



The BIG Belgian Business Analysis Survey

2020 edition

By IIBA® Brussels Chapter
In co-creation with

novado
SOFTWARE INNOVATORS

 **BARYON**



"This survey is a reference point for any business analysis practitioner working in Belgium. It is remarkably rich in details on the current status of Business Analysis in the region. I like how the statistical results are combined with inspiring experts' interpretations. I am looking forward to future editions to keep my eyes on the latest trends!"

- Victoria Cupet -

IIBA Regional Director - Europe

"This first Belgian Business Analysis survey was conducted according to the core principles of business analysis: value for the stakeholders, connection with the business and a curious mindset supported by an appropriate toolset. It is no surprise to see that BAs are invading organisations across all industries. The combination of broad business experience and overview with a bag of scientific modelling and analysis techniques makes things work. I am glad to read in this report that business analysis is doing well in Belgium and is supported by an active community and IIBA chapter. I am sure you will enjoy discovering the survey results."

- Prof. Jan Vanthienen -

Professor in Information Management

"This survey provides a fascinating insight into the business analysis community in Belgium. The results are extensive, varied and sometimes quite surprising. I'm sure they will inspire the BA Competency Centre at Smals in our strive to maximize value for our customers."

- Karel Van Eeckhoutte -

Lead Business Analyst at Smals

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Dear BA enthusiast,

There is no single most important trait of "the" business analyst. But there is one that is definitely high up on our shortlist: **curiosity**. And curious we were.

How is business analysis carried out in Belgium? In what kinds of organisations and contexts is business analysis performed? What is its impact? **Who** is performing business analysis?

We were keen to get a better understanding of the Belgian BA landscape and community. Inspired by surveys and reports from other countries, we initiated our own.

As any BA can tell you, one of the key questions to ask of any initiative is "Why?" Why did we run this survey?

In short: to help our BA community grow and thrive. The survey results give us, **and you**, a concrete view on how, when, and where your peers work, and what tools and techniques they use. It can serve as a reference point and a

source of inspiration for the next steps in your career. It helps us identify how we can support you in taking those steps.

We also wanted to find out how well-established business analysis is in Belgium. We believe that seeing organisations take business analysis at heart can trigger its structural application at others, and this report provides that view.

The numbers in this report are only half of its value. Our survey team has added its own impressions, looking for **the story behind the data**.

What do the numbers in this report tell you? What questions do they raise? We'd love to hear from you.

Enjoy the learnings and Stay Safe!

*The IIBA® Brussels Chapter Survey Team**

(*Meet us on page 20)

