

favelas in the media: shifting public perception

2009–2014

Catalytic Communities

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Introduction

Rio's favelas are among the most stigmatized urban communities in the world. As some of the modern world's oldest informal settlements, today they constitute affordable housing stock for 24% of the city's population. Built and constantly developed through collective action in spite of historical neglect by authorities, favelas are incubators of culture and home to the workers that sustain the city. By 2050, around one third of the world's population is expected to be living in informal urban settlements, so the future development and perceptions of Rio's favelas have the potential to influence development globally.

Although stigma is often the result of deep-rooted perceptions, the media plays an important role in influencing those perceptions, whether by reinforcing, strengthening and perpetuating negative stereotypes or by challenging and gradually eroding them.

In October 2009, the International Olympic Committee announced Rio de Janeiro as the host of the 2016 Summer Olympics. With the 2014 World Cup already scheduled for Brazil, it was clear that Brazil, and Rio in particular, would receive intensified media coverage over the course of its event preparations and celebrations. With that intensified focus on Rio came unprecedented international media attention to Rio's favelas.

Catalytic Communities (CatComm) saw this period as an opportunity for international journalists to take substantial steps towards ending the stigma around favelas by producing thoughtful and nuanced coverage about them, ultimately influencing the discourse, policies and initiatives around informal settlements around the world.

Now, one year after the World Cup and with just over a year until the Olympics, we're producing a half-time report. How does the mainstream international media report on Rio's favelas? How has coverage of favelas changed since the 2009 Olympic announcement? What could be improved ahead of the 2016 Olympics?

This study begins to answer those questions. Focusing on six mainstream English-language print and online news outlets from the United States and the United Kingdom, we have tracked and examined 329 articles that mention favelas from October 2009 through September 2014, seeking to answer the following questions:

1. In what contexts do the international media write about favelas?
2. Which favelas and zones are covered?
3. Whose perspectives about favelas are given a platform?
4. What language is used to describe favelas?
5. What kind of imagery accompanies articles about favelas?
6. What are the predominant portrayals of favelas? What are the most common negative stigmas and positive attributes?
7. How do the answers to these questions change with respect to time and media outlet?

Methodology

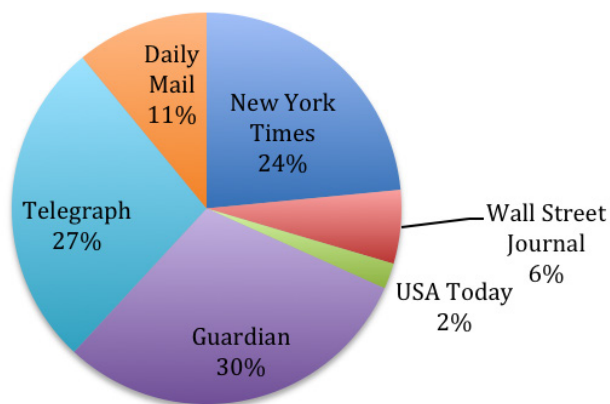
With oversight from CatComm’s Executive Director, Theresa Williamson, Ph.D., and board member and Lecturer of Political Science at the University of California Berkeley, Wendy Sinek, Ph.D., CatComm Research Intern Cerianne Robertson, a recent graduate of Harvard University, designed and executed the study, drawing on six months’ prior experience of monitoring international reporting on Rio’s favelas with CatComm, as well as previous academic research on media portrayals of highly stigmatized communities and organizations. Other interns with CatComm contributed to producing the final report.

For the purposes of this report, we chose to focus our analysis on data from three alternate years, beginning with the announcement Rio would host the World Cup: October 2009-September 2010, October 2011-September 2012, and October 2013-September 2014.

We focused on media from the two countries that appeared to be responsible for most of the widely-read English-language material produced about Rio’s favelas: the US and the UK. For selecting news sources, we aimed to include outlets...

- that produce a lot of material about favelas
- with the highest readership in each country
- that are read by leading decision-makers in a variety of fields
- that publish in print and online
- that, together, reflect diverse positions on the political spectrum

Articles by outlet (of 329 articles)



With these criteria in mind, we selected *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *USA Today* from the US, and *The Guardian*, *The Telegraph*, and the *Daily Mail* from the UK.

Using a combination of the outlets’ search engines and Lexis Nexis, we began with an initial list of every written article that mentioned “favela” during our specified time periods. Note that this method of selecting articles overlooks any articles that use only alternatives like “slum” or “community” instead of using “favela” at all, which certainly would be interesting and useful to the study; this limitation was necessary in order to maintain a consistent methodology of identifying articles within a reasonable scope for this project. From the original search results, we excluded results that:

- Appeared only in print (and not online).
- Lacked a written component (ie. only a video, or only a photo slideshow with captions).
- Were calendar listings, advertisements, or live text feeds.
- Mentioned favelas only in the context of another Brazilian city, outside of the state of Rio de Janeiro. We did include any article that used “favela” to describe non-Brazilian cities, as this constitutes an example of the word “favela” being used beyond its particular meaning and context (of informal communities in Brazil), which is therefore interesting in terms of how perceived parallels between favelas and other informal or low-income settlements lead people to incorrectly label other communities with the term.
 - Used “favela” because it was somebody or something’s name, where there was no connection to Rio’s favela communities.
 - Were exact repeats of an already coded article from the same outlet; we kept articles that included replicated sections but were not exact repeats.

After these removals, we were left with 329 articles, distributed unevenly among the six outlets.

Every outlet produced the greatest number of articles that mention favelas in the 2013-2014 year. In total, there were about 2.7 times more articles in 2013-2014 than in each of the previous time periods. The three American outlets and *The Telegraph* published more articles mentioning favelas in 2011-2012 than 2009-2010, but *The Guardian* and *Daily Mail* published at least two times more articles in the 2009-2010 period than in 2011-2012.

Outlets	Oct 2009 - Sept 2010	Oct 2011 - Sept 2012	Oct 2013 – Sept 2014	TOTAL
<i>NY Times</i>	13	21	44	78
<i>WSJ</i>	2	3	15	20
<i>USA Today</i>	0	1	6	7
<i>Guardian</i>	30	13	56	99
<i>Telegraph</i>	16	28	45	89
<i>Daily Mail</i>	8	4	24	36
TOTAL	69	70	190	329

We developed a standardized survey form to code each article and tested the survey form’s consistency with 5 independent readers prior to starting the main study. In October and November 2014 our trained Research Intern read through the 329 articles and answered a standardized survey for each article. She analyzed the articles as they appeared on the outlets’ websites. Any survey questions for which the Research Intern could not confidently say she had responded consistently throughout were re-done or discarded.



Findings

1. CONTEXT

A. Centrality

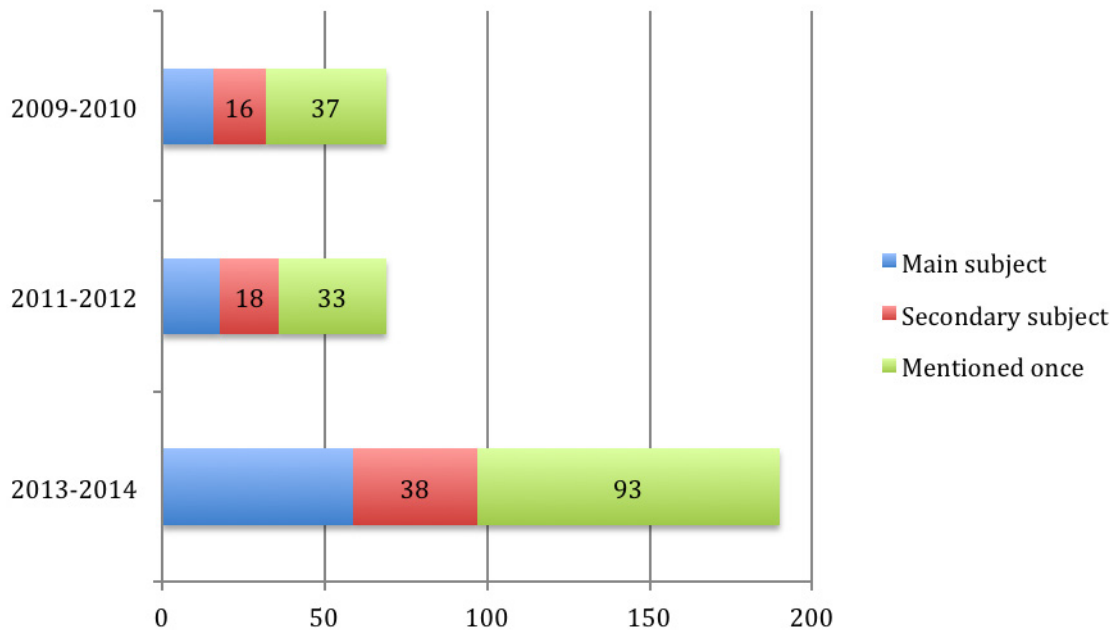
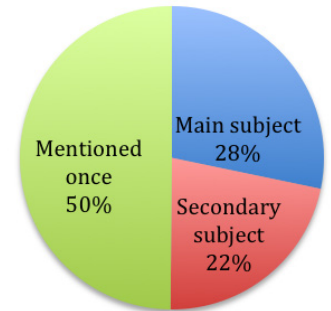
In almost half (164) of the articles, favelas were just mentioned once, while in the rest (165) of the articles favelas received more attention, either as a main subject or setting (“Main Subject”), or as one of several topics (“Secondary Subject”).

By year:

Breaking these data down by year reveals that, over time, there was a small increase in the percent of articles in which favelas were the main subject. The 2013-2014 period was the only year in which over 30% of articles featured favelas as a main subject.

More interesting than the percentages are the absolute numbers, however, which show (below) that the number of articles in which favelas were a main subject nearly tripled from the first two time periods to the third (2013-2014). The number of articles in which favelas were a main or secondary subject saw more than a 2.5-fold increase from the first two time periods to the third. Favelas were not just mentioned substantially more in 2013-2014, but were given substantially more space and attention as key subjects.

Centrality (of 329 articles)



There was also a significant increase in articles that mention favelas just once in 2013-2014 compared to the earlier time periods.

See Appendices A-F for Centrality by outlet

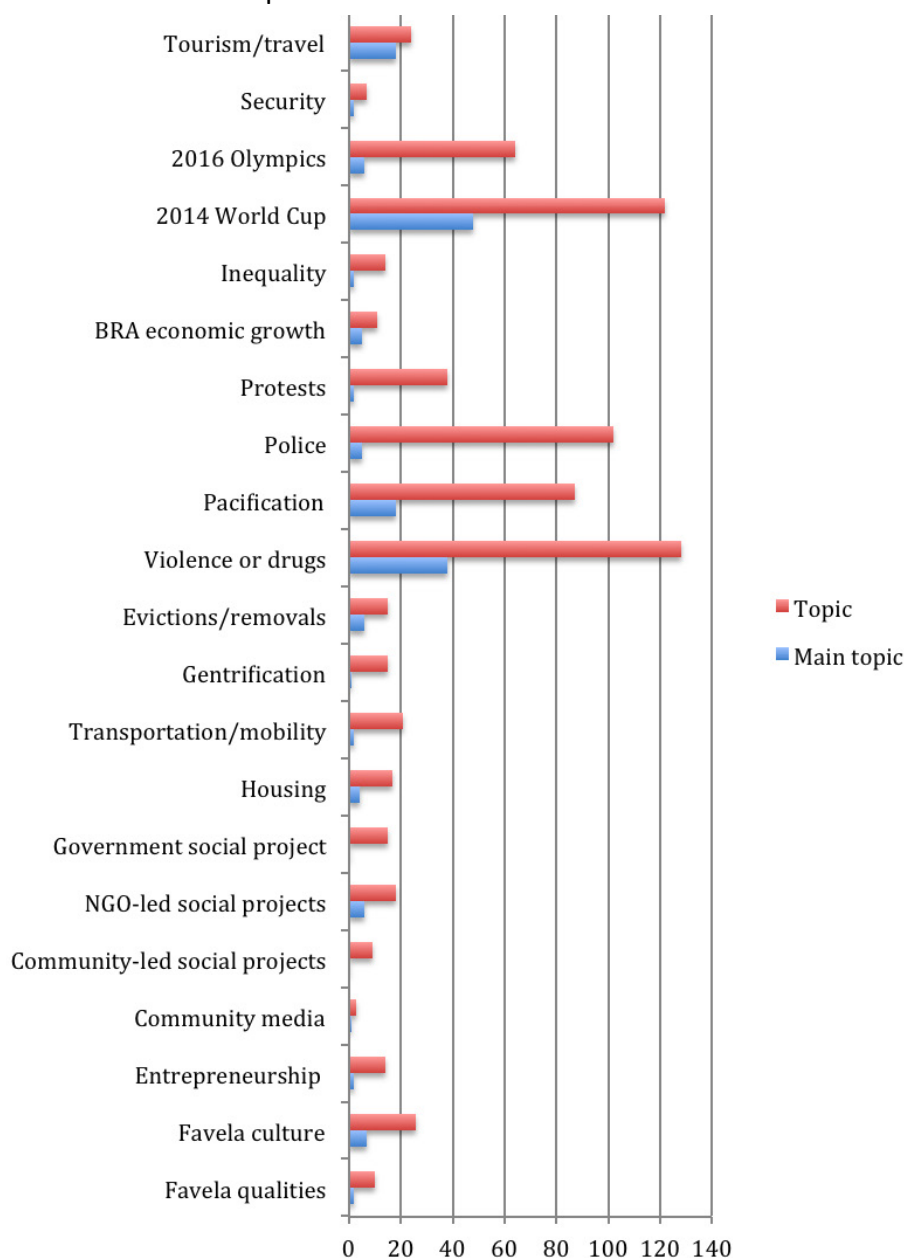


B. Type of Article

The majority of articles about favelas were either news stories covering a specific incident or “Feature Articles,” which explored a topic or phenomenon more in-depth. The split of articles between these two categories was close, with 117 feature articles and 110 news articles.

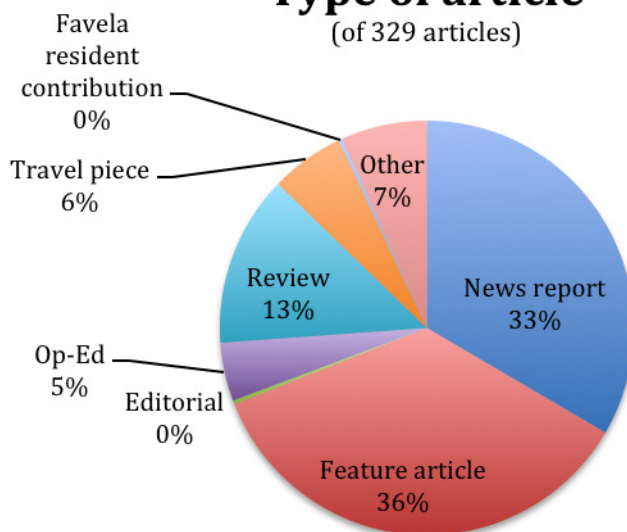
By year:

Over the years, feature articles overtook news reports as the most common type of article featuring favela, although they began at very close numbers in 2009-2010 with 18 feature articles and 22 news reports. In 2011-2012 there were 26 of each, and 2013-2014 saw more of a divergence, with feature articles at 73 compared to 62 news articles.



Type of article

(of 329 articles)



C. Topics of Discussion

By looking at the topics discussed in articles, we gain further insight into the contexts in which they are presented, as well as the issues about favelas that the media focuses on. The topics included in this graph either emerged out of the initial coding phase, or are topics of particular interest to CatComm—notably Favela qualities, Favela culture, Community media—that we wanted to track. Articles could be coded for multiple “Topics,” but only one “Main Topic.”

