

# Euthanasia for neuropsychiatric conditions in Belgium

Kenneth Chambaere



# Conflicts of interest

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- Nothing to disclose

# Belgian convicted killer with 'incurable' psychiatric condition granted right to die

Justice minister approves Frank van den Bleeken's request after doctors agree his psychological condition is incurable



📷 Frank Van Den Bleeken during the trial to determine his right to die at the Court of Brussels. Photograph: Virginie Lefour/PA

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## Right to die: Belgian doctors rule depressed 24-year-old woman has right to end her life

'Laura' entered a psychiatric facility when she was 21

Rose Troup Buchanan | Friday 3 July 2015 | [99](#) comments



# Belgian euthanasia legislation

## Substantive criteria

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### The **patient**

- legally competent and conscious
- medically futile condition
- unbearable physical or mental suffering
- serious and incurable disorder

### The **request**

- voluntary
- well-considered
- repeated
- not the result of any external pressure

# Medical & ethical issues

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Patient's competence?

Well-considered request?

Unbearable suffering?

Incurable condition?

No prospects for improvement?

Suicide prevention in psychiatric care

# Belgian euthanasia legislation – **Procedural criteria**

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Consultation of a second physician

In case of non-terminally-ill patients

- Consultation of a third physician
- 1 month between request and act of euthanasia

Notification to Federal Control and  
Evaluation Committee

# Data

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Federal Control and Evaluation Committee  
Euthanasia

Euthanasia registration form

Part of mandatory notification procedure

# Inclusion criteria

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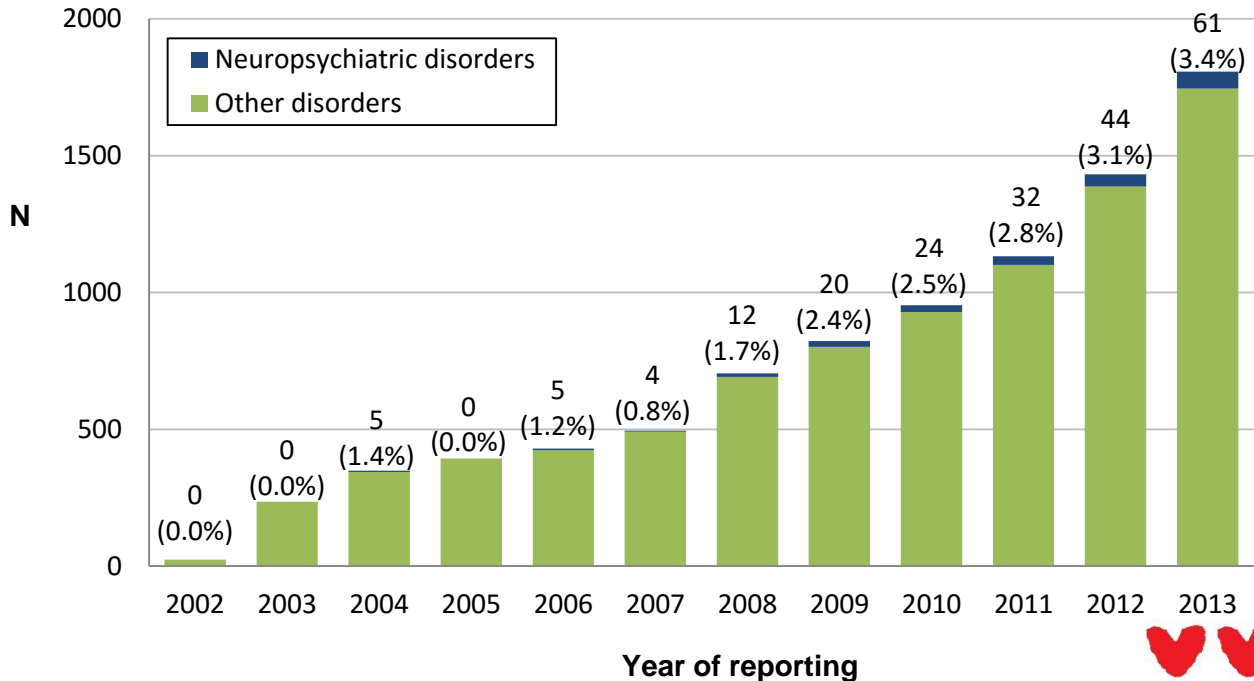
neuropsychiatric disorders

N=207 → 5 categories:

