Sociodemographic, sexual, reproductive and relationship characteristics of adolescents having an abortion in Portugal: a homogeneous or a heterogeneous group?

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: The aims of the study were to describe the sociodemographic, sexual, reproductive and relational characteristics of adolescents having an abortion in Portugal and to explore the differences between three adolescent age groups.

Methods: We recruited a nationally representative sample of 224 adolescents (<16 years, n=18; 16–17 years, n=103; 18–19 years, n=103) who had an abortion. Data were collected from 16 health care services that provide abortion.

Results: The adolescents were predominantly single, were from non-nuclear families, had low-socioeconomic status and were students. Mean age at first sexual intercourse was 15 years and mean gynaecological age was 5 years. Most had had multiple sexual partners, and for most it was their first pregnancy. At conception, the majority were involved in a long-term romantic relationship, were using contraception but did not identify the contraceptive failure that led to the pregnancy. Significant age group differences were found. Compared with the younger age groups, the 18–19 year age group was more frequently married or living with a partner, had finished school, had attained a higher educational level (as had their partner), intended to go to university, and had a greater number of sexual partners. Compared with the other groups, those under 16 years of age reported earlier age at menarche and at first sexual intercourse, and had a lower gynaecological age.

Conclusions: Our study characterises the life contexts of Portuguese adolescents who had an abortion. It highlights the need to recognise the heterogeneity of this group according to age. The findings have important implications for the development of age-appropriate guidelines to prevent unplanned pregnancy.
KEYWORDS
Abortion; adolescents; age differences; contraception

葡萄牙的社会人口、性别、生育和青少年流产的关系特点：同质或异质群体？

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摘要

目的：这项研究的目的是描述葡萄牙的社会人口、性别、生育和青少年流产的关系特点，探究三个青少年年龄组之间的差异。

方法：我们在全国招募了224名具有代表性的做过流产的青少年（<16岁，n=18；16－17岁，n=103；18－19岁；n=103）。数据来自于16个提供流产的卫生保健站。

结果：这些青少年主要是孤儿，来自非核心家庭，经济地位低的学生。初次性交的平均年龄是15岁，平均妇女年龄是5年。大多数人有多个性伴侣，而且他们中的大多数是第一次怀孕。对于怀孕，大多数人都有一个长期的浪漫的恋爱关系，采取了避孕措施，但不能确定是避孕失败导致的怀孕。我们发现了显著的年龄组差异，与年轻的年龄组相比，18－19岁年龄组结婚或者和伴侣同居的人更多，已经完成了学业，获得了更高的教育水平（他们的伴侣也一样），打算去上大学，有更多的性伴侣。与其他组相比，那些小于16岁年龄组的青少年，初潮年龄和初次性交年龄较早，妇女年龄较低。

结论：我们的研究描述了做过流产的葡萄牙青少年的生活环境特征，它强调了我们需要根据年龄认识到这个群体的异质性。研究结果对调整预防意外怀孕的合适年龄参考有重要意义。
关键词
流产，青少年，年龄差异，避孕