

## Facts and Figures of the Netherlands



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Social and Cultural Trends 1995-2006

Theo Roes (ed.)



The Netherlands Institute for Social Research | SCP  
The Hague, March 2008

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## Foreword

This publication contains an abridged version of *The Social State of the Netherlands (De sociale staat van Nederland) 2005 and 2007*, which is published by the Netherlands Institute for Social Research | SCP. The structure of this report is described schematically in Annex 1.

This summary of the two publications presents a description and analysis in broad outline of the life situation of the Dutch population and of specific population groups using key figures on aspects such as education, employment, income, health care, leisure time use, social participation, safety and housing. These descriptions include the opinions of citizens themselves.

SCP also presents the Life Situation Index in this publication. The Index is a measure which provides an overall picture of the social situation in the Netherlands, distilled into an index score.

Finally, this publication includes a report and analysis of public opinion on politics and the government, as well as on European affairs.

Many SCP staff contributed to *The Social State of the Netherlands 2005 and 2007*. Theo Roes, former deputy director of SCP, was the editor for the Dutch-language publication in 2005 and also wrote this abridged summary for translation into English. We owe him a great debt of thanks for his willingness to produce this special publication.

Prof.dr. Paul Schnabel  
Council Director, The Netherlands Institute for Social Research/SCP



# 1 Demography: size and profile of the population

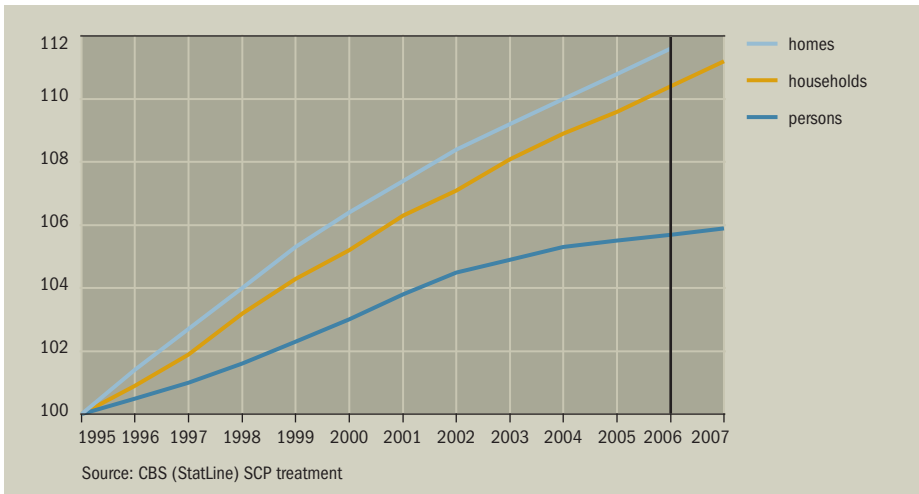
Population ageing, multiculturalisation and household dilution have become key social processes at the start of the 21st century, which have major consequences for the life situation of the population and the structure of the Dutch welfare state.

## Population trend

The Dutch population has been growing steadily for more than a century (figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1

Trend in the population, 1995-2007 (in index figures, 1995= 100; 2007 is estimated)



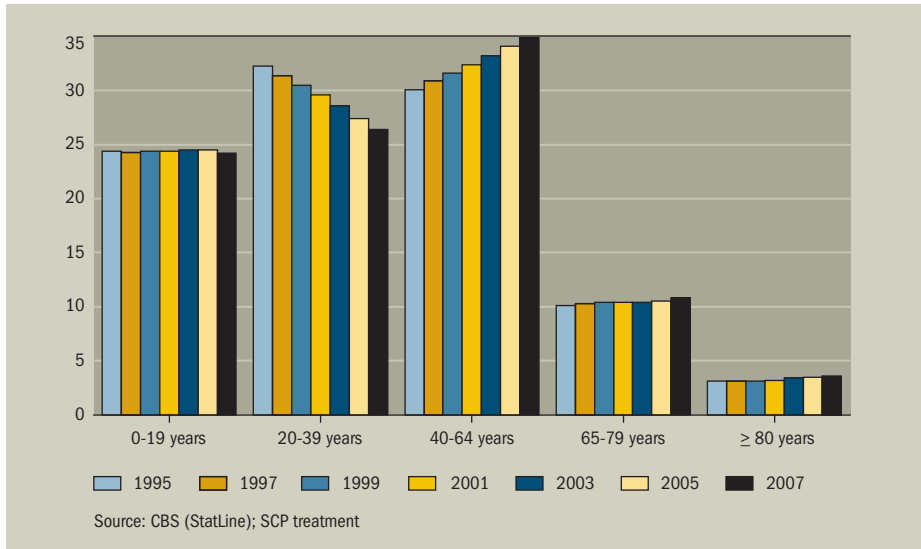
The number of people living in the Netherlands grew between 1993 and 2005 by 6% per annum to reach 16.4 million in 2006. It grew slightly faster in the middle of this period (0.75%) than at the beginning and at the end (0.2%). The population growth rate is expected to remain at this level (CBS 2005). More than 60% of the increase was due to a birth surplus, and just under 40% to a migration surplus. The migration surplus had a particularly strong influence on the population growth at the start of the 1990s and again at the start of the present century, but this influence fell sharply from 2003 onwards and has now become negative. The birth surplus has remained fairly stable over time, at just over 60,000 persons.

The number of households has also increased, reaching 7.2 million in 2006, and at 0.90% per year is growing faster than the number of people in the population. In the period 1993-2006 the growth in the number of households outstripped the increase in the population by over 5%. This higher growth rate is attributable partly to a

relative increase in the number of single-person households (up 1.6% per annum), as well as the rise in the number of families without children (1.1% per year) at the expense of the number of families with children (0.1% per annum). The number of children per family with children has remained virtually unchanged at an average of 1.8.

Household dilution means that the total amount of income earned in the Netherlands is more thinly spread; it has to be shared between more households, but by fewer people per household on average. As a result, an average household was able to manage with 2.5% less income in 2005 than in 1993 in order to achieve the same level of prosperity. As the number of children per family with children is not falling, this effect does not occur in family households.

Figure 1.2  
Dutch population by age, 1995-2007 (in percentages; 2007 is estimated)



The population trend is characterised not only by family dilution, but also by ageing. This ageing has not manifested itself so much in the highest age groups in the past decade, but mainly in the potential labour force (figure 1.2). Thus the proportion of 20-39 year-olds fell steadily from 32% in 1995 to 26% in 2007 (-1.7% per annum), while the proportion of 40-64 year-olds rose from 30% to 35% (+1.2% per year). The share of 65-79 year-olds increased from 10.1% in 1995 to 10.8% in 2007, and the proportion of people aged over 80 increased from 3.1% to 3.6%. Although these latter increases appear less spectacular, the absolute numbers involved are considerable, particularly among the over-80s; the number of people in this age group has increased by 25% since 1995, reaching a total of 596,000 by early 2007.

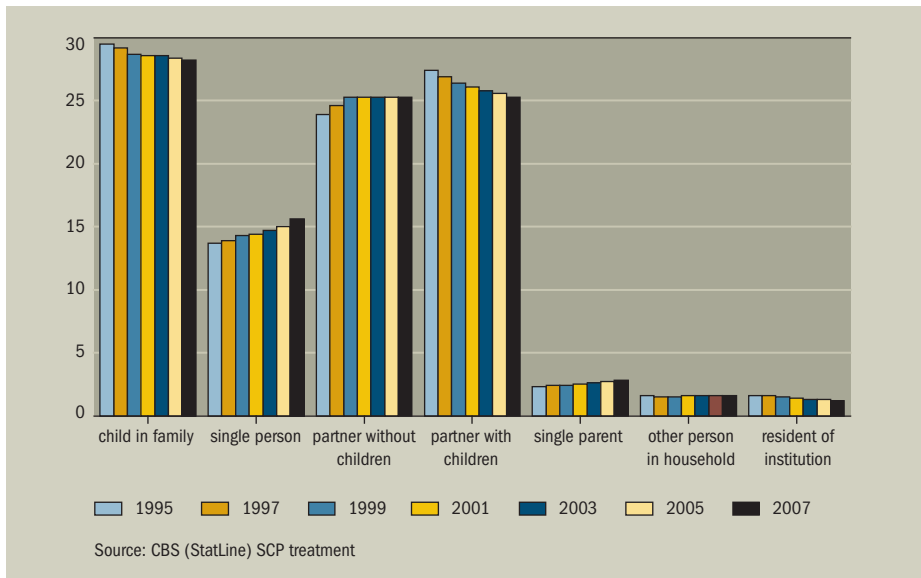
### Population composition

At any point in the period 1995-2000, the most common household is a two-parent family with children (48%), followed by a two-person household (25%) and a single-person household (16%). Single-parent families (8%), residents of institutions and special forms of cohabitation (each around 2%) are clearly in the minority (figure 1.3).

The cohabitation profile is gradually changing. The number of lone-parent families and single-person households has increased substantially in the course of ten years, while the number of residents of institutions has declined. Couples with children are also on a downward trend; their share in total households has fallen steadily from 27.4% in 1995 to 25.3% in 2007.

Figure 1.3

The population by position in the household, 1995-2007 (in percentages; 2007 is estimated)



Relationship formation patterns in the Netherlands are dominated by the ‘serial monogamy’ model: a – generally small – series of monogamous relationships culminating in a fairly late first marriage (on average 32 years for men, 30 for women). Same-sex marriage has been legal in the Netherlands since 2000, and accounts for just over 1.5% of the total number of marriages each year. The number of marriages fell by almost 10% between 1995 and 2005 to 74,000; the number of partnerships registered in 2005 was 11,300, of which 600 were same-sex partnerships. Marriage is increasingly losing popularity as the preferred relationship for families with children; in 1980, one in 20 children was born out of wedlock; by 2005 this had increased to one in three (Van der Meulen and De Graaf 2006).

The downward trend in the number of families (partners with children) is due partly to a decline in the number of women of fertile age and partly to relationship break-ups, where a family with children is transformed into a single person plus a single-parent family. Formal relationship dissolution has stabilised since the middle of the 1990s at nine or ten divorces per 1,000 marriages. In addition, more than 15 out of every 1,000 marriages ends each year due to the death of a partner. The dissolution of informal relationships occurs mainly among unmarried cohabitantes without children, roughly half of whom have a cohabitation contract (Latten 2004).

The increase in the number of *single-parent families* has both a participatory component and a population component. Among young people (15-30 years) and the middle age groups (30-60 years), the proportion of single-parent families increased by around 2% per annum between 1995 and 2003. By contrast, the number of lone-parent families in the youngest age group remained virtually unchanged because the number of people in this age category fell by almost 2% per year. The increase in the number of people of middle age led to a rise in the number of single-parent families of middle age of more than 3% per annum. Although the number of people in the higher age groups also grew, the lower mortality rate actually led to a fall in the proportion of single-parent families in this age group. The growth in the number of single-parent families is thus entirely attributable to the middle age categories. The low proportion of single-parent families in the population as a whole (6.3% in 2005) does not mean this is a socially marginal phenomenon; one in six young children see their parents split, while three out of ten marriages end in divorce (Latten 2004).

There are important differences between single-parent families of indigenous and non-Western origin. In the first place the proportion of single-parent families of non-Western origin is higher than those of Dutch origin. Single mothers in the indigenous population account for 3.5% of the total, while in the non-Western population the figure is over 10% (De Jong and Van Huis 2003a). The background to single parenthood is different in the two cases; it cannot be ascribed entirely to the younger age profile of the non-Western population, but is also consequences of migration. For example, the number of single mothers who have never married is (traditionally) high in Surinamese, Antillean and Aruban circles, while Turkish and Moroccan single mothers are relatively frequently married to a partner who lives elsewhere.

The sharp rise in the number of *single persons* occurred in all age groups, and is due in only small part to the ageing of the population. The biggest increase occurred in the middle age groups, with the primary factor being relationship break-up and the growth in the size of the age groups concerned (see also De Jong and Van Huis 2003b).

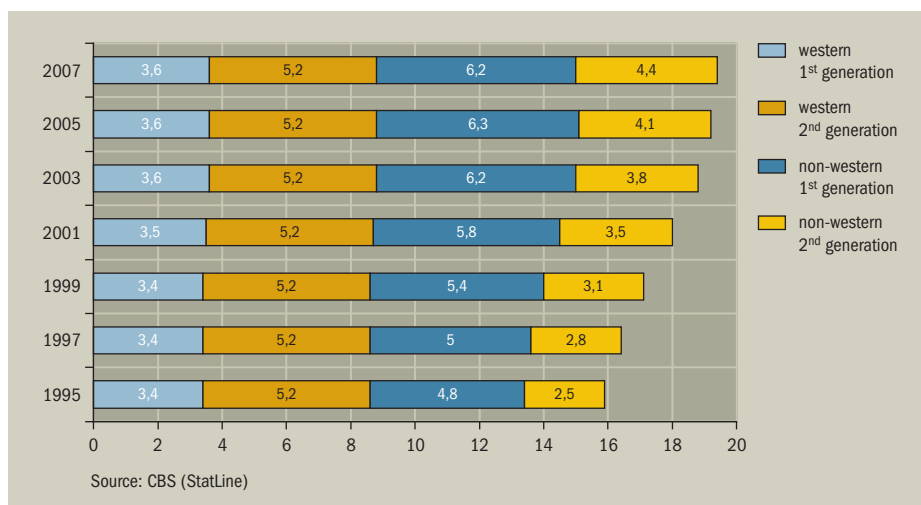
## Ethnic origin

In addition to family dilution and population ageing, the population profile is also affected by international migration. There has been a sharp increase in the number of people of non-indigenous origin living in the Netherlands, especially non-Western ethnic minorities (figure 1.4). The non-indigenous population numbered just over 1.7 million people at the start of 2007 (CBS-Statline). Statistics Netherlands counts as ethnic minorities to people of whom are least one parent was born abroad. The country of origin for those not born in the Netherlands (the first generation) is determined on the basis of their own country of birth. For the second generation (born in the Netherlands) the country of birth of the mother is decisive (unless she was born in the Netherlands, in which case the country of birth of the father is used). The category 'non-Western' comprises ethnic minorities from Turkey, Africa, Central and South America and Asia (excluding Indonesia and Japan).

Where the proportion of immigrants of Western origin was greater than those of non-Western origin in 1995, this situation had reversed by 2007; the proportion of non-Western ethnic minorities rose from 7.3% in 1995 to 10.6% in 2007, while the proportion of Western immigrants remained virtually unchanged at around 8.8%. The proportion of all immigrants together thus increased from 15.9% in 1995 to 19.4% in 2007, a rise of almost 2% per annum. Around two-thirds of non-Western immigrants originate from Turkey, Morocco, Surinam (each accounting for around 2% of the population) and the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba (just under 1% of the population).

Figure 1.4

Share of ethnic minorities in the total population by ethnicity and generation, 1995-2007 (in percentages; 2007 is estimated)



People can be first-generation or second-generation immigrants; in the former case they were themselves born abroad, while in the latter case at least one of their parents was born abroad. Almost 60% of Western immigrants are second-generation immigrants; the figure for non-Western immigrants is 40%. The rise in the share of non-Western ethnic minorities occurs in both the first generation (+1.4 percentage points) and the second generation (+1.6 percentage points). However, the increase in the proportion of first-time generation non-Western ethnic minorities came to a halt in 2005, since when it has been falling, while the second generation has continued to grow at the same rate.

The non-Western ethnic minority population is younger on average than the indigenous population, and is much less affected by population ageing (SCP/WODC/CBS 2005). The average age of members of non-Western ethnic minorities was 28 years in 2005, compared with 40 years for the indigenous population, while those aged over 65 accounted for fewer than 3% of the total, compared with more than 15% in the indigenous population. The youthful character of the non-indigenous population also applies for groups which have lived in the Netherlands for some time, in particular Surinamese, Turks and Moroccans. These groups will however undergo population ageing in the coming decades, partly due to falling immigration and growing emigration, especially by young people. The presence of non-Western immigrants (residents at least one of whose parents was born in a non-industrialised country) will consequently have a steadily reducing effect in the longer term in holding back the ageing of the Dutch population as a whole.

Members of non-Western ethnic minorities have traditionally been concentrated in the west of the Netherlands, and particularly in the four major cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht (table 1.1). Although this applies for all ethnic minority groups, Surinamese and Moroccans are particularly overrepresented in the west of the country (and in the four major cities), while Turks relatively often live in the former industrial regions in the east of the country. The other non-Western ethnic minorities – especially refugee groups – are also overrepresented in the west of the Netherlands, but live mainly in the medium-sized towns and cities. However, after initially being deliberately dispersed throughout the country, these groups also ultimately tend to move to the cities (Latten et al. 2005).

Table 1.1

Distribution of ethnic minorities across national regions and proportion living in the four major cities, 2006 (in percentages)

	north	east	south	west	4 major cities
Turks	2.1	21.2	16.3	60.3	35.4
Moroccans	1.5	9.9	16.4	72.2	46.9
Surinamese	3.2	11.9	6.5	78.3	52.7
Antilleans	5.9	14.3	13.7	66.1	33.9
other non-Western ethnic minorities	6.5	16.9	14.6	62.0	30.9
total non-Western ethnic minorities	4.0	15.3	13.7	67.0	39.3
total Dutch population	10.4	21.2	21.7	46.7	12.8

Source: CBS (Bevolkingsstatistiek'04)

Many municipalities have become more multi-ethnic over the last five years. The biggest increase in percentage terms has taken place in Rotterdam, Schiedam, Delft and Almere, a trend driven in large part by the exodus of the urban population (Gijsberts 2004). The departure of the indigenous population from the cities – the ‘white flight’ – has been under way for several years and is likely to continue for the foreseeable future, leading to an increase in the ethnic concentration in neighbourhoods which already contained a high proportion of ethnic minorities. The ethnic minority middle-class is also increasingly choosing to live outside the major cities, giving rise to what has been referred to as the ‘black flight’ (De Groot 2004). The homes they vacate, mostly cheap, small rented dwellings(flats) are likely to be occupied by non-Western migrants, often coming directly from abroad (Latten et al. 2005).

