

Living in COVID Times - IDF Europe COVID & Diabetes Survey

Experiences from People living with Diabetes



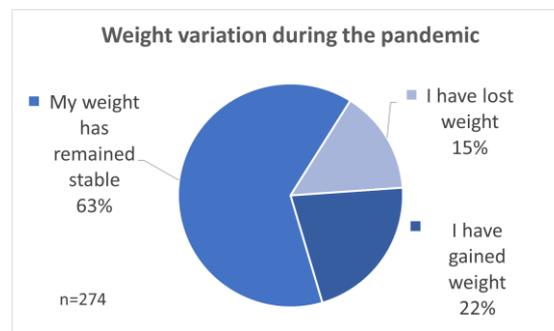
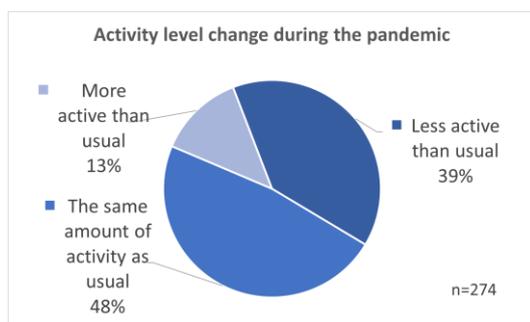
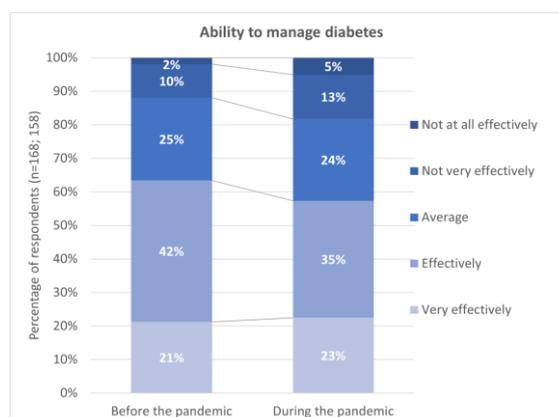
Finland

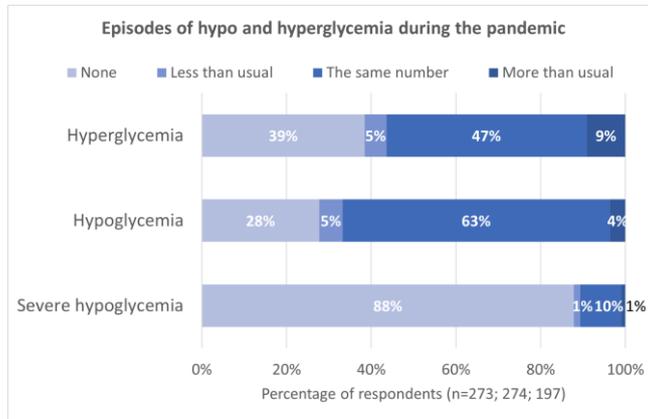
Summary

The Finnish response to the pandemic did not lead to major issues for people living with diabetes (PwD). PwD found it generally easy to be tested; and there was only limited disruption in access to care, medicines, supplies, and technologies. The measures put in place to lower the risk of catching COVID-19 during the pandemic were on the whole perceived as adequate. Only a small proportion of PwD found it more difficult to manage their diabetes during the crisis than did, prior to it. The major area of disruption related to access to healthcare services. Finland had the highest proportion of respondents (close to a fifth) in the survey countries, not considering that they were at high risk of developing a serious form of COVID-19. As in many countries, PwD would have benefited from more guidance: 83% of respondents did not receive any from their healthcare team and 81% mentioned that more information and clearer, dedicated recommendations would have helped them manage their diabetes better. More than 20% of respondents received information from their diabetes association, although government sources were the most prevalent. COVID-19 had a significant psychological impact, causing anxiety and more frequent episodes of low mood for over a third of the respondents. As in many other countries, the healthcare system did adapt somewhat to the constraints resulting from the pandemic. More people attended virtual consultations than had done pre-COVID and most appeared satisfied with them. While some PwD expressed reservations about attending remote consultations in the future, a large majority felt ready to use them, either exclusively or as part of a mix of options.

