

ADDICTIVE-RELATED BEHAVIOURS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: RESULTS FROM A NATIONWIDE STUDY IN PORTUGAL

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Take-home message

1. COVID-19 pandemic can increase maladaptive coping behaviours in some groups of the population
2. Public health interventions are needed to mitigate the negative consequences of this pandemic



Background

Individuals can engage in maladaptive behaviours in the short-to-long term (e.g., addiction-related behaviours, such as overeating, drinking, smoking) as a response to a pandemic context [1-5]. As a result, their health and wellbeing might be compromised [4-6].



Aims

This study aims to characterize self-reported changes in addiction-related behaviours and associated factors in the adult population during the first COVID-19 lockdown, in Portugal.



Methods

Study design: Cross-sectional study

Sample: Non-probabilistic sample of adults (≥ 18 years) residing in Portugal (mainland and autonomous regions)

Data collection: Online survey (May 22 to July 20, 2020); data on sugar-sweetened food intake, consumption of alcohol, smoking, cannabis and other substances, gambling, work-related indicators, and sociodemographic information

Data analysis: Data cleaning and weighting (by sex, age group, NUTS II and educational level). Logistic regression models conducted to assess potential determinants of addiction-related behaviours.



Results

- 3.982 participants in total (79.1% women; mean age of 45.15 years)
- Women (OR=1.55, 95% CI: 1.11-2.18), and individuals with difficulties in work-life balance (OR=1.87, 95% CI: 1.37-2.56) had higher odds for self-reported increase of sweets intake
- Young adults (18–34 years; OR=3.73, 95% CI: 1.49-9.33) and those with work-life balance difficulties (OR=4.82, 95% CI: 2.82-8.23) presented higher odds for alcohol drinking increase.
- Those unemployed (or with suspended activity or in layoff; OR=16.4, 95% CI: 2.81-96.3) and those with lower income ($< 1,000\text{€}$; OR=5.38, 95% CI: 1.61-18.0) had higher odds for gambling behaviour increase.



Conclusions

Some groups of the Portuguese population reported to have increased addiction-related behaviours, during the COVID-19 lockdown, with negative consequences for mental health. These data is pivotal to inform public health interventions and alleviate potential deleterious impacts of the pandemic, namely from a health equity perspective.

