



# Time use in the Netherlands

Edition 1

The Netherlands Institute for Social Research  
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# Colophon

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## Contact

For more information, please contact Anne Roeters at [a.roeters@scp.nl](mailto:a.roeters@scp.nl) or on +31 (0)6 1141 8223, or the SCP Press Office at [pers@scp.nl](mailto:pers@scp.nl) or on +31 (0)6 2161 4433.

## Authors

[Anne Roeters](#)  
in collaboration with [Jan Dirk Vlasblom](#) and [Marian de Voogd-Hamelink](#)

## Coordination for Card stack

[Anouk de Wit](#)

## Design & production

[Textcetera](#), The Hague

## Figures

[Studio With Lisa Dalhuijsen](#), The Hague

## Opening image

Hollandse Hoogte

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# Introduction

The way in which people spend their time provides a good deal of information about their preferences, norms, opportunities and constraints. Time use data are therefore a unique tool for gaining insight into social differences and societal changes. Do men and women, people with higher and lower education levels and people in different life stages organise their time differently? And do we allocate our time differently compared to a decade ago?

'Time use in the Netherlands' is a digital publication ('card stack'), made up of a number of standalone pages, or 'cards'. Each card deals with one aspect of the time use of the Dutch. The data are based on the Time Use Survey 2016 (TBO '16), supplemented with data from the 2006 and 2011 surveys.

# A week at a glance

Authors: [Anne Roeters](#) and [Jan Dirk Vlasblom](#)

There are 168 hours in a week. Everyone has the same amount of hours, but people allocate these 168 hours differently. How people spend their time is indicative of their interests, opportunities and constraints. For example, some spend more time in paid work whereas others spend more time in leisure.

This part of the card stack offers a broad description of how the Dutch spent their time in 2016. In line with earlier research, we differentiate between six categories of time use: personal care (including sleep) [For example sleeping, eating and drinking, dressing and washing.]; paid work [For example, time on the job, commuting to and from work, looking for work and training during working hours.]; household and care [Household tasks, shopping, parent-child time and caring for adult household members.]; leisure [Media and ICT, social contacts, sport, culture, hobbies, bars/restaurants, outings and relaxing.]; study [General and vocational education and free time study courses.]; and volunteering and meetings [Volunteering, providing unpaid help outside the household, attending meetings and gatherings and religious activities.]. Which activities took up most time? How much time do the Dutch spend relaxing and how does this compare to the time spent on paid and unpaid work and rest?

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## The Time Use Survey 2016

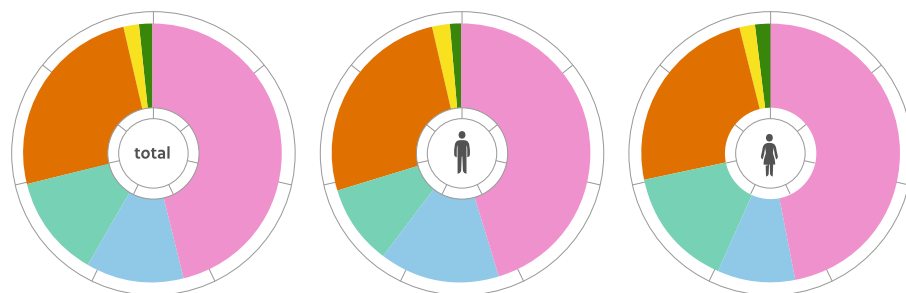
Participants in the Time Use Survey (TBO) were asked to record their time use in a diary, using their own words. They did so during one full week. After the completed diaries had been submitted, the reported activities were coded by Statistics Netherlands (CBS). The [codes used](#) can be found in the Appendix (in Dutch). For the analyses, the activity codes were grouped into larger categories. For example, sleeping and showering are both considered to be personal care. Travel time was included in the activity to which the respondent was travelling; for example, commuting to work is categorized as paid work.

The Dutch Time Use Survey largely adheres to the HETUS guidelines, which help researchers to harmonize European time use data. But whereas the recommended length of the diary is one or two days in the HETUS guidelines, the Dutch data cover a full week. The main reason for choosing to do this is that it enables us to compare the data with earlier waves. A possible disadvantage is that the response becomes more selective, because the survey is more time-intensive.

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## Weekly time use in 2016

[Hours per week spent on the six main time use categories, population aged 12 years and older, 2016 (hours per week).]



● personal care ● employment ● household and family care ● leisure ● study ● voluntary work and meetings scp.nl

- 1 Household and family care excludes informal support to other households.
- 2 Leisure includes time spent on media and social contacts.
- 3 Volunteering and meetings includes informal support to other households (e.g. looking after grandchildren), attending meetings and religious activities.

Source: SCP/CBS (TBO'16)

## Most time spent on personal care and leisure

The figure shows how many hours people spend on the six categories each week. People can multitask, but we report the activity that - according to the respondent - was the 'primary activity'.<sup>1</sup> Dutch people aged 12 years and older spend almost half the week on personal care [def: For example sleeping, eating and washing].<sup>2</sup> They spend 59 hours per week sleeping and around 18 hours per week on other types of personal care, such as eating and washing. People spend just over 40 hours to leisure activities [Media and ICT, social contacts, sport, culture, hobbies, bars/restaurants, outings and relaxation.]. This roughly equals the time spent on a full-time job. Men spend three hours per week more on leisure than women. But women spend around three hours more per week on personal care.

## Men spend more time on paid work, women spend more time on care

A quarter of the week is spent on paid and unpaid work activities. But compared to men, women spend more time on the household and care tasks [def: Household tasks, shopping, parent-child time and caring for adult household members.], and report fewer hours of paid work [Performing paid work, commuting to and from work, looking for work and training during working hours.]. Women thus still spend more time in the domestic domain, whereas paid work occupies a more central role for men.

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### The individual activities do not always add up to precisely 168 hours per week. Why?

The time spent on specific categories of activities is rounded off and the total therefore does not always add up to 168 hours per week. In addition, activities that could not be categorised, such as time spent completing the diary for the survey, are excluded.

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## Weekly time spend on studying, volunteering, and meetings is limited

The Dutch spend an average of 3 hours and 20 minutes per week studying and doing homework; They spend an average of 2.5 hours per week on voluntary activities and meetings [Volunteering, providing informal support besides household, attending meetings and religious activities.]. These low averages are largely explained by the fact that a high proportion of the population spend no time at all on these activities.

### Participation in study, volunteering, and meetings by age

The following table shows that three-quarters of participants in the survey did not spend any time on activities related to studying during the diary week. More than half did not spend any time on volunteering, providing informal support to other households, religious activities or attending meetings. Participation in these activities is strongly related to age: young people spend are more likely to volunteer and participate in related activities.

Share of respondents who participated in study and volunteering\* during the diary week, population aged 12 years and older, 2016 (in percentages)

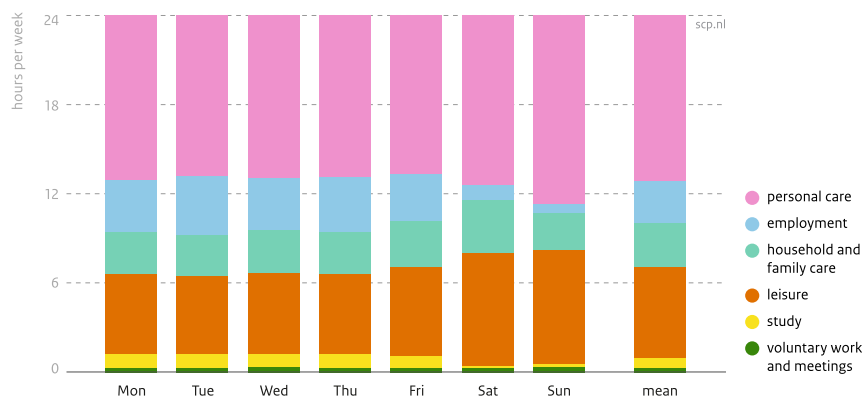
age group	study	volunteering
total	25%	45%
12-19 years	74%	23%
20-64 years	23%	43%
over-65s	6%	63%

\* Including informal support to other households, meetings and religious activities.

Source: SCP/CBS (TBO'16)

### Time use during the week and weekend

[Hours per week spent on the six main time use categories, by day of the week, population aged 12 years and older, 2016 (hours per week).]



Source: SCP/CBS (TBO'16)

## Differences between the days of the week and times of day

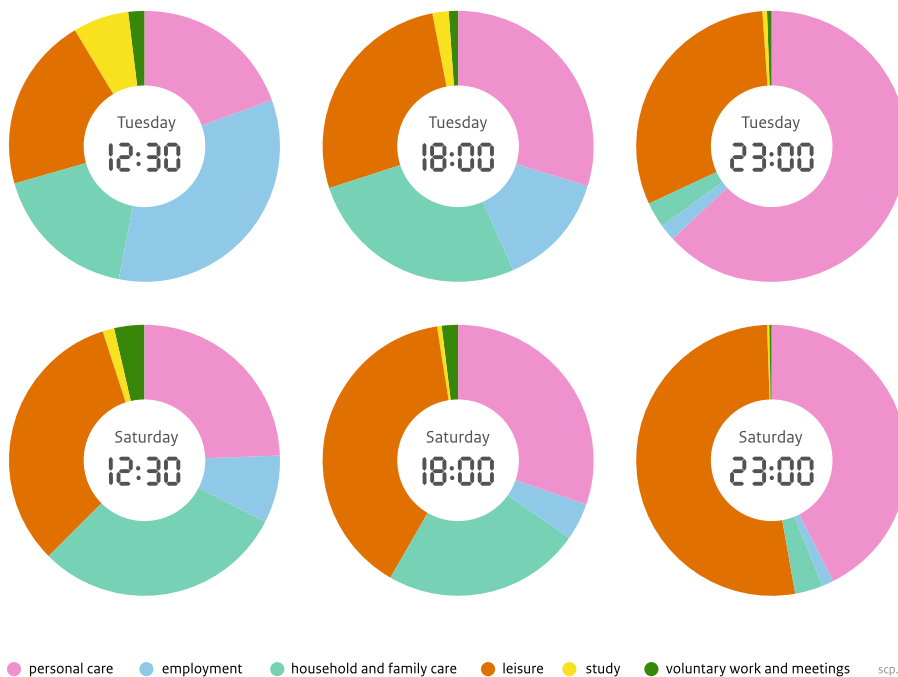
The time use data also enable us to analyse the timing of activities. What is the evidence for the popular assumption that we are moving towards a 24/7 society in which people work in the evenings and at weekends? And do the Dutch still have dinner at 6.00 p.m.?

The weekdays look very similar. People spend almost 11 hours on personal care (including sleep). The amount of leisure time roughly equals the total amount of time spent on paid work, household and family care and study. Friday is the weekday that most closely resembles the weekend days. This could indicate that Friday is a popular part-time day.

