


Occupational Accidents Prediction in Brazilian States: A Machine Learning Based Approach

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Abstract: Occupational accident is an unexpected event connected to work that may result in injury and/or death of workers. Thus, the possibility of predicting the occurrence of occupational accidents can assist the government in labor policy-making, protecting the lives and health of workers. In this work, we propose the use of machine learning models to predict the occurrence of occupational accidents in each Brazilian state. We use multiple datasets concerning socio-economic, employment, and demographic data as sources to obtain an integrated table utilized to train regression models (linear regression, support vector regressor, and LightGBM) and make predictions. We verify that the developed models show high predictive performance and explainability, with the R-squared metric reaching 0.90.

1 INTRODUCTION

The first joint report produced by the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) to assess the burden of illnesses and injuries at work estimates that these cause the deaths of almost two million workers per year (Organization et al., 2021). In 2016 alone, occupational accidents and work-related diseases caused the death of 1.9 million people, overloading the countries' health systems, reducing family income, and decreasing economic productivity (Organization et al., 2021).


About Brazil, between 2012 and 2021, there were 6,161,623 (six million, one hundred and sixty-one thousand, six hundred and twenty-three) occupational accidents and work-related diseases reported to official government agencies, in addition to 22,954 (twenty and two thousand, nine hundred and fifty-four) deaths due to work-related reasons (MPT, 2023). It is worth highlighting that social security expenses estimated to result from such facts have already exceeded 133 billion reais (MPT, 2023) (approximately 25.7 billion dollars in 2023 exchange rate), a significant portion of the Brazilian Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

According to specialized literature, however, work-related accidents and illnesses are caused by

multiple factors that could be prevented (Alli, 2008). According to Brazilian legislation, employers are demanded to implement preventive measures to eliminate or mitigate the risks present in the workplace, while the government is responsible for enforcing labor legislation and promoting a safe working environment, with a focus on preventing accidents and work-related diseases. To achieve this objective, government agencies can use technology to increase the efficiency of their actions.

Recently, we have experienced the growth of machine learning (ML), driven not only by the data availability but also by the increasing processing power of computers (Alpaydin, 2021). This field of study allows machines to learn from past data and make predictions (Alpaydin, 2021). Machine learning algorithms have been applied to solve various problems, such as building recommendation systems, fraud detection, and image recognition (Alpaydin, 2021). Several areas of knowledge, such as medicine and engineering, have also made use of advances in the area to automate diagnoses and anticipate results.

Although Brazilian legislation requires the reporting of occupational accidents and work-related diseases for public entities, there is a delay between the reporting of occupational accidents and their use by the government. Thus, forecasting the number of occupational accidents can anticipate preventive actions.

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Furthermore, predicting work accidents for the country's economic sectors can help in establishing public policies for health and safety at work and prevention of occupational accidents.

The objective of this work is to obtain a dataset on the number of occupational accidents, as well as the extraction and processing of information that are used as independent variables in predictive models and which is obtained from multiple sources. Subsequently, we analyze the use of machine learning algorithms to predict the number of occupational accidents in each economic activity and Brazilian state (Brazilian territory divisions). As far as we know, this work is unprecedented in Brazil and may help the government to act more efficiently, reducing pension costs, and increasing the general well-being of society.

2 BACKGROUND AND RELATED WORKS

In this section, we briefly examine the fundamental concepts of machine learning and perform a bibliographical review of the employment of ML in occupational accident prediction.

2.1 Machine Learning

In recent years, the increase in computational capacity and data storage has driven the development of ML, which has been applied in many areas of knowledge. In this work, we intend to predict the number of occupational accidents in each Brazilian state and economic activity. Therefore, the target variable is a continuous number, and, as a consequence, we propose the use of regression models. Thus, let us briefly describe the ML regression algorithms implemented in the proposed experimental protocol.

