

**Working Papers Film & TV Studies**  
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# **GENDER REPRESENTATIONS IN BELGIAN CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMES: A QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS**

**Dieter Grammens, Marieke Rodenburg and Sofie Van Bauwel**

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## ABSTRACT

Children's fictional programmes are produced, sold, bought and broadcasted around the globe. Children under the age of twelve are interesting consumption groups for the market of fiction and all the marketing toys related to these media products. Children's programmes represent, as all media content does, gender identities. Media are representational machines which articulate gender representations and play an important role in the lives, identity constructions and fantasies of children. By means of a quantitative con-

tent analysis we look at the gender representation in children's programmes on the Belgian television. We analyse the way in which gender is represented on the narrative and a cinematographic level and stress the first latent manner of representation. This research is part of a larger global project on the gender representation in children programmes around the world initiated by GDIGM (Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media) and the IZI (Institute for Youth and Educational Television).



## PREFACE

With this publication the Centre for Cinema and Media Studies wants to put emphasis on current research on gender representations in children's programmes. As research around the world stressed (see Jordan, 2004; Buckingham, 2002) children do spend a lot of time before the television set and sometimes they do even have their own television set in their rooms. Especially the 'new' digital media, DVD and the internet give new possibilities to children to watch all sorts of programmes. Children programmes are one of the programme categories which still stand in a commercial media environment and are sold all around the world. These programmes provide children with knowledge, pleasure, identities, identifications, meanings around gender and are important elements in the gender socialisations of children without saying that television content has an effect on children.

The Dept. of Communication studies at the Ghent University and the Centre for Cinema and Media Studies has a tradition of researching gender and representation. One of the core initiators of this research field was Prof. dr. Frieda Saeys († 2007) who has always emphasised the importance of this kind of research and who has also initiated this quantitative research which was funded by the IZI (International Central Institute for Youth and Educational Television) and was part of a global research project on gender representations in children's programmes around the world. In honour of Prof. dr. Frieda Saeys we want to present the working paper on gender representations and stress the importance of this research field.

The research reported upon in this WP has already been presented in a shorter version in the GDIGM regional report on Belgium and at the global conference on Children's Television Worldwide: Gender Representation hosted by the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, the Institute for Youth and Educational Television (IZI) and the University of South California in January 2008 in Los Angeles.

<sup>1</sup> The sample in the international study consists of 2367 hours of explicit children's television, 1654 hours of fictional shows, 20.452 programmes (from which 1654 hours were fictional), 26342 characters (fiction) and 14959 human characters. In order to compare, the codebook is the same in each country. In the analysis criteria for the elements of the programme: type of programme (show – fiction, show – documentaries, show – game shows, show mixed programmes, show – other, commercials, trailers, other), differentiation of fiction (animation, puppets, people, mixture, other), country (domestic production, international co-production, foreign production, other), language and subtitles were coded. On the level of the narration and cinematographic level the main characters were coded (protagonist or antagonist, type of character (animal, human, monster, plant or object), skin colour (only if human), hair colour, sex, age and bodyweight.



## INTRODUCTION

Children spend a lot of time watching television. According to d'Haenens, Klokhuys and Summeren (2001), Flemish children, aged from six to eight years old, watch television about 85 minutes a day, while children older than eight years watch television about 113 minutes a day. In a more recent study, Bonnewyn, Debourse and Dochy (2005) found that children between four and eight years old watch television more than two hours a day. More than half of the children between 11 and 18 years old watch television between two and four hours a day and 10% of these children watches television even more than four hours a day. These studies confirm the importance of television in children's everyday life. Several authors mention that children have a polychronic television use. When they are in front of the television they do not only watch television. At the same time they also do several other things like doing homework, reading or playing (Allen, 1965; Gunther & McAleer, 1997; Van Gils & Bosscher, 1997; Livingstone, 2006). Consequently, children do not always pay equal attention to television and they are not always focused. The focus depends on the moment and situation of watching. Children that watch television alone are more focused than children that watch television together with other children (Van Gils & Bosscher, 1997). A lot also depends on the kind of programme that is being watched. Children will for example pay more attention to their favorite programme (Gunter & McAleer, 1997). Most of the favorite programmes are formats which are defined by the production as children's television. It is this umbrella genre which is the scope of research we present here.

Between May 2<sup>nd</sup> and July 2<sup>nd</sup> 2007 24 countries around the world analysed gender in children's television. The main goal of the research is to create a meaningful and accurately representative sample of the children's television programmes available in each participating country. The initiative was taken by the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media (GDIGM). The Geena Davis Institute: 'Comparative international analyses are crucial to developing a cross-cultural perspective and to effectively communicating the negative consequences of gender stereotypes to content creators and the public. At this point, such international comparative analyses do not exist'.

The programmes are chosen because of their popularity amongst children; represent the diversity of available television programmes and the differentiation between public service and private broadcasting networks. Funded by the IZI (International Central Institute for Youth and Educational Television) and part of a global research project on gender representations in children's programmes around the world initiated by the GDIGM. Using a quantitative content analysis the latent gender representations in children's programmes were analysed around the world<sup>1</sup>. The following questions have raised: Who are the heroes and heroines in children's television? How do they look like? Or: How is gender being constructed in the media texts for children? And in addition: What is the relation between regional produced programmes and co-productions and imported (bought) programmes?



With the collaboration of the International Central Institute for Youth and Educational Television's (IZI) and the Prix Jeunesse International's project Children's Television Worldwide: Gender Representation, The Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media aims to begin to fill this gap in children's media by exploring television's representation of gender in countries across the world.' GDIGM organised a conference in January 2008 in Los Angeles, including a Round Table, bringing together the participating international researchers studying gender representation in the media, specifically children's television. During a public seminar in LA on the last day, the results have been introduced to Hollywood executives and producers.



## REPRESENTATION AND STEREOTYPING

Today, the role of television as part of the socialization process of children is generally accepted. Television helps children to cultivate an image of social reality that deviates from things we are confronted with in everyday life (Gerbner, Gros, Morgan, Signorielli & Shanahan, 2002). Despite the important role of television in the socialization process of children, little research has focused on the gender representation in children's programmes. Public opinion as well as research within the effect paradigm of the 1970s pronounce the 'dangers of this medium' (Oliver, 2001). Without falling back to the effect thinking of the 1970s or making causal relationships between content and reception, it remains important to investigate what is represented and how this is done.

Stereotypes remain kind of a biased representation that annuls diversity. Especially gender representations are often portrayed one-sidedly, also in children's television (Aubrey & Harrison, 2004). Several studies demonstrate that children's television often represents gender stereotypically (Barcus, 1983; Signorielli, 1991; Thompson & Zernibos, 1995). Baker and Raney (2007) state that several studies show the same results. There are more male than female superheroes. Concerning physical traits, female superheroes are shown as slim with revealing clothes. They have more human characteristics and they are more member than leader of a group. Male superheroes are more muscular, wear ordinary clothes and are more leader than member of a group. Concerning personality traits, female superheroes are warm, emotional, jealous, attractive, romantic, sensitive and superficial. Male superheroes are more assertive, athletic, technical and hard. In closing, female superheroes are more in distress, while male superheroes are brave and aggressive.

Also in Flanders, research concerning gender representations in children's television is not new. Lefever (1999) shows there are more male than female characters in Flemish children programmes. Besides, there are also more stereotypical than non-stereotypical occupations and male characteristics are mainly attributed to male characters.



## GENDER REPRESENTATIONS AROUND THE GLOBE

Before going deeper into the specific results for Belgian children's programmes we want to stress some of the global findings of the analysis in 24 countries. A content analysis of this level is above all important because of the large amount of quantitative data it produces which stresses some global trends about the gender representations. Most striking result was the fact that almost 77 percent of the fiction shows are production of another country, mainly US and UK productions, and 23% produced in their own country. The USA and UK are the countries with the highest percentage of domestic or co-produced programmes, respectively 82,7% and 67,7%. The 31,2% fictional programmes have been taken for further analysis. Within these, more than 80 percent of the recorded fiction are animation shows and only 9,1% of the cases show real people.

Among the fiction shows, more than 80 percent is produced in the respective national language. Most of fiction shows (90%) did not use subtitles. For three quarters there was no narrator or voice over used, in the cases where there was a narrator or voice over in the fiction shows, 6,1% was female, and 14,6% male voices, and a minor part (3,5%) of these were mixed.

As noted in the coding book, all the characters that were screened for more than 50% of the time in the programme, were analysed by sex, age, their role in the programme and which place they were having in their social environment. One third of the main characters in the fictional characters are female, whilst 68% of them are male. Norway, Syria, UK and Israel have a higher percentage of female characters, while Cuba and Malaysia appear at the bottom of the list. Animation characters related to real life characters show a better balance of gender (31%-40% female and 60% male). There are both more male protagonists as antagonists counted, but within the female characters relatively 80% of these appear as protagonists, and only 9,5% antagonists. Within the male characters this balance is almost the same; 76,1% protagonists and 15% antagonists. In total 77% of all the characters were protagonists. Most of the characters are human or animals. More than 60% percent of the human characters were male, with 37,1% female characters, amongst the animals you find 23,2% females and 68,8% males. Looking at the constellation of the characters, there is no significant difference between males and females whether they appear alone, as a duo or in a group. Although, female characters appear slightly more in groups than their male counterpart (60%-54%). There is an actual difference in the place the characters are introduced into the plot. Of all of them they are introduced for 43,9% in the private space, secondly in the public or works space (26,4%), 18,1% in nature, then for a small ten percent in school. There is a slight difference that female characters appear relatively more in private space and school, while males more in public. Female characters are more frequently shown as equals and they are less often presented as leaders or followers (see global report IZI, 2008).

Looking at the skin colour of the main characters, one sees that the majority, 72% were Caucasian, especially in Cuba, Argentina, Belgium, Slovenia and South Africa. There is more diversity in skin colour amongst female characters; they are more represented as Asia, Africans or Latinas. Most of



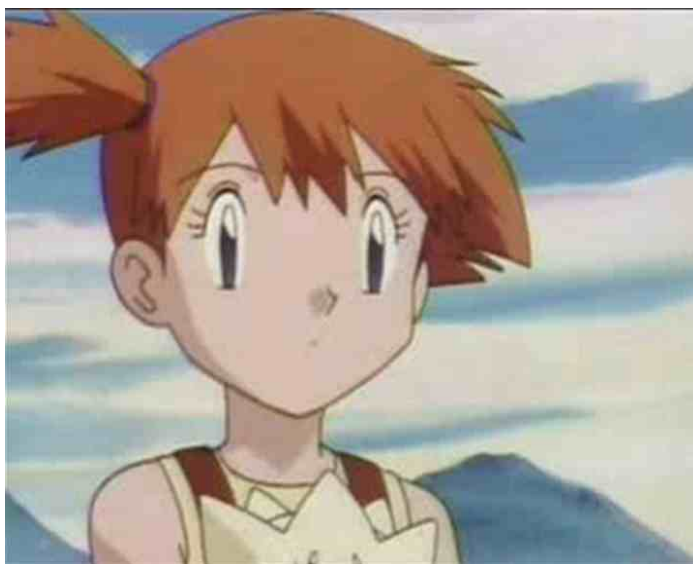


the main characters are blonde, black and brown. Female characters are often blonde and red-haired. Australia, UK and Syria are for one third blonde.

Amongst the protagonists there are almost no babies and elderly people, but much more children, youngsters, adolescents, adults. Amongst the teenagers, one finds more girls (36,8%) than boys (25,2%) and more male adults (35%) than female adults (24,1%). The weight of the characters differs in gender. Whilst the majority (84,1%) of the boys and girls are normal range, when they are very thin, more female characters are amongst them (14,8% female and 5,8 male). Boys are shown as overweighed for 8,8% to 3,6% girls. Especially Australia and UK show very often thin girls, while almost none coded in Hong Kong and Israel. Overweighed boys are especially seen in Kenya and Argentina.

