

Pedestrian distraction: Seldom seen yet loudly heard

Seth LaJeunesse
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Project team



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Outline

- What is “framing” and why is it important?
- How is pedestrian ‘distraction’ framed in TV news media of traffic crashes?
- How can we re-frame the conversation around traffic injury?

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What is “framing” and why is it important?

- **Framing** - focusing attention on certain events over others, thus placing stories within a field of meaning.
- Media frames guide the audience in discerning which story details are most pertinent, such as who is involved, how they were involved, and who may be responsible for a traffic crash (*Ralph, Goddard, Thigpen, and Iacobucci, 2019*) .



Source: cjr.org/analysis/when-covering-car-crashes-be-careful-not-to-blame-the-victim.php

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18 CBSAs involved in study

- Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH
 - Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia, NC-SC
 - Cleveland-Elyria, OH
 - Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington
 - Denver-Aurora-Lakewood, CO
 - Detroit-Warren-Dearborn, MI
 - Erie, PA
 - Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX
 - Las Vegas-Henderson-Paradise, NV
 - New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA
 - Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford, FL
 - Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale, AZ
 - Pittsburgh, PA
 - Salt Lake City, UT
 - San Antonio-New Braunfels, TX
 - San Francisco-Oakland-Hayward, CA
 - Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA
 - Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater, FL
- The top **2 TV broadcast stations** in each of the 18 CBSAs (36 stations)

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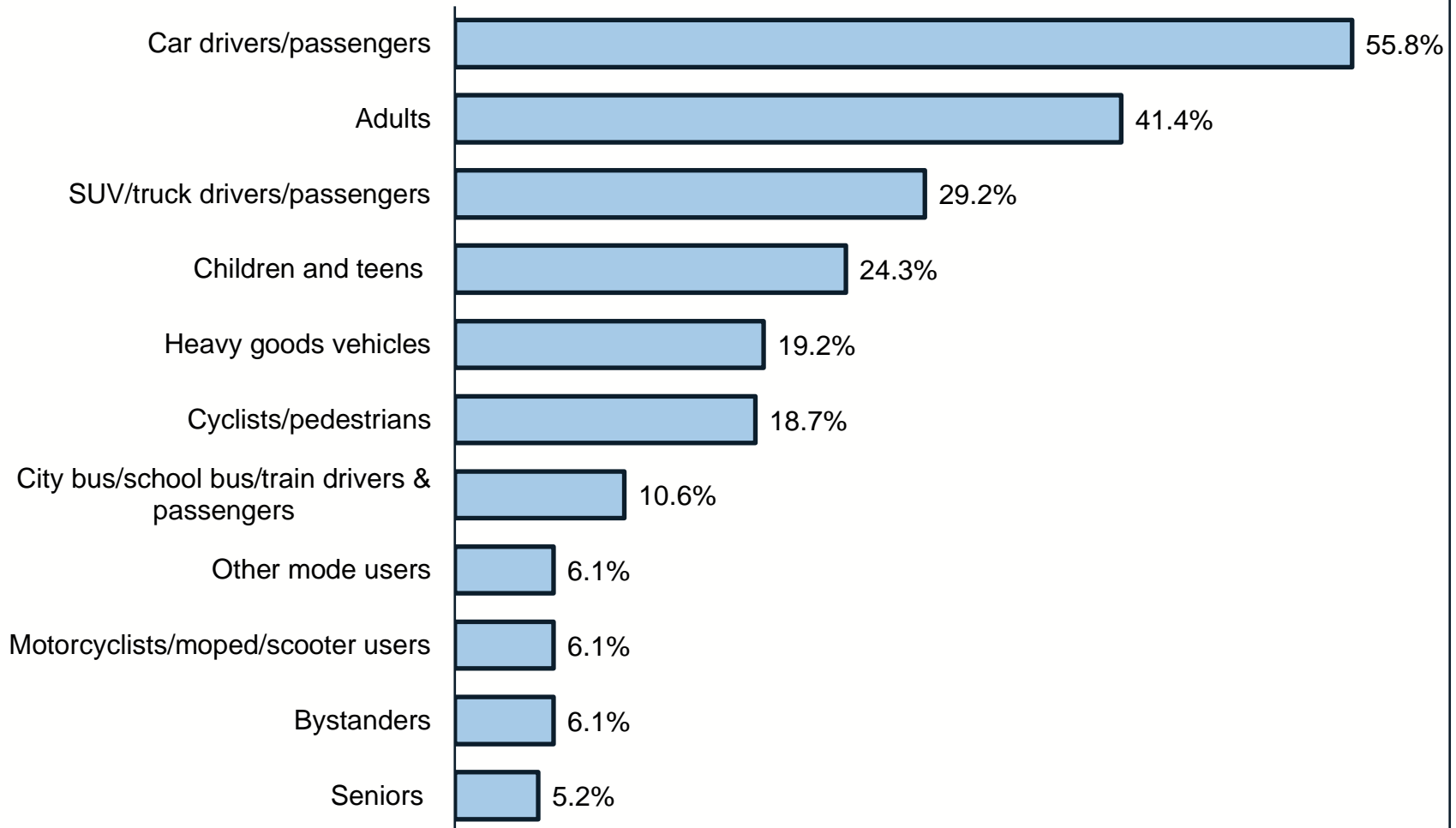


