

THE CHILD IN FLANDERS

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FOREWORD

"The Child in Flanders", a separate publication since 2000, has been a success. 3,000 copies of the first report were distributed. The report has also been available for consultation on the Child and Family website, with an English version for interested parties abroad.

"The Child in Flanders" has become the reference work for anyone seeking information about young children in Flanders.

The second edition is now ready, with updated figures and a number of additions to the content. A broad palette of information, not only statistics but also information about concrete aspects of the circumstances in which young children live, such as child care, deprivation, passive smoking, ... and about the social and medical development of young children. Special attention has been given to cot death, hearing defects, accidents and breast-feeding.

The mission of Child and Family is, together with its partners, to create as many opportunities as possible for every child, no matter where it was born and how it grows up. It is hoped that "The Child in Flanders" will prove to be a useful and reliable reference source for the formulation of concrete policy objectives and for evaluating the impact of policy being pursued, not only for Child and Family itself, but also for its partners in health and social services, the media, students, etc. We

want this instrument to reach everyone involved with young children in Flanders.

Bea Buysse

scientific adviser

Chapter 1.

The child population: 2000 did not bring a millennium baby boom

In the "hype" around the transition to the year 2000, there was speculation in many quarters that the year 2000 would also witness a baby boom. However, the number of births in 2000 stayed at the same level as in 1999.

This chapter first presents various figures and then goes on to explain these figures, indicate trends and place the figures in a European context.

In addition to children born in Flanders, there are also children who have come from other countries: immigrants, including adopted children and asylum seekers. These figures will also be interpreted.

1. Number of births

In 2000, there were 61,877 live births in the *Region of Flanders (provisional figure)*. This figure remained practically unchanged in comparison with 1999 (see Table 1.1 and Figure 1.2). (The birth rate in the Region of Flanders in 2000 is a new record low since the Second World War.

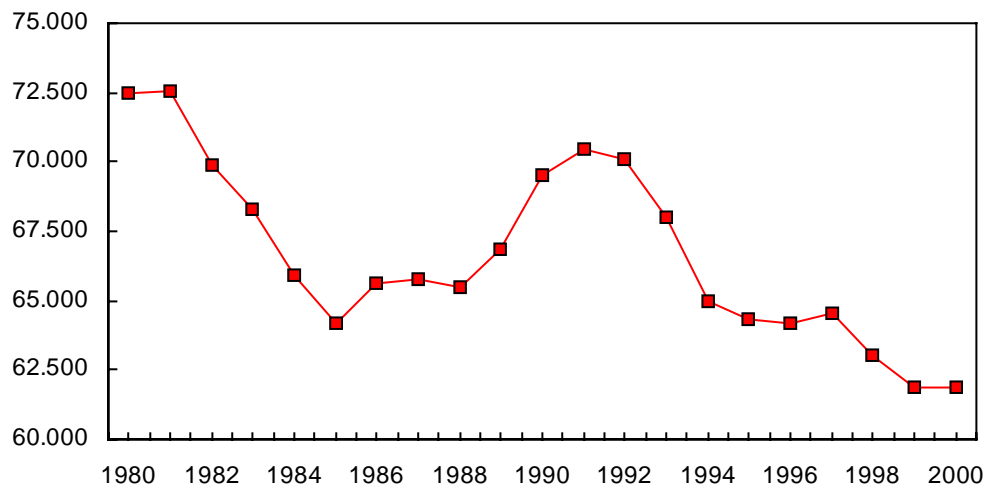
Births	
1999	61,906
2000	61,877

1.1 Number of live births in the Region of Flanders

Source: NIS - Population trend

* *Provisional figure*

Births trend



1.2 Trend in the number of births in the Region of Flanders since 1990

Source: NIS - Population trend

Table 1.3 shows the number of births *per province*. In Antwerp, Flanders-Brabant and Limbourg, the number of births is lower than in 1999.

In East Flanders and West Flanders there was a slight rise in the number of births.

Figure 1.4 shows the trend in the number of births in each province since 1980.

Births by province

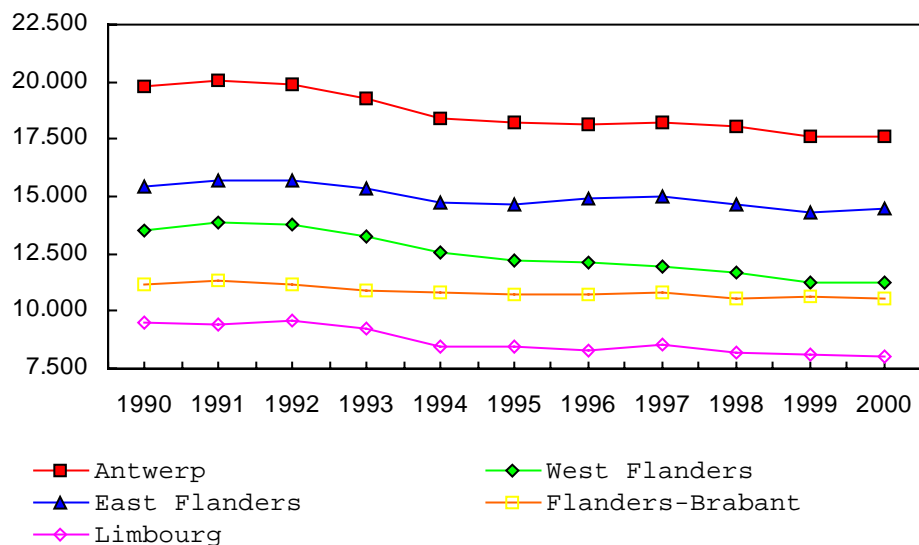
	1999	2000*
Antwerp	17,608	17,579
Flanders-Brabant	10,643	10,562
West Flanders	11,227	11,253
East Flanders	14,287	14,454
Limbourg	8,141	8,029

1.3 Number of live births per province

Source: NIS - Population trend

* Provisional figures

Births trend by province



1.4 Trend in the number of live births by province

Source: NIS - Population trend

2. Immigration, adoption, asylum seekers

In addition to children born in Flanders, there are children who come to Flanders as immigrants either from the Walloon or Brussels Regions, or from outside Belgium.

In this context, we also present figures for adoptions - the majority of adoptions in Flanders are intercountry adoptions - and figures for minors who are asylum seekers.

2.1. Immigration

In 1999, 4,839 children aged under 12 migrated to the Region of Flanders **from other countries**. This figure is approx. 10.8% higher than in 1998. In addition, 3,852 children migrated **from the Region of Brussels and the Walloon Region**. The number of migrations from other regions remained virtually unchanged compared with 1998 (see Table 1.5).

Immigration

From another Region

From outside Belgium

1998

1999

1998

1999

Children aged under 3	1,147	1,156	1,111	1,183
Children aged 3-6	1,109	1,089	1,248	1,426
Children aged 6-12	1,588	1,607	2,010	2,230
<hr/>				
Total	3,844	3,852	4,369	4,839

1.5 Number of children aged under 12 migrating to the Region of Flanders from another Region or from outside Belgium

Source: NIS - Population trend

2.2. Adoption

In the course of 2000, the **authorised adoption services* placed** a total of 245 children **for adoption**. This was 31 more than in 1999. The majority of placements were of children who came from abroad (86%) (see Table 1.6 and Figure 1.7). The children from outside Belgium came mainly from India, China, Ethiopia, Vietnam, Haiti, the Philippines, Romania, and Russia (see Table 1.6).

At the time of placement in a family, 45.7% of the children were under 1 year old and 26.1% were between 1 and 2 years old. About 28% of the children were 2 years old or older (see Table 1.8).

The average age was 1.5 and was unchanged from 1999.

In 54.3% of adoptions, the child was adopted by a childless family. In the case of placement in a family with children, the adopted child was usually younger than the children in the family. A total of 4.9% of the children were placed with one or more other children (see Table 1.9).

Most of the adoptive parents were aged between 30 and 45. In comparison with 1999, the average age of the adoptive father was 37.6 and of the adoptive mother 35.7. The average age of the adoptive father had remained virtually unchanged, whereas the average age of the adoptive mother had fallen by 0.4 years. A total of 11 children had no adoptive father and 1 child had no adoptive mother.

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

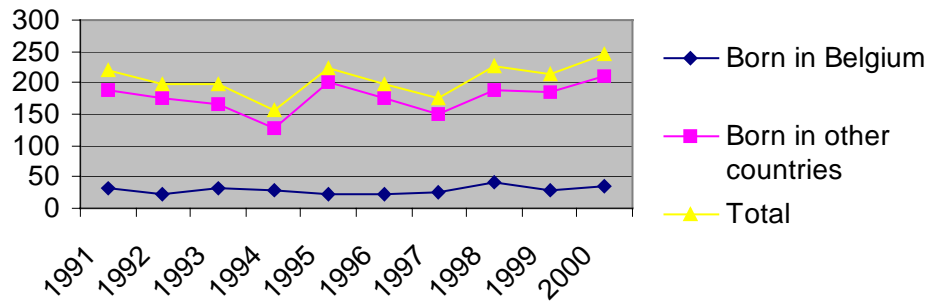
Adopted children

	1999		2000	
	Number	%	Number	%
Born in Belgium	30	14.0	35	14.3
Born in other countries				
India	36	16.8	35	14.3
China	19	8.9	34	13.9
Ethiopia	18	8.4	31	12.7
Vietnam	24	11.2	27	11.0
Haiti	11	5.1	23	9.4
The Philippines	12	5.6	19	7.8
Romania	19	8.9	15	6.1
Russia	12	5.6	10	4.1
Sri Lanka	2	0.9	3	1.2
Bulgaria	3	1.4	2	0.8
Colombia	11	5.1	2	0.8
Ecuador	4	1.9	2	0.8
Moldavia	7	3.3	2	0.8
South Africa	0	0.0	2	0.8
Chile	1	0.5	1	0.4
El Salvador	1	0.5	1	0.4
Thailand	3	1.4	1	0.4
Bolivia	1	0.5	0	0.0
<i>Total figure for children from other countries</i>	184	86.0	210	85.7
Total	214	100.0	245	100.0

1.6 Children placed for adoption: numbers by countries of origin

Source: *Child and Family - Adoption statistics*

Adoption trends



1.7 Trend in the number of children placed for adoption since 1991

Source: Child and Family - Adoption statistics

Age on adoption

In whole years	1999		2000	
	Number	%	Number	%
0 years	84	39.3	112	45.7
1 year	61	28.5	64	26.1
2 years	28	13.1	25	10.2
3 years	12	5.6	16	6.5
4 years	7	3.3	10	4.1
5-9 years	17	7.9	11	4.5
10-14 years	5	2.3	7	2.9
Total	214	100.0	245	100.0

1.8 Age of children on placement for adoption

Source: Child and Family - Adoption statistics

Position in the family

	Number	%
Childless family. placement of 1 child	123	50.2
Childless family. placement of more than 1 child	10	4.1

Family with children. placement of 1 child as the oldest child	3	1.2
Family with children. placement of 1 child as the youngest child	96	39.2
Family with children. placement of 1 child as neither the oldest nor the youngest child	1	0.4
Family with children. placement of more than 1 child. all older than the existing children	3	1.2
Family with children. placement of more than 1 child. all younger than the existing children	9	3.7
<hr/>		
Total	245	100.0

1.9 Children placed for adoption by number of children placed and position in the adoptive family - 2000

Source: Child and Family - Adoption statistics

2.3. Minors as asylum seekers

Young asylum seekers come into Belgium with or without their parents. In 2000 (provisional figures) the number of minors who applied for asylum on their own behalf was 1,332, of whom 82 were under the age of 5 and 97 were aged between 5 and 10. There were fewer minors as asylum seekers than in 1999; when there were 1,834. The number of minors included in a parent's application for asylum is not yet known for 2000. In 1999 over 11,000 young asylum seekers were included in a parent's application (see Table 1.10).

Minors as asylum seekers		
	1999	2000
Minors included in a parent's asylum application	11 398	n/a
<hr/>		
Minors as asylum seekers (1)		
aged under 5	86	82
aged 5-10	115	97
aged 10-15	453	394
aged 15-18	1 180	759

Total for minors as asylum seekers (1) 1,834 **1,332**

1.10 Numbers of minors as asylum seekers in Belgium

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

(1) Minors making an individual application for asylum

3. Number of young children

On 01.01.00, there were 189,825 children aged under 3 in the **Region of Flanders**; there were 197,093 children aged 3-6 and 423,843 children aged 6-12 (see Table 1.11). In comparison with 1999, the number of children aged under 3 in the Region of Flanders had fallen by 2,635 (-1.4%) and the number of children aged 3-6 had fallen by 3,556 (-1.8%). There was an increase of 2,713 (+0.6%) in the number of children aged 6-12 (see Figure 1.12).

The proportion of children aged under 3 in the population is 3.20% and the proportion of children aged under 12 is 13.65%. This proportion represents a slight fall compared with 1999 (see Table 1.11).

Young children

	Number		Percentage of population	
	1999	2000	1999	2000
Number of children aged under 3	192,460	189,825	3.25	3.20
Number of children aged 3-6	200,649	197,093	3.39	3.32
Number of children aged 6-6	421,130	423,843	7.11	7.14
Total number of children aged under 12	814,239	810,761	13.74	13.65

1.11 Number of young children in the Region of Flanders and percentage of the population (on 1 January)

Source: NIS - Population trend

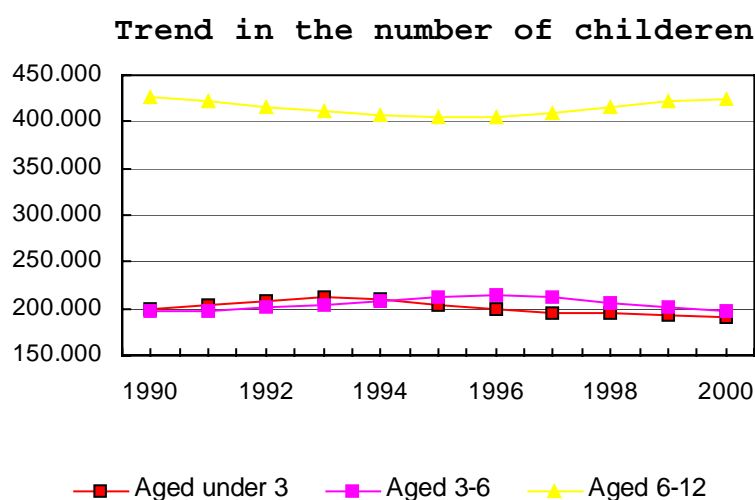


Figure 1.12 Trend in the number of children aged under 12 in the Region of Flanders (on 1 January)

Source: NIS - Population trend

Only a very small number of children in the Region of Flanders do **not** have **Belgian nationality**: 5.3%. In this connection, it must be borne in mind that the nationality criterion is not very suitable for identifying people of foreign origin, as a result of increased opportunities to acquire Belgian nationality. About 15% of the children born in 2000 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.

Children of other nationalities

Antwerp	20.6
Flanders-Brabant	11.8
West Flanders	6.1
East Flanders	12.3
Limbourg	22.1
<hr/>	
Region of Flanders	14.9

1.13 Children born in 2000: percentage of children whose mother is not of Belgian origin (i.e. she did not have Belgian nationality when she was born) by province - Region of Flanders

Source: Child and Family - IKAROS

There are major differences from province to province. Limbourg has the highest percentage of children of non-Belgian origin, i.e. 22.1%.

The percentage in the province of Antwerp is 20.6%. East Flanders (12.3%) and Flanders-Brabant (11.8%) come in the middle. West Flanders only has 6.1% (see Table 1.13).

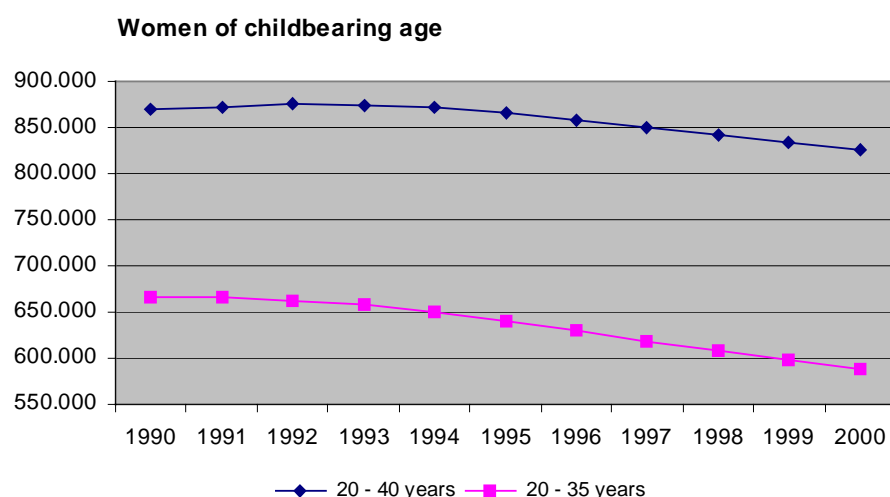
4. Explanatory notes

The birth rate is influenced by a number of social factors. We shall look at the number of women, the fertility rate, the age at which women become pregnant, teenage mothers, births outside and within marriage, and people's wishes as regards having children.

Finally, we shall endeavour to look into the future.

4.1. Women of childbearing age

An important critical factor in the trend in the number of births is the **trend in the number of women aged 20-40**, the age group in which the majority of births occur. The number of women aged 20 to 40 continues to fall, albeit rather less sharply. At the start of 2000 there were 0.8% fewer women aged 20 to 40 than at the start of 1999. If one looks at women in the age group 20 to 35, there is a decrease of 1.8% (see Figure 1.14).



1.14 Trend in the number of women aged 20-40 and 20-35 in the Region of Flanders since 1990 (on 1 January)

Source: NIS - Population trend

4.2. Fertility rate

In 1995 (most recent figures available), the **average number of children per woman** in the Region of Flanders was 1.5020 (see Table 1.15). The fertility rate is therefore well below the replacement factor. It is assumed that a fertility rate of 2.1 is required to replace the generation.

Fertility rate	
1990	1.5503
1991	1.5794
1992	1.5806
1993	1.5543
1994	1.4996
1995	1.5020

1.15 Total fertility rate - Region of Flanders

Source: NIS - Population statistics

4.3. Getting pregnant: later and later

Women are getting pregnant at later and later ages. In 1999 the average age on the birth of a first child was 27.5 years and 30.6 years on the birth of the next child. In the past ten years, there has been a slight but sustained increase in the **average age at which women give birth**, in the case of both the first child and a subsequent child (see Figure 1.16).

As women are postponing childbearing, not only is there a greater possibility of permanent childlessness, but also, and above all, there is a longer period of uncertainty before they become pregnant. There is also a greater risk of miscarriage, of complications of pregnancy, of giving birth prematurely, of chromosomal abnormalities and of death of the infant.

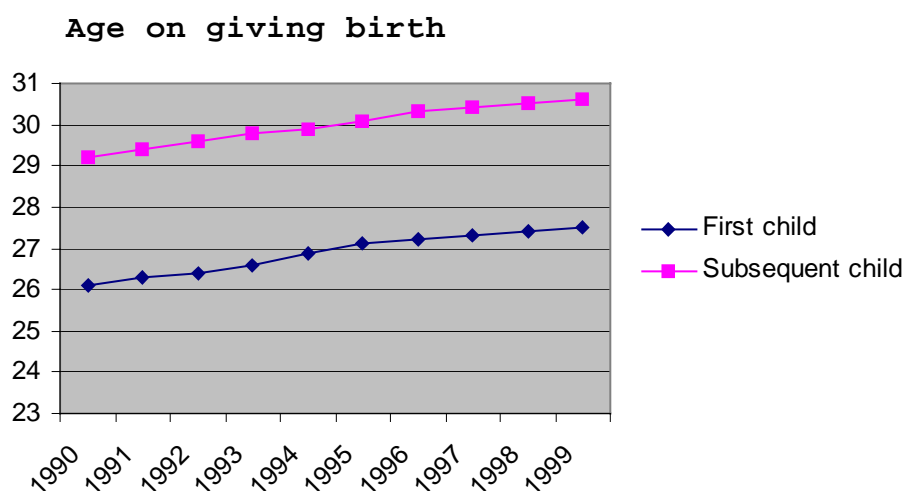


Figure 1.16 Average age at which women give birth

Source: Study Centre for Perinatal Epidemiology (SPE) - Perinatal activities in Flanders

4.4. Teenage mothers

There is a link between teenage pregnancy and situations involving risks for mother and child.

Teenage mothers leave school early, are more at 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 1999, 2.2% of women who gave birth were under the age of 20. This has remained more or less the same over the past few years.

The number of births to women aged between 15 and 19 is 6.9 per 1000 women of that age group (1995, most recent figures).

4.5. Births and marriage

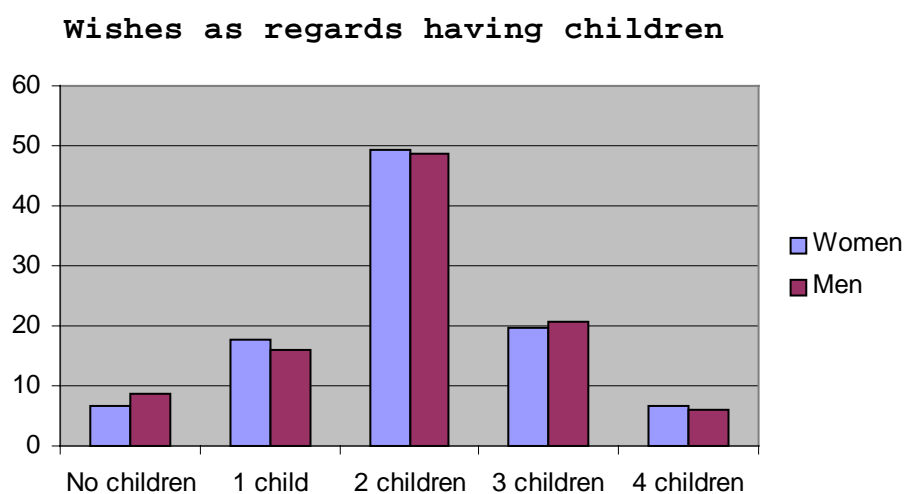
In the Region of Flanders, by far the majority of children are **born within marriage**. In 1995 (most recent figures available), almost 9 in 10 children (88.3%) were born within marriage. The number of children born outside marriage shows a small but consistent increase: from 7% in 1990 to almost 12% in 1995.

