



EU Civic Prize on Chronic Pain - III Edition  
Award Ceremony



# THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON EUROPEANS WITH CHRONIC PAIN

# Who responded to the survey?



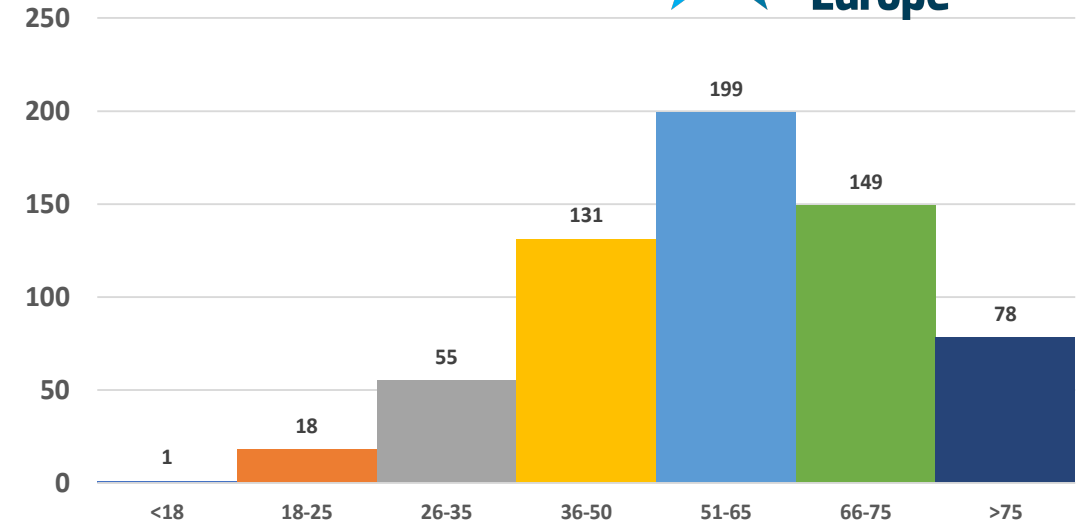
Questionnaire completion

- 970 people (796 valid)
- People living with pain for 10 years or longer were most represented

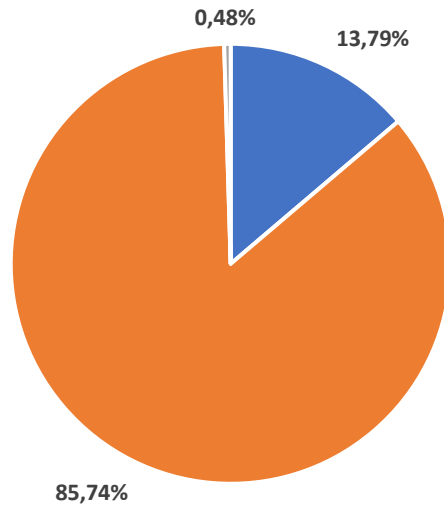


## Available in

7 Languages:  
English Italian  
French Spanish  
Dutch German  
Bulgarian



Distribution of respondents by age



Distribution of respondents by gender

- Male
- Female
- Other



Open online from

**December 2020**

to

**January 2021**

- UK (43%), Netherlands, and France highest response
- Fibromyalgia (35%), Arthritis, CRPS, Chronic fatigue, Neuropathic pain most common disease areas



27.01% consider themselves to be more at risk of contracting Covid-19 because of their chronic pain condition.

54.34% respondents are confident that they will avail of a vaccine, others are unsure or saying “it depends” and 11.53% saying they would not take it.

Fewer than half the respondents had been tested for Covid-19 (46.76%)

18.80% considered that they had been exposed to Covid-19.

7.15% reported that they had been diagnosed with Covid-19.

Most respondents (72.40%), are unsure or only somewhat confident in their healthcare system.



