

Patrícia Silva<sup>1</sup>, Sara Vilão<sup>1,2</sup>, Margarida Pocinho<sup>3</sup>, Pedro Rebelo<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ESTeSL - Escola Superior de Tecnologia da Saúde, Instituto Politécnico de Lisboa, Lisbon, Portugal

<sup>2</sup> ULS Guarda, Portugal

<sup>3</sup> ESTeSC – Escola Superior de Tecnologia da Saúde de Coimbra, Portugal

## Hypothesis / aims of study

Urinary incontinence (UI) is a health issue with multidimensional repercussions that negatively interfere with women's quality of life (QoL) and it is often underdiagnosed and untreated.

The aims of this study were:

- identify the prevalence of urinary incontinence among women in a municipality in the center region of Portugal;
- assess the impact of UI on women's QoL across multiple dimensions, including daily activities, effort activities, self-image, emotional impact, sexuality and well-being.

## Study design, materials and methods

**STUDY DESIGN** - This was an observational, cross-sectional and analytical study, conducted using a convenience sampling method, which received approval from the local institutional research ethics board.

The sample size was calculated for a population of 11,459 women in the municipality, with 30% expected prevalence<sup>1</sup>, a 95% confidence interval and a 5% precision, resulting in a sample size of 323.

**INCLUSION CRITERIA:** ≥ 18 years, residents in the municipality and have the intellectual capacity to complete the questionnaires.

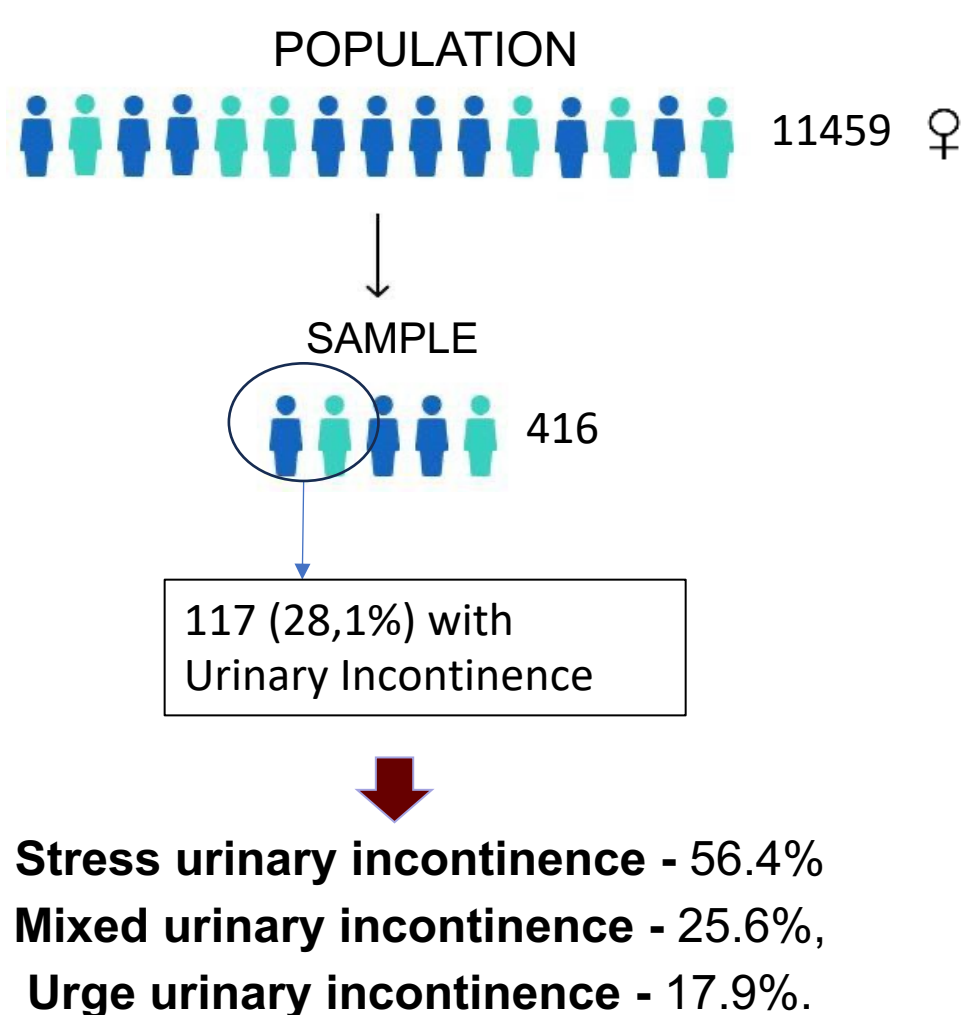
**EXCLUSION CRITERIA:** Women with neurological conditions

### PROCEDURES

Data were collected using a **sample characterization questionnaire** and the **Contilife®** measurement instrument, which was accessible in both online and paper form.