The data suggest that Dutch society is still far from a 24/7 society. People spend little time in employment at the weekend. Sunday is a day of rest, with a relatively large amount of time spent on personal care and leisure.

### When do the Dutch engage in which activities?

[Share of the population participating in the six main categories of time use, Tuesdays and Saturdays, population aged 12 years and older, 2016 (%).]



Source: SCP/CBS (TBO'16)

An examination of the timing of activities during the day, also shows little evidence for a 24/7 economy. People mainly work between 8.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m. There is a dip in the percentage of people with paid work around noon, suggesting that a substantial number of people take a break around lunchtime. The peak in personal care time around 6.00 p.m. suggests that a large proportion of the Dutch still have dinner early in the evening. Leisure activities mostly take place during the evening. On Saturdays people spend more time on leisure, household and family care throughout the day.

Paid work is concentrated during office hours and on weekdays. At 8.00 p.m. on Tuesdays, 6% of the respondents are spending time on paid work; at 10.00 p.m. this proportion has dropped to 3%. On Saturday mornings and afternoons, the percentage of people that is working fluctuates between

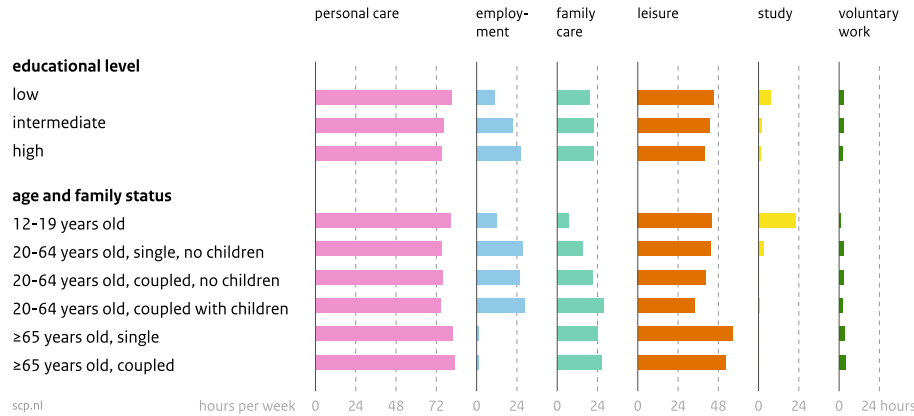


6% and 8%; on Saturday evening only 2% spend time on paid employment. These people may be working overtime, but they may also have a job that involves working outside normal office hours (e.g. nursing or the hospitality industry).

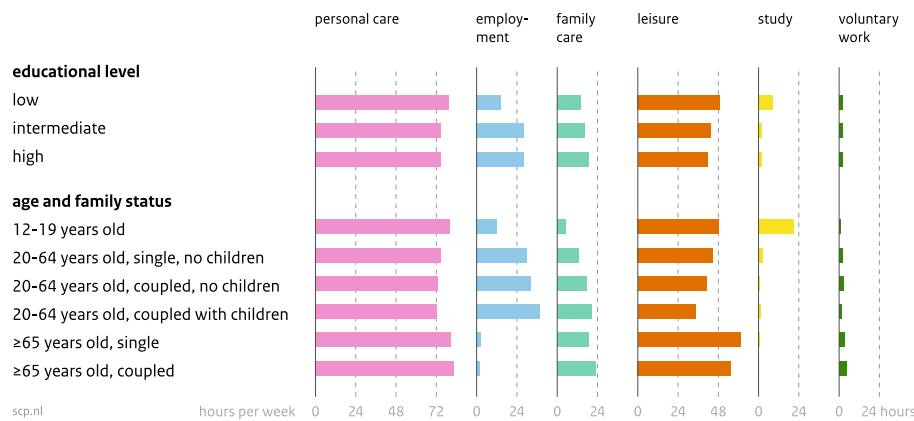
Differences in time use

[Time spent per week on the six main time use categories, by background characteristic, population aged 12 years and older, 2016 (in hours per week).]

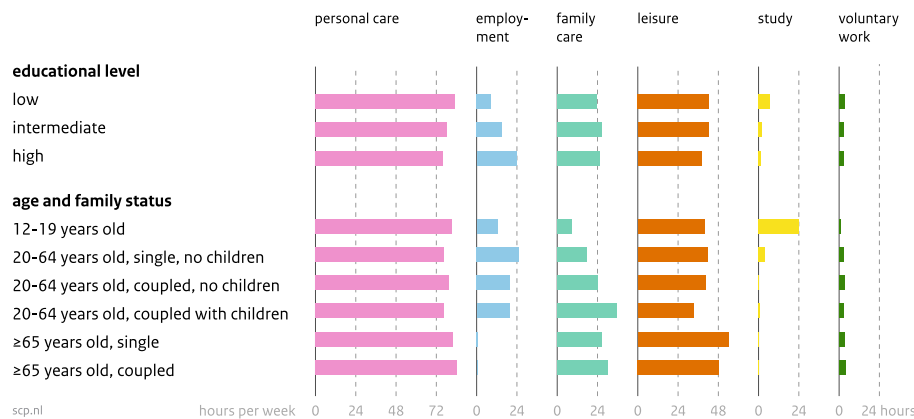
Full population



Men



Women



Source: SCP/CBS (TBO'16)

## Dividing lines in time

Differences between social groups can manifest themselves in several ways (Bovens et al. 2014; Vrooman et al. 2014). Time use data can provide valuable insights into differences in behaviour. It is precisely for this reason that ‘Time’ is one of the six core domains in the Gender Equality Index published by the European Institute for Gender Equality (2017). Does the behaviour of men and women, and of different educational and age groups differ? Or are the similarities greater than the differences?

Recently, the gap between different educational and income groups has received a great deal of attention from researchers and politicians (Bovens et al. 2014; nos.nl 2017; Piketty 2017; Rijksoverheid 2017). The ageing of the population has also made the well-being of the over-65s a topical issue (Van den Broek et al. 2016; Van den Broek 2016; NOS 2017; Rijksoverheid 2017). We therefore look at gender, educational level and age.

## Differences between men and women

There are clear differences in men’s and women’s time use in the domains of employment and care. This reflects the gendered division of labour. Gender roles still differ and stimulate men to focus on paid work and women to focus on caring for the household and family (Bianchi & Milkie 2010; European Institute for Gender Equality 2017). Women also spend slightly more time on personal care and slightly less time on leisure activities. A more detailed analysis shows that men spend more time on ICT, sports and hobbies, while women spend more time bathing/showering and dressing than men.

## Educational differences

Someone’s educational level is indicative of someone’s preferences and opportunities (Bovens et al. 2014). Higher-educated men spend more time on employment and care than lower-educated men. Women with a higher educational level also report more time in paid work, but the differences in time spent on care tasks are small. Those with a higher educational level have a strong labour market position and higher career ambitions, which may explain why they work longer hours (Cloïn 2013; Van der Horst 2014; Portegijs & Van Brakel 2016). The finding that higher educated men spend most time on household and family care reflects the importance these men attach to an equal division of housework.

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### A note with regard to the comparisons between groups

It is important to note that we are comparing groups, without accounting for other background characteristics. For example, this could imply that lower-educated people report a limited number of working hours because they are more likely to be at school or retired. Differences between groups should therefore be interpreted with care.

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Differences between educational groups can also be observed in the other domains. Lower-educated respondents spend more time on leisure activities [[Media and ICT, social contacts, sport, culture, hobbies, bars/restaurants, outings and relaxation.](#)] and personal care [[For example](#)

sleeping, eating and drinking, dressing and washing.] than the higher-educated respondents.<sup>3</sup> The latter finding is mainly the result of the overrepresentation of young people (aged 12-19 years) in the low-educated group; if this group is excluded, lower-educated people actually spend less time studying (half an hour per week compared with 100 minutes per week for people with intermediate and high education).

### Life stage with children relatively busy


Different life stages bring different opportunities and constraints (Nomaguchi & Bianchi 2004; Bianchi & Milkie 2010; Kraaykamp et al. 2013). For example, single people have a great deal of control over their time use, whereas people with a partner and children have to coordinate their time use with others. In addition, young and older people's daily lives show large differences. For example, many young people go to school, which implies that they spend more time studying and less time on paid work and care. Younger and older individuals also spend a relatively large proportion of their time on leisure activities and personal care. The life stage with children is the busiest in terms of time spent on paid and unpaid work. In contrast to what is sometimes assumed, mothers are not busier than fathers. On the contrary: in the life stage with children in the household, men spend almost 3.5 hours per week more on the sum of paid and unpaid work than women.<sup>4</sup>

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#### No 'second shift' for women

Arlie Hochschild introduced the term 'second shift' (Hochschild 1989). She posited that many women begin a 'second shift' at home after finishing work. This was based on the assumption that women do the bulk of the housework, while men relax after work. There is no evidence for a second shift in the Netherlands. Whilst Dutch women do indeed spend more time on unpaid work (household and family care) than men, they also spend less time on paid work. Accordingly, the sum of paid and unpaid work is the same for men and women. In fact, in the life stage with children aged between 4 and 11 years, men are busier than women.

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The other cards in this card stack look in more detail at [Personal care](#), [Employment](#), [Household and care](#) and [Leisure](#). We focus on these domains because people spend most time on these activities. The [Time use report](#)  (to be published in the second half of 2018) will look at these aspects in more depth.

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## Notes

- 1 Participants were also asked to record their secondary activities, i.e. activities they were performing alongside the main activity. This could for example mean looking after children whilst cooking. These secondary activities are not included in the analyses for this card stack.
- 2 More information on the study can be found in the card [Background of the Time Use Survey](#).
- 3 This is also the case if we look only at people in paid employment. This does reduce the educational differences.
- 4 The difference between fathers and mothers is statistically significant if the children are aged between 4 and 11 years.

# Personal care

Author: [Anne Roeters](#)

Personal care includes our basic needs (such as sleeping and eating) and is therefore a fundamental part of the day. The amount of sleep, for example, has a major impact on our quality of life (Kahneman & Krueger 2006; Ancoli-Israel et al. 2008; Dewald et al. 2010; Van Laethem et al. 2015). After a night of too little sleep a day rarely turns into a good day.

According to some, modern life has become so rushed that there is little time left for personal care. Both journalists and researchers have sounded the alarm about the amount of sleep people get today. They presume that people are suffering from a chronic lack of sleep because they are kept awake by the endless possibilities of the Internet, the blue light emitted by smartphone screens and the stress of daily life (Van Gelder 2014; Vantighem 2017; Weeda 2017). Do we manage to get the recommended eight hours' sleep per day?

