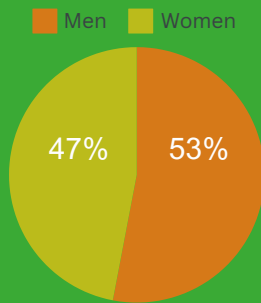


BELCOHORT NEWSLETTER

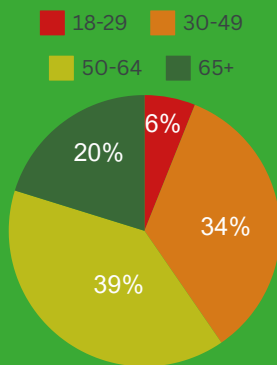
May 2024

PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

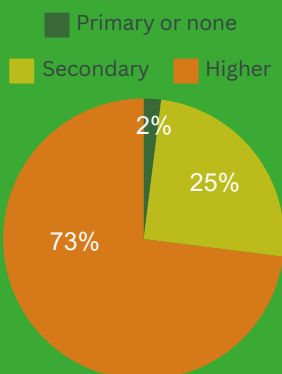
Distribution (%) by sex



Distribution (%) by age



Distribution (%) by highest diploma



The BELCOHORT project has started well and we thank you for your participation. In the initial phase, a total of **1975 people** from all over Belgium have joined the cohort. It is definitely the purpose to grow and new initiatives will be taken to recruit more people. Through short newsletters, about twice a year, we will keep you updated on our activities, results and opportunities to take part in specific data collections.

BELCOHORT PROJECT IN BRIEF

BELCOHORT is an epidemiological cohort, that is to say a large number of people who agree to be followed over time and to share information confidentially about their health for research purposes (diseases and health problems, lifestyle, working conditions, life events, etc.).

The diversity of health-related data, repeated over time, will make it possible to:

- analyze long-term health risk factors (linked to lifestyle and living conditions, etc.)
- better understand the mechanisms of disease development and
- evaluate the effectiveness of health interventions

BELCOHORT is currently in a pilot phase until December 2025.

MUNICIPALITIES WITH BELCOHORT PARTICIPANTS



■ Municipalities with less than 20 participants (136)
■ Municipalities with between 20 and 49 participants (18)
■ Municipalities with 50 or more participants (5)

MODE OF PARTICIPATION



21% paper questionnaire



79% online questionnaire

UPCOMING PROJECTS

WEAHCOP STUDY

An emerging field to collect information on the lifestyle of people is the use of wearables and apps. Such wearables, for instance smartwatches, are already used by people to monitor their physical activity and sleep pattern, but could also be very useful for research. The WEAHCOP project will begin at the end of 2024 with a subsample of BELCOHORT participants, and will aim to assess the feasibility of data collection using these new technologies in a population cohort. Participants will also receive a feedback on their own results. Participation in this study is of course voluntary and initially relatively few people will be invited to this project. However in the future it is the purpose to collect such information in a much larger group.



STUDY ON MENTAL HEALTH AND EMPLOYMENT SITUATION

In the initial phase of the BELCOHORT study, our key aim is to showcase the significance of a comprehensive database that integrates longitudinal data on various factors such as health, lifestyle, socio-demographic details, and environmental information. In a specific study, the association between employment status and mental health will be investigated. Research questions like 'What is the impact of labour market transitions on the mental health and wellbeing?' and 'What is the impact of changes in mental health status on the employment situation?' will be addressed. The BELCOHORT data infrastructure will be used to better understand causality patterns in this association and the underlying mechanisms.

NEXT BELCOHORT QUESTIONNAIRES

The continuation of your participation is important to monitor health changes over time in our cohort. Along with this newsletter, you will receive an invitation to complete the second questionnaire. Please complete it as soon as possible. If you would not have filled the first questionnaire, it is still possible to do this. A further questionnaire for all is planned in 2025. However, some of you will already be contacted for participation in the WEAHCOP project in the second half of 2024.