

Living in COVID Times - IDF Europe COVID & Diabetes Survey

Experiences from People living with Diabetes



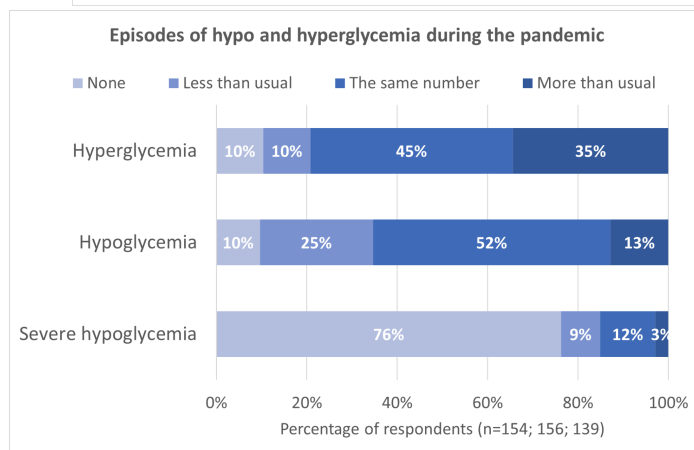
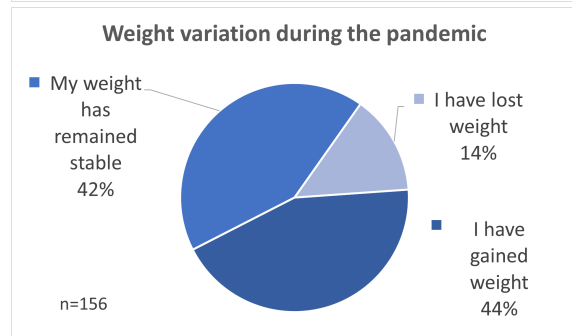
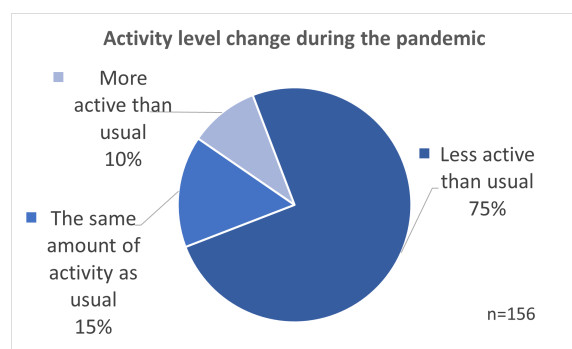
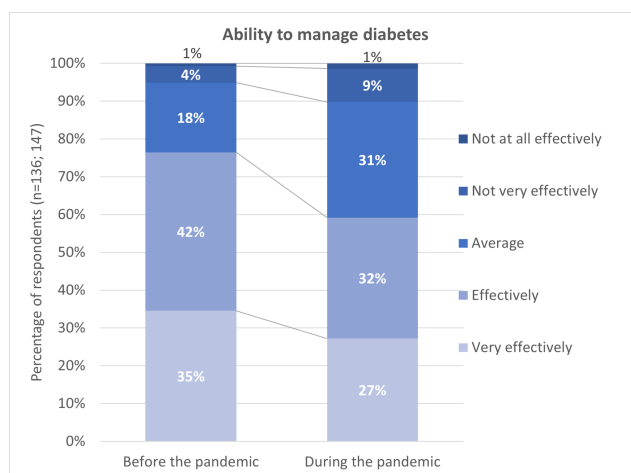
Spain

Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic had a notable impact on people living with diabetes (PWD) in Spain. The number of PWD reporting they were able to manage their diabetes “effectively” or “very effectively” fell sharply. Maintaining some physical activity represented a significant challenge during the lockdown. Access to diabetes medicines was generally not an issue, but access to care was adversely affected, with many appointments cancelled or rescheduled. Many PWD felt afraid or were unable to leave their house, creating additional barriers to accessing care. Virtual healthcare solutions were available for a majority of the respondents and were well received by most, with strong enthusiasm for virtual consultations, but 37% of PWD would have liked more online support. Over half the respondents to the survey did not receive any advice from their usual healthcare professionals and the lack of guidance was generally perceived as a major gap - 72% would have wanted to receive more diabetes-specific information. National diabetes associations played a strong role in this respect, with more than half of respondents receiving information from them, although the government remained the main source of information for more than two thirds of PWD surveyed. COVID-19 also took a significant psychological toll on PWD.