4.6. Wishes as regards having children*

When asked how many children they want, most women say that they want two children (49.4%). There is a remarkable concentration around the figure of 2 children.

After that the percentage of women who say they want 1 or 3 children is about the same, i.e. 17.6% and 19.6% respectively. The percentages who say they want no children or four children are also about the same, i.e. 6.6% and 6.8% respectively. Virtually the same picture emerges for men (see Figure 1.17).

The source of these figures is the NEGO V follow-up survey carried out between November 1996 and February 1997.

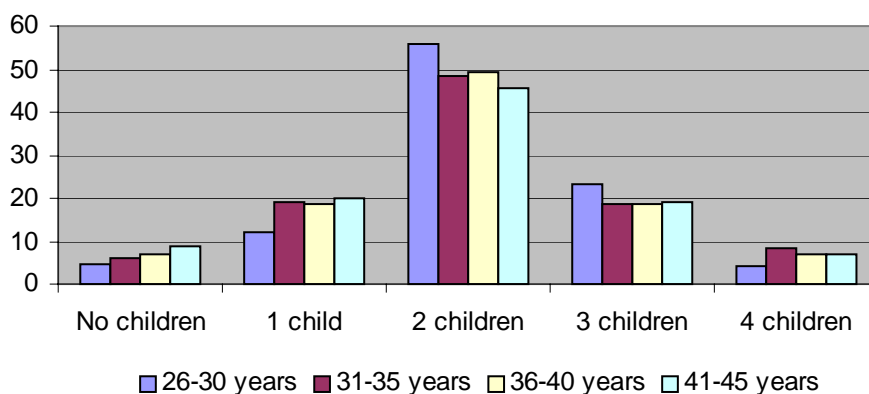


1.17 Wishes as regards having children, women and men aged 26-45 in Flanders

Source: M. Callens and F. Deven, data from the NEGO V follow-up survey (1996-97), Centre for Population and Family Research, Brussels

The figures vary slightly in accordance with age at the time of the survey. A relatively greater proportion of the women in the youngest age group surveyed (26-30) want two children: 55.7%. Rather fewer women in this age group opt for no children or four children (see Figure 1.18).

Wishes as regards having children by age



1.18 Wishes as regards having children among women in Flanders by age

Source: M. Callens and F. Deven, data from the NEGO V follow-up survey (1996-97), Centre for Population and Family Research, Brussels

To a great extent, women aged 41-45 appear to have realised their wishes as regards children: 80.3% say that the number of children they have matches their wishes (see Figure 1.19).

It should be noted that they were asked about the desired situation and the actual situation at the same time, so that the respondents may have adjusted their answers accordingly.

In comparing the desired and the actual number of children, account must be taken of the fact that factors on which policy measures can at most exert only an indirect influence also play a part, such as low fertility and characteristics of the family form.

* Wishes as regards having children: the survey asked about the number of children wanted.

Correspondence between the current number of children and the number wanted

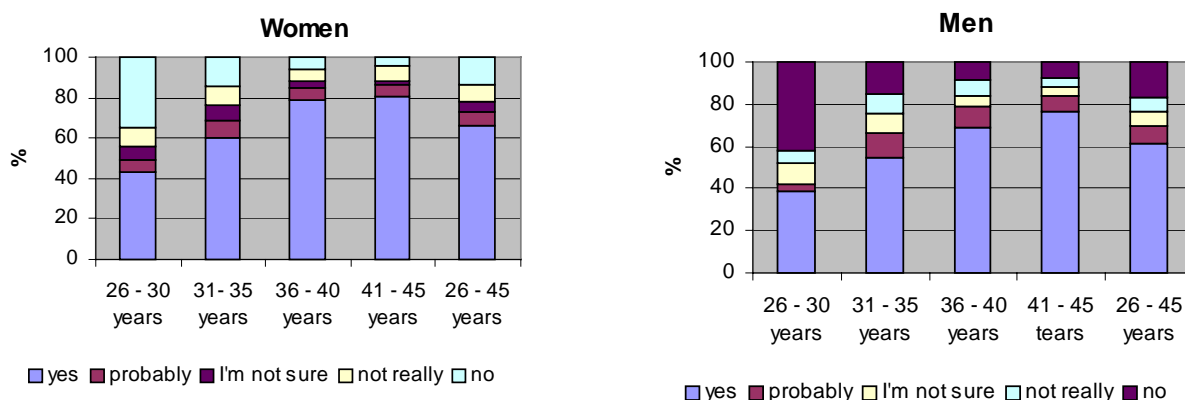


Figure 1.19 Correspondence between the current number of children and the number wanted by men and women by age - Flanders

Source: M. Callens and F. Deven, data from the NEGO V follow-up survey (1996-97), Centre for Population and Family Research, Brussels

4.7. Outlook in respect of the number of births

With regard to the fertility rate, the current pattern of behaviour is continuing rather than changing.*

The "European Values Studies" show that the views of the youngest generation surveyed (born between 1961 and 1972) on family values, such as the reciprocal obligations of parents and children, the importance of keeping the family intact, children as the fulfilment of a dream, etc., are the same as those of the preceding generation. There are no signs of a return to the "traditional family". The various lifestyles attract a fairly constant proportion of the population. Translated into demographic behaviour, this means that for the time being there will be no change in the tendency to postpone parenthood. At most, it can be said that the rate of further intensification of postponement of marriage and parenthood is slowing down.

Nor do economic theories lead to any other conclusions at present.

Neoclassical economic theory explained the second demographic transition, which can be characterised as postponement of marriage and parenthood, as arising from a conscious weighing up of costs and benefits. The so-called opportunity costs linked to motherhood remain considerable, and the level of employment among women aged between 25 and 34 has never been as high in Flanders as it is today. There are no signs of a change in the financial autonomy of women, so that from the viewpoint of neoclassical economic theory, the demographic trend for postponement can only be expected to continue, and further to weaken marriage as an institutional framework.

Another important theory in explaining the second demographic transition is the **Easterlin vision**, and from this viewpoint also, change seems unlikely. In this theory, a link is seen between the fertility rate on the one hand and, on the other hand, consumer aspirations developed in adolescence and the opportunities for men to acquire the income necessary to fulfil them through employment and a career.

The generations born in the 1970s have very high consumer aspirations: surveys show that their priorities are material wellbeing and career. Another factor is the strong competition on the labour market. On the basis of this explanatory

model also, the demographic trend for postponement can be expected to continue.

In 1996, the NIS published population forecasts for the **period 1995-2050**. No more recent population forecasts are as yet available.

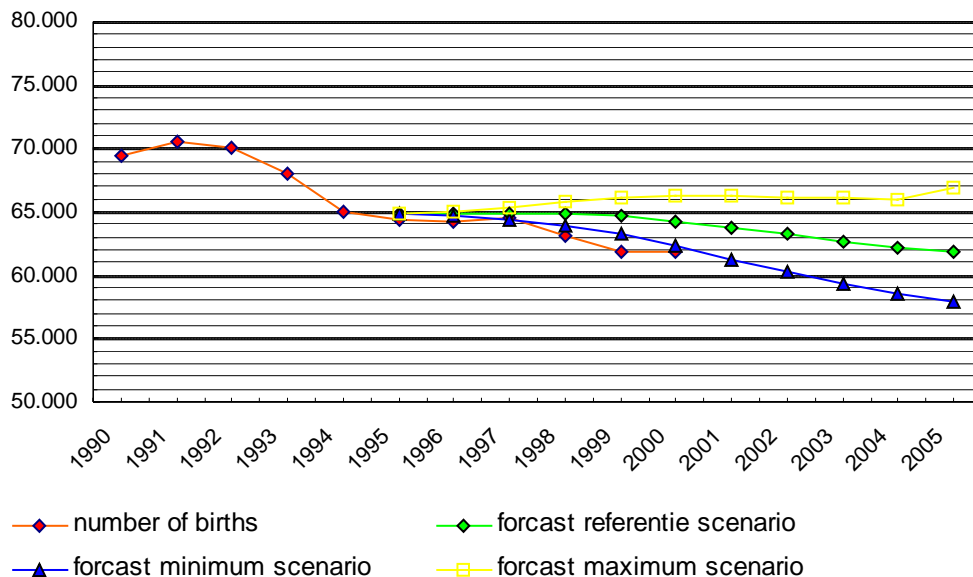
A total of 12 scenarios were drawn up.

The NIS puts one scenario forward as a **reference scenario**, since the hypotheses in respect of deaths, births and migration contained in this scenario are regarded as the most likely.

The reference scenario assumes an overall fertility rate (OFR) of 1.75; the minimum scenario postulates a rate of 1.6 and the maximum scenario a rate of 1.9. Under the reference scenario, the fertility rate will remain virtually unchanged until 2000. From 2001 there will be a period with a slight fall. By 2005 there should still be 61 851 births. In the minimum scenario, the number of births in 2005 would be 57 895; in the maximum scenario 66 965.

By 2000 the number of births had already fallen below the expected figure for the minimum scenario (see Figure 1.20).

Births forecasts



1.20 Forecasts of the number of births in the Region of Flanders

* See Deboosere P., Lesthaeghe R., Surkijn J., Boulanger P.M., Lambert A., *Huishoudens en Gezinnen [Households and families]*, NIS, monograph no. 4, 1997

5. The European context

How do the figures for and trends in births in Flanders fit into the European context? The figures for Flanders were compared with national figures in Belgium and some other European countries, i.e. the Netherlands, Germany and France as neighbouring countries, and also Italy (as a southern country), Sweden (as a northern country) and Great Britain.

5.1. Births

A number of figures for births from 1990 are reproduced in Tables 1.21, 1.22 and 1.23: the number of births, the percentage trend in the birth rate, and the number of births per 1,000 inhabitants.

Very different trends were observed in the countries investigated (see table 1.21). In some countries, namely France, Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden, the number of births increased from 1999 to 2000. There was a decrease in Belgium, Germany and the United Kingdom.

However, there are major differences when these figures are compared with the figures for 1990 (see Table 1.22). In Germany, Belgium and Italy, the birth rate was lower in 2000 and in the UK and Sweden it was much lower. In the Netherlands and France the birth rate in 2000 was slightly higher than in 1990.

In the EU as a whole, the birth rate increased by about 1.3% between 1999 and 2000. A rise like this had not been seen since 1994, but still it cannot really be called a millennium baby boom.

The *overall fertility rate* is below the replacement level everywhere, a figure of 2.10 children per woman being assumed for the latter (see Table 1.24). There has been a marked decrease in Sweden from 1990 to 1998-1999. The other countries investigated have experienced small fluctuations in the fertility rate.

The age at which women are having children is rising everywhere. According to the most recent figures available, the *average age at which women give birth* is over 28 in all the countries investigated. The Netherlands has the highest average age at 30.3 years (see Table 1.25).

The *fertility rate among teenagers* is low in Belgium, as it is in France. In Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden, however, it is even lower. The United Kingdom has a high number of births among women under the age of 19 (see Table 1.26).

In Belgium, childbirth to cohabiting couples is still the exception, but the rate is increasing. In 1995, 17.3% of *births occurred outside marriage*.

The figure is a little higher in Germany and the Netherlands. Sweden, France and the United Kingdom have a much higher percentage of births outside marriage. In Italy, only a small percentage of births occur outside marriage (see Table 1.27).

Births						
	1990	1995	1998	1999	2000	Difference 1999-2000 (in %)
Region of Flanders	69,492	64,300	63,042	61,906	61,877*	-0.1
Belgium	123,554	114,226	114,276	114,164	114,883*	+0.6
Germany	NB	765,221	785 034	770,744	760,000**	-1.4
<i>of which, former FRG</i>	<i>727,199</i>	<i>681,374</i>	<i>682 172</i>	<i>664,497</i>		
France	762,407	729,609	740,500	744,100	778,000**	+4.6
United Kingdom	798,612	732,049	717,081	700,192	680,100**	-2.9
Italy	569,255	525,609	515,439	523,463	560,100**	+7.0
The Netherlands	197,965	190,513	199,408	200,445	206,300**	+2.9
Sweden	123,938	103,422	89,028	88,173	89,700**	+1.4

1.21 Number of live births in certain European countries since 1990

Source: Council of Europe, *Recent demographic developments in Europe 2000*

Eurostat, *Population and social conditions, Statistics in focus, 12/2000*

n/a: not available (reunified Germany from 3 October 1990)

* Provisional figures

** Estimates

Births trend					
	1990	1995	1998	1999	2000
Region of Flanders	100.0	92.5	90.7	89.1	89.0*
Belgium	100.0	92.5	92.5	92.4	92.3*
Germany	100.0	92.2	94.6	92.9	91.6**
<i>of which, former FRG</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>93.7</i>	<i>93.8</i>	<i>91.4</i>	
France	100.0	95.7	97.1	97.6	102.0**

United Kingdom	100.0	91.7	89.8	87.7	85.2**
Italy	100.0	92.3	90.5	92.0	98.4**
The Netherlands	100.0	96.2	100.7	101.3	104.2**
Sweden	100.0	83.4	71.8	71.1	72.4**

1.22 Trend in the numbers of live births since 1990 in certain European countries

Sources: Council of Europe, Recent demographic developments in Europe 2000 (own calculations)

Eurostat, Population and social conditions, Statistics in focus, 16/2000

* *Provisional figures*

** *Estimates*

Births per 1,000

	1990	1995	1998	1999	2000
Region of Flanders	12.0	11.0	10.7	10.4	10.4*
Belgium	12.4	11.3	11.2	11.2	11.2*
Germany	NB	9.4	9.6	9.4	9.2**
<i>of which, former FRG</i>	<i>11.6</i>	<i>10.3</i>	<i>10.2</i>		
France	13.5	12.6	12.6	12.6	13.1**
United Kingdom	13.9	12.5	12.1	11.8	11.4**
Italy	10.0	9.2	9.0	9.1	9.7**
The Netherlands	13.3	12.4	12.7	12.7	13.0**
Sweden	14.5	11.7	10.1	10.0	10.1**

1.23 Birth rate: number of births per 1000 inhabitants since 1990 in certain European countries

Sources: Council of Europe, Recent demographic developments in Europe 2000

Eurostat, Population and social conditions, Statistics in focus, 12/1999

n/a: not available

* *Provisional figures*

** *Estimates*

Fertility rates

1990	1995	1998	1999
------	------	------	------

Region of Flanders	1.55	1.50		
Belgium	1.62	1.55	1.60	1.61
Germany	n/a	1.25	1.33	
<i>of which, former FRG</i>	<i>1.45</i>	<i>1.34</i>	<i>1.41</i>	<i>1.40</i>
France	1.78	1.70	1.75	1.77
United Kingdom	1.83	1.71	1.71	1.68
Italy	1.33	1.20	1.15	
The Netherlands	1.62	1.53	1.63	1.65
Sweden	2.13	1.73	1.50	1.50

1.24 Overall fertility rate per woman since 1990 in certain European countries

Sources: Council of Europe, Recent demographic developments in Europe 2000

NIS, Population statistics

Eurostat, Population and social conditions, Statistics in focus, 12/1999

n/a: not available

Age on giving birth

	1990	1995	1997	1998	1999
Region of Flanders	27.8	28.7	29.0	29.1	29.1
Belgium	27.9	28.5			
Germany	27.6	28.3	28.5	28.6	
<i>of which, former FRG</i>	<i>28.2</i>	<i>28.6</i>	<i>28.8</i>		
France	28.3	29.0	29.2	29.3	
United Kingdom	27.7	28.2	28.3	28.3	28.4
Italy	28.9	29.7			
The Netherlands	29.3	30.0	30.2	30.2	30.3
Sweden	28.5	29.2	29.2	29.7	29.8

1.25 Average age of women giving birth since 1990 in certain European countries

Sources: Council of Europe, Recent demographic developments in Europe 2000

Study Centre for Perinatal Epidemiology (SPE)

Teenage fertility rates

	1990	1995	1996	1997
Belgium	8.6	6.7		
Germany	14.6	9.4	9.6	9.5
France	9.2	6.9	6.8	6.7
United Kingdom	27.0	22.0	22.9	
Italy	6.5	5.3		
The Netherlands	6.4	4.2	4.1	4.4
Sweden	9.8	6.1	5.5	5.0

1.26 Number of births per 1,000 women under the age of 19

Source: Eurostat, Key data in health 2000

Births outside marriage				
	1990	1995	1998	1999
Region of Flanders	7.1	11.7		
Belgium	11.6	17.3		
Germany	15.3	16.1	20.0	
<i>of which, former FRG</i>	<i>10.5</i>	<i>12.9</i>	<i>15.9</i>	
France	30.1	37.6		
United Kingdom	27.9	33.6	37.6	38.8
Italy	6.5	8.1	9.0	9.2
The Netherlands	11.4	15.5	20.8	22.7
Sweden	47.0	53.0	54.6	55.3

1.27 Percentage of births outside marriage in certain European countries since 1990

Sources: NIS, Population statistics

Council of Europe, Recent demographic developments in Europe, 2000

5.2. Number of young children

The Region of Flanders is a **small region** within Europe. With 320,682 children under the age of 5, Flemish children represent only a very small fraction of the number of young children in the European Union. On 01.01.00, there were a total of approximately 20.2 million children under 5 in the European Union.

Since 1995 the **number** of young children has continued to decrease. There were 7.6%

fewer children under 5 in the Region of Flanders in 2000 than in 1995. The Region of Flanders is one of the areas where the numbers are falling most steeply. Only in Sweden (-22.6%) was the fall even greater. There was only a very small fall in France (-1%) and the Netherlands (-0.5%).

Table 1.28 shows the number of children under 5 from 1995 onwards. Table 1.29 shows the percentage trend, with 1995 as the basis (1995 = 100).

A striking aspect of the demographic trend in European countries is the **drop in the number of children**, which is the complement to the more frequently mentioned ageing of the population. From 1995 onwards, there has been a drop in the **percentage of young children in the overall population** in all the countries studied.

In the period 1995-2000, the Region of Flanders and the United Kingdom came in the **middle** of the range of figures for the trend in the percentage of young children in the population (-0.5%). The drop was smaller in Germany (-0.3%), Italy (-0.2%), France (-0.1%) and the Netherlands (-0.2%); the drop was much greater in Sweden (-1.6%) (see Table 1.30).

In the **next few years**, the percentage of young children and the number of children are expected to **continue to fall**. It is expected that the number of children under 5 will be lower everywhere in the EU before 2010. However, this general falling trend **is not found to the same degree** in the different European countries. Germany and Sweden in particular can expect to see a very substantial fall; a fall of around 10% is expected in the Region of Flanders, Belgium, the UK and the Netherlands. In France and Italy, the percentage of children under 5 is expected to be only a little lower in 2010 than in 1996 (see Table 1.31).

Children aged under 5				
	1995	1998	1999	2000
Region of Flanders	346.9	329.1	323.8	320.7
Belgium	615.1	584.9	579.1	577.2
Germany	4,190.5	3,973.9	3,944.6	
<i>of which, former FRG</i>	3,655.4	3,527.3		
France	3,623.5	3,557.2	3,586.3	3,623.3
United Kingdom	3,858.8	3,691.3	3,646.2	3,607.7
Italy	2,769.5	2,688.9	2,652.9	2,659.0

The Netherlands	988.7	969.4	976.2	983.5
Sweden	605.7	518.5	491.4	468.7

1.28 Number of children aged under 5 (in thousands) from 1995 onwards in certain European countries

Source: Council of Europe, Recent demographic developments in Europe, 2000

Trend in the number of children

	1995	1998	1999	2000
Region of Flanders	100.0	94.9	93.3	92.4
Belgium	100.0	95.1	94.1	93.8
Germany	100.0	96.5		
<i>of which, former FRG</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>94.2</i>		
France	100.0	98.2	99.0	
United Kingdom	100.0	95.7	94.5	93.5
Italy	100.0	97.1	95.8	96.0
The Netherlands	100.0	98.0	98.7	99.5
Sweden	100.0	85.6	81.1	77.4

1.29 Trend in the number of children aged under 5 from 1995 onwards in certain European countries (1995 = 100)

Source: Council of Europe, Recent demographic developments in Europe, 2000 (own calculations)

Percentages of young children

	1995	1998	1999	2000
Region of Flanders	5.9	5.6	5.5	5.4
Belgium	6.0	5.7	5.7	5.7
Germany	5.1	4.8		
<i>of which, former FRG</i>	<i>5.5</i>	<i>5.3</i>		
France	6.2	6.1	6.1	6.1
United Kingdom	6.6	6.2	6.1	6.1
Italy	4.8	4.7	4.6	4.6

The Netherlands	6.4	6.2	6.2	6.2
Sweden	6.9	5.9	5.5	5.3

1.30 Age structure: percentages of children aged under 5 in the overall population from 1995 onwards in certain European countries

*Sources: Council of Europe, Recent demographic developments in Europe, 2000
NIS, Population statistics*

Forecasts

	2000	2005	2010
Region of Flanders	-4.6%	-6.7%	-9.4%
Belgium	-4.0%	-5.7%	-8.5%
Germany	-7.2%	-17.4%	-22.5%
France	+3.4%	+0.3%	-2.0%
United Kingdom	-4.6%	-8.7%	-11.6%
Italy	-1.2%	+2.9%	-2.2%
The Netherlands	-4.1%	-5.1%	-10.8%
Sweden	-19.1%	-16.9%	-16.7%

1.31 Prospective trends in the numbers of children aged under 5 in the period 2000-2010 in certain European countries, in comparison with 1996

*Sources: Eurostat, Demographic Statistics 1997
NIS, Population forecasts 1995-2050*

5.3. Intercountry adoption

Of all the countries studied, the lowest figure for the relative number of adoptions is the UK, with 0.59 per 100,000 inhabitants. Flanders also has a very small number of intercountry adoptions at 3.54 per 100,000 inhabitants. The Walloon Region, France, the Netherlands and especially Sweden have a higher rate of intercountry adoptions than Flanders. There are no figures available for Germany and Italy (see Tables 1.32 and 1.33).