The local hospital, healthcare centers, and other regional institutions were contacted to distribute the survey, and the data collection took place between 29 November 2022 and 31 January 2023.

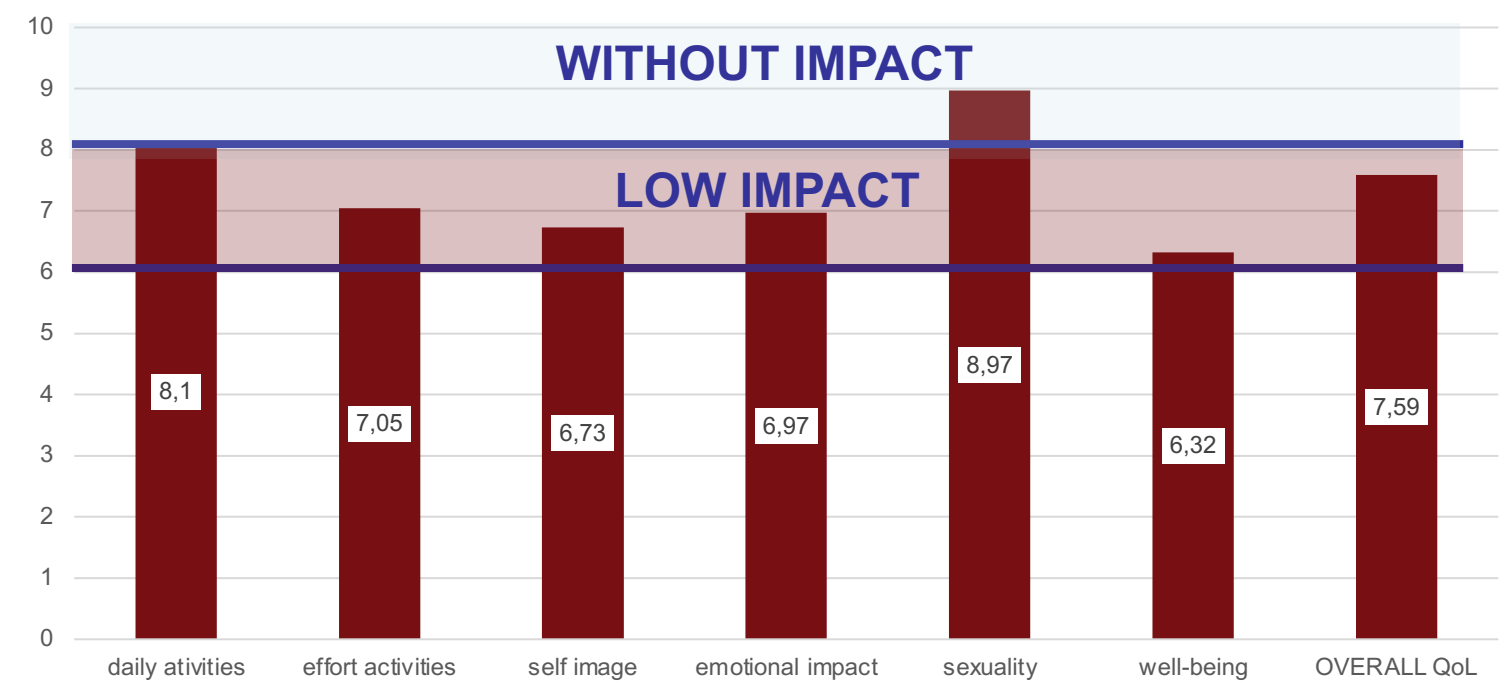
## Results and interpretation



- The mean age, of the women with UI, was 51.1 years, ranging from a minimum of 20 to a maximum of 88 years.