Within the major cities, ethnic minorities are highly concentrated within specific neighbourhoods. If the district and neighbourhood division used by Statistics Netherlands (CBS) is applied, there were 83 districts in 2004 where more than 25% of the residents were of non-Western origin (SCP/WODC/CBS 2005). In 13 of these districts the non-Western population made up the majority. At neighbourhood level, there were 456 neighbourhoods where ethnic minorities made up more than 25% of the population, and in 92 neighbourhoods they accounted for more than half the population. Almost half of these ‘concentration neighbourhoods’ are situated in the four major cities, where they account for more than 10% of all neighbourhoods.

### Family formation

Taking the population as a whole, roughly one in five women have one child. Just under half have two children and slightly less than a third have three or more. Older generations of Turkish and Moroccan women have large numbers of children by

Dutch standards; for example, 85% of Moroccan women born in the second half of the 1940s have three or more children. The figure drops to three-quarters for the generation of women born ten years later. Today's younger generations appear to have three or more children even less frequently (Alders and Jansen Heijtmajer 2002). Surinamese women from the first immigrant generation increasingly resemble indigenous women in the number of children they have, and the pattern for Antilleans and Arubans corresponds precisely with that for indigenous women. The 'total fertility rate' – an approximation of the average number of children per woman – has fluctuated between 1.5 and 1.7 for more than 20 years (NGR/CBS 2003).

In the early 1970s, the average age of a Dutch woman on the birth of her first child was 24 years; today it is over 29 years. Men are now 32 years old on average when they become a father for the first time. Surinamese and Antillean women, and especially Turkish and Moroccan women, have children earlier than indigenous women. As with indigenous women, the more recently Surinamese and Antillean women were born, the later they began having children. However, a common factor for all groups is that members of the second generation defer motherhood until much later than the first generation and are already approaching the behaviour patterns of indigenous women (Van Praag 2003).

There are several reasons for deferring parenthood: the increased labour force participation rate of women; the relative decline in the importance attached to having children; and the desire first to create a solid basis for life are examples. The main factor, however, is the increased education level (Beets et al. 2001). Highly educated people in particular tend to postpone the birth of their first child (Beets and Van Poppel 2004). This deferral can ultimately become permanent, leading to unintended childlessness.

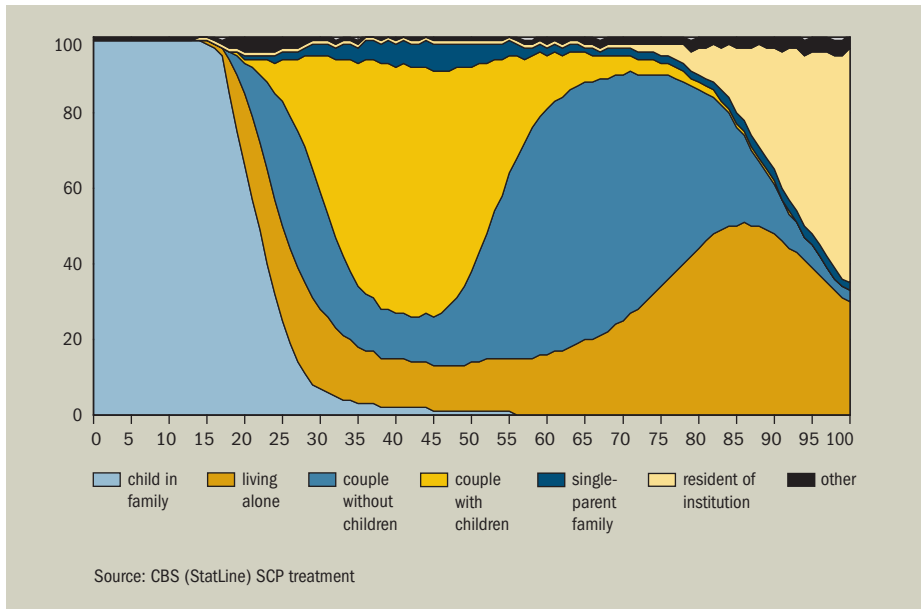
11% of women currently aged 60 are childless; the figure for women who are now aged around 45 years is 17%, while 20% of women who are currently aged around 30 expect not to have children (De Graaf 2004). Highly educated women in particular relatively often remain childless: 25% of well-educated women aged over 45 years are childless, compared with 9% of their low-educated female peers.

Childlessness is less common among non-Western ethnic minorities than in the indigenous population, and is barely increasing at all. Virtually all Turkish and Moroccan women (around 95%) have children, for example. And although Statistics Netherlands (CBS) is predicting some increase in childlessness among this group, it will continue to be much less common than among indigenous women. 10% of older Surinamese women remain childless; younger generations of Surinamese women do so more frequently. The proportion of Antillean women who do not have children is comparable in both the older and younger generations to the younger generations of indigenous women (Alders and Jansen Heijtmajer 2002).

### Life stage transitions

People generally go through several cohabitation relationships during their lives (see figure 1.5). Until the age of 18 almost everyone lives as a child in a family, but after this different cohabitation relationships quickly arise, reflecting the fact that adolescence is the harbinger of radical changes in the cohabitation pattern. Whereas virtually every 17 year-old is still part of a family with children, this applies for only a quarter of 25 year-olds; the rest have begun living alone (a quarter), become part of a couple (a third) or started a family (a tenth). From the age of 30 onwards, a family with children is the dominant cohabitation form; between the ages of 40 and 45, two-thirds of the population have entered this phase of life. Around the age of 55, the ‘empty nest phase’ begins, when the children leave the parental home; some two-thirds of the population aged around 65 are in this phase. Thereafter, people gradually undergo a transition to living alone, often following the loss of their partner. Up to the age of 85, this is then the dominant pattern, applying for more than half the population in this age category. After this age, the majority face the prospect of moving into an institution; around half the population aged 95 live in a care or nursing home. Naturally, individual life courses can differ markedly from this dominant pattern, and by no means everyone will experience the transitions cited above, or will undergo some transitions several times.

Figure 1.5  
Cohabitation profile by age in 2005 (in percentages)



Life stages and the transitions between them have major economic and social consequences (Kalmijn 2002). The main economic effects, measured in terms of

changes in labour force participation rate and income, occur mainly during family formation and manifest themselves in a reduction in the labour participation rate of women and a cut in household disposable income. These two deteriorations in economic position – the ‘family dip’ – have however become much less severe over time (SCP 2003: 60 and 88). The effects are more marked in the case of divorce than widowhood, partly because social insurance compensates for part of the material loss when someone is widowed. The social consequences of transitions in life stages are localised by Kalmijn in the size and quality of social networks and feelings of emotional and social loneliness.

### Task divisions in the household

The modern family ideal embraces changes in the task division within households. After the birth of their first child, more and more women today combine looking after children with a job. The traditional breadwinner model has consequently lost its dominant position, to be replaced by different variants of the double-earner household. In 1990, 49% of couples still had only one earner (usually the man); both partners worked in 37% of households. In 2005 these figures were 28% and 63%, respectively (table 1.2).

Table 1.2

Share of single-earner and double-earner couples based on their labour force participation rate, 1990-2005

	1990	1994	1998	2000	2002	2005
single earners	49	42	34	31	30	28
man has a job	46	36	30	27	25	22
woman has a job	3	6	4	4	5	6
double earners	37	43	56	60	61	63
one and a half earners	22	27	37	42	42	44
man in full-time job <sup>b</sup>	21	26	36	40	41	42
woman in full-time job <sup>b</sup>	1	1	1	2	2	2
double part-time earners <sup>c</sup>	2	2	4	4	5	6
double earners <sup>d</sup>	13	14	14	14	14	13
non-earners <sup>e</sup>	15	15	10	10	9	9
total	100	100	100	100	100	100

a Heterosexual couples where both partners are aged between 15 and 65 years.

b A full-time job is defined here as a job for at least 35 hours per week.

c Both partners have a job for less than 35 hours per week.

d Both partners have a job for at least 35 hours per week.

e Neither partner is in paid employment.

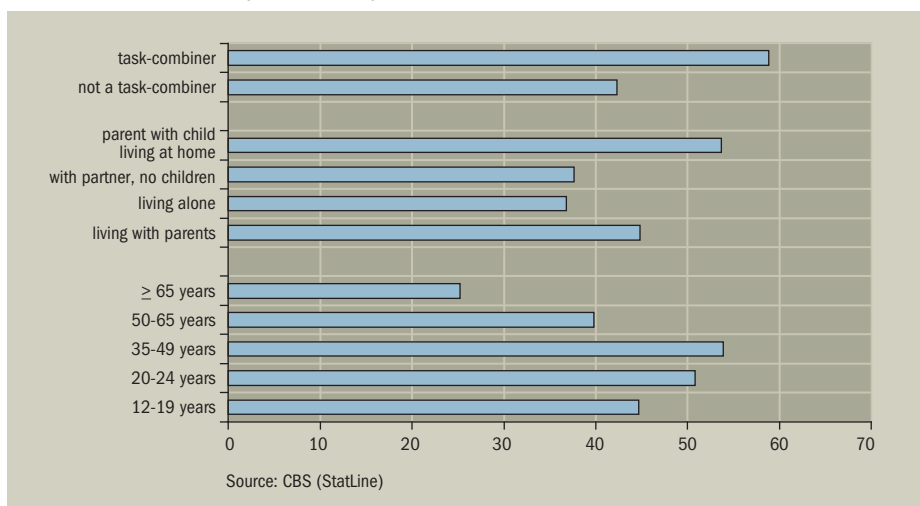
Source: CBS (WBO'90-'00, '02; EBB'05), SCP treatment

The one and a half earner model is the most common among double earners, where one partner (usually the man) works full-time and the other (usually the woman) works part-time. In 2005 this category accounted for 44% of all couples. The proportion of couples with both partners working full-time has also increased since 1990, but appears to have stabilised in recent years. These are mainly couples who do not (yet) have children (Keuzenkamp and Hooghiemstra 2000). Although it is not infrequently claimed in discussions that the tide is turning and that more women are again opting for full-time motherhood, the figures do not support this. Given the steadily rising labour force participation rate of women and their preference for part-time work, it is likely that the proportion of couples in one and a half earner households will increase further in the future.

All time use surveys since 1975 show that the Dutch spend an average of around 19 hours per week looking after their household and their family. The amount of time spent on care per head of the population has remained the same. However, the care tasks are unequally divided: women provide more care than men, though this gender distribution is less uneven than in the past. Where in 1995 women devoted an average of 26.2 hours a week to household tasks and men 11.3 hours, the figures in 2005 were 25.5 and 12.1 hours per week, respectively. This shift can be seen most clearly in households with (small) children (Breedveld et al. 2006: 17).

Figure 1.6

Time spent on (compulsory) activities by household characteristics, 2005



The gradual disappearance of the traditional breadwinner model has led to a sharp rise in the number of people combining tasks (“task-combiners”) (Breedveld and Van den Broek 2004). This increase has occurred among both men and women, so that little change has taken place in the distribution of care tasks between the sexes.

Task-combiners spend an average of 59 hours per week on work, care and education, compared with 42 hours for non-task-combiners. The majority of task-combiners are in the 35-49 age range (52% in 2005). These 'compulsory' activities take up most time in the group of 20-49 year-olds, and parents with children living at home have the busiest lives (figure 1.6).

### Conclusion

The Dutch population more than trebled in size in the twentieth century, reaching a total of 16.4 million in 2007. The proportion of non-Western ethnic minorities has increased rapidly over the last 40 years, from 1-2% of the population to more than 10%. The number of households is growing even more quickly than the population, largely due to the increase in the number of single-person households. Family formation begins late; the average Dutch woman is 29 years old before her first child is born, and the average number of children per family is 1.8. For a long time it was unusual in the Netherlands for married women, and especially mothers, to work outside the home. This has changed markedly, though women – especially those with children – almost all work part-time. Household tasks are more equally divided between men and women than in the past, but women still devote more than twice as many hours per week to these tasks as men.

## 2 *Economy: income and labour force participation*

The performance of the Dutch economy has a direct impact on the labour force participation rate, earned income and benefit dependency. The resultant budget for households and public authorities in turn impacts on the quality of life of households. The gradual improvement in income in the second half of the 1990s, and the marked improvement in purchasing power in 2001, had a positive effect on people's life situation. This is reflected above all in an increase in mobility and the associated vehicles (more, and more expensive cars), and improvements in housing (more, and more expensive, owner-occupied homes). The healthy economic growth in the 1990s naturally also had an impact on the employment rate (more people in work) and unemployment (fewer unemployed people). The reversal in economic growth in 2001 and the related consequences for income not only had an adverse effect on the labour market and employment, but also put pressure on the accessibility of the housing market and the affordability of homes. The growth in the number of privately owned vehicles also slowed markedly.

The income figures presented in this chapter are taken from the National Accounts of Statistics Netherlands (CBS) and therefore reflect the position at macro-level. Definition differences, population differences and measurement differences mean that these figures may differ from the income data presented in chapter 5, which are based on administrative data from individual taxpayers.

### *National income*

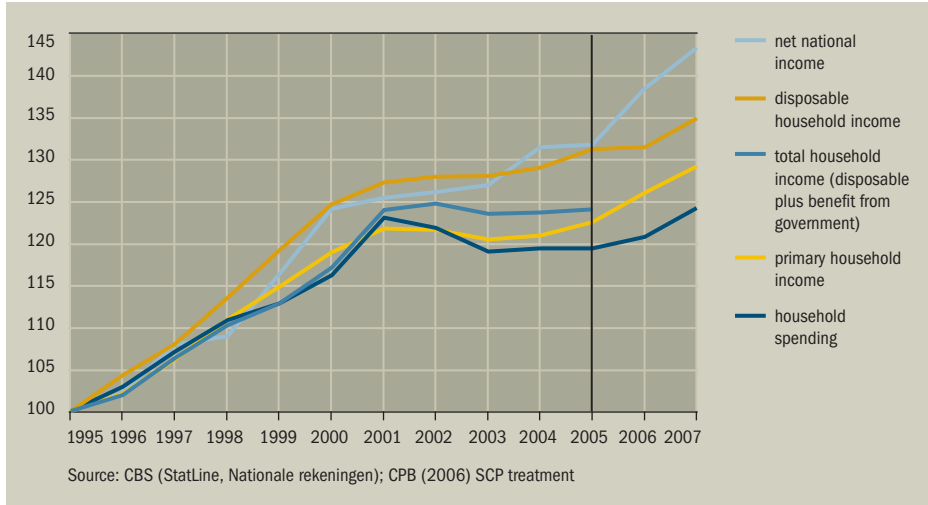
The Dutch national income showed a rising trend in the period 1995-2005, with an average inflation-adjusted increase of 2.75% per annum (figure 2.1). However, this growth took place almost entirely in the years 1995-2000 (4.5% per annum). 2001 brought a drastic slowing of the relatively strong growth in the preceding years to almost nil. This downturn in economic growth was tempered somewhat in 2002 by additional government spending, resulting from the increases pledged in 1997 in health care, safety and education (CPB 2003). Under the Coalition Agreement adopted by the second coalition government led by Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende, however, this increased public spending came to a halt. The result of these factors was annual income growth averaging 1% in the period 2001-2004. From 2005 the economic recovery gathered pace, and households began to see the benefit of this from 2006 onwards.

Over 72% of national income is currently generated by households (including returns on pension investments). Households pay social insurance contributions and taxes from this income, but also receive social security and pension benefits in return. The product of these transfers is the freely disposable income, which currently accounts for more than half the national income. Up to 2002, households shared around 60%

of the disposable income, but this fell in subsequent years to around 55%. The beneficiaries were both businesses and the government. The government in particular has benefited from the income growth resulting from increased prosperity in recent years. To some extent this has again been channelled back to individual households through higher government spending on health care (eliminating waiting lists) and education (reducing class sizes). This is represented in the curve in figure 2.1 showing total household income: disposable household income plus the benefit from the government. For 2007 and subsequent years, the Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis CPB projects that households will again benefit from the total income growth in proportion to their share in total income (CPB 2007: 26). On balance, this means that household disposable income has lagged behind the trend in national income by around 13% since 2002.

Households have compensated for part of this discrepancy in income growth by addressing savings and taking on debt. Since 2002, household spending has grown around 5% faster than disposable household income. This means that half the difference between the growth in disposable household income and the higher growth in national income has been made up by spending more money than was immediately available. Households appear to favour an even trend in consumer spending (Stokman 2007). In 2001, for example, household spending lagged behind the strong growth in income.