**ILLUSTRATION 1**

***Screenshot Pokémon***





## BELGIAN CHILDREN'S TELEVISION

Belgium has a complex federal structure with several communities and two regional governments and two regional governments. This complex structure is also reflected in Belgium broadcasting. In 1977 the French speaking and Dutch speaking broadcasters were separated and now we have a Walloon public broadcaster RTBF and Flemish public broadcaster VRT. Only recently in 1989 commercial television was introduced. At this moment the public broadcaster is very successful. Most tv-households watch television on cable (96%) and receive more than 40 mostly European channels (in this context Nickleodeon shares a channel with MTV and broadcasts from 8am till 8pm. In the table below an overview of the different main Flemish tv-channels (in this study most of the data were collected of Flemish broadcasting).

Belgium is a trilingual country, having Dutch (Flemish), French and German as official languages. Since the German speaking community is too small we did not include them in our analysis. We thus can make a distinction between Flemish and the French children television. We consider both, starting with Flemish children television.

The public broadcasting in the Dutch-speaking Belgium, VRT, has strict obligations considering the media offer of children's programmes. This task is discharged by the channel Ketnet, which tries to reach children until the age of twelve with a local and high-quality programming. In April 2006, Ketnet has been divided into three sub segments. *Ketnet* remains the brand name for the programmes for children between four and eight years old. Besides, there is also *K'tje*, that stimulates children in their development and *NT* that helps eight to twelve years old to explore the world of adolescents (Beheersovereenkomst 2007 – 2011). In the autumn of 2007, Ketnet has canceled NT because it did not fit with the Ketnet-label (Maes, 2007, August 30). The public broadcasting is not the only Flemish channel that provides children television. Also the commercial channels VTM and VT4 offer specific programmes for children. On VTM those programmes are scheduled in the early morning and are called Tamtam ([www.vtm.be](http://www.vtm.be)). VT4 does not only broadcast children's television in the morning, but also in the afternoon ([www.vt4.be](http://www.vt4.be)). Nickelodeon, that shares a channel with MTV Nederland, brings children programmes from 5 a.m. until 8 p.m. (Dbj, 2008, January 26).

Besides these analogue channels, the advent of digital television in Flanders in 2006 has brought some digital children's channels to the Flemish part of Belgium: Jetix, Nickelodeon Junior, Boomerang and Cartoon Network.

The audiovisual landscape constantly changes. Therefore it is important to mention some recent evolutions. For a long time, the controversial '*vijfminutenregel*' ('5-minutes rule') prohibited advertising five minutes before and after children programmes on Flemish channels. This has led to several heated discussions (Voorhoof, 2000). The commercial channels even threatened to stop providing children programmes (Michaels, 2006, March 11). The problem is that the public and commercial broadcasters do not fight on even terms. VRT is subsidized by the government to offer children programmes but commercial channels depend on the advertisers. Because of the



*‘vijfminutenregel’* the advertisers showed little interest in advertising around Flemish children programmes. Moreover, since the commercial channels Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network broadcasted from abroad (where the *‘vijfminutenregel’* does not apply), they could show advertising before and after its children programmes on Flemish television (Michaels, 2006, March 11). The rule was undermined and lost its legal force. Because of this, it is abrogated in 2007 (Voorhoof, 2007). For Flemish commercial channels, the abolition of the *‘vijfminutenregel’* has made children television financially attracting again. This has led to some new initiatives. In the autumn of 2007, VTM planned to establish a new children channel together with the Dutch channel Jetix. These plans ended in January 2008, when VTM decided to join forces with MTV to set up Nick Jr., a new children channel that sends out from 6 a.m. until 8 p.m. The new channel will be launched in the course of 2008 (dbj, 2008, January 26).

In the French-speaking part of Belgium, leading players in children’s television are La Deux and Club-RTL. La Deux is the second channel of the Walloon public broadcasting, and is compatible with La Une. La Deux aims at specific target groups, such as children (Saeys, 2007; [www.ladeux.be](http://www.ladeux.be)). Club-RTL is the second channel of the leading private television group RTL-TVi. Club-RTL strongly commits itself to children’s programmes, which are bundled in the morning and early evening called ‘Kids Club’ (Saeys, 2007; [www.clubrtl.be](http://www.clubrtl.be)).

Besides these analogue channels, some digital channels are also aimed at children, such as Disney Cinémagic, Boomerang, Tiji and Canal J. It is important to notice that the French television channels are very popular as well in the Walloon region (Saeys, 2007). TF1 and France 3 broadcast several children programmes ([www.tf1.fr](http://www.tf1.fr); [www.france3.fr](http://www.france3.fr)). Table 1:

**TABLE 1**      ***Main Belgian television channels***

|                  | <b>Channel</b> | <b>Group</b>                 | <b>Share (2007)</b> |
|------------------|----------------|------------------------------|---------------------|
| Flemish channels | Een            | VRT (public)                 | 30,1%               |
|                  | Ketnet/Canvas  | VRT (public)                 | 9,4%                |
|                  | VTM            | VMMA (private)               | 20,7%               |
|                  | Kanaaltwee     | VMMA (private)               | 5,9%                |
|                  | VT4            | SBS (private)                | 6,4%                |
|                  | Vijftv         | SBS (private)                | 4,1%                |
|                  | VITAYA         | Media ad infinitum (private) | 3,4%                |
|                  | Others         | /                            | 20,1%               |
| Walloon channels | La Une         | RTBF (public)                | 15,1%               |
|                  | La Deux        | RTBF (public)                | 4,5%                |
|                  | RTL-TVi        | RTL (private)                | 19,3%               |
|                  | Club RTL       | RTL (private)                | 4,8%                |
|                  | Plug TV        | RTL (private)                | 1,5%                |
|                  | Be1            |                              | 0,5%                |



**TABLE 1**      ***Main Belgian television channels (Continued)***

|  | <b>Channel</b> | <b>Group</b>                 | <b>Share (2007)</b> |
|--|----------------|------------------------------|---------------------|
|  | AB3            | AB (private)                 | 3,6%                |
|  | AB4            | AB (private)                 | 1,5%                |
|  | TF1            | <i>French public channel</i> | 17,1%               |
|  | FR2            | <i>French public channel</i> | 9,6%                |
|  | FR3            | <i>French public channel</i> | 6,1%                |
|  | Others         | /                            | 16,4%               |

The data in this study were collected from the public broadcasters Ketnet and La Deux, VTM (commercial family channel), and VT4 (broad young audience). Most of the programmes were broadcasted by the public broadcaster VRT en RTBF (La Deux). Children's programmes are defined by the Flemish broadcasting decree (Flemish Government, 2008) as *"a programme that is aimed at children younger than twelve, which has to turn out of the content, the moment of broadcasting, the style, the presentation, the way of announcement and the viewing figures"*. Especially the children's channel Ketnet (4-12 years old) offers domestic qualitative programmes, which are initiated by the policy of the public broadcaster. An example is the Diversity Charter, erected by the public broadcaster VRT in 2001, where equal and diverse representation is emphasised in the production and the broadcasting of programmes.

<sup>2</sup> Dates data gathering: 02.05.2007 – 31.05.2007.



## METHODS

In this paper, we will investigate the latent gender representation in children's programmes by means of a quantitative content analysis. In a content analysis, the presence of certain characteristics in a text is examined in order to say something about the text. In our opinion, Neuendorf (2002, p.10) gives the most conclusive definition of a quantitative content analysis: *"Content analysis is a summarizing, quantitative analysis of messages that relies on the scientific method (including attention to objectivity-intersubjectivity, a priori design, reliability, validity, generalizability, replicability and hypothesis testing) and is not limited as to the types of variables that may be measured or the context in which the messages are created or presented"*.

The codebook is a central element in a content analysis. It lists all characteristics that have to be examined. The codebook that is used in this study, is created by the International Central Institute for Youth and Educational Television (IZI) in Germany, as part of an international study concerning gender representation in children's television. The codebook consists of three parts. The first part consists of some criteria for the programme slot, making it possible to identify the coded programme: country of broadcast, channel, date, title of the programme and length of the programme. The second part considers the programme itself: programme type, country, language, narrator or voice over and the presence or absence of subtitles. In the last part of the codebook, the main characters of fiction programmes are further analyzed: protagonist or antagonist, type of character, skin color, hair color, sex, age, body weight, disability and constellation of the main characters.

In order to obtain objective and reliable results, in Belgium the three coders attended training sessions and discussed the results of trial encodings.

Within the context of the international study, the recording of the programmes happened in May 2007<sup>2</sup>. With the aim of the study in mind, we created a meaningful and accurately representative sample of the Belgian children's television programmes.

The sample is based on the following Belgian television networks. One public Flemish network Ketnet, La Deux (public Wallon French speaking), commercial broadcasters VTM and VT4. For these channels the children's programme of the country was recorded in the agreed time frame and subsequently categorized and measured. The sample analysed here consists of 118 hours of explicit children's television, 87 hours of fictional shows, 981 programmes (445 fictional shows), 1803 characters (fiction) from which 1042 human characters.

Based on preceding theory (cfr. Supra), we formulated some hypotheses:

**H1:** There are more male than female characters/heroes in children's television.

**H2:** Male characters are more often the leader of a team than female characters.

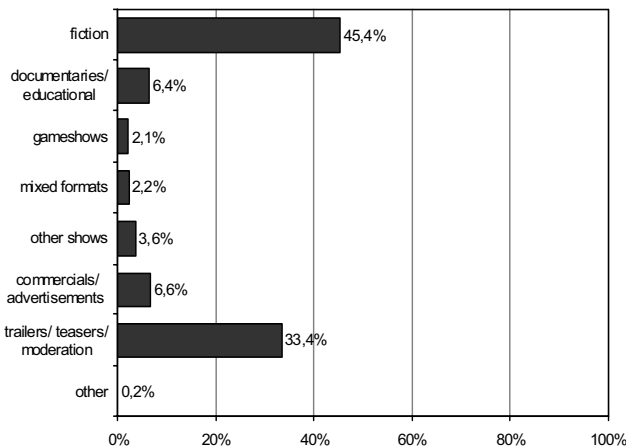
**H3:** As for physical characteristics, gender is portrayed stereotypically.



## FICTION AND NON-FICTIONAL IN BELGIAN CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMES

The sample comprises altogether 982 shows that can be categorised into different programme types. 445 shows (45.4%) can be referred to as fiction, 63 shows (6.4%) were documentaries, 21 were game shows (2.1%) and 22 mixed formats (2.2%). Of interest for the further analysis of the children's programmes are only the 445 fictional shows that were coded. Those are in 54.8% of the cases animation shows and in 18.7% of the cases shows with real people (n=83). Then there is a puppet show 4.3% and a mixed format 21.8% (n=97).