Our respondent's main work environment



Nikolaas De Graeve

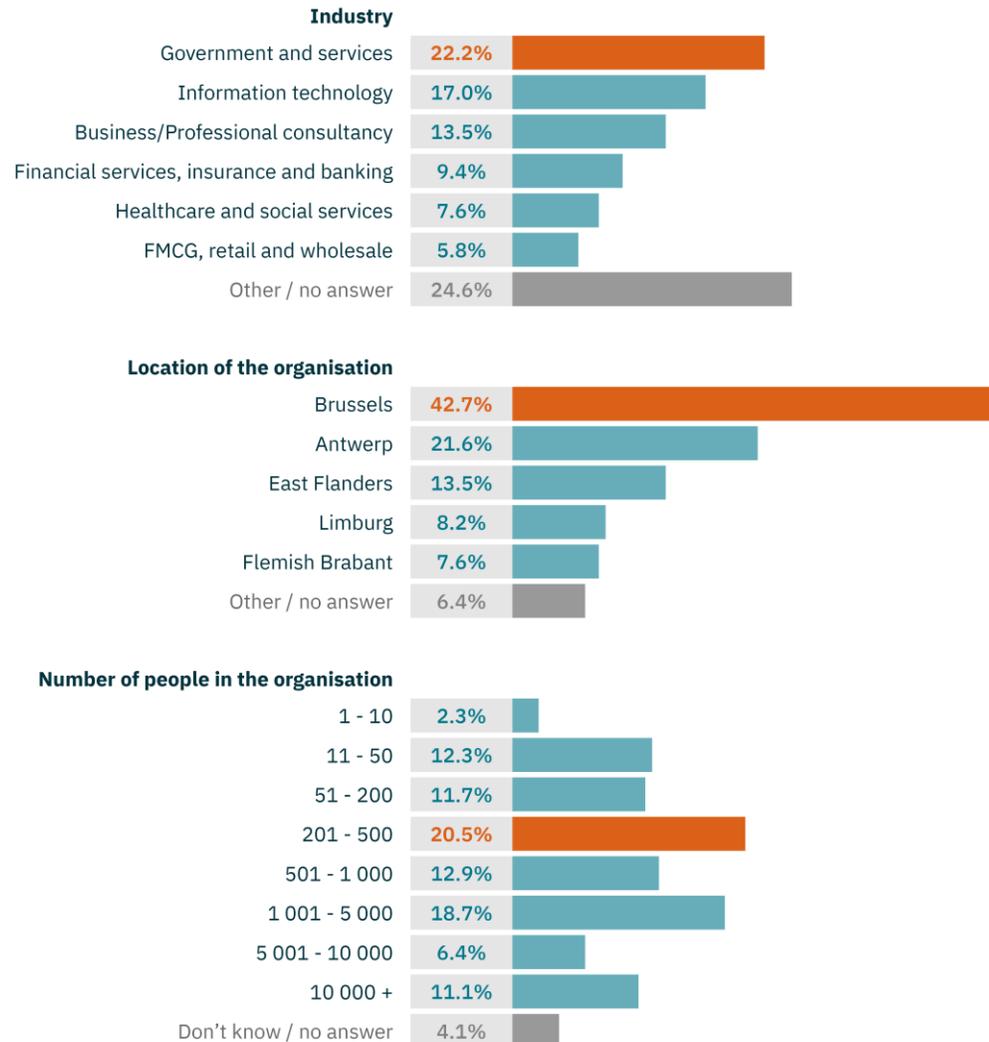
The Hands-on BA

Find me on 

I am not surprised that BAs work for organisations of all sizes, across all industries and throughout the whole country. After all, every organisation has business processes that can be optimized, and every organisation plays a role in a transforming world that requires rapid responses to new challenges. Consider, for example, the impact of COVID-19.

BAs can often play an important role in these transformations supported by their techniques, personal skills and experience. This is true at all levels, from operational to strategic.

The BA question to start each workday is: **“How, where and for whom can I create value?”** A question relevant independently of size, sector or location of an organisation.

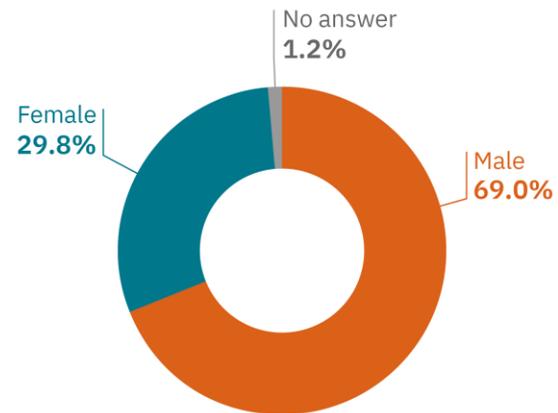


Original survey questions: What industry do you mainly work for? | In which of these Belgian regions is the company of your main work environment located? | What is the size of organisation in which you work?

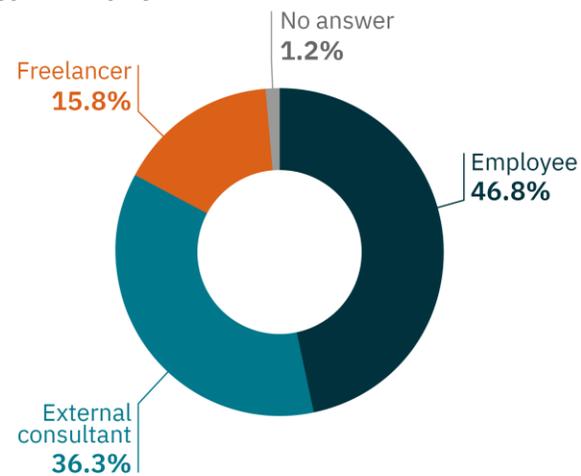
Our respondent's profile

"It's a man's world...., but it would be nothing without a woman or a girl"
- James Brown, entertainer -

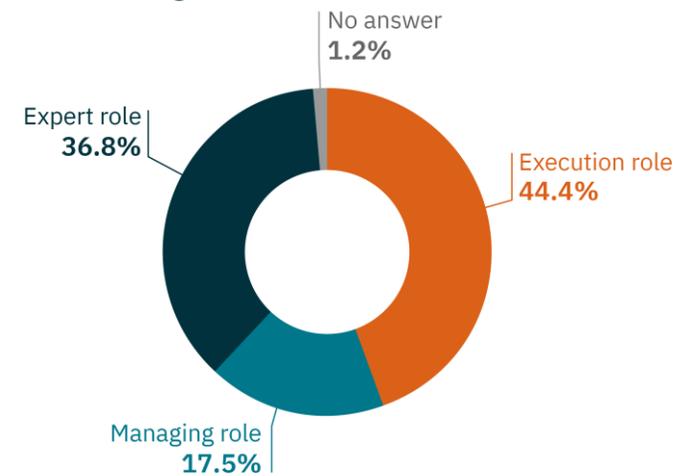
Gender



Type of employment



Role in the organisation



Our respondent's profile



With "Analyst" **Ann Mistiaen**
Ask me anything on 

Questions of interest

Our analysis shows there are significantly more female employees than male. The other way around, men choose freelancer and consultancy positions significantly more often. Do you think that these results confirm more traditional employment patterns?