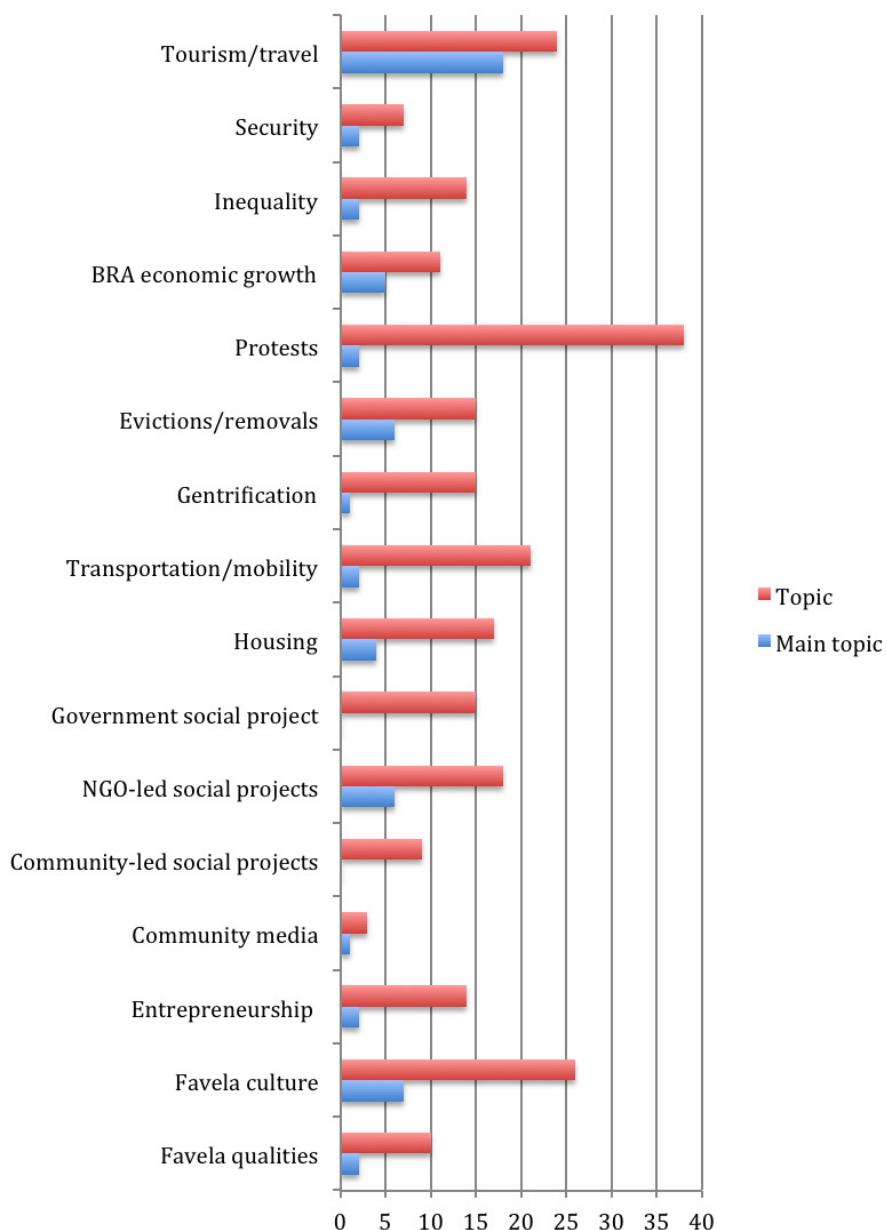
Five topics stand out as the most regular: “Violence or drugs,” the “World Cup,” “Police,” “Pacification,” and the “Olympics” all featured in over 60 articles, while all other topics featured in less than 40 articles. To get a better picture of the less frequent topics, the following graph presents the same data but only for those topics featured in less than 40 articles:



By year:

In each time period, the top five topics remained the same, albeit in slightly different orders. “Violence and drugs” was the most common topic in each time period. The 2013-2014 period mirrored the exact patterns of the overall topic numbers, but the “Olympics” received more mentions than the “World Cup” in the two earlier time periods. This makes sense when one considers that, in general, the Olympics has had a greater impact than the World Cup on the city of Rio, and the favela pacification program is more often framed in the context of reducing crime and the influence of drug trafficking in Rio before the Olympics.

See Appendices A-F for Topics by outlet



Conclusion

The 2013-2014 period saw a massive spike in articles that mentioned Rio’s favelas compared to the two earlier periods. This spike was accompanied by a substantial growth in articles—both news and feature articles—that treated favelas as a main or secondary subject, giving space to describing them, their residents, and the activities taking place within them. “Favela” was also mentioned only once in more articles, which suggests that it may have become a more prominent term of reference that journalists know their readers will understand without extensive explanation or context.

The expanded range of pieces on favelas did not, however, create a substantial shift in the common topics. Besides the mega-events themselves, the topics that were mentioned most frequently remained “Violence and Drugs,” “Police,” and “Pacification” over the three time periods. This pattern suggests that favelas continue to be discussed primarily in the context of the negative topics, reinforcing the misconception that the only newsworthy topics about favelas are negative.

2. WHICH FAVELA?

A. Which Zone?

185 articles (56%) did not discuss one or more of Rio's zones in particular, which means they mentioned neither a specific zone, nor a neighborhood or favela, as the latter would have signaled the zone. These articles included statements such as, "Many tourists are planning to visit a favela," "Rio's favelas are notorious for violence," or "He grew up playing football in the favela where he was born."

This is problematic because the urban landscape of the city changes substantially from one zone to another:

- The South Zone encompasses popular tourist sites and the residences and spaces of Rio's elite, with historic and consolidated favelas dotting the hillsides and currently experiencing price hikes and market displacement;
- Centro is mainly an employment hub but also home to working-class inhabitants and the site of the rapid government-led Port redevelopment next to Rio's first favela and region of utmost importance with regard to Rio's African heritage;
- The North Zone is a post-industrial working class region, traditionally marginalized and deficient in public services, with confrontations between police and drug traffickers used as an excuse for this neglect; and
- The enormous West Zone, developed recently and the site of many recent evictions in its closer-in contested zones, is a mix of distant low-lying working-class militia-dominated neighborhoods, with the exception of the growing elite enclave of Barra da Tijuca. The West Zone will be the location of the Olympic Village.

Furthermore, identifying specific favelas by name and avoiding generalizations is important for accurate portrayals of Rio de Janeiro because there are over 1,000 favelas in the metropolitan area with a tremendous amount of variation from one to another.

Among the articles that were clearly about one or more particular zone(s), there were more stories about the South Zone than any other region, followed by the North Zone.

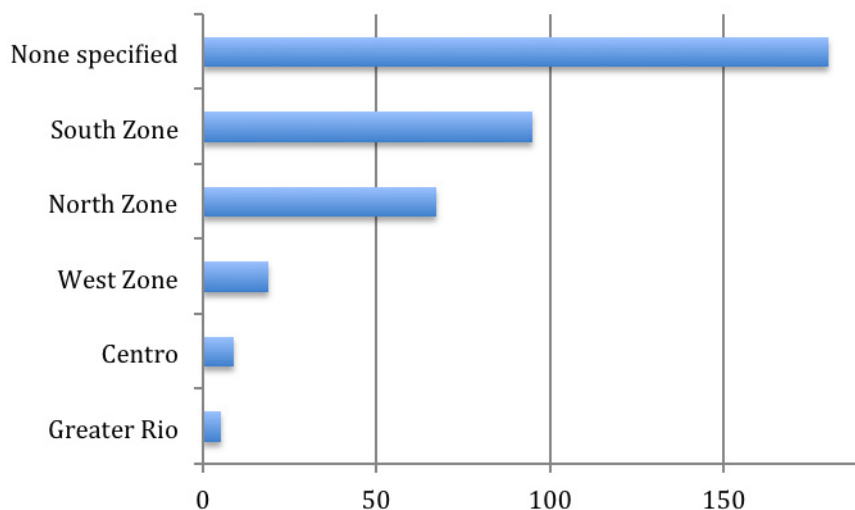
By year:

The results for this question varied significantly by year. 65% of articles from 2009-2010 were not about a specific zone (or favela), while only about 40% of articles in each of the other two time periods were unspecific. The North Zone was the most commonly portrayed zone in 2009-2010, while the South Zone was most popular in the media in the other two years. Favelas from the Greater Rio region did not feature at all during 2013-2014.

See Appendices A-F for Zones by outlet

Which zone?

(of 329 articles)



B. Favela Specificity

Nearly half (47%) of the articles referred only to favelas in general. 9% discussed a specific favela without naming it (e.g. “He grew up in a favela in Rio.”), while the remainder identified at least one specific favela by name.

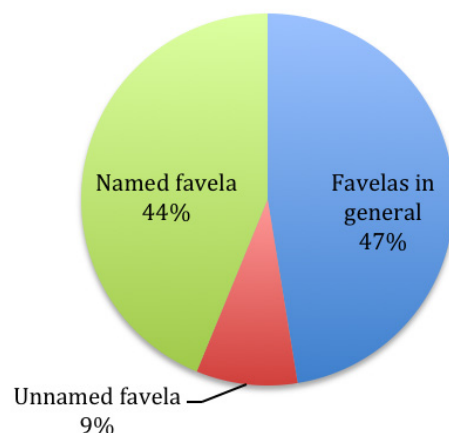
See Appendices A-F for Favela specificity by outlet

C. Which Favela?

In the 144 articles that mentioned specific favelas, some communities received considerably more mentions than others.

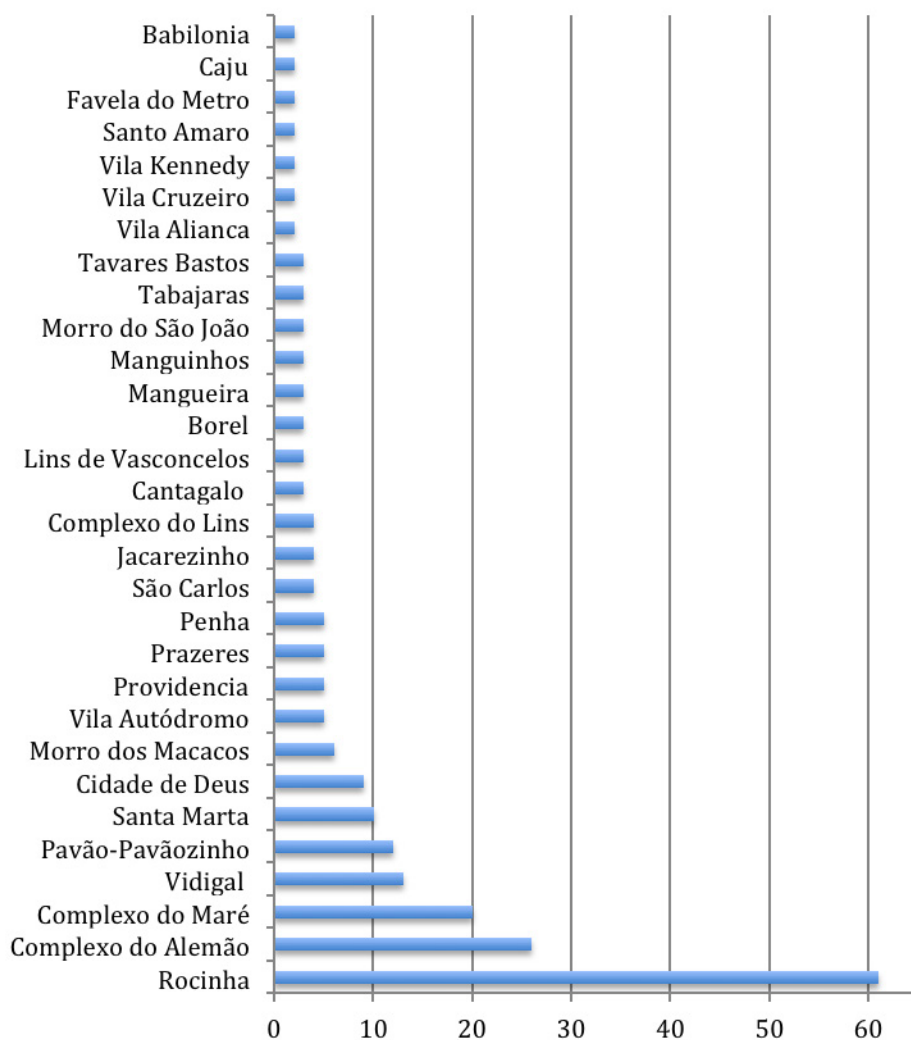
Favela specificity

(of 329 articles)



Which favela?

(of 329 articles)



Three articles about Rocinha spelled the favela’s name incorrectly—as “Recina” or “Rochina.” Two other articles described Telerj—the urban occupation of an abandoned factory in Complexo do Alemão—as a favela.

By year:

The favelas with the most mentions by year were Morro dos Macacos (6) in 2009-2010; Rocinha (14) and Alemão (10) in 2011-2012; and Rocinha (45), Maré (17), Alemão (12), Vidigal (10), and Santa Marta (7) in 2013-2014.

See Conclusion and Appendices A-F for Which favelas by outlet

Conclusion

Over time, articles tended to be more precise by focusing stories on, and clearly identifying, a specific favela and zone. The overall results show the South Zone as the most commonly covered zone. However, that was not the case in 2009-2010 when the North Zone drew the most coverage, the South and North zones were similarly covered in 2011-2012, and it was

only in the build-up to the World Cup that coverage shifted to an overwhelming focus on the South Zone. The attributes of the South Zone that likely appeal to mainstream media—the proximity to tourists, ease of entry and convenience to journalists who are staying in the South Zone, and the sheer scale of Rocinha in particular as the



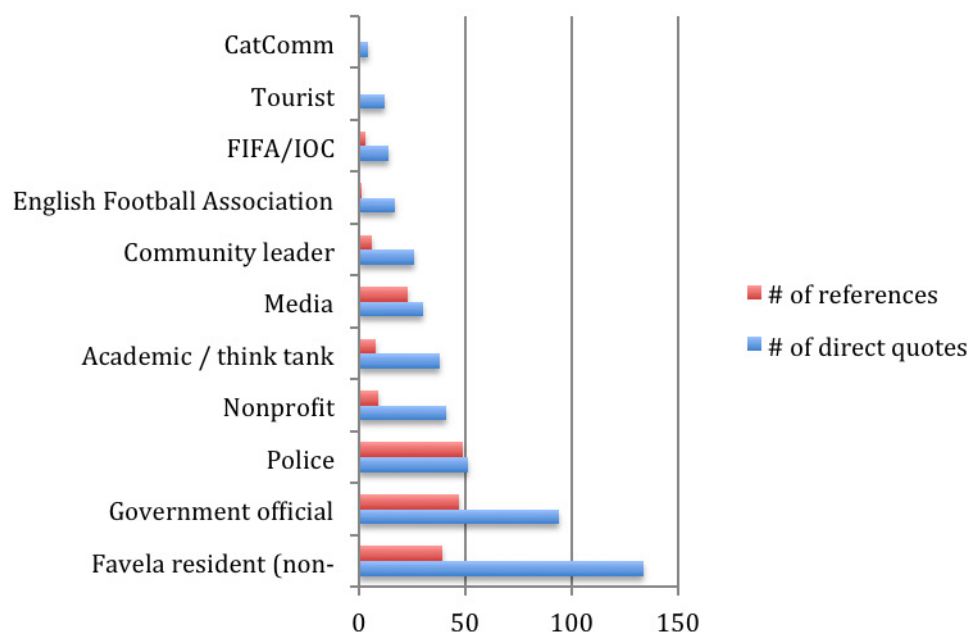
largest single favela—therefore appear to have played a bigger role during the World Cup year, perhaps because there were more journalists covering Rio for the first time and for expanded international audiences. This focus on the South Zone was driven in particular by unparalleled interest in Rocinha alongside increased coverage of Vidigal and Santa Marta as places of interest for tourists to visit and experience World Cup celebrations.

For Rocinha, it’s useful to note that UK media gave it particular attention from the lens of the English football team, who stayed in a hotel in nearby São Conrado. That said, while the UK outlets produced substantially more articles mentioning Rocinha (42) than did the US outlets (19), it was the *Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today* that focused on Rocinha most disproportionately relative to other favelas, with Rocinha featuring in 47% and 57% of their articles respectively.

See Appendices A-F for more on Which favela by outlet.

3. PERSPECTIVE

To assess what kind of sources articles cited for information or opinions about favelas, we tracked the categories of people who were either quoted directly or referenced indirectly (e.g. “The police commissioner said that...”, “According to one resident...”). For articles in which favelas were the main subject, we counted all quotes and references; for articles in which favelas were a secondary subject, we counted quotes and references from the section(s) about favelas, and any others that were directly related to favelas; for articles in which favelas were mentioned just once, we counted any quote or reference in that specific sentence. The graph below therefore shows the number of quotes and references, and does not reflect any information about number of articles.

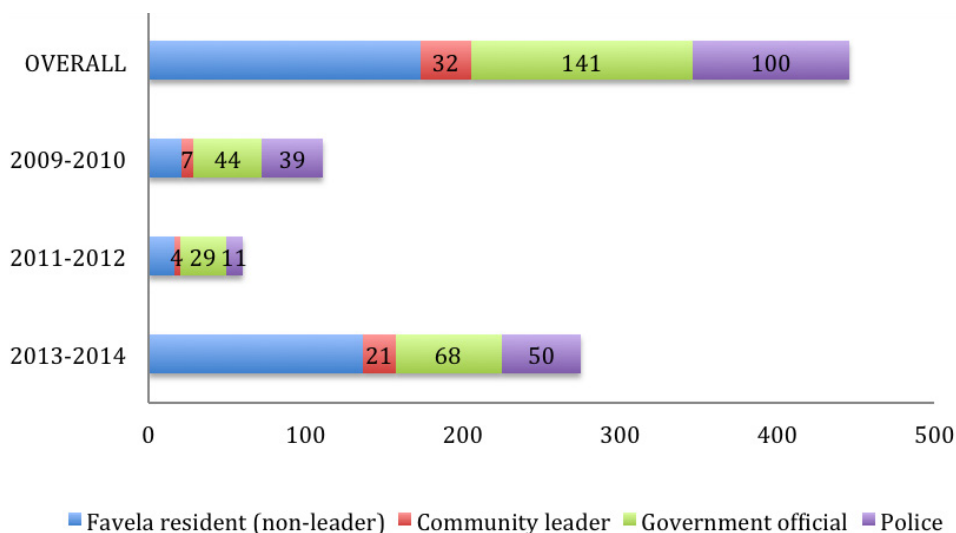


“Favela residents” are the most quoted group, followed by “Government officials.” Interestingly, indirect references were more evenly distributed across the three top groups: “Police,” “Government officials,” and “Favela residents.”

