

## HEALTH EXPECTANCY IN BELGIUM

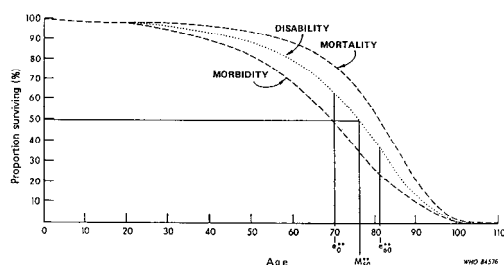
### What is health expectancy?

Health expectancies were first developed to address whether or not longer life is being accompanied by an increase in the time lived in good health (the **compression of morbidity** scenario) or in bad health (**expansion of morbidity**). So health expectancies divide life expectancy into life spent in different states of health, from say good to bad health. In this way they add a dimension of quality to the quantity of life lived.

### How is the effect of longer life measured?

The general model of health transitions (WHO, 1984) shows the differences between life spent in different states: total survival, disability-free survival and survival without chronic disease. This leads naturally to life expectancy (the area under the 'mortality' curve), disability-free life expectancy (the area under the 'disability' curve) and life expectancy without chronic disease (the area under the 'morbidity' curve).

**The general model of health transition (WHO, 1984): observed mortality and hypothetical morbidity and disability survival curves for females, USA, 1980.**



$e_0^{**}$  and  $e_{60}^{**}$  are the number of years of autonomous life expected at birth and at age 60, respectively.  
 $M_{50}^{**}$  is the age to which 50% of females could expect to survive without loss of autonomy.

There are in fact as many health expectancies as concepts of health. The commonest health expectancies are those based on self-perceived health, activities of daily living and on chronic morbidity.

### How do we compare health expectancies?

Health expectancies are independent of the size of populations and of their age structure and so they allow direct comparison of different population sub-groups: e.g. sexes, socio-professional categories, as well as countries within Europe (Robine et al., 2003).

Health expectancies are most often calculated by the Sullivan method (Sullivan, 1971). However to make valid comparisons, the underlying health measure should be truly comparable.

To address this, the European Union has decided to include a small set of health expectancies among its European Community Health Indicators (ECHI) to provide synthetic measures of disability, chronic morbidity and perceived health. Therefore the Minimum European Health Module (MEHM), composed of 3 general questions covering these dimensions, has been introduced into the Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) to improve the comparability of health expectancies between countries.\* In addition life expectancy without long term activity limitation, based on the disability question, was selected in 2004 to be one of the structural indicators for assessing the EU strategic goals (Lisbon strategy) under the name of "Healthy Life Years" (HLY).

Further details on the MEHM, the European surveys and health expectancy calculation and interpretation can be found on [www.ehemu.eu](http://www.ehemu.eu).

### What is in this report?

This report is produced by the European Health Expectancy Monitoring Unit (EHEMU) as part of a country series. In each report we present:

- Life expectancies\*\* and health expectancies based on activity limitation (HLY) for the country of interest and for the overall 25 European Union member states (EU25), using the SILC question on long term activity limitation for 2005 and 2006. As the SILC has been only recently initiated, to document trends we provide previous HLY series based on the disability question of the 1995-2001 European Community Household Panel (ECHP)
- health expectancies based on the two additional dimensions of health (chronic morbidity and self-perceived health) for the country of interest, based on SILC 2006
- a global analysis of health expectancies of European countries, based on the SILC 2006

