



Press release

Statistics Netherlands

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Employment up again in 1998

The labour market showed strong positive trends again in 1998. Employment was 200 thousand up on 1997 and unemployment fell sharply. Nearly half of Dutch women now have paid work. Just as in 1997, the number of people with a permanent job increased strongly. The rise in the number of flexible workers also continued according to the Statistics Netherlands' labour force survey.

More people in work

According to the results of the labour force survey the number of people with a job of at least twelve hours a week was on average 193 thousand higher than in 1997. This result confirms the picture from the surveys among companies up to and including the third quarter. With a growth in employment of nearly 200 thousand, 1998 was another top year for the labour market. In 1997 too there were 200 thousand more people with a job than in 1996. The number of people with a job of at least twelve hours a week, the active labour force, was 6.6 million on average in 1998. In 1988 it was still only 5.4 million, so it has risen by 1.2 million people in the space of ten years.

Nearly half of Dutch women in paid employment

Female labour participation grew further in 1998. Last year nearly half of the women aged 15-64 had a paid job of at least twelve hours a week (49%). In 1981 this percentage was still only 30. Labour market participation of men also increased and rose to 75% in 1998, the same level as in 1981, while it had declined substantially in the eighties.

In spite of the strong rise in the number of women working, it is still much lower than the number of men. The difference in labour participation between men and women is smallest for the higher educated. Seventy-three per cent of women with vocational college or university education had a job, compared with 86% of men with a similar education. For those with lowest education levels 30% of women had a job compared with 62% of men.

Part-time work increasing

The number of people with a part-time job was 134 thousand higher last year than in 1997. Nearly 2 million people, 30% of the active labour force have a job of 12-34 hours a week. The increase in female employment was largely down to an increase in the number of part-time jobs. In 1998, 90 thousand more women had a part-time job, only 10

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thousand more a full-time job. Part-time jobs are also more popular among men. Just under half of the increase in male employment was in jobs of 12-34 hours a week.

Strong increase in permanent jobs

In 1998 the number of people with a permanent (full-time or part-time) job was 169 thousand higher than in 1997. This is the second year running that the number of workers with permanent contracts has shown a strong growth. The number of people with a flexible contract also increased further. There were nearly 45 thousand flexible workers more in 1998 than in 1997. In the last four years, the number of these workers has risen by a total of 185 thousand.

Unemployment fell sharply

Unemployment fell by nearly 90 thousand to 287 thousand in 1998. Registered unemployment is defined as the number of people without a job (or with a job of less than 12 hours a week) registered with an employment agency, seeking work and available to start work for at least twelve hours a week immediately. Figures on registered unemployment are published monthly. Statistics Netherlands also compiles other figures on unemployment. A broader definition of unemployment is the non-active labour force. These are people who are looking for work for twelve or more hours a week, regardless of whether they are registered with an employment agency. The non-active labour force also fell by 90 thousand last year to 349 thousand people, 5% of the labour force. This sharp fall in the number of non-active people has taken unemployment to its lowest level since 1980.

One hundred thousand fewer people want paid work

An even broader definition of unemployment is the number of people who would like to work for at least twelve hours a week regardless of whether they are looking for a job or are available to start work straightaway. There were 918 thousand of such people in 1998 over 100 thousand fewer than in 1997.

Position of immigrants and lower educated still unfavourable

Although the labour force participation of immigrants did rise from 1997 to 1998, it is still much lower than that of the native population. Unemployment among immigrants fell from 16 to 13%. In spite of the strong rise in employment, the position of Turks and Moroccans has not improved in the last four years. Unemployment in this group was 20% in 1998, four times the level of the native population.

Unemployment among people with lower educational levels has been high for years. In 1998 12% of people with only primary education were unemployed, just over twice as many as in the total labour force.

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