By year:

Zooming in more closely on certain categories, we can identify trends over time. We chose to focus on the most commonly used source categories (“Favela resident,” “Government official,” and “Police”) as well as “Community leader,” as

they are a particular category of “favela resident.” Note that the chart below is most useful for examining the ratios between different source categories for each year. The absolute numbers are less useful as which they may be misleading due to the variation in the number of articles published each year.

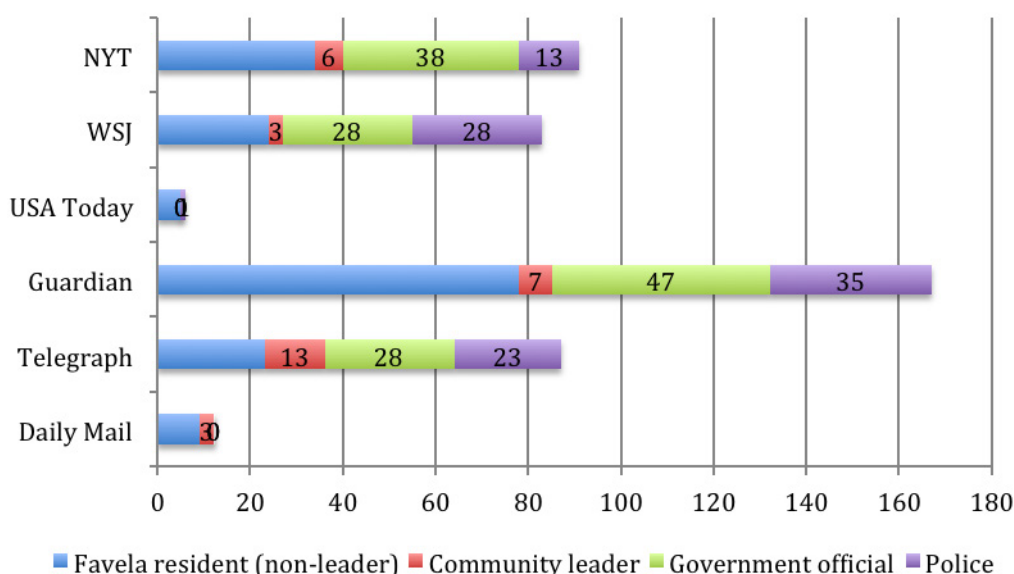


Between 2013 and 2014, favela residents were cited over six times more in top English mainstream media outlets than in 2009-2010. This chart reveals a fascinating shift from 2009-2010, when we can see the highest ratios of “Government official” and “Police” citations (75% of citations from these four categories) to “Favela resident” and “Community leader” citations (25%), to 2013-2014 when “Favela resident” and “Community leader” were cited more (57%) than “Government official” and “Police”



combined (43%). Although “Community leader” is a relatively rare source in all three time periods, the World Cup year did provide a greater platform for their voices to be heard. This is a positive trend, because community leaders are often elected by to public roles that provide them with increased access to information and the visibility to speak up more safely than other residents.

By outlet:



Each outlet cited favela residents more than or a similar number of times as (within 5 citations) the number of citations of government officials or police. *USA Today* and the *Daily Mail* gave particular prominence to favela residents as sources relative to other groups, although they also cited far fewer sources in general than the other outlets. The other four outlets cited the two categories of “official” sources more than citing favela residents and leaders (and that is before taking into account the citations of academic, NGO, or FIFA/IOC sources), but the *Wall Street Journal* is notable in that citations of favela residents are outnumbered over 2:1 by citations of government and police sources.

Conclusion

Favela residents, government officials and the police are the most commonly cited sources of information or opinion about favelas. In the World Cup year, the voices of favela residents were given an unprecedented platform, both in absolute and relative terms. Between 2013 and 2014, favela residents were cited over six times more in top English mainstream media outlets than in 2009-2010.

What these results do not show is the number of articles that discussed favelas without using any local residents or officials as sources of information or opinion at all. Particularly during the World Cup, there was an unfortunate trend of journalists who visited favelas and reported only their experiences and reflections.¹

¹ These results also do not distinguish the ways in which different sources were used; a study on media coverage in the San Francisco Bay Area found that in that context, authorities were more frequently quoted for information on solutions and arguments that were critical to debates, while local residents were more often quoted for “scene setting” descriptions (<http://www.datacenter.org/reports/DisplacingtheDream.pdf>). This would be an interesting subject for future research into media coverage of Rio’s favelas.

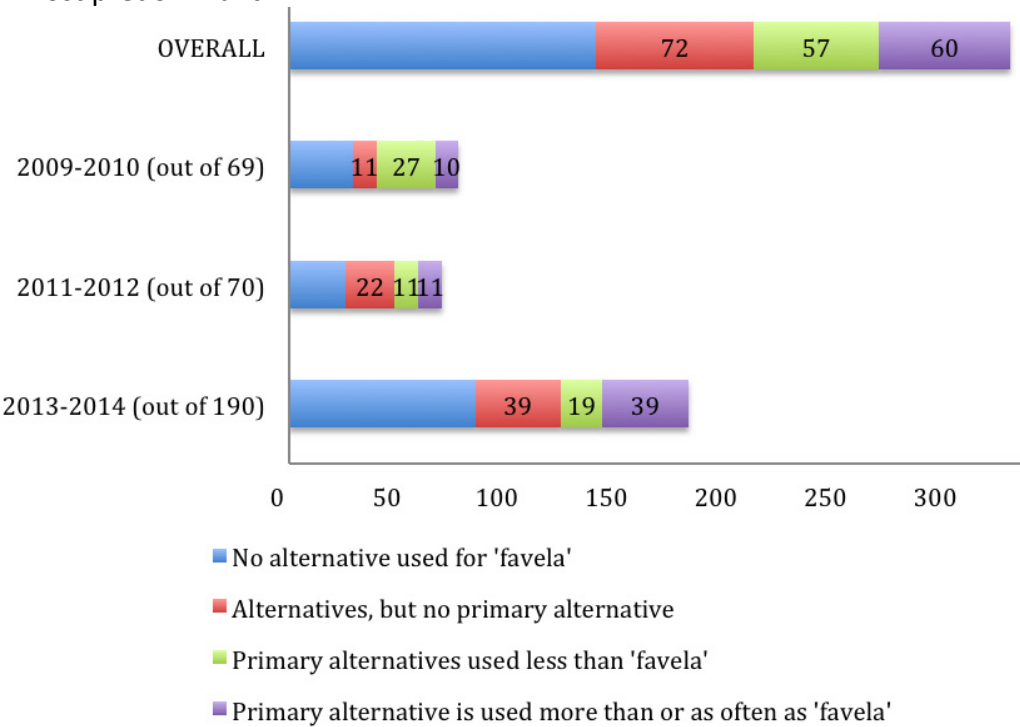
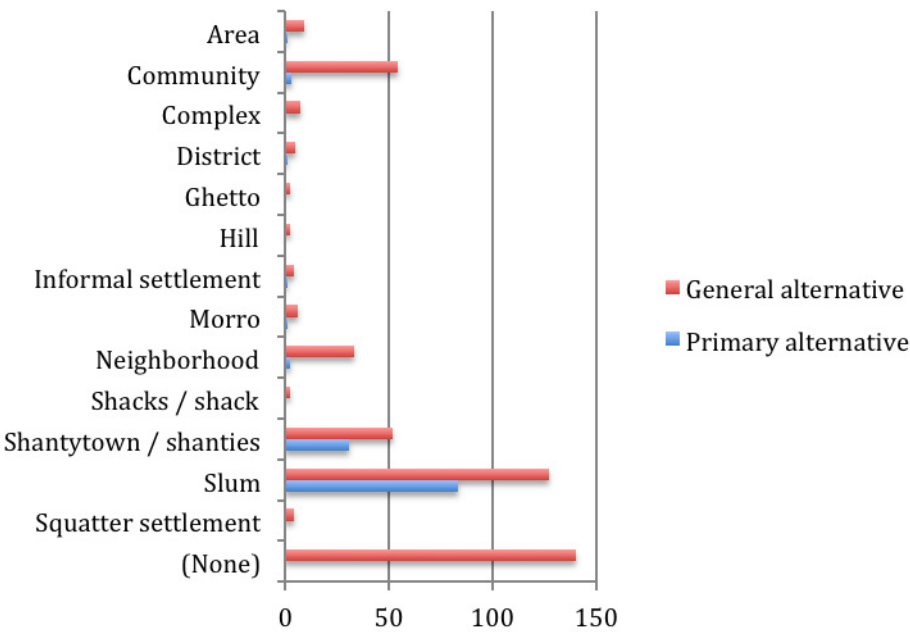


4. LANGUAGE

“Favela” is a challenging word to translate to English, and the concept of a favela and the diversity of communities called favelas is a hard one to accurately convey to international audiences who are unfamiliar with Rio’s unique landscape. English-language articles often employ more familiar English words to translate or explain the word “favela,” regardless of their accuracy or the stigma produced. Many more articles use alternative words throughout the article.

While tracking what words were employed to describe favelas, we identified any alternatives that were presented as a definition or translation of “favela,” or used in the title, heading or first paragraph, as “Primary Alternatives.” The graph below shows, in red, the number of articles that used the following words in place of “favela” as “General Alternatives” and, in blue, the number of articles that used each term as a “Primary Alternative.”

Out of the 329 articles, 140 (43%) used no alternative for favela. Of the 189 articles that did use at least one alternative, “slum,” “community,” “shantytown,” and “neighborhood” were the most common terms. Of the 117 (36%) articles that used a “Primary Alternative,” the negative terms – “slum” and “shantytown” were most predominant.



By year:
CatComm has been working to encourage English-language media to “call them favelas,” instead of employing potentially misleading alternatives, so we were interested in examining whether there was a notable change in the presence of alternatives over time.

% of articles	OVERALL	2009 – 2010	2011 – 2012	2013 - 2014
No alternative is used for “favela”	43%	42%	37%	45%
Alternatives, but no primary alternative	22%	16%	31%	20%
Primary alternatives used	35%	42%	32%	35%
Primary alternative is used more than or as often as “favela”	17%	28%	16%	14%

These three time periods do not suggest linear patterns for the number of articles that use “General Alternatives.” In articles that use a “Primary Alternative” for “favela,” there has been a decline in the percent of cases where that translation or definition word is used more often than “favela.” These data would benefit from the inclusion of data from additional years and more precise analysis before any conclusions are drawn from this pattern, however. Note that these data do not distinguish between positive or negative alternatives.

In particular, CatComm has worked to discourage the use of inaccurate and stigmatizing translations like “slum” and “shantytown” in place of “favela.” Since “slum,” “shantytown” (or “shanties”), “community,” and “neighborhood” stood out as the most commonly used words for “favela,” we explore their usage over time as well.

% of articles: “Slum”	OVERALL	2009 – 2010	2011 – 2012	2013 - 2014
Articles that used “slum”	40%	49%	46%	34%
Articles where “slum” was primary alternative	25%	33%	24%	22%
Articles where “slum” was used more than “favela”	13%	25%	13%	9%

% of articles: “Shantytown”	OVERALL	2009 – 2010	2011 – 2012	2013 - 2014
Articles that used “shantytown”	16%	19%	16%	15%
Articles where “shantytown” was primary alternative	9%	13%	9%	7%
Articles where “shantytown” was used more than “favela”	5%	6%	6%	4%

Over these three time periods, the percentage of articles that use “slum” and “shantytown” has declined. There are also consistent declines in the percentage of articles that use these terms as a translation or definition of “favela,” and of articles that use these terms more than “favela.”

% of articles: “Community”	OVERALL	2009 – 2010	2011 – 2012	2013 - 2014
Articles that used “community”	17%	7%	16%	21%
Articles where “community” was primary alternative	1%	0	0	2%
Articles where “community” was used more than “favela”	0.3%	0	0	.5%

% of articles: “Neighborhood”	OVERALL	2009 – 2010	2011 – 2012	2013 - 2014
Articles that used “neighborhood”	10%	6%	7%	13%
Articles where “neighborhood” was primary alternative	0.7%	0	0	1%
Articles where “neighborhood” was used more than “favela”	0.3%	0	0	5%

The percentage of articles that used “community” or “neighborhood” increased over the course of the three time periods in question. In the earlier two periods, these terms were never used as a translation or definition of “favela,” but they began to be occasionally used as “Primary Alternatives” and sometimes employed more frequently than “favela” in the 2013-2014 period.

By outlet:

% of articles	OVERALL (n=329)	NYT (n=78)	WSJ (n=20)	USA (n=7)	GUAR (n=99)	TELE (n=89)	DM (n=36)
No alternative is used for “favela”	43%	27%	20%	29%	49%	60%	33%
Alternatives, but no primary alternative	22%	26%	5%	14%	31%	16%	14%
Primary alternatives used	35%	47%	75%	57%	20%	24%	53%
Primary alternative is used more than or as often as “favela”	17%	21%	30%	29%	10%	13%	33%
Use “slum”	40%	60%	70%	43%	30%	20%	50%
Use “shantytown”	16%	9%	35%	14%	17%	12%	28%
Use “community”	17%	14%	35%	29%	17%	18%	6%
Use “neighborhood”	10%	17%	25%	29%	5%	7%	6%

Mirroring the overall trend, each individual outlet used “slum” as the most common “General” and “Primary” alternative word for “favela.” The word appeared in anywhere between 20% of articles (*The Telegraph*) to 70% (*The Wall Street Journal*).

In general, the UK outlets were more likely to publish articles that mentioned favelas without using any alternative word. *The Telegraph* and *The Guardian* were also least likely to define or translate “favela” through a “Primary Alternative” of any kind. *The Wall Street Journal* was the most likely to use a “Primary Alternative,” to use “slum” or “shantytown,” and to use that “Primary Alternative” more often than the word “favela.” It was also *The Wall Street Journal*, however, that was most likely to publish articles with the positive alternative, “community.” Five of the twenty *Wall Street Journal* articles used both “slum” and “community.” *USA Today* was the most likely outlet to use the positive alternative “neighborhood.”

Conclusion

English-language media continue to employ heavily stigmatizing terms to describe favelas, particularly when offering translations or definitions of “favela.” “Slum” was the most common alternative term in all three time periods and all six outlets. However, a shift towards more positive terms is underway. A clear decline of the word “slum,” both as a “General Alternative” and a “Primary Alternative,” was a positive trend. In 2009-2010, “slum”



was used as an alternative for “favela” in 50% of articles in top English mainstream media outlets. While still the most common alternative for “favela” by the World Cup, it was used in only 34% of articles between 2013 and 2014. “Shantytown” also declined, while the more positive terms of “community” and “neighborhood” increased, such that “community” was employed by more articles than “shantytown” by the 2013-2014 period. In general, by 2014, it was more likely for “favela” to be an article’s most frequently used term than it had been in previous years. This finding corroborates our previously stated conclusion (in the section on Context) that over time journalists appear to be more confident that their audiences are increasingly familiar with the word “favela.”

The US outlets were more inclined than the UK outlets to include at least one alternative word for “favela” in their articles, such that it was American outlets with the highest percentages of articles using each of the common alternatives regardless of whether it was negative or positive. *The Telegraph* stands out for avoiding the use of an alternative in 60% of all articles that mentioned favelas, while *The Guardian* avoided alternatives in almost half (49%) of its articles.



5. IMAGERY

A picture may be worth a thousand words, but just 70 (21%) of the articles featured a photo of a favela. Where favelas were the main or a secondary subject (165 articles), 63 (38%) of the articles featured a photo of a favela.