Diabetes Management

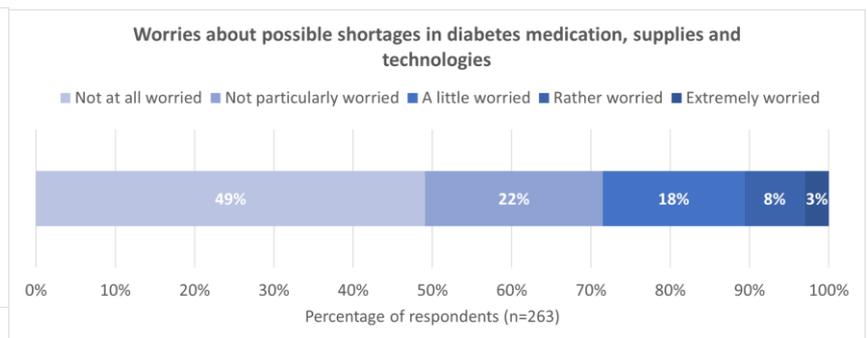
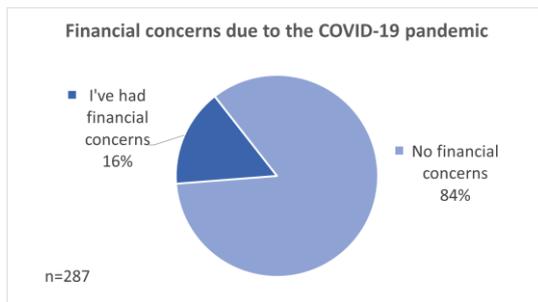
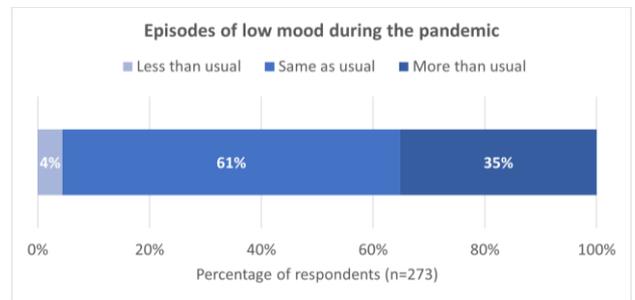
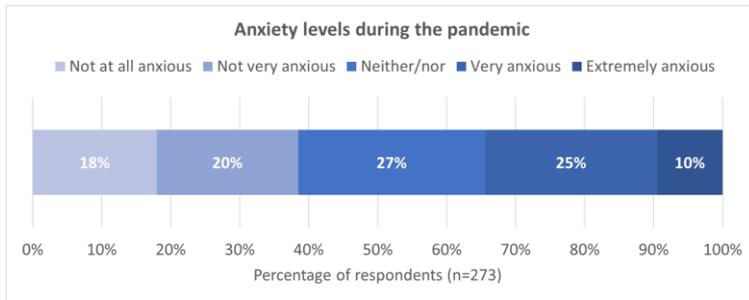
Eighteen percent of the respondents reported that their ability to manage their diabetes was ineffective or very ineffective during the pandemic, up from 12%. Nearly all (94%) were able to follow their diabetes regimen as usual. For 87% of the respondents, blood glucose readings stayed the same or were more stable, and a modest number of PwD reported more frequent hyperglycaemic episodes. Over one third of the respondents were less active during COVID-19 times, and under one quarter gained weight.

