

COVID-19 THREATENS SCHOOL TRANSPORT: 60% OF PARENTS DO NOT WANT THEIR CHILDREN TO USE IT DUE TO FEAR OF CONTAGION

- Although school transport is the first road safety group to achieve the target of '0 deaths' in traffic accidents, 6 out of 10 Spanish parents are considering stopping using it due to fear of COVID-19.
- School transport, which makes 247 million trips with children every year, has not recorded a single death in a traffic accident since 2012.
- Despite having an accident rate that is 11 times lower than that of private vehicles on the same journeys and transporting 630,000 children in Spain daily, parents' perception of its safety is mistaken and very limited, since they only give it a 3 out of 5, well below the score given for private cars or for making the journey on foot.
- Parents also have 'homework': only 9% personally check that safety measures are followed on school transport and 63% say that they are completely unaware of the measures, as "other people are responsible for that".
- Parents' proposals: implement a '0 rate' in blood alcohol tests for drivers of this means of transport (83%), make child restraint systems (CRS) mandatory on all buses (79%) and withdraw licences from companies that do not comply with regulations (63%).
- The most usual accident that school buses are involved in: on interurban roads due to head-on or side-on collisions on the homeward journey. The worst month is October, coinciding with the first weeks of 'back-to-school'.
- Galicia, Andalusia and Valencia are the Spanish communities with the most school transport accidents. The case of Galicia is particularly striking, as it accounts for only 5% of general accidents, but 21% of school transport accidents.

Madrid, 5 October 2020. 'Back-to-school' is an unavoidable event for Spanish families at this time of year. New matters relating to the COVID-19 pandemic are added to children's usual nerves and the financial stress for parents this year. Will safety and hygiene measures be followed? Will they wear the face masks? Will it be safe for my children? Doubts that are also affecting school buses, a means of transport used by **630,000 Spanish children for getting to school every day.**

In terms of fighting accident rates, it is not an insignificant matter, as school transport **is the first road safety group to achieve '0 deaths' in traffic accidents**, with an accident rate that is **11 times lower** than for private cars and **6 times lower than** for public transport. However, fear of COVID-19 might do away with this

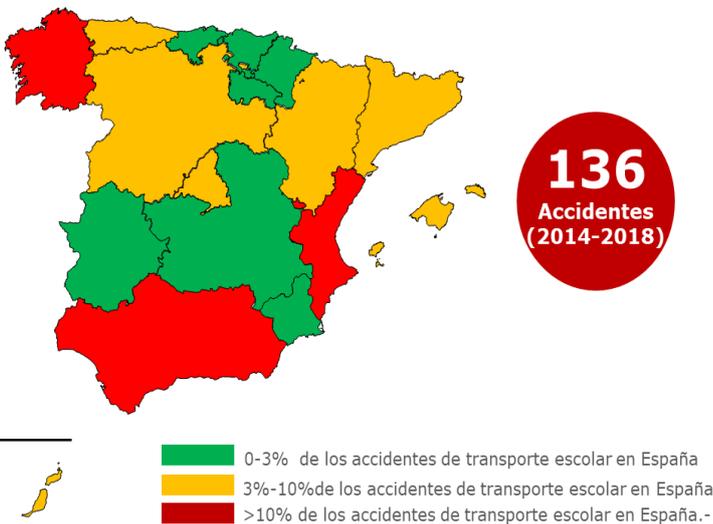
achievement, as **more than 60% of Spanish parents** do not want to use school buses due to fear of contagion, and this percentage could rise another **19%** if we count parents that would only use this means of transport if compliance with all health and hygiene regulations can be guaranteed.

This is the main question studied in the report called '**Transporte escolar: ¿viajan seguros nuestros hijos? Accidentalidad, normativa y percepción social en la era COVID**' (School Transport. Are our children safe travelling on it? Accident rates, regulations and social perception in the COVID era), run by the [Línea Directa Foundation](#) in collaboration with FESVIAL (the Spanish Foundation for Road Safety), which analysed all of the school transport accidents that have taken place in Spain over the past 5 years and ran a survey of 1,700 Spanish mothers and fathers on how their children get to school and how they perceive this means of transport in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.

