



Using the Power of a Public Opinion Poll + Digital Advocacy to Accelerate Road Safety Legislation in India



The Problem

The roads of India are a dangerous place. According to the World Health Organisation's (WHO) most recent Global Status Report for Road Safety, more than 200,000 people were killed in road crashes in India in 2013. Five million are estimated to have become disabled in the last decade and approximately 500,000 are injured each year. This crisis continues to drain the country of three percent of its GDP annually, and the problem is so severe that the Supreme Court of India has declared road crashes a National Emergency.

According to the World Health Organisation's (WHO) most recent Global Status Report for Road Safety, more than two million people were killed in road crashes in India in 2014.

Survey shows people wary of unsafe roads

By Mail Today Bureau in New Delhi

THREE out of five people feel unsafe on Indian roads, finds a survey conducted in 12 cities of the country, including the four metros of Mumbai, Kolkata, Bangalore and Delhi. During the survey, the general public expressed strong support for the Road Transport and Safety Bill, 2014 and expressed hope that roads will become safer.

Nearly 98 per cent of all those surveyed in Delhi strongly favoured passing of the proposed Bill; and 93 per cent believed that passing the Bill will be an important accomplishment for Parliament. These are the findings of a survey report which was released by former Union home secretary G.K. Pillai in the presence of several families affected by road accidents.

The report further reveals that 91 per cent respondents, across India, believe that increased penalties for traffic violations will improve road safety, while 97 per cent respondents favour the various statutes for protection of children during commute. About 90 per cent respondents favour mandating helmets for everyone on a two



Unsafe Indian roads are a matter of concern for three out of five people.

wheeler and 96 per cent favour reforming RTOs. In the past decade, more than 12 lakh people have been killed in road accidents in India. This translates to over 380 deaths a day, equivalent to a jumbo jet crash.

The survey was jointly commissioned by SaveLIFE Foundation and the Global Road Safety Partnership (a hosted project of the International

Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies). Referring to lack of focus which society and politicians have on road accidents, Pillai pointed out that 2,500 people lost their lives due to terrorism during the last one year in India as compared to 1,38,700 deaths due to accidents.

"But you see the kind of attention terrorism gets? Yesterday, 14 people died, you saw the Union Home Minister going all the way to Chhattisgarh and the whole publicity and so on. But 318 people died yesterday in road accidents in the country. People don't identify it as it gets scattered across the society," Pillai said. He called upon the society to press the elected representatives to get the Bill passed.

The poll, conducted by international research agency Kadence, covered 12 cities with a total of 38 per cent respondents belonging to rural touch-points. The survey was conducted across 12 Indian cities, including Chennai, Varanasi, Nagpur, Rohtak, Changanassery, Burdwan, Falghar and Mandya in which more than 1,300 people were interviewed.

Report says 91 per cent of Indians feel penalties will improve road safety

An example of the widespread media coverage

Since 2013, the SaveLIFE Foundation (SLF), an organisation focused on improving road safety and emergency care across India, has worked to pressure policy makers to develop a comprehensive road safety law that would provide safer streets for drivers and pedestrians. India's current omnibus law, the Motor Vehicles Act of 1988, has many shortcomings; in its most recent report the WHO evaluated the law based on five risk factors – enforcing speed limits, prevention of drunk driving, safety of children, use of seat belts and helmets – and found it lacking in four out of those five areas.

The Policy Challenge

Given the deficiencies of the Motor Vehicles Act of 1988, the organisation implemented a strategy to advocate for comprehensive road safety legislation in 2013. At the time, most organizations were



