



Socioeconomic inequalities in obesity prevalence: Portuguese Health Examination Survey results

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BACKGROUND

Obesity is recognized as a serious public health issue, since it constitutes an important risk factor for mortality and morbidity associated to cardiovascular diseases and diabetes [1].

This study aimed to estimate the prevalence of obesity in the Portuguese population, based in the direct measurement of weight and height, and to assess socioeconomic inequalities (education and occupation) in the obesity prevalence.

METHODS

Study design: INSEF is a nationally representative cross-sectional prevalence study.

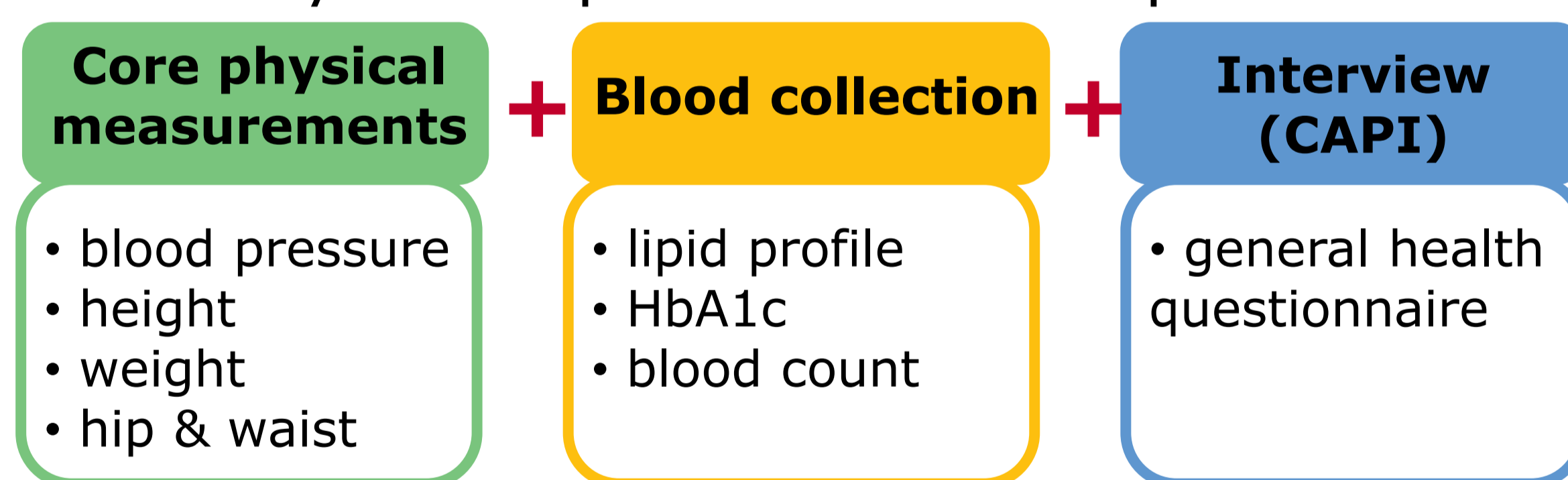
Target population: individuals aged between 25 and 74, living in Portugal for more than 12 months, non-institutionalized and able to follow an interview in Portuguese.

Sampling: two-stage stratified cluster sampling.

Sample size: n=4911

Fieldwork: February 2015 – December 2015

The survey encompasses three components:



Measurement: INSEF participants' height and weight were measured according to European Health Examination Survey procedures.

Definition: Obesity was defined as body mass index ≥ 30 kg/m².

Statistical analysis: Poisson regression was applied to estimate adjusted prevalence ratios (aPR) of obesity according to sex, age group, education and employment status.

RESULTS

▪ The overall prevalence of obesity was 28.7% [CI_{95%}: 26.8%-30.6%].