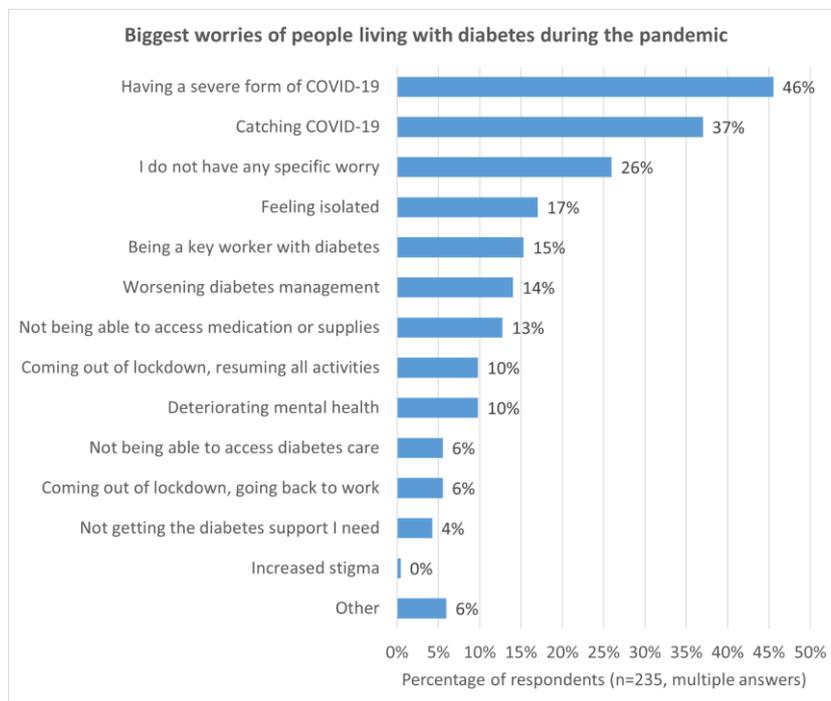




Psychological Impact

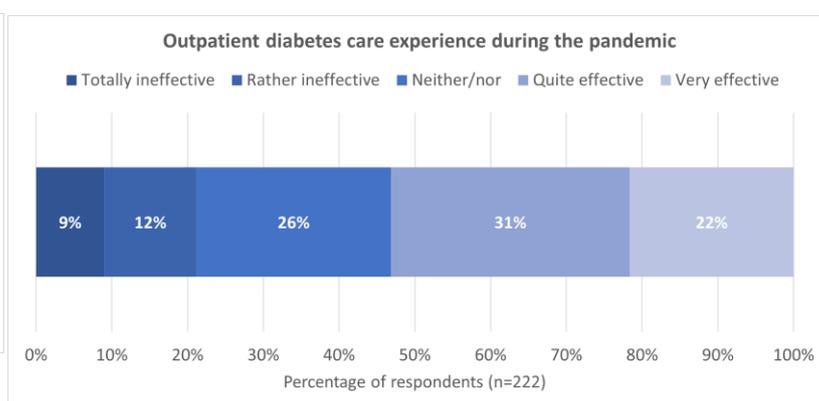
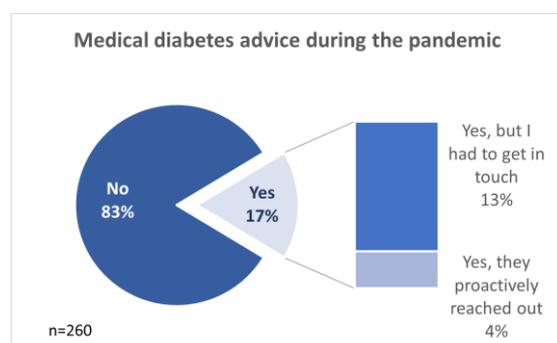
The psychological impact of COVID-19 seen in many countries around Europe was also evident in Finland. Thirty-five percent of the respondents felt more or much more anxious during the pandemic and the same proportion experienced more episodes of low mood than usual. The worries most cited by PwD were developing a serious form of COVID-19 and catching the disease in the first place. Isolation, supply shortages, difficulties to work or manage one's diabetes and financial issues were also reported as concerns.

