

Health promotion and tobacco control: a transatlantic perspective between Brazil and Portugal

Promoção da saúde e controle do tabaco: um olhar transatlântico entre Brasil e Portugal
Promoción de la salud y control del tabaco: una perspectiva transatlántica entre Brasil y Portugal

*Francisco Lucas de Lima
Fontes¹*

ORCID: 0000-0003-1880-9329

*Ermelinda do Carmo
Valente Caldeira²*

ORCID: 0000-0003-1949-9262

EDITORIAL

Health promotion, a concept based on the Ottawa Charter, recognizes that health is influenced by economic, social and environmental factors, as well as individual practices. The fight against smoking is one of the most challenging fronts in this context, given its direct relationship with the global burden of chronic diseases and preventable deaths. The articulation of public policies that involve multiple sectors and civil society has proved fundamental in dealing with this problem. In both Brazil and Portugal, health promotion plays a crucial role in integrating tobacco prevention and control actions, reflecting the guidelines of Canada's Population Health Promotion Model.

This Canadian model highlights the intersection between health, public policies and community action, emphasizing the need for healthy environments and structural interventions that shape behaviour. The influence of this paradigm is evident in global policies, including those adopted in Brazil and Portugal. It offers a theoretical framework that guides governments to create evidence-based strategies that are sensitive to cultural and social particularities. In Brazil, the National Health Promotion Policy (*Política Nacional de Promoção da Saúde*, PNPS) translates these principles into concrete actions, whereas in Portugal, the National Program for the Prevention and Control of Smoking reflects a progressive normative approach, especially in relation to tobacco consumption and electronic devices.

Brazil and Portugal have different histories and cultural dynamics, but they share similar challenges in tackling smoking. In Brazil, robust policies have contributed to a significant reduction in the prevalence of adult smokers, from 34.8% in 1989 to 12.6% in 2019⁽¹⁾. These achievements are the result of educational campaigns, tax increases and the creation of smoke-free environments. In Portugal, legislative efforts, such as the Tobacco Law (Law No. 37/2007), have significantly limited smoking in public places and restricted advertising, but the country still faces worrying rates, with 17% of the population identified as smokers in 2019⁽²⁾.

Epidemiological data reinforces the need for ongoing interventions. In Portugal, the prevalence of lifetime consumption has risen to 51% in 2022, with a worrying increase among young women and adolescents⁽³⁾. In 2024, a study of university students revealed that more than half of the participants (51.6%) reported having smoked tobacco at some point in their lives. In addition, 32% reported smoking in the 12 months prior to the survey, while 23.5% had smoked in the

¹Universidade Federal do Piauí, Teresina, Piauí, Brasil.

²Universidade de Évora, Évora, Portugal.

Autor correspondente:
Francisco Lucas de Lima Fontes
E-mail: lucasfontesenf@ufpi.edu.br

last 30 days⁽⁴⁾. In Brazil, although overall rates have fallen, vulnerable populations, especially those with low incomes and less schooling, continue to be exposed to high tobacco consumption levels. This data highlights the need for policies that combine structural interventions with educational campaigns adapted to local specificities.

Exposure to second-hand smoke is another significant problem. In Portugal, around 7.7% of the population reported daily exposure to environmental tobacco smoke in 2019⁽²⁾. In Brazil, the implementation of smoke-free environments has helped to reduce this exposure in public places, but there are still challenges in the home environment and in low-income communities⁽¹⁾. Children and adolescents are especially vulnerable, suffering impacts on their respiratory health and development.

An emerging challenge is Electronic Smoking Devices (ESDs), which include electronic cigarettes and heated tobacco products. In Brazil, their commercialization is prohibited by the National Health Surveillance Agency (*Agência Nacional de Vigilância Sanitária*, ANVISA), but the informal market is growing rapidly, driven by marketing strategies that promote these devices as less harmful⁽¹⁾. In Portugal, although their sale is regulated by European Directive 2014/40 on Tobacco Products and Law No. 109/2015, use among young people is alarming: in 2019, 4.7% of teenagers aged between 13 and 18 reported having used e-cigarettes in the last 30 days⁽²⁾. These figures highlight the need for more incisive educational campaigns and stricter regulations to curb its popularization.

