

THE CHILD IN FLANDERS

FOREWORD

CHAPTER 1. THE CHILD POPULATION

1. Number of births

- 1.1. Number of births recorded by Child and Family
- 1.2. The official birth rate
- 1.3. Number of births to women registered as asylum seekers
- 1.4. Birth rate projections

2. The number of young children

- 2.1. Trend in the number of young children (*de jure* population)
- 2.2. Forecasts
 - 2.2.1. Official forecasts of the number of children under 12
 - 2.2.2. Forecasts of the number of children under 3 based on Child and Family records

3. Adopted children

4. Minors as asylum seekers

5. Background information and interpretation of demographic trends

- 5.1. Wishes as regards having children
 - 5.1.1. Ideal family size
 - 5.1.2. Wishes as regards having children
 - 5.1.3. Expected final number of children and the discrepancy between the number of children people want and the number they actually have
- 5.2. Fertility in the Region of Flanders
 - 5.2.1. Total fertility
 - 5.2.2. Total fertility rates by Belgian/non-Belgian nationality of the mothers
 - 5.2.3. Total fertility by province
 - 5.2.4. Age-specific fertility
 - 5.2.5. End of the postponement of the first child?
 - 5.2.6. Higher fertility, larger families?
- 5.3. Abortion
- 5.4. Teenage pregnancy

6. The European context

- 6.1. Births, fertility and abortions
- 6.2. Young children
- 6.3. Intercountry adoption

CHAPTER 2. THE FAMILIES OF YOUNG CHILDREN: DIVERSITY INTERPRETED

- 1. Two-parent or one-parent family?
- 2. Type of family
- 3. Only child?
- 4. Children in blended families
- 5. Origin
- 6. The language spoken at home
- 7. Older parents?
- 8. Health of the mothers and fathers of the children

9. Young children and grandparents

10. Background information

10.1. Forming relationships

10.1.1. Number of marriages between people of the opposite sex

10.1.2. Number of gay marriages

10.1.3. Age on getting married

10.1.4. New cohabitation contracts

10.2. Relationship breakdowns

10.2.1. Divorces of people of the opposite sex

10.2.2. Divorces of gay couples

10.2.3. Cohabitation contracts dissolved

11. The European context

11.1. Families in which young children live

11.2. Marriages and divorces

CHAPTER 3. EMPLOYMENT IN FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

1. Participation of parents of young children in employment

2. Extent of employment of parents of young children

3. Circumstances of the non-working parents of young children

4. Why do the parents of young children work part time?

5. Number of hours worked and working schedules

6. Participation in employment in families with young children from the perspective of the women

7. Employment situation of grandparents

8. The European context

8.1. Level of employment of women with young children

8.2. Children living in a family with no adult in work

CHAPTER 4. PROSPERITY, POVERTY AND DEPRIVATION

1. Disposable income per person in families with young children

2. Increased risk of poverty

3. Making ends meet

4. Non-monetary deprivation

5. Children in families with an insecure source of income or a source of income that indicates an insecure financial situation

5.1. Children for whom guaranteed child benefit is paid

5.2. Children in families with income from maintenance

5.3. Children in families receiving the guaranteed minimum income

6. Children in underprivileged families

7. Children living in families without permanent residence status

8. Residential status

9. Consumer goods in the home

10. The European context

10.1. Increased risk of poverty

CHAPTER 5. CHILDREN AND CHILD-REARING ENVIRONMENTS OUTSIDE THE HOME

1. Children and child care

1.1. How many children are entrusted into the care of another person or facility at certain times?

1.1.1. Children aged under 3

1.1.2. Children aged 3-12

1.2. Who looks after young children when parents are not doing this themselves?

1.2.1. Informal or formal child care?

1.2.2. Children in formal child care

1.3. Taking care of sick children

1.4. Wellbeing and engagement

1.4.1. On going to their child care

1.4.2. While at the child care facility

2. Special education

3. Children receiving supervision and support via special youth welfare

3.1. Supervision and support via the special youth welfare service, subsidised by Child and Family

3.2. Supervision and support via the special youth welfare service

4. The European context

4.1. Summary of child care and education for children under compulsory school age

4.2. Child care and education for children under compulsory school age

CHAPTER 6. ASPECTS OF THE HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG CHILDREN

1. Data on pregnancy and childbirth

1.1. Becoming pregnant and antenatal care

1.2. Place where women give birth and length of stay in the maternity hospital

1.3. Data on the mothers and the births

1.4. Data on births

2. Life expectancy

3. Mortality

3.1. Number of deaths of children aged 0-15 in the Region of Flanders

3.1.1. In the whole group of children aged 0-15

3.1.2. In children aged under 12 months

3.2. Causes of death in children aged under 15 years in the Region of Flanders

3.2.1. In children aged under 12 months

3.2.2. In children aged 1 to 15 years

3.3. Deaths as a result of accidents in children aged 1 to 15 years

4. Morbidity

4.1. Congenital abnormalities

4.2. Congenital hearing loss

4.3. Diseases and disorders

4.4. Tooth decay

4.5. Overweight in young people

4.6. Children needing special care or guidance

4.7. Hospital admissions

5. Victims of road accidents

6. Child abuse

7. The European context

7.1. Life expectancy at birth

7.2. Caesareans

- 7.3. Birth weight
- 7.4. Congenital abnormalities
- 7.5. Mortality
- 7.6. Cot deaths
- 7.7. Deaths caused by accidents
- 7.8. Deaths as a result of violence
- 7.9. Overweight in children aged 6 to 12 years

CHAPTER 7. A SAFE AND HEALTHY LIFE?

1. Reducing the risk of neural tube defects (spina bifida)

2. Feeding babies

- 2.1. First food
- 2.2. Duration of breast-feeding

3. Vaccination rates

4. A smoke-free environment for the young child?

5. Use of therapeutic drugs

6. Use of alternative medicine

7. Oral hygiene in young children and eating habits that affect oral health

8. Living conditions

9. Moving house

10. The European context

- 10.1. Breastfeeding
- 10.2. Vaccination rates
- 10.3. Oral hygiene of young children
- 10.4. Housing problems and problems in the immediate living environment

FOREWORD

Producing a new edition of "The Child in Flanders" is a huge undertaking every time, even when we are doing this for the thirteenth year running. This year we were confronted in particular with problems at the Statistics and Economic Information Department (ADSEI), which meant they were unable to supply us with figures for 2009. As a result of this we have been unable to update a substantial number of sections of this report.

The questions

We try throughout the year to form an idea of the questions about aspects of the lives of young children that people are seeking answers to. Many people approach Child and Family with their questions. We receive enquiries on an almost daily basis from journalists, students, researchers, politicians, policy advisers and others on a whole range of subjects to do with young children and their families. "The Child in Flanders" is our attempt to keep providing up-to-date answers to as many of these questions as possible.

The sources

Child and Family is gathering more and more data itself. One important source of data is our IKAROS database, in which our staff record information about all the children in Flanders with whom they come into contact. The number of births recorded by Child and Family has been given a very prominent place in this report for the first time. Not only because the official birth rate figure has been delayed, but also because the Child and Family birth rate is much more complete. Child and Family records not only births in the *de jure* population, but also births to women registered as asylum seekers and those living in the country illegally. As well as the birth rate, this database contains up-to-date and accurate figures on breast-feeding, the percentage of ethnic minority children and the percentage of children growing up in disadvantaged households, to name just a few topics, and Child and Family also compiles data on the use of child care. We supplement our own data with official statistics and information obtained from scientific research.

A balance

Broadly speaking we can say that the majority of children born in Flanders have a reasonably good life. A number of positive points clearly emerge from this report. Most young children live with both their natural parents. Parental participation in the labour market is high, with an increasing number of families where one parent opts to work part time while the other has full-time employment in this phase of their children's lives. Young families have opportunities to adapt their working hours to suit their specific needs. They also get a great deal of support from grandparents. There are high levels of participation in formal child care. Even at a very young age large number of children are being given the additional opportunities to develop offered by child care facilities.

There has been a small but constant increase in breast-feeding: not only are more newborn babies being started on breast milk, but a growing number are still being exclusively breast-fed at the age of three months. A very high percentage of young children in Flanders receive all the right vaccinations to protect them against the main infectious diseases and the vaccination rate has increased even further in the past few years. Progress also continues to be made on cot death: the number of cases fell again.

The number of young children growing up in disadvantaged families or families at increased risk of poverty and the young people who are victims of child abuse or neglect remain policy priorities. The increase in deaths and serious injuries on our roads is another issue that needs to be addressed.

We hope that this report on the welfare of young children and the circumstances in which they are living will be a

useful tool for anyone involved in evaluating policy and developing the services for young children in the future. Finally, we hope that this report will stimulate public interest in the lives that children in Flanders are living.

Happy reading!

Bea Buysse
Scientific adviser

CHAPTER 1. THE CHILD POPULATION

Because of the economic crisis that began with the crisis in the financial markets in the middle of 2007, people are watching the trend in the birth rate with even more interest than usual. Apparently birth rates are expected to fall during a recession. Research into the effects of economic recessions on fertility has shown that the number of births frequently falls, although the decrease often only lasts for one or two years after the start of the recession*.

This chapter will therefore examine the number of births in 2009 in some detail. We present the number of births recorded in the records of Child and Family. Then we look at the official birth rate – unfortunately the figures for 2009 are not yet available – and the number of births to women registered as asylum seekers.

After that we outline the size of the child population by age. We zoom in on children placed in families for adoption and on minors entering the country as asylum seekers.

As well as presenting basis population figures, we interpret the figures and trends. We present some data from recent research into people's wishes as regards having children, and we also discuss female fertility.

Finally, we place the figures in a European context, comparing the figures for the Region of Flanders with the EU-15 countries.

* Source: *Demos*, volume 25, November 2009

1. Number of births

Child and Family has its own database with information on children, which we use to calculate the *number of births recorded by Child and Family*. The information on children is gathered from contacts in maternity hospitals, home visits and child health clinics. The Child and Family birth rate includes *all* births in the Region of Flanders, regardless of the residence status of the parents. This figure has been available since 2001.

The *official birth rate* is produced by the Statistics and Economic Information Department (ADSEI) of FPS Economy based on the National Register and it *only includes births in the 'de jure' population*, that is both Belgians and foreign nationals.

In addition to these births, there are the *births to asylum seekers*. These births are registered on the asylum seekers' register.

1.1. Number of births recorded by Child and Family*

A slight decrease of 0.9%

In 2009 Child and Family recorded 69 692 births to mothers living in the Region of Flanders. That was 610 (0.9%) fewer than in 2008 (see Table 1.1 and Figure 1.2). The number of babies born in 2009 was quite a bit higher than in the years up to 2008. The number of births recorded by Child and Family was slightly higher than the figure reached by adding together the official number of births (see 1.2) and the number from the asylum seekers' register (see 1.3). This should come as no surprise, given the fact that there are people living in Flanders illegally and given the fact that many people have been living in the country for some time when they are first recorded in the National Register (immigrants).

* 2009: Provisional figures

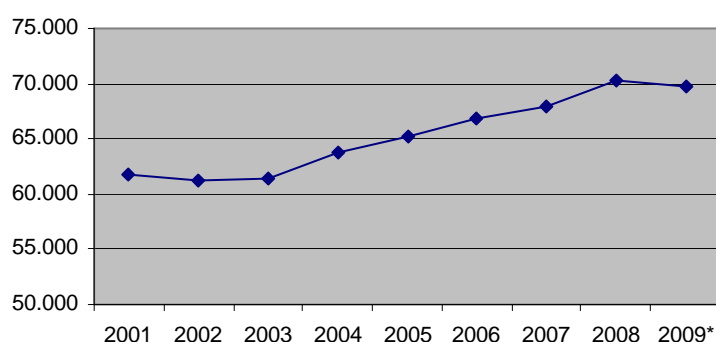
Births recorded by Child and Family	
2008	70 302
2009*	69 692

1.1 Number of live births in the Region of Flanders

Source: Child and Family - IKAROS

* Provisional figure

Births recorded by Child and Family



1.2 Number of live births in the Region of Flanders since 2001

Source: Child and Family - IKAROS

* Provisional figure

Table 1.3 also shows the trend in the number of births recorded by Child and Family *by province*. In all provinces except Limburg the birth rate fell between 2008 and 2009. This fall was small in the provinces of Antwerp (-0.1%), Flemish Brabant (-0.8%) and East Flanders (-0.8%) but quite marked in the province of West Flanders (-3.2%). In Limburg the birth rate increased by 0.2%.

Births recorded by Child and Family by province

	2008	2009*	% trend
Antwerp	20 992	20 971	- 0.1
Flemish Brabant	11 714	11 629	- 0.8
West Flanders	12 059	11 676	- 3.2
East Flanders	16 608	16 472	- 0.8
Limburg	8 929	8 944	+ 0.2
Region of Flanders	70 302	69 692	- 0.9

1.3 Number of live births in the Region of Flanders by province

Source: Child and Family - IKAROS

* Provisional figures

1.2. The official birth rate*

The official birth rate for 2009 has not been published yet. In 2008 (provisional figure) there were 68 394 births in the Region of Flanders (see Table 1.4). Figure 1.5 shows the trend from 2000 onwards.

* Relates to births to Belgian women and foreign women registered in the Aliens Register ('de jure' population). Since 1 February 1995, people who have applied for refugee status are no longer included in the 'de jure' population

Official birth rate

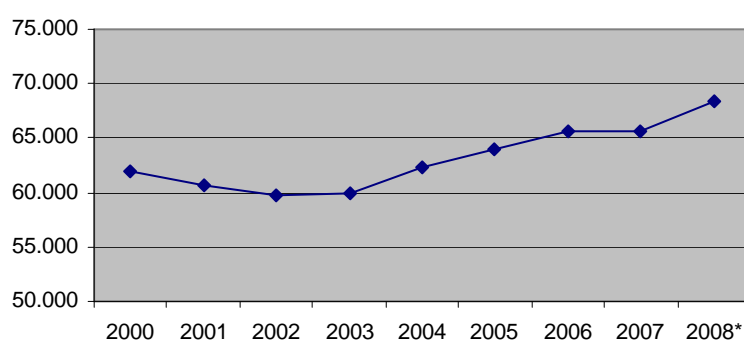
2007	65 689
2008*	68 394

1.4 Number of live births in the Region of Flanders (*de jure* population)

Source: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, based on the National Register

* Provisional figure

Official birth rate



1.5 Trend in the number of live births in the Region of Flanders since 2000 (*de jure* population)

Sources: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, Population Statistics and FPS Economy based on the National Register (2008 and 2009 figures)

* Provisional figure

Table 1.6 shows the official number of births *per province* for 2008 compared with 2007.

Official birth rate by province

	2007	2008*	% trend
Antwerp	19 354	20 380	+5.4
Flemish Brabant	11 147	11 350	+1.8
West Flanders	11 332	11 777	+3.9
East Flanders	15 348	16 176	+5.3
Limburg	8 508	8 711	+2.5

1.6 Number of live births per province (*de jure* population)

Source: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, based on the National Register

* Provisional figures

1.3. Number of births to women registered as asylum seekers*

Babies are also born every year in the Region of Flanders who are not included in the official figure for the number of births. These are babies born to asylum seekers, both women who have applied for asylum and those whose application for asylum has been granted. In 2009, 413 births to women on the asylum seekers' register were recorded. This was 16% more than in 2008.

Table 1.7 shows the number of births to these women by province. 35.8% of these babies live in the province of Antwerp. There was an increase from 2008 to 2009 in all provinces except Limburg.

* This register lists asylum seekers from the date of their initial application, so it includes both asylum seekers in the application phase and those whose application has been allowed. The duty to register people who have applied for refugee status in a separate asylum seekers' register came into effect on 1 February 1995

Births to women on the asylum seekers' register			
	2008	2009*	% trend
Antwerp	134	148	+10.4
Flemish Brabant	38	51	+34.2
West Flanders	59	82	+39.0
East Flanders	69	76	+10.1
Limburg	56	56	+0.0
Region of Flanders	356	413	+16.0

1.7 Number of births to women registered as asylum seekers per province

Source: National Register

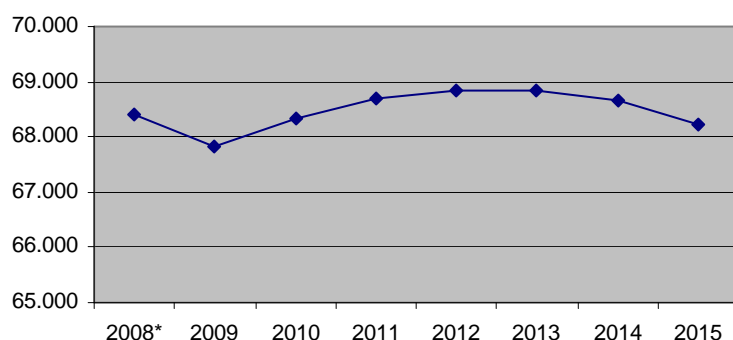
* Provisional figures

1.4. Birth rate projections

In 2008 the Federal Planning Bureau and the Statistics and Economic Information Department published new population projections for the period 2007 to 2060*. Birth rate forecasts and other forecasts were produced, based on the recorded population on 1 January 2007 and births in 2006. According to these projections, the official birth rate should continue to rise slightly until 2012-2013, to peak at 68 852, which represents an increase of almost 5% compared with 2006 (see Figure 1.8).

* Federal Planning Bureau, FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, Planning Paper 105, May 2008

Official birth rate projections



1.8 Official birth rate: projections to 2015 and comparison with the birth rate in 2008

Source: Federal Planning Bureau, FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, Planning Paper 105, May 2008

* Provisional figure

2. The number of young children

2.1. Trend in the number of young children (*de jure* population)

Both the number of children under 3 and the number aged 3 to 6 increased, by over 3 200 for each age group

The most recent figures available are for 1 January 2008. The *percentage* of children in the population

under the age of 3 was 3.22% in 2008, a slight increase from 2007. The percentage of children aged 3 to 6 also increased slightly, from 3.06% to 3.09%. The percentage of children aged 6 to 12 was 6.43% in 2008, a slight decrease from 2007 (see Table 1.9).

On 01.01.08, there were 198 249 children aged under 3, 396 345 children aged 3-6 and 306 050 children aged 6-12 in the Region of Flanders. The trend in the *number* of children was different for the different age groups. In comparison with 2007, the number of children aged under 3 in the Region of Flanders rose by 3 234 (+1.7%); the number of children aged 3-6 rose by 3 250 (+1.7%). The number of children aged 6 to 12 fell by 1 866 (- 0.5%) (see Table 1.9). For the whole population of children under the age of 12, this amounted to an increase of 4 618 children, or 0.6%.

	Young children			
	Number		Percentage of population	
	2007	2008	2007	2008
Aged under 3	195 015	198 249	3.19	3.22
Aged 3-6	187 095	190 345	3.06	3.09
Aged 6-12	397 916	396 050	6.50	6.43
Total aged under 12	780 026	784 644	12.75	12.73

1.9 Number of young children in the Region of Flanders and percentage of the population (on 1 January) – *de jure* population

Source: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, Population Statistics

2.2. Forecasts

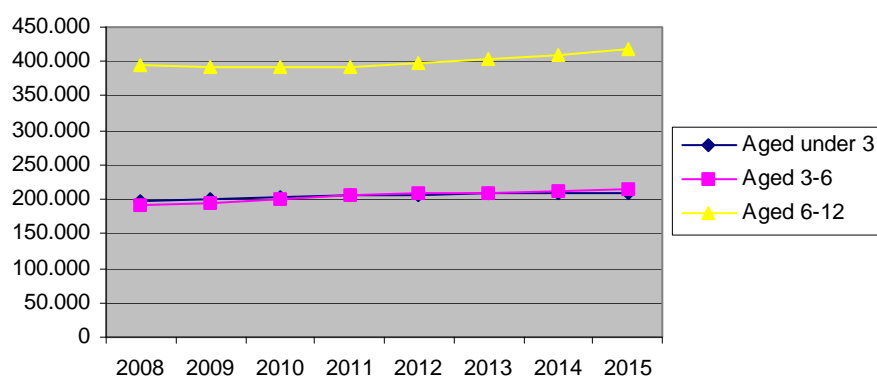
2.2.1. Official forecasts of the number of children under 12

Increase expected in the number of children under 12

The population projections for 2007-2060* published in May 2008 also include forecasts of the number of young children. We are interested in children up to the age of 12 (see Figure 1.10). We are counting on the number of children under 3 increasing until 2014, by which date we expect there to be approximately 5.3% more children in this age group than on 1 January 2008. The number of children aged 3 to 6 is expected to increase throughout the whole period 2008-2015. For the older age group, children aged 6 to 12, a slight downward trend to 2011 will be followed by a period of increase from 2012.

* Federal Planning Bureau, FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, Planning Paper 105, May 2008

Official forecasts of the number of children aged under 12



1.10 Official forecasts of the number of children under 12 in the Region of Flanders to 2015 compared with the

number of children in 2008 (on 1 January)

Sources: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, Population Statistics

Federal Planning Bureau, FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, Planning Paper 105, May 2008

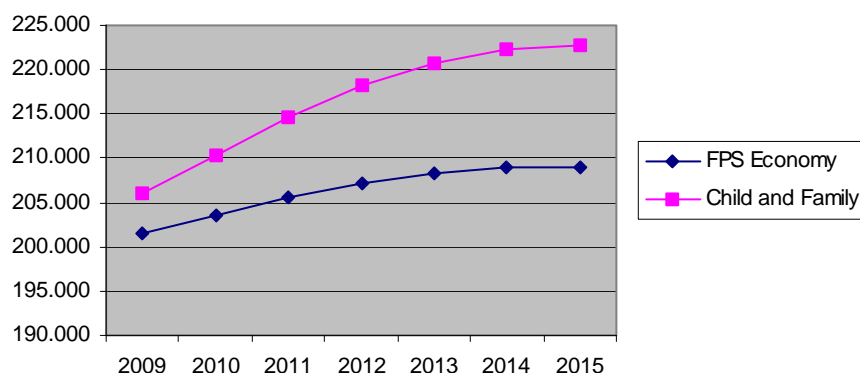
2.2.2. Forecasts of the number of children under 3 based on Child and Family records

Higher than the official forecasts

In view of the fairly large differences between the official birth rate and the number of births recorded by Child and Family, Child and Family has commissioned its own forecasts of the number of children under 3 since 2008 (see also point 1). As this forecast is produced every year, we can get a much more *regular* estimate of the expected number of children under 3 than is available from the official population forecasts, an estimate that is also *more complete*.

The baseline for the 2009 estimate is the number of children registered in IKAROS database in 2008. The forecast covers the period 2009-2015. According to this estimate there should be 222 785 children under 3 in the Region of Flanders by 2015, or 16 643 more than in 2009 (+8.1%). Child and Family expects therefore that there will be significantly more children than forecast by the official source (+13 898 or +6.7%). The difference between the official forecasts and Child and Family's forecasts lie not so much in the percentage trend as in the forecast numbers (see Figure 1.11).

Forecasts for children aged under 3



1.11 Forecasts of the number of children under 3 in the Region of Flanders to 2015, based on Child and Family data compared with the forecasts of the FPS Economy/Federal Planning Bureau

Sources: Surkyn Johan, Willaert Didier, "Projectie van het aantal kinderen van 0 tot 3 jaar in het Vlaamse Gewest (2009-2015)" (Projection of the number of children aged 0 to 3 in the Region of Flanders (2008-2013) Interface Demography research report, November 2009.

Federal Planning Bureau, FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, Planning Paper 105, May 2008

3. Adopted children

A small but increasing number of adoptions through the authorised adoption services, especially from Ethiopia and Kazakhstan. Marked change in the age of the children

In the course of 2009, the *adoption services authorised** by Child and Family placed a total of 268 children for adoption. This was 29 more than in 2008 (+12.1%). The majority of the children placed for adoption came from outside Belgium (91.0%) (see Table 1.12 and Figure 1.13). The number of children from abroad who were adopted increased (+34) and the number of children born in Belgium who were adopted decreased (-5). The children from outside Belgium came mainly from Ethiopia and Kazakhstan (see Table

1.12). The adoptions of children from Belgium included 2 children of non-Belgian nationality.

At the time of placement in a family, 19.4% of the children were under 1 year old and 34.7% were between 1 and 2 years old. 25% of the children were 2 to 5 years old or more (see Table 1.14). No fewer than 20.9% were over 5. The marked decrease in the percentage of children under 1 stands out (from 46.4 to 19.4%) as does the increase in the percentages of children in the age groups 1 to 2 and 5 to 10. The average age was 2.4 years; an increase of 1 year compared with 2008.

There was a small increase in adoptions by childless families: in 62.7% of adoptions the child was adopted by a family with no children, compared with 57.7% in 2008. In 80.6% of the cases of children placed for adoption, only one child was placed in the family (see Table 1.15).

Over 66% of adoptive parents were aged between 35 and 44 years. The average age of the adoptive father was 38.7 and of the adoptive mother 37.6. The average age of adoptive parents was virtually unchanged from 2008, when it was 38.8 and 37.4 respectively.

The vast majority of adoptive parents were married couples (248 or 92.5%). 16 adoptions were by a single woman, 3 by a cohabiting couple and 1 by a single man.

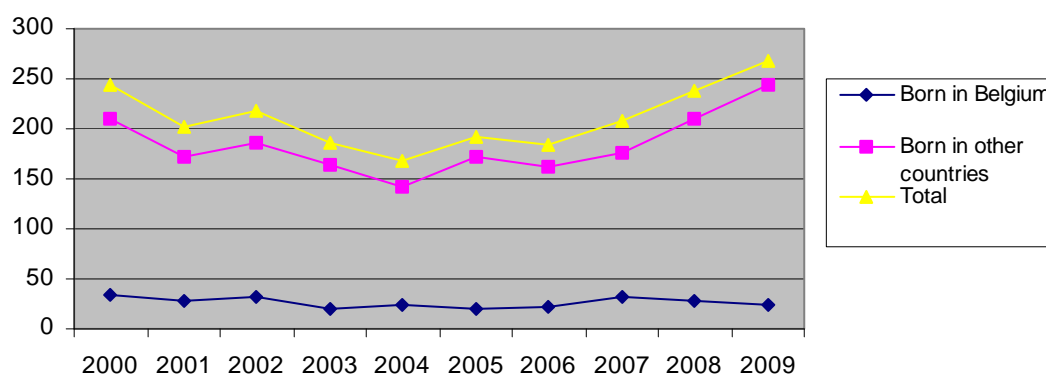
** No information is available on the number of "private" adoptions, i.e. adoptions not arranged through an authorised adoption service.*

Adopted children				
	2008		2009	
	Number	%	Number	%
Born in Belgium	29	12.1	24	9.0
Ethiopia	97	40.6	107	39.9
Kazakhstan	58	24.3	86	32.1
Russia	8	3.3	14	5.2
China	8	3.3	13	4.8
South Africa	10	4.2	11	4.1
Poland	4	1.7	2	0.7
Sri Lanka	5	2.1	3	1.1
Thailand	4	1.7	3	1.1
Haiti	0	0.0	3	1.1
The Philippines	6	2.5	2	0.7
India	9	3.8	0	0.0
Colombia	1	0.4	0	0.0
Overall figure for children from other countries	210	87.9	244	91.0
Total	239	100.0	268	100.0

1.12 Children placed for adoption: numbers by country of origin

Source: Child and Family – Flemish Central Authority for Adoption

Adoption trends



1.13 Trend in the number of children placed for adoption since 2000

Source: *Child and Family – Flemish Central Authority for Adoption*

	Age on adoption		2009	
	2008		Number	%
	Number	%	Number	%
Under 1 year	111	46.4	52	19,4
1 to 2 years	47	19.7	93	34,7
2 to 3 years	30	12.6	29	10,8
3 to 4 years	19	7.9	17	6,3
4 to 5 years	8	3.3	21	7,8
5 to 10 years	19	7.9	52	19,4
10 to 15 years	5	2.1	4	1,5
Total	239	100.0	268	100,0

1.14 Age of children on placement for adoption

Source: *Child and Family – Flemish Central Authority for Adoption*

	Position in the family		2009	
	2008		Number	%
	Number	%	Number	%
Childless family, placement of 1 child	112	46.9	123	45.9
Childless family, placement of more than 1 child	26	10.9	45	16.8
Family with children, placement of 1 child as the youngest child	95	39.7	90	33.6
Family with children, placement of 1 child as neither the oldest nor the youngest child	0	0.0	1	0.4
Family with children, placement of 1 child as the oldest child	0	0.0	2	0.7
Family with children, placement of more than 1 child, all younger than the existing children	0	0.0	7	2.6
Family with children, placement of more than 1 child, as neither the oldest nor the youngest child	6	2.5	0	0.0
Total	239	100.0	268	100.0

1.15 Children placed for adoption by number of children placed and position in the adoptive family

Source: *Child and Family – Flemish Central Authority for Adoption*

4. Minors as asylum seekers

Some young asylum seekers come into *Belgium* with their parents but some enter the country unaccompanied. In 2009, 702 minors* submitted asylum applications in their own right. These are minors with their own individual case file, or in other words, minors who have arrived before or after their parents, and not minors who are included in the annex to their parents' asylum application. Most of them were young asylum seekers aged 16 or 17 years (31.9% and 46.7% respectively).

Considerably more minors applied for asylum than in 2008, when 521 minors applied (see Table 1.16).

* Classified as minors following a bone scan

Minors as asylum seekers (1)				
	2008		2009	
	Number	%	Number	%
Children aged under 6	4	0.8	6	0.9
Children aged 6-11	16	3.1	14	2.0
Children aged 11-16	143	27.4	130	18.5
Children aged 16	156	29.9	224	31.9
Children aged 17	202	38.8	328	46.7
Total	521	100.0	702	100.0

1.16 Number of minors seeking asylum in Belgium by age (age on the date asylum requested)

Source: National Commissioner for Refugees and Stateless Persons, Office for Unaccompanied Minors

(1) These figures relate to the number of minors with an individual dossier. These are minors who have arrived before or after their parents and not minors who are included in the annex to their parents' asylum application. They were classified as minors following a bone scan

5. Background information and interpretation of demographic trends

The birth figures are influenced by a number of social factors. We shall look at people's wishes as regards having children, the fertility rate, abortions and teenage pregnancies.

5.1. Wishes as regards having children

The average number of children considered to be ideal by adults aged 20 to 50 comes out at 2.06, significantly fewer than in 2003

The SCV survey (survey of social and cultural trends in Flanders)* surveyed adults' wishes as regards having children. As well as asking about ideal family size and the number of children the respondent and his/her partner wanted, the survey also asked people about their plans to have more children in the future.

5.1.1. Ideal family size

When adults aged 20 to 50 were asked about ideal family size, the average figure that came out was 2.06 children. The figure for male respondents was slightly higher than that for women, namely 2.08 compared with 2.03 (this difference is not statistically significant) (see Table 1.17). Childlessness was rarely reported as ideal (4.0%). 68.2% of those questioned thought 2 children was the ideal number. 17.5% gave 3 children. Few people thought 1 child was ideal (8.2%) and very few indeed thought 4 or more children ideal (2.1%) (see Figure 1.18). When the adults were broken down into different age groups, the younger ones gave a slightly lower average ideal family size than the older ones: adults aged 20-35 gave 2.05 children on average; adults aged 35-50 gave 2.07. This difference is not statistically significant. When compared with a survey conducted in 2003 (DIALOG survey), there has been a marked decrease in average reported ideal

family size from 2.27 to 2.06.

* Van Peer C., *Kinderwens in Vlaanderen: een update op basis van de survey Sociaal-culturele verschuivingen 2008, (Wishes of Flemish adults as regards having children: an update based on the Social and Cultural Trends survey 2008) SVR Web publication 2009/6*

Ideal family size, personal wishes as regards family size and final number of children people expect to have

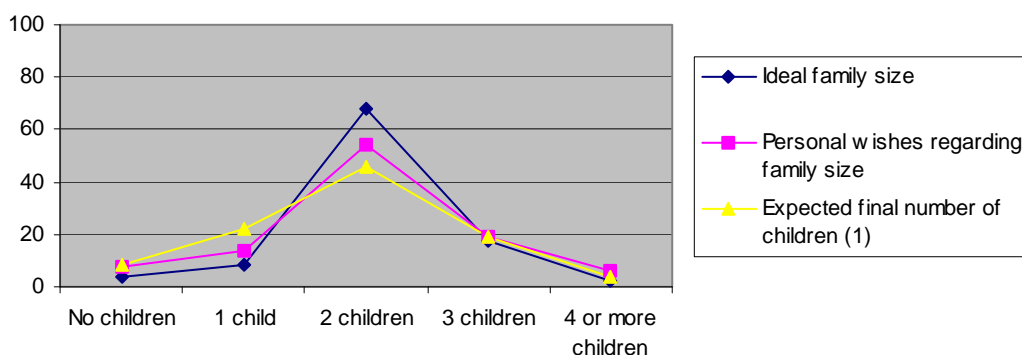
	Men	Women	Total
Average ideal family size (adults aged 20-50)	2.08	2.03	2.06
Average family size when respondents asked about their personal wishes (adults aged 20-40)	2.06	2.02	2.04
Average number of children people expect to have (adults aged 20- 40) (1)	1.84	1.93	1.88

1.17 Average ideal family size as reported by adults aged 20-50, average family size when asked about personal wishes as reported by adults aged 20-40, and the average number of children people expect to have as reported by adults aged 20-40 – Region of Flanders, 2008

Source: Research Centre of the Flemish Government, SCV survey 2008

(1) Using the medium variant, where a 'not sure' response is interpreted as 1 more planned child

Ideal family size, personal wishes as regards family size and final number of children people expect to have



1.18 Ideal family size as reported by men and women aged 20 to 50, personal wishes regarding family size as reported by men and women aged 20 to 40, and expected final number of children as reported by men and women aged 20-40, Region of Flanders – 2008 (percentages)

Source: Research Centre of the Flemish Government, SCV survey 2008

(1) Using the medium variant, where a 'not sure' response is interpreted as 1 more planned child

5.1.2. Wishes as regards having children

Personal wishes as regards having children slightly lower than ideal family size

In addition to ideal family size, the SCV survey also asked about the *number of children that people wanted for themselves*. On average respondents aged 20 to 40 wanted 2.04 children (see Table 1.17). Men on average wanted 2.06 children and women 2.02 children. The difference between men and women is not statistically significant.

Respondents aged 20 to 30 wanted slightly more children on average at 2.1 compared with 1.99 for respondents aged 30 to 40. Generally younger men and women expressed a desire for more children than did those who were further on in their reproductive lives. What people value changes during the course of their reproductive lives and they also become more realistic about the number of children they want as they get older. The number of children people reported that they want personally was slightly lower than their expressed ideal family size. Ideal family size refers to a social rather than a personal ideal. Demographers point out that by expressing a higher idea family size, respondents are actually making a comment about the institutional context. What they are trying to say is that in a different institutional setting they would have liked to have more children. Since the last survey (DIALOG survey 2003), the number of children people say they want for themselves has increased, while ideal family size has decreased.

5.1.3. Expected final number of children and the discrepancy between the number of children people want and the number they actually have

The expected final number of children that men and women in the 20 to 40 age group will have was calculated based on the number of children they already have plus the number they plan to have in the future*. This group already had 0.76 children on average and reported that they planned to have a further 1.12 in the future, producing an expected final 1.88 children per adult. The calculation assumed that respondents who said they were still unsure about whether they would have more children would have 1 additional child (medium variant) (see Table 1.17). The expected final number of children was identical to that found by the 2003 survey (DIALOG survey). The SCV survey also allowed us to calculate the difference between what people want and reality*. The average discrepancy in adults aged 36-50 was 0.52. This is known as deficit fertility.

* The group with 'excess fertility' was not included in the calculation

5.2. Fertility in the Region of Flanders

5.2.1. Total fertility

Marked rise in fertility again in 2008. Drop in fertility among non-Belgian women

Total fertility is the sum of the age-specific fertility rates, expressed as the number of children per woman. This is actually a theoretical number of children that is said to be born to each woman, because it is the sum of the age-specific fertility rates in a given calendar year, whereas women have their children over a period of years. Total fertility is a good indicator of how many children women have in a given calendar year.

In 2008 (figures for 2009 are not yet available), the *total fertility rate per woman* in the Region of Flanders was 1.82 (see Table 1.19). We would have to go back to 1974 to find such a high fertility rate in the Region (see Figure 1.20), but the total fertility rate is still below replacement level. It is assumed that a fertility rate of 2.1 is required to replace the generation, at least if migration is left out of the picture.

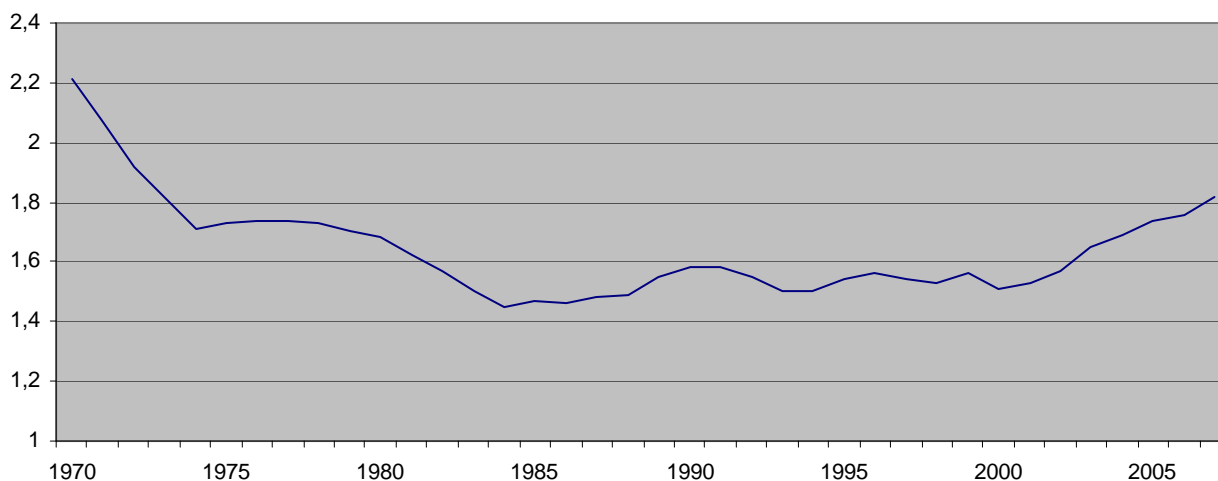
Figure 1.20 shows a constant increase in the total fertility rate since 2001.

	Total fertility rate		
	Belgian women	Non-Belgian women	Total
2001	1.42	2.89	1.51
2005	1.60	3.02	1.69
2006	1.64	3.04	1.74
2007	1.66	3.05	1.76
2008	1.72	2.98	1.82

1.19 Total fertility rates in the Region of Flanders – 2001-2008

Source: Van Bavel J., Bastiaenssens V., *De recente evolutie van de vruchtbaarheid in het Vlaamse Gewest: update 2008 (Recent fertility trends in the Region of Flanders: update 2008)*, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Interface Demography, Working Paper 2009-2. Based on data from Child and Family, IKAROS

Trend in the total fertility rate



1.20 Trend in the total fertility rate in the Region of Flanders from 1971 onwards

Source: Van Bavel J., Bastiaenssens V., *De recente evolutie van de vruchtbaarheid in het Vlaamse Gewest: update 2008 (Recent fertility trends in the Region of Flanders: update 2008)*, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Interface Demography, Working Paper 2009-2. Based on data from Child and Family, IKAROS (2001-2008)

5.2.2. Total fertility rates by Belgian/non-Belgian nationality of the mothers

Main increase in fertility among Belgian women. Convergence of Belgian and non-Belgian women

Total fertility is considerably higher for non-Belgian women than for Belgian women: 2.98 for non-Belgian women compared with 1.72 for Belgian women (see Table 1.19).

Fertility among Belgian women increased from 2007 to 2008 (+0.06 units) and decreased among women of non-Belgian nationality (-0.07 units) (see Table 1.19). Since the start of the analyses of the IKAROS data (2001), the total fertility rate of Belgian women has risen by 0.3 units and that of non-Belgian women by only 0.09 units. So there is some convergence between the two population groups.

The impact of the population of foreign nationals on total fertility is rather limited: in 2008 the total fertility rate for Belgian women in the Region of Flanders was only 0.1 units lower than the total fertility rate for the whole population.

5.2.3. Total fertility by province

Considerable differences

Total fertility rates vary from province to province, with a relatively low rate in the province of Limburg (1.68) and a relatively high rate in the province of Antwerp (1.93). East Flanders (1.82), West Flanders (1.82) and Flemish Brabant (1.74) come in the middle. All provinces saw an increase from 2007 to 2008.

Looking at the trend among women of Belgian and non-Belgian nationality, it emerges that the total fertility rate of *Belgian women* went up in every province. The total fertility rate rose markedly among Belgian

women in the provinces of East and West Flanders (+0.08 units), slightly less in the provinces of Antwerp and Limburg (+0.06 and 0.04 units) and there was a very small increase in Flemish Brabant (+0.01 units). The total fertility rate of *non-Belgian women* fell in all provinces apart from East Flanders.

The large variation in the *total fertility rates* for *non-Belgian women* by province stands out, with relatively low rates in Flemish Brabant and Limburg and relatively high rates in East Flanders and Antwerp. The fertility rate for non-Belgian women is, however, above replacement level in all provinces (see Table 1.21).

Total fertility rates by province						
	Belgians		Non-Belgians		Total	
	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008
Antwerp	1.69	1.75	3.44	3.36	1.86	1.93
Flemish Brabant	1.66	1.67	2.39	2.34	1.73	1.74
West Flanders	1.70	1.78	3.21	2.98	1.75	1.82
East Flanders	1.64	1.72	3.47	3.53	1.74	1.82
Limburg	1.56	1.60	2.62	2.46	1.65	1.68
Region of Flanders	1.66	1.72	3.05	2.98	1.76	1.82

1.21 Total fertility rates by province and by Belgian/non-Belgian nationality of the mothers

Source: Van Bavel J., Bastiaenssens V., *De recente evolutie van de vruchtbaarheid in het Vlaamse Gewest: update 2008 (Recent fertility trends in the Region of Flanders: update 2008)*, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, *Interface Demography, Working Paper 2009-2*.
 Based on data from *Child and Family, IKAROS*

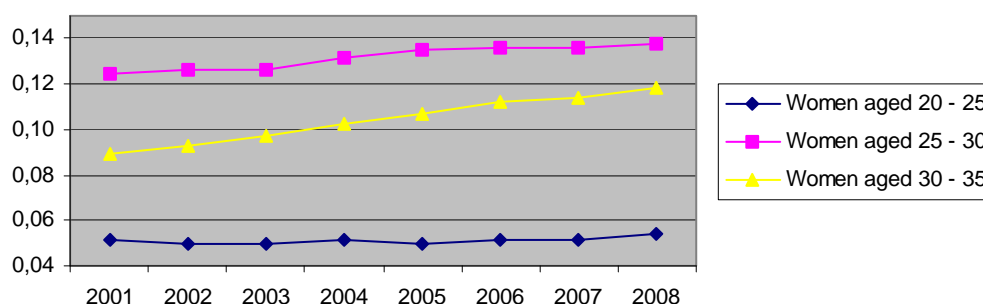
5.2.4. Age-specific fertility

2008 again saw a slight increase in fertility among women under 30 and a continued increase among those over 30

Age-specific fertility is a ratio of the number of births to women of a specific age to the number of women of that age in the population. These figures reflect how many women of a specific age have children in a given year, and it is therefore a good indicator of the fertility of each age group.

Figure 1.22 shows the fertility rate of women in the Region of Flanders for different age groups between 20 and 35 since 2001. The fertility rate of women aged 25 to 30 continues to rise steadily, though the rise is sometimes very small as it was from 2006 to 2007, and since 2006 the fertility rate of the 20-25 age group has started to increase slightly again. In addition, the fertility rate of women over 30 continues to increase steadily. Going back a few decades the total fertility rate fell because the decrease among relatively young women was not fully compensated for by an increase in fertility among older women. In the past few years the total fertility rate has gone up due to the trend of more women over 30 having babies and the more recent rise in fertility among women under 30.

Trend in age-specific fertility rates



1.22 Trend in the fertility rates of specific age groups since 2001 – Region of Flanders

Source: Van Bavel J., Bastiaenssens V., *De recente evolutie van de vruchtbaarheid in het Vlaamse Gewest: update 2008, (Recent fertility trends in the Region of Flanders)* Vrije Universiteit Brussel, *Interface Demography, Working Paper 2009-2*. based on data from FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, and from Child and Family, IKAROS

5.2.5. End of the postponement of the first child?

Pause in the postponement trend; hesitant move toward earlier motherhood

The fertility rate in Flanders, just as elsewhere in Europe, has undergone two evolutions since the mid-1960s. In the first period the number of children per man or woman fell and so families became smaller; after that there was a trend to postpone having the first child later and later. The decrease in average family size mainly occurred in the 1960s and '70s. Since then it has primarily been a matter of continuing postponement.

The recent increase in the fertility rate of women under 30 is a sign that *postponement has reached its limit*, and that we may even be seeing a slight reversal of this trend. However, if we are seeing a new trend away from postponement, it is still a very hesitant one. In 2007, for the first time in years, there was a slight fall in the average age of Belgian mothers at the birth of their first baby. However, the decrease did not continue in 2008, because the increase in fertility among women over 30 was greater than the increase in the under 30s (see Table 1.23).

Trend in the average age of motherhood

	2001	2005	2006	2007	2008
All births					
Real average (1)					
Total population	28.38	29.07	29.20	29.20	29.23
Belgians	28.53	29.19	29.28	29.28	29.31
Non-Belgians	27.34	28.55	28.71	28.70	28.76
Expected on the basis of age-specific fertility rates (1)					
Total population	28.36	28.83	28.94	29.96	29.02
Belgians	28.49	28.94	29.04	29.07	29.12
Non-Belgians	27.19	27.82	28.02	28.08	28.15
Births of first child					
Real average (1)					
Total population	26.76	27.50	27.65	27.58	27.62

Belgians	26.93	27.63	27.77	27.69	27.72
Non-Belgians	25.39	26.71	26.78	26.89	26.95
Expected on the basis of age-specific fertility rates (1)					
Total population	26.70	27.32	27.44	27.40	27.45
Belgians	26.88	27.47	27.60	27.53	27.58
Non-Belgians	23.69	24.42	25.85	26.01	26.10

1.23 Average age of mothers on giving birth in the Region of Flanders, 2001-2008

Source: Van Bavel J., Bastiaenssens V., *De recente evolutie van de vruchtbaarheid in het Vlaamse Gewest: update 2008 (Recent fertility trends in the Region of Flanders: update 2008)*, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Interface Demography, Working Paper 2009-2.