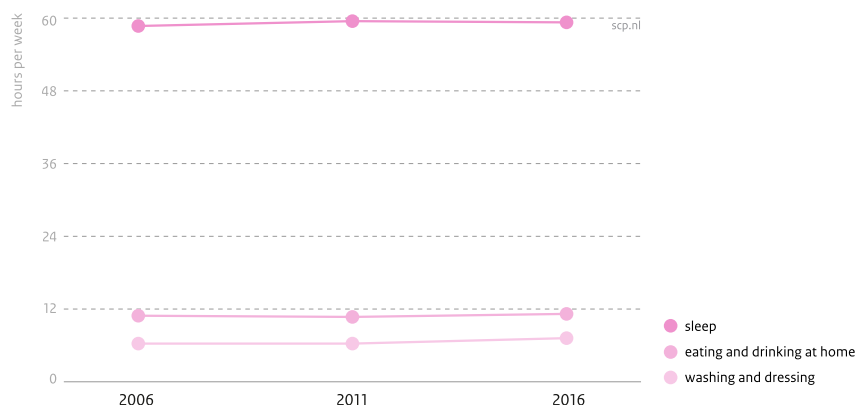
And what has happened with other types of personal care? This card investigates how the time spent on personal care activities has changed over the last decade. In addition, we compare men and women, educational levels and age groups and look at the differences between men and women.

## What kind of activities are categorised as 'personal care'?

In 2016, Dutch people aged 12 years and older spent an average of 11 and a quarter hours on sleep and other types of personal care (this is equivalent to 79 hours per week).<sup>1</sup> People spent 1 hour 35 minutes eating and drinking at home [Eating a meal or snack or drinking something at home.]. They spent more than one hour per day on activities such as washing and dressing [Showering, bathing, brushing teeth, shaving, putting on make-up, getting dressed, medical care and 'private' care.]. However, most personal care was spent in bed [Sleeping and other time spent ill or awake in bed.]: an average of 8 hours 25 minutes per day. People spent almost one hour longer in bed on Sundays than on an average weekday.

### Personal care, 2006-2016

[Personal care: distribution across different types of personal care, population aged 12 years and older, 2006-2016 (in hours per week).]



Source: SCP (TBO'06); SCP/CBS (TBO'11-'16)

## Little change in time spent sleeping and eating

The figures provide no support for the assumption that we spend less time on sleep and other forms of personal care today than in the past. We did not spend any more (or any less) time in bed in 2006 than we do today. And the amount of time spent eating and drinking [Eating a meal or snack or drinking something at home.] fluctuates only marginally over this period. There are also no indications that there is less time for activities such as showering and dressing.

### Eating and drinking between 1975 and 2015

Because time use data have been collected since 1975, we can examine trends before 2006. In the article ‘Fast or slow food?’, the researchers investigate how food-related time has changed between 1975 and 2005. They show that people spent 15 minutes per day less eating and drinking at home in 2005 than in 1975. Compared to 30 years earlier, people spent almost twice as much time going out for dinner and take-out (Mandemakers & Roeters 2014).

## Do we manage to get 8 hours of sleep a day?

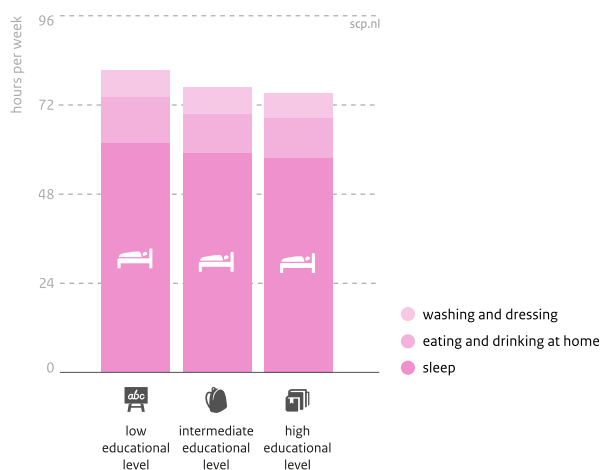
In the category ‘bed rest’ [Sleeping and other time spent ill or awake in bed.], we distinguish between sleeping and lying in bed awake or ill.

Participants in the survey report that they spend an average of 8 hours 15 minutes per day sleeping and 10 minutes lying awake. While it is of course possible that people who lie awake at night have not always recorded this accurately, it seems that a majority of Dutch people meets the recommended eight hours sleep per day. To be precise, 60% of participants in the diary week exceeded the eight-hour threshold.<sup>2</sup> This does not change if we look only at the population of working age. Among young people, no less than 88% reported that they sleep for 8 hours or more per day. Roughly 5% of the Dutch citizens reported that they slept less than 6.5 hours per day (or night).

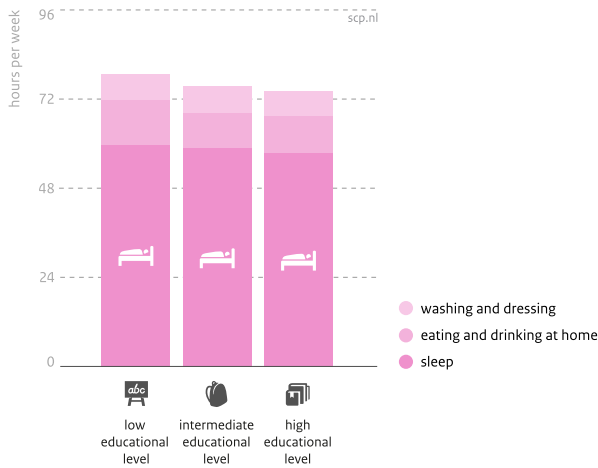
### Personal care by educational level

[Time spent on personal care, by educational level and sex, population aged 12 years and older, 2016 (in hours per week).]

#### Full population



**Population 20 through 64 years old**



Source: SCP/CBS (TBO'16)

**Educational differences greater than gender differences**

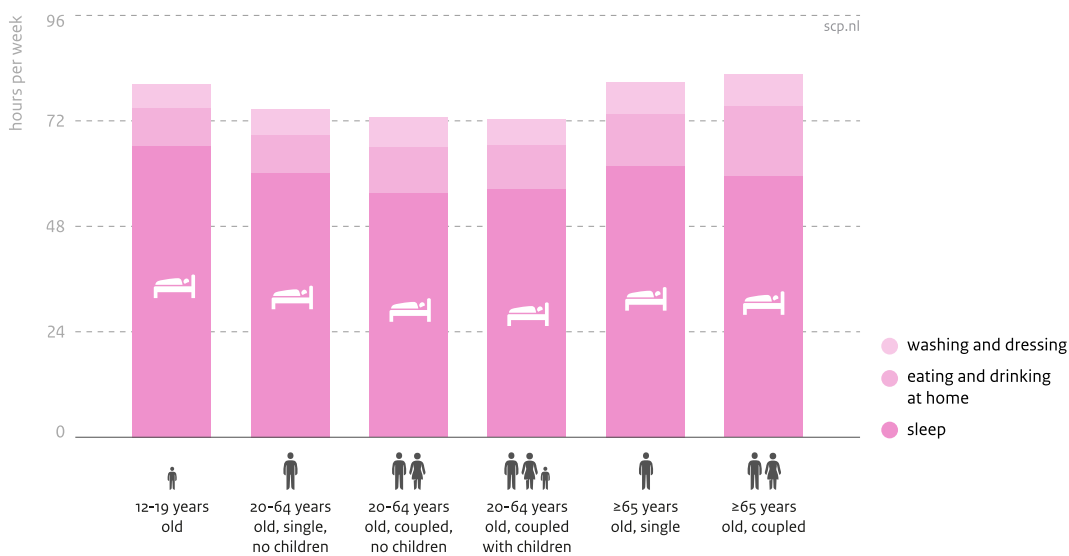
Per week, women spend three hours more on personal care than men.

However, the differences between the educational groups appear to be slightly greater than those between men and women. People with a low educational level spend almost six hours per week more on personal care than people with a high educational level. This gap is smaller if we look only at people of working age, but is still 4.5 hours per week.

**Personal care by age and family status**

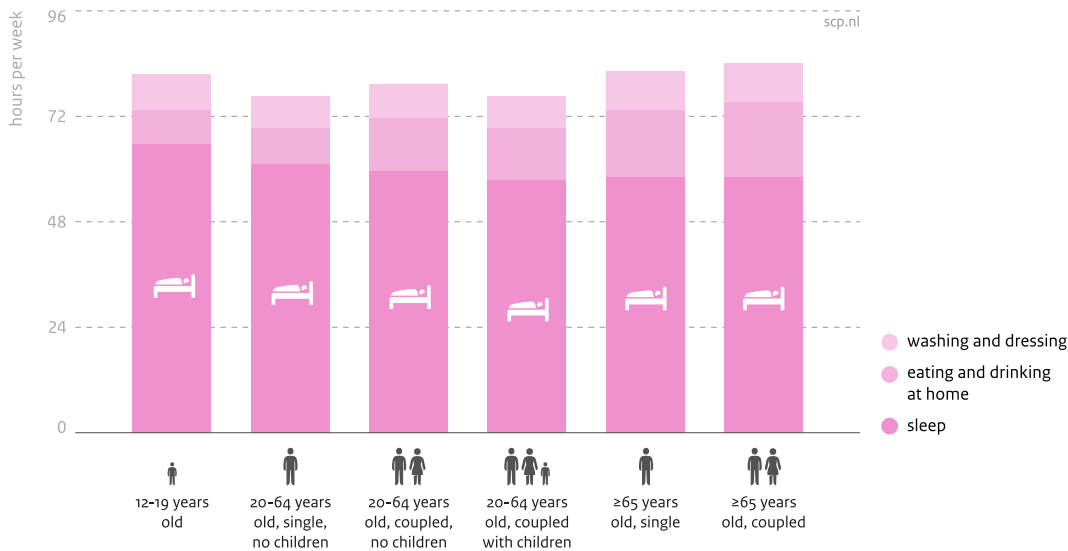
[Time spent on personal care, by age, family status, and sex, population aged 12 years and older, 2016 (in hours per week).]

**Men**





## Women



Source: SCP/CBS (TBO'16)

## Older people spend more time on personal care, but do not sleep more

Several studies have shown that sleep patterns vary with age. Young people, for example, need more sleep, while older people experience more problems sleeping (Ancoli-Israel et al. 2008; Klerman & Dijk 2008). The position of young people stands out particularly clearly in the time use statistics. They spend much more time in bed than adults. There are few differences between older people and people of working age.

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### Cite this card

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### Notes

- 1 As with the other activities, we look only at the main activities. For more information, see the card [Background of the Time Use Survey](#).
- 2 Women reach this threshold more often than men (64% versus 57%).