Early 2000, I started my career as a consultant in large companies in Brussels, Antwerp, and Ghent, while living in West Flanders. I noticed that a lot of consultants were working in these companies, precisely to fulfil their needs for a specific period. Back then, more men than women were employed (a common phenomenon in the IT world).

Moreover, as a woman, I experienced the difficulty of combining work and kids. Did I want to keep driving for four hours each day to Brussels, making sure I passed Aalst before 7 AM to prevent a bumper to bumper ride? Did I not want to have breakfast with my children in the morning or put them into bed in the evening? **I decided to work closer to home, but was confronted with the fact that demand for consultants was much lower here.** So I became an employee in a smaller company.

Even today, I see that many of my female colleagues either have moved to the city centres or have become a regular employee in a company closer to home. In my experience, men are less affected by this phenomenon. They still "eat miles" when starting a new assignment as a consultant.

However, with corona in mind, this issue may become less important? Who knows telework may become the new normal, and the work-family balance can be found more easily?

We see that BAs with 0-1 year of experience find themselves significantly more in an execution role, while BAs with over 15 years of experience find themselves significantly more in an expert role. This is probably not a surprise, is it?

The first question of course is "when is someone considered an expert?" In my opinion, the title 'expert' is not something you get after only studying and getting a diploma. It is 'learning on the job', gaining experience, and being able to share that experience with others.

However, also **BAs with less experience can be a valuable soundboard** for more experienced people. They have other views; they look at things differently. **What 'has always been this way' can be challenged and we should encourage this** because it enriches the minds of all BA people, regardless of their level of experience.

I started my career as a Functional/Business Analyst in 2013, so having only 7 years of BA experience, I would not consider myself an expert. However, I do experience that other people are asking me how to do things, asking my opinion. So in certain BA domains, I do feel I'm 'gaining expertise'. To be a real 'expert', however, there is still a long way to go...

The BA title



The other job titles include:

- Advisor
- (Enterprise Lean) Agile Coach
- Auditor
- Business Development Manager
- BA Methodology Expert
- (Business) Consultant
- Business system Analyst
- Business Unit Manager
- CEO
- Chief Process Officer
- Data Analyst
- Data Management Expert
- Data Scientist
- District Manager
- Growth Hacker
- Internal IT Auditor
- IT Analyst
- Management of Change Consultant
- Manager
- Master Data Officer
- Operations Director / Manager
- Owner
- Project Consultant
- RPA Consultant
- Sales Manager
- Software Architect
- Test Analyst



Original survey question: what is your job title?

The BA title

“What's in a name? That which we call a rose by
any other name would smell as sweet”
- Shakespeare, Playwright -



Ann Mistiaen
Analyst
Find me on 

What's in a title? Tough question, as we saw in the results of the survey... There are so many official working titles across companies. However, having another title than BA does not mean you are not involved in BA tasks. I see it more like having a BA 'role': you don't specifically need to have the official title of Business Analyst.

I also see some of my colleagues, having the title 'product owner', 'product manager' and even 'designer', perform BA tasks. I think this makes our profession stronger. By applying the BA mindset of asking why, they will investigate and even challenge more deeply what their stakeholders are asking. As a result, they enrich their role, and take their stakeholders' needs into account more deeply. This ultimately results in a win-win situation for both the stakeholders and themselves.

People also grow during their careers. I'm an example myself, having started as a Test Engineer. Immersed in testing software against analysis documents, I learned what a good analysis should contain. So I started as a functional analyst. Some years later, I learned to be more in contact with the business, so I considered becoming a business analyst. **And isn't this something we all want, growing and learning, regardless of the 'title' we have?**

Question of interest



With “Becoming BA” **Saartje Lambregts**
Let's discuss 

The numbers show that people that learn on the job tend to do more self-study and people that do more self study get more professional training. Do you think this is a logical finding?

I did not know it at the time, but I learned BA partly in college. At the time, my dad always explained to me that they gave me so much work to see how motivated I was. So I assumed that motivated people went to college. But the data about BA's training backgrounds tells another story. A lot of people learned BA on the job, including me.

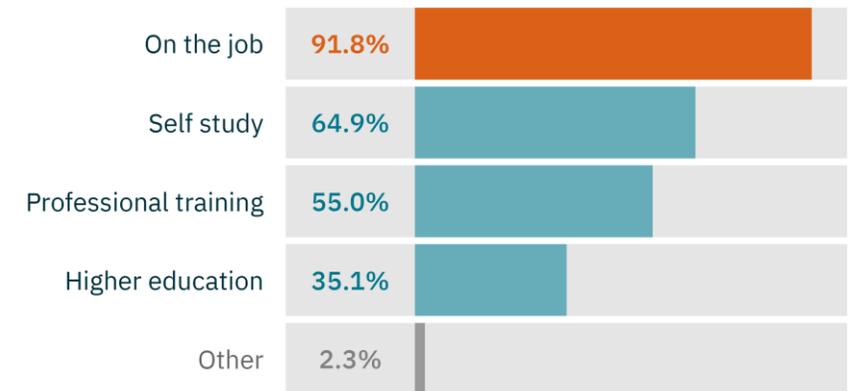
At university, you are left with a bunch of practical questions that you try to answer through gaining experience. On the job, you get a practical education that forces you to fill your knowledge gaps between the books. 65% of the respondents do this, as we can see. I, too, try to fill in my knowledge gaps through some self study at the weekend or after working hours.