Based on data from Child and Family, IKAROS

(1) The real average is the normal arithmetic mean of the age of the mothers (in full years) of registered births and so it is not only influenced by the age-specific fertility rates but also by the number of potential mothers at each age

The average expected on the basis of age-specific fertility rates is the mean of the age-specific fertility rates for each age, and so it is not influenced by the number of potential mothers at each age

5.2.6. Higher fertility, larger families?

Signs of a slight rise in the number of families with three or more children?

The increase in the total fertility rate does not necessarily mean that later generations will on average have rather more children than women in the generations just before them. It is quite conceivable that women who have their first child at a slightly younger age will also stop having children at a younger age, without ending up with more children. It is quite conceivable, therefore, that the birth rate among older women will level off or even start to fall in the future.

To find out whether families are now becoming slightly larger, we look at the *relative number of 1st, 2nd, 3rd and later babies* and the *age-specific fertility rates for each*.

Between 2001 and 2006 the percentage of firstborns in the total number of births increased, while the percentage of 3rd and later babies fell. However, in 2007 and in 2008 the percentage of second babies in the total number of births increased (see Table 1.24). The rise in the age-specific fertility rates in 2005 was mainly due to more firstborns; in 2006 it was rather a matter of more second babies; and in 2007 and 2008 it was a matter of more second and later babies. Age-specific figures for second births hardly increased if at all in 2004, An increase in second babies can be seen in 2005 and 2006, and in 2007 and 2008 there were also more third and later babies born.

Until 2006 there were no signs that families in Flanders might start to get very slightly bigger again. Based on the trends in 2007 and 2008 we would expect a slight increase in the number of young families with three or more children in the Region of Flanders. These are very small shifts, however, and it is by no means certain that this small change in trend will continue in years to come. Nor is it clear how far this increase can be explained by the growing significance of new Belgians and non-Belgians in the population of the Region of Flanders.

		Birth order (1)			
Nationality	Birth order	2001	2006	2007	2008
Belgians	1st	46.1	48.4	47.8	47.6
	2nd	35.9	34.7	35.4	35.6
	3rd	12.6	11.9	11.8	11.9

	4th +	5.4	5.0	5.0	4.9
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Non-Belgians	1st	47.7	43.2	43.3	42.5
	2nd	30.1	31.6	31.6	32.4
	3rd	15.6	14.6	15.1	14.8
	4th +	12.6	10.5	10.0	10.2
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total population	1st	45.6	47.7	47.2	46.9
	2nd	35.2	34.3	34.9	35.1
	3rd	13.0	12.3	12.2	12.3
	4th +	6.2	5.8	5.7	5.7
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

1.24 Births by nationality and birth order in the Region of Flanders, percentages, 2001-2008

Source: Van Bavel J., Bastiaenssens V., *De recente evolutie van de vruchtbaarheid in het Vlaamse Gewest: update 2008 (Recent fertility trends in the Region of Flanders: update 2008)*, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, *Interface Demography, Working Paper 2009-2*.

Based on data from *Child and Family, IKAROS*

(1) Birth order refers to the number of times that the mother has given birth.

Twins and triplets are assigned the same birth order

5.3. Abortion

A small number of pregnancies are terminated at the request of the woman. Small increase in abortions relative to live births

A number of pregnancies are not continued to full term but terminated at the request of the woman. Pregnant women in Flanders can go to abortion clinics or hospitals to have an abortion. In 2007 (more recent figures are not available) 7 648 legal abortions were performed in these clinics and hospitals. That is an increase of 2.9% compared with 2006 (see Table 1.25 and Figure 1.26; see also point 5.4). The number of abortions was 25% higher than in 2000. In 2007 there were 116 abortions per 1 000 births, compared with 113 in 2006.

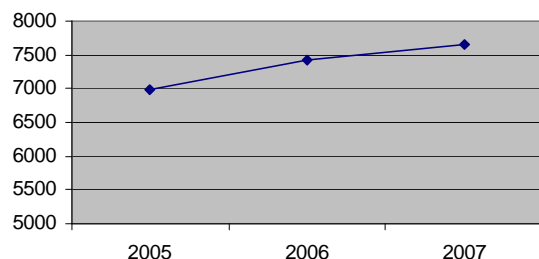
Figure 1.27 shows the number of abortions by age of the woman.

Abortions		
	2006	2007
Number of abortions	7 432	7 648
Number of abortions per 1 000 births	113	116

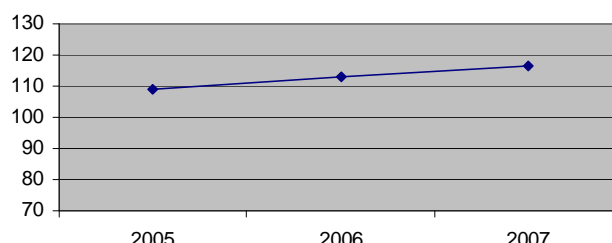
1.25 Abortions in women living in the Region of Flanders, number and number per 1 000 births

Source: *National Evaluation Commission for Terminations of Pregnancy*

**Abortions
Number**



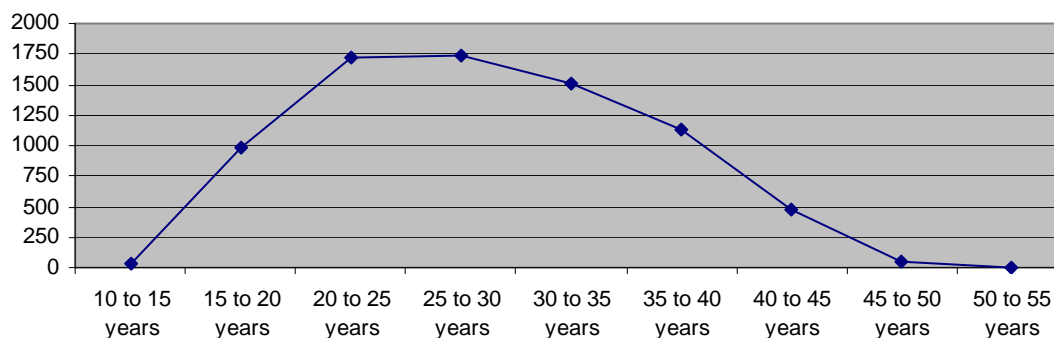
Per 1 000 births



1.26 Trend since 2000 in the number of abortions and the number of abortions per 1 000 births in women living in the Region of Flanders

Source: National Evaluation Commission for Terminations of Pregnancy

Abortions by age



1.27 Number of abortions among women living in the Region of Flanders by age – 2007

Source: National Evaluation Commission for Terminations of Pregnancy

5.4. Teenage pregnancy

Teenage motherhood tends to be the exception; a significant number of teenage pregnancies are terminated

There is a link between teenage motherhood and situations involving risks for mother and child. *Teenage mothers* leave school early, are at greater risk of poverty, and are more likely to be single mothers. Children of teenage mothers are more at risk of having a low birth weight, of dying within their first year of life, and of becoming teenage mothers themselves.

Teenage motherhood tends to be the exception in Flanders. In 2008 only 1 356 or 2% of women giving birth were aged under 20. This was slightly fewer than in 2007 (-2.8%), when 1 395 women under the age of 20 gave birth. Almost half (49.2%) of the teenage mothers were 19 and almost 29% were 18 (see Table 1.28 and Figure 1.29).

Teenage mothers

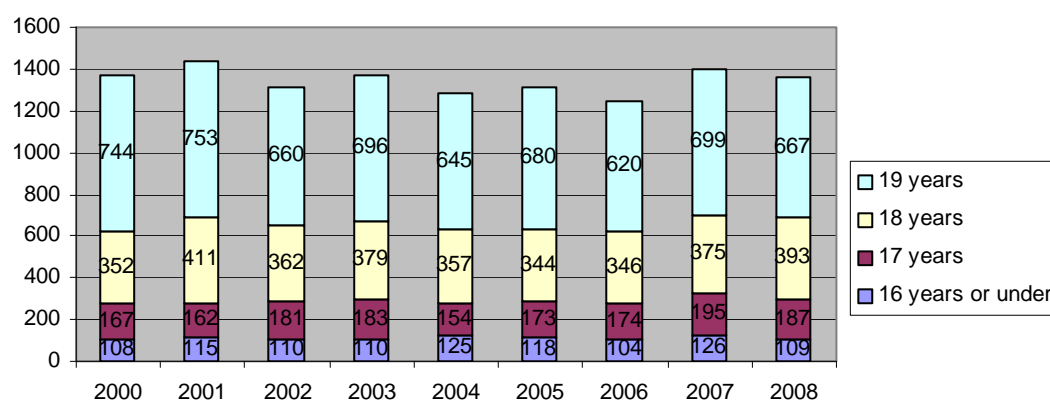
	2007	2008
14 years or under	10	8

15 years	36	28
16 years	80	73
17 years	195	187
18 years	375	393
19 years	699	667
Total under 20 years	1 395	1 356

1.28 Number of teenage mothers in Flanders (Region of Flanders and Flemish maternity hospitals in Brussels)

Source: Study Centre for Perinatal Epidemiology

Trend in teenage mothers



1.29 Trend in the number of teenage mothers by age in Flanders (Region of Flanders and Flemish maternity hospitals in Brussels) since 2000

Source: Study Centre for Perinatal Epidemiology

The number of *teenage pregnancies* is, however, considerably higher than the number of births to women under the age of 20. In 2007 the number of teenage pregnancies – births and abortions together – was 2 408, made up of 1 395 births and 1 013 abortions. Out of every 100 pregnant teenagers, 57.9 became mothers and 42.1 had an abortion. These were however mainly women in the 15 to 20 age group. Below the age of 15 there were 36 abortions and 10 births. Pregnant girls under the age of 15 are relatively more likely to have an abortion than those aged 15 to 20 (see Table 1.30 – see also section 5.3).

Figure 1.33 shows the trend in the number of teenagers having abortions or giving birth since 2000.

* The figures shown are for 2007, because only the figures for number of births are available for 2008

Abortions among teenagers

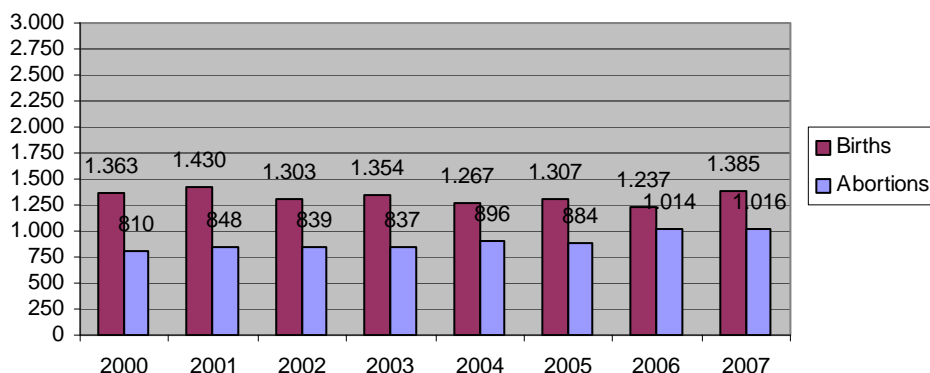
	2006	2007
Number		
in girls aged 10 to 15 years	24	36
in girls and young women aged 15 to 20 years	990	977
Total girls and young women aged 10 to 20 years	1 014	1 013
Per 100 pregnancies		
in girls and young women aged 10 to 20 years	44,9	42,1

1.30 Number of abortions and number of abortions per 100 pregnancies among women and girls under the age

of 20

Sources: National Evaluation Commission for Terminations of Pregnancy
 Study Centre for Perinatal Epidemiology

Abortions and births among teenagers



1.31 Number of women and girls under the age of 20 who had abortions in the Region of Flanders and number of teenage mothers in Flanders (Region of Flanders and Flemish maternity hospitals in Brussels) since 2000

Sources: National Evaluation Commission for Terminations of Pregnancy
 Study Centre for Perinatal Epidemiology

6. The European context

How do the birth rate and birth trends in Flanders fit into the European context? What is the trend in the number of young children? The figures for Flanders were compared with the figures for the EU-15 countries and, where possible, the total figure for the EU-15.

6.1. Births, fertility and abortions

A number of figures for births are reproduced in Tables 1.32, 1.33 and 1.34: the number of births, the percentage trend in the figures for births, and the number of births per 1000 inhabitants. The 2009 figures for the EU-15 countries are still estimates. According to these estimates, the birth rate in the EU-15 countries was approximately 0.4% lower in 2009 than in 2008. For the first time since 2003, the number of births is expected to fall. Going in the opposite direction to this general trend, the birth rate is expected to increase sharply from 2008 to 2009 in Finland (+11.4%) and in Spain (+8.7%). The birth rate also goes up in Sweden though less sharply (+3.8%). Greece (+2.0%), France (+0.1%) and the Netherlands (+0.4%) have very slight increases. Small decreases in the birth rate are expected in Belgium (-0.7%), Luxembourg (-0.2%), Austria (-1.3%), the United Kingdom (-0.9%) and Ireland (-0.3%). There are more marked decreases in Germany (-5.4%) and Portugal (-6.8%).

The *number of births per 1000 inhabitants* in the EU-15 countries is 10.9. Significantly higher figures are recorded for Ireland (16.8), France (12.9), the United Kingdom (12.8), Finland (12.4), Sweden (12.3) and Spain (12.3) and a significantly lower figure for Germany (7.9) (see Table 1.34).

The *total fertility rate* (TFR) is below replacement level everywhere, a figure of 2.1 children per woman being assumed for the latter, at least when migration is left out of the picture (see Table 1.35). Not a single one of the EU-15 countries reaches replacement level; though Ireland (2.09) and France (2.00) get close. Due to the constant rise in its TFR, the Region of Flanders now has a relatively high rate among the EU-15 countries. The most recent figures available point to a rise in the TFR in all of the EU-15 countries, apart

from Luxembourg, where it remains unchanged.

Table 1.36 shows the trend in the *final number of offspring* at the end of the years of fertility, at age 49. This table shows the birth cohorts to 1970-1971, with estimates given for the cohorts that had not reached the age of 49 by that year. With 1.65 offspring to women born in 1970 (1970 cohort), Belgium finds itself in the middle group. In almost all of the EU-15 countries, younger generations of women are having fewer children than the generations of 1955 and 1960. Denmark and Luxembourg are exceptions to this; in both countries there has been a small but steady increase in the final number of offspring.

The age at which women have children has in recent years remained virtually constant or risen slightly. According to the most recent figures available, the *average age at which women give birth* is over 29 in all the countries investigated. In Germany, France, the Nordic countries and the Mediterranean countries the average age is over 30 and in the Netherlands and Ireland it is even over 31. The *average age for having a first child* is over 28 in most of the EU-15 countries, apart from Finland, Portugal and Austria. It is exactly 28 years in the Region of Flanders (see Tables 1.37 and 1.38).

The fertility rate for girls and young women aged 15 to 20 years is low in the Region of Flanders compared with many of the EU-15 countries. The United Kingdom especially, but also Portugal and Ireland, have a high birth rate among women aged 15 to 20 (see Table 1.39).

The number of children born outside marriage continues to increase in most of the EU-15 countries. France and Sweden have a very high percentage of births outside marriage. In Sweden 54.7% of all children are born outside marriage; in France 52.6%. With 39% of births outside marriage, Belgium is in the middle group. In Greece, only a very small percentage of births occur outside marriage (see Table 1.40).

Table 1.41 shows an overview of the number of *abortions* per 100 births. The Region of Flanders and Belgium have quite a low number of abortions per 100 births compared with the other EU-15 countries.

	Births					
	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009**
Region of Flanders	61 877	63 906	65 655	65 689	68 394	
Belgium	114 883	119 622	121 382	120 663	124 991*	124 138
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>						
Germany	766 999	685 795	672 724	684 862	682 514*	645 581
France	808 249	807 787	830 288	819 605	829 311*	830 391
Luxembourg	5 723	5 371	5 514	5 477	5 596	5 583
The Netherlands	206 619	187 910	185 057	181 336	184 634*	185 416
<i>Nordic countries</i>						
Finland	56 742	57 745	58 840	58 729	59 331	66 094
Denmark	67 084	64 282	64 984	64 082	65 038	62 642
Sweden	90 441	101 346	105 913	107 421	109 301	113 808
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>						
Greece	103 267	107 545	112 042	111 926	118 302*	120 654
Italy	543 144	554 022	560 010	563 933	575 810*	553 590
Portugal	120 008	109 399	105 449	102 492	104 594*	97 403
Spain	397 632	466 371	482 957	493 702	519 050*	563 988

Austria	78 268	78 190	77 914	76 250	77 752	76 733
The United Kingdom	679 029	722 549	748 563	772 245	794 383*	787 350
Ireland	54 789	61 372	65 425	70 620	75 065*	74 855
EU-15	4 092 897	4 129 306	4 197 062	4 236 442	4 326 002*	4 308 227

1.32 Number of live births in the EU-15 countries from 2000 onwards

Sources: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, Population Statistics

Eurostat, website

* Provisional figures

** Estimates

Births trend						
	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009**
Region of Flanders	100.0	103.3	106.1	106.2	110.5	
Belgium	100.0	104.1	105.7	105.0	108.8*	108.1
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>						
Germany	100.0	89.4	87.7	89.3	89.0*	84.2
France	100.0	99.9	102.7	101.4	102.6*	102.7
Luxembourg	100.0	93.8	96.3	95.7	97.8	97.6
The Netherlands	100.0	90.9	89.6	87.8	89.4*	89.7
<i>Nordic countries</i>						
Finland	100.0	101.8	103.7	103.5	104.6	116.5
Denmark	100.0	95.8	96.9	95.5	97.0	93.4
Sweden	100.0	112.1	117.1	118.8	121.2	125.8
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>						
Greece	100.0	104.1	108.5	107.5	114.6*	116.8
Italy	100.0	102.0	103.1	103.8	106.0*	101.9
Portugal	100.0	91.2	87.9	85.4	87.2*	81.2
Spain	100.0	117.3	121.5	124.2	130.5*	141.8
Austria	100.0	99.9	99.5	97.4	99.3	98.0
The United Kingdom	100.0	106.4	110.2	113.7	117.0*	116.0
Ireland	100.0	112.0	119.4	128.9	137.0*	136.6
EU-15	100.0	100.9	102.5	103.4	105.7*	105.3

1.33 Trends in the number of live births since 2000 in the EU-15 countries

Sources: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, Population Statistics

Eurostat, website

Internal calculations

* Provisional figures

** Estimates

Births per 1 000						
	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009**
Region of Flanders	10.4	10.6	10.8	10.7	11.1	
Belgium	11.2	11.3	11.5	11.4	11.7*	11.5

<i>Neighbouring countries</i>						
Germany	9.3	8.3	8.2	8.3	8.3*	7.9
France	13.3	12.9	13.1	12.9	13.0*	12.9
Luxembourg	13.2	11.6	11.8	11.5	11.6	11.3
The Netherlands	13.0	11.5	11.3	11.1	11.3*	11.3
<i>Nordic countries</i>						
Finland	11.0	11.0	11.2	11.1	11.2	12.4
Denmark	12.6	11.9	12.0	11.8	11.9	11.4
Sweden	10.2	11.2	11.7	11.8	11.9	12.3
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>						
Greece	9.5	9.7	10.1	9.9	10.5*	10.7
Italy	9.5	9.5	9.5	9.5	9.7*	9.2
Portugal	11.8	10.4	10.0	9.7	9.9*	9.2
Spain	9.9	10.8	11.0	11.1	11.5*	12.3
Austria	9.8	9.5	9.4	9.2	9.3	9.2
The United Kingdom	11.6	12.0	12.4	12.7	13.0*	12.8
Ireland	14.5	14.9	15.5	16.4	17.1*	16.8
EU-15	10.8	10.7	10.8	10.8	11.0*	10.9

1.34 Birth rate: number of births per 1 000 inhabitants since 2000 in the EU-15 countries

Sources: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, Population Statistics

Eurostat, website

Internal calculations

* Provisional figures

** Estimates

Fertility rates

	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008
Region of Flanders	n/a	1.69	1.74	1.76	1.82
Belgium	1.66	1.75	1.80	1.81	
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	1.38	1.34	1.33	1.37	1.38
France	1.89	1.94	2.00	1.98	2.00
Luxembourg	1.76	1.63	1.65	1.61	1.61
The Netherlands	1.72	1.71	1.72	1.72	1.77
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	1.73	1.80	1.84	1.83	1.85
Denmark	1.77	1.80	1.85	1.84	1.89
Sweden	1.54	1.77	1.85	1.88	1.91
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	1.26	1.33	1.40	1.41	1.51
Italy	1.26	1.32	1.35	1.37	
Portugal	1.55	1.40	1.36	1.33	1.37
Spain	1.23	1.35	1.38	1.40	1.46

Austria	1.36	1.41	1.41	1.38	1.41
The United Kingdom	1.64	1.78	1.84	1.90*	
Ireland	1.89	1.87	1.92	2.01	2.09

1.35 Total fertility rate (TFR) per woman since 2000 in the EU-15 countries

Sources: Van Bavel J., Bastiaenssens V., *De recente evolutie van de vruchtbaarheid in het Vlaamse Gewest: update 2008 (Recent fertility trends in the Region of Flanders: update 2008)*, Brussels, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Interface Demography, Working Paper 2009-2

Eurostat, website

* Provisional figure

n/a: not available

	Final number of offspring (1)				
	1955	1960	1965	1970	1971
Belgium	1.83	1.87	1.76	1.65	
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	1.67	1.66	1.55	1.47	1.47
France	n/a	n/a	2.02		
Luxembourg	1.68	1.74	1.82	1.82	1.84
The Netherlands	1.87	1.86	1.78	1.74	
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	1.90	1.96	1.91	1.86	
Denmark	1.83	1.87	1.89	1.95	1.92
Sweden	2.03	2.05	2.01	1.96	
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	n/a	1.97	1.77	1.57	1.52
Italy	1.79	1.64	1.46	1.40	
Portugal	2.03	1.88	1.82	1.66	1.64
Spain	1.92	1.79	1.61	1.45	
Austria	1.77	1.70	1.64	1.60	1.60
The United Kingdom	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Ireland	n/a	n/a	n/a	2.02	

1.36 Average number of children per woman at the end of her fertile years (age 49) for the generations born between 1955 and 1971

Sources: Council of Europe, *Recent demographic developments in Europe 2005*

Eurostat, website

OECD, *Family database (figures for France)*

(1) Where a cohort has not yet reached the age of 49, the final number of offspring is estimated based on the observed fertility rates of the earlier generations (Eurostat estimates)

n/a: not available

	Age on giving birth					
	2000	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Region of Flanders	29.2	29.5	29.6	29.6	29.7	29.7
Belgium	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	29.8	
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>						
Germany	28.7	29.3	29.5	29.6	30.2	

France	29.3	29.6	29.7	29.7	29.8
Luxembourg	29.3	30.2	29.8	29.9	30.2
The Netherlands	30.3	30.5	30.5	30.6	31.1
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	29.6	29.9	29.9	30.0	
Denmark	29.2	30.1	30.2	30.3	30.4
Sweden	29.9	30.4	30.5	30.5	30.9
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	29.6	29.6	29.9	29.9	30.7
Italy	30.3	n/a	30.9		
Portugal	28.6	29.2	29.3	29.5	30.0
Spain	30.7	30.9	30.9	30.9	30.8
Austria	28.2	28.8	29.0	29.2	29.4
The United Kingdom	28.5	29.0	29.1	29.2	29.3
Ireland	30.5	31.0	n/a	30.7	31.1

1.37 Average age of women giving birth since 2000 in the EU-15 countries

Sources: Study Centre for Perinatal Epidemiology (SPE)

Eurostat, website

Eurostat, *The Social Situation in the European Union 2009*

n/a: not available

Age on giving birth to the first child

	2000	2004	2005	2006	2007
Region of Flanders	27.5	27.9	28.0	28.0	28.0
Belgium	n/a				
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	28.2	29.0	n/a	29.1	
France	27.8	28.4	28.5	28.6	
Luxembourg	28.3	28.7	29.0		
The Netherlands	28.6	28.9	28.9		
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	27.4	27.8	27.9		
Denmark	27.3	28.4	28.4		
Sweden	27.9	28.6	28.7		
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	28.0	28.3	28.5		
Italy	n/a				
Portugal	26.5	27.1	27.1		
Spain	29.1	29.3	29.3	29.3	
Austria	26.4	27.0	27.2		
The United Kingdom	29.1	29.7	29.8	30.0	
Ireland	27.7				

1.38 Average age of women giving birth to the first child since 2000 in the EU-15 countries

Sources: Study Centre for Perinatal Epidemiology (SPE)

Eurostat, website

n/a: not available

Fertility rates for teenagers (1)

	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008
Region of Flanders	n/a	0.03903	0.03555	0.04021	0.03847
Belgium	n/a	0.05272	n/a	n/a	n/a
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	0.06471	0.05285	0.05050	0.04955	0.04876
France	0.06138	0.05754	0.05762	0.05687	0.05770
Luxembourg	0.06079	0.05999	0.05190	0.05114	0.04342
The Netherlands	0.03680	0.02887	0.02614	0.02597	0.02591
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	0.04982	0.05138	0.04721	0.04551	0.04314
Denmark	0.03943	0.02788	0.02973	0.02828	0.03015
Sweden	0.03517	0.02945	0.02965	0.02952	0.02962
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	0.04360	0.05223	0.05661	0.05538	0.06012
Italy	0.03574	0.03421	0.03350	0.03330	n/a
Portugal	0.10851	0.09355	0.08392	0.08342	0.07954
Spain	0.04423	0.05728	0.06071	0.06574	0.06826
Austria	0.06870	0.06420	0.05974	0.05596	0.05619
The United Kingdom	0.14469	0.12985	0.13082	n/a	n/a
Ireland	0.09789	0.08312	0.08160	0.08742	0.08733

1.39 Fertility rates for young women aged 15 to 20 years

Sources: Van Bavel J., Bastiaenssens V., *De recente evolutie van de vruchtbaarheid in het Vlaamse Gewest: update 2008 (Recent fertility trends in the Region of Flanders: update 2008)*, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Interface Demography, Working Paper 2009-2.

Based on data from Child and Family, IKAROS

Eurostat, website

(1) Aged 15 to 19 years; age in full years

n/a: not available

Births outside marriage per 100 births

	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008
Belgium	n/a	n/a	n/a	39.0	
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	23.4	29.2	30.0	30.9	32.1
France	43.6	48.4	50.5	51.7	52.6
Luxembourg	21.9	27.2	28.8	29.2	30.2
The Netherlands	24.9	34.9	37.1	39.5	41.2
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	39.2	40.4	40.6	40.6	40.7
Denmark	44.6	45.7	46.4	46.1	46.2
Sweden	55.3	55.5	55.5	54.8	54.7
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	4.0	5.1	5.3	5.8	5.9
Italy	9.7	15.4	18.6	20.7	

Portugal	22.2	30.7	31.6	33.6	36.2
Spain	17.7	26.6	28.4	n/a	31.8
Austria	31.3	36.5	37.2	38.3	38.8
The United Kingdom	39.5	42.9	43.7	44.4	
Ireland	31.5	32.0	33.2		

1.40 Number of births outside marriage in the EU-15 countries from 2000 onwards

Source: Eurostat, website

n/a: not available

Number of abortions per 1 000 births					
	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008
Region of Flanders	98.6	109.2	113.2	116.4	
Belgium	119.8	141.5	145.3	149.5	
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	175.5	180.9	178.0	170.7	167.7
France	254.1				
Luxembourg	n/a				
The Netherlands	131.7	152.9	153.9	156.2	
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	192.7	190.0	181.8	180.3	175.1
Denmark	233.5	236.2	231.6		
Sweden	342.5	345.1	340.3	346.4	348.2
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	174.5	153.4			
Italy	250.2	233.3	225.8		
Portugal	n/a				
Spain	160.3	196.6			
Austria	n/a				
The United Kingdom	276.3	265.6	276.5	275.0	
Ireland	n/a				

1.41 Number of abortions per 1 000 births since 2000 in the EU-15 countries

Sources: National Evaluation Commission for Terminations of Pregnancy

WHO Regional Office for Europe, European Health for all database (website)

n/a: not available

6.2. Young children

The Region of Flanders is a *small region* within Europe. Children under the age of 5 in the Region of Flanders make up only 1.6% of the total number of young children in the European Union. On 01.01.09, there were over 20.9 million children under 5 in the European Union (see Table 1.42).

The number of children in the EU-15 countries increased slightly between 2008 and 2009 (estimated +0.7%). Most of the EU-15 countries saw an increase in the number of young children. The increase was less than 2% in France, Luxembourg, Finland, Denmark, Italy and Austria. It was more than 2% in Sweden, Greece, Spain and Ireland. In Germany, the Netherlands and Portugal the number of children under 5 decreased. For Belgium and the Region of Flanders there are no figures available for 2009. Table 1.43

shows the percentage trend with 2000 as the base year.

Table 1.44 presents the trend in the *number of young children* in the total population. The large number of young children in Ireland stands out (7.6%). Germany has the lowest percentage of young children (4.2%).

Looking ahead to 2015, a slight increase in the number of children under 5 is expected in the EU-15 countries (+1.1%). Different countries are expected to experience very different trends, with a marked increase in Ireland (+16.3%). Increases of between 5 and 10% are expected in Luxembourg (+5.5%), Sweden (+5.9%), Spain (+9.7%) and the United Kingdom (+6.1%). Small or very small increases are expected in Belgium (+2.9%), Finland (+3.9%), Greece (+0.7%) and Austria (+1.2%). For France (-0.5%), Portugal (-2.1%), Germany (-3.2%) and Italy (-3.7%) forecasts indicate small decreases and for the Netherlands (-7.7%) and Denmark (-5.4%) more marked decreases in the number of children under 5 by 2015 (see Table 1.45).

	Number of children aged under 5					
	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Region of Flanders	320 682	309 328	312 800	319 246	325 972	
Belgium	577 217	574 859	580 368	590 156	600 728	
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>						
Germany	3 947 634	3 656 322	3 570 858	3 504 146	3 469 044	3 445 172
France	3 752 377	3 929 764	3 914 575	3 943 376	3 973 883	4 028 388
Luxembourg	28 460	27 924	27 731	27 920	28 061	28 511
The Netherlands	983 491	1 010 626	988 152	966 881	945 727	931 556
<i>Nordic countries</i>						
Finland	297 522	283 693	284 949	288 127	291 628	295 002
Denmark	340 593	328 056	325 152	324 883	325 606	326 932
Sweden	468 716	485 558	496 345	512 583	525 305	536 982
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>						
Greece	518 125	517 910	524 376	534 848	543 615	557 120
Italy	2 624 578	2 733 436	2 745 849	2 775 811	2 807 626	2 847 126
Portugal	535 886	553 702	552 755	547 569	536 621	528 983
Spain	1 840 202	2 171 491	2 233 926	2 288 863	2 364 938	2 418 939
Austria	424 501	397 723	398 332	399 333	396 259	396 528
The United Kingdom	3 575 961	3 414 600	3 443 487	3 542 824	3 645 438	
Ireland	264 576	295 803	303 047	309 827	323 994	338 200
EU-15	20 179 839	20 381 467	20 389 852	20 557 147	20 778 473	20 925 555*

1.42 Number of children under 5 years old in the EU-15 countries from 2000 onwards

Sources: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, Population Statistics

Eurostat, website

* Estimated figures

	Trend in the number of children aged under 5					
	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Region of Flanders	100.0	96.5	97.5	99.6	101.6	

Belgium	100.0	99.6	100.5	102.2	104.1	
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>						
Germany	100.0	92.6	90.5	88.8	87.9	87.3
France	100.0	104.7	104.3	105.1	105.9	107.4
Luxembourg	100.0	98.1	97.4	98.1	98.6	100.2
The Netherlands	100.0	102.8	100.5	98.3	96.2	94.7
<i>Nordic countries</i>						
Finland	100.0	95.4	95.8	96.8	98.0	99.2
Denmark	100.0	96.3	95.5	95.4	95.6	96.0
Sweden	100.0	103.6	105.9	109.4	112.1	114.6
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>						
Greece	100.0	100.0	101.2	103.2	104.9	107.5
Italy	100.0	104.1	104.6	105.8	107.0	108.5
Portugal	100.0	103.3	103.1	102.2	100.1	98.7
Spain	100.0	118.0	121.4	124.4	128.5	131.4
Austria	100.0	93.8	93.8	94.1	93.3	93.4
The United Kingdom	100.0	95.5	96.3	99.1	101.9	
Ireland	100.0	111.8	114.5	117.1	122.5	127.8
EU-15	100.0	101.0	101.0	101.9	103.0	103.7*

1.43 Trend in the number of children aged under 5 in the EU-15 countries since 2000

Sources: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, Population Statistics

Eurostat, website (internal calculations)

* Estimated figures

	Percentage of children aged under 5					
	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Region of Flanders	5.4	5.1	5.1	5.2	5.3	
Belgium	5.6	5.5	5.5	5.6	5.6	
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>						
Germany	4.8	4.4	4.3	4.3	4.2	4.2
France	6.2	6.3	6.2	6.2	6.2	6.3
Luxembourg	6.6	6.1	5.9	5.9	5.8	5.8
The Netherlands	6.2	6.2	6.0	5.9	5.8	5.7
<i>Nordic countries</i>						
Finland	5.8	5.4	5.4	5.5	5.5	5.5
Denmark	6.4	6.1	6.0	6.0	5.9	5.9
Sweden	5.3	5.4	5.5	5.6	5.7	5.8
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>						
Greece	4.9	4.7	4.7	4.8	4.8	4.9
Italy	4.6	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.7
Portugal	5.3	5.3	5.2	5.2	5.1	5.0
Spain	4.6	5.0	5.1	5.1	5.2	5.3
Austria	5.3	5.0	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.7
The United Kingdom	6.1	5.7	5.7	5.8	6.0	

Ireland	7.0	7.2	7.2	7.2	7.4	7.6
EU-15	5.3	5.3	5.2	5.2	5.3	5.3*

1.44 Percentages of children aged under 5 in the overall population in the EU-15 countries since 2000

Sources: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, Population Statistics

Eurostat, website (internal calculations)

* Estimated figures

Children aged under 5: projections for 2015

	Children in 2008	Projections for 2015	% trend
Belgium	600 728	617 992	+2.9
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>			
Germany	3 469 044	3 357 252	-3.2
France	3 973 883	3 954 914	-0.5
Luxembourg	28 061	29 607	+5.5
The Netherlands	945 727	872 798	-7.7
<i>Nordic countries</i>			
Finland	291 628	303 026	+3.9
Denmark	325 606	308 039	-5.4
Sweden	525 305	556 288	+5.9
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>			
Greece	543 615	547 607	+0.7
Italy	2 807 626	2 703 933	-3.7
Portugal	536 621	525 095	-2.1
Spain	2 364 938	2 595 011	+9.7
Austria	396 259	401 227	+1.2
The United Kingdom	3 645 438	3 867 101	+6.1
Ireland	323 994	376 712	+16.3
EU-15	20 778 473	21 016 402	+1.1

1.45 Projected trends in the numbers of children aged under 5 in the EU-15 countries for 2015 compared with numbers in 2008

Source: Eurostat, EUROPOP 2008, Population Projections, Convergence Year 2150

6.3. Intercountry adoption

In the EU-15 countries, the relative number of *intercountry* adoptions is lowest in Portugal, Germany and the United Kingdom, where there are fewer than 1 per 100 000 inhabitants. Flanders and the French Community also have quite small numbers of intercountry adoptions. Sweden and Ireland score the highest with almost 10 intercountry adoptions per 100 000 inhabitants (see Tables 1.46 and 1.47).

Receiving country	Adoptions					
	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Flemish Community (1)	210	172	162	176	210	244

French Community (1)	290	299	221	182	154	207
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>						
Germany	854	560	583	778	664	
France	2 971	4 136	3 977	3 162	3 271	3 017
Luxembourg	57	41	45	31	36	
The Netherlands	1 193	1 185	816	778	767	
<i>Nordic countries</i>						
Finland	198	308	218	176	156	
Denmark	716	585	450	426	395	
Sweden	981	1 083	879	800	793	912
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>						
Greece	n/a					
Italy	n/a	2 840	3 188	3 420	3 977	3 964
Portugal	n/a	15	8	12		
Spain	3 062	5 423	4 472	3 648	3 156	
Austria	n/a	98				
The United Kingdom	351	369	363	356	225	
Ireland	225	366	313	392	422	

1.46 Trend in the numbers of intercountry adoptions in the EU-15 countries since 2000

Source: Selman P., School of Geography, Politics and Sociology, Newcastle University, UK

(1) adoptions arranged through an authorised adoption service only

n/a: not available

Adoptions per 100 000 inhabitants

Receiving country	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Community of Flanders (1) (2)	3.37	2.71	2.54	2.74	3.24	3.77*
French Community (2)(3)	7.23	7.29	5.35	4.38	3.67	4.94
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>						
Germany	1.04	0.68	0.71	0.95	0.81	
France	4.91	6.59	6.29	4.97	5.11	4.69*
Luxembourg	13.15	8.89	9.59	6.51	7.44	
The Netherlands	7.52	7.27	5.00	4.76	4.68	
<i>Nordic countries</i>						
Finland	3.83	5.88	4.15	3.34	2.94	
Denmark	13.43	10.81	8.29	7.82	7.21	
Sweden	11.07	12.02	9.72	8.78	8.64	9.86
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>						
Greece	n/a					
Italy	n/a	4.86	5.43	5.78	6.67	6.56*
Portugal	n/a	0.14	0.08	0.11		
Spain	7.65	12.60	10.22	8.20	6.97	
Austria	n/a	1.19				
The United Kingdom	0.60	0.61	0.60	0.59	0.37*	
Ireland	5.96	8.91	7.44	9.09	9.59	

1.47 Trend in the numbers of intercountry adoptions per 100 000 inhabitants in the EU-15 countries from 2000

onwards

Source: Selman P., School of Geography, Politics and Sociology, Newcastle University, UK

(1) per 100 000 inhabitants in the Region Of Flanders and 30% of the inhabitants in the Brussels Capital Region

(2) adoptions arranged through an authorised adoption service only

(3) per 100 000 inhabitants in the Walloon Region and 70% of the inhabitants in the Brussels Capital Region

** Provisional figure*

n/a: not available

CHAPTER 2 THE FAMILIES OF YOUNG CHILDREN: DIVERSITY INTERPRETED

In this section, we discuss the family context of young children in Flanders. We shall look at the types of families in which children are growing up (two-parent or one-parent families, married couple or cohabiting couple), growing up with brothers or sisters, the family origin, the language spoken at home, the age and health of parents, the presence of grandparents and the help being offered by grandparents. By way of background information into the context of the family, we look at marriage and divorce in Flanders. Finally, some of the figures for Flanders will be set in a European context, by comparing them with the EU-15 countries.

1. Two-parent or one-parent family?

Young children in one-parent families are still the exception

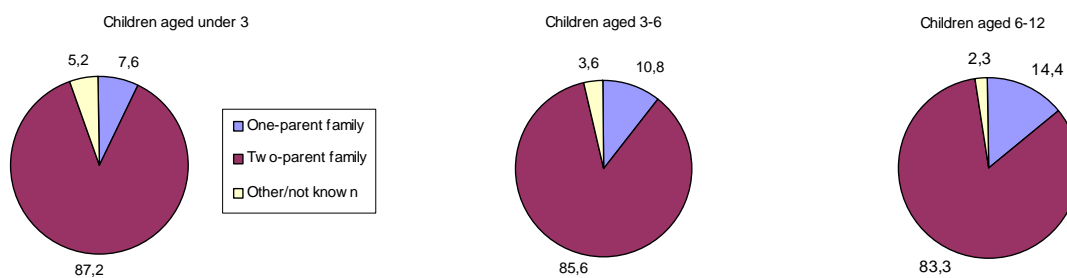
Most young children live in a *two-parent family* (situation on 1 January 2007; more recent figures are not available). 7.6% of children aged under 3 live in a *one-parent family*; the figure is 10.8% for children aged 3 to 6, and 14.4% for children of primary school age (see Table 2.1 and Figure 2.2). The percentage of children aged 3 to 6 living in a one-parent family remained unchanged in 2007 compared with 2006. In the youngest age group the percentage increased by 0.2% and for children aged 6 to 12 it increased by 0.1% (see Table 2.1).

Two-parent or one-parent family		
	2006	2007
Children aged under 3		
One-parent family	7.4	7.6
Two-parent family	87.4	87.2
Other/not known	5.2	5.2
Total	100.0	100.0
Children aged 3-6		
One-parent family	10.8	10.8
Two-parent family	85.7	85.6
Other/not known	3.5	3.6
Total	100.0	100.0
Children aged 6-12		
One-parent family	14.3	14.4
Two-parent family	83.5	83.3
Other/not known	2.2	2.3
Total	100.0	100.0
All children under 12		
One-parent family	11.8	11.8
Two-parent family	85.0	84.8
Other/not known	3.2	3.4
Total	100.0	100.0

2.1 Children under 12 years according to whether they live in a two-parent or one-parent family – Region of Flanders (percentages) – situation on 1/1

Source: data from the National Register – edited by E. Lodewijckx, Research Centre of the Flemish Government

Two-parent or one-parent family



2.2 Children under 12 years according to whether they live in a two-parent or one-parent family – Region of Flanders – 2007

Source: data from the National Register – edited by E. Lodewijckx, Research Centre of the Flemish Government

2. Type of family

The classic nuclear family is in decline. Over 26% of children under the age of three live with an unmarried couple

The decline of the classic nuclear family is regularly in the news, but data on the families in which young children live show that for them the traditional nuclear family is still usually the norm. Over 65% of children aged under 12 live with their *natural father and mother*, who are also a *married couple* (see Table 2.3). There is a difference to be found, however, between the very young and the somewhat older children. 26.2% of children under the age of 3 live with an *unmarried couple*. For children aged 3 to 6, this is 16.9% and for children aged 6 to 12, 10.2%. Since 2006 there has been an increase in the number of children under the age of 12 who are being brought up by an unmarried couple, from 14.2% to 15.8%. Figure 2.4 shows the trend in the percentage of children living with an unmarried couple since 2004.

Most children who live with *one parent* live with their mother: 10.3% of children under 12 live with a single mother and only 1.5% live with a single father. The number of children living with a single mother or a single father was virtually unchanged since 2006 (see Table 2.3).

	Type of family							
	2006				2007			
	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3-6	Children aged 6-12	Total	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3-6	Children aged 6-12	Total
Child with married couple	63.3	70.6	74.4	70.8	61.0	68.8	73.1	69.0
With both natural parents	62.4	67.3	69.3	67.2	60.1	65.1	67.7	65.2
With one parent and a step-parent	0.1	0.5	1.6	1.0	0.2	0.5	1.6	1.0
With one parent and a ?step-parent (1)	0.5	2.5	3.1	2.3	0.6	2.9	3.4	2.6
With a married couple, not related	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3
Child with unmarried couple (2)	24.2	15.1	9.1	14.2	26.2	16.9	10.2	15.8
With one parent and a step-parent (2)	0.9	1.9	3.8	2.6	0.8	1.9	3.9	2.6
With one parent and a ?step-parent (1)	23.3	13.2	5.3	11.6	25.4	15.0	6.3	13.2
Child with single mother	6.5	9.6	12.6	10.4	6.5	9.5	12.6	10.3
Child with single father	0.9	1.2	1.7	1.4	1.0	1.3	1.8	1.5
Child living with another nuclear family (3)	5.1	3.5	2.2	3.2	5.2	3.6	2.3	3.3
Child in collective household	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.0	<0.0	<0.0	<0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

2.3 Type of family in which children under 12 are living – Region of Flanders (percentages) – situation on 1 January

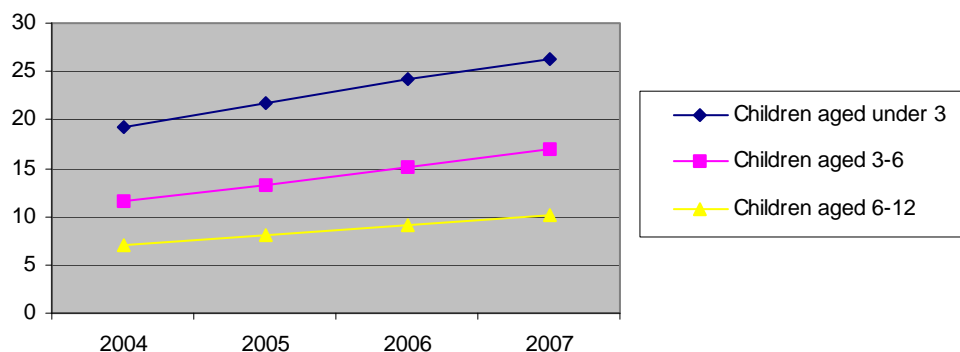
Source: data from the National Register – edited by E. Lodewijckx, Research Centre of the Flemish Government

(1) ?step parent: indicates that this may be the stepmother/stepfather of the child, but it could also be the natural mother/father

(2) When children are living with an unmarried couple, it is difficult to determine whether the adults are their natural father or mother. This is why these children are usually put into the 'with one parent and a ?step-parent' category

(3) For example, with grandparents

Children living with an unmarried couple



2.4 Trend in the percentage of children living with an unmarried couple by age group since 2004 – Region of Flanders

Source: data from the National Register – edited by E. Lodewijckx, Research Centre of the Flemish Government

3. Only child?

The majority of young children do not grow up as the only child in the family

Almost 69% of children under 12 have 1 or 2 brothers or sisters. 21.9% of the children are only children and 9.2% have 3 or more brothers or sisters. Table 2.5 shows this by age group.

Children in the household	Brothers and sisters			Total
	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3-6	Children aged 6-12	
Only child	38.8	18.3	15.6	21.9
One other child	40.5	51.8	48.7	47.4
Two other children	14.3	21.3	24.9	21.5
Three other children	4.3	6.0	7.5	6.4
Four or more other children	2.0	2.6	3.3	2.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

2.5 Number of other children under the age of 18 with whom children under 12 are living – Region of Flanders (only children under the age of 12 who are living with a married or unmarried couple or with a single parent) (percentages) – situation on 1 January 2007

Source: data from the National Register – edited by E. Lodewijckx, Research Centre of the Flemish Government

4. Children in blended families

Joint custody arrangements only affect a very small number of children under 3

It is not possible to find out how many children are living in more than 1 family under joint custody arrangements from the National Register. The children are always officially resident with one of the parents. To find out about joint custody, therefore, we have to use surveys. A survey into the use of child care* conducted in 2009 asked whether the child regularly stayed in more than 1 family. A small number of children (2%) aged 3 months to 3 years regularly stay in more than 1 family. The living arrangements are very variable. Roughly speaking, about 1 in 4 of these children spend an equal amount of time in both families. 4 in 10 children live with one family most of the time – over 75% of the time – and 3 in 10 spend rather more time with one family than the other (25% to 50% of the time versus 50% to 75%) (see Table 2.6).

