

PREVALENCE OF ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION AMONG SCHOOL AGED CHILDREN FROM THE NORTHERN PORTUGAL

José Precioso*, Cláudia Correia*, José Machado*, Catarina Samorinha *,Paulo Dias
***, Luís Dias* y Henedina Antunes*

Universidade do Minho*; *Instituto de Saúde Pública da Universidade do Porto*;
****Universidade Católica*

Introduction: Alcohol consumption among teenagers is a serious problem, being highly prevalent and continuously increasing. Monitoring alcohol consumption is needed in order to assess the effectiveness of preventive measures.

Objective: This study aims to describe the prevalence of alcohol consumption and excessive consumption (drunkenness and binge drinking) in primary and high school students from the northern Portugal.

Method: Descriptive cross-sectional study with a representative sample from the northern Portugal, including 1631 public school students aged 10 to 17 years (849 female and 782 male).Data were collected in the school year of 2013/2014 through self-administered questionnaires. The variables “alcohol drinking”, “drunkenness” and “binge drinking” were assessed by the following questions: “How often did you drink at least one alcohol drink?”; “How many times have you stayed drunk for having alcoholic drinks?”; and “In the past 30 days, how many times did you drink 5 or more drinks in the same occasion?”.

Results: At the age of 15, 22.1% of boys and 14.7% of girls declared they have drunk alcohol beverages in the past week. By the age of 16, 45.1% of boys and 45.0% of girls reported having drunk alcohol beverages in the past 30 days; 21.1% of boys and 22.9% of girls, by the same age, declared they have been drunk at least once; and 17.4% of boys and 20.8% of girls admitted/reported they engaged in binge drinking in the past 30 days.

Conclusions: The fact that approximately one in every five boys and one in every five girls, aged 16, reported having been drunk and engaged in binge drinking in the past 30 days is a cause for concern. There seems to be a gender equality when it comes to alcohol consumption. Data suggest the need to continue the preventive efforts and health promotion activities at schools.