



Vlaanderen
is werk

Labour market participation of
people with work limitations due to
health problems

Data from the EU Labour Force Survey Belgium and the
Regions

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Erik Samoy

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What is the Labour Force Survey

The European Union Labour Force Survey is conducted in the 28 Member States of the European Union (EU-28) and in a few other countries. It is a large household sample survey providing quarterly results on labour participation of people aged 15 and over, as well as on persons outside the labour force. The target population is composed of people living in private households, excluding those living in collective households or in institutions. The national statistical institutes are responsible for selecting the sample, preparing the questionnaires, conducting the face-to-face interviews with households, and forwarding the results to the statistical office of the European Union Eurostat.

Health and Disability in the Labour Force Survey

Standard EU LFS questionnaires do not contain questions on health or disability. However, each year a special block of questions or so-called “ad hoc module” is used to obtain more detailed information on a specific subject. In 2011 (second quarter) the module topic was health and disability. Countries may of course ask questions about this topic on other occasions than the EU module, but few do so. This may be because they don’t want to lengthen the standard interviews or because they want to avoid being pressured towards adding questions about other topics. However we strongly advocate the inclusion of at least one disability variable in all LFS questionnaires because an individual's labour market position is determined as much, if not more, by health or disability than by sex, age or education. This appears also from the module data.

Many of the questions in the disability module are used to define a target group of people with a long-standing health condition or disease in order to allow for comparison of this group with the other respondents on the core variables of the LFS. To that end respondents are asked to indicate their most important and second most important long-standing health problem or disease in a fixed list of 18 items. They are also asked whether they have problems performing 10 listed activities of daily living (ADLs) and whether they experience limitations in the amount of work (i.e. the number of hours) or the type of work they could do or in getting to and from work. Based on the lists of health problems and of ADL problems and on the 3 work-related limitations, a group of people with work limitations (PWL) caused by a long-standing health condition or an ADL problem” is identified.²

¹ Special thanks are due to Lina Waterplas, sociologist, for her comments on this text.

² “Definition 4 of Disability: People limited in work (LIMHOURS, LIMTRANS or LIMTYPEW) because of health condition (HEALTHMA) or basic activity difficulty (DIFFICMA)”. Eurostat, Statistical analysis and publication of the results of the 2011 Labour Force Survey ad hoc module on employment of disabled people. Report of work carried out by Eurostat. (draft) 2015, p. 95.

http://doc.ukdataservice.ac.uk/doc/7688/mrdoc/pdf/ahm2011_evaluation_report.pdf

Because these item lists are time consuming to administer, it is unpractical to incorporate them in all the LFS questionnaires. A possible alternative is to ask a single general question, as is done in Belgium in every LFS. But does this lead to the same results and, if not, is the difference acceptable?

Could a single short question do the trick? Evidence from Belgium

In Belgium, every LFS questionnaire contains the following general question:

“Are you hampered in your daily activities (whether or not work-related) by a disability, a long-standing health condition or disease (related to work or not)?

Yes, severely, Yes, to some extent, No.”³

When the disability module was included in the LFS in 2011 (2nd quarter) the standard question about being hampered in daily activities preceded the module. As appears from Table 1, this question does not capture the same population as the module questions containing a list of health or ADL problems. In reply to the general question, 15.2% of people aged 15-64 report to be hampered in their daily activities by a disability or health problem. When presented with item lists, one person out of four (24.8%) claims to have a long-standing health problem and/or an ADL problem, i.e. 10 percentage points more. Analysis also reveals that the population with ADL problems on the basis of the list question and those who are hampered (general question) differ considerably although their numbers are close (13.9 % vs 15.2%).

Table 1. Size of target groups according to different criteria (Belgium, 15-64)

<i>Ad hoc module</i>	%
At least one long-standing health problem (list of 18 problems)	23.6
At least one ADL problem (list of 10 activities)	13.9
At least one health problem and/or ADL problem	24.8
Work limitations	13.2
<i>General question on disability, health condition or disease*</i>	
<i>Severely hampered</i>	7.9
<i>Hampered to some extent</i>	7.2
Total hampered	15.2

Source : FOD Economie, Algemene Directie Statistiek - Statistics Belgium, Ad hoc module LFS 2nd quarter 2011.

As can be seen in Table 2, 13.2% of the respondents report limitations in work. The overlap with the general question about feeling hampered (yes answers on both criteria) is 11.0%; non-overlap is 6.4%. (Cohen’s kappa: 0.74⁴). It can be concluded that, although the general question and the (constructed) variable “limitations in work” do not measure exactly the same reality, the divergence is small enough to allow for the substitution of one by the other for practical reasons.

³ Original question in Dutch: “Ervaart U in uw dagelijkse bezigheden (op het werk of daarbuiten) hinder door een handicap, een langdurige aandoening of een langdurige ziekte (al dan niet werkgerelateerd)? Ja, in erge mate, Ja, in zekere mate, Neen” and in French : “Vous sentez-vous entravé(e) dans vos activités quotidiennes (au travail ou en dehors) en raison d’un handicap, d’une affection ou d’une maladie de longue durée (lié ou non au travail) ? Qui, considérablement, Oui, un peu, Non.”

⁴ Cohen’s kappa is a statistic measuring agreement between observers of the same issue, normalized / corrected for chance agreement. A Cohen’s kappa above 0.4 is considered acceptable and above 0.6 good.