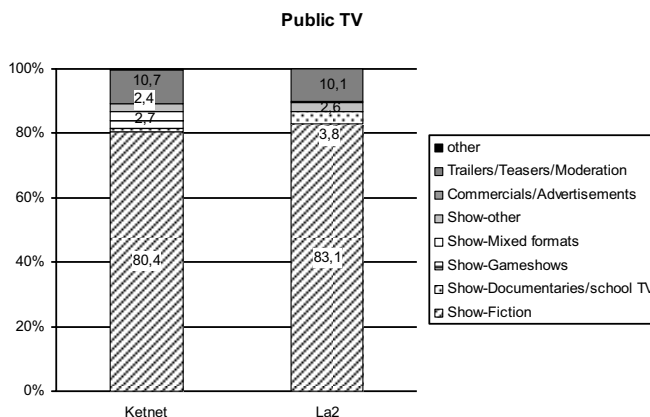
**GRAPH 1** *Differentiation between fiction and non-fiction*



IZI – Children's Television Worldwide 2007; basis: Belgium, 118 h children's programme

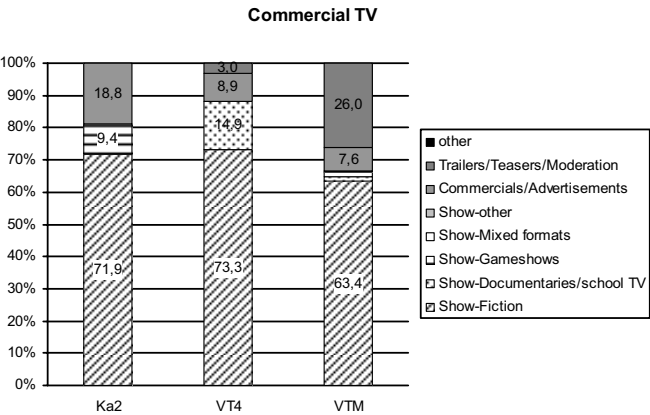
The public stations in Belgium show about 10% more fiction shows than the commercial broadcasters do.

**GRAPH 2** *Frequency of children's fiction and non fiction programmes in public broadcasting*





**GRAPH 3**      *Frequency of children’s fiction and non fiction programmes in commercial broadcasting*





## PROGRAMMES GENRES

We coded the general type/genre of show. Is it an animation or a puppet show? Or mixed?

Among the 445 recorded fiction shows were 244 (54.8%) animation shows; in 83 shows (18.7%) real people are the actors/actresses and 19 (4.3%) was a puppet show. 97 shows (21.8%) were a mix of several of these categories.

On an international scale, Belgium is last when it comes to the percentage of animated programmes (54.8%).

**TABLE 2** *Programmes genres in children's programmes around the world*

|              | <b>Animation</b> | <b>Puppets</b> | <b>People</b> | <b>Mixture</b> | <b>other</b> |
|--------------|------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|
| Slovenia     | 96,5%            | 0,9%           | 1,9%          | 0,7%           | 0,0%         |
| China        | 96,4%            | 0,7%           | 2,9%          | 0,0%           | 0,0%         |
| Canada       | 95,9%            | 0,7%           | 0,7%          | 2,0%           | 0,7%         |
| Egypt        | 95,3%            | 0,0%           | 2,6%          | 2,1%           | 0,0%         |
| Cuba         | 94,5%            | 0,3%           | 2,8%          | 2,4%           | 0,0%         |
| Syria        | 93,5%            | 0,0%           | 3,2%          | 0,0%           | 3,2%         |
| Kenya        | 90,6%            | 0,7%           | 8,1%          | 0,7%           | 0,0%         |
| Netherlands  | 90,0%            | 0,8%           | 9,2%          | 0,0%           | 0,0%         |
| Germany      | 88,8%            | 1,8%           | 7,0%          | 2,4%           | 0,0%         |
| Austria      | 88,3%            | 2,6%           | 6,4%          | 2,6%           | 0,0%         |
| Hong Kong    | 85,8%            | ,6%            | 8,9%          | 1,8%           | 0,0%         |
| Hungary      | 85,8%            | 12,1%          | 0,7%          | 1,4%           | 0,0%         |
| South Africa | 85,3%            | 3,9%           | 8,3%          | 2,5%           | 0,0%         |
| USA          | 84,8%            | 1,3%           | 8,5%          | 5,5%           | 0,0%         |
| Norway       | 84,6%            | 2,6%           | 10,3%         | 2,6%           | 0,0%         |
| Brazil       | 84,2%            | 1,1%           | 12,6%         | 2,1%           | 0,0%         |
| India        | 81,0%            | 0,0%           | 19,0%         | 0,0%           | 0,0%         |
| New Zealand  | 80,6%            | 0,0%           | 13,9%         | 5,5%           | 0,0%         |
| Australia    | 80,4%            | 1,1%           | 11,0%         | 2,8%           | 4,6%         |
| Israel       | 74,7%            | 0,8%           | 21,4%         | 3,1%           | 0,0%         |
| Malaysia     | 72,4%            | 0,0%           | 13,8%         | 13,8%          | 0,0%         |
| Argentina    | 58,8%            | 17,6%          | 17,6%         | 5,9%           | 0,0%         |
| UK           | 55,0%            | 10,8%          | 12,3%         | 20,8%          | 1,2%         |
| Belgium      | 54,8%            | 4,3%           | 18,7%         | 21,8%          | 0,4%         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>83,9%</b>     | <b>2,4%</b>    | <b>8,9%</b>   | <b>4,5%</b>    | <b>0,3%</b>  |





41.6% of Ketnet programmes are animated programmes, while even 67.9% of the La2 programmes are animated. Ka2 shows – at least in this sample – exclusively puppet shows, while VT4 78.4% and VTM 47.9% animated programmes. That a commercial channel shows puppets for a 100% is quite unusual and should be positively pointed out.

**ILLUSTRATION 2**      *Screenshot Big & Betsy*

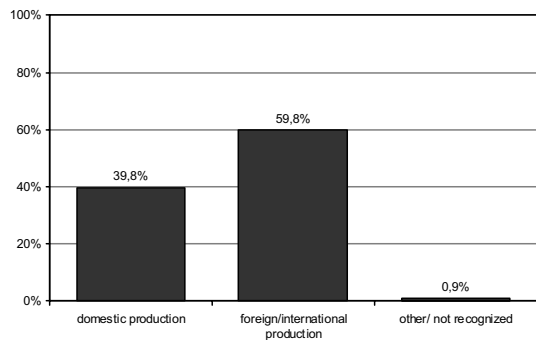




# WHERE ARE THE SHOWS PRODUCED?

We coded where/by which company the show is produced (as far as can be seen from credits, programme magazine or other sources). Is it a company or broadcaster from one’s own country or from a foreign country or an international co-production?

**GRAPH 4**      *Origin of production of children’s shows*



IZI – Children’s Television Worldwide 2007; basis: Belgium, 87 h fict. children’s programme

The fiction shows are in 59.8% of the cases productions of another country and in 39.8% produced domestically. 4 (n=0.9%) shows could not be classified into any category.  
In the international scale Belgium is clearly above the average, when it concerns domestically produced shows.

**TABLE 3**      *Frequency of domestic production of children’s programmes around the world*

| Domestic productions |       |
|----------------------|-------|
| Malaysia             | 93,1% |
| USA                  | 82,7% |
| UK                   | 67,7% |
| China                | 53,4% |
| Canada               | 44,2% |
| Belgium              | 39,8% |
| Germany              | 17,3% |
| India                | 15,8% |
| Hungary              | 13,2% |
| Israel               | 13,1% |
| Australia            | 11,1% |
| Norway               | 9,0%  |
| Egypt                | 8,9%  |



**TABLE 3**      *Frequency of domestic production of children's programmes around the world (Continued)*

| Domestic productions |              |
|----------------------|--------------|
| Netherlands          | 7,3%         |
| South Africa         | 6,4%         |
| Brazil               | 6,3%         |
| Argentina            | 5,9%         |
| Cuba                 | 5,5%         |
| Syria                | 3,2%         |
| Slovenia             | 2,3%         |
| Austria              | 0,8%         |
| Hong Kong            | 0,6%         |
| New Zealand          | 0,5%         |
| Kenya                | 0,0%         |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>22,6%</b> |

About 39.8% of the children's programme in Belgium was domestically produced. 11% was made in France, 9% in the Netherlands, and 8% in the UK, the USA and in Canada.

More than one third of the public TV programmes are domestically produced. While the commercial TV stations Ka2 and VT4 show exclusively internationally produced programmes, 43.3% of VTM programmes are domestically produced.

**ILLUSTRATION 3**      *Screenshot Pokémon*

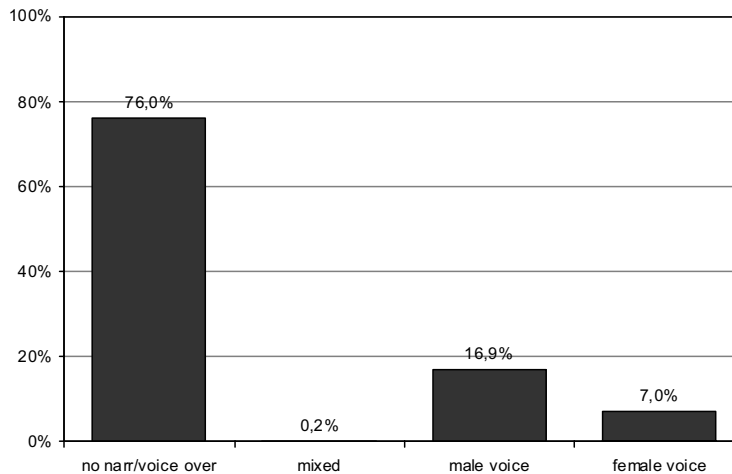




## WHO SPEAKS? ORIGIN OF NARRATOR / VOICE OVER

We coded whether there is a narrator or voice over (which means you can hear a voice but do not necessarily see the person) – is it a male or a female voice?

**GRAPH 5**      *Origin of narrator / voice over*



IZI – Children's Television Worldwide 2007; basis: Belgium, 87 h fict. children's programme

In 338 (76.0%) fiction shows there was no narrator, in 31 shows (7.0%) there was a female narrator, in 75 shows (16.9%) a male narrator, and one show used a mixed narrator (0.2%). There are twice as many male as female narrators.

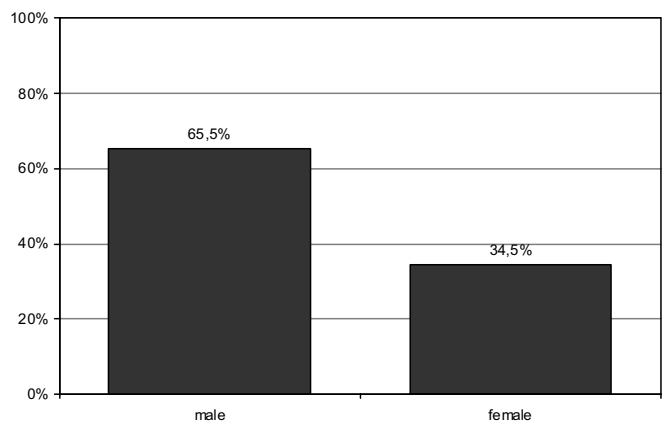
<sup>3</sup> Please note: The quantity of cases varies because of a different number of the missing. In the glossary the maximum number of cases is accounted.



## WHO ARE THE MAIN CHARACTERS? RESULTS AT CHARACTER LEVEL<sup>3</sup>

In this study we focused on the main characters of the show, which we defined as the characters that can be seen on screen at least 50% of the time of the duration of the episode. In the first step we analysed which sex it is, based on grammatical terms, name of character, voice, easily identifiable sexual characteristics. In terms of characters, in the 445 fiction shows in Belgium’s children’s television, 1803 were identified as main characters.

**GRAPH 6**      *Origin of Sex of the Characters*



IZI – Children’s Television Worldwide 2007; basis: Belgium, 87 h fict. children’s programme; n =1803 fict. characters

### Gender perspective: Men and boys are the heroes of the programme

The characters of the fictional shows in Belgian children’s television were in 34.5% of the cases female and in 65.5% male. In Belgium broadcasted children’s television more than half of the characters are males, and one third is female.

