

Joan Damiens, PhD

Demographer

Based in Helsinki, Finland | French citizenship

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RESEARCH INTERESTS

My research is at the intersection of social studies, family demography, and public health. I study inequalities in physical conditions, mental health and mortality, with an inter- and intragenerational approach. My strengths rely on a strong emphasis on interpretation, utilising sociological and psychological theories, as well as a willingness to develop innovative and precise longitudinal methodologies, based on event-study, event-history, or multistate analyses, as well as decomposition analyses.

EDUCATION

- 2019-2023 **PhD in Demography**
Centre for Demographic Research, UCLouvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium
Title: *"Unlivable. Housing conditions, residential mobility and suicide of the working-age population. An analysis of Belgian administrative data."*
Supervisors: Thierry Eggerickx and Christine Schnor
Committee: Bruno Masquelier, Myriam Khat, Sophie Pennec, Jean-Paul Sanderson.
- 2016-2018 **Master's degree in Population and Development Studies (SPED2M)**
UCLouvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium
Highest distinction.
Master's thesis title: *"Housing conditions and mortality in Belgium, 1991-2016"*.
Participation in the **Causineq project**
Supervisor: Thierry Eggerickx
- 2014-2016 **Bachelor's degree in Political Sciences**
UCLouvain-FUCAM, Mons, Belgium
Distinction

ACADEMIC POSITIONS AND RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

- Since 2023 **Postdoctoral researcher**
Helsinki Institute for Demography and Population Health, University of Helsinki, Finland
Max Planck and the University of Helsinki Centre for Social Inequalities in Population Health, Rostock, Germany and Helsinki, Finland
ERC-Advanced Grant on social inequalities in population health: integrating evidence from longitudinal, family-based and genetically informed data (PI: Pekka Martikainen).
- 2019-2023 **PhD in Demography, FNRS Research Fellow**
Centre for Demographic Research, UCLouvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium
Title: *"Unlivable. Housing conditions, residential mobility and suicide of the working-age population. An analysis of Belgian administrative data."*
Supervisors: Thierry Eggerickx and Christine Schnor
Participation in the **FamilyTies project**
- 2018-2019 **Research assistant**
Centre for Demographic Research, UCLouvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium
Data management and analyses for the GlobMig Project (PI: Philippe Bocquier), based on more than 20 surveys (DHS, MICS) and Census samples (IPUMS) in LMICs.
- 2018 **Intern**
Myria (Federal Migration Office), Brussels, Belgium
Supervised by Koen Dewulf and Sophie Vause.
Data management, collaboration on the annual report. I led a short thematic analysis on the relationship between population ageing and international migration in Western Europe ([Myriatics #9](#)).

TEACHING AND SUPERVISION

- Since 2025 **Volunteer mentor for the Lumière Foundation**
Mentorship of undergraduate students in the writing of their first scientific paper, on various topics such as STEM education inequalities in Kazakhstan, or parental incarceration and young adults' mental health in India.
- Since 2025 **Family and inequalities, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland**
Two sessions on "horizontal inequalities within families" and "family composition and mental health" (4h/year in total) and final evaluations (essays)
Course coordinator: Sanna Kailaheimo-Lönnqvist

- Since 2024 **Population health and health inequalities (SOSK-510), University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland**
Two sessions on “reproductive and sexual health” and “mental health” (4h/year in total) and final evaluations (essays)
Course coordinator: Kaarina Korhonen
- 2023-2024 **Populations Projections (LDEMO2220), UCLouvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium**
Practical work (20h/year), teamwork supervision and intermediate evaluations (essays)
Course coordinator: Bruno Masquelier
- 2020-2022 **Demographic questions and challenges in the 21st century (LSPED1214), UCLouvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium**
Two sessions on “social demography” and “mental health inequalities” (4h/year) and final evaluations (MCQ).
Course coordinator: Philippe Bocquier, Christine Schnor
- 2020-2021 **Population and Health (LDEMO2610), UCLouvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium**
Two sessions on “infant health” and “Malaria” (4h/year) and final evaluations (essays)
Course coordinator: Catherine Gourbin, Philippe Bocquier