Chapter 2. The families of young children: diversity interpreted

It is rather more common for a young child to live in a family with other children who are not living in the household throughout the whole week: 6.3% of children aged 3 months to 3 years. In about half of these families there is 1 other child involved (3.4% of all children). 2.4% of all children whose parents were questioned were living with 2 children who were not living in the household all the time and 0.5% with 3 or more of such children.

* Hedeboom Georges, Peetermans Annick, *Het gebruik van opvang voor kinderen jonger dan 3 jaar in het Vlaamse Gewest (Use of childcare for children under the age of 3 in the Region of Flanders)*, Support Centre for Wellbeing, Public Health and the Family, 2009

Children in blended families	
Children living in more than 1 family	2.0
How their living arrangements are shared	
Predominantly in one of the two families (1)	42.4
Equally shared between the two families	25.4
Spend rather more time in one of the two families (2)	32.2
Children living in families with other children who are not there throughout the whole week	6.3
<i>of which</i>	
1 child is not there all the time	3.4
2 children are not there all the time	2.4
3 or more children are not there all the time	0.5

2.6 Children aged between 3 months and 3 years: percentage of children living in more than 1 family broken down by how much time they stay with their respective families and the percentage of children living in a family with other children who are not there throughout the whole week – 2009

Source: * Hedeboom Georges, Peetermans Annick, *Het gebruik van opvang voor kinderen jonger dan 3 jaar in het Vlaamse Gewest (Use of childcare for children under the age of 3 in the Region of Flanders)*, Support Centre for Wellbeing, Public Health and the Family, 2009

(1) At least 75% in one family and a maximum of 25% in the other family

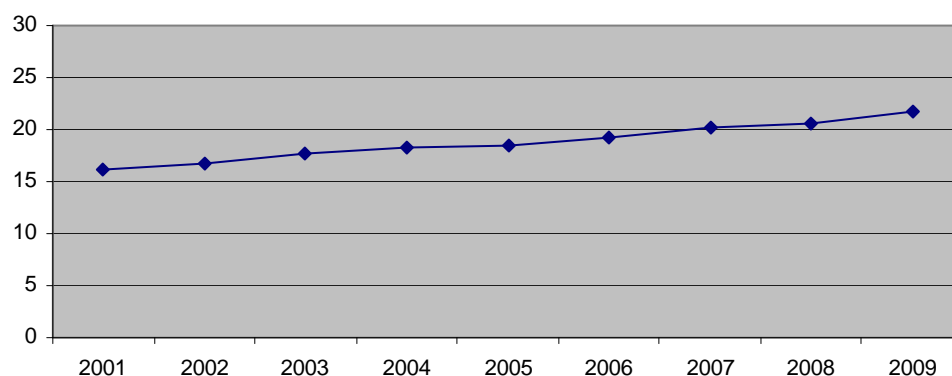
(2) 50 to 75% in one family and 25 to 50% in the other family

5. Origin

Only a very small number of children aged under 12 in the Region of Flanders do not have *Belgian nationality*: 5.7%. That represents an increase of 0.4% compared with 2007 (more recent figures are not available). In this connection, it must be borne in mind that the nationality criterion is not very suitable for identifying people of foreign origin, in view of the various opportunities to acquire Belgian nationality.

A better criterion is the *origin of the child's mother*. 21.7% of the children born in 2009 were born to mothers who are not of Belgian origin. That is to say the mother did not have Belgian nationality when she was born. This figure represents a slight increase compared with 2008 (+1.2%). As the years have passed there has been a small but steady increase in the percentage of children of non-Belgian origin (see Figure 2.7).

Trend in the percentage of ethnic minority children



2.7 Trend in the number of children of non-Belgian origin since 2001 – Region of Flanders (percentages)

Source: *Child and Family - IKAROS*

* Provisional figure

The families of these children come from many countries: 165 different countries of origin. The most important *countries of origin* are Morocco, Turkey and the Netherlands. 5.1% of the children born in 2009 are of Moroccan origin, 2.8% of Turkish origin, and 1.8% of Dutch origin (see Table 2.8).

Children by origin		
	2008	2009*
Belgium	79.6	78.4
Morocco	4.6	5.1
Turkey	3.0	2.8
The Netherlands	1.7	1.8
Russia	0.7	0.8
Poland	0.7	0.7
Congo	0.6	0.7
Other countries	9.1	9.7
Total	100.0	100.0

2.8 Percentage of live births by origin of the mother (nationality of the mother at the time of her birth) – Region of Flanders

Source: *Child and Family - IKAROS*

* Provisional figures

There are major differences from province to province. Antwerp has the highest percentage of children of non-Belgian origin, i.e. 29.7%. Limburg and Flemish Brabant come in second (24.3%) and third place (22.7%). East Flanders has 18% children of non-Belgian origin. West Flanders has the lowest percentage of children of non-Belgian origin, i.e. 9.4% (see Table 2.9). The number of children of non-Belgian origin increased slightly in all provinces from 2008 to 2009.

Ethnic minority children by province		
	2008	2009*
Antwerp	28.1	29.7
Flemish Brabant	20.5	22.7

Chapter 2. The families of young children: diversity interpreted

West Flanders	9.2	9.4
East Flanders	17.3	18.0
Limburg	23.6	24.3
Region of Flanders	20.4	21.7

2.9 Percentage of live births where the mother is not of Belgian origin (i.e. she did not have Belgian nationality when she was born) by province and by year of birth – Region of Flanders

Source: *Child and Family - IKAROS*

* Provisional figures

6. The language spoken at home

For quite a number of children Dutch is not their mother tongue

Young children who speak a language other than Dutch at home are faced with greater challenges if they are to do well later at school and on the labour market. We look at *the language* in which the *mother* talks to her *child*. This was not Dutch in the case of 21.2% of the children born in 2009. French is the next most common language (4.2%), Arabic and Turkish came second and third. There was a slight decrease in the percentage of children whose mother tongue is Dutch from 2008 to 2009 (- 0.9%) (see Table 2.10).

Language spoken by mother to child

	2008	2009*
Dutch	79.5	78.8
French	4.3	4.2
Arabic	3.3	3.7
Turkish	3.1	3.0
Berber	1.7	1.7
English	1.0	1.1
Russian	0.7	0.7
Polish	0.6	0.6
Spanish	0.5	0.5
Other languages	5.3	5.9
Total	100.0	100.0

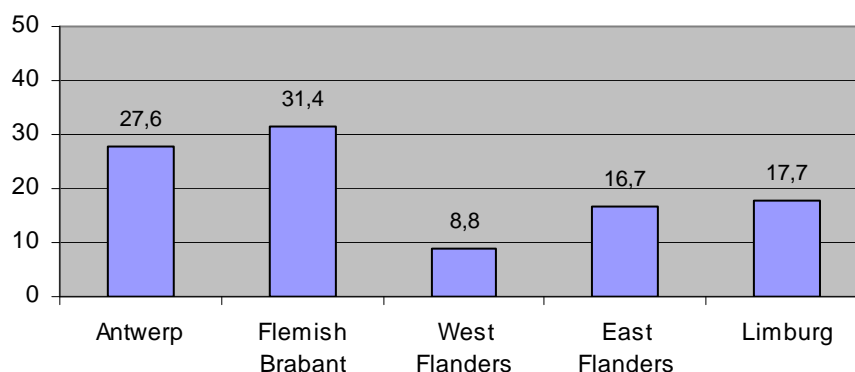
2.10 Live births by the language in which the mother communicates with her child – Region of Flanders (percentages)

Source: *Child and Family - IKAROS*

* Provisional figures

There are major differences from province to province. In Flemish Brabant over 31% of mothers speak a language other than Dutch to their child. In Antwerp this is almost 28%. In Limburg (17.7%) and East Flanders (16.7%) this is considerably lower and in West Flanders it is only 8.8% (see Figure 2.11). In Antwerp, Arabic (6.0%) and Berber (4.6%) are the most common other languages; French is the second language in Flemish Brabant (16.4%); in West Flanders it is also French (2.4%); in East Flanders Turkish (4.2%), Arabic (3.1%) and French (2.4%) are spoken; and in Limburg the most common languages other than Dutch are Turkish (8.4%) and Arabic (3.2%).

Languages spoken in non-Dutch-speaking households by province



2.11 Live births: percentage of children whose mother speaks to them in a language other than Dutch, by province – 2009*

Source: *Child and Family - IKAROS*

* Provisional figures

7. Older parents?

Increasing number of older fathers

From the data in the National Register we know the age of the mothers and fathers of young children. The most recent figures available are for 1 January 2007. Over 38% of *children aged 0 to 3 years* have a mother aged between 30 and 35 and over 31% have a mother aged between 25 and 30. Fathers are older. The age groups 35 to 40 and 40-plus together account for over 40% of fathers. With the *children aged 3 to 6*, the largest group of mothers (39.2%) are in the 30 to 35 age group. Almost 62% of the fathers of these children are 35 or older. A comparison of the age distribution of the parents of all the children under 12 with 2006 reveals a slight increase in mothers in the 25 to 30 age group and in the 40-plus age group. The number of children with a mother in the 30 to 35 age group decreased slightly. There has also been a decrease in the number of children with a father in the 30 to 40 age group, and an increase in the number of fathers in the 40+ age group (see Table 2.12).

Older parents (1)

	2006		2007		Total
	Total	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3-6	Children aged 6-12	
Present age of mother/step-mother					
Aged under 20	0.1	0.4	<0.0	<0.0	0.1
20 to 25 years	2.7	8.1	2.6	0.2	2.7
25 to 30 years	13.6	31.4	16.5	4.2	13.9
30 to 35 years	29.9	38.2	39.2	20.0	29.1
35 to 40 years	33.3	17.6	30.8	41.9	33.3
40 years or over	20.3	4.3	10.8	33.6	20.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Present age of father/step-father					
Aged under 20	0.0	<0.0	<0.0	<0.0	<0.0
20 to 25 years	0.9	2.5	0.7	0.1	0.9
25 to 30 years	7.2	19.2	7.2	1.5	7.4
30 to 35 years	22.9	37.7	30.2	10.6	22.3

35 to 40 years	34.2	26.1	37.4	35.7	33.7
40 years or over	34.8	14.4	24.5	52.1	35.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

2.12 Children aged under 12: present age of the mother/step-mother and the father/step-father – Region of Flanders (percentages) – situation on 1 January

Source: data from the National Register – edited by E. Lodewijckx, Research Centre of the Flemish Government

(1) These are the adults with whom the child lives, the parent(s) or step-parent(s)

8. Health of the mothers and fathers of the children

The parents of most young children are in good or excellent general health

When parents are in poor health, this can have a significant impact on the social circumstances of young children, on the day-to-day care of the children, for instance, or on the parents' participation in employment and earning capacity, etc. The SILC survey (Statistics on Income and Living Conditions) 2007 provided us with information about the state of health of Flemish parents. Parents were asked about their state of health, so this was a subjective assessment by the interviewees. The mothers and fathers of the majority of children report that their own general health is excellent (see Table 2.13).

Health of parents

	Mother	Father
Excellent	40.5	38.8
Good	46.4	51.3
Fair	9.5	6.1
Poor	2.8	3.5
Very poor	0.8	0.2
Total	100.0	100.0
	(N=103)	(N=902)

2.13 General health of the mothers and fathers of children aged under 12 – Region of Flanders (2007)

Source: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, SILC – 2007

9. Young children and grandparents

40% of children under 12 still have four grandparents; a small number (4.1%) even have more than 4 grandparents. The percentage of children with 4 grandparents is higher for children under the age of 3 years (see Table 2.14).

Figure 2.15 shows the distance from the child's home to the grandparents' home. About 40% live less than 5 km from their maternal grandparents. The figure for paternal grandparents is almost the same.

Grandparents

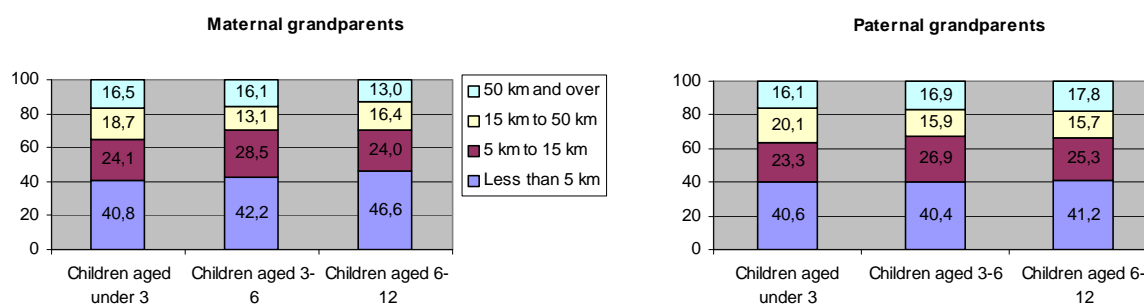
	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3-6	Children aged 6-12	Total
More than 4 grandparents	4.7	5.7	3.1	4.1
4 grandparents	50.7	42.5	35.0	40.3
3 grandparents	25.9	30.2	30.6	29.4
2 grandparents	11.5	17.5	21.3	18.2
1 grandparent	5.8	3.3	7.2	5.9
No grandparents	1.5	0.8	2.8	2.0

Total	100.0 (N=537)	100.0 (N=610)	100.0 (N=1 270)	100.0 (N=2 417)
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2.14 Children aged under 12: number of grandparents living – 2005 (percentages)

Source: Antwerp University, Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy

Distance to grandparents (1)



2.15 Children aged under 12: distance to the maternal and paternal grandparents – 2005 (percentages)

Source: Antwerp University, Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy

(1) If the grandparents are separated, the distance to the grandparent who lives closest was taken

Grandparents are a great support, especially in *looking after the children*. Only 17.3% of children aged under 12 live in a family where the parents report that they get no help from grandparents in taking care of the children. Grandparents are regularly involved in *transporting their grandchildren*: 42.5% of the families of children aged under 12 are able to call on grandparents for this on a regular basis and another 13.7% can call on them occasionally. Help in the form of *cooking for the whole family* and *help with household tasks* is also not insignificant. 25.1% and 20.1% respectively of the families of children under 12 are able to rely on these forms of help on a regular basis, and 14% and 12.1% respectively do so occasionally. A significant number of families receive *financial support* from grandparents: 17.6% regularly and 9.3% occasionally (see Table 2.16).

	Help from grandparents			
	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3-6	Children aged 6-12	Total
Taking care of the children				
Yes (1)	74.1	78.2	62.2	68.9
Rarely	11.7	9.6	16.7	13.8
Never	14.2	12.2	21.2	17.3
Transporting the children				
Yes (1)	38.3	50.7	40.3	42.5
Rarely	12.1	12.4	15.1	13.7
Never	49.6	36.9	44.6	43.8
Help with cooking for the whole family				
Yes (1)	26.6	29.3	22.4	25.1
Rarely	15.3	15.5	12.7	14.0
Never	58.1	55.2	65.0	60.9
Help with household tasks				

Chapter 2. The families of young children: diversity interpreted

Yes (1)	25.1	21.1	17.4	20.1
Rarely	14.4	14.5	10.0	12.1
Never	60.5	64.4	72.6	67.8
Financial support				
Yes (1)	19.5	19.3	15.9	17.6
Rarely	11.2	12.1	7.2	9.3
Never	69.3	68.7	76.9	73.1
Other help				
Yes (1)	19.8	18.0	13.3	16.0
Rarely	5.5	5.6	4.9	5.2
Never	74.7	76.4	81.8	78.8

2.16 Children aged under 12: amount of help the family gets from one or more grandparents – 2005

Source: Antwerp University, Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy

(1) Covers response categories "sometimes", "often" and "always"

10. Background information

10.1. Forming relationships

Cohabitation can take several forms: marriage, a statutory cohabitation or a de facto cohabitation. The couple may be of the opposite or the same sex. Gay marriages have been possible in Belgium since 1 June 2003.

10.1.1. Number of marriages between people of the opposite sex

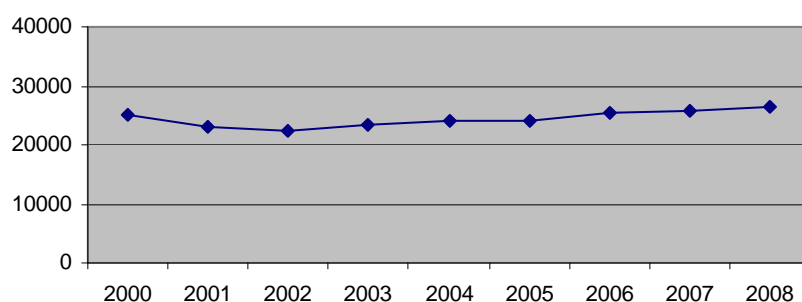
There were 26 277 marriages in the Region of Flanders in 2008 (figures for 2009 not yet available); this is an increase of 1.4% compared with 2007. The gross marriage rate is 4.26 per 1 000 inhabitants (see Table 2.17 and Figure 2.18).

Marriages		
	Number	Per 1000 inhabitants
2007	25 919	4.24
2008	26 277	4.26

2.17 Number of marriages in the Region of Flanders

Source: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, Population Statistics

Marriage trend



2.18 Trend in the number of marriages between people of the opposite sex in the region of Flanders since 2000

Source: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, Population Statistics

10.1.2. Number of gay marriages

There were 747 gay marriages in the Region of Flanders in 2008, 3.1% fewer than in 2007. These break down almost equally between marriages between two men and marriages between two women (see Table 2.19).

	Gay marriages		Total
	Between 2 men	Between 2 women	
2004	401	353	754
2005	363	330	693
2006	364	380	743
2007	366	406	771
2008	368	379	747

2.19 Number of gay marriages in the Region of Flanders since 2004

Source: Statistics and Economic Information Department, based on the National Register

10.1.3. Age on getting married

Since the legalisation of gay marriages, some statistics have replaced the distinction based on gender by the terms first and second spouse. In a conventional marriage the first spouse is usually the man and the second the woman.

The *average age* on getting married (2008) in the Region of Flanders was 35.7 for first spouses and 32.8 years for second spouses. This represents a very small increase compared with 2007 (+0.2 months).

The median was somewhat lower at 32.4 years for first spouses and 29.5 for second spouses.

The median also increased by a very small amount (+0.2 months and +0.1 month).

There is a conspicuous difference between the average age on marrying for the first time and the second time. The average ages of people who have not been married before was 30.5 and 28.1 respectively. The average ages of divorced people who are marrying for the second time was 48.4 and 44.8 respectively.

Marriages at a young age are fairly unusual: 2.1% of second spouses and 0.3% of first spouses who got married in the Region of Flanders in 2008 were under the age of 20. The number of marriages where the second spouse was under the age of 20 increased slightly compared with 2007 (+0.4%).

10.1.4. New cohabitation contracts

'Statutory cohabitation' refers to people who have registered their partnership under the provisions of Article 1476 of the Civil Code. Figures are only available on the *number of people who entered into a new cohabitation contract*, not the total number of contracts. In 2007, 27 390 people entered into a new cohabitation contract, 96.1% of which were between people of the opposite sex and 3.9% were between people of the same sex (see Table 2.20 and Figure 2.21).

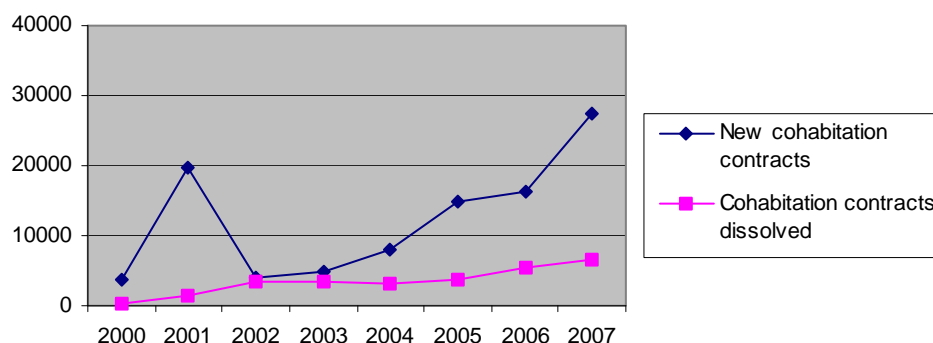
People entering into new cohabitation contracts (1)			
	Between people of the opposite sex	Between people of the same sex	Total number of people involved
2006	15 591	634	16 225
2007	26 316	1 074	27 390

2.20 Number of people entering into new cohabitation contracts – Region of Flanders

Source: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, based on the National Register

(1) Brothers, sisters and other members of a family may also enter into cohabitation contracts; so no conclusions can be drawn from these statistics about the nature of the relationships between the parties

Cohabitation contracts



2.21 Trend in the number of people entering into new cohabitation contracts and dissolving cohabitation contracts since 2000

Source: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, based on the National Register

10.2. Relationship breakdowns

It is not possible to give a full picture of breakdowns in cohabitations. We only have information about divorces and dissolutions of cohabitation contracts. In addition to these, there are de facto separations of married couples and breakdowns of other forms of relationships.

10.2.1. Divorces of people of the opposite sex

There were 16 602 *divorces* of people of the opposite sex in the *Region of Flanders* in 2008 (2009 figures not yet available). This represents an increase of 15.3%. There were 2.69 divorces per 1 000 inhabitants in 2008 (Table 2.22). The sharp rise in the number of divorces is partly due to the new divorce law which came into effect on 1 September 2007*. An earlier spike in the divorce figures in 1995 (Figure 2.23) resulted from the coming into effect of the law on joint exercise of parental responsibility on 1 October 1994. It will be interesting to see whether the numbers drop again in 2009 and by how much.

Divorces

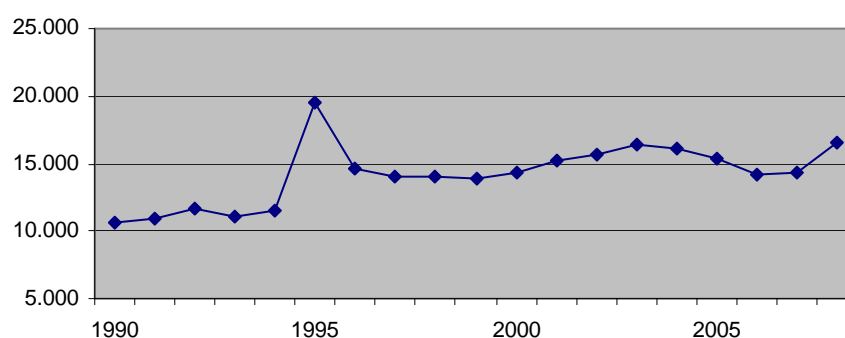
	Number	Per 1000 inhabitants
2007	14 395	2.35
2008	16 602	2.69

2.22 Number of divorces in the Region of Flanders

Source: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, Population Statistics

* The new law allows couples to divorce simply on the grounds that they have lived apart for 1 year instead of 2 years. No fault has to be proven

Divorce trend



2.23 Trend in the number of divorces of people of the opposite sex in the Region of Flanders since 1990

Source: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, Population Statistics

10.2.2. Divorces of gay couples

There were 112 divorces of gay couples in the Region of Flanders in 2008. This was a large increase compared with 2007 (see Table 2.24).

Divorces of gay couples

	Men	Women	Total
2004	2	3	5
2005	3	7	10
2006	6	13	19
2007	26	40	66
2008	44	68	112

2.24 Trend in the number of gay divorces in the Region of Flanders from 2004 onwards

Source: National Register

10.2.3. Cohabitation contracts dissolved

These figures are for the *number of people involved* and not the number of cohabitation contracts dissolved. In 2007, 6 651 people were involved in the dissolution of a cohabitation contract, and most of them were people of the same sex (95%). This represents an increase of almost 26% from 2006 to 2007 (see Table 2.25 and Figure 2.21).

Dissolutions of cohabitation contracts (1)

	Between people of the opposite sex	Between people of the same sex	Total number of people involved
2006	4 988	306	5 294
2007	6 321	330	6 651

2.25 Number of people involved in the dissolution of cohabitation contracts in the Region of Flanders

Source: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, based on the National Register

(1) Brothers, sisters and other members of a family may also enter into cohabitation contracts; so no conclusions can be drawn from these statistics about the nature of the relationships between the parties

11. The European context

11.1. Families in which young children live

Quite a lot of children live in *one-parent families* or in a household with *one or both of their own parents and one or more other adults*, but they are still in a minority .

In Belgium 15.7% of children under 14 live in a one-parent family and 15% live in a family which includes adults who are not their parents. In so far as data on this is available for the other EU-15 countries, Belgium has a relatively high number of children living in one-parent families; only the United Kingdom scores higher. The percentage of children living in a household that includes adults other than their parents is also quite high (see Table 2.26).

Children under 14 by family type			
	One-parent family	Two-parent family	Families with 2 or more other adults (1)
Belgium	15.7	66.7	15.0
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>			
Germany	13.3	78.2	8.5
France	13.4	79.8	6.7
Luxembourg	6.8	84.4	8.7
The Netherlands	11.4	84.8	3.8
<i>Nordic countries</i>			
Finland	n/a	n/a	n/a
Denmark	n/a	n/a	n/a
Sweden	n/a	n/a	n/a
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>			
Greece	4.1	84.5	11.4
Italy	5.0	84.3	8.7
Portugal	6.0	73.6	19.8
Spain	5.8	75.1	18.8
Austria	9.0	71.5	19.4
The United Kingdom	23.8	65.8	10.2
Ireland	n/a	n/a	n/a

2.26 Percentage of children aged 0 to 14 by family type (one-parent family, two-parent family, family including two or more adults who are not the child's parent) – 2007

Source: OECD, Family Database (website) based on the European Labour Force Survey, 2007

(1) Family including one or both parents and one or more other adults

n/a: not available

74% of teenagers live with both their parents. This figure is lower in the French-speaking community in Belgium, Sweden and England and higher in the Mediterranean countries, the Netherlands and Ireland. The number of teenagers living in step-families varies from 14% in the French-speaking community in Belgium to 3% in Greece and Italy. The percentage of teenagers living with a single parent varies from 21% in Sweden to 9% in Italy (see Table 2.27).

Teenagers (1) by family type				
	With both natural parents	In step- family	With a single parent	Other (2)
Belgium / Dutch- speaking	74	10	14	1
Belgium / French- speaking	67	14	17	2
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>				
Germany	74	9	15	1
France	73	11	14	1
Luxembourg	76	8	14	2
The Netherlands	80	7	12	1
<i>Nordic countries</i>				
Finland	71	13	16	1
Denmark	73	8	17	1
Sweden	69	9	21	1
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>				
Greece	86	3	11	1
Italy	87	3	9	1
Portugal	82	6	10	2
Spain	84	4	11	1
Austria	76	8	14	1
United Kingdom (only England)	70	12	16	1
Ireland	81	5	13	2

2.27 Percentage of children aged 11, 13 and 15 living with both natural parents, in a step-family, with a single parent or in another family type – 2005-2006

Source: OECD, Family Database (website) based on Health Behaviour in School-aged Children, 2005/2006

(1) Children aged 11, 13 and 15 years

(2) With adults other than their parent(s)

Table 2.28 shows whether children aged 0 to 14 are being brought up as only children or with other children in the family. The Region of Flanders comes in the middle of the range with respect to the number of young children growing up as only children. Finland has relatively large numbers of children growing up in families with 3 or more children.

Number of children in the family

	Families with 1 child	Families with 2 children	Families with 3 or more children
Region of Flanders (1)	21.9	47.4	30.7
Belgium	20.3	44.4	35.3
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>			
Germany	27.7	48.2	24.1
France	22.3	45.9	31.8
Luxembourg	19.5	45.4	35.0
The Netherlands	17.9	49.0	33.1
<i>Nordic countries</i>			
Finland	16.7	38.0	45.4
Denmark	n/a	n/a	n/a
Sweden	n/a	n/a	n/a
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>			
Greece	22.8	55.0	22.2
Italy	29.5	53.7	16.8
Portugal	35.1	48.0	16.9
Spain	30.3	53.6	16.2
Austria	26.1	47.7	26.2
The United Kingdom	21.3	45.3	33.4
Ireland	n/a	n/a	n/a

2.28 Percentage of children under 14 by the number of children in the family, 2007

Sources: Region of Flanders: data from the Register of Births – edited by E. Lodewijckx, Research Centre of the Flemish Government

OECD, Family Database (website) based on the European Labour Force Survey, 2007

(1) Children aged under 12

n/a: not available

11.2. Marriages and divorces

The *marriage rate* (= number of marriages per year per 1 000 inhabitants) in the Region of Flanders is rather low (see Table 2.29). The rate in the Region of Flanders is one of the lowest in the EU-15 countries, along with Luxembourg, France, Italy, Portugal and Austria. Denmark has the highest marriage rate. The number of marriages per 1 000 inhabitants has fallen or is virtually unchanged in most of the countries studied since 2000. The only countries in which the number has risen are Finland and Sweden. This falling trend is coupled with marriage at an ever later age and an increase in other forms of cohabitation.

	Marriages per 1 000 inhabitants				
	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008
Region of Flanders	4.2	4.0	4.2	4.2	4.3
Belgium	4.4	4.1	4.3	4.3	4.3
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	5.1	4.7	4.5	4.5	4.9
France	5.0	4.5	4.3	4.3	4.3*
Luxembourg	5.0	4.4	4.2	4.1	3.9
The Netherlands	5.5	4.5	4.4	4.4	4.6*
<i>Nordic countries</i>					

Finland	5.1	5.6	5.4	5.6	5.8
Denmark	7.2	6.7	6.7	6.7	6.8
Sweden	4.5	4.9	5.0	5.2	5.5
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	4.5	5.5	5.2	5.5	4.6*
Italy	5.0	4.2	4.1	4.2	4.1*
Portugal	6.2	4.6	4.5	4.4	4.1*
Spain	5.4	4.8	4.6	4.5	
Austria	4.9	4.8	4.5	4.3	4.2
The United Kingdom	5.2	5.2	n/a	4.4*	
Ireland	5.0	5.1	5.1	5.2	

2.29 Number of marriages per 1 000 inhabitants (gross marriage rate) in the EU-15 countries from 2000 onwards.

Sources: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, Population Statistics Eurostat, website

* Provisional figure

n/a: not available

In most of the EU-15 countries there are about 2 to 3 *divorces* per 1 000 inhabitants. Italy and Ireland have fewer than 1 divorce per 1 000 inhabitants (see Table 2.30).

	Divorces per 1 000 inhabitants				
	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008
Region of Flanders	2.6	2.6	2.3	2.4	2.7
Belgium	2.6	2.9	2.8	2.8	3.3
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	2.4	2.4	2.3	2.3	2.3
France	1.9	2.5	2.2		
Luxembourg	2.4	2.3	2.5	2.3	2.0
The Netherlands	2.2	2.0	1.9	2.0	2.0*
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	2.7	2.6	2.5	2.5	2.5
Denmark	2.7	2.8	2.6	2.6	2.7
Sweden	2.4	2.2	2.2	2.3	2.3
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	1.0	1.2	1.3	1.2	
Italy	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.9*
Portugal	1.9	2.2	2.3	2.4	
Spain	0.9	1.7	n/a	2.8	
Austria	2.4	2.4	2.5	2.5	
The United Kingdom	2.6	2.6	n/a	2.4*	
Ireland	0.7	0.8	0.9	0.8	

2.30 Number of divorces per 1 000 inhabitants in the EU-15 countries from 2000 onwards.

Sources: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, Population Statistics Eurostat, website

** Provisional figures*

n/a: not available

CHAPTER 3 EMPLOYMENT IN FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

The day-to-day activities of young children are determined to a significant extent by whether their parents have a paid job or not. The time children spend away from the family home, at child care for instance, is closely linked to whether their parents work. Parents' employment is also an important factor for the standard of living of the family. Having work still always offers the best protection against financial poverty. This chapter deals with the extent to which the parents of young children have paid employment. In addition to whether or not parents work, we also look at the extent of employment and parents' working schedules. We present population data from the Labour Market and Social Security Data Warehouse of the Crossroads Bank for Social Security, SILC data (Statistics on Income and Living Conditions), research data on child care in the Region of Flanders, research data from the Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy on the care of young children in Flanders, and data from the Labour Force Survey (Eurostat).

1. Participation of parents of young children in employment

Most children live with parents who are in employment; only a small number of children live in a family with no adult in work

In line with the purpose of "The Child in Flanders", this section presents a number of figures on the employment of the parents of young children, with the child as the unit of calculation. The most recent figures available are for 31.12.06.

Almost 89% of children under the age of 12 have *at least one parent* who has a job*. Put the other way round, over 11% live in a family where neither parent works. Compared with 2005 there was a 0.8% increase in the number of children living in a family where at least one parent works. 59.6% live in a family where *both parents* work*. This was an increase of 0.9% compared with 2005. Almost 14% live with both of their parents of whom *one works and one is without paid work*. This category remained unchanged from 2005 to 2006.

Table 3.1 shows the situation by the age of the child. This shows that slightly more of the children in the youngest age group live in families with one working parent and one parent not in paid employment and receiving benefit or in families with two working parents.

Incidence of employment in the family

	2005		2006		
	Total	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3-6	Children aged 6-12	Total
Two working	58.7	60.4	60.3	58.8	59.6
One working and one seeking work and receiving benefit	4.0	4.1	3.6	3.0	3.4
One working and one not in paid employment and receiving benefit (1)	3.7	6.2	4.4	2.4	3.8
One working and one not in paid employment	13.8	12.9	13.0	14.6	13.8
Two parents seeking work and receiving benefit and/or not in paid employment (1)	5.8	6.5	5.8	5.0	5.6
One working	7.5	4.5	7.0	9.9	7.9
One seeking work and receiving benefit	2.1	1.5	1.7	1.9	1.8
One not in paid employment and receiving	1.8	1.7	1.8	1.8	1.8

benefit (1)					
One not in paid employment	1.4	1.2	1.3	1.6	1.4
Not known	1.1	1.0	1.1	0.9	1.0
<i>Total with at least one working parent in the family</i>	<i>87.7</i>	<i>88.2</i>	<i>88.3</i>	<i>88.7</i>	<i>88.5</i>
<i>Total with no working parent in the family</i>	<i>12.3</i>	<i>11.8</i>	<i>11.7</i>	<i>11.3</i>	<i>11.5</i>
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

3.1 Children under 12 according to incidence of parents' employment, or incidence of employment of the reference person and his/her partner if the child does not live with his/her parents – Region of Flanders (percentages) – situation on 31 December

Source: Labour Market and Social Security Data Warehouse of the Crossroads Bank for Social Security

(1) Not in paid employment and receiving benefit: covers full-time early retirement, full-time career break and those exempt from registering as job-seekers

Parental participation in employment varies depending on the *type of family* the child is living in. Children living with a single mother are more likely to live in a family where no-one has paid employment. For children under the age of 3 living with a single mother, only 50.8% of the mothers work. For children aged 3 to 6, this is 60.8% and for children aged 6 to 12, 67.0%. Their mothers are more likely to be job-seekers receiving unemployment benefit or not in paid employment and receiving benefit. Of the children living with a single father, there are quite a lot whose father does not work. In the case of 21.9% of the children under the age of 12 living with a single father, the father does not work. Table 3.2 does not include the family type 'nuclear family with other persons' (percentage in the population of children under 12: 4.3%). These are often children living in families with no adult in work (69.4%). Participation in employment of parents of young children increased relatively more for children in one-parent families than for children in two-parent families from 2005 to 2006.

* Parents: the term 'parents' means the child's parents if he/she is living with them, or the reference person and his/her partner if the child is living in a different type of family.

Parents' employment and type of family

	2005		2006		
	Total	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3-6	Children aged 6-12	Total
Child with a married or unmarried couple					
Both parents working	69.4	68.7	70.4	70.9	70.2
One parent working, one parent seeking work and receiving benefit	4.7	4.6	4.2	3.6	4.0
One parent working, one parent not in paid employment and receiving benefit (1)	4.2	6.8	5.0	2.8	4.3
One parent working, the other parent not in paid employment	15.8	14.0	14.8	17.4	15.9
<i>Total with one or both parents working</i>	<i>94.1</i>	<i>94.0</i>	<i>94.4</i>	<i>94.7</i>	<i>94.5</i>
Other	5.9	6.0	5.6	5.9	5.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Percentage of children with a married or unmarried couple</i>	<i>84.1</i>	<i>86.7</i>	<i>84.9</i>	<i>82.6</i>	<i>84.2</i>

Child with a single mother

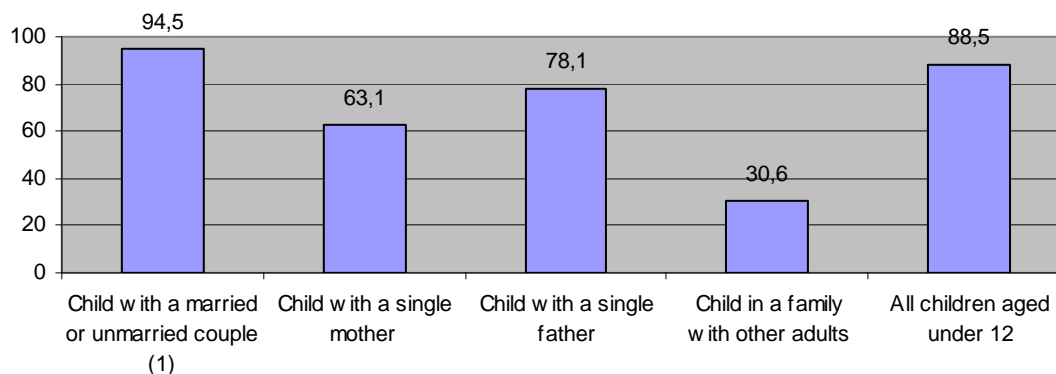
Mother working	60.2	50.8	60.8	67.0	63.1
Mother seeking work and receiving benefit	19.0	21.0	16.6	13.6	15.4
Mother not in paid employment and receiving benefit (1)	9.7	14.3	11.1	8.1	9.7
Mother not in paid employment	11.1	13.8	11.4	11.3	11.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Percentage of children with single mothers</i>	<i>10.2</i>	<i>6.4</i>	<i>9.3</i>	<i>12.4</i>	<i>10.2</i>
Child with a single father					
Father working	77.0	71.3	77.2	80.0	78.1
Father seeking work and receiving benefit	10.2	12.6	10.0	8.4	9.4
Father not in paid employment and receiving benefit (1)	4.5	5.5	4.2	3.6	4.0
Father not in paid employment	8.3	10.6	8.6	7.9	8.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Percentage of children with single fathers</i>	<i>1.3</i>	<i>0.8</i>	<i>1.2</i>	<i>1.7</i>	<i>1.4</i>

3.2 Children under 12 according to parents' employment, or employment of the reference person and his/her partner if the child does not live with his/her parents for the most important types of family – Region of Flanders (percentages) – situation on 31 December

Source: Labour Market and Social Security Data Warehouse of the Crossroads Bank for Social Security

(1) Not in paid employment and receiving benefit: covers full-time early retirement, full-time career break and those exempt from registering as job-seekers

Working parent(s) in the family



3.3 Percentage of children under 12 by whether there is one or more working parent(s) in the family and by type of family – Region of Flanders – situation on 31.12.06

Source: Labour Market and Social Security Data Warehouse of the Crossroads Bank for Social Security

(1) One or both parents working

2. Extent of employment of parents of young children

Children in two-parent families: one parent in full-time work and one in part-time work is the most common arrangement and is increasing

36.8% of children under 12 who live in a two-parent family (2006) are in “one-and-a-half job families”: one parent works full-time and the other parent works part-time (30.6%), or one parent is self-employed and the other works part-time (6.2%). The parents of 29.4% of children can be said to be highly active in their work and careers, belonging to full-time “two-job families”. This covers 17.3% of children in two-parent families where both parents work full time as employees, 5.5% where both parents are self-

employed, and 6.6% where one parent is self-employed and the other is in full-time employment. A third important group are the children who live in a family where only one parent works, full-time as an employee (15.8%) or in self-employment (4.7%), or in a family where both parents work part-time (2.6%). 24.2% of the children under 12 in a two-parent family are in this situation: they can be described as “one-job families”* (see Figure 3.5).

Between 2005 and 2006 there was a slight increase in the number of children in “one-and-a-half job families” and a slight decrease in the number of children in “one-job families”. This trend towards more children in “one-and-a-half-job families” and fewer children in families where only one parent works has been going on for a number of years (see Figure 3.6).

Moving on to the *children in one-parent families*, many of their parents are not in paid employment. 35.1% of these children live with a parent – usually the mother – who does not work. Almost 28% of these children live with one parent who works full-time as an employee. Over 28% work part time and 6.6% are self-employed. There was a small increase in both full-time and part-time working among single parents from 2005 to 2006 (see Table 3.4).

* One-job family also includes combinations of one parent working full-time or in self-employment with a parent who falls into the “other” category (working with undefined employment contract or in special jobs and unemployed people whose unemployment benefit has been suspended) (1.1%)

	Extent of employment				
	2005	2006			Total
	Total	Children aged 0-3	Children aged 3-6	Children aged 6-12	
Children in a two-parent family					
Both parents are full-time employees	17.2	21.8	16.6	15.4	17.3
One parent is a full-time and one parent is a part-time employee	30.1	27.2	31.6	31.8	30.6
Both parents are part-time employees	2.4	2.6	2.7	2.4	2.6
One parent is a full-time employee, one is self-employed	6.6	6.5	6.4	6.7	6.6
One parent is a full-time employee, one is not in paid employment	16.4	17.1	15.5	15.3	15.8
One parent is a full-time employee and one parent falls into the “other” category (1)	0.9	1.1	1.0	0.9	1.0
Both parents are self-employed	5.6	3.8	4.9	6.6	5.5
One parent is self-employed and one parent is a part-time employee	6.1	5.0	6.4	6.7	6.2
One parent is self-employed, one is not in paid employment	4.9	4.2	4.6	5.1	4.7
One parent is self-employed and one falls into the “other” category (1)	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Other combinations	9.8	10.6	10.0	9.1	9.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Children in a one-parent family					
Parent is a full-time employee	26.8	24.1	26.9	29.1	27.8

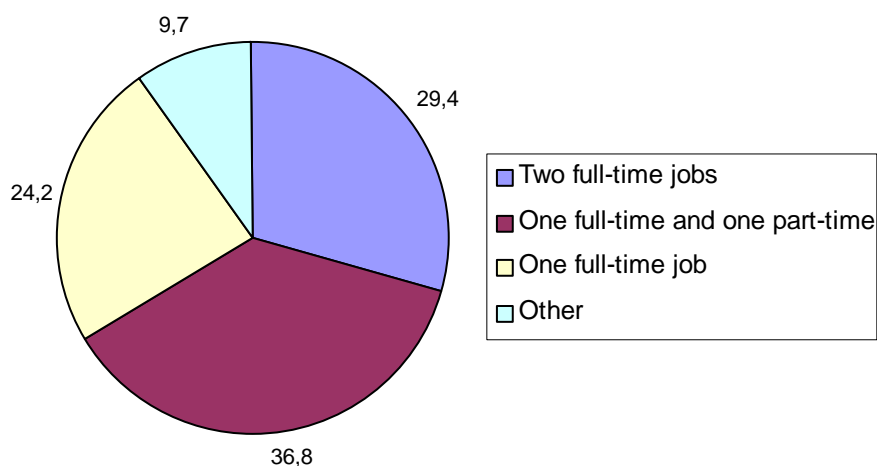
Parent is a part-time employee	27.2	21.0	27.3	30.7	28.4
Parent is self-employed	6.5	5.5	6.0	7.1	6.6
Parent is not in paid employment	37.9	46.9	37.3	31.5	35.1
Other (1)	1.7	2.5	2.5	1.8	2.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

3.4 Children aged under 12 living with a married couple, a cohabiting couple or a single parent (mother or father) by the extent of parental employment – Region of Flanders (percentages) – situation on 31 December

Source: Labour Market and Social Security Data Warehouse of the Crossroads Bank for Social Security

(1) Other: working with undefined employment contract or in special jobs and unemployed people whose unemployment benefit has been suspended

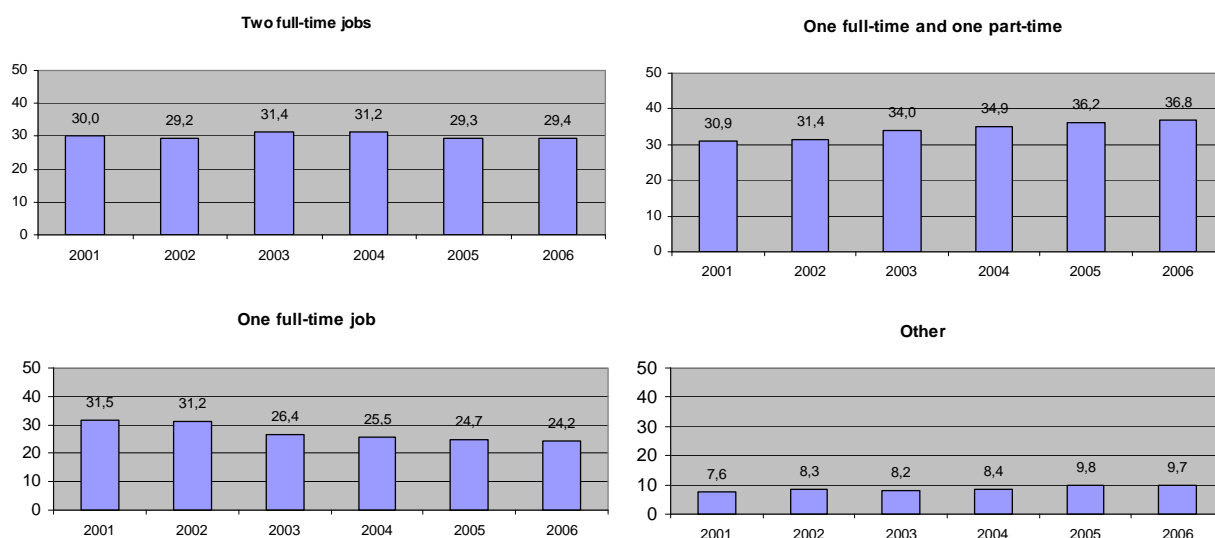
Extent of employment



3.5 Extent of employment of the parents of children under 12 living in a two-parent family – Region of Flanders (percentages) – situation on 31.12.06

Source: Labour Market and Social Security Data Warehouse of the Crossroads Bank for Social Security

Trend in the extent of employment



3.6 Extent of employment of the parents of children under 12 living in a two-parent family since 2001 –

Region of Flanders (percentages)

Source: Labour Market and Social Security Data Warehouse of the Crossroads Bank for Social Security

3. Circumstances of the non-working parents of young children

Mothers' main reason for not working is their responsibilities in the home; fathers' main reason for not working is unemployment

A recent survey into the use of child care for children under 3 also asked parents about their employment situation*. Almost 19% of the children under 3 had a non-working mother; in some cases this was due to unemployment (5.3%), but the majority gave domestic responsibilities as their reason for not working (11.2%).