A few results of our coding of 1,156 broadcast TV news articles featuring traffic crashes from 2012—2019

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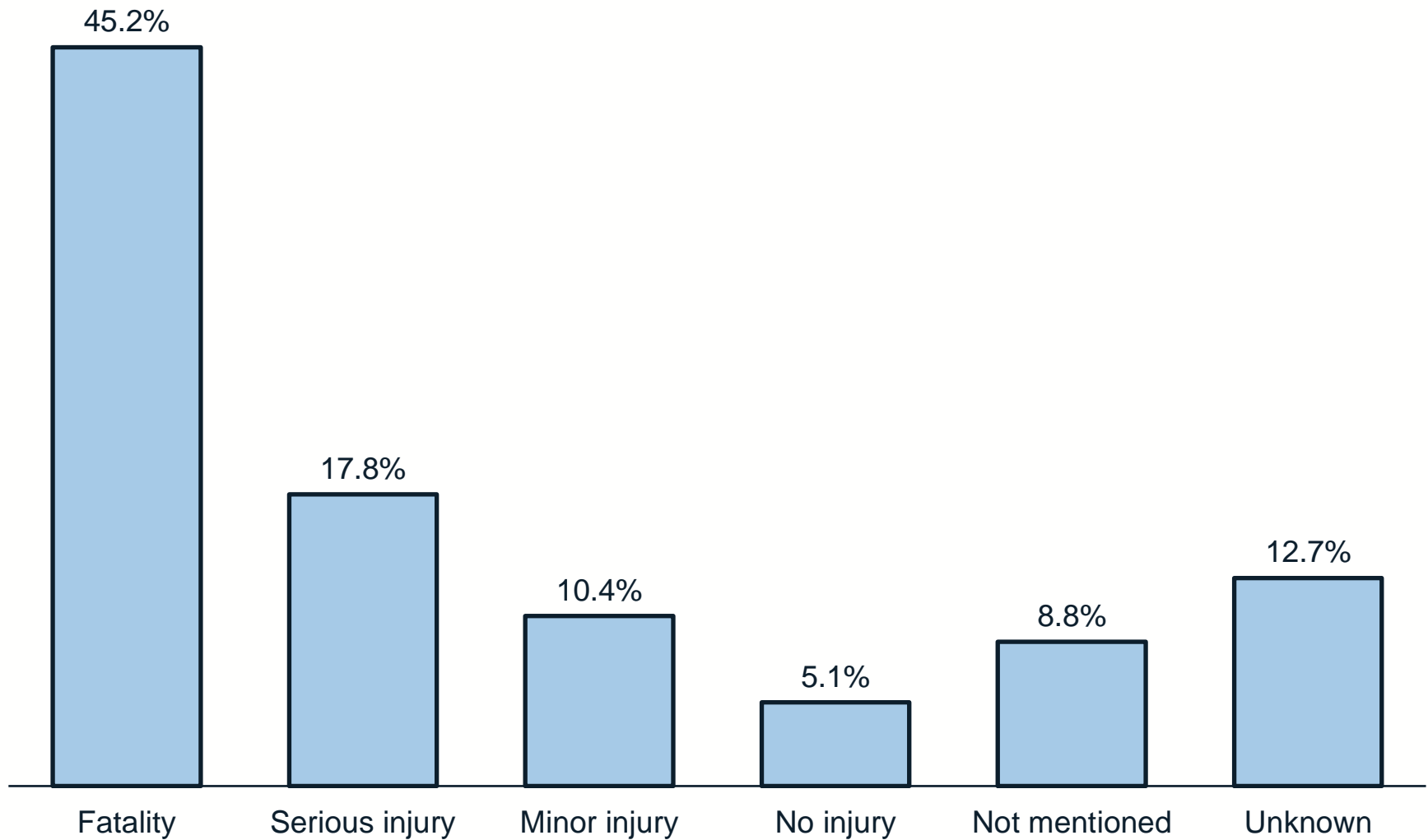


