



## 1.1. FTE practising physicians aged 55 years and over (% of FTE practising physicians, S-7)

### 1.1.1. Documentation sheet

<b>Description</b>	Practising physicians aged 55 years and over, in Full-Time-Equivalent (FTE) (% of FTE practising physicians)
<b>Calculation</b>	Numerator: number of FTE practising physicians aged 55 years and over Denominator: total number of FTE practising physicians
<b>Rationale</b>	<p>Aside the overall number of doctors, the distribution of medical workforce by age category and specialisation have also important implications on the current and future supply of medical services. Since many years, physicians ageing in OECD countries has raised concerns about the insufficient recruitment to replace the actual workforce who will retire within 10 years. Although there is evidence that retirement of doctors often only occurs gradually and that their retirement age is increasing. Moreover, there are also concerns the growing imbalance number of doctors preferring greater specialisation instead of general medicine and access to primary care for all the population.{OECD, 2017 #2}</p> <p>The proportion of practising physicians (and GPs) aged 55 years and over gives a rough estimation of the share of physicians that will retire within 10 years (although a significant number of doctors continues to practise after 65 years old).{OECD, 2017 #2} This indicator should be analysed together with the current number of practising physicians, and the number of medical graduates (input).</p> <p>At the European level, there is a “Joint action on health workforce planning and forecasting”.<sup>a</sup> The objective of this platform is to facilitate collaboration and exchange between Member states in order to better prepare the future of the health care workforce. This will support Member states in their capacity to take effective and sustainable measures. Also, various tools will be developed to enable Member states to implement health care workforce planning and/or to enhance the current planning processes.</p>
<b>Data source</b>	RIZIV – INAMI (annual statistics) OECD Health statistics{OECD, 2023 #651}
<b>Technical definitions and limitations</b>	<p>All practising physicians are included, even those with very low volume of activity. 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>FTE is calculated by dividing individual NIHDI reimbursed expenditure by the median of reimbursed expenditure from their speciality for age 45-54. If the result of this division is above “1”, the result will be indicated as “1”. If it is below one, the percentage indicates the % of one FTE. Because this is not based on the actual time of work, this should be interpreted with caution (e.g. the median reimbursed expenditure in 2020 was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic).</p> <p>The language was based on the language of contact with RIZIV-INAMI (FR or NL).</p>

<sup>a</sup> <http://healthworkforce.eu/>



<b>International comparability</b>	OECD indicator. 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). FTE are not available. International data therefore refer to head counts. Limitation: OECD countries use different methodologies to calculate the same indicator (such as different levels of activity).
<b>Dimension</b>	Sustainability – Workforce capacity
<b>Related indicators</b>	Number of practising physicians Number of medical graduates
<b>Reviewers</b>	Antoine Khalil and Pascal Meeus

### 1.1.2. Results

#### Belgium

Table 1 shows the number of practising physicians in full-time-equivalent by age category. In 2021, 9 833 FTE physicians were aged 55 years and over (38.6%, see Table 1). This proportion is decreasing since 2016 and was slightly above 40% between 2013 and 2019 and slightly below 40% in 2020 and 2021.

#### Analyses per medical specialty

In 2021, the proportion of FTE physicians aged 55 years and over was higher than 40% for medical specialists in rheumatology (46.1%), GPs (44.6%), and medical specialists in Ear-Nose-Throat (ENT) (41.2%), radiology (41%) and nuclear medicine (40.2%). Among these medical specialities, the proportion of FTE GP aged 55 years and over was

decreasing since 2015 while for other medical specialties, it was rather increasing (see Figure 2).

It should also be noted that a high proportion of GPs and rheumatologists are aged 65 years old and over. This situation can be linked to the fact that they are working longer and to the lack of new graduates to replace the retired workforce.

#### Regional comparison

The proportion of FTE practising physicians aged 55 years old and over was higher for French-speaking physicians than for Dutch-speaking physicians during the whole study period (41.7% and 36.3% respectively in 2021, based on the linguistic role of the physician, see Table 1).