One of the most striking points thrown up by the study is that, despite **99% of the people surveyed** stating that they have "never had a problem" with school buses and not a single death being recorded over recent years, parents only give school transport a **score of 3 out of 5 for safety**, far below the score for private cars or making the journey on foot. An opinion which official data strongly refutes, since no other means of transport has safety figures comparable to school buses.

In addition, parents also acknowledge that they have to do their 'homework', as only **9% of parents** personally check that safety measures are complied with on school transport and **63% admit that they are completely unaware of the measures**, as "other people are responsible for that".

Accident rates on school buses



School buses are, by far, the **safest way** for children to go to school, although they are used by a relative minority. Asked how they take their children to school, only **4% of parents** choose the bus as their children's usual mode of travel, although almost **90%** choose it for them to go to their **after-school activities** or go on **excursions**. This means that, every year, school buses make about **247 million journeys** with children.

Despite practically all children using the school bus at some time, the accident rate is excellent. Over the past 5 years, only **136 accidents** were recorded, with no deaths and only **5 serious injuries**. In fact, **since 2012** there have been no deaths at all recorded in traffic accidents for this means of transport. The **typical accident** involving school buses in Spain usually happens on an interurban road (58%), in a head-on or side-on collision (20%) and especially on the homeward journey. The month with the most accidents is usually **October**, coinciding with the first weeks of 'back-to-school'.

Although there are very few accidents involving these vehicles and the distribution of them by **autonomous community** is not statistically significant, **Galicia** (21%),

Andalusia (16%) and **Valencia** (14%) are the Spanish communities with the most school transport accidents. At the other end of the scale are **Cantabria, La Rioja and the Basque Country**, with just one accident involving this type of vehicle in the past 5 years. The case of **Madrid** and **Catalonia** is particularly striking, as, although they have a larger fleet and population and more activity than average for the country, they are not in the autonomous communities with the most accidents.

The offences most usually present in the accidents were being **distracted** (22%), **not yielding** (18%), **driving at an inappropriate speed** (10%) and **not maintaining the safety distance** (7%).

Parents' perceptions and proposals

Asked about the benefits of the school bus, parents state the **punctuality, sustainability** and **independence** it gives the children. They also positively value the **professionalism** of the drivers, the fares and the safety of the bus stops. The main area for improvement would be the **lack of appropriate seat belts** (32%), as they are not adapted to the size and weight of children.

As for the proposals of Spanish mothers and fathers for improving the safety of these buses, three stand out: implementing a **'0 rate'** in blood alcohol tests for drivers (83%), making **child restraint systems** (CRS) mandatory on all buses (79%) and **withdrawing their licence** from any company that does not comply with regulations (63%).

Methodology

To analyse the accident rate for school transport in Spain, the Línea Directa Foundation, in collaboration with FESVIAL (the Spanish Foundation for Road Safety), has studied all accidents involving this type of vehicle between 2014 and 2018, based on schedule, the month of the accident and the profile of the victim. With the support of the MDK consultancy firm, a survey was conducted with more than 1,700 Spanish mothers and fathers between 12 and 18 June 2020, weighting the results proportionately by sex, age and region, with a margin of error of +/-2.37%.

About Línea Directa Foundation

The purpose of the Línea Directa Foundation is to help improve road safety in Spain. Its activity is based on four main lines of action: dissemination, research, training and social action, always with the common denominator of fighting against traffic accidents. Its slogan is 'For Road safety. Here and Now.' More at: www.fundacionlinedirecta.org

Línea Directa Foundation

Santiago Velázquez
Director of External Communication
santiago.velazquez@fundacionlinedirecta.org
Tel.: 682 196 953
Ricardo Carrasco
ricardocarrasco.perez@lineadirecta.es
Tel.: 682 38 75 33

Trescom

Florita Vallcaneras/Isabel Gata
florita.vallcaneras@trescom.es
isabel.gata@trescom.es
Tel.: 914 115 868/630 701 069

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