At the same time, when doing self study, it's easier for me to identify the areas that I need (professional) training in. So, that might be one way to link these three training backgrounds and I think that self study is a much better indication of motivation than higher education.

The BA training

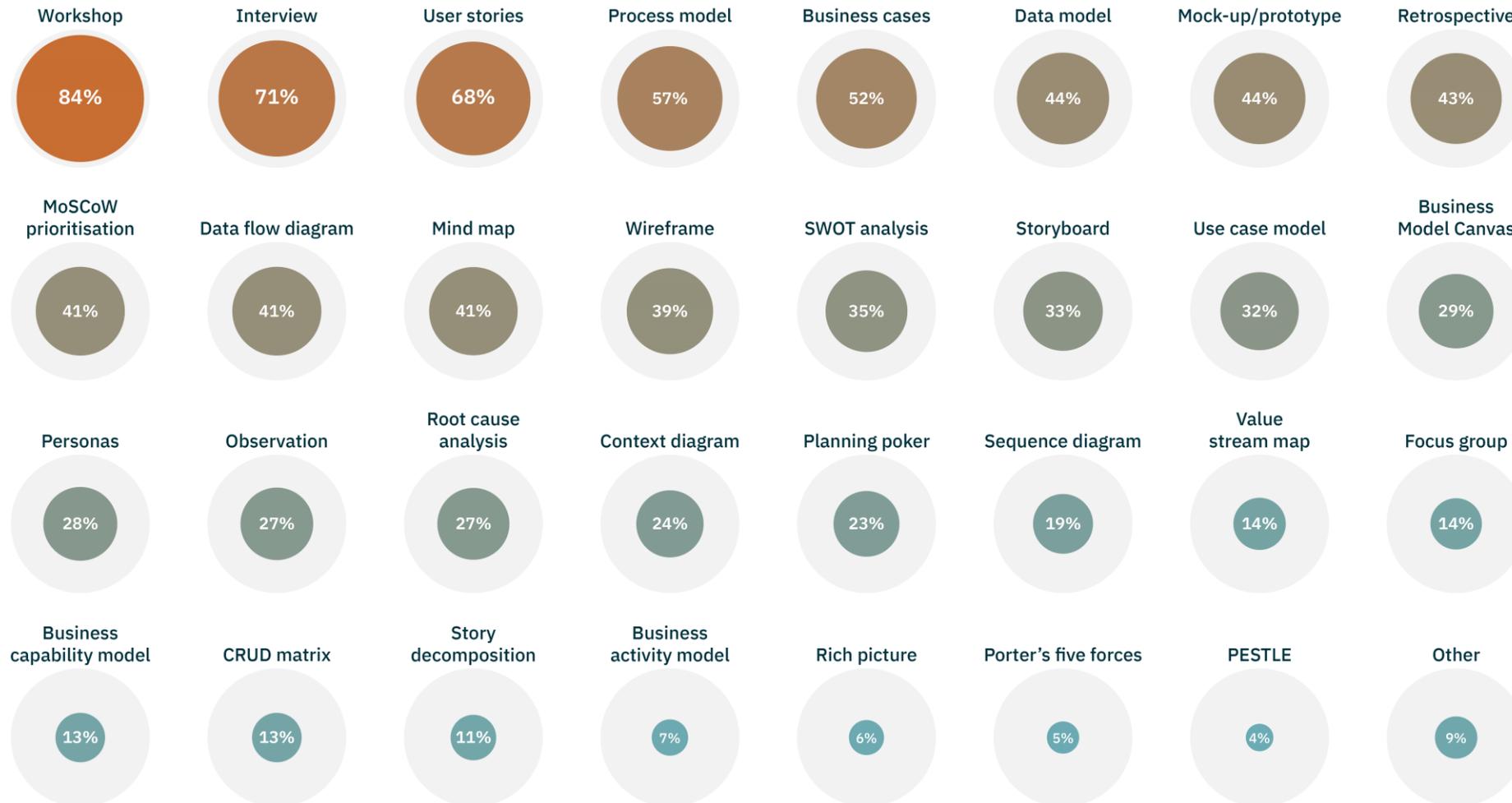
“The capacity to learn is a gift, the ability to learn is a skill and the willingness to learn is a choice.”

