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Working time in the European Union: the Netherlands

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The aim is to obtain a fuller insight into differences in working time across the European Union and into developments in average hours worked both in total and by specific sections of the work force in the Netherlands over the preceding years. The general concern is to investigate the factors underlying the changes that are observed in the survey data collected and, in particular, how terms and conditions of employment are changing in relation to working time. In general, data refer to the working time of those in employment.

The national contributions collect data inter alia from; firstly the [EU Labour Force Survey](#) which covers average hours worked by men and women employees both overall and in part-time and full-time jobs, the proportion of men and women in part-time jobs and the relative number of men and women employed under different arrangements as regards working time. Secondly, from the [Fourth European Working Conditions Survey](#) conducted by the European Foundation which covers other aspects of working time, including the number of days worked per week, evening, night and weekend working, the organisation of working time, the proportion of people with second jobs, the time spent commuting as well as on unpaid work.

These data are intended to form the basis of the replies to the questions asked but other relevant data have been used where available to supplement these.

Duration of work

Average weekly hours

Does the evidence from the above surveys, and other sources, indicate that, over the past five or ten years, employees are working fewer hours in your country?

Yes, that is correct. Below you will find the latest download from the Statline database of the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics, concerning the average working week in hours of male and female employee, with and without overtime. Only overtime of women does not decrease.

Table 1: Average number of working hours of male and female Dutch employees from the year 1995, and the difference between overtime included or not in percentages

	Men plus overtime	Men minus overtime	Difference in percentage	Women plus overtime	Women minus overtime	Difference in percentage	All employees plus overtime	All employees minus overtime	Difference in percentage
1995	36.9	36.1	2.2%	26.4	26.2	0.8%	32.7	32.1	1.9%
1996	36.5	35.7	2.2%	25.9	25.8	0.4%	32.2	31.7	1.6%
1997	36.0	35.2	2.3%	25.3	25.2	0.4%	31.7	31.1	1.9%
1998	35.8	35.1	2.0%	25.3	25.1	0.8%	31.5	31.0	1.6%
1999	35.8	35.0	2.3%	25.4	25.2	0.8%	31.4	30.9	1.6%
2000	35.8	35.0	2.3%	25.5	25.3	0.8%	31.4	30.9	1.6%
2001	35.6	34.9	2.0%	25.5	25.3	0.8%	31.3	30.8	1.6%
2002	35.6	34.9	2.0%	25.3	25.1	0.8%	31.2	30.7	1.6%
2003	35.5	34.8	2.0%	25.3	25.1	0.8%	31.1	30.6	1.6%
2004	35.2	34.6	1.7%	24.9	24.8	0.4%	30.7	30.2	1.7%
2005	35.0	34.4	1.7%	24.8	24.7	0.4%	30.4	30.0	1.3%
2006	34.5	34.0	1.5%	24.6	24.5	0.4%	30.1	29.7	1.3%
2007	34.7	34.1	1.8%	24.5	24.3	0.8%	30.1	29.7	1.3%
Difference 1995 -	-6.0%	-5.5%	-0.4	-7.2%	-7.3%	-0.0	-8.0%	-7.5%	-0.6

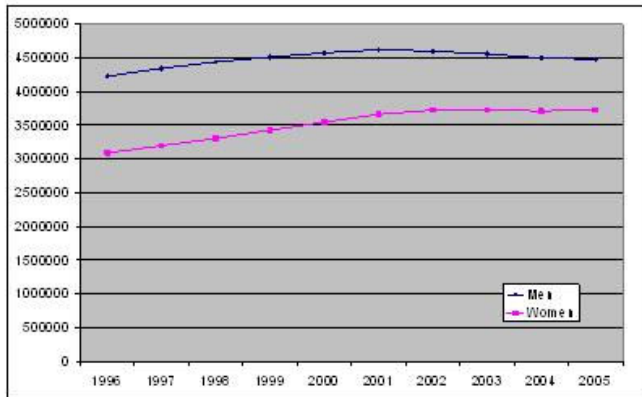
2007

Source: CBS Statline

Is there evidence that any such decline in average working time is due more to compositional changes (e.g. more women entering the labour market and working part-time) than to an across-the-board reduction in hours?