Master's theses evaluation in Demography

- 2025 **Master SPED, UCLouvain, Louvain-la-Neuve**
Impact des mesures restrictives prises face au COVID-19 sur le bien-être psychique des personnes âgées en Belgique et en France by Cyprien Nyandwi Ntirugirimbabazi (Supervised by Ester Rizzi)
- 2024 **Master's in Population Studies, University of Helsinki**
Demographic transitions in China and South Korea: a comparative study by Jussi Heikkola (Supervised by Karri Silventoinen)

I am also familiar with different types of teaching and supervision, ranging from experiences as a private teacher during my studies to informal supervision during projects or as the representative of PhD students for four consecutive years during my PhD.

PUBLICATIONS

PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES

Damiens, J., Schnor, C., Willaert, D. (2025). Moving out and moving on: the impact of mobility in a context of union dissolution on antidepressants intake in Belgium. *Journal of Health and Social Sciences*. 10(3):327-356. <https://doi.org/10.19204/2025/MVNG6>

Damiens, J., Junna, L., Tarkiainen, L., & Martikainen, P. (2025). Individual and parental housing tenure and mental healthcare use among Finnish men and women in early mid-adulthood. *Social Science and Medicine - Mental Health*, 100444.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmmh.2025.100444>

[Reproducible files](#)

Bourguignon, M., **Damiens, J.**, Doignon, Y., Eggerickx, T., Plavsic, A., Sanderson, J. P., & Bertrand, A. (2025). Individual and Spatial Determinants of Mortality During the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Case of Belgium in 2020. *Population, Space and Place*, 31(3), e70019.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.70019>

Damiens, J. (2024). Residential mobility and suicide in Belgium: Understanding the role of union transitions and life stages. *Finnish Yearbook of Population Research*, 47-80.

<https://doi.org/10.23979/fypr.130971>

[Reproducible files](#)

Damiens, J., Fadel, L., Marteau, B., Rees, A., Schnor, C., Van Cleemput, O., & Zilincikova, Z. (2023). Identifying partnership biographies from residential information in Belgian administrative data. *Quetelet Journal*, 11(1), 41-67. <https://doi.org/10.14428/rqj2023.11.01.02>

[Reproducible files](#)

Damiens, J., & Schnor, C. (2022) Do tenants suffer from status syndrome? Homeownership, Norms, and Suicide in Belgium. *Demographic Research*, 46, 453-502.

<https://doi.org/10.4054/DemRes.2022.46.16>

[Reproducible files](#)

Bourguignon, M., **Damiens, J.**, Doignon, Y., Eggerickx, T., Fontaine, S., Plavsic, A., Rees, A., Rizzi, E., Sanderson, J.-P., Schlüter, B.-S. (2022) One year later. Socio-demographic variation analysis of the 2020 COVID-19 excess mortality in Belgium. *Cahiers Québécois de Démographie*.

Damiens, J. (2020). The impact of housing conditions on mortality in Belgium (1991-2016). *Journal of Population Research*, 37(4), 391-421. [https://doi.org/10.1007/s12546-020-09252-](https://doi.org/10.1007/s12546-020-09252-y)

[y](#)

WORKING PAPERS

Schnor, C., **Damiens, J.**, Fadel, L., Rees, A., Zilincikova, Z. (2023). Family structure and proximity to kin during childhood. *Démographie et société*, 32. Centre de recherche en Démographie, Louvain-la-Neuve, 16p.

Bourguignon, M., **Damiens, J.**, Doignon, Y., Eggerickx, T., Fontaine, S., Plavsic, A., Rees, A., Rizzi, E., Sanderson, J.-P., Schlüter, B.-S. (2022) Variations spatiales et sociodémographiques de mortalité de 2020-2021 en Belgique. L'effet de la pandémie COVID-19. *Démographie et Société*, 27. Centre de recherche en Démographie, Louvain-la-Neuve, 39p.