Adoptions

Receiving country	1995	1998	1999	2000
-------------------	------	------	------	------

Community of Flanders (1)	202	188	184	210
Walloon Community	270	332	290	
Germany	n/a	n/a	n/a	
France	3,028	3,777		
United Kingdom	154	258	277	351
Italy	n/a	n/a	n/a	
The Netherlands	661	825	993	
Sweden	895	928	1,019	981

1.32 Trend in the numbers of intercountry adoptions in certain European countries from 1995 onwards

Source: Information provided by the central authorities

(1) adoptions arranged through an authorised adoption service only

n/a: not available

Adoptions per 100,000				
Receiving country	1995	1998	1999	2000
Community of Flanders (1) (2)	3.44	3.18	3.10	3.54
Walloon Community (3)	8.15	9.98	8.70	
Germany	n/a	n/a	n/a	
France	5.22	6.43		
United Kingdom	0.26	0.44	0.47	0.59
The Netherlands	4.29	5.27	6.30	
Sweden	10.15	10.49	11.51	11.07

1.33 Trends in the numbers of intercountry adoptions per 100,000 inhabitants in certain European countries from 1995 onwards

Source: Information provided by the central authorities

(1) per 100,000 inhabitants in the Region of Flanders

(2) adoptions arranged through an authorised adoption service only

(3) per 100,000 inhabitants in the Walloon Region

n/a: not available

Chapter 2.

Families with young children: increasing diversity

In this section, we shall be discussing the *family context* of young children in

Flanders. In addition to the composition of the family unit, we shall look at the position of grandparents. We shall also describe the child-rearing environment - roles and values - in the family.

By way of background information in the context of the family, we shall look at marriage and divorce in Flanders.

Finally, some of the figures for Flanders will be set in a European context.

1. Two-parent or one-parent family?

Most young children live in a **two-parent family**. The number of children aged under 3 living in a **one-parent family** amounts to 4.2%; the figure is 4.4% for children aged between 3 and 7, and 5.6% for children of primary school age. The majority of children living in one-parent families live with their mother, since following divorce custody is still awarded to the mother in most cases (see Table 2.1).

A very small number of children live in **multi-generation families** (under 1%) (see Table 2.2).

Type of family				
	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3-7	Children aged 7-12	Total
One-parent family	4.2	4.4	5.6	4.9
Two-parent family	95.8	95.6	94.4	95.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

2.1 Children aged under 12 by type of family (percentages)

Source: Panel Study of Belgian Households - year of observation 1998. Processed on behalf of Child and Family

2. In the traditional nuclear family?

The decline of the traditional nuclear family is attracting more and more attention. Data on the families in which young children live shows that for them the traditional nuclear family is still usually the norm. Almost 9 out of 10 children aged under 12 live with their **natural fathers and mothers**, who also constitute a **married couple** (see Table 2.2).

Almost 1 child in 10 aged under 3 lives with a natural father and mother who are cohabiting. More children aged under 3 than previously are living with parents who

constitute a cohabiting couple (9.8% as against 8.1% in 1997). The question is whether this cohabitation constitutes a temporary or permanent situation.

Longitudinal analysis of the data for 1992-95 shows that the most common change experienced by children in the composition of their family is the marriage of their cohabiting parents.

Table 2.2 also shows that very few children (2.0%) do not live with their natural mothers. The number of children who do not live with their natural fathers is also small, but still amounts to 5.7%. In the case of children of primary school age, 7.7% do not live with their natural father.

Family composition				
	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3-7	Children aged 7-12	Total
Child of a married couple consisting of its natural father and its natural mother	84.9	89.9	89.7	89.0
Child of a married couple consisting of its natural father and its non-natural mother	0.0	0.0	1.5	0.7
Child of a married couple consisting of its natural mother and its non-natural father	0.0	0.3	0.5	0.3
Child of a married couple consisting of its non-natural mother and its non-natural father	0.0	0.9	1.1	0.8
Child of a cohabiting couple consisting of its natural father and its natural mother	9.8	3.2	0.4	3.1
Child of a cohabiting couple consisting of its natural mother and its non-natural father	0.0	1.0	0.9	0.8
Child of a cohabiting couple consisting of its natural father and its non-natural mother	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.1
Child of a cohabiting couple consisting				

of its non-natural father and its non-natural mother	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Child in a one-parent family with its natural mother	4.0	3.9	5.2	4.5
Child in a one-parent family with its natural father	0.2	0.5	0.4	0.4
Child in a multi-generation family with its father/mother and grandparents	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
<hr/> Total	<hr/> 100.0	<hr/> 100.0	<hr/> 100.0	<hr/> 100.0

2.2 Children aged under 12: composition of the family in which they live (percentages)

Source: Panel Study of Belgian Households - year of observation 1998. Processed on behalf of Child and Family

3. Only child?

Young children usually live in a family with **1 or 2 brothers or sisters**: 36.9% of children aged under 3 are only children, and 43.3% have 1 brother or sister in the family. In the case of children aged between 3 and 7, 12.6% are only children and 53.0% have only 1 brother or sister in the family. In the case of children aged between 7 and 12, 44.7% have 2 or more brothers or sisters in the family (see Table 2.3).

Brothers and sisters

	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3-7	Children aged 7-12	Total
Only child	36.9	12.6	8.3	15.1
One brother or sister in the family	43.3	53.0	47.0	48.6
Two brothers and/or sisters in family	15.5	25.0	31.0	26.0
Three brothers and/or sisters in family	4.0	6.0	9.3	7.1
Four or more brothers and/or sisters in family	0.3	3.4	4.4	3.2
<hr/> Total	<hr/> 100.0	<hr/> 100.0	<hr/> 100.0	<hr/> 100.0

2.3 Number of brothers and/or sisters with whom children aged under 12 live (percentages)

Source: Panel Study of Belgian Households - year of observation 1998. Processed on behalf of Child and Family

4. Contact with mother and father

The data on the **frequency** of the child's contact with its parents confirms what was already suggested by the composition of the family (see point 1): only some 5% of young children do not see their mother and father every day.

This percentage increases slightly as the children get older, from 4% of children under 3 to 7% of children aged 7 to 12. Where children do not see one of their parents every day, it is usually the father (see Table 2.4).

Parental contact				
	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3-7	Children aged 7-12	Total
Sees mother and father every day	96.0	95.8	93.0	94.6
Sees mother every day and father several times a week	1.5	3.0	4.1	3.2
Sees mother every day and father around once a week	0.8	0.6	1.1	0.9
Sees mother every day and father once or twice a month	0.4	0.2	1.1	0.7
Sees mother every day and never sees father	0.8	0.4	0.2	0.4
Sees mother several times a week and father several times a week	0.5	0.0	0.1	0.1
Sees father every day and mother once a week or less	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

2.4 Children aged under 12: frequency of contact with parents (children in two-parent families only - percentages)

Source: Panel Study of Belgian Households - year of observation 1998. Processed on behalf of Child and Family

5. Young children and grandparents

Around 76% of children aged under 3 still have four grandparents. The figure is over 56% for children aged 3-7 and it is still 48% for children aged 7-12 (see Table 2.5).

Most children live only a short distance from their grandparents: around 10% of children live less than 1 km away; some 60% live a maximum of 9 km away.

Relatively speaking, children aged 7-12 live slightly further away (see Figure 2.1). This data relates to 1997. In 1998, the Panel Study of Belgian Households stopped including the distance from grandparents.

Grandparents				
	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3-7	Children aged 7-12	Total
4 grandparents	75.7	56.4	48.5	56.4
3 grandparents	22.1	30.5	32.8	30.0
2 grandparents	1.1	10.0	14.7	10.5
1 grandparent	1.1	2.9	3.5	2.8
No grandparents	0.0	0.2	0.5	0.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

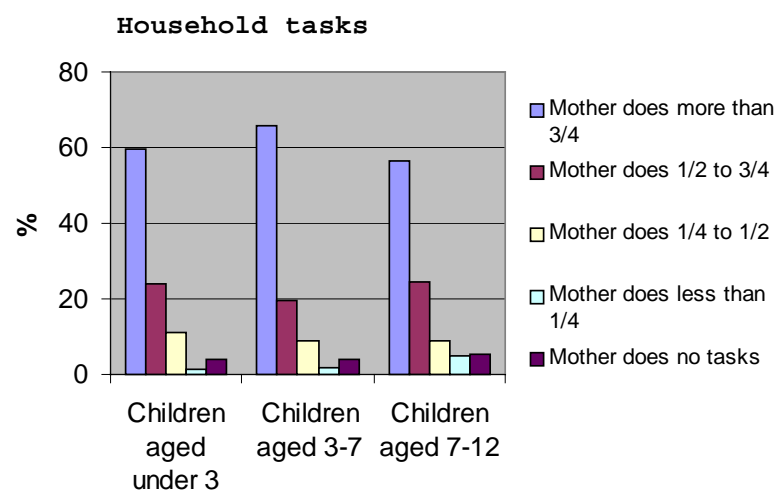
2.5 Children aged under 12: numbers of grandparents still alive (children in two-parent families only - percentages)

Source: Panel Study of Belgian Households - year of observation 1998. Processed on behalf of Child and Family

6. Roles and values in families with young children

The vast majority of young children live in a family in which the mother says that she is responsible for more than half of *household tasks*. Around 6 out of 10 children aged under 12 live in a family in which the mother is responsible for more than three-quarters of household tasks. This is true for all the age groups. Although most children have a mother who works outside the home, it is still the

mother who is principally or exclusively responsible for child care (see Figure 2.6). From the point of view of emancipation, this is alarming: young children do not appear to be acquiring emancipation-oriented values and standards in their home environment.



2.6 Children aged under 12 by the proportion of household tasks carried out by the mother (children in two-parent families only)

Source: Panel Study of Belgian Households - year of observation 1998. Processed on behalf of Child and Family

Another element that is decisive for the family lifestyle is the division of **decision-making** between mother and father. Almost 6 out of 10 young children live in a family in which more than half the decisions are predominantly taken by both parents. Around 1 child in 10 lives in a family in which more than half the decisions are taken by the father only.

Most young children are socialised in a family in which the voices of the mother and father carry equal weight, with a culture of consultation prevailing (see Table 2.7).

Decision-making

Children aged under 3	Children aged 3-7	Children aged 7-12	Total
-----------------------------	-------------------------	--------------------------	-------

More than half the

decisions are				
taken jointly	60.6	60.4	56.3	58.7
More than half the				
decisions are taken				
by the father only	15.7	8.2	11.9	11.1
With regard to half the decisions,				
the partners disagree about				
who takes the decisions	16.2	17.0	15.8	16.4
Other situation	7.5	14.4	16.0	13.8
<hr/>				
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

2.7 Children aged under 12 by who takes decisions in the family (children in two-parent families only - percentages)

Source: Panel Study of Belgian Households - year of observation 1998. Processed on behalf of Child and Family

The largest percentage of young children (around 40%) have parents who are primarily or completely conformist in their **child-rearing values** (see Table 2.8). The second largest group consists of young children whose parents do not share the same child-rearing values: one parent is primarily or completely conformist, while the other parent supports an upbringing that is completely or primarily geared to the autonomy of the child.

Being **conformist** means that parents attach importance to values such as having good manners, being polite and being tidy, being brave, honest and patient, being able to save, being pious, helpful and altruistic, and being obedient and loyal. Parents who are **geared to the autonomy of the child** attach importance to values such as being independent, having a sense of responsibility, being imaginative and creative, being tolerant, respecting people, possessing leadership qualities, showing self-control, being resolute and persevering.

The parents of children under 3 opt for a style of child-rearing geared to furthering the child's autonomy rather less often, probably because of the child's age.

Child-rearing values

Children	Children	Children	Total
aged	aged	aged	

	under 3	3-7	7-12	
Primarily or completely				
conformist	43.6	41.6	38.2	40.5
Mixed	21.2	26.5	28.7	26.5
Primarily or completely				
geared to autonomy	26.2	28.2	28.0	27.7
No answer	9.0	3.7	5.1	5.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

2.8 Children aged under 12 by child-rearing values held by their parents (children in two-parent families only - percentages)

Source: Panel Study of Belgian Households - year of observation 1998. Processed on behalf of Child and Family

The majority of children live in a family that is very open to **contacts with friends and relatives** (see Table 2.9). Open families agree that they are often in the company of friends (reciprocal visits) and say that they have a lot of contact with relatives. The percentage of children living in a closed or less open family is lowest in the under 3 age group.

Openness of families

	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3-7	Children aged 7-12	Total
Closed, not very open	9.0	14.1	15.5	13.8
Fairly open family	17.5	20.4	20.4	19.9
Very open family	73.5	65.5	64.1	66.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

2.9 Children aged under 12 by the extent to which the family to which they belong is open/closed (children in two-parent families only - percentages)

Source: Panel Study of Belgian Households - year of observation 1998. Processed on behalf of Child and Family

7. Explanatory notes

7.1. Marriages

There were 25,749 *marriages* in the *Region of Flanders* in 1999; a decrease of 882 (-3.4%) compared with 1998. The overall marriage rate is 4.17 per 1,000 inhabitants. The number of marriages continued to fall in the period 1990-1999, so it is possible to speak of a long-term decreasing trend. The estimated figures for 2000 indicate a slight rise (see Table 2.10 and Figure 2.11).

In our country, the average age on marriage is 32 years and 6 months for men and 29 years 8 months for women. The median age is about 3 years younger: 29 years and 3 months for men and 26 years and 11 months for women (1999). There has been an increase of approximately 2 months in the average and median ages of both men and women compared with 1998. There is a conspicuous difference between the average age of a first marriage and a second marriage. The average age of men and women who have not been married before is 28 years and 10 months and 26 years and 7 months respectively. For divorced men and women the ages are 43 years and 39 years and 5 months respectively (1999).

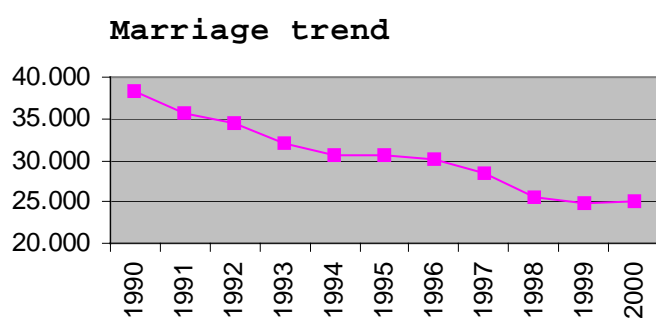
Marriages at a young age are fairly unusual: 2.8% of women and 0.5% of men under the age of 20 got married in the Region of Flanders in 1999. In 59 marriages or 0.2% both the man and the woman were under the age of 20. There has been a slight decrease in the number of women under the age of 20 getting married 20 (-0.3%) (1999).

Marriages		
	Number	Per 1,000 inhabitants
1998	25,631	4.33
1999	24,749	4.17
2000	24,975*	4.20*

2.10 Number of marriages in the Region of Flanders

Source: NIS - Marriage and divorce statistics

* Estimated figures



2.11 Trend in the number of marriages in the Region of Flanders

Source: NIS - Marriage and divorce statistics

7.2. Relationship breakdowns

In 1999, there were 13,961 *divorces* in the *Region of Flanders*; a figure that is virtually unchanged in comparison with 1998. In 1999, there were over 235 divorces per 100,000 inhabitants. The number of divorces in 2000 is estimated at 14,542, an increase of 4% (Table 2.12 and Figure 2.13).

However, divorce figures do not give a complete picture of the number of breakdowns in cohabitations. In addition to divorces there are separations and the dissolution of other forms of relationship.

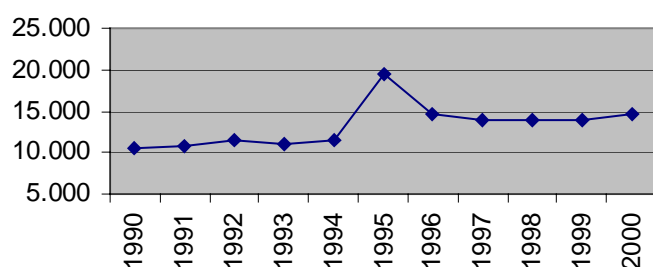
Divorces		
	Number	Per 100,000 inhabitants
1998	13,973	236.33
1999	13,961	235.55
2000	14,542*	244.80*

2.12 Number of divorces in the Region of Flanders

Source: NIS - Marriage and divorce statistics

* Estimated figures

Divorce trend



2.13 Trend in the number of divorces in the Region of Flanders

Source: NIS - Marriage and divorce statistics

8. The European context

Many children live in **one-parent families**, but they are still in a minority. The increase in the number of children living in one-parent families has been one of the most conspicuous socio-demographic trends in Europe in recent years. Attention has been drawn to a parallel with the increase in the two main phenomena leading to one-parent families, namely the breaking-off of relationships and births outside marriage.

In Belgium, 8.2% of families with children are one-parent families, a figure which is comparable to the figures for France, the Netherlands and Germany. The United Kingdom and Sweden have much higher percentage: over 20% of children live in a one-parent family (see Table 2.14).

Children in one-parent families

Belgium (1992)	8.2
Germany (1994)	9.8
France (1994)	7.7
United Kingdom (1995)	20.0
Italy	n/a
the Netherlands (1994)	7.4
Sweden (1995)	21.3

2.14 Children in one-parent families in certain European countries: percentage of children under the age of 18 who lived in a one-parent family around 1995

Source: UNICEF, *A league table of Child Poverty in Rich Nations, 2000*

n/a: not available

The **marriage rate** is rather on the low side in the region of Flanders (see Table 2.15).

Only Sweden has fewer marriages per 1,000 inhabitants. The marriage rate is the highest in the Netherlands.

Willingness to get married has decreased over the past few decades in all the countries investigated. This falling trend is coupled with marriage at a later and later age and an increase in different forms of cohabitation.

Marriages per 1,000					
	1990	1995	1998	1999	2000
Region of Flanders	6.7	5.2	4.3	4.2	4.2*
Belgium	6.5	5.1	4.4	4.3	
Germany	6.5	5.3	5.1	5.2	
<i>of which, former FRG</i>	6.6	5.7	5.4	5.5	
France	5.1	4.4	4.8	4.8	
United Kingdom	6.5	5.5	5.1		
Italy	5.6	5.1	4.8	4.8	
The Netherlands	6.4	5.3	5.5	5.7	
Sweden	4.7	3.8	3.6	4.0	

2.15 Number of marriages per 1,000 inhabitants (overall marriage rate) from 1990 onwards in certain European countries

Sources: Council of Europe, Recent demographic developments in Europe 2000

NIS, Population statistics

* *Estimated figures*

In all the countries studied, with the exception of Italy, there are 2 to 3 **divorces** per 1,000 inhabitants. Italy has only 0.6 divorces per 1,000 inhabitants (see Table 2.16).

Divorces per 1,000					
	1990	1995	1998	1999	2000

Region of Flanders	1.8	3.3	2.4	2.4	2.4*
Belgium	2.0	3.5	2.6	2.6	
Germany	3.9	2.1			
<i>of which, former FRG</i>	1.9	2.2			
France	1.9	2.1			
United Kingdom	2.9	2.9	2.7		
Italy	0.5	0.6	0.6		
The Netherlands	1.9	2.2	2.1	2.1	
Sweden	2.3	2.6	2.3	2.4	

2.16 Number of divorces per 1,000 inhabitants from 1990 onwards in certain European countries

*Sources: Council of Europe, Recent demographic developments in Europe 2000
NIS, Population statistics*

* *Estimated figures*

Chapter 3.

Financial security

In this chapter, we look at the **income situation** of families with young children, both objectively and from the families' own perspective. The **participation of parents in employment** is an important determining factor here. Employment still offers the most important protection against poverty. Other details to do with employment, such as whether parents work full time or part time and whether they work at special times, also influence the availability of parents for child care. We shall then look at **deprivation** in Flanders.

Lastly, we shall consider the **home circumstances** of young children, an indicator of comfort in the family, and also of the stability or instability of the home environment.

The situation in Flanders will be compared in a number of respects with the situation in certain European countries.

1. One-income or two-income families

The number of wage or salary earners in the family is a good starting point for estimating the income situation of families with young children. Most children live in a **two-income family**. The older children become, the more likely they are to live in a single-income family. Almost 6% of children under 12 live in a family with no income from employment or income replacing this. This percentage is higher for children aged 7-12 than for children under 7 (see Table 3.1).

One-income or two-income families

	Children aged under 3	Children aged aged 3-7	Children aged 7-12	Total
Two-income families	75.5	73.2	71.3	72.8
<i>of which</i>				
2 incomes from employment	69.7	68.3	68.6	68.7
1 income from employment and 1 replacement income	5.8	4.9	2.7	4.1
Single-income families	20.6	22.6	20.4	21.3
No income from employment or income replacing this income	3.9	4.2	8.3	5.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

3.1 Children aged under 12 living in one-income or two-income families (children in two-parent families only - percentages)

Source: Panel Study of Belgian Households - year of observation 1998. Processed on behalf of Child and Family

2. Children in families living at subsistence level

Approximately 14,000 children live in families that have to get by on a subsistence level income (1 January 2000). These are children these families have to provide for. Compared with 1 January 1999, the number of children in families with a subsistence level of income has fallen slightly (-2.5%) (see Table 3.2).

