

THE CHILD IN FLANDERS

FOREWORD

CHAPTER 1. THE CHILD POPULATION

1. Number of births

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

2. Number of young children

- 2.1. Trend in the number of young children and official forecasts – the *de jure* population
- 2.2. Forecasts of the number of children under 3 based on Child and Family records

3. Newcomers and leavers: immigrants, emigrants, children for adoption, asylum seekers

- 3.1. Immigrants and emigrants
- 3.2. Adopted children
- 3.3. Minors as asylum seekers

4. Background information and interpretation of demographic trends

- 4.1. Wishes as regards having children
 - 4.2. Fertility in the region of Flanders
 - 4.2.1. Total fertility
 - 4.2.2. Total fertility rates by Belgian/non-Belgian nationality of the mothers
 - 4.2.3. Total fertility by province
 - 4.2.4. Age-specific fertility
 - 4.2.5. End of the postponement of the first child?
 - 4.2.6. Higher fertility, larger families?
 - 4.3. Abortion
 - 4.4. Teenage pregnancy
- ##### 5. The European context
- 5.1. Births
 - 5.2. Number of young children
 - 5.3. Intercountry adoption

CHAPTER 2. FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN: DIVERSITY INTERPRETED

1. Two-parent or one-parent family?

2. Type of family

3. Only child?

4. Children, living at home all the time or not

5. Origin

6. The language spoken at home

7. Older parents?

8. Health of the mothers and fathers of the children

9. Young children and grandparents

10. Background information

- 10.1. Forming relationships
 - 10.1.1. Number of marriages between people of the opposite sex
 - 10.1.2. Number of gay marriages

- 10.1.3. Age on getting married
- 10.1.4. New cohabitation contracts
- 10.2. Relationship breakdowns
 - 10.2.1. Divorces of people of the opposite sex
 - 10.2.2. Divorces of gay couples
 - 10.2.3. Cohabitation contracts dissolved
- 11. The European context**
 - 11.1. Families in which young children live
 - 11.2. Marriages and divorces

CHAPTER 3. EMPLOYMENT IN FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

- 1. Participation of parents of young children in employment**
- 2. Extent of employment of parents of young children**
- 3. Why are there parents of young children with no paid work?**
- 4. Why do the parents of young children work part time?**
- 5. Arranging family-friendly working hours**
- 6. Participation in employment in families with young children from the perspective of the women**
- 7. Employment situation of grandparents**
- 8. The European context**
 - 8.1. Level of employment of women with young children
 - 8.2. Children living in a family with no adult in work

CHAPTER 4. PROSPERITY, POVERTY AND DEPRIVATION

- 1. Disposable income per person in families with young children**
- 2. Increased risk of poverty**
- 3. Making ends meet**
- 4. Non-monetary deprivation**
- 5. Children in families with an insecure source of income or a source of income that indicates an insecure financial situation**
 - 5.1. Children for whom guaranteed child benefit is paid
 - 5.2. Children in families with income from maintenance
 - 5.3. Children in families receiving the guaranteed minimum income
- 6. Children in underprivileged families**
- 7. Children living in families without permanent residence status**
- 8. Residential status**
- 9. Consumer goods in the home**
- 10. The European context**
 - 10.1. Increased risk of poverty

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

- 1. Children and child care**
 - 1.1. How many children are entrusted into the care of another person or facility at certain times?
 - 1.1.1. Children aged under 3
 - 1.1.2. Children aged 3 - 12
 - 1.2. Who looks after young children when parents are not doing this themselves?

- 1.2.1. Informal or formal child care?
- 1.2.2. Children in formal child care
- 1.3. Taking care of sick children
- 1.4. Wellbeing and engagement
 - 1.4.1. Going to the child care facility and coming back
 - 1.4.2. While at the child care facility

2. Special education

3. Children receiving supervision and support via special youth welfare

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

4. The European context

- 4.1. Summary of child care and education for children under compulsory school age
- 4.2. Use of child care and education by children under compulsory school age

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

1. Data on pregnancy and childbirth

- 1.1. Antenatal care
- 1.2. Place where women give birth and length of stay in the maternity hospital
- 1.3. Data on deliveries

2. Life expectancy

3. Mortality

- 3.1. Number of deaths of children aged 0-15 in the Region of Flanders
 - 3.1.1. In the whole group of children aged 0-15
 - 3.1.2. In children aged under 12 months
- 3.2. Causes of death in children aged under 15 years in the Region of Flanders
 - 3.2.1. In children aged under 12 months
 - 3.2.2. In children aged 1 to 15 years
- 3.3. Deaths as a result of accidents in children aged 1 to 15 years

4. Morbidity

- 4.1. Disabilities
 - 4.1.1. Congenital abnormalities
 - 4.1.2. Officially recognised disabilities
- 4.2. Congenital hearing loss
- 4.3. Diseases and disorders
- 4.4. Tooth decay
- 4.5. Overweight in children aged 2 to 12 years
- 4.6. Children with psychosocial and/or emotional problems
- 4.7. Hospital admissions

5. Victims of road accidents

6. Child abuse

7. The European context

- 7.1. Life expectancy at birth
- 7.2. Caesareans
- 7.3. Birth weight
- 7.4. Congenital abnormalities
- 7.5. Mortality
- 7.6. Cot deaths

- 7.7. Deaths caused by accidents
- 7.8. Deaths as a result of child abuse
- 7.9. Overweight in children aged 6 to 12 years

CHAPTER 7. A SAFE AND HEALTHY LIFE?

1. Feeding babies

- 1.1. First food
- 1.2. Duration of breast-feeding

2. Vaccination rates

3. Use of therapeutic drugs

4. Use of alternative medicine

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

6. Smoking during pregnancy

7. Living conditions

8. Moving house

9. The European context

- 9.1. Breast-feeding
- 9.2. Vaccination rates
- 9.3. Oral hygiene of young children
- 9.4. Housing problems

Foreword

Producing a new edition of “The Child in Flanders” is a huge undertaking every time, even when we are doing this for the twelfth year running. So we are extremely pleased to be able to offer you the new report which is chock full of fascinating data.

The questions

We try throughout the year to form an idea of the questions about aspects of the lives of young children that people are seeking answers to. Many people approach Child and Family with their questions. We receive enquiries on an almost daily basis from journalists, students, researchers, politicians, policy advisers and others on a whole range of subjects to do with young children and their families.

“The Child in Flanders” is our attempt to keep providing up-to-date answers to as many of these questions as possible.

The birth rate is perhaps the figure that attracts most interest, but it is important to point out that there is no simple answer to the question of exactly how many babies are born in any one year. Are we talking about the official birth rate that only counts births in the *de jure* population or are we counting all births? In our increasingly diverse society it is important to also be aware of things that are left out of the official statistics.

The sources

Child and Family is gathering more and more data itself. One important source of data is our IKAROS database, in which our staff record information about all the children in Flanders with whom they come into contact. As well as the birth rate, this database contains up-to-date and accurate figures on breast-feeding, the percentage of ethnic minority children, the percentage of children growing up in disadvantaged households, to name just a few topics.

Child and Family also compiles important data on the use of formal child care facilities.

We supplement our own data with official statistics and information obtained from scientific research.

A balance

The steady increase in births since 2003 has at least narrowed the gap a little between people's expressed wishes as regards having children and the number of children they are actually having. The rising number of young children presents a huge challenge to the services to families with young children.

Broadly speaking we can say that the majority of children born in Flanders have a reasonably good life. A number of positive points clearly emerge from this report.

Most young children live with both their natural parents. Parental participation in the labour market is high, with an increasing number of families where one parent opts to work part time while the other has full-time employment in this phase of their children's lives. Young families have opportunities to adapt their working hours to suit their specific needs. They also get a great deal of support from grandparents.

There are high levels of participation in formal child care. Even at a very young age large number of children are being given the additional opportunities to develop offered by child care facilities.

There has been a small but constant increase in breast-feeding.

A very high percentage of young children in Flanders receive all the right vaccinations to protect them against the main infectious diseases and the vaccination rate has increased even further in the past few years.

The number of young children growing up in disadvantaged families or families at increased risk of poverty and the minors who are victims of child abuse or neglect remain policy priorities.

And although the incidence of cot death has fallen again, infant mortality deserves attention.

We hope that this report on the welfare of young children and the circumstances in which they are living will be a useful tool for anyone involved in evaluating policy and developing the services for young children in the future. Finally, we hope that this report will stimulate public interest in the lives that children in Flanders are living.

Happy reading!

Bea Buysse
Scientific adviser

CHAPTER 1 THE CHILD POPULATION

For anyone involved in the care of very young children, it is important to know how large the next cohort of young children will be. The number of births and the number of children by age are important parameters for planning services for young children.

This chapter will therefore examine the number of births in 2008 in some detail. In addition to the official number of births, we also give the number of births to women registered as asylum seekers, and we present the birth rate from Child and Family's records, which is an even more complete figure.

After that we outline the child population by age. We look at how many children migrated into and out of the Region of Flanders. We zoom in on children placed in families for adoption and on minors entering the country as asylum seekers.

As well as presenting basis population figures, we interpret the figures and trends. Trends in female fertility are an important issue, and so we also look ahead to the coming years.

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

1. Number of births

Different birth rates are available for Flanders.

First there is the *official birth rate* produced by the Statistics and Economic Information Department of FPS Economy (formerly NIS) based on the national register. The official birth rate relates to births in the *de jure* population who live here by right, both Belgians and foreign nationals. In addition to these births, there are the *births to asylum seekers*. These births are registered on the asylum seekers' register. This number must, therefore, be added to the official birth rate.

However, Child and Family has its own database of births and so can produce its own birth rate figure. Child and Family has access to a number of sources to compile its own record of births, such as its contacts in the maternity hospitals and from home visits. The *Child and Family birth rate* includes all births, regardless of the residence status of the parents.

1.1. The official birth rate*

Significant increase in the official birth rate: in 2008 there were over 4% more births than in 2007

The official birth rate was appreciably higher than in 2007. In 2008 (provisional figures) there were 68 394 births in the region of Flanders or 2 705 (4.1%) more than in 2007 (see Table 1.1).

Compared with the lowest point in the birth rate in 2002, there were 8 669 more births in 2008 (see Figure 1.2).

50.9% of the live births were boys; 49.1% were girls (2007; 2008 figures not yet available) (see Table 1.3).

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

Official birth rate

2007

65 689

2008*

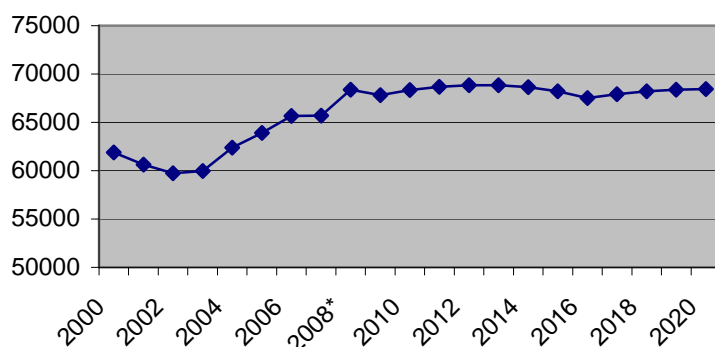
68 394

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

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

* Provisional figure

Trend in the official birth rate and projections



1.2 Trend in the number of live births in the Region of Flanders since 2000 (*de jure* population) and projections for 2009 to 2020

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

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

* Provisional figure

Number of births by gender

	Number	%
Boys	33 432	50.9
Girls	32 257	49.1

1.3 Number of live births in the Region of Flanders by gender - 2007 (*de jure* population)

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

Table 1.4 shows the number of births *per province*.

The birth rate increased the most in the provinces of Antwerp and East Flanders by 5.4% and 5.3% respectively. The birth rate increased by 3.9% in West Flanders, 2.5% in Limburg and 1.8% in Flemish Brabant (see also Figure 1.5).

Births by province

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

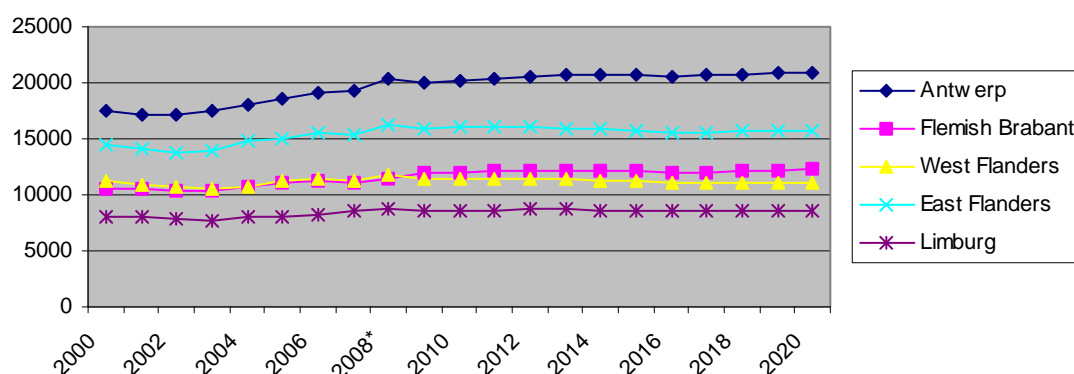
1.4 Number of live births per province (*de jure* population)

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

Economy based on the National Register (2008 figures)

* Provisional figures

Trend in the number of births and projections by province



1.5 Trend in the number of live births by province since 2000 (*de jure* population) and projections for 2009 to 2020

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

* Provisional figures

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

A number of babies are born every year in the Region of Flanders who are not included in the official figure for the number of births. These are babies born to asylum seekers, both women who have applied for asylum and those whose application for asylum has been granted. In 2008, 379 births to women on the asylum seekers' register were recorded. This was 6.9% fewer than in 2007.

Table 1.6 shows the number of births to these women by province. 40% of these babies live in the province of Antwerp. In the provinces of Antwerp and Flemish Brabant there was an increase in these births from 2007 to 2008; the other provinces saw a decrease.

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

Births to women on the asylum seekers' register			
	2007	2008*	% trend
Antwerp	141	150	+6.4
Flemish Brabant	48	50	+4.2
West Flanders	79	69	-12.7
East Flanders	86	64	-25.6
Limburg	53	46	-13.2
Region of Flanders	407	379	-6.9

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

Source: National Register

* Provisional figures

1.3. Number of births recorded by Child and Family*

Child and Family recorded over 3.3% more births in 2008 than in 2007

In 2008 Child and Family recorded 70 187 births to mothers living in the Region of Flanders. This was an increase of 2 250 or 3.3% over 2007 (see Table 1.7). The number of births recorded by Child and Family was slightly higher than the figure reached by adding together the official number of births and the number from the asylum seekers' register (+1 414 or 2.1%). This should come as no surprise, given the fact that there are people living in Flanders illegally and administrative registrations and children of immigrants are only recorded in the National Register after the child has been living in the country for some time.

Table 1.7 also shows the trend in the number of births recorded by Child and Family *by province*. The greatest increases were recorded in the provinces of East Flanders (+4.8%), Antwerp (+4.4%) and West Flanders (+3.2%). Smaller increases were recorded in the provinces of Limburg (+1.8%) and Flemish Brabant (+0.7%).

* 2008: * Provisional figures

Births recorded by Child and Family			
	2007	2008*	% trend
Antwerp	20 106	20 983	+ 4.4
Flemish Brabant	11 582	11 653	+ 0.6
West Flanders	11 669	12 049	+ 3.3
East Flanders	15 819	16 576	+ 4.8
Limburg	8 761	8 926	+ 1.9
Region of Flanders	67 937	70 187	+ 3.3

1.7 Number of live births recorded by Child and Family by place of residence at birth – Region of Flanders by province

Source: Child and Family – IKAROS

* Provisional figure

1.4. Birth rate projections

In 2008 the Federal Planning Bureau and the Statistics and Economic Information Department published new population projections for the period 2007 to 2060*. Birth rate forecasts and other forecasts were produced, based on the recorded population on 1 January 2007 and births in 2006.

Figure 1.2 shows the forecasts for the region of Flanders and Figure 1.5 shows the forecasts for the different Flemish provinces.

These forecasts show that the official birth rate is expected to rise slightly until 2012-2013. The birth rate is projected to increase to a maximum of 68 852, a further increase of almost 5% compared with 2006.

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

2. Number of young children

2.1. Trend in the number of young children and official forecasts – the *de jure* population

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

The *percentage* of children in the population under the age of 3 was 3.22% in 2008, a slight increase from

2007. The percentage of children aged 3 to 6 also increased slightly, from 3.06% to 3.09%. The percentage of children aged 6 to 12 was 6.43% in 2008, a slight decrease from 2007 (see Table 1.8).

On 01 January 2008, there were 198 249 children aged under 3, 190 345 children aged 3-6 and 306 050 children aged 6-12 in the Region of Flanders. The trend in the *number* of children was different for the different age groups. In comparison with 2007, the number of children aged under 3 in the Region of Flanders rose by 3 234 (+1.7%); the number of children aged 3-6 rose by 3 250 (+1.7%). The number of children aged 6 to 12 fell by 1 866 (- 0.5%) (see Table 1.8 and Figure 1.9).

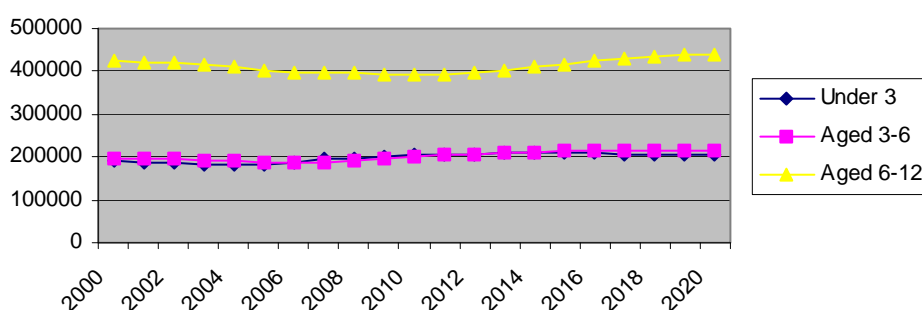
For the whole population of children under the age of 12, this amounted to an increase of 4 618 children, or 0.6%.

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

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

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

Trend in the number of children and projections



1.9 Trend in the number of children aged under 12 in the Region of Flanders since 2000 and projections 2009 to 2020 (on 1 January)

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

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

The population projections for 2007-2060* published in May 2008 also include forecasts of the number of young children.

Figure 1.9 shows the forecasts of the number of children in the age groups under 3, 3 to 6 years and 6 to 12 years for the Region of Flanders.

The number of children under 3 is expected to continue to rise until 2014. By January 2014 it is expected that there will be about 6.8% more children under 3 than there were on 1 January 2007.

For the age group 3 to 6, an increase until 2018 is expected. For children aged 6 to 12, the next few years, until 2011, will bring a further slight decrease, after which the number of children in this age group will

increase for a while.

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

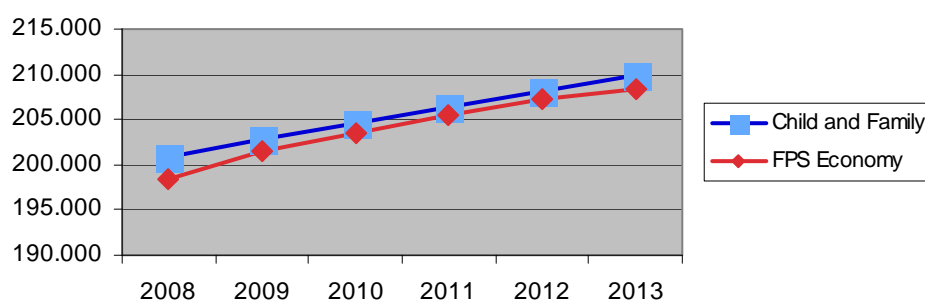
2.2. Forecasts of the number of children under 3 based on Child and Family records *Slightly higher than the official forecasts*

For the sake of the not insignificant number of births outside the *de jure* population, Child and Family had a forecast produced for the first time in 2008 of the number of children under 3 for the period 2008-2013 (see also section 1.3).

The plan is to do this forecast every year, so that we can get a much more *regular* estimate of the expected number of children under 3 than is available from the official population forecasts, an estimate that is also *more complete*. The baseline for this first estimate is the number of children registered in IKAROS database in 2007.

According to this estimate there should be almost 210 000 children under 3 in the Region of Flanders by 2013, or 9 061 more than in 2008 (+4.5%). Child and Family expects there to be slightly more children than in the official forecasts (+1 648 or +0.8%) (see Figure 1.10).

Forecasts for children aged under 3



1.10 Forecasts of the number of children under 3 in the Region of Flanders to 2013, according to Child and Family compared with the forecasts of the FPS Economy/Federal Planning Bureau

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

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

3. Newcomers and leavers: immigrants, emigrants, children for 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. Some children leave to live in another region or move abroad.

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.

3.1. Immigrants and emigrants

In 2006 (more recent figures are not available), 6 693 children aged under 12 migrated to the Region of

Flanders *from other countries*. That represents a 22.4% increase since 2005. There were 5 111 immigrants from *the Brussels Capital Region or the Walloon Region*. The number of migrations from other regions was also higher than in 2005 (+8.3%) (see Table 1.11).

4 389 children (+8.7%) migrated abroad and a further 2 732 children (+3.7%) migrated to another region (see Table 1.12). The migration balance was positive for the Region of Flanders, with 4 683 more immigrants than emigrants in the total population of children up to the age of 12 years.

	Immigration			
	From another region		To another country	
	2005	2006	2005	2006
Children aged under 3	1 477	1 556	1 492	1 759
Children aged 3 - 6	1 411	1 470	1 610	1 915
Children aged 6 - 12	1 830	2 085	2 368	3 019
Total	4 718	5 111	5 470	6 693

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

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

	Emigration			
	To another region		To another country	
	2005	2006	2005	2006
Children aged under 3	774	758	1 003	1 057
Children aged 3 - 6	740	767	1 199	1 300
Children aged 6 - 12	1 121	1 207	1 835	2 032
Total	2 635	2 732	4 037	4 389

1.12 Number of children aged under 12 emigrating to another region or another country.

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

3.2. Adopted children

Very small but rising number of adoptions through the authorised adoption services. Mainly from Ethiopia and Kazakhstan

In the course of 2008, the *adoption services authorised** by Child and Family placed a total of 239 children for adoption. This was 31 more than in 2007 (+14.9%). The majority of the children placed for adoption came from outside Belgium (87.9%) (see Table 1.13 and Figure 1.14).

The number of children from abroad who were adopted increased (+34) and the number of children born in Belgium who were adopted decreased (-3). The children from outside Belgium came mainly from Ethiopia and Kazakhstan (see Table 1.13). The adoptions of children from Belgium included 2 children of non-Belgian nationality.

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

At the time of placement in a family, 46.4% of the children were under 1 year old and 19.7% were between 1 and 2 years old. 33.9% of the children were 2 years old or more (see Table 1.15).

The average age was 1.4 years; this was unchanged since 2007.

In 57.7% of the adoptions, the child was adopted by a childless family, compared with 64.4% in 2007. So

there was a slight shift from adoptions by childless families to adoptions by families that already have children. In 86.6% of the cases of children placed for adoption, only one child was placed in the family (see Table 1.16).

About 65% of adoptive parents were aged between 35 and 44 years. The average age of the adoptive father was 38.8 and of the adoptive mother 37.4. The average age of adoptive parents was slightly younger than in 2007, when it was 38.9 and 37.7 respectively.

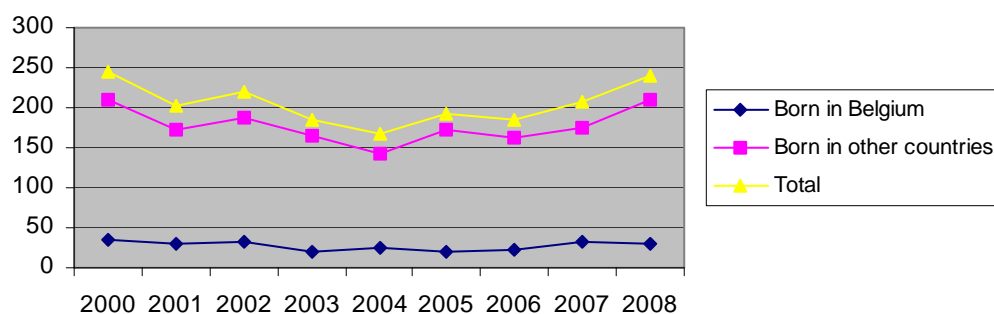
The vast majority of adoptive parents were married couples (216 or 90.4%). 19 single women and 4 cohabiting couples adopted a child.

Adopted children				
	2007		2008	
	Number	%	Number	%
Born in Belgium	32	15.4	29	12.1
Ethiopia	88	42.3	97	40.6
Kazakhstan	26	12.5	58	24.3
South Africa	7	3.4	10	4.2
India	5	2.4	9	3.8
China	30	14.4	8	3.3
Russia	4	1.9	8	3.3
The Philippines	9	4.3	6	2.5
Sri Lanka	2	1.0	5	2.1
Poland	0	0.0	4	1.7
Thailand	2	1.0	4	1.7
Colombia	3	1.4	1	0.4
Total figure for children from other countries	176	84.6	210	87.9
Total	208	100.0	239	100.0

1.13 Children placed for adoption: numbers by countries of origin

Source: Child and Family – Flemish Central Authority for Adoption

Adoption trends



1.14 Trend in the number of children placed for adoption from 2000 onwards

Source: Child and Family – Flemish Central Authority for Adoption

Age on adoption

	2007		2008	
	Number	%	Number	%
Under 1 year	101	48.6	111	46.4
1 to 2 years	45	21.6	47	19.7
2 to 3 years	21	10.1	30	12.6
3 to 4 years	12	5.8	19	7.9
4 to 5 years	12	5.8	8	3.3
5 to 10 years	14	6.7	19	7.9
10 to 15 years	3	1.4	5	2.1
Total	208	100.0	239	100.0

1.15 Age of children on placement for adoption

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

Position in the family

	2007		2008	
	Number	%	Number	%
Childless family. Placement of 1 child	102	49.0	112	46.9
Childless family. Placement of more than 1 child	32	15.4	26	10.9
Family with children. Placement of 1 child as the youngest child	73	35.1	95	39.7
Family with children. Placement of 1 child not as the youngest child	1	0.5	0	0.0
Family with children. Placement of 2 children. Interim placements	0	0.0	6	2.5
Total	208	100.0	239	100.0

1.16 Children placed for adoption by number of children placed and position in the adoptive family - 2008

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

3.3. Minors as asylum seekers

Some young asylum seekers come into *Belgium* with their parents but some enter the country unaccompanied. In 2008, 521 minors* submitted asylum applications in their own right. These are minors with their own individual case dossier, or in other words, minors who have arrived before or after their parents, and not minors who are included in the annex to their parents' asylum application. Most of them were young asylum seekers aged 16 or 17 years (29.9% and 38.8% respectively).

The number of minors who applied for asylum was virtually the same as in 2007, when 519 minors applied for asylum (see Table 1.17).

* Classified as minors following a bone scan

Minors as asylum seekers (1)

	2007		2008	
	Number	%	Number	%
Children aged under 6	5	1.0	4	0.8
Children aged 6 - 11	19	3.7	16	3.1
Children aged 11 - 16	139	26.8	143	27.4
Children aged 16	159	30.6	156	29.9
Children aged 17	197	38.0	202	38.8
Total	519	100.0	521	100.0

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

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

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

4. Background information and interpretation of demographic trends

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

4.1. Wishes as regards having children

“Two children” are given most often as the ideal number, but a significant number of men and women prefer to have fewer children at the moment than the number they consider to be ideal

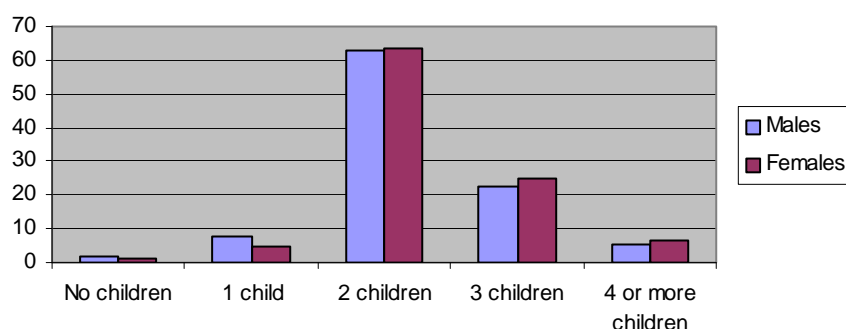
A postal survey “Population and Policy in Flanders” conducted in the autumn of 2003 by the CBGS (Centre for Population and Family Research) asked a number of questions about having children.

This survey was conducted among a representative sample of men and women aged 20 to 55 in the Region of Flanders.

In response to the question about the *ideal number of children* in a family, two children emerged as the clear winner: 63% of the respondents gave 2 children as the ideal family size. For 23.8%, 3 children is the ideal number. Remaining childless was rarely seen as ideal (1.2%). Women gave 2, 3 or 4 children as the ideal slightly more frequently than men. Rather more men gave 0 or especially 1 child (see Figure 1.18). Figure 1.19 shows the ideal family size by age of those questioned.

The average ideal family size reported was 2.27 children. The average reported by male respondents was 2.23 and by female respondents 2.31. The fact that this figure is over 2 is not insignificant.

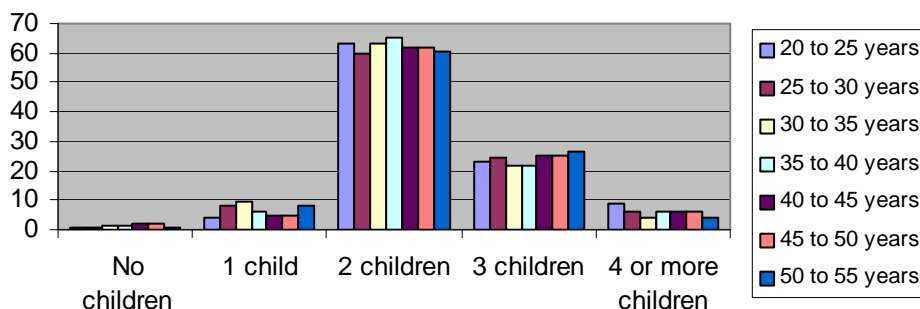
Ideal family size



1.18 The ideal number of children in a family according to men and women aged 20 to 55 years – Region of Flanders – 2003 (percentages)

Source: CBGS (Centre for Population and Family Research), “Population and Policy in Flanders” survey

Ideal family size by age



1.19 The ideal number of children in a family according to men and women by age – Region of Flanders – 2003 (percentages)

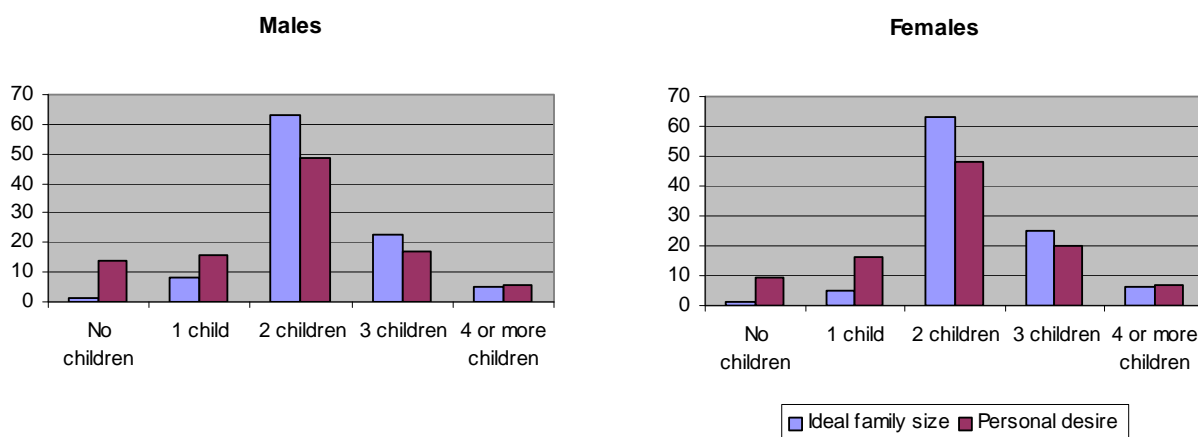
Source: CBGS (Centre for Population and Family Research), “Population and Policy in Flanders” survey

In addition to ideal family size, the survey also asked about the *number of children that people wanted for themselves right now*. Figure 1.20 shows that the number of children that men and women wanted for themselves at the time of the survey was less than their ideal number.

On average they wanted 1.94 children: men wanted 1.87 children on average and women exactly 2 children.

Fewer men and women wanted 2 or 3 children for themselves at the time of questioning than the number who gave 2 or 3 children as the ideal family size. Only about 48% of the men and women wanted 2 children at the time of the survey, while about 63% of them gave 2 children as their ideal number. 17% of the men and almost 20% of the women said that they would like 3 children now, while 22.5% of men and 24.8% of women put 3 children first when asked about their ideal family size. A significant number of both men and women said that they did not want any children at the time of questioning (13.6% and 9.4% respectively), while hardly any men or women gave this as their ideal. This is likely to be explained in part as people postponing having children.

Ideal family size and personal desire for children



1.20 The ideal number of children in a family according to men and women aged 20 to 55 years and the number of children they desire to have now – Region of Flanders – 2003 (percentages)

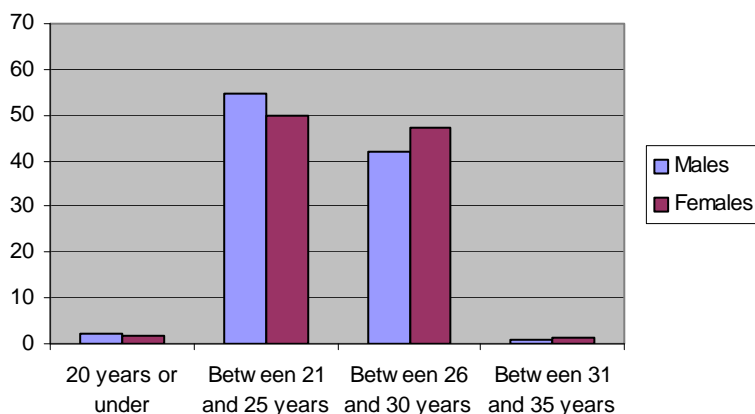
Source: CBGS (Centre for Population and Family Research), “Population and Policy in Flanders” survey

Note: 2 figures with subtitles Men / Women and only 1 key

The survey also asked about the best age for a woman to have her first baby.

Slightly more than half of those questioned (52%) answered that 21 to 25 is the best age to have a first baby. 45% said 26 to 30. It is noteworthy that women are slightly more inclined to give 26 to 30 as the best age than men (47.4% against 42.2%) (see Figure 1.21).

Best age for first baby



1.21 Best age for a woman to have her first baby, according to men and women aged 20 to 50 years – Region of Flanders – 2003

Source: CBGS (Centre for Population and Family Research), “Population and Policy in Flanders” survey

4.2. Fertility in the Region of Flanders

4.2.1. Total fertility

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

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

Total fertility is a good indicator of how many children women have in a given calendar year.

In 2008, the *total fertility rate per woman* in the Region of Flanders was 1.82 (see Table 1.22). We would have to go back to 1974 to find such a high fertility rate in the Region, but the total fertility rate is still below replacement level. It is assumed that a fertility rate of 2.1 is required to replace the generation, at least if migration is left out of the picture.

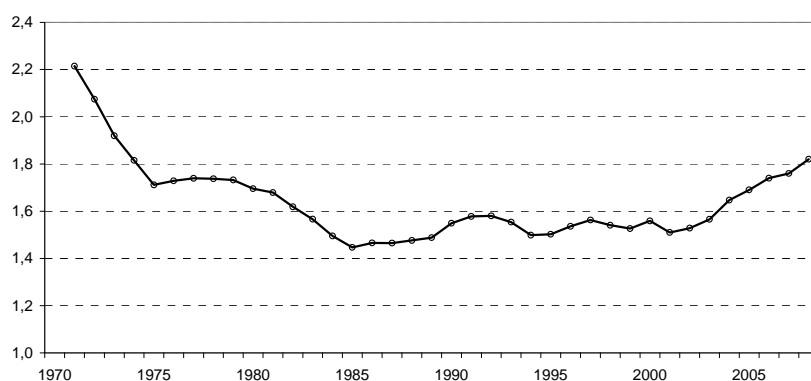
Figure 1.23 shows a constant increase in the total fertility rate since 2001.

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

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

Source: Van Bavel J., Bastiaenssens V., *De recente evolutie van de vruchtbaarheid in het Vlaamse Gewest: update 2008*, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, *Interface Demography Working Paper 2009 -2*. Based on data supplied by Child and Family, Ikaros

Trend in the total fertility rate



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

Source: Van Bavel J., Bastiaenssens V., *De recente evolutie van de vruchtbaarheid in het Vlaamse Gewest: update 2008*, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, *Interface Demography, Working Paper 2009 -2*. Based on Willems (1971-2000) and on data supplied by Child and Family, IKAROS (2001-2008)

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

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

Total fertility is considerably higher for non-Belgian women than for Belgian women: 2.98 for non-Belgian women compared with 1.72 for Belgian women (see Table 1.22).

Fertility among Belgian women increased from 2007 to 2008 (+0.06 units) and decreased among women of non-Belgian nationality (-0.07 units) (see Table 1.22). Since the start of the analyses of the IKAROS data (2001), the total fertility rate of Belgian women has risen by 0.3 units and that of non-Belgian women by only 0.09 units. So there is some convergence between the two population groups.

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

4.2.3. Total fertility by province

Considerable differences

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

All provinces saw an increase from 2007 to 2008.

Looking at the trend among women of Belgian and non-Belgian nationality, it emerges that the total fertility rate of *Belgian women* went up in every province. The total fertility rate rose markedly among Belgian women in the provinces of East and West Flanders (+0.08 units), slightly less in the provinces of Antwerp

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

The large variation in the *total fertility rates* for *non-Belgian women* by province stands out, with relatively low rates in Flemish Brabant and Limburg and relatively high rates in East Flanders and Antwerp. The fertility rate for non-Belgian women is, however, above replacement level in all provinces (see Table 1.24).

