

Summary Report on Behavioural Addictions 2021

The analysis of the results of the EDADES and ESTUDES surveys from 2014 confirms that gambling, internet use and video games are widespread activities in our society. In 2020, 64.2 % of the population aged 15 to 64 years have gambled in the last year (face-to-face, online or both) while, 94.5% have used the internet for recreational purposes. In 2021, 20.1% of students aged 14 to 18 have gambled in the last year (face-to-face, online or both) and 85.1% have played video games.

As for online gambling, in 2020 6.7% of the population aged 15 to 64 years according to the EDADES survey have gambled in the last year (3.5% in 2018). As in previous editions, the percentage playing online is higher in men (9.1%) than in women (4.2%), and it is more frequent among younger people, with its prevalence decreasing as age increases. In the population that plays online, the predominant game among men is sports betting (58.8%), while among women lottery-type games, including "primitivas" or "bonoloto", predominate (45.5%). The maximum amount played in a single day among most players is between 6 and 30 euros.

In the population of students aged 14 to 18, according to the ESTUDES survey, the prevalence of gambling online has decreased (9.4% in 2021 compared to 10.3% in 2019), with a large difference by sex (15.0% in boys and 3.8% in girls). This prevalence increases as the age of the students increases. The online games preferred by students continue to be video games, sports betting and e-sports in both boys and girls. Regarding the largest amount of money spent in a single day on online games in the last 12 months, 2.8% indicate that they have spent less than 6 euros, and 1.4% has spent more than 30 euros. Only 1.2% of students gamble online weekly or more frequently.

Face-to-face gambling is much more widespread since, according to the EDADES survey, more than half of the population aged 15 to 64 (63.6% in 2020) has gambled in the last year, mostly through conventional and instant lottery games. In the same way as in online gambling, the largest amount of money spent in a single day is in the range of 6 to 30 euros. In face-to-face gambling, the differences by sex are much smaller and, contrary to what happens with online gambling, its prevalence increases notably with age.

Data from the ESTUDES survey indicate that, in the population of students aged 14 to 18, face-to-face gambling is also more frequent than online gambling (17.2% in 2021), although less prevalent than in the general population. In 2021, this prevalence has been reduced compared to 2019 (22.7%), due to the social restrictions associated with the control of the Covid pandemic. There is a large significant difference by sex, being higher in men than in women (22.7% and 11.6% respectively), and it increases as age does, as it did for online gambling. The majority of students between 14 and 18 years of age, both men and women, who have gambled in person have done so in lotteries, “primitive” or “bonoloto”. The maximum amount of money spent in a single day in the last 12 months, for the vast majority of students aged 14 to 18, is less than 6 euros.

As noted, gambling and the use of Internet is highly prevalent in the Spanish population. However, not all of this use can be categorized as problematic. In the EDADES 2018 survey, a specific scale was introduced in order to obtain an approximation of this phenomenon at the population level. Thus, applying the DSM-V criteria, in 2020 1.6% of the population aged 15 to 64 years would perform a possible problematic gambling (DSM-V ≥ 1 and < 4) and 0.6% would present a possible gambling disorder (DSM-V ≥ 4). When we compare the way the general population gambles with individuals who show possible problematic gambling or gambling disorder, we see that the latter present a higher frequency of gambling and a higher expenditure of money in a single day. It is also observed that potential problem gamblers or gambling disordered individuals present higher prevalence of risky behaviours, such as: binge drinking, risky alcohol consumption and daily tobacco use.

Regarding Internet use, data from the EDADES survey indicate that in 2020, 3.7% of the population aged 15 to 64 years has made a possible compulsive use of the Internet, which would mean an estimated figure of approximately 1,139,000 people. This value hardly presents differences by sex and represents an increase with respect to what was detected in 2015 and 2018. The ESTUDES 2021 survey shows that, among the population of students aged 14 to 18 years, the prevalence of possible compulsive internet use is considerably higher (23.5%) than that of the population aged 15 to 64 years, being higher among women (28.8%). The prevalence of alcohol and cannabis use is also higher among individuals with a possible compulsive use of the Internet.

Finally, regarding the use of video games, according to the ESTUDES 2021 survey, 85.1% of students aged 14 to 18 years have played in the last year, a percentage that is higher among boys (96.9%), with a prevalence of gaming that decreases as age advances. Approximately 50% of students who have played video games in the last year have done so at least weekly. And the majority of students who have played video games in the past 12 months spend less than 2 hours a day playing video games. Among the total number of students aged 14 to 18 years, 7.1% would present a possible video game use disorder according to the scale based on DSM-V criteria.

The prevalence of possible problem gambling, possible compulsive Internet use and video game use in students aged 14 to 18 years highlights the importance of intensifying prevention activities in various areas.