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Belgian Ageing Studies:
Supporting the process of creating age-friendly and safe communities

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Overview

- Belgian Ageing Studies (BAS)
  - Background and history
  - Aim
  - Method
  - Outcomes
  - Conclusion
- Supporting age-friendly and safe communities
  - Brussels as case

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Belgian Ageing Studies

BAS

Belgian Ageing Studies

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1. Background and history

- Importance of place and locality in later life
- Paradox of neighbourhood participation
  - Older people tend to spend a lot of time in their neighbourhood
  - Older people are often among the first to be ignored when it comes to decision-making processes and participation in the production of their neighbourhood
- Enhancing agency
  - Recognizing older people as actors in social change
  - Involving older people in aspects of research, policy-making and community practice
  - Especially important to implement at a local level

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1. Background and history

- 2002: law on ‘participation of older people’
  - Against ageist discrimination and social exclusion
  - Involve older people in local policy planning
  - Environmental analysis
- Flemish municipalities: S.O.S.
- 2003: Development of the study with a number of partners

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2. Aim

- Provide an **instrument** to measure the living conditions and quality of life of older people
- Promote **evidence-based policy** at the **local** level by providing input and mobilizing knowledge for planning and inclusive policy programmes
- Support the process of creating **age-friendly** communities
- Examine **trends** in particular municipalities by conducting follow-up studies

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3. Method

Partners

- Research process = a continuous cooperation between:
  - Older volunteers
  - Local stakeholders
  - Members of local senior organizations
  - Local authorities
  - Provincial government
  - Dept. Adult Educational Sciences Vrije Universiteit Brussel

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3. Method

Standardised method

- Development questionnaire (co-design)
- Development of research scenario
- Development of training programmes
- Development of process model of involving older people

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3. Method

Sampling design

- Home-dwelling older people (60+)
- Community representative sample in each municipality
  - stratified by gender and age (60-69 years, 70-79 years, 80 years and over)
  - Drawn from the census records of the municipality

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3. Method

Data collection method: Peer-research

–+/- 40 older volunteers in each municipality

–Generates a ‘sense of ownership’

–Stimulates political participation and involvement among older citizens

–Visibility of research and involvement of older people at the local level

–Response rate (between 65% - 85% in each municipality)

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4. Outcomes

- Belgium
  - Flanders: 158 municipalities (N>70.000)
  - Brussels
  - Walloon regions: 2 municipalities
- The Netherlands: 5 municipalities
- Italy: 1 municipality

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4. Outcomes

Evidence based policy

–Results are situated in regional and Flemish context

–Findings of the municipality are discussed in a number of forums which are organised by the stakeholder's network and the older volunteers who were involved in the study

–Development of local action plans

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4. Outcomes

Large quantitative dataset

–for several PhD's

–Used for academic publications

- e.g. "Social Capital and Feelings of Unsafety in Later Life: A Study on the Influence of Social Ties, Place Attachment and Civic Participation on Perceived Safety in Belgium"
- e.g. "Social participation among older adults living in mediumsized cities in Belgium: the role of neighbourhood perceptions"

–Used by colleagues examining unexplored themes

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4. Outcomes

Trendresearch

–Bruges, Gent, Genk, Mol, …

–After 6 years, a follow-up BAS

Additional qualitative studies

–Build on initial quantitative analysis

–BAS used to guide purposeful selection of the study areas

–E.g. Select two municipalities with low levels of feelings of unsafety and two municipalities with high levels of feelings of unsafety

–Qualitative data to capture the contextual nature of feelings of unsafety (amongst others)

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5. Conclusion

Practical and policy implications

- Potential of facilitating social change in the neighbourhood by involving older people in aspects of research, local-policy making and community practice
- Involving older people from A to Z: empowerment
- Process model of recruiting, engaging, motivating older volunteers
- Continuous cooperation between a network of partners