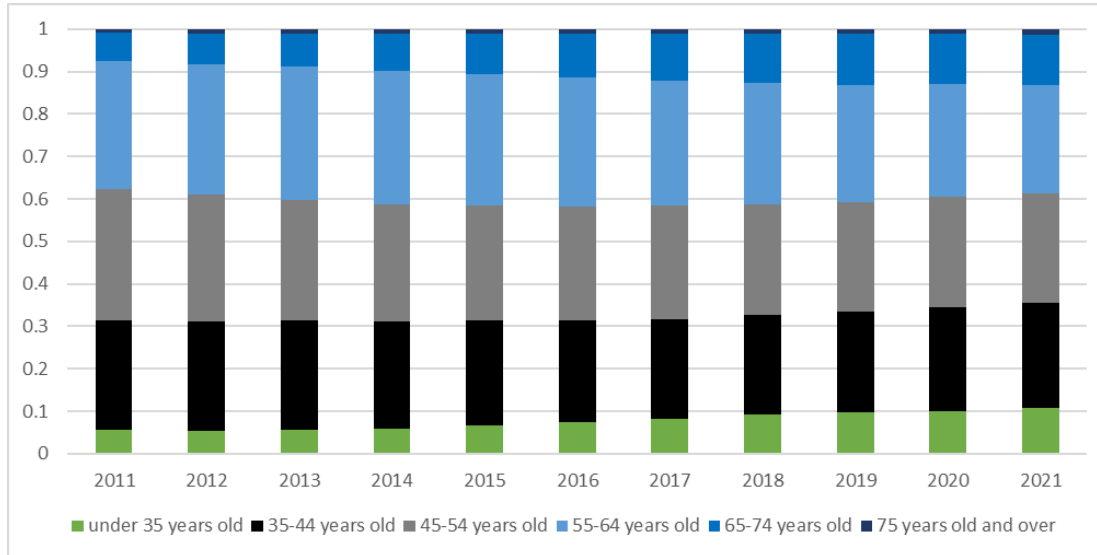

**Table 1 – Number of practising physicians in full-time-equivalent (FTE), by age category, 2011-2021**

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
<b>under 35 years old</b>	1250.5 (5.6%)	1221.3 (5.4%)	1287.2 (5.7%)	1373.9 (6%)	1558.7 (6.7%)	1733 (7.3%)	1985.3 (8.2%)	2281.8 (9.3%)	2418.7 (9.8%)	2521.2 (10.1%)	2720.6 (10.7%)
<b>35-44 years old</b>	5722.5 (25.8%)	5794.5 (25.8%)	5822.2 (25.6%)	5813.4 (25.3%)	5793.6 (24.7%)	5687.7 (24%)	5687.1 (23.5%)	5735.9 (23.3%)	5880.6 (23.7%)	6047.9 (24.3%)	6350.4 (24.9%)
<b>45-54 years old</b>	6857.2 (30.9%)	6702.3 (29.8%)	6471.2 (28.5%)	6347 (27.6%)	6356.8 (27.1%)	6394.5 (26.9%)	6463.9 (26.7%)	6421.4 (26.1%)	6386.7 (25.8%)	6496.7 (26.1%)	6557.4 (25.8%)
<b>55-64 years old</b>	6685 (30.1%)	6932.2 (30.8%)	7125 (31.3%)	7199.8 (31.3%)	7239.1 (30.9%)	7197.3 (30.3%)	7093.5 (29.3%)	7007.1 (28.5%)	6853.5 (27.6%)	6625.7 (26.6%)	6481.6 (25.5%)
<b>65-74 years old</b>	1485.7 (6.7%)	1619.8 (7.2%)	1791.6 (7.9%)	2032.8 (8.8%)	2253.4 (9.6%)	2452.7 (10.3%)	2667.9 (11%)	2843.1 (11.6%)	2972.2 (12%)	2951.6 (11.8%)	3042.3 (11.9%)
<b>75 years old and over</b>	201.9 (0.9%)	224.8 (1%)	237 (1%)	244 (1.1%)	237.2 (1%)	263.1 (1.1%)	278.2 (1.2%)	283.3 (1.2%)	279.7 (1.1%)	276.4 (1.1%)	309.4 (1.2%)
<b>Total practising physicians</b>	22 202.9	22 494.8	22 734.1	23 011.0	23 438.8	23 728.3	24 175.9	24 572.6	24 791.5	24 919.5	25 461.8
<b>% 55 years old and over</b>	8372.7 (37.7%)	8776.8 (39%)	9153.6 (40.3%)	9476.7 (41.2%)	9729.7 (41.5%)	9913 (41.8%)	10 039.7 (41.5%)	10 133.5 (41.2%)	10 105.5 (40.8%)	9853.7 (39.5%)	9833.4 (38.6%)
<b>French-speaking</b>	4023.2 (40.7%)	4205.5 (42.2%)	4371.9 (43.4%)	4546.7 (44.7%)	4661.2 (45%)	4731.5 (45.3%)	4760 (44.9%)	4758 (44.4%)	4734.8 (44.1%)	4592.7 (42.8%)	4594.8 (41.7%)
<b>Flemish-speaking</b>	4349.5 (35.3%)	4571.3 (36.5%)	4781.7 (37.7%)	4930 (38.4%)	5068.5 (38.8%)	5181.5 (39%)	5279.6 (38.9%)	5375.4 (38.8%)	5370.7 (38.2%)	5261 (37.1%)	5238.6 (36.3%)