Who's featured in media posts? (N = 1,156 posts)



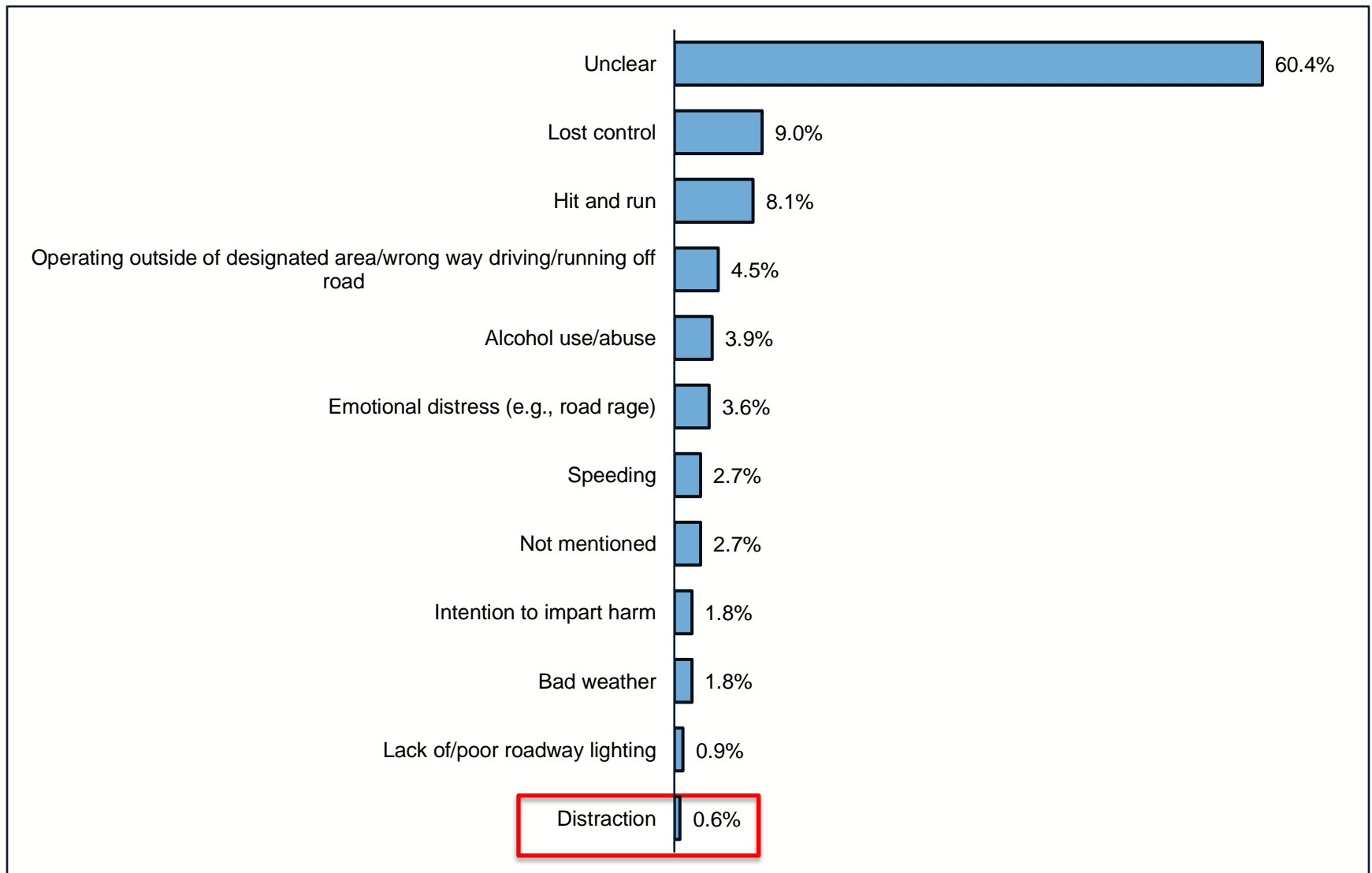
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Injury severity



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What were crashes attributed to (N = 1,156)?



