

REPORT ON BEHAVIORAL ADDICTIONS AND OTHER ADDICTIVE DISORDERS

Executive summary

The main objective of this monographic report is to contribute to understanding the current situation regarding behavioral addictions and, specifically, gambling, problematic Internet use, possible gaming disorder and pornography use in Spain. In this way, it intends to ultimately help in the prevention of misuse and possible problems associated with these activities.

For this purpose, a descriptive study of gambling, gaming, internet use and pornography use has been carried out based on the answers to specific questions included in the latest editions of ESTUDES and EDADES surveys, the results of which are representative at the national level. In addition, data on admissions to treatment for behavioral addictions in Spain are included for the first time.

The main results of this report are presented below.

GAMBLING (ONLINE AND/OR FACE TO FACE)

Population 15-64 years old (EDADES)

- In 2022, 58.1% of the population aged 15 to 64 **has gambled online and/or in person** (60.4% in men and 55.7% in women).
- As in previous years, there continues to be a large difference between the prevalence of **online gambling**, at 5.3% in 2022, and **face-to-face gambling**, with a prevalence of 57.4%.
- **In terms of evolution**, both online and face-to-face gambling have decreased with respect to the data obtained in 2020 (6.7% and 63.6%, respectively).
- By **sex**, men have the highest prevalence of both types of gambling (online: 8% vs. 2.5%; face-to-face: 59.2% vs. 55.5%).
- Analyzing the prevalence by **age group**, it can be seen that young people (between 15 and 34 years of age) are the ones who gamble the most with money online (6.5% of young people between 15 and 24 years of age and 8.4% of those between 25 and 34 years of age). In the case of face-to-face gambling, this is a practice that increases as the age of the respondents increases.
- With respect to the **type of games used**, there are important differences. Among those who play face-to-face, people who play conventional lottery or instant lotteries predominate, while the most practiced game among those who play online is sports betting, this is repeated throughout the different years (2018-2022).
- The **largest amount of money spent** in a single day by those who have gambled online or face-to-face is, in most cases, below 30 euros. A greater amount of money spent in a single day is observed in those who have gambled online than face to face; this difference being greater in 2022. In both types of gambling, the distribution by sex shows that the amount spent by women is lower than that of men.
- As for the **age of initiation**, the age of initiation in face-to-face gambling continues to be lower than that of online gambling in the population between 15 and 64 years of age (23.3 vs. 26.3 years).

Population 14-18 years old (ESTUDES)

- In 2023, 21.5% of students between 14 and 18 years of age **has gambled online and/or in person** in the last 12 months (compared to 20.1% in 2021). Regarding to gender, there are significant differences, with this percentage rising to 29.4% in the case of men and falling to 13.3% in the case of women.
- In 2023, the prevalence of **face-to-face gambling** was 17.7%, higher than the prevalence of **online gambling** (10.7%).

- **Evolutionarily**, both prevalences have slightly increased with respect to 2021 (online: 9.4% in 2021; face-to-face: 17.2% in 2021) but without reaching 2019 levels.
- **By sex**, men have the highest prevalence in both types of gambling (online: 17.1% vs. 4.3%; face-to-face: 23.4% vs. 11.8%).
- According to **age**, in both types of gambling, the prevalence in the last 12 months experiences a progressive increase as the age of the students increases.
- In relation to the **type of game**, with respect to online gambling, in first place are video games (51.5%) and in second place sports betting (35.2%), both for men and women. However, in the third position there are differences according to sex, with cryptocurrencies in the case of men and bingo in the case of women. Regarding the type of betting with physical money, it is observed that lotteries, "primitiva" or "bonoloto" are placed in first place with 40.6%, followed by bingo with 35.9% and instant lotteries with 33.6%. There are significant differences according to gender. For men, the games most used in person are lotteries, "primitiva", "bonoloto", sports betting and soccer pools and/or quinigol, while for women, bingo is the most representative game modality, followed by lotteries, "primitiva", "bonoloto" and instant lotteries.
- The **largest amount of money spent** in a single day by those who have gambled online or face-to-face is, in most cases, below 6 euros. A greater amount of money spent in a single day is observed in those who have gambled online. In both types of gambling, the distribution by sex shows that the amount spent by women is lower than that of men.
- The **age of onset** is similar for online and face-to-face gambling, being 14.7 years and 14.8 years, respectively.