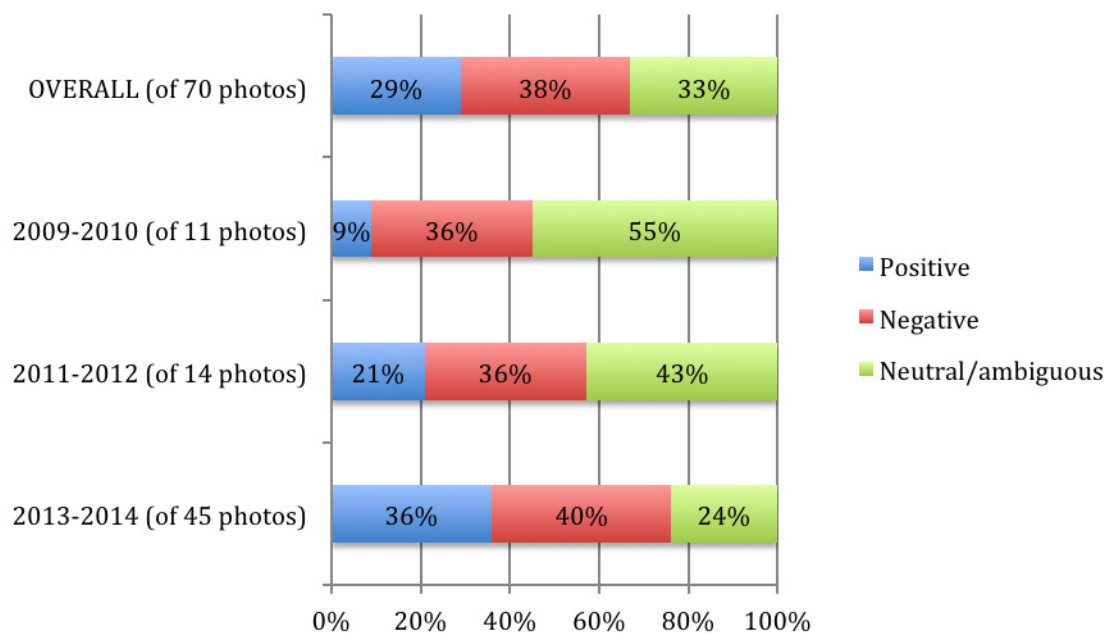
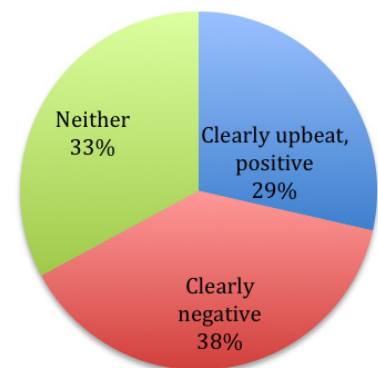
Of the 70 articles with images of a favela, some were clearly upbeat and positive (featuring art, leisure, business, etc.), while others were clearly negative (featuring violence, weapons, sewage, broken buildings), and the rest were neither clearly one nor the other. Articles coded as “neither” positive nor negative for imagery may have included a mix of positive and negative photos, or ambiguous photos (ie. buildings, people standing, aerial shots of a favela, etc.).

Of the 70 articles with favela photos, 21 articles did not identify the photographed favela by name, while 9 included a photo of a named favela that was not discussed in the article.

By year:

Although there was an increase in percent of photos that were negative over the years, there was a much more significant increase in the percent of photos that were positive over the years, from 9% to 36%.

Favela imagery, all years (of 70 articles)



See Appendices A-F for Imagery by outlet

Conclusion

Over the years, an increasing percentage of articles featured positive favela images. Still, only 20 of 329 articles (less than 1%) featured only positive images of favelas. The media has huge room for improvement in publishing a bigger and more diverse array of favela photos, and in using and identifying images that actually match the favela(s) discussed in the articles.



6. PORTRAYAL

A. Common Attributes

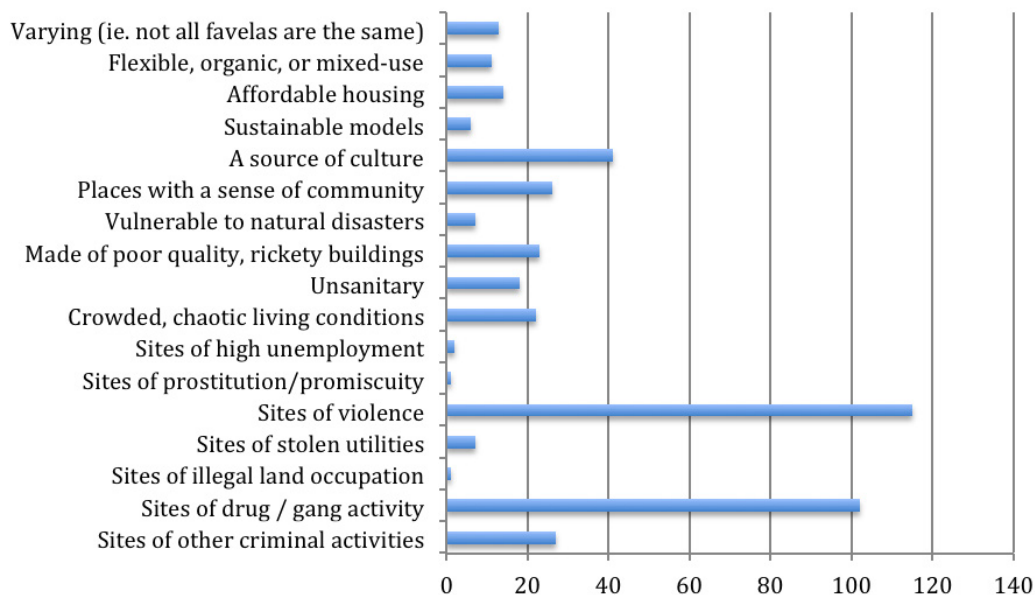
Based on initial coding of a sample of articles, we compiled a list of positive and negative favela attributes that featured frequently in English mainstream news. Although a number of other attributes arose over the course of the study, for the purpose of consistency we include only the data for those pre-identified attributes that we were able to track throughout the study.

To minimize the influence of the researcher's biases and interpretations, we only coded an article as including one of the following attributes if that attribute was explicitly mentioned or demonstrated. For example, a description of ramshackle homes would be coded for "Favelas are made of poor quality, rickety buildings," but not for "Favela residents are financially poor," even though the latter is implied.

The following graph tracks the number of articles that featured each attribute.

Favelas are...

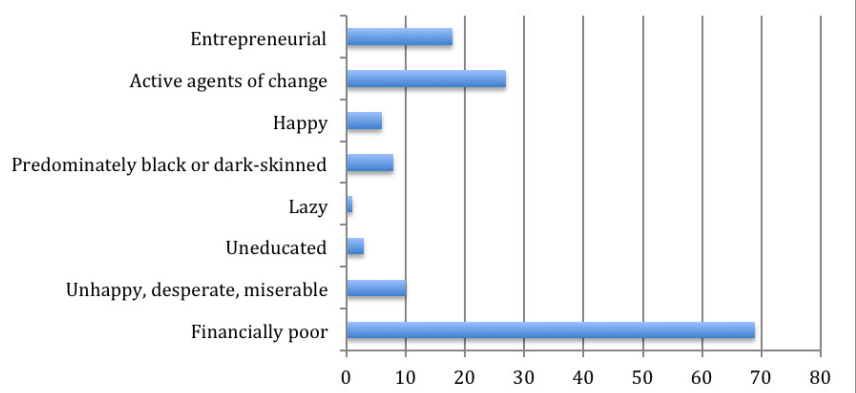
(of 329 articles)



"Sites of violence" and "Sites of drug / gang activity" clearly stood out as the most commonly portrayed attributes of favelas. These two attributes each featured in over 100 articles. The most common positive attribute was "a source of culture," which can be credited to the number of articles that discuss music and dance emerging from the favelas (including passinho, funk and baile funks, samba).

Favela residents are...

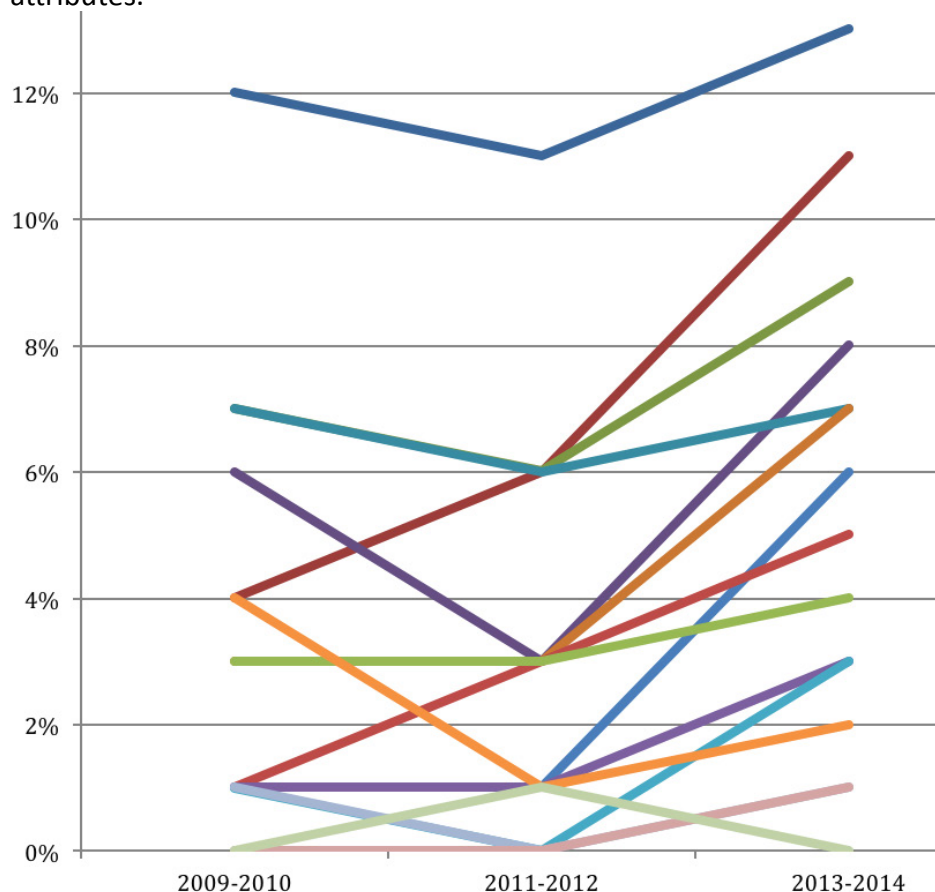
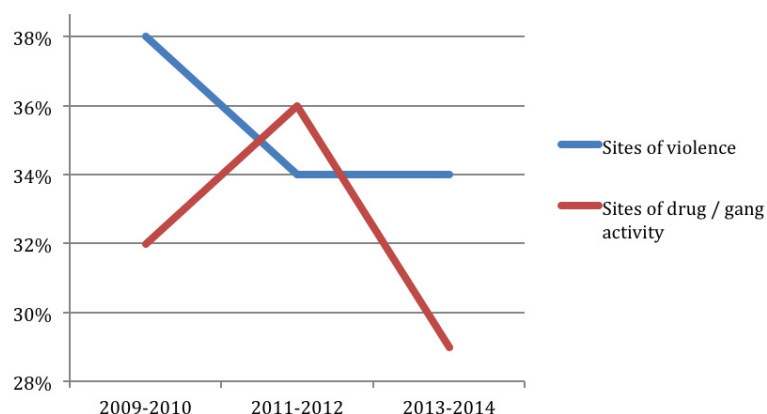
(of 329 articles)



The most common trait ascribed to favela residents was “financially poor.” We were happy to find that residents were more commonly portrayed as “entrepreneurial” and “active agents of change” than as “unhappy, desperate or miserable,” which corroborates findings and experiences on-the-ground.

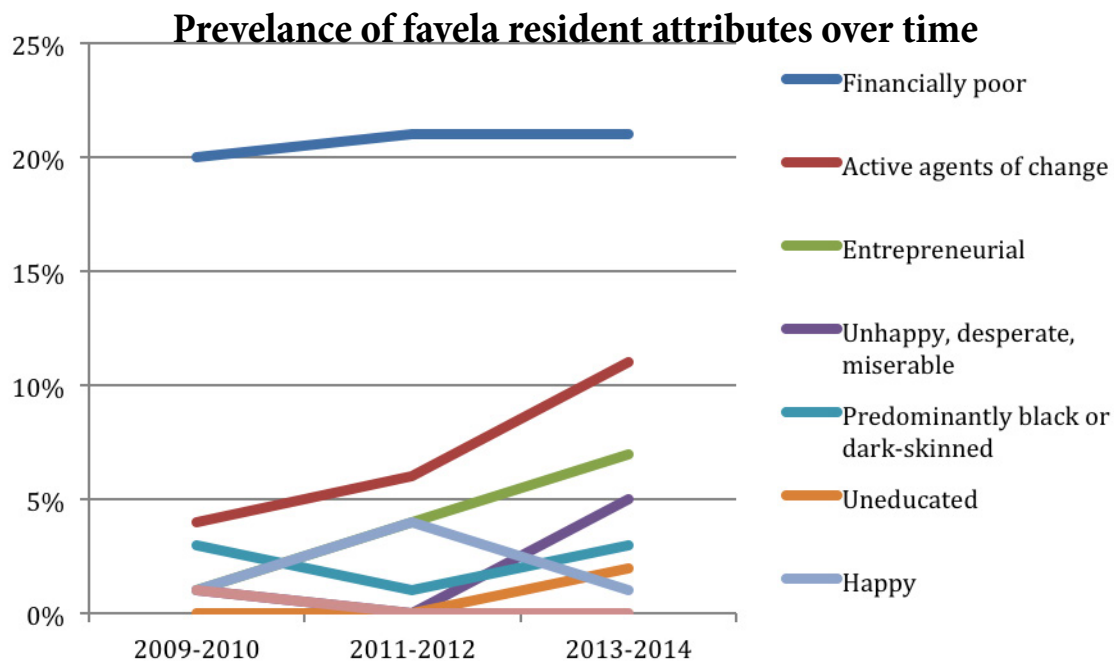
By year:

Here “sites of violence” and “sites of drug / gang activity” are graphed separately because they were featured substantially more frequently than other attributes.



Prevalence of favela attributes over time

The “positive” attributes of favelas (from “Varying” to “Places with a sense of community,”) were all featured in a greater percent of articles in 2013-2014 than in previous years. The only other consistent linear trend is the increase of articles that portray favelas as “Sites of other criminal activity,” referring to crimes that do not relate to violence, drugs, stolen utilities or illegal occupations. Most of these references were to incidents of muggings, which were a bigger part of the conversation in 2013-2014 as the media debated security concerns for tourists in Rio.



The portrayal of favela residents as “Entrepreneurial” and “Active agents of change” became more common each year.

Apart from the noted points, there are few linear trends for these time periods.

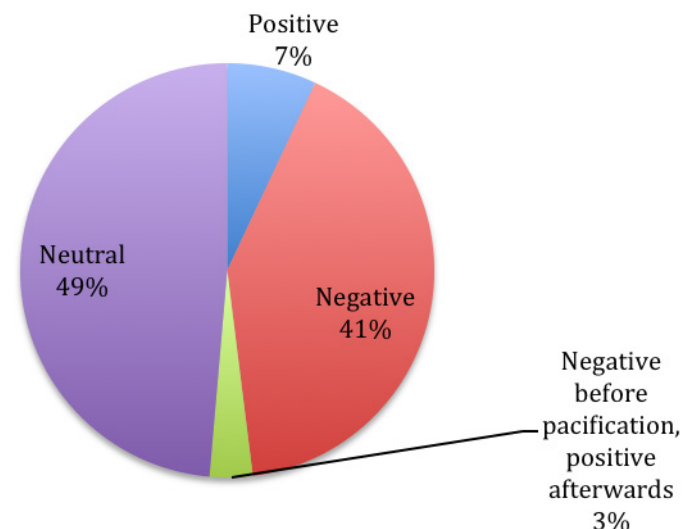
By outlet:

Five of the six outlets shared the same three most common attributes: “sites of violence,” “sites of drug/gang activity,” and “financially poor.” USA Today was the only outlet to have “unsanitary” in its top three frequent attributes, in place of “sites of drug / gang activity.”

See Appendices A-F for more on Portrayals by outlet

B. Overall Impression

The researcher labeled every article by the overall impression it gave of Rio’s favelas. To minimize inconsistency, the researcher asked, “If this article were the first time a reader heard of Rio’s favelas, what overriding impression would the reader have of favelas after reading the article?” All articles that included both positive and negative elements of favelas, or where the researcher felt the answer could be ambiguous, were labeled as “neutral.” Caution should be used when drawing conclusions from these numbers—the “neutral” category includes articles that could arguably be interpreted as positive or negative.



