1.1. Practising physicians per 1000 population (A-10)

1.1.1. Documentation sheet

Description	Number of practising physicians per 1 000 population
Calculation	**Primary indicator:** • **Number of practising physicians per 1 000 population** Numerator : Number of practising physicians x 1 000 (end-of-year situation, 31/12) Denominator: End-of-year Belgian population (1st January t+1) **Secondary indicator:** • **Number of practising physicians, in FTE per 1000 population** Numerator: Number of full time equivalent (FTE) practising physicians x 1 000 (end-of-year situation, 31/12) Denominator: End-of-year Belgian population (1st January t+1) • **Number of practising physicians acceding to the agreement, in FTE per 1000 population** Numerator: Number of full time equivalent (FTE) practising physicians acceding to the agreement (conventionnés / geconventioneerde) x 1 000 (end-of-year situation, 31/12) Denominator: End-of-year Belgian population (1st January t+1) • **Number of professionally active physicians per 1000 population** Numerator: Number of professionally active physicians x 1 000 (end-of-year situation, 31/12) Denominator: End-of-year Belgian population (1st January t+1)
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.
Data source	Practising physicians: RIZIV–INAMI yearly statistics Professionally active physicians: Federal database of healthcare professionals (“Cadastre/Kadaster”), Federal Public Service Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment (FPS Public Health). PlanCad 2004-2016[1] and 2017-2021[2]. International comparison: OECD Health Statistics 2023
Technical definitions	To be aligned with international definitions, stomatologists are excluded from the calculations on the number of physicians (physicians in this technical sheet = OECD/WHO codes 1.1 to 1.8) and are rather included in the number of dentists (OECD/WHO code 3). Differences therefore

	appear with some published RIZIV-INAMI numbers (see https://www.healthybelgium.be/en/medical-practice-variations/overall-context-of-practice-variations/healthcare-providers) Practising physicians: Physicians are considered to be practising (RIZIV – INAMI: "profiles") if they provide more than 1 clinical service (i.e. consultations, visits, technical acts, but not prescriptions) during a given year. Physicians working as salaried in medical houses with a capitation payment system are added to those numbers. Physicians still in training are not counted. As mentioned above, it should also be noted that stomatologists are not included and can be found in A-12. 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 (determined based on reimbursed RIZIV-INAMI expenditure) of a specialist compared to the P50 (median) revenue/RIZIV-INAMI expenditure of the same specialism between 45-55 years old (N.B. all results above 1 are limited to 1). Professionally active physicians: concern physicians licensed to practice (i.e. with a visa/visum) that are registered as self-employed person into the National Institute for the Social Security of the Self-employed (NISSE) database or that are registered as salaried worker into the 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 physicians within the Planning Unit for the Supply of Healthcare Professions of the FPS Public Health. For practising physicians, regional analysis is based on the contact address transmitted by the physician to the RIZIV-INAMI. Some of them transmitted the address of their office and others transmitted their personal address.
Limitations	For practising physicians: • RIZIV-INAMI data published in this technical sheet slightly differ from OECD data because small corrections were done by RIZIV-INAMI after transmission of data to OECD. Differences were observed for the year 2016 for all specialties (see 'international comparability') and for GPs for the years 2012-2014/2016-2021. RIZIV-INAMI data are the correct ones. • RIZIV-INAMI data also differ from data from the PlanCad project because of a different definition. In RIZIV-INAMI data, practising physicians must have provided more than 1 clinical service (at least two), based on the RIZIV-INAMI nomenclature while in the PlanCad project, practising physicians concern physicians registered as self-employed into the NISSE database and having provided a minimum level of services per year (at least 5% of the median amount reimbursed to self-employed physicians in the 45-54 age category, defined by medical (sub-)specialty, based on RIZIV-INAMI nomenclature, with some exceptions[a],) or registered as salaried worker into the NSSO database with at least 0.1 full time equivalent (FTE) per year and working for an active employer in the health sector. Because of a stricter threshold, data in the PlanCad projects are lower than in RIZIV-INAMI data. This also explain why the number of practising GPs presented in this technical sheet for example differ from data presented in S-19 (Projection of the number of GPs active in the healthcare sector). • Because OECD data are based on RIZIV-INAMI data, most data presented in this technical sheet are based on RIZIV-INAMI data but the interested reader can find the details of the analyses based on the PlanCad project in Miermans P-J 2019[1] and Vivet V et al. 2023[2]

[a] For medical specialists in clinical genetics, the threshold of at least 2 RIZIV-INAMI services per year was used and for physicians without recognition (agreement), a threshold of €7 500 was used.

	• FTE are based on RIZIV-INAMI expenditure and not on the actual time of work and should therefore be interpreted with caution, especially for 2020 because the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the median income/reimbursed expenditure and therefore the resulting FTE estimates.
International comparability	OECD countries use different methodologies to calculate the same indicator (such as different minimal activity thresholds). Comparisons between countries are therefore potentially inadequate.[3] It should also be noted that for 2016, Belgian OECD data concerned the number of practicing physicians with at least one clinical service (instead of more than one).
Dimensions	Accessibility, Health workforce
Related indicators	Practising nurses (A-11), Medical graduates (S-4), Medical graduates becoming GP (S-5), Foreign-trained physicians (S-14), Physicians aged 55 years old and over (S-7), Projection of the number of contacts with GPs (s-18), Projection of the number of GPs active in the healthcare sector (S-19), Practising geriatricians (OLD-6), Practising Psychiatrists (MH-2)
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1.1.2. Results

Belgium

Based on RIZIV-INAMI data, there were 37 504 practising physicians in 2021 in Belgium, corresponding to a density of 3.2 per 1000 population. This number increased over time from 32 180 in 2011 (2.9 per 1000 population) to 37 504 in 2021 (3.2 per 1000 population, +11.0%, see Table 1). Expressed in FTE, it increased from 2.0 per 1000 population in 2011 to 2.2 per 1000 population in 2021 (+9.3%). The share of FTE physicians acceding to the agreement (convention rate) slightly increased from 76.9% in 2012 to 78.9% in 2021 (2011 data not available).

Based on data from the PlanCad, the density of professionally active physicians increased from 3.4 per 1000 population in 2016 to 3.6 per 1000 population in 2021 (see Table 1).

Data presented in the next sections are based on RIZIV-INAMI data but the interested reader can find details of the analyses based on the PlanCad project in Miermans P-J 2019[1] and Vivet V et al. 2023.[2]