In the case of 10.6% of the children, the mother had taken a temporary full-time break from work: mainly maternity leave, parental leave, career break or time credit. Most of the fathers of the children who were not working were unemployed (see Table 3.7).

* Source: Hedeboom G., Peetermans A., *Het gebruik van kinderopvang in Vlaanderen (Use of child care in Flanders)*, Support Centre for Wellbeing, Public Health and the Family, 2009

Circumstances of non-working parents

	Mother	Father
Taking a temporary (full-time) break from work for:		
Maternity leave	2.2	-
Parental leave	4.0	1.1
Sick leave	1.3	0.6
Career break/time credit	2.6	0.2
Unpaid leave	0.1	0.0
Invalidity	0.4	0.7
Total	10.6	2.6
Not working because:		
Unemployed	5.3	3.9
Housewife / house father, student, etc.	11.2	1.5
Other (retired, social assistance benefit, asylum seeker)	2.3	1.4
Total	18.8	6.8

3.7 Circumstances of the non-working parents of children aged 3 months to 3 years in the Region of Flanders – 2009 (percentages of all children)

Source: Hedeboom G., Peetermans A., *Het gebruik van kinderopvang in Vlaanderen (Use of child care in Flanders)*, Support Centre for Wellbeing, Public Health and the Family, 2009

4. Why do the parents of young children work part time?

Mothers, mainly because of caring responsibilities

The SILC survey found that mothers who work fewer than 30 hours a week do so mainly because of housework or caring for children or other people (74.8%). Some mothers (6.3%) considered that they were already working full time and another group (13.8%) did not want to work more hours. 8.4% wanted to work more but had not found a job with more hours. Of the small number of fathers who work part time (2.7%), their reasons for doing so are less clear (see Table 3.8).

Reason for working part-time

	Mother	Father
--	--------	--------

Housework, caring for children or other people	74.8	35.3
Education or training	0.5	0.0
Illness or disability	1.2	0.0
Wants to work more hours but has not found a job	6.7	21.5
Does not want to work more hours	5.4	23.6
Considers her working hours to be the equivalent of a full-time job	6.3	16.3
Other	5.1	3.3
Total	100.0	100.0
	(N=27)	(N=27)
<i>Percentage of children whose mother or father works part time</i>	<i>27.3</i>	<i>2.7</i>

3.8 Children under the age of 12 whose mother or father works fewer than 30 hours: reasons for working part time – 2007 (percentages)

Source: Federal Department for the Economy, Office of Statistics and Economic Information, SILC, 2007

5. Number of hours worked and working schedules

The fathers of most young children work long hours.

Both the number of hours worked and working schedules are important elements for people trying to combine employment and family life.

The SILC survey asked mothers and fathers of young children about the normal *number of hours they worked* in their main occupation and in their second job if they have one. Mothers of children under 12 worked on average over 32 hours a week and fathers almost 45 hours a week (see Table 3.9).

Normal number of hours worked (1)		
	Mother	Father
Less than 20 hours	11.5	0.4
20 to 25 hours	13.8	1.9
25 to 30 hours	9.6	1.1
30 to 35 hours	23.3	3.4
35 to 40 hours	20.5	29.0
40 to 45 hours	11.5	26.2
45 or more hours	9.8	38.1
Total	100.0	100.0
	(N=840)	(N=865)
Average	32.1	44.5
P25	24.0	38.0
P75	38.0	50.0

3.9 Children aged under 12: normal number of hours worked by their mother and father – 2007 (percentages)

Source: Federal Department for the Economy, Office of Statistics and Economic Information, SILC, 2007

(1) Children whose mother and/or father has paid work; total of main job and second job.

The survey of the use of child care also asked parents about their *working schedules*. Table 3.10 shows the working schedules of the mothers and fathers of children aged of *3 months to 3 years**. Almost 79% of the children have a mother who only works in the daytime during the working week. In the case of fathers this is slightly lower (72.8%). Shift work is very rare among the mothers: 3.9% work in a two-shift system; 2.7% in a three-shift system. 0.9% do night shifts. These figures are rather higher for the fathers, with 6.1%

working in a two-shift system and 4% in a three-shift system. 1.4% of the fathers work nights. 6.2% of the young children have a mother whose working hours are not the same every week and 8% have a father working variable hours (see Table 3.10).

* Source: Hedeboom G., Peetermans A., *Het gebruik van kinderopvang in Vlaanderen (Use of child care in Flanders)*, Support Centre for Wellbeing, Public Health and the Family, 2009

Working schedules

	Mother (N=3 342)	Father (N=3 676)
Only in the day during the week	78.7	72.8
Shifts: early and late	3.9	6.1
Shifts: early, late and night	2.7	4.0
Irregular hours weekly	6.2	8.0
Only night work	0.9	1.4
Only weekend work	1.8	2.0
Other working hours	5.9	5.7
Average number of hours' paid work per week	31.3	40.3
Average number of working days per week	4.5	5.0

3.10 Working schedules of mothers and fathers of children aged 3 months to 3 years – Region of Flanders, 2009

Source: Hedeboom G., Peetermans A., *Het gebruik van kinderopvang in Vlaanderen (Use of child care in Flanders)*, Support Centre for Wellbeing, Public Health and the Family, 2009

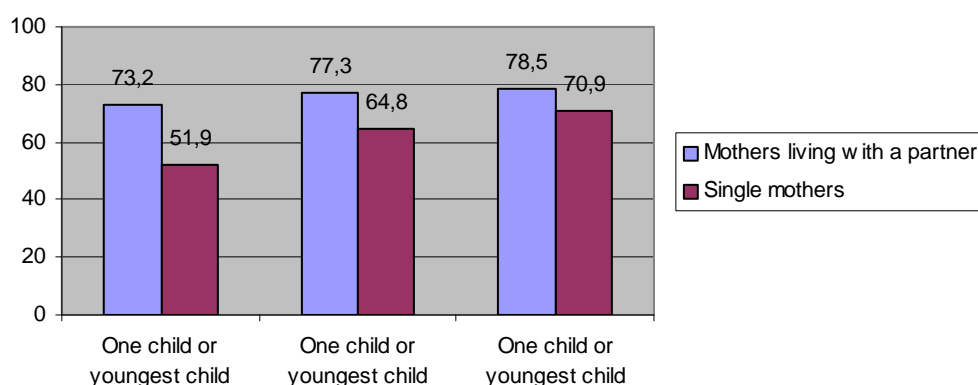
6. Participation in employment in families with young children from the perspective of the women

High levels of employment among women. Far fewer single mothers in work

The Labour Market and Social Security Data Warehouse of the Crossroads Bank for Social Security allows you to zoom in on the employment of mothers with young children with “women” and not “children” as the *unit of calculation*. In view of the impact of employment participation on the family situation, we also present these data.

73% of mothers with a child under the age of 12 in the Region of Flanders were in some form of paid employment in 2006. This was slightly more than in 2005 (+ 1.1%). Participation in employment is lower among mothers with a child under the age of 3 (70.8%) than among mothers of older children. Considerably fewer single mothers with a child under 12 are in employment than mothers who live with a partner: 65.5% of single mothers compared with 76.3% of mothers who live with a partner. Single mothers with a child under 3 participate even less: only 51.9% have paid employment. The percentage of single mothers with a child under 12 who are in paid employment increased from 62.7% in 2005 to 65.5% in 2006 (see Figure 3.11 and Table 3.12).

Mothers' employment



3.11 Cohabiting and single mothers with one child or the youngest child under 12: percentage without paid employment – Region of Flanders – situation on 31 December 2006

Source: Labour Market and Social Security Data Warehouse of the Crossroads Bank for Social Security

Mothers' employment: in detail

	2005		2006		
	Total	One child or youngest child			Total
		Under 3 years	3 to 6 years	6 to 12 years	
Mothers living with a partner					
Working in paid employment	63.4	63.5	65.3	64.7	64.4
Self-employed	7.4	6.3	7.8	8.6	7.5
Working as assistant to self-employed person	2.3	1.3	2.0	2.9	2.1
Working in paid employment and self-employed	2.2	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.3
<i>Total with paid work</i>	<i>75.3</i>	<i>73.2</i>	<i>77.3</i>	<i>78.5</i>	<i>76.3</i>
Job-seeker receiving benefit	4.4	4.5	3.7	2.9	3.7
Not in paid employment and receiving benefit (1)	3.7	6.7	3.1	1.3	3.7
Without paid work	16.6	15.6	15.9	17.3	16.4
<i>Total without paid work</i>	<i>24.7</i>	<i>26.8</i>	<i>22.7</i>	<i>21.5</i>	<i>23.7</i>
Total mothers living with a partner	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Single mothers					
Working in paid employment	55.0	45.5	57.4	62.1	57.6
Self-employed	5.4	4.5	5.0	6.1	5.5
Working as assistant to self-employed person	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.3
Working in paid employment and self-employed	2.1	1.6	2.2	2.5	2.2
<i>Total with paid work</i>	<i>62.7</i>	<i>51.9</i>	<i>64.8</i>	<i>70.9</i>	<i>65.5</i>
Job-seeker receiving benefit	18.0	20.9	15.0	12.0	14.6
Not in paid employment and receiving benefit (1)	8.8	13.6	9.3	6.6	8.7
Without paid work	10.5	13.5	10.8	10.5	11.2
<i>Total without paid work</i>	<i>37.3</i>	<i>48.1</i>	<i>35.2</i>	<i>29.1</i>	<i>34.5</i>
Total single mothers	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total mothers (2)					
Working in paid employment	60.9	61.4	63.0	61.8	61.9
Self-employed	6.9	6.1	7.2	7.7	7.0

Working as assistant to self-employed person	2.0	1.3	1.7	2.3	1.8
Working in paid employment and self-employed	2.1	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.2
<i>Total with paid work</i>	<i>71.9</i>	<i>70.8</i>	<i>74.2</i>	<i>74.1</i>	<i>73.0</i>
Job-seeker receiving benefit	6.0	5.7	5.1	4.3	4.9
Not in paid employment and receiving benefit(1)	6.1	7.6	5.1	5.6	6.2
Without paid work	16.0	15.9	15.6	16.0	15.9
<i>Total without paid work</i>	<i>28.1</i>	<i>29.2</i>	<i>25.8</i>	<i>25.9</i>	<i>27.0</i>
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

3.12 Employment of all mothers (mothers with partners and single mothers) with one child or the youngest child under 12 years by age of the child/youngest child – Region of Flanders (percentages) – situation on 31 December

Source: Labour Market and Social Security Data Warehouse of the Crossroads Bank for Social Security

(1) Not in paid employment and receiving benefit: covers full-time early retirement, full-time career break and those exempt from registering as job-seekers

(2) Includes mothers whose children are living in another family

7. Employment situation of grandparents

Some are still working

A significant number of grandparents of children under the age of 3 are still working, especially maternal grandparents. 39% of maternal grandmothers and/or grandfathers are still working. The equivalent figure for paternal grandparents is only 24.1%. Table 3.13 shows how the percentage decreases as the children get older.

Grandparents' employment				
	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3-6	Children aged 6-12	Total
Maternal grandparents	39.0	25.3	15.6	23.4 (N=2 217)
Paternal grandparents	24.1	18.2	12.3	16.6 (N=2 035)

3.13 Children aged under 12: participation in employment of the maternal and/or paternal grandparents – 2005 (percentages)

Source: Antwerp University, Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy

8. The European context

8.1. Level of employment of women with young children

There are no European figures available on participation in employment in families that include the child as a unit in the calculations. However, the *level of employment of women with young children* is known. Using the Labour Force Survey (Eurostat) we compared the Region of Flanders with the EU-15 countries, excluding Sweden, which did not take part in this survey.

Table 3.14 breaks down the level of employment among mothers in 2008 by the number of children they have – 1, 2, or 3 or more children – and by the age of the youngest child. The Region of Flanders has one of the highest rates of employment of mothers with one or more children under the age of 15. The level of employment of mothers is much lower in the Mediterranean countries of the EU, apart from Portugal. There is a noticeable difference in rates of employment between mothers with 1 or 2 children and those with 3 children or more. Generally, fewer mothers with 3 or more children work, and of them, those whose youngest child is under 3 are least likely to work.

Level of employment of mothers			
	With 1 child	With 2 children	With 3 or more children
With a child or the youngest child under 3			
Region of Flanders	85.2	82.6	55.6
Belgium	74.6	72.1	46.7
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>			
Germany	64.4	55.4	34.2
France	68.9	54.5	38.9
Luxembourg	(1)	(1)	(1)
The Netherlands	79.4	76.1	55.8
<i>Nordic countries</i>			
Denmark	81.8	84.3	78.7
Finland	55.8	54.8	41.9
Sweden	n/a	n/a	n/a
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>			
Greece	56.9	52.1	48.6
Italy	57.8	49.7	35.4
Portugal	78.5	75.0	53.5
Spain	64.3	53.4	43.2
Austria	71.2	55.4	39.0
Ireland	72.0	59.0	46.9
The United Kingdom	68.6	55.2	36.3
EU-15	66.4	56.5	40.5
With a child or the youngest child aged 3 to 6			
Region of Flanders	84.7	85.3	67.8
Belgium	76.1	76.0	56.9
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>			
Germany	65.9	59.0	46.3
France	77.4	78.5	57.4
Luxembourg	(1)	(1)	(1)
The Netherlands	73.2	75.1	63.4
<i>Nordic countries</i>			
Denmark	78.6	92.2	79.6
Finland	84.6	84.4	72.3
Sweden	n/a	n/a	n/a
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>			
Greece	57.3	59.2	53.8
Italy	61.4	54.7	42.8
Portugal	80.7	79.7	63.2
Spain	65.8	58.2	56.1
Austria	76.3	68.5	54.2

Ireland	67.3	52.8	44.1
The United Kingdom	65.9	67.2	47.1
EU-15	68.3	65.6	52.6
With a child or the youngest child aged 6 to 15			
Region of Flanders	76.9	81.6	75.0
Belgium	70.5	75.9	65.6
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>			
Germany	75.7	73.2	56.1
France	76.9	79.6	65.7
Luxembourg	65.4	66.6	(1)
The Netherlands	74.1	78.4	73.0
<i>Nordic countries</i>			
Denmark	85.2	90.6	86.4
Finland	86.9	89.3	84.9
Sweden	n/a	n/a	n/a
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>			
Greece	61.3	61.4	54.8
Italy	58.7	54.5	46.8
Portugal	76.5	78.2	69.2
Spain	62.0	62.0	59.6
Austria	82.5	79.5	71.4
Ireland	68.0	62.2	58.0
The United Kingdom	76.3	77.6	61.7
EU-15	71.0	71.9	62.2
Total with a child or the youngest child under 15			
Region of Flanders	80.4	81.7	63.0
Belgium	72.7	74.9	56.8
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>			
Germany	71.7	65.3	45.7
France	74.7	71.4	52.3
Luxembourg	69.5	64.9	(1)
The Netherlands	76.0	77.0	64.3
<i>Nordic countries</i>			
Denmark	83.9	89.3	81.6
Finland	78.0	78.8	61.2
Sweden	n/a	n/a	n/a
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>			
Greece	60.2	58.7	53.2
Italy	58.2	53.1	40.7
Portugal	77.6	77.0	60.4
Spain	63.3	58.4	49.9

Austria	79.3	70.7	53.6
Ireland	68.9	60.4	50.1
The United Kingdom	73.1	69.0	47.7
EU-15	69.4	66.0	50.7

3.14 Level of employment of women with one child or the youngest child under the age of 15 in some EU-15 countries – 2008

Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey, 2008 (Processed by the Department of Work and Social Economy, Policy Division)

(1) Figure not reliable

n/a: not available

8.2. Children living in a family with no adult in work

Around 9.3% of children in the EU-15 countries live in a family with no adult in work. With 11.3%, Belgium has a relatively high number of young people living in families with no adult in employment. Only the United Kingdom and Ireland score higher. The figures for the Region of Flanders, which are for a younger age group, are also on the high side (see Table 3.15).

Table 3.16 shows the level of employment by family type for children under 15. In most EU-15 countries there is a marked difference between the children who live in two-parent families and the children who live in one-parent families. Denmark and Sweden are exceptions, as there is hardly any difference in those countries. The gap is greatest in the United Kingdom. Belgium has the second highest gap.

No adult working					
	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008
Region of Flanders	9.3*	12.3**	11.5**		
Belgium	11.4	12.8	12.7	12.0	11,3
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	9.4	11.0***	10.6	9.6	9,3
France	9.3	8.8	9.3	8.8	8,5
Luxembourg	4.0	2.7	3.7	3.4	3,6
The Netherlands	7.0	6.7	6.4	5.9	4,8
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	n/a	6.6	4.9	4.4	4,1
Denmark	n/a	5.7	5.0	5.3	3,3
Sweden	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	5.5	4.2	3.9	3.9	3,6
Italy	7.6	5.9	5.7	5.8	6,7
Portugal	3.8	4.6	4.6	5.1	4,7
Spain	6.6	5.6	5.3	5.3	6,5
Austria	3.8	5.9	6.0	5.3	5,3
The United Kingdom	17.0	16.5	16.5	16.7	16,4
Ireland	10.1	11.9	11.2	11.5	13,1
EU-15	9.8****	9.6****	9.5****	9.2****	9,3***

3.15 Children under the age of 18 living in a household in which there is no adult with paid work

(percentages) in the EU-15 countries

Source: Eurostat, website

* Children aged under 14

** Children aged under 12

*** Provisional figures

**** Estimates

n/a: not available

No adult working by family type

	Children in two-parent families	Children in one-parent families	All children
Region of Flanders*	5.5	35.1	11.5
Belgium	5.6	43.2	12.1
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>			
Germany	5.9	36.4	9.9
France	4.6	33.2	8.9
Luxembourg	1.5	19.8	2.8
The Netherlands	3.3	37.2	7.3
<i>Nordic countries</i>			
Finland	3.6	30.1	4.5
Denmark**	2.4	4.8	7.2
Sweden**	1.5	3.2	4.8
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>			
Greece	2.3	25.9	3.5
Italy	4.1	23.8	5.6
Portugal	3.0	28.0	4.9
Spain	2.8	22.0	4.6
Austria	3.7	25.0	5.9
The United Kingdom	6.6	50.9	17.6
Ireland	n/a	n/a	n/a

3.16 Children under the age of 15 living in a household in which there is no adult with paid work (percentages) by family type in the EU-15 countries – 2007

Source: OECD, Family database (website) based on the Labour Force Survey, apart from Denmark and Sweden, for which the figures are based on EU-SILC

* Situation on 31 December 2006; children under 12

**Children under 18

CHAPTER 4. PROSPERITY, POVERTY AND DEPRIVATION

Poverty is harmful to children, both immediately and in the long term. This is why we examine the incomes of families with young children in some detail. We look at the disposable income of families with young children, followed by the objective “at-risk-of-poverty threshold” (an EU-indicator of the degree of financial poverty), the families’ subjective assessment of their own incomes and a number of non-monetary indicators of deprivation in the family. Next we examine how many children live in a family whose source of income indicates that they are in an insecure financial situation (guaranteed child benefit, maintenance allowance, guaranteed minimum income), before going on to examine deprivation in families with young children in Flanders. After that we describe various aspects of the family home: type of home, which is an indicator of the comfort of the home, and residential status, which has a significant impact on families’ spending patterns. We also look at whether the family has certain consumer goods in the home. Lastly, poverty in Flanders is compared with the situation in the EU-15 countries.

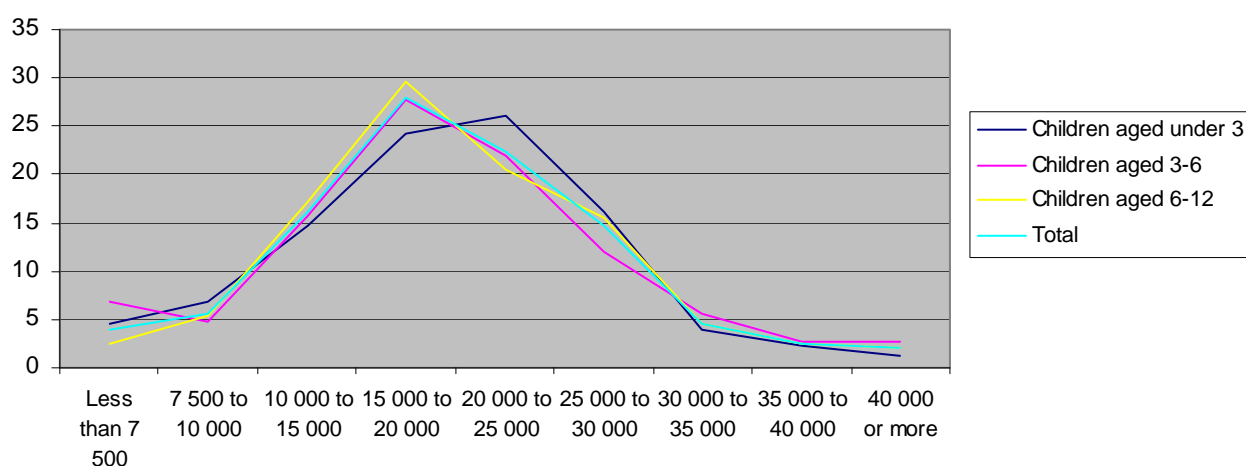
1. Disposable income per person in families with young children

Most children live in a family with a decent income

We look at the *disposable income per person* in families with young children. This is the equivalised disposable income, derived from the disposable family income with a correction for family size*. We also look at the median (middle score in a set of ranked scores) rather than the mean, because the median is less influenced by incomes at the high and low extremes of the scale. In families with children under 12, the median in 2006 was 19 375 euro per year. The “poorest” 10% of children were living in a family that had to manage on about half that amount (10 163 euro per person per year) or less. The “richest” 10% of children were living in a family with a disposable income of at least 28 319 euro per person per year.

Figure 4.1 shows the distribution of children by disposable annual income in 2006, corrected for family size.

Disposable annual income per person



4.1 Children under the age of 12 by disposable annual income per person in the family – Region of Flanders – 2006 (percentages)

Source: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, SILC – 2007

*To calculate the disposable income per person, a weighting system was used in which the head of the household (reference person) counts as 1, other persons over the age of 14 count as 0.5 and children under the age of 14 count as 0.3. A family consisting of a mother, a

father and two children under the age of 14 years therefore count as the equivalent of 2.1 persons

2. Increased risk of poverty

Over 1 in 10 young children live in a family which is at increased risk of poverty. Many more children are at risk of poverty in families where the parent(s) do not work

The “at-risk-of-poverty threshold” is an indicator developed in the EU to measure the proportion of the population living in a family below the poverty line. The family is said to be at risk of poverty, or at increased risk of poverty, if the disposable income per person in the family is less than 60% of the median disposable income of the country. For the year 2006, the income threshold for Belgium was 22 128 euro per year for a family of 2 adults and 2 children. The equivalent figure for 2005 was 21 665 euro. This means that the threshold in 2006 was 2.1% higher than the year before. We used the Belgian norm because tax and social security – the most important income redistribution mechanisms – are federal powers.

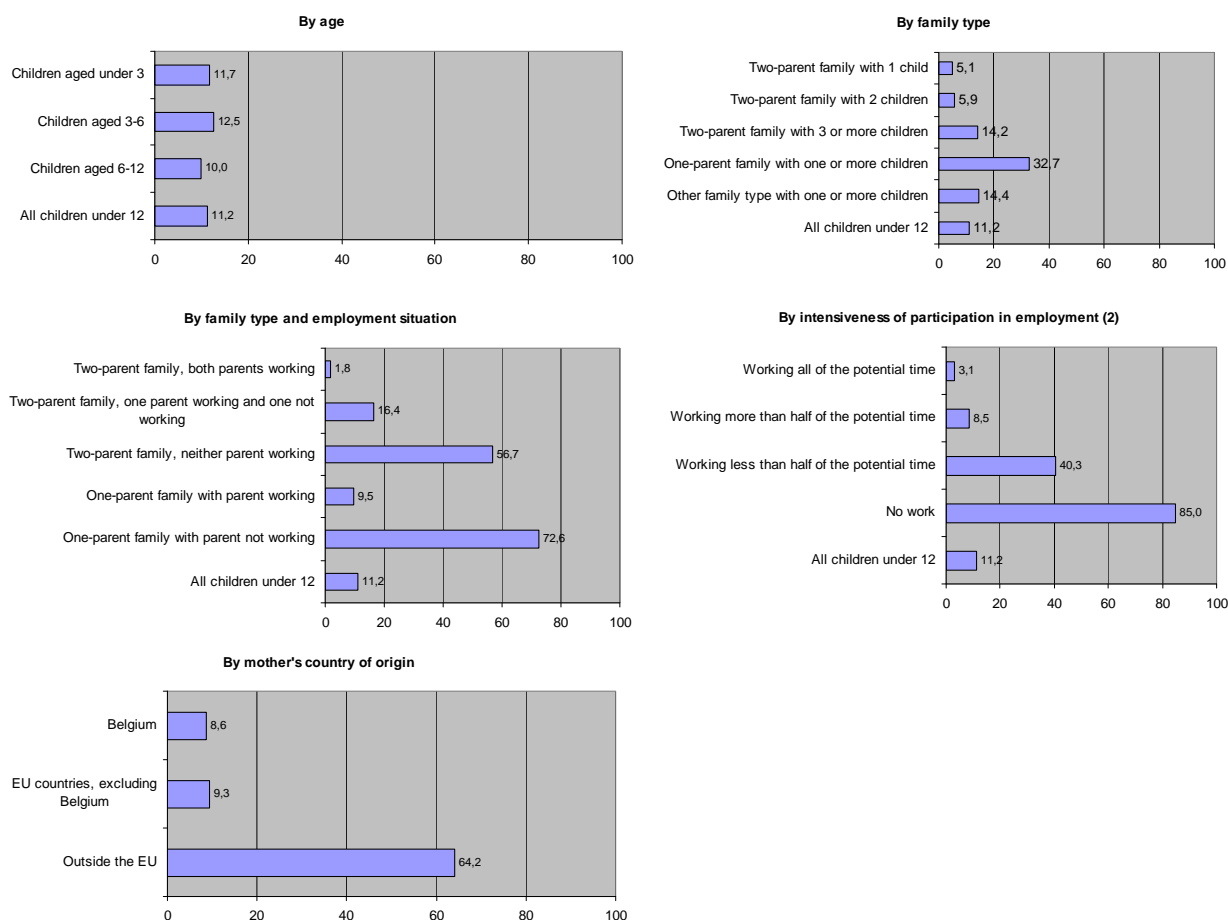
We look at the percentage of children living in a family whose income is below the poverty line. The daily circumstances in which these children live threaten to be difficult and their future economic situation is at risk. The *general picture* is that 11.2% of children under the age of 12 are at increased risk of poverty. When broken down by *age group*, the situation is noticeably better for children in the 6 to 12 age group (10.0% are at increased risk of poverty).

Looking at *family type*, there is a big difference between the children in one-parent families and children in two-parent families. Almost 33% of children in one-parent families are at increased risk of poverty. There is also a noticeable difference between children in two-parent families with 1 or 2 children and those in two-parent families with 3 or more children: children in two-parent families with 3 or more children are at much greater risk of poverty (14.2%) than their peers in the smaller two-parent families. The differences become even more stark if we look at whether the parents work: 56.7% of children in families with two non-working parents are at increased risk of poverty. The risk is even higher for children in one-parent families where the parent does not work: 72.6%.

Another factor is *the intensiveness of the family's participation in employment*. We looked at how many months the adults in the family had worked, regardless of the hours they worked when they were in employment. The figures are striking. 85% of children in families where no adults work at all are at increased risk of poverty. Where the parents work for less than half of the potential time, the figure is 40.3%; where they work for between 50 and 100% of the potential time it is 8.5%; and where they work for all of the potential time it is 3.1%.

There also turn out to be major differences based on the *mother's country of origin*. Over 64% of children whose mother originates from outside the EU are at increased risk of poverty.

Increased risk of poverty (1)



4.2 Percentage of children under the age of 12 years living in a family with an income below the poverty line by age group, family type, employment situation of the family and mother's country of origin – Region of Flanders – 2006

Source: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, SILC – 2007

(1) Poverty line: 60% of the median disposable annual income per person in Belgium

(2) Expressed as the number of months that the adults in the family worked, regardless of the hours they worked when they were in employment, out of the total number of potential months

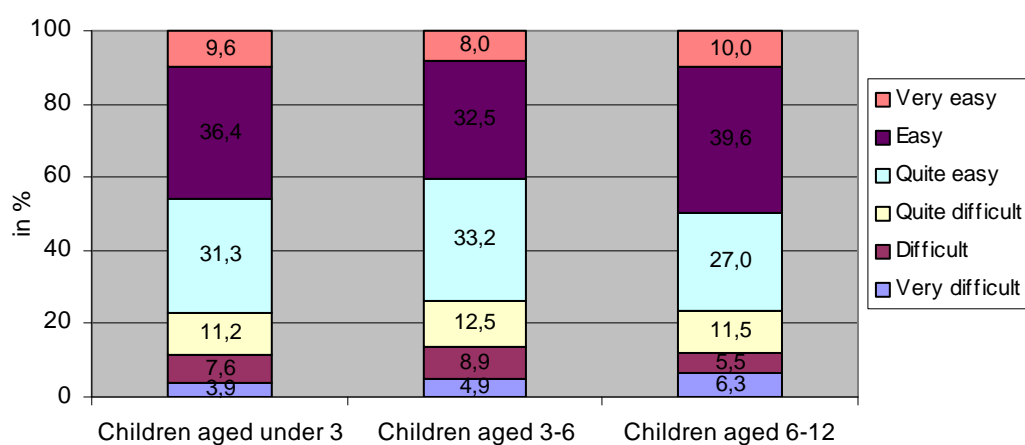
3. Making ends meet

This is difficult or very difficult for over 12%; easy or very easy for over 41%

A significant number of children live in a family where the reference person reports that it is difficult (6.9%) or very difficult (5.4%) to make ends meet. 41.1% live in families that manage easily or very easily. Figure 4.3 shows this by age group.

The scale of the problem of families with young children who are in precarious financial circumstances is also revealed when families are asked about whether they can cope with unexpected expenditure and housing costs. 15.6% of children live in a family that is unable to cope with unexpected costs. Housing costs are a heavy burden on the families of 14.4% of children.

Making ends meet



4.3 Children aged under 12: the family's experience of making ends meet on its monthly income – Region of Flanders – 2007 (percentages)

Source: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, SILC – 2007

4. Non-monetary deprivation

A week's annual holiday: not taken for granted

In addition to the monetary indicators, the SILC survey included a number of *non-monetary indicators*. Table 4.4 presents four such indicators: being able to afford one week's holiday a year; being able to afford to eat meat, chicken or fish; being able to afford to entertain family or friends; and being able to heat the home adequately. It is striking that almost 14% of the children live in a family where the reference person reports that the family cannot afford *to take a week's holiday every year*. Only a very small number of children live in a family that cannot afford *to eat meat, chicken or fish every other day* (or a vegetarian equivalent). Over 5% live in a family that cannot afford to *entertain family or friends at least once a month* and almost 13% live in a family that has difficulty *heating the home* adequately. There is little difference between the age groups. Slightly more children in the 3 to 6 age group live in a family that cannot afford to take a week's holiday once a year, or cannot afford to entertain family or friends or has difficulty heating the house adequately

Non-monetary deprivation

	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3-6	Children aged 6-12	Total (N=1080)
The family cannot afford to take one week's annual holiday	13.1	15.5	13.1	13.7
The family cannot afford to eat meat, chicken or fish (or a vegetarian equivalent) every other day	0.4	1.4	1.4	1.2
The family cannot afford to have friends or family round for a drink or a meal at least once a month	4.9	5.2	5.2	5.1
The family cannot afford to heat their home adequately	9.7	16.6	12.0	12.5

4.4 Children aged under 12: extent to which families cannot afford certain things – Region of Flanders – 2007 (percentages)

Source: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, SILC – 2007

5. Children in families with an insecure source of income or a source of income that indicates an insecure financial situation

5.1. Children for whom guaranteed child benefit is paid

A small number of minors

Guaranteed child benefit is awarded when the adults responsible for the care of a child do not have enough to live on and are not entitled to support from any other child benefit scheme for employees, public servants or the self-employed. Those who are in receipt of the minimum income get this automatically without a means test. At the end of 2008, guaranteed child benefit was being paid for 3 512 minors. That is about 0.4% of children under the age of 18. This was a decrease of 9% from 2007 (see Table 4.5).

Guaranteed child benefit				
	Children aged under 6	Children aged 6-12	Children aged 12-18	Total
2007	1 606	1 209	1 043	3 858
2008	1 408	1 169	935	3 512

4.5 Number of minors for whom guaranteed child benefit was being paid on 31/12 – Region of Flanders

Source: Child Benefit Department for Employees, Geographical distribution of families

5.2. Children in families with income from maintenance

Almost 10% of children under 12 live in a family where one or both parents receives a maintenance allowance for their children from an ex-partner. Table 4.6 also shows the percentages by age group.

Maintenance	
Children aged under 3	3.0
Children aged 3-6	11.1
Children aged 6-12	11.8
Children aged under 12	9.9

4.6 Children aged under 12: percentage of children living in a family that receives maintenance – Region of Flanders – 2005

Source: Antwerp University, Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy

5.3. Children in families receiving the guaranteed minimum income

A very small number of children under the age of 12 live in a family that receives the guaranteed minimum income; it is usually the mother that gets the guaranteed minimum income. The average amount received per month is 600 euro (see Table 4.7).

Guaranteed minimum income	
Children in families receiving the guaranteed minimum income	0.5%
Average amount per month	599.8 euro

4.7 Children aged under 12: percentage of children living in a family that receives the guaranteed minimum income and the average amount received – Region of Flanders – 2005

Source: Antwerp University, Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy

6. Children in underprivileged families*

A small but growing number of children live in underprivileged families

Child and Family records data on deprivation every year. In these records, deprivation is defined as a lasting situation in which people are deprived of opportunities to participate adequately in things to which society attaches great value, such as education, employment and housing. Six *selection criteria* have been

derived from this definition, on the basis of which it is determined whether or not a family is considered to be underprivileged, namely the family's *monthly income*, the parents' *educational level*, the children's *development*, the parents' *employment situation*, and *housing and health*. If a family fulfils three or more criteria, it is considered to be underprivileged.

All families with a child born between 1 January 2009 and 31 December 2009 were assessed on the 6 criteria. 8.3% of children born in 2009 (in the Region of Flanders) were born into an underprivileged family (provisional figure). This percentage represents 5 424 children in the Region of Flanders. The percentage of children born into underprivileged families has slightly increased since 2008 (+0.4%) (see Table 4.8).

Figure 4.9 shows the trend since 2001. There were 2.4% more children in underprivileged families in 2009 than in 2001.

** Because of the delay in the publication of the official birth rate figures and the fact that the official birth rate does not include all births, we decided to use the number of births recorded by Child and Family to calculate the percentage of children living in underprivileged families (see also chapter 1, section 1)*

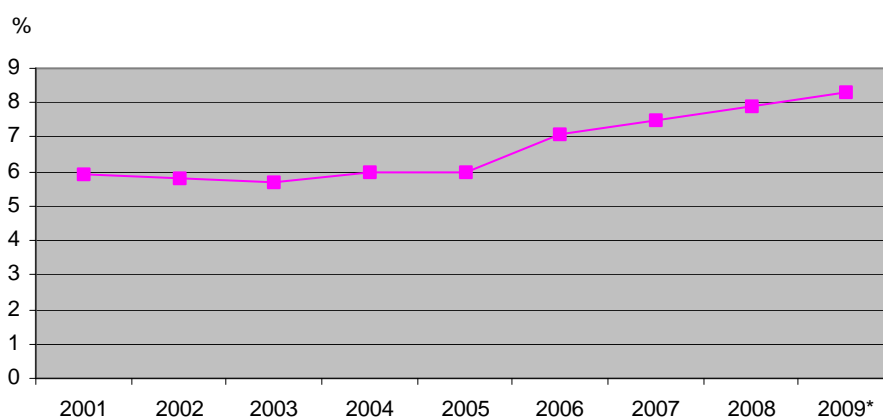
Underprivileged families		
	2008	2009*
Antwerp	11.2	10.7
Flemish Brabant	5.3	5.8
West Flanders	5.3	6.3
East Flanders	6.8	7.5
Limburg	9.6	10.6
Total	7.9	8.3

4.8 Percentage of children born into an underprivileged family during the year, by province

Source: Child and Family - IKAROS

* Provisional figures

Trend in underprivileged families



4.9 Trend in the percentage of children born into an underprivileged family each year from 2001 onwards – Region of Flanders

Source: Child and Family - IKAROS

* Provisional figure

The percentage of underprivileged families varies by province. The highest percentages of underprivileged families with young children are found in the provinces of Antwerp (10.7%) and Limburg (10.6%); the lowest is in Flemish Brabant, with 5.8%. In the provinces of West and East Flanders, 6.3% and 7.5% respectively were recorded (provisional figures) (see Table 4.8). The metropolitan areas of Antwerp and Ghent account for over 37% of all children born into families living in deprivation.

Deprivation is coloured. The mothers of almost 6 out of 10 children born into an underprivileged family did not have Belgian nationality at the time of their birth. Table 4.10 gives for the Region of Flanders the percentage of babies born into an underprivileged family and the percentage not born into an underprivileged family by the national origin of the mother at the time of her birth. Not having Belgian nationality undeniably increases the chance of being born into an underprivileged family.

Deprivation and origin (1)		
	Babies born into underprivileged families	Babies born into families that are not underprivileged
Belgian origin	38.7	80.5
Moroccan origin	15.7	4.1
Turkish origin	8.4	2.3
Other origin	36.8	12.1
Not known	0.4	1.0
Total	100.0	100.0

4.10 Babies born in 2009 into underprivileged families and families which are not underprivileged by nationality of the mother at the time of her birth – Region of Flanders (percentages)

Source: *Child and Family - IKAROS*

(1) *Provisional figures*

Most underprivileged families face a *complex combination of problems*. A low monthly income is the criterion indicated the most (for 73.9% of children in underprivileged families). A low level of education and a poor employment situation of the parents are indicated for 71.6% and 70.6% respectively of the children in underprivileged families. Poor housing is reported for almost 45.2% of underprivileged families. 24.4% of the children have developmental problems. Health problems score lowest (18.2%) (see Table 4.11). The records also show that in the case of 51.7% of children born into an underprivileged family, the family is living in very poor socio-economic circumstances. This means that these families are poorly situated in terms of income, education and employment.

Problems of deprivation		
	2008	2009*
Low monthly income	79.6	73.9
Low level of education of one or both parents	78.8	71.6
Poor employment situation of parents	76.0	70.6
Poor housing	50.7	45.2
Problems in children's development	29.8	24.4
Health problems	22.0	18.2

4.11 Babies born into underprivileged families: extent of presence of certain criteria for deprivation (percentages)

Source: *Child and Family - IKAROS*

* *Provisional figures*

7. Children living in families without permanent residence status

Affects 0.6% of children

Child and Family's own database, IKAROS, records whether or not the family has permanent residency. Families without permanent residence status are mainly those who have applied for asylum and those who are living in the country illegally. 430 babies were born into families without permanent residence status in 2009, or 0.6% of births in that year (provisional figures). This percentage has gone down slightly since 2008. Over 40% of these children live in the province of Antwerp (see Table 4.12).

Births into families without permanent residence status				
	2008		2009*	
	Number	% of births	Number	% of births
Antwerp	218	1.0	174	0.8
Flemish Brabant	54	0.5	59	0.5
West Flanders	64	0.5	67	0.6
East Flanders	95	0.6	74	0.5
Limburg	54	0.6	56	0.6
Total	485	0.6	430	0.6

4.12 Babies born into a family without permanent residence status, by province of residence on date of birth (numbers and percentages)

Source: Child and Family - IKAROS

* Provisional figures

8. Residential status

Most young children live in a home that their parents own

Residential status – owner occupier or tenant – has a significant impact on families' spending patterns and there is a link between renting and greater risk of poverty.

The family usually owns the home (76.5%). This percentage is a little higher for children aged 6 to 12 (see Table 4.13). Children in families that rent their home at market rates or reduced rates are at noticeably much greater risk of poverty: almost 34% against only 4.5% of children whose family owns their own home (SILC – 2007).

Residential status				
	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3-6	Children aged 6-12	Total
Owner	74.6	72.3	79.4	76.5
Tenant – market price	18.8	19.3	12.7	15.8
Tenant – reduced rent	6.3	6.9	6.9	6.7
Free home	0.4	1.5	0.9	0.9
Total	100.0 (N=214)	100.0 (N=27)	100.0 (N=537)	100.0 (N=308)

4.13 Children aged under 12: children living in a home owned or rented by their parents – Region of Flanders – 2007 (percentages)

Source: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, SILC – 2007

9. Consumer goods in the home

The presence or absence of certain consumer goods in the home teaches us something about the standard

of living of families with young children, but it should not be forgotten that the families' own priorities play a role in whether or not they purchase these goods. Some of the goods in Table 4.14 are also indicators of the families' opportunities to communicate and associated opportunities to develop.

	Consumer goods		
	Present	Not present for financial reasons	Not present for other reasons
Colour TV	99.1	0.1	0.8
Computer	90.6	4.7	4.7
Washing machine	98.8	0.8	0.4
Car	93.9	2.6	3.5
Mobile phone	98.4		
			1.6
Internet connection	85.9	5.9	8.2
Landline phone	77.7	6.7	15.5

4.14 Percentage of children in families with certain consumer goods and reasons for not possessing those goods

Source: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, SILC – 2007

10. The European context

10.1. Increased risk of poverty

The "at-risk-of-poverty threshold" (Eurostat) means that the family's disposable income per person is less than 60% of the median family income of the country they live in. Table 4.15 shows the "at-risk-of-poverty threshold" in the EU-15 countries for the age group 0 to 18 years. Belgium comes in the middle of the range. The Mediterranean countries and the United Kingdom have much higher percentages of children under 18 living in families at increased risk of poverty. The Nordic countries have much lower figures.

In most of the EU-15 countries there are considerably more one-parent families at risk of poverty than two-parent families. Families with 3 or more children score relatively worse (see Table 4.16).

Children under 18 at increased risk of poverty (1)				
	2005	2006	2007	2008
Belgium	18	15	17	17
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>				
Germany	12	12	14	15
France	14	14	16	17
Luxembourg	20	20	20	20
The Netherlands	15	14	14	13
<i>Nordic countries</i>				
Finland	10	9	10	12
Denmark	10	10	10	9
Sweden	9	15	12	13
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>				
Greece	20	23	23	23
Italy	24	25	25	25
Portugal	24	21	21	23
Spain	24	24	24	24

Austria	15	15	15	15
The United Kingdom	22	24	23	23
Ireland	23	22	19	18
EU-15	18	18	19	19

4.15 Percentage of children under 18 at increased risk of poverty after social transfers

Source: Eurostat, website

(1) Threshold limit value: 60% of disposable family income corrected for family size

n/a: not available

Families at increased risk of poverty (1)

	One-parent families		Two-parent families	
	with dependent children	with 1 dependent child	with 2 dependent children	with 3 or more dependent children
Belgium	39	8	8	16
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>				
Germany	36	9	8	15
France	27	10	9	23
Luxembourg	44	11	14	26
The Netherlands	29	5	7	17
<i>Nordic countries</i>				
Finland	24	7	7	12
Denmark	16	4	4	12
Sweden	26	9	5	13
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>				
Greece	27	17	22	27
Italy	36	15	22	38
Portugal	39	16	21	32
Spain	38	15	22	44
Austria	26	9	11	21
The United Kingdom	44	10	14	31
Ireland	42	9	12	13
EU-15	35*	12*	14*	24*

4.16 Percentage of families at increased risk of poverty after social transfers, by family type – 2008

Source: Eurostat, website

(1) Threshold limit value: 60% of disposable family income corrected for family size

* Provisional figures

CHAPTER 5. CHILDREN AND CHILD-REARING ENVIRONMENTS OUTSIDE THE HOME

The responsibility for bringing up children is shared between the family and society and the important role played by child care in this is being increasingly recognised. Child care is the third child-rearing environment, alongside the family and school. This chapter looks in detail at the use of child care for pre-school children and for school children, covering the extent of child care use and whose care the children are entrusted into. We present data on the whole population of children using formal child care from the records kept by Child and Family of children attending all child care facilities. We look at child care from the children's perspective and examine their wellbeing and level of engagement at their child care facilities. A small number of children receive special support through special education, through the special youth welfare service, or through social services which are subsidised by Child and Family. First, we outline the situation in Flanders and then compare this with the situation in the countries of the EU-15.

1. Children and child care

1.1. How many children are entrusted into the care of another person or facility at certain times?

Young children spend a significant amount of the day at child care facilities. We examine the use of *all types of child care* for the under-3s and for children aged 3 to 12. We have very recent figures for children under 3 (random sample survey from spring 2009); the figures we use for children aged 3 to 12 are from 2004. Figures are available on the *use of formal child care* from 2006 to 2009 (population data). Section 1.2.2 examines the use of formal child care and trends in the use of formal child care in detail. Both studies and the attendance registers relate to use of child care in the week including 1 February.

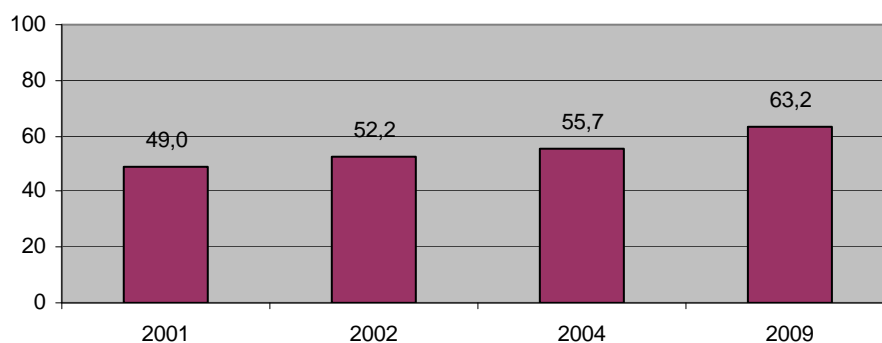
1.1.1. Children aged under 3

General

Over 63% of children aged 3 months to 3 years make "regular" use of child care

63.2% of children aged 3 months to 3 years are *regularly* looked after by relatives, a child minder or a child care centre (spring 2009). Regular use of child care means care provided for at least one continuous period of 5 hours per week if the child is not yet attending nursery school, or at least once a week if the child is already going to nursery school. Then there is another group of 5.8% who make *limited* use of child care. 31% of children aged 3 months to 3 years are *not* looked after by relatives, a child minder or a child care centre. Regular use of child care increased by 7.5% between 2004 and 2009 (see Figure 5.1 and Table 5.2).