Figure 2.1  
Trend in real national income, 1995-2007  
(index figures, 1995 = 100; figures for 2006 and 2007 are estimated)

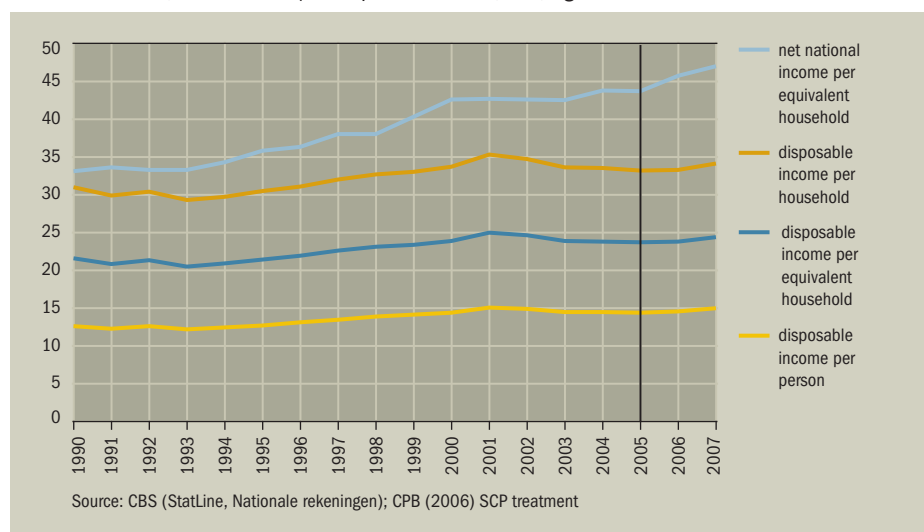


Population growth and household dilution mean that total disposable income has become more thinly spread. If the total disposable income of the population is

related to the size of the population, we find that disposable income per household increased by an average of 1% per year in the period 1995-2007 (see figure 2.2). This means that half the annual growth of 2% in total disposable income is absorbed by the increase in the number of households. That increase can be explained partly by the growth in the population (0.5% per annum) and partly by family dilution (0.5% per annum) (see chapter 1). Taken together, these factors resulted in an improvement household purchasing power of more than 14% over the period 1995-2007. However, this increase was not evenly distributed: between 1995 and 2001 purchasing power improved by 17%, but declined by 5% in the period 2001-2005. Projections are that the tide in purchasing power will not turn until 2007, with an improvement of more than 2% forecast.

Figure 2.2

Trend in incomes, 1995-2007 (2005 prices x EUR 1,000; figures for 2006 and 2007 are estimated)



Stated at the level of a single-person household, the purchasing power of households is found to have increased between 1995 and 2001 from € 21,500 to € 25,100 (at 2005 prices). From 2001 onwards, the purchasing power of household income fell, reaching € 23,400 in 2006. In 2007 this income is projected to increase again to € 24,000 per household.

### Activity profile

Many people go through different phases in their lives. Figures 2.3 and 2.4 show the life course profile of men and women, respectively, in the main socio-economic categories for 2005. People were asked which socio-economic category they would put themselves into: workers (full-time or part-time), benefit claimants (unemployed),

Figure 2.3  
Activity profile of men by age, 2005 (in percentages)

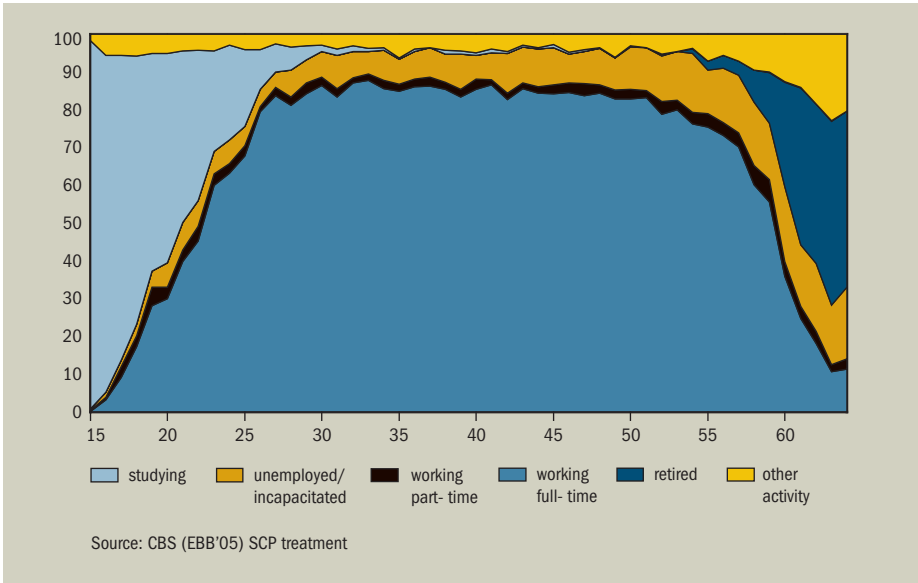
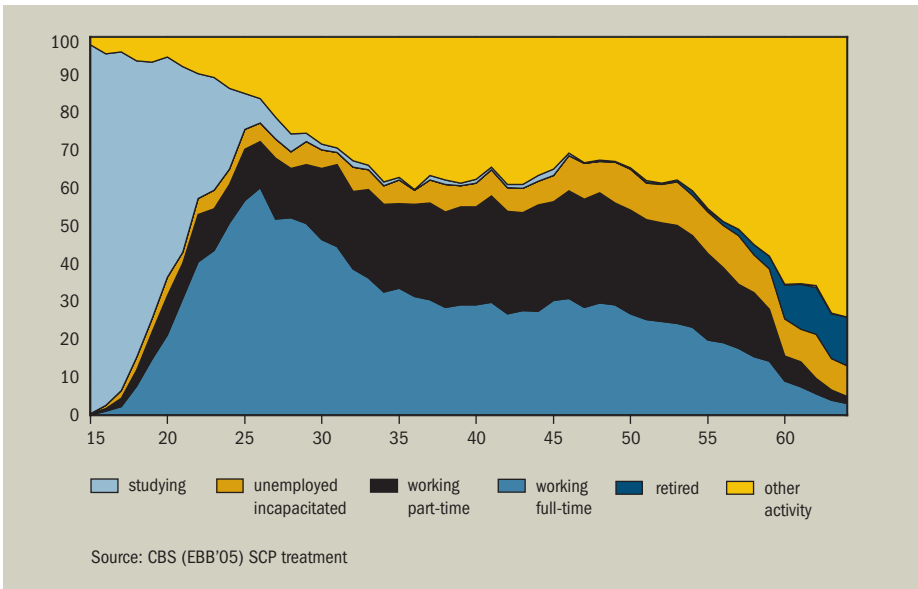


Figure 2.4  
Activity profile of women by age, 2005 (in percentages)



pensioners, students or other active groups (volunteers or housewife/househusband). The differences between men and women are marked. More than 95% of men report that they are involved with education or the labour market up to the age of 57.

This proportion falls sharply to 30% at age 64. Education (from 15 to 22 years) and the labour market (from 23 years) thus dominate the daily lives of men. For women, the labour market never achieves a score of more than 75%, and fluctuates between 60% and 70% between the ages of 30 and 57 years. The typical family dip is limited to a slight fall in labour force participation in the middle career years (30-45 years) and a sharp increase in part-time working instead of full-time employment.

The activity profile has changed markedly over time. Table 2.1 shows the difference in socio-economic activity in 1995 and in 2005. These years are relatively comparable economically, because they both mark transitions from an economic decline to an economic revival.

Table 2.1

Change in individual activity profile, by age, 1995 and 2005 (in percentage points)

	15-24 years	25-34 years	35-44 years	45-54 years	55-64 years
<b>men</b>					
working full-time	1	-1	-2	0	10
working part-time	1	0	-1	0	0
unemployed/incapacitated	-1	-2	1	-1	-5
retired	0	0	0	0	-10
studying	-4	1	0	0	0
other activity	3	1	2	1	5
<b>women</b>					
working full-time	-2	6	6	7	6
working part-time	2	-2	-1	5	4
unemployed/incapacitated	0	2	3	6	7
retired	0	0	0	0	2
studying	1	1	0	0	0
other activity	0	-6	-8	-18	-19

Source: CBS (EBB'95 and '05) SCP treatment

The table shows clearly the strong growth in labour force participation. For men, this led to a sharp reduction in the number of people incapacitated for work and taking early retirement; for women the increase took place mainly at the expense of other activities: looking after their own household, performing voluntary work and recreational activities. The labour force participation rate of women increased virtually across the board, but most markedly among 45-54 year-olds, whereas this is the case for men only for the 55-64 year-olds, primarily due to a reduction in early

retirement. The increased focus on the labour market by women intensifies with age, and is expressed not only in more work, but also in more work-related benefits.

One aspect which at first sight appears surprising is the fall in the participation in education by men. For decades, a trend has been under way whereby more young people spend longer in education. In 2000, 92% of 16 year-olds were in full-time education; among 18 year-olds the figure in 2000 was 64% and among 24 year-olds 17% (SCP 1994; OCW 2003; CBS StatLine). The compulsory school age in the Netherlands is 4-16 years, and in 2007 the school leaving age was raised to 18 years. The fall in educational participation by men shown in table 2.1 is probably not so much a matter of falling participation as such, but rather a consequence of the growing number of people studying who qualify themselves as working because they are also in (part-time) employment. Among girls, the table shows a further increase in participation in education as a primary activity.

Figures on non-Western ethnic minorities are available only from the middle of the 1990s onwards. In 2003, 8% of the labour force comprised non-Western ethnic minorities, compared with 5% in 1995. This proportion is set to increase sharply in the future: young people are strongly overrepresented among the non-Western ethnic minorities, and will be entering the labour market in large numbers in the years ahead.

The life course of women in particular has changed greatly in recent decades. More and more women are combining child care with a job after the birth of their first child. The traditional breadwinner model has lost its dominant position in Dutch society as a result, and been replaced by a number of variants of the double-earner household (table 1.2).

Individual life courses can deviate widely from the average picture presented in the standard biography. Individualisation and emancipation have led to more freedom of choice (Ester, Muffels and Schippers 2006). Transitions have become less predictable, and are now combined more and interchanged more. The different activities are increasingly competing for the available time, and at any given moment people are making more and more conscious choices between working, caring for the family, studying and recreation.

### *Social security*

Table 2.2 presents data on the number of benefit claimants in 1996 and 2006, as well as their share – including in a number of intermediate years – in the relevant population category.

As table 2.2 shows, benefit dependency among the population aged up to 65 years (the official retirement age) fell by 4.5 percentage points between 1996 and 2006.

This was primarily due to a reduction in unemployment and disability benefits. There was also a net decrease in the number of people in receipt of social assistance benefit and survivor's pensions (after the age of 65), but this was less spectacular than the fall in the number of disability and unemployment benefits. The trend in unemployment and social assistance benefits also reflects the economic climate. In 2004 the downward trend in these benefits was interrupted. Partly due to the effects of the economic recovery, however, benefit dependency subsequently fell again.

Table 2.2

Trend in the number of benefit claimants, 1996-2006

provision	relevant population category	1996 (%)	1998 (%)	2000 (%)	2002 <sup>a</sup> (%)	2004 (%)	2006 (%)	change 1996-2006 (%)
<b>disability benefit</b>								
15-44 years	labour force 15-44	5.6	5.6	6.1	6.5	6.2	5.0	-11
45-64 years	labour force 45-64	32.5	30.9	29.4	28.1	26.0	22.2	-32
unemployment benefit	labour force 15-64	6.7	4.1	2.6	2.8	4.4	3.3	-50
social assistance	population 15-64	4.4	3.9	3.3	3.1	3.3	3.0	-32
survivors pension	population 45-64	5.4	4.9	4.4	4.0	3.6	3.1	-43
<b>total</b>	<b>population 15-64</b>	<b>18.7</b>	<b>16.9</b>	<b>15.6</b>	<b>15.6</b>	<b>16.4</b>	<b>14.2</b>	<b>-24</b>

Source: CBS (SCP treatment)

The absolute number of recipients of disability benefits increased across the board. However, if allowance is made for the growth in the labour force since 1996, a different picture emerges. This applies mainly for 45-64 year-olds: although the number of people with an incapacity for work in this age group increased, the number of people aged over 45 in the labour force increased even more strongly. Related to the size of the relevant population category, therefore, the proportion of older disability benefit claimants fell substantially.

Partly as a result of the fall in benefit dependency, there was a concomitant decline in social security spending. This can be attributed on the one hand to the growth in employment during this period, leading to a sharp reduction in the number of unemployed people and social assistance benefit claimants, while the ageing of the labour force led to changes in the views on participation by older people in the labour market. At the same time, a large number of policy measures were introduced to reduce the costs of social security. Often these measures involved benefit cuts and measures to limit entitlement. Examples are the active integration policy for social assistance benefit claimants and the more stringent criteria for awarding disability benefit, which consequently lost some of its function as effectively a pre-pension arrangement or unemployment provision.

## Conclusion

In real terms, individual disposable income increased by around 10% between 1995 and 2007. Disposable household income grew strongly up to and including 2001 (roughly 15%), fell thereafter and began to rise again in 2006. Individual households are projected to have purchasing power of € 24,000 in 2007.

The labour force participation rate has increased sharply in the last decade: more women, more older persons (55-65 years) and (once again) more members of ethnic minorities are now in work. The activity profiles of men and women differ markedly.

The number of initial claimants as a proportion of the population aged 15-64 years fell sharply between 1996 and 2006 by around 24%. This was primarily due to a steep reduction in the number of unemployed people (-50%) and in the number of disability and social assistance benefits paid.

### 3 Developments in public services

The government has two major tasks: to redistribute income and to provide public services. Both activities have important consequences for the lives of citizens. The redistribution of income – via social security benefits – accounted for more than a quarter of government spending in 2005, while public services took over half. Almost a third of expenditure on public services is purely collective in nature (going on things such as defence, the police, the judicial apparatus, public administration) and does not benefit individual citizens directly. More than two-thirds of this expenditure does however reach individual citizens directly in the form of health care, education, culture, etc.

#### Political developments

Since 2002, successive coalition governments led by the Christian Democrat (CDA) Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende have introduced radical policy changes which have implications for public services and for the lives of individual citizens. The first Balkenende government was a centre-right coalition between the CDA and the liberal VVD together with the newcomer LPF (List Pim Fortuyn). The enormous electoral gains by this new party (26 seats) meant it was able to participate in the government which took office in July 2002, in the middle of a politically turbulent period that was ushered in by the murder of the political leader of the LPF, Pim Fortuyn, just before the elections on 15 May 2002. Safety and integration of ethnic minorities were the leading themes in the Coalition Agreement, under the motto ‘Restoring trust’. Education and health care were also given high priority, and there were plans for a new health care system and for moves to curb the number of people on disability benefit. However, the worsening economic climate reduced the scope for investments in health care and education. The first Balkenende government was forced to leave office as early as October of that same year, following a conflict between two LPF ministers and their subsequent resignation.

The second Balkenende government took office following the elections in January 2003, with the Democrats (D66) as the new coalition partner (LPF joined the opposition with nine seats). The main policy intentions of this ‘Balkenende II’ government (2003-2006) were laid down in the document *Meedoen, meer werk en minder regels* (‘Taking part, more work and fewer rules’) (TK 2002/2003a), in the subsequent government declaration of 11 June 2003 (TK 2002/2003b), in the Speeches from the Throne of 2003 and 2004 (Handelingen 2003/2004 and 2004/2005) and in the *Afspraken hoofdlijnenakkoord* (‘Outline Agreement’) of 2005, known as the Easter Accord (*Paasakkoord*) (TK 2004/2005a). In the Outline Agreement the coalitions partners portrayed a dramatic situation in the various social domains which had been the focus of attention in the preceding politically turbulent period – areas such as

safety, health care, integration, the economy, and of course the relationship between the government and the public. The motto of the Agreement was a reference to the main thrust of the policy: more responsibility for individual citizens, a greater sense of belonging together and ‘reform of a welfare state that has become bogged down in bureaucracy’.

The objectives of the Balkenende II government also had implications for the deployment of financial resources. Public administration and social security were allocated fewer funds, while additional resources were made available for public provisions such as health care, education, safety and infrastructure. The second government fell in June 2006 when D66 pulled out of the coalition.

The transitional ‘Balkenende III’ government (CDA-VVD coalition) was followed in March 2007 by a new centre-left coalition consisting of the Christian Democratic CDA, the Labour Party (PvdA) and the Christian Union. This fourth Balkenende government shifted the emphasis from radical system changes to sustainable investment in people, society and the environment. Six basic tenets were developed for this, which are intended to support government policy in the coming years. The Netherlands must play a more active international role, develop a more competitive economy, create a more sustainable living environment, instil greater social cohesion, enhance safety and respect, and improve the service orientation of the public sector.

### Reforms

The Dutch social security and health care system is a hybrid which incorporates social-democratic, corporatist and liberal characteristics. The Balkenende II government placed an ambitious reform of social security and health care on the agenda, in which the emphasis had shifted markedly in the direction of an activating approach, with both ‘Swedish’ and ‘American’ characteristics. The income protection function was intended for groups who genuinely had no alternative. The eligibility conditions for disability benefit were tightened up considerably, but before a person is allowed to claim disability benefit, employers must now continue to pay 70% of the salary of the employee in question for the first two years of their incapacity for work.

In addition, the follow-up benefit was scrapped for new unemployment benefit claimants. The Work and Social Assistance Act (wwb) is aimed at helping more benefit claimants back into work, and a number of other arrangements (reintegration, subsidised jobs, housing benefit) were subjected to thorough scrutiny.

The existing early retirement (vut) and pre-pension schemes have been replaced by a limited life course arrangement, funded by individual employees themselves. The aim is to create a social security system which is affordable in the longer term, which promotes participation in employment and which fits in with a desire for citizens to take their own share of responsibility.

The General Old Age Pensions Act (AOW), which provides a basic pension for every person over the age of 65 of around € 1,000 per month for a single person in 2006, is not yet under discussion; here, income protection remains the central focus. The issue of how this system will be funded in the future has however been raised.

The measures taken have begun to have an impact: pay moderation, dismantling of pre-pension schemes, further streamlining and rationalisation of benefits and subsidy schemes. The old-age pensions system is funded by contributions from working people up to the age of 65 (roughly € 25 billion per year). Supplementary pensions are funded using a capitalisation system. In the Netherlands, the assets held by pension funds today total more than € 700 billion. The civil service pension fund (ABP), with assets of over € 200 billion, is the third largest pension fund in the world. The total amount of supplementary pensions also stands at around € 25 billion per year.

