

Who is a migrant? Implications of definition on the migrant stock in Belgium.

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Three different definitions of 'migrants' are commonly used in Belgium:

* Non-nationals (NN) are persons who do not have the Belgian nationality.

* Immigrants (IM) are persons born abroad who immigrated to Belgium.

* Persons of foreign origin (FO) are persons with foreign nationality at birth or Belgian nationality at birth, having at least one parent with foreign nationality at birth.

Using data from the national population register, the corresponding migrant stocks are compared.

Not surprisingly, the size of the migrant stock varies accordingly (Table 1). There are amply twice as many persons of foreign origin as non-nationals.

The differences in stock size depend on the region of origin (Table 2). For instance, there are almost five times as many persons of Maghreb & Turkish origin in the FO stock than in the NN stock and more than twice as many in the FO stock than in the IM stock. For persons of Eastern European origin the numbers differ by a factor 1.65 and 1.34, respectively.

Consequently, the stocks differ in their composition according to region of origin (Table 3). For instance, persons of Maghreb & Turkish origin are most numerous in the FO stock.

Furthermore, age and gender distributions vary between the three migrant stocks (Figure 1, Table 4). The IM stock has very few children and shows an older population than the other stocks, in particular for persons of Southern European and Maghreb & Turkish origin. There are more older women than men of Maghreb & Turkish origin in the NN stock, whilst the reverse is true for the IM and FO stocks.

The observed differences are explained by migration history (figure 2) and adoption of Belgian nationality (figure 3). Migrants of Maghreb & Turkish origin, for example, are much less numerous in the IM stock than in the FO stock because more than half of them were born in Belgium. As this is especially the case for children and younger adults, the IM stock also refers to an older population. Differences between the NN stock and the FO stock relate to the large number of persons adopting Belgian nationality or acquiring this at birth, consequently not belonging to the NN stock. That older women of Maghreb & Turkish origin outnumber men of similar age in the NN stock is due to their different naturalisation behaviour.

In conclusion, it will be obvious that policy needs to be well aware that the pervasive denomination 'migrants' may actually refer to very different target groups.

Table 1. Size

	NN	IM	FO
Number (thousands)	1,194	1,699	2,826
% of total population	10.8	15.3	25.5

Source: National Population Register, Belgium 2013

Table 2. Size by origin

Origin:	Number (thousands)			Ratio	
	NN	IM	FO	FO vs NN	FO vs IM
Western & Northern European	369	542	646	x1,75	x1,19
Southern European	260	219	579	x2,23	x2,64
Eastern European	219	269	361	x1,65	x1,34
Maghreb & Turkish	153	334	740	x4,85	x2,22
Other origin	193	336	500	x2,59	x1,49

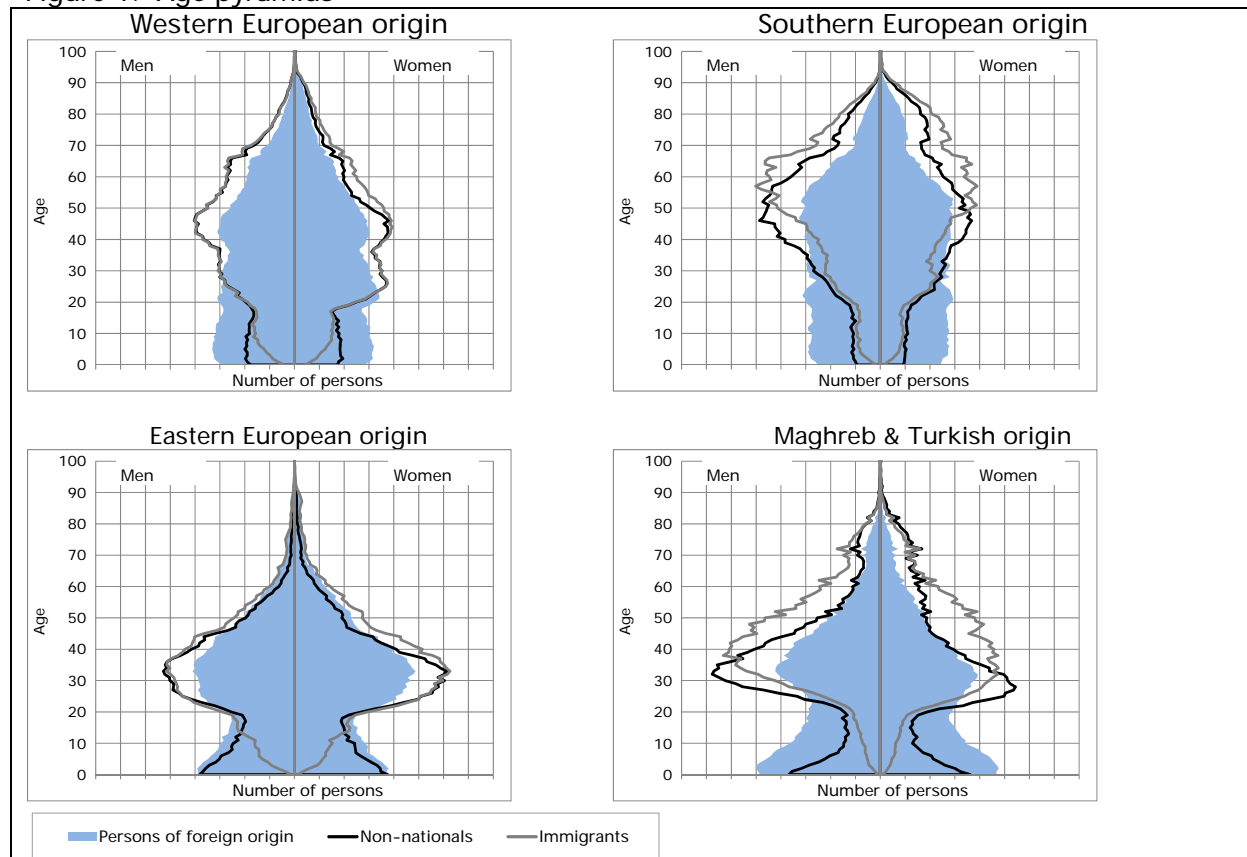
Table 3. Composition by origin (%)