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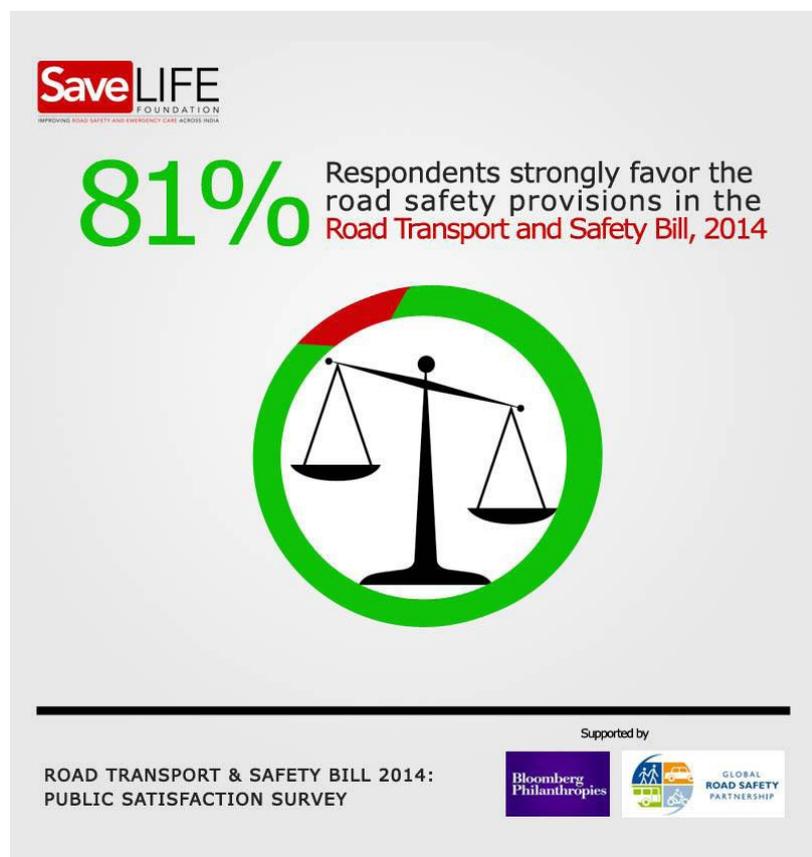
advocating to amend the Motor Vehicles Act of 1988, but SLF focused on bringing attention to the need for a more comprehensive law. By late 2014, the organization had convinced policy makers to introduce omnibus road safety legislation and they invited SLF to help draft it.

While drafting of the bill represented major progress, policy maker support and subsequent passage in Parliament remained uncertain. SLF believed they had public opinion on their side, but they needed a credible way to demonstrate that support to Parliament and sway Parliamentarians to support this legislation, which was much stronger than the previous law. With the legislation at a critical juncture, SLF strategized about how they could measure public opinion and use it to keep pressure on policy makers to vote the bills into law.

The Tactics

SLF decided to conduct a public opinion poll to help rally support for the legislation in Parliament. Public opinion polls, or surveys, include carefully designed questions to the public, or segments of the public, with the answers intended to measure the opinions of a population. To be credible, polls must be carried out in a neutral and unbiased

To be credible, polls must be carried out in a neutral and unbiased way, preferably by an independent third party. When implemented in this way and disseminated effectively, they can produce data that is very powerful in swaying decision makers.



Save Life Foundation created a range of infographics to highlight the poll results on social media



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SaveLIFE FOUNDATION
IMPROVING ROAD SAFETY AND EMERGENCY CARE ACROSS INDIA

Bloomberg Philanthropies

GLOBAL ROAD SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

Press Release

Poll shows overwhelming public support for new Road Safety Bill

81% respondents strongly favor the passage of the Bill
90% believe passing the Bill will be a major accomplishment for Parliament

New Delhi, December 3rd, 2014 – In a poll jointly commissioned by SaveLIFE Foundation and the Global Road Safety Partnership (a hosted project of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies), with support from Bloomberg Philanthropies, the general public has expressed strong support for the Road Transport and Safety Bill, 2014. The report titled, “**Road Transport & Safety Bill 2014: Public Satisfaction Survey**” was released earlier today by Former Union Home Secretary Mr. G.K. Pillai in the presence of several families affected by road accidents. The Poll conducted by international research agency Kadence Research covered 12 cities with a total of 38% respondents belonging to rural touch-points.

81 % of all respondents “**strongly favor**” passing of the proposed road safety Bill and **90 %** believe that passing the Bill will be an **important accomplishment for the Indian Parliament**.

In the past decade, more than 12 lakh people have been killed in road crashes in India. This translates to over 380 deaths a day, equivalent to a jumbo jet crash. Survey findings also revealed that **3 out of 5 respondents** feel **unsafe** while traveling on Indian roads as **drivers, pedestrians or passengers**.

In addition to showing overall support for the Bill, **98%** of the respondents also favor several specific provisions in the Bill. These include making it mandatory for all drivers to be trained before getting a license, protection for children during commute, increased electronic enforcement and heavy penalties for not complying with traffic laws, and making it mandatory for all two wheeler riders to wear helmets.