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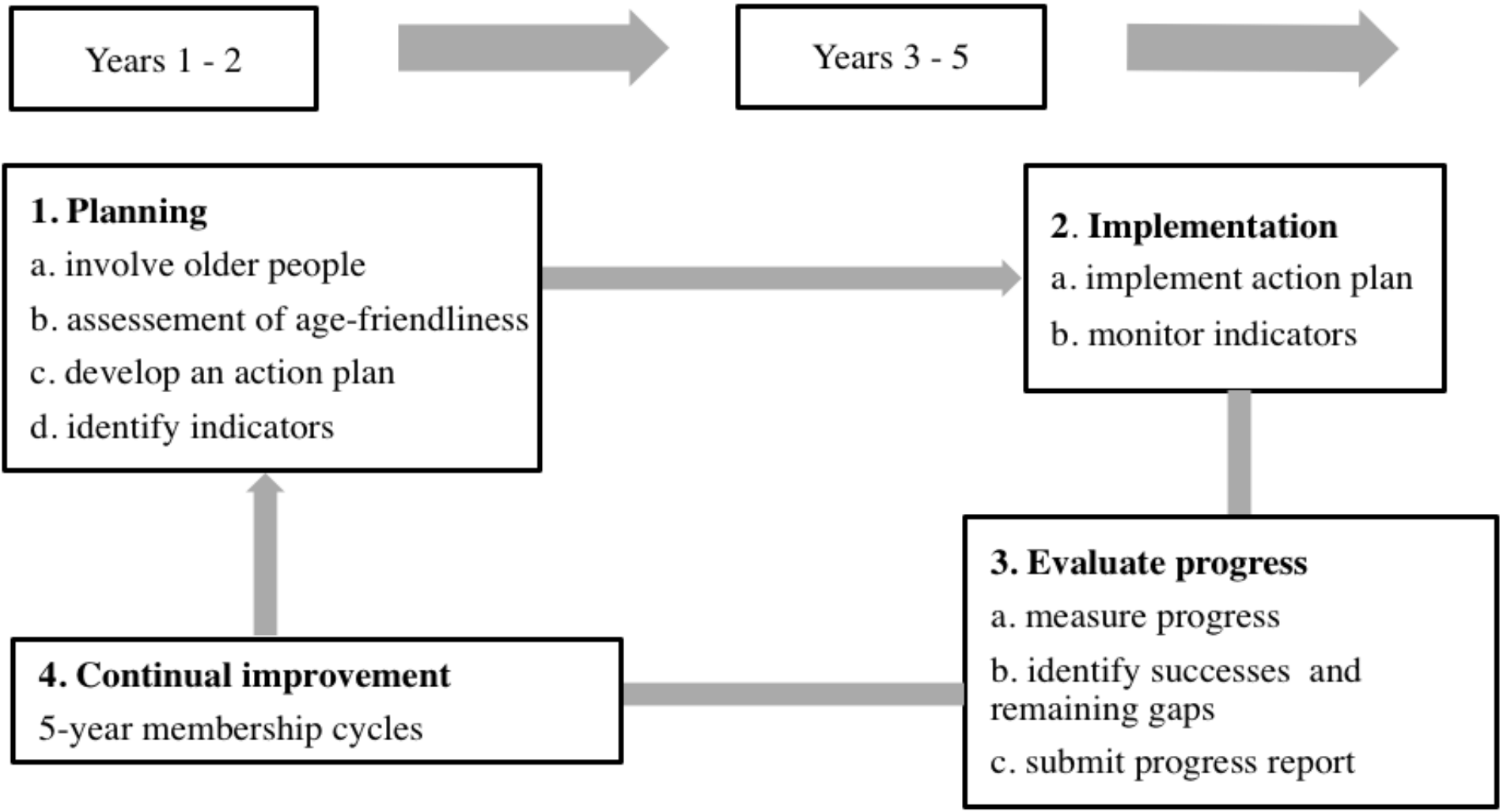
Supporting age-friendly and safe communities

