

ZOOM

PEOPLE WITH A MIGRANT BACKGROUND

A ZOOM ON OUR FELLOW CITIZENS WITH AFRICAN ROOTS: BELGO-CONGOLESE, BELGO-RWANDAN AND BELGO-BURUNDIAN

With a population of 110,000 living in Belgium, Belgo-Congolese, Belgo-Rwandan and Belgo-Burundian people are the **third largest group stemming from immigration from outside the European Union**. These citizens are not often mentioned in a research context and they seem to be poorly understood in society, even though Belgium shares a long common history with them.

As part of its program on integration and migration, and continuing on from its study of Belgo-Moroccans and Belgo-Turks (2015), the King Baudouin Foundation has asked researchers from UCL, ULg and VUB to meet

and to talk to people from these three countries and from other countries in French-speaking sub-Saharan Africa. The aim: to get to know them better and find out their views on a range of issues that affect them.

This survey, which is the first of its kind in Belgium, was carried out among a representative sample of **805 people in Belgium's three regions**. The resulting portrait is a nuanced one and is intended as a contribution towards an informed debate. This process is all the more important as Afro-descendants seem to be more and more permanently established in Belgium and are seeing high levels of demographic growth.



BRIEF OVERVIEW

This quantitative and qualitative research reveals important differences as well as a number of common results compared to the study on Belgo-Moroccans and Belgo-Turks. Belgo-Congolese, Belgo-Rwandan and Belgo-Burundian communities cannot be considered as one homogenous group, which is also indicated by the research results. What's more, the study also reveals important differences between the latter and people originating from other French-speaking sub-Saharan African countries.

» Migrations from Afro-descendants have occurred more recently than those of Belgo-Turks and Belgo-Moroccans and they are, distinct from the latter, the result of initiatives by individuals or families to study, rejoin their families or escape from conflicts.

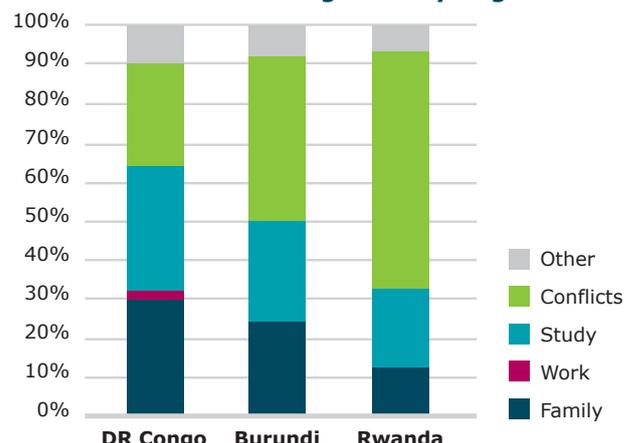
» The **unemployment rate** among Afro-descendants is high: four times higher than the rate among Belgians, even though 60% of them have a higher education degree.

» Migrants coming from sub-Saharan Africa are victims of **discrimination** and unequal treatment or even racial abuse.

» The **second generation of Afro-descendants is showing marked signs of greater inclusion than the first generation**, particularly in the sense that they feel more that they belong in Belgium and are not perceived as foreigners.

» A **large majority, 91% of the Afro-descendants interviewed, consider that colonial history should be taught in schools** and 74% of them think the colonial question is not discussed enough or is hidden in public debate.

Reasons for migration by origin



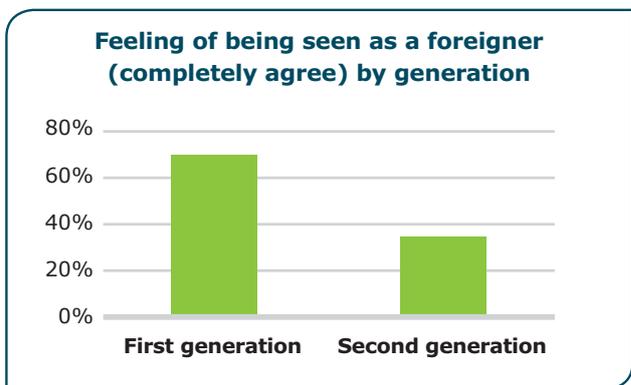


FACTS AND ANALYSES

THE MAJORITY OF THEM ARE BELGIANS... BUT THEY EXPERIENCE DISCRIMINATION

- » More than half (56%) of Afro-descendants who were interviewed in the context of this study have **Belgian nationality**. More than one in four migrants from French-speaking sub-Saharan Africa has or has had political refugee status (more than 40% of those from Rwanda and Burundi).
- » **Almost 8 out of ten respondents, however, indicate that they have experienced discrimination**, unequal treatment or abuse due to either the color of their skin or their origin. This discrimination makes it difficult to access housing and work, and it occurs both in educational establishments and in the workplace.
- » Although 61% of those interviewed feel Belgian, 86% of them consider that they are perceived as foreigners.
- » This does not stop a majority of these people (70-80%) viewing themselves as “completely different from Belgians” in terms of the way they bring up children, respect older people and receive family members or friends.

- » **Second generation Afro-descendants feel that they belong in Belgium more than their elders**, which is the opposite of what was observed in the study on Belgo-Moroccans and Belgo-Turks.
- » Women have a greater desire than men to remain permanently in Belgium, and they are keen to obtain Belgian nationality. Nevertheless, they feel that they are more often seen as foreigners by the majority population.



