



6.6. Practising physicians per 1000 inhabitants (A-5)

6.6.1. Documentation sheet

Description	Number of practising physicians per 1 000 population
Calculation	<p>Main indicator: Number of practising physicians per 1 000 population</p> <p>Numerator : Number of practising physicians x 1 000</p> <p>Denominator: End-of-year Belgian population</p> <p>Secondary indicator:</p> <p>Number of practising physicians, in FTE per 1000 population</p> <p>Numerator: Number of full time equivalent (FTE) practising physicians x 1 000 (see also the technical definitions)</p> <p>Denominator: End-of-year Belgian population</p> <p>Number of practising physicians acceding to the agreement, in FTE per 1000 population</p> <p>Numerator: Number of full time equivalent (FTE) practising physicians acceding to the agreement (conventionnés / geconventioneerde) x 1 000</p> <p>Denominator: End-of-year Belgian population</p>
Rationale	The number of care providers gives important information on the medical workforce and thus the accessibility of healthcare. Together with the number of graduates, this information can be used for health providers supply planning.
Limitation	<p>Data on all professionally active physicians are currently not reported. A more detailed view on the activity of licensed physicians is available in the PlanCad project, resulting of a linkage of several administrative databases. A new report of the PlanCad for physicians, that will allow us to have details about all professionally active physicians and practising physicians, including physicians working outside the health system covered by the compulsory health insurance such as in occupational medicine, in insurance companies, in child services (ONE-kind and gezin), etc.), also in FTE, is only planned for 2019-2020. An update of this indicator will therefore be done on the website when the PlanCad report for physicians will be available.</p> <p>Regional analysis is based on the personal address of the practitioner and not on the addresses where (s)he practice. This mainly impact estimates in Brussels (underestimation).</p>
Primary data source	OECD Health Statistics 2018 and RIZIV–INAMI yearly statistics
Technical definitions	<p>A care provider is considered to be practising (RIZIV – INAMI: “profiles”) if he/she provided more than 1 clinical service (i.e. consultations, visits, technical acts, but not prescriptions) during a given year.</p> <p>General practitioners working as salaried in medical houses or in homes for elderly are added to those numbers.</p> <p>Physicians still in training are not counted.</p>



	<p>RIZIV – INAMI also calculates the number of full-time-equivalent (FTE) practising physician. Because information on their time of work is not available, FTE is calculated as the ratio between individual revenue of a specialist compared to the P50 of the same specialism between 45-55years (N.B. all results above 1 is limited to 1).</p>
International comparability	<p>The OECD differentiates between practising physicians (doctors providing direct care to patients), professionally active physicians (including also doctors working in the health sectors as managers, educators, researches, etc) and physicians licensed to practise (i.e. having the required diploma). In addition, OECD countries use different methodologies to calculate the same indicator (such as different minimal activity thresholds). Comparisons between countries are therefore potentially inadequate.¹</p> <p>Before 2009, Belgian data transferred to OECD for practising physicians included all registered physicians at the INAMI – RIZIV (all physicians having a RIZV – INAMI code). Since 2009 (and since then data have been adapted retrospectively) these data are based on the number of practising physicians, giving a better picture of the medical density in Belgium.</p> <p>It should also be noted that for 2016, OECD data concerned the number of practicing physicians with at least one clinical service (instead of more than one); 2016 data on the number of practicing physicians with more than one clinical service are available on the RIZIV – INAMI website (https://www.riziv.fgov.be/fr/statistiques/soinsdesante/2017/Pages/nombre-dispensateurs-soins-individuels.aspx?utm_source=alert&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=FR20190211)</p>
Dimensions	Accessibility, Health workforce
Related indicators	Qualification levels of healthcare providers (GP versus SPs). Medical graduates

