



# **The OEDA-COVID 2020 survey**

## **Summary Report**

The OEDA-COVID-2020 Survey, of the Spanish Government Delegation for the National Plan on Drugs, published the 26<sup>th</sup> of March 2021 by the Ministry of Health, is the first representative survey of the Spanish population on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on drug use and addictions, with a total sample of 8780 questionnaires.

It shows a global decrease on the psychoactive substance use, including tobacco and alcohol, except for hypnotosedatives without prescription, along with an increase in internet use for leisure. Online gambling has remained unchanged, while non-internet gambling activities have decreased.

### **Methodology**

The OEDA-COVID 2020 survey is a general population telephone survey for people living in Spain and whose fieldwork was conducted between the 10<sup>th</sup> of November and the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 2020.

The sample selection was carried out through simple random sampling stratifying by Autonomous Communities and Autonomous Cities (AC), and size of habitat (5 sections), with a quota system by sex and age. Seventy per cent of the sample selection was carried out by simple random sampling among randomly generated mobile phone numbers, according to the Mitofsky-Waksberg method. The remaining 30% was randomly sampled from the operators' white pages' databases to complete the quotas per stratum.

In total, 8,780 valid interviews were collected, 7,886 on 15-64 year old population group and 894 on those 65 year old and over.



The sampling error was +1.04% under the assumption of simple random sampling for a 95% confidence interval and maximum heterogeneity ( $p=q=0.5$ ).

Weighting was done by Autonomous Communities and Autonomous Cities (19), habitat size (5), sex (2) and age (6). A total of 864 weighting coefficients were used. The response rate was 42%.

## Main results

### OEDA-COVID-2020 SURVEY in the 15-64 age group

The data show that, during the pandemic, the **consumption of alcoholic beverages** has decreased in both sexes and in all age groups (prevalence of consumption before the pandemic 62.0% and during the pandemic 57.3%). This represents a decrease of 8%, which in 15-24 year olds is as high as 25%. The prevalence of daily use in the last 30 days during the pandemic is 9.4%.

Heavy episodic drinking (**binge drinking**) also declined during the pandemic, in both sexes and in all age groups (prevalence of binge drinking before the pandemic 17.2% and during the pandemic 9.7%). In the 15-19 age group, the decline is as high as 25%.

During the pandemic, 16.0% of the population aged 15-64 years surveyed had a possible **risky alcohol consumption**, with risky alcohol consumption being higher in men (17.3%) than in women (14.8%).

**Tobacco consumption** decreases during the pandemic (prevalence of consumption before the pandemic 29.1% and during the pandemic 27.7%), in all age groups and in both sexes, except among women aged 25-34 years and women aged 45-54 years, groups in which prevalence remains more or less stable. Notably, in younger age groups and in adults over 60 years of age, the decline is close to 10%. During the pandemic, the prevalence of daily smoking in the past 30 days was 23.4%.



**E-cigarette use**, which was already low, decreases during the pandemic (prevalence of use before the pandemic 3.5% and during the pandemic 2.3%), in both sexes and in all age groups, the decrease being greater among people under 35 years of age.

With regard to the relatively low use of **hypnosedatives without prescription**, an increase in use during the Covid-19 pandemic is observed (prevalence of use before the pandemic 1.9% and during the pandemic 3.1%). This increase occurs in all age groups and in both sexes, but is higher in women. The prevalence of daily use of hypnosedatives without prescription in the last 30 days during the pandemic was 0.7%.

1.3% of the population aged 15-64 years surveyed reported using **opioid analgesics without prescription** both before and during the Covid-19 pandemic, with no differences by sex.

**Cannabis** is the most commonly used illegal drug. During the Covid-19 pandemic, a decrease in use is observed in both sexes and in all age groups (prevalence of use before the pandemic 7.8% and during the pandemic 6.5%; a decrease of 17%). This decrease is greater in the age groups with the highest use, i.e. the youngest age groups. During the pandemic, 1.2% of 15-64 year-olds surveyed reported possible problem cannabis use, measured by the CAST questionnaire (CAST $\geq$ 4), rising to 19% of those reporting cannabis use during the pandemic.

**Cocaine use**, which is relatively under-reported, also declined during the pandemic, from 1.4% before the pandemic to 1% during the pandemic.

**Internet use for recreational purposes** is an activity undertaken by the majority of the population both before and during the pandemic. No changes are found in the pattern of use by sex or age group, except in those aged 59 and over, where it decreases slightly. There is a significant increase in the number of hours spent on this activity, with an average of 2.5 hours on any given day before the pandemic (either on weekdays or weekends) and around 3.5 hours during the pandemic.



During the pandemic, the prevalence of **non-internet gambling** activities decreases. This type of gambling is higher in men and in those under 25 years of age. However, no changes are observed in the **online gambling** prevalence of use before and during the pandemic, a type of gambling that remains higher in males and under 25s, including some minors for whom this activity is illegal.

### **OEDA-COVID-2020 SURVEY among the population over 64 years of age**

Among the population aged over 64 years surveyed, the consumption of **alcoholic beverages** is lower than in the population aged 15-64 years. During the pandemic, the data show a decrease in the consumption of alcoholic beverages in this population group in both sexes, and in all age ranges (prevalence of consumption before the pandemic 34.2% and during the pandemic 31.8%). The consumption of alcoholic beverages is more prevalent in men both before and during the pandemic. During the pandemic, 13.3% of respondents had consumed alcoholic beverages daily in the past 30 days.

Regarding **tobacco use**, a decrease in tobacco use during the pandemic is observed in both sexes and all ages, with the prevalence of tobacco use being higher in men (prevalence of use before the pandemic 10.9% and during the pandemic 8.9%, a decrease of 20%). The prevalence of daily smoking in the last 30 days during the pandemic was 7.9%.

The use of **electronic cigarettes** and psychoactive substances such as **hypnotics without prescription, cannabis, opioid analgesics without prescription** or **cocaine** was not detected among the surveyed people over 64 years of age.

Approximately half of the over-64s have used the **Internet for recreational purposes**, with slightly higher use among men than among women. This use has decreased slightly during the pandemic in both sexes and in all age groups. However, there has been a significant increase in time spent on the Internet for fun, with an average of 1.5 hours during the pandemic, both on weekdays and weekends.



With regard to **non-internet gambling activities**, a higher prevalence was observed in men and in people over 74 years of age. During the Covid-19 pandemic, this type of gambling decreased in both sexes and in all age groups (prevalence of gambling before the pandemic 8.0% and during the pandemic 5.3%). **Online gambling** is not detected in this population group.

## Conclusions

The pattern of psychoactive substance use, internet use and gambling has changed during the Covid-19 pandemic, with a generalized decrease. However, there was an increase in the use of hypnotosedatives without prescription, as well as in the number of hours spent using the Internet for recreational purposes, while online gambling remained unchanged.

This overall decline in use occurs in a context of reduced access to illicit drugs, a consequence of the control measures adopted in the COVID-19 pandemic in Spain. These measures impacted individuals, business and premises. Therefore, access to substances such as alcohol and tobacco remained, but with reduced availability. The control measures also affected leisure environments, and this has possibly contributed to the changes observed, especially in heavy episodic alcohol consumption among young people, showing the impact of environmental prevention in tackling this problem.

The prevalence of online gambling among young people and underage adolescents shows the importance of the prevention activities promoted from different spheres, along with access and marketing regulations, as the ones recently approved by the Spanish Government.