### References

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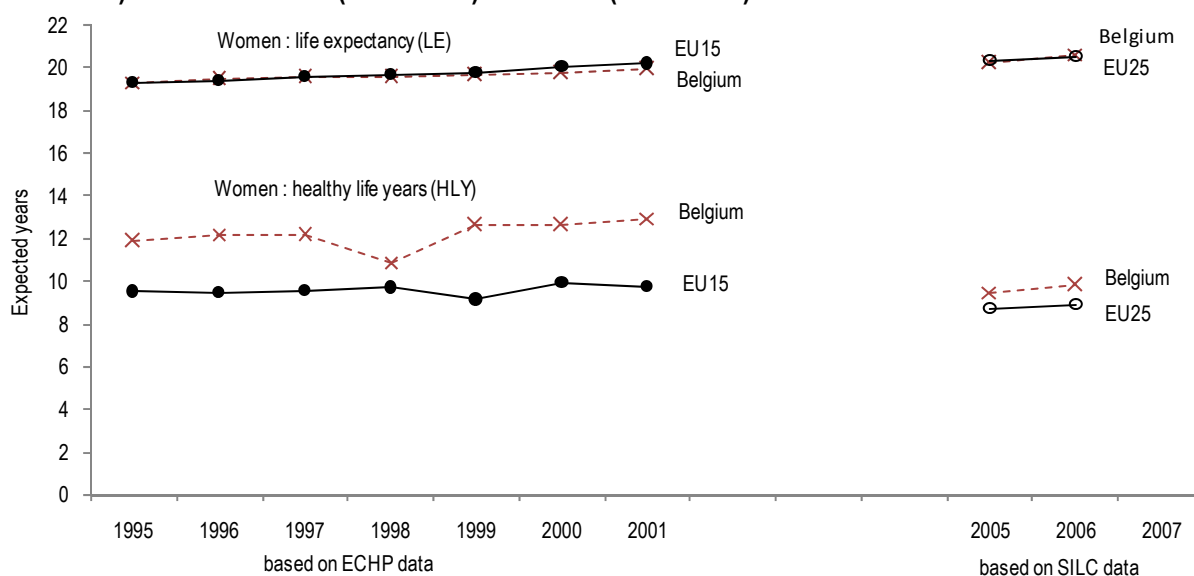
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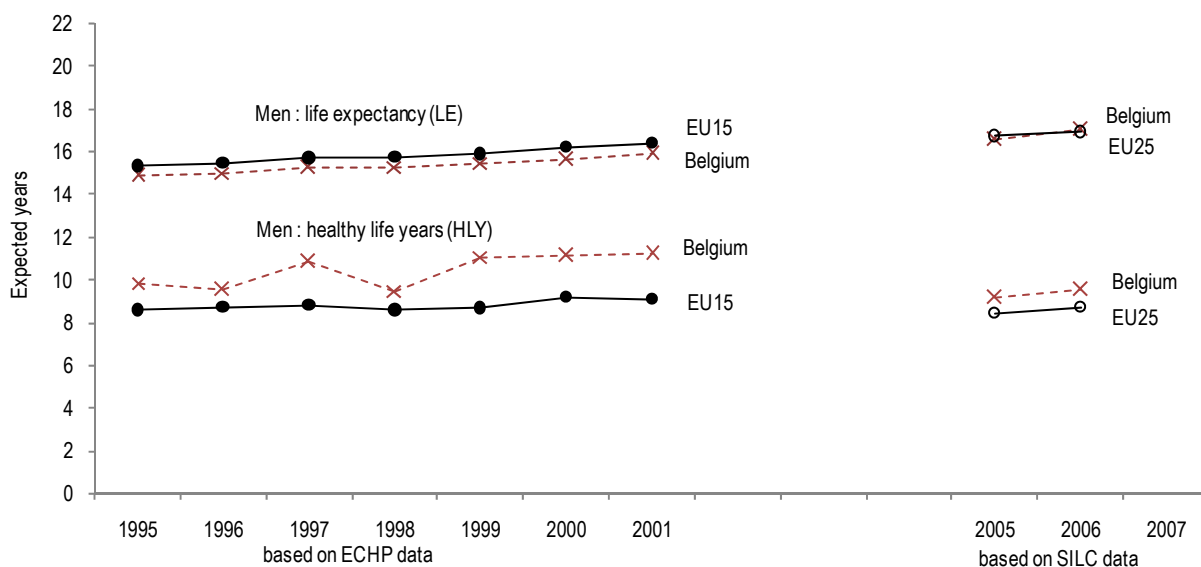
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\* Nevertheless, before 2008, the translations of the module used in some countries were not optimum (See Eurostat-EU Task Force on Health Expectancies common statement about the SILC data quality); \*\* Computed with the Eurostat method.

