

## Elective Abortion in Portugal:

### A National Research Project Aimed to Understand Reproductive Decisions and Psychological Adjustment After Abortion in Different Reproductive Phases

Joana Pereira<sup>1,2</sup>, Raquel Pires<sup>1,2</sup>, & Maria Cristina Canavarro<sup>1,2</sup>

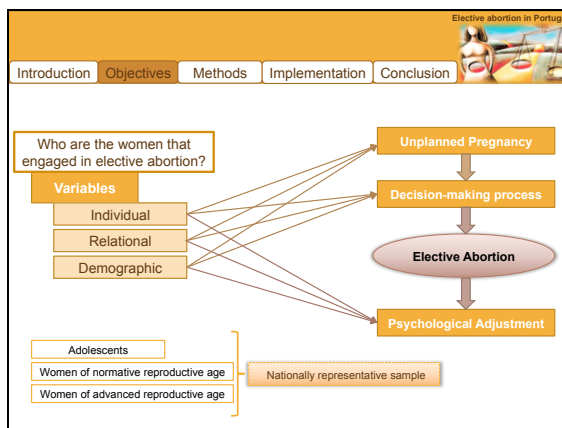
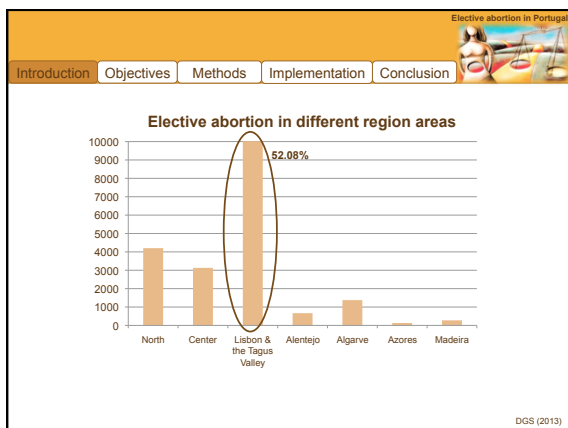
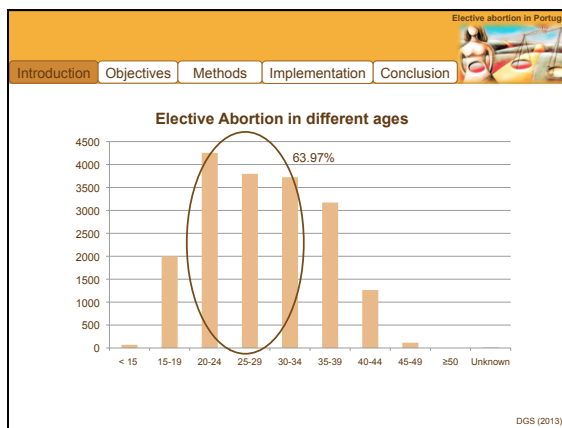
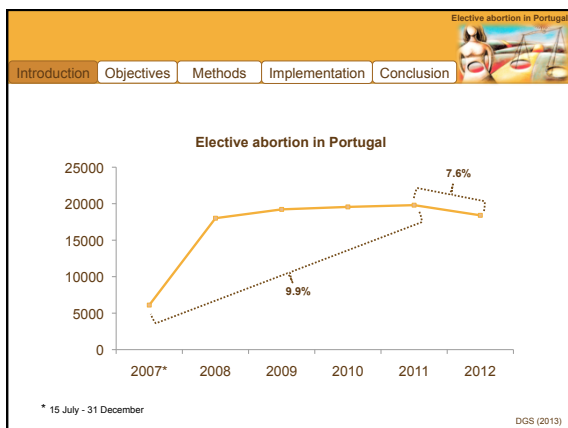
<sup>1</sup> Research Line *Relationships, Development & Health* of the R&D Unit Institute of Cognitive Psychology, Vocational and Social Development of the University of Coimbra, Portugal  
<sup>2</sup> Psychological Intervention Unit of the Maternity Doctor Daniel de Matos, Centro Hospitalar e Universitário de Coimbra, EPE, Portugal

First Global Conference on Contraception, Reproductive and Sexual Health, Copenhagen 2013

Elective abortion in Portugal

Introduction Objectives Methods Implementation Conclusion

- The Portuguese abortion law allowing elective abortion is recent (2007);
- The research on the individual, relational, and demographic variables involved on **women's decision to terminate a pregnancy** and on their **subsequent psychological adjustment** is scarce in Portugal (Cosme & Leal, 1998; Guedes, 2008; Noya & Leal, 1998; Ouró & Leal, 1998; Sereno, Leal, & Maroco, 2012);
- International studies have suggested that the decision to terminate a pregnancy and the subsequent adjustment may be **influenced by life circumstances**, namely women's life projects and reproductive phase (Broen, Moum, Böttker, & Ekeberg, 2005; Finer, Frohwrth, Dauphinee, Singh, & Moore, 2006; Major et al., 2009);
- In Portugal, elective abortion rates are largely **heterogeneous among different years, reproductive phases and regional areas** (DGS, 2010, 2013).



