

# Living in COVID Times - IDF Europe COVID & Diabetes Survey

## Experiences from People living with Diabetes



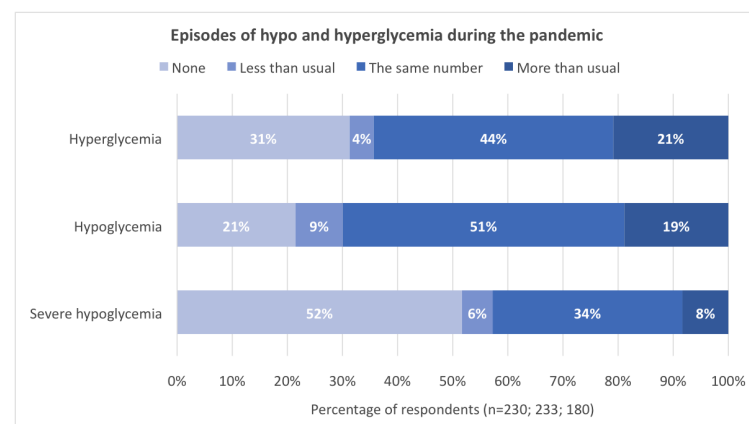
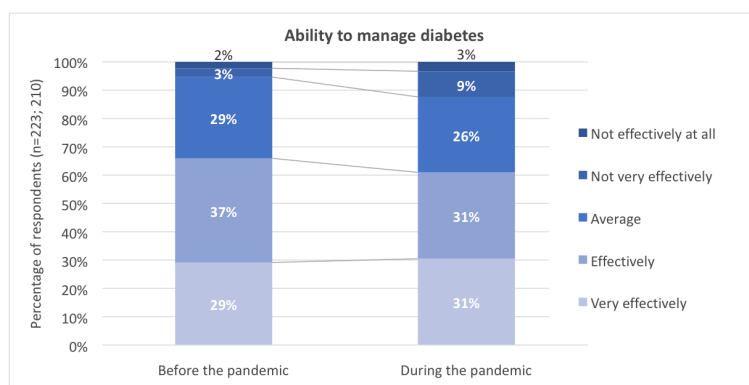
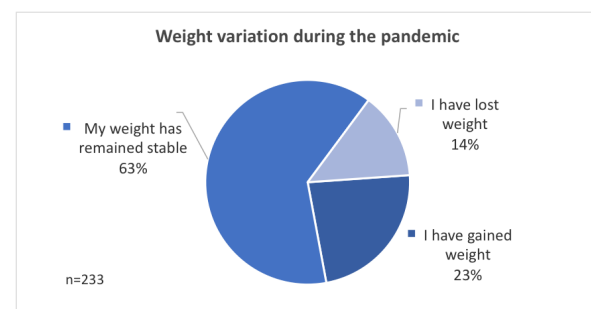
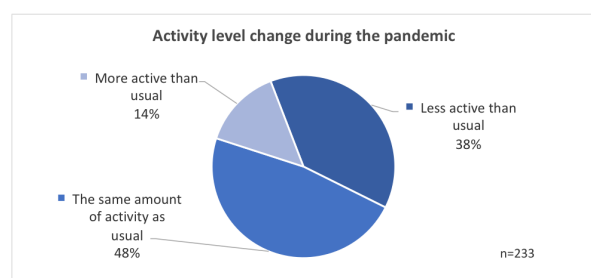
Belgium

### Summary

The overall impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Belgium on people living with diabetes (PwD) was relatively limited. There was a significant increase in the number of people who felt that their ability to manage their diabetes had worsened during the pandemic, but more than 60% of respondents rated their ability as effective or very effective, and 86% felt they were able to follow their diabetes regimen. Access to medicines and supplies was generally not a challenge, but there were marked disruptions relating to access to care. As in many countries, one of the significant issues for PwD was the lack of guidance; 75% of respondents did not receive any from their usual healthcare professionals and 84% mentioned that more information would have helped them manage their diabetes better. The pandemic did create more anxiety for many PwD. One in ten respondents were worried about shortages of medicines and supplies and a number experienced more episodes of low mood. Few respondents were convinced of the effectiveness of the virtual consultations that were implemented during the crisis, although this may have been due to the technologies used.