**TABLE 4**      *Gender of characters worldwide*

| female      |       | male         |       |
|-------------|-------|--------------|-------|
| Norway      | 41,6% | Argentina    | 81,5% |
| Syria       | 38,9% | Cuba         | 79,9% |
| Israel      | 37,4% | Malaysia     | 77,2% |
| UK          | 37,3% | Egypt        | 71,4% |
| India       | 36,1% | Slovenia     | 71,2% |
| New Zealand | 35,2% | South Africa | 70,3% |
| Canada      | 35,1% | Austria      | 69,4% |



TABLE 4

**Gender of characters worldwide (Continued)**

| female       |              | male         |              |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Hong Kong    | 34,9%        | China        | 69,1%        |
| Belgium      | 34,5%        | Germany      | 69,0%        |
| Kenya        | 33,2%        | Australia    | 68,5%        |
| USA          | 33,1%        | Brazil       | 68,5%        |
| Hungary      | 32,6%        | Netherlands  | 68,4%        |
| Netherlands  | 31,6%        | Hungary      | 67,4%        |
| Brazil       | 31,5%        | USA          | 66,9%        |
| Australia    | 31,5%        | Kenya        | 66,8%        |
| Germany      | 31,0%        | Belgium      | 65,5%        |
| China        | 30,9%        | Hong Kong    | 65,1%        |
| Austria      | 30,6%        | Canada       | 64,9%        |
| South Africa | 29,7%        | New Zealand  | 64,8%        |
| Slovenia     | 28,8%        | India        | 63,9%        |
| Egypt        | 28,6%        | UK           | 62,7%        |
| Malaysia     | 22,8%        | Israel       | 62,6%        |
| Cuba         | 20,1%        | Syria        | 61,1%        |
| Argentina    | 18,5%        | Norway       | 58,4%        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>32,1%</b> | <b>total</b> | <b>67,9%</b> |

With a proportion of 34.5% female characters, Belgium is slightly above the international average.

ILLUSTRATION 4

**Screenshot Mega Mindy**



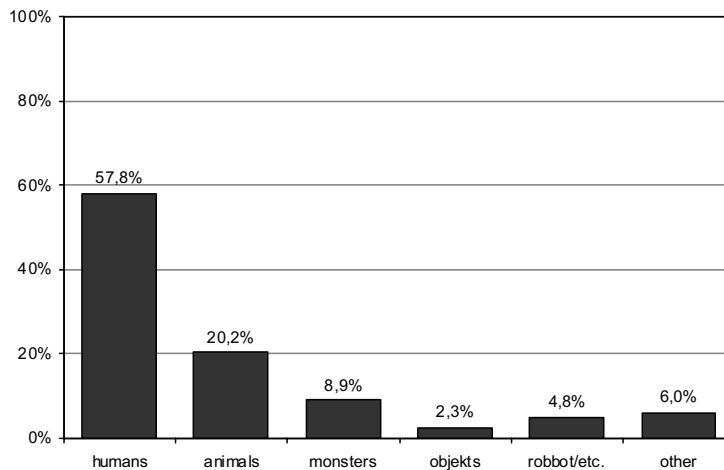
In public stations about one third of the characters are female. Commercial stations range from 13% female characters (Ka2), over 38.3% (VTM) to 43.7% (VT4). Two of the commercial channels have a higher percentage of female characters than the public ones. It is remarkable, that VT4 and VTM as private broadcaster have a more equal gender representation than Ketnet and La2.



## IS THE MAIN CHARACTER A HUMAN – ANIMAL – MONSTER – OBJECT – MACHINE ETC.?

364 characters of the 1803 recorded were animals, which accords to a percentage of 20.2%. and most of the character types are human (57.8%).

**GRAPH 7**     *Type of characters*



IZI – Children's Television Worldwide 2007; basis: Belgium, 87 h fict. children's programme; n =1803 fict. characters

364 characters were animals, which accords to a percentage of 20.2%. Part of this group is, for example, Snuffie or *Nijntje*. 1042 of the characters (57.8%) are humans. The monsters and mythical creatures appear as the third largest group. 160 characters (8.9%) can be assigned to this group, i.e. Dodo or *Wawa*. Furthermore, 42 plants (2.3%), 86 robots or machines (4.8%) and 109 other characters (6.0%) were recorded.

Of the 364 animals 103 (28.3%) were female and 192 (52.7%) male. For 69 (19.0%) characters the gender was not identifiable. Of the 1042 humans 378 (36.3%) were female and 649 (62.3%) were male. 15 (1.4%) characters could not be identified. Among the 39 plants, 7 were female (17.9%), 24 (61.5%) were male and 8 neutral (20.5%). Of the 84 machines and robots which were counted, 36 (42.9%) were male, 5 (6.0%) were female, and 43 were gender-neutral (51.2%). Among the 160 monsters and mythical creatures, 22 were female (13.8%), 61 (38.1%) were male and 76 neutral (47.5%). The gender of the 109 other characters was in 38 cases (34.9%) neutral, 52 (47.7%) characters were male and 19 (17.4%) characters were female.





**TABLE 5**      *Types of characters around the world*

|              | <b>Animal</b> | <b>Human</b> | <b>Monster/<br/>etc.</b> | <b>Plant/Object</b> | <b>Robot/etc.</b> | <b>other</b> |
|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Kenya        | 12,8%         | 77,0%        | 9,2%                     | 0,3%                | 0,6%              | 0,1%         |
| South Africa | 12,6%         | 74,3%        | 1,5%                     | 0,1%                | 11,1%             | 0,5%         |
| Malaysia     | 6,4%          | 72,8%        | 4,6%                     | 16,2%               | 0,0%              | 0,0%         |
| Slovenia     | 17,9%         | 70,9%        | 4,9%                     | 0,5%                | 4,4%              | 1,4%         |
| Egypt        | 21,7%         | 70,0%        | 3,2%                     | 0,3%                | 4,3%              | 0,4%         |
| Israel       | 26,8%         | 66,9%        | 3,1%                     | 1,6%                | 1,5%              | 0,1%         |
| Netherlands  | 19,7%         | 65,2%        | 10,4%                    | 3,7%                | 1,0%              | 0,0%         |
| New Zealand  | 23,5%         | 64,5%        | 4,1%                     | 4,1%                | 2,8%              | 1,1%         |
| Syria        | 23,1%         | 62,7%        | 11,9%                    | 0,0%                | 0,0%              | 2,2%         |
| Hong Kong    | 22,8%         | 62,0%        | 8,5%                     | 0,4%                | 2,0%              | 4,3%         |
| Canada       | 26,7%         | 60,5%        | 5,8%                     | 0,8%                | 2,4%              | 3,8%         |
| Norway       | 25,8%         | 60,1%        | 2,8%                     | 5,5%                | 2,8%              | 3,0%         |
| China        | 32,7%         | 59,2%        | 0,4%                     | 1,6%                | 4,5%              | 1,6%         |
| Brazil       | 22,8%         | 59,0%        | 6,2%                     | 6,1%                | 1,0%              | 4,9%         |
| Australia    | 26,0%         | 58,8%        | 4,1%                     | 5,4%                | 5,7%              | 0,0%         |
| Belgium      | 20,2%         | 57,8%        | 8,9%                     | 2,3%                | 4,8%              | 6,0%         |
| Hungary      | 35,2%         | 54,9%        | 3,8%                     | 2,2%                | 2,7%              | 1,1%         |
| Germany      | 30,7%         | 54,8%        | 4,2%                     | 8,0%                | 1,2%              | 1,1%         |
| UK           | 27,8%         | 54,3%        | 0,8%                     | 0,0%                | 6,0%              | 11,2%        |
| Austria      | 31,7%         | 53,6%        | 4,7%                     | 7,7%                | 1,2%              | 1,1%         |
| India        | 22,2%         | 50,6%        | 1,5%                     | 8,9%                | 2,5%              | 14,3%        |
| USA          | 34,2%         | 47,3%        | 6,0%                     | 3,7%                | 2,2%              | 6,6%         |
| Argentina    | 30,0%         | 45,5%        | 10,0%                    | 13,6%               | 0,9%              | 0,0%         |
| Cuba         | 55,5%         | 29,4%        | 7,3%                     | 2,1%                | 2,3%              | 3,5%         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>26,3%</b>  | <b>59,1%</b> | <b>5,0%</b>              | <b>3,5%</b>         | <b>3,1%</b>       | <b>3,1%</b>  |

With a proportion of 57.8% of humans in its children's programmes, Belgium is a little bit below the international average.



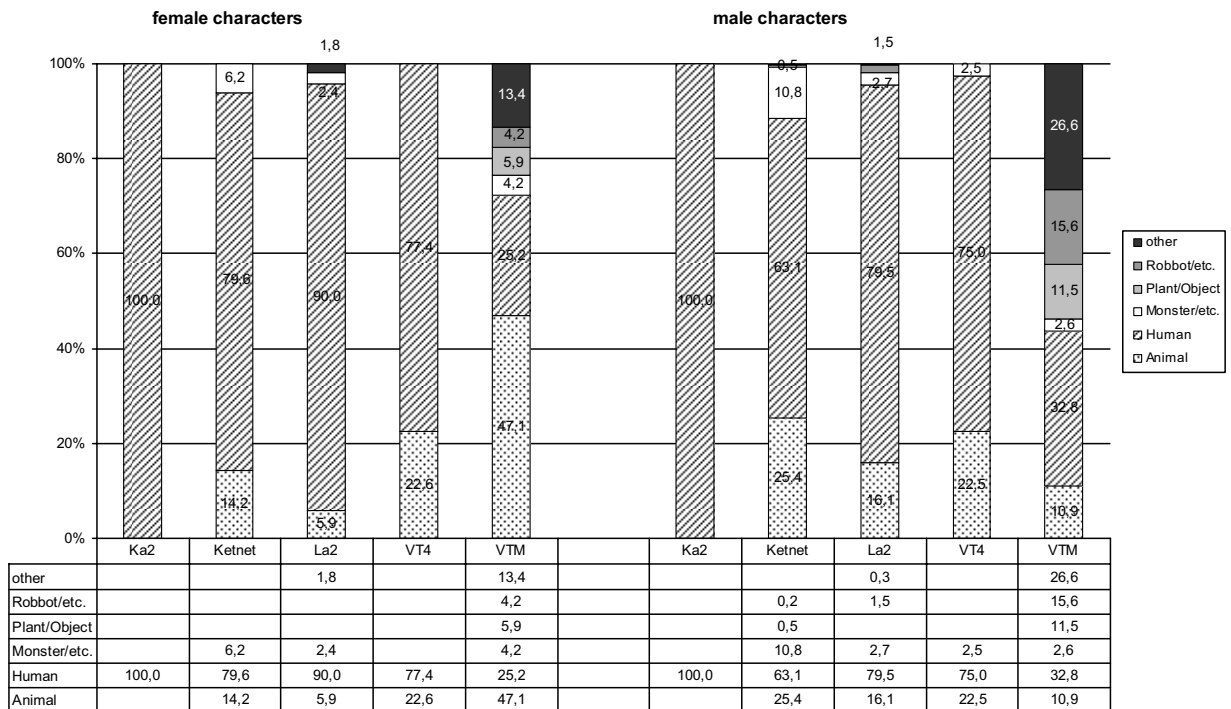


### **Gender Perspective: Female characters are often humans, males more often monsters and robots**

Of the 534 (29.7%) female characters 378 (70.8%) were humans and 22 (4.1%) were monsters or mythical creatures, and 103 female characters (19.3%) are animals. The 1014 male characters are represented in 649 cases (64.0%) as humans and in 192 (18.9%) cases as animals. Monsters and mythical creatures with male gender were found in 61 characters (6.0%), 36 (3.6%) were part of the plot as robots, and 24 male plants (2.4%) could be counted.