Table 2. Feeling hampered and work limitations (total percentages)

		Hampered (general question)		Total
		yes	no	
Work limitations	yes	11.0	2.2	13.2
	no	4.2	82.6	86.8
Total %		15.2	84.8	100.0

Source : FOD Economie, Algemene Directie Statistiek - Statistics Belgium, Ad hoc module LFS 2nd quarter 2011.

Based on our analysis, we recommend to include a general question in every LFS questionnaire. We do not claim that the Belgian question on being hampered in daily activities is the best one imaginable. Asking people whether they are hampered in their work might be an even better proxy for limitations in work, but this cannot be tested using the 2011 database. Another option is to combine the general question with questions about limitations in work. We did this using the 2011 database to construct a new variable, Work limitations 2, identifying those hampered in daily activities who experience at least one problem in the amount or the type of work they can do or in getting to and from work. As a result the 15.2% of people feeling hampered were reduced to 11.0% feeling hampered and having at least one work limitation.

Table 3. Belgian respondents (15-64) by work limitations and work limitations 2 (total %)

		Work limitations 2		Total
		yes	no	
Work limitations	yes	11.0	2.2	13.2
	no	0.0	86.8	86.6
Total %		11.0	89.0	100.0

Source : FOD Economie, Algemene Directie Statistiek - Statistics Belgium, Ad hoc module LFS 2nd quarter 2011.

Because both variables make use of the same work limitation criteria the agreement between the measurements is very high (Cohen's kappa: 0.90). The work limitations 2 measurement is a good option because it is easy to administer. No need to go through long lists of health and ADL problems.

In their study of eleven measurements of disability, including subjective, administrative and functional ones, Molden and Tøssebro (2010) found that subjective definitions yield widely diverging disability prevalence, ranging from less than 5% to more than 30% in EU countries.⁵ Using a constructed variable such as work limitations only slightly reduces this variation, from 6.7% to 22.2% (see Table 29). However, as appears from Belgian data, within a single country even a subjective measure such as the general question remains stable and reliable over the years. Nonetheless, to measure work disability, we recommend to add some questions on specific work limitations.

⁵ Molden, T. H., J. Tøssebro (2010) Measuring disability in survey research : Comparing current measurements within one data set. *ALTER, European Journal of Disability Research* n° 4, 174-189.

Results from the 2011 LFS module for Belgium and the Regions

Characteristics of people with work limitations

In what follows, we present the results of the 2011 module with a focus on “people with work limitations”. As a reminder, this is a constructed category based on a cluster of questions from the 2011 module: the questions on health and on ADL problems and the three work-related questions: limitation in the type of work and the amount of work and in transportation from and to work. People fall in this category when they have a health problem and/or a problem in at least one ADL activity and at least one problem in their work or, when inactive, a problem to find a job. The figures in all the following tables are weighted and are therefore not as precise as they appear. Absolute numbers are rounded to the nearest thousand.

Table 4. People with work limitations in Belgium and the Regions (15-64)

	Brussels Capital	Flemish Region	Walloon Region	Belgium
%	13.5	12.6	14.4	13.2
N	97 000	509 000	313 000	919 000

Source : FOD Economie, Algemene Directie Statistiek - Statistics Belgium, Ad hoc module LFS 2nd quarter 2011.

As can be seen in Table 4, people with work limitations represent 13.2% of the Belgian population aged 15-64 (just above 900 000 persons). In Flanders, the percentage is 12.6%, in Brussels-Capital 13.5% and in the Walloon Region 14.4%. More than half (54%) are women. In Flanders 56% are women and in the Walloon Region and in Brussels-Capital 50%.

Table 5. People with or without work limitations by age and region (15-64)

Age	Brussels Capital		Flemish Region		Walloon Region		Belgium	
	<i>Experiencing work limitations</i>							
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
15-19	2.4	8.7	2.2	9.7	1.2	10.7	1.9	9.9
20-24	3.7	10.9	2.7	10.0	3.0	10.7	2.9	10.3
25-29	4.9	13.4	3.6	10.1	4.6	9.9	4.0	10.4
30-34	5.9	14.6	6.9	10.1	5.4	10.1	6.3	10.5
35-39	10.5	12.1	6.3	10.1	7.7	10.6	7.2	10.5
40-44	14.8	10.5	9.4	11.3	10.5	10.7	10.3	11.0
45-49	12.2	9.8	13.8	11.6	13.2	10.7	13.4	11.1
50-54	17.7	7.6	16.2	10.7	15.8	9.9	16.2	10.1
55-59	13.4	7.1	19.8	8.7	19.3	8.6	19.0	8.5
60-64	14.4	5.3	19.0	7.8	19.3	8.0	18.6	7.6
Total %	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total N	97000	619000	509000	3544000	313000	187000	919000	6032000

Source : FOD Economie, Algemene Directie Statistiek - Statistics Belgium, Ad hoc module LFS 2nd quarter 2011.

As appears from Table 5, the people with work limitations are much older than the rest of the population : more than half are over 50, compared to a quarter among the rest of the population and less than 5% are under 25, compared to 20%. Their age distribution is similar in Flanders and the Walloon region (mean = 40.2 vs 39.9). In Brussels-Capital the population is somewhat younger (mean = 38).

Table 6 shows that people with work limitations have a much lower level of education than the rest of the population. The largest share with a low level of education is to be found in Brussels-Capital.