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

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

Source: Van Bavel J., Bastiaenssens V., *De recente evolutie van de vruchtbaarheid in het Vlaamse Gewest: update 2008*, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, *Interface Demography, Working Paper 2009 -2*. Based on data supplied by Child and Family, Ikaros

4.2.4. Age-specific fertility

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

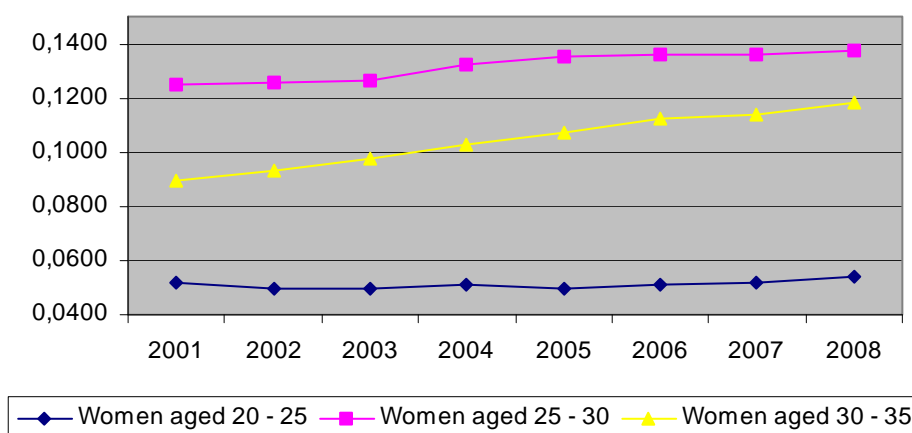
Age-specific fertility is a ratio of the number of births to women of a specific age to the number of women of that age in the population. These figures reflect how many women of a specific age have children in a given year, and it is therefore a good indicator of the fertility of each age group.

Figure 1.25 shows the fertility rate of women in the Region of Flanders for different age groups between 20 and 35 since 2001.

The fertility rate of women aged 25 to 30 continues to rise steadily, though the rise is sometimes very small as it was from 2006 to 2007, and since 2006 the fertility rate of the 20-25 age group has started to increase slightly again. In addition, the fertility rate of women over 30 continues to increase steadily.

Going back a few decades the total fertility rate fell because the decrease among relatively young women was not fully compensated for by an increase in fertility among older women. In the past few years the total fertility rate has gone up due to the trend of more women over 30 having babies and the more recent rise in fertility among women under 30.

Trend in age-specific fertility rates



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

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

4.2.5. End of the postponement of the first child?

Pause in the postponement trend; hesitant move toward earlier motherhood

Fertility in Flanders, just as in other regions of Europe, has undergone two trends since the mid-1960s. First there was a period in which the number of children per man or woman decreased and so families became smaller; that was followed by constant further postponement of the first child. The decrease in average family size mainly occurred in the 1960s and '70s. Since then it has been primarily a matter of continuing postponement.

The recent increase in the fertility rate of women under 30 is a sign that *postponement has reached its limit*, and that we may even be seeing a slight reversal of this trend. However, if we are seeing a new trend away from postponement, it is still a very hesitant one. In 2007, for the first time in years, there was a slight fall in the average age of Belgian mothers at the birth of their first baby. However, the decrease did not continue in 2008, because the increase in fertility among women over 30 was greater than the increase in the under 30s (see Table 1.26).

Trend in the average age of motherhood

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

Births of first child

Real average (1)

Total population	26.76	27.50	27.65	27.58	27.62
Belgians	26.93	27.63	27.77	27.69	27.72
Non-Belgians	25.39	26.71	26.78	26.89	26.95

**Expected on the basis of
age-specific fertility rates (1)**

Total population	26.70	27.32	27.44	27.40	27.45
Belgians	26.88	27.47	27.60	27.53	27.58
Non-Belgians	23.69	24.42	25.85	26.01	26.10

1.26 Average age of mothers on giving birth in the region of Flanders, 2001-2008

Source: Van Bavel J., Bastiaenssens V., *De recente evolutie van de vruchtbaarheid in het Vlaamse Gewest: update 2008*, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Interface Demography, Working Paper 2009 -2. Based on data supplied by Child and Family, Ikaros

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

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

4.2.6. Higher fertility, larger families?

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

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

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

Between 2001 and 2006 the number of firstborns as a percentage of the total number of births increased, while the percentage of third and later babies decreased. In 2007 and in 2008, however, the percentage of second babies increased (see Table 1.27).

The rise in the age-specific fertility rates in 2005 was mainly due to more firstborns; in 2006 it was rather a matter of more second babies; and in 2007 and 2008 it was a matter of more second and later babies. In 2004 the age-specific rate for second babies hardly increased if at all. An increase in second babies can be seen in 2005 and 2006, and in 2007 and 2008 there were also more third and later babies born.

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

Birth order (1)

Nationality	Birth order	2001	2006	2007	2008
Belgians	1st	46.1	48.4	47.8	47.6
	2nd	35.9	34.7	35.4	35.6
	3rd	12.6	11.9	11.8	11.9
	4th +	5.4	5.0	5.0	4.9
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Non-Belgians	1st	47.7	43.2	43.3	42.5
	2nd	30.1	31.6	31.6	32.4
	3rd	15.6	14.6	15.1	14.8
	4th +	12.6	10.5	10.0	10.2
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total population	1st	45.6	47.7	47.2	46.9
	2nd	35.2	34.3	34.9	35.1
	3rd	13.0	12.3	12.2	12.3
	4th +	6.2	5.8	5.7	5.7
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

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

Source: Van Bavel J., Bastiaenssens V., *De recente evolutie van de vruchtbaarheid in het Vlaamse Gewest: update 2008*, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, *Interface Demography, Working Paper 2009 -2*. Based on data supplied by Child and Family, Ikaros

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

Twins and triplets are assigned the same birth order

4.3. Abortion

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

A number of pregnancies are not continued to full term but terminated at the request of the woman. Pregnant women in Flanders can go to abortion clinics or hospitals to have an abortion. In 2007, 7648 legal abortions were performed at these clinics and hospitals. Compared with 2006 there was an increase of 2.9% (Table 1.28 and Figure 1.29; see also section 4.4). The number of abortions was 25% higher than in 2000.

In 2007 there were 116 abortions per 1 000 births, compared with 113 in 2006.

Figure 1.30 shows the number of abortions by age of the woman.

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

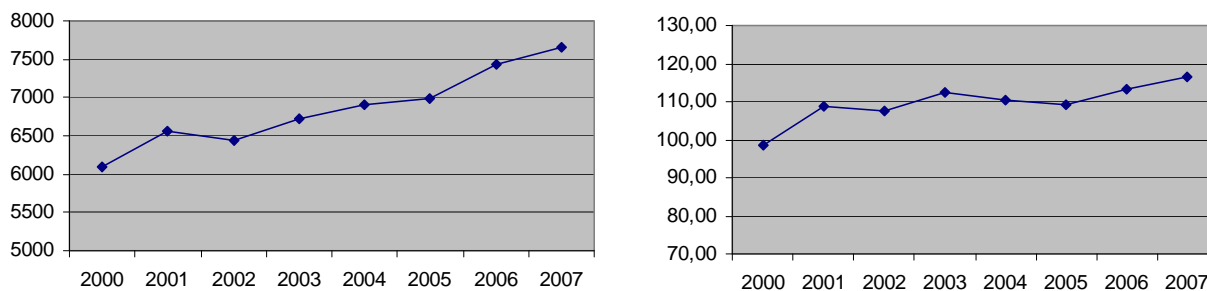
1.28 Abortions in women living in the Region of Flanders, number and number per 1 000 births

Source: National Evaluation Commission for Terminations of Pregnancy

Abortions

Number

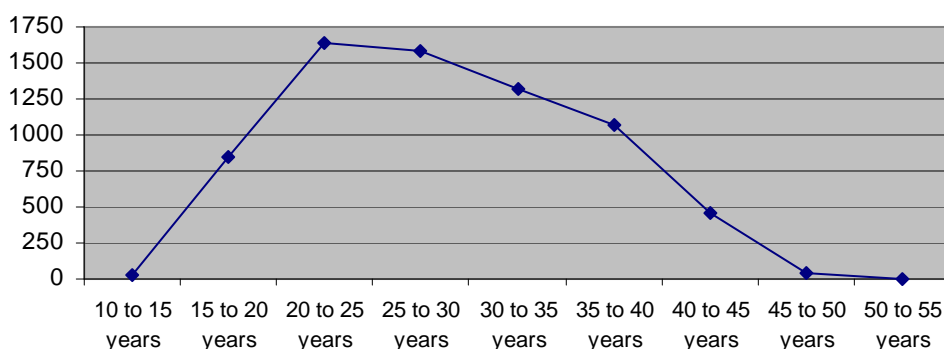
Per 1 000 births



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

Source: National Evaluation Commission for Terminations of Pregnancy

Abortions by age



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

Source: National Evaluation Commission for Terminations of Pregnancy

4.4. Teenage pregnancy

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

There is a link between teenage motherhood and situations involving risks for mother and child. *Teenage mothers* leave school early, are 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 2007 only 1 395 or 2.2% of women giving birth were aged under 20. This figure was higher than in 2006 (+12.1%), when 1 244 girls and young women under the age of 20 gave birth. Half (50.1%) of the teenage mothers were 19 and another 26.9% were 18 (see Table 1.31 and Figure 1.32).

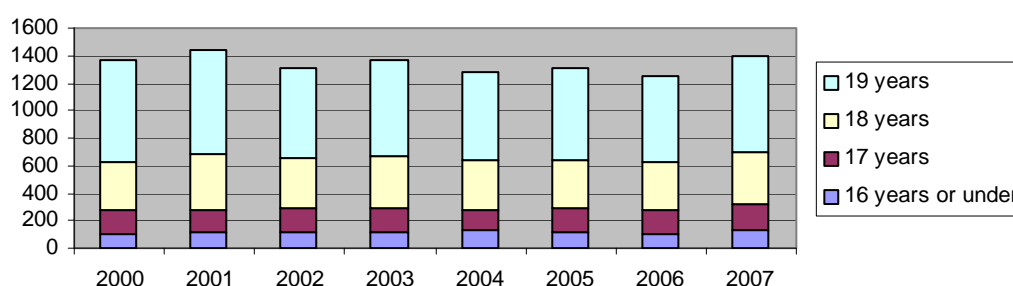
Teenage mothers		
	2006	2007
14 years or under	7	10
15 years	22	36

16 years	75	80
17 years	174	195
18 years	346	375
19 years	620	699
Total under 20 years	1 244	1 395

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

Source: Study Centre for Perinatal Epidemiology

Trend in teenage mothers



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

Source: Study Centre for Perinatal Epidemiology

The number of *teenage pregnancies* is, however, considerably higher than the number of births to women under the age of 20. In 2007 the number of teenage pregnancies – births and abortions together – was 2 408, made up of 1 395 births and 1 013 abortions. Out of every 100 pregnant teenagers, 57.9 became mothers and 42.1 had an abortion. These were however mainly women in the 15 to 20 age group. Below the age of 15 there were 36 abortions and 10 births in 2007. Pregnant girls under the age of 15 are more likely to have an abortion than those aged 15 to 20 (see Table 1.33 – see also section 4.3).

Figure 1.34 shows the trend in the number of teenagers having abortions or giving birth since 2001.

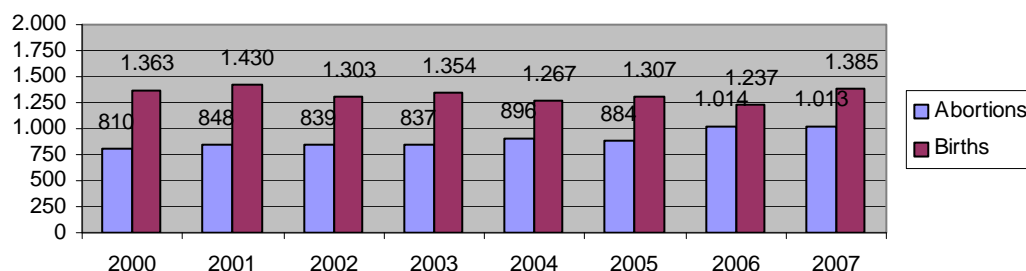
Abortions among teenagers		
	2006	2007
Number		
in girls and young women aged 10 to 15 years	24	36
in girls and young women aged 15 to 20 years	990	977
Total girls and young women aged 10 to 20 years	1 014	1 013
Per 100 pregnancies		
in girls and young women aged 10 to 20 years	44.9	42.1

1.33 Number of abortions and number of abortions per 100 pregnancies among women and girls under the age of 20

Sources: National Evaluation Commission for Terminations of Pregnancy

Study Centre for Perinatal Epidemiology

Abortions and births among teenagers



1.34 Number of women and girls under the age of 20 who had abortions in the Region of Flanders and number of teenage mothers in Flanders (Region of Flanders and Flemish maternity hospitals in Brussels) since 2000
*Sources: National Evaluation Commission for Terminations of Pregnancy
Study Centre for Perinatal Epidemiology*

5. The European context

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

5.1. Births

A number of figures for births are reproduced in Tables 1.35, 1.36 and 1.37: the number of births, the percentage trend in the birth rate, and the number of births per 1 000 inhabitants. The 2008 figures for the EU-15 countries are still estimates.

According to these estimates, the birth rate in the EU-15 countries in 2008 should be about 1.4% higher than in 2007 and almost 6% higher than in 2000.

The birth rate in most EU-15 countries is estimated to be higher in 2008 than in 2007.

The very sharp increase in the birth rate in Ireland, at over 14%, and the large increase in the United Kingdom (+3.1%) stand out. Belgium (+3.6%) and the Region of Flanders (+4.1%) also see a large increase. In Luxembourg (+2.7%), the Netherlands (+2.5%) and Sweden (+2.1%) there are also increases, but rather smaller. Germany, Finland, Denmark, Italy and Spain expect an increase of 1 to 2%. In only 4 of the EU countries is the birth rate expected to fall, France (-1.2%), Greece (-0.4%) and Portugal (-0.3%), or stay virtually the same, Austria (+0.4%).

The *number of births per 1 000 inhabitants* in the EU-15 countries is 10.9. Appreciably higher figures are noted in Ireland (18.3), the United Kingdom (13.0) and France (12.9), while the figure for Germany is significantly lower (8.3) (see Table 1.37).

The *total fertility rate* (TFR) is below replacement level everywhere, a figure of 2.1 children per woman being assumed for the latter, at least when migration is left out of the picture (see Table 1.38). Due to the constant rise in its TFR, the Region of Flanders now has a relatively high rate among the EU-15 countries. Only France and Ireland have a noticeably higher TFR. The most recent figures available also indicate that trends vary in the EU-15 countries. As in the Region of Flanders, total fertility rates are increasing in Belgium, France, the Nordic countries, Greece, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom and Ireland. The most recent figures for Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Austria point to a decrease. Table 1.39 shows the trend in the *final number of offspring* at the end of the years of fertility, at age 49. This

table shows the birth cohorts to 1970-1971, with estimates given for the cohorts that had not reached the age of 49 by that year. With 1.65 offspring to women born in 1970 (1970 cohort), Belgium finds itself in the middle group. In almost all of the EU-15 countries, younger women had fewer children than the generation of women born between 1955 and 1960. Denmark and Luxembourg are exceptions to this, with a small but constant increase in the final number of offspring.

The age at which women have children has in recent years remained virtually constant or risen slightly. According to the most recent figures available, the *average age at which women give birth* is over 29 in all the countries investigated. In the Netherlands, the Nordic countries, Italy, Spain and Ireland, the average age even comes out over 30 years. The average age for having a first child is over 28 in most of the EU-15 countries, apart from Finland, Portugal and Austria. It is exactly 28 years in the Region of Flanders (see Tables 1.40 and 1.41).

The fertility rate for girls and young women aged 16 to 20 years is low in the Region of Flanders compared with many of the EU-15 countries. The United Kingdom especially, but also Portugal and Ireland, have a high birth rate among women aged 16 to 20 (see Table 1.42).

The number of children born outside marriage continues to increase in most of the EU-15 countries. France, the Nordic countries and the United Kingdom have a high percentage of births outside marriage. In Sweden 54.7% of all children are born outside marriage. With 39% of births outside marriage, Belgium is in the middle group. In Italy and Greece, only a very small percentage of births occur outside marriage (see Table 1.43).

Table 1.44 shows an overview of the number of *abortions* per 100 births. The Region of Flanders and Belgium have quite a low number of abortions per 100 births compared with the other EU-15 countries.

	Births				
	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008*
Region of Flanders	61 877	63 906	65 655	65 689	68 394
Belgium	114 883	117 799	121 382	120 663	124 991
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	766 969	685 795	672 724	684 862	681 703
France	774 782	807 787	830 288	819 605	823 970
Luxembourg	5 723	5 371	5 514	5 477	5 466
The Netherlands	206 619	187 910	185 057	181 336	185 621
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	56 742	57 745	58 840	58 729	59 331
Denmark	67 084	64 282	64 984	64 082	64 990
Sweden	90 441	101 346	105 913	107 421	109 630
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	103 267	107 545	112 042	111 926	110 609
Italy	538 999	554 022	560 010	563 933	573 407
Portugal	120 008	109 399	105 449	102 492	102 162
Spain	397 632	466 371	482 957	493 702	501 120
Austria	78 268	78 190	77 914	76 250	76 536
The United Kingdom	679 029	722 549	748 563	772 245	796 070

Ireland	54 789	61 042	64 237	70 620	80 697
EU-15	4 055 532	4 127 153	4 195 874	4 236 838	4 294 592

1.35 Number of live births in the EU-15 countries since 2000

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

* Eurostat estimates, apart from the figures for the Region of Flanders and Belgium (provisional figures, FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, based on the National Register)

Births trend					
	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008*
Region of Flanders	100.0	103.3	106.1	106.2	110.5
Belgium	100.0	102.5	105.7	105.0	108.8
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	100.0	89.4	87.7	88.0	88.9
France	100.0	104.3	107.2	107.7	106.3
Luxembourg	100.0	93.8	96.3	93.0	95.5
The Netherlands	100.0	90.9	89.6	87.7	89.8
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	100.0	101.8	103.7	103.5	104.6
Denmark	100.0	95.8	96.9	95.5	96.9
Sweden	100.0	112.1	117.1	118.8	121.2
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	100.0	104.1	108.5	107.5	107.1
Italy	100.0	102.8	103.9	104.6	106.4
Portugal	100.0	91.2	87.9	85.4	85.1
Spain	100.0	117.3	121.5	124.2	126.0
Austria	100.0	99.9	99.5	97.4	97.8
The United Kingdom	100.0	106.4	110.2	113.7	117.2
Ireland	100.0	111.4	117.2	128.9	147.3
EU-15	100.0	101.8	103.5	104.5	105.9

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

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

Internal calculations

* Estimates

Births per 1 000					
	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008*
Region of Flanders	10.4	10.6	10.8	10.7	11.1
Belgium	11.2	11.3	11.5	11.4	11.7
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	9.3	8.3	8.2	8.2	8.3
France	13.2	12.9	13.2	13.2	12.9
Luxembourg	13.1	11.6	11.8	11.2	11.3

The Netherlands	13.0	11.5	11.3	11.1	11.3
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	11.0	11.0	11.2	11.1	11.2
Denmark	12.6	11.9	12.0	11.8	11.9
Sweden	10.2	11.2	11.7	11.8	11.9
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	9.8	9.7	10.1	9.9	9.9
Italy	9.3	9.5	9.5	9.5	9.6
Portugal	11.7	10.4	10.0	9.7	9.6
Spain	10.1	10.8	11.0	11.1	11.1
Austria	9.7	9.5	9.4	9.2	9.2
The United Kingdom	11.4	12.0	12.4	12.7	13.0
Ireland	14.5	14.9	15.3	16.4	18.3
EU-15	10.8	10.7	10.8	10.8	10.9

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

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

Internal calculations

* *Estimates*

	Fertility rate				
	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008
Region of Flanders	NA	1.69	1.74	1.76	1.82
Belgium	1.66	1.75	1.80	1.81	
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	1.38	1.34	1.32		
France	1.89	1.94	2.00		
Luxembourg	1.76	1.66	1.65		
The Netherlands	1.72	1.71	1.70		
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	1.73	1.80	1.84		
Denmark	1.78	1.80	1.83		
Sweden	1.54	1.77	1.85		
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	1.26	1.33	1.39		
Italy	1.26	1.32			
Portugal	1.55	1.40	1.35		
Spain	1.23	1.35	1.38		
Austria	1.36	1.41	1.40		
The United Kingdom	1.64	1.78	1.84		
Ireland	1.89	1.86	1.93		

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

Sources: *Van Bavel J., Bastiaenssens V., De recente evolutie van de vruchtbaarheid in het Vlaamse Gewest: update 2007, Brussels, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, 2008, Interface Demography, Working Paper*

2008 -2, <http://www.vub.ac.be/SOCO/demo.intro.htm>.

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

Eurostat, website

NA: not available

	Final number of offspring (1)				
	1955	1960	1965	1970	1971
Belgium	1,83	1,87	1,76	1,65	
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	1,67	1,66	1,55	1,47	1,47
France	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Luxembourg	1,68	1,74	1,82	1,82	1,84
The Netherlands	1,87	1,86	1,78	1,74	
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	1,90	1,96	1,91	1,86	
Denmark	1,83	1,87	1,89	1,95	1,92
Sweden	2,03	2,05	2,01	1,96	
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	NA	1,97	1,77	1,57	1,52
Italy	1,79	1,64	1,46	1,40	
Portugal	2,03	1,88	1,82	1,66	1,64
Spain	1,92	1,79	1,61	1,45	
Austria	1,77	1,70	1,64	1,60	1,60
The United Kingdom	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Ireland	NA	NA	NA	2,02	

1.39 Average number of children per woman at the end of her fertile years (age 49) for the generations born between 1955 and 1969

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

Eurostat, website

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

NA: not available

	Age on giving birth				
	2000	2004	2005	2006	2007
Region of Flanders	29,2	29,5	29,6	29,6	29,7
Belgium	NA				
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	28,7	29,3	29,5	29,6	
France	29,3	29,6	29,7	29,7	
Luxembourg	29,3	30,2	29,8	29,9	
The Netherlands	30,3	30,5	30,5	30,6	
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	29,6	29,9	29,9	30,0	
Denmark	29,2	30,1	30,2	30,3	

Sweden	29,9	30,4	30,5	30,5
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>				
Greece	29,6	29,6	29,9	29,9
Italy	30,3	NA	30,9	
Portugal	28,6	29,2	29,3	29,5
Spain	30,7	30,9	30,9	30,9
Austria	28,2	28,8	29,0	29,2
The United Kingdom	28,5	29,0	29,1	29,2
Ireland ²	30,5	31,0	NA	30,7

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

Sources: Study Centre for Perinatal Epidemiology (SPE)

Eurostat, website

NA: not available

Age on giving birth to the first child

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

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

Sources: Study Centre for Perinatal Epidemiology (SPE)

Eurostat, website

NA: not available

Fertility rates for teenagers (1)

	2000	2003	2004	2005	2006
Region of Flanders	NA	0.03973	0.03684	0.03799	0.03477
Belgium	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					

Germany	0.04980	0.04629	0.04344	0.04126	0.03907
France	0.04564	0.04435	0.04470	0.04415	0.04364
Luxembourg	0.04449	0.04313	0.04179	0.04840	0.04279
The Netherlands	0.02749	0.02657	0.02292	0.02088	0.02024
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	0.03622	0.07025	0.03728	0.03675	0.03387
Denmark	0.03950	0.02147	0.02127	0.02094	0.02230
Sweden	0.02527	0.02195	0.02200	0.02196	0.02195
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	0.02998	0.04413	0.04347	0.04216	0.04499
Italy	0.02737	0.02579	NA	0.02490	NA
Portugal	0.08755	0.08025	0.07751	0.07611	0.06813
Spain	0.03441	0.04218	0.04319	0.04566	0.04843
Austria	0.05000	0.04991	0.05129	0.04874	0.04529
The United Kingdom	0.11732	0.10704	0.10655	0.10319	0.10327
Ireland	0.07494	0.07476	0.06696	NA	NA

1.42 Fertility rates for young women aged 16 to 20 years

Sources: Eurostat, website

Van Bavel J., Bastiaenssens V., *De recente evolutie van de vruchtbaarheid in het Vlaamse Gewest: update 2008*, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Interface Demography, Working Paper 2009 -2. Based on data supplied by Child and Family, Ikaros

(1) Age 16 to 20 years; age reached during the course of the year

NA: not available

Births outside marriage per 100 births

	2000	2004	2005	2006	2007
Belgium	NA	NA	NA	NA	39.0
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	23.4	27.9	29.2	30.0	30.0
France	45.5	49.4	48.4	50.5	
Luxembourg	21.9	26.1	27.2	28.8	30.7
The Netherlands	24.9	32.5	34.9	37.1	39.7
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	39.2	40.8	40.4	40.6	40.6
Denmark	44.6	45.4	45.7	46.4	46.1
Sweden	55.3	55.4	55.5	55.5	54.7
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	4.0	5.3	5.1	5.3	5.0
Italy	9.7	NA	15.4	18.6	20.7
Portugal	22.2	29.1	30.7	31.6	33.6
Spain	17.7	25.2	26.6	28.4	
Austria	31.3	35.9	36.5	37.2	38.2
The United Kingdom	39.5	42.3	42.9	43.7	
Ireland	31.5	32.0	32.0	33.2	

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

Source: Eurostat, website

NA: not available

	Number of abortions per 1 000 births					
	2000	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Region of Flanders	98.6	112.3	110.6	109.2	113.2	116.4
Belgium	118.4	139.1	138.6	141.5	149.9	155.0
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>						
Germany	175.5	181.2	183.7	180.9	178.0	
France	254.1	274.7				
Luxembourg	NA					
The Netherlands	131.7	143.9	150.0	152.9	153.9	
<i>Nordic countries</i>						
Finland	192.7	190.2	193.3	190.0	181.7	179.4
Denmark	233.5	241.0	235.7	236.2	231.6	
Sweden	342.5	347.7	314.4	345.0	340.3	346.4
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>						
Greece	174.5	151.1	152.7			
Italy	250.2	229.7	243.8			
Portugal	NA					
Spain	160.3	180.6	187.0	196.6		
Austria	NA					
The United Kingdom	278.9	281.1	278.6			
Ireland	NA					

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

Sources: National Evaluation Commission for Terminations of Pregnancy

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

NA: not available

5.2. Number of young children

The Region of Flanders is a *small region* within Europe. With 325 972 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 January 2008, there were over 20.7 million children under 5 in the European Union (see Table 1.45).

The number of children in the EU-15 countries increased slightly between 2007 and 2008 (estimated +0.6%).

Most of the EU-15 countries saw an increase in the number of young children. The increase was less than 2% in Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Finland, Denmark, Greece and Italy. It was more than 2% in Sweden, Spain, Austria and Ireland. The Region of Flanders also saw an increase of slightly over 2%. In Germany, the Netherlands and Portugal the number of children under 5 decreased. Table 1.46 shows the percentage trend, with 2000 as the baseline.

Table 1.47 presents the trend in the *percentage of young children* in the total population. The large number of young children in Ireland stands out (7.4%). Germany has the lowest percentage of young children (4.2%).

The status quo in the number of young children in the EU-15 countries is expected to be more or less maintained in the years up to 2015 (-0.3%). Expected trends vary greatly between the different countries, with a marked increase in Luxembourg (+10.1%), Austria (+7.0%) and Ireland (+13.9%) and a marked decrease in Italy (-7.9%). In Belgium the status quo will be more or less maintained (+0.3%).

A 2.2% increase in the number of children aged 1 to 5 is expected in the EU-15 countries. A slightly higher increase is expected for Belgium (+3.2%). Large increases are expected in Spain (+11.8%) and Ireland (17.4%). The number of 1 to 5 year-olds is expected to fall in Germany (-3.4%), Italy (-2.4%) and Portugal (-2.2%), but with especially large decreases in Denmark (-5.3%) and the Netherlands (-8.6%) (see Table 1.48).

Number of children aged under 5					
	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008
Region of Flanders	320 682	309 328	312 800	319 246	325 972
Belgium	577 217	574 859	580 368	590 156	600 728
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	3 947 634	3 656 322	3 570 858	3 504 146	3 469 044
France	3 760 324	3 992 974	3 988 504	4 011 247	4 028 551
Luxembourg	28 460	27 924	27 731	27 920	28 061
The Netherlands	983 491	1 010 626	988 152	966 881	945 727
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	297 522	283 693	284 949	288 127	291 628
Denmark	340 593	328 056	325 152	324 883	325 606
Sweden	468 716	485 558	496 345	512 583	525 304
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	518 125	517 910	524 376	534 848	543 615
Italy	2 624 578	2 733 436	2 745 849	2 782 811	2 807 626
Portugal	535 886	553 702	552 755	547 569	536 621
Spain	1 840 202	2 171 491	2 233 926	2 288 863	2 364 938
Austria	424 501	398 026	399 233	379 052	396 472
The United Kingdom	3 575 961	3 414 600	3 443 487	3 542 824	
Ireland	264 576	295 803	303 047	309 827	323 994
EU-15	20 187 786	20 444 980	20 464 732	20 611 737	20 730 800*

1.45 Number of children under 5 years old in the EU-15 countries since 2000

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

* Estimated figures

Trend in the number of children aged under 5					
	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008
Region of Flanders	100.0	96.5	97.5	99.6	101.6
Belgium	100.0	99.6	100.5	102.2	104.1
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	100.0	92.6	90.5	88.8	87.9
France	100.0	106.2	106.1	106.7	107.1
Luxembourg	100.0	98.1	97.4	98.1	98.6

The Netherlands	100.0	102.8	100.5	98.3	96.2
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	100.0	95.4	95.8	96.8	98.0
Denmark	100.0	96.3	95.5	95.4	95.6
Sweden	100.0	103.6	105.9	109.4	112.1
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	100.0	100.0	101.2	103.2	104.9
Italy	100.0	104.1	104.6	106.0	107.0
Portugal	100.0	103.3	103.1	102.2	100.1
Spain	100.0	118.0	121.4	124.4	128.5
Austria	100.0	93.8	94.0	89.3	93.4
The United Kingdom	100.0	95.5	96.3	99.1	99.1
Ireland	100.0	111.8	114.5	117.1	122.5
EU-15	100.0	101.3	101.4	102.1	102.7

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

Sources: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, Population Statistics
Eurostat, website (internal calculations)

	Percentages of young children				
	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008
Region of Flanders	5.4	5.1	5.1	5.2	5.3
Belgium	5.6	5.5	5.5	5.6	5.6
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	4.8	4.4	4.3	4.3	4.2
France	6.4	6.4	6.3	6.3	6.3
Luxembourg	6.5	6.1	5.9	5.9	5.8
The Netherlands	6.2	6.2	6.0	5.9	5.8
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	5.8	5.4	5.4	5.5	5.5
Denmark	6.4	6.1	6.0	6.0	5.9
Sweden	5.3	5.4	5.5	5.6	5.7
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	4.9	4.7	4.7	4.8	4.8
Italy	4.6	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.7
Portugal	5.2	5.3	5.2	5.2	5.1
Spain	4.7	5.0	5.1	5.1	5.2
Austria	5.2	4.9	4.8	4.8	4.8
The United Kingdom	6.0	5.7	5.7	5.8	5.8
Ireland	7.0	7.2	7.2	7.2	7.4
EU-15	5.4	5.3	5.3	5.3	

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

Sources: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, Population Statistics
Eurostat, website (internal calculations)

Projections for 2015

	Children under the age of 1			Children aged 1 - 5		
	2008	2015	% trend	2008	2015	% trend
Belgium	123 073	123 435	+0.3	479 158	494 539	+3.2
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>						
Germany	682 000	671 635	-1.5	2 780 902	2 685 617	-3.4
France	779 800	785 448	+0.7	3 088 329	3 169 466	+2.6
Luxembourg	5 358	5 901	+10.1	22 441	23 706	+5.6
The Netherlands	180 328	174 593	-3.2	764 236	698 205	-8.6
<i>Nordic countries</i>						
Finland	58 741	60 712	+3.4	232 769	242 314	+4.1
Denmark	64 412	60 666	-5.8	261 194	247 373	-5.3
Sweden	107 757	111 764	+3.7	417 548	444 524	+6.5
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>						
Greece	109 903	105 408	-4.1	433 276	442 199	+2.1
Italy	563 687	519 281	-7.9	2 239 005	2 184 652	-2.4
Portugal	101 543	101 446	-0.1	433 085	423 649	-2.2
Spain	488 724	497 700	+1.8	1 876 214	2 097 311	+11.8
Austria	74 427	79 660	+7.0	320 670	321 367	+0.2
The United Kingdom	766 396	787 477	+2.8	2 881 552	3 079 624	+6.9
Ireland	66 278	75 495	+13.9	256 676	301 217	+17.4
EU-15	4 172 427	4 160 261	-0.3	16 487 055	16 855 763	+2.2

1.48 Forecasts of trends in the number of children under the age of 1 year and aged 1 to 5 in the EU-15 countries for 2015 based on 2008

Source: Eurostat, Population Projections, Convergence Year 2150

5.3. Intercountry adoption

In the EU-15 countries, the relative number of *intercountry* adoptions is lowest in Germany and the United Kingdom, where there are fewer than 1 per 100 000 inhabitants. Flanders and the French Community also have very small numbers of intercountry adoptions. Sweden, Spain and Denmark score the highest with around 8 intercountry adoptions per 100 000 inhabitants (see Tables 1.49 and 1.50).

Receiving country	Adoptions					
	2000	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Flemish Community (1)	210	143	172	162	176	210
French Community (1)	290	327	299	221	182	154
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>						
Germany	854	650	560	583	778	
France	2 971	4 079	4 136	3 977	3 162	3 271
Luxembourg	57	56	41	45	31	
The Netherlands	1 193	1 307	1 185	816	782	
<i>Nordic countries</i>						
Finland	198	289	308	218	176	
Denmark	716	528	585	450	426	395

Sweden	981	1 109	1 083	879	800	793
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>						
Greece	NA					
Italy	NA	3 402	2 840	3 188	3 420	3 977
Portugal	NA	2	15	8	12	
Spain	3 062	5 541	5 423	4 472	3 648	
Austria	NA	93	98			
The United Kingdom	351	332	369	356		
Ireland	225	398	366	313	392	

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

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

(1) adoptions arranged through an authorised adoption service only

NA: not available

Adoptions per 100 000 inhabitants						
Receiving country	2000	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Flemish Community (1) (2)	3.54	2.38	2.85	2.67	2.88	3.41
French Community (2)(3)	2.83	3.15	2.86	2.10	1.72	1.44
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>						
Germany	1.04	0.79	0.68	0.71	0.95	
France	5.06	6.78	6.60	6.31	4.99	5.13
Luxembourg	13.08	12.40	8.89	9.59	6.51	
The Netherlands	7.52	8.04	7.27	5.00	4.78	
<i>Nordic countries</i>						
Finland	3.83	5.54	5.88	4.15	3.34	
Denmark	13.43	9.78	10.81	8.29	7.82	7.21
Sweden	11.07	12.36	12.02	9.72	8.78	8.64
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>						
Greece	NA					
Italy	NA	5.88	4.86	5.43	5.78	6.67
Portugal	NA	0.02	0.14	0.08	0.11	
Spain	7.76	13.09	12.60	10.22	8.20	
Austria	NA	1.14	1.19			
The United Kingdom	0.59	0.56	0.61	0.59		
Ireland	5.96	9.88	8.91	7.44		

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

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

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

(2) adoptions arranged through an authorised adoption service only

(3) per 100 000 inhabitants in the Walloon Region

NA: not available

CHAPTER 2. FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN: DIVERSITY INTERPRETED

In this section, we discuss the family context of young children in Flanders. We shall look at the types of families in which children are growing up (two-parent or one-parent families, married couple or cohabiting couple), growing up with brothers or sisters, the family origin, the language spoken at home, the age and health of parents, the presence of grandparents and the help being offered by grandparents.

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

Finally, some of the figures for Flanders are set in a European context, by comparing them with the EU-15 countries.

1. Two-parent or one-parent family?

Young children in one-parent families are still the exception

Most young children live in a *two-parent family*. 7.6% of children aged under 3 live in a *one-parent family*; the figure is 10.8% for children aged 3 to 6, and 14.4% for children of primary school age (see Table 2.1 and Figure 2.2).

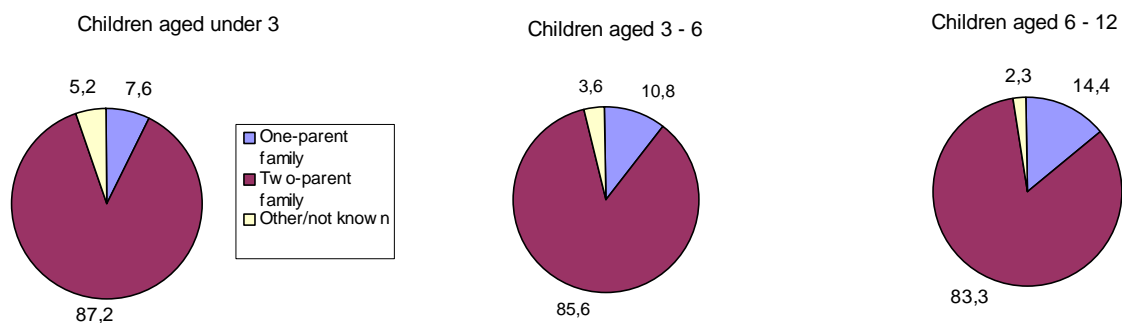
The percentage of children aged 3 to 6 who live in a one-parent family remained unchanged from 2006 to 2007. In the case of the youngest age group that percentage increased by 0.2% and it increased by 0.1% for the older age group of children aged 6 to 12 (see Table 2.1).

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

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

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

Two-parent or one-parent family



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

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

2. Type of family

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

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

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

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

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

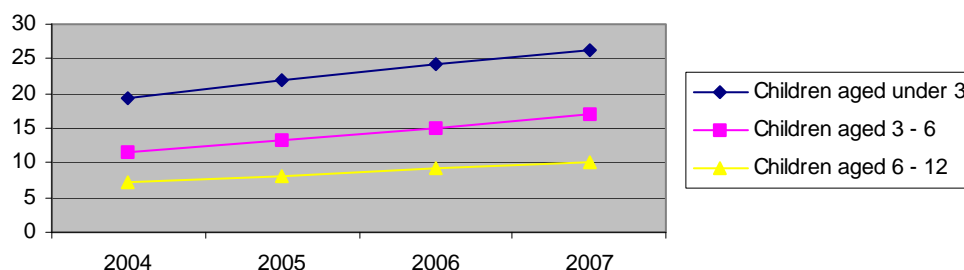
Source: data from the National Register – edited by E. Lodewijckx, Research Centre of the Flemish Government

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

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

(3) For example, with grandparents

Children living with an unmarried couple



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

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

3. Only child?

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

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

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

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

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

4. Children, living at home all the time or not

Joint custody arrangements on a very small scale

Joint custody is when ex-partners share the custody of their children and the children spend an equal amount of time living with each parent. It is not possible to find out how many children are living under joint custody arrangements from the National Register. The children are always officially resident with one of the parents. To find out about joint custody, therefore, we have to use surveys. Research into the care of young children in Flanders conducted by the Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy inquired about this. 3.0% of children under 12 do not live at home the whole time. Almost half of these children live with the ex-spouse or ex-partner of one of their parents part of the time (see Table 2.6).