The health care system was changed radically with effect from 2006. The original Sickness Benefits Act for employees earning below a given income threshold, and the private health insurance system for those earning more than this threshold, have been replaced by a basic insurance arrangement, in which everyone participates and in which health insurers have a duty to accept applicants. Supplementary cover can also be arranged on top of this basic package. Everyone from the age of 18 upwards pays a nominal premium to the health insurer (roughly € 100 per month), together with an income-dependent contribution to the government, paid via their employee. Children aged below 18 do not pay contributions. People on lower incomes receive a health care allowance. These changes have brought the health care system more into line with the market and have reduced the insured cover. A number of provisions for eligible citizens which were previously funded under the Exceptional Medical Expenses Act (AWBZ) have moreover been transferred to local authorities. The Social Support Act (WMO) (2007) charges local authorities with the task of putting in place health care and welfare provisions to support citizens and/or to provide them with a personal budget so that they can arrange their own care themselves. However, members of the public can no longer enforce their rights, as is still the case under the AWBZ.

### Priorities

Safety and education were priority policy areas for the second Balkenende government. Education establishments were given greater autonomy and extra funding was made available, especially for pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO) and efforts to combat the (threatened) shortage of teachers. Under the 2005 Easter Accord, additional funding was also provided for (higher) education, knowledge-building and innovation.

In the area of safety, prevention and enforcement competed for priority. Unusually, youth policy and community support policy were predominantly placed in a safety perspective and were also allocated additional resources as part of the preven-

tion theme. Beyond this, the safety policy was aimed primarily at the role of enforcement. Almost all elements of the safety chain received extra funding for this.

The policy on minorities was transformed into an integration policy, aimed at curbing the influx of migrants and integrating those (non-Western) ethnic minority groups already present in the Netherlands.

The theme of administrative renewal was concerned with the role of the referendum and the question of elected mayors. The Easter Accord contained further details on this latter topic and also added a number of issues which were to receive closer scrutiny, such as the electoral system, the citizen initiative and the position of the Upper House of Parliament and the Council of State. Since then, these issues have again been removed from the table following the fall of the Balkenende II government in June 2006. The quality of public service delivery was also accorded high priority. This theme cut a swathe through the whole of government policy ('Modernising Government' action programme) and was predominantly a question of administrative culture. A great deal was expected of ICT in this regard as a means of providing citizens with easier access to the government and improving the service delivery.

The ambitions of the government as laid down in the Coalition Agreement were also reflected in the allocation of financial resources. The plan was to reduce substantially the funding allocated to public administration and social security (CPB 2002). Cutting the amount of red tape would reduce the amount of money needed by the public administration, while it was argued that the generosity of social security benefits impeded the path to paid employment. Against this, additional resources were made available for 'in kind' provisions such as health care, education, safety and infrastructure. A number of key figures are presented below on government spending on these provisions

The fourth Balkenende government formulated a large number of more or less specific targets and policy proposals to translate the six basic tenets from the Coalition Agreement into practice (Ministerie van Algemene Zaken 2007). Aspects relating to education include reducing school dropout, combating segregation in education and reducing educational disadvantage. The government is intent on achieving greater social cohesion among other things by providing financial incentives for voluntary work, informal care and leave arrangements, by stepping up the pace of integration of immigrants, by improving problem neighbourhoods and by offering greater protection to young people. The government is also seeking to engender more safety and respect by solving more crimes and improving the position of victims. The government believes that service delivery in the public sector can be improved for example by stimulating participation in and dissemination of art and culture, promoting a healthy lifestyle and allocating more money for nursing home care. A budget of € 7 billion has been set aside for this investment agenda for the coming years. More

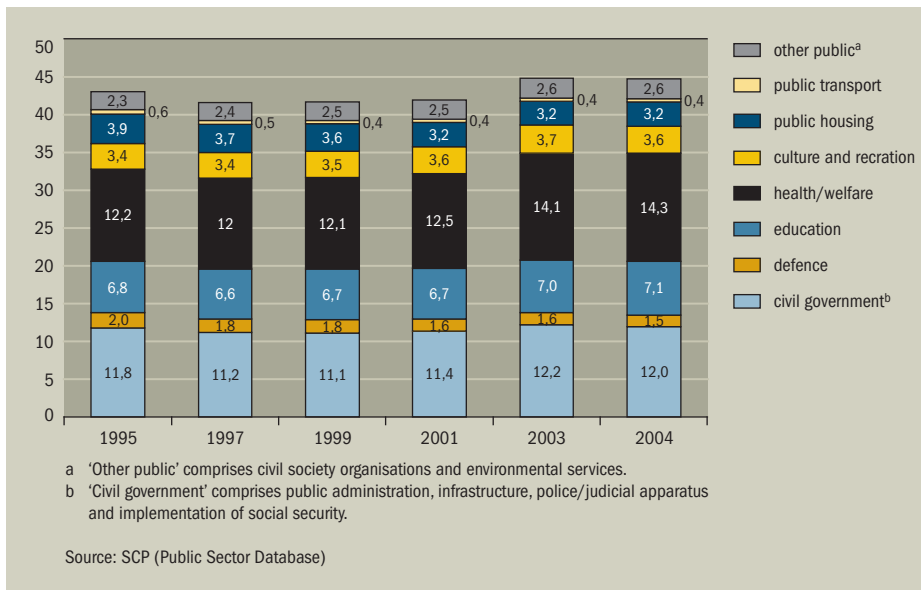
than 60% of this investment agenda will benefit citizens directly: 20% via education, 10% via childcare, 7% via nursing homes, and 6% each for measures to enhance the quality of neighbourhoods, raise safety and to improve the protection of young people and the family.

### Public services sector

Public services, partly because of the high staff costs, absorb a large slice of government resources. The trend in public income and expenditure in the period 1995-2005 shows a relatively stable picture as a percentage of net national income (NNI) (CBS StatLine), though this share does show a gradual fall from just under 60% in the mid-90s to just over 50% around the turn of the century, after which it stabilises. The share of net national income taken by total spending on public services declined gradually in the 1990s from 46% to 43%, and in 2003 had returned to its 1993 level (figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1

Total costs of public services as a percentage of net national income, 1995-2004



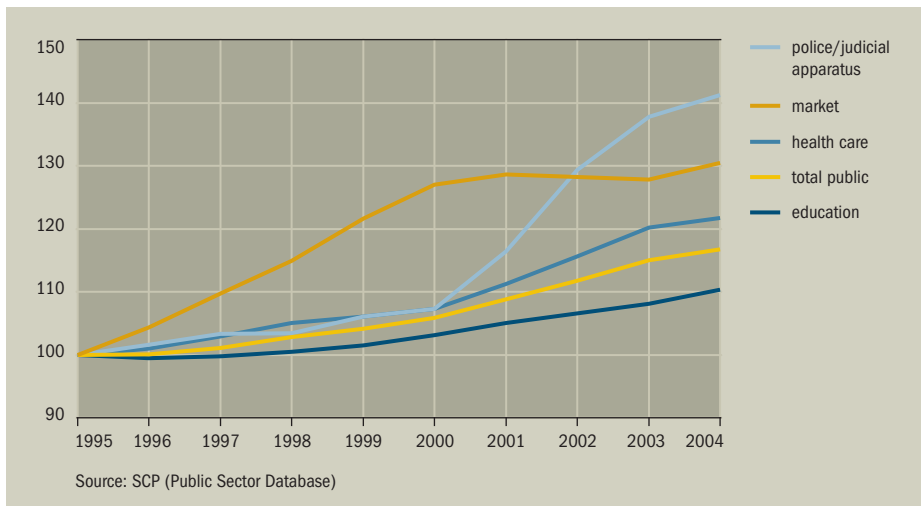
In 1995 the costs of public service delivery accounted for more than 43% of NNI (figure 3.1) and, after falling slightly in around 2000, rose further in 2003 to almost 45% of NNI. The growth in spending on public services was slightly lower during the period of economic buoyancy and increased slightly when the economy encountered heavier weather. On a sector by sector basis, the share of total costs taken by the majority of sectors shows little change. This applies among others for civil government (around 12%) and education (around 7%). In health and welfare, by

contrast, we see an increase of more than 12% from 2000 onwards, to more than 14% in 2005. Defence spending shows a steady downward trend. The spending on culture and recreation and other public services has grown slightly over the years.

The output of public services has to be measured using physical indicators, because the market value is generally not known. These product indicators must reflect the performance of the services delivered as accurately as possible (Kuhry and Van der Torre 2002). When the output of the public services sector is measured using physical indicators of this kind, it is found to have increased by almost 17% in the period 1995-2004 (figure 3.2), an average of 1.7% per year. The output figure for the market sector is included for comparison purposes, and is found to have increased by an average of 3.0% per annum. The figures over the years present an anticyclical picture, with the growth in public output lagging behind the growth in private output in periods of economic strength, and outstripping the pace of private output in times of slower economic growth.

Figure 3.2

Output in the public services and market sector, 1995-2004 (index figures, 1995 = 100)



This output growth in the public sector manifests itself primarily in relation to public safety (41% in the period considered) and health care (32%). In the area of public safety, this is due to the increased output of the prison system and the rise in the crime clear-up rate and is attributable not only to the investment of more resources, but also to the increased attention for the functioning of the police and judicial apparatus and the introduction of performance contracts.

The growth in the health care sector can be largely ascribed to the increase in spending on drugs, the temporary abandoning of budgeting and the elimination of waiting lists, for which additional funding was made available.

In the education sector, output growth was hampered by the process of 'dejuvenation' among 'older' young people (fewer 18-24 to year-olds), but was offset by a further expansion in educational participation, with a resultant slight net increase in educational output (10%).

The real costs of public services rose by an average of 3.4% per annum in the period 1995-2004. On balance, the growth in costs can be attributed to a more or less equal degree to the increase in output described above (1.7%) and to an increased cost price per product (1.7%).

### Conclusion

Today, in 2007, after getting off to a strong economic and political start in the new millennium, the Netherlands can look back on a number of very turbulent years with a great deal of political unrest, a long economic recession and constantly changing views on the tasks and priorities of the government. Public services have for many years accounted for an average of around 45% of NNI. One continuing point for attention is the difference in output growth between the public services sector and the market sector. As a result of this difference, the public services sector is becoming steadily more expensive in relative terms per unit product delivered.

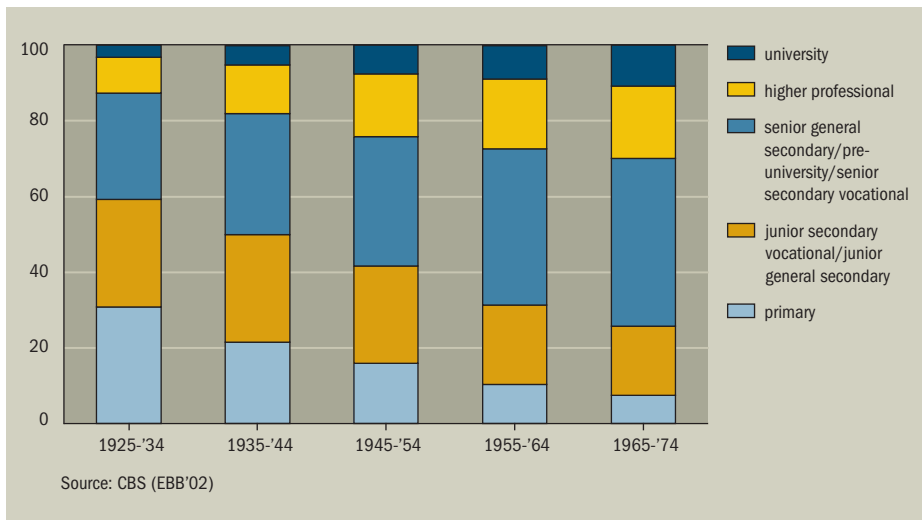
## 4 Education

### Education level of the population

Education contributes to people's personal development; it is the most important means of access to the labour market and also fulfils a social function. Accordingly, the government gives high priority to education. One of these priorities is to realise the highest possible education level among the population as a whole.

Figure 4.1

Education level of the population, by birth cohorts, 1925-1979 (in percentages)



The education level of the Dutch population has been rising for many years, and increases with each successive birth cohort (figure 4.1). Of those born in the period 1925-1934, 31% achieved no more than elementary school qualifications; that applies for only 7.5% of the generation born in 1965-1974. Two-fifths of the generation from 1925-1934 achieved at least secondary school level, and this applies for almost three-quarters of the cohort from 1965-1974. Table 4.1 shows the trend in the last ten years, from which it can be seen that the share of highly educated people in the labour force is increasing steadily.

Yet there is a question as to how much the education level will continue to rise in the future (ceiling effect). The education level attained by those leaving full-time education during the last decade shows only a slight annual increase, for example (SCP 2003: 43). The pre-war generations contained a great deal of unused talent, but today every individual in principle has the opportunity to develop their own intellectual capacities. The educational achievement of girls is no lower than that of boys; in

fact, a few years ago girls overtook boys in their level of educational attainment. There is however a wide difference between boys and girls in the choices of certain disciplines and subjects. Girls relatively rarely choose science subjects and courses, with the exception of medicine and biology, and almost never choose technical courses.

The biggest educational growth potential today is in the immigrant population (see SCP/WODC/CBS 2005: figure 5.6). There is currently a wide discrepancy between the education level of ethnic minorities in the Netherlands and that of the indigenous population. Table 4.1 shows that Turks and Moroccans, in particular, have had little schooling; a high proportion of them have had no formal education at all or have had just a few years of primary education. This applies more often for women than men (Gijssberts and Merens 2004). Although Surinamese and Antilleans are better educated than these Mediterranean groups, they too lag behind the indigenous population. On the other hand, the education level of all four groups referred to has increased in the last decade and the gap relative to the indigenous population has narrowed. The children of first-generation migrants are currently engaged in a catching up exercise; compared with just over ten years ago, the proportion of Turks and Moroccans with secondary school and higher education qualifications has roughly doubled. The trend among Surinamese and Antilleans is more gradual. The composition of the population of other non-Western ethnic minorities is highly diverse and contains relatively few highly educated members. Any further increase in the education level of the population as a whole will therefore be accounted for by young members of ethnic minorities.

### Primary education

In principle, all children in the Netherlands go to school from the age of five until at least the end of the school year in which they reach the age of 16. For several years, politicians and educationalists have hinted at the need for an earlier start and longer duration of compulsory education (2-18 years), and in practice the school-leaving age will be raised in 2008 from 16 to 18 years. The government is responsible for ensuring that children are actually able to follow a course of education. In order to optimise access to education, special policy measures have been put in place for pupils with individual learning or other difficulties and for children with social problems (OCW 2004).

There are more than 1.5 million children at primary school in the Netherlands. If children have a disability, a behavioural disorder or specific needs, they are where possible integrated into mainstream schools with support from expertise centres and funded by additional personal budgets, also referred to as the 'rucksack' (LGF). In addition, however, there are special primary schools (SBAO) and special secondary schools (SO)/regional expertise centres (REC), which had 48,300 and 35,300 pupils, respectively, in 2005. SBAO schools are intended for children with specific needs, such as children with dyslexia or ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder).

Table 4.1

Population aged 15-64 years, by origin and education level, 1996-2005 (in percentages)

	indigenous	Turks	Moroccans	Surinamese	Antilleans	other non-Western
<b>1996</b>						
primary education	12	56	57	26	19	24
vbo/mavo	27	24	23	27	34	25
havo/vwo/mbo	42	16	16	33	32	31
hbo/wo	20	4	4	13	16	20
total	100	100	100	100	100	100
<b>2005</b>						
primary education	8	31	34	14	11	16
vbo/mavo	25	25	26	29	25	20
havo/vwo/mbo	41	36	33	43	45	43
hbo/wo	26	8	7	15	19	21
total	100	100	100	100	100	100

vbo = pre-vocational education  
 mavo = junior general secondary education  
 havo = senior general secondary education  
 vwo = pre-university education  
 mbo = senior secondary vocational education  
 hbo = higher professional education  
 wo = university education

Source: CBS (2007: 263-264)

The regional expertise centres are aimed at children with a disability or behavioural disorder. Despite the commitment to integration in mainstream schools, a more or less constant proportion of pupils (just under 8%) use these special educational provisions, though shifts can be discerned between the different forms of special education. Several reasons can be cited for this. The number of special needs pupils is increasing, and they include a relatively high proportion of ethnic minority children. In addition, it is very difficult in practice to achieve the required extra care within mainstream education with the resources available for this to (partnerships of) schools. The resistance of parents and teachers to bringing special needs pupils into mainstream education will also be a significant factor. The first evaluation study of the effects of integration of pupils with disabilities shows that there are (virtually) no differences in school attainment between children in special schools and comparable children in mainstream schools, though on a social level there are negative effects (Sontag et al. 2007).

In order to address learning disadvantage that is rooted in social circumstances, a number of pre-school and early-school education (vve) programmes have been developed, and schools receive additional funding based on the proportion of pupils

whose parents have a low education level or a different country of origin. The success of the efforts to combat disadvantage in primary schools can be measured by the learning achievements of the pupils in question compared with the attainments of non-disadvantaged pupils, and since 1988 the language disadvantage of Turkish, Moroccan and Surinamese primary schoolchildren has indeed reduced considerably (Gijsberts and Hartgers 2005). Despite this progress, however, the gap is still considerable, and is also greater than that of indigenous disadvantaged pupils. Also striking is the fact that indigenous disadvantaged pupils did not make up any ground between 1988 and 2002; in fact their degree of disadvantage increased (+37%) (see also Vogels and Bronneman-Helmerts 2003; Inspectie 2005).

### Secondary education

The position in the third school year provides a good indicator of the distribution of pupils across the different secondary school types. The majority of pupils have by this time made a choice (although a few are in a combined senior general secondary/pre-university education stream) and, with the exception of a group of pupils who circumvent the compulsory schooling requirement, all young people are still at school.