Professions most represented among men and women who have a job

Women	%	Men	%
Cleaner	15%	Warehouse worker	9%
Carer	14%	Salesperson	7%
Nurse	8%	Restaurant (cook, waiter, other)	6%
Salesperson	7%	Trained blue-collar worker in industry	6%
Restaurant (cook, waiter, other)	7%	Administrative employee	5%
Home help	5%	Electrician	3%
Receptionists and call center workers	4%	Social assistants and nursery staff	3%
Social assistants and nursery staff	4%	Cleaner	3%
Secondary school teachers	3%	Financial manager, auditor, tax specialist	2%
Total	67%		44%

EDUCATED TO DEGREE LEVEL... BUT DOWNGRADED

- » **More than 60% of Afro-descendants have a higher education degree**, which is a high level of education in comparison with the average of other groups stemming from immigration, or when compared to the Belgian average.
- » Nevertheless, **56% of those questioned are doing a job that is below their level of education**. So why does this downgrading occur? It is caused by discrimination at the point of recruitment and also because although they may have a degree in their country of origin, in many cases it is not recognized at the same level in Belgium (35%).
- » **Women** who are often very highly educated, seem to be downgraded less than men. Nevertheless, **they mainly work in the care and domestic sectors**, which demonstrates a high level of ethno-stratification in the labor market.

A FINANCIAL SITUATION INFLUENCED BY THEIR WORKING SITUATION

» The standard of living of households, when assessed in terms of access to goods that are a primary necessity, is considered “adequate” by half of those surveyed. A third of the interviewees said their living standard was “just about adequate” and 13% thought it “inadequate”.

Only 8% considered it “more than adequate”. It is no surprise that people in jobs that are in line with their qualifications are in a better financial situation than those who are victims of downgrading or those who are unemployed or not working for other reasons.

STRONG TRENDS IN TERMS OF VALUES

» Ninety-five percent of the respondents declare that they have a **religion**: Catholic (42%), Protestant (24%) or Evangelical-Pentecostal (15%).

» Three-quarters of them say that they are unfavourable towards homosexuality and ethical positioning on themes such as euthanasia and abortion.

» The majority (more than 80%) think that **democracy** is the best model of government. Seventy percent say that they are in **favour of equality between men and women**.

Attitude towards divorce, abortion, homosexuality and euthanasia

To what extent are these various practices and situations acceptable?	Acceptable	Not acceptable	No opinion / no answer
Divorce	48%	50%	2%
Abortion	24%	73%	3%
Homosexuality	19%	76%	5%
Euthanasia	18%	74%	8%

INTERESTED IN POLITICS AND COLONIAL HISTORY

» Although lower than the level seen among Belgo-Turks and Belgo-Moroccans, confidence among Afro-descendants in regard to **Belgian institutions** is slightly higher than what is seen at the national level.

» One in two people in this group have already voted in Belgium.

» Afro-descendants are very interested in **politics**, particularly in relation to their country of origin. In terms of Belgian and European federal politics, they were found to be more interested than the Belgian population in general.

» The vast majority (91%) of those interviewed consider that **colonial history** should be taught at school. More than 7 out of 10 persons think the colonial question is taboo in the Belgian public debate.



CONCLUSIONS

WHAT ARE THE KEY MESSAGES FROM THIS CONTRASTING PORTRAIT OF AFRO-DESCENDANTS IN BELGIUM?

» Living permanently in Belgium

Afro-descendants are moving towards living permanently in Belgium. The fact that they are becoming more anchored in our society is evidenced by the improved social inclusion of second generation Afro-descendants who were born and socialised in Belgium.

» Educated but downgraded

Afro-descendants have a high level of education compared with the averages for other groups stemming from immigration, and even with the Belgian average. Nevertheless, they still report very high rates of unemployment and downgrading.

» Discrimination on multiple levels

Afro-descendants are affected by ethno-racial discrimination and racism. These types of discrimination affect many areas of life, such as employment, housing, public

spaces, contact with institutions and educational institutions.

» Demands

Afro-descendants would like to see tangible symbolic and material measures in relation to colonial history and colonial injustices. The majority of them consider that colonial history should also be taught in schools.

» Connected to their country of origin

Afro-descendants have regular and frequent contacts with their countries of origin, but these are lessening over the generations.

» Interested in politics

Afro-descendants are more interested in Belgian politics than the Belgian population in general. This high level of interest is directly related to their high level of education.

CAPITALISING ON THE YOUNGER GENERATION

Contrary to the results of the 2015 study of Belgo-Turks and Belgo-Moroccans, young Afro-descendants feel that they belong in Belgium more than their parents did, and they have **less of a feeling of being perceived as foreigners**. Those who are of working age also have a lower unemployment rate than those in the first generation.

This is an encouraging sign and it also presents a real **opportunity**. With their high level of education and their dual cultures, young Afro-descendants also offer considerable **human and socio-economic potential** which is all the more important in the current context of globalisation. There is a need to capitalise on these aspects in order to move towards greater recognition and inclusion in society.

PUBLICATIONS BY THE KING BAUDOIN FOUNDATION

- This Zoom gives a brief overview of the results of the study. The details can be found in the full report '*Des citoyens aux racines africaines: un portrait des Belgo-Congolais, Belgo-Rwandais et Belgo-Burundais*' (2017), Sarah Demart, Bruno Schoumaker and Ilke Adam.
- '*Belgo-Marocains, Belgo-Turcs: (auto) portrait de nos concitoyens*' (2015), Ilke Adam and Corinne Torrekens.

You can download or order the publications free of charge on www.kbs-frb.be.

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The Foundation is an actor for change and innovation, serving the public interest and increasing social cohesion in Belgium and Europe. We seek to maximize our impact by strengthening the capacity of organizations and individuals. We also stimulate effective philanthropy by individuals and corporations.

The King Baudouin Foundation is a public benefit foundation. The Foundation was set up in 1976 on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of King Baudouin's reign.

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