## Life expectancy (LE) and Healthy Life Years (HLY) at age 65 for Belgium and the European Union (EU15 and EU25) based on ECHP (1995-2001) and SILC (2005-2006)



Belgium	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Women : LE	19.3	19.4	19.5	19.6	19.6	19.7	19.9				20.2	20.6	
Women : HLY	11.8	12.2	12.2	10.9	12.6	12.6	12.9				9.5	9.8	
% HLY/LE	61%	63%	62%	56%	64%	64%	65%				47%	47%	

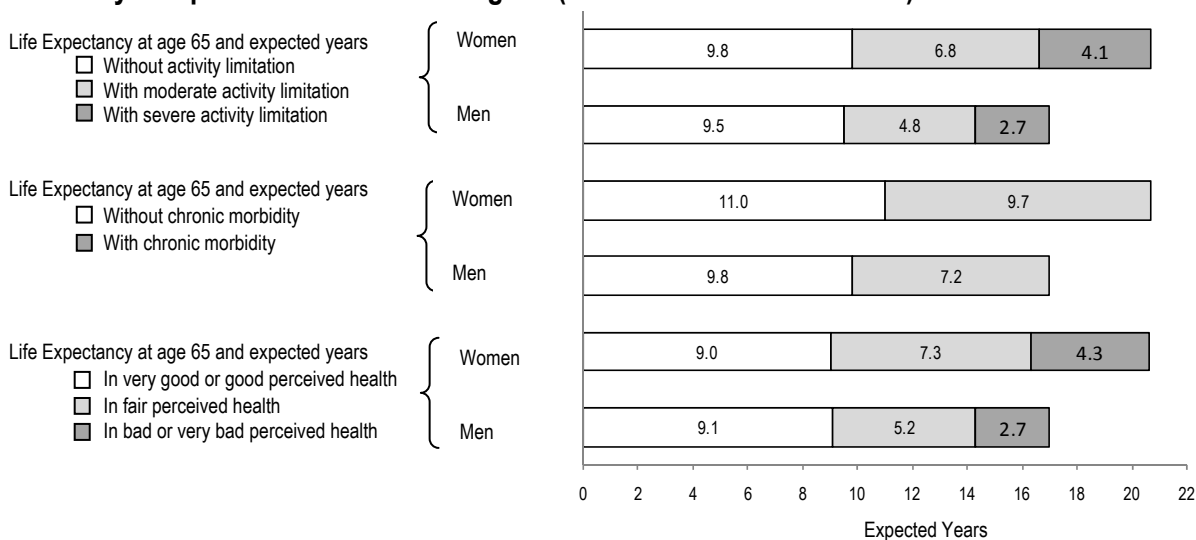


Belgium	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Men : LE	14.8	15.0	15.2	15.3	15.5	15.6	15.9				16.6	17.0	
Men : HLY	9.8	9.5	10.8	9.5	11.1	11.1	11.2				9.1	9.5	
% HLY/LE	66%	63%	71%	62%	72%	71%	70%				55%	56%	

### Key points:

- Belgian life expectancy (LE) at age 65 has increased by 1.2 years for women and 2.0 years for men over the 1996-2006 period: LE for both sexes between 1995-2001 was slightly below the EU15 average. By 2006 LE for both sexes was close to the EU25 average.
- Over the 1995-2001 period, health expectancy based on activity limitation (HLY) at age 65 from the ECHP data increased in Belgium. The proportion of HLY (or years without *self-reported limitations due to health condition or disability*), within the total expected years, slightly increased for both sexes between 1995 and 2001, being 65% for women and 70% for men in 2001. Between 1995 and 2001 HLY in Belgium was above the EU15 average.
- The new HLY series, initiated in 2005 with the SILC data, shows values for Belgium in 2006 of around 1 year above the EU25 average. In 2006 women and men at age 65 could expect to spend 47% and 56% of their life without *self-reported long-term activity limitations* respectively. Between 2005 and 2006 HLY slightly increased for men and women in Belgium.