**GRAPH 8**      *Gender of characters*



The highest percentage of female animals appears on VTM (47.1%), while the largest share of female humans was counted on Ka2 (100%). The highest percentage of female monsters is shown on Ketnet (6.2%), while the only female plants (5.9%) and robots (4.2%) appear on VTM. The highest percentage of male animals was counted on Ketnet (25.4%), while the largest share of male humans was counted on Ka2 (100%). The highest percentage of male monsters appears on Ketnet (10.8%), while the highest shares of male plants (11.5%) as well as of robots (15.6%) were shown on VTM. So Ka2 is the only channel which shows human characters exclusively.



## WHAT IS THE GENERAL ROLE IN THE STORY: PROTAGONIST OR ANTAGONIST?

We coded the “general part” of the character in the narration of the story – is it the good main character or the bad and evil guy/girl?

1687 of the 1803 characters in Belgian children’s television were identified as protagonists. This corresponds to a relative part of 93.6%. On the other hand, there are 116 antagonists that constitute 6.4% of the characters. Of the 1682 protagonists counted, 508 (30.2%) are female and 932 (55.4%) male. 242 characters (14.4%) could not be identified. Among the 116 antagonists there are 26 (22.4%) female characters and 82 (70.7%) male characters. 8 characters (6.9%) are not identifiable.

**TABLE 6**      *Frequency of protagonists and antagonists around the world*

|              | <b>Protagonist</b> | <b>Antagonist</b> |
|--------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| UK           | 38,6%              | 28,8%             |
| Australia    | 61,5%              | 27,3%             |
| South Africa | 74,5%              | 23,5%             |
| Cuba         | 77,8%              | 21,4%             |
| China        | 81,1%              | 18,8%             |
| Malaysia     | 82,1%              | 17,9%             |
| Brazil       | 34,3%              | 15,9%             |
| Norway       | 78,6%              | 15,7%             |
| Argentina    | 83,6%              | 15,5%             |
| Netherlands  | 83,1%              | 15,4%             |
| India        | 80,6%              | 15,3%             |
| Egypt        | 83,7%              | 15,0%             |
| Kenya        | 82,5%              | 15,0%             |
| Syria        | 85,1%              | 14,9%             |
| Hungary      | 85,7%              | 13,6%             |
| Slovenia     | 64,6%              | 12,8%             |
| Canada       | 35,1%              | 11,9%             |
| New Zealand  | 88,1%              | 11,7%             |
| USA          | 78,6%              | 10,3%             |
| Austria      | 87,1%              | 9,5%              |
| Germany      | 87,9%              | 8,8%              |
| Hong Kong    | 93,5%              | 6,5%              |
| Belgium      | 93,6%              | 6,4%              |
| Israel       | 95,5%              | 4,5%              |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>77,0%</b>       | <b>13,7%</b>      |





In children's TV in Belgium 6.4% of the characters are antagonists, which is only half of the international average. It seems that Belgium does not tell its stories with many antagonists.

### **Gender Perspective: Antagonists are three times more often male**

Of the 1682 protagonists, 508 (30.2%) are female and 932 (55.4%) male. 242 characters (14.4%) could not be identified as either. Among the 116 antagonists there are 26 (22.4%) female characters and 82 (70.7%) male characters. Among the female characters, 508 (95.1%) appear as protagonists. 26 (4.9%) of the female characters are antagonists. With regard to boys' or men's characters, there are 932 (91.9%) protagonists. 82 (8.1%) men characters appear as antagonists. To summarize: Antagonists are three times more often male than female.

**ILLUSTRATION 6**      *Screenshot Mega Mindy*



The channel showing the highest percentage of female antagonists is Ka2 (33.3%), while the fewest antagonists appear on La2 (3.5%). The channel presenting the highest percentage of male antagonists is VT4 (15%), and the fewest male antagonists were counted on VTM (6.8%).



## IN WHAT KIND OF RELATION IS THE CHARACTER?

We coded in what kind of constellation the main character is acting. Does he/she work alone, in a group or a duo?

137 of the characters (7.6%) are integrated into the plot as loners. 129 of the 1795 coded characters in this category are part of a duo (7.2%). 1309 (72.8%) and thus the majority of the characters are part of a group or a team, respectively. 12.3% could not be grouped into any of the categories.

**TABLE 7**      *Frequency of positions of characters around the world*

|              | <b>loner</b> | <b>duo</b>   | <b>group/team</b> |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
| China        | 14,3%        | 10,1%        | 75,7%             |
| USA          | 9,4%         | 14,1%        | 74,5%             |
| Belgium      | 7,6%         | 7,2%         | 72,8%             |
| Syria        | 15,7%        | 14,2%        | 70,1%             |
| Canada       | 9,1%         | 24,8%        | 65,3%             |
| Malaysia     | 9,2%         | 25,4%        | 64,7%             |
| South Africa | 17,5%        | 20,3%        | 59,5%             |
| Australia    | 14,2%        | 25,6%        | 58,3%             |
| Egypt        | 16,8%        | 24,6%        | 57,6%             |
| New Zealand  | 19,0%        | 20,9%        | 56,5%             |
| UK           | 17,9%        | 22,7%        | 56,4%             |
| Slovenia     | 27,5%        | 16,2%        | 55,6%             |
| India        | 31,3%        | 14,4%        | 54,2%             |
| Germany      | 18,7%        | 26,4%        | 54,0%             |
| Austria      | 19,3%        | 26,4%        | 53,3%             |
| Kenya        | 20,8%        | 26,1%        | 51,9%             |
| Norway       | 20,6%        | 24,2%        | 50,1%             |
| Cuba         | 24,8%        | 26,7%        | 48,6%             |
| Hong Kong    | 25,1%        | 27,1%        | 46,8%             |
| Hungary      | 22,4%        | 32,3%        | 45,2%             |
| Israel       | 23,9%        | 31,4%        | 44,0%             |
| Argentina    | 30,0%        | 29,1%        | 40,9%             |
| Netherlands  | 34,8%        | 27,2%        | 37,8%             |
| Brazil       | 67,9%        | 6,5%         | 25,0%             |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>20,3%</b> | <b>21,1%</b> | <b>56,5%</b>      |

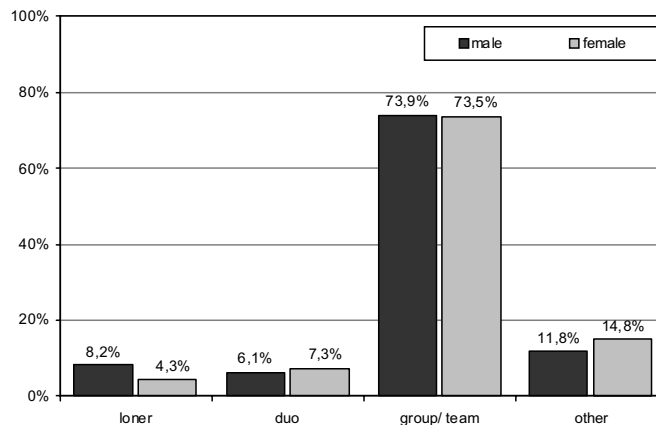
In Belgium 72.8% of the characters is part of a group, which puts Belgium on third place. It seems that Belgium likes to tell stories with main characters in groups.



## Gender Perspective: Males twice as often loners, but both mostly in groups

Of the 532 (29.7%) female characters 23 (4.3%) are loners, 39 (7.3%) are duos and 392 (73.5%) are a part of a group. The 1008 male characters are with 83 (8.2%) loners, 62 (6.1%) duos and with 747 (73.9%) a part of a group. Male and female main characters in Belgium are mostly in groups, but males are twice as often loners.

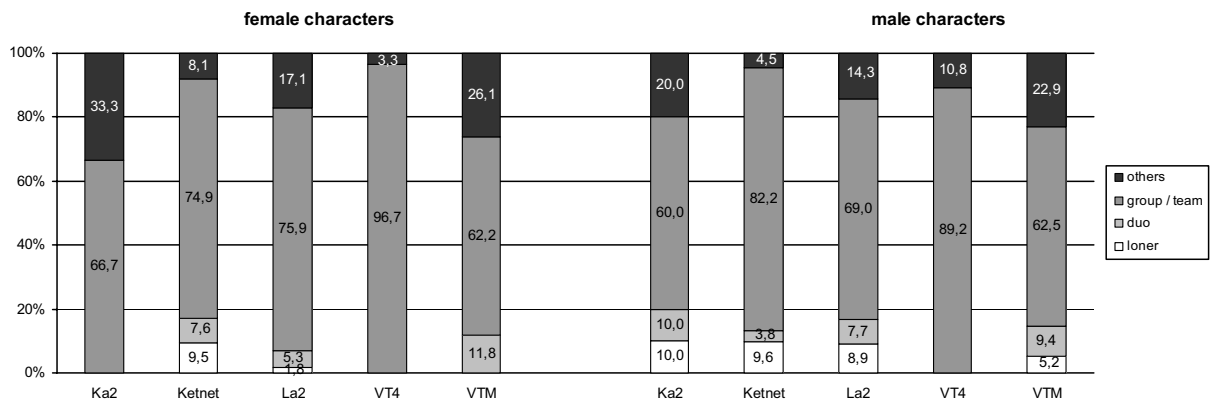
**GRAPH 9** *Relation of the characters in Belgium*



IZI – Children's Television Worldwide 2007; basis: Belgium, 87 h fict. children's prog.; 445 fict. shows; 1807 human characters

The highest share of females in groups appears on VT4 (96.7%), while the highest share of female duos was counted on VTM (11.8%), and of female loners on Ketnet (9.5%). The highest percentage of males in groups was counted on VT4 (89.2%), while the highest percentages of male duos (10%) as well as of loners (10%) appear on Ka2. So, VT4 presents the most characters in collectives, be it among the females or among the males.

**GRAPH 10** *Relation of the gendered characters in Belgium*







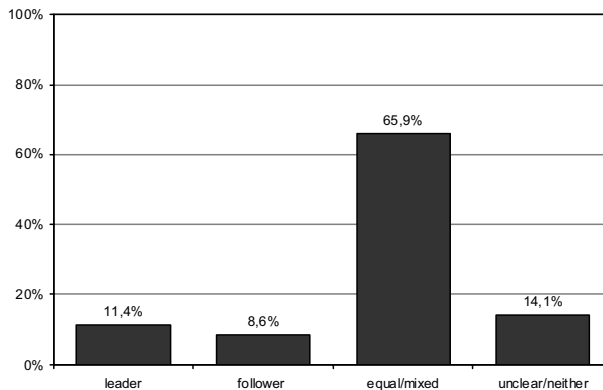




## WHICH HIERARCHICAL POSITION DOES THE CHARACTER ASSUME IN THE SHOW?

We coded the role in the social context. Who is dominant in the relationship and solution of the problem? Is there a clear leading character?

**GRAPH 11** *Hierarchical position of the characters*



IZI – Children's Television Worldwide 2007; basis: Austria, n = 111 h fict. children's programme; n = 2114 fict. characters

1185 (65.9%) of the 1797 characters appear as equals regarding hierarchical positions. 204 (11.4%) are leaders. 154 (8.6%) are part of a following, and for 254 (14.1%) characters the position was not clearly identifiable.