- Brian Herbert, writer -



Original survey question: Where did you learn your BA skills?
(multiple answers possible)

The BA toolbox



Original survey question: Which of the following TOOLS & TECHNIQUES have you personally conducted or participated in during the past 12 months? (multiple answers possible)

The BA toolbox

Question of interest

With “Annalyst” **Ann Mistiaen**
I am on 



In the chart we see that workshops and interviews were very popular among respondents in the past twelve months. Do you think that these tools have gained popularity in the past 12 months and could their popularity come from their ease in use and understandability?

In my experience, I mainly see that tools requiring more interaction from all participants or stakeholders are on the rise. Stakeholders are more and more involved. Interviews and workshops are great examples of this. People think along and feel being heard.

My own experience is that it is still in full swing. For example, I went to a company myself to capture the needs of a particular project. That company was used to working mainly via PowerPoint slides and Excel sheets. **So when I arrived there with my visual material (posters, post-its) to organise a workshop, they were quite dubious.** For them, it took some time to get used to the fact that everyone could just share their own opinion and thoughts and to the fact it was an ‘active’ meeting, and not just listening to others. But when I later asked how they had experienced it, I only got positive reactions. Conclusion from my experience: don’t be afraid to try out things even if your ‘audience’ is not used to it!

Question of interest

With “Innovating BA” **Filip Hendrickx**
Find me on 



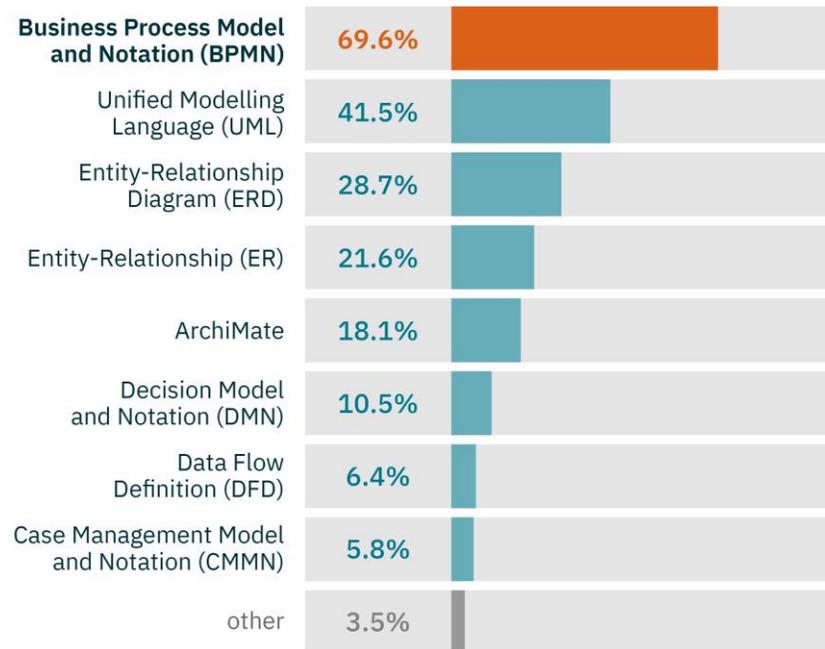
Did you know that consultants did significantly more retrospectives in the past 12 months than employees?

I never thought about this and I would not have expected any correlation here. I don't think consultants are by definition better placed to run retrospectives than employees. Perhaps they are more inclined to initiate new techniques?

For a retrospective to be successful, it's really helpful that the facilitator is a neutral person. Neutral to the team and the project. This way, he or she can focus on ensuring a safe environment without being distracted by his or her own project experiences. An employee from another team, project or department could definitely also fulfil that role.

Do you need a data model?

Let's do a quick exercise: Ask five colleagues to write down their definition of 'customer' and have them compare and discuss. Would some more formality be useful, or can you leave it up to the techies? Let me know!



Original survey question: Which of the following modelling languages have you personally applied or used in the past 12 months? (multiple answers possible)

The BA languages

With "Innovating BA" **Filip Hendrickx**
Ask me more on 



Question of interest

A little less than 50% of the respondents used UML. Why do you think that UML is less popular than BPMN?

When looking at the techniques and modelling languages people use, it's clear that **process models are a BA's best friend**, by far. Having a software development background, I'm both surprised and not surprised that data modelling is distinct second. I'm not surprised, because data is often considered something for 'techies', and also for 'data scientists' these days.

I am surprised, because you can only understand a process if you know and understand the data it processes and produces. Ultimately, and I'm exaggerating a bit here, **you can have data without a (formal) process, but you cannot have a process without data.**

So how come we do more process modelling than data modelling (or information or concept modelling)? Are there simply many processes for a single data model? Or are we, as business analysts, treating data less formally than processes?

BA involvement RACI



Nikolaas De Graeve
The Hands-on BA
I am on

What strikes me first is that BAs are involved in many different types of assignments and that not everyone carries out all types of assignments in their main work environment.