Children in families on a subsistence income

	1999	2000
Families with 1 child	3,427	3,218
Families with 2 children	4,216	4,088
Families with 3 children	2,985	2,937
Families with 4 children	1,852	1,904
Families with 5 or more children*	2,012	1,984

Total number of children*	14,492	14,131
Per 1,000 children aged under 18:	11.8	11.6

3.2 Number of children in families on a subsistence level of income by family size and number per 1,000 children under the age of 18 - Flemish Region

Source: Ministry of Social Affairs, Public Health and the Environment, Minimum Income Department

* Estimated figures

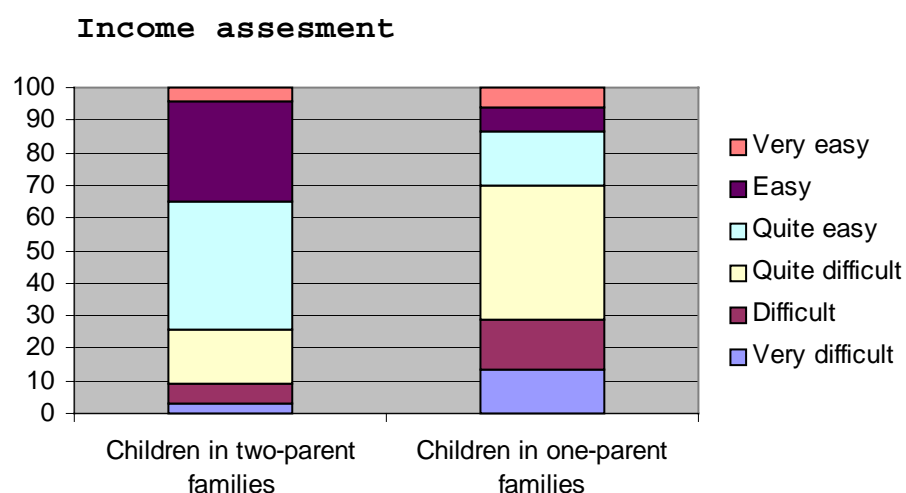
3. Family income level

Almost 75% of young children in two-parent families live in a family that says it finds it **quite easy to very easy** to manage.

Around 9% of children aged under 12 in two-parent families live in a family that finds it **difficult to very difficult** to manage. Some 16% live in a family that finds it **quite difficult** to manage on its income.

Children in one-parent families usually live in a family that finds it very difficult, difficult or quite difficult to manage (see Figure 3.3).

This subjective opinion runs parallel with the situation in respect of the family's **capacity to save**. In the case of children from two-parent families, only 29% of families do not manage to save; in the case of children from one-parent families, this figure rises to 77%.



3.3 Children aged under 12: how does the family manage on its current monthly income? (percentages)

Source: Panel Study of Belgian Households - year of observation 1998. Processed on behalf of Child and Family

4. Participation of parents of young children in employment

4.1. Participation in employment, full or part-time, breaks in employment

Around 69% of children aged under 12 have **a mother in paid employment**. More pre-school children have a mother who has taken a temporary break from employment than do children who attend school: 12% as against approx. 4% for children attending school (see Table 3.4).

Mothers quite often work **part-time**: in the case of over 1 in 4 of the pre-school children who have a working mother, she works part-time. More pre-school children have a mother who works full time (72%) than do children who attend school (see Table 3.5). Of children who attend nursery school, 61% have a mother who works full time; for children at primary school, the figure is 65%.

Most children have **a father in paid employment**, virtually always working full time (see Tables 3.4 and 3.5).

In the case of children whose mothers are currently **not in paid employment**, the mother has usually been in paid employment at some time. Only in the case of 19% of children has the mother never been in paid employment. This figure is higher for children aged under 3 (33%) (see Table 3.6).

Mothers who have **taken a temporary break from paid employment** are usually taking a career break or pregnancy/maternity leave. A career break is more common with children at school than with pre-school children.

Employment situation				
	Pre-school children	Children attending nursery school	Children attending primary school	Total
Mother				
Paid employment	68.7	68.6	69.4	69.0
No paid employment	19.1	26.4	27.3	25.7
Temporary break				

from work	12.2	5.03.3	5.3	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Father				
Paid employment	95.8	95.3	90.1	92.8
No paid employment	4.2	4.7	8.5	6.5
Temporary break				
from work	0.0	0.0	1.4	0.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

3.4 Employment situation of parents of children aged under 12 (children in two-parent families only - percentages)

Source: Panel Study of Belgian Households - year of observation 1998. Processed on behalf of Child and Family

Employment situation: full-time/part-time work

	Pre-school children	Children attending nursery school	Children attending primary school	Total
Mother works				
full time	72.3	61.0	65.2	64.9
part time*	27.7	39.0	34.8	35.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Father works				
full time	98.3	97.2	97.5	97.6
part time*	1.7	2.8	2.5	2.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

3.5 Children aged under 12: employment situation of parents by full-time and part-time work (children in two-parent families only - percentages)

Source: Panel Study of Belgian Households - year of observation 1998. Processed on

behalf of Child and Family

* *Part-time: a minimum of 15 hours and a maximum of 30 hours of work per week*

No employment or temporary break from employment				
	Pre-school children	Children attending nursery school	Children attending primary school	Total
Mother is unemployed and entitled to benefit and was <i>once</i> in paid employment	19.5	27.8	21.1	23.0
Mother is unemployed and entitled to benefit and has <i>never</i> been in paid employment	7.8	5.3	0.6	3.2
Mother runs the home and was <i>once</i> in paid employment	47.6	54.2	57.8	55.4
Mother is unemployed and not entitled to benefit and was <i>once</i> in paid employment	0.0	1.0	4.4	2.7
Mother runs the home and has <i>never</i> been in paid employment	25.1	11.7	16.1	15.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Percentage of children with a mother without paid employment of taking a temporary break from employment	31.3	31.4	30.6	31.0

3.6 Children aged under 12: situation of mothers not in paid employment or taking a temporary break from employment (children in two-parent families only - percentages)

Source: Panel Study of Belgian Households - year of observation 1998. Processed on behalf of Child and Family

4.2. Working at special times

For about 45% of the children whose mothers work, she works normal hours, that is to say she ***never works at the weekend and she never works before 7 a.m. or after 8 p.m.*** Where mothers do work at special times, this usually involves weekend work

combined with early or late hours. There is virtually no difference by whether the child does or does not attend school.

It is much more common for fathers to work at special times. Around 3 out of 4 children have fathers who also work at special times (see Table 3.7).

Working at special times				
	Pre-school children	Children attending nursery school	Children attending primary school	Total
Mother works				
Not in the week before 7 a.m. or after 8 p.m. and not at the weekend	45.1	47.1	44.0	45.3
In the week before 7 a.m. or after 8 p.m.	8.3	9.4	10.3	9.6
At the weekend	11.5	7.3	7.0	7.9
In the week before 7 a.m. or after 8 p.m. and at the weekend	35.1	36.2	38.7	37.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Father works				
Not in the week before 7 a.m. or after 8 p.m. and not at the weekend	26.7	24.4	29.2	26.9
In the week before 7 a.m. or after 8 p.m.	30.5	20.1	15.6	19.5
At the weekend	6.1	6.1	4.5	5.3
In the week before 7 a.m. or after 8 p.m. and at the weekend	36.7	49.4	50.7	48.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

3,7 Children aged under 12: incidence of parents working at special times (children

in two-parent families only - percentages)

Source: Panel Study of Belgian Households - year of observation 1998. Processed on behalf of Child and Family

5. Deprivation in children

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 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 01.01.00 and 31.12.00 were assessed in accordance with the 6 criteria, and each underprivileged family was asked for information in connection with the assessment criteria.

About 4.7% of children born in 2000 (in the Region of Flanders) were born into an underprivileged family (provisional figure). This percentage represented 2,922 children in the Region of Flanders. The percentage of children born into underprivileged families has remained virtually unchanged in comparison with 1999 (see Table 3.8).

Figure 3.9 shows the trend since 1992. Over this period the percentage has gradually risen to almost double. Given that Child and Family focuses its attention on the problem of deprivation, this rise may reflect increased access to this group and better recording of the phenomenon rather than an actual increase in the problem in Flanders.

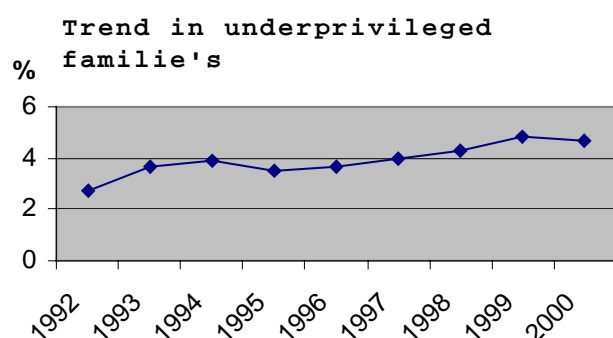
Underprivileged families		
	1999	2000*
Antwerp	5.1	5.7
Flanders-Brabant	3.0	2.8
West Flanders	4.7	4.6
East Flanders	5.5	4.9

Limbourg	5.7	5.1
Total	4.8	4.7

3.8 Number of underprivileged families among families with a child born in the course of the year, by province (percentages)

Source: *Child and Family - Atlas of deprivation in families with young children*

* Provisional figures



3.9 Trend in the percentage of underprivileged families in families with a child born in the course of the year - Region of Flanders

The percentage of underprivileged families varies by **province**. The highest percentage of underprivileged families with young children, namely 5.7%, is found in the province of Antwerp, and the lowest in Flanders-Brabant, with 2.8%. In the provinces of Limbourg, East Flanders and West Flanders, percentages of 5.1%, 4.9% and 4.6% respectively were recorded (see Table 3.8). Compared with 1999, the figure is lower in the provinces of Limbourg and East Flanders and higher in the province of Antwerp.

Deprivation is strongly concentrated in a limited number of **municipalities**. Half of all children born into an underprivileged family live in nine municipalities. These are Antwerp, Ghent, Mechelen, Ostend, Beringen, Heusden-Zolder, Menen, Bruges and Aalst.

Antwerp (662), Ghent (329) and Mechelen (116) have the largest numbers of births into underprivileged families.

Most underprivileged families face a **complex combination of problems**. The poor employment situation of the parents and a low monthly income are the criteria indicated most frequently. A low level of education on the part of one or both parents is indicated in a good 2 out of 3 underprivileged families. Poor housing

is reported for slightly over half of underprivileged families. Over 4 in 10 of the children have developmental problems. Poor health scores lowest (see Table 3.10).

It also appears from the records that in the case of a good 4 out of 10 (41.1%) of the children born into an underprivileged family, the family is living in a poor socio-economic situation (41.3%). This means that these families are poorly situated in terms of income, education and employment.

Problems of deprivation

	1999	2000*
Poor employment situation of parents	77.2	77.7
Low monthly income	76.9	77.0
Low level of education of one or both parents	66.6	66.8
Poor housing	51.1	54.9
Problems in children's development	44.3	43.5
Poor health	27.1	28.5

3.10 Fulfilment of the various criteria for deprivation in underprivileged families (percentages)

Source: Child and Family - Atlas of deprivation in families with young children

* *Provisional figures*

6. Home circumstances

Most children live in a **single-family home**. Around 5% live in an apartment or flat (see Table 3.11). The family usually also owns the home. This percentage increases as the child grows older (see Table 3.11).

Many young children have experienced **moving house**. Almost half the children in the 7-12 age group have not always lived in the same home (see Table 3.12).

One in ten children live in poor **living conditions**. The main problems are lack of space (21%) and poor soundproofing of the dwelling (14%). Some 8% of children live in a home that is too dark, and another 8% in a home that is difficult to heat. The living conditions of children under 3 is noticeably worse as regards these four points (see Table 3.13).

Home				
	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3-7	Children aged 7-12	Total
Type of home				
Single-family home - detached house	41.7	52.4	56.5	52.2
Single-family home - semi-detached or terraced house	45.6	41.0	37.3	40.2
Apartment or flat in building with fewer than 10 homes	3.9	4.0	3.8	3.9
Apartment or flat in building with 10 or more homes	0.9	1.6	1.4	1.4
Other	7.9	1.0	1.0	2.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Residential status				
Owner	63.4	76.1	85.5	77.9
Tenant	33.8	22.1	13.7	20.5
Living rent-free	2.8	1.8	0.8	1.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

3.11 Children aged under 12: type of home in which the child's family lives and residential status (percentages)

Source: Panel Study of Belgian Households - year of observation 1998. Processed on behalf of Child and Family

Mobility				
	Children	Children	Children	Total

	aged under 3	aged 3-7	aged 7-12	
Child has always lived in the same home	78.6	65.6	51.7	61.6
Child has moved house at least once	21.4	34.4	48.3	38.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

3.12 Children aged under 12 according to whether or not the child has moved house at least once (percentages)

Source: Panel Study of Belgian Households - year of observation 1998. Processed on behalf of Child and Family

Living conditions

	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3-7	Children aged 7-12	Total
Child lives in home that is difficult to heat	14.1	5.1	6.8	7.5
Child lives in home that is too dark	15.5	5.5	8.9	8.7
Child lives in poorly sound-proofed home	22.9	13.1	11.3	14.1
Child lives in home with insufficient space	27.6	20.9	19.3	21.4

3.13 Children aged under 12 who live in poor living conditions (percentages)

Source: Panel Study of Belgian Households - year of observation 1998. Processed on behalf of Child and Family

7. The European context

7.1. Participation in employment of families with young children

There are no European figures available on participation in employment of families that include the child as a unit in the calculations. However, the number of

families with children under 14 that do not include an adult in employment is known. The figure for Belgium matches that for the EU. Belgium scores better than the UK, but less well than Italy, Germany, France and the Netherlands (see Table 3.14).

Families with no adult in employment

Belgium	11.0
Germany	8.6
France	8.8
United Kingdom	19.5
Italy	7.6
The Netherlands	9.3
EU	10.5

3.14 Percentages of families with children aged under 14 that do not include an adult in employment in certain European countries, 1996

Source: OECD

There are wide variations in the countries studied in the **level of employment of women with young children**. With over 60%, Belgium has the second-highest rate behind Sweden, with 75%. In Italy, the former Federal Republic of Germany and the Netherlands, fewer than half these women are in employment. There are also wide variations in **full-time/part-time working**, with Italy at one end of the scale with virtually all women in employment working full time, and the Netherlands at the other end with most women working part time (see Table 3.15).

Working mothers

	Full-time	Part-time	Total in employment
Belgium	38	24	62
Germany	26	25	51
<i>of which, former FRG</i>	18	28	46
France	40	19	59
United Kingdom	18	35	53
Italy	37	6	43

The Netherlands	6	41	46
Sweden*	55	40	75

3.15 Percentages of women with a child aged under 10 who are in employment in certain European countries - 1993

Source: European Commission Network on Childcare, A Review of Services for Young Children in the European Union 1990-1995

* Sweden: figures apply to women with young children aged under 7

7.2. Poverty

Another important aspect is the income situation of families with young children. One way of looking at this is to use the monetary poverty standard. According to the EU standard, a child is living in poverty when the family has an income that is less than 50% of the average net reference income for the country in question. There are great differences in rates of child poverty among the European countries investigated. The highest percentages are found in Italy and the UK. Percentages in Germany, France and the Netherlands are also slightly higher than in Belgium. Sweden has an even lower percentage than Belgium.

The percentage is much higher among children in one-parent families, except in Italy (see Table 3.16).

Relative poverty*

	All families	One-parent families	Two-parent families	Ratio
Belgium (1992)	4.4	13.5	3.6	3.8
Germany (1994)	10.7	51.2	6.2	8.3
France (1994)	7.9	26.1	6.4	4.1
United Kingdom (1995)	19.8	45.6	13.3	3.4
Italy (1995)	20.5	22.2	20.4	1.1
the Netherlands (1994)	7.7	23.6	6.5	3.6
Sweden (1995)	2.6	6.7	1.5	4.5

3.16 Percentages of children under 18 living in families in relative poverty in certain European countries around 1995, by one-parent and two-parent families

Source: UNICEF, A league table of Child Poverty in Rich Nations, 2000

* Relative poverty: income below 50% of the average income of the country, measured

using the median (EU 1984)

** Ratio: % in one-parent families / % in two-parent families

However, poverty can also be measured on the basis of non-monetary indicators. To do this, the European Observatory on National Family Policies uses indicators such as living in a house with a leaking roof or damp walls, since these indicators are associated with poverty in all European countries.

These figures show that, using the 'leaking roof' indicator, about 7% of children under the age of 16 live in poor conditions.

Measured on the basis of the 'damp walls' indicator, there are fairly large differences between the countries studied, with the lowest percentage in Italy and the highest percentages in the UK and France (see Table 3.17).

Living conditions		
	Leaking roof	Damp walls
Belgium	7.3	17.3
Germany	7.1	13.2
France	8.0	22.0
United Kingdom	6.7	23.1
Italy	7.8	7.7
The Netherlands	9.4	14.1
Sweden	n/a	n/a

3.17 Percentage of children aged under 16 who live in poor living conditions in certain European countries

Source: European Observatory on National Family Policies (ECHP data)

n/a: not available

Chapter 4.

Social development

Socialisation of young children does not take place exclusively within the family. From a very young age, children come into contact with a wide **variety of worlds**. TV and video are an important channel for contact with the world outside the family. The annual holiday also plays an important part here. For most young children there is also their child care: child care in the pre-school years is a

fact of daily life for many children in Flanders. School attendance from the age of 2 ½ is fairly universal in Flanders. Many children also have out-of-school care as well.

A small number of children receive special support through the special youth welfare service or social services, subsidised by Child and Family.

Finally, this chapter compares the situation in Flanders with the situation in a number of European countries.

1. Use of child care

1.1. Children aged under 2½

61.6% of children aged between 3 months and 2½ are **regularly**, i.e. at least once a week, looked after by relatives, a child minder or a child care centre. There has been a substantial increase in the use of child care in comparison with 1997, with a rise of over 4% (see Table 4.2 and Figure 4.1).

In the case of children aged between 1 month and 3 months, child care is the exception: 12% were looked after regularly (1997).

Use of child care		
Percentage of all children aged between 3 months and 2½		
	1997	1999
Regularly	57.2	61.6
Very occasionally or never	42.8	38.4
Total	100.0	100.0

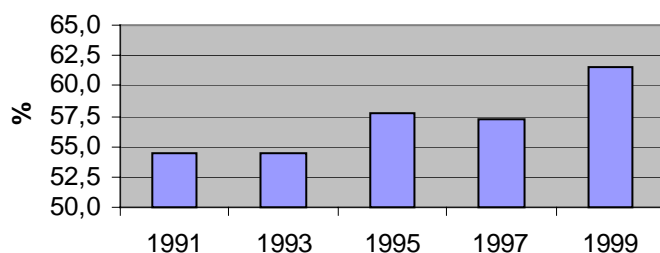
4.1 Use of child care for children aged between 3 months and 2½ in the Region of Flanders (percentages)

Sources: Child and Family - Survey on the use of child care for children aged under 3, autumn 1997

Vanpée K., Sannen L., Hedebouw G., Child care in Flanders. Use, choice of child care type and evaluation by the parents, HIVA, Leuven, 2000

Trends in the use of child care

Trends in the use of child care



4.2 Trend in the use of child care for children aged between 3 months and 2½ - percentages

Sources: *Child and Family - Survey on the use of child-minding facilities for children aged under 3*

Vanpée K., Sannen L., Hedebouw G., Child care in Flanders. Use, choice of child care type and evaluation by the parents, HIVA, Leuven, 2000

Use of child care for ethnic minority children, children of unemployed mothers and children in underprivileged families is much lower than in the total group. For children with a handicap the percentage of users is similar to the total group. It is also relatively high among one-parent families (see Table 4.3). For all these specific subgroups, the intensity (i.e. the number of hours child care per week) is lower than in the total group.

Use of child care by subgroups

	Regularly	Very occasionally or never
Children with a handicap	64.0	36.0
Ethnic minority children	12.9	87.1
Children in underprivileged families	31.4	68.6
Children in one-parent families	54.5	45.5
Children with an unemployed mother	14.6	85.4
All children	61.6	38.4

4.3 Use of child care for children aged between 3 months and 2½ by a number of subgroups in the Region of Flanders, 1999 (percentages)

Source: *Vanpée K., Sannen L., Hedebouw G., Child care in Flanders. Use, choice of*

child care type and evaluation by the parents, HIVA, Leuven, 2000

Child care for children aged between 3 months and 2½ is provided to a great extent by **child care facilities subsidised by Child and Family**: 30.0% use a child minder affiliated to a child care service, and 22.5% use a day nursery: 52.5% in total. There has been an increase of 13.2% in the percentage of child care subsidised by Child and Family in comparison with 1997.

Grandparents are responsible for 27.3% of child care and other relatives for 4.8% (see Table 4.4 and Figure 4.5). Informal child care accounts for a total of 32.1%, representing a fall of 8.8% in comparison with 1997.

Private child care - private child minders and day nurseries - accounts for 15% of children. There has been a fall of 2.7% in this figure, due to a decrease in child care by private child minders (-3.8%). Care provided by private child care centres rose slightly (+1.1%) (see Table 4.4).

