



1.1. Nurses aged 50 years and over (% of practising nurses) (S-10)

1.1.1. Documentation sheet

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| Description | <p>Primary indicator: Nurses aged 50 years and over as a proportion of practising nurses.</p> <p>Secondary indicator: Nurses aged 50 years and over as a proportion of professionally active nurses in the labour market.</p> |
| Calculation | <p>Primary indicator: Numerator: Number of practising nurses aged 50 years and over Denominator: Total number of practising nurses</p> <p>Secondary indicator: Numerator: Number of professionally active nurses aged 50 years and over Denominator: Total number of professionally active nurses</p> |
| Technical definition | <p>A nurse is considered as professionally active when he/she is registered as self-employed person into National Institute for the Social Security of the Self-employed (NISSE) database or when he/she is registered as salaried worker into National Social Security Office (NSSO) database with at least 0.1 full time equivalent (FTE) per year. The threshold of 0.1 FTE per year has been established by the working group on nurses within the Planning Unit for the Supply of Healthcare Professions of the FPS Public Health.¹</p> <p>Practising nurses are defined as those active in the health sector. A nurse is considered as active in the health sector when he/she is registered as self-employed into NISSE database and had provided a minimum level of services per year (at least 10% of the activity level of a full time self-employed, i.e. 817 services in 2018 based on RIZIV-INAMI nomenclature) or when she/he is registered as salaried worker into NSSO database with at least 0.1 full time equivalent (FTE) per year and is working for an active employer in the health sector.¹</p> |
| Rationale | <p>Beyond the overall number of nurses, the age composition of the nursing workforce also has important implications on the current and future supply of healthcare services. The ageing of nurses in industrialized countries has, for many years, raised concerns that there may not be sufficient new recruits to replace them. An additional concern is that nurses quit their job before the retirement age (see limitations for this indicator).</p> <p>This indicator gives a rough estimation of the share of nurses that will retire within 10 years (although a significant number of nurses may have already quit their job before the official retirement age). It should be analysed together with the current number of practising nurses, and the number of nursing graduates (inflow).</p> |
| Data source | PlanCad Nurses 2004-2018 ¹ Federal database of health care professionals, Federal Public Service Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment |
| Limitation | A high score for this indicator can be interpreted in two ways: first, a high need to invest in new recruits, but also a sign of longer availability on the labour market (retirement at later age) which is a good sign. |
| International comparability | No standardized data collection available. |
| Dimension | Sustainability – Workforce capacity |



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| Related indicators | Practising nurses (A-11), nursing graduates (S-8), nurses following the bachelor routes (S-9); foreign-trained nurses (S-16), projection of the number of nurses active in the healthcare sector (S-22) |
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1.1.2. Results

Belgium

In 2018 (31/12/2018), 126 496 nurses were practising in the health sector (see Table 1). Practising nurses are well distributed between each age group between 25 and 59 years old: with a share varying between 12.0% and 13.4% depending on age category (see Table 1 and Figure 1). One third of practising nurses were aged above 50 years old in 2018, while 18.8% was aged 55 years or above (Table 1). The share of practising nurses aged 50 years and over is increasing between 2004 and 2018, from 14.0% to 32.1% (+18.1 percentage points, see Figure 2).

Regional comparison

Table 1 and Figure 1 shows that age distribution of practising nurses is quite the same between regions. The largest share of practising nurses is aged between 40-44 years old in Wallonia, between 50 and 55 years old in Flanders, and between both 40-44 and 55-59 years (same proportions) in Brussels. In 2018, the share of practising nurses aged 50 years old and over was 32.8% in Flanders, 30.1% in Wallonia, 33.8% in Brussels (see Table 2).

