

# Gender convergence in alcohol consumption? Outcomes from general population survey on drugs, Portugal 2001-2016/17



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## Introduction

- Some studies have argued there has been gender convergence in alcohol consumption. Most of these studies refer to data from countries in Northern Europe, Australia and the United States of America.
- According to Bloomfield *et al* (2001), since the 1970s that has been concern that women may have started to adopt the same drinking behaviours as men, as a result of emancipation in which women increasingly move into lifestyles similar to men's lifestyles – the convergence hypothesis.
- This analysis aims to compare women's and men's alcohol consumption patterns in Portugal, a Southern European country, between 2001 and 2016/17 by age groups to test gender convergence.
- By convergence we mean that differences between men's and woman's drinking behaviour – in prevalence, abstention, problematic drinking (CAGE) and attitudes towards alcohol – have grown narrower over time.

## Methods

- **Design and setting:** repeated cross-sectional data from four waves of the **General population survey on drugs in Portugal** 2001 (n= 14 184), 2007 (n= 12 202), 2012 (n= 5 355), and 2016/17 (n= 9 632). All the samples of the Portuguese GPS are representative at national and regional level by gender and age. Face-to-face interviews have been the method of data collection throughout the four waves (2001 paper and pencil, 2007-2016/17 CAPI)
- **Participants:** large general population living in households with ages 15-64 years old.
- **Measurements:** prevalence of drinking (last 12 months and last 30 days), problematic drinking (CAGE) and attitudes towards alcohol. Not all measurements were assessed in all four surveys in the same way.

## Results

- Statistical analysis: prevalence of drinking, problematic drinking (CAGE) and attitudes towards alcohol by age groups and sex was calculated with cross-tabulations. Gender differences in alcohol drinking are reported with 95% confidence intervals (95% CI).
- Prevalence: there was no convergence on last 12 months and last 30 days prevalence of drinking overall. We found convergence only in the age group 35-54 years.
- CAGE: between 2001 and 2016/17 the score of CAGE for alcohol dependency has decreased among men and increased among woman, in a progressive convergence.
- Alcohol related attitudes: measured by the agreement with the statement "no risks" or "few risks" in drinking 5 or more drinks at the weekend. We found no convergence overall, but only in the age group 35-44 years old.

## Key conclusions

- Convergence is a complex concept and we consider that we need to take into account more than one measure.
- If we take in account single indicators there are some signs of convergence, and changes in society can easily explain them. But there are other, finer indicators that may not validate completely the convergence premise.
- In the analysis by age group, it is clear that beyond a general convergence, there is an intragenerational convergence as it is not transversal to all age groups.

## Conflicts

- There are no conflicts of interest to report.

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