# Top challenges during pandemic life?

Through the bio-psycho-social model

Access

Medication

Technology Solutions

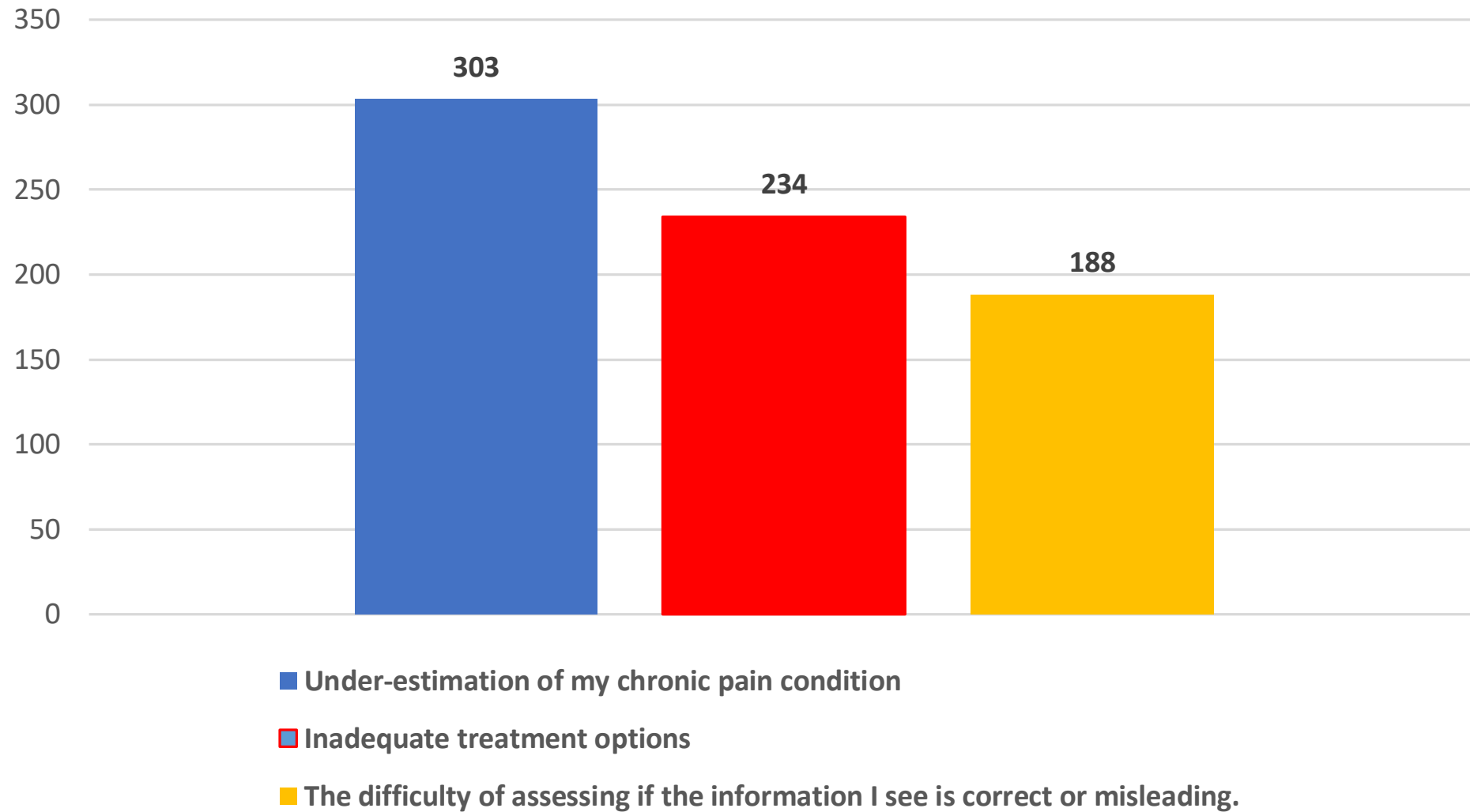
Quality of life: mood, pain intensity, pain interference, sleep

Employment & Income

Social

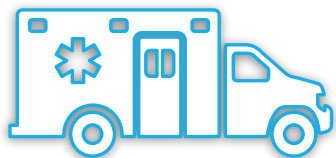


Regarding the top three challenges, this is presented in Figure 68.



**Figure 68. Top three challenges you have felt since the pandemic started**

## Access



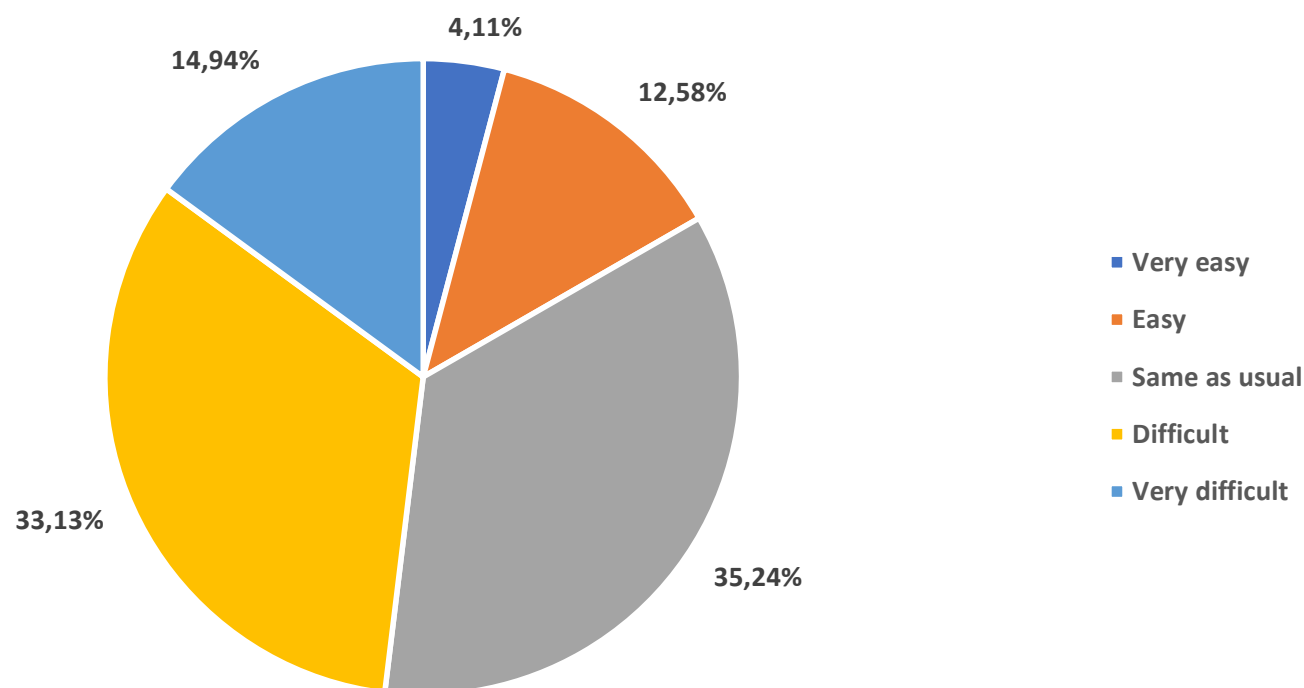
Nearly half 48.07% report that obtaining healthcare and services since the beginning of the pandemic was difficult or very difficult.