Analyses by demographic characteristics

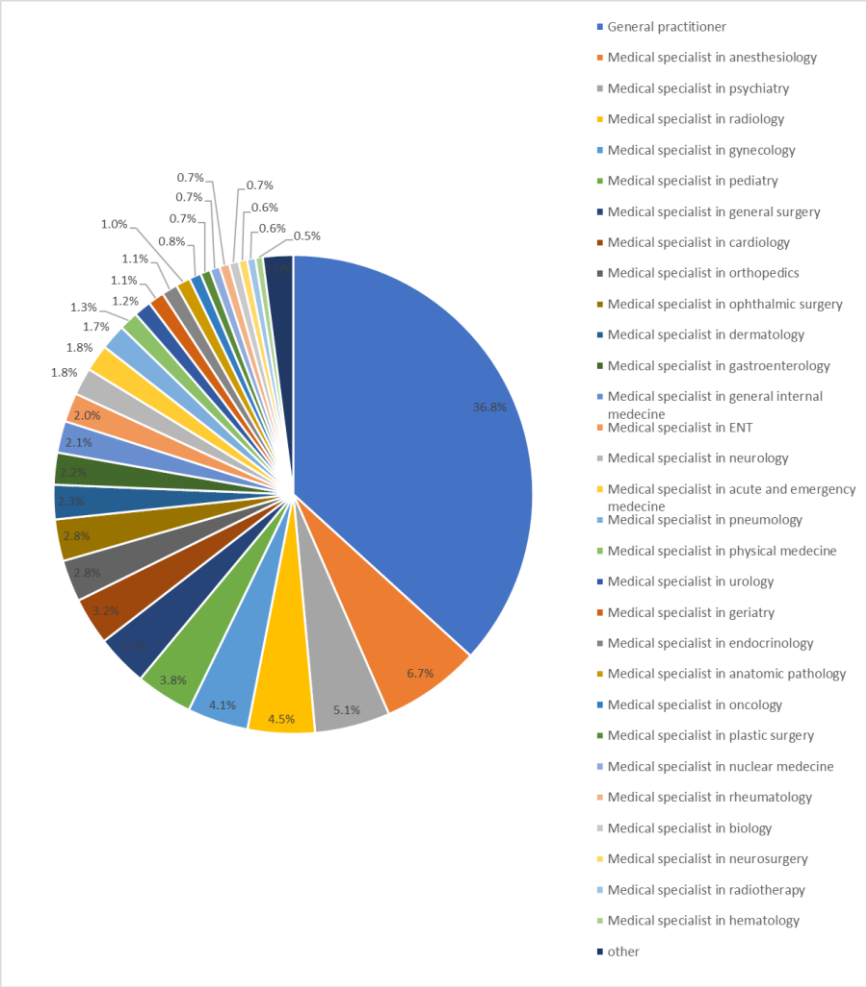
Analyses by age category or by country of origin can be found in indicators S-7 (practising physicians aged 55 years old and over) and S-14 (Foreign trained physicians).

Table 1 – Number of physicians and density per 1000 population, by categories (professionally active, practising, and practising acceding to the agreement), 2011-2021

		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Professionally active physicians*	Number						38 056	38 654	39 365	40 119	40 942	41 761
	Density**						3.4	3.4	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.6
Practising physicians	Number	32 180	32 578	32 998	33 352	34 020	34 484	35 042	35 721	36 272	36 989	37 504
	Density**	2.9	2.9	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.1	3.1	3.2	3.2	3.2
Practising physicians (in FTE)	Number	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
	Density**	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.2	2.2	2.2
Practising physicians acceding to the agreement (in FTE)	Number		17 305.9	17 472.7	17 764.9	18 175.9	18 442.0	18 765.3	19 074.5	19 239.1	19 601.8	20 091.1
	Density**		1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7

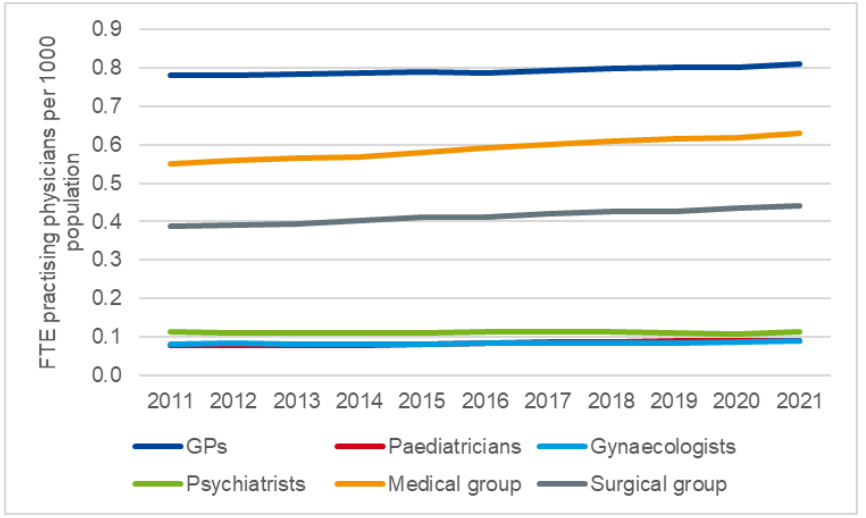
*Source: RIZIV-INAMI data, except for professionally active physicians (*PlanCad 2004-2016 and PlanCad 2017-2021). Because different sources are used (and different definitions), comparisons should be used with caution; **Number per 1000 population*

Figure 1 – Distribution of practising physicians (head count, 2021)



Source: RIZIV-INAMI data, KCE calculations

Figure 2 – Density of FTE practising physicians, by speciality, 2011-2021



Source: RIZIV-INAMI data, KCE calculations

Table 2 – Density of practising physicians (per 10 000 population), by province and medical specialty, 2021

	Antwerp	Flemish Brabant	Walloon Brabant	West Flanders	East Flanders	Hainaut	Liège	Limburg	Luxem-bourg	Namur	Brussels	Belgium
General practitioner	77.6	84.7	84.8	85.9	85.8	74.1	84.3	90.7	74.4	89.3	64.5	80.8
Medical specialist in pediatry	7.0	12.9	16.3	6.2	7.4	6.2	10.8	3.8	4.9	9.4	11.4	8.4
Medical specialist in gynaecology	8.0	12.6	15.0	7.1	7.9	8.3	10.2	7.1	7.8	8.0	10.5	9.0
Medical specialist in psychiatry	9.7	14.4	18.1	8.1	9.3	7.3	13.0	10.0	4.2	10.1	18.9	11.2
Medical specialist in general internal medicine	3.7	6.6	13.3	2.4	3.6	4.0	4.6	2.6	1.9	6.6	7.6	4.7
Medical specialist in geriatrics	2.2	2.8	2.9	3.1	2.6	2.1	2.0	2.9	2.2	1.8	1.7	2.4
Medical specialist in endocrinology	2.0	3.4	2.6	1.4	2.4	2.1	3.2	2.0	1.6	2.4	2.6	2.3
Medical specialist in oncology	1.4	2.5	2.5	1.9	1.8	1.3	1.9	1.2	1.0	2.4	2.2	1.8
Medical specialist in haematology	1.1	1.9	1.3	0.8	0.9	0.8	1.1	0.8	1.0	1.3	1.1	1.1
Medical specialist in rheumatology	0.9	1.5	2.5	1.2	1.8	1.2	1.7	1.8	0.6	2.1	1.5	1.5
Medical specialist in pneumology	3.2	5.5	5.2	3.0	4.1	2.9	4.3	3.7	2.1	5.3	3.3	3.8
Medical specialist in gastroenterology	4.3	6.5	9.1	4.6	4.6	3.1	5.3	4.1	2.1	5.4	4.6	4.7
Medical specialist in cardiology	6.5	10.0	13.7	5.1	6.5	3.8	8.9	5.7	4.6	8.3	8.2	7.0
Medical specialist in neurology	3.8	4.7	7.4	4.1	3.6	3.2	4.1	3.8	2.6	4.1	4.7	4.1
Medical specialist in physical medicine	2.7	2.6	4.5	3.8	3.5	1.9	4.6	2.2	0.8	2.1	1.6	2.8
Medical specialist in dermatology	4.0	8.1	9.4	3.7	5.4	3.2	5.9	5.0	1.6	4.4	5.8	5.1
Medical specialist in ENT	4.0	5.2	8.1	3.8	3.7	3.0	5.3	3.4	3.6	6.0	4.6	4.3
Medical specialist in radiotherapy	1.4	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.0	0.9	0.9	0.2	2.5	0.7	1.2
Medical specialist in nuclear medicine	1.1	2.4	2.4	1.2	1.5	0.8	2.1	1.2	0.9	1.7	1.4	1.5
Medical specialist in biology	1.2	1.6	2.6	1.4	1.7	0.9	0.9	1.8	0.6	2.0	1.6	1.4
Medical specialist in anatomic pathology	2.0	3.1	3.5	2.1	2.6	1.5	2.3	1.8	0.6	1.3	1.9	2.1
Medical specialist in radiology	8.5	15.3	20.2	9.5	9.0	6.2	11.8	8.4	6.7	10.5	9.3	9.9
Medical specialist in clinical genetics	0.3	1.0	0.4	0.0	0.4	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.3	0.3
Medical specialist in anaesthesiology	14.3	19.3	24.4	16.9	16.6	8.2	17.4	12.2	6.9	15.4	11.5	14.7