BAS
Belgian Ageing Studies

- Membership WHO Age-friendly City network
  - E.g. Brussels


Years 1 - 2
Years 3 - 5
1. Planning
a. involve older people
b. assessement of age-friendliness
c. develop an action plan
d. identify indicators
2. Implementation
a. implement action plan
b. monitor indicators
3. Evaluate progress
a. measure progress
b. identify successes and remaining gaps
c. submit progress report
4. Continual improvement
5-year membership cycles

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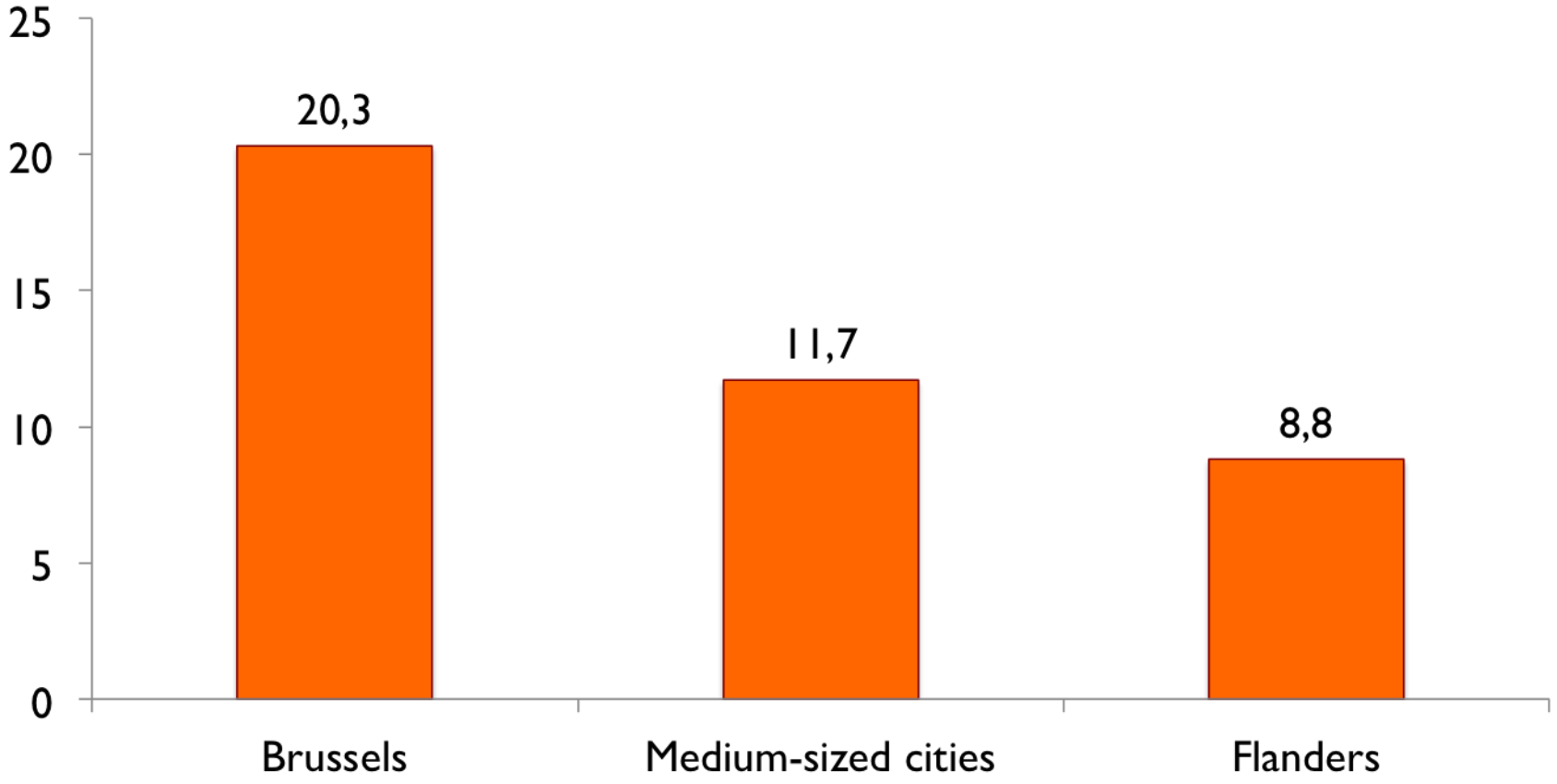
Having no children?