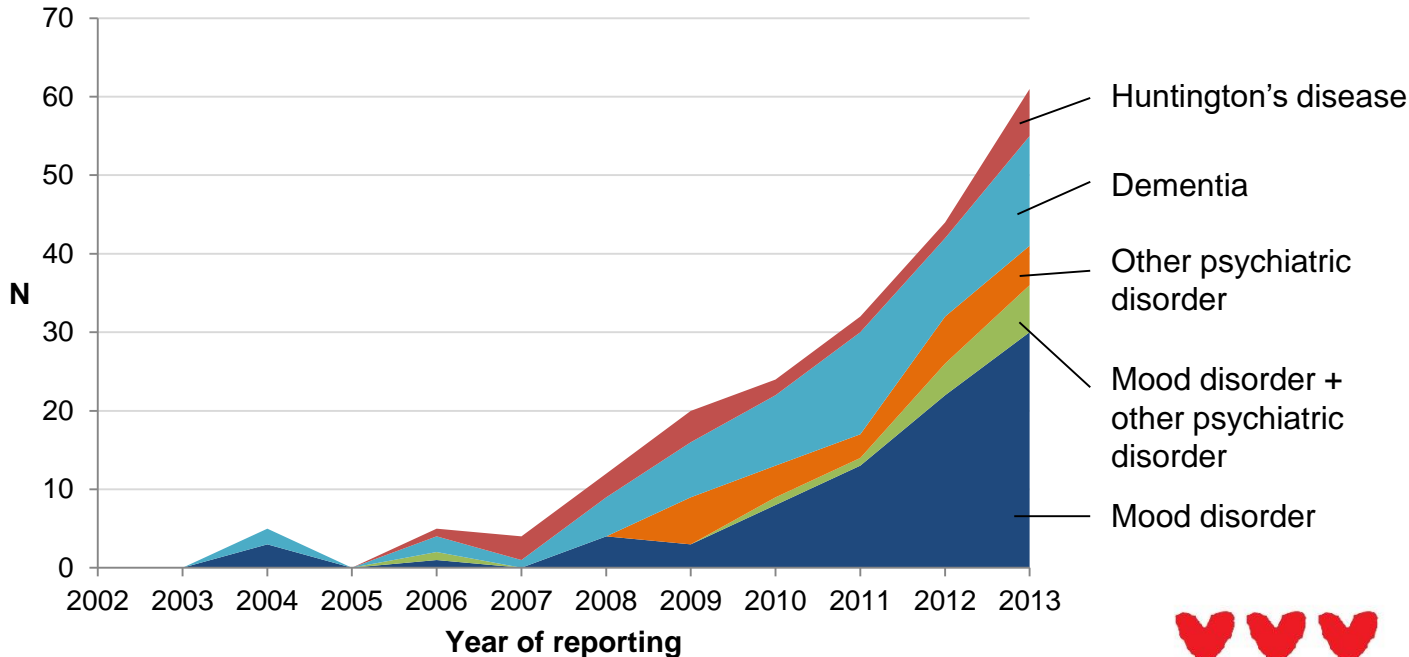
1. Mood disorder (n=84)
2. Mood disorder + other psychiatric disorder (n=13)
3. Other psychiatric disorder (n=24)
4. Dementia (n=63)
5. Huntington's disease (n=23)



