

Discretion and the poverty reducing capacity of social assistance

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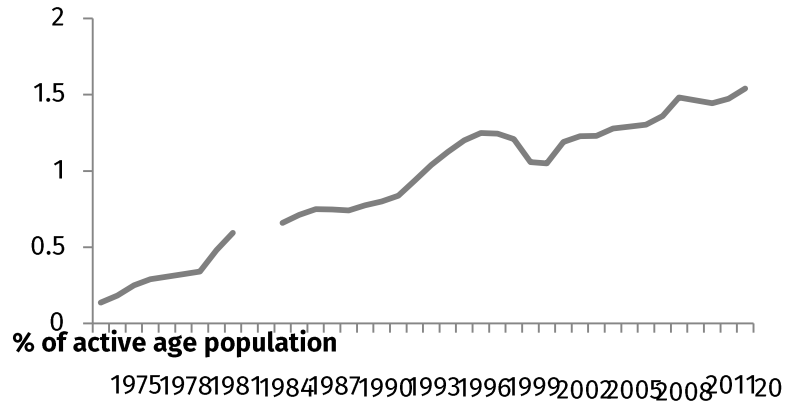


Responsibility for social assistance in Belgium

	Federal level	Local level = local council & non-professional board	Professional = educated social worker
Legislation	X – several elements open for interpretation	Local guidelines, regulation & verbal agreements	Personal interpretation
Financing	55-70%	30-45%	
Administration			
· Social investigation			X
· Advice eligibility			X consultation with team
· Decision		X	
· Control	X	X	