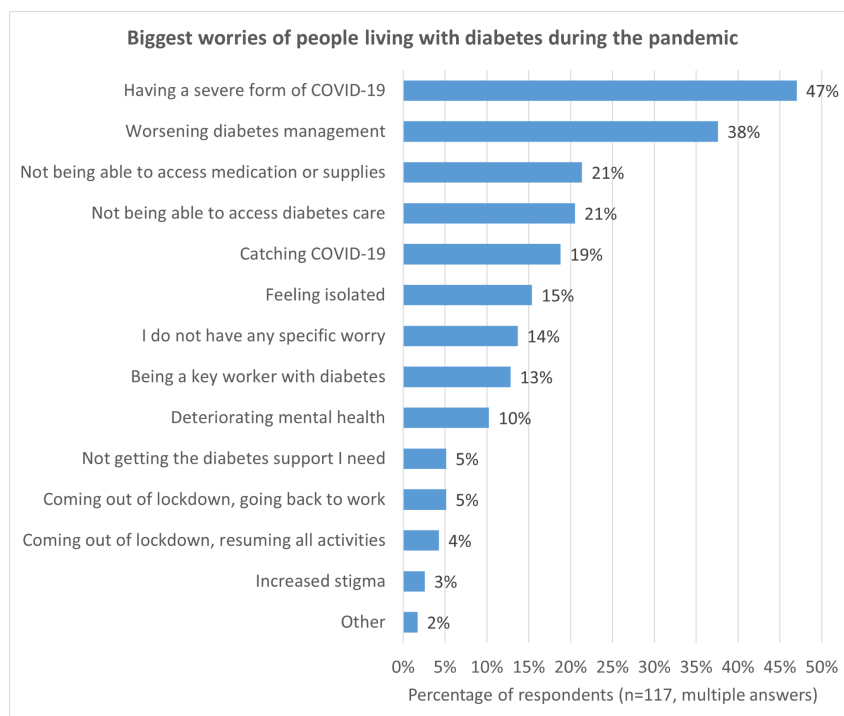
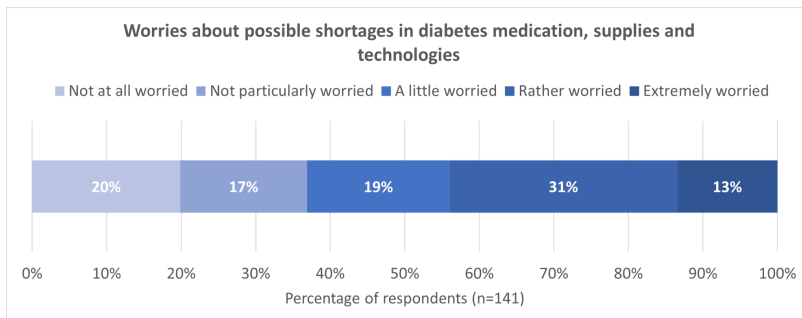
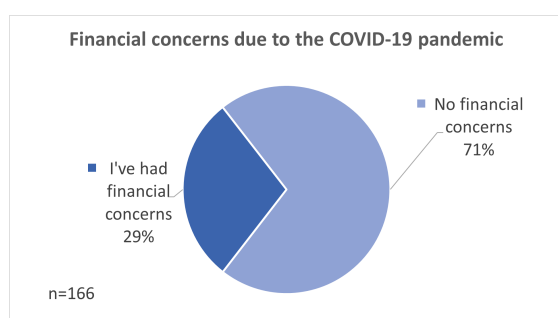
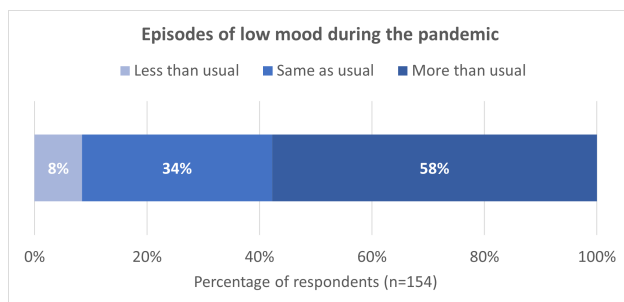
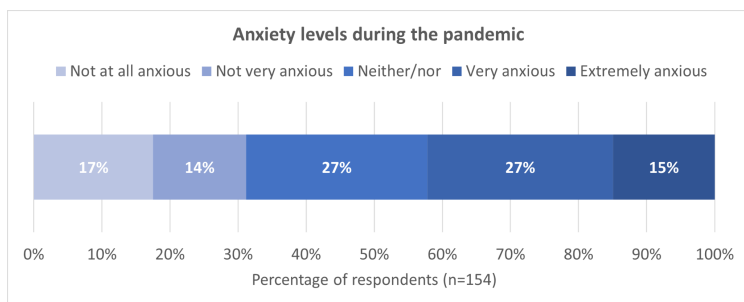
Diabetes Management