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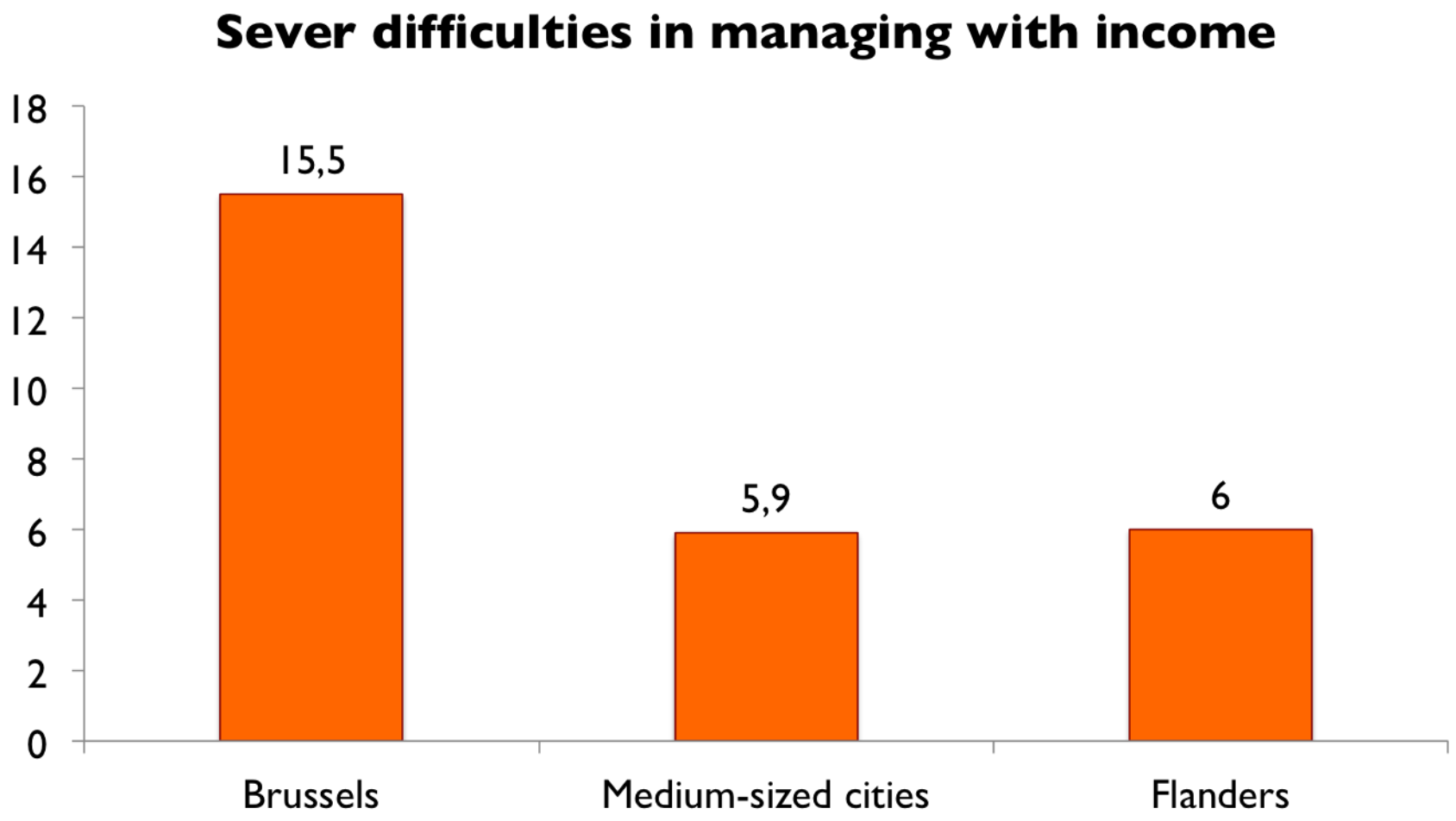
Income