Medical specialist in acute and emergency medicine	3.9	5.3	8.3	2.7	2.9	3.5	5.6	2.3	3.1	4.5	4.5	4.0
Medical specialist in general surgery	7.8	12.4	11.0	5.4	8.0	5.4	8.3	6.1	4.6	9.4	6.7	7.7
Medical specialist in orthopaedics	6.7	8.3	10.2	7.2	6.8	4.6	4.5	5.9	4.6	7.4	3.8	6.2
Medical specialist in urology	2.5	3.1	3.5	3.2	3.0	1.8	2.7	2.9	0.7	2.3	1.8	2.6
Medical specialist in neurosurgery	1.4	1.8	0.9	1.2	1.4	0.8	1.4	1.5	0.2	1.6	0.7	1.3
Medical specialist in plastic surgery	1.3	1.9	3.5	1.2	2.0	1.0	1.6	0.6	0.7	1.5	1.5	1.5
Medical specialist in ophthalmic surgery	6.1	8.4	9.4	5.8	5.7	3.6	7.1	6.2	4.0	6.1	6.7	6.2
Medical specialist in neuropediatric*	*0.5*	*1.3*	*0.9*	*0.3*	*0.4*	*0.3*	*0.8*	*0.3*	*0.0*	*0.6*	*0.5*	*0.5*
Medical specialist in neuropsychiatry*	0.2	0.3	1.0	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.2
Medical specialist in internal and nuclear medicine*	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0
Medical specialist in rheumatology and physical medicine*	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Medical specialist in nuclear radiotherapy*	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0
Medical specialist in biology and nuclear medicine*	0.7	1.1	1.4	0.6	1.6	0.5	1.1	0.5	0.3	0.0	0.9	0.9
Medical specialist in biology and anatomic pathology*	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
No specialisation - GP	0.6	0.8	2.5	0.0	0.7	1.0	0.9	0.5	0.7	0.3	1.4	0.8
No specialisation	1.5	1.8	2.7	0.5	1.6	0.7	2.5	1.5	0.4	0.4	4.4	1.7

*Source: RIZIV – INAMI data, KCE calculations; *Old specialty or mixed specialties, explaining the low density. Densities for each province was compared to Belgian density: red cells = -40%, orange: -20%; light green = +20%, dark green = +40%. No colour was added for specialties with a density below 1 per 10 000 population.*

Analyses by medical specialty and by province/region

In 2021, the three specialities among physicians with the highest density (expressed in FTE per 1000 population) are GPs (8.08 FTE per 1000 population), anaesthesiologists (1.47 FTE per 1000 population) and psychiatrists (1.12 FTE per 1000 population) (see Table 2[b], Figure 1 and Figure 2). A convention rate inferior to 50% was observed for dermatologists (21.1%), medical specialists in ophthalmic surgery (28.4%), medical specialists in plastic surgery (30.6%), gynaecologists (41.9%), and orthopaedists (42.6%) (see Table 3 and Table 4).

Table 3 – Share of practising physicians acceding to the agreement (conventioned physicians), 2021

	Practising physicians	Practising physicians in FTE	Practising physicians acceding to the agreement in FTE (Conventioned)	% Conventioned
GPs	13837	9361.8	8322.4	88.9%
Paediatricians	1631	1038.6	881.3	84.9%
Gynaecologists	1566	1046.2	438.6	41.9%
Psychiatrists	2011	1316.4	1187.3	90.2%
Medical group[c]	10595	7302.9	5433.3	74.4%
Surgical group[d]	7353	5106.9	3585.5	70.2%
Non specialised	511	289.0	242.6	84.0%

Source: RIZIV – INAMI data, KCE calculations

In head count, the number of practising physicians per 1000 population is lower in the Flemish region than in Brussels (>20%) and Wallonia (<20%). Expressed in FTE, it is Brussels that has the lowest density (see Table 5, and Figure 3) while the density of FTE practising physicians acceding to the agreement was higher in Wallonia.

Expressed in FTE, the density of practising physicians varied between provinces and medical specialties. A density 40% lower than the Belgian density (in red in Table 2) was observed for several medical specialities in the province of Luxemburg but also, in a lesser extent, in Hainaut, Limburg, and West-Flanders. On the contrary, in the Walloon Brabant and the Flemish Brabant, densities by medical specialty were generally higher (in green) than the Belgian densities. It should nevertheless be noted that a part of these analyses is based on the address of the physician's home and not based on the place of practice, which could explain the higher density in the Walloon Brabant and the Flemish Brabant.

Variations per district can be shown in Figure 4 to Figure 10 (for all FTE practising physicians, GPs, paediatricians, gynaecologists, psychiatrists, and physicians of the medical and surgical groups).

[b] Expressed per 10 000 population in this table to allow for more details

[c] Medical groups are physocians who specialise in the diagnosis and non-surgical treatment of physical disorders and diseases and includes for example medical specialists in Internal medicine in cardiology, endocrinology, gastroenterology, oncology, rheumatology, neurology, ENT, radiology, dermatology, etc. (excluding GPs, paediatricians, gynecologists, and psychiatrics, and surgeons).

[d] Surgical group are physicians who specialise in the use of surgical techniques to treat disorders and diseases and includes for example medical specialists in general surgery, in neurological surgery, in plastic surgery, in orthopaedics, in ophthalmology, in urology, in nephrology, in - General surgery - Neurological surgery - Plastic surgery - Orthopaedics - Ophthalmology - Urology, nephrology - Other types of surgery anaesthesiology, and in other types of surgery

Table 4 – Convention rate (Number of FTE practising physician who totally or partially acceded to the agreement in 2021/FTE practising physicians)

