

Gallup Pakistan Analysis of Punjab Development Statistics (50 Years) Roads & Road Accidents



PRESS RELEASE

Punjab's Road Expenditure Rises from Rs. 120 Million in 1971–72 to Rs. 45.05 Billion in 2020–21, While Road Accident Casualties Increase from 3,847 in 1972 to 9,347 in 2021

Islamabad, May 22nd, 2026

Punjab's spending on roads has expanded sharply over five decades, rising from Rs. 120 million in 1971–72 to Rs. 45,048 million in 2020–21. Over the same broad period, road accidents and casualties also increased, showing that while transport infrastructure expanded substantially, road safety challenges continued to persist. The long-term data reflects both the scale of development spending undertaken by the province and the growing pressures associated with rising urbanization, traffic volume, and motorization.

What is the Big Data Analysis Series by Gallup?

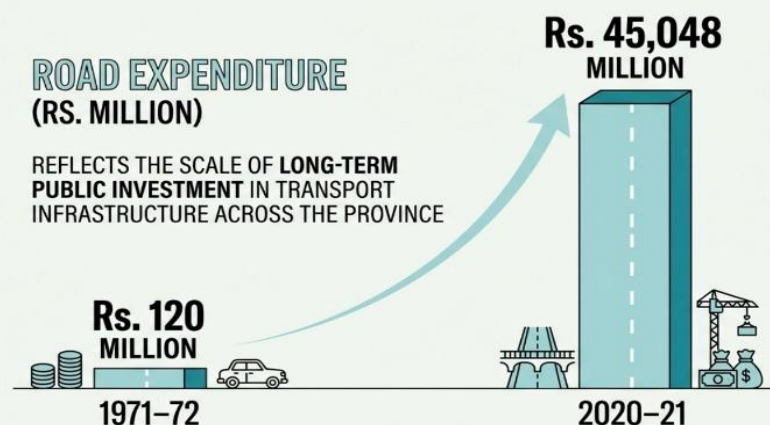
Gallup Pakistan's Big Data series was initiated by Bilal I. Gilani, Executive Director of Gallup Pakistan. As he explains: *"Pakistan does not suffer from a lack of data, but from limited accessibility and weak translation of numbers into understanding. Gallup Pakistan bridges this gap by analyzing large, often under-used datasets — from PSLM and Labour Force Surveys to Economic Surveys and National Census data — so these statistics can meaningfully inform policy and public discourse."*

What data points this current edition covers:

This analysis is based on Table 20.1: Expenditure on Construction and Maintenance of Roads Maintained by Highway Department, The Punjab and Table 20.2: Road Accidents and Casualties, The Punjab from *Punjab Development Statistics for 50 Years (1972–2021)*. The data covers road expenditure from 1971–72 to 2020–21 in million rupees, and road accidents/casualties from 1972 to 2021, including fatal accidents, non-fatal accidents, deaths and injuries.

Punjab's Road Expenditure Rises from Rs. 120 Million in 1971–72 to Rs. 45.05 Billion in 2020–21, While Road Accident Casualties Increase from 3,847 in 1972 to 9,347 in 2021

Road Expenditure Expanded Dramatically Over Five Decades

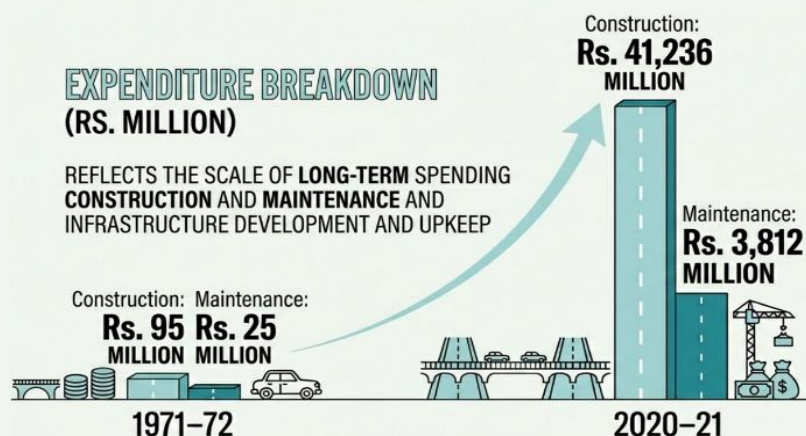


Punjab's road expenditure rose from Rs. 120 million in 1971–72 to Rs. 45,048 million in 2020–21, reflecting the scale of long-term public investment in transport infrastructure across the province. Spending remained relatively modest through much of the 1970s and early 1980s, but accelerated substantially after the 1990s as road construction and expansion became increasingly central to provincial development priorities.