Source: RIZIV-INAMI



Figure 1 – Distribution of FTE practising physicians by age category, 2011-2021



Source: RIZIV-INAMI

Table 2 – Number of practising physicians in full-time-equivalent (FTE), by age category and medical specialty, 2021

	FTE	FTE>55	FTE>65	mean age	%55 years old and over	%65 years old and over
<b>General practitioner</b>	9361.8	4174.7	1899.2	50.9	44.6%	20.3%
<b>Medical specialist in paediatrics</b>	975.0	297.2	69.7	48.9	30.5%	7.1%
<b>Medical specialist in gynaecology</b>	1046.2	348.3	93.6	49.2	33.3%	8.9%
<b>Medical specialist in psychiatry</b>	1292.7	494.8	190.1	51.6	38.3%	14.7%
<b>Medical specialist in general internal medicine</b>	546.1	206.0	41.5	50.7	37.7%	7.6%
<b>Medical specialist in geriatric</b>	275.9	70.6	16.3	47.6	25.6%	5.9%

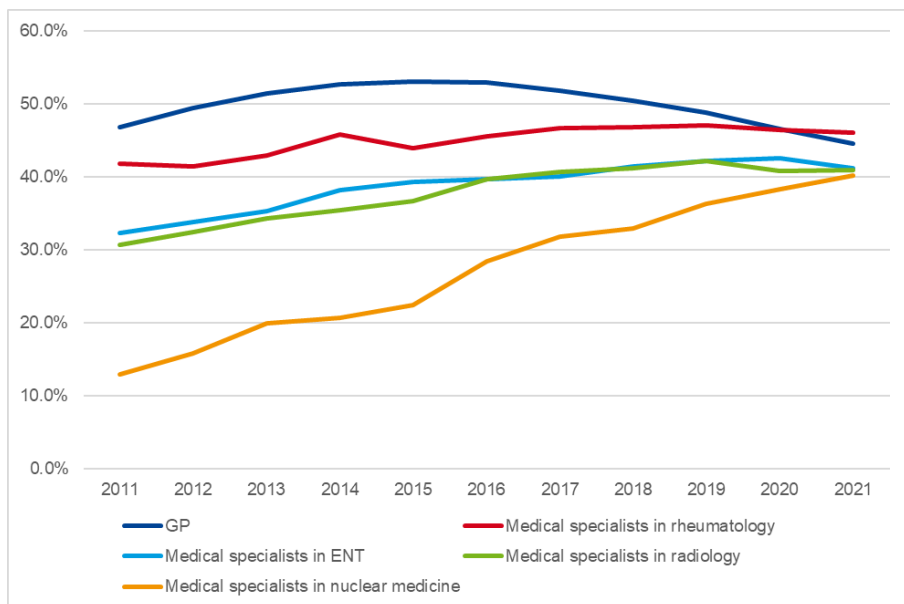


Medical specialist in endocrinology	271.8	83.4	23.8	49.6	30.7%	8.8%
Medical specialist in oncology	205.6	64.2	11.5	48.9	31.2%	5.6%
Medical specialist in haematology	125.9	39.7	6.4	48.8	31.6%	5.1%
Medical specialist in rheumatology	169.4	78.1	28.8	53.2	46.1%	17.0%
Medical specialist in pneumology	437.8	152.7	44.3	50.3	34.9%	10.1%
Medical specialist in gastroenterology	549.4	207.3	54.8	50.5	37.7%	10.0%
Medical specialist in cardiology	813.4	315.3	86.7	51.1	38.8%	10.7%
Medical specialist in neurology	469.5	164.0	45.8	49.6	34.9%	9.8%
Medical specialist in physical medicine	327.2	125.3	31.8	50.2	38.3%	9.7%
Medical specialist in dermatology	590.2	221.6	61.4	50.1	37.5%	10.4%
Medical specialist in ENT	499.0	205.4	58.0	51.0	41.2%	11.6%
