

PREVALENCE OF STRESS URINARY INCONTINENCE IN WOMEN IN FOUR EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

Aims

To determine the prevalence and treatment of stress urinary incontinence (SUI) symptoms in four European countries

Methods

We conducted a mailed survey of 29,500 households in four European countries (10,000 in Spain and 6,500 each in France, Germany and the UK). The households were representative of the general population. A 13-item questionnaire assessed the prevalence of urinary incontinence (UI) symptoms during the preceding 30 days and treatment patterns for UI. Each questionnaire was to be completed by adult female household members. The present analysis focused on SUI symptoms in female respondents aged 18 and over. Details of the survey population are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Response rates to questionnaire.

Country	France	Germany	Spain	UK	Total
Number of questionnaires sent	6,500	6,500	10,000	6,500	29,500
Responders n (%)	3,915 (60.2)	3,824 (58.8)	6,464 (65.6)	2,931 (45.0)	17,141 (58.1)

UI was defined as any leakage or involuntary loss of urine. SUI symptoms were defined as a leak or loss of urine due to sneezing, coughing, laughing, exercising, lifting or physical activity. Urge urinary incontinence (UUI) symptoms were defined either as an urge to urinate but being unable to get to the toilet before leaking or losing urine, or a leak or loss of urine not due to actions listed in the definition of stress incontinence symptoms. Mixed urinary incontinence (MUI) symptoms were defined as at least one stress and one urge symptom.

Results

15% of women in Spain, 32% in France, 32% in the UK and 34% in Germany had experienced UI in the preceding 30 days. SUI was the most common underlying symptom (Figure 1). The median age for the women with any UI was 50.9 years, the women with SUI were somewhat younger (47.3 years, $p < 0.05$) and the majority of women had had their symptoms for more than 2 years (data not shown).

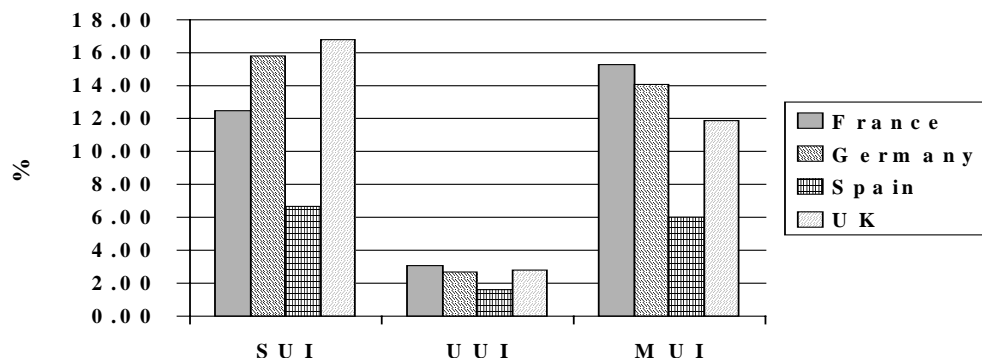


Figure 1. Underlying symptoms for women with UI

The main results of the SUI group are shown in table 2.

Table 2. SUI results.

Country	France	Germany	Spain	UK	Total
SUI symptoms in previous 30 days n (% of all female responders)	490 (12.5)	604 (15.8)	437 (6.7)	493 (16.8)	2,021 (11.8)
% of women with SUI who had symptoms in past week	70.7	81.1	80.1	83.7	78.8
% of women with SUI who used pads or other absorbent materials	37.1	55.5	46.9	41.4	45.8
% of women with SUI who ever consulted a physician for SUI	32.9	32.3	19.9	15.0	25.5
% of women with SUI ever undergone surgery for UI	1.6	2.6	1.4	3.7	2.4
% of women with SUI taking medication for UI	5.5	2.5	0.9	1.2	2.6

Conclusions

This study collected data from a large number of women in four European countries. Nearly one third of women in Germany, France and the UK had experienced symptoms of UI in the previous 30 days with 15% in Spain. More than four fifths of women in these four countries with symptoms of UI had any symptoms of SUI.

Nearly half of the women with SUI used pads or other absorbent materials in case of leakage but the proportions of women who were taking medication or had ever received surgical treatment for SUI were low in all four countries.

Extrapolated to the specific country populations, it is estimated that SUI affects approximately 3 million women in France, 5.5 million women in Germany, one million women in Spain and 4 million women in the UK.

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