	Antwerp	Flemish Brabant	Walloon Brabant	West Flanders	East Flanders	Hainaut	Liège	Limburg	Luxem-bourg	Namur	Brussels	Belgium
General practitioner	85.0%	88.7%	73.3%	95.5%	94.2%	83.9%	90.7%	98.2%	81.7%	95.0%	78.9%	88.9%
Medical specialist in paediatrics	97.0%	79.8%	69.3%	92.5%	75.7%	91.1%	87.0%	95.6%	96.0%	84.7%	76.0%	84.2%
Medical specialist in gynaecology	30.5%	43.8%	43.5%	21.5%	31.0%	75.3%	34.0%	50.3%	4.3%	58.0%	51.7%	41.9%
Medical specialist in psychiatry	91.6%	93.2%	84.4%	98.4%	94.1%	93.3%	90.0%	82.9%	99.5%	86.9%	86.8%	90.6%
Medical specialist in general internal medicine	99.0%	98.9%	98.1%	100.0%	97.5%	99.9%	99.2%	100.0%	100.0%	99.9%	98.5%	98.9%
Medical specialist in geriatric	100.0%	93.8%	96.1%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	98.5%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	99.0%
Medical specialist in endocrinology	99.6%	99.6%	74.2%	100.0%	99.8%	100.0%	91.9%	94.3%	100.0%	100.0%	87.5%	96.0%
Medical specialist in oncology	100.0%	100.0%	99.7%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	81.9%	97.6%
Medical specialist in haematology	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	90.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	96.7%	98.8%
Medical specialist in rheumatology	82.6%	60.9%	81.8%	67.9%	72.6%	81.4%	88.7%	29.3%	100.0%	75.8%	80.2%	72.5%
Medical specialist in pneumology	95.0%	95.1%	79.1%	100.0%	81.2%	97.5%	95.8%	100.0%	73.0%	92.4%	80.6%	91.6%
Medical specialist in gastroenterology	78.9%	71.3%	71.5%	83.0%	55.3%	99.3%	77.7%	94.3%	100.0%	96.1%	75.7%	77.9%
Medical specialist in cardiology	68.5%	64.0%	80.3%	51.8%	44.9%	93.3%	85.0%	54.6%	77.2%	90.8%	75.0%	69.3%
Medical specialist in neurology	96.7%	92.7%	72.5%	95.5%	95.4%	94.1%	82.2%	87.0%	73.7%	91.3%	86.3%	90.2%
Medical specialist in physical medicine	63.5%	63.8%	68.2%	29.2%	26.9%	100.0%	80.3%	70.5%	100.0%	92.0%	81.4%	61.1%
Medical specialist in dermatology	12.5%	16.8%	26.2%	10.7%	18.7%	40.5%	22.9%	2.3%	43.0%	36.6%	35.1%	21.1%
Medical specialist in ENT	59.3%	69.9%	55.1%	61.9%	48.4%	75.4%	73.9%	82.9%	53.0%	81.8%	50.7%	64.0%
Medical specialist in radiotherapy	94.9%	85.3%	83.4%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	90.0%	99.8%	100.0%	100.0%	53.9%	93.0%
Medical specialist in nuclear medicine	100.0%	89.2%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	91.0%	100.0%	73.1%	100.0%	88.2%	88.6%	94.3%
Medical specialist in biology	95.7%	97.0%	90.8%	100.0%	88.7%	91.4%	99.6%	81.4%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	94.2%
Medical specialist in anatomic pathology	83.8%	88.8%	85.9%	92.7%	90.2%	95.8%	100.0%	76.0%	100.0%	100.0%	91.3%	90.1%
Medical specialist in radiology	19.0%	50.4%	63.6%	39.5%	25.5%	98.4%	93.5%	45.4%	96.7%	94.0%	73.2%	56.0%
Medical specialist in anaesthesiology	97.8%	97.2%	88.9%	93.8%	87.9%	98.4%	94.3%	100.0%	100.0%	98.4%	92.8%	94.7%

Medical specialist in acute and emergency medicine	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	96.9%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	99.8%
Medical specialist in general surgery	77.5%	84.4%	68.8%	65.1%	64.0%	97.3%	81.6%	54.1%	97.3%	98.6%	77.6%	77.4%
Medical specialist in orthopaedics	32.9%	36.9%	44.9%	23.8%	21.0%	84.2%	58.4%	43.6%	89.4%	76.5%	49.0%	42.6%
Medical specialist in urology	44.3%	61.3%	44.9%	63.0%	34.7%	91.8%	55.7%	40.8%	50.5%	92.6%	66.5%	55.6%
Medical specialist in neurosurgery	50.3%	76.0%	52.7%	48.6%	28.7%	85.7%	75.5%	100.0%	100.0%	75.7%	82.4%	64.2%
Medical specialist in plastic surgery	10.4%	37.5%	44.3%	14.0%	11.0%	63.8%	32.9%	30.8%	0.0%	81.3%	42.2%	30.6%
Medical specialist in ophthalmic surgery	21.8%	24.4%	19.0%	23.4%	17.2%	48.1%	44.1%	18.7%	0.0%	32.8%	45.1%	28.4%

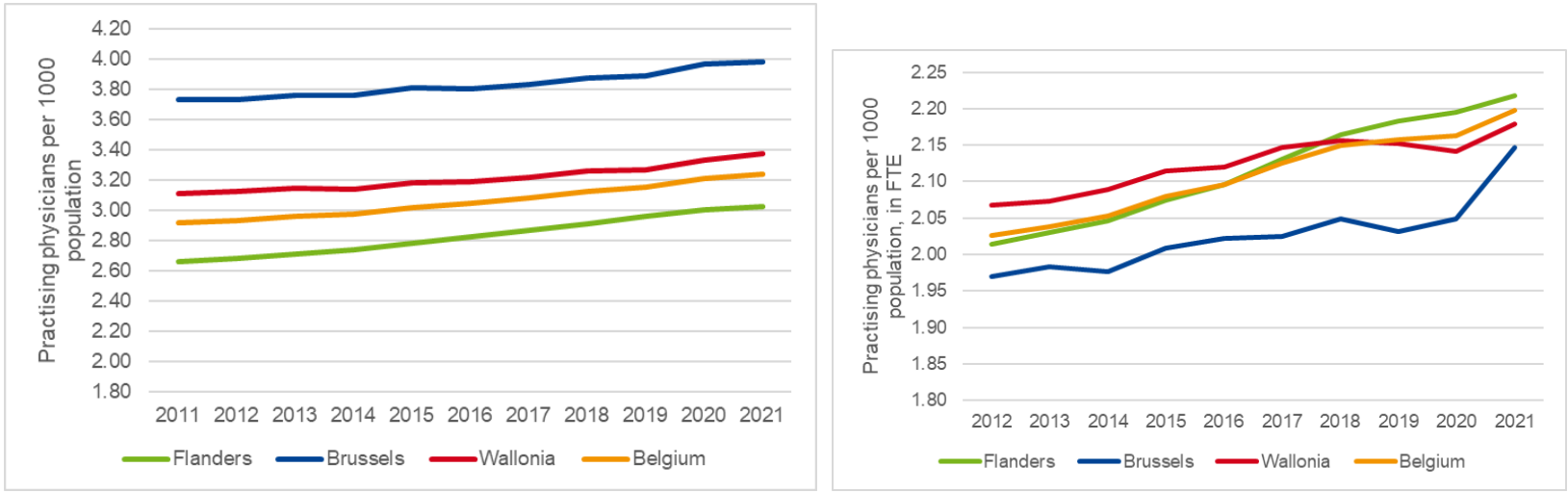
Source: RIZIV – INAMI data, KCE calculations

Table 5 – Density of practising physicians per 1000 population, by region, evolution 2011-2022

		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Practising physicians	Flanders	2.66	2.68	2.71	2.74	2.78	2.83	2.87	2.91	2.96	3.00	3.03
	Brussels	3.73	3.74	3.76	3.76	3.81	3.80	3.84	3.88	3.89	3.97	3.99
	Wallonia	3.11	3.13	3.14	3.14	3.18	3.19	3.22	3.26	3.27	3.34	3.37
Practising physicians (in FTE)	Flanders	1.99	2.01	2.03	2.05	2.07	2.10	2.13	2.16	2.18	2.20	2.22
	Brussels	1.97	1.97	1.98	1.98	2.01	2.02	2.02	2.05	2.03	2.05	2.15
	Wallonia	2.06	2.07	2.07	2.09	2.11	2.12	2.15	2.16	2.15	2.14	2.18
Practising physicians acceding to the agreement (in FTE)	Flanders		1.55	1.56	1.57	1.60	1.62	1.63	1.66	1.67	1.69	1.71
	Brussels		1.36	1.39	1.40	1.44	1.46	1.49	1.52	1.52	1.56	1.65
	Wallonia		1.63	1.65	1.67	1.70	1.71	1.73	1.74	1.74	1.77	1.81

