

# Changing face of ‘multi-jobbing’

*Holding down more than one job is becoming an increasingly attractive proposition for people in the Netherlands. In the past it had been seen as an option mainly for people struggling to make ends meet. However, new research shows that so-called ‘multi-jobbing’ is not just the preserve of lower skilled and lower paid workers. The study examines the benefits and drawbacks of having more than one job, the reasons for multi-jobbing, and looks at the different outcomes for workers.*

## Background

An increasing number of people in the Netherlands are holding down more than one job – known in the country as multi-jobbing. Multi-jobbing is also sometimes referred to as moonlighting, multiple job holding or having a parallel career.

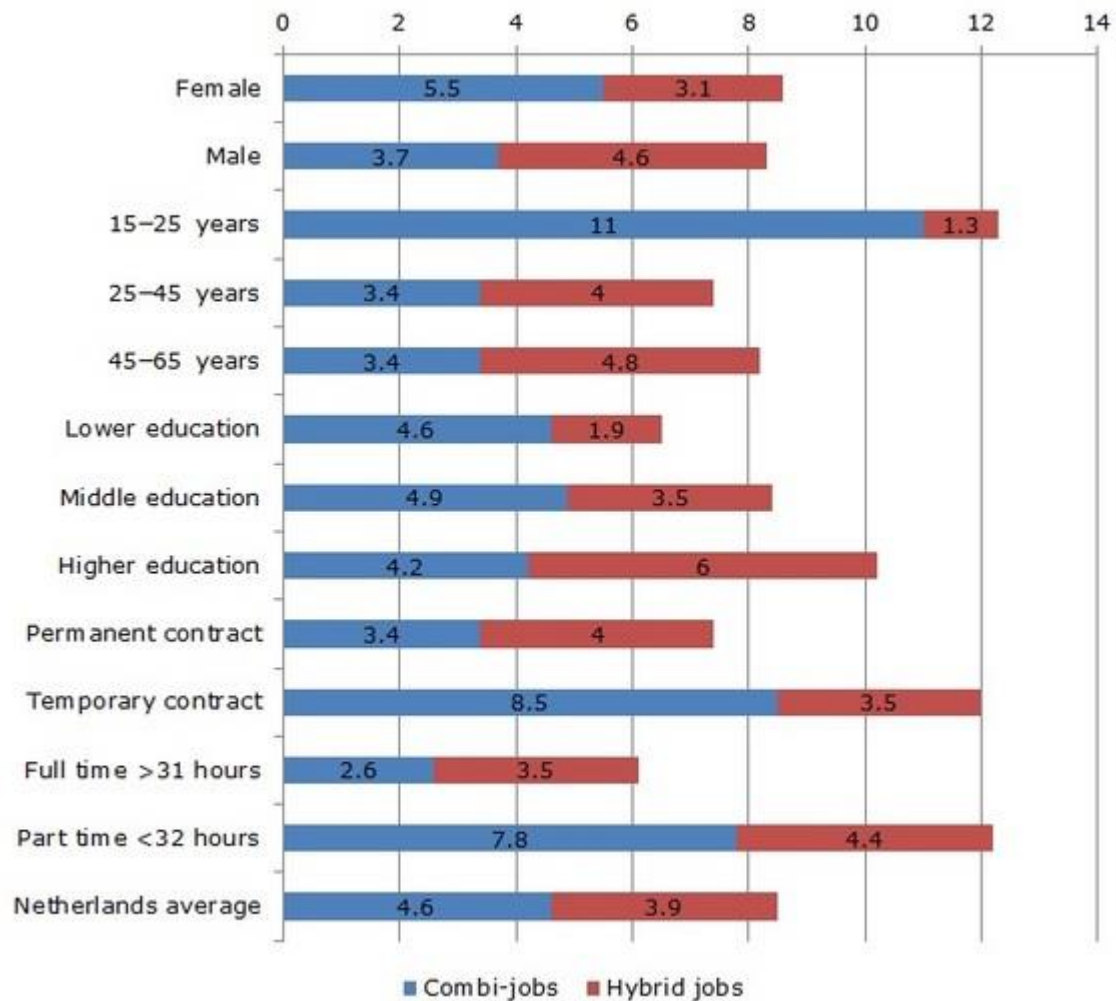
This type of alternative employment relationship is not uncommon. A recent study, Reasons for combining multiple jobs, shows that more than 8.5% of the Dutch working population currently holds down more than one job. It is estimated by [Eurostat](#) that in 2013, 3.5% of the European working population held a second job. This translates to around eight million people, compared to just one million multi-jobbers in 2002.