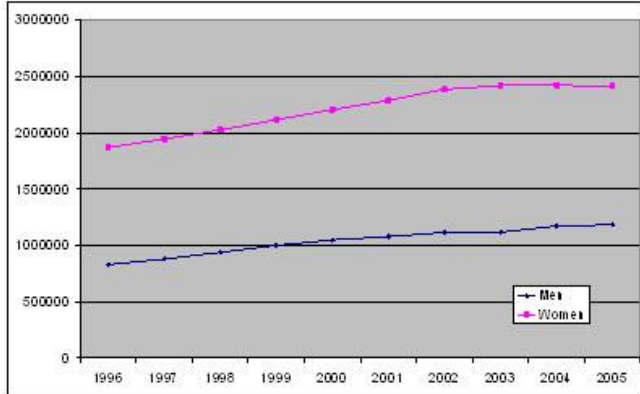
Yes, partly. Since 1996 more women have entered the labour market (figure 1) and more women have started to work part-time (figure 2). This also happened in the preceding decades, when many women entered the labour market by means of part time jobs to combine work and family care. In the last twelve years however, also men's average number of working hours decline (table 1).

Figure 1. Number of men and women on the Dutch labour market



(Source: CBS Statline)

Figure 2. Number of part-time working men and women on the Dutch



Labour market (Source: CBS Statline)

Is there evidence that any fall in average hours over these periods may be due to a reduction in the number of people working very long hours – over 48 per week? Is there evidence that this has been due, to any extent, to the adoption of the EU working time Directive?

This may be the case, because in The Netherlands the differences in percentages overtime drop over the years only among male employees. It is not likely that this is related to the adoption of the EU working time Directive, because we (in EU and NL) had a restricted Working Time Law reducing the average number of weekly working hours to 45 (40 in case of night work) and this was extended to an average maximum of 52 hours (in a period of 16 weeks), by a governmental correction in 2007.

Annual hours worked

To what extent is the notion of annual working time (calculated to take account of annual holidays, including public holidays, as well as average weekly hours) in common use in political or everyday discussion, or in social partner negotiations?

The annual working time is not in use in political and everyday discussion. The discussion in the Netherlands concentrates on the duration of the average working week.

Is there any evidence that the number of weeks worked per year has declined over the past five or ten years due to increased holidays, or time off for other purposes?

There is no evidence of this kind, because the average number of holiday weeks did not decline.

Days of work per week**Is the five-day week the predominant norm, as opposed to other patterns – four days, four and a half-days, five and a half-days, six days?**

The five-day week is the predominant norm in the Netherlands.

Are there any obvious trends in this respect – for example, to reduce the number of days worked per week, but to increase the number of hours worked each day?

In some sectors of industry such as Public Administration and Financial Services, there is a collectively negotiated a 36-hour working week with a possibility to work 4 days and 9 hours, but this has to be negotiated individually between the employee and the employer.

Full-time and part-time working**Has part-time working grown relative to full-time working over the past five or ten years?**

Yes, it has (see table 2 and figure 2)

Table 2a Relative growth of the number of employees working part-time and full-time in the Dutch labour force

Notes (delete if none) Source:	Number of employees in labour force			
	12-20 hrs	20-35 hrs	35 hours	Total
1996	418000	1323000	4443000	6184000
2000	578000	1645000	4694000	6917000
2005	662000	1898000	4359000	6919000
2006	674000	1950000	4450000	7074000

Table 2b Relative growth of the number of employees working part-time and full-time in the Dutch labour force

Notes (delete if none) Source:	Percentage of employees in labour force			
	12-20 hrs	20-35 hrs	35 hours	Total
1996	6.8%	21.4%	71.8%	100.0%
2000	8.4%	23.8%	67.9%	100.0%
2005	9.6%	27.4%	63.0%	100.0%
2006	9.5%	27.6%	62.9%	100.0%

Source: CBS Statline

Are there major gender differences in the patterns of part-time working?

Yes there are (see table 1 and figure 2).

Does the government encourage part-time working, either 'passively' (i.e. through the workings of social security or taxation rules) or 'actively' (e.g. in the sense of particular incentives being offered)?

Up to 2002, the Dutch government promoted part-time work passively by stimulating child care, because it was found that part-time work stimulated the opportunities for women to enter the labour market and combine work and family care. Students were stimulated passively to work part-time and combine this with study finance by reducing their rights to get a complementary (free) subsidy.

With the start of the second government Balkenende in 2003, the Dutch government started to discourage part-time work, because of the shortage of personnel on the Dutch labour market. Child care was discouraged by changing the subsidizing rules of child care in the disadvantage of parents. The current fourth (left-wing, the third one was only temporary) government Balkenende adopts a more active subsidizing policy.

