



# Member State Report Belgium

## DATA & STATISTICS

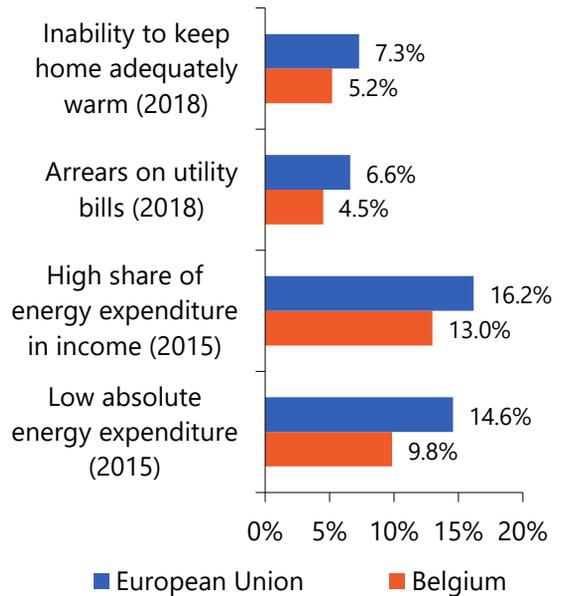
This Member State Report of the EU Energy Poverty Observatory (EPOV) provides an overview of the energy poverty situation in Belgium at a glance. With key indicators, policies, and publications, it offers an understanding of the key aspects of energy poverty in Belgium.

Belgium has a higher performance than the EU average on the population-reported indicators. In 2018, 5.2% of Belgians reported that they were unable to keep the home adequately warm while the corresponding EU average is 7.3%. Similarly for 2018, 4.5% of the population was unable to pay their utility bills on time due to financial difficulties, while the respective EU average is 6.6%.

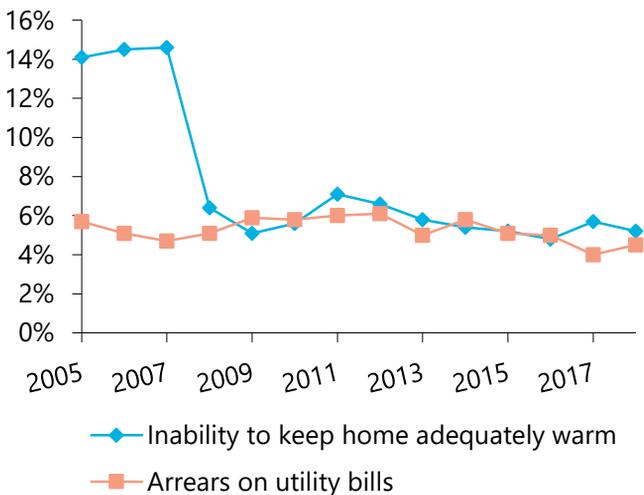
Belgium's performance in the expenditure-based indicators is better compared to the EU average. The share of households that spend a high share of their income on energy expenditure is 13.0% which is lower than the EU average. These households are likely to live in a dwelling with poor thermal and energy efficiency in non-urban areas where there is more heat dissipation.

Conversely, at 9.8% Belgium has a lower number of households spending a low share of their income on energy expenditure than the EU average. These households might restrict their energy spending below what is necessary to meet their needs.

### Performance relative to EU average\*



### Performance over time\*



In Belgium, the percentage of households that are unable to keep the home adequately warm decreased from 14% in 2001 to 5% in 2018. The notable decrease in 2008 can be explained by a change in indicator measurement or data gathering. Meanwhile households in arrears on utility bill slowly decreased from 6% in 2005 to 4.5% in 2018, without notable fluctuations between years.

Arrears on utility bills show a relatively constant path over time, as few policies exist to tackle this issue. Moreover, around 8% of the Belgian households receive a social tariff for energy consumption, which partly explains the constant percentage.