6.6.2. Results

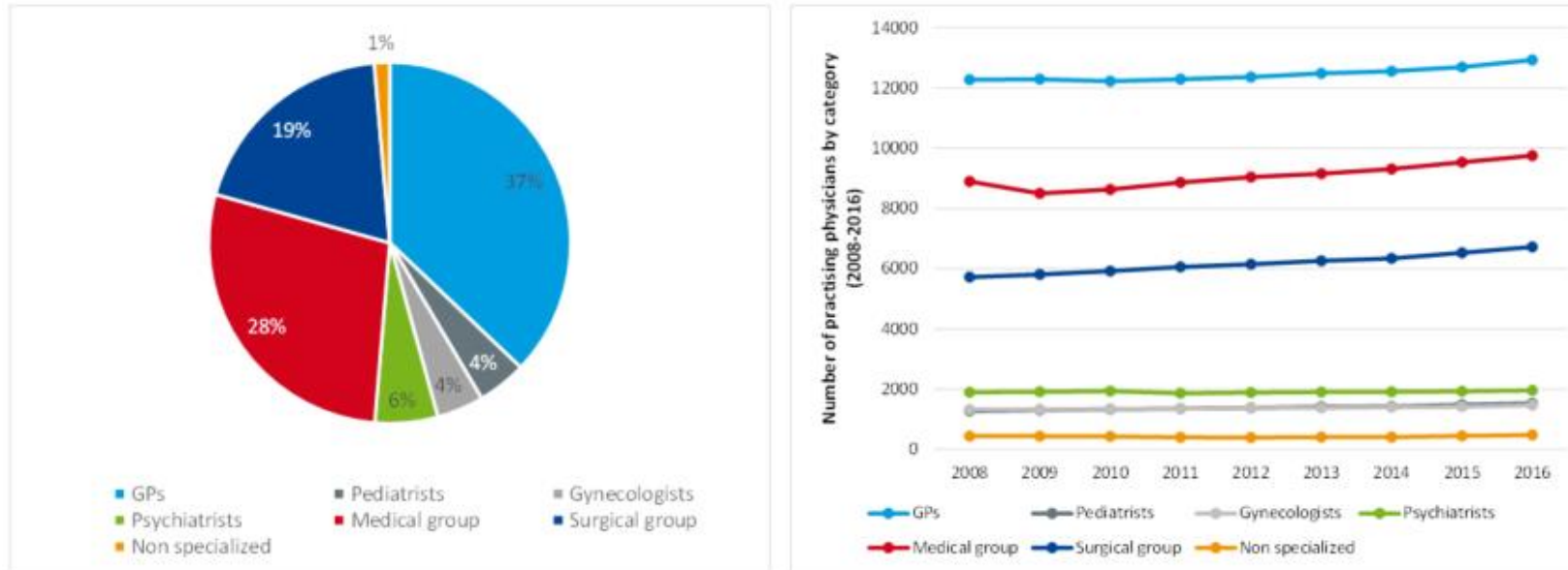
Belgium

Based on the last OECD statistics, there were 34 834 physicians in practice in 2016 in Belgium, corresponding to a density of 3.07 per 1000 inhabitants (see Table 43). The number of practising physicians increased over the time from 31 803 in 2008 to 34 834 in 2016 (see Table 43). The three main specialities among physicians are GPs (37%), medical group (28%) and surgical group (19%, see Figure 83).

**Table 43 – Number of practising physicians, by speciality (2008-2016)**

Speciality	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Density 2016 (/1000 inhabitants)
TOTAL Physicians	31 803	31 577	31 814	32 181	32 582	32 999	33 353	34 020	34 834	3.07
GPs	12 274	12 286	12 228	12 290	12 363	12 483	12 560	12 693	12 929	1.14
Paediatricians	1269	1301	1332	1350	1378	1414	1429	1482	1532	0.14
Gynaecologists	1317	1331	1346	1352	1370	1377	1405	1416	1462	0.13
Psychiatrists	1891	1914	1932	1865	1890	1899	1907	1930	1958	0.17
Medical group	8893	8500	8627	8866	9043	9157	9309	9530	9753	0.86
Surgical group	5718	5806	5916	6059	6150	6261	6339	6523	6719	0.59
Non specialized	441	439	433	399	388	408	404	446	481	0.04

Source: OECD Health Statistics 2018

**Figure 83 – Distribution of practising physicians (2016) and evolution of the number of practising physician, by speciality (2008-2016)**

Source: OECD Health Statistics 2018

Regional analysis

There are no huge variation between regions and provinces but the number practising physicians per 1000 population is slightly lower in the Flemish region than in the Walloon region or the region of Brussels capital (see Table 44). It should nevertheless be noted that this analysis is based on the address of the physician's home and not based on the place of practice. A recent study² based on the place of the GP practice obtained 1.23 practising GP per 1000 population in Brussels in 2017 (compared to 1.17 per 1000 population in 2016 based on the place of the physician's home).