PROBLEMATIC GAMBLING AND GAMBLING DISORDER

According to the latest version of the "*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition (DSM-5)*" gambling disorder is "persistent maladaptive gambling behavior that results in clinically significant distress". Given the current evidence, in the DSM-5 pathological gambling is classified under the chapter "Substance-related and addictive disorders."

According to this manual, obtaining a score of 1 to 3 on the DSM-5 scale would be considered problematic gambling, representing excessive gambling behavior, experiencing some problem derived from this activity. A score equal to or higher than 4 would be considered a gambling disorder, which can be differentiated into three levels according to the score obtained: mild, moderate or severe.

Population 15-64 years old (EDADES)

- In 2018 edition of EDADES survey, a scale based on DSM-5 diagnostic criteria was introduced for the first time to explore the existence of possible problematic gambling and/or gambling disorder.
- It is estimated that, in 2022, 1.7% of the population would show a possible problematic gambling (1.3% of people would have a possible problematic gambling and 0.4% would present a possible gambling disorder). This figure has decreased compared to 2020, when the prevalence of a possible problematic gambling was 2.2%. This value is higher among men than among women (1.6% vs. 1% respectively).
- Potential problematic gambling (DSM-5 ≥ 1) among the population that has gambled online or in person in the last 12 months is higher among people who gamble online (13.6%) than among those who gamble in person (2.9%), a situation that remains stable over time and occurs in both sexes.
- Regarding the profile of people who engage in possible problematic gambling, it is observed that:
 - gamble more frequently than the general population aged 15-64 years old
 - play a wider variety of games
 - spend larger amounts of money

- have a higher prevalence of risky behaviors, such as drunkenness, binge drinking, risky alcohol consumption and daily tobacco use

Population 14-18 years old (ESTUDES)

- In ESTUDES 2019 survey, the Lie/Bet questionnaire was introduced for the first time, in order to explore possible problematic gambling. This is a screening instrument of only two questions that inquires whether the subject has felt the need to gamble more and more or has lied to significant people, about how much money he/she spends on gambling. The prevalence rate of possible problematic gambling according to this instrument is Lie/Bet \geq 1.
- In 2023, it is estimated that 4% of students aged 14 to 18 years could present a possible problematic gambling. This figure represents a slight increase compared to 2021 (3.4%) mainly due to an increase in prevalence among males, as the prevalence of gambling among females has remained stable over the last 3 editions.
- By age, it is observed that the prevalence of possible problem gambling increases as the age analyzed increases, with 18-year-old students having the highest prevalence (8.3%).
- In 2023, 23.5% of students who have played money online would have a possible problematic gambling, while among those who have played with money face-to-face this value stands at 20.5%. Compared to 2021, these prevalences have increased, and to a greater extent in face-to-face gambling, from 18.2% to 20.5%.
- With respect to the profile of students aged 14 to 18 years who present a possible problematic gambling, it is observed that:
 - they gamble with a higher frequency than the rest of the 14-18 year-old students
 - they play a greater variety of games (video games, sports betting and slots, slot machines)
 - spend larger amounts of money
 - have a higher prevalence of risky behaviors and psychoactive substance use, such as drunkenness, binge drinking, and cannabis use.

PROBLEMATIC INTERNET USE

Problematic Internet use is a growing phenomenon of our time that is defined as a generalized and compulsive use of the internet, associated with a loss of control and negative consequences for the individual.

Since 2014 and 2015, a scale was introduced to measure problematic internet use, in ESTUDES and EDADES surveys: The Compulsive Internet Use Scale (CIUS). This is a validated scale for the early detection of possible cases of risk and consists of a total of 56 items, in which a score greater than, or equal to 28, indicates possible problematic internet use.