Types of child care		
	Percentage of users of child care	
	1997	1999
Grandparents	37.0	27.3
Other relatives, Friends, neighbours, etc.	3.9	4.8
Child minder affiliated to a service (subsidised by Child and Family)	22.7	30.0
Day nursery (subsidised by Child and Family)	16.6	22.5
Private child minder registered with or supervised by Child and Family	12.3	8.5
Private child care centre registered with or supervised by Child and Family	5.4	6.5
Live-in staff	1.3	0.7
Other (childcare and family support centre, PWA, au pair, etc.)	0.7	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0

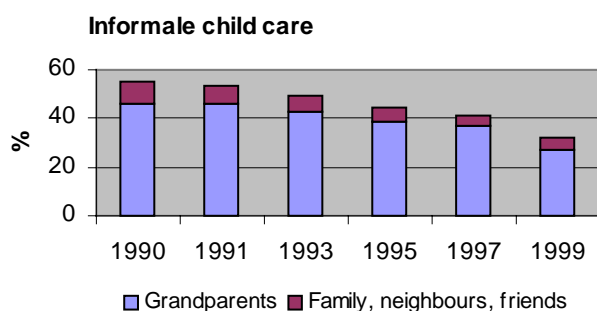
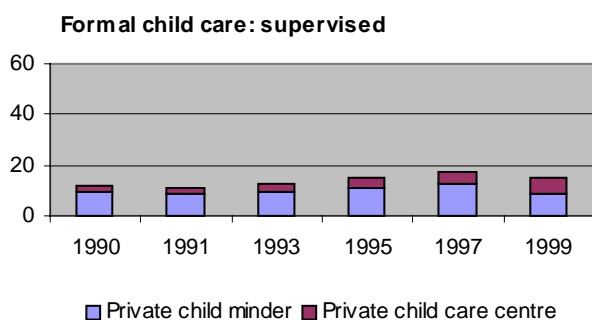
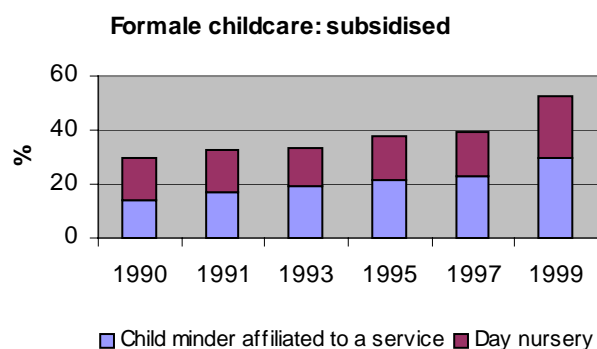
4.4 Children aged between 3 months and 2½: use of child care by type of child care

(Region of Flanders)

Sources: *Child and Family - Survey on the use of child care for children aged under 3, autumn 1997*

Vanpée K., Sannen L., Hedeboom G., Child care in Flanders. Use, choice of child care type and evaluation by the parents, HIVA, Leuven, 2000

Trends in child care type



4.5 Trend in the use of formal and informal child care for children aged between 3 months and 2½ - percentages of users of child care

Sources: *Child and Family - Survey on the use of child care for children aged under 3, autumn 1997*

Vanpée K., Sannen L., Hedebouw G., *Child care in Flanders. Use, choice of child care type and evaluation by the parents, HIVA, Leuven, 2000*

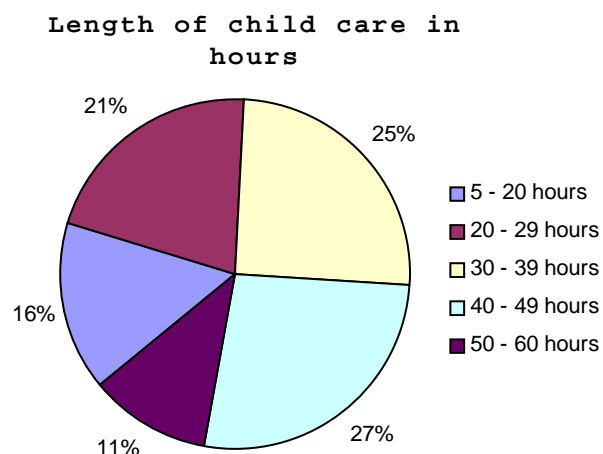
The **intensity of child care** can be looked at in terms of the number of days that child care is used and the number of hours per week that a child is cared for. One in three children (33.7%) go to child care for five full days. The other children are looked after part time, many of them for 4 or 4 ½ days a week. Full-time child care has increased compared with 1997 (see Table 4.6).

Children who are cared for regularly are also looked after for relatively long periods. About 6 out of 10 children are looked after for 30 hours or more per week, which corresponds on average to more than 6 hours per "working day". About 4 out of 10 children are looked after for 40 hours or more per week and about 1 in 10 even for 50 hours or more (see Figure 4.7).

Length of child care in days		
	1997	1999
Full-time	29.3	33.7
Part-time	69.1	66.3
Day and night, night, weekend	1.6	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0

4.6 Intensity of child care per week among children aged 3 months to 2 ½ years who regularly go to child care (= at least 5 hours per week) in the Region of Flanders
Sources: Child and Family - Survey on the use of child care for children aged under 3, autumn 1997

Vanpée K., Sannen L., Hedebouw G., *Child care in Flanders. Use, choice of child care type and evaluation by the parents, HIVA, Leuven, 2000*



4.7 Number of hours' child care per week among children aged 3 months to 2 ½ years who regularly go to child care (= at least 5 hours per week) in the Region of Flanders, 1999

Source: Vanpée K., Sannen L., Hedebouw G., *Child care in Flanders. Use, choice of child care type and evaluation by the parents, HIVA, Leuven, 2000*

1.2. School-age children

About 50% of children who are at nursery school and 28.6% of children at primary school are regularly looked after by persons or facilities other than their parents **during the week** (see Table 4.8).

In the case of children at nursery school, **grandparents** are the most important child care resource. Grandparents look after about 40% of children attending nursery school. In the case of children at primary school, child care provided by and at the school is the most important type: 35.8%. Grandparents look after 34.3% of these children (see Table 4.9).

Use of out-of-school care

	Children attending nursery school	Children attending primary school
Regularly	51.1	28.6
Very occasionally or never	48.9	71.4
Total	100.0	100.0

4.8 Use of out-of-school care for children attending nursery school or primary

school in the Region of Flanders, 1999 (percentages)

Source: Vanpée K., Sannen L., Hedebouw G., *Child care in Flanders. Use, choice of child care type and evaluation by the parents*, HIVA, Leuven, 2000

Types of child care		
	Percentage of users of child care	
	Children attending nursery school	Children attending primary school
Grandparents	40.6	34.3
Other relatives. friends. neighbours	7.3	14.9
Child care outside school (IBO)	7.9	4.5
Child care provided by and at school	27.9	35.8
Child minder affiliated to a service	7.0	0.0
Private child minder	4.9	1.5
Day nursery	1.1	1.5
Private child care centre	0.8	0.0
Other (PWA, au pair, live-in staff, etc.)	2.5	7.5
Total	100.0	100.0

4.9 School-age children: use of child care by children attending nursery school or primary school by type of child care, Region of Flanders, 1999 (percentages)

Source: Vanpée K., Sannen L., Hedebouw G., *Child care in Flanders. Use, choice of child care type and evaluation by the parents*, HIVA, Leuven, 2000

1.3. Sick children

A child's illness brings extra worries for many families who use child care. Over half of **pre-school children** are **not** cared for at their usual child care facility when they have a short-term illness. 53.3% are sometimes cared for by their grandparents. For one in three children, one of the parents takes a leave day or a day off in lieu. About half of the parents take leave for social or family reasons.

Only 45.6% use their usual child care facility in the event of short-term illness, mostly grandparents or a child minder. 6.7% of parents report that they have occasionally used a specific organisation that provides child care for sick

children(see Table 4.10).

**Child care used in the event of illness:
pre-school children**

	Percentage
Usual child care facility	45.6
- <i>grandparents</i>	23.2
- <i>other relatives, neighbours, friends</i>	2.8
- <i>child minder affiliated to a service</i>	10.5
- <i>private child minder</i>	4.3
- <i>day nursery</i>	3.1
- <i>private child care centre</i>	1.6
Grandparents (1)	53.3
Parent(s) take(s) leave or a day off in lieu	37.6
Parent(s) take(s) leave for social or family reasons	35.8
Other (relatives, friends, neighbours) look after the child (1)	9.8
Parent(s) work at home	8.3
Specific organisation that provides child care for sick children	6.7
Partner does not work	1.3
Other solution	5.0

4.10 Child care used in the event of short-term illness of pre-school children who normally use child care in the Region of Flanders, 1999 (more than one type allowed)
Source: Vanpée K., Sannen L., Hedebouw G., Child care in Flanders. Use, choice of child care type and evaluation by the parents, HIVA, Leuven, 2000

(1) Grandparents/others who care for the child on a regular day-to-day basis are not included here, they are to be found under the category "the usual child care facility"

Almost half of **pre-school children cannot** go to their usual child care facility when they are ill. In this situation the parents often take a day's leave, a day off in lieu or leave for social or family reasons or the grandparents step in (see Table 4.11).

Child care used in the event of illness:

school-age children

	Children aged 2½-6	Children aged 6-12
Usual child care facility	49.1	41.5
- <i>grandparents</i>	42.1	33.8
- <i>other</i>	7.2	7.7
Parent(s) take(s) leave or a day off in lieu	39.3	32.3
Grandparents look after the child (1)	37.6	50.8
Parent(s) take(s) leave for		
social or family reasons	36.8	36.9
Partner does not work	20.1	9.2
Other (relatives, neighbours, friends)		
look after the child (1)	10.5	3.1
Parent(s) work at home	10.5	7.7
Specific organisation that provides		
child care for sick children	8.8	4.6
Child stays at home alone	0.5	3.1
Other solution	4.5	4.6

4.11 Care used in the event of short-term illness of school-age children who normally use child care in the Region of Flanders, 1999 (more than one type allowed)

Source: Vanpée K., Sannen L., Hedebouw G., Child care in Flanders. Use, choice of child care type and evaluation by the parents, HIVA, Leuven, 2000

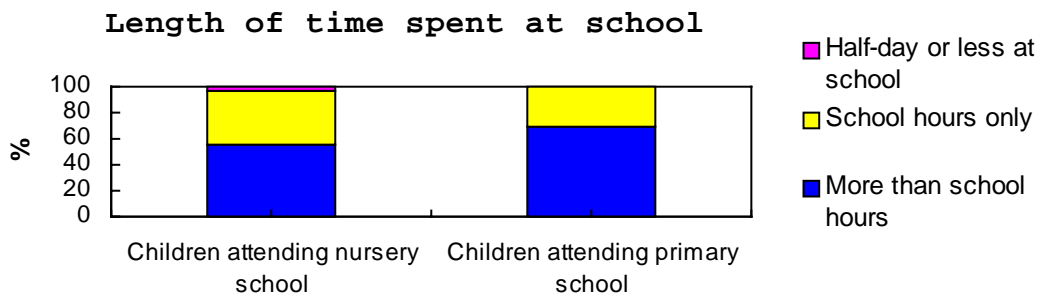
(1) Grandparents/others who care for the child on a regular day-to-day basis are not included here, they are to be found under the category "the usual child care facility"

2. Going to school

Most children in the Region of Flanders attend nursery school. Even before the age of 3, school attendance is **fairly universal**. In the autumn of 1999, 65.8% of children aged between 2½ and 3 attended school full time and 21.1% part time, usually for 5 mornings. 13.2% of these children did not go to school yet.

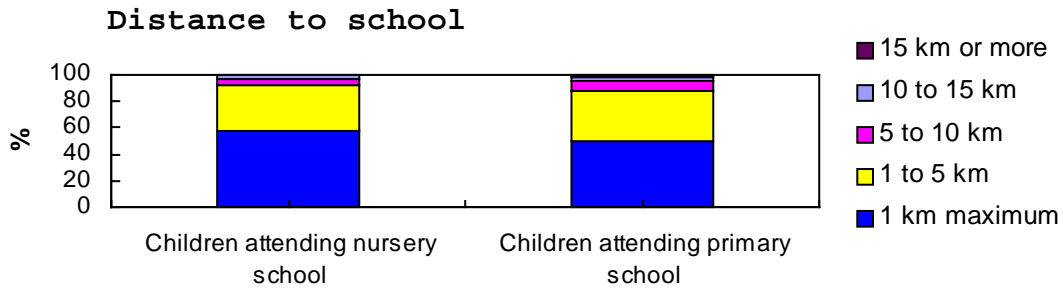
For many children attending nursery school or primary school, **a day at school** lasts longer than the actual school hours: over 55% of pupils at nursery school and 68% of primary school pupils stay at school for longer than school hours (see Figure 4.12).

The school, and in particular the nursery school, is a very short **distance** away from the **home**. 57% of children attending nursery school live a maximum of 1 km from the school, and 36.1% live between 1 and 5 km away. The respective percentages for children attending primary school are 49.3% and 38.5% (see Figure 4.13). However, this short distance does not prevent 68% of nursery-school children and 51.3% of primary-school children from being taken to school by car (see Figure 4.14).



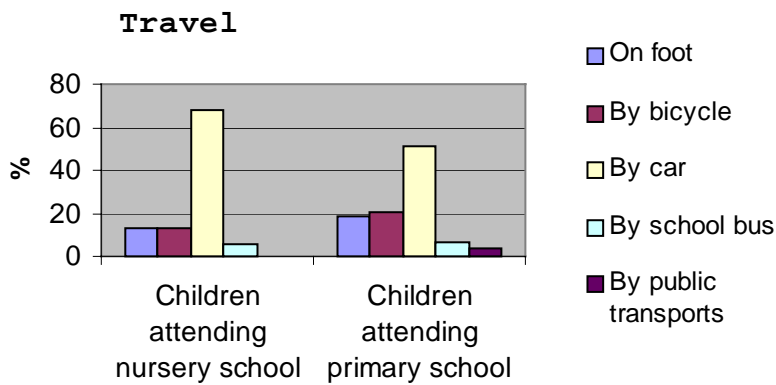
4.12 Children aged under 12: length of time spent at school (percentages)

Source: Panel Study of Belgian Households - year of observation 1998. Processed on behalf of Child and Family



4.13 Children aged under 12: distance to school (percentages)

Source: Panel Study of Belgian Households - year of observation 1998. Processed on behalf of Child and Family

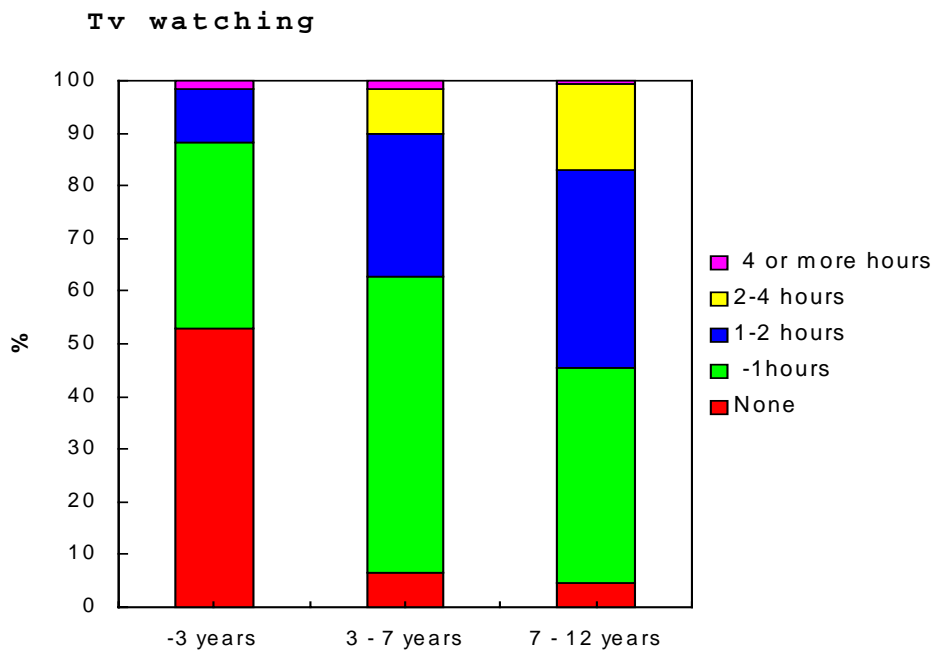


4.14 Children aged under 12: means of travelling to school (percentages)

Source: Panel Study of Belgian Households - year of observation 1998. Processed on behalf of Child and Family

3. TV/video watching

Children under 3 usually watch no TV or videos, or watch for at most one hour a day: almost 53% do not watch at all, and over 35% watch for one hour at most. TV viewing is higher for 3-7 year-olds: 37.4% watch for 1 hour or more. From the age of 7 onwards, almost 17% of children are fairly intensive viewers (see Figure 4.15).



4.15 Children aged under 12: hours per day spent watching TV/videos (percentages)

Source: Panel Study of Belgian Households - year of observation 1998. Processed on behalf of Child and Family

4. Annual holidays

For children in two-parent families, the annual holiday is virtually the norm; this is much less often the case for children in one-parent families.

About 86% of children who live in a two-parent family had **at least one week's** holiday in 1998. There is virtually no difference by age of the child (see Table 4.16). Far fewer children in one-parent families go on holiday: 43% did not go on holiday for at least one week.

Annual holidays				
	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3-7	Children aged 7-12	Total
The family goes on holiday	84.1	84.1	89.3	86.3
The family does not go on holiday	15.9	15.9	10.7	13.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

4.16 Children aged under 12 who go on holiday for at least one week a year (two-parent families only - percentages)

Source: Panel Study of Belgian Households - year of observation 1998. Processed on behalf of Child and Family

5. Children receiving supervision and support via special youth welfare

Supervision and support measures are in place for a number of young children via the special youth welfare committees and the juvenile courts. Child and Family subsidises the supervision and support measures via special youth welfare for some of these children.

5.1. 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 for placement in foster families. This is short-term care at the parents' request on account of special life, work, home,

health or financial circumstances.

There were 4,495 children registered in child care and family support centres in 2000, i.e. children who received support on at least one day in 2000. There were 304 children registered with the foster placement services. These figures are virtually unchanged compared with 1999 (see Table 4.17).

Supervision and support via Child and Family					
	1999		2000		
	Total	-3 yr	3-6 yr	+6 yr	Total
Childcare and family support centres	4,477	1,958	1,313	1,224	4,495
Foster placement services	311	84	76	144	304
Total	4,788	2,042	1,389	1,368	4,799

4.17 Number of children registered with a special youth welfare service subsidised by Child and Family

5.2. Supervision and support via the special youth welfare service

On 31.12.00, a total of 1,852 children under 12 were being supervised by a special youth welfare committee: 194 children under 3, 429 children aged 3-6 and 1,229 children aged 6-12.

Data are also available on supervision measures imposed by *juvenile courts* in 2000. On 31 December 2000, 2,053 children under 12 were subject to supervision measures imposed by the juvenile courts, of whom 190 were under 3, 403 were aged 3 to 6 and 1,460 were aged 6 to 12 (see Table 4.18).

This includes placement in a foster home by a foster-care service, placement in supervised hostels, day centres, family hostels, guidance or observation centres or boarding schools, or supervision by a home supervision service, preventive social measures, and admission to facilities within Child and Family or within the Flemish Fund for the Integration of Persons with a Disability (VFIPH).

Supervision and support via the special youth welfare service

	Special youth welfare committee		Juvenile court	
	1999	2000	1999	2000
Children aged under 3	193	194	178	190
Children aged 3-6	426	429	392	403
Children aged 6-12	1,220	1,229	1,410	1,460
Total	1,839	1,852	1,980	2,053

4.18 Numbers of children subject to supervision by a special youth welfare committee or a supervision measure imposed by a juvenile court

Source: Ministry of the Community of Flanders, Special Youth Welfare Department

Types of supervision and support via special youth welfare committees

	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3-6	Children aged 6-12
Supervised hostels	14	96	268
Day centres	0	5	223
Foster care services/foster families	89	189	342
Boarding schools*	0	4	22
Family hostels	0	3	13
Shelters, guidance and observation centres	0	3	17
Preventive social measures	23	24	106
Home supervision services	61	93	205
Child and Family facilities	5	4	4
VFIPH facilities	0	2	3
Facilities outside Dutch-speaking areas	2	1	9
General hospitals	0	4	14
Free of charge	0	1	1
Not known	0	0	2

Total	194	429	1,229
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4.19 Children subject to supervision by a special youth welfare committee: types of supervision and support, 2000

Source: Ministry of the Community of Flanders, Special Youth Welfare Department

* Community boarding schools and state boarding schools

Types of supervision and support imposed by juvenile courts

	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3-6	Children aged 6-12
Supervised hostels	24	99	327
Day centres	0	1	64
Foster care services/foster families	82	143	497
Boarding schools*	0	2	31
Family hostels	0	4	17
Shelters, guidance and observation centres	0	3	11
Home supervision services	17	35	118
Child and Family facilities	30	31	75
VFIPH facilities	4	15	28
Facilities outside Dutch-speaking areas	4	1	10
General hospitals	3	3	6
Free of charge	25	64	274
Not known	1	2	2
Total	190	403	1,460

4.20 Children subject to a supervision measure imposed by a juvenile court: types of supervision and support, 2000

Source: Ministry of the Community of Flanders, Special Youth Welfare Department

* Community boarding schools, state boarding schools, open boarding schools

6. The European context

6.1. Child care

The level and use of child care varies widely from one country to another. Belgium

leads the field, together with France and Sweden, in terms of the percentage of subsidised **child care places**.

In some other countries, there is virtually no state child care provision for children aged under 3 (see Table 4.21).

Available data on the use of child care - percentage use and types of child care - are incomplete (see Table 4.22).

Subsidised child care

Belgium	30
Germany (former FRG)	2
France	23
United Kingdom	2
Italy	6
The Netherlands	8
Sweden	21

4.21 Number of subsidised places per 1,000 children aged under 3 in certain European countries

Source: European Commission Network on Childcare, A Review of Services for Young Children in the European Union 1990-1995

Use of child care

Community of Flanders	<p><i>0-3 months</i>: almost all children are "cared for" by their parents</p> <p><i>3m-2½ years</i>: 61.6% use child care, of whom 29% use day nurseries, 38.5% child minders and 32.1% grandparents or other relatives</p> <p><i>2½ - 6 years</i>: 51.1% use out-of-school care</p>
Walloon Community	<p><i>0-1 years</i>: "care" by parents predominates</p> <p><i>1-2½ years</i>: 21.5% are cared for in day nurseries and 12% by child minders</p>
Germany	n/a

United Kingdom	0-1 years: almost all children are "cared for" by their parents or informally by relatives or child minders 1-3 years: most child care facilities are private. No data on use 20% of 2 year-olds attend play groups
Italy	0-1 years: "care" by parents, supplemented by informal care in families 1-3 years: 27% cared for at home; 48% by relatives or informal care within the family; 15% by live-in carers; 6% in child care centres; 2% by fathers and care within the family
The Netherlands	day nurseries are used by 17% of 0-4 year-olds over 50% of 2-4 year-olds go to play groups out-of-school care is used by 5% of 4-12 year-olds
Sweden	0-1 years: almost all children are "cared for" by their parents at home 1-5 years: 61% of children attend pre-school child care centres full time; 12% are cared for in families

4.22 Use of child care by age, around 1999

Source: OECD, *Thematic review of early childhood education and care*

n/a: not available

6.2. Going to school

The Region of Flanders leads Europe when it comes to the age at which children first go to school. 82.4% of children aged between 3 and 4 go to school. The figure is also quite high in France (78.9%). In the other countries it is about 50% or less (see Table 4.23).