## Life and health expectancies at age 65 based on activity limitation (Healthy Life Years), chronic morbidity and perceived health for Belgium (Health data from SILC 2006)



### Key points:

- In 2006, LE at age 65 in Belgium was 20.6 years for women and 17.0 years for men.
- Based on the SILC 2006, at age 65, women spent 9.8 years (47% of their remaining life) without activity limitation (corresponding to Healthy Life Years (HLY)), 6.8 years (33%) with moderate activity limitation and 4.1 years (20%) with severe activity limitation.\*
- Men of the same age spent 9.5 years (56% of remaining life) without activity limitation compared to 4.8 years (28%) with moderate activity limitation and 2.7 years (16%) with severe activity limitation.\*
- Although the total years lived by men were less than those for women, the numbers of years lived in very good or good perceived health and the years lived without activity limitation were very similar. However the number of years lived without chronic morbidity was greater for women than men.
- Compared to men, women spent a larger proportion of their life in ill health and these years of ill health were more likely to be years with severe health problems.

These results should be interpreted cautiously given the lack of the institutional population and in some countries the small sample size. The sample size for Belgium comprised 1079 women and 938 men aged 65+ years.

\* These may not sum to Life Expectancy due to rounding.

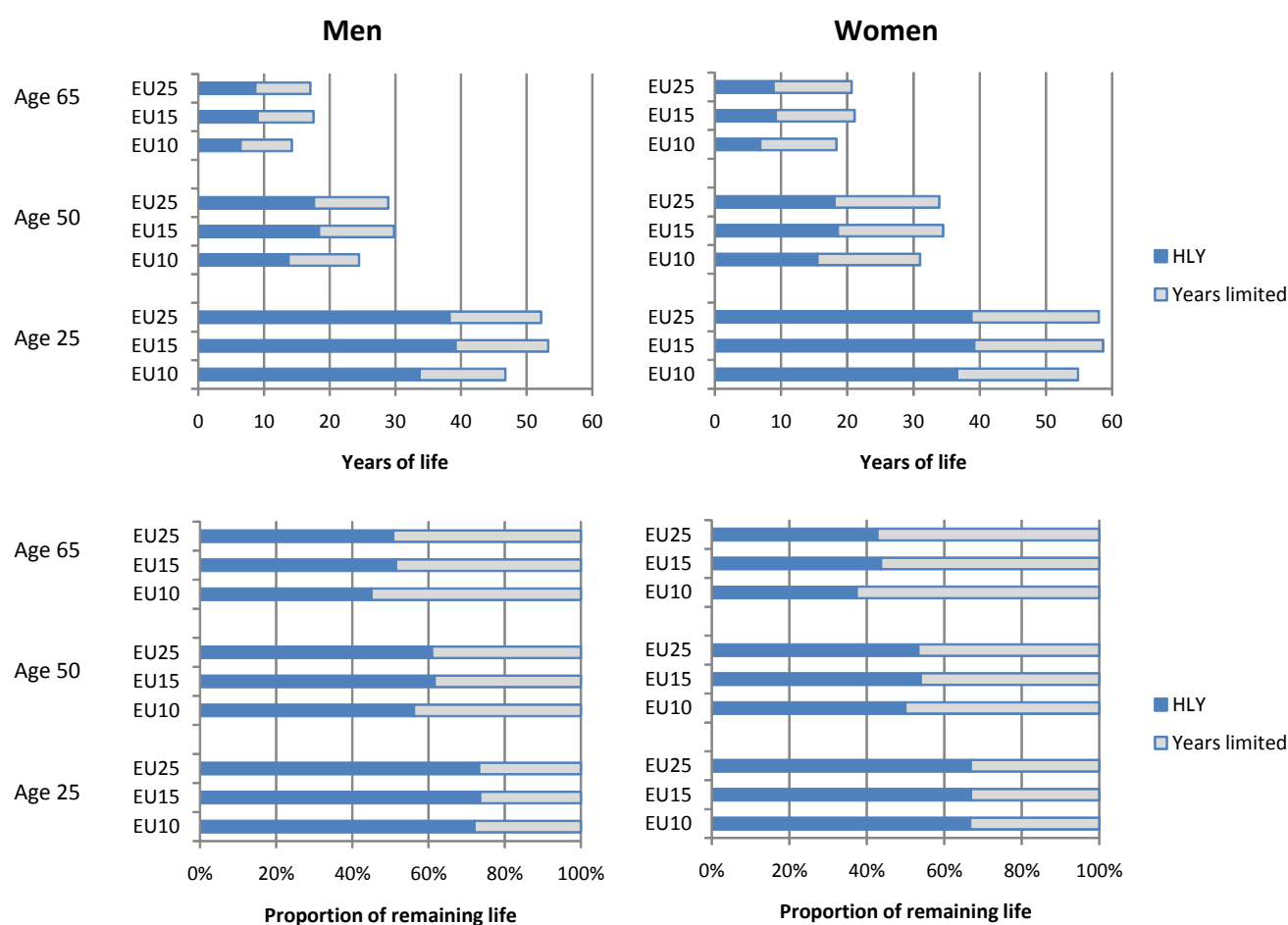
## Published results and other reports of health expectancies for Belgium

