



**Report on "Understanding or brooding over our emotions. Analysis of the silent strategies that bring us closer to or distance us from emotional well-being"**

## **BROODING ACCOUNTS FOR 40% OF ANXIETY-RELATED PROBLEMS AND 30% OF DEPRESSION-RELATED PROBLEMS AMONGST THE SPANISH POPULATION**

- **Brooding, or continuously dwelling on problems, or mentally engaging in a negative situation is one of the typical reactions to adverse circumstances that distances people from emotional well-being. It is the variable responsible for the greatest volume of anxiety and depression-related problems amongst the Spanish population, being behind 40% of clinical symptoms of anxiety and 30% of clinical symptoms of depression.**
- **In Spain, brooding over emotions is the main indication of these clinical symptoms. In this sense, 40% of people say they have suffered from mental health problems; This is particularly common among young people, with a worrying 54% of young people aged 18 to 29 admitting to having experienced this type of problem.**
- **However, emotional regulation strategies exist that help bring people closer to well-being and prevent anxiety and depression. These are based on identifying emotions, understanding them and reassessing them. These skills can be trained and improved in both clinical and educational contexts.**
- **The most prevalent mental health ailments in Spain are anxiety (68%) and depression (51%), mood disorders (29%), suicidal thoughts (12%), eating disorders (12%) and addictions (10%).**
- **Medication is the most common way that Spaniards deal with their mental health. So much so that more than 14 million Spaniards (41%) have taken antidepressants at some point and, of those, 1 in 4 consume them almost daily, with a higher percentage amongst women.**
- **By autonomous regions, the Balearic Islands, Catalonia and Cantabria account for the highest percentage of inhabitants who have experienced mental health problems, while La Rioja, the Basque Country and Asturias have the least.**

**Madrid, 28 November 2023.** Everybody has tossed and turned in bed at night, unable to fall asleep because they can't get a report they have to deliver at work or a family problem out of their head. Thoughts constantly creep back to your mind, without it being possible to find a solution. In psychology, this is known as **brooding** and **it is behind 40% of anxiety problems** in the Spanish population **and 30% of cases of depression.**



To some extent, biological predisposition and life experiences are responsible for the appearance of mental health problems; however, what really explains the persistence or worsening of mental ailments are the strategies used to regulate what we feel. In this sense, brooding is the main silent strategy that hinders Spanish people from achieving well-being.

This is one of the main **conclusions** of the study "**Understanding or brooding over our emotions. Analysis of the silent strategies that bring us closer to or distance us from emotional well-being**", prepared by [Línea Directa](#)'s health insurance business, based on the results of **1,700 surveys** carried out throughout Spain in which psychometric instruments validated and used worldwide in the field of psychology and mental health were included. This report has been prepared in cooperation with the **expert in Emotional Intelligence, Ruth Castillo-Gualda**, and the **specialist in Interventions in Anxiety and Stress, Juan Ramos-Cejudo**, both **professors at the Faculty of Health at Camilo José Cela University (UCJC)** with a view to establishing what happens in people's minds to develop emotional problems, detect the main indicators as regards clinical symptomatology of disorders and propose prevention or protection strategies that help the population to enjoy emotional health.

### **Strategies that hinder or facilitate emotional well-being**

What people do with their feelings can hinder or facilitate their emotional well-being. In this sense, **three unhelpful responses** have been identified that lead to anxiety and depression and therefore **make it more difficult for people to achieve well-being: repressing what you feel, brooding on the situation** or problem, and **not knowing the causes** of emotional distress. Two examples of unhelpful strategies as regards a problem with your partner include: dwelling on the way you reacted in a past argument, in an obsessive way and in a loop (brooding) or anticipating negative consequences such as a breakup, without them ever happening.

The good news is that there are strategies that **can help people achieve well-being** and prevent anxiety and depression and thus improve their mental health. These are based on **identifying emotions, understanding and reassessing them**; these skills can be trained and improved, both in clinical and educational contexts. An example of reassessing emotions includes reinterpreting frustration: "Not getting something I want doesn't mean I'm not capable, not valid enough."

### **Mental health problems in Spain**

Mental health issues have grown in recent years. The WHO estimates that **450 million people worldwide suffer from a disorder** that severely impedes their lives.

In Spain, **brooding over emotions is the main indication of these clinical symptoms**. In this sense, **40% of people** claim to have suffered from **psychological disorders**; this problem is more common amongst young people, with a worrying 54% of young people aged between 18 and 29 years old admitting to having experienced this type of problem. In fact, according to the WHO, half of all mental health disorders begin at age 14 or earlier and **two-thirds of mental health problems show their first signs in late childhood or adolescence**.

The most prevalent mental health ailments in our country are: anxiety (68%) and depression (51%), followed by mood disorder (29%), suicidal thoughts (12%), eating disorders (12%) and addictions (10%).



There are gender differences in the prevalence of mental health conditions between men and women. While the predominant ailments in men are addictions (+7pp), behavioural disorders (+6pp) and bipolar disorder (+4pp), in women they are anxiety (+7pp), suicidal thoughts (+5pp) and eating disorders (+5pp).

By autonomous region, the **Balearic Islands (51%), Catalonia (47%) and Cantabria (45%)** are the communities with the **highest percentage of inhabitants who say they have experienced mental health problems.**

**On the other hand, the Basque Country, Asturias (33%) and La Rioja (30%)** are the regions accounting for the **lowest percentages.**



**Antidepressants: the immediate way of dealing with mental health problems**

When brooding is not treated properly or emotions are not managed effectively, more serious mental health problems can occur. And in this sense, the figures confirm that there is a

direct relation with the consumption of anxiolytics or antidepressants. So much so that **more than 14 million Spaniards (41%) have taken antidepressants at some point** and, of those, **1 in 4 consume them almost daily**, with a higher percentage amongst women. The **sale of anxiolytics and antidepressants** in pharmacies in Spain **has risen by 40%** over the last decade, with Spain the top country in Europe when it comes to the consumption of psychotropic drugs.

Another conclusion of this study is that **60% of Spaniards have taken sleep medications at some time** and **1 in 4 consume such medication on almost a daily basis**, with a higher rate of consumption amongst women.

In light of this data, it is no surprise that **46% of Spaniards have at some point sought help from a mental health professional**, and, of these, **1 in 3 have consultations once a month or more**. Young people aged 18 to 29 are most likely to turn to professionals for help. However, more than half of people with mental health disorders who need treatment do not receive it. This fact is undoubtedly influenced by the fact that **70% of the Spanish population considers that mental health is still a taboo.**

### **Methodology**

Survey carried out by Línea Directa in collaboration with the consultancy firm MDK on 1,700 individuals proportionally distributed along quotas by sex, age and region. Margin of error of +/- 2.38% with a confidence interval of 95%. Fieldwork carried out between 4 and 8 September 2023. The study was performed with the collaboration of mental health experts, Ruth Castillo-Gualda, an expert in emotional intelligence, and Juan Ramos-Cejudo, a specialist in anxiety and stress, both professors at the Faculty of Health at Camilo José Cela University (UCJC).

### **About Línea Directa**

Línea Directa Aseguradora is the 5th largest insurer of cars in Spain, specialising in direct sales of insurance for cars, motorbikes, companies, the self-employed, homes and health. Línea Directa is among the 100 Spanish companies with the best reputations, according to the MERCO Companies ranking.



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Seguro de Salud

**PRESS RELEASE**

**X #StopBrooding**

This initiative applies to the following **Sustainable Development Goals**:



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