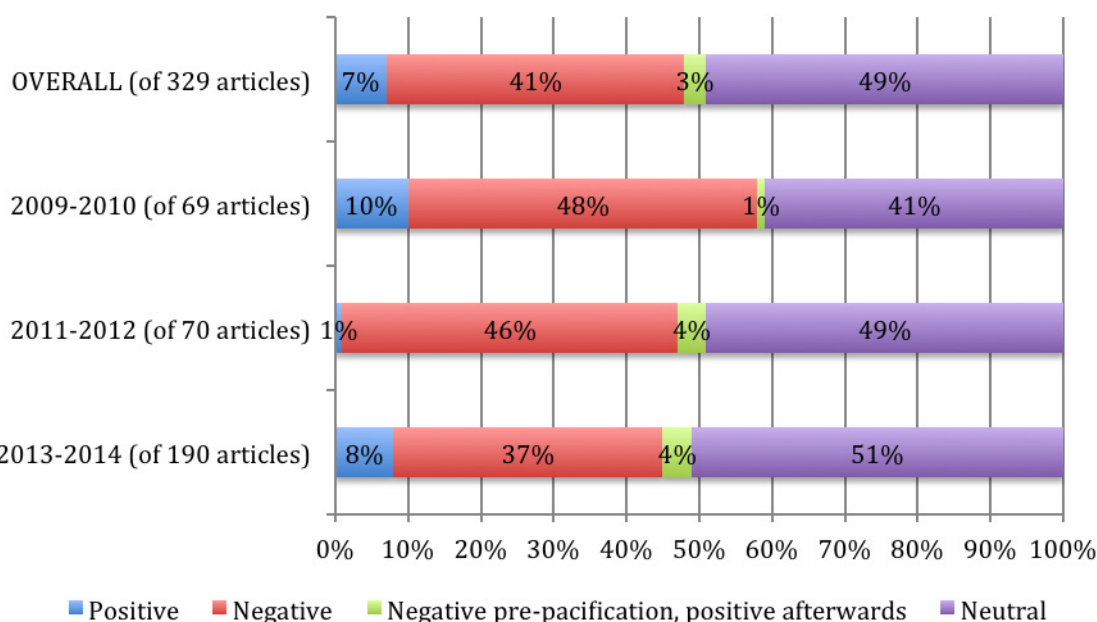


By year:

The main take-away from this graph is the decline of unambiguously negative articles over time, from 48% of all articles in 2009-2010 to 37% in 2013-2014.

By outlet:

Outlets that had more clearly positive articles than the group average included: *The New York Times* (9%), *The Telegraph* (10%), *The Guardian* (8%).



Outlets that had more clearly negative articles than the group average included: *The Wall Street Journal* (55%), *USA Today* (57%), *The Daily Mail* (47%), and *The Telegraph* (47%).

The Wall Street Journal, *USA Today*, and *The Daily Mail* had no clearly positive articles.

See Appendices A-F for more on Overall Impression by outlet

Conclusion

Although much of the data in this section does not lead to clear conclusions about trends over time, two exciting patterns emerge: First, all positive traits (of favelas and their residents) were present in a greater percent of articles in 2013-2014 than in previous years. Second, unambiguously negative articles declined over time, from 48% of all articles in 2009-2010 to 37% in 2013-2014. Still, clearly negative articles significantly outweigh clearly positive ones in every year, and the most common attributes are consistently negative, across all six outlets: favelas are portrayed as “sites of violence” and “sites of drug / gang activity” while residents are portrayed as “financially poor.” While violence, drugs and gangs, and poverty do exist in favelas, they seem disproportionately emphasized in this set of articles at the expense of favela assets like culture, community, and organic development, which go underreported in these media outlets.

The Wall Street Journal, *USA Today*, and the *Daily Mail* were particularly unbalanced, publishing no clearly positive articles about favelas during the time periods in question. However, it is important to remember that nearly half of all articles were coded as “neutral” and certainly could have contained positive elements.

Overall impressions and images: 27 articles featured only unambiguously negative images, and 23 of those (85%) appeared to contribute to a negative overall impression. No articles were coded for unambiguously negative imagery but a positive overall impression, so negative imagery appears to be a good predictor of the overall impression. Unambiguously positive imagery is not such a good predictor: of the 20 articles coded for positive imagery, 5 gave a positive impression, 2 gave a negative impression, 2 situated pacification as a shift from negative to positive, and the remaining 11 were neutral.

Conclusion

Mainstream international media coverage of Rio's favelas is changing. The most stark change is the immense expansion of coverage, a truly positive legacy of the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympics. Extensive and diverse coverage of favelas is important for correcting a history of largely uniform, stigmatizing coverage. Negative stereotypes of favelas in the media have long served as fodder for top-down interventions that assume no aspects of favelas are worthy of preserving, justifying policies that ultimately exacerbate inequality. Rio de Janeiro, however, is a city that cares about its global image, and international perceptions of its favelas and the city's actions towards them can influence local policies towards a more inclusive approach.

Key evidence:

- There was an approximately 270% increase in articles that mentioned favelas in 2013-2014 compared to each of the previous time periods. In other words, there were more articles in 2013-2014 than in the other two years of this study combined. This spike was accompanied by a similar percent increase in articles that treated favelas as a main or secondary subject, giving space to describing them, their residents, and the activities taking place within them.

The coverage may not be changing as fast as some would like. Reporting on negative topics and the emphasis of old negative stereotypes about favelas and their residents remain pervasive, and continue to outweigh portrayals of favelas as valuable and productive elements of Rio's urban fabric, and coverage of favela residents as active participants in Rio's efforts to build a more inclusive, equitable city. There is a one-time window of opportunity through the Olympics to set the record straight—to disseminate the context, nuance and perspective that's necessary to form the baseline understanding of these communities that will foster effective policy.

Key evidence:

- Besides the mega-events themselves, the topics that were mentioned most frequently remained "Violence and Drugs," "Police," and "Pacification" over the three time periods. Clearly negative articles significantly outweigh clearly positive ones in every year, and the most common attributes are consistently negative, across all six outlets: favelas are portrayed as "sites of violence" and "sites of drug / gang activity" while residents are portrayed as "financially poor." These patterns reinforce the misconception that the only newsworthy topics about favelas are negative.
- The media ignores favelas outside of the North and South Zone. During the World Cup Year, even favelas in North Zone received relatively little attention compared to those in the wealthier areas popular with tourists. This is true despite the fact that the 2016 Olympic Games will take place primarily in the city's West Zone.
- English-language media continue to employ heavily stigmatized terms to describe favelas, particularly when offering translations or definitions of "favela." "Slum" was the most common alternative term in all three time periods and all six outlets.
- Only 20 of 329 articles (less than 1%) featured only positive images of favelas.

And yet, there is evidence of a gradual transformation in international coverage of Rio's favelas.

Key evidence:

- Between 2013 and 2014, favela residents were cited over six times more in top English mainstream media outlets than in 2009 - 2010. Not only a result of increased favela coverage, voices of favela residents occupied a bigger percentage of all the voices cited about favelas than in previous years.
- In 2009 - 2010, "slum" was used as an alternative for "favela" in 50% of articles in top English mainstream media outlets. While still the most common alternative for "favela" by the World Cup, it was used in only



34% of articles between 2013 and 2014.

- By 2014, it was more likely for “favela” to be an article’s most frequently used term than it had been in previous years.
- Over the years, an increasing percentage of articles featured positive favela images.
- A greater percent of articles presented positive traits of favelas and their residents in 2013-2014 than in previous years.
- Unambiguously negative articles about favelas declined over time, from 48% of all articles in 2009-2010 to 37% in 2013-2014.

We will continue to track international media coverage of Rio’s favelas through the 2016 Olympics, expanding our data to incorporate each year from October 2008 (a year prior to the Olympic announcement, which will include the beginning of Rio’s pacification program) to September 2016. We will also expand the number of outlets we monitor to include the top publications from Canada, South Africa, and Australia, as well as additional outlets from the US and UK.

From this initial study, however, we conclude with:

Recommendations for Journalists

Journalists! You are in the midst of a critical media moment for favelas. Seize the opportunity to make a difference in perceptions of favelas, and as a result make a difference in policy and how the world understands the role and potential of informal communities in our rapidly urbanizing world. Here are some of our recommendations for how you can produce quality coverage of Rio’s favelas:

- **KEEP UP** the attention. Our results show the dramatically expanded platform for favela news and coverage has successfully brought an expanded platform for the voices of favela residents. From numerous interviews with community leaders following the World Cup, we know that favela community leaders genuinely appreciate the opportunity to talk to international journalists and many feel that you are bringing a critical new interest and approach to social issues above and beyond what exists in the national media.
 - “It’s really positive that the international press is giving attention to the communities, because the national media only gives communities attention when something bad is happening.” – Community leader from Horto, on international media coverage during the World Cup
- **SEEK** beyond the outsider perspective. Despite the above point, there was an influx of articles during the World Cup that reported from the perspective of the journalist without including favela resident perspectives, and still a number of other articles that asked for international footballers’ opinions of favelas they barely visited. These stories would have been much more interesting with the additional perspective of residents on the issues that concern and interest them.
- **REQUEST** support from CatComm to seek out contacts that can provide perspective on stories relating to their communities. We are here to help.
- **VARY** the topic. The majority of articles that mention favelas still focus on fundamentally negative issues—violence, gangs, drugs, poverty—at the expense of examining housing, community initiatives, culture, activism and a variety of other topics that are begging for greater coverage, and which can provide insight to debates on the same issues in the newspaper’s home country.
- **RECOGNIZE** your responsibility to provide a balanced portrayal of favelas. The unambiguously negative articles that perpetuate stigmas about favelas continue to outweigh the unambiguously positive articles that challenge those stigmas and situate residents as potential agents of positive change. Some outlets produced zero unambiguously positive articles about favelas throughout the three time periods of this

study, so take a moment to consider what underlying impression your work is creating for your readers and the ultimate impact this will have on the communities you write about.

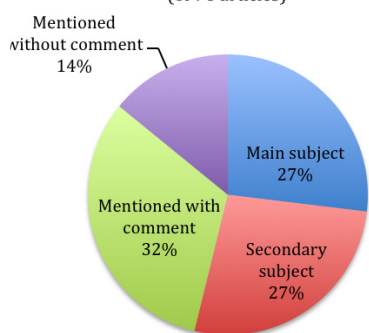
- **RESPOND** to the growing international familiarity with the word “favela” (thanks to your work) by cutting down on the stigma-heavy English words like “slum,” which still pervades more articles than any other alternative word for favela.
- **EXPLORE** favelas outside the South Zone and even the North Zone, or seek out lesser-known communities in those regions. As the seat of the Olympic Village, the West Zone needs more attention. When everyone else is writing about Rocinha, CatComm is always on hand to offer support for stories on lesser-known favelas.
- **EXPAND** the repertoire of photos of favelas out there and mix up the subject of those images. Less than 1% of articles from our study featured photos that were all clearly positive. Request images from professional favela-based photography collectives Imagens do Povo, Favela Em Foco, and others, or from [CatComm’s growing stock on Flickr](#).

APPENDIX

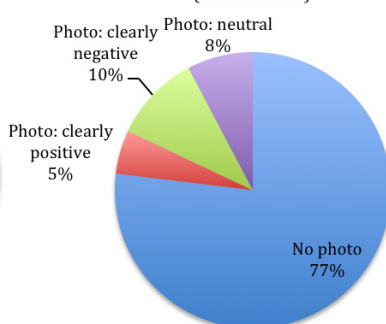
- A. The New York Times
- B. The Wall Street Journal
- C. USA Today
- D. The Guardian
- E. The Telegraph
- F. The Daily Mail
- G. Complete list of articles

A. New York Times

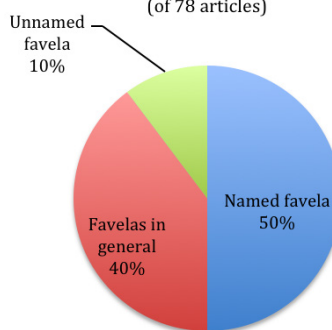
Centrality (of 78 articles)



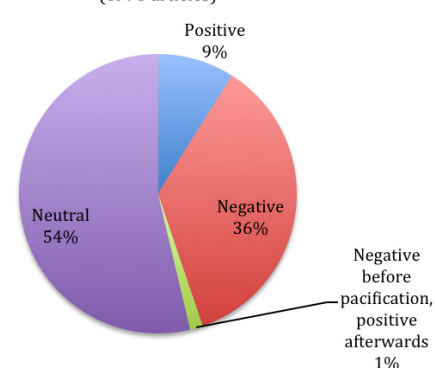
Favela Imagery (of 78 articles)



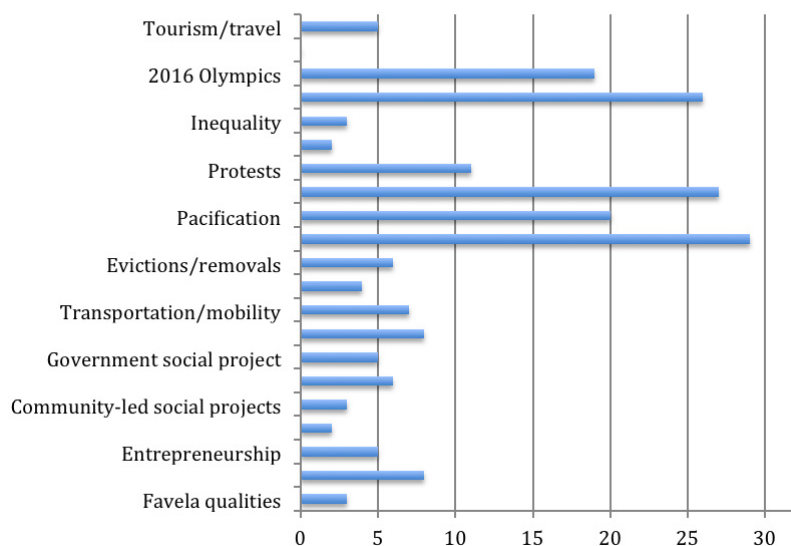
Which favela? (of 78 articles)



Overall impression (of 78 articles)

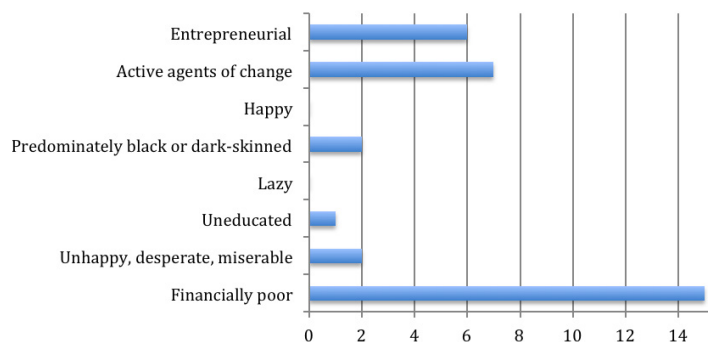


Common topics (of 78 articles)



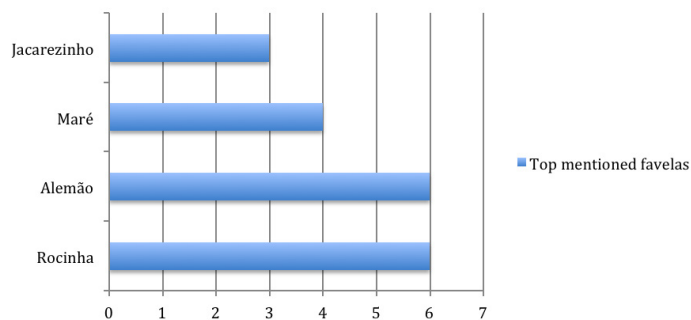
Favela residents are...

(of 78 articles)



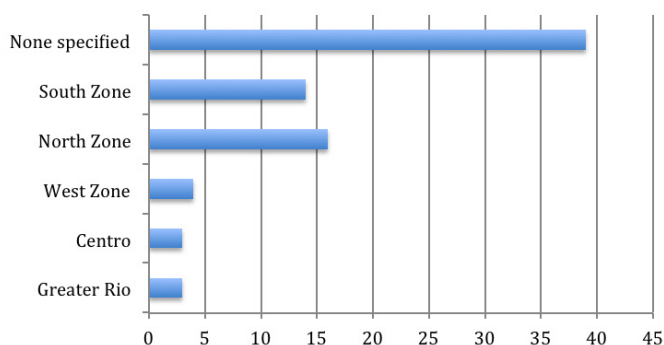
Top mentioned favelas

(of 78 articles)



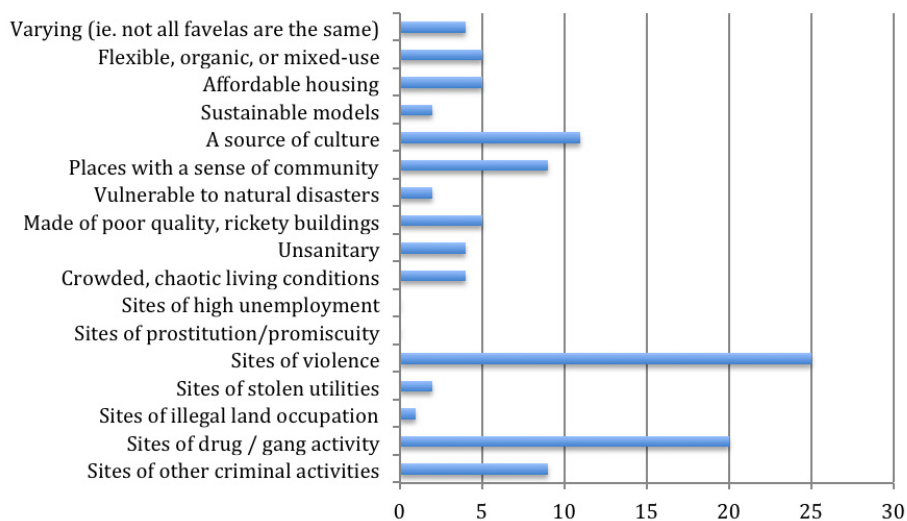
Which zone?