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- N. Bossuyt, S. Gadeyne, P. Deboosere, H. Van Oyen. Socio-economic inequalities in health expectancy in Belgium. *Public Health*. 2004;118:3-10.

## Healthy Life Years in Europe at ages 25, 50 and 65 in 2006

The top two graphs in the figure below show for men and women separately Healthy Life Years (HLY) and life expectancy at different ages for the newly joined EU10 countries, the established EU15 countries and the EU25 as a whole. The two lower graphs show HLY as a proportion of life expectancy for each of the ages and country groupings. The key points are:

- LE at age 25 is less in the EU10 countries than the EU15, by 6.5 years in men and 3.8 years in women. Differences between the EU10 and EU15 in LE reduce with age and by age 65 are 3.3 years for men and 2.7 for women.
- Differences in HLY between the EU10 and EU15 are smaller than differences in LE at all ages; at age 25 men in the EU10 have 5.5 years fewer free of activity limitation than men in the EU15 and women have 2.6 years fewer. Differences reduce with age for men but are relatively static for women; by age 65 differences are 2.6 years for men and 2.3 years for women.
- The proportion of remaining life spent free of activity limitation reduces with age but values are very similar in the EU10 and EU15.



## About EHEMU

The European Health Expectancy Monitoring Unit (EHEMU) and its current project European Health and Life Expectancy Information System (EHLEIS) are funded by the European Public Health Programme (2004-2008) and is a collaboration between: the French national institute on health and medical research (INSERM) and CRLC (Montpellier, France), the University of Leicester (UK), the Scientific Institute of Public Health (ISP Belgium), the French National Institute of Demography (INED), University Charles (Czech Republic), Erasmus University Medical centre (The Netherlands) and University of Rostock (Germany). EHEMU aims to provide a central facility for the co-ordinated analysis, interpretation and dissemination of life and health expectancies to add the quality dimension to the quantity of life lived by the European populations. Further details about EHEMU can be found on the websites: [www.ehemu.eu](http://www.ehemu.eu) and [www.healthy-life-years.eu](http://www.healthy-life-years.eu)