

Euthanasia for neuropsychiatric conditions in Belgium

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Conflicts of interest

- 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

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

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

Patient's competence?

Well-considered request?

Unbearable suffering?

Incurable condition?

No prospects for improvement?

Suicide prevention in psychiatric care

Belgian euthanasia legislation – **Procedural criteria**

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

Federal Control and Evaluation Committee
Euthanasia

Euthanasia registration form

Part of mandatory notification procedure

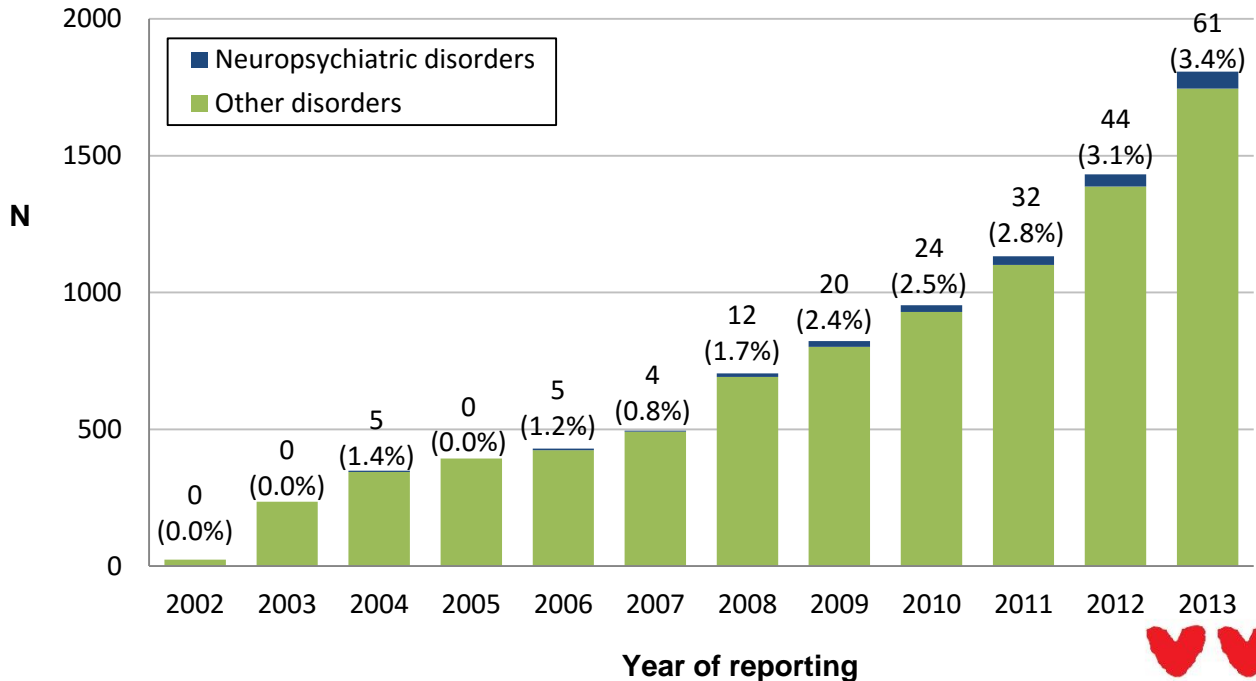
Inclusion criteria

neuropsychiatric disorders

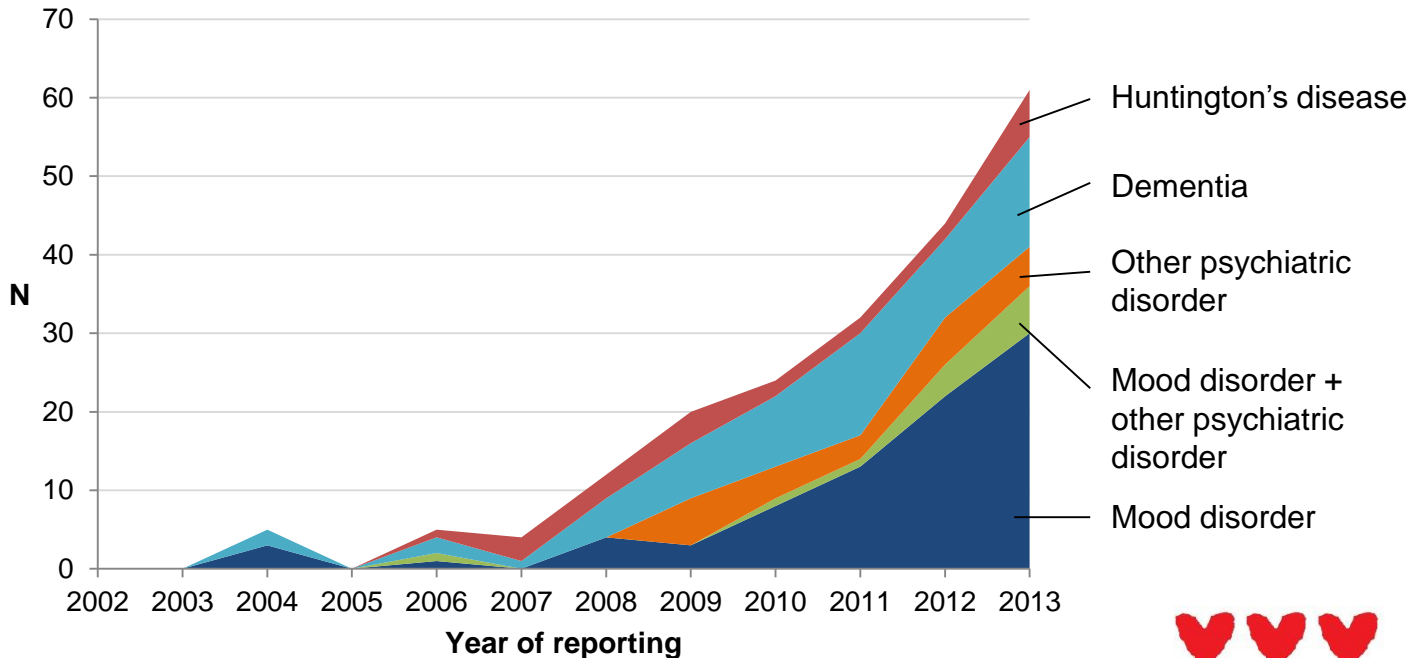
N=207 → 5 categories:

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)

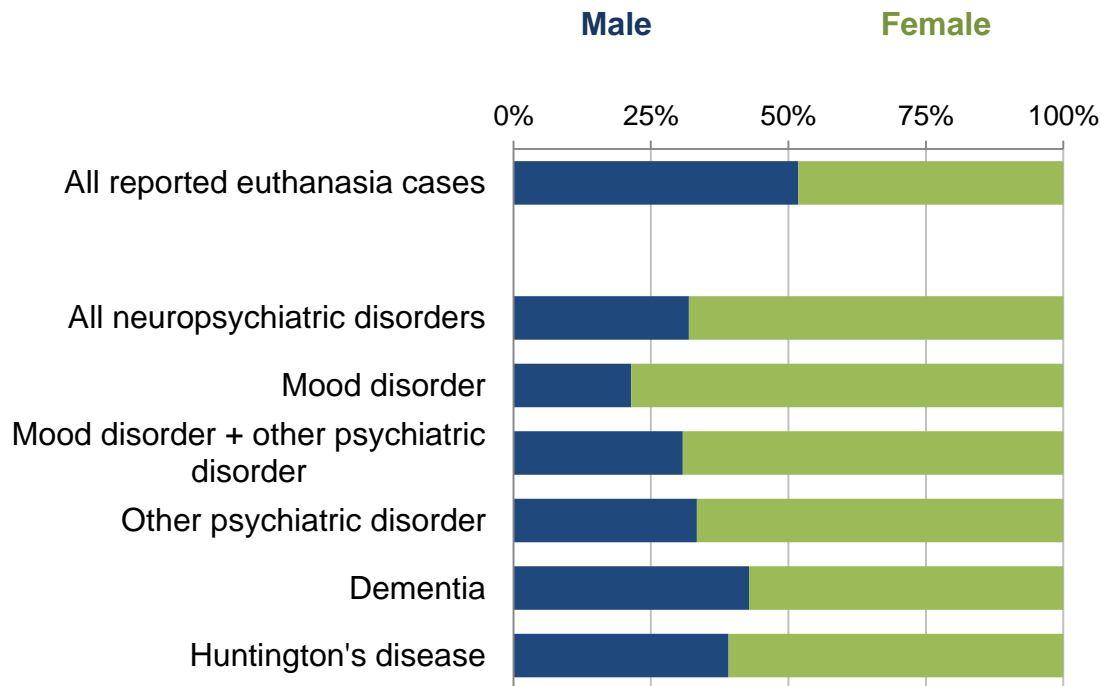
Increase in the number of cases reported to the Commission