Construction Spending Dominated Provincial Road Investment

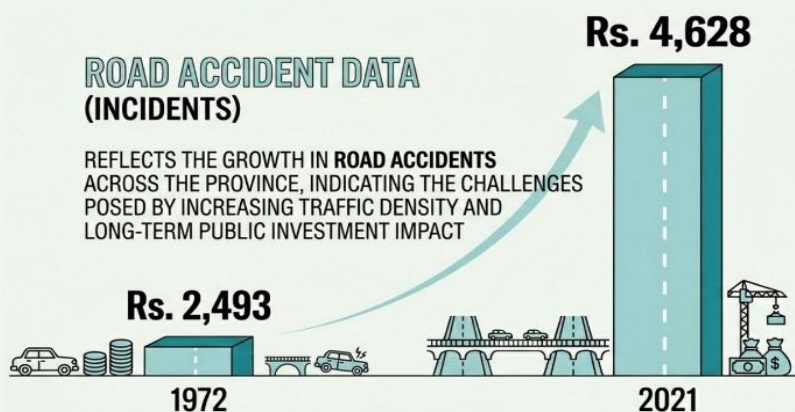
EXPENDITURE BREAKDOWN (RS. MILLION)

REFLECTS THE SCALE OF **LONG-TERM** SPENDING
CONSTRUCTION AND **MAINTENANCE** AND
INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT AND UPKEEP



Construction expenditure consistently accounted for the overwhelming majority of total road spending throughout the series. Construction spending increased from Rs. 95 million in 1971–72 to Rs. 41,236 million in 2020–21, while maintenance expenditure rose from Rs. 25 million to Rs. 3,812 million over the same period.

Road Accidents Increased Over Time Despite Fluctuations



Road accidents increased from 2,493 in 1972 to 4,628 in 2021, though the pattern across the decades was uneven rather than consistently upward. Accident numbers rose sharply during the 1970s and 1980s as vehicle movement and traffic activity expanded across the province.

While accident numbers increased over time, the rise in casualties was even more pronounced. Total casualties increased from 3,847 in 1972 to 9,347 in 2021, indicating that the human impact of road accidents remained severe despite improvements in infrastructure and connectivity.

Key Findings:

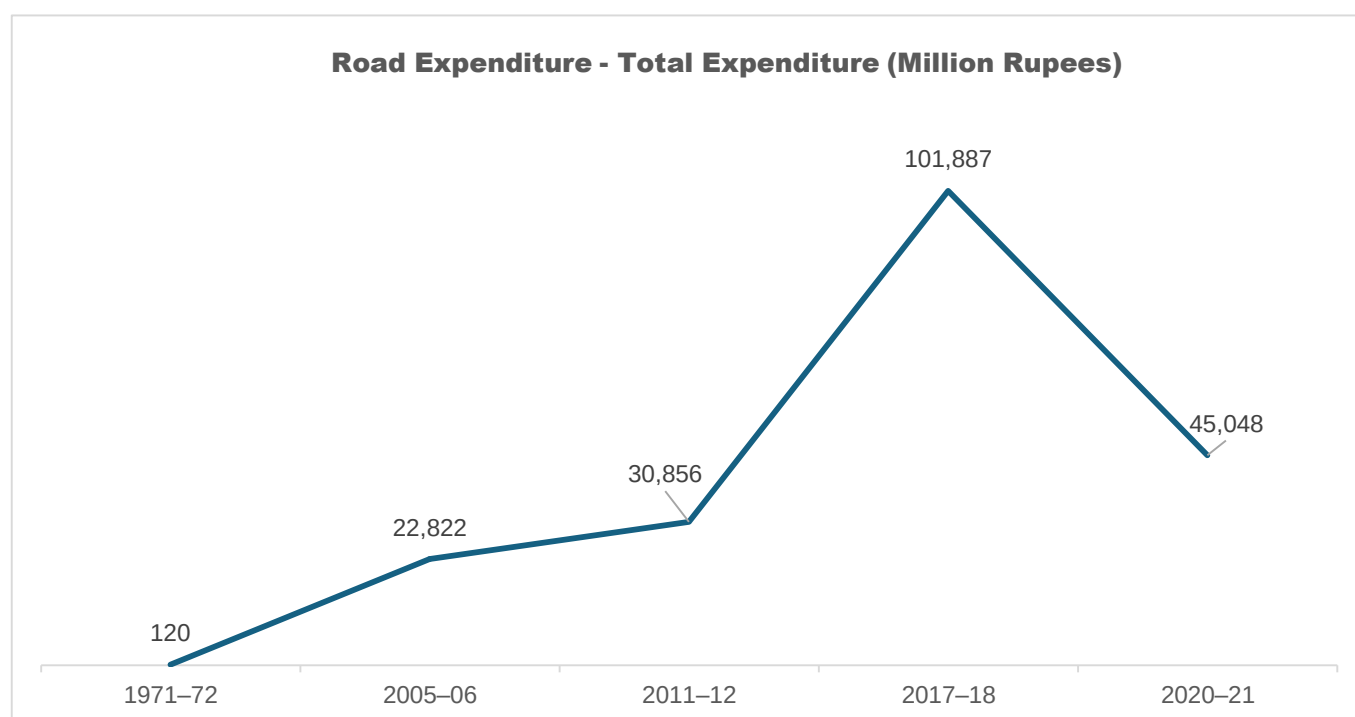
1. Punjab's total road expenditure increased from Rs. 120 million in 1971–72 to Rs. 45,048 million in 2020–21, reflecting major long-term expansion in road infrastructure spending.
2. Road expenditure reached its historical peak of Rs. 101,887 million in both 2017–18 and 2018–19 before falling sharply in subsequent years.
3. Construction spending consistently dominated road expenditure, increasing from Rs. 95 million to Rs. 41,236 million, while maintenance expenditure rose from Rs. 25 million to Rs. 3,812 million.
4. Total road accidents increased from 2,493 in 1972 to 4,628 in 2021, though accident numbers fluctuated considerably across decades rather than rising continuously.
5. Fatal accidents remained a major component of total accidents, increasing from 1,054 in 1972 to 2,601 in 2021.
6. Total road casualties increased from 3,847 in 1972 to 9,347 in 2021, including 3,300 deaths and 6,047 injuries in 2021 alone.
7. The data suggests that despite very large increases in infrastructure spending, road safety pressures remained persistent, highlighting the importance of enforcement, traffic management, and safer transport systems alongside road expansion.

1. Road Expenditure Expanded Dramatically Over Five Decades

Punjab's road expenditure rose from Rs. 120 million in 1971–72 to Rs. 45,048 million in 2020–21, reflecting the scale of long-term public investment in transport infrastructure across the province. Spending remained relatively modest through much of the 1970s and early 1980s, but accelerated substantially after the 1990s as road construction and expansion became increasingly central to provincial development priorities.

The pace of increase became especially pronounced after the mid-2000s. Total expenditure crossed Rs. 20,000 million in 2005–06, rose further to Rs. 30,856 million in 2011–12, and eventually reached a historic peak of Rs. 101,887 million in both 2017–18 and 2018–19. However, this growth was not uninterrupted. Expenditure later declined sharply to Rs. 45,048 million in 2019–20 and 2020–21, indicating that road investment experienced periods of rapid expansion followed by fiscal contraction or project completion phases.

The long-term trend nevertheless shows that road infrastructure became a far larger component of provincial development spending compared to the early decades of the series.



