



Social state of the Netherlands

2017



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Eds.
Rob Bijl
Jeroen Boelhouwer
Annemarie Wennekers

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Contact

Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau

Postbus 16164

2500 BD Den Haag

Website: www.scp.nl

E-mail: info@scp.nl

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Preface

In The social state of the Netherlands (ssn) report series, which has been published since 2001, the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (scp) describes and analyses the quality of life of the Dutch population and of different groups within Dutch society. We do that on the basis of indicators for numerous areas of people's lives: education, employment, income, health, leisure time use, social participation, social safety, housing and residential setting. This report not only describes the objective situation, but also explores the opinions of Dutch people and how they see their lives, for example how much they trust politicians and how satisfied they are with their lives.

This ninth edition of ssn offers an opportunity to look back over a rather longer period than usual, spanning 25 years. This was a period in which the Netherlands experienced great economic prosperity, but also underwent a number of economic crises. In what respects has the Netherlands changed over the last 25 years? How has quality of life developed? These questions run as a common thread through this edition of ssn.

We also devote specific attention in this ssn to a finding from the most recent edition of the scp's Social and Cultural Report (*De toekomst tegemoet* - 'Facing the future'), which observes a shift away from what people *have* to people can *do* with what they have. The demands of today's society are different from those that applied in 1990. What role do (social and digital) skills play in the lives of the Dutch? How are different sections of the population dealing with the ever faster pace of life and complexity of society?

These are questions to which policymakers and politicians would also like answers. There is increasing interest in quality of life, partly driven by a growing realisation that, as well as economic developments, social and cultural aspects – including opinions, attitudes and satisfaction levels – also have consequences for society. In the light of this, and at the request of the Dutch Senate, starting in 2018 scp will report annually on the life situation of the Dutch population, prior to the budget debates.

Professor Kim Putters
Director, Netherlands Institute for Social Research

1 How is the Dutch population faring?

Jeroen Boelhouwer, Rob Bijl & Annemarie Wennekers

1.1 A brief history of The social state of the Netherlands

In 1985 the Netherlands Institute for Social Research | SCP was asked by the Dutch House of Representatives to embark on a series of 'Social and Cultural Outlook' studies (*Sociale en culturele verkenningen*) focusing on the social and cultural aspects of Dutch society.

These yearly reports were intended to act as social and cultural counterparts to the Macro Economic Outlook (*Macro economische verkenningen*) published by the Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis (CPB), with the emphasis on the life situation of the Dutch population and the climate of opinion in the Netherlands. Each *Social and Cultural Outlook* consisted of a core section (public opinion, life situation and quaternary sector) plus a special theme which varied from report to report. However, in reality they were not true outlook studies, since they discussed the most recently available figures and the trends and developments that had produced them.

A more structural layout was therefore adopted in 2001 based on a theoretical framework, so that each edition contained the same chapter headings and dealt with the same fixed set of topics. The period reviewed in each report was also standardised at ten years. Rather than appearing annually, the new report was published every two years under the title *De sociale staat van Nederland* (Social State of the Netherlands – SSN), alternating with the *Sociaal en Cultureel Rapport* (Social and Cultural Report – SCR), which over time had begun to focus more on varying rather than fixed themes.

Whilst the tradition of monitoring social and cultural trends on a continual basis is widespread in Europe, the Dutch series is among the longest-running (Noll & Berger 2014). The first edition of SSN described the general objectives of social monitors (Roes 2001; cf. also Noll 2002). These are:

- Offering a comprehensive overview of the life situation of the population as a whole using indicators for a number of socially and politically relevant domains;
- Providing systematic information on developments in various groups in Dutch society and in the different regions of the Netherlands;
- Providing information on developments over time;
- Based on this information, highlighting social problems and disadvantage to inform politicians and policymakers;
- Analysing the backgrounds, causes and consequences of these problems;
- Supplying information on the extent to which policy objectives are being achieved.

Two principles were later added to this list (cf. Boelhouwer et al. 2015; Noll & Berger 2014). First: focus more on output and outcomes than on input (statistics on the health of the population are more relevant than figures on the number of doctors). Second: regard informing society at large as at least as important as informing policy. For scp, the perspective of the citizen is a central principle. This is expressed in ssn by putting people at the heart of the study and reporting about them rather than about institutions or organisations

1.2 Quality of life in the spotlight

The amount of attention given to monitoring social developments has fluctuated over time, but has been increasing strongly again for a number of years now, while the objectives and principles highlighted above are as relevant as ever.

In 1990 the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) published the first Human Development Report, in which attention focused not just on income but also on health and education (UNDP 2010). This was largely ignored by politicians and policymakers at the time, however, and it was 2009 before the report began to resonate, largely as a result of a conference in 2007 entitled ‘Beyond GDP’, a joint initiative of the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Club of Rome, the OECD and the WWF. This led to the publication of a Communication by the European Commission in 2009 on ‘measuring progress in a changing world’ entitled *GDP and beyond* – a title which embraces gross domestic product (GDP) to a greater extent than the earlier title *Beyond GDP*. Five actions were identified in this report. The first was to complement information on GDP with social and environmental indicators. The second was to focus on producing accurate reporting on distribution and inequality. Third was the desire to maximise the amount of real-time information: this was seen as important for decision-making. Fourth was the development of a European scoreboard for sustainable development. And last, there was a need to extend the national accounts to include social and environmental aspects.

The EC called on Member States to implement these actions, the aim of which was:

to provide indicators for correct and useful standards to measure the progress in delivering social, economic and environmental goals in a sustainable manner. Ultimately, national and EU policies will be judged on whether they are successful in delivering these goals and improving the well-being of Europeans (EC 2009: 11)

Another key document which appeared in 2009 was the final report by the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission. The Commission was created by the then French President Sarkozy ‘to identify the limits of GDP as an indicator of economic performance and social progress’ and ‘to consider what additional information might be required for the production of more relevant indicators of social progress’ (Stiglitz et al. 2009: 7). The report’s conclusion was that quality of life (here and now) should be distinguished from sustainable development (later). The Commission felt it was high time to broaden the focus on the

economy to include quality of life, for example devoting less attention to production and more to income and consumption, taking households as the central perspective instead of the economy, paying more and more attention to distribution. Finally, the report concluded that quality of life is multidimensional and that both objective and subjective aspects should be taken into account.

In reality, the European Commission Communication and the Stiglitz report did little more than describe the (background to) social monitors and reports which already existed in many countries, such as the ssn in the Netherlands. Nonetheless, they were very important because of the political attention they generated. After 2009, political action was taken to enrich the existing statistics on wealth and prosperity with social and environmental indicators. The United Kingdom, Italy and Germany initiated national dialogues to ascertain which aspects of life situation people considered important (Cnel/Istat 2013; German Federal Government 2016; ONS 2011). In the Netherlands, a broad-based parliamentary commission was formed in 2015 with the brief of:

clarifying what GP does and does not measure and [...] what the added value is of developing indicators to map the different elements of broad-based prosperity (TCBWB 2016: 4)

The parliamentary commission came to the same conclusion as the earlier reports, and recommended that the existing Dutch Sustainability Monitor be further developed to a Broad Welfare Monitor.

1.3 The ninth edition – time to look back

The social state of the Netherlands has been published every two years since 2001; that first edition described developments in the life situation of Dutch citizens between the start of 1990 and the year 2000. In this ninth edition, instead of the usual review covering a period of ten years, we look all the way back to the time which formed the starting point for that first edition, namely 1990. This edition therefore takes stock over a period of around 25 years. The benefit of looking back over a longer period is that it enables us to consider whether or not developments are reinforced over time. To what extent has prosperity and life situation in the Netherlands changed over the last 25 years? And how have the perceptions of Dutch citizens regarding the social state of the country changed over that time?

The Netherlands is in the fortunate position of having a rich tradition of data collection, including on the social aspects of society (in some cases going back as far as the 1970s). New initiatives are also regularly launched to collect new data, which means we have far more data today than 25 years ago. This means that some time series used in this report do not cover the full period of 25 years. Such a relatively long period – at least in the world of data collection – can sometimes also create other problems. Comparisons over time require that questionnaires and research methods remain unchanged, which is often at

odds with changes in society. For example, a question which was considered normal in 1990 could today be regarded as outmoded, old-fashioned or undesirable. The use of web-based surveys has also increased rapidly in the wake of the mass penetration of the Internet since 1995, and this also presents challenges to comparability. Readers of this report will also regularly be confronted with interrupted time series. Nonetheless, we were pleasantly surprised by what we were able to measure: trends in key indicators going back 25 years can be found in all chapters.

1.4 Taking stock: 1990 to the present

The trends presented in this report portray the changes that have taken place in a large number of domains over the last 25 years (the structure of the report is described in more detail in § 1.5). Chapter 2 describes the changes in the context of individual quality of life, such as changes in the population profile or economic prosperity.

This paragraph briefly outlines the international context in which we lived in 1990, what impact this had on national sentiment and to what extent this is different in 2017. To do so, we draw on the Speeches from the Throne; even here there has been a change: until 2013 they were pronounced by Queen Beatrix, thereafter by her successor, King Willem-Alexander. 1990 was the year of the Iraqi attack on Kuwait (the first war that could be followed live on television) and also of German reunification. Following the attack on Kuwait, Queen Beatrix said the following:

We must fight against oppression, injustice and lack of tolerance. It is vital that people are able to develop and flourish in freedom, with the right to their own culture and beliefs, embedded in respect and care for each other. These ideals must also guide us in our own country. Social and administrative renewal, as well as European unification, are the keywords for this in our democracy. In order to achieve these ideals, government will seek consultation and collaboration.

These are words which could still apply today, and in fact they were echoed in 2016 by King Willem-Alexander:

Given all that is happening throughout the world, it is understandable that we as a society have concerns and have begun to attach more importance to the familiar and the known. [...] we in the Netherlands have long fought for a number of democratic values, including the separation of church and state, freedom of expression and freedom of religion. Men and women are equal before the law in our country, and we make no distinction on the basis of race, religion or sexual orientation. Everyone who wishes to live in our country must respect and observe these values. No one is expected to relinquish their own origin or culture, but constitutionally established norms must be respected and resolute action will be taken against intimidation and violence.

There is a difference in the last sentences of the two quotes: ‘consultation and collaboration’ have been replaced by ‘resolute action’. A Speech from the Throne provides a snapshot of the mood of the country as the incumbent government wishes this to be

conveyed (in 1990 this was the third government under Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers, comprising a coalition of the Christian-Democratic Appeal (CDA) and the Labour Party (PvdA), and in 2016 the second government under Mark Rutte, a coalition of the conservative-liberal People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) and Labour). We will look more closely at different aspects of the national mood in this SSN, but from the perspective of the citizen this time, before drawing conclusions on the extent to which that mood has changed.

A number of tasks in the social domain were devolved from the government to local authorities in 2015, based on the idea that they are in a better position to deliver the necessary customisation to solve people's problems, after first looking at what people or their networks can do for themselves. The thinking on this was no different in 1990; from the Speech from the Throne:

Social and administrative renewal complement each other. The responsibilities of governments, civil-society organisations and citizens must be linked together in such a way that social policy delivers better results. Too many citizens are on the margins and there is too much waste of human talent. The government wishes to give municipalities the opportunity to make their own choices and develop their own policy in close consultation with civil-society organisations and citizens themselves.

1.5 Structure of the report: a conceptual framework

The systematic description of life situation, one of the characteristics of social monitors, manifests itself in two ways in this report: first by structuring the descriptions on the basis of a conceptual framework – more on this later – and second through the identical structure of the individual chapters. Each chapter begins with an outline of the policy, where possible with a description of specific policy goals. Data are then presented on objective indicators of life situation, describing not just the average situation in the Netherlands as a whole, but also providing breakdowns by different social categories. This reflects the fact that a general trend can mask differences between groups, for example between older and younger people, between high and low-educated people, between different ethnic groups or between men and women. Where data are available, the chapter then presents a description of subjective indicators of quality of life and life satisfaction. Each chapter also contains a European comparison for one or more indicators. The chapters end with a summary, which feeds back into the policy objectives.

The choice of life domains discussed in the individual chapters, and of the topics discussed within the chapters, is not arbitrary: the choice of topics is dictated to a large extent by their relevance for people's daily lives, policy and empirical research. As a result, the domains presented in this SSN correspond closely with those discussed in social reports published in other European countries (Noll & Berger 2014).

Chapter 2 concentrates on the social and economic context: developments in the national income and changes in the composition of the population. The ensuing chapters then deal successively with public opinion, education, income and social security, paid work and care tasks, health and care, participation and engagement, leisure time use, social safety, and housing and the residential setting. Finally, chapter 12 summarises quality of life using the SCP Life Situation Index (SLI), complemented with information on happiness and satisfaction and a broad measure of sustainable development in the Netherlands.

In describing quality of life, in this SSN we distinguish between a number of aspects (see also figure 1.1). In the first place, there is the distinction already mentioned between people's objective life situation and their subjective perceptions. Second, we distinguish between the life situation ultimately attained and the possibilities that people have to improve their life situation (resources or forms of capital). Those possibilities are diverse in nature and relate inter alia to people's income, education, labour market situation and health. The social network of which someone forms part also plays a role, especially in a society where people are increasingly and increasingly often expected to find their own solutions. As well as financial and social resources, individual factors and skills are also important: a person's ability to manage independently depends among other things on their mental well-being, degree of resilience or sense of having control over their own lives.

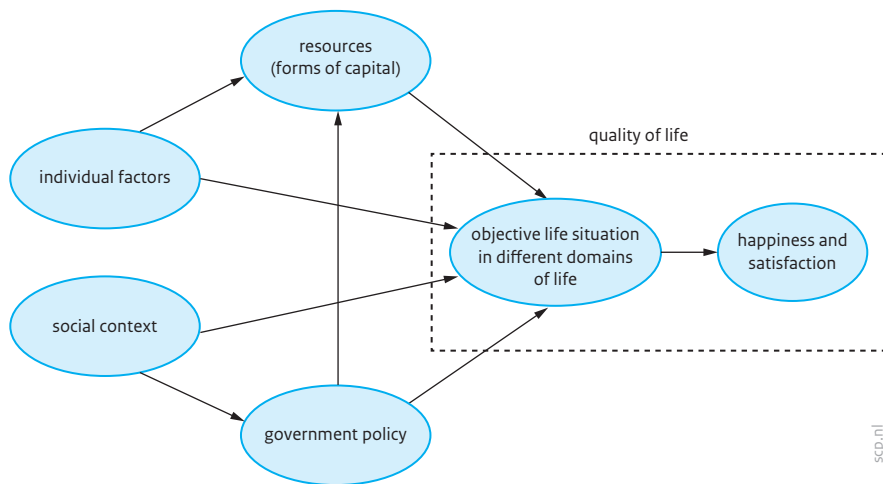
As social networks become more important, social skills also constitute an important resource: how capable are people of participating in networks and maintaining their position in them or making adequate use of them? Social contacts not only take place face-to-face, but increasingly virtually or online as well, for example via social media. Leaving aside social contacts, the Internet also plays an increasingly important role in society, for example in contacts with government agencies, and digital skills are therefore also important. Quality of life also depends on the choices people make, for example lifestyle or degree of participation.

The government plays a key role in providing the necessary resources (income, education, employment and health), partly by guaranteeing access to them, so that disadvantage is prevented, and partly by compensating for disadvantage where it does arise, e.g. through tax breaks or allowances.

The diagram in figure 1.1 is a static representation of the variables that influence life situation, and is intended mainly to provide a visualisation of the description of quality of life. It also provides a key to the structure of the chapters in which the different elements are discussed.

Figure 1.1

Quality of life is a combination of a person's objective life situation and their subjective life satisfaction



In a dynamic reality, two further contexts are also important. First, there is the geographical setting: the quality of the residential setting, of the surrounding nature and the local environment. Second, quality of life in the here and now has consequences for the opportunities and resources of future generations. Those consequences can be positive; innovation, technology and change can create new opportunities and resources: who would have thought 25 years ago that we would today be so easily contactable everywhere and always, and that we would have access via the Internet to all the information we need at any time of day or night? But there can also be negative consequences: not everyone is equally able to keep up with the changes and to meet the demands placed on them by society. The way in which we give shape to our present quality of life also has consequences for countries elsewhere in the world, as well as for the environment and climate in general. The long-term sustainability of our present way of life cannot be taken for granted. In the most recent Social and Cultural Report (*Sociaal en Cultureel Rapport*) this, together with concerns about solidarity in the Netherlands, emerged as the key problem for the future (Van den Broek et al. 2016). The ssN has traditionally included a summarising chapter on quality of life, which for a number of years has been supplemented by a description of how sustainably society is developing. For a detailed discussion of this issue, we refer to the Broad Welfare Monitor, currently in development.

1.6 From resources to skills?

In this edition of ssn we describe the quality of life of Dutch citizens based on the conceptual framework outlined earlier, and look at issues relating to distribution and difference. Each of the recent editions deals with a different theme, which runs as a common thread through the whole report. For example, four years ago the theme was the impact of the economic crisis, while two years ago the report focused specifically on ‘the middle segment’ (people with intermediate education): how had they fared during the preceding ten years? This time, the focus is on a wider timeframe, instead of looking back over ten years, we take stock over a period of 25 years. In addition, at various points in the report we explore the shifts from dividing lines based on resources to a dividing line based on skills.

The demands of today’s society are different from those that applied in 1990. Old ties and certainties have disappeared and those that have replaced them are not always permanent or certain. On top of that, more and more demands are being placed on citizens’ ability to solve their own problems and exert their own control. There is no simple explanation for social disparities, which was evident among other things in the 2014 edition of the Social and Cultural Report (*Sociaal en Cultureel Rapport 2014*), in which the Dutch population was divided into six groups based on their position in society. Of these six groups, the ‘precariat’, in particular, was in a worryingly disadvantaged position, not only as regards income, financial capacity or education, but also in terms of health, social and cultural capital.

The division into groups also took account of digital skills and mental capital, including self-confidence and resilience. These latter skills, in particular, proved to be scarce not only in the precariat, but also in a second disadvantaged group: the *insecure workers*, a group who lack the skills to escape from their disadvantaged position without help. Recently, the Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) also placed the emphasis on skills that go beyond knowing or being able to do something; the WRR speaks of the importance of ‘do-ability’ in determining people’s independence and ability to solve their own problems (WRR 2017). The WRR also points out that stressful events or long-term mental burden can lead to reduced do-ability, including in people with a good education or higher income.

In the most recent edition of the Social and Cultural Report, the shifting dividing lines are described incisively as a shift from *haves and have-nots to cans and cannots* (Van den Broek et al. 2016: 219-220). This idea fits in with the growing importance of social and digital skills discussed in section 1.5, which are taking the place of having a good income or a good education. Whilst they may still be important preconditions, it increasingly matters what people *can do* with the old resources. That at least is the idea – in this ssn we will try to shed some light on this by looking at these skills where possible and in one case using education as a proxy (in that case the question is whether the importance of education is

growing compared to factors such as income). The concluding discussion takes an overarching view of the role of these skills and the changes that have occurred in them over the last 25 years.

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2 People and economy: the social playing field

Ab van der Torre

- The ageing of the Dutch population is accelerating.
 - Older people are continuing to live at home for longer.
 - The Dutch population grew by 2.0 million between 1990 and 2015.
 - Population growth in 2015 was driven solely by migration and the birth rate being higher than mortality rate among people with a migration background.
 - The divorce rate rose to 40%.
 - Real net disposable household income per standardised household increased by an average of 1.3% between 1990 and 2001, falling thereafter by 0.6% per annum. Over the period as a whole, there was a shift from households to collectively funded government provisions.
 - In the Netherlands the bad times are coming to an end, but unemployment remains high.
-

2.1 Life situation in the social playing field

The life situation of Dutch citizens is determined not only by their personal circumstances, but also to a large extent by circumstances that are outside their direct field of influence, for example demographic, social and economic developments in the Netherlands and the European Union (EU). This chapter discusses the most important social trends for citizens' life situation.

Demographic trends such as population ageing, changes in the ethnic make-up of society and household dilution (reduction in the average number of persons per household) have consequences for people's health, objective and subjective safety, participation, recreation, mobility and housing.

Employment and purchasing power are heavily influenced by economic developments. Purchasing power (what we are able to buy) and government actions (legislative frameworks and the supply of public goods, such as education, safety, home care and social security benefits) enable citizens to structure their life situation to some extent as they see fit.

There are a few notable events which have an impact on developments and which are important for life situation. For example, the European Union was founded with the Treaty on European Union (also referred to as the Maastricht Treaty), which was signed on 7 February 1992 and came into effect on 1 November 1993.¹ Among other things, the European Union replaced the European Economic Community (EEC) and regulated cooperation in three areas: the economy, foreign and security policy, and police and justice. The economic cooperation included far-reaching integration of economic and

monetary policy and the creation of a Monetary Union with a single European currency in 1999.

In the period 1990-2015, the function of social security benefit changed; whereas until the 1990s it had served mainly as a means of income protection, thereafter it acquired a reintegration function. This was accompanied by a tightening up of the system, notably stricter eligibility criteria, and ultimately by the requirement to do something in return for receiving benefit. The introduction of the Participation Act in 2015 marked a provisional end to this process of change (see also § 5.1).

In 2000 Paul Scheffer provided a powerful impetus to the public debate on the multicultural society and the Dutch immigration and integration policy with his article 'Het multiculturele drama' ('The multicultural drama'). The debate ultimately led to a strict migration policy introduced by the then Minister for Integration and Immigration, Rita Verdonk (2003-2006).

During the period 1990-2015, various tasks were decentralised from central government to local and/or provincial authorities, including provisions and services for disabled persons (Services for the Disabled Act (Wvg)) (from 1 April 1994), responsibility for primary and secondary school buildings (from 1 January 1997), urban and regional public transport (since 1998), social assistance benefit (Work and Social Assistance Act (Wet Werk en Bijstand) (from 1 January 2004), domiciliary help (Social Support Act (Wmo) 2007) (from 1 January 2007) and nature management and development (since 2013) (Gradus 2017). This phase of reforms culminated in the recent decentralization of responsibility for three areas of social activity (with effect from 1 January 2015), as a result of a change in administrative thinking from a belief in top-down solutions which treated everyone the same to the notion of administration 'close to the citizen' and 'customisation'. Finally, the credit crisis (2007-2011) and the debt crisis which followed it (from 2009) ushered in the most serious economic recession since the 1930s, leading to high levels of unemployment in the Netherlands and other European countries.

2.2 Developments in the population

Population growth: national

The Dutch population grew by 13% in the period 1990-2015, from 14.9 million to 17.0 million (figure 2.1), an average growth rate of 0.5% per year. However, the number of households grew twice as fast over the same period, from just under 6.1 million to over 7.7 million (+26%), resulting in household dilution (fewer people per household on average). A major cause of this dilution was the growth in the share of single-person households at the expense of multiple-person households (see also FD 2016), in turn the result of developments such as the increased divorce rate, the rise in the number of single older persons aged over 90 and the increased share of young singles.

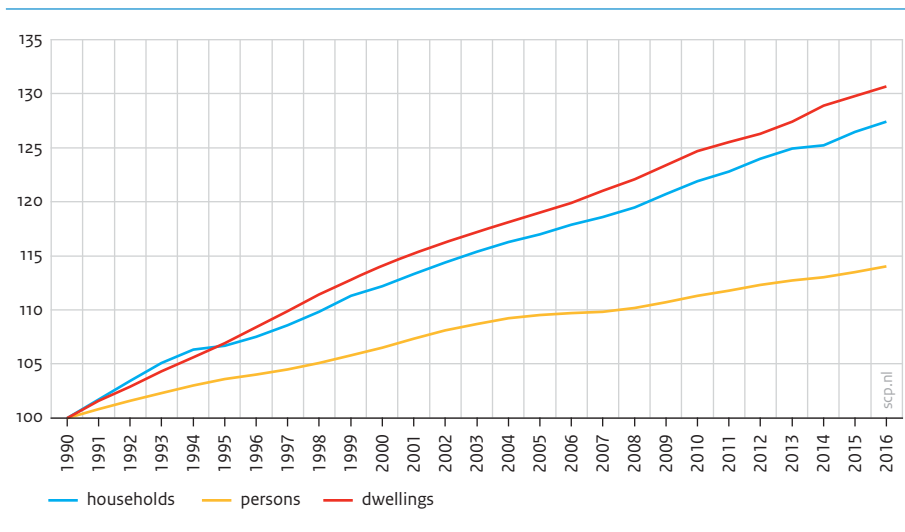
The number of homes in the Netherlands grew by 30% (from 5.8 million in 1990 to 7.6 million in 2016), just less than the number of households (7.7 million in 2016). Pro rata, therefore, slightly more homes became available per household. The growth in

the housing stock has slowed slightly since the turn of the century, from an average of 1.3% per year in the period 1990-2000 to an average of 0.8% since 2001 (StatLine² statistics on the housing stock, condition and changes since 1921 (*Voorraad woningen; standen en mutaties vanaf 1921*)).

Figure 2.1

Growth in number of households double rate of population growth

Growth in households, persons and dwellings, 1990-2016 (index figures, 1990 = 100)

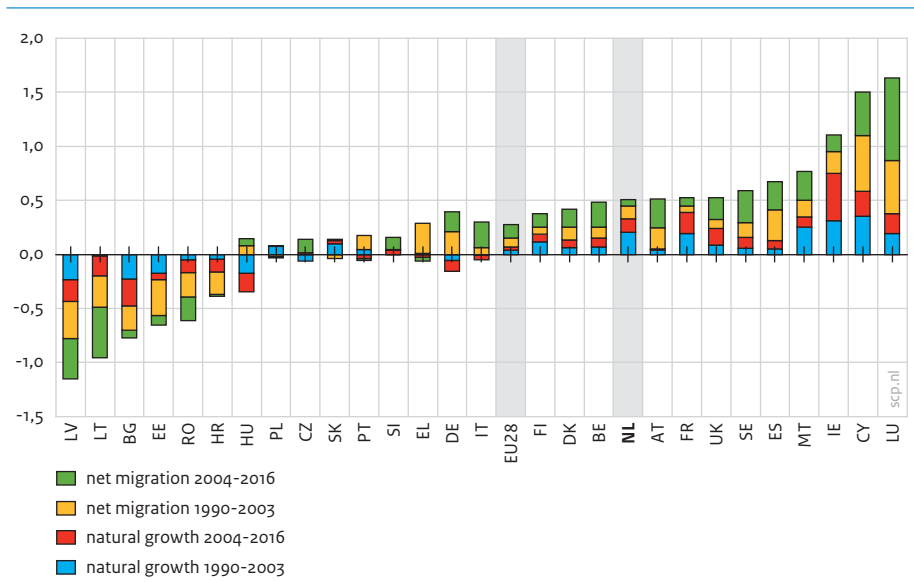


Source: CBS (StatLine, population statistics and housing statistics)

Population growth: International

The average population growth in the Netherlands of 0.5% per year over the period studied was higher than in the European Union as a whole, despite the higher migration experienced by the EU in the second half of the period 1990-2015 (figure 2.2). This was driven by natural population growth (due to the birth surplus (more births than deaths)), especially in the period 1990-2002. In most European countries, population growth due to migration was higher than natural population growth. There are wide differences between European countries in the rate of population growth, which ranges from -1.2% for Latvia to +1.6% for Luxembourg. The seven countries with negative natural population growth are all in Eastern Europe. The open borders, among other things due to the accession of most Eastern European countries to the Schengen Agreement, providing for visa-free movement of people, led to substantial emigration from Eastern Europe, often to countries in Central and Western Europe, including the Netherlands. There has also been a considerable flow of refugees into Central and Western Europe in recent years, mainly from Syria, Iraq and Eritrea.

Figure 2.2
 Higher population growth in the Netherlands than in EU due to higher natural growth
 Annual population growth in Europe, by natural growth and external migration, 1990-2015
 (in percentages per year)^a



a Appendix A (at the back of this publication) contains an explanation of the country codes used.

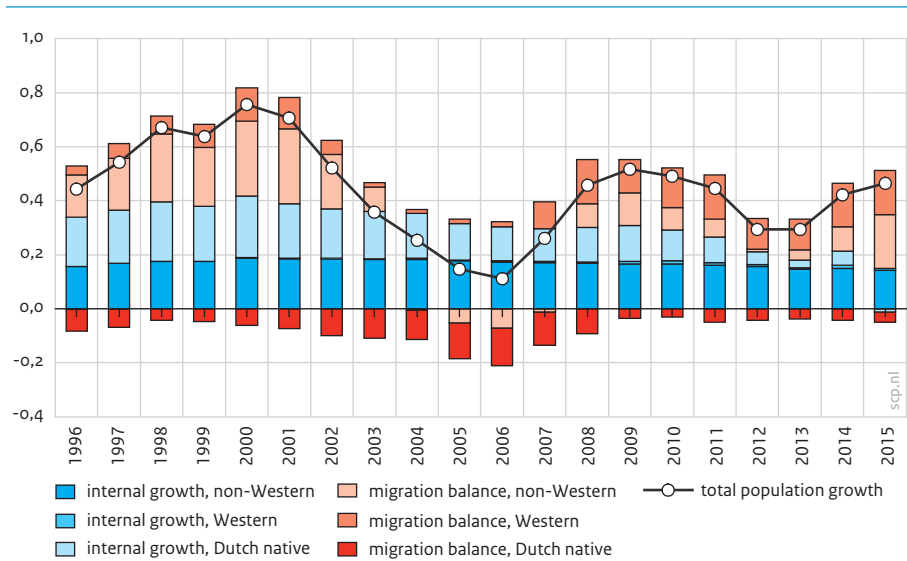
Source: EC (Eurostat)

Population growth due to birth surplus versus migration surplus

The total growth of the Dutch population fluctuated over the period, reaching its highest value in 2000, at 0.7% (figure 2.3). Total population growth fell thereafter, reaching 0.1% in 2006. There were two further increases in later years, taking the growth rate in 2015 to just under 0.5%.

Figure 2.3
Reduced growth of native population turns into contraction

Annual population growth, by natural growth and external migration, 1996-2015 (in percentages of the population by country of birth)^{a, b}



- a Migration balances include administrative adjustments. A person is classed as an immigrant if he/she is registered in the Municipal Personal Records Database and expects to remain in the Netherlands for at least four months. Persons who were themselves born in the Netherlands and one of whose parents was also born in the Netherlands (Dutch natives) can also immigrate into the Netherlands.
- b Figures not available for 1996.

Source: CBS (StatLine, population statistics); SCP treatment

The three uppermost bars in figure 2.3 show the internal population growth (due to a birth surplus), broken down into Dutch natives, Western and non-Western migrants. The bottom three bars show the external growth (migration balance), with the same breakdown. The internal population growth of Dutch natives declined steadily over the period and actually turned negative in 2015, meaning that more Dutch natives died in 2015 than were born. Together with the negative migration balance of natives, this led to a declining native population. The Dutch population continued to grow, however, due to a mostly positive migration balance and positive internal growth of people with a predominantly non-Western origin.

Four key events can help explain the trend in migration flows. First, instability in the Middle East and the war in Yugoslavia in the 1990s resulted in flows of non-Western and Western refugees, respectively. Second, the restrictive migration and repatriation policy pursued by Integration and Immigration Minister Rita Verdonk between 2003 and 2006 turned the positive migration balance of non-Western immigrants into a negative balance. The third event was the accession of the majority of Eastern European countries to the Schengen Agreement on 21 December 2007, making it possible for residents of Eastern European EU Member States to settle in other Member States and leading to a sharp increase in the migration of Eastern Europeans to the Netherlands. Finally, a major flow of refugees from war-torn regions such as Syria, Iraq and Eritrea which began in 2013 led to strong growth in the number of non-Western immigrants in the Netherlands.

Grey and green pressure

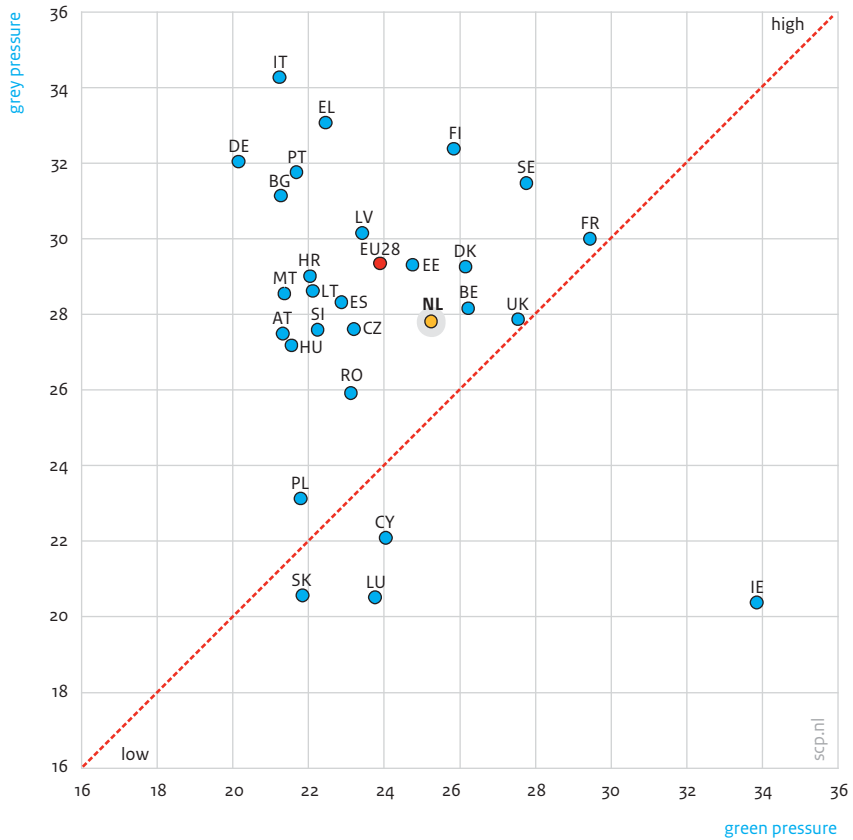
People's age determines their life situation both directly and indirectly (see chapter 12). This is because the age distribution of the population has a strong influence on demand for public services. A relatively young population places more demands on education and family benefits, for example, while a relatively older population has a high demand for care, pension benefits and older persons' tax credit. Each of these provisions and services has a major impact on public expenditure. And since that expenditure has to be financed through tax revenues and therefore paid for by taxpayers, the age distribution of the population has an indirect effect on purchasing power and thus also on citizen's life situation. Two measures/indicators can be used to quantify the impact of the age distribution of the population, namely 'green pressure' and 'grey pressure'. Green pressure is the ratio between the number of people aged 0-14 years and the potential labour force (15-64 years), while grey pressure is the share of people aged over 65 as a proportion of the potential labour force.

In 2016, the grey pressure was higher than the green pressure in the Netherlands (27.8% versus 25.2%) (figure 2.4). The difference was even more marked in the EU averages, where the grey pressure stood at 29.4% and green pressure at 23.9%. The grey pressure is greater than the green pressure in virtually all EU Member States. One exception is Ireland, where the grey pressure is low and the green pressure high (20.4% versus 33.8%). In France, both ratios are on the high side. There are several countries where the grey pressure is very high (above 30%), with the highest share of older persons being found in Italy, Greece, Finland, Germany, Portugal, Sweden, Bulgaria and Latvia.

Figure 2.4

Grey pressure greater than green pressure in most EU Member States and the Netherlands

Green pressure and grey pressure in Europe, persons aged 15-64 years, 2016 (in percentages of 0-14 year-olds and over-65s)^a



a Appendix A (at the back of this publication) contains an explanation of the country codes used.

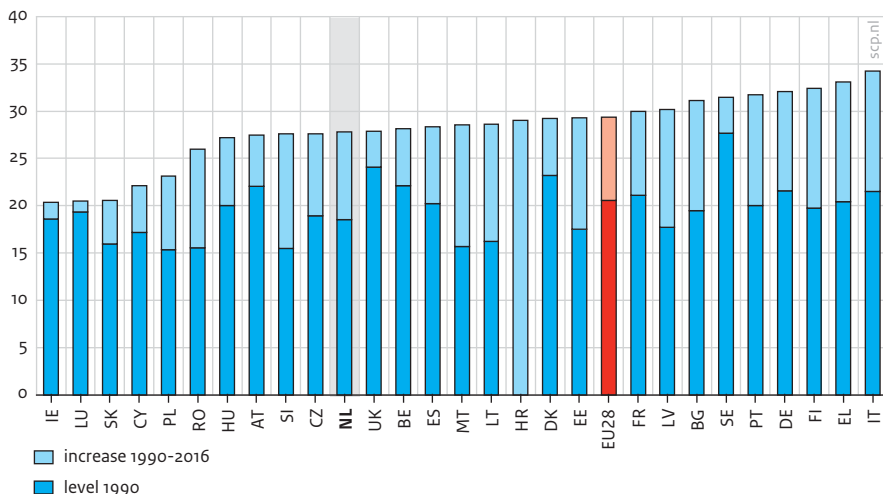
Source: ec (Eurostat)

Population ageing

The grey pressure has increased in all countries over the last 26 years (figure 2.5). Over the period 1990-2016, population ageing in the Netherlands proceeded at roughly the same pace as the average across the EU, though the Dutch population was slightly younger at the start of the period and therefore also at the end, in 2016. The countries where population ageing is highest are Italy, Greece, Slovenia, Malta, Finland, Latvia and Lithuania.

Figure 2.5
Population ageing in large parts of Europe, including the Netherlands

Grey pressure in Europe,^{a, b} persons aged 15-64 years, 1990 and 2016 (in percentages of over-65s)



- a No figures are available for Croatia for 1990, so the increase for the period 1990-2016 cannot be shown. The bar relates to 2016.
- b Appendix A (at the back of this publication) contains an explanation of the country codes used.

Source: EC (Eurostat)

Not shown in the figure is the increase in green pressure. This pressure is only genuinely increasing in Denmark and, to a very slight extent, in Sweden. In all other countries the green pressure is actually declining, in a process of dejuvenation. This trend is strongest in Poland, Slovakia and Cyprus, where the green pressure has fallen by more than 17 percentage points. The rate of dejuvenation in the Netherlands can be described as moderate, at 1.2 percentage points.

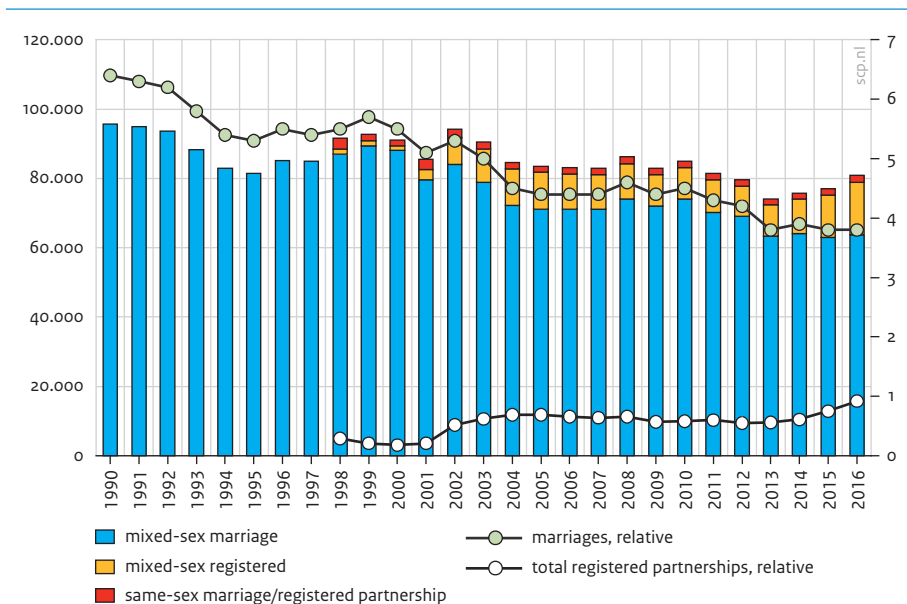
Trend in marriages and partnerships

People can occupy various positions in society in their lives. Examples are the household type to which they belong (single, couples with children, couples without children), position in the household (partner, parent, child), marital status and whether or not they have children. An event that changes this position is referred to as a demographic transition. In the remainder of this section we discuss a few demographic transitions, and positions and developments therein, such as the number of marriages and the household type to which someone belongs.

In 2016, there were a total of 63,813 marriages and 15,090 new registered partnerships between a man and a woman in the Netherlands. Marriages or registered partnerships between same-sex couples together totalled 2,052 in 2016 (figure 2.6). In relative terms, there were 3.8 marriages and 0.92 registered partnerships per 1,000 inhabitants.

Figure 2.6
Marriage rate declining, registered partnerships increasing

Marriages and registered partnerships, 1990-2016 (in absolute figures and per 1,000 inhabitants)^{a, b}



- a Left-hand axis: number of marriages and registered partnerships in absolute numbers. Right-hand axis: marriages and registered partnerships per 1,000 inhabitants.
- b Up to and including 2000, same-sex marriages were not recorded. 2010 forms a trend break in the data; with effect from 2010 marriages entered into abroad, in particular, are recorded better.

Source: cbs (StatLine)

The number of mixed-sex marriages, with a few ups and downs, shows an overall downward trend in the period 1990-2016. This was offset to some extent by an upward trend in the number of registered partnerships from 1998 onwards (before 1998, partnerships did not have legal status) (BiZa 1998). The downturn which set in after the economic crisis in the total number of marriages and registered partnerships together reversed in 2014 into a (temporary) increase. In addition, from 2012 onwards a gradual shift took place from marriages to registered partnerships.

If we leave the years in which the registered partnership was introduced (1998) and the permitting of same-sex marriage (2001) out of consideration, the number of registered partnerships and marriages between same-sex couples fluctuates between just over 1,600 and over 2,000 persons per year. Here again, a decline can be observed after the economic crisis, followed by a rise in more recent years.

If we look at the number of marriages and registered partnerships per 1,000 inhabitants, the same trends emerge: a falling trend in marriages and a rise in the number of registered partnerships.

The average age at which people marry for the first time rose in the period 1990-2016 from 28.2 to 33.7 years for men and from 25.9 to 31.1 years for women (StatLine, not shown in figure).

Trend in divorce and marriage duration

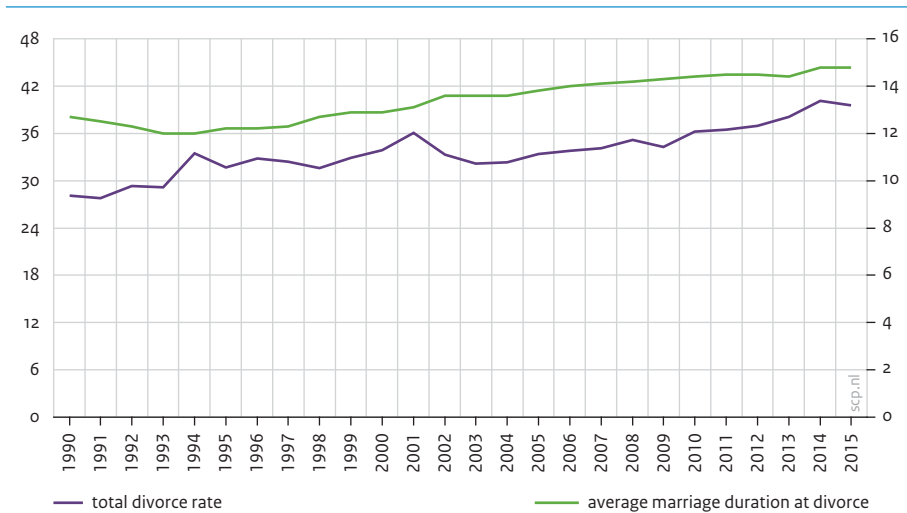
The proportion of marriages ending in divorce³ was 39.6% in 2015 (figure 2.7), an increase of 11.5 percentage points since 1990 (28.1%). The remaining marriages, over 60% of the total, ended through the death of one or both partners.

Up to and including 2003, the trend in the divorce rate fluctuated, with several peaks and troughs; thereafter, it rose fairly steadily, with two exceptions. In 2009, the year after the onset of the economic crisis, a downward trend set in. It may be that the costs associated with divorce played a role here: Income insecurity and mortgage debts caused by negative equity due to the fall in house prices were an issue for many households. An upward outlier occurred in 2014, when the Netherlands had begun to climb out of the crisis; this may have been a year of 'catching up'.

Divorce has financial consequences for the households affected, not only because of the costs of the divorce itself, but often also due to the loss of income and/or higher fixed costs which ensue. This in turn affects the purchasing power of households and therefore the life situation of those concerned. The growing number of households and concomitant increasing need for housing may also have had an impact.

Figure 2.7
Divorce rate and marriage duration at divorce increase

Divorces and marriage duration, 1990-2015 (in percentages and years)^{a, b}



- a Left-hand axis: divorce rate as a percentage of married couples.
Right-hand axis: marriage duration in years.
- b Up to and including 1997, the calculation of the divorce rate was based among other things on figures for the number of divorces. From 1998 onwards, divorcing women were used as a basis. The differences are minimal.

Source: CBS (StatLine)

The average marriage duration at divorce showed a net increase in the period 1990-2015, from 12.7 to 14.8 years, an increase of 2.1 years. Marriage duration at divorce initially fell to 12.0 years in 1993 and 1994, before rising at a fairly even pace. The fall in 2013 was temporary; marriage duration at divorce increased again in 2014.

If we subdivide divorces based on marriage duration, we see a relative shift from divorces with a short marriage duration (less than ten years) to divorces with a long marriage duration (ten years or more) (StatLine; not shown in figure). This explains the increase in the average marriage duration. It may be that the disappearance of the taboo surrounding divorce played a role for the group who divorced after a long marriage. Another possible explanation is that the increased economic independence of both partners removed some of the obstacles to divorce.

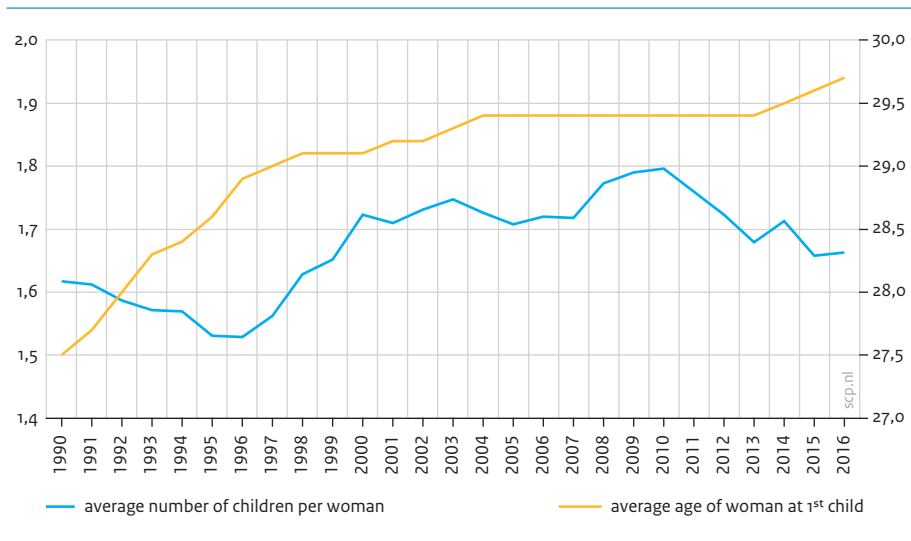
Since 1993, the divorce rate has exceeded the marriage rate, and the gap between the number of divorces and new marriages has widened steadily (StatLine; not shown in figure).

Number of children and age at birth of first child

The average number of children per woman showed a slight net increase between 1990 and 2016, from 1.62 to 1.66 (figure 2.8). The number initially fell, to 1.53 in 1996, before rising to 1.80 in 2010. The number fell fairly steeply between 2010 and 2016, by 0.14. The average age at which women had their first child rose or stabilised over the period 1990-2016 as a whole. The increase in the period 1990-2004 is probably related to the greatly increased labour participation rate of women over that period. The fact that women continued studying for longer and therefore began their careers later may also have played a role. The stabilisation occurred mainly in the period 2005-2013, after which the average age rose again. In 1990, the average age at which a woman had her first child was 27.5 years; in 2016 it was 29.7 years.

Figure 2.8
Average number of children per woman falls after 2010; average age at which women have their first child rises continuously

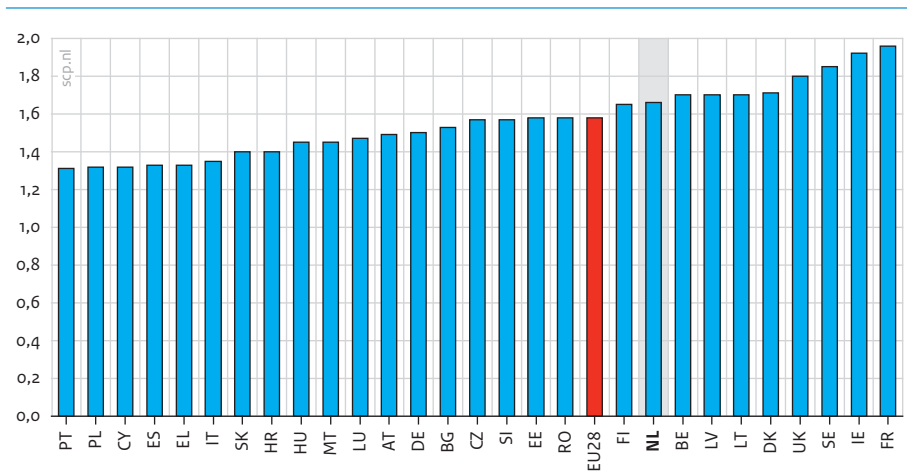
Average number of children and age of woman at birth of first child, 1990-2016



Source: CBS (StatLine)

The average number of children per woman in the Netherlands (1.66) is higher than the average for the EU as a whole (1.58) (figure 2.9). France (1.96), Ireland (1.92) and Sweden (1.85) have the highest number of children per woman. The lowest child numbers occur in the Southern European countries Spain, Portugal, Italy, Greece and Cyprus, as well as in Poland, and range from 1.31 to 1.35 children per woman.

Figure 2.9
 Number of children per Dutch woman slightly above the EU average
 Average number of children per woman, you Member States, 2016^a

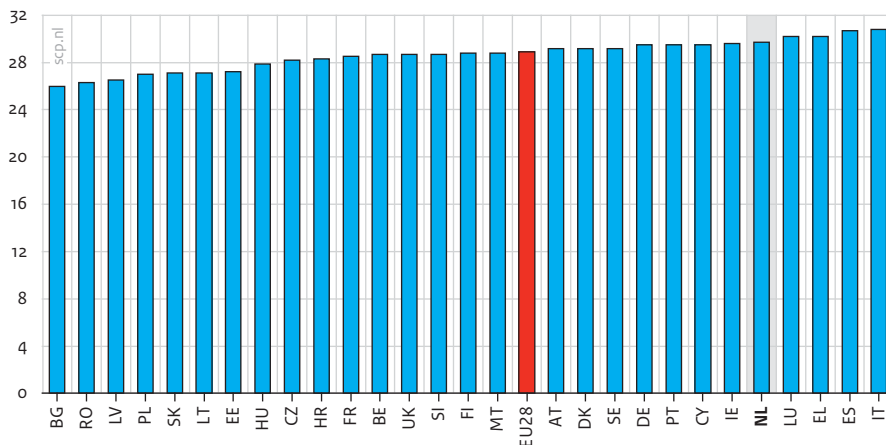


a Appendix A (at the back of this publication) contains an explanation of the country codes used.

Source: EC (Eurostat)

The Netherlands also scores above the EU average for the average age at which women have their first child (29.7 years versus 28.9 years) (figure 2.10) Italy, Spain, Greece and Luxembourg are the only countries where women are older on the birth of their first child (above 30 years). Women in Eastern European countries have their first child at a relatively young age on average, and actually below the age of 27 in Bulgaria, Romania and Latvia.

Figure 2.10
 Aged of Dutch woman on birth of first child slightly above the EU average
 Average age of woman on birth of first child, EU Member States, 2016^a



a Appendix A (at the back of this publication) contains an explanation of the country codes used.

Source: ec (Eurostat)

Trend in household composition

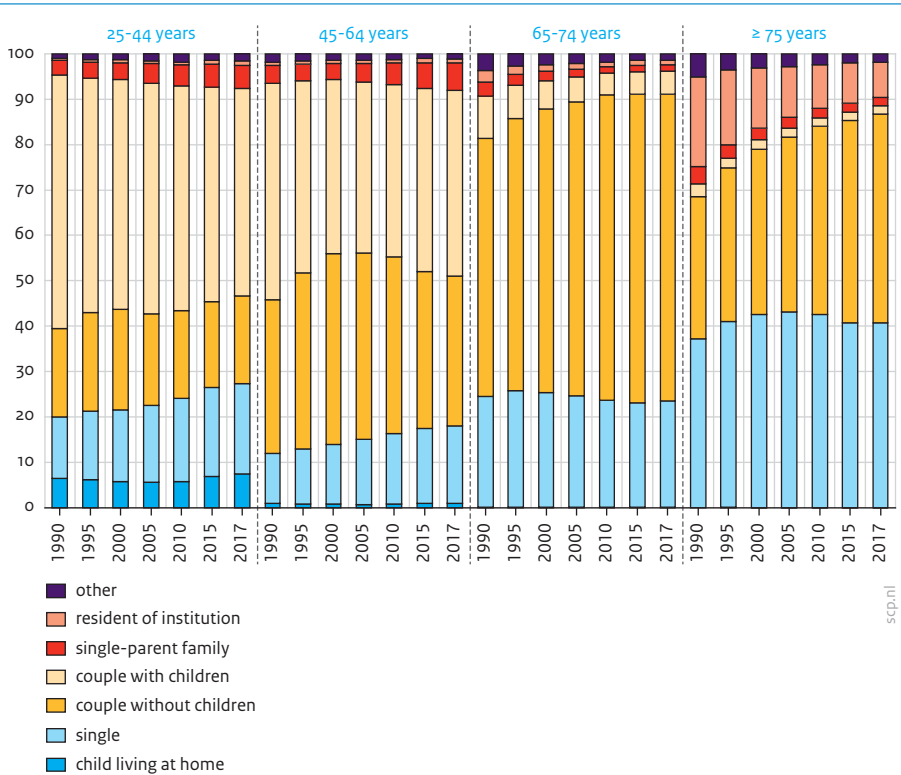
The final demographic factor discussed here which influences people’s life situation is household composition. For this factor we consider the percentage distribution of persons aged 25 years and older across the different household types in the period 1990-2017 (figure 2.11).

After falling in the period 1990-2005, the percentage of people aged 25 or older still living at home increased again. The share of single-person households in the age category 25-64 rose sharply, from 13.4% to 20.0% among 25-44 year-olds, and from 10.9% to 17.1% for 45-64 year-olds. The share of single people aged over 75 also increased (+3.4%); their share has traditionally been systematically higher due to the death of their partner and divorce (40.7% in 2017).

Figure 2.11

Older persons more often continue living at home

Distribution of persons across household types, by age category, 1990-2017 (in percentages)



Source: CBS (StatLine, population statistics)

The share of couples with children has declined in the 25-44 age group. The share of people aged over 45 years with children also initially declined, but began rising again after 2005. Evidently, people have been deferring having children in recent years. This also fits in with the rising average age at which women have their first child. The share of single-parent families in the entire 25-64 age group has also increased, from 3.1% in 1990 to 5.1% in 2017 among 25-44 year-olds and from 4.0% to 6.0% among 45-64 year-olds. The share of people living in institutions has fallen very sharply, especially among those aged 75 and older, dropping 12.1 percentage points (from 19.8% to 7.7%). This reduction was accompanied by a slightly higher percentage-point increase in persons who have a partner but no children. People are thus clearly continuing to live at home for longer, probably due to a combination of their desire to do so and the policy of 'extramuralisation' aimed

at enabling people to continue living at home for longer (with a shift from care provided in institutions to care provided at home). The reduction in the number of older persons living in institutions is however slowing.

2.3 Economy and income

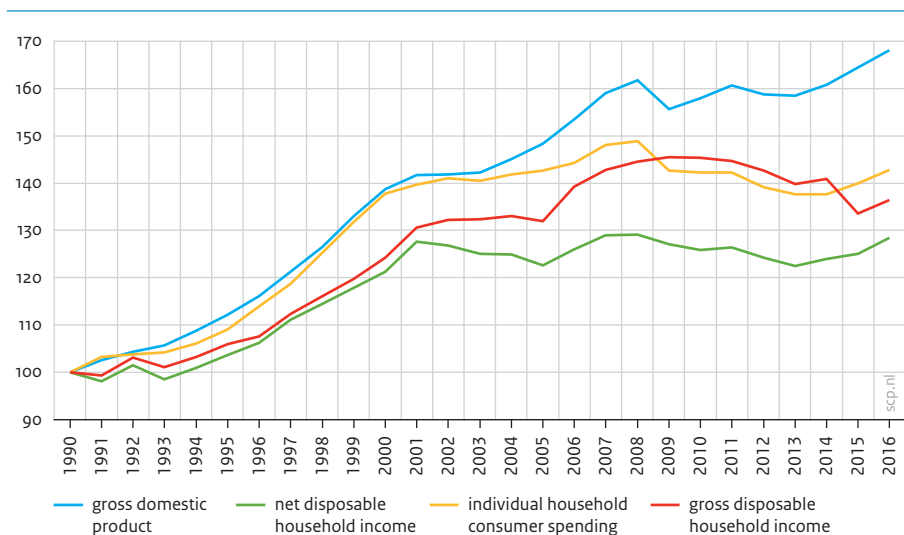
Trend in incomes

Gross domestic product (GDP), the value of goods and services produced within a country's borders per year, showed a net increase of 68% over the period 1990-2016 (figure 2.12). The rapid growth in the 1990s was followed by more faltering growth in the subsequent years, for example due to the recession just after the turn of the century and the further recessions in 2008-2009 and 2012 as a result of the credit crisis and debt crisis, respectively. To gain an insight into what Dutch households actually have available for household expenditure, we look at net disposable national income,⁴ and specifically that portion of disposable national income which goes to households (54% in 2016). Net disposable household income has risen less on balance than GDP. This is due to the net sharp fall in the share of national disposable income taken by households over the period 1990-2016 in favour of the share taken by the government.

Consumer spending by individual households rose sharply in the 1990s, and in fact outstripped net disposable household income. Both trends were still visible between 2000 and 2008, albeit to a lesser extent. This is possible if households save less or take on more debt. After the onset of the credit crisis, in 2009, individual consumer spending by households fell sharply again (-4.2%), and this trend continued in the four ensuing years. Spending began rising again in 2014. Though 2016 had not yet reached the historical high point seen in 2008; the same applies for net disposable household income. If we supplement household income with government spending on social transfers in kind ('profit' from the government), such as most government spending on health and education, this tells us about the 'alternative' disposable income of households. This generally follows the trend in net disposable household income, though sometimes a fall in the latter is initially partially offset by profit from government provisions and services, so that the alternative disposable income continues to rise (2002-2004 and 2009).

Figure 2.12

Rapid rise in disposable household income followed by lengthy period of stabilisation

Trend in real incomes, 1990-2016 (in index figures, 1990 = 100)^{a, b}

- a Gross domestic product (GDP), net disposable national income: 2016 figures are provisional. Variables across the household sector: figures 2015 and 2016 provisional.

Variables across the household sector include non-profit organisations operating on the half of households.

Information on net alternative disposable household income is no longer available after 2011.

Consequently, the gross variant has been used. As this latter variant is itself not available for the period up to 1995, the trend in the net variant for the period 1990-1995 has been linked to the gross variant in 1995. The difference between the gross and net variants consists in the write-downs (for own home and self-employed persons). Linking is permitted assuming that the trend in the write-downs does not deviate materially from the trend in the net variant.

- b All incomes are real incomes, i.e. shown in constant prices (GDP, net national income and net disposable national income deflated by the GDP price index figure; variables across the household sector deflated by the consumer price index (CPI)).

Source: cbs (StatLine, National Accounts)

Some processing of the data is needed to be able to compare household income over time, because the type and size of households varies from year to year, as do the fixed costs per household type. It is therefore not enough simply to divide the total disposable income earned by Dutch citizens by the number of households. To get around this, we introduce the concept of 'equivalent household' (box 2.1).

Box 2.1 Explanation of 'equivalent household'

We start by imagining that the population consists entirely of single persons. We calculate this by multiplying the number of households by an equivalence factor per household. This tells us how much extra income a household with a given composition needs in order to achieve the same spending power as a single person (a couple with two children, for example, needs 1.87 times as much income).

The number of households rises by an average of 0.94% each year, but because the increase in the number of single persons adds an extra 0.94% equivalent households each year, the disposable income for households must rise by more than 0.94% to compensate for the growth in the number of equivalent households.

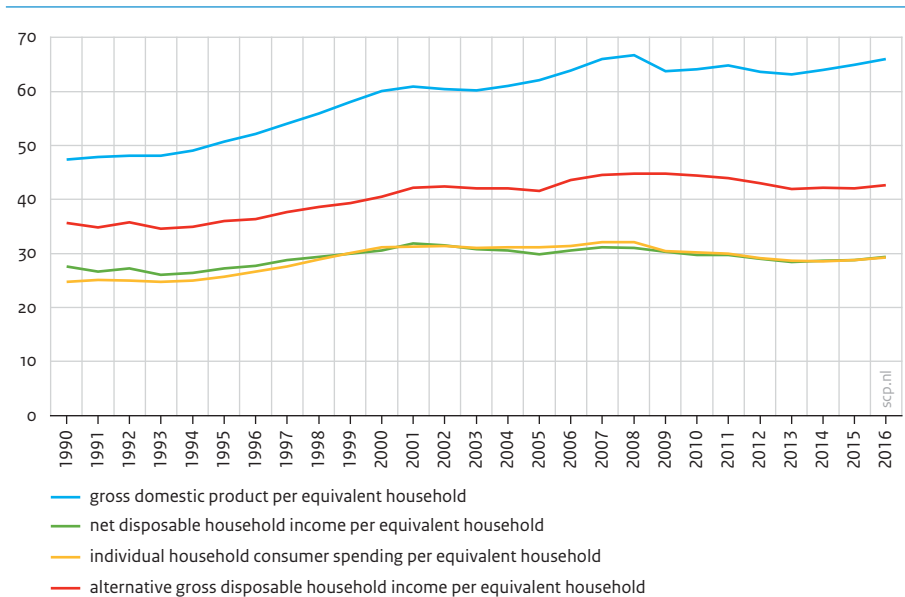
The real net disposable national income per equivalent household has risen sharply, from 38,800 euros in 1990 to 53,800 euros in 2016 (at 2016 prices) (figure 2.13), which translates into an average rise of 1.3% per year. The economic fluctuations, with the different recessions, can be clearly seen in the trend in this variable. What remained for households per equivalent household rose much less quickly, from 27,600 euros in 1990 to 29,300 euros in 2016, an increase of 0.2% per year. The lengthy downturn between 2009 and 2013 stands out clearly; it was not until 2014 that a slight improvement set in.

If we also include the 'profit from the government' then, despite the downturn during the last crisis, our calculations still turn out 18% higher in 2016 than in 1990 (an increase of 0.7% per year). The limited increase in the net disposable income of households per equivalent household was thus partially compensated by profit from the government.

Figure 2.13

Limited increase in net disposable income of households per household equivalent partially compensated by more government positions

Real incomes and consumer spending of households, 1990-2016 (in 2016 prices x 1,000)^{a, b}



a Gross domestic product (GDP), net disposable national income: 2016 figures are provisional. Variables across the household sector: figures 2015 and 2016 provisional.

Variables across the household sector include non-profit organisations operating on the half of households.

Information on net alternative disposable household income is no longer available after 2011.

Consequently, the gross variant has been used. As this latter variant is itself not available for the period up to 1995, the trend in the net variant for the period 1990-1995 has been linked to the gross variant in 1995. The difference between the gross and net variants consists in the write-downs (for own home and self-employed persons). Linking is permitted assuming that the trend in the write-downs does not deviate materially from the trend in the net variant.

b All incomes are real incomes, i.e. shown in constant prices (GDP, net national income and net disposable national income deflated by the GDP price index figure; variables across the household sector deflated by the consumer price index (CPI)).

Source: CBS (StatLine, National Accounts)

Real consumer spending by households per equivalent household rose over the period 1990-2016 more than the real net disposable income of households per equivalent household, going up by an average of 0.6% per year. Net household income was devoted almost entirely to consumer spending in 2016. In addition, consumer spending was at times temporarily higher than net disposable income. This can happen when people

address their savings or borrow money, for example through a mortgage. The surplus equity in owner-occupied homes in the period after 2010 made it possible to obtain relatively cheap consumer credit.

Trend in wealth

It is not just households' income situation, but also their asset position which determines their spending power and therefore their purchasing power position and the general economic trend. Assets provide a buffer function, helping households to maintain their spending during temporary dips in income. They are sometimes substantial enough to fulfil the function for a long period, in which case they contribute to the 'permanent income' of the household.⁵

According to the Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis (CPB), the Dutch have relatively low savings in proportion to their income, but relatively high assets tied up in their homes and pensions (Lukkezen & Elbourne 2015). On the one hand, the relatively low savings make it difficult to accommodate setbacks, but as stated earlier, high house prices can make it easier to obtain consumer credit.

The dependence on assets tied up in the value of the home also carries a risk if house prices fall, as generally happens during a recession. When that happens, the assets in the form of home equity provide virtually no buffer to accommodate dips in income.

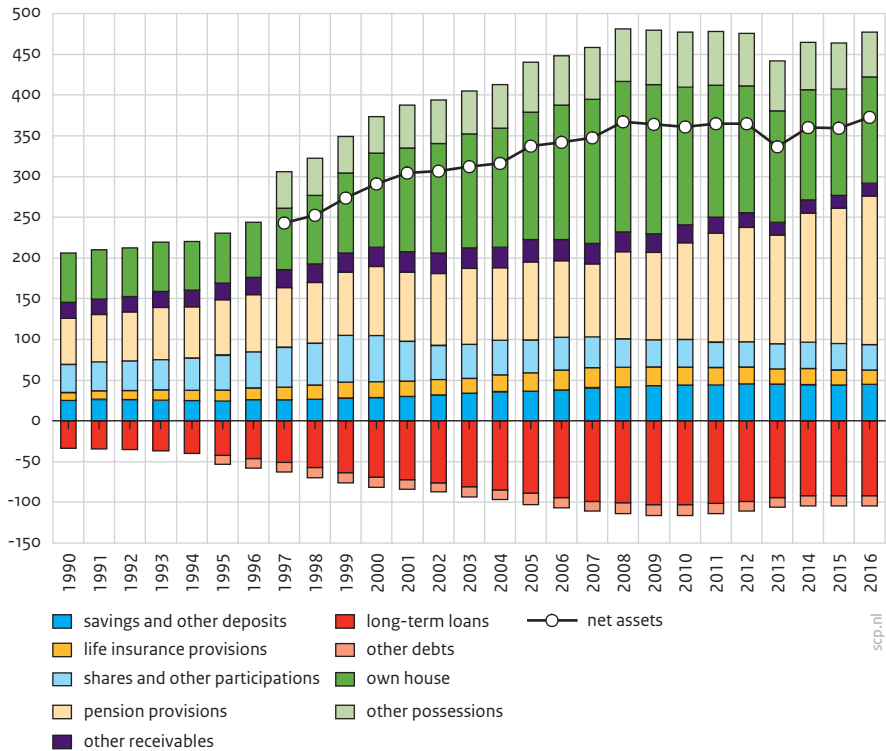
Household assets consist of the sum total of their possessions and debts. The most important categories of possessions are savings and deposits, shares, other participating interests in companies, their own home, life insurance provisions and accrued pension entitlements. Debts include long-term loans, including a mortgage on their own home and other loans.

Although households cannot freely access their future pension provision, this is nonetheless regarded as part of their assets: accruing a pension provision is after all intended to safeguard their spending in the longer term. This approach differs to that taken in chapter 5 on income, where pension provisions are ignored.

In 2016, the average Dutch household possessed real gross assets of 477,000 euros, including pension provisions, and debts of 104,000 euros (in 2016 prices) (figure 2.14). This average household therefore had net assets of 373,000 euros in 2016. The average pension provision in that year was 182,000 euros per household, and life insurance provisions averaged 17,500 euros. Together, these account for more than half the total average net assets. Households living in owner-occupied homes (average value 131,000 euros in 2016) frequently had a mortgage debt. Long-term loans, largely consisting of mortgage debt, amounted to an average of 92,000 euros in 2016.

Figure 2.14
Real assets increased thanks to pension provisions and home ownership

Real household assets, 1990-2016 (in 2016 prices and per household, x 1,000)^a



a Figures for 'other possessions' are not available for the period up to and including 1996; figures for 'other debts' are not available up to and including 1994. Long-term loans include mortgages. Possessions in 2000-2005 and in 2012 are estimates.

Source: cbs (StatLine, National Accounts) scp treatment

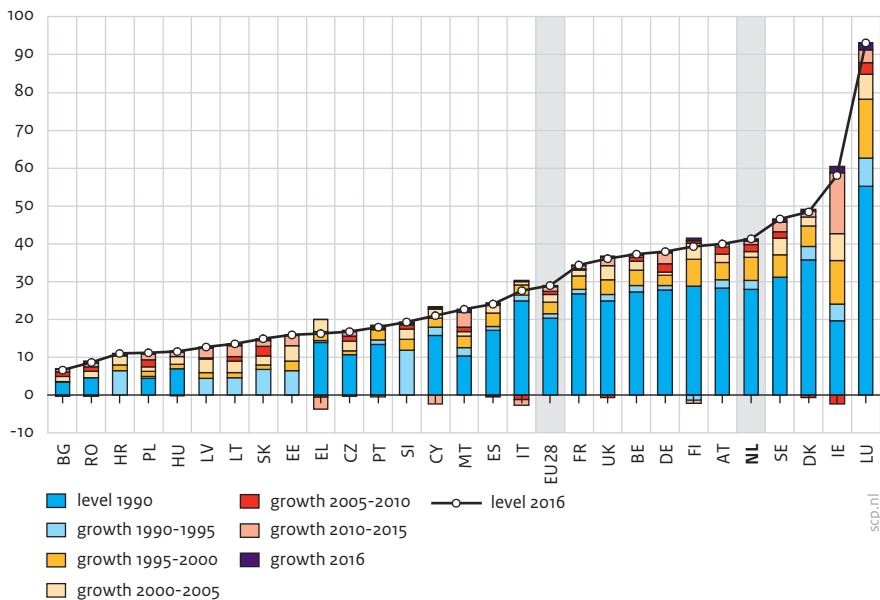
The total net assets of households per household rose by 51% over the period 1997-2008 (no total figures are available for the period up to and including 1996). This was followed by a period of more or less stabilisation, with a clear dip in 2013. Average net assets showed a slight upward trend again in 2016. The average growth over the whole period 1997-2016 was 2.3% per annum, a higher rate of increase than income. This growth was caused mainly by a sharp rise in the value of pension provisions and assets from home ownership, which reached an average of 4.6% and 3.0%, respectively, per year over the

period 1990-2016. The increase in assets from home ownership was largely the result of the rise in the average value of homes (CBS StatLine).

Figure 2.15

The Netherlands was a wealthy country and is becoming slightly richer still in relative terms

Gross domestic product (GDP) per inhabitant, EU Member States, 1990-2016 (in euros (2016) x 1000)^{a, b}



a Ranked by GDP in 2016.

Figures are not available for the period 1990-1994 for Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Croatia or Slovakia. For these countries, the figure shown for growth in the period 1990-1995 is that for 1995. Other missing figures have been estimated based on figures from the World Bank, and using extrapolation for Germany and Hungary in 1990.

b Appendix A (at the back of this publication) contains an explanation of the country codes used.

Source: EC (Eurostat) and World Bank, SCP treatment.

If we compare the real gross domestic product (GDP) per inhabitant of the Netherlands with that of other European countries in the period 1990-2016, two things are apparent (figure 2.15). First, both the starting level in 1990 and the end level in 2016 are higher in the Netherlands than the average in the other European countries. Second, real GDP in the Netherlands grew at an average of 1.5% per year in the period 1990-2016, slightly above the annual average in the present EU Member States (1.4%) – notwithstanding the spurt in growth in the majority of new Eastern European countries following accession to the EU.

One explanation for this was the average lower growth in GDP in a number of large, older Member States, such as France (1.0%), Italy (0.4%) and Germany (1.2%).

The economic crisis which began in 2008 affected European countries in different ways. In terms of GDP, the hardest hit EU economies were those of Greece, Cyprus, Slovenia, Croatia, Spain, Finland, Portugal, Italy and Ireland. Ireland was in fact affected slightly earlier, but also recovered earlier than the others. Countries such as Germany, Poland, Lithuania and Malta came through the crisis relatively unscathed. The Netherlands scored just below the average.

Trend in misery

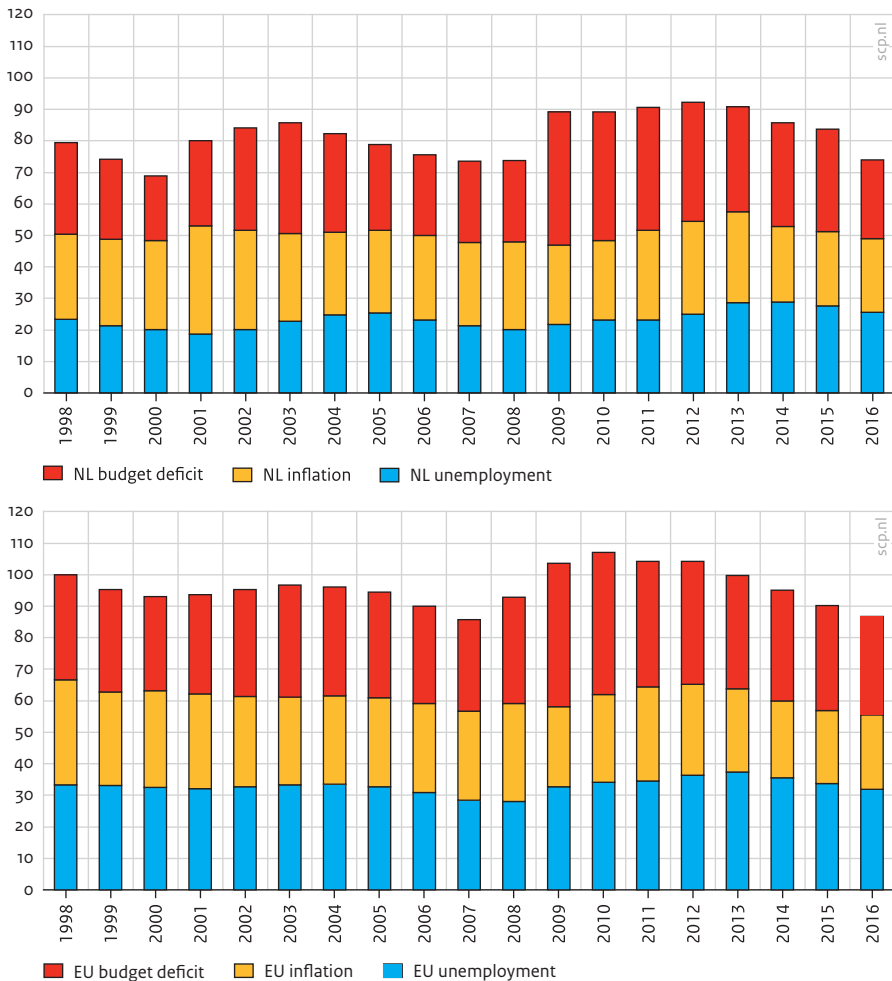
A country's economic performance is not determined solely by the trend in GDP. Other factors also play a role, such as the rate of unemployment, inflation, the government deficit and the balance of trade deficit. The more these variables can be minimised, the better the country performs. The extent to which a country succeeds in suppressing unemployment, inflation and the budget deficit is expressed as a score on a 'misery index', in which each of these three variables carries the same weight⁶ in the starting year (in our case 1998) for a reference country (in our case the EU average). The index is 100 for the EU average in 1998. The higher the index, the poorer the performance. Naturally, the variables making up the misery index are no more than an approximation of the economic situation; the choice of variables is fairly arbitrary, as is the composition of the index.

On balance, the Netherlands slid down the misery index in the period 1998-2016, with short-lived peaks during the two recessions caused by higher budget deficits followed by higher unemployment (figure 2.16). Unemployment in the Netherlands was still high by Dutch standards in 2016. Taking all 28 EU Member States together, the misery index score is higher than in the Netherlands in each year, and its trend over time slightly flatter. This suggests that the Netherlands is slightly more sensitive to economic developments than the average across the EU. Unemployment in the EU countries is still relatively high historically, despite the recession ending in 2016.

A number of things stand out from a comparison of the positions in 1998 and 2016 of the countries that now make up the EU⁷ (figure 2.17). Countries which were not yet EU members in 1998 still came high on the misery index in that year, mainly due to high inflation and/or high unemployment. Most countries slid down the misery index, with the exception of Luxembourg, Denmark, Ireland, Austria, the United Kingdom, Poland, Belgium, Portugal, France and Spain. The reduction in misery in the Eastern European countries is particularly striking. The misery level fell slightly in the Netherlands due to low inflation and a lower budget deficit. Only four countries have a lower misery index score than the Netherlands: Denmark, the Czech Republic, Malta and Luxembourg.

Figure 2.16
The Netherlands and EU escape from the misery of the 2009 crisis, but unemployment remains relatively high

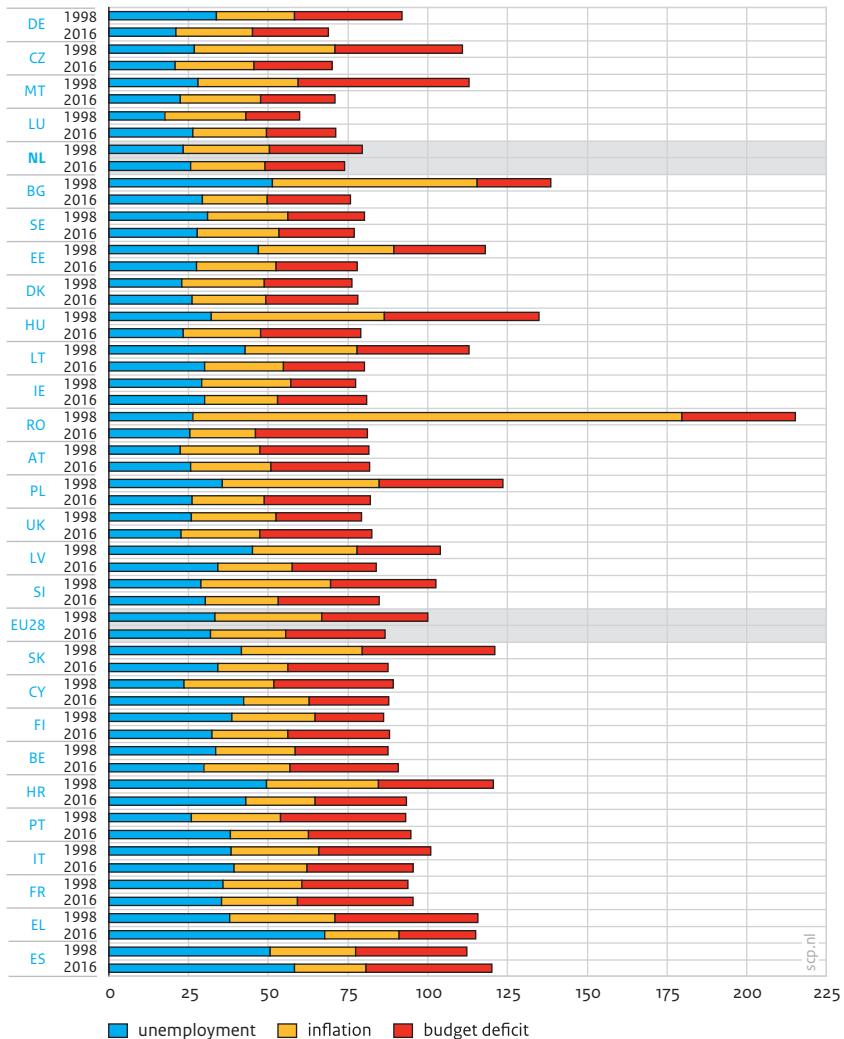
Misery index, the Netherlands and the EU, 1998-2016^a



a Misery index for the EU in 1998 at 100 and sub-indices for unemployment, inflation and the budget deficit in the EU in 1998 at 33 1/3. The figures for 1998 and 1999 have been estimated for some countries.

Source: Ec (Eurostat) scp treatment

Figure 2.17
 The Netherlands has fallen slightly on the misery index due to lower inflation and a lower budget deficit
 Misery index, EU Member States, 1998 and 2016^{a, b}



a Ranked by position in 2016. Misery index for the EU in 1998 at 100 and sub-indices for unemployment, inflation and the budget deficit in the EU in 1998 at 33 1/3. The figures for 1998 and 1999 have been estimated for some countries.
 b Appendix A (at the back of this publication) contains an explanation of the country codes used.

Source: ec (Eurostat) scp treatment

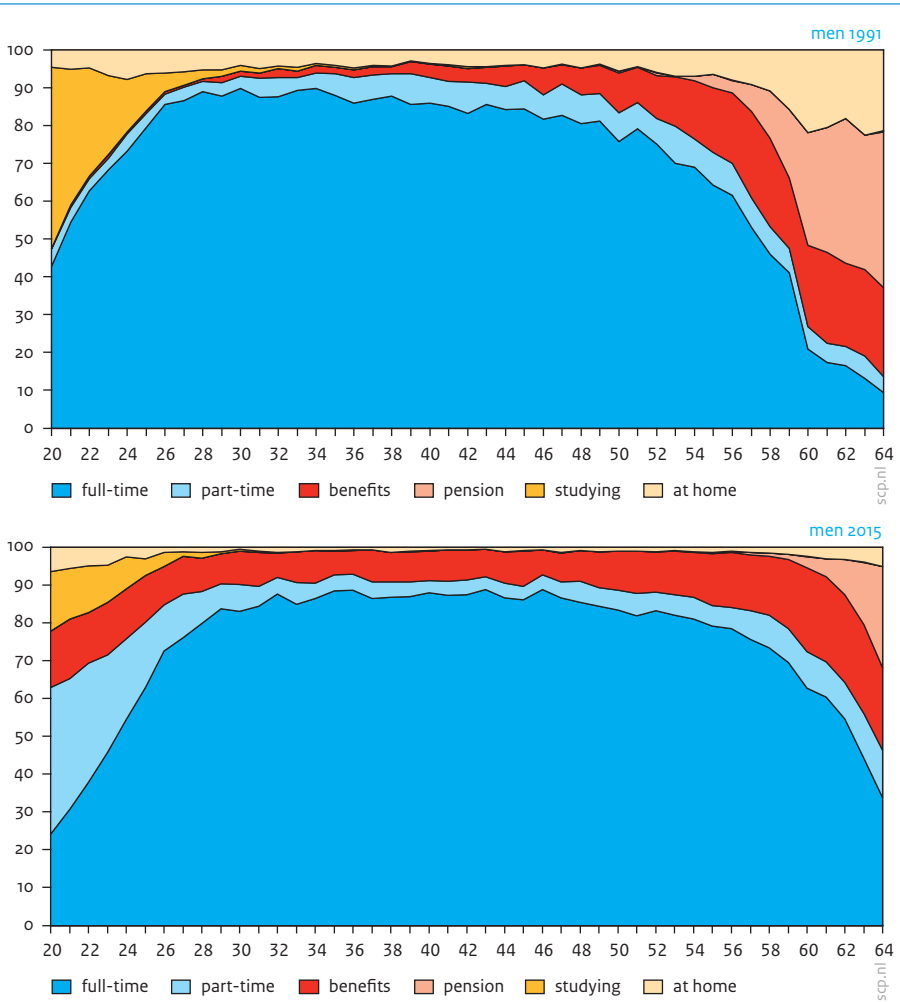
2.4 Activities of citizens

People's life course is marked by fairly fixed patterns, which are linked to important life events. Some of these events mainly occur early in life (studying, leaving home, moving in with someone, starting a job), others in the middle of the life course (starting a family, separation/divorce) or towards the end of life (retirement, loss of partner). Not everyone experiences the same life events and not everyone experiences comparable events in the same phase of their lives. Liefbroer and Dykstra (2000) argue that people trend towards a standard life course over time, with the life courses of different population groups coming to resemble each other ever more closely (by sex, education level and social class). Here, we restrict ourselves to the average age profile of men and women, because their life courses are still found to differ from each other markedly, even though they change over time.

Respondents in the Labour Force Survey (EBB) were asked to name the most important socio-economic activity at any point in their lives. Respondents were able to choose from the categories 'working', 'unemployed', 'incapacitated for work', 'retired', 'studying' and 'staying at home'. These activities form the basis for the profile presented here. We draw two comparisons, one between men and women in 2015 and one between 1991 and 2015 (for both men and women).

In 2015 there were still considerable differences between the activity profiles of men and women, though they have narrowed over time. Both men and women enter the jobs market fairly soon after leaving education (figures 2.18 and 2.19); at age 24, three-quarters of both men and women were already working (full-time and part-time together). Among men, this figure rose gradually to 90% by the age of 29, remaining at that level up to and including age 50. Women reach their maximum labour participation rate (around 80%) earlier, at around age 25, and it remains at around this level until age 46. Women's maximum labour participation rate thus begins and ends four years earlier than that of men. Men much more often work full-time than women; fewer than 10% of men aged between 28 and 57 years work part-time. Of those men who are still working at age 64 (46%), 73% are still in full-time employment. More than a third of women at every age work part-time. Among women, 67% of those who are still working at age 64 are in part-time employment, while the total female labour participation rate at this age is 29%.

Figure 2.18
 Men mainly work full-time, and this is only declining among young people
 Life course profile of men, by age and principal activity, 1991 and 2015 (in percentages)^a



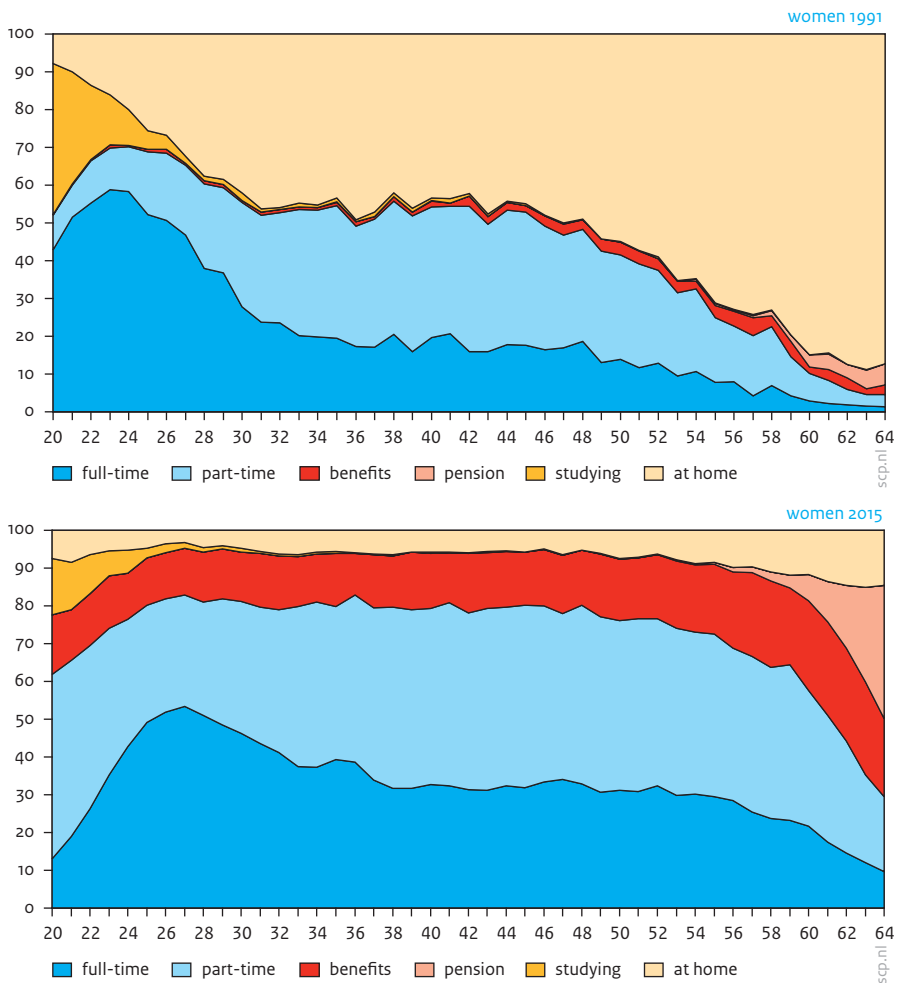
a Changes in the question formulation mean that differences can occur between 1991 and 2015; the question formulation in 1990 was very different from that in later years and has therefore not been included.

Source: CBS (EBB'91 and '15) SCP treatment

Figure 2.19

Women increasingly going out to work, mainly part-time

Life course profile of women, by age and principal activity, 1991 and 2015 (in percentages)^a



a Changes in the question formulation mean that differences can occur between 1991 and 2015; the question formulation in 1990 was very different from that in later years and has therefore not been included.

Source: CBS (EVB'91 and '15) SCP treatment

The labour participation rate of both men and women gradually reduces over their life course due to rising unemployment and incapacity for work. For men, their pension comes into view from the age of 60 onwards, and slightly earlier for women, from the age of 57. Finally, there are more women than men for whom their most important activity takes place in the home. At age 26, this applies for 1% of men and 4% of women; at age 64, the percentages have risen to 5% and 15%, respectively.

If we compare the life course profile of men between 1991 and 2015, we see that young men more often work part-time and that older men are more often in work (full-time or part-time). The differences between 1991 and 2015 are smaller for men than for women. A major increase in the labour participation rate of women is observed over the period, both full-time and part-time. This increase took place mainly before 2002 (CBS, EBB'02, not shown in figure). More women also began receiving benefits.

People often combine working with caring for children or providing other forms of care or support to others. These combinations occur mainly among women, which is why they often work part-time. Stemming from this behaviour, a range of earner types has emerged (figure 2.20).

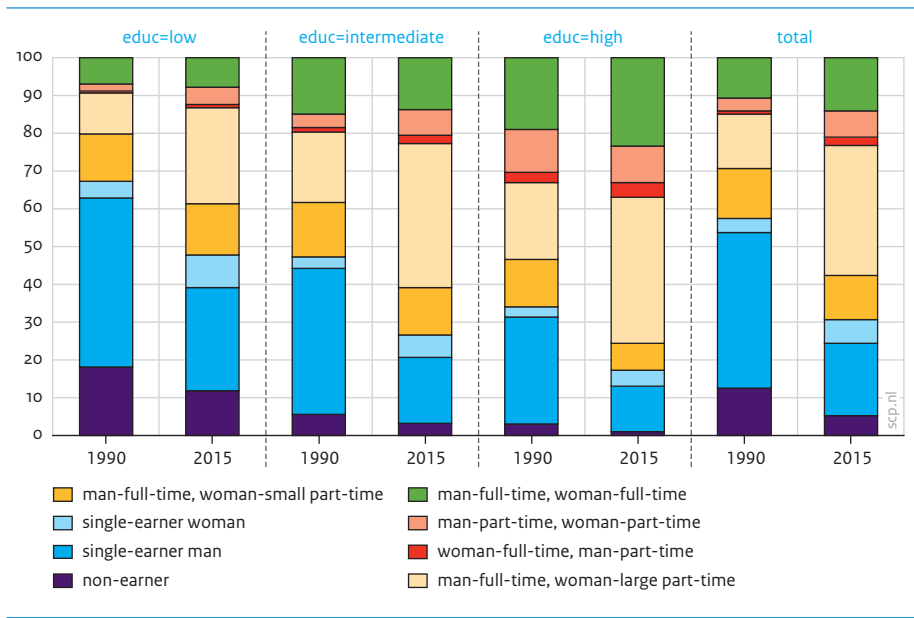
The combination of a man with a full-time job and a woman with a large part-time job (three or four days a week) has become much more common, rising from 14% in 1990 to 35% in 2015. This trend has occurred at the expense of the combination where only the man works, which went down from 41% in 1990 to 19% in 2015.