**TABLE 8** *Hierarchical position of the characters worldwide*

|              | Leader |              | Follower |             | equal or mixed |
|--------------|--------|--------------|----------|-------------|----------------|
| Argentina    | 47,3%  | Australia    | 34,6%    | Malaysia    | 67,1%          |
| Cuba         | 42,1%  | New Zealand  | 32,7%    | Belgium     | 65,9%          |
| India        | 40,2%  | UK           | 30,1%    | Brazil      | 62,9%          |
| China        | 30,8%  | India        | 26,9%    | Hungary     | 61,4%          |
| Norway       | 28,4%  | Egypt        | 20,7%    | USA         | 61,2%          |
| Syria        | 28,2%  | Norway       | 19,8%    | Kenya       | 56,7%          |
| South Africa | 28,2%  | South Africa | 19,5%    | Slovenia    | 54,8%          |
| Slovenia     | 27,3%  | Syria        | 16,8%    | Hong Kong   | 53,5%          |
| Australia    | 27,1%  | Hungary      | 16,6%    | Syria       | 53,4%          |
| Kenya        | 26,7%  | Canada       | 15,0%    | Germany     | 47,9%          |
| UK           | 26,1%  | Malaysia     | 14,1%    | Austria     | 47,7%          |
| Germany      | 24,0%  | Germany      | 14,0%    | Cuba        | 46,1%          |
| Austria      | 23,8%  | Argentina    | 13,6%    | Netherlands | 45,9%          |



TABLE 8

*Hierarchical position of the characters worldwide (Continued)*

|              | Leader       |              | Follower     |              | equal or mixed |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| Egypt        | 23,3%        | Austria      | 13,6%        | Israel       | 45,5%          |
| Hungary      | 18,5%        | Kenya        | 12,1%        | China        | 45,0%          |
| Brazil       | 13,8%        | Israel       | 10,3%        | South Africa | 42,9%          |
| Israel       | 13,5%        | Cuba         | 10,3%        | Egypt        | 40,2%          |
| USA          | 13,0%        | USA          | 10,2%        | Argentina    | 39,1%          |
| Belgium      | 11,4%        | Netherlands  | 10,1%        | Norway       | 36,5%          |
| New Zealand  | 11,0%        | Slovenia     | 9,0%         | New Zealand  | 33,5%          |
| Canada       | 9,9%         | Brazil       | 8,8%         | India        | 30,7%          |
| Malaysia     | 8,2%         | China        | 8,6%         | Australia    | 29,4%          |
| Hong Kong    | 6,7%         | Belgium      | 8,6%         | UK           | 28,3%          |
| Netherlands  | 6,4%         | Hong Kong    | 6,9%         | Canada       | 26,3%          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>20,5%</b> | <b>Total</b> | <b>15,5%</b> | <b>Total</b> | <b>47,7%</b>   |

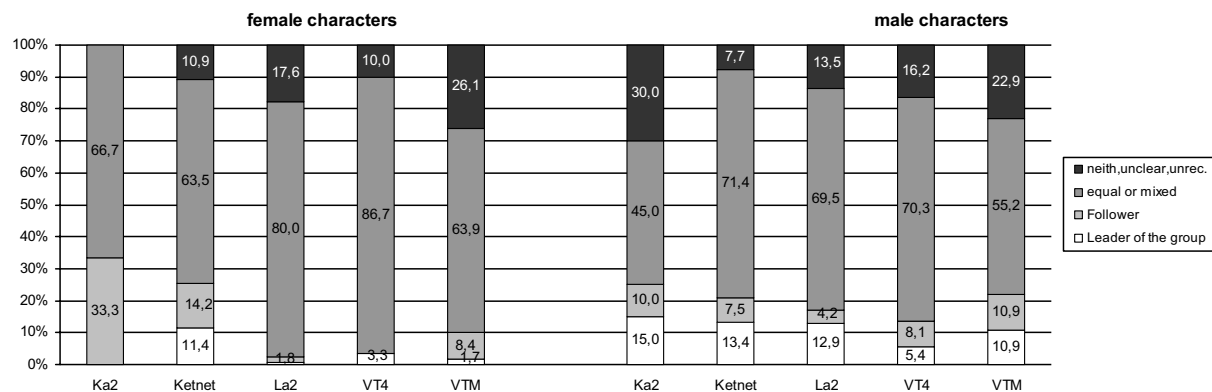
With the proportion of 11.4% of the characters in leading positions Belgium reaches only half the international average. Belgium is second to last when it comes to the number of followers, but it is way above average concerning equal or mixed teams. It seems that Belgium likes to tell stories with main characters in groups in equal positions and not so much stories about leaders and followers.

### Gender Perspective: Leaders are twice as often males

The 533 female characters are in 374 (70.2%) of the cases equal or mixed. 28 female characters (5.3%) appear as leaders and 44 (8.3%) as followers. For 87 characters (16.3%) the constellation was not identifiable. Among the 1009 boy and man characters 677 (67.1%) are equal or mixed, and in 126 (12.5%) cases leader of a group. 72 (7.1%) are part of the following and for 134 characters (13.3%) the classification was not possible.



**GRAPH 12**     *Positions of gender characters*



The highest percentage of females in leading positions appear on Ketnet (11.4%), while of female followers on Ka2 (33.3%). The highest share of females in equal positions had VT4 (86.7%). The highest percentage of males in leading positions was counted on Ka2 (15%), while of male followers on VTM (10.9%). The highest share of males in equal positions is shown on Ketnet (71.4%). Thus, channels have different gender proportions concerning hierarchy.



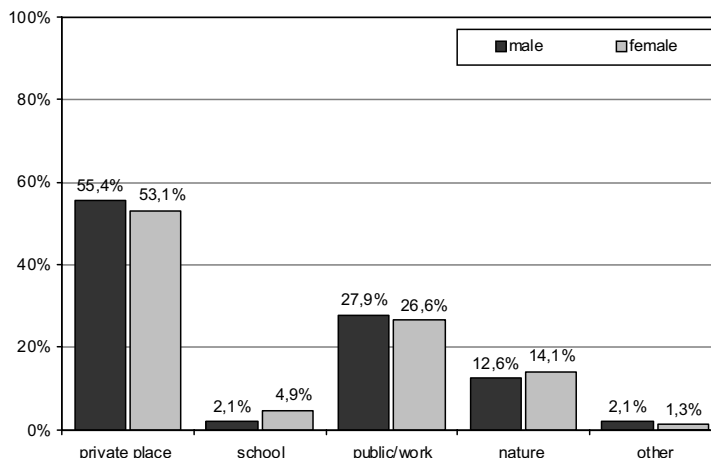
## AT WHICH LOCATION IS THE CHARACTER INTRODUCED INTO THE PLOT?

We coded where the character is located in its first appearance in the show (not the opening song). The most common location at which the character is introduced into the plot is the private sphere. 1013 (56.5%) of the recorded characters of this category appear here for the first time. Public spaces or work, respectively, rank second. Here, 463 characters (25.8%) are introduced for the first time. 229 characters are in nature in their introduction scene (12.8%), 47 characters (2.6%) are in school, and 41 (2.3%) at other locations.

### Gender Perspective: Nearly gender equality in the introduction of the location

283 (53.1%) of the 533 female characters in the sample are introduced into the plot in private settings. 142 (26.6%) of the characters are introduced in public spaces or at work. 75 (14.1%) characters appear for the first time in nature. 26 (4.9%) are introduced to the viewer in school and 1.3%, thus 7 characters, at locations other than these categories. 558 (55.4%) of the male characters are first introduced in private settings. 281 (27.9%) are presented in public or at work. At third position are nature locations with 127 characters (12.6%) and finally school where 21 characters (2.1%) are introduced. There is nearly gender equality in the introduction of the location which is not the case in many other countries.

**GRAPH 13** *Introduction of the gendered characters into the plot*



IZI – Children's Television Worldwide 2007; basis: Belgium, 87 h fict. children's programme; n =1803 fict. characters





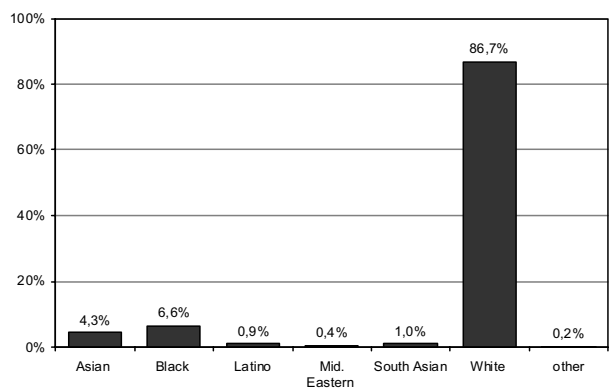
# THE ANALYSIS OF THE HUMAN CHARACTERS

The characters which were coded as humans were furthermore coded according to their skin colour, hair colour, their age and their physique as well as possibly existing disabilities.

## Skin colour / Ethnicity

We coded as far as possible the skin colour or ethnicity of the main human characters and distinguished by shape of eyes, by dark or tanned skin etc.

GRAPH 14 *Skin colour of the characters*



IZI – Children’s Television Worldwide 2007; basis: Belgium, 87 h fict. children’s programme; n =1042 fict. human characters

44 (4.3%) of the human characters have shown Asian physical traits. Afro-American characters were found in 68 (6.6%) characters of the sample. 10 (1.0%) were classified as South Asia, 9 (0.9%) as Latin-American and 4 (0.4%) as Arab or Oriental. The majority, with 894 characters (86.7%), were Caucasian. All in all, 2 characters were classified as Other or were not identifiable.

TABLE 9 *Ethic origin of the characters around the world*

| Asian     |       | Black        |       | Latino    |       | White        |       |
|-----------|-------|--------------|-------|-----------|-------|--------------|-------|
| Hong Kong | 65,0% | UK           | 15,1% | Australia | 10,6% | Cuba         | 91,5% |
| China     | 64,4% | USA          | 12,2% | USA       | 7,1%  | Argentina    | 90,0% |
| Egypt     | 41,5% | New Zealand  | 10,6% | Israel    | 4,6%  | Belgium      | 86,7% |
| Syria     | 26,2% | Germany      | 9,0%  | Brazil    | 4,4%  | Slovenia     | 86,5% |
| Hungary   | 18,6% | Austria      | 8,8%  | Hong Kong | 4,0%  | South Africa | 80,8% |
| Kenya     | 11,0% | South Africa | 8,7%  | Syria     | 3,6%  | Canada       | 80,0% |

<sup>4</sup> Migration Information source:  
[www.migrationinformation.org](http://www.migrationinformation.org)