Children living at home all the time or not

Living at home	
All the time	97.0
Not all the time	3.0
Total	100.0
	(N=2 416)
Situations of children who do not live at home all the time	
Live with a parent's ex-spouse or ex-partner	49.3
At boarding school	6.8
Other situation (1)	43.8
Total	100.0
	(N=73)

2.6 Children under 12 by whether they do or do not live at home all the time – 2005

Source: Antwerp University, Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy

(1) For example: living in an institution, placed with a foster family, or 'other'

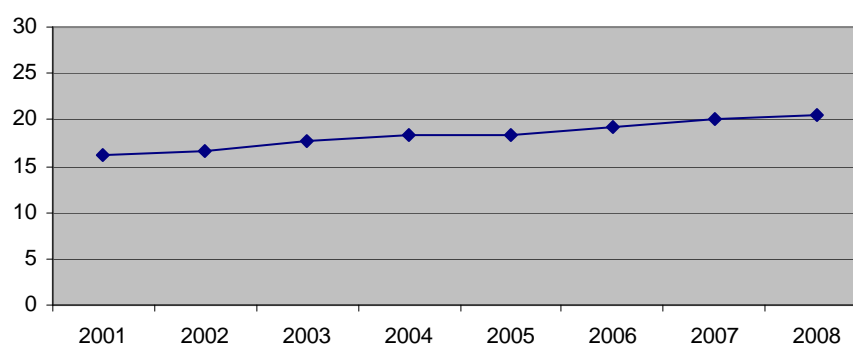
5. Origin

Only a very small number of children aged under 12 in the Region of Flanders do not have *Belgian nationality*: 5,7%. This is an increase of 0.4% compared with 2007. In this connection, it must be borne in mind that the nationality criterion is not very suitable for identifying people of foreign origin, in view of the various opportunities to acquire Belgian nationality.

A better criterion is the *origin of the child's mother*. 20.4% of the children born in 2008 were born to mothers who are not of Belgian origin. That is to say the mother did not have Belgian nationality when she was born. This percentage represents a slight increase compared with 2007 (+0.3%) (see Figure 2.7).

As the years have passed there has been a small but steady increase in the percentage of children of non-Belgian origin (see Figure 2.7).

Trend in the percentage of ethnic minority children



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

Source: Child and Family – IKAROS

The families of these children come from many countries: more than 160 different countries of origin. The most important *countries of origin* are Morocco, Turkey and the Netherlands. 4.6% of the children

born in 2008 are of Moroccan origin, 3.0% of Turkish origin, and 1.7% of Dutch origin (see Table 2.8).

Children by origin		
	2007	2008*
Belgium	79.9	79.7
Morocco	4.7	4.6
Turkey	2.9	3.0
The Netherlands	1.8	1.7
Russia	0.7	0.7
Poland	0.6	0.7
Congo	0.6	0.6
Serbia/Montenegro	0.5	0.4
France	0.4	0.4
Italy	0.4	0.4
Other countries	7.5	7.8
Total	100.0	100.0

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

Source: *Child and Family – IKAROS*

* *Provisional figures*

There are major differences from province to province. Antwerp and Limburg have the highest percentages of children of non-Belgian origin, at 28.0% and 23.5% respectively. In Flemish Brabant there are 20.2% and there are 17.2% in East Flanders. West Flanders has the lowest percentage of children of non-Belgian origin, i.e. 9.2% (see Table 2.9). There was a slight increase in the number of children of non-Belgian origin in all provinces except Limburg where the percentage fell slightly compared with 2007.

Ethnic minority children		
	2007	2008*
Antwerp	27.4	28.0
Flemish Brabant	19.6	20.2
West Flanders	8.9	9.2
East Flanders	16.5	17.2
Limburg	25.6	23.5
Region of Flanders	20.1	20.4

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

Source: *Child and Family – IKAROS*

* *Provisional figures*

6. The language spoken at home

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

Young children who speak a language other than Dutch at home are faced with greater challenges if they are to do well later at school and on the labour market.

We look at *the language* in which the *mother* talks to her *child*. This was not Dutch in the case of 20.4% of the children born in 2008. French is the next most common language (4.3%), Arabic and

Turkish came second and third. There was a slight decrease in the percentage of children whose mother tongue is Dutch from 2007 to 2008 (- 0.7%) (see Table 2.10).

Language spoken by mother to child		
	2007	2008*
Dutch	80.3	79.6
French	4.3	4.3
Arabic	3.2	3.3
Turkish	3.0	3.1
Berber	1.6	1.7
English	0.9	1.0
Russian	0.6	0.7
Polish	0.5	0.6
Spanish	0.5	0.5
Yiddish	0.3	0.3
Other languages	4.8	4.9

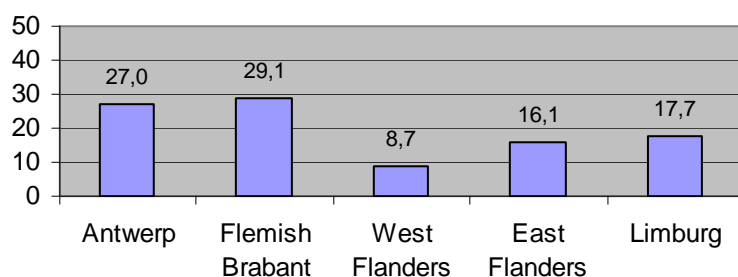
2.10 Live births by the language in which the mother communicates with her child – Region of Flanders (percentages)

Source: *Child and Family – IKAROS*

* Provisional figures

There are major differences between the provinces, with over 1 in 4 children in Flemish Brabant and Antwerp whose mother speaks to them in a language other than Dutch. In East Flanders and Limburg this is considerably lower and in West Flanders it is almost 9% (see Figure 2.11). In Antwerp, Arabic (5.7%) and Berber (4.3%) are the most common other languages; French is the second language in Flemish Brabant (15.8%); in West Flanders it is also French (2.4%); in East Flanders Turkish (4.4%), Arabic (3.0%) and French (2.3%) are spoken; and in Limburg the most common languages other than Dutch are Turkish (9.2%) and Arabic (2.8%).

Language spoken at home is not Dutch



2.11 Live births: percentage of children whose mother speaks to them in a language other than Dutch, by province – 2008*

Source: *Child and Family – IKAROS*

* Provisional figures

7. Older parents?

Increasing number of older fathers

From the data in the National Register we know the age of the mothers and fathers of young

children.

Over 38% of children aged 0 to 3 years have a mother aged between 30 and 35 and over 31% have a mother aged between 25 and 30. Fathers are older. The age groups 35 to 40 and 40-plus together account for over 40% of fathers.

With the children aged 3 to 6, the largest group of mothers (39.2%) are in the 30 to 35 age group. Almost 62% of the fathers of these children are 35 or older.

A comparison of the age distribution of the parents of all the children under 12 with 2006 reveals a slight increase in mothers in the 25 to 30 age group and in the 40-plus age group. The number of children with a mother in the 30 to 35 age group decreased slightly.

There has also been a decrease in the number of children with a father in the 30 to 40 age group, and an increase in the number of fathers in the 40+ age group (see Table 2.12).

Older parents (1)					
	2006	2007			
	Total	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3 - 6	Children aged 6 - 12	Total
Present age of mother/step-mother					
Under 20	0.1	0.4	<0.0	<0.0	0.1
20 to 25 years	2.7	8.1	2.6	0.2	2.7
25 to 30 years	13.6	31.4	16.5	4.2	13.9
30 to 35 years	29.9	38.2	39.2	20.0	29.1
35 to 40 years	33.3	17.6	30.8	41.9	33.3
40 years or over	20.3	4.3	10.8	33.6	20.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Present age of father/step-father					
Under 20	0.0	<0.0	<0.0	<0.0	<0.0
20 to 25 years	0.9	2.5	0.7	0.1	0.9
25 to 30 years	7.2	19.2	7.2	1.5	7.4
30 to 35 years	22.9	37.7	30.2	10.6	22.3
35 to 40 years	34.2	26.1	37.4	35.7	33.7
40 years or over	34.8	14.4	24.5	52.1	35.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

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

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

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

8. Health of the mothers and fathers of the children

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

When parents are in poor health, this can have a significant impact on the social circumstances of young children, on the day-to-day care of the children, for instance, or on the parents' participation in employment and earning capacity, etc. The SILC survey (Statistics on Income and Living Conditions) 2006 provided us with information about the state of health of Flemish parents.

Parents were asked about their general state of health. This was therefore a subjective assessment by the parents questioned. The mothers and fathers of the majority of children report that their own general health is excellent (see Table 2.13).

Health of parents		
	Mother	Father
Excellent	38.4	40.9
Good	49.5	49.4
Fair	10.0	6.8
Poor	1.6	2.8
Very poor	0.5	0.1
Total	100.0	100.0
	(N=1 032)	(N=955)

2.13 General health of the mothers and fathers of children aged under 12 – Region of Flanders (2006)

Source: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, SILC – 2006

9. Young children and grandparents

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

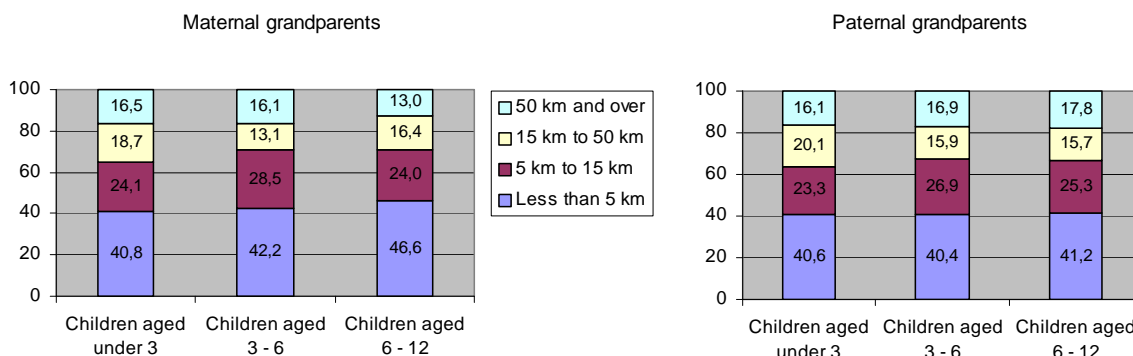
Figure 2.15 shows the distance from the child's home to the grandparents' home. About 40% live less than 5 km from their maternal grandparents. The figure for paternal grandparents is almost the same.

Grandparents				
	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3 - 6	Children aged 6 - 12	Total
More than 4 grandparents	4.7	5.7	3.1	4.1
4 grandparents	50.7	42.5	35.0	40.3
3 grandparents	25.9	30.2	30.6	29.4
2 grandparents	11.5	17.5	21.3	18.2
1 grandparent	5.8	3.3	7.2	5.9
No grandparents	1.5	0.8	2.8	2.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	(N=537)	(N=610)	(N=1 270)	(N=2 417)

2.14 Children aged under 12: number of grandparents living – 2005 (percentages)

Source: Antwerp University, Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy

Distance to grandparents (1)



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

Source: Antwerp University, Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy

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

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

Help from grandparents

	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3 - 6	Children aged 6 - 12	Total
Taking care of the children				
Yes (1)	74.1	78.2	62.2	68.9
Rarely	11.7	9.6	16.7	13.8
Never	14.2	12.2	21.2	17.3
Transporting the children				
Yes (1)	38.3	50.7	40.3	42.5
Rarely	12.1	12.4	15.1	13.7
Never	49.6	36.9	44.6	43.8
Help with cooking for the whole family				
Yes (1)	26.6	29.3	22.4	25.1
Rarely	15.3	15.5	12.7	14.0
Never	58.1	55.2	65.0	60.9
Help with household tasks				
Yes (1)	25.1	21.1	17.4	20.1
Rarely	14.4	14.5	10.0	12.1
Never	60.5	64.4	72.6	67.8
Financial support				
Yes (1)	19.5	19.3	15.9	17.6

Rarely	11.2	12.1	7.2	9.3
Never	69.3	68.7	76.9	73.1
Other help				
Yes (1)	19.8	18.0	13.3	16.0
Rarely	5.5	5.6	4.9	5.2
Never	74.7	76.4	81.8	78.8

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

Source: Antwerp University, Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy

(1) Covers response categories “sometimes”, “often” and “always”

10. Background information

10.1. Forming relationships

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

10.1.1. Number of marriages between people of the opposite sex

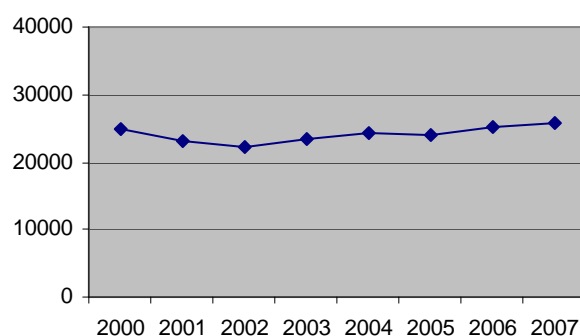
There were 25 919 *marriages* in the *Region of Flanders* in 2007 (figures for 2008 not yet available); this is an increase of 2.5% compared with 2006. The gross marriage rate is 4.24 per 1 000 inhabitants (see Table 2.17 and Figure 2.18).

Marriages		
	Number	Per 1 000 inhabitants
2006	25 278	4.16
2007	25 919	4.24

2.17 Number of marriages in the Region of Flanders

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

Marriage trend



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

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

10.1.2. Number of gay marriages

1 519 gay marriages took place in the Region of Flanders in 2007, 8.8% more than in 2006. 48.4% of these marriages were between two men and 51.6% were between two women (see

Table 2.19).

	Gay marriages		
	Between 2 men	Between 2 women	Total
2004	802	705	1 507
2005	726	659	1 385
2006	688	708	1 396
2007	735	784	1 519

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

Source: National Register

10.1.3. Age on getting married

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

The *average age* on getting married (2007) in the Region of Flanders was 35.5 for first spouses and 32.6 years for second spouses. This represents a very small increase compared with 2006 (+0.1 and +0.2 months).

The median was somewhat lower at 32.2 years for first spouses and 29.4 for second spouses.

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

There is a conspicuous difference between the average age on marrying for the first time and the second time. The average ages of people who have not been married before was 31.1 and 28.7 respectively. The average ages of divorced people who are marrying for the second time was 47.9 and 44.3 respectively.

Marriages at a young age are fairly unusual: 1.7% of second spouses and 0.3% of first spouses who got married in the Region of Flanders in 2007 were under the age of 20. These percentages were slightly lower than in 2006 (- 0.1 months).

10.1.4. New cohabitation contracts

'Statutory cohabitation' refers to people who have registered their partnership under the provisions of Article 1476 of the Civil Code.

Figures are only available on the *number of people who entered into a new cohabitation contract*, not the total number of contracts. In 2007, 27 390 people entered into a new cohabitation contract, 96.1% of which were between people of the opposite sex and 3.9% were between people of the same sex (see Table 2.20 and Figure 2.21).

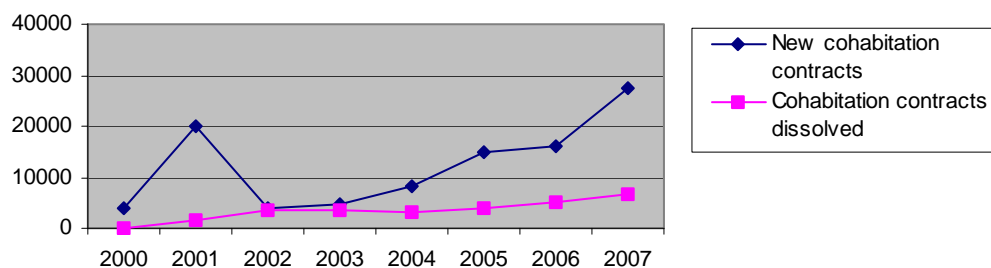
	People entering into new cohabitation contracts (1)		
	Between people of the opposite sex	Between people of the same sex	Total number of people involved
2006	15 591	634	16 225
2007	26 316	1 074	27 390

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

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

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

Cohabitation contracts



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

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

10.2. Relationship breakdowns

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

10.2.1. Divorces of people of the opposite sex

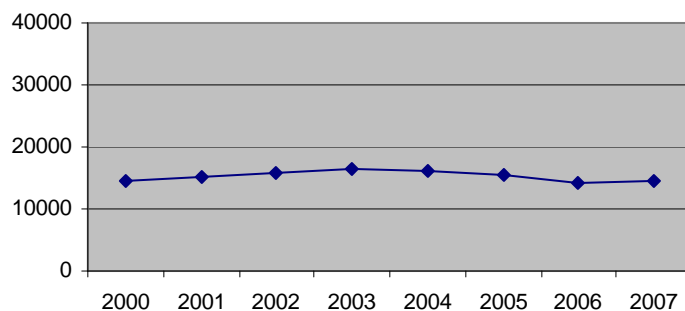
There were 14 395 divorces of people of the opposite sex in the Region of Flanders in 2007 (2008 figures not yet available). This represents an increase of 1.3%. There were 2.35 divorces per 1 000 inhabitants in 2007 (Table 2.22 and Figure 2.23).

Divorces		
	Number	Per 1 000 inhabitants
2006	14 213	2.34
2007	14 395	2.35

2.22 Number of divorces in the Region of Flanders

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

Divorce trend



2.23 Trend in the number of divorces of people of the opposite sex in the Region of Flanders since 2000

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

10.2.2. Divorces of gay couples

There were 127 divorces of gay couples in the Region of Flanders in 2007. This was a large increase compared with 2006 (see Table 2.24).

Divorces of gay couples			
	Males	Females	Total
2004	3	3	6
2005	6	14	20
2006	12	22	34
2007	49	78	127

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

Source: National Register

10.2.3. Cohabitation contracts dissolved

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

Dissolutions of cohabitation contracts (1)			
	Between people of the opposite sex	Between people of the same sex	Total number of people involved
2006	4 988	306	5 294
2007	6 321	330	6 651

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

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

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

11. The European context

11.1. Families in which young children live

Quite a lot of children live in *one-parent families* or *step-families* but they are still in a minority.

In Belgium, 9.2% of teenagers (11-, 13- and 16-year-olds) live in one-parent families and 8.1% live in step-families, figures which are comparable with our neighbouring countries. The United Kingdom and the Nordic countries have much higher percentages of teenagers living in one-parent families. In the Mediterranean countries the number of teenagers living in step-families particularly is much lower (see Table 2.26).

Teenagers (1) in one-parent families or step families		
	One-parent family	Step-family
Belgium	9.2	8.1
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>		

Germany	12.8	9.2
France	11.0	9.7
Luxembourg	NA	NA
The Netherlands	10.7	6.1
<i>Nordic countries</i>		
Finland	14.6	11.0
Denmark	16.5	13.5
Sweden	16.8	12.7
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>		
Greece	7.5	1.2
Italy	7.0	2.2
Portugal	9.8	5.8
Spain	9.1	3.0
Austria	12.5	7.5
The United Kingdom	16.9	14.5
Ireland	10.3	3.5

2.26 Percentage of children aged 11, 13 and 16 who live in a one-parent family of step-family – 2001

Source: Unicef, *Child Poverty in perspective: an overview of child well-being in rich countries, report card 7 (2007)*

(1) Children aged 11, 13 and 16 years

NA: not available

Table 2.27 shows whether children under 14 are being brought up as only children or with other children in the family. The Region of Flanders comes in the middle of the range with respect to the number of young children growing up as only children. Finland has relatively large numbers of children growing up in families with 3 or more children.

Children in the family			
	Families with 1 child	Families with 2 children	Families with 3 or more children
Region of Flanders (1)	21.9	47.4	30.7
Belgium	20.3	44.4	35.3
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>			
Germany	27.7	48.2	24.1
France	22.3	45.9	31.8
Luxembourg	19.5	45.4	35.0
The Netherlands	17.9	49.0	33.1
<i>Nordic countries</i>			
Finland	16.7	38.0	45.4
Denmark	NA	NA	NA
Sweden	NA	NA	NA
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>			
Greece	22.8	55.0	22.2
Italy	29.5	53.7	16.8
Portugal	35.1	48.0	16.9

Spain	30.3	53.6	16.2
Austria	21.3	45.3	33.4
The United Kingdom	NA	NA	NA
Ireland			

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

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

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

(1) Children aged under 12

NA: not available

11.2. Marriages and divorces

The *marriage rate* (= number of marriages per year per 1 000 inhabitants) in the Region of Flanders is rather low (see Table 2.28). The rate in the Region of Flanders is one of the lowest in the EU-15 countries, along with Luxembourg, France, Italy and Austria. Denmark has the highest marriage rate.

The number of marriages per 1 000 inhabitants has fallen or is virtually unchanged in most of the countries studied since 2000. Only in Finland, Sweden and Greece has it risen. This falling trend is coupled with marriage at an ever later age and an increase in other forms of cohabitation.

Marriages per 1 000 inhabitants				
	2000	2005	2006	2007
Region of Flanders	4.2	4.0	4.2	4.2
Belgium	4.4	4.1	4.3	4.3
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>				
Germany	5.1	4.7	4.5	4.5*
France	5.0	4.5	4.3	4.2*
Luxembourg	5.0	4.4	4.2	4.1
The Netherlands	5.5	4.5	4.4	4.5
<i>Nordic countries</i>				
Finland	5.1	5.6	5.4	5.6
Denmark	7.2	6.7	6.7	6.7
Sweden	4.5	4.9	5.0	5.2
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>				
Greece	4.5	5.5	5.2	5.2*
Italy	5.0	4.2	4.1	4.2*
Portugal	6.2	4.6	4.5	4.4*
Spain	5.4	4.8	4.6	
Austria	4.9	4.8	4.5	4.3
The United Kingdom	5.2	5.2		
Ireland	5.0	5.1		

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

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

* *Provisional figure*

In most of the EU-15 countries there are about 2 to 3 *divorces* per 1 000 inhabitants. Italy and Ireland have fewer than 1 divorce per 1 000 inhabitants (see Table 2.29).

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

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

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

* *Provisional figures*

NA: *not available*

CHAPTER 3 EMPLOYMENT IN FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

The day-to-day activities of young children are determined to a significant extent by whether their parents have a paid job or not. The time children spend away from the family home, at child care for instance, is closely linked to whether their parents work.

Parents' employment is also an important factor for the standard of living of the family. Having work still always offers the best protection against financial poverty. This chapter deals with the extent to which the parents of young children have paid employment.

As well as looking at the simple fact of employment or the lack of it, we also examine the extent of employment, patterns of working hours, and job flexibility.

We present population data from the Labour Market and Social Security Data Warehouse of the Crossroads Bank for Social Security, SILC data (Statistics on Income and Living Conditions), research data from the Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy on the care of young children in Flanders, and data from the Labour Force Survey (Eurostat).

1. Participation of parents of young children in employment

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

In line with the purpose of "The Child in Flanders", this section presents a number of figures on the employment of the parents of young children, with the child as the unit of calculation. The most recent figures available are for 31 December 2005.

Almost 88% of children under the age of 12 have *at least one parent* who has a job*. Put the other way round, almost 12% live in a family where neither parents works. Compared with 2004 there was a 0.3% increase in the number of children living in a family where neither parent works.

58.7% live in a family where *both parents* work*. This was an increase of 1% compared with 2004.

Almost 14% live with both of their parents of whom *one works and one is without paid work*. The percentage of children in this category fell by 0.4% from 2003 to 2004.

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

Incidence of employment in the family

	2004		2005		
	Total	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3 - 6	Children aged 6 - 12	Total
Two working	59.7	59.6	59.8	57.8	58.7
One working and one seeking work and receiving benefit	4.7	4.7	4.2	3.6	4.0
One working and one not in paid employment and receiving benefit (1)	3.7	6.2	4.3	2.3	3.7
One working and one not in paid employment	14.2	12.7	12.6	14.8	13.8
Two parents seeking work and receiving benefit and/or not in paid employment (1)	5.0	6.9	6.0	5.3	5.8
One working	7.3	4.2	6.7	9.5	7.5
One seeking work and receiving benefit	2.5	1.8	2.1	2.3	2.1

One not in paid employment and receiving benefit (1)	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.8	1.8
One not in paid employment	1.1	1.1	1.3	1.5	1.4
Not known	0.2	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.1
<i>Total with at least one working parent in the family</i>	<i>89.5</i>	<i>87.3</i>	<i>87.6</i>	<i>88.0</i>	<i>87.7</i>
<i>Total with no working parent in the family</i>	<i>10.5</i>	<i>12.7</i>	<i>12.4</i>	<i>12.0</i>	<i>12.3</i>
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

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

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

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

Parental participation in employment varies depending on the *type of family* the child is living in. Children living with a single mother are more likely to live in a family where no-one has paid employment. For children under the age of 3 living with a single mother, only 47.2% of the mothers work. For children aged 3 to 6, this is 58.4% and for children aged 6 to 12, 64.1%. Their mothers are more likely to be job-seekers receiving unemployment benefit or not in paid employment and receiving benefit. Of the children living with a single father, there are quite a lot whose father does not work. In the case of 23.0% of the children under the age of 12 living with a single father, the father does not work. Table 3.2 does not include the family type 'nuclear family with other persons' (percentage in the population of children under 12: 4.3%). These are often children living in families with no adult in work (67.9%).

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

Parents' employment and type of family

	2004		2005		
	Total	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3 - 6	Children aged 6 - 12	Total
Child with a married or unmarried couple					
Both parents working	69.4	67.9	70.0	69.8	69.4
One parent working, one parent seeking work and receiving benefit	5.4	5.2	4.9	4.3	4.7
One parent working, one parent not in paid employment and receiving benefit (1)	4.2	6.8	4.9	2.7	4.2
One parent working, the other parent not in paid employment	16.2	13.7	14.4	17.6	15.8
<i>Total with one or both parents working</i>	<i>95.2</i>	<i>93.6</i>	<i>94.1</i>	<i>94.4</i>	<i>94.1</i>
Other	4.8	6.4	5.9	5.6	5.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Percentage of children with a married or</i>	<i>85.3</i>	<i>86.6</i>	<i>84.8</i>	<i>82.7</i>	<i>84.1</i>

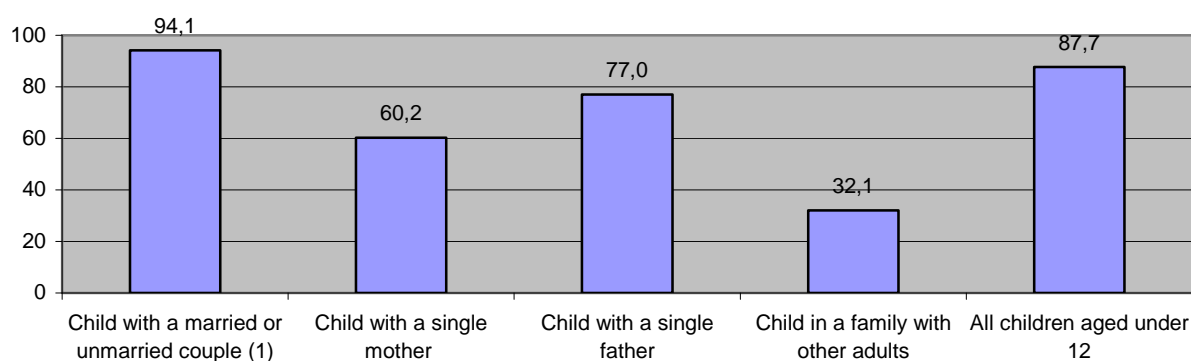
<i>unmarried couple</i>					
Child with a single mother					
Mother working	59.4	47.2	58.4	64.1	60.2
Mother seeking work and receiving benefit	22.6	25.1	20.0	17.1	19.0
Mother not in paid employment and receiving benefit (1)	9.3	14.3	10.7	8.2	9.7
Mother not in paid employment	8.7	13.4	10.9	10.6	11.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Percentage of children with single mothers</i>	<i>10.2</i>	<i>6.4</i>	<i>9.5</i>	<i>12.4</i>	<i>10.2</i>
Child with a single father					
Father working	78.1	69.8	75.5	79.0	77.0
Father seeking work and receiving benefit	11.0	12.1	11.0	9.5	10.2
Father not in paid employment and receiving benefit (1)	4.1	7.2	5.0	3.8	4.5
Father not in paid employment	6.8	10.9	8.4	7.8	8.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Percentage of children with single fathers</i>	<i>1.3</i>	<i>0.8</i>	<i>1.1</i>	<i>1.7</i>	<i>1.3</i>

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

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

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

Working parents in the family



3.3 Percentage of children under 12 by whether there is one or more working parents in the family and by type of family – Region of Flanders – situation on 31 December 2005

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

(1) One or both parents working

2. Extent of employment of parents of young children

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

36.2% of children under 12 who live in a two-parent family (2005) are in “one-and-a-half job families”:

one parent works full-time and the other parent works part-time (30.1%), or one parent is self-employed and the other works part-time (6.1%).

The parents of 29.3% of children can be said to be highly active in their work and careers, belonging to full-time “two-job families”. This covers 17.2% of children in two-parent families where both parents work full time as employees, 5.6% where both parents are self-employed, and 6.6% where one parent is self-employed and the other is in full-time employment.

A third important group are the children who live in a family where only one parent works, full-time as an employee (16.4%) or in self-employment (4.9%), or in a family where both parents work part-time (2.4%). 24.7% of the children under 12 in a two-parent family are in this situation: they can be described as “one-job families”* (see Figure 3.5).

Between 2004 and 2005 there was a slight increase in the number of children in “one-and-a-half job families” and a slight decrease in the number of children in “one-job families” and “two-job families”. This trend towards more children in “one-and-a-half-job families” and fewer children in families where only one parent works has been going on for a number of years (see Figure 3.6).

Moving on to the *children in one-parent families*, many of their parents are not in paid employment. 37.9% of these children live with a parent – usually the mother – who does not work. Almost 27% of these children live with one parent who works full-time as an employee. Over 27% work part time and 6.5% are self-employed (see Table 3.4).

* *One-job family also includes combinations of one parent working full-time or in self-employment with a parent who falls into the "other" category (working with undefined employment contract or in special jobs and unemployed people whose unemployment benefit has been suspended, 1.0%)*

	Extent of employment				Total
	2004	2005		Total	
	Total	Children aged 0 - 3	Children aged 3 - 6	Children aged 6 - 12	Total
Children in a two-parent family					
Both parents are full-time employees	18.5	21.8	16.4	15.3	17.2
One parent is a full-time and one parent is a part-time employee	29.1	26.6	31.5	31.2	30.1
Both parents are part-time employees	2.2	2.5	2.6	2.3	2.4
One parent is a full-time employee, one is self-employed	6.9	6.5	6.5	6.7	6.6
One parent is a full-time employee, one is not in paid employment	17.4	17.5	15.9	16.1	16.4
One parent is a full-time employee and one parent falls into the “other” category (1)	0.8	1.1	0.9	0.8	0.9
Both parents are self-employed	5.8	3.8	5.2	6.6	5.6
One parent is self-employed and one parent is a part-time employee	5.8	5.0	6.3	6.5	6.1
One parent is self-employed, one is not in paid employment	5.1	4.3	4.7	5.2	4.9
One parent is self-employed and one falls into	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1

the "other" category (1)

Other combinations	8.4	10.8	9.8	9.3	9.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Children in a one-parent family

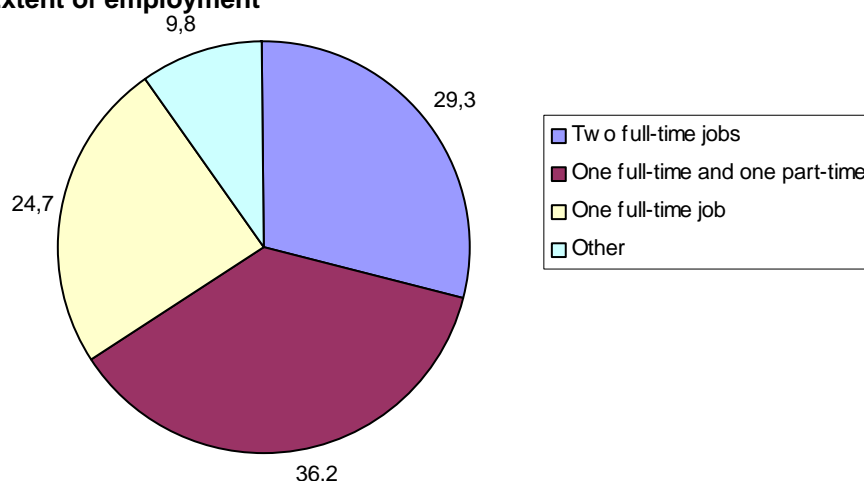
Parent is a full-time employee	27.6	22.5	25.9	28.2	26.8
Parent is a part-time employee	25.9	19.7	26.4	29.3	27.2
Parent is self-employed	6.7	5.3	6.0	6.9	6.5
Parent is not in paid employment	38.6	50.4	39.8	34.2	37.9
Other (1)	1.3	2.2	1.9	1.4	1.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

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

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

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

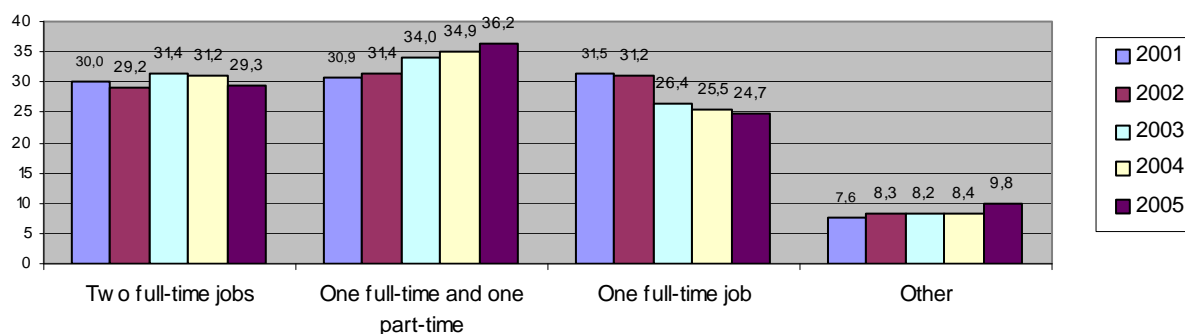
Extent of employment



3.5 Extent of employment of the parents of children under 12 living in a two-parent family – Region of Flanders (percentages) – situation on 31 December 2005

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

Trend in the extent of employment



3.6 Extent of employment of the parents of children under 12 living in a two-parent family since 2001 – Region of Flanders (percentages)

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

3. Why are there parents of young children with no paid work?

The main reason for mothers not working is their caring responsibilities; the main reason for fathers not working is their failure to find paid work

In the case of mothers who do not have paid employment, the main reason* for this is that they are taking care of children or other people. Only in a small number of cases is this due to their failure to find paid work. In the case of fathers who do not have paid employment, this is usually because they have been unable to find paid work (see Table 3.7).

Reason for not having paid work

	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3 - 6	Children aged 6 - 12	Total
Mother				
Because I am looking after children or other people	66.7	79.6	77.0	75.7
I do not work because I am occupied with other things	1.3	1.0	0.0	0.5
I do not think there is any work suitable for me	2.6	2.9	0.4	1.5
I have found work and will be starting soon	0.0	1.0	1.3	1.0
I am waiting to hear if my job application has been successful	3.8	1.0	3.5	2.9
I have not found any work	15.4	9.7	5.2	8.3
Because this is more advantageous financially	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.2
For health reasons	1.3	0.0	0.4	0.5
Other reason	9.0	4.9	11.7	9.5
Total	100.0 (N=78)	100.0 (N=103)	100.0 (N=230)	100.0 (N=411)
<i>Percentage of children whose mother has no paid work</i>	16.3	18.8	23.2	20.6
Father				
Because I am looking after children or other people	13.3	5.3	3.7	6.6
I do not work because I am occupied with other things	0.0	5.3	3.7	3.3
I do not think there is any work suitable for me	0.0	0.0	18.5	8.2
I have found work and will be starting soon	0.0	21.1	0.0	6.6
I am waiting to hear if my job application has been	13.3	0.0	3.7	4.9

successful				
I have not found any work	40.0	31.6	51.9	42.9
For health reasons	6.7	5.3	0.0	3.3
Other reason	26.7	31.6	18.5	24.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	(N=15)	(N=19)	(N=27)	(N=67)
<i>Percentage of children whose father has no paid work</i>	<i>4.7</i>	<i>4.6</i>	<i>5.2</i>	<i>5.1</i>

3.7 Children aged under 12 whose mother or father has no paid work: most important reason for not having paid work – 2005 (percentages)

Source: Antwerp University, Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy

* This information comes from a study of a sample of children (research carried out by the Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy)

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

Mothers, mainly because of caring responsibilities

The SILC survey found that the main reasons that mothers work part time is because of their domestic responsibilities (76.1%). A significant number of mothers (9.3%) consider the number of hours that they work at home is equivalent to a full-time job. Of the small number of fathers who work part time (2%), their reasons for doing so are less clear (see Table 3.8).

Reason for working part-time		
	Mother	Father
Domestic responsibilities	76.1	27.7
Education or training	0.5	0.0
Illness or disability	1.6	4.1
Wants to work more hours but has not found a job	4.1	16.0
Does not want to work more hours	4.1	7.4
Considers work in the home equivalent to a full-time job	9.3	20.9
Other	4.2	23.9
Total	100.0	100.0
	(N=263)	(N=25)
<i>Percentage of children whose mother or father works part time</i>	<i>22.6</i>	<i>2.0</i>

3.8 Children under the age of 12 whose mother or father works part time: reasons for working part time – 2006 (percentages)

Source: Federal Department for the Economy, Office of Statistics and Economic Information, SILC, 2006

5. Arranging family-friendly working hours

The fathers of most young children work long hours. Fathers are also more likely to have “atypical” working hours than mothers but they have more flexibility

The number of hours worked, the pattern of working hours and the flexibility offered at work are all important factors for parents combining family life with employment.

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

Normal number of hours worked (1)		
	Mother	Father
Less than 20 hours	11.9	0.6
20 to 25 hours	14.8	0.7
25 to 30 hours	8.7	0.5
30 to 35 hours	21.0	2.2
35 to 40 hours	21.0	29.9
40 to 45 hours	12.3	25.4
45 or more hours	10.4	40.7
Total	100.0	100.0
	(N=881)	(N=791)
Average	32.4	45.4
P25	24.0	38.0
P75	38.0	50.0

3.9 Children aged under 12: normal number of hours worked by their mother and father – 2006 (percentages)

Source: Federal Department for the Economy, Office of Statistics and Economic Information, SILC, 2006
 (1) Children whose mother and/or father has paid work; total of main job and second job.