Among all (married) couples, the man predominantly works full-time (79%). The share of women in this group working full-time rose over the period from just 15% to only 23%.

Figure 2.20

Mainly reduction in single-earners and growth in one-and-a-half earners

Share of single and double-earners among (married) couples,^a by labour participation rate, 1990 and 2015 (in percentages and numbers x 1,000)



a Couples in which both partners are aged between 25 and 65 years. Non-earners are households where neither partners is in paid employment.

Source: CBS (EVB'90 and '15) SCP treatment

2.5 Government expenditure

Legislation and regulations, along with the performance of public tasks, play an important role in modern welfare states and contribute to improving the life situation of citizens. The performance of public tasks, in particular, involves high costs. The share of the national income taken by government expenditure declined between 1996 and 2016. As figures are not available for the period up to and including 1994, and because 1995 is not a good year on which to base a comparison because of the 'grossing-up' operation⁸ involving Dutch housing associations, in each case a comparison is made with 1996. The reduction was four percentage points, from 47% in 1996 to 43% in 2016. The economic crisis led to a drop in GDP in 2009, temporarily increasing the share of GDP taken by government expenditure to 48%. Taken over the entire period 1996-2016, GDP increased around 0.4% per year faster than government expenditure.

The share of government expenditure allocated to direct public services, referred to as 'profit' from the government (healthcare, education, public order and safety, culture and recreation, and infrastructure and transport), rose from 30% in 1996 to 42% in 2016. Social security benefits and provisions and services together accounted for 38% spending in 1996. This figure was slightly lower in 2016, at 37%.

As the international Cofog (Classification of the Functions of Government) applied by Statistics Netherlands (CBS) places welfare-related activities under social security benefits rather than under health care, the percentage of profit from the government in this area is lower and the percentage of social security benefits and provisions higher than in other studies carried out by SCP, such as Olsthoorn et al. (2017). The share of government expenditure devoted to the economy, environment, defence, development aid, public administration, interest on government debt and other expenditure fell from 31% in 1996 to 21% in 2016.

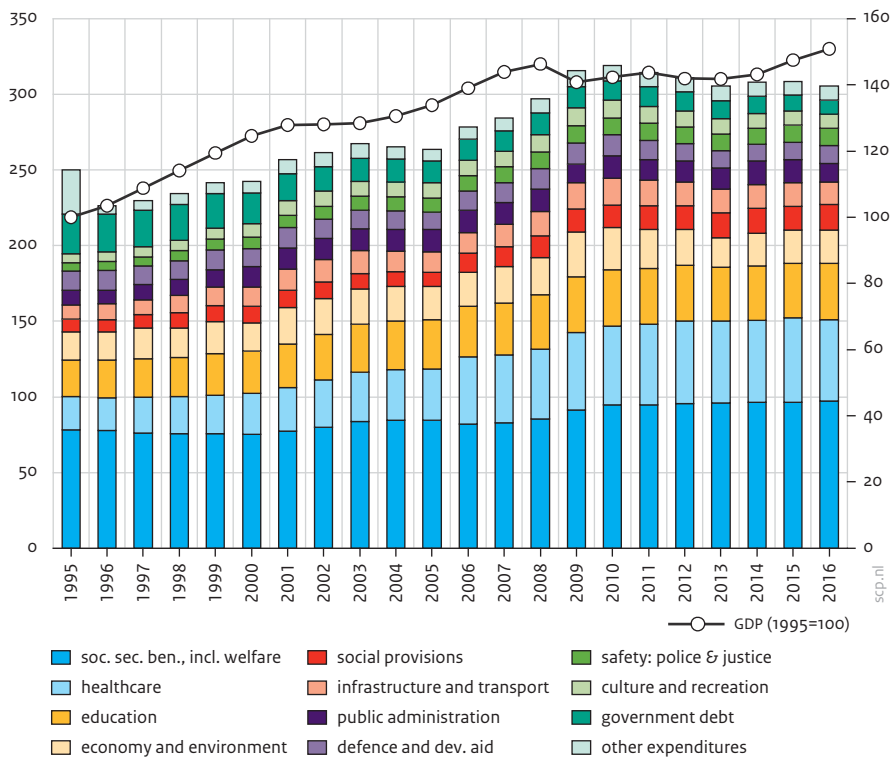
The real growth in that expenditure of 79.1 billion euros in the period 1996-2016 was largely the result of increased spending on health care (+32.5 billion euros) social security benefits including welfare (+19.2 billion euros, including social support (Wmo)), education (+12.5 billion euros) and social provisions (+8.5 billion euros) (figure 2.21). Interest payments on government debt fell by 15.8 billion euros due to the lower interest rates.

If we rank government spending on the various functions as a percentage of total government expenditure in order of the share taken, social protection, including welfare, comes top at 32%, followed by healthcare at 18%, education at 12%, the economy and environment at 7% and social provisions at 5%. The sharp rise in care expenditure in 2006 is partly artificial, caused by the introduction of the Care Insurance Act (Zorgverzekeringswet), which brought private health insurance (roughly a third of total expenditure) into the collective sector.

Figure 2.21

Increase in government spending up to and including 2010, followed by a fall^a

Government expenditure and GDP, 1995-2016 (in 2016 prices (expenditure) and index figures: 1990 = 100 (GDP))



a Data are not available for the period 1990-1994. 1995 shows a deviating picture due to the grossing-up operation for housing associations.

Source: CBS (StatLine, government expenditure)

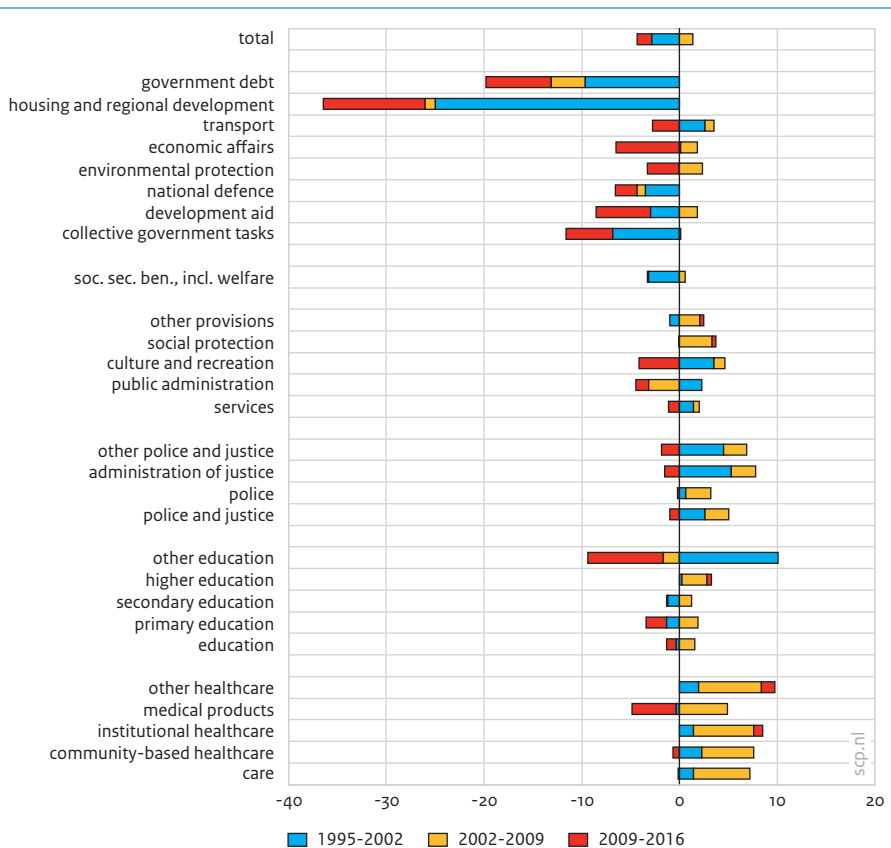
Breaking down the observation period into three equal periods (1995-2002, 2002-2009 and 2009-2016) makes clear precisely when the various shifts in government expenditure took place (figure 2.22). The share of government spending in GDP fell most steeply in the period 1995-2002 (-2.8%, partly due to the grossing-up operation), fell albeit less steeply in the period 2009-2016 (-1.5%), but rose in the period 2002-2009 (+1.3%). The percentage of social security benefits, including welfare payments, fell mainly in the first period, while costs of care rose particularly in the second period and education costs rose sharply in the first period but fell particularly in the third period.

Over the period 1995-2016 as a whole, expenditure on most government functions (as a percentage of total government spending) fell in percentage terms; the biggest fall was in spending on the government debt (-6.6% per year); housing and regional development has been left out of consideration here due to the grossing-up operation. The biggest rise was in spending on other healthcare provisions (3.2%).

Figure 2.22

Sharp rise in care costs

Growth in government expenditure as a share of GDP, 1995-2016 (in percentages)^a



a This refers to the percentage growth of a percentage (government expenditure as a percentage of GDP).

Source: cbs (StatLine) scp treatment

If we limit ourselves to the last period, 2009-2016, spending on other healthcare provisions and higher education saw the biggest increase (0.9% and 0.5%, respectively), while other education and interest on the government debt showed the biggest falls (-7.7% and -6.7%, respectively).

Underlying all these developments are not just demographic and economic factors, but also policy developments. However, it goes beyond the scope of this chapter to look at this in detail here; reference is instead made to the other chapters in this report, for example on education and care.

2.6 Concluding discussion

The development of people's life situation is determined in part by its social, demographic and economic developments which affect their lives. Both long-term and short-term developments can play a role here. Long-term developments include things such as a long-lasting demographic process, for example population ageing; examples of short-term developments are an economic crisis and migration flows.

There are a number of demographic trends which affect citizens' life situation. First, there is of course the increasing population ageing (the number of people aged over 65 as a percentage of the population aged 15-64 years grew from 19% to 28% in the period 1990-2016). Another example is the trend towards corporatisation. In addition, more and more older people are continuing to live at home (the share of people aged over 75 living at home rose from 80% in 1990 to 93% in 2014) and either do not move into an institution or do so at a much later age (transition to community-based care). The rate of growth of the native Dutch population also slowed steadily over the period, and actually turned negative in 2015, though a positive birth and migration balance in the migrant population meant that the total population continued to increase, including in 2015 (average increase 0.44% per year in 1996-2015). The number of households increased more rapidly, however, as more and more people began living alone. There was a relative decline in the number of marriages, but a relative increase in registered partnerships, though the rise in the latter did not fully compensate for the reduction in the former. Finally, the divorce rate increased over the period 1990-2016 (from 28% to 40%).

The economic situation can be broadly divided into two periods: the period up to and including 2001 and the period thereafter. In the first period, incomes rose relatively quickly according to several measures; this was brought to a halt in the second period by a number of economic recessions. Net disposable household income adjusted for inflation and household composition rose in the period 1990-2000 from 27,600 euros to 30,600 euros per annum, before falling with some fluctuations to 29,300 euros in 2016. The growth in net disposable household income was brought to an end not just by the economic downturn and smaller households, but also by a shift in income from households to companies and, in particular, the government. The income lost to the

government was (partially) repaid to households through more public services, such as care, education and safety. If we look at unemployment, inflation and the budget deficit (misery index), we find that the degree of 'misery' in the Netherlands has fallen since 1998 and in 2016 was below the average for the EU. Unemployment remains on the high side.

If we compare the life course profile of men between 1991 and 2015, we see that young men more often work part-time and that older men are more often in work (full-time or part-time). The differences between 1991 and 2015 were greater for women than for men. A major increase in the labour participation rate of women can be observed over the period (especially before 2002), both full-time and part-time. Although the differences in daily activities between men and women have narrowed overtime, they had by no means disappeared in 2015: the labour participation rate of men was higher in that year than that of women (90% versus 80% at the peak of their labour participation), and men were more often working full-time. The combination of a man with a full-time job and a woman with a large part-time job (three or four days a week) has become much more common, rising from 14% in 1990 to 35% in 2015. The trend among single earners was the opposite.

The rise in net disposable household income up to and including 2001 appears to stem not just from the favourable economic tide in that period, but also from the growing labour participation of women. The halt in the rise of net disposable household income in the period after 2001 can be ascribed to the weak economic climate and the shift in income from households to government, partly due to a sharp increase in costs of care.

Notes

- 1 See https://www.europa-nu.nl/id/vicyi6b6duk/w/verdrag_van_maastricht.
- 2 Statline is the online database of Statistics Netherlands (CBS), available at <https://opendata.cbs.nl/statline/#/CBS/en>.
- 3 This is the percentage of marriages which will be dissolved by divorce if the marriage duration-specific mortality and divorce probabilities observed in the reporting year continue to apply. This differs from the percentage of all dissolved marriages in a year which end through divorce in that year. This latter percentage was 36.9% in 2015, equivalent to 34,200 marriages (StatLine).
- 4 The difference between GDP and net disposable national income consists in write-downs, the balance of primary incomes from and to other countries and the balance of income transfers (secondary income) from and to other countries.
- 5 The permanent income is the average income to which a household expects to have access over a longer period. According to the economist Milton Friedman, the extent and composition of household consumption is determined more by their permanent income than by the fluctuating annual incomes.
- 6 To this end the unemployment rate, inflation and the budget deficit are standardised before being added together.

- 7 It was not until 1 May 2004 that Greek-Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia and the Czech Republic acceded to the European Union, to be followed in 2007 by Bulgaria and Romania, and in 2013 Croatia.
- 8 The 1995 'grossing-up operation' was a privatisation exercise to end government subsidies to housing associations, compensated by a one-off payment that was set off against the monies owed to the government by the housing associations. The amounts involved were 36.8 billion and 26.6 billion guilders, respectively. The operation cost 5% of GDP.

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3 Public opinion

Paul Dekker & Josje den Ridder

- After a dip between 2008 and 2013, the economic mood in the country is back in positive territory in 2017, but the share of the population who think that the Netherlands is a land of prosperity is lower than in 1993 (74% versus 81%).
 - Dutch citizens have more trust in the courts and business than in the government and the church. Trust in the church has fallen sharply since 2000. Trust in politics fluctuates, but there has been no increase in political cynicism over the last 25 years.
 - In times of economic crisis, the economy and employment are high on the public agenda. Now the crisis is past, other concerns are returning. People in 2017 are concerned about immigration, the state of Dutch society and healthcare.
 - Broadly speaking, no major shifts have taken place since 1990 in people's views regarding moral issues, freedom of expression, the environment, the multicultural society and the European Union. There is no evidence of the frequently cited 'lurch to the right'. There have of course been some changes: support for freedom of expression has diminished, attitudes towards immigrants have become slightly more positive and support for EU membership is lower in 2016/17 than in 1996.
 - Different population groups hold different views. For example, wide differences can be observed over the last 25 years between people with a high and low education level and people with and without political self-confidence. There are also differences based on age, sex and income; these appear to be relatively stable, though there has recently been a striking reduction in support for referendums among people with high education.
 - Compared with other Europeans, the Dutch have a lot of trust in Parliament, are optimistic about the direction in which the country is going and have an international orientation.
-

3.1 1990 and 2017: a world of difference?

This chapter discusses trends in public opinion at various levels. First, we examine the mood in society, measured by satisfaction with society and the economy; we then go on to explore trust in institutions and attitudes towards politics, before turning to prioritisation of social values and problems. We conclude by looking at changes in attitudes to a number of social and political issues, ranging from ethical questions to income distribution and the environment to views on the EU. That is a large number of topics, which will therefore not all be discussed exhaustively. So public opinion in the Netherlands will only be sketched in broad outlines.

As in the rest of this edition of *SSN*, this chapter will as far as possible cover the period 1990-2017, to see whether this period was one of change or continuity in Dutch public opinion. The early 1990s are sometimes seen as a period of quiet satisfaction; the Berlin

Wall had just fallen and all national and international political conflicts appeared to have been resolved... a time of prosperity, satisfaction and political consensus. However, this period of relative calm did not last long: it was broken at international level by the attacks on the World Trade Centre on 11 September 2001, and at national level in the Netherlands by the 'political earthquake' and the murder of the right-wing populist politician Pim Fortuyn in 2002. Following these events, too, the political landscape was a constantly shifting patchwork both nationally and internationally. This political upheaval (and the associated media hypes about a lurch to the right, rising populism, angry citizens, a rejection of Europe, crises of confidence and cultural polarisation) could create the impression that public opinion was also changing radically. In this chapter we explore a large number of topics to see whether that impression is correct. We do that by looking at the major changes in support for one or more opinions per topic in the Dutch population as a whole. Section 3.6 discusses the differences between population groups.¹

3.2 The mood regarding society and the economy

We begin by looking at a number of indicators for the public mood in the Netherlands, and in particular opinions on whether Dutch society and the economy is moving in the right or wrong direction, as well as measures of satisfaction and well-being.

Box 3.1 Trend breaks in the 'Cultural change in the Netherlands' survey (*Culturele veranderingen in Nederland – cv*)

The tables presented in this chapter draw on data from the 'Cultural change in the Netherlands' survey series (*Culturele veranderingen in Nederland*). A number of changes were made to the question formulations and response categories in the 2010/11 survey (in that year for half the respondents, thereafter for everyone; for more detail, see (in Dutch) Den Ridder & Schyns 2013). With the occasional exception, this chapter uses only data from the new question formulations. Where comparison of the old and new formulations produces different outcomes in 2010/11, the old figures are streamlined with the new. Unless stated otherwise, the figures in the tables are percentages of all respondents who gave an answer, including those who answered 'I don't know'. For 2008/09, for the early 1990s and the period around the year 2000, the survey has been selected which contained the most questions that are relevant for the table in question.

In general, the assessment by Dutch citizens of their own situation and of Dutch society did not change massively between 1993 and 2016/17, as table 3.1 shows. A consistent figure of around 85% believe that their own family lives in prosperity; almost half think that other people can be trusted; and more than 80% are proud to be Dutch. The concerns about norms and values which have been observed frequently in recent years (see e.g. Dekker & Den Ridder 2015: 75) turn out also to have been present in 1993; in fact, the proportion of the Dutch public who did not see a decline in norms and values was actually slightly lower then. But there have also been some bigger changes. People in 1993

were considerably more positive about the prosperity of the Netherlands than in subsequent years, with 2012/13 and 2014/15 as low points. In 2016/17, 36% say they never feel ashamed to be Dutch. We cannot compare that figure with the 1990s, but it is lower than the figure in 2008/09.

Table 3.1

Less positive about prosperity in the Netherlands than in 1993 and more control over own lives

Positive assessments and expectations regarding own situation, the economy and society, persons aged 18 years and older, 1993-2016/17 (in percentages)^a

	1993	2000	2008/'09	2012/'13	2014/'15	2016/'17
thinks own life or family is prosperous ^a	86	.	86	82	83	85
thinks the Netherlands is prosperous ^a	81	.	75	69	67	74
thinks most people can be trusted ^b	.	47	52	51	47	48
does not think that norms and values are declining ^c	33	.	36	38	40	38
does not feel ashamed to be Dutch ^d	.	.	45	43	40	36
is (quite) proud to be Dutch ^e	.	.	82	81	80	81

a Chooses 'prosperous' in response to the questions 'Do you feel that you/your family are prosperous or not?', and 'Do you think that the Netherlands is currently a prosperous country or not?'

b Chooses 'trust' in response to the question 'Do think that in general most people can be trusted, or do you think you can't be too careful in dealing with other people?'

c Chooses 'getting better' and 'the same' in response to the question 'Some people think that the norms and values in this country are steadily declining; others believe they are getting better. What do you think?'

d Disagrees with the statement 'There are things happening in the Netherlands today which make me ashamed to be Dutch.'

e Responses to the question 'Would you say that you are very proud, quite proud, not so proud or not proud at all to be Dutch?'

Source: SCP (CV'93-'16/'17)

The long intervals between measurements mean that the figures in table 3.1 do not offer a good picture of the impact of the recent economic crisis on people's economic evaluations and perceptions. If we track the economic perceptions quarter by quarter over recent years, we are able to see this impact more clearly, and it is then plain that the economic mood in 2017 can be characterised as reasonably positive (see table 3.1). Data from the COB (Continu onderzoek burgerperspectieven – 'Citizens' Outlook Barometer') for the third quarter of 2017 show that 80% are satisfied with the national economy. In other words, after a long decline, reaching a low point of 47% in the summer

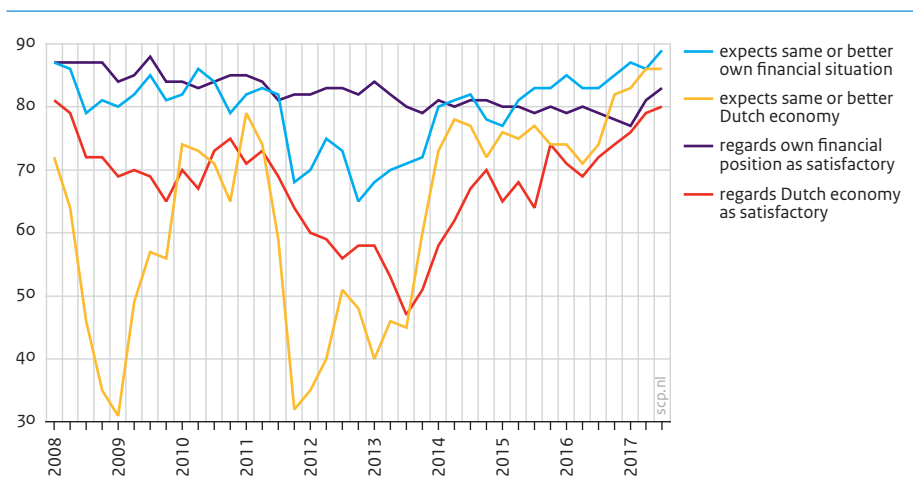
of 2013, satisfaction with the Dutch economy has risen back to its level from before the economic and financial crisis which began in mid-2008. People’s economic expectations are also positive: 86% do not expect to see a deterioration over the next 12 months. That is different from the situation in January 2009 and October 2011, when only 31% and 32%, respectively, did not expect a deterioration. Figures from Statistics Netherlands (CBS) also show that consumer confidence was high in July 2017 compared with the long-term average.²

Even during the crisis, the Dutch remained relatively positive regarding their own financial situation and future – at least compared to their opinions regarding the national economy. In July 2017, 83% reported that their own financial situation was satisfactory, bringing to a provisional end a slight downward trend in financial satisfaction since 2008 (figure 3.1). 89% did not expect to see any deterioration in their own financial situation over the coming twelve months.

Figure 3.1

After the economic crisis: recovering confidence in the economy continues in 2017^a

Economic optimism, persons aged 18 years and older, January 2008 - July 2017 (in percentages)



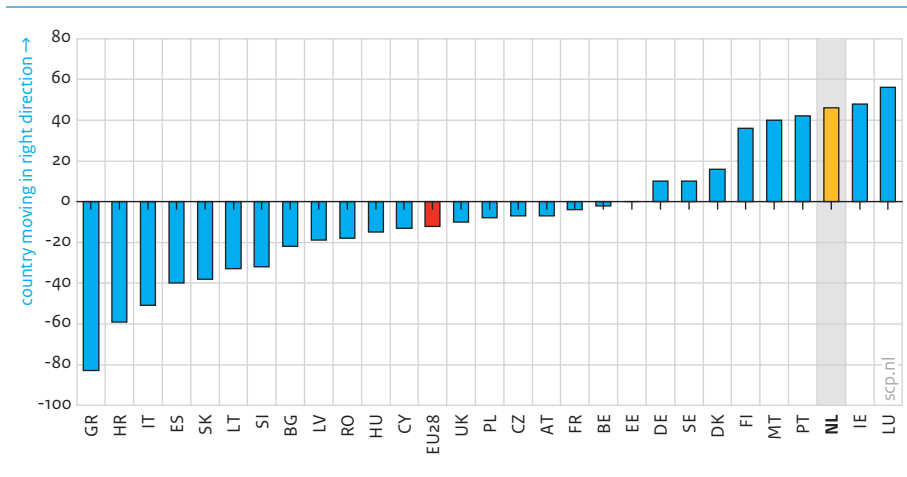
a The ‘satisfactory’ scores are the percentage of scores of between 6 and 10 on a satisfaction scale of 1-10. The expectations relate to the next 12 months.

Source: SCP (COB’08/1-’17/3)

The Netherlands often ranks among the more positive and optimistic EU Member States, and that is once again the case in 2017. Figure 3.2 shows that the majority of Dutch citizens believe the country is going in the right direction (67% think this, while 21% feel it is going in the wrong direction; a net positive score of 46). Only the Irish and Luxembourg

populations were more positive in the spring of 2017. There are wide differences across the EU. In addition to a small group of optimistic countries, there is a group of countries including France, Belgium and the United Kingdom where a small majority are pessimistic. Pessimism dominates clearly in countries such as Spain, Hungary and Greece, with a large consensus in Greece, particularly, that the country is going in the wrong direction.

Figure 3.2
 Dutch optimistic about the future of the country compared with other Europeans
 Societal optimism, persons aged 15 years and older, spring 2017 (in net scores)^{a, b}



- a The net scores represent the percentage of people who believe the country is moving in the right direction, less the percentage who feel it is going in the wrong direction.
- b Appendix A (at the back of this publication) contains an explanation of the country codes used.

Source: EC (EB 87.3)

One of the concerns expressed about society relates to the (growing) tensions between different groups in the population. How do the Dutch view tensions in society, and how has this changed compared with the past? To gain a first impression of this, table 3.2 presents a number of group differences and the extent of the perceived opposition. The oppositions between rich and poor, between those with low and high education, between Dutch natives and people with a migration background, and between people with and without work are regarded as considerable by most people in 2017. The proportion who feel that there are substantial oppositions between rich and poor and between those with different education levels has grown in recent years. Respondents were also asked about some of these oppositions in 1987; On average, slightly more people in 2017 see substantial oppositions between these groups than in 1987, though the

difference is small and also fluctuates over time. A feeling that there are considerable oppositions is regarded as an indication of societal unease (Spruyt 2014). No consistent upward or downward trend can be observed here.

Table 3.2

Biggest perceived differences are in income, education, ethnicity and having work

Perception of great or very great social oppositions,^a persons aged 18 years and older, 1987-2016 (in percentages)

	1987	2006	2008/'9	2010	2012	2015	2017
poor people – rich people	78	79	72	72	64	75	77
low-educated – highly educated	.	.	.	61	65	66	70
migration background – natives	.	.	66	67	58	63	66
people without work – people in work	48	63	63	60	60	66	64
young people – older people	37	60	59	51	49	48	55
employers – employees	68	57	52	48	47	53	53
working class – middle class	22	33	32	28	29	36	36
women – men	.	.	.	14	16	18	21
average for the five oppositions included in each survey	51	58	56	52	50	56	57

a 'Below is a list of pairs of social groups which differ from each other and are sometimes even at odds with each other. Can you say in each case how great you think the oppositions between these two groups are?' Ranked by size of opposition in 2017.

Source: scp (cv'87, '06, '08/'09; cob'10/'1, '12/4, '15/4 and '17/1)

However, table 3.2 provides little insight into the potentially problematic nature of these oppositions. The question formulation talks of groups which 'differ from each other and are sometimes even at odds with each other', but this may not necessarily mean that people also see conflicts. To gain an impression of the perceived conflict, we look to other research.

When people are explicitly asked about groups between which there is 'friction' or 'conflict', they perceive the most conflicts between people with a migration background and Dutch natives. In 2012, the survey presented in table 3.2 asked not only about perceived oppositions, but also explicitly about perceived conflict. In response to this question, 57% of respondents see major conflict between people with a migration background and Dutch natives (58% see some opposition). By way of comparison: 34% see a conflict between rich and poor, while 64% see an opposition (Den Ridder et al. 2012: 21-26).

A survey in 2014 asked respondents in the Netherlands about the groups between which they perceived friction once again, most people saw friction between people with a migration background and Dutch natives, with 60% seeing severe or very severe friction

between these groups (Gijsberts et al. 2014: 22). Respondents in the European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS) 2011 were asked about tensions, and here again more people saw tensions between racial and ethnic groups (48%) or between religious groups (36%) than between rich and poor (20%).

3.3 Trust in institutions and opinions on politics

How much do people trust certain institutions, and in particular the institution of politics? Table 3.3 shows the percentage of people who have a (very) great deal of trust in the justice system, the business community, the government and the church.³ Trust is greatest in the justice system in all years presented in the table, though 1998 stands out as a year of low trust in this institution.⁴ Trust in the business community is higher in 2016/17 than in 1991. Trust in the church declined sharply after the end of the 1990s; people have had the least trust in this institution since 2012, probably in part because of the abuse scandals in the Catholic Church (cf. De Hart 2014: 31). The share with strong trust in the government is also low: 18% of Dutch citizens in 2016/17.

Table 3.3

More trust in the justice system and business than in the government and the church

Institutional trust, persons aged 18 years and older, 1991-2016/17 (in percentages)^a

	1991	1998	2008/'9	2012/'13	2014/'15	2016/'17
the justice system	47	34	44	41	40	44
the business community	28	31	33	32	34	36
the government	17	26	23	17	15	18
church and religious organisations	24	30	19	13	13	12

a The percentages shown are for '(very) great deal of trust' in answer to the question 'How much trust do you have in?'

Source: scp (cv'91-'16/'17)

The share of 18% who trust the government is fairly low, but it should be borne in mind here that this is the share of those who have a (very) great deal of trust. People are asked to give a score out of 10, in July 2017 49% give at least a 6 or a 7 (Den Ridder et al. 2017: 7) Respondents in the Eurobarometer (EB) survey are asked if they 'tend to trust' or 'tend not to trust' a certain institution, and this too produces higher trust figures (see figure 3.3). However, it is also clear that the justice system (and the police) enjoy considerably more public trust than politics, in this case Parliament, local authorities and the European Union (EU). This ranking has remained reasonably stable over the last five years, but was slightly different before that; in the period 1997-2002, people had more trust in Parliament than in the government. Trust in political institutions, in particular, is highly

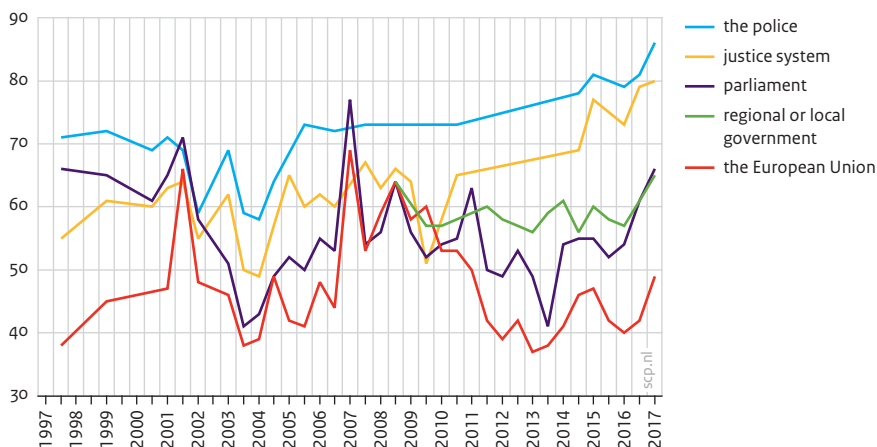
volatile. In 2001, for example, trust in Parliament and the EU peaked, as it did again in early 2007 (generally ascribed to the positive reception of the ‘100 days’ tour’ by the fourth government led by Jan-Peter Balkenende), and trust is rising again in 2017. The economic trend and outlook are important factors in political trust, but so are political events (trust falls at times of scandal and crises, and rises in response to decisiveness and when a new government takes office; cf. Van der Meer 2017).

Trust in political parties is lower than trust in Parliament (not shown in figure); since the late 1990s it has fluctuated between 30% and 40%, occasionally dipping below and occasionally rising above this band (see e.g. Den Ridder & Dekker 2015: 16). In the spring of 2017, trust in political parties was once again on a rising trend – up to 46% from 35% in the autumn of 2016.

Figure 3.3

Wide fluctuations in political trust

Trust in Parliament and government, persons aged 15 years and older, 1997–2017 (in percentages)^a



a The figure shows the shares who report that they ‘tend to trust’ these institutions. Other response categories were ‘tend not to trust’ and ‘don’t know’.

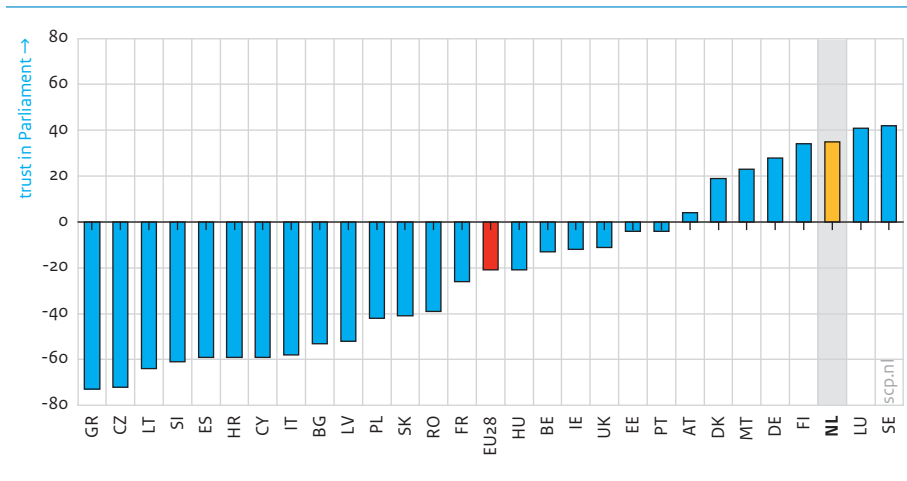
Source: EC (EB 48.0-87.3)

The Netherlands is among the top countries in Europe for trust in Parliament (with a net score of +35; 66% ‘tend to trust’ the national parliament, 31% ‘tend not to trust’ it; see figure 3.4). Political trust is also above average in Sweden, Luxembourg, Finland, Germany, Denmark and Malta. The Greeks (-73) and Czechs (-72) have the least trust in their national Parliament. The question on trust in the national Parliament was first put at the end of 1997 to respondents in the then 15 EU Member States. Then, too, trust in the

Netherlands, with a net score of +36, was well above the EU-15 average of +8. Once again, people in Luxembourg were the most trusting. Trust is low in Belgium and Italy

Figure 3.4
Dutch exhibit high political trust compared with other Europeans

Trust in Parliament, persons aged 15 years and older, spring 2017 (in net scores)^{a, b}



- a The net scores show the percentage who ‘tend to trust’ (the most important chamber of) the national Parliament, less the percentage who ‘tend not to trust’ Parliament.
- b Appendix A (at the back of this publication) contains an explanation of the country codes used.

Source: EC (EB 87.3)

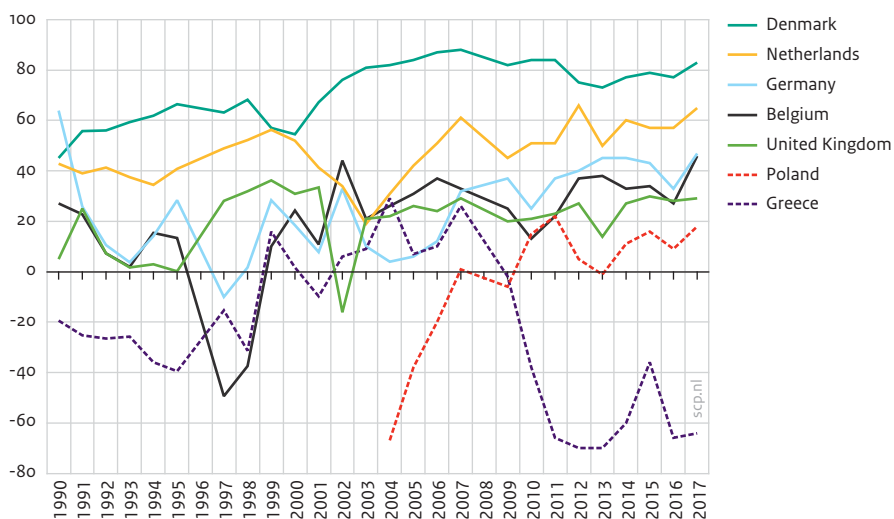
We now turn to satisfaction with democracy in general. Research shows that this satisfaction consists not just in an evaluation of democratic principles and procedures, but also includes opinions about politics in general or about the way in which the incumbent government is performing (Canache et al. 2001; Linde & Ekman 2003). In 2016/17, 68% of the Dutch are satisfied with the functioning of democracy. That is lower than the 79% satisfaction score in 2008/09 and comparable with the years 2012/13 and 2014/15. This decline in democratic satisfaction after 2008 is not found in other data and is perhaps explained by the small peak in democratic satisfaction and political trust in 2008 as a result of the decisive political action during the banking crisis (cf. Den Ridder et al. 2017; see also table 3.4 for the relatively high score for satisfaction with the government in 2008).

Data from the Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies (DPES) show that in the spring of 2017, 80% of respondents were fairly or very satisfied with the way Dutch democracy functions.⁵ This figure has remained reasonably stable over the last ten years.⁶ The Eurobarometer

also shows no decline in satisfaction with democracy (see figure 3.5), though there are fluctuations: satisfaction fell in the final days of the ‘purple’ coalition governments (between the red social democratic party and blue liberal parties) in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and began rising again after 2003. Satisfaction with democracy is higher in 2017 than in 1990, and comparisons with the 1970s also do not show a decline (e.g. Thomassen et al. 2014). Democratic satisfaction in the Netherlands is accordingly assessed as relatively high: there is no structural decline over time, and the Netherlands also scores well compared with other countries (Van Ham & Thomassen 2017: 25).

Figure 3.5
Fluctuating satisfaction with democracy

Net satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in own country,^a persons aged 15 years and older, 1976–2013 (in percentage points)



a ‘Thinking about the way democracy functions in [country], would you say that you are all in all very satisfied, reasonably satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied?’ The figure shows the percentage ‘very/reasonably satisfied’ less the percentage ‘not very satisfied/not at all satisfied’.

Source: EC (EB 33-87.3; yearly averages up to and including 2001, autumn measurements 2002, 2003, 2007, 2009 and ’11; the remainder are spring measurements)

This positive comparison is also evident in figure 3.5, where the trend in democratic satisfaction in the Netherlands is compared with that in a number of other countries – four neighbouring countries (Belgium, Germany, the United Kingdom and, slightly further removed, Denmark) and, by way of contrast, the economic crisis country Greece in the South and the controversial democracy of Poland in the East. The Netherlands has the

highest democratic satisfaction score after Denmark, at least viewed over the period as a whole. Democratic satisfaction in Germany fell sharply after reunification in 1990 due to the addition of (more often dissatisfied) East Germans, and above all dissatisfaction among the much larger group of West Germans regarding the process of reunification. From 1993 onwards, satisfaction fluctuates considerably, showing a rising trend in recent years but without reaching its earlier level. The United Kingdom occupies a position midway between these countries, generally with a limited majority of satisfied citizens.

Satisfaction with the government is slightly higher in 2016/17 than in the preceding years, but lower than in 2000 and 2008/09 (table 3.4). As with satisfaction with politics, the score for satisfaction with the government is mainly a snapshot. This applies to a slightly lesser extent for the statements about politics in the lower part of the table, where some minor shifts can be observed, though broadly speaking the Dutch are no more cynical about politics in 2016/17 than in 1992. Roughly half of Dutch respondents think that people like them have little influence on the government, that politicians care little about their opinion, and a large majority believe that MPs are more concerned about powerful groups than about the general interest. A minority believe the government does little that is useful for their daily lives.

Table 3.4
No more cynical about politics than in the 1990s

Attitudes towards politics, persons aged 18 years and older, 1992-2016/17 (in percentages)^a

	1992	2000	2008/'09	2012/'13	2014/'15	2016/'17
satisfied with the functioning of democracy	.	.	79	71	69	68
satisfied with the government	.	77	75	63	61	65
agrees with the following statements						
whatever the government does, it's of little use for people's daily lives.	24		30	27	30	29
people like me have no influence over what the government does	47	52	52	51	53	50
I don't think MPs care much about what people like me think	46	49	42	44	48	46
MPs pay too much attention to the interests of a few powerful groups rather than the general interest	58	58	56	60	65	62

a Satisfaction questions: 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied in response to the questions: 'How satisfied are you with the way in which democracy functions in the Netherlands?', and 'very' and 'more or less' satisfied in response to the question: 'How satisfied are you in general with what the Dutch government does?'

Source: scp (cv'92-'16/'17)

Over the last 25 years, around half the Dutch public have consistently expressed the view that citizens should have a greater say in local and provincial administration (see table 3.5). Since the year 2000, more than 70% have consistently supported the concept of elected mayors, and more than half support the idea of an elected Prime Minister. The support for more direct influence and civic participation is therefore reasonably stable, except for one indicator which suddenly shows a steep fall in 2016/17: support for referendums drops from 82% in 2014/15 to 69% in 2016/17. This is probably related to the referendum on Ukraine in 2016. A similar decline in support is found in the National Survey of Voters ((NKO), from 66% support for referendums on important issues in 2012 to 57% in 2017. We shall return to this in section 3.6.

Table 3.5

Increasing support for a bigger say at local level; less support for referendums in 2017

Support for statements about politics, persons aged 18 years and older, 2004-2016/7 (in percentages)

	1992	2000	2008/'09	2012/'13	2014/'15	2016/'17
feels that citizens should have more say ^a	49	57	48	49	53	47
agreement with the following statements						
what we need are fewer laws and institutions and more courageous, tireless and dedicated leaders whom the public can trust ^b	37	32	54	.	.	.
it would be a good thing if running the country was left to a few powerful leaders ^b	.	.	.	33	30	28
voters themselves should decide in a referendum on certain issues that are important for our country		(81) ^c	79	79	82	69
the mayor should be elected by those who live in the municipality		(72) ^c	71	71	74	71
the Prime Minister should be directly elected by voters		(54) ^c	.	54	57	.

- a Percentage 'bigger' in response to the question 'What do you think about how much say citizens have in the local and provincial administration? Should citizens have a bigger say, a smaller say or should it stay the same?' (formulated differently until 2010; the responses have been adapted to those to the new question).
- b We regard these statements as too different to standardise the responses. Both questions were put to two halves of the sample in 2010/11; at that time, they received support from 55% and 34%, respectively.
- c Not asked in 2000, but asked in 1998 and 2002; when the percentages were respectively 81%/81%, 71%/72% and 53%/54%.

Source: SCP (cv'92-'16/'17)

Around 30% of the Dutch population would prefer the administration to be in the hands of powerful leaders. The statement as formulated until 2010 received more support, because it linked more powerful leadership with less bureaucracy. Support for this statement steadily reduced in the 20th century, but suddenly became more popular again at the start of the present century, probably under the influence of the right-wing populist politician Pim Fortuyn.⁷

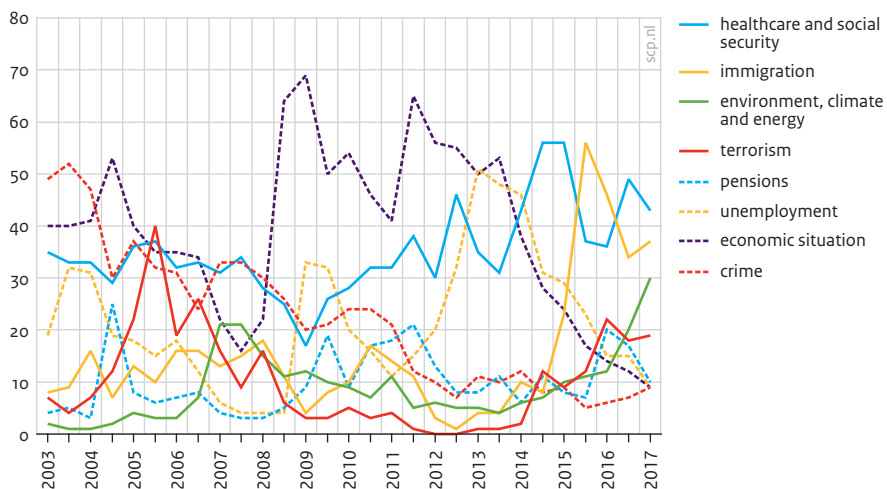
3.4 Public agendas

What people see as the biggest social problems and challenges fluctuates considerably over time, as we saw in figure 3.6. The state of the economy has a major influence on these fluctuations: during the economic crisis, public concerns related to the economic situation, and later to unemployment. Now that the economy is improving, concerns about the economy and employment are easing and being replaced by other problems, such as healthcare and social security. Since the refugee crisis at the end of 2015, immigration has also been high on the agenda. These fluctuations are also reflected in the quarterly surveys in the Citizens' Outlook Barometer (COB) in which, unlike in figure 3.6, people are able to say in their own words what they think are the biggest social problems facing society. There, too, we have seen the concerns about the economy easing since 2014, but there is considerable disquiet about immigration and integration (the arrival of refugees, concerns that reception of asylum-seekers will be at the expense of Dutch citizens who are in difficulties, the integration of minorities). One theme that is frequently cited spontaneously but was not included in figure 3.6 is the way people get on together in Dutch society. Over the last ten years, people have consistently expressed concerns about a hardening of society, growing intolerance, bad manners, antisocial behaviour and the 'me' culture (see e.g. Den Ridder et al. 2017: 9).

Box 3.2 Concerns about the international situation

When surveys ask about social problems or issues that concern people, international questions generally do not score highly, partly because these surveys often ask explicitly about problems in the Netherlands. International themes which are mentioned nevertheless are the refugee crisis, the threat of terrorism (in the Netherlands and elsewhere) and the European Union. When asked in July 2017, 39% of respondents said they were fairly or very concerned about the international political situation, 45% were slightly concerned and 5% were not concerned at all (Den Ridder et al. 2017: 18). Those concerns are focused on the situation in Syria and the Middle East, the threat of terrorism, the relationship between Russia and the West and political leaders such as Trump, Putin and Erdogan. This question has been included in the Citizens' Outlook Barometer (COB) since 2015 because, based on developments on the world stage, we have the impression that the international political situation now or in the near future could have a bigger influence on Dutch public opinion than in the past. Unfortunately we do not have good enough indicators to examine whether the concerns about the international situation at present really are greater than in 1990.

Figure 3.6
 Following economic crisis, care and immigration once again important
 Biggest problems in own country, persons aged 15 years and older, 2003 - spring 2017 (in percentages)^a



a 'What would you say are currently the two biggest problems in the Netherlands?' Respondents could choose up to two problems from a list. The list of problems is adjusted from time to time. Up to and including the spring of 2012 (EB 76.3), respondents were asked about 'healthcare'; from autumn 2012 (EB 77.3) they were asked about 'healthcare and social security'.

Source: EC (EB 59.1-87.3)

3.5 Societal issues

In this section we briefly look at a number of political and societal issues. The choice of topics is fairly arbitrary and dependent on the available material, but they are nonetheless topics which are currently receiving political and public attention because they are controversial. The question of income differentials is not discussed here, since that is the subject of Chapter 5.

1 Moral questions

Based on responses to the two general statements about right and wrong in table 3.6, there has been rather more moral uncertainty over the last ten years than was the case in the early 1990s, though no recent trend is discernible. By contrast, a trend is visible with regard to the death penalty. In the early 1990s, four out of ten Dutch citizens felt the death penalty was an option; today just a quarter support this line. Freedom of choice for women in relation to abortion is supported by roughly three-quarters of respondents, more than in the 1990s. Support for the option of euthanasia is higher; around nine out

of ten Dutch people support this, the same as in the 1990s. Support for a more recent question on ‘the right’⁸ to commit suicide is less widespread. The final moral question concerns gay marriage, i.e. full legal marriage for same-sex couples, which became possible in the Netherlands in 2001. Acceptance of gay marriage is very high and has only increased over the last ten years, to stand at over 90% now (for more figures and further discussion see Kuyper 2016).

Table 3.6

Consistent very large majority in favour of euthanasia and gay marriage

Attitudes towards politics, persons aged 18 years and older, 1991-2016/17 (in percentages)^a

	1992	1998	2008/'09	2012/'13	2014/'15	2016/'17
agrees with the following statements						
there are so many different opinions about what is right and what is wrong that you sometimes no longer know where you are	39	.	44	43	42	45
everything changes so fast today that you often hardly know what's right and what's wrong any more	34	.	41	39	39	41
it would be a good thing if the death penalty was reinstated for certain crimes	42	(39) ^b	30	27	26	23
if a woman wants to, she should be able to have an abortion	60	57	74	71	71	74
acceptance of euthanasia ^a	91	88	93	92	92	92
acceptance of suicide ^a	.	.	.	74	76	78
acceptance of gay marriage ^a	.	.	87	91	92	94

a Acceptance of euthanasia: ‘give the injection’ and ‘it depends’ in response to the question: ‘Suppose a doctor has the ability to help end someone’s suffering at their own request by giving them an injection. Do you think that the doctor should in that case give the injection, not give the injection or does it depend?’; and acceptance of suicide: ‘always’ and ‘in some situations’ in response to the question: ‘Do you think that people should have the right to kill themselves if they wish?; acceptance of gay marriage: ‘good thing’ and ‘don’t mind either way’ in response to the question: ‘What do you feel about the fact that gay couples can now legally marry? Do you think that’s a good thing, a bad thing or do you not mind either way?’

b Question not put in 1998, but asked in 1996 and 2000; agreement in those years was 39% and 38%, respectively.

Source: SCP (CV'92-'16/'17)

2 Freedom of expression

Support for freedom to criticise the Royal Family has risen since 1992 from 64% to 77% (table 3.7). Support for occupying buildings is low, at 30%, and no different from in 1992. Interestingly, support for the freedom to write what one wishes in public is by contrast lower in 2016/17 than in 1992 and 2008/09. In 1992, 73% and 81%, respectively, supported these freedoms; in 2016/17 the figures were 65% and 66%, respectively. If we go back a little further in time and look at support for these freedoms since the 1970s (not shown in table), we find that the support now is comparable with its level then. Support for freedom of expression, verbal or written, rose between 1970 and 1990. What has recently also changed is *who* supports freedom of expression: where in 1970 and 1990 the support came mainly from people on the left of the political spectrum, since 2008 people who count themselves on the political right have also considered this freedom very important. This appears to be due among other things to the fact that the debate about freedom of expression is increasingly conducted in the context of the multicultural society (see Den Ridder et al. 2014: 25-26).

Nothing has changed over the last ten years in support for the view that freedom of expression must not go so far that people's religious feelings are offended; in every survey, between 66% and 68% felt this would be going too far. We know from further discussion of this statement in the COB (Dekker & Den Ridder 2014a: 16-18) that people who support this statement feel that freedom of expression is too often used as an excuse for deliberately offending others. People who disagree with the statement believe that religious people are relatively easily offended and that this should not impose constraints.

Table 3.7

Support for freedom of expression lower than 25 and ten years ago

Attitudes towards politics, persons aged 18 years and older, 1991-2016/17 (in percentages)^a

	1992	1998	2008/9	2012/13	2014/15	2016/17
thinks everyone should be free to criticise the Royal Household	64	71	76	.	.	77
occupy buildings (e.g. schools or universities) in support of justified demands	31	37	.	.	.	30
write whatever they wish in public	73	71	75	.	.	65
say whatever they wish in public	81	81	74	.	.	66
agrees with the statement: 'freedom of expression shouldn't go so far that people's religious feelings are offended'	.	.	67	67	66	68

Source: SCP (cv'92-'16/17)

3 Environment

Support by citizens and businesses for laws which force them to protect the environment has diminished since 2000 compared with 1993 (table 3.8). In 1993, 70% felt that the government should pass laws to force citizens to protect the environment, and 91% felt the government should force companies to do so. In 2016/17, these figures are 57% and 78%, respectively. This does however mean that a large majority still believe that businesses should be forced to protect the environment. This reduced support echoes the findings of earlier research, which shows that people do not see such a strong need for environmental protection measures and do not wish to be forced by the government. They would prefer to use their own initiative, as long as that does not involve any more time or effort (Van den Broek 2015; Dekker et al. 2016: 35 ff.).

Table 3.8

Decline in support since 1993 for laws to force people or companies to protect the environment

Attitudes towards government and the environment, persons aged 18 years and older, 1993-2016/17 (in percentages)^a

	1993	2000	2014/15	2016/17
first choice from two policy preferences				
– the government should allow people to decide for themselves how they protect the environment, even if that means they don't always do the right thing	17	27	29	27
– no opinion	13	14	17	17
– the government should pass laws to force people to protect the environment, even if that goes against people's right to decide for themselves	70	59	54	57
second choice from two policy preferences				
– the government should allow businesses to decide for themselves how they protect the environment, even if that means they don't always do the right thing	5	6	13	12
– no opinion	4	6	10	10
– the government should pass laws to force businesses to protect the environment, even if that goes against their right to decide for themselves	91	88	76	78

Source: SCP (CV'93-'16/'17)

4 Multicultural society and refugees

The Dutch are no more negative about immigrants today than in the 1990s. This may be counter-intuitive, especially given the greatly increased attention for this theme in the public and political debate since 2002, with the ‘multicultural taboo’ from the 1990s being used as a negative anchor point. Whilst it is true that this theme has been higher on the political agenda since the success of the LPF party led by the right-wing populist politician Pim Fortuyn, other studies have shown that there was no ‘lurch to the right’ by Dutch citizens between 1994 and 2002 as regards their opinions on immigration and integration (Holsteyn et al. 2003).⁹

In the ‘Cultural change in the Netherlands’ survey (cv), the Dutch are found to be slightly more positive in their attitudes towards immigration than in the 1990s (see table 3.9). Where in 1994 49% felt that there were too many people living in the Netherlands with a non-Dutch nationality; in 2016/17 the figure was 31%. 85% favour a flexible attitude towards political refugees (compared with 75% in 1994). The share favouring a flexible attitude to marriage migration or economic refugees is much lower (53% and 45%, respectively), though this minority is bigger than in 1994.

Since the refugee crisis in 2015, there has been a great deal of debate about whether or not refugees should be accepted. Compared with 1994, people’s reaction to the hypothetical possibility of an asylum-seekers’ centre being established in their neighbourhood remains unchanged: 34% would have no objection at all, 50% would accept it with some reservations and 16% would protest. Most Dutch people (59%) do not think the Netherlands should accept more refugees than it currently does; 13% think it should (not shown in table); see Den Ridder et al. 2017: 13).

Compared with other EU countries, support for refugees is high in the Netherlands (see figure 3.7). This refers to the net support for the statement that respondents’ own country should help refugees. This help is more general and non-committal than admitting more refugees, but the support for helping them does say something about the degree to which public opinion sees (political) refugees as a shared national responsibility. Whereas rejection of that responsibility dominates in a number of Central and Eastern European countries, acceptance is very widespread, in the Netherlands and other northwestern Member States, but also in Spain, Malta and Cyprus. The positions of these countries are closely aligned with those in earlier measurements; in 2015 and 2016, acceptance was also highest in Sweden followed by the Netherlands (and at the end of 2016 also by Germany; Dekker et al. 2017: 22).

Table 3.9

More positive views on immigration and on tolerance of Muslims than in the 1990s

Agreement with statements about immigration and integration, persons aged 18 years and older, 1994-2016/17 (in percentages)

	1994	2000	2008/'09	2012/'13	2014/'15	2016/'17
generally thinks there are too many people of a different nationality living in our country	49	52 ^b	39	32	36	31
reactions to hypothetical establishment of an asylum-seekers' centre in the neighbourhood						
would have no objection at all	32	.	.	.	.	34
would accept it with some reservations	48	.	.	.	.	50
would protest against it	17	.	.	.	.	16
favours flexibility in issuing residence permits ^c to						
someone who is personally threatened by the political situation in their own country	75	79	85	85	86	85
a son of a foreigner living here legally who wants to bring over his future wife to the Netherlands	44	56	44	48	52	53
someone who has little or no means of subsistence due to the economic situation in their own country	25	32	46	45	47	45
agreement with the following statements						
most Muslims in the Netherlands respect other people's culture and way of life	.	.	41	52	55	56
the Western European way of life and the Muslim way of life are irreconcilable	.	.	39	44	43	45
Muslim men dominate their women	.	.	75	76	73	71

Table 3.9

(Continued)

	1994	2000	2008/'09	2012/'13	2014/'15	2016/'17
Muslims in the Netherlands bring up their children in an authoritarian way	.	.	55	58	56	55

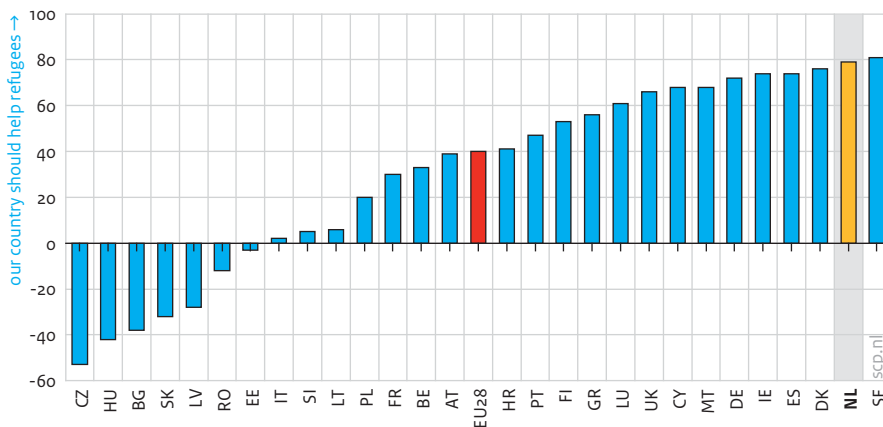
- a 'Suppose the local authority wanted to establish an asylum-seekers' centre in your neighbourhood. Would you ...?'
- b The figures are from 1999.
- c 'I'm going to read out a number of reasons why people from other countries want to come to our country to live or work. Would you use this card to indicate to what extent you think the Dutch government should be flexible in issuing residence permits to these people from other countries?' The figures shown are the percentages 'very' and 'somewhat' flexible (as opposed to 'not very flexible', 'shouldn't issue at all' and 'don't know'.

Source: scp (cv'94-'16/'17)

Figure 3.7

The Dutch think more than other Europeans that their own country should help refugees

Views on helping refugees, persons aged 15 years and older, spring 2017 (in net scores)^{a, b}



- a The net score is the percentage agreeing with the statement '[own country] should help refugees', less the percentage who reject this statement.
- b Appendix A (at the back of this publication) contains an explanation of the country codes used.

Source: EC (EB 87.3)

Since 2008/09, the ‘Cultural change in the Netherlands’ survey (cv) has also asked about views on Muslims. 56% think that most Muslims respect other people’s way of life; that is more than in 2008/09 (41%). At the same time, there has been an increase in the percentage who think the Western European way of life and the Muslim way of life are irreconcilable, from 39% who held this view in 2008/09 to 45% in 2016/17. 71% think that Muslim men dominate women; 55% think that Muslims bring up their children in an authoritarian way. These opinions have changed little.

5 The European Union

In 2016/17, 58% of the Dutch public think that EU membership is a good thing; 14% think it is a bad thing (table 3.10). That is a substantially lower share showing support than in 1996, when 75% thought that EU membership was a good thing. The Eurobarometer also shows a reduction in support for EU membership since the early 1990s, from 82% in 1990 and 75% in 1996 to 62% in 2013. Thereafter, support rises again, reaching 72% in 2016. This recovery in support is much less evident in the cv survey (after a decline in 2014/15): just over 60% think the Netherlands derives benefits from EU membership, and that share has not reduced since 1996. Data from the National Survey of Voters (NKO) also show a more negative mood towards Europe than in the 1990s. Whereas between 1994 and 2002 the proponents and opponents of further EU unification held each other more or less in balance, in 2006 those in opposition clearly outnumber the supporters, with the difference being greatest in 2006 (see also Rosema et al. 2007: 176). In 2017, 45% believe that European unification is going too far; 33% think it should go further. Another difference compared with the 1990s is smaller neutral middle group, suggesting that this issue is becoming more polarised.

Table 3.10

The Dutch believe that the Netherlands mainly benefits from EU membership; support for membership lower than in 1996

Opinions about EU membership, persons aged 18 years and older, 1996-2016/17 (in percentages)^a

	1996	2006	2008/09	2012/13	2014/15	2016/17
generally thinks that Dutch membership of the EU is a						
good thing	75	65	65	57	56	58
bad thing	4	13	8	15	18	14
thinks that, all things considered, Dutch membership of the EU						
brings benefits	64	58	68	63	62	66
brings no benefits	15	28	22	29	31	26

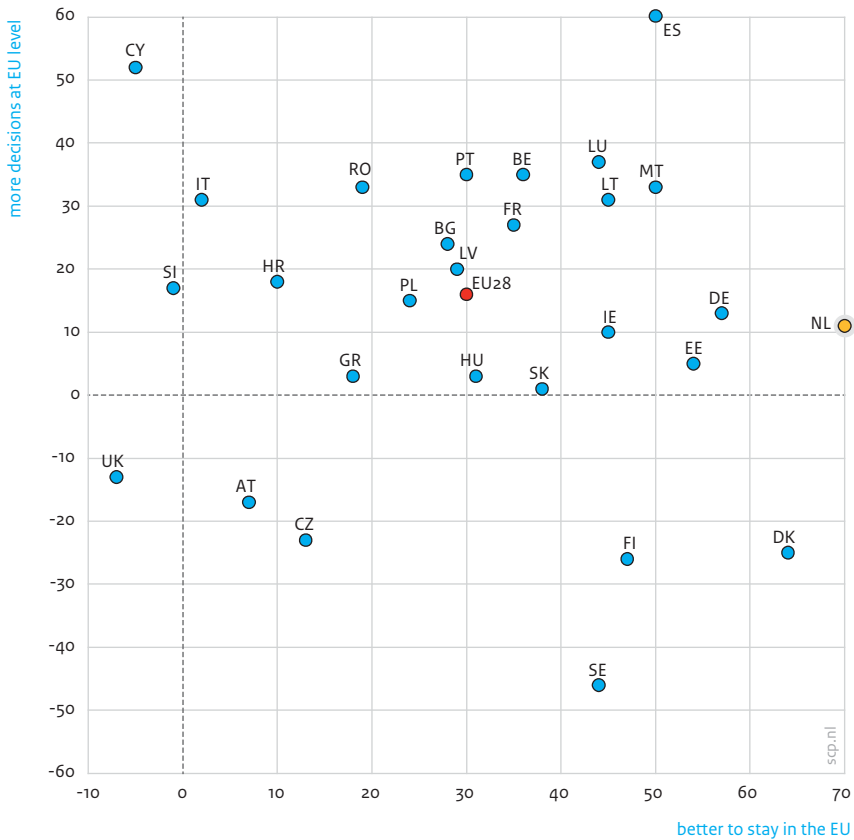
Source: SCP (cv '96-'16/'17)

Dutch support for EU membership is higher than in other EU Member States, a position that the Netherlands has held for some time (Dekker et al. 2016: 24). Opinion in the United Kingdom and Cyprus is dominated by support for leaving the EU, and in Italy and Slovenia opinion is evenly divided. However, the strong Dutch support for staying in the EU does not stem from enthusiasm for the European Union. Figure 3.8 shows that support for more decisions to be taken at EU level is slightly lower in the Netherlands than in the EU as a whole. The figure also shows that, at country level, there is no relationship between support for EU membership and support for more EU decision-making. There are countries which combine low support for EU membership with little enthusiasm for more EU decision-making (United Kingdom, Czech Republic and Austria), countries where support for both is above-average (most pronounced in Spain), but also countries where scepticism about EU membership is accompanied by above-average support for more decisions at EU level (Cyprus and Italy), and vice versa (the Nordic countries as well as the Netherlands). At the end of 1986, support for EU membership was the highest in the Netherlands of all Member States, but was accompanied by relatively pronounced pessimism about the EU (Dekker et al. 2017: 19).¹⁰ Dutch public opinion appears to see EU membership above all as something unavoidable: people are by no means enthusiastic about it, but do not see a real alternative. This sense of having no alternative is probably an important source of the grumbling and irritations about 'Europe' (Dekker 2017).

Figure 3.8

Dutch majority in favour of EU membership, but little or no average support for 'more' EU

Opinions on EU membership and EU decision-making, persons aged 15 years and older, spring 2017 (in net scores)^{a, b}



- a The net scores are the percentage who disagree less the percentage who agree with the statement: '[own country] would have a better future outside the European Union' (horizontal), and the percentage who agree less the percentage who disagree with the statement: 'More decisions should be taken at EU level' (vertical).
- b Appendix A (at the back of this publication) contains an explanation of the country codes used.

Source: EC (EB 87.3)

3.6 Differences between groups

In the forgoing sections we have limited ourselves strictly to developments in the population as a whole. This was the only option given the wide diversity of topics and the long period covered in this report. This section focuses on a selection of opinions and looks briefly at differences between groups and any changes that have taken place in those opinions. In table 3.11 we look at six opinions for which the question formulations in the 'Cultural change in the Netherlands' survey (cv) have remained unchanged between 1993 and 2016/17. The top row of figures in the table shows the unadjusted trend: have opinions become more (+) or less (-) popular? The figures in the subsequent rows show the trend corrected for changes in a number of characteristics cited in the table. The net effects of these characteristics are then presented, i.e. the overrepresentation (+) or underrepresentation (-) of an opinion in the reported population category, after correction for the other characteristics. It should be noted here that for education level and (household) income, we have separated the highest and lowest 50% in each year. The reason for this is that there was no good absolute division for the period as a whole. As well as these two subdivisions, we also separate sample population into two sexes, two age groups, in paid work/not in paid work, Church attendance/no church attendance, and political self-confidence/no political self-confidence.

Table 3.11
Political self-confidence important in public views and perceptions

Support for opinions, by various background characteristics, persons aged 18 years and older, 1993-2016/17 (logistic regression coefficients)^a

	most people can be trusted (table 3.1) 1996-2017	support for referendums (table 3.5) 1998-2017	freedom to say what you want (table 3.7) 1993-2017	too many different nationalities (table 3.9) 1993-2017	flexible towards political refugees (table 3.9) 1993-2017	EU member- ship a good thing (table 3.10) 1996-2017
year (unadjusted trend)	-0.02***	-0.01	-0.05***	-0.02***	0.03***	-0.06***
year (trend adjusted for changes in the following characteristics)	-0.02***	-0.01	-0.04***	-0.03***	0.03***	-0.06***
woman versus man	-0.03	0.22***	-0.08	-0.03	0.28***	-0.20***
≥ 45 years versus 18-44 years	0.30***	-0.29***	-0.26**	0.28***	0.04	-0.15***
high versus low education ^b	0.79***	-0.22***	0.38***	-0.74***	0.68***	0.65***
high versus low income ^b	0.33***	0.04	0.29***	-0.16***	0.22***	0.24***
works versus does not work 16 hours or more per week	0.18***	0.24***	0.13	-0.14	-0.04	-0.02
(sometimes) goes to church versus never	0.06	-0.17***	-0.67***	-0.03	0.01	0.10**
political self-confidence versus no political self-confidence ^c	0.81***	-0.44***	0.18*	-0.79***	0.67***	0.83***

- a A value greater than 0 means more support for the opinion concerned than the cited reference category; a value below 0 means less support than the reference category. Significance: *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05.
- b Division in each year of education level and gross household income into two equal halves. Respondents in categories that are intersected by the 50%-line are assigned to a category arbitrarily.
- c Disagrees with the statement: 'People like me have no influence at all over what the government does' versus 'agree' and 'no opinion' (table 3.4).

Source: scp (cv'93-'16/'17)

Over the last quarter of a century, there has been a weak downward trend in social trust and a slightly steeper downward trend in support for freedom of expression and membership of the EU (table 3.11). Over the same period, there has been a weak upward trend in acceptance of migrants (less support for the view that there are too many people of a different nationality living in the Netherlands, and more support for admitting political refugees). The trend in support for referendums remains stable. These trends do not change after correcting for the characteristics mentioned. The trend figures describe changes per year, and cannot be compared with the figures for the other characteristics, which in each case involve the division of the population into two groups. The most recent figures can however be compared with each other.

The presence or absence of political self-confidence makes the biggest difference across the piece. Self-confidence is associated with more trust in other people, less support for referendums and a positive attitude towards migrants and the EU. Self-confidence is less relevant for support for freedom of expression; here, going to church makes the biggest difference: churchgoers are clearly more reticent. Church attendance makes little or no difference for the other opinions studied here.

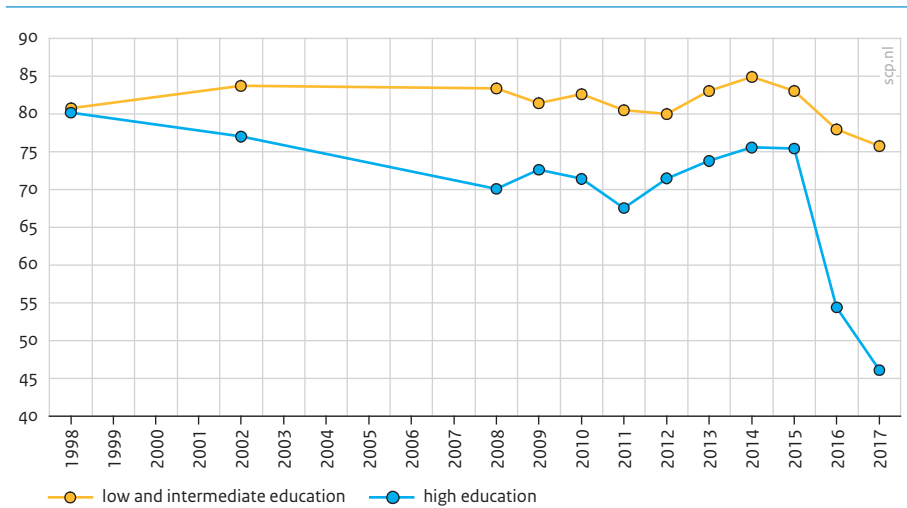
Education makes the biggest difference across the board after political self-confidence. Belonging to the better-educated half of the population exhibits approximately the same pattern as political self-confidence. The dichotomies 'young versus old' and 'rich versus poor' also make some difference; sex less so and being in paid work versus not being in paid work the least.¹¹

The figures for the different characteristics cover the whole period, and it is possible that changes may have occurred in the relationships with the different opinions.

We investigated this by testing for differences in the relationships before and after 2004 (roughly the middle of the 25-year period covered in this report). There was little evidence of such changes. For social trust and acceptance of political refugees, we find no indications at all for changes in the background to people's views. A few, generally weak indicators are found for the other views (not shown in table). The clearest seems to be a change in the educational effect: people with high education differ slightly less from people with low education after 2004 due to the stronger rejection of the idea that there are too many people of foreign origin living in the Netherlands, slightly more due to greater support for EU membership and more again due to their lower support for the introduction of binding referendums. Closer inspection of the developments reveals a clear difference on the last point, in particular; this is shown at the end in figure 3.9. The graph shows that the difference between people with high, low and intermediate education is only substantial in 2016 and 2017. It is probably caused mainly by the different assessments of recent referendums.¹²

Figure 3.9
 People with high education reject referendums

Support for the introduction of binding referendums, persons aged 18 years and older, 1998-2017 (in percentages)^a



a (Strongly) agrees with the statement: ‘Voters themselves should decide in a referendum on certain issues that are important for our country’; see table 3.5 for the population figures; education levels: low and intermediate = up to and including senior secondary vocational (mbo) and pre-university (vwo); high = higher professional (hbo) and university (wo).

Source: scp (cv’98-’16/17)

Apart from this remarkably pronounced difference in changed attitudes towards referendums, the main finding in this section is that the presence or absence of political self-confidence makes a great difference *in addition* to education level as for attitudes towards societal and political issues. The two backgrounds are related (people with high education have more self-confidence), but even after allowing for differences in education level differences remain between people’s views on politics and society depending on their political self-confidence, which is probably embedded in a more general feeling of *mastery*.

3.7 Concluding discussion

Anyone who has followed the news over the last 15 years could easily gain the impression that it has been a period of great change. Especially since the ‘long political year 2002’ (cf. Brants & Van Praag 2005), a great deal has been written about a ‘lurch to the right’ and the electorate being ‘adrift’ (cf. Holsteyn et al. 2003). More recently – following the Brexit

vote and Trump's election victory – the picture has more than in the past been one of rising populism and the 'angry citizen'. Has public opinion really changed so drastically, from calm and trusting in the 1990s to angry and suspicious in the 2000s and beyond? And has that led to a concomitant change in views on societal issues?

In this chapter we have explored public opinion on the basis of a wide diversity of indicators, mainly – though not exclusively – based on the 'Cultural change in the Netherlands' (cv) survey, and as far as possible since the early 1990s. There is of course much more opinion research available which might say something about changes in public opinion, but the long-running cv survey is one of the more suitable sources for saying something about developments over time. Before answering the overarching question posed in this chapter, it is worth emphasising that the focus here has been on public opinion as the aggregate set of views of the population as a whole. We have discussed differences between groups and changes in those differences only briefly, and have also left the underlying concerns and drivers out of consideration. The value of this thumbnail sketch lies mainly in the presentation of trends over time and the placing of those trends against the background of what people think and write about Dutch public opinion.

This chapter shows that public opinion is indeed subject to change on some points – though these are much more often fluctuations than structural trends or developments in a particular direction. For example, the perception of what constitute the most important societal issues is subject to change, and is largely dependent on what is happening at any given moment in time. In times of crisis, for example, economic concerns dominate, while at other times people are more concerned about crime or, as in 2017, healthcare and immigration. Trust in or satisfaction with politics, Parliament and the government is also subject to change, rising or falling in line with economic developments and political events. Economic perceptions and evaluations also fluctuate, once again depending on the state of the economy.

The more general attitudes of political cynicism or political self-confidence are more stable: many citizens are fairly cynical about politics, but it is not the case that the Dutch have become substantially more cynical since 2002 than they were before. Support for a greater say for citizens has been a constant, although following the Ukraine referendum the enthusiasm for referendums has declined among people with high education. No major shifts have taken place since 1990 in views on moral issues, freedom of expression, the environment and the multicultural society. There is no evidence of the frequently cited 'lurch to the right'. There have of course been some changes: support for freedom of expression has diminished, attitudes towards immigrants have become slightly more positive and support for EU membership is lower in 2016/17 than in 1996. In short, the Dutch do not take a totally different view of politics and society in 2017 than

they did in the 1990s, though there have undoubtedly been movements, shifts and differences of emphasis.

So has nothing changed, then? Yes, it has. Political scientists often point out that it is not so much that the opinions of voters are so very different from in the past, but that – especially since 1994 – changes have taken place in their political behaviour, as well as in the *supply side* of politics. Citizens have become more flexible and at each election make a choice from a fixed set of parties (Van der Meer et al. 2012). Moreover, since 2002 new parties have emerged, addressing a new combination of themes and thus appealing to new groups of voters. Something has also changed on the political playing field: the economic dimension is no longer dominant, but instead the political debate is increasingly driven by cultural issues, such as immigration, integration and European unification (see e.g. Andeweg & Irwin 2014; Tillie et al. 2016). This changed political playing field, combined with the emergence of new political parties, means that opinions that were already present in the past are now coming to the fore more prominently. They now also have official representation.

Another thing that may have changed is the tone of the public debate. We are slightly tentative in our formulation here, because the answers to the closed survey questions which form the source for this chapter provide little or no information on this. However, based on qualitative research in the Citizens Outlooks Barometer (*Continu Onderzoek Burgerperspectieven* (COB)), conducted with focus groups and with open responses to open survey questions, we do suspect that a number of taboos from the 1990s have disappeared. Particularly when answering questions in online surveys, people often do not mince their words and tend to say exactly what they think.¹³ The Internet has also become an important forum for public debate outside the world of research, something that was not the case in 1990. The harder tone also penetrates further. In face-to-face interviews, people are more polite and reserved, especially where focus groups are not held in Amsterdam, but there too we see that people are more willing than in the past to be open about their voting behaviour and their opinions. Not only do people more readily make their voices heard on the Internet, but since 2002 surveys and the media have also clearly focused more on public opinion. Our own survey is an example of this, but the media have also been seen on the streets regularly since 2002, afraid of missing ‘the voice of the people’. Even if public opinion itself is relatively stable, therefore, the way in which it is expressed in the political and publicity arena is very different from the early 1990s.

Notes

- 1 Due to limited space, we will not look here at the diversity of opinions underlying the overall picture for the population as a whole, nor at the volatility of opinions in the short term. For changes in diversity and polarisation, see Dekker & Den Ridder (2014b), and for changes in the short term, see the

- quarterly bulletins of the ‘Citizens Outlooks Barometer’ (Continu onderzoek burgerperspectieven, COB; available (in Dutch) at www.scp.nl).
- 2 See www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/nieuws/2017/34/consumentenvertrouwen-stijgt-een-fractie-in-augustus
 - 3 The criteria on which people decide whether or not they trust these institutions can vary from one institution to another. For example, in forming an opinion about their trust in the government or Parliament, people may be influenced by the composition of the Cabinet; for trust in the business community it makes a difference whether the respondent is thinking of large or small businesses (small businesses enjoy more trust than large corporations).
 - 4 We do not have an explanation for this, but a substantial reduction in trust in the justice system between 1990 and 1999 was also recorded in the European Values Study (Dekker & Van der Meer 2007: 12).
 - 5 Here and later in the chapter we use the weighted data from the main NKO survey (i.e. the data from respondents who completed either a face-to-face or web-based questionnaire via the Kantar research bureau).
 - 6 In 1998, 84% were satisfied.
 - 7 The old statement received 55% support in 2010/11; the new statement, which was presented to respondents at the same time, received 34% support. The falling popularity of the old statement from 1970 until the end of the century was partly due to the rising education level. The increase in support from 32% to 59% between 2000 and 2004 (no measurement in 2002) was probably due to the fact that the statement was associated less with suspicious authoritarianism and more with powerful and decisive action.
 - 8 The question (stated in note a to table 3.6) refers to a right. We assume that this is interpreted in a moral sense (is it OK for someone to do this?) rather than a legal sense (suicide is not forbidden by law). The issue is however confused by the debate about the legal right to assisted suicide (being allowed by law to help someone commit suicide and to ask for such help).
 - 9 A majority have felt since 1994 that the Netherlands should not admit any more asylum-seekers; the findings for 2017 were not available at the time of writing this publication. If we look at a related issue, namely integration, we again find that since as long ago as the 1990s a majority have felt that minorities should adapt to Dutch culture (see also Rosema et al. 2007: 174). A majority (54%) also share this view in 2017, but this majority is considerably smaller than in 2002 and 2006, and also slightly smaller than in the 1990s.
 - 10 That was once again the case at the start of 2017. Just as there is no relationship between support for EU membership and support for EU decision-making, there is no relationship with pessimism at national level. Based on individual data from the preceding Eurobarometer (EB 86.2, November 2016), however, it can be observed that in general, the less people favour decision-making at EU level, the more they see a future for the country outside the EU. That is the case in the Netherlands and 21 of the other 27 EU Member States (in four countries there is no relationship and in Poland and Slovenia there is a weak inverse relationship). In 27 of the 28 Member States, people are more inclined to see a future outside the EU where they are pessimistic about the EU (there is no relationship in the United Kingdom).
 - 11 Bear in mind that these are net effects. We thus do not find roughly the same deviations among people with high education and people with self-confidence, because these groups overlap each other. The differences can be ‘added together’. Conversely, the greater social trust in older age does not mean that

older people trust more: the positive effect of age is mainly compensated by the negative effect of their lower average education level (older people and young people score roughly the same level of social trust across the whole period).

- 12 In 2016 the Ukraine referendum in the Netherlands, and the Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom. Party-politically, a change can be observed before this. Where in the 1970s it was mainly the supporters of the precursors of the Green Left (GroenLinks) and Democrats 66 (D66) parties who were enthusiastic about referendums, in 2010/12 it was supporters of the Socialist Party (SP) and the right-wing populist Party for Freedom (PVV); support was a good deal lower among followers of Green Left (though still represented a majority; Den Ridder et al. 2016: 34 ff.). See Hendriks et al. (2017) for more detailed analyses.
- 13 In an analysis of angry responses to the open COB question on why people think the Netherlands is moving more in the wrong than the right direction, Esther Schrijver (2016) observed a coarsening of the responses between 2008 and 2016.

Whereas there is no strong in- or decreasing trend perceivable in how often feelings of anger have been expressed in the period 2008-2016 [...] there are striking differences in the manner in which anger is expressed. Overall, the expression of anger becomes more intense, 'rough' and direct. [...] Changes in the intensity level of civic anger become apparent on the level of words, as more swearing words (such as 'fuck') and coarse words (such as 'ass', 'ignorant rabble', and 'political bozos') were used. On the level of sentences, these changes became mainly apparent in two ways: through the use of metaphors and sarcasm. Interestingly, in the answers containing a high level of intensity these tropes were used more often. In addition, anger was more often expressed in capital letters and the use of multiple punctuation marks (Schrijver 2016: 50).

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4 Education

Ria Vogels & Ralf Maslowski

- The education level of the Dutch population is increasing steadily; women are graduating from higher education more often than men (56% versus 44%).
 - The population aged 25–64 years with at most a low education level halved between 1990 and 2016 (from 45% to 23%).
 - The Dutch are engaging in lifelong learning to a greater extent than people in most other European countries.
 - Arithmetic and mathematics skills in primary and secondary education are declining, and could also be improved in senior secondary vocational education.
 - ‘Inclusive education’ is not equally accessible for all children.
-

4.1 Quality and equity

Focus on educational quality

Dutch education policy has been heavily focused over the last ten years on attainment and success rates. Agreements have been in place since 2007 between the government and education on improving the quality of education and teaching staff. The quality agendas and performance targets in which they were encapsulated meant a revamped approach to the goals and configuration of education (Bronneman-Helmers 2011). This followed a period beginning in the early 1990s in which attention was focused mainly on systemic changes, devolution of responsibilities from national government to local authorities and school boards, and administrative renewal.

The focus on educational achievement stems from concerns about the level of knowledge and skills of pupils and students. Although the general education level in the Netherlands is relatively high, international comparative studies such as PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS show a declining trend over the last 20 years (see § 4.3). One specific area of concern for policy is the relatively small number of high-achieving primary and secondary school pupils. This has prompted major policy efforts in recent years. Encouraging a working practice which focuses principally on improving learning outcomes (outcome-focused approach) marks an attempt to raise the quality of primary and secondary education. The supervision by the Dutch Inspectorate of Education reveals that an outcome-focused approach is difficult for many teachers (Inspectie van het Onderwijs 2017). The emphasis on improving outcomes in language and arithmetic/mathematics led to discussion about whether this would squeeze out other skills too much, for example social competencies and citizenship, but also digital literacy (Platform Onderwijs2032 2016).

Improving teaching as a profession

During the last government term, policy was also focused on improving the quality of teachers and raising the status of the teaching profession. This was done by creating a register of teachers and improving access to professionalisation activities through a teacher scholarship and other incentive measures. To better equip teachers for their profession, the quality of teacher training programmes has been improved, higher access standards have been introduced and universities of applied science and academic universities have launched a joint academic primary teacher training programme. At the same time, there are concerns about the pressure of work to which teachers are exposed. Teachers have to complete a large number of administrative tasks in addition to their lessons, while teaching itself is becoming ever more complex due to bigger differences in level and demands for customisation (Turkenburg & Herweijer 2016). The feeling that a lot is being asked of teachers has been exacerbated in primary and secondary schools and in senior secondary vocational education (mbo) by the introduction of the concept of inclusive education, which imposes a duty of care on schools to provide additional support for all pupils who need it. Teaching staff and schools do not yet appear adequately equipped to accommodate children requiring extra or specific support, and therefore experience teaching these children as an additional burden.

Equity under pressure

The Netherlands has one of the more egalitarian education systems, with smaller differences between gifted and less gifted pupils than in most other European countries. There are however indications that this egalitarianism may be under pressure (OECD 2016a). The Inspectorate of Education noted in its Education Report that not all pupils and students are given the opportunity to follow education that is appropriate for their level (Inspectie van het Onderwijs 2016b).

A look back over 25 years

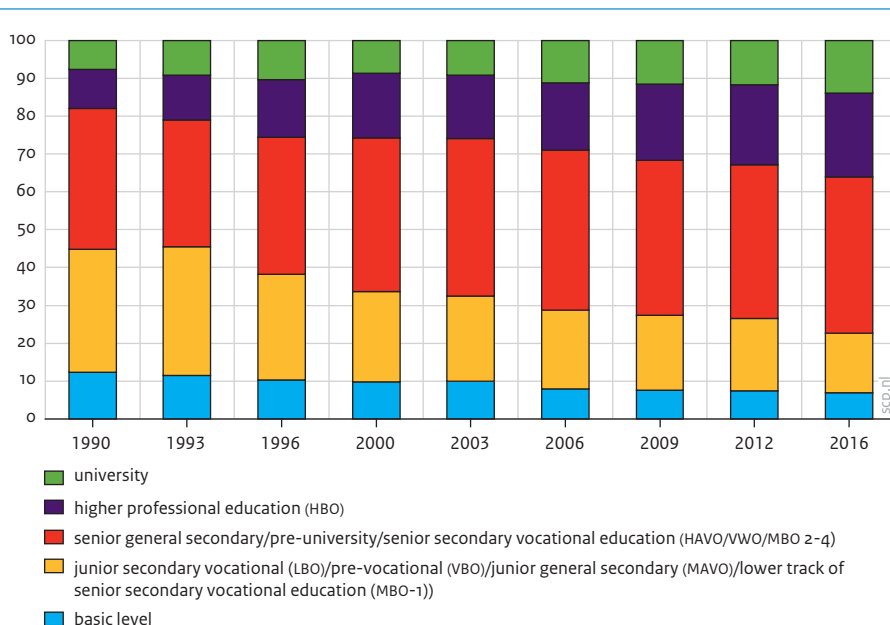
Education policy tends to focus on problems that are occurring in education now or are expected to occur in the near future. This short-term perspective often blinds those concerned to what has been achieved over the longer term. Here, we discuss developments over the last 25 years; we do that on the basis of the average education level of the Dutch population, the degree to which everyone is able to attain a basic qualification, and the extent to which people continue learning after completing their initial education. In this context, we focus on more recent issues relating to quality and equity. The emphasis is on the last few years, but where possible developments are placed in a longer time perspective.

4.2 Steadily rising education level

Education is an important resource for (successful) participation in society. The education level of the Dutch population has been rising for a very long time, though compared with

the educational expansion in the second half of the 20th century, the changes that have taken place over the last 25 years are more modest. Nonetheless, the education level of the Dutch population continues to rise steadily (figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1
Education level of Dutch population rising steadily



Source: CBS (EVB'90-'00); CBS (StatLine Onderwijsstatistieken 2017: '03-'16); SCP treatment

Where in 1990 45% of the Dutch population aged 25-64 years still had a low educational level (either no more than primary education or a maximum of junior secondary vocational education (lbo)/pre-vocational education (vbo)/junior general secondary education (mavo)/lower track of senior secondary vocational education (mbo-1)), in 2016 this had fallen to 23%. This means that a steadily shrinking proportion of the Dutch population failed to attain a basic qualification (a certificate at a minimum of senior general secondary education/pre-university education (havo/vwo) or mbo-2 level); this qualification is very important for the chance of finding a job.

In 1990, 37% of the Dutch population had a secondary/intermediate qualification (havo/vwo/mbo-2-4). This percentage has risen since then and has fluctuated at around 40-42% since the turn of the century. The majority of these have a senior secondary vocational qualification: 19% have an mbo-2 or mbo-3 qualification, and 16% an mbo-4 qualification.

The percentage of the population with a higher education level has also risen over the last 25 years. In 1990, 10% of the population aged 25-64 years had a higher professional education (hbo) qualification and just under 8% a university degree. These figures have since doubled, to 22% and 14%, respectively, in 2016.

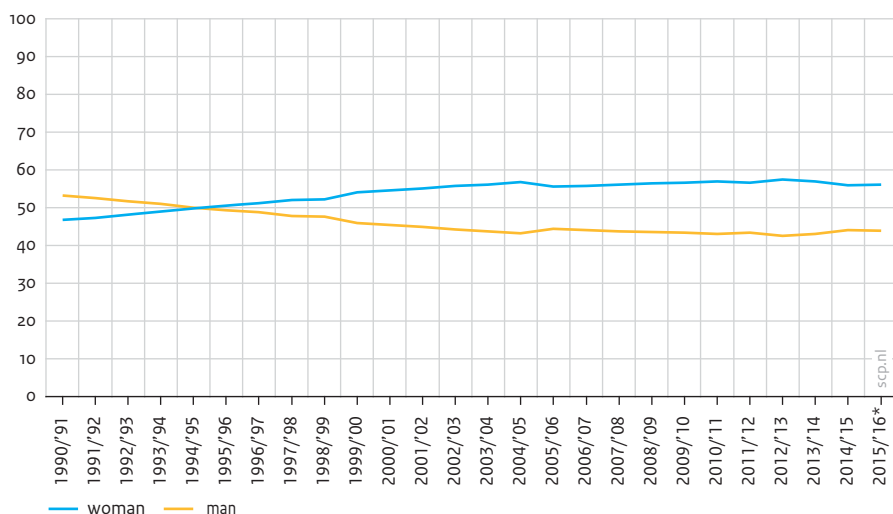
Women graduate from higher education more often than men

The trend in the education level of women is striking. In 1990/91, the male/female breakdown among those obtaining a (first) degree from higher education was 53%/47% (figure 4.2). In 1994/95, the number of women obtaining a higher professional or university degree was the same as the number of men, but thereafter the difference widened rapidly in favour of women (44% versus 56%). The male/female balance has remained more or less stable at that level since the turn of the century.

Figure 4.2

Women graduate from higher education more often than men

Higher education graduates^{a, b} by sex, 1990/91-2015/16 (in percentages)



a Approximation of first higher education degree, but includes double-counting of hbo graduates who later went on to attain a university degree.

b Until the introduction of the Bachelor/Master system (BaMa) in the academic year 2002/03, includes all hbo graduates (excluding postgraduate programmes), and thereafter hbo bachelor graduates. From 2006/07, also includes associate degree graduates (two-year programmes within hbo bachelor structure). For university education, includes all completed 'old-style' university programmes (doctoraal) and, from 2002/03, university bachelor graduates.

* Provisional figures.