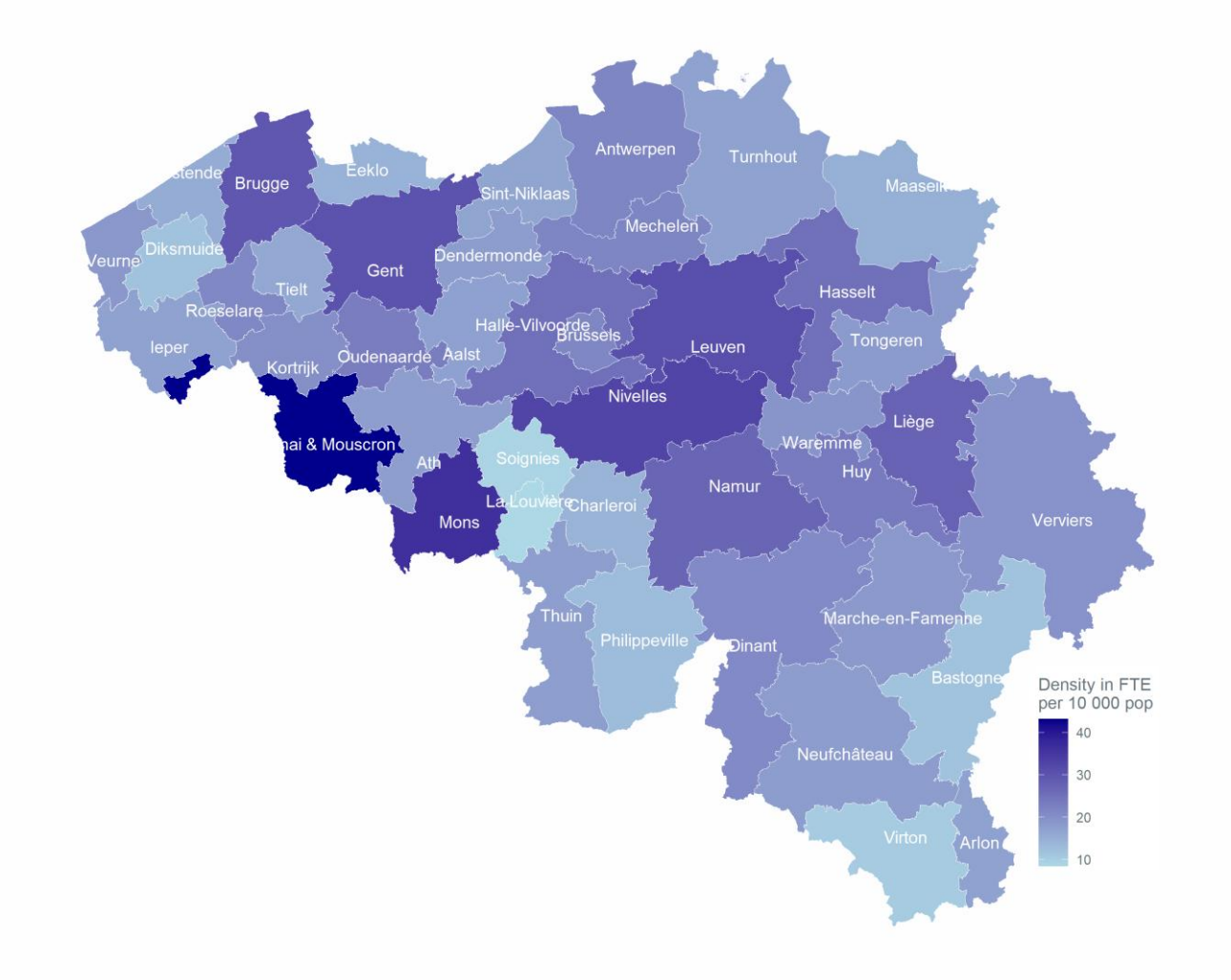
Source: RIZIV – INAMI data, KCE calculations

Figure 3 – Density of practising physicians (in head count and in FTE), per 1000 population, by region, evolution 2011-2021



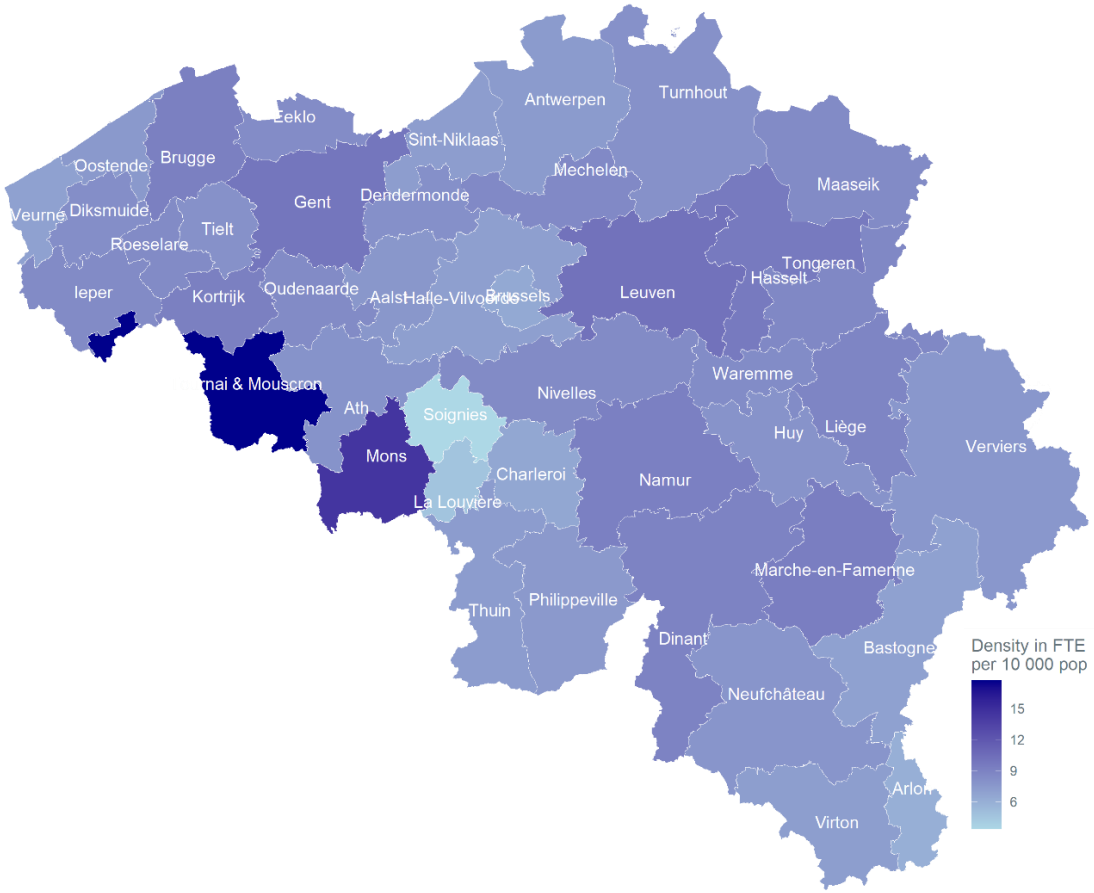
Source: RIZIV – INAMI data, KCE calculations

Figure 4 – Distribution of FTE practising physicians per 10 000 population, by district, 2021