This indicator nevertheless also poorly reflects the real workforce of practising physicians, as all physicians performing at least 1 clinical act are included in the head counts. To overcome this problem, the RIZIV – INAMI also calculated the number of full time equivalent (FTE) practising

physicians, and the number of FTE acceding to the agreement. These data are presented in Table 44. In 2016, the number of practising GP is 12 929 (1.14 per 1000 population), while their estimated FTE is 8988 (0.79 per 1000 population) and their estimated FTE acceding to the agreement is 7 719 (0.68 per 1000 population). Based on these data, some low values can be noticed for some specialties (GPs and gynaecologists), which can be seen as a sign of problems in some area (see Table 44 and Table 45).



Table 44 – Number of practising physicians (per 1000 population, 2016)

	GPs	Paediatricians	Gynaecologists	Psychiatrists	Medical group	Surgical group	Non specialized	Total	
Total Belgium	1.14	0.14	0.13	0.17	0.86	0.59	0.04	3.1	
Total Brussels region	1.17	0.22	0.23	0.33	1.14	0.66	0.10	3.8	
Flemish region	Antwerp	1.02	0.10	0.09	0.14	0.68	0.03	2.6	
	Flemish Brabant	1.23	0.21	0.18	0.22	1.22	0.05	4.0	
	West Flanders	1.08	0.08	0.09	0.11	0.66	0.01	2.5	
	East Flanders	1.11	0.11	0.10	0.13	0.77	0.02	2.8	
	Limburg	1.10	0.06	0.08	0.14	0.63	0.04	2.5	
	Total Flanders	1.10	0.11	0.11	0.15	0.79	0.58	0.03	2.8
Walloon region	Walloon Brabant	1.33	0.29	0.23	0.31	1.71	1.04	0.09	5.0
	Hainaut	1.07	0.10	0.12	0.11	0.67	0.44	0.04	2.6
	Liège	1.27	0.18	0.16	0.21	0.99	0.66	0.05	3.5
	Luxembourg	1.13	0.08	0.09	0.07	0.53	0.36	0.04	2.3
	Namur	1.41	0.13	0.11	0.15	0.94	0.69	0.04	3.5
	Total Wallonia	1.21	0.15	0.14	0.16	0.91	0.60	0.05	3.2

Source: RIZIV – INAMI data and KCE calculation (calculated in the same way than for OECD data)

**Table 45 – Number of practising physicians, in FTE and acceding to the agreement (per 1000 population*; 2016)**

	Practising physicians	Practising physicians in FTE	Conventionned practising physicians in FTE
GPs	12 929 (1.14)	8 988 (0.79)	7 719 (0.68)
Paediatricians	1 532 (0.14)	952 (0.08)	824 (0.07)
Gynaecologists	1 462 (0.13)	948 (0.08)	369 (0.03)
Psychiatrists	1 958 (0.17)	1 289 (0.11)	1 129 (0.10)
Medical group	9 753 (0.86)	6 683 (0.59)	5 077 (0.45)
Surgical group	6 719 (0.59)	4 678 (0.41)	3 202 (0.28)

Source: RIZIV – INAMI data and KCE calculation (*calculated in the same way than for OECD data, i.e. per 1000 Belgian end-of-year population and not per 10 000 insured people)

Number of practising physicians per age group

The number of practising physicians increased over the time from 29 022 in 2000 to 34 834 in 2016 (see Table 46 and Table 47). However, the physicians are getting older and older (see

Figure 84). In 2016, 44.9% of the physicians are aged above 55 years old in comparison to 24% in 2000 (see Table 46 and Table 47).

Table 46 – Number of practising physicians per age category (2000-2013)