Bourguignon, M., **Damiens, J.**, Doignon, Y., Eggerickx, T., Fontaine, S., Lusyne, P., Plavsic, A., Sanderson, J.-P. (2020). Surmortalité liée à la COVID-19 en Belgique: variations spatiales et socio-démographiques. *Démographie et Société*, 17. Centre de recherche en Démographie, Louvain-la-Neuve, 42p.

MANUSCRIPTS UNDER REVIEW OR IN PREPARATION

Damiens, J., Berger, M., Junna, L., Martikainen, P., **Mortgage affordability and mental healthcare use: Evidence from Finnish population registers.**

Affiliations: University of Helsinki, Medical University of Vienna

Dual event-study and mixed-model design to show that the mental health impact of mortgages depends on repayment affordability at onset, with high-burden borrowers experiencing increased risks and tenants consistently disadvantaged. **Status:** Under review (Revise and Resubmit). **In:** *Social Science & Medicine*.

Cisotto, E., Moretti, M., Silan, M., **Damiens, J.**, Belloni, P., Korhonen, K., Martikainen, P. **Mapping Social Health and Dementia Risk: A Register-Based Study of Older Adults in Finland.**

Affiliations: Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Bocconi University, University of Padua, University of Helsinki.

This study examines the influence of individual- and area-level social health factors on geographic variation in dementia incidence among older adults in Finland, employing a matching-based method (MARMoT). **Status:** Under review. **In:** *Social Science & Medicine*.

Damiens, J., Bishop, L., Martikainen, P. **Siblings' health trajectories: a dynamic study of the role of family, work and geography.**

Affiliations: University of Helsinki

This study investigates whether divergence in family, work, and geographic trajectories predicts discordance in health outcomes among Finnish siblings, using sequence analysis and sibling fixed-effects linear probability models.

Status: manuscript ready, last modifications. **Target:** *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*.

Damiens, J., Gotink, J., Tarkiainen, L., Gadeyne, S., Martikainen, P. **Decomposing and understanding the suicide trends: a comparative analysis of Belgium and Finland.**

Affiliations: University of Helsinki, Brussels Institute for Social and Population Studies

I led a cross-national demographic study of Belgium and Finland that decomposed suicide mortality declines into behavioural risk reductions vs. compositional shifts (ageing, educational expansion) by sex and age, and triangulated findings with negative binomial models to pinpoint policy-relevant drivers, especially among low-educated mid-life men.

Status: Manuscript in preparation. **Target:** *Demography*.

Damiens, J. **Housing affordability, family trajectories and mental health: Evidence from Finnish Registers**

Using Finnish registers, I model joint housing-family trajectories (tenure and flow-based mortgage burden; partnership/parenthood) with multi-channel sequence analysis, milestone-

anchored event studies, and within-person/sibling fixed effects to identify how order and instability drive mental health risks, yielding policy-relevant evidence beyond static status comparisons.

Status: Manuscript in preparation. **Target:** *Demography*.

Berger M., **Damiens, J.**, Junna, L., Martikainen, P. **Buy or rent? Mental health risk trade-offs from involuntary job loss between homeownership and mortgage debt**

Affiliations: University of Helsinki, Medical University of Vienna

This project employs a quasi-causal event study design to investigate whether debt temporarily offsets the protective effect of homeownership on mental health in the context of job loss.

Status: Manuscript in preparation. **Target:** *Journal of Health Economics*

Damiens, J., Dudel, C. **Mental Health Life Expectancy from Multistate Models: Incidence, Recovery, Relapse, and Suicide in the Population.**

Affiliations: University of Helsinki, Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research

Through multistate life tables for mental health trajectories and dynamic prediction of state occupancy and transitions to suicide, this framework yields interpretable hazard ratios and policy-relevant absolute measures, clarifies when suicide risk is elevated (during treatment vs post-cessation), and quantifies which transitions drive socioeconomic and partnership disparities in time on treatment and suicide risk.

Status: Manuscript in preparation. **Target:** *Demography*.