Table 6. People with or without work limitations by level of education and region (15-64)

	Brussels Capital		Flemish Region		Walloon Region		Belgium	
Education level	<i>Experiencing work limitations</i>							
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Low	60.5	33.4	48.5	25.6	54.6	31.7	51.9	28.3
Medium	23.2	26.4	34.4	41.5	32.5	37.3	32.6	38.7
High	16.3	40.2	17.0	32.9	12.9	31.0	15.5	33.1
Total %	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total N	97000	619000	509000	3544000	313000	1869000	919000	6032000

Source : FOD Economie, Algemene Directie Statistiek - Statistics Belgium – A hoc module LFS 2nd quarter 2011.

As appears from Table 7, more than half of the people with work limitations have an official recognition of a disability.

Table 7. People with work limitations with an official recognition of a disability (15-64) by region

	Brussels Capital		Flemish Region		Walloon Region		Belgium	
Official recognition of a disability								
Yes	50.7		60.6		56.2		58.0	
No	49.3		39.4		43.8		42.0	
Total %	100.0		100.0		100.0		100.0	

Source : FOD Economie, Algemene Directie Statistiek - Statistics Belgium, Ad hoc Module LFS 2nd quarter 2011.

Table 8 shows that in Belgium, the Flemish Region and Brussels Capital amongst people born outside of the EU-15 or the 12 new Members States (EU27) there are more people with work limitations than amongst the people born in Belgium. However this is not the case in the Walloon region.

Table 8. People with or without work limitations (PWL) by country of birth and region (15-64)

Belgium						
Country of birth						
		Belgium	EU-15	New EU MS ⁶	Other	Total
PWL	Yes	13.0	14.3	06.0	15.5	13.2
	No	87.0	85.7	94.0	84.5	86.8
total	%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	N	5860000	374000	96000	620000	6950000
Flemish Region						
Country of birth						
		Belgium	EU-15	New EU MS	Other	Total
PWL	Yes	12.4	16.0	08.4	13.9	12.6
	No	87.6	84.0	91.6	86.1	87.4
total	%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	N	3628000	136000	44000	245000	4052000

⁶ The new Member States (MS) are: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia.

Walloon Region						
Country of birth						
		Belgium	EU15	New EU MS	Other	
PWL	Yes	14.5	15.0	05.2	12.9	14.4
	No	85.5	85.0	94.8	87.1	85.6
total	%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	N	1868000	144000	12000	159000	2182000
Brussels-Capital						
Country of birth						
		Belgium	EU15	New EU MS	Other	
PWL	Yes	12.0	10.7	03.7	19.1	13.5
	No	88.0	89.3	96.3	80.9	86.5
total	%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	N	364000	95000	40000	217000	715000

Source : FOD Economie, Algemene Directie Statistiek - Statistics Belgium, Ad hoc Module LFS 2nd quarter 2011.

It appears from table 9 that the household situation of people with work limitations is very different from that of the rest of the population: they are much more often living alone or with a partner without children, and much less often with their parents. The latter is probably related to the different age structure.

Table 9. People with or without work limitations by household situation (15-64)

Living (with)	Brussels Capital		Flemish Region		Walloon Region		Belgium	
	<i>Experiencing work limitations</i>							
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Alone	24.0	20.9	18.5	9.2	23.8	11.1	20.9	11.0
Partner no children	11.2	11.5	28.8	17.7	21.2	13.9	24.3	15.9
Partner 1 child	10.5	9.1	13.8	13.4	9.6	9.5	12.0	11.7
Partner 2 children	15.9	9.8	9.4	14.9	7.5	13.8	9.4	14.0
Partner 3 children	10.6	8.8	5.1	6.5	5.0	8.4	5.6	7.3
Head one- parent family	11.9	9.3	7.7	6.6	14.4	9.0	10.4	7.6
With parents	8.1	19.5	7.0	20.8	6.5	21.9	6.9	21.0
Other	7.8	11.1	9.8	11.0	12.0	12.4	10.3	11.5
Total %	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total N	97000	619000	509000	3544000	313000	1869000	919000	6032000

Source : FOD Economie, Algemene Directie Statistiek - Statistics Belgium, Ad hoc Module LFS 2nd quarter 2011.

Table 10 shows that most people with work limitations have at least one ADL problem. There is not much difference between the regions.

Table 10. People with work limitations according to ADL problems (15-64)

ADL-problem	Brussels Capital	Flemish Region	Walloon Region	Belgium
Yes	80.2	78.9	77.5	78.5
No	19.8	21.1	22.5	21.5
Total %	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	97000	509000	313000	919000

Source : FOD Economie, Algemene Directie Statistiek - Statistics Belgium, Ad hoc Module LFS 2nd quarter 2011.

In Tables 11 to 14 we take a closer look at the long-standing health problems of people with work-limitations. LFS respondents could name more than one problem, but the tables only show the problem they considered to be most important as far as the impact on their everyday life was concerned. As a reminder, “long-standing” means that the health condition or disease has lasted or is likely to last for at least six months. For the sake of clarity, the data for Belgium and for each region are presented in separate tables.