Source: CBS (StatLine Onderwijsstatistieken 2017); SCP treatment

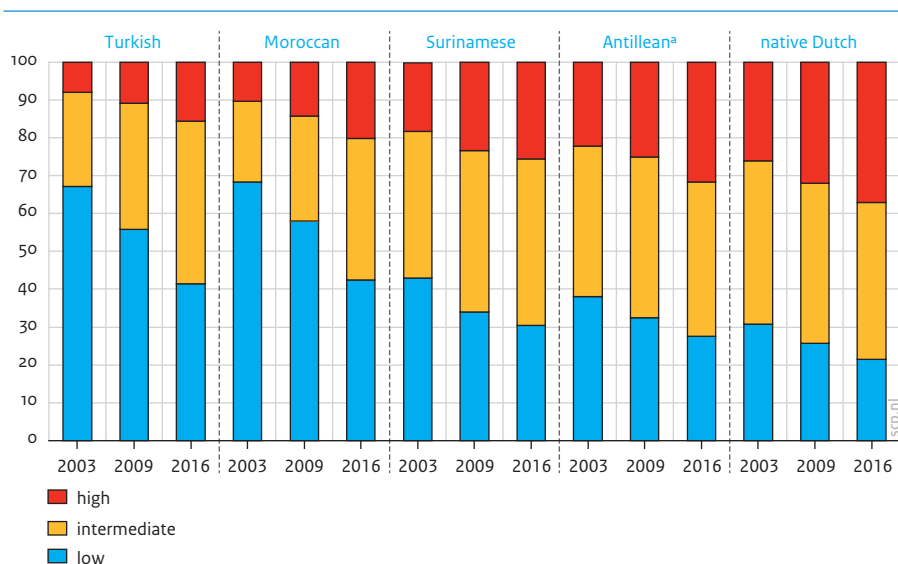
Dutch citizens with a migration background still at an educational disadvantage

Although the education level of the Dutch population as a whole is rising, there is variation across different population groups. For many years, the four largest groups in the Netherlands with a migration background, namely those whose origins lie in Turkey, Morocco, Suriname and the (former) Netherlands Antilles, have been confronted with educational disadvantage (figure 4.3). Although the education level of these groups is also rising thanks to the educational participation of the second generation, who were born in the Netherlands, the fact that the education level of the native Dutch population has also risen means the disadvantage has not been eliminated. The education level of migrants with a Moroccan and Turkish background and their descendants lags behind particularly, despite the leap forwards since 2003.

Figure 4.3

Non-Western migrants, particularly those with a Turkish or Moroccan background, still face educational disadvantage

Education level attained, persons aged 25-64 years, by origin, 2003-2016 (in percentages)



* 'Antillean' means the (former) Netherlands Antilles and Aruba.

Source: CBS (StatLine Onderwijsstatistieken 2017)

The four groups cited above are also at a disadvantage relative to some other migrant groups (not shown in figure). There is enormous variation in the education level of migrants and their descendants originating from other non-Western countries, ranging from groups with exceptionally high education levels, including relative to Dutch natives

(migrants from China, refugees from Iran), to groups with an exceptionally low education level (refugees from Somalia). There are some groups that have recently come to the Netherlands whose education level is not yet known, nor how it will develop. Between 2014 and 2017, refugees from Syria and Eritrea, particularly, have come to the Netherlands (CBS 2017). The expectation is that Syrian refugees will have a lower education level than the earlier, highly educated Iranian refugees, and that the Eritrean refugees will correspond more closely with the low-educated refugees from Somalia (CBS 2017).

Further reduction in school dropout

The improving education level of the Dutch population is also evident from the steady reduction in the number of pupils dropping out of education. Early school-leavers are young people who leave initial education without at least a basic qualification, i.e. a havo, vwo or mbo-2 certificate (Commissie Rauwenhoff 1990). In the 2015/16 school year, there were 23,000 new early school-leavers, over 1,400 fewer than the previous year (TK 2016/2017a) and around 5,000 fewer than in 2012/13 (the first year that the new method for counting early school-leavers was applied) (OCW 2017). At European level, the Dutch government is aiming to ensure that by 2020 no more than 8% of young people aged 18-24 years leave school without a basic qualification. This target was in fact almost achieved in 2016, with a figure of 8.2% (Eurostat 2017a), and the Dutch education minister accordingly wishes to press ahead with this approach and has set a new target of a maximum of 20,000 new premature school-leavers in 2021 (TK 2016/2017a). Ending school dropout entirely is probably unrealistic; there will always be young people who, for whatever reason, do not want to complete their education, or for whom attaining a basic qualification is a step too far despite their own or society's efforts.

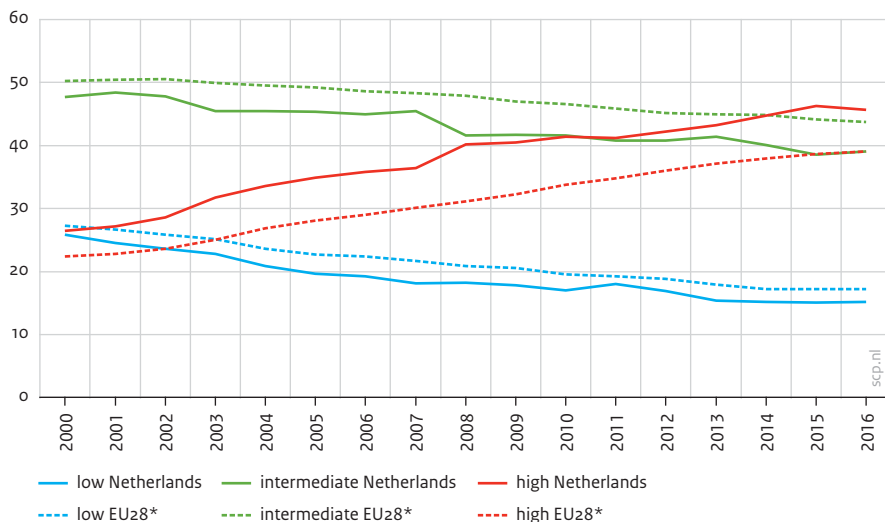
Education level rising everywhere in Europe; the Netherlands above the European average

The education level of the population is also rising in the other countries of the European Union. The share of young adults (30-34 years) in Europe with a high education level rose between 2000 to 2016 from 22% to 39% (in the Netherlands from 27% to 46%; figure 4.4). The share of young adults with a low education level fell in the European Union from 27% to 17%; the reduction was slightly greater in the Netherlands (from 27% to 15%). Similarly, the share of young adults with intermediate education fell more steeply in the Netherlands (from 48% to 39%) than in the European Union as a whole (from 50% to 44%).

In some European countries, more than half the population aged 30-34 years now have a high education level. These are mainly Northern European countries, with Lithuania leading the way with 59% having a high education, followed among others by Sweden, Norway, Luxembourg and Ireland. By contrast, the share of people with high education in this age category is much lower in the countries of Southern and Eastern Europe, in particular. Romania and Italy bring up the rear, with 26% highly educated young adults.

Figure 4.4
Education level of young adults rising across Europe; Netherlands doing better than EU average

Highest education level attained, persons aged 30-34 years in the Netherlands and average in Europe, 2000-2016 (in percentages)



* In 2000 and 2001 it concerns data of 27 EU Member States.

Source: Eurostat (2017b); SCP treatment

Participation in lifelong learning rising slightly

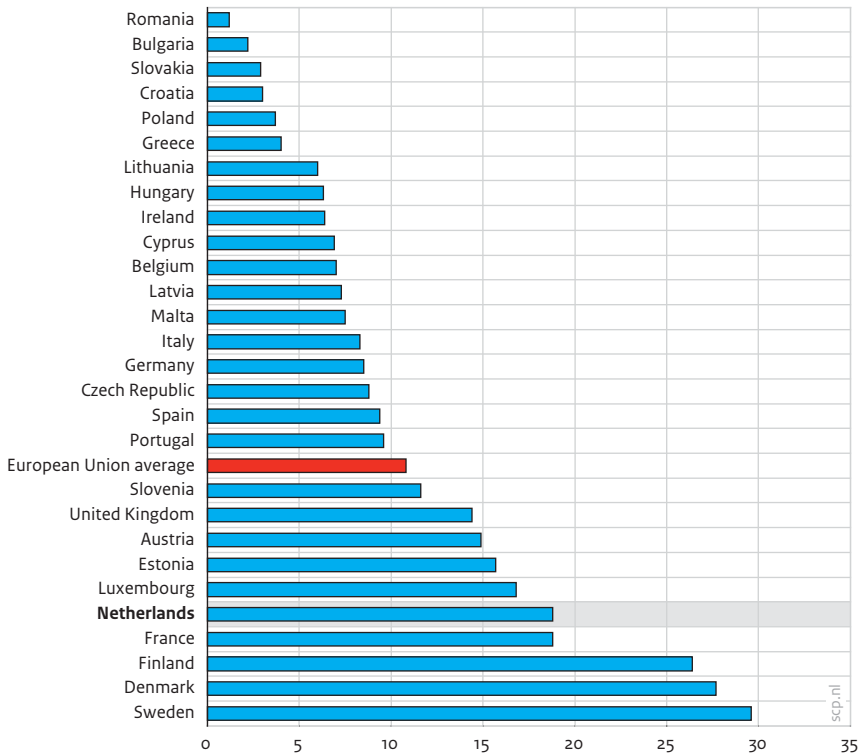
In addition to a good initial education, developments on the labour market and in society require that Dutch citizens continue to develop their knowledge and skills. The Dutch government has therefore made lifelong learning one of its core policy aims (TK 2014/2015). Over the past year measures have been taken to promote flexibility in both senior secondary vocational education (mbo) and higher education. These measures are aimed on the one hand at making access to mbo and higher education easier for working people by enabling them to take part in individual course modules in a phased approach, and on the other by offering customisation. In addition, the government has recently introduced the Lifelong Learning Credit, which enables people aged up to 55 who are no longer entitled to student finance to take out a loan to cover their tuition fees if they wish to pursue an mbo or higher education programme.

The proposed measures are based on the finding that the percentage of the labour force participating in training activities has been more or less stable for several years, and that measures to raise participation have not led to a substantial increase (Pleijers & Hartgers 2016).

Figure 4.5

Participation in training in the Netherlands relatively high (reference year 2016)

Participation^a in formal and non-formal training activities,^b persons aged 25-64 years, 2016
(in percentages)



a Participation during the four weeks preceding the completion of the questionnaire.

b Formal and non-formal training activities in principle include all educational activities (with the exception of informal learning on the job) in which persons aged 25-65 years participate. They include short, work-related training courses or workshops, for example, but also initial programmes in senior secondary vocational education (mbo), higher professional education (hbo) or university education, or language courses followed in their free time.

Source: Eurostat (2017c)

In 2016, just under 19% of adults in the Netherlands had recently (in the preceding four weeks) taken part in a training course or education programme (figure 4.5). That is more than in most other EU countries (average just under 11%), including the neighbouring countries of Belgium (7%) and Germany (9%). The only part of the European Union where participation in lifelong learning is higher than in the Netherlands is Scandinavia;

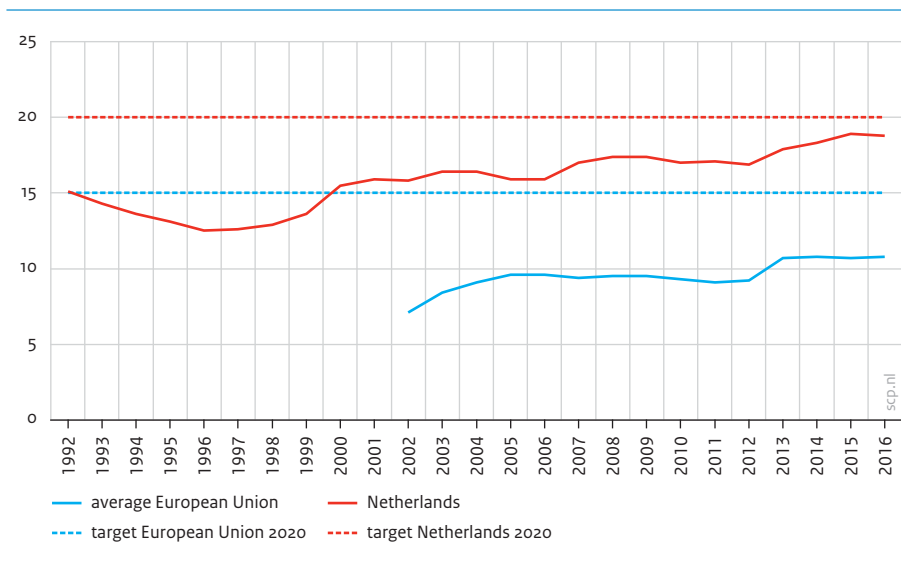
in Finland, Denmark and Sweden, between 25% and 30% of the labour force take part in educational and training activities.

The Netherlands therefore easily meets the target of 15% for 2020 formulated by the European Union for Member States. The Netherlands has adopted a higher target of 20% participation by 2020, and given the present participation rate, this appears to be within reach.

Figure 4.6

Slight increase in participation in lifelong learning in the Netherlands in recent years

Trend in participation^a in formal and non-formal training activities,^b persons aged 25-64 years, 1992-2016^{c, d} (in percentages)



- a Participation during the four weeks preceding the completion of the questionnaire.
- b Formal and non-formal training activities in principle include all educational activities (with the exception of informal learning on the job) in which persons aged 25-65 years participate.
- c 2003 and 2004 excluding Sweden.
- d Trend break in 2013 due to changed measurement method.

Source: Eurostat (2017c); SCP treatment

Since 2002, information has also been available for EU Member States on participation in lifelong learning. Figure 4.6 shows that the trend for the Netherlands is markedly differently from that for other European countries. Although the growth in participation rates in other countries (+3.8 percentage points) was slightly greater in the period 2002-2016 than in the Netherlands (+3.0 percentage points), the Netherlands has recorded stronger growth in participation over the last five years (+1.7 percentage points) than the average for the EU as a whole (+0.7 percentage points).

The trend in participation over time varies widely between different EU Member States. While some EU countries have for some years seen a stable (or even declining) share of adults participating in training activities, the share has grown more or less gradually in Estonia, Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg and Sweden. In Finland, Denmark and Sweden, which already had a relatively higher rate of participation in lifelong learning than in other EU Member States, participation increased further between 2002 and 2016 by 9, 10 and 11 percentage points, respectively (Eurostat 2017c).

4.3 Concerns about the quality of compulsory education

The reading skills of Dutch secondary school students are better than in most other European countries, as are their skills in mathematics and science. This means that Dutch secondary school students are still performing above-average compared with their peers in other countries. At the end of primary school, most pupils have sufficient reading and arithmetic skills to equip them for secondary education. This does not however alter the fact that particularly there has been a slight decline in arithmetic and mathematics skills among both primary and secondary school pupils over the last 15 to 20 years.

Declining arithmetic and science skills among primary school pupils

In 2015 the TIMSS survey (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) investigated the knowledge of Grade 4 pupils in arithmetic and science (biology, physics and chemistry as well as physical geography) (Mullis et al. 2016). While they perform better than the international average, Dutch pupils lag behind their peers in many other EU Member States (Meelissen & Punter 2016). Moreover, the performance of Grade 4 pupils in arithmetic and science has declined since 2011. This decline over the last four years reflects the trend over the last 20 years (Meelissen & Punter 2016). Of the 17 countries for which this trend can be described, only the Netherlands and the Czech Republic show a declining trend in arithmetic skills. In 14 of the 17 countries, including England, Ireland, Portugal and Slovenia, these skills have improved (Mullis et al. 2016). A comparable trend is found for the knowledge and skills of Grade 4 pupils (around 10 years old) in science.

Dutch secondary school students just below the European top

A slight downward trend can also be observed in secondary education. In the three-year international PISA study (Programme for International Student Assessment) of 15-year-old students, Dutch students are found still to be performing relatively well compared with their counterparts in other EU Member States (Feskens et al. 2016). Of the 27 EU countries which took part in PISA'15, the Netherlands takes sixth place for science, with only Estonian and Finnish students doing significantly better than their Dutch peers. The performance of students in Ireland, Germany, the United Kingdom and Slovenia is comparable to the Netherlands. In the other 20 EU Member States, the performance of 15-year-olds in this discipline is worse than in the Netherlands; they include Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, Austria, France and Spain.

Declining trend in knowledge and skills in secondary education

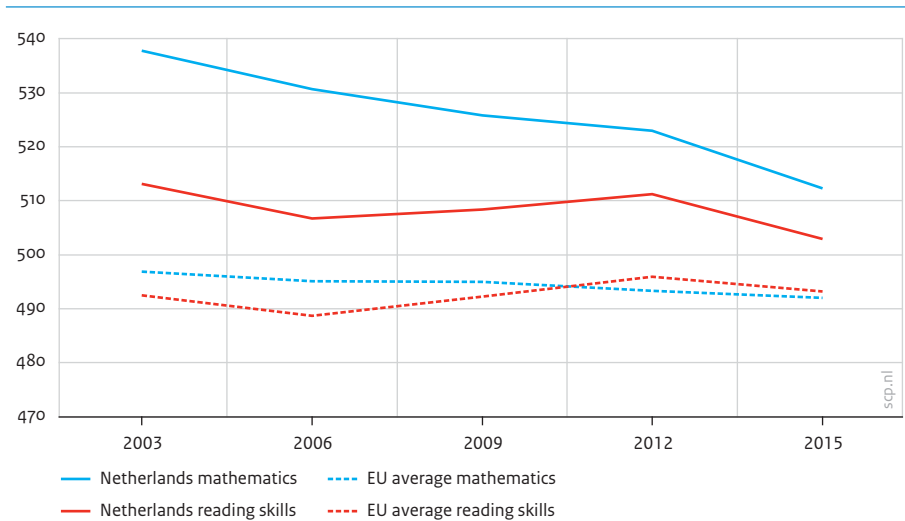
However, the PISA study also shows an apparent decline in knowledge and skills over the last 15 years. Changes in content mean this is difficult to determine accurately for science, but a slight downward trend can be observed in reading and mathematics (Feskens et al. 2016). Although the OECD does not report a significant decline in reading skills between 2003 and 2015, the average in 2015 was nonetheless 10 points lower than in 2003 (figure 4.7). This is reflected in the lower position of the Netherlands in 2015 relative to other EU countries. In 2003 and 2006, the Netherlands was in fourth position in the EU behind Finland, Ireland and Poland, and in 2009 actually took second place behind Finland. In 2015, the Netherlands had fallen to seventh place in the EU rankings, behind Slovenia, Poland, Germany, Estonia, Ireland and the leader Finland.

There are also differences in reading skills between school types. The level of reading skills has for example remained stable among senior general secondary (havo) and pre-university (vwo) students since 2006 (Feskens et al. 2016), but have declined steadily among preparatory secondary vocational (vmbo) students. The reading skills scores of 15-year-olds in vmbo combined and theoretical learning pathways, vmbo profession-oriented and vmbo basic learning pathways has declined by 21, 27 and 18 points, respectively, since 2006. This same trend is found for science achievement by vmbo students, who are falling further behind their peers in havo and vwo. The opposite trend applies for mathematics: here, it is the performance of havo and vwo students that has declined. It is this decline which is largely responsible for the consistent downward trend in average skill levels in mathematics since 2003. The gradual fall in achievement also manifests itself among students who excel in mathematics (from 7.3% in 2003 to 3.2% in 2015).

Figure 4.7

Decline in reading and mathematics performance of Dutch 15 year-olds since 2003

Trend in average reading and mathematics scores,^a Dutch 15 year-old students compared with the EU average,^b 2003-2015



- a The international average for both reading and mathematics scores is 500, with a standard deviation of 100.
- b The EU average was calculated on the basis of the 17 EU Member States (excluding the Netherlands) which participated in all PISA studies between 2003 and 2015 (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Sweden).

Source: OECD (2016b, 2016c); SCP treatment

Also increased attention for language and mathematics achievement in mbo

A great deal has changed in senior secondary vocational education (mbo) in recent years. Mbo programmes not only prepare students for the jobs market, but also for progression to higher professional education (hbo). Problems with the match between mbo and both the labour market and hbo programmes prompted reforms in mbo. A binding recommendation regarding the continuation of studies was introduced, automatic intake into mbo-2 tracks came to an end, mbo programmes were intensified and shortened, national examinations were introduced and higher standards were set for language and mathematics (reference levels) (TK 2010/2011).

There is a great deal of debate within mbo about the reference levels for basic skills, which, it is argued, put pressure on vocational education, for which teaching time has already been reduced, while failing students on these general basic skills could prevent some of them from obtaining a vocational qualification (Turkenburg & Vogels 2017).

In response to this criticism, the reference levels for language and mathematics have not (yet) been made compulsory for all mbo levels. From the 2015/16 school year, Dutch language skills will count towards the pass/fail decision at all levels. Although mathematics is compulsory for mbo-4, it does not form part of the pass/fail criterion. English for mbo level 4 is still a voluntary pilot project. The majority of students obtaining an mbo qualification in 2015/16 passed Dutch language, but less than half of successful mbo-4 students achieved a pass in mathematics (CVTE 2016).

Equipping students to play a part in society

The policy attention for attainment and pass rates has led to a strong focus on basic subjects. In addition, there has been continuous attention in recent years for promoting active citizenship and social cohesion. Schools have the task of familiarising students with the values and skills needed to take responsibility for and contribute to the quality of society. Central to this are democratic principles, equality and tolerance (Inspectie van het Onderwijs 2016a). Earlier national and international research on citizenship skills has shown a skills deficiency in a relatively high proportion of primary and secondary school pupils in relation to citizenship (Maslowski et al. 2012; Wagenaar et al. 2011). This was attributed to the lack of clarity regarding the mission of schools, which meant they had not developed a clear vision of citizenship. Since then, primary and secondary schools have hardly changed (Inspectie van het Onderwijs 2016a); teaching on citizenship at most schools is still not very well planned or focused, and as a result little is known about the results achieved by schools in this area. Mbo is the only school type where teachers have a clearer vision of citizenship, and this is also the only school type where the statutory qualification framework provides a structure for formulating attainment targets and developing a citizenship curriculum (Elfering et al. 2017; Inspectie van het Onderwijs 2016a).

The debate on citizenship in primary and secondary education has recently been given added impetus by the plans for a future-proof curriculum, referred to as *Onderwijs2032* (Education2032). Following the broad public debate in 2014 on which knowledge and skills children need to learn in order to be as well prepared as possible for their future by 2032, the Platform Onderwijs2032, chaired by Paul Schnabel, began working up these plans, and in January 2016 presented its report entitled *Ons onderwijs2032* (Our Education2032), calling for a better balance in education between knowledge acquisition, personal development and equipping students for a role in society. In addition to the importance of citizenship and the subjects Dutch, mathematics and English, the report highlighted the need for digital literacy of pupils (Platform Onderwijs2032 2016). To become digitally literate, in addition to a basic knowledge of ICT pupils also need to develop the skills to assess the reliability of information, understand the impact of media on their own behaviour and that of others, and be able to use ICT to solve new problems.

Education in a changing society

The plans put forward by the Platform for a radical change to the curriculum structure in secondary education have – at least so far – received little support from students, parents or schools, with the exception of the need to adapt current subjects to changes in society (Tholen et al. 2016). Broadening the scope for customisation does receive broad support, but there is resistance to abandoning the existing subjects (Vereniging Hogescholen et al. 2016). It remains to be seen how the plans for Education2032 will be taken forward, and over what period any curriculum changes will be implemented.

The changes in the structure and content of mbo discussed above are also intended to ensure that students are better equipped for a future in an uncertain, changing jobs market (Turkenburg & Vogels 2017). The introduction of competence-based learning (in around 2010) in mbo initially also sparked off lots of debate, but today there is a general consensus among stakeholders (teachers, school heads, present and former students) that, in addition to subject knowledge and skills, generic skills such as cooperation, communication, problem-solving ability and critical thinking are also key in enabling mbo students to find and retain work in a rapidly changing labour market.

4.4 Concerns about equity in education

Learning outcomes have become steadily more important over the last 25 years. Parents with high education more often take the performance of the school into account when choosing a primary school, and engage in dialogue with the Grade 6 teacher to obtain the highest possible continuation of study recommendation for their child (Korpershoek et al. 2016a). They also more often engage private tutors to give their child extra lessons or support them with their homework. Low-educated parents not only use such resources less, but generally also have lower expectations of their children (De Boer 2009). They sometimes curtail their child's ambition by choosing a small rural school in a neighbouring village over a school in 'the big city'. Children of low-educated parents consequently more often begin at a lower secondary education level than children of more highly educated parents. Pupils from higher socio-economic milieus also more often progress to higher levels during their secondary school careers than children from lower socio-economic backgrounds (TK 2016/2017g). This in turn has consequences for their progression to senior secondary vocational and higher professional education and to university. Korthals (2015) shows that, given a similar level of performance, children of highly educated parents have a significantly greater chance of progressing to higher education than children of low-educated parents. These factors impose constraints on access, especially for children from weaker socio-economic backgrounds (see also OECD 2016a; Onderwijsraad 2017).

Trend towards more selectivity in secondary education

First-year classes in secondary schools have become more homogeneous in recent years, a trend noted by the Dutch Inspectorate of Education in its report on the 2014/15 school year (Inspectie van het Onderwijs 2016b). Whereas in the early 1990s, under the Secondary Education Act, many comprehensive secondary schools offered broad, multi-level first-year classes to new students (incorporating more than two school types), this practice reduced over the course of the 1990s in favour of two-level classes (*dakpanklas*), combining two adjacent school types.

Although precise figures are unavailable, it is clear that the number of ‘umbrella’ classes has fallen over the last ten years; the Inspectorate reports that in 2005 they accounted for around two-fifths of all first-year classes, compared with around a third in 2015 (Inspectie van het Onderwijs 2016b). The number of broadly mixed classes fell even more sharply over the same period, to around a fifth today. By contrast, the number of homogeneous first-year classes has increased sharply over the last decade. School boards make these choices for both practical and substantive reasons. Parents, especially of children at grammar school (*gymnasium*), often prefer a homogeneous first-year class, because it means that students are immediately taught at the appropriate level. Schools align with this desire to prevent parents from choosing a different school where their children can be placed in a homogeneous class (Korpershoek et al. 2016b). Another factor is that many combined schools are so large that students are divided across different locations, and it is then practical, partly due to differences in curricula between preparatory secondary vocational (*vmb*) and senior general secondary/pre-university education (*havo/vwo*), to organise teaching along the lines of the different school types (Inspectie van het Onderwijs 2015).

The question then is to what extent further homogenisation will affect students’ educational careers and therefore the ultimate education level attained, and whether that impact might be different for specific groups of students. Homogeneous first-year classes appear to work better than mixed-ability classes for some students, especially pre-university students who have to work hard to complete their education successfully (Kuyper & Van der Werf 2012; Van der Steeg 2011). Students with a migration background and those from lower socio-economic milieus, by contrast, benefit more from broader, more mixed classes. In addition, research has shown that the more able junior general secondary education (*mavo*) students from ‘umbrella’ classes often attain a higher qualification than students from homogeneous *mavo* classes (Van Elk et al. 2011).

It is plausible that the growing number of recommendations for one specific school type at the end of primary school tends to encourage rather than impede the creation of homogeneous first-year classes in secondary schools. The same applies for the segregation of school types across different locations. The consequence of this is that, in practice, selection for a specific school type takes place even earlier and the transition to a higher school type is made more difficult. The danger is that students from lower

socio-economic milieus and students with a migration background will then have fewer opportunities to progress to higher forms of education (Van Rooijen et al. 2016).

Equity under pressure due to contraction of the sector

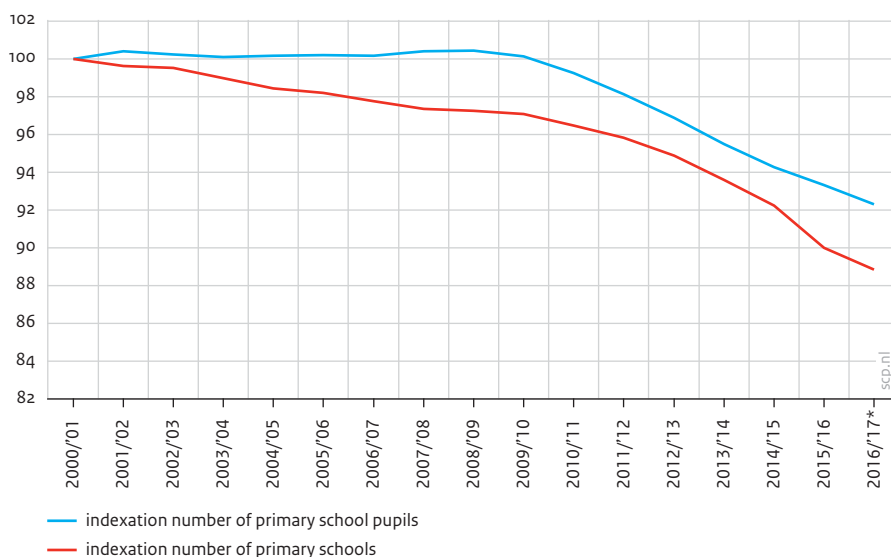
Although parents are almost always able to find a place for their child in a mixed first-year class within their region, this does not apply equally for all regions (DUO 2017). In the Provinces of Friesland, Drenthe and Groningen, especially, but also in the northwest of the Province of Limburg, for example, the number of schools with a broad, mixed first-year class incorporating vmbo-theoretical and senior general secondary education (havo) is very limited, which means that vmbo students have a greater chance of being placed in a vmbo combined/theoretical or a mixed vmbo class (DUO 2017).

This is largely connected to the reducing student intake: nationally, around 40% of secondary schools have seen a reduction in student numbers in recent years, and forecasts suggest that in 2019 around 80% of secondary schools will face a reduction in intake. This fall in student numbers is especially noticeable in preparatory secondary vocational education (vmbo), due partly to demographic contraction in recent years plus the relatively higher number of students entering senior general secondary education (havo). In order to maintain a full spectrum of availability, broader option programmes were introduced in vmbo in the 2016/17 school year. The declining student numbers have thus far not led to a reduction in the number of programmes offered, but there is a danger that reducing student numbers per school will lead to a reduction in the number of options from which students in affected regions can choose (TK 2016/2017b).

The decline in student numbers is also noticeable in mbo in some regions, though it will be 2021 before student numbers fall across the sector as a whole (Inspectie van het Onderwijs 2017). As with vmbo, this is expected to have an impact on the amount of choice in the programmes offered by schools. It will mean that students will not always be able to follow their first-choice programme, or will be forced to travel further in order to do so.

The reduced intake has been evident in primary education since 2008 (figure 4.8). Compared with the intake of just over 1,553,000 primary school pupils in the 2008/09 school year, the figure in 2016/17 was down by 8.1%, at less than 1,428,000. The number is expected to fall further, by around 55,000, up to 2023, after which it will start to rise again (ocw 2016). The falling intake affects a high proportion of Dutch municipalities; forecasts suggest that nine out of ten municipalities will be faced with falling pupil numbers over the next decade. For some municipalities this will mean drastic changes, with projected reductions of around 40-50%. The reductions will mainly affect rural areas; in the four largest cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht), the number of 4-12 year-olds has actually continued to grow in recent years.

Figure 4.8
 Number of primary school children falling since 2008/09
 Changes in pupil numbers and primary schools, 2000-2016 (in percentages, school year 2000/01 = 100)



* Figures for 2016/17 are provisional

Source: CBS (StatLine); SCP treatment

The declining pupil numbers have consequences for the number of schools in the affected regions; between 2008 and 2016, 669 primary schools closed (TK 2016/2017c). Although these closures are not always the result of falling pupil numbers, this does play a role in most cases. In the Provinces of Groningen, Limburg and Zeeland this has led to the disappearance of schools from some villages altogether. The loss of ‘the school in the village’ exercises parents greatly. Those who advocate keeping schools open mainly refer to the impact of closure on the liveability of the village (Steenbekkers et al. 2017), while those who favour closure argue that small schools are unable to offer sufficient quality and that lack of contact with peers mean that social skills and citizenship are insufficiently stimulated. According to the Dutch Inspectorate of Education (Inspectie van het Onderwijs 2016b), there is a greater risk of quality suffering in small schools. Small primary schools often have combination classes consisting of two or more year groups, and it demands a good deal from teachers to meet the different needs of all pupils in the class. Smaller schools also often have only a limited number of hours available for the school head, and there is little scope to deploy an special needs coordinator (intern begeleider) or support staff.

Inclusive education: customisation that is not yet a good fit

The Inclusive Education Act (*Wet passend onderwijs*) which came into force in 2014 seeks to ensure that all children are given a place in initial education and senior secondary vocational education (mbo) which is appropriate to their qualities and abilities. Inclusive education means that children who need extra support, for example because of learning, behavioural or physical problems, actually receive it, preferably in mainstream schools, or in special schools if they require more intensive support (TK 2012/2013). In senior secondary vocational education (mbo), where there is no special education provision, inclusive education focuses on reinforcing the support in the classroom with the aim of making mbo more accessible and reducing dropout (Eimers & Kennis 2017). Schools are obliged to ensure that each child receives an appropriate place, guided by the needs and abilities of the child rather than (the limitations of) the school. Evaluation and monitoring of inclusive education in practice reveals that not everything is yet working well (Inspectie van het Onderwijs 2017; Onderwijsraad 2016; TK 2012/2013, 2016/2017d and 2016/2017e).

Inclusive education brings risk of growing inequality

The Education Council of the Netherlands (Onderwijsraad) (2016) warns of an increase in unequal opportunities for children. Children living in regions which currently receive proportionally less funding than in the past but who still need that support are more likely to be placed in mainstream schools than children in regions which now receive more money. Funding, rather than the needs of the child, sometimes determines whether a child is placed in special or mainstream education. The availability of support also varies from school to school, and although customisation does require some variation, the Education Council believes this also creates a risk of inequality.

The funding for inclusive education does not go to providing support for the individual child, as was previously the case with the individual pupil funding scheme (the *rugzakje*), but is channelled through regional partnerships of mainstream and special education and school boards to the school, where it may be spent on providing training for teachers, for example. As a result, the influence of parents has reduced (Van der Meer 2016). Both parents and schools are often still unclear as to which individual arrangements are still available for the child in addition to the basic provisions – for example, paid for through the Youth Welfare Act (*Wet jeugdzorg*) (Eimers et al. 2016).

This brings us to differences between parents. In the first place, achieving appropriate education for their child requires that parents are aware of their child's problems and needs and of the suitability and availability of schools. In practice, however, when choosing an appropriate school parents tend to look first and foremost not so much at specific provisions or knowledge present in the school, as at the openness of the school's attitude, the interest in their child and the willingness to accommodate their child (Van der Meer 2016). In the perception of parents, the school and the class are still the central focus, rather than the specific needs of and support for their child. Parents who possess

assertive and diplomatic skills and who are able to network are more successful in influencing the placement of their child than parents who have these skills to a lesser degree. This is yet another reason why inclusive education is not equally accessible for every child (Van Eck & Rietdijk 2017; Ledoux 2017; Van der Meer 2016).

Many children still staying at home despite inclusive education

There is a gap between what schools can provide according to teachers (appropriate and workable in the classroom) and what parents expect (appropriate for their child). This acts as a potential source of conflict between schools and parents. The consequence of these differing expectations can be that children do not end up in the right school, or even stay at home.

One of the aims of inclusive education is to reduce the number of children who stay at home, i.e. children who do not go to school for a lengthy period and children who are not enrolled at school (with or without a dispensation from attending school).

The government is seeking to ensure that by 2020 no child stays at home for longer than three months (TK 2015/2016). In the 2014/15 school year – the first year for which figures are available on the size of this group – almost 4,000 children of compulsory school age had been at home without dispensation for more than three months. In the 2016/17 school year, this number had risen to 4,200. There is also a group of children who are exempt from following education (permitted absence). This group has grown sharply in recent years, reaching 16,000 in the 2015/16 school year (Ingrado 2017). These are often children with complex (mental and/or physical) problems, for whom participating in education may not be straightforward or possible; however, inclusive education is also intended for them. Whether it will prove possible to eliminate both non-permitted and permitted absence from school, however, is questioned (Eimers et al. 2016).

Unintended consequences of student loan system in higher education?

A new student finance system came into force in the Netherlands from the 2015/16 academic year. One major change was the replacement of the student grant for higher education students by a student loan. Even as the plans were being introduced (Second Rutte Cabinet 2012), a debate arose about the potential unintended consequences for access to education (Turkenburg et al. 2013). There were fears that young people with less affluent parents, in particular, would decide against enrolling in higher education because of the higher costs of studying and the prospect of debt, as well as the lower ability of their parents to provide financial support. There were also expectations that young people would take on part-time jobs to help pay for their studies, potentially meaning that they would devote less time to their studies. The education minister promised Parliament that the impact of the introduction of the new system would be monitored to enable the policy to be adjusted in the event of undesirable developments. This monitoring exercise showed a higher intake than normal in the two years preceding the introduction of the new system (Van den Broek et al. 2017; TK 2016/2017f). Young people who might otherwise have considered a gap year began a higher education course

in the 2013/14 and 2014/15 academic years in order to take advantage of the student grant. This had the knock-on effect of reducing intake in the first year under the new system, 2015/16, though the number rebounded in the next year (the so-called Bow Wave Effect). Intake into senior secondary vocational education (mbo) and higher professional education (hbo), which was already falling before the introduction of the new system (Herweijer & Turkenburg 2016), has however not yet reached the level seen in earlier years (Van den Broek et al. 2017). This appears to be due in part to a greater aversion among mbo students to taking out a loan; they report more often than pre-university (vwo) students that they are considering not going on to professional education for financial reasons (Van den Broek et al. 2017).

4.5 Concluding discussion: past, present and future

A look back over 25 years of education policy shows that the Dutch education system has provided a solid foundation under society during that period. The education level of the Dutch population is higher than that of most other European countries, a higher proportion of the population attains a basic qualification and there is a stronger focus on continuing in education after completing initial education. As the average education level of young adults now entering the jobs market is higher than that of those who are retiring, the education level of the labour force will rise further in the coming years. At the same time, there are concerns about the quality of education. The attainment levels of the present generation of primary and secondary school pupils are lower than 15-20 years ago, especially in mathematics and arithmetic, despite the strong focus on excellence and improving attainment. The demands placed on citizens in the changing society of tomorrow will moreover demand more rather than fewer skills, and will therefore require further investments in educational quality.

In order to meet these challenges, it is important to make the most of everyone's potential. There are indications that the Dutch education system has been less successful in this regard in recent years. Despite the government's educational disadvantage policy, the opportunity gap has widened in recent years. The system of early selection in Dutch education means that the level at which pupils initially enter secondary education largely determines the further education options open to them. In response, parents with high education, in particular, try to have their children placed in the highest possible school type immediately after leaving primary school, in fact sometimes higher than that recommended by the primary school. The Inspectorate of Education notes that children of highly educated parents are three times as likely to go on to higher education than children of low-educated parents (Inspectie van het Onderwijs 2016b).

Vulnerable groups in society (low socio-economic backgrounds) seem to be at a particular disadvantage due to the accumulation of barriers as they progress through their educational careers. Children from higher socio-economic backgrounds are better able to overcome these barriers and their parents are better able to stand up for their children's

interests. As a result, after the gradual emancipation of children with low-educated parents, the gap between highly educated and low-educated groups is now widening again.

In the report *De toekomst tegemoet* ('Facing the future') (Van den Broek et al. 2016), SCP describes a number of trends in society and extrapolates them to the future. Life will be more dynamic than at present, with fewer fixed frameworks and more customisation, and heavy emphasis will be placed on individual control and responsibility. Life will be a much more complex affair, which places demands on individuals' ability to maintain their place in society. The winners are likely to be those who are able to keep pace with these new demands and who see these changes more as a challenge than a threat. These winners (the 'cans') will be equipped with qualifications that will be (even) more important in the future than they are today, including learning capacity and intelligence, talent, professionalism, creativity and innovative capacity. The cognitive aspect will certainly be important, but will be less of a determinant of active participation and societal success than it is today. Talent will become a bigger differentiating factor than education level. There are concerns about those who appear to be losing the battle, the 'cannots': the 'lower-skilled', the 'low-talented' and the 'unteachables', for whom the bar may be too high. The dividing line in the future may therefore lie not so much between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots', as between the 'cans' and the 'cannots'.

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5 Income and social security

Jean Marie Wildeboer Schut & Michiel Ras

- In 2014, the purchasing power of most groups in Dutch society had not fully recovered from the crisis, though it was higher than at the start of the century.
 - The sharp increase in negative equity has come to a halt.
 - The number of disability benefits in payment appears to be stabilising. The dependence on unemployment benefits reflects the economic crisis.
 - One in nine self-employed people (11%) were below the poverty line in 2014.
 - After a slight dip, most people's satisfaction with their own income is back at its 2010 level. But more and more people believe that the income differentials in the Netherlands should be reduced.
-

5.1 Introduction

In order to understand the developments that have taken place over the last 25 years in the areas of income and social security, we also need to look at the 15-year period prior to that. It was in around 1975 that the realisation first started to dawn that the capacity of the welfare state was not infinite. The preceding decades had seen a number of important social security laws passed, culminating in the National Assistance Act (*Algemene Bijstandswet (ABW)*) in 1965 and the Disability Insurance Act (*Wet op de Arbeidsongeschiktheidsverzekering (WAO)*) in 1967; then the welfare state appeared to be complete. The first oil crisis in 1973 rudely shattered this illusion, ushering in the end of the 'mini-golden age' as the period from 1945-1975 has sometimes been called (Becker 1992). The years of economic growth of about 5% were over, and the belief gradually took hold that they would never return (Den Uyl 1978). In the summer of 1975, the Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis (CPB) published a forecast suggesting lower economic growth over the next five years, a doubling of the unemployment rate and a sharp rise in the collective tax burden (SCP 1998; Van Zanden 1998). A retrenchment was needed, and social security was one of the biggest targets. This retrenchment paradigm continues to this day, culminating most recently in the implementation of the Participation Act in 2015.

Initially, measures were taken on an ad hoc basis, aimed mainly at addressing the funding of the social security system (among other things by increasing contributions, cf. SCP 1998). In 1982, however, it became clear that more drastic measures were needed; This was the year that marked the height – or, perhaps more accurately, the low point – of the 'Dutch disease'. The Netherlands recorded a meagre economic growth of 1.2%,

unemployment reached 12% of the labour force, and there was a conveyor belt of company bankruptcies (De Rooy 2002). The 1982 Wassenaar Agreement was followed by years of wage moderation. The link between wages and benefits also moderated the latter, thus reducing public expenditure on benefits. The time was also considered ripe for system reforms, with the main measures being to shorten the duration of unemployment benefits and introduce stricter qualifying criteria for wao-funded disability benefits.

Then began, in 1990, the period on which this edition of *Social State of the Netherlands* is focused. That year marked the start of the last 25 years of a period in which the constant paring back and chipping away at the social security system became the norm. 1990 saw the publication of the report 'A working perspective' (*Een werkend perspectief*) by the Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) (WRR 1990; cf. Vrooman (2010)), in which the WRR voiced its strong support for what was to become the most important credo in Dutch social security and income policy in the ensuing decades: 'work before income', freely translated a few years later to 'work, work, work'. This period also ushered in a number of shifts in emphasis in Dutch income policy. Traditionally, the aim of income policy has been to ensure that the existing income landscape remains relatively stable. Whilst excessive income differentials are regarded as a bad thing, they are also seen as justified to a certain extent, provided they promote economic growth. The Wage-Benefit Linkage and Exceptions Act (*Wet Koppeling met Afwijkingmogelijkheid – wka*) which came into force in 1991 and governed the linkage between the minimum wage and regulated wages, was almost immediately repealed for several years. This had the knock-on effect, through the net-net linkage, of pushing down minimum benefits as well. The linkage was in fact reinstated some years later and remained in full force until 2003. The linkage has also not been broken again since 2006. Today, after many years of placing the emphasis on economic recovery, the mood in policy circles once again appears to be shifting in favour of providing more support for non-workers, and in particular pensioners and benefit claimants, (TK 2016/2017; CPB 2017a).

In 1992, the then Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers declared the Netherlands to be a sick country: more than 800,000 people were classed as unfit for work in that year. This statement was to prove to be the prelude to the second major system overhaul. Further restrictions were introduced to access and to the duration of disability benefits (in 1993, but especially in 2004 and 2006), unemployment benefit (in 1995) and social assistance benefit (1996, 2004). On the other hand, in 1996 the government amended the income tax system by bringing in the older persons' tax credit. This had the effect of driving up the (net) state retirement pension to the level of the net minimum wage, taking it above the guaranteed minimum income which applied for social assistance benefit. The introduction of the Participation Act in 2015 marks the end of the period that is discussed and analysed in this report. Today, even people with a disability are expected

to be active on the labour market, and people who receive benefits are in many cases expected to do something in return.

All in all, major changes appear to have taken place in the Dutch social security system (and therefore also in income policy) over recent decades. On the other hand, it is debatable whether these changes are truly fundamental (Vrooman 2010). Moreover, a number of caveats apply, because at least as important for the outcomes of government policy are the dynamic processes which take place in society: divorce, household formation, retiring and becoming unemployed all have a major influence on income and therefore on individual prosperity. Providing a backdrop to these events are demographic trends such as population ageing and immigration, while the economy also plays a role. This chapter therefore looks not only at the consequences of the various policy measures that were introduced, but also at the influence of these latter trends.

5.2 Disposable income¹

Income not back to pre-crisis levels, but higher than at the start of this century

Virtually all groups in Dutch society saw their purchasing power improve between 1990 and 2000 (table 5.1²). People aged over 65 saw the biggest increase: 13% for those living alone and 11% for those living with a partner. This increase may be due in part to the introduction of the older persons' tax credit in 1996. By contrast, the purchasing power of self-employed persons (income from profits) fell by 5%; the economic downturn in the early 1990s probably hit this group. The purchasing power of non-Western migrants fell by 6% between 1995 and 2000.

The period 2000-2014 can be neatly divided into two halves: the years before the onset of the crisis (2008) and the years after it. Between 2000 and 2007, almost all groups in Dutch society saw their situation improve dramatically, with the purchasing power of the first and fourth quartiles increasing by 15%. The purchasing power of couples with children increased even more: single-earners saw their real incomes rise by 17%, and double-earners with children by no less than 19%. The increase for single-earners without children (1%), was meagre by comparison, as was that – albeit less so – of benefit claimants (7%).

The impact of the economic crisis became apparent after the high point in 2007. Virtually all groups lost purchasing power, with the self-employed and single-earners with children leading the way: both groups lost 14% after the peak year 2007. Exceptions to this decline were employees, whose purchasing power remained unchanged, benefit claimants, whose purchasing power rose by 6%, and pensioners aged under 65, who saw an improvement of no less than 8% between 2007 and 2014.

Table 5.1

Consequences of crisis still being felt. Purchasing power of most groups still not fully recovered

Average purchasing power by a number of background characteristics, 1990-2017^a (in euros x 1,000 per year, 2016 prices)^b

	standardised disposable income averages							income changes (%)			
	1990	2000	2000 ^c	2007	2014	2017 ^a	'90/'00	'00/'07	'07/'14	'00/'14	'14/'17 ^a
1 st quartile	12.0	12.5	12.4	14.3	13.5	14.0	5	15	-5	9	3
2 nd quartile	17.7	19.6	19.1	21.4	20.1	21.4	11	12	-4	7	5
3 rd quartile	23.5	25.7	25.1	27.9	26.9	28.4	10	11	-3	7	5
4 th quartile	36.7	40.0	41.8	48.0	44.1	46.6	8	15	-8	6	6
single person < 65 years	20.6	21.6	21.1	23.3	22.1	23.1	5	11	-5	5	5
single person ≥ 65 years	18.3	20.7	20.1	22.4	21.2	21.3	13	11	-5	5	0
single-parent family	14.4	15.4	15.5	17.6	17.3	18.1	7	14	-2	12	5
couple < 65 years, no children, single-earner	25.0	27.6	25.1	25.4	23.0	23.9	10	1	-9	-8	4
couple < 65 years, no children, double-earners	29.6	31.7	30.8	35.1	32.7	34.5	7	14	-7	6	6
couple < 65 years, with children, single-earner	18.2	19.4	18.5	21.6	18.6	19.3	7	17	-14	0	4
couple < 65 years, with children, double-earners	21.9	23.7	23.3	27.8	26.9	28.9	8	19	-3	16	7
couple ≥ 65 years	21.0	23.3	23.0	26.6	25.8	25.9	11	15	-3	12	1
income from profits	31.0	29.5	30.6	34.3	29.5	31.4	-5	12	-14	-4	7
wages	23.1	25.4	24.7	27.6	27.5	29.4	10	12	0	11	7
pension < 65 years	23.2	24.9	23.0	26.0	28.0	28.8	7	13	8	22	3
benefits	14.3	15.0	15.0	16.1	15.1	15.5	5	7	-6	1	2

Table 5.1
(Continued)

	standardised disposable income averages							income changes (%)			
	1990	2000	2000 ^c	2007	2014	2017 ^a	'90/'00	'00/'07	'07/'14	'00/'14	'14/'17 ^a
pension ≥ 65 years	19.5	22.0	20.7	23.2	23.0	22.9	13	12	-1	10	0
native Dutch		24.9	25.2	28.7	27.1	28.6	8 ^d	14	-6	8	5
migrants, Western		24.8	25.0	28.2	26.4	27.8	8 ^d	13	-6	6	5
migrants, non-Western		19.1	18.5	21.0	20.2	21.3	-6 ^d	13	-4	9	6
all households	22.4	24.4	24.6	27.9	26.3	27.7	9	13	-6	7	5

a The figures for 2017 are estimates.

b Excludes households in homes and institutions; includes housing benefits.

c Provisional figures. There was a trend-break in 2000. The results before and after that year are not fully comparable.

d '95/'00.

Source: CBS (PO'90-'14); SCP treatment

Overall, however, most groups have seen their purchasing power improve since the start of this century. Groups whose purchasing power has improved by 10% or more include single-parent families (12%), double-earners with children (16%), pensioners (10%, with retired couples receiving 12% more) and employees (11%). Early retirees top the ranking with an increase of 22% since 2000. For the self-employed, by contrast, the crisis still appears to be having an impact: income from profits in 2014 was 4% lower on average than in 2000. Single-earners without children have also still not caught up with their 2000 level (-8%); the small increase in purchasing power in the pre-crisis years (1%) is nowhere near enough to make up for the losses from 2008 onwards.

Using estimates,³ an attempt has been made to predict purchasing power for 2017.

This suggests an improvement of a few percent for most groups from 2014 onwards.

Income inequality has been stable in the Netherlands for years (table 5.2; cf. e.g. (Vrooman et al. 2014), though the revised income panel survey (IPO) has tended to push up the observed inequality. Analyses by Vrooman and Wildeboer Schut (2015) show that a number of societal changes since 1990 have had only a limited effect on the trend in the income distribution. For example, changes in the level of education and the concomitant remuneration have had virtually no impact on income differentials. The same applies for developments in the size of various ethnic groups and in their incomes. The inequality has increased slightly due to the rise in the number of double-earners and single persons at the expense of the number of single-earners. On the one hand, the increase in the number of pensioners and self-employed workers since 2000 has led to greater income inequality, while on the other the falling incomes of the first group and rising incomes of the second group tend to mitigate this.

The poverty rate has been rising in the last few years.⁴ In 2010, 6% of the Dutch population were living below the 'modest but adequate' poverty threshold; by 2014 this had risen to almost 8%. The risk of poverty in all groups is the same in 2014 as in 2000. Benefit claimants continue to be the group with the highest risk of poverty: 35% of this group were poor in that year according to the 'modest but adequate' criterion. Other population categories at risk of poverty are single-parent families and people with a non-Western migration background: a quarter of the first group had an income below the poverty threshold in 2014, and this applied for more than one in five households in the second category.

Table 5.2 also includes employees and self-employed workers. People in these groups living below the poverty line are often described as the 'working poor'. The groups are not the same, however: there are considerable differences between them. The share of poor employees has fluctuated around 3% since 1990, and the share of poor self-employed workers around 10-11%. Despite economic fluctuations, the trend in these figures is fairly stable.

Table 5.2
Inequality stable; rise in poverty in 2014⁵

Income inequality, poverty and wealth, 1990-2017^a

	1990	1995	2000	2000 ^e	2005	2010	2014	2017 ^a
income inequality								
Gini ^c	0.235	0.232	0.233	0.255	0.249	0.248	0.253	0.257
Theil ^d	0.095	0.087	0.090	0.161	0.122	0.115	0.121	0.124
poverty								
modest but adequate criterion ^e	5.7	8.0	6.8	7.0	6.8	6.0	7.6	6.6
single-parent families	27.8	41.7	29.05	26.8	26.7	22.1	24.7	21.8
benefit claimants	28.5	39.0	32.6	31.0	31.1	28.8	34.8	31.1
non-Western migrants		22.9	21.1	20.2	19.7	16.9	21.3	18.3
children (0-17 years)	8.1	12.1	10.1	10.6	10.2	8.9	11.4	9.5
single persons	11.7	13.9	10.7	10.6	10.7	9.7	11.0	10.2
over-65s	4.6	6.1	4.0	3.6	3.3	2.6	3.0	3.0
employees	1.9	2.6	3.6	3.5	3.1	2.7	3.6	2.7
self-employed	7.4	10.2	10.2	11.3	11.3	10.5	11.0	10.0
wealth (share (%) of total earned income)								
wealthiest 10%	20.4	20.0	20.3	22.8	22.1	21.8	22.0	22.1
wealthiest 1%	3.5	3.3	3.6	6.2	4.8	4.6	4.8	4.7

a The figures for 2017 are estimates.

b Provisional figures.

c The Gini coefficient is a measure of income inequality. The coefficient has a value of 1 if one person/household receives all the income in the country, and has a value of 0 if everyone in the country receives precisely the same income. Due to the way in which the Gini coefficient is calculated, this measure is particularly sensitive to differences in the middle segment of the income distribution.

d The Theil coefficient is also a measure of income inequality. This coefficient also has a value of 0 when incomes are completely equally distributed, but the maximum is equal to the logarithm of the number of observations, and in principle is therefore infinite. Due to the way in which it is calculated, the Theil coefficient is mainly sensitive to differences in the higher income segment.

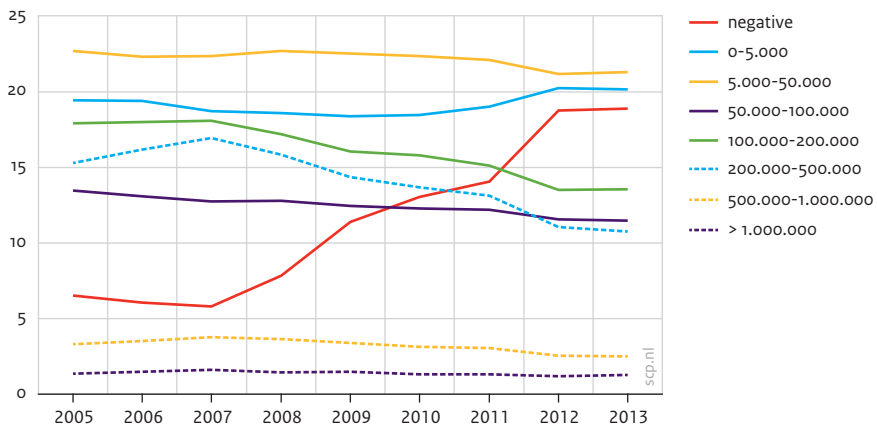
e The 'modest but adequate' criterion represents the minimum income necessary to meet unavoidable expenses on food, clothing and housing, plus expenditure on basic forms of recreation and social participation.

Source: CBS (IPO'90-'14); SCP treatment

Based on the estimates used, the relative size of most groups has fallen by a few percentage points in 2017. The wealthiest 10% of the population receive more than 20% of the total income; that share has remained unchanged for years. The wealthiest 1%, by contrast, are seeing their share of national income increase substantially: in the 1990s this group accounted for just over 3% of all incomes; in 2014 this had risen to almost 5%.⁶

The impact of the economic crisis on the distribution of wealth, including people’s net assets in their own home, appears to have come to a halt; the size of virtually all wealth categories has stabilised (figure 5.1). One exception are people with assets of between 200,000 and 500,000 euros and also, to a lesser extent, those with incomes of between 50,000 and 100,000 euros. The first group now accounts for more than 10% of the population, the latter just under one percentage point more. The stabilisation of the number of people with negative assets is notable – around 19% – after having increased sharply in recent years due to falling house prices.

Figure 5.1
 Sharp increase in negative assets comes to a halt,^a size of most wealth categories has stabilised
 Trend in wealth categories, 2005-2013^b (in percentages)



- a Assets include the property tax valuation (woz) of the home, set against the outstanding mortgage debt.
- b The wealth categories are shown in 2016 prices.

Source: CBS (IPO-vermogen '05-'13); SCP treatment

5.3 Poverty trend analysis

The at-risk groups identified in section 5.2 partially overlap, and as a result no clear picture emerges of the influence of changes in the size of these groups or the effect of changes in their poverty risk. In this section we attempt to shed light on this using decomposition analysis. To do this, we break down the change in the total poverty rate into:

- changes in the share of each group (relative size); and
- changes in the poverty risk of each group (the share with an income below the ‘modest but adequate’ criterion), also referred to as the ‘poverty prevalence’.

The two periods analysed are 1995-2000 and 2007-2013. The final years of the twentieth century were a period with a flourishing Dutch economy; the poverty rate fell by 1.2 percentage points (from 8% to 6.8%). The period 2007-2013 spans the years of and after the crisis. The poverty rate in the Netherlands peaked at 7.9% in 2013, an increase of 2.5 percentage points (from 5.4%) since 2007.

The groups are ranked hierarchically in the analysis. The main substantive determinants (e.g. in paid work or not) are ranked ahead of less important factors (e.g. type of work/benefit or origin). The methodology used is explained in more detail in Vrooman & Wildeboer Schut (2013), who decomposed the change in the poverty rate over a period of 25 years. Figure 5.2 shows the outcomes for the period 1995-2000 in concise format:

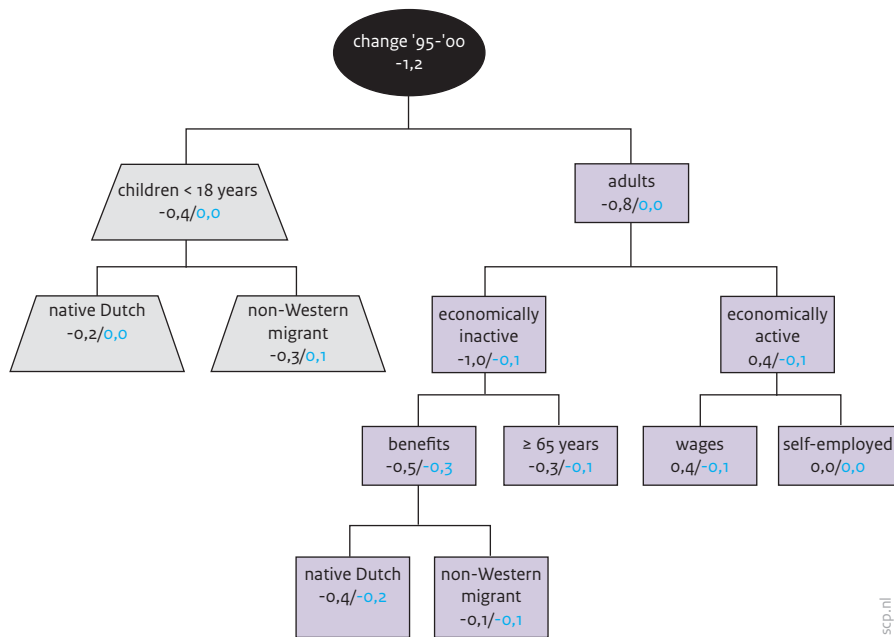
There is no single, straightforward explanation for the reduction in the poverty rate from 8% to 6.8% between 1995 and 2000. The change in the percentage of people in poverty can be largely ascribed to changing poverty prevalences in the different groups, with the changed population shares having only a few limited effects. The influence of the decline in the share of benefit claimants is particularly notable here.

The economic revival during that period led to a drastic reduction in the number of people unemployed (table 5.3). Since this group is relatively poor, this had the knock-on effect of reducing the overall poverty rate. The increase in the proportion of pensioners did the same, though this effect is slightly weaker. However, pensioners are a relatively affluent group, with incomes generally above the poverty line (table 5.2). If the size of this group increases, this will therefore lead to a reduction in the poverty rate measured across the population as a whole.

Figure 5.2

Reduction in poverty rate between 1995 and 2000

Hierarchical decomposition of changes in the poverty rate 1995-2000^a (in percentage points)



scp.nl

a Change in total percentage of people in poverty based on the 'modest but adequate' criterion.

black: Δ total poverty prevalence by Δ group prevalence

purple: Δ total poverty prevalence by Δ group share

Key: The change in the poverty rate (-1.2) in the population as a whole can be analysed into effects which show the reduction in poverty among children and among adults. Those effects amount to -0.4 and -0.8, respectively. Any changes between 1995 and 2000 in the proportions of children and adults have had no effect on the poverty rate (both effects are 0.0). The total change in the poverty rate of -1.2 is also equal to the effects at each underlying level. There are minor rounding differences.

Source: CBS (IPO'95 and '00); SCP treatment

The effect of the falling risk of child poverty (from 12.1% to 10%) has a reducing effect of 0.4 percentage points on the total poverty rate. The impact for adults is 0.8 percentage points. Interestingly, while the economic prosperity reduced the risk of poverty for benefit claimants (from 39% to 32.6%; cf. table 5.2), it increased the risk of poverty for employees (by one percentage point, from 2.6% to 3.6%). Although this is still a low poverty risk, the large size of this group (about 1 million in both years) means the effect on the overall poverty rate is still substantial (0.4 percentage points).

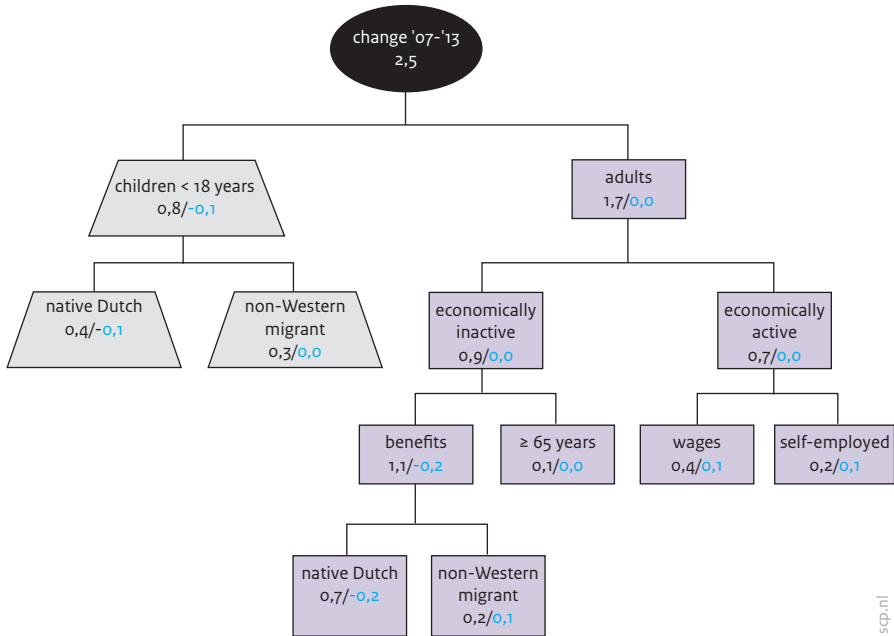
The second period for which poverty trends are analysed is from 2007 to 2013. In the economic peak year 2007, the poverty rate was at its lowest point of this century, at 5.4%. This rose gradually to reach 7.9% in 2013, the year in which the Netherlands saw its highest number of people in poverty to date. The difference of 2.5 percentage points is analysed in figure 5.3.

The rise in the poverty rate from 5.4% to 7.9% is due almost entirely to the increased risk of poverty in the various groups. The biggest rise (1.1 percentage points) is among benefit claimants, but the contribution by employees (0.4 percentage points) is not insignificant. The low contribution from pensioners is striking: their risk of poverty rose by 'only' 0.6 percentage points, from 2.7% in 2007 to 3.3% in 2013. This contributes 0.1 percentage points to the increase in the poverty rate across the population as a whole.

Figure 5.3

Poverty rate rises from low point in 2007 to high point in 2013

Hierarchical decomposition of changes in the poverty rate 2007-2013^a (in percentage points)



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a Change in total percentage of people in poverty based on the 'modest but adequate' criterion.

black: Δ total poverty prevalence by Δ group prevalence

purple: Δ total poverty prevalence by Δ group share

Key: The change in the poverty rate (2.5) in the population as a whole can be analysed into effects which show the reduction in poverty among children and among adults. Those effects amount to 0.8 and 1.7, respectively. Any changes between 1995 and 2000 in the proportions of children and adults have had very little effect on the poverty rate. The slight reduction in the share of children had a small reducing effect on poverty in the population as a whole (-0.1). The total change in the poverty rate of 2.5 is also equal to the effects at each underlying level. There are minor rounding differences.

Source: CBS (IPO'95 and '00); SCP treatment

5.4 Provisions focusing on income and work

Policy as well as external factors determine the trend in the number of benefits

Until the early 1990s, the main purpose of social security benefits was income protection. Since then, several Dutch governments have also placed heavy emphasis on encouraging benefit claimants to participate in the labour market. A large number of benefits have been cut back and been subjected to stricter access criteria for this reason. However, a number of societal trends also run through all the policy intentions, and policy has only a limited influence on their effects. Table 5.3 shows the number of benefits paid in the most important income replacement arrangements in the period 1990-2016.

The benefit volume (measured by the number of benefits) has risen sharply since 1990, from just over 3.8 million to almost 5.1 million. Logically, this increase can be attributed to four developments, each of which influences demand for the various benefits in its own way. They are population ageing, the increase in the potential labour force (15-64 year-olds), developments in policy (see § 5.1) and economic fluctuations.

Table 5.3

Disability benefits appear to stabilise, take-up of unemployment benefits reflects economic crisis

Trend in take-up of social security benefits, 1990-2016 (number of benefits x 1,000 and in percentages)

	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2016
incapacity for work							
Disability Insurance Act (wao)/Work and Income according to Labour Capacity Act (WIA)	731	702	769	703	596	545	546
of which partial incapable for work (%)	21	28	30.4	34	29	25	24
new claimants	101	64	100	20	40	37	41
moving off benefit	72	97	76	82	48	45	40
Disability Provision (Early Disabled Persons) Act (Wajong) ^a	91	102	127	147	195	249	247
of which partial incapable for work (%) ^b	1	2	2	2		1	1
new claimants	5	4	10	10	8	4	
moving off benefit	2	2	4	6	5	5	
Disability Insurance (Self-employed Persons) Act (waz)	59	56	57	53	34	15	14
of which partial incapable for work (%)	42	47	40	40			
New claimants	10	5	7	5	0	0	0
Moving off benefit	6	7	7	7	4	2	2
total incapacity for work	881	860	953	903	825	809	807

Table 5.3

(Continued)

	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2016
unemployment and social assistance benefit							
unemployment benefit (ww) ^c	177	395	194	307	264	446	412
new claimants	332	579	275	376	415	584	491
moving off benefit	330	590	302	392	421	579	525
Social Assistance Act (ABW)/Work and Social Assistance Act (wwb)/Participation Act (Participatiewet)	550	512	381	371	339	454	437
total unemployment/social assistance benefit	727	907	575	678	603	900	849
old age/surviving dependants							
General Old Age Pensions Act (AOW) ^d	2040	2186	2334	2554	2881	3371	3398
Survivors' Pension Act (Anw)	193	196	168	138	98	36	34
total number of benefits	3841	4149	4030	4273	4407	5116	5088
ditto, without AOW	1801	1963	1696	1719	1526	1745	1690
dependency ratio ^e	77	77	62	64	63	71	71
ditto, excl. AOW	39	38	29	28	25	26	26

a The figures include the old and new Wajong arrangements together. The new Disability Provision (Early Disabled Persons) Act ('new Wajong') came into force on 1 January 2010. From 1 January 2015, the Wajong was incorporated in the Participation Act.

b Under the new Wajong regime, we class everyone with a 'work plan' (*werkregeling*) as having a partial incapacity for work.

c Excluding part-time unemployment benefit.

d Only domestic benefits.

e Number of economically inactive persons per 100 economically active persons (aged over 15).

Source: (CBS 2017a); (CPB 2017b); (UWV 2013, 2014); 2016)

The rise in the number of benefits appears to be due mainly to population ageing. The extent of the direct influence of this factor on the total number of benefits can be calculated by deducting the number of state retirement benefits (AOW) from the total; this reveals a sharp reduction. Depending on the year, the number of benefits then varies from roughly 1.5 million (2005) to just under 2 million (1995). As a counterbalance to this trend, it should be borne in mind that the population aged 20-65 years has grown by more than a million since 1990 (CBS 2017e).

Population ageing also has an indirect – and therefore much more difficult to determine precisely – effect on the trend in disability benefits, in particular. An older population is almost by definition in less good health; and, all other things being equal, a less healthy population will make more use of these benefits. However, the increased take-up of these benefits appears to be tempered by a second trend that has been of major importance for the number of benefits in payment in recent decades, namely the growing emphasis on financial incentives for current and potential benefit claimants. While the growth in the number of older people automatically converts into an increase in state pension benefits, the link to population growth is much less clear-cut for members of the potential labour force (the number of 15-65 year-olds).

Whereas in the heyday of the welfare state (and the years immediately thereafter) the main purpose of benefits was income protection, a sea-change took place after 1990 (see § 5.1), with the main focus of benefits shifting to reintegration. Sickness and disability benefits, in particular, have been the target of several policy interventions, with important changes including the implementation of the Extension of Obligation to Pay Salary (Sickness) Act *wulbz*, extending the employer's obligation to pay salary in the event of sickness up to a maximum of one year) in 1996 and the Obligation to Continue to Pay Salary (Sickness) Act (*wvlz*; continued payment of salary for up to two years) in 2003. In addition, after years of debate, the Disability Insurance Act (*wao*) was repealed and replaced on 1 January 2006 with the Work and Income according to Labour Capacity Act (*wia*). This applied to all new cases of incapacity for work. For existing cases (people aged up to 45 years), stricter eligibility criteria for disability benefit under the *wao* were introduced under an 'assessment ruling' (*Schattingsbesluit*) in 2004. The *wia* incorporates two arrangements: the Resumption of Work for Partially Disabled Persons Regulation (*wga*) and the Income Provision (Fully Disabled Employees) Regulation (*iva*).

The number of disability benefits in payment reached a high point in 2002 (993,000), before falling to end at a fairly stable level of just over 800,000 in the years after 2010. This reduction was due mainly to the steady fall in the number of *wao/wia* benefits (from 803,000 in 2002 to 546,000 in 2016). Changes to these arrangements, with by far the largest number of benefits in payment, have the biggest impact on developments in the total benefit volume. In turn, the fall in the number of *wao/wia* benefits in payment appears to be mainly the result of the reduction in the number of people moving onto these benefits since the start of this century. On the one hand this was due to the stricter access criteria (following the introduction of the Eligibility for Permanent Disability Benefit (Restrictions) Act (*Wet verbetering poortwachter – wvp*) in 2002. On the other hand, the extension of the obligation to pay salary during sickness from one to two years caused a sharp reduction in the numbers moving onto these benefits in 2005. Currently, there are around 40,000 new *wao/wia* benefit claimants each year. The number of disability benefits paid to self-employed people (*waz*) has fallen steadily over the last decade, and stood at only 14,000 in 2016 (was 50-60,000 prior to 2005). Access to these

benefits has been closed off to new claimants since 2006, and this has of course influenced the declining total.

The reduction in the volume of disability benefits is still going on, though is levelling off, mainly due to the increase in the number of benefits for young disabled persons (Wajong), which has trebled since 1990. The Wajong was replaced by the 'new Wajong' ('nWajong') in 2010, which places more emphasis on participation in the labour market (among other things through periodic reassessment). However, this had no noticeable effect on the number of new claimants. Possible reasons put forward for the rising number of new claimants include improved diagnosis of certain disorders, a more complex society and the impact of the introduction of the new Work and Social Assistance Act (wwb) (Suijker 2007; CPB 2011), which encouraged local authorities to admit as few people as possible to social assistance benefit. This very probably led to people being referred to Wajong benefits instead, which are not the responsibility of local authorities. The role of economic fluctuations (another important determinant of the trend in the number of benefits) is reflected mainly in the trend in the number of unemployment and social assistance benefits. This can be seen very clearly from the increase of these benefits to over 900,000 since the economic crisis.

The Participation Act came into force on 1 January 2015. Its implementation is entirely the responsibility of local authorities. The wwb was absorbed entirely into the new Act (417,000 persons), as were partially disabled young people who previously received nWajong benefits. This will at least partially reduce the incentive for local authorities not to take responsibility for these groups. Finally, the Participation Act also takes in people on the waiting list for benefits under the Sheltered Employment Act (wsw).

The I/A ratio – the ratio between the economically inactive and economically active – can be used as a sort of summarising measure for benefit dependency. This ratio indicates the degree to which benefit dependency is supported financially and serves as input for the Wage-Benefit Linkage and Exceptions Act (Wet Koppeling met Afwijkingsmogelijkheid (wka)). The I/A ratio rose to 71 as a result of the crisis, which means that there were 71 non-workers for every 100 people in work. Around the turn of the century, the ratio stood at 62, since when it has deteriorated significantly. Much of the dependency ratio is influenced by the age profile of the population; if the over-65s are left out of consideration, in 2016 100 economically active persons 'only' had to support 26 economically inactive persons.

Limited success of reintegration provisions

As a consequence of the policy maxim 'work, work, work', attention increasingly shifted over time – in other words, more money was set aside for – to measures to promote a return to the labour market. They included wage cost subsidies, participation placements, education and training initiatives, and were deployed mainly by local authorities. Despite

these efforts, the effect of these measures turned out to be limited, and perhaps partly as a result of this they have been cut back severely in recent years (Vrooman 2016). Despite this, local authorities are now attempting to support more people with less money (TK 2015/2016).

The limited success of the reintegration measures is linked to the fact that market forces and the configuration of the social security system are strong(er) players. Processes such as the economic cycle, the increased labour participation rate of women and social security regulations (in terms of access and the level of benefits) generally play a bigger role (Vrooman 2010).

In addition, imposing reintegration targets can have unintended consequences; when seeking to meet targets, it can for example be worthwhile selecting people who already have a good chance of finding paid work. With this in mind, the incentives in the Participation Act are also being improved, giving local authorities a greater stake in actually reducing the number of people on social assistance benefit. However, reintegration trajectories also have inherent drawbacks: they are bureaucratic and some of those affected tend to adopt a wait-and-see approach if they know that a trajectory is to be launched for them (Vrooman 2010). Alongside this criticism, however, it is important not to forget that, for some people, reintegration can be precisely the push they need to take them onto the labour market.

It was already clear in the previous edition of 'Social State of the Netherlands' (ssn) (Wildeboer Schut & Olsthoorn 2015) that among unemployed people starting a new job a small, shrinking group of 3% received support in 2013 (from the Employee Insurance Agency (uwv) (CBS 2014). It should be noted that, strictly speaking, it is in fact not possible to demonstrate that the support given was the decisive factor in helping these people to find work. The percentage of social assistance benefit claimants helped to find work was much higher: in 2011, 73% of those who found paid work had received support (from the local authority), and in 2013 the figure was 61%. The April 2017 labour market monitor (*Monitor arbeidsmarkt april 2017*) (TK 2017/2018) presents combined figures for social assistance benefit claimants and non-claimants together. If we compare these with the corresponding groups from 2011 and 2013, we see a rapidly declining series: from 54% to 40% and 26%. People are thus increasingly finding paid employment without support. More than 30% of those who do not receive support still receive a (partial) benefit after accepting paid work.

The number of people provided with a reintegration trajectory by the local authority (regardless of the ultimate result) grew from 159,000 to 174,000 at the end of 2016 (TK 2017/2018). Most of those were people of non-Western origin. Viewed by type of support, the wage costs subsidy funded through the Participation Act stands out. This provision is aimed at people who are not able to earn the statutory minimum wage. This subsidy appears to be gaining in importance, with the number of recipients rising from 180 at the end of 2014 to 4,450 at the end of 2016. A much smaller group of recipients (200 at the end of 2016) are in sheltered employment. Both groups could grow further following the ending of new sheltered employment provision in 2015.

5.5 Perception of own income

Slight increase in satisfaction with own income

In 2016/17, the proportion of people reporting that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their income was roughly back to its 2010 level (table 5.4). In the intervening years, this satisfaction was slightly lower. Income satisfaction tracks the trend in real disposable income. People with high education are satisfied substantially more often (84%) than people with low (67%) and intermediate (73%) education. Of the latter two groups, those with low education gradually appear to have become less satisfied. Research by Statistics Netherlands (CBS) shows something similar: of the four income groups studied between 2013 and 2016, the top three became clearly more satisfied, but satisfaction in the lowest income group showed no net change (CBS 2017b). The trend in their income was marginally, but not substantially, worse than that of the other income groups, and it may be that income and uncertainty regarding employment also played a role in their (lack of) satisfaction. The differences in satisfaction between income groups are much greater than those between different education levels: 46% of those in the first income group are satisfied, compared with 90% in the fourth (highest) group. Comparable differences are found for labour market position when we compare benefit claimants aged under 65 with workers and pensioners. There was a slight net improvement in satisfaction in all household types except couples without children, though they were still the most satisfied group. Single-parent families remained substantially less satisfied than the rest, despite improvements in the child-related budget since 2015.

Table 5.4
Slight increase in satisfaction with own income

Share of persons who are satisfied or very satisfied with their own household income, by a number of background characteristics, 2010-2016 (in percentages)

	2010/'11	2012/'13	2014/'15	2016/'17
total	74	72	72	75
education level				
low	72	66	69	67
intermediate	68	69	69	73
high	84	83	79	84
labour market position				
working	75	77		
work (new) ^a			75	78
benefit recipient	38	30		
benefits (new) ^a			29	40
Retired	86	80		
pension (new) ^a			76	79
other	70	68		
other (new)			55	55
household composition				
living alone	69	70	65	73
single-parent family	49	49	52	53
couple without children	81	79	78	80
couple with children	73	72	75	76

a In 2014, labour market position was determined by the main source of income in the household, whereas previously it had been based on self-definition by the respondent. This creates a trend-break in the relevant figures.

Source: SCP (cv'10/'11-'16/'17); SCP treatment

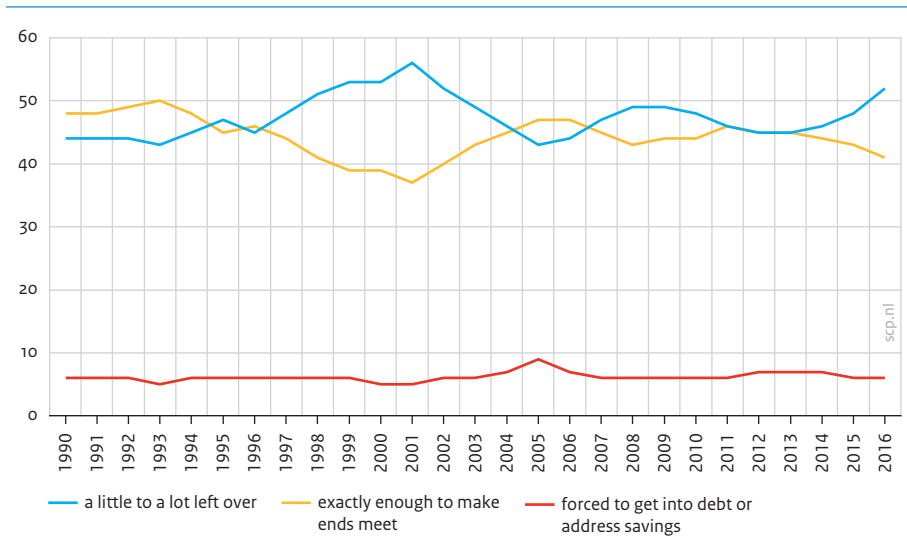
Group who have difficulty making ends meet small, but remarkably constant

The proportion of households reporting that they are forced to get into debt or address savings in order to make ends meet has been around 6% since 2015 (see figure 5.4). That is slightly lower (rounded off) than in 2012-2014 (7%). Viewed over the longer period 1990-2016, the size of this group is remarkably stable, fluctuating between 5% and 7%, with 2005 as the sole exception (9%). Perhaps not entirely coincidentally, that was also the year when the poverty rate in the Netherlands reached a temporary peak (Wildeboer Schut en Olsthoorn 2015). The crisis which began in 2008 evidently had a limited impact on how households perceived their own financial situation.

Figure 5.4

Share of households getting into debt or addressing savings constant over time

Households by their self-reported ability to make ends meet, 1990-2016^a (in percentages)



a The differences in percentages have not been tested for their statistical significance. Some caution is therefore called for in interpreting smaller differences over time.

Source: CBS (2017e)

Viewed by household characteristics, by contrast, there are clear differences in the difficulty in making ends meet (table 5.5). The share of households of non-working breadwinners aged up to 65 increased slowly to 22% in 2015, after never having exceeded 15% (in 2005) prior to the crisis in 2008. This was followed by a slight reduction in 2016 (19%). Difficulty making ends meet peaked earlier for single-parent families, in 2012-2014 (20%). The measures taken in 2015 specifically aimed at single-parent families (increasing the child-related budget) would appear to be bearing fruit: in 2015, the share having difficulty making ends meet had fallen to 16%, and in 2016 to 13% – though economic developments will also have played a helpful role here.

Table 5.5

Non-working persons aged under 65 and single-parent families have most difficulty making ends meet
Households who have to get into debt or address savings in order to make ends meet, by a number of background characteristics, 2002-2016 (in percentages)

	2002	2005	2008	2012	2014	2015	2016
total	6	9	6	7	7	7	6
education level							
low	6	9	7	9	9	8	7
intermediate	6	8	7	7	9	7	6
high	4	6	5	5	5	5	4
labour market position							
working	5	9	6	7	7	6	4
non-working < 65 years	10	15	12	18	20	22	19
non-working ≥ 65 years	3	5	3	4	5	4	5
household composition							
living alone	6	9	7	9	9	9	7
single-parent family	14	20	17	20	20	16	13
couple without children	3	4	4	4	4	4	4
couple with children	6	10	7	7	7	6	6

Source: CBS (2017f; 2017g)

There is more variation over time in the percentage who have no difficulty making ends meet (but actually have money left over) (figure 5.4). The figure stood at 44% in the early 1990s, peaked at 56% in 2001 and by 2016 had returned to 52%.

The groups who have money left over are mainly people with high education, people in work and couples without children, with the figure for highly educated people reaching 66% in 2016 (not shown in figure). The share of households with money left over increased in all groups between 2015 and 2016.

Opinions on level of benefits vary depending on benefit

On average, people in 2016 were reasonably satisfied with the level of a number of important social security benefits in the Netherlands (figure 5.5). This relates to both benefit claimants and non-claimants together. Opinions have been measured over the last 25 years in a series; although the measurements were not always carried out in exactly the same way, patterns can still be discerned.

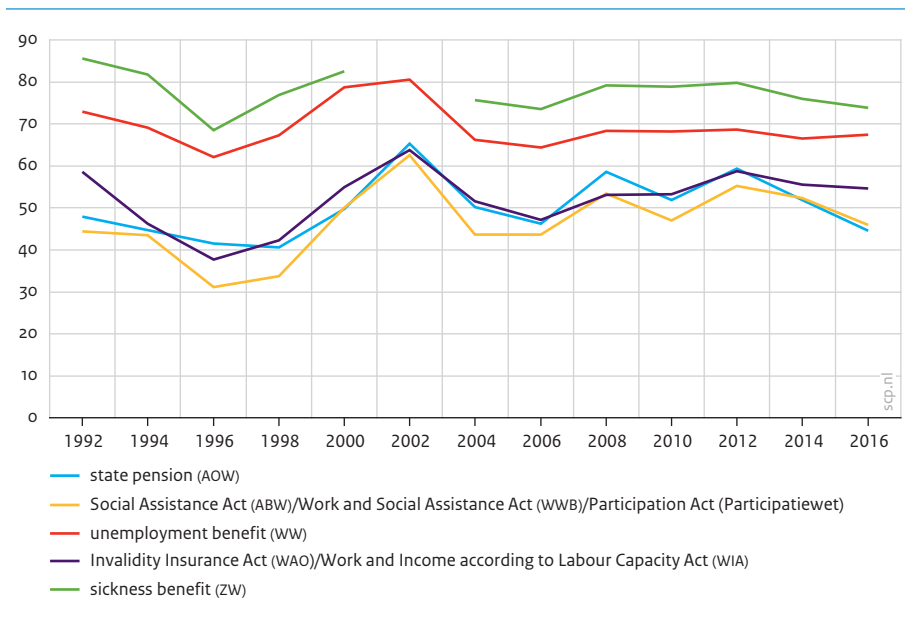
Sickness benefits (zw) are most often judged to be adequate (74% think this), followed by unemployment benefit (ww) in a clear second place (67%). These benefits have been considered adequate since as long ago as 1992, although opinions on these and other

benefits fluctuated widely until 2004. This probably reflects reactions to cuts which were regarded as unjustified (Becker 2003).

Figure 5.5

The Dutch are reasonably satisfied with the level of the main benefits

Share of persons who consider specific benefits to be adequate,^{a, b, c} 1992-2016 (in percentages)



- a The group who did not give an opinion, generally around 10%, is excluded.
 b A slightly different methodology was used in 2002, which may have influenced the results (Verhagen 2007).
 c Up to and including 2008, respondents were asked if they considered the benefit cited to be adequate; from 2008 the question was made more specific by asking whether respondents felt the *amount* of the benefit was adequate. This may have produced a trend-break, though it is plausible that people before 2010 also had in mind the amount of the benefit when answering the question (though it is possible that they also took its duration into account in formulating their response).

Source: SCP (cv'92-'16/'17); SCP treatment

Opinions on disability benefits (WAO/WIA), income support via social assistance benefit/Wwb/Participation Act and the state pension (AOW) are lower and vary more over time. Here again, opinions have stabilised somewhat since 2004. At the end of the analysis period, 55% of respondents felt that the level of WIA disability benefit was adequate, but the satisfaction figures for benefits paid under the Participation Act and the state pension are clearly lower (just over 45%). The recent drop in satisfaction with the state pension is striking. It may be connected to the problems at pension funds and the

pensions debate; that has in reality nothing to do with the state pension, but concerns supplementary pensions, where problems with the funding ratio have meant it has not always been possible to index-link supplementary pensions in recent years. However, not everyone is aware of this distinction. The recent raising of the state retirement age may also have played a role.

The recent fall in average satisfaction with the level of benefits has taken place at roughly the same rate among people in work and people in receipt of benefit or pension (not shown in figure). In 2016, 60% of working people were still satisfied; people on benefits were the least satisfied (39%). Pensioners themselves are the most satisfied with the state pension (52% in 2016); only 22% of people in receipt of (other) benefits think the state pension is adequate. It is striking that the dissatisfaction with the state pension is concentrated in groups where the amount of this benefit currently plays no role. This finding is in line with earlier editions of this report.

Three out of four Dutch people think income differentials are too wide

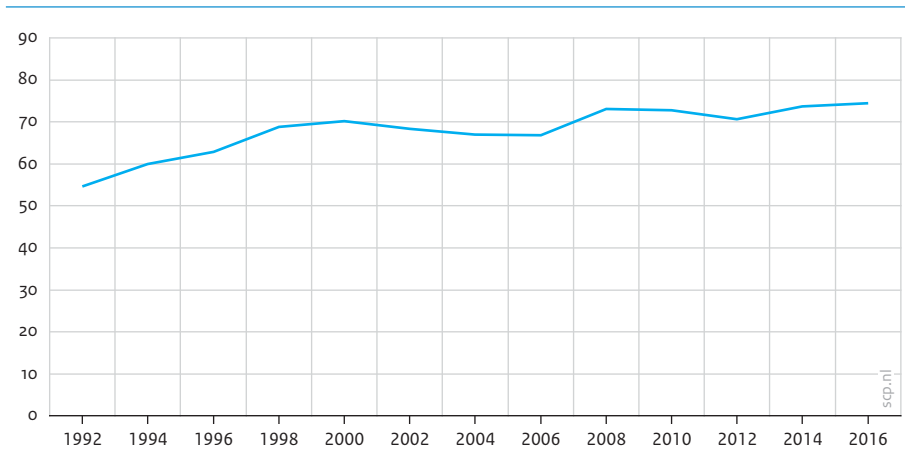
In 2016/17, almost three-quarters of Dutch people felt that the income differentials in the Netherlands should be reduced (figure 5.6) when asked their opinion on the gap between high and low incomes. People were not questioned separately about income differentials between men and women, and the possibility can therefore not be entirely ruled out that the opinions of respondents who only wished to see these differentials reduced was reflected in their response to the general question about differentials. Over the period 1992-2016, a growing number of people felt that income differentials should be reduced; the proportion holding this view rose from 55% to 74%. In 2016/17, more than 70% of groups based on education level, labour market position and household composition also hold this view. The increase to some extent tracks the economy: when the economy is performing better, the desire to see income differentials reduced appears to increase, and vice versa. These opinions bear much less relation to actual measured inequality, which remained virtually unchanged over this period.

The group who would like income differentials to be reduced is substantially bigger and has grown much faster than the group who consider benefits to be inadequate (figure 5.5). One possible explanation is the increase in the number of fewer well-paid jobs and of sole traders. The debate about the highest incomes may also play a role; this was cited in the 2009 edition of 'Social State of the Netherlands' (*De sociale staat van Nederland 2009*) as a possible reason for the increase in these views after 2004.

Figure 5.6

Three-quarters of Dutch citizens think income differentials are too wide

Share of households who believe that income differentials in the Netherlands should be (much) smaller,^a 1992-2016 (in percentages)



a There may be a trend-break in 2008 due to the move to a different fieldwork agency.

Source: SCP (cv'92-'16/'17); SCP treatment

5.6 Concluding discussion

In the summer of 1975, senior figures at the Dutch Ministry of Finance finally managed to persuade their own minister that, after having achieved a rather poor track record, a change of course was necessary (Van Zanden and Griffiths 1989). This was followed by a period of unrelenting government intervention in a bid to keep the welfare state manageable. Vrooman (2016) analysed the changes in almost sixty social security arrangements in the period 1980-2015 in areas such as unemployment, old age, sick leave, etc. He concluded that older people are doing better than ever in terms of income protection while, by contrast, those aged 18-64 years have fallen behind substantially since 1990. In fact, for those aged below around 50, the reduction in income protection probably began much earlier, as a raft of measures taken in the 1980s (changes to the employment history requirement for unemployment benefit, extension of the Widows and Orphans Benefits Act (AWW) to include male surviving dependants, and the early retirement schemes) mainly benefited those aged over 50, and on balance negated the effects of the limitations experienced by those on social assistance and disability benefits during this period.

If the situation for large groups in Dutch society has deteriorated *de jure* since 1975 (or, if preferred, since 1990), *de facto* there is no one-to-one relationship between the policy pursued and the level of purchasing power, poverty, income inequality, take-up of unemployment benefits and the state pension, people's satisfaction with their own income, and so on. In fact, as the analyses in this chapter have shown, population ageing and the state of the economy appear to be at least as important in shaping the trend in these variables. Moreover, the effects of policy can be indirect. For example, the number of people aged 20-64 years in Dutch society increased by over 440,000 between 1995 and 2016 (CBS 2017c), while the number of people in work increased almost fourfold (1.6 million) (CBS 2017d). It therefore seems that the population has at least in part 'repaired' the deterioration in social security benefits by their own efforts, i.e. working more. On the other hand, it could be argued that the constant hammering by the government on the need to work has had an effect.

Although the implementation of the Participation Act marks the end of a period of continual cuts in social security, which as a result is less generous than at any time in the last 25 years, the outlook for Dutch citizens appears to be favourable for the years ahead: the economy is growing again, the poverty rate is declining, and people's satisfaction with their own income is rising again.