Trend in the regular use of child care for children under the age of 3



5.1 Trend in the regular use of child care for children aged between 3 months and 3 years in the Region of Flanders since 2000 (percentages of all children).

Sources: *Child and Family, Surveys on the use of child care for children aged under 3, autumn 2001, autumn 2002 and spring 2004*
 Hedebouw G., Peetermans A., *Het gebruik van kinderopvang in Vlaanderen (Use of child care in Flanders), Support Centre for Wellbeing, Public Health and the Family, 2009*

Use of child care		
	2004	2009
Regular use	55.7	63.2
Limited use	10.1	5.8
No use	34.2	31.0
Total	100.0	100.0

5.2 Use of child care for children aged between 3 months and 3 years in the Region of Flanders (percentages)

Sources: *Child and Family, Survey on the use of child care for children aged under 3 – spring 2004*

Hedebouw G., Peetermans A., *Het gebruik van kinderopvang in Vlaanderen (Use of child care in Flanders), Support Centre for Wellbeing, Public Health and the Family, 2009*

By province

Regular use of child care varies significantly between provinces. It is highest in Flemish Brabant (68%). Parents in Limburg use child care the least (52.7%). Regular use of child care increased in all provinces between 2004 and 2009 (see Table 5.3).

Regular use by province		
	2004	2009
Antwerp	50.9	60.6
Flemish Brabant	62.9	68.0
West Flanders	59.9	66.6
East Flanders	59.2	66.3
Limburg	44.0	52.7
Region of Flanders	55.7	63.2

5.3. Use of child care for children aged 3 months to 3 years by province (percentage of all children)

Sources: *Child and Family, Survey on the use of child care for children aged under 3 – spring 2004*

Hedebouw G., Peetermans A., *Het gebruik van kinderopvang in Vlaanderen (Use of child care in Flanders), Support Centre for Wellbeing, Public Health and the Family, 2009*

By age

Use of child care is much lower for babies up to the age of 6 months and for children over the age of 2½ years; regular use is higher for children between the age of 1 and 2 years: around 71%.

The use of child care varies with age. Regular use of child care is much lower under the age of 6 months (see Table 5.4 and Figure 5.5). Table 5.4 and Figure 5.5 also include the age group 1 month to 3 months*. Below 3 months regular use of child care is rather exceptional. Between 1 and 2½ years, regular use is above 70%, with a peak of 71.7% at 1½ to 2 years. Compared with the spring of 2004, regular use of child care increased markedly in all age groups, except for children between 2½ and 3 years where it fell slightly.

* The 2009 survey asked parents about their past use of child care when their baby was aged 1 to 3 months

Use of child care by age

	2004		2009	
	Regular use	Regular use	Limited use	No use
1 to 3 months (1)	14.5	6.6	0.0	93.4
3 to 6 months	32.7	53.3	4.8	41.8
6 months to 1 year	59.8	65.7	5.1	29.2
1 year to 1½ years	61.3	70.6	5.1	24.3
1½ years to 2 years	62.7	71.7	4.9	23.5
2 years to 2½ years	61.3	69.0	5.5	25.6
Total 3 months to 2½ years	58.2	67.6	5.1	27.3
2½ years to 3 years	45.1	44.3	8.8	46.9
Total 3 months to 3 years	55.7	63.2	5.8	31.0

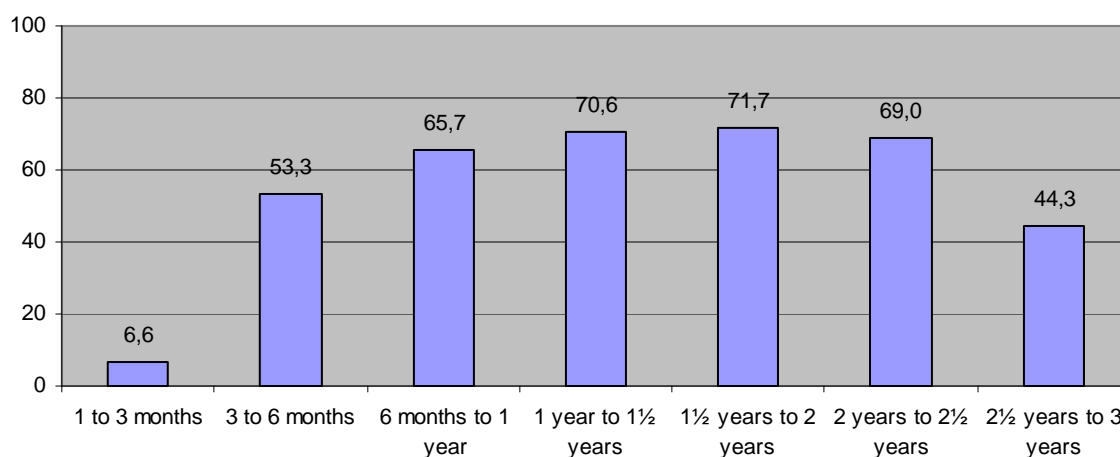
5.4 Use of child care for children aged between 1 month and 3 years in the Region of Flanders, by age – spring 2004 and spring 2009 (percentages of all children).

Sources: *Child and Family, Survey on the use of child care for children aged under 3 – spring 2004*

Hedebouw G., Peetermans A., *Het gebruik van kinderopvang in Vlaanderen (Use of child care in Flanders), Support Centre for Wellbeing, Public Health and the Family, 2009*

(1) The 2009 survey asked parents about their past use of child care when their baby was aged 1 to 3 months

Use of child care by age



5.5 Regular use of child care for children aged between 1 month and 3 years in the Region of Flanders, by age – spring 2009 (percentages of all children).

Source: Hedebouw G., Peetermans A., *Het gebruik van kinderopvang in Vlaanderen (Use of child care in Flanders), Support Centre for Wellbeing, Public Health and the Family, 2009*

By disadvantaged groups

Ethnic minority children and children in underprivileged families make much less use of child care. Use by children in underprivileged families has not increased.

Use of child care by ethnic minority children and children from underprivileged families is much lower than in the population as a whole. Only 32.6% of ethnic minority children and 21.0% of children in underprivileged families use child care on a regular basis. Compared with spring 2004, regular use by ethnic minority children has increased considerably, but use by underprivileged children has stayed the

same.

By family circumstances

Lower but increasing use by single parents

Single parents make noticeably less use of child care than two-parents families. 54.6% of the children of single parents use child care on a regular basis as opposed to 63.8% of children who live with both their parents. However, single parents' use of child care also increased from 2004 to 2009 (see Table 5.6 and Figure 5.7).

Use of child care by disadvantaged groups and family circumstances

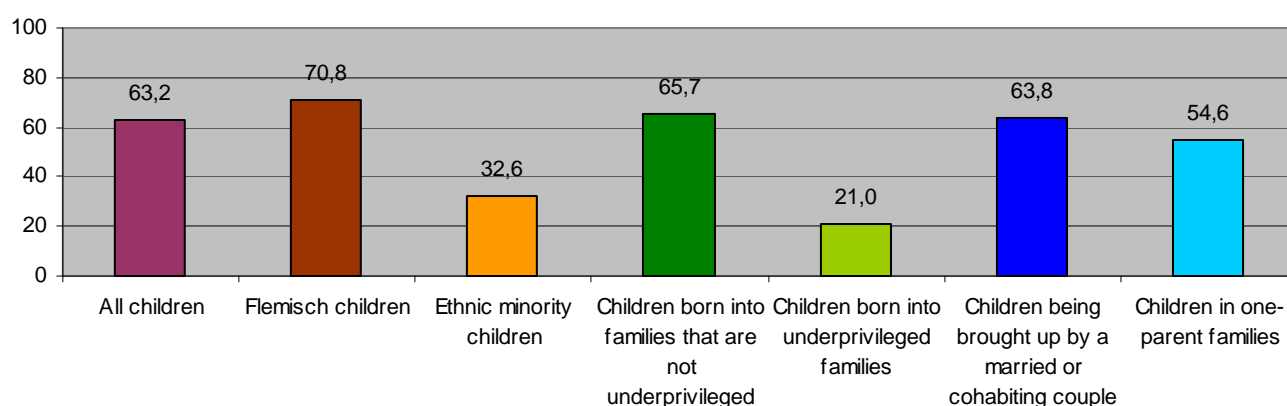
	2004		2009	
	Regular use	Regular use	Limited use	No use
Ethnic minority children	23.7	32.6	6.1	61.3
Flemish children	62.9	70.8	5.5	23.7
Children born into underprivileged families	21.7	21.0	8.7	70.4
Children born into families that are not underprivileged	57.9	65.7	5.6	28.7
Children in one-parent families	48.0	54.6	9.5	36.0
Children being brought up by a married or cohabiting couple	56.1	63.8	5.6	30.6
All children	55.7	63.2	5.8	31.0

5.6 Use of child care for children aged between 3 months and 3 years in the Region of Flanders, by disadvantaged groups and family circumstances – spring 2004 and spring 2009 (percentages of all children).

Sources: *Child and Family, Survey on the use of child care for children aged under 3 – spring 2004*

Hedebouw G., Peetermans A., *Het gebruik van kinderopvang in Vlaanderen (Use of child care in Flanders), Support Centre for Wellbeing, Public Health and the Family, 2009*

Use of child care by disadvantaged groups and family circumstances



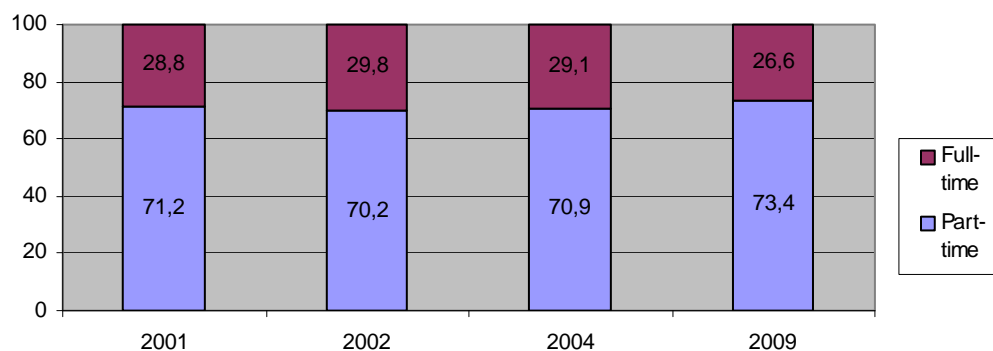
5.7 Regular use of child care for children aged between 3 months and 3 years in the Region of Flanders by disadvantaged groups and family circumstances – spring 2009 (percentages of all children).

Source: Hedebouw G., Peetermans A., *Het gebruik van kinderopvang in Vlaanderen (Use of child care in Flanders), Support Centre for Wellbeing, Public Health and the Family, 2009*

Length of child care

Over 73% of the children who are cared for on a regular basis are cared for *part-time* (see Figure 5.8). Part-time child care is usually care provided for a certain number of full days: 43.5% of all users only use child care for a few full days per week. Part-time child care has increased in comparison with 2004 (+2.5%). This coincides with an increase in the number of parents, especially mothers, who work part time.

Length of child care



5.8 Intensity of weekly child care among children aged 3 months to 3 years who regularly (= at least one continuous period of 5 hours a week for pre-school children and at least once a week for school children) go to child care in the Region of Flanders (percentages)

Sources: *Child and Family, Surveys on the use of child care for children aged under 3, autumn 2001, autumn 2002 and spring 2004*
 Hedebouw G., Peetermans A., *Het gebruik van kinderopvang in Vlaanderen (Use of child care in Flanders), Support Centre for Wellbeing, Public Health and the Family, 2009*

Atypical child care

Atypical child care means child care that starts early (before 7 a.m.), finishes late (after 6 p.m.) or is provided for long hours (more than 11 hours per day) and child care provided at the weekend or at night. Table 5.9 shows that in 2009 21.5% of regular child care users were using child care at one or more of these atypical times. Almost 14% of regular users were leaving their children at the child care facility after 6 p.m. So care after 6 p.m. accounted for most of the atypical child care used. Use of atypical child care has fallen sharply since 2004, from 35.4% to 21.5%.

Atypical child care		
	2004	2009
Before 7 a.m.	12.7	7.3
After 6 p.m.	24.5	13.7
Weekend	12.9	5.0
More than 11 hours a day	5.5	4.6
At night	11.7	3.9
Atypical on at least 1 point	35.4	21.5

5.9 Percentage of children aged 3 months to 3 years using atypical child care – Region of Flanders (percentage of regular users of child care)

Sources: *Child and Family, Survey on the use of child care for children aged under 3 – spring 2004*
 Hedebouw G., Peetermans A., *Het gebruik van kinderopvang in Vlaanderen (Use of child care in Flanders), Support Centre for Wellbeing, Public Health and the Family, 2009*

1.1.2. Children aged 3-12

General

Greater use of out-of-school child care for children aged 3 to 6, especially care at the end of the school day

In 2004 (more recent figures are not available) 55% of children aged 3-6 and almost 40% of children aged 6-12 were cared for *during the week* by persons or facilities other than their parents (see Table 5.10). That means that in the course of a week they were cared for at least once before school, after school or on a Wednesday afternoon. Use of out-of-school care for children aged 3 to 6 years had increased by 1.4% since autumn 2002. Use for children aged 6 to 12 years had decreased by 0.7% (see Table 5.10).

Children who live in a one-parent family made use of out-of-school care to the same degree as children who live with both their parents (46.3% and 44.5% respectively use it regularly).

Use of out-of-school care

	2002	2004
Children aged 3-6	53.6	55.0
Children aged 6-12	40.5	39.8
Children aged 3-12	44.7	44.6

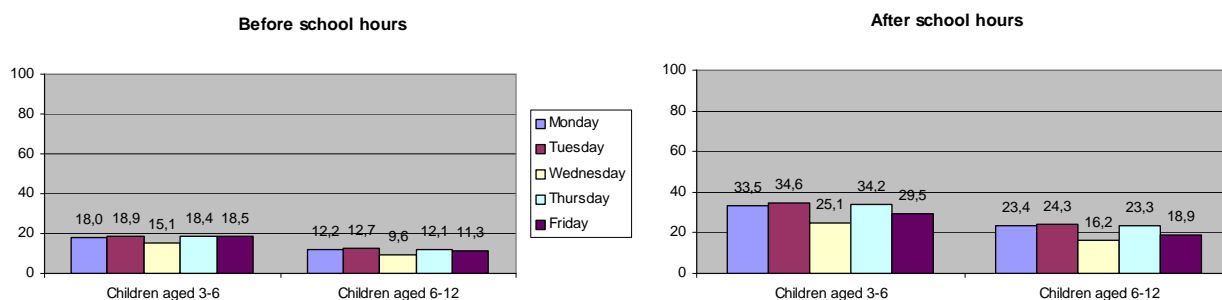
5.10 Use of out-of-school child care for children aged 3 to 12 years in the Region of Flanders (percentages)

Sources: *Child and Family, Surveys on the use of out-of-school child care for children aged 3 to 12 years, autumn 2002 and spring 2004*

By day and time of day

Child care is mainly used after school. Figure 5.11 shows the use of child care per day and by the time of day.

Out-of school child care by day and time of day



5.11 Use of out-of-school child care for children aged 3-6 and 6-12 by day and by time of day in the Region of Flanders (percentages of all children aged 3-6 and 6-12) – spring 2004

Source: *Child and Family, Survey on the use of out-of-school child care for children aged 3-12, spring 2004*

Intensity of use of out-of-school child care

A small number of children make very frequent use of child care both before school and after school

We look at intensity of use over a week. 14.3% of the children being cared for make intense use of out-of-school care, that is 4 or 5 times before school and 4 or 5 times after school. 17% only make occasional use of this type of care, at most once before school and once after school (see Table 5.12).

Intensity of use of out-of-school child care

		After school			
		None or little use	Moderate use	High use	Total
Before school	None or little use (1)	17.0	25.4	21.5	63.9
	Moderate use (2)	3.7	6.0	1.3	11.0
	High use (3)	6.8	4.0	14.3	25.0
Total		27.4	35.4	37.1	100.0

5.12 Use of out-of-school care for children aged 3 to 12 years in the Region of Flanders by intensity of use – spring 2004 (percentages)

Source: *Child and Family, Survey on the use of out-of-school child care for children aged 3-12, spring 2004*

(1) None or little use: no use or only once a week

(2) Moderate use: 2 or 3 times a week

(3) High use: 4 or 5 times a week

1.2. Who looks after young children when parents are not doing this themselves?

1.2.1. Informal or formal child care?

Children aged under 3 mainly in formal child care; children aged 3 to 12 mainly in informal child care

Most children aged 3 months to 3 years who are cared for outside the home on a regular basis are cared for by family day care providers or in child care facilities recorded in the Child and Family records. In 2009, over 73% of the children aged 3 months to 3 years who regularly used child care were being cared for by a child minder affiliated to a child minders' service, a subsidised day care centre, private child minder, mini-crèche or private day care centre. 24% were being cared for under informal arrangements, mostly by grandparents (22.4%). The proportion of informal child care fell sharply between 2004 and 2009 (see Table 5.13).

Informal child care is the most important category for *children aged 3 to 12 years* (2004; more recent figures are not available): 45.5% of children in this age group are cared for by grandparents or in other informal arrangements. Grandparents are clearly the most important providers of informal child care accounting for 35.1%. Child care provided by and at the school comes in second place, with 34.5%. Formal child care in facilities recorded in the Child and Family records accounts for 17.1%. Out-of-school child care initiatives (IBOs) account for 11.5%. Between 2002 and 2004, there was a relative decrease in informal child care and a relative increase in child care provided by and at schools. Table 5.14 shows use of child care for children in the age groups 3 to 6 years and 6 to 12 years by type of child care.

Use of child care by type of child care

Children aged 3 months to 3 years	2004	2009
Informal child care	34.8	24.0
Formal child care in Child and Family records	63.6	73.4
Child care provided by schools and out-of-school child care initiatives	1.6	2.8
Total	100.0	100.0

5.13 Children aged 3 months to 3 years who regularly use child care, by type of child care – Region of Flanders (percentages)

Sources: *Child and Family, Survey on the use of child care for children aged under 3 – spring 2004*

Hedebouw G., Peetermans A., *Het gebruik van kinderopvang in Vlaanderen (Use of child care in Flanders), Support Centre for Wellbeing, Public Health and the Family, 2009*

Use of child care by type of child care

	Children aged	Children aged	Total
--	---------------	---------------	-------

	3-6	6-12	
Informal child care	45.3	45.6	45.5
Formal child care in Child and Family records	20.3	15.0	17.1
Child care provided by and at school	31.0	36.7	34.5
Two types of formal child care, both equally important	3.3	2.6	2.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

5.14 Children aged 3 to 12 years who regularly use child care, by type of child care – Region of Flanders – spring 2004

Sources: *Child and Family, Survey on the use of child care for children aged 3 to 12 and on the use of out-of-school child care, spring 2004*

1.2.2. Children in formal child care

Use of formal child care increasing. Increasing proportion of school children

General

The figures on the use of formal child care are based on a register of children attending and present at all formal child care facilities in the week beginning 1 February as recorded by Child and Family*. The number of children under 3 on the attendance registers is compared with the number of children under 3 recorded on Child and Family's IKAROS database. We switched to using IKAROS because the official population statistics only include the *de jure* population. The IKAROS database on the other hand includes virtually all children who live in Flanders (see chapter 1, section 1). Another reason is that we cannot get hold of up-to-date population statistics from the official sources as they are only published after a delay of a few years. We cannot use IKAROS for children in the 3 to 12 age group and so we continue to work with the official population figures.

** Formal child care in Child and Family records: registered and/or subsidised day care centres, child minders' services, out-of-school care provided in separate rooms at day care centres, private child minders, mini-crèches, private day care centres and out-of-school child care initiatives (IBOs), local neighbourhood child care services*

The term 'mini-crèche' ceased to be used from 1 January 2009. Since then the term 'private day care centre' has been used for all private child care facilities catering for 8 or more children

Use of formal child care for children under 12

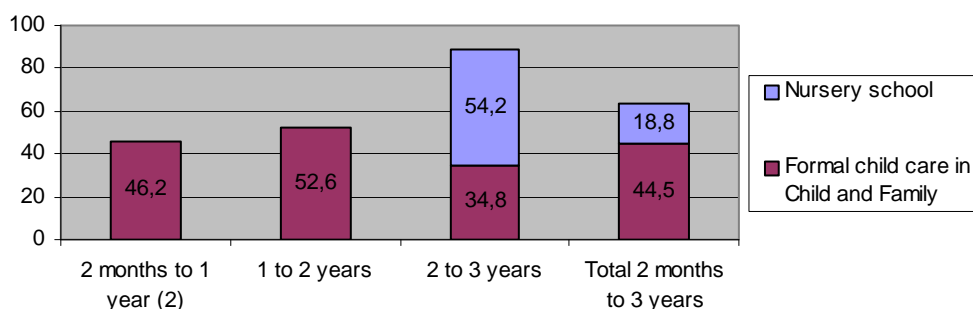
Use of formal child care is highest in the 1 to 2 years age group: 52.6% of children in this age group use formal child care facilities. Over 46% of children aged 2 to 12 months use formal child care. This drops down to 34.8% between 2 and 3 years, partly due to the fact that some children are now attending out-of-school child care initiatives (see Figure 5.15). From the age of 3 years only just over 16% of the children are still using formal child care facilities as recorded in the Child and Family records (see Figure 5.16).

Use of formal child care and nursery school for children under 3

Children in the 2 ½ to 3 years age group may be using both pre-school day care and the school system. In the week beginning 01.02.09, 54.2% of children aged 2 to 3 years were registered at a nursery school. When they are added to the figure for children using formal child care facilities recorded in the Child and Family records, it turns out that 89% of children aged 2 to 3 are using one of the two systems. Taking the total population of children aged 2 months to 3 years in Flanders, this means that 63.4% use one of the two systems: 44.5% use formal child care and 18.8% go to nursery school*.

** Children in the phase of transferring from child care to nursery school were only counted once*

Children aged under 3 years in formal child care and nursery school (1)



5.15 Children aged 2 months to 3 years attending formal child care facilities recorded in the Child and Family records and nursery school in the Region of Flanders by age – 2009 (percentages)

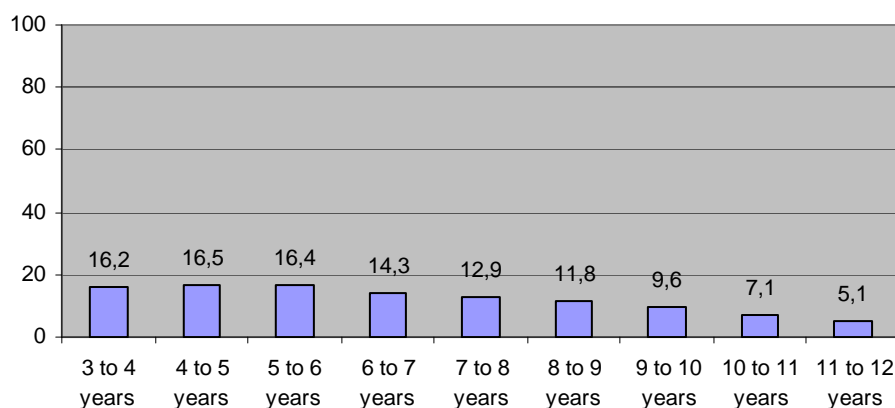
Sources: Child and Family, children's attendance records (week beginning 1 February 2009)

Education Department, school attendance figures on 01.02.09

(1) Percentage of children living in the Region of Flanders on 1/1/2009 according to the IKAROS database

(2) For children under the age of 1 year, the percentage was calculated on 10/12 of the total group

Children aged 3 to 12 years in formal child care (1)



5.16 Children aged 3 to 12 years attending formal child care facilities recorded in the Child and Family records in the Region of Flanders by age – 2009 (percentages)

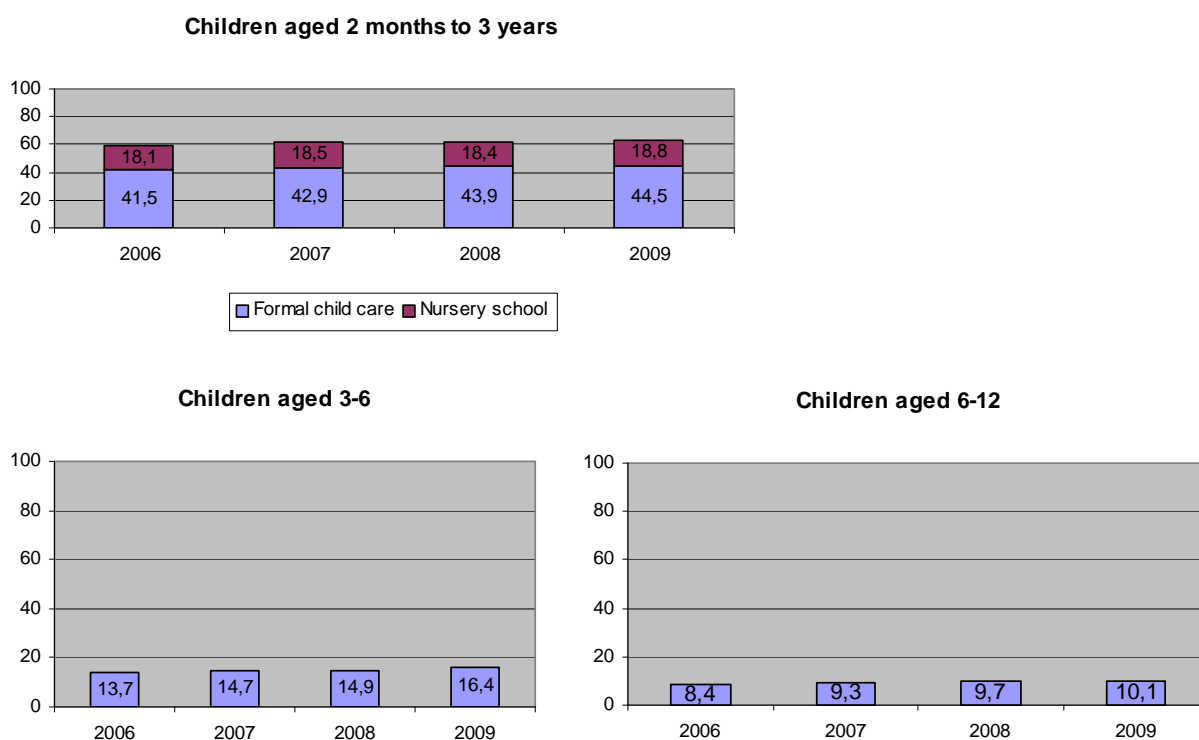
Source: Child and Family, children's attendance records (week beginning 1 February)

(1) Percentage of children living in the Region of Flanders on 1/1/2008 (figures for 1/1/2009 not yet available) according to the official population statistics, plus an estimated figure based on the IKAROS database to include children outside the 'de jure' population

Trend in the use of formal child care and nursery school

Use of formal child care for children aged 2 months to 3 years increased by 0.6% from 2008 to 2009, so the trend continues upwards. Attendance at nursery school also increased (+0.4%). There was also a slight increase in the use of formal child care in facilities recorded in the Child and Family records for children in the age groups 3 to 6 years and 6 to 12 years from 2008 to 2009 (+ 1.5% and + 0.4%) (see Figure 5.17).

Trend in the use of formal child care (1)



5.17 Trend in the use of formal child care and nursery school for children aged 2 months to 12 years, by age group since 2006 – Region of Flanders

Source: Child and Family, children's attendance records (week beginning 1 February)

(1) Children aged under 3: percentage of children living in the Region of Flanders according to the IKAROS database For children under the age of 1 year, the percentage was calculated on 10/12 of the total group

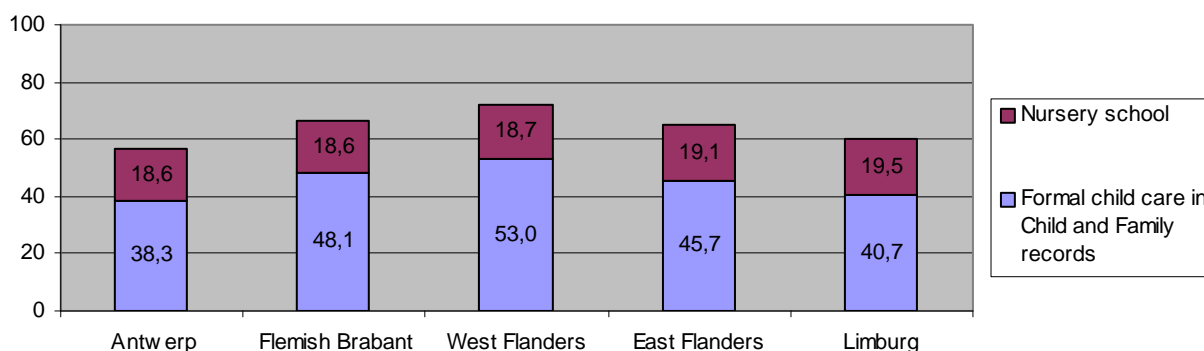
Children aged 3-12: percentage of children living in the Region of Flanders according to the official population statistics, plus an estimated figure based on the IKAROS database to include children outside the 'de jure' population

By province

Figure 5.18 shows the use of formal child care facilities recorded in the Child and Family records and nursery school for children *under the age of 3 years* by province. Use of *formal child care* by children *under the age of 3* is highest in West Flanders (53%). It is significantly lower in the provinces of Antwerp (38.3%) and Limburg (40.7%), with Flemish Brabant (48.1%) and East Flanders (45.7%) coming in-between. Use of *nursery school* for children in the 2 months to 3 years age group does not vary much by province: it fluctuates between 18.6% in Antwerp and Flemish Brabant and 19.5% in Limburg.

Figure 5.19 shows the use of formal child care in facilities recorded in the Child and Family records for children aged 3 to 12 years. In the 3 to 6 years age group, use of formal child care in facilities recorded in the Child and Family records is highest in Limburg (21.7%). West Flanders has the second highest use in this age group (21.1%), followed by East Flanders (16.9%). The provinces of Antwerp and Flemish Brabant have the lowest use of formal child care in facilities recorded in the Child and Family records (12.7% and 13.4% respectively). In the 6 to 12 age group, use is again highest in Limburg (15.4%). West Flanders has the second highest use in this age group (11.0%), In East Flanders it is 9.4%, in Flemish Brabant 8.8% and in Antwerp 8.3%.

Children aged under 3 years in formal child care and nursery school by province (1)



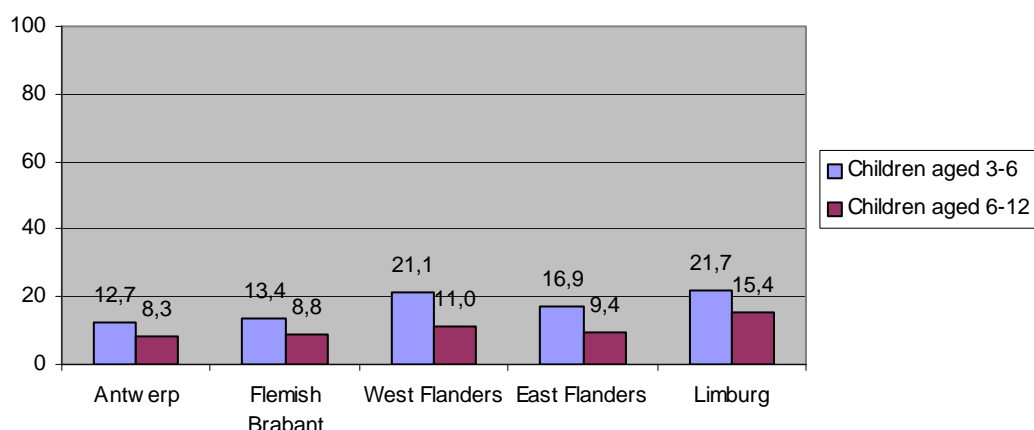
5.18 Children aged 2 months to 3 years attending formal child care facilities recorded in the Child and Family records and nursery school by province – 2009 (percentages)

Sources: *Child and Family, children's attendance records (week beginning 1 February)*

Education Department, school attendance figures on 01.02.09

(1) Percentage of children living in the Region of Flanders according to the IKAROS database For children under the age of 1 year, the percentage was calculated on 10/12 of the total group

Children aged 3 to 12 years in formal child care by province (1)



5.19 Children aged 3 to 12 years attending formal child care facilities recorded in the Child and Family records by province and age group – 2009 (percentages)

Source: *Child and Family, children's attendance records (week beginning 1 February)*

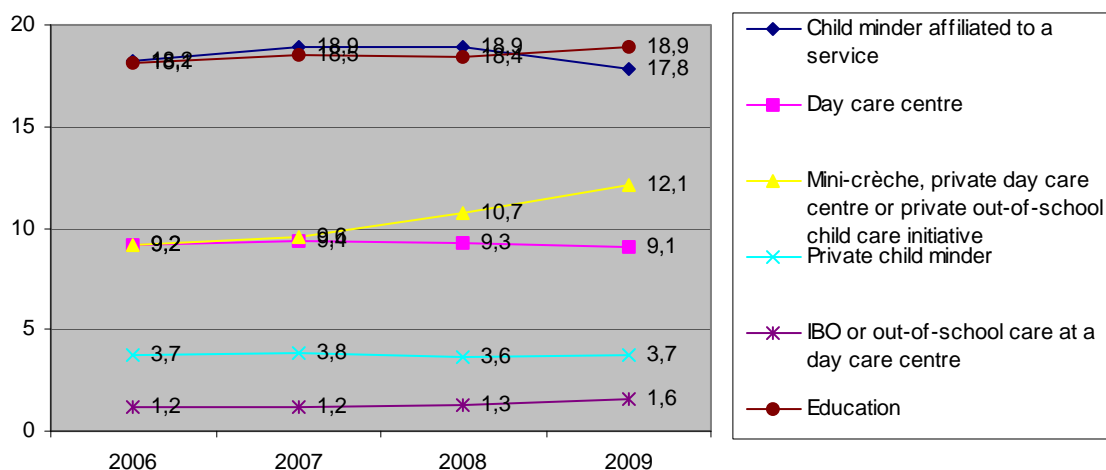
(1) Percentage of children living in each province on 1/1/2008 (figures for 1/1/2009 not yet available) according to the official population statistics, plus estimated figure based on the IKAROS database to include children outside the 'de jure' population

By type of child care facility

For children under the age of 3 years, the type of child care used the most is a child minder affiliated to a child minders' service: nearly 18% of all children aged 2 months to 3 years are cared for by a child minder affiliated to one of these services. Public day care centres take 9.1% of these children. Private day care centres and mini-crèches take 12.1%. Figure 5.20 shows the trend since 2006, when attendance records started to be kept. Care provided by mini-crèches or private day care centres increased quite sharply. The steady rise in the use of child minders came to an end in 2009 with a drop of 1%. Care provided by day care centres and out-of-school initiatives remained virtually unchanged. Use of nursery schools increased.

The main type of child care for *children over the age of 3* is the out-of-school child care initiative (IBO) or specific out-of-school facilities at day care centres (see Table 5.21). Use of IBOs or specific out-of-school child care facilities increased slightly from 2008 to 2009 (+0.6%).

Children aged under 3 by type of child care facility or nursery school (1) (2)



5.20 Children aged 2 months to 3 years by type of formal child care facility recorded in the Child and Family records or nursery school since 2006 – Region of Flanders (percentages)

Sources: Child and Family, children's attendance records (week beginning 1 February)

Education Department, school attendance figures on 1 February of the year in question

(1) Percentage of children living in the Region of Flanders according to the IKAROS database For children under the age of 1 year, the percentage was calculated on 10/12 of the total group

(2) Excluding local neighbourhood child care services (0.2% in 2009)

Children aged 3 to 12 years in formal child care by type of child care facility (1)

Children aged 3-6	
IBO or out-of-school care at a day care centre	12.8
Day care centre, child minder affiliated to a service, local neighbourhood child care service	2.1
Private sector	1.5
Total	16.4
Children aged 6-12	
IBO or out-of-school care at a day care centre (2)	8.9
Child minder affiliated to a service	0.6
Private sector	0.6
Total	10.1

5.21 Children aged 3 to 12 years attending formal child care facilities in the Region of Flanders, as recorded in the Child and Family records by age group and type of facility – 2009 (percentages)

Sources: Child and Family, children's attendance records (week beginning 1 February)

Education Department, school attendance figures on 01.02.09

(1) Percentage of children living in the Region of Flanders on 1/1/2008 (figures for 1/1/2009 not yet available) according to the official population statistics, plus estimated figure based on the IKAROS database to include children outside the 'de jure' population

(2) This is child care provided in separate rooms at day care centres

1.3. Taking care of sick children

Illness in children is not unusual and it involves changes in the type of child care used

A sick child creates a difficult situation for families who use child care facilities. In the week 2 to 8 February 2009, 13.2% of the *children aged 3 months to 3 years* who make regular or limited use of child care were ill during the week of the survey. The use of child care changed for 64.6% of the children who were ill. Many parents make arrangements within the immediate or extended family, by taking leave, days off in lieu or social leave, by working at home or by calling on the grandparents (see Table 5.22). Noticeably more different arrangements have to be made when the sick child is normally cared for by a child minder affiliated to a service (73.5%) or in a registered day care centre (72.2%). Children who are normally looked after by grandparents or other relatives experience the least change in child care (47.3%). Grandparents play a big role in looking after sick children and this increased from 2004 to 2009. We have no information on care arrangements for school-age children when they are ill.

Child care used in the event of illness: children aged under 3

Impact on the child care	
Child care arrangements not changed	35.4
Child care arrangements changed	64.6
Total	100.0
Nature of the change (1)	
Non-working partner looked after the child	14.9
Parent took social leave	26.2
Parent took leave or days off in lieu	24.5
Parent worked at home	6.8
Grandparents looked after the child	64.4
Relatives, neighbours, acquaintances looked after the child	4.5
Used service that provides care for sick children	3.5
Other	5.3

5.22 Care in the event of illness of children aged between 3 months and 3 years who normally use child care facilities or attend nursery school in the Region of Flanders – spring 2009 (percentages)

Source: Hedebouw G., Peetermans A., *Het gebruik van kinderopvang in Vlaanderen (Use of child care in Flanders)*, Support Centre for Wellbeing, Public Health and the Family, 2009

(1) Several answers possible

1.4. Wellbeing and engagement

1.4.1. On going to their child care

Saying goodbye is not difficult

To bring the child's perspective into the picture, the survey of the use of child care in Flanders* included a number of questions about children's wellbeing. Parents were asked about their child's demeanour when they leave him or her at the child care facility. They were presented with three statements about how their child usually feels when left at the child care facility: your child is relaxed; it is difficult to say goodbye; and your child is interested in what is going to happen.

Most parents agreed (37.1%) or totally agreed (49.7%) that their child was relaxed when taken to the child care facility (Table 5.23). Conversely two-thirds of parents did not agree with the statement that saying goodbye is difficult. The statement 'my child is interested in what is going to happen' evoked a more moderate response: over two-thirds of the respondents agreed (47.2%) or totally agreed (22.4%). However, some parents, especially the parents of very young children, found this rather more difficult to answer. The

lower response rates are also an indication of this. Overall we can say that the children's stress levels (according to the parents) were rather lower than might have been expected, and quite a large group were interested in what they were going to do that day at child care.

* Source: Hedebouw G., Peetermans A., *Het gebruik van kinderopvang in Vlaanderen (Use of child care in Flanders)*, Support Centre for Wellbeing, Public Health and the Family, 2009

	Child's demeanour when left at child care (1)				
	Totally disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Totally agree
Child is relaxed (N=2 256)	1.6	2.9	8.6	37.1	49.7
Saying goodbye is difficult (N=2 233)	33.3	33.7	14.7	13.8	4.6
Child is interested in what is going to happen (N=2221)	1.7	5.1	23.8	47.2	22.4

5.23 Demeanour of children aged 3 months to 3 years when left at their child care facility – Region of Flanders – 2009

Source: Hedebouw G., Peetermans A., *Het gebruik van kinderopvang in Vlaanderen (Use of child care in Flanders)*, Support Centre for Wellbeing, Public Health and the Family, 2009

(1) In percentages of regular and limited users of child care over the most commonly used types of child care – postal survey only.

Includes both children attending formal child care facilities and children looked after by grandparents or other family members

1.4.2. While at the child care facility

From expert observations

Over 39% of the children are moderately to intensively engaged in activities while at their child care; almost 51% of the children are observed to have a high level of wellbeing

A project conducted by the Experience-based Education Expertise Centre, KU Leuven (ECEGO) in partnership with Child and Family in 2004-02/2009 assessed the degree of engagement and levels of wellbeing of a large group of children* (more than 10 000). A scanning procedure was used for the assessment, which involved observing each child in the group in turn for 2 minutes. The assessment was performed by ECEGO staff.

Engagement is recognised by a high level of concentration, in which children are so absorbed in what they are doing that they do not notice time passing. They are highly motivated. They have an open attitude and are keen to make use of what the environment has to offer. These children engage in intense mental activity and soak up experiences. The source of engagement is the child's own drive to explore and discover. Engagement is only possible when the child makes use of all his/her abilities to the full and gives of his/her best.

Children with a high level of *wellbeing* feel on top of the world. Their lives are dominated by enjoyable feelings: they get pleasure and enjoyment from each other and from things. They radiate vitality, but also relaxation and inner calm. They are open and receptive to whatever comes their way. They are spontaneous and have the confidence to be themselves. Wellbeing is associated with self-confidence, self-esteem and assertiveness. The essence of this is in being in touch with their own feelings and experiences, fresh and undistorted.

21% of the children in *day care centres* or with a *child minder* who were assessed, were found to be in the "low engagement" zone, in other words they were not really active. 41% were moderately engaged; they were active without being really involved. 38% of the children were actively engaged or very actively engaged during the observation. Of the children attending *out-of-school child care facilities*: 22.3% were found to have a low level of engagement, 34% a moderate level and 43.7% were actively engaged or very

actively engaged (see Table 5.24). The average scores for engagement were slightly lower for the younger children than the older ones, going from 2.931 for children aged 6 months to 1 year, to 3.382 for the 6- to 12-year-olds.

** Measurements taken in 620 child care settings which volunteered to participate in a project to monitor the implementation of a self-evaluation instrument for wellbeing and engagement of children in child care facilities*

Level of engagement at the child care facility			
	Children at day care centres and with child minders (N= 8 049)	Children at out-of-school child care facilities (N=2 585)	Total (N=10 634)
Low (1)	21.0	22.3	21.3
Moderate (2)	41.0	34.0	39.3
High (3)	38.0	43.7	39.4

5.24 Scores for level of engagement of children while they are at their child care facilities, for children at day care centres and with child minders and for children at out-of-school child care facilities – 2004-02/2009 (percentages)

Source: Experience-based Education Expertise Centre, KU Leuven, Final report 2009

(1) Low: covers scores 1, no activity, and 2, frequently interrupted activity

(2) Moderate: score 3, activity without intense engagement

(3) High: covers scores 4, activity with moments of intense engagement, and 5, uninterrupted intense activity

A situation of relatively high or very high wellbeing was noted for 49.4% of the children being cared for in a *day care centre* or with a *child minder*. They were obviously doing well at their child care facility. 6.1% of the children assessed fell into the “low wellbeing” zone. “Moderate wellbeing” was noted for 44.5% of the children. Of the children attending *out-of-school child care facilities*, the assessment concluded that 4.6% had a low level of wellbeing, 41% moderate wellbeing and 54.4% a high level of wellbeing (see Table 5.25). Once again, the average level of wellbeing was lower for the youngest children than for the older ones. The average wellbeing score for children under 6 months was 3.465; the highest score was recorded for the age group 3 to 6 (3.722).

Wellbeing in child care			
	Children at day care centres and with child minders (N=6 761)	Children at out-of-school child care facilities (N=2 233)	Total (N=8 994)
Low (1)	6.1	4.6	5.7
Moderate (2)	44.5	41.0	43.6
High (3)	49.4	54.4	50.7

5.25 Scores for level of wellbeing of children while they are at their child care facilities, for children at day care centres and with child minders and for children at out-of-school child care facilities – 2004-02/2009 (percentages)

Source: Experience-based Education Expertise Centre, KU Leuven, Final report 2009

(1) Low: covers scores 1, very low wellbeing, and 2, low wellbeing

(2) Moderate: score 3, neutral-moderate wellbeing

(3) High: covers scores 4, high wellbeing, and 5, very high wellbeing

As reported by parents

The survey into the use of child care in Flanders 2009* asked parents some questions about how their child

felt at their child care facility. They were asked how their child felt with the people who looked after him/her; how the child felt with the other children at the child care facility; and how the child felt about the toys and activities on offer. The majority of parents said that the child felt happy with the people looking after him/her. For the two other questions, feelings about the other children and the play activities on offer, the scores were lower (55.9% and 56.7% very happy and 38.7% and 37.9% happy), but overall the outcome was still good.

* Source: Hedeboom G., Peetermans A., *Het gebruik van kinderopvang in Vlaanderen (Use of child care in Flanders)*, Support Centre for Wellbeing, Public Health and the Family, 2009

Extent to which the child feels happy at child care facility (1)					
	Very happy	Happy	Sometimes happy, sometimes unhappy	Rather unhappy	Very unhappy
With the people looking after the child (N=2 253)	75.1	22.3	2.5	0.1	0.0
With the other children (N=2 069)	55.9	38.7	5.2	0.1	0.0
With the toys and activities (N=2 137)	56.7	37.9	5.2	0.2	0.0

5.26 Extent to which children aged 3 months to 3 years feel happy at their child care facility – Region of Flanders – 2009

Bron: Hedeboom G., Peetermans A., *Het gebruik van kinderopvang in Vlaanderen, Steunpunt WVG, 2009*

(1) In percentages of regular and limited users of child care over the most commonly used types of child care – postal survey only. Includes both children attending formal child care facilities and children looked after by grandparents or other family members

2. Special education

Even at nursery school age some children do not attend a mainstream school; at primary level this goes up to almost 7%. More and more children are in integrated mainstream schools

0.81% of children of nursery school age receive special nursery school provision, mainly of type 2: special education for children with a moderate or serious cognitive disability. At primary level over 6.7% of children go to special schools: mainly type 1, special education for children with minor cognitive disabilities; and type 8, special education for children with speech, language and/or serious learning disorders (see Table 5.27).