Research conducted by the Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy surveyed parents' *patterns of working hours*.

Table 3.10 shows the patterns of working hours of the mothers and fathers of children under the age of 12. We look at working outside the normal working day, shift work, night work, weekend work and irregular working hours. 19.5% of the children have a mother who works hours which fall into at least one of these atypical categories. Many more children have a father who works atypical hours: 41%. In the case of the mothers this usually involves working outside the normal working day and at weekends; for fathers the largest group is working outside the normal working day.

Patterns of working hours (1)		
	Mother	Father
Works outside the normal working day	16.1	29.2
Shift work	8.5	12.6
Night work	3.6	7.1
Weekend work	12.4	13.6
Irregular working hours (2)	7.8	16.1
<i>Working hours include at least one of these atypical patterns</i>	19.5	41.0

3.10 Children aged under 12: pattern of working hours of their mother and father – 2005 (percentages)

Source: Antwerp University, Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy

(1) Children whose mother and/or father has paid work or is taking a temporary break from work.

(2) Includes evening work

This same piece of research carried out by the Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy found marked differences between the mothers and fathers of young children as far as *flexibility at work* is concerned. More children under 12 have a mother who has the opportunity to work part-time or to take parental leave from her employment. Their fathers, on the other hand, have more flexibility in the time they start and leave work and more opportunities to work from home (see Table 3.11).

Flexibility at work (1)		
	Mother	Father
Flexibility in time of starting and finishing work		
It is very difficult to change my working hours	46.5	35.9
I can change the time that I start and finish work, if I notify them in advance, as long as I am at work for an agreed number of hours	15.2	12.4
I can change the time that I start and finish work, if I notify them in advance	19.0	18.2
I can change the time that I start and finish work, without notifying them in advance, as long as I am at work for an agreed number of hours	9.8	12.5
I can change the time that I start and finish work without notifying them in advance	9.5	20.9
Total	100.0 (N=1 773)	100.0 (N=1 745)
My present job offers me the opportunity to work part-time	69.6 (N=1 757)	24.7 (N=1 757)
My present job allows me to work from home	18.9 (N=1 728)	30.3 (N=1 756)
My present job allows me to take parental leave	71.7 (N=1 769)	49.1 (N=1 751)

3.11 Children aged under 12: flexible working opportunities enjoyed by their mothers and fathers – 2005 (percentages)

Source: Antwerp University, Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy

(1) Children whose mother and/or father has paid work or is taking a temporary break from work.

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

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

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

71.9% of mothers with a child under the age of 12 in the Region of Flanders were in some form of paid employment in 2005. This was slightly fewer than in 2004 (-0.1%). Participation in employment is lower among mothers with a child under the age of 3 (69.9%) than among mothers of older children.

Considerably fewer single mothers with a child under 12 are in employment than mothers who live with a partner: 62.7% of single mothers compared with 75.3% of mothers who live with a partner. Single mothers with a child under 3 participate even less: only 48.5% have paid employment. The percentage of single mothers in paid employment increased from 61.9% in 2004 to 62.7% in 2005 (see Table 3.12).

Mothers' employment					
	2004	2005			
		One child or youngest child			
		Under 3 years	3 to 6 years	6 to 12 years	Total
Total					

Mothers living with a partner					
Working in paid employment	63.2	62.7	64.4	63.5	63.4
Self-employed	7.4	6.3	7.6	8.4	7.4
Working as assistant to self-employed person	2.6	1.4	2.2	3.1	2.3
Working in paid employment and self-employed	2.1	2.1	2.2	2.2	2.2
<i>Total with paid work</i>	<i>75.4</i>	<i>72.4</i>	<i>76.4</i>	<i>77.3</i>	<i>75.3</i>
Job-seeker receiving benefit	5.1	5.2	4.4	3.6	4.4
Not in paid employment and receiving benefit(1)	3.7	6.7	3.0	1.3	3.7
Without paid work	15.8	15.6	16.1	17.8	16.6
<i>Total without paid work</i>	<i>24.6</i>	<i>27.6</i>	<i>23.6</i>	<i>22.7</i>	<i>24.7</i>
Total mothers living with a partner	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Single mothers					
Working in paid employment	54.2	42.3	55.3	59.4	55.0
Self-employed	5.3	4.4	5.1	5.9	5.4
Working as assistant to self-employed person	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3
Working in paid employment and self-employed	2.0	1.6	2.0	2.3	2.1
<i>Total with paid work</i>	<i>61.9</i>	<i>48.5</i>	<i>62.7</i>	<i>67.8</i>	<i>62.7</i>
Job-seeker receiving benefit	21.4	24.9	18.3	15.4	18.0
Not in paid employment and receiving benefit(1)	8.4	13.7	9.1	6.9	8.8
Without paid work	8.3	12.9	9.8	9.8	10.5
<i>Total without paid work</i>	<i>38.1</i>	<i>51.5</i>	<i>37.3</i>	<i>32.2</i>	<i>37.3</i>
Total single mothers	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total mothers (2)					
Working in paid employment	60.7	60.5	62.0	60.6	60.9
Self-employed	6.9	6.1	7.1	7.5	6.9
Working as assistant to self-employed person	2.3	1.3	1.9	2.5	2.0
Working in paid employment and self-employed	2.0	2.0	2.1	2.1	2.1
<i>Total with paid work</i>	<i>72.0</i>	<i>69.9</i>	<i>73.2</i>	<i>72.7</i>	<i>71.9</i>
Job-seeker receiving benefit	7.0	6.5	6.1	5.4	6.0
Not in paid employment and receiving benefit(1)	6.0	7.7	5.0	5.5	6.1
Without paid work	15.0	15.8	15.6	16.4	16.0
<i>Total without paid work</i>	<i>28.0</i>	<i>30.1</i>	<i>26.8</i>	<i>27.3</i>	<i>28.1</i>
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

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

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

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

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

7. Employment situation of grandparents

Some are still working

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

decreases as the children get older.

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

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

Source: Antwerp University, Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy

8. The European context

8.1. Level of employment of women with young children

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

However, the *level of employment of women with young children* is known. Using the Labour Force Survey (Eurostat) we compared the Region of Flanders with the EU-15 countries, excluding Sweden, which did not take part in this survey.

Table 3.14 breaks down the level of employment among mothers in 2007 by the number of children they have – 1, 2, or 3 or more children – and by the age of the youngest child. The Region of Flanders has one of the highest rates of employment of mothers with one or more children under the age of 15. The level of employment of mothers is much lower in the Mediterranean countries of the EU, apart from Portugal. There is a noticeable difference in rates of employment between mothers with 1 or 2 children and those with 3 children or more. Generally, fewer mothers with 3 or more children work.

Level of employment of mothers			
	With 1 child	With 2 children	With 3 or more children
With a child or the youngest child under 3			
Region of Flanders	81.1	80.1	58.5
Belgium	71.7	70.2	48.8
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>			
Germany	62.2	52.0	38.6
France	69.7	54.7	40.6
Luxembourg	(1)	(1)	(1)
The Netherlands	78.1	74.7	58.2
<i>Nordic countries</i>			
Denmark	NA	NA	NA
Finland	58.9	54.4	36.9
Sweden	NA	NA	NA
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>			
Greece	54.1	52.5	43.2
Italy	56.8	49.8	33.3
Portugal	72.1	72.5	57.0

Spain	62.4	53.9	40.7
Austria	68.7	51.9	35.7
Ireland	NA	NA	NA
The United Kingdom	66.1	54.4	32.0
With a child or the youngest child aged 3 to 6			
Region of Flanders	77.3	83.0	63.5
Belgium	71.1	75.3	56.3
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>			
Germany	70.2	62.9	43.2
France	74.4	78.8	55.4
Luxembourg	(1)	(1)	(1)
The Netherlands	75.3	75.7	64.9
<i>Nordic countries</i>			
Denmark	NA	NA	NA
Finland	79.7	83.6	80.9
Sweden	NA	NA	NA
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>			
Greece	53.8	56.1	50.8
Italy	59.6	51.5	36.7
Portugal	78.6	76.1	59.1
Spain	67.8	60.1	45.5
Austria	75.2	71.2	56.6
Ireland	NA	NA	NA
The United Kingdom	61.5	63.6	46.3
With a child or the youngest child aged 6 to 15			
Region of Flanders	79.7	81.3	77.2
Belgium	72.4	74.3	70.9
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>			
Germany	75.0	68.0	58.3
France	77.6	78.8	60.7
Luxembourg	63.6	67.4	(1)
The Netherlands	74.4	78.2	72.8
<i>Nordic countries</i>			
Denmark	NA	NA	NA
Finland	87.4	89.1	79.4
Sweden	NA	NA	NA
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>			
Greece	61.5	59.4	53.2
Italy	56.5	53.2	46.0
Portugal	75.6	76.7	67.0
Spain	64.1	61.1	74.0
Austria	80.2	77.5	64.0
Ireland	NA	NA	NA

The United Kingdom	75.8	75.5	57.0
Total with a child or the youngest child under 15			
Region of Flanders	79.9	81.4	65.2
Belgium	72.0	73.3	57.1
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>			
Germany	71.3	62.2	45.3
France	74.8	71.3	49.4
Luxembourg	68.6	66.7	(1)
The Netherlands	75.7	76.5	64.7
<i>Nordic countries</i>			
Denmark	82.2	86.1	78.8
Finland	77.5	77.2	57.7
Sweden	NA	NA	NA
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>			
Greece	58.7	56.8	48.5
Italy	57.1	51.6	37.0
Portugal	75.5	75.0	59.6
Spain	64.3	58.5	49.0
Austria	76.6	68.7	49.5
Ireland	69.0	58.8	50.7
The United Kingdom	70.9	66.0	42.6

3.14 Level of employment of women with one child or the youngest child under the age of 15 in some EU-15 countries – 2007

Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey, 2007 (Processed by the Work and Social Economy Centre (Steunpunt WSE))

(1) Figure not reliable

NA: not available

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

Around 9.2% of children in the EU-15 countries live in a family with no adult in work. With 12.0%, Belgium has a relatively high number of young people living in families with no adult in employment. Only the United Kingdom scores higher. The figures for the Region of Flanders, which are for a younger age group, are also on the high side (see Table 3.15).

No adult working				
	2000	2005	2006	2007
Region of Flanders	9.3*	10.5**		
Belgium	11.4	12.8	12.7	12.0
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>				
Germany	9.4	11.0	10.6	9.6
France	9.3	8.8	9.3	8.7
Luxembourg	4.0	2.7	3.7	3.4
The Netherlands	7.0	6.7	6.4	5.9
<i>Nordic countries</i>				
Finland	NA	6.6	4.9	4.4

Denmark	NA	5.7	5.0	
Sweden	NA	NA	NA	
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>				
Greece	5.5	4.2	3.9	3.9
Italy	7.6	5.9	5.7	5.8
Portugal	3.8	4.6	4.6	5.1
Spain	6.6	5.6	5.3	5.9
Austria	3.8	5.9	6.0	5.3
The United Kingdom	17.0	16.5	16.5	16.7
Ireland	10.1	11.9	11.2	11.3
EU-15	9.8***	9.6***	9.5***	9.2***

3.15 Children under the age of 18 living in a household in which there is no adult with paid work (percentages) in the EU-15 countries

Source: Eurostat

Children aged under 14

**Children aged under 12

*** Estimates

NA: not available

CHAPTER 4 PROSPERITY, POVERTY AND DEPRIVATION

Poverty is harmful to children, both immediately and in the long term. This is why we examine the incomes of families with young children in some detail.

We look at the disposable income of families with young children, followed by the objective “at-risk-of-poverty threshold” (an EU-indicator of the degree of financial poverty), the families’ subjective assessment of their own incomes and a number of non-monetary indicators of deprivation in the family. Next we examine how many children live in a family whose source of income indicates that they are in an insecure financial situation (guaranteed child benefit, maintenance allowance, guaranteed minimum income), before going on to examine deprivation in these families.

After that we describe various aspects of the family home: type of home, which is an indicator of the comfort of the home, and residential status, which has a significant impact on families’ spending patterns.

We also look at whether the family has certain consumer goods in the home. Lastly, poverty in Flanders is compared with the situation in the EU-15 countries.

1. Disposable income per person in families with young children

Most children live in a family with a decent income

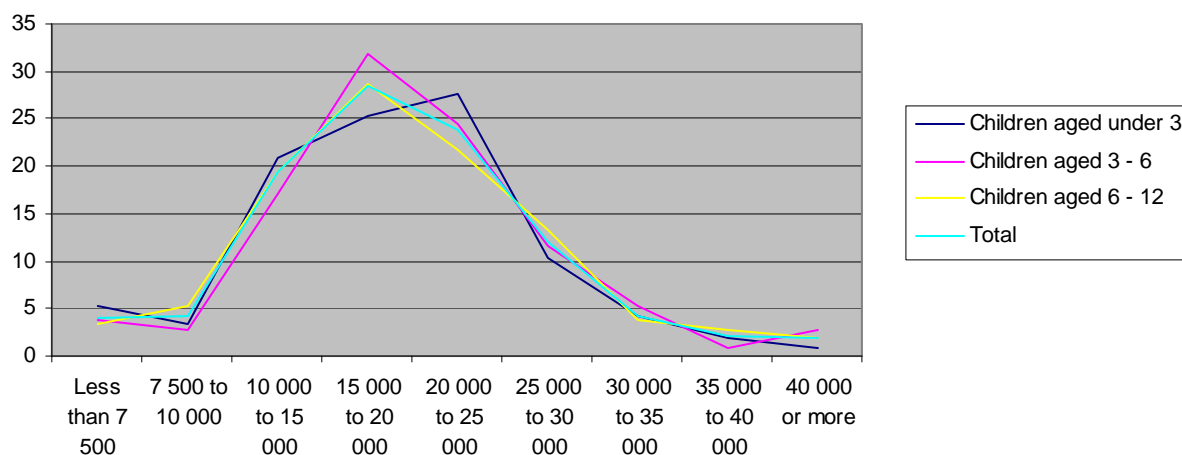
We look at the *disposable income per person* in families with young children. This is the equivalised disposable income, derived from the disposable family income with a correction for family size*.

We also look at the median (middle score in a set of ranked scores) rather than the mean, because the median is less influenced by incomes at the high and low extremes of the scale.

In families with children under 12, the median in 2005 was 19 792 euro per year. The “poorest” 10% of children were living in a family that had to manage on about half that amount (10 694 euro per person per year) or less. The “richest” 10% of children were living in a family with a disposable income of at least 28 948 euro per person per year.

Figure 4.1 shows the distribution of children by disposable annual income in 2005, corrected for family size.

Disposable annual income per person



4.1 Children under the age of 12 by disposable annual income per person in the family – Region of Flanders – 2005

Source: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, SILC – 2006

**To calculate the disposable income per person, a weighting system was used in which the head of the household (reference person) counts as 1, other persons over the age of 14 count as 0.5 and children under the age of 14 count as 0.3. A family consisting of a mother, a father and two children under the age of 14 years therefore count as the equivalent of 2.1 persons.*

2. Increased risk of poverty

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

The “at-risk-of-poverty threshold” is an indicator developed in the EU to measure the proportion of the population living in a family below the poverty line. The family is said to be at risk of poverty, or at increased risk of poverty, if the disposable income per person in the family is less than 60% of the median disposable income of the country. For the year 2005, the income threshold for Belgium was 21 664.52 euro per year for a family of 2 adults and 2 children. The equivalent figure for 2004 was 20 711.75 euro. This means that the threshold in 2005 was 4.6% higher than the year before. We used the Belgian norm because tax and social security – the most important income redistribution mechanisms – are federal powers.

We look at the percentage of children living in a family whose income is below the poverty line. The daily circumstances in which these children live threaten to be difficult and their future economic situation is at risk.

The *general* picture is that 9.4% of children under the age of 12 are at increased risk of poverty. When broken down by *age group*, the situation is noticeably better for children in the 3 to 6 age group (7.1% are at increased risk of poverty). Looking at *family type*, there is a big difference between the children in one-parent families and children in two-parent families. Almost 29% of children in one-parent families are at increased risk of poverty. There is also a noticeable difference between children in two-parent families with 1 or 2 children and those in two-parent families with 3 or more children: children in two-parent families with 3 or more children are at much greater risk of poverty (10.3%) than their peers in the smaller two-parent families.

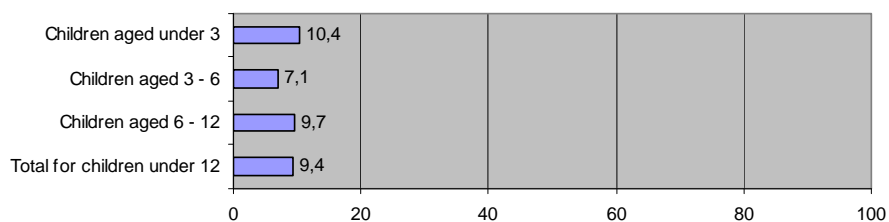
The differences become even more stark if we look at whether the parents work: 88.4% of children in families with two non-working parents are at increased risk of poverty. The risk is also very high for children in one-parent families where the parent does not work: 45.0%.

Another factor is the *intensiveness of the family's participation in employment*. We looked at how many months the adults in the family had worked, regardless of the number of hours they worked when they were in employment. The figures are striking. Almost 78% of children in families where no adults work at all are at increased risk of poverty. Where the parents work for less than half of the potential time, the figure is 28.5%; where they work for between 50 and 100% of the potential time it is 9.2%; and where they work for all of the potential time it is 2%.

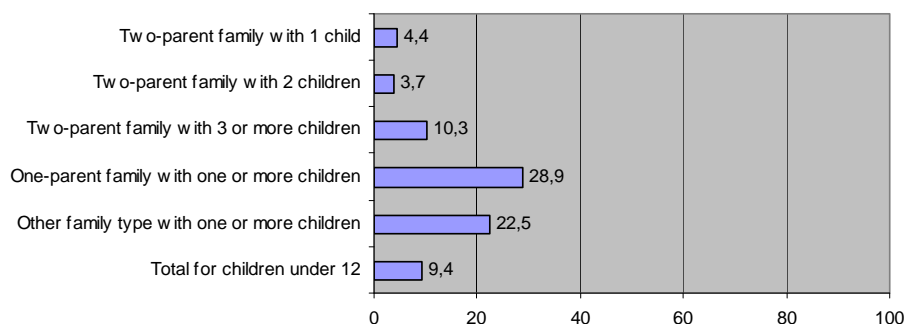
There also turn out to be major differences based on the *mother's country of origin*. Almost 43% of children whose mother originates from outside the EU are at increased risk of poverty.

Increased risk of poverty (1)

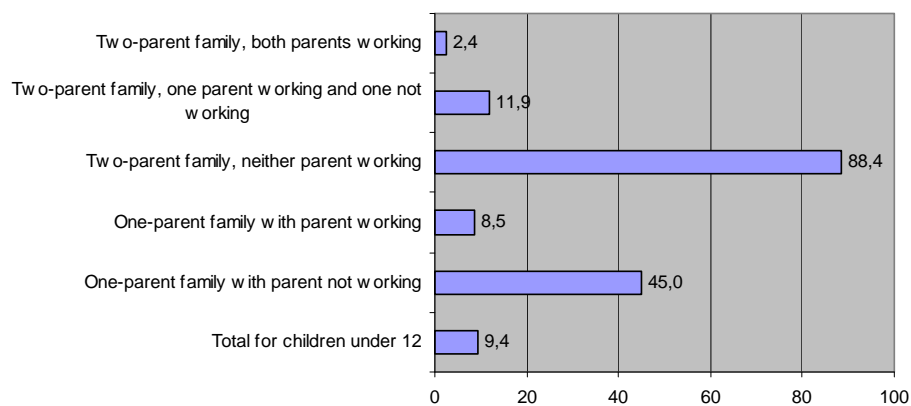
Bij age



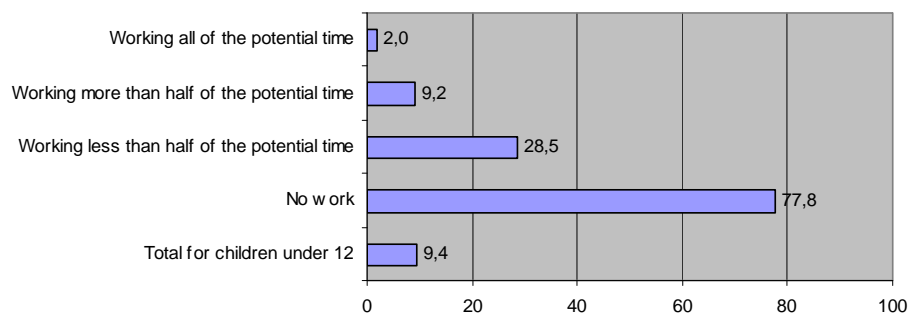
By family type



By family type and employment situation



By intensiveness of participation in employment (2)



Country of origin

4.2 Percentage of children under the age of 12 years living in a family with an income below the

poverty line by age group, family type, employment situation of the family and country of origin – Region of Flanders – 2005

Source: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, SILC – 2006

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

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

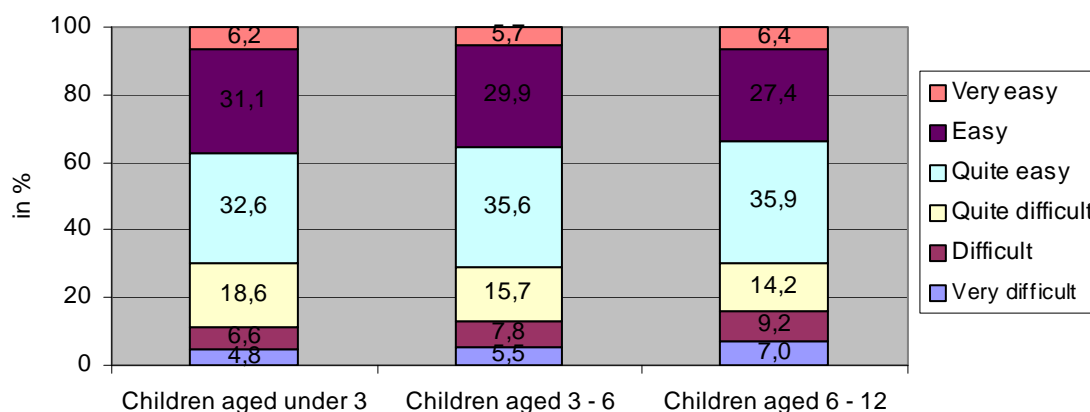
3. Making ends meet

This is difficult or very difficult for almost 16%; easy or very easy for 36%

A significant number of children live in a family where the reference person reports that it is difficult (8.2%) or very difficult (6.1%) to make ends meet. 35.1% live in families that manage easily or very easily. Figure 4.3 shows this by age group.

The scale of the problem of families with young children who are in precarious financial circumstances is also revealed when families are asked about whether they can cope with unexpected expenditure and housing costs. 17.5% of children live in a family that is unable to cope with unexpected costs. Housing costs are a heavy burden on the families of 18% of children.

Making ends meet



4.3 Children aged under 12: the family's experience of making ends meet on its monthly income – Region of Flanders – 2006 (percentages)

Source: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, SILC – 2006

4. Non-monetary deprivation

A week's annual holiday: not taken for granted

In addition to the monetary indicators, the SILC survey included a number of *non-monetary indicators*. Table 4.4 presents four such indicators: being able to afford one week's holiday a year; being able to afford to eat meat, chicken or fish; being able to afford to entertain family or friends; and being able to heat the home adequately.

It is striking that almost 17% of the children live in a family where the reference person reports that the family cannot afford to *take a week's holiday every year*.

Only a very small number of children live in a family that cannot afford to *eat meat, chicken or fish every other day* (or a vegetarian equivalent).

Over 7% live in a family that cannot afford to *entertain family or friends at least once a month* and almost 8% live in a family that has difficulty *heating the home* adequately.

There is little difference between the age groups. Slightly more children in the 3 to 6 age group live in families which cannot afford to take a week's annual holiday or entertain family or friends. Slightly more of the older children live in families which cannot afford to heat their home adequately.

Non-monetary deprivation				
	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3 - 6	Children aged 6 - 12	Total (N=1 125)
The family cannot afford to take one week's annual holiday	15.6	14.5	18.1	16.6
The family cannot afford to eat meat, chicken or fish (or a vegetarian equivalent) every other day	2.1	1.7	3.4	2.7
The family cannot afford to have friends or family round for a drink or a meal at least once a month	6.7	5.3	8.5	7.3
The family cannot afford to heat their home adequately	6.2	9.4	10.5	8.9

4.4 Children aged under 12: extent to which families cannot afford certain things – Region of Flanders – 2006 (percentages)

Source: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, SILC – 2006

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

5.1. Children for whom guaranteed child benefit is paid

A small number of minors

Guaranteed child benefit is awarded when the adults responsible for the care of a child do not have enough to live on and are not entitled to support from any other child benefit scheme for employees, public servants or the self-employed. Those who are in receipt of the minimum income get this automatically without a means test.

At the end of 2007, guaranteed child benefit was being paid for 3 858 minors, i.e. 0.6% of children under the age of 18. This was a decrease of almost 9% from 2007 (see Table 4.5).

	Guaranteed child benefit			
	Children aged under 6	Children aged 6 - 12	Children aged 12 - 18	Total
2006	1 756	1 350	1 133	4 239
2007	1 606	1 209	1 043	3 858

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

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

5.2. Children in families with income from maintenance

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

Maintenance	
Children aged under 3	3.0
Children aged 3 - 6	11.1

Children aged 6 - 12	11.8
Children aged under 12	9.9

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

Source: Antwerp University, Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy

5.3. Children in families receiving the guaranteed minimum income

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

Guaranteed minimum income	
Children in families receiving the guaranteed minimum income	0,5%
Average amount per month	599.80 euro

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

Source: Antwerp University, Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy

6. Children in underprivileged families

A small but growing number of children live in underprivileged families

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

Six *selection criteria* have been derived from this definition, on the basis of which 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*, *housing* and *health*. If a family fulfils three or more criteria, it is considered to be underprivileged.

All families with a child born between 1 January 2008 and 31 December 2008 were assessed in accordance with the 6 criteria, and each underprivileged family was asked for information in connection with the assessment criteria.

7.6% of children born in 2008 (in the Region of Flanders) were born into an underprivileged family (provisional figure). This percentage represents 5 207 children in the Region of Flanders. The percentage of children born into underprivileged families has slightly increased since 2007 (see Table 4.8).

Figure 4.9 shows the trend since 2000. In 2008 there were almost 3% more children living in underprivileged families than in 2000.

Underprivileged families		
	2007	2008*
Antwerp	10.1	10.5
Flemish Brabant	3.6	5.2
West Flanders	5.9	5.2
East Flanders	6.7	6.6
Limburg	9.0	9.1

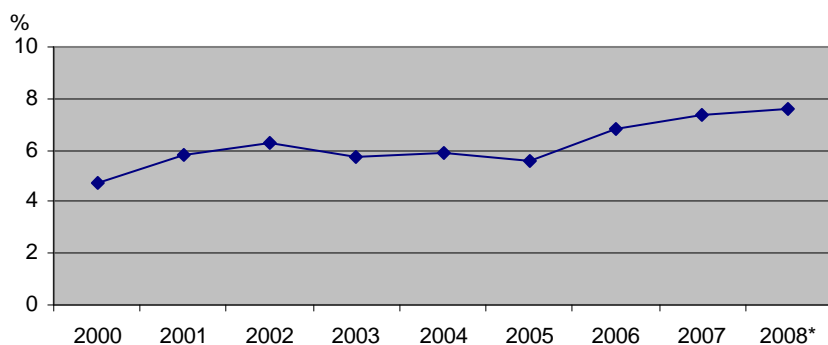
Total	7.4	7.6
-------	-----	------------

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

Source: *Child and Family – IKAROS*

* *Provisional figures*

Trend in underprivileged families



4.9 Trend in the percentage of children born into an underprivileged family each year from 2000 onwards – Region of Flanders

Source: *Child and Family – IKAROS*

* *Provisional figure*

The percentage of underprivileged families varies by province. The highest percentage of underprivileged families with young children, namely 10.5%, is found in the province of Antwerp, and the lowest in Flemish Brabant and West Flanders, with 5.2%. The records show 9.1% underprivileged families in the province of Limburg and 6.6% in East Flanders. The sharp increase in Flemish Brabant from 3.6 to 5.2% (provisional figures) is striking (see Table 4.8).

Half of the children born into an underprivileged family live in one of six towns and cities. There were 2 616 babies born into underprivileged families in these urban areas, representing 50.2% of all babies born to underprivileged families. The six towns and cities where they live are Antwerp, Ghent, Leuven, Mechelen, Genk and Menen. The metropolitan areas of Antwerp and Ghent account for over 30% and almost 8% respectively of all children born into families living in deprivation. Leuven comes in third place with 3.2%.

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

Not having Belgian nationality undeniably increases the chance of being born into an underprivileged family.

Deprivation and origin (1)

	Babies born into underprivileged families	Babies born into families that are not underprivileged
Belgian origin	41.6	81.6
Moroccan origin	14.1	3.8

Turkish origin	9.2	2.5
Other origin	34.7	11.2
Not known	0.4	0.9
Total	100.0	100.0

4.10 Babies born in 2008 into underprivileged families and families which are not underprivileged by nationality of the mother at the time of her birth – Region of Flanders (percentages)

Source: *Child and Family – IKAROS*

(1) *Provisional figures*

Most underprivileged families face a *complex combination of problems*. A low monthly income is the criterion indicated the most (for 79.6% of children in underprivileged families). A low level of education and a poor employment situation of the parents are indicated for 78.8% and 76.0% respectively of the children in underprivileged families. Poor housing is reported for almost 51% of underprivileged families. Almost 30% of the children have developmental problems. Health problems score lowest (see Table 4.11).

The records also show that in the case of 50.6% of children born into an underprivileged family, the family is living in very poor socio-economic circumstances. This means that these families are poorly situated in terms of income, education and employment.

Problems of deprivation

	2007	2008*
Low monthly income	76.3	79.6
Low level of education of one or both parents	79.1	78.8
Poor employment situation of parents	75.0	76.0
Poor housing	50.8	50.7
Problems in children's development	33.1	29.8
Health problems	22.0	22.0

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

Source: *Child and Family – IKAROS*

* *Provisional figures*

7. Children living in families without permanent residence status

Affects 0.6% of children

Child and Family's own database, IKAROS, records whether or not the family has permanent residency. Families without permanent residence status are mainly those who have applied for asylum and those who are living in the country illegally.

454 babies were born into families without permanent residence status in 2008, or 0.6% of births in that year (provisional figures). This is a slightly lower percentage than in 2007. Over 45% of these children live in the province of Antwerp (see Table 4.12).

Births into families without permanent residence status

	2007		2008*	
	Number	% of births	Number	% of births
Antwerp	239	1.2	207	1.0
Flemish Brabant	62	0.5	43	0.4
West Flanders	71	0.6	62	0.5

East Flanders	110	0.7	90	0.5
Limburg	53	0.6	52	0.6
Total	535	0.8	454	0.6

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

Source: *Child and Family – IKAROS*

* Provisional figures

8. Residential status

Most young children live in a home that their parents own

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

The family usually owns the home (79.4%). This percentage increases as the child grows older (see Table 4.13).

It is striking that children whose families rent their home at market rates or at a reduced rent are at much greater risk of poverty: 28.2% compared with only 4.7% of children whose family own their own home (SILC - 2006).

Residential status				
	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3 - 6	Children aged 6 - 12	Total
Owner or living rent free	72.1	80.1	82.8	79.4
Tenant (market price or reduced rent)	26.7	19.3	17.1	20.0
Free home	1.2	0.6	0.1	0.5
Total	100.0 (N=308)	100.0 (N=251)	100.0 (N=566)	100.0 (N=1 125)

4.13 Children aged under 12: children living in a home owned or rented by their parents – Region of Flanders – 2006 (percentages)

Source: *FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, SILC – 2006*

9. Consumer goods in the home

The presence or absence of certain consumer goods in the home teaches us something about the standard of living of families with young children, but it should not be forgotten that the families' own priorities play a role in whether or not they purchase these goods. Some of the goods in Table 4.14 are also indicators of the families' opportunities to communicate and associated opportunities to develop.

Consumer goods			
	Present	Not present for financial reasons	Not present for other reasons
Colour TV	99.2	0.2	0,5
Computer	90.2	4.3	5,5
Washing machine	99.0	0.5	0,5
Car	92.8	4.3	2,9

Mobile phone	98.4			
			1.6	
Internet connection	83.4	6.7		9.9
Landline phone	79.8	6.0		14.3

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

Source: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, SILC – 2006

10. The European context

10.1. Increased risk of poverty

The 'at-risk-of-poverty threshold' (Eurostat) means that the family's disposable income per person is less than 60% of the median family income of the country they live in.

Information on numbers of children living below this threshold in the EU-15 countries is only available for the broad age group 0 to 16 years, no further details are available (see Table 4.15).

Belgium comes in the middle of the range. The Mediterranean countries have much higher percentages of children under 16 living in families at increased risk of poverty. The Nordic countries have much lower figures.

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

Children under 18 at increased risk of poverty (1)

	2004	2005	2006	2007
Belgium	18*	18	15	17
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>				
Germany	NA	12	12	14*
France	15	14	14	16
Luxembourg	18	19	20	20
The Netherlands	NA	15	14	14
<i>Nordic countries</i>				
Finland	10	10	10	11
Denmark	9	10	10	10
Sweden	12	9	15	12
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>				
Greece	21	20	23	23
Italy	25	24	25	25
Portugal	24	23	20*	21
Spain	24	24	24	24
Austria	15	15	15	15
The United Kingdom	NA	22	24	23
Ireland	22	23	22	19
EU-15	NA	18	18	19*

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

Source: Eurostat, website

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

* Provisional figures

NA: not available

Families at increased risk of poverty (1)				
	One-parent families	Two-parent families		
	with dependent children	with 1 dependent child	with 2 dependent children	with 3 or more dependent children
Belgium	40	11	11	18
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>				
Germany	33	11	12	18
France	38	14	15	29
Luxembourg	56	18	21	31
The Netherlands	50	9	12	26
<i>Nordic countries</i>				
Finland	31	8	8	17
Denmark	26	4	5	16
Sweden	39	6	7	15
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>				
Greece	36	24	28	45
Italy	39	24	32	50
Portugal	56*	22*	33*	52*
Spain	45	19	29	48
Austria	39	12	16	27
The United Kingdom	57	19	19	38
Ireland	63	16	22	33
EU-15	42**	16**	20**	31**

4.16 Percentage of families at increased risk of poverty after social transfers, by family type – 2006

Source: Eurostat, website

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

* Provisional figures

** Estimated figures

CHAPTER 5 CHILDREN AND CHILD-REARING ENVIRONMENTS OUTSIDE THE HOME

The responsibility for bringing up children is shared between the family and society and the important role played by child care in this is being increasingly recognised. Child care is the third child-rearing environment, alongside the family and school.

This chapter looks in detail at the use of child care for pre-school children and for school children, covering the extent of child care use and whose care the children are entrusted into. We present data on the whole population of children using formal child care from the records kept by Child and Family of children attending all child care facilities.

We look at child care from the children's perspective and examine their wellbeing and level of engagement at their child care facilities.

A small number of children receive special support through special education, through the special youth welfare service, or through social services which are subsidised by Child and Family. First, we outline the situation in Flanders and then compare this with the situation in the countries of the EU-15.

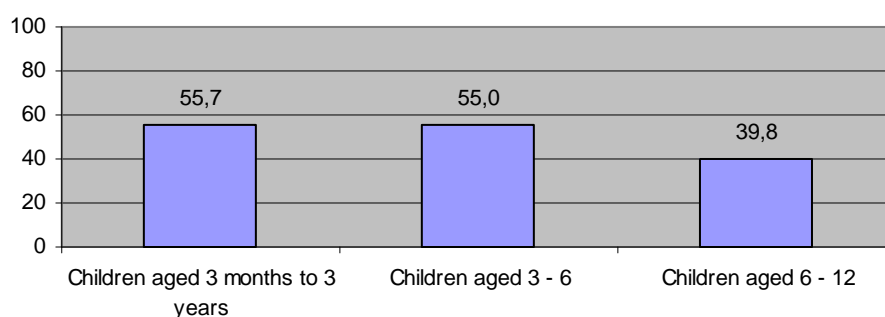
1. Children and child care

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

Young children spend a significant amount of time at child care facilities. Figure 5.1 shows the percentage of *users of child care* in the spring of 2004 (more recent figures are not available), and this is followed by an examination of the use of child care for the under-3s and for children aged 3 to 12.

Data on the *use of formal child care facilities* are available up to 2008. Section 1.2.2 deals with the use of formal child care at length and with trends in its use.

Regular use of child care for children under the age of 12



5.1 Regular use of child care for children under the age of 12 in the Region of Flanders by age – spring 2004 (percentages of all children)

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

1.1.1. Children aged under 3

General

Almost 56% of children aged 3 months to 3 years make “regular” use of child care

55.7% of children aged between 3 months and 3 years are regularly, i.e. *for at least one continuous period of 5 hours per week*, looked after by relatives, a child minder or a child care centre (spring 2004). Then there is another group of 10.1% who make limited use of child care. 34.2% of children aged 3 months to 3 years are not looked after by relatives, a child minder or a child care centre.

Regular use of child care in 2004 had increased by 3.5% since 2002 (see Table 5.2).

Use of child care		
	2002	2004
Regular use	52.2	55.7
Limited use	11.1	10.1
No use	36.7	34.2
Total	100.0	100.0

5.2 Use of child care for children aged between 3 months and 3 years in the Region of Flanders (percentages)
Sources: *Child and Family, Surveys on the use of child care for children aged under 3, autumn 2002 and spring 2004*

By age

Use of child care is much lower for babies up to the age of 6 months and for children over the age of 2½ years; over 60% of children between the age of 1 year and 2½ years use child care regularly

The use of child care varies with age. Regular use of child care is much lower under the age of 6 months (see Table 5.3 and Figure 5.4). Table 5.3 and Figure 5.4 also include the age group 1 month to 3 months. Below 3 months regular use of child care is rather exceptional. Between 1 and 2½ years, regular use is above 60%, with a peak at 1½ to 2 years. Regular use of child care for babies aged 3 to 6 months had fallen compared with the autumn of 2002. It had risen for the other age groups; with a particularly marked increase in the 6 months to 1 year age group from 52.5% to 59.8%.