Population 15-64 years old (EDADES)

- In 2022, 3.5% of the population aged 15 to 64 years had a possible problematic use of the internet in Spain, which would mean an estimated figure of approximately 1,096,000 people. This figure is slightly lower than the figure obtained in 2020 (3.7%).
- Prevalence is similar among men and women in all editions of the survey. With respect to age, problematic internet use is higher among younger individuals (15-24 years). In the 15-34 years age group, females show higher prevalence of possible problematic internet use than males.
- Both in 2022 and in previous editions, differences are observed in relation to other risk behaviors such as heavy alcohol consumption (drunkenness and binge drinking in the last 30 days) and cannabis use in the last 30 days, between the population aged 15 to 64 years with a possible problematic internet use and the general population aged 15 to 64 years. In all cases, higher prevalences were observed in the population with a possible problematic internet use.

Population 14-18 years old (ESTUDES)

- In 2023, prevalence of problematic internet use among students aged 14 to 18 years was 20.5%, having decreased 3 percentage points compared to 2021 result.
- An analysis of this indicator by sex shows that, as in previous years, the possible problematic use of the internet is higher in women than in men (25.9% in women and 15.3% in men).
- The prevalence of internet users with possible problematic use increases with age. Compared to 2021, prevalence decreases for all ages except 18 years old, which remains stable (23.3% vs. 23.6%).
- In relation to other risk behaviors, it is observed, as in the general population (15-64 years old) that intensive alcohol consumption, cannabis consumption and daily tobacco use in the last 30 days are higher among students with a possible problematic use of the Internet than in the rest of the students.

GAMING

Video game use disorder is defined, according to CIE-11, as a pattern of gaming behavior ("digital gaming" or "video gaming") characterized by impaired control over gaming, increasing priority given to gaming over other activities to the extent that gaming takes precedence over other interests and daily activities, along with continuation of gaming despite the occurrence of negative consequences. For a diagnosis of video game use disorder to be made, the pattern of behavior must be severe enough to cause significant impairment in personal, family, social, educational, occupational, or other important areas of functioning and would normally have been evident for at least 12 months.

In 2019, a module on gaming was included in the framework of the Survey of Secondary School Students on Drugs and Addictions (ESTUDES). The first part of the module included general questions on prevalence and frequency of use and, in a second part, questions based on DSM-5 criteria were included to be able to detect a possible video game disorder. Questions on the use of electronic sports ("eSports") as a player or spectator were also included. The main results of their analysis are detailed below.

Population 14-18 years old (ESTUDES)

- Regarding the prevalence of video game use in 2023, 83.1% of students report gaming (96.2% of males and 69.7% of females). As was the case in 2019 and 2021, the prevalence of use is higher among boys than among girls.
- In terms of age, there is a negative trend as the age of the users increases.
- Analyzing the frequency of gaming in 2023, the most common is the weekly use of video games (29.8%). However, there are different trends between boys and girls: 43% of boys have played video games weekly in the last 12 months, while in the case of girls, only 16.0% have done so with this frequency.
- According to the DSM-5 criteria-based scale, in 2023, 5.1% of all students aged 14 to 18 years would have a possible gaming disorder. This percentage is the lowest of those recorded since 2019.
- By gender, men are the most likely to suffer from gaming disorders, although this percentage has dropped considerably compared to the figure recorded in 2021 (11.3% vs. 7.7%).
- When analyzing the prevalences by age, there is a generalized decrease with respect to 2021, except in the case of 18 years old, which becomes the age with the highest possibility of gaming disorder, being similar to the percentage of 14 years old (5.9% and 5.8%, respectively).
- In relation to the frequency of gaming, it is higher among students with a possible gaming disorder than among students who have played video games in the last 12 months (both in days and in number of hours). They also play larger amounts of money to improve their position in video games, having increased the spending of more than €100 compared to 2021 (from 15.8% to 19.1%).