Just under 60% of respondents rated their ability to manage their diabetes “effectively” or “very effectively” during the crisis, down from 76% pre-COVID-19. Physical activity levels plummeted. Some 75% of respondents reported exercising less and 44% gaining weight. Blood glucose variability rose, as did the reported frequency of hyperglycemic episodes.



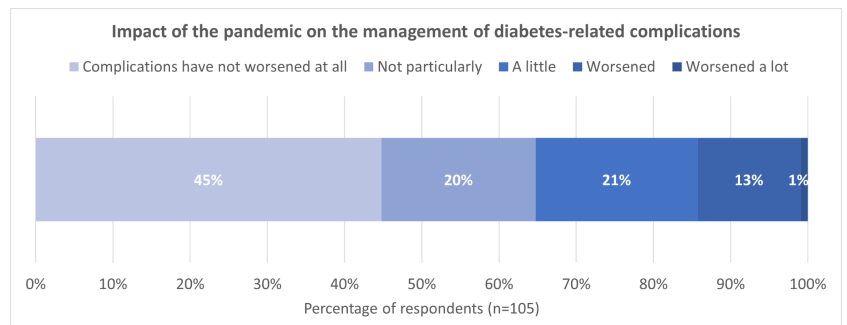
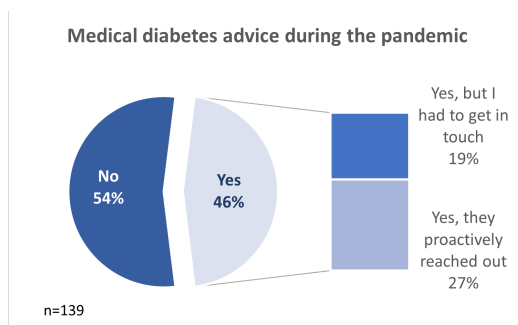
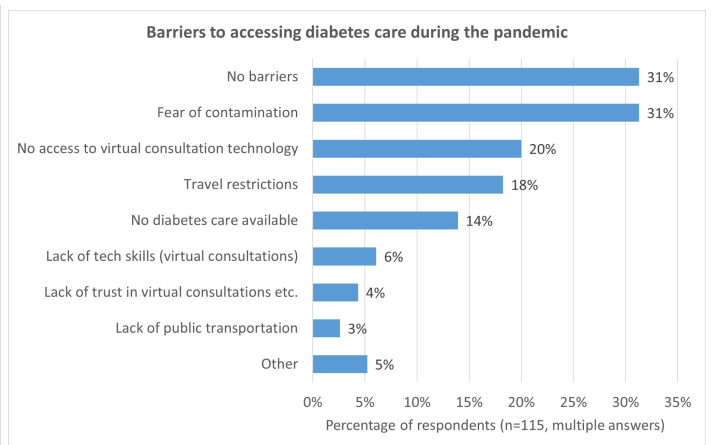
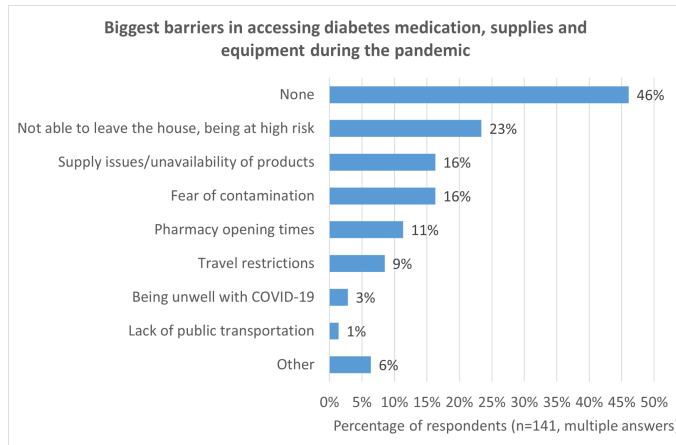
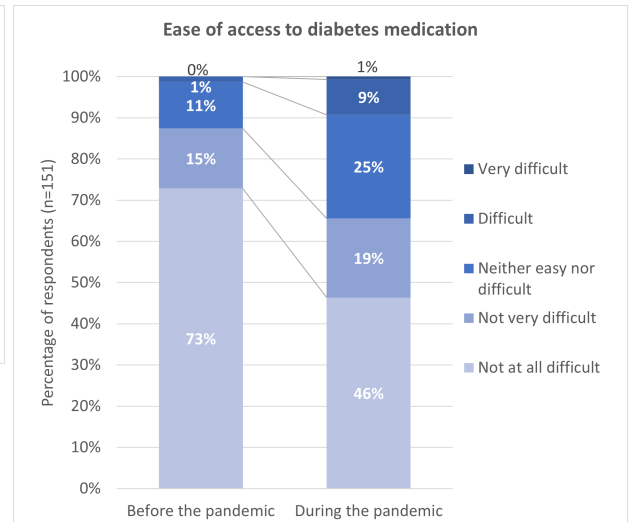
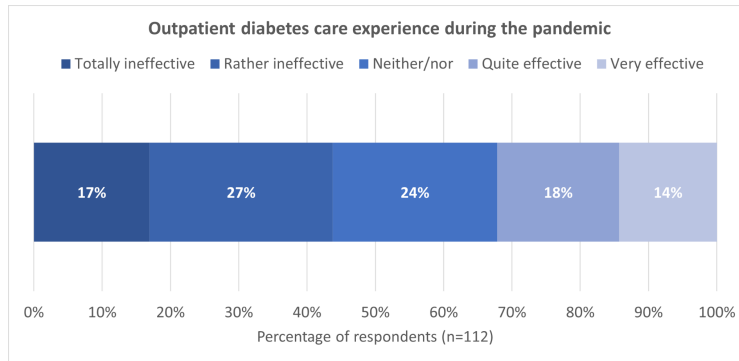
Psychological Impact