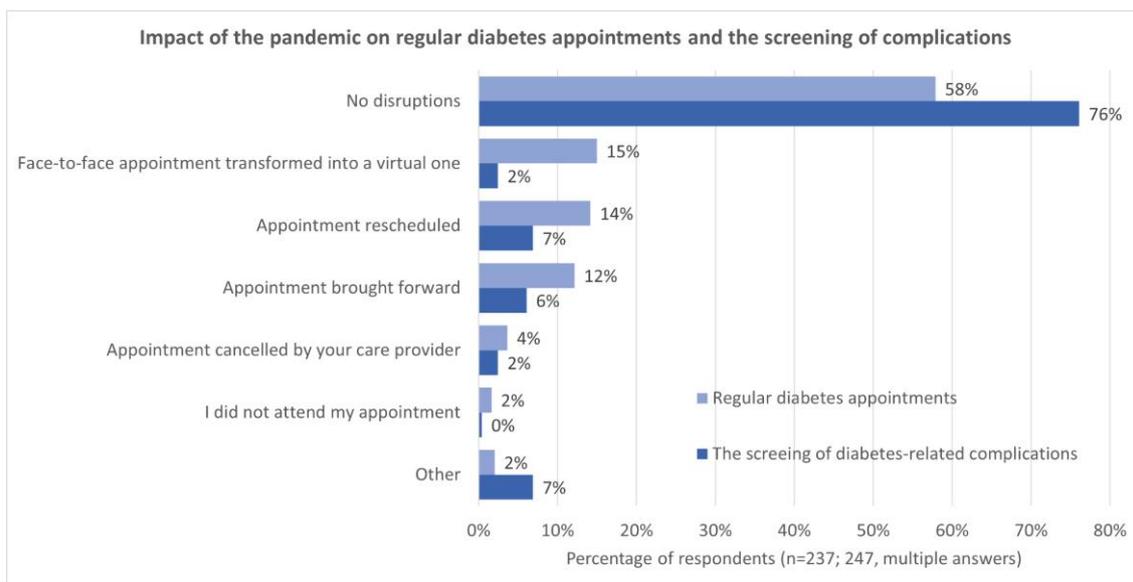
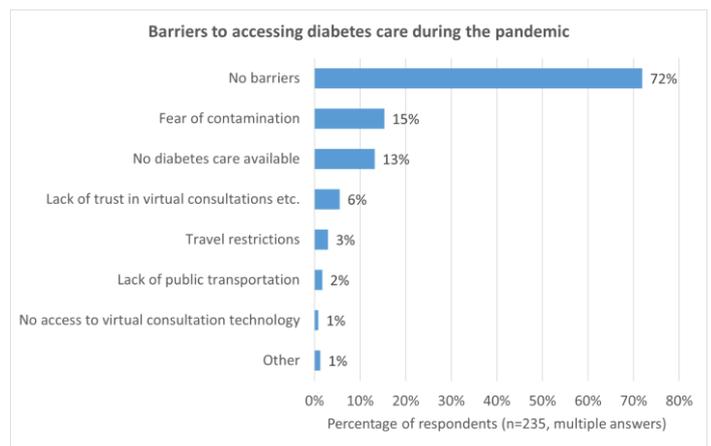
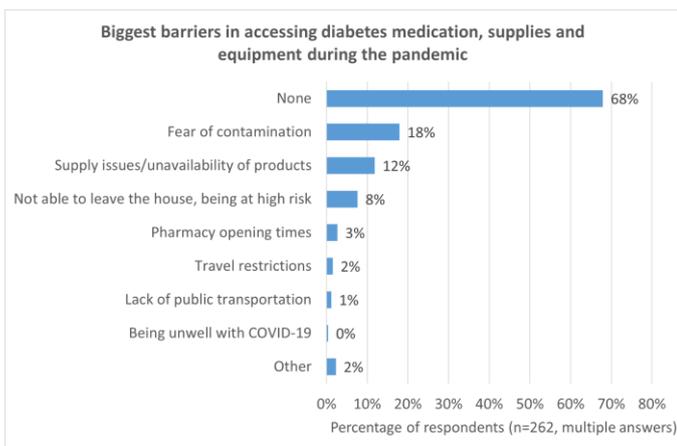