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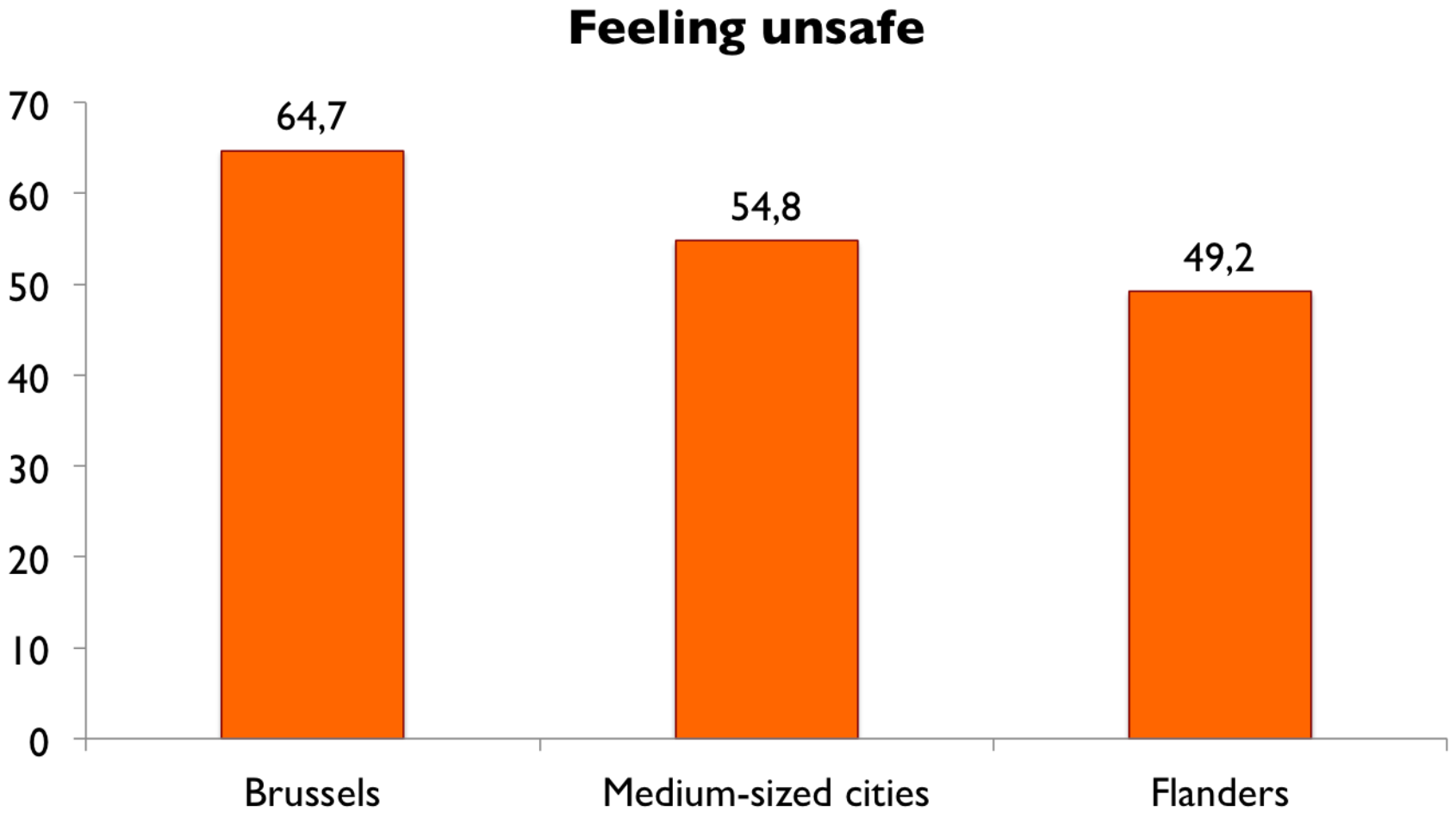
Fear of crime