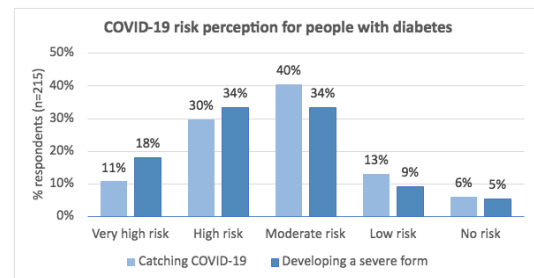
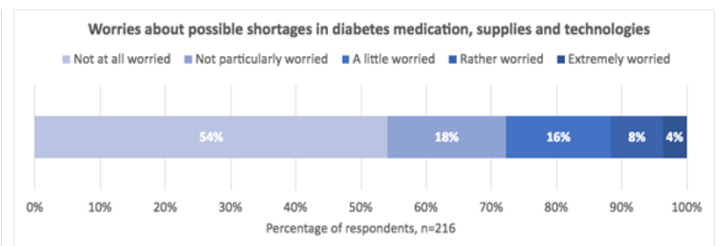
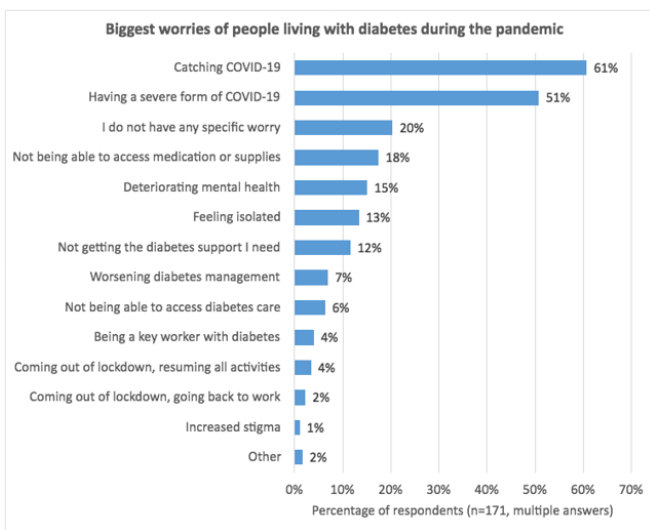
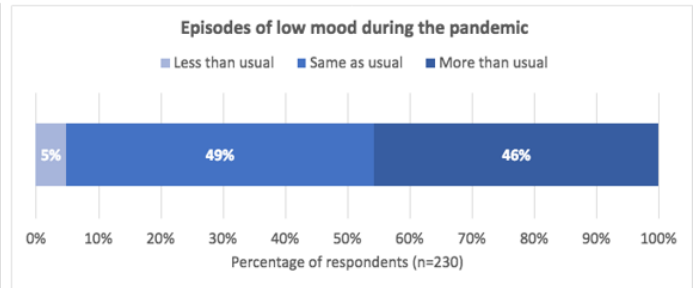
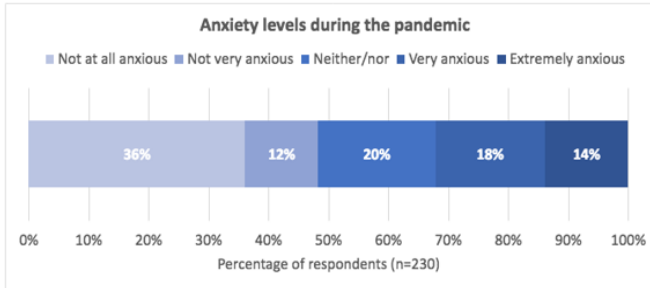
### Diabetes Management

Some people felt that their ability to manage their diabetes had worsened during the pandemic, although this remained at low levels. About one-fifth of respondents did, however, record more variable blood glucose levels and a greater number of hypoglycemic and hyperglycemic events. Physical activity levels also declined during the COVID-19 pandemic, and more people said they had put on weight than the opposite.



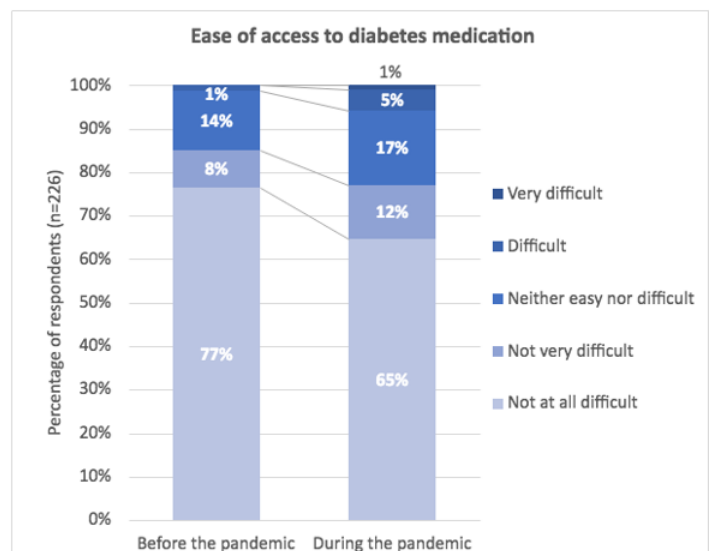
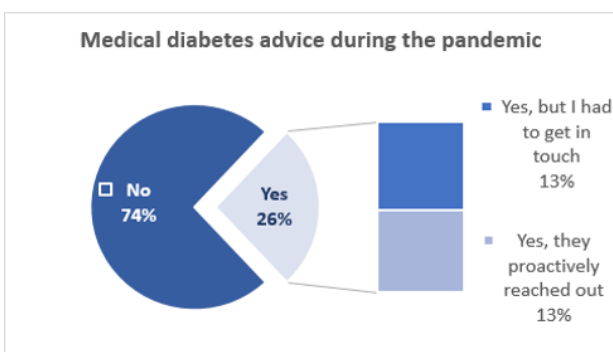
## Psychological Impact