Collective bargaining**What are the main working time concerns and priorities of trade unions in collective bargaining?**

In the last ten years trade union policy has changed to a more individual oriented approach. Collective

bargaining concentrates on negotiating employment conditions at a more general level and aims to offer in collective agreements opportunities for individual choices (CAO a-la-carte). In the case of working time, this means that trade unions try to keep the achieved reduced working week in general (36-hour working week), but to negotiate individual elaboration when employees want to work more hours. Also the combination of work and family care is of great concern to the trade unions, not only directed to the women, but also to the men. More opportunities for child care and the right to influence individual working time are the main working time concerns of the current policies.

Is part-time working generally viewed positively, or accepted reluctantly, by trade unions?

It is viewed positively.

Work schedules

The working day and working week

To what extent does the standard 'full-time' working day – 08.00/09.00 to 17.00/18.00 - prevail as the norm?

Full-time work is not standard any more in the Netherlands. Many women work part-time (table 1 and 2, and figure 2), but also an increasing number of men work part-time. That is, in many sectors; also men work one day less per week to combine responsibility for child care with their partner. So part-time work increases, but the concentration on work on working days from 08.00 to 18.00 is still the norm. Most of the part-time work is done in day parts of 4 hours in the morning or afternoon on working days from 08.00 to 18.00. Of course in the Hotel and Restaurant sector and some other sectors where people often work in non-standardised working hours (Trade, Public Transportation), part-timers also work in the evenings and in weekends.

To what extent does the 'standard time norm' of the working week (40 hour, 5 day week) prevail?

Almost all people work at day time on working days (see table 3). When it comes to evening, night and weekend work, less people are involved. There is a strong correlation between evening, night and weekend work (r =around .50).

Table 3 Percentage of people in the Dutch labour force, working at different times of the day and the week

	Men	Women	Total
	94.7%	89.9%	92.7%
Evening work	30.7%	29.6%	30.2%
Night work	7.7%	5.5%	6.7%
Weekend work	31.6%	27.9%	30.0%

Source: TNO Work Situation Survey, 2000, 2002, 2004

Non-standard work arrangements

To what extent are non-standard working time arrangements – evening, night and week-end work - mainly limited to those sectors of the economy where it is difficult to avoid – e.g. shift working in continuous process plants or lunch-time and evening work in restaurants?

To a great extent (see table 4).

Table 4. Percentage of people in the Dutch labour force, working at different times of the day and the week in different sectors of industry

	Day work	Evening work	Night work	Weekend work
	96.9%	21.9%	11.5%	21.9%
Construction	99.1%	11.5%	0.9%	13.7%
Trade	83.7%	44.2%	2.0%	47.4%
Transport and Communication	92.0%	37.8%	13.9%	41.6%
Financial services	97.7%	22.7%	0.2%	10.3%
Commercial services	98.8%	20.8%	1.9%	16.2%
Education	98.7%	25.3%	0.2%	12.5%
Health and public care	93.3%	33.0%	12.8%	32.8%
Other services	92.3%	41.1%	10.3%	39.9%
Farming, Forestry, and				

