



Report: "Life in a second. Distractions and accidents on Spanish roads (2012-2021)"

DISTRACTIONS AT THE WHEEL CAUSED 6,200 DEATHS OVER THE PAST DECADE AND THEIR LETHALITY HAS INCREASED BY 52%

- **Distractions at the wheel cause 1 in 3 fatal accidents in Spain. Over the past decade, they have caused 238,000 accidents with victims, more than 30,000 serious injuries and 6,200 deaths.**
- **Although the number of accidents caused by distractions has been reduced, their lethality has increased by 52%. The reason... drivers do not respect speed limits, aggravating the consequences of these accidents. In fact, speeding penalties have increased by 26% since the pandemic.**
- **Despite the progress made with road safety, there is still a lack of awareness: 21 million drivers in Spain (76%) admit to being distracted when driving and 1.5 million confess to doing so "almost always".**
- **According to police reports, most accidents involving distraction are caused by losing focus while driving (31%), fatigue (29%), looking elsewhere (13%) and interacting with passengers in the vehicle (9%). However, drivers recognise that what distracts them most is the "peeping effect" when other accidents occur (80%), looking at the landscape (79%), getting lost in their thoughts (72%), using the built-in GPS or mobile GPS (52%) and reading Whatsapp or emails on their phone (34%).**
- **The biggest concern in terms of distractions is the use of mobile phones, although the difficulty in collecting this data in police reports limits its weight in the statistics. In fact, more than 13 million motorists (48%) admit to using their phone regularly when driving, and 600,000 confess to being "addicted" to using it behind the wheel.**
- **Distraction accidents usually entail rear-end collision, on secondary roads and at the weekend. Long straights and traffic lights are where drivers are most careless.**
- **Drivers in the Canary Islands, Murcia and Castilla y León are the ones who admit to being most distracted when driving, while those in Aragon, Extremadura and Catalonia claim to do so in a smaller proportion.**

Madrid, 9 May 2023. Who hasn't felt sleepy or tired at the wheel on a long trip? Who hasn't got caught up in their thoughts, been distracted contemplating the landscape or used a GPS device while driving? They might seem like normal behaviours, but they're not. At the wheel, a second is enough time for a person's life to change forever.

In fact, distractions, together with speeding and the consumption of alcohol and drugs, form the so-called "accident triangle" on the road. In 2021, **1 in 3 fatal accidents** in Spain occurred for this reason, reaching alarming figures over the past decade. **238,000 accidents with victims**, more than **30,000 serious injuries** and **6,200 deaths**.

And although the number of accidents caused by **distractions decreased significantly** between 2012 and 2021, their **lethality** increased by **52%**, to **2.4 deaths per 100 victims**. The reason for this? Speed, a factor that significantly aggravates the impact of becoming distracted. Not surprisingly, since 2019, **speeding fines** have increased by 26%.

These are some of the main **findings** of the study "**Life in a second. Distractions and accidents on Spanish roads (2012-2021)**", prepared by [Línea Directa Foundation](#) in collaboration with Centro Zaragoza based on the accident rate analysis of data from the ARENA database of the DGT (2012-2021) and the results of **1,700 surveys** carried out across Spain.

In the words of **Mar Garre, Managing Director of the Línea Directa Foundation**, "we want to raise awareness among drivers about the need to maintain attentive at all times while driving because distractions, along with speeding and alcohol consumption, are one of the main causes of deaths on the road. To this end, we need to be aware that nothing is important enough to put our lives and the lives of our family at risk."

Losing focus, the main reason for carelessness at the wheel

Distractions make you less alert while driving and significantly increase the risk of an accident. For example, and according to the Spanish Directorate General for Traffic (DGT), **using a mobile phone at the wheel multiplies the risk of having an accident by 4** and **sending a WhatsApp message increases that risk by 23**. But what are the most common distractions in traffic accidents? According to data collected by the DGT in police reports, **31% of accidents caused by distraction are due to losing focus**, followed by **fatigue** (30%), **looking at the surroundings** (13%) and **interacting with passengers in the vehicle** (10%).

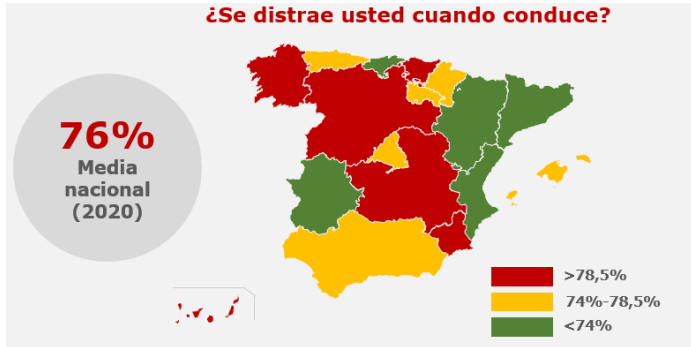
However, the biggest concern in terms of distractions at the wheel is the **use of a mobile phone**, although the **difficulty gathering information on this in police reports** limits its weight in the statistics. The figures speak for themselves: More than **13 million motorists** (48%) admit to using their phone regularly while driving, and **600,000** confess to being "addicted."

Distraction accidents usually occur on **interurban roads** (60%), **on weekends** (37%) and **involve a rear-end collision** (27%). The injured driver is usually an adult man who gets distracted, especially on long straights and at traffic lights.

Asked about the main reasons for distractions regardless of whether they had been in an accident or not, Spanish drivers recognise that they tend to "**peep**" on other accidents (80%), **use the built-in GPS** or mobile GPS when driving (50%) and **read WhatsApp messages** (35%). More than 10% of those surveyed admitted to suffering distractions at the wheel by recording themselves with their mobile and interacting on social media while driving.

Regions where drivers are most distracted behind the wheel

Despite the progress made in road safety, there is still a long way to go in terms of awareness: 21 million Spanish drivers (76%) acknowledge that they get distracted when driving and **1.5 million (5.4%) admit to suffering these mistakes "almost always"**.



By regions, drivers in the **Canary Islands, Murcia and Castilla y León** most admit to being distracted when driving, while those in **Aragon, Extremadura and Catalonia** claim to do so the least.

Distractions at the wheel are behaviours that can result in **economic penalties and points on driving licences**, depending on the severity of the distraction. Thus, for the

past year and as a result of the latest reform of the Traffic Law, using a mobile when driving is punishable by fine of 200 euros and 6 points.

Methodology

The study has been prepared in collaboration with Centro Zaragoza Instituto de Investigación de Vehículos (the Zaragoza Vehicle Research Institute). In relation to the technical specifications of the analysis, the DGT's ARENA database was used to identify the number, relative percentage and characteristics of all accidents with victims that occurred between 2012 and 2021 when distraction was the cause. And the 2022 DGT driver census has been used to extrapolate from the survey. The survey was carried out in collaboration with the consultancy firm MDK. It included 1,700 interviews with quotas by gender, age and Autonomous Community, with a sampling error of +/- 2.37% ~ 3.1% for the proportional sample, with a confidence level of 95%. The fieldwork was carried out between 27 March and 4 April 2023.

About Línea Directa Foundation

Línea Directa Foundation is a non-profit institution that was created in 2014 with the aim of helping to build a better and safer society by promoting various initiatives with road safety as its main area of action. The Foundation was set up by Línea Directa Aseguradora as a further show of its commitment to reduce traffic accidents.

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