# Employment

Author: [Anne Roeters](#)

## How much time do we spend on paid work and related activities?

Time use data provide unique information about labour market participation and related activities. Where contractual hours reflect a person's employment contract, the hours reported in the time diary reflect people's daily lives. During the diary week, people may work more than their contractual hours because they are working overtime, or less because they are ill or on holiday. The time use data also allow us to look at activities that are indirectly related to paid work, such as commuting, work-related training and looking for a new job.

Averages for the full Dutch population mask wide differences in the time spent on paid work. There are differences between men and women, between people with different educational levels and between different age groups and family types. These differences are often related to a person's labour market position and family demands (Van Echtelt et al. 2016; SER 2016; Roeters 2017). In this card we therefore look at men and women, people with high and low educational level and people of different ages and family status.

## How is the time spent on paid work measured?

The umbrella term 'employment' as used here encompasses four activities: performing paid work; commuting to and from work; training during working hours; and looking for work.<sup>1</sup> Averaged out over all Dutch citizens aged 12 years and older, people spend 20.5 hours per week on employment. If we look only at those who are between the ages of 20 and 65, the average is seven hours per week higher. Within this age category, we can also zoom in on the employed individuals. This group works an average of 35 hours per week.

The lion's share of 'employment time' is spent performing paid work. People spend three and a quarter hours per week travelling to and from work.

The time diaries also showed how much time people spend on courses, workshops and other types of training during working hours and how much time they spend looking for work. As less than 5% of the working-age population takes part in these activities, the time spent in these activities averages out at less than 10 minutes per week.

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### The Netherlands: Part-time champion

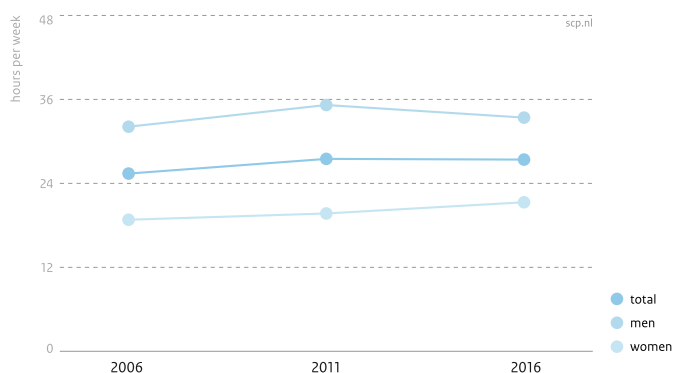
Part-time work is very popular in the Netherlands. Three-quarters of employed women and one in five employed men work part-time. The average across the 28 EU Member States is 31.5% for employed women and 8.2% for employed men (Portegijs & Van Brakel 2016).

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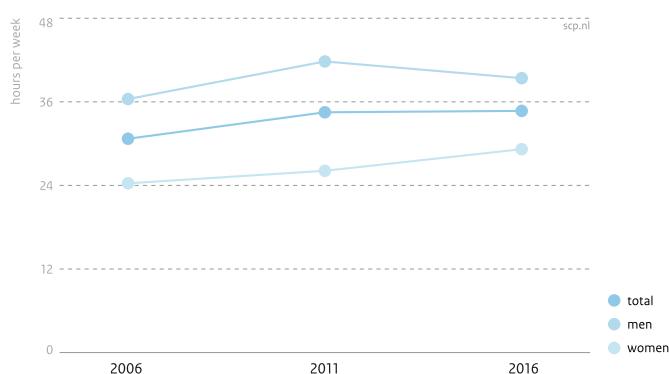
## Employment, 2006-2016

[Total time spent on activities relating to employment, population 20-64 years old, 2006-2016 (in hours per week).]

### Full population



### People in paid employment



Source: SCP (TBO'06); SCP/CBS (TBO'11-'16)

## Continuity....

In 2016, people spent two hours per week more on paid employment than in 2006. If we look only at employed respondents, the increase is slightly larger, at four hours per week. This increase is especially visible among employed women: in 2016 they spent five hours per week more on work-related activities than in 2006.<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that this does not mean that there was a similar increase in the contractual hours. The Emancipation Monitor 2016 (*Emancipatiemonitor 2016*) shows that the contractual working hours of employed women increased by an average of one hour per week between 2005 and 2015 (Portegijs & Van Brakel 2016, p. 67). The contractual hours of men fell by one hour over the same period.

## ...despite the economic crisis

The limited changes in paid worktime are surprising, given the deep economic crisis to which the Dutch labour market has been exposed over the past decade (CBS 2017). At the low point of the crisis in 2011, people were not working less than before and after the crisis.<sup>3</sup> If anything, the opposite was the case: employed men, in particular, spent more time on work in that year. It may be that they increased their working hours during the crisis in order to ensure their job security. It is also possible that it became easier to continue working from home on a laptop or smartphone.

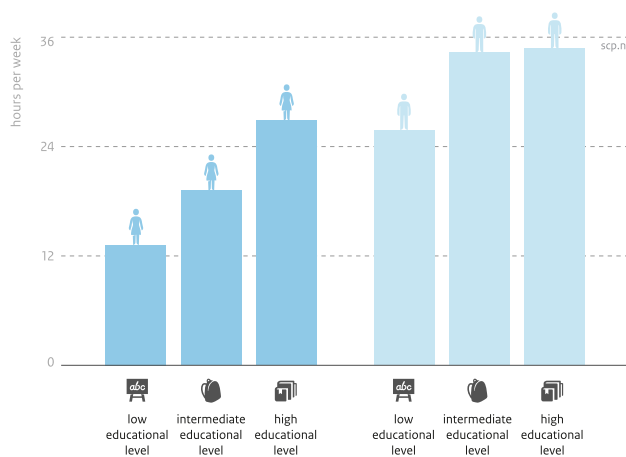
## Trends in contractual hours

The trends in the time use data correspond with estimates of the trends in contractual hours based on the Dutch Labour Force Survey (EBB). In 2005 employed women had a contract for 25.4 hours per week on average; in 2015, this had increased to 26.6 hours. The contractual hours for men were 38.5 and 37.7 hours per week, respectively. The Emancipation Monitor 2016 (*Emancipatiemonitor 2016*) also shows the increase in contractual hours was largest among younger women (Portegijs & Van Brakel 2016).

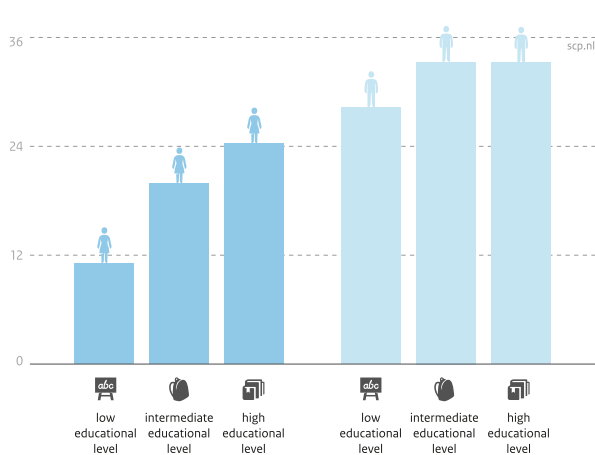
## Employment by education level

[Time spent on employment and related activities, by educational level and sex, population 20-64 years old, 2016 (in hours per week).]

2016



2006



Source: SCP/CBS (TBO'16)

It is possible that the working hours of people with high and low educational levels have developed differently over the last decade. Technological changes on the labour market mainly pose a threat to the labour market position of those with intermediate education, because their work is relatively often replaced by technology (Herweijer & Josten 2014; Van den Berge & Ter Weel 2015).

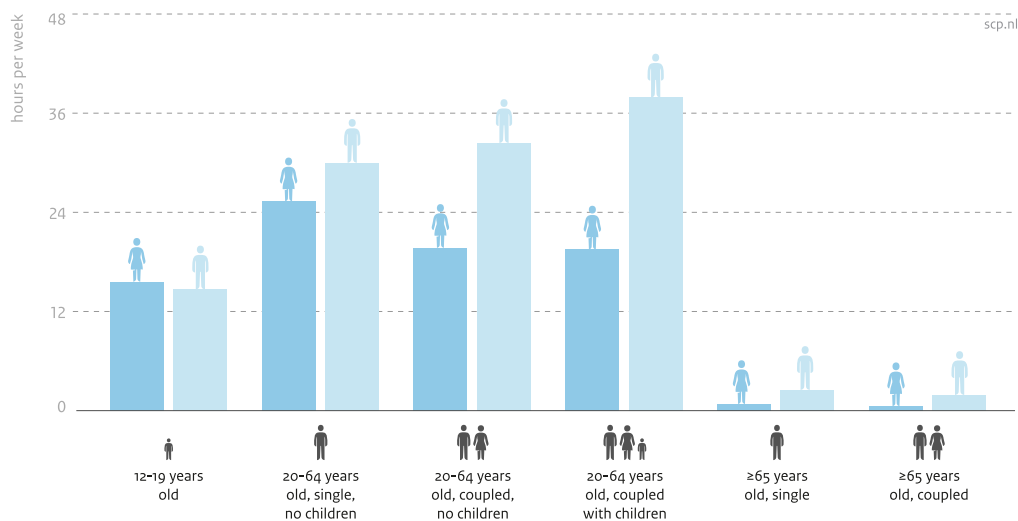
At the same time, telework is more common among those with a higher educational level, so these workers may be most tempted to work overtime (Roeters et al. 2016b; SER 2016).

The figure above shows the educational differences in the time spent on paid employment and related activities (for those between the ages of 20 and 65 years). Employed and non-employed individuals are included. The higher a person’s education level, the more time he or she spends on paid employment. Men with an intermediate educational level resemble men with a high educational level. Among women, those with an intermediate educational level occupy a distinct middle position. Between 2006 and 2016 the differences among women have increased slightly, while for men, the difference between those with low and high education has increased from five hours to no less than nine hours per week. This is mainly because the amount of time spent on employment by low-educated men (of working age) fell sharply between 2006 and 2011. Possible, lower educated man have been affected more by the economic crisis.

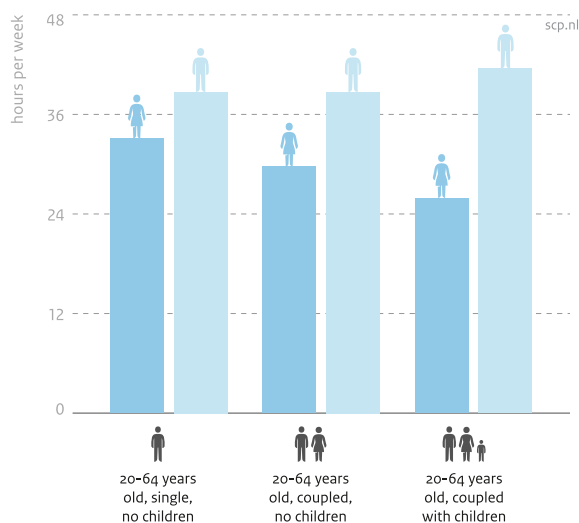
**Employment by age and family status**

[Time spent on employment and related activities, by age and family status, as well as sex, population aged 12 years and older, 2016 (in hours per week).]