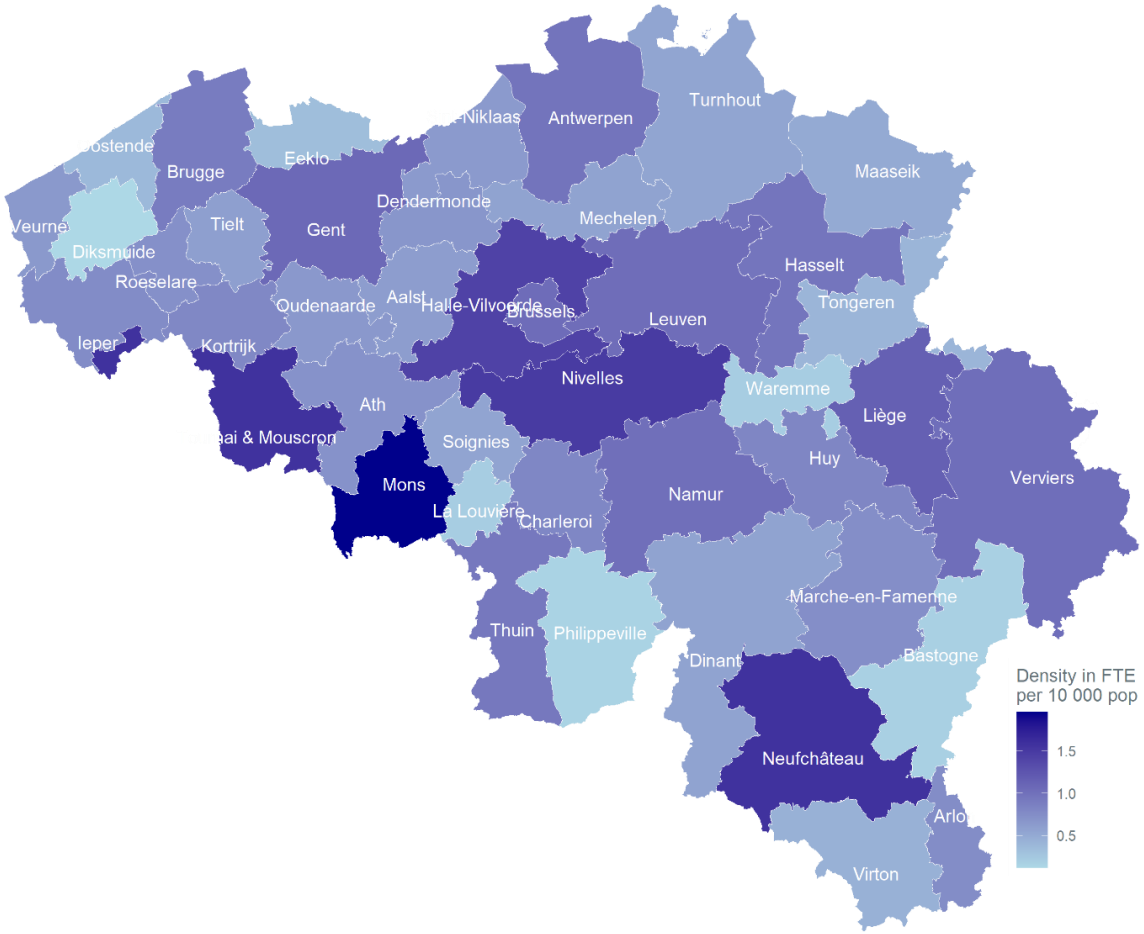
Source: RIZIV – INAMI data, KCE calculations

Figure 5 – Distribution of FTE practising GPs per 10 000 population, by district, 2021



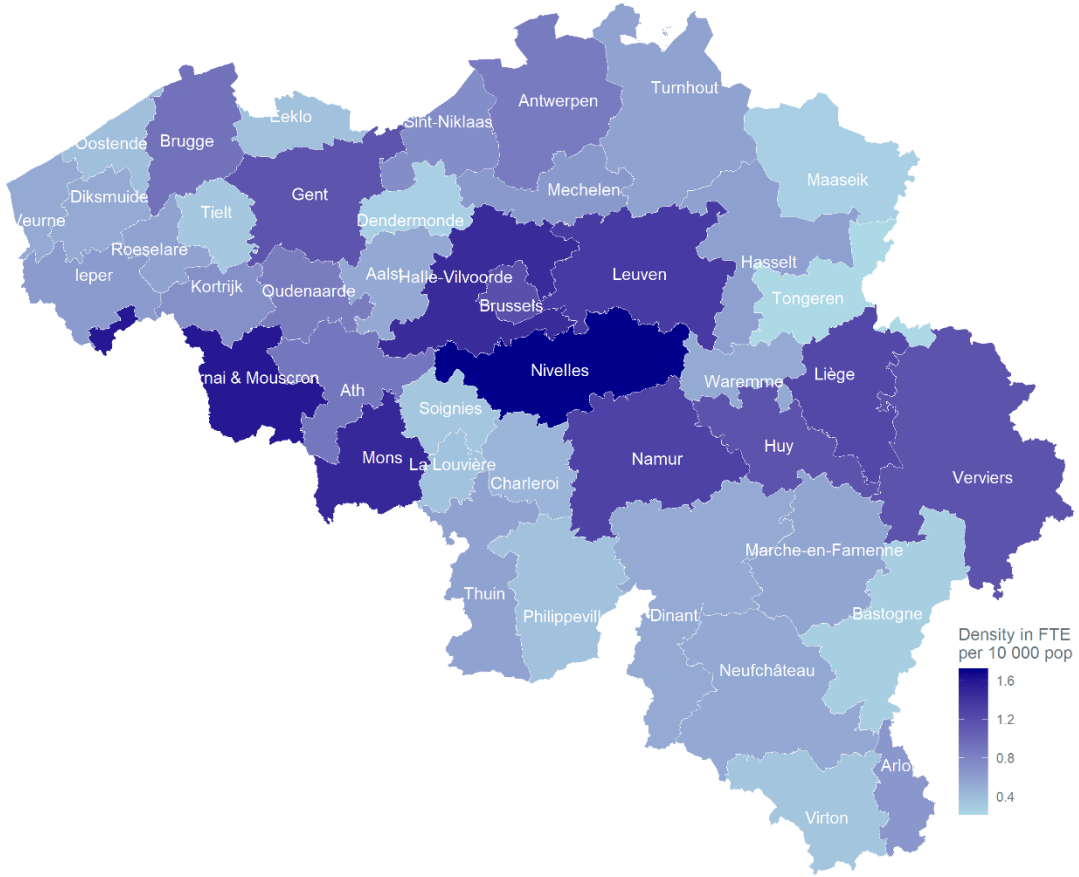
Source: RIZIV – INAMI data, KCE calculations

Figure 6 – Distribution of FTE practising gynaecologists per 10 000 population, by district, 2021



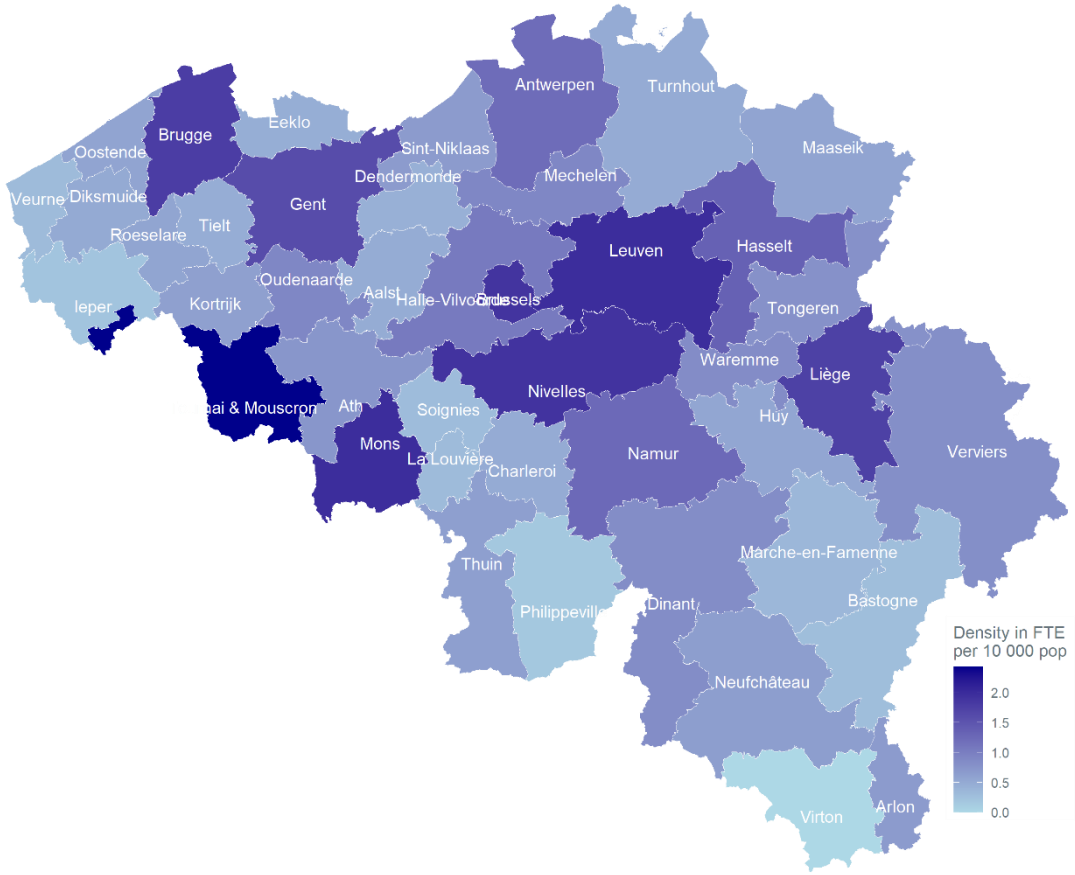
Source: RIZIV – INAMI data, KCE calculations

