

# The penalty points system driver's license reduces accidents on a temporary basis

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The measures that really cause a profound and steady change as to the accident rate are those that introduce safety elements into the car and become mandatory, like the safety belt. Credit: SINC

"We studied every accident reduction measure on an individual basis and we estimated the reduction percentage corresponding to the penalty points system driver's license, a legal reform that entered into force in Spain in the summer of 2006, which had already been implemented in several countries like Austria, Japan or Ireland," explains to SINC José Ignacio Castillo Manzano, US researcher and study co-author.

The effects of this measure were analyzed based on four different variables: deaths in [highway](#), deaths in city accidents, injured in highway and injured in city accidents.

According to the study published in the *Accident Analysis & Prevention* journal, the penalty points system driver's license resulted in an average reduction of 12.6% in the number of deaths in highway accidents over the two years after the law coming into force, following an initial impact during the first month of 16.3%. With respect to the number of people injured in the city and in the highway, the measure had a similar initial impact, but the effects disappeared quickly within less than a year, specifically nine and eleven months, respectively.

Regarding the fourth highway safety indicator, the number of deaths in urban accidents, researchers did not find any effect caused by said reform. "In the case of deaths in the city, specific reforms must be designed for the purposes of reducing them because it's a variable that follows a dynamic that is totally different from the rest," says the expert.

On the other hand, the impact of the penalty points system driver's license in our country is clearly above the average of other countries. "Pedagogically speaking, it is a measure that has had great impact on the press and television, but when it comes to the truth its effects are temporary and very short lasting. However, most studies in other countries refer to a reduction shorter than six months versus two years in [Spain](#)," adds Castillo Manzano.

"This is not a single measure on which to base an accident rate policy, but a measure that must be complemented with other measures," states the researcher. Data are available from the Statistics National Institute (INE, as per its acronym in Spanish), which extracts them from the Traffic General Directorate (DGT, as per its acronym in Spanish).

## **Mandatory use of the safety belt, a longer lasting measure**

Researchers also estimated the effect of the mandatory use of the safety belt. Such measure affects the same three variables as the penalty points system driver's license. "Since June 1992, the mandatory use of the safety belt has translated into a reduction of 12-13% in the number of deaths in highway accidents and the number of injured in highway and in the city. This percentage has remained constant over time until the end of December 2007, that is, about 15 years and a half," points out Castillo Manzano.

A conclusion that the DGT must take into consideration: of all the measures, those that really cause a profound and steady change as to the accident rate are those that introduce safety elements into the car and become mandatory, like the safety belt.

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