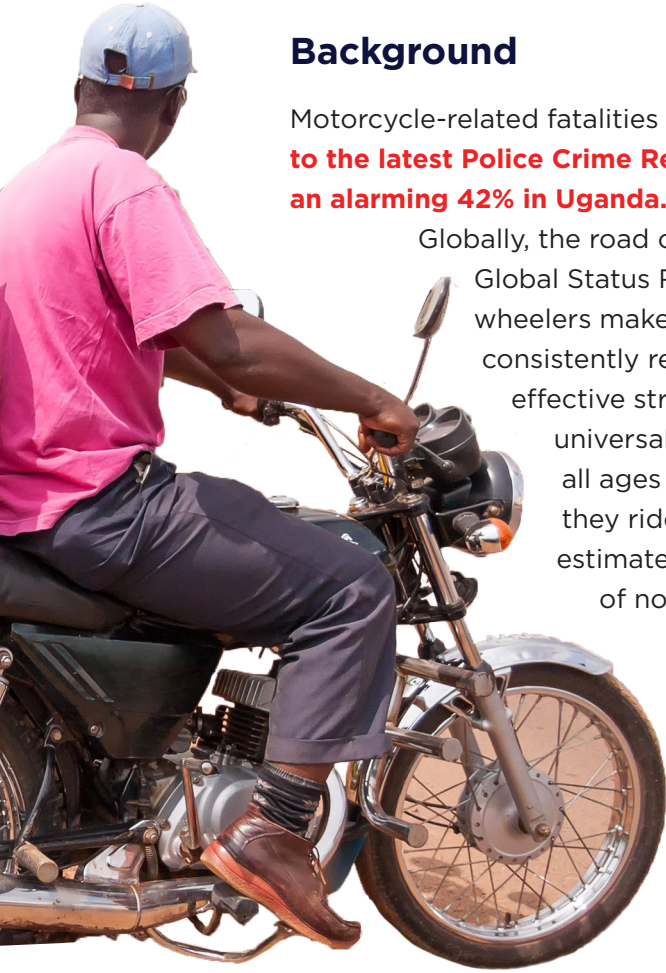


Distribution of Safe Helmets in Kampala, Uganda

POLICY BRIEF



Background

Motorcycle-related fatalities have been steadily increasing over the past 15 years. **According to the latest Police Crime Report, road crashes from 2020 to 2021 have increased by an alarming 42% in Uganda. Motorcycle fatalities are also up by 21% across the country.**

Globally, the road crash statistics are concerning as pointed out in the most recent Global Status Report on Road Safety, which declared that two and three-wheelers make up 28% of all global deaths. Helmet use has been shown to consistently reduce motorcycle crash-related injuries and deaths. The most effective strategy to increase helmet use is enactment and enforcement of universal helmet laws. Universal helmet laws require all motorcyclists of all ages to wear helmets, on all roads and for all engine types, whenever they ride. Motorcycle helmet use for adults and children can lead to an estimated 42% reduction in risk of fatal injuries and a 69% reduction in risk of non-fatal head injuries.

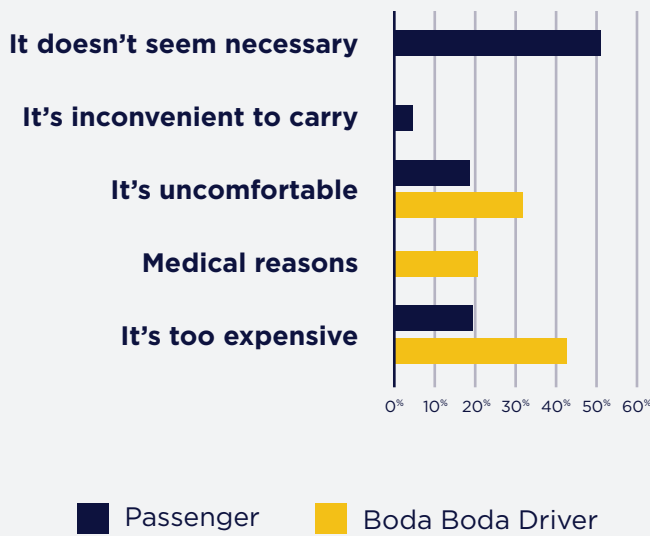
In Kampala, Uganda motorcycle helmet ownership is highest among the employed riders (93.3%), followed by boda boda riders (91.4%). Ownership among passengers remains extremely low at only 5.8%. Despite the high percentage of ownership, only 69% of motorcycle riders are wearing helmets on the road. A further 14% are carrying helmets but not wearing them while riding. The half face helmet is most popular among the boda riders and make up 67% of self-reported helmets. While full-face helmets with a chin bar are well established as the safest helmet style, they make up less than a quarter of the helmets on the roads.

Helmet Use

The main reason for not wearing helmets all the time was discomfort and overheating. However, riders using the more cumbersome helmets complained less about these issues, indicating this is at least partly a question of attitude. Additionally, riders explained their lack of helmets as being because of their price and comfort, while passengers described them generally as unnecessary.

Only around one in twenty passengers in Kampala own and regularly use helmets, and these were acquired freely, however, for boda riders around 22% of helmets owned came with the motorcycle at the point-of-sale, rising to 28% for commercial riders.

Reasons for Not Owning a Helmet



Helmet Quality

Almost half of the helmets on the road in Kampala have defects. Half-shell helmets have the highest rate of defects, with 81% users reporting at least one defect while 57% of open face helmets reported having at least one defect. The most common defects were a lack of an inner protective shell, a malfunctioning strap, or the helmet being cracked. All of these defects seriously reduce the protective capacity of the helmet.

Recommendations moving forward

With such a low usage of helmets by passengers, requiring two helmets to be sold with every motorcycle and requiring new standards and a public awareness campaign would bring significant improvements to the

sector over time, including raising passenger usage by 10 times and shifting the market towards full-face and modular helmets. This option would see the widest adoption and improvements in road safety.

To ensure high efficacy, there should be close coordination with the public awareness campaign. This would mean including messaging specifically aimed at:



Rider usage



Passenger usage



Hairnet usage



Proper fastening of helmet



Helmet quality and defects

Lastly, to keep motorcycle riders and passengers safe on the roads, ROSACU calls on the Ministry of Works and Transport to align the regulations for helmet use with global best practices and to collaborate with the Uganda National Bureau of Standards to update the standards for helmet use for children and adults.

The Road Safety Advocacy Coalition Uganda (ROCASU), is a coalition of civil society organizations working to advance safer roads in Uganda.



ROSACU

Road Safety Advocacy Coalition Uganda