



**Footwear for diabetic patients**  
**Growing market opportunities for footwear companies**

*The World Health Organisation (WHO) reports that approximately 27% of diabetic patients are exposed to the peripheral neuropathies, among which more than 50% of those have injuries in the legs. According to the WHO forecasts, 51% of people with diabetes worldwide will eventually develop diabetic neuropathy. This means that, inevitably, the diabetic footwear market is expected to spike in coming years: the Diabetic Footwear Global Market Report 2023 suggests that the market reached \$7.83 billion in 2023, and will further grow to 10,67 billion \$ in 2027, meaning a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 8.1%.*

**A dynamic market despite the context**

Since 2020, major factors have been negatively impacting economy, and footwear was among the most affected industrial sectors. Firstly, the Covid-19 pandemic leading to the shutdown of companies during the lockdown, disruption of the supply chain and the reduction of demand by the consumers, then the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the consequent sanctions are also causing an altered demand in the region and have repercussions on the global market. Finally, the spiking inflation rates are addressing the consumers' interests to different goods. Although the product is a basic need for the affected patients, this negative scenario did not spare the diabetic footwear market.

Nevertheless, other factors such as the increasing incidence of diabetes on the global population, are currently neutralising the negative trend and contributing to a rapid market growth. The International Diabetes Federation (IDF) reports that 537 million adults (20-79 years) suffer from diabetes worldwide, translated in a global expenditure of at least 966 billion \$ for diabetes treatment. The datum is expected to rise up to 643 million in 2030 and 783 million in 2045. This rapid evolution is linked to the changing patterns of the population, starting with the rising geriatric population. For this segment of population, the WHO data indicates 1 billion people aged 60 or more in 2020, with a projection to double the figure by 2050. In addition, albeit the behavioural changes since the outbreak of Covid-19, the incidence of obesity and, in some cases, the spread of less healthy lifestyles also boost the potential performances of the diabetic footwear market. Last but not least, a more sounded awareness on diabetes and the diabetic foot syndrome (DFS) are attracting more people to suitable equipment allowing an alleviation of their health conditions, including specific footwear.

**Trends in the diabetic footwear market (2023-2033)**

Several Diabetic Footwear Market Reports provide specialists with specific information they need to assess the market. While the reports are available under subscription, here are some general elements publicly accessible (*see Sources for reference*):

*Geographical concentration* – The main market share for diabetic footwear is concentrated in North America and Europe, and both regions should remain in the leading position for the next 10 years. Nevertheless, the Asian-Pacific region is supposed to register the fastest growth rates due to the structural changes in its population. The improving living conditions, especially in countries like China and India, are leading to the development of physical conditions causing diabetes. Combined with an



improved awareness on the diabetic syndrome, the region will eventually bring more consumers to the diabetic footwear market.

*Consumers' gender* – When it comes to diabetic footwear, women are the main consumer target. Moreover, due to the increase of female diabetic patients already registered, this market segment is expected to grow at a faster pace compared to the male counterpart.

*Distribution Channels* – Solutions for DFS patients are available both in physical and online shops. Offline purchases as retail outlets are the favourite solution by diabetic footwear consumers, with such store market segment expected to grow to 7,551.7 million \$ by 2031. It is evident that the reason behind this datum is the preference of patients to try the product before buying, in order to test the comfort and the fitting of the shoe. On the other hand, online platforms, that have the merit to have exposed diabetic footwear to the wider public, are chosen by consumers looking for a wider choice of models and trends.

*Footwear type* – The three main products addressed to DFS patients are shoes, sandals, and slippers. Shoes are dominating the market for both women and men as they are the most versatile option for several seasons and occasions. However, the sandals segment should grow faster than the other categories.

### **What can be still done?**

Data suggest that the diabetic footwear market will spike in the very near future. However, it is still necessary to unblock certain conditions to allow the development of its full potential.

First of all, it is necessary to raise awareness on diabetes and the DFS worldwide, without leaving any patient behind. In this regard, the IDF denounces that almost half of the adults suffering from diabetes is still undiagnosed. An informed patient can become a customer concerned about the improvement of the quality of life and who requires specific footwear according to the indications of health professionals.

The IDF data also suggest that 3 in 4 adults with diabetes live in low- and middle-income countries, which means that related diabetes expenses for this group can be difficult to bear, taking into account the high costs of diabetes treatment in those geographical areas. Coming back to diabetic footwear, despite the wide offer of prices and models, it remains on an average quite expensive. Therefore, awareness must be correlated to the accessibility to diagnosis, treatment and equipment.

Technological advancements in strict coordination between manufacturers and health specialists and supported by the feedback of patients are of utmost importance in order to obtain more comfortable adaptable products while limiting costs and lower prices. Although mass production will not be able to respond to those patients with manifested foot damaged, and in such cases, customisation for the specific needs will be essential, new solutions allowing at least a production on a larger scale of customisable footwear will enable a larger group of patients to access the diabetic footwear market.

### *Sources*

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