**TABLE 9**      *Ethic origin of the characters around the world (Continued)*

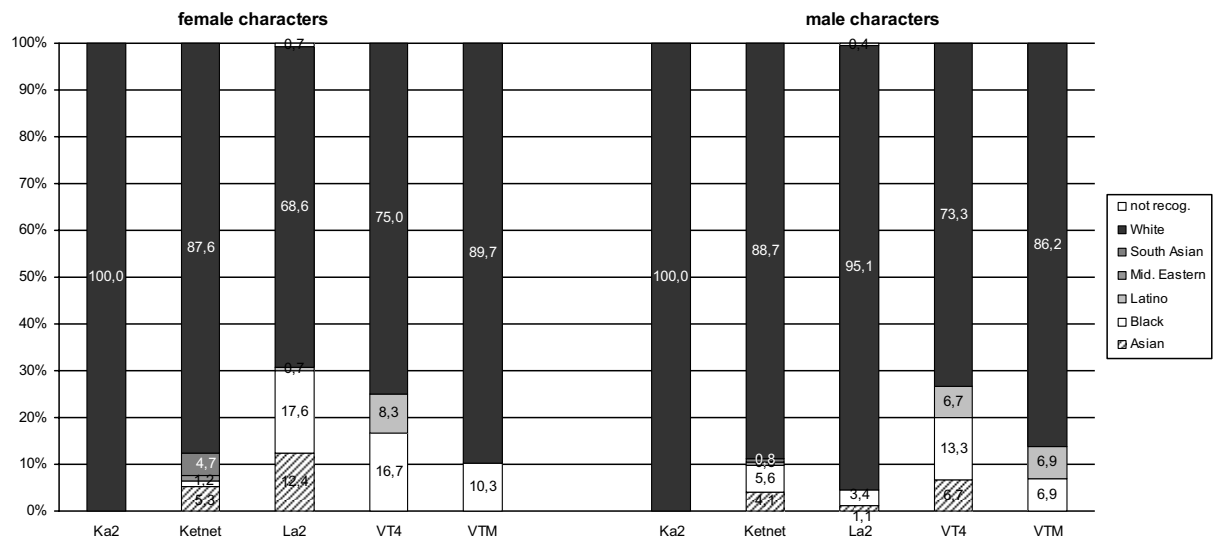
| <b>Asian</b> |              | <b>Black</b> |             | <b>Latino</b> |             | <b>White</b> |              |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| USA          | 10,2%        | Syria        | 8,3%        | Kenya         | 3,5%        | Netherlands  | 78,5%        |
| Germany      | 9,2%         | Brazil       | 7,9%        | Canada        | 3,4%        | Brazil       | 78,3%        |
| Austria      | 9,0%         | Kenya        | 7,0%        | Netherlands   | 3,1%        | Hungary      | 78,2%        |
| Israel       | 7,5%         | Belgium      | 6,6%        | New Zealand   | 2,9%        | Germany      | 77,5%        |
| Netherlands  | 6,4%         | Canada       | 6,6%        | South Africa  | 2,7%        | Austria      | 77,5%        |
| New Zealand  | 6,3%         | Argentina    | 6,0%        | UK            | 1,9%        | Norway       | 76,7%        |
| India        | 6,3%         | Israel       | 5,1%        | Cuba          | 1,7%        | Israel       | 76,4%        |
| Brazil       | 5,9%         | Australia    | 4,2%        | Egypt         | 1,4%        | Australia    | 74,9%        |
| South Africa | 5,7%         | Netherlands  | 4,2%        | Austria       | 1,4%        | UK           | 72,8%        |
| Canada       | 4,8%         | Norway       | 3,7%        | India         | 1,4%        | New Zealand  | 72,6%        |
| Belgium      | 4,3%         | Slovenia     | 3,0%        | Germany       | 1,4%        | Kenya        | 68,9%        |
| Slovenia     | 4,2%         | Egypt        | 2,6%        | Norway        | 0,9%        | USA          | 67,8%        |
| Norway       | 4,2%         | China        | 2,0%        | Belgium       | 0,9%        | India        | 60,3%        |
| Australia    | 3,2%         | Cuba         | 1,7%        | Hungary       | 0,9%        | Syria        | 52,4%        |
| UK           | 1,9%         | India        | 1,6%        | China         | 0,2%        | Egypt        | 45,4%        |
| Cuba         | 0,9%         | Hungary      | 1,5%        | Slovenia      | 0,1%        | Hong Kong    | 30,3%        |
| Argentina    | 0,0%         | Hong Kong    | 0,4%        | Argentina     | 0,0%        | China        | 14,8%        |
| Malaysia     | 0,0%         | Malaysia     | 0,0%        | Malaysia      | 0,0%        | Malaysia     | 12,7%        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>11,7%</b> | <b>Total</b> | <b>6,4%</b> | <b>Total</b>  | <b>2,6%</b> | <b>Total</b> | <b>72,2%</b> |

With a proportion of 4.3% Asian characters in its children's programmes, Belgium lies way below the international average. The number of blacks is about the same as the average, while the Latinos are again below. Belgium television is one of the 'whitest children's television'. In comparison to other EU-countries, Belgium does not have a large population with an ethnic minority background (6.9%)<sup>4</sup>. Still, characters with an ethnic minority background are not well represented. These figures need to be taken relatively, since origin is not always visible by skin or hair or appearances as such. Further conclusions can only be based on further in-depth research.

Out of the 376 female characters 298 (79.3%) are white Caucasians, 28 (7.4%) Asians, 8 (2.1%) South Asians, 36 (9.6%) Blacks and 3 (0.8%) Latinos, and 2 (0.5%) with typical traits of the Middle East are a part of a group. The 640 male characters are with 581 (90.8%) white Caucasians, with 16 (2.5%) Asians, with 32 (5.0%) Blacks, with 6 (0.9%) Latinos, with 2 (0.3%) South Asia origins and with 2 from (0.3%) the Middle East. Females, like in many other countries, too, are more often "the other non Caucasian characters" like Asian, Black and South Asian.



**GRAPH 15** *Ethnic origin of the gendered characters*



Ka2 tells its stories exclusively with Caucasian characters. The highest share of Asian females appears on La2 (12.4%), where also the highest share of black females (17.6%) could be found. The highest percentage of Latinas was counted on VT4 (8.3%), while Ka2 showed white females characters exclusively. The highest percentage of Asian (6.7%) as well as of Black (13.3%) males appeared on VT4. The highest share of male Latinos was counted on VTM (6.9%), while Ka2 also shows white males characters exclusively. So, among both sexes Ka2 shows whites for a 100%.

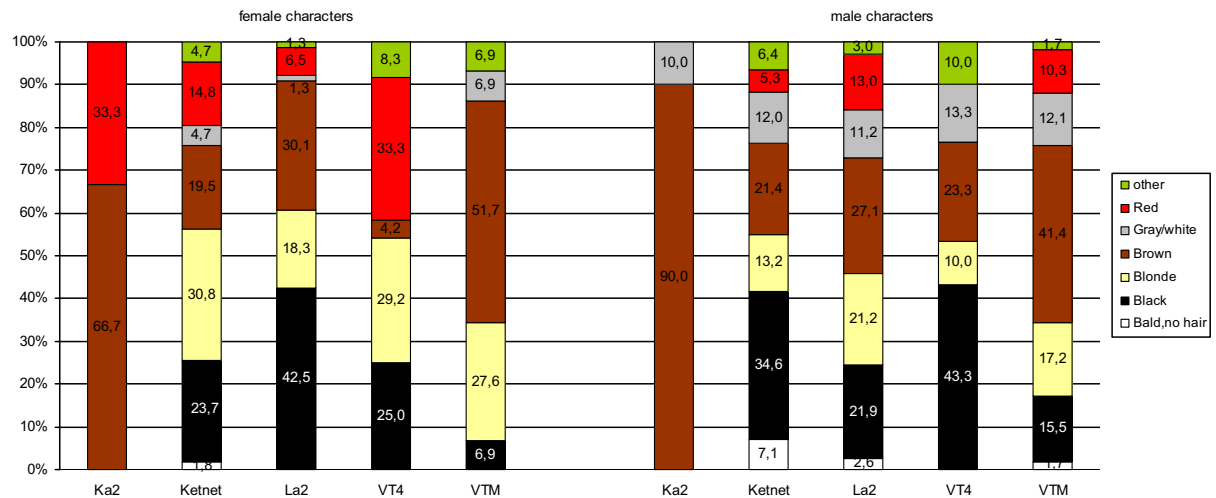
## Hair colour

We coded what the hair mostly look like. 29 (2.8%) characters did not have any hair, 285 (27.6%) characters had black hair and 276 (26.7%) characters had brown hair. 202 characters were blond (19.6%), the hair of 87 people was grey or white (8.4%) and that of 112 red (10.9%). 41 people were categorized in the category Other (4.0%).

Out of the 376 female characters 3 (0.8%) have no hair, 113 (30.1%) have black hair, 95 (25.3%) blonde hair, 97 (25.8%) have brown hair, 12 (3.2%) have gray or white hair and 44 (11.7%) have red hair. The 641 male characters are with 26 (4.1%) without hair, with 172 (26.8%) black-haired, 105 have (16.4%) blonde hair, 179 (27.9%) have brown hair, 75 (11.7%) have gray or white hair and 55 (8.6%) have red hair.



**GRAPH 16** *Hair colour of gendered characters*



The highest percentage of blonde females can be seen on Ketnet (30.8%), while of brown-haired on Ka2 (66.7%). The highest share of female black-haired had La2 (42.5%). The highest percentages of red-haired females are shown on Ka2 and Vt4 (33.3% each).

The highest percentage of blonde male characters appeared on La2 (21.2%), while of brown-haired on Ka2 (90%) and of black-haired on VT4 (43.3%). So, among both sexes Ka2 and VTM had the highest shares of brown-haired characters.

## Age

We coded the age as far as visible or clear from the content. Coded as adults if they have the recognisable characteristics such as acquisition of earnings, role of mother/father etc., or elderly if there are recognisable traits such as role of grandma/grandpa, walks with a stick etc.

In terms of age, two larger groups could be found in the sample: 443 (42.9%) are adults and 275 (26.6%) are children. 257 (24.9%) are teenagers. Only one (0.1%) is a baby, and 43 (4.2%) are seniors.





**TABLE 10**      *Age group of the characters around the world*

| <b>Baby/ Toddler</b> |             | <b>Child</b> |              | <b>Youth/<br/>Teenager</b> |              | <b>Adult</b> |              | <b>Elderly</b> |             |
|----------------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|----------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|-------------|
| Egypt                | 8,7%        | Malaysia     | 64,3%        | Hungary                    | 58,1%        | Argentina    | 62,0%        | Argentina      | 12,0%       |
| Kenya                | 6,7%        | China        | 52,5%        | Netherlands                | 42,9%        | Brazil       | 54,9%        | Norway         | 9,3%        |
| Netherlands          | 6,1%        | New Zealand  | 49,2%        | Israel                     | 41,6%        | Cuba         | 48,6%        | Brazil         | 8,8%        |
| Cuba                 | 4,1%        | Germany      | 44,5%        | Australia                  | 40,3%        | Egypt        | 47,7%        | Canada         | 7,1%        |
| UK                   | 3,0%        | Austria      | 44,1%        | USA                        | 37,8%        | UK           | 46,7%        | Syria          | 6,0%        |
| China                | 1,8%        | Hong Kong    | 43,7%        | South Africa               | 36,7%        | Belgium      | 42,9%        | Kenya          | 5,7%        |
| Israel               | 1,6%        | Kenya        | 40,4%        | India                      | 36,4%        | Canada       | 42,8%        | Slovenia       | 5,4%        |
| Germany              | 1,1%        | Syria        | 36,1%        | Slovenia                   | 35,1%        | India        | 37,1%        | Egypt          | 5,0%        |
| Austria              | 1,1%        | Slovenia     | 34,1%        | Hong Kong                  | 31,8%        | Norway       | 34,0%        | Germany        | 4,9%        |
| Canada               | 1,0%        | Netherlands  | 32,2%        | Norway                     | 27,9%        | Kenya        | 32,2%        | Austria        | 4,9%        |
| New Zealand          | 0,5%        | USA          | 31,2%        | Syria                      | 26,5%        | Syria        | 31,3%        | South Africa   | 4,5%        |
| South Africa         | 0,5%        | Canada       | 29,8%        | Belgium                    | 24,9%        | Australia    | 30,4%        | China          | 4,2%        |
| Norway               | 0,5%        | UK           | 29,5%        | Germany                    | 24,7%        | Malaysia     | 30,2%        | Belgium        | 4,2%        |
| USA                  | 0,3%        | South Africa | 29,5%        | Austria                    | 24,6%        | South Africa | 28,7%        | Cuba           | 3,7%        |
| Brazil               | 0,2%        | Norway       | 27,0%        | New Zealand                | 24,0%        | USA          | 28,4%        | Hungary        | 3,4%        |
| Belgium              | 0,1%        | Israel       | 26,8%        | China                      | 22,1%        | Israel       | 25,9%        | Malaysia       | 3,2%        |
| Slovenia             | 0,1%        | Belgium      | 26,6%        | Brazil                     | 19,6%        | New Zealand  | 25,9%        | Australia      | 3,1%        |
| Argentina            | 0,0%        | Australia    | 26,0%        | Canada                     | 19,2%        | Slovenia     | 25,3%        | Netherlands    | 3,1%        |
| Australia            | 0,0%        | Egypt        | 25,5%        | Cuba                       | 18,9%        | Austria      | 24,6%        | Israel         | 2,8%        |
| Hong Kong            | 0,0%        | Cuba         | 24,7%        | UK                         | 18,5%        | Germany      | 24,1%        | India          | 2,5%        |
| Hungary              | 0,0%        | India        | 23,9%        | Argentina                  | 18,0%        | Hungary      | 23,1%        | UK             | 2,3%        |
| India                | 0,0%        | Brazil       | 15,9%        | Kenya                      | 15,0%        | Hong Kong    | 22,7%        | Hong Kong      | 1,8%        |
| Malaysia             | 0,0%        | Hungary      | 15,2%        | Egypt                      | 13,2%        | China        | 19,3%        | USA            | 1,8%        |
| Syria                | 0,0%        | Argentina    | 8,0%         | Malaysia                   | 2,4%         | Netherlands  | 15,6%        | New Zealand    | 0,4%        |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>1,6%</b> | <b>Total</b> | <b>33,9%</b> | <b>Total</b>               | <b>29,3%</b> | <b>Total</b> | <b>30,6%</b> | <b>Total</b>   | <b>4,1%</b> |

Belgium is way below the average regarding its numbers of babies, children and teenagers. On the other hand it is above average regarding the adult characters shown and about average with its elderly people. It seems that Belgium likes to tell its stories in children's television with adults and not so much with children and teens.