## Different types of multi-jobbing

Second jobs are often regarded as additional paid hours on top of a full-time job, helping a lower paid worker ‘make ends meet’. However, recent national figures for the Netherlands from the Central Bureau of Statistics ([CBS](#)) show that multi-jobbers with two paid jobs worked an average of 31.8 hours per week. This suggests Dutch multi-jobbers are often combining part-time jobs.

The prevalence of multi-jobbing is shown in Figure 1, broken down into several socio-demographic categories. The figures seem to indicate that younger employees and temporary and part-time workers are more likely to have paid work with multiple employers. These might be termed combi-jobs. More highly educated and older workers more often combine a paid job with self-employment, known as hybrid jobs.

**Figure 1: Prevalence of multi-jobbing (%)**



Source: National Working Conditions Survey, 2012; N = 23.041; (TNO / Statistics Netherlands).

## Main reasons for multi-jobbing

There seem to be some misconceptions over the main reasons for people to combine jobs.

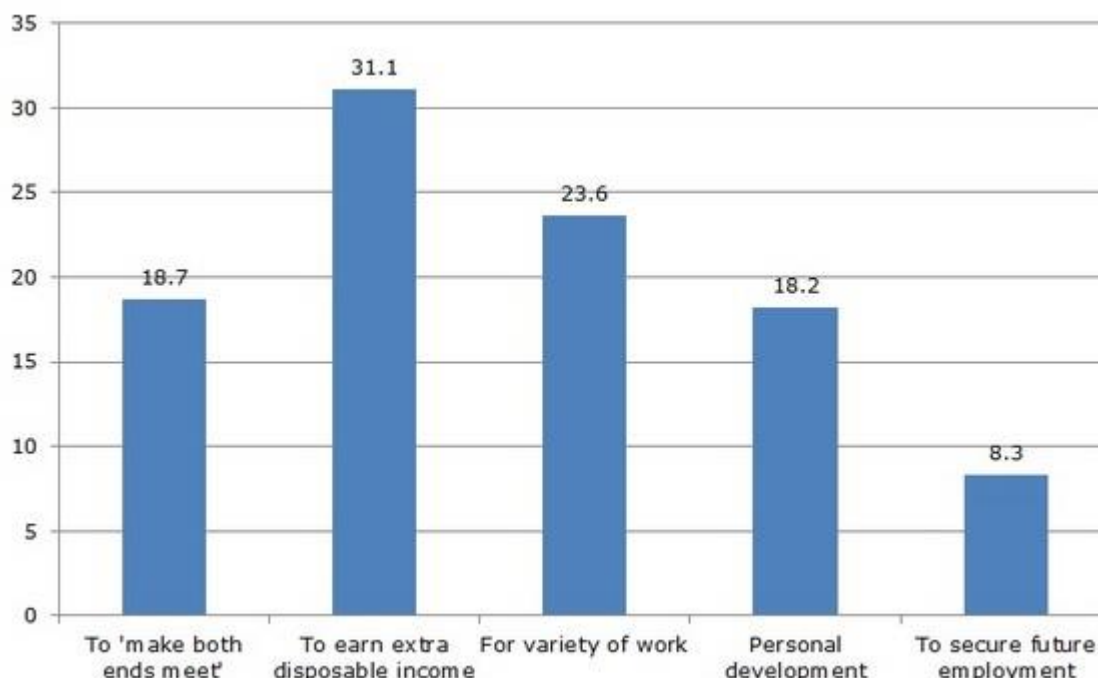
The mainstream opinion is that most multi-jobbers are vulnerable workers with a lower social-economic status and are forced into this position for financial reasons. Research from several countries, including the United States, partly supports the view that lower-skilled workers are more likely to have financial reasons for multi-jobbing.