Medical specialist in radiotherapy	142.5	37.7	7.7	48.5	26.5%	5.4%
Medical specialist in nuclear medicine	170.0	68.3	7.1	50.1	40.2%	4.2%
Medical specialist in biology	165.5	53.4	11.9	49.4	32.3%	7.2%
Medical specialist in anatomic pathology	248.0	84.3	16.3	50.1	34.0%	6.6%
Medical specialist in radiology	1151.3	471.5	98.4	50.3	41.0%	8.5%
Medical specialist in anaesthesiology	1707.5	511.7	94.2	48.6	30.0%	5.5%
Medical specialist in acute and emergency medicine	461.9	77.2	13.8	45.2	16.7%	3.0%
Medical specialist in general surgery	888.2	338.0	78.5	51.0	38.1%	8.8%
Medical specialist in orthopaedics	717.5	260.4	45.5	50.1	36.3%	6.3%
Medical specialist in urology	298.1	91.4	22.5	48.9	30.7%	7.5%
Medical specialist in neurosurgery	145.7	41.6	9.1	48.9	28.5%	6.2%
Medical specialist in plastic surgery	170.8	50.8	7.8	48.2	29.7%	4.6%
Medical specialist in ophthalmic surgery	717.2	244.9	63.7	49.2	34.1%	8.9%

Source: RIZIV-INAMI. It should be noted that some medical specialties with a very low number of FTE are not included in this table (e.g. Medical specialists in neuropsychiatry, without new profile since 1990).



**Figure 2 – Proportion of practising physicians aged 55 years and over, in full-time-equivalent (FTE), for a selection of medical specialty, 2011-2021**



Source: RIZIV-INAMI

**International comparison**

Based on head counts (FTE not available internationally), the proportion of Belgian physicians aged 55 years old and over is decreasing since 2016 but

remain higher than the EU-14 and EU-27 averages (with 43.3% compared to 35.1% and 37.4% respectively in 2020, see Table 3 and Figure 3).