		1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
	Irregular	2.7%	3.6%	4.5%	5.1%	6.5%	5.6%	2.0%	1.4%	1.7%	1.9%	1.6%
	Shift work	0.6%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.4%	0.6%	0.4%	0.4%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Mining	Irregular	1.0%	6.3%	3.0%	4.1%	1.1%	2.3%	1.2%	1.2%	2.3%	2.4%	2.4%
	Shift work	13.4%	8.4%	11.0%	11.2%	12.6%	12.5%	15.1%	15.7%	16.3%	9.5%	9.8%
Industry	Irregular	1.1%	2.9%	3.0%	3.0%	3.2%	2.6%	1.2%	1.2%	1.4%	1.2%	1.2%
	Shift work	15.8%	15.1%	14.3%	14.1%	13.4%	13.2%	13.5%	13.3%	12.2%	12.4%	12.6%
Energy and Water Supply	Irregular	5.4%	5.2%	5.8%	5.8%	4.7%	5.2%	5.5%	4.5%	3.6%	3.3%	4.6%
	Shift work	3.4%	2.4%	2.6%	3.3%	3.2%	3.7%	3.5%	3.1%	4.3%	2.2%	2.9%
Construction	Irregular	0.3%	0.4%	0.6%	0.8%	1.8%	2.4%	1.2%	0.5%	0.6%	0.4%	1.0%
	Shift work	0.4%	0.1%	0.2%	0.4%	0.4%	1.4%	1.1%	1.0%	0.6%	0.9%	1.0%
Trade	Irregular	1.7%	3.5%	3.6%	3.8%	6.0%	5.1%	4.4%	4.6%	4.8%	4.5%	4.3%
	Shift work	1.1%	1.2%	1.1%	1.2%	1.3%	1.2%	1.1%	1.1%	0.9%	1.0%	1.1%
Hotels and Restaurants	Irregular	28.2%	28.7%	27.2%	25.9%	20.1%	25.3%	22.1%	23.9%	25.1%	25.1%	24.2%
	Shift work	3.3%	5.4%	5.8%	4.3%	3.1%	3.3%	1.8%	2.2%	2.2%	2.9%	1.2%
Transport, Communication	Irregular	21.1%	20.0%	19.5%	17.1%	15.7%	16.1%	12.8%	12.2%	10.7%	11.8%	11.8%
	Shift work	8.3%	7.8%	7.8%	7.1%	7.8%	7.0%	7.6%	7.6%	6.9%	7.1%	7.2%
Financial Services	Irregular	1.6%	2.0%	1.9%	2.0%	2.0%	1.8%	1.3%	1.6%	1.4%	1.6%	1.7%
	Shift work	0.6%	0.6%	0.8%	0.5%	0.4%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%	0.1%	0.3%
Commercial Services	Irregular	5.4%	8.1%	7.4%	6.2%	5.0%	4.8%	5.2%	5.1%	5.2%	3.6%	4.3%
	Shift work	1.7%	2.0%	1.6%	1.7%	3.2%	3.1%	3.9%	3.8%	3.5%	4.0%	4.1%
Public administration	Irregular	7.7%	9.9%	8.6%	8.7%	9.6%	8.9%	8.8%	9.6%	9.8%	11.4%	11.1%
	Shift work	1.0%	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.7%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Education	Irregular	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.9%	0.9%	0.8%	0.6%	0.4%	0.3%	0.4%
	Shift work	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Health and Public care	Irregular	40.3%	39.9%	39.5%	39.6%	38.0%	38.9%	35.9%	34.4%	33.3%	32.0%	33.1%
	Shift work	0.4%	0.3%	0.3%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%
Culture and other Services	Irregular	10.6%	11.4%	11.9%	13.7%	13.5%	10.9%	8.8%	10.2%	10.3%	9.5%	10.1%
	Shift work	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%	1.3%	1.2%	1.8%	1.3%	1.1%	0.4%
Total	Irregular	9.0%	10.2%	10.0%	9.8%	9.8%	9.7%	8.7%	8.8%	8.9%	8.7%	9.0%
	Shift work	4.2%	4.0%	3.7%	3.6%	3.7%	3.7%	3.7%	3.6%	3.2%	3.3%	3.3%

Irregular work is done more often in:

Agriculture (where there is a strong decline in the last five years)

Energy and Water Supply (where it is declining and matches up with shift work in 2005;

Trade (where it is increasing)

Hotel and Restaurant sector (where it is declining)

Transport and Communication (where it is declining strongly)

Commercial services (where it is declining, while shift work increases; in 2004 both lines cross)

Public administration, where it increases, while shift work declines);

Health and social care (where it declines)

Culture and other services (where it declined strongly in 2000).

Shift work is done more often in:

Mining (where it increases over the last ten years, except the last two years);

Industry (where it is declining)

What kinds of shift systems dominate – regular mornings, afternoon or nights or mixed patterns?

In the Netherlands all kinds of shift work systems are applied: 2-shifts (discontinuous) systems are often applied in the food industry, 3-shifts (semi-continuous) systems in the metal industry, and 5-shifts (full-continuous) systems in heavy metal and chemical industry. Sometimes 4-shifts systems persist, in order to skip working on Sundays for religious reasons. Mixed patterns are only applied when necessary, for instance in the bread baking industry, where most of the work has to be done in the second half of the night.

Organisation of working time

Flexibility of working time

How far do individual workers have influence over their own working time arrangements – for example over the time they start and end work?

In most office work environments flexible working time arrangements are allowed to help employees to match working times with private responsibilities such as family care, but also with personal concerns such as doctors' visits. A more regulated strategy that exists within this policy is that people with a 36-hour working week, can negotiate with their direct principal to work four days of nine hours.

To what extent is it possible to 'bank' hours or days of work – for example to work extra hours for a number of days in order to take day(s) off?

Banking systems are not widespread in The Netherlands, but are sometimes used in sectors by employers to regulate shorter and longer working hours related to seasonal trends and unexpected work supply. In the case of employees, banking hours are used to exchange hours worked in winter with hours of leisure time in summer for instance. In workplaces where employees have flexible beginning and ending times of the working day, a banking system is sometimes used to transport an often limited number of debit and credit hours to the next month or year.

To what extent can workers determine their own work schedules - in other words, work when they like, so long as the work is delivered on time?