The simplest regression model is called linear regression (James et al., 2013). It assumes that there is approximately a linear relationship between the features and the target variable. Data is used to find the best linear coefficients which minimize the discrepancies between predicted and actual output values. This kind of model, although simple compared to more modern models as the ones described below (Support Vector Machines - SVM and LightGBM), is widely used in science (James et al., 2013).

The SVM algorithms denote a class of ML models developed in the 1990s and which gained popularity since then (James et al., 2013). The SVM models were initially introduced for classification problems and later generalized to other situations, being cur-

rently used in various domains of application, such as text categorization and computer vision (Mammone et al., 2009).

LightGBM is a gradient boosting tree algorithm that was developed by Microsoft, focusing on the efficiency and scalability of the ML model (Ke et al., 2017). Compared to other boosting trees, LightGBM saves time and computational cost, allowing researchers and developers to deal with big datasets (Schapire et al., 1999).

Given the variety of available machine learning models, deciding which method produces the best results in a given dataset is an important task (James et al., 2013). Thus, let us briefly summarize the metrics used in this work to evaluate the prediction of the trained regression models.

The Root mean square error (RMSE) represents the squared root of the squared differences between the actual values and the predicted values of a variable. The closer RMSE is to zero, the better the predictions. On the other hand, the mean absolute percentage error (MAPE) is the mean percentual difference between the predicted and actual value of a variable. Finally, the coefficient of determination (R^2) represents the proportion of variance in the target that can be explained by the features. The values of R^2 range between 0 and 1 and the greater the value of this metric, the more explainable is the target variable by the features through the regression model.

2.2 Related Works

In recent years, some works have been produced using ML techniques on themes related to workers' health and, more specifically, using data on occupational accidents.

In this regard, Sarkar et al. predicted whether an accident caused damage to workers or property with an accuracy of around 90% (ninety percent) by performing tests with SVM and ANN (Artificial Neural Networks) and applying GA (genetic algorithm) and PSO (particle swarm optimization) algorithms to refine the hyperparameters of the models (Sarkar et al., 2019). In turn, Recal et al. used logistic regression, SVM, ANN, and SGB (Stochastic Gradient Boosting) to classify work accidents that occurred in the construction industry in Turkey, working in two scenarios: binary prediction (fatal accident or not) and prediction in three classes (simple, severe, or fatal accident) (Recal and Demirel, 2021). The authors conclude that the SVM and SGB algorithms performed better in the two-class problem, while the SGB obtained better metrics in the three-class problem. In addition, the authors state that the predictions

in the class of fatal accidents surpassed the results of other classes in accuracy, which reveals that the selected features have characteristics associated with the severity of accidents and, therefore, the trained models can be used to prevent future occurrences (Recal and Demirel, 2021).

Khairuddin et al. analyzed a public OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) database using five machine learning algorithms: SVM, KNN (K-Nearest Neighbors), Naïve Bayes, Decision Tree, and Random Forest (Khairuddin et al., 2022). The authors used a feature optimization technique through which only the three most important features of the models are maintained in the algorithms' training process. Using the described methodology, the authors could predict the possibility of hospitalization with 89% accuracy (eighty-nine percent) and with 95% accuracy (ninety-five percent) the occurrence of amputation as a result of an accident at work.

ML models were also used for predictions in some specific economic activities. Koc et al., for example, used data from approximately 48,000 accidents in civil construction in Turkey and predicted the possibility of permanent disability of the injured workers with an accuracy of 82% (eighty-two percent) through the application of the algorithm XGBoost (Extreme Gradient Boosting) and with the use of a genetic algorithm to fix the hyperparameters of the model (Koc et al., 2021).