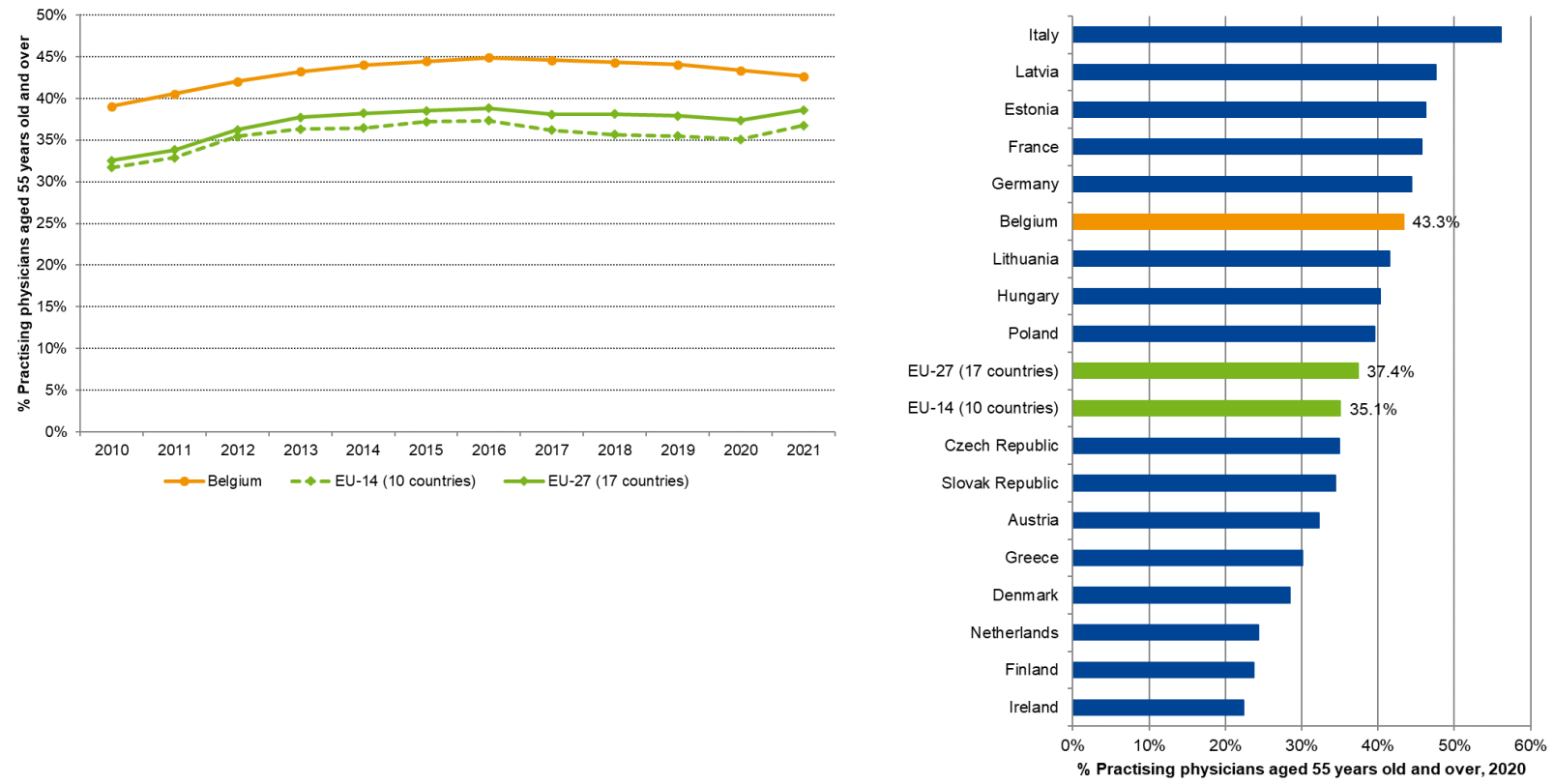
**Table 3 – Share of practising physicians aged 55 years and over in Belgium (2010-2020)**

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Belgium</b>	39.05%	40.52%	42.01%	43.21%	44.01%	44.45%	44.89%	44.55%	44.29%	44.03%	43.34%
<b>EU-14</b>	31.71%	32.89%	35.45%	36.30%	36.45%	37.19%	37.30%	36.19%	35.65%	35.48%	35.08%
<b>EU-27</b>	32.53%	33.81%	36.21%	37.72%	38.19%	38.51%	38.81%	38.07%	38.12%	37.88%	37.38%

Source: OECD Health Statistics 2018



Figure 3 – Proportion of practising physicians aged 55 years and older: international comparison (2010-2021)<sup>b</sup>



Source: OECD Health Statistics 2023

<sup>b</sup> Because of the lack of data from other European countries, 2020 is taken as the reference in the calculation.



### Key points

- **In 2021, 38.6% of FTE practising physicians were aged from 55 years old and over in Belgium. This proportion is decreasing since 2016 but remain higher than 40% for medical specialists in rheumatology (46.1%, increasing trends), GPs (44.6%, decreasing trends), and medical specialists in Ear-Nose-Throat (ENT) (41.2%), radiology (41%) and nuclear medicine (40.2%) (increasing trends).**
- **The proportion of FTE practising physicians aged 55 years old and over was higher for French-speaking physicians (41.7% in 2021) than for Dutch-speaking physicians (36.3% in 2021) during the whole study period (2011-2021).**
- **Even if a decrease is observed since 2016, the proportion of physicians aged 55 years old and over remain higher than on average among EU-14 and EU-27 countries (Based on head counts, FTE not available internationally).**

### References

1. OECD. Health at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators. Paris: 2017. Available from: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/health\\_glance-2017-en](http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/health_glance-2017-en)