

# Newcomers in Belgium. Who are they?

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## Research question

Each year, a considerable number of immigrants find residence in Belgium. Information on these newcomers is quite limited and restricted to groups already targeted by specific policy programs, e.g. aiming at civic integration. However, the National Population Register holds standardized data on all newcomers. These are explored for the first time, providing a comprehensive picture of their origins, key population characteristics and living arrangements. This allows to optimize policy and identify subgroups in need of more attention.

## Data source and definitions

**Data source** : National Population Register, situation on 1/1/2011.

**Newcomers** : persons of foreign nationality, registered for the first time in Belgium in 2010 and living there on 1/1/2011.

## Results

Total number of newcomers : 103,289

Table 1. *Region of origin*

region of origin	number	3 most important countries of origin
Western Europe*	28,476	France (11,693), The Netherlands (7,412), Germany (2,671)
Southern Europe	9,104	Spain (3,107), Italy (3,093), Portugal (2,193)
Eastern Europe	26,815	Poland (7,746), Romania (7,100), Bulgaria (3,857)
Morocco	11,188	
Turkey	3,187	
Africa	10,021	Congo (1,639), Cameroon (1,253), Algeria (1,122)
Asia	9,648	India (1,870), China (1,495), Japan (859)
America	4,411	Brazil (1,526), Ecuador (818), Colombia (364)

