



Press release

Statistics Netherlands

PR01-264
19-11-2001
9:30 AM

Work load not increasing

The percentage of Dutch people experiencing high-pressure workloads was slightly lower in 2000 than it had been in 1999. The percentage of people working behind computer terminals has been stable since 1998. In 2000 over 6000 work-related illnesses were reported, 2000 more than in 1999. Over 50% of the work-related illnesses are problems with the back, shoulders, arms or hands (including RSI). About half of all RSI complaints are caused by working with computers.

There was a slight increase in absenteeism, from 5.4 to 5.5%. The increase was smaller than in previous years.

These data come from the report on working conditions in 2001 produced by Statistics Netherlands, the *Arbomonitor* of the Labour Inspectorate, and the *signaleringsrapport Beroepsziekten 2001* of the Netherlands Center of Occupational Diseases.

These reports are included in the *Arbobalans 2001* submitted to Parliament by Deputy Minister Hoogervorst of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment.

[ARBO stands for working conditions, translator]

Work load down slightly

In 2000 three people in ten worked under great time pressure, while four in ten regularly had to work. This is a slight drop compared to 1999. One noticeable result is that working under great time pressure in construction dipped substantially, from 32% in 1999 to 28% in 2000.

Autonomy unchanged

Autonomy, or having a say in one's own work, hardly changed between 1999 and 2000. However there are a few changes when the situation is compared to 1996. The number of people who have a say in setting the pace at which they work has increased fairly strongly: from 59 in 100 in 1996 to 66 in 100 last year. Likewise possibilities improved for people to decide on how to do the work and when to take time off during this period: from 68 to 71%. Other forms of autonomy, such as decisions about taking breaks and ordering the sequence of work, hardly changed.

Statistics Netherlands
Press Office

P.O. Box 4000
2270 JM Voorburg
The Netherlands
tel. +31 70 337 58 16
fax +31 70 337 59 71
e-mail:
persdienst@cbs.nl

Statistics Netherlands
is a department of
the Ministry of
Economic Affairs

Working behind the terminal

In 2000 about 43% of the work force was regularly working behind a terminal. This is about the same figure as in the preceding two years. Working behind a terminal has been stable since 1998, whereas there was an increase in the number of people working at terminals between 1996 and 1998 from 38 to 43%.

The percentage of people who had to work with their upper body in the same position for long periods of time fell from 45% in 1996 to 42% in 2000. Also the percentage of people who regularly have to work in an uncomfortable position went down slightly, as did the percentage of people who are regularly sweating or out of breath while working.

More checks by Labour Inspectorate

The percentage of people who have to use physical strength at work has been stable in recent years. The same is true for the percentages of people who have to deal with harmful noise or vibrations. The efforts to eliminate these risks will be increased in the near future. The Labour Inspectorate will become stricter in checking that noise standards are observed and protective gear is worn. The capacity of the Labour Inspectorate will be increased by 50 jobs. Furthermore, the agreements with the social partners on prevention and re-integration will be continued.

Not enough attention paid to occupational diseases

In the report signalling occupational diseases there is a call for medical care for occupational diseases. Because there is too much emphasis on absenteeism, the ARBO services cannot provide enough signals about the damage to people's health caused by work. In many cases the care and treatment of patients suffering from work-related diseases require specific specialist knowledge and have to be focused both on the individual and on the situation at work. The Dutch Center for Occupational diseases favours using industrial health care expertise in curative care. Furthermore the ARBO services have to keep up to date in the areas of prevention and care of work-related diseases.

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For more information please contact:

STATISTICS NETHERLANDS,
Ferdy Otten, tel. (045) 570 72 75

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND EMPLOYMENT,
Petra Klap, tel. (070) 333 48 09

NETHERLANDS CENTER FOR OCCUPATIONAL DISEASES,
Dick Spreeuwiers, tel. (020) 566 53 87