Figure 4.2

Distribution of pupils in third secondary school year, 1995-2005 (in percentages)

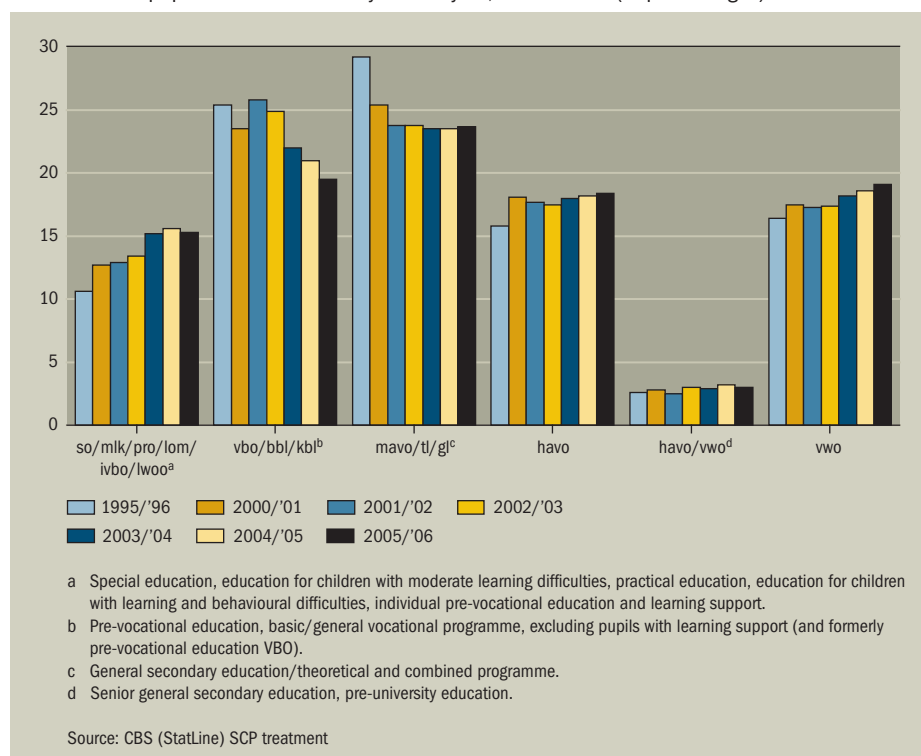


Figure 4.2 illustrates the trend in participation over the last decade. The proportion of pupils in the third year of secondary education (pre-vocational secondary education, VMBO) who require some form of extra care has increased by almost 50% in the space of ten years. Within this group, the growth in special education and schools for children with moderate learning difficulties (MLK)/practical education (PRO) has been particularly marked. This is a category of pupils with highly diverse problems, such as physical and mental impairments and behavioural problems, who receive all manner of specific forms of teaching and support within mainstream schools (VMBO). Ethnic minority pupils are overrepresented in these groups.

There has been a corresponding decrease in the number of non-disadvantaged pupils in pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO) (practical and theoretical), while the proportion of pupils in the third year of senior general secondary education (havo) and pre-university education (vwo) has actually increased. The two extremes (high and low education levels) are thus attracting more and more pupils. However, the shrinkage in the pupil numbers in junior general secondary education (mavo) – an important middle category – appears to have come to an end.

The differences in school choice and achievement of pupils can be explained to some extent by their socio-economic background. In particular, the education level of the parents remains a strong predictor of school choice. The Netherlands does not deviate significantly from the OECD average in this regard (OECD 2004).

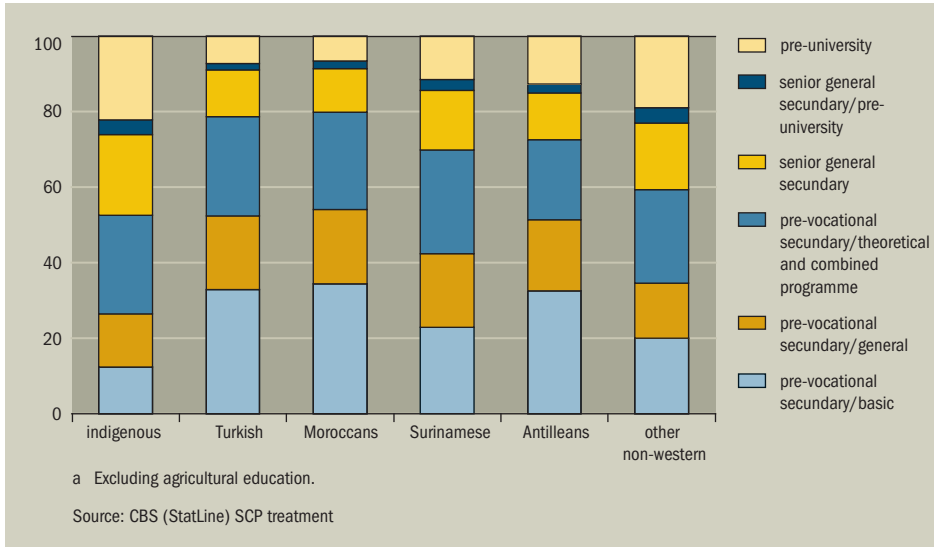
The language and arithmetic disadvantage of ethnic minority primary school pupils that is associated with the education level of their parents also has implications for their position in secondary school. Ethnic minority pupils are overrepresented in VMBO, and within that category in the lower practical level (basic and general vocational education). Ethnic minority pupils are underrepresented in senior general secondary/pre-university education (havo/vwo), at around 10% (CBS StatLine).

It can be seen from figure 4.3 that in the 2005/06 school year, no more than one in five Turkish and Moroccan pupils were in senior general secondary/pre-university education (havo/vwo). Surinamese and Antillean pupils also lagged significantly behind indigenous young people, with just over a quarter following havo/vwo programmes compared with almost half their indigenous counterparts.

The figures for the five biggest refugee groups produce a mixed picture. Young Iranians do just as well as indigenous young people, with half of them in senior general secondary (havo) or pre-university (vwo) education. This applies for 38% of pupils from (former) Yugoslavia and Afghanistan, and for slightly fewer Iraqi pupils (30%). The low participation of Somali pupils in senior general secondary or pre-university education (fewer than one in five) is a cause for concern.

Figure 4.3

Pupils in the third year of secondary school<sup>a</sup> by education level and origin, 2005/'06  
(in percentages)



Not only are non-Western ethnic minority pupils clearly overrepresented in VMBO; they also much more frequently follow the lower-level VMBO curricula, aimed at basic occupations. Almost a quarter of Turkish, Moroccan and Somali (but also Iraqi and Afghan) young people receive learning support.

Although the disadvantage of pupils of Surinamese and Antillean origin is less marked, a substantial proportion of these pupils are still receiving learning support (LWOO), compared with only 8% of indigenous pupils. These are the special needs pupils referred to earlier.

### Transfers

Around 90% of all secondary school pupils go on to further vocational or higher education. The initial qualification standard is an important marker in a person's school career; young people must complete a senior general secondary, pre-university or senior secondary vocational (MBO) course at least at level 2 before leaving school. For young people who have completed a VMBO education, secondary vocational education is the most appropriate place for obtaining an initial qualification. Pupil statistics released recently indicate that nine out of ten pupils completing VMBO go straight on to a continuing education course. There are differences between the various VMBO programmes, but even of those in programmes aimed at basic occupations (including pupils receiving learning support) 87% go on to MBO programmes (table 4.5).

It is also striking that the number of pupils going on from VMBO theoretical programmes (formerly junior general secondary education, mavo) to senior general secondary education (havo) is increasing again. The ‘accumulation’ of secondary education courses fell out of favour in the 1990s. After a decline in transfers from junior general secondary education (mavo, now VMBO-TL) to senior general secondary education (havo) of almost 20% in the early 1990s to 11% in 1999, it has risen again in recent years to 15%. This increase is partly due to Turkish and Moroccan pupils, of whom around 20% transfer from VMBO-TL to havo, though 14% of indigenous pupils are now also making the same transfer.

Table 4.5

Destination of secondary school leavers<sup>a</sup>, 2005 (in percentages)

	secondary education	bol	bbl	hbo	wo	no education	total
vmbo	7	74	10	.	.	9	100
vmbo basis	0	64	22	.	.	13	100
vmbo kader	0	81	11	.	.	7	100
vmbo gl	5	85	5	.	.	5	100
vmbo tl	15	75	3	.	.	7	100
havo	4	4	0	80	.	12	100
vwo	.	0	.	14	72	14	100

a Excluding agricultural education.

vmbo = pre-vocational secondary education

basis = basic

kader = general

gl = combined programme

tl = theoretical programme

havo = senior general secondary education

vwo = pre-university education

bol = vocational training

bbl = block or day release

wo = university education

Source: CBS (StatLine)

The transfer from havo to pre-university education (vwo) – a transfer that was made by almost one in five qualified havo students in the early 1990s – has by contrast fallen further since the end of the 1990s, from 7% to 4%. It is likely that the alternative of following a one-year HBO (higher professional education) foundation course is more attractive to those with ambitions to go to university than a two-year pre-university course, in which they will have to take more final examinations. In 2004, 2,800 HBO students without a degree (though probably with a foundation course diploma) went on to university (CBS 2007a: 152).

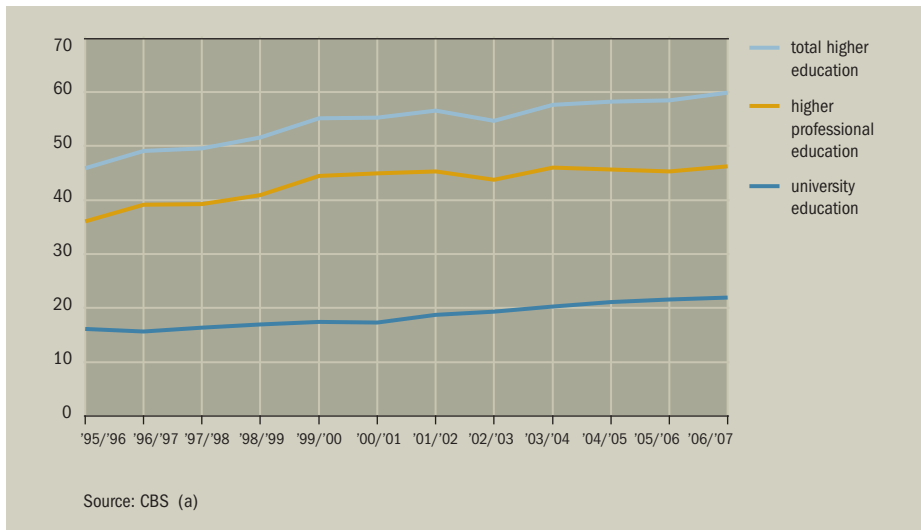
### Vocational and higher education

In 2005 there were 466,000 MBO students. There has been a shift away from block or day release courses, in which teaching takes place mainly in a work situation, towards full-time vocational training (in 2000, 63% of students followed vocational training programmes; in 2005 the figure was over 70%). This shift is a result of the economic downturn in the Netherlands.

There are four MBO levels. Assistant training (*assistentenopleiding*) (level 1), which can be accessed without a secondary education qualification, does not lead directly to an initial qualification, and attracts only a small number of participants (fewer than 5%). The emphasis in vocational training is on long courses at levels 3 and 4, which together account for three-quarters of the participants. In block and day release programmes, the emphasis is on courses at level 2. As in pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO), young people of non-Western ethnic origin on senior secondary vocational (MBO) programmes courses at the lower levels (1/2) more often than their indigenous peers.

Figure 4.4

Inflow into higher professional (hbo) and university (wo) education and total inflow in higher education (in percent of the relevant cohort of young people), 1995-2007



The government is committed to increasing the participation in higher education. And the number of students entering higher education is indeed continuing to rise, partly because due to an increase in the number of entrants of non-Western origin. After remaining steady at around 30% for a few years, participation in higher professional education rose to 46% of the cohort in question in 2006. The number of students going to university has increased by around one percentage point each year,

rising from 17% in 1998 to 22% in 2006. The total intake is in fact slightly higher than this, as older persons also begin or resume a higher education course.

Participation in higher education by non-Western ethnic minorities is significantly lower than among indigenous young people. In the Annual Report on Integration 2005 (*Jaarrapport Integratie 2005*) (SCP/WODC/CBS 2005) it was calculated that one in five members non-Western ethnic minorities entered higher professional education in 2003/2003, compared with around a third of indigenous young people. The figures for university education were 9% and 18%, respectively. This discrepancy can be attributed to the low percentage of ethnic minorities following senior general secondary (*havo*) and pre-university (*vwo*) education. Yet considerable shifts have taken place in the intake, especially among Turks and Moroccans. Whereas in the mid-1990s only 10% of Turks and Moroccans entered higher professional education, this figure had doubled to around 20% by 2002, roughly equivalent to the participation rate of Surinamese and Antilleans (where the intake has barely increased since 1995). The number of Turkish and Moroccan students going to university also doubled, albeit at a much lower level (from 3% to 6%).

### School dropout

There has for some time been a lack of clarity concerning the extent of school dropout, where pupils leave school without an initial qualification (no *havo*, *vwo* or minimum MBO level 2 diploma).

Until recently, the national trend in premature school dropout was monitored via reports from the Regional Reporting and Coordination Centres (RMC), whose task was to guide early school-leavers back into the education system. Starting from the position in 2001, with 70,000 premature school-leavers, the target was to reduce the number of new cases of school dropout to 35,000 by 2010. The trend in the number of new cases of dropout reported to the RMCs has been fairly uneven in recent years, with a fall in some years and stability in others. In 2006 the number of new RMC cases was 56,000, virtually the same as in the previous year. This apparent stagnation could be related to the more complete RMC records in the latter year. Figures have recently become available which are based on pupil number records; these show that at the end of the 2004/05 school year, 62,500 young people left school without an initial qualification (TK 2006/2007).

At EU level, the trend in early school dropout is monitored using sample surveys in which, unlike the RMC surveys, no distinction is made between 'old' and 'new' cases. According to the EU indicator, 12.9% of 18-24 year-olds left school early in 2006, equivalent to roughly 170,500 individuals. The EU indicator, which is more suitable for monitoring the trend over time, shows a gradual fall in the number of premature school-leavers compared with the starting figure of 15.5% in 2000.

However, the downward trend is not rapid enough to achieve the policy target of a dropout rate of 8% by 2010.

Educational achievement varies depending on the education type. A benchmark study commissioned by the Netherlands Association of Vocational Education and Training Colleges (MBO Raad) shows an average 39% of students leaving MBO programmes did so without a qualification. Relatively more students leave without a diploma at the lower levels (MBO 1+2) than at the higher levels (MBO 3+4) (PriceWaterhouseCoopers 2006). In higher professional education (HBO), roughly 70% of students achieve a degree after eight years. In universities, where students spend longer obtaining their degree on average, 75% of students have attained a degree after nine years (CBS StatLine). The official course duration for both higher professional and university education is four years (five years for science subjects at university).

### Adult education

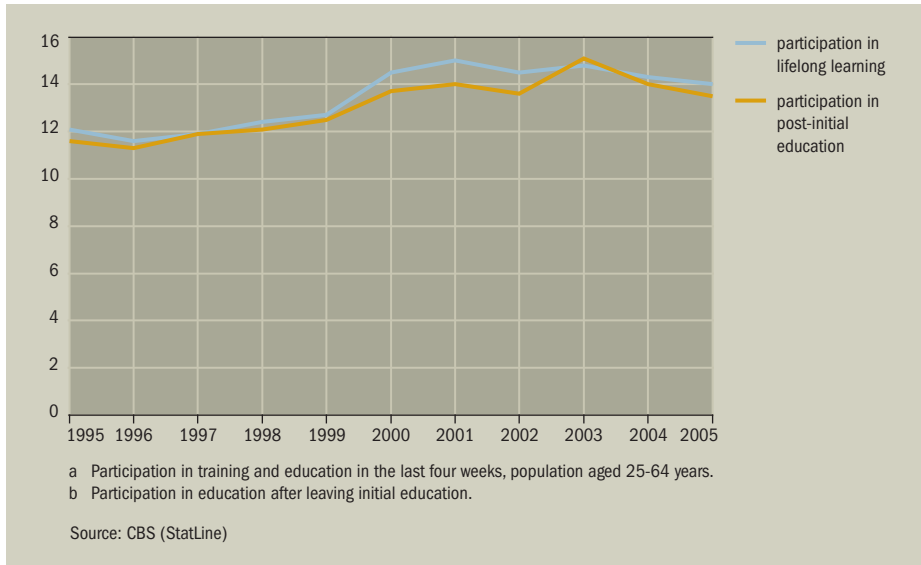
At its summit in Lisbon in 2000, the EU agreed a target of ensuring that half the labour force aged 25-45 years had been through higher education by 2020. This target cannot be achieved simply by replacing older, lower-educated cohorts by younger, better-educated cohorts. Adult education is one way of increasing the education level of the (potential) labour force. Based on several indicators, however, participation in adult education has stagnated in recent years, after a period of growth in the second half of the 1990s. The indicators calculated by Statistics Netherlands (CBS) in fact suggest a decline in the most recent period (figure 4.5). Although definition changes make comparison over time difficult, this does not explain the recent decline.

There has also been a reduction in participation in one specific form of adult education, namely company training programmes. Where 41% of employees in the private sector took part in company training in 1999, this had fallen to 35% in 2005 (CBS StatLine). The economic situation may have played a role in this. Expressed as a percentage of wage costs, spending on company training fell over the same period from 1.7% to 1.4%.