### About the EU Energy Poverty Observatory

The EU Energy Poverty Observatory (EPOV) is an initiative by the European Commission to help Member States in their efforts to combat energy poverty. It exists to improve the measuring, monitoring and sharing of knowledge and best practice on energy poverty. EPOV has been developed by a consortium of 13 organisations. This report was authored by Navigant.

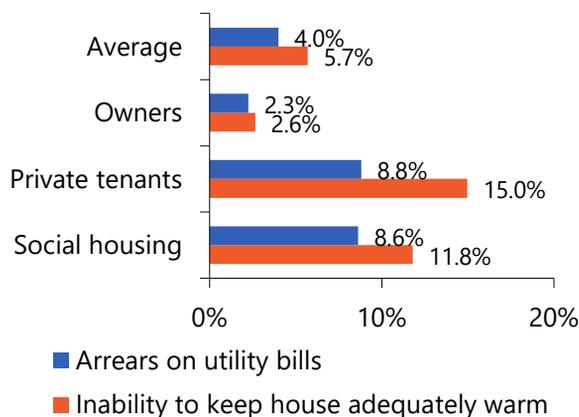
\*Population-reported indicators taken from Eurostat [here](#) and [here](#) on November 19, 2019. Expenditure-based indicators calculated by EPOV based on HBS data. Disaggregated data of Population-reported indicators calculated by EPOV based on Eurostat provided data.



# Member State Report Belgium

## DATA & STATISTICS

### Inability to keep home warm and Arrears on utility bills disaggregated by tenure type (2017)\*



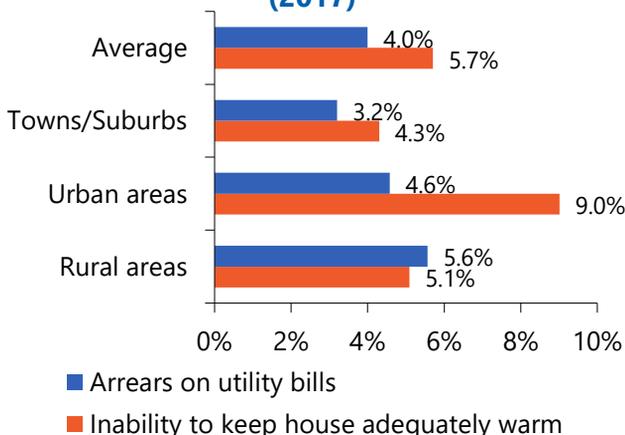
The disaggregated data of the household-reported indicators suggest that energy poverty in Belgium is highest for the private tenants sector in 2017, at 15% for inability to keep the house warm and 8.8% for arrears on utility bills. The private tenant sector, which is most vulnerable to these indicators, accounts for 19% of the population in Belgium.

The data also indicates households in detached and semi-detached houses as the most vulnerable to these indicators, noting that 78% of the population lives in these two types of dwelling.

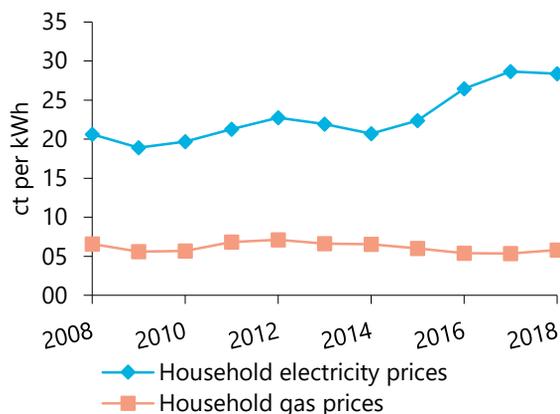
In Belgium, urban areas have the lowest performance for the ability to keep the house adequately warm and having arrears on utility bills, closely followed by rural areas. This may be due to the higher costs of living in urban areas and the relatively high share of poor populations living in cities. Urban areas account for 27% of the Belgian population, with 55% of the population living in suburbs.