Going to school

Belgium*	82.4
Germany	49.4
France	78.9
United Kingdom	50.6
Italy	63.7

The Netherlands	32.8
Sweden	42.8

4.23 Children under the age of 4 who attend school in certain European countries: percentage of all children aged 3 to 4 (1998)

Source: OECD, Education at a Glance, 2000

* *Relates to Flanders; figures for Belgium not available*

Chapter 5.

Aspects of the health and development of young children

Perinatal mortality and infant mortality are generally regarded as good indicators of the quality of a country's health system. Life expectancy is another much used indicator. In addition to these basic indicators, in this section we also look at antenatal care and present some data on childbirth.

In the context of morbidity in young children, we begin by considering congenital abnormalities and hearing loss identified in the neonatal period. We then go on to look at a number of diseases and disorders of relevance to young children.

Data on accidents and on child abuse is another important area of focus.

1. Data on pregnancy and childbirth

Antenatal care in Flanders is mainly provided by gynaecologists: 92.2% of pregnant women were under the care of a private gynaecologist during pregnancy, and another 4.7% were under the care of both a gynaecologist and their own GP. Provision of antenatal care by private gynaecologists increased slightly from 1999 to 2000.

The highest percentage of antenatal care provided by gynaecologists is found in the provinces of Flanders-Brabant and Antwerp. The highest percentage of shared antenatal care is found in the province of West Flanders.

The number of pregnancies not involving medical care is very low (0.3%) (see Tables 5.1 and 5.2).

Antenatal care

	1999	2000
Private gynaecologist	91.6	92.2
Mixed	4.6	4.7
GP	2.5	1.9
Child and Family antenatal clinic	0.6	0.4

Midwife	0.5	0.5
No antenatal care	0.2	0.3

Region of Flanders	100.0	100.0
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5.1 Antenatal care: type of antenatal care - Region of Flanders (percentages)

Source: *Child and Family - IKAROS*

Antenatal care by province

	Antwerp	Flanders- Brabant	West Flanders	East Flanders	Limbourg	Region of Flanders
Private gynaecologist	94.3	96.1	89.2	90.5	90.5	92.2
Mixed	1.4	2.3	8.4	7.1	5.5	4.7
GP	2.4	0.8	2.0	1.5	2.4	1.9
Other	1.6	0.7	0.2	0.7	1.2	0.9
No antenatal care	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

5.2 Antenatal care: type of antenatal care by province - 2000 (percentages)

Source: *Child and Family - IKAROS*

The majority of live births take place **in a maternity hospital**. In 1995 (most recent figures available), the percentage of home births in the Region of Flanders was 1.0%. In 1997 (the most recent figures available), the average duration of stay in a maternity hospital was 6.07 days in the Region of Flanders. In the Region of Brussels, the figure was 5.73 days. The average duration of stay has fallen slightly, by 0.3 days, compared with 1996.

In the Region of Flanders in 1999, of 100 deliveries, 46.9 were first-born children, 34.2 were second children, 12.4 were third children, and 6.5 were fourth or later children. The relative proportion of third or later children decreased from 19.6 in 1998 to 18.9 in 1999.

The percentage of young mothers, i.e. mothers aged under 20, was 2.2% (1999). The percentage of pregnancies in women over the **age** of 40 was 1.1%. The average age of

the mother was 27.5 for primiparae and 30.6 for multiparae; this represents a slight rise in comparison with 1998 (+0.1 years). The trend towards pregnancy at a later age is continuing, both for primiparae and for multiparae. The increase is slight but sustained: over a period of 5 years (1995-1999), the average age increased from 27.1 to 27.5 for primiparae and from 30.1 to 30.6 for multiparae (see also chapter 1, point 4.3).

A number of pregnancies not to be underestimated, i.e. 4.3%, were achieved following fertility treatment: 1.9% of women had had **hormone therapy**, 1.2% had undergone **in vitro fertilisation** (IVF), 0.6% had been artificially inseminated, and 0.5% had had an intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI) (1999). The number of births following fertility treatment increased slightly compared with 1998, by 0.2%.

Over 42% of multiple pregnancies came about following medically assisted fertilisation. This was the case for only 3.7% of single births. 3.8% of children came into the category of multiple births. The incidence of twins was 3.6%, and that of triplets 0.2%. 1,097 twins, 31 triplets and one set of quads were recorded.

In 1999, 7.0% of pregnant women gave birth prematurely, following a pregnancy of less than 37 weeks. The relative proportion of **children with a low birth weight** (less than 2500 grams) was 7.1%. The birth weight of 1.2% of children was extremely low (less than 1500 grams). There has been a slight increase compared with 1998 in the number of premature births (+0.3%).

In three in ten women (31.3%), the birth was **induced**, usually for reasons of convenience to either the obstetrician or the pregnant woman. Around 70.2% of children were born without **obstetric intervention**. Over one child in six was born by Caesarean section. Compared with 1988, there was a slight increase in the incidence of Caesareans. This is a sustained increase: since 1995, the incidence of Caesareans in all deliveries has risen from 13.6% to 16.2%. In 13.0% of deliveries, vacuum extraction* or forceps were employed. Epidural anaesthesia was used in almost six in ten deliveries. There has also been a sustained increase in the incidence of epidural anaesthesia: over a period of 5 years (1995-1999), the incidence increased from 48.2% to 61.3%.

After the birth, 12.9% of children were transferred to a neonatal ward and 3.9% to a neonatal intensive care ward. The number of transfers to both neonatal wards and neonatal intensive care wards fell (-0.3% and -0.2%).

Source: Study Centre for Perinatal Epidemiology (SPE) -1999

* vacuum extraction: delivery of a baby with the aid of an instrument that is attached to the baby's head

2. Life expectancy

Life expectancy **at birth** and at the **age of 1 year is** about 75 years for men and about 81 years for women (1998, most recent figures) (see Table 5.3).

Table 5.3 also shows the trend since 1995. Life expectancy increased each year, with the exception of 1997 to 1998. However, this can probably be attributed to a change in data-gathering in 1998.

Life expectancy			
		At birth	At 1 year
Men	1995	74.6	74.1
	1996	75.1	74.5
	1997	75.5	74.9
	1998	75.4	74.8
Women	1995	80.8	80.2
	1996	81.3	80.6
	1997	81.5	80.8
	1998	81.1	80.5

5.3 Life expectancy in the Region of Flanders, at birth and at 1 year

Source: Health indicators, Ministry of the Community of Flanders, Health Care Administration

3. Mortality

3.1. Mortality in the youngest age group in the Region of Flanders

Data on infant mortality is generally presented in accordance with a number of criteria known as mortality criteria.

The first mortality criterion is **stillbirth**. This is the number of children who are registered as "stillborn" after a pregnancy of at least 180 days. In 1998 (no more recent figures are as yet available), 259 babies were stillborn. The **figure for stillbirths** was 3.9 per thousand births. This figure was 0.6 per thousand lower than in 1997.

Early neonatal mortality is death occurring between birth and the age of seven days (7 x 24 hours). In 1998, 152 infants died in this period; the figure for early neonatal mortality was 2.4 per thousand live births. The figures are unchanged from 1997.

The **perinatal mortality figure** was 6.3 per thousand births. Perinatal mortality is made up of infant deaths during the first seven days of their life, together with the figure for stillbirths. In 1998, there was a fall in perinatal mortality of 0.6 per thousand. This decrease can be ascribed to the decrease in stillbirths; early neonatal mortality remained at the same level.

Another mortality criterion frequently employed is **neonatal mortality**. This covers death between birth and the first four weeks (28 days) after birth. In 1998, 200 infants died during the first 28 days of their life. The neonatal mortality figure was 3.2 per thousand live births, 0.2 per thousand higher than in 1997.

The figure for **late neonatal mortality** was 0.8 per thousand live births. Late neonatal mortality is death after the first seven days (7 x 24 hours) up to and including the age of 28 days.

Finally, there is also **infant mortality**. This covers deaths between birth and the age of one year. In 1998, 319 infants died during their first year. The infant mortality figure was 5.1 per thousand live births, a rise of 0.2 per thousand. This can be ascribed to the fall in deaths in all age categories (see Table 5.4).

41.0% of infants born alive with a **birth weight** of under 1,000 grams died before reaching the age of 1 (1998) (see Table 5.5). As Table 5.6 shows, mortality is appreciably higher in **multiple births**. Twins have a 3.88 times greater risk of dying before the age of 1 year than singletons. The risk for triplets is 6.58 times.

Mortality figures

	1997	1998
Stillbirths per 1,000 live births and stillbirths	4.5	3.9
Early neonatal mortality per 1,000 live births	2.4	2.4
Perinatal mortality per 1,000 live births and stillbirths	6.9	6.3
Late neonatal mortality per 1,000 live births	0.6	0.8
Neonatal mortality per 1,000 live births	3.0	3.2
Post-neonatal mortality per 1,000 live births	1.9	1.9
Infant mortality per 1,000 live births	4.9	5.1

5.4 Foeto-infant mortality figures in the Region of Flanders

Source: Health indicators, Ministry of the Community of Flanders, Health Care Administration

Mortality by birth weight					
	Early neonatal mortality	Late neonatal mortality	Post-neonatal mortality	Alive	Total
< 500 g	4	0	0	0	4
500 -999 g	60	8	3	108	179
1,000 -1,499 g	17	7	10	313	347
1,500 - 1,999 g	13	5	4	784	806
2,000 g or over	55	26	96	60,522	60,699
Not known	3	2	6	572	583
Total	152	48	119	62,299	62,618

5.5 Outcome of pregnancy: number of deaths and live births by birth weight in the Region of Flanders - 1998

Source: Health indicators, Ministry of the Community of Flanders, Health Care Administration

Multiple pregnancies						
	Still-births	Early neonatal mortality	Late neonatal mortality	Post-neonatal mortality	Alive	Total
Single births	230	118	46	109	60,008	60,511
Twins	28	32	2	10	2,237	2,309
Triplets	1	2	0	0	54	57
Total	259	152	48	119	62,299	62,877

5.6 Outcome of pregnancy: number of deaths and live births in single and multiple pregnancies in the Region of Flanders - 1998

Source: Health indicators, Ministry of the Community of Flanders, Health Care Administration

3.2. Causes of death in the deaths of young children in the Region of Flanders

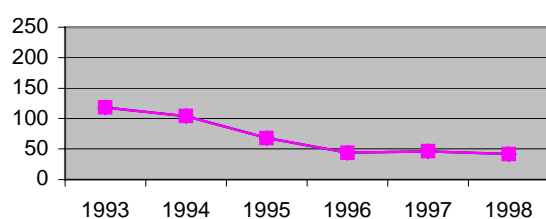
The most important causes of death in stillbirths and infant mortality are complications during pregnancy and the perinatal period and congenital abnormalities. In 1998, 185 children died as a result of complications during pregnancy and the perinatal period and 142 as a result of congenital abnormalities. 42 children suffered cot death as against 46 in 1997. The lower number of cot deaths achieved since Child and Family started its campaign in the autumn of 1994 has been upheld in 1998 (see Table 5.7 and Figure 5.8).

Causes of death		
	1997	1998
Congenital abnormalities	150	142
Complications during pregnancy and the perinatal period	214	185
Prematurity and dysmaturity	26	20
RDS (Respiratory Distress Syndrome)	46	62
SIDS (cot death)	46	42
Other	46	46
Poorly defined	70	79
Total	598	576

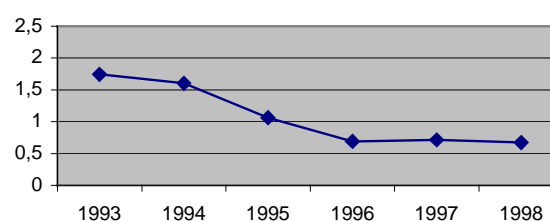
5.7 Causes of death in children aged under 12 months in the Region of Flanders

Source: Health indicators, Ministry of the Community of Flanders, Health Care Administration

Number of cot deaths



Cot deaths per 10.000



5.8 Cot deaths in the Region of Flanders: number of deaths and number of deaths per 10,000 live births

Source: Health indicators, Ministry of the Community of Flanders, Health Care Administration

4. Morbidity

In addition to the mortality figures, the figures for the incidence of diseases are an important indicator of the health of the population. We present figures here on a number of illnesses and abnormalities that are relevant to children.

4.1. Congenital abnormalities

The data on all children in Flanders is available only from obstetric records (SPE). In 1999, congenital abnormalities were identified in the perinatal period in 1.5% of all births. This percentage is unchanged from 1998. Table 5.9 presents a detailed picture of the occurrence of congenital abnormalities.

Congenital abnormalities*		
	Number	Per 100 births
Specific abnormalities		
Spina bifida	14	0.02
Anencephaly	2	<0.01
Hydrocephalus	22	0.04
Cleft lip/palate	81	0.13
Imperforate anus	10	0.02
Missing limbs	22	0.04
Diaphragmatic hernia	16	0.03
Umbilical hernia/gastroschisis	8	0.01
Abnormality of		
nervous and sensory system	42	0.07
gastro-intestinal tract	60	0.10
urogenital tract	148	0.24
heart and lungs	217	0.35
muscles and skeleton	128	0.21
craniofacial complex	33	0.05

multiple congenital abnormalities	42	0.07
Chromosomal abnormalities	69	0.11
Other	149	0.24

5.9 Congenital abnormalities recorded (perinatal period) in Flanders - 1999

Source: Study Centre for Perinatal Epidemiology (SPE)

* Congenital abnormalities identified in births in maternity hospitals (< 500 g)

In a number of children, the abnormality is only identified later. The Eurocat register records congenital abnormalities up to the age of 1 year. The records currently cover the entire province of Antwerp (see Table 5.10).

Congenital abnormalities up to the age of 1 year*

System affected	per 10,000 births	
	1998	1999
Cardiovascular system	36.3	45.7
Limbs	47.4	41.2
Nervous system	21.2	18.1
<i>of which, neural tube</i>	9.5	6.2
<i>hydrocephalus</i>	8.9	3.4
Digestive system, excluding		
Pyloric stenosis	12.3	18.1
Pyloric stenosis	31.2	42.3
Internal urogenital system	25.1	23.1
External urogenital system	5.6	5.6
Cleft lip	9.5	5.6
Cleft palate	5.6	5.6
Umbilical hernia	2.8	1.7
Gastroschisis	0.6	1.7
Metabolic diseases	12.8	5.1
Chromosomal abnormalities	22.9	22.0
<i>of which, Down's syndrome</i>	13.9	12.4

5.10 Congenital abnormalities recorded up to the age of 1 year in the province of Antwerp.

Source: Eurocat, Provincial Institute of Hygiene, Antwerp

* Eurocat records all congenital abnormalities in neonates, whether born alive or stillborn, in children aged up to 1 year, in fetuses born after 20 weeks of pregnancy, and in abortions induced owing to an abnormality

4.2. Hearing loss

Since the introduction of Algo hearing screening at Child and Family, reliable figures have been available on the incidence of hearing defects in Flanders. A hearing defect was identified in 91 children tested who were born in 2000, or 1.6 per 1,000 children tested. A total of 57,898 children were tested, compared with 57,047 in 1999; the incidence in 1999 was 1.5 per 1,000 children tested (see Table 5.11).

Hearing loss				
	1999		2000*	
	Unilateral	Bilateral	Unilateral	Bilateral
21-40 dB	13	7	8	1
41-70 dB	5	18	16	15
71-90 dB	2	9	4	10
91 dB and more	11	19	3	11
Hearing loss not yet precisely determined	0	0	12	11
Total	31	53	43	48

5.11 Young children in whom hearing loss was identified, expressed in decibels (dB); hearing loss in accordance with the scale of the Bureau International d'Audiophonologie

Source: Child and Family

* Provisional figures

4.3. Diseases and disorders

Information is now also available on diseases and disorders in children, on the basis of the 1997 Belgian Health Survey, the first health survey carried out on children living in the Region of Flanders.

In the Health Survey, enquiries were made about 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, chronic non-specific respiratory disease and allergies.

Nine per cent of the children under 12 surveyed had suffered from one or more diseases or disorders in a 12-month period. The figure was lowest for children under 1 (<5%) (see Table 5.12).

Long-term diseases, disorders, disabilities

0 years	4.4
1-3 years	7.3
3-6 years	10.4
6-12 years	9.8
<hr/>	
Total	8.9

5.12 Percentages of children aged under 12 in the Region of Flanders suffering from one or more long-term diseases, disorders or disabilities in a 12-month period
Source: Health Survey 1997, Louis Pasteur Scientific Institute of Public Health - processing by Child and Family

Asthma, chronic bronchitis and chronic non-specific respiratory disease

The 1997 Health Survey shows that in the Region of Flanders, in a 12-month period almost 4% of children under 12 had had asthma, chronic bronchitis or chronic non-specific respiratory disease. Children aged under 12 months were the most frequent sufferers from respiratory tract disorders (9.4%) (see Table 5.13).

Asthma, chronic bronchitis, chronic non-specific respiratory disease

0 years	9.4
1-3 years	4.5
3-6 years	3.5
6-12 years	2.2

Total	3.6
-------	-----

5.13 Percentages of children aged under 12 with asthma, chronic bronchitis or chronic non-specific respiratory disease in a 12-month period

Source: Health Survey 1997, Louis Pasteur Scientific Institute of Public Health - processing by Child and Family

Allergies

In a 12-month period, around 13% of children under 12 suffered from an allergy. There were virtually no cases of allergies in children under the age of 12 months (see Table 5.14).

Allergies	
0 years	0.0
1-3 years	13.2
3-6 years	14.3
6-12 years	13.6
Total	12.6

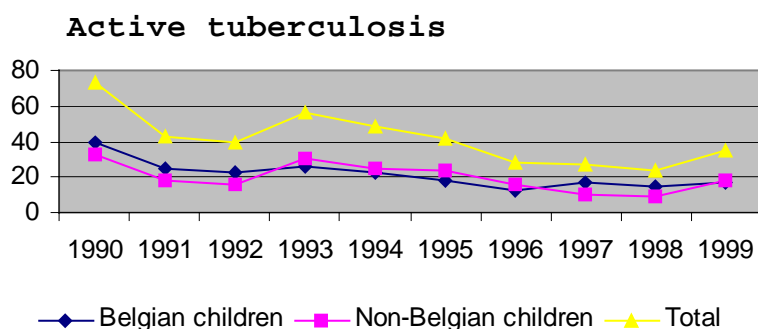
5.14 Percentages of children aged under 12 with allergies in the Region of Flanders in a 12-month period

Source: Health Survey 1997, Louis Pasteur Scientific Institute of Public Health - processing by Child and Family

Active tuberculosis

Active tuberculosis is not found only in developing countries. Children also suffer from tuberculosis in the industrialised countries of the West. In 1999, 35 new cases of tuberculosis were recorded in children under 15 in Flanders, 17 of them in Belgian children and 18 in non-Belgian children.

The number of new cases of active tuberculosis was much higher than in 1998 (+ 45.8%). The rise can be attributed almost entirely to the increase in tuberculosis among non-Belgian children. Figure 5.15 shows the trend since 1990.



5.15 Number of new cases of tuberculosis in children aged under 15 in the Region of Flanders

Source: Flemish Association for Respiratory Health Care and the Combating of Tuberculosis (VRGT)

4.4. Hospital admissions

In a 12-month period, 13% of children aged under 12 were admitted to hospital, in most cases only once. For children aged 1-3, almost 1 child in 5 (Region of Flanders) was admitted to hospital in a 12-month period (see Table 5.16).

Hospital admissions	
0 years	16.6
1-3 years	18.9
3-6 years	10.8
6-12 years	10.9
Total	13.0

5.16 Percentages of children admitted to hospital once or more in the course of one year in the Region of Flanders

Source: Health Survey 1997, Louis Pasteur Scientific Institute of Public Health - processing by Child and Family

5. Accidents to children

Accident prevention is an important task for anybody involved in caring for young children.

As a starting point for preventive measures, data on the actual situation is indispensable.

We shall present a number of data on accidents to young children: the results of a

large-scale survey of the parents of young children in Flanders carried out by Child and Family's district nurses; data on admissions to accident and emergency departments as the result of accidents in everyday life; and data on traffic accidents.

5.1. Accidents necessitating medical treatment

Data on accidents resulting in admission to hospital or death are systematically compiled via record systems, but this represents only the tip of the iceberg. A different method is required to chart less serious accidents.

A much fuller picture of accidents can be obtained via a **population survey**. In 1984-1985, a population survey of very young children was organised in Flanders for the first time by the NWK [national child welfare service]. In 1999, Child and Family launched a new population survey of accidents to young children.

In the survey, parents of children under 3 were asked on a monthly basis whether their child had had an accident in the past month. An accident is regarded as being any unintended, unforeseen event in which the sudden impact of an outside force inflicts a physical injury, and for which a doctor has been consulted, from this point on referred to as an accident necessitating medical treatment.

The survey ran from January 1999 to December 2000. It produced evidence on the incidence of accidents among young children, what exactly happens, in what circumstances and what the consequences are. The initial results for 1999 are now available. The complete results will be published during 2001.

In the case of children aged between 3 months and 3 years, in the course of a year one child in four is the victim of an accident for which a doctor is consulted. The **accident rate** is a little higher in boys than in girls, and varies depending on age. A noteworthy feature is that the accident rate has not changed in comparison with 15 years ago, except in the 3-month to 1-year age group (see Table 5.17).

Accident rate		
	1984-1985	1999*
Boys (1)	0.27	0.27
Girls (1)	0.21	0.22

3 months to 1 year	0.09	0.14
1-2 years	0.26	0.25
2-3 years	0.27	0.27
<hr/>		
Total	0.24	0.24

5.17 Incidence of accidents necessitating medical treatment in children aged between 3 months and 3 years

Source: Child and Family - Accident study

** Provisional figures*

(1) In 1984-1985, children aged 3-4 were also included

Most accidents happen in or near the child's own home or in or near another dwelling. In comparison with 1984-1985, there has been an increase in the percentage of accidents at child care facilities, which matches the increased use of formal child care (see Table 5.18 and Figure 5.19).