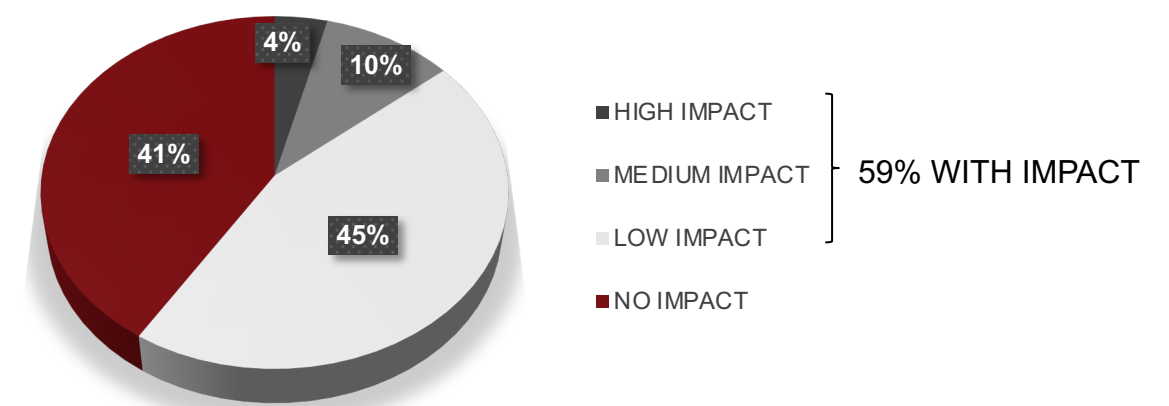
- Concerning the assessment of overall QoL, the mean score was  $7.59 \pm 1.56$ , indicating a low impact ( $p=0.000$ ). Specifically, in the dimensions of Daily Activities and Sexuality, mean scores suggested **no** impact on quality of life, while in the remaining dimensions, the impact was **low** based on the mean scores ( $p=0.000$ ).

### IMPACT OF UI ON CONTILIFE® DIMENSIONS



- Considering an established cutoff point (with impact/without impact) and the overall QoL, our findings suggest that **UI have impact on the QoL on the majority of women.**

### OVERALL QUALITY OF LIFE



- **Mixed urinary Incontinence** was the type of UI that cause more impact on QoL (73%).
- Only **37 women** sought professional assistance, with the most frequently mentioned professionals being the Gynecologist/Obstetrician (n=12) or the General Practitioner (n=10). Notably, six women in 117, reported seeking help from a physiotherapist.

- Different healthcare professionals, should **actively inquire** about urinary losses in women, in order to guide them towards the best resolution of their complaints.

- Efforts should be made by physiotherapists **to raise awareness** among **physicians** and the **general population** about the significance of physiotherapy in UI. Pelvic physiotherapy is considered the **first-line intervention** in this condition, and it can also play a key role in **prevention** <sup>2,3</sup>.

## Conclusions

Almost one third of women, in our study, reported UI. Female UI has a statistically significant impact on QoL across all Contilife® dimensions, despite being classified as low impact. Only one third of these women sought professional assistance. Therefore, it becomes important that the healthcare professionals actively inquire about this topic, and promote urinary health literacy strategies.

## References

- Alves JO, Luz ST Da, Brandão S, Da Luz CM, Jorge RN, Da Roza T. Urinary Incontinence in Physically Active Young Women: Prevalence and Related Factors. Int J Sports Med [Internet]. 2017;38(12):937–41. Available from: <https://www.thieme-connect.com/products/ejournals/abstract/10.1055/s-0043-115736>
- Pereira MG, Lynch B, Hall-Faul M, Pedras S. Quality of life of women with urinary incontinence in rehabilitation treatment. J Health Psychol [Internet]. 2019;24(2):254–63. Available from: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27302604/>
- Gamsizkan Z, Sungur MA, Kaya AE, Cayir Y. Urinary Incontinence in Women Living in Rural Areas and Reflections on Quality of Life. Middle Black Sea J Heal Sci [Internet]. 2021;7(April):32–7. Available from: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351243648\\_Urinary\\_Incontinence\\_in\\_Women\\_Living\\_in\\_Rural\\_Area](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351243648_Urinary_Incontinence_in_Women_Living_in_Rural_Area)