In another work, Scott et al. used prehospital care data to predict which admissions occurred as a result of occupational accidents in rural areas (Scott et al., 2021). Intending to help reduce the underreporting of occupational accidents, the authors used the Naïve Bayes algorithm and claimed to reduce by 69% (sixty-nine percent) the need for visual inspection of pre-hospital care cases (Scott et al., 2021). In the medical-hospital activity, Koklonis et al. used post-accident (or post-incident) data to classify events into five classes: needle/cut accident, fall, incident, accident, and safe condition (Koklonis et al., 2021). The authors categorized the data into the classes above with an accuracy of 93% (ninety-three percent), performing tests with the Naïve Bayes, MLP (multilayer perceptron), KNN, and BN (Bayesian Networks) algorithms.

In Brazil, the Labor Inspectors created a binary classification model for accidents that was able to create a probability of occurrence of accidents (Toledo et al., 2020). The trained model presented an 86% (eighty-six percent) accuracy in the test dataset and the generated probabilities have been used in the planning of inspections in the country (Toledo et al., 2020).

3 OCCUPATIONAL ACCIDENTS IN BRAZIL

As an initial step in building predictive models, it is necessary to understand the data used as features and target variables. To this end, an exploratory analysis of the occupational accident data in Brazil is performed in this section.

Brazilian laws oblige all companies in which occupational accidents and work-related diseases occur to communicate these facts to the government through a digital document named Occupational Accident Communication (CAT - Comunicação de Acidente de Trabalho). Data about the employee (like age, gender, and professional activity), the accident/disease (type of accident/disease, causative factor, etc.), and the employer (such as its economic activity) are informed in this document. These data are received by the Brazilian government which creates a dataset that is used in this work, after an anonymization process. It is worth mentioning that we do not consider work-related diseases, just maintaining in the analyzed data the occupational accidents. From 2016 to 2022, a total of 2.387.938 occupational accidents were reported in Brazil, which will be analyzed in what follows.

In Fig. 1, we represent the line plot of the number of occupational accidents (shown in blue) and deaths resulting from accidents (shown in red) in Brazil for the period under consideration. We can observe that the number of accidents decreased in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, while, on the other hand, there was an increase in the number of work-related diseases, due to the same cause. In the period considered excluding the year 2020, the number of occupational accidents was at the level of 450 thousand, while the number of deaths resulting from work-related causes was close to 2 thousand.

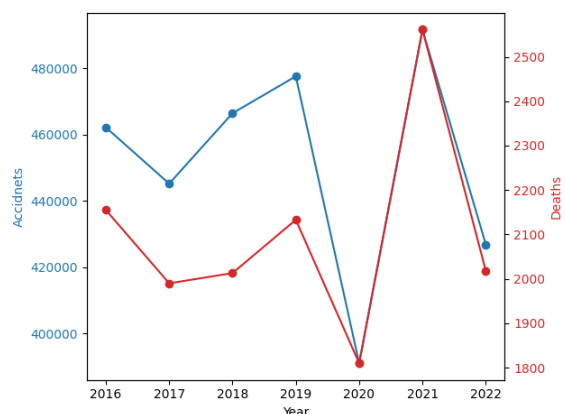


Figure 1: Line plots of the number of occupational accidents and work-related deaths.

In Fig. 2, we show the distribution of occupational accidents in Brazil by sex and age of workers, presenting the age pyramid of these accidents in Brazil. It is possible to verify that the most affected age group is made up of young men, aged between 21 and 25 years. In general, it is also possible to verify that the number of occupational accidents is higher among men (69.4% of the occupational accidents occur with men). The types of activities carried out by male workers in Brazil and the inexperience of young people at work may explain this demographic distribution.

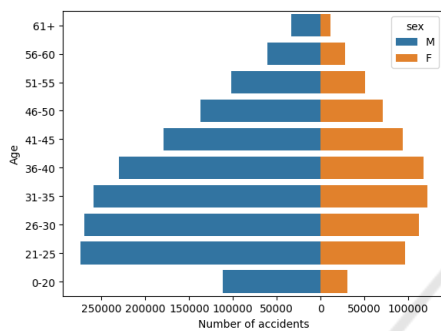


Figure 2: Age pyramid of work-related diseases in Brazil.

