



## **THE NUMBER OF DRIVERS KILLED AND WHO TESTED POSITIVE FOR PSYCHOTROPIC MEDICATION HAS INCREASED BY 40% IN THE LAST 3 YEARS**

- **The involvement of psychotropic medication in the most serious road accidents is a cause for concern: in the last three years, the number of drivers killed who tested positive for these substances has increased by 40%.**
- **In the last decade, the use of psychotropic medication was reported in almost 50,000 accidents involving 1,300 driver fatalities, which is a considerable percentage of all motorists killed in road accidents: 12% in the last available year.**
- **The outlook is not good: in the wake of the pandemic, 11 per cent of motorists admit to using more dangerous medication while driving than before, which may worsen the situation even further.**
- **A lack of knowledge is prevalent: almost half of drivers do not know how to identify medication that makes driving unsafe. In addition, 4.5 million motorists admit to having been behind the wheel after mixing medication and alcohol and 4 million admit to having experienced high-risk situations because of their medication.**
- **8 million Spanish drivers are currently undergoing medical treatment and another 2 million could be self-medicating.**
- **By autonomous community, Murcia and Extremadura are the regions where most accidents and dangerous situations occur for this reason, while the Basque Country and Castilla-La Mancha are the least affected.**

**Madrid, 13 July 2021.** The effect of medication on driving is **the great unknown for the vast majority of Spanish drivers**. This may be understandable, as medicines are a complex phenomenon and their effects vary depending on the type of medication, the dose and the person.

In this regard, it is important to clarify that **medicines should allow motorists to drive safely**, as long as they are consumed responsibly. Three conditions must be met for this to happen: it must be **medically prescribed**, it must be used for **therapeutic** purposes and its use **must not impair driving**. This is not always the case, as the presence of psychotropic medication in the most serious road accidents is becoming a cause for concern. In fact, in the last three years, the **number of drivers killed** who tested **positive** for these substances has **increased by 40%**.

Furthermore, in the last decade, the use of this type of medicine was present in almost **50,000 accidents with casualties**. According to an estimate based on data

from the **National Institute of Toxicology and Forensic Science (INTCF)**, some **1,300 drivers** who died in accidents were found to have tested **positive** for psychotropic medication. In fact, in the last available year alone, **12% of motorists** who died in traffic accidents tested positive for this medication. This is a situation that may become even worse, as **11% of Spaniards** admit to **taking more dangerous medicines** while driving as a result of the pandemic.

These are some of the conclusions of the study "**Medication and driving: a deadly cocktail. Consumption of medicines among Spanish drivers (2010-2019)**", carried out by the **Línea Directa Foundation** in collaboration with **FESVIAL** (the Spanish Foundation for Road Safety) and which analyses how the consumption of psychotropic medication has affected road safety over the last decade.

In the words of **Mar Garre, Director General of the Línea Directa Foundation**: "there is no need to panic: The behaviour of drivers is what is to blame for accidents, not the medicines themselves, so we must use them responsibly. We should only take medication when prescribed by a doctor, respect doses and any contraindications, read the package leaflet and consult our doctor or pharmacist if we are going to drive. We need to be vigilant, because the presence of psychotropic medication in fatal accidents is a growing phenomenon, which should make us aware of this problem".

Proportionally, the fate of pedestrians is even worse than that of drivers: **1 in 5 pedestrians killed in road accidents** over the last decade **were under the influence of psychotropic medication** at the time of the accident. In this regard, almost **400 pedestrians** who died as a result of a road accident had taken this type of medication.

### **Ignorance and irresponsible behaviour**

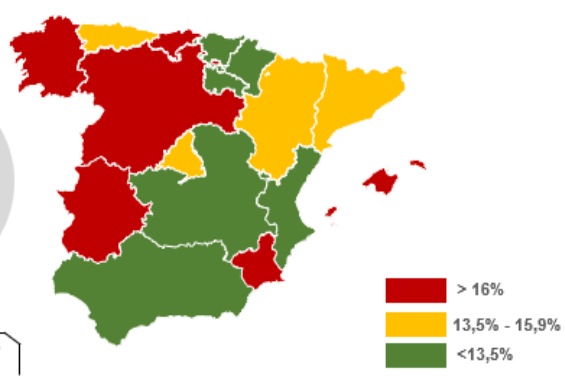
According to the study by the **Línea Directa Foundation**, there is a **widespread lack of knowledge** about the effects that medication can have on driving. In fact, almost **half** of Spanish motorists (46%) do not know **the meaning of the warning symbol** that suggests a medicine may affect their ability to drive and **3 out of 4 are unaware of the consequences** of the medicines they take.

This lack of knowledge leads to behaviour that could, at the very least, be described as irresponsible. Some **4.5 million drivers** admit to driving after mixing alcohol and medicines and another **2 million** after combining medicines with drugs. In addition, **1.1 million** motorists admit to continuing to drive when they feel the effects of the medication they are taking.

Explanations for this come very close to excuses: **2 out of 3 drivers** say that **the doctor never or hardly ever informs them** about the effects of medication on driving, a percentage that rises to **76%** when it comes to **pharmacists**. However, **more than 40%** of motorists admit that they also do not ask their doctor about the consequences of their medication **and more than 50%** do not always read the package leaflet to find out about this. This is worrying, as **8 million drivers** are undergoing medical treatment and another **2 million** may be self-medicating.

### **Accidents and risk situations due to the use of medication**

**14,4%**  
Media nacional



When asked whether they had experienced accidents or risky situations due to medication use, **14% of motorists**, or the equivalent of about **4 million**, acknowledged that they had been involved in one of these situations. By autonomous community, **Murcia, Extremadura and Galicia** are the territories that recorded the most incidents due to medication use, while the **Basque Country, Castilla-La Mancha and the Valencian Community** recorded the lowest amount.

As for the **profile of the drivers involved in accidents**, **men** are involved in more accidents and risky situations than women, who are more knowledgeable about the subject, tend to read the package leaflet more often to check its effects on driving, and believe that psychotropic medication can pose the same threat as drugs. By age, **people between 35 and 44 years old** are those who have the most accidents, and there is a strong tendency towards repeat offences, with **2 out of every 3 drivers** involved in medicine-related accidents being **repeat offenders**.

**Methodology**

This report has been produced in collaboration with the Spanish Foundation for Road Safety (FESVIAL). The data on drivers and pedestrians killed in traffic accidents were extracted from the 2010 to 2019 reports of the National Institute of Toxicology and Forensic Science (INTCF) by extrapolating the forensic analysis sample (50%) to the total number of drivers killed. In order to prepare the opinion poll, a survey was conducted among 1,700 drivers over 18 years of age with a driving licence, selected proportionally by sex, age and autonomous community. The field work took place between 14 and 17 June 2021 and the survey has a sampling error of +/- 2.38%.

**Línea Directa Foundation**

It is a non-profit institution that was created in 2014 with the aim of helping to build a better and safer society, promoting various initiatives with Road Safety as its main area of action. The Foundation was created by Línea Directa Aseguradora to take another step in its commitment to the fight against traffic accidents.

Línea Directa Foundation - <https://www.fundacionlineadirecta.org/>

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