

# Rise in number of overtime hours worked

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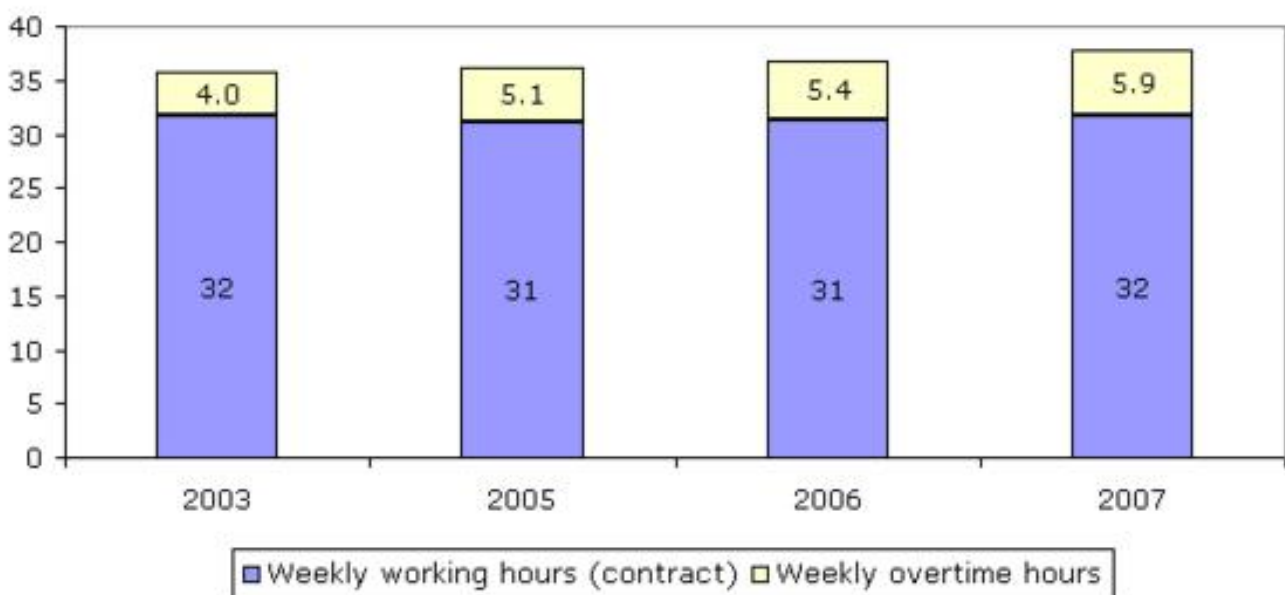
Although the proportion of Dutch employees working overtime decreased slightly between 2003 and 2007, the amount of overtime hours worked by employees increased over the same period. Working overtime appears to be related to occupational risks such as high pressure of work, poor work-life balance and the tendency to look for another job. However, the National Survey on Working Conditions suggests that some employees may occasionally welcome working overtime.

Recent findings from the National Survey on Working Conditions (Nationale Enquête Arbeidsomstandigheden, NEA) enable a closer analysis of regular working time and working overtime in the Netherlands. The NEA is carried out among about 25,000 employees in the Netherlands and covers topics regarding quality of work, work characteristics and health at work. The first pilot survey was held in 2003 and from 2005 onwards the NEA has become a yearly survey (van Hooff, van den Bossche and Smulders, 2008).

## Trends in working overtime

Dutch employees work on average 32 contractual hours a week. In addition, they report working about six hours overtime a week (Bakhuys Roozeboom et al, 2008). Although the proportion of employees working overtime incidentally or on a structural basis has decreased slightly from 75% in 2003 to 73% in 2007, the number of reported overtime hours has increased substantially over the same period from four hours to six hours a week (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Trends in contractual weekly working hours and overtime, 2003–2007



Source: NEA, 2007

Trends in contractual weekly working hours and overtime, 2003–2007

## Prevalence of working overtime

Working overtime incidentally or on a structural basis appears to be relatively common among men (76%) and highly educated employees (university or higher tertiary education) (83%), compared with women (70%) and low-educated employees (63%) who complete on average four years of secondary education or less. Looking at the general industrial classification of economic activities within the European Communities (Nomenclature générale des activités économiques dans les Communautés européennes, NACE), the incidence of overtime hours differ. In the transport, storage and communication sector (NACE I) and the real estate, renting and business activities sector (NACE K), the proportion of employees working overtime is relatively high (respectively 77% and 78%), whereas in construction (NACE F) and in agriculture and fishing (NACE A), working overtime is relatively less common (respectively 65% and 68%). In addition, the amount of overtime hours worked also appears to differ by sector. In the transport, storage and communication sector, the average number of overtime hours is highest at over nine hours a week, whereas in health and social work (NACE N), the average number of overtime hours is lowest at about four hours a week.

In line with earlier survey findings by the Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research ( Nederlandse Organisatie voor toegepast-natuurwetenschappelijk onderzoek, TNO) (NL0605NU03, NL0707019I), the number of regular contractual working hours differs by sector (Figure 2). In construction, employees report working longer hours (on average 38 hours a week), whereas in health and social work employees report working relatively fewer hours a week (about 26 hours a week). This could be due to the fact that women are highly represented in the latter sector and more often work part time than men. Figure 2 provides an overview of the average weekly working hours as well as overtime hours according to sector.