	Use of child care by age			
	2002	2004		
	Regular use of child care	Regular use of child care	Limited use of child care	No child care
1 to 3 months	8.8	14.5	16.0	69.5
3 to 6 months	34.8	32.7	12.0	55.2
6 months to 1 year	52.5	59.8	9.3	30.9
1 year to 1½ years	56.9	61.3	8.5	30.2
1½ years to 2 years	61.4	62.7	10.0	27.3
2 years to 2½ years	56.1	61.3	8.3	30.4
Total 3 months to 2½ years	54.2	58.2	9.4	32.4
2½ years to 3 years	41.8	45.1	13.5	41.4
Total 3 months to 3 years	52.2	55.7	10.1	34.2

5.3 Use of child care for children aged between 1 month and 3 years in the Region of Flanders, by age – autumn 2002 and spring 2004 (percentages of all children)

Sources: *Child and Family, Surveys on the use of child care for children aged under 3, autumn 2002 and spring 2004*

Use of child care by age

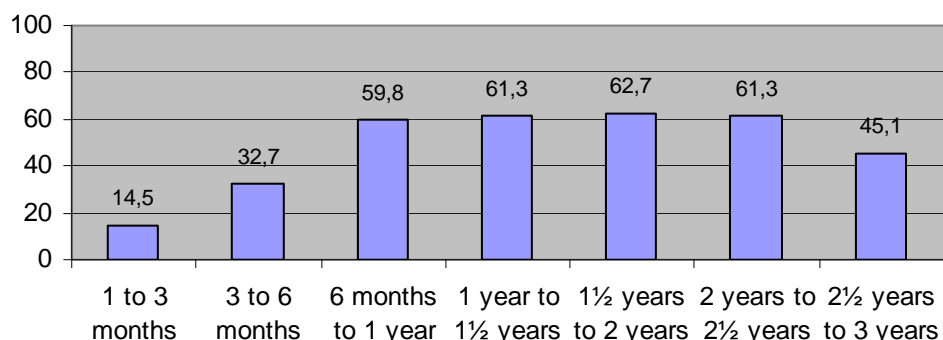


Figure 5.4 Regular use of child care for children aged between 1 month and 3 years in the Region of Flanders, by age – spring 2004 (percentages of all children).

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

By disadvantaged groups

Ethnic minority children and children in underprivileged families make far less use of child care, but use by these groups has also increased significantly

Use of child care by ethnic minority children and children from underprivileged families is much lower than in the population as a whole.

Only 23.7% of ethnic minority children and 21.7% of *children in underprivileged families* use child care on a regular basis. The lowest rate of use is noted for ethnic minority children who also belong to underprivileged families (12.7%). Compared with autumn 2002, regular use of child care by ethnic minority children and children in underprivileged families had also increased significantly in 2004.

Children in one-parent families also make less use of child care than the general population: 48% of these children were making regular use of child care in spring 2004 (see Table 5.5 and Figure 5.6).

Use of child care by disadvantaged groups

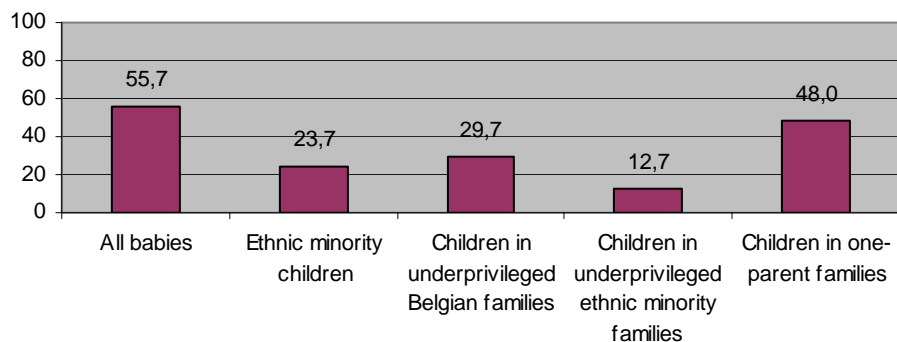
	2002		2004	
	Regular use	Regular use	Limited use	No use
Ethnic minority children	19.6	23.7	6.7	69.5
Babies born into underprivileged families	18.8	21.7	5.9	72.4
<i>of which</i>				
<i>Children in underprivileged Belgian families</i>	26.8	29.7	3.4	66.9
<i>Children in underprivileged ethnic minority families</i>	8.1	12.7	7.9	79.4
Children in one-parent families	NA	48.0	11.4	40.6
All babies	52.2	55.7	10.1	34.2

5.5 Ethnic minority children, children in underprivileged families and children in one-parent families: use of child care for children aged between 3 months and 3 years in the Region of Flanders – autumn 2002 and spring 2004 (percentages)

Sources: *Child and Family, Surveys on the use of child care for children aged under 3, autumn 2002 and spring 2004*

NA: not available

Use of child care by disadvantaged groups



5.6 Regular use of child care for children aged between 3 months and 3 years in the Region of Flanders by disadvantaged groups – spring 2004 (percentages of all children).

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

Intensity

Almost 71% of the children who are cared for on a regular basis are cared for part-time (see Table 5.7). Part-time child care had increased slightly in comparison with 2002 (+0.7%). 35.4% of regular users sometimes make use of *atypical child care*, that is to say care before 7 a.m., after 6 p.m., night and weekend child care or for more than 11 hours per day. Use of atypical child care had also increased since 2002 (31.4% in 2002).

Length of child care

	2002	2004
Full-time	29.8	29.1
Part-time	70.2	70.9
Total	100.0	100.0

5.7 Intensity of child care per week among children aged 3 months to 3 years who regularly go to child care (= at least one continuous period of 5 hours per week) in the Region of Flanders (percentages)

Sources: *Child and Family, Surveys on the use of child care for children aged under 3, autumn 2002 and spring 2004*

1.1.2. Children aged 3 - 12

General

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

55% of children aged 3-6 and almost 40% of children aged 6-12 are cared for *during the week* by persons or facilities other than their parents (see Figure 5.1 and Table 5.8). That means that in the course of a week they are cared for at least once before school, after school or on a Wednesday afternoon. Use of out-of-school care for children aged 3 to 6 years had increased by 1.4% since autumn 2002. Use for children aged 6 to 12 years had decreased by 0.7% (see Table 5.8).

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

Use of out-of-school care

	2002	2004
Children aged 3 - 6	53.6	55.0

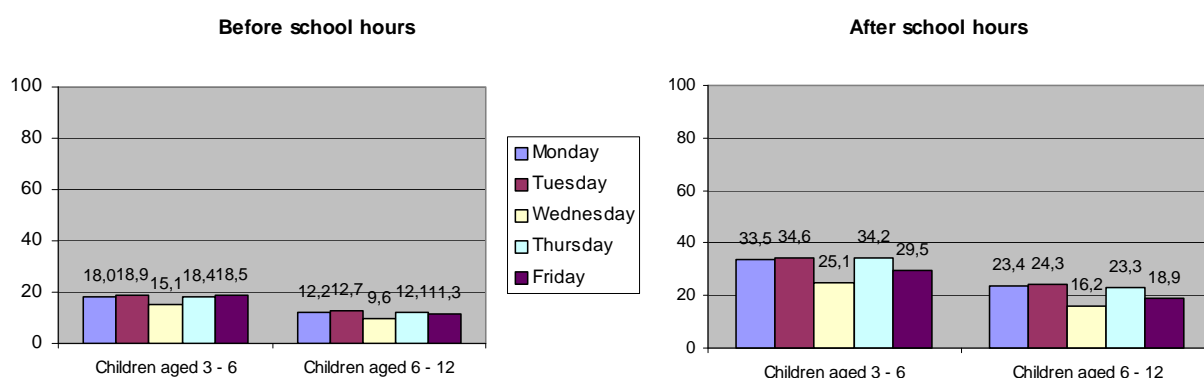
Children aged 6 - 12	40.5	39.8
Children aged 3 - 12	44.7	44.6

5.8 Use of out-of-school child care for children aged 3 to 12 years in the Region of Flanders (percentages)
Sources: *Child and Family, Surveys on the use of out-of-school child care for children aged 3 to 12 years, autumn 2002 and spring 2004*

By time of day

Child care is mainly used after school. Figure 5.9 shows the use of child care per day and by the time of day.

Out-of school child care by time of day



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

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

Intensity of use of out-of-school child care

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

We look at intensity of use over a week. 14.3% of the children being cared for make intense use of out-of-school care, that is 4 or 5 times before school and 4 or 5 times after school. 17% only make occasional use of care, at most once before school and once after school (see Table 5.10).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.2.1. Informal or formal child care?

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

Most children aged 3 months to 3 years who are cared for outside the home on a regular basis are cared for by family day care providers or in child care facilities recorded in the Child and Family records.

In 2004, over 64% of the children aged 3 months to 3 years who regularly used child care were being cared for by a child minder affiliated to a child minders' service, a subsidised day care centre, private child minder, mini-crèche or private day care centre. 34.5% were being cared for under informal arrangements, mostly by grandparents (31.0%). The proportion of informal child care fell slightly between 2002 and 2004 (see Table 5.11 and Figure 5.12).

Informal child care is the most important category for *children aged 3 to 12 years*: 45.5% of children in this age group are cared for by grandparents or in other informal arrangements. Grandparents are clearly the most important providers of informal child care accounting for 35.1%.

Child care provided by and at the school comes in second place, with 34.5%. Formal child care in facilities recorded in the Child and Family records accounts for 17.1%. Out-of-school child care initiatives (IBOs) account for 11.5%.

Between 2002 and 2004, there was a relative decrease in informal child care and a relative increase in child care provided by and at schools. Table 5.11 shows use of child care for children in the age groups 3 to 6 years and 6 to 12 years by type of child care.

Use of child care by type of child care

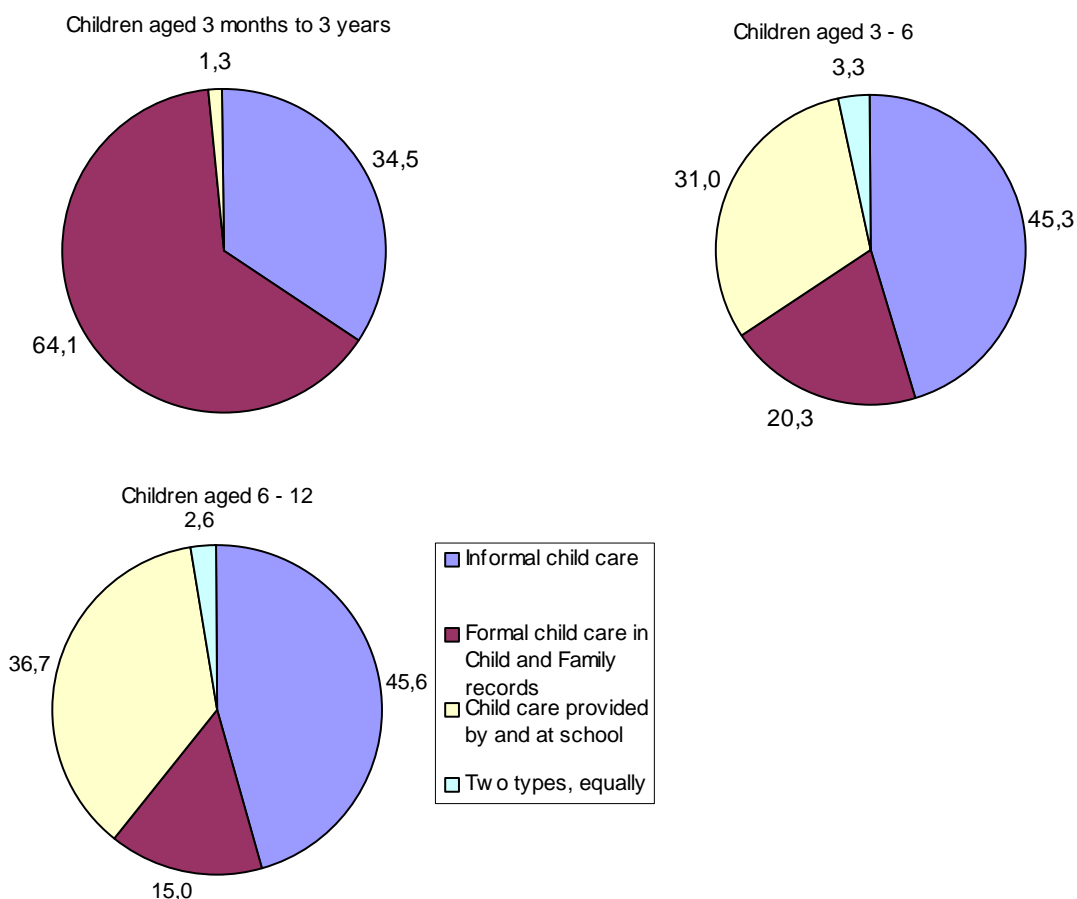
	2002	2004
Children aged 3 months to 3 years		
Informal child care	37.4	34.5
Formal child care in Child and Family records	61.7	64.1
Child care provided by and at school	0.9	1.3
Total	100.0	100.0
Children aged 3 to 6 years		
Informal child care	49.8	45.3
Formal child care in Child and Family records	21.0	20.3
Child care provided by and at school	25.9	31.0
Two types, equally important	3.3	3.3
Total	100.0	100.0
Children aged 6 to 12 years		
Informal child care	51.9	45.6
Formal child care in Child and Family records	15.5	15.0
Child care provided by and at school	30.0	36.7
Two types, equally important	2.6	2.6
Total	100.0	100.0
Total number of children aged 3-12		
Informal child care	51.1	45.5
Formal child care in Child and Family records	17.6	17.1
Child care provided by and at school	28.4	34.5
Two types, equally important	2.9	2.9

Total	100.0	100.0
-------	-------	-------

5.11 Children aged 3 months to 12 years who regularly use child care, by type of child care – Region of Flanders (percentages)

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

Use of child care by type of child care



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

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

1.2.2. Children in formal child care

Use of formal child care increasing. The main increase is found in the use of mini-crèches and private day-care centres

General

The figures on the use of formal child care are based on a register of children attending and present at all formal child care facilities in the week beginning 1 February as recorded by Child and Family*. Unlike the figures presented in section 1 and section 1.2.1, these are figures for children attending all child care facilities recorded by Child and Family, including facilities in Brussels.

The total number of children attending these facilities is compared with the total number of children in the Region of Flanders plus a proportion of the children in Brussels (30%, in accordance with a politically prescribed convention).

The official population statistics only include the number of children in the *de jure* population (see chapter 1, sections 1.1 - 1.3). We are able to estimate how many children there are who are outside the *de jure* population from Child and Family's records (IKAROS). This group of children was added to the official population figures to calculate the percentages.

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

Use of formal child care for children under 12

Use of formal child care is highest in the 1 to 2 years age group: 52.6% of children in this age group use formal child care facilities. Almost 45% of children aged 2 to 12 months use formal child care. This drops down to 36.2% between 2 and 3 years, partly due to the fact that some children are now attending out-of-school child care initiatives (see Figure 5.13).

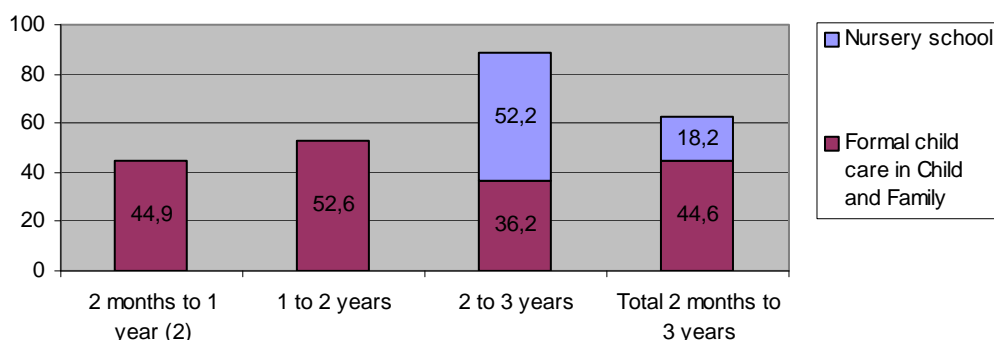
From the age of 3 years just under 15% of the children are still using formal child care facilities as recorded in the Child and Family records (see Figure 5.14).

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

Children in the 2 ½ to 3 years age group may be using both day care and the school system. In the week beginning 1 February 2008, 52.2% of children aged 2 to 3 years were registered at a nursery school. When they are added to the figure for children using formal child care facilities recorded in the Child and Family records, it turns out that almost 88.3% of children aged 2 to 3 are using one of the two systems. Taking the total population of children aged 2 months to 3 years in Flanders, this means that almost 63% use one of the two systems: 44.6% use formal child care and 18.2% go to nursery school *.

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

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



5.13 Children aged 2 months to 3 years attending formal child care facilities recorded in the Child and Family records and nursery school in Flanders by age – 2008 (percentages)

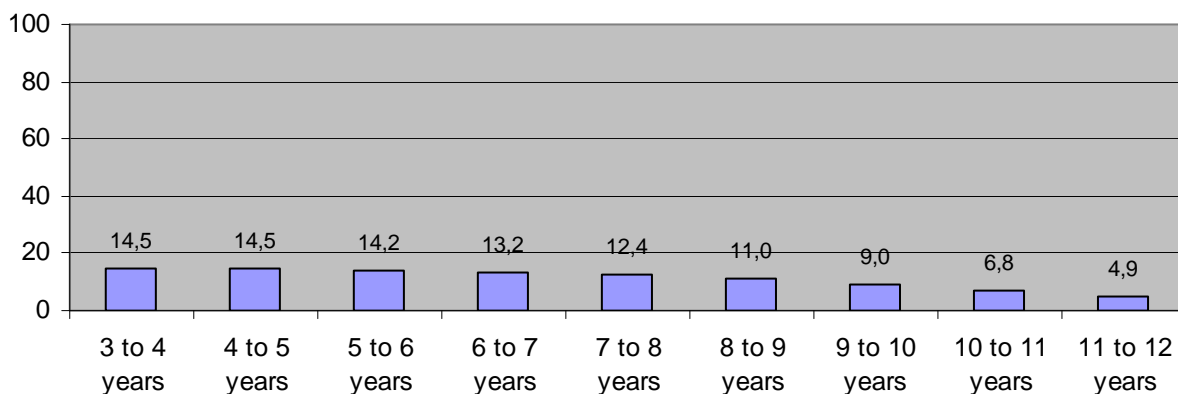
Sources: *Child and Family, children's attendance records (week beginning 1 February)*

Education Department, school attendance figures on 01.02.08

(1) Percentage calculated on the number of children living in the Region of Flanders and 30% of children living in the Brussels Region on 01.01.08. The number of children from the official population statistics was increased with the addition of an estimated figure from the IKAROS database, so that children outside the 'de jure' population were also counted

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

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



5.14 Children aged 3 to 12 years attending formal child care facilities recorded in the Child and Family records in Flanders by age – 2008 (percentages)

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

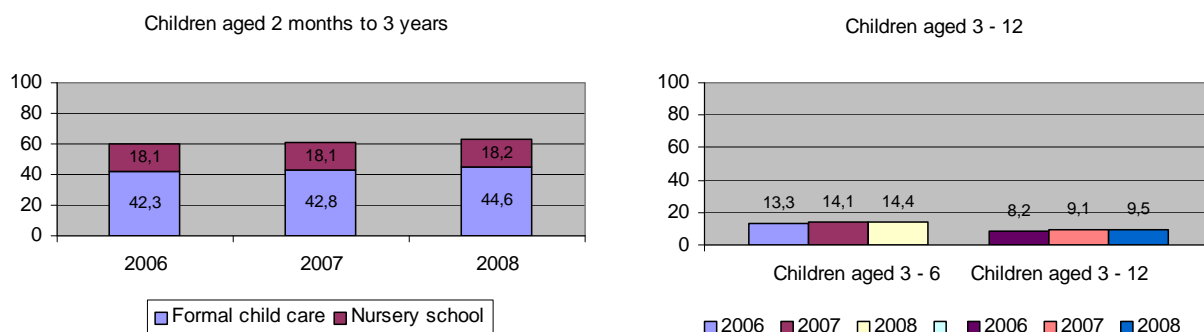
(1) Percentage calculated on the number of children living in the Region of Flanders and 30% of children living in the Brussels Region on 01.01.08. An estimated figure from the IKAROS database was added to the number of children from the official population statistics, so that children outside the ‘de jure’ population were also counted

Trend in the use of formal child care and nursery school

Use of formal child care for children aged 2 months to 3 years increased by 1.9% from 2007 to 2008, showing that the rising curve is continuing.

There was also a slight increase in the use of formal child care for children in the age groups 3 to 6 years and 6 to 12 years from 2007 to 2008 (+ 0.3% and + 0.4%) (see Figure 5.15).

Trend in the use of formal child care (1)



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

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

(1) Percentage calculated on the number of children living in the Region of Flanders and 30% of children living in the Brussels Region on 1/1. An estimated figure from the IKAROS database was added to the number of children from the official population statistics, so that children outside the ‘de jure’ population were also counted

By province

Figure 5.16 shows the use of formal child care facilities recorded in the Child and Family records and nursery school for children *under the age of 3 years* by province.

Use of *formal child care* by children *under the age of 3* is highest in West Flanders (53.7%). It is significantly lower in the provinces of Antwerp (38.7%) and Limburg (39.3%), with Flemish Brabant (45.1%) and East Flanders (46.3%) coming in-between.

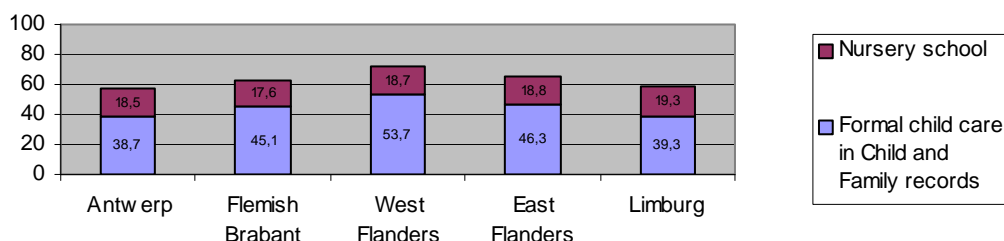
Use of *nursery school* for children in the 2 months to 3 years age group does not vary much by province: it fluctuates between 17.6% in Flemish Brabant and 19.3% in Limburg.

Figure 5.17 shows the use of formal child care in facilities recorded in the Child and Family records for children aged 3 to 12 years.

In the *3 to 6 years* age group, use of formal child care in facilities recorded in the Child and Family records is highest in West Flanders (20.5%). Limburg has the second highest use in this age group (19.2%), followed by East Flanders (14.4%). The provinces of Antwerp and Flemish Brabant have the lowest use of formal child care in facilities recorded in the Child and Family records (12.1% and 11.7% respectively).

In the *6 to 12* age group, use is highest in Limburg (13.8%). West Flanders has the second highest use in this age group (11.0%), Use by this age group is 9.1% in East Flanders and over 8% in the provinces of Antwerp and Flemish Brabant

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



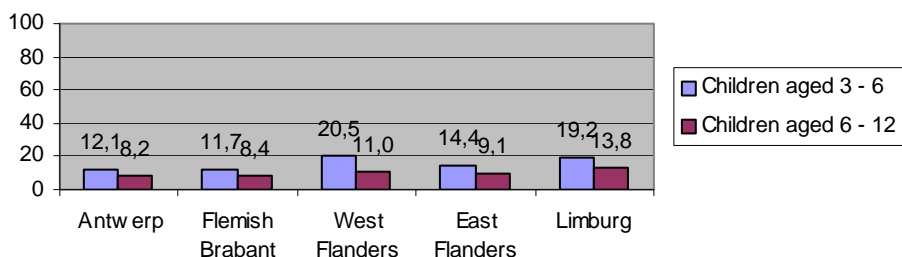
5.16 Children aged 2 months to 3 years attending formal child care facilities recorded in the Child and Family records and nursery school by province – 2008 (percentages)

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

Education Department, school attendance figures on 01.02.08

(1) Percentage calculated on the number of children living in the Region of Flanders and 30% of children living in the Brussels Region on 01.01.08. An estimated figure from the IKAROS database was added to the number of children from the official population statistics

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



5.17 Children aged 3 to 12 years attending formal child care facilities recorded in the Child and Family records by province and age group – 2007 (percentages)

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

(1) Percentage calculated on the number of children living in the Region of Flanders and 30% of children living in the Brussels Region on 01.01.08. The number of children from the official population statistics was increased with the addition of an estimated figure from the IKAROS database

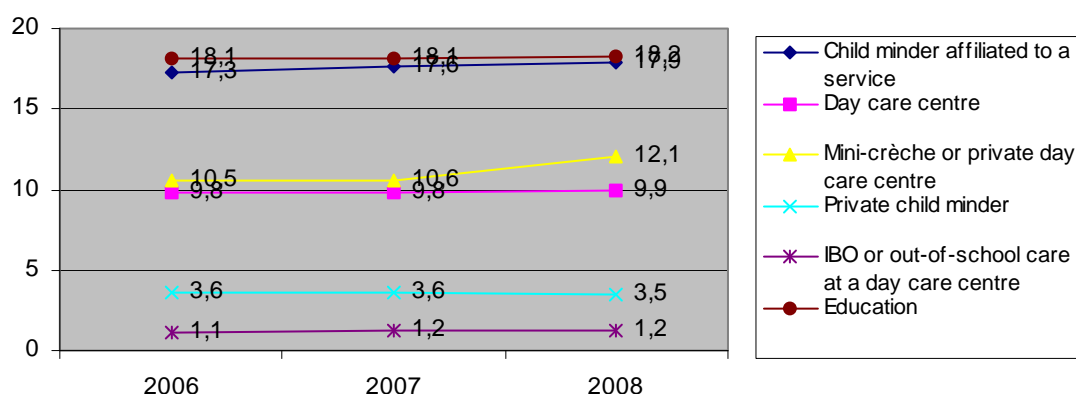
By type of child care facility

For children under the age of 3 years, the type of child care used the most is a child minder affiliated to a child minders' service: nearly 18% of all children aged 2 months to 3 years are cared for by a child minder affiliated to one of these services. Public day care centres take 9.9% of these children. Private day care centres and mini-crèches take 12.1%.

Figure 5.18 shows the trend since 2006, when attendance records started to be kept. Care provided by child minders affiliated to a child minders' service has risen slightly in recent years; care provided in mini-crèches and private day care centres has increased more markedly. Care provided in public day care centres, out-of-school child care initiatives (IBOs) and nursery schools remained virtually unchanged.

The main type of child care for children over the age of 3 is the out-of-school child care initiative (IBO) or specific out-of-school facilities at day care centres (see Table 5.19). Use of IBOs or specific out-of-school child care facilities increased slightly from 2006 to 2008 (over 1%).

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



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

Sources: *Child and Family, children's attendance records (week beginning 1 February)*
Education Department, school attendance figures on 1 February of the year in question

(1) Percentage calculated on the number of children living in the Region of Flanders and 30% of children living in the Brussels Region on 1 January of the year in question. An estimated figure from the IKAROS database was added to the number of children from the official population statistics, so that children outside the 'de jure' population were also counted

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

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

Children aged 3 - 6	
IBO or out-of-school care at a day care centre	10.8
Day care centre or child minder affiliated to a service	2.0
Private sector	1.6
Total	14.4
Children aged 6 - 12	
IBO or out-of-school care at a day care centre (2)	8.2
Child minder affiliated to a service	0.6
Private sector	0.7
Total	9.5

5.19 Children aged 3 to 12 years attending formal child care facilities in Flanders, as recorded in the Child and Family records by age group and type of facility – 2008 (percentages)

Sources: *Child and Family, children's attendance records (week beginning 1 February)*
Education Department, school attendance figures on 01.02.08

(1) Percentage calculated on the number of children living in the Region of Flanders and 30% of children living in the Brussels Region on 01.01.08. An estimated figure from the IKAROS database was added to the number of children from the official population statistics

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

1.3. Taking care of sick children

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

A sick child creates a difficult situation for families who use child care facilities. In February 2004, 16.8% of children aged 1 month to 3 years were ill during the week of the survey. The use of child care changed for almost 53% of the children who were ill. Many parents make arrangements within the immediate or extended family, by taking leave, days off in lieu or social leave, by working at home or by calling on the grandparents (see Table 5.20).

Children who normally go to a day care centre experience considerably more changes when they are ill (registered day care centre 71.7%; private day care centre 63.6%). Children who are normally looked after by grandparents or other relatives experience the least change in child care (32.8%).

There is no information available on the child care arrangements for school children when they are ill.

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

Impact on the child care	
Child care arrangements not changed	47.3
Child care arrangements changed	52.7
Total	100.0
Nature of the change (1)	
Non-working partner looked after the child	13.5

Parent worked at home	6.8
Parent took social leave	24.3
Parent took leave or days off in lieu	15.0
Grandparents looked after the child	47.2
Relatives, neighbours, acquaintances looked after the child	4.2
Used service that provides care for sick children	3.0
Child care instead of school	1.4
Other	11.3

5.20 Care in the event of illness of children aged between 1 month and 3 years who normally use child care facilities or attend nursery school in the Region of Flanders – spring 2004 (percentages)

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

(1) Several answers possible

1.4. Wellbeing and engagement

1.4.1. Going to the child care facility and coming back

Keen to go to the child care facility, and even more keen to come home

The research study “Care of Young Children” conducted by the Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy included a number of questions on children’s feelings about going to and coming home from their child care facility.

For pre-school child care, questions were asked about children from the age of 12 months.

Table 5.21 shows the scores on the items the parents were asked about.

Most parents reported that their child is relaxed and lively or has a lot of energy when going to their child care. Aggressive or quiet and withdrawn behaviour was rarely reported.

Saying goodbye seems to be a bit more difficult but is still very positive. When the child is picked up from the child care, the questions on the children’s behaviour were answered in even more positive terms.

Wellbeing and child care

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Totally agree
On going to their child care					
Child is relaxed (N=767)	0.8	2.1	5.5	47.2	44.2
Saying goodbye is difficult (N=742)	41.9	35.4	7.8	8.5	6.3
Child is interested in what is going to happen (N=751)	2.3	5.5	13.2	49.7	29.3
Child is aggressive, cries or struggles or is very quiet and withdrawn (N=757)	55.2	30.0	7.5	6.7	0.4
Child is lively, has a lot of energy (N=768)	0.1	1.7	7.4	48.6	42.2
On coming back from their child care					
Child is listless (N=778)	55.4	38.3	3.0	3.0	0.4
Child is interested in what is happening in his environment (N=777)	0.1	1.8	4.5	51.9	41.7
Child does not look at parent, has little to say (N=756)	52.1	39.6	4.4	2.8	1.1
Child is relaxed (N=786)	0.5	2.7	5.1	52.7	39.1
Child is aggressive, cries or struggles or is very quiet and withdrawn (N=783)	58.7	31.5	5.6	4.0	0.1

5.21 Wellbeing and formal child care: mood and reactions of children aged 1 to 3 years when going to and coming back from their child care, as reported by their parents – 2005

Source: Antwerp University, Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy

1.4.2. While at the child care facility

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

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

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

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

21.0% of the children in *day care centres* or with a *child minder* who were assessed, were found to be in the "low engagement" zone, in other words they were not really active. 41.0% were moderately engaged; they were active without being really involved. 38.0% of the children were actively engaged or very actively engaged during the observation.

Of the children attending *out-of-school child care facilities*: 22.3% were found to have a low level of engagement, 34.0% a moderate level and 43.7% were actively engaged or very actively engaged (see Table 5.22). The average scores for engagement were clearly lower for the younger children than the older ones, going from 2.82 for the crawlers to 3.44 for the 6- to 12-year-olds (2004-2006; data broken down by age group data not yet available for the whole period).

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

Level of engagement at the child care facility			
	Children at day care centres and with child minders (N= 8 072)	Children at out-of-school child care facilities (N=2 588)	Total (N=10 660)
Low (1)	21.0	22.3	21.3
Moderate (2)	41.0	34.0	39.3
High (3)	38.0	43.7	39.4

5.22 Scores for level of engagement of children while they are at their child care facilities, for children at day care centres and with child minders and for children at out-of-school child care facilities – 2004-2/2009 (percentages)

Source: Experience-based Education Expertise Centre, KU Leuven, Final report 2009 (in preparation)

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

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

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

A situation of relatively high or very high wellbeing was noted for 49.4% of the children being cared for in a *day care centre* or with a *child minder*. They were obviously doing well at their child care facility. 6.1% of the children assessed fell into the “low wellbeing” zone. “Moderate wellbeing” was noted for 44.5% of the children.

Of the children attending *out-of-school child care facilities*, the assessment concluded that 4.6% had a low level of wellbeing, 41.0% moderate wellbeing and 54.4% a high level of wellbeing (see Table 5.23). Once again the average scores for wellbeing were found to be lower for the youngest children than the older children (2004-2006; data broken down by age group not yet available for the whole period).

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

5.23 Scores for level of wellbeing of children while they are at their child care facilities, for children at day care centres and with child minders and for children at out-of-school child care facilities – 2004-2/2009 (percentages)

Source: Experience-based Education Expertise Centre, KU Leuven, Final report 2009 (in preparation)

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

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

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

2. Special education

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

0.81% of children of nursery school age receive special nursery school provision, mainly of type 2: special education for children with a moderate or serious mental handicap.

In primary education 6.59% attend special schools. These are mainly type 1 – special education for children with minor mental handicaps; and type 8 – special education for children with speech, language and/or serious learning disorders (see Table 5.24).

Special education (1)		
	Nursery school	Primary school
Minor mental handicaps (type 1)	-	10 030
Moderate or serious mental handicaps (type 2)	1 101	3 559
Behavioural problems (type 3)	191	1 990
Physical handicap (type 4)	284	1 081
Visual impairment (type 6)	42	120
Hearing impairment (type 7)	332	877
Speech, language and/or serious learning disorders	-	9 483

(type 8)

Total number of children	1 950	27 140
Percentage	0.81	6.59

5.24 Children in special education in Flanders: number and percentage of children attending school – 2007-2008 school year

Source: *Statistical Yearbook of Flemish Education, 2007-2008 school year*

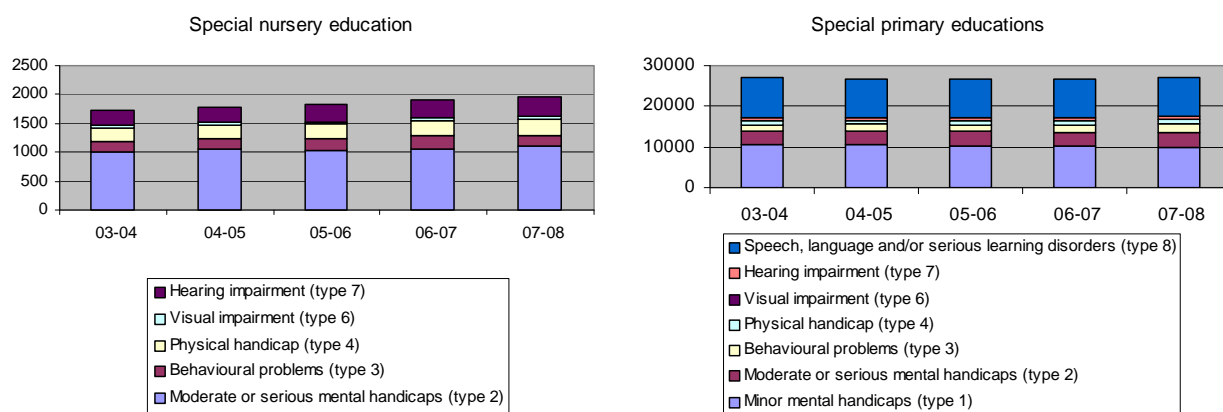
(1) To prevent pupils being counted twice, hospital schools (type 5) were not included

The number of children in special nursery schools has increased slightly and the number of children attending special primary schools has remained virtually unchanged over the past few school years, despite the allocation of increased resources for special needs to mainstream schools (see Figure 5.25).

In 2007-2008, there were 1 235 children in mainstream nursery schools who were receiving help from special schools to enable them to attend those schools (integrated schooling). The equivalent figure in primary schools was 4 160.

Compared with the 2006-2007 school year, the number of children in integrated mainstream schools had increased by 12.0% in the nursery sector and 15.0% in the primary sector.

Special education: trend by type



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

Source: *Statistical Yearbook of Flemish Education*

3. Children receiving supervision and support via special youth welfare

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

In addition, supervision and support measures are in place for a number of young children via the special youth welfare committees and the juvenile courts.

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

Some children and their families are given support or care in child care and family support centres or via services providing foster care as a means of supporting the family. This is short-term care at the parents' request on account of special living, working, home, health or financial circumstances.

On 1 February 2009, 1 407 children, almost exclusively under the age of 12, were receiving supervision and

support in *child care and family support centres* and there were 135 children in foster families who had been placed there by the *foster care services*. A total of 1 542 children were receiving supervision and support via the special youth welfare service, subsidised by Child and Family. Altogether the number of children receiving supervision and support had increased by 1.6% since 2008 (see Table 5.26).

Supervision and support via Child and Family						
	2008		2009			Total
	Total	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3 - 6	Children aged 6 - 12	Children aged 12 and above	
Child care and family support centres	1 417	556	396	450	5	1 407
Foster care services offering temporary family support	101	35	44	54	2	135
Total	1 518	591	440	504	7	1 542

5.26 Number of children receiving supervision and support from a special youth welfare service on 1 February 2008 and 1 February 2009, subsidised by Child and Family

Source: *Child and Family*

3.2. Supervision and support via the special youth welfare service

In 2007, a total of 5 802 children under the age of 12 were subject to supervision by a *special youth welfare committee* or a *supervision measure imposed by a juvenile court*: 559 under 3 years, 1 359 aged 3 to 6 and 3 884 aged 6 to 12. The total number of children under the age of 12 receiving supervision and support had increased by 7.0% compared with 2006 (see Table 5.27).

For most of the under-3s this involved placement in a foster family provided by foster care services, supervision and guidance at home or admission to a children's home.

For most of the children aged 3 to 6 years this involved placement in a foster family, supervision and guidance at home or admission to a children's home.

For children aged 6 to 12, day centres, reception and orientation centres and boarding schools were also important (see Table 5.28).

Supervision and support via the special youth welfare service (1)		
	2006	2007
Children aged under 3	492	559
Children aged 3 - 6	1 269	1 359
Children aged 6 - 12	3 663	3 884
Total	5 424	5 802

5.27 Number of children receiving supervision and support via the special youth welfare service by age

Source: *Ministry of the Flemish Community, Special Youth Welfare Department*

(1) Number of children subject to a measure during the course of the year. Children are only counted once per type of facility. Children who are admitted to more than one facility are counted each time

Type of supervision and support (1)			
	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3 - 6	Children aged 6 - 12

	2006	2007	2006	2007	2006	2007
General hospitals	16	20	10	10	24	34
Residential children's homes	37	51	211	222	794	815
Boarding schools	3	1	33	33	207	259
Day centres	0	0	4	4	480	446
Foster care services	305	344	623	649	1 199	1 260
Family hostels	0	0	5	5	14	16
Reception and orientation centres	9	13	80	91	326	372
Foster family not supported by service	1	0	1	1	0	0
Special youth welfare projects	2	0	3	4	9	4
Psychiatric hospitals	5	3	9	9	40	28
Home supervision services	114	127	290	331	570	650
Total	492	559	1 269	1 359	3 663	3 884

5.28 Children receiving supervision and support via the special youth welfare services, by age and type of support

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

(1) Number of children subject to a measure during the course of the year. Children are only counted once per type of facility. Children who are admitted to more than one facility are counted each time

4. The European context

Child care and educational provision for children under compulsory school age (pre-primary) varies greatly from one country to another. These services are referred to by the OECD and other international organisations as Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC).