Dei Bardi, L., **Damiens, J.**, Berger, M., Tarkiainen, L., Martikainen, P. **Housing Wealth, Mortality and Mental Healthcare Use in Finland**

Affiliations: University of Helsinki, Medical University of Vienna

This project examines how individual and parental housing wealth influence mental health trajectories, utilising Finnish register data to distinguish the direct effects of housing assets from intergenerational transfers and resources. **Status:** Analyses ongoing. **Target:** *Housing Studies*.

ONGOING PROJECTS

SdeCare project: Healthcare trajectories of the populations dead due to suicide in Belgium.

Collaboration between UCLouvain (Pr. Christine Schnor, Dr. Joan Damiens) and Mutualité Chrétienne (Dr. Svetlana Sholokhova, Dr. Stijn Vos)

This project aims at studying the healthcare trajectories of the population who died by suicide and deaths of despair in Belgium, thanks to sequence analyses, through the data of the Mutualité chrétienne.

Status: The data request has been approved by Statbel in October 2025.

Parenthood, Policy, and Gendered Inequalities: A Finland-Australia Comparative Study

Collaboration between the University of Queensland (Dr. Mengxuan Suri Li, Pr. Janeen Baxter) and the University of Helsinki (Dr. Olivia McEvoy, Dr. Joan Damiens)

Using aligned linked administrative data from Finland and Australia, this project examines how the transition to parenthood and family size shape long-term gender income gaps and mothers' mental health and suicide mortality, leveraging policy contrasts (leave design and sharing) to identify life-course effects and inform equity-focused welfare reforms.

Status: An application for funding at the University of Helsinki (FIRE program) has been submitted; the data request for Australian data is in preparation.

SELECTED CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

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| 2025 | 23rd Nordic Demography Symposium (10-12 June, Middelfart, Denmark): "Decomposing and understanding the suicide trends in Belgium and Finland" |
| | RC28 on social stratification (25-27 March, Milan, Italy): "Individual and parental housing tenure and mental healthcare use among Finnish men and women in early mid-adulthood." |
| 2024 | European Population Conference (12-15 June, Edinburgh, Scotland): "Residential Mobility and Suicide: Understanding the Role of Partnership Transitions, Life Stages and Housing Context" |
| 2023 | British Society for Population Studies (5-7 September, Winchester, England): "The right place. Housing conditions, environmental inequalities and risk of suicide in Belgium" |
| 2022 | Quetelet Workshop (21-22 November, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium): "Identifying partnership biographies from residential information in Belgian administrative data" |
| 2021 | European Network for the Sociological and Demographic Study of Divorce, 19th annual meeting (13-15 October, online): "Moving out and moving on: the triggering impact of mobility on mental health in the context of union dissolutions. Evidence from Belgium" |
| 2020 | IUSSP International Population Conference (5-10 December, online): "Do tenants suffer from status syndrome? Homeownership, norms and suicide in Belgium." |

FUNDING AND GRANTS

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|------|---|
| 2024 | Postdoctoral research grant (CR – Chargée de recherche), FNRS, Belgium
Project title: Falling far from the tree? Social inequalities in all-cause and cause-specific premature mortality between siblings in Belgium. Three years of funding and 5 000 € of functioning credits.
Evaluation: Outstanding |
|------|---|

- 2022 **“Scientific Meeting Abroad” Mobility grant – FNRS, Belgium**
Participation in the 3rd International Conference on Migration and Mobilities, St-Andrews University, Scotland (ref. 40012615)
Amount: 350€
- 2019 **Research fellow grant (ASP - Aspirante), FNRS, Belgium**
Title: *The impact of the residential situation and its changes on suicide among the 20-64-year-olds in Belgium.*
Four years of funding and 5 000 € of functioning credits.
Evaluation: Outstanding