Research by the Netherlands Institute for Social Research | SCP has shown that women more often follow training courses which do not lead to a qualification than men (27% versus 17%). In addition, working people take part in adult education much more often than non-workers, and prefer courses which lead to a qualification (31%) to those which do not (25%). Members of ethnic minorities take part in adult education more often than their indigenous counterparts. This is mainly due to the fact that refugees follow courses in Dutch as a second language and integration courses (SCP 2004a).

Figure 4.5

Participation in lifelong learning<sup>a</sup> and post- initial education<sup>b</sup>, 1995-2005 (in percentages)



## Conclusion

The average education level of the population is continuing to rise. Three-quarters of the generation currently aged between 30 and 40 years have completed at least a secondary education. More than a quarter of the indigenous population aged between 15 and 65 years have completed a higher education course (higher professional or university education). Girls have caught up with boys as regards education level, but still show little interest in science and technical subjects. Non-Western ethnic minorities, especially Moroccans and Turks, have a very large educational disadvantage, though the second generation is engaged in a major catching-up exercise. One continuing cause for concern is school dropout, where pupils leave school without an initial qualification.

## 5 Labour market

Participation in the labour market has a major influence on the life situation of citizens. Work is not only a source of income, but also has consequences for people's social contacts, opportunities for development and status. However, work can also impose a strain, create a great deal of stress and lead to various physical and psychological problems. Both having a job and the quality of that job are important determinants of quality of life.

### *Developments on the demand side*

The labour market took a turn for the worse in 2002, with a reduction in the number of jobs as well as the employment volume, expressed here as the number of employment hours in full-time equivalents. Where the employment volume in the Netherlands rose from 5.7 million to 6.64 million employment years between 1995 and 2001, from 2002 onwards the figure fell to 6.45 million by 2005 (table 5.1). The tide turned again in 2005, though the minimal increase in the number of jobs and the number of vacancies in that year were no more than small bright spots. The trend in vacancies runs ahead of trends on the labour market in general, and rising vacancy figures can be regarded as a first indication of a recovering labour market (CBS 2005). The increase in temporary employment (not shown in table, see CPB 2005) also pointed towards a recovery. In 2006, the number of people in work past its earlier peak of 2002 and the number of open vacancies rose to match its level in 2001.

Table 5.1

Key figures: trends on the demand side of the labour market

	1995	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
number of jobs (x 1000) <sup>a</sup>	7642	8811	8775	8796	8723	8747	8911
employment volume (x 1000 employment years) <sup>b</sup>	5774	6636	6619	6547	6452	6433	6579
open vacancies total (x 1000)	135 <sup>c</sup>	197	149	109	118	150	195

a A job is an employment position that is filled by working persons. Since a person can have more than one job, the number of jobs is greater than the number of persons.

b The number of jobs in a year converted to full-time equivalents.

c Figures from 1998.

Source: CBS (StatLine, Arbeidsrekeningen) SCP treatment

### *Developments on the supply side*

Demand for labour is reflected in developments in the labour supply. There were more than 7.9 million working people in the Netherlands in 2006, of whom more than 7 million formed part of the working labour force (more than 12 hours' paid

work per week: in EU countries calculations start from one hour's paid work per week). Compared with the peak year 2002, this again represents a small increase. The turnaround on the labour market began in 2005, when the employment rate began to increase again in absolute terms, especially in the area of flexible employment contracts and self-employed workers. The proportion of flexible employment contracts fluctuates but does not take off to any great extent, however. This is in contrast to part-time work: the share of part-timers in the working population has increased to around a third. The proportion of self-employed people is also growing strongly; this group now account for roughly 11% of the labour force.

The growth in the labour force in the period studied here was largely accounted for by a rise in the gross participation rate of women, older persons and non-Western ethnic minorities. In all three groups, however, this initially led to an increase in unemployment (more people looking for work). As regards older workers, not only has their gross and net participation rate increased, but even in times of economic weakness the proportion of working of persons in this group has steadily increased, as their traditional early exit routes (early retirement, disability benefit) have increasingly been closed off.

In the other target groups, the economic climate and selection processes have had the reverse effect, reducing the access to the labour market. The gross participation rate of young people has declined as they seek access to the labour market less and less. This may be because they are remaining in education for longer, but it may also be because they are not looking for work.

Trends in the net participation rate clearly reflect movements in the economic cycle. While the proportion of working people in the total population aged 15-64 rose from 62% to 65% between 1998 and 2002, falling thereafter to 63%, the net participation rate was back at 65% again in 2006. However, the picture varies depending on the group considered. Women are maintaining their position on the labour market and the share of working older people is increasing. By contrast, the net participation rate of young people, members of non-Western ethnic minorities and the low-educated (people with no more than primary education) fell. A positive trend can be observed among young people and those with a low education level in 2006, but this was not yet the case for non-Western ethnic minorities.

The unemployment rate in 2005 approaches the high level reached in the middle of the 1990s, with an unemployed labour force of 483,000 (not shown in table). In 2006 this number fell back to 413,000. The same trend can be observed in registered and long-term unemployment. Quarterly figures published by Statistics Netherlands (CBS) for 2007 indicate that the downward trend is continuing.

Table 5.2

Key figures: trends in the supply side of the labour market

	1996	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
working persons <sup>a</sup> (x 1000)	7011	7892	792	7912	7864	7877	7937
labour force <sup>b</sup> (x 1000)	6686	7273	7337	7401	7398	7401	7486
working labour force (x 1000)	6185	7021	7035	7001	6919	6918	7074
employees	5456	6256	6256	6213	6116	6103	6195
part-time workers	-	2294	2438	2494	2494	2559	2624
permanent employment contract	4911	5753	5774	5754	5646	5590	5631
flexible employment contract	545	503	482	459	471	513	564
self-employed	728	765	779	788	802	816	879
gross participation rate <sup>c</sup> (%)	63	67	68	68	68	68	68
women	50	56	57	57	58	59	60
55-64 year-olds	28	36	39	40	41	42	44
15-24 year-olds	46	49	48	47	46	44	44
non-Western ethnic minorities <sup>d</sup>	51	55	56	56	56	56	55
max. primary education	34	39	39	39	39	38	40
net participation rate <sup>e</sup> (%)	59	65	65	64	63	63	65
women	45	53	54	54	54	54	56
55-64 year-olds	26	35	37	38	39	40	42
15-24 year-olds	40	45	44	42	39	38	39
non-Western ethnic minorities	40	50	49	47	47	47	47
max. primary education	29	36	36	35	33	33	35
unemployment (x 1000)	501	252	302	399	479	483	413
unemployment (%)	8	4	4	5	7	7	6
women	11	5	5	6	7	8	7
55-64 year-olds	4	2	3	4	5	6	6
15-24 year-olds	13	7	9	11	14	13	11
non-Western ethnic minorities	22	9	11	15	16	16	16
max. primary education	16	8	7	8	11	13	13
registered unemployment	440	146	170	255	319	311	260
long-term (> 1 year)	221	52	55	76	114	118	106

a Incl. persons with a working week of less than 12 hours (EBB data).

b Working people with a job for at least 12 hours per week, and jobseekers looking for work for at least 12 hours per week  
c Labour force as a percentage of the total population aged 15-64 years.

d Statistics Netherlands counts as ethnic minorities people of whom at least one parent was born abroad. The country of origin for those not born in the Netherlands (the first generation) is determined by their country of birth. For the second generation (born in the Netherlands) the country of birth of the mother is decisive (unless she was born in the Netherlands, in which case the country of birth of the father is used). The category 'non-Western' comprises ethnic minorities from Turkey, Africa, Central and South America and Asia (excluding Indonesia and Japan).

e Working labour force as a percentage of the total population aged 15-64 years.

Source: CBS (StatLine); CPB (2005) SCP treatment

### *Labour market participation rate and unemployment in ethnic groups*

Table 5.3 shows that the net participation rate of non-Western ethnic minorities (see chapter 1) rose sharply between 1996 and 2001, from 40% to 50%. It then fell back to 47% in 2003 and remained unchanged up to and including 2006. Despite the increase since the middle of the 1990s, therefore, the participation rate of this group still lags a long way behind the general average.

The vulnerable position of this group is also reflected in the unemployment rate, which in all years is between three and three and a half times as high as in the indigenous population. The trend in the unemployment rate in this group broadly follows the general trend, but at some distance and with more volatility. Between 1996 and 2001 the unemployment rate in the non-Western ethnic minority population fell from 22% to 9%, before rising again to 16% in 2004, after which it remained virtually unchanged. The rate fell slightly in 2006 (from 16.4% to 15.5%), mainly due to a change in youth unemployment: the unemployment rate among 25-64 year-olds of non-Western origin did not fall in 2006 (CBS 2007b).

While the problems on the labour market are concentrated among non-Western ethnic minorities, there are wide differences between individual ethnic groups in the prevalence of paid work. Table 5.3 shows which proportion of the population aged between 15 and 65 years had a paid job for at least 12 hours per week (net participation rate) in 2003/2004. The figure is especially low among refugee groups: the net participation rate of Iraqis, Afghans and Somalis is around 27%. Women in these groups, and especially Afghan and Somali women, rarely have paid jobs. In the group rankings, Iranians, Turks and Moroccans occupy an intermediate position. Compared with the other refugee groups, the participation rate of Iranians is notably high. This will be due in part to the high education level of this group, as well as the fact that they have lived in the Netherlands for much longer on average than the other refugee groups.

The participation rate of Moroccans looks particularly poor in 2003/04, given the relatively long period for which they have lived in the Netherlands. Only just over a third are in paid employment. A large number of people in the Moroccan community are unemployed or incapacitated for work, few women participate in the labour market and a large number of young people are still of school age. The position of Moroccan women improved markedly in 2006, but still fewer than a quarter of Moroccan women are in paid employment. The Turkish community scored better in 2003/04, but in 2006 their participation rate had reduced across the board. The position of the Surinamese community, which is generally relatively favourable, also deteriorated during the period of falling employment, and the same can be said for Antillean men. Strikingly, the participation rate of Antillean women increased in the same period.

Table 5.3

Net participation rate, by ethnic group and sex 2003/2004/2006 (in percentages)

	total		men		women	
	2003/'04	2006	2003/'04	2006	2003/'04	2006
Turks	46	44	59	57	33	30
Moroccans	37	39	45	53	28	23
Surinamese	62	60	67	65	58	55
Antilleans	52	56	57	56	46	51
(former) Yugoslavians	49		58		39	
Iraqis	28		35		15	
Afghans	27		38		10	
Iranians	43		52		32	
Somalis	26		40		9	
other non-Western ethnic minorities	43		51		34	
total non-Western ethnic minorities	48		55		39	
indigenous population	67	67	76		56	58

Source: CBS (EBB'04): Turks, Moroccans, Surinamese, Antilleans, other non-Western ethnic minorities, total non-Western ethnic minorities, indigenous population; ISEO/SCP (SPVA'03): (former) Yugoslavia, Iraqis, Afghans, Iranians and Somalis; CBS (StatLine, July 2007)

### Subsidised employment and reintegration

A range of instruments is available to help the unemployed, people with a full or partial incapacity for work and people on social assistance benefit who have difficulty finding work and are at a wide remove from the labour market, to get their feet back on the employment ladder.

First, the Work and Social Assistance Act (WBB), which came into force on 1 January 2005, provides for all manner of wage cost subsidies in order to create jobs in the public sector and at subsidised institutions. In the first half of 2005 roughly 46,000 people took part in this form of subsidised employment. To a large extent these were a continuation of earlier schemes (Jobseekers Reintegration Act (WIW)) and the entry-level and step-up jobs decree (ID decree). Around 10% moved off benefit, but only a fifth of those moved to a mainstream job.

People who can only work under adapted working conditions due to illness or disability are eligible for jobs under the Sheltered Employment Act (WSW). At the end of the first half of 2006, there were more than 99,000 eligible employees. Virtually all of these people (98%) had a 'WSW job'; the rest had a 'supported employment contract'. From 2001 to 2004 inclusive, the number of people covered by these schemes increased by between 1.7% and 1.9% annually. The situation then appears to have

reversed, with the growth almost halving in 2005 (0.9%) and falling slightly in the first half of 2006. The number of people leaving wsw jobs is small, and those who do so rarely move into mainstream employment (3%). Logically, this is related to the long-term physical, psychological and/or slight intellectual disabilities of the participants (Bolhuis and Flapper 2006, 2007).

A third instrument is the reintegration programme, aimed at disability and unemployment benefit recipients who are under the responsibility of the employee insurance implementation institute (Uwv) and at social assistance beneficiaries who fall under the responsibility of local authorities. The reintegration programmes encompass a wide variety of activities, including job application training, work accustomisation, education and skills training. Both the Uwv and local authorities contract the reintegration activities out to private reintegration firms. The Uwv launched a total of 343,139 programmes in the period 2002-2006, of which 87,910 culminated in placement in a paid job (over 25%). 34% of the programmes launched in 2002 were closed at the end of 2006, but only 6% of those begun in 2006 have so far been closed. Reintegration is a lengthy process. Unemployment benefit claimants tend to find work slightly more quickly than disability benefit claimants (Uwv 2007). No data are available on the activities of local authorities. In mid-2005 the total number of participants in reintegration programmes for social assistance clients of local authorities was more than 220,000. In almost 170,000 cases, instruments other than wage cost subsidies were used. The proportion of people moving off the schemes and into mainstream employment, both as a total and excluding wage cost subsidies, was approximately 22% (CBS StatLine).

### Conclusion

The upward trend in labour market participation, which was particularly strong in the second half of the 1990s, resumed in 2006 after a dip between 2002 and 2005, and the signs are that this improvement will continue in 2007. The labour market participation rate (65%) is relatively high in an international perspective, too, though the majority of women in particular work part-time in the Netherlands. The participation rate of non-Western ethnic minorities is still low, especially among Moroccans, women and refugees. Unemployment has fallen rapidly in a short period, and is well below 400,000 in 2007. Attempts to help the long-term unemployed and those declared unfit for work to find employment where possible are proving a lengthy process.

## 6 Income and social security

Like education, income is an important resource both for individuals and for the households of which they form part. Having an adequate income not only means that people are able to meet their basic needs, but also enables them to fulfil less essential needs. This makes it all the more striking that the Dutch government has little or no specific incomes policy. It merely states that the trend in purchasing power should be more or less the same for all income groups, and that the income position of the weakest groups in society should be protected. The incomes policy is also aimed at active integration, which in practice means seeking to remove obstacles to accepting work by limiting the poverty trap (SZW 2004: 26).

Social security policy is closely related to incomes policy; social security is intended to provide income protection for those who are unable (temporarily) to meet their own basic needs (SZW 2004: 96). In addition, however, the policy is aimed primarily at reducing benefit dependency, both by seeking to move people off benefit and into jobs and by limiting the number of people moving on to benefit in the first place.

### *General income trends*

The years between 1994 and 2005 can be split into three periods, in which the years 2001 and 2003 could be seen as turning points. First there was the healthy growth in the economy in the period 1994-2000. Table 6.1 shows that real disposable personal annual income increased by an average of 5% in this period. The unemployed saw an even bigger improvement in their income of 8%, while the purchasing power of pensioners aged 65 and over improved by 10% following the introduction of the elderly person's tax credit. The exception were people on disability benefit, whose average income, stated in 2004 prices, fell during this period due to the increasing awarding of partial disability benefits. Of those in work, women saw a bigger increase in income than men (7% versus 2%). The income of non-workers rose faster because of the relatively big improvement for pensioners in particular in this period. Between 1995 and 2000, the income of non-Western ethnic minorities grew more than the average, probably because of improvements in their labour market position due to the growth in employment in that period.

From 2001, the Dutch economy stagnated, and this slowly but surely ushered in higher unemployment. The rise in the labour market participation rate also virtually ground to a halt. The result was that in the period 2001-2003 most groups saw their financial position deteriorate. This applied in particular for employees and the self-employed: where the average reduction in personal income was 2%, the self-employed saw their income fall by 7%, underlining the fact that they are the first group to see an economic downturn reflected in their income. Employees' income

Table 6.1

Average disposable income, persons aged 18 years and older,<sup>a</sup> by a number of background characteristics, 1994-2005 (in euros, 2004 prices)

	average disposable income (x 1000)					increase	increase	increase
	1994	2000	2001	2003	2005 <sup>b</sup>	1994-2000 (%)	2001-2003 (%)	2003-2005 (%)
<b>principal source of income</b>								
employee	18.7	19.0	20.4	20.0	20.0	2	-2	0
self-employed	24.2	24.8	27.2	25.2	27.0	3	-7	7
unemployed <sup>c</sup>	10.8	11.6	11.9	12.2	12.0	8	2	-1
incapacitated for work <sup>d</sup>	13.1	12.7	12.8	12.9	12.9	-3	0	0
pensioner < 65 years	18.9	19.5	19.0	19.1	19.2	3	0	1
pensioner > 65 years	13.8	15.2	14.9	15.4	15.7	10	3	2
<b>labour market situation</b>								
man, working	23.1	23.6	25.2	24.5	24.8	2	-3	2
woman, working	13.3	14.1	15.5	15.3	15.5	7	-2	1
man, not working	16.3	18.0	16.5	16.7	17.0	11	1	2
woman, not working	11.3	12.2	11.8	12.0	11.9	8	2	0
<b>ethnic origin</b>								
indigenous	.	18.4	18.8	18.5	18.7	4 <sup>e</sup>	-2	1
ethnic minority, Western, 1 <sup>st</sup> generation	.	17.8	19.3	18.3	18.3	6 <sup>e</sup>	-5	0
ethnic minority, Western, 2 <sup>nd</sup> generation	.	18.5	19.1	18.8	18.7	5 <sup>e</sup>	-2	0
ethnic minority, non-Western, 1 <sup>st</sup> generation	.	15.1	15.7	15.4	15.4	10 <sup>e</sup>	-2	0
ethnic minority, non-Western, 2 <sup>nd</sup> generation	.	12.5	13.7	13.4	13.5	1 <sup>e</sup>	-2	0
<b>all persons</b>	<b>17.2</b>	<b>18.1</b>	<b>18.2</b>	<b>18.4</b>	<b>18.4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>1</b>

a Excluding people in residential homes and institutions, people receiving only student finance, and people with an incomplete annual income; disposable income excluding housing benefit

b The figures for 2005 are provisional. The revision of the Income Panel Survey (IPO) in 2001 means these figures are not fully comparable with earlier years.

c Including social assistance beneficiaries.

d Excluding those whose benefit is paid via the employer (these people are registered as employees).

e Growth in 1995-2000.