Tendencies in social assistance in Belgium

Increase of beneficiaries



Estimates of non-take-up = 1 on 2

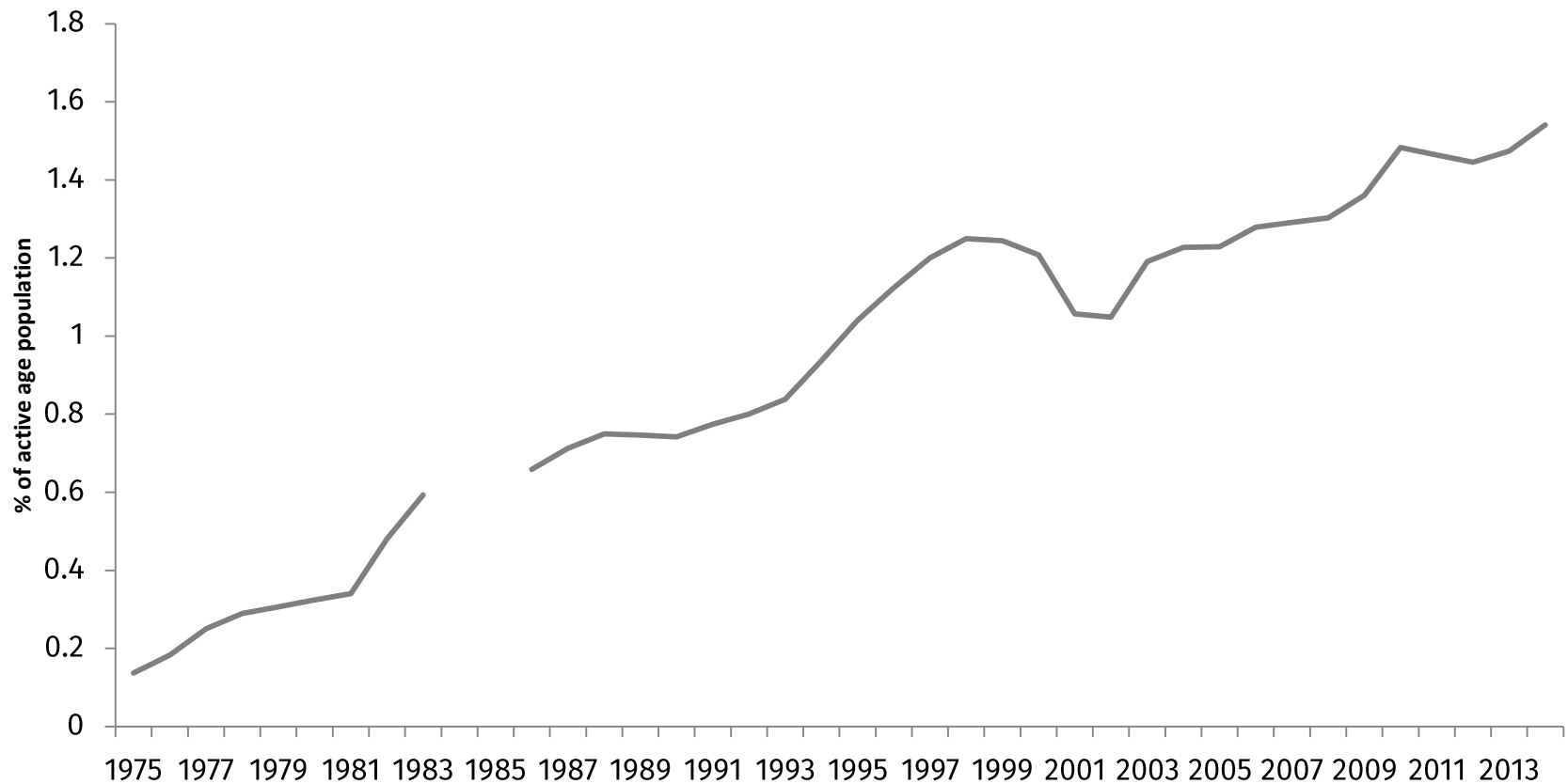
Discretion of professionals

Discretion of municipalities



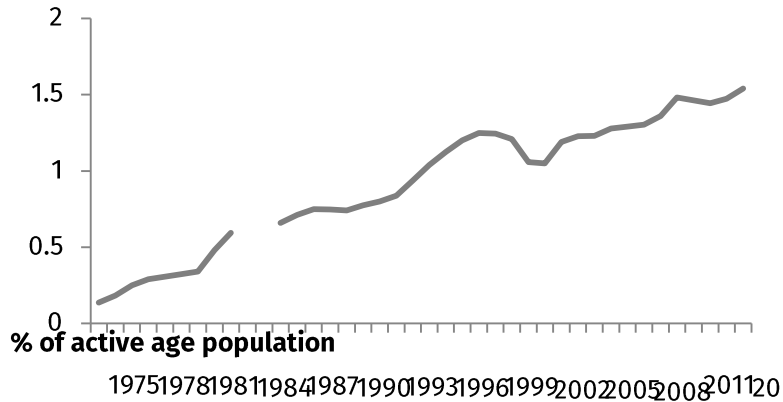
Tendencies in social assistance in Belgium

Social assistance beneficiaries



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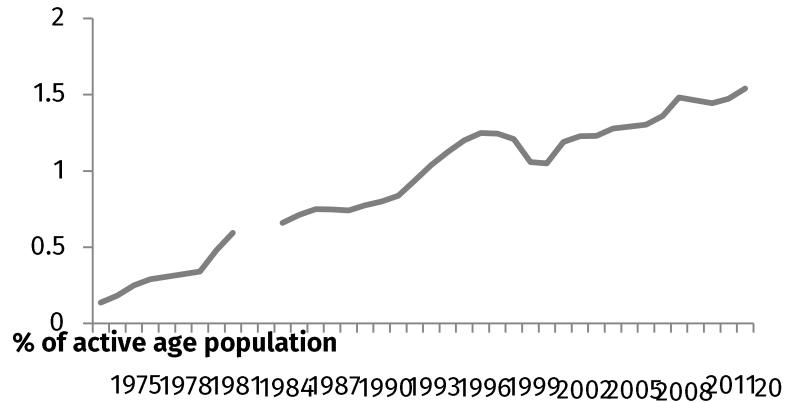
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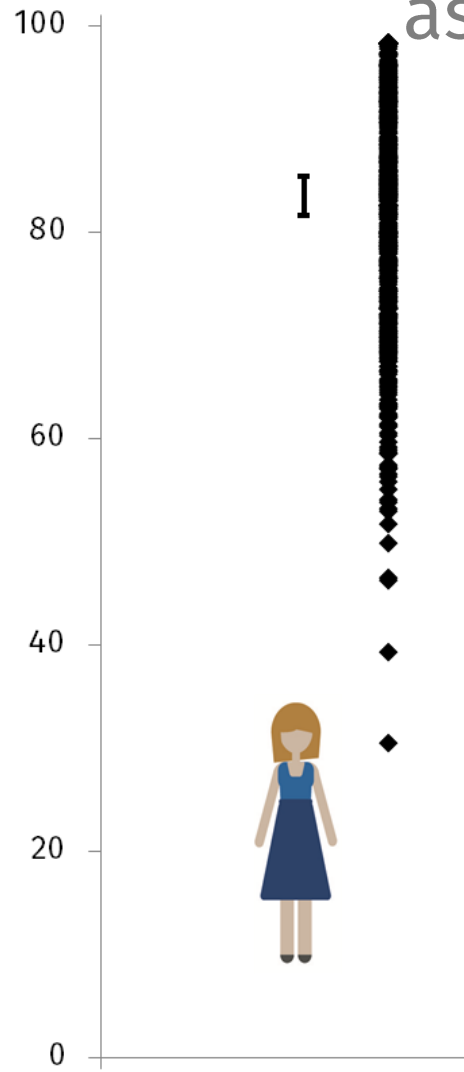
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Discretion of professionals