Notes

- 1 The terms 'income', 'disposable income', 'standardised income' and 'purchasing power' are used interchangeably in this chapter. In all cases, the reference is to disposable household income adjusted for inflation and household composition.
- 2 These are partially overlapping groups for which the trend in purchasing power is given.
- 3 The method used can be broken down into three steps.
 - The population was split into several dozen socio-economic groups, the main ones being employees and the self-employed, pensioners and benefit claimants. These groups were then refined further by adding in household type, number of earners and income level. The Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis (CPB) calculated the median purchasing power changes for these groups for 2017.
 - These changes were attributed to the same groups in the 2014 income panel survey (IPO'14). This produced the expected incomes per group in 2017.
 - Demographic and socioeconomic changes were then incorporated, such as population ageing and unemployment. The IPO'14 was then re-weighted with the projected numbers for 2017.
- 4 In this chapter, the 'modest but adequate' criterion is used as the poverty line. In 2014 it amounted to 1,063 euros per month for a single person.
- 5 The poverty rate reached a peak in 2013 of 7.9%, after which it fell slightly to 7.6% in 2014. This slight decline is expected to have continued in the years after 2014 (Hoff et al. 2017).
- 6 Table 5.2 shows a share of 6.2% in 2000. The provisional character of this database is probably having an effect here.

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6 Paid work and care tasks

Bart van Hulst, Martin Olsthoorn & Anne Roeters

- The dominant trends on the Dutch labour market over the last 25 years have been the growth in part-time employment, especially of women, and in the share of self-employed people, especially sole traders/freelancers.
 - There has been a sharp increase in the labour participation rate in the last 25 years, especially of older people and women.
 - The most severe burnout symptoms occur in the education sector, affecting 18% of employees, but despite this people working in education are not frequently dissatisfied with their jobs.
 - The highest burnout rates among self-employed workers are in the financial services sector, with 17% affected. This is reflected in their job dissatisfaction.
 - The Dutch public have not quite taken on board the prospect of a retirement age of over 67 years that will result from the linking of the state retirement age to life expectancy.
 - Men spend an average of 46 hours per week in total on 'obligatory' activities, and women an average of 45 hours per week.
 - The total time spent on paid work, care tasks and education was roughly the same in 1990 as in 2016, though has fluctuated somewhat over the intervening years.
 - Roughly one in three people in the Netherlands feel under time pressure, women more so than men.
-

6.1 Trends in paid work and care tasks

Since the early 1990s, the Dutch labour market and labour market policy have been broadly shaped by three trends. The first is demographic: the Netherlands has an ageing population, and raising the labour participation rate has accordingly been on the agenda for some time. The second trend is economic: the Dutch labour market has seen a sharp increase in the use of flexible employment contracts over the last 25 years. This trend began in the first half of the 1990s with a rise in the proportion of temporary contracts, and was reinforced around the turn of the century by an increase in the share of sole traders/freelancers (Euwals et al. 2016) in the labour force. The third trend relates to policy. Since the early 1990s, there has been a shift in emphasis in Dutch labour market policy, from a passive approach focusing on income support to a more active policy aimed at the integration of people who do not participate in the labour market but who place demands on the social security system (see chapter 5 and Wielers & De Beer 2016).

All these trends have driven policy developments in their own way over the last two years. The Participation Act (Participatiewet) came into force on 1 January 2015, as part of the decentralisation of responsibilities in the social domain. The Act covers a number of income provisions (see chapter 5), but is also linked to measures aimed at promoting labour market participation by disadvantaged groups. The Act thus fits in with the policy trend towards more active integration. The main measures in this context are the ‘jobs contract’ (whereby both the private sector and the government undertake to create jobs for labour market re-entrants who are unable to earn the minimum wage), and ‘sheltered employment’ (work placements for people who are unable to find work with mainstream employers). Since 1 January 2015, the number of jobs to be created by the private sector under the jobs contract has been more than met, but the government is lagging behind,¹ and candidates are not always found to fill the vacancies created. The number of sheltered employment places created is currently below expectations (TK 2016/2017b). The lack of progress in creating these workplaces was addressed in an amendment to the Participation Act at the end of 2016 by imposing an obligation on local authorities (TK 2016/2017b).

The growth in the number of flexible contracts created a new form of inequality, namely between employees with a permanent contract and a reasonable degree of job security, and employees with a flexible contract and sole traders/freelancers (Euwals et al. 2016). The government has made efforts in the recent period to combat the inequality between these groups. The ‘Work and Security Act’ (Wet werk en zekerheid – wwz) came fully into effect on 1 January 2016, amending a number of existing employment laws, including in relation to the accrual and payment of unemployment benefits. Among the changes which came into force on 1 January 2015 are the shortening of the ‘chain system’ governing consecutive fixed-term contracts, streamlining of the dismissal laws, the introduction of transitional severance pay and a less generous unemployment benefits regime² (TK 2015/2016a, 2015/2016b). The controversial decision on daily wage rates, under which the calculation system resulted in flexible employees receiving too little unemployment benefit, was addressed with an amended decision effective from 1 December 2016 (TK 2016/2017a). To provide more legal certainty for the growing group of sole traders/freelancers, the Labour Relations Assessment (Deregulation) Act (DBA) came into force on 1 May 2016 (TK 2014/2015c). The DBA places responsibility for a proper definition of the employment relationship with the client and the contractor, whereas previously this responsibility lay solely with the contractor (i.e. the self-employed worker/freelancer). The DBA is an attempt by the government to avoid self-employed workers being used – intentionally or unintentionally – as de facto employees (bogus self-employment). Owing to a lack of clarity regarding the relationship between the DBA and the 1907 Labour Act (Arbeidswet) (Section 610, Book 10 of the Netherlands Civil Code) enforcement has been deferred until 2018. In the coalition agreement, it has been decided to replace the DBA with a new law with a similar goal, although this law has yet to be formulated (TK 2017/2018).

In response to population ageing, the government has raised the state retirement age twice in the last two years, following amendment of the General Old Age Pensions Act (AOW) in 2012 (TK 2011/2012b). The state retirement age in 2018 is 66 years, and will rise to 67 in 2021; thereafter it will be linked to life expectancy (see also chapter 7). This is expected to mean that the retirement age continues rising to reach 71.5 years in 2060 (CBS 2014a). The Continued Employment after Retirement Age Act (Wet werken na de AOW-gerechtigde leeftijd) was also adopted on 1 January 2016, making it more attractive for employers to take on people of retirement age (Olsthoorn & Cloin 2015; TK 2014/2015a).

6.2 Labour market trends

Momentum returns to labour market

In the last edition of 'Social State of the Netherlands' (SSN) we observed that the Dutch economy was showing signs of a tentative recovery following the deep downturn in the wake of the economic crisis and the recession of 2009. That recovery proved to be robust in 2016, with GDP growing by around 2.0% in both 2015 and 2016 and the employment volume and the number of jobs and open vacancies both rising (table 6.1).

The Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis (CPB) is projecting a similar rate of GDP and employment growth for 2017 and 2018, as well as a reduction in unemployment (CPB 2017).

To gain an impression of the progress of the recovery, we can plot a Beveridge curve (figure 6.1). This portrays the relationship between the unemployment rate and the job vacancy rate. The theory underlying this graph is that the labour market often shows repeated patterns. First, when the economy is doing well, unemployment is low and there are lots of unfilled vacancies: few people are unemployed and employers find it difficult to fill vacancies (above left). Then, as the economy weakens the number of unfilled vacancies reduces: employers see their profits falling and stop expanding or start to contract (above left to bottom left). This in turn begins to push up unemployment (bottom left to bottom right). Finally, when the economy recovers the number of vacancies first increases, after which unemployment reduces (bottom right to top left).

Table 6.1
 Economy growing and labour market improving

Trend in economic growth and demand for labour, yearly averages, 1990–2016 (in percentages and absolute numbers x 1,000)

	1990	1996	2000	2008	2012	2014 ^a	2016 ^b	Q2 2017 ^b
GDP growth versus earlier period	. ^c	3.6	4.2	1.7	-1.1	1.4	2.2	1.5
employment volume (employees in employment years) ^d	4832	5108	5766	6095	5901	5775	5930	.
jobs held by employees ^e	5896	6486	7377	8025	7908	7742	7920	8130
employment volume (self-employed workers in employment years) ^d	863	990	962	1086	1154	1190	1202	.
jobs held by self-employed workers ^f	1654	1766	1691	1889	2015	2093	2079	2087
open vacancies	.	.	203.7	240	112	108	155.9	212.8

a Provisional figures for employment volume and jobs held by employees and self-employed workers.

b Provisional figures.

c . indicates that the figures concerned are no longer available in StatLine.

d The number of jobs held by employees and self-employed workers in a year, converted to full-time equivalents; two half jobs within the same year thus count as one employment year.

e Jobs for more than one or a few hours per week are also counted.

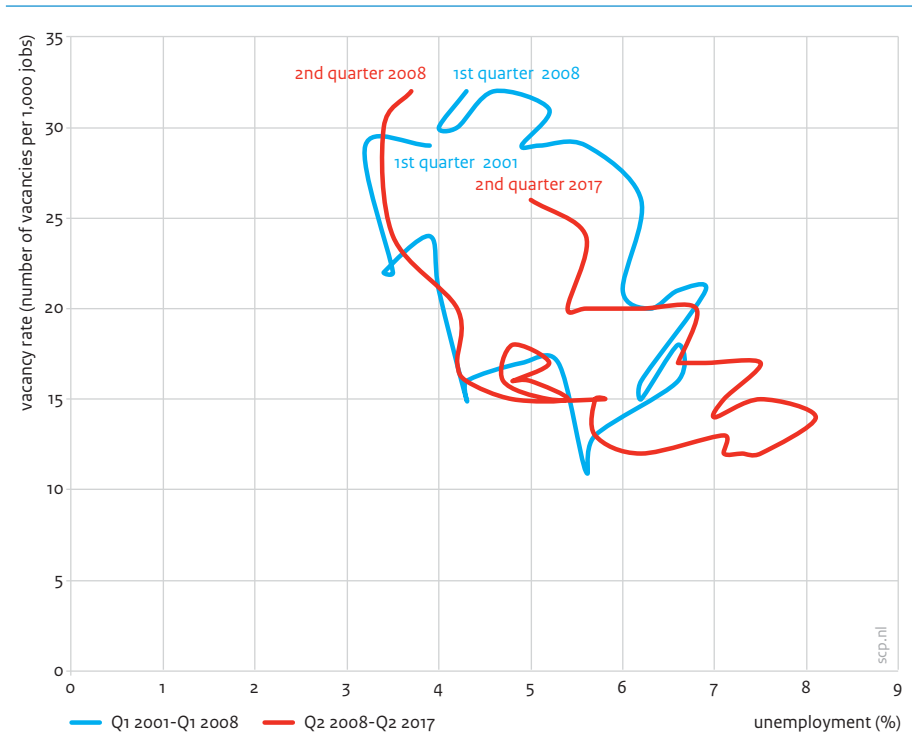
f As well as jobs held by employees, there are also jobs held by self-employed workers. In that case, therefore, the self-employed worker is both employer and employee and the job coincides with the business.

Source: (CBS 2017c, 2017d, 2017e, 2017i)

Figure 6.1 shows Beveridge curves for two periods. The first curve (blue) describes the period from the peak before the bursting of the dot-com bubble to the peak before the collapse of the us housing market and the ensuing financial crisis (Q1 2001 to Q1 2008). The second curve (red) describes the period from the peak before the collapse of the American housing market to the present (Q2 2008 to Q1 2017). The first thing the figure shows is that the labour market is indeed recovering well: if the curve reflects the usual course of development, both the job vacancy rate and the unemployment rate have passed their low point and high point, respectively, by a wide margin. Second, unemployment is beginning to fall back towards 4%, which can be regarded as the historical natural unemployment rate for the Netherlands.³

Figure 6.1
Labour market recovery appears well on track

Vacancy rate and unemployment rate, 15-75 year-olds, 2001-2017 (in percentages and numbers per 1,000 jobs)



Source: (CBS 2017b, 2017h); SCP treatment

The labour market over the last 25 years: more part-timers and more self-employed

If we look back over the period since 1990, a number of shifts in the labour market stand out (see table 6.1 and figure 6.2). We can divide the whole period broadly into three shorter periods. During the first period of strong economic growth (up to and including 1997), the number of jobs held by both employees and self-employed workers increased steadily. In the second period (1997-2002), the number of jobs held by employees continued to grow strongly, whereas the number of jobs held by self-employed workers declined. In the third period (from 2002 onwards), this relationship has reversed and it is the number of jobs held by self-employed workers that has grown, while the number held by employees has lagged behind. As we shall see later in the chapter, and as reported by Euwals et al. (2016), the latter trend is due in large part to the sharp rise in the number of self-employed workers without employees (sole traders/freelancers). The employment volume of employees has also grown more slowly over the last 25 years than the number of jobs held by employees. This reflects the sharp rise in the number of people working part-time, and therefore to some extent the growth in the labour participation rate of women since the 1980s. The employment volume of self-employed workers, by contrast, has grown more strongly than the number of jobs held by this group, indicating a rise in the number of hours worked each week by self-employed persons since 1990.

There are multiple reasons for this sharp rise in self-employment, and research points to several factors. Employers appear to be responding to the obligation to continue paying an employee's salary during periods of illness by taking on more flexible workers, including self-employed workers. The self-employed persons' deduction can also be used as a means of setting the costs of employing a self-employed person at a level which reduces the costs to the employer whilst at the same time leaving the self-employed worker with a higher net income than if they were an employee (albeit the self-employed worker still has to pay for a number of important insurances). It is also likely that the competition on costs taking place in the export sector in a globalising world is leading to a desire to reduce employers' costs and thus perhaps to greater use of self-employed workers. Finally, the growth in the self-employed segment could be being driven by growing individualisation and people's need to be their own boss, as well as by technological developments which make it possible to find a good, suitable self-employed person for a particular task quickly (e.g. via online platforms) (Kremer et al. 2017; Roeters et al. 2016).

Figure 6.2

Strong growth in jobs held by self-employed workers since 2003

Trend in demand for labour, yearly averages, 1990-2016 (in cumulative growth percentages compared with 1990)^a



a The figures for 2014, 2015 and 2016 are provisional.

Source: (CBS 2017d)

Supply of labour over the last 25 years: growth in working labour force mainly due to increased number of self-employed workers

Compared with the *Social State of the Netherlands 2015* (SSN 2015), there has been a sea change in the labour supply across the piece, with the working labour force and the number of employees increasing again after falling for several years. This recovery can already be seen in 2015 and accelerates in 2016. The total population aged 15-65 years (the potential labour force) is also increasing again, albeit this growth only becomes apparent in 2016 and is small, especially in relative terms. Some things have simply remained as they were: the growth in the number of self-employed people which began some years ago has for example continued unabated in recent years.

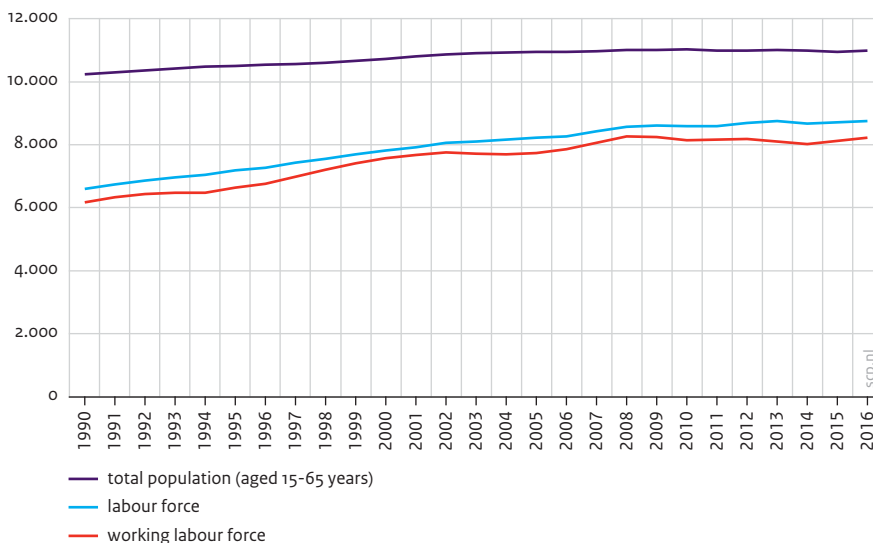
If we view the labour market over a longer period, a number of trends become apparent. First, the labour force has grown considerably more quickly than the total population aged 15-65 years (figure 6.3); the latter has grown by just over 7% since 1990, with most of this growth taking place up to the year 2000, after which there was virtually no structural increase. By contrast, the labour force has grown much more quickly, by 33% since 1990.

Much of the growth in the labour force also took place before 2000, but continued for longer, only levelling off in around 2009. The growth in the labour force and the working labour force has been virtually synchronous, though there are of course small annual differences due to fluctuations in the unemployment rate.

Figure 6.3

Labour force growing faster than the total population aged 15-64 years

Development of labour force, 1990-2016^a (in absolute numbers x 1,000)



a In 2001 and 2003 there was a trend-break in the data collection. These breaks have been corrected by linking old series to new ones in overlapping years. The values for the years prior to 2003 are therefore adjusted figures.

Source: CBS (2017a, 2017g); SCP treatment

In line with figure 6.2, the number of self-employed workers increases sharply after 2003, while the number of employees barely grows at all: the number of self-employed workers has grown by 36% since 2003, compared with a 2% increase in the number of employees. However, the vast majority (83%) of the working labour force is still made up of employees; this means that, in absolute numbers, the differences in the two trends are a good deal smaller. The growth in the number of self-employed workers can be largely ascribed to the sharp increase in the number of sole traders/freelancers referred to earlier.

The average weekly working hours have gradually declined, reducing by more than two hours since 1996. This is due on the one hand to a reduction in working hours across the board, and on the other to a compositional effect: the share of women in the working labour force has risen, and their working hours are below average (table 6.2).

Table 6.2

Labour participation rate rising, especially among women and older people

Trend in labour supply, participation and unemployment, persons aged 15-64 years, 2006-2017Q2^b
(in number x 1,000, hours and percentages)

	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	Q2 2017
total population (aged 15-64 years)	10,952	10,997	11,017	10,992	10,980	10,988	11,039
labour force	8,272	8,571	8,583	8,684	8,677	8,754	8,802
working labour force	7,856	8,257	8,151	8,174	8,028	8,223	8,360
total employees	6,812	7,118	6,973	6,984	6,774	6,910	7,032
self-employed	1,043	1,139	1,177	1,191	1,255	1,313	1,328
weekly working hours ^a	31.6	31.8	31.5	31.2	31.4	31	31
men	37.4	37.3	37.0	36.5	36.4	36	36
women	24.7	25.5	25.4	25.2	25.2	26	26
net labour participation rate, total (%)	71.7	75.1	74.0	74.4	73.1	74.8	75.7
men	79.0	81.8	79.5	79.3	78.1	79.6	80.2
women	64.4	68.3	68.4	69.4	68.1	70.1	71.2
15-24 years	60.5	64.3	60.7	61.1	58.8	60.8	61.9
55-64 years	44.9	50.7	53.2	57.6	59.9	63.5	65.5
non-Western migrants	54.3	61.1	57.5	57.7	55.2	56.3	55.8
unemployment rate, total (%)	5.0	3.7	5.0	5.9	7.5	6.1	5.0
men	4.1	3.0	4.6	5.5	7.2	5.6	4.6
women	6.1	4.5	5.5	6.3	7.8	6.5	5.5
15-24 years	10.0	8.6	11.1	11.7	12.7	10.8	9.0
55-64 years	4.8	3.9	4.4	5.3	7.7	7.2	6.1
non-Western migrants	12.6	8.4	11.7	14.1	16.5	13.2	11.9
low -skilled	8.0	6.2	8.4	9.4	12.3	10.0	9.2
intermediate-skilled	4.5	3.2	4.5	5.6	7.6	6.1	4.9
high-skilled	2.9	2.1	3.0	3.4	4.0	3.5	2.7

Table 6.2

(Continued)

	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	Q2 2017
net labour participation rate, 65-69 years	8.3	10.4	12.1	12.7	14.7	13.1	13.8
net labour participation rate, 70-74 years	4.3	4.3	5.4	6.3	5.7	6.0	6.8

a CBS has published data rounded off in whole hours since 2016.

b Second quarter.

Source: CBS (2017a, 2017j)

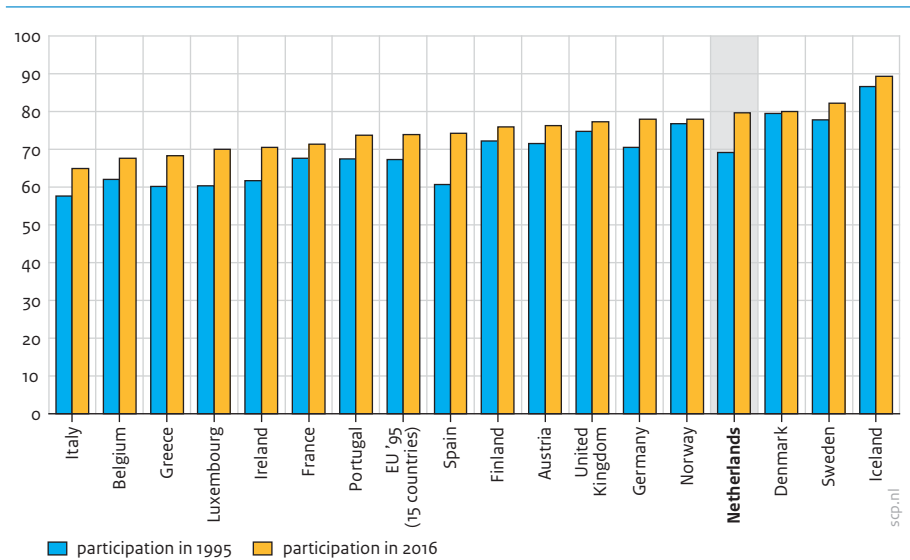
Increased labour participation, especially among older persons and women

The trends in the labour participation rate are in line with the trends in the labour supply observed earlier. After falling for several years, the labour participation rate began rising again since 2015, and reached almost 75% in 2016. The rise in the labour participation rate in the last two years means there has been a slight net increase over the last five years. Although the labour participation rate has increased in all groups in the last two years, this does not apply over the last five years. In fact, the labour participation rate of young people (15-25 years) and non-Western migrants has decreased in the last five years. By contrast, the labour market participation of older people (55-64 years) has risen sharply, from around 55% to almost 64%. This increase is in line with the longer-term picture: the labour participation rate of old people has increased by almost 2.3 times since 1990, though the caveat needs to be applied here that it started from a very low base in the early 1990s. The female labour participation rate has also risen sharply since 1990, by more than 26 percentage points. Raising the labour participation of women has been a central plank of the Dutch government's emancipation policy (Portegijs & Van den Brakel 2016).

It was noted earlier in this chapter that raising the labour participation rate has been a key policy principle, and the strong and persistent increase suggests that this policy has borne fruit. The Netherlands also performs well internationally, having climbed from the middle group in terms of labour participation to the leading group in Europe (Chkalova et al. 2017). Figure 6.4 illustrates this based on the trend in the gross participation rate in 15 EU Member States between 1995 and 2016; it can be seen that the Netherlands has climbed from ninth place in 1995 to fourth place in 2016.

Figure 6.4

Labour participation rate in the Netherlands has increased, putting the Netherlands in the leading group
Trending gross participation rate in 15 EU Member States, 1995 and 2016 (in percentages)



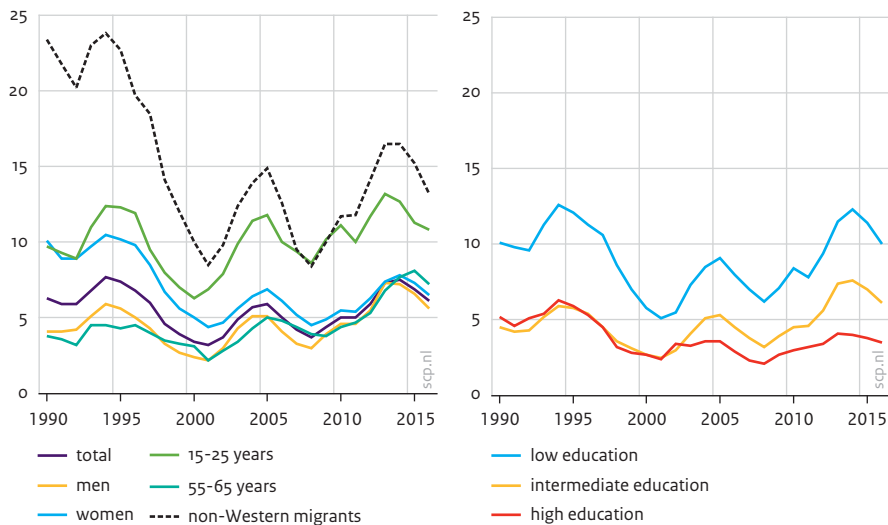
Source: Eurostat (2017)

Substantial differences in unemployment between groups

It was noted earlier in this section that the unemployment rate in the Netherlands is falling. However, there are substantial differences in unemployment between groups, both in terms of level and trend. Unemployment is well above average especially among the low-skilled, non-Western migrants and young people. At the same time, these same groups are seeing the biggest fall in unemployment in percentage points in the current period of economic recovery. For example, the unemployment rate among non-Western migrants has fallen by over three percentage points over a period of two years. Viewed over a longer period, the trend in unemployment shows fluctuations, peaking in 1994, 2005 and 2014. The unemployment rate in the various groups tracks the trend in total unemployment, and the differences in unemployment levels observed in 2016 are also visible in the multi-year trends. The groups referred to earlier with high unemployment rates appear to be extra susceptible to economic developments, both positive and negative. During the last two periods of economic recovery, three groups benefited slightly earlier than others: unemployment fell among men, high-skilled workers and young people in 2005 and 2014, whereas it was still rising in the economy as a whole. For the other groups, the fall in unemployment followed a year later (figure 6.5).

Figure 6.5

Unemployment peaks in 1994, 2005 and 2014

Unemployment by background characteristics, persons aged 15-64 years, 1990-2016^a (in percentages)

a In 2001 and 2003 there was a trend-break in the data collection. These breaks have been corrected by linking old series to new ones in overlapping years. The values for the years prior to 2003 are therefore adjusted figures.

Source: CBS (2017a, 2017g); SCP treatment

6.3 Flexibilisation and working conditions

More than 83% of those in work are employees, the majority with a permanent employment contract (table 6.3). However, the share of these employees has been falling for many years, in favour of employees with flexible contracts: the share of employees with permanent employment contracts has fallen from seven to six out of ten. This trend continued in 2016, albeit more slowly than in previous years.

There are different types of flexible employment contracts. The majority of flexible employment contracts in 2016 were on-call or stand-in contracts, at around 6% of employment contracts. One reason for this is the strong growth in this category of workers over the last decade, though the share fell (slightly) for the first time in 2016. Another common type of flexible employment contract is the temporary contract with the prospect of a permanent contract. The share of workers with this type of contract has grown particularly over the last two years, and accounted for approximately 4% of employment contracts in 2016. Agency staff are a similar sized group, making up 3% of employment contracts. Their share is fairly stable over time, though it is known that when

the economy recovers after a crisis, the number of agency staff is the first to increase (Reitsma & Hilbers 2017), and this effect has also been apparent in recent years.

Table 6.3

Increasing number of employees with a flexible employment contract

Distribution of employment position, persons aged 15-64 years, 2006-2017 Q2^a (in percentages)

	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	Q2 2017
employees	86.3	85.7	85.0	84.7	83.5	83.3	83.4
with permanent employment contract	70.7	68.4	67.5	66.0	63.0	61.4	60.5
with flexible employment contract	15.5	17.3	17.5	18.7	20.6	21.9	22.9
temporary with prospect of permanent	2.3	2.9	2.7	3.0	2.8	3.5	3.9
temporary ≥ 1 year	1.6	1.7	2.0	1.9	2.4	2.1	2.0
temporary < 1 year	2.1	2.3	2.3	2.1	2.0	2.2	2.5
on-call or stand-in contracts	3.8	4.1	4.7	5.5	6.5	6.4	6.4
agency staff	3.0	2.9	2.4	2.4	2.8	3.3	3.3
permanent contract, no set hours	1.0	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.5	1.5	1.7
temporary contract, no set hours	1.7	2.1	2.1	2.4	2.5	2.8	3.1
self-employed	13.7	14.3	15.0	15.3	16.5	16.7	16.6
self-employed without employees	9.0	9.7	10.4	10.9	12.0	12.2	12.4
self-employed with employees	4.2	4.1	4.0	3.9	4.0	4.0	3.9
helping family member	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.3

a Second quarter.

Source: CBS (2017k)

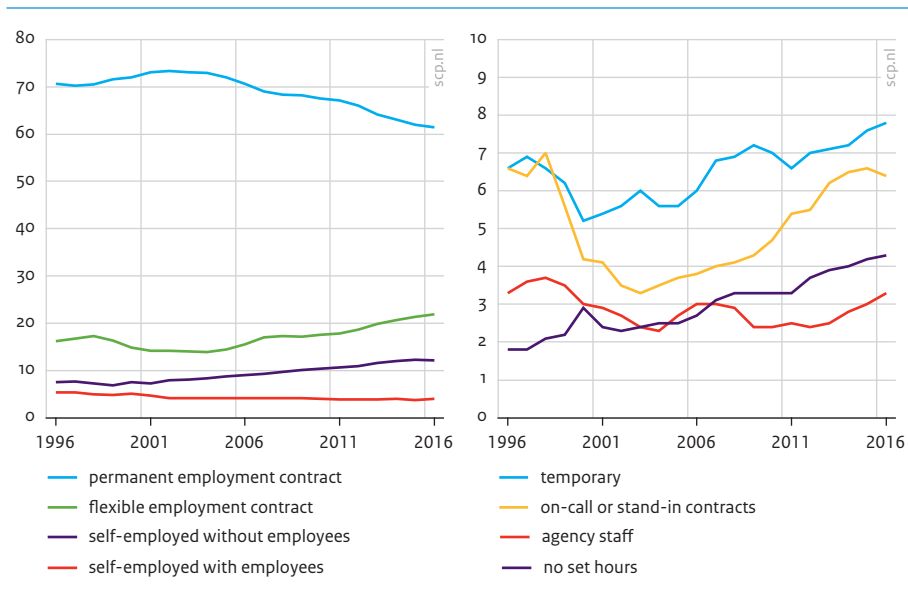
Viewed over a period of 20 years, there has been a sharp decline in the proportion of employees with a permanent employment contract (figure 6.6). This decline had not actually begun until 2003, and accelerated from 2005 onwards. The trend has been mainly towards flexible employment contracts and sole traders/freelancers. The share of flexible on-call and stand-in contracts has fallen sharply since 1998. This coincides with the introduction of the Flexibility and Security Act in 1999 (Flexwet 1999), which reduced the appeal of on-call work as a result of the negative sentiment among employers (Knegt et al. 2007). This trend reversed in 2003, and the share of on-call and stand-in contracts began to increase again.

As stated, the share of self-employed workers, especially those without employees, has been growing for several years, and this trend is continuing at the expense of the share of employees. This growth came to a halt in 2016, however, and actually fell slightly compared with 2015. There are two obvious explanations for this. First, it is possible that in an improving labour market people feel less need to become self-employed. A second possible explanation is the introduction of the Labour Relations Assessment

(Deregulation) Act (DBA) in 2016 in a bid to combat the ‘bogus self-employment’ referred to in the Introduction. However, as also stated in the Introduction, enforcement of this Act has been deferred until 2018, and the effect could be largely due to the increase of awareness as a result of the mere announcement of the Act.

Figure 6.6
Accelerated decline in permanent employment contracts since 2005

Distribution across different employment contracts and within flexible contracts, persons aged 15-64 years, 1996-2016a (in percentages)



a In 2001 and 2003 there was a trend-break in the data collection. These breaks have been corrected by linking old series to new ones in overlapping years. The values for the years prior to 2003 are therefore adjusted figures.

Source: CBS (2017f, 2017k, 2017l); SCP treatment

Are sole traders/freelancers the new workers?⁴

The improved capabilities of ICT and the changing content of work has led to high expectations of remote working ('the new way of working') since the start of this century. The idea of remote working is that it should enable people to work whenever and wherever they choose, and thus to structure their working and personal lives as they see fit. In the Social State of the Netherlands (SSN) we generally use two indicators for remote working: teleworking and autonomy. We are seeing steady growth in the first indicator for employees (table 6.4) (see also Van Echtelt et al. 2016). This growth has been fairly consistent over the last ten years, at around one percentage point per year, though the trend-break in the National Employment Conditions Survey (NEA) makes accurate comparison difficult (see notes a and b to table 6.4). By contrast, the second indicator, the degree of autonomy enjoyed by employees, shows no growth at all. As noted in the previous edition of SSN, teleworkers definitely enjoy more autonomy than non-teleworkers, and the most likely conclusion is therefore that employees who telework are often those who already had a fair degree of autonomy (see also Olsthoorn & Cloin 2015). The growing opportunities for teleworking are thus not making people more autonomous; rather, employees who were already autonomous are being given an opportunity to telework.

Another reason that the autonomy of employees is not increasing may be the strong growth in the number of self-employed workers over the last ten years. This growth is not driven by 'traditional' self-employed entrepreneurs who sell products in their own business, such as a farmer or shopkeeper, but by sole traders and freelancers who sell their own labour to a client, for example management consultants, or self-employed construction workers. Like their 'traditional' counterparts, these 'new-style' self-employed workers enjoy high degree of autonomy, scoring an average of around 2.80 on a three-point scale in 2017, compared with 2.46 for employees. They also often work at locations other than the client's or their own office. Although the indicators for employees and self-employed workers are not readily comparable, the large difference in the shares of each leads to a strong suspicion that working 'off-site' is more common for self-employed workers than for employees (15.5% and 16.4% of employees were engaged in teleworking in 2015 and 2016, respectively, compared with 63.5% of 'new-style' self-employed workers working at alternative locations in 2015). Viewed from this perspective, it is not impossible that a proportion of people who have become self-employed in recent years do different work from that which a fairly autonomous employee would perform. It may therefore be that the bulk of the 'remote working' is being carried out by these new cohorts of self-employed workers.

Table 6.4

More teleworking by employees, but their autonomy has not increased and is lower than that of self-employed workers

Teleworking and autonomy, employees and self-employed workers, 2008-2017 (in percentages and scale scores)

	2008	2010	2014 ^a	2015	2016	2017
teleworking ^b (%)						
employee (before trend-break)	12.2	15.2	14.8	15.5	16.4	
also works at locations other than own office or client's premises						
traditional self-employed worker				52.2		. ^c
new-style self-employed worker				63.5		. ^c
autonomy ^{d, e} (freedom to organise aspects of own work)						
employee	2.52	2.50	2.46	2.46	2.46 ^f	
traditional self-employed worker				2.80		2.79 ^f
new-style self-employed worker				2.81		2.82 ^f

a The research design of the NEA changed in 2014 (see e.g. Hooftman et al. 2015).

b Up to and including 2013, respondents were asked "Are you a teleworker?" From 2014, respondents were asked about the number of hours they spent teleworking, and were only classed as teleworkers if they did so for more than half a day. Given this stricter question formulation and conceptualisation, it is likely that the percentage of teleworkers is systematically lower in 2014 than up to and including 2013.

c In the 2017 Self-employment Survey (ZEA'17), self-employed respondents were asked about the locations where they normally work.

d The variable 'autonomy' is constructed as the average of five questions: 'Are you able to decide how you do your work?'; 'Do you decide the order in which you carry out your work?'; 'Are you able to decide the pace at which you work?'; 'Are you able to take leave whenever you wish?'; and 'Do you have to devise solutions in your work yourself in order to do certain things?' A sixth question focuses on autonomy in relation to working times. To facilitate comparability between employees and self-employed workers, and over time, we left this question out of the scale. Consequently, the results presented for autonomy of employees do not correspond with the methodological reports from the National Employment Conditions Survey (NEA) (see e.g. Hooftman et al. 2016).

e 1 = no autonomy, 3 = regular freedom (average score).

f These figures were specially provided by TNO for this study.

Source: Hooftman et al. (2016); Lautenbach et al. (2017); Maatwerk TNO (NEA '16 and ZEA '17); TNO/CBS (NEA '08-'15; ZEA '15); SCP treatment

6.4 Job demands and perceptions of work and pension

Work in education, financial services and ICT is the most demanding in several respects

The skills demanded by the work and how demanding the work is in several areas are important issues for a number of public debates that will play a role now and in the future. Recently, for example, the debate about the lower retirement age for people carrying out heavy work was rekindled: people in physically strenuous occupations, it is argued, will in many cases be at risk of becoming incapacitated for work before reaching retirement age, prompting a need for changes to the social security system. In 2015, 14.6% of employees said they performed physically demanding work 'more than occasionally' (see table 6.5; although the table contains more recent figures, 2015 is the last year for which we are able to compare employees and self-employed workers). A higher proportion of self-employed workers reported this (23.5% of traditional and 17.3% of new-style self-employed workers). The percentage of workers doing physically demanding work in 2015 was, not entirely surprisingly, high in agriculture (employees 31.9%, self-employed workers 42.9%), industry and energy (employees 26.3%, self-employed workers 35.6%) and the construction industry (employees 37.9%, self-employed workers 59.5%) (not shown in table). If problems should arise in more demanding occupations with people dropping out of the work process due to the raised retirement age, it is in many cases likely to be workers in these sectors who are affected. The fact that self-employed workers in these sectors often take out no or insufficient disability insurance due to cost considerations poses a potential future risk for these workers and for the demands placed on the social security system (Van der Linden & De Vries 2014).

It is also expected that routine work will increasingly be taken over by robots, while work requiring creative, social and empathic skills will continue to be performed by people (Roeters et al. 2016; WRR 2017). We cannot measure the importance of these skills directly, but we can look at whether workers themselves report that their work is creatively or emotionally demanding. Work which is reported by workers as being creatively demanding and varied occurs mainly in education (67.4% of employees in the sector felt in 2015 that their work was often or always creatively demanding, compared with 81.6% of self-employed workers in this sector) and healthcare (employees 52.9%, self-employed workers 71.4%), but also in the information and communications sector (employees 57.7%, self-employed workers 73.6%). The share of workers reporting that their work is emotionally demanding is small, but highest in the education sector (employees 9.1%, self-employed workers 5.6%) and in healthcare (employees 9.3%, self-employed workers 8.1%). Although work that is both creatively and emotionally demanding can have negative aspects, it does make it unlikely that the education and healthcare sectors are good candidates for automation (see also Autor 2015).

Finally, if we construct an indicator to measure how demanding several aspects of work are, we find that in 2014 14.4% of employees had jobs which were demanding according

four of the five indicators in table 6.5. The same applied in 2015 for 9.6% of traditional self-employed workers and 12.6% of new-style self-employed workers. Cumulatively, the most demanding sector for employees in 2014 was education (24.2%), followed by information and communication (21.1%) and in third place by financial services (19.7%). The most demanding sector for self-employed workers is financial services (23.8%), followed at some distance by industry and the energy sector (15.7%). It is worth noting that it is unequivocally clear demanding work should be interpreted negatively. For example, creatively demanding work is generally varied, something which those doing it appreciate, while work that is cognitively demanding can be stressful for some and challenging for others, or both at the same time.

Table 6.5

Around one in seven employees and one in eight self-employed workers report that their work is demanding on several fronts

Qualitative and quantitative job demands of employees and self-employed workers, 2008-2017 (in percentages)

	2008	2010	2012	2014 ^a	2015	2016	2017
more than occasionally physically demanding work ^b							
employees	15.5	15.7	14.8	14.4	14.6	14.8	.
traditional self-employed workers					23.5		25.4
new-style self-employed workers					17.3		17.7
often/always high work rate ^c							
employees	21.4	22.1	20.6	25.2	25.2	24.9	.
traditional self-employed workers					15.7		15.8
new-style self-employed workers					17.1		16.0
often/always cognitively demanding work ^d							
employees	65.3	64.1	62.0	61.8	63.1	62.2	.
traditional self-employed workers					54.8		54.8
new-style self-employed workers					69.1		72.2
often/always emotionally demanding work ^d							
employees	4.4	4.7	3.9	4.8	4.7	4.8	.
traditional self-employed workers					2.3		. ^f
new-style self-employed workers					3.6		. ^f

Table 6.5

(Continued)

	2008	2010	2012	2014 ^a	2015	2016	2017
often/always creatively demanding work ^d							
employees	48.8	47.7	46.0	43.8	.	43.3	.
traditional self-employed workers					47.3		49.6
new-style self-employed workers					61.7		62.9
cumulatively demanding work (four of five above indicators)							
employees	13.6	13.7	12.2	14.4	.	.	.
traditional self-employed workers					9.6		.
new-style self-employed workers					12.6		.

- a The research design of the NEA changed in 2014 (see e.g. Hooftman et al. 2015).
- b A respondent has 'more than occasionally physically demanding work' if he/she scores higher than 2 on average in answer to the questions, 'Does your work involve using great strength?', 'Do you use tools, equipment or machinery in your work which causes vibrations?', 'Do you work in an uncomfortable position?', 'Does your work involve you making repetitive movements?', and 'Is there so much noise at your workplace that you have to talk loudly in order to make yourself heard?' These questions could be answered with 1 = no, 2 = yes, occasionally, and 3 = yes, regularly.
- c A respondent has 'often/always a high work rate' if he/she scores an average of 3 or higher in response to the questions, 'Do you have to work very fast?', 'Do you have to do a great deal of work?', and 'Do you have to work extra hard?' These questions could be answered with 1 = never, 2 = occasionally, 3 = often and 4 = always.
- d A respondent has 'often/always cognitively demanding work' if he/she scores an average of 3 or higher in response to the questions, 'Does your work entail intensive thinking?', 'Does your work require you to keep your mind on the job?' and 'Does your work demand lots of attention from you?' These questions could be answered with 1 = never, 2 = occasionally, 3 = often and 4 = always.
- e A respondent has 'often/always emotionally demanding work' if he/she scores an average of 3 or higher in response to the questions, 'Does your work put you in emotionally difficult situations?', 'Is your work emotionally demanding?' and 'Do you get emotionally involved in your work?' These questions could be answered with 1 = never, 2 = occasionally, 3 = often and 4 = always.
- f Not available in ZEA'17.
- g A respondent has 'often/always creatively demanding work' if he/she scores an average of 3 or higher in response to the questions, 'Is your work varied?', 'Does your job require you to learn new things?' and 'Does your job demand creativity?' These questions could be answered with 1 = never, 2 = occasionally, 3 = often and 4 = always.

Source: TNO/CBS (NEA'08-'15; ZEA'15); SCP; Maatwerk TNO (NEA '16 and ZEA '17).

Satisfaction of self-employed workers stable or falling; burnout risk increasing

One interesting finding in the last edition of SSN was the decline in satisfaction with work and working conditions since the peak in 2010. This decline did not continue after that, but has also not recovered. After peaking in 2010, when 77.2% of employees reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their working conditions, this figure fell to 73.2% in 2015 before rising slightly in 2016 to 73.5% (table 6.6). Similarly, 78.8% of

employees reported in 2010 that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their work, this fell to 76.4% in 2015, and again rose slightly in 2016 to 77.0%.

Table 6.6

Satisfaction with work and working conditions of employees appears to be improving, while that of self-employed workers is flat

Satisfaction with work and working conditions, and burnout, employees and self-employed workers, 2008-2017 (in percentages)

	2008	2010	2014	2015	2016	2017
(very) satisfied with working conditions ^a						
employees	76.1	77.2	73.1	73.2	73.5	
traditional self-employed workers				78.8		76.8
new-style self-employed workers				78.9		78.5
(very) satisfied with work (among self-employed) ^a						
employees	78.4	78.8	76.5	76.4	77.0	
traditional self-employed workers				82.0		79.7
new-style self-employed workers				81.8		81.3
severe burnout symptoms ^b						
employees	12.7	13.1	14.4	13.4	14.6	
traditional self-employed workers				6.2		9.0
new-style self-employed workers				7.4		8.1

a Satisfaction with work and with working conditions show the same trend-break as the other variables in the NEA. However, further research has shown that this trend-break was probably so small as to be negligible (Mars et al. 2016). We therefore present these variables as a continuous series.

b Respondents in the NEA and ZEA surveys are suffering from severe burnout if they score higher than 3.20 on the seven-point scale used to measure the intensity of burnout symptoms. In practice this means that they feel emotionally exhausted by their work more than once a month, feel completely drained at the end of the working day, feel tired when they get up in the morning and have to face going to work, report that it demands a great deal from them to work the whole day with people and feel completely exhausted by their work.

Source: Hooftman et al. (2016); Lautenbach et al. (2017); TNO/CBS (NEA'08-'15; ZEA'15); SCP treatment

The satisfaction with work and working conditions of traditional self-employed workers fell by around two percentage points between 2015 and 2017. This decline was accompanied by a fairly marked increase in the incidence of severe burnout symptoms – from 6.2% in 2015 to 9.0% in 2017 – and an improvement in the financial situation of the companies employing traditional self-employed workers; the share of these companies which were performing well or very well went up from 37.9% to 39.4% (Janssen et al. 2015;

Lautenbach et al. 2017). Although this suggests that traditional self-employed workers are busier in an improving economy and that this may impact negatively on their satisfaction, it is nonetheless strange that the work rate of this group remained constant between 2015 and 2017. An alternative explanation could be that traditional self-employed workers suffered from the pressure on the retail sector due to the rise in online shopping, though this in turn does not tally with the improving company profits.

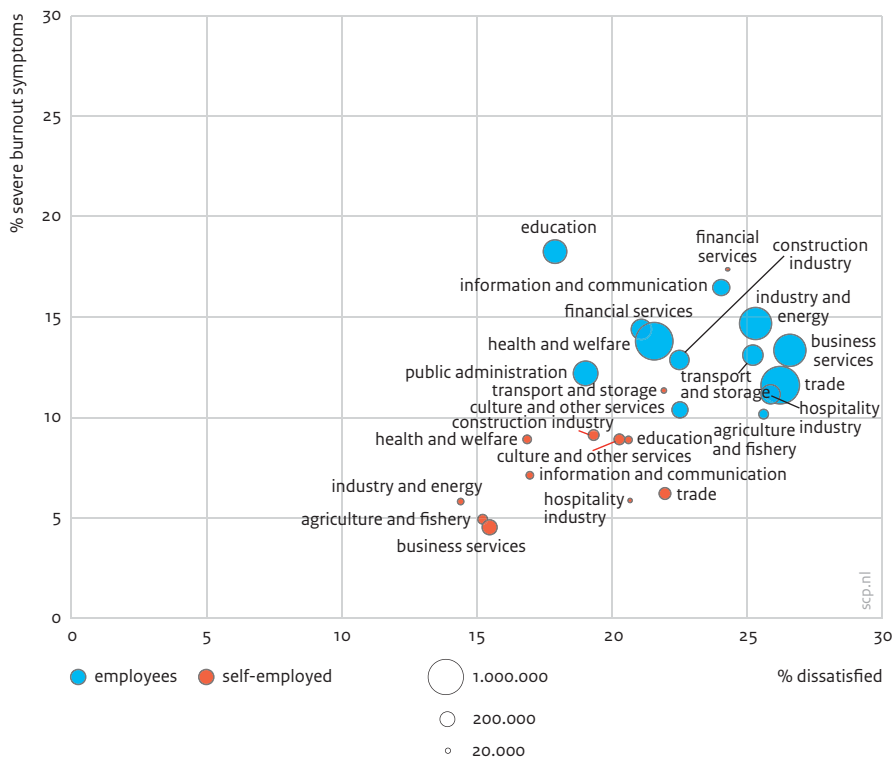
Sectors with high burnout rates are not necessarily sectors where dissatisfaction is high

Some commotion arose in a number of sectors in 2017 about pressure of work and worker dissatisfaction, amid claims that pressure of work and the risk of burnout had increased particularly in (primary) education. ‘The increased pressure of work is leading to a decline in work enjoyment for a high proportion of educational staff’ (CNV Onderwijs 2016) (see also chapter 4). And a survey conducted by the Dutch nurses’ and carers’ association (v&vn) among employees in the care sector found that ‘more than half are thinking of giving up their work because the stress due to pressure of work is becoming too high and is also impacting on their personal lives’ (v&vn 2017).

Figure 6.7 shows how employees and self-employed workers in different sectors score on indicators for satisfaction with work and for severe burnout symptoms (see note b to table 6.6 for a definition of ‘serious’).⁶ Education is indeed the sector with the highest burnout risk for employees: 18% of employees in education suffered from severe burnout symptoms in 2015, compared with 10% in the cultural sector, for example. In the health and welfare sector, the incidence of severe burnout symptoms is closer to the average, at 14%, while in public administration (e.g. central and local government) it is relatively low, at 12%. Dissatisfaction with work in the mainly (semi-)public sectors referred to is relatively low. That contrasts with the situation in a high proportion of market sectors, such as business services, trade and commerce and the hospitality industry, where the incidence of severe burnout symptoms is not notably high, but dissatisfaction with work is above average.

In general it is also the case, in line with table 6.6, that compared to employees self-employed workers in almost all sectors less often suffer severe burnout symptoms and are less often dissatisfied, with the exception of the financial services sector, where the burnout risk is high, with 17% of self-employed workers suffering severe burnout symptoms. The same applies for dissatisfaction with work, with 24% of self-employed workers dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

Figure 6.7
Employees in education most prone to burnout, but are the most satisfied with their work
 Severe burnout symptoms and dissatisfaction of employees and self-employed workers, by sector, 2015
 (in percentages)^a



a The size of the bubbles indicates the number of employees/self-employed workers in the sector concerned.

Source: TNO/CBS (NEA'15; ZEA'15); SCP treatment

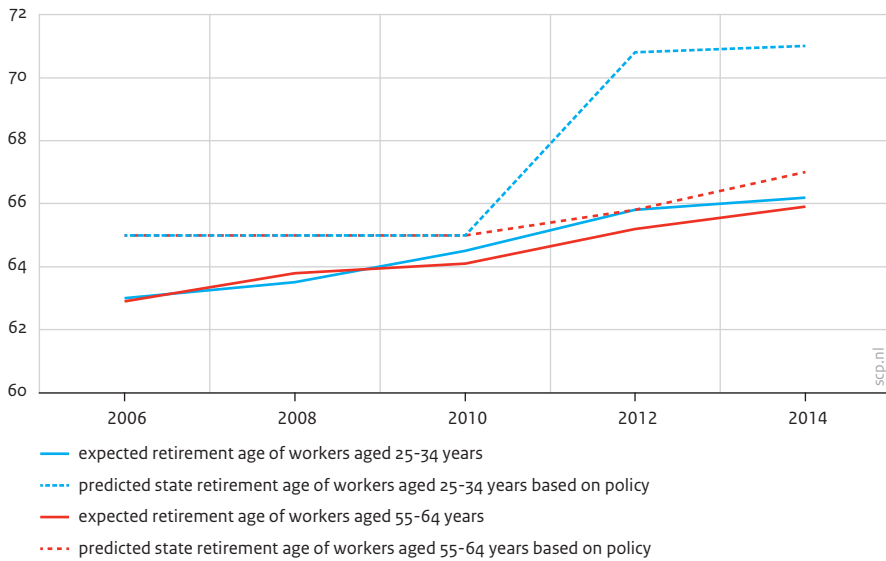
Workers still not making allowance for linking of state retirement age to life expectancy

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, the phased raising of the state retirement age came into effect in 2012, and was stepped up in 2014 (TK 2011/2012b, 2014/2015b). In recent years, the raising of the retirement age has run in parallel with an increase in the age at which people expect to leave the employment process: in 2014, the average expected retirement age for all age categories surveyed was age 66 or older, whereas in 2010 it was below 65 in almost all cases (see figure 6.8).

This *policy feedback* – the process whereby discussions about policy changes and their actual implementation lead among other things to changes in behaviour and expectations (Pierson 1993) – appears for the moment to be limited to the first phase of the increase in the retirement age, currently to 67 years by 2021. According to current projections, however, the second phase, involving the linking of the retirement age to life expectancy, is likely to lead to substantially higher retirement ages than people, and especially young people, currently appear to be expecting. For example, people aged 25-34 years assumed on average in 2014 that they would retire at just over age 66, whereas their state retirement age is actually likely to be 71 years. On the other hand, the expected retirement age has always been lower than the actual state retirement age (Olsthoorn en Cloin 2015), possibly because people are willing to use their savings or a company pension to enable them to retire earlier. However, the gap has never been so wide as since the introduction of the ‘indexation’ of the retirement age. It is of course possible that the policy feedback mentioned above will take place more slowly and that people will adjust their expectations as the retirement age rises.

Figure 6.8
Expected retirement age rising, but lags behind actual state retirement age

Age at which people expect to retire and the forecast state retirement age,^a by age category, 2006-2014 (in years)



- a The projection for the actual retirement age is based on policy and the forecast life expectancy in the year concerned: up to and including 2010, the retirement age for everyone was 65 years; for 2012 and 2014 it was set on the basis of the policy and projected life expectancy at that time. The retirement age based on life expectancy (V) is calculated based on $V = (L - 18.26) - (P - 65)$ with three months' increase where $V > 0.25$, where L is the remaining life expectancy after age 65 and P is the retirement age after the most recent change.

Key: In 2012 people aged 25-34 years expected to retire at an average age of 65.8 years (65 years and just under ten months). In that year, however, the projected state retirement age for this group was 70.8 years (70 years and just under ten months).

Source: (CBS 2012, 2014b); SCP treatment; SCP (AAP'06-'14); (TK 2011/2012b, 2014/2015b)

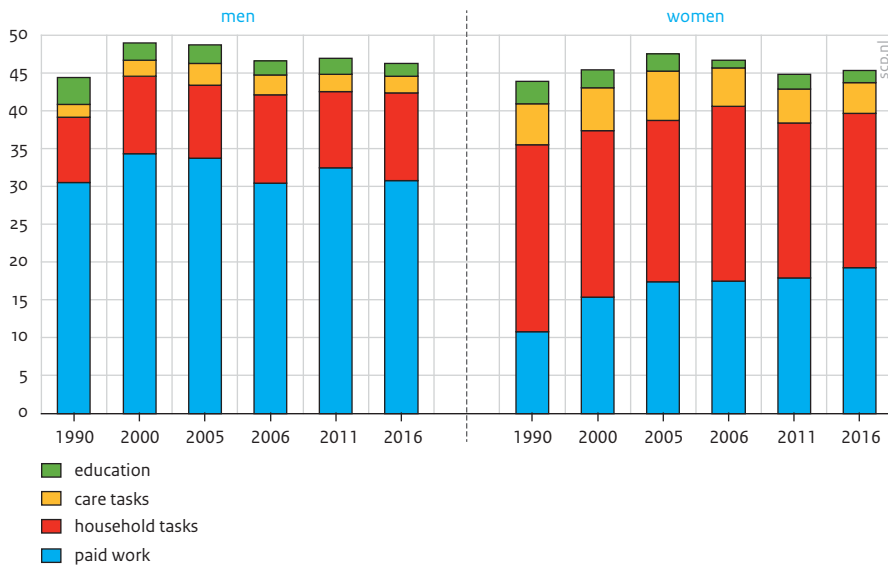
6.5 Time spent working and providing care

Many people combine paid work with the care for others. How does the time the people spend on paid work and care tasks add up? Has this increased over the last 25 years? And who is the busiest and who feels busiest? In this section, we use the Time Use Survey (TBO) to answer to these questions. We consider the time spent on paid work, care tasks and study. The sum of the time spent on these activities is sometimes described as 'obligatory' time, because people have less control over these activities than over activities such as leisure and personal care (Bijl et al. 2015). It is important to note that the personal lives of working people incorporate more roles and tasks than those relating to care and study. For example, working people also participate in leisure activities and voluntary work. For the moment, we leave these activities out of consideration.

Figure 6.9 shows the total time spent on paid work, household and care tasks, and education. The first finding of note is that this total was roughly the same in 2016 as in 1990; nowadays people spend just under two hours per week more on these activities than in 1990. In the intervening years, the time spent in these activities first increased, but this trend was reversed into a slight decrease around 2005. Between 2011 and 2016 (the two most recent years) nothing changed, with one exception: men in 2016 spent one hour per week more on household and care tasks. The total time spent on work, household and care tasks and study by men and women is reasonably similar. In 2016, men spent one hour per week more on these tasks, but this difference is not statistically significant and can be attributed to chance. In the earlier years, men were slightly busier (in 2000 and 2011) or men and women were equally busy. However, the composition of the obligatory time is different for men than for women, with men spending more time on paid work and less time on the household and care tasks related to children and other household members.

Figure 6.9
Limited increase in total time spent on work and care since 1990

Time spent on paid work, education, household and care tasks, persons aged 20-64 years, 1990-2016
(in hours per week)



Source: SCP (TBO'90-'06); SCP/CBS (TBO'16)

The total amount of time spent on paid work and care tasks is highest among people with a high educational level, parents and those in paid employment (table 6.7). Men spend slightly more time on the 'obligatory' activities than women, but the difference is negligible. Higher educated men and women spend more time on the combination of activities than their lower-educated counterparts. This is partly because the higher educated work more hours. Higher-educated men are more involved in care than men with a low and intermediate educational level. The educational differences for women are negligible. The presence of young children shows a stronger association with the time spent on care tasks for women than for men. This is linked to the fact that women still carry the main responsibility for children: a quarter of women and almost half of men believe that women are more suited to bringing up small children than men (Portegijs & Van den Brakel 2016). The presence of children adds 6.5 hours of care tasks for men and almost 14 hours for women. People do not compensate for these additional care tasks by working less: women with a young child work the same number of hours as childless women, while men with a young child actually work eight hours more than men without young children. It is also surprising that people without paid work devote slightly, though

not much more time to care tasks: non-employed men spend five hours per week more on care tasks than employed men. For women, the difference between those in and out of paid employment is almost seven hours.

Table 6.7

Men, higher educated people, parents and workers spend the most time on combining work and care

Time spent on obligations, paid work and care tasks, by a number of background characteristics, persons aged 20-64 years, 2016 (in hours per week)

	paid work, care and study ^a		paid work		care tasks ^b	
	men	women	men	women	men	women
total	46.2	45.3	30.8	19.2	13.8	24.5
low education	35.1	38.6	22.8	11.7	11.8	26.2
intermediate education	45.9	44.2	31.2	17.4	12.7	24.7
high education	50.5	49.6	32.9	24.7	15.8	23.5
no young child ^c	42.9	42.1	28.8	19.4	12.1	20.8
with a young child ^c	56.2	54.2	36.9	18.7	18.7	34.5
without paid work	23.9	32.7	.	.	17.8	29.0
with paid work	51.5	51.4	36.9	27.3	12.8	22.3

a Paid work, study, household and caring for children and adult household members.

b Household and caring for children and adult household members.

c Youngest child aged under 13 years.

Source: SCP/CBS (TBO'16)

Earlier in this chapter we discussed the risks of experiencing time pressure at work, including the increased risk of burnout. People can also experience time pressure outside work, for example because children demand a lot of time and attention and sick family members require support. Unfortunately, we are unable to look back as far as 1990 and investigate how busy people felt at that time. What we can do is investigate how much time pressure people experience now, and who experiences this most. In the Time Use Survey, respondents kept a diary record of the time spent on activities during one week, and for each day they indicated how busy they had felt. Table 6.8 shows that over a third of Dutch people experienced time pressure at least once a week. Women experience more time pressure than men. This is striking, because table 6.7 showed that they do not spend any more – and if anything less – time on the combination of work and care tasks. One possible explanation is that women feel busier because they multitask more and their

leisure is less relaxing because they feel responsible for their partner and children (Portegijs et al. 2016).

Table 6.8

Perceived time pressure depends not only on actual time use

Share of people who experience time pressure on at least one diary day, by sex, persons aged 15-64 years, 2016 (in percentages)

	men	women
total	36%	43%
low education	32%	28%
intermediate education	35%	42%
high education	39%	50%
no young child ^a	34%	40%
with young child ^a	41%	52%
no paid work	23%	38%
paid work	39%	46%
least busy 25%	26%	34%
busiest 25%	45%	51%

a Youngest child aged under 13 years.

Source: SCP/CBS (TBO'16)

Women with a higher educational level and women with a young child experience more time pressure than women with a low educational level and women without a young child. There are no educational differences for men. (The table shows different percentages for different groups of men, but these can be attributed to chance). Here we do see a clear parallel with the actual time use patterns. Higher-educated women with higher education, for example, spend more time on obligations than lower-educated women (table 6.7). Having a job increases the perceived time pressure for both men and women. Finally, the study participants were divided into four equal groups and ranked on the basis of the total time spent on obligations, from the busiest to the least busy group. Around half of those in the (objectively) busiest group experience pressure of time. This share is considerably lower in the least busy group, though a quarter of men and a third of women still experience time pressure.

6.6 Childcare and leave

Broadly speaking, the government uses two policy tools to facilitate the combination of work and care tasks: formal childcare and leave. Spend less time caring for children and more time in paid employment. In a sense, childcare involves the partial transfer of responsibility for children from parents to the government. In the Netherlands, the childcare system is market-based, so the government shares this responsibility with the private sector. By contrast, leave arrangements enable working people with care responsibilities to take time off work temporarily, giving parents and informal carers more available time to provide care. In this section we describe how those in paid employment who have care responsibilities are facilitated by describing trends in the use of childcare and parental leave arrangements. It was unfortunately not possible to go all the way back to 1990; for childcare, we go back to 2005 and for parental leave to 2000.

Figure 6.10 shows the trend in formal childcare based on the number of applications for childcare allowance. The statistical series begins in 2005, the year in which the Childcare Act (*Wet kinderopvang*) was introduced in the Netherlands. Prior to 2005, childcare was not an inherent element of the public policy on the national level. At that time, there were three types of formal childcare: private childcare (paid for entirely by parents), childcare subsidised by local authorities, and childcare which was paid for by the employers (sometimes provided by the employer). Between 1990 and 2014, the national government funded childcare through a series of incentives. For example, in some instances the government paid local authorities to provide additional childcare places. Under these measures, the number of childcare places increased tenfold between 1989 and 2004, from 20,000 to 200,000 (SER 2016a).

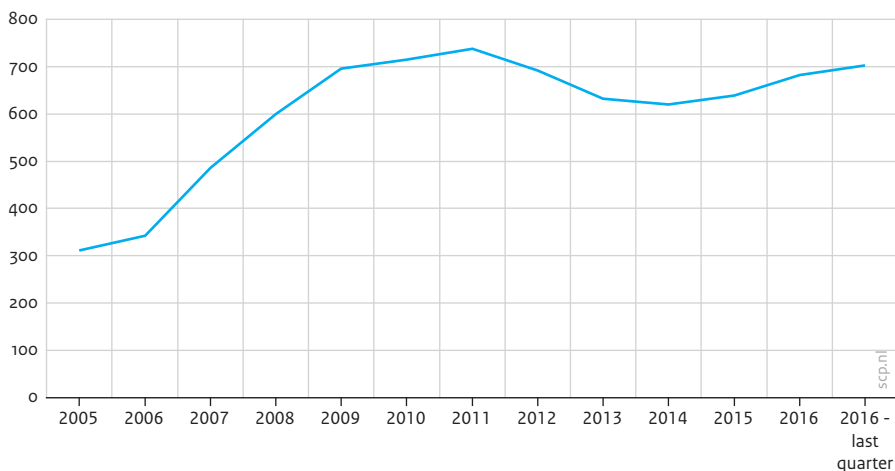
The introduction of the Childcare Act means that all parents who are working, in training or looking for work can apply for a childcare allowance. The allowance is income-dependent and is intended to make childcare accessible to all socio-economic groups (Roeters & Bucx 2016). It operates through a regulated market system, in which childcare centres and child minders are commercial operators who have to meet a number of quality standards set by the government. Compliance with these standards is monitored by the Municipal Health Service (GGD). The aim of the Childcare Act is that the total expenditure should be shared equally between the government, employers and parents. In practice, however, this is not always the case; in 2015, parents contributed 38%, employers 39% and the government 23% (SER 2016a).

Figure 6.10 shows that the number of children who received a childcare allowance has increased since the introduction of the Childcare Act; it went up sharply between 2005 and 2009, after which it slowed and reversed into a decline after 2011. This trend coincides with deep cuts in childcare allowance, making childcare more expensive for parents (SER 2016a). Earlier research, for example by Portegijs et al. (2013), has shown that many parents replaced formal childcare with informal care (e.g. grandparents) during this

period. After 2014 there was another reversal, with the number of children in childcare rising again. This is not entirely coincidental, because 2014 was the first year in which the government increased their spending on childcare. It has continued these investments and also announced additional investments for the coming years.

Figure 6.10
Changes in childcare

Number of children receiving childcare allowance, 2005-2016 (in absolute numbers x 1,000)^a



a These numbers are yearly averages. The figures for the period 2005-2007 inclusive are estimates. See szw (2015) for further information.

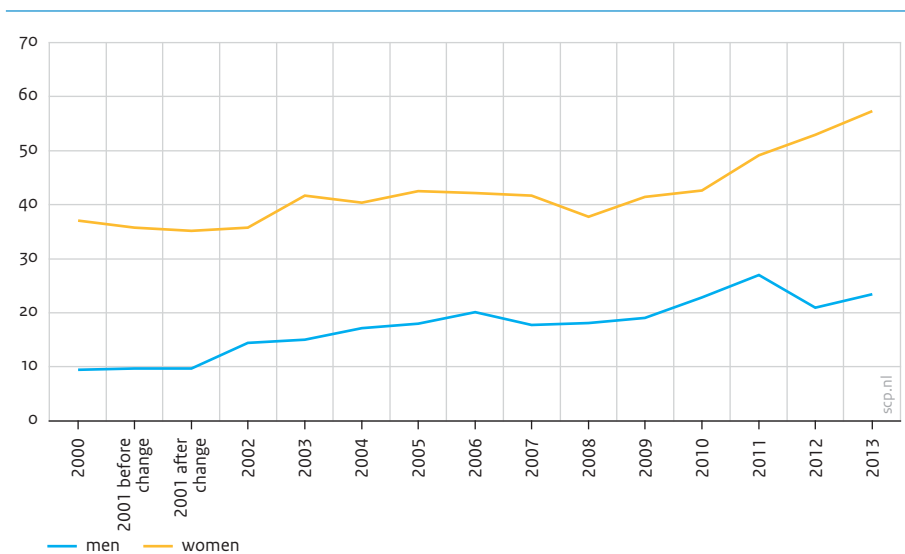
Source: szw (2012, 2015, 2016, 2017), TK (2011/2012a)

Figure 6.11 illustrates the take-up of parental leave. Parental leave in the Netherlands is unpaid. The take-up was calculated on the basis of the share of employees with children aged eight years or younger who took this leave in a given year. People who have already used their parental leave entitlement are not counted as users, so the share of employees who have at some time made use of this leave is actually higher. The most recent figures, from 2013, show that just over half of mothers and 20% of fathers take parental leave. How did this change over time? The first thing that stands out is that although women make more use of parental leave than men, the trends for men and women are not parallel. Whereas in the period 2000-2007 there was a slight increase in the share of women taking this leave, the share of men doing so rose substantially. Although it faltered somewhat around the economic crisis years, the share of men taking parental leave grew steadily until 2011. Between 2011 and 2012, the share of men taking parental leave fell sharply, but appears to have recovered slightly in 2013. Over the same period,

there was a clear rise in the share of women taking parental leave, leading to a widening of the gap between men and women, especially between 2011 and 2013. It will be interesting to add to this time series in a future edition of ssn. The tax break which made taking parental leave financially more attractive was cut in 2015, and this may have led to a reduction in take-up.

Figure 6.11

Men and women who take parental leave, 2000-2013 (in percentages of those entitled)^a



a The number of people entitled to parental leave is calculated from 2000 onwards by selecting on the basis of people aged 15-64 years with children aged 8 years or younger. People who have already used their parental leave entitlement are then deducted from this group.

Source: CBS (StatLine); CBS (2017m)

6.7 Concluding discussion

This chapter has shown that the Dutch labour market is clearly becoming more flexible, both for employees and for the growing segment of (new-style) self-employed workers. These trends are being driven among other things by the increasing possibilities offered by technology (Kremer et al. 2017), an area in which the future promises to bring a number of potentially radical developments. Although the predictions of mass unemployment as a result of robotisation have been adjusted sharply downwards in recent research – from 45% of workers who would be replaced (Frey & Osborne 2013) to less than 10% (Acemoglu & Restrepo 2016; Arntz et al. 2016) – it is likely that increasing

opportunities for automation will lead to changes in job content. And although currently only around 1% of people derive a monthly income from an online services platform (Uber, TaskRabbit, etc.), the growing technological possibilities could lead to further growth in the on-demand economy (Farrell & Greig 2016; Frenken & Straathof 2015; Hoenselaar et al. 2017), and thus potentially in the segment of new-style self-employed workers who respond to this demand.

From a legal perspective, traditional and new-style self-employed workers may be comparable entities, but they differ fundamentally in their relationship to the labour market and social security. Put crudely, traditional self-employed workers are the sole traders of the past: shopkeepers and farmers. By contrast, new-style self-employed workers sell their labour; they are consultants, architects, builders, freelance journalists, and so on. Neither traditional nor new-style self-employed workers enjoy protection against incapacity for work as standard (Lautenbach et al. 2017), and therefore in many cases have no insurance cover if they should become incapacitated for work. However, unlike new-style self-employed workers, traditional self-employed workers will in many cases be able to fall back on a family member, so that their income is less under threat if they become ill. Neither group of self-employed workers automatically build up a supplementary pension to top up their state pension, though traditional self-employed workers do often have a considerable amount of capital invested in their business, which can be used in due course to provide this supplementary pension (Janssen et al. 2015). New-style self-employed workers often lack this capital and, although they can make additional savings through banking or insurance products ('third pillar') on their own initiative, in reality self-employed workers in general, and thus probably also this group, do this to only a limited extent (Mastrogiacomo 2016). Both traditional and new-style self-employed workers have a looser relationship with the social security system than employees, but the growing group of new-style self-employed workers appear to have less financial and social capital than traditional self-employed workers on which they can fall back when they are (temporarily) unable to work. New-style self-employed workers have their own unique vulnerabilities and therefore pose a challenge for the social security system in the future.

Technological developments on the labour market and the changes in labour relations demand new skills from citizens. As robots can take over simple, routine work but are currently not capable of social interaction, social and empathic skills will become increasingly important in the labour market of the future (Autor & Handel 2013; Bessen 2016; SER 2016b). And if the trend towards a more flexible labour market continues, with or without pressure from a growing number of online platforms, citizens will have to become more independent and entrepreneurial (WRR 2017). People who are already doing work which places heavy demands on such skills, such as those working in education or the care sector, will probably be fairly well equipped to cope with any negative consequences of technological developments. Others will need to (continually) learn

these skills in order not to fall behind. Not all citizens will be equally able to acquire these skills, and scp has already warned of a potential divide between the ‘cans’ and ‘cannots’ (Van den Broek et al. 2016; Roeters et al. 2016).

Such a divide could manifest itself on the labour market as a growing risk of unemployment and low-quality work for the cannots, and also as wage inequality, with the cannots being locked into jobs with much lower pay growth than the cans. Although we have seen in this chapter that unemployment is higher among low-skilled than high-skilled workers, we have not yet seen a clear structural divergence between the two groups. Recent research has also shown that automation need not necessarily have a major impact on employment at the bottom end of the labour market (but possibly a greater impact in the middle) (Arntz et al. 2016). By contrast, sharply rising productivity in occupations requiring a high education level makes growing wage inequality a more realistic prospect (Autor 2015).

The new demands imposed by the changing labour market could also have consequences for people’s well-being. The increased uncertainty puts workers under some pressure and could translate into problems such as burnout. However, time pressure is not only related to the situation at work: people’s personal lives also demand time and attention. It is interesting to note here that people with higher education are the group who devote most time to combining work and care tasks and who experience the greatest pressure of time. Combining work and care tasks also demands skills such as flexibility and the ability to plan, which will only grow in importance in the future.

Notes

- 1 The State Secretary for Social Affairs and Employment imposed a jobs contract quota on the government sector in June 2017.
- 2 The ‘chain system’ concerns the number of times an employee can be taken on on a temporary contract over a contiguous period, and the length of that period. Transitional severance pay is the payment to which an employee whose employment contract is terminated or not renewed by their employer is entitled in almost all cases if he/she has worked for the employer for a minimum of two years. Previously, this payment was not mandatory and was often determined using the ‘subdistrict court formula’.
- 3 The natural unemployment rate is the rate of unemployment that is not due to unfavourable economic conditions, but to the fact that not every unemployed person actively looks for work and that finding a job in many cases takes time (De Graaff-Zijl et al. 2014).
- 4 Tables 6.4 and 6.5 are based partly on the 2016 National Employment Conditions Survey (NEA’16) and the 2017 Self-employment Survey (ZEA’17) which were provided for this study by TNO, and for which we thank Wendela Hooftman and Ernest de Vroome.
- 5 The number of self-employed workers in the dataset is too small to determine this proportion separately for traditional and new-style self-employed workers.

- 6 This figure cannot be interpreted causally. We cannot posit that employees in the healthcare sector would do better to become self-employed because they would then be more satisfied and suffer less from burnout, because the difference between self-employed workers and employees could be due to a number of other factors, such as the occupation, age, education level, income, etc. Josten and Vlasblom (2017), however, find support for a causal relationship between sole tradership and job satisfaction.

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7 Health and care

Sjoerd Kooiker

- The health status of the Dutch improved in the period 1990-2015. Life expectancy has increased and people are dying at an increasingly great age.
 - Physical mobility has improved greatly, especially for those of middle age and the older generation. Life expectancy in good health and life expectancy without physical disabilities have both increased.
 - The percentage of the population with chronic diseases has increased, as has the percentage of the population with multiple chronic diseases. Life expectancy without chronic diseases has fallen.
 - These trends have been much more positive for men than for women. Men's life expectancy increased by 5.9 years between 1990 and 2015, from 73.8 to 79.7 years. Over the same period, the life expectancy of women increased by three years, from 80.1 to 83.1 years. We find a similar gender difference for the increase in life expectancy without physical disabilities.
 - When it comes to use of medical care, older people in particular have at least once a year contact with general practitioners (GPs) and medical specialists. As regards GPs, this trend is accompanied by a lower rate of annual contact for the population as a whole.
 - There are no indications of an increase in the percentage of annual contacts with alternative therapists, which remains fairly low.
 - Over the entire period 1990-2016, the annual percentage of the population who had contact with a physiotherapist increased steadily.
 - In mental health care, there has been a clear shift from more intensive to lighter forms of care.
 - The percentage of older people receiving long-term care reduced between 2004 and 2014. This refers to care in kind, for which the recipient pays a contribution and not care organised through a personal budget.
 - There was little change between 2008 and 2017 in the percentage of people providing informal care.
-

7.1 Does new policy build on the major reforms implemented by the previous government?

The new government under Prime Minister Mark Rutte ('Rutte III') is in many ways building on the policy of its predecessor ('Rutte II'), especially as regards the large-scale reform and decentralisation which took place in 2015. The present coalition agreement states that no new reforms are needed, simply improvements. In this chapter we look mainly at the period 1990-2015.

7.2 Review of healthcare policy in the period 1990-2015

At the start of the 1990s, the Netherlands was in the midst of a transition from a government-regulated and budgeted (curative) health care system to a demand-led system based around a regulated private sector. The Dekker Committee report *Bereidheid tot verandering* ('Willingness for change') formed the basis for these changes (Committee on the Structure and Funding of Health Care 1987 – Commissie Structuur en financiering gezondheidszorg 1987). In its report, the Committee proposed the introduction of a basic health insurance for all citizens which would incorporate 85% of the existing public health insurance package, plus the creation of a system based on regulated competition, with a key role for health insurers. The new system eliminated the distinction between public and private health insurance. The second coalition government led by Ruud Lubbers (1986-1989), which included the centre-right vvd party, supported this approach, but in the Lubbers III government which succeeded it (1989-1994), with the Labour Party (PvdA) as a coalition partner, the proposed basic health insurance package was enlarged to incorporate 95% of the existing package. The resistance by advocacy groups to the introduction of what seemed to be becoming an ever more expensive comprehensive insurance was however too great, and the plans ran aground.

Perhaps not wishing to repeat this experience, Els Borst, health minister in the first 'purple' coalition government, bringing together the centre-right vvd and the centre-left PvdA (1994-1998), opted to let sleeping dogs lie where health care was concerned, and refrained from any further system reforms. Borst was the first health minister in a long time who was also a doctor, and rather than going through yet another laborious process of system reform, in her two terms of office she focused on different aspects, such as the legal embedding of patient rights, creating legislation for quality assurance in healthcare, and bringing in a (new) legal framework for organ donation and euthanasia.¹ She also made it a priority to encourage a healthy lifestyle and introduced legislation to discourage smoking and drinking. Ultimately, in later governments, that would culminate in the guarantee of a smoke-free workplace (2004), the banning of smoking in public spaces and bars and restaurants (2008) and the raising of the minimum age for buying alcohol and tobacco to 18 in 2014.

Patient choice received a boost when the State Secretary for Health, Welfare and Sport, Erica Terpstra, campaigned in 1995 for the introduction of a personal budget for purchasing care at home, to be funded through the Exceptional Medical Expenses Act (AWBZ). The number of personal budget-holders rose in the period 1998-2009 by an average of 25% per year (Sadiraj et al. 2011). Given the sharp increase in the number of budget-holders and the ever more complicated application procedures, it looked as if the personal budget would become a victim of its own success, and there were also ever stronger indications of fraud. During the first Rutte government (2010-2012), it looked as if the personal budget would be largely scrapped, though in the end this was not the case.

In the second Rutte government (2012-2017), the personal budget was anchored in the Social Support Act (Wmo) and the Long-term Care Act (Wlz).

Changes in health care proceeded extremely slowly in the 1990s because of the ability of the many advocacy groups and advisory boards to hold up progress, as illustrated by the plans for health insurance. The introduction of the Advisory Bodies Framework Act (Kaderwet adviescolleges) by the 'purple' cabinet in 1997 led to a marked reduction in the number of health care advisory boards and placed the centre of decision-making power with politicians. This came good two cabinets later (Balkenende II: 2003-2006) during the political decision-making on the Health Insurance Act in 2004, which was adopted by the House of Representatives with little fuss (Fogteloo 2005) – though in the Senate health minister Hans Hoogervorst did have to make eighteen concessions (EK 2006).

A constantly recurring theme in the 1990s was the debate about waiting lists, which were a problem in curative and long-term care, mental health care, elderly care, domiciliary care and care for people with disabilities. These waiting lists proved stubborn, and the political and media focus on them continued for a long time. Not surprisingly, therefore, the various editions of *Social State of the Netherlands* (ssn) published summary figures on waiting lists in the period 2001-2007.

It was health minister Els Borst who came up with a solution to the waiting lists in 2002, by abandoning the strict budgeting regime in curative care but retaining the duty of health insurers to fund care.² This policy of 'extra funding for extra care' opened the way for more production, waiting lists shrank. The growth in costs which ensued also continued after the implementation of the Health Insurance Act in 2006, rising by an average of 5.2% per year in the first four years following its introduction. The debate on waiting lists fell silent, though it has recently been rekindled.³

The introduction of compulsory health insurance for curative care on 1 January 2006 brought an end to the distinction between public and private health insurance. For a long time, the idea of requiring patients to pay a sizeable contribution for basic medical care was considered out of the question (the introduction of a co-payment for medicines in 1983 and for specialist treatments in 1988 involved relatively small amounts), but in 2008 a compulsory excess of 150 euros was brought in for basic health insurance; this initially rose gradually, but in 2013 it was raised to 350 euros and in 2017 stands at 385 euros. Insured people with low incomes are compensated for this financial burden through the healthcare allowance (paid by the Dutch tax authority).

This did not bring an end to the increase in healthcare costs, but attention turned more towards long-term care and the growing costs of the AWBZ, which were rising faster than the costs of curative care (Horst et al. 2011).⁴ Measures were taken to reduce demand for long-term care but also to increase the efficiency and quality of that care (Plaisier & De Klerk 2015). Access to care had already been restricted since 2005, via the ‘usual care’ protocol (the care that fellow household members can be expected to provide each other), through client contributions and through the introduction of centralised, objective needs assessment. The latter changes in particular were intended to contribute to raising quality and efficiency.

The introduction of the Social Support Act (WMO) in 2007 marked an important change in the way support for people with health problems in the home setting was viewed. Under the new system, care is organised close to where the recipient lives, under the aegis of the local authority. A person’s health and disabilities no longer determine their right to care; in fact the whole concept of ‘right to care’ as a criterion for care allocation disappeared, though the local authority has a duty to ensure that people who rely on care achieve some independence and are able to participate in society, and to offer help if their own social network and their own finances are insufficient to provide the support they need.

The second Rutte government (2012-2017) brought in further devolution measures, with local authorities being given responsibility for even more components of care. Access to residential care facilities was restricted for both older people and psychiatric patients. The only exception were people requiring more or less constant care, for whom a core of the former AWBZ remained intact in the form of the Long-term Care Act (Wlz).

A consistent trend can be discerned in the policy of the last 25 years, in which care delivery has moved from specialist to generalist care and from professional care to self-care, as well as a shift in responsibility from central government to local government and the citizen. Although the intention is that access to and reimbursement of long-term and other care should be organised as far as possible in accordance with objective, nationally applicable criteria, the devolution of responsibility means that local differences can occur.

7.3 The health of the Dutch

The different editions of *Social State of the Netherlands* (SSN) have consistently reported that around 80% of the Dutch population feel healthy, and the most recent figures from Statistics Netherlands (CBS), from 2016, are no exception. This does not however mean that people do not have health problems. When asked about the presence of long-term health problems in the last twelve months, around 30% of the population confirmed this to be the case (table 7.1) Almost all children and young people feel healthy, though long term health problems also occur in this age group.

Table 7.1

The majority of the population feel healthy, but long-term health problems are common

Perceived health and three summary indicators for health and disabilities as reported by the population in private households, by sex and age category, 2016 (in percentages)

	sex		age				
	m	f	<18 years	18-34 years	35-64 years	65-74 years	≥ 75 years
perceived health: good or very good ^a	82	77	96	87	74	67	57
one or more chronic diseases ^b	28	32	12	20	36	49	52
mobility impairments ^c	6	13	1	2	8	15	37
mental health problems ^d	9	14	6	12	12	10	13

a The figure for 'perceived health' covers all age groups. For children aged up to 12 years, the question was put to parents or carers.

b Percentage of persons answering 'yes' to the question 'Do you/does your child have one or more long-term illnesses or disorders? 'Long-term' means (expected) duration of six months or longer.'

c Percentage of persons aged 12 years or older answering 'yes, with great difficulty' or 'no, I can't do that' to at least one of the three questions about mobility impairments (based on the OECD indicator).

d Sum score on five questions concerning (lack of) mental well-being (MHI-5), persons aged 12 years and older, report on the preceding four weeks, percentage based on cut-off point.

Source: CBS (maatwerktablel, GE'16)

Many long-term disorders more commonly affect older people. This certainly applies for problems to do with joints and mobility; joint wear commonly affects older people, for example (table 7.2). In section 7.4 we shall see that the number of impairments and disabilities reported by older people has been declining steadily over time. Mental health problems are less age-dependent.

Table 7.2
Health complaints concerning mobility mainly in older age

Health complaints related to mobility and exercise over the last twelve months as reported by the population in private households, by sex and age category, 2016 (in percentages)

	sex		age				
	m	f	<18	18-34	35-64	65-74	≥ 75
			years	years	years	years	years
chronic joint inflammation	4	8	0	2	8	13	16
severe or stubborn back problem	8	10	1	5	13	15	18
severe or stubborn neck or shoulder problem	8	11	1	5	13	15	15
severe or stubborn elbow, wrist or hand problem	4	8	0	3	9	9	12
joint wear, arthrosis or arthritis wear of hips or knees	10	18	0	1	14	32	39

Source: CBS (maatwerktabel, GE'16)

If we look at serious diseases that people have had at some point in their lives, cancer is the most commonly reported, once again mainly by older people (table 7.3). Far more men than women have had a heart attack at some time. Deaths due to cardiovascular disease have however greatly reduced over time, whereas deaths from cancer have increased (not shown in table).

Table 7.3

In private the elderly report having had cancer at some time

Serious diseases that people have had 'at some time' as reported by the population in private households, by sex and age category, 2016 (in percentages)

	sex		age				
	m	f	<18	18-34	35-64	65-74	≥ 75
			years	years	years	years	years
stroke, brain haemorrhage, cerebral infarction ^a	4	3	0	0	3	8	11
heart attack ^a	5	2	0	0	3	7	13
cancer	5	8	0	1	7	17	25

a Question only put to persons aged 12 years and older.

Source: CBS (maatwerktablel, 6E'16)

A final overview of long-term diseases shows that high blood pressure is particularly common among older people (table 7.4). High blood pressure is not strictly speaking a disease, but is primarily a risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Health problems which occur less in older age are migraine and severe headache, as well as allergies.

A population survey can of course provide no more than a limited picture of the health of the Dutch population as a whole; respondents are at liberty to decide whether or not to report a health problem during the survey. Another – again limited – picture of public health can be obtained via the medical profession, for example general practitioners, where the respondent is not a lay person giving their opinion, but a doctor. The caveat does need to be applied here that not all health problems are reported to GPs, so that health problems can be missed using this method, too. However, a high proportion of registered patients in the Netherlands have contact with their GP surgery during the course of a year, and because it is such an accessible service, data from general practices do offer a good basis for making statements about the health of the population (Hoon et al. 2016). GPs are mainly familiar with their patients' chronic diseases. The Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) accordingly uses statistics from general practitioners to obtain a picture of the prevalence of chronic diseases.

In 2017, RIVM reported that on 1 January 2015, 8.5 million people in the Netherlands had one or more chronic diseases according to their GP records (RIVM 2017). The most common diseases depend on the age of the person concerned. An earlier survey from 2011 showed that constitutional eczema, asthma and attention disorders (ADHD) were the most common problems in children aged up to 15 years. In the broad 15-64 age group, neck and back complaints were the most common, followed by arthrosis and diabetes mellitus. The most common disorders among people aged over 65 were arthrosis, hearing impairments and diabetes mellitus.

Table 7.4

Most other health problems occur in older age, apart from migraine and severe headache and allergies

Other common long-term health problems that people have experienced during the last twelve months, as reported by the population in private households, by sex and age category, 2016 (in percentages)

aspects of health	sex		age				
	m	f	<18 years	18-34 years	35-64 years	65-74 years	≥ 75 years
diabetes ^a	5	5	0	1	5	15	17
migraine or severe headache	10	19	6	20	19	10	7
COPD, chronic bronchitis, pulmonary emphysema	4	4	1	2	5	10	10
allergy	17	20	16	25	19	12	9
high blood pressure ^b	14	17	1	3	16	35	40
dizziness and falling ^b	3	7	3	4	4	6	14
incontinence (urinary) ^b	3	10	1	2	6	10	22
depression ^b	8	10	4	9	10	7	7

a Respondents were asked about diabetes without a temporal perspective.

b Question only put to persons aged 12 years and older.

Source: CBS (maatwerktabel GE'16)

It is more difficult to obtain a picture of the mental health of the population. The Health Survey (GE) carried out by Statistics Netherlands (CBS) aims to measure mental health mainly by asking whether people are nervous, depressed, happy or unhappy over a period of four weeks (Driessen 2011). The findings show that around 12% of the population aged 12 years and older suffer from these mental health complaints. Specific psychological complaints such as phobias are not covered in the CBS survey. GPs do record these specific psychological complaints, but problems such as anxiety disorders are clearly under-reported by GPs.⁵ And while the surveys developed by the Trimbos Institute specifically to measure mental health do cover all kinds of mental health problems such as mood disorders, anxiety disorders and behavioural disorders, they do so only for the adult population aged 18-64 years. Children aged under 18 and people aged 65 and older are consequently left out of the picture, and we therefore know strikingly little about the mental health of these groups. On top of that, the most recent survey dates from 2007-2009. In that survey, 18% of the adult Dutch population reported having suffered mental health problems in the previous year; a third of them had two or more mental health issues (Veerbeek et al. 2015). When asked about having had mental health issues 'at some point in their lives', 43.5% answered in the affirmative (Veerbeek et al. 2013). Seen from this perspective, it would appear that mental health problems can affect almost anyone. However, not every mental health problem is equally serious; the percentage of the population with severe mental illness who are known to care professionals is much lower. These people have long-term disorders which also impose severe social constraints and demand continuous mental health care (Delespaul & Consensusgroep Epa 2013.) An estimated 281,000 people in the Netherlands (1.7%) have one or more such problems. According to the Phrenos Expertise Centre, 60% of them have a psychotic disorder, 10% a primary substance dependency and 30% fall into the group with 'other disorders' (e.g. autism, severe depression and anxiety disorders, or a personality disorder).⁶

7.4 What changes have taken place in people's health over 25 years?

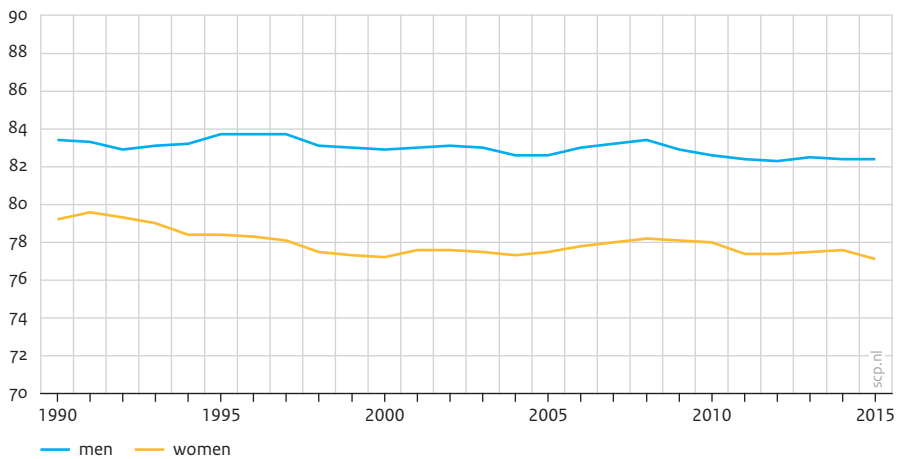
Perceived health

People's subjectively perceived health (survey question: 'How is your health generally?') is one of the most commonly used and most repeated research questions about health. Statistics Netherlands (CBS) has asked this question since the first Health Survey in 1981. For a review of the period 1990-2015, it is important to note that the percentage reporting good or very good health fell slightly over this period (figure 7.1). This is partly due to the ageing of the population: the slight but steady decline is less obvious if we look at the other age categories. It then transpires that it is mainly people aged 45-64 and 65-74 years (figure 7.2) whose perceived health has improved.