Mr. G.K. Pillai, Trustee of SaveLIFE Foundation stated that, “India’s sole road safety law, the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, has not been able to keep pace with the exponential growth of motor vehicles in the last two decades and consequent increase in road fatalities. It is time that India gets a road safety law which is comprehensive, inclusive, protects Vulnerable Road Users and provides a structured approach to Road Safety”

Key highlights

- **Protection for children during commute:** 97% of respondents said they would favor protection for children during commute in the new law.
- **Reforming Regional Transport Offices:** 96% of respondents say they favor reforming RTOs to make it easier, more efficient and corruption-free to obtain a driver’s license.
- **Increasing penalties:** 91% of respondents believe that increased penalties for road safety violations will improve road safety

CHECKLIST: Conducting a poll to gauge public opinion

1. Identify which areas of your issue could be strengthened by public opinion research. You’ll want the poll to be specific and the area of interest to be verifiable.
2. Set a clear objective for the poll. Start with the end in mind, as this will help you develop the poll’s methodology and format.
3. Work with an independent third party to design and administer the poll. This will ensure the data you gather is credible and scientifically valid.
4. Develop a clear dissemination strategy for the results. Utilize multiple platforms – consider both traditional and social media – to inform and engage the public and policymakers.

Want to learn more? You can find other resources for advocates at www.grsproadsafety.org

The press release Save Life Foundation released to launch the poll results

way, preferably by an independent third party. When implemented in this way and disseminated effectively, they can produce data that are very powerful in swaying decision makers.

For SLF, the poll was one tactic within a broader advocacy strategy that also included traditional media, dissemination of reports, and digital advocacy. In India, online and social media tools provide an effective way to widely share information and demonstrate public opinion to decision makers. To support the new legislation, SLF planned to implement a poll and then use traditional and digital advocacy tools to broadcast the results.

The SLF poll – the “Public Satisfaction Survey” – coincided with the public release of the initial draft of the Bill, while it was waiting to be introduced into Parliament. The poll, carried out by international research agency Kadence Research, surveyed 1300 people in 12 cities across India.



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Survey findings indicate that 3 out of 5 respondents currently felt unsafe while travelling on Indian roads. The results show strong public support for the bill, with 81 % of all respondents “strongly favoring” passage of the proposed road safety Bill and 90 % indicating they believe that the Bill’s passage would be an important accomplishment for the Indian Parliament. In addition to expressing overall support, 98% of the respondents also favour several specific provisions in the Bill – including mandatory training for all drivers, protection for children during commutes, increased electronic enforcement and heavy penalties for not complying with traffic laws, and mandatory helmets for all two wheeler riders.

Based on the analysis of the data, SLF packaged and disseminated the results widely. First, they created infographics that summarized the report, drafted press releases that showcased the results in a compelling way, and developed social media messages that specifically targeted policy makers and influencers as well as the general public. They then used the SLF website, Facebook, and twitter to disseminate those materials and messages. On Twitter, they used the hashtag #roadsafetybill, and at the SLF website, users could share the poll results through more than 30 apps and social media platforms.

Through this campaign, millions of people – including key target Parliamentarians and influencers – mobilized around the draft of the new road safety bill. In addition to giving supportive policy makers the evidence they needed to publicly champion the bill, the survey also allowed SLF to advocate with the opposition by demonstrating the public’s clear support for the issue.

SLF timed their poll – the “Public Satisfaction Survey” – to coincide with the public release of the initial draft of the Bill, while it was waiting to be introduced into Parliament.



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The Wrap-Up

The clear facts and statistics about widespread public support for the new legislation, presented through the polling and dissemination process, helped to assure policy makers that they were making an informed decision in moving the bill forward. SLF plans to conduct additional polls in the future to build the evidence base for their advocacy efforts.

In April 2015, the Transport Ministry released a diluted draft of the original Bill, based on some internal opposition to the strong language in the draft. However, SLF and many other road safety advocates, reacted strongly to that weaker version with vocal public protests. As a result, the Bill was taken back by the Transport Ministry for re-drafting and improvements. The new version, likely to be released during this session of Parliament, is expected to be much closer to the earlier draft that was demonstrated by the poll to have the strongest public support.