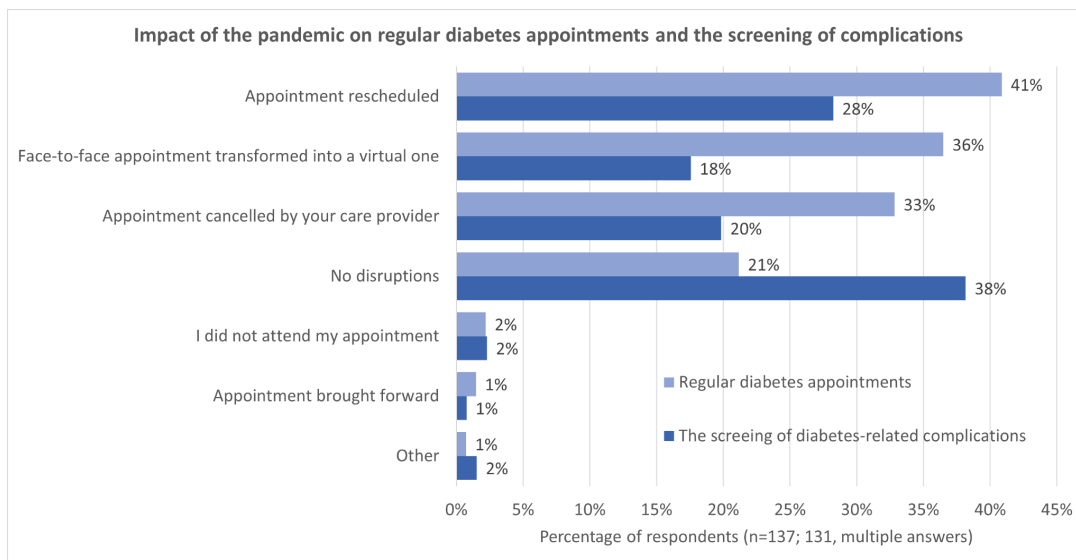
The psychological burden brought about by the pandemic was widely felt by PwD in Spain, as 42% of respondents were more or much more anxious than before COVID-19, 45% worried about shortages in medicines and supplies, and 58% experienced more frequent episodes of low mood than usual. Developing a severe form of COVID-19 and a degraded ability to manage their diabetes featured prominently among the most frequently reported concerns. Respondents also worried about potential medicine shortages and difficulties in accessing care. Close to one third of the respondents reported experiencing financial concerns as a result of the pandemic, adding to existing material and psychological difficulties.