Figure 7.1

Slight fall particularly in the percentage of women reporting good or very good health

Share of the population in private households reporting good or very good health, by sex, 1990-2015 (in percentages)

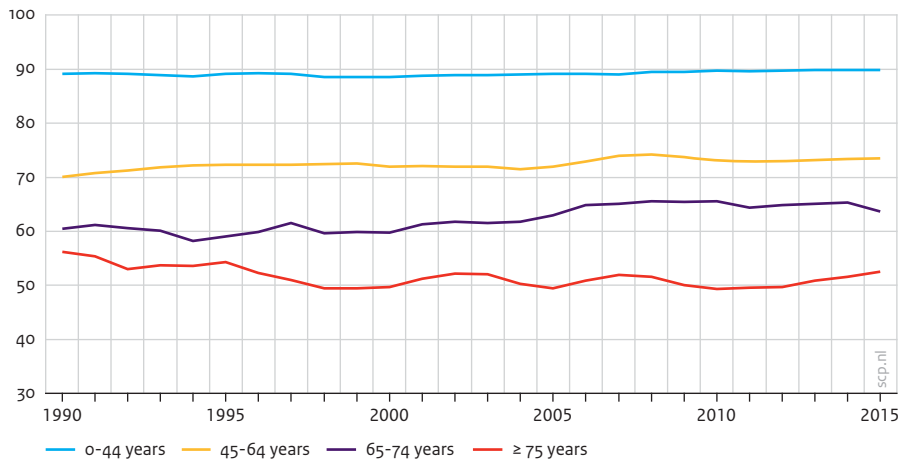


Source: CBS; RIVM treatment of e.g. GE'90-96; GE'10-'14; POLS'97-'09

Figure 7.2

Slight increase in the percentage of people aged between 45 and 75 years reporting good or very good health

Share of the population in private households reporting good or very good health, by age category, 1990-2015 (in percentages)



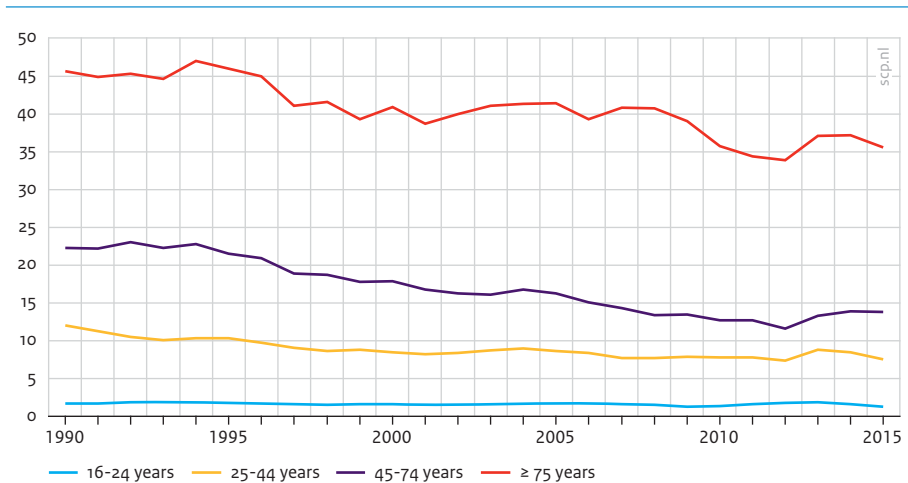
Source: CBS; RIVM treatment of e.g. GE'90-'96; GE'10-'14; POLS'97-'09

The responses to questions in the CBS Health Survey about having physical impairments/disabilities presents a picture of improving mobility over time for those with common mobility impairments, and especially those aged 45 years and older (figure 7.3).

Figure 7.3

Lower percentage of mobility impairments particularly among people aged 45 and older

Share of the population in private households reporting physical impairments/disabilities, by age category, 1990-2015 (in percentages)



Source: CBS; RIVM treatment of e.g. GE'90-'96; GE'10-'14; POLS'97-'09

Chronic diseases

Information from both population surveys and GP records shows that the number of people in the Netherlands with one or more chronic diseases has increased over recent decades. This is probably due in part to increased attention for these diseases.

General practitioners participating in the Continuous Morbidity Registration (CMR) in Nijmegen have for a long time kept records of 13,500 patients at ten general practices (Uijen & Van de Lisdonk 2008). They saw the percentage without chronic diseases decline from 70% to 63% between 1985 and 2005, which means that in 2005 37% of their patients had at least one chronic disease.⁷ The percentage with one or two chronic diseases was fairly stable between 1985 and 2005; the percentage with three chronic diseases grew by 60%, while the percentage with four chronic diseases trebled from 2.6% in 1985 to 7.5% in 2005.

A further increase in the percentage of the population with one chronic disease was observed between 2004 and 2011 in the general practices which participated in the Netherlands Institution for Health Services Research (NIVEL) registration system (which grew from 29 practices in 2004 to 105 practices in 2011). In the (standardised) population aged 25 years and older, the percentage of patients with at least one chronic disease increased from 36.1% in 2004 to 41.8% in 2011 (Van Oostrom et al. 2016).⁸ The percentage with two or more chronic diseases increased from 13.5% in 2004 to 16.2% in 2011.

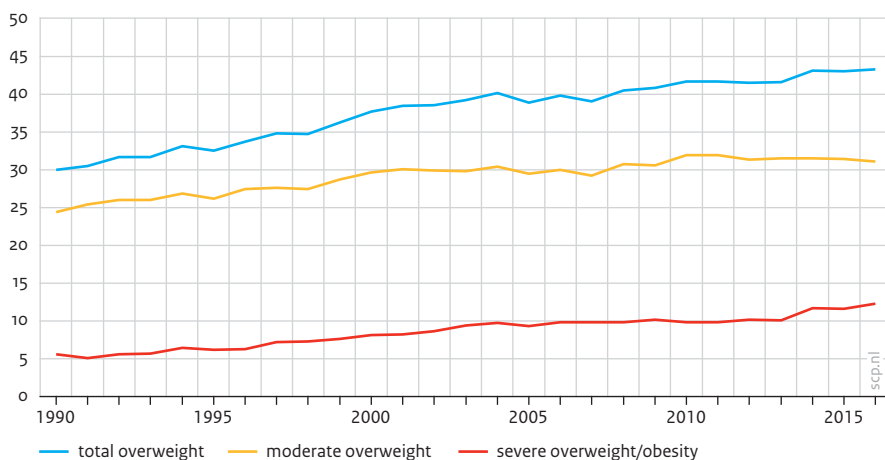
Data from the CBS Health Survey over the period 2001-2011 confirm this picture; here, too, the share of the (standardised) population aged 25 years and older with at least one (self-reported) chronic disease increased, from 41.8% in 2001 to 45.4% in 2011. The percentage with two or more chronic diseases grew from 15.3% in 2001 to 16.9% in 2011 (Van Oostrom et al. 2016).

One of the most striking and visible trends over recent years has been the steady increase in the number of people who are overweight. Looking at the period that is the central focus here, we see that this trend developed mainly in the 1990s and at the start of this century (figure 7.4), with an increase of 10 percentage points in the share of overweight people between 1990 and 2004. Being overweight is not a disorder in itself, but being seriously overweight or obese does present a risk factor for disorders such as type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, gallstones, cardiovascular disease, back and joint complaints and certain types of cancer.⁹

Figure 7.4

Increase in overweight mainly in the 1990s and start of this century

Moderate overweight (BMI 25-30), severe overweight/obesity (BMI \geq 30) and total overweight^a in the population in private households aged four years and older, 1990-2016 (in percentages)



a Slightly different definitions of overweight/obesity are used for people aged under 18.

Source: CBS (StatLine)

Life expectancy

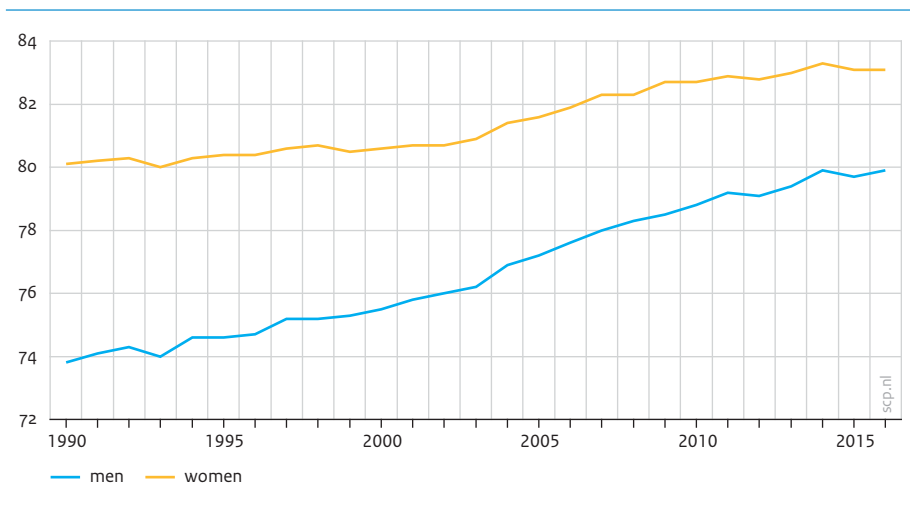
A very reliable measure of the development of health trends over a series of years is life expectancy, which should be seen primarily as an index of age-specific mortality figures.

Life expectancy at birth for men was just under 80 years in 2016, and just over 83 years for women (figure 7.5). The increase in life expectancy is the big success story of the last 150 years for public health (De Beer 2017). Until the 1950s, the biggest gains came through the decline in child mortality; in more recent decades, the increase in life expectancy mainly reflects an improvement in the survival chances in older age. According to the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI), the percentage of people dying around age 80 or younger is decreasing steadily, while the percentage dying at age 90 or older is rising (De Beer 2017: 2).

Figure 7.5

Clear rise in life expectancy visible since 2003, especially in men

Trend in life expectancy at birth, by sex, 1990-2016 (in life years)



Source: CBS (StatLine)

Figure 7.5 shows that life expectancy increased more quickly after 2002 than between 1990 and 2000, and that the life expectancy of men rose more quickly than that of women. The health economists Wim Groot and Henriëtte Maassen van den Brink, writing in the Dutch newspaper *Het Financieele Dagblad* in 2010, stated that the striking increase in life expectancy after 2003 was attributable to the ‘extra funding for extra care’ health policy described earlier, because more treatments became possible and more preventive medication was prescribed to treat high blood pressure and high cholesterol (Groot & Maassen van den Brink 2010). More care thus not only means higher costs, but also health benefits. A recent study of the rising life expectancy at birth between 2000 and 2009 estimated that 47% of the increased life expectancy of women and 30% of that of men can be attributed to higher healthcare spending (Peters et al. 2015).

The Netherlands and Europe

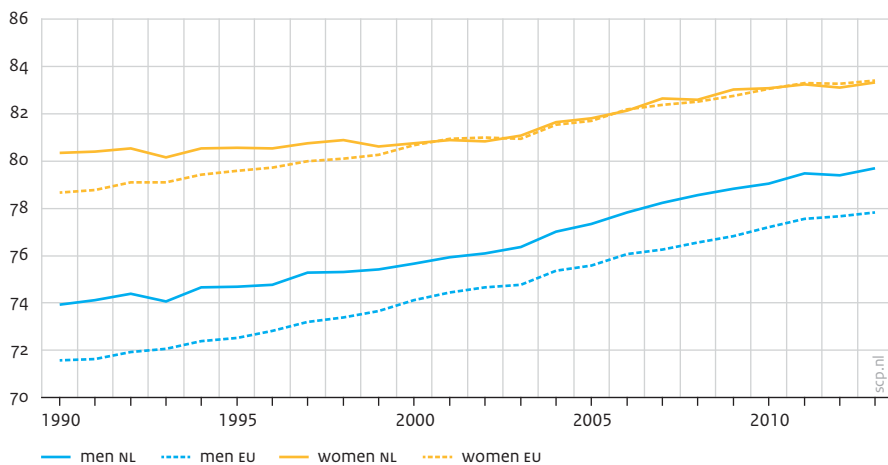
A comparison with the trend in other EU Member States shows that the life expectancy of men is growing faster than that of women in those countries, too. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), life expectancy in the 28 EU Member States increased over the period 1990-2013 by an average of 6.26 years for men and 4.76 years for women.

The increase in the Netherlands is noticeably lower, at just under three years for women and 5.8 years for men. Figure 7.6 shows clearly that female life expectancy in the Netherlands increased more slowly in the 1990s and only increased in parallel with the EU as a whole after the year 2000. The combination of the low growth in female life expectancy and high growth in male life expectancy means the gender gap in life expectancy in the Netherlands was the narrowest in the whole EU in 2013, at 3.3 years.

Figure 7.6

Life expectancy of Dutch men higher than the European average

Increase in life expectancy, by sex, in the Netherlands and the 28 EU Member States, 1990-2013 (in life years)



Source: WHO (Health For All database); RIVM treatment

There was strong growth in men's life expectancy (seven years or more) between 1990 and 2013 in the Czech Republic (7.68 years), Portugal (7.03 years), Finland (7.15 years) and Estonia (7.95 years). A striking finding for Estonia is that the life expectancy of men in neighbouring Latvia increased by only two years between 1990 and 2013. Leading the field in terms of the rise in male life expectancy is Luxembourg, with an increase of 8.58 years between 1990 and 2013.¹⁰ The highest life expectancy for men in the EU in 2014 was in Spain (80.4 years), Sweden (80.6 years), Norway (80.3 years) and Luxembourg (80.3 years). The highest life expectancy in Europe as a whole is found in Swiss men, at 80.8 years

(as reported by the WHO in 2013).¹¹ The Swiss themselves recently (2016) reported a life expectancy of 81.5 years for men.¹²

Women's life expectancy is especially high in Spain (86.25 years in 2014) and France (85.82 years in 2013). These two countries alternate for the top position in life expectancy in Europe, but up to the year 2000 life expectancy was consistently highest in France. Women's life expectancy is also above 85 years in the small countries of Cyprus and Luxembourg.

Whether the increase in life expectancy will continue to increase in the same way is unclear. In July 2017, Eurostat reported that life expectancy fell very slightly (0.3 years) between 2014 and 2015 for the first time since 2002, but added that it is too soon to conclude that there is a genuine downward trend (Eurostat 2017).

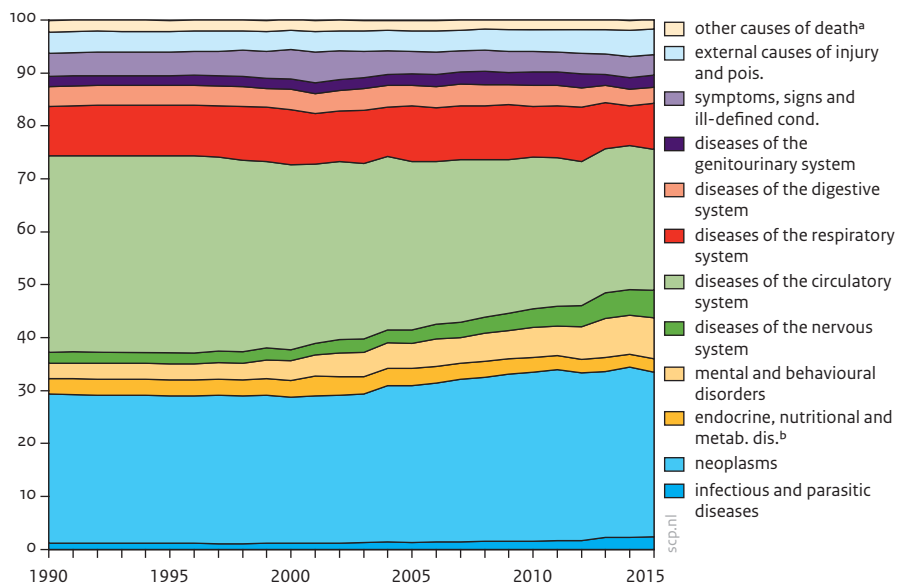
It is not easy to gain a clear impression of how much specific factors have contributed to longer life expectancy. Medical progress, dietary habits, lifestyle and welfare all play a role in the changing disease pattern (Salmon and Murray 2002). Figure 7.7 shows how the changing disease pattern in society has led to a shift in causes of death.

If we look at the main categories of causes of death in figure 7.7, we see an increase in the percentage of cases where various forms of cancer (neoplasia) are the cause of death, and a decline in death from cardiovascular disease. Deaths due to mental disorders and diseases of the nervous system have also increased. This is mainly due to an increase in deaths due to dementia, the various forms of which may be placed in different main categories.¹³

The reduction in deaths from cardiovascular disease is one of the most striking trends of the last 35 years. The risk of someone in their 60s dying from cardiovascular disease has reduced by 75% since 1980 (De Beer 2017). However, a reduction in deaths from cardiovascular disease does not produce a straightforward health gain, because other diseases then have more chance of manifesting themselves ('substitution of risks') (Van de Water et al. 1994). This is one of the reasons for the increased risk of dying from cancer in older age.

Figure 7.7
A large decrease in mortality from cardiovascular disease

Causes of death by main categories in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10), 1990-2015 (in percentages)



* The main category endocrine, nutritional and metabolic diseases also includes immune system disorders.

** Other causes of death: diseases of the musculoskeletal system and connective tissue; diseases of the blood and blood-forming organs; diseases of the skin and subcutaneous tissue; complications of pregnancy, labour and delivery; certain conditions originating in the perinatal period; congenital disorders.

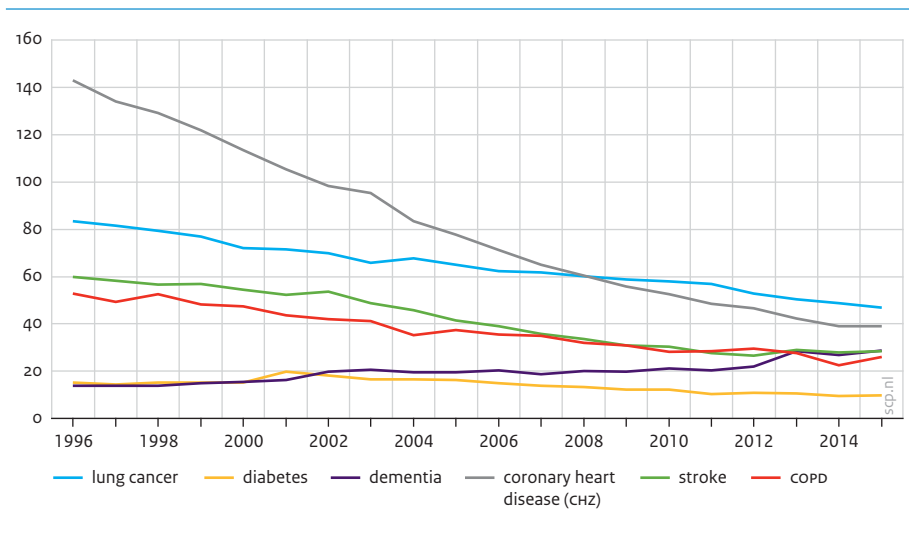
Source: CBS (Doodsoorzakenstatistiek); RIVM treatment

Death rates from coronary heart disease – heart disease resulting from a reduced blood flow to the heart via the coronary arteries – have fallen sharply in both men and women¹⁴ (figures 7.8 and 7.9). There has also been a marked reduction in deaths from lung cancer in men, but by contrast an increase in women, which is one of the reasons that the life expectancy of Dutch women lags behind internationally. The increase in deaths from dementia is much greater in women than men.

Figure 7.8

Sharp fall in male mortality due to major causes of death such as coronary heart disease, lung cancer, stroke and COPD

Mortality per 1,000, standardised for specific diseases, for men. 1996-2015^{a, b}



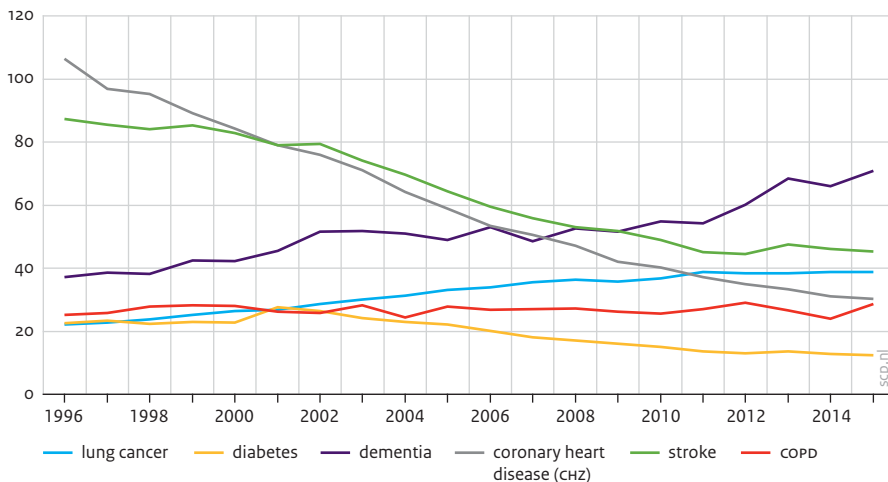
a Standardised for the population in 1990.

b Owing to a change of definition in the classification of diseases (transition from ICD-9 to ICD-10), the standardised mortality is shown from 1996 onwards.

Source: CBS; RIVM treatment

Figure 7.9

A pattern of decrease and increase in mortality in women

Mortality per 1,000, standardised for specific diseases, for women. 1996-2015^{a, b}

a Standardised for the population in 1990.

b Owing to a change of definition in the classification of diseases (transition from ICD-9 to ICD-10), the standardised mortality is shown from 1996 onwards.

Source: CBS; RIVM treatment

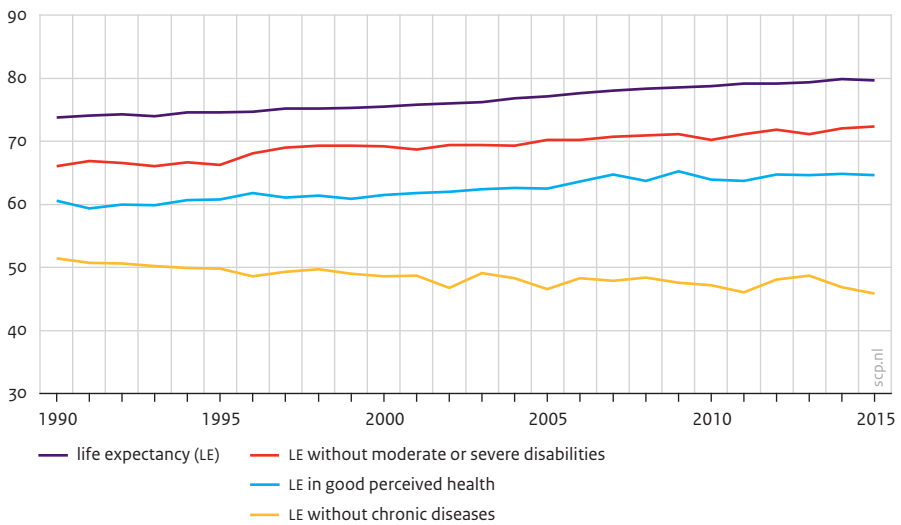
Life expectancy in good health

Life expectancy is a good indicator of the trend in the expected lifespan of a population over time. One limitation is that it tells us nothing about health status during life. To fill this gap, an indicator was developed in the 1980s which estimates the number of years that someone will live in good health, referred to as 'healthy life expectancy'. Extensions to this concept are life expectancy without physical disabilities and life expectancy without chronic diseases. Mortality rates for each of these indicators are combined with the survey figures cited above.¹⁵ Statistics Netherlands (CBS) performs these calculations and in developing a time series for these indicators has tried as far as possible to correct for changes that have taken place in the surveys (Lodder & Kardal 2009). The calculation method also corrects for differences in the population profile over time. Healthy life expectancy and comparable measures are therefore relatively useful tools for indicating how the health of the population changed between 1990 and 2015. The 2015 edition of *Social State of the Netherlands (SSN 2015)* devoted attention to differences in healthy life expectancy and derived measures by education level. In this edition we give more attention on the average trend rather than trends in specific socio-economic population categories.

Figures 7.10 and 7.11 broadly summarise the trends in health referred to earlier. People in 2015 more often had one or more chronic diseases than in 1990; life expectancy without chronic diseases has declined. This decline is more pronounced for women (-8 years) than for men (-5.5 years). On the other hand, life expectancy in good health or without disabilities actually increased over the period studied, with the increase in life expectancy without severe or moderate disabilities being greater (6.3 years for men and three years for women) than the increase in life expectancy in perceived good health (four years for men and 1.3 years for women).

Figure 7.10
Men are healthier in 2015 than in 1990 in many respects

Trend in life expectancy at birth, life expectancy in good health, life expectancy without moderate or severe disabilities and life expectancy without self-reported chronic diseases, men, 1990-2015 (in life years)

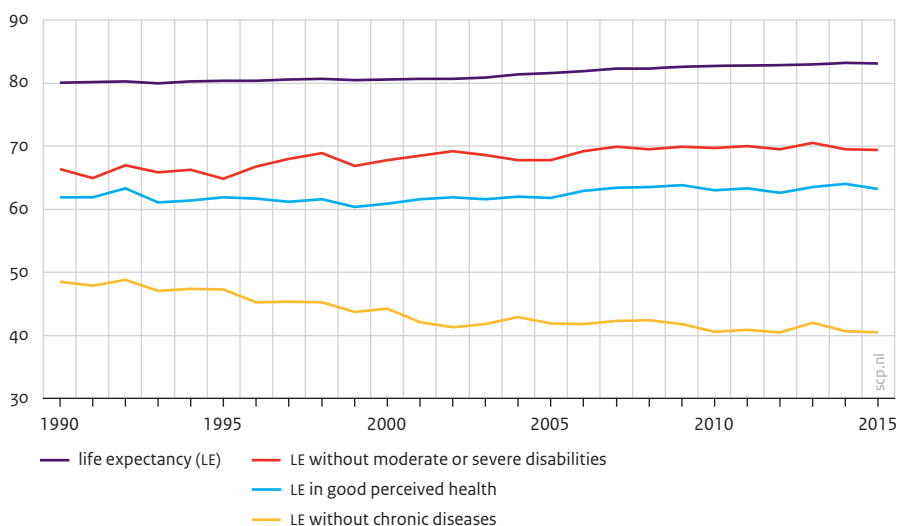


Source: CBS (StatLine)

Figure 7.11

The health gains for women between 1990 and 2015 are relatively modest compared with the gains for men over the same period

Trend in life expectancy at birth, life expectancy in good health, life expectancy without moderate or severe disabilities and life expectancy without self-reported chronic diseases, women, 1990-2015 (in life years)



Source: CBS (StatLine)

7.5 Use of healthcare provisions

There are various ways of measuring the use of care provisions. Statistics Netherlands (CBS) questions a sample of the Dutch population throughout the year on whether they have used the services of medical, paramedical or alternative care providers and whether they have been admitted to hospital during the year.¹⁶ Contacts between care professionals and patients/clients are also recorded, often for financial reasons. The CBS Health Survey has asked about use of care throughout the entire period 1990-2015/16, though changes have been made to the measurement method over time. Periods in which comparable measurement methods were used are 1990-2009, 2010-2013 and 2014-2016. The results are presented in broad outline in tables 7.5 and 7.6.¹⁷

Taking all age categories together, the share of the Dutch population who contact their GP each year is fairly constant over the period 1990-2000, at around 75%, after which the percentage falls slightly. Later measurements using slightly different methods also show slightly lower percentages for the population as a whole, falling to 69% in 2016.

The percentage of older people (age 65 and above) who visit their GP at least once a year is higher, at around 87%, but here again we see a slightly lower percentage in 2009. In the two categories of older people used by CBS since 2010, we see a decline in visits by those aged 65-74 years, but not among people aged 75 and older. The measurement in 2016, in particular, shows that GP care is shifting to the very oldest age groups.

The reported trend in the use of medical specialist care follows a different pattern. Taking the population as a whole, it initially follows a fairly volatile pattern, fluctuating around 38% until approximately the year 2000 (with the figure of 41% in 1990 being an outlier); from 2001 onwards, however, the trend rises steadily, with around 43% reporting having had annual contact with a medical specialist in 2009. In the subsequent years (2010-2016) this figure falls back to 38-39%. The trend in the older age groups (65 and older) shows a rising trend with outliers from around 59% in 1990 to over 67% in 2009, after which the percentages for those aged 65-74 years and those over 75 fall slightly and remain constant. The growth from 2001 may be due to the policy referred to earlier of expanding medical specialist production ('extra funding for extra care' policy).

Visits to physiotherapists and remedial therapists show a rising trend for both the population as a whole and for the older generation. People have been able to access physiotherapists directly, i.e. without a referral, since 2006, and this may have played a role in the increase in visits. A shift towards older people can be observed in 2016. A minority of the population have experienced a hospital admission or day admission. The survey data reveal no major changes over time.

Given the regularly recurring attention in the media, it is interesting that, according to the CBS data, relatively few people visit alternative therapists; population surveys also show no rising trend here.¹⁸ It is also not the case that alternative therapists mainly treat older people. CBS looked in more detail in 2014 at contacts with alternative therapists in the period 2010-2012.¹⁹ The 6% who have visited an alternative therapist equates to 1 million people. They are mainly people aged between 30 and 50 years, people who are highly educated (to degree level) and people with supplementary health insurance. Twice as many women as men visit an alternative therapist. Frequently reported types of alternative therapy are homeopathy and acupuncture. Studies in other countries show much higher percentages (Van Dijk 2006). In an international comparative review article based on surveys in Western countries, the most frequent users of alternative medicine are described as white, middle-aged women who are well educated and have a good income (Ernst 2000: 255) – though this does not mean that other groups in the population do not use alternative medicine.

Around the year 2000 it seemed that interest in alternative therapists was set to increase steadily (see Van Dijk 2006). Figures from the CBS Health Survey suggested an increase from 3.8% in 1981 to over 6% in 2002, and the number of therapies offered increased from five in 1960 to more than 400 in 2004; the number of therapists registered with a

professional association increased from 500 in 1969 to 22,000 in 2003. Yet according to the CB1 Health Survey, the percentage of the population visiting an alternative therapist did not increase (further) between 2010 and 2016.

A qualitative study was carried out in the Rotterdam region on the experience of mental illness of 119 Dutch people with a migration background. Half of them considered health complaints from a biomedical perspective and the other half from a combined biomedical and alternative perspective (Hoffer 2009: 212). When looking for help, they generally consulted care providers along the lines prescribed by their own culture. For example, people with a Moroccan background only consulted Islamic practitioners, and those of Chinese extraction only visited traditional Chinese doctors.

Table 7.5

Increasing contacts with medical specialists and physiotherapists after 2000, contacts with GPs fairly constant

Share of the population in private households who have had contact with a number of care providers at least once in the course of a year,^a 1990-2009 (in percentages)

	1990	2000	2009
general practitioner			
total population	75	76	74
≥ 65 years	87	89	85
medical specialist			
total population	41	38	43
≥ 65 years	59	58	67
physiotherapist			
total population	14	16	21
≥ 65 years	18	23	28
alternative therapist			
total population	6	6	7
≥ 65 years	5	4	4
hospital admission			
total population	7	6	7
≥ 65 years	13	12	14

a The questions on use of medical care provisions were modified from 2010 onwards and are therefore not entirely comparable with the period described above.

Source: CBS (StatLine; GE'90-'09)

Table 7.6

In particular elderly persons (75 years and over) have contact with the GP; older people more often consult a physiotherapist. Visits to alternative therapists remain nearly unchanged

Share of the population in private households who have had contact with a number of care providers at least once in the course of a year,^a by age category, 1990-2009 (in percentages)

	2010	2016
general practitioner		
total population	72	69
65-74 years	81	77
≥ 75 years	84	85
medical specialist		
total population	38	39
65-74 years	57	56
≥ 75 years	64	63
physiotherapist		
total population	22	26
65-74 years	28	34
≥ 75 years	30	37
alternative therapist		
total population	6	5
65-74 years	4	5
≥ 75 years	3	3
hospital admission (with overnight stay)		
total population	7	7
65-74 years	13	12
≥ 75 years	17	16
hospital (day admission)		
total population	8	8
65-74 years	11	11
≥ 75 years	12	10

a The figures for 2010-2013 and 2014-2016 are not completely comparable due to methodological changes.

Source: CBS (StatLine; 6E'10-'16)

Use of care based on care records

Hospitals 1995-2010

Records of hospital admissions in the form of production figures (only available from CBS for the period 1995-2010) show a different picture from that portrayed by the Health Survey. The figures show clearly that the 'extra funding for extra care' policy led to an increase in care production. Between 1995 and 2001, the number of hospital admissions per 10,000 residents stayed fairly constant for both men (a reduction from 905.2 to 876.8) and women (a slight increase from 1,064 to 1,080.1). It then increased to 1,152 admissions per 10,000 male residents in 2010 and 1505.5 per 10,000 residents for women in 2010. This equates to an increase of over 30% for men and nearly 40% for women in the nine years between 2001 and 2010.

GP care 2011-2015

Records on care received from general practitioners and mental health nurse practitioners show an increase in the number of extended consultations and visits over the five measurement years from 2011 to 2015.²⁰ The number of email consultations also rose sharply. The main increase in GP activity relates to older patients. Among patients aged 85 and older there were 1,544 extended visits per 1,000 registered patients. There were also a large number of telephone consultations in this group. The slightly younger age group (75-84 years) stands out for the large number of extended consultations in 2015 (De Hoon et al. 2016: 15).

For decades, there has been talk of substituting (secondary) hospital care with primary care provided by GPs, and the primary care administrative accord 2014-2017 contains agreements on this. It remains to be seen how successfully this substitution can be implemented; a study by NIVEL observes that it cannot simply be assumed that primary and secondary care function as communicating vessels (De Jong et al. 2016), except in specific cases. The Netherlands Court of Audit wrote in November 2016 that the new funding model for primary care was only applied for the first time in 2015 (Algemene Rekenkamer 2016: 60). Financially, the arrangements made for 2015 produced little result.

The number of clients for mental health services increased from 637,700 to 936,900 between 2003 and 2009. The biggest increase occurred in the area of sheltered housing, up from 10,500 in 2003 to 26,700 in 2009, a rise of 154% (Veerbeek et al. 2013: 48). The 2012 sector report from the Dutch Association of Mental Health and Addiction Care (GGZ Nederland) states that the number of unique patients fell by 6% in the period 2009-2012 (GGZ Nederland 2014).

The Dutch Healthcare Authority (NZA) compiled a Market Scan for mental health care in 2016 (NZA 2016), which shows a clear trend in the patient flows. The lightest form of care (provided by mental health nurse practitioners in a GP surgery) increased strongly, from 95,183 patients in 2011 to 427,482 in 2015. By contrast, the number of patients receiving care provided by psychologists and basic mental health care declined (from 333,463 in 2011 to 281,597 in 2014), as did the number receiving secondary/specialist mental health care (from 979,197 in 2011 to 710,020 in 2014). Overall, the changes in the number of patients led from well over 1.3 million in 2011 to well over 1.2 million in 2014.

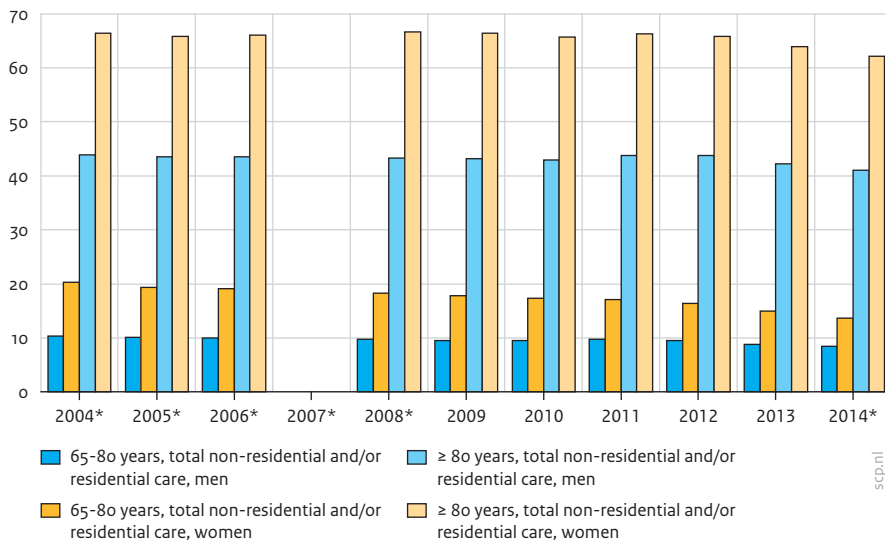
Long-term care 2004-2014

SCP analysed the use of domestic help, personal care and nursing during the period 2004-2011 (Plaisier & De Klerk 2015). This showed that while the number of users of these forms of care had risen, in percentage terms there was no increase. The rise was due to population growth and the increase in the number of (very) elderly people. Use of care by those aged 80 and over is stable and is declining among those aged 65-80 years.

Figure 7.12 shows what proportion of the older population received long-term care in kind (i.e. not in the form of a personal budget) for which they were required to pay a contribution. Persons aged 18 and older who receive long-term care are required to pay a contribution if they have sufficient income; The Central Administrative Office (CAK) keeps a record of this and supplies data to Statistics Netherlands (CBS) for use in the Long-term Care Monitor (*Monitor langdurige zorg*).

Figure 7.12

Reduction between 2004 and 2014 in the percentage of older people receiving long-term care in kind
 Recipients of long-term care with and without residence, care users who pay a client contribution,
 by age, 2004-2014 (in percentages of the age group concerned)



* Provisional figures.

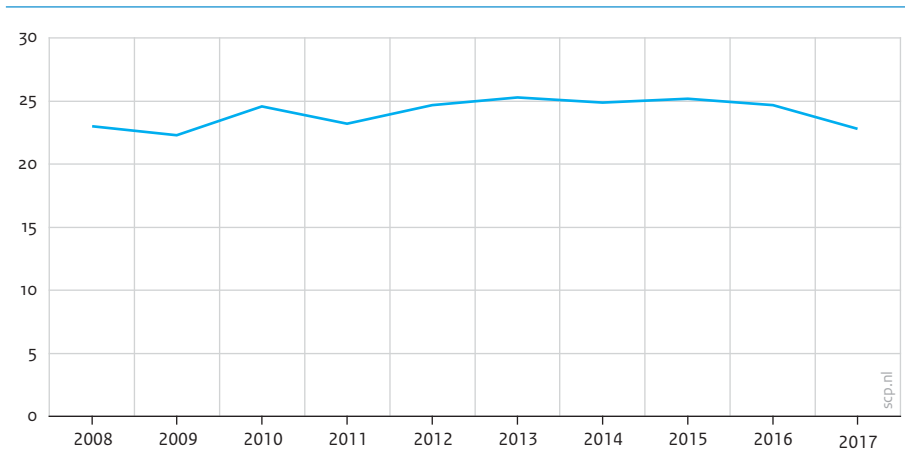
Source: CBS (Monitor langdurige zorg)

The general picture is one of a decline in the percentage of older people receiving long-term care who have not received a personal budget but who do pay a client contribution.²¹

Data on the percentage of people providing informal care do not reveal any major changes between 2008 and 2017. This also applies for providing help to neighbours, and so on (see chapter 8). A study by TNO does however show an increase in the percentage of informal carers between 2010 and 2013 among working people aged 45-60 years, albeit a small one. The percentage reporting that they had provided informal care in the last twelve months rose from 21% to 26%, but the provision of voluntary care and support remained virtually unchanged (Petrichева & Damman 2017).

Figure 7.13

Little change since 2008 in the percentage of people providing informal care

Share of informal carers,^a persons aged 16 years and older, 2008-2017 (in percentages)

a People who provide unpaid help to sick or disabled family members, friends or neighbours.

Source: scp (Survey on Cultural Change)

7.6 Summary and concluding discussion

Summary

The health status of the Dutch population improved in the period 1990-2015. Life expectancy has increased and people are dying at an increasingly great age. Physical mobility has improved, especially among those of middle age and members of the older generation. This reflects the increased participation in sport by older people, as described in chapter 9.

Life expectancy in good health and life expectancy without physical disabilities have both increased. There has thus been a clear improvement in quality of life. At the same time, the percentage of the population with one or more chronic diseases has also increased. This is probably due in part to increased attention for these diseases, such as diabetes. Life expectancy without chronic disease has fallen.

These trends have been much more positive for men than for women. Men have seen a bigger increase in life expectancy, including life expectancy in good health and life expectancy without physical disabilities. At the same time, life expectancy without chronic diseases has fallen less among men.

There is some research which attributes the improvement in life expectancy this century largely to increased care 'production', but the last word has yet to be written on this (Peters 2015).

When it comes to use of medical care, older people have more contacts per year with general practitioners (GPs) and medical specialists. As regards GPs, this trend is accompanied by a lower percentage of annual contacts for the population as a whole.²² The percentage of annual contacts with alternative therapists shows no sign of an increase; the share of the population who have contact with these therapists remains fairly low. These are not care providers that are visited mainly by (the oldest) older persons.

Over the whole period 1990-2016, the percentage of the population having annual contact with a physiotherapist increased steadily. The percentage having contact with these therapists is high among the over-75s.

Survey data suggest that there has been little increase in the percentage of people who are admitted to hospital each year. However, the figures on care production tell a different story, showing a strong rise in production between 2001 and 2010.

In mental health care, a clear shift can be observed from more intensive to lighter forms of care.

The percentage of older people receiving long-term care reduced between 2004 and 2014. This relates to 'care in kind', in other words care for which the recipient does not receive a personal budget. Administrative data on this are only available for people who paid a client contribution for this care but, despite this limitation, these findings do provide an indication of the scope of long-term care.

The percentage of people providing informal care did not increase markedly between 2008 and 2017.

Concluding discussion

A consistent trend can be discerned in the policy of the last 25 years, towards attempting to move care delivery from specialist to generalist care and from professional care to self-care, and towards a shift in responsibility from central government to local government and the citizen.

If the positive health trends referred to above are combined with these policy trends, the picture that emerges is one in which the better health and mobility of older people in particular enables them to live independently for longer, but also that people living longer means higher healthcare costs. Peters (2015) accordingly observes that the flipside of a longer life is a financial burden for the Dutch welfare state, and especially the healthcare sector, pension funds and insurers.

It also means that an ever larger group of very elderly people living independently will have to make do with the highest possible forms of care close to their home. There is no doubt that very intensive efforts are being made in this regard by GPs and other doctors, paramedics, home care workers, community nurses and other professionals, particularly in primary care and the welfare sector. Citizens in more and more locations throughout

the Netherlands are also setting up care cooperatives and housing initiatives for people with care needs. Nonetheless, there are regular indications that very elderly and frail people are not always receiving the care they need at home, as also demonstrated in the recent report *Krakende ketens in de zorg voor kwetsbare ouderen* ('Creaking chains in the care system for frail older persons') published by the association of healthcare institutions in the Amsterdam region (SIGRA).²³

It is sometimes assumed that informal care is gradually replacing formal care, but the figures on informal care presented here do not support this assumption. Chapter 8 makes clear that the percentage of volunteers providing help to neighbours, older persons and people with disabilities has decreased rather than increased since 2014, which runs contrary to what had been expected in the context of the 'participation society'. There is therefore no firm case for relying on more substitution of formal by informal care.

Developments in Dutch society between 1990 and 2015 have delivered many health benefits, which have also made it possible for many people to live productive lives for longer and with good quality of life. Despite this, dependency on care is also increasing, partly due to the changed population profile. At this point in time, dealing adequately with the consequences of the health benefits offered by medical care and the welfare state enabling people to live longer, by providing social and medical care that is sufficient in both quantity and quality for all members of the growing group of very elderly and frail older persons, seems likely to prove challenging.

Notes

- 1 The previous Minister of Health who was also a doctor was Louis Stuyt, a member of the first Biesheuvel government (1971-1973).
- 2 The productivity study by Blank et al. (2016: 111) asserts that this was partly the result of a court ruling in 1999 in which a positive indication for care created an enforceable right to that care.
- 3 An international comparative study by the oEcd reported waiting lists for nine common operations (cataracts, knee and hip replacement, angioplasty, bypass, etc.) for twelve countries in 2011. The waiting lists were shortest in the Netherlands, averaging less than 1.5 months. There was also a clear reduction in waiting lists in the period 2006-2011 for hip, knee and cataract operations (Siciliani et al. 2014). There was uproar once again in 2017 concerning the waiting lists for medical specialist care in the Netherlands. The Dutch Healthcare Authority (NZA) observed in 2017 that the waiting lists for eight specialist outpatient treatments had risen above the prescribed waiting time of four weeks (the 'Treek standard'). According to the NZa, there is no straightforward explanation or solution for this, though there are often clear regional differences. In regions with an ageing population, increasing demand for care by older people coincides with low interest by medical specialists to establish there. This is a factor in specialisms such as rheumatology, rehabilitation, geriatrics and ophthalmology. Waiting times of six weeks for an intake interview in specialist mental health care also exceed the four-week standard (NZA 2017: 36). Waiting lists are particularly high for disorders on the autistic spectrum and personality

- disorders; waiting lists for basic mental health services are around the norm, on average. Waiting lists for mental health care are lengthening because of the relatively low budget for specialist mental health care services, patients are not always treated in the right place and there is a lack of clarity about the available care at regional level. Stakeholders reached agreement in July 2017 on tackling the waiting list problem. The Dutch Consumer Association (*Consumentenbond*) also reported in September 2017 that there were waiting lists for nursing home admission, especially for people with dementia.
- 4 This was also the case for the transfer of parts of AWBZ-funded care to other legislative regimes. For example, domiciliary care was transferred to the Social Support Act (wmo) in 2007, and curative mental health care to the Health Insurance Act (Zvw) in 2008 (Van Strien & Bhageloe-Datadin 2015).
 - 5 See: See the rivm report on this: <https://www.volksgezondheidenzorg.info>
 - 6 <https://www.kenniscentrumphrenos.nl/kennisthemas/epa/>
 - 7 Standardised for the population in 2000.
 - 8 When studying changes over time, standardisation ensures that the age and sex distribution between the different measurement instances is the same and that the differences found are therefore not attributable to differences in the age and gender profile of the population.
 - 9 See: <http://www.voedingscentrum.nl/encyclopedie/overgewicht.aspx>
 - 10 The national statistics agency in Luxembourg reports an increase of 7.6 years in male life expectancy between 1990 and 2012. The biggest increase occurred in the age group 60-79 years (2.96 years) and was concentrated in the period 2005-2012 (1.16 years).
 - 11 See the rivm report on this: <https://www.volksgezondheidenzorg.info/onderwerp/levensverwachting/regionaal-internationaal/internationaal#node-internationale-vergelijking-trend-levensverwachting-mannen>.
 - 12 <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/bevoelkerung/geburten-todesfaelle/lebenserwartung.html>
 - 13 People with advanced dementia also develop motor problems, which can cause them to choke and/or develop a lung infection; lung infection is then the direct cause of death, and dementia the underlying cause.
 - 14 <https://www.gezondheidsnet.nl/ziekten/kransslagader-aandoeningen-coronaire-aandoeningen-coronaire-hartziekten-chz>
 - 15 Healthy life expectancy and derived measures relate to the whole population, not just to the population living in private households as in the figures reported from the CBS Health Survey.
 - 16 <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/onze-diensten/methoden/onderzoeksomschrijvingen/korte-onderzoeksbeschrijvingen/gezondheidsenquête-vanaf-2014>
 - 17 For a detailed picture, see the CBS StatLine database.
1981-2009
<http://statline.cbs.nl/Statweb/publication/?VW=T&DM=SLNL&PA=7042MC&D1=0-2,7-13,121-123,128-134,154-156,161-167,260-262,267-273,315-317,322-328&D2=1-29&HD=170601-1533&HDR=G1&STB=T>
2010-2013
<http://statline.cbs.nl/Statweb/publication/?VW=T&DM=SLNL&PA=81027NED&D1=0-1,12-13,25-26,41-42,46,51,53-54&D2=0-13&D3=0&D4=a&HD=170601-1536&HDR=G3&STB=G2,T,G1>

2014-2016

<http://statline.cbs.nl/Statweb/publication/?VW=T&DM=SLNL&PA=83005NED&D1=57-58,60-61,63-64,68-69,75,77,79-80&D2=0-13&D3=0&D4=a&HD=170601-1538&HDR=G2,G3&STB=T,G1>

- 18 GPs who practice alternative medicine are not included here; if they were included, the frequency of visits would be higher (Van Dijk (2006) suggests 15%), but it is not the case that each visit to a GP who practices alternative medicine by definition leads to an alternative therapy. It is therefore difficult to include these visits in the figures.
- 19 <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/nieuws/2014/11/bijna-1-miljoen-mensen-onder-behandeling-van-een-alternatieve-genezer>
- 20 The Netherlands Institute for Health Services Research (NIVEL) has several primary care registration systems, in which among other things 418 Dutch GP practices with a total of 1.5 million patients participate. The figures are representative for the patient population.
- 21 The number of older recipients of personal budgets funded through the Exceptional Medical Expenses Act (AWBZ) declined between 2011 and 2014 from 23,605 to 22,955.
- 22 Based on the CBS Health Survey. The Netherlands Institution for Health Services Research (NIVEL) reports that 78% of registered patients had contact with their GP practice in 2015 (De Hoon, et al., 2016).
- 23 <https://www.sigra.nl/nieuwsbericht/krakende-ketens-de-zorg-voor-kwetsbare-ouderen>

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8 Social and political participation and engagement

Pepijn van Houwelingen & Paul Dekker

- Compared with people in other European countries, the Dutch are very ready to voice their political protest against unjust laws, but participate in politics less often.
 - The number of trade union members (since 2000) and church members has fallen substantially, mainly due to limited numbers of new, younger members.
 - Membership of sports clubs is projected to fall from around one in three Dutch citizens to one in five by 2030.
 - The generosity of the Dutch and the percentage of volunteers is largely stable, though volunteers devote slightly more time to volunteering than ten years ago.
 - Volunteers are mainly men, older people, churchgoers, Dutch natives and well educated.
 - The Dutch have become more engaged in politics over the last quarter of a century and also take part in slightly more non-electoral actions (boycotts, signing petitions, etc.). By contrast, membership of political parties has declined. Political participation via the Internet has increased since the start of this century.
 - Generally speaking, the gap in social and political engagement between higher and lower-educated people has widened slightly over the last quarter of a century.
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8.1 Introduction

‘The Netherlands is sick’, observed Dutch prime minister Ruud Lubbers in 1990. Lubbers was referring in the first instance to the almost one million Dutch citizens who were claiming disability benefits at that time, but he was also highlighting a wider problem: too many people in the Netherlands were on benefits and on the margins of society, whereas in principle they were capable of working.¹ Since 1990, there have been all kinds of initiatives from successive Dutch governments aimed at increasing the participation and engagement of Dutch citizens and reducing their dependence on the welfare state. The public spending cuts in the culture sector were, for example, based on the idea that the country’s artistic and cultural output should be shaped not by the government, through subsidies, but by the market, through the pricing mechanism, and by society itself, through gifts and donations. The recent reforms in the care sector, such as the introduction of the Social Support Act (Wmo), have also all been based on the principle that society – in the case of the Wmo interpreted as family, friends and neighbours, but also volunteers – should first do all it can itself to provide support to people in need of care before the government comes into the picture. The thinking was that the role of government should as far as possible be limited to creating the necessary conditions to enable society to flourish through its own efforts. In the 2013 Speech from the Throne,

the Dutch king described this as a transition in which "the traditional welfare state is slowly but surely transforming into a participation society" (Van Houwelingen et al. 2014: 17).

Over the last 25 years, all manner of policy initiatives have also been taken aimed at increasing the political engagement of the Dutch, including the (temporary) introduction of elected mayors and an advisory referendum. However, we had concluded in an earlier study (Van Houwelingen et al. 2014: 222), in line with the Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR), among others, that attempts to promote political (or 'policy-influencing') participation and engagement in the Netherlands have produced relatively sparse results: the Netherlands is 'institutionally conservative' (WRR 2012: 33).

In short, more and more participation and engagement has been expected from Dutch citizens in all kinds of areas over the last quarter of a century, at least by policymakers and politicians. But is this actually happening? In this chapter we restrict ourselves to trends in societal and political participation. Do the Dutch volunteer more or less today than 25 years ago? Do they give more or less money to good causes? And how successful have the attempts to raise political participation and engagement been? We also look at the development of citizenship ideals in the Netherlands. The central question running through all of this is: Has the social participation and engagement of the Dutch genuinely increased over the last quarter of a century, as assumed and desired by politicians and policymakers?

True to tradition, we start the chapter by placing participation and engagement in the Netherlands in a European perspective. We then focus on three areas, namely membership and donations (passive forms of social participation), volunteering (active form of participation) and political participation and engagement. We do this using time series, where possible going back 25 years, to investigate what changes in background characteristics can be identified over time, for example age or education level. We also devote extra attention to the importance of background characteristics such as age, sex and education level for social and political participation and engagement.

8.2 The Netherlands in Europe: politics mainly focused on the national level and participation is average

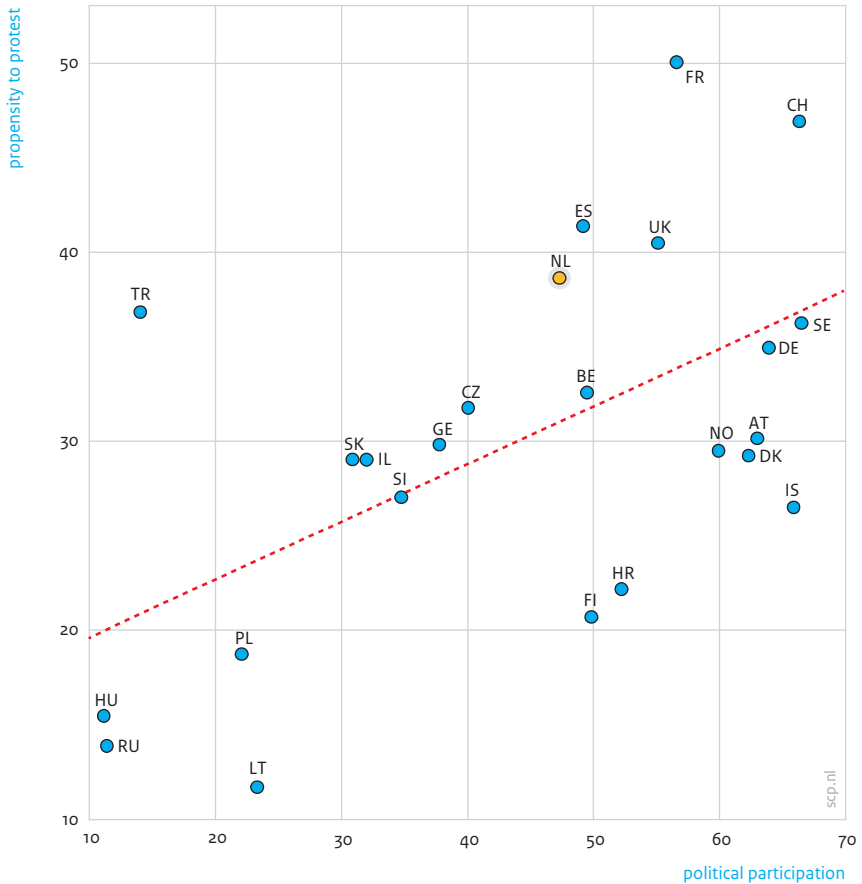
In the absence of up-to-date international data on volunteering or other forms of active social participation, we compare only political participation and engagement. The 2015 edition of 'The social state of the Netherlands' (*SSN 2015*) contained data from the 2012/2013 edition of the European Social Survey (ESS) which showed rates of volunteering in the Netherlands to be very high relative to other countries in Europe (Bijl et al. 2015). This echoes findings in several earlier studies (e.g. Musick & Wilson 2007: 342 ff.) and it is probably still the case, though that can only be investigated in the next edition in this series, when data from the European Values Study 2017/2018 are available.

In figure 8.1 we compare recent participation in political activities in a wide range of European countries (including the only partly European Turkey and the Eurovision Song Festival contestant Israel) and, as an indicator for propensity to engage in political protest, an assessment of how likely people would be to do something in the event of a bad political proposal. The propensity to protest is high in the Netherlands – exceeded in only four of the 24 countries studied – but in terms of actual political participation the Netherlands is fairly average, and participation in most other (North)western European countries is substantially higher. That was also the finding in *SSN 2015*, based on a comparable question on participation in the ESS (Van Houwelingen & Dekker 2015: 226-227): political participation in the Netherlands is low compared to the high level of volunteering.

Figure 8.1

The Dutch are not very politically active, but have a high propensity to protest

Political participation^a and propensity to protest^b in 24 countries, persons aged 18 years and older, 2014-15 (in percentages)^c



a Answered 'I have done so in the last year' at least once to the question: 'There are several ways in which people can be socially or politically active. Can you say whether you have ever taken part in the following activities, or would do so in the future? Participation via the Internet also counts: 1) signing a petition; 2) boycotting or deliberately buying certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons; 3) taking part in a demonstration; 4) attending a political meeting or gathering; 5) contacting (or trying to contact) a politician or official to express your opinion; 6) giving or collecting money for a social or political activity; 7) contacting or appearing in the media to express an opinion; 8) expressing political opinions on the Internet.'

- b 'Very/fairly likely' in answer to the question: 'Imagine that Parliament is considering passing a law that you regard as unjust or harmful. How likely is it that you would try to do something about it, alone or with others?'
- c Appendix A (at the back of this publication) contains an explanation of the country codes used.

Key to figure: The continuous line shows that there is a positive relationship between the level of actual political participation and the propensity to protest. Participation is relatively high in countries above the line, propensity to protest is relatively high in countries below the line.

Source: ISSP'14/'15 (Burgerschapsmodule)

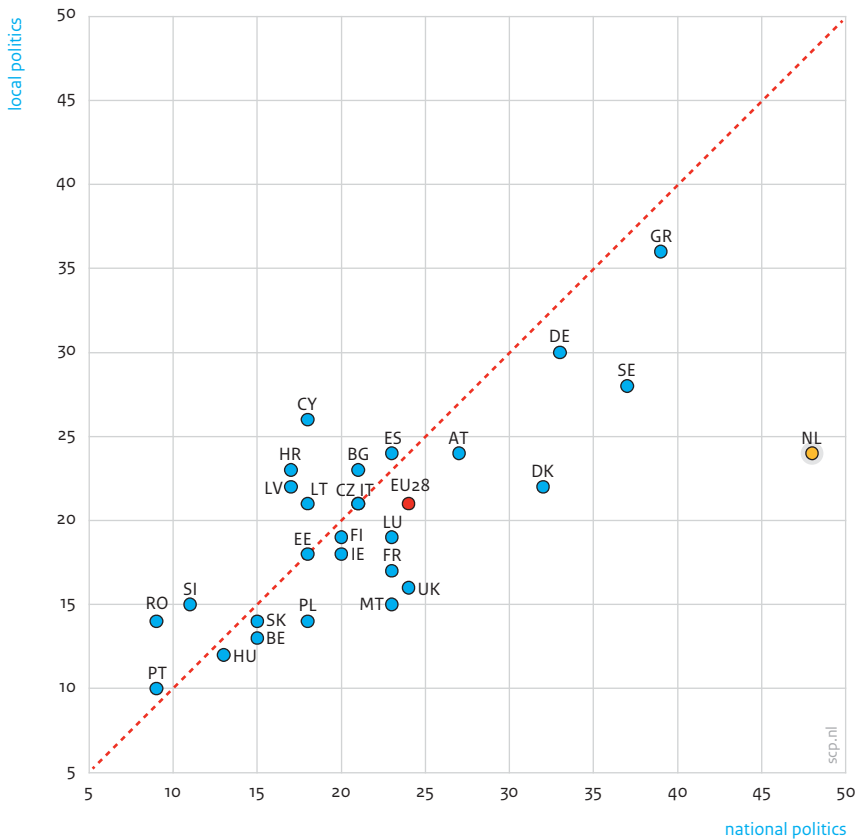
Figure 8.2 compares shares of the population in the EU Member States who regularly talk about local and national political issues in their circle of friends. What counts as 'regularly' can of course vary, but the combination in any event provides an impression of the relative importance of national and local politics in people's lives.

Many countries are located on or around the diagonal, indicating that people talk equally frequently about local and national political issues. People in some countries more often talk about local issues (this is clearly the case in Cyprus and Croatia), while national politics are more often discussed in numerous countries, for example the United Kingdom, Denmark, Sweden and, the most extreme case, the Netherlands. Two years ago the Netherlands also deviated in this direction (Van Houwelingen & Dekker 2015: 228), but the difference is now rather greater. Dutch research also suggests a greater interest in national than local politics in the Netherlands, but local politics score higher in terms of satisfaction and trust (Van der Meer & Van der Kolk 2016; Den Ridder et al. 2014: 26 ff.).

Figure 8.2

More interest in national politics among the Dutch

Local and national political interest^a in 28 countries, persons aged 15 years and older, 2017 (in percentages)^b



- a 'When you are together with friends or family, would you say that you talk about national (local) political affairs regularly, sometimes or never?' The figure shown is the percentage answering 'regularly'.
- b Appendix A (at the back of this publication) contains an explanation of the country codes used.

Key to figure: People in countries above the diagonal line talk more about local politics; people in countries below the diagonal talk more about national politics.

Source: EC (EB 87.1)

8.3 Membership of trade unions and churches, and donorship

Trade unions

Over the last 25 years, the total membership of the three biggest trade unions in the Netherlands was highest in 2000 (almost 1.8 million members), since when it has fallen gradually to just under 1.5 million in 2016 – a gradual decline in the total number of trade union members since the turn of the century, in other words. The reason for this is the ageing of the membership: with the exception of the Trade Union Federation for Professionals (vcp), the number of trade union members aged 65 and older has risen since 2000. At the same time, the number of younger members joining has fallen sharply: whereas in 1999 the Netherlands Trade Union Confederation (FNV) had 71,000 members under the age of 25, in 2016 this had dropped to less than half that figure: 31,000. The decline in membership of the three biggest trade unions since 2000 is all the more striking given that the total labour force has grown over the same period from around 8 million to 9 million².

Table 8.1

Decline in trade union membership

Membership of the three biggest Dutch trade unions, 1990-2016 (in numbers x 1,000)

	1990	1994	1997	2000	2003	2006	2009	2012	2014	2016	annual trend ^a
FNV	975	1111	1194	1225	1205	1171	1197	1180	1132	1078	3
cnv ^b	302	338	354	357	355	342	336	341	287	282	-1
vcp ^{bc}	125	156	161	207	169	161	135	132	54	100	-2
total	1402	1605	1709	1789	1729	1674	1668	1653	1473	1460	-1

- a Average annual change in membership (x 1,000) based on the trend curve between the two measurement points.
- b The fluctuations in membership of the National Federation of Christian Trade Unions in the Netherlands (cnv) and the Trade Union Federation for Professionals (vcp) after 2012 are due to individual trade unions joining and leaving these two federations.
- c Formerly (before 2014) the Federation of Managerial and Professional Staff Unions (MHP).

Source: CBS (StatLine)³

Churches

Membership of the six largest churches and the Netherlands Bible Society has been falling gradually since 1994, from 8.7 million to 6.3 million in 2015; over the same period, the Dutch population has grown by around 1.5 million. The Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PKN) have seen a particularly sharp fall in membership. By contrast, the (orthodox) Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Christian and Liberated) either maintained or, in the case of the Liberated branch and the

Reformed Congregations, increased their membership. The net reduction in membership of the various churches listed in table 8.2 averages out at 311 people per day since 1994.

Table 8.2
Decline in church membership

Membership of the largest Dutch churches and the Netherlands Bible Society, 1994-2015 (in numbers x 1,000)

	1994	1997	2000	2003	2006	2009	2012	2015	annual trend ^a
Roman Catholic Church	5460	5283	5106	4533	4352	4212	4044	3882	-80
Protestant Church (PKN) (until 2004: Dutch Reformed, Reformed Churches in the Netherlands + Evangelical Lutheran Church)	2599	2435	2271	2458	2329	2149	2153	1970	-25
Reformed Churches (Liberated)	121	124	125	126	126	124	122	119	0
Reformed Congregations	94	96	98	101	103	105	106	108	1
Christian Reformed Churches	75	75	75	74	74	74	74	73	0
Restored Reformed Church	.	.	.	.	70	58	59	59	-1
Netherlands Bible Society	372	337	331	303	202	182	138	122	-13
total	8721	8350	8006	7593	7256	6903	6696	6333	-114

a Average annual change in membership (x 1,000) based on the trend curve between the two measurement points.

Source: Kaski (censuses of individual churches and the Netherlands Bible Society)

Unfortunately no reliable time series are available for the number of Muslims in the Netherlands, an increasingly important religious group. (Maliepaard en Gijsberts 2012: 44) It is estimated that there are currently around one million Muslims living in the Netherlands;⁴ in 1990 the figure was estimated at just under half a million.⁵ In other words, the number of Muslims in the Netherlands has roughly doubled over the last 25 years, while the number of Christians has fallen by (over) two million (around 25%) over the same period (table 8.2).

Other civil-society organisations

There are of course many other civil-society organisations in addition to trade unions and churches, such as sports federations, consumer organisations and organisations concerned with international aid and solidarity. The publication 'United in change' (*Verenigd in verandering*) describes trends in the number of donors and members of these

organisations over the period 1994-2012 (Posthumus et al. 2014: 64). The report reveals that the number of donors and members of consumer, older persons', nature, environmental and sports organisations increased over this period, while those of broadcasting, health, welfare, women's and international aid and solidarity organisations fell. Although the recently published 'Sport Forward Study' (Sport Toekomstverkenning) (Van Bakel et al. 2017) shows a stable picture for the proportion of Dutch citizens who are members of a sports club over the last twenty years, at around one in three, it also forecasts that a number of social trends such as population ageing, immigration and individualisation will lead to a reduction in this proportion in the years ahead, to around one in five by 2030.

Donations

How has giving in the Netherlands developed over the last ten years? What are the main conclusions to be drawn on the basis of the study 'Giving in the Netherlands' (Geven in Nederland - GIN)? First, although the absolute amount given has increased, as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) it has remained roughly unchanged since 1997 (table 8.3). The Dutch give just over 5 billion euros per year to good causes, equivalent to approximately 0.8% of GDP. Compared with 2013, businesses in particular give more to good causes, possibly because of the concern for corporate social responsibility. The most money is given to causes in the category 'church and ideology', although this has fallen gradually as a percentage of total giving since 1997. The proportion given to organisations in the field of sport and recreation has also fallen gradually since 1997, while giving to causes in the category 'other' has grown strongly. All in all, 83% of Dutch households sometimes give money to a good cause, with the largest amounts in relative terms given by employees with an income between the modal and twice the modal income. This makes the Netherlands one of the most generous countries in the world (Steenbergen 2017). Finally, the recent spending cuts in the field of culture do not appear to have led to an increase in the percentage of the total going to the cultural sector, although the amount given to the cultural sector does show a clear increase since 1997.

Table 8.3

Generosity of the Dutch remains stable

Giving by type of good cause and type of gifts, 1997-2015 (in euros^a and percentages)

	1997	2001	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013	2015	annual trend ^b
households which give money (%)	71	82	83	88	87	85	88	83	0.78
average amount per household (euros)	213	263	254	260	241	240	237	261	0

Table 8.3

(Continued)

	1997	2001	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013	2015	annual trend ^b
total monetary gifts (in millions of euros)	1348	1770	1786	1650	1537	1492	1568	1620	-2
gifts in kind ^c (in millions of euros)	180	365	414	295	401	337	403	460	10
total gifts	1528	2136	2199	1945	1938	1829	1971	2081	7
other contributions to good causes ^d									
legacies	135	231	182	240	232	256	265	289	6
funds	214	237	431	339	387	294	290	301	4
companies	693	1359	1,513	1639	1694	1378	1363	2007	29
lotteries			396	394	461	498	494	524	14
total contributions to good causes (in millions of euros)	2570	3963	4721	4557	4712	4255	4383	5200	80
ditto as % of GDP	0.7	0.8	0.9	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.8	-0.01
good causes as % of gifts									
church and ideology	27	22	19	22	19	19	22	21	-0.1
health	13	11	11	10	13	11	12	13	-0.14
international aid	15	15	18	12	12	13	13	13	-0.17
environment, nature conservation and animal protection	8	7	8	8	9	9	8	9	0.06
education and research	4	3	6	6	6	4	5	4	-0.01
culture	4	9	7	8	10	7	6	7	0.08
sport and recreation	16	18	15	15	15	16	13	10	-0.26
public and social causes	11	10	12	13	10	13	13	11	0.06
other ^e	2	4	5	5	5	8	7	11	0.42

a Not adjusted for inflation.

b Average annual change based on the trend curve between the two measurement points.

c These are the respondents' own estimates of the monetary value of a gift in kind. It is fairly logical that people are inclined to slightly overestimate the value of an item they donate, such as an old jacket, for example.

d Due to corrections applied, these figures differ slightly from those in earlier reports of the study 'Geven in Nederland'.

e The cause is often unclear for those who make donations in kind (Bekkers et al. 2017: 103) and as donations in kind have increased in relative terms in recent years, this could explain the increase in this good cause category.

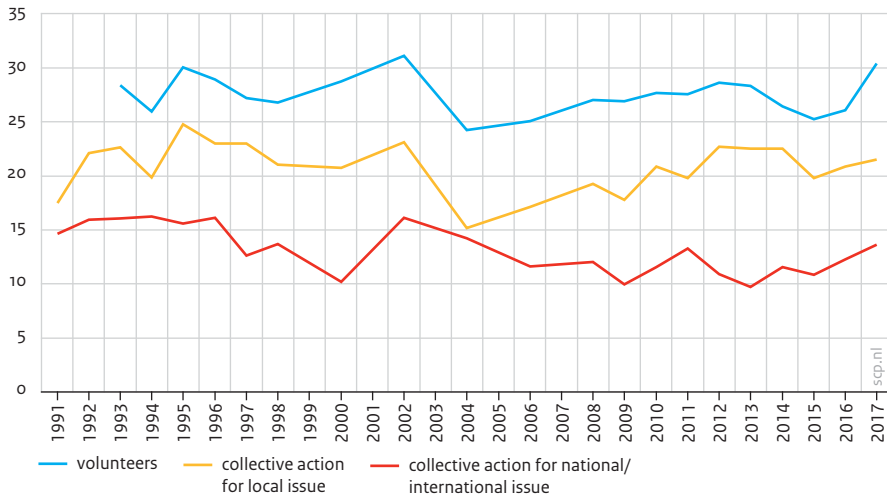
Source: vu (GiN; taken from Bekkers et al. 2017)

8.4 Volunteering

All in all, the percentage of the Dutch population who report that they volunteer has remained reasonably constant since 1990 (volunteering is defined here as work that is carried out in an organised context, without compulsion and unpaid, for the benefit of other people or society). The percentage generally fluctuates between 25% and 30% (figure 8.3). The same applies for the share of the population who have become engaged over the last two years in a (sub)local issue (the share varies between 15% and 25%) or a national/international issue (between 10% and 15%). No clear trends can be discerned over this long period, only fluctuations. The most recent measurement, for 2017, shows an increase in both volunteering and collective action, but these percentages still fall within the long-term bandwidth.

Figure 8.3
Volunteering and collective action fluctuating and recently rising

Trends in volunteering and collective action^a in the Netherlands, persons aged 18 years and older, 1991-2017 (in percentages)



- a Collective action = has taken action together with others in the last two years for a local, national or international issue. The question formulation was changed in 2010/11, and the figures for 2008 and earlier years have been adjusted to compensate for double measurement in those years.

Source: scp (cv '91-'16/'17)

Table 8.4 shows the average number of hours per week that the Dutch spend on various forms of social participation. The picture is generally a fairly stable one, though the average number of hours per week spent volunteering has increased gradually recently, from 0.7 hours in 2006 to 0.9 hours in 2016. The percentage of volunteers shows little or no increase over the same period, however, indicating that volunteers are devoting more time on average to volunteering than they did ten years ago.

Table 8.4

Time spent on social participation, persons age 12 years and older, 1975-2005 and 2006-2016 (in hours per week)

	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005 ^a	2006	2011	2016
total	2.0	2.0	2.2	2.1	2.2	1.8	1.8	2.0	2.3	2.2
volunteering	0.8	0.9	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.9
unpaid help to persons (family members) in other households ^b	0.8	0.7	1.0	0.8	1.0	0.8	0.8	0.9	1.0	0.9
practising religion ^c	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4

a The data collection method changed between 2005 and 2006. Until 2005, data were collected during one week in October each year; since 2006 data collection has taken place throughout the year. Differences in reported time use may therefore not represent genuine differences in behaviour, but may be the result of the new method of data collection. Caution should therefore be exercised in comparing the data from before and after 2005.

b E.g. helping with repairs, minding children or providing emotional support to a friend.

c E.g. praying, attending a service or activities such as being an elder or deacon.

Source: SCP (TBO'75-'06); SCP en CBS (TBO'11 and '16)

Just over a quarter of the Dutch population thus engage in volunteering, and this proportion is fairly stable over time. But what kind of volunteering do they do? Table 8.5 breaks down volunteering into the type of organisation for which people volunteer. Sports clubs, religious/ideological organisations and community groups make the most use of volunteers. The percentages are once again fairly stable; volunteering for choral, music or drama societies has in any event not increased in recent years following the public spending cuts in this sector, and the number of volunteers in sports clubs also appears to be fairly stable. This latter finding could be problematic since, as in the cultural sector, the spending cuts are likely to mean that (many) more volunteers are needed in the sports sector than in the past. It is not surprising in this light that finding sufficient volunteers for sports clubs appears to have become less than straightforward over the last few years.

Table 8.5

Percentage of volunteers stable

Organised volunteering, persons aged 18 years and older, 1990-2016/17 (in percentages)

	1990	1993	1999	2004	2010/11	2014/15	2016/17
choral, music or drama society	5	5	4	5	5	4	4
sports club	14	14	14	12	14	14	14
hobby club	8	8	4	5	5	4	5
political organisation	2	2	1	1	2	1	2
trade union, employees' or employers' organisation	3	3	3	2	1	2	1
religious or ideological organisation	8	8	8	10	9	7	8
school, crèche or pre-school playgroup (parents' committee, executive committee etc.).	11	11	10	9	10	9	9
help for neighbours, elderly persons, people with disabilities	13	13	10	13	15	15	11
organisation with social object (human rights, nature, etc.).	4	4	4	6	5	5	7
engages in one or more types of volunteering	42	41	39	40	42	43	41

Source: SCP (DLO'90-93; POLS'99; SUI'04-'16/'17)

The percentage of volunteers in the Netherlands who volunteer for one or more of the organisations listed in table 8.5 has fluctuated around 40% since 1990, indicating that the percentage of volunteers in the different types of organisation has also remained fairly stable since 1990. Most volunteering is carried out for sports clubs: around one in seven (adult) Dutch citizens volunteer for these organisations. Organisations which provide help to neighbours, elderly or disabled persons also account for around 10% of (adult) Dutch volunteering, and the same applies for schools, crèches, pre-school playgroups, and so on.

The number of people volunteering for trade unions in the Netherlands has been falling gradually since 1990, while more people have begun volunteering for organisations with a social object, such as promoting human rights or nature conservation. It is interesting to note that the percentage of volunteers providing help to neighbours, elderly and disabled persons appears to have fallen slightly in the most recent measurement year despite the increasing efforts in this area in particular to place more responsibility on citizens' own independence, for example through the Social Support Act (Wmo). This may be an indication of volunteers gradually becoming overburdened, though it is unfortunately not possible to make any firm statements about this based on our data.

As already noted earlier (Van Houwelingen en De Hart 2013), men, older persons and people with higher education have engaged in volunteering (relatively) more often since 1993. The difference between people with low and high education has grown particularly strongly over the last quarter of a century, almost doubling from 9 to 16 percentage points (see table 8.6). Men, people with high education and churchgoers volunteer most often. It is worth noting in this context that the percentage of people with high education in the Netherlands has increased over the last 25 years from 23% to 30%. Interestingly enough, the percentage of volunteers among employed and unemployed people is virtually the same.

Table 8.6

Older persons and people with higher education volunteer more often

Volunteering^a by background characteristics, persons aged 18 years and older, 1993-2016/17 (in percentages)

	1993	2000	2008/09	2012/13	2016/17
total	28	28	26	28	27
men	29	30	27	30	30
women	27	27	26	26	25
18-34 years	22	18	18	23	20
35-64 years	33	33	31	32	31
≥ 65 years	25	34	26	28	30
low education	24	25	21	20	19
intermediate education	30	28	28	29	27
high education	33	35	32	35	35
never goes to church	22	21	21	24	22
goes to church sometimes, regularly or often	37	41	34	35	37
not in paid work	27	32	27	29	27
in paid work	29	26	26	28	27

a Volunteering for a least one hour per week.

Source: scp (cv'93-'16/'17)

Do members of minorities volunteer more or less often than Dutch natives? And do we find the same differences in volunteering among members of minorities, for example by sex and age, as among Dutch natives? Table 8.7 shows that members of minorities generally volunteer substantially less often. For example, Dutch natives volunteer twice as

often as Dutch citizens with a Turkish background. In another SCP publication, we looked in more detail at the possible reasons for these differences (Van Houwelingen et al. 2016); we noted there too that members of minorities probably do not provide unpaid help and informal care any more often than Dutch natives, as is frequently assumed. In minority groups, it is mainly young people rather than older people who volunteer, presumably because they have a better command of Dutch. The second generation are thus more likely to volunteer, and as with Dutch natives, those with higher education levels are more often active as volunteers. Finally, in the community of Antillean origin, women volunteer more often than men.

Table 8.7

Less volunteering especially by older persons with a migration background

Volunteering^a by background characteristics, persons aged 18 years and older, 2015 (in percentages)

	Turkish	Moroccan	Surinamese	Antillean	Native Dutch
total	18	22	22	25	37
men	18	22	21	21	36
women	17	21	23	28	38
18-34 years	20	22	22	23	33
35-64 years	17	22	23	26	40
≥ 65 years	2	14	14	21	36
first generation	15	20	20	22	-
second generation	22	24	25	30	-
low education	11	19	17	21	27
intermediate education	18	22	20	23	39
high education	30	26	29	29	43

a Respondents were asked: Have you volunteered during the past 12 months?

Source: SCP (SIM'15)

To summarise, older people, people with high education, churchgoers and Dutch natives volunteer frequently. This core finding has been confirmed time and time again in numerous studies over many years (Boss et al. 2011: 16). The percentage of volunteers in the Netherlands in fact also varies from province to province: the percentage is highest in the provinces of Friesland, Overijssel and Zeeland, and lowest in the provinces of Flevoland, Noord-Holland and Limburg (Boss et al. 2011: 18). The low percentage of volunteers in Limburg may initially cause some surprise, given this province's reputation

for having a flourishing associational life. However, this has been described earlier and explained by Schmeets and Arts (2010), who point out that the available social capital in Limburg is under pressure due among other things to population ageing, secularisation and socio-economic disadvantage, especially in the south of the province, and this is having an impact on volunteering.

8.5 Politics

Political engagement

Table 8.8 illustrates the trend in political engagement based on respondents' own assessment of their political interest, following political news and propensity to vote and protest. These last two may not necessarily be a good predictor of behaviour, but they do tell us something about the degree to which people think they should vote or should protest if something they consider unjust is happening in the political arena.

Political interest and attention for political news has increased since 2008 compared with the preceding years, and the propensity to turn out and vote has certainly not reduced. Technology can play a role in following political news (regularly reading something about political issues is almost automatic via news sites on a smartphone), but this does not explain the increase in interest. Protest propensity and support for protest actions by others have also been higher on average since 2008; the biggest increase took place between the middle of the 1970s and the mid-1990s (Dekker 2000).

Table 8.8

More political interest and greater protest propensity and support for protest actions

Engagement with politics, persons aged 18 years and older, 1993-2016/'17 (in percentages)

	1993	2000	2008/09	2012/13	2014/15	2016/17
is fairly/very interested in politics	50	49	60	62	60	61
regularly reads about politics in the Netherlands, e.g. in the newspaper	38	36	52	50	49	49
propensity to vote ^a	81	76	86	88	83	84
propensity to protest ^b	48	48	54	55	54	56
support for protest actions ^c	61	65	70	68	73	68

a Says would vote if a general election were held at the time of the survey.

b 'Very' and 'somewhat' likely in answer to the question: 'How likely is it that you would genuinely try to do something if you thought Parliament was passing an unjust law? Would that be very likely, somewhat likely or unlikely?'

c 'Approve' in answer to the question: 'Suppose someone feels a law is so unjust that he/she decides to impede the government through sit-in demonstrations, mass meetings or protest marches. Would you approve or disapprove of that?'

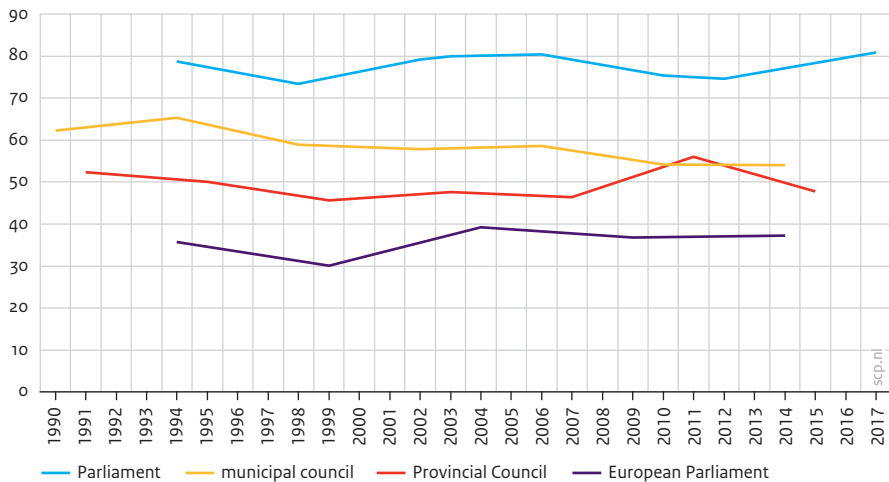
Source: scp (cv'93-'16/'17)

Electoral turnout

The turnout at general elections has remained reasonably constant across the board since 1990. Turnout is highest for general elections, at around 80% (corresponding with the propensity to vote in table 8.8), and lowest in European elections, at less than 40%. The turnout at provincial and local elections is between these two. The turnout at local council elections has been declining slightly since 1990, and the percentages at the last two elections (54%) are substantially below the turnout figures of around 70% seen in the 1970s and 80s. The devolution of policy tasks in the social domain to local authorities in recent years could have boosted turnout at the council elections in March 2018, but as yet there are no indications of a revival in interest in local politics (see figure 8.2 and the comments there).

Figure 8.4
Turnout at elections reasonably stable

Turnout at elections, 1990-2017 (in percentages)



Source: Kiesraad

Table 8.9

Total number of party members falling

Membership of political parties, persons aged 18 years and older, 1990-2017

	1990	1995	2000	2005	2008	2010	2015	2017	Δ^a	annual ^b
Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA)	125,033	100,442	82,000	73,000	69,200	67,592	53,107	48,775	-61%	-2543
Christian Union (CU)	-	-	-	24,235	27,683	26,441	23,521	23,695	-2%	-242
Democrats 66 (D66)	9,829	15,000	11,878	11,744	10,357	18,507	25,190	26,285	167%	+548
Green Left (GroenLinks)	15,900	12,000	14,314	20,709	21,410	20,961	21,252	23,390	47%	+433
Labour Party (PvdA)	91,784	64,523	58,426	61,111	59,327	54,504	49,155	46,162	-50%	-1233
Reformed Political Party (sgp)	23,062	23,600	25,491	25,900	26,906	27,196	29,974	30,122	31%	+272
Socialist Party (sp)	-	16,899	26,198	44,299	50,238	46,507	42,679	39,550	134%	+1141
People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (vvd)	59,074	53,465	48,092	41,861	36,832	36,371	30,895	26,497	-55%	-1129
Party for the Animals (PvdD)	-	-	-	-	6,972	10,310	12,019	12,866	85%	+386
50plus	-	-	-	-	-	-	7,534	6,180	-18%	-677
total	324,682	285,929	266,399	302,859	301,953	298,079	275,773	264,476	-13%	-102

a Percentage change in party membership in 2017 compared to the first measurement year.

b Annual change in membership based on a linear trend between the measurement instances (not all available measurement instances are shown in the table).

Source: DNPP

Membership of political parties

Membership of the three largest political parties in the Netherlands (CDA, PvdA and VVD) has fallen sharply – by at least half – since 1990 (table 8.9). As a result, the total number of political party members has also fallen since 2005, from just over 300,000 in that year to around 264,000 in 2017. On the other hand, the smaller parties have managed to more or less stabilise their membership numbers (ChristenUnie) or increase them, either gradually (SGP) or in a series of intermittent jumps (D66 and GroenLinks). While there has been a net sharp increase in membership of the SP since 1995, membership has fallen substantially since 2008. All in all, therefore, the total number of members of these political parties has fallen gradually since 2005, while the number of people entitled to vote has increased gradually since 2005, from 12 million to approximately 13 million⁶

Non-electoral participation

What is the situation as regards forms of political participation other than voting at elections? Earlier (figure 8.3) we presented trends in participation in collective action for local, national and international causes. Apart from ‘independent’ (Van Houwelingen et al. 2014) and philanthropic activities, these activities will also include political participation in the sense of activities targeting government policy and applicable opinion, in a bid to change political and social choices (Van Deth 2015). How political this participation is is unknown. Tables 8.10 and 8.11 look more specifically at political activities.

Table 8.10 shows that the Dutch relatively often sign petitions, contact a politician or official, or boycott products, and if anything the popularity of these forms of action is increasing rather than decreasing. Campaigns and demonstrations and activity within a political party or action group are as unpopular as ever.

Taken together, the activities in table 8.10 do not suggest a decrease in non-electoral participation, and possibly an increase after 2012. This also applies if we look at other, differently formulated activities in table 8.11.

Leaving out the popular petition signing in table 8.10, but taking a longer time period (activity in the last five years rather than the past year), the percentage of participants in table 8.11 has been around 40% since 2002, once again with a possible increase after 2012. As respondents were asked separately here about activity via the Internet, we do see a clear shift behind the total percentages. There has been a sharp increase over the last fifteen years in political participation via the Internet, and a reduction in other forms of participation; the share of respondents participating in public inquiries fell from 15% to 8%, in action groups from 7% to 4%, and in demonstrations from 10% to 6%. The Internet allows virtually everyone to be politically active today (Van Deth 2015), though this participation is often less intensive and less ‘obligatory’. Expressing an opinion on the Internet takes little time and ties someone to a particular standpoint less than taking part in a demonstration or contributing to a debate at a meeting.

Table 8.10

Increase in boycotting products, contacting politicians and signing petitions

Political participation,^a persons aged 18 years and older, 2002-2014 (in percentages)

	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014
has signed a petition	23	25	21	24	28	22	29
has contacted a politician or national or local official	15	14	14	14	17	15	18
has boycotted certain products	11	9	9	9	10	12	15
has worn a sticker or badge for a campaign	4	6	4	5	4	4	5
has been active in a political party or action group	3	4	4	3	4	3	4
has taken part in a permitted public demonstration	3	5	3	3	3	3	3
at least one of the above activities	36	39	35	37	42	37	47

a Affirmative answered to the following question: 'There are various ways of trying to improve things in the Netherlands or to try and prevent things from going wrong. Have you done one of the following things in the past 12 months?'

Source: GfK (ES5'02-'14)

Political participation need not always be peaceful. Pressure may be put on politicians using threats, which is also a form of 'influence'. Local and provincial politicians are most often confronted with aggression and violence. According to the report 'State of the administration 2016' (*Staat van het bestuur 2016*), the percentage of political office-holders who had been victims of aggression and violence increased by four percentage points in 2016 compared with 2014, from 23% to 27%. More than half of Dutch mayors had experienced this in 2016. The aggression is mostly verbal (BZK 2016: 125-126).

Table 8.11

More Dutch people politically active via Internet

Political participation,^a persons aged 18 years and older, 2002-2017 (in percentages)

	2002	2006	2010	2012	2017
has taken part in a political discussion or action via Internet, email or SMS	10	18	21	22	24
has involved radio, television or newspaper	13	10	12	11	10
has contacted a politician or official	14	11	12	8	9
has taken part in a public inquiry, public hearing or discussion meeting organised by the authorities	15	11	11	7	8
has taken part in a protest action, protest march or demonstration	10	8	5	6	6
has involved a political party or organisation	8	5	5	3	4
has taken part in an action group	7	4	3	3	4
something else	4	3	4	4	4
at least one of the above activities	41	39	41	39	45

a Answer to the question: 'There are various ways of raising a political issue or exerting influence on politicians or the government. Could you look at the following options and tell me which of them you have used over the last five years?'

Source: SKON (DPES'02-'17), weighted results (2017 main study)

8.6 Ability/inability and willingness/unwillingness to participate socially or politically

Who are the most socially and politically active people in the Netherlands? In the foregoing we have consistently described which groups are relatively socially and politically active, for example older people or people with high education, but we have taken no account of other characteristics which may have an influence. In this section we examine these characteristics using multivariate analyses. We also look at any trends that can be observed since 1993. The number of people engaging with a local, national or international cause or volunteering has fallen (slightly) since 1993 (table 8.12). In general, social and political engagement is higher among men, older people, people with high education, people with higher incomes and churchgoers than those falling outside these groups. People in employment volunteer less often, but are more inclined to take part in protests than those who do not work 16 hours or more per week. Finally, people who believe they have no influence at all over what the government does are, as might be expected, (much) less socially and politically active and engaged on all fronts.

Table 8.12
 Less volunteering by young people, non-churchgoers and lower-educated people
 Various forms of social and political participation and engagement, by background characteristics, 1993-2016/17 (b-values)^a

	volunteers	action for a local cause ^b	action for a national/international cause ^b	propensity to vote	propensity to protest
year (unadjusted)	-0.01 **	-0.02 ***	-0.01 **	-0.00	0.00
year	-0.00	-0.02 ***	-0.01 *	-0.00	0.01 **
woman instead of man	-0.19 ***	-0.22 ***	-0.06	-0.12 **	-0.11 ***
45+ instead of 18-44	0.32 ***	0.27 ***	-0.07	0.60 ***	-0.05
high instead of low education ^c	0.39 ***	0.43 ***	0.63 ***	0.71 ***	0.33 ***
high instead of low income ^b	0.23 ***	0.17 ***	-0.08	0.38 ***	0.07 *
(sometimes) goes to church instead of never	0.74 ***	0.29 ***	0.43 ***	0.29 ***	0.04
works 16 hours or more per week instead of does not do so	-0.29 ***	0.05	0.03	0.06	0.14 ***
believes has political influence instead of does not believe this ^d	0.41 ***	0.36 ***	0.53 ***	1.07 ***	0.48 ***

a A b-value greater than 0 means a greater propensity to participate; a value below 0 means less than in the stated reference category.

Significance: *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05.

b Only measured up to and including 2011; for a description see question formulation in figure 8.3. To correct for the change in question formulation, a dummy variable was included from 2012 onwards.

c Subdivision per year of education level and gross household income into two equal halves. Respondents in categories that are intersected by the 50%-line are assigned to a category arbitrarily.

d Disagrees with the statement: 'People like me have no influence at all over what the government does' versus 'agree' and 'no opinion'.

Source: scp (cv'93-'16/17)

The overrepresentation of people with high education in particular in politics and civil society is a well-known phenomenon which has sometimes been described as ‘diploma democracy’ (Bovens & Wille 2017). Are these background characteristics themselves subject to change? For example, has the effect of education and therefore of diploma democracy becomes stronger over the last 25 years? To test this, we compared the periods before and after 2004, the year which falls roughly in the middle of the 25-year period in which we are interested. The amount of volunteering by churchgoers has diminished slightly since 2004, and women and people in work are less likely to take action for a local cause. While older people have taken action less often for an issue of international interest since 2004, those on higher incomes have started doing so more often. As regards political engagement, it is notable that those on higher incomes more readily indicate an intention to vote or protest since 2004, whereas the propensity to vote has fallen among churchgoers. All in all, the difference between those with higher and lower education has increased slightly since 1993, while by contrast churchgoers have in some respects come to resemble non-churchgoers more closely.