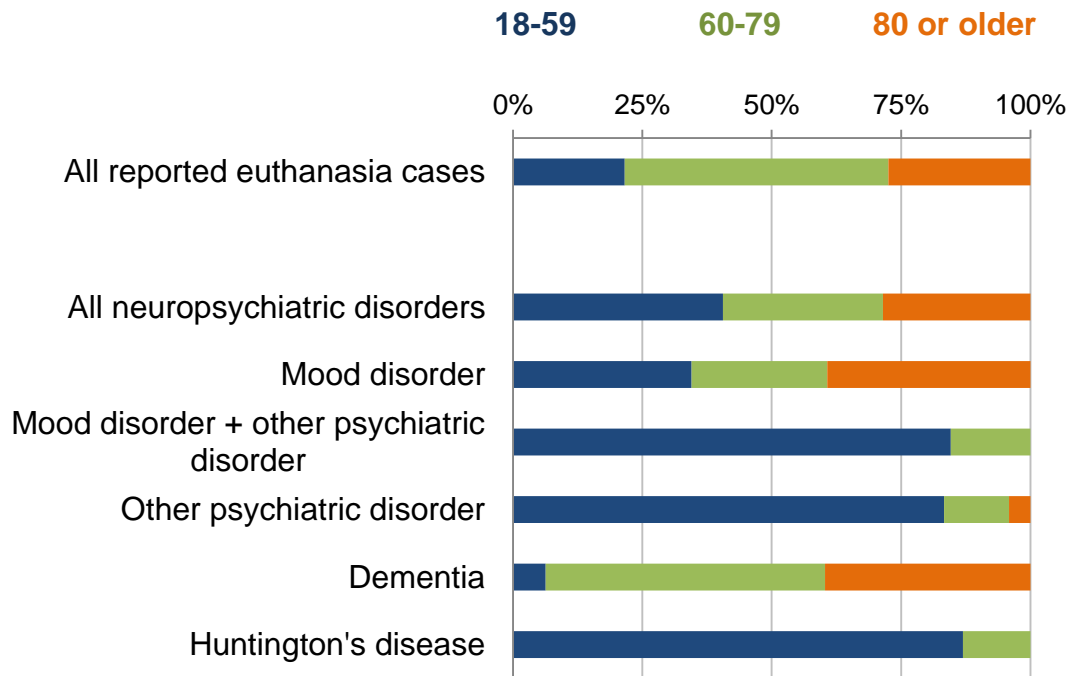
Increase in the number of reported cases for neuropsychiatric conditions



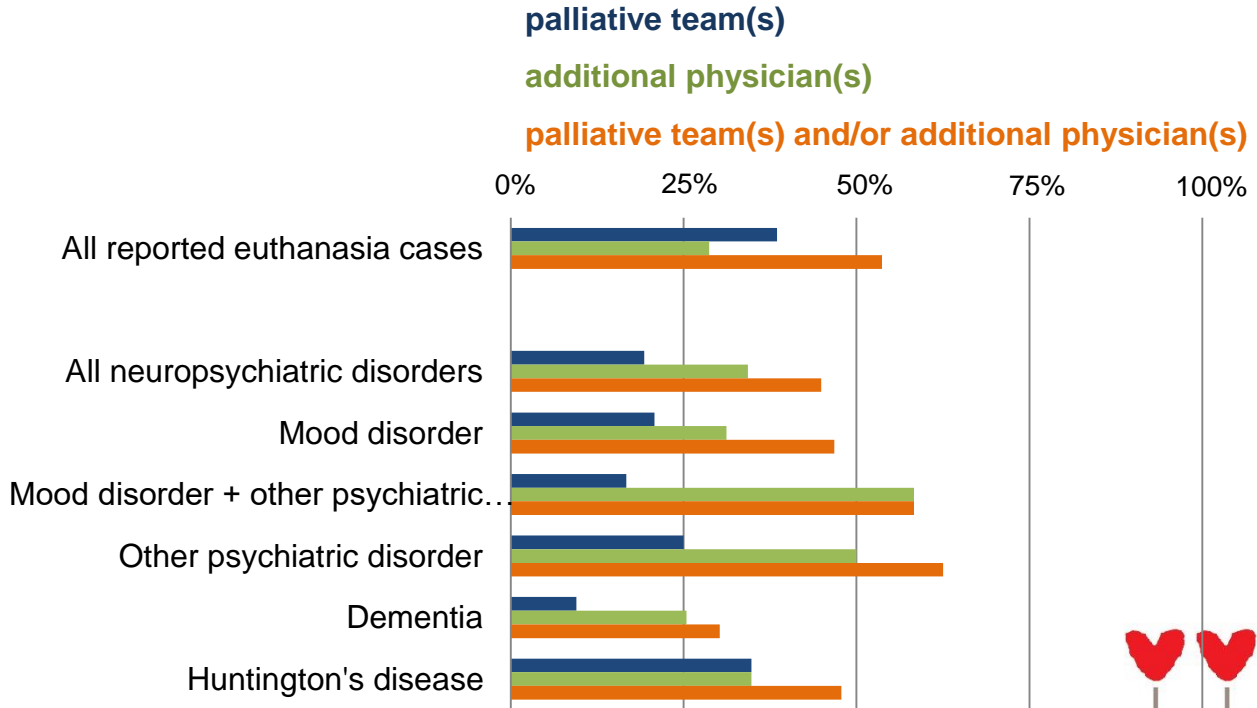
Women are overrepresented in euthanasia cases with a neuropsychiatric disorder diagnosis



