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DRIVERS' WORKING CONDITIONS AND PRIVATE BUS CRASHES IN KANDY, SRI LANKA

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Background Buses are the main mode of passenger transport in Sri Lanka operated by both government and private sectors. However,

private sector buses carry a greater risk of crashes than the government sector buses.

Objectives This study aimed to explore the driver factors for private bus crashes in Kandy District, Sri Lanka and the effects of working conditions of private bus drivers on bus crashes.

Methods A case-control study was carried out in the Kandy district of central province, Sri Lanka. Cases were the private bus drivers registered in the central province and involved in crashes between November 2005 and April 2006 (n=63). Two controls were matched for each case who participated in the study. Controls were the private bus drivers working on the same route of the case and working around the same time of the crash (n=90).

Results A strong association was observed between drivers' disagreement on working hours and private bus crashes (OR 5.06, 95% CI 1.55 to 16.52). Also, a significant association was noted between self-reported traffic convictions and private bus crashes (OR 8.00, 95% CI 3.29 to 19.44). Age and driving experience were inversely related to the bus crashes.

Significance Drivers' disagreement on working hours and traffic rule violations were significant risk factors for private bus crashes in Sri Lanka. Young, inexperienced drivers are more prone to involve in crashes. Hence, new legislations are recommended on working hours of the private bus drivers. Further, government should take stern actions against traffic rule violations.