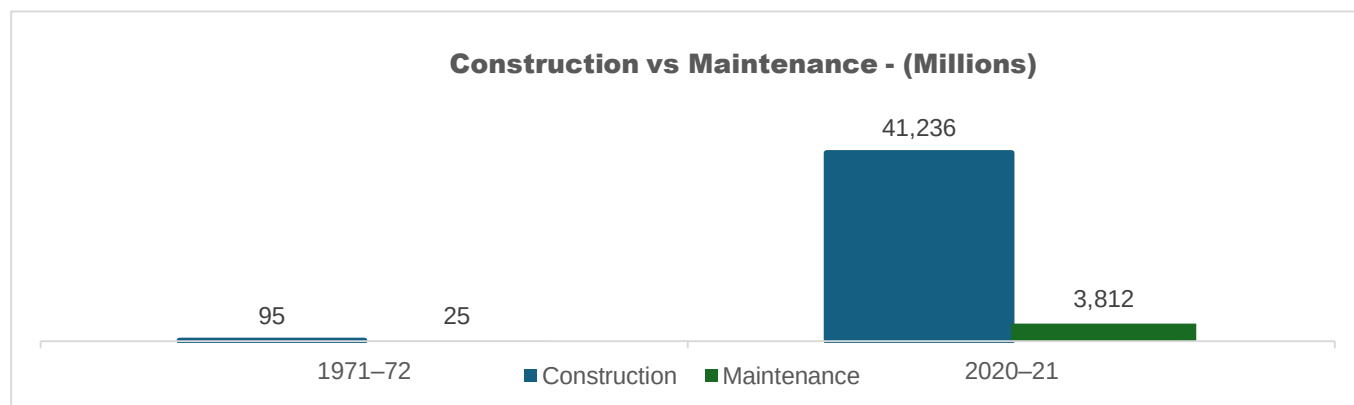
Source: Bureau of Statistics, Planning & Development Board, Government of the Punjab — Punjab Development Statistics for 50 Years (1972–2021).

2. Construction Spending Dominated Provincial Road Investment

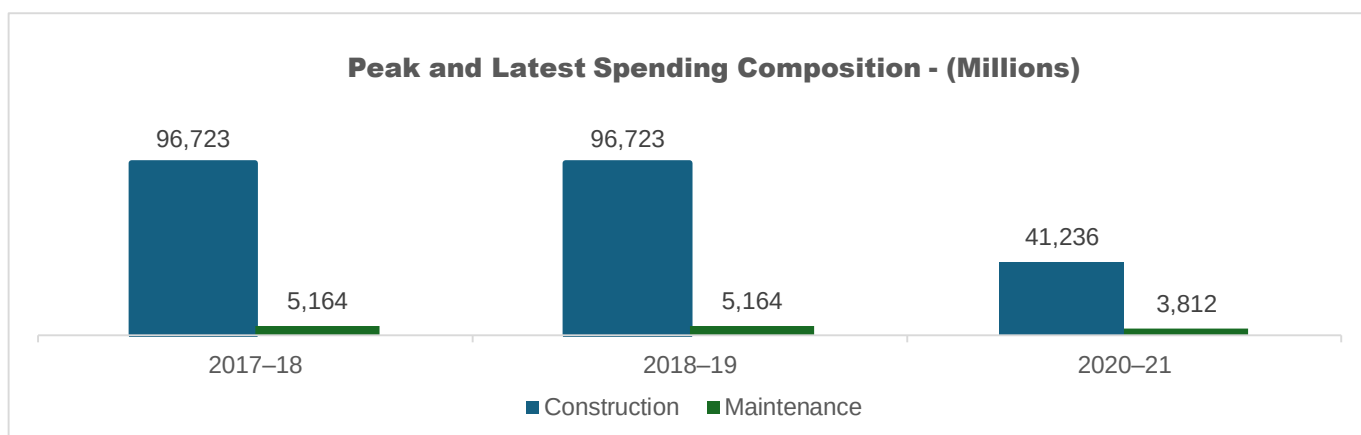
Construction expenditure consistently accounted for the overwhelming majority of total road spending throughout the series. Construction spending increased from Rs. 95 million in 1971–72 to Rs. 41,236 million in 2020–21, while maintenance expenditure rose from Rs. 25 million to Rs. 3,812 million over the same period.

The data shows that the province's road strategy remained heavily focused on expansion and development of infrastructure rather than maintenance alone. Even during years of exceptionally high expenditure, construction spending absorbed the vast majority of funds. For example, in 2017–18, total expenditure stood at Rs. 101,887 million, of which Rs. 96,723 million was allocated toward construction while Rs. 5,164 million went toward maintenance.