In Fig. 3, we can observe the distribution of occupational accidents by the type of injury, classified using the category of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases (ICD), for the ten most frequent types. We can notice that injuries related to musculoskeletal factors (hand and wrist injuries and fractures, foot and ankle injuries, etc.) are the most frequent diseases consequent to accidents. Communicable diseases are also in the list, most related to health assistant professionals.

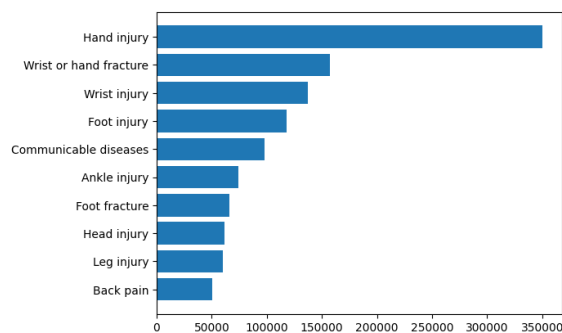


Figure 3: Bar diagram of the distribution of occupational accidents in Brazil by type of injury for the ten most frequent types.

In this work, we aim to obtain a machine learning model to predict the number of occupational accidents in the Brazilian states. Thus, the target variable is obtained from the CAT dataset as we discuss below.

4 PROPOSED APPROACH AND DATA PREPARATION

This section describes the methodology adopted in this work in addition to analyzing the steps in data preparation and the dataset obtained.

4.1 The Methodological Path

The methodology used in the present work is summarized in Fig. 4. Firstly, we use data from multiple sources to obtain an integrated dataset containing all the features and the target variable that are used in this work. Then, we execute a preprocessing stage and split the dataset into training and test data, which are used to implement the ML models and analyze the results. In this section, we detail the data integration and preparation step presented in Fig. 4, while the data preprocessing and ML model training and evaluation are described in Sec. 5.

It is important to mention that we used Python programming language (Van Rossum et al., 2007) in all steps of this work, from data preparation to model training and evaluation.

4.2 Data Preparation

Let us start by describing the data preparation, the first step of the methodology used in this work and depicted in Fig. 4.

In this work, the target variable is the number of occupational accidents in Brazilian states for each economic activity and by year. Thus, we use the data acquired from the mentioned CAT communication and obtain the number of occupational accidents in a given economic activity in a Brazilian city each year by grouping and counting the number of rows. When constructing the dataset, only accidents that occurred between 2016 and 2021 were kept, as we would not have all the features available for 2022.

The data used as features were obtained by integrating multiple datasets, as shown in Fig. 4. These datasets were obtained from public sources and the Brazilian Labor Ministry databases. Thus, an important contribution is made in this work: the integration of data from multiple sources to obtain a single unified table containing all variables needed to train the models.

The construction of a public sociodemographic dataset in Brazil has already been done (Toledo et al., 2023). Integrating data from public sources related to population, economy, employment, education, and health, the authors obtained a socioeconomic statistics dataset for all 5,570 Brazilian cities (Toledo