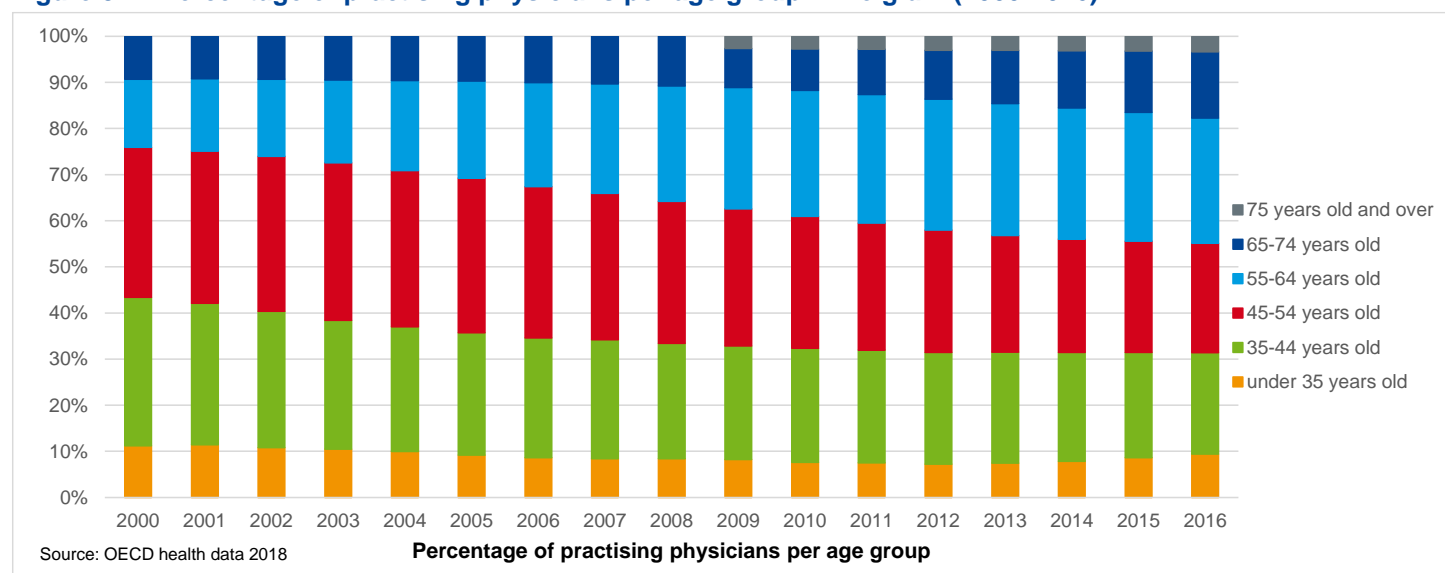
Year (OECD)	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Total practising physicians	29 022	29 325	29 553	29 663	29 903	30 098	30 450	30 878	31 280	31 578	31 815	32 182	32 583	32 999
under 35 years old	3 255 (11.2%)	3 344	3 198	3 100	2 978	2 765	2 628	2 596	2 617	2 595	2 416	2 420	2 356	2 457
35-44 years old	9 339 (32.2%)	9 001	8 736	8 300	8 085	7 978	7 907	7 968	7 843	7 770	7 867	7 871	7 898	7 946
45-54 years old	9 443 (32.5%)	9 679	9 934	10 124	10 133	10 105	9 996	9 798	9 618	9 391	9 108	8 850	8 641	8 337
55-64 years old	4 285 (14.8%)	4 593	4 923	5 331	5 828	6 327	6 853	7 322	7 831	8 309	8 691	8 974	9 240	9 446
65-74 years old	2 700 (9.3%)	2 708	2 762	2 808	2 879	2 923	3 066	3 194	3 371	2 681	2 861	2 011	2 012	2 013
75 years old and over										832	872	913	988	1 009

Source: OECD Health Statistics 2018


Table 47 – Number of practising physicians per age category (2014-2016)

Year (OECD)	2014	2015	2016
Total practising physicians	33 353	34 020	34 834
under 35 years old	2 615	2 926	3 275 (9.4%)
35-44 years old	7 878	7 781	7 664 (22%)
45-54 years old	8 180	8 192	8 258 (23.7%)
55-64 years old	9 487	9 502	9 457 (27.2%)
65-74 years old	4 137	4 527	4 996 (14.3%)
75 years old and over	1 056	1 092	1 184 (3.4%)

Source: OECD Health Statistics 2018

Figure 84 – Percentage of practising physicians per age group in Belgium (2000-2016)


Source: OECD Health Statistics 2018



International comparison

Based on the 12 countries that report data on practising physicians to the OECD, Belgium has a lower number of practising physicians per 1 000 inhabitants than the EU average (3.1 vs 3.5 in 2016, see Figure 85). Since