Table 11. Most important long-standing health problem of people with work limitations (15-64) - Belgium - 2011 *

	N	%
Problems with back or neck (which includes arthritis or rheumatism)	276000	30.0
Problems with legs or feet (which includes arthritis or rheumatism)	105000	11.4
Problems with arms or hands (which includes arthritis or rheumatism)	85000	9.3
Heart, blood pressure or circulation problems	63000	6.8
Cancer	46000	5.0
Depression	41000	4.4
Mental handicap / intellectual disability : light , moderate or severe	38000	4.1
Chest or breathing problems, including asthma and bronchitis	31000	3.4
Other mental, nervous or emotional problems	31000	3.3
Diabetes	28000	3.0
Stomach, liver, kidney or digestive problems	24000	2.6
Severe headache such as migraine	16000	1.7
Other progressive illnesses (which include multiple sclerosis, HIV, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease)	15000	1.7
Chronic anxiety	10000	1.1
Epilepsy (including fits)	(9000)	(1.0)
Skin conditions, including allergic reactions and severe disfigurement	(7000)	(0.7)
Learning difficulties (reading, spelling or math disability)	(5000)	(0.6)
Other long-standing health problems	90000	9.8
Total	919 000	100.0

* Figures below 10 000 are bracketed because they are too small to be statistically reliable.

Source : FOD Economie, Algemene Directie Statistiek - Statistics Belgium, Ad hoc Module LFS 2nd quarter 2011.

**Table 12. Most important long-standing health problems of people with work limitations (15-64)
- Brussels Capital 2011 ***

	N	%
Problems with back or neck (which includes arthritis or rheumatism)	17000	17.9
Problems with legs or feet (which includes arthritis or rheumatism)	11000	11.8
Problems with arms or hands (which includes arthritis or rheumatism)	(9000)	(9.7)
Diabetes	(9000)	(9.2)
Heart, blood pressure or circulation problems	(8000)	(8.3)
Depression	(7000)	(7.6)
Mental handicap / intellectual disability : light , moderate or severe	(5000)	(5.0)
Cancer	(5000)	(4.7)
Stomach, liver, kidney or digestive problems	(4000)	(4.5)
Other mental, nervous or emotional problems	(3000)	(2.8)
Severe headache such as migraine	(3000)	(2.6)
Chest or breathing problems, including asthma and bronchitis	(2000)	(2.3)
Other progressive illnesses (which include multiple sclerosis, HIV, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease)	(2000)	(1.9)
Chronic anxiety	(2000)	(1.6)
Skin conditions, including allergic reactions and severe disfigurement	(1000)	(1.4)
Epilepsy (including fits)	(1000)	(1.0)
Learning difficulties (reading, spelling or math disability)	0	0
Other long-standing health problems	(7000)	(7.6)
Total	97 000	100.0

* Figures below 10 000 are bracketed because they are too small to be statistically reliable.

Source : FOD Economie, Algemene Directie Statistiek - Statistics Belgium, Ad hoc Module LFS 2nd quarter 2011.

**Table 13. Most important long-standing health problem of people with work limitations (15-64)
- Flemish Region – 2011 ***

	N	%
Problems with back or neck (which includes arthritis or rheumatism)	173000	34.0
Problems with legs or feet (which includes arthritis or rheumatism)	54000	10.6
Problems with arms or hands (which includes arthritis or rheumatism)	47000	9.3
Heart, blood pressure or circulation problems	28000	5.6
Other mental, nervous or emotional problems	23000	4.5
Cancer	23000	4.5
Mental handicap / intellectual disability : light , moderate or severe	21000	4.1
Depression	20000	4.0
Chest or breathing problems, including asthma and bronchitis	20000	3.8
Other progressive illnesses (which include multiple sclerosis, HIV, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease)	10000	(1.9)
Stomach, liver, kidney or digestive problems	(9000)	(1.8)
Diabetes	(9000)	(1.8)
Severe headache such as migraine	(9000)	(1.7)
Epilepsy (including fits)	(6000)	(1.1)
Learning difficulties (reading, spelling or math disability)	(4000)	(0.8)
Chronic anxiety	(3000)	(0.6)
Skin conditions, including allergic reactions and severe disfigurement	(3000)	(0.5)
Other long-standing health problems	48000	9.5
Total	509 000	100.0

* Figures below 10 000 are bracketed because they are too small to be statistically reliable.

Source : FOD Economie, Algemene Directie Statistiek - Statistics Belgium, Ad hoc Module LFS 2nd quarter 2011.

**Table 14. Most important long-standing health problem of people with work limitations (15-64)
- Walloon Region -2011 ***

	N	%
Problems with back or neck (which includes arthritis or rheumatism)	86000	27.4
Problems with legs or feet (which includes arthritis or rheumatism)	40000	12.6
Problems with arms or hands (which includes arthritis or rheumatism)	29000	9.1
Heart, blood pressure or circulation problems	26000	8.4
Cancer	18000	5.9
Depression	13000	4.2
Mental handicap / intellectual disability : light , moderate or severe	12000	3.8
Stomach, liver, kidney or digestive problems	10000	3.2
Diabetes	10000	(3.1)
Chest or breathing problems, including asthma and bronchitis	(9000)	(3.0)
Chronic anxiety	(6000)	(1.9)
Other mental, nervous or emotional problems	(5000)	(1.6)
Severe headache such as migraine	(5000)	(1.5)
Other progressive illnesses (which include multiple sclerosis, HIV, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease)	(4000)	(1.2)
Epilepsy (including fits)	(3000)	(0.8)
Skin conditions, including allergic reactions and severe disfigurement	(2000)	(0.8)
Learning difficulties (reading, spelling or math disability)	(1000)	(0.4)
Other long-standing health problems	34000	11.0
Total	313 000	100.0

* Figures below 10 000 are bracketed because they are too small to be statistically reliable.

Source : FOD Economie, Algemene Directie Statistiek - Statistics Belgium, Ad hoc Module LFS 2nd quarter 2011.