The degree of involvement (involved → responsible → accountable) does vary per type of assignment. **We could classify the different types of assignments under the 3rd wave model for business analysis (Paul, 2013).** The assignments with the highest involvement are mostly still in the first wave of business analysis, where the BA performs a bridging role. Next come the assignments that are in the second wave of business analysis, where the BA performs the challenging role. The lowest involvement is in the 3rd wave: an advising role. But even here, more than half of the respondents indicated that they were at least involved in these kinds of assignments.

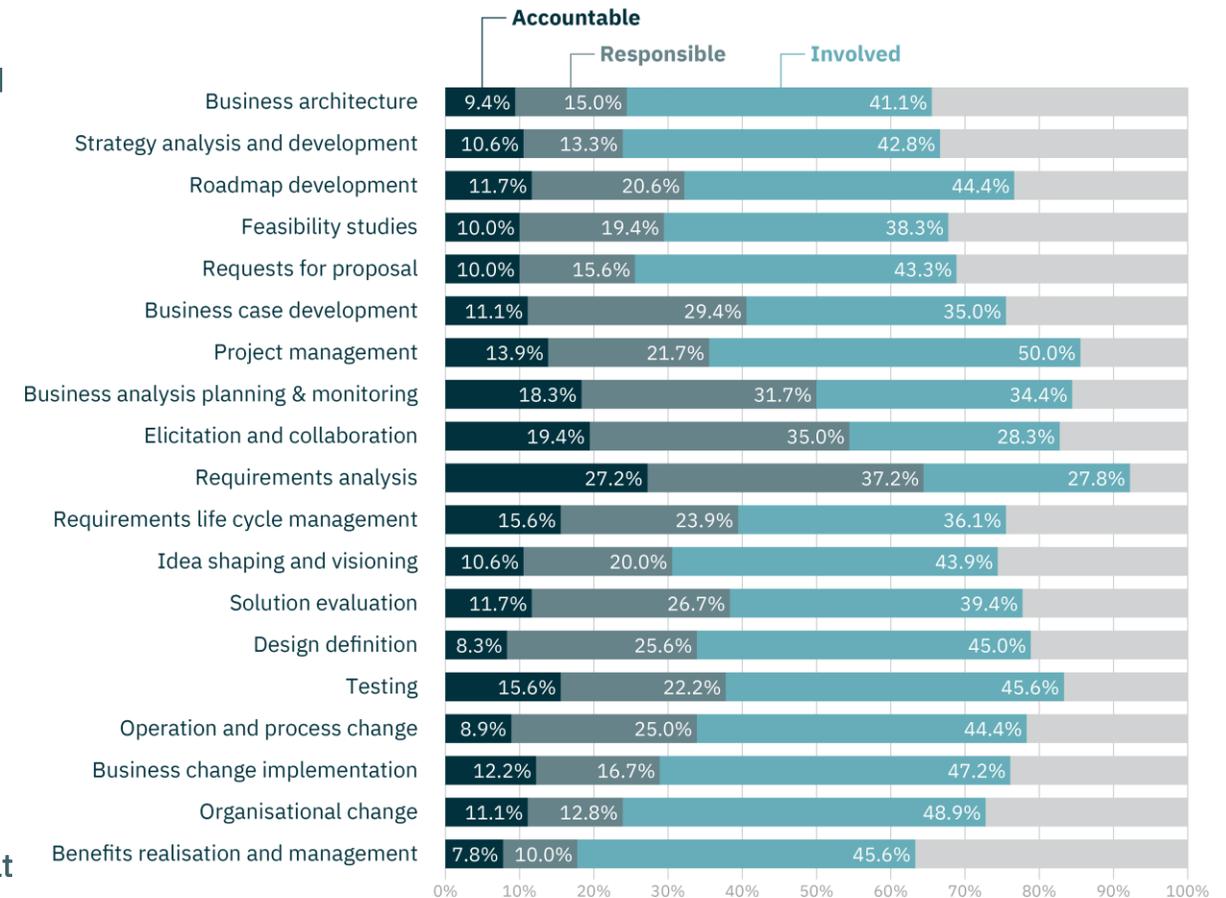
I am very curious to see how this will evolve in the coming years!



What's the
the 3rd wave model
for business analysis?