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Percentage of crashes attributed to pedestrian distraction?

0%

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How does TV news media handle road user distraction?

Admonishment

- “STOP FOR SCHOOL BUSES! This 7-year-old boy was nearly hit by a car as he was crossing the street to his school bus. His father says this video shows the **dangers of distracted driving.**”
- “DON'T TEXT AND DRIVE: Police in Massachusetts released dashcam video of a texting driver crashing into a utility pole as a warning to others about the **dangers of distracted driving.**”

Comedy?

- “BURRITO TO BLAME: Surveillance video shows a city bus driver was eating a burrito with both hands seconds before causing a multi-car pileup.”

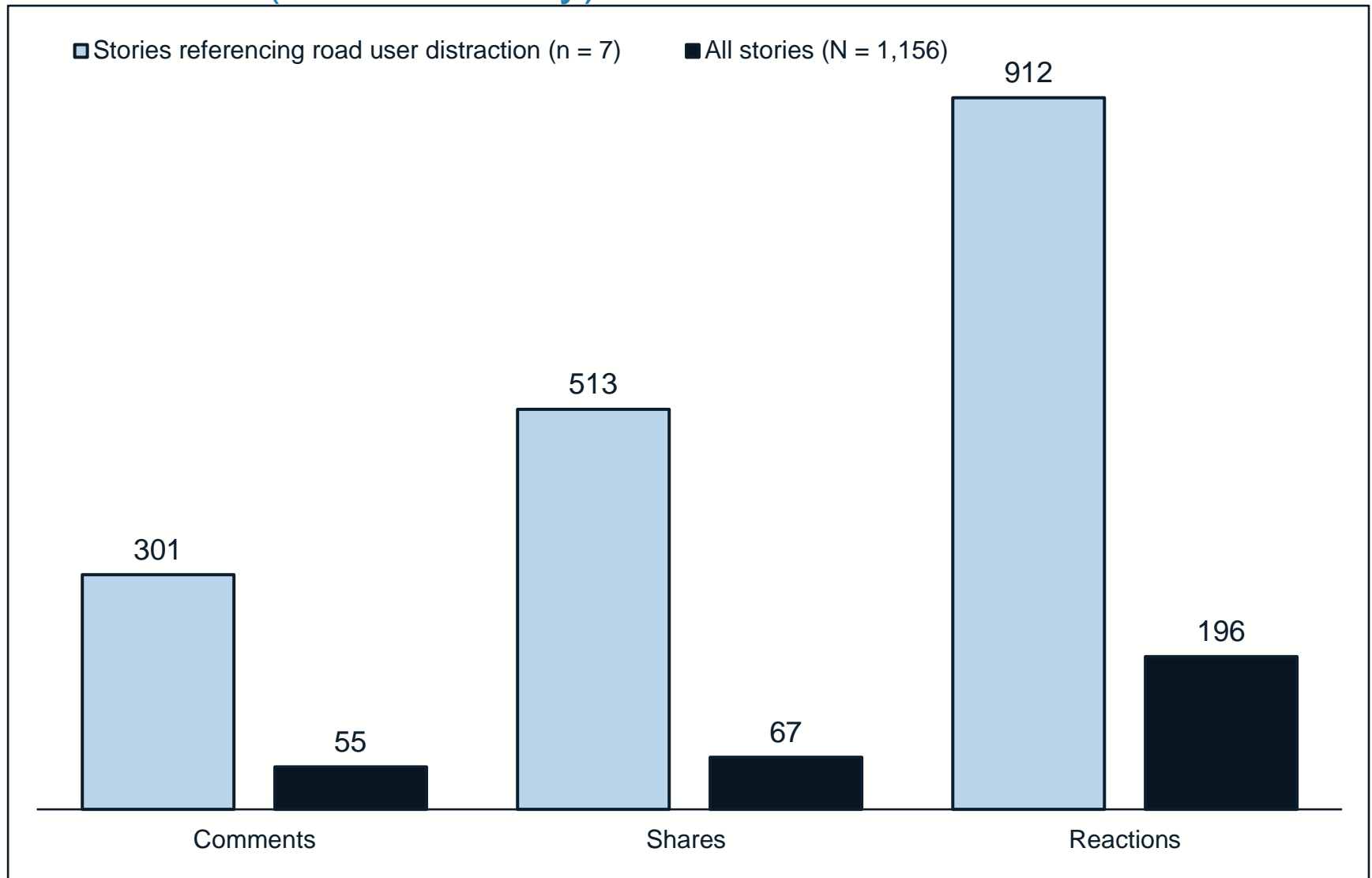
Conjecture

- “Over a dozen people were hurt were injured following the collision between two Mattapan Trolleys. Crash attributed to **possible distraction.**”
- “Crews are on the scene of a multi-car crash that is causing significant delays on I-15 in Weber County. Investigators **believe a distracted driver didn't notice** traffic was slowing down near an exit.”