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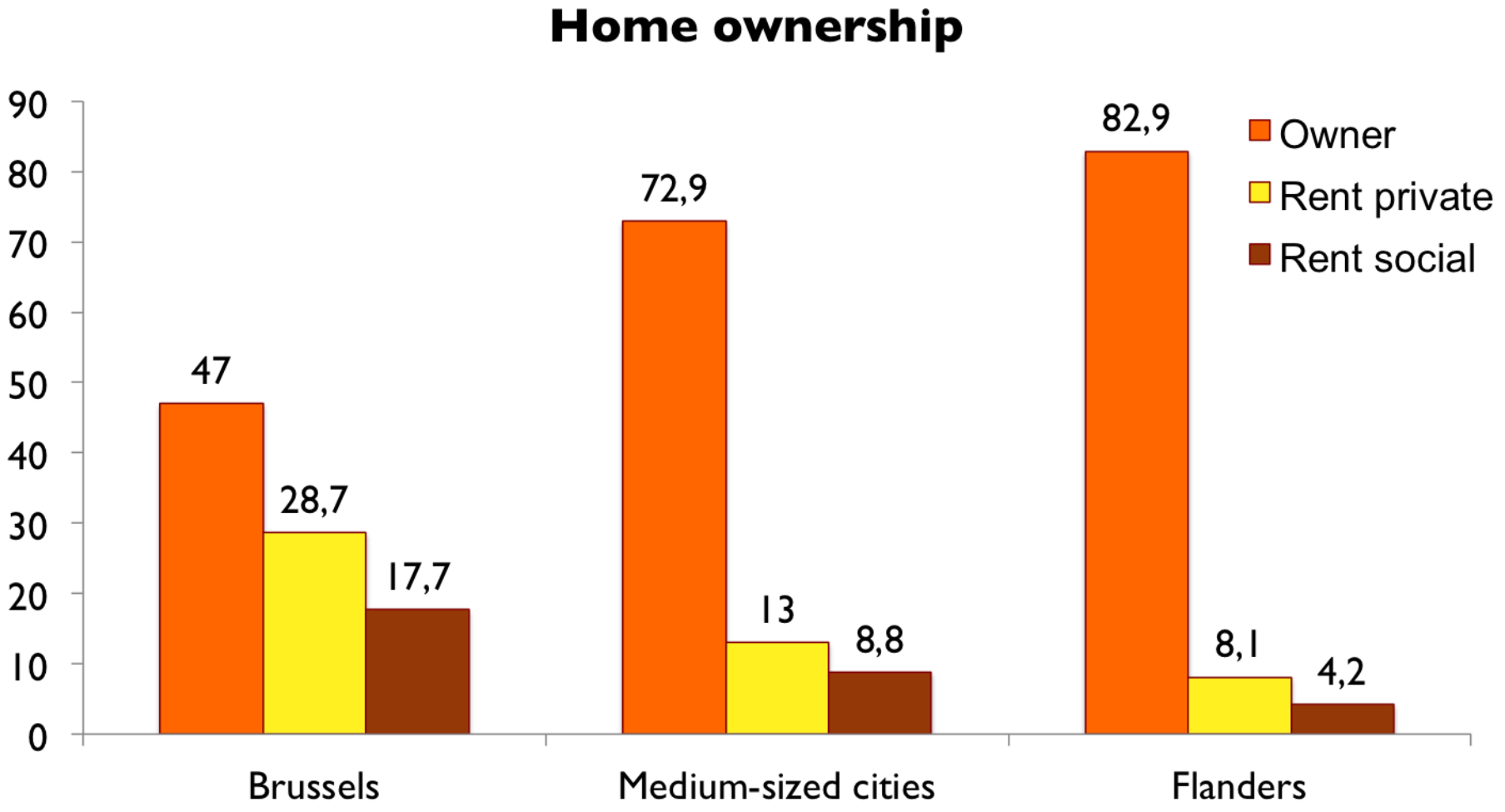
Housing