**Full population**



**People in paid employment**



Source: SCP/CBS (TBO'16)

## Paid work over the life course

The amount of time that people are able and willing to allocate to paid work varies considerably depending on their personal circumstances (SER 2016). Does someone still go to school? Are there children that need to be looked after? The figures below show that the reported time on employment varies across age and family status.

Analyses of labour market participation often focus on people of working age; that is why this card mostly focused on those between the ages of 20 and 64 year. However, young people also report around 12 hours of paid work per week; these are often (though not always) side jobs, student jobs, etc. The reported working hours of older people are much lower; Older women (65+) work less than half an hour per week on average, older men two hours.

## Gender gap largest in life stage with children

Single women report a similar number of hours in paid employment as single men. Among those in a household with a partner and child(ren), men work 18.5 hours more per week than women. This pattern is in line with earlier research showing that gender differences in working hours increase with age. A crucial life event is the arrival of the first child (Wiesmann et al. 2008; Roeters et al. 2016a). Women often reduce their working hours in order to be able to spend time on the care for the child, while men tend to increase rather than decrease their work hours after the birth of a child. These different choices reflect different role patterns: women feel responsible for looking after the baby, while men feel responsible for providing financial security (Wiesmann et al. 2008; Bianchi & Milkie 2010).

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### Cite this card

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### Publication date

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### Notes

- 1 A lunch break during working hours is also categorized as performing paid work.
- 2 The increase is 4.5 hours per week if we look only at the time spent performing paid.
- 3 The share of respondents (aged 20-64) reporting that they were working during the diary week was around 80% in each survey year.



# Household and care

Author: [Anne Roeters](#)

## How much time do we spend on household and care tasks?

We allocate a part of our time to ourselves (e.g. when we read a book or take a bath), but when we care for others we 'give' a part of our time away. Parents look after children and informal carers provide care to loved ones who need help. Household tasks are also often considered as 'care' because these often benefit others (Folbre 2006). For example household members can enjoy a meal or a clean home. The question how much the Dutch value household work and other care tasks and how this compares with the value of employment is often raised but difficult to answer (Putters 2015). In this card we show how much time the Dutch spend on the household and the care for the family and others. Did the time spent on these activities remain constant between 2006 and 2016, as was the case for employment, or do we see more changes in this domain? How have educational differences developed and what differences can be observed between different age groups and household types?

Because care is one of the main domains where gender differences manifests themselves, this card focuses on the differences between men and women. For example, Dutch and international research shows that women still spend more time on household tasks than men (Portegijs & Van Brakel 2016; European Institute for Gender Equality 2017). The time use data enable us to look in more detail at how much time men and women spend on household and care tasks and how this varies across educational groups, age groups and household types.

## How much time do the Dutch spend on household and care tasks?

On average, the Dutch spend 21 hours per week on the housework and care. This is an average of three hours per day. If we include informal help provided to other households (such as unpaid odd jobs or babysitting), that adds an additional one hour per week to this average.<sup>1</sup> Women spend more time on the household and care (both the total and the individual activities).

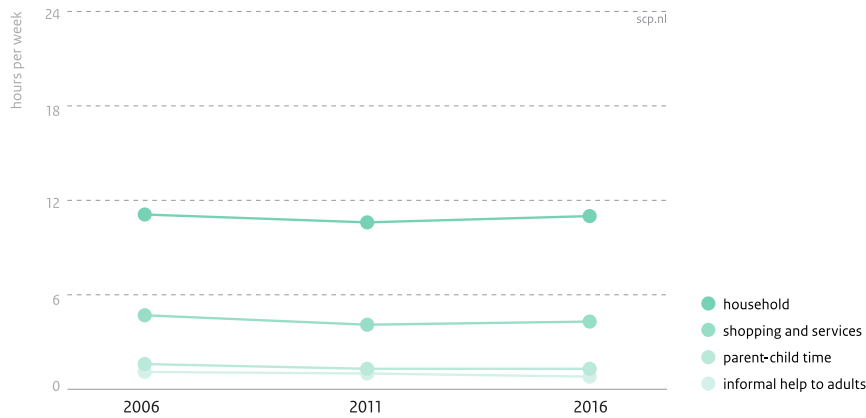
The bulk of the time spent on family care is allocated to activities such as cooking, tidying up, cleaning and doing the laundry. The Dutch spent 2 hours per day on these activities in 2016. Shopping and using services also take a fair amount of time, namely 5 hours per week (43 minutes per day).

The average Dutch person spends less than half an hour per day looking after and supervising children and providing unpaid help. However, many people do not have (young) children and/or do not have a partner, friends or family members that need help. Parents of children aged under 4 years spend 14.5 hours per week on childcare. Respondents who reported that they were providing some type of informal care spent an average of 3.5 hours per week doing so.

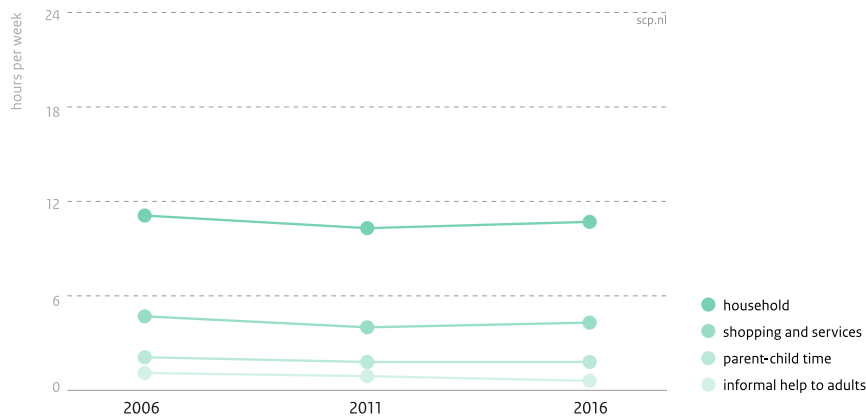
### Housework and care, 2006-2016

[Time spent on housework and care, different types of activities, population aged 12 years and older, 2006-2016 (in hours per week).]

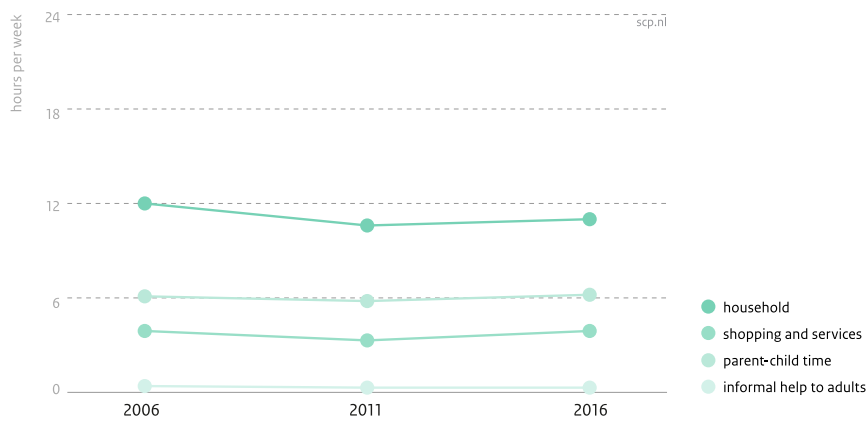
#### Men (full population)



#### Men (population 20 through 64 years old)



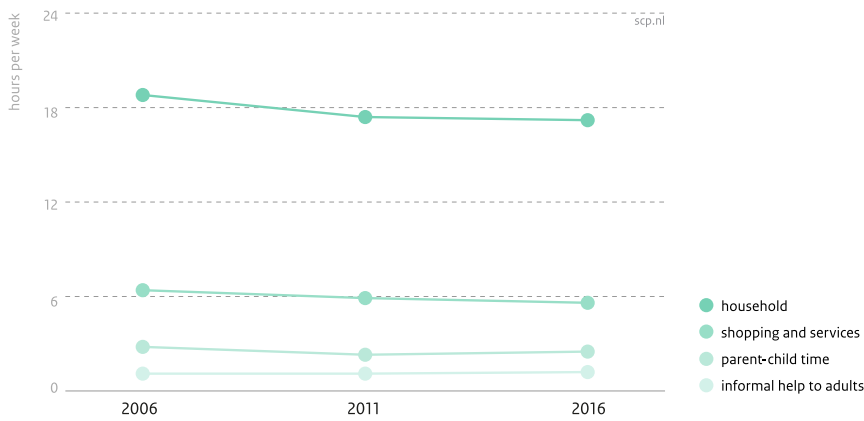
#### Fathers



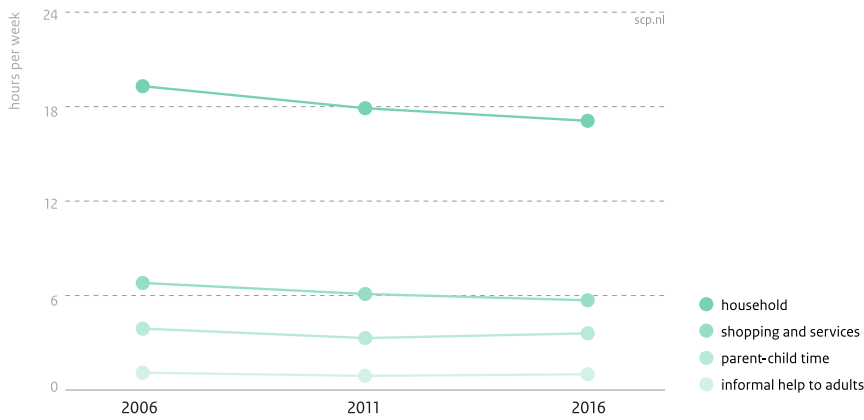
The figures for fathers and mothers apply to parents of children aged 11 years and younger.