This persistent imbalance suggests that road policy over the decades prioritized network growth, widening, and new development projects. At the same time, the comparatively smaller maintenance allocations may also reflect the growing burden of sustaining an increasingly large road network over time.



Source: Bureau of Statistics, Planning & Development Board, Government of the Punjab — Punjab Development Statistics for 50 Years (1972–2021).



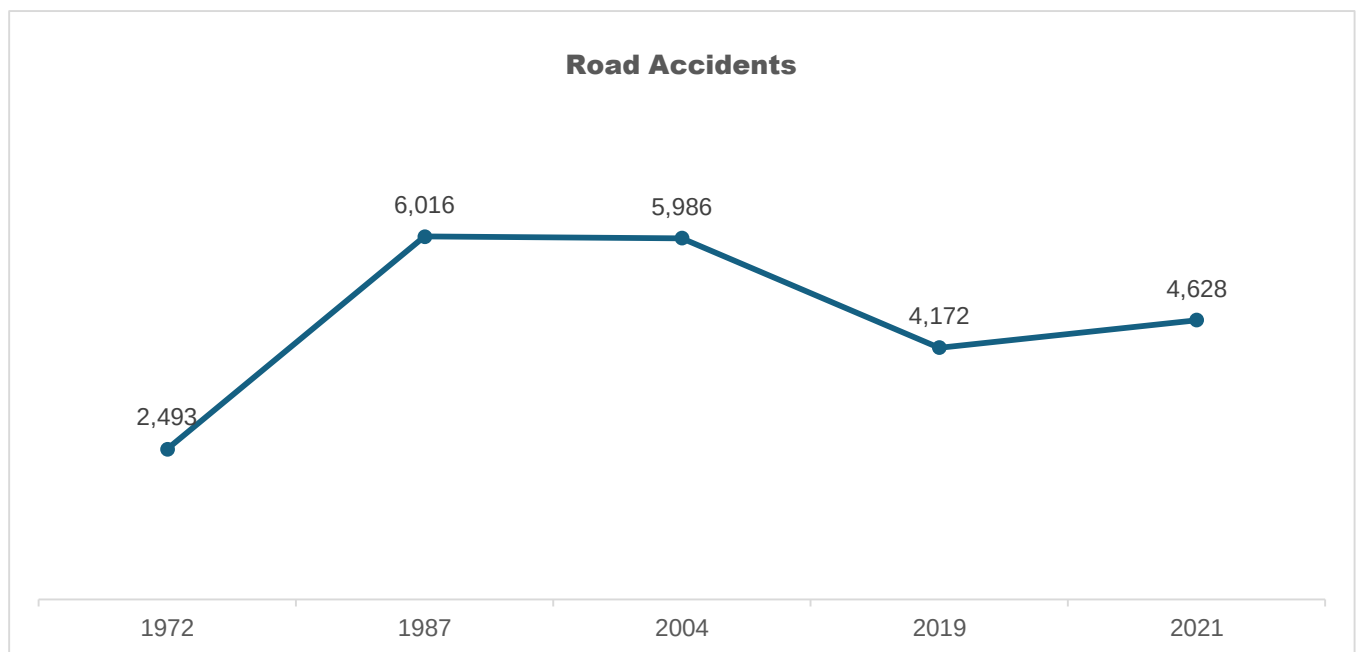
Source: Bureau of Statistics, Planning & Development Board, Government of the Punjab — Punjab Development Statistics for 50 Years (1972–2021).

3. Road Accidents Increased Over Time Despite Fluctuations

Road accidents increased from 2,493 in 1972 to 4,628 in 2021, though the pattern across the decades was uneven rather than consistently upward. Accident numbers rose sharply during the 1970s and 1980s as vehicle movement and traffic activity expanded across the province.

By 1987, total accidents had climbed to 6,016, more than double the level recorded in 1972. Accident figures continued fluctuating afterward, remaining persistently high through the 1990s and 2000s. The province recorded 5,986 accidents in 2004, while the figure later declined to 4,172 in 2019 before increasing again to 4,628 in 2021.