# Increase in the number of cases reported to the Commission

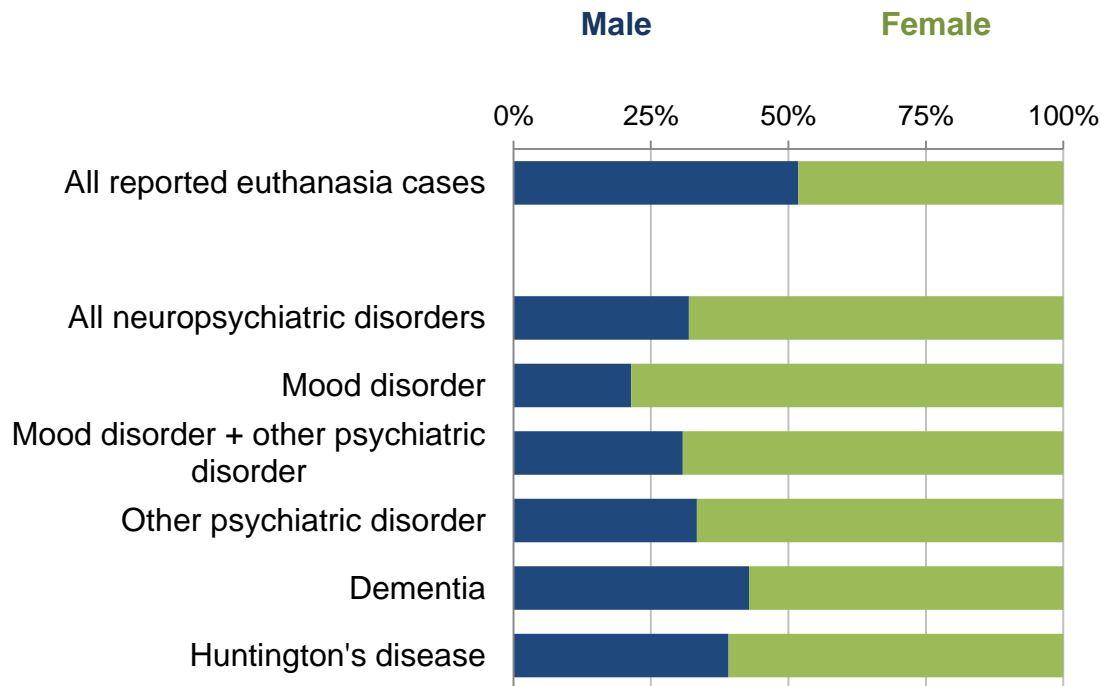


# Increase in the number of reported cases for neuropsychiatric conditions



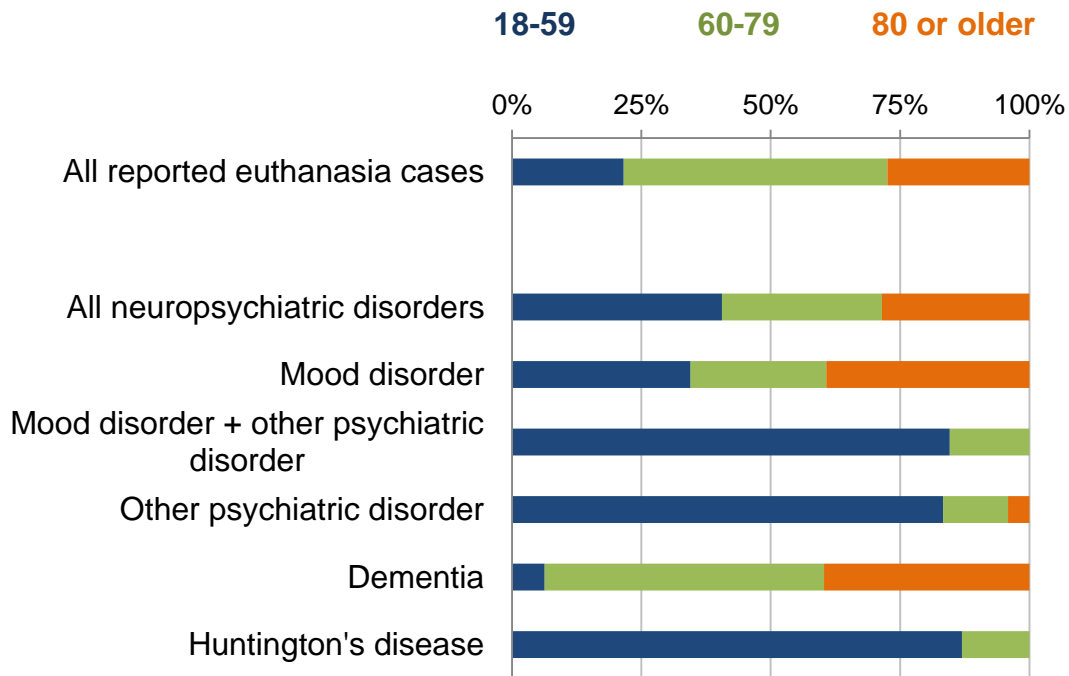
# Women are overrepresented in euthanasia cases with a neuropsychiatric disorder diagnosis