Source: SCP (TBO'06); SCP/CBS (TBO'11-'16)

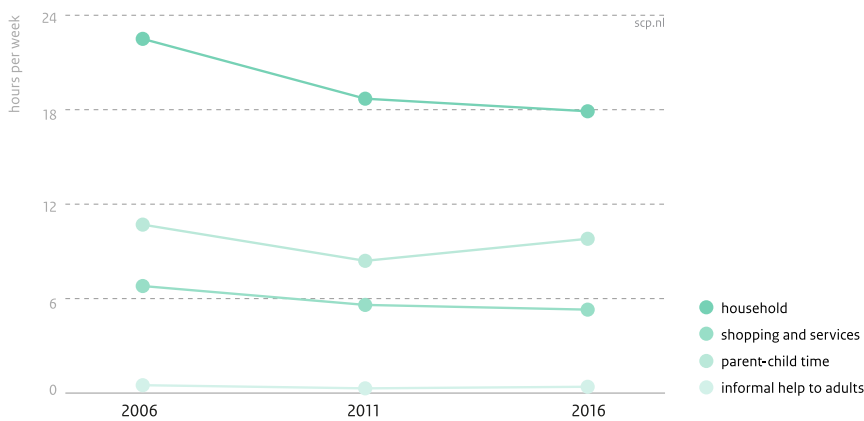
**Women (full population)**



**Women (population 20 through 64 years old)**



**Mothers**



The figures for fathers and mothers apply to parents of children aged 11 years and younger.  
 Source: SCP (TBO'06); SCP/CBS (TBO'11-'16)

**Time gains for women?**

Technological progress has led to the development of new household appliances and enable us to shop for food and groceries, clothing and meals online. These developments could partly explain why women spend less time on the household and care in 2016 compared to 2006: women spend 1 hour 36 minutes per week less on these activities than in 2006. There was no reduction for men.

As a result, the gap between men and women has somewhat narrowed. Nevertheless, in 2016 the gender gap was still almost nine hours per week.

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### Time-saving technologies in the household

Since the 1970s, scientists have been debating whether domestic appliances (such as microwaves and washing machines) have had a time saving-effect (Szalai et al. 1972; Vanek 1974; Bittman et al. 2004; Gershuny 2004). Although this debate is still ongoing, multiple studies suggest the amount of time spent on the household remains fairly constant despite the increased opportunities to save time. A possible explanation is that people raise their standards as the technical possibilities increase. For example, in the past, people only did the laundry once a week because it was so laborious. The arrival of laundry machines meant that laundry took less time, but in response people increased the frequency of washing their clothes. A similar mechanism may be at play now. It is easier to shop online, but the time that is saved by not having to go to the shop, may be spend looking at other online shops.

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### No indications that parenthood has become more intensive

Family sociologists posit that parents are more engaged with their children than in the past. It is suggested that this 'intensive parenthood' is a new ideology that stimulates parents to invest more time and money in their children than before (Altinas 2016). The time use data provide no evidence for this, however there are no significant differences between 2006 and 2016 for either fathers or mothers.

### No sign of an increase in informal support as yet

Despite the ageing of the Dutch population and the ambitions of the government for people to provide more informal support, people did not increase the time they spent in this activity between 2006 and 2016. The percentage of respondents who recorded providing informal support for at least 10 minutes in the diary week was 40% in 2006. In 2016 this was 10 percentage points lower. If we look only at those who provided informal support, we see large variations across time. Compared with 2006, those who provide informal support spent 40 minutes more doing so per week in 2016 (3.4 versus 2.7 hours). The average was higher in 2011, however, at 4.2 hours. In summary, it appears that the number of people providing unpaid help has declined over the last 10 years, but that those who do provide it spend more time doing so.

### Has the gender gap narrowed?

Bianchi et al. (2012) investigated whether the division of household and care tasks has become more equal in America over time. The researchers looked at a long period – 1965-2010 – and concluded that the gender gap had indeed narrowed. This is partly because men increased their involvement in the household, but mainly because women decreased the time they spent on household tasks.

In this card stack we look back over a period of 10 years. Although the pace of women's emancipation is generally slow, there are at least two reasons to expect that the gender gap has reduced.

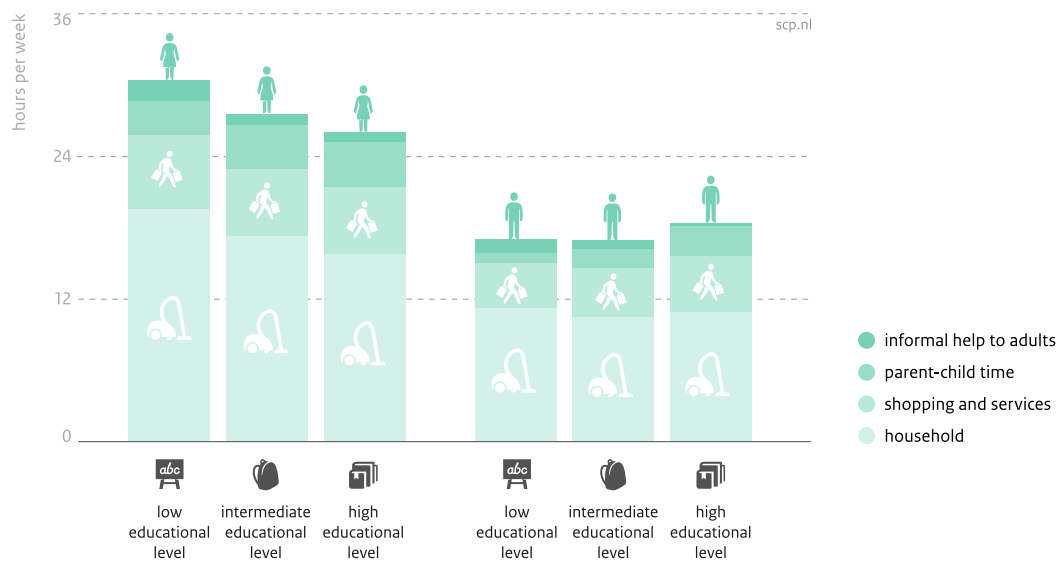
As discussed in the [Employment](#) card, women spend slightly more time in paid employment today than in the past. In addition, women’s education level has risen and actually exceeds that of men in the younger generations (Merens & Bucx 2017). As a result, gender norms may have become more egalitarian. The data show that the gender gap in the time spent on household and care tasks decreased from 11 hours per week (2006), to 9 hours per week (2016). The gender gap thus appears to be slowly narrowing.

Finally, there are surprisingly few differences between the population as a whole and those in paid employment. Those with children spend more time on household and family care.

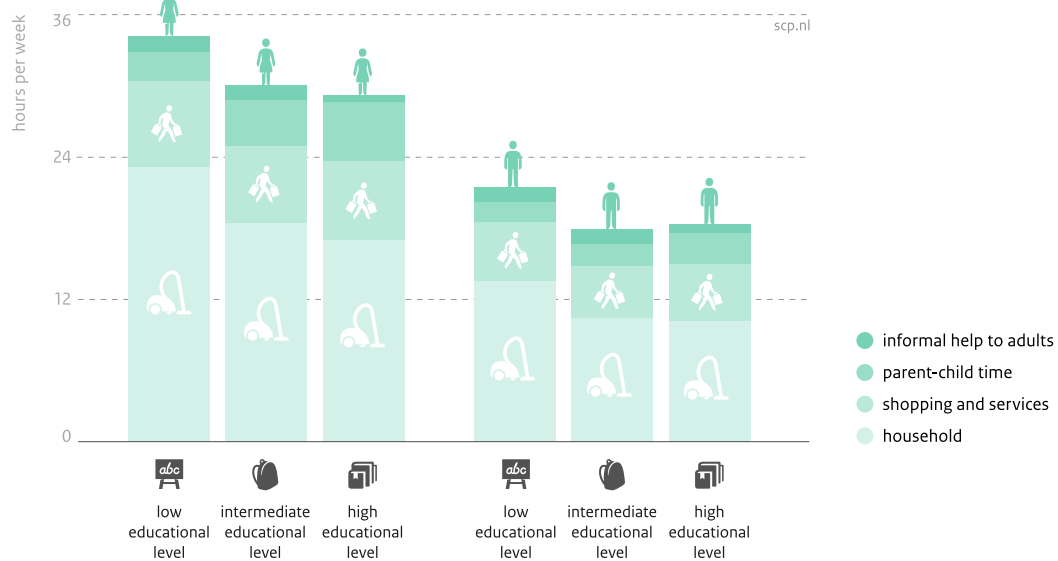
### Housework and care by education level

[Time spent on household and care tasks, by educational level and sex, population of 20-64 years old, 2016 (in hours per week).]

**2016**



**2006**



Source: SCP/CBS (TBO'16)

## Differences between educational levels greatest among men

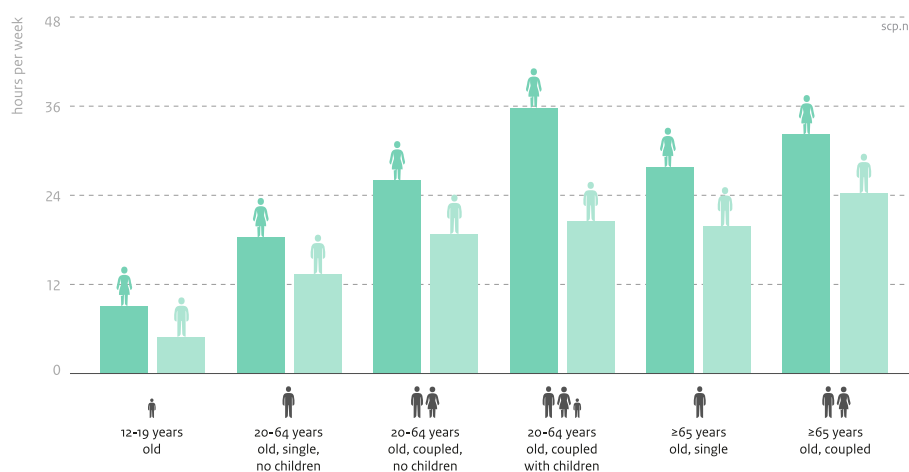
For paid employment, we found both gender and educational differences. Since employment and care are communicating vessels, it is interesting to investigate whether this finding also applies to the family and home domain. At first sight, this does indeed appear to be the case. However, a closer analysis shows that many of the differences are not statistically significant.

There are a few exceptions to this. Highly educated men seem to be more involved in child rearing as they spend more time with children than men with a low and intermediate educational level. Highly educated women spend less time on household tasks than women with a low educational level. One possible explanation is that higher educated women have less time because they are more likely to be in paid employment and have the financial resources to outsource household and care tasks (Heisig 2011). Finally, highly educated men and women spend relatively little time providing informal support to adults. It is possible that their parents and other loved ones suffer fewer health problems.

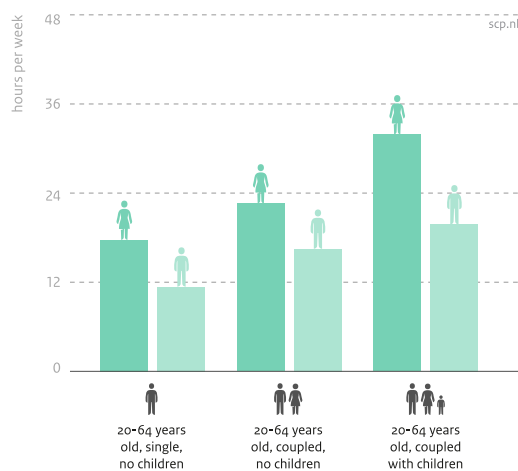
### Housework and care by age and family status

[Time spent on household and care tasks, by age and family status and sex, population aged 12 years and older, 2016 (in hours per week).]