Access to Medicines, Supplies, Technologies, and Care

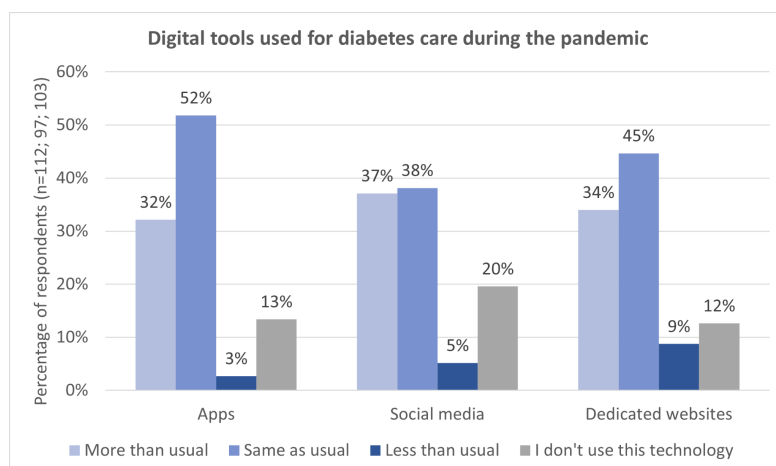
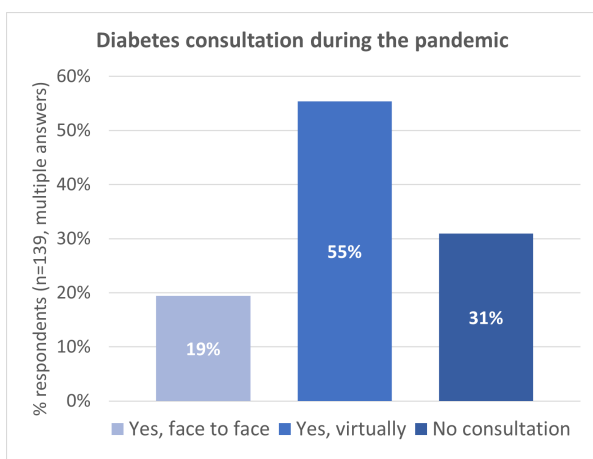
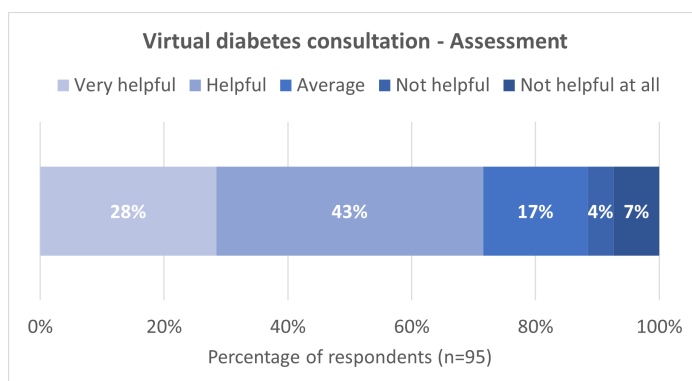
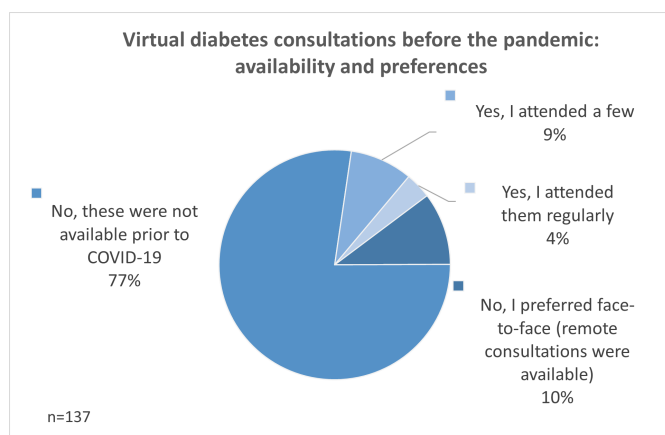
During the pandemic, there was a sharp increase in the number of respondents who indicated experiencing some degree of difficulty in accessing medicines, supplies, and technologies. However, these problems were not experienced by most. PwD in Spain also reported significant issues accessing care, with many appointments being rescheduled or cancelled. 41% of PwD saw an appointment for regular diabetes care rescheduled, 33% cancelled, and for 36% of respondents, consultations went virtual. Appointments for the screening of diabetes-related complications were also extensively disrupted. Fear of contamination, lack of access to the adequate technological tools, and travel restrictions were most frequently cited as causes of limited access to care.