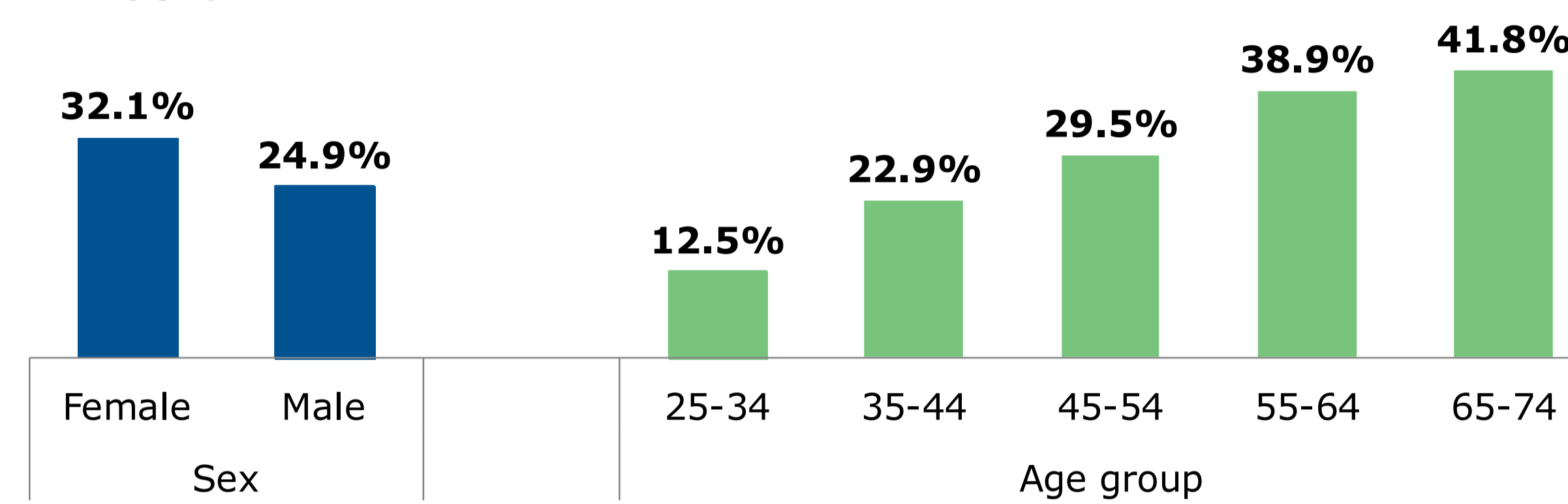


Figure 1. Prevalence of obesity by sex and age group

▪ The prevalence of obesity was 32.1% among females and 24.9% among males and it increased with age from 12.5% to 41.8%.

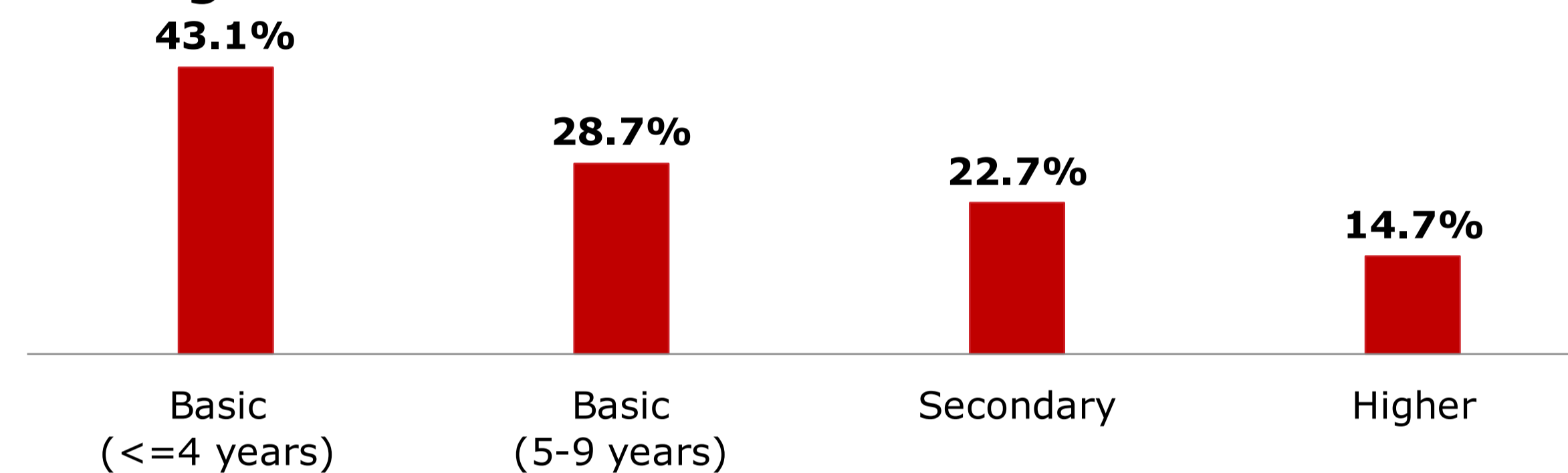


Figure 2. Prevalence of obesity by level of education.