Urban areas are notably unable to keep their house adequately warm while arrears on utility bills tend to be more in rural areas. This may be attributed to the dwelling type most prevalent in rural areas and by having lower building density which increases heat dissipation. The rural area accounts for 18% of the Belgian population.

### Inability to keep home warm and Arrears on utility bills disaggregated by urban density (2017)\*



### Belgian household energy costs over time



The household energy cost over time in Belgium has gradually increased to reach a peak in 2017 with electricity at 29.0 €/ct/kWh and gas at 5.81 €/ct/kWh. There is a sharp increase in electricity price between 2014 and 2018. This can be partly explained by lower electricity generation capacities.

Notably, gas prices remained relatively stable over time. Despite the higher cost of electricity, no sharp increase can be observed in arrears on utility bills.

\*Population-reported indicators taken from Eurostat [here](#) and [here](#) on November 19, 2019. Expenditure-based indicators calculated by EPOV based on HBS data. Disaggregated data of population-reported indicators calculated by EPOV based on Eurostat provided data.



# Member State Report Belgium

## POLICIES & MEASURES

Belgium is one of the most active countries in terms of research, policies and activities in the field of energy poverty. The first major study on energy poverty in Belgium was published in 2011 (Huybrechs, Meyer and Vranken). Since then, multiple other studies on the issue have been published. In 2015, the King Baudouin Foundation initiated an annual publication called the Energy Poverty Barometer, which produces energy poverty statistics and analyses for Belgium.

A wide range of energy poverty policies have been implemented in Belgium. On the federal level, a *social tariff for natural gas and electricity* exists, which aims to help certain vulnerable consumers afford sufficient energy. The measure is funded through general levies on electricity and natural gas prices. The federal tariff has been extended in certain regions to encompass additional socio-economic groups.

All three regions (Brussels, Flanders and Wallonia) have some type of *disconnection protection during winter* to prevent indebted households from being exposed to cold temperatures. Some regional utilities have provisions to install prepayment meters or power limiters that aim to reduce debt accumulation. All regions also provide *energy and renovation grants* to facilitate the improvement of domestic energy efficiency.

Local social services provide multiple services to households experiencing energy poverty. Financial aid is available for paying the electricity and natural gas bills, as well as for households that use heating oil, kerosene or propane gas to heat their home (*electricity and gas fund, social heating fund*). In addition, they also help households negotiate payment plans and in some cases assist to improve energy efficiency. There are also a [significant number of initiatives](#) targeting energy poverty, such as the *Energy Savers*, the Platform against energy poverty, and Revert. The most recent example of this is the Dampoort Renovates! programme in which low-income households are supported to enhance the EPC score. This programme in the city of Gent specifically targets low-income households who own an energy-inefficient dwelling.

Selected measures	Type of measure	Organisation	Target groups	Start year	Result
<a href="#">Disconnection protection during winter (Brussels, Flanders and Wallonia)</a>	Disconnection protection	Regional government	Indebted households	Unknown	Economically vulnerable households cannot be disconnected from the grid in the months October – March.
<a href="#">Electricity and gas fund and Social heating fund</a>	Social support	National government, Local government	Indebted households	2001	The number of cases needing financial support has decreased from 52,184 in 2008 to 28,895 in 2015. Besides bill support, this long-term success is thanks to the additional measures in terms of energy efficiency and energy audits.
<a href="#">Energy Savers</a>	Energy audits, Building insulation	NGO	Vulnerable households, Indebted households,	2007	21,400 energy checks were implemented and over 1,200 roofs were insulated in 2010.
<a href="#">Energy and renovation grants (Brussels, Flanders and Wallonia)</a>	Building insulation, Heating system	Regional government	No specific target group	2004	146,000 energy grants were disbursed between 2004 and 2012 adding up to €90 million. In 2012, most grants were allocated for improving windows and household appliances.
<a href="#">Grants for social insulation projects for rental buildings</a>	Building insulation	Regional government, Grid operator	Vulnerable households, Private tenants, Social housing	2016	Unknown
<a href="#">Social tariff for natural gas and electricity</a>	Social tariff	National government	Vulnerable households	2004	In 2016, 8.5% of all Belgian households (460,000 contract) received the social tariff automatically.
<a href="#">Dampoort renovates!</a>	Building insulation, Heating system	Local government	Low-income household	2014	The buildings that participated improved from an EPC-score of 519 kWh/m <sup>2</sup> to 244 kWh/m <sup>2</sup> .