	NN	IM	FO
Western & Northern European	30.9	31.9	22.8
Southern European	21.8	21.8	20.5
Eastern European	18.4	18.4	12.8
Maghreb & Turkish	12.8	12.8	26.2
Other origin	16.2	16.2	17.7

Table 4. Sex ratio (number of men per 100 women)

Origin:	Western European			Southern European			Eastern European			Maghreb & Turkish		
	NN	IM	FO	NN	IM	FO	NN	IM	FO	NN	IM	FO
Age:												
0-17 y	104	103	104	106	104	104	105	108	105	105	106	104
18-29 y	78	78	92	98	93	106	87	89	91	82	79	95
30-49 y	100	97	100	119	110	108	97	87	89	155	126	118
50-64 y	129	105	104	141	124	116	89	80	84	85	106	106
65+ y	106	90	89	89	91	90	54	66	73	68	105	105

Figure 1. Age pyramids*



*Number of persons in each migrant stock is 10,000

Figure 2. Migration history : immigrants and their children born in Belgium

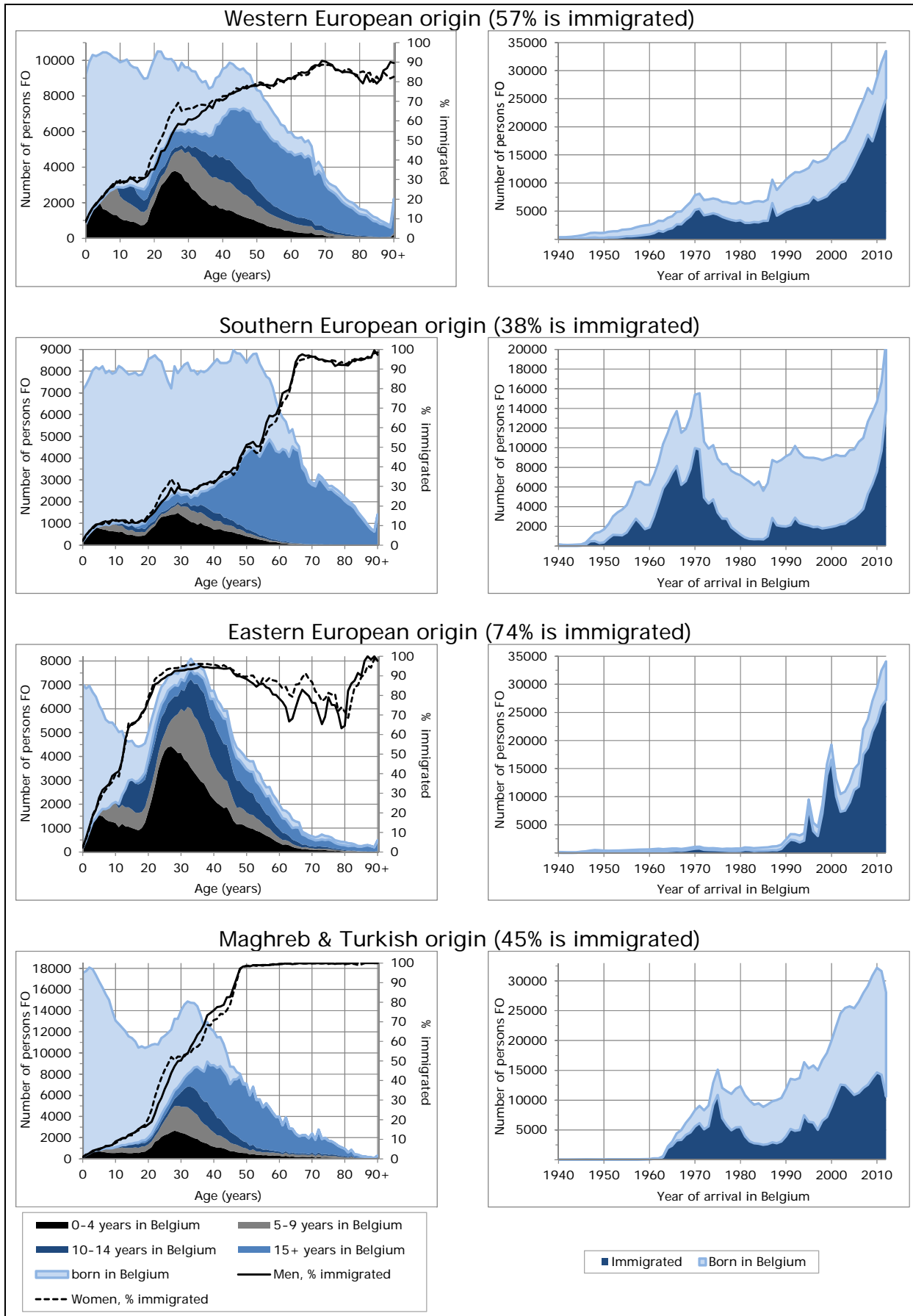


Figure 3. Non-nationals and persons of foreign origin with Belgian nationality