(of 78 articles)



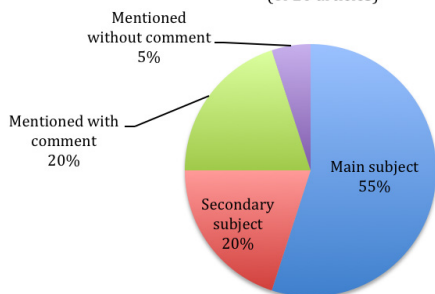
Favelas are...

(of 78 articles)

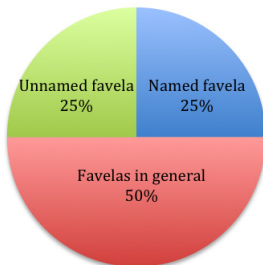


APPENDIX B. Wall Street Journal

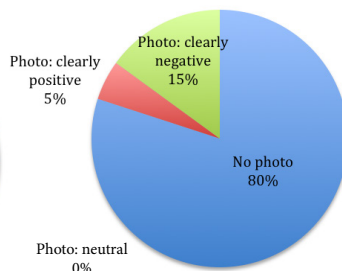
Centrality (of 20 articles)



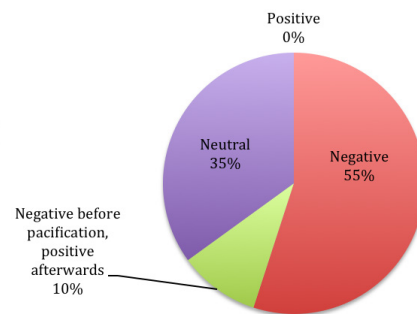
Which Favela? (of 20 articles)



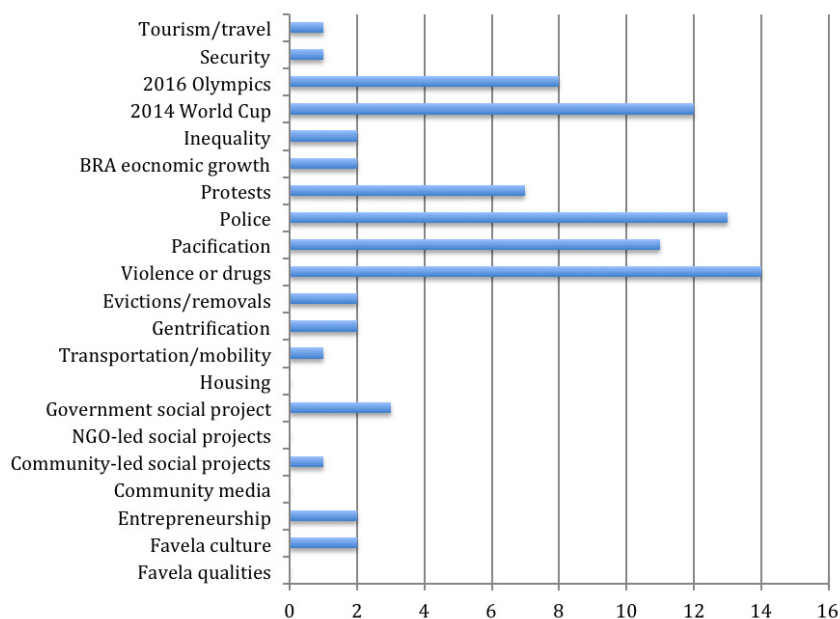
Favela Imagery (of 20 articles)



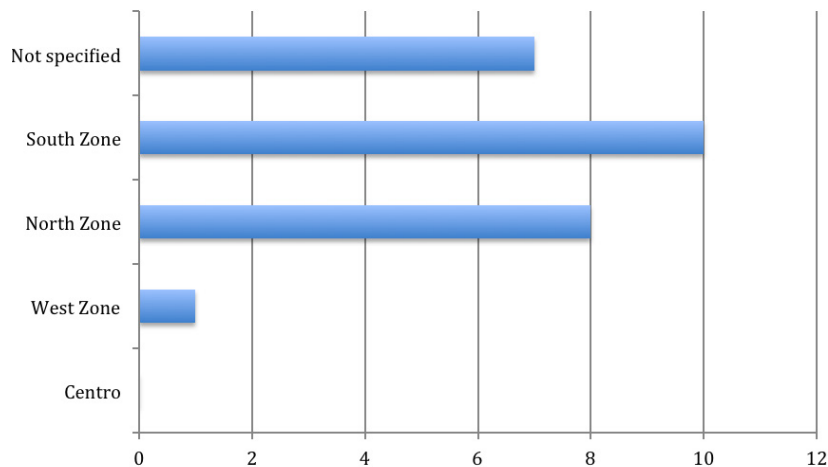
Overall impression (of 20 articles)



Common Topics (of 20 articles)

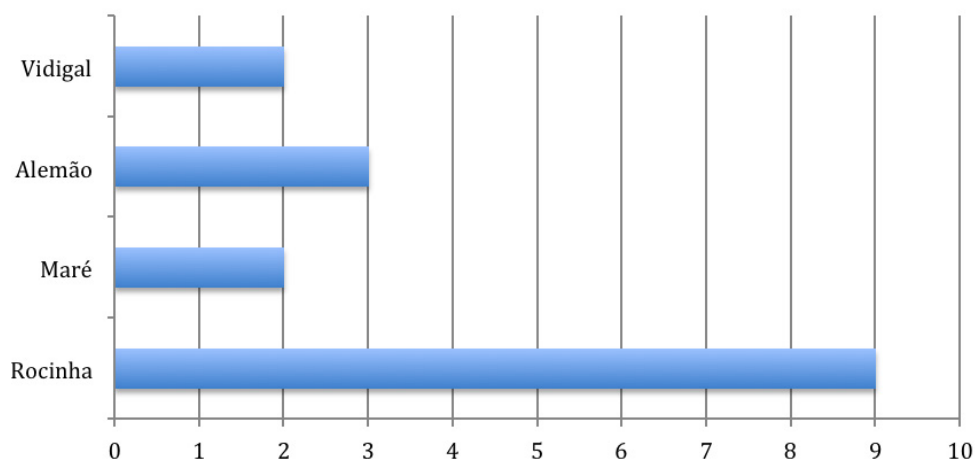


Zone (of 20 articles)



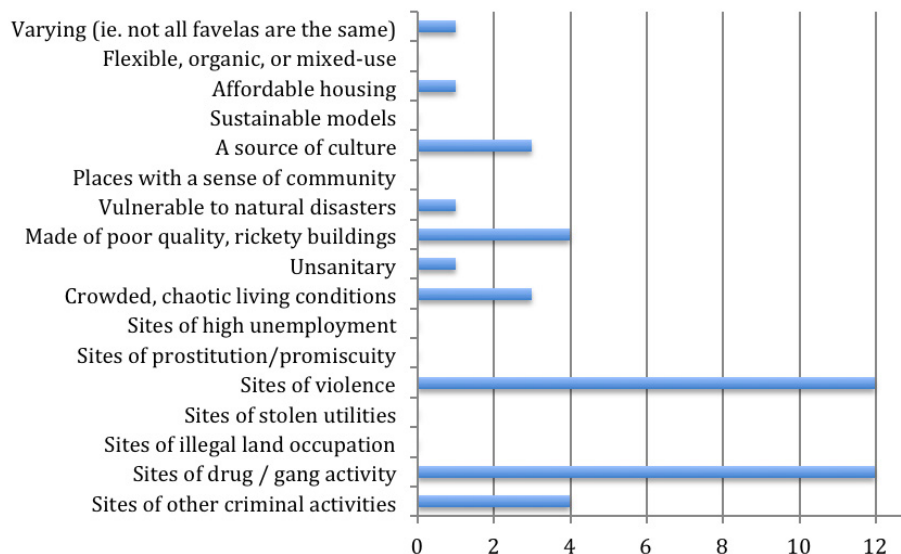
Top Mentioned Favelas

(of 20 articles)



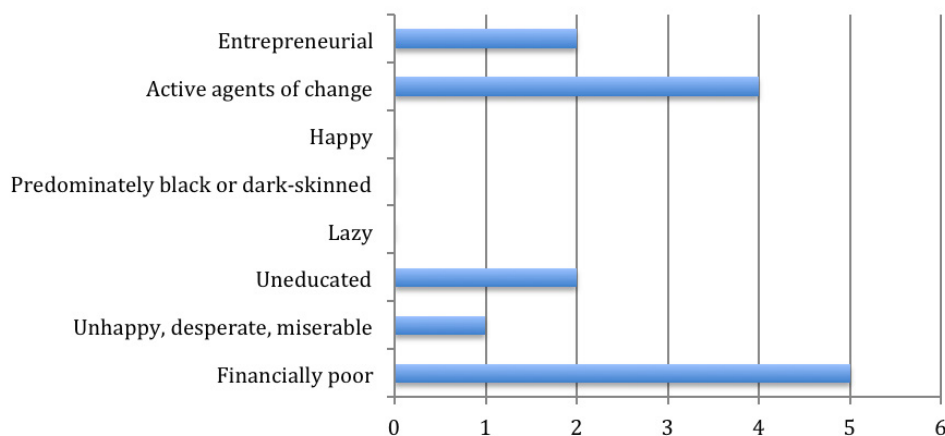
Favelas are...

(of 20 articles)



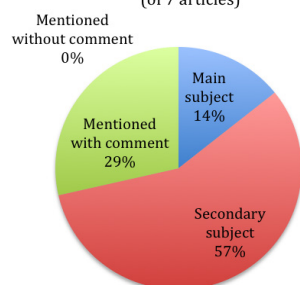
Favela Residents Are...

(of 20 articles)

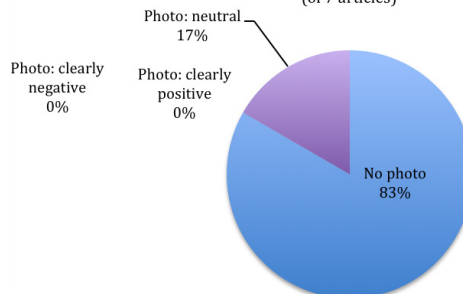


APPENDIX C. USA Today:

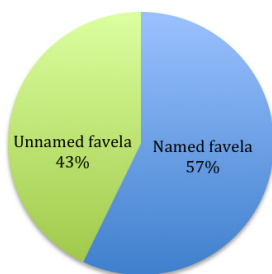
Centrality (of 7 articles)



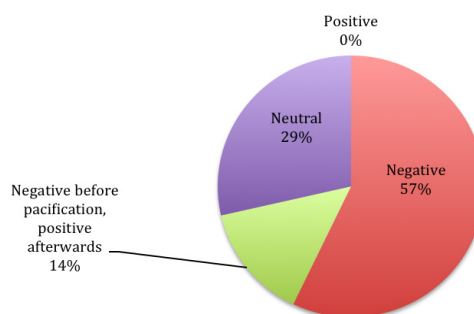
Favela Imagery (of 7 articles)



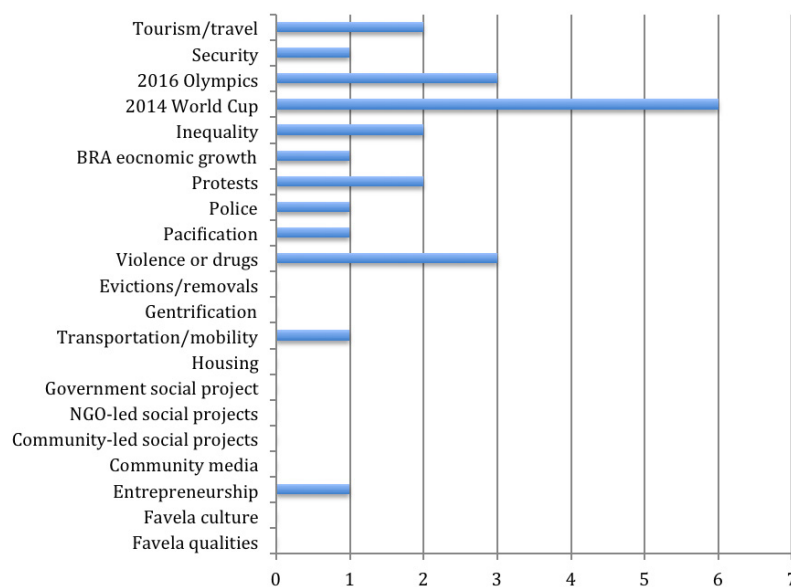
Which Favela? (of 7 articles)



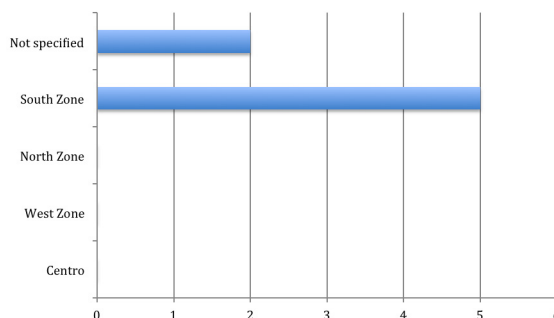
Overall impression (of 7 articles)



Common Topics (of 7 articles)

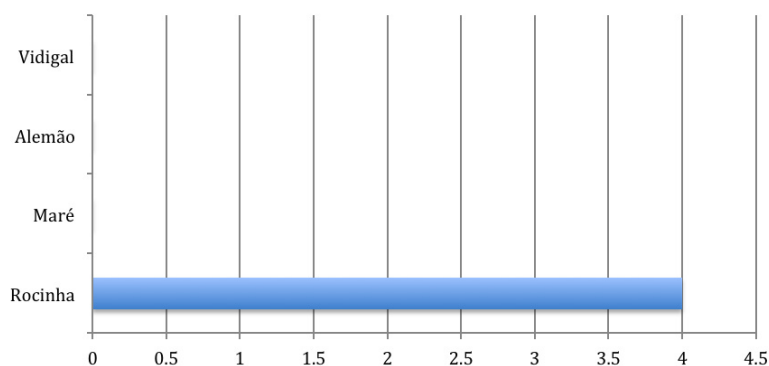


Zone (of 7 articles)



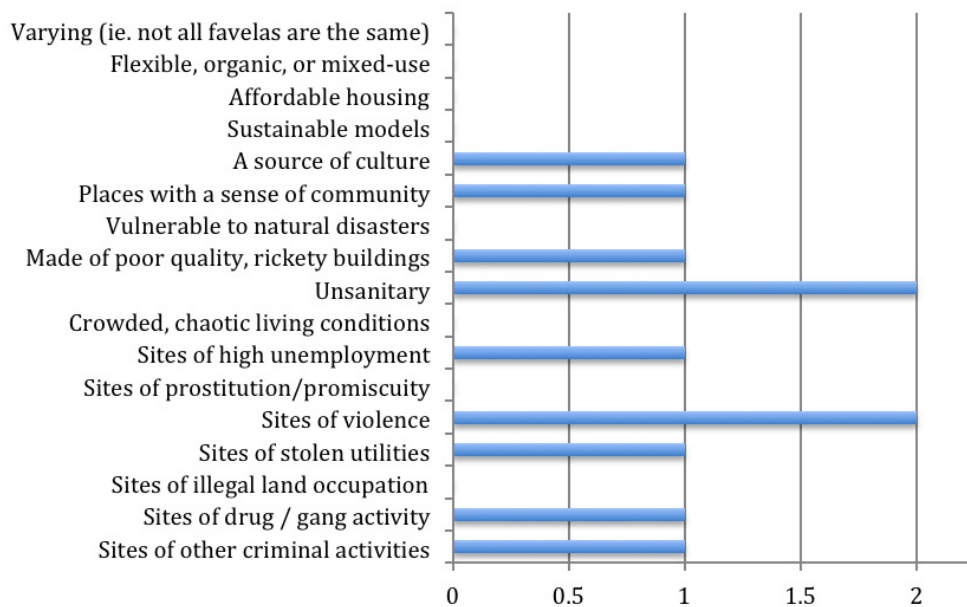
Top Mentioned Favelas

(of 7 articles)



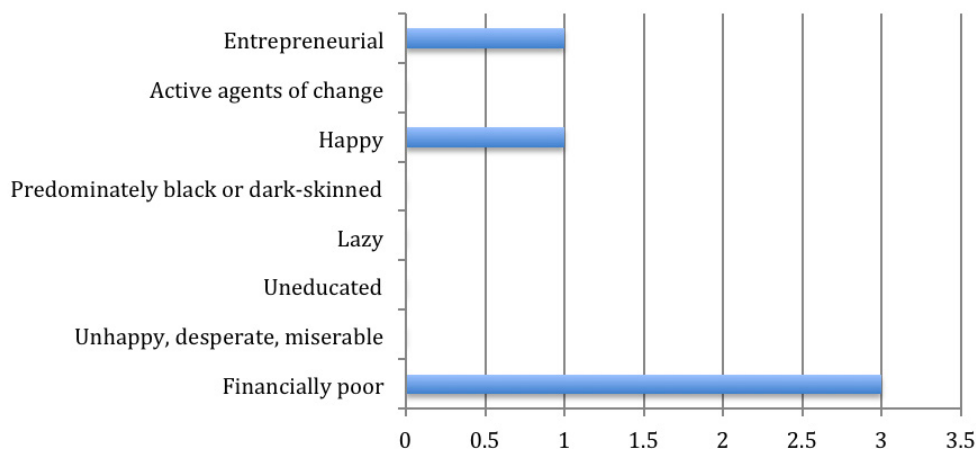
Favelas are...