### Contact us:

www.energypoverty.eu  
contact@energypoverty.eu  
Twitter at @EPOV\_EU



# Member State Report Belgium

## PUBLICATIONS & ORGANISATIONS

This page gives an overview of publications on energy poverty in Belgium and presents organisations working on energy poverty in Belgium

Organisation

**Name:** 2GENDERS

**Organization type:** Research & Consultancy

**Description:** The 2GENDERS project focuses on energy poverty in Belgium. The project will describe the phenomenon and the populations affected, ascertain the wider associations, if any, between energy poverty and social relations, mobility and self-reported health, and design and deliberate possible interventions with a range of important stakeholders including the energy poor.

Organisation

**Name:** Community building (Samenlevingsopbouw)

**Organization type:** NGO

**Description:** This NGO is active in the fight against exclusion and deprivation, by engaging with people in socially vulnerable situations to ensure that their needs are taken into account in the formulation of structural policy changes. Access to basic social rights is their priority, which includes also right to affordable energy and energy-efficient housing.

Publication

**Title:** Vulnerable Consumers Market Segmentation Report

**Authors:** ASSIST Consortium

**Year:** 2018

**Description:** The market behavioral segmentation represents a key preparatory phase for the development of the national and local actions. It will lead to a complete understanding of the actual situation under different aspects: socio-demographic, economic and dwelling characteristics of consumers, but also consumers' degree of knowledge, common needs and priorities regarding energy. The final objective is to assign vulnerable consumers into market groups who share common characteristics.

Publication

**Title:** Energy poverty in Brussels: first results of a qualitative survey

**Authors:** Baudaux, A.

**Year:** 2014

**Description:** This article presents the results of fieldwork among social workers dealing with energy poverty and beneficiaries of social help in Brussels. In-depth interviews were conducted with people for whom gaining access to energy in the home is a problem. This article analyses energy poverty through three main topics – health, social recognition and social support – and explores whether they are interrelated or not. Results show that energy poverty is associated with social life and mental health.

### Other selected publications

- Huybrechs, F., Meyer, S., and Vranken J. (2011) [Energy poverty in Belgium](#) (in Dutch and French)
- Storms, E., and Meyer, S. (2012) [An introduction to energy poverty in Belgium](#)
- Bartiaux, F., Van der Linden, M., Debast, N. & Baudaux, A. (2014) [Energy poverty](#) (in French)
- Baudaux, A. (2014) [Energy poverty in Brussels: first results of a qualitative survey](#)
- Delbeke, B., and Meyer, S. (2015, 2016, 2017) [The energy poverty barometer \(2017 edition\)](#)
- Lahaye W., Bartiaux F., and Sibeni A. (2016) [Living in energy vulnerability: continuous mental arithmetic and limited possibilities](#) (in Dutch)
- Goedemé, T. et al. (eds.) (2017) [Poverty, energy and living: creative ideas for a future without energy poverty](#) (in Dutch)
- ASSIST Consortium (2018) [Vulnerable Consumers Market Segmentation Report](#)

For definitions of the terms used in this report [click here](#). The EPOV website provides an extensive collection of Knowledge & Resources. [Click here](#) for more information and to contribute additional policies, publications and other resources.

This report was completed in February 2020.

#### Contact us:

[www.energypoverty.eu](http://www.energypoverty.eu)  
[contact@energypoverty.eu](mailto:contact@energypoverty.eu)  
Twitter at @EPOV\_EU