Special education (1)		
	Nursery school	Primary school
Minor cognitive disabilities (type 1)	-	9 920
Moderate or serious cognitive disabilities (type 2)	1 106	3 692
Behavioural problems (type 3)	193	2 216
Physical disability (type 4)	296	1 143
Visual impairment (type 6)	41	121
Hearing impairment (type 7)	341	929
Speech, language and/or serious learning disorders (type 8)	-	9 522
Total number of children	1 977	27 543
Percentage	0.81	6.73

5.27 Children in special education in Flanders: number and percentage of children attending school – 2008-

2009 school year

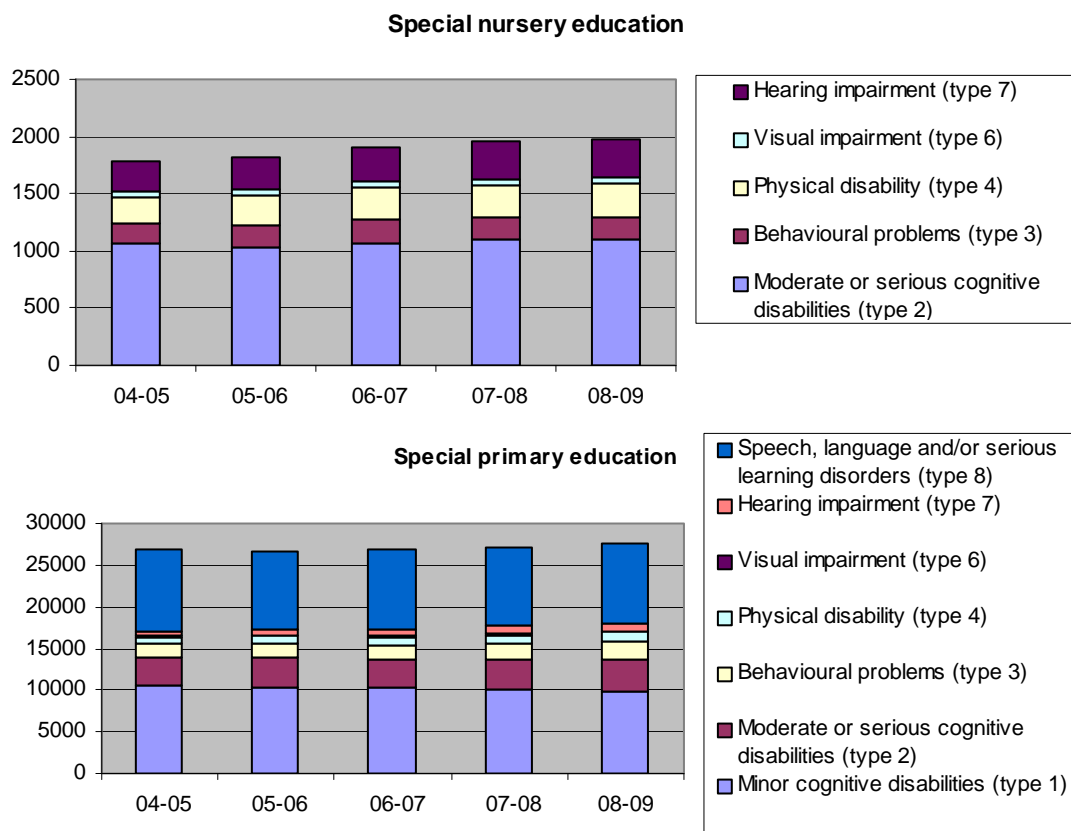
Source: Statistical Yearbook of Flemish Education, 2008-2009 school year

(1) To prevent pupils being counted twice, hospital schools (type 5) were not included

The number of children in both special nursery education and special primary education increased slightly in the 2008-2009 school year (+1.4 en +1.5%), despite the increased resources for special needs in mainstream schools (see Figure 5.28).

In 2008-2009, there were 1 355 children in mainstream nursery schools who were receiving help from special schools to enable them to receive mainstream schooling (integrated schooling). There were 4 525 such children in primary schools. The number of children having integrated schooling increased by 9.7% at nursery level and 8.8% at primary level from the 2007-2008 school year.

Special education: trend by type



5.28 Trend in the number of pupils in special primary education in Flanders in each school year and by type of special education

Source: Statistical Yearbook of Flemish Education

3. Children receiving supervision and support via special youth welfare

When problems arise or in a crisis involving young children, or when living, employment, home, health or financial circumstances create a need for day and night care, parents can call upon services registered and subsidised by Child and Family. A small number of children receive supervision and support through these special welfare services. In addition, supervision and support measures are in place for a number of young children via the special youth welfare committees and the juvenile courts.

3.1. Supervision and support via the special youth welfare service, subsidised by Child and Family

Some children and their families are given support or care in child care and family support centres or via services providing foster care as a means of supporting the family. This is short-term care at the parents' request on account of special life, work, home, health or financial circumstances. On 01.02.10, 1 538 children, almost exclusively under the age of 12, were receiving supervision and support in *child care and family support centres* and there were 152 children in foster families who had been placed there by the *foster care services*. A total of 1 690 children were receiving supervision and support via the special youth welfare service, subsidised by Child and Family. Altogether the number of children receiving supervision and support had increased by 9.6% since 2009 (see Table 5.29).

	Supervision and support via Child and Family					Total
	2009	2010				
	Total	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3-6	Children aged 6-12	Children aged 12 and above	
Childcare and family support centres	1 407	570	390	534	35	1 538*
Foster care services offering temporary family support	135	35	61	54	2	152
Total	1 542	605	451	588	37	1 690*

5.29 Number of children receiving supervision and support from a special youth welfare service on 1 February 2009 and 1 February 2010, subsidised by Child and Family

Source: Child and Family

* Only included in total: 9 children whose age is unknown

3.2. Supervision and support via the special youth welfare service

A total of 8 965 children under the age of 12 came into contact with a special youth welfare committee or social services linked to the juvenile court in 2008: 1 024 were under 3 years, 2 079 were aged 3 to 6 and 5 862 were aged 6 to 12.

In 2008 the Youth Welfare Agency of the Ministry of the Flemish Community introduced a new registration system (Domino). The most important changes this brought were the extension of registration to measures that only involve an interview or which are outside the scope of the special youth welfare service and full registration of measures. Caution will have to be exercised therefore when making comparisons with the year before.

Supervision and support via the special youth welfare service		
	2007	2008
Children aged under 3	798	1 024
Children aged 3-6	1 734	2 079

Children aged 6-12	5 043	5 862
Total	7 575	8 965

5.30 Number of children in contact with a special youth welfare committee or social services linked to the juvenile court

Source: Ministry of the Flemish Community, Youth Welfare Agency

What measures are being taken? Information about the measures taken is also being centralised in the Domino registration system. We only look at the most important supervision and support measures involving residential, peripatetic* or mobile supervision** within the framework of the special youth welfare services. Supervisory measures such as the reprimand, preventive social action, guidance by a counsellor or school, general welfare work and services offered by the Flemish Agency for Disabled People, etc. are not considered here. When analysing this data it must be remembered that a child may be the subject of more than one measure during the course of a year.

Most of the children under 3 were placed with a foster family provided by foster care services (341 children) or given supervision and guidance at home (138 children). For most of the children aged 3 to 6 years, measures taken involved placement in a foster family (649 children), supervision and guidance at home (393 children) or admission to a children's home (228 children). Services to the 6 to 12 age group included foster care (1 299 children), residential care (880 children), day care centres (452 children) and reception and orientation centres (305 children) (see Table 5.31).

The increase in the number of children receiving supervision and guidance at home from 2007 to 2008 can be partly attributed to a change in the way the records are kept. Until 2007, in the case of families with several children, only the youngest child was registered, regardless of whether more than one child was receiving supervision. Since 2008 it has increasingly become the norm to register all the children involved in the home supervision.

*Peripatetic supervision: supervision and guidance provided at a facility (e.g. counselling or group work with parents and/or children)

**Mobile supervision: context and/or family guidance at home

Type of supervision and support (1)

	Children aged under 3		Children aged 3-6		Children aged 6-12		Total	
	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008
	General hospitals	20	53	10	21	34	36	64
Residential children's homes	51	46	222	228	815	880	1 088	1 154
Day centres	0	0	4	3	446	452	450	455
Foster care services	344	341	649	649	1 260	1 299	2 253	2 289
Family hostels	0	0	5	3	16	14	21	17
Reception and orientation centres	13	15	74	85	300	305	387	405
Special youth welfare projects	0	3	4	16	4	22	8	41
Psychiatric hospitals/care homes	3	3	9	1	28	33	40	37
Supervision and guidance at home (2)	127	138	331	393	650	851	1 108	1 382

5.31 Children receiving supervision and support via the special youth welfare service: number of children by the most important supervision measure and by age

Source: Ministry of the Flemish Community, Youth Welfare Agency

(1) Children who are admitted to more than one facility are counted each time

(2) In 2007, in the case of families with several children, only the youngest child was registered, regardless of whether more than one

child was receiving supervision. In 2008 all the children involved were registered

4. The European context

Child care and educational provision for children under compulsory school age (pre-primary) varies greatly from one country to another. These services are referred to by the OECD and other international organisations as Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). We outline first the ECEC provision in the EU-15 countries before presenting some figures on the use of these child-rearing environments outside the home.

4.1. Summary of child care and education for children under compulsory school age

The compulsory school age is 6 in most of the EU-15 countries. Compulsory schooling starts earlier in Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom (5 years) and later in the Nordic countries (7 years). Broadly speaking, child care and educational provision for children under compulsory school age can be divided into 3 categories: group-based child care (crèches), child care in a family environment (family day care providers) and pre-primary education. Another way to distinguish between the facilities is based on their funding: publicly or privately funded. Facilities in the 'public' category get most of their funding from the government and are run by public authorities. Facilities in the 'private' category are usually run by governing bodies operating either on a non-profit or a for-profit basis, and are financed by a mix of public funds and private resources (parents).

One major point of difference between the EU-15 countries concerns whether or not there is an integrated structure to their ECEC provision. In most EU-15 countries there is a divide around the age of 3, with child care in group facilities or provided by child minders for children under 3 and pre-primary education for children from about the age of 3 onwards. Finland, Sweden and to some extent Denmark are exceptions to this pattern, as they have integrated child care and pre-primary education services for young children up to the age of compulsory schooling. In the Netherlands, Portugal, Austria, the United Kingdom and Ireland, services for the youngest children are mainly funded and organised privately. In the other EU-15 countries, governments provide considerable levels of funding for the services for very young children (see Table 5.32).

		ECEC services (1)							
		0	1 year	2	3 years	4 years	5 years	6 years	7 years
		years		years					
Community of Flanders	<i>Kinderdagverblijven</i> (group child care) <i>Onthaalouders</i> (family day care providers)								
					<i>Kleuterschool</i> (pre-primary), with out-of-school care				Compulsory education
French Community	<i>Crèches</i> (group child care) <i>Gardiennes</i> (family day care providers)								
					<i>Ecole maternelle</i> (pre-primary), with out-of-school care				Compulsory education

Neighbouring countries

Chapter 5. Children and child-rearing environments outside the home

Germany	<i>Krippen</i> (group day care)	<i>Kindergarten</i> (pre-school)	Compulsory education
France	<i>Crèches</i> (group child care) <i>Assistantes maternelles</i> (family day care providers)	<i>Ecole maternelle</i> (pre-school)	Compulsory education
Luxembourg	<i>Crèches</i> (group child care) <i>Tagesmutter</i> (family day care providers)	Enseignement pré scolaire (pre-school)	Compulsory education
Luxembourg	<i>Crèches</i> (group child care) <i>Tagesmutter</i> (family day care providers)	Enseignement pré scolaire (pre-school)	Compulsory education
The Netherlands	<i>Gastouderopvang</i> (family day care providers) <i>Crèches</i> (group child care) Play groups (group child care)	First year of primary school	Compulsory education

Nordic countries

Finland	<i>Perhepäivähoito</i> (family day care providers) <i>Paivakoti</i> (group child care)	<i>Esiopetus</i> (pre-school)	Compulsory education
Denmark	<i>Dagpleje</i> (family day care providers) <i>Vuggestuer</i> (group child care) <i>Adlersintegrer</i> (group child care)	<i>Børnehaver</i> (kindergarten) <i>Børnehaver</i> (pre-school)	Compulsory education
Sweden	<i>Forskola</i> (pre-primary) / <i>Familjedaghem</i> (family day care providers) (limited)	<i>Forskoleklas</i> (pre-school)	Compulsory education

Mediterranean countries

Greece	<i>Vrefonipiaki stahmi</i> (group child care)	Nursery school (pre-primary) <i>Nipiagogeia</i> (pre-primary)	Compulsory education
Italy	<i>Asili nidi</i> (group child care)	<i>Scuola dell'infanzia</i> (pre-school)	Compulsory education
Portugal	<i>Crèches familiare</i> (family day care providers) <i>Crèches</i> (group child care)	<i>Jardims de infancia</i> (pre-primary)	Compulsory education
Spain	<i>Educación pre-escolar</i> (group child care)	<i>Educación infantil</i> (pre-school with primary education)	Compulsory education

Austria	<i>Tagesmutter</i> (family day care providers) <i>Krippen</i> (group day care)	<i>Kindergarten</i> (pre-school), with out-of-school care	Compulsory education
The United Kingdom	Nurseries (group child care) Child minders (family day care providers) Playgroups (group child care)	Playgroups (group child care) Nurseries (group child care)	Reception class in primary school
Ireland	Regulated family day care providers Nurseries (group child care)	Early Start and Infant School (pre-school with primary education)	Compulsory education
		Play groups (group child care)	

5.32 Summary of child care and education provision for children under compulsory school age and the age at which compulsory education starts in the EU-15 countries

Source: OECD Family database (website)

(1) ECEC: Early Childhood Education and Care

Key for Table:

orange: private. Private: mainly run by governing bodies operating on either a non-profit or a for-profit basis, and financed by a mix of public funds and private resources (parents).

green: public. Public: mainly funded and run by public authorities

grey: compulsory education

4.2. Child care and education for children under compulsory school age

First of all we look at the percentage of children for whom no child care is used; in other words, their parents take care of them entirely by themselves. Together with the Netherlands, Denmark and Portugal, the Region of Flanders is one of the countries/regions where very few under-3s receive no child care at all. In Germany, Finland and Austria, a large percentage of parents care for their children exclusively up to the age of 3 (64%, 72% and 67% respectively) (see Table 5.33).

Exclusive care by parents				
	2005	2006	2007	2008
Region of Flanders	34.2 (1)	n/a	n/a	31.0 (2)
Belgium	45	43	40	43
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>				
Germany	62	76	n/a	64
France	48	50	50	45
Luxembourg	44	38	45	43
The Netherlands	30	25	22	24
<i>Nordic countries</i>				
Finland	70	70	70	72
Denmark	27	26	29	27
Sweden	47	52	50	47
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>				
Greece	47	41	49	37
Italy	53	50	54	52

Portugal	27	23	37	28
Spain	44	42	41	45
Austria	68	61	66	67
The United Kingdom	48	45	38	46
Ireland	47	52	55	53

5.33 Percentage of children under 3 for whom no child care (formal or informal) is used and who also do not go to school

Source: *Child and Family, Survey on the use of child care for children aged under 3 – spring 2004*

Hedebouw G., Peetermans A., *Het gebruik van kinderopvang in Vlaanderen (Use of child care in Flanders), Support Centre for Wellbeing, Public Health and the Family, 2009*

EU-SILC (website)

(1) Figures for 2004

(2) Figures for 2009

Figures on the use of formal child care and education for children under compulsory school age distinguishing between use for less than 30 hours a week and use for more than 30 hours a week.

The figures for children under 3 are unreliable for quite a few countries. Among the EU-15 countries for which reliable figures are available, it is striking what large differences there are in the use of child care for *children under 3*. Germany, Luxembourg, Finland and Italy have low rates of use: both numbers making limited use of child care (<30 hours) and numbers making intense use of child care (>30 hours) are low. Belgium, Spain and France are in the middle of the range. Denmark has very high rates of use: over 70% with high rates of intense use (>30 hours) too (see Table 5.34).

For children from *age 3 to compulsory school age* there are reliable figures for most EU countries. Here too we see major differences. First of all there are the countries with very high rates of use (\pm 90% or more) and intense use (>30 hours a week): Belgium, Denmark, Sweden and Italy. A second group of countries comprise those with very high use but low intensity (many parents using child care for less than 30 hours): Germany, France, the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom. Finland, Portugal and Italy have slightly lower rates of use but more high intensity users (relatively more >30 hours). Luxembourg, Austria and Ireland have slightly lower rates of use, largely also at lower intensity (many parents using child care for less than 30 hours) (see Table 5.35).

Use of formal child care and education for children under 3				
	2005		2008	
	<30 hours per week	>30 hours per week	<30 hours per week	>30 hours per week
Belgium	23	19	20	23
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>				
Germany	8	8	11	9
France	16	16	17	24
Luxembourg	14	8*	13	13
The Netherlands	36	4*	41	6*
<i>Nordic countries</i>				
Finland	8	19	5	21
Denmark	13*	60	8*	65
Sweden	22	31	18	31

Chapter 5. Children and child-rearing environments outside the home

<i>Mediterranean countries</i>				
Greece	3*	4*	5*	7*
Italy	9	16	12	16
Portugal	4*	26	2*	31*
Spain	25	14	22	16
Austria	4*	0*	4*	2*
The United Kingdom	24	5	31	4*
Ireland	14	6*	16	8*

5.34 Percentage of children under 3 using formal child care or going to school, by number of hours

Sources: EU-SILC

* Not reliable

Use of formal child care and education for children from age 3 to compulsory school age				
	2005		2008	
	<30 hours per week	>30 hours per week	<30 hours per week	>30 hours per week
Belgium	50	48	25	74
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>				
Germany	61	26	55	36
France	56	39	52	43
Luxembourg	51	12*	54	23*
The Netherlands	82	7	77	12
<i>Nordic countries</i>				
Finland	25	51	20	58
Denmark	15	79	13	83
Sweden	35	52	31	64
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>				
Greece	27	34	40	27
Italy	21	70	19	72
Portugal	12*	18*	9*	69
Spain	54	40	50	45
Austria	53	16	51	20
The United Kingdom	64	24	67	20
Ireland	64	14	72	13

5.35 Percentage of children from age 3 to compulsory school age using formal child care or going to school, by number of hours

Source: EU-SILC

* Not reliable

CHAPTER 6. ASPECTS OF THE HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG CHILDREN

In this chapter we start by looking at data on pregnancy and giving birth, also covering how pregnancy is achieved and antenatal care. We look at where women give birth and a number of statistics relating to births, including the baby's birth weight, an important indicator for the health of young children. Then we examine a number of mortality criteria. Perinatal mortality and infant mortality are generally regarded as good indicators of the quality of a country's health system. We zoom in on mortality of children up to the age of 15, the number of deaths and the causes of death. In the context of morbidity in young children, we describe congenital abnormalities and hearing loss identified in the neonatal period. We also look at a number of diseases and disorders that are relevant to the young child, admissions to hospital, and children's need for special care and guidance as reported by their parents. Data on child abuse are an area of particular interest. We conclude with a number of figures from the EU-15 countries.

1. Data on pregnancy and childbirth

1.1. Becoming pregnant and antenatal care

Increasing number of pregnancies following medically assisted fertility treatment. Almost all births follow a pregnancy in which the mother-to-be was monitored and cared for by a gynaecologist

A number of pregnancies not to be underestimated, i.e. 5.4%, were achieved following *fertility treatment*. 2.1% of women who gave birth in 2008 (figures for 2009 not yet available) had had *hormone therapy*, 1.9% had undergone *in vitro fertilisation (IVF)*, in 1.4% the pregnancy was achieved following intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI). The number of births following fertility treatment increased slightly compared with 2007, by 0.4%. 32.7% of multiple pregnancies came about following medically assisted fertilisation. This was the case for only 4.9%* of single births.

Antenatal care in Flanders is mainly provided by gynaecologists: in 2009, 94.5% of births followed a pregnancy in which the antenatal care was provided by a private gynaecologist and 4.5% in which the antenatal care was shared by a gynaecologist and a general practitioner. This state of affairs hardly changed from 2008 to 2009. The number of babies born following pregnancies not involving medical care is very low indeed (0.1%) (see Table 6.1).

* Source: Study Centre for Perinatal Epidemiology (SPE)

Antenatal care (1)		
	2008	2009
Private gynaecologist	95.1	94.5
Shared (2)	3.8	4.5
GP	0.2	0.2
Child and Family antenatal centre	0.2	0.1
Midwife	0.6	0.5
No antenatal care	0.1	0.1
Total	100.0	100.0

6.1 Antenatal care: babies born by type of antenatal care – Region of Flanders (percentages)

Source: Child and Family - IKAROS

(1) Both live births and stillbirths

(2) Shared: antenatal care provided by private gynaecologist and GP

1.2. Place where women give birth and length of stay in the maternity hospital

Home births and very short stays in hospital are very rare. Reduced stay in hospital on the increase

In 2009 almost all babies were born in a *maternity hospital*. Only 1.1% were born at home or somewhere else but not in a maternity hospital. This figure is unchanged since 2008.

In over 45% of births, the mother spent 5 or 6 *nights in the maternity hospital*. Very short hospital stays (2 nights or less) are rare (5.9% of births); reduced hospital stays occurred in 38.4% of births and long stays in 9.3%. Once again there was a decrease in normal hospital stays (-2.3%) and an increase in reduced hospital stays (+2.9%) from 2008 to 2009 (see Table 6.2).

Place where women give birth and length of stay in the maternity hospital (1)		
	2008	2009
Maternity hospital	98.9	98.9
<i>of which</i>		
<i>very short stay in hospital (max. 2 nights)</i>	5.8	5.9
<i>reduced stay in hospital (3 or 4 nights)</i>	35.5	38.4
<i>normal stay in hospital (5 or 6 nights)</i>	47.6	45.3
<i>long stay in hospital (7 nights or more)</i>	10.0	9.3
Home birth, or other place (2) apart from maternity hospitals	1.1	1.1
Total	100.0	100.0

6.2 Births by place of the birth and length of the mother's stay in the maternity hospital – Region of Flanders (percentages)

Source: Child and Family - IKAROS

(1) Both live births and stillbirths

(2) For example: birthing centre

1.3. Data on the mothers and the births*

First of all we look at the *age* of the mother on giving birth (2008 figures): 69.8% of women who gave birth were aged 25 to 35. Young mothers, i.e. mothers under 20, made up 2% of women giving birth. 14.3% were over 35, and 2.2% were in fact over 40. The *average age of mothers on giving birth* to their first child was 28.1 years, and it was 31.1 years for multiparae. The average age was virtually unchanged since 2007 (primiparae +0.1 months). For 46.9% of these women, this was their first delivery; 53.1% had given birth before.

In 2008, 7.4% of pregnant women gave birth *prematurely*, following a pregnancy of less than 37 weeks. This figure represents a slight increase over 2007 (+ 0.4%).

In 25.3% of women, the birth was *induced*, usually for reasons of convenience either for the obstetrician or the pregnant woman. The downward trend in inductions first noted in 2004 continued in 2008, with a decrease of 0.3%. Before 2004, 30% or more births were still being induced.

Epidural anaesthesia was used for 67.4% of births. The incidence of epidurals increased slightly over 2007 (+0.8%).

In 2008 no *maternal deaths* were recorded. In 2007 3 women died giving birth. The maternal mortality rate in Flanders has remained steady at around 1 recorded death in 15 000 births for over 20 years (since 1987).

* Source: Study Centre for Perinatal Epidemiology (SPE)

1.4. Data on births*

Specialist medical equipment and procedures are used to assist in bringing quite a number of babies into the world in Flanders. In 2008 20.2% of babies were born by Caesarean section (+0.5%). In 9.5% of deliveries, vacuum extraction** was used and in 0.8% forceps were used. 69.3% of babies were born *without obstetric intervention*. The increase in the number of Caesareans can be mainly attributed to the increase in the incidence of twins.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines *low birth weight* as less than 2 500 grams at birth regardless of how long the pregnancy lasted. Low birth weight is an important indicator of children's health because children with a low weight at birth are at greater risk of poor health or dying, they stay in hospital for longer after they are born and they are at greater risk of developing disabilities. The relative proportion of *babies with a low birth weight* (less than 2 500 grams) was 6.9% (+0.2%). The birth weight of 1.1% of children was extremely low (less than 1 500 grams) (see Table 6.3). 57.4% of the babies who were in the multiple birth category weighed less than 2 500 grams at birth. This was the case for only 5% of single births.

3.6% of babies came into the category of *multiple births* (-0.2%). 3.6% of babies were born a twin and 0.1% were born a triplet. 1 251 twin births and 13 triplet births were registered. The incidence of twins was quite a bit higher than in 2007 (+130 or +11.6%). Since records began (1987) the incidence of twins has never exceeded the figure for 2008. The incidence of triplets fell (-4).

After the birth, 13% of babies were transferred to a *neonatal unit* and 3.9% to a *neonatal intensive care unit*. The number of transfers to a neonatal unit or to a neonatal intensive care unit was virtually unchanged since 2007.

* Source: Study Centre for Perinatal Epidemiology (SPE)

**Vacuum extraction: delivery of a baby with the aid of an instrument that attaches to the baby's head by means of a vacuum

Data on births		
	2007	2008
Sex		
Boy	51.1	51.4
Girl	48.9	48.6
Method of delivery		
Spontaneous	69.8	69.3
Vacuum extraction	9.5	9.5
Forceps	0.8	0.8
Caesarean	19.7	20.2
Breech	0.3	0.3
Birth weight		
Low (< 2 500 grams)	6.7	6.9
<i>of which extremely low (< 1 500 grams)</i>	1.1	1.1
2 500 grams or more	93.3	93.1
Ranking		
First-born	47.2	46.9
Second baby	34.6	34.9
Third baby	12.2	12.2
Fourth or subsequent baby	6.0	5.9

<u>Single or multiple birth</u>		
Single baby	96.6	96.4
Baby is one of twins	3.3	3.6
Baby is one of triplets	0.1	0.1
<u>Neonatology transfer</u>		
Neonatal unit	13.2	13.0
Neonatal intensive care unit	3.9	3.9

6.3 Percentage of babies by sex, method of delivery, birth weight, ranking, single or multiple birth and whether transferred to neonatology

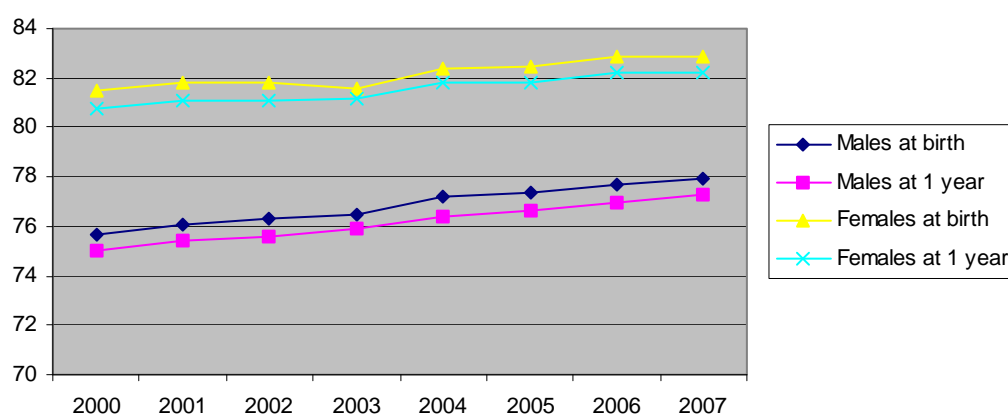
Source: Study Centre for Perinatal Epidemiology (SPE)

2. Life expectancy

The men are catching up

Life expectancy *at birth* and *at the age of 1 year* is 77.9 years and 77.3 years for males and 82.9 and 82.2 years for females (2007; figures for 2008 not yet available). The gap between men and women has narrowed because male life expectancy increased from 2006 to 2007 (see Figure 6.3).

Life expectancy



6.4 Life expectancy in the Region of Flanders, at birth and at 1 year (in years)

Source: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency

3. Mortality

3.1. Number of deaths of children aged 0-15 in the Region of Flanders

3.1.1. In the whole group of children aged 0-15

Mainly before the age of 1 year

Most deaths in childhood occur before the age of 1 year. In 2008, 276 babies died before the age of 1 year; there were 123 deaths in the following eleven years of life. From 2007 to 2008, the number of deaths before the age of 1 year fell by 11 and the number of deaths in the next fourteen years of life fell by 5 (see Table 6.5). The relative figures for 2008 are not yet available.

	Deaths by age and gender			
	2007		2008	
	Total	Males	Females	Total
Number				
Under 1 year	287	155	121	276

1 to 5 years	50	31	25	56
5 to 10 years	29	17	14	31
10 to 15 years	49	19	17	36
Total	415	222	177	399
Per thousand (1)				
Under 1 year	4.28	n/a	n/a	n/a
1 to 5 years	0.20	n/a	n/a	n/a
5 to 10 years	0.09	n/a	n/a	n/a
10 to 15 years	0.14	n/a	n/a	n/a

6.5 Number of deaths and number of deaths per thousand in children aged 0-15 by age and gender – Region of Flanders

Source: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency

(1) Per thousand children on 1 January of the year in question, excluding children under 1 year. For the children under 1 the figure is per thousand children born in that year

n/a: not available

3.1.2. In children aged under 12 months

In this section we shall consider in more detail the deaths of children aged under 12 months. Data on infant mortality is generally presented in accordance with a number of criteria known as mortality criteria. Figure 6.6 shows the 2007 figures for the various mortality criteria.

Number of deaths is the only criterion available as yet for 2008. In the absence of the denominator, it is not possible to calculate the different mortality rates for 2008. We look at the number of deaths in the year by the age of the infant at time of death (see Table 6.7).

In 2008, 261 *stillbirths* were registered in the Register of Births, Marriages and Deaths. These were all babies who were dead at birth and had reached a birth weight of at least 500 grams following a pregnancy that lasted at least 22 weeks. In 2007 there were 259 stillbirths. The SPE records show that there were a number of stillbirths that were not registered in the Register of Births, Marriages and Deaths but which nevertheless fall within the WHO definition*. These are babies born before 180 days in the womb (before the limit laid down by law) but which had reached a birth weight of 500 grams or more or babies born after a pregnancy lasting 22 weeks or more. There were 66 such stillbirths in 2008.

In 2008, 149 babies died between birth and the age of seven days (7 x 24 hours), compared with 151 in 2007 (=early neonatal mortality). After the first seven days (7 x 24 hours) up to 28 days, 43 babies died in 2008 (=late neonatal mortality). In 2007 there were 36 deaths at this stage of life. The total number of deaths in the first four weeks was 192 (neonatal mortality) compared with 187 in 2007. After the first 4 weeks (7 x 24 hours) there were a further 84 infant deaths. In total in 2008, 276 infants died in the first year of life, compared with 287 in 2007.

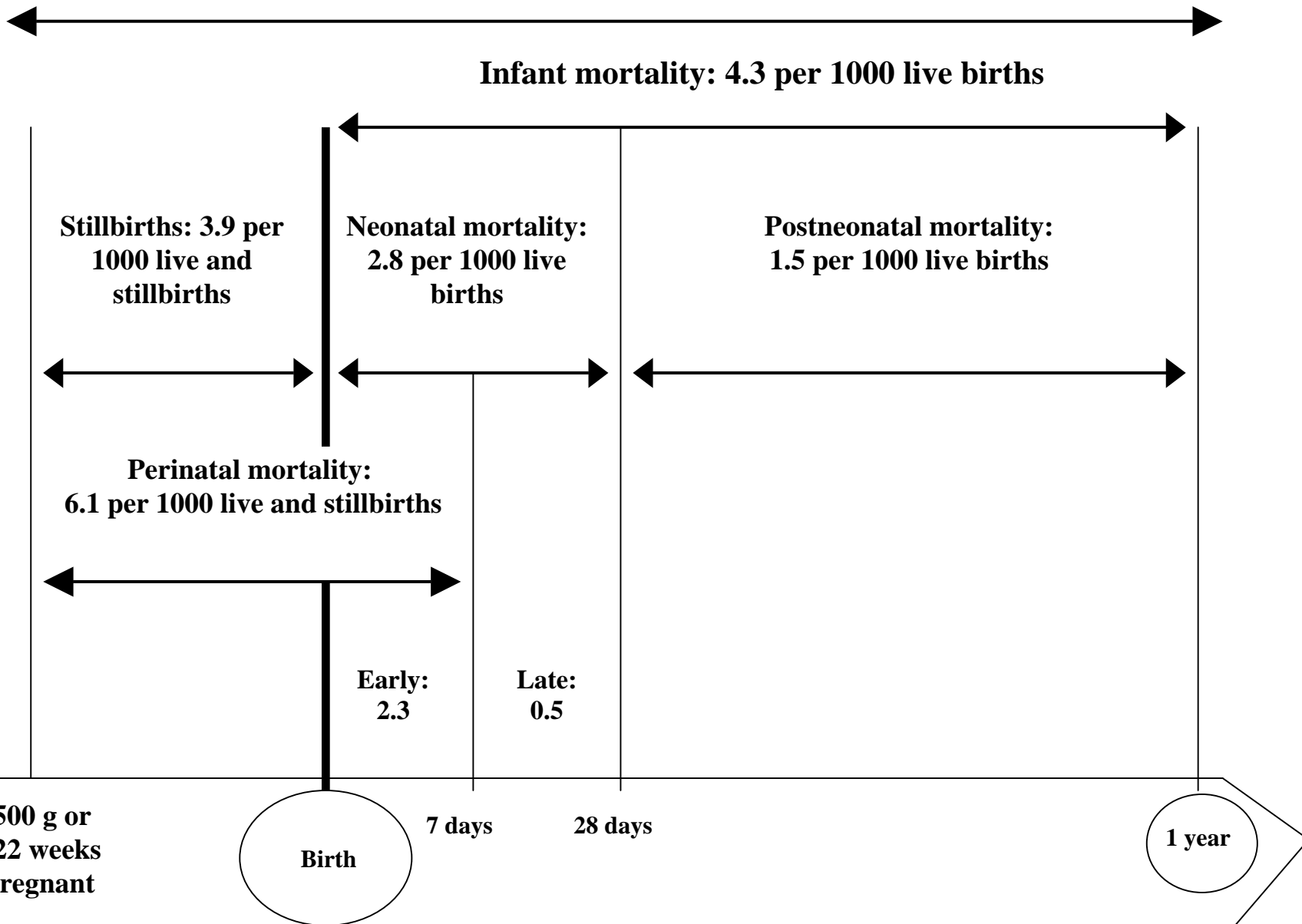
Table 6.8 shows the *birth weight* of infants that died and stillbirths in 2008. Table 6.9 shows mortality and stillbirths by *single or multiple births*.

6.6 Foetal-infant mortality figures in the Region of Flanders – 2007

Source: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency

* WHO definition: weight of 500 grams or more or pregnancy lasting 22 weeks or more

Foetal-infant mortality: 8.1 per 1000 live and stillbirths



Trend in foetal-infant mortality

	2007	2008
Stillbirths	259	261
Early neonatal deaths	151	149
Late neonatal deaths	36	43
Post-neonatal deaths	100	84
Perinatal deaths	410	410
Neonatal deaths	187	192
Infant deaths	287	276
Total number of stillbirths and infant deaths	546	537

6.7 Trend in stillbirths and deaths of infants before the age of 1 year by life stage – Region of Flanders

Source: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency

Mortality by birth weight

	Stillbirths (1)	Early neonatal mortality	Late neonatal mortality	Post-neonatal mortality	Total foetal-infant mortality
Under 500 g	20	14	1	2	37
500 to 1 000 g	66	60	7	6	139
1000 to 1 500 g	39	18	3	9	69
1 500 to 2 000 g	32	12	6	4	54
2 000 to 2 500 g	30	14	6	9	59
2 500 g to 4 500 g	72	29	20	52	173
4 500 g and over	2	0	0	1	3
Not known	0	2	0	1	3
Total	261	149	43	84	537

6.8 Number of stillbirths and deaths of infants before the age of 1 year by birth weight in the Region of Flanders – 2008

Source: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency

(1) Still births registered in the Register of Births, Marriages and Deaths and those falling within the WHO definition (weight 500 grams or more, pregnancy of 22 weeks or more)

Mortality by number of babies

	Stillbirths (1)	Early neonatal mortality	Late neonatal mortality	Post-neonatal mortality	Total foetal-infant mortality
Single births	236	113	37	75	461
Twins	24	36	5	9	74
Triplets	1	0	1	0	2
Quadruplets or more	0	0	0	0	0
Total	261	149	43	84	537

6.9 Single and multiple births: number of stillbirths and deaths of infants before the age of 1 year in the Region of Flanders – 2008

Source: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency

(1) Still births registered in the Register of Births, Marriages and Deaths and those falling within the WHO definition (weight 500 grams or more, pregnancy of 22 weeks or more)

or more, pregnancy of 22 weeks or more)

3.2. Causes of death in children aged under 15 years in the Region of Flanders

3.2.1. In children aged under 12 months

Most important causes of death in cases of stillbirth and infant mortality: factors affecting the mother, complications during pregnancy and the birth, and congenital abnormalities. Further decrease in cot deaths

The most important causes of death in stillbirths and infant mortality are complications during pregnancy and the perinatal period and congenital abnormalities. In 2008, 161 babies died in utero or in the first year of life as a result of factors affecting the mother and complications during pregnancy and the birth, and 123 died as a result of congenital abnormalities. 18 suffered cot death, 4 fewer than in 2007. The incidence of cot death has been reduced to around 3 cases per 10 000 live births (see Table 6.10 and Figure 6.11).

Causes of death under the age of 12 months

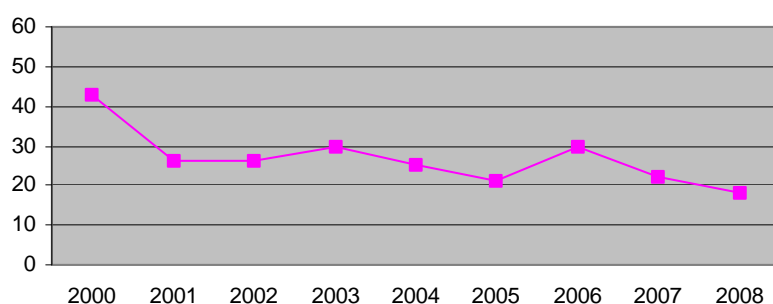
	2007			2008		
	Stillbirths (1)	Infant mortality	Total	Stillbirths (1)	Infant mortality	Total
Congenital abnormalities	48	82	130	45	78	123
Factors affecting the mother and complications during pregnancy and birth	110	41	151	108	53	161
Prematurity and dysmaturity	10	17	27	9	9	18
Perinatal infections	7	17	24	6	19	25
Bleeding and perinatal blood disorders	2	21	23	2	20	22
Endocrine, digestive, skin disorders (perinatal)	7	7	14	9	10	19
Perinatal heart and respiratory disorders, including RDS (Respiratory Distress Syndrome)	6	29	35	6	22	28
SIDS (cot death)	0	22	22	0	18	18
Other disorders	2	34	36	2	33	35
Poorly defined conditions	67	5	72	74	4	78
Trauma/external cause of death	0	12	12	0	10	10
Total	259	287	546	261	276	537

6.10 Causes of death in children aged under 12 months in the Region of Flanders (stillbirths and infant mortality)

Source: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency

(1) Still births registered in the Register of Births, Marriages and Deaths and those falling within the WHO definition (weight 500 grams or more, pregnancy of 22 weeks or more)

Cot deaths



6.11 Trend in the number of cot deaths in the Region of Flanders since 2000

Source: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency

3.2.2. In children aged 1 to 15 years

Two most important causes of death in children aged 1 to 15: accidents, and cancer and blood disorders

The most important cause of death in children aged 1 to 15 is accidents; followed by cancer and blood disorders. Over 30% of deaths in 2008 resulted from an accident. Deaths resulting from accidents increased considerably, from 26 in 2006 to 42 in 2007 (+61.5%), and then fell back to 37 in 2008 (-11.9%). The number of deaths caused by cancer and blood disorders was almost 20%: an increase from 20 to 24 cases. Table 6.12 shows the most important causes of death by age group. Figure 6.13 shows the trend in deaths resulting from violence and from accidents since 2000.

Deaths 1-15 years

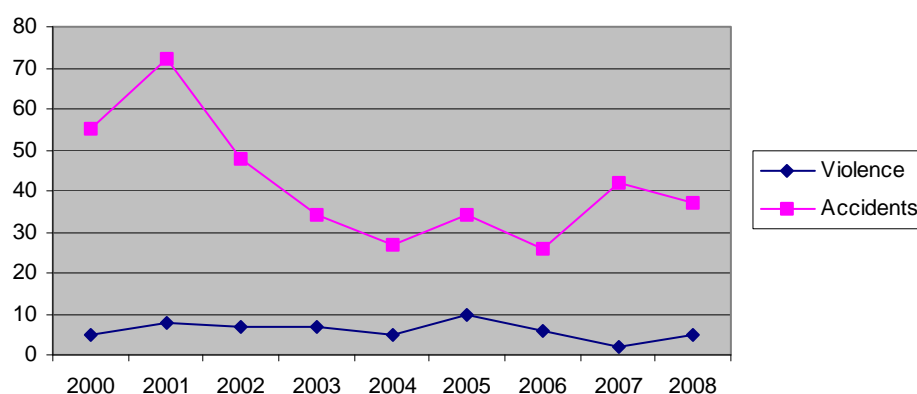
	2006		2007		2008	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Children aged 1-5						
Infections	4	8.5	8	16.0	2	3.6
Cancer and blood disorders	6	12.8	5	10.0	10	17.9
Metabolism	4	8.5	2	4.0	5	8.9
Muscle and nervous system disorders	5	10.6	3	6.0	4	7.1
Heart and respiratory system disorders	4	8.5	4	8.0	4	7.1
Gastrointestinal tract	2	4.3	3	6.0	0	0.0
Congenital abnormalities	6	12.8	4	8.0	12	21.4
SIS	1	2.1	1	2.0	0	0.0
Accident	8	17.0	18	36.0	12	21.4
Intentional self harm	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Violence	3	6.4	0	0.0	4	7.1
Other or unknown	4	8.5	2	4.0	3	5.4
Total deaths in children aged 1-5	47	100.0	50	100.0	56	100.0
Children aged 5-10						
Infections	1	3.6	1	3.4	1	3.2
Cancer and blood disorders	11	39.3	5	17.2	9	29.0
Metabolism	0	0.0	4	13.8	6	19.4
Muscle and nervous system disorders	3	10.7	6	20.7	1	3.2
Heart and respiratory system disorders	2	7.1	0	0.0	3	9.7
Gastrointestinal tract	1	3.6	0	0.0	1	3.2

Congenital abnormalities	0	0.0	4	13.8	1	3.2
Accident	9	32.1	6	20.7	7	22.6
Intentional self harm	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Violence	1	3.6	2	6.9	1	3.2
Other or unknown	0	0.0	1	3.4	1	3.2
Total deaths in children aged 5-10	28	100.0	29	100.0	31	100.0
Children aged 10-15						
Infections	0	0.0	1	2.0	1	2.8
Cancer and blood disorders	9	32.1	10	20.4	5	13.9
Metabolism	3	10.7	4	8.2	2	5.6
Muscle and nervous system disorders	0	0.0	4	8.2	3	8.3
Heart and respiratory system disorders	2	7.1	5	10.2	3	8.3
Gastrointestinal tract	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Congenital abnormalities	1	3.6	3	6.1	0	0.0
Accident	9	32.1	18	36.7	18	50.0
Intentional self harm	2	7.1	2	4.1	3	8.3
Violence	2	7.1	0	0.0	0	0.0
Other or unknown	0	0.0	2	4.1	1	2.8
Total deaths in children aged 10-15	28	100.0	49	100.0	36	100.0
Children aged 1-15						
Infections	5	4.9	10	7.8	4	3.3
Cancer and blood disorders	26	25.2	20	15.6	24	19.5
Metabolism	7	6.8	10	7.8	13	10.6
Muscle and nervous system disorders	8	7.8	13	10.2	8	6.5
Heart and respiratory system disorders	8	7.8	9	7.0	10	8.1
Gastrointestinal tract	3	2.9	3	2.3	1	0.8
Congenital abnormalities	7	6.8	11	8.6	13	10.6
SIS	1	1.0	1	0.8	0	0.0
Accident	26	25.2	42	32.8	37	30.1
Intentional self harm	2	1.9	2	1.6	3	2.4
Violence	6	5.8	2	1.6	5	4.1
Other or unknown	4	3.9	5	3.9	5	4.1
Total deaths in children aged 1-15	103	100.0	128	100.0	123	100.0

6.12 Causes of death in children aged 1-15 years in the Region of Flanders

Source: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency

Deaths of children aged 1 to 15 resulting from violence or accidents



6.13 Trend in the number of deaths of children aged 1 to 15 years resulting from violence and from accidents since 2000

Source: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency

3.3. Deaths as a result of accidents in children aged 1 to 15 years

At 37, the number of fatal accidents fell once again in 2008 (-5). However, this figure is still higher than in 2006, when there were only 26 fatal accidents, the lowest figure in the period 2000-2008. Almost two-thirds of fatal accidents are traffic accidents (24 out of 37) (see Figure 6.13). In Table 6.14 we look at deaths resulting from accidents in 2008 in more detail. 12 children aged 1 to 5 years died as a result of an accident (-6), of whom 7 died as a result of traffic accidents, most of them as pedestrians. 7 children aged 5 to 10 years died as a result of an accident (+1), of whom 4 were killed in traffic accidents. 18 children aged 10 to 15 years died as a result of an accident (unchanged), of whom 13 were killed in traffic accidents.

	Fatal accidents											
	Children aged 1-5			Children aged 5-10			Children aged 10-15			Total children 1 to 15 years		
	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008
Pedestrian	0	0	5	0	0	2	1	5	2	1	5	9
Cyclist or motorcyclist	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	4	4	0	4
Passenger in a vehicle	0	2	2	2	0	1	0	0	3	2	2	6
Other or not specified	2	2	0	2	4	1	4	7	4	8	13	5
Total road accidents	2	4	7	5	4	4	8	12	13	15	20	24
Fall	1	0	(1)	0	0	(1)	0	2	(1)	1	2	(1)
Trapping, jamming	0	1	(1)	0	1	(1)	0	1	(1)	0	3	(1)
Drowning or submersion	1	4	2	1	0	2	0	0	0	2	4	4
Unintentional poisoning	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	2	0	2	3
Hanging, strangulation,	1	5	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	6	1

choking												
Fire	2	4	1	2	1	0	0	0	1	4	5	2
Other	1	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	1	3	0	3
Total other	6	14	5	4	2	3	1	6	5	11	22	13
accidents												
Total	8	18	12	9	6	7	9	18	18	26	42	37

6.14 Causes of fatal accidents in children aged under 15 in the Region of Flanders

Source: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency

(1) 2008: included in 'other' category

4. Morbidity

In addition to mortality figures, figures for the incidence of diseases and disabilities are an important indicator of the state of health of the population. In this section we present figures on a number of illnesses and abnormalities of relevance to children and we look at children's need for special care or guidance as reported by their parents. We also look at admissions to hospital.