Figure 2: Contractual weekly working hours and overtime, by sector



Source: NEA, 2007

Contractual weekly working hours and overtime, by sector

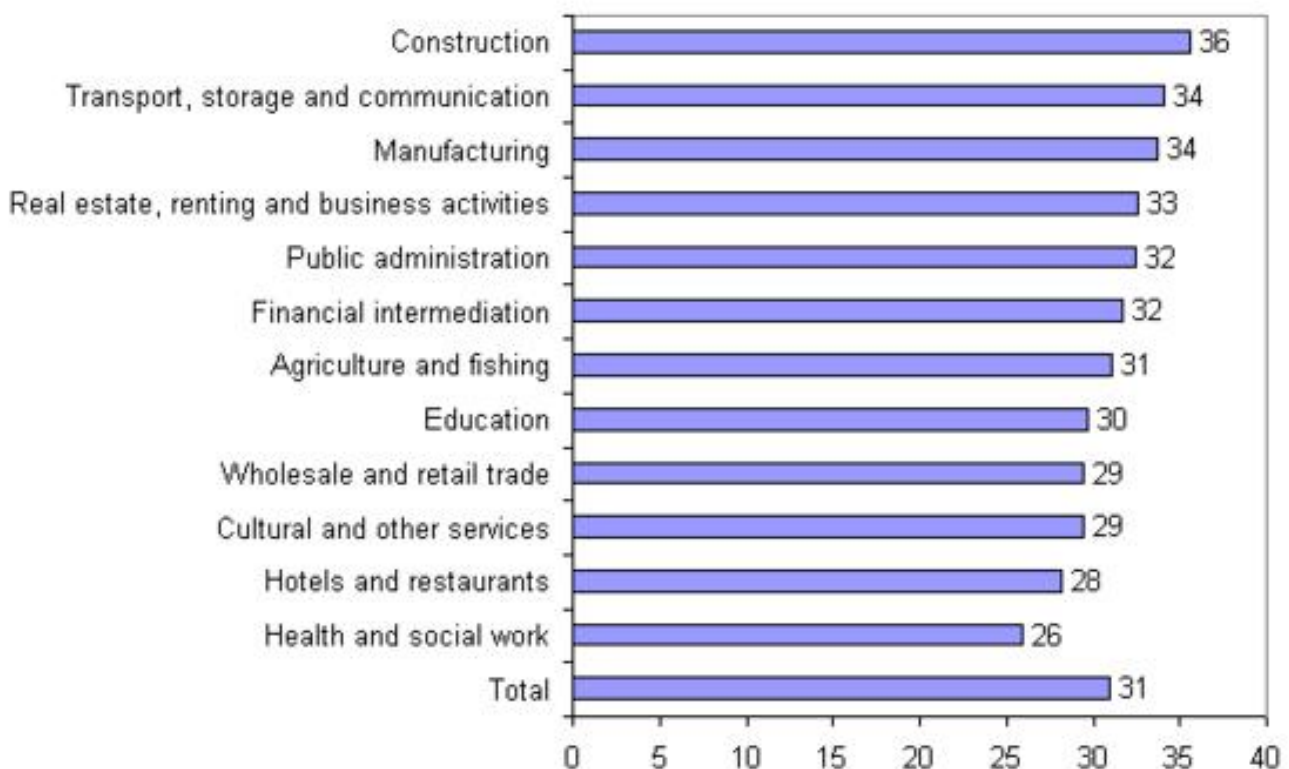
## Exposure to occupational risks

Working overtime appears to be related to occupational risk factors. For example, working overtime is related to high levels of work pressure (Pearson's correlation coefficient  $r=.32$ ) and to work-life balance problems. Employees who report working overtime on a structural basis more often report missing or neglecting family activities due to work (72%) compared with employees not or incidentally working overtime (45%). Furthermore, workers who report working overtime on a structural basis more often report thinking about finding another job compared with those who do not or inadvertently work overtime (57% compared with 48% respectively).

## Willingness to work overtime

Although working overtime appears to be associated with occupational risks, overtime may sometimes be welcomed by employees. For example, in some sectors of the economy, employees may actually be motivated to work overtime for financial reasons or because of intrinsic motivational reasons. In construction, transport, storage and communication, as well as manufacturing, the preferred number of working hours by employees is highest (Figure 3). These are the same sectors in which employees report working a relatively high amount of overtime. In addition, Pearson's correlation analyses show that the number of overtime hours is strongly positively related to the number of preferred working hours reported by employees ( $r= .22$ ). In sectors in which employees report working relatively many overtime hours, this correlation is even stronger (for example, in the transport sector,  $r= .33$ ).

Figure 3: Preferred weekly working hours, by sector



Source: NEA, 2007

Preferred weekly working hours, by sector

## Conclusions

Results from the NEA show that Dutch employees work about six hours a week overtime and that this number of hours is increasing. Most overtime hours are reported by male employees, highly educated employees and employees in the transport, storage and communication sector. Although working overtime appears to be associated with negative aspects of work, overtime may actually be sometimes welcomed by employees. Correlation analyses show that employees who prefer a higher number of working hours also report working relatively many overtime hours.

## References

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