Source: CBS (IPO'94-'05) SCP treatment

also fell because the rate inflation outstripped pay increases. Those who were not in work (benefit claimants and pensioners) benefited from the fixed indexation of their benefits, and accordingly saw a slight improvement in their purchasing power. Pension funds, in particular, often base the indexation of their pensions on data from the previous year. As a result, an increase in income from wages has a delayed impact

on the level of pensions. Among pensioners there was also a compositional effect due to the influx of a new generation of retirees with better pensions.

The downturn in average incomes had largely ended by 2003 and the incomes of several groups slowly began to rise again, with an average increase of 1% in the period 2003-2005. Self-employed workers made good their income losses from the period 2001-2003 completely, but employees did not yet see an improvement in their income. In this period, too, pensioners saw their incomes rise slightly more than the average. The various categories of ethnic minorities were out of step with the mainstream; their incomes lagged behind.

The rise in personal incomes between 1994 and 2000 also meant a rise in household income during this period. There are however some differences between population groups (see table 6.2). Pensioners' incomes rose more strongly, partly due to the introduction of the elderly person's tax credit, while the incomes of households living from business profits also rose more than average. Households whose principal source of income was wages or benefits did relatively less well. The purchasing power of couples with children and households with only one breadwinner also rose significantly less than average. Non-Western ethnic minority households benefited greatly from the strength of the economy in the second half of the 1990s, especially those in the first generation.

Table 6.2

Average purchasing power of households,<sup>a</sup> by a number of background characteristics, 1994-2003 (in euros, 2004 prices)

	average standardised income (x 1000)					increase 1994-2000	increase 2001-2003	increase 2003-2005
	1994	2000	2001	2003	2005 <sup>b</sup>	(%)	(%)	(%)
<b>income group</b>								
first quartile (lowest 25%)	8.6	9.4	10.0	9.9	9.8	10	-2	-1
second quartile	13.8	15.2	15.6	15.5	15.6	10	0	0
third quartile	19.0	20.6	20.9	20.8	20.8	9	-1	0
fourth quartile (highest 25%)	29.6	32.2	34.6	33.8	34.2	9	-3	1
<b>household composition<sup>c</sup></b>								
single persons < 65 years	14.7	16.2	17.2	16.6	16.4	11	-4	-1
single persons ≥ 65 years	14.9	16.5	16.4	16.9	17.2	11	3	2
single-parent families	10.9	11.7	12.6	12.4	12.6	8	-1	1
couples < 65 years without children, single earners	18.0	19.6	20.1	19.4	20.2	9	-4	4
couples < 65 years without children, double earners	24.2	26.0	27.0	26.8	26.7	8	-1	0

Table 6.2 (continued)

	average standardised income (x 1000)					increase 1994-2000	increase 2001-2003	increase 2003-2005
	1994	2000	2001	2003	2005 <sup>b</sup>	(%)	(%)	(%)
couples < 65 years with children, single earners	14.6	15.3	16.2	15.6	16.6	5	-4	6
couples < 65 years with children, double earners	18.3	19.8	20.7	20.2	20.6	9	-2	2
principal source of income								
income from profits	23.4	25.6	27.0	25.2	26.5	10	-7	5
income from wages	19.8	20.8	21.6	21.4	21.3	5	-1	0
income from benefits <sup>d</sup>	10.3	10.9	11.8	12.0	11.9	6	2	-1
income from pension < 65 years <sup>e</sup>	18.8	20.0	18.9	19.5	19.7	6	3	1
income from pension, ≥ 65 years	15.9	17.4	16.8	17.4	17.8	10	4	2
ethnic origin								
indigenous	.	19.8	20.8	20.5	20.7	8 <sup>f</sup>	-1	1
ethnic minority, Western, 1 <sup>st</sup> generation	.	18.9	20.4	19.4	19.3	7 <sup>f</sup>	-5	-1
ethnic minority, Western, 2 <sup>nd</sup> generation	.	19.8	20.9	20.6	20.5	8 <sup>f</sup>	-1	-1
ethnic minority, non-Western, 1 <sup>st</sup> generation	.	14.0	14.7	14.3	14.2	13 <sup>f</sup>	-3	-1
ethnic minority, non-Western, 2 <sup>nd</sup> generation	.	13.5	15.0	14.4	13.7	10 <sup>f</sup>	-4	-5
all households	17.7	19.4	20.3	20.0	20.1	9	-2	1

a Excluding households in residential homes and institutions; disposable income excluding housing benefit.

b The figures for 2005 are provisional. The revision of the Income Panel Survey (IPO) in 2001 means the figures after 2001 are not fully comparable with earlier years.

c Children = minors (0-17 years).

d Excluding pension benefits < 65 years.

e Including surviving dependant's benefit and early retirement/pre-pension.

f Growth in 1995-2000.

Source: CBS (IPO'94-'05) SCP treatment

There was a general reduction in purchasing power in the period 2001-2003. The average fall across all households was 2%, but the actual figure varied from 4% (single-earner couples with or without children and single-person households) to 7% (the self-employed). The household incomes of ethnic minority groups fell more than average. Those in work in these groups relatively quickly lost their jobs again (see also table 5.2), leading to a further sharp deterioration in their income position. After 2001, households living on retirement pension did especially well; their purchasing power rose by a total of almost 4% in 2001-2003, due among other things to the indexation mechanism referred to earlier.

There was a small (1%) average increase in household incomes in the period 2003-2005, though there are considerable differences between the different categories. Particularly striking is the increase of 6% in the income of single-earner households with children and the sharp fall (-5%) in the income of second-generation non-Western ethnic minority households.

### *Rich and poor*

The proportion of low-income households has fallen sharply since the middle of the 1990s (for a definition see SCP/CBS 2005: 16-18). Where in 1994 16% of Dutch households were below the low-income threshold, the figure had fallen to around 9.7% in 2001 (see table 6.3). The portion of low-income households fell even more for the elderly. This was due partly to the implementation of a new policy on poverty (see SZW 1995), but the strength of the economy was also an important factor. Rising employment, resulting in a very tight labour market at the end of the 1990s, improved the labour market opportunities for groups which otherwise hold little appeal for employers. The already mentioned elderly person's tax credit was an important factor for the drop of the poor households among the elderly.

However, the economic downturn mean that the percentage of households with a low income has increased again slightly in the last couple of years. In 2003 9.8% of households were on a low income; by 2005 the poverty rate had risen to 10.0%. Not surprisingly, single-parent families, non-Western ethnic minority households and households in receipt of benefit are very strongly overrepresented in this category.

The percentage of high-income households also rose between 1994 and 2001, though this growth was not as marked as the fall in the proportion of low-income households. Double-earner households without children are particularly strongly represented among the high incomes, accounting for more than a quarter in 2001. The difference compared with the total group of double-earner households makes clear that children put a brake on purchasing power. This is also reflected in the fact that children relatively infrequently figure in households with high incomes. In line with the weaker economy, the total percentage of high-income households fell back slightly in the period 2001-2005.

It has been claimed regularly in recent years that more and more households are finding it difficult to make ends meet, and in some cases are in serious debt. This applies especially for low-income households, though it is claimed that those on middle incomes are also experiencing financial difficulties (Nibud 2005). The rise in fixed costs, or more generally government spending cuts, the downturn in the economy and the introduction of the euro are usually blamed for this situation.

Table 6.3

Rich and poor households, 1994-2005 (in absolute numbers and percentages)

	1994	2000	2001	2003	2005
total number of households <sup>b</sup> (x 1000)	6,034	6,547	6,545	6,531	6,612
with a low income <sup>c</sup> (in %)	16.1	11.9	9.7	9.8	10.0
single persons aged over 65	33.6	22.1	14.1	11.1	10.7
single-person households <sup>d</sup>	35.5	43.7	39.5	39.5	41.2
non-Western ethnic minorities	.	31.8	29.9	29.9	30.0
benefit claimants <sup>e</sup>	56.1	52.4	48.5	48.5	47.8
children (0-17 years)	17.3	12.8	12.9	12.9	12.9
with a low income on average over four years	16.2	14.1	.	.	.
with a consistently low income over four years	6.8	5.2	.	.	.
with a high income <sup>c</sup> (in %)	7.7	10.8	12.0	11.6	11.5
employees	8.4	11.5	12.8	12.5	11.8
double earners	5.2	7.5	9.4	8.4	9.1
double earners without children	18.5	25.4	26.1	25.5	24.1
children (0-17 years)	3.7	5.6	7.4	6.5	7.4
with a high income on average over four years	6.9	8.2	.	.	.
with a consistently high income over four years	4.0	4.6	.	.	.

a The figures for 2005 are provisional. The revision of the Income Panel Survey (IPO) in 2001 means the figures after 2001 are not fully comparable with earlier years.

b Excluding students and households with an incomplete annual income.

c Low income in 2005: € 10,301 (at 2004 prices), high income: three times the low income.

d Only children aged under 18.

e Not (pre-)pension.

f Cannot be calculated due to lack of panel data.

Source: CBS (IPO'94-'05) SCP treatment

In 1994, when the economy was also in recession, almost 15% of households reported that they found it difficult or very difficult to make ends meet, and slightly under 13% reported that they were forced to get into debt or eat into their savings. These percentages began to fall after 1996, reaching 8% and 10%, respectively, in 2001 (not shown in table). The figures then began to rise again, reaching 10% and over 12%, respectively, in 2002. In 2005, the percentage of households finding it difficult or very difficult to make ends meet shot up to 17% and was even higher than ten years earlier (SCP 2006: 44).

## Social security

Table 6.4 presents figures on the number of benefit claimants in 1994 and 2005, as well as the share of the relevant population category accounted for by benefit claimants in these and a number of intermediate years.

Table 6.4

Benefit dependency, population aged 15-64 years, 1994-2005 (in absolute numbers and percentages)

	relevant population category	1994 (x 1000)	2005 (x 1000)	1994 (%)	1998 (%)	2002 <sup>a</sup> (%)	2004 (%)	2005 (%)	change 1994-2005 (in percentage points) relative to relevant population category	total population aged 15-64 years
disability benefit	labour force 15-64	894	898	13.8	13.1	13.4	12.8	12.1	-1.7	-0.3
15-44 years	labour force 15-44	278	263	5.8	5.6	6.4	6.1	5.5	-0.3	-0.3
45-64 years	labour force 45-64	617	635	36.0	30.9	27.9	25.7	24.4	-11.6	-0.1
unemployment benefit	labour force 15-64	410	305	6.3	4.1	2.7	4.3	4.1	-2.2	-1.1
social assistance <sup>b</sup>	population 15-64	516	355	4.9	3.9	3.1	3.3	3.2	-1.7	-1.7
surviving dependant's pension	population 40-64	196	141	4.3	3.7	3.0	2.7	2.5	-1.8	-0.6
<b>total</b>	<b>population 15-64</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>1699</b>	<b>19.2</b>	<b>16.8</b>	<b>15.5</b>	<b>16.2</b>	<b>15.5</b>		<b>-3.7</b>

a These figures differ from those presented in *De sociale staat van Nederland 2003* ('The Social State of the Netherlands 2003'). This is due to a change in the population statistics and (in the case of disability benefit) use is no longer made of derived benefit years, but instead the number of benefits in payment as at 31 December.

b General social assistance / Work and Social Assistance Act, plus Older and Partially Incapacitated Unemployed Workers Income Scheme (IOAW) and the Older and Partially Incapacitated Former Self-employed Persons Income Scheme (IOAZ).

Source: benefits: CBS (2004a and 2005a); UWV (2004a and 2005a); population: CBS (2005b and 2005c); labour force: CBS (1995, 2004b, 2005d)

There was a net reduction of 317,000 in the total number of benefit claimants aged between 15 and 64 years between 1994 and 2005, reducing the benefit dependency of the population aged 65 years and under by almost 4 percentage points. This was due chiefly to social assistance benefit: since 1994 the number of benefits paid pursuant to the Social Assistance Act (ABW, now replaced by the Work and Social Assistance Act, WWB), the Older and Partially Incapacitated Unemployed Workers Income Scheme (IOAW) and the Older and Partially Incapacitated Former Self-employed Persons Income Scheme (IOAZ) fell by 161,000. There was also a net decrease in

the number of unemployment benefits and surviving dependant's pensions paid, by 105,000 and 55,000, respectively. It should be borne in mind when considering these figures that both the number of unemployment benefits and the number of social assistance benefits increased between 2001 and 2005, though this situation reversed in 2005, with a reduction in the number of all three benefits paid. The fall in the number of disability benefits began as early as 2002. Over the whole period 1994-2005, the total number of benefits reduced by only 4,000, mainly among older employees. However, related to the size of the relevant population category, the number of people with an incapacity for work in the 55-64 age group fell by 10 percentage points.

### Conclusion

The picture that emerges of the period studied in this chapter is reasonably positive up to and including 2001. Household purchasing power increased, poverty fell and the number of benefit claimants declined. This trend was reinforced by changes to the tax system in 2001, which led to a clear improvement in purchasing power. After 2001, however, the situation changed: between 2001 and 2003 households saw their disposable income fall by a total of 2%, while the proportion of low-income households began to grow again. The number of benefits paid also increased in this period, though this situation appears to have changed for the better again in 2004-2005.

## 7 Health and care

For more than 20 years the Dutch have regarded being in good health as one of the most important things in their lives (Van Campen 2005). Not only is good health a key determinant of their quality of life; it is also an important resource in enabling people to undertake social activities. Health problems impede employment, education, leisure time use and other forms of participation in society. The health care system offers citizens support in recovering from health problems. For people with long-term health problems, i.e. the chronically ill and disabled, the health care system provides the maximum possible compensation for their loss of function. Finally, health has two aspects: health status as diagnosed by medical professionals, and people's own perceptions of their health status. These two aspects need not always coincide.

### *Life expectancy*

Improvements in public health can be measured by the increasing life expectancy, the increase in the number of years that people living good health and the fall in avoidable health problems (VWS 2003; TK 2004/2005b).

Life expectancy at birth has risen steadily since 1995, and in 2005 stood at 77.2 years for men and 81.6 years for women – an increase of 2.6 and 1.2 years, respectively, within the space of ten years. The difference in life expectancy between men and women is shrinking; at age 65, the remaining life expectancy for men is 15.9 years and for women 19.6 years (CBS StatLine 2007; Poos 2007). The acknowledged oldest woman in the world, the Dutch woman Hendrikje van Andel-Schipper, died in 2006 at the age of 115. Almost 1 in 10,000 Dutch people are currently aged 100 or older. If the present trend continues, by 2050 the life expectancy at birth will be 79.64 men and 82.6 years for women 82.6 (De Jong 2005).

People with a low education level have a shorter average lifespan than the highly educated. In the second half of the 1990s the difference was 2.6 years for women and no less than 4.9 years for men (De Hollander et al. 2006; Hoeymans and Van der Lucht 2004). The differences between socio-economic groups are smaller among Turks and Moroccans and among Antillean/Aruban women than in the indigenous population (Bos et al. 2005).

Differences in mortality rates between socio-economic groups are also found at higher ages (65 years and older). Figures from the same period indicate that the mortality rate for a proportion of ethnic minority men (Turks, Surinamese and Antilleans/Arubans) is higher than for indigenous men. Moroccan men have a lower mortality rate and the differences between women are small; only Surinamese

women have a higher mortality risk (Bos et al. 2005). The mortality risk among Turkish adult males has increased over the last 15 years; cardiovascular disease, lung and other cancers and smoking patterns have played a role in this (Garssen 2006).

Women live longer than men on average, then. However, it is not the case that they live for longer in good health. For example, in the period 2001-2005 the life expectancy without physical impairments (based on POLS Health Module) was virtually identical for men and women: 68.9 years for men and 67.5 years for women (Knoops and Perenboom 2006). Figures from 2003 show that the unhealthy years are primarily the result of minor impairments (Perenboom 2005). People with a low education level spend more years living in less good health than their well-educated peers (Van Herten et al. 2002).

### Lifestyle

Changing one's lifestyle or living more healthily is regarded as an important means of reducing socio-economic health differences. Smoking and drinking are among the key policy targets, and young people are the most important target group of this policy of discouragement (TK 2004/2005b).

In the 1990s, the percentage of smokers was fairly stable at around 33%. A gradual decline then set in, to around 30% in 2003 (De Hollander et al. 2006). This decline was not uniform, however, with differences between population groups; young people (12-18 year-olds), the over-65s, the well-educated and the highest income group, for example, smoked less than other groups (see Bijl et al. 2007, Appendices). At present, the situation is not showing any further improvement; in fact, according to figures published by Statistics Netherlands (CBS), the percentage of older smokers (65-74 year-olds) actually increased between 2004 and 2006 from 20% to 24% (CBS StatLine 2007).

Total alcohol consumption fell slightly between 2001 and 2004. Overall, just under half the Dutch adult population drink alcohol responsibly or are teetotal (CBS POLS 2001-2004). This overall figure masks considerable differences between men and women and between different socio-economic groups. More than half of all women do not drink alcohol, compared with only a third of men. And although the better educated drink more frequently than the low-educated, the number of problem drinkers among those with a low education level is higher than average (De Hollander et al. 2006).