SCP carried out a forward study in 2007 to explore trends in volunteering up to the year 2015 (Dekker et al. 2007). Population ageing, individualisation, increased multi-ethnicity, the raising of the state retirement age, secularisation, the breaking down of traditional socio-political and religious barriers (‘depillarisation’), the increasing labour participation rate of women and the rising education level of the population were all cited in that publication as potential trends that could have an important impact on volunteering in the Netherlands. As table 8.12 shows, some of these trends – in particular population ageing and the rising education level of the Dutch population – have a positive impact on volunteering, while others – mainly secularisation and the greater labour market participation of women – have a negative impact. All in all, the sum impact of these trends for volunteering in the Netherlands appears to be more negative than positive: the percentage of the Dutch population who volunteer or take action for a local, national or international cause has fallen (slightly) rather than increasing since 1993 (table 8.12). However, this fall is so slight that the picture could also be described as largely stable.

8.7 Concluding discussion

Dutch politicians and society in general expect more and more from citizens today. The government has been generally retrenching over the last 25 years, in a transformation from welfare state to ‘participation society’. Citizens are expected to fill the gaps left by this retrenchment by stepping up their social participation, for example as volunteers or donors. Has that actually happened? This chapter shows that there are few indications of an increase in the social participation and engagement of the Dutch over the last quarter of a century. The picture is largely stable, and where trends can be observed, they tend to be negative rather than positive. For example, membership of trade unions, political

parties and churches has gradually declined and the amount of volunteering by the Dutch has reduced (slightly) over the last 25 years, as has the degree to which they take action for a local, national or international cause. This applies particularly for women, lower-educated people and people in employment. The higher labour participation rate, especially of women, could offer an explanation for this: as more people work (part-time), there is less time left over for social participation. The growth in the number of non-Western migrants and their descendants, who generally volunteer less, could also provide an explanation. On the other hand, in some cases we have also seen a shift in participation: whilst it is true that the Dutch are less often members of a political party, for example, at the same time a higher proportion of the population report since the start of this century that they have taken part in a boycott or political action or discussion via the Internet. Finally, it is mainly men, older people, churchgoers, Dutch natives and people with higher education who are active as volunteers. The difference in social and political participation and engagement between higher and lower-educated people has probably also increased slightly over the last 25 years.

Notes

- 1 See: <https://fd.nl/economie-politiek/1123361/nederlandnog-net-zo-ziek-als-in-1990>.
- 2 See: <http://statline.cbs.nl/Statweb/publication/?DM=SLNL&PA=82309ned&D1=0-1&D2=0&D3=0&D4=0&D5=4,9,14,19,24,29,34,39,44,49,54,59,64,69&HDR=G4&STB=G1,G2,G3,T&VW=T>.
- 3 See: <http://statline.cbs.nl/Statweb/publication/?VW=T&DM=SLNL&PA=80598ned&D1=0&D2=0&D3=0&D4=0-1,l&D5=a&HD=150720-1140&HDR=T,G2,G1,G3&STB=G4>.
- 4 See: <http://nos.nl/artikel/2163084-het-aantal-moslims-stijgt-maar-met-hoeveel.html>.
- 5 See: <http://statline.cbs.nl/Statweb/publication/?DM=SLNL&PA=70086NED&D1=0-16&D2=0,9,19,29,32-33&VW=T>.
- 6 See: www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/nieuws/2017/07/bijna-13-miljoen-kiesgerechtigden-op-15-maart.

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9 Leisure time

Anne Roeters, Annemarie Wennekers, Andries van der Broek, Ine Pulles & Annet Tiessen-Raaphorst

- The Dutch spend 47.1 hours per week on leisure activities. Men, people aged over 65, people with a low educational level and people without young children or paid work spend most time on leisure.
 - As in 1990, the majority of leisure time in 2016 was spent on using media and ICT. Digitalisation and the growth of the Internet have changed the media landscape, but new media are mainly a supplement to (or partial replacement for) the traditional media.
 - Following a dip in 2011, time spent on social contacts in 2016 was back at its 2006 level. The average of 8.3 hours per week is still lower than the almost ten hours per week the Dutch spent on this activity in 1990.
 - Roughly half the population participate in sport on a weekly basis. Individual and unorganised sports are more popular than sport practised through a club. Membership of sports clubs has not fallen since 2000.
 - Pop concerts developed into events attended by people of all ages over the last 25 years. The cultural 'reach' is still higher among people with high education than those with low education.
 - The number of holidays people take has increased sharply over the last 25 years. Compared with other Europeans, a relatively high proportion of the Dutch go on holiday; in 2014, 82% of the Dutch went on holiday at least once a year, compared with an EU average of 60%.
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9.1 Introduction

Leisure time serves many purposes. People can relax, develop themselves and maintain contacts with other people (Verbeek en De Haan 2011). The amount of leisure time people have provides an indication of how busy they are and to what extent they have control over their time. Some commentators have suggested that the amount and quality of leisure time should be included as an element in determining quality of life (Stiglitz et al. 2010) (see also chapter 12). How people allocate their leisure time also provides an insight into social changes and differences, because it indicates what (different) people consider important: do people prefer to go to the theatre when they have a free evening, for example, or do they go to the gym? *The Social State of the Netherlands* (SSN) has reported on leisure time since the very first edition. However, it is not only researchers who are interested in leisure time use; through policy measures that relate to media, sport and culture, policymakers affect the context in which people shape their leisure.

This chapter focuses on the amount of leisure time the Dutch have and how they allocate this time. In addition, like the other chapters in this report, we look back over a period of 25 years and investigate how leisure time has developed. The chapter also looks at social differences: how do men and women, people with low and high education and young and older people organise their leisure time?

There are multiple definitions of leisure time (Bittman en Wajcman 2000; Sayer 2005; Passias et al. 2017). Some researchers consider leisure time as all time that is not spent on paid work, study, the household and care activities, based on the argument that people are free to organise the time that is left over as they see fit.¹ Other researchers limit leisure time to specific activities, though the exact categorisation varies. Earlier editions of ssn (and the time use surveys carried out by scp) have opted for this latter approach. We therefore define leisure time as time spent on ‘media use, social contacts, recreational activities and relaxation, social participation and leisure mobility’ (Cloin 2013, p. 32; Bijl et al. 2015, p. 241).

All the chapters in this edition of ssn consider the question of whether there is a difference between the ‘cans’ and ‘cannots’: people who have no difficulty finding their way in a changing society and people who do not have the appropriate skills to do this. Unlike the other domains, it is difficult to identify what these skills are in the case of leisure time: because what constitutes a ‘more successful’ use of leisure time? For this reason, whilst we do look at the educational differences that occur, we do not try to categorise these differences in terms of cans and cannots.

This chapter focuses in turn on the total leisure time of the Dutch (§ 9.2), media use (§ 9.3), social contacts (§ 9.4), sport (§ 9.5) and culture (§ 9.6). It appears that more possibilities have opened up over recent decades in all these constituent areas of leisure time. There are far more technological possibilities, and new sports and cultural forms have developed in or come to the Netherlands. However, people have not acquired more time. What does this mean for the way in which people organise their time? And does the broadening of the leisure time options reinforce or reduce social differences? As the changes in the different areas of leisure do not correspond with each other on a one-to-one basis, the emphasis in each section of this chapter is slightly different. For media and social contacts, for example, we look at the role of digitalisation, while the focus in the section on sport is on the shift away from playing sport at a club towards individual sports participation. For culture, we also outline trends in people’s interest in it and investigate whether social differences in that interest have increased or reduced. Finally, in section 9.7 we look briefly at what is perhaps the ultimate form of leisure time: holidays.

9.2 Leisure time at a glance

As a starting point and to provide context for the more in-depth analyses in the ensuing sections, this section briefly sketches the main contours of the leisure activities of the Dutch. The analyses presented in this section are mostly based on data from the Time Use Survey (TBO) (see Box 9.1). Although leisure time is far more than a form of time use, time use data are a useful means of comparing participation in different activities: an hour spent at a cultural institution, for example, is equal to an hour spent on sport. The choices people make in spending their time are therefore a good reflection of what they consider important.

Box 9.1 Using diary data to measure leisure time

This paragraph presents a broad overview of the leisure time use of the Dutch. It draws on the most recent data from the Time Use Survey (TBO) which is carried out by SCP in collaboration with Statistics Netherlands (CBS). The data were collected throughout the year in 2016. The first time use survey in the Netherlands dates from 1975; since then, new data have been collected every five years. Since this SSN looks back over a period of 25 years, 1990 is taken as the starting point here.

Time use surveys provide a unique insight into people's daily activities. As well as completing a standard questionnaire, participants in the survey also fill in a 'time use diary', in which they keep a record of how they spend their time over a period of seven days. This means that they report what they are doing during predetermined periods of time. The precise methodology has changed somewhat over the years, but since 2006 people have reported their time use for time intervals of ten minutes. They report the main activity, what else they are doing at the same time (the 'secondary activity'), where they are and who else is present. These diary data are a rich source of information because they provide an insight into who does what and when. Generally speaking, it is assumed that diary data are not, or minimally, distorted by social desirability because people are recording their actual behaviour and not making their own subjective assessment of how much time they spend on different activities (Gershuny 2003; Sayer 2005). Time use data are less suitable for measuring activities which occur infrequently or which take little time.

Trends in the amount of leisure time

Table 9.1 summarises the total leisure time use of Dutch citizens and highlights a number of specific activities. There is a break between the data for 2005 and 2006. This is because a number of major changes were made in 2006 in the way in which the TBO data are collected. Although the impact of these changes appears to be limited, it does mean that the measures for the period prior to 2006 are not comparable on a one-to-one basis with those after that year (Kamphuis et al. 2009). The most important changes are that since 2006 data collection takes place throughout the whole year (rather than in October, as was the case in 2005 and earlier years), and that respondents are asked to note down their activities in ten-minute periods (rather than per fifteen minutes). In addition, respondents in the survey in 2005 and earlier years had to select an activity from a number

of options which they felt best reflected their own activity; since 2006, respondents write down in their own words what they are doing and coders subsequently convert these responses into activities.

Table 9.1

Just over 47 hours of leisure time per week in both 1990 and 2016

Amount of leisure time (total and types of leisure), persons aged 12 years and older, 1990-2016^a (in hours per week, leisure time as main activity)

	1990	2000	2005	2006	2011	2016
total	47.2	44.8	44.7	46.9	47.8	47.1
media and ICT use ^b	18.8	18.7	18.9	19.6	20.9	18.9 ^d
social contacts ^c	9.8	8.5	7.5	8.6	7.2	8.3 ^d
sport	1.2	1.2	1.6	1.4	1.7	1.7
culture	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.5	0.5
outings	1.5	1.4	2.0	1.7	1.8	1.8
resting, lazing	1.2	1.3	1.3	2.5	1.7	2.0 ^d

a A change in the data collection method between 2005 and 2006 means the information is not directly comparable.

b Excluding online communication.

c Including online communication.

d Differs significantly from the time use in 2011.

Source: SCP (TBO'90-'06); SCP/CBS (TBO'16)

On average, the Dutch had just over 47 hours' leisure time per week in 1990. This fell slowly but steadily in the ensuing years, to just under 45 hours in 2005. After the introduction of the new method of data collection in 2006, the estimated amount of leisure time was two hours per week higher, at just under 47 hours per week. This rose by around one hour in 2011, but the increase came to a halt in 2016. At just over 47 hours per week, the amount of leisure time in 2016 is similar to the level in 1990.

A closer look at the different types of leisure shows that there are few differences in the way in which people spend their leisure between 2016 and 1990. As in 1990, most time (almost 19 hours) is spent using media and ICT and maintaining social contacts (just under ten hours in 1990 and over eight hours in 2016). After peaking in 2011, the use of media and ICT has fallen back to the level of 2006. The time spent on social contacts has returned to its 2006 level, after a dip in 2011. However, compared to 1990, people still spend 1.5 hours per week less on this activity. The Dutch spend more time doing sport than in 1990, but there appears to have been little change over the last ten years. The time spent on culture and going on excursions and other outings also remained stable. Two hours per week were spent resting or relaxing in 2016. That is almost double the time spent on this in 1990 and slightly higher than in 2011.

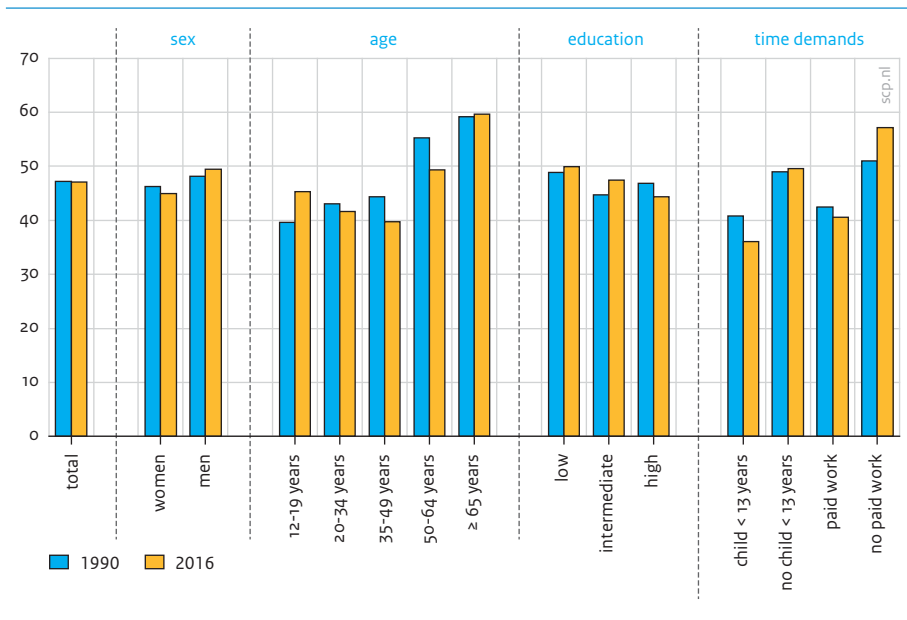
Social differences in the total amount of leisure time

Figure 9.1 shows the social differences in the amount of leisure time in 1990 and 2016. In 2016, men and lower-educated people reported more leisure time than women and people with higher education. There are also differences based on age, with 35-49 year-olds and 20-34 year-olds having the least leisure time. Young children and paid work appear to be major competitors for leisure time. For example, the difference in the amount of leisure time between people with and without a young child is more than 13 hours per week, while for paid work the difference is 17 hours. This finding provides support for the idea that the life stage with young children is the ‘rush hour’ of life, in which there is limited time to do other things apart from working and looking after the children.

Figure 9.1

Men, people with low education and people with no young children or work have the most leisure time.

Total amount of leisure time, by background characteristics, persons aged 12 years and older, 1990 and 2016 (in hours per week)



Source: SCP (TBO'90); SCP/CBS (TBO'16)

A number of findings stand out when comparing the social differences in 2016 and 1990. For example, the gender gap in leisure was more narrow in 1990 than in 2016; the difference between men and women has more than doubled, from two hours to 4.5 hours per week. Educational differences also appear to have widened between 1990 and 2016:

whereas in 1990 lower-educated people had two hours more leisure time per week than higher-educated people, this gap had widened to 5.6 hours in 2016 (in 2011 the difference was even greater, at 7.5 hours). And while people with intermediate education had the least leisure time in 1990, in 2016 they were in a middle position. The pattern in age-based differences changes over time: in 1990, teenagers had the least leisure time, whereas in 2016 they took a middle position. Dutch people of working age, by contrast, appear to have less leisure time than in 1990. Finally, the differences between men with and without young children and men with and without work increased between 1990 and 2016.

The most popular out-of-home leisure activities

Another way to study how people organise their leisure time is to look at the most popular leisure activities. The Continuous Leisure Time Study (cvro) has identified the top ten activities performed outside the home (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek 2016, p. 55). The most recent data for 2015 show that taking walks is the most popular activity (table 9.2), with an estimated 441 million walks made each year. The second and third most popular leisure activities are shopping in a city centre and eating out. Almost half the leisure activities outside the home take place in people's own municipality.

Table 9.2

Walking the most population leisure activity

Top ten most popular leisure activities outside the home,^a 2015 (in millions)

1	walking for pleasure	441
2	shopping in a city centre	202
3	eating out in a restaurant/bistro	194
4	cycling for pleasure	193
5	fitness/aerobics/steps/spinning, etc.	182
6	shopping for pleasure in a suburban or neighbourhood centre	119
7	swimming in an indoor pool	103
8	education/school association	98
9	trip out in the car	85
10	bar/cafe visit	79

a Excluding the population living in institutions or residential nursing or care homes.

Source: CBS (2016b: 55)

Unfortunately, the cvto does not go back as far as 1990. However, its predecessor, the Daytime Recreation Survey (ODR) does provide some insight into the most popular activities 25 years ago. As this was a different type of study with different categories, no major conclusions can be drawn from this comparison. However, as in 2015, we see that shopping and walking are popular activities (table 9.3); both were in the top three in 1990. Eating out was also in the top ten in 1990 (at number 6), though was less popular than in 2015.

Table 9.3

Shopping and walking popular for 25 years; eating out less popular in 1990

Top ten most popular leisure activities outside the home,^a 1990 (in millions)

1	recreational shopping	129
2	associational activities, hobby clubs, etc.	92
3	walking	60
4	other indoor sport	58
5	other outdoor sport	53
6	eating out	41
7	cycling	38
8	total film, theatre, concert, etc.	35
9	bar/cafe visit	32
10	swimming in indoor pool	29

a Excluding the population living in institutions or residential nursing or care homes.

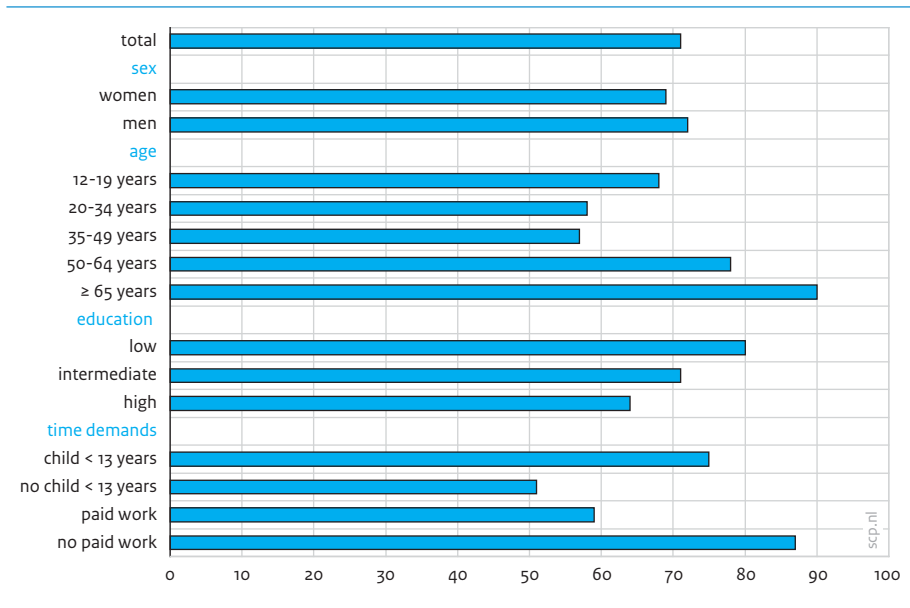
Source: (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek 2017a)

Satisfaction with the amount of leisure time

Almost three-quarters of Dutch citizens feel they have enough free time (figure 9.2), though the extent to which people are satisfied with their leisure varies across the different social groups. The pattern corresponds with differences in the amount of leisure time discussed above: men are slightly more satisfied than women, and lower-educated people are more satisfied than higher-educated people. People with busier lives, because they work and/or have young children, less often say they have enough leisure time than people without a job or young child. The age-based differences also appear to be associated with how busy people are: 20-49 year-olds, who are often in a busy phase of life with young children and important career steps, are the least satisfied with the amount of leisure time they have.

Figure 9.2
Large majority satisfied with the amount of leisure time

Satisfaction with leisure time,^a by background characteristics, persons aged 12 years and older, 2016
(in percentages)



a Percentage who agree with the statement: 'I have enough leisure time.'

Source: SCP/CBS (TBO'16)

9.3 Media use

The formerly relatively straightforward media landscape,² consisting principally of newspapers and broadcasters, has undergone a number of radical changes. The most important trends, with the most far-reaching consequences, are digitalisation, commercialisation and internationalisation. The 1987 Media Act was amended in 1992 to include commercial broadcasters (for a description of the period prior to 1992, see Hoefnagel 2005). A new Media Act came into force in 2008, replacing and modernising the 1987 Act, with a number of technical adaptations.

Under pressure from commercialisation and internationalisation, the number of players in the media landscape increased sharply, changing the character of the landscape as a result. The present media policy is no longer 'pillarised' along socio-political and religious dividing lines, but along medium-specific lines: rather than a general media policy, there is a press policy, a broadcasting policy and an Internet policy. This division

into ‘silos’ is the result of the constant emergence of new media (first the press, then radio, television and the Internet).

The 2008 Media Act was amended by the second government under Mark Rutte (Rutte II). This amendment was deemed necessary in view of the curtailment of the government contribution and developments in the media landscape. The central plank of the bill for the new Act was a future-proof public broadcasting system whose key tasks were education, culture and information provision. After the bill had been adopted in Parliament (TK 2014/2015), the Dutch Senate raised a number of major objections, among other things questioning the political independence of the public broadcasting system. After a supplement to the bill had been adopted by both Houses of Parliament (TK 2015/2016), the amendments came into force on 2 November 2016.

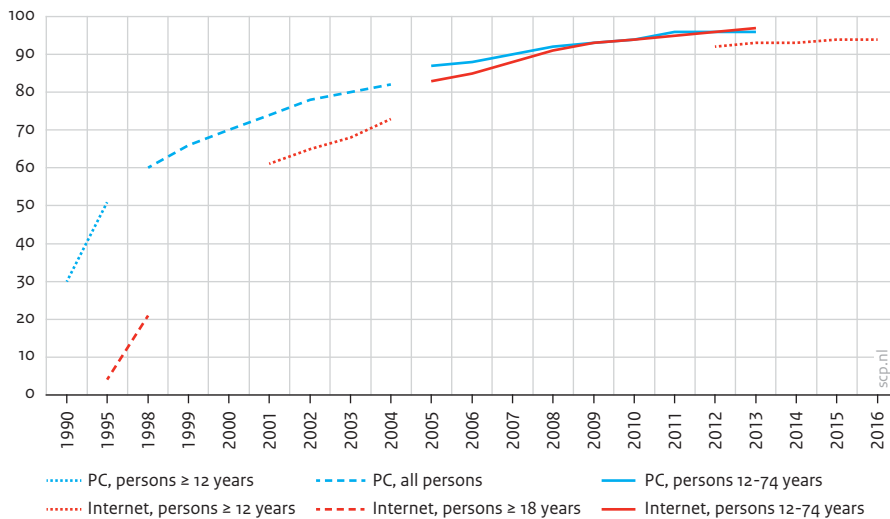
Values such as plurality, independence and accessibility remain at the heart of the media policy. This set of values gives expression to the importance for society of a properly functioning media landscape, and also implies that a future media landscape may be expected to make a significant contribution to the functioning of democracy, the economy and society (WRR 2005).

Digitalisation and the changing media landscape

An important social trend over the last 25 years, which is likely to continue having an impact for decades to come (Van den Broek et al. 2016), is the ongoing digitalisation of the lives of the Dutch (De Haan 2010). The first computers came onto the market in the early 1980s, but it took until the 1990s before a substantial proportion of the Dutch population actually purchased a computer. Less than a third (30%) of the population had a computer at home in 1990, after which it rose gradually to reach 96% in 2013 (see figure 9.3). The most important development over this period was connection to the Internet. Following the improvement in user-friendliness after the introduction of the World Wide Web in 1993, the appeal of the Internet spread beyond the circle of universities and large corporations and grew within 15 years to an information and entertainment medium for virtually everyone. In 1995, only 4% of the Dutch population had access to the Internet; around the turn of the century it stood at 46%, and went on to hit 97% in 2013³. This puts the Netherlands in the leading group internationally. The Netherlands also leads the way in Europe for use of the Internet (EC 2015). In 2015, 86% of the Dutch population reported that they used the Internet daily or almost daily. Denmark (85%) and Sweden (85%) were close behind, while the lowest Internet use was found in Romania (39%).

Figure 9.3
Steady but unstoppable spread of computers and Internet access

Ownership of personal computer (PC) and access to the Internet, by age category, 1990-2016
(in percentages)



- a Persons aged 12 years and older.
- b Persons aged 18 years and older.
- c Persons aged 12-74 years
- d All persons.

Source: CBS (POL5'98-'04; ICT '05-'16); CBS/SCP (ICT-pilot 2001); SCP (TBO'90-'95; GNC'98), see Huysmans et al. (2004).

Today, the mobile telephone has grown into the most popular device for using the Internet (CBS 2016a). The percentage of the Dutch population with a smartphone rose from 11% in 2005 to 85% in 2016 (not shown in figure). This means there are more Dutch people with a smartphone today than a laptop (79%) or computer (58%). Tablet ownership (68%) also lags behind. Almost everyone in the youngest age group (12-25 years) had a smartphone in 2016 (98%), followed by 25-45 year-olds (95%) and 45-65 year-olds (90%). Ownership of smartphones has increased strongly in the older age groups in recent years, from 15% in 2012 to 65% in 2016 in the 65-75 age group, and from 2% to 30% among those aged over 75. A common characteristic of the spread of computers, Internet and mobile telephony is that young people, as well as people with high education and people on higher incomes, lead the way as early adopters and users (Huysmans et al. 2004).

Digitalisation and the rise of the Internet have had a major impact on the media landscape. Today, people can read, listen to or watch the same content on a variety of channels. Use of media is also no longer tied to a particular time or place; users can decide for themselves when and where they use which media. This has led to an enormous increase in the options and freedom of choice of media users for obtaining information, seeking entertainment and communicating. In addition, the characteristic one-way traffic of traditional (mass) media has made way for a situation in which users are not only recipients, but also transmitters and creators of media content (e.g. videos, vlogs and blogs).

The growing opportunities for Internet activity have thus given users a more active role in the media landscape. What changes have taken place in the media use of the Dutch as a result of these developments? In answering this question, the extent of media use is a central focus in this edition of *ssn*: has the time spent on media by the Dutch increased over time? The form and content of media use is also of interest: which media are used in what way, and has this changed in recent years?

Trends in media use by the Dutch

The time spent on media use as a main leisure activity remained constant for a long time, at around 19 hours per person per week (table 9.1). After 2006, the time spent on media rose for the first time in years, from 19.6 hours per week in 2006 to 20.9 hours in 2011. This growth came to a halt in 2016, and use of media and ICT was back at the level seen in 2006 and earlier years, at 18.9 hours per week. This is due mainly to the use of Internet and computers, which rose sharply between 2006 and 2011 from 2.8 to four hours per week, but which in 2016 was back at its 2006 level of 2.5 hours per week (figure 9.4). An important caveat here is that using the Internet via a mobile phone is not included here, whereas this activity has grown in popularity in recent years. We return to this in section 9.4 when discussing online communication and communication by mobile and fixed telephone.

Watching television is still the most popular media activity. In 1990, the Dutch devoted 12 hours per week to this activity, and in 2016 just over 1.5 hours more (13.6 hours). Reading printed media (books, magazines, newspapers, etc.) was in second place in 1990, at 5.1 hours per week, but this fell sharply during the 1990s. This decline runs in parallel with the rise of the Internet, but had already begun midway through the 1950s (Knulst & Kraaykamp 1996). Time spent reading was roughly the same in 2016 (2.3 hours per week) as in 2011 (2.5 hours). Listening to radio and music as a main activity has accounted for an average of 0.3 hours per week for many years, well below the 1.2 hours spent on this activity in 1990. Use of the Internet and computers was still very modest in 1990, accounting for 0.5 hours per week.

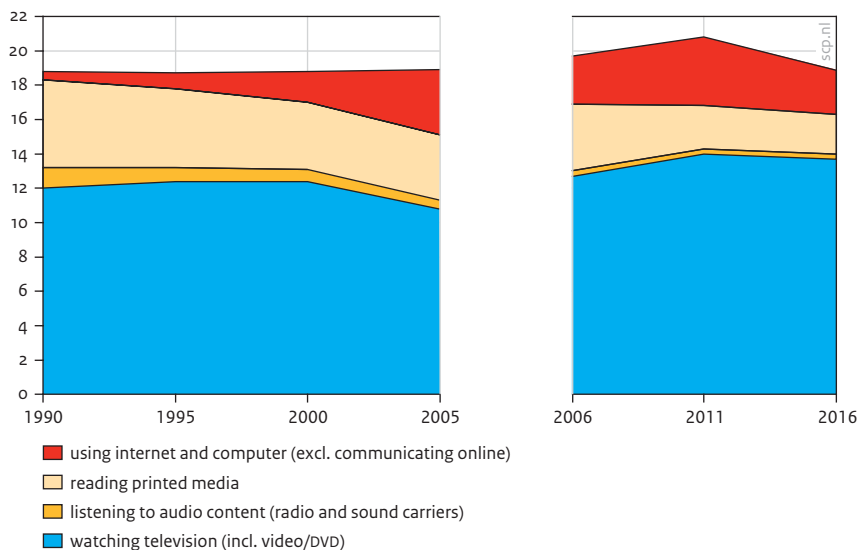
Unfortunately, the Time Use Survey (TBO) provides little insight into which media people use and how. Since 2006, respondents have recorded their media behaviour in their own

words, and if someone has written ‘using the Internet’, for example, it is not clear precisely what that person has done online and using which device. Or, if someone has stated that they were using a smartphone, it is not clear whether they were using it to communicate, to search for something on the Internet, or perhaps to watch a series or listen to the radio.

Figure 9.4

Watching television still the most popular media activity of the Dutch

Media use,^a persons aged 12 years and older, 1990-2016 (in hours per week)



a Watching television, listening to the radio, reading printed media, use of Internet and computers as main activity.

Source: SCP (TBO'90-'06); SCP/CBS (TBO '11 and '16)

It is increasingly difficult in the current media landscape to distinguish between different media activities and to separate mass media use and interpersonal communication activities (e.g. when using social media). To obtain the most detailed picture possible of media use, SCP joined forces with a number of media research organisations in 2013 to launch a new time use survey: the Media Time Use Survey (Media:Time / Media:Tijd). Respondents in this survey enter specific information about their media use in a diary, such as the activities they have carried out and the carriers (fixed and mobile devices or paper) they have used for this (Wennekers et al. 2017). They also keep a record of simultaneous use of different media, enabling a range of media combinations to be studied. The most recent survey, in 2015, shows that the Dutch spend an average of

7 hours 23 minutes per day using media (Wennekers et al. 2016). This includes traditional mass media (television, radio and printed media) in all possible forms (online and offline, on paper and digital, via fixed and mobile devices), as well as gaming, computer and Internet use and communicating via media. Most of the time spent on media (over 3.5 hours) involves combining media with other activities, such as watching television whilst eating or taking part in sport. Almost three hours per day is spent on one single media activity, such as playing a computer game without doing something else at the same time. Just under one hour is spent combining several media activities, such as listening to music whilst reading the paper.

Use of media via old and new channels

In 1995, Nicholas Negroponte predicted that within five years the passive, old (mass) media would make way for interactive media. He predicted that the technological possibilities would usher in sweeping changes (Negroponte 1995). In reality, however, such changes take longer than anticipated; the attachment to the existing and the familiar prevents sudden shifts of this kind (De Haan 2010). The traditional mass media did not for example collapse in 2015. Rather, there appears to be something of a gradual transition, in which the old media (perhaps in changed format) coexist alongside the new media. In 2015, the Dutch spent most media time per day viewing (3 hours 4 minutes) and listening (2 hours 42 minutes) to media content, mostly using 'traditional' forms of media: watching television at the time of broadcast (78% of viewing time) and listening to the radio at the time of broadcast (91% of listening time) (see table 9.4). The remaining viewing time is devoted to deferred watching of television programmes or streaming videos (e.g. via Netflix or YouTube). New ways of listening to media content currently play a modest role, accounting for 9% of total listening time per day, though listening via the Internet did double between 2013 and 2015. Screens (e.g. e-readers, tablets, computers, smartphones) have not yet overtaken paper as the most popular medium for reading books, magazines and newspapers: of the 37 minutes that the Dutch spend reading on average each day, the lion's share (82%) is still spent reading from paper in the traditional way.

Table 9.4

Traditional media still dominant despite changes in the media landscape

Time spent on traditional forms of viewing,^a listening^b and reading,^c expressed as a share of total viewing, listening and reading time, by a number of background characteristics, persons aged 13 years and older, 2013 and 2015 (in percentages)^d

	television at time of broadcast (as % of total viewing time)		radio at time of broadcast (as % of total listening time)		reading from paper (as % of total reading time)	
	2013	2015	2013	2015	2013	2015
total ≥ 13 years	84	78	94	91	85	82
women	83	77	94	91	84	77
men	85	79	94	92	86	87
13-19 years	72	55	84	73	78	82
20-34 years	71	61	92	86	78	67
35-49 years	83	76	95	92	78	74
50-64 years	89	85	94	94	83	78
≥ 65 years	94	94	98	98	93	91
low education	88	85	94	95	90	85
intermediate education	84	80	95	92	82	81
high education	78	68	92	87	84	80

a Watching television at time of broadcast.

b Listening to radio at time of broadcast.

c Printed media.

d Measured on an average day.

Source: NLO/NOM/SKO/SCP (Media:Tijd'13); NLO/NOM/SKO/BRO/SCP (Media:Tijd'15)

Table 9.4 shows that clear shifts are taking place in media use in certain groups. Teenagers and young adults more readily switch to using new (digital) media – often at the expense of the traditional (mass) media – while older users tend more to adhere to the familiar media repertoire (Wennekers & De Haan 2017; Wennekers et al. 2016). This fits in with a more or less established pattern in the way innovations spread through a society (Rogers 2003): a leading group of early adopters with an affinity for technology (often young and well educated, with good digital skills) is followed at some distance by a group who either eschew or move late to the use of the new technology (predominantly older, low-educated and inexperienced or less skilled with new media). Between these two extremes lies the majority of the population, who accept the new technology later than the first group but sooner than the second (De Haan 2010).

9.4 Social contacts

Frequency of contact with family, friends and neighbours

People also use their leisure time to maintain their social lives. Table 9.5 shows that little has changed in the last 25 years in the frequency with which the Dutch have contact with their family, neighbours and friends/acquaintances. The share of the Dutch population who are in contact with their family on a weekly basis has stood at just under 75% since 2008. The share of the population who have weekly contact with friends and acquaintances has also been stable since 2008, at around 60%. The share who have weekly contact with neighbours is the lowest, at 39% in 2016, but here again few changes can be observed over recent years. Changes in the measurement method mean that these figures are not readily comparable with those from earlier years.

Table 9.5

Few changes in the frequency with which the Dutch have contact with their loved ones

Frequency of social contacts over the years, persons aged 18 years and older, 1990-2016 (in percentages)

	1990	1999 ^a	2002	2008 ^b	2010	2012	2014	2016
contact with family								
once a week or more	66	84	86	73	73	73	75	76
once every two weeks	15	7	7	15	15	16	13	13
less often	19	9	8	12	13	12	12	11
contact with neighbours								
once a week or more	62	67	76	42	41	38	41	39
once every two weeks	11	12	9	25	27	28	25	27
less often	27	22	15	33	32	34	34	34
contact with friends and acquaintances								
once a week or more	67	75	76	56	59	59	. ^c	60
once every two weeks	15	12	12	26	23	24	. ^c	23
less often	19	14	12	19	19	18	. ^c	17

a Trend-break due to transition from the Continuous Life Situation Survey (DLO) to the Periodic Life Situation Survey (POLS).

b Trend-break due to transition from verbal to written question formulation.

c Due to an error in the questionnaire, a tick-box was missing for the response option 'once every two weeks'. Many of these responses were probably distributed among the nearby response options. These numbers have therefore been omitted from the table.

Source: CBS (DLO '90, POLS-SLI '99 and '02, CV '08-'16); SCP analysis

The differences compared with 1999/2000 (when the Dutch appeared to have more frequent contact with their loved ones) and 1990 (when the frequency of contact was a good deal lower) should therefore be interpreted with caution.

Trends in the time spent on social contacts

The time spent talking to and catching up with others, face-to-face or mediated (y telephone and/or via the Internet), does show a decline over time (table 9.6), from 9.8 hours in 1990 to 7.5 hours in 2005. Communication via the Internet has also been included under social contacts since 2006. The total time spent on social contacts fell between 2006 and 2011 from 8.6 hours to 7.2 hours per week. However, it increased again in 2016 to 8.3 hours. Most of this time (six hours) is spent on face-to-face contact. Mediated contact accounted for 2.3 hours per week in 2016, a bigger share of total time spent on social contacts than in 1990. The time spent on contact by telephone (including mobiles) increased between 2011 and 2016, from 0.8 to 1.6 hours per week. This could be linked to the growing popularity of smartphones mentioned earlier, which can of course be used for other (online) media activities as well as for communication.⁴

Table 9.6

The Dutch had more time for visiting and catching up (face-to-face) in 1990 than in 2016.

Main activities in social contacts (as a main activity) persons aged 12 years and older, 1990-2016 (in hours per week)

	1990	2000	2005	2006	2011	2016
social contacts	9.8	8.5	7.5	8.6	7.2	8.3
face-to-face contact ^a	9.2	7.8	6.8	6.9	5.7	6.0
with household members (talking)	2.0	1.3	1.2	0.7	0.6	0.8
with third parties (visiting)	7.2	6.5	5.6	5.5	3.8	3.5
mediated contact				1.7	1.5	2.3
by telephone (incl. mobile)	0.6	0.7	0.7	1.1	0.8	1.6
via Internet				0.6	0.8	0.7

a As well as talking to fellow household members and visits (both making and receiving visits, going to someone else's home for a meal), the total hours per week spent on face-to-face contact also include the other unspecified time spent on social life (which cannot be broken down into contact with household members or third parties).

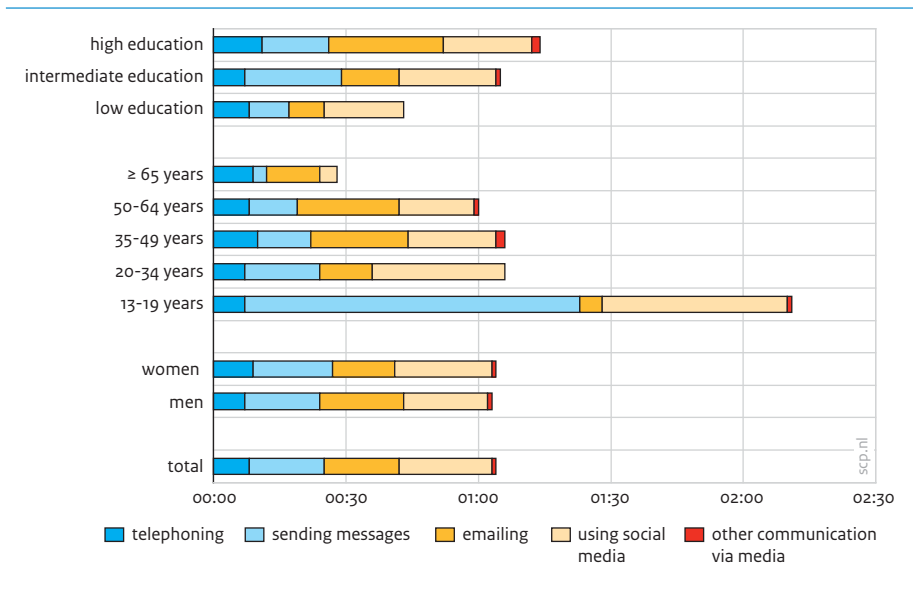
Source: SCP (TBO'90-'06); SCP/CBS (TBO'11 and '16)

Two caveats need to be applied to the above measurement of social contacts. The first relates to face-to-face contact. This measurement includes only the time that people spend on catching up and paying visits; however, a proportion of social contact takes place in combination with outings, sport or cultural activities (see §§ 9.5-9.7).

The conclusion that the amount of time people spend with others has declined over the last 25 years is therefore not justified on the basis of the foregoing. It is after all possible that growing time pressure and growing competition from other leisure time options mean that social contacts today are more often combined with other activities. As in other areas of daily life, people also set high standards for (the content of) their leisure time (Breedveld & Van den Broek 2004). The leisure market offers a growing number of options, but this may also create difficulties in choosing within the limited amount of leisure time available.

Figure 9.5
Teenagers spend the most time communicating via media

Different forms of communication via media, by a number of background characteristics, persons aged 13 years and older, 2015 (in hours:minutes)^a



a Average on an average day.

Source: NLO/NOM/SKO/BRO/SCP (Media:Tijd'15)

The second caveat relates to mediated contact. The Time Use Survey (TBO) provides only a rough indication of the contact that people have via the Internet or by telephone. The Media:Tijd study provides a more detailed insight into these mediated contacts. In the 2015 time use diaries used in the Media:Time survey, people recorded an average of 1 hour 6 minutes per day spent on communicating via media⁵ (figure 9.5), virtually the same as in 2013. Social media take up the most time (21 minutes), followed by email (17 minutes), messaging via SMS, chat or an app (17 minutes) and calling on the telephone (8 minutes).

The differences between age groups are the most obvious feature. Teenagers spend the most time communicating via media, at an average of 2 hours 12 minutes per day, while the over-65s spend the least time on this activity, at less than half an hour per day. Social media and messaging are the most popular forms of communicating for 13-19 year-olds and 20-34 year-olds. These age groups spend the least time on the more traditional forms of communication (telephone and email).

9.5 Sport

Sports policy at a glance

25 years ago, sport was seen as a means of achieving public health and wellbeing targets. Policymakers sought to create jobs in sport, promote sports participation by non-Western population groups and women, combat discrimination against homosexuals and trigger social renewal. In the early 1990s, policymakers also began devoting more attention to elite sport, and in 1999 the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport published a policy document on 'Opportunities for elite sport' (*Kansen voor topsport*) (Ministerie van Volksgezondheid 1999). This document focused not only on the performance of elite athletes, but also on attendance at events and the role of the media. Two years later, policymakers turned their attention to the positive health effects of sport and exercise, with the publication of the policy document 'Sport, exercise and health' (*Sport, bewegen en gezondheid*) (Ministerie van Volksgezondheid 2001). It was not until 2005 that the separate goals of the earlier policy documents were brought together, in the policy document 'Time for sport. Exercise, participation, performance' (*Tijd voor sport. Bewegen, meedoen, presteren*) (Ministerie van Volksgezondheid 2005), which laid the basis for today's national sports policy, aimed both at promoting participation, health and performance and following sport (see also Van Bakel et al. 2017), including via the media and by attending matches and events. The policy document not only set out ambitions for the specific policy domain of sport, but also devoted wide attention to the contribution that sport could make to other policy domains. In other words, sport was not just an end in itself, but also a means of achieving other social policy objectives, for example improving the health of the population and increasing social cohesion through people taking part in sport together. This is sometimes described as the instrumentalisation of sports policy (Van den Heuvel en Van der Poel 1999). The most recent government standpoint, as expressed in the document 'Excelling at all levels' (*Uitblinken op alle niveaus*) (Ministerie van Volksgezondheid 2009), continues this line and regards (elite) sport and exercise as a means of achieving broad policy objectives in relation to social participation, health, good quality of life and economic progress.

Trends in the sports participation of the Dutch

The authors of the Sport Forward Study (*Sport Toekomstverkenning*), which was published in the autumn of 2017, posit that social trends such as individualisation, flexibilisation and commercialisation have a major impact on Dutch sport. People increasingly want to

decide for themselves where, when and with whom they take part in sport and exercise. In addition, the amount of commercial sport available has increased and the way people experience sport is becoming increasingly important. These and other trends have already begun and will continue to influence sport in the future (Van Bakel et al. 2017). To what extent is this reflected in trends over recent decades?

To obtain an impression of the last 25 years, we draw on two data sources: the Amenities and Services Utilisation Survey (AVO, containing figures for the period 1991-2007) and the Health Survey/Lifestyle Monitor (GE/LSM), covering the period from 2001 onwards).

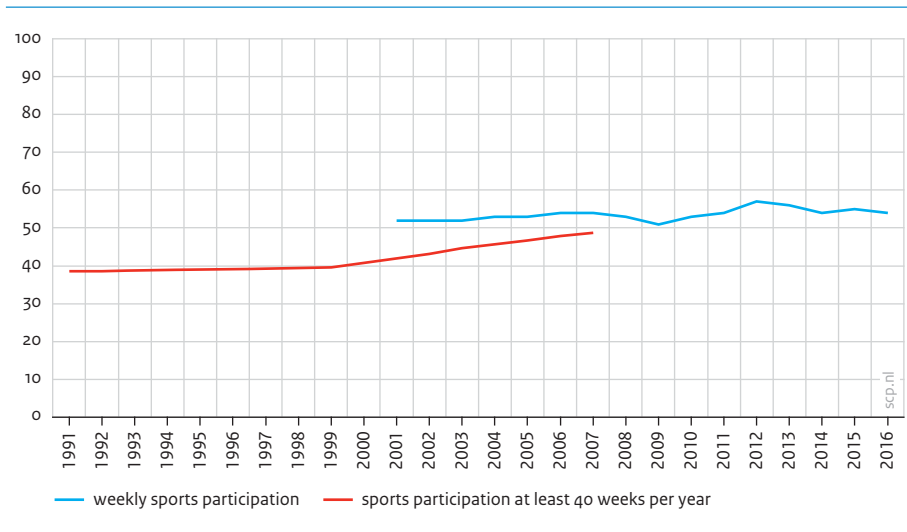
Figure 9.6 shows that participation in sport by the entire Dutch population aged between 12 and 79 years has increased. In 1991, four out of ten Dutch citizens aged between 12 and 79 years took part in sport in at least 40 weeks of the year. Participation remained constant through the rest of the 1990s, and grows to half the Dutch population after 2000.

The database compiled by Statistics Netherlands (CBS) and the Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) measures participation in sport in a slightly different way, looking at the percentage of Dutch people who take part in sport each week. This shows slight fluctuations between 2001 and 2016, but remains broadly stable, with 54% of 12-79 year-olds taking part in sport on a weekly basis in 2016.

Figure 9.6

Increase in weekly sports participation over the last 25 years

Weekly sports participation, persons aged 12-79 years, 1991-2016 (in percentages)



Source: CBS (GE'01-'13); CBS in collaboration with RIVM (GE/LSM'14-'16); SCP (AVO'91-'07)

The differences in sports participation between men and women are negligible, but age, education level and health status remain as important explanatory variables for

differences in participation (table 9.7). The differences by education level and origin have increased over the last fifteen years (Gooskens en Van den Dool 2017). The share of people with high education participating in sport was already higher in 2001 and has increased further since then, while the share among those with intermediate and low education has fallen slightly. The differences by origin are slightly smaller, but here again the gap has widened. The differences between age groups show that participation in sport declines with advancing age. These differences have however shrunk, mainly because more people aged over 65 have taken up sport.

Table 9.7

Increasing differences in sports participation by education level and origin

Weekly participation in sport by background characteristics, persons aged 12 years and older, 2001-2016 (in percentages)

	2001	2008	2016
total	51	51	52
women	50	51	51
men	52	50	54
4-11 years ^a	-	-	65
12-19 years	77	76	70
20-34 years	62	62	64
35-49 years	53	52	52
50-64 years	42	45	47
≥ 65 years	26	30	37
low education ^b	35	32	32
intermediate education ^b	51	48	48
high education ^b	60	63	67
native Dutch	51	51	54
Western migrant	50	54	49
non-Western migrant	45	40	41

a The core module of the Lifestyle Monitor was expanded from 2016 to include 4-11 year-olds.

This age group are not included in the total or in the other background characteristics.

b 25 years and older.

Source: CBS (GE'01 and '08); CBS in collaboration with RIVM (GE/LSM'16)

Certain groups in society thus still participate less in sport. Are these people also less satisfied with the available sports facilities and the sports that are organised within them? Migrants with a non-Western origin, people with moderate or poor health and people

with low and intermediate education are indeed more often dissatisfied with the available sports facilities and the choice of sports in their local setting (Wennekers et al. 2015). The question is whether dissatisfaction with the facilities and available sports has a negative impact on participation. The argument could also be made the other way round: lack of familiarity with the available sports encourages dissatisfaction. Based on the available data, it is not possible to answer this question. Generally speaking, however, the Dutch are very satisfied with the available sports and exercise opportunities in their immediate residential setting (86%), and this has changed little in recent years.

Sports participation through a club, commercially, individually or non-organised

The Dutch participate in sports individually, through sports clubs and through commercial providers. Individual or non-organised sports participation was the most popular form in 2016, but appears not to have grown over time. Table 9.8 shows that 44% of the Dutch population took part in sport alone or not in organised form in 2016. On the other hand, around a third of the Dutch are members of a sports club and one in five use the facilities of a commercial provider. Club membership peaked in 1991, at 37% of the population (Kamphuis en Van den Dool 2008). Club membership then fell until the year 2000, after which it has remained constant (Tiessen-Raaphorst 2015). Sports participation through commercial providers increased between 2012 and 2016. Not all population groups use the various organisational forms to the same extent. Individual or non-organised participation is mainly something for men, adults and people with high education. An increase in this kind of participation can also be observed among 20-34 year-olds. This is also the age group which makes the most use of commercial sports centres.

People's need to be flexible in deciding when to participate in sport, as well as the combination of different organisational forms, is also reflected in an increase in the participation in sports such as running, cycling and fitness training. Swimming was the most practised sport in 1991 (33% of the population had done this at least once), followed at a considerable distance by cycle touring/cycle racing (14%), skating (13%), keep fit/jogging (11%), tennis and soccer (both 10%), and only then fitness/aerobics (9%) (Breedveld en Tiessen-Raaphorst 2006). Extra analyses based on data from the Leisure time Omnibus Survey (vto) show that fitness training had become the most practised sport in 2016 (27%), including aerobics and outdoor fitness (32%). Participation in fitness training grew enormously between 1991 and 2007, but appears to have stabilised since then (Hover et al. 2012). As in 1991, swimming is still a popular sport (26%), though participation has fallen slightly, followed by other individual sports such as running or jogging (19%) and walking (15%). Playing soccer through a club (11%) completes the top five most practised sports in 2016.

Table 9.8

Small shifts in organisational forms

Club membership and individual sports participation, by background characteristics, persons aged 6 years and older, 2012 and 2016 (in percentages)

	individual or non-organised		subscription or membership of a fitness centre or commercial sports provider		membership of a sports club	
	2012	2016	2012	2016	2012	2016
total	49	44	18	21	32	31
women	46	41	19	24	29	28
men	51	47	16	19	35	34
6-11 years	38	34	20	20	70	78
12-19 years	45	38	17	17	66	56
20-34 years	61	58	26	34	36	35
35-49 years	55	48	19	23	25	23
50-64 years	51	48	15	16	19	19
≥ 65 years	31	28	11	14	16	18
low education ^a	34	29	11	12	16	14
intermediate education ^a	52	45	17	22	23	24
high education ^a	67	60	26	28	32	29

a 20 years and older.

Source: SCP/CBS (VTO'12-'16)

9.6 Culture

Dutch cultural policy shows a high degree of continuity over time. To support culture, a cultural policy system was set up in the middle of the last century which is still in existence today: the government makes resources available, and cultural experts advise on their distribution. This system was enshrined in law in 1993 in the Cultural Policy (Special-Purpose Funding) Act (*Wet op het specifiek cultuurbeleid*). This Act is still in force and charges the responsible minister with the task of 'creating the necessary conditions for the maintenance, development, social and geographical dissemination or other form of distribution of cultural content' based on 'considerations of quality and diversity' (Section 2 of the Act). A Council for Culture, made up of experts from the field, advises the Minister (Section 2a). However, while the system has remained the same, the tastes and composition of the Dutch population have evolved, leading to erosion of the pedestal of

the ‘high’ arts. Individual emancipation, under the credo of self-development, self-determination and individual control, is at odds with the idea that some forms of art deserve government support while others do not.

If there are changes in cultural policy to be discerned at all, perhaps two are worth mentioning. They are the calls for more attention for young and non-native audiences, initiated at the end of the twentieth century by the then State Secretary for Culture, Rick van der Ploeg, and the public spending cuts on the arts (with the exception of cultural heritage), which began under the first Rutte government. Despite this, there is a certain continuity underlying these changes: the government has for a long time expressed the desire for the subsidised part of the cultural sector to focus on the changing tastes and composition of the Dutch population.

To gain a picture of patterns in the cultural interests of the Dutch population, SCP has long employed a broad or inclusive definition of the term ‘culture’ in its research. The definition includes not only opera, classical music and other canonised art forms, but also popular culture. Respondents are asked if they have visited any performance or exhibition; a distinction between ‘high’ and ‘low’ is only made in the subsequent analysis, but does not dictate what is and what is not measured. SCP has also consistently devoted attention to the practising of art forms by people themselves in their leisure time (such as making music and painting). Attention here is focused on a number of forms of cultural visits.

Attendance at classical concerts has fallen slowly but steadily over time (table 9.9). The reach of pop concerts (including musicals) initially grew strongly and has stabilised recently. After initially falling in the 1990s, the share of the population visiting a museum at least once a year increased.

Table 9.9

Slight decline in attendance at classical concerts; distinct increase in attendance at pop concerts

Trends in a number of forms of cultural reach, population aged 6 years and older, 1991-2016 (in index figures,^a 2007 and 2012 =100)

	1991	1999	2007 and 2012	2016
classical concerts (including opera)	114	107	100	88
pop concerts (including musicals)	71	82	100	100
museums	100	90	100	108

- a Differences in the measurement method mean that the time series 1991-1999-2007 and the time series 2012-2016 are not directly comparable, hence the use of index figures. The figures for 1991 and 1999 are plotted against 2007 = 100; the figures for 2016 against 2012 = 100. The fact that 2007 and 2012 have both been set at 100 does not mean that nothing changed in the intervening years.

Source: SCP/CBS (AVO’91-’07; VTO’12 and ’16)

The Cultural Policy (Special-Purpose Funding) Act explicitly refers to the social dissemination of culture: culture should not have a limited audience, but should be enjoyed by people with a diversity of backgrounds. However, it is people of advanced age and with higher education who visit classical concerts. The higher education also counts for attendance at pop concerts and museums, where the age distribution is the reverse (table 9.10). Sex is a less distinguishing factor. But is cultural reach more evenly distributed by age and education level today than in the past?⁶

Table 9.10

Democratisation of pop music in terms of age of visitors

Different forms of cultural reach, by background characteristics, persons aged 6-79 years, 1991 and 2016 (in index figures, yearly average =100)

	classical concerts ^a		pop concerts		museums	
	1991	2016	1991	2016	1991	2016
women	113	103	106	109	102	102
men	88	97	94	90	98	98
6-11 years	44	50	29	108	129	125
12-19 years	56	71	139	115	107	104
20-34 years	88	99	184	114	105	96
35-49 years	119	75	90	113	108	57
50-64 years	138	116	45	97	95	50
65-79 years	125	151	4	72	34	52
primary education ^b	38	50	37	52	46	42
preparatory secondary vocational education, junior secondary vocational education, junior general secondary education ^b	82	96	86	83	83	80
senior general secondary education, pre-university education, senior secondary vocational education ^b	119	80	143	95	115	87
higher professional education ^b	231	151	167	127	168	137

a Including opera.

b 20 years and older.

Source: SCP/CBS (AVO'91; VTO'16)

In terms of age profile, especially the 'democratisation' of the reach of pop concerts is striking. This is partly a generational effect: people who visited pop concerts earlier in their lives often continue to do so. However, this does not explain why far more children

aged 6-11 years also visit pop concerts. On the one hand, a trend involving pop music aimed specifically at young children appears to play a role, while on the other parents have begun visiting pop concerts together with their offspring. Compared with this, the age profile of those visiting classical music concerts and museums is characterised mainly by continuity. The effect of education level has proved persistent: although the difference in cultural reach based on education level has become slightly less sharply defined, it remains large.

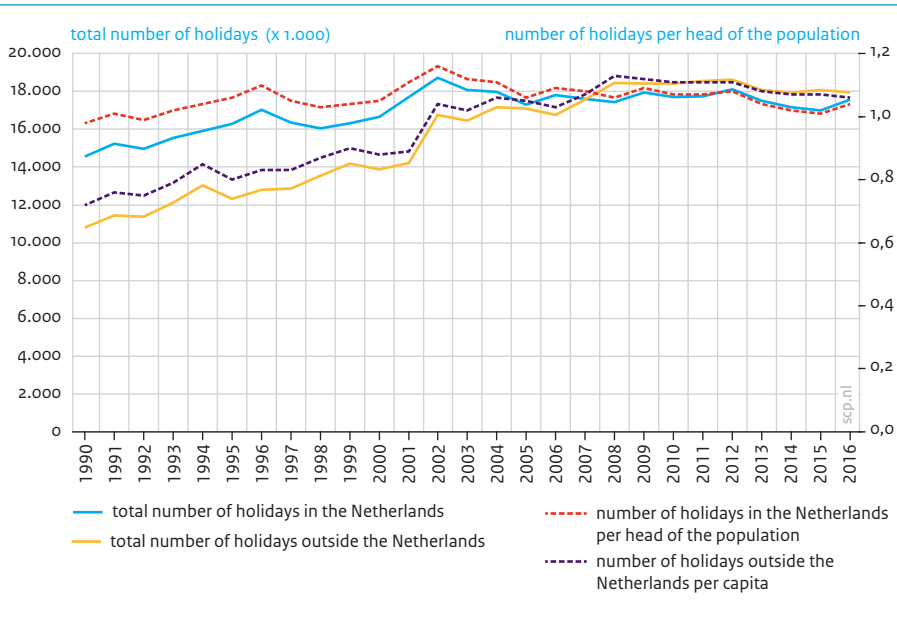
9.7 Holidays

We end this chapter with a brief description of the number of holidays taken by the Dutch. Figure 9.7 shows the trend in the total number of domestic and foreign holidays and the number of holidays per head of the population. This number increased sharply between 1990 and 2016. In 1990, the Dutch went on holiday within the Netherlands an average of once per year, and took a foreign holiday an average of 0.7 times per year. In 2016 this had increased to an average of 1.04 for holidays in the Netherlands and 1.06 for holidays abroad. There has thus been a particular rise in foreign holidays. The growth was strongest between 1990 and 2006, after which it came to a halt, and actually fell slightly in the years following the financial crisis. This trend also occurred internationally (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek 2016, p. 24). Compared with the rest of Europe, a relatively high proportion of the Dutch go on holiday. The most recent figures show that 82% of the Dutch population went on holiday at least once a year in 2014, compared with an EU average of 60% (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek 2016, p. 37).

The number of holidays spent in the Netherlands was higher in 1990 than the number of foreign holidays (a difference of almost 3.8 million holidays). During the period of growth from 1990 to the middle of the 2000s, the rise in foreign holidays was however greater, so that this gap narrowed and from 2004 onwards had disappeared. In the period thereafter, the number of foreign holidays actually slightly exceeded the number of holidays in the Netherlands, though the difference is small.

Figure 9.7
Increase in domestic and foreign holidays

Total number of holidays^a and number of holidays per head of the population, 1990-2016 (in absolute numbers)



- a Until 2002, a holiday was defined as 'a period spent outside the home for the purpose of relaxation or enjoyment involving at least one overnight stay not in the home of family or friends.' After 2002, this was amended to 'a period spent outside the home for relaxation or enjoyment involving at least one overnight stay.' Lodging with family, friends or acquaintances abroad was now also included in the definition of 'holiday'. However, staying with family, friends or acquaintances in the Netherlands does not count, unless the normal occupants were absent for most or all of the time.

Source: (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek 2017b)

9.8 Concluding discussion

With a few fluctuations, the amount of leisure time in the Netherlands has remained stable over the last 25 years. Although the Dutch appear to organise their leisure time slightly differently today, there have been no major shifts. There are more options to choose from today, for example between old and new media, commercial and subsidised art forms, and between a sports club or a bootcamp in the local park. But the findings in this chapter suggest that new forms of leisure time use are supplementing rather than replacing the old forms. In 2016, people read newspapers both on their smartphone and on paper, participate in sport both in an organised form and individually, and visit both the theatre and popular forms of culture.

Analyses of the individual areas of leisure time offer a more detailed picture. The rise of new forms of ICT and social media has imposed a clear stamp on the trend in media consumption. However, there is no evidence of a complete sea-change, because traditional forms of media are still widely used.

People today spend less time on social contacts compared with 1990, though there appears to have been a revival between 2011 and 2016. The frequency of social contacts has also remained stable, which could mean that people see or speak to each other more briefly, or that they more often combine social contacts with other activities.

Sport also remains popular: around half the Dutch population participate on a weekly basis. That is a big difference compared with 25 years ago. However, the averages mask wide differences by education level, age and origin. The share of the population who are members of a sports club and/or who participate in sport in an organised form has remained stable, though there does appear to be a great need in 2017 to be able to take part in sport at flexible times.

The trends in the reach of culture vary. The reach of classical concerts was falling steadily, while the reach of pop music increased and visits to museums were on the rise after an initial dip. The persistent wide differences by education level are also striking. The age differences in the reach of pop music have narrowed.

Finally, the last section of this chapter showed that the number of holidays taken by the Dutch has increased, especially foreign holidays.

When we compare the social differences in the various leisure time domains, no uniform picture emerges. Women have less leisure time than men and also organise it differently: they play slightly less sport and visit more cultural events. The differences by education level are the most striking feature. Higher-educated people have less time, but play more sport and also visit more cultural events. The educational differences in total leisure time and sport have increased, but appear to have narrowed slightly as regards culture. This could possibly indicate that the attempts by the government to increase the cultural reach among people with lower education levels have enjoyed some success. In contrast to cultural policy, Dutch sports policy does not target specific groups. The (growing) education-based differences in sport could however warrant attention from policymakers, especially in the light of the health differences between people with lower and higher education levels (see also chapter 7).

Notes

- 1 This approach ignores the fact that people can also (partly) determine for themselves how much time they spend on other areas of activity. Looking after children is a good example of this: although some tasks (such as feeding a baby) are indeed largely fixed, other care tasks (such as playing with children or visiting a playground) are more flexible and could even be regarded as leisure time. In addition, children are generally not something that 'happens' to people, but are usually a conscious choice.

- 2 The term ‘media landscape’ is used to denote the entire range of tools available to a society to carry out its social communications (Bardoel & Van Cuilenburg 2003).
- 3 The share of the Dutch population with access to the Internet is lower when measured over the period 2012-2016 than the final level found over the period 2005-2013. This can be explained by the fact that the most recent measurement also included Dutch citizens aged 75 years and older, whereas the measurement over the period 2005-2013 only included 12-74 year-olds. Consequently, the lower Internet access among older persons is reflected in the average for the population as a whole.
- 4 Communication via a smartphone is not always well separated in the TBO from other forms of mobile media use. So while smartphone use is classified under social contacts here, it may also include time spent on other media activities such as watching videos online or offline.
- 5 It should be noted that this is possibly an underestimate. Communicating via social and other media is characterised by short usage episodes (less than five minutes) which are not recorded in the time used diary. At the end of each day, respondents do indicate whether and how often they have engaged in these short communication episodes, but it is not possible to convert this into time use.
- 6 Ethnicity also has a major influence on cultural participation; see Van den Broek & Keuzekamp (2008). These authors use targeted fieldwork in a bid to obtain a picture of the cultural activities of new groups in Dutch society. However, this was a one-off exercise, and this section therefore does not describe any trends in this regard.

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10 Social safety

Lonneke van Noije

- Experienced and recorded crime have fallen over the last decade. The percentage of victims fell over the same period, from 28% in 2005 to 17% in 2016. Like today, men, young people and higher-educated people were relatively often victims of crime twenty years ago.
 - The share of suspects who are minors continues to fall, and was 40% lower in 2015 than in 2005 (unique persons).
 - The police have achieved most of their national targets, though the clear-up rate falls short. Dutch public satisfaction with the police in general and in their own neighbourhood has grown on all fronts in 2016.
 - 44% of the Dutch had great or very great trust in the justice system in 2016, the highest percentage for at least six years. A shrinking majority, but still 71%, believe that crimes in the Netherlands are generally punished too leniently. The courts are increasingly imposing short custodial sentences and fewer fines.
 - In 2016, 35% of the Dutch population reported that they occasionally felt unsafe, a gradual reduction since the turn of the century. These feelings occur predominantly in the same groups (women, people with high education, migrants) as over twenty years ago, with the exception of older people, who twenty years ago were the group who most often felt unsafe; today that group are young people.
-

10.1 A long-term perspective on safety

Safety is a policy area in which Dutch political parties still position themselves in their election programmes on the traditional spectrum of left or right. There is general consensus about the desired goal, but not on how to achieve it. In recent decades this has led to swings in policy, sometimes rhetorical, sometimes substantive, depending on the incumbent coalition. In this chapter we look back over this period.

In the 1970s and early 1980s, the Dutch police recorded a sharp increase in crime. Up till then, tackling crime had been seen as the exclusive preserve of the police and judiciary, but the policy plan 'Society and crime' (*Samenleving en criminaliteit* (SeC)) (Justitie 1985) argued that the criminal law should be an *ultimum remedium*, and that primary responsibility for tackling crime lay with other government agencies, civil-society organisations, the business community and the public. The SeC also argued that the primary focus should be on frequently occurring forms of crime, which impacted citizens most. Proposed measures included modifying the built environment, strengthening social cohesion and reinforcing functional supervision.

This emphasis on the prevention of unsafety through administrative and area-specific prevention in combination with close cooperation between government and society, was continued in the 1990s under the policy documents ‘Law on the move’ (*Recht in beweging* (RiB)) (Justitie 1990) and ‘Safety policy 1995-1998’ (*Veiligheidsbeleid 1995-1998*) (TK 1996/1997), as well as the first comprehensive safety programme (Integraal veiligheidsprogramma) (TK 1998/1999). Attention did however shift from minor offences to more serious forms of criminality (RiB), and responsibility for prevention was placed more emphatically with local authorities, coordinated by the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (*Veiligheidsbeleid 1995/1998*).

Around the turn of the century, criminal law enforcement acquired greater prominence with the publication of a policy document on controlling crime (*Criminaliteitsbeheersing*) (TK 2001/2002) and the policy plans ‘Towards a safer society’ (*Naar een veiliger samenleving*) (TK 2002/2003) and ‘Safety begins with prevention’ (*Veiligheid begint bij voorkomen*) (2007-2010). Shortcomings in the chain of justice needed to be eliminated, by increasing the chance of being caught, ruling out non-interventions and speedier processing. Supervision and enforcement – mainly by the police, but also by private security officers, for example – were intensified, aimed specifically at the biggest causes of nuisance, namely frequent offenders and young people. The nuisance experienced by citizens and feelings of unsafety were important criteria in measuring the success of the safety policy (from 2012 based on specific targets). Citizens and businesses were expected to take more responsibility themselves. Meanwhile investments were stepped up in individual and alternative sanctions for frequent offenders and problem youngsters, in order to ease the pressure on cell capacity, and more attention was given to victim support and to prevention aimed at offenders, partly through efforts to build positive ties with society. The first government under Prime Minister Mark Rutte (2010-2012) renamed the Ministry of Justice the Ministry of Security and Justice, which took over responsibility for a new national police force from the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. The message went out that people could only live in freedom in a society where people are safe and feel safe. To help create this freedom, the government offered legal protection to citizens, but would where necessary intervene rigorously in people’s private lives. ‘Decisiveness’ was the watchword. The policy swung back again to a regime of harsher sanctions, partly through increased sentences, the introduction of minimum sentences and a more Draconian detention regime. Although prevention was part of current policy, new preventive measures were aimed mainly at detection, including preventive searches and CCTV. When the first Rutte government (2010-2012) made way for the second (Rutte II (2012-2017)), the tone of the debate on public safety moderated and focused more on prevention. Harsher sanctions were replaced by customised sanctions and timely resocialisation. The substantive changes were limited.

Whichever line the new government coalition follows, all parties are agreed on one thing: the police need to be more strongly embedded in the social fabric of local communities once again, in the first place by recruiting more police officers who maintain personal

contact with residents and at-risk groups. The role of community police officer incorporates supervision, enforcement and prevention. The number of these officers has already grown in recent years, but the norm ratio of one officer per 5,000 residents has not yet been achieved everywhere. Other specific priorities have been brought together in the 'Safety Agenda 2015-2018' (*Veiligheidsagenda 2015-2018*) (TK 2014/2015), which is currently still in force. The details of this Safety Agenda were discussed in the last edition of SSN. Briefly, the Agenda formulates specific targets for the police for tackling corrosive (organised) crime, cybercrime, horizontal fraud,¹ child pornography and *high-impact* crime (mugging, burglary, assault, nightlife violence, homophobic violence, domestic violence and child abuse). The government's hope is that tackling high-impact crime will have the biggest effect in improving people's feelings of safety. This approach is also planned to include the seizing of criminally or illegally obtained assets, with the proceeds being used primarily to pay compensation to victims.

There is a growing realisation in the criminal justice system of the complex accumulation of psychosocial problems confronting many delinquents, as well as of the high costs of detention, which are not recouped in the form of reduced recidivism. As a consequence, the possibilities are currently being explored of an individual, multi-problem approach centred in the personal sphere of offenders, and thus close to the local community (VenJ 2016). This brings us to the threshold of the future, with which the Ministry is engaging fully, among other things by developing its first 'Strategic Knowledge and Innovation Agenda' (SKIA) (VenJ 2017).

In this chapter, too, we opt for a long-term perspective. Where possible, we describe trends in objective and subjective safety from the start of the 1990s, enabling us to look back over a quarter of a century. Did the trends we currently observe begin recently, or are they robust and longer lasting? Answering this question will not only give a tentative indication of what we may expect in the future, but will also place the impact of policy changes in perspective. In addition to this review, true to tradition we also devote attention to a number of current safety themes and organisations, in view of their topical social relevance.

10.2 Extent of and trend in crime over a quarter of a century

The answer to the question of whether crime is rising or falling depends on the time period considered, the type of offence and the sources consulted. To obtain the fullest possible picture of the extent of and trend in crime in the Netherlands, we compare two data sources: results of victim surveys, and police records. As both sources have advantages and disadvantages, they are presented together,² starting with victim surveys. Before looking back over recent decades, we will discuss the most recent developments.

Number of incidents experienced stabilises in 2016

According to the Safety Monitor (*Veiligheidsmonitor*), Dutch citizens experienced virtually the same amount of crime in 2016 (312 offences per 1,000 persons) as in 2015 (318 offences) (figure 10.1). Almost 60% of these offences were crimes against property, just over 30% involved vandalism and over 10% were violent offences. More than half the total offences reported were committed using a computer (cybercrime). There were no significant changes in any of these offence categories, including cybercrime, compared to 2015. All offence categories were reported less in 2016 than in 2012, however, with the exception of violent crime, which was unchanged.

Figure 10.1

Decline in the last ten years is a break with the past

Criminality per 1,000 members of the population, 1992/1994-2016 (in absolute numbers)^{a, d}

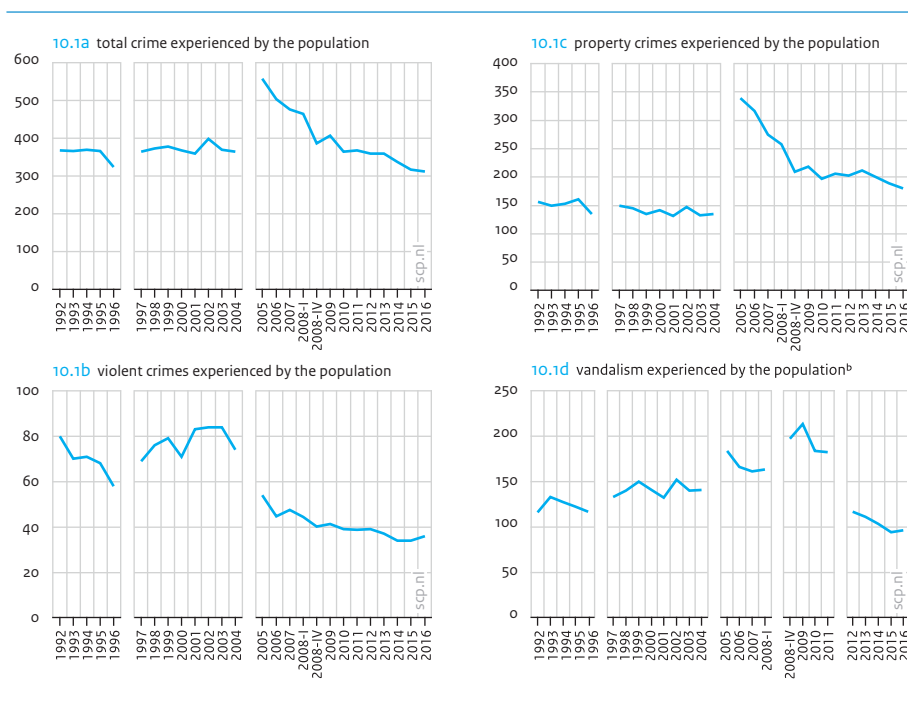
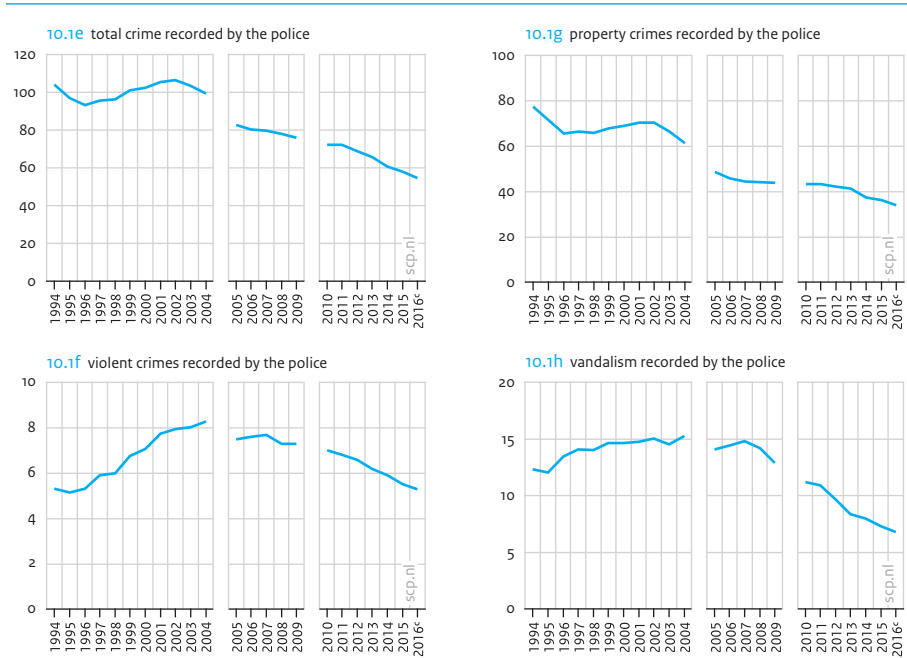


Figure 10.1
(Continued)



- a Figures 10.1a-d: based on victim surveys, population aged 15 years and older. In figures 10.1a to 10.1c inclusive, the periods 2005-2008I (National Safety Monitor, VMR) and 2008IV-2011 (Integral Safety Monitor, IVM) have been made comparable with 2012-2016 (Safety Monitor, VM) using conversion factors from Statistics Netherlands (CBS 2015). Figures 10.1e-h: based on police statistics (with provisional figures for 2015 and 2016).
- b Conversion factors for converting VMR and IVM to VM are not available for vandalism. Figure 10.1d therefore shows the original time series with methodological breaks between the VMR, IVM and VM.
- c Provisional figures.
- d In figures 10.1a-d, the series 1992-1996, 1997-2004 and 2005-2016 are not comparable due to methodological breaks. In figures 10.1e-h, the series 1994-2004, 2005-2009 and 2010-2016 are not comparable due to methodological breaks.

Source: CBS (ERV'92-'96; IVM'08-'11; POLS'97-'04; VM'12-'14; VMR'05-'08; Politiestatistiek)

Reduction in reporting of experienced offences in 2016

Victim surveys provide supplementary information on offences that are not brought to the attention of the police and therefore do not appear in the police records. In 2016, victims reported 34% of offences experienced to the police. That is less than in 2015 (36%) and even less than in the three preceding years (38%). Violent crime and property crime were the most commonly reported (41%); the propensity to report vandalism is considerably lower, at barely 19%. The most common reasons for not reporting offences

in recent years have consistently been that it wouldn't make any difference, that the incident was not important enough and that people did not see it as a matter for the police.

Reported offences slightly less often recorded according to citizens

Not every offence is reported to the police, and not every offence that is reported to the police ends up in the police records. To record a reported offence, the police must draw up an official police report. According to citizens, this was done for 25% of offences experienced in 2016. Based on the offences reported to the police, this means that around 72% of reported offences were actually recorded by the police. We refer to this as the propensity to record offences. According to Dutch citizens, this propensity was highest for property crime (77%) – probably because insurance companies often require this – followed by vandalism (68%), cybercrime (58%) and violence (53%). The total propensity to record offences was slightly lower in 2016 than in 2015 (74%) and 2012 (75%). This is mainly due to a reduction in the propensity to record property crime and vandalism. On the other hand, violent offences were recorded more often in 2016. The propensity to record cybercrime appears to have increased gradually over the last five years.

Fewer offences recorded by the police in 2016

Police records provide more information on crime without immediate victims or committed against businesses or organisations, which are obviously not reported by citizens in victim surveys. The police recorded 929,000 offences in 2016. Crimes against property accounted for 62% of this figure, public order offences for just over 12% and violent offences almost 10%.

Total recorded crime has been falling since 2002, but this trend has accelerated since 2011 and is still continuing. There was a further reduction in all recorded crime categories in 2016. Recorded violent offences and sex offences have fallen consistently since 2007, as have recorded vandalism and public order offences, at a slightly faster rate. The number of recorded crimes against property has been falling since 2002, albeit at a slower pace.

A promising decade, with a digital reservation

The picture over the longer term is a positive one. A steadily decreasing number of Dutch citizens have reported being victims of crime over the last ten years. With the odd fluctuation, the trend showed no change in the 1990s and the period around the turn of the century. This picture is broadly confirmed by the police figures, which have shown a steady reduction in crime for more than ten years, whereas the crime rate was still rising in the mid-1990s. The fact that both sources show a similar trend over a longer period provides some confidence that the crime rate is indeed falling.

A similarly positive trend is occurring in other Western countries, making it less likely that national policy in the Netherlands is responsible. There are any number of possible explanations, but the search is still on for definitive answers, which is why this has also been included on the Dutch National Research Agenda. One of the most promising

explanatory factors is an increase in the technical protection of homes, cars and retail premises, greatly limiting the opportunities for crimes against property (Farrell 2013; Vollaard et al. 2009).

There is however an awareness that a shift may be taking place from traditional crime to cybercrime. Research commissioned by the woDC shows that perpetrators of traditional offences, such as threats or theft, are reasonably similar to perpetrators of cybercrime in a broad sense, who commit the same offences with the help of a computer (Zebel et al. 2013). By contrast, cybercrime in a narrow sense, i.e. crime in which computers are both the means and the end, is attracting a new group of offenders, who were not previously involved in common forms of offline crime. It may be that it is more difficult for citizens to recognise that they have been victims in the digital world, and harder for the police to detect and record these offences, so that both sources may currently be underestimating the real situation. However, a shift from offline to online crime does not appear to offer a sufficient explanation in itself for the falling crime rate. We will return to this in the discussion of suspects in section 10.4.

10.3 A few areas highlighted for attention by police and justice system

Here we highlight a number of topical forms of crime about which victim surveys and police records do not (yet) provide complete information. Discrimination, violence against people in public-facing roles and cybercrime are offences which have been accorded high priority in safety policy. However, these types of offence are not readily recognised by and/or reported to the police. They also tend to be hidden behind overarching offence categories such as abuse, threats and theft, but are capable of developing completely differently from those larger categories. All this warrants a more detailed look at these offences based on available data sources.

Discrimination

The Discrimination Guideline (*Aanwijzing discriminatie*) produced in 2007 by the Dutch Board of Procurators General contains mandatory rules on the investigation and prosecution of discrimination. Linked to this, the Discrimination Prosecution Guideline (*Richtlijn strafvordering discriminatie*), most recently tightened up in 2015, stipulates that offences with 'discriminatory aspects' must always lead to a summons; a doubling of the sentence is the principle for the penalty sought. Following negative reports in the Dutch media (RTL news, 22 September 2016) regarding the low proportion of reported offences taken up by the Public Prosecutions Department, the Board announced that, following the growth of social media in which tens of thousands of utterances appear every day, it is impossible to follow their own guideline and investigate all reports, including the less serious ones.

The Discrimination Guideline also formulates rules for the consistent recording of offences by the police. Although work is still going on to optimise them (for the quality of data sources see Andriessen & Fernee 2012), police records on discrimination have been

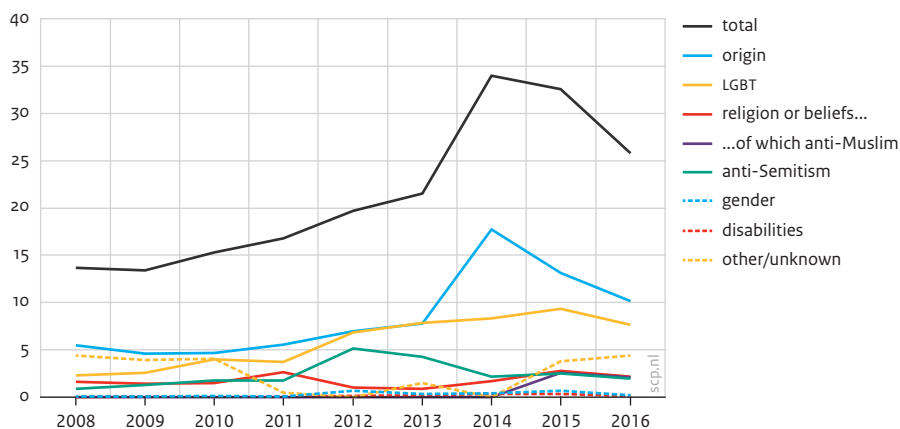
available since 2008. These figures show a steeply rising trend until 2014, from 2,238 incidents in 2008 to 5,721 in 2014 – equivalent to just under 14 incidents per 100,000 Dutch citizens in 2008, and 34 incidents in 2014 (figure 10.2). There are three likely explanations for this increase. First, continual improvements in the recording of incidents resulted in higher police figures; second, awareness-raising campaigns and other media attention may have encouraged victims to report incidents (Art.1 2015); third, there may have been an actual increase in discrimination.

In 2014 there was indeed a specific reason for the record number of incidents reported in that year (Art.1 2015): that was the year in which the Dutch politician Geert Wilders made his infamous ‘fewer Moroccans’ statement at the end of the local council elections, a statement for which he was convicted in 2017. Many private citizens made official complaints against Wilders at the time. The case is currently before the appeal courts. After 2014, the number of incidents reported fell to 4,376 in 2016, around 26 per 100,000 inhabitants. If we imagine figure 10.2 without the outlier that is 2014, the number of incidents recorded in 2016 still sits on an imaginary rising line starting in 2008.

Figure 10.2

Recorded discrimination recovers after peak year 2014

Incidents by discrimination ground, 2008-2016 (in numbers per 100,000 population)



Source: Police records (vnh'08-'16) (In: Mink en Van Bon 2017); SCP treatment

According to police records, the biggest reason for discrimination in 2016 was ethnic origin (39% of cases)³ (figure 10.3). The trend in this form of discrimination, which fell after the peak in 2014, is thus a strong determinant of the trend in the total number of recorded incidents. The next most common form of recorded discrimination (30%) is against LGBT persons (lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders); the number of these incidents has also been rising since 2008, albeit more gradually. 8% of recorded

discrimination was on religious grounds, and of this figure, 95% was aimed at Muslims. Some of the discrimination against Muslims – many of whom in the Netherlands are of North African or Turkish origin – will also have been recorded as discrimination on the grounds of origin. Anti-Semitism also accounted for 8% of recorded discrimination. Other reasons for discrimination are recorded much less often.

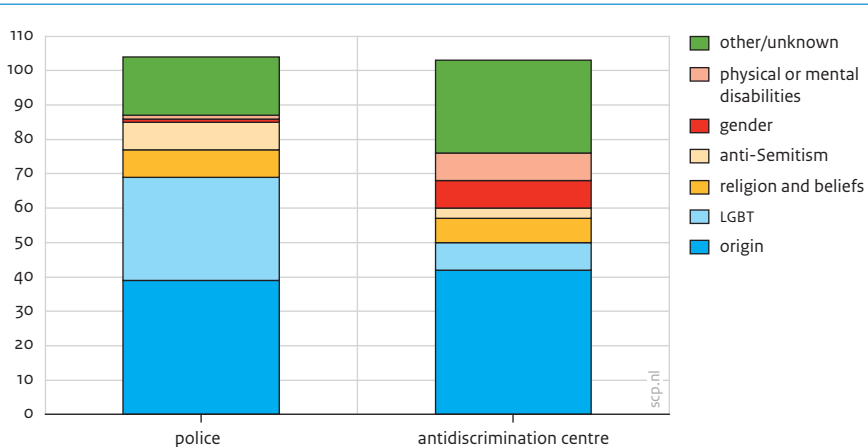
The vast majority of cases (75%) involved insults, sometimes in combination with primary discrimination.⁴ Vandalism accounted for just under 20% of recorded incidents, followed by abuse and threats, at 6% and 3%, respectively. Finally, 1% of incidents recorded involved incitement and 1% exclusion.

Police records provide an improving but inevitably incomplete picture of discrimination in the Netherlands, because victims or witnesses do not take every incident to the police. Antidiscrimination centres (ADVs) can often offer a low-threshold alternative, making them a supplementary source of information, though one caveat here is that complaints to ADVs do not always stand up in legal proceedings. The trend in ADV reports is also dominated by the aforementioned statement by Geert Wilders in 2014, which generated a one-off influx of almost 9,714 complaints. There was a notable fall in the number of complaints in 2015 (4,561) and 2016 (4,596). Unlike the police records in 2015 and 2016, this means that the number of ADV reports is at its lowest for almost ten years.

Figure 10.3

Other forms of discrimination reported than recorded

Discrimination ground as share of the total number of incidents reported and recorded, 2016 (in percentages)



Source: Police records (BVH'16) and ADV reports 2016 (In: Mink & Van Bon 2017)

The comparison between antidiscrimination centre (ADV) reports and police records also points to a difference in the extent to which different grounds for discrimination appear to occur. The amount of discrimination on the grounds of origin and religion more or less corresponds in both sources. Discrimination against LGBT persons is however much more strongly represented in the police records (30%) than in the ADV reports (8%); this also applies to a lesser extent for anti-Semitism (8% versus 3%). Discrimination on the grounds of gender and disability is by contrast much more often reported to ADVs (both 8%) than recorded by the police (both 1%). These differences may be associated with several factors: the severity and criminality of the incident, the motivation of the victim to report the incident to the police (or an ADV), differences in classification and prioritisation by the police.

Violence against people in public-facing roles

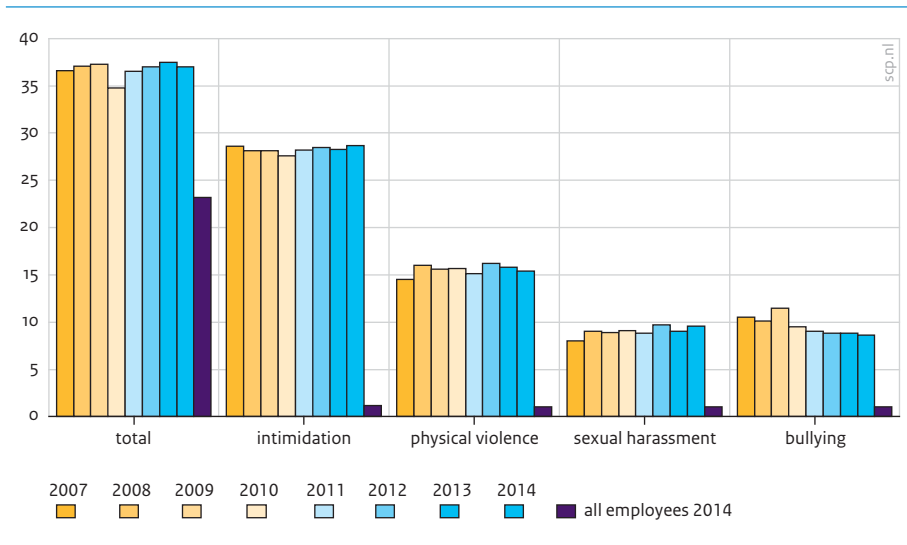
The ‘Working safely with the public’ (*Veilige publieke taak*) programme was launched in 2007 with the aim of reducing aggression and violence against workers in public-facing jobs (TK 2007/2008). The programme came to an end on 1 January 2017. Where the focus was initially mainly on frontline workers, such as ambulance staff and police officers, concerns have also been rising more recently about local politicians (Bouwmeester et al. 2016). Their responsibility for sensitive issues such as the reception of asylum-seekers and tackling regional organised drugs crime means they are not popular among all sections of the population, and that makes them susceptible to aggression.

To combat violence against people in public-facing roles, the former Ministry of Security and Justice first set about speeding up and increasing the sentences handed out to offenders. Among other things, the criminal prosecution guidelines were updated: since early 2011 the Public Prosecutions Department must demand penalties that are three times as severe for violence against these victims and against bystanders who intervene. The penalties demanded were indeed increased, but to a lesser extent than prescribed by the guidelines (TK 2012/2013). In addition, on 1 January 2015 it was made possible to place alleged offenders in pre-trial detention earlier, opening the way for fast-track and super-fast track justice. The Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations published measures for employers and measures aimed at improving cooperation throughout the criminal justice chain.

According to the Netherlands Working Conditions Survey (*Nationale enquête arbeidsomstandigheden – NEA*), in 2014 37% of employees in a public-facing role had personally experienced aggression from third parties in the preceding year⁵ (figure 10.4). This compared with 23% of all Dutch employees. Most public-facing workers reported that they had been victims of intimidation (just under 29%), followed by physical violence (over 15%), sexual harassment (just under 10%) and bullying (just under 9%). Only reported instances of bullying declined between 2007 and 2014; by contrast, incidents of sexual harassment rose over the same period. The other forms of aggression by third parties showed no uniform trend between 2007 and 2014.

Figure 10.4
Less bullying, more sexual harassment of public-facing employees

Share of respondents in public-facing roles who have been victims of aggression by third parties in the past twelve months, 2007-2014 (in percentages)^a



a The NEA survey contains no information about verbal aggression, such as name-calling and insults.

Source: TNO (NEA'07-'14)

Despite all the policy measures, there is no evidence of a reduction in reported aggression against public-facing workers – at most in the case of bullying. Whether this implies that the policy has had no impact, or whether it has in fact raised awareness among these employees (who may therefore more readily report incidents) cannot be determined using our data.

