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## Factors impacting negatively on work–life balance

*The problem of work interfering with home life – otherwise known as ‘work–home interference’ – appears to be stabilising in the Netherlands. However, it remains a significant problem for higher educated workers in the middle age group. Work seems to impact on home life up to twice as often as home life impacts on work. Work pressure is an important explanatory factor in variable work–home interference levels, followed by the number of hours worked and education.*

### Context

Combining work and non-working life is becoming an increasingly important subject of interest due to the growing number of employed women in the Netherlands and the fact that government policy is directed at encouraging even more women to become active in the labour market and to work more hours each week. However, trying to combine work and family life can be extremely difficult for some workers, leading to problems such as depression and fatigue ([NL0701019I](#), see also Van Hooff et al, 2005). The degree to which work interferes with family life or to which family activities interfere with work are referred to as ‘work–home’ or ‘home–work’ interference respectively.

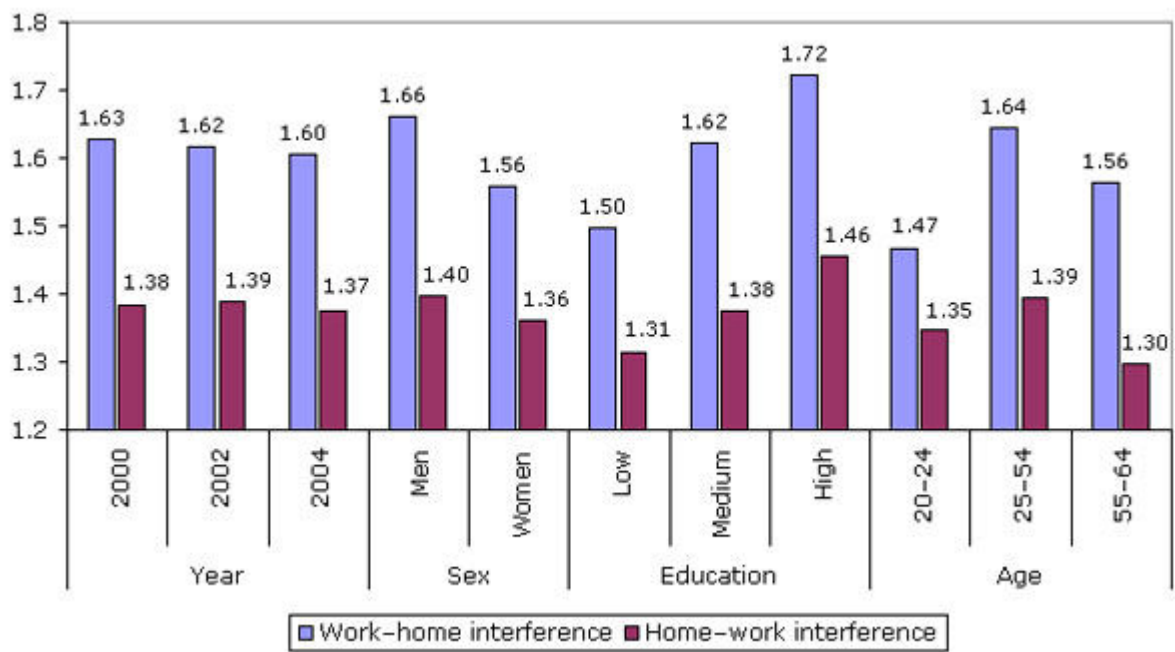
### TNO Work Situation Survey

Data on the prevalence of work–home and home–work interference in the Netherlands can be obtained from the [TNO Work Situation Survey \(TAS\) \(in Dutch\)](#). The survey, launched by [TNO Work and Employment](#) on behalf of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, [SZW](#)) and carried out biennially in 2000, 2002 and 2004, aims to gain an insight into the quality of work in the Netherlands. The survey interviews about 4,000 workers each year and covers issues such as demography, the work contract, the company, the work situation, health and well-being, and [work-life balance](#).

### Findings on work–life balance

Findings obtained from the TAS reveal that work–home and home–work interference appear to be stabilising in the Netherlands over the period 2000–2004 (Bakhuys Roozeboom et al, 2007). However, workers more frequently report work–home interference than home–work interference (Figure 1). According to the results, work seems to impact on family life up to twice as often as home life impacts on work. Moreover, both work–home and home–work interference appear to be a particularly significant issue for higher educated male workers in the middle age group.