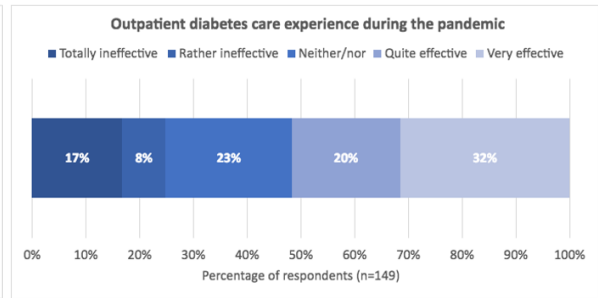
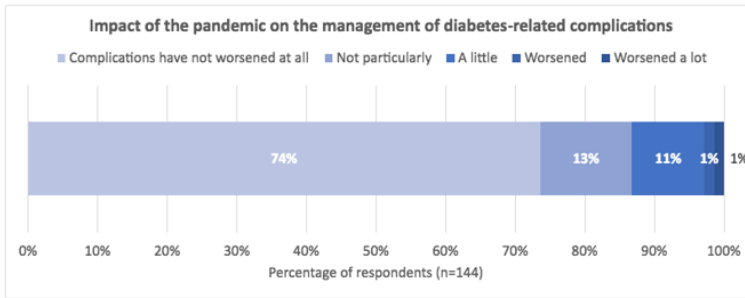
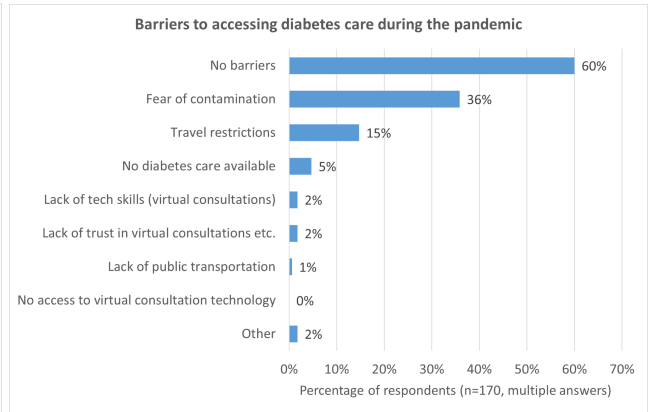
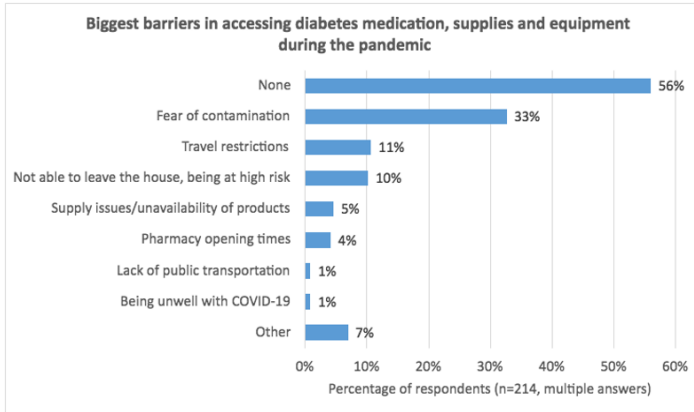
Diabetes is a condition requiring round-the-clock management and attention, and the COVID-19 pandemic has meant worrying even more. Being at high risk, PwD were afraid of catching the disease and falling severely ill. Almost half the respondents experienced more episodes of low mood than usual, and many felt more anxious. Financial concerns and worries about medicine shortages were also reported, albeit by a minority of people in Belgium.