Cybercrime

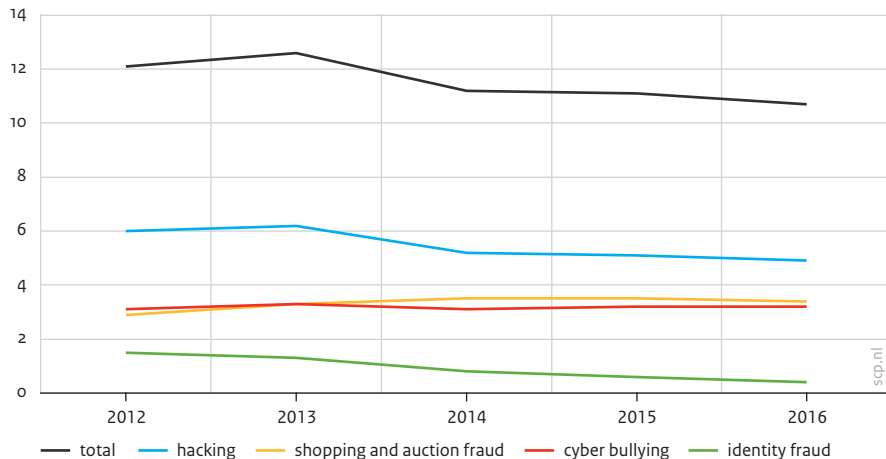
Use of IT is deeply rooted in Dutch society, also when compared with other European countries: only 1% of Dutch households do not have access to or use the Internet, the lowest figure in Europe (see chapter 9). According to Eurostat, this is the reason for the relatively high number of cyber incidents in the Netherlands. According to the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), the main threats to the digital security of the Dutch government, businesses and public in the past year were posed by sophisticated ransomware attacks by professional criminals, and digital economic and political spying by foreign intelligence services. In addition, there was no letup in the number of fairly simple to mount Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks. A slightly lesser but growing threat in the eyes of the NCSC is the theft and publication of sensitive information by

'hacktivists', with both good and bad intentions. Although updating security systems continues to be a challenge, especially for members of the public and SMEs, many infiltrations are not actually the result of technical vulnerabilities, but of clever manipulation of people (social engineering), who are often the weakest links in a security system (NCSC 2016). In figure 10.5 we look only at victimisation of cybercrime reported by Dutch citizens.

Figure 10.5

Decrease in victims of identity fraud and hacking over time

Experienced victimisation in the preceding twelve months, by type of offence, persons aged 15 years and older, 2012-2016 (in percentages)



Source: CBS (VM'12-'16)

Just under 11% of the Dutch population reported in 2016 that they had been victims of some form of cybercrime in the preceding year. It is quite possible that more people were affected without knowing. The most frequent incidents involved hacking (4.9%), followed by online shopping and auction fraud (3.4%), cyberbullying (3.2%) and identity fraud (0.4%).

Between 2012 and 2016 there was a very gradual decline in people reporting that they had been victims of cybercrime. Online bullying was just as common in 2016 as in 2012, and online shopping and auction fraud slightly more common. There were no changes compared with 2015. Given the likelihood that people's online activity will only increase, so will the opportunity for abuse. The fact that the total number of victims of cybercrime is nonetheless not rising suggests an improved awareness and prevention by users and/or providers of digital services. A survey by the Dutch research organisation TNS NIPO appears to back this up: three-quarters of respondents reported that they were well aware of

Internet crime, a figure that has increased continuously since the first survey in 2011 (Capgemini 2016). This does not of course imply that three-quarters of people would know how to act in such a situation.

The majority of victims of cybercrime are aged under 25. The risk decreases rapidly with age; of the population groups into which the population is divided here, people aged over 65 are by far the least likely to be victims (table 10.1). On the other hand, there has been a relatively sharp fall in the number of young victims of cybercrime since 2012.

The increased efforts in education to make pupils more 'media-savvy' may have played a role here, and may also have contributed to the increased prevention measures referred to earlier. Men are more often victims than women. Lower-educated people are less often victims than people with intermediate and high education. We find no differences between groups of differing origin.

Table 10.1

Young people most often victims of cybercrime, but frequency diminishing

Experienced victimisation of cybercrime in the preceding twelve months, persons aged 15 years and older, 2012-2016 (in percentages)^a

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
total	12.1	12.6	11.2	11.1	10.7
men	11.6	13.4*	11.8*	11.5*	11.3*
women	12.5	11.9*	10.6*	10.6*	10.2*
15-24 years	19.5*	20*	17.6*	17.1*	15.6*
25-44 years	14.9*	15.3*	14.2*	13.5*	13.1*
45-64 years	10.0*	11.0*	9.2*	9.8*	9.8*
≥ 65 years	5.1*	5.8*	5.2*	5.3*	5.4*
low education	9.1*	9.6*	8.2*	8.4*	7.9*
intermediate education	13.8	13.9*	12.5	12.1*	11.9
high education	14.3	15.1*	13.4	13.3*	12.9
native Dutch	12.0	12.6	11.1*	11.0	10.8
Western migrant	12.4	12.9	11.7	11.3	10.6
non-Western migrant	12.4	12.7	11.2	11.1	10.1

a The significance shown (*) relates to differences between groups ($p < 0.05$).

Source: CBS (VM'12-'16)

There thus appears to be a stronger association between being a victim of cybercrime and the level of people's digital activity rather than of their digital skills. Groups which use the Internet in larger numbers and more intensively – young people, men and people with higher education (see also chapter 9) – are more exposed to potential cybercriminals, whatever their digital skills. A relatively high proportion of young victims of cybercrime are themselves also perpetrators, for example (Zebel et al. 2013). It is thus precisely the groups who on average have the greatest digital resources and competence who are at the most risk: opportunity makes the thief.

10.4 Crime suspects

The police record suspects about whom they have reasonable cause to believe that they have committed a crime. The number of recorded suspects has been declining steadily for more than a decade (table 10.2): between 2005 and 2015, the number fell continuously, from 513,000 in 2005 (328,000 unique persons) to 283,000 in 2015⁶ (196,000 unique persons), a decline of 45% (40% unique persons). The number of recorded suspects, like the number of unique suspects, also fell between 2014 and 2015, by 11%. In part, this robust decline is due to the fall of almost 29% in (recorded) crime over the same period. The fall does not appear to be due to a reduction in the number of cases for which a suspect is identified, because the clear-up rate in 2015 was barely lower (25.2%) than the ten-year average (25.5%) (provisional figures) (§ 10.6).

The share of minors (12-18 year-olds, unique persons) in the total recorded unique suspects (12-79 year-olds) has fallen over the last ten years, from 16% in 2005 to 11% since 2015. The probability of a minor being recorded as a suspect (the suspect rate, not shown in table) fell sharply over the decade, from 8.5% in 2005 to 3.0% in 2015. Minors were relatively less often suspects of vandalism or public order disturbances during this period, relatively as often suspects of crimes of violence and relatively more often suspects of property crimes.

Women form a very clear minority among uniquely recorded suspects, at 19% in 2015, though this does represent an increase from 16% in 2005. The suspect rate among men is four times as high as among women (1.8% versus 0.45%). It was almost five times as high in 2005. Women relatively often commit crimes against property: in 2015, 25% of unique suspects of property crimes were female, followed by 16% of unique suspects in traffic offences, 14% of suspects of violent crime, 13% of suspects of vandalism and public order disturbances and 11% of suspects of drug crimes. The share of women among suspects of traffic offences has risen markedly over the last decade; by contrast, the share of female suspects of drug crimes has fallen.

Table 10.2
Fewer suspects recorded

Recorded suspects (total recorded and unique persons), by gender, age and origin, 2005-2015
(in absolute numbers and shares of unique suspects)

	2005	2008	2014 ^a	2015 ^a
recorded suspects (total)	513,450	470,950	318,380	283,510
recorded suspects (unique persons)	327,970	309,370	218,740	196,300
unique suspects (numbers)				
women	53,440	53,880	42,090	37,220
12-18 years	52,860	47,710	23,780	22,490
native Dutch	193,150	177,580	113,940	100,770
Western migrant	40,150	44,290	37,380	33,680
non-Western migrant	80,020	79,430	65,800	59,980
unique suspects (%)				
women	16	17	19	19
12-18 years	16	15	11	11
native Dutch	59	57	52	51
Western migrant	12	14	17	17
non-Western migrant	24	26	30	31

a The figures for 2014 and 2015 are provisional.

Source: Kessels & Vissers (2016); SCP treatment

51% of recorded unique suspects in 2015 were of Dutch origin. Non-Western migrants from the traditional migration countries of Morocco, Turkey, Suriname, the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba accounted for 22% of recorded unique suspects; 9% were of other non-Western origin and 17% were Western migrants. This means that people with a non-Western background are overrepresented among suspects, with a suspect rate around 3.5 times higher than that of Dutch natives. On the other hand, the suspect rate has fallen in stages for every group – Dutch natives, Western migrants, traditional and other non-Western migrants – since 2005.

The overrepresentation of people with a non-Western background among adult suspects can be explained in part by the high share of young men in non-Western groups and their weaker socio-economic position. Despite this, the difference between migrants and Dutch natives remains largely unexplained (Blom et al. 2005; Van Noije & Kessels 2012). The justice system itself could play a role here. Amnesty International has pointed out that proactive police activity in the Netherlands, such as preventive body searches and compulsory identification, leads to ethnic profiling (Amnesty International 2013). This problem has also been recognised by the Dutch police themselves (Nationale Politie

Eenheid Oost Brabant 2015), which developed a programme in 2015 entitled ‘The power of difference’ (*De kracht van het verschil*) to combat this practice in all Dutch police regions. There are also indications that selectivity can occur in the prosecution and trial phases (Van Wingerden & Wermink 2016). Moreover, Rovers (1999) drew attention to the fact that the justice system can have an indirect negative impact on migrant groups because (serious) economic and traffic offences, including white-collar crime, are less often investigated and prosecuted and less heavily punished than frequently occurring blue-collar crime, which is more often committed by people from lower social milieus.

The biggest shift in the suspect population is found among the very youngest suspects. Van der Laan and Weijters (2015), using data for Amsterdam, find a number of possible explanations for this, including a growing number of community officers and formal police supervision in general, both of which may be related to a targeted approach to (juvenile) crime in high-risk areas. They also find a relationship with the fall in the number of single-parent families, the number of school dropouts and the number of pupils per school.

The rapidly growing popularity of gaming has also been proffered as an explanation for the reduction in juvenile delinquency: young people no longer have the time to hang around on the streets and cause trouble, because they are too busy with their computer games and other online activities (e.g. Beerthuisen et al. 2017; Cunningham et al. 2011). Some of these online activities could consist of cybercrime, which would mean that the juvenile delinquency has simply been displaced, though at present this appears to apply to only a limited extent (Rokven et al. 2017; Zebel et al. 2013). Analysis of data for the period 2006-2012 shows that 5.5% of young people questioned say they have committed a cyber offence in the past year (Zebel et al. 2013). Of the recorded offences committed by minors between 2006 and 2011, 0.3% were cyber offences; the figure is probably higher in reality because the judicial chain has a hard time handling cyber offences.

All in all, therefore, until recently only a small proportion of young people were involved in cybercrime. To some extent this is a new group of delinquents, who engage in cybercrime in a narrow sense, such as hacking (where the computer is both a means and an end). Their profile differs both from that of offline delinquents and cyber-delinquents in a broad sense (where the computer is simply a means, with traditional offences as the end). They are more often born in the Netherlands, more often first offenders, have fewer delinquent friends and more often stay on the right path after having been apprehended. Delinquents who commit traditional offline and online offences, by contrast, closely resemble each other (Rokven et al. 2017; Zebel et al. 2013).

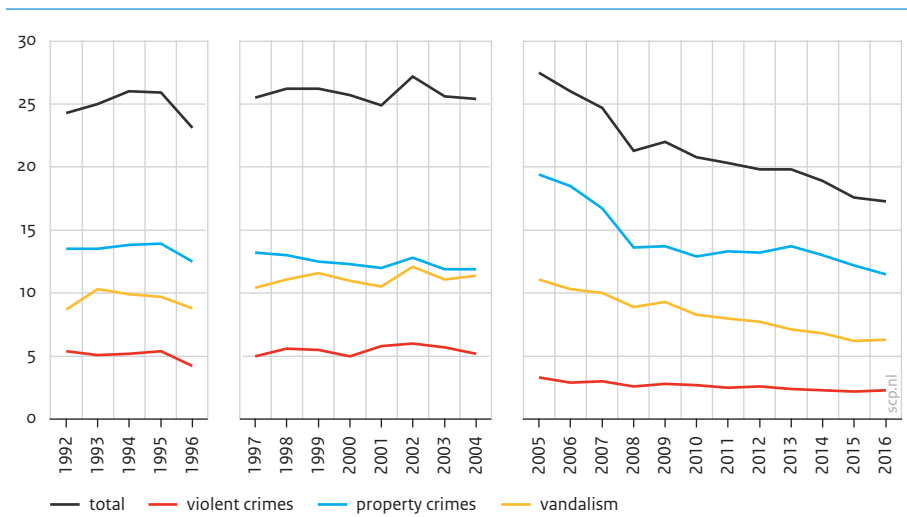
10.5 Victims of crime

In 2016, 17% of the Dutch population aged 15 years and older reported that they had been victims of crime at least once during the preceding twelve months (figure 10.6). This share has fallen slowly but continuously since 2009, when it stood at 22%. Crime against

property affected the highest proportion of victims in 2014 (11.5%); just over 6% were victims of vandalism, while 2.3% were victims of violent crime. Victimisation rates started to fall in 2005, first rapidly, then rather more gradually. There was no sign of this downward trend in the 1990s and early 2000s. The trend was due mainly to the sharp fall in property crime between 2005 and 2008, and again after 2013. The number of victims of vandalism has also fallen almost every year in the recent period. There has also been a gradual decline in victims of violent crime, from just over 3% in 2005 to just over 2% in 2016. The past decade has thus been a good period not just in terms of the number of offences (§ 10.2), but also in terms of the number of victims.

Figure 10.6
Reduction in victimisation mainly in last decade

Victimisation rate in the preceding twelve months, by type of offence, persons aged 15 years and older, 2008-2016 (in percentages)^{ab}



- a The figures for 2005-2011 have been corrected for the methodological break between the VMR/IVM and the VM (CBS 2014).
- b The series 1992-1996, 1997-2004, 2005-2016 are not comparable due to methodological breaks.

Source: CBS (ERV'92-'96; IVM'08-'11; POLS'97-'04; VM'12-'16; VMR'05-'07)

This trend has occurred in virtually every population group; the only exception are homosexual men, where the victimisation rate did not fall in 2016 (table 10.3). The biggest differences occur between age groups: 15-24 year-olds are victims more than twice as often as people aged over 65. This difference is found in all offence categories. Compared with 25-64 year-olds, only vandalism affects the youngest group less often, because they often do not yet own a car or a house which can be vandalised.

Reported victimisation also rises with education level. Lower-educated people report the least violence, least property crime and least vandalism. People with the highest education level report the most property crime and the most vandalism.

Non-Western migrants and their children more often report being victims, though this applies only for crimes against property. There is virtually no difference between Dutch natives and Western migrants.

Table 10.3

Homosexual men, young people, higher-educated people and non-Western migrants most often victims

Experienced victimisation, by population characteristics and type of crime, 2016 (in percentages)

	total	violent offences	property crime	vandalism
total	17.3*	2.3*	11.5	6.3*
men	17.9*	2.8*	11.4	6.7*
women	16.8	1.9	11.6	5.8
15-24 years	22.1*	3.8*	16.4*	5.1*
25-44 years	20.4*	2.9*	13.1*	7.9*
45-64 years	16.9*	2.2*	10.7*	6.9*
≥ 65 years	10.4*	0.8*	7.1*	3.7*
low education	13.7*	1.9*	9.1*	4.7*
intermediate education	17.4*	2.7	11.3*	6.3*
high education	21.1*	2.4	14.1*	7.8*
native Dutch	16.7	2.4	10.8	6.3
Western migrant	17.9	2.2	11.9	6.7
non-Western migrant	21.1*	2.3	16*	5.8
homosexual man	24.3*	3.7	16.4*	9.5*
bisexual man	17.7	3.6	11	6.1
heterosexual man	18.1	2.8	11.3	6.9
homosexual woman	18.6	2.4	11.9	6.6
bisexual woman	16.8	2.2	11.5	6.7
heterosexual woman	17.7	2.1	12.1	6.2

* $p < 0.05$

Source: CBS (VM'16)

In the last edition of 'Social State of the Netherlands' (SSN 2015), there were no significant differences in victimisation rates based on sexual orientation, but this was the case in 2016. Property crime and vandalism are reported more often by homosexual than

heterosexual men. The differences as regards being victims of violent crime are smaller (and not statistically significant). For women, sexual orientation appears to make virtually no difference. Figures on sexuality have only recently become available, and the consistency of statistical relationships found has yet to be proven. The smallest difference, though still significant, is between men and women: men are more often victims, but only of violent crime and vandalism.

If we compare the group differences in 2016 with those in 1995, the first year in which data on education are available in addition to gender and age, we find that these differences were very comparable twenty years ago (figure 10.7); virtually the same groups were either more often or less often victims of particular types of crime than as in 2016. The differences today are rather smaller than in 1995, however, because of the sharper fall in victimisation among men, people with high education and especially young people than in the other groups.

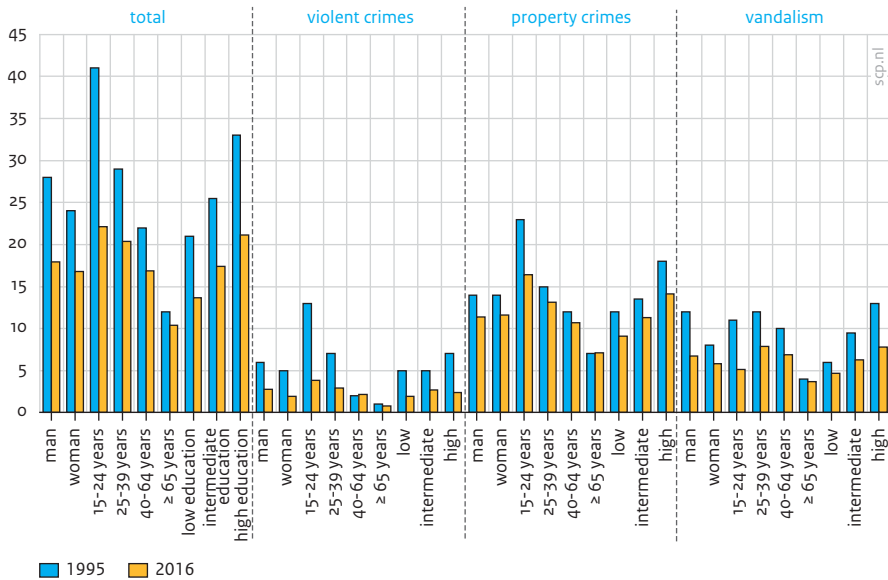
The literature finds explanations for these differences in victimisation rates mainly in lifestyle and habits which are associated with population characteristics such as age, education level and degree of urbanisation. For example, young people often venture into high-risk nightlife areas, and there is more crime in the city (Wittebrood 2006). Research shows that the higher victimisation rates among non-Western migrants largely disappear after correcting for the high shares of young men and city-dwellers in this population group (Wittebrood et al. 2005).

There is no definitive explanation for the high reported victimisation among people with high education; on the one hand, their better material position makes them attractive targets for vandalism and property crime, while on the other hand they mostly live in better neighbourhoods where the risks are lower. It has also been posited that higher-educated people have a lower tolerance threshold, and therefore more readily see themselves as victims when incidents occur and report them (Laub 1997).

We can only speculate on an explanation for the differences between homosexuals and heterosexuals. It is known that some aggression specifically targets homosexuals (see also § 10.3 on discrimination), but here we saw that the differences mainly relate to material victimisation. Intolerance can be one of the motives for vandalism, but that is less likely in the case of robbery. As with people with high education, the willingness to report incidents may play a role. We will need to await data covering a longer period before we are able to see how robust this result is.

Figure 10.7
Stable pattern of victimisation by population group^{a, b}

Experienced victimisation, by background characteristics, 1995-2016 (in percentages)



- a The figures for 1995 and 2016 are drawn from different surveys: the Legal Protection and Safety Survey (Enquête rechtsbescherming en veiligheid – ERV’95) and the Safety Monitor (Veiligheidsmonitor – VM’16). As a result, the victimisation figures are not directly comparable between years. It is however possible to compare the group proportions between years.
- b In 1995, intermediate education was split into intermediate 1 (up to the fourth year of senior general secondary (havo) or pre-university education (vwo), junior general secondary education (mavo) and lower secondary vocational education (lbo)) and intermediate 2 (the fourth year and above of havo or vwo and mbo (VET)). We have merged these by taking the average of the two education levels.

Source: CBS (ERV’95; VM’16)

10.6 Police: performance and appreciation

Since the new Police Act 2012 came into force on 1 January 2013, the development of a National Police Force has been a process of trial and error which has caused a fair degree of unrest. Previously, the Dutch police force comprised 25 different constabularies, each with its own chief officer. The new, unified National Police Force is headed by a single Central Unit which manages and supports ten regional units, divided into districts with 168 Frontline Teams providing basic police services.⁷ Frontline Teams can call on a flexible deployment team in their district if they are in danger of running short of manpower. The envisaged reduction in bureaucracy and administrative burden is intended to enable

police officers to spend more time patrolling the streets and improve the quality of policing in terms of prevention, enforcement and investigation. According to staff, however, policing has actually been more hidebound by red tape and enforced role changes since the introduction of the new system. This has now been recognised by senior management (VenJ 2015).

Current policy attaches great importance to (restoring) trust by strengthening the relationship of the police with the public, and ways are being sought of ensuring that the police are at the heart of the community (Politieacademie 2015). In addition, of course, one of the core tasks of the police remains to fight crime. In this section we look at both the hard and soft results: the performance of the police measured against the targets set in the Safety Agenda 2015-2018 (*Veiligheidsagenda 2015-2018*) and public satisfaction with the police.

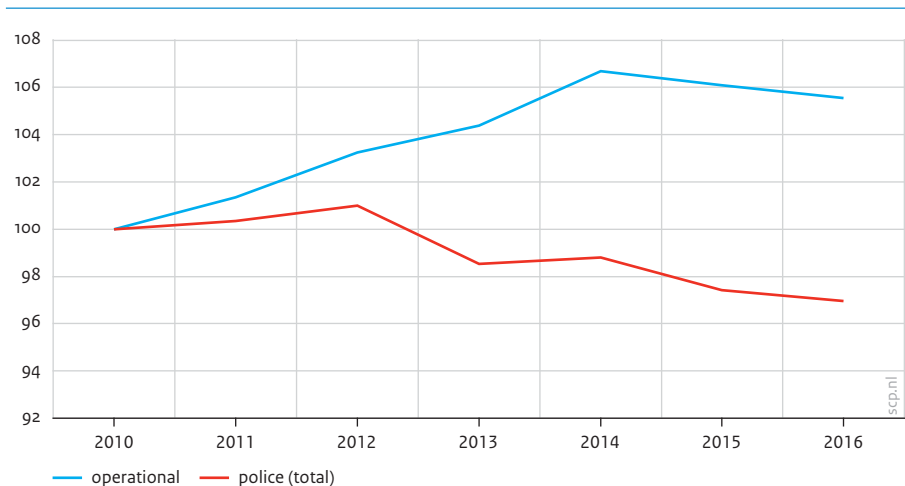
Growth in operational police capacity comes to a halt

In 2016, there were 337 police officers available for every 100,000 Dutch citizens (excluding trainees). The numbers were still growing between 2005 and 2009, but around the time of the reorganisation there was a clear contraction (figure 10.8).

Figure 10.8

Stabilisation in share of operational police personnel

Relative trend in total and operational police numbers, 2010-2016 (in index figures, 2010 = 100)



Source: Police annual reports

This did not apply for operational personnel (excluding trainees):⁸ their numbers increased from 269 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2010 to 287 in 2014. This number has not grown since then, and stood at 284 police officers per 100,000 inhabitants in 2016. Their relative share within the police apparatus as a whole also increased sharply until 2014, since when it has stabilised (figure 10.8). More operational personnel does not mean more uniformed officers on the street, but it does mean that a growing share of the police organisation is available for primary policing duties, including street patrols. Operational reinforcement was not only sought by increasing the number of officers, but also by modernising systems and through staff training (Nationale Politie 2017).

Boosting clear-up rates remains a challenge

The police achieved virtually all the national targets set in the Safety Agenda in 2016 (Nationale Politie 2017). The number of criminal gangs successfully targeted was above target (1,369 against 950), sufficient complex cyber-investigations were carried out (34 against a target of 30), more than sufficient suspects of horizontal fraud were passed to the Public Prosecutions Department (2,780 against a target of 1,600), and there were more than enough interventions against child pornography (876 against a target of 620). The only target where the police fell short was in passing on offenders of cybercrime to the Public Prosecutions Department (177 against a target of 190).

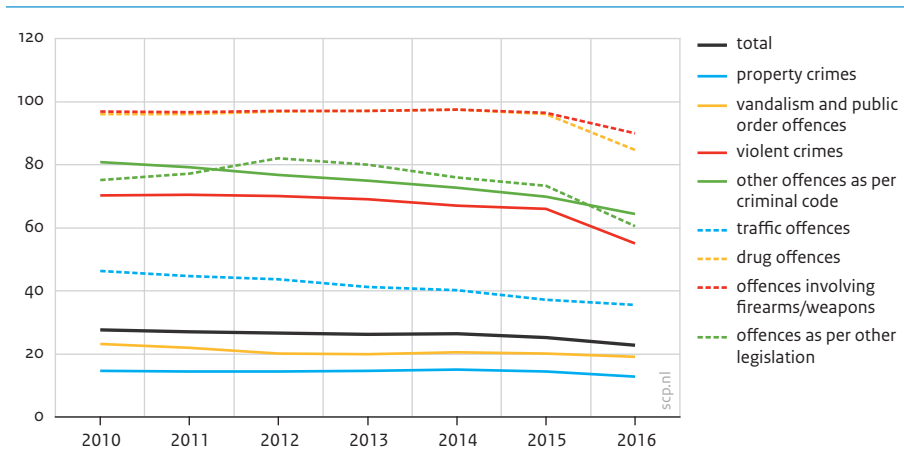
In the Safety Agenda, tackling high-impact crime is locally translated into maximum numbers of offences and minimum clear-up rates, depending on the local context. A crime is regarded as cleared up if at least one suspect is known to the police, regardless of whether they are on the run or deny the offence. Nationally, the clear-up rate for house burglaries (9.7%) and mugging (28.9%) in 2016 fell below the targets (10.3% and 29.2%, respectively). The target clear-up rate of 49.2% for robberies was however achieved, with a clear-up rate of 55.9% (Nationale Politie 2017).

No overarching target clear-up rate was formulated. Following the reduction in recorded crime, the number of solved crimes also fell in stages, from 331,000 in 2010 to 211,000 in 2016 (figure 10.9). However, the number of solved crimes fell more quickly than the number of cases, causing a fall in the clear-out rate from 27.6% in 2010 to 22.7% in 2016. However, this latter figure is not yet definitive and could increase.

Figure 10.9

Provisionally lower clear-up rate particularly in traffic, violent and other offences

Clear-up rate, by type of offence, 2010-2016^a (in percentages)



a The figures for 2015 and 2016 are provisional.

Source: cbs (StatLine veiligheid en recht)

The clear-up rate is not an optimum indicator for successful investigation of offences, because suspects do not always turn out to be guilty, of course. Moreover, by arresting one frequent offender, the police could be dealing unawares with a handful of offences. The clear-up rate is also depressed by a high willingness to report and record offences. If the crime rate remains the same but more crimes are known, then more crimes have to be cleared up. This helps explain why clear-up rates in some countries are higher than in the Netherlands (Smit et al. 2003). Nonetheless, the low clear-up rate received negative publicity in the media last year following a critical analysis of the criminal investigation service commissioned by the Ministry of Security and Justice (TK 2015/2016). In January last year, the police themselves raised the alarm with the Minister in the run-up to the general election (Koch 2017).

Public opinion of the police improved across the board

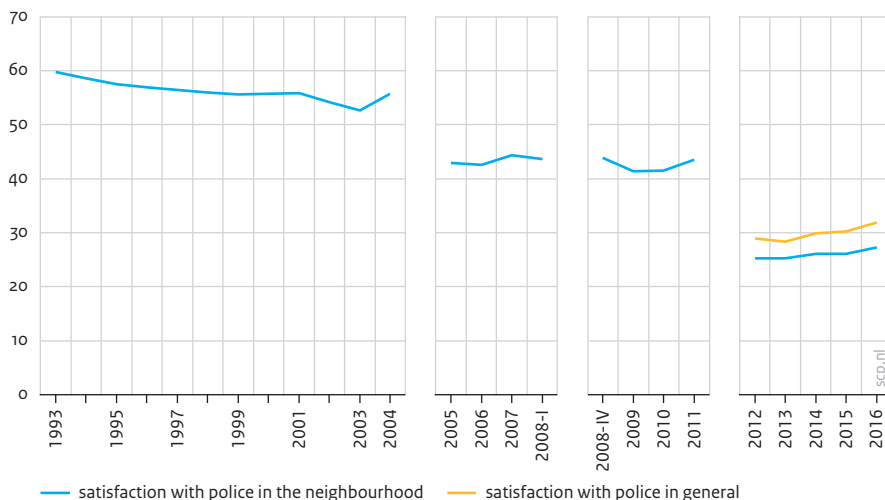
32% of the Dutch population are satisfied or very satisfied with the functioning of the police in general, and 27% with the functioning of the police in their local neighbourhood (figure 10.10). Dutch public satisfaction has increased in both cases since 2012, and not least in the most recent measurement year. There are several dimensions to satisfaction with general police functioning, all of which have moved in a positive direction since 2012. More people trust the police in general in 2016, more people think

the police are effective in combating crime and more people appreciate the interaction between the police and the public, as well as the communication with the public. For satisfaction with the police in the community, it is possible to look back over a longer period. However, three methodological breaks mean we are only able to compare the level of satisfaction over a limited number of years at a time. We can however compare the direction of the trends in broad outline. Where satisfaction in the 1990s declined a little each year, no clear trend could be discerned in the first decade of the 21st-century, only fluctuations; in the past decade, starting in 2010, people have taken an increasingly positive view of neighbourhood policing.

Figure 10.10

Satisfaction with the neighbourhood policing increased only recently^a

Share of the population who are satisfied or very satisfied with police functioning, 1993-2016 (in percentages)



a The series 1993-2004, 2005-2008I, 2008IV-2011 and 2012-2016 are not comparable due to methodological breaks.

Source: CBS (IVM'08-'11; PMB'93-'04; VM'12-'16; VMR'05-'08)

Men, young people, non-Western migrants and people with high education were the most frequently satisfied or very satisfied with the police in general and in the neighbourhood in 2016. At the same time, however, men and non-Western migrants were also the most frequently dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. People with low education and people aged over 65 are both the least often satisfied and the least often dissatisfied.

These group differences sometimes turn out differently on the underlying four dimensions of general satisfaction (trust, fighting crime, reciprocal interaction and communication). Trust is highest among young people and people with high education, and lowest among non-Western migrants and people aged 45-65 years. Young people, non-Western migrants and people with low education have the highest opinion of the police as effective crime-fighters; 45-65 year-olds have the lowest opinion. Appreciation for the interaction and/or communication between police and public is highest among women, non-Western migrants and people with higher education. Once again, it is lowest among 45-65 year-olds, as well as among those with intermediate education.

10.7 The judiciary: trust and sentencing climate

The public look to the police to provide primary safety, but the perception that citizens have of the justice system also affects the perceived effectiveness of safety policy. The more citizens feel protected by an adequate law enforcement, the more they are willing to trust each other and engage in relationships, and the more they will adhere to the rules of law and order (Niemeijer & Wijck 2013). Trust in institutions like the police and the courts system is therefore indicative of the quality of a society as a whole (Fukuyama 1995). Different mechanisms influence public trust in the judiciary (Van Noije & Putters 2017), but the most widely discussed factor used to judge the performance of the courts – more so than reducing recidivism in the longer term – is the severity of the sanctions handed down, which are generally only known for high-profile cases. In those cases, citizens are swayed by a punishment that feels severe or lenient. In this section we explore how much trust the Dutch have in the judiciary, how they feel about the severity of punishments in the Netherlands and what sentences are actually imposed.

Undiminished trust in the judiciary

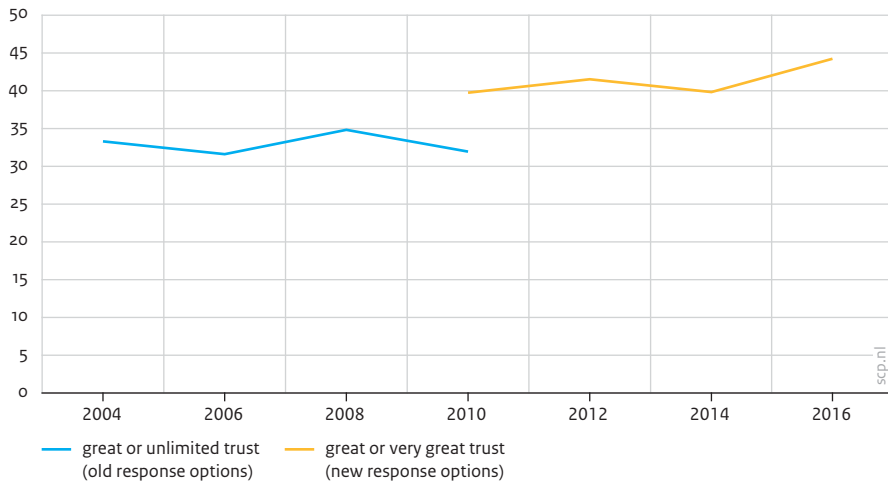
Dutch public trust in the courts system is high compared with other public and private institutions. According to the 2016 edition of the SCP survey 'Cultural Changes in the Netherlands' (*Culturele Veranderingen 2016*) (cv'16), 44% of the Dutch public have great or very great trust in the judiciary, the highest figure for at least six years (see figure 10.11). Moreover, chapter 3 showed that, according to the 'Citizens' Outlook Barometer' survey (*Continu onderzoek burgerperspectieven – COB*) conducted by SCP in the fourth quarter of 2016, the judiciary tops the list of most trusted of seven institutions: 67% of the Dutch public have sufficient trust in the judiciary. Whereas trust in the media and political institutions appears to have fallen slightly between 2008 and 2016, this is not the case for the courts. The 'Social Cohesion and Wellbeing' survey (*SocSamWelzijn*) conducted by Statistics Netherlands (CBS) confirms that the courts (and the police) enjoyed the most public trust between 2012 and 2015 compared with other institutions (69% in 2015). The Dutch justice system also enjoys above-average public trust compared with other European countries (European Social Survey 2014, in Van Noije & Putters 2017). These figures as yet show no

sign of the crumbling authority of the courts which has been feared and predicted, partly due to increasing political interference (Raad van State 2017).

Figure 10.11

No sign of declining trust in judiciary

Trust/great trust in the judiciary, persons aged 16 years and older, 2004-2016 (in percentages)



Source: scp (cv'04-'16)

Wide variation in trust by education level

However, trust in the judiciary is not universal. It rises sharply with education level: 66% of people with high education have great or very great trust in the system, compared with 39% of those with intermediate education and 28% of those with low education (cv'16). This relationship is confirmed by other sources (ESS'14 and COB'16/4). We find no uniform relationship between trust and age. According to cv'16, trust among young people is fairly high compared with people aged over 65. Other sources suggest that trust declines with age (ESS'14) or that trust is relatively high among both young people and those aged over 55 (COB'16/4). Trust among the young is thus in any event high. We do not find a difference in any sources between the various migrant groups and the Dutch native population (COB'16/4; cv'16; ESS'14).

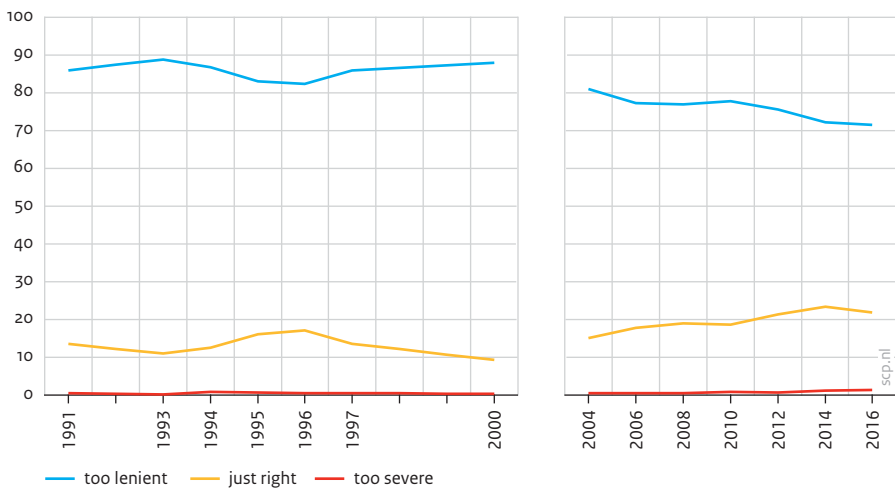
First signs of narrowing punitivity gap

Trust in the judiciary as an institution need not automatically mean that people also trust that the courts will hand out the sentences they would like. This is borne out by the general opinion on sentencing in the Netherlands. The difference between the sentences imposed by the courts and those that the public consider appropriate has been referred to

as the ‘punitivity gap’ (Keijser & Elffers 2007). According to members of the public, this gap is wide: in 2016, 71% felt that crime in the Netherlands in general is punished too leniently (figure 10.12). Almost no one (1%) believes that sentencing is too harsh. The percentage who think that sentences are too light has however shrunk, especially since 2004, when it stood at 81%. In the second half of the 1990s, the observed punitivity gap widened further; this should perhaps be seen in the light of the growing public dissatisfaction which around the turn of the century found a mouthpiece in the populist politician Pim Fortuyn.

Figure 10.12
A shrinking majority think that sentencing is too lenient

Opinions on sentencing in the Netherlands,^a persons aged 16 years and older, 1991-2016 (in percentages)



- a Answer to the question: ‘Are sentences for crimes in the Netherlands generally too severe, too lenient or about right?’
- b Trend-break between 2000 and 2004 due to the lack of a weighting factor up to 2004.

Source: SCP(CV’91-’16)

Opinion is slightly more divided on the question of whether sentencing today is different from in the past. In 2016, 40% of the public felt that the courts hand down lighter sentences than ten years ago; 25% think that sentencing is just as severe now as it was then, and 11% believe sentences are now harsher. The share who think that the sentencing regime today is more lenient than ten years ago showed no further increase in 2016, for the first time since 2006.

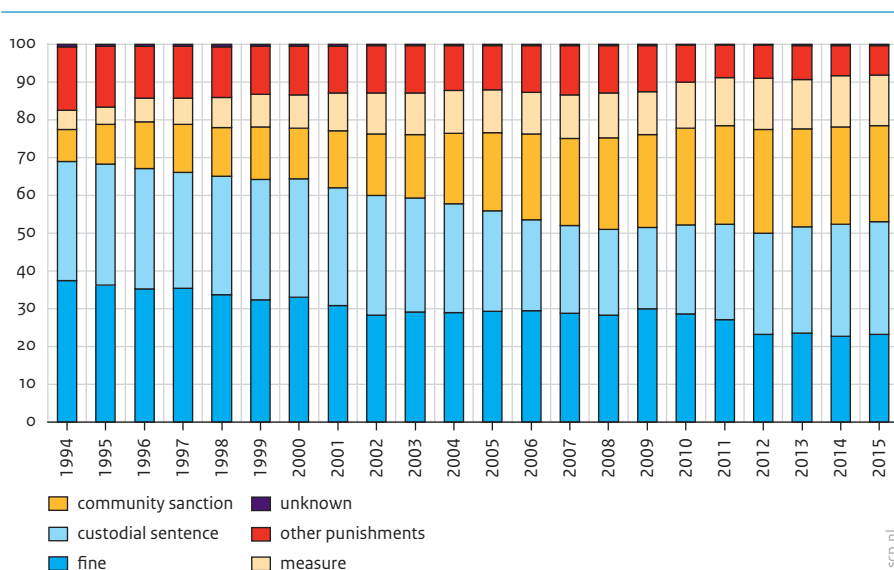
More but shorter custodial sentences, fewer but higher fines

It is interesting to compare these perceptions of the sentencing regime with the trend in sentences actually imposed; 30% of sentences or measures imposed by the courts in 2015 were custodial sentences, 25% were community sentences and suchlike and 23% were fines (figure 10.13). The proportion of custodial sentences has been rising since 2010. The share of community service orders rose for many years, but this came to a halt in 2012. Fines were the most common sanction until 2012, but have since been overtaken by both custodial sentences and community sanctions. Custodial sentences have been the most common sanction since 2013.

Figure 10.13

Imprisonment the most common punishment since 2013

Sentences passed by the courts, by type of sanction, 1994-2015^a (in percentages)



a The figures for 2015 are provisional.

Source: CBS (StatLine, Statistiek rechtbankstrafzaken)

In 2016, 56% of the custodial sentences imposed were of short duration, i.e. six weeks or less; 27% of sentences were for between six weeks and six months, 14% between six months and three years and 3% three years or longer. The share of short custodial sentences (up to six weeks) has increased every year since 2007 (36%) at the expense of intermediate sentences (between six months and three years), which have declined each year since then. The small share of long prison sentences has been stable for twenty years.

Most fines imposed in 2016 (60%) were for relatively small amounts (up to 453 euros); 39% involved an amount between 453 and 2,268 euros, and 1% of fines were above 2,268 euros. The proportion of small fines increased from 57% to 65% between 1999 and 2011. This share was lower again in the last four years, while the share of intermediate fines was much higher.

All of this implies that more but shorter custodial sentences were imposed in 2016, and (for around four years now) fewer but higher fines. Changes in the sentencing regime are not necessarily a sign that sentences in general are becoming lighter or more severe, but could also indicate changes in the seriousness of the offences or the situation of offenders. More community service orders have been imposed over the last ten years, which are sometimes seen by the public as a soft option. But the main trend has been an increase in the number of custodial sentences imposed for less severe offences (often short sentences) at the expense of fines. If we assume that custodial sentences are the most severe form of punishment in the eyes of the public, therefore, the perception that sentences are more lenient today than ten years ago does not correspond fully with reality.

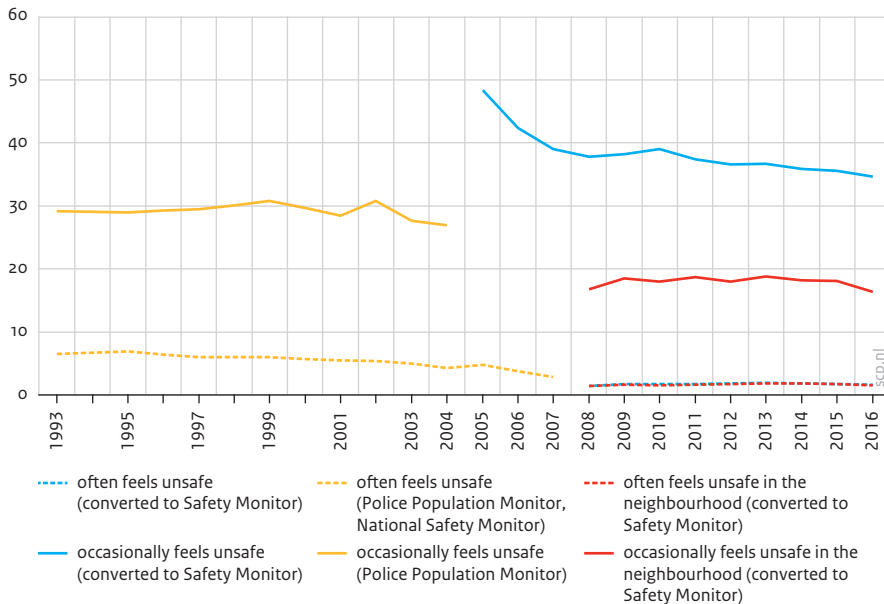
10.8 Feelings and perceptions of unsafety

Decline in general feelings of unsafety over the last decade

The government sees it as its task not only to improve the safety of the Dutch population, but also the perceived safety. The Ministry of Security and Justice has set itself the specific target of reducing the proportion of the Dutch public who occasionally feel unsafe by 10% in 2017 compared with 2012 (37%), equivalent to 33.3% in 2017. In 2016, 35% of the Dutch public said they occasionally feel unsafe; around 1.5% reported that they often feel unsafe (figure 10.14). The moderate feelings of unsafety are therefore developing in the desired direction, and have done so since the start of this century. The main trend in the 1990s was one of stability. Although it is now well known among scientists and policymakers that feelings of unsafety develop in accordance with their own dynamic, separately from the actual crime rate, we note that both reported victimisation and recorded crime, as well as reported feelings of unsafety, have fallen over the last ten years.

Figure 10.14
Reduced feelings of unsafety in the last decade

Share of the population who ‘occasionally’ and ‘often’ feel unsafe, in general and in their neighbourhood, persons aged 15 years and older, 1993-2016 (in percentages)



Source: BZK/Justitie (PMB'93-'04); CBS (IVM'08-'11; VM'12-'16; VMR'05-'07)

The fact that there is probably only a limited direct relationship between the level of crime and general feelings of unsafety can be deduced in part from the much flatter trend in feelings of safety in the neighbourhood: in 2016, 16% occasionally felt unsafe in their neighbourhood, but prior to this the figure fluctuated for years around 18%. Feelings of safety in one's own residential neighbourhood refer to a more specific context than feelings of unsafety in general, and will therefore more often be based on people's own experiences with crime and nuisance. In a recent study of different dimensions of perceived safety, it was found that people do not equate general feelings of unsafety to the fear of becoming a victim of crime, and that the two types of feelings are explained by different background characteristics (Van Noije & Iedema 2017). People who say they occasionally feel unsafe may be influenced by all manner of signals, for example street litter, antisocial behaviour, (un)certainly about the future and news reports about immigration or the economy (Elchardus et al. 2008; Pleysier 2010; Skogan & Maxfield 1981). Evidently, there have been sufficient positive signs over the last ten years to reduce general feelings of unsafety.

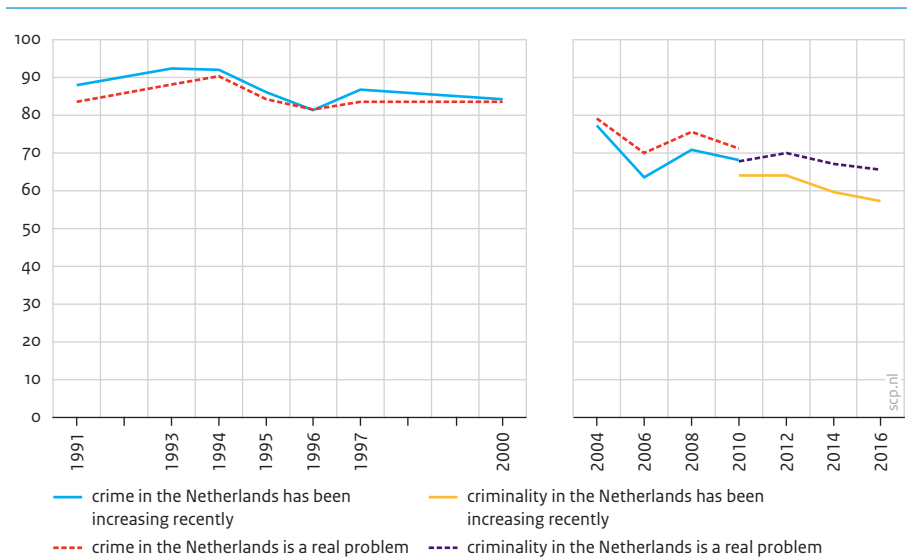
Perception of unsafety also less and less dominant

A clearer indication of the degree to which subjective safety corresponds with actual safety is the perception of that actual safety. The SCP 'Cultural Changes' survey (*Culturele veranderingen*) asks whether people feel that criminality has increased, remained the same or declined over the recent period. Since the start of these surveys, a majority have said that criminality is increasing, though this majority has shrunk considerably, from being consistently above 80% in the 1990s to 57% in 2016 (figure 10.15). This was supported by the crime statistics in the 1990s, but over the last decade this view is no longer in line with the actual trend.

Figure 10.15

A steadily shrinking majority believe that criminality has increased recently

Perception of criminality in society, 1991-2016 (in percentages)^{a, b, c}



- a In 2012 the word 'crime' (*misdad*) was replaced in both cv questions by 'criminality' (*criminaliteit*). Both versions were used in 2010.
- b These questions were not asked in 1992, 1998 and 1999. Scores for these years have been determined by distributing the averages over these years.
- c Trend-break between 2000 and 2004 due to the lack of a weighting factor up to 2004.

Source: scp (cv'91-'16)

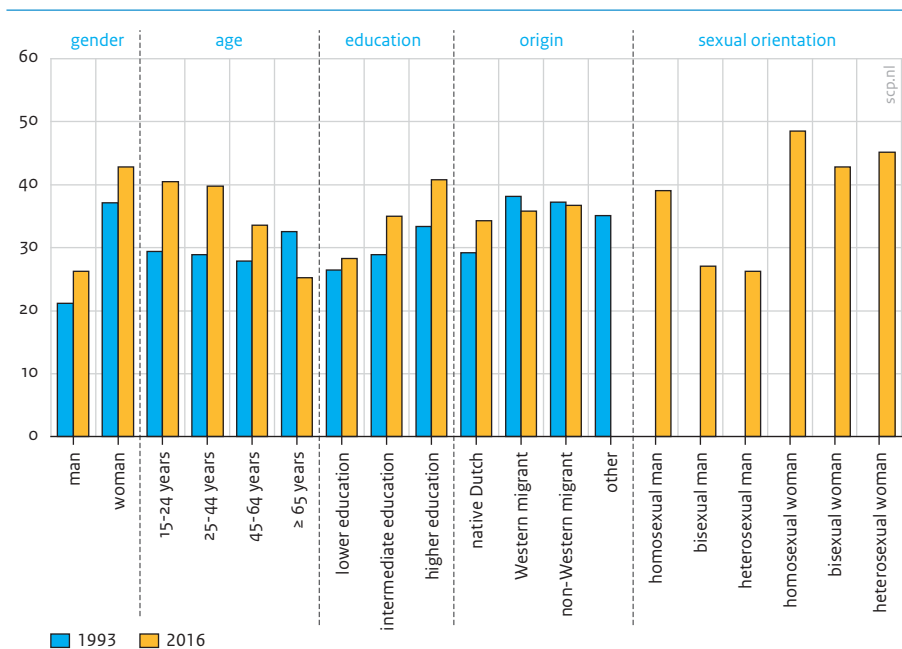
In addition, 66% believe that criminality is a real problem. This majority, too, has reduced sharply since the 1990s. A steadily shrinking majority of the Dutch population thus take a negative view of criminality in the Netherlands, but even so, the pessimism is still greater than is suggested by the trend in criminality over the last ten years.

Feelings of unsafety most common among older persons in the past, now most common among the young

Feelings of unsafety occur much more often in some population groups than others. Women top the list here: in 2016, 43% said they occasionally feel unsafe, compared with 26% of men (figure 10.16). It makes no (statistically significant) difference whether the women are homosexual, bisexual or heterosexual. Homosexual men, however, feel unsafe more often than heterosexual or bisexual men. Feelings of unsafety in 2016 reduce with age (more young than older people occasionally feel unsafe) and increase with rising education level. Non-Western migrants feel unsafe slightly more often than Dutch natives and Western migrants, but the difference was not statistically significant in 2016. It is largely the same population groups who most often feel unsafe in their own residential neighbourhood in 2016 (women, young people, homosexual men and non-Western migrants, not shown in figure). The only difference occurs for education level; while people with high education most often feel unsafe in general, they least often feel unsafe in their own neighbourhood.

Figure 10.16
Relatively favourable trend in feelings of unsafety among older people

Share who 'occasionally' feel unsafe in general, by background characteristics, persons aged 15 years and older, 1993-2016 (in percentages)



Source: BZK/Justitie (PMB'93); CBS (VM'16)

More than twenty years ago, the differences between the sexes and the different education levels were comparable: women much more often felt unsafe than men, and people with high education more often than people with low education. As in later years, Dutch natives least often felt unsafe. The only major difference is found among older people; in 2016 this group least often feel unsafe compared with their younger fellow citizens, whereas in 1993 they were the group who most often felt unsafe.⁹ In other words, older people have felt safer as the years have passed. This may be due to the specific safety and neighbourhood policy for older people as a vulnerable group, but also to the fact that the over-65s are an increasingly vital group who perhaps no longer feel as vulnerable as older people in the past.

10.9 Concluding discussion: a future-proof constitutional state

The crime rate in the Netherlands has reduced, not only according to the police, but also according to members of the public. There was no sign of a reduction in the 1990s; it began just after the turn of the century and continued, despite the economic crisis and the upward impulse that might be expected from it. The reduction affects all offence categories: violent crime, property crime and vandalism. Only reported violent crime has not declined in the last five years, though fewer offences were recorded by the police. However, this result is no reason for the ministry, judiciary and police to rest on their laurels. They have a sense of urgency in scrutinising their relationship with a changing society. Their concerns are not so much about rising crime as about evaporating solidarity and growing polarisation between sections of society. If some groups no longer feel represented by the institutions of the Dutch **constitutional** state, the concern is that they may turn their backs on it or even actively seek to undermine it (Raad van State 2017; Raad voor de Rechtspraak 2017; VenJ 2017). The justice ministry is wondering out loud whether it can mobilise its institutions so that it is able to engage with society in a responsive and helpful way as opposed to a stiff and unbending stance, with the aim of creating a future-proof **constitutional** state.

For the time being, both the police and the courts can count on substantial support among the population, who trust these institutions more than others. Moreover, trust in the courts and the police has risen, as has satisfaction with the police. There are however considerable differences between population groups; particularly striking is that people with high education and young people have the most trust and are the most satisfied. Differences between origin groups are less clear-cut. The Dutch public also appear to support the institutions in principle, but by no means always to agree with their actions and decisions in practice (see also Van Noije 2017; Van Noije & Putters 2017). In 2016, a minority of around 30% were satisfied or very satisfied with the functioning of the police (though this has increased) and a majority of some 70% felt that the courts impose overly lenient sentences (though this has decreased). Day-to-day practice and the relationship

with specific groups thus demands attention, but the general trends do not give cause for pessimism.

The same applies for subjective safety. While the number of offences, the share of suspects and the share of victims are falling, so is the number of people who believe that crime in the Netherlands is rising or who regard it as a major problem in Dutch society, from no less than 90% in the first half of the 1990s to around 60% and 65%, respectively, today. To some extent, therefore, the actual trend appears to be working through into the perception of it, though it is still the case that a majority take a sombre view. Feelings of unsafety have also been reducing steadily since the turn of the century. In particular, the perceived safety of older people appears to have improved more than average: whereas in the 1990s people aged over 65 were the group who most often felt unsafe of all age groups, in recent years they are the group who least often have felt unsafe. This may be due to the fact that the present older generation feels more vital and independent on average.

Yet there is a great deal of uncertainty about the future trend in crime, particularly because we do not precisely know its causes. Why was it still rising in the 1990s, and why the sudden change thereafter? While it is true that, shortly after the turn of the century, starting with the first government under prime minister Jan-Peter Balkenende, the government began focusing heavily on law enforcement in response to the complaint that the authorities had for too long closed their eyes to the problems on the streets, the contribution made by national policy has to be put into context, because crime is falling throughout virtually the whole Western world. Measures that have also been taken in other countries, such as more sophisticated technical security for homes and cars, or youth and family policy to prevent school dropout, then become more plausible explanations. This also applies for global socio-economic and demographic factors, of which frequently cited though not uncontroversial examples are the 'dying out' of the generation of heroin addicts (Vollaard et al. 2009), the legalisation of abortion and the reduction in disadvantaged single-parent families (Eide et al. 2006; Joyce 2009). Based on other explanations in the literature, we would actually have expected to see an increase in (property) crime during the recent economic crisis, with the high unemployment it created, but no such increase was observed (Eide et al. 2006; Hooghe et al. 2011; Vollaard et al. 2009).

A substantial part of the explanation probably lies in the younger generation, which is where the biggest relative reduction has occurred. Are they perhaps devoting themselves more to study, spending more time gaming and leaving less time over to cause trouble, or are they using their digital skills increasingly to commit cyber offences, which relatively often remain under the radar? In section 10.4 we discussed why there is only a limited one-to-one relocation from offline to online criminality. Yet the opportunity to commit

cybercrime is increasing and keeping up with this demands continual investment in the expertise and capacity of the police.

Something similar also applies for organised and white-collar crime. An energetic approach to lack of safety on the street does nothing to prevent people committing fraud, tax evasion or environmental crime. The financial and economic crisis has greatly reduced the public and political indifference to white-collar crime, and the efforts on this front have increased. The often cross-border nature of this type of crime means that, like cybercrime, it is relatively difficult to pin down and poses a challenge for the future.

Notes

- 1 Horizontal fraud is fraud involving the personal money and goods of a private individual.
- 2 The figures in this section can be found on the websites of Statistics Netherlands (CBS) (www.statline.nl) and the Research and Documentation Centre (WODC) (www.wodc.nl) (see also Kalidien 2016).
- 3 As with all recorded incidents, the classification of discrimination grounds depends on the personal judgement of the victim and the police officer who writes up the incident.
- 4 The police records distinguish between criminal offences such as abuse or threats with a discriminatory aspect (often motive) and primary discrimination, such as group insults, incitement to hatred or discrimination in the performance of an office, profession or business, such as a selective door policy at a discotheque.
- 5 'Third parties' refers to clients such as patients, pupils and public transport passengers, not colleagues or managers.
- 6 The figure for 2015 is provisional.
- 7 The Central Unit has its own independent tasks and also carries out specialist tasks in support of the Regional Units. Each Regional Unit is managed by a Chief Constable. Each Regional Unit is made up of districts, which in turn are divided into Frontline Teams. The Frontline Teams consist of Constables and Senior Constables, neighbourhood police officers, detectives and one or more team chiefs, who are jointly responsible for ensuring local safety.
- 8 The operational police strength comprises police officers who are in direct contact with the public or who make a direct substantive contribution to primary policing tasks. They may be general investigative officers (Section 141 of the Dutch Criminal Code) or support staff.
- 9 A check on later editions (PMB'95 and PMB'97) shows that the frequent feelings of unsafety in 1993 among the over-65s are not due to chance: they also scored highest then. This is no longer the case in the Safety Monitors over the last ten years (i.e. not just in 2016): here, young people score the highest.

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11 Housing and the residential environment

Jeanet Kullberg & Michiel Ras

- Housing association tenants are still more often low-income households; 12% had a low income in 1990, 45% in 2015. This is in line with the goal of reserving these homes for those on the lowest incomes. However, it also appears to generate extra tensions between neighbours: more than one in ten housing association tenants say they have severe problems with their neighbours.
 - While the quality of rented homes continued to increase from 2000, satisfaction with these homes declined slightly from 2012 onwards, with 80% very satisfied, 77% satisfied. The sharp rise in rents in this period, especially for those on higher incomes, even for homes of the same quality, probably plays a role here.
 - A quarter of young people (18-34 years) were living in private rented accommodation in 2015 – twice as many as in 2009. The short time they have spent on the waiting list means they have less chance of securing social rented housing than older people, or else their incomes are too high. Their housing has also become steadily smaller since 2002.
 - Housing costs are increasingly tracking the economy, especially in the owner-occupied sector. The housing costs of tenants mainly follow the rules for rent increases. Young people, single persons and single-parent families spend a relatively high proportion of their income on housing.
 - Action by residents of ‘disadvantaged neighbourhoods’ (*krachtwijken*) for the neighbourhood increased between 2012 and 2015. People with a migration background, and in particular the second generation, make a major contribution to this.
-

11.1 25 years of housing policy

The publication of the Heerma Memorandum on Housing Policy (*Van bouwen naar wonen. Volkshuisvesting in de jaren negentig*) in 1989 (VROM 1989) ushered in a period of economic growth and reducing housing shortages. Simplification of public housing rules and cuts to housing subsidies were central planks of the Memorandum, marking the end of the post-war reconstruction period. A new term was introduced into the Dutch lexicon: *scheefwonen* (‘skewed income-to-rent ratio’), meaning tenants who were paying too little or too much rent in relation to their income. They needed to be persuaded or if necessary forced to live in accommodation that was more appropriate to their income. In the event, it was decided to favour persuasion over compulsion. This topic has once again been placed on the housing agenda in recent years, and this time efforts are made to compel young people and large families to move home through the use of temporary tenancy agreements. Supplementary rent increases are used in a bid to prevent people living ‘too cheaply’.

Dutch housing associations were made autonomous in the 1990s; while they were still required to operate within a nationally formulated framework, they had a great deal of autonomy in implementing policy, in consultation with local authorities. This change, too, has come back onto the agenda recently, after several housing associations had taken on excessive financial risks (investing in derivatives) and business risks (e.g. the losses suffered on the ss Rotterdam floating hotel). There have also been several cases of fraud. The problems even prompted a Parliamentary inquiry in 2014. The new Housing Act (1 July 2015) restricts the freedom of housing associations.

As well as ensuring good-quality, affordable housing and a good residential environment, promoting home ownership was also made a priority in Dutch housing policy, complete with targets: the aim was that within ten years home ownership should increase from 43% to 50-55% of all homes in the Netherlands. Housing associations were charged with selling off a proportion of their rented housing stock, something which until then had been a controversial issue.

Whereas in the 1990s the decentralisation of housing policy was inspired by the idea of transferring responsibilities from central to local government and housing associations, in the 2000s the central focus was on the citizen. In the Memorandum on housing in the 21st-century (*Mensen wensen wonen. Wonen in de 21e eeuw*) (VROM 2000), freedom of choice was the key word. The housing shortage had been reduced further and the emphasis shifted from quantity to quality. In response to a society made up of individualised and emancipated citizens who wanted a say in how and where they lived, a central task for housing policy for the 2000s, in addition to ensuring that people in vulnerable positions had somewhere to live, was to ensure that the housing stock better matched the wishes and needs of occupants. Attention was devoted to developing suitable housing and care models for older people and people with disabilities, improving urban housing quality and meeting people's desire to live in a green environment. There were new calls for an increase in home ownership, this time to 65% by 2010. On the other side of the coin, mortgage interest tax relief has been reduced in stages since the 2000s and stricter mortgage lending criteria have been introduced in order to protect buyers against financial risks whilst at the same time reducing government spending.

To improve what was perceived to be the very poor quality of (large) urban housing stock, until the onset of the housing market crisis (in around 2008), major efforts were undertaken made to regenerate prewar housing stock in particular. Today, living in the city is growing in popularity, with concerns now focused more on regions where the population is contracting. Although not a new aim, the signing of the Paris Climate Agreements has given sustainability of the housing stock a more prominent place on the agenda.

This chapter looks back over a period of 25 years of housing in the Netherlands: how has housing quality developed, including in terms of sustainability, quality of the residential environment and satisfaction with both? Where are we today compared with before the economic crisis? What do occupants pay for their homes, both in absolute expenditure and relative to their income and the quality on offer? What are citizens themselves doing to increase their enjoyment of their homes? The periodic Dutch housing survey (WoON) is the main data source used, as well as the many studies that are based on it.

11.2 Housing quality

The quality of the housing stock changes over the years as a result of ageing, overdue maintenance and the housing needs of new generations, but also because of new housing development, home improvements and demolition of older homes. Owner-occupied homes sometimes have a different emotional value from rented homes, not related to their objective quality; owner-occupiers are able to modify and improve them to their hearts' content. In most cases, home purchases are financed by borrowing; as the loan is repaid, the percentage of the home owned by the buyer increases – although that did not prevent buyers from taking out interest-only mortgage loans, until this was banned in 2013. Financing a home purchase places demands on the amount and certainty of the borrower's income. By contrast, rented homes relieve tenants of the need for maintenance, and tenants can give up the tenancy at any time. This flexibility has advantages for those who are not yet ready to tie themselves down to a particular location or a financial commitment. It can however be difficult to obtain a rented home, especially social rented housing, and it may then be easier to secure a private rented home. Maximum income thresholds mean that people on higher incomes, and a proportion of those on middle incomes, are not permitted to occupy social rented housing. However, high house prices mean it is not easy for them to buy a home either.

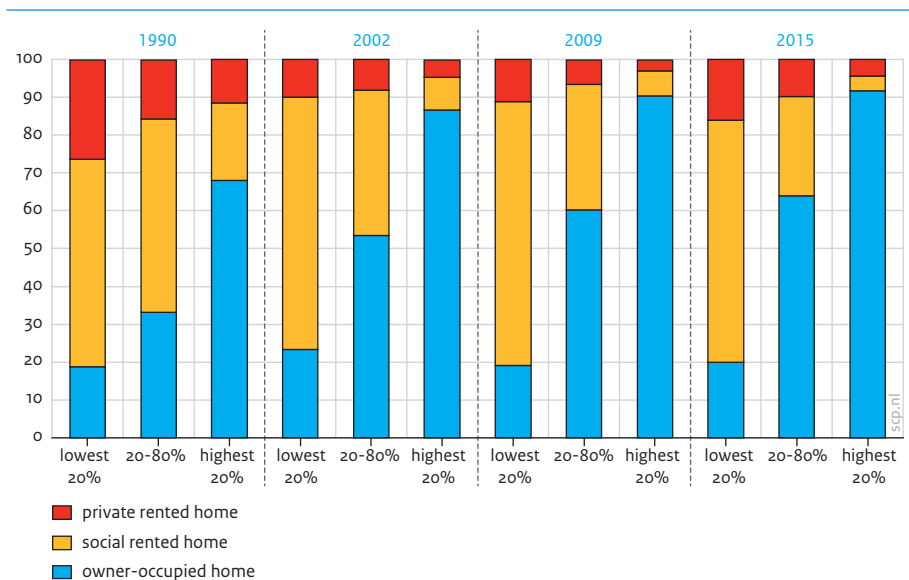
Housing association tenants: from 12% of the lowest incomes in 1990 to 45% in 2015

Figure 11.1 shows the tenure type of the various income groups for a number of years between 1990 and 2015. The share of people buying their own home increased over this period from 45% to 59% of independent households. Home ownership increased sharply among those on higher and middle incomes, especially in the 1990s; there was virtually no change in home ownership in the lowest income group. There was a shift in this latter group (and to a lesser extent among middle and higher incomes as well) from private to social rented housing in the 1990s. Urban regeneration played a role here, with private rented homes being bought up, improved or replaced and subsequently entrusted to the management of housing associations. The private rented sector in the Netherlands faces a good deal of competition from both owner-occupied homes and social rented homes, each of which enjoy financial subsidies from government which the private rented sector does not. Despite this, the private rented sector has grown in importance since 2002, and especially in the last few years. This has been promoted by government policy, partly

through the introduction of stricter income thresholds for social housing tenants. In addition, the owner-occupied market was not always accessible, especially for people with temporary employment contracts. The low interest rates have also made buy-to-let investment an attractive option for investors; this has led to an increase in the availability of private rented housing in recent years, partly fuelled by the selling of housing associations homes. Some owners also found it was possible and in some cases necessary to let rather than sell their homes, retaining the mortgage interest tax relief.

Figure 11.1
Home ownership has become commonplace over the last 25 years for those on higher incomes, and has also doubled among those on middle incomes.

Income groups by tenure type, 1990-2015 (in percentages)



Source: CBS (WBO'90, '02; various institutes (WoON'06-'15)

Viewed from the perspective of the home tenure categories, the selective exodus of tenants on high and middle incomes from housing association homes (into owner-occupied homes) and the sale of a number of housing association homes to tenants with middle incomes, meant that housing association tenants were increasingly people on lower incomes (figure 11.2). The share of housing association tenants in the lowest income quintile has almost quadrupled over the last 25 years, from 12% to over 45%. This trend developed rapidly through the 1990s, and has accelerated again in the last few years. The strict housing allocation policy in recent years will have played a role here: the income threshold for allocation to social rented housing has been lowered, which means

that those on upper middle incomes are no longer eligible. This change is in line with the policy (demanded by Brussels) of reserving social rented housing more of those on lower incomes, turning it from a public provision to a social safety net.

Over half of low-income households are in receipt of some form of social security provision, and one in ten receive some combination of youth welfare, social support and unemployment provisions (Pommer & Boelhouwer 2016: 128). It is therefore likely that the social problems in housing association homes have increased substantially. It is the task of local authorities to deal with these problems, since under the new Housing Act housing associations are no longer permitted to use their resources to address social housing problems – though caretakers can still fulfil a role in highlighting problems.

Figure 11.2

Housing association and private rented homes increasingly occupied by people on the lowest incomes

Housing association homes, private rented homes and owner-occupied homes, by income category of the occupants, 1990-2015 (in percentages)



Source: CBS (WBO'90,'02); various institutes (WoON'09, 15)

People whose incomes are too high to qualify for social rented housing should in principle be able to find alternative housing in the private rented sector, or by purchasing a home. In practice, however, it is striking that the private rented sector is also increasingly occupied by people in the lowest income group. The long waiting lists for social rented housing are a factor here (see § 11.4). The income category of people living in owner-occupied homes has changed little, though the share of middle incomes has increased following the expansion of home ownership in this large group.

Young people living in ever smaller homes

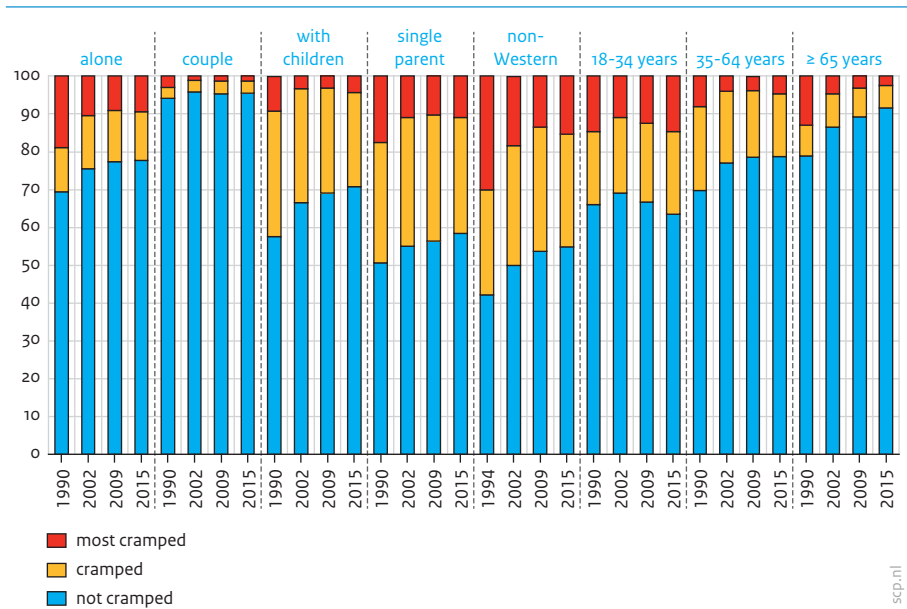
How much space do people have in their homes? We express this here using the terms ‘cramped’ and ‘most cramped’ housing (figure 11.3). Limited housing space is not always problematic, as evidenced for example by the fashion for ‘tiny houses’ or the desire to live in a central location, where limited living space is accepted as part of the package. Nonetheless, living in cramped housing is a key indicator for dissatisfaction with the dwelling. We classify ‘cramped’ as a two-room home or, if there are children, a home where each child does not have its own bedroom. For those living in the most cramped conditions, in addition to the limited number of bedrooms the living room is fairly small, measuring a maximum of 24 square metres according to the assessment of the respondent. Both these criteria deviate from the definition of overcrowding according to Eurostat (2016), which is based on two children having to share a room (for those aged 12 years or older, only if they are of the same sex). According to that definition, the Dutch have some of the most generously sized homes, with overcrowding affecting only a small percentage – though this rises much higher, to 13%, for those in the poorer section of the population. A similar contrast between the population as a whole and the poorer section of the population is also found in the Scandinavian countries which, like the Netherlands, have an egalitarian image.

According to our strictest definition of cramped housing (‘most cramped’), this is a reasonably widespread phenomenon (10-15%) among single-parent families, people with a non-Western background and young people. While cramped housing declined in these groups in the 1990s, this decline has come to a halt in recent years, and in fact there was actually an increase among young people and people of non-Western origin. The preference for urban living plays a role here, and perhaps the economic crisis as well.

Figure 11.3

Reduction in cramped housing since the 1990s, but not in recent years

Cramped housing, by background characteristics of the occupants, 1990-2015 (in percentages)



(* In 1994 respondents were asked for the first time about their cultural background).

Source: CBS (WBO'90, '02); various institutes (WoON'09, '15)

Progress in making the housing stock more sustainable falls well behind targets for 2020

Home energy consumption is related to the characteristics of the home and its occupants. Large, detached homes cost more to heat than apartments which are enclosed on all sides. The insulation of the home is also a factor. People who are at home all day use more energy than those who spend long working days outside the home. Other potentially relevant factors are how much the occupant feels the cold and how environmentally aware they are. There has been a sharp increase over the last 25 years in attention for measures to improve the energy-efficiency of homes, although even in 1990 two-thirds of Dutch homes already had double glazing in the living room, and 40% in the other rooms as well. This increased to almost 90% and 70%, respectively, in 2002. Cavity wall, roof and floor insulation were less widespread

In 2006, roughly a third of all Dutch homes had an A, B, or C energy label (with 'A' being the most energy-efficient); a third had an F or G label, while a further third had a D or E label. In 2015, more than half had a (provisional) A, B or C energy label (figure 11.4).

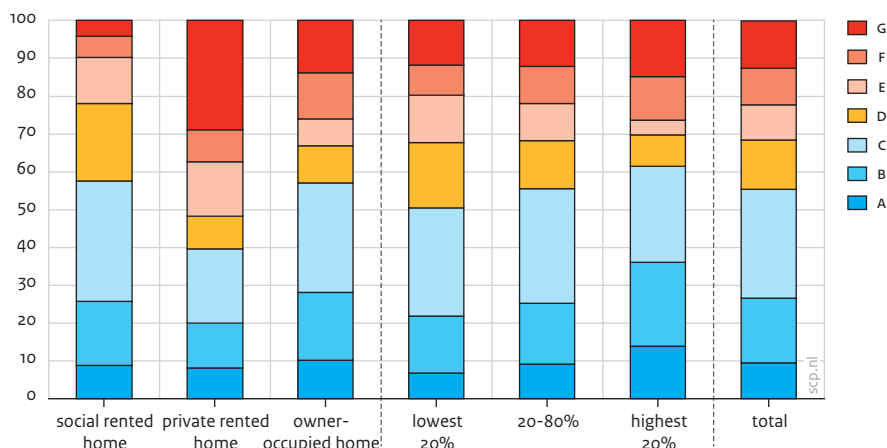
This label, which has been mandatory since 2008, shows the energy performance of the home, with higher scores being achieved through the presence of more wall, floor and roof insulation, replacement of single or double glazing with HR++ glazing and high-efficiency boilers and solar boilers being installed. Gas heaters and kitchen and bathroom water heaters pull the score down, but they are becoming scarcer.

The energy performance scores are highest in social rented and owner-occupied homes, and lowest in the private rented sector (figure 11.4). The more recently the home was built, the better the energy performance. Homes built before 1970 score particularly badly in energy performance tests, though retrofit insulation has brought some improvement. The progress to date does not yet provide confidence with regard to the agreements made in 2012 between housing associations (Aedes umbrella organisation), private landlords (Vastgoed Belang) and the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations on energy-saving in the rented housing sector (*Convenant energiebesparing huursector*). These agreements contain targets for 2020: an average B label for social rented housing and at least a C label for 80% of privately rented homes. One of the key concerns is that rent increases should not exceed the savings that tenants can achieve in their energy costs (Woonbond 2017: 21).

Figure 11.4

People on highest incomes live in homes with high or low energy labels; low and middle incomes are in between

(Provisional) energy label^a of homes, by tenure type and income of the occupants, 2015 (in percentages)



a Including provisional labels. In 2015, 38% of Dutch homes had an energy label (75% of housing association homes had a label, but only a quarter of social rented housing); homes without an energy label were issued with a provisional label based on characteristics such as year of construction of the home.

Source: CBS (WoON'15)

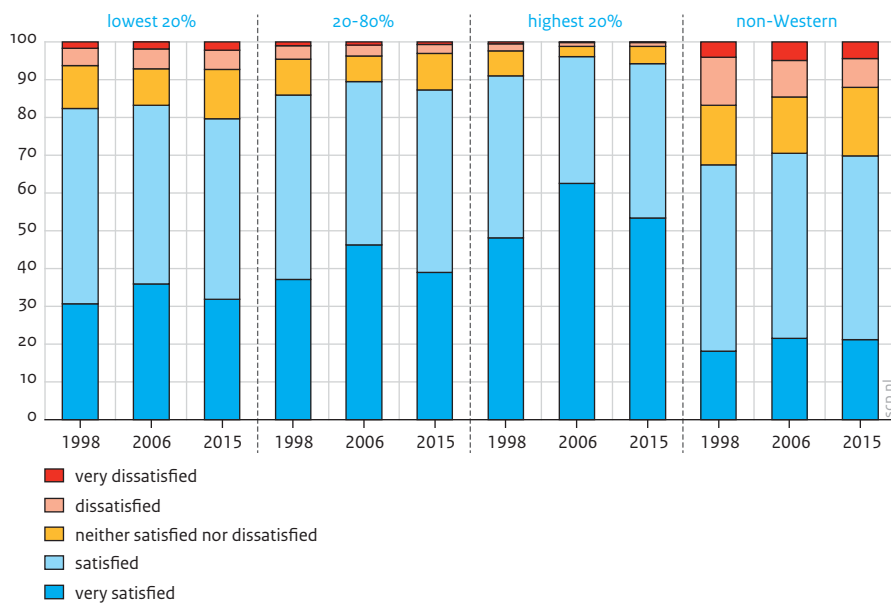
People with a high income more occupy homes with a high or low energy label (figure 11.4). People on the lowest incomes, including many housing association tenants, more often live in homes with a D or E label. The more energy-efficient the home, the less economical people are in heating their home. This is related to the fact that energy-efficient homes are often larger and more expensive and are more often occupied by families. Even after correcting for age, income and household composition, however, people still heat their homes more. Occupants of energy-efficient homes sometimes think that their heating behaviour makes little difference, and some of the insulation effect is therefore lost. By contrast, people who live in homes that are not energy-efficient are more careful with their energy consumption, especially those living in a large home (Leidelmeijer & Cozijnsen. 2007; Tichelaar & Leidelmeijer 2013). They tend to be either young people who spend a lot of time at home or older people. Older people living in large, owner-occupied homes have little difficulty in paying the higher heating costs, but this is often not the case for older people living in rented homes that are not energy-efficient (F or G label); despite being careful with their energy consumption, they pay 33% more on average for energy than comparable occupants living in a more energy-efficient home (all better energy performance labels together) (Leidelmeijer & Cozijnsen, 2007).

High satisfaction with homes; slight increase in difference between high and lowest incomes

People in the Netherlands are very satisfied with their homes, with almost 90% being satisfied or very satisfied. This satisfaction has been measured periodically in the same way since 1998. Satisfaction was highest in the years immediately before the economic crisis (2006, 2009), after which it fell slightly, possibly because people were less able to achieve their desire to move house due to a lack of new development or reduced income security (Blijie et al. 2015).

Satisfaction ratings increase over time as people progress through their housing 'career', but among young people, too, less than one in ten are genuinely dissatisfied. In addition to life course and housing career, income is an important factor in housing quality and satisfaction. The difference between the income categories increased slightly between 1998 and 2015: satisfaction among those on the highest incomes showed a net increase over that period, but this was not the case for those on the lowest incomes (figure 11.5). Satisfaction among people with a non-Western background is still much lower than average, though the share who are dissatisfied has reduced.

Figure 11.5
Satisfaction with the home still very high even after the crisis



Source: CBS (wbo'98); various institutes (WoON'06, '15)

Satisfaction with rented homes lags behind improved physical quality

Figure 11.6 shows the trend in satisfaction with the home in relation to the trend in housing quality. Satisfaction with owner-occupied homes is substantially higher than satisfaction with rented homes, although even there around 80% are satisfied or very satisfied. The quality gap between rented and owner-occupied homes is greater than the difference in satisfaction, implying that people in rented homes are more satisfied than home-owners given the quality of their homes.

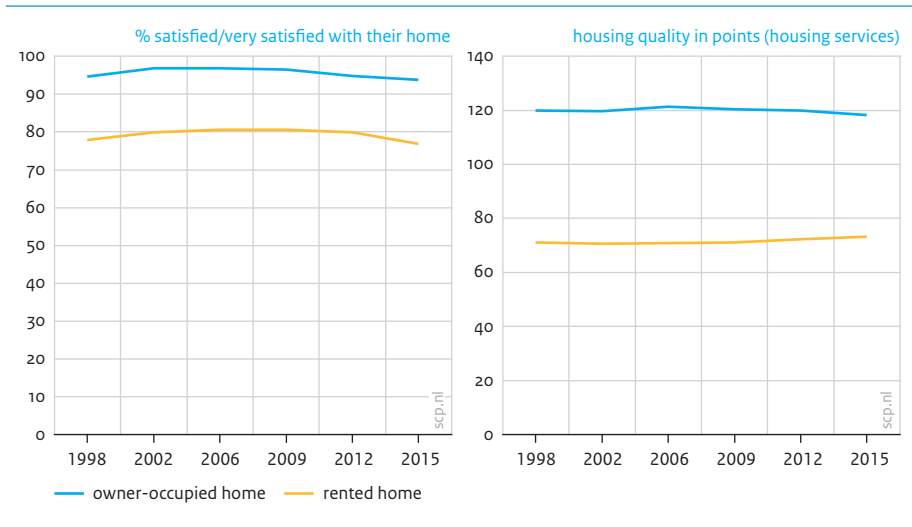
Numerous aspects were used to measure the quality of homes, such as surface area, type of home (detached, flat, etc.), year of construction and condition. The property tax value was used to estimate how much these aspects influence the quality. Naturally, property tax values can also vary due to differences in supply and demand (e.g. contracting regions versus major cities) and price trends (e.g. falling house prices during an economic recession). These are treated as price differences here and therefore do not count towards housing quality. For a more detailed analysis, see Ras et al. (2006) in the section on housing services.

The average quality of rented and owner-occupied homes in 2015 was set at 100. Owner-occupied homes predominantly lie well above this figure, rented homes below it.

Both the satisfaction with and quality of homes has proved to be fairly robust over time, though average satisfaction with rented homes has fallen slightly since 2012, whereas the quality has actually improved since 2009. The reasons for this slight but significant reduction in satisfaction probably lies in the cost of renting; there were substantial rent increases in 2013 and 2014 compared with the preceding and ensuing years, pushing up rents by as much as 6.5% for those on slightly higher incomes. On a change of tenancy, the rent may also be raised in one go, and over the years the average increase has been over 15%. This can lead to wide rent discrepancies between new and older residents on the same housing development. The rise in housing association rents was greater than in the private rented sector.

Figure 11.6
Satisfaction with rented homes lags behind the increased quality

Trend in satisfaction with and quality of the home, owner-occupied and rented homes, 1998-2015 (in percentages and housing points)



Source: CBS (WBO'98, '02); various institutes(WOON'06-'15)

11.3 Housing costs

Housing costs increasingly tracking the economy

The thriving housing market is leading to reports that first-time buyers are having difficulty getting a foot on the housing ladder, partly because of stricter mortgage lending rules (e.g. InFinance 2017; Julien 2017). It has been posited that high house prices made it difficult for certain groups to buy a home (RIGO 2003). But what is the trend in housing costs over a longer period?

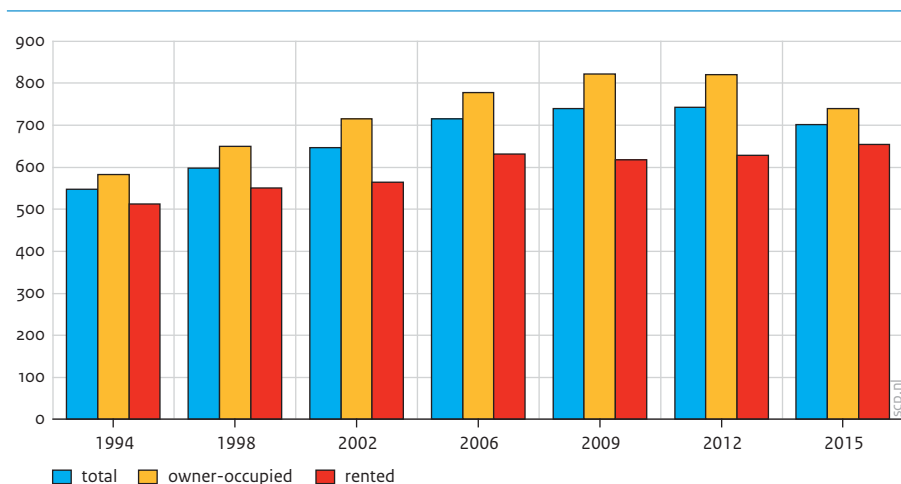
It is difficult to compare the housing costs of independent dwelling tenants and owner-occupiers, because owners also build up equity in their home. Here, we adopt the definition generally used in the Dutch Housing Needs Survey (wbo) and the Housing Survey (WoON), i.e. net housing costs excluding maintenance, depreciation and changes in value, but including mortgage repayments. Ancillary housing costs are also included: energy, water, and local authority levies and taxes.¹ Average housing costs rose from 360 euros per month in 1994 to 701 euros a month in 2015, an average increase of 3.2% per annum (figure 11.7). After correcting for the general price trend, the increase averages 1.2% per annum. This is attributable mainly to net housing expenses; ancillary expenses (such as energy) rose less quickly.

The housing costs of tenants and owner-occupiers were closer in 2015 than at the start of the period studied here, but developed differently over the period. In the owner-occupied sector, house prices were a relevant factor, but so were mortgage interest rates, which have fallen over recent years and thus lowered the housing costs of owner-occupiers. The nominal rent increases were one of the biggest factors in the rental sector. Real housing costs grew fastest in the rental sector between 2002 and 2006 (2.9% per annum), caused by rising energy costs. They also grew after 2012, when it was permitted for rents to be a few percentage points higher for those on higher incomes as part of the policy of combating the skewed income-to-rent ratio. And as stated, rents could increase even further on a change of tenancy. Living too cheaply (people on higher incomes living in low-rent homes) reduced by around 2.5 percentage points between 2012 and 2015, partly as a result of the means-tested rent increases (Blijie et al. 2016).

Figure 11.7

Total monthly housing costs fell for owner-occupiers between 2012 and 2015, but rose for tenants

Average housing costs^a of households, 1994-2015 (in euros per month, 2015 prices)



- a Housing costs include expenses for energy, water, local levies and taxes, allowances, subsidies and tax effects; they exclude maintenance, depreciation and changes in value, but include mortgage repayments.

Source: CBS (WBO'94, '98, '02); various institutes (WoON'06-'15)

Housing costs also change more rapidly than housing quality

Housing costs increased over the period studied, then. So did housing quality, but only by an average of 8% over the period 1994-2015. That is equivalent to an average of 0.4% per annum, much lower than the increase in real housing costs. The increase occurred mainly between 1994 and 2009, followed by stabilisation, probably due to the economic and housing market crisis (reduction in new development). The pattern is thus somewhat comparable with that for housing costs.

The growth in average housing quality is linked to the trend in the share of owner-occupied homes, which went up from 48% in 1994 to 59% in 2015. As we have seen, the quality of rented homes is around a third lower than that of owner-occupied homes, so that the composition of the mix has a major influence. Table 11.1 plots price against quality stated in euros at 2015 levels.

The average price/quality ratio tracks the economic performance but, as stated, with more fluctuations. When reading the table it should be borne in mind that the Dutch population is increasingly well educated, ageing (and the incomes of older persons rise more quickly over time than those of other age categories) and more often single.

People with high education pay increasingly more per unit quality. To a large extent this is because they live in more expensive (more urban) regions² (see e.g. Blijie et al. 2016). It is striking that the outcomes by age category show that the housing costs of households aged under 35 years have increased steadily, including when compared with older households; the difference relative to the over-65s widens over the period from an average of 1.30 euros to 3.20 euros per point per month. Part of the explanation lies in the general rise in housing costs, while people aged over 65 have in many cases largely paid off their mortgage or pay a relatively low rent. In this sense, starting out on the housing market has indeed become more difficult. The differences between household types are the smallest, though they too have increased over time.

Table 11.1

Given equal housing quality, young people pay by far the most per unit quality

Average price/quality ratio,^a by background characteristics 1994-2015, (in euros per unit quality, 2015 prices)

	1994	2002	2009	2012	2015
total	6.3	7.1	7.9	7.9	7.6
low education	5.9	6.7	7.2	7.2	6.8
intermediate education	6.4	7.2	7.8	7.9	7.5
high education	6.8	7.6	8.5	8.5	8.2
18-34 years	7.1	8.4	9.5	9.4	9.4
35-64 years	6.3	7.0	8.0	8.1	7.7
≥ 65 years	5.8	6.1	6.5	6.5	6.2
living alone	6.3	7.1	7.6	7.7	7.5
single-parent family	6.4	7.0	7.7	8.0	8.0
couple without children	6.5	6.9	7.6	7.6	7.1
couple with children	6.2	7.3	8.5	8.5	8.2

a Housing costs include expenses for energy, water, local levies and taxes, allowances, subsidies and tax effects; they exclude maintenance, depreciation and changes in value, but include mortgage repayments.

Source: CBS (wbo'94, '02); various institutes (WoON'09-'15)

Housing costs to income ratios reasonably stable, but high for young people, singles and single-parent families in recent years

Housing costs have risen, and so have the costs per unit quality; but has the share of household income spent on housing also increased? Table 11.2 shows how the housing costs to income ratio has developed over time. Generally speaking, housing costs to income ratios, averaged out across home rental and purchase, rose until 2009, after which

they remained reasonably constant. People with a higher education level have lower average housing costs to income ratios: their housing costs are higher, but their incomes are higher still. Where older persons had the highest housing costs to income ratios up to and including 2002, in recent years this position has been taken by households aged under 35. This appears to have arisen mainly because of their much lower incomes (Bierings et al. 2017). Their housing costs to income ratios reduced again in 2015, probably because the crisis was coming to an end.

Incomes thus play a much more important role than the share taken by housing costs in income after 2009. Young people do however appear to spend a bigger share of their income on housing than in the past, without any concomitant increase in housing quality.

Table 11.2

Low-educated people spend a third of their income on housing on average; twenty years ago it was a quarter

Average housing costs to income ratio^{a, b}, by background characteristics, 1994-2015 (in percentages)

	1994	2002	2009	2012	2015
total	22	25	28	28	27
low education	25	29	31	31	32
intermediate education	21	25	29	29	28
high education	19	21	25	25	24
18-34 years	22	26	34	33	30
35-64 years	21	24	26	26	26
≥ 65 years	26	27	28	29	28
living alone	28	31	36	36	35
single-parent family	28	33	29	29	31
couple without children	19	20	24	24	23
couple with children	19	22	23	23	22

a The housing costs to income ratio is the share of disposable household income taken by net housing costs. Housing costs include expenses for energy, water, local levies and taxes, allowances, subsidies and tax effects, and exclude maintenance, depreciation and changes in value, but include mortgage repayments.

b Incomes in 1994 have been corrected for a measurement difference (questionnaire versus register data in later years).