Out of the 376 female characters none is a Baby or Toddler, 116 (30.9%) are children, 135 (35.9%) teens, 109 (29.0%) adults and 14 (3.7%) seniors. 1 male character (0.2%) is a Baby or Toddler, 144 (22.5%) are children, 122 (19.1%) teens, 334 (52.3%) adults and 29 (4.5%) seniors. So, there seem to be more mature males than females in Belgian children's TV.

There are no female babies, while the highest percentage of female children was counted on La2 (40.5%), and of female teenagers on VT4 (87.1%). Ka2 tells its stories – at least in this sample – only with female adults (100%). The highest share of female elderly humans appeared on VTM (13.8%). The only male baby was shown by the channel Ketnet (0.4%), while the highest percentage of male children appeared on La2 (33.6%), and of male teenagers on VT4 (52.5%). The highest share of male adults could be seen on Ketnet (62.8%) and of male elderly people on La2 (7.2%).

### **Physical appearance and shape**

We coded whether the body of the main character is situated within the normal range of weight or shape or that the producers wanted to make clear that there is a non-normal range (overweight or very thin body). 1009 (86.3%) of the sample are of average weight. 29 (2.7%) of the characters were very thin, and 134 (10.9%) very overweight.



TABLE 11

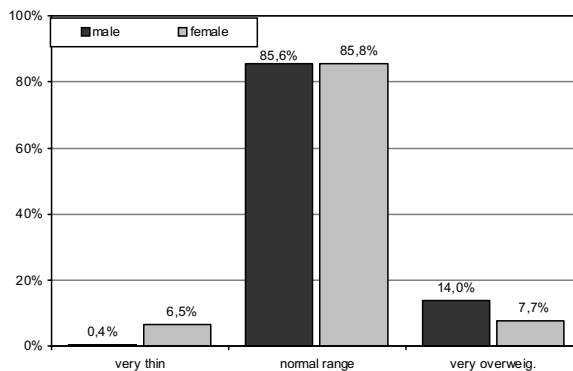
*Weight of the characters around the world*

| <b>very thin</b> |       | <b>normal range</b> |       | <b>very overweight</b> |       |
|------------------|-------|---------------------|-------|------------------------|-------|
| Australia        | 27,5% | Israel              | 97,7% | Argentina              | 14,0% |
| UK               | 27,4% | Hong Kong           | 97,1% | Kenya                  | 12,7% |
| Norway           | 18,6% | Hungary             | 94,2% | Germany                | 11,1% |
| New Zealand      | 18,1% | South Africa        | 92,7% | Belgium                | 10,9% |
| Syria            | 17,9% | Netherlands         | 92,6% | Austria                | 10,9% |
| Germany          | 14,0% | Brazil              | 91,2% | Canada                 | 10,7% |
| Austria          | 13,9% | USA                 | 91,1% | UK                     | 8,9%  |
| Egypt            | 11,7% | Malaysia            | 90,5% | China                  | 7,9%  |
| Slovenia         | 11,3% | Cuba                | 88,9% | Norway                 | 7,4%  |
| Kenya            | 10,2% | India               | 88,8% | Malaysia               | 7,1%  |
| China            | 8,1%  | Slovenia            | 88,2% | USA                    | 7,1%  |
| India            | 6,1%  | Canada              | 86,5% | Egypt                  | 7,1%  |
| Cuba             | 4,9%  | Belgium             | 86,3% | New Zealand            | 6,5%  |
| Brazil           | 4,2%  | China               | 84,1% | Cuba                   | 6,2%  |
| Argentina        | 4,0%  | Argentina           | 82,0% | Netherlands            | 5,9%  |
| Canada           | 2,8%  | Egypt               | 81,2% | South Africa           | 5,4%  |
| Belgium          | 2,7%  | Syria               | 78,6% | India                  | 5,1%  |
| Malaysia         | 2,4%  | Kenya               | 77,1% | Brazil                 | 4,7%  |
| Hungary          | 2,4%  | New Zealand         | 75,4% | Australia              | 3,7%  |
| South Africa     | 2,0%  | Austria             | 75,2% | Syria                  | 3,6%  |
| USA              | 1,9%  | Germany             | 75,0% | Hungary                | 3,4%  |
| Netherlands      | 1,5%  | Norway              | 74,0% | Hong Kong              | 2,5%  |
| Israel           | 0,6%  | Australia           | 68,8% | Israel                 | 1,7%  |
| Hong Kong        | 0,4%  | UK                  | 63,7% | Slovenia               | 0,5%  |
| total            | 9,1%  | total               | 84,1% | total                  | 6,8%  |

The thin characters in Belgium's children TV are with a proportion of 2.7% below average, the overweight people are above average and the normal ranged humans are about the international average. It should be positively marked that there is a relatively high percentage of overweight main characters in Belgian children's TV which probably is closer to reality than in many other countries.



**GRAPH 17** *Physical appearance of the gendered characters*

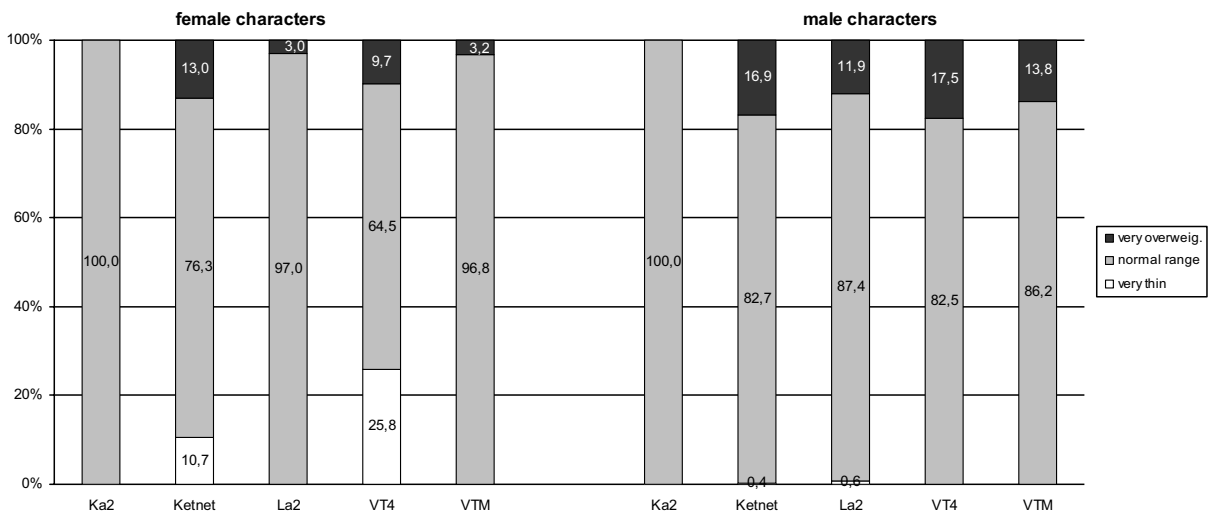


IZI – Children's Television Worldwide 2007; basis: Belgium, 87 h fict. children's programme; n =1042 fict. human characters

## Gender Perspective: Thin girls and overweight boys

Out of the 402 (29.7%) female characters 345 (85.8%) are in the normal range, 26 (6.5%) are very thin and 31 (7.7%) are very overweight. The 601 male characters (85.6%) are in the normal range, 3 (0.4%) are very thin and 98 (14.0%) are very overweight.

**GRAPH 18** *Weight of gendered characters*



The highest share of very thin females was counted on VT4 (25.8%), while of overweight female characters on Ketnet (13%). Exclusively normal sized females were seen on Ka2 (100%). There are





almost no thin males (only 0.6% on La2 and 0.4% on Ketnet), while the highest share of overweight characters appeared on VT4 (17.5%). Again, exclusively normal ranged males were seen on Ka2. So, the commercial channel Ka2 is the only channel that shows characters that are of a normal body rang for a 100%.

### **Disabilities of main characters: Nearly not there!**

We coded if the character has a clearly identifiable disability or serious chronicle illness (HIV/Aids, cancer, diabetes etc.), which can be seen obviously or is an important part of character construction. 5 disabled characters are among the 1336 recorded and coded characters of the Belgian sample. And these disabled persons are male. This is certainly not commensurate with reality. Therefore, 99.6% of all characters are without any recognizable disability.



## CONCLUSIONS

Our research mostly confirms previous studies (e.g. Baker & Raney, 2007) concerning gender representations in children's television, but not totally.

More than half of the characters in Belgian children's programmes are males, and one third are females. As showed in the global results, also in Belgium the protagonists are more than half of the time male. Amongst all antagonists, more than 22% is female. We see that the group of heroes consists of more men than women.

The greater part of the character types are humans, followed by animals, monsters and mythical figures. Most of the represented characters are part of a group. Female characters are less represented as loner than male. Female and male characters are almost equally represented as duo. More than 60% of the characters are hierarchically positioned as equal. Only 5,3% of the female characters appear as leader as opposed to 12,5% of all male characters. 86% of the human characters are white. Also female characters are represented mostly as white. They also have most of the time black, brown and blond hair. Females are more portrayed as blond or red than males. Specific in the Belgian context is that adults are more represented in children's programmes. We see more male adult characters than female. Most characters are represented with an average weight, but when characters are portrayed as very thin, most of them are female.

Although the public broadcaster has more equal gender portrayal than the private broadcaster, there still is a gender imbalance. This gender imbalance on the level of content in children's television programmes fits into the more general gender stereotypical portrayal in television fiction (see McDonald, 1995). This research is important not only because a large sample of global children's programmes was analysed but also because this data can give us some trends in the portrayal of gender in these specific programmes. This quantitative research has to be seen as a first step in the research of gender representation and can only be interpreted for inventory purposes. In-dept analysis has to be done to look closely at the way in which these gender identities are represented. We have to keep in mind that these formats are part of popular culture and are complex and contradictory in the way gender discourses are encoded and decoded. The moments of negotiation have to be stressed as well, and we hope that this first level of analysis of the latent content can trigger more research into the field of gender representation and children programmes.



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