Elective abortion in Portugal

Introduction Objectives **Methods** Implementation Conclusion

**Design**

- ✓ Cross-sectional

**Participants**

- ✓ Women who engage in elective abortion

Study groups	Ages	Minimum (for national representation)
Adolescents	< 19 years	71
Women of normative reproductive age	20-34 years	390
Women of advanced reproductive age	≥ 35 years	141

Elective abortion in Portugal

Introduction Objectives **Methods** Implementation Conclusion

**Inclusion criteria**

- ✓ Women who engaged in elective abortion in accordance with the Portuguese abortion law (n.º 16/2007 of 17 April);
- ✓ Having the ability to understand and answer the self-report questionnaires.

**Procedure**

- ✓ The sample is being collected at Gynecological and Obstetric services from different regional areas;
- ✓ All participants were informed about the study and provided written informed consent. When participants were under 16 years old, the consent form was also signed by their legal tutor.

**Ethics approval**

- ✓ The project was approved and carried out in compliance with ethical standards from all the public health services research ethics committees where women were recruited.

Elective abortion in Portugal

Introduction Objectives **Methods** Implementation Conclusion

**Measures**

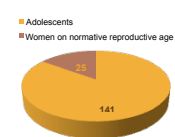
Variables	Measures
<b>Demographic</b>	
- Social, political, cultural information	
<b>Individual</b>	- Demographic self-report questionnaire
- Age, marital and socioeconomic status	
<b>Reproductive</b>	
- Age at first sexual intercourse, number of sexual partners, contraceptive behavior, elective abortion history	
<b>Relational</b>	
- Quality of relation with significant persons (family, partner, friends) and social support of this persons	- Eigna Minnen av Barnoms Uppfostran (EMBU; Perris, Jacobsson, Lindstrom, Von Knorring, & Perris, 1984; Portuguese version: Canavaro, 1997)
	- Adjectives scales
<b>Psychological Adjustment</b>	
- Depressive symptomatology	- Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS; Cox, Holden, & Sagovsky, 1987; Portuguese version: Figueiredo, 1997)
- Reasons for elective abortion, decision-making autonomy, satisfaction and emotional experience	- Reasons for Abortion List (RAL; Broen, Moum, Bodtker, & Ekeberg, 1998; Portuguese version: Pires, Araujo-Pedrosa, Canavaro, & Guedes, 2011)
- Quality of life	- Adjectives scales
	- EUROCHS-QOL-8 (Power, 2003; Portuguese version: Pereira, Melo, Gameiro, & Canavaro, 2011)

Elective abortion in Portugal

Introduction Objectives **Methods** Implementation Conclusion

**Collection Sample Status**

Regions	Number of Public Health Services
North	5
Center	4
Lisbon & the Tagus Valley	5
Alentejo	1
Algarve	2
Azores	1
Madeira	1



Elective abortion in Portugal

Introduction Objectives **Methods** Implementation Conclusion

**Exploratory findings**

- ✓ Suggest several variables closely related to adolescent development as predictors of the decision to terminate a pregnancy and of subsequent adjustment;
- *Research project adolescence pregnancy in Portugal: contribution for the understanding of occurrence context and consequences of elective abortion in adolescence*, 2012, Figueira da Foz, Portugal;
- *Elective abortion: a new view at reproductive questions in adolescences*, in press;
- *Elective abortion in Portugal: Reasons for abortion and subsequent emotional adjustment in a sample of female adolescents*. Poster presented at the First Global Conference on Contraception, Reproductive and Sexual Health, May 23 2013, Copenhagen, Denmark.
- *Risk factors to the elective abortion in adolescence: Contribution for research to prevention*. Symposium, June 20-22 2013, Aveiro, Portugal;
- *Elective abortion: Psychological adjustment on a sample of young Portuguese women*. Free communication, July 4-6 2013, Faro, Portugal;
- *Influence factors for an unplanned pregnancy in adolescence: a characterization study of Portuguese reality*. Free communication, 4-6 July 2013, Faro, Portugal;
- *Elective abortion: Developmental specificities in the decision-making process*. Symposium, July 4-6 2013, Faro, Portugal


Analyses ongoing for the other study groups will soon allow us to clarify the role of women's age on reproductive decisions and on their subsequent adjustment.

Elective abortion in Portugal

Introduction Objectives **Methods** Implementation Conclusion

**This project may contribute to:**

- ✓ Know the reality of elective abortion in Portugal;
- ✓ Identify demographic and reproductive profiles of women who engage in elective abortion;
- ✓ Understand the decision-making process to terminate a pregnancy, the psychological adjustment after abortion, and the influence of different variables (individual, relational and demographic) in this processes in different reproductive phases;
- ✓ Establish specific guidelines for family planning in different reproductive phases;
- ✓ Allow health care providers to efficiently support women during their reproductive decisions, identifying those at greater risk of psychological difficulties and providing them with specialized interventions.



---

Thank you for your attention!

[joanaifpereira88@gmail.com](mailto:joanaifpereira88@gmail.com)

[http://gaius.fpce.uc.pt/saude/index\\_uk.htm](http://gaius.fpce.uc.pt/saude/index_uk.htm)

First Global Conference on Contraception, Reproductive and Sexual Health, Copenhagen 2013

