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HARTMANN Incontinence Study

Breaking the Silence: A European Report

2019

A European study designed to reveal the human truth of people living with urinary incontinence today. The research explores their struggles as well as the impact urinary incontinence has on their lives.



Breaking the Silence: A European Report

Executive Summary

We already know that talking about incontinence is hard, but what the *Breaking the Silence: A European Report* reveals is just how much of an impact it has on people's emotional well-being and their overall life.

There are millions of people across Europe who live with urinary incontinence. Most disturbing is that many people over the age of 45 suffer in silence and avoid activities such as sports, travelling, socialising and even having sex due to incontinence. They resort to tricks in order to cope with the condition. And all without a word to their close friends, family and partners. Moreover, it's happening at a time in life when people generally have more time and want to have more experiences.

People with incontinence say more education and information is needed. They believe incontinence is a taboo subject and wish society was more open.

The time is now. It's time to break the silence and empower the millions who live with incontinence. People need to know that they are not alone, that quick fixes are not a solution. We have the opportunity to educate and motivate people across Europe by igniting a social conversation about incontinence and informing people about the right solutions so they can own their incontinence, not just get by.



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Key themes

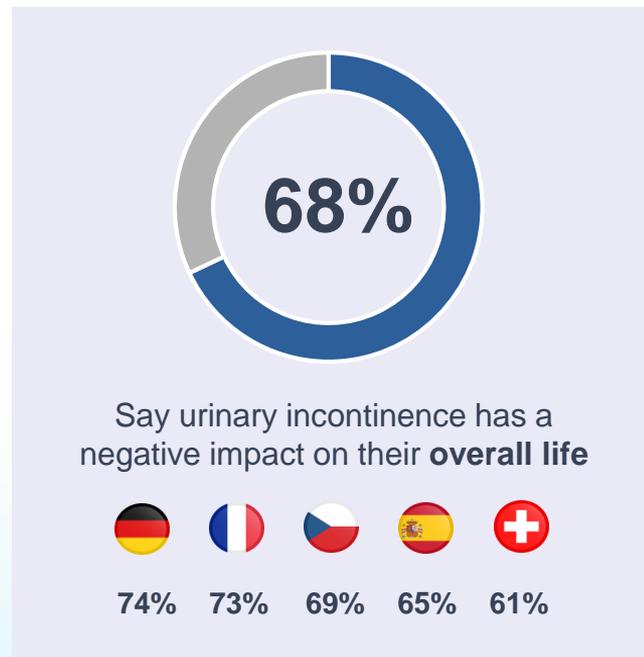
8 Key themes

- 1 Incontinence is negatively impacting the lives of people across Europe
- 2 And it has deep emotional consequences
- 3 At first, many are in denial about their condition
- 4 Many hide their condition and suffer in silence
- 5 People resort to different tricks to cope with incontinence
- 6 But those who opened up experienced a positive effect
- 7 People living with incontinence wish society was more open
- 8 There is a need for information and education

1 Incontinence is negatively impacting the lives of people across Europe

The majority of people living with urinary incontinence say the condition negatively impacts their overall life. But the impact of urinary incontinence is far-reaching, with most aspects of people's lives being affected by it.

People's self-esteem and emotional wellbeing are the aspects most negatively affected, but also their sex life, hobbies and interests, social life and overall relationships.



2 It has deep emotional consequences

People living with urinary incontinence experience a wide range of negative emotions, such as embarrassment, worry and insecurity, which never fully go away.

As a result of the condition, confidence and self-perceptions are negatively affected, with some saying that it makes them feel old and less attractive.

47%

Say that urinary incontinence
makes them feel old



47%



53%



49%



47%



38%

3 At first, many are in denial about their condition

Upon first noticing the symptoms of urinary incontinence, many didn't want to fully admit to their condition.

Many thought that they could handle the condition and that it was temporary and would go away. Others didn't consider urinary incontinence as a problem and didn't think too much about it.



Thought that they could handle the condition (70%)



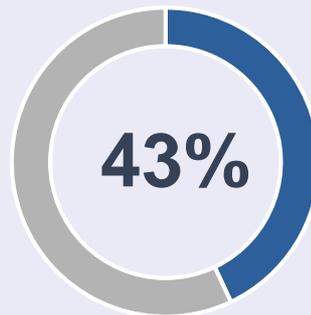
Thought that it was temporary and would go away (52%)

4 Many hide their condition and suffer in silence

The immediate reaction of people living with urinary incontinence is generally to keep the condition to themselves.

