CONTEXTUAL FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH FEELING THAT FIRST INTERCOURSE WAS TOO EARLY AMONG BELGIAN ADOLESCENTS

BACKGROUND
First sexual intercourse is a major event in a young person’s life marking the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Early sexual intercourse, an older partner and alcohol or drug use have been associated with higher risk of non-use of contraceptive methods and consequently with higher risks of STI and unintended pregnancies [1-3]. Those factors have also been associated with regrets about the timing of first intercourse [4-7]. Studies have also documented that a negative first experience was likely to impact sexual development and maybe future sexual life [4].

We examined associations of contextual factors around the first intercourse with the feeling that first intercourse was too early.

METHODS
Within the 2014 HBSC survey, data were collected among 2,015 French-speaking Belgian adolescents aged 16-20 who had already intercourse (50.1% of the 16-20 year olds). Variable of interest was the feeling on the timing of their first intercourse and was dichotomized. Adolescents who declared they would rather have had first intercourse later and 3.6% did not really want to have intercourse]. This proportion was twice as high among girls (Figure 1).

After adjustment, first intercourse with an older partner and no subsequent intercourse were associated with feeling that first intercourse was too early among boys compared with those who wished it happened earlier, those for whom it happened at the right moment and those who did not think about. Those factors were also associated with sexual risk behaviours. The timing of first intercourse is part of a broader concept that refers to sexual competence or readiness. This concept covers other major dimensions such as autonomy of decision (alcohol use, peer and partner pressure) and level of willingness of both partners. Future research is needed to explore first sexual intercourse within this broader framework.

RESULTS
Half of the sample were boys; girls were younger than boys (Table 1). The proportion of adolescents who had had first intercourse with a younger partner was 3 times higher among boys, while proportion of those who had had first experience with an older partner was twice as high among girls. Boys were twice as likely to report they had only one sexual intercourse as girls.

One in five adolescents (19.7%) reported first intercourse was too early (16.1% would rather have had first intercourse later and 3.6% did not really want to have intercourse). This proportion was twice as high among girls (Figure 1).

After adjustment, first intercourse with an older partner and no subsequent intercourse were associated with feeling that first intercourse was too early among boys compared with those who wished it happened earlier, those for whom it happened at the right moment and those who did not think about (Figure 2). Older girls, those who reported an early sexual intercourse, non-use of contraception and no subsequent intercourse, were more prone to report feeling that first intercourse was too early compared with those who wished it happened earlier, those for whom it happened at the right moment and those who did not think about. This proportion was twice as high among girls (Figure 1).

Using logistic regression model, associations with early sexual intercourse (before 16 years), age difference between partners, contraceptive use (including condom), number of subsequent intercourse and sociodemographic factors (as potential confounders) were assessed. Interactions with gender, age at first sexual intercourse and age difference between partners were tested. Since interaction between gender and age at first intercourse was statistically borderline (p=0.07), analyses were stratified among boys and girls.

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REFERENCES

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MAIN MESSAGES
• Having a first intercourse when they did not actually feel ready could place adolescents at higher risk of non-use of contraception (including condom), especially girls.
• Sexual health education programs should help adolescents to assess their wantness to engage in sexual intercourse and to free themselves from any pressure.

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