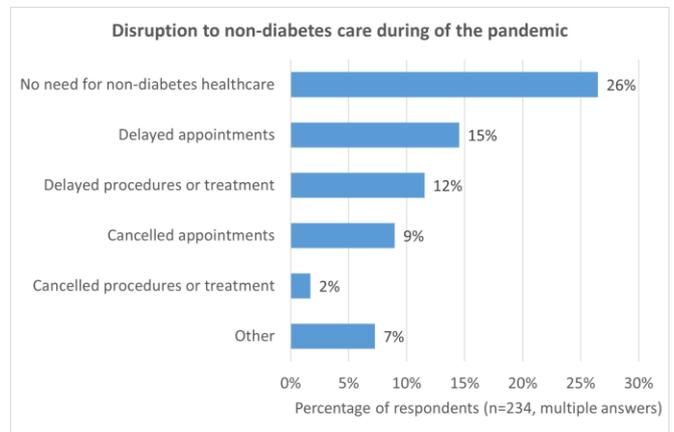
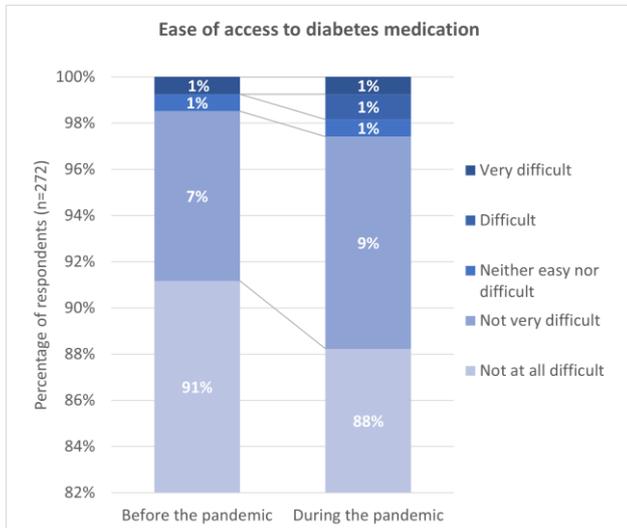