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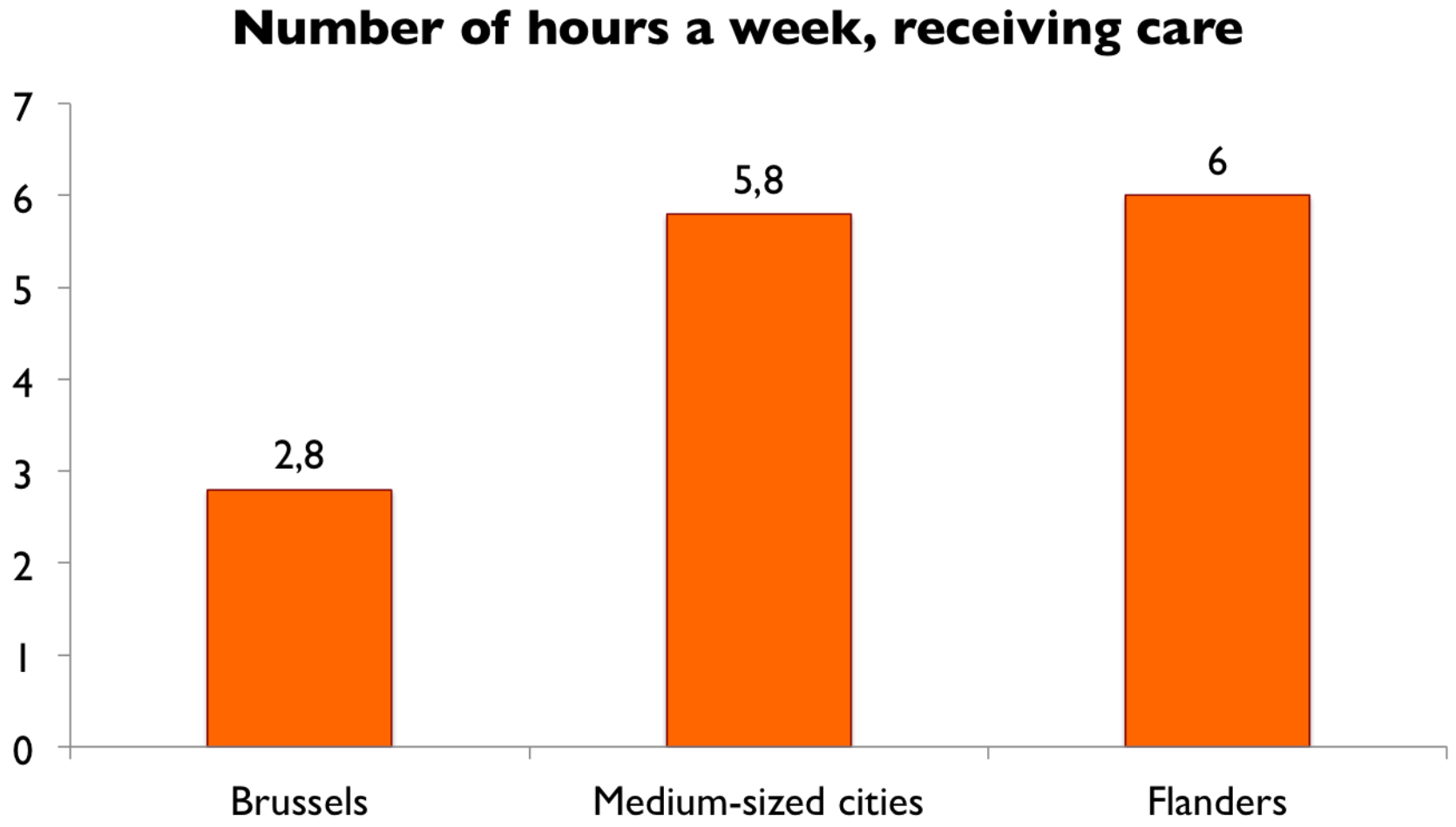
Care