Tables 11 to 14 show that half of the problems mentioned are problems with back, neck, legs, feet, arms or hands (50.7% in Belgium and, in descending order, 53.9% in the Flemish Region, 49.2% in the Walloon Region and 39.5% in Brussels). Taken together, diseases such as *cancer, heart blood pressure or circulation problems, chest or breathing problems, including asthma and bronchitis, stomach, liver, kidney or digestive problems, diabetes* come in second place (Belgium 20.8%, Brussels 29%, Walloon Region 23.6%, Flemish Region 17.4%). Psychological and psychiatric problems, such as *chronic anxiety, depression and other mental, nervous or emotional problems* taken together come in third place (Belgium 8.9%, Brussels 12.0%, Flemish Region 9.0% and Walloon Region 7.7%). Mental handicap (*mental retardation or intellectual disability*) accounts for 4.1% in Belgium and about the same percentage in all the regions.

Labour Market participation of People with a Limitation in Work

As appears from Table 15, the employment rate of people with work limitations is only half the rate of people with no such limitations. They are more often unemployed and especially more often inactive. There are considerable differences between the regions.

Table 15. People with or without work limitation by labour market situation and region (15-64)

	Brussels Capital		Flemish Region		Walloon Region		Total	
LM situation	<i>Experiencing work limitations</i>							
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Employed	27.5	60.4	38.6	70.9	26.9	62.7	33.4	67.3
Unemployed	10.0	9.3	3.5	2.6	6.9	5.5	5.3	4.2
Inactive	62.5	30.3	57.9	26.5	66.2	31.8	61.2	28.5
Total %	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total N	97000	619000	509000	3544000	313000	1869000	919000	6032000

Source : FOD Economie, Algemene Directie Statistiek - Statistics Belgium, Ad hoc Module LFS 2nd quarter 2011.

Tables 16 to 18 show that the employment rate of people with work limitations in Belgium and in the Flemish and the Walloon Region varies according to health problem. The number of cases for Brussels is too low to examine the distribution. For Belgium, the gap between the highest and the lowest employment rate ranges from nearly 50% (for severe headache such as migraine) to barely 6% (mental handicap). The gap between these health categories is 58% - 8% for the Flemish Region and 54% - 5% for the Walloon Region. People with psychological or psychiatric problems also have very low employment rates.

Table 16. PWL : Employment rate according to health problem (15-64) - Belgium -2011 *

	%
Severe headache such as migraine	49.7
Problems with back or neck (which includes arthritis or rheumatism)	45.6
Problems with arms or hands (which includes arthritis or rheumatism)	32.9
Other long-standing health problems	33.8
Stomach, liver, kidney or digestive problems	31.8
Cancer	28.7
Heart, blood pressure or circulation problems	26.8
Skin conditions, including allergic reactions and severe disfigurement	(33.0)
Problems with legs or feet (which includes arthritis or rheumatism)	32.0
Chronic anxiety	26.6
Chest or breathing problems, including asthma and bronchitis	23.7
Other progressive illnesses (includes multiple sclerosis, HIV, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's)	22.8
Diabetes	27.2
Other mental, nervous or emotional problems	23.6
Learning difficulties (reading, spelling or math disability)	(12.8)
Depression	14.3
Mental handicap / intellectual disability : light , moderate or severe	5.9
Epilepsy (including fits)	(0.0)
Total	33.4

* Percentage bracketed when the number of cases is too low.

Source : FOD Economie, Algemene Directie Statistiek - Statistics Belgium, Ad hoc Module LFS 2nd quarter 2011.

Table 17. PWL : Employment rate according to health problem (15-64)* - Flemish Region -2011

	%
Severe headache such as migraine	(57.8)
Problems with back or neck (which includes arthritis or rheumatism)	50.2
Diabetes	(40.6)
Heart, blood pressure or circulation problems	37.5
Problems with legs or feet (which includes arthritis or rheumatism)	37.4
Other long-standing health problems	39.0
Problems with arms or hands (which includes arthritis or rheumatism)	37.1
Stomach, liver, kidney or digestive problems	(32.6)
Chronic anxiety	(29.9)
Cancer	34.2
Other progressive illnesses (includes multiple sclerosis, HIV, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's)	(23.9)
Skin conditions, including allergic reactions and severe disfigurement	(25.6)
Other mental, nervous or emotional problems	21.7
Chest or breathing problems, including asthma and bronchitis	22.2
Depression	16.6
Learning difficulties (reading, spelling or math disability)	(17.3)
Mental handicap / intellectual disability : light , moderate or severe	7.9
Epilepsy (including fits)	(0.0)
Total	38.6

* Percentage bracketed when the number of cases is too low.

Source : FOD Economie, Algemene Directie Statistiek - Statistics Belgium, Ad hoc Module LFS 2nd quarter 2011.

Table 18. PWL : Employment rate according to health problem (15-64) - Walloon Region 2011

	%
Severe headache such as migraine	(54.1)
Skin conditions, including allergic reactions and severe disfigurement	(39.5)
Problems with back or neck (which includes arthritis or rheumatism)	35.6
Problems with legs or feet (which includes arthritis or rheumatism)	28.9
Other progressive illnesses (includes multiple sclerosis, HIV, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's)	(31.6)
Stomach, liver, kidney or digestive problems	27.8
Problems with arms or hands (which includes arthritis or rheumatism)	27.7
Other long-standing health problems	27.4
Diabetes	(23.7)
Chronic anxiety	(22.6)
Heart, blood pressure or circulation problems	17.8
Chest or breathing problems, including asthma and bronchitis	(25.0)
Depression	16.6
Other mental, nervous or emotional problems	(20.1)
Cancer	16.3
Mental handicap /intellectual disability : light , moderate or severe	4.9
Learning difficulties (reading, spelling or math disability)	(0.0)
Epilepsy (including fits)	(0.0)
Total	26.9

* Percentage bracketed when the number of cases is too low.