4.1. Congenital abnormalities

Data on *congenital abnormalities* affecting all children in Flanders are available only from obstetric records (SPE). In 2008, congenital abnormalities were identified in the *perinatal period* in almost 1.6% of births. This percentage is unchanged from 2007.

Table 6.15 presents a detailed picture of the incidence of congenital abnormalities.

Congenital abnormalities (1)		
	Number	Per 10 000 births
Central nervous system	77	11.1
Eye	10	1.4
Ear, face and neck (excl. nose)	127	18.3
Cardiovascular	237	34.1
Respiratory system	33	4.8
Gastro-intestinal	81	11.7
Genito-urinary	187	26.9
Musculoskeletal	200	28.8
Integument	26	3.7
Cystic hygroma	0	0.0
Chromosomal abnormalities	60	8.6
Congenital infection	9	1.3
Hydrops foetalis	6	0.9
Other	67	9.6
Total babies with one or more congenital abnormalities	1 084	156.0

6.15 Congenital abnormalities recorded (perinatal period) in Flanders per 10 000 births – 2008

Source: Study Centre for Perinatal Epidemiology (SPE)

(1) Congenital abnormalities identified in births in maternity hospitals (≥ 500 g) More than one abnormality may be recorded for some babies

In a number of children, the abnormality is only identified later. The Eurocat register records *congenital abnormalities* up to the age of 1 year. For Flanders, the whole province of Antwerp participates in the Eurocat register. The provisional figures for 2008 must be treated with caution. In the past it has been found that the final figures do differ somewhat from the provisional figures for a number of disorders. Reports for

2010 are still being received, partly because it sometimes takes a while to reach a diagnosis. This is why we are discussing the 2007 figures.

One or more congenital abnormalities were diagnosed in almost 194 children in 10 000. We show the systems that are affected most frequently. Heart disorders occur in over 50 cases per 10 000 births. The most common abnormality is ventricle septum defect, in popular speech known as 'a hole in the heart'. In almost 39 out of 10 000 births the limbs were affected and in almost 24 out of 10 000 births it was the nervous system. Abnormalities of the urinary system occurred in over 22 out of 10 000 births; orofacial clefts (mainly cleft lip) in almost 20 out of 10 000 births; abnormalities of the genital system in almost 18 out of 10 000 births; and chromosomal abnormalities in almost 26 out of 10 000 births (see Table 6.16).

Congenital abnormalities up to the age of 1 year (1) (2)

	Per 10 000 births	
	2007 calculation February 2009	2008 calculation February 2009
Nervous system	23.7	17.2
<i>of which neural tube defects</i>	8.1	5.3
<i>hydrocephalus</i>	5.0	4.3
Eye	4.5	4.3
Ear, face, neck	2.5	5.3
Heart	50.3	48.4
<i>of which ventricle septum defect</i>	19.6	15.3
<i>atrium septum defect</i>	8.1	9.6
Respiratory system	5.5	4.3
Oro-facial clefts	19.6	14.9
<i>of which cleft lip with or without cleft palate</i>	13.1	9.1
<i>cleft palate</i>	6.5	5.8
Digestive system	17.1	15.8
Abdominal wall defects	3.5	1.4
Urinary system	22.1	24.4
Genital system	17.6	20.6
<i>of which hypospadias</i>	15.1	17.2
Limbs	38.7	45.5
<i>of which club foot</i>	8.6	9.1
<i>dislocated hip and/or dysplasia</i>	5.5	3.8
<i>polydactylism</i>	13.6	19.6
<i>syndactylism</i>	3.5	5.8
Musculo-skeletal system	13.6	12.9
Other abnormalities	8.1	8.1
Teratogenic syndromes with abnormalities	1.5	1.4
Genetic syndromes and microdeletions	9.6	6.7
Chromosomal abnormalities	25.7	22.5
<i>of which Down's syndrome (trisomy 21)</i>	13.1	14.4
Metabolic	10.6	8.1
Total babies with one or more congenital abnormalities	193.7	191.6

6.16 Congenital abnormalities recorded up to the age of 1 year in the province of Antwerp per 10 000 births.

Source: Eurocat, Provincial Institute of Hygiene, Antwerp

(1) Eurocat records all congenital abnormalities in neonates, whether born alive or stillborn, in children aged up to 1 year, in foetuses born after 20 weeks of pregnancy, and in abortions induced owing to an abnormality

(2) More than one abnormality may be recorded for some babies

4.2. Congenital hearing loss

In 2.2 out of 1 000 children

Congenital hearing loss can be detected at a very young age. Almost all babies who are born at full term in Flanders are tested by Child and Family in the first months of their life. 2.2 children per 1 000 born in 2009 and tested by Child and Family were found to have some degree of congenital hearing impairment (provisional figure) (Table 6.17). Table 6.18 shows the incidence of hearing loss. In over half of the cases (58.6%) the children have impaired hearing in both ears and in more than half the cases (49.2%) some form of hearing aid or treatment is necessary (hearing loss of more than 40 dB).

Incidence of hearing loss (1)

Per 1 000 children tested	
2005	2.27
2006	2.17
2007	2.76
2008*	2.37
2009**	2.22

6.17 Incidence of congenital hearing loss among children tested by Child and Family

Source: Child and Family - IKAROS

(1) Not included: children who were admitted to an NICU

* Not (yet) included 2008: 3 inconclusive reports

** Not (yet) included 2009: 7 inconclusive reports and 55 missing reports

Degree of hearing loss

	Unilateral	Bilateral
2007		
21 to 40 dB	12	10
41 to 70 dB	40	57
71 to 90 dB	13	17
> 90 dB	17	13
Total with classified hearing loss	82	97
2008*		
21 to 40 dB	6	20
41 to 70 dB	30	48
71 to 90 dB	13	16
> 90 dB	13	13
Total with classified hearing loss	62	97
2009**		
21 to 40 dB	8	7
41 to 70 dB	23	31
71 to 90 dB	8	16
> 90 dB	17	19

Total with classified hearing loss	56	73
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6.18 Degree of hearing loss expressed in decibels (dB) among children with congenital hearing impairment established after a positive hearing test carried out by Child and Family

Source: Child and Family

* Not (yet) included 2008: 3 inconclusive reports

** Not (yet) included 2009: 7 inconclusive reports and 55 missing reports

4.3. Diseases and disorders

Thanks to the Health Surveys we have access to information about diseases and disorders in young children. At this point in time we have the data from the 2008 survey. Of the children surveyed aged under 12 at the time of the survey, 9.2% were suffering from one or more chronic diseases, disorders or disabilities. For children under 3, the figure was 3.4%; for children aged 3 to 6, the figure was 11%; and for children aged 6 to 12, almost 12% were affected (see Table 6.19). Table 6.19 also shows the figures for 2004. The incidence has fallen slightly since 2004.

Chronic diseases, disorders, disabilities		
	2004	2008
Children aged under 3	5.1	3.4
Children aged 3-6	5.6	11.0
Children aged 6-12	12.4	11.9
Total aged under 12	9.5	9.2
	(N=43)	(N=308)

6.19 Percentages of children aged under 12 in the Region of Flanders suffering from one or more chronic diseases, disorders or disabilities at the time of the survey

Source: Health Surveys 2004 and 2008, Department of Epidemiology, Scientific Institute of Public Health

The Health Survey also enquired into diseases and disorders in a 12-month period. A number of diseases and disorders of relevance to children will be discussed in more detail below, namely asthma, chronic bronchitis (or other chronic respiratory disease) and allergies.

Asthma and chronic bronchitis

Asthma and chronic bronchitis are words that the population uses. From a medical point of view we point out here that below the age of 4 no diagnosis of asthma can be made. and from a medical point of view one must now talk of wheezing bronchitis instead of chronic bronchitis.

The 2008 Health Survey shows that in the Region of Flanders, in a 12-month period, almost 2% of children under 12 had had *asthma* and over 2% had had *chronic bronchitis or another chronic respiratory disease* (see Table 6.20). Compared with 2004, the incidence of asthma in the total population of children under 12 has fallen and the incidence of chronic bronchitis and other chronic respiratory diseases remains virtually unchanged.

	Asthma and chronic bronchitis			
	Asthma		Chronic bronchitis or other chronic respiratory disease	
	2004	2008	2004	2008
Children aged under 3	3.2	0.5	3.5	3.6
Children aged 3-6	1.6	2.1	3.0	2.9

Children aged 6-12	7.3	2.8	1.2	1.0
Total aged under 12	5.3	1.9	2.0	2.2
	(N=441)	(N=308)	(N=43)	(N=304)

6.20 Percentages of children under 12 with asthma, chronic bronchitis, chronic non-specific respiratory disease or emphysema in the Region of Flanders in a 12-month period

Source: 2004 and 2008 Health Survey Belgium, Department of Epidemiology, Scientific Institute of Public Health

Allergies

Almost 11% of children under 12 had suffered from an allergy in a 12-month period. Children aged 3 to 12 suffer from more allergies than the under-3s (see Table 6.21). The incidence of allergies among children aged 6 to 12 fell between 2004 and 2008; the incidence among the under-6s increased.

Allergies		
	2004	2008
Children aged 1-3	7.4	7.6
Children aged 3-6	9.0	12.6
Children aged 6-12	16.3	11.3
Total aged under 12	13.0	10.7
	(N=43)	(N=308)

6.21 Percentages of children aged under 12 with reported allergies in the Region of Flanders in a 12-month period

Source: 2004 and 2008 Health Survey Belgium, Department of Epidemiology, Scientific Institute of Public Health

Permanent injury resulting from accidents

The 2008 Health Survey included for the first time a question about permanent injury resulting from accidents. Of the children surveyed aged under 12, 1.4% had suffered permanent injury as a result of an accident at some time in the past and 1.2% had suffered permanent injury in the last 12 months (see Table 6.22).

Permanent injury resulting from accidents		
	Ever happened	Happened in the last year
Children aged under 3	1.4	1.4
Children aged 3-6	0.0	0.0
Children aged 6-12	2.3	1.9
Children aged under 12	1.4	1.2
	(N=308)	(N=308)

6.22 Percentage of children under 12 who had suffered permanent injury as a result of an accident at any time in the past and percentage that had suffered such injury in the past 12 months

Source: 2008 Belgian Health Survey, Department of Epidemiology, Scientific Institute of Public Health

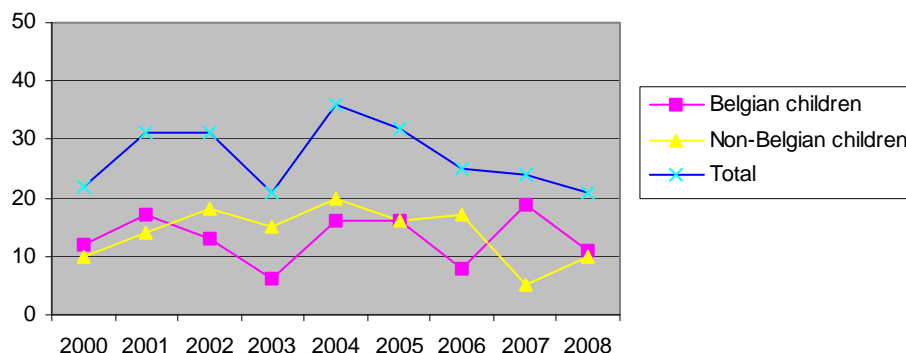
Active tuberculosis

Very small number of new cases of TB

Active tuberculosis is not found only in developing countries. Children also suffer from tuberculosis in the industrialised countries of the West. In 2008, 21 new cases of tuberculosis were recorded in children under 15 in Flanders, 11 of them in Belgian children and 10 in non-Belgian children. The incidence per 100 000 was 1.2 in Belgian children (95% confidence interval: 0.6 – 2.1) and 18.4 in the non-Belgian children (95% confidence interval: 8.8 - 33.8). There were fewer new cases of active tuberculosis than in 2007. Among

Belgian children, fewer new cases were diagnosed, among non-Belgian children there were more. Figure 6.23 shows the trend from 2000 onwards.

Active tuberculosis



6.23 Number of new cases of active tuberculosis in children aged under 15 in the Region of Flanders from 2000 onwards

Source: Flemish Association for Respiratory Health Care and the Combating of Tuberculosis (VRGT)

4.4. Tooth decay

Tooth decay in young children: 3 to 4 out of every ten children have visible plaque on their teeth; 7% of 3-year-olds and over 30% of 5-year-olds have cavities

As part of the "Tandje de Voorste" (Smile for Life) project* data were collected on the state of oral health of Flemish pre-school children. In 2003, 1 250 3-year-olds and 1 283 5-year-olds in 4 regions were examined by a team of trained dentists following a set method. The data obtained from the clinical examinations of the children's mouths were supplemented with information from questionnaires completed by their parents. Table 6.24 shows that over 30% of the 3-year-olds and over 37% of the 5-year-olds had *visible plaque* on their teeth. At the age of 3, 7% of the children already had *clear signs of tooth decay* (i.e. cavities), at the age of 5, 31% of the children had tooth decay (see also chapter 7 point 7). Of the children who were found to have tooth decay, in the majority of cases the affected teeth had not been treated (filled). At 5 years, less than half of the children had any sign of having been treated by a dentist and at 3 years, the overwhelming majority had not had any dental treatment (90%).

* This project is a collaboration between the Universities of Leuven and Ghent and Child and Family, made possible by the support of Gaba International and Gaba Benelux

Plaque and tooth decay

	3-year-olds (N=1 250)	5-year-olds (N=1 283)
State of teeth		
Completely sound milk teeth	93.1	69.2
1 to 4 teeth affected by tooth decay	6.1	23.6
5 or more teeth affected by tooth decay	0.8	7.2
Total	100.0	100.0
Plaque		
% children with visible plaque on teeth	30.7	37.3

Untreated tooth decay

% children with tooth decay	89.2	54.8
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6.24 Visible plaque, state of the teeth of 3- and 5-year-olds and untreated tooth decay in some regions of Flanders – 2003 (percentages)

Source: Declerck D., Leroy R., Martens L., Lesaffre E., Garcia-Zattera M.J., Vanden Broucke S., Debyser M., Hoppenbrouwers K., Factors associated with prevalence and severity of caries experience in preschool children. *Community Dent Oral Epidemiol* 2007; 35 (in press)

4.5. Overweight in young people

Obesity or serious overweight is gradually being recognised as a serious public health problem. Obesity adversely affects quality of life. It is the cause of numerous short-term problems (including problems engaging in physical activities) but it is the long-term effects that are of greatest concern (development of type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disorders and some forms of cancer).

For a number of years the Body Mass Index* has been used as an indicator of overweight and obesity in children and adolescents as well as adults. The BMI has been the standard by which to judge the body weight of adults for decades. It is not so simple with children. The BMI varies with age, so it is not realistic to have a simple threshold limit value that is valid for all ages. An obvious option is to use the BMI percentile curves, that take explicit account of age differences. Then all that remains is to choose where to set the threshold percentiles for overweight and obesity. An arbitrary choice of a particular percentile (e.g. the 85th percentile) as the threshold limit value for being overweight presents an important conceptual problem. The increasing incidence of overweight people in the population means that as the years go by this percentile will go higher and higher. The International Obesity Task Force (IOTF) has proposed using the percentiles that correspond to a BMI of 25 at age 18 as objective criteria for overweight and obesity respectively. That is why this criterion was used in the “Flemish growth curves” project to calculate the prevalence of overweight and obesity in Flanders. The fieldwork for this project was carried out between January 2002 and December 2003 and it found that 11.2% of boys aged 2 to 12 were overweight and 2.5% were obese. The equivalent figures for girls were 15.2% and 3.4%**.

More recent figures are now available thanks to the 2008 Health Survey. Unlike the Flemish Growth Curves project, the health surveys rely on self-reporting of weight and height. Some caution needs to be exercised when this method is used, as various studies have shown that people tend to underestimate their own weight and overestimate their own height. So it is possible that some people may have been assigned to the wrong category. Age and sex-specific threshold limit values were used to estimate the incidence of overweight in the Health Survey. Overall 17% of young people in the Region of Flanders were found to be *overweight*, rather more boys than girls (though the difference was not statistically significant). The incidence of overweight is significantly higher in young people whose parents have a low level of education than in those who live in better educated households. The incidence over the different Health Surveys (1997, 2001, 2004, 2008) has remained more or less constant. 4% of young people aged 2 to 18 are *obese*. Obesity is most prevalent in girls at age 2 to 6 and in boys at age 6 to 12 (see Table 6.25).

	Overweight and obesity			
	Boys		Girls	
	Overweight	Obese	Overweight	Obese
2 -6 years	15.8	5.2	18.0	10.0
6 -12 years	23.1	10.1	16.7	1.8
12 -18 years	15.4	0.8	13.4	0.7

6.25 Incidence of overweight and obesity in young people aged 2 to 18 in the Region of Flanders – 2008

Source: 2008 Belgian Health Survey, Department of Epidemiology, Scientific Institute of Public Health

* BMI = weight (kg) / height (m) x height (m)

**Flemish Growth Curves project (Roelants M., VUB; Hauspie R., VUB; Hoppenbrouwers K., KU Leuven)

4.6. Children needing special care or guidance

A recent survey into the use of child care (2009)* for children under 3 also provides information about the need for special care or guidance. This survey asked parents whether their child needed more care or guidance than the majority of their peers due to health problems or developmental disorders.

Overall 4% of the children surveyed were reported as needing special care or guidance for various reasons. The main reasons given were long-term health problems (48% of the group with problems or 1.9% of the total group) and problems with motor/physical development (30.3% or 1.2%). The other problems mentioned were somewhat rarer (see Table 6.26).

*Hedebouw G., Peetermans A., *Het gebruik van kinderopvang in Vlaanderen (Use of child care in Flanders)*, Support Centre for Wellbeing, Public Health and the Family, 2009

Special care or guidance (1)		
	% of group with special needs (N=177)	% of total group (N=4 399)
Long-term health problems (> 3 months)	48.0	1.9
Problems with motor/physical development	30.3	1.2
Problems with cognitive development	7.5	0.3
Behavioural or emotional problems	5.1	0.2
Problems with hearing	2.6	0.1
Problems with sight	2.6	0.1
Other reasons	21.7	0.9
<i>of which eating problems</i>	7.3	0.3
<i>no immediate problems but extra supervision required</i>	5.6	0.2

6.26 Percentage of children aged 3 months to 3 years who need special care or guidance in the Region of Flanders – 2009

Source: Hedebouw G., Peetermans A., *Het gebruik van kinderopvang in Vlaanderen (Use of child care in Flanders)*, Support Centre for Wellbeing, Public Health and the Family, 2009

(1) Several answers possible

4.7. Hospital admissions

Quite a lot of children under 3 are admitted to hospital

Admission to hospital and staying in overnight is quite a common occurrence among very young children. In a 3-month period, over 15% of children aged under 12 were admitted to hospital. Far fewer children in the age groups 3 to 6 years and 6 to 12 years were admitted to hospital: 2.0% and 2.9% respectively (see Table 6.27). These data are from 2004. The results on hospital admissions from the 2008 Health Survey are not yet available.

Hospital admissions	
Children aged under 3	15.2
Children aged 3-6	2.0

Children aged 6-12	2.9
Total aged under 12	5.1
	(N=411)

6.27 Percentage of children admitted to hospital and staying in overnight once or more in the course of one year in the Region of Flanders – 2004

Source: 2004 Belgian Health Survey, Department of Epidemiology, Scientific Institute of Public Health

5. Victims of road accidents

After years of going down, deaths and serious injury from road accidents went up again

In addition to the fatalities, many children are seriously injured in road accidents every year. We will now look at the most recent figures for each age group. In 2008, 5 children under 3 were *killed and 22 were seriously injured* in road accidents in the Region of Flanders. In the 3 to 6 age group, there were 3 fatalities and 23 seriously injured children and in the 6 to 12 age group there were 8 fatalities and 93 seriously injured children. Compared with 2007, there was a marked increase both in the number of fatalities (+8) and in the number of seriously injured (+15) (see Table 6.28). Looking at the type of road user, what stands out is that most of the deaths were passengers in cars. Most of the seriously injured were pedestrians, followed in second place by car passengers and in third place by cyclists (see Table 6.28).

Figure 6.29 shows the trend since 2001. The downward trend in the number of deaths and serious injuries to children under 12 due to road accidents came to an end in 2008. In fact the increase from 2007 to 2008 was really quite substantial: +17.5%.

	Road accident victims					
	2007			2008		
	Died within 30 days	Seriously injured(1)	Total	Died within 30 days	Seriously injured(1)	Total
By age						
Children aged under 3	2	19	21	5	22	27
Children aged 3-6	1	19	20	3	23	26
Children aged 6-12	5	82	87	8	93	101
Total	8	120	128	16	138	154
By type of road user						
Pedestrian	1	36	37	3	54	57
Bicycle	2	26	28	4	38	42
Moped	0	3	3	0	0	0
Motor cycle	0	3	3	0	1	1
Private car	5	43	48	6	42	48
Other	0	9	9	3	3	6
Total	8	120	128	16	138	154

6.28 Victims of road accidents in the Region of Flanders – Number of children under the age of 12 who died within 30 days, the number seriously injured and type of road user

Source: Belgian Institute for Road Safety

(1) Seriously injured: necessitating admission to hospital for more than 24 hours

Trend in victims of road accidents



6.29 Trend in the number of children fatally or seriously injured in road accidents in the Region of Flanders since 2001

Source: Belgian Institute for Road Safety

6. Child abuse

The confidential child abuse centres received reports of actual or suspected child abuse or neglect for over 45.5 children per 10 000 during the course of 2009. A slight increase compared with 2008

Our figures on the incidence of child abuse are based on the contacts made with the confidential child abuse centres. People contact these centres for a whole variety of reasons. It may be about concrete situations involving child abuse: sexual violence, physical abuse or neglect or emotional abuse or neglect. Sometimes people report a situation where a child appears to be at risk. In other instances it is not really clear why the contact has been made. Finally, people make contact for help with dealing with the effects of earlier abuse or neglect and some make contact about problems that are not related to child abuse. We will now examine some of the details of these reports.

A total of 6 435 *notifications* to the six confidential child abuse centres were recorded in 2009 (provisional figure) (see Table 6.30). 4 858 notifications concerned a concrete situation involving abuse or neglect (or a suspected case). 1 277 notifications concerned children thought to be at risk or ill-defined problems and 300 concerned problems dealing with earlier abuse or problems unrelated to child abuse. The number of notifications rose by 6.4% compared with 2008. Both the number of notifications of concrete child abuse (+8.2%) and the number of notifications of children at risk or ill-defined problems (+3.7%) increased. However, the number of notifications concerning problems dealing with earlier abuse and other problems unrelated to child abuse decreased (-8.3%).

A total of 8 802 juveniles were affected by these notifications, of whom 6 503 (73.9%) were children reported because of concrete situation involving abuse or neglect or a suspected case. The total number of *children notified* rose by 5.5% compared with 2008 (see Table 6.30). Figure 6.31 shows the trend in the number of children notified by the nature of the problem reported since 2005.

In 2009, 61.7 children (provisional figure) *per 10 000 children were notified* in the Region of Flanders compared with 58 in 2008 (see Table 6.33). 45.5 children (provisional figure) per 10 000 were notified for a concrete form of abuse or neglect in the Region of Flanders in 2009 compared with 42.1 in 2008. Figure 6.32 shows the trend per 10 000 children since 2005.

The relative number of notified children varies greatly between provinces (see Table 6.33). We look at the

notifications concerning a concrete situation involving abuse or neglect (or a suspected case). In the province of Antwerp, 58.3 children per 10 000 children under 18 were notified for this reason. West Flanders had the lowest number of notifications: 33.3. Flemish Brabant also had a relatively high score: 51.6 children per 10 000. East Flanders (39.5 per 10 000) and Limburg (36.7 per 10 000) came in the middle.

Notifications			
	2008	2009*	Trend 2008-2009
Number of notifications for			
Concrete situation (actual or suspected) involving abuse or neglect	4 490	4 858	+8.2%
Child at-risk or ill-defined problems	1 232	1 277	+3.7%
Problems dealing with earlier abuse or unrelated problems	327	300	-8.3%
Total notifications	6 049	6 435	+6.4%

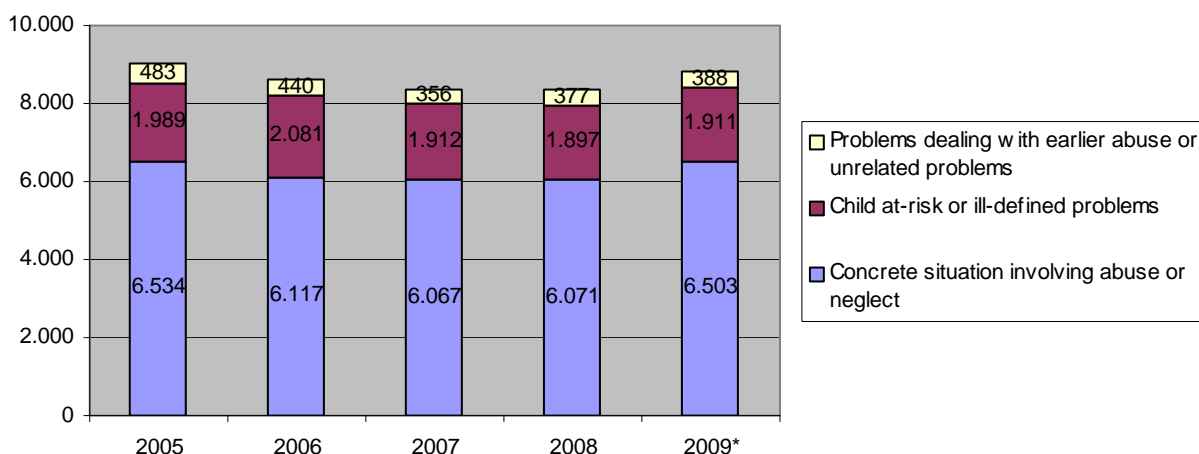
Number of children notified for			
Concrete situation (actual or suspected) involving abuse or neglect	6 071	6 503	+7.1%
Child at-risk or ill-defined problems	1 897	1 911	+0.7%
Problems dealing with earlier abuse or unrelated problems	377	388	+2.9%
Total number of children notified	8 345	8 802	+5.5%

6.30 Number of notifications to the confidential child abuse centres and number of children notified by nature of the problem reported

Source: Child and Family - Records of the confidential child abuse centres

* Provisional figures

Trend in the number of children notified

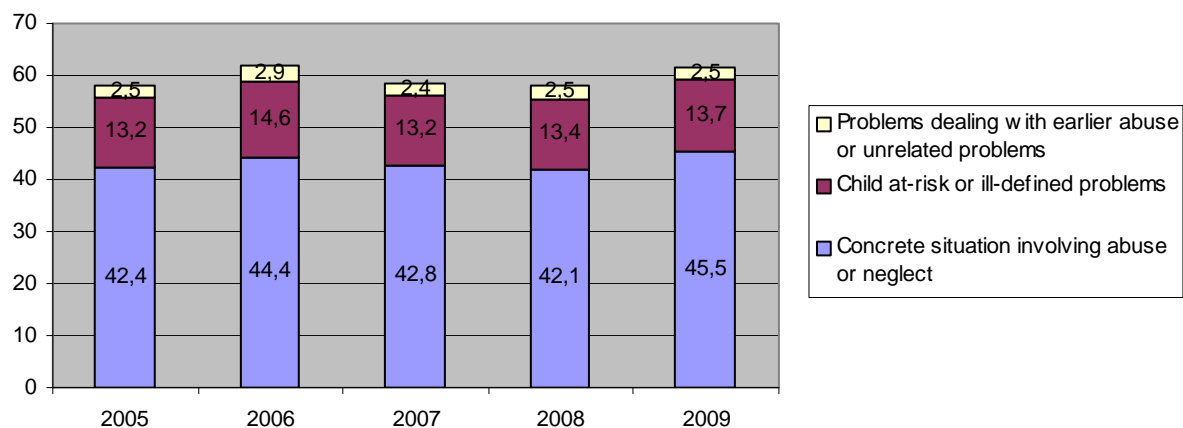


6.31 Trend in the number of children notified to the confidential child abuse centres since 2005 by nature of the problem reported

Source: Child and Family - Records of the confidential child abuse centres

* Provisional figures

Trend in the number of cases notified per 10 000 children



6.32 Trend since 2005 in the number of children notified to the confidential child abuse centres per 10 000 children under 18 by the nature of the problem reported – Region of Flanders

Source: Child and Family - Records of the confidential child abuse centres

* Provisional figures

Numbers of cases notified per 10 000 children, by province								
	Concrete situation involving abuse or neglect		Child at-risk or ill-defined problems		Problems dealing with earlier abuse or unrelated problems		Total	
	2008	2009*	2008	2009*	2008	2009*	2008	2009*
Antwerp	53.2	58.3	14.9	16.5	3.0	2.8	71.1	77.6
Flemish Brabant	46.9	51.6	11.6	12.7	3.1	3.2	61.6	67.5
West Flanders	34.4	33.3	9.7	9.6	1.3	1.1	45.4	44.0
East Flanders	34.4	39.5	18.4	16.4	2.8	2.9	55.6	58.8
Limburg	35.3	36.7	8.9	9.7	1.6	1.7	45.8	48.1
Region of Flanders	42.1	45.5	13.4	13.7	2.5	2.5	58.0	61.7

6.33 Child abuse: number of children notified per 10 000 children under the age of 18 in the Region of Flanders and by province by the nature of the problem reported

Source: Child and Family - Records of the confidential child abuse centres

* Provisional figures

Chapter 6. Aspects of the health and development of young children

For 3 081 children, or 47.4% of the children notified for concrete abuse or neglect (or a suspected case), those notifying the abuse reported *physical abuse or neglect*. The number of children notified because of *sexual abuse* was 1 656 or 25.5% of those notified for concrete abuse or neglect (or a suspected case). Incest was notified for 1 004 children or 60.6% of all cases of sexual abuse. Extrafamilial sexual abuse was notified in the case of 583 children or 35.2% of all cases of sexual abuse. In the case of 69 children (4.2% of all cases notified for sexual abuse) it was still not clear whether sexual abuse was involved or not. 1 766 children or 27.1% were reported on account of emotional abuse or neglect.

Compared with 2008, there was an increase in the number of children in respect of whom a concrete situation involving real or suspected physical abuse or neglect was reported. The number of children notified for physical abuse or neglect rose by 7.1%. The number of children notified for emotional abuse or neglect went up by 8.3%. The number of children notified on account of sexual abuse also increased (+5.9%), though these cases all fell into the 'extrafamilial sexual abuse' category (+25.6%). The number of children notified because of incest fell (-1.1%) as did the number of cases notified for sexual abuse where it was not clear whether incest was involved or not (-18.8%) (see Table 6.34 and Figure 6.35).

Children notified for a concrete situation involving abuse or neglect: problems notified

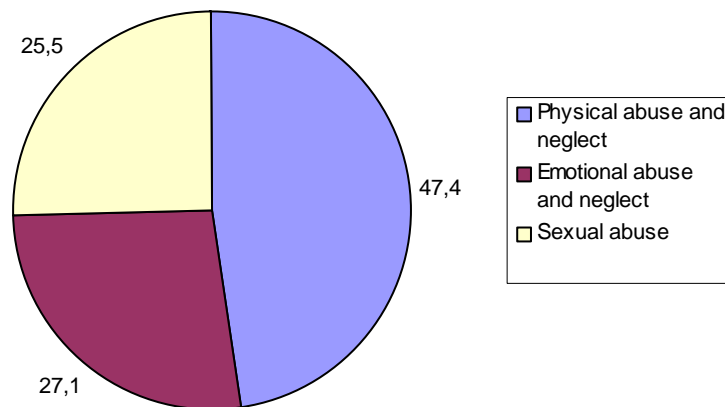
	2008		2009*		Trend 2008-2009
	Number	%	Number	%	%
Physical abuse	1 756	28.9	1 901	29.2	+8.3
Physical neglect	1 121	18.5	1 180	18.1	+5.3
<i>Total physical abuse and neglect</i>	<i>2 877</i>	<i>47.4</i>	<i>3 081</i>	<i>47.4</i>	<i>+7.1</i>
Emotional abuse	979	16.1	1 100	16.9	+12.4
Emotional neglect	651	10.7	666	10.2	+2.3
<i>Total emotional abuse and neglect</i>	<i>1 630</i>	<i>26.8</i>	<i>1 766</i>	<i>27.2</i>	<i>+8.3</i>
Incest	1 015	16.7	1 004	15.4	-1.1
Extrafamilial sexual abuse	464	7.6	583	9.0	+25.6
Not known whether incest or not	85	1.4	69	1.1	-18.8
<i>Total sexual abuse</i>	<i>1 564</i>	<i>25.8</i>	<i>1 656</i>	<i>25.5</i>	<i>+5.9</i>
Total	6 071	100.0	6 503	100.0	+7.1

6.34 Children notified to the confidential child abuse centres because of a concrete situation involving abuse or neglect (or a suspected case) by the most important problem notified

Source: Child and Family - Records of the confidential child abuse centres

* Provisional figures

Notifications of a concrete situation involving abuse or neglect: problems notified



6.35 Children notified to the confidential child abuse centres because of a concrete situation involving abuse or neglect (or a suspected case) by the most important problem notified – 2009

Source: *Child and Family - Records of the confidential child abuse centres*

40.1% of *all* notifications came from the child's immediate social circle: notifications by the mother figure (33.9% of this category of notifications), the father figure (15.3%), the father and mother figures together (0.4%), other members of the immediate family or relatives (23.9%), neighbours or acquaintances (22.0%), other people (2.6%) or the victims themselves (1.8%).

33.9% of all notifications came from professionals (16.7% from health care workers, 11.3% from welfare organisations and 5.9% from the special youth welfare service). Child and Family staff providing preventive care services accounted for 3.3% of all notifications. Notifications by all other professionals together accounted for 23.7%. These were judicial institutions (1.4%), pre-school facilities (1.6%) and school facilities (20.8%).

0.7% of notifications came from someone from the perpetrator's social circle. In 1.6% of the cases notified, it is not known who reported them (see Table 6.36).

	Reported by							
	Concrete situation involving abuse or neglect		Child at-risk or ill-defined problems		Problems dealing with earlier abuse or unrelated problems		Total	
	2008	2009*	2008	2009*	2008	2009*	2008	2009*
People in child's immediate social circle	40.7	40.4	35.1	36.4	56.6	51.0	40.4	40.1
Health professionals	15.2	15.0	25.0	23.8	12.2	14.3	17.0	16.7
<i>of which Child and Family</i>	2.6	2.2	9.2	7.3	1.2	3.7	3.9	3.3
Welfare organisations	10.9	10.9	14.0	13.4	8.9	9.0	11.4	11.3
Special youth welfare service	6.4	6.3	5.1	4.4	3.7	4.7	6.0	5.9
Judicial institutions	1.6	1.3	0.8	1.3	2.1	3.7	1.4	1.4
Pre-school facilities	1.0	1.4	2.0	2.3	0.6	0.7	1.2	1.6
School and out-of-school facilities	22.8	22.7	15.7	15.3	14.4	13.7	20.9	20.8
Someone from the perpetrator's social circle	0.5	0.6	0.8	1.3	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.7
Unknown	1.0	1.4	1.4	1.9	1.5	3.0	1.1	1.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	(N=445)	(N=308)	(N=2 233)	(N=427)	(N=308)	(N=308)	(N=610)	(N=632)

6.36 Children notified to the confidential child abuse centres: individual or organisation notifying the case (percentages) by nature of the problems reported

Source: *Child and Family - Records of the confidential child abuse centres*

* Provisional figures

7. The European context

7.1. Life expectancy at birth

With a life expectancy at birth of 77.9 years for men and 77.3 years for women in 2007, the Region of Flanders scores quite well, especially for men. Only the Netherlands and Sweden had higher male life expectancy in that year. Female life expectancy is higher in France, Spain, Sweden, Finland, Austria and Portugal (see Table 6.37).

Life expectancy at birth					
Males					
	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008
Region of Flanders	75.7	77.4	77.7	77.9	
Belgium	75.1	n/a	n/a	77.3	77.5*
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	n/a	76.2	76.4	76.9	77.2*
France	75.3	76.7	77.1	77.5	77.5*
Luxembourg	n/a	n/a	n/a	77.6	77.6
The Netherlands	75.5	77.2	77.6	78.0	78.3*
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	74.1	75.5	75.8	75.8	76.3
Denmark	74.3	75.6	75.9	76.0	76.3
Sweden	77.4	78.4	78.7	78.9	79.1
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	75.4	n/a	77.0	77.1	77.6*
Italy	76.5	78.0	78.4	78.4	78.8*
Portugal	72.9	74.9	75.2	75.2	76.5*
Spain	75.6	77.0	77.7	77.7	78.9*
Austria	75.1	76.6	77.1	77.3	77.6
The United Kingdom	75.4	77.0	n/a	77.6	
Ireland	n/a	n/a	n/a	76.7	76.8
Females					
	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008
Region of Flanders	81.5	82.5	82.9	82.9	
Belgium	81.4	n/a	n/a	83.3	83.5*
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	n/a	81.8	82.0	82.3	82.4*
France	82.8	83.7	84.1	84.4	84.3*
Luxembourg	n/a	n/a	n/a	82.7	82.7*
The Netherlands	80.6	81.6	81.9	82.3	82.3*
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	81.0	82.3	82.8	82.9	83.0
Denmark	79.0	80.2	80.4	80.5	80.7
Sweden	82.0	82.8	82.9	83.0	83.2
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	80.5	n/a	82.0	82.0	82.5*
Italy	82.5	83.5	84.0	83.8	84.1*
Portugal	79.9	81.4	81.8	81.6	81.7*

Spain	82.5	83.5	84.1	84.1	85.0*
Austria	81.1	82.2	82.7	82.8	83.0
The United Kingdom	80.2	81.2	n/a	81.7	
Ireland	n/a	n/a	n/a	81.5	81.6

6.37 Male and female life expectancy at birth from 2000 onwards in the EU-15 countries

Sources: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency

FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, Population Statistics

Eurostat, website

* Provisional figures

n/a: not available

7.2. Caesareans

With 201.5 Caesareans per 1 000 live births, Flanders is in the middle of the range. The rate of Caesareans is considerably lower in the Netherlands, Finland and Sweden. Italy has the highest percentage of Caesareans at over 389 per 1 000 live births (see Table 6.38).

	Caesareans				
	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008
Flanders(1)	169.7	193.0	198.1	197.1	201.5
Belgium	n/a				
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	208.8	267.4	277.8	284.0	283.7
France	171.5				
Luxembourg	198.0				
The Netherlands	118.7	135.7	137.8	139.2	
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	157.8	162.8	161.4	162.6	162.9
Denmark	150.5	197.3	204.5	214.1	221.4
Sweden	144.9	167.8	172.6		
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	n/a				
Italy	333.0	382.4	389.4		
Portugal	277.3	339.8	346.9		
Spain	215.1	250.1			
Austria	172.0	244.2	258.1	271.5	280.0
The United Kingdom	199.7	222.8	226.3	229.7	
Ireland	214.3	261.9	258.9	265.9	

6.38 Number of Caesareans per 1 000 live births in the EU-15 countries from 2000 onwards.

Sources: Study Centre for Perinatal Epidemiology

WHO Regional Office for Europe, European Health for all database (website)

(1) Figures for the Region of Flanders and a Dutch-speaking maternity hospital in Brussels; number per 1 000 births

n/a: not available

7.3. Birth weight

Rates of prematurity, defined as a birth weight below 2 500 g, vary greatly in the EU-15 countries. Finland and Sweden have very low rates at respectively 3.5 and 4.3 babies with a low birth rate per 100 live births. At 6.9 per 100 in 2008, the Region of Flanders still scores on the high side. In Greece, Portugal, Spain and Austria the rates are above 7 (see Table 6.39).

	Low birth weight				
	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008
Flanders(1)	6.8	6.8	7.0	6.7	6.9
Belgium	n/a				
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	6.4	6.8	6.8	6.9	
France	n/a				
Luxembourg	7.5				
The Netherlands	n/a	6.4	6.3	6.2	
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	4.5	4.2	4.3	4.9	3.5
Denmark	4.7	4.9	6.0	6.7	5.8
Sweden	4.4	4.1	4.3		
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	8.1	8.8	9.0	8.8	8.4
Italy	n/a	7.2	6.7		
Portugal	7.1	7.5	7.5	7.8	
Spain	6.9	7.6	7.5		
Austria	6.3	6.8	7.1	7.2	7.1
The United Kingdom	7.5				
Ireland	5.6	5.8	5.7		

6.39 Number of children with a birth weight below 2 500 g per 100 live births in the EU-15 countries from 2000 onwards

Sources: Study Centre for Perinatal Epidemiology

WHO Regional Office for Europe, European Health for all database (website)

(1) Figures for the Region of Flanders and a Dutch-speaking maternity hospital in Brussels

n/a: not available

7.4. Congenital abnormalities

A number of countries keep Eurocat records of congenital abnormalities up to 1 year. At present the data for 2007 are available. Table 6.40 compares the data from the Antwerp register for 2007 with the data from the Eurocat registers that are "full members" of Eurocat. There are 32 registers from 17 countries.

Rather fewer congenital abnormalities in total were recorded on the Antwerp register than the average on the Eurocat registers. Compared with the Eurocat averages, there were significantly fewer heart disorders and chromosomal abnormalities, including Down's syndrome, in Antwerp in 2007, and there were also fewer abnormalities of the urinary system and abdominal wall defects. Antwerp has more recorded cases of abnormalities of the digestive system, the limbs, the musculoskeletal system and more orofacial clefts, genetic syndromes and microdeletions in 2007 than the Eurocat averages.

Congenital abnormalities up to the age of 1 year*

	Antwerp 2007	Eurocat average 2007 (1)
--	--------------	--------------------------

	Per 10 000 births	Per 10 000 births
Nervous system	23.7	24.0
<i>of which neural tube defects</i>	8.1	10.0
<i>hydrocephalus</i>	5.0	5.9
Eye	4.5	3.2
Ear, face, neck	2.5	1.7
Heart	50.3	61.7
<i>of which ventricle septum defect</i>	19.6	27.7
<i>atrium septum defect</i>	8.1	12.2
Respiratory system	5.5	4.9
Oro-facial clefts	19.6	16.6
<i>of which cleft lip with or without cleft palate</i>	13.1	10.2
<i>cleft palate</i>	6.5	6.4
Digestive system	17.1	14.9
Abdominal wall defects	3.5	6.5
Urinary system	22.1	26.5
Genital system	17.6	16.7
<i>of which hypospadias</i>	15.1	14.3
Limbs	38.7	34.3
<i>of which club foot</i>	8.6	10.4
<i>dislocated hip and/or dysplasia</i>	5.5	5.0
<i>polydactylism</i>	13.6	8.5
<i>syndactylism</i>	3.5	3.9
Musculo-skeletal system	13.6	7.8
Other abnormalities	8.1	6.1
Teratogenic syndromes with abnormalities	1.5	1.6
Genetic syndromes and microdeletions	9.6	5.6
Chromosomal	25.7	34.1
<i>of which Down's syndrome (trisomy 21)</i>	13.1	20.0
Metabolic	10.6	*
Total babies with one or more congenital abnormalities	193.7	209.8

6.40 Congenital abnormalities recorded up to the age of 1 year in the Eurocat registers per 10 000 births in 2007

Sources: Eurocat, Provincial Institute of Hygiene, Antwerp

Eurostat, website

(1) Only the registers which participated fully in the registration

* Antwerp is the only Eurocat register that records metabolic disorders

7.5. Mortality

With a *perinatal mortality rate of 6.1 per 1 000 births in 2007*, the Region of Flanders has one of the worst scores. Only France (2000 figures), the United Kingdom (2000 figures) and the Netherlands (2008 figures) have higher perinatal mortality rates (see Table 6.41).

Infant mortality is below 4 per 1 000 live births in most of the EU-15 countries. The Region of Flanders along with the United Kingdom is among the small number of countries in the EU-15 with a score of more than 4 per 1 000 live births (see Table 6.42).

Perinatal mortality					
	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008
Region of Flanders	6.1	5.4	6.2	6.1	
Belgium	n/a				
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	6.1	5.6	5.6	5.5	5.3
France	6.6				
Luxembourg	6.8	5.0	3.6	4.7	
The Netherlands	9.1	5.5	4.9	4.5	6.3
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	3.7	3.0	3.0	3.3	2.6
Denmark	4.8	3.3	3.2	3.1	2.8
Sweden	4.7	3.3	3.6	4.3	
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	7.9	5.7	4.9	5.3	4.4
Italy	5.7	4.6	4.5		
Portugal	5.1	4.2	5.5	5.3	
Spain	5.5	4.7			
Austria	3.9	3.4	3.2	3.1	3.0
The United Kingdom	8.2				
Ireland	6.2	5.1	5.1	5.1	

6.41 Perinatal mortality rate (stillbirths and deaths during the first seven days) per 1 000 births in the EU-15 countries since 2000

Sources: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency

WHO, Regional Office for Europe, European Health for all database (website)

n/a: not available

Infant mortality					
	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008
Region of Flanders	4.7	3.9	4.2	4.3	
Belgium	4.8	3.7			
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	4.4	3.9	3.8		
France	4.4	3.6	3.6	3.5	
Luxembourg	3.0	2.6	2.2		
The Netherlands	5.1	4.9	4.4	4.1	3.8
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	3.6	3.1	2.9	2.7	2.7
Denmark	5.0	4.4	3.4		
Sweden	3.4	2.5	2.8	2.5	
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	5.4	3.8	3.7	3.6	2.7
Italy	4.5	n/a	3.7	3.6	
Portugal	5.5				
Spain	4.4	3.8			

Austria	4.8	4.2	3.6	3.7	3.7
The United Kingdom	5.6	5.1	5.0	4.8	
Ireland	6.2	3.9	3.7	3.1	3.8

6.42 Infant mortality: number of deaths of children aged under 12 months per 1 000 live births from 2000 onwards in the EU-15 countries

Sources: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency

WHO, Regional Office for Europe, European Health for all database (website)

n/a: not available

Mortality in children aged 1 to 5 is quite up and down, with significant differences from one year to the next. With 20 deaths per 100 000 live births, the Region of Flanders is among the EU-15 countries with a high rate of mortality in children aged 1 to 5 years (see Table 6.43).