Source: CBS (WBO'94, '02); various institutes (WoON'09-'15)

11.4 Access to (suitable) housing

Private rented sector: quick but expensive

During the crisis years, the number of people moving to owner-occupied homes and, to a lesser extent, to social housing, fell. The number of home purchase transactions only began to rise again at the end of 2014 (NVM 2017). Progression from rented to owner-occupied homes also fell during the crisis years. Young people and people on low incomes are the main groups forced to seek recourse in the private rented sector. In 2015, a quarter of households aged up to 35 years were living in private rented homes; that is double the percentage in 2012, but also more than in 1990. The fact that people with low incomes increasingly opt for private rented homes will be related to the long waiting lists for social rented housing combined with an urgent need for somewhere to live. Many recently moved tenants considered both social and private rented housing. They (rightly) think that social rented housing is cheaper but that they will be able to move into private rented accommodation more quickly. This latter assumption is also correct: the number of people moving into private rented homes is roughly double that for social rented housing (WoOn'15). People looking for a home who allegedly have not yet found a suitable dwelling refer when asked why to the shortage of homes, excessive prices or long waiting lists. Inadequate quality of the available homes is rarely cited.

Longer waiting lists for social rented housing

Most social rented homes that become available today are presented on the Internet, and those interested can actively search for homes online. Transparent ('market-based') housing allocation systems rapidly gained a hold in the 1990s, but in the 2000s the Internet became the favoured presentation medium and collaboration between local authorities and housing associations made it possible to search on a larger geographical scale, such as across an urban region. At present, the four largest Dutch cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht) are looking at the joint presentation of available rented housing stock in order to make it easier for tenants to move between the cities (NOS 2017).

Advertising models for offering rented homes initially provided an alternative to registering home-seekers. Increasingly, however, people today are registering, and the time they have been registered is generally used as a ranking criterion. In addition to such ranking criteria, there are also criteria relating to appropriate income and household size. In the 1990s and 2000s, these criteria were lowered in order to offer more freedom of choice, but they have actually been made stricter again in recent years. The allocation formula prescribed by the EU plays a role here: offering housing association homes to people with middle incomes is regarded as a form of state aid for social landlords and has therefore been ended. The only cases regarded as urgent today are people whose home is being demolished as part of an urban regeneration programme, people living in shelters and people in life-threatening situations.

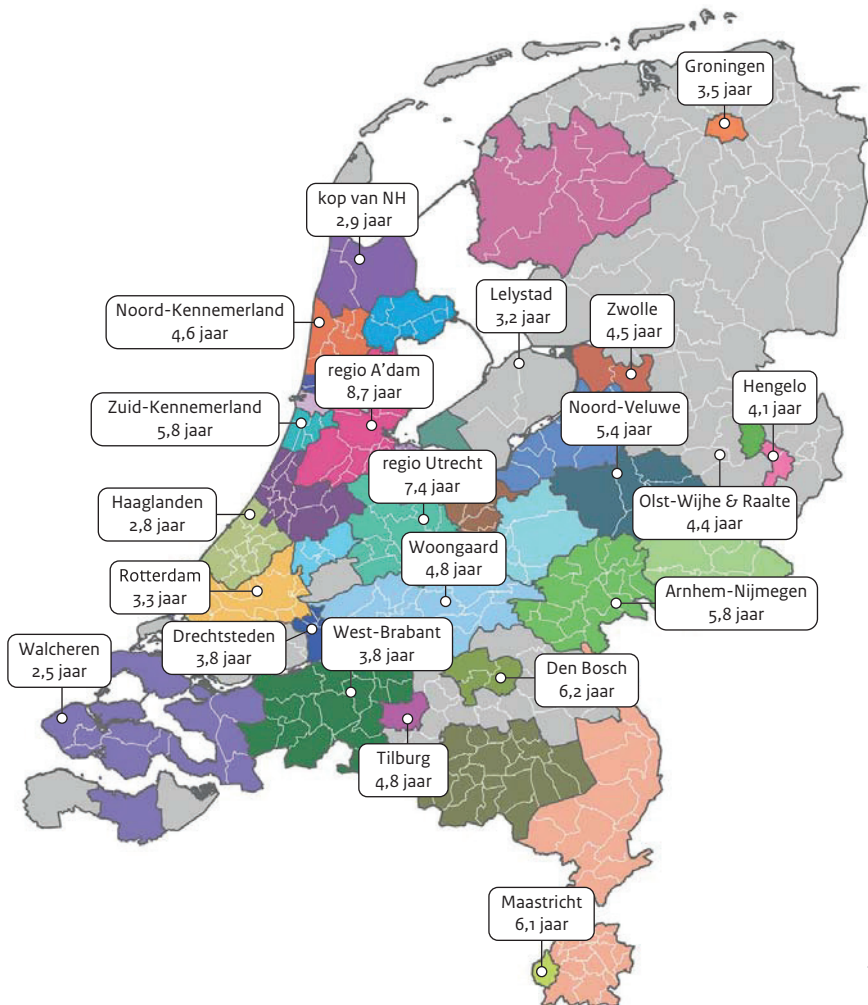
Until July 2017, asylum-seekers with residency status were also given priority, but this has been abandoned in order to create more scope for 'ordinary' home-seekers, including starters on the housing market. The share of homes allocated asylum-seekers with residency status had risen from 6% of nearly empty housing association homes in 2014 to 14% in 2015 and 32% in 2016, the (one-off) peak year for the number of refugees needing housing (Priemus 2017). The general sense that 'foreigners' were allocated a home more quickly than the native population will be one of the factors in the ending of the urgency status of these cases. The duty of local authorities to house set numbers of asylum-seekers with residency status (in proportion to the number of residents in the municipality) remains, however, which means that homes still have to be found. A temporary incentive scheme amounting to 87.5 million euros (just over 6,000 euros per asylum-seeker with residency status) was introduced for the period from February 2016 to 2021 to help local authorities and landlords house this group through new development or adaptation of existing buildings, such as empty offices (RVO 2016). In September 2017, local authorities had applied for a quarter of this budget.

Kromhout et al. (2016) compiled estimates of the waiting times for rented housing based on the computerised allocation data of housing associations. No national overview is available. For 2014, a tentative estimate based on these systems suggesting a waiting time of 8-9 years in the Amsterdam region, just over seven years in the Utrecht region, more than six years in Den Bosch and Maastricht, 5.8 years in Zuid-Kennemerland and 2.5 years in Walcheren (figure 11.8). Kromhout et al. (2016) looked at five regions of the Netherlands to investigate the number of years that home-seekers were registered before being allocated a home and the number of years that they spend actively seeking a home. The length of registration increased in each of these regions between 2010 and 2015, from 6.5 years to almost eight years in the Utrecht region and slightly less in Zuid-Kennemerland, Drechtsteden, Hengelo and Groningen. The number of years people spend actively looking for a home also increased everywhere, with the biggest rise occurring in Zuid-Kennemerland, from two years to over four years. In general, older people find a home more often than young home-seekers, simply because they have been registered for longer. Roughly a quarter of those actively seeking a housing association home say they get into great difficulties if they do not find a home within three months (Kromhout et al. 2016). This explains why many young people who have been on the waiting list for a limited time seek recourse in the private rented sector.

Figure 11.8

Waiting lists for social rented housing highest in northern Randstad region (Amsterdam/Utrecht), Den Bosch, Maastricht and Arnhem-Nijmegen

Average length of registration^a for social rented housing, 2014 (in years)



a Only for registered home-seekers (in some regions, such as Amsterdam, this thus excludes those transferring to new homes, who are ranked according to length of occupancy); excludes allocations based on urgency.

Source: Kromhout et al. (2016: 11)

Numbers of older persons and people with disabilities rising faster than the number of accessible homes

Older people and people with disabilities sometimes have special housing needs, for example good accessibility of the rooms. The combination of population ageing and the desire (or need) to continue living independently at home for as long as possible has created demand for homes that are suitable for older people. Figure 11.9 shows the steady rise in the number of internally and externally accessible homes (stairless homes) since the mid-1990s. A key factor, in addition to the building of more apartments, was the installation of lifts in existing housing complexes, taking the share of lift-accessible homes from just over 8% in 1990 to more than 15% in 2015 – though these are not homes specifically for older people.

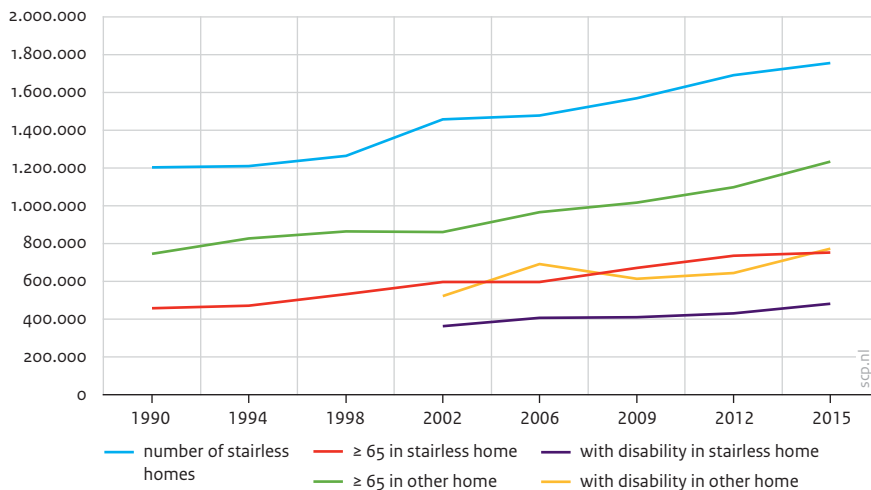
The number of older people living in stairless homes has increased, but the number of less accessible homes has risen much faster, especially since 2012. A rapidly growing number of people aged over 65 live in homes where accessibility is not ideal. That is not surprising, because people of this age are often still in excellent health, as people increasingly enjoy a healthy old age. But people with moderate or severe physical disabilities are also more likely to be living in a home that is not stairless, and this gap appears to be widening since 2012. Why do these people not move home?

The propensity to move home by older persons, including those with severe physical disabilities, reduces as satisfaction with their home increases. The housing conditions of successive cohorts of older people have improved greatly, and those who attach importance to their home and their neighbourhood are less likely to want to move. This also applies to older persons living in single-family owner-occupied homes, for example. Their incomes have also improved, so that they are more often able to purchase help. Two-thirds of people with disabilities living in non-accessible homes therefore have absolutely no desire to move. They are better educated and more affluent on average than those who do live in suitable homes. They also more often have a partner or child living at home, which means there is more often money available to buy in help and that informal help can more often be provided by fellow household members.

Figure 11.9

People with disabilities more often do not live in an accessible home; nonetheless, most of them do not wish to move

Numbers of accessible (stairless) homes, older persons and people with physical disabilities^a in stairless homes versus less accessible homes,* 1900-2015 (in absolute numbers)



- a The numbers of older persons are expressed in households, based on the oldest member of the household. The same applies for people with disabilities: the person with the moderate or severe physical disability is taken as a basis.

Source: CBS (wBO'90-'902); various institutes (WoON'06-'15)

11.5 Quality of the residential setting and resident action

Narrowing liveability gap between four largest cities (G4), 21 largest cities (G21) and rest of the Netherlands

The quality of the residential environment can be cast in general ranking terms to only a limited extent because of the diversity of residential environments, with something for everyone. In the 2000s, in particular, freedom of choice was a central plank of Dutch housing policy, including variety in residential settings. There was also growing regional diversity, with the population in some parts of the country contracting and others becoming ever more densely populated, especially the northern edge of the Randstad conurbation (the area of the Netherlands incorporating the four major cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht). In the 1990s there were concerns about the impoverishment of inner-city areas compared with the suburbs and surrounding (growth) municipalities, to which affluent city-dwellers moved. Large city policy was developed involving physical, economic and social interventions, in order to ensure

strong cities embedded in a strong region. These concerns have almost reversed since then: urban centres are increasingly attracting highly educated people, while the suburbs and peripheral municipalities are seeing an increasing influx of less affluent people from the city (PBL 2012). A contributory factor in the popularity of cities is related to the opportunities they offer for highly educated people, and especially double-earners. New residential neighbourhoods are also keeping highly educated people within the city limits during the family formation phase (Van Dam et al. 2015).

As discussed in the previous edition of *Social State of the Netherlands* (SSN), the lead of non-urban areas over urban areas in terms of social cohesion, decay and neighbourhood nuisance is reducing. In particular, the 40 ‘empowered neighbourhoods’ (*krachtwijken*) (and other disadvantaged neighbourhoods, see Permentier et al. 2013) have made up ground. According to the Safety Monitor (*Veiligheidsmonitor*) (CBS 2017), relatively little changed between 2012 and 2016 in terms of nuisance, decay and social cohesion. The small changes which did take place were mostly in a positive direction, with the exception of a slight increase in nuisance caused by neighbours. This was not a reference to young people hanging around on the streets, who were actually perceived as creating less nuisance.

Slight reduction in satisfaction with the residential setting

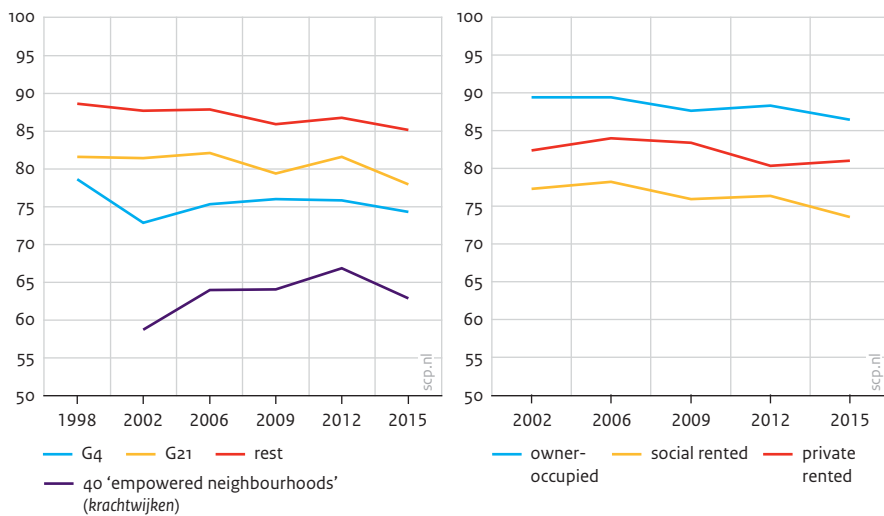
Satisfaction with the residential setting (figure 11.10) follows the pattern of convergence between most urban municipalities and the rest of the Netherlands. The series began in 1998, and satisfaction then dipped in 2002 in the four largest cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht, The Hague: the G4 municipalities), while satisfaction in the ‘empowered neighbourhoods’ was also especially low in that year. Thereafter, satisfaction in the ‘empowered neighbourhoods’ and the G4 municipalities, in particular, increased again. The slight reduction in satisfaction in 2015 is difficult to reconcile with the more positive developments in relation to decay, nuisance and social cohesion.

If we look at satisfaction with the residential environment on the part of home owners, social housing tenants and private sector tenants, the satisfaction gap remains comparable between 2002 and 2015. Satisfaction in the private rented sector has held up the best in recent years.

Figure 11.10

Fall in satisfaction with the residential setting among housing association tenants and home-owners

Satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of the residential setting, by type of residential community and housing sector, 1998-2015 (in percentages)



Source: CBS (WBO'98, '02); various institutes (WoON'06-'15)

Increase in nuisance from immediate neighbours, especially in the social rented sector

There is a Turkish saying: 'You don't buy a house, you buy neighbours'. This indicates the importance of having good neighbours for housing enjoyment. Rules set out in the Dutch Civil Code, as well as tenancy agreements, are strongly focused on preventing nuisance from neighbours. The indicators for nuisance used in both the Housing Survey and the Safety Monitor measure noise nuisance, nuisance caused by young people and by 'other neighbourhood residents', but not nuisance from immediate neighbours; this appears to be too personal an issue to project it onto the neighbourhood as a whole. Is it no longer a matter of *incompatibilité des humeurs*? Given the increasing calls on citizens to be respectful of those around them, the relationship with the neighbours, those are after all the people who literally live closest, is worth looking at separately. Both the WoON Housing Survey and the Safety Monitor ask respondents about neighbours and other neighbourhood residents.

Nuisance caused by immediate neighbours affects over 6% of all households. This figure has risen by over one percentage point since 1998; this may be connected to increasing urbanisation, because like other forms of nuisance, nuisance caused by immediate neighbours occurs most in urban municipalities. Nuisance caused by neighbours rose fastest in the larger cities outside the G4 municipalities (figure 11.11). Nuisance decreased

in the 40 ‘empowered neighbourhoods’ between 2006 and 2012, but rose again sharply thereafter. It is plausible that there was a link here with the efforts made in these neighbourhoods, and attention for social relationships within the neighbourhood declined again in 2015.

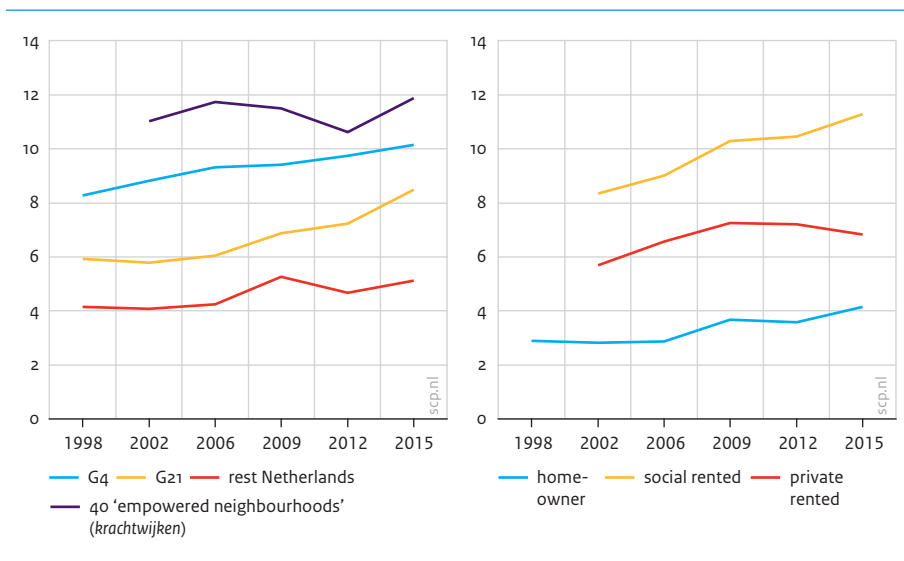
Figure 11.11 also shows (right-hand side) that nuisance from immediate neighbours is an issue particularly in the social rented sector, and has increased sharply since 2002 to affect more than one in ten tenants. The stricter allocation of homes to people with low incomes and people with social problems may have played a role here, as may the increased number of asylum-seekers with residency status. Nuisance caused by neighbours also has a strongly subjective aspect; a difficult relationship with neighbours who are psychologically remote can play a role. The perceived nuisance from neighbours has by contrast declined in the private rented sector in recent years, possibly due to a selection effect: private landlords can exclude less popular tenants, such as asylum-seekers or people living in shelters.

Home owners experience much less nuisance from neighbours, though there has been an increase since 2009. If the crisis prevented people from moving house, it was less easy for them to escape neighbours with whom they had a poor relationship.

Figure 11.11

More than one in ten tenants in the social rented sector suffer nuisance from immediate neighbours

Share of residents who say they often suffer nuisance from immediate neighbours, by housing location and tenure type, 1998-2015 (in percentages)



Providing help to neighbours: looking after the home and/or pets and helping with odd jobs the most common; willingness to help others stronger in working-class neighbourhoods

A harmonious relationship with one's immediate neighbours is a great boon. The devolution of policy in the social domain from central to local government also aims to capitalise on people's willingness to help immediate neighbours or other local residents. Below we look at what neighbours do for each other in day-to-day practice. 63% of all adults living in an independent dwelling (i.e. not in student housing, nursing or care home, etc.) report that they actively help neighbours, while a further 19% say they would be prepared to do so. Table 11.3 shows which forms of help for neighbours are more or less general. By far the most common are helping people during holidays: keeping an eye on their home while they are away and looking after pets. Helping with odd jobs is also fairly common, especially in owner-occupied houses where people help each other with maintenance tasks, such as cleaning gutters.

More than one in eight residents occasionally do the shopping for neighbours. This is more common among urban, low-educated tenants in multiple-occupancy dwellings. Providing help with computers and the Internet is very common, with little differentiation according to the background of the helper. Taking in parcel deliveries is relatively uncommon, at 1.2% in 2015; it is more common among highly educated tenants living in the city. The same applies for lending items and providing administrative help. A small number of people undertake to put away waste containers and to take out and bring back neighbours in their car. These services are mostly provided outside the city.

Table 11.3

Keeping an eye on the house and pets during absence and helping with odd jobs around the home the most common forms of neighbour help

Forms of help provided to immediate neighbours, persons aged 18 years and older living in independent dwellings, 2015 (in percentages)

keeping an eye on neighbours' home when absent	46.7	putting away waste container	0.8
odd jobs in and around the home	27.6	lending items	0.8
looking after pets	16.5	cooking and bringing food	0.7
shopping	12.4	taking out/bringing back in the car	0.4
helping with Internet/computer	10.5	cleaning the street	0.3
looking after children	1.9	providing informal care	0.2
taking in parcels	1.2	helping with administration	0.2

Source: CBS (WoON'15)

A caring gesture such as bringing food occurs mainly in urban working-class neighbourhoods, and especially among residents with a migration background. Finally, informal care is provided to immediate neighbours on a small scale, with no differentiation based on the characteristics of the helpers or the neighbourhoods in which this takes place.

Growing reticence in asking for help after age 70

Recent research by Vermeij (2016) among rural dwellers explores how people who receive help from a fellow villager came by that help. The findings show that people are less inclined to ask for help as they grow older. The old saying, ‘good neighbours keep themselves to themselves’, which Blokland-Potters (2004) used as the title for her book on social relations in the city (*Goede buren houden zich op d'r eigen*) refers to the sense that a certain distance between neighbours helps maintain a good relationship. It also helps if the relationship is reciprocal and it is not just one neighbour asking for support or services. But not everyone is able to provide a reciprocal service. From the age of 70 onwards, offering reciprocal help accordingly falls off steeply and the dependence on spontaneous offers of help via an intermediary, such as a welfare organisation, family or friends, increases (Vermeij 2016). Even in villages where social cohesion is predominantly good, there is great reticence in asking for help if the relationship cannot be reciprocal, and intermediaries are then indispensable.

Almost one in five adult residents do something for the neighbourhood

Apart from their immediate neighbours, residents can also do something voluntarily to make their neighbourhood better or more attractive. This again fits in with the discourse of the ‘participation society’, in which the government does less and leaves more to the citizen. There is a great deal of research showing that vital older persons, people with intermediate and high education and people who are affiliated to the church are overrepresented in this group. It is also interesting that many people who engage in volunteering say they fell into it because they were asked to do it (see chapter 8). Being a member of a network where such things are asked, for example a church community, thus increases the likelihood that someone will do something of this nature.

The same personal characteristics as those of volunteers are found to influence more specific activities by residents for the benefit of their neighbourhood. 19% of all people aged over 18 report that they actively do something for the neighbourhood; a further 18% would be willing to do so but do not know what to do or do not have time. Those who do engage actively for the neighbourhood most often do something to keep the neighbourhood clean and tidy (table 11.4).

Table 11.4

Resident action mostly aimed at keeping the neighbourhood clean and tidy

Forms of action to benefit the neighbourhood, persons aged 18 years and older living in independent dwellings, 2015 (in percentages)

keeping the street clean	11.6	organising a neighbourhood party	5.9
reporting vandalism	9.9	helping in community centre	1.8
action to improve neighbourhood safety	5.9	active in a neighbourhood association	1.0
looking after public green spaces	4.6		

Source: CBS (WoON'15)

Having a low income, low education level and being young reduce the chance of doing something for the neighbourhood (Van Noije 2016). So does having a migration background, but on closer inspection this is found to apply mainly to the first generation, and resident action in disadvantaged neighbourhoods is no lower. In addition, people who are not yet doing so often say they would be willing to make a contribution. It may be that these people experience obstacles, are not asked to help or sometimes provide socially desirable answers. Lower-educated people also do less for the neighbourhood on average, and generally also do not say that they would like to do more. It is possible that they feel less need to give socially desirable answers. It is also conceivable that activities such as cleaning and looking after green spaces overlap more with the work that they do for a living or in exchange for social security benefit, for example.

In neighbourhoods with low socio-economic status, volunteering for the neighbourhood is lower in absolute terms, but not to the extent that might be expected on the basis of the social differences. This is because there is more often a reason for wanting to do something in these neighbourhoods, especially with a view to keeping the neighbourhood neat and tidy and maintaining social cohesion. The fact that residents in these neighbourhoods are sometimes invited to take part in actions such as a neighbourhood activity or organising a neighbourhood party may also play a role here. By contrast, if the problems become too great, and especially if safety is an issue, residents will step back (Leidelmeijer 2012, Van Noije 2016).

Resident action increased in the 40 'empowered neighbourhoods' between 2012 and 2015, especially by people with a lower education level (Van Noije 2016). Improved safety in these neighbourhoods may have played a role here, but the many interventions may also have led to an increase in networking, and thus to mobilisation of residents; because here, too, it helps if people are asked.

11.6 Concluding discussion

The emphasis in Dutch housing policy in the 2000s was placed heavily on increasing freedom of choice for housing consumers. This has no longer been the top priority in recent years, and the freedom of choice has been curtailed somewhat, as illustrated for example by the phased changes to the rules on mortgage interest tax relief and stricter financing criteria for buying a home (lower loan-to-value ratio, abolition of interest-only mortgages). In the social rented sector, more conditions have been attached when allocating homes to the applicant's income and family size in the case of larger homes. The skewed income-to-rent ratio, which was a key topic in the 1990s, is back on the agenda. Bigger rent increases are now permitted for people on higher incomes in a bid to prevent them living too cheaply in relation to their income, and this is proving successful. Satisfaction with the home was high on average through the 1990s, after years of strong economic growth, new development and neighbourhood renewal and regeneration. It is only with the recent economic crisis that satisfaction with the home has decreased somewhat, and it is still not back at its pre-crisis level.

The government has set targets for making the housing stock more sustainable by 2050, and this will demand major investments. More than half the homes in the Netherlands have a (provisional or permanent) A, B or C label, but efforts will need to be stepped up in order to achieve the government targets. The Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL) has calculated that the social rented sector offers the best chance of achieving these goals, thanks to adequate reserves (Schilder et al. 2016). With a view to securing the cooperation of tenants, it has been agreed that they must be able to 'earn back' any rent increases through energy savings. Home owners are much less certain of earning back their investments; for many older people that will not be the case.

There are signs that housing quality is no longer the most important issue for citizens, but rather the accessibility and affordability of the home. Statements by home-seekers appear to reflect this, as does the fact that satisfaction and housing quality run only partly in parallel and that the price/quality ratio also appears to be a factor.

While the scarcity of homes still varies across different regions, and urban areas increasingly stand out compared with contracting regions in this regard, satisfaction with the residential setting is converging: the perceived benefit of rural municipalities, where people can enjoy a quiet life with lots of space, over urban municipalities, with more nuisance and decay and less social cohesion, is declining. Disadvantaged neighbourhoods, in particular, are catching up to less disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and resident activity for the benefit of the neighbourhood also increased in these areas between 2012 and 2015. Residents with a migration background, and especially members of the second generation, are also doing their bit here.

In addition to the geographical contrasts, the contrasts between those on higher and lower incomes and between young and older people on the housing market also appear

to be widening. Entirely in line with the policy aims, the social rented sector has increasingly become the domain of people with a low income, and this group includes many people with social problems. Housing associations are dependent in offering help or support on community teams, since new Housing Act (2015) has prevented them from appointing community social workers. Housing associations are however responsible for ensuring that their tenants are able to enjoy living in a good-quality environment, something that is increasingly being undermined by the nuisance experienced from immediate neighbours.

Another contrast is that between people who have already acquired a position on the housing market and those who are just starting out. Young people (aged up to 35) pay considerably more for a home than older people, and this contrast has increased sharply over the last twenty years. It is connected to the stricter financing criteria for people seeking to buy a home, (abrupt) rent increases and the flight of young people to the private rented sector.

Notes

- 1 For 1994 we have estimated the ancillary housing costs because they were not in the database. The incomes are known for less than 75% of households in 1991, and incomes and housing costs have therefore not been analysed for that year.
- 2 As stated, the popularity of a region is not used as a criterion for quality. Only location differences within a region are counted, such as the distance to the urban centre. For example: identical homes in Amsterdam and Emmen are assigned the same quality.

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12 Quality of life: life situation and happiness

Jeroen Boelhouwer

- The recent economic growth is not yet translating into better quality of life.
 - The objective life situation in the Netherlands has improved over the last 25 years (by almost 7%); happiness and satisfaction with life have remained roughly unchanged (with a score of 8- out of 10). However, people with a poor life situation became slightly less satisfied with their lives over the period (with a score falling from 6.8 in 2004 to 6.6 in 2017).
 - Generally speaking, differences in life situation between different groups in society narrowed between 1990 and 2017. Vulnerable groups such as older persons, single-person households and people on low incomes saw a particular improvement, as did people living in very highly urbanised areas (+15%). However, the differences by education level and health have increased over the last 25 years (by 45% and 38%, respectively).
 - After narrowing between 2008 and 2015, the differences between healthy and unhealthy people, people with high and low education, workers and non-workers and people with high and low incomes have widened in the last two years.
 - The feeling of having control over one's life is an important determinant of quality of life (just as possessing basic computer skills is for objective quality of life). Modern skills such as these play an important role in today's society, and mean that the importance of education and age is diminishing slightly.
 - There is a group of deprived people with a low quality of life who see no chance of improving their lives and have almost no possibility of doing so themselves. The size of this group is limited (around 5% of the population) but stable over time.
 - The ecological footprint of Dutch society has increased over the last 25 years: if everyone had the same consumption desires as the Dutch, we would need more Earths today than in 1990 (up from just under 3 Earths to almost 3.5). In the last few years, partly thanks to the economic crisis, things have been moving tentatively in the right direction.
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12.1 Increased attention for quality of life

Attention for quality of life has increased sharply over the last 25 years, and there is wide interest today in how a society and its citizens are faring, not just in relation to income. The previous chapters of this report have described each of the most important domains of life individually. In this chapter we use the main key indicators to describe trends in quality of life based on the SCP Life Situation Index (see Box 12.1). The Index has been in existence since 1974, enabling us to describe trends over a longer period. At the time, there was an extensive debate in the OECD about what the best indicators for studying quality of life were (OECD 1973, 1976). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was launched in 1990, with the annual Human Development Report containing

the summarising Human Development Index. Partly due to a lack of political interest, several countries did little with social indicators for many years. Today, there are many initiatives for developing indicators, dashboards and indices, and this development appears to be still ongoing. An important catalyst, especially for political attention for this theme, was the 2009 report by the economists Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi (Stiglitz et al. 2009). Since that time, many European parliaments and governments have launched new social monitoring systems or attempted to incorporate existing data in policy. The EU statistical office Eurostat has also begun initiatives to make data comparable across Europe (Eurostat 2017).

In the Netherlands, last year the Dutch Parliament adopted a report on mapping welfare and well-being in the Netherlands (*Welvaart in kaart*) produced by the Temporary Committee for a Broad Definition of Welfare (TCBW). The report calls for an approach that goes beyond gross domestic product (GDP) and for the development of a Broad Welfare Monitor (TCBW 2016). The Dutch government research agencies (Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL), Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP) and Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis (CPB) will carry out exploratory studies for this purpose (PBL/SCP/CPB 2017).

The attention for quality of life has not only increased at national level, but also at local level. For several years there have been local initiatives based around well-being and happiness, including in municipal policy (Van Campen et al. 2012). This first happened in the context of the Social Support Act 2007 (Wmo), and later when responsibility for social care was largely devolved to local authorities under the Wmo 2015, the Participation Act and the Youth Act; local authorities and care institutions developed programmes aimed at increasing people's welfare and well-being. Similar developments are also well under way in education and on the labour market.

12.2 Quality of life is multidimensional, objective and subjective

The description of quality of life used in this chapter follows the conceptual framework set out in chapter 1, in which a differentiation is made between objective life situation (what do people have and do?) and subjective opinions on that life situation (how do people feel about it?). A distinction is also made between the life situation ultimately achieved and the resources to which people have access. Resources are the possibilities on which people can draw to improve their quality of life: income, education, paid employment and health. Whereas earlier chapters discussed individual domains, in this chapter we take an overarching view of quality of life and focus on the relationships between the individual components.

The approach taken to quality of life in this chapter incorporates a number of elements which have remained unchanged since 1990. The basic idea is the quality of life is a multidimensional concept which relates both to people's factual (objective) situation and to the way in which they (subjectively) experience and assess that situation. The different

dimensions are summarised in a single compounding indicator, the SCP Life Situation Index (see Box 12.1). The content of the Life Situation Index has not remained precisely the same since 1990, however, partly because indicators become outdated (in the 1970s, for example, owning a television was part of the measurement of living standards, whereas today it is a personal computer, and even that is possibly due for replacement), or because some areas increase in importance in the public debate and therefore acquire a stronger focus (as with sport, for example).

Box 12.1 The SCP Life Situation Index

SCP has used an index since 1974 – the SCP Life Situation Index – as a summarising measure of the welfare and well-being of the Dutch population. The Index contains data on eight key social domains: health (degree of impairment due to a disability or chronic disease); housing situation (including home size and type); social and public participation (volunteering, loneliness); participation in sport; living standards (ownership of consumer durables); mobility (car and public transport); sociocultural leisure activities (including cultural participation and hobbies); and holiday behaviour (see Boelhouwer 2010 for an extensive description of the Index). The possibilities that people have (or acquire) to improve their situation are not counted as part of their life situation itself, but as resources. The way in which people perceive their own situation is also not included as part of their life situation, but is studied separately. The conceptual model is presented in more detail in chapter 1.

The Life Situation Index is set at 100 in 1997, with a standard deviation of 15; changes can be interpreted as percentage increases or decreases. By and large, changes in life situation are small and take place gradually. This is inherent in the domains included in the Index; aspects such as housing and health generally do not change much or rapidly. Small changes are therefore often relevant anyway. The most recent data were collected in the period September 2016 – May 2017.

This chapter has for several years also devoted attention to sustainability, based on the question of how sustainable our present quality of life is in the longer term. The description of life situation is about the here and now, and about developments in the past. Sustainability is about quality of life in the future. While it is true that climate and the environment have received political attention over the last 25 years, it is debatable how much progress has been made. An excerpt from the Speech from the Throne delivered by the Queen of the Netherlands in 1990 may illustrate this:

Environmental policy and economic growth are both important and can be mutually supportive. The specific geographical location of the Netherlands and the structure of our economy make it necessary to pursue a radical environmental policy.

The message in the Speech from the Throne delivered by the King of the Netherlands in 2016 was not essentially different:

The consequences of climate change demand major investments and innovations in sustainable energy sources, such as wind, water and sunlight. [...] This development is not only good for the environment, but will also deliver jobs and opportunities for Dutch industry.

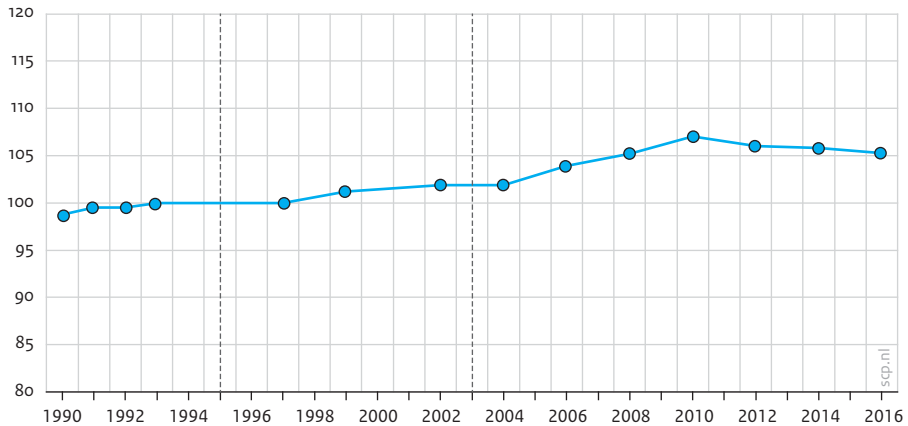
At the end of this chapter we will look at quality of life in relation to sustainable development.

12.3 The life situation of the Dutch improved between 1990 and 2016

SCP has used the Life Situation Index since 1974 to track developments in objective quality of life. Since this edition of *Social State of the Netherlands (SSN)* covers a period of 25 years, we look here at developments since 1990.¹ The life situation of the Dutch in 2017 is better than in 1990 (figure 12.1). Until 2010 the improvement was continuous, but the trend reversed in 2010 in the wake of the economic crisis. The life situation deteriorated between 2010 and 2012, but the conclusion in the last edition of the SSN was that the decline stabilised in 2014. ‘The Netherlands is bouncing back’ was the message then. Looking back, it transpires that the Netherlands has not yet really bounced back, but also that the deterioration is not continuing (the slight fall that can be seen in the figure is not statistically significant). The Netherlands has thus not yet found the upward path: although the economic recession has now given way to economic growth (see chapter 2), this is not yet reflected in an improved life situation. Earlier chapters in this edition of SSN describe a stabilisation or even slight decline in a number of social domains in recent years. Those are domains which are important for people’s life situation: more chronic diseases (see also chapter 7), stabilisation in holidays (chapter 9) and stabilisation in cultural participation (also chapter 9).² Positive trends in some components of life situation in recent years are limited to housing and ownership of consumer goods (see chapter 11 for improvements in housing quality and chapter 5 for the improvement in incomes).

Figure 12.1

Life situation of the Dutch better in 2017 than in 1990

Trend in life situation, persons aged 18 years and older, 1990-2016 (in index figures, 1997 = 100)^a

a The two vertical lines represent trend-breaks in the data. The first was caused by a change in the sample design, the second by a switch from a verbal to a written questionnaire. See also note 1.

Source: CBS (DLOGO-93; POLS-SLI97-02); SCP (CVO4-06); SCP/CBS (CVO8-16/17)

The life situation of older people, women and single persons has improved more than average over the last 25 years

The fact that the life situation of the Dutch is improving on the whole does not necessarily imply that this is the case for all groups in society. However, this does turn out to be the case for the period 1990-2017: the life situation of all groups normally included in our study improved over the period. There are also differences, with the improvement being greater in some groups than others (table 12.1). Older people and single-person households, for example, saw a bigger improvement in their situation than couples with children and people of middle age (35-64 years). Also notable is the fact that women have made up their disadvantage relative to men over the last 25 years. This fits in well with the development over the last quarter of a century in which women have generally acquired more resources, as illustrated by their increased education level (see chapter 4) and higher labour participation rate (chapter 6).

Table 12.1

The life situation of all groups improved between 1990 and 2017, and especially for the over-65s and single-person households

Life situation by background characteristics, Dutch population, 1990-2016 (in index figures, 1993 and 1997 = 100)

	1990	1999	2008	2010/ 11	2014/ 15	2016/ 17	change 1990-2017
all	99	101	105	107	106	105	+6
18-34 years	101	105	108	109	107	107	+6
35-64 years	102	104	108	109	107	107	+5
≥ 65 years	86	85	92	99	100	99	+13
single-person household	85	90	96	101	99	98	+13
single-parent family	91	96	102	103	100	99	+8
couple without children	96	101	105	106	106	107	+9
couple with children	105	107	110	111	109	110	+5
men	101	103	105	107	106	106	+5
women	97	100	105	107	105	105	+8
native Dutch	-	102	-	108	107	106	+4 since 1999
Western migrants	-	100	-	106	105	107	+7 since 1999
non-Western migrants	-	93	-	102	100	99	+6 since 1999

- Not available.

Source: CBS (DLOGO-93; POLS-SLI97-02); SCP (CVO4-06); SCP/CBS (CVO8-16/17)

Differences in life situation between low and high incomes and low and high education levels widen again between 2014 and 2017

Life situation depends not only on individual background characteristics, but also on the resources to which people have access. In the conceptual framework, we assume that there is a positive association between possessing resources and life situation, and we do indeed find that people with a high income or higher education level have a better life situation than people with a low income or lower education level (table 12.2). This has not changed over the years. Also unchanged is the fact that differences based on income are greater than those based on other resources.

The differences are often considerable, for example between healthy and unhealthy people or between workers and non-workers, but they are even greater between people with low and high education and between lower and higher income groups. Between 1990 and 2017 we see a trend in which the differences are greater around the turn of the

century than in the period before and after. It is striking that the differences have widened again in the last two years, after narrowing or stabilising for several years.

Table 12.2

Differences in life situation based on resources increased again between 2014/15 and 2017

Life situation by resources, Dutch population, 1990-2016/17 (in index figures, 1997 = 100, standard deviation = 15)

	1990	1999	2008	2010/ 11	2014/ 15	2016/ 17	change 1990-2017
all	99	101	105	107	106	105	+6
lowest 20% ^a	85 ^a	87	94	99	99	95*	+10
20% – 80% ^a	99 ^a	102	106	107	106	106	+7
highest 20% ^a	107 ^a	112	112	114	114	114	+7
<i>difference highest and lowest incomes</i>	22	25	18	15	15	19	-3
low education	94	94	96	99	98	96**	+2
intermediate education	102	106	106	108	106	106	+4
high education	105	109	113	113	111	112	+7
<i>difference high and low education</i>	11	15	17	14	13	16	+5
non-workers	93	92	97	101	100	99	+6
workers	103	106	109	110	109	110	+7
<i>difference workers and non-workers</i>	10	14	12	9	9	11	+1
has a disability or chronic disease ^b	94	89	99	101	100	99	+5
no disability or chronic disease ^b	102	102	109	110	109	110	+8
<i>difference by health</i>	8	13	10	9	9	11	+3

Significant difference 2014-2016, * $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$

a Disposable household income. In 1990: lowest 25%; 25-75%; highest 25%.

b In 1990: number of fourteen diseases presented. In 1999: having/not having one of nine specified serious diseases and conditions.

Source: CBS (DLO90-93; POLS-SLI97-02); SCP (CVO4-06); SCP/CBS (CVO8-16/17)

Bigger improvement in life situation in urban areas than rural areas

As well as differences between social groups, there are also geographical differences: the life situation of people living in less urbanised areas is slightly better than that of people living in urban areas (table 12.3). However, the differences in 2017 are smaller than in 1993 (the first year for which this information is available). Life situation in very highly urbanised areas, in particular, has improved more than average. This improvement occurred particularly in the period before the turn of the century, when the difference compared with less urbanised areas narrowed considerably. After 2000, the differences remained more or less stable. If we look at the different domains which make up life situation, the improved life situation in highly urbanised areas is found to stem mostly from an improved housing situation and a catching-up in terms of ownership of consumer durables.

An explanation for the shrinking differences can be found in migration patterns, and especially a (selective) movement to the city. Very highly urbanised areas have seen a bigger than average improvement in education level in recent years, for example (Kullberg et al. 2015; Vermeij 2015).

Table 12.3

Marked improvement in life situation in urban areas

Life situation by degree of urbanisation of place of residence, 1992-2017 (in index figures, 1997 = 100)

	1992*	1999	2008	2010/ 11	2014/ 15	2016/ 17	difference
all ^b	99	101	105	107	106	105	+6
very highly urbanised	91	96	105	106	105	104	+13
highly urbanised	99	102	105	106	106	106	+7
moderately urbanised	101	102	106	109	107	107	+6
low urbanisation	102	103	105	107	106	105	+3
non-urban	104	103	105	108	106	106	+2
<i>difference very highly urbanised and non-urban</i>	13	7	0	2	1	2	
G4	-	-	104	105	103	104	
G32 ^a	-	-	104	106	105	104	
rest of Netherlands	-	-	106	108	105	106	

- Not available.

a This includes for all years the 38 municipalities which since 2016 have constituted the 'G32' municipalities (32 largest municipalities).

Source: CBS (DLOGO-93; POLS-SLI97-02); SCP (CVO4-06); SCP/CBS (CVO8-16/17)

12.4 Modern skills, such as control over one's life, as a supplement to resources

It is not only the way in which the life situation is measured that has changed over the years; changes have also been made to the conceptual framework used to describe quality of life (see chapter 1; for more background see Boelhouwer 2010). One important change was the reassessment of the role of health, which was initially included solely as an outcome indicator (and therefore part of the life situation). From 2004 onwards, health has played a dual role, being included both in resources and in life situation. This involves two different definitions of the concept of 'health'. According to the WHO definition, (not) having disease or infirmity is a resource, and the impediments in daily functioning as a result of those diseases and infirmities form part of a person's life situation. Having a serious disease or condition is found to have an independent effect on life situation and to be more important than whether or not someone is in paid employment (table 12.4).

The most recent change, in 2010, was the inclusion of modern skills as a resource. These are the skills that people need in order to function in a modern society. This fits in with the discussion in the introductory chapter concerning a shift from 'haves' and 'have-nots' to 'cans' and 'cannots'. The idea is that it is not just the resources traditionally differentiated in the SSN that are important, but that it is key what people are able to do with those resources. In other words, people need new skills in order to make the most of the available resources. Two such skills have been included in the description of the life situation since 2010: basic computer skills (being able to search for something on the Internet, being able to send an email)³ and perceived control over one's own life.⁴ These modern skills are found to exert an independent influence on the life situation; at the same time the effect of age and education, in particular, is diminishing. The limited time series does not permit very firm conclusions about any shifts, but the data in any event show that modern skills play an important role in objective quality of life.

Table 12.4

Perceived control and digital skills are important determinants of life situation

 Influence of resources and a number of other background characteristics on life situation, 1990-2017
 (multivariate ANOVA analysis, beta coefficients)^a

	1990	1999	2002	2008	2010/ 11	2012/ 13	2014/ 15	2016/ 17
age ^b	0.15	0.26	0.25	0.27	0.16	0.14	0.11	0.10
income ^c	0.20	0.32	0.30	0.26	0.27	0.25	0.21	0.23
labour market position ^d	0.04	0.10	0.11	0.06	0.00	0.05	0.11	0.05
education ^e	0.25	0.27	0.27	0.30	0.17	0.20	0.17	0.21
household composition ^f	0.28	0.10	0.13	0.13	0.07	0.07	0.14	0.16
income source ^g	0.13	0.05	0.06	0.13	0.08	0.11	0.14	0.16
health ^h	-	-	-	0.16	0.15	0.16	0.16	0.17
perceived control ⁱ	-	-	-	-	0.17	0.20	0.19	0.17
digital skills ^j	-	-	-	-	0.21	0.23	0.19	0.18
explained variance	48%	57%	55%	53%	48%	51%	50%	57%

- Not available.

a Beta coefficients express the relative importance of the various determinants: the higher the number, the greater the importance.

b 18-24 years, 25-34 years, 35-44 years, 45-54 years, 55-64 years, 65-74 years, 75 years and older.

c Disposable household income. In deciles.

d A person works or does not work.

e In 1990: primary/extended primary education (LO)/vGLO); lower secondary (MULO); junior secondary vocational (LBO); junior general secondary (MAVO); pre-university year 3 (vwo-3); senior secondary vocational (MBO); senior general secondary (HAVO); pre-university (vwo); higher professional (HBO), university. From 1997 LBO was included as a separate category.

f Single person, couple without children, couple with children, single-parent family.

g In 1990: salary, pension/assets, state pension/widow's/orphan's pension, other social security benefit, other. From 1997: salary/profits, early retirement benefit/personal/state pension, social security benefit/disability benefit, student grant, other.

h Does or does not have a chronic condition, disease or disability.

i Scale for perceived control based on five questions. See note 4.

j Scale for basic digital skills based on five questions. See note 3.

Source: CBS (DLO90-93; POLS-SLI97-02); SCP (CVO4-06); SCP/CBS (CVO8-16/17)

Accumulated disadvantage and advantage mean differences are widening

We can see from table 12.4 that resources are slightly more important for the life situation than background characteristics, with income and education in particular being important predictors. However, the effect of a combination of income and education cannot be gauged from the table. To gain a better insight into the effects of an accumulation of disadvantage or advantage, we use a segmentation analysis.

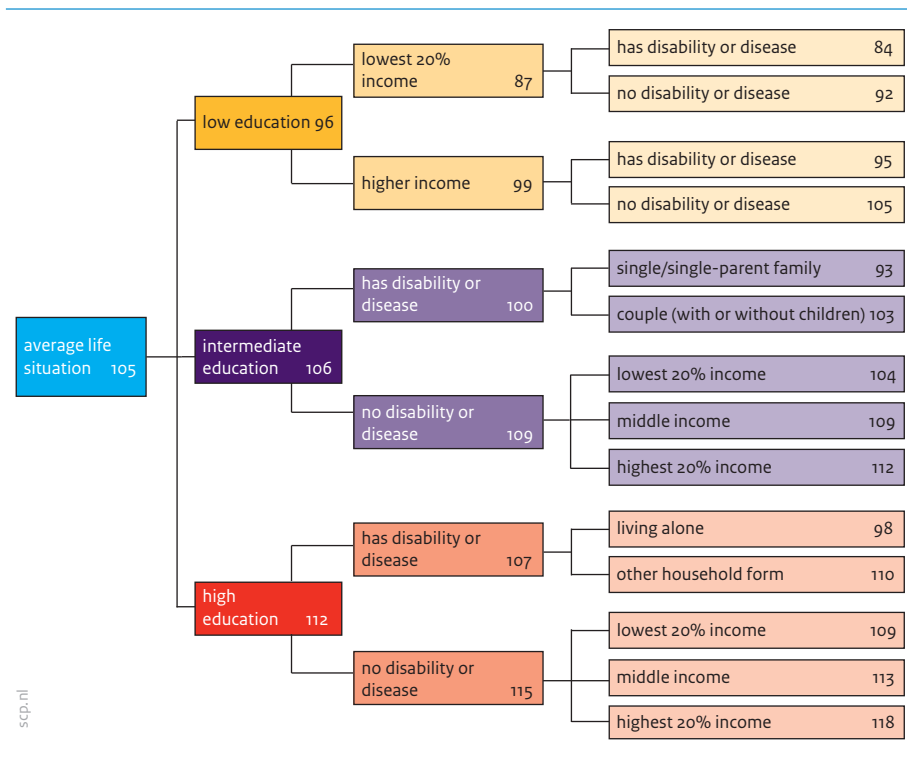
This produces a tree structure, from which it can be seen that differences increase rapidly

when there is an accumulation of disadvantage or advantage (figure 12.2). For example, the difference between having a low and high education is 16 points; however, if a low-educated person also has a low income and a serious disease or disability, and if a high-educated person has a high income and no serious disease or disability, the difference increases to no less than 34 points. That is a much bigger difference than we might expect on the basis of the individual characteristics.

Figure 12.2

Accumulation of resources has a distorting effect on life situation

Life situation by accumulation of resources and background characteristics, 2017 (exhaustive CHAID analysis, index figures, 1997 = 100).



SCP/CBS (CV/SLI'16/'17)

Social cohesion in the neighbourhood and having a social network are important factors for the life situation

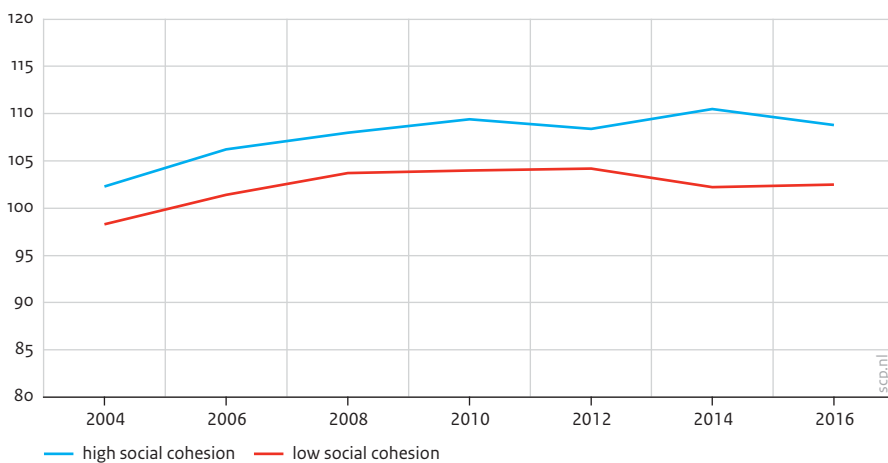
Although the life situation is in principle individually determined and influenced by individual characteristics and resources, the setting also plays a role. This may be the social network within which people operate or the physical setting in which they live.

The physical setting was discussed earlier in relation to degree of urbanisation; here we look at social networks and social cohesion in the neighbourhood. Social cohesion is about the sense of community in the neighbourhood, for example getting along well with each other.⁵

It transpires that people’s life situation is better in neighbourhoods where there is high social cohesion than where social cohesion is low (figure 12.3). Until 2012, the difference between neighbourhoods with high and low social cohesion was reasonably constant, but increased thereafter. It is useful to bear in mind here that, while there is a relationship between social cohesion and life situation, this does not tell us anything about causality; it is possible that people with a good life situation increase the social cohesion in the neighbourhood, but it is also possible that a high degree of social cohesion in the neighbourhood improves people’s life situation (e.g. because they see other people engaging in sport or voluntary work and are prompted to do so themselves).

Figure 12.3
Life situation is better in neighbourhoods with high social cohesion

Life situation by degree of social cohesion in the neighbourhood, 2017 (in index figures, 1997 = 100)



Source: SCP (cvo4-06); SCP/CBS (cvo8-16/17)

Another important aspect of the social setting is people’s social network. There are two aspects to a social network: the quantity and quality of the network. The quality of a network is measured in terms of the sense of not being alone, of being part of a group. This perspective forms part of the life situation via the measurement of loneliness. In order not to be lonely it is necessary to know people – although knowing people in itself is not enough to prevent loneliness (lack of social contacts is sometimes described as ‘social isolation’; whether contacts are experienced as meaningful is related to feelings

of loneliness; see Heessels et al. 2015). Here we look at the quantitative aspects of the social network, i.e. the frequency with which someone has contact with family, neighbours or friends. Generally speaking, people have the most contact with family, followed by friends and acquaintances, and the least contact with neighbours (see chapter 9). There is a positive relationship between life situation and frequency of contacts: the life situation of people who have regular contact is better than that of people who have sporadic contact (table 12.5). It makes little difference whether those contacts are with family, friends or neighbours.

Table 12.5

Life situation by social contacts, 1990-2017^a (in index figures, 1997 = 100)

	1990	1999	2008	2012/13	2014/15	2016/17
contact with family						
once a week or more	98	102	106	107	107	106
once every two weeks	102	102	106	106	105	106
less often	99	96	100	102	103	100*
contact with neighbours						
once a week or more	100	101	106	106	107	106
once every two weeks	100	104	107	108	107	107
less often	96	99	104	104	105	104
contact with friends and acquaintances						
once a week or more	100	103	107	108	-	107
once every two weeks	99	100	107	105	-	106
less often	93	92	100	101	-	99

- Not available.

* Significant difference compared with preceding year ($p < 0.05$).

a A trend-break occurred between 2002 and 2008, due to a switch from a verbal to a written questionnaire in 2008. The idea behind this change was that people are more likely to give honest answers in a written questionnaire.

Source: CBS (DLO90-93; POLS-SLI97-02); SCP (CVO4-06); SCP/CBS (CVO8-16/17)

12.5 Happiness and satisfaction from 1990 to 2017

As we have seen, objective quality of life has improved over the last 25 years. Does the same apply for a subjective quality of life? Are people happier today than in 1990? There are various ways of measuring whether people are happy. One is simply to ask, 'How happy are you?'; another is to ask, 'How satisfied are you with your life in general?'. The difference between the two questions is often lost in spoken language; they also

resemble each other closely, but there are subtle differences.⁶ Happiness is for example more about a (temporary) moment of joy, while life satisfaction is more an overall weighing of positive and negative events and emotions over a longer period.⁷ In international research, the question about satisfaction with life has become the standard, but the question about happiness dates back to 1990. We therefore address both questions in the rest of this section. It does need to be borne in mind that the question about happiness was no longer asked verbally from 2004 onwards, but in written form; this probably results in more reliable responses (because people are more likely to give an honest answer if an interviewer is not present), but also represents a break in the time series. If we look at the trend in both series, the happiness of the Dutch appears to be reasonably stable over time (table 12.6).

Table 12.6
Happiness of the Dutch reasonably stable; satisfaction with life slightly increased

Happiness through the years, 1990-2017^a (in percentages and average scores out of 10)^b

	1990	1999	2004	2008	2012/ 13	2014/ 15	2016/ 17
very happy	23	21	15	16	15	14	15
happy	64	68	68	68	70	68	69
neither happy nor unhappy	10	9	13	14	12	15	14
not very happy/unhappy	2	3	4	2	2	3	3
unhappy	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
satisfaction with life	-	-	7.6	7.9	7.8	7.8	7.8
share of people giving a score of 8 or higher	-	-	61	68	67	68	67

- Not available.

a A trend-break occurred between 2004 and 2008, due to a switch from a verbal to a written questionnaire in 2008. The idea behind this change was that people are more likely to give honest answers in a written questionnaire.

b Average scores are available from 2004 onwards.

Source: CBS (DLO90-93; POLS-SLI97-02); SCP (CVO4-06); SCP/CBS (CVO8-16/17)

However, if instead of happiness we look at satisfaction with life, we see that this increased between 2004 and 2017: the Dutch are slightly more satisfied with life in 2017 than in 2004, the first year in which this question was asked (see also Veenhoven 2016), though the increase is minimal (from 7.6 to 7.8). Interestingly, the economic crisis had no impact on people's feelings of happiness, however it is measured.

As we are looking back over 25 years in this edition of *ssn*, we will briefly stay with the question about happiness and examine differences between groups in society, just as we

did earlier with the objective life situation. Here again, income has a bigger impact on happiness than the other resources (table 12.7). One thing that does change is that the differences in happiness based on resources have narrowed over the last two years, whereas they have increased for life situation. In other words, different characteristics are important for happiness than for the life situation.

Table 12.7
Differences in happiness based on resources decrease between 2015 and 2017
Happiness by resources, 1990-2016/17^a (share who are happy/very happy)

	1990	1999	2008	2010/11	2014/15	2016/17
all	91	88	83	82	82	83
lowest 20% disposable income	77 ^b	76	72	73	69	72
20% – 80%	90 ^b	90	84	84	83	85
highest 20%	92 ^b	94	92	89	92	91
<i>difference highest and lowest incomes</i>	15	18	20	16	23	19
low education	85	86	77	74	75	79
intermediate education	89	91	84	83	82	82
high education	89	90	88	89	87	89
<i>difference high and low education</i>	4	4	11	15	12	10
non-workers	84	85	77	76	73	77
workers	90	92	86	86	88	88
<i>difference workers and non-workers</i>	6	7	9	10	15	11
has a disability or chronic disease ^b	83	82	72	77	71	77
no disability or chronic disease ^b	90	89	91	86	89	88
<i>difference by health</i>	7	7	19	9	18	11

Significant difference 2014-2016 * $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$.

- a A trend-break occurred between 2002 and 2008, due to a switch from a verbal to a written questionnaire in 2008. The idea behind this change was that people are more likely to give honest answers in a written questionnaire.
- b In 1990: lowest 25%; 25%-75%; highest 25%.
- c In 1990: number of fourteen conditions presented. In 1999: having/not having one of nine specified serious diseases and conditions.

Source: CBS (DLOGO-93; POLS-SLI97-02); SCP (CVO4-06); SCP/CBS (CVO8-16/17)

People's happiness is determined partly by their resources, but psychological indicators are more important, such as a sense of having control over their lives (table 12.8; see also

Winkelaar 2017).⁸ Unlike the life situation, basic digital skills are not relevant for happiness. On the other hand, perceived control over one's own life is by far the most important resource for happiness. Including control over one's own life as a resource for happiness reduces the importance of health. There is also a relationship between the two; not entirely surprisingly, people with a serious disease or a disability have less control over their lives than healthy people.⁹

Having control over one's life is found to be a more important determinant of happiness than comparable psychosocial concepts such as resilience, self-confidence, efficacy or possession of social skills.¹⁰ One thing that does play a role in happiness is optimism: if this is added to the resources, the explained variance rises to 32%.¹¹

The difference in life satisfaction between people who feel they have little control and those who feel they have a lot of control over their own lives is considerable: no fewer than two percentage points on a scale from 1 to 10 (table 12.9). This difference is greater than that for satisfaction with most of the individual components of life. The smallest difference is in satisfaction with the home; this is an area about which the Dutch are generally the most satisfied, together with their circle of friends and acquaintances (both score more than 8 out of 10). The lowest satisfaction rating is with Dutch society (though it is worth pointing out that according to the Citizens' Outlook Barometer (COB), satisfaction with politics scores even lower). Satisfaction with the various components of life has in many cases remained stable since the turn of the century, and in some cases has increased slightly.

Table 12.8
Perceived control the most important resource for happiness

Influence of resources and a number of other background characteristics on happiness,^a 1990-2017^b
(multivariate ANOVA analysis, beta coefficients)

	1990	1999	2002	2008	2010	2012	2014/ 15	2016/ 17
age ^c	0.12	0.13	0.12	0.13	0.10	0.11	0.10	0.09
income ^d	0.04	0.09	0.11	0.09	0.07	0.11	0.10	0.07
labour market position ^e	0.02	0.07	0.11	0.04	0.10	0.10	0.13	0.04
education ^f	(n.s.)	0.07	0.13	0.07	0.05	0.06	0.03	0.04
household composition ^g	0.25	0.20	0.18	0.17	0.11	0.16	0.11	0.10
income source ^h	0.10	0.12	0.09	0.13	0.09	0.10	0.08	0.08
health ⁱ	-	-	-	0.18	0.03	0.06	0.07	0.06
perceived control ^j	-	-	-	-	0.41	0.33	0.37	0.38
digital skills ^k	-	-	-	-	0.06	0.07	0.06	0.05
					(n.s.)	(n.s.)	(n.s.)	(n.s.)
explained variance	11%	13%	14%	13%	24%	26%	23%	11%

- Not available.

a Since data on happiness are available for all years while data on satisfaction with life are not, in this table we opt for happiness (in the previous editions of *SSN* we used satisfaction with life).

b A trend-break occurred between 2002 and 2008, due to a switch from a verbal to a written questionnaire in 2008. The idea behind this change was that people are more likely to give honest answers in a written questionnaire.

c 18-24 years, 25-34 years, 35-44 years, 45-54 years, 55-64 years, 65-74 years, 75 years and older.

d In deciles; in 1990 in octiles.

e Works versus does not work.

f In 1990: primary/extended primary education (LO)/VGLLO); lower secondary (MULO); junior secondary vocational (LBO); junior general secondary (MAVO); pre-university year 3 (vwo-3); senior secondary vocational (MBO); senior general secondary (HAVO); pre-university (vwo); higher professional (HBO), university. From 1997 LBO was included as a separate category.

g Single person, couple without children, couple with children, single-parent family.

h In 1990: salary, pension/assets, state pension/widow's/orphan's pension, other social security benefit, other. From 1997: salary/profits, early retirement benefit/personal/state pension, social security benefit/disability benefit, grant, other.

i Does or does not have a chronic condition, disease or disability.

j Scale for perceived control based on five questions. See note 5.

k Scale for digital skills based on five questions. See note 6.

Source: CBS (DLOGO-93; POLS-SLI97-02); SCP (CVO4-06); SCP/CBS (CVO8-16/17)

Table 12.9
The Dutch are the most satisfied with their homes and circle of friends and acquaintances

Opinions on a number of components of the life situation and on Dutch society, 1999- 2016/17 (in scores out of 10)

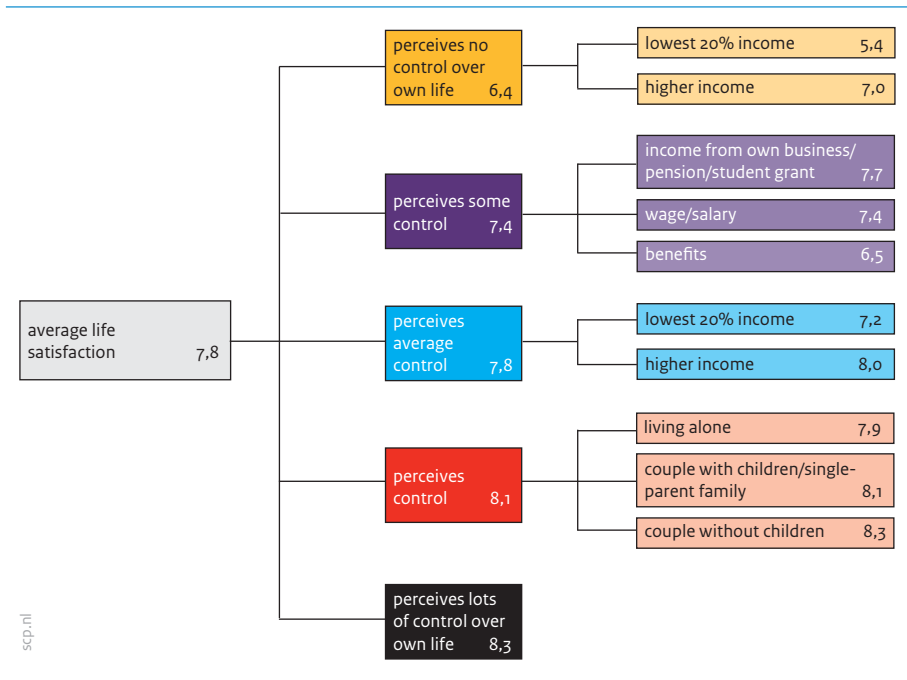
	1999	2002	2008	2012	2014/ 15	2016/ 17	Control over one's own life (2016/17)	
							little control	lots of control
home	7.9	7.9	8.1	8.2	8.2	8.1	7.7	8.3
circle of friends and acquaintances	7.7	7.9	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.1	7.5	8.3
residential setting	7.7	7.7	7.8	7.9	7.9	7.9	7.3	8.1
social position	7.4	7.5	7.6	7.5	7.5	7.5	6.2	8.2
financial resources of household	7.4	7.4	7.3	7.3	7.3	7.4	6.3	8.0
education	7.1	7.2	7.5	7.6	7.6	7.6	6.6	8.2
amount of leisure time				7.2	7.5	7.4	7.0	7.6
life at the present time							6.4	8.4
Dutch society	6.6	6.4	6.5	6.7	6.6	6.7	6.0	7.0

Source: CBS (POLS-SLI97-02); SCP (CVO4-06); SCP/CBS (CVO8-16/17)

As with the life situation, a tree structure provides an insight into the consequences of an accumulation of disadvantage for satisfaction with life. The tree structure shows that people who feel they have no control over their own lives and who also have a low income rate their lives with a score of 5.4 out of 10 (figure 12.4). That is an extremely low figure; in the last edition of *ssn* we argued that a score of 6 counted as satisfactory at school, but this certainly does not apply when it is used as a rating for someone's life. The reason for this is that it is difficult to rate one's own life as unsatisfactory; if people give their lives a score of 6 or less, therefore, this is often a sign that they have many problems.

Figure 12.4
Accumulation of resources reinforces life satisfaction

Life situation by accumulation of resources and background characteristics, 2017 (exhaustive CHAID analysis, in average scores out of 10).



Source: SCP/CBS (CV/SL16/17)

12.6 A good life situation yet still unhappy?

The fact that a score of 6 out of 10 objectively masks many problems raises the question of the relationship between people’s objective life situation and their subjective appreciation of it. The definition of what constitutes a good life situation is also normative in nature: although the definition of the Life Situation Index is based on good theoretical grounds and is comparable with indicator systems used in other countries (cf. Boelhouwer 2010; Noll & Berger 2014), individuals may make different judgements and choices.¹² Someone who does not take part in sport and does not have a car may for example have perfectly valid reasons for this and be happy with these choices. In this section we look at the relationship between objective and subjective quality of life and examine how frequently people with an objectively less good life situation are nonetheless satisfied, or conversely dissatisfied despite an objectively good situation.

Share of people with a good life situation higher in 2017 than in 1990

To explore this adequately, we first briefly look in more detail at the extremes of the two measurements: the share of people with a good or poor life situation and the share of people who are happy or not happy.¹³ Until the onset of the economic crisis, we see an increase in the share of people with a good life situation and a decline in the share with a poor life situation (table 12.10). Since 2008, these shares have more or less stabilised. As we saw earlier, the share of Dutch people saying they are happy does not change.

Table 12.10

Share of Dutch people with good quality of life has increased over the last 25 years

People with a good and poor life situation and people who are very satisfied or very dissatisfied with their lives, 1990-2016/17^a (in percentages)

	1990	1999	2002	2008	2012	2014/ 15	2016/ 17
good life situation (score > 115)	15	18	19	28	29	28	29
poor life situation (score < 85)	20	16	13	10	8	8	10
very happy (score 1)	23	21	21	16	15	14	15
not happy (scores 3, 4, 5)	13	12	12	17	15	18	17

a A trend-break occurred between 2002 and 2008, due to a switch from a verbal to a written questionnaire in 2004. The idea behind this change was that people are more likely to give honest answers in a written questionnaire.

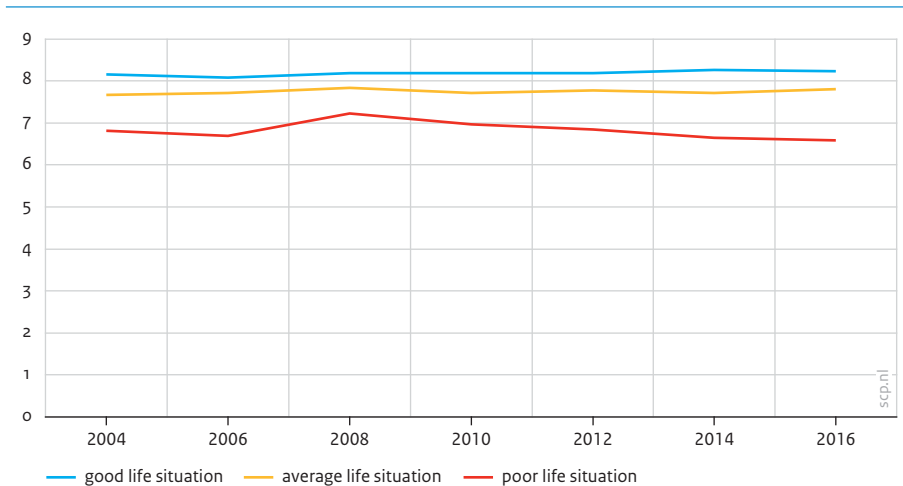
Source: CBS (DLOGO-93; POLS-SLI97-02); SCP (CVO4-06); SCP/CBS (CVO8-16/17)

The trend shows that there is not a one-to-one relationship between life situation and happiness.¹⁴ There are people who are unhappy but who objectively live in good circumstances; there are also people who are happy but who based on their objective life situation live in less good circumstances. As stated, this can be understood based on the idea that the Life Situation Index includes items which may not be important for everyone. To expose the relationship between happiness and life situation, we make a diversion to satisfaction with life. We then see that in 2017, people with a poor life situation are less satisfied than in 2004 (figure 12.5). There is no difference for people with a good or average life situation. This is partly because people with a poor life situation are genuinely less happy and partly because of a compositional effect: as the group of people with a poor life situation shrinks, it increasingly consists of people with multiple disadvantages, who are on average less satisfied with their lives.

Figure 12.5

Reduced satisfaction with life among people with a poor life situation, but unchanged for other groups

Satisfaction with life of people with a good and poor life situation, 2004-2016/17 (in average scores out of 10)



Source: SCP (cvo4-06); SCP/CBS (cvo8-16/17)

Well-being, deprivation, dissonance and adaptation

To look a little more deeply into the question of which groups are affected, we use the Zapf schema (1984), which differentiates four quadrants, or groups, in combinations of objective and subjective quality of life (table 12.11). Two of these combinations represent the expected relationships: a group which combines a good life situation with being happy (well-being) and a group which combines a poor life situation with being unhappy (deprivation). One of the other two groups combines a good life situation with being unhappy (dissonance) and one a poor life situation with being happy (adaptation). It can be seen from table 12.11 that these four groups are limited in size: the well-being group accounted for 4% of the population in 1990, rising to 7% in 2017. The deprived group shrank over the same period from 5% to 4%. Clearly, very few people with a good life situation are unhappy, or happy with a poor life situation (around 1% in each case). By far the largest group consists of the middle categories, which are not included in the table. The relationship between objective life situation and the subjective rating of that situation has strengthened over time: in 1990, 17% of people with a poor life situation were happy, but in 2017 this had fallen to just 6%. Over the same period, the share of people with a poor life situation who are not happy increased sharply (from 26% to 40%).

¹⁵ The group for whom components of their life situation do not contribute to their happiness is thus very limited in size.

Table 12.11
 Dissonance and adaptation are negligible; the deprived group remains stable over time
 Relationship between life situation and happiness, 1990-2016/17 (in percentages)

	good life situation (% of whole population, 1990-2016)		poor life situation (% of whole population, 1990-2016)
happy	well-being (4%-7%)		adaptation (3%-1%)
not happy	dissonance (1%-2%)		deprivation (5%-4%)
	good life situation (% of this group)		poor life situation (% of this group)
		1990	
very happy	29		17
not happy	5		26
		1999	
very happy	30		13
not happy	3		30
		2008	
very happy	24		6
not happy	7		39
		2017	
very happy	23		6
not happy	6		40

Key: the coloured cells show the share in the population as a whole; for example, 4% of the population fall into the quadrant ‘well-being’. The non-coloured cells contain vertical percentages: in 1990, 29% of people with a good life situation were very happy and 5% were not happy.

Source: CBS (DLOGO-93; POLS-SLI97-02); SCP (CVO4-06); SCP/CBS (CVO8-16/17)

The quadrants ‘adaptation’ and ‘dissonance’ contain so few people that we are not able to look at them in any more depth. We can however do so for the quadrants ‘well-being’ and ‘deprivation’. These groups are also not large, however, and the results should therefore be interpreted with some caution. On the other hand, the differences between the groups are particularly wide, not just in terms of life situation and satisfaction with life, but also as regards resources or opinions (table 12.12). The members of the deprived group are much less satisfied with the government, society and their own lives than people in the well-being quadrant. They are also much more vulnerable in terms of resources (58% have a low income and 70% a low education level). In addition, members of this group more often live in social isolation and say they less often vote in elections. The concerns about this group are exacerbated further by the fact that half of them say they have little control over their lives and see no opportunities for improving their lot. This group resembles what has been described in an earlier SCP study as the ‘precariat’: a group who do not have resources, lack the means or skills to change this and sometimes turn their backs on

society (Vrooman et al. 2014). The size of this group is relatively limited, but has barely decreased over the last 25 years.

Table 12.12

People in the deprived group have multiple disadvantages and little control over their own lives

A few figures concerning the deprived group, 2017 (in index figures, scores out of 10 and percentages)

	none of the four quadrants (n = 1865)	well-being (n = 133)	deprivation (n = 79)
life situation (index figure)	105	120	74
satisfaction with life (score out of 10)	7.9	9.0	5.3
satisfaction with society (score out of 10)	6.7	7.3	5.7
satisfaction with government (score out of 10)	6.0	6.9	4.5
lowest 20% income (%)	19	8	58
low education (%)	25	6	70
has a chronic disease or condition (%)	37	21	87
has no one with whom can discuss personal or intimate matters (%)	3	0	29
if there were elections, would you vote? → no (%)	11	2	38
what do you think about the opportunities you have been given in life → few, very few, none (%)	13	1	56
do you see opportunities to improve your life → no (%)	18	0	57
low assessment of control over own life (%)	6	0	52

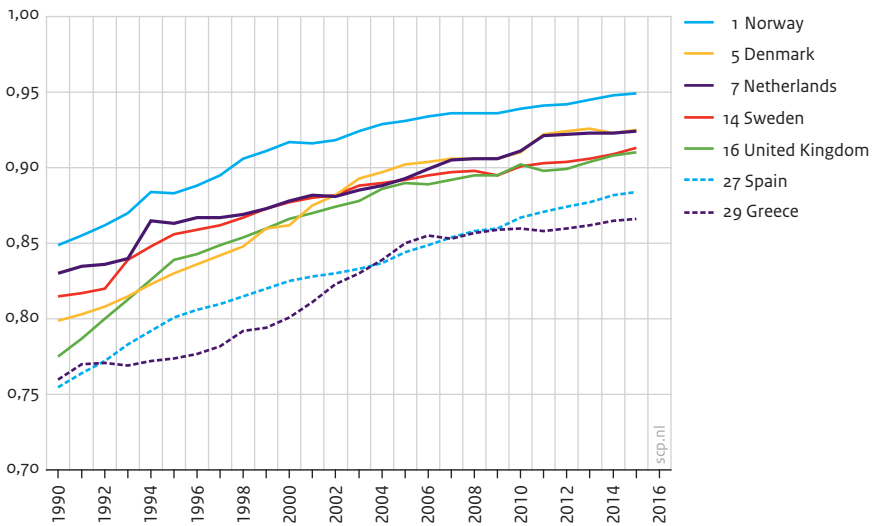
Source: SCP/CBS (cv2016/17)

12.7 Quality of life in the Netherlands is also good in a European perspective

In this section we look at quality of life in a European perspective: how does the Netherlands compare with its neighbouring countries? As with the description of quality of life in the Netherlands, for the other countries too we draw a distinction between objective and subjective quality of life. One of the longest-running international comparative indicators for objective quality of life is the United Nations Human Development Index, which has included data on education, health (life expectancy) and income since 1990 (UNDP 2016). As with the trend in life situation, developments since 1990 have been positive, and for the Netherlands relatively stable in recent years (figure 12.6).

Figure 12.6
Objective quality of life in other Western countries has also increased since 1990

Trend in the Human Development Index (the vertical axis shows the index scores), 1990-2015^a



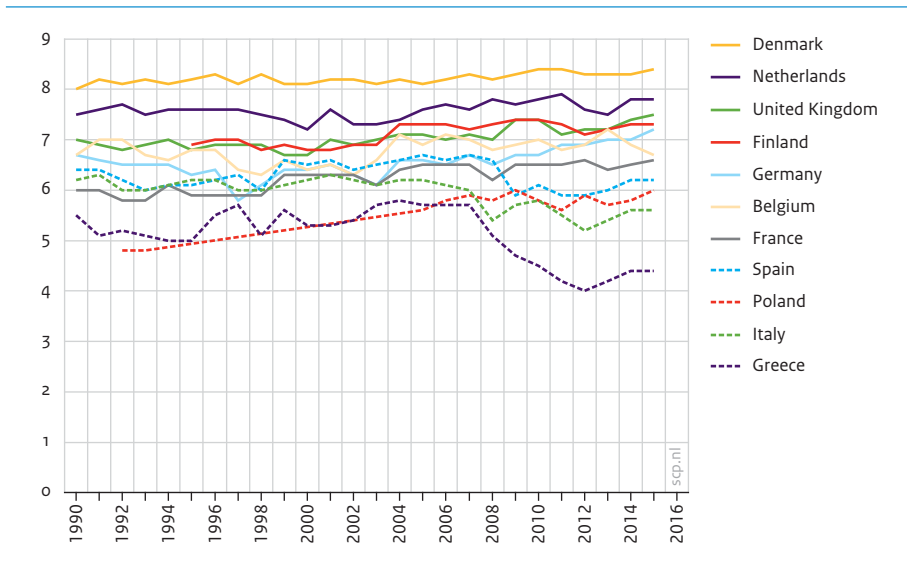
a The numbers assigned to the different countries represent their position in the world ranking in 2016.

Source: UNDP (2017)

Data on happiness or satisfaction with life covering a longer time series are available for only a limited number of countries. Due to a long lack of political and public attention for subjective views and opinions, the data collection lags behind. Using data from the World Database of Happiness, however, it is possible to describe the trend since 1990 for nine European countries (figure 12.7). There is considerable variation in the trend in happiness in these countries. Happiness has declined significantly in countries that were hit hard by the economic crisis, such as Greece and Spain, whereas in other countries happiness today is greater than in 1990; these countries include Germany and the United Kingdom. If we extend the study period back as far as the early 1970s, the Netherlands is also among the countries where happiness has increased (see Veenhoven 2016).

Figure 12.7
Denmark happier than the Netherlands since 1990

Trend in happiness in a number of European countries, 1990-2015 (in scores out of 10)



Source: Veenhoven (2017)

The *World Happiness Report* has been published each year since 2012, providing an annual ranking of countries based on happiness. In the most recent report, from 2017, the Norwegians emerge as the happiest people, with the Dutch coming in sixth place. However, the differences are very small: if the figures are rounded off, the countries in the top five score the same (table 12.13). The report also compares happiness today with happiness prior to the economic crisis. As in figure 12.7, the impact of the economic crisis is found to vary across countries, with the effect in some countries, especially those which were hit hard economically, being greater than in others. We saw earlier that Greece, Spain and Italy have still not recovered from the crisis, and this also applies for Denmark. On the other hand, we showed earlier in this chapter that the economic crisis has had virtually no impact on Dutch happiness, and Norwegians are now happier than they were before the crisis.

Table 12.13

Norwegians are the happiest people in Europe; the Dutch come in sixth place

Happiness in a number of European countries, 2005-2014 (in scores out of 10)^a

	2014-2016	change since 2005-2007
Norway (1)	7.5	0.12
Denmark (2)	7.5	-0.40
Iceland (3)	7.5	.
Switzerland (4)	7.5	0.02
Finland (5)	7.5	-0.20
Netherlands (6)	7.4	-0.08
Sweden (10)	7.3	-0.03
Austria (13)	7.0	-0.12
Ireland (15)	7.0	-0.17
Germany (16)	7.0	0.44
Belgium (17)	6.9	-0.35
Luxembourg (18)	6.9	.
United Kingdom (19)	6.7	-0.17
Czech Republic (23)	6.6	0.14
France (31)	6.4	-0.37
Spain (34)	6.4	-0.67
Slovakia (40)	6.1	0.83
Poland (46)	6.0	0.24
Italy (48)	6.9	-0.75
Romania (57)	5.8	0.61
Hungary (75)	5.3	0.25
Greece (87)	5.2	-1.10
Portugal (89)	5.2	-0.21
Bulgaria (105)	4.7	0.87
Ukraine (132)	4.1	-0.93

a The figures between brackets show the position in the world ranking of 155 countries.

Source: Helliwell et al. (2017)

12.8 But not yet very sustainable

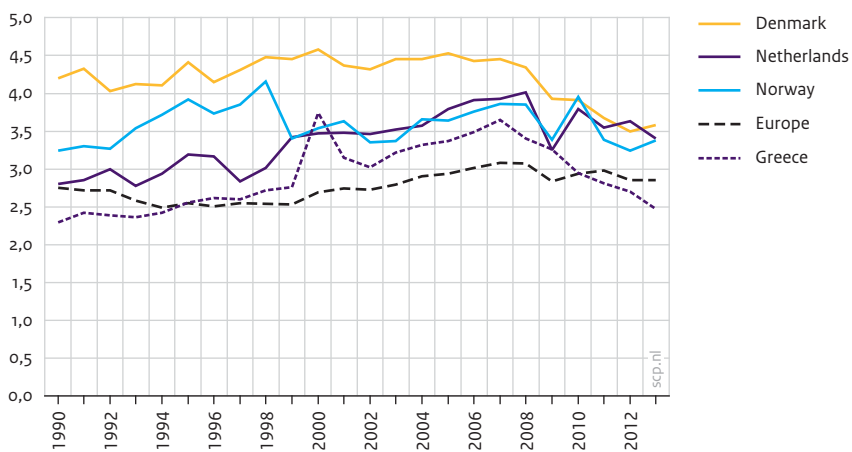
Finally, we will try to say something about the sustainability of the way we live today: how sustainable is our present quality of life? In principle, a great deal of data are available on this, as illustrated by the large amount of information included in the Dutch Sustainability Monitor (*Monitor duurzaam Nederland*). The conclusion in the most recent update is that 'quality of life in the Netherlands [shows] a broadly positive picture, and [is] high by European standards. However, people in the Netherlands and elsewhere in the world are using up their resources to a considerable degree' (CBS 2017).

Earlier editions of *ssn* have explored the relationship between the ecological footprint and the Human Development Index (HDI), with the message that better quality of life goes hand in hand with a non-sustainable footprint. The ecological footprint is one of the few indicators which enables trends since 1990 to be described, and we accordingly use it here.¹⁶ The ecological footprint gives an impression of the amount of space that would be needed if everyone on earth were to have a particular lifestyle, for example that of the Dutch. Put differently, the ecological footprint of the Netherlands shows how much land and water area would be needed to produce the consumption of the average Dutch person for the whole world population, and to process the associated waste (see also Ewing et al. 2009). The total area needed is often represented as numbers of Earths.

More Earths would be needed to support the Dutch lifestyle today than in 1990, though the trend has been moving in the right direction in recent years (figure 12.8). This applies even more so for Denmark and Greece. It is notable that the economic crisis has had a positive impact on sustainable development, with the ecological footprint falling sharply in all countries immediately post-crisis – and in a number of countries the footprint continued to shrink steadily thereafter. In some other countries, including the Netherlands, the footprint first bounced back to a higher level before falling again. The caveat needs to be applied here that no calculations are available for the most recent years, and it is therefore unclear to what extent this trend is persisting now that the economy is growing again.

Figure 12.8

3.5 Earths needed to support the consumption of the average Dutch citizen



Source: Global Footprint Network (2017)

12.9 Concluding discussion: the disadvantaged and their happiness

Quality of life in the Netherlands has improved over the last 25 years. In the first place, objective life situation has improved, and this applies for all groups differentiated. At the same time, however, there has been no increase in subjective happiness, and life satisfaction has risen only very slightly. Secondly, the differences between social groups narrowed over the same period, except for the differences between those with a high and low education level and people with and without serious diseases or conditions, where the differences widened. The differences between the majority of social groups have moreover widened again over the last two years. Whether this is a delayed effect of the economic crisis and whether it will continue remains to be seen. While quality of life has generally not declined any further in the most recent years, it has also not increased, despite a fairly sustained resumption of economic growth.

It is also notable that the life satisfaction of people with a poor life situation has declined, while that of people with a good life situation has remained unchanged. The combination of a poorer life situation and being unhappy occurs in a group that we have termed 'deprived'. This group also faces an accumulation of problems in combination with few opportunities to improve their situation by themselves. Although it is a relatively small group, it did not shrink between 1990 and 2017 (though it also did not grow). These people belong to the group that we call 'cannots'. Members of this group often lack what we term 'modern skills', of which perceived control over one's own life is a key exponent. The size of this group is limited in our data, but there will be a proportion of this group who do not take part in surveys, and the group is therefore likely to be larger rather than smaller in reality. The decentralisation of responsibilities in the social domain could perhaps offer some solace for this group. Offering customised support which is tailored to the problems people face could lead to social support being provided to help people in the deprived group deal with the everyday problems they face. Such a policy could also contribute to their happiness.

Notes

- 1 Over the last 25 years there have been two trend-breaks in the data: once on the transition to a completely new sample design (between 1993 and 1997) and once when a transition was made from a verbal to a written questionnaire (2004). This influences some of the topics included in the conceptual model, such as happiness or loneliness. The effect on the more objective aspects in the Life Situation Index is negligible. Changes in survey methods are difficult, because they can affect comparability; but they are also useful, because they enable indicators to be kept up to date and relevant. In the Life Situation Index we have repaired the trend-breaks by assuming no changes took place between the trend-break years for the Netherlands as a whole. Changes in separate, individual social groups can then still be identified (in relation to the general trend). See also Boelhouwer (2017).

- 2 The index figures for the individual domains were as follows in 2014 and 2016 (where 1997 = 100): housing: 102 and 106, respectively; sociocultural leisure activities: 100 and 100; social and public participation: 100 and 101; sport: 98 and 100; ownership of consumer goods: 107 and 113; mobility: 101 and 104; health: 99 and 99.
- 3 The scale for basic computer skills consists of five items: is the respondent able to use a word processing program on the computer, send an email, search for practical information on the Internet (such as telephone numbers or train times), install a computer program, and install security on a computer (e.g. antivirus software or a firewall)? Together, these items form a scale: Cronbach's alpha 0.88.
- 4 The scale for control over one's life consists of five items: I have little control over the things that happen to me; some of my problems are impossible for me to solve; there is little I can do to change important things in my life; I often feel helpless when dealing with problems in life; I sometimes feel that I am just the plaything of life. Together, these items form a scale: Cronbach's alpha 0.83.
- 5 The scale for social cohesion consists of five items: I have lots of contact with my immediate neighbours; people in this neighbourhood get on well with each other; I live in a nice neighbourhood with a strong sense of community; people in this neighbourhood hardly know each other; I am satisfied with the make-up of the population in this neighbourhood. Together, these items form a scale: Cronbach's alpha 0.82.
- 6 The correlation between happiness and life satisfaction in 2017 is 0.63.
- 7 Another distinction that is made is that happiness relates more to affective aspects and life satisfaction to cognitive aspects. This is by no means the end of the debate, however, because happiness in the sense of fulfilment combines the affective and cognitive aspects (see e.g. Veenhoven 2002).
- 8 With thanks to Lize Winkelaar, who investigated a number of these scales for correlations, reliability and validity (Winkelaar 2017).
- 9 13% of people with a condition or disease feel they have a high degree of control over their lives, while 12% feel they have little control. The figures for people without a disease or condition are 19% and 4%, respectively.
- 10 These concepts were measured using scales consisting of several items. The Cronbach's alpha for efficacy is 0.80, for self-confidence 0.76, for resilience 0.68 and for social skills 0.80. See Winkelaar (2017) for the items in each scale. Including these scales in the model to explain happiness increases the explained variance to 25%. Only self-confidence, with a beta coefficient of 0.18, has a notable effect; the effect of the other items is less and the contribution of social skills is not even statistically significant.
- 11 Including a scale for optimism boosts the explained variance to 38%. The beta coefficient for optimism is then 0.38; that of control of one's life 0.18. The scale for optimism consists of four items: I am always optimistic about my future; I generally take a very positive view of myself; I occasionally feel like a failure; generally speaking, my life seems to be the way I would want it. These items form a scale: Cronbach's alpha 0.71.
- 12 The Life Situation Index consists of domains and indicators which are important for many people's lives. See Boelhouwer (2010).
- 13 We define a good life situation as a score of 115 or more on the Life Situation Index; a poor life situation is a score of 85 or less. The reason for this is that the standard deviation in the baseline year (1997) is 15.

Happiness was measured on a five-point scale. We define being not happy based on three responses: 'Neither happy nor unhappy', 'not very happy', 'unhappy'. We interpret the category 'very happy' as happy. The remaining category 'happy' is then the middle group and is left out of consideration in the table.

- 14 The correlation coefficient between life situation and happiness is 0.33 in 2017.
- 15 The correlation between life situation and happiness is also greater in 2017 than in 1990, with correlation coefficients of 0.33 in 2017, 0.30 in 2008 and 0.21 in 1990.
- 16 There is in fact some debate about the use of the ecological footprint. For example, the Temporary Committee for a Broad Definition of Welfare (TCBW) argues that 'this indicator is not suitable because it is a compound indicator, is based on virtual rather than actual land use and is based on global average outputs for different types of land, so that efficiency gains are not reflected in the footprint' (TCBW 2016: 82). On the other hand, some scientists argue that the footprint is a useful tool which serves as a rough indicator for the actual footprint (CBS et al. 2011: 144; Stiglitz et al. 2009: 71-75).

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Appendix A

Country codes used

AT	Austria
BE	Belgium
BG	Bulgaria
CY	Cyprus
CZ	Czech Republic
DE	Germany
DK	Denmark
EE	Estonia
EL	Greece
ES	Spain
EU	European Union
FR	France
FI	Finland
GR	Greece
HR	Croatia
HU	Hungary
IE	Ireland
IT	Italy
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal
LT	Lithuania
LU	Luxembourg
LV	Latvia
MT	Malta
NL	Netherlands
RO	Romania
SE	Sweden
SK	Slovakia
SI	Slovenia
UK	United Kingdom