Access to Medicines, Supplies, Technologies, and Care

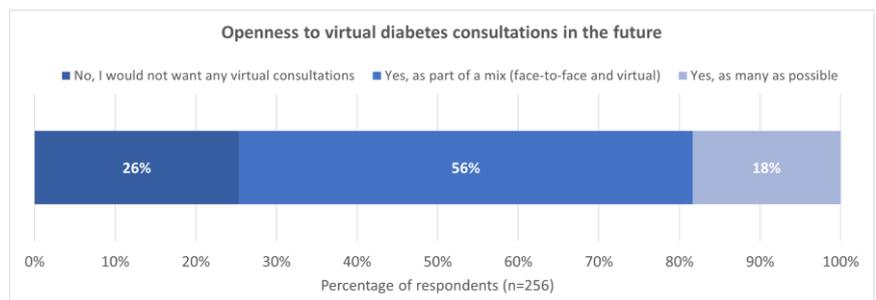
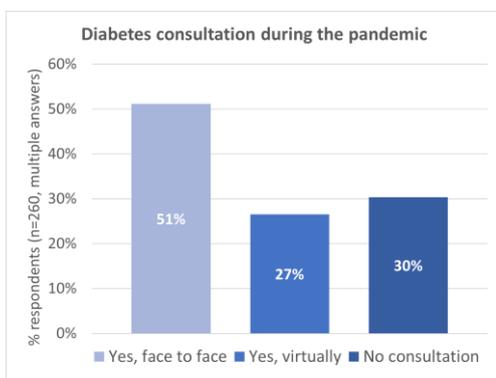
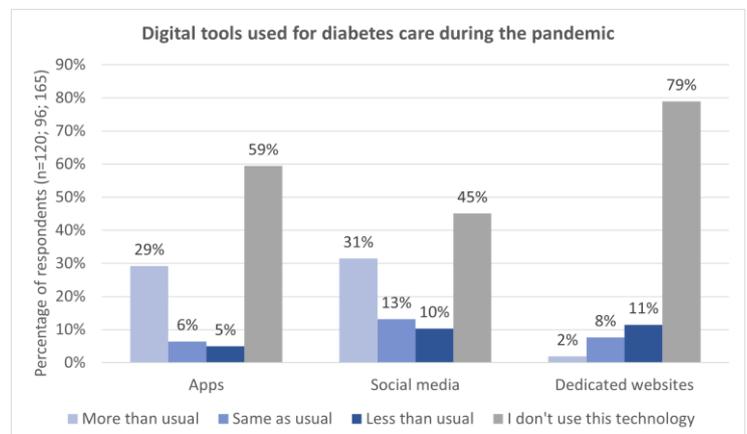
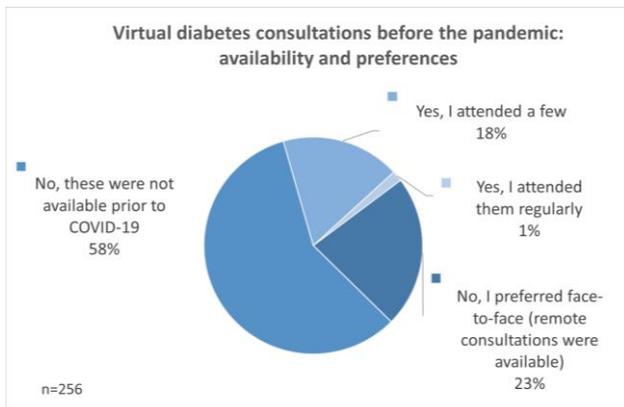
Just 2% of respondents experienced some difficulties in accessing medicines. Even fewer PwD reported challenges in accessing diabetes supplies or equipment. Only 10% reported being worried about potential shortages (whether or not they had experienced any issues) and only 8% stockpiled more medication than usual - the lowest proportion of any country in the survey.. Compared with other European countries, access to care was not a big issue in Finland, with a high of 72% of PwD not encountering any obstacles. Fear of COVID-19 contamination was the most frequently cited of the barriers to access to care (15%), while 13% also reported that diabetes care was not available. There was little disruption to appointments for regular diabetes care and even less disruption for appointments regarding the screening of diabetes-related complications.





E-health

While virtual consultations were, to some extent, available before COVID-19, more PwD attended one during the pandemic. Of those who did attend such consultations, the majority found them helpful, although a quarter did not. Three-quarters of the virtual consultations took place over the phone. Overall, three quarters of the respondents were open to remote consultations in the future, in many cases with a preference for a mix of face-to-face and remote appointments. Perhaps driven by their perceived lack of information and guidance, usage of apps and social media platforms for diabetes management increased during the pandemic.



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 Finland, 298 people responded to the survey. Some were parents or caregivers for PwD, but most of them lived with diabetes (three quarters with type 1 diabetes and one quarter with type 2). Some 74% were women. Age ranges between 21 and 70 were well represented. The median time respondents had been living with diabetes was between 11 and 30 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 Finland during the pandemic, write to idfeurope@idf-europe.org. We look forward to hearing from you!



**International
Diabetes Federation**
Europe