We outline first the ECEC provision in the EU-15 countries before presenting some figures on the use of these child-rearing environments outside the home.

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

There are variations between the EU-15 countries in the age at which attending school becomes compulsory. In most of the EU-15 countries, compulsory school attendance starts at the age of 6. Compulsory schooling starts earlier in Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom (5 years) and later in the Nordic countries (7 years).

Broadly speaking, child care and educational provision for children under compulsory school age can be divided into 3 categories: group-based child care (crèches), child care in a family environment (family day care providers) and pre-primary education. Another way to distinguish between the facilities is based on their funding: publicly or privately funded. Facilities in the "public" category get most of their funding from the government and are run by public authorities. Facilities in the "private" category are usually run by governing bodies operating either on a non-profit or a for-profit basis, and are financed by a mix of public funds and private resources (parents).

One major point of difference between the EU-15 countries concerns whether or not there is an integrated structure to their ECEC provision. In most EU-15 countries there is a divide around the age of 3, with child care in group facilities or provided by child minders for children under 3 and pre-primary education for children from about the age of 3 onwards. Finland, Sweden and to some extent Denmark are exceptions to this pattern, as they have integrated child care and pre-primary education services for young children up to the age of compulsory schooling.

In the Netherlands, Portugal, Austria, the United Kingdom and Ireland, services for the youngest children are mainly funded and organised privately. In the other EU-15 countries, governments provide considerable

levels of funding for the services for very young children (see Table 5.29).

ECEC services (1)								
	0 years	1 years	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years	6 years	7 years
Flemish Community	<i>Kinderdagverblijven</i> (group child care) <i>Onthaalouders</i> (family day care providers)						Compulsory education	
				<i>Kleuterschool</i> (pre-primary), with out-of-school care				
French Community	<i>Crèches</i> (group child care) <i>Accueillant(e)s</i> (family day care providers)						Compulsory education	
				<i>Ecole maternelle</i> (pre-primary), with out-of-school care				
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>								
Germany	<i>Krippen</i> (group day care)			<i>Kindergarten</i> (pre-primary)			Compulsory education	
France	<i>Crèches</i> (group child care) <i>Assistantes maternelles</i> (family day care providers)						Compulsory education	
				<i>Ecole maternelle</i> (pre-primary)				
Luxembourg	<i>Crèches</i> (group child care) <i>Tagesmutter</i> (family day care providers)			Enseignement pré scolaire (pre-primary)				Compulsory education
The Netherlands	<i>Gastouderopvang</i> (family day care providers) <i>Crèches</i> (group child care) Play groups (group child care)				First year of primary school	Compulsory education		
<i>Nordic countries</i>								
Finland	<i>Perhepäivähoito</i> (family day care providers) <i>Paivakoti</i> (group child care)						<i>Esiopetus</i> (pre-primary)	Compulsory education
Denmark	<i>Dagpleje</i> (family day care providers) <i>Vuggestuer</i> (group child care)			<i>Børnehaver</i> (pre-primary)			Compulsory education	
	<i>Adlersintegrer</i> (group child care)							
	0 years	1 years	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years	6 years	7 years

	0 years	1 years	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years	6 years	7 years	
Sweden	<i>Forskola</i> (pre-primary) / <i>Familiedaghem</i> (family day care providers) (limited)						<i>Forskoleklas</i> (pre-primary)	Compulsory education	
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>									
Greece	<i>Vrefonipiaki stahmi</i> (group child care)						Compulsory education		
	Nursery school (pre-primary)								
	<i>Nipiagogeia</i> (pre-primary)								
Italy	<i>Asili nidi</i> (group child care)			<i>Scuola dell'infanzia</i> (pre-primary)			Compulsory education		
Portugal	<i>Crèches familiare</i> (family day care providers) <i>Crèches</i> (group child care)			<i>Jardims de infancia</i> (pre-primary)			Compulsory education		
Spain	<i>Educación pre-escolar</i> (group child care)			<i>Educación infantil</i> (pre-primary)			Compulsory education		
Austria	<i>Tagesmutter</i> (family day care providers) <i>Krippen</i> (group day care)			<i>Kindergarten</i> (pre-primary), with out-of-school care			Compulsory education		
The United Kingdom	Nurseries (group child care) Child minders (family day care providers) Playgroups (group child care)			Playgroups (group child care) Nurseries (group child care)		Reception class in primary school	Compulsory education		
Ireland	Child minders (family day care providers) Nurseries (group child care)				Early Start and Infant School		Compulsory education		
	Play groups (group child care)								

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

Source: OECD Family database (website)

(1) ECEC: Early Childhood Education and Care

Key for Table:

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

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

grey: compulsory education

(instructions for lay-out: Luxembourg grey bars or surfaces through 4/5 years. And the word “préscolaire” must be joined up)

4.2. Use of child care and education by children under compulsory school age

The Barcelona norm for ECEC was established at the European summit in Barcelona in 2002. The target was that by 2010 at least 90% of children between three years old and the mandatory schools age and at least 33% of children under 3 should be guaranteed suitable child care provision. In pursuit of this norm,

Eurostat defined this as use of formal child care or education facilities.

Table 5.30 shows the user figures for 2006, broken down into use for less and more than 30 hours. The Table also gives the compulsory school age. The large differences both in uptake and scale of use are striking.

The Flemish Community has the second highest usage figure for children under 3 years of age. Only Denmark uses more child care for this age group. For children between 3 years and compulsory school age, the Flemish Community also has one of the highest participation rates. Unlike many other EU-15 countries, in other words, the Flemish Community had already reached the Barcelona target by 2006.

Participation in ECEC (1)

	0 -2 years			3 years to compulsory school age			Age compulsory schooling starts
	<30 hours	30 hours or more	Total	<30 hours	30 hours or more	Total	
Flemish Community	NA	NA	60,4	NA	NA	>98	6
Belgium	17	23	40	36	62	98	6
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>							
Germany	11	7	18	66	27	93	6
France	14	17	31	52	42	94	6
Luxembourg	14	17	31	42	16	58	4
The Netherlands	41	4	45	82	7	89	
<i>Nordic countries</i>							
Finland	5	21	26	21	56	77	7
Denmark	7	77	73	16	80	96	7
Sweden	17	27	44	34	58	92	7
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>							
Greece	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	6
Italy	10	16	26	24	66	90	6
Portugal	1	32	33	9	66	75	6
Spain	20	19	39	47	44	91	6
<i>Other countries</i>							
Austria	3	1	4	55	16	71	6
The United Kingdom	28	5	33	65	24	89	5
Ireland	13	5	18	80	13	93	6

5.30 Participation in child care and education of children under compulsory school age in the EU-15 countries in 2006 and age when compulsory schooling starts

Sources: *Child and Family*

Commission of the European Communities, Implementation of the Barcelona objectives concerning childcare facilities for pre-school-age children, 3 October 2008, COM (2008) 638

(1) ECEC: Early Childhood Education and Care

NA: not available

The number of years that children normally spend in the school system from the age of 3 to 6 years varies

from 1.4 years in Greece and Finland to over 3 years in Belgium, France, Italy and Spain (see Table 5.31).

In many of the EU-15 countries, over 95% of 5-year-olds attend some form of child care or educational facility. Finland stands out for its low level of participation in ECEC. Germany scores the next lowest. At the age of 4 years, the differences are greater, with some countries having high (90 to 95%) to very high (+95%) participation and others lower (80 to 90%) or low (-80%) participation. Once you come to the under-3s, only the Flemish Community and Denmark have participation above 60%.

	3 years	4 years	5 years	Number of years that children can attend pre-primary education facilities between the ages of 3 and 6
Flemish Community (2006)	>95	>99	>99	3.1
Belgium (2004)	99.3	99.9	99.7	3.1
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>				
Germany (2001)	69.5	84.3	86.7	2.4
France (2002)	100.0	100.0	100.0	3.2
Luxembourg (2003)	37.9	83.5	96.9	2.2
The Netherlands (2004)	32.3	74.0	98.4	1.7
<i>Nordic countries</i>				
Finland (2003)	37.7	46.1	54.6	1.4
Denmark (2005)	81.8	93.4	93.9	2.7
Sweden (2004)	82.5	87.7	89.7	2.6
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>				
Greece (2003)	NA	57.2	84.1	1.4
Italy (2000)	98.7	100.0	100.0	3.0
Portugal (2004)	63.9	79.9	90.2	2.3
Spain (2004)	95.9	100.0	100.0	3.1
Austria (2004)	45.9	82.1	93.1	2.2
United Kingdom (2004)	50.2	92.0	98.2	2.4
Ireland (2000)	48.0	46.6	100.0	1.5

5.31 Participation of children aged 3 to 6 in pre-primary education in the EU-15 countries (percentages), and the number of years that children between the age of 3 and 6 can receive education before compulsory school age – around 2004

Source: OECD Family database (website)

(1) ECEC: Early Childhood Education and Care

NA: not available

CHAPTER 6 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 frequently used indicator. We zoom in on mortality in children up to the age of 15 years – number of deaths and causes of death – and on life expectancy at birth and at the age of 1 year.

Apart from these basic indicators, we also look at antenatal care and where women have their babies. We also present some data on childbirth.

In the context of morbidity in young children, we begin by describing congenital abnormalities and hearing loss, already identified in the neonatal period. We then go on to look at a number of diseases and disorders of relevance to young children, at hospitalisation and at specific problems that the children have as reported by their parents.

Data on child abuse are an area of particular interest.

We conclude with a number of figures from the EU-15 countries.

1. Data on pregnancy and childbirth

1.1. Antenatal care

Almost all births follow a pregnancy in which the mother-to-be was monitored and cared for by a gynaecologist

Antenatal care in Flanders is mainly provided by gynaecologists: in 2008, 95.1% of births followed a pregnancy in which the antenatal care was provided by a private gynaecologist and 3.8% in which the antenatal care was shared by a gynaecologist and a general practitioner. This state of affairs hardly changed from 2007 to 2008.

The number of babies born following pregnancies not involving medical care is very low indeed (0.1%) (see Table 6.1).

Antenatal care (1)		
	2007	2008
Private gynaecologist	96.0	95.1
Shared (2)	2.7	3.8
GP	0.4	0.2
Child and Family antenatal centre	0.2	0.2
Midwife	0.6	0.6
No antenatal care	0.1	0.1
Total	100.0	100.0

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

Source: *Child and Family – IKAROS*

(1) Both live births and stillbirths

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

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

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

In 2008 almost all babies were born in a *maternity hospital*. Only 1.1% of births were home births. This was virtually unchanged since 2007.

In almost 48% of births, the mother spent 5 or 6 *nights in the maternity hospital*. Very short hospital stays (2 nights or less) are rare (5.8% of births); reduced hospital stays occurred in 35.5% of births and long stays in 10%. There was a marked decrease again in normal hospital stays (-3.1%) and an increase in reduced

hospital stays (+3.8%) from 2007 to 2008 (see Table 6.2).

Place where women give birth and length of stay in the maternity hospital (1)		
	2007	2008
Maternity hospital	98.8	98.9
<i>of which</i>		
<i>very short stay in hospital (max. 2 nights)</i>	5.5	5.8
<i>reduced stay in hospital (3 or 4 nights)</i>	31.7	35.5
<i>normal stay in hospital (5 or 6 nights)</i>	50.7	47.6
<i>long stay in hospital (7 nights or more)</i>	10.8	10.0
Home birth, or other place (2) apart from maternity hospitals	1.2	1.1
Total	100.0	100.0

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

Source: *Child and Family – IKAROS*

(1) Both live births and stillbirths

(2) For example: birthing centre

1.3. Data on deliveries*

In Flanders in 2007, of 100 deliveries, 47.2 were first-born children, 34.6 were second children, 12.2 were third children, and 6.0 were fourth or later children. There was an increase in the number of second babies (+0.6) compared with 2006.

* Source: *Study Centre for Perinatal Epidemiology (SPE)*

The percentage of young mothers, i.e. mothers aged under 20, was 2.1% (2007). 69.9% of women who gave birth were aged 25 to 35, 14.1% were over 35, and 2.0% were in fact over 40. The *average age of mothers* on giving birth to their first child was 28.0 years, and it was 31.1 years for multiparae. The average age was virtually unchanged since 2006 (multiparae +0.1).

A number of pregnancies not to be underestimated, i.e. 5.0%, were achieved following *fertility treatment* (+0.2%). 2.0% of women had had *hormone therapy*, 1.8% had undergone *in vitro fertilisation (IVF)*, in 1.2% the pregnancy was achieved following intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI) (2007). There was a slight increase in the number of births following fertility treatment compared with 2006 (+0.2%). There was an increase in the percentage of pregnancies following hormone treatment.

31.1% of multiple pregnancies came about following medically assisted fertilisation. This was the case for only 4.5% of single births.

3.4% of children came into the category of *multiple births* (-0.1%). The number of babies born a twin was 3.3% of all babies born, and the number born a triplet was less than 0.1%. 1 121 twins, 17 triplets and one set of quadruplets were recorded. The incidence of twins was quite a bit lower than in 2006 (-6). The number of triplets increased by +6.

In 2007, 7.1% of pregnant women gave birth prematurely, following a pregnancy of less than 37 weeks. This figure represents a slight decrease compared with 2006 (-0.3%). The relative proportion of *babies with a low birth weight* (less than 2 500 grams) was 6.7% (-0.3%). The birth weight of 1.1% of children was extremely low (less than 1 500 grams). 55% of the babies who were in the *multiple birth* category weighed less than 2 500 grams at birth. This was the case for only 5% of single births.

In 25.6% of women, the birth was *induced*, usually for reasons of convenience, applying to either the obstetrician or the pregnant woman. The downward trend in inductions first noted in 2004 continued in 2007, with a decrease of 0.5%. Before 2004 30% or more of all births had been induced.

Epidural anaesthesia was used for 66.6% of births. The incidence of epidural pain relief was virtually unchanged compared with 2006 (+0.1%).

69.8% of babies were born *without obstetric intervention*. 19.7% of babies were born by Caesarean section (-0.1%). There was a decrease in the incidence of Caesareans for the first time in 20 years. In 9.5% of deliveries, vacuum extraction** was used and in 0.8% forceps were used.

After the birth, 13.3% of babies were transferred to a neonatal unit and 3.9% to a neonatal intensive care unit. The number of transfers to a neonatal unit or to a neonatal intensive care unit fell slightly compared with 2006.

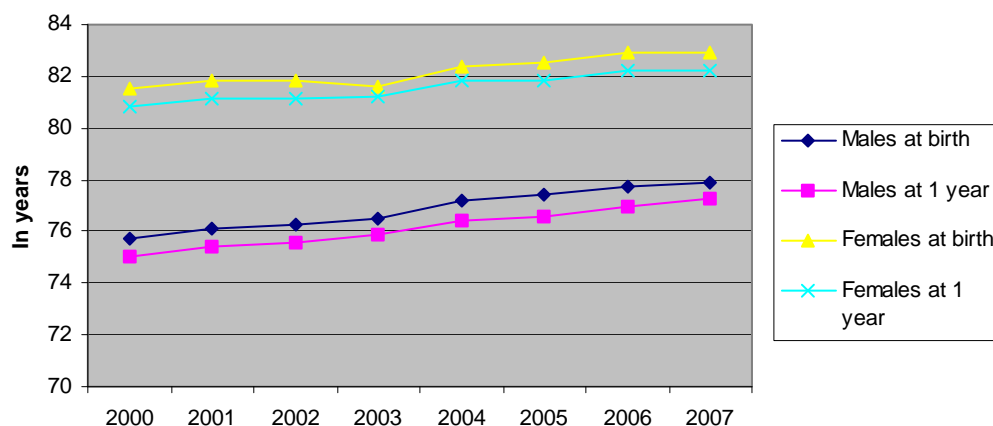
* *Vacuum extraction: delivery of a baby with the aid of an instrument that attaches to the baby's head by means of a vacuum*

2. Life expectancy

The men are catching up

Life expectancy *at birth* and *at the age of 1 year* is 77.9 years and 77.3 years for males and 82.9 and 82.2 years for females (2007). The gap between men and women has narrowed because male life expectancy increased from 2006 to 2007 (see Figure 6.3).

Life expectancy



6.3 Life expectancy in the Region of Flanders, at birth and at 1 year (in years)

Source: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency

3. Mortality

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

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

Mainly before the age of 1 year

Most deaths in childhood occur before the age of 1 year. After the first year the number of deaths falls to 0.23 per 1 000 children or less. In 2007, 287 babies died before the age of 1 year; there were 128 deaths in the following eleven years of life.

From 2006 to 2007, the number of deaths before the age of 1 year increased by 11 and the number of

deaths in the next fourteen years of life increased by 23 (see Table 6.4).

Deaths by age and gender				
	2006		2007	
	Total	Males	Females	Total
Number				
Under 1 year	276	168	119	287
1 to 5 years	48	30	20	50
5 to 10 years	29	16	13	29
10 to 15 years	28	24	25	49
Total	381	238	177	415
Per thousand (1)				
Under 1 year	4.19	4.92	3.62	4.28
1 to 5 years	0.19	0.23	0.16	0.20
5 to 10 years	0.09	0.10	0.08	0.09
10 to 15 years	0.08	0.13	0.15	0.14

6.4 Number of deaths and number of deaths per thousand in children aged 0-15 by age and gender – Region of Flanders

Source: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency

(1) Per thousand children on 1 January of the year in question, excluding children under 1 year. For the children under 1 the figure is per thousand children born in that year

3.1.2. In children aged under 12 months

Slight increase in infant mortality, increase in early neonatal mortality, and a decrease in stillbirths and late neonatal mortality

This section looks in more detail at the deaths of children aged under 12 months.

Data on infant mortality are generally presented in accordance with a number of criteria known as mortality criteria (see Figure 6.5 and Tables 6.6 and 6.7).

The first mortality criterion is *stillbirth*. This is the number of babies designated as “stillborn” with a birth weight of at least 500 g or following a pregnancy that lasted at least 22 weeks. There were 262 stillbirths in 2007. The figure for *stillbirths* was 3.9 per thousand births. This figure was 0.3 per thousand lower than in 2006.

Early neonatal mortality is death occurring between birth and the age of seven days (7 x 24 hours). In 2007, 151 infants died in this period; the figure for early neonatal mortality was 2.3 per thousand live births, 0.3 more than in 2006.

The *late neonatal mortality rate* was 0.5 per 1 000 live births, a fall of 0.2 compared with 2006. Late neonatal mortality is death after the first seven days (7 x 24 hours) up to and including the age of 28 days.

Post-neonatal mortality, or death after the first 4 weeks (7 x 24 hours) remained unchanged at 1.5 per 1 000 live births.

Some mortality criteria are the sum of two or more of the mortality criteria described above. These are the perinatal mortality rate, the neonatal mortality rate, infant mortality and foetal-infant mortality.

The *perinatal mortality figure* was 6.1 per thousand births. Perinatal mortality is the death of infants during the first seven days of their life, together with the figure for stillbirths. In 2007, there was a fall in perinatal mortality of 0.1 per thousand.

Another mortality criterion frequently employed is *neonatal mortality*. This covers death between birth and the 28th day after birth. In 2007, 187 infants died during the first four weeks (28 days) of their life. The

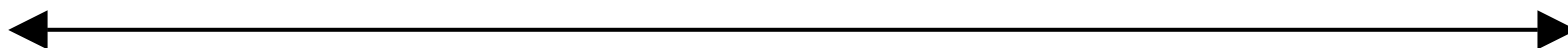
Chapter 6. Aspects of the health and development of young children

neonatal mortality rate was 2.8 per thousand live births, a rise of 0.1 compared with 2006.

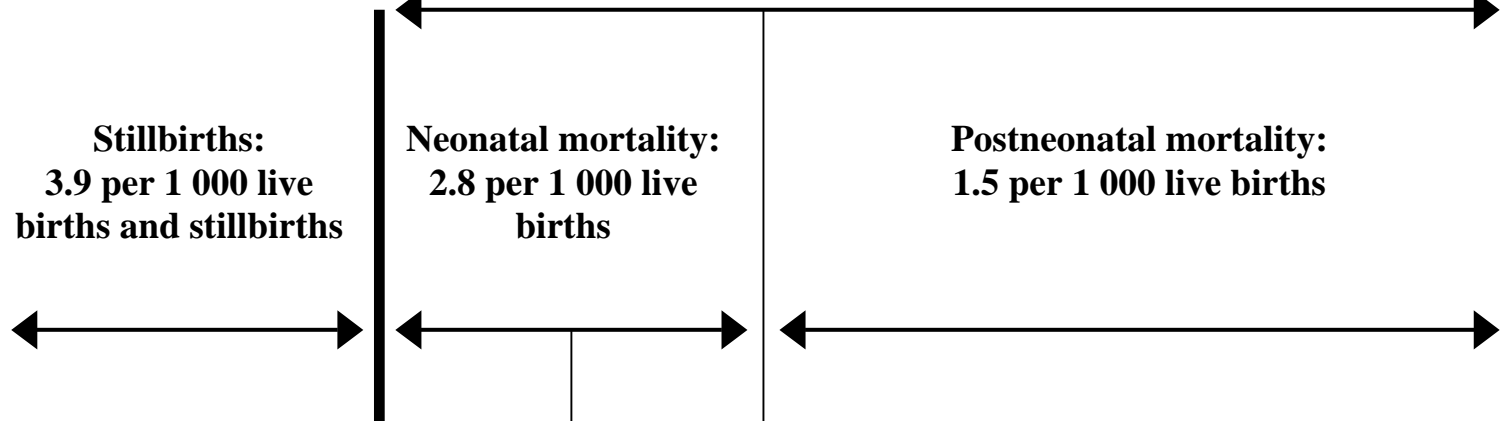
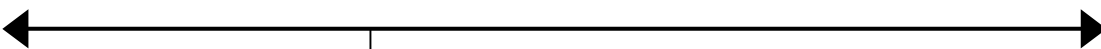
Infant mortality is deaths occurring between birth and the age of one year. In 2007, 287 infants died during their first year of life. The infant mortality rate was 4.3 per thousand live births, an increase of 0.1 over 2006. Finally, there is *foetal-infant mortality*: the total of stillbirths and infant mortality. Foetal-infant mortality in 2007 was 8.1 per thousand live births and stillbirths, a decrease of 0.3 from 2006 (see Table 6.6).

Only 41.5% of babies with a *birth weight* of 1 000 g or less survived to the age of 1 year. 28.6% were dead at birth and 29.9% died before reaching the age of 1 year (2007) (see Table 6.7). As Table 6.8 shows, mortality is appreciably higher in *multiple births* than in single births. A twin is at 4.7 times greater risk of being born dead or dying before the age of 1 year than a singleton.

Foetal-infant mortality: 8.1 per 1 000 live births and stillbirths



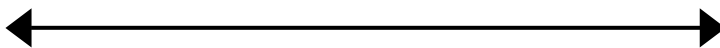
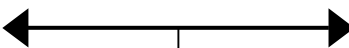
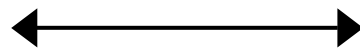
Infant mortality: 4.3 per 1 000 live births



Stillbirths:
3.9 per 1 000 live
births and stillbirths

Neonatal mortality:
2.8 per 1 000 live
births

Postneonatal mortality:
1.5 per 1 000 live births



Perinatal mortality:
6.1 per 1 000 live births and
stillbirths

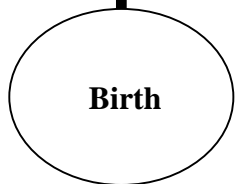


Early:
2.3

Late:
0.5

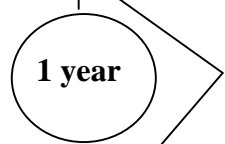
6.5 Foetal-infant mortality figures
in the Region of Flanders – 2007
*Source: Health indicators,
Flemish Care and Health Agency*

**≥ 500 g or ≥ 22
weeks pregnant**



7 days

28 days



Mortality trends

	2006	2007
Stillbirths per 1 000 births	4.2	3.9
Early neonatal mortality per 1 000 live births	2.0	2.3
Late neonatal mortality per 1 000 live births	0.7	0.5
Post-neonatal mortality per 1 000 live births	1.5	1.5
Perinatal mortality per 1 000 live births and stillbirths	6.2	6.1
Neonatal mortality per 1 000 live births	2.7	2.8
Infant mortality per 1 000 live births	4.2	4.3
Total foetal-infant mortality per 1 000 live births and stillbirths	8.4	8.1

6.6 Trends in foetal-infant mortality figures in the Region of Flanders – 2007

Source: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency

Mortality by birth weight

	Stillbirths	Early neonatal mortality	Late neonatal mortality	Post-neonatal mortality	Alive at 1 year	Total
Under 500 g	16	18	0	1	2	37
500 to 1 000 g	73	58	9	7	127	274
1000 to 1 500 g	42	14	4	9	306	375
1 500 to 2 000 g	29	9	2	6	795	841
2 000 to 2 500 g	37	18	3	13	2 843	2 914
2 500 g and over	62	33	18	63	62 417	62 593
Not known	3	1	0	1	178	183
Total	262	151	36	100	66 668	67 217

6.7 Outcome of pregnancy: number of deaths and live births by birth weight in the Region of Flanders – 2007

Source: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency

Mortality by number of babies

	Stillbirths	Early neonatal mortality	Late neonatal mortality	Post-neonatal mortality	Alive at 1 year	Total
Single births	231	111	31	93	64 465	64 931
Twins	28	36	5	7	2 164	2 240
Triplets	0	0	0	0	39	39
Quadruplets or more	0	4	0	0	0	4
Total	259	151	36	100	66 668	67 214

6.8 Outcome of pregnancy: number of deaths and live births in single and multiple pregnancies in the Region of Flanders – 2007

Source: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency

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

3.2.1. In children aged under 12 months

Most important causes of death in cases of stillbirth and infant mortality: factors affecting the mother, complications during pregnancy and the birth, and congenital abnormalities. Marked decrease in cot deaths

The most important causes of death in stillbirths and infant mortality are complications during pregnancy and in the perinatal period and congenital abnormalities. In 2007, 151 babies died in utero or in the first year of life as a result of factors affecting the mother and complications during pregnancy and the birth, and 130 died as a result of congenital abnormalities. 22 babies died of cot death, 8 fewer cases than in 2006. The incidence of cot death has fallen to 3.6 per 10 000 live births (-1.0) (see Table 6.9 and Figure 6.10).

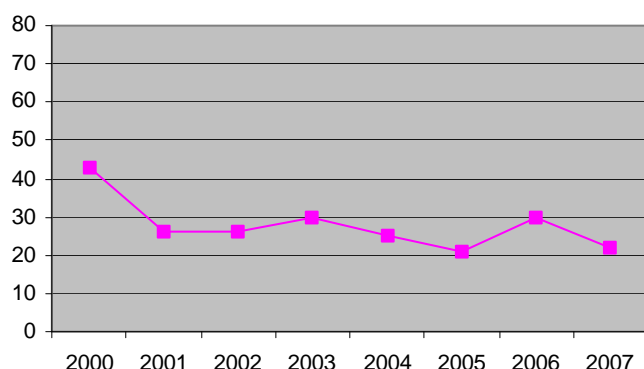
Causes of death under the age of 12 months

	2006			2007		
	Stillbirths	Infant mortality	Total	Stillbirths	Infant mortality	Total
Congenital abnormalities	39	65	104	48	82	130
Factors affecting the mother and complications during pregnancy and birth	128	53	181	110	41	151
Prematurity and dysmaturity	9	11	20	10	17	27
Perinatal infections	6	16	22	7	17	24
Bleeding and perinatal blood disorders	2	9	11	2	21	23
Endocrine, digestive, skin disorders (perinatal)	1	6	7	7	7	14
Perinatal heart and respiratory disorders, including RDS (Respiratory Distress Syndrome)	6	43	49	6	29	35
SIDS (cot death)	0	30	30	0	22	22
Birth trauma	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other disorders	2	30	32	2	34	36
Poorly defined conditions	83	3	86	67	5	72
Trauma/external cause of death	1	10	11	0	12	12
Total	277	276	553	259	287	546

6.9 Causes of death in children aged under 12 months in the Region of Flanders (stillbirths and infant mortality)

Source: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency

Cot deaths



6.10 Trend in the number of cot deaths in the Region of Flanders since 2000

Source: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency

3.2.2. In children aged 1 to 15 years

Two most important causes of death in children aged 1 to 15: accidents, cancer and blood disorders

The two most important causes of death in children aged 1 to 15 are accidents and cancer and blood disorders. Over 25% of deaths in 2006 resulted from an accident (more recent figures not available). The absolute number fell from 34 to 26.

The number of deaths caused by cancer and blood disorders was also over 25%, or 26 cases. This had also fallen from 32 to 26.

Table 6.11 shows the most important causes of death by age group.

Figure 6.12 shows the trend in the number of deaths resulting from violence and from accidents since 2000. The falling trend in fatal accidents continues.

Causes of death 1-15 years

	2005		2006	
	Number	%	Number	%
Children aged 1 - 5				
Infections	6	10.9	4	8.5
Cancer and blood disorders	14	25.5	6	12.8
Metabolism	5	9.1	4	8.5
Muscle and nervous system disorders	4	7.3	5	10.6
Heart and respiratory system disorders	8	14.5	4	8.5
Gastrointestinal tract	0	0.0	2	4.3
Congenital abnormalities	5	9.1	6	12.8
SIS	0	0.0	1	2.1
Accident	10	18.2	8	17.0
Intentional self harm	0	0.0	0	0.0
Violence	2	3.6	3	6.4
Other or not specified	1	1.8	4	8.5
Total deaths in children aged 1-5	55	100.0	47	100.0
Children aged 5 - 10				
Infections	2	6.1	1	3.6
Cancer and blood disorders	7	21.2	11	39.3
Metabolism	4	12.1	0	0.0
Muscle and nervous system disorders	5	15.2	3	10.7

Heart and respiratory system disorders	1	3.0	2	7.1
Gastrointestinal tract	0	0.0	1	3.6
Congenital abnormalities	2	6.1	0	0.0
Accident	5	15.2	9	32.1
Intentional self harm	0	0.0	0	0.0
Violence	7	21.2	1	3.6
Other or not specified	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total deaths in children aged 5-10	33	100.0	28	100.0
Children aged 10 - 15				
Infections	0	0.0	0	0.0
Cancer and blood disorders	11	22.4	9	32.1
Metabolism	2	4.1	3	10.7
Muscle and nervous system disorders	2	4.1	0	0.0
Heart and respiratory system disorders	7	14.3	2	7.1
Gastrointestinal tract	0	0.0	0	0.0
Congenital abnormalities	7	14.3	1	3.6
Accident	19	38.8	9	32.1
Intentional self harm	0	0.0	2	7.1
Violence	1	2.0	2	7.1
Other or not specified	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total deaths in children aged 10-15	49	100.0	28	100.0
Children aged 1 - 15				
Infections	8	5.8	5	4.9
Cancer and blood disorders	32	23.4	26	25.2
Metabolism	11	8.0	7	6.8
Muscle and nervous system disorders	11	8.0	8	7.8
Heart and respiratory system disorders	16	11.7	8	7.8
Gastrointestinal tract	0	0.0	3	2.9
Congenital abnormalities	14	10.2	7	6.8
SIS	0	0.0	1	1.0
Accident	34	24.8	26	25.2
Intentional self harm	0	0.0	2	1.9
Violence	10	7.3	6	5.8
Other or not specified	1	0.7	4	3.9
Total deaths in children aged 1-15	137	100.0	103	100.0

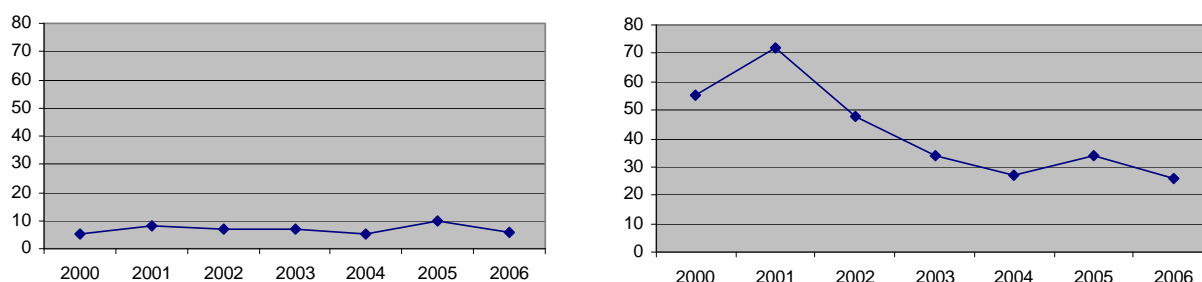
6.11 Causes of death in children aged 1-15 years in the Region of Flanders

Source: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency

Trend in the number of deaths of children aged 1 to 15 years

Violence

Accidents



6.12 Trend in the number of deaths of children aged 1 to 15 years resulting from violence and from accidents since 2000

Source: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency

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

The 26 fatal accidents in 2006 represent a marked decrease from 2005 (-8) (more recent figures not yet available).

In Table 6.13 we look at deaths resulting from accidents in 2006 in more detail. 8 children aged 1 to 5 suffered a fatal accident, of which 2 were killed in road accidents, 2 by fire, 1 from a fall, 1 by hanging, strangulation or choking and 1 by drowning.

9 children aged 5 to 10 suffered a fatal accident, of which 5 were killed in road accidents, 2 by fire and 1 by drowning. All the fatal accidents suffered by children aged 10 to 15 were road accidents (8 fatalities).

Fatal accidents

	Children aged 1 - 5		Children aged 5 - 10		Children aged 10 - 15		Total aged 1 to 15 years	
	2005	2006	2005	2006	2005	2006	2005	2006
Pedestrian	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
Cyclist or motorcyclist	0	0	1	1	5	3	6	4
Passenger in a vehicle	0	0	0	2	2	0	2	2
Other or not specified	3	2	2	2	5	4	10	8
Total road accidents	3	2	3	5	13	8	19	15
Fall	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Trapping, jamming	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Drowning or submersion	3	1	0	1	4	0	7	2
Unintentional poisoning	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Hanging, strangulation, choking	2	1	1	0	0	0	3	1
Fire	1	2	0	2	1	0	2	4
Other	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	3
Total other accidents	7	6	2	4	6	1	15	11
Total	10	8	5	9	19	9	34	26

6.13 Causes of fatal accidents in children aged under 15 in the Region of Flanders

Source: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency

4. Morbidity

In addition to mortality figures, figures for the incidence of diseases and disabilities are an important indicator of the state of health of the population. In this section we present figures on a number of illnesses and abnormalities of relevance to children and we also look at specific problems reported by parents that

children have with their feelings, concentration and behaviour, and problems they have getting on with other people. We also look at admissions to hospital.

4.1. Disabilities

4.1.1. Congenital abnormalities

Data on *congenital abnormalities* affecting all children in Flanders are available only from obstetric records (SPE). In 2007, congenital abnormalities were identified in the *perinatal period* in almost 1.6% of births. This was fewer than in 2006 (-0.1%).

Table 6.14 presents a detailed picture of the incidence of congenital abnormalities.

Congenital abnormalities (1)		
	Number	Per 10 000 births
Central nervous system	97	14.5
Eye	8	1.2
Ear, face and neck (excl. nose)	112	16.7
Cardiovascular	331	49.4
Respiratory system	71	10.6
Gastro-intestinal	89	13.3
Genito-urinary	185	27.3
Musculo-skeletal	180	26.9
Integument	29	4.3
Cystic hygroma	1	0.1
Chromosomal abnormalities	65	9.7
Congenital infection	7	1.0
Hydrops foetalis	4	0.6
Other	105	15.7
Total babies with one or more congenital abnormalities	1 057	157.8

6.14 Congenital abnormalities recorded (perinatal period) in Flanders per 10 000 births – 2007

Source: Study Centre for Perinatal Epidemiology (SPE)

(1) Congenital abnormalities identified in births in maternity hospitals (≥ 500 g) More than one abnormality may be recorded for some babies

In a number of children, the abnormality is only identified later. The Eurocat register records *congenital abnormalities* up to the age of 1 year. For Flanders, the whole province of Antwerp participates in the Eurocat register. The provisional figures for 2007 must be treated with caution. In the past it has been found that the final figures do differ somewhat from the provisional figures for a number of disorders. Reports for 2009 are still being received, partly because it sometimes takes a while to reach a diagnosis. This is why we are discussing the 2006 figures.

One or more congenital abnormalities were diagnosed in almost 208 children in 10 000. We show the systems that are affected most frequently. Heart disorders occur in almost 54 cases per 10 000 births. The most common abnormality is ventricle septum defect, in popular speech known as 'a hole in the heart'. In almost 44 out of 10 000 births the limbs were affected and in over 33 out of 10 000 births it was the nervous system. Abnormalities of the urinary system occurred in over 25 out of 10 000 births; abnormalities of the genital system in almost 24 out of 10 000 births; and chromosomal abnormalities also in almost 24 out of 10 000 births (see Table 6.15).

Congenital abnormalities up to the age of 1 year (1) (2)

	Per 10 000 births	
	2006 calculation December 2008	2007 calculation December 2008
Nervous system	33.3	19.1
<i>of which neural-tube defects</i>	13.8	8.1
<i>hydrocephalus</i>	5.1	4.0
Eye	3.6	3.5
Ear, face, neck	2.1	1.0
Heart	53.8	42.8
<i>of which ventricle septum defect</i>	21.0	18.6
<i>atrium septum defect</i>	6.2	5.0
Respiratory system	2.1	4.5
Oro-facial clefts	12.8	12.6
<i>of which cleft lip with or without cleft palate</i>	8.7	12.1
<i>cleft palate</i>	4.1	6.5
Digestive system	19.5	12.6
Abdominal wall defects	3.6	3.0
Urinary system	25.1	19.6
Genital system	23.6	16.1
<i>of which hypospadias</i>	21.0	14.6
Limbs	43.6	34.2
<i>of which club foot</i>	13.8	8.1
<i>dislocated hip and/or dysplasia</i>	7.2	4.0
<i>polydactylism</i>	11.3	13.6
<i>syndactylism</i>	6.2	3.0
Musculo-skeletal system	11.3	11.1
Other abnormalities	6.2	4.0
Teratogenic syndromes with abnormalities	0.0	1.0
Genetic syndromes and microdeletions	7.7	6.5
Chromosomal abnormalities	23.6	21.6
<i>of which Down's syndrome (trisomy 21)</i>	13.8	11.1
Metabolic	7.2	7.0
Total babies with one or more congenital abnormalities	207.6	176.6

6.15 Congenital abnormalities recorded up to the age of 1 year in the province of Antwerp per 10 000 births.

Source: Eurocat, Provincial Institute of Hygiene, Antwerp

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

(2) More than one abnormality may be recorded for some babies

4.1.2. Officially recognised disabilities

The health survey enquired about officially recognised disabilities. Young children reported as having an officially recognised disability are the exception: 0.5% of children under 3 years, 1.9% of children aged 3 to 6, and 1.2% of children aged 6 to 12 (see Table 6.16).