(of 7 articles)



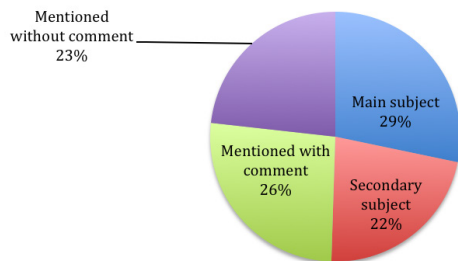
Favela Residents Are...

(of 7 articles)

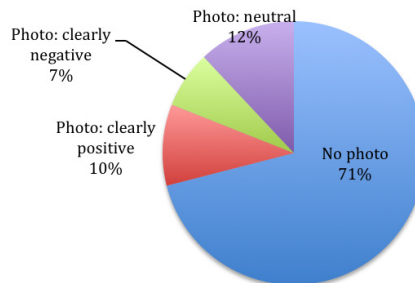


APPENDIX D. The Guardian

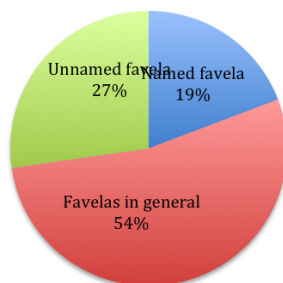
Centrality (of 99 articles)



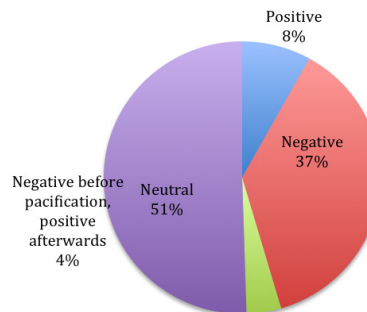
Favela Imagery (of 99 articles)



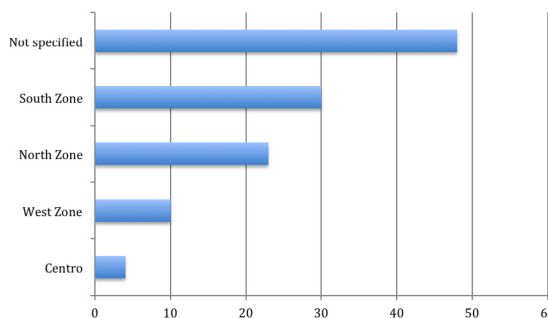
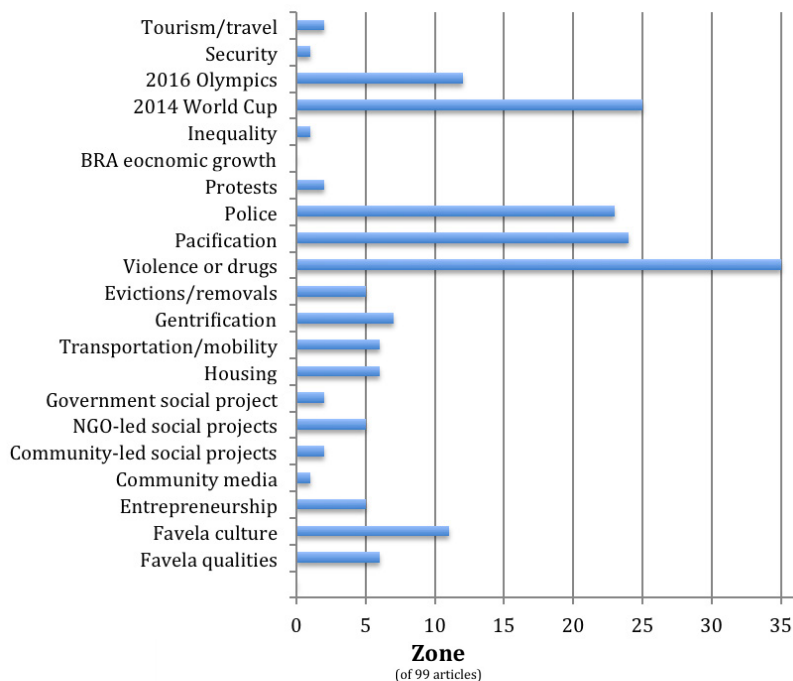
Which Favela? (of 99 articles)



Overall impression (of 99 articles)

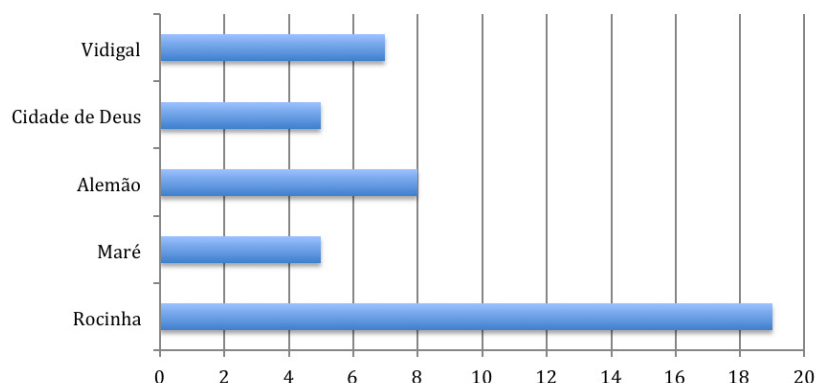


Common Topics (of 99 articles)



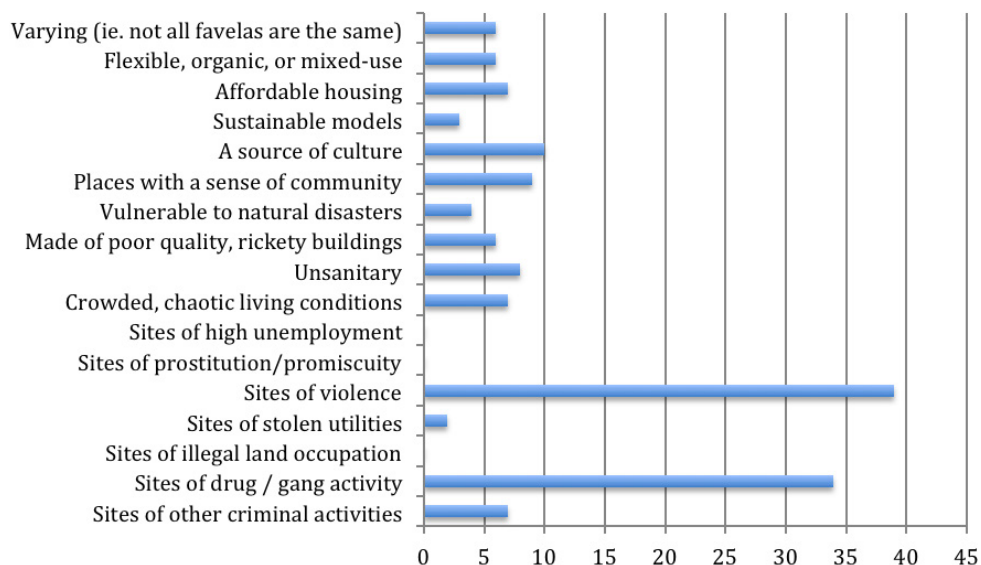
Top Mentioned Favelas

(of 99 articles)



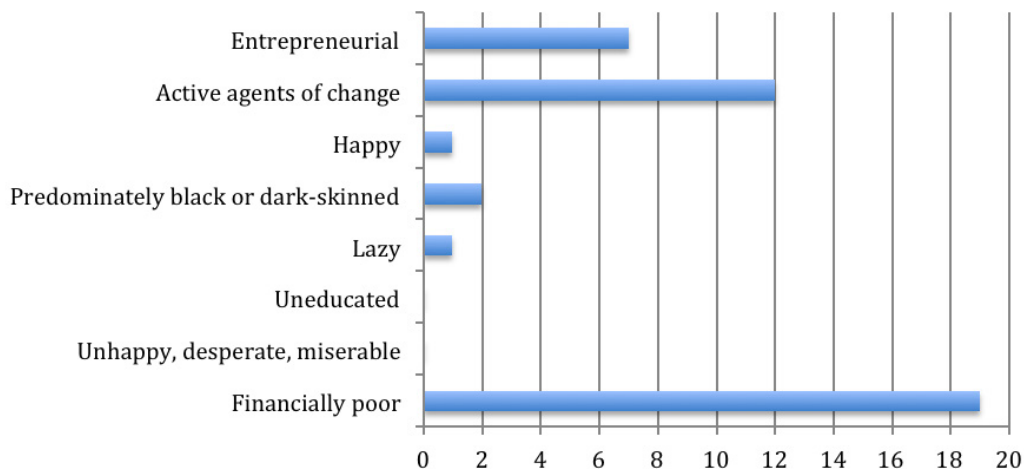
Favelas are...

(of 99 articles)



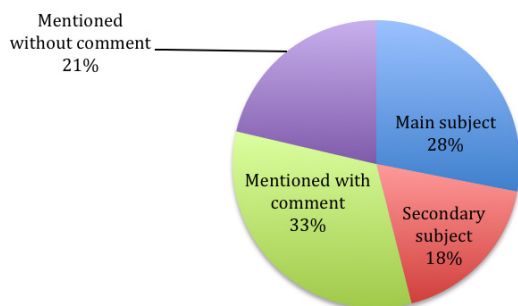
Favela Residents Are...

(of 99 articles)

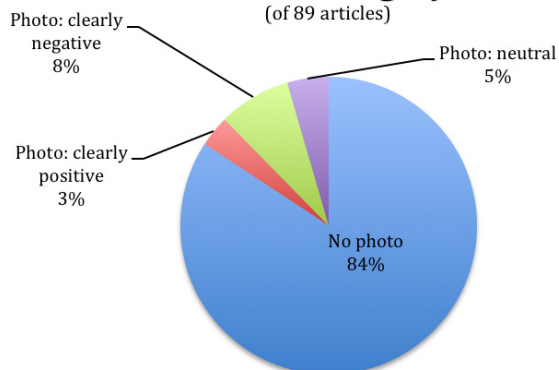


APPENDIX E. The Telegraph

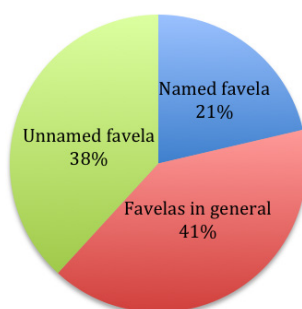
Centrality (of 89 articles)



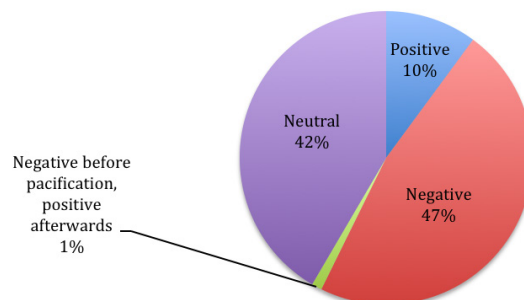
Favela Imagery (of 89 articles)



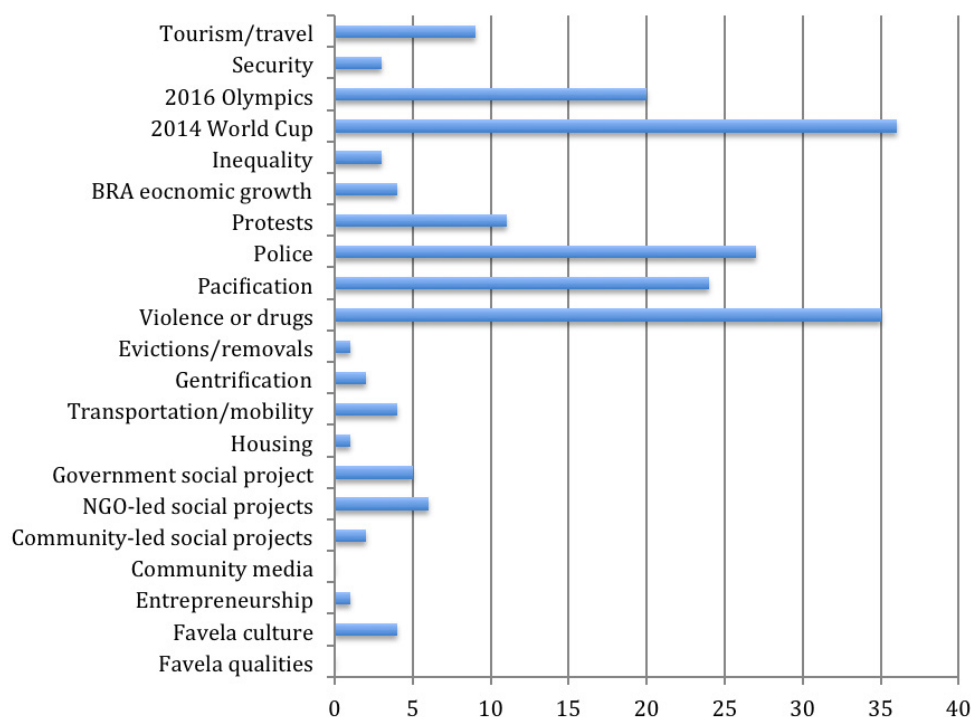
Which Favela? (of 89 articles)



Overall impression (of 89 articles)