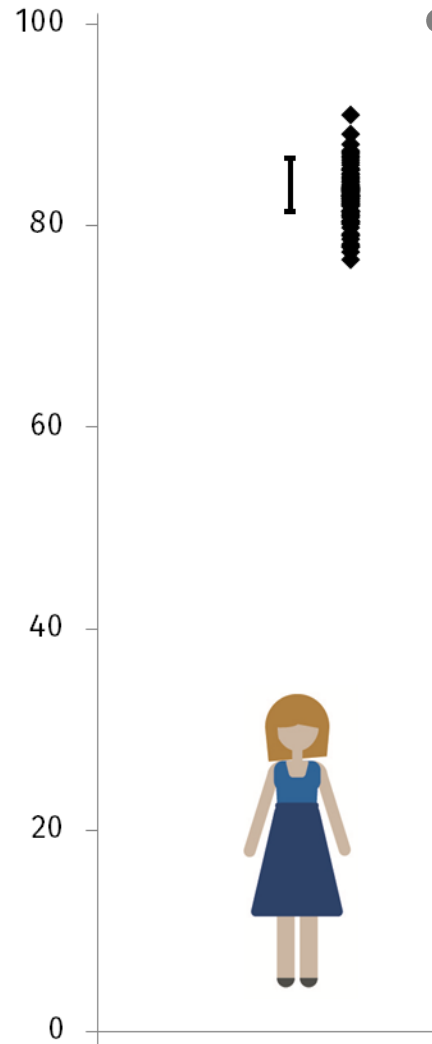
Discretion of municipalities



Variation in predicting eligibility to social assistance across 600 professionals

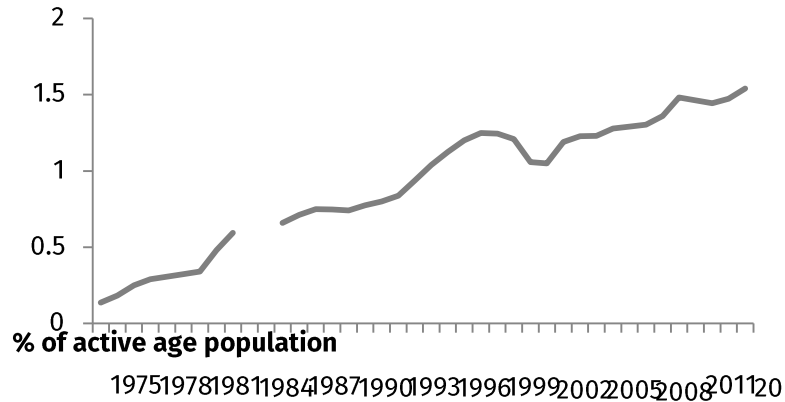


Variation in predicting eligibility to social assistance across 90 municipalities



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A more centralized sign up system?

= impossible for the full population

⇒ For **certain categories**:

- Clients with no change in living situation expect the move from municipality A to municipality B.
- Temporarily sanctioned in unemployment insurances
- Situation in which documents do not offer extra information

A more centralized sign up system?

How?

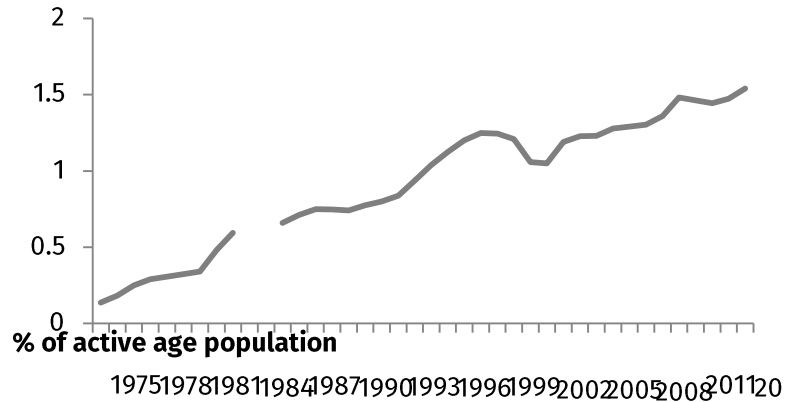
- Administrative data
- Sigides
- Simple sign up form?

If funding:

- Tests in 2 to 5 municipalities

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A more centralized sign up system?

Conditions:

- Simple, clear conditions
- Possibility to re-take the procedure
- Full customized follow up after eligibility decision

www.ocmw-verhalen.be

Thanks



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Most recent publications:

- PhD:
<https://repository.uantwerpen.be/docman/irua/07a6b8/158101.pdf>
- ‘Weighing up work willingness’ in the *European Sociological Review*:
<https://academic.oup.com/esr/advance-article-abstract/doi/10.1093/esr/jcz028/5512028>
- 40 jaar OCMW en bijstand:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1YUyTWQ73lpsj7_9BDrk_ujizpu8FgzzRUVce_G0f2iM/edit