Recognised disability

	2001	2004
Children aged under 3	0.4	0.5
Children aged 3 - 6	2.4	1.9
Children aged 6 - 12	1.3	1.2
Total aged under 12	1.4	1.4
	(N=503)	(N=432)

6.16 Percentage of children under 12 with an officially recognised disability in the Region of Flanders

Source: Health Survey 2001 and 2004, Department of Epidemiology, Scientific Institute of Public Health

4.2. Congenital hearing loss

Found in over 2.3 per 1 000 children

Congenital hearing loss can be detected at a very young age. Almost all babies who are born at full term in Flanders are tested by Child and Family in the first months of their life. About 2.3 children per 1 000 born in 2008 and tested by Child and Family were found to have some degree of congenital hearing impairment (provisional figures).

Table 6.18 shows the incidence of hearing loss. In over 2 in 3 cases the children have impaired hearing in both ears and in over 1 in 2 cases some form of hearing aid or treatment is necessary (bilateral hearing loss of more than 40 dB).

Incidence of hearing loss (1)

Incidence of hearing loss per 1 000 children tested

2005	2.24
2006*	2.37
2007**	2.98
2008***	2.33

6.17 Incidence of congenital hearing loss among children tested by Child and Family

Source: Child and Family – IKAROS

(1) Not included: children who were admitted to an NICU

* Not (yet) included 2006: 9 inconclusive reports and 2 missing reports

** Not (yet) included 2007: 21 inconclusive reports and 19 missing reports

*** Not (yet) included 2008: 12 inconclusive reports and 21 missing reports

Degree of hearing loss

	Unilateral	Bilateral
2005		
21 to 40 dB	9	18
41 to 70 dB	25	36
71 to 90 dB	8	11
> 90 dB	12	19
Total with classified hearing loss	54	84
2006*		
21 to 40 dB	15	20
41 to 70 dB	24	29
71 to 90 dB	8	13
> 90 dB	7	25
Total with classified hearing loss	54	87
2007**		

21 to 40 dB	13	12
41 to 70 dB	39	58
71 to 90 dB	14	14
> 90 dB	16	13
Total with classified hearing loss	82	97
2008***		
21 to 40 dB	5	19
41 to 70 dB	23	47
71 to 90 dB	11	15
> 90 dB	7	14
Total with classified hearing loss	46	95

6.18 Degree of hearing loss expressed in decibels (dB) among children with congenital hearing impairment established after a positive hearing test carried out by Child and Family

Source: *Child and Family*

* Not (yet) included 2006: 9 inconclusive reports and 2 missing reports

* Not (yet) included 2007: 21 inconclusive reports and 19 missing reports

* Not (yet) included 2008: 12 inconclusive reports and 21 missing reports

4.3. Diseases and disorders

Thanks to the Belgian Health Surveys, data are available on diseases and disorders in children in the Region of Flanders.

Of the children surveyed aged under 12 *at the time of the survey*, 9.4% were suffering from one or more chronic diseases, disorders or disabilities. For children under 3 and children aged 3 to 6, the figure was over 4%; for children aged 6 to 12, almost 12% were affected (see Table 6.19). Table 6.19 also shows the figures for 2001. The incidence has increased in the 6 to 12 age group.

Chronic diseases, disorders, disabilities		
	2001	2004
Children aged under 3	5.1	4.4
Children aged 3 - 6	6.2	4.6
Children aged 6 - 12	6.6	11.8
Total aged under 12	6.4	9.4
	(N=516)	(N=447)

6.19 Percentages of children aged under 12 in the Region of Flanders suffering from one or more chronic diseases, disorders or disabilities at the time of the survey

Source: *Health Survey 2001 and 2004, Department of Epidemiology, Scientific Institute of Public Health*

The Health Survey also enquired into diseases and disorders *in a 12-month period*. A number of diseases and disorders of relevance to children will be discussed in more detail below, namely asthma, chronic bronchitis (or other chronic respiratory disease) and allergies.

Asthma and chronic bronchitis

Asthma and chronic bronchitis are words that the general public uses. From a medical point of view we point out here that below the age of 4 no diagnosis of asthma can be made, and from a medical point of view one must now talk of wheezing bronchitis instead of chronic bronchitis.

The 2004 Health Survey shows that in the Region of Flanders, in a 12-month period almost 5% of children under 12 had had *asthma* and almost 2% had had *chronic bronchitis or other chronic respiratory disease*

(see Table 6.20). The incidence in the total population of children under 12 was virtually unchanged since 2001.

Asthma and chronic bronchitis				
	Asthma		Chronic bronchitis or other chronic respiratory disease	
	2001	2004	2001	2004
Children aged under 3	3.9	3.0	3.3	3.1
Children aged 3 - 6	6.6	1.8	1.4	2.0
Children aged 6 - 12	3.1	6.4	2.6	1.0
Total aged under 12	4.3	4.9	2.5	1.9
	(N=516)	(N=446)	(N=516)	(N=447)

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

Source: *Belgian Health Survey 2001 and 2004, Department of Epidemiology, Scientific Institute of Public Health*

Allergies

Over 13% of children under 12 years of age suffered from an allergy in a 12-month period. Children aged 6 to 12 suffer from more allergies than younger children (children under 3 and those in the 3 to 6 age group) (see Table 6.21). The incidence of allergies among children under the age of 6 fell between 2001 and 2004; the incidence among 6 to 12-year-olds increased.

Allergies		
	2001	2004
Children aged 1 - 3	10.9	8.5
Children aged 3 - 6	13.6	6.9
Children aged 6 - 12	12.7	16.3
Total aged under 12	13.5	13.2
	(N=516)	(N=447)

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

Source: *Belgian Health Survey 2001 and 2004, Department of Epidemiology, Scientific Institute of Public Health*

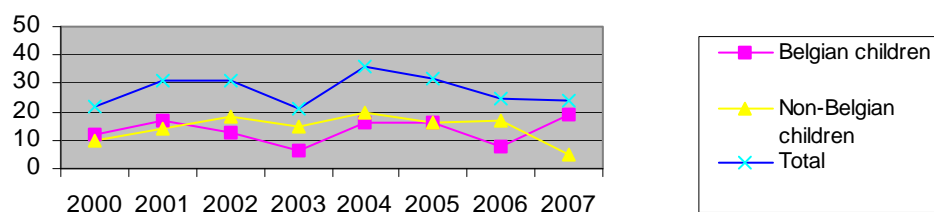
Active tuberculosis

Very small number of new cases of TB

Active tuberculosis is not found only in developing countries. Children also suffer from tuberculosis in the industrialised countries of the West. In 2007, 24 new cases of tuberculosis were recorded in children under 15 in Flanders, 19 of them in Belgian children and 5 in non-Belgian children. The incidence per 100 000 was 2.0 in Belgian children (95% confidence interval: 1.3 – 3.2) and 9.9 in the non-Belgian children (95% confidence interval: 3.2 – 23.2).

The number of new cases of active tuberculosis remained at almost the same level as in 2006. There were noticeably more new cases among Belgian children and noticeably fewer cases among non-Belgian children. Figure 6.22 shows the trend from 2000 onwards.

Active tuberculosis



6.22 Number of new cases of active tuberculosis in children aged under 15 in the Region of Flanders from 2000 onwards

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

4.4. Tooth decay

Tooth decay in young children: 3 to 4 out of every ten children have visible plaque on their teeth; 7% of 3-year-olds and over 30% of 5-year-olds have cavities

As part of the “Tandje de Voorste” (Smile for Life) project* data were collected on the state of oral health of Flemish pre-school children.

In 2003, 1 250 3-year-olds and 1 283 5-year-olds in 4 regions were examined by a team of trained dentists following a set method. The data obtained from the clinical examinations of the children’s mouths was supplemented with information from questionnaires completed by their parents.

Table 6.23 shows that over 30% of the 3-year-olds and over 37% of the 5-year-olds had *visible plaque* on their teeth.

At the age of 3, 7% of the children already had *clear signs of tooth decay* (i.e. cavities), at the age of 5, 31% of the children had tooth decay (see also chapter 7 point 5).

Of the children who were found to have tooth decay, in the majority of cases the affected teeth had not been treated (filled). At 5 years, less than half of the children had any sign of having been treated by a dentist and at 3 years, the overwhelming majority had not had any dental treatment (90%).

* This project is a collaboration between the Universities of Leuven and Ghent and Child and Family, made possible by the support of Gaba International and Gaba Benelux

Plaque and tooth decay

	3-year-olds (N=1 250)	5-year-olds (N=1 283)
State of teeth		
Completely sound milk teeth	93.1	69.2
1 to 4 teeth affected by tooth decay	6.1	23.6
5 or more teeth affected by tooth decay	0.8	7.2
Total	100.0	100.0
Plaque		
% children with visible plaque on teeth	30.7	37.3
Untreated tooth decay		
% children with tooth decay	89.2	54.8

6.23 Visible plaque, state of the teeth of 3- and 5-year-olds and untreated tooth decay in some regions of Flanders – 2003 (percentages)

Source: Declerck D., Leroy R., Martens L., Lesaffre E., Garcia-Zattera M.J., Vanden Broucke S., Debyser M., Hoppenbrouwers K., Factors associated with prevalence and severity of caries experience in preschool

children. *Community Dent Oral Epidemiol* 2007; 35 (in press)

4.5. Overweight in children aged 2 to 12 years

For a number of years the Body Mass Index* has been used as an indicator of overweight and obesity in children and adolescents as well as adults. The BMI has been the standard by which to judge the body weight of adults for decades. It is not so simple with children. The BMI varies with age, so it is not realistic to have a simple threshold limit value that is valid for all ages. An obvious option is to use the BMI percentile curves, that take explicit account of age differences. Then all that remains is to choose where to set the threshold percentiles for overweight and obesity. An arbitrary choice of a particular percentile (e.g. the 85th percentile) as the threshold limit value for being overweight presents an important conceptual problem. The increasing incidence of overweight people in the population means that as the years go by this percentile will go higher and higher. The International Obesity Task Force (IOTF) has proposed using the percentiles that correspond to a BMI of 25 or 30 kg/m² at age 18 as objective criteria for overweight and obesity respectively. That is why this criterion was used in the “Flemish growth curves” project to calculate the prevalence of overweight and obesity in Flanders.

The fieldwork for this project was carried out between January 2002 and December 2003 and it found that 11.2% of boys aged 2 to 12 were overweight and 2.5% were obese. The equivalent figures for girls were 15.2% and 3.4% (see Table 6.24).

Overweight and obesity

	Boys	Girls
Overweight	11.2	15.2
Obese	2.5	3.4

6.24 Incidence of overweight and obesity in 2- to 12-year-olds in Flanders based on the threshold limit values of the International Obesity Task Force – 2002-2003 (percentages)

Source: “Flemish growth curves” project (Roelants M., VUB; Hauspie R., VUB; Hoppenbrouwers K., KU Leuven)

* BMI = weight (kg) / height (m) x height (m)

4.6. Children with psychosocial and/or emotional problems

The research study entitled “Caring for young children” carried out by the Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy assessed children from the age of 4 years for psychosocial and emotional problems that they might have, and asked the parents to grade these problems as minor, obvious or serious.

The parents of 18% of the children reported that their child had problems with his/her feelings, concentration or behaviour, or problems getting on with other people (see Table 6.25). Most of the problems reported were graded as minor or obvious; 15% of the children were reported as having serious problems. Most of these problems had been going on for more than a year (see Table 6.26).

Psychosocial and emotional problems

	Children aged 4 - 6	Children aged 6 - 12	Total
Children with problems	10.2	20.7	18.0
Children without problems	89.8	79.3	82.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
	(N=432)	(N=1 264)	(N=1 696)

6.25 Children with problems with their feelings, concentration or behaviour or problems getting on with other people, by age of the child – 2005 (percentages)

Source: Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy, Antwerp

Seriousness and duration of the problems

	Children aged 4 - 6	Children aged 6 - 12	Total
Seriousness of the problems			
Minor problems	58.1	40.8	43.3
Obvious problems	25.6	44.3	41.6
Serious problems	16.3	14.9	15.1
Total	100.0 (N=43)	100.0 (N=262)	100.0 (N=305)
Duration of the problems			
Less than one month	0.0	0.4	0.3
1 to 5 months	14.0	8.0	8.9
6 to 12 months	11.6	9.6	9.9
More than a year	74.4	82.0	80.9
Total	100.0 (N=43)	100.0 (N=261)	100.0 (N=304)

6.26 Children with problems with their feelings, concentration or behaviour or problems getting on with other people, by seriousness and duration of the problems, as reported by their parents – 2005 (percentages)

Source: Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy, Antwerp

4.7. Hospital admissions

One in ten children under the age of 3

Admission to hospital and staying in overnight is quite a common occurrence among very young children. In a 3-month period, over 11% of children aged under 12 were admitted to hospital. Far fewer children in the age groups 3 to 6 years and 6 to 12 years were admitted to hospital: 1.3% and 2.6% respectively (see Table 6.27).

Because the questionnaire used for the Health Surveys has changed, the figures for 2004 cannot be compared with 2001.

Hospital admissions

Children aged under 3	11.4
Children aged 3 - 6	1.3
Children aged 6 - 12	2.6
Total aged under 12	4.8
	(N=444)

6.27 Percentage of children admitted to hospital and staying in overnight once or more in the course of one year in the Region of Flanders – 2004

Source: 2004 Belgian Health Survey, Department of Epidemiology, Scientific Institute of Public Health

5. Victims of road accidents

Further decrease in serious road accidents

In addition to the fatalities, many children are seriously injured in road accidents every year. We will now look at the most recent figures for each age group.

In 2007, 2 children under 3 were *killed and 19 were seriously injured* in road accidents in the Region of Flanders. In the 3 to 6 age group, there was 1 fatality and there were 19 seriously injured children and in the 6 to 12 age group there were 5 fatalities and 82 seriously injured children. There was a marked decrease in the number of seriously injured children compared with 2006 (-25) (see Table 6.28).

Looking at the type of road user, what stands out is that most of the deaths were passengers in cars. Most of the seriously injured were car passengers as well, followed in second place by pedestrians and in third place by cyclists (see Table 6.28). Figure 6.29 shows the trends since 2001. Compared with 2001 there was a considerable decrease in deaths and serious injuries to children under 12 due to road accidents, from 260 in 2001 to 128 in 2007.

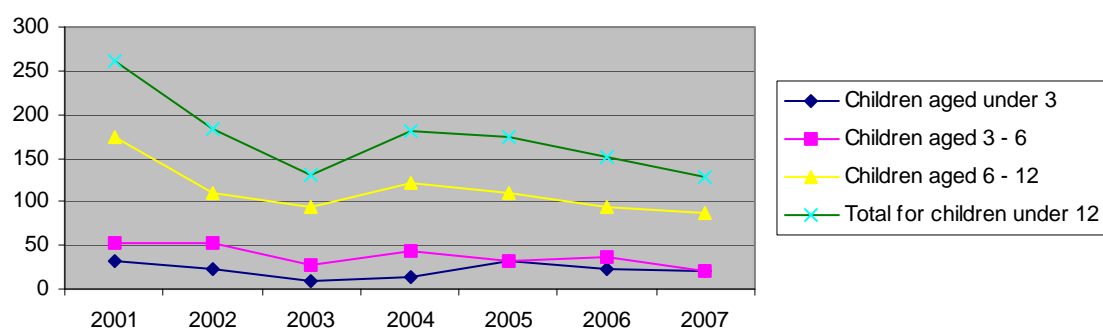
Road accident victims							
	2006			2007			
	Died within 30 days	Seriously injured(1)	Total	Died within 30 days	Seriously injured(1)	Total	
By age							
Children aged under 3	1	21	22	2	19	21	
Children aged 3 - 6	1	35	36	1	19	20	
Children aged 6 - 12	5	89	94	5	82	87	
Total	7	145	152	8	120	128	
By type of road user							
Pedestrian	1	56	57	1	36	37	
Bicycle	2	22	24	2	26	28	
Moped	0	4	4	0	3	3	
Motor cycle	0	1	1	0	3	3	
Private car	4	58	62	5	43	48	
Other	0	4	4	0	9	9	
Total	7	145	152	8	120	128	

6.28 Victims of road accidents in the Region of Flanders – Number of children under the age of 12 who died within 30 days, the number seriously injured and type of road user

Source: Belgian Institute for Road Safety

(1) Seriously injured: necessitating admission to hospital for more than 24 hours

Trend in victims of road accidents



6.29 Trend in the number of children fatally or seriously injured in road accidents in the Region of Flanders since 2001

Source: Belgian Institute for Road Safety

6. Child abuse

In 2008 the confidential child abuse centres received reports of abuse or neglect for over 42 children per 10 000, fewer than in previous years

Our figures on the incidence of child abuse are based on the number of reports made to the confidential

child abuse centres. People contact these centres for a whole variety of reasons. In order to extract a correct figure for notifications of concrete cases of child abuse made to the confidential child abuse centres from the whole range of concerns reported, we have only counted the contacts where a concrete case of abuse or neglect of a minor was involved or where someone reported a suspicion of a concrete case* of: sexual abuse, physical abuse or neglect, emotional abuse or neglect, or Münchhausen syndrome by proxy.

A total of 4 529 such *notifications* to the six confidential child abuse centres were noted in 2008 (provisional figure) (see Table 6.30). The number of notifications fell by 3.7% compared with 2007. Figure 6.31 shows the trend in notifications from 2000 onwards.

These notifications affected 6 112 minors. The number of *children reported* increased by 0.6%, but the relative number of children reported decreased from 2007 to 2008. In 2008 42.5 *children were reported per 10 000* children in the Region of Flanders compared with 48.2 in 2007 (see Table 6.32). Figure 6.33 shows the trend per 10 000 children since 2000. The highest incidence of reports was noted in 2005; since then it has fallen every year. The figure for 2008 is 7.1 per 10 000 which is below the 2005 peak.

The relative number of children notified varies from province to province. It is highest in the province of Antwerp, with almost 54 notifications per 10 000 children, and lowest in West Flanders with over 34 notifications per 10 000 children.

The provinces of Limburg, Antwerp and West Flanders have experienced quite marked decrease (-12.6 per 10 000, -7.5 per 10 000 and -8.2 per 10 000 respectively). In Flemish Brabant there was also a decrease but much smaller (-1.1 per 10 000), as was also the case in East Flanders (-0.8 per 10 000) (see Table 6.32).

** As well as reporting child abuse or neglect, people also contact the confidential child abuse centres about situations where children are thought to be at risk, about problems dealing with the emotional consequences of earlier abuse or neglect and about other problems. Sometimes it is not clear what the problem is. The confidential child abuse centres recorded 2 243 such contacts in 2008*

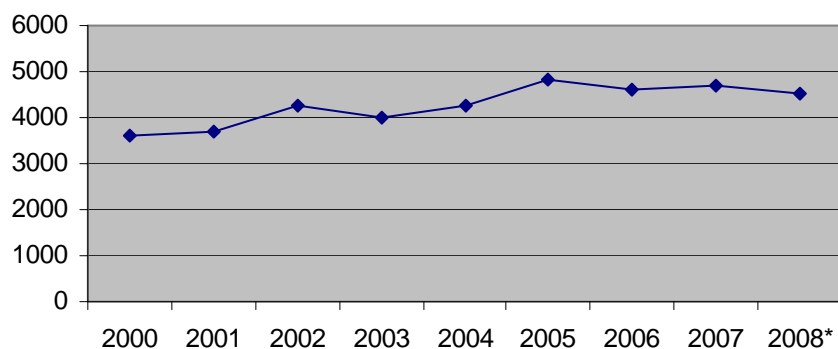
Notifications		
	2007	2008*
Number of notifications	4 704	4 529
Number of children affected	6 078	6 112

6.30 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



6.31 Trend in the number of notifications of child abuse or neglect from 2000 onwards

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

* Provisional figure

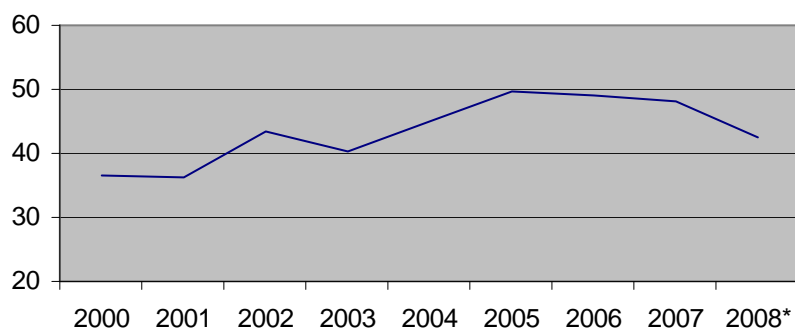
	Number of cases notified per 10 000 children		
	2007	2008*	Trend 2007-2008
Antwerp	61.1	53.6	-7.5
Flemish Brabant	48.4	47.3	-1.1
West Flanders	42.4	34.2	-8.2
East Flanders	36.6	35.8	-0.8
Limburg	47.9	35.3	-12.6
Region of Flanders	48.2	42.5	-5.7

6.32 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*

* Provisional figures

Trend in the number of cases notified per 10 000 children



6.33 Child abuse: trend in the number of children notified per 10 000 children under the age of 18 from 2000 onwards

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

* Provisional figure

In the case of 2 876 children, or 47.1% of cases notified, those notifying the abuse reported *physical abuse or neglect*.

The number of children that were notified because of *sexual abuse* was 1 573 or 25.7% of the children reported. Incest was notified for 1 021 children or 64.9% of all cases of sexual abuse. Extrafamilial sexual abuse was notified in the case of 467 children or 29.7% of all cases of sexual abuse. In the case of 85 children (5.4% of all cases notified for sexual abuse) it was still not clear whether sexual abuse was involved or not.

1 640 children or 26.8% were reported on account of *emotional abuse or neglect*.

Compared with 2007 the number of children reported for physical abuse or neglect increased (+11.7%), as did the number reported for emotional abuse or neglect (+1.4%). The number of children reported on account of sexual abuse fell by 15.2% (see Table 6.34 and Figure 6.35).

40.7% of notifications came from the child's immediate social circle: Notifications by the mother figure (13.3% of all notifications), the father figure (6.4%), the father and mother figures together (0.1%), other members of the immediate family or relatives (9.7%), neighbours or acquaintances (9.0%), other people (1.1%) or the victims themselves (1.0%).

32.5% of notifications came from professionals (15.2% from health care workers, 10.9% from welfare organisations and 6.4% from the special youth welfare service).

Notifications by all other professionals together accounted for 25.3%. These were judicial institutions (1.5%), pre-school facilities (1.0%) and school facilities (22.8%).

0.5% of notifications came from someone from the perpetrator's social circle. In 1.0% of the cases notified, it is not known who reported them (see Table 6.36).

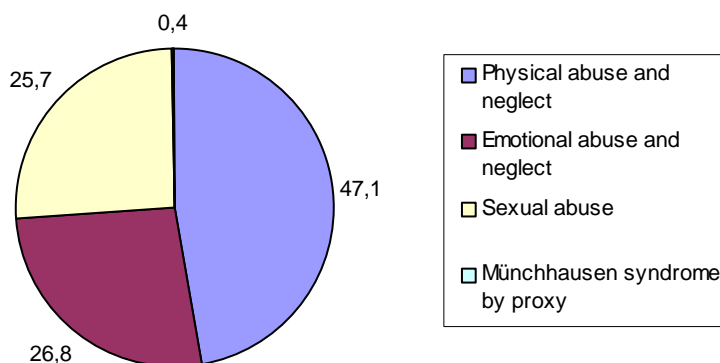
	Problems notified				Trend 2007- 2008
	2007		2008*		
	Number	%	Number	%	
Physical abuse	1 488	24.5	1 747	28.6	+17.4
Physical neglect	1 087	17.9	1 129	18.5	+ 3.9
<i>Total physical abuse and neglect</i>	<i>2 575</i>	<i>42.4</i>	<i>2 876</i>	<i>47.1</i>	<i>+ 11.7</i>
Emotional abuse	896	14.7	987	16.1	+ 10.2
Emotional neglect	722	11.9	654	10.7	- 9.4
<i>Total emotional abuse and neglect</i>	<i>1 618</i>	<i>26.6</i>	<i>1 641</i>	<i>26.8</i>	<i>+ 1.4</i>
Incest	1 163	19.1	1 021	16.7	- 12.2
Extrafamilial sexual abuse	591	9.7	467	7.6	- 21.0
Not known whether incest or not	102	1.7	85	1.4	- 16.7
<i>Total sexual abuse</i>	<i>1 856</i>	<i>30.5</i>	<i>1 573</i>	<i>25.7</i>	<i>- 15.2</i>
Münchhausen syndrome by proxy	30	0.5	22	0.4	- 26.7
Total	6 078	100.0	6 112	100.0	+ 0.6

6.34 Child abuse: children notified by the most important problem notified

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

* Provisional figures

Problems notified



6.35 Child abuse: children notified by the most important problem notified in 2007

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

	Reported by		Trend 2007 - 2008
	2007	2008*	
People in child's immediate social circle	42.2	40.7	-1.5
Health professionals	15.2	15.2	0
<i>of which Child and Family</i>	2.7	2.6	-0.1
Welfare organisations	10.2	10.9	+0.7
Special youth welfare service	5.5	6.4	+0.9
Judicial institutions	1.6	1.5	-0.1
Pre-school facilities	1.4	1.0	-0.4
School and out-of-school facilities	22.3	22.8	+0.5
Someone from the perpetrator's social circle	0.5	0.5	0
Unknown	1.1	1.0	-0.1
Total	100.0	100.0	

6.36 Child abuse: persons or organisations reporting it (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 77.9 years for men and 82.9 years for women, the Region of Flanders scores quite well, especially for men. Only the Netherlands and Sweden have higher male life expectancy. Female life expectancy is higher in France, Spain, Sweden, Finland, Austria and Portugal (see Table 6.37).

Life expectancy at birth					
Males					
	2000	2004	2005	2006	2007
Region of Flanders	75.7	77.2	77.4	77.7	77.9
Belgium	75.1	76.5	76.6	77.0	
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	75.1	76.5	76.7	77.2	
France	75.3	76.7	76.7	77.3	
Luxembourg	74.6	75.9	76.7	76.8	

The Netherlands	75.5	76.9	77.2	77.7	78.2
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	74.2	75.4	75.6	75.9	76.1
Denmark	74.5	75.4	76.0	76.1	
Sweden	77.4	78.4	78.5	78.8	
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	75.5	76.6	76.8	77.2	77.2
Italy	76.6	77.9			
Portugal	73.2	75.0	74.9	75.5	
Spain	75.8	76.9	77.0	77.7	
<hr/>					
Austria	75.2	76.4	76.7	77.2	77.6
The United Kingdom	75.5	76.0	77.1	77.4	77.7
Ireland	74.0	76.4	77.3	77.3	
<hr/>					
Females					
	2000	2004	2005	2006	2007
Region of Flanders	81.5	82.4	82.5	82.9	82.9
Belgium	81.4	82.4	82.4	82.3	
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	81.2	81.9	82.0	82.4	
France	83.0	83.8	83.7	84.4	
Luxembourg	81.3	82.3	82.3	81.9	
The Netherlands	80.5	81.5	81.7	82.0	82.7
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	81.2	82.5	82.5	83.1	83.2
Denmark	79.2	80.2	80.5	80.7	
Sweden	82.0	82.8	82.9	83.1	
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	80.6	81.3	81.6	81.9	82.0
Italy	82.9	83.8			
Portugal	80.9	81.4	81.3	82.3	
Spain	82.9	83.8	83.7	84.4	
<hr/>					
Austria	81.2	82.1	82.3	82.8	83.2
The United Kingdom	80.3	81.0	81.1	81.8	81.9
Ireland	79.2	81.4	81.7	82.1	

6.37 Male and female life expectancy at birth from 2000 onwards in the EU-15 countries

Sources: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency

FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, Population Statistics Eurostat, website (2000-2006)

WHO Regional Office for Europe, European Health for all database (website)(2007)

7.2. Caesareans

With 197.1 Caesareans per 1 000 live births, Flanders is in the middle of the range. The rate of Caesareans is considerably lower in the Netherlands, Finland and Sweden. Italy has the highest percentage of Caesareans at over 382 per 1 000 live births (see Table 6.38).

Caesareans

	2000	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Flanders(1)	169.7	189.2	188.6	193.0	198.1	197.1
Belgium	NA					
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>						
Germany	208.9	248.1	259.5	267.4	277.8	
France	171.1	188.0				
Luxembourg	198.0	234.6	239.6			
The Netherlands	118.7	137.2	136.4	135.1		
<i>Nordic countries</i>						
Finland	157.8	161.7	163.9	162.7	161.4	162.6
Denmark	150.5	191.8	201.8	197.3	204.3	214.1
Sweden	144.9	157.5	165.3	167.8	172.6	
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>						
Greece	NA					
Italy	333.0	364.4	374.5	382.4		
Portugal	277.3	318.8	324.3	339.8		
Spain	215.1	237.0	242.4	250.1		
Austria	172.0	221.2	235.6	244.2	258.1	271.5
The United Kingdom	199.7	218.8	220.1			
Ireland	214.3	243.0	254.2	261.9		

6.38 Number of Caesareans per 1 000 live births in the EU-15 countries from 2000 onwards.

Sources: Study Centre for Perinatal Epidemiology

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

(1) Figures for the Region of Flanders and a Dutch-speaking maternity hospital in Brussels; number per 1 000 births

NA: not available

7.3. Birth weight

Rates of prematurity, defined as a birth weight below 2 500 g, vary greatly in the EU-15 countries. Sweden and Finland have very low rates at respectively 4.2 and 4.3 babies with a low birth weight per 100 live births. At 6.7 per 100 in 2007, the Region of Flanders still scores on the high side. In the Mediterranean countries, with the exception of Spain, and in Austria it is over 7 (see Table 6.39).

	Low birth weight					
	2000	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Flanders(1)	6.8	7.4	6.9	6.8	7.0	6.7
Belgium	NA					
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>						
Germany	6.4	6.8	6.9	6.8	6.8	6.9
France	NA	8.0				
Luxembourg	6.8	7.4				
The Netherlands	NA					
<i>Nordic countries</i>						
Finland	4.5	4.1	4.2	4.2	4.3	4.9
Denmark	4.7	5.0	5.0	4.9	6.0	6.7

Sweden	4.4	4.3	4.2	4.1	4.3	
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>						
Greece	8.1	8.6	8.6	8.8	9.0	8.8
Italy	NA	7.0	6.9	7.2		
Portugal	7.1	7.4	7.6	7.5		
Spain	6.9	7.5	7.4	7.6	4.5	
Austria	6.3	7.1	6.8	6.8	7.1	7.2
The United Kingdom	7.5					
Ireland	5.6	5.9	5.7	5.8		

6.39 Number of children with a birth weight below 2 500 g per 100 live births in the EU-15 countries from 2000 onwards

Sources: Study Centre for Perinatal Epidemiology

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

(1) Figures for the Region of Flanders and a Dutch-speaking maternity hospital in Brussels

NA: not available

7.4. Congenital abnormalities

A number of countries keep Eurocat records of congenital abnormalities up to 1 year. At present the data for 2006 are available.

Table 6.40 compares the data from the Antwerp register for 2006 with the data from the Eurocat registers that are "full members" of Eurocat. There are 36 registers from 16 countries.

Rather fewer congenital abnormalities in total were recorded on the Antwerp register than the average on the Eurocat registers. Compared with the Eurocat averages, there were significantly fewer heart disorders and chromosomal abnormalities, including Down's syndrome, in Antwerp in 2006. More abnormalities of the nervous system, the digestive system, the genital system, including hypospadias and the limbs were recorded in 2006 in Antwerp than the average in the Eurocat register.

Congenital abnormalities up to the age of 1 year

	Antwerp 2006 Per 10 000 births	Eurocat average 2006 (1) Per 10 000 births
Nervous system	33.3	24.0
<i>of which neural-tube defects</i>	13.8	9.8
<i>hydrocephalus</i>	5.1	5.7
Eye	3.6	3.2
Ear, face, neck	2.1	2.1
Heart	53.8	67.4
<i>of which ventricle septum defect</i>	21.0	30.6
<i>atrium septum defect</i>	6.2	17.1
Respiratory system	2.1	4.0
Oro-facial clefts	12.8	14.8
<i>of which cleft lip with or without cleft palate</i>	8.7	9.2
<i>cleft palate</i>	4.1	5.7
Digestive system	19.5	14.6
Abdominal wall defects	3.6	6.7
Urinary system	25.1	27.5
Genital system	23.6	17.1

<i>of which hypospadias</i>	21.0	14.4
Limbs	43.6	35.3
<i>of which club foot</i>	13.8	9.7
<i>dislocated hip and/or dysplasia</i>	7.2	6.1
<i>polydactylism</i>	11.3	8.5
<i>syndactylism</i>	6.2	4.4
Musculo-skeletal system	11.3	7.6
Other abnormalities	6.2	6.7
Teratogenic syndromes with abnormalities	0.0	1.2
Genetic syndromes and microdeletions	7.7	5.9
Chromosomal	23.6	34.7
<i>of which Down's syndrome (trisomy 21)</i>	13.8	20.3
Metabolic	7.2	*
Total babies with one or more congenital abnormalities	207.6	217.8

6.40 Congenital abnormalities recorded up to the age of 1 year in the Eurocat registers per 10 000 births in 2006

Source: Eurocat, Provincial Institute of Hygiene, Antwerp

(1) Only the registers which participated fully in the registration

* Antwerp is the only Eurocat register that records metabolic disorders

7.5. Mortality

With a *perinatal mortality rate of 6.1 per 1 000 births in 2007*, the Region of Flanders has one of the worst scores. Only France (figures from 2000) and the United Kingdom have higher perinatal mortality rates (see Table 6.41).

Infant mortality is below 4 per 1 000 live births in most of the EU-15 countries. Due to the increase in infant mortality in 2006 and 2007, the Region of Flanders, together with the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, is now one of the worst scoring countries in the EU-15, with a rate of over 4 per 1 000 live births (see Table 6.42).

	Perinatal mortality				
	2000	2004	2005	2006	2007
Region of Flanders	6.1	6.2	5.4	6.2	6.1
Belgium	NA				
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	6.1	5.9	5.6	5.6	
France	6.6				
Luxembourg	7.0	4.8	5.0	3.6	
The Netherlands	7.9	6.7	6.9	6.0	5.7
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	3.7	2.9	3.0	3.0	3.3
Denmark	4.8	3.5	3.3	3.2	3.1
Sweden	4.7	3.9	3.3	3.6	4.3
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	7.9	6.3	5.7	4.9	5.3

Italy	5.7	4.5	4.6		
Portugal	5.1	5.6	4.2		
Spain	5.5	5.0	4.7		
Austria	3.9	3.2	3.4	3.2	3.1
The United Kingdom	8.2	8.2			
Ireland	6.2	5.5	5.1		

6.41 Perinatal mortality rate (stillbirths and deaths during the first seven days) per 1 000 births in the EU-15 countries since 2000

Sources: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency

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

NA: not available

Infant mortality					
	2000	2004	2005	2006	2007
Region of Flanders	4.7	3.9	3.9	4.2	4.3
Belgium	4.8	4.0	3.7		
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	4.4	4.1	3.9	3.8	
France	4.4	3.9	3.6	3.6	
Luxembourg	3.0	3.5	2.6	2.5	
The Netherlands	5.1	4.4	4.9	4.4	4.1
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	3.6	3.3	3.1	2.9	2.7
Denmark	5.0	4.2	4.4	3.4	
Sweden	3.4	3.2	2.5	2.8	
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	5.4	4.1	3.8	3.7	3.6
Italy	4.5	NA	NA	3.7	
Portugal	5.5	3.9			
Spain	4.4	4.0	3.8		
Austria	4.8	4.5	4.2	3.6	3.7
The United Kingdom	5.6	5.1	5.1	5.0	4.8
Ireland	6.2	4.9	3.9	3.7	

6.42 Infant mortality: number of deaths of children aged under 12 months per 1 000 live births from 2000 onwards in the EU-15 countries

Sources: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency

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

NA: not available

Mortality in children aged 1 to 5 is quite up and down, with significant differences from one year to the next. With 20 deaths per 100 000 live births, the Region of Flanders is among the EU-15 countries with a high rate of mortality in children aged 1 to 5 years (see Table 6.43).

Deaths in children aged 1-5						
	2000	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007

Region of Flanders	NA	19.0	19.0	22.0	24.0	20.0
Belgium	NA					
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>						
Germany	24.1	22.3	20.7	20.4	18.3	
France	25.1	24.0	20.8	19.6	19.8	
Luxembourg	21.7	8.9	8.9	13.6		
The Netherlands	28.1	24.1	23.5	24.2	21.2	18.9
<i>Nordic countries</i>						
Finland	17.7	20.7	24.7	24.3	11.8	19.9
Denmark	19.1	25.5	23.5	18.7	14.6	
Sweden	12.3	20.0	19.8	21.3	17.5	
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>						
Greece	18.4	18.3	23.0	20.3	14.8	18.0
Italy	19.3	18.3	NA	NA	17.1	
Portugal	45.1	28.7	32.1			
Spain	26.1	27.2	22.4	21.7		
Austria	22.7	28.2	15.7	21.3	21.8	17.1
The United Kingdom	NA	24.6	23.2	21.9	22.8	22.7
Ireland	21.2	21.9	20.9	22.0	13.7	

6.43 Number of deaths of children aged 1 to 5 years per 100 000 live births from 2000 onwards in the EU-15 countries (crude death rate)

Sources: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency
WHO/Europe, European mortality database (MDB), website
NA: not available

7.6. Cot deaths

The Mediterranean countries in the EU and the Netherlands have very few cases of cot death: fewer than 2 cases under the age of 1 year per 10 000 live births. The Region of Flanders and Germany have the highest incidence of cot death per 10 000 live births (see Table 6.44).