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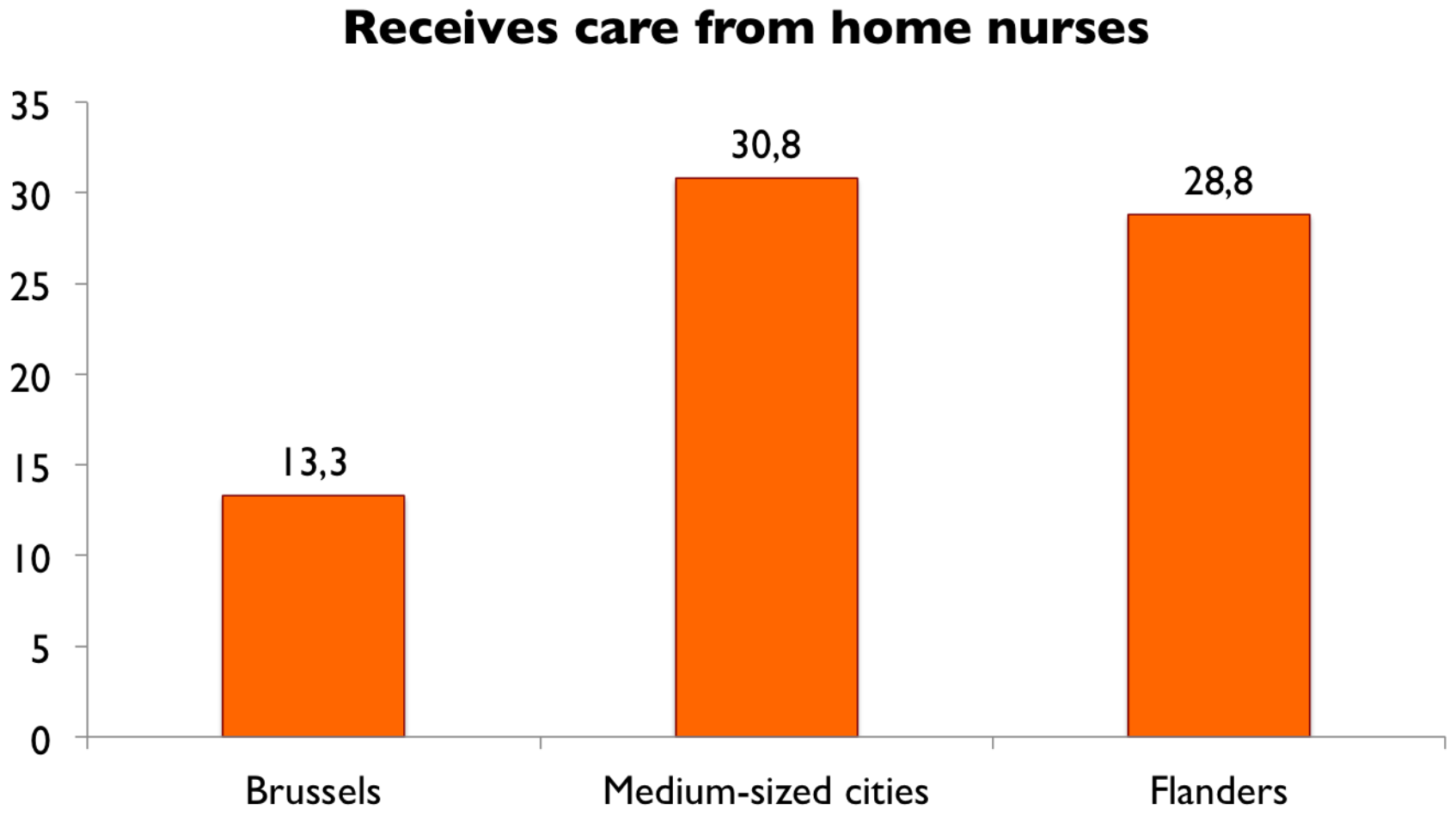
Home nurses



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- Based on BAS
  - Development of local/policy action plan (policymakers together with older people's advisory board)
  - WHO application
  - Launche of age-friendly Brussels at the international day of older people in October 2010

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Thank you for your attention

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