- Looking at other types of behaviors such as online, face-to-face or problematic gambling, the prevalences are higher among students with possible gaming disorder than among all students aged 14 to 18 years.

USE OF PORNOGRAPHY

The term pornography refers to any literary, artistic, or cinematographic material that explicitly exhibits genitalia and sexual actions, and whose primary purpose is to arouse the viewer in a sexual manner.

Currently, access to pornography has changed drastically due to easy access through the Internet and the emergence of new technologies. Adolescents are initiated in this practice at very early ages and its use is increasing due to: easy access to content through the Internet (accessibility), low or no cost of this material (affordability) and anonymity of the Internet (anonymity).

In order to explore the prevalence of pornography use among young people, a module on pornography use was introduced in the 2023 ESTUDES survey. Its main results are shown below.

Population 14-18 years old (ESTUDES)

- 66.8% of students admit to having used pornography at least once in their lifetime, 58.6% in the last 12 months and 44.5% in the last 30 days.
- By sex, there are large differences, with much greater use of pornography among men than among women for the three time periods analyzed. The greatest differences are found in consumption in the last month (68.4% of male students vs. 19.3% of female students).
- With respect to age, there is a direct relationship with pornography use, since the higher the age, the higher the prevalence of pornography use in the three time periods considered. It is noteworthy that 37.1% of 14-year-olds have seen pornography in the last month.
- Regarding the company with which pornography consumption takes place, 85% of students between 14 and 18 years of age use it alone, reaching 91% in case of men. However, women have a higher rate of viewing pornography both with partners and friends, with a difference of 12.3 percentage points between the two sexes (37.0% of women and 24.7% of men).
- In relation to the device used to view pornography, it is observed that the greatest use of pornography is from the cell phone (92.4%), followed by use from the computer or tablet (36.6%). When differentiating by sex, the greatest discrepancy is in the use of computer or tablet, where 41.1% of men visualize by this means while it drops to 27.9% in the case of women.

ADMISSIONS TO TREATMENT FOR BEHAVIORAL/NON-SUBSTANCE ADDICTIONS INDICATOR

- The indicator "Admissions to Treatment for behavioral or non-substance addictions" is a registry that collects individualized data on admissions to outpatient treatment for behavioral/non-substance addictions in an autonomous community/city in a given year. It starts its collection in all ACs and AC in 2021.
- Its objective is to complement the information obtained in the surveys with information on the treatment of people diagnosed with behavioral or non-substance addictions.
- A detailed protocol is available describing the variables included in the indicator, the behavioral/non-substance addictions collected and the inclusion and exclusion criteria. This information can be consulted on the website of the National Plan on Drugs (PNSD).
- In 2021, 4,052 admissions to treatment for behavioral addictions were reported; 3,520 were admissions in men and 528 were admissions in women. In 2021 there were 69,487 admissions to treatment for abuse or dependence on psychoactive substances including illegal drugs and alcohol.
- In 2021, 80.7% of treatment admissions have been for gambling disorder (n=3269), 10.2% for problematic use of internet, mobile or electronic devices, social networks or video games (n=412), 4% for shopping addiction (n=162) and 2.5% for sex-related disorders (n=102).

- The majority of those admitted to treatment were men (87%), which implies a lower presence of women than in treatment admissions for psychoactive substances (illegal drugs and alcohol).
- The average age of those admitted to treatment is 36.6 years, with many differences depending on the behavioral disorder that generates the admission (gambling: 38 years; video games: 21 years; shopping: 45.1 years; sex: 39.3 years; eating: 37.4 years).
- 23.7% present dual pathology (a mental health diagnosis) different from the disorder for which they are admitted to treatment. This percentage is higher among women (43.6%) than among men (20.7%).
- Although the behavioral addiction that generates most admissions in both sexes is gambling, in the case of women the weight of this disorder accounts for 51.9%; consequently, addictions to shopping and problematic use of the Internet, cell phones or electronic devices, social networks or video games acquires much more weight than among men.