The composition of accidents also highlights the severity of road safety challenges. Fatal accidents increased from 1,054 in 1972 to 2,601 in 2021, while non-fatal accidents rose from 1,226 to 2,027 over the same period. The data suggests that despite periods of decline, Punjab continued to experience substantial levels of serious road accidents across multiple decades.



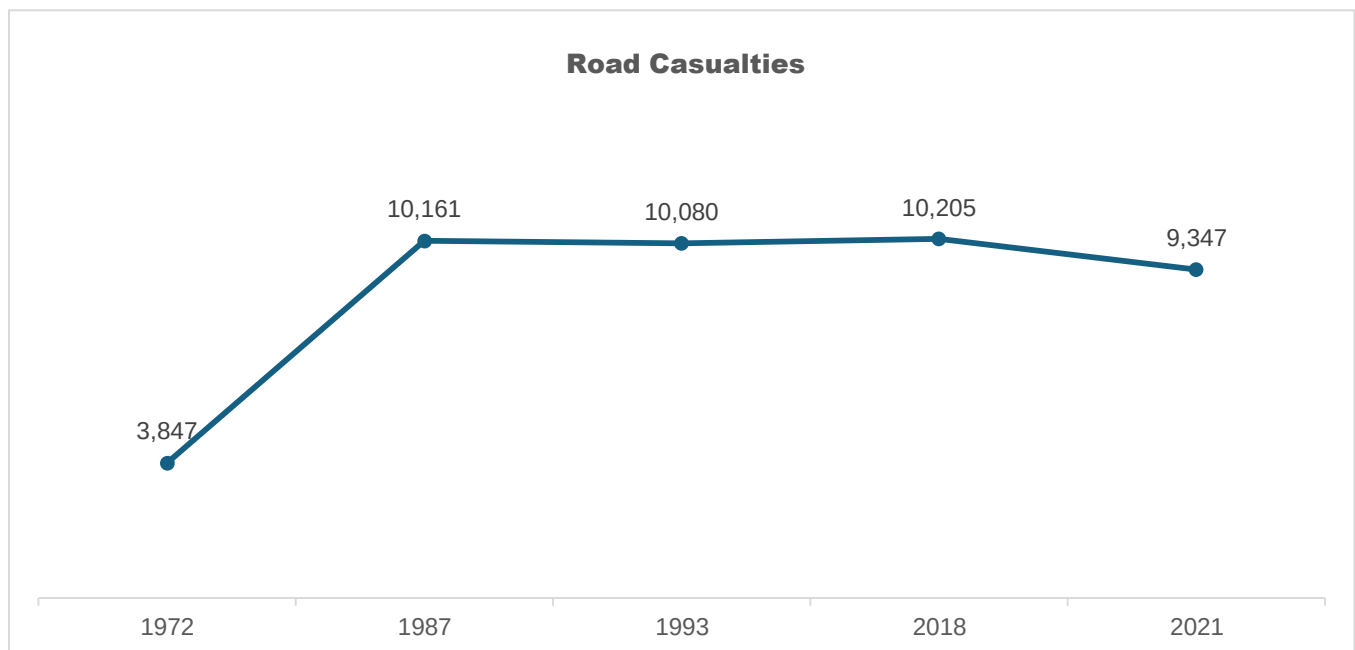
Source: Bureau of Statistics, Planning & Development Board, Government of the Punjab — Punjab Development Statistics for 50 Years (1972–2021).

4. Road Casualties Rose More Sharply Than Accident Numbers

While accident numbers increased over time, the rise in casualties was even more pronounced. Total casualties increased from 3,847 in 1972 to 9,347 in 2021, indicating that the human impact of road accidents remained severe despite improvements in infrastructure and connectivity.

The number of people killed in road accidents increased from 1,237 in 1972 to 3,300 in 2021, while injuries rose from 2,610 to 6,047 during the same period. Casualty levels crossed 10,000 in several years, including 10,161 in 1987, 10,080 in 1993, and 10,205 in 2018, showing that road safety pressures remained elevated across different phases of development.

The data also suggests that rising mobility and vehicle usage may have intensified exposure to road risks over time. Even when total accident numbers declined in certain years, casualty figures often remained high, indicating that accident severity continued to pose a major challenge.