Deaths in children aged 1-5					
	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008
Region of Flanders	n/a	22.0	24.0	20.0	
Belgium	n/a				
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	24.1	20.4	18.3		
France	25.1	19.6	19.8		
Luxembourg	21.7	13.4	8.9		
The Netherlands	28.1	24.2	21.2	18.9	19.6
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	17.7	24.3	11.8	19.9	17.9
Denmark	19.1	18.7	15.0		
Sweden	12.3	21.3	17.5	16.5	
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	18.4	20.3	14.8	18.0	18.1
Italy	19.3	n/a	17.1	16.2	
Portugal	45.1				
Spain	26.1	21.7			
Austria	22.7	21.3	21.8	17.1	19.1
The United Kingdom	n/a	21.9	22.8	22.7	
Ireland	21.2	22.0	13.7	22.7	17.2

6.43 Number of deaths of children aged 1 to 5 years per 100 000 children from 2000 onwards in the EU-15 countries (crude death rate)

Sources: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency

WHO/Europe, European mortality database (MDB), website

n/a: not available

7.6. Cot deaths

Cot death is extremely rare in the Netherlands, Greece and Italy. Due to the further decrease in 2008, the Region of Flanders is now in the middle group. Germany scores the worst (see Table 6.44).

Cot deaths					
	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008
Region of Flanders	69.5	32.9	45.7	33.5	28.9*
Belgium	n/a				
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	64.7	43.1	38.6		
France	46.3	32.2	32.2	26.8	
Luxembourg	35.7	37.1	18.4		
The Netherlands	12.2	10.5	5.9	7.7	9.9
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	31.6	33.0	20.6	15.3	20.3
Denmark	24.2	17.1	15.5		
Sweden	27.9	22.7	23.1	12.2	
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	10.8	7.5	9.1	4.5	9.6
Italy	6.2	n/a	4.2	4.1	
Portugal	6.3				
Spain	19.2	20.4			
Austria	49.8	38.0	32.1	28.6	28.7
The United Kingdom	n/a	26.7	27.5	28.7	
Ireland	93.2	39.3	40.9	36.6	29.2

6.44 Number of cases of cot death per 100,000 infants under the age of 1 year in the EU-15 countries from 2000 onwards (crude death rate)

Sources: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency

WHO/Europe, European mortality database (MDB), website

n/a: not available

* Provisional figure

7.7. Deaths caused by accidents

Table 6.45 compares the number of deaths resulting from accidents to children aged 0 to 15 in the Region of Flanders with the other EU-15 countries and Table 6.46 shows the number of deaths from road accidents. With 4.7 deaths per 100 000 resulting from accidents and 2.0 resulting from road accidents, the Region of Flanders is one of the EU-15 countries with a high score.

Deaths caused by accidents					
	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008
Region of Flanders	n/a	4.3	3.4	4.7	
Belgium	n/a				
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	4.3	3.3	2.9		
France	6.3	3.8	3.7		
Luxembourg	7.1	6.1	2.4		
The Netherlands	4.3	3.1	2.7	2.7	2.3
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	4.5	5.4	2.6	3.4	2.8

Denmark	4.7	3.0	3.2		
Sweden	2.4	1.8	2.2	1.7	
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	5.8	6.1	3.8	4.9	4.2
Italy	3.7	n/a	2.4	2.9	
Portugal	6.1				
Spain	6.4	4.2			
Austria	6.5	3.8	3.5	2.7	3.4
The United Kingdom	n/a	2.7	2.8	2.9	
Ireland	4.2	3.6	2.7	3.2	3.8

6.45 Number of deaths caused by accidents in children aged 0 to 15 years per 100 000 children in the EU-15 countries from 2000 onwards (standard death rate (SDR))

Sources: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency

WHO/Europe, European mortality database (MDB), website

n/a: not available

Deaths caused by road accidents					
	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008
Region of Flanders	n/a	2.2	1.5	2.0	
Belgium	n/a				
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	2.0	1.4	1.2		
France	2.9	1.4	1.2		
Luxembourg	3.4	3.5	0.0		
The Netherlands	2.0	1.1	1.3	1.2	0.9
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	2.2	2.7	1.1	2.0	1.0
Denmark	2.5	1.6	1.2		
Sweden	1.2	0.5	1.5	0.6	
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	3.0	4.3	2.0	3.0	2.4
Italy	2.0	n/a	1.4	1.5	
Portugal	3.0				
Spain	3.5	2.0			
Austria	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.2	1.0
The United Kingdom	n/a	1.2	1.4	1.3	
Ireland	2.6	1.3	1.2	1.6	2.3

6.46 Number of deaths caused by road accidents per 100 000 children aged 0 to 15 in the EU-15 countries from 2000 onwards (standard death rate (SDR))

Sources: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency

WHO/Europe, European mortality database (MDB), website

n/a: not available

7.8. Deaths as a result of violence

Deaths of children aged 0 to 15 years resulting from violence fluctuate slightly from year to year (see Table 6.47). Once again the Region of Flanders is among the EU-15 countries with a high score.

Deaths resulting from violence					
	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008
Region of Flanders	n/a	1.2	0.7	0.7	
Belgium	n/a				
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	0.6	0.4	0.5		
France	0.7	0.4	0.5		
Luxembourg	0.0	0.0	0.0		
The Netherlands	0.2	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.5
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	0.8	0.8	0.4	0.7	0.4
Denmark	0.7	0.6	0.0		
Sweden	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.1	
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.4	0.1
Italy	0.2	n/a	0.2	0.2	
Portugal	0.3				
Spain	0.2	0.2			
Austria	0.9	1.0	0.8	0.6	0.3
The United Kingdom	n/a	0.2	0.1	0.1	
Ireland	0.9	0.3	0.2		

6.47 Number of deaths caused by violence in children aged 0 to 15 years per 100 000 children in the EU-15 countries from 2000 onwards (standard death rate (SDR))

Sources: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency

WHO/Europe, European mortality database (MDB), website

n/a: not available

7.9. Overweight in children aged 6 to 12 years

The “Flemish growth curves” study looked at children between the ages of 2 and 12 years. For the purposes of comparison with the EU-15 countries, we have taken from this study the total figure for boys and girls in the 6 to 12 age group, because this is the figure that is available for other countries. In Flanders 14.8% of 6- to 12-year-olds are overweight and 3.4% are obese. Flanders is in the middle of the range. The incidence varies from 12% (the Netherlands) to 36% (Italy) (see Table 6.48).

Overweight	
Flanders	14.8
Belgium	18.0
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>	
Germany	16.0
France	19.0
The Netherlands	12.0
<i>Nordic countries</i>	
Denmark	15.0
Sweden	18.0
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>	
Greece	31.0

Chapter 6. Aspects of the health and development of young children

Italy	36.0
Spain	34.0
<hr/>	
The United Kingdom	20.0

6.48 Incidence of overweight in 6-12 year-olds in a number of EU countries

Sources: Lobstein T., Frelut M-L., *Prevalence of overweight among children in Europe, Obesity news 2003*

"Flemish growth curves" project (Roelants M., VUB; Hauspie R., VUB; Hoppenbrouwers K., KU Leuven)

CHAPTER 7. A SAFE AND HEALTHY LIFE?

People's personal behaviour can affect their state of health, even from a very young age. Examples of this for the young child include whether their mother took folic acid supplements during pregnancy, whether they are breast-fed or not, whether they are vaccinated, exposure to smoking, use of therapeutic drugs and oral hygiene. The living environment is also important for the young child, even more so than for adults. In this chapter we look at a number of aspects of how young children live. We also present some figures on the EU-15 countries.

1. Reducing the risk of neural tube defects (spina bifida)

Folic acid is important for preventing neural tube defects (spina bifida) in the foetus. Folic acid deficiency has also been linked with lower birth weight. The Superior Health Council recommends a daily intake of 400 µg* during pregnancy (the normal intake for a woman who is not pregnant is 200 µg). It is difficult to get this amount simply by eating a normal varied diet, which is why women are recommended to take a supplement of 400 µg per day, from when they start trying for a baby until at least 12 weeks after conception. If there is a medical history of neural tube defects, a daily supplement of 4 mg is recommended.

The research programme known as *JOnG!* conducted by the Support Centre for Wellbeing, Public Health and the Family questioned the mothers of 2 106 newborn babies (spread over 8 Flemish districts and 1 Brussels district) shortly after the birth (cohort year 0, births May 2008 - April 2009) about whether they had taken folic acid and, if so, when they started and when they stopped.

In response to the question about their use of folic acid before and during pregnancy, 1 774 mothers or 86.4% said that they had taken supplements (95% reliability interval 84.8 - 87.8%) and 279 or 13.6% said they had not (95% reliability interval 12.1 - 15.2%). 53 mothers said they did not know or did not answer this question. 1 632 respondents also filled in the period in which they had taken the supplement on their questionnaires (see Table 7.1). The study found that around half of the mothers who had used a folic acid supplement had started taking it before they got pregnant. Most of the rest had started during the first trimester. The majority of them continued to take the supplement until after the birth: 60.9% of the users (or 52.6% of the complete target group) kept taking the supplement until after the birth and 34.7% (30% of the target group) were still taking it when they completed the questionnaire.

Applying the guidelines of the Superior Health Council to the letter, we see that the incidence of correct usage was approximately 36.3%. Another 32.3% started taking it during the first 2 months of pregnancy (probably after the first visit to the doctor) and continued taking the supplement at least into the second trimester. Research literature based on data of around ten years ago assumes that fewer than 25% of pregnant women use the supplement correctly. In a more recent study of a hundred first-time Flemish mothers conducted in 2006, the Provincial Institute for Hygiene in Antwerp estimated that 39% were already taking folic acid before the start of the pregnancy.

* µg: microgram

Taking folic acid supplements before and during pregnancy						
Started taking supplement	Stopped taking supplement					Total
	Before the pregnancy	1st trimester	2d trimester	3rd trimester	After the birth	
Before the pregnancy	0.3	6.9	6.5	2.4	27.4	43.3
1st month	-	4.1	5.0	3.1	14.3	26.5

2nd month	-	0.3	1.8	1.4	6.7	10.2
3rd month	-	0.0	0.4	0.7	3.0	4.1
2nd trimester	-	-	0.2	0.5	1.1	1.8
3rd trimester	-	-	-	0.2	0.2	0.3
No supplement	-	-	-	-	-	13.6
Total	0.3	11.4	13.9	8.2	52.6	100.0

7.1 Use of folic acid supplements (tablets or multivitamin preparations) by the stage of the pregnancy; expressed as percentages of all respondents

Source: Support Centre for Wellbeing, Public Health and the Family, JOnG! Research Programme

2. Feeding babies

2.1. First food

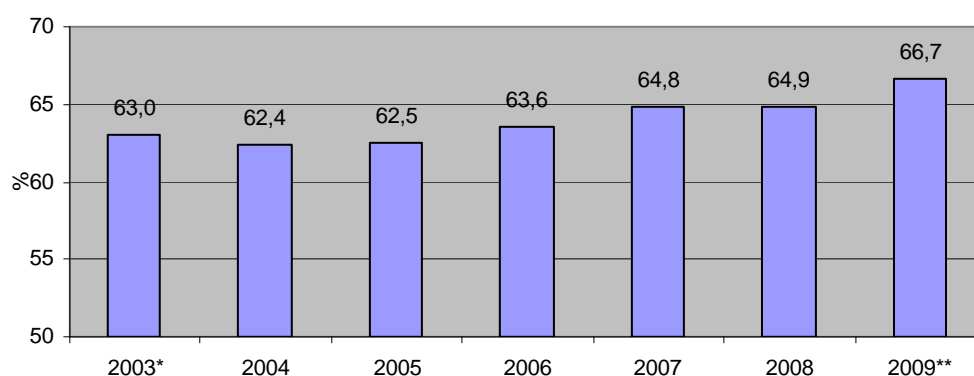
Breast-feeding from birth continues to increase; ethnic minority babies are breast-fed much more

Breast-feeding is, without a doubt, the healthiest and most natural way of feeding a baby. The benefits for the health of mother and child are abundantly clear. In addition to the fact that breast-feeding has greater biological value and breast milk is more easily digested, breast-feeding also protects against infections, offers the child protection against illnesses such as airway infections, diarrhoea and ear infection for longer, and helps to prevent allergy to cow's milk.

Child and Family uses a definition of breast-feeding that is in line with that of the WHO: breast-feeding means feeding the baby exclusively on breast milk. Small quantities of water, oral rehydration substances, medicines, and vitamin and/or mineral supplements are still considered to be exclusive breast-feeding, as is some formula milk that has to be given due to special circumstances. When, however, formula milk or other food is given regularly in addition to breast milk, this is no longer considered as breast-feeding. First food is defined as the food the baby is being given on day six.

In Flanders, 66.7% of newborn babies are fed exclusively on breast milk as their *first food* on day 6. This represents an increase of 1.8% compared with 2008 (see Figure 7.2). The percentage of babies who are exclusively breast-fed varies by *province*. The percentage is highest in Flemish Brabant: where 70.2% of babies are initially exclusively breast-fed. In the province of West Flanders, the percentage is the lowest, at only 60.3%. In the provinces of Limburg and Antwerp 67.6% of newborn babies are exclusively breast-fed and in the province of East Flanders 67.1% (see Table 7.3). The percentage of babies being fed exclusively on breast milk as their first food increased in all provinces from 2008 to 2009.

Trend in breast-feeding as first food



7.2 Trend in the percentage of babies fed exclusively on breast milk as their first food on day 6 since 2003

Source: *Child and Family - IKAROS*

* April - December 2003

** Provisional figures

The percentage of babies who are initially exclusively breast-fed is about 2% higher for *first-borns* than for subsequent babies. 67.8% of first-borns are breast-fed; for subsequent babies the figure is 65.7%. There was an increase for both first-borns and subsequent babies from 2008 to 2009 (see Table 7.4). The percentage who are breast-fed is much lower for *premature babies*: only 58.3% are breast-fed initially. 67.3% of babies born at full term are breast-fed (see Table 7.5).

Babies born to Belgian *underprivileged families* are much less likely to be breast-fed than other babies (39.1%) and this percentage hardly increased at all from 2008. Table 7.6, which presents the percentage of breast-fed babies by disadvantaged groups, also shows that babies born into non-Belgian underprivileged families are the most likely to be breast-fed from birth (79.5%). The figure for babies born into Belgian families which are not underprivileged is 79.1%. Table 7.7 shows the differences by *age of the mother*. Mothers aged between 25 and 35 breast-feed from birth the most. Breast-feeding increased in all age groups from 2008 to 2009. The incidence of breast-feeding is highest for babies whose mother has had a university education: at just short of 80%. The second highest incidence is among mothers with a very low *level of education* (77.9%). This last fact is hardly surprising, as these are mainly ethnic minority babies. The lowest rate is among babies whose mothers are educated to 1st and 2nd stage or lower secondary school (see Table 7.8).

Breast-feeding by province

	2008	2009
Antwerp	66.3	67.6
Flemish Brabant	68.1	70.2
West Flanders	58.2	60.3
East Flanders	65.4	67.1
Limburg	65.7	67.6
Region of Flanders	64.9	66.7

7.3 Percentage of babies who are being exclusively breast-fed on day 6 by province

Source: *Child and Family - IKAROS*

Breast-feeding by birth order

	2008	2009
First-born children	66,0	67,8
Second or later children	64,0	65,7
All children	64,9	66,7

7.4 Percentage of babies being breast-fed on day 6, by birth order – Region of Flanders

Source: Child and Family - IKAROS

Breast-feeding and prematurity

	2008	2009
Premature	54.4	58.3
Full term	65.7	67.3
All children	64.9	66.7

7.5 Percentage of babies being breast-fed on day 6 by whether or not they were born prematurely – Region of Flanders

Source: Child and Family - IKAROS

Breast-feeding and belonging/not belonging to a disadvantaged group

	2008	2009
Babies in Belgian families which are not underprivileged	62.4	63.9
Babies in underprivileged Belgian families	39.0	39.1
Babies in non-Belgian families which are not underprivileged	78.6	79.5
Babies in non-Belgian underprivileged families	76.3	79.1
All children	64.9	66.7

7.6 Percentage of babies being breast-fed on day 6, by whether or not their family belongs to a disadvantaged group – Region of Flanders

Source: Child and Family - IKAROS

Breast-feeding and age of the mother

	2008	2009
Aged under 20	51,1	52.1
20 – 25	60,5	62.1
25 – 30	66,0	68.3
30 – 35	66,7	68.1
35 – 40	64,4	65.3
40 years or over	62,5	64.7
All children	64,9	66.7

7.7 Percentage of babies being breast-fed on day 6, by age of the mother – Region of Flanders

Source: Child and Family - IKAROS

Breast-feeding and level of education of the mother

	2008	2009
No education or only primary school	76.9	77.9
1st and 2nd stage or lower secondary school	53.2	54.5
3rd stage or higher secondary school	54.0	56.0

Non-university higher education (short course)	70.2	71.8
University education	79.1	79.8
All children	64.9	66.7

7.8 Percentage of babies being breast-fed on day 6, by level of education of the mother – Region of Flanders

Source: Child and Family - IKAROS

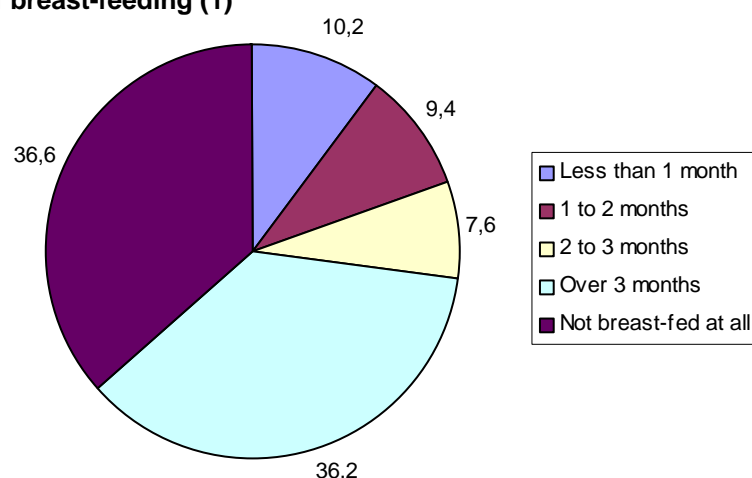
2.2. Duration of breast-feeding

Over 36% are still exclusively breast-feeding at 3 months. Mothers are breast-feeding for longer

The most recent figures available on the duration of breast-feeding relate to babies born in the third quarter of 2009, so we looked at babies born in the fourth quarter of 2008 up to and including the third quarter of 2009 rather than the 2009 calendar year. Over 36% of these babies were still being exclusively breast-fed at the age of 3 months (see Figure 7.9 and Table 7.10). Of the group who started on breast-feeding (breast-feeding on day 6), 57.1% were still being exclusively breast-fed at the age of 3 months. Table 7.10 shows that in the province of Flemish Brabant in fact 62.3% were still being exclusively breast-fed at 3 months. Not only has there been an increase in the number of babies that start on breast-feeding (see 2.1), mothers are also breast-feeding for longer.

The decrease in the number of breast-fed children between day 6 and 3 months is slow but sure. Figure 7.11 shows the number of babies still being exclusively breast-fed by age in full weeks.

Duration of breast-feeding (1)



7.9 Duration of breast-feeding in babies born in the 4th quarter of 2008 up to and including the 3rd quarter of 2009 – Region of Flanders (percentages)

Source: Child and Family - IKAROS

(1) Excluding babies for whom the duration of breast-feeding is not known

Breast-feeding at 3 months by province (1)

	% of all babies		% of babies who were initially breast-fed	
	Babies born from 4/2007 to 3/2008 inclusive	Babies born from 4/2008 to 3/2009 inclusive	Babies born from 4/2007 to 3/2008 inclusive	Babies born from 4/2008 to 3/2009 inclusive
Antwerp	35.7	36.4	55.3	56.2
Flemish Brabant	38.9	40.3	62.0	62.3

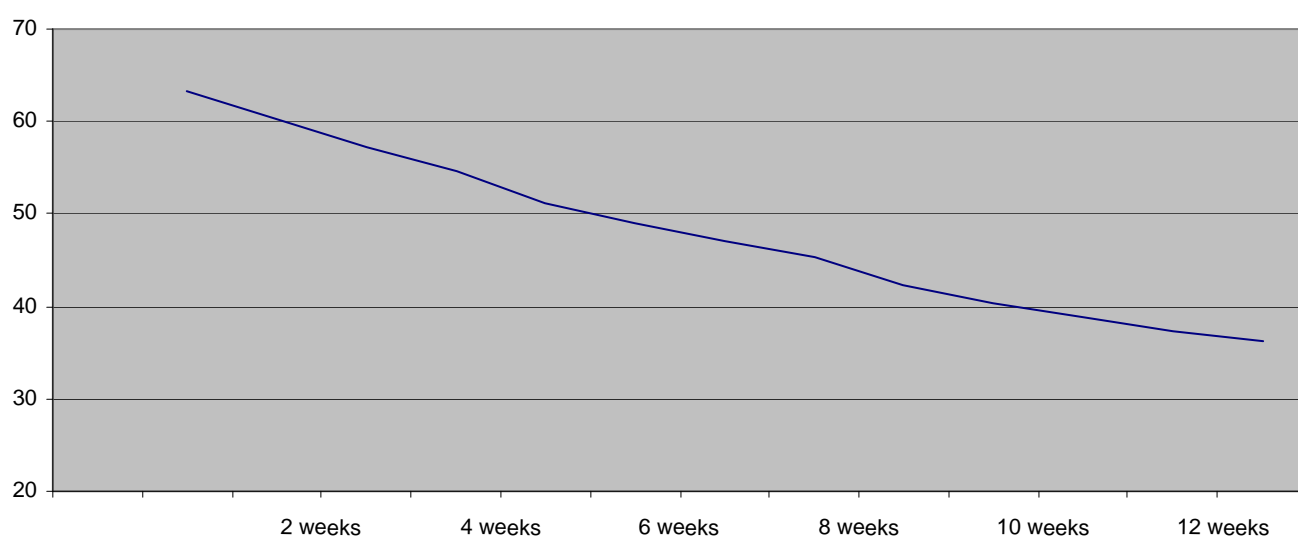
West Flanders	30.1	30.9	53.5	53.6
East Flanders	35.3	36.5	55.5	57.2
Limburg	34.8	37.6	53.9	56.9
Region of Flanders	34.9	36.2	55.9	57.1

7.10 Babies still exclusively breast-fed at 3 months, by province of birth, as a percentage of all babies and as a percentage of babies who were initially breast-fed

Source: Child and Family - IKAROS

(1) Excluding babies for whom the duration of breast-feeding is not known

Duration of breast-feeding in weeks (1)



7.11 Babies born in the 4th quarter of 2008 up to and including the 3rd quarter of 2009 who are exclusively breast-fed, by duration of breast-feeding in full weeks (percentages) – Region of Flanders

Source: Child and Family - IKAROS

(1) Excluding babies for whom the duration of breast-feeding is not known

3. Vaccination rates

Very high vaccination rate; rapid uptake of the new rota vaccine

A study* carried out in 2008 found that a very high percentage of young children in the Region of Flanders are vaccinated properly against the most important infectious diseases for which vaccines are available. The vaccination rate for young children in Flanders is well over 95% for all the basic vaccines. It is essential that enough people are vaccinated to prevent the spread of the diseases. The WHO target is a 90% vaccination rate. The oral rota vaccine recommended since November 2006 was quickly accepted: by 2008 a 30% vaccination rate had already been reached for 2 doses, even though the recommendation was still not in force for the majority of the surveyed children.

Table 7.12 shows a comparison with the last survey from 2005. It shows that the vaccination rate increased for all the basic vaccinations.

Most young children are vaccinated by Child and Family (84.2%)**. Some are vaccinated by a paediatrician (11.3%) or GP (4%). A very small number of children were vaccinated abroad or through ONE (Office de la Naissance et de l'Enfance) (0.5%). The risk of incomplete vaccination is greater among last-born children in a family, especially in families with 4 or more children, and among the children of young mothers and

mothers of non-Belgian origin. The main reasons given by parents for their children's incomplete vaccination record were anti-vaccination convictions and illness of the child.

**Hoppenbrouwers K., Van Damme P., Depoorter A-M., Studie van de vaccinatiegraad bij jonge kinderen en adolescenten in Vlaanderen in 2008, [Survey of vaccination rates of young children and adolescents in Flanders in 2008] February 2009*

*** For more information about the vaccinations offered by Child and Family, see our annual vaccination report (www.kindengezin.be/Algemeen/Over_Kind_En_Gezin/rapporten/default.jsp)*

Vaccination rates								
	2005				2008			
	Dose 1	Dose 2	Dose 3	Dose 4	Dose 1	Dose 2	Dose 3	Dose 4
Polio	99.0	98.6	98.2	93.1	99.7	98.8	98.5	95.3
DTP	98.7	98.2	97.9	92.9	99.3	98.6	98.3	95.2
HIB	98.1	97.6	97.2	92.6	99.1	98.4	98.1	95.2
Hep B (1)	96.9	96.1	92.2	10.1	99.0	98.3	98.0	95.1
Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV) 7-valent (2)	NS	NS	NS		97.7	93.8	89.1	32.2
Measles/mumps/rubella	94.0				96.6			
Meningitis C	94.1				95.6			
Rota vaccine (3)	NS	NS	NS	NS	33.3	30.4	0.9	

7.12 Vaccination rate among young children living in the Region of Flanders – children aged 18 to 24 months at the time of the survey

Sources: Van Damme P., Hoppenbrouwers K., Depoorter A-M., Studie van de vaccinatiegraad bij jonge kinderen en adolescenten in Vlaanderen in 2005, [Survey of vaccination rates of young children and adolescents in Flanders in 2005] March 2006

Hoppenbrouwers K., Van Damme P., Depoorter A-M., Studie van de vaccinatiegraad bij jonge kinderen en adolescenten in Vlaanderen in 2008, [Survey of vaccination rates of young children and adolescents in Flanders in 2008] February 2009

(1) For hepatitis B, both the 3-dose schedule and the 4-dose schedule were used in the period of the 2005 survey. In the case of the 2008 survey, the 1-dose schedule, 2-dose schedule and 3-dose schedule were used during the survey period

(2) 7-valent pneumococcal conjugate vaccine; the schedule varies from 1 to 4 vaccines depending on the age at which the first dose is administered

(3) The rota vaccine has been available in Belgian pharmacies since 1 June 2006 and has been recommended and the cost partially reimbursed since November 2006. This means that the recommendation only applies to children born since September 2006

NS: Not (not yet) in schedule or recommended

4. A smoke-free environment for the young child?

The detrimental consequences of active smoking for public health are well known. Various surveys have also demonstrated the risks of passive exposure to tobacco smoke. These are an increased risk of lung cancer, irritation of the mucous membranes of the eyes and the bronchial tubes, with coughing and asthma as symptoms, and, although this is less clear, an influence on cardiovascular disorders. For young children, there is also an increased risk of cot death and obvious effects on respiration. A smoke-free environment is therefore an important consideration in services to families.

The research programme known as *JOnG!* conducted by the Support Centre for Wellbeing, Public Health and the Family questioned mothers shortly after giving birth (cohort year 0, births May 2008 - April 2009)

about whether they smoked before they got pregnant, during pregnancy and after the birth. They were also asked whether anyone else in the house smoked during their pregnancy and after the birth.

22.7% of the babies had a mother who smoked immediately before the pregnancy (only the 12 months before the survey were taken into consideration) (see Table 7.13). The incidence of smoking decreased by about 10% during the pregnancy and after the birth. With a very few exceptions (n = 3) the mothers who smoked during or after the pregnancy were the same mothers who smoked before the pregnancy. Table 7.13 shows the number of cigarettes per day that they smoked.

If we add the number of pregnant women who were exposed to smoking in their own home to those who were active smokers, 16.6% of the women were found to have been exposed to tobacco smoke during their pregnancy (12.3% active smokers and 4.3% exposed to smoke because other people in the home smoke)*.

After the birth the total exposure rate dropped to 14.2%: 11.9% of babies with a mother who smoked herself and 2.3% with a mother who was exposed to smoke from other smokers in the home.

* This is a minimum threshold, because there is no information about exposure to passive smoking outside the home

	Exposure to tobacco smoke (1)						
	Percentage (2) (95% reliability interval)		Number of cigarettes per day (3)				
			<1	1-5	6-10	11-20	>20
<i>Active smoking</i>							
Before the pregnancy	22.7	(21.0 - 24.6)	12.7	23.5	25.7	27.4	10.7
During the pregnancy	12.3	(10.9 - 13.8)	14.1	35.5	26.6	21.4	2.4
After the pregnancy	11.9	(10.6 - 13.4)	11.2	22.9	33.8	25.8	6.2
<i>Passive smoking</i>							
During the pregnancy	10.6	(9.3 - 12.0)	8.7	24.0	25.5	24.0	17.9
After the pregnancy	4.7	(3.8 - 5.7)	13.3	27.8	23.3	20.0	15.6

7.13 Percentage of babies whose mother smoked actively or passively before, during and after the pregnancy – babies born between May 2008 and April 2009

(1) This is a minimum threshold, because there is no information about exposure to passive smoking outside the home

(2) Percentage calculated on all babies for whom this question was answered with "yes" or "no"

(3) Percentage of those babies whose mothers were exposed to tobacco smoke through active or passive smoking

Source: Support Centre for Wellbeing, Public Health and the Family, JOnG! Research Programme

5. Use of therapeutic drugs

A considerable amount of therapeutic drugs used

The health survey provides information about the use of therapeutic drugs (data for 2004; 2008 not yet available), which is high in the Region of Flanders, even for young children. 31% of children under the age of 12 took some form of medicine in the 2-week period* of the survey. This percentage falls as the child grows up, from 43% of children under the age of 3 to 27% of children aged 6-12. There was a slight decrease in the use of therapeutic drugs between 2001 and 2004, except for the children under the age of 3. Table 7.14 includes the use of both prescribed medicines and medicines which can be bought without a prescription. Over 20% of children under 3 were given medicines prescribed by a doctor, a decrease compared with usage in 2001. The use of over-the-counter medicines had also fallen to 13.8%.

* The surveys were spread over the year

Use of therapeutic drugs		
	2001	2004
Use of therapeutic drugs		
Children aged under 3	39.1	43.0
Children aged 3-6	35.0	29.7
Children aged 6-12	34.7	26.6
Total aged under 12	36.5 (N=509)	31.0 (N=441)
Use of prescribed therapeutic drugs		
Children aged under 3	31.0	24.8
Children aged 3-6	20.5	18.6
Children aged 6-12	17.0	18.5
Total aged under 12	22.0 (N=518)	20.1 (N=447)
Use of therapeutic drugs obtained without a prescription		
Children aged under 3	13.0	23.9
Children aged 3-6	18.0	13.8
Children aged 6-12	19.9	10.3
Total aged under 12	18.1 (N=506)	13.8 (N=442)

7.14 Percentages of children taking prescribed medication and medication obtained without a prescription in a 2-week period, by age group – Region of Flanders

Source: 2001 and 2004 Belgian Health Survey, Department of Epidemiology, Scientific Institute of Public Health

6. Use of alternative medicine

The health survey (data for 2004; 2008 not yet available) gives us a picture of the extent to which parents are using alternative medicine for young children: 11% of children under 12 had had some contact with non-conventional or alternative medicine in a 12-month period. This was even higher for children under 3, at 14.7% (see Table 7.15). This usually involved the child being taken to a doctor who practises alternative medicine. In most cases this was a homeopathic practitioner. Quite a few children under 3 were taken to see an osteopath (5.1%). The increase in the use of homeopathic medicine and osteopathy for children under the age of 3 is striking: 6.4% and 0.4% respectively in 2001.

	Alternative medicine			
	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3-6	Children aged 6-12	All children under 12
Contact with non-conventional therapy	14.7	10.5	9.5	11.0 (N=444)
Contact with non-conventional therapy through a doctor	9.8	7.9	8.3	8.2 (N=427)
Contact with non-conventional therapy through a paramedic	3.4	2.3	1.8	2.6 (N=407)
Contact with a homeopathic	11.3	7.2	9.8	8.7

practitioner				(N=444)
Contact with an osteopath	5.1	1.4	1.8	2.8
				(N=445)

7.15 Children under the age of 12 for whom alternative forms of medical treatment were sought in a 12-month period: extent of use, type of practitioner and type of medicine (percentages)

Source: 2004 Belgian Health Survey, Department of Epidemiology, Scientific Institute of Public Health

7. Oral hygiene in young children and eating habits that affect oral health

Daily tooth-brushing and consumption of sugary products are the most important areas for improvement

Behavioural factors are very important for oral health. Just think how important eating habits and oral hygiene are. Learning good habits at a young age goes a very long way to determining the state of a person's oral health in later life. Data were collected as part of the "Tandje de Voorste" (Smile for Life) project* (see also chapter 6, point 4.4). Parents in Flanders often only start brushing their toddler's teeth after their second birthday. Tooth-brushing is still not a daily habit in 1 in 5 5-year-olds. Many children – even 3-year-olds – are not given help with brushing their teeth. What is surprising is that even some 5-year-olds still frequently drink from a bottle (12%). What's more, that bottle often contains a sugary drink. It is an established habit of around two thirds of children in Flanders to drink sweet drinks between meals. Further questioning revealed that over 10% of the children are offered sugary drinks before going to bed or during the night. Twelve percent of the parents questioned also admitted that they regularly put sweet substances on their child's soother (see Table 7.16).

The findings of this project clearly show that there is a great deal of room for improvement in the oral health of children in Flanders. Starting daily tooth-brushing with the help of a parent at an early enough age needs to be encouraged. Parents also need to be warned about the risks associated with frequently giving their children sugary products on soothers, in bottles, as drinks between meals and at night.

* This project is a collaboration between the Universities of Leuven and Ghent and Child and Family, made possible by the support of Gaba International and Gaba Benelux

Oral hygiene and eating habits (%)

	3-year-olds (N=1 250)	5-year-olds (N=1 283)
Oral hygiene		
Age tooth-brushing starts		
1 year or under	35.7	61.5
- between 1 and 2 years	45.1	30.5
- 2 years old or more	19.2	8.0
Frequency of tooth-brushing		
- > 1x/day	17.6	23.0
- > 1x/day	53.2	55.7
- not every day	29.2	20.3
Parents help with tooth-brushing (every day)	50.1	33.3
Eating habits		
Drink from a bottle (at time of survey)	40.5	12.0
Put sweet substances on soother (ever done this?)	12.7	12.6
Sweet drinks between meals (regularly)	69.0	64.5

Sweet drinks at night (regularly)	11.1	10.6
7.16 Oral hygiene and eating habits which affect oral health among 3- and 5-year-olds in some regions of Flanders		

Source: Declerck D., Leroy R., Martens L., Lesaffre E., Garcia-Zattera M.J., Vanden Broucke S., Debyser M., Hoppenbrouwers K., Factors associated with prevalence and severity of caries experience in preschool children, Community Dentistry Oral Epidemiology 2007; 35..

8. Living conditions

The immediate environment in which they live is extremely important for young children, They spend more of their time in their everyday lives in the home and in the immediate vicinity of the home than do adults. Children need a safe place to grow up in.

Most young children live in a single-family home

The type of home can be seen as one indicator of the comfort of the home and it gives an indication of the space in which children are growing up. Most young children live in a single-family home (88.7%) (see Table 7.17).

	Type of dwelling			
	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3-6	Children aged 6-12	Total
Single-family home – detached house	32.6	38.3	42.9	39.2
Single-family home – semi-detached or terraced house	51.2	50.9	47.9	49.5
Apartment or studio in building with fewer than 10 homes	13.2	8.6	7.0	9.0
Apartment or studio in building with 10 or more homes	3.0	1.9	1.7	2.1
Other	0.0	0.3	0.4	0.3
Total	100.0 (N=27)	100.0 (N=27)	100.0 (N=525)	100.0 (N=304)

7.17 Children aged under 12: type of home in which children live – Region of Flanders – 2007 (percentages)

Source: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, SILC – 2007

Over three-quarters of children under the age of 12 have their own bedroom. Almost 64% have room to play indoors and 94% live in a home with a garden or backyard attached to the house (see Table 7.18).

	Space for children?			
	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3-6	Children aged 6-12	Total
Separate bedroom for each child	76.7	72.5	76.8	75.7 (N=2 418)
Room to play indoors	56.6	67.5	65.4	64.0 (N=2 415)
Garden or backyard	91.4	94.9	94.7	94.0 (N=2 417)

7.18 Children aged under 12: percentage who live in a home with a separate bedroom for each child, room

to play indoors and a garden or backyard – 2005

Source: Antwerp University, Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy

25.3% of young children live in a *home* with one or more problems: too dark, damp, lacking basic conveniences (bath or shower, toilet or hot water) or overcrowded (less than 1 room per person). Damp and overcrowding are the most common problems (see Table 7.19).

Over 47% of the children live in a *living environment which has one or more faults*. These include noise from the neighbours or the street, pollution or other nuisance caused by traffic or industry, vandalism or crime, remote location without good public transport links and a scruffy neighbourhood. Noise from neighbours or the street scores the worst (see Table 7.20).

Living conditions				
	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3-6	Children aged 6-12	Total
Faults in the home				
Too dark	10.5	7.5	7.7	8.4
Leaking roof, damp walls or floor, rotting window frames or rotting woodwork	19.7	19.4	11.1	15.3
Lack of basic conveniences (bath or shower, toilet, hot running water)	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.2
Overcrowded (less than 1 room per person)	10.0	10.5	14.7	12.5
<i>Percentage with one or more faults in the home</i>				25.3
	29.9 (N=214)	28.6 (N=27)	21.4 (N=537)	(N=308)
Faults in living environment				
Noise from neighbours or the street	28.8	22.5	21.2	23.5
Pollution or other nuisance caused by traffic or industry	14.0	11.5	14.8	13.8
Vandalism or crime in the neighbourhood	12.2	18.1	14.1	14.6
Remote location without good public transport links	10.8	10.5	13.2	11.9
Scruffy neighbourhood	6.2	7.4	8.0	7.4
<i>Percentage with one or more faults in the living environment</i>				47.1
	48.6 (N=214)	46.1 (N=27)	46.8 (N=537)	(N=308)

7.19 Children aged under 12: faults in the home and in the living environment (percentages) – 2007

Source: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, SILC – 2007

9. Moving house

Many young children have experienced moving house.

Table 7.20 shows how many children move house in the course of one year. In 2007 (more recent figures are not available), 11.3% of children under the age of 12 moved house. In about half of these cases they moved house within the same municipality. Slightly more children moved house than in 2006.

Moved house within past year	
2006	2007

	Children aged under 12	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3-6	Children aged 6-12	Total
Moved house within the municipality	5.3	6.5	6.2	4.4	5.5
Moved to a different municipality within the same district	2.4	3.0	2.8	1.9	2.4
Moved to a different district within the Region of Flanders	1.7	2.2	2.0	1.4	1.8
Moved to another region within Belgium	0.3	0.8	0.8	0.5	0.7
Moved abroad or unknown	0.6	0.9	1.1	0.9	1.0
Total who moved house	10.3	13.4	12.9	9.1	11.3
Did not move house	89.7	86.6	87.1	90.9	88.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

7.20 Children aged under 12: percentage who moved house during the year, by type of move

Source: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, Population Statistics

10. The European context

10.1. Breastfeeding

Flanders certainly does not lead the field as far as breast-feeding is concerned. The percentage of babies who are initially exclusively breast-fed is significantly to very much lower than in the Mediterranean and the Nordic countries. Flanders also scores poorly at 3 months (see Table 7.21).

Breastfeeding			
	Breast-fed at some point	At 3 months	At 6 months
Region of Flanders	66.7 (1) (2009)	36.2 (1) (2009)	n/a
Belgium	65.9 (2007)	n/a	n/a
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>			
Germany	86.0 (2003)	n/a	n/a
France	63.0 (2003)	n/a	n/a
Luxembourg	88.0 (2003)	45.1 (2008)	41.1 (2008)
The Netherlands	75.0 (2006-08)	54.1 (2008)	35.2 (2008)
<i>Nordic countries</i>			
Finland	93.0 (2007)	76.0 (2005)	60.0 (2005)
Denmark	98.0 (2007)	n/a	n/a
Sweden	97.6 (2006-07)	85.7 (2006)	69.2 (2006)
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>			
Greece	86.0	n/a	n/a

	(2005)		
Italy	81.1	59.2	40.4
	(2005)	(2005)	(2005)
Portugal	91.0	n/a	n/a
	(2006)		
Spain	77.2	n/a	n/a
	(2003)		
Austria	n/a	72.0	65.0
		(2006)	(2006)
The United Kingdom	77.0	34.0	25.0
	(2003)	(2005)	(2005)
Ireland	43.8	n/a	n/a
	(2)		

7.21 Percentage of babies that are breast-fed at birth, at 3 months and at 4-6 months

Sources: *Child and Family - IKAROS*

Central Bureau of Statistics, the Netherlands

OECD Family database (website): figures under 'breast-fed at some point' only cover Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands

European health for all database, WHO Europe: figures on breast-feeding at 3 months/ 6 months

La Leche League International (website): figures under 'breast-fed at some point' only cover Germany and Luxembourg

(1) Exclusively breast-fed

(2) Year not given

n/a: not available

10.2. Vaccination rates

The vaccination rate for *polio and DTP* is high in most of the EU-15 countries and the Region of Flanders comes out on top. In Denmark and Austria, the rate for polio 3 and DTP 3 is below 90%. The United Kingdom and Ireland also score quite low. For *hepatitis B* the situation is not as good and in various countries Hep B 3 is not in fact included in the vaccination scheme or it is limited to at-risk groups (the Nordic countries, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Ireland). Vaccination rates for *measles* and *Hib* are also below the 90% WHO target in many countries. The Region of Flanders is among the countries with the highest rates of take-up of these vaccines too (see Table 7.22).

Vaccination rates (1)					
	DTP3	Polio3	Measles	HepB3	Hib3
Region of Flanders*	98.3	98.5	96.6	98.0	98.1
Belgium	99	99	93	98	98
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	90	96	95	90	93
France	98	98	87	29	87
Luxembourg	99	99	96	94	98
The Netherlands	97	96	96	NS/R	97
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	99	97	97	NS/R	98
Denmark	75	75	89	NS	75
Sweden	98	98	96	(NS/R)	98
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					

Greece	99	99	99	95	83
Italy	96	96	91	96	96
Portugal	97	97	97	97	97
Spain	97	97	98	97	97
Austria	83	83	83	83	83
The United Kingdom	92	92	86	NS/R	92
Ireland	93	93	89	NS/R	93

7.22 Percentage of children who have had DTP 3, polio 3, measles, Hep B 3 or Hib 3 vaccinations – 2008

Sources: Hoppenbrouwers K., Van Damme P., Depoorter A-M., *Studie van de vaccinatiegraad bij jonge kinderen en adolescenten in Vlaanderen in 2008, [Survey of vaccination rates of young children and adolescents in Flanders in 2008] February 2009*

Unicef, *Immunization Summary, A Statistical reference containing data through 2008, The 2010 Edition*

* 2008

NS: not in scheme

NS/R: not in scheme, only for at-risk groups

10.3. Oral hygiene of young children

Our figures for oral hygiene in the other EU countries are based on data from the *National Institute for DentoCraniofacial Research (NIDCR)* of the *National Institute of Health (NIH)* of the USA.

Table 7.23 shows the results for oral hygiene for Flanders and compared with the EU countries which took part in the NIH study. The Flemish children got very poor scores on reported frequency of tooth-brushing.

Oral hygiene				
	Brush teeth twice a day	Started brushing before 2nd birthday	Parents help children with tooth brushing	Sweet drinks at night
Flanders (Leuven)	32	65	74	19
Germany	66	94	80	21
Denmark	81	96	97	12
Italy	43	63	79	17
Scotland	85	99	84	20
Wales	83	94	79	26
Northern Ireland	77	90	69	15
Ireland	52	76	74	22

7.23 Oral health-related behaviour of children aged 3 to 5 in some EU countries – 2004 (percentages)

Source: Pine C. M. et al., *International comparisons of health inequalities in childhood dental caries. Community Dental Health 2004, 21 (Supplement): 121-130*

10.4. Housing problems and problems in the immediate living environment

European SILC (Statistics on Income and Living Conditions) data on *housing problems* of families with children are available for 2008. The problems found were: too dark; leaking roof; damp walls or floor; rotting window frames or woodwork; lack of basic conveniences (bath or shower, toilet, warm running water); overcrowded (less than 1 room per person). Table 7.24 shows the percentage of families who reported three or more housing problems, by type of family. One-parent families with dependent children reported relatively more problems than two-parent families with 1 or 2 dependent children. Finland, Sweden, Greece

and Spain are exceptions to this: in these countries there is hardly any difference by family type. Belgium comes in the middle of the range for two-parent families. The Nordic countries score better; the United Kingdom scores worse. Belgium has the worst scores of any country for one-parent families: 37% of one-parent families have one or more problems with their housing.

Housing problems experienced by families				
	One-parent families	Two-parent families		
		with 1 child	with 2 children	with 3 or more children
Belgium	37	20	19	22
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>				
Germany	29	17	17	19
France	29	18	16	16
Luxembourg	29	23	20	23
The Netherlands	34	19	16	18
<i>Nordic countries</i>				
Finland	13	12	10	10
Denmark	21	10	14	10
Sweden	15	13	16	15
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>				
Greece	19	19	19	23
Italy	27	21	20	25
Portugal	28	21	21	22
Spain	20	17	19	22
Austria	25	18	18	19
The United Kingdom	32	25	22	25
Ireland	25	19	13	13
EU-15	29	19	18	19

7.24 Percentages of one- and two-parent families with one or more housing problems in the EU-15 countries – 2008

Source: Eurostat (website) SILC

The European SILC also look at the wider living environment, and examine how many families have one or more *problems* in the *immediate surroundings of their home*. The issues include pollution and other nuisance caused by traffic or industry, noisy neighbours or street noise, and vandalism or crime in the neighbourhood. When these factors are examined, the disadvantage suffered by one-parent families is even more striking. In all of the EU-15 countries one-parent families report the most problems in their immediate living environment. Belgium comes in the middle group on this. For two-parent families though the Belgian figure is on the high side (see Table 7.25).

Problems in the immediate home surroundings of families				
	One-parent families	Two-parent families		
		with 1 child	with 2 children	with 3 or more children
Belgium	41	35	34	36
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>				

Germany	49	35	33	35
France	44	31	26	29
Luxembourg	48	25	24	32
The Netherlands	46	30	41	29
<i>Nordic countries</i>				
Finland	46	29	24	21
Denmark	43	31	30	28
Sweden	40	29	23	24
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>				
Greece	43	37	33	31
Italy	41	35	35	35
Portugal	39	34	35	40
Spain	35	35	33	29
Austria	33	27	28	38
The United Kingdom	46	42	36	37
Ireland	36	33	18	19
EU-15	44	35	33	32

7.25 Percentages of one- and two-parent families with one or more problems in the immediate surroundings of their home in the EU-15 countries – 2008

Source: Eurostat (website) SILC