Source : FOD Economie, Algemene Directie Statistiek - Statistics Belgium, Ad hoc Module LFS 2nd quarter 2011.

In Table 19 the most important health problems named by people with work limitations have been regrouped into four categories to allow for comparison of employment rates between regions.

Table 19. Employment rate (%) of people with work limitations by most important health problem and region

	Belgium	Flemish Region	Walloon Region	Brussels Region
Problems with back, neck, legs, feet, arms or hands	40.2	45.4	32.4	34.4
Cancer, Heart blood pressure or circulation problems, Chest or breathing problems, including asthma and bronchitis, Stomach, liver, kidney or digestive problems, Diabetes	27.4	33.1	20.5	27.5
Psychological and Psychiatric problems, such as Chronic anxiety, Depression, Other mental, nervous or emotional problems	19.4	19.9	18.9	18.3

Source : FOD Economie, Algemene Directie Statistiek - Statistics Belgium, Ad hoc Module LFS 2nd quarter 2011.

The aim of Tables 20 to 23 is to examine how people's long-standing health conditions or diseases or ADL problems interfere with the work they can do. The LFS questionnaire contains questions concerning:

- the amount of work (number of hours that someone can work in a week);
- the type of work (for instance, having problems in carrying heavy loads, working outdoors, sitting for a long time) that he/she can do;
- the ability to get to and from work.

For those in employment, the questions refer to their current situation, for those who are not employed (unemployed or inactive) they refer to a possible job.

In Belgium and in the three regions, all people with work limitations have a problem with at least one of the above aspects.

Table 20. People with work limitations by limitation and LM situation (15-64) Belgium

<i>Are you limited in the number of hours you could work or can work ?</i>						
	Not Employed		Employed		Total	
<i>Limitation</i>	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	529000	86.5	136000	55.6	665000	72.4
No	83000	13.5	171000	44.4	253000	27.6
Total	611000	100.0	307000	100.0	919000	100.0
<i>Are you limited in the type of work you could perform or perform ?</i>						
Yes	557000	91.1	254000	82.8	812000	88.3
No	54000	8.9	53000	17.2	107000	11.7
Total	611000	100.0	307000	100.0	919000	100.0
<i>Are you limited in getting to and from work ?</i>						
Yes	299000	48.8	52000	16.8	350000	38.1
No	312000	51.2	255000	83.2	568000	61.9
Total	611000	100.0	307000	100.0	918000	100.0

Source : FOD Economie, Algemene Directie Statistiek - Statistics Belgium, Ad hoc Module LFS 2nd quarter 2011.

Table 21. People with work limitations by limitation and LM situation (15-64) Brussels

<i>Are you limited in the number of hours you could work or can work ?</i>						
	Not Employed		Employed		Total	
<i>Limitation</i>	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	56000	80.7	15000	57.7	72000	74.4
No	13000	19.3	11000	42.3	25000	25.6
Total	69000	100.0	26000	100.0	97000	100.0
<i>Are you limited in the type of work you could perform or perform ?</i>						
Yes	62000	89.3	22000	84.6	85000	87.9
No	7000	10.7	4000	15.4	12000	12.1
Total	69000	100.0	26000	100.0	97000	100.0
<i>Are you limited in getting to and from work ?</i>						
Yes	35000	50.1	7000	26.9	42000	43.4
No	34000	49.9	19000	73.1	55000	56.6
Total	69000	100.0	26000	100.0	97000	100.0

Source : FOD Economie, Algemene Directie Statistiek - Statistics Belgium, Ad hoc Module LFS 2nd quarter 2011.

Table 22. People with work limitations by limitation and LM situation (15-64) Flemish Region

<i>Are you limited in the number of hours you could work or can work ?</i>						
	Not Employed		Employed		Total	
<i>Limitation</i>	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	272000	86.9	108000	55.2	380000	74.7
No	41000	13.1	88000	44.8	129000	25.3
Total	313000	100.0	196000	100.0	509000	100.0
<i>Are you limited in the type of work you could perform or perform ?</i>						
Yes	280000	89.7	163000	82.9	443000	87.1
No	33000	10.3	33000	17.1	66000	12.9
Total	313000	100.0	196000	100.0	509000	100.0
<i>Are you limited in getting to and from work ?</i>						
Yes	136000	43.7	26000	13.2	162000	31.9
No	176000	56.3	170000	86.8	347000	68.1
Total	313000	100.0	196000	100.0	509000	100.0

Source : FOD Economie, Algemene Directie Statistiek - Statistics Belgium, Ad hoc Module LFS 2nd quarter 2011.

Table 23. People with work limitations by limitation and LM situation (15-64) Walloon Region

<i>Are you limited in the number of hours you could work or can work ?</i>						
	Not Employed		Employed		Total	
<i>Limitation</i>	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	201000	87.6	47000	55.8	248000	79.1
No	28000	12.4	37000	44.2	65000	20.9
Total	229000	100.0	84000	100.0	313000	100.0
<i>Are you limited in the type of work you could perform or perform ?</i>						
Yes	214000	93.6	69000	82.2	284000	90.6
No	15000	6.4	15000	17.8	29000	9.4
Total	229000	100.0	84000	100.0	313000	100.0

<i>Are you limited in getting to and from work ?</i>						
Yes	127000	55.5	19000	22.5	146000	46.7
No	102000	44.5	65000	77.5	167000	53.3
Total	229000	100.0	84000	100.0	313000	100.0

Source : FOD Economie, Algemene Directie Statistiek - Statistics Belgium, Ad hoc Module LFS 2nd quarter 2011.