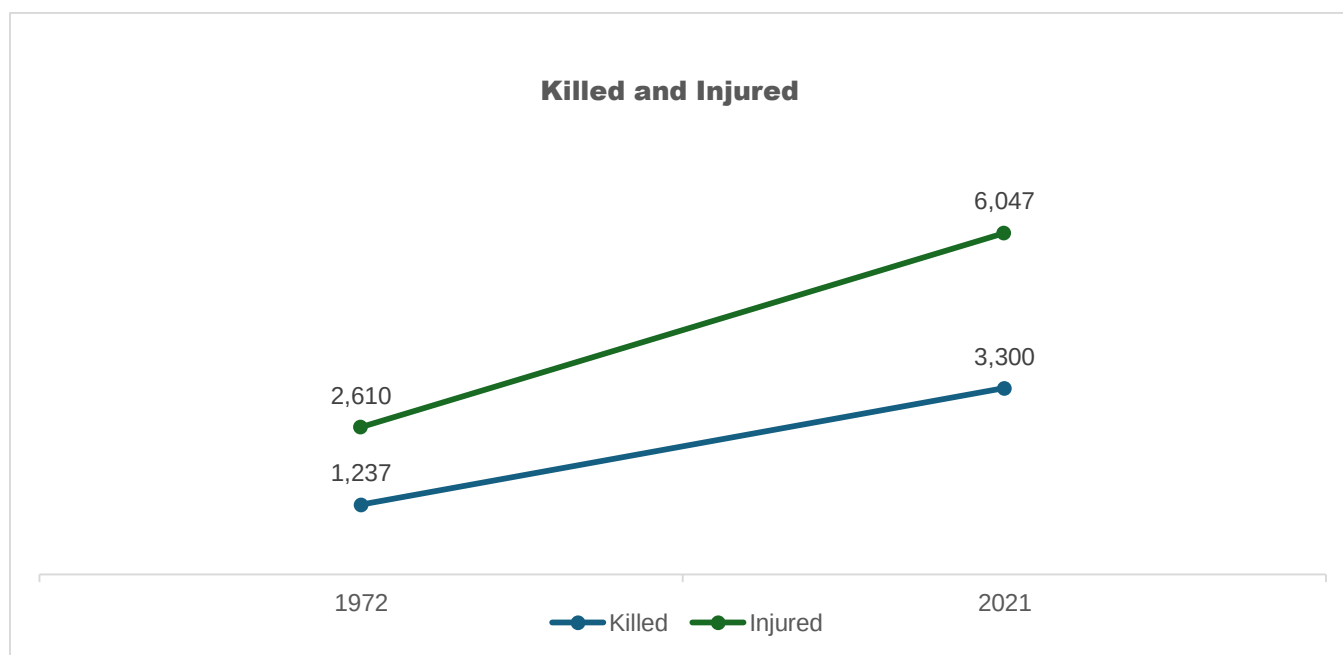
Source: Bureau of Statistics, Planning & Development Board, Government of the Punjab — Punjab Development Statistics for 50 Years (1972–2021).

5. Infrastructure Expansion Alone Did Not Eliminate Road Safety Risks

The combined trends from expenditure and accident data present a complex picture of development. Punjab invested heavily in road infrastructure over the past five decades, particularly after the 2000s, yet road accidents and casualties remained persistently high.

This does not imply that road spending itself caused worsening safety outcomes. Rather, the data suggests that infrastructure expansion alone may not be sufficient to substantially reduce road safety risks without parallel improvements in traffic regulation, enforcement capacity, urban planning, driver behavior, vehicle standards, and emergency response systems.

The figures indicate that as road networks expanded and mobility increased, the province also faced growing pressures linked to traffic density and transport safety. The long-term trends therefore highlight the importance of combining infrastructure development with broader road safety interventions to improve transport outcomes over time.



Source: Bureau of Statistics, Planning & Development Board, Government of the Punjab — Punjab Development Statistics for 50 Years (1972–2021).



Wish to Contribute to Gallup Big Data Analysis?

Gallup Pakistan is looking for collaboration with researchers to expand the Big Data Analysis project. If you have any ideas, please write to Bilal I Gilani, Project Director, Big Data Analysis at Gallup Pakistan.

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