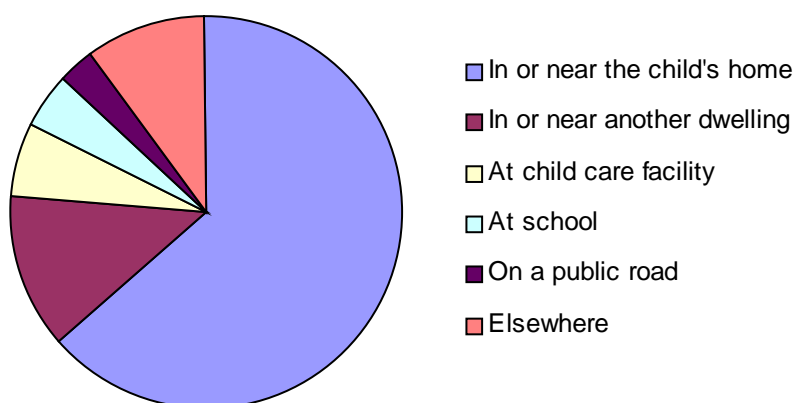
Places where accidents occur

	1984-1985	1999*
In or near the child's home	64.7	63.3
In or near another dwelling	16.0	13.0
At child care facility	1.8	6.0
At school	5.7	4.8
On a public road	6.6	3.1
Elsewhere	5.1	9.9
Not known	0.1	0.0
<hr/>		
Total	100.0	100.0

5.18 Accidents necessitating medical treatment, to children aged between 3 months and 3 years, by the place where the accident occurs

Source: Child and Family - Accident study

** Provisional figures*



5.19 Accidents necessitating medical treatment, to children aged between 3 months and 3 years, by the place where the accident occurs - 1999

Source: *Child and Family - Accident study*

* Provisional figures

Falls are a common cause of accidents to young children. In the case of children aged under 12 months, this is usually a fall from a height; in the case of children aged 1-3, it is usually a fall on the level. Burns caused by liquid or steam, choking, and crushing or pinching of a limb occur relatively more often in children aged between 3 months and 1 year than in older children. Cuts and knocks are more common in children aged 1-3 (see Table 5.20 and Figure 5.21).

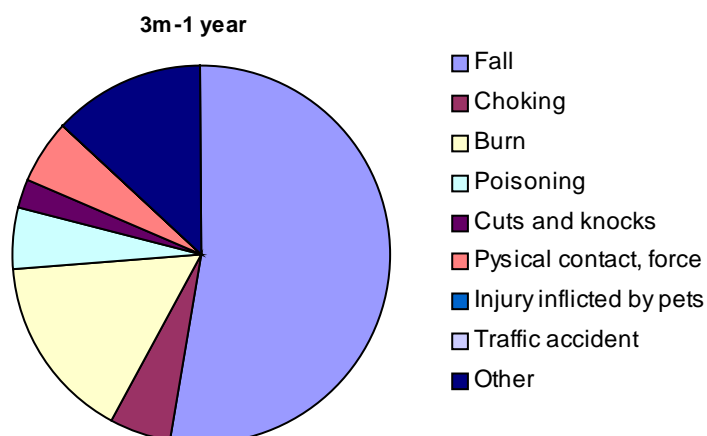
Type of injury				
	3m-1yr	1-2yr	2-3yr	Total
Fall	52.6	60.8	58.8	59.3
On the level, tripping	15.8	33.5	30.4	30.8
On the stairs	5.3	7.8	10.4	8.8
From a higher to a lower floor	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.2
Fall from a height, other	31.6	19.6	17.6	19.5
Choking	5.3	0.4	0.8	0.9
Burn	15.8	6.9	2.8	5.6
Hot liquid or steam	10.5	2.0	1.2	2.3
Contact with hot/burning object	5.3	4.1	1.6	3.0
Other	0.0	0.8	0.0	0.4

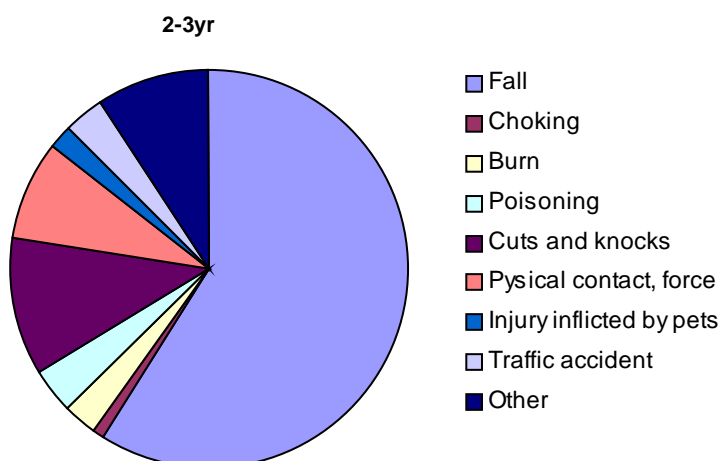
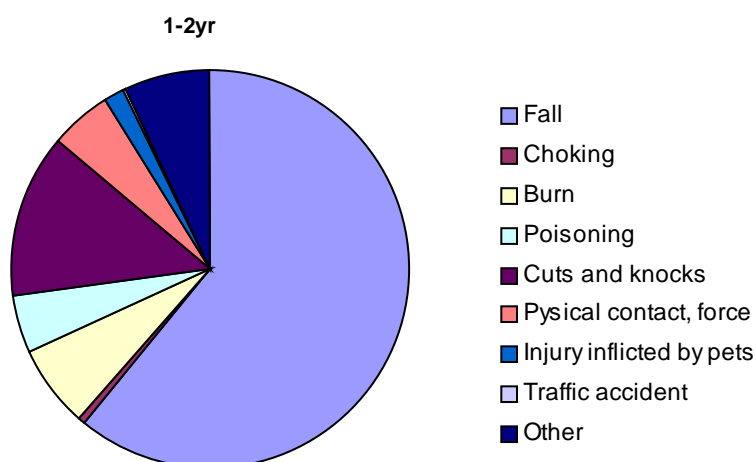
Poisoning	5.3	4.5	3.6	4.1
Cut, knock	2.6	13.5	11.6	11.8
Contact with sharp object	2.6	2.4	4.0	3.2
Contact with static object	0.0	5.7	4.8	4.9
Contact with falling/thrown object	0.0	2.9	1.2	1.9
Contact with moving object	0.0	2.4	1.6	1.9
Physical contact, force	5.3	4.9	8.0	6.4
Blow, knock or kick	5.3	2.4	3.6	3.2
Other physical contact	0.0	2.4	4.4	3.2
Injury inflicted by a pet	0.0	1.6	2.0	1.7
Traffic accident	0.0	0.4	3.2	1.7
Other	13.2	6.9	9.2	8.4
Crushing, pinching of a limb	10.5	5.7	6.4	6.4
Something in eye, ear, nose	2.6	0.8	2.8	1.9
Drowning, fall into water	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.2

5.20 Accidents necessitating medical treatment, to children aged between 3 months and 3 years, in 1999, by type of injury and age

Source: Child and Family - Accident study

Type of injury





5.21 Accidents necessitating medical treatment, to children aged between 3 months and 3 years, by type of injury and age - 1999

Source: Child and Family - Accident study

5.2. Accidents resulting in admission to an accident and emergency department

Belgium participates in the EHLASS records, records of accidents excluding traffic and industrial accidents. In 1999 *the accident and emergency departments* of two Flemish hospitals and one Brussels hospital took part in this. These records do not allow the incidence of accidents resulting in admission to an accident and emergency department to be determined.

The *types of accident occurring most frequently* are: fall from a height, fall on the level, blow or knock, and crushing. Over half the children aged under 1 who

are admitted to an accident and emergency department have suffered a fall from a height. Children aged over 4 suffer from both falls on the level and falls from a height; and blows and knock are also quite frequent occurrences (see Table 5.22).

Types of accident			
	under 1	1 to 4 years	5 to 14 years
Fall on the level	14.4	29.8	30.9
Fall from a height	56.0	21.7	15.3
Fall, not specified	0.0	4.1	2.7
Physical stress	2.4	1.4	4.1
Cut, penetrating object	1.6	3.9	4.3
Blow, knock	7.2	14.9	27.6
Crushing	2.4	8.6	6.2
Other mechanical cause	0.0	2.3	1.4
Foreign body	4.0	3.7	1.4
Poisoning	2.4	1.4	0.5
Hot liquid, steam	4.0	2.2	1.0
Hot object	1.6	1.1	0.1

5.22 Accidents resulting in admission to an accident and emergency department the most important types of accident (Kingdom of Belgium - percentages) -1999

Source: EHLASS, Annual Report, Belgium, 1999

5.3. Traffic accidents

In 1999, 122 children under 5 were **killed or seriously injured** in a traffic accident in **Belgium**. This represents a fall of 6.9% compared with 1998. In particular, the number of child passengers in cars who were killed decreased. In 1999 12 were killed in road traffic accidents compared with 20 in 1998.

The number of children aged 5 to 9 who were killed or seriously injured fell (-12.4%) but the number in the 10 to 14 age group rose (+5.3%). In 1999 233 children aged 5 to 9 were killed or seriously injured in accidents, of whom 21 were killed. 376 children aged 10 to 14 were killed or seriously injured, of whom 32 were killed (see Table 5.23).

Traffic accident victims

Age	Pedestrian	Cyclists, moped riders, motor- cyclists, car drivers	Car passen- gers	Other	Total
0-4 years					
1998	30	5	87	9	131
1999	44	2	64	12	122
<i>of whom, deaths within 30 days</i>	4	1	6	1	12
5-9 years					
1998	94	43	111	18	266
1999	66	42	116	9	233
<i>of whom, deaths within 30 days</i>	3	3	15	0	21
10-14 years					
1998	80	166	94	17	357
1999	71	164	103	38	376
<i>of whom, deaths within 30 days</i>	7	13	9	3	32

5.23 Traffic accidents - number of deaths within 30 days and serious injuries (= admission to hospital for more than 24 hours required) by ages under 15 and types of road user (Kingdom of Belgium)

Source: Belgian Road Safety Institute - NIS data

6. Child abuse

In 1999, the six confidential child abuse centres recorded a total of 4,918 **notifications** of specific cases of abuse or neglect of minors. A total of 6,917 minors were involved (see Table 5.24).

The number of notifications fell by 10.7% compared with 1999. However, there is a slight rise over the number of notifications in 1998 (+2.6%). 1999 was evidently a year with an exceptional number of notifications and the figures for 2000 continue the gradually rising line since 1995 (see Figure 5.25).

In 2000 the **number of children notified per 10,000** children was 54.4 (for the Region of Flanders). Figure 5.26 shows the trend per 10,000 since 1995. This figure confirms the sharp rise in 1999 and the fall in 2000. Disregarding 1999, there has been a slight increase in the number of children notified since 1995.

The relative number of children notified per 10,000 children in 2000 varies by province. It is highest in the province of Antwerp (59.7 per 10,000) and lowest in the province of Limbourg (37.9 per 10,000) (see Table 5.27).

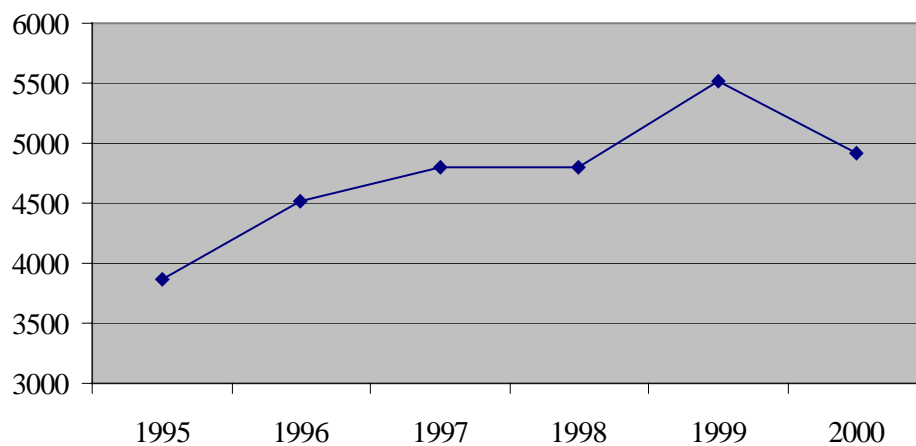
All the centres, apart from the centre in Brussels, had fewer cases notified to them than in 1999. However, the extent of the decrease varied from centre to centre. The decrease was greatest at the centres in Antwerp, Leuven and Hasselt (over 15% in each case). The centres in Ghent and Bruges also saw relatively sharp falls (9.2% and 5.5% respectively). Brussels recorded a rise of 10.7%.

Notifications		
	1999	2000*
Number of notifications	5,509	4,918
Number of children affected	7,494	6,917

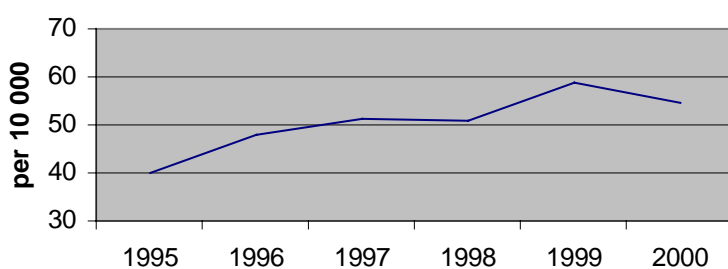
5.24 Numbers of notifications of child abuse or neglect

Source: Child and Family - Records of the confidential child abuse centres

* *Provisional figures*

Trend in the number of notifications

5.25 Trend in the number of notifications of child abuse or neglect since 1995

Trend in the number of children notified

5.26 Child abuse: trend in the number of children notified per 10,000 children under the age of 18

Source: *Child and Family - Records of the confidential child abuse centres*

Number of cases notified per 10,000 children

	1999	2000
Antwerp	66.8	59.7
Flanders-Brabant	60.7	52.6
West Flanders	52.9	49.8
East Flanders	66.4	63.1
Limbourg	36.5	37.9
Region of Flanders	58.8	54.4

5.27 Child abuse: number of children notified per 10,000 children under the age of 18 in the region of Flanders and by province

Source: Child and Family - Records of the confidential child abuse centres

In the case of 1,866 children, or 27.0% of cases notified, those notifying the abuse reported **physical abuse or neglect**. This represents a decrease compared with 1999 in the number of children in respect of whom physical abuse or neglect was reported.

The same can be said about the children notified because of **sexual abuse** (1,734 children or 25.0%). For two out of three of these (alleged) sexually abused children, the person reporting the case stated right away that the abuser was a member of the family (incest); one third involved abuse by someone outside the family or the relationship between the abuser and the victim is not known.

1,329 children or 19.2% were reported on account of **emotional abuse or neglect**. This represents a rise of almost 2% over last year (see Table 5.28).

45.9% of notifications came from the child's immediate surroundings. They included notifications by: the mother figure (16.9% of the total number of notifications), other members of the immediate family or relatives (9.9%), neighbours or acquaintances (9.0%), the father figure (6.7%), and the victims themselves (1.6%). 52.1% of notifications came from professionals (18.1% from health care social workers, 10.8% from welfare organisations, and 17.8% from schools or pre-school facilities).

Problems notified

	1999	2000*	
		Number	%
Physical abuse	17.0	1,105	16.0
Physical neglect	12.0	761	11.0
<i>Total physical abuse and neglect</i>	29.0	1,866	27.0
Emotional abuse	9.7	733	10.6
Emotional neglect	7.8	596	8.6
Münchhausen syndrome by proxy	0.3	21	0.3

Sexual abuse incest	18.6	1,151	16.6
Sexual abuse not incest or not known whether it is incest	7.9	583	8.4
<i>Total sexual abuse</i>	26.5	1,734	25.0
Child at risk of abuse/neglect	14.7	1,012	14.6
Problem unclear, person reporting not sure	6.5	536	7.8
Problems to do with working through earlier abuse/neglect	1.8	114	1.7
No abuse, other problem	3.7	305	4.4
<hr/>			
Total	100.0	6,917	100.0

5.28 Child abuse: cases of child abuse notified by the most important problem notified (percentages)

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 75.4 years for men and 81.1 years for women, the Region of Flanders scores very highly. Male life expectancy in the Region of Flanders is the longest of the countries investigated. Only Sweden has a longer female life expectancy (see Table 5.29).

Life expectancy at birth

	1990	1995	1997	1998
Men				
Region of Flanders	n/a	74.6	75.5	75.4
Belgium	72.7	73.4	74.3	74.4
Germany	72.0	73.3	74.0	74.5
France	72.7	73.9	74.6	74.6
United Kingdom	72.9	74.0	74.7	74.8
Italy	73.6	74.9	74.9	
The Netherlands	73.8	74.6	75.2	75.2
Sweden	70.9	72.8	73.4	73.5
Women				

Region of Flanders	n/a	80.8	81.5	81.1
Belgium	79.4	80.2	80.6	80.5
Germany	78.4	79.7	80.3	80.6
France	80.9	81.9	82.2	
United Kingdom	78.5	79.2	79.5	79.7
Italy	80.1	81.3	81.1	
The Netherlands	80.9	80.4	80.5	80.6
Sweden	80.4	81.4	81.8	81.9

5.29 Male and female life expectancy at birth in certain European countries since 1990

Source: Eurostat, Key data on health 2000

n/a: not available

7.2. Caesareans

With around 162 Caesareans per 1,000 live births, Flanders is in the middle of the range. The Netherlands and Sweden have a much lower proportion of Caesareans. Germany, France and the United Kingdom have similar figures to Flanders. In Italy, the proportion of Caesareans is much higher at 264 per 1,000 live births (see Table 5.30).

Caesareans						
	1990	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Flanders*	97.8	142.9	146.9	153.0	157.2	162.5
Belgium	104.5					
Germany	157.0	172.4	176.1	181.4		
France	126.9	158.0				
United Kingdom	112.8**	n/a	141.5			
Italy	207.9	n/a	n/a	264.1		
The Netherlands	74.1	96.5	100.6	103.9		
Sweden	107.9	120.0	117.3			

5.30 Number of caesareans per 1,000 live births in certain European countries

Sources: Study Centre for Perinatal Epidemiology

Eurostat, Key data on health 2000

* Figures for the Region of Flanders and a Dutch-speaking maternity hospital Brussels

** 1991 figures

n/a: not available

7.3. Mortality

Infant mortality in the Region of Flanders has fallen considerably since 1990. The Region of Flanders now has a good score for infant mortality on a level with other European countries. Only Sweden does noticeably better (see Table 5.31). The Region of Flanders is also on a par with countries with good results in respect of **perinatal mortality figures**, or infant deaths within the first seven days of life in combination with stillbirth figures (see Table 5.32).

Infant mortality					
	1990	1995	1997	1998	1999
Region of Flanders	8.6	5.9	4.9	5.1	
Belgium	6.6	5.8	5.4	5.2	5.3
Germany	7.1	5.3	4.9	4.6	
<i>of which, former FRG</i>	7.1	5.3	4.8	4.6	
France	7.4	4.9	4.7	5.2	4.8
United Kingdom	8.0	6.2	5.9	5.7	5.8
Italy	8.2	6.2	5.6	5.5	5.2
The Netherlands	7.1	5.4	5.0	5.2	5.2
Sweden	6.0	4.1	3.6	3.5	3.4

5.31 Infant mortality: number of deaths of children aged under 12 months per 1,000 live births from 1990 in certain European countries

Sources: Council of Europe, *Recent demographic developments in Europe 2000*

Ministry of the Community of Flanders, *Health indicators*

Ministry of the Community of Flanders, *Births, perinatal mortality and infant mortality, 1990-1992*

Perinatal mortality*					
	1990	1995	1996	1997	1998
Region of Flanders	8.4	7.7	7.0	7.2	6.6

Belgium	8.9	7.2		
Germany	6.3	6.8	6.8	6.5
France	8.3	7.4	7.4	
United Kingdom	8.1	n/a	8.7	
Italy	10.5	7.1		
The Netherlands	9.6	8.0	8.4	7.9
Sweden	6.5	5.5	n/a	5.4

5.32 Perinatal mortality figures per 1,000 live births from 1990 in certain European countries

Sources: Eurostat, Key data on health 2000

NIS, Population statistics

Ministry of the Community of Flanders, Health indicators

** per 1,000 live births*

n/a: not available

7.4. Cot death

The most recent survey available dates from 1996 (see Table 5.33).

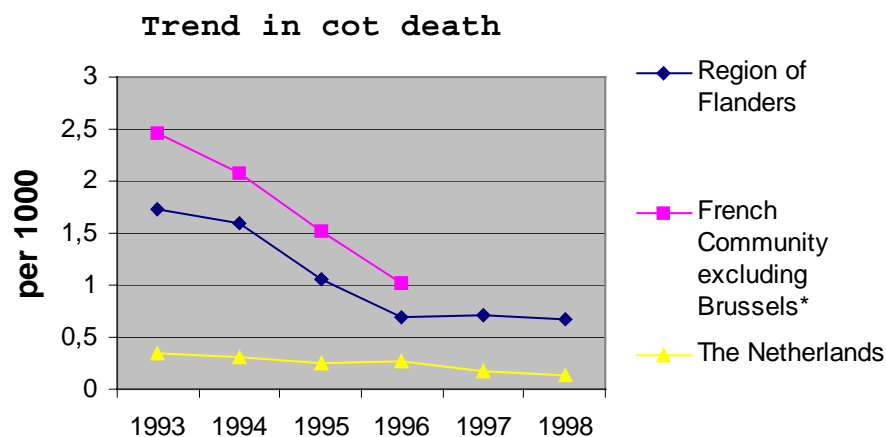
The number of cases of cot death has fallen considerably since 1993 in both the Region of Flanders and the Walloon Region. However, the number of cases is still considerably higher than in the Netherlands (see Figure 5.34).