A recent study by the Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research ([TNO](#)) suggests that only 50% of the multi-jobbers in the Netherlands have multiple jobs because they need extra money ‘to make ends meet’ or want more disposable income. Some of these workers do take more than one job to secure a living wage. However, the majority want to earn something extra on top of an already satisfactory income.

The study shows that for the remaining 50%, multi-jobbing is not driven by financial factors. Reasons given include ‘more job variety’, ‘to benefit personal development’, and ‘to secure

future employment'. These figures suggest that holding down multiple jobs is, for many, a personal work strategy to find or regain job satisfaction, to increase their competences or to allay fears of job insecurity.

**Figure 2: Most important reasons for multi-jobbing (%)**



Source: National Working Conditions Survey, 2012; N = 379; (TNO/Statistics Netherlands).

## Pros and cons of multi-jobbing

TNO also looked at the outcomes of multi-jobbing for employees who made the transition from one paid job to multiple jobs. A recent qualitative study, Reasons for combining multiple jobs, asked 20 multi-jobbers from a variety of occupational backgrounds how they felt about having a combi-job or a hybrid job. It asked about the benefits and drawbacks they encountered.

The outcomes, summarised in the table, were categorised into three employability indicators – health/well-being effects, work motivational effects and effects on the employee's position in the labour market.

| Multi-jobbing outcomes, by employability indicators |   |   |
|---|---|---|
|   | Benefits of Multi-jobbing   | Drawbacks of Multi-jobbing              |
| Health/well-being effects                           | Multi-jobbing with one home-based job increases work time control                       | More/flexible work hours and less sleep |
|   | Part-time self-employment provides more job control – it offers the ability say 'no' to | The burden of a double                  |

|                                  |   |  |
|----------------------------------|---|--|
|                                  | overtaxing activities   | administration<br><br>Work–life balance is harder to maintain  |
| <b>Work motivational effects</b> | More task variety motivates and gives work pleasure in both jobs<br><br>Knowledge/network from one job is applicable in the other job<br><br>New learning experiences when setting up own business  | Hard to commit to two employers, especially when one job is less than five hours per week<br><br>Loyalty conflicts when two employers call on your flexibility   |
| <b>Labour market position</b>    | Higher net income<br><br>Financial security from paid employment gives way to incremental growth of own business without worrying about financial issues (job security)<br><br>Better chances in the labour market when partly self-employed (spreading your chances) | Loss of pension schemes when partly self-employed<br><br>In multiple small jobs, less access to additional courses paid by employer<br><br>Institutional barriers to combining multiple jobs when also partly unemployed |

## Conclusions

Conclusions based on initial findings include:

- a large proportion of Dutch multi-jobbers have non-financial reasons for multi-jobbing;
- multi-jobbing can act as a personal work strategy to improve employability;
- employability is not necessarily threatened after the transition from one to multiple jobs;
- the Netherlands has a unique employment structure which offers workers the possibility of taking a number of part-time jobs – this may make it easier to combine these part-time jobs;
- policymakers should not necessarily judge multi-jobbing as an undesirable type of labour market behaviour;
- in a more flexible and greying European labour market, the employability benefits could counterbalance some of the potential drawbacks;
- the hybrid combination of paid employment and self-employment is more prevalent at a higher age, and most benefits older employees.

## References

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