Need

Result

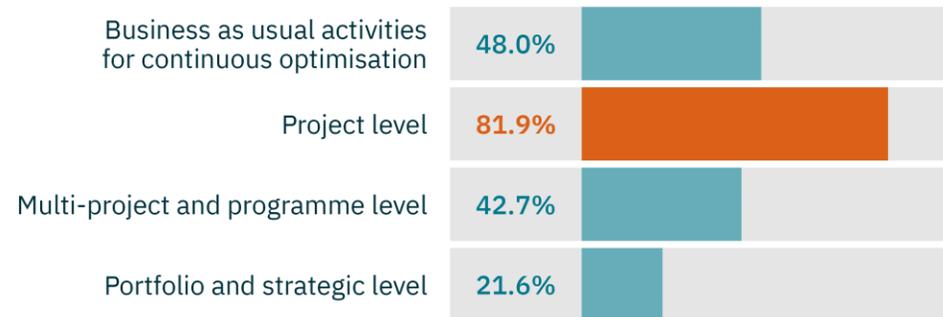


Original survey question: In your main work environment, which of the following areas are you responsible for, accountable for or involved in? (multiple answers possible)

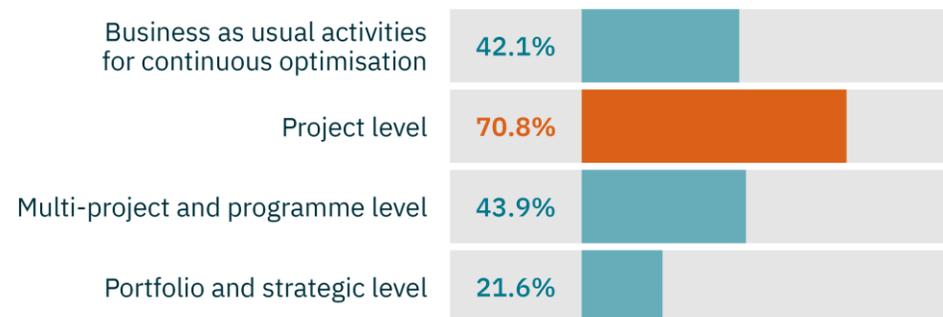
“Endeavors succeed or fail, because of the people involved”
- Colin Powell, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff -

BA involvement level

Level of BA in the organisation



Personal level of BA activities



Nikolaas De Graeve

The Hands-on BA
Let's connect 

Many participants chose two or more answers here, proving that business analysis can be done at different levels. In the BA RACI we find the more specific tasks within these levels.

Many business analysts start their career at the project level (e.g. elicitation of requirements) and then evolve towards the pre-project and strategic level.

I've been lucky enough to be able to work on different levels, and personally **I like the variety of combining work at different levels.** This way I have a very varied job on the one hand, and on the other hand I also keep in touch with assignments at the different levels, so I can also keep my knowledge about techniques and tools up to date.

The level of BA

"Strategy is choosing what not to do."

- Micheal Porter, Professor -

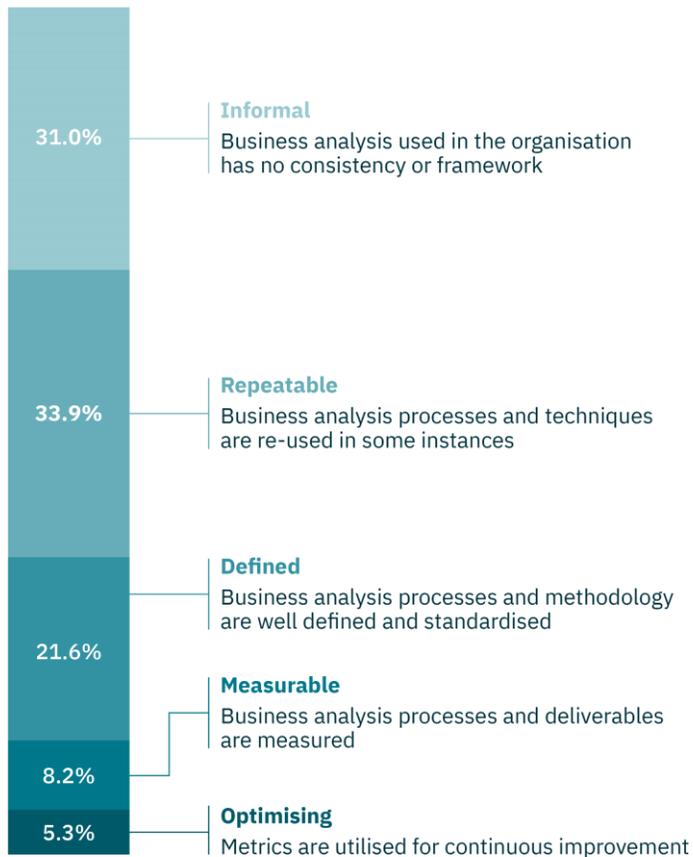
Filip Hendrickx
Innovating BA
Let's discuss 



The fact that business analysis is happening mostly at project level is not very surprising. I am happy to see that many organisations, regardless of their size, are also applying business analysis during pre-project feasibility studies and project initiation, across projects, and at portfolio and strategic level, helping the organisation set its direction.

In the end, **a great strategy will not be successful without effective execution**. It will simply remain slideware catching dust. When business analysis is being done during strategy formulation, it can help make things concrete and serve as a reality check: what would need to be true to make this strategy work? This helps prepare for the execution part. I believe many people in a BA role have very relevant knowledge and experience about how their organisation works, and also the right mindset of "asking why" to help create executable strategies. It's about connecting the dots between solution alternatives and strategic goals, and keeping projects in check. It does require us to think strategically more often. The only way is up! ;-)

BA practice maturity



Original survey question: What is the maturity level of the business analysis practice in your work environment?