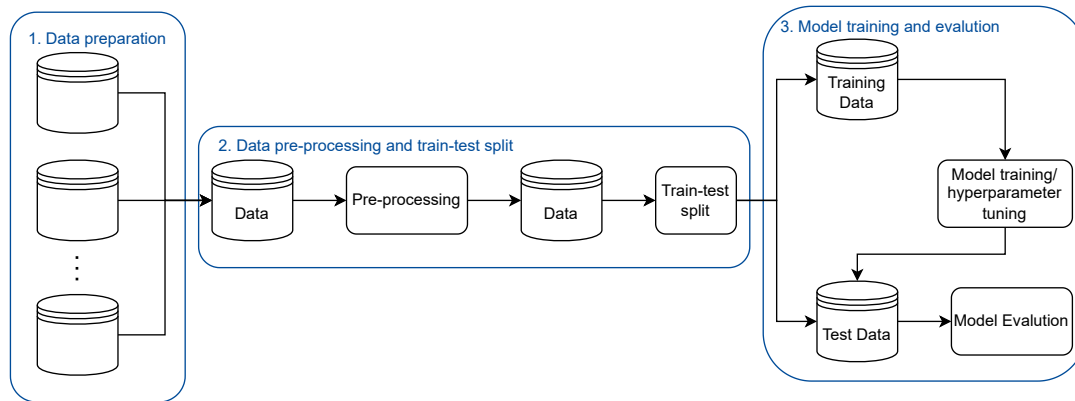


Figure 4: The methodological path used in this work.

et al., 2023). From these public sources, some variables are chosen to compose the dataset used in this work, as we discuss below.

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) represents the value of all the finished goods and services produced in a region and, as a consequence, it is related to the economic activity and the need for work. On the other hand, the Human Development Index (HDI) is related to health, education, and work conditions.

General data from Brazilian cities are also included as features: the population and working staff. We can expect that the greater a region is (bigger population and working staff), the greater the number of occupational accidents too.

From the Brazilian Labor Ministry databases, we include data related to the employers and employees. The economic activity of an enterprise, given by the Brazilian National Classification of Economic Activities (CNAE), is used as a categorical variable. The numbers of employers and employees in each Brazilian state are also included. It is important to observe that, as described in Sec. 3, the sex and age of workers are determinant variables in the occurrence of accidents. Thus, the mean age of the employees, the average time they work in a given employer, and the proportion of females were included as features in our study.

Finally, we included features obtained from the Brazilian Labor Inspection. The number of irregularities related to informal workers and the number of irregularities related to working hours are added, since the mentioned WHO/ILO joint report points out exposure to long work hours as the major cause of deaths related to work and informal jobs being correlated to the occurrence of accidents (Organization et al., 2021). In Brazil, Labor Inspectors stop work activities if serious and imminent risks to workers' health are detected, in procedures called embargos or interdictions, whose numbers per economic activity

in a given state are also included in this work. Since it should be expected that a higher number of occupational accidents occur in economic activities in which a greater number of irregularities are detected, the mentioned variables are considered in ML model training.

It is worth mentioning that the described datasets are joined using the Brazilian cities and the year as keys.

4.2.1 The Resulting Dataset

After the step of data integration, a unified dataset is obtained containing, for each Brazilian city, the number of occupational accidents in each economic activity and all the corresponding features. Brazil is divided into 27 states and, these regions, are divided into cities. As we intend to predict the accidents in each Brazilian state, we proceed to the proper aggregation summing all the numerical variables but the ones that are average numbers (and which begin with "avg"). At this step, we also calculate the population density (ratio between population and surface area) and employers' density (number of employers divided by the surface area). The features of the dataset used to train the machine learning models proposed in this work are displayed in Table 1. We describe each variable, informing its type, unity, maximum and minimum values.

It is essential to state that we take into account the correlation between variables when choosing the features for model training and if a feature pair has a correlation near one we removed one of them, maintaining only the ones listed in Table 1. For example, initially, we intended to use the total number of female workers and the total salaried workers as features. But as the number of female workers and the number of employees have a Pearson correlation near 1, just the second variable is maintained. Similarly, the total

Table 1: Data dictionary.