Nearly nine out of ten people with work limitations (Belgium, 88.3%) are limited in the type of work and nearly three out of four (72.4%) are limited in the number of hours they can or could perform. Much less people are limited in getting to and from work (38.1%). Amongst those not employed there is a larger group reporting such limitations than amongst the employed. The figures for the regions are similar to those for the whole of Belgium except for limitations in getting to and from work, where there are substantial differences between the regions.

The purpose of Tables 24 to 27 is to identify the people with work limitations who, because of a health or ADL problem, need personal assistance, special equipment or workplace adaptations, and working arrangements to find employment, and those in employment who use these provisions. In Belgium, 3.6% of employed people with work limitations use personal assistance, but a much higher share of those not in employment (29.2%) report they would need it to be able to work. Special equipment or workplace adaptations are needed by 27.8%, whereas only 10.8% of the employed use these provisions. Special working arrangements are a necessity for 52.0% and are used by 18.9%. The differences between the Regions are rather small.

Table 24. People with work limitations using or needing personal assistance, special equipment or workplace adaptations, and working arrangements (15-64) Belgium

<i>Because of the health problem or difficulty the person needs (not employed persons)/uses (employed persons) personal assistance to enable him/her to work.</i>						
	Not Employed		Employed		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	178000	29.2	11000	3.6	190000	20.7
No	433000	70.8	296000	96.4	728000	79.3
Total	611000	100.0	307000	100.0	918000	100.0
<i>Because of the health problem or difficulty the person needs (not employed persons)/uses (employed persons) special equipment or needs (not employed persons)/has (employed persons) workplace adaptations to enable him/her to work</i>						
Yes	170000	27.8	33000	10.8	203000	22.1
No	441000	72.2	274000	89.2	715	77.9
Total	611000	100.0	307000	100.0	918000	100.0
<i>Because of the health problem or difficulty the person needs (not employed persons)/has (employed persons) special working arrangements to enable him/her to work (such as, sedentary jobs, teleworking, flexible hours or less strenuous work)</i>						
Yes	318000	52.0	58000	18.9	376000	40.9
No	293000	48.0	249000	81.1	542000	59.1
Total	611000	100.0	307000	100.0	918000	100.0

Source : FOD Economie, Algemene Directie Statistiek - Statistics Belgium, Ad hoc Module LFS 2nd quarter 2011.

Table 25. People with work limitations using or needing personal assistance, special equipment or workplace adaptations, and working arrangements (15-64) Brussels

<i>Because of the health problem or difficulty the person needs (not employed persons)/uses (employed persons) personal assistance to enable him/her to work.</i>						
	Not Employed		Employed		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	19454	27.8	709	2.7	20163	20.9
No	50505	72.2	25858	97.3	76363	79.1
Total	70000	100.0	26000	100.0	96000	100.0
<i>Because of the health problem or difficulty the person needs (not employed persons)/uses (employed persons) special equipment or needs (not employed persons)/has (employed persons) workplace adaptations to enable him/her to work</i>						
Yes	20000	28.5	3000	11.7	23000	23.9
No	50000	71.5	23000	88.3	73000	76.1
Total	70000	100.0	26000	100.0	96000	100.0
<i>Because of the health problem or difficulty the person needs (not employed persons)/has (employed persons) special working arrangements to enable him/her to work (such as, sedentary jobs, teleworking, flexible hours or less strenuous work)</i>						
Yes	33000	47.1	5000	18.4	38000	39.2
No	37000	52.9	21000	81.6	58000	60.8
Total	70000	100.0	26000	100.0	96000	100.0

Source : FOD Economie, Algemene Directie Statistiek - Statistics Belgium, Ad hoc Module LFS 2nd quarter 2011.

Table 26. People with work limitations using or needing personal assistance, special equipment or workplace adaptations, and working arrangements (15-64) Flemish Region

<i>Because of the health problem or difficulty the person needs (not employed persons)/uses (employed persons) personal assistance to enable him/her to work.</i>						
	Not Employed		Employed		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	96000	30.7	7000	3.6	103000	20.2
No	216000	69.3	189000	96.4	406000	79.8
Total	313000	100.0	196000	100.0	509000	100.0
<i>Because of the health problem or difficulty the person needs (not employed persons)/uses (employed persons) special equipment or needs (not employed persons)/has (employed persons) workplace adaptations to enable him/her to work</i>						
Yes	91000	29.2	21000	10.9	113000	22.1
No	222000	70.8	175000	89.1	396000	77.9
Total	313000	100.0	196000	100.0	509000	100.0
<i>Because of the health problem or difficulty the person needs (not employed persons)/has (employed persons) special working arrangements to enable him/her to work (such as, sedentary jobs, teleworking, flexible hours or less strenuous work)</i>						
Yes	185000	59.0	41000	20.8	225000	44.3
No	128000	41.0	155000	79.2	283000	55.7
Total	313000	100.0	196000	100.0	509000	100.0

Source : FOD Economie, Algemene Directie Statistiek - Statistics Belgium, Ad hoc Module LFS 2nd quarter 2011.

