

Summary

Time use in the Netherlands

Time use research can provide new insights in social differences and change in the Netherlands. How the Dutch spend their time is indicative of their preferences, opportunities and constraints. A comparison of data from 2006 and 2016 demonstrated a high level of continuity. At the same time, there are substantial differences between social groups. For example, Dutch women spend nine hours per week more on household and care tasks than men and the lower educated spend more than 5 hours per week more in leisure activities than the higher educated. The card stack 'Time use in the Netherlands' is a report from the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP) and based on information about more than 1,500 Dutch respondents.

Continuity and differences

'Time use in the Netherlands' studies the changes in time use during the last decade. Although the last decade was characterized by many large societal changes (including an economic crisis), the time use of the Dutch was characterised by continuity. The time spent on activities such as paid work, the care for the household and family and studying, for example, did not increase or decrease substantially between 2006 and 2016. Moreover, the Dutch spend a similar amount of time on leisure activities as ten years ago. This is surprising in the light of increasing concerns about time pressure. A closer analysis shows that certain groups in society do spend a lot of time on paid and unpaid work. People with a higher educational level and parents, for example, spend more time on paid work and care than people with lower educational levels, young people and the over-65s. The sum of paid and unpaid work is highest for people with higher education and people with children.

Majority of Dutch people get eight hours sleep

Research shows that 60% of the Dutch spend at least eight hours a day in bed. This percentage did not change between 2006 and 2016. People spend almost 80 hours a week (and more than 11 hours per day) on personal care (including sleeping, showering and eating). This time is most scarce among those with a high educational level, single people and parents. For example: fathers spend almost ten hours per week less on these activities than men aged 65 and older.

Wide gender gap in paid work and care tasks

Men and women spend roughly a quarter of their time on paid and unpaid work. There are, however, large differences in the ways in which they allocate this time: men spend more time in employment and women spend more time on the care for the household and family members. The gender gap is largest in families with children. On a weekly basis, fathers spend 18 hours more on paid work and 15 hours less on household and care tasks than mothers. Gender differences are also evident among young people. Boys and young men in the 12-19 age group spend five hours a week on care tasks, whereas girls and young women in the same age group spend nine hours per week on these activities, which is almost double.

Media and ICT are the most popular leisure activities

On average, people spend approximately 42.5 hours per week on leisure activities. This includes activities such as resting (two hours per week), sports (1 hour 45 minutes per week) and social contacts (eight hours per week). The most popular form of leisure time use is media and ICT. In particular, people spend a lot of time watching television, at an average of two hours per day.

Men have slightly more leisure time than women: approximately three hours per week. In 2016, people with high education spent more than five hours less on leisure activities per week. These differences are slightly smaller if school students and pensioners are excluded from the analysis.

The Dutch Time Use Study

The findings that are reported are based on analyses of the most recent Dutch time use data. The data were collected in 2016 in collaboration with Statistics Netherlands (CBS). The aim of this publication is to present a broad overview of time use in the Netherlands. Over the coming year we will build on this first publication, by conducting more in-depth studies. In doing so, the SCP will focus on the link between people's time use and the quality of life. For example, how much time pressure do people experience and how does this relate to (the quality of) their time use?