The harm caused by smoking is widely documented. In Portugal, more than 13,500 deaths a year are attributed to smoking, with lung cancer, cardiovascular disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease being the main causes⁽²⁾. In Brazil, the economic and social impact of smoking is immense, with high costs for the health system in the treatment of diseases related to tobacco consumption, such as heart attacks and cancers⁽⁵⁾.

Integration between different sectors is key to tackling smoking effectively. In Brazil, the Health at School Program is an example of how health and education can come together to promote healthy habits and prevent smoking initiation⁽¹⁾. In Portugal, coordination between the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and community organizations has been essential in disseminating information about the risks associated with tobacco and ESDs.

This intersectoral integration also reflects the importance of joint actions between government, civil society and companies to address the social determinants of smoking. Tax incentives for sustainable production, strict regulation and international partnerships are strategies that can amplify the results.

On the other hand, the rise of new tobacco products requires a continuous review of legislation and the adaptation of educational campaigns. The misconception that ESDs are less harmful than conventional tobacco represents an additional challenge for public health policies in both countries.

Brazil and Portugal can learn from their respective experiences to face emerging challenges. While Brazil stands out for its significant reduction in the consumption of traditional cigarettes, Portugal has advanced in regulations dealing with new tobacco products. The exchange of experiences between the two countries can enrich tobacco control strategies, promoting solutions adapted to local contexts.

Tobacco control, whether traditional or in emerging forms, remains a priority for global public health. Based on evidence-based policies, intersectoral partnerships and innovative educational actions, Brazil and Portugal can not only face the challenges of the present, but also serve as models for other nations seeking to reduce the devastating impacts of smoking.



How to cite this article: Fontes FLL, Caldeira ECV. Health promotion and tobacco control: a transatlantic perspective between Brazil and Portugal [editorial]. *Rev Enferm UFPI* [internet]. 2025 [cited: dia mês abreviado ano];14:e6380. DOI: 10.26694/reufpi.v14i1.6380

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This study was financed in part by the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES) - Finance Code 001.

REFERENCES

1. Ministério da Saúde (BR). Caderno temático do Programa Saúde na Escola: prevenção do uso do tabaco [recurso eletrônico]. Brasília: Ministério da Saúde; 2022. 44 p.

2. Nunes E, Gato I. Programa Nacional para a Prevenção e Controlo do Tabagismo 2020. Portugal. Ministério da Saúde. Direção-Geral da Saúde. Lisboa: Direção-Geral da Saúde; 2021. 81 p.
3. Balsa C, Vital C, Urbano C. V Inquérito Nacional ao Consumo de Substâncias Psicoativas na População Geral, Portugal 2022: Relatório final. Lisboa: Serviço de Intervenção nos Comportamentos Aditivos e nas Dependências; 2022. 278 p.
4. Silva PA (Coord) et al. Saúde e estilos de vida no ensino superior em Portugal. Lisboa: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais; 2024. 350 p.
5. Instituto Nacional de Câncer (INCA). O tabagismo no Brasil: morte, doença e política de preços e impostos [Internet]. Rio de Janeiro: Instituto Nacional de Câncer; 2021. Disponível em: <https://ninho.inca.gov.br/jspui/bitstream/123456789/15986/1/O%20tabagismo%20no%20Brasil%3a%20morte%2c%20doen%C3%A7a%20e%20pol%C3%ADtica%20de%20pre%C3%A7os%20e%20impostos.pdf>

Conflicts of interest: No
Submission: 2025/01/10
Revised: 2025/01/11
Accepted: 2025/01/11
Publication: 2025/01/31

Editor in Chief or Scientific: José Wicto Pereira Borges

Authors retain copyright and grant the Revista de Enfermagem da UFPI the right of first publication, with the work simultaneously licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution BY 4.0 License, which allows sharing the work with acknowledgment of authorship and initial publication in this journal.