▪ Prevalence of obesity was higher for individuals with basic education, unemployed and other without professional activity (retired individuals, housewives, permanently disabled people).

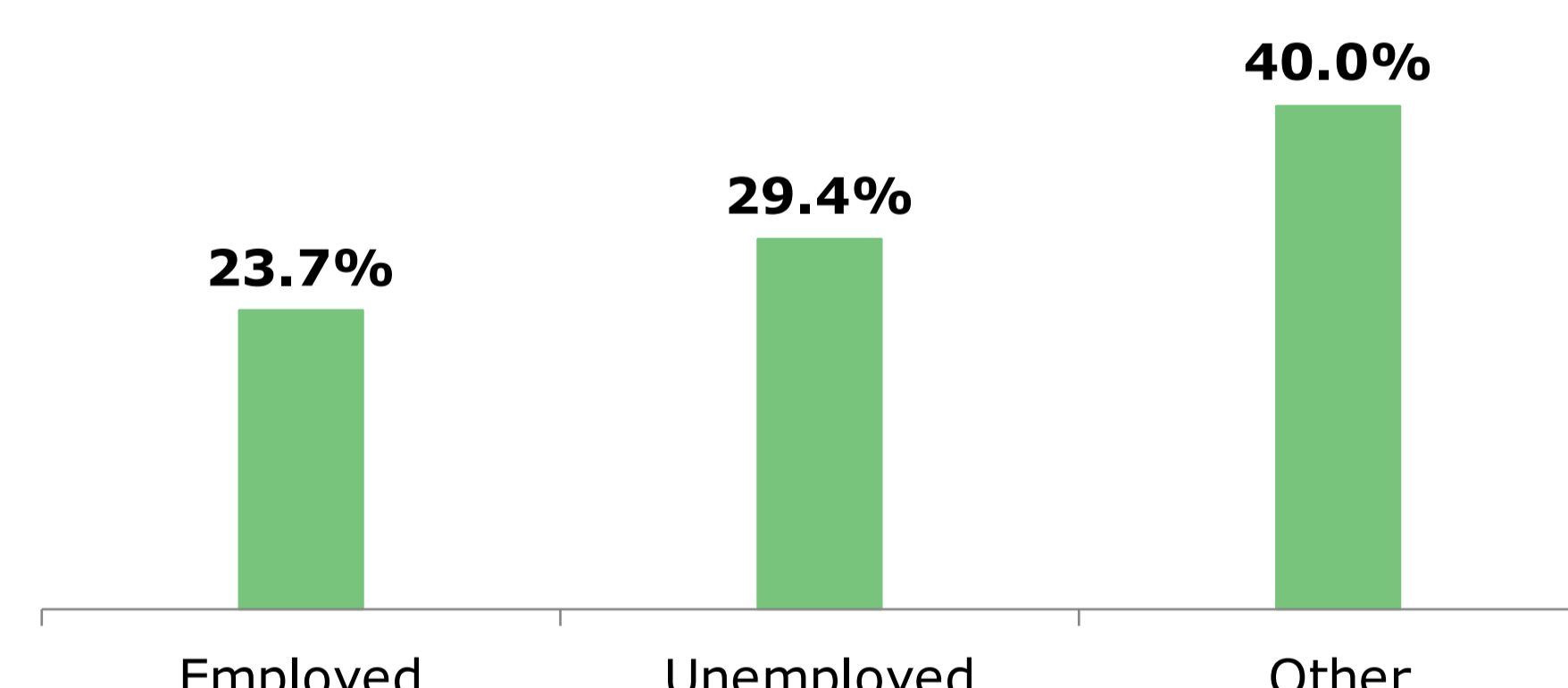


Figure 3. Prevalence of obesity by employment status.

▪ After adjustment, significant differences in prevalence rates of obesity were verified according to sex, age group and level of education. No significant differences were observed according to employment status.

▪ The prevalence of obesity was higher among females (aPR = 1.3 [1.2, 1.4]) than males.

▪ Older age groups were more affected compared to the 25-34 years old group, with the 65-74 years old age group presenting the highest prevalence (aPR=2.4 [1.5, 3.6]).

▪ Individuals with basic education presented the double of the prevalence of obesity than individuals with higher education (aPR=2.1 [1.6, 2.8]).