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

CONFERENCE ORGANISATIONS

- 2026 Symposium at the **SLLS conference** on the collaborative work using Register-based data in Belgium, the Netherlands and Nordic countries (to be confirmed), **Brussels, Belgium**
Organising committee and chairperson
- 2023 **4th Belgian Demography Day, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium**
Organising committee and chairperson
- 2022 Co-organiser of the **1st Quetelet workshop, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium** (with Bruno Schoumaker, Natacha Zimmer and Christine Schnor)
Organising committee, chairperson, presenter and representative of the DEMO centre to the panel discussion “Setting the path for collaborations based on administrative data”
- 2020 Co-organiser of the **Quetelet Seminar**: “Invisibilities and Uncertainties in Population Sciences”
- 2019-
2023 Organiser of the **DEMO Annual PhD Seminars**
Organisation (solo or in committees), chairperson and presenter
- Organiser of the **methodological meeting for PhD students** and postdoctoral researchers
Regular discussion of research methods. Presenter for the sessions on *Event History and Survival analyses* and *Decomposition methods*.

EDITORIAL ACTIVITIES

- 2022-
2023 Member of the editorial committee of the Observatoire Belge des Inégalités
- Since Member of the editorial board of the Quetelet Journal (RQJ)

2018
Reviews for Demographic Research, Social Science and Medicine, BMC Public Health, Journal of Population Research and Quetelet Journal.

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIVITIES

2019- **Representative of the PhD students at the DEMO centre**
2023 Elected twice by my peers.
I helped welcome new PhD students and navigate administrative challenges, such as completing initial procedures in Belgium and accessing data.

DISSEMINATION

LARGE AUDIENCE PRESENTATIONS

2022 **Festival des Jeunes Chercheur·se·s dans la Cité, Brussels.**
Inégalités sociales face à la santé mentale (Social inequalities in mental health)

IN THE MEDIA AND OTHER NON-ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS

2024 **Le Vif**
Niveau de vie, isolement, prévention... Pourquoi le taux de suicide est plus élevé en Wallonie (Living standards, isolation, prevention... Why are suicide rates higher in Wallonia), Interview with Christophe Leroy.
Available for subscribers only.

Alter-Echos

Suicide : briser un tabou pour ouvrir le dialogue (Suicide : break a taboo and open a dialogue), Interview with Pierre Jassogne.
<https://www.alterechos.be/suicide-briser-un-tabou-pour-ouvrir-le-dialogue/>

2023 **Observatoire Belge des Inégalités**
Les inégalités sociales et d'environnement de vie face au suicide en Belgique (Social and living environment inequalities facing suicide in Belgium)
<https://inegalites.be/Les-inegalites-sociales-et-d>

2022 **Politique, Revue Belge d'Analyse et de Débat**
Vieillesse et inégalités : reculer l'âge à la retraite est-il la solution ? (Ageing and inequalities : is postponing retirement age the solution ?)
<https://www.revuepolitique.be/vieillesse-et-inegalites-reculer-lage-a-la-retraite-est-il-la-solution/>

2021 **Observatoire Belge des Inégalités**
Les écarts d'espérance de vie en fonction des conditions de logement (Life expectancy gaps according to housing conditions)

SKILLS AND LANGUAGES

Proficiency in Stata, R, and SPSS.

Professional proficiency in English (C1) and French (Native). Fundamental knowledge in Dutch (B2) and Spanish (B2). Beginner in Finnish (A1).

REFERENCES

Pekka MARTIKAINEN, Professor at University of Helsinki, director of the Helsinki Institute for Demography and Population Health (contact: pekka.martikainen@helsinki.fi)

Pekka Martikainen is a demography professor at University of Helsinki. He is an expert in health studies, demography and related topics such as inequalities in mortality and health behaviours.

Thierry EGGERICKX, Professor at UCLouvain, FNRS Research Director (contact: thierry.eggerickx@uclouvain.be)

Thierry Eggerickx is a demography professor at UCLouvain. He specialises in social inequalities in health, mortality, fertility and internal migration, with extensive expertise in historical demography and the Belgian context.

Sylvie GADEYNE, Professor at Vrije Universiteit Brussels (contact: sylvie.gadeyne@vub.be)

Sylvie Gadeyne is an associate professor at the Department of Sociology of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. Her research has evolved around socio-economic inequalities in health and mortality in Belgium and Europe.