Variable	Description	Type	Unit	Min value	Max value
UF	Brazilian state	string	-	-	-
Cnae	Brazilian economic activity classification	string	-	-	-
Population	Population	int	-	1.85×10^3	3.08×10^7
WorkingStaff	Working staff	int	-	0	2.33×10^6
PopulationDensity	Number of people by km^2	float	-	0.6	5363.08
HDI	Human Development Index (HDI)	float	-	0.469	0.847
GPD	Gross Domestic Product (GDP)	float	10^3 R\$	2.36	2.18×10^7
NrEmployers	Number of employers	int	-	0	633,656
EmployersDensity	Number of enterprises by km^2	float	-	0	5.36
NrEmployees	Number of employees	int	-	0	1.07×10^6
PropFemale	Proportion of female workers	float	-	0	1
AvgAge	Average age of employees	float	years	0	56.70
AvgTime	Average time working for the employer	float	years	0	25.55
NrIrregularities	Nr. of irregularities related to informal workers	int	-	0	662
NrIrregHours	Nr. of irregularities related to working hours	int	-	0	270
NrEmbargoes	Nr. of embargoes/closures	int	-	0	1547

salaried population and the working staff have a correlation coefficient near one and, thus, the first feature was removed.

5 EXPERIMENTAL PROTOCOL

In this section, we describe the data preprocessing and the machine learning models training, the final steps of Fig. 4.

5.1 Data Preprocessing

As a data preprocessing step, null numerical data were replaced by zero. The categorical variables were transformed into numerical variables using the target encoding strategy (Micci-Barreca, 2001), since there are a large number of variable categories, a situation for which the strategy has proven effective (Pargent et al., 2022). The numerical variables were resized by subtracting them from their means and dividing them by the standard deviation of their distributions, a strategy called standard scalar. After the preprocessing step, the resulting dataset has 11,255 (eleven thousand, two hundred and fifty-five) rows (also called instances in ML problems).

5.1.1 Train-Test Split

Evaluating the performance of an ML model in an unbiased dataset is an essential step. So, it is a common practice to split the initial dataset into training and test ones. In this work, the dataset resulting from the preprocessing step was randomly divided into a training dataset, which contains 80% of the data instances, or 9,004 (nine thousand and four) rows, and

a test dataset, including the remaining 20% rows, or 2,251 (two thousand, two hundred and fifty one).

5.2 Model Training

As already mentioned, we intend to predict the number of occupational accidents in Brazil in each state and for each economic activity. So, it is clear that this problem is a regression one and, as a consequence, the correct choice of the studied models must be made.

Although linear regression is a very simple supervised learning model, it is useful and widely used in science (James et al., 2013). In this work, linear regression with the standard hyperparameters of the Python library Scikit Learn is used as a baseline model.

In this study, we analyze the use of models SVM and LightGBM, since they have been presenting a high performance in regression problems (Bentéjac et al., 2021) and were also used in similar problems to the one proposed in this work in other countries (Di Noia et al., 2020; Toledo et al., 2020).

The ML models have a set of hyperparameters, which are adjusted in training steps, that can improve the models' performance and help prevent overfitting. The hyperparameter search space used for SVM and LightGBM models can be seen in Table 2.

In the model training step and for hyperparameter search, we also use cross-validation with four folds for all the models and Bayesian optimization. In this process, the training dataset is divided into four folds in each iteration and, while one of them is used for evaluating the model, the other three are used for training the algorithm. After all of the iterations, the best hyperparameters are chosen and the

Table 2: Hyperparameter search spaces.

Model	Hyperparameter search space
SVR	$C:[0.1,1,10,100]$
	$\text{gamma}:[\text{'scale'}, \text{'auto'}]$ $\text{kernel}:[\text{'linear'}, \text{'poly'}, \text{'rbf'}]$
LightGBM	$\text{max_depth}:[5, 9]$
	$\text{num_leaves}:[6, 17]$
	$\text{boosting_type}:[\text{gbdt}, \text{dart}]$
	$\text{subsample}:[0.7, 0.8, 0.9, 1.0]$
	$\text{colsample_bytree}:[0.8, 0.9, 1.0]$ $\text{learning_rate}:[0.05, 0.5]$

Table 3: Metrics for the implemented regression models.

Model	R^2	MAPE	RMSE
Linear regression	0.492	21.27%	743.20
SVR	0.725	3.31%	546.54
LightGBM	0.908	1.86 %	316.60

whole dataset is used to train the algorithm, which is evaluated with the test dataset.

