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Journal scan

Novoa AM, Pérez K, Santamariña-Rubio E, Borrell C. Effect on road traffic injuries of criminalizing road traffic offences: a time-series study. *Bull World Health Organ* 2011;89:422–431.

Road traffic injuries constitute a major public health problem in Spain. In recent years, the Spanish government has implemented several measures to reduce the burden of traffic injuries. Despite existing laws, the number of injuries and deaths attributable to speeding and drunk driving was still extremely high. To further reduce road injuries linked to these behaviours, the penal code was modified on 1st December 2007 in which several traffic offences were criminalised. The main criminalised offences were driving over the speed limit, drunk driving, reckless driving, and driving without a license. There is novelty in this study because it fills gap by examining the effect of criminalising several road behaviours on the numbers of drivers involved in injury collisions and of people injured in traffic collisions in Spain. Investigators used interrupted time-series design to conduct an evaluation study in drivers involved in traffic collisions and the number of people injured in traffic collisions in Spain in 2000–2009. Data was collected from Road Traffic Crashes Database of Spain's General Traffic Directorate. Time-series analysis was done by Poisson regression models, controlled for time trend, seasonality, fuel consumption and previous road safety interventions to account for changes in potential confounders, such as improvements in vehicle safety or in road behaviour, throughout the study period.

To control for changes in exposure, we adjusted for national fuel consumption in the models. It was found that there was clear reduction in the number of male drivers involved in injury collisions compared with the expected numbers; notably, no such reduction was observed among female drivers. The largest reductions in risk were observed for seriously injured and fatally injured drivers, all ages <65 years, non-urban roads and during both day and night time. Greater reductions were observed among young male drivers, especially those riding motorcycles and mopeds may be, at least to some extent, because men and young drivers tend to engage in the riskier behaviours that were criminalised by the reformed penal code and to the fact that riders of powered two-wheel vehicles, especially mopeds, tend to be less compliant with road safety legislation. Large sample size allowed authors to stratify the analysis by relevant variables such as age, sex, type of road user, road type, and time of collision and the long pre-intervention period provided analytical stability. However, they were unable to separately analyse the effect of each of the road behaviours penalised. The results of the study suggest that criminalising certain road traffic behaviours can effectively improve road safety by reducing both the number of drivers involved in injury collisions and the number of people injured in traffic collisions. These findings can probably be generalised to other countries that have efficient road traffic administration and that prioritize traffic law enforcement.

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doi: 10.1016/S0377-1237(12)60053-7