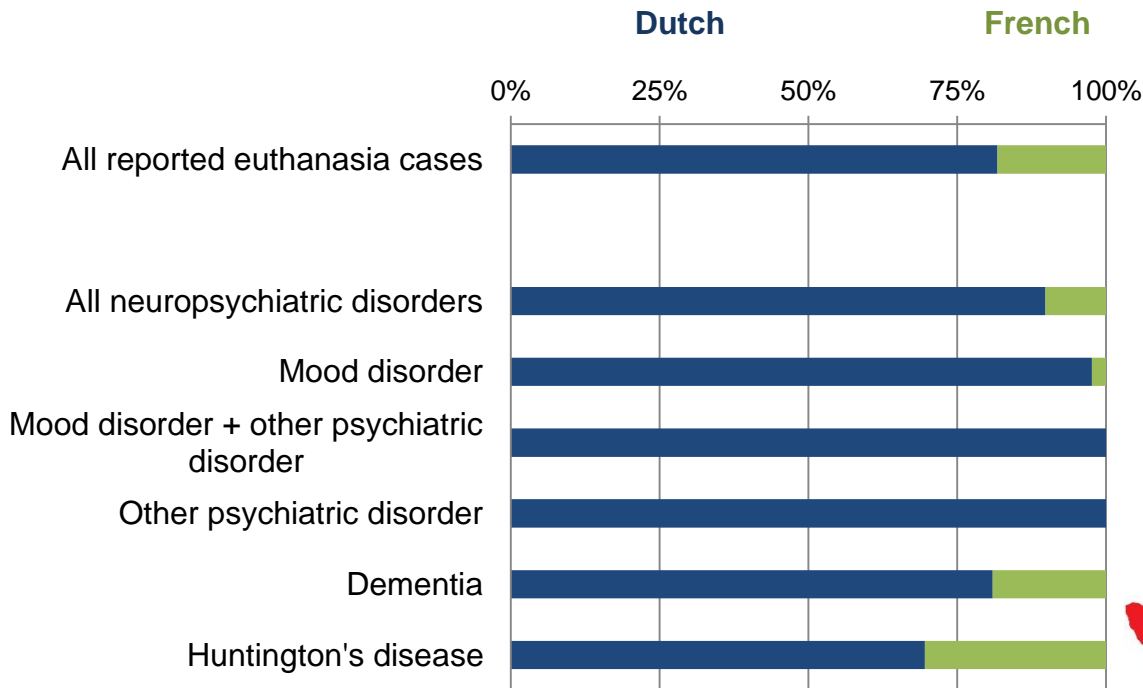
Psychiatric disorders and Huntington's disease: mainly younger patients



Consultations beyond legal requirements



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



Recap on main findings

Increase, but still limited practice

Younger, female patients

Consultations beyond legal requirements

Vast majority of cases reported in Dutch

Discussion

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 (↔ the Netherlands)

Need for additional monitoring of these cases?

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