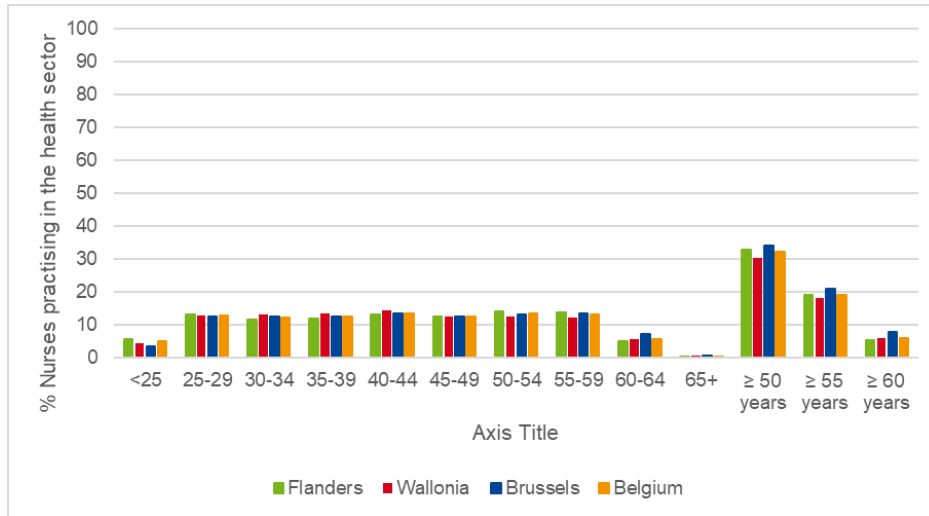
Table 1 – Practising nurses per age group and region of activity (2018)

| | Belgium | Flanders | Wallonia | Brussels |
|-------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| <25 | 6358 (5.0%) | 4328 (5.6%) | 1600 (4.3%) | 425 (3.3%) |
| 25-29 | 16 211 (12.8%) | 9870 (12.9%) | 4717 (12.8%) | 1604 (12.4%) |
| 30-34 | 15 143 (12.0%) | 8754 (11.4%) | 4746 (12.9%) | 1623 (12.5%) |
| 35-39 | 15 572 (12.3%) | 9077 (11.8%) | 4869 (13.2%) | 1612 (12.4%) |
| 40-44 | 16 896 (13.4%) | 9917 (12.9%) | 5245 (14.2%) | 1723 (13.3%) |
| 45-49 | 15 702 (12.4%) | 9552 (12.5%) | 4554 (12.4%) | 1588 (12.3%) |
| 50-54 | 16 815 (13.3%) | 10 615 (13.9%) | 4517 (12.3%) | 1679 (13.0%) |
| 55-59 | 16 611 (13.1%) | 10 458 (13.7%) | 4421 (12.0%) | 1728 (13.3%) |
| 60-64 | 6803 (5.4%) | 3852 (5.0%) | 2017 (5.5%) | 931 (7.2%) |
| 65+ | 385 (0.3%) | 190 (0.2%) | 146 (0.4%) | 48 (0.4%) |
| Total | 126 496 (100%) | 76 613 (100%) | 36 832 (100%) | 12 961 (100%) |
| ≥ 50 years | 40 614 (32.1%) | 25 115 (32.8%) | 11 101 (30.1%) | 4386 (33.8%) |
| ≥ 55 years | 23 799 (18.8%) | 14 500 (18.9%) | 6584 (17.9%) | 2707 (20.9%) |
| ≥ 60 years | 7188 (5.7%) | 4042 (5.3%) | 2163 (5.9%) | 979 (7.6%) |