### Average rate of work–home and home–work interference, by year, sex, education and age

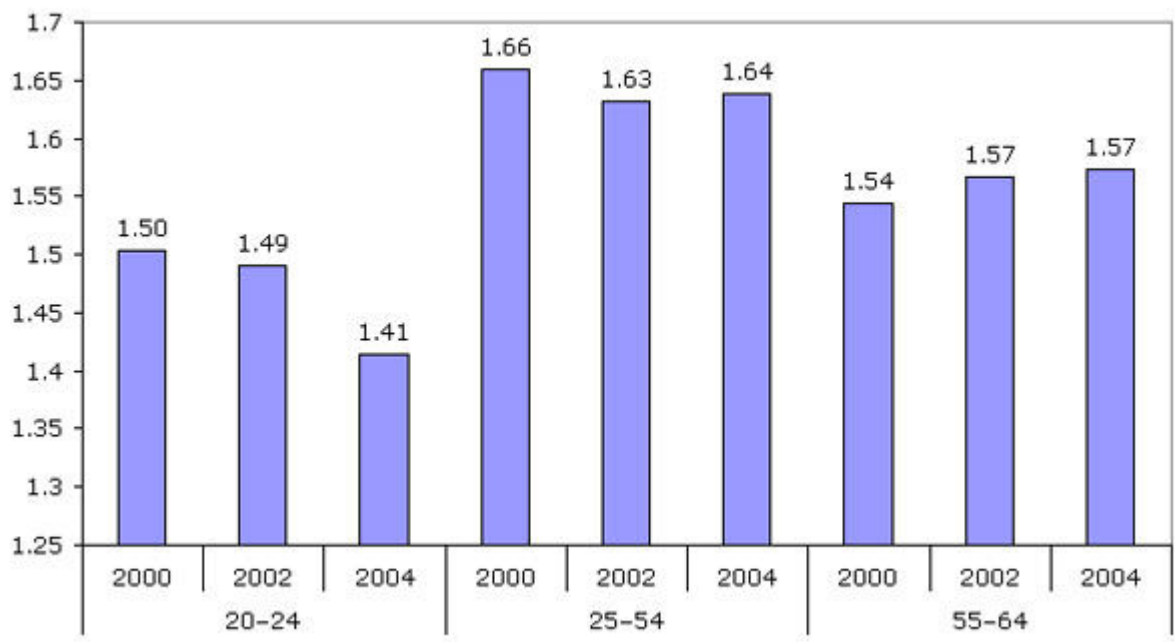


Note: Scores range from 1 to 4; for work-home interference, 1 means that work 'never' interferes with home life and 4 means that work 'very often' interferes with home life. For home-work interference, 1 means that home life 'never' interferes with work and 4 means that home life 'very often' interferes with work.

Source: TAS, 2000-2004

Further analysis reveals that work-home interference has declined among workers aged 20-24 years, whereas it has remained relatively stable among older workers and those in the middle age group (Figure 2).

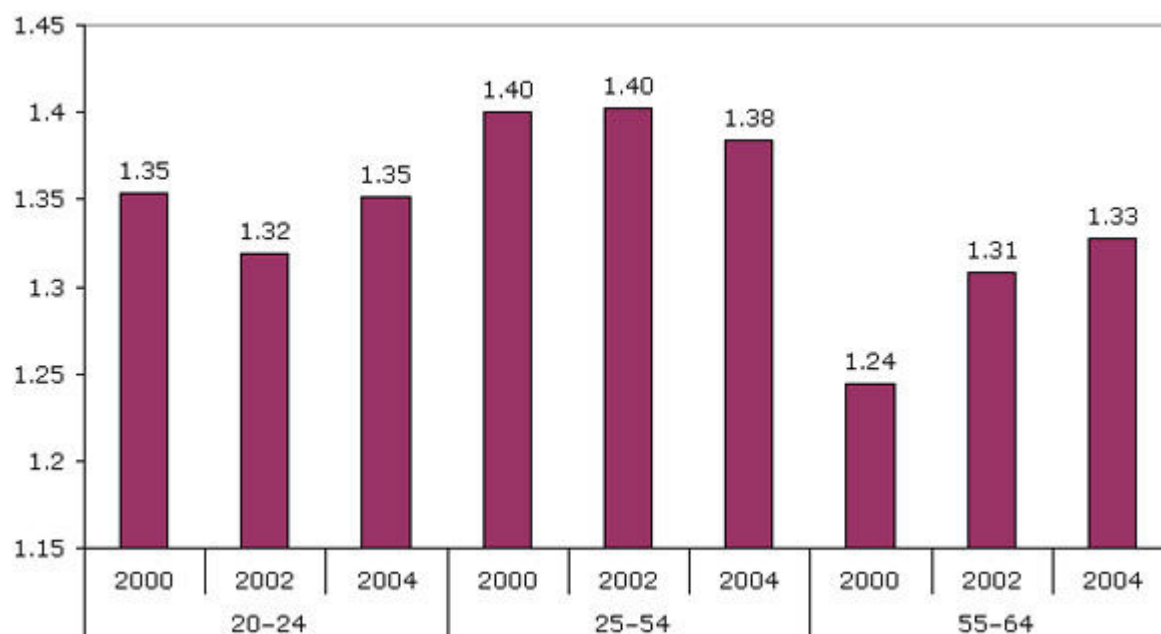
**Trends in work-home interference, by age, 2000-2004**



Source: TAS, 2000-2004

A different picture emerges in relation to home–work interference. Such interference seems to increase considerably among older workers, whereas it remains relatively stable among young workers and those in the middle age group (Figure 3).

### Trends in home–work interference, by age, 2000–2004



Source: TAS, 2000–2004

### Factors affecting work–home interference

Additional regression analyses attributed gender differences in work–home interference to the number of working hours. Male workers tend to work more hours each week compared with their female counterparts, at 38 hours compared with 27 hours respectively. In general, however, the results of the regression analyses show that differences in work–home interference can be mostly attributed to work pressure (standardised regression coefficient Beta = 0.26): the higher the work pressure, the greater the interference of work on family life. Working long hours (Beta = 0.15) and having a high education (Beta = 0.13) were the second most influential factors in explaining these differences in work–home interference. Gender does not have a significant moderating effect.

### References

Bakhuys Roozeboom, M., De Vroome, E., Smulders, P. and Van den Bossche, S., [Trends in de arbeid in Nederland tussen 2000 en 2004](#), Hoofddorp, TNO Kwaliteit van Leven, 2007.

Van Hooff, M., Geurts, S., Taris, T., Kompier, M., Dijkers, J., Houtman, I. and Van den Heuvel, F., 'Disentangling the causal relationships between work–home interference and employee health', *Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment and Health*, Vol. 31, No. 1, 2005, pp. 15–29.

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