Within the first few weeks, few told their partner, family and friends. And many have never spoken with their partner, family and friends about their urinary incontinence.

The main reasons for hiding the condition are embarrassment and the hope that it would go away.



Have never talked to their partner about their urinary incontinence*



39%



43%



53%



35%



46%

*Among those who have a partner

5 People resort to different tricks to cope with their condition

To try to deal with their urinary incontinence, people use a variety of tricks and coping mechanisms.

The most common tricks are emptying the bladder frequently and before leaving the house. However, they also use mechanisms that perhaps create more hassle, such as locating the bathrooms in unknown places, carrying extra underwear, carrying an emergency kit with them and even putting toilet paper in their underwear.



62% locate the bathrooms in unknown places



41% carry extra underwear with them



36% carry an emergency kit with them (e.g. clothes, etc.)



24% put toilet paper in their underwear

6 But those who opened up experienced a positive effect

Talking to others can have a positive effect on both the relationship and one's confidence.

Those who talked to their partner about their urinary incontinence say that they felt more supported and confident in themselves as a result. Other benefits include feeling closer to one's partner and more optimistic about the relationship.

6 in 10

Say that they felt more supported as a result of talking to their partner (61%)*



55%



65%



57%



70%



59%

*Among those who talked to their partner about their urinary incontinence

7 People wish society was more open

There are societal barriers when it comes to urinary incontinence. Many feel that there exists an idea that urinary incontinence only affects old people. And for some, urinary incontinence is a taboo subject in their country and people are stigmatized.

People living with urinary incontinence want society to be more open about it.

6 in 10

Wish that society was more open about urinary incontinence (59%)



58%



66%



51%



66%



54%

8 There is a need for information and education

People living with urinary incontinence say there is not enough information about the condition and more education is needed.

In fact, people in the study said that information, whether on urinary incontinence products or medical information, would empower them to manage their condition.

7 in 10

Say that more education on urinary incontinence is needed (71%)



72%



74%



67%



81%



62%

Key highlights by country



THE DENIERS. German respondents are amongst the most likely to deny urinary incontinence. The impact of urinary incontinence on life, self-esteem and emotional wellbeing is greater. They are more likely to say that the condition is a taboo subject in their country.



THE ASHAMED. French respondents are more likely to be embarrassed, upset and not in control of their urinary incontinence. The emotional impact of the condition is significant for French respondents, especially when it comes to their self-perceptions (e.g. age, attractiveness). They are amongst the most likely to say that there is not enough information about the condition and that society needs to be more open.



THE HACKERS. Czech respondents are the most likely to try to cope with the condition by using tricks and to avoid situations and activities as a result of their condition. They are amongst the most likely to look for information about the condition. Fewer Czech respondents have talked to their partner about their urinary incontinence and more have avoided having sex.



THE TALKERS. Spanish respondents don't feel as embarrassed as their counterparts and are generally more positive about their urinary incontinence. They are the most likely to talk to their trusted circle about their urinary incontinence and to feel supported by them. Despite this, they are the most likely to say that more education is needed.



THE ACCEPTORS. Swiss respondents are generally more accepting their condition, both when they first noticed the symptoms and currently. They are amongst the least affected by the condition, and are less likely to avoid situations and activities.



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Methodology

Methodology

The research was commissioned by HARTMANN and conducted by Edelman Intelligence, an independent global research and analytics firm.

- **Method:** 15-minute online survey
- **Audience:** Men and women aged 45+ who experience urinary incontinence
- **Countries:** Czech Republic, France, Germany, Spain and Switzerland
- **Sample size:** Total sample of n=2311
- **Fieldwork:** Conducted in February 2019 in local languages



Note: Sample in Switzerland was weighted up to n=500 so that all countries have equal representation in the total global figures.

Profile

Demographics

Gender

Men*	Women*
24%	76%

Age

45–54	55–64	65+
39%	34%	26%

Area

Urban	Suburban	Rural
47%	24%	29%

Level of urinary incontinence

Light	Moderate
65%	32%

Heavy	Severe
2%	1%

Time with urinary incontinence

Less than 3 years	3 to 9 years
45%	36%

10 or more years	Don't know
14%	5%