	Cot deaths						
	2000	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Region of Flanders (1)	6.9	4.4	5.0	4.0	3.3	4.6	3.6
Belgium	NA						
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>							
Germany	6.5	5.1	5.3	4.6			
France	4.6	3.8	3.4	3.4			
Luxembourg	3.6	5.6	7.5	9.3	3.7		
The Netherlands	1.2	1.1	1.4	0.9	1.0		
<i>Nordic countries</i>							
Finland	3.2	2.5	3.2	1.9	3.3		
Denmark	2.4						
Sweden	2.8	2.1	2.2	2.8			

<i>Mediterranean countries</i>						
Greece	1.1	1.0	0.8	0.9	0.8	0.9
Italy	0.6	0.5				
Portugal	0.6	0.5	0.7			
Spain	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.9	2.0	
Austria	5.0	4.2	3.4	2.1	3.8	3.2
The United Kingdom	NA	3.3	3.0	2.9	2.7	
Ireland	9.3	5.9	6.9	6.0	3.1	

6.44 Number of cases of cot death per 10 000 infants under the age of 1 year in the EU-15 countries from 2000 onwards (crude death rate)

Sources: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency

WHO/Europe, European mortality database (MDB), website

(1) Figures for total number of cases of cot death per 10 000 live births

NA: not available

7.7. Deaths caused by accidents

Table 6.45 compares the number of deaths resulting from accidents to children aged 0 to 15 in the Region of Flanders with the other EU-15 countries and Table 6.46 shows the number of deaths from road accidents. With 3.2 deaths per 100 000 resulting from accidents and 1.4 resulting from road accidents, the Region of Flanders comes in the middle of the range of EU-15 countries.

Deaths caused by accidents						
	2000	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Region of Flanders	NA	NA	3.0	4.3	3.2	
Belgium	NA					
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>						
Germany	4.3	3.9	3.2	3.3	2.9	
France	6.3	5.1	4.2	3.8	3.7	
Luxembourg	7.1	2.4	2.4	6.1		
The Netherlands	4.3	4.3	3.3	3.1	2.7	2.7
<i>Nordic countries</i>						
Finland	4.5	4.7	8.4	5.4	2.6	3.4
Denmark	4.7	4.2	4.2	3.0	3.2	
Sweden	2.4	2.8	8.9	1.8	2.2	
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>						
Greece	5.8	5.3	4.5	6.1	3.8	4.9
Italy	3.7	3.2	NA	NA	2.4	
Portugal	6.1	8.0	7.6			
Spain	6.4	5.4	4.7	4.2		
Austria	6.5	5.7	3.0	3.8	3.5	2.7
The United Kingdom	NA	3.1	2.8	2.7	2.8	2.9
Ireland	4.2	4.6	3.0	3.0	3.6	2.7

6.45 Number of deaths caused by accidents in children aged 0 to 15 years per 100 000 children in the EU-15 countries from 2000 onwards (standard death rate (SDR))

Sources: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency

WHO/Europe, European mortality database (MDB), website
 NA: not available

Deaths caused by road accidents						
	2000	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Region of Flanders	NA	NA	1,3	2,2	1,4	
Belgium	NA					
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>						
Germany	2.0	1.7	1.4	1.4	1.2	
France	2.9	2.1	1.6	1.4	1.2	
Luxembourg	3.4	1.3	0.0	3.5		
The Netherlands	2.0	2.3	1.3	1.1	1.3	1.2
<i>Nordic countries</i>						
Finland	2.2	3.3	1.7	2.7	1.1	2.0
Denmark	2.5	2.6	1.9	1.6	1.2	
Sweden	1.2	1.2	1.0	0.5	1.5	
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>						
Greece	3.0	3.1	3.0	4.3	2.0	3.0
Italy	2.0	1.8				
Portugal	3.0	4.4	4.2			
Spain	3.5	2.8	2.4	2.0		
Austria	1.7	2.7	1.3	1.7	1.7	1.2
The United Kingdom	NA	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.4	1.3
Ireland	2.6	1.7	1.2	1.3	1.2	

6.46 Number of deaths caused by road accidents per 100 000 children aged 0 to 15 in the EU-15 countries from 2000 onwards (standard death rate (SDR))

Sources: Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency
 WHO/Europe, European mortality database (MDB), website
 NA: not available

7.8. Deaths as a result of violence

Deaths of children aged 0 to 15 years resulting from violence fluctuate slightly from year to year (see Table 6.47). Once again the Region of Flanders is among the EU-15 countries with a score in the middle of the range.

Deaths resulting from violence						
	2000	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Region of Flanders	NA	NA	0.9	1.2	0.6	
Belgium	NA					
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>						
Germany	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.5	
France	0.7	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5	
Luxembourg	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0		
The Netherlands	0.2	0.5	0.4	0.7	0.6	0.6
<i>Nordic countries</i>						
Finland	0.8	0.4	0.4	0.8	0.4	0.7
Denmark	0.7	1.3	0.0	0.6	0.0	

Sweden	0.3	0.1	0.6	0.2	0.1	
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>						
Greece	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.4
Italy	0.2	0.2	NA	NA	0.2	
Portugal	0.3	0.4	0.0			
Spain	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.2		
Austria	0.9	0.6	0.6	1.0	0.8	0.6
The United Kingdom	NA	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1
Ireland	0.9	0.1	0.0	0.3	0.2	

6.47 Number of deaths caused by violence in children aged 0 to 15 years per 100 000 children in the EU-15 countries from 2000 onwards (standard death rate (SDR))

Sources: *Health indicators, Flemish Care and Health Agency WHO/Europe, European mortality database (MDB), website*
NA: not available

7.9. Overweight in children aged 6 to 12 years

The “Flemish growth curves” study looked at children between the ages of 2 and 12 years. For the purposes of comparison with the EU-15 countries, we have taken from this study the total figure for boys and girls in the 6 to 12 age group, because this is the figure that is available for other countries. In Flanders 14.8% of 6- to 12-year-olds are overweight and 3.4% are obese. Flanders is in the middle of the range.

The incidence varies from 12% (the Netherlands) to 36% (Italy) (see Table 6.48).

	Overweight
Flanders	14.8
Belgium	18.0
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>	
Germany	16.0
France	19.0
The Netherlands	12.0
<i>Nordic countries</i>	
Denmark	15.0
Sweden	18.0
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>	
Greece	31.0
Italy	36.0
Spain	34.0
The United Kingdom	20.0

6.48 Incidence of overweight in 6-12 year-olds in a number of EU countries

Sources: *Lobstein T., Frelut M-L., Prevalence of overweight among children in Europe, Obesity news 2003*
“Flemish growth curves” project (Roelants M., VUB; Hauspie R., VUB; Hoppenbrouwers K., KU Leuven)

CHAPTER 7 A SAFE AND HEALTHY LIFE?

People's personal behaviour can affect their state of health, even from a very young age. Examples of this for the young child are whether they are breast-fed or not, whether they are vaccinated, use of therapeutic drugs and oral hygiene.

The living environment is also important for the young child, even more so than for adults. In this chapter we look at a number of aspects of how young children live and the environment in which they live, including information on how often they move house.

1. Feeding babies

1.1. First food

Breast-feeding from birth continues to increase; ethnic minority babies are breast-fed much more

Breast-feeding is, without a doubt, the healthiest and most natural way of feeding a baby. The benefits for the health of mother and child are abundantly clear. In addition to the fact that breast-feeding has greater biological value and breast milk is more easily digested, breast-feeding also protects against infections, offers the child protection against illnesses such as airway infections, diarrhoea and ear infection for longer, and helps to prevent allergy to cow's milk.

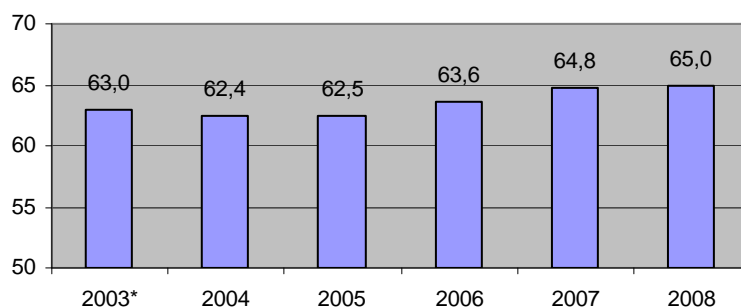
Child and Family uses a definition of breast-feeding that is in line with that of the WHO: breast-feeding means feeding the baby exclusively on breast milk. Small quantities of water, oral rehydration substances, medicines, and vitamin and/or mineral supplements are still considered to be exclusive breast-feeding, as is some formula milk that has to be given due to special circumstances. When, however, formula milk or other food is given regularly in addition to breast milk, this is no longer considered as breast-feeding.

First food is defined as the food the baby is being given on day six.

In Flanders, 65% of newborn babies are fed exclusively on breast milk as their *first food* on day 6. This represents an increase of 0.2% compared with 2007 (see Figure 7.1).

The percentage of babies who are exclusively breast-fed varies by *province*. The percentage is highest in Flemish Brabant, where 68.3% of babies are initially exclusively breast-fed. In the province of West Flanders, the percentage is the lowest, at only 58.2%. In the provinces of Limburg, Antwerp and East Flanders, 66.8%, 66.4% and 65.4% of newborn babies respectively are exclusively breast-fed (see Table 7.2). In the provinces of Flemish Brabant, West Flanders and Limburg the percentage of babies exclusively breast-fed increased; in the provinces of Antwerp and East Flanders it remained unchanged.

Trend in breast-feeding as first food



7.1 Trend in the percentage of babies fed exclusively on breast milk as their first food on day 6 since 2003

Source: *Child and Family – IKAROS*

* April - December 2003

The percentage of babies who are initially exclusively breast-fed is still slightly higher for *first-borns* than for subsequent babies but the gap is narrowing. 66.0% of first-borns are breast-fed; for subsequent babies the figure is 64.1%. There was an increase for subsequent babies and a decrease for first-borns from 2007 to 2008 (see Table 7.3).

The percentage who are breast-fed is much lower for *premature babies*: only 54.7% are breast-fed initially. 65.8% of babies born at full term are breast-fed (see Table 7.4).

Babies in Belgian *underprivileged families* are much less likely to be breast-fed than babies in other types of families (38.6%). Table 7.5 presenting the percentage of breast-fed babies by different privileged/underprivileged social groups also shows that babies from non-Belgian families which are not underprivileged are the most likely to be breast-fed from birth (78.6%). The figure for babies born into Belgian families which are not underprivileged is 62.5%.

Table 7.6 shows the differences by *age of the mother*. Mothers aged between 25 and 35 breast-feed from birth the most. Among the youngest (<25 years) and oldest (40 years +) mothers, the incidence of breast-feeding fell compared with 2007 but more babies whose mothers were in the 30-40 age group when they were born were breast-fed.

The percentage of breast-fed babies is highest among mothers with a university degree and among mothers with a very low *level of education*. This last fact is hardly surprising, as these are mainly ethnic minority babies. The rate of breast-feeding fell among mothers who completed 3rd stage or higher secondary education. There was an increase in the groups of mothers with other levels of education or the rate remained the same (see Table 7.7).

Breast-feeding by province

	2007	2008
Antwerp	66.4	66.4
Flemish Brabant	68.1	68.3
West Flanders	57.7	58.2
East Flanders	65.4	65.4
Limburg	65.6	66.8
Region of Flanders	64.8	65.0

7.2 Percentage of babies who are being exclusively breast-fed on day 6 by province

Source: *Child and Family – IKAROS*

Breast-feeding by birth order

	2007	2008
First-borns	66.5	66.0
Second or later babies	63.4	64.1
All babies	64.8	65.0

7.3 Percentage of babies being breast-fed on day 6, by birth order – Region of Flanders

Source: *Child and Family – IKAROS*

Breast-feeding and prematurity

	2007	2008
Premature	54.9	54.7
Full term	65.6	65.8
All babies	64.8	65.0

7.4 Percentage of babies being breast-fed on day 6 by whether or not they were born prematurely – Region

of Flanders

Source: *Child and Family – IKAROS*

Breast-feeding and belonging/not belonging to a disadvantaged group

	2007	2008
Babies in Belgian families which are not underprivileged	62.4	62.5
Babies in underprivileged Belgian families	38.1	38.6
Babies in non-Belgian families which are not underprivileged	78.5	78.6
Babies in non-Belgian underprivileged families	76.5	77.0
All babies	64.8	65.0

7.5 Percentage of babies being breast-fed on day 6, by whether or not their family belongs to a disadvantaged group – Region of Flanders

Source: *Child and Family – IKAROS*

Breast-feeding and age of the mother

	2007	2008
Under 20	54.6	51.6
20 – 25	61.4	60.8
25 – 30	66.3	66.3
30 – 35	66.1	66.9
35 – 40	62.8	64.9
40 years or over	64.5	62.8
All babies	64.8	65.0

7.6 Percentage of babies being breast-fed on day 6, by age of the mother – Region of Flanders

Source: *Child and Family – IKAROS*

Breast-feeding and level of education of the mother

	2007	2008
No education or only primary school	75.4	77.2
1st and 2nd stage or lower secondary school	53.2	53.2
3rd stage or higher secondary school	54.6	54.1
Non-university higher education (short course)	70.0	70.3
University education	79.0	79.2
All babies	64.8	65.0

7.7 Percentage of babies being breast-fed on day 6, by level of education of the mother – Region of Flanders

Source: *Child and Family – IKAROS*

1.2. Duration of breast-feeding

Over 3 in 10 babies are still being exclusively breast-fed at 3 months. Mothers are breast-feeding for longer

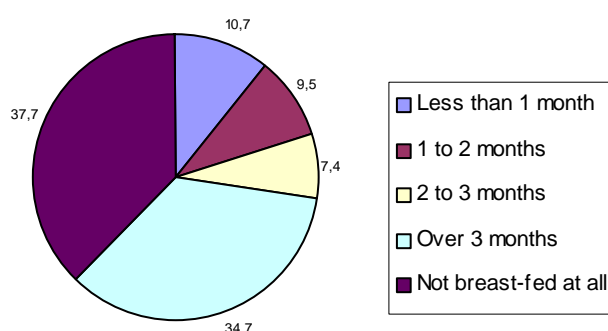
The most recent figures available are for the third quarter of 2008, which is why we look at babies born in the fourth quarter of 2007 up to and including the third quarter of 2008. Almost 35% of these babies were still being exclusively breast-fed at the age of 3 months (see Figure 7.8 and Table 7.9). Of the group who started on breast-feeding (breast-feeding on day 6), 55.7% were still being exclusively breast-fed at the age

of 3 months. Table 7.9 shows that in the province of Flemish Brabant in fact over 61.6% were still being exclusively breast-fed at 3 months.

Not only has there been an increase in the number of babies that start on breast-feeding (see 1.1), mothers are also breast-feeding for longer, except in the provinces of West Flanders and Limburg.

The decrease in the number of breast-fed children between day 6 and 3 months is slow but sure. Figure 7.10 shows the number of babies still being exclusively breast-fed by age in full weeks.

Duration of breast-feeding (1)



7.8 Duration of breast-feeding in babies born in the 4th quarter of 2007 up to and including the 3rd quarter of 2008 – Region of Flanders (percentages)

Source: *Child and Family – IKAROS*

(1) Excluding babies for whom the duration of breast-feeding is not known

Breast-feeding at 3 months by province (1)

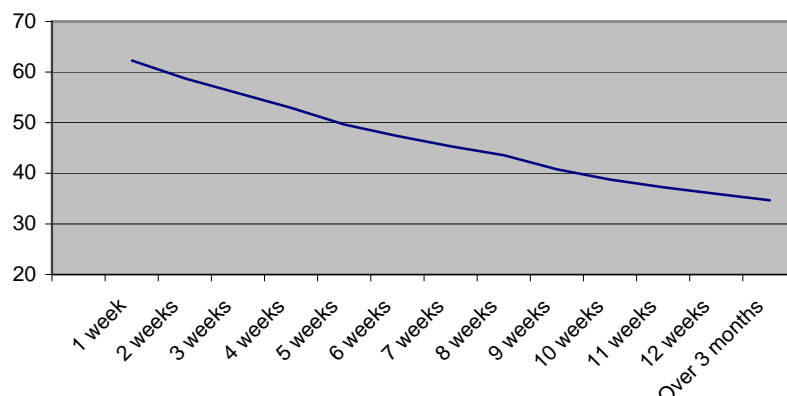
	% of all babies		% of babies who were initially breast-fed	
	4/2006-3/2007	4/2007-3/2008	4/2006-3/2007	4/2007-3/2008
Antwerp	34.8	35.2	54.4	55.1
Flemish Brabant	37.7	38.6	60.3	61.6
West Flanders	30.1	30.0	53.7	53.4
East Flanders	34.3	35.0	54.8	55.4
Limburg	34.8	34.7	54.0	53.8
Region of Flanders	34.3	34.7	55.3	55.7

7.9 Percentage of babies born in the 4th quarter up to and including the 3rd quarter of the year in question who were still being exclusively breast-fed at the age of 3 months, by province of birth

Source: *Child and Family – IKAROS*

(1) Excluding babies for whom the duration of breast-feeding is not known

Duration of breast-feeding in weeks (1)



7.10 Babies in the Region of Flanders: percentage of babies being exclusively breast-fed by duration of breast-feeding in full weeks – babies born 4th quarter 2007 - 3rd quarter 2008

Source: *Child and Family* – IKAROS

(1) Excluding babies for whom the duration of breast-feeding is not known

2. Vaccination rates

Very high vaccination rate; rapid uptake of the new rota vaccine

A new survey of the vaccination rate of young children living in the Region of Flanders was conducted in 2008. The vaccination records held at home for 915 children aged 18 to 24 months at the time of the survey were examined. If the parents did not have a vaccination record or if the information was incomplete, the researchers consulted Vaccinnet, Child and Family's medical files, the child's paediatrician or GP. The vaccination rate produced by the survey was therefore based on documented vaccinations.

This survey was carried out by K.U.Leuven, the University of Antwerp and Brussels Free University (VUB).

The study found that a very high percentage of young children in the Region of Flanders are vaccinated properly against the most important infectious diseases for which vaccines are available. The vaccination rate for young children in Flanders is well over 95% for all the basic vaccines. It is essential that enough people are vaccinated to prevent the spread of the diseases. The WHO target is a 90% vaccination rate. A 30% vaccination rate has already been reached for 2 doses of the recently recommended – since November 2006 – oral rota vaccine, even though the recommendation did not yet apply to the majority of the children in the survey. This indicates rapid take-up of this vaccine.

Table 7.11 shows a comparison with the last survey from 2005. It shows that the vaccination rate increased for all the basic vaccinations.

Most young children are vaccinated by Child and Family (84.2%)*. Some are vaccinated by a paediatrician (11.3%) or GP (4%). A very small number of children were vaccinated abroad or through ONE (Office de la Naissance et de l'Enfance) (0.5%).

The risk of incomplete vaccination is greater among last-born children in a family, especially in families with 4 or more children, and among the children of young mothers and mothers of non-Belgian origin. The main reasons given by parents for their children's incomplete vaccination record were anti-vaccination convictions and illness of the child.

* For more information about the vaccinations offered by Child and Family, see our annual vaccination report (www.kindengezin.be/Algemeen/Over_Kind_En_Gezin/rapporten/default.jsp)

Vaccination rates								
	2005				2008			
	Dose 1	Dose 2	Dose 3	Dose 4	Dose 1	Dose 2	Dose 3	Dose 4
Polio	99.0	98.6	98.2	93.1	99.7	98.8	98.5	95.3
DTP	98.7	98.2	97.9	92.9	99.3	98.6	98.3	95.2
HIB	98.1	97.6	97.2	92.6	99.1	98.4	98.1	95.2
Hep B (1)	96.9	96.1	92.2	10.1	99.0	98.3	98.0	95.1
Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV) 7-valent (2)	NS	NS	NS	NS	97.7	93.8	89.1	32.2
Measles/mumps/rubella	94.0				96.6			
Meningitis C	94.1				95.6			
Rota vaccine (3)	NS	NS	NS	NS	33,3	30,4	0,9	

7.11 Vaccination rate among young children living in the Region of Flanders – children aged 18 to 24 months at the time of the survey

Sources: Van Damme P., Hoppenbrouwers K., Depoorter A-M., *Studie van de vaccinatiegraad bij jonge kinderen en adolescenten in Vlaanderen in 2005, [Survey of vaccination rates of young children and adolescents in Flanders in 2005] March 2006*

Hoppenbrouwers K., Van Damme P., Depoorter A-M., *Studie van de vaccinatiegraad bij jonge kinderen en adolescenten in Vlaanderen in 2008, [Survey of vaccination rates of young children and adolescents in Flanders in 2008] February 2009*

(1) For hepatitis B, both the 3-dose schedule and the 4-dose schedule were used in the period of the 2005 survey. In the case of the 2008 survey, the 1-dose schedule, 2-dose schedule and 3-dose schedule were used during the survey period

(2) 7-valent pneumococcal conjugate vaccine; the schedule varies from 1 to 4 vaccines depending on the age at which the first dose is administered

(3) The rota vaccine has been available from pharmacies in Belgium since 1 June 2006 and has been recommended and partially refunded by medical insurance since November 2006. This means that the recommendation only applies to children born since September 2006

NS: Not (not yet) in schedule or recommended

3. Use of therapeutic drugs

A considerable amount of therapeutic drugs used

The health survey gives information about the use of therapeutic drugs, which is high in the Region of Flanders, even for young children. 31% of children under the age of 12 took some form of medicine in the 2-week period* of the survey. This percentage falls as the child grows up, from 43% of children under the age of 3 to 27% of children aged 6-12. There was a slight decrease in the use of therapeutic drugs between 2001 and 2004, except for the children under the age of 3.

Table 7.12 includes the use of both prescribed medicines and medicines which can be bought without a prescription. Over 20% of children under 3 took prescribed medicines, a decrease on the 2001 figure. 13.8% took medicines which can be obtained without prescription, also less than in 2001.

* The surveys were spread over the year

Use of therapeutic drugs

	2001	2004
Use of therapeutic drugs		
Children aged under 3	39.1	43.0
Children aged 3 - 6	35.0	29.7
Children aged 6 - 12	34.7	26.6
Total aged under 12	36.5 (N=509)	31.0 (N=441)
Use of prescribed therapeutic drugs		
Children aged under 3	31.0	24.8
Children aged 3 - 6	20.5	18.6
Children aged 6 - 12	17.0	18.5
Total aged under 12	22.0 (N=518)	20.1 (N=447)
Use of therapeutic drugs obtained without a prescription		
Children aged under 3	13.0	23.9
Children aged 3 - 6	18.0	13.8
Children aged 6 - 12	19.9	10.3
Total aged under 12	18.1 (N=506)	13.8 (N=442)

7.12 Percentages of children taking prescribed medication and medication obtained without a prescription in a 2-week period, by age group – Region of Flanders

Source: 2001 and 2004 Belgian Health Survey, Department of Epidemiology, Scientific Institute of Public Health

4. Use of alternative medicine

The health survey gives us a picture of the extent to which parents are using alternative medicine for young children: 11% of children under 12 had had some contact with non-conventional or alternative medicine in a 12-month period. This was even higher for children under 3, at 14.7% (see Table 7.13). This usually involved the child being taken to a doctor who practises alternative medicine. In most cases this was a homeopathic practitioner. Quite a few children under 3 were taken to see an osteopath (5.1%).

The increase in the use of homeopathic medicine and osteopathy for children under the age of 3 is striking: 6.4% and 0.4% respectively in 2001.

	Alternative medicine			
	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3 - 6	Children aged 6 - 12	Total for children under 12
Contact with non-conventional therapy	14.7	10.5	9.5	11.0 (N=444)
Contact with non-conventional therapy through a doctor	9.8	7.9	8.3	8.2 (N=427)
Contact with non-conventional therapy through a paramedic	3.4	2.3	1.8	2.6 (N=407)

Contact with a homeopathic practitioner	11.3	7.2	9.8	8.7 (N=444)
Contact with an osteopath	5.1	1.4	1.8	2.8 (N=445)

7.13 Children under the age of 12 for whom alternative forms of medical treatment were sought in a 12-month period: extent of use, type of practitioner and type of medicine (percentages)

Source: 2004 Belgian Health Survey, Department of Epidemiology, Scientific Institute of Public Health

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

Daily tooth-brushing and consumption of sugary products are the most important areas for improvement

Behavioural factors are very important for oral health. Just think how important eating habits and oral hygiene are. Learning good habits at a young age goes a very long way to determining the state of a person's oral health in later life.

Data were collected as part of the "Tandje de Voorste" (Smile for Life) project* (see also chapter 6, point 4.4).

Parents in Flanders often only start brushing their toddler's teeth after their second birthday. Tooth-brushing is still not a daily habit in 1 in 5 5-year-olds. Many children – even 3-year-olds – are not given help with brushing their teeth.

What is surprising is that even some 5-year-olds still frequently drink from a bottle (12%). What's more, that bottle often contains a sugary drink. It is an established habit of around two thirds of children in Flanders to drink sweet drinks between meals. Further questioning revealed that over 10% of the children are offered sugary drinks before going to bed or during the night.

Twelve percent of the parents questioned also admitted that they regularly put sweet substances on their child's soother (see Table 7.14).

The findings of this project clearly show that there is a great deal of room for improvement in the oral health of children in Flanders. Starting daily tooth-brushing with the help of a parent at an early enough age needs to be encouraged. Parents also need to be warned about the risks associated with frequently giving their children sugary products on soothers, in bottles, as drinks between meals and at night.

* This project is a collaboration between the Universities of Leuven and Ghent and Child and Family, made possible by the support of Gaba International and Gaba Benelux

Oral hygiene and eating habits (%)		
	3-year-olds (N=1 250)	5-year-olds (N=1 283)
Oral hygiene		
Age tooth-brushing starts		
1 year or under	35.7	61.5
- between 1 and 2 years	45.1	30.5
- 2 years old or more	19.2	8.0
Frequency of tooth-brushing		
- > 1x/day	17.6	23.0
- > 1x/day	53.2	55.7
- not every day	29.2	20.3

Parents help with tooth-brushing (every day)	50.1	33.3
Eating habits		
Drink from a bottle (at time of survey)	40.5	12.0
Put sweet substances on soother (ever done this?)	12.7	12.6
Sweet drinks between meals (regularly)	69.0	64.5
Sweet drinks at night (regularly)	11.1	10.6

7.14 Oral hygiene and eating habits which affect oral health among 3- and 5-year-olds in some regions of Flanders

Source: Declerck D., Leroy R., Martens L., Lesaffre E., Garcia-Zattera M.J., Vanden Broucke S., Debyser M., Hoppenbrouwers K., *Factors associated with prevalence and severity of caries experience in preschool children. Community Dent Oral Epidemiol 2007; 35*

6. Smoking during pregnancy

A significant point of concern among health professionals providing services to families is having young children grow up in a smoke-free environment.

This has been a point of concern in connection with preventing cot death for years. The RIZIV (National Institute for Sickness and Invalidity Insurance) has been running a programme since 2005 to help pregnant women and their partners stop smoking.

An analysis of the impact of this campaign carried out in 2007 gives an indication of the number of pregnant women and partners who smoked during the pregnancy.

This study shows that only a small percentage of pregnant women were smokers before they got pregnant. The picture for their partners is even better. About half of the women who smoked stopped during the pregnancy and were still not smoking shortly after the birth. The number of partners smoking also fell but the decrease was smaller (see Table 7.15).

Smoking by pregnant women and their partners (1)

	Non-smoker	Fewer than 15 cigarettes a day	More than 15 cigarettes a day	Total
Mother before pregnancy	86.3	8.9	4.8	100.0
Mother during pregnancy	94.7	4.6	0.6	100.0
Mother after pregnancy	94.6	4.0	1.4	100.0
Partner before pregnancy	90.5	4.4	5.0	100.0
Partner during pregnancy	92.3	4.4	3.3	100.0
Partner after pregnancy	93.0	4.0	3.0	100.0

7.15 Smoking by pregnant women and their partners in the Region of Flanders – 2007

Source: VRGT (Flemish Lung and Tuberculosis Association), research study as part of the 'Helping pregnant women and their partners give up smoking' programme

(1) Not included in the questionnaire: ethnic minority and underprivileged families

7. Living conditions

The immediate environment in which they live is extremely important for young children, They spend more of their time in their everyday lives in the home and in the immediate vicinity of the home than do adults.

Children need a clean, safe place to grow up in.

Most young children live in a single-family home

The type of home can be seen as one indicator of the comfort of the home and it gives an indication of the

space in which children are growing up. Most young children live in a single-family home (89.8%) (see Table 7.16).

Type of home				
	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3 - 6	Children aged 6 - 12	Total
Single-family home – detached house	40.2	38.5	47.0	43.2
Single-family home – semi-detached or terraced house	44.2	51.5	45.5	46.6
Apartment or studio in building with fewer than 10 homes	12.8	8.5	5.1	7.9
Apartment or studio in building with 10 or more homes	2.8	1.5	1.8	2.0
Other	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.3
Total	100.0 (N=308)	100.0 (N=251)	100.0 (N=566)	100.0 (N=1 125)

7.16 Children aged under 12: type of home in which children live – Region of Flanders – 2006 (percentages)

Source: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, SILC – 2006

Over three-quarters of children under the age of 12 have their own bedroom. Almost 65% have room to play indoors and 94% live in a home with a garden or backyard attached to the house (see Table 7.17).

Space for children?				
	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3 - 6	Children aged 6 - 12	Total
Separate bedroom for each child	76.7	72.5	76.8	75.7 (N=2 418)
Room to play indoors	56.6	67.5	65.4	64.0 (N=2 415)
Garden or backyard	91.4	94.9	94.7	94.0 (N=2 417)

7.17 Children aged under 12: percentage who live in a home with a separate bedroom for each child, room to play indoors and a garden or backyard – 2005

Source: Antwerp University, Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy

30.1% of young children live in a *home* with one or more problems: too dark, damp, lacking basic conveniences (bath or shower, toilet or hot water) or overcrowded (less than 1 room per person). Damp and overcrowding are the most common problems (see Table 7.18).

Almost 44% of the children live in *an environment that has one or more faults*. These include noise from the neighbours or the street, pollution or other nuisance caused by traffic or industry, vandalism or crime, remote location without good public transport links and a scruffy neighbourhood. Noise from neighbours or the street scores the worst (see Table 7.18).

Living conditions

	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3 - 6	Children aged 6 - 12	Total
Faults in the home				
Too dark	7.1	6.0	7.8	7.2
Leaking roof, damp walls or floor, rotting window frames or rotting woodwork	18.9	14.7	13.1	14.9
Lack of basic conveniences (bath or shower, toilet, hot running water)	1.3	0.0	0.1	0.4
Overcrowded (less than 1 room per person)	9.9	13.8	13.5	12.6
<i>Percentage with one or more faults in the home</i>				30.1
	32.2 (N=308)	29.5 (N=251)	29.4 (N=566)	(N=1 125)
Faults in living environment				
Noise from neighbours or the street	24.8	21.8	18.6	20.9
Pollution or other nuisance caused by traffic or industry	11.1	8.0	13.0	11.3
Vandalism or crime in the neighbourhood	10.8	11.8	16.2	13.8
Remote location without good public transport links	13.5	15.1	11.6	12.9
Scruffy neighbourhood	6.1	8.3	5.1	6.1
<i>Percentage with one or more faults in the living environment</i>				43.8
	44.3 (N=308)	44.5 (N=251)	43.3 (N=566)	(N=1 125)

7.18 Children aged under 12: faults in the home and in the living environment (percentages) – 2006
Source: FPS Economy, Statistics and Economic Information Department, SILC – 2006

8. Moving house

Many young children have experienced moving house.

Table 7.19 shows how many children move house in the course of one year. In 2006 (more recent figures are not available), 10.3% of children under the age of 12 moved house. In about half of these cases they moved house within the same municipality. Slightly more children moved house than in 2005.

	Moved house within past year				Total
	2005		2006		
	Children aged under 12	Children aged under 3	Children aged 3 - 6	Children aged 6 - 12	
Moved house within the municipality	5.3	6.6	6.5	4.3	5.3
Moved to a different municipality within the same district	2.3	3.0	2.9	1.9	2.4
Moved to a different district within the Region of Flanders	1.6	2.2	2.0	1.4	1.7
Moved to another region within Belgium	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3
Moved abroad or unknown	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.5	0.6
Total who moved house	10.1	12.8	12.5	8.3	10.3

Did not move house	89.9	93.8	87.5	91.7	89.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

7.19 Children aged under 12: percentage who moved house during the year, by type of move

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

9. The European context

9.1. Breast-feeding

Flanders certainly does not lead the field as far as breast-feeding is concerned. The percentage of babies who are initially exclusively breast-fed is significantly to very much lower than in Sweden and Denmark and in the Mediterranean countries. Flanders also scores poorly at 3 months (see Table 7.20).

	Breast-feeding		
	at birth	at 3 months	at 4 to 6 months
Region of Flanders	65.0 (1) (2008)	34.7 (1) (2008)	NA
Belgium	NA	NA	NA
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>			
Germany	86 (2003)	NA	NA
France	50 (2003)	NA	NA
Luxembourg	88 (2003)	NA	54 (2003)
The Netherlands	75.0 (2006-08)	51.9 (2006-08)	32.0 (2) (2006-08)
<i>Nordic countries</i>			
Finland	NA	76 (2005)	NA
Denmark	98 (2003)	NA	NA
Sweden	97 (2003)	85.7 (2006)	NA
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>			
Greece	NA	NA	NA
Italy	85 (2003)	59.2 (2005)	19 (2003)
Portugal	93 (2003)	NA	NA
Spain	91 (2003)	65.5 (2001)	NA
Austria	NA	72 (2006)	NA
The United Kingdom	69 (2003)	NA	14 (2003)
Ireland	31-54 (2003)	NA	NA

7.20 Percentage of babies that are breast-fed at birth, at 3 months and at 4-6 months

Sources: *Child and Family – IKAROS*

La Leche League International (website) (data at birth; 2003)

European health for all database, WHO Europe (data at 3 months)

Central Bureau of Statistics, the Netherlands

(1) *Exclusively breast-fed*

(2) *At 6 months*

NA: *not available*

9.2. Vaccination rates

The vaccination rate for *polio and DTP* is high in most of the EU-15 countries and the Region of Flanders comes out on top. In Denmark, Greece and Austria, the rate for polio 3 and DTP 3 is below 90%. The United Kingdom and Ireland also score quite low.

For *hepatitis B* the situation is not as good and in various countries Hep B 3 is not in fact included in the vaccination scheme or it is limited to at-risk groups (the Nordic countries, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Ireland). Vaccination rates for *measles and Hib* are also below the 90% WHO target in many countries. The Region of Flanders is among the countries with the highest rates of take-up of these vaccines too (see Table 7.21).

Vaccination rates (1)					
	DTP3	Polio3	Measles	HepB3	Hib3
Region of Flanders*	98.3	98.5	96.6	98.0	98.1
Belgium	99	99	92	94	98
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>					
Germany	97	97	94	87	94
France	98	98	87	29	87
Luxembourg	99	99	96	87	99
The Netherlands	96	96	96	NS/R	96
<i>Nordic countries</i>					
Finland	99	97	98	NS/R	97
Denmark	75	75	89	NS	75
Sweden	99	99	96	4 (NS/R)	99
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>					
Greece	88	87	88	88	88
Italy	96	96	87	96	95
Portugal	97	96	95	97	97
Spain	96	97	97	96	96
Austria	85	85	79	85	85
The United Kingdom	92	92	86	NS/R	92
Ireland	92	92	87	NS/R	92

7.21 Percentage of children who have had DTP 3, polio 3, measles, Hep B 3 or Hib 3 vaccinations – 2007

Sources: *Hoppenbrouwers K., Van Damme P., Depoorter A-M., Studie van de vaccinatiegraad bij jonge kinderen en adolescenten in Vlaanderen in 2008, [Survey of vaccination rates of young children and adolescents in Flanders in 2008] February 2009*

Unicef, The State of the World's Children, 2009

* 2008

NS: *not in scheme*

NS/R: not in scheme, only for at-risk groups

9.3. Oral hygiene of young children

Our figures for the other EU countries are based on data from the *National Institute for DentoCraniofacial Research* (NIDCR) of the *National Institute of Health* (NIH) of the USA (see point 5).

Table 7.22 shows the results for oral hygiene for Flanders and for the EU countries which took part in the study. The Flemish children got very poor scores on reported frequency of tooth-brushing.

Oral hygiene				
	Brush teeth twice a day	Started brushing before 2nd birthday	Parents help children with tooth brushing	Sweet drinks at night
Flanders (Leuven)	32	65	74	19
Germany	66	94	80	21
Denmark	81	96	97	12
Italy	43	63	79	17
Scotland	85	99	84	20
Wales	83	94	79	26
Northern Ireland	77	90	69	15
Ireland	52	76	74	22

7.22 Oral health-related behaviour of children aged 3 to 5 in some EU countries – 2004 (percentages)

Source: Pine C. M. et al., *International comparisons of health inequalities in childhood dental caries. Community Dental Health 2004, 21 (Supplement): 121-130*

9.4. Housing problems

The European Panel Study of Households published data on housing problems experienced by families with children. The problems found were: lack of space; noisy neighbours or street noise; insufficient light; inadequate heating; damp or leaking roof; traffic pollution or industrial pollution; and vandalism or crime. Table 7.23 shows the percentage of families who reported three or more problems, by type of family. One-parent families with dependent children reported relatively more housing problems than two-parent families with 1 or 2 dependent children. In most of the EU-15 countries, the percentage is a little higher in two-parent families with 3 or more children than in two-parent families with 1 or 2 children.

Belgium comes in the middle of the range for two-parent families with 1 or 2 children. Austria, Ireland and France score better; the Mediterranean countries score noticeably worse. For one-parent families, Belgium is among the best scoring countries: with France it has one of the lowest percentages reporting three or more problems.

Housing problems experienced by families				
	One-parent families	Two-parent families		
		with 1 child	with 2 children	with 3 or more children
Belgium	16.9	11.5	14.7	11.7
<i>Neighbouring countries</i>				
Germany	NA	NA	NA	NA
France	14.3	9.0	11.0	15.8

Luxembourg	NA	NA	NA	NA
The Netherlands	24.3	11.5	7.6	8.1
<i>Nordic countries</i>				
Finland	26.8	14.3	10.0*	13.0*
Denmark	26.2	13.6	13.4	11.1
Sweden	NA	NA	NA	NA
<i>Mediterranean countries</i>				
Greece	39.1	19.6	23.0	22.8
Italy	33.4	22.6	24.2	30.0
Portugal	43.1	16.9	18.9	31.5
Spain	22.5	16.2	16.0	18.0
Austria	14.5	6.4	7.4	9.3
The United Kingdom	NA	NA	NA	NA
Ireland	42.0*	9.7*	7.7*	NA
EU-15	20.0	12.1	12.8	15.9

7.23 Percentages of one- and two-parent families with three or more housing problems in the EU-15 countries – 2001

Source: Eurostat, website

* Unreliable

NA: not available