\* Including Northern Europe, United States, Canada

Figure 1. *Age at immigration*

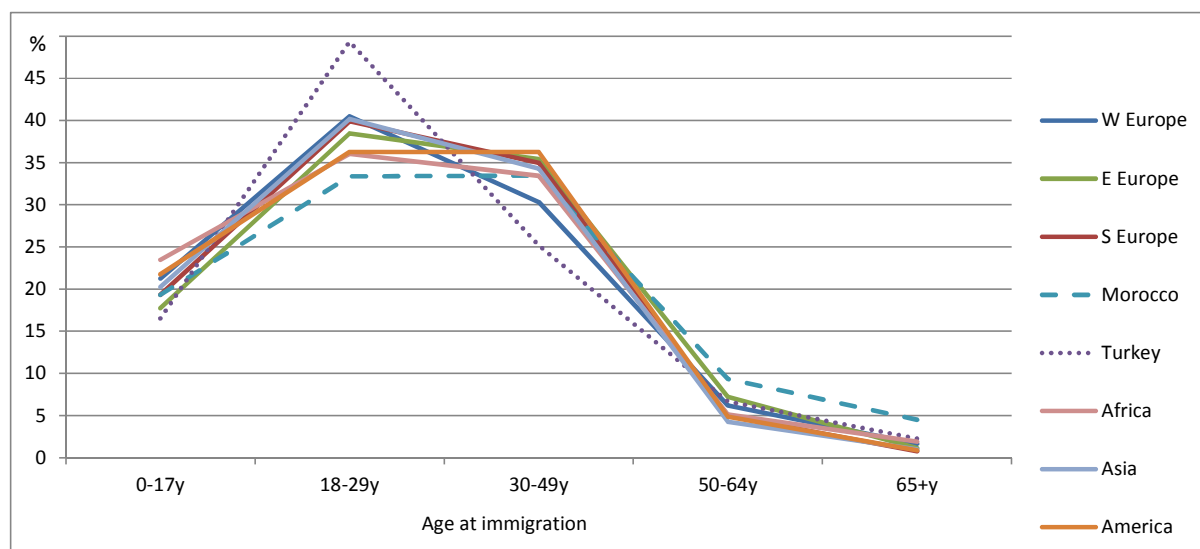


Table 2. *Number of men per 100 women*

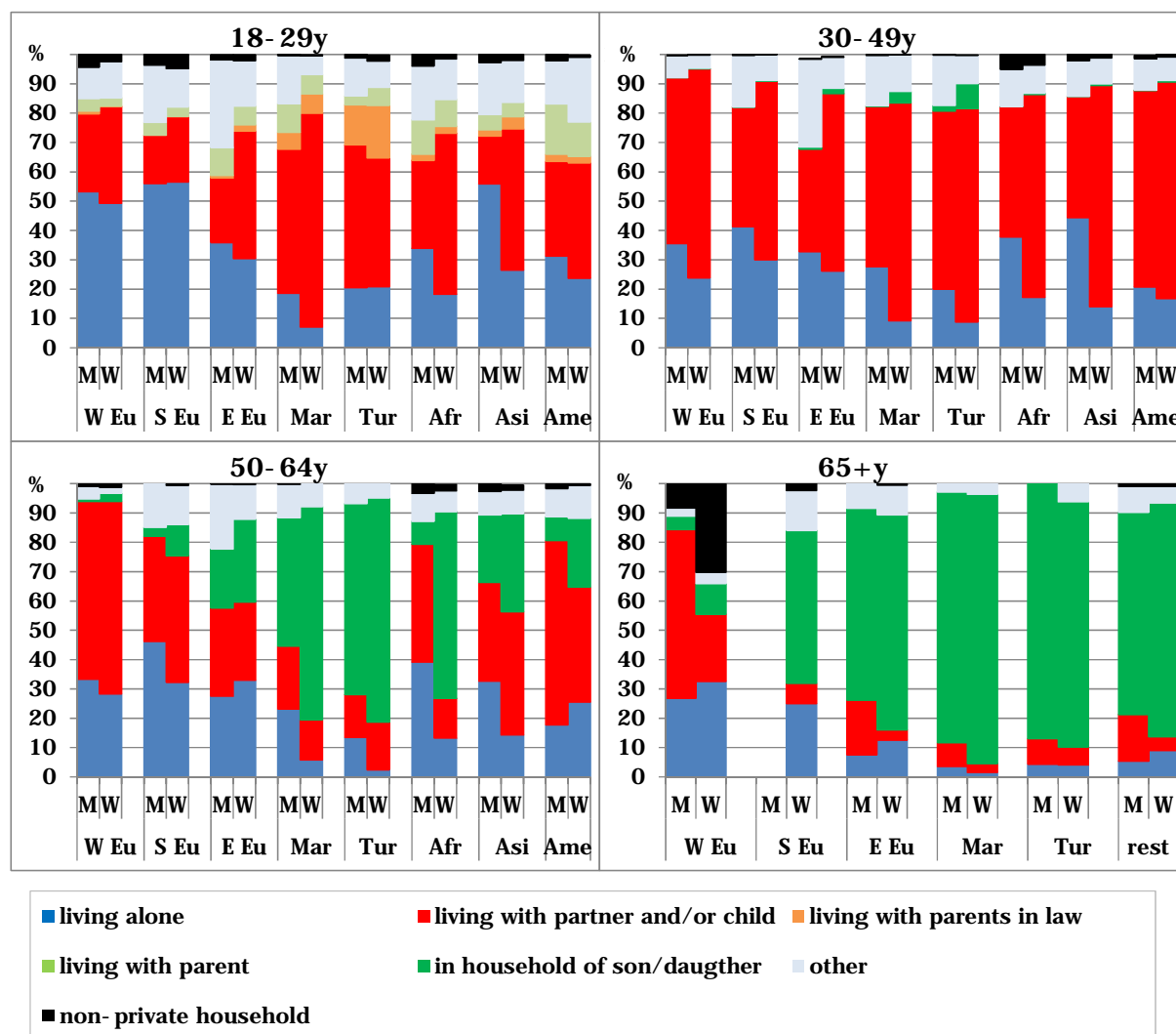
	0- 17y	18- 29y	30- 49y	50- 64y	65+y	all
<b>W Europe</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>S Europe</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>E Europe</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>Morocco</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>Turkey</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>Africa</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>Asia</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>America</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>all</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>94</b>

Table 3. *Marriage migrants (% and numbers)*

	All newcomers	Men 18- 39y	Women 18- 39y	All newcomers	Men 18- 39y	Women 18- 39y
<b>W Europe</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>10.3</b>	<b>1,645</b>	<b>509</b>	<b>773</b>
<b>S Europe</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>183</b>
<b>E Europe</b>	<b>11.0</b>	<b>12.0</b>	<b>20.0</b>	<b>2,703</b>	<b>778</b>	<b>1,661</b>
<b>Morocco</b>	<b>31.8</b>	<b>47.0</b>	<b>50.7</b>	<b>3,262</b>	<b>1,356</b>	<b>1,558</b>
<b>Turkey</b>	<b>35.3</b>	<b>48.8</b>	<b>50.9</b>	<b>1,028</b>	<b>495</b>	<b>445</b>
<b>Africa</b>	<b>19.2</b>	<b>25.8</b>	<b>30.7</b>	<b>1,927</b>	<b>799</b>	<b>937</b>
<b>Asia</b>	<b>16.0</b>	<b>14.1</b>	<b>31.1</b>	<b>1,426</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>902</b>
<b>America</b>	<b>26.0</b>	<b>29.1</b>	<b>40.8</b>	<b>792</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>442</b>
<b>all</b>	<b>14.4</b>	<b>18.1</b>	<b>23.8</b>	<b>13,187</b>	<b>4,692</b>	<b>6,919</b>

Marriage migrants : persons immigrated into Belgium at the time of their marriage

Figure 2. *Living arrangements of newcomers*



M = men, W = women

## Conclusions

The population of newcomers is very diverse in its origins. Only about 1 in 5 immigrated from neighbouring countries (table 1) and most have a cultural background that differs markedly from their new environment. Inevitably, many are ignorant of local customs, regulations and institutions, and will face communication problems, housing difficulties, discrepancies in required curriculum, etc., restraining their socio-economic future.

About 1 in 5 newcomers is a child (figure 1) and will need to go to school in Belgium. The majority of newcomers, however, arrives at an age of professional activity and some subgroups will hardly be able to find a job. The integration programme of Flanders and Brussels consists of Dutch language lessons as well as social and career orientation to help adult immigrants take part in social life and access the labour market.

Marriage migrants and women especially, are very vulnerable and more at risk of divorce and social isolation. Almost all marriage migrants from Thailand, Philippines, China, USSR, Poland and Brazil are brides (table 3). Immigration of Turks and Moroccans, men as well as women, is also often related to marriage. Turkish marriage migrants often reside with their parents in law (figure 2). Family-formation migration is least important for newcomers from Western and Southern Europe.

**Some newcomers immigrate at later age (figure 1). In majority, these are older women (table 2), living with a son or daughter (figure 2). This shows that established migrants (especially Moroccans) arrange for their parents to join them in order to provide better personal care. These elderly migrants will require a specific approach in health care.**

**Older newcomers from Western (and Southern) Europe have a higher masculinity index (table 2) and they usually have their own household, living alone or with a partner (figure 2). They probably come to Belgium for quite different reasons (more favourable tax regime, acquisition of private property,...).**

**Primarily, newcomers are received by (larger) cities which already have a difficult demographic situation, and this is where migrant issues need to be addressed most urgently.**