#### Full population



#### People in paid employment



Source: SCP/CBS (TBO'16)

## Differences between parents and people without children larger for women than for men

Women still feel more responsible for the organisation of the household and care of children than men (Wiesmann et al. 2008; Ridgeway 2011; Portegijs & Van Brakel 2016). They also work fewer hours in the life stage with children, provide them with more time for family care (see also the card [Employment](#)). This suggests that women are more likely to adapt the time they spend on family care to their personal situation. The data support this.

Cohabiting men with at least one child spend two hours more per week on household and care tasks than cohabiting men who do not (yet) have children. However, the difference between cohabiting women with and without children is much greater: 10 hours per week. This implies that the gender gap in housework and care is especially large for couples with children. (This gender gap is slightly smaller if only those in paid employment are considered). Nevertheless, even among single individuals a gender gap exists. For example, in the age group of the 20-64-years old, single women spend five hours per week more on household and care tasks than single men.<sup>2</sup>

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### Why we cannot make interferences about changes over the life course

The time use data enable us to compare different age groups and household types. However, they do not allow us to make claims about cause-effect relationships: we cannot know if life course events such as the birth of a child *influence* people's time use. This implies that the observed differences between groups may have to be attributed to 'third' factors. For example, people with children may have already spend more time on housework before the birth of the child because they are more home-oriented.

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## Gender gap also wide among young people and people aged over 65

To contextualize the time use of 20-64 year-olds - that was discussed in the previous paragraph -, we also look at the earlier and later life stages. Girls and young women between the ages of 12 and 19 years old spend 4 hours more per week on household and care tasks than boys and young men in this age group.<sup>3</sup> Possibly, parents allocate more household tasks to their daughters than to their sons. What happens after age 65, when both partners generally no longer (need to) work? The time use of men and women in this age group is relatively similar compared to the age group 20-64-years old. However, women still spend 8 hours per week more on household and care tasks than men.

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## Notes

- 1 In the card [A week at a glance](#), this form of time use was categorised under voluntary work and meetings. Here, we regard unpaid help as a family care.
- 2 As in the rest of this card stack, single parents are not included, because our dataset includes too little information on this group to enable us to make any statements about them.
- 3 Compared with boys, girls spend more time on household tasks, groceries/shopping and giving informal support to adults.

# Leisure

Author: [Anne Roeters](#)

## How much leisure do the Dutch have and what do they do?

The amount and nature of people's leisure is an indicator of their quality of life (Stiglitz et al. 2010; Verbeek & De Haan 2011; Bijl et al. 2015). People can use leisure time to relax, strengthen social ties, perform physical activity and learn new skills such as a language. Moreover, the way in which leisure time is spent, is relatively free. The amount of leisure time people have and how they experience and allocate this time is partly a matter of choice, but also depends on personal circumstances. Someone with a busy job and young children, for example, will have little time for leisure activities, while someone who is unemployed has a lot of free time but may not derive as much enjoyment from this. In this card we investigate how much time people spend in leisure activities and how they spend this time. We also investigate the possible differences between men and women and educational and age groups.

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### Why more leisure time is not always better

Although the term 'leisure time' has a positive ring to it, it is not necessarily experienced as such. Someone who is unemployed, for example, may not always know what to do with the time at their disposal. Moreover, leisure is not necessarily relaxing. Prior research suggests leisure can be intensive and busy (Gershuny 2009; Sevilla et al. 2012; Sullivan & Gershuny 2017). Research also shows that the quality of women's leisure is lower than that of men because women more often multitask leisure with care tasks and because their leisure activities are more fragmented (Bittman & Wajcman 2000; Portegijs et al. 2016).

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## How much leisure do we have?

We consider eight sub-categories of leisure: media and ICT (including watching television); social life (such as family visits); hobbies (such as playing music); cultural participation (such as a visit to the theatre); sports; outdoor activities and trips (including walking and cycling trips); going to bars/restaurants and parties; and simply doing nothing.<sup>1</sup> Together, these activities took up 42.4 hours per week in 2016, roughly equivalent to a full-time working week. On Saturday and Sunday, people spend around 7.5 hours in leisure activities. On weekdays, this varies between five hours and fifteen minutes on an average Tuesday and six hours on an average Friday.

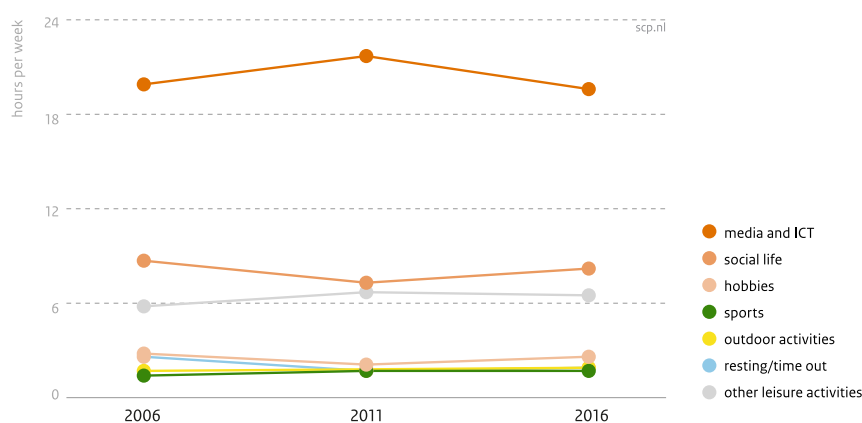
Media and ICT [[Listening to or watching media, reading, gaming, using the Internet and using a computer.](#)] (19.6 hours per week) and social life [[Social life: face-to-face contact \(e.g. visits\) and mediated contact \(telephone, SMS, chat, social media.\)](#)] (8.2 hours per week) are the most popular types of leisure. If we look more closely, we see that the category 'media and ICT' consists mainly of watching television (an average of two hours per day).<sup>2</sup> Compared to women, men spend a larger part of their leisure on media, ICT and hobbies, and spend less time in social activities.

## A closer look at media and ICT use: The ‘Media:Time study

The ‘Media: Time’ study examines media use in the Netherlands in detail. For this study, the Netherlands Institute of Social Research (SCP) collaborates with the Dutch Public Broadcasting Association (Nederlandse Publieke Omroep – NPO), the National Radio Audience Research Organisation (Nationaal Luister Onderzoek – NLO), the National Multimedia Research Organisation (Nationaal Onderzoek Multimedia – NOM), the Dutch Viewer Audience Measurement Service (Stichting Kijk Onderzoek – SKO) and the Dutch Outdoor Research Organisation (Buitenreclame Onderzoek – BRO). This time-use survey has been carried out twice (in 2013 and 2015) and will be repeated every few years. Time use is measured slightly differently in the Media: Time study than in this study. For example, people are asked to enter one main activity and up to three media and ICT activities for each time interval of 10 minutes. See the [Media:Time card stack](#) for more information about the survey and the results (in Dutch).

## Leisure time, 2006-2016

[Time spent in different types of leisure, population aged 12 years and older, 2008-2016 (in hours per week).]



Source: SCP (TBO’06); SCP/CBS (TBO’11-’16)

There is little change in the total amount of leisure time between 2006 and 2016. Also, the gender gap does not become larger or smaller. If we look in more detail at the specific leisure activities, we see that - compared with 2016 - people in 2006 more often reported that they were resting and relaxing. A number of shifts appear to have taken place between 2006 and 2011, which were reversed in 2016. For example, the time spent on media and ICT increased between 2006 and 2011, but returned to the same level in 2016.

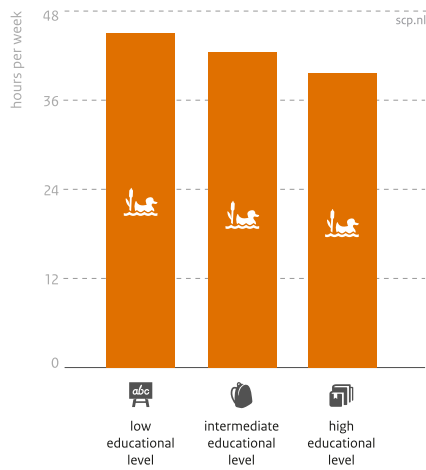
## A possible explanation for the decrease in media and ICT-time

The surprising decrease in media and ICT use between 2011 and 2016 is mainly driven by changes in Internet and computer use. The change would have smaller if we had considered “online activities on phone” as leisure. However, this activity was categorized as social life because the telephone is often used for online communication. For more information, see Chapter 9 of ‘Social State of the Netherlands 2017’ (*Sociale Staat van Nederland 2017*) (Bijl et al. 2017).

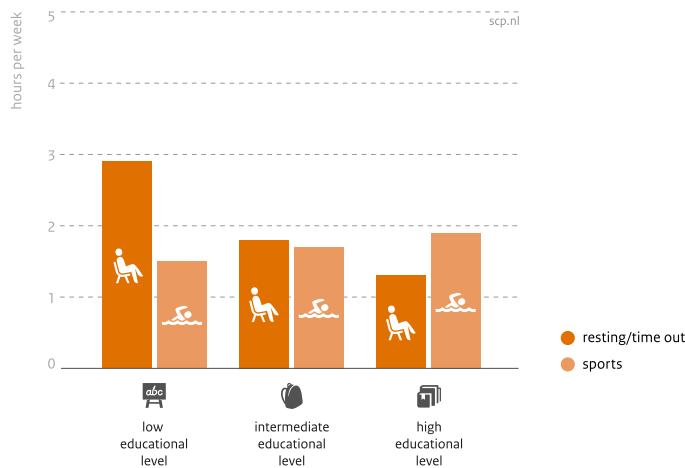
### Leisure time by educational level

[Time spent on leisure, by educational level and sex, population aged 12 years and older, 2016 (in hours per week).]

#### Leisure (total)



#### Sports and resting



Source: SCP/CBS (TBO'16)

### Leisure and social status

Socio-economic differences in leisure time have existed as long as this topic has been studied. But whereas a higher socio-economic status (SES) was traditionally associated with *more* leisure time, nowadays those with a higher SES have less leisure compared to those with a lower SES (Veblen 1899/1912; Gershuny 2009). Traditionally, the wealth and social position of the upper class meant that they spent no or very little time in paid employment. There was no need to do so. Moreover, the upper class had the money to outsource household work and the care for children. This left a lot of time for leisure. In contrast, the lower social classes had to work long days in order to earn a sufficient income. Nowadays, higher SES groups tend to work longer hours than lower SES groups. One of the drivers of this change is the rise of the knowledge economy..