- “We had four young kids crossing, looks like they were in the crosswalk at time, and for whatever reason he seems to have lost control of the vehicle. **I don't know** if it was medical or some type of distracted driving. **We're not sure.**”
- “Beyond tragic: A New Hampshire firefighter pulled a dying woman from crash this morning only to learn later it was his daughter. Investigators are **looking into whether Cullen was distracted while driving.**”

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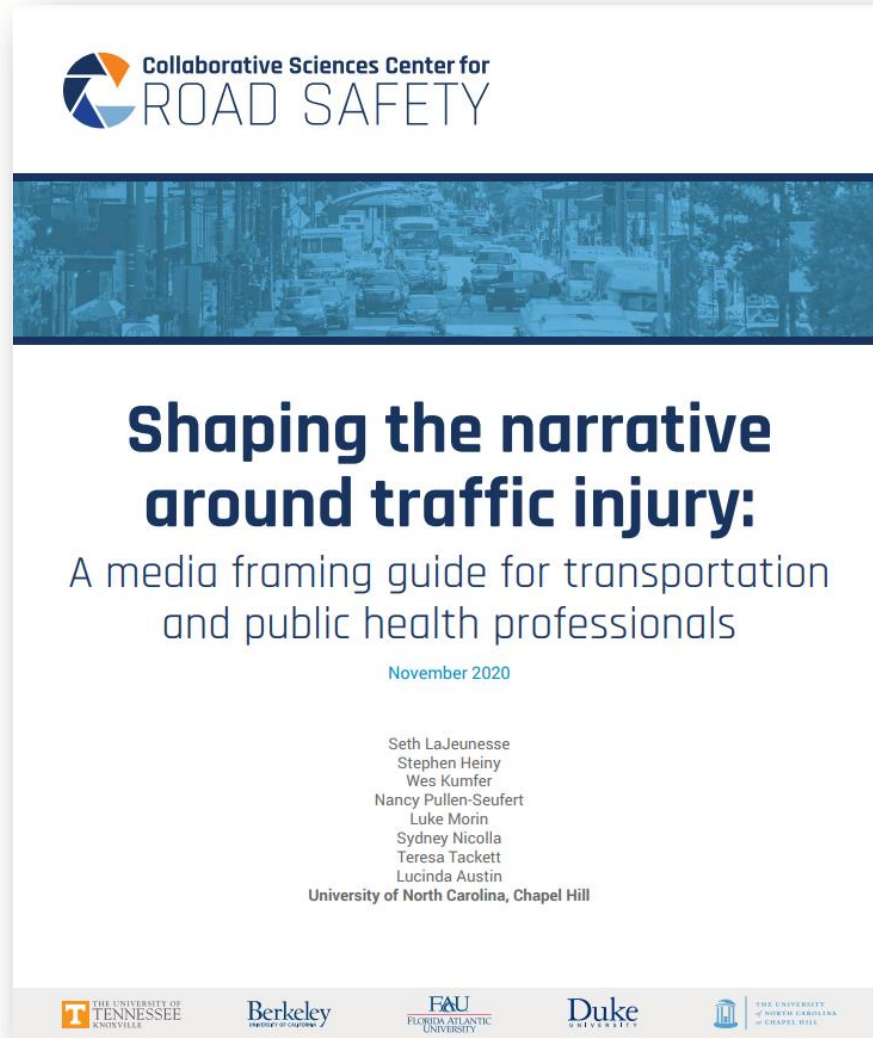


How do viewers respond to stories featuring road user distraction (median # of y)?



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Expanding the frame around traffic injury




Source: roadsafety.unc.edu/docs/CSCRS_R29_FGuide.pdf

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Ways we can re-frame the conversation around traffic injury

- Appeal to **intrinsic** values of concern for others
- Depict **themes** over events
- Inspire **pragmatic** “can-doism”
- Identify opportune times to contribute to the safety narrative



A proposed **Intrinsic-Thematic-Pragmatic** Framework

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Thank you!

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