Figure 7 – Distribution of FTE practising paediatricians per 10 000 population, by district, 2021



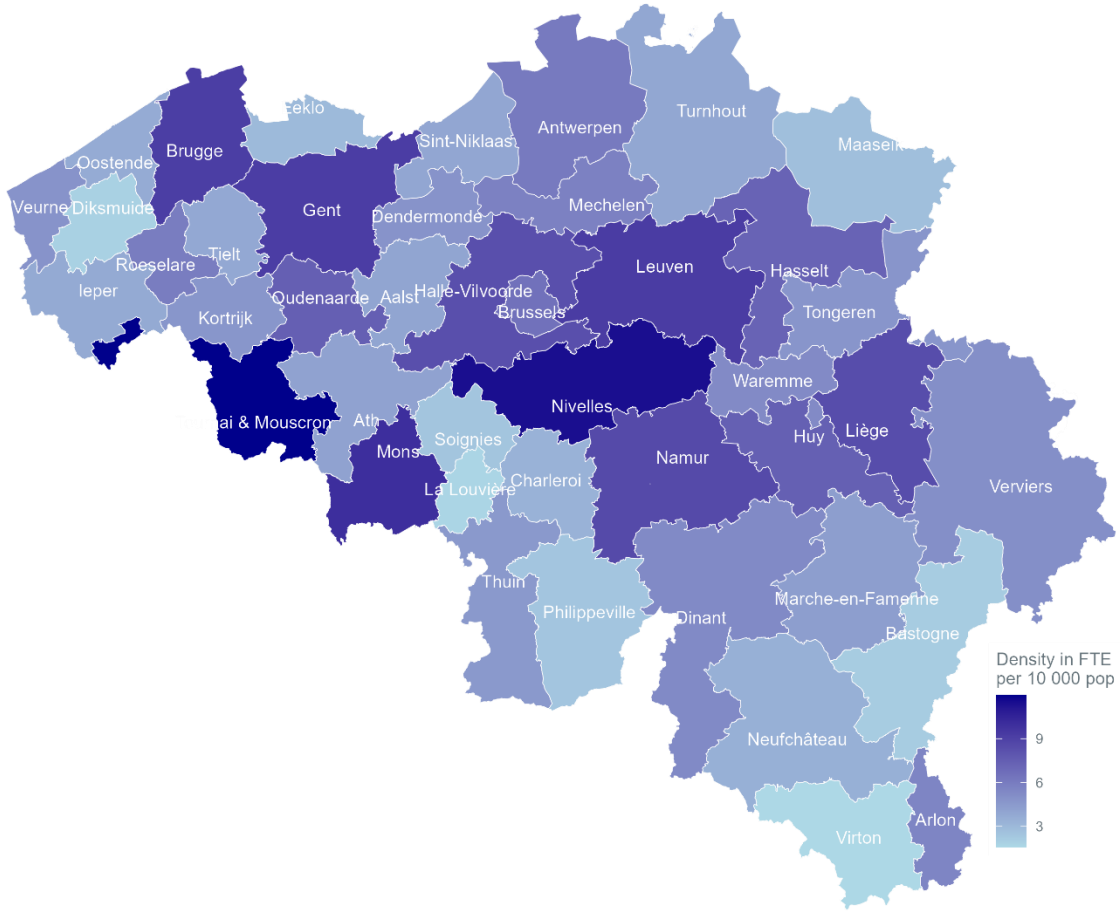
Source: RIZIV – INAMI data, KCE calculations

Figure 8 – Distribution of FTE practising medical specialists in psychiatrics per 10 000 population, by district, 2021



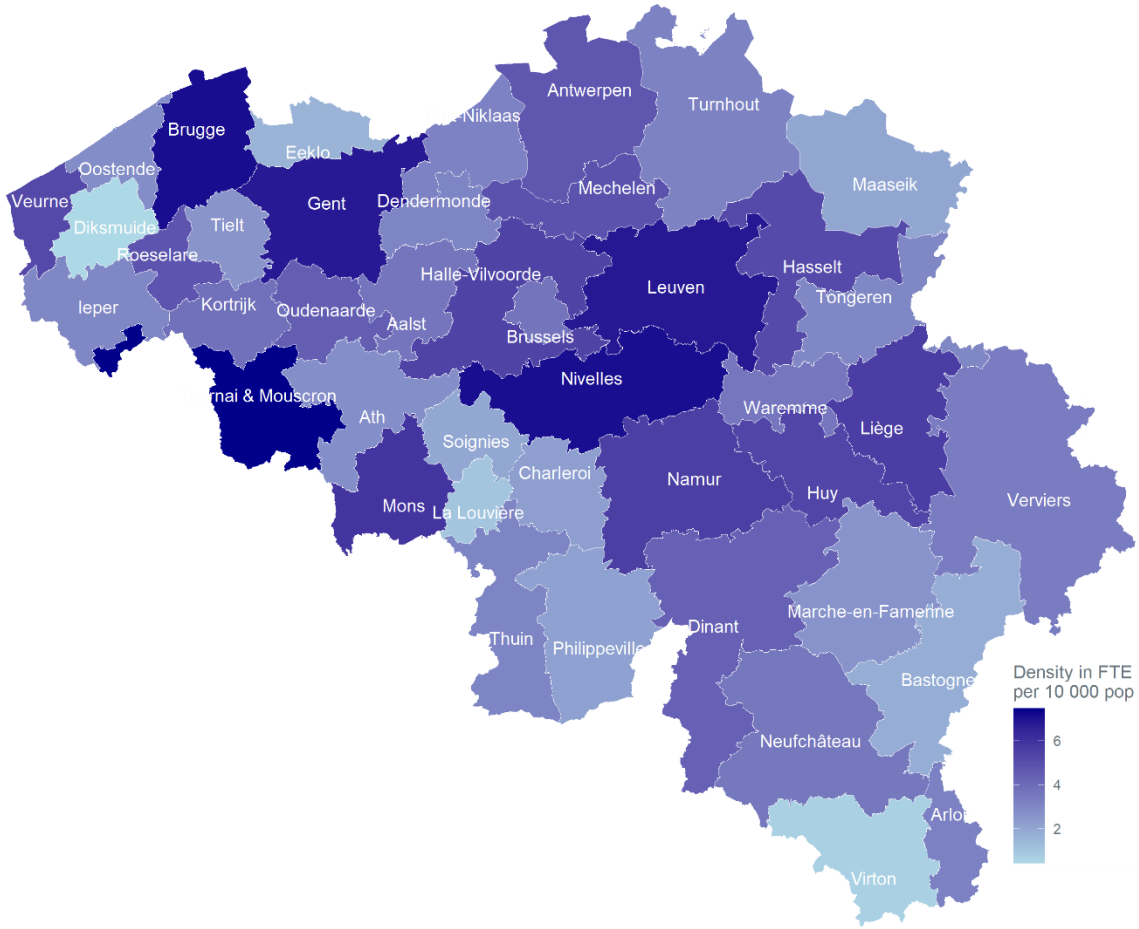
Source: RIZIV – INAMI data, KCE calculations