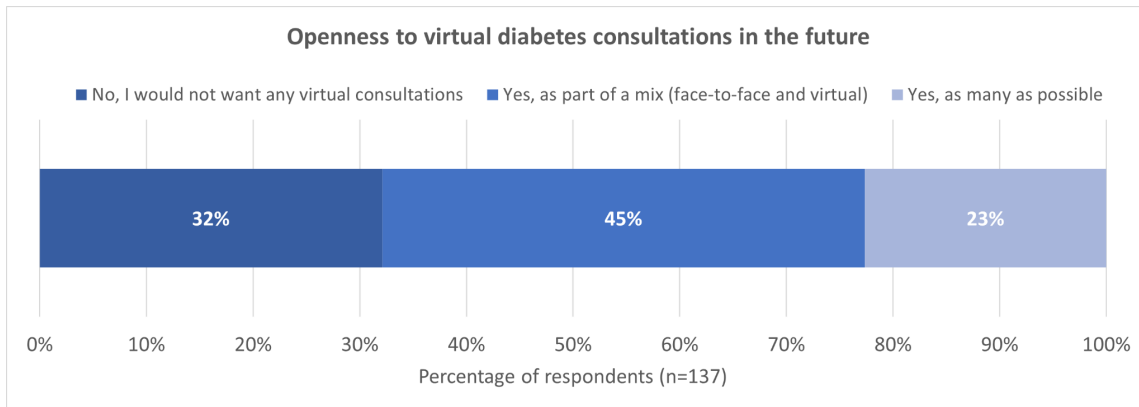




E-health

The deployment of virtual consultations occurred relatively rapidly as a response to the crisis. Over half of survey respondents attended one such consultation during the pandemic, almost three times as many as attended a physical consultation. This was a large increase compared to pre-COVID times. Most virtual consultations were held over the phone and through online platforms or email in some cases. Such consultations seemed to be very well received by PwD attending them and, overall, more than two-thirds of PwD indicated that they would consider attending them in the future (45% as part of a mix of face-to-face and virtual consultations).





Background

This country profile was developed as 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 Spain, 177 people responded to the survey, 25% of them parents or caregivers and 75% themselves living with diabetes. Type 1 diabetes was better represented, while 11% of the respondents lived with type 2 diabetes. All age ranges from 6 to 90 years old were well represented and there was a majority of women (60%). The median time respondents had been living with diabetes was between 11 and 20 years, and the answers covered a broad spectrum and reflected a variety of situations.

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

If you wish to share a testimonial of your life with diabetes in Spain during the pandemic, write to idfeurope@idf-europe.org. We look forward to hearing from you!



**International
Diabetes Federation**
Europe