## Access to Medicines, Supplies, Technologies and Care

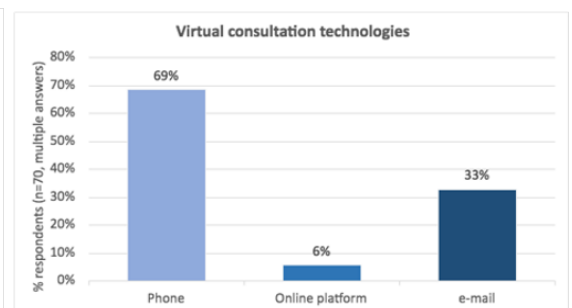
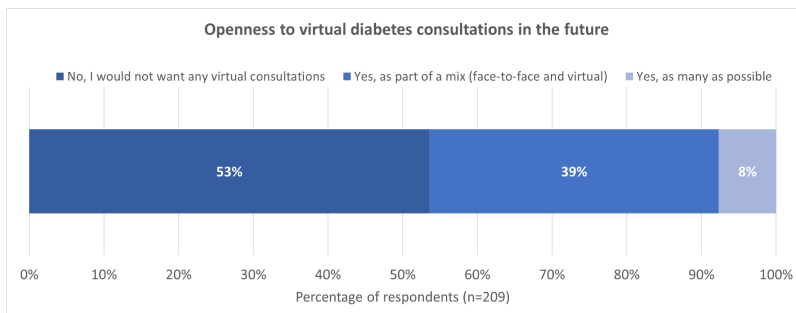
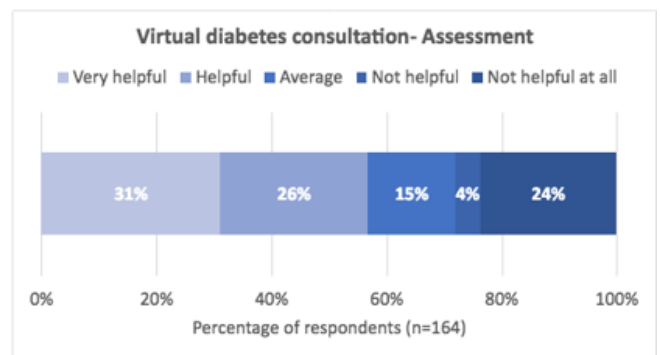
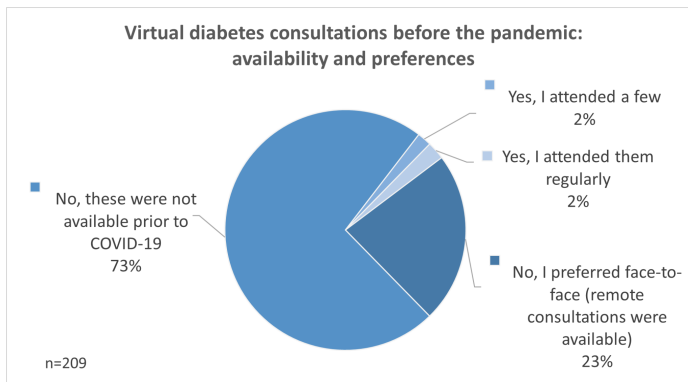
Access to medicines only proved a challenge for about six percent of respondents; a similar proportion recorded some difficulty in accessing supplies. There were more disruptions relating to access to care, with more than one third of respondents recording that their appointment for regular diabetes care was rescheduled, although half the respondents did not experience any disruptions.





## E-health

Virtual consultations were put in place and 22% of respondents were able to attend one, a huge increase compared to pre-COVID times. Virtual consultations were conducted almost exclusively through phone or email, and seemed to work well for most, although not for all. More than half the people who responded to the survey indicated that they were not interested in virtual consultations in the future.



## Background

This country profile is part of 'Living in COVID times', an online survey conducted by IDF Europe between August and October 2020. It collected answers from 3,480 people living with diabetes across 32 countries in Europe and aimed to understand how the COVID-19 crisis affected PwD's lives and their diabetes care. In Belgium, 251 people responded to the survey. Almost all of them lived with diabetes (half with type 1 and half with type 2 diabetes). Just under 80% of respondents were 51 years old or more. The median time respondents had been living with diabetes was between 11 to 20 years, but the answers covered a broad spectrum and reflected a variety of situations. Gender representation was relatively balanced (55% women and 45% men).

The Europe-wide, Living in COVID times, report can be found [here](#).

If you wish to share a testimonial of your life with diabetes in Belgium during the pandemic, write to [idfeurope@idf-europe.org](mailto:idfeurope@idf-europe.org). We look forward to hearing from you!



**International  
Diabetes Federation**  
Europe