

# Survey: Despite high prevalence, urinary incontinence is still very much a taboo

*Arnhem (The Netherlands), 20 September 2021.* Although urinary incontinence (UI) is a very common issue affecting 10% to 20% of people across Europe<sup>1</sup>, it is still very much a taboo. This is revealed by a new survey<sup>2</sup> commissioned by the European Association of Urology (EAU). Of the people that experience some form of UI, nearly 30% percent is not comfortable talking about it.

The survey examined the knowledge of and experience with UI of 3,029 men and women of eighteen years and older in the United Kingdom (UK), France, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands.

UI, the inability to hold your urge to urinate, is a treatable condition yet only a third of the people who experience some loss of urine seek help from a professional (a general practitioner or medical specialist). Around 35% of this group gives as reason that they expect that UI will cure by itself. Another 27% is not comfortable talking about it with a professional. Remarkably, more women than men feel uncomfortable talking about it. 44% of the Dutch respondents aged 55 and over who experienced UI have never spoken to anyone about it, the highest of any age category.

## **Misconception**

One of the reasons for this taboo may be the misconception that surrounds the incidence of UI. As mentioned, UI is a very common condition, but only 8% of the respondents indicated the right incidence rate. Experiences differ amongst the participating countries and between men and women. In France, for instance, 52% of the respondents claimed to have never experienced UI: 64% of the French men said so, in comparison to only 46% of the women. Interestingly, 27% of the 18-24-year-old respondents in the UK experience some loss of urine either once a week or more often. And yet, 28% of the Brits in this age category don't know what UI is.

## **Treatment**

Although most of the respondents think that UI can be treated depending on the cause, a quarter stills feels that you have to accept living with it or is not aware of any treatment. The highest number of unawareness of treatment is in the UK, with 47% not knowing about treatment possibilities. In Italy, 46% of the respondents said they are not seeing a specialist as they expect UI to improve by itself, followed by the Netherlands (38%), the UK (35%), Germany (33%), and France (32%).

## **Don't accept UI**

The truth, however, is that in most cases UI can be treated or cured with various treatment options. Prof. Christopher Chapple, Secretary General of the EAU, explains: "Many people suffer from incontinence and recent studies confirm that it is increasingly affecting the quality of life. Luckily,

there are different possibilities ranging from pads to surgery. There's absolutely no need for shame. So don't take it for granted. Talk about it with a professional and see what the best solution for you is."

## **ENDS**

### **About the survey**

The new survey was commissioned by the European Association of Urology (EAU) for its annual Urology Week (20-24 September 2021). Over 3,000 members of the public from the United Kingdom (UK), France, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands were asked about their knowledge of and experience with urinary incontinence (UI). The survey was conducted by Emotive and supported by an educational grant from Medtronic.

Breakdown of 3,029 respondents per country:

- Germany: 610
- France: 609
- Italy: 606
- The Netherlands: 604
- UK: 600

The information was sourced in July 2021.

### **References**

1. [https://eurohealth.ie/women\\_and\\_incontinence\\_2018/](https://eurohealth.ie/women_and_incontinence_2018/)
2. EAU Urology Survey 2021 [Conducted in July 2021]