Source: PlanCad Nurses 2004-2018¹; KCE calculation

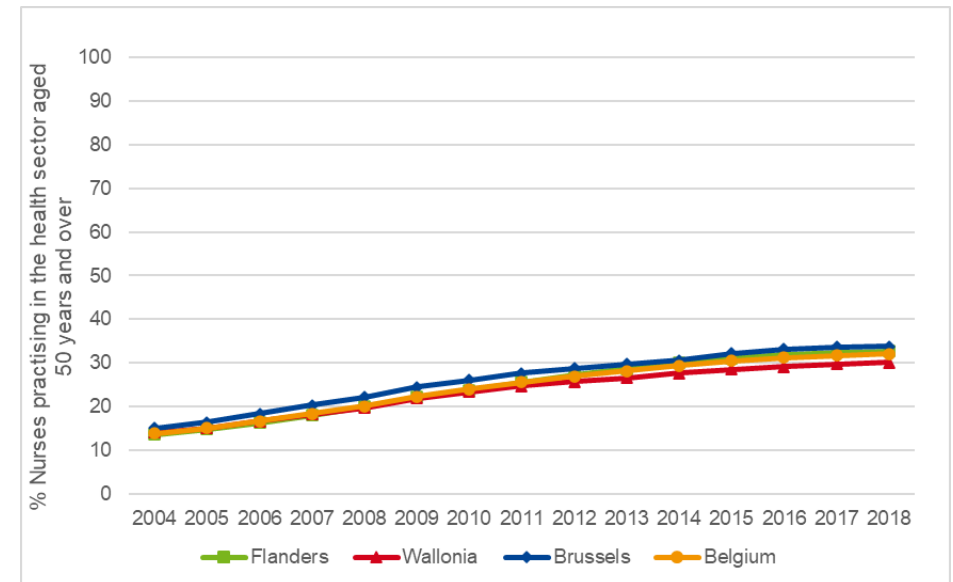


Figure 1 – Percentage of practising nurses per age group and region of activity (2018)



Source: PlanCad Nurses 2004-2018¹; KCE calculation

Figure 2 – Percentage of practising nurses aged 50 years old and over, Belgium and per region of activity, evolution 2004-2018



Source: PlanCad Nurses 2004-2018¹; KCE calculation



In term of professionally active nurses on the Belgian labour market, results are similar (see Table 2).

Table 2 – Professionally active nurses per age group and region of activity (2018)

| | Belgium | Flanders | Wallonia | Brussels |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| <25 | 6773 (4.6%) | 4579 (5.1%) | 1688 (4.0%) | 500 (3.1%) |
| 25-29 | 17 562 (11.8%) | 10 666 (11.8%) | 5018 (11.9%) | 1849 (11.6%) |
| 30-34 | 16 772 (11.3%) | 9 733 (10.7%) | 5133 (12.2%) | 1878 (11.8%) |
| 35-39 | 17 935 (12.1%) | 10 532 (11.6%) | 5421 (12.9%) | 1957 (12.3%) |
| 40-44 | 20 231 (13.6%) | 12 010 (13.3%) | 6049 (14.4%) | 2157 (13.5%) |
| 45-49 | 18 774 (12.6%) | 11 497 (12.7%) | 5295 (12.6%) | 1970 (12.4%) |
| 50-54 | 20 258 (13.6%) | 12 837 (14.2%) | 5308 (12.6%) | 2102 (13.2%) |
| 55-59 | 20 329 (13.7%) | 12 879 (14.2%) | 5239 (12.5%) | 2199 (13.8%) |
| 60-64 | 8 956 (6%) | 5186 (5.7%) | 2548 (6.1%) | 1215 (7.6%) |
| 65+ | 1192 (0.8%) | 703 (0.8%) | 380 (0.9%) | 106 (0.7%) |
| Total | 148 782 (100%) | 90 622 (100%) | 42 079 (100%) | 15 933 (100%) |
| ≥ 50 years | 50 735 (34.1%) | 31 605 (34.9%) | 13 475 (32.0%) | 5622 (35.3%) |
| ≥ 55 years | 30 477 (20.5%) | 18 768 (20.7%) | 8167 (19.4%) | 3520 (22.1%) |
| ≥ 60 years | 10 148 (6.8%) | 5889 (6.5%) | 2928 (7.0%) | 1321 (8.3%) |

Source: PlanCad Nurses 2004-2018¹; KCE calculation

Key points

- In 2018, 32.1% of practising nurses in Belgium were aged 50 years and over, while 18.8% were aged 55 years old or above.
- The proportion of practising nurses aged 50 years and over in Belgium increased between 2004 and 2018, from 14.0% to 32.1% (+18.1 percentage points). This can either be seen as a need to invest in new recruits or to a sign of longer availability on the labour market (retirement at later age).
- Results were similar between regions.

References

1. Vivet V, Durand C, Jouck P, Miermans P-J, Steinberg P, Groupe de travail Infirmiers de la Commission de planification de l'offre médicale. PlanCad Infirmiers 2004-2018. Bruxelles: Cellule Planification des professions de soins de santé, Service Professions des soins de santé et pratique professionnelle, DG Soins de santé, SPF Santé publique, Sécurité de la chaîne alimentaire et Environnement; 2021. Available from: <https://organesdeconcertation.sante.belgique.be/fr/documents/hwf-infirmiers-sur-le-marche-du-travail-2004-2018>