## Lower educated spend more activities in leisure time than higher educated

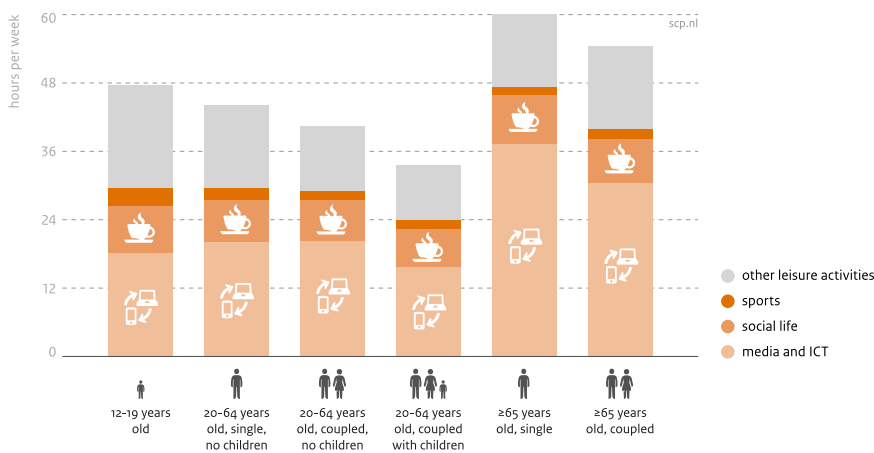
There is a clear educational difference in the time spent on leisure. Those with a lower educational level report more leisure time than those with an intermediate and higher educational level. This finding does not change if we exclude young people and those aged over 65 who have a lower education level compared with the other groups and who tend not to be employed) from the analyses. This pattern is in line with prior (international) research (Gershuny 2009; Gimenez-Nadal & Sevilla-Sanz 2011; Sevilla et al. 2012; Cloin 2013). People with a lower educational level more often work fewer hours and are more often unemployed, which means they (can) allocate a relatively high proportion of their time to leisure activities.

To investigate whether the different educational groups organise their time differently, we zoomed in on two leisure activities: sports and resting. Sport is an example of an ‘intensive’ activity, which can be expensive and to which a certain status is attached. Resting, by contrast, is less intensive activity which is by definition not organised. The differences in sport are negligible, but when it comes to resting we find that people with low education do indeed spend more time on this activity.

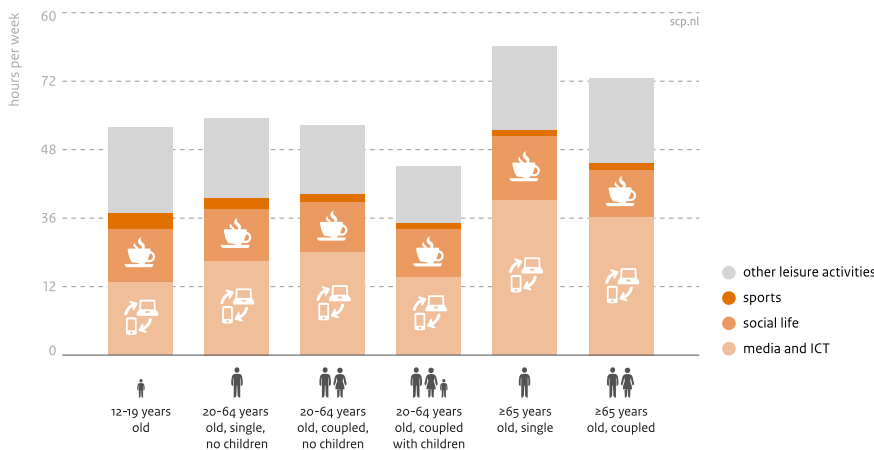
### Leisure by age and family status

[Time spent on leisure, population aged 12 years and older, 2016 (in hours per week).]

#### Men



#### Women



Source: SCP/CBS (TBO'16)

## Different ages and family status, different possibilities

In line with the findings in the other cards of this card stack, we find that the life stage in which many people have a career and dependent children is relatively busy. The data on leisure time confirm this finding: cohabiting parents spend the least time in leisure activities (just over 33 hours per week). Young people, and especially older people, have lots of leisure time. Of all the groups that were studied, men aged 65 and older (living with a partner) have most leisure time (56 hours per week).

The types of activities people participate in also varies with age and family status. Compared with the older age groups, young people spend more time doing sports and socialising. These activities are relatively active and often take place outside the home. The absence of young children and health complaints probably makes it easier to participate in these activities. Media and ICT use – the most passive form of time use in this figure – is popular for all ages and in all family types. This activity is most popular among the over-65s. The main driver is mainly because people aged over 65 spend a relatively large amount of time watching television.

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### Notes

- 1 Voluntary work and meetings (such as committee work), religious activities (such as church attendance) and attending meetings of associations and organisations (such as a political party) are not included here, but are classed under volunteering and meetings; see the card [A week at a glance](#).
- 2 This means watching television as a main activity. Watching television as a secondary activity (e.g. if the television is on in the background whilst the respondent is cooking) is not counted.

# Background of the Time Use Survey

Author: [Anne Roeters](#)

## Changing times?

The past decade has been characterized by many societal changes. The Dutch economy fell into a crisis and recovered again. Politicians and policymakers changed tack by aiming for a ‘participation society’: a society in which citizens participate in paid employment, lifelong learning, volunteering, local decision-making and informal care (Putters, 2015) – and all this at a time when worries about time pressure are abound (Kervezee 2015; Velde 2015; Vrij Nederland 2015). This publication investigates whether these changes are reflected in the time use of the Dutch.

Do the Dutch spend more time working and providing care than in the past? Are we heading towards a 24/7 society in which we work and care around the clock? And how much time is left for leisure?

## A brief guide to the cards and figures

The data relate to people’s main activities. Participants in the study kept a time-use diary for one week in which they were asked to indicate which was their main activity at each given time interval. Unless stated otherwise, the data relate to all Dutch citizens aged 12 years and older, including those who did not spend any time on the activity in question. Most of the tables report the average time use across the whole week. Respondents who did not make diary entries on all seven days have been left out of consideration in these figures.

## Background to the study

Since 1975, the SCP has used the Time Use Survey as a means to describe the daily life of the Dutch. Every five years, a sample of the Dutch population is asked to and record their time use in a ‘time diary’, during one week. These data have been [reported in several reports](#).

Since 2011, the SCP collected the data in collaboration with [Statistics Netherlands \(CBS\)](#). In 2006, the fieldwork was performed by Social data BV.

Diary data are a rich source of information because they provide an insight into who does what, when and with whom. We assume that diary data are not, or minimally, biased by social desirability because respondents report their actual behaviour and do not estimate how much time they spend on different activities (Gershuny 2003; Sayer 2005).

In this card stack we analysed the most recent time use data, which were collected throughout 2016. We also look back at the two previous editions of the survey, from 2006 and 2011. Between 1975 and 2005, a slightly different method was used (Kamphuis et al. 2009), so in this card stack we decided not to go back further than 2006. In the next [time use report](#) (which will be published in 2018), we will look further back in time.



## Significance testing

This card compares years, men and women, people with high and low educational levels and different age groups and family types. When interpreting these differences, it is important to consider the ‘statistical significance’ of these differences. Differences may also be attributed to chance, for example because the difference is small or there is a lot of uncertainty. Where we say something about differences, these have proved to be significant unless stated otherwise.

## Categorization of the activities

The respondents in the study reported their activities in their own words. Afterwards, coders of the CBS assigned activity codes to these activities. For the analyses in this card stack, these activity codes were grouped together (See the [code lists](#) [↗](#) (in Dutch)). For example, sports activities were categorized as leisure. To some extent, the categorization of individual activities is arbitrary. Eating an evening meal at home, for example, is categorised as personal care here, whereas it could also be categorised as leisure or even as parent-child time when family members are present (Mandemakers & Roeters 2014). The categorisation of the activities is based on the literature. But as that literature develops in line with advancing insights, and the nature of the activities changes, it was decided when devising the new classification to deviate on some points from the classification used in earlier SCP reports.<sup>1</sup>

For example, construction and repairs is no longer categorised under leisure, but as housework. As a direct consequence of this, the gender differences in both leisure and family care are smaller than before.

## Time-use diaries

The Time Use Survey combines a ‘time diary’ with a questionnaire. Each respondent received a diary in which he or she recorded their time use. Respondents wrote down in their own words what they were doing during each time interval in the diary week. They were asked to record the most important activity (‘main activity’) and any other activities they were doing at the same time (‘secondary activity’). For each activity they were asked to report where they were, whether they were alone or in the company of someone they knew. Coders from Statistics Netherlands (CBS) went through the diaries and assigned an appropriate code from a code list to each activity. See the [code lists](#) [↗](#) (in Dutch).

Supplementary to this, the respondents also answered questions from two questionnaires, completing the first questionnaire at the start of the diary week and the second at the end. The questionnaires provided us with information on aspects such as the socio-demographic background characteristics, perceived quality of life, opinions and job characteristics of respondents.

## Sampling and fieldwork

Statistics Netherlands (CBS) drew a sample from all persons who were registered as residents of the Netherlands in the Personal Records Database and who were aged 10 years or older (the 10 and 11 year-olds were excluded from the analyses in this card stack). People living in institutions

or residential nursing or care homes were excluded from the sample. As the data were collected throughout 2016, a new sample was drawn each month. This was a two-step process. In the first step, a number of municipalities were selected within each region of the Netherlands. The chance that a municipality would be selected was proportionate to the number of residents. This step guaranteed a regional distribution. In the second step, a random sample was drawn within each municipality.

The CBS interviewers visited the homes of potential respondents. If these persons were prepared to take part, the “Start-questionnaire” was completed at that moment. Respondents were also asked if they were willing to record their activities in the diary. At the end of the diary week, the interviewer called on the respondent again. During this visit, the diary was checked and the “End questionnaire” completed. The initial invitation letter contained a gift voucher for 5 euros. When respondents completed the diary, they received a further gift voucher worth 10 euros.


The “Start questionnaire” was completed by 2,757 people, equivalent to a response rate of 52.9%. Some people did drop out during the subsequent steps, however. The diaries of 2,260 respondents were approved; this means that they had correctly completed at least one working day and at least one weekend day in the diaries. For this card stack, we only selected respondents who had completed the diaries for a full week. As a consequence, the final analyses were based on 1,841 respondents. In the final sample, young people, older people and households with higher incomes and cohabiting partners were overrepresented. To correct for any biases, weights were used in the analyses.

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### Notes

- 1 The most recent (2017) edition of "Social state of the Netherlands" (Bijl et al. 2017) and the most recent Time Use report 'Met het oog op de tijd' ('With an eye on the time') (Cloin 2013).