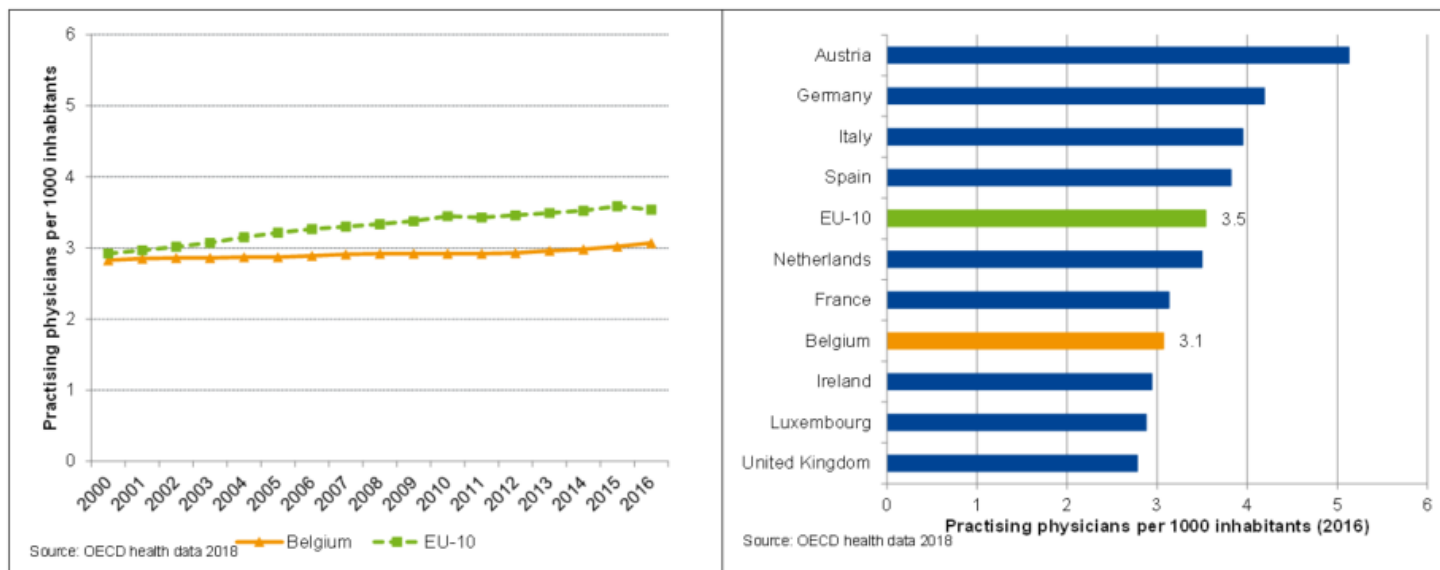
2000, the European average of the number of practising physicians per 1 000 inhabitants has increased over the time while the growth rate is relatively low in Belgium. It is nevertheless important to note that the definition of practising physicians varied across countries and that in some countries, it corresponded to the number of physicians licensed to practice.

Table 48 – Number of practising physicians per 1 000 inhabitants (2000-2016)

Year (OECD)	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Practising physicians per 1000 inhabitants	2.8	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.1

Source: OECD Health Statistics 2018

Figure 85 – Number of practising physicians (per 1000 inhabitants): international comparison (2000-2016)



Source: OECD Health Statistics 2018



Key points

- **The density of practising physicians is very stable since 2000, with 3.1 / 1000 population in 2016 (this represents around 34 800 physicians).**
- **This indicator poorly reflects the real workforce of practising physicians, as all physicians performing at least 1 clinical act are included in the head counts. To overcome this problem, the RIZIV – INAMI also calculated the number of full time equivalent (FTE) practising physicians, and the number of FTE acceding to the agreement. In 2016, the number of practising GP is 12 929 (1.14 per 1000 population), while their estimated FTE is 8 988 (0.79 per 1000 population) and their estimated FTE acceding to the agreement is 7 719 (0.68 per 1000 population).**
- **The number of professionally active physicians will be available in 2019-2020 via the PlanCAD for physicians.**
- **The number of practising physician is slightly lower in the Flemish region than in the Walloon region or the region of Brussels capital (2.8, 3.2 and 3.8 respectively). Low values can be noticed for some specialties (GPs and gynecologists) in some districts.**
- **Belgium has a density lower than the EU-average (3.07 versus 3.54 per 1000 population). It is nevertheless important to note that the definition of practising physicians varied across countries and that in some countries, it corresponded to the number of physicians licensed to practice.**

References

1. OECD. Health at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators. Paris: 2017. Available from: http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/health_glance-2017-en
2. Missinne S, Luyten S. Les médecins généralistes en région bruxelloise: qui sont-ils, où pratiquent-ils et où se situent les potentielles pénuries? Bruxelles: Observatoire de la santé et du social; 2018. Available from: http://www.ccc-ggc.brussels/sites/default/files/documents/graphics/dossiers/dossier_2018-02_medecins_generalistes_bruxelles.pdf