6 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses the predictions obtained by the ML models trained as shown in Sec. 5.

In Table 3, we list the metrics obtained for the models in the test dataset. We can notice that the LightGBM has the higher R^2 and the lower values of MAPE and RMSE. Observe that the value of R^2 reaches the values of 0.725 for SVM and 0.908 for LightGBM, which tells us that the features and models chosen explain the target variable, distancing from random guesses.

Upon analyzing the MAPE metric, we can observe that there is only a 1.86% variation between the actual and predicted values for the target variable when using the LightGBM model. On the other hand, the values of RMSE presented in Table 3 are below the standard deviation for the target variable, which is 1051.72.

The LightGBM algorithm calculates a score for each feature, representing the feature's importance, with a higher score representing a larger effect on the prediction. We depict in Fig. 5 the relative feature importance for the trained model.

We can observe that the Brazilian state has the highest importance. The territory is related to the economic activities developed and to the population, which can explain the score. The total work staff is the second most important feature since we can expect a growth in the number of accidents in territories with a higher number of workers. The average time that the employees work with the employers is also

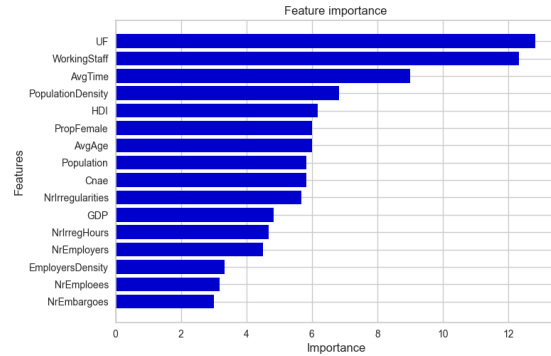


Figure 5: Feature importance for LightGBM algorithm.

Table 4: Hyperparameter search spaces.

Model	Best hyperparameters
SVR	$C = 10$
	$\text{gamma}=\text{'auto'}$ $\text{kernel}=\text{'poly'}$
LightGBM	$\text{max_depth} = 9$
	$\text{num_leaves} = 7$
	$\text{boosting_type}=\text{gbdt}$
	$\text{subsample}=0.7$
	$\text{colsample_bytree}=1.0$ $\text{learning_rate}=0.48$

an important feature, indicating that the experience in the workplace reduces the probability of accidents.

Finally, for reproducibility reasons, we list in Table 4 the models' hyperparameters that gave the best metrics in the training step.

7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this work, we obtain an integrated dataset containing the number of occupational accidents in each Brazilian state and socioeconomic variables used as features. We, thus, examine the use of ML models to predict the number of occupational accidents in the country.

Analyzing the results obtained so far, it is possible to verify that it has been possible to build predictive models to predict the number of accidents occurring in a given state of the federation.

The high R^2 values obtained for the SVM and LightGBM algorithms allow the conclusion that the trained models can explain the target variable based on the selected features. Besides that, MAPE values in the order of 1.8% to 3.3% mean that there is a low percentual difference between the predicted and actual value of the accident number.

In this work, we predict the number of work accidents for each economic activity in Brazilian states. A

challenge that still needs to be faced is the prediction of work accidents for each of the 5,570 (five thousand five hundred and seventy) cities in the country, which we intend to do in future contributions. In this problem, there is a greater granularity in data, considerably increasing the number of training instances. Furthermore, not all economic activities are developed in all cities in the country, which will need to be analyzed in the data preprocessing stages.

Another possibility for future work is the use of time series analysis techniques to forecast the number of occupation accidents. To this end, it is necessary to perform appropriate transformations in the occupational accident dataset, evaluate the granularity of the information, and choose the correct experimental protocol.

Given the importance of the government's preventive action strategies to safeguard workers' health, the continuity of research seems to be essential.

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