Saartje Lambregts

Becoming BA

Let's connect



Looking at these results I ask myself some questions that maybe the reader can answer. Does the graph imply that very mature companies, from a BA perspective, are rare, while less mature companies are in the majority? This could draw a rather dismal picture of the Belgian BA landscape.

I'm not completely surprised by this. In the weekly online BA cafe (hosted by the IIBA® Brussels Chapter), the Belgian participants occasionally talk about the seeming lack of interest for and underestimation of the importance of the role of business analysis. **It sometimes seems as if many decision makers don't have time for the why-questions at the heart of the BA role.**

At the same time, we can ask ourselves if there could be a correlation with the smaller number of respondents that find themselves in a management function. Perhaps only managing BAs are involved at the level where BA is done in an optimising and measurable way and maybe that could also explain our results.

On the other hand, it's great to see over half of the respondents perform their business analysis work in a more or less structured way, which helps increase the credibility of our work. This is definitely an interesting one to study more closely and compare over the next couple of years.

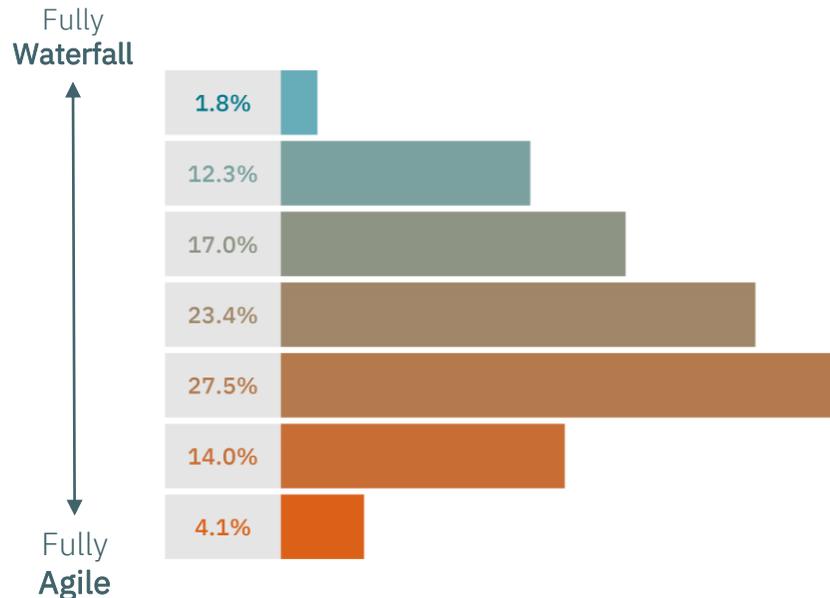
Regularly revisit **the agile manifesto** & apply it to other business functions or organizational levels



Filip Hendrickx

Innovating BA
Let's connect 

BA practice approach



Ah, agile! It's tough not to give an opinionated reflection here :-).

If I can speak from about 20 years of experience, I see many organisations are now indeed applying agile methodologies and frameworks to some extent. However, in my opinion, there are at least two actions most organisations can take to shift from doing agile to being agile, and become more successful in several ways.

Regularly revisit the agile manifesto. It has four values and no less than twelve principles. Are you really applying all sixteen aspects, or have you made a conscious decision not to apply some of them? Even though it was created in 2001, the agile manifesto is still a valuable starting point for collaborative reflection and improvement.

While the manifesto arose from the world of software development, you will only reap its true benefits when **applying it also at other business functions or organisational levels**, like the finance or HR functions, or the strategic level.

BAs, having historically been an important connection between "business and IT", are very well placed to support, or even lead, their organisations in taking these steps forward.

Epilogue

Every end is a new beginning. The end of this first Big Belgian Business Analysis Survey is the start of a regular look at the state of BA in Belgium, and a trigger for new initiatives to support our community.

Over 200 people have taken the time to respond to our survey, which is great. **Thank you very much!** You have made this first survey "a little big". Together, we can make it really big in the coming years, increasing its relevance and representativeness.

As any curious person can tell you: new answers usually raise new questions. Our survey is no different. It sets us off to **explore what drives BAs and how we can increase our impact.**

The beginning has been made. We're looking forward to finding out how our beloved profession will evolve in the coming years and, together with the whole BA community, be a driving force of that evolution.

Want to join this evolution? [Get in touch!](#)

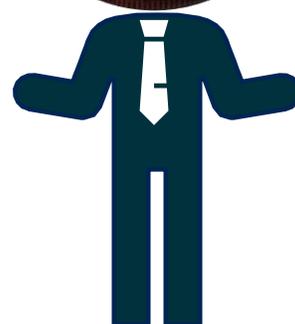
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In co-creation with

