

Belgium

Ethnicity in Belgium

Group selection

As Belgium is divided along linguistic fault-lines and the workings of public policy reflects the divisions (²⁹⁵, 33). This coding differentiates between three distinct groups that are defined on linguistic lines: the Dutch-speakers (60 percent, ²⁹⁶), mostly Flemish and concentrated in the northern half of the country (**Flemings**), the French-speakers (40 percent, ²⁹⁷), dominantly Walloon and located in the southern half of Belgium (**Walloons**), and a small group of German speakers (1 percent, ²⁹⁸, **Germans**) in the eastern cantons of Wallonia. This linguistic diversity is accommodated in a complex political system.

²⁹⁵ [Erk, 2008]

²⁹⁶ [Central Intelligence Agency, 2014]

²⁹⁷ [Central Intelligence Agency, 2014]

²⁹⁸ [Central Intelligence Agency, 2014]

Power relations

1946-1969

The Belgian state was formed in 1830 by a Francophone elite. “The expectation at the time was that Belgium would gradually become a French-speaking state” (²⁹⁹, 32). However, due to the persistence of various Flemish dialects in the northern half of the country, tensions began to emerge to the point where the growing Flemish movement started to demand the recognition of the cultural distinctiveness of Flanders. This “Flemish nationalism continued to gain strength during the interwar period and managed to win certain concessions from the Belgian state” (ibid). During the 1950s, the situation deteriorated and brought the Belgian state to a standstill. Only a complete reform of the political system appeared to be a way “out from the impasse” (ibid). Until these reforms, the French-speakers are coded as “senior partner” and the Dutch-speakers as “junior partner”. The German speakers are “politically irrelevant”.

²⁹⁹ [Erk, 2008]

1970-1972

In 1970, the Belgian unitary state came to an end, after reforms that recognized the cultural duality of the state. Ever since, the two major linguistic groups have equally shared the political power on the national level, and are therefore both coded as “senior partner”. The German speakers are “politically irrelevant”.

1973-1979

The German-speaking cantons in the east were granted internal rule in 1973, with their own parliament in the capital of Eupen, supervising the regional government and controlling linguistic and cultural matters. The German-speakers are therefore coded as having regional autonomy.

1980-2017

In 1980, the Flemish and Walloon Regions obtained regional autonomy with the establishment of regional executives. The process of federalization continued over the years, leading to ever more rights for the regions.

The three Communities (Flemish, French, and German) today have powers for culture, education, health policy, social welfare, etc. ⁽³⁰⁰⁾.

³⁰⁰ [Belgium, 2017]

There are pronounced tensions between the Flemish and Walloons. In 2010-2011 Belgium did not have an elected government for 589 days because the opposing Flemish and Walloons were unable to agree on policy issues and form a governing coalition following national elections ⁽³⁰¹⁾.

³⁰¹ [The Washington Post, 2013]

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Political status of ethnic groups in Belgium

From 1946 until 1969

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Flemings	0.59	JUNIOR PARTNER
Walloon	0.4	SENIOR PARTNER
Germans	0.01	IRRELEVANT

From 1970 until 1972

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Flemings	0.59	SENIOR PARTNER
Walloon	0.4	SENIOR PARTNER
Germans	0.01	IRRELEVANT

From 1973 until 1980

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Flemings	0.59	SENIOR PARTNER
Walloon	0.4	SENIOR PARTNER
Germans	0.01	POWERLESS

From 1981 until 2017

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Flemings	0.59	SENIOR PARTNER
Walloon	0.4	SENIOR PARTNER
Germans	0.01	POWERLESS



Figure 47: Political status of ethnic groups in Belgium during 1946-1969.

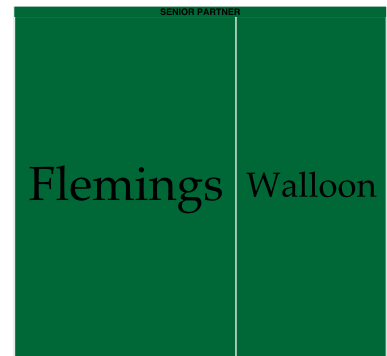


Figure 48: Political status of ethnic groups in Belgium during 1970-1972.