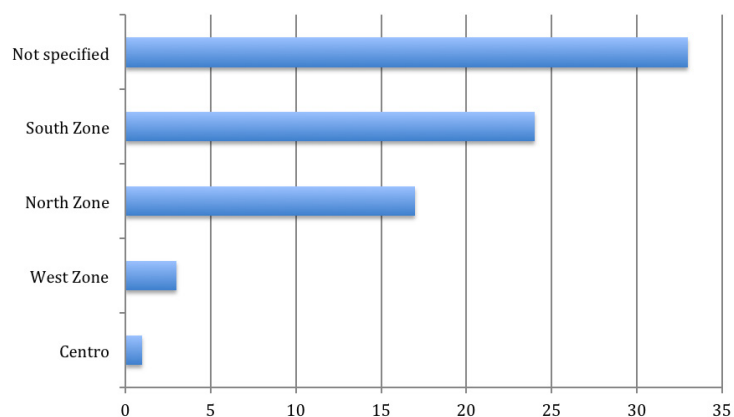


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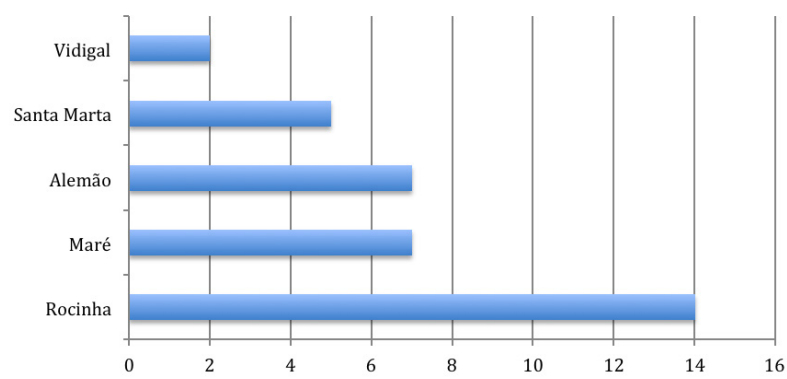
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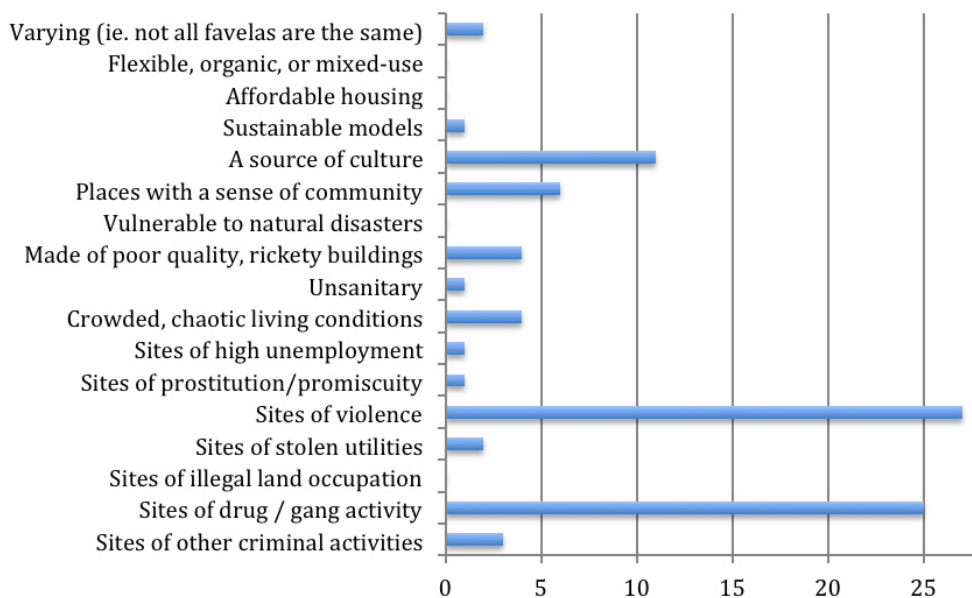
Top Mentioned Favelas

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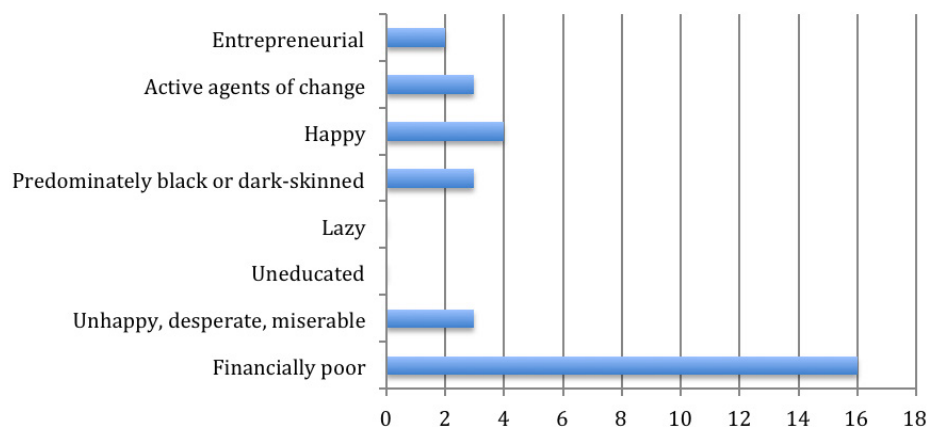
Favelas are...

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Favela Residents Are...

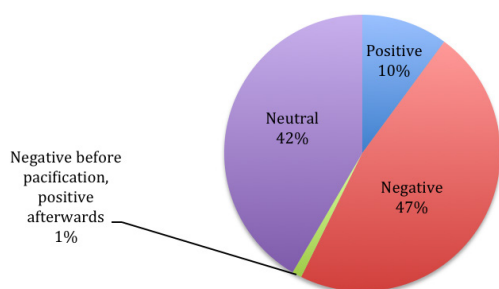
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APPENDIX F. The Daily Mail

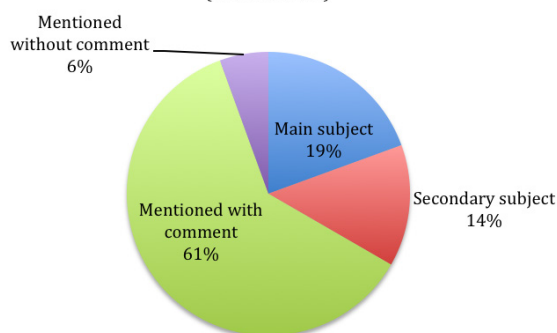
Overall impression

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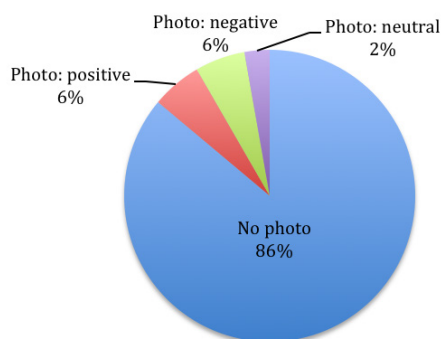
Centrality

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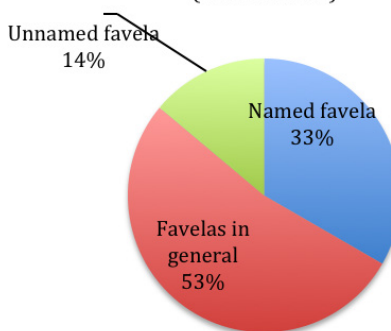
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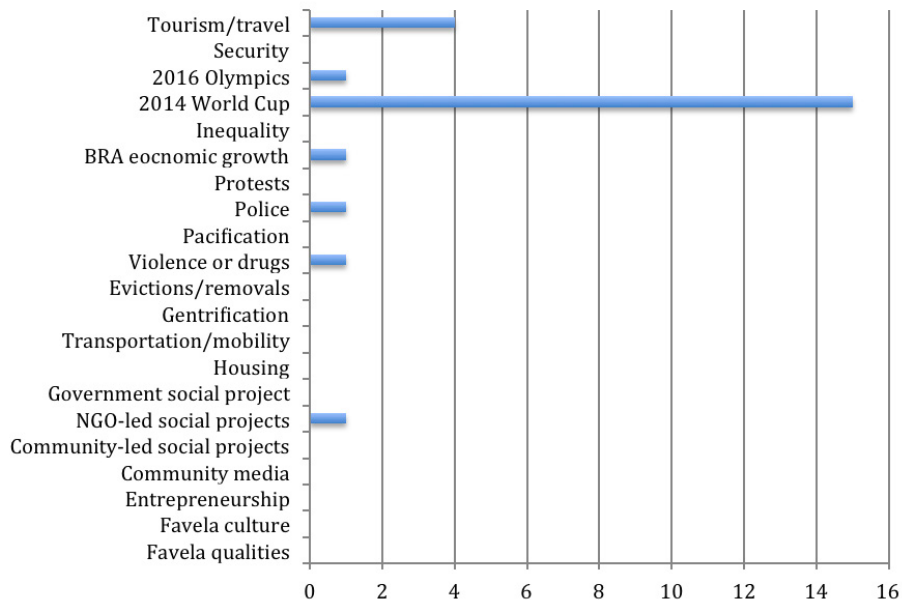
Which Favela?

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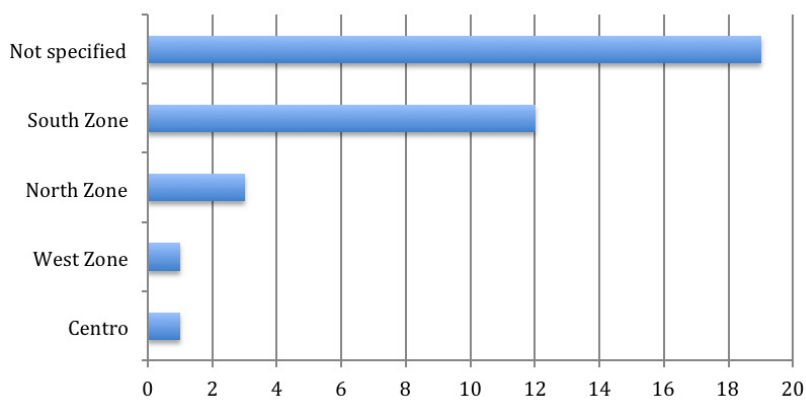
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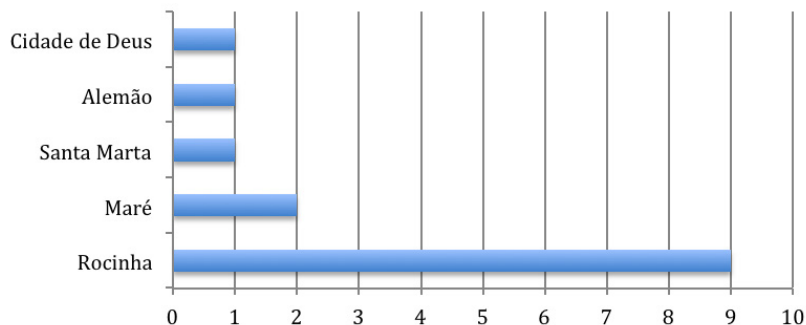
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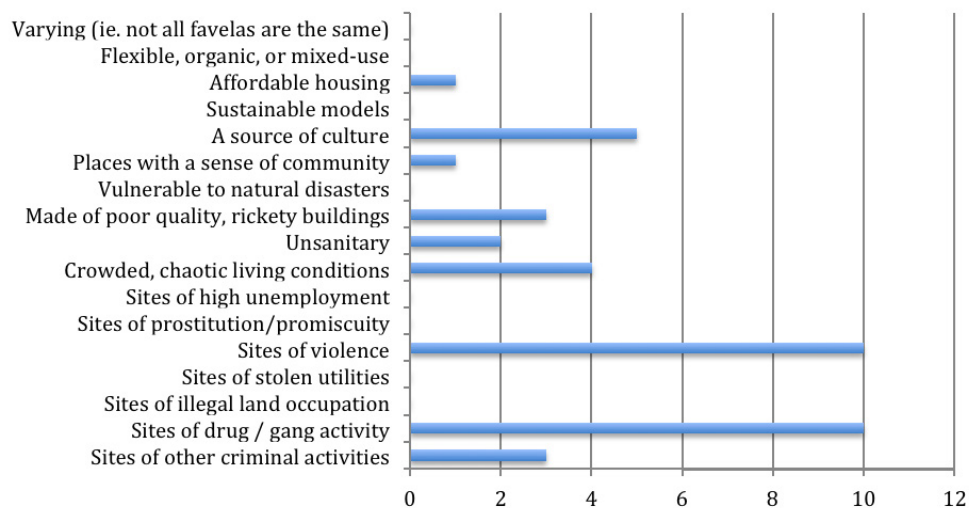
Top Mentioned Favelas

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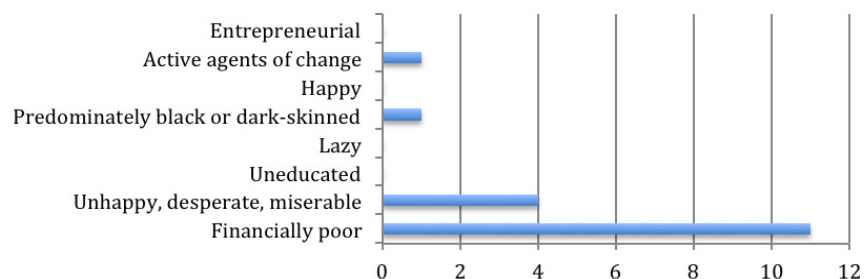
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Favela Residents Are...

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[A Good Payday for Banks in Petrobras Sale](#)
['Feel Free. Be Yourself. It's the Only Marketing Device That Can Work.'](#)
[The Hills Are Alive](#)
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[Reyna Has Lesson Plan for U.S.](#)
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[From Field to Congress, Soccer Star Leaves His Mark](#)

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[Exploring the Social and Environmental Challenges as Brazil Prepares for Two Sports Spectacles](#)

[Brazilian Stories and Selfies Through a Pinhole](#)

[29 Minutes That Shook Brazil](#)

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[The Post-American Mall](#)

[Brazilian Officers Will Face Charges of Torture and Murder](#)

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[Brazil: Deadly Violence Erupts in Rio](#)

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[36 Hours in Rio de Janeiro](#)

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[In the Name of the Future, Rio Is Destroying Its Past](#)

[Californian With an M.B.A. Follows His Heart to Brazilian Funk](#)

[Rio Police Officer Is Indicted for Torture While Lecturing on 'Smart Policing' in New York](#)

[The World Cup Soundtrack](#)

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[Violence in the Newest Olympic City Rattles Brazil](#)

[Photographing Favela Funk](#)

[Party Down, Favela Style](#)

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[A Divided Rio de Janeiro, Overreaching for the World](#)

[Slum Dwellers Are Defying Brazil's Grand Design for Olympics](#)

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[Google, Microsoft Expose Brazil's Favelas](#)

['World Atlas of Street Photography' Author Jackie Higgins on the Art Form's Comeback](#)

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[Brazil Tries a Softer Approach to Crime](#)

[Rio's Efforts to Pacify Violent Slums Face Crisis](#)

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[Rio Officials Investigate Details In Dancer's Death That Sparked Riots](#)

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[Tight Security Will Restrict Pope During Middle East Visit](#)

[Hope Fades in Brazil for a World Cup Economic Boost](#)

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[The Street Dance of the Rio Slums Comes to New York City](#)

[Brazilian DJ to Funk Up New York](#)

USA Today

[U.S. water polo's Azevedo plans on gold 'one way or another'](#)

[In Rio, Lapa is where it's at](#)

[With crime reputation, Brazil beefs up security for Cup](#)

[Reality check for England with Rio favela visit](#)

[Some Brazilians choose protests over World Cup](#)

[Voices: In Brazil, economic gaps just one road apart](#)

[Five weeks, 21,595 miles and a lifetime of memories from the 2014 World Cup](#)

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[Click to Download: Arcade action](#)

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[From Ferguson to Rio: two black teenagers shot dead by police, two very different reactions](#)

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[How to build your own sustainable house](#)

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[Radical Cities - Latin America's revolutionary housing solutions](#)

[Rio de Janeiro captures 2016 Olympics - but now the work begins](#)

[Rio gun-battle claims 14 lives as drug dealers storm shantytown](#)

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[Security will not be an issue at 2016 Games, says Rio mayor](#)

[A bloodbath on my Rio doorstep](#)

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[Mafia assassination threat forces Brazil MP into exile](#)

[Brazilian cameraman killed in Rio shoot-out during police drugs raid](#)

[Brazilian 'drug lord' sees reign as 'king of the hill' end in car boot](#)

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[As Rio builds hotels for World Cup, countless families are trapped in squats](#)

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[Favela tourism in Rio de Janeiro](#)

[On a city trek in Rio de Janeiro, Michael Emmerson takes a back-street route through the favelas](#)

[As all eyes turn to Brazil ahead of next week's World Cup draw, Gavin McOwan walks the streets, beaches and mountains of Rio de Janeiro - and meets a football legend along the way](#)

[Too many funfairs, not enough toys: Germany's Christmas markets backlash](#)

[England's 2014 World Cup base offers Atlantic, Adele and unlimited golf](#)

[World Cup: fans' £6,000 bill for 13,500 mile odyssey if England reach final](#)

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[Brazil to order army into Rio slums as violence escalates before World Cup](#)

[Street Child World Cup kicks off in Brazil to tackle global problem](#)

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[The World Cup and Olympics threaten to overwhelm Rio - yet there is time to create a sensation out of disaster](#)

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[Rio 2016 Olympic preparations damned as 'worst ever' by IOC](#)

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[In Rio and Manaus Fifa's racketeers will show they are the only game in town](#)

[England's Daniel Sturridge will do whatever it takes to beat Uruguay](#)

[How Brazil's World Cup has sold its people short in the Amazon](#)

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[From slave songs to samba, the vibrant rhythms of Brazilian dance come to Britain](#)

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[RIO FERDINAND: I'm honoured to be part of BBC team, but I'm not done with playing yet"](#)

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[Rio-bocop... armed and ready for the World Cup: Elite troops carrying rifles, stun grenades and combat knives will tackle fans who cause trouble in Brazil](#)

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[Rejoice! FM radio fans have seen off the digital dictators \(for now\): Switch from FM signals to digital has been delayed to 2015](#)

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[Harry has a ball in Brazil: Rugby, volleyball and a fond salute to his big brother as Prince takes charm offensive to the beach](#)

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[Brazil police accused of 'cleansing' favelas before World cup football carnival rolls into town](#)