Figure 9 – Distribution of FTE practising medical specialists of the medical group per 10 000 population, by district, 2021



Source: RIZIV – INAMI data, KCE calculations

Figure 10 – Distribution of FTE practising medical specialists of the surgical group per 10 000 population, by district, 2021



Source: RIZIV – INAMI data, KCE calculations

International comparison

Based on the countries that report data on practising physicians to the OECD, Belgium has a lower number of practising physicians per 1 000 population than the EU averages (3.21 vs 4.03 (EU-14) and 3.84 (EU-27) in 2021, see Table 6 and Figure 11). Since 2010, the EU average of the number of practising physicians per 1 000 population has increased over the time (+13.6% for the EU-14 and +16.3% for the EU-27) while the growth rate is relatively lower in Belgium (+9.9%). 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.

Impact of the COVID -19 pandemic

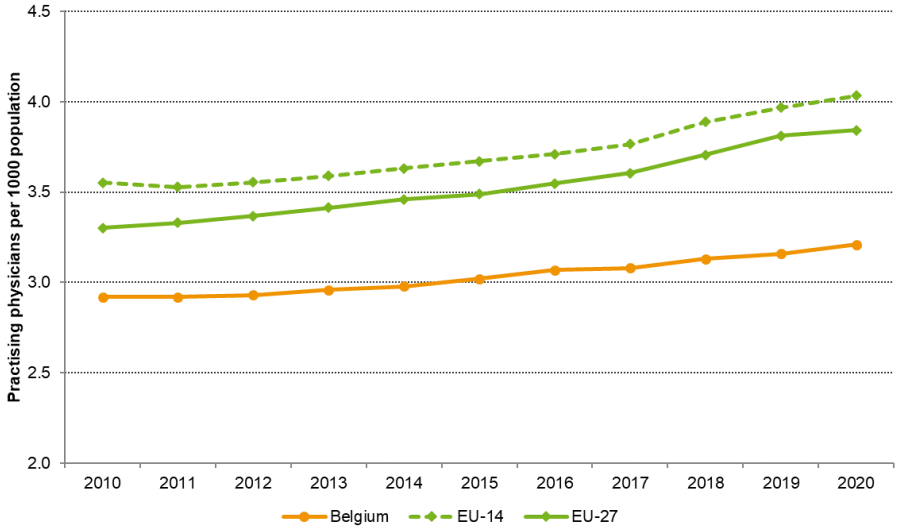
In head count, a percentage increase of 1.7% in the number of practising physicians per 1000 population can be observed between 2019 and 2020, while the average annual growth rate between 2010 and 2019 was 0.99%. In FTE, an important increase was observed between 2020 and 2021 in Brussels (+4.8%), while the average annual growth rate between 2010 and 2019 in Brussels was 0.4%. These analyses are nevertheless not sufficient to determine if this is linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the calculation of FTE (see the limitations in the documentations sheet) could in part explain these differences.

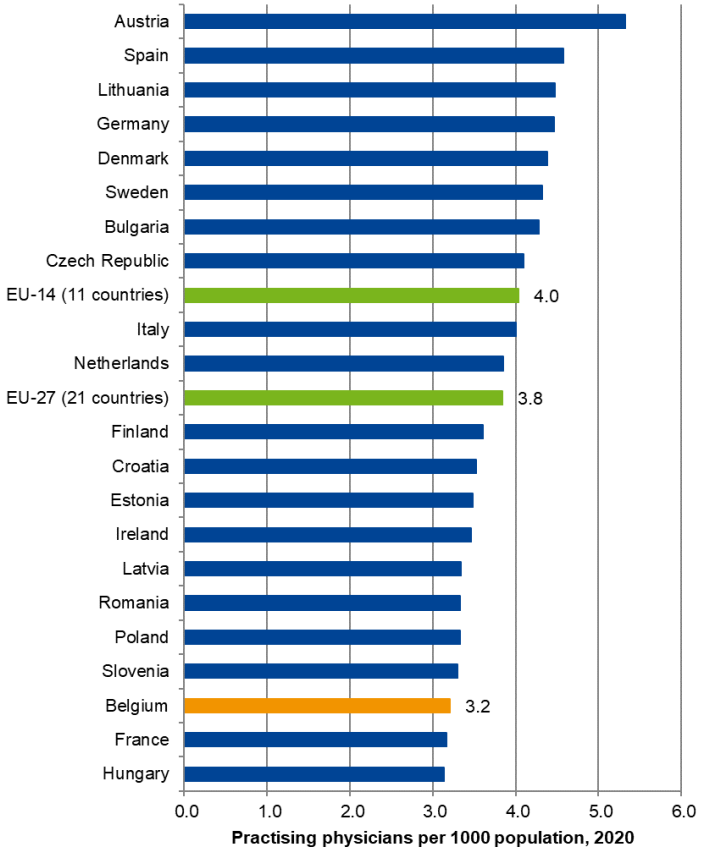
Table 6 – Number of practising physicians per 1 000 population (2010-2021)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Belgium	2.92	2.92	2.93	2.96	2.98	3.02	3.07	3.08	3.13	3.16	3.21
EU-14	3.55	3.53	3.55	3.59	3.63	3.67	3.71	3.77	3.89	3.97	4.03
EU-27	3.30	3.33	3.37	3.41	3.46	3.49	3.55	3.60	3.71	3.81	3.84

Source: OECD Health Statistics 2023

Figure 11 – Number of practising physicians per 1000 population: international comparison (2010-2020)





Source: OECD Health Statistics 2023

Key points

- **In 2021, there were 41 761 professionally active physicians (3.6 per 1000 population), 37 504 practising physicians (3.2 per 1000 population, +11% since 2011), and 25 461.8 FTE practising physicians (2.2 per 1000 population, +9.3% since 2011).**
- **The proportion of physicians who fully or partially acceded to the agreement (conventioned physicians, in FTE) was quite stable (78.9% in 2021). However, by medical specialty, this proportion was lower than 50% in 2021 for dermatologists (21.1%), ophthalmologic surgeons (28.4%), plastic surgeons (30.6%), gynaecologists (41.9%), and orthopaedists (42.6%).**
- **In head count, the number of practising physicians per 1000 population is lower in Flanders than in Brussels (difference ≥20%) and Wallonia (difference <20%), but when expressed in FTE, Brussels has the lowest density.**
- **Disparities between provinces can be highlighted. For a number of medical specialties, densities (expressed in FTE) lower than the Belgian density (difference ≥20% and even 40%) were mainly observed in the province of Luxembourg and, to a lesser extent, in Hainaut, Limburg, and West Flanders. Conversely, the highest densities were generally observed in Walloon Brabant and Flemish Brabant.**
- **The lower density in Brussels (in FTE) and the higher densities in Walloon Brabant and Flemish Brabant can be explained by the fact that the analysis is based on the address of contact, which mainly corresponded to the physicians' home address rather than its place of practice. This is therefore not a warning signal.**
- **Belgium has a lower density of practising physicians per 1000 population than the EU averages (3.2 compared to 4.0 and 3.8 per 1000 population in 2020 for the EU-14 and the EU-27 averages respectively). The increase between 2010 and 2021 was also lower in Belgium than the EU averages (+9.9% compared to +13.6% and +16.3% for the EU-14 and the EU-27 averages respectively). However, it is important to note that the definition of practising physicians varied between countries and that in some countries, it corresponded to the number of physicians licensed to practice.**

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