Table 27. People with work limitations using or needing personal assistance, special equipment or workplace adaptations, and working arrangements (15-64) Walloon Region

<i>Because of the health problem or difficulty the person needs (not employed persons)/uses (employed persons) personal assistance to enable him/her to work.</i>						
	Not Employed		Employed		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	63000	27.7	3000	4.1	67000	21.3
No	166000	72.3	81000	95.9	246000	78.7
Total	229000	100.0	84000	100.0	313000	100.0
<i>Because of the health problem or difficulty the person needs (not employed persons)/uses (employed persons) special equipment or needs (not employed persons)/has (employed persons) workplace adaptations to enable him/her to work</i>						
Yes	59000	25.6	8000	10.2	67000	21.5
No	170000	74.4	76000	89.8	246000	78.5
Total	229000	100.0	84000	100.0	313000	100.0
<i>Because of the health problem or difficulty the person needs (not employed persons)/has (employed persons) special working arrangements to enable him/her to work (such as, sedentary jobs, teleworking, flexible hours or less strenuous work)</i>						
Yes	101000	44.0	12000	14.4	113000	36.0
No	128000	56.0	72000	85.6	200000	64.0
Total	229000	100.0	84000	100.0	313000	100.0

Source : FOD Economie, Algemene Directie Statistiek - Statistics Belgium, Ad hoc Module LFS 2nd quarter 2011.

Apart from health issues, the LFS explored other reasons restricting people with work limitations in the work they do or could do. Table 28 shows which reasons were chosen as most important out of a list of possible reasons. Lack of qualifications or experience, personal reasons and lack of appropriate job opportunities were named most often.

Table 28. Most important reason, besides health condition/disease or ADL problem restricting the work people with work limitations can or could do (employed or not, 15-64)

	Brussels		Flemish Region		Walloon Region		Belgium	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Lack of qualifications or experience	13000	13.0	32000	6.2	27000	8.7	71000	7.8
Lack of appropriate job opportunities	4000	4.3	31000	6.2	18000	5.6	53000	5.8
Lack or poor transportation to and from workplace	1000	0.8	5000	1.1	6000	2.1	13000	1.4
Employers' lack of flexibility	2000	2.5	11000	2.1	9000	3.0	23000	2.5
Affects receipt of benefits	2000	2.4	12000	2.3	4000	1.3	18000	2.0
Family and caring responsibilities	4000	4.1	21000	4.1	8000	2.5	33000	3.6
Personal reasons	5000	5.0	33000	6.4	28000	9.0	66000	7.2
Other reason	11000	11.6	25000	4.9	31000	9.7	66000	7.2
No "other" restricting reason	54000	56.3	339000	66.7	182000	58.0	575000	62.6
Total	96000	100	509000	100.0	313000	100.0	918000	100.0

Source : FOD Economie, Algemene Directie Statistiek - Statistics Belgium, Ad hoc Module LFS 2nd quarter 2011.

Table 29. Prevalence and employment rate of people with work limitations (Europe)

	Prevalence (15-64)	Employment rate (15-64)		Employment rate gap (ppt) (2) – (1)
		Work limitations		
		Yes* (1)	No (2)	
Bulgaria	8.0	17.7	62.1	44.4
Hungary	11.4	18.1	61.0	42.9
Ireland	7.1	21.7	62.1	40.4
Romania	11.6	23.9	64.8	40.9
Poland	11.4	26.2	63.9	37.7
Slovakia	11.6	29.2	70.3	41.1
Greece	6.7	29.8	58.8	29
Malta	10.4	30.0	60.6	30.6
Croatia	11.4	31.6	55.0	23.4
<i>Lithuania</i>	11.9	32.5	63.9	31.4
Estonia	14.3	33.3	70.4	37.1
Belgium	13.2	33.4	67.3	33.9
Spain	9.4	33.8	61.8	28
Czech Republic	9.7	34.5	69.3	34.8
Germany	11.0	35.4	72.6	37.2
United Kingdom	12.8	36.0	75.6	39.6
Italy	7.0	37.0	59.3	22.3
<i>European Union (28)</i>	<i>11.1</i>	<i>38.1</i>	<i>67.3</i>	<i>29.2</i>
Netherlands	13.2	39.4	80.3	40.9
Latvia	11.6	40.6	63.1	22.5
Denmark	16.9	41.5	80.0	38.5
Cyprus	10.4	41.7	70.5	28.8
Slovenia	22.2	44.0	70.3	26.3
Portugal	18.5	44.0	69.6	25.6
Luxemburg	14.0	47.9	66.9	19
Austria	15.5	48.2	76.1	27.9
Finland	18.2	50.6	74.7	24.1
France	10.6	59.6	64.5	4.9
Sweden	14.2	61.5	76.4	14.9

Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey 2011, Ad Hoc Module on Disability.

*Countries ranked according to ascending employment rates of persons with work limitations

The prevalence of people with work limitations (15-64) varies between 6.7% (Greece) and 22.2% (Slovenia). Comparisons of the employment rate only make sense between countries with prevalence rates that are not too wide apart. Therefore Belgium (with a prevalence rate of 13.2%) may for example be compared to the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Sweden (resp. 13.2%, 12.8% and 14.2%). It appears that, compared to Belgium, the employment rate of people with work limitations is higher in the UK and in the Netherlands and much higher in Sweden. However, when we look at the difference in employment rate between the people with work limitations and the others, the gap in Belgium (33.9 ppt) is smaller than in the UK (39.6 ppt) and the Netherlands (40.9 ppt), but much larger than in Sweden (14.9 ppt).