

Six-country European survey finds over half of adults with diabetes in the UK and Italy experience anxiety

September 14 2022



Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

A survey of adults with type 1 and type 2 diabetes from six Western European countries highlights the unique burden of mental health issues

on people with diabetes and suggests a link between blood sugar management and severity of anxiety.

The study by Evelyn Cox from dQ&A—The Diabetes Research Company, San Francisco U.S., and colleagues is being presented at this year's European Association for the Study of Diabetes (EASD) Annual Meeting in Stockholm, Sweden (19-23 Sept).

"Our survey results underline how vulnerable adults with [diabetes](#) are to generalized [anxiety](#). In particular, women with diabetes and those younger than 45 may be more susceptible to experiencing anxiety, emphasizing the need for greater support," says Ms. Cox.

She adds, "Our findings also indicate a link between blood sugar management and severity of anxiety. This underscores the need for a more integrated approach to diabetes management and mental health support to both minimize anxiety and improve blood sugar metrics targeted at high-risk groups."

Previous research shows that people with diabetes have higher rates of [mental health disorders](#), including generalized anxiety disorder (characterized by persistent and excessive worry), compared to the general population. But there has been little research on the relationship between diabetes management and generalized anxiety.

For this study, researchers conducted an online survey to collect data on demographic characteristics, anxiety, and blood sugar management metrics in 3,077 adults from the dQ&A EU research panel (average age 44, 52% female) living with type 1 diabetes (66%) or type 2 diabetes (34%) in France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden, and the UK. Data were collected between October and November 2021. All respondents were compensated for completing the survey (€12 EUR).

Respondents were asked for their most recent hemoglobin A1c level (HbA1c, a measure of blood sugar control) if they knew it (2,561 participants); and those who used glucose sensors (2,011) were asked about the percentage of time in a typical day they spent in the target blood sugar range (between 70 and 180 mg/dl). All respondents completed the Generalized Anxiety Disorder questionnaire (GAD-7) to screen for, and measure, severity of anxiety.

The analyses found that people with diabetes living in Italy and the UK reported the highest rates of anxiety (63% and 51%, respectively), while those in the Netherlands reported the lowest rates (39%).

Across all six European countries studied, women with diabetes were more likely to report experiencing anxiety than men (57% vs 39%). And anxiety was more common among those younger than 45 years than those older—59% and 34%, respectively.

The analyses also found that individuals with higher HbA1c over the past few months (greater than 7%) were more likely than those with lower HbA1c (equal or less than 7%) to report moderate (13% vs 10%) or severe anxiety (6% vs 4%).

Additionally, respondents using glucose sensors who spent less than 70% of a typical day in the target [blood sugar](#) range reported almost twice the rate of moderate or severe anxiety compared to those who spent 70% or more of their time in the target range (22% vs 14%).

"It is crucial that people with diabetes who experience challenges with their mental health reach out to their healthcare providers or mental healthcare practitioners for support," says Cox. "Effective treatments are available and can considerably improve quality of life."

Provided by Diabetologia

Citation: Six-country European survey finds over half of adults with diabetes in the UK and Italy experience anxiety (2022, September 14) retrieved 26 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-09-six-country-european-survey-adults-diabetes.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.