Determining the work schedules is a privilege related to certain types of work. Most often this is related to home work (0,4% of the total work force), to self-employment (5.6% of the total workforce), or to teleworking (4,1% of the total work force) where people have agreed with their direct superior to work some days at home by means of modern ICT solutions.

From an employee perspective, can a distinction be drawn between 'positive' flexibility concerning working time (i.e. arrangements that suit them) and 'negative' flexibility (arrangements that suit their employers), or are most arrangements by mutual consent?

Yes, it is possible to make a distinction. In the case of 'on-call work', employees agree with their employer to work for a fixed number of hours per week and a specified flexible number of hours per week. The fixed number may range from 0 to 40. This type of work is mostly done by mutual consent, but it is most often initiated by the employer, for instance a shop keeper or restaurant owner who wants to call employees for duties in busy times in the evening or weekends. But employees may also benefit from this, as they can work on times when the partner is at home to comply with family care obligations. However the mutual consent is easily changed to the advantage of the employer. Therefore these situations are better regulated nowadays by the Dutch Law on Flexibility and Security that came into force on January 1, 1999. But still some employers misuse these kinds of situations, because they generally have more power.

In 2006 there were 110,000 on-call workers in The Netherlands (1.7% of all employees). Women more often work in on-call jobs (64%). Next to on-call workers there were in 2006 also 210,000 employees (3.0% of all

employees) working for Temporary employment agencies. The working times depend also for these employees on the demands of the company where they are placed.

Is there evidence that people with higher ranking, better paid jobs are more likely to have greater flexibility regarding their working time arrangements than those with lower ranking/less well paid jobs?

See table 7. There is some evidence but not a perfect linear relationship.

Table 7. Percentage of employees having variable, sliding or other free-choice flexible working times at their work

	Percentage of employees
Other	5.3%
Lower professional education	2.7%
Secondary school	6.4%
Higher professional education	9.2%
University	4.2%
Total	5.8%

Source TNO employee study on work flexibility 1996: sample size: n=978

Are there major differences between non-manual workers and manual workers in terms of such flexibility?

Unknown, but this can be expected (see table 7).

Are there major differences between public sector and private sector workers in terms of such flexibility?

Unknown, but this can be expected.

Are any major gender differences – for example, are men and women seen to be subject to more or less 'positive' or 'negative' flexibility?

Unknown, but this can be expected.

Other working time issues

Multiple job holding

How widespread is the practice of multiple job holding in your country?

In November 2006 4.9% of the employees was reported to have two or more jobs at that time. For the period November 2005 until November 2006 15.4% of the employees reported to have two or more jobs during these 12 months (TNO survey among 51,657 working people from 18 to 64 years participating in the Intomart GFK on-line internet panel).

Are second or third jobs primarily seen as supplementary sources of income relative to a main job, or are all the different jobs seen as equally valid?

Information is not available.

Commuting time

How much time does commuting typically add to the average 'working day' (in the sense of time spent away from home)?

Information is not available.

Is commuting commonplace for everybody, or does the time spent vary in any systematic way – such as according to the type of job, or whether people live in urban or rural areas?

It is common to everyone, but in many (more traditional) jobs there is less commuting because people live close to their work.

Is the development of teleworking (full-time or part-time) seen as a viable and attractive alternative to commuting?

Yes, teleworking is generally seen as an attractive alternative, also by the Dutch government. As it involves 4,1% of the total work force, it is a viable alternative. Other sources report even about 8% teleworking. However there is also a limit to teleworking, because it is only an alternative for work that can be done on distance by means of computers or similar. There are even commercial teleworking offices in the Netherlands nowadays where employees can hire an office and the office support such as printers, copiers and even a secretary and where they can connect to their work and do their job from distant office locations.

Unpaid working hours (of those in work)

Is there much debate about the impact of time spent on unpaid work in the home, as well as time spent on paid work, on work-life balance, especially between men and women?

There is much debate in the news and also from the side of the trade unions. Former governments (before 2002) paid more attention to this (equal rights for women and men). Nowadays the left wing government again pays more attention to these questions.

Are there pressures for non-paid work to be more recognised, and for the work involved to be shared more evenly between partners?

There is a discussion on the contribution of volunteers to economy, not only in the case of volunteers adding their efforts to clubs or associations, but also to public organisations or organisations with public responsibilities such as hospitals and old peoples institutions. This discussion concentrates on volunteer work, and not on sharing house care responsibilities between partners.

Composite indicators of weekly working hours

Composite indicators of weekly working hours have been developed for full-time and part-time workers, both male and female, which include time spent in unpaid as well as paid work and time spent commuting. What do you see as the most significant implications of these indicators so far as your country is concerned?

All are relevant!

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