Cot deaths

Region of Flanders	0.69
Germany	0.87
France	0.61
United Kingdom	0.61
Italy	0.10
The Netherlands	0.17
Sweden	0.35

5.33 Number of cases of cot death per 1,000 live births in certain European countries in 1996

Source: Eurostat, Key data on health 2000



5.34 Number of cases of cot death per 1,000 live births from 1993

Sources: Ministry of the Community of Flanders, Health indicators

Ministère de la Communauté Française

Central Bureau of Statistics, the Netherlands

* French Community excluding Brussels

7.5. Congenital abnormalities

A number of countries keep Eurocat records of congenital abnormalities up to 1 year.

Table 5.35 compares the data from the Antwerp register with the data from all Eurocat registers that operate fully in accordance with Eurocat guidelines. There are 16 registers.

Differences are found for pyloric stenosis, cardiovascular, uro-genital and chromosomal abnormalities. There is a significantly higher incidence of pyloric stenosis in Antwerp than in the other regions that keep records. There is also a lower incidence of urogenital abnormalities and slightly fewer cardiovascular and chromosomal abnormalities.

Congenital abnormalities up to the age of 1 year

	Antwerp 1999	Eurocat average 1990-94
Cardiovascular system	45.7	58.7
Limbs	41.2	46.8
Nervous system	18.1	22.0
<i>of which, neural tube</i>	6.2	10.1

<i>hydrocephalus</i>	3.4	5.0
Digestive system, excluding pyloric stenosis	18.1	13.9
Pyloric stenosis	42.3	5.9
Internal urogenital system	23.1	32.6
External urogenital system	5.6	14.5
Cleft lip	5.6	8.9
Cleft palate	5.6	6.4
Umbilical hernia	1.7	2.5
Gastroschisis	1.7	1.3
Metabolic disorders	5.1	*
Chromosomal abnormalities	22.0	28.9
<i>of which, Down's syndrome</i>	12.4	16.8

5.35 Congenital abnormalities recorded up to the age of 1 year in the Eurocat registers

Source: Eurocat, Provincial Institute of Hygiene, Antwerp

* Antwerp is the only Eurocat register that records metabolic disorders

7.6. Deaths caused by accidents

Both the number of deaths caused by accidents and the number of deaths caused by traffic accidents is on the high side in Belgium. Only Germany and France have higher figures for deaths among 1 to 4 year-olds caused by accidents (see Tables 5.36 and 5.37).

Deaths caused by accidents

	1 to 4 year-olds	5 to 9 year-olds	10 to 14 year-olds
Belgium	9.8	8.1	9.6
Germany	11.1	7.1	7.3
France	12.0	7.3	8.4
United Kingdom	7.3	4.6	6.4
Italy	5.9	4.7	7.6
The Netherlands	8.4	5.0	6.6
Sweden	5.6	4.5	5.5

5.36 Number of deaths caused by accidents per 100,000 children in certain European countries in the period 1991-1995, by age

Source: UNICEF, *Child deaths by injury in rich nations*, INNOCENTI Report Card, 2001

Deaths caused by traffic accidents

Belgium	4.3
Germany	3.6
France	3.8
United Kingdom	2.9
Italy	3.3
The Netherlands	3.4
Sweden	2.5

5.37 Number of deaths caused by traffic accidents per 100,000 children aged 1 to 14 in certain European countries in the period 1991-1995

Source: UNICEF, *Child deaths by injury in rich nations*, INNOCENTI Report Card, 2001

Chapter 6.

A safe and healthy life?

The way in which people live plays a large part in determining how healthy they are, and this applies from a very early age. Good examples of this for the young child are breast-feeding, nutrition, vaccination, use of therapeutic drugs, passive smoking and sleep.

1. Breast-feeding and bottle-feeding in the first months of life

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 children against infections, offers protection against childhood illnesses for longer and helps to prevent allergies.

In our society, mothers do not breast-feed as a matter of course. There are practical drawbacks, etc.

In Flanders, 63% of newborn babies are breast-fed as their **first food**. This represents an increase of 2% compared with 1999.

The percentage of babies who are breast-fed varies by **province**. In the province of West Flanders, the percentage is quite a lot lower, at only 52.4%. It is also lower in the province of East Flanders. In the provinces of Antwerp and Flanders-

Brabant, over 65% of newborn babies are breast-fed. There has been an increase in all provinces (see Table 6.1).

More babies of **non-Belgian origin** are breast-fed than babies of Belgian origin: 75% compared to 59.7%.

The percentage of babies who are breast-fed as their first food is slightly higher for **first-borns** than for subsequent babies. 66.4% of first-borns are breast-fed; for subsequent babies the figure is 60.9% (see Table 6.2).

Breast-feeding		
	1999	2000
	%	%
Antwerp	64.4	66.8
Flanders-Brabant	66.2	68.4
West Flanders	50.3	52.4
East Flanders	59.2	61.4
Limbourg	64.5	65.4
Region of Flanders	61.0	63.0

6.1 Percentages of babies initially breast-fed by province

Source: Child and Family - IKAROS

Breast-feeding by subgroups	
Babies of Belgian origin	59.7
Babies of non-Belgian origin*	75.0
First-borns	66.4
Second or later babies	60.9
Total	63.0

6.2 Percentage of babies initially breast-fed, by origin and birth order - Region of

Flanders

Source: *Child and Family - IKAROS*

* *Babies whose mother did not have Belgian nationality when she was born.*

Optimising the feeding of infants is an important area of focus for Child and Family. Research into feeding practices is essential if programmes to optimise infant feeding are to succeed. Child and Family will start a scientific study in 2001. Until this has been carried out, the only information available is from some limited studies.

A study* conducted in Hasselt in 1997 found that of all **bottle-feeding** started from birth to the age of 2 months, partially hydrolysed milks accounted for about 16%; soya-based feeds 9.5% and extensively hydrolysed milks 4.5%.

It emerged that mothers also change their baby's feed very frequently: at the age of 2 months only 34% were still getting the same feed as at birth; 33% had changed once, 19% twice and 13% at least three times. 11% of all the changes involved switching from one whey-based formula to another.

* Source: M. Raes, *Dienst Kinder- en Jeugdgeneseskunde, Virga Jesseziekenhuis, Hasselt*

2. Healthy nutrition after the first year of life?

What are the eating habits of young children? Healthy eating habits are measured on the basis of the incidence of breakfasting and eating hot meals, and on the basis of consumption of food products such as meat, fish, vegetables, fresh fruit, milk, brown bread and fat, and the non-consumption of snacks or sugary drinks.

In the case of almost 1 child in 10 from the age of 3 upwards, **breakfast every day** is not the norm. From the age of 6 especially, a substantial number of children never or very rarely eat breakfast (see Table 6.3).

Breakfast			
	1-3 years	3-6 years	6-12 years
Less than once or twice a week	1.5	0.0	5.6
1 - 2 times a week	0.5	1.8	5.0
3 - 5 times a week	0.5	8.5	3.3
6 - 7 times a week	97.5	89.7	86.1

Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
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6.3 Children aged between 1 and 12 by the number of times a week they eat breakfast

Source: Health Survey 1997, Louis Pasteur Scientific Institute of Public Health - processing by Child and Family

Over 9 out of 10 children aged 1-3 and 6-12 eat a **hot meal** with vegetables every day or nearly every day. This percentage is lower (80%) for children aged 3-6 (see Table 6.4).

Hot meal

	1-3 years	3-6 years	6-12 years
Less than once or twice a week	1.5	1.5	0.3
1 - 2 times a week	0.6	0.5	0.4
3 - 5 times a week	5.4	17.3	7.0
6 - 7 times a week	92.6	80.7	92.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

6.4 Children aged between 1 and 12 by the number of hot meals with vegetables eaten per week

Source: Health Survey 1997, Louis Pasteur Scientific Institute of Public Health - processing by Child and Family

Table 6.5 shows the consumption of a number of food products.

The consumption of **vegetables and fresh fruit** is certainly capable of improvement. Many children aged 3-6 and 6-12 do not eat fresh fruit every day (25% and 31% respectively). Many children aged over 3 eat less than 2 portions of vegetables or fresh fruit a day (almost 50%).

There are different guidelines on **milk** consumption according to whether the children are very young or rather older: full-cream milk is recommended for children under 5, and semi-skimmed milk for children over 5. Daily consumption by 52% of children aged 1-3 of milk with a reduced fat content is unhealthy; nor does the consumption by 30% of children aged 6-12 of full-cream milk accord with the guidelines on healthy nutrition.

The consumption of **brown bread** should certainly be increased. Around half the

children still usually eat white bread.

Fat should not be restricted in the diets of children under 5. Sandwiches should be spread with margarine (not butter) and meals should be prepared with margarine or oil. Table 6.5 shows that from this point of view, the nutrition of many children aged 1-3 can be described as unhealthy: no fat is spread on sandwiches (55.1%), or butter is used (14.7%). With regard to cooking, it appears that only in the case of a limited number of children is no fat added (5.5%), but in the case of a rather larger number of children (11.5%), butter is used.

There is very heavy consumption of **snacks and sugary drinks**: 60% of children aged 1-3 consume these every day, and the figure is actually around 90% for older children.

Nutrition			
	1-3 years	3-6 years	6-12 years
<u>Consumption of meat or poultry</u>			
Less than once a week	1.4	0.0	0.0
At least once a week	20.3	23.7	9.9
(Almost) every day	78.3	76.3	90.1
<u>Consumption of fish</u>			
Less than once a week	47.9	20.5	29.8
At least once a week	52.1	79.5	69.9
(Almost) every day	0.0	0.0	0.3
<u>Consumption of fresh fruit</u>			
Less than once a week	4.7	7.1	7.0
At least once a week	11.7	18.1	24.1
(Almost) every day	83.6	74.8	68.9
<u>Consumption of vegetables or fresh fruit</u>			
Less than 2 portions a day	27.5	48.8	49.9
2 portions or more a day	72.5	51.2	50.1
<u>Consumption of dairy products with a reduced fat content</u>			
Less than once a week	40.0	36.7	32.7
At least once a week	8.2	7.6	11.2
(Almost) every day	51.9	55.7	56.0
<u>Consumption of full-cream dairy products</u>			
Less than once a week	63.7	57.5	60.7
At least once a week	4.3	3.0	9.7

(Almost) every day	32.0	39.5	29.6
<u>Consumption of bread</u>			
Usually white bread	44.8	51.6	42.6
Usually brown bread	55.2	48.4	57.5
<u>Use of fat on bread</u>			
None	55.1	24.3	30.7
Butter	14.7	20.9	21.9
Margarine	21.7	33.5	24.8
Diet margarine	8.5	18.0	21.4
Other	0.0	3.2	1.3
<u>Use of fat in cooking</u>			
None	5.5	0.0	0.8
Butter	11.5	17.4	12.4
Margarine	57.4	52.5	57.9
Oil	18.7	20.3	14.5
Other	0.0	0.0	0.6
Butter and margarine	4.3	4.7	2.1
Margarine and oil	2.6	3.9	6.7
Diet product	0.0	1.2	5.0
<u>Consumption of snacks or sugary drinks</u>			
Less than once a week	22.6	2.8	1.5
At least once a week	17.8	6.6	10.0
(Almost) every day	59.6	90.7	88.5

6.5 Children aged between 1 and 12 by the consumption of a number of food products
*Source: Health Survey 1997, Louis Pasteur Scientific Institute of Public Health -
 processing by Child and Family*

3. Safe sleeping habits

The risk of cot death (see also chapter 5, point 3.2) can be greatly reduced by taking a few very simple precautions. The first point is the baby's sleeping position. It is recommended that babies are always put down to sleep on their backs. Temperature is another important point to consider, with recommendations on the ideal temperature for the room in which the baby sleeps and on clothing and bedding (parents are advised against using duvets and pillows). Parents are also advised to have the baby sleep where they can keep an eye on him. Smoking is another important consideration (see also point 7).

These recommendations are already being observed to quite a large extent in Flanders and there has been a considerable improvement since 1994, the year that

Child and Family started to give systematic advice about "Safe sleeping habits".

By the autumn of 2000, 61% of babies under the age of 10 months always slept on their backs. However, sleeping on the side is still quite common for babies under 3 months. Almost 78% of mothers with a baby under the age of 10 months follow the advice not to use duvets. The temperature of the room in which the baby sleeps is still not good, with over half of babies still sleeping in a room that is too warm. The advice to put babies down to sleep in the living room in the daytime is followed by over 55%. At night parents still prefer to put babies in their own bedrooms whereas the recommendation is that they sleep in the parents' bedroom (see Table 6.6).

Sleeping situation			
	1994	1995	2000
<u>Sleeping position</u>			
Always on back	29.6	45.1	61.2
Always on side	26.8	23.7	10.0
Always on tummy	20.7	9.0	4.3
Other	22.9	22.1	24.5
<u>Use of duvet at night</u>			
Never use a duvet	30.8	45.0	77.9
<u>Use of pillow</u>			
Never use a pillow	87.6	90.5	91.6
<u>Temperature of room baby sleeps in during the day</u>			
Below ideal temperature	8.6	7.6	3.2
Ideal temperature	40.8	44.5	45.4
Above ideal temperature	50.6	47.9	51.4
<u>Place where baby sleeps during the day</u>			
Living room	48.6	52.0	55.9
Own bedroom	38.0	36.8	33.5
<u>Place where baby sleeps at night</u>			
Own bedroom	59.7	59.7	64.6
Parents' bedroom	28.2	28.4	29.8
Other	12.2	11.9	5.7
<u>Supervision</u>			
Parent always checks if baby cries hard	69.5	73.8	73.3

Smoking

Someone in the house smokes	n/a	n/a	14.6
Someone in the house smokes in the child's presence	n/a	n/a	7.5

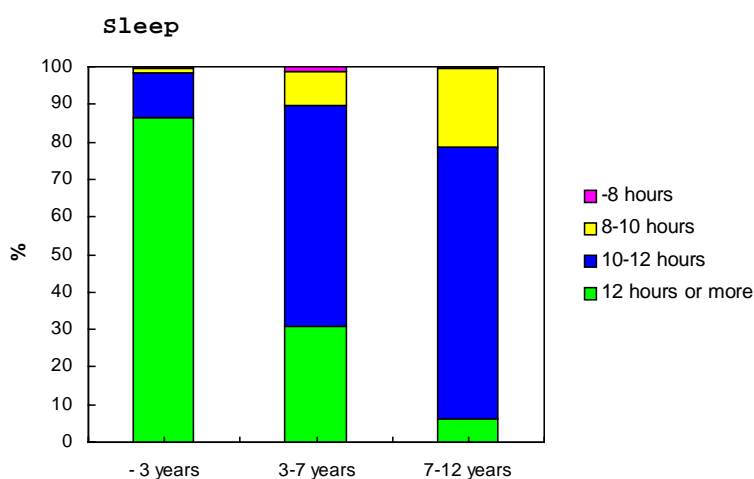
6.6 Sleeping situation of babies under 10 months (first-borns only)

Source: Child and Family - surveys into the sleeping situation of babies, 1994, 1995 and 2000

n/a: not available

4. Do children get enough sleep?

As children grow up, they sleep for fewer hours. In the first years of life, sleeping for over 12 hours is the norm; the equivalent figure for 3-7-year-olds is 10 to 12 hours, and from the seventh year, many children still sleep for between 8 and 10 hours (see Figure 6.7).



6.7 Children aged under 12: number of hours' sleep per child per day, by age (percentages)

Source: Panel Study of Belgian Households - year of observation 1998. Processed on behalf of Child and Family

5. Vaccination rates

Vaccination is one of the most important and successful instruments of protection against childhood diseases.

The generally available programme of vaccination for young children in Flanders includes vaccination against poliomyelitis, diphtheria/tetanus/pertussis (DTP), Haemophilus influenzae type b, hepatitis B, and measles/mumps/rubella.

In Flanders, the vaccination policy is implemented by various bodies, but as yet

there are no full central records of the vaccines administered.

However, in 1999 the vaccination rate was determined by means of a survey based on a random sample. A sample study has revealed the vaccination rate among children aged 18 to 24 months in Flanders.

The rate of vaccination against polio is good, as is that against DTP, except for the repeat vaccination (DTP4). The rates are too low in the case of vaccination against Hib, hepatitis B and measles/mumps/rubella (see Table 6.8).

Vaccination rates*

Poliomyelitis

Polio 1	99.2
Polio 2	98.9
Polio 3	96.2

Diphtheria/tetanus/pertussis

DTP 1	95.7
DTP 2	95.4
DTP 3	94.5
DTP 4	89.2

Haemophilus influenzae type b

Hib 1	85.5
Hib 2	84.4
Hib 3	82.6
Hib 4	73.9

Hepatitis B

Hep 1	74.2
Hep 2	73.4
Hep 3	68.4
Hep 4	15.1

Measles/mumps/rubella

MMR	83.4
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6.8 Vaccination rates in children aged 18 to 24 months in Flanders - 1999

Source: Vaccination rates in Flanders, VUB - UIA

* per 100 children

6. Use of therapeutic drugs

Generally speaking, the use of therapeutic drugs has increased steadily in Belgium since 1980.

Considerable use is also made of therapeutic drugs for young children. Around 23% of children (Region of Flanders) took **prescribed medication** in a 2-week period surveyed. This percentage falls as the child grows up, from 32% of children under 12 months to 18% of children aged 6-12 (see Table 6.9).

Use of therapeutic drugs	
0 years	32.3
1-3 years	27.3
3-6 years	23.1
6-12 years	18.4
Total	
	22.6

6.9 Percentages of children taking prescribed medication in a 2-week period - region of Flanders

Source: Health Survey 1997, Louis Pasteur Scientific Institute of Public Health - processing by Child and Family

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

The detrimental consequences of active smoking for public health are well known. Various surveys have also shown 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 more obvious effects on respiration.

A random sample of 2,000 families with a first-born child under the age of 10 months were questioned in December 2000. The survey found that 7.5% of the children were exposed to smoke in their own homes. In 5.6% of the cases the parents smoked; in 1.9% only visitors smoked. 12.3% of the babies were exposed to smoke outside the home (see Table 6.10).

Fathers smoke in the presence of their child rather more often than mothers (see Table 6.11).

Children with a "young" mother - younger than 25 - are more likely to be exposed to smoke. There is also a trend towards more frequent passive smoking if the mother followed a technical or vocational programme at school.

It certainly cannot be assumed from this that only a very limited number of fathers and mothers of young children are active smokers.

The same questionnaire also asked whether anyone in the home smokes and who. Around 7.7% of mothers and 10.3% of fathers smoke in the home (see Tables 6.12 and 6.13).

Passive smoking

Yes, exposed to parents' smoking whether or not combined with visitors and others smoking in other places	5.6
Yes, only visitors whether or not combined with others smoking in other places	1.9
Yes, only exposed to others smoking in other places	12.3
No	80.3
Total	100.0

6.10 Percentage of children under the age of 10 exposed to passive smoking (only first-borns) in the Region of Flanders - 2000

Source: Child and Family, The sleeping situation of young babies in Flanders, 2000

Passive smoking: who smokes?

Only mother	0.4
Only father	1.3
Mother and father	1.3
Mother and someone else	0.5
Father and someone else	0.8
Mother, father and someone else	1.1
Total smoking mothers	3.3

<i>Total smoking fathers</i>	4.5
------------------------------	------------

Only other residents in the home	0.4
Only visitors and other residents in the home	1.9
Only visitors or other persons in the home	1.9
Only others in other places	12.3

6.11 Who smokes in the presence of the child? - percentage of the total group of children (first-born babies under the age of 10 months) - 2000

Source: Child and Family, The sleeping situation of young babies in Flanders, 2000

Smoking in the home

Yes	14.6
No	85.4

Total	100.0
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6.12 Percentage of babies under the age of 10 months who live in a home where someone smokes (only first-borns) - 2000

Source: Child and Family, The sleeping situation of young babies in Flanders, 2000

Smoking in the home: who smokes?

Only mother	1.6
Only father	4.4
Mother and father	4.3
Mother and someone else	0.6
Father and someone else	0.4
Mother, father and someone else	1.2

<i>Total smoking mothers</i>	7.7
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<i>Total smoking fathers</i>	10.3
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Only other residents in the home	0.4
Visitors or other persons in the home	1.8

6.13 Percentage of babies under the age of 10 months who live in a home where someone smokes (only first-borns) - 2000

Source: *Child and Family, The sleeping situation of young babies in Flanders, 2000*

8. The European context

8.1. Breast-feeding

Although breast-feeding has increased, Flanders is certainly not leading the field. The percentage of babies who are breast-fed as their first food is higher in the French Community and in the Netherlands. It appears to be lower in the United Kingdom (see Table 6.14).

According to a WHO report, the prevalence of breast-feeding is much higher in the Scandinavian countries. In Sweden 90% of babies are still being breast-fed at the age of 3 months; and at the age of 6 months it is still over 60%.

Breast-feeding					
	1990	1995	1998	1999	2000
Region of Flanders	n/a	n/a	59.4	62.0	
French Community	63.8*	68.5	70.9		
The Netherlands	70.3	69.1	66.2		
England and Wales		62.0			
Scotland		41.0			

6.14 Percentage of babies who are breast-fed as their first food in certain European countries

Sources: *Child and Family - IKAROS*

ONE, Banque de Données Médico-Sociales, rapport 2000

Central Bureau of Statistics, Statline, the Netherlands

BMJ Bookshop.com (United Kingdom)

* 1991 figures

n/a: not available

8.2. Vaccination rates

Rates of vaccination against polio and DTP are good in most European countries. There are major variations with respect to measles. The region of Flanders, Germany and especially Italy score low. In France, the Netherlands, the UK and Sweden, the rates of vaccination against measles are the same as for polio and DTP

(see Table 6.15).

Vaccination rates			
	Polio 3	DTP3	Measles
Region of Flanders	96.3	94.5	83.4
Germany	95	95	88
France	97	96	97
United Kingdom	96	95	95
Italy	96	95	55
The Netherlands	97	97	96
Sweden	99	99	96

6.15 Percentages of children who have had polio 3, DTP3 or measles vaccines

Sources: Vaccination rates in Flanders, VUB - UIA

UNICEF, Country Statistics, 1999