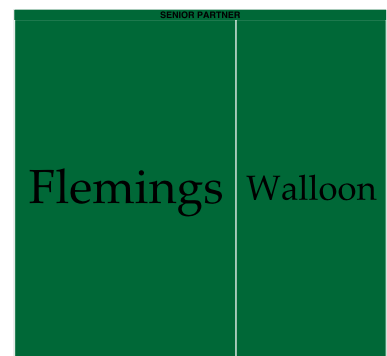
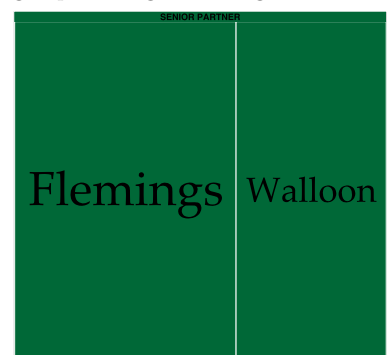


Figure 49: Political status of ethnic groups in Belgium during 1973-1980.



Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Belgium

From 1946 until 1972

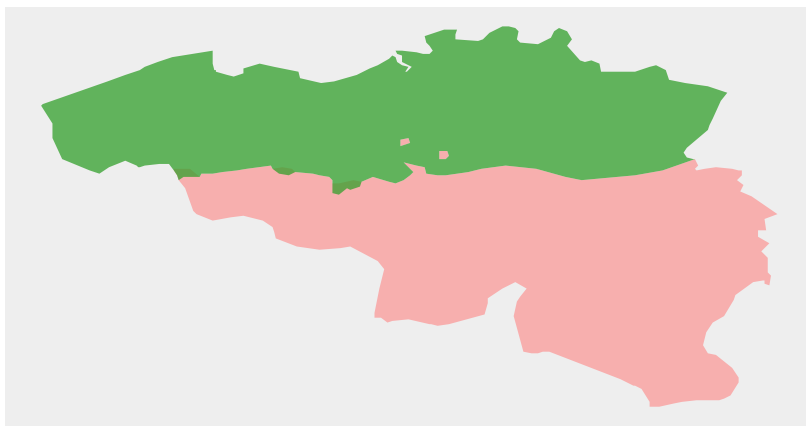


Figure 51: Map of ethnic groups in Belgium during 1946-1972.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
Walloon	15 669	Regional & urban
Flemings	13 752	Regional & urban

Table 20: List of ethnic groups in Belgium during 1946-1972.

From 1973 until 2017

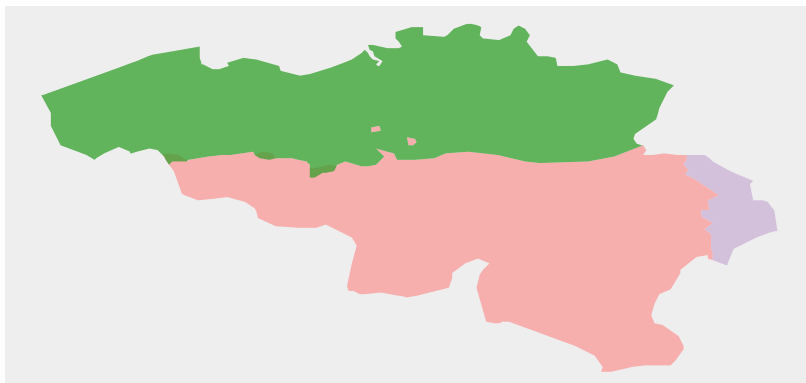


Figure 52: Map of ethnic groups in Belgium during 1973-2017.

	Group name	Area in km ²	Type
■	Walloon	15 669	Regional & urban
■	Flemings	13 752	Regional & urban
■	Germans	1149	Regional & urban

Table 21: List of ethnic groups in Belgium during 1973-2017.