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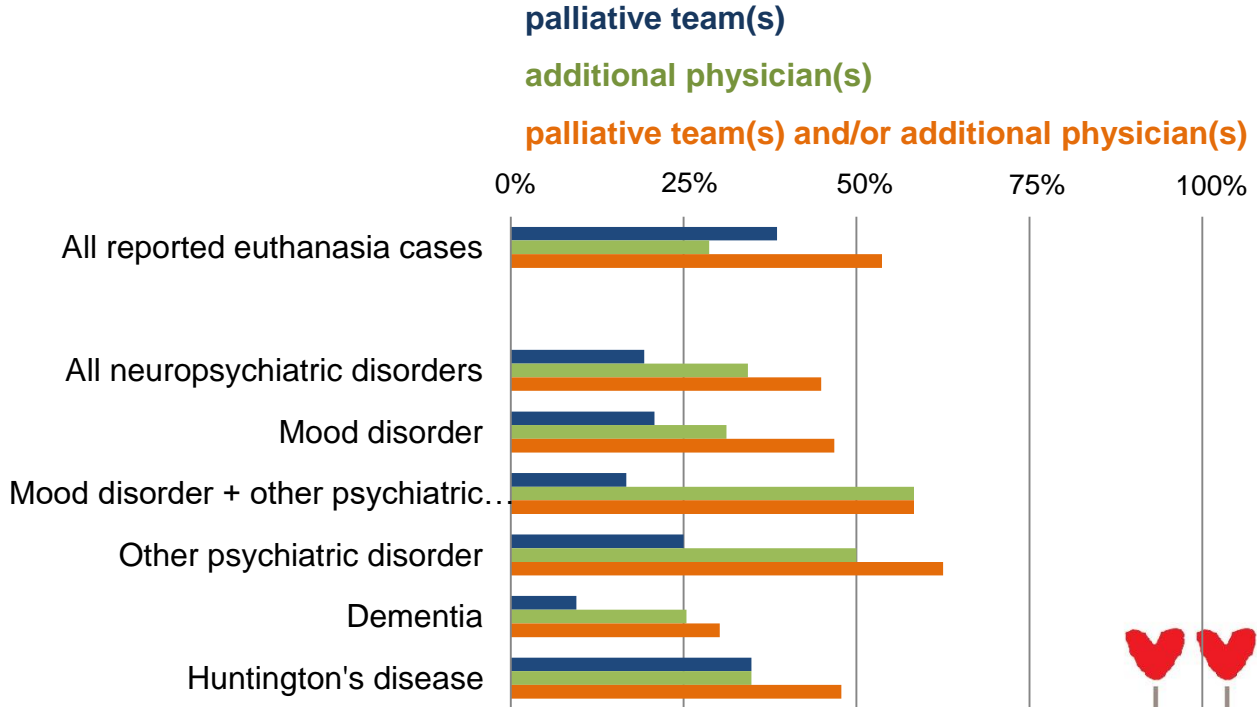


# Psychiatric disorders and Huntington's disease: mainly younger patients

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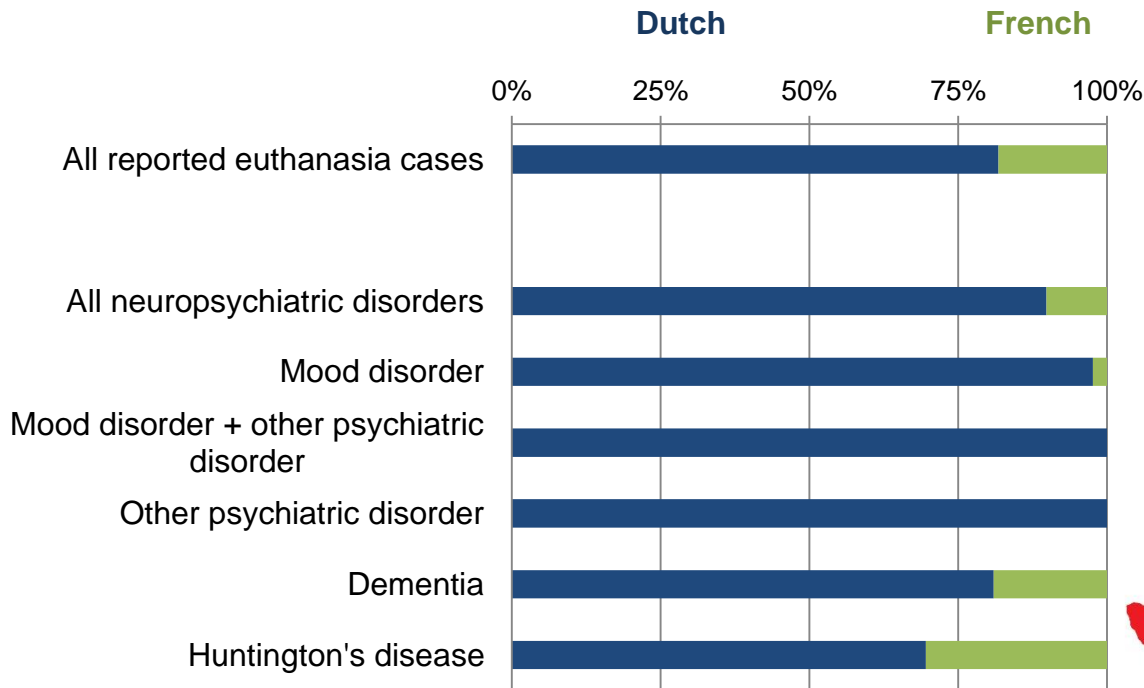


# Consultations beyond legal requirements



# Disparity in reported euthanasia between Dutch-speaking and French-speaking physicians

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# Recap on main findings

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Increase, but still limited practice

Younger, female patients

Consultations beyond legal requirements

Vast majority of cases reported in Dutch

# Discussion

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Only reported euthanasia cases

- Euthanasia granted but not performed

Why mostly women?

Depression & older patients: tiredness of life?

Acceptability seemingly higher in (Dutch-speaking) Flanders

Lack of clinical guideline ( $\leftrightarrow$  the Netherlands)

Need for additional monitoring of these cases?



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