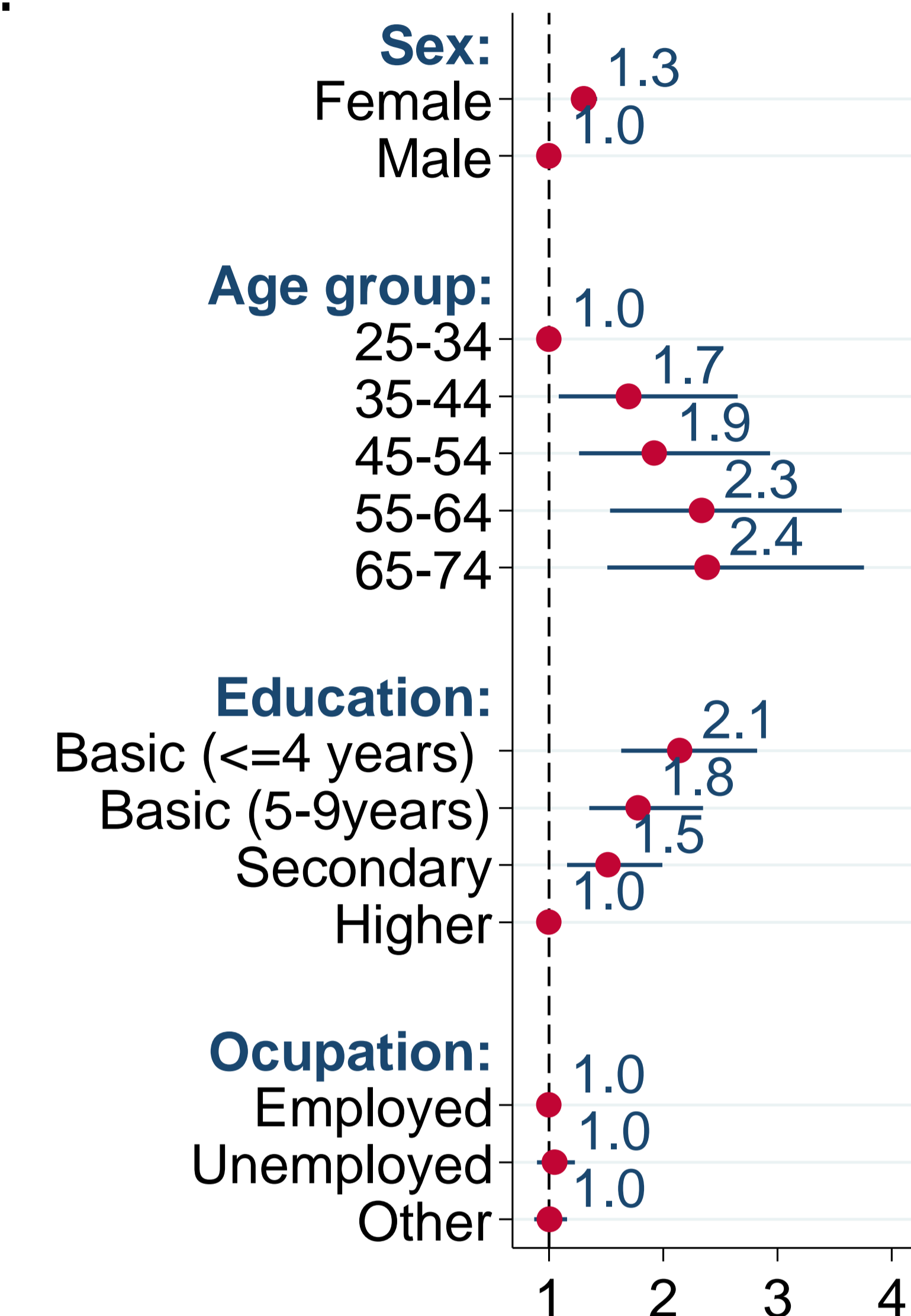


Figure 4. Adjusted Prevalence ratios of obesity by sex, age group, level of education and employment status.

CONCLUSIONS

Obesity affects 287 per 1000 adults aged 25-74 years old in Portugal. INSEF provided evidence that a higher prevalence of obesity is found in older individuals, with lower education levels. Public health interventions that focus on specific population subgroups are required for obesity prevention, namely throughout health literacy strategies.

REFERENCES

[1] Branca, Francesco, Haik Nikogosian, and Tim Lobstein. *The challenge of obesity in the WHO European Region and the strategies for response: summary*. World Health Organization, 2007.

FUNDING

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