Under-estimation and stigmatisation by medical professionals of my chronic pain condition: how often and how much it impacts on my life affects 303 (47.79%)

Inadequate treatment options: 234 (36.91%)

Difficulty of assessing if the information I see is correct or misleading 188 (29.65%)

Delayed access to diagnosis 163 (25.71%)



Thinking of access overall, how difficult, or easy has it been to obtain the healthcare, and services you needed since the beginning of the pandemic?

## Technology



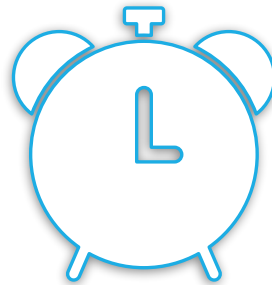
Use of digital technology has increased in many areas of healthcare in the pandemic.

49.37% are receiving advice or medical appointments via telephone.

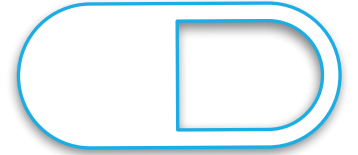
However, 27.6% state that modern technology is not integrated in their treatment.

Although only 10.41% say that they are currently having video consultations, 40.22% say this would be their preferred digital management solution.

Still, 27.29% prefer personal contact.



## Medication use



93.09% are using prescribed medication for their chronic pain.

24.73% are using over-the-counter (unprescribed) medication.

This means that at least 17% of the respondents are using both. This fact could lead to unwanted drug interactions.

68.91% report that access to medicines is no harder during the pandemic. However, in Italy more than half found it more difficult.

## Quality of life

**Mood:** 66% stated their mood was worse to much worse. 3.36% better!

**Pain intensity:** 54% reported their pain intensity was 'worse' to 'much worse'.

**Pain interference:** 64% noted the degree to which pain interfered in their lives was 'somewhat' to 'a great deal'.

**Sleep disturbance:** 43% noted no change in their sleep. While 57% stated sleep was 'worse' to 'much worse'.

Isolation

Solitude

Loneliness

Over 1 in 4 (28%) people felt they had no-one to talk to about their mood, feelings or psychological issues... not even a family member

Anger

Frustration

Being controlled

Tiredness

Fatigue





## Employment and income



- Almost half of the respondents who chose to reply to the question “Were you working before the pandemic, 47.62% say they were not.
- Of those who are still in work, only 6.17% have the flexibility to choose whether to work from home or attend the workplace, the others are almost equally divided between the two workplace options.
- 38.76% said they feel they are being paid less than you deserve in your job (wages / salary) due to their pain condition. And the same number feel that their chronic pain condition had an impact on lowering their total annual income (salary and/or other income).

# Conclusion

- It is clear from this survey that the Covid-19 pandemic has had a complex and profound impact on people living with chronic pain, while they have been unable to access the health services they need.
- We have recorded an increase in the intensity of their pain, the interference that pain makes to their lives, and greater sleep disturbance. Captured also is a decrease in people's mood, and disruption to their social lives.
- In particular, this survey has revealed that some people living with chronic pain believe they have no one they can talk to when it comes to their mood or any psychological issues... not even a family member.
- Most are willing to avail of a vaccine. This reflects the percentage of people concerned that they are at higher risk of contracting the virus. Medications remained available, however, access to other treatment and medical services are reported as difficult or very difficult.
- We have seen that many of the problems highlighted are overlapping. It is therefore unsurprising that the overall quality of life has decreased due to the pandemic.



THANK YOU!

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Short and In-depth reports available on the PAE Website

[www.pae-eu.eu](http://www.pae-eu.eu)