At first sight, the drinking patterns of young people (12-18 year-olds) compare favourably with those of the adult population, but this is mainly due to the fact that there are still many teetotallers among 12-15 year-olds. Among 15-17 year-olds, only 30% adhere to the alcohol guidelines for their age group. Young people who drink alcohol almost all drink much too much when they do so. In fact, the incidence of

binge drinking (five or more units of alcohol on each occasion) actually increased sharply between 2003 and 2005 (Van Dorsselaer et al. 2007).

### Morbidity pattern

The morbidity pattern in the Netherlands has undergone a change since the middle of the 1990s. Table 7.1 shows the biggest upward and downward movements in terms of incidence and prevalence in the period 1993-2003, based on medical records (primarily GP records). The incidence of some forms of cancer, including lung cancer in women, has increased, while among men the number of new cases of lung cancer has fallen. This difference is related to changes in smoking behaviour; the general incidence of cancer remains roughly the same. The increase in certain forms of cancer is related to changes in lifestyle and better and earlier detection.

Table 7.1

Most common diseases in the Netherlands in 2003 and ranking of diseases based on greatest statistical significance, changes in the period 1993-2003<sup>a</sup>

	incidence <sup>b</sup>	prevalence <sup>b</sup>
most common	upper respiratory tract infections	neck and back complaints
	neck and back complaints	contact eczema
	sports injuries	arthritis
	acute urinary infections	coronary heart disease
	accidents in personal life	diabetes mellitus
strongest increase	lung cancer (w)	asthma
	breast cancer (w)	diabetes
	skin cancer	depression
	colon cancer	anxiety disorders
	diabetes	strokes
strongest decrease	lung cancer (m)	COPD
	influenza	ulcers of stomach and duodenum
	accidents in personal life	hearing impairment
	stomach cancer	heart failure (w)
	sports injuries	parkinson's disease

COPD = chronic bronchitis and lung emphysema

w = trend is significant for women; m = trend is significant for men; in all other cases the trend is significant for both men and women.

a Figures obtained by performing a linear regression analysis on data on incidence and prevalence of 53 selected diseases. A correction has been applied for age.

b Incidence: the number of new cases of the disease.

c Prevalence: the total number of cases of the disease.

Source: De Hollander et al. 2006

There has also been a sharp increase in the number of people suffering from asthma or diabetes mellitus. In both cases, the increase is related to changes in lifestyle and increased awareness and alertness on the part of doctors and patients. In the case of diabetes mellitus, the increase in the number of overweight people is an important factor. Since the end of the 1990s the number of cases of asthma has stopped increasing, and in fact a slight fall can be observed in children (De Hollander et al. 2006).

## Chronic diseases

Table 7.2

Number of chronic or long-term diseases<sup>a</sup>, persons aged 12 years and older, by background characteristics, 2001-2004 (in percentages and difference 2004-2001 in percentage points)

	no disease			≥ 2 diseases		
	2001	2004	2004-2001	2001	2004	2004-2001
<b>gender</b>						
male	63.6	61.0	-2.6*	13.4	14.8	+1.4
female	49.5	50.2	+0.7	23.6	23.8	+0.2
<b>age</b>						
12-17 years	73.5	78.3	+4.8	6.5	3.1	-3.4*
18-34 years	64.1	66.1	+2.0*	11.2	11.3	+0.1
35-64 years	54.4	51.7	-2.7*	20.1	21.9	+1.8
≥ 65 years	38.9	36.6	-2.3	34.3	34.6	+0.3
<b>education level</b>						
low	52.5	54.3	+1.8	22.4	22.4	0
medium	58.7	55.9	-2.8*	16.6	19.1	+2.5
high	60.1	56.0	-4.1*	14.7	16.0	+1.3
<b>disposable income</b>						
lowest 20%	45.0	51.3	+6.3*	29.0	24.7	-4.3*
middle 21-79%	57.9	54.5	-3.4*	16.9	19.5	+2.6*
upper 20%	58.7	62.2	+3.5	16.3	13.8	-2.5*
<b>total</b>	<b>56.4</b>	<b>55.5</b>	<b>-0.9</b>	<b>18.7</b>	<b>19.4</b>	<b>+0.7</b>

a Had suffered during the last 12 months from one or more of 13 chronic or long-term diseases, namely diabetes, (consequences of) stroke, cerebral haemorrhage or infarct, heart attack or other serious heart disease, cancer, migraine or regular severe headache, asthma, chronic bronchitis, lung emphysema or CARRA; serious skin disease (psoriasis or chronic eczema) intestinal disorders, joint where, chronic joint inflammation, back complaint, neck or shoulder complaint, and elbow, wrist or hand complaint.

\* Is significant based on data for 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004.

Source: CBS (POLS'01-'04) SCP treatment

Around 45% of Dutch people aged 12 years and older report that they suffer from a chronic or long-term disease. Almost 20% suffer simultaneously from two or more diseases (comorbidity). The figures presented in table 7.2 are based on 13 types of disease which respondents reported having in the Periodic Life Situation Survey (POLS) by Statistics Netherlands (CBS).

Groups which suffer from a long-term disease significantly more often are the over-65s, people in receipt of benefit, women and the lowest income group. The same groups also more often suffer comorbidity by having two or more diseases. People with a low education level also fall into this group. Then people (12-18 year-olds), 18-34 year-olds and the highest income groups, by contrast, more frequently report that they suffer from none of the 13 types of disease.

The percentage of Dutch people aged 12 years and older suffering from at least one chronic or long-term disease remained unchanged between 2001 and 2004. The proportion suffering from comorbidity also remained constant in the same period (table 7.2). In some sections of the population, however, trends can be observed. Between 2001 and 2004, people in the lowest income group suffered less often from long-term disease. By contrast, the percentage suffering from a disease increased among those with a secondary and higher education level, the middle income groups, 35-64 year-olds and men (table 7.2). During the same period, comorbidity decreased among 12-18 year-olds and in the lowest and highest income groups. People with a middle income increasingly began suffering from several long-term diseases simultaneously. In both cases, the ageing of the population is probably a significant factor.

### Physical impairments

Diseases not uncommonly lead to physical impairments in carrying out activities, but such impairments may also be congenital or the result of an accident. The number of people with impairments cannot be established unequivocally, but it is known that there are approximately 1.5 million people living independently with moderate or severe motor impairments, in other words people who have difficulty using their limbs and who therefore experience difficulty with things such as general day-to-day activities or mobility. Roughly 430,000 people living independently suffer from moderate or severe visual impairments and there are around 360,000 people with moderate or severe hearing impairments. Some people suffer impairments in different areas simultaneously. If this is taken into account, the number of people living independently with a moderate or severe impairment rises to an estimated 1.7 million. Long-term physical disabilities occur more commonly in women, the elderly, single persons, the low-educated and low-income groups. The number of people with physical impairments is increasing (De Klerk 2007).

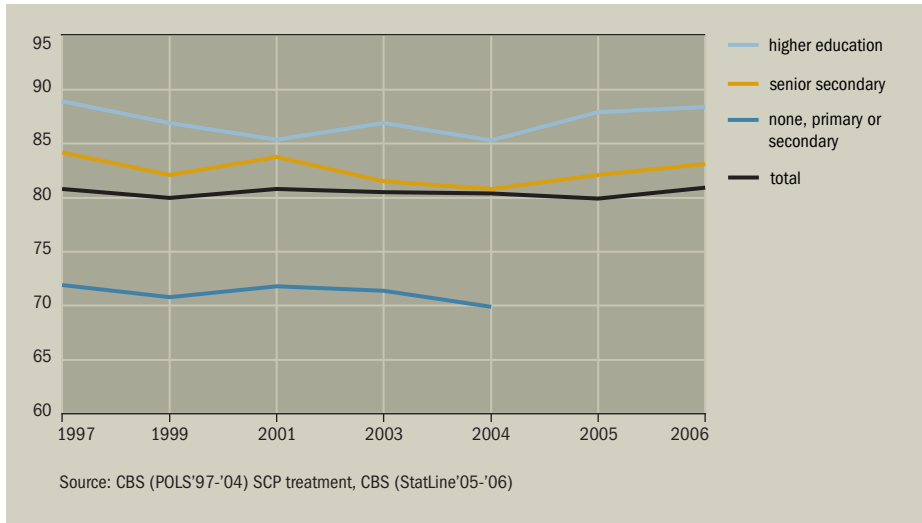
### Perceived health

As well as the objective figures on life expectancy and diseases, people's own opinions about their health are an important indicator for public health. How someone feels, their perceived health, is not only a good predictor of mortality and morbidity, but also of the take-up of provisions such as GPs and home care services.

The Dutch feel just as healthy today as they did ten years ago (figure 7.1). Around 80% feel healthy or very healthy.

Figure 7.1

Perceived health of the population aged 12 years and older (persons with good or very good perceived health) by education level, 1997-2006



There are however a number of groups whose health is improving or deteriorating. The socio-economic health differences are particularly noteworthy here. The perceived health of people with a secondary and higher education level fell until 2004 before returning to its 1997 level thereafter. The health status of people with a low education level fell less sharply until 2004, leading to a reduction in socio-economic health differences. In the period 2004-2006, the health status of people with primary and pre-vocational education improved slightly, but on balance the socio-economic health differences between those with a low (primary) and high (higher professional, university) education level began increasing again in 2004.

### Take-up of care provisions

Table 7.3 shows the take-up of a number of medical provisions and home care services in 2004, as well as the difference in percentage points between 1997 and 2004. The figures are based on people's own perceptions.

Table 7.3

Care take-up by background characteristics, 1997-2004 (take-up in 2004 in percentages and difference in behaviour 2004-1997 in percentage points)

	GP (last two months)		medical specialist (last two months)		hospitals (last year)		home care <sup>a</sup> (last year)		physiotherapy (last year)	
	2004	2004-1997	2004	2004-1997	2004	2004-1997	2004	2004-1997	2004	2004-1997
<b>gender</b>										
male	27.1	-1.3	14.5	+1.1	5.5	-0.2	1.9	-0.1	15.2	+2.0
female	36.7	-3.8	17.7	+1.4	6.8	+0.8	5.5	+0.7	19.4	+2.2
<b>age</b>										
< 18 years	23.6	-3.6	9.7	-2.6	2.7	-1.0	1.0	-0.6	6.2	+0.2
18-34 years	29.8	-3.1	12.7	+2.0	5.1	+0.8	0.9	-0.8	16.4	+2.5
35-64 years	32.8	-2.2	17.4	+2.1	6.5	+0.7	2.2	+0.5	21.9	+2.3
≥ 65 years	47.4	-1.8	28.7	+2.2	12.7	-0.2	18.0	+2.4	23.8	+3.6
<b>education level</b>										
low	35.1	-3.0	18.6	+1.5	7.5	+0.2	6.6	+1.7	18.5	+0.5
secondary	33.6	-1.5	16.9	+3.5	6.3	+1.1	3.0	+0.7	20.7	+3.6
high	30.8	-0.4	15.7	+1.3	6.4	+1.6	2.3	+0.1	19.6	+4.4
<b>disposable income</b>										
lowest 20%	36.0	-6.1 <sup>b</sup>	19.0	+0.9 <sup>b</sup>	7.9	-0.5 <sup>b</sup>	8.2	-0.9 <sup>b</sup>	18.5	+2.6 <sup>b</sup>
middle 21-79%	32.0	-1.4 <sup>b</sup>	16.0	+2.9 <sup>b</sup>	6.1	+1.4 <sup>b</sup>	2.9	+0.2 <sup>b</sup>	17.3	+2.5 <sup>b</sup>
upper 20%	27.4	-3.5 <sup>b</sup>	13.1	-2.2 <sup>b</sup>	4.5	-0.8 <sup>b</sup>	1.2	-0.5 <sup>b</sup>	16.2	+0.1 <sup>b</sup>
<b>income source</b>										
from employment	28.1	-2.7	13.3	+1.0	4.8	+0.5	1.2	-0.3	15.7	+1.8
from pension	45.6	-1.2	26.5	+2.3	12.0	+0.3	14.8	+3.4	23.2	+2.9
from benefit	38.8	-2.2	19.8	+2.4	7.8	+0.9	3.6	-0.1	20.2	+3.9
other	35.3	-1.5	18.3	+1.6	6.0	-1.7	6.0	+4.2	19.7	+3.5
<b>household composition</b>										
single person	37.9	-3.9	21.0	+3.0	7.5	-0.8	12.9	+1.3	22.0	+2.8
couple no children	37.7	-1.1	21.4	+2.1	8.3	+1.1	3.8	+1.3	22.2	+3.8
couple with children	27.5	-2.9	12.5	+0.2	5.0	+0.4	1.3	-0.6	13.8	+1.0
single-parent family	32.0	-3.4	12.7	+1.2	4.3	-1.4	3.1	+0.2	16.3	+2.1
<b>total</b>	<b>31.9</b>	<b>-2.6</b>	<b>16.1</b>	<b>+1.2</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>+0.4</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>+0.3</b>	<b>17.3</b>	<b>+2.1</b>

a Home care: district nurse and/or home help.

b 2004-1998.

Source: CBS (POL5'97-'04) SCP treatment

A slight increase in care consumption can be observed across the board, except for visits to the GP. Women, the elderly, people with a low education level, low-income groups and benefit claimants/pensioners generally make more frequent use of care provisions than their social opposites. These are also the groups with an increased

risk of less good health. After correction for age and health, the differences by education level disappear or reduce (RIVM 2006; Westert and Verkleij 2006). Income-based differences also reduce, though people with a low income are admitted to hospital slightly more frequently than people with a high income (De Hollander et al. 2006).

By contrast, the number of visits to a physiotherapist has increased by more than average since 1997. In particular, people aged over 65, people with a secondary and higher education level and couples without children visit a physiotherapist more often.

Despite the reduced frequency of visits to the GP, more people consult a medical specialist, especially people with a secondary education level and people living alone. The number of people admitted to hospital in the past year was only fractionally higher in 2005 than in 1997. The number of admissions fell between 1997 and 2001, but rose to a higher level from 2002 (CBS StatLine). It is uncertain whether there is a 'floor' in the number of admissions. The length of hospital admissions continues to fall and now averages around six days. Day treatments have shown strong growth.

Take-up of home care by the Dutch did not change significantly between 1997 and 2004, though did increase in a number of specific groups, including people with severe disabilities. The over-65s also made increasing use of home care services, while 18-34 year-olds received support less often. The trend among the elderly and severely disabled is related to the fact that they are now living independently for longer and to the increased use of community-based care. The fall in take-up among 18-34 year-olds may be the result of a tightening up of the indication criteria in 2004.

## Conclusion

The Dutch regard being in good health as extremely important and most of them (80%) also feel healthy. The differences between objective and subjective health status are largely socio-economically determined. The higher someone's educational and occupational level, the better their health and the longer their life expectancy. Average life expectancy at birth is continuing to increase, rising by more than two months a year for men and by just over one month a year for women. The current life expectancy for men is 77.2 years and 81.6 years for women. Chronic diseases and permanent disabilities occur frequently, especially among the elderly; all in all, they affect around 10% of the population.

## 8 Culture, media and sport

The activities undertaken by people in their leisure time play a key part in determining their quality of life. Participation in culture, communication and sport fosters personal development and social cohesion. However, the government distances itself from the question of how people spend their leisure time; that is something for individuals to decide for themselves. Yet the government does promote a number of leisure activities, albeit subtly, by supporting certain provisions in the field of culture, communication and sport and by encouraging the take-up of those provisions (by specific groups).

### Culture

The 'cultural reach' – the proportion of people visiting a museum, theatre or popular or classical concert at least once a year – increased from 76% to 80% in the period 1995-2003. This increase can be attributed largely to popular culture and museums.

Table 8.1 presents participation figures for two forms of culture, analysed by a number of background characteristics of the population. The percentage of the population (aged 6 years and older) reporting that they have visited a (Dutch) museum showed some growth from 1995 onwards (from 35% in 1995 to 38% in 2003). The number of visitors per 100 inhabitants rose from 76 in 1995 to 82 in 2003. This growth related to the number of occasional visitors; a stable proportion of the population (around 6%) visit a museum once every three months or more. On average, people visiting museums did so slightly more than twice per year.

A quarter of the population visit one or more professional theatre, ballet, classical music or opera performances each year. This figure did not change between 1995 and 2003. Of these four theatre categories, professional theatre and classical concerts (14% and 12%, respectively) had the biggest reach. Ballet and opera/opera each reached 9% of the population annually. Compared with museums, therefore, theatres attract a higher proportion of frequent visitors. The interest in popular theatre forms (pop music, musicals) has increased considerably in recent years, especially among those in middle age. The number of visits to cinemas has also increased since the middle of the 1990s (not shown in table; see Van den Broek et al. 2005 and SCP 2005). More than half the population visit the cinema at least once a year; over 10% do so once or more per month.

Table 8.1

Visits<sup>a</sup> to museums and theatres<sup>b</sup> by a number of background characteristics<sup>c</sup>, population aged 6 years and older, 1995-2003 (in percentages of visitors)

	museums			theatre		
	1995	1999	2003	1995	1999	2003
visits (%)	35	37	38	25	25	24
number of visits per 100 inhabitants	76	77	82	59	58	58
frequent visitors <sup>d</sup> (%)	6	6	6	5	5	5
occasional visitors <sup>e</sup> (%)	29	31	32	20	20	19
men	33	36	37	22	22	21
women	36	39	39	29	28	28
6-11 years	40	46	54	17	23	24
12-19 years	39	39	45	18	20	19
20-34 years	31	28	27	25	22	22
35-49 years	38	39	39	29	23	25
50-64 years	36	43	43	32	33	30
65-79 years	29	39	36	25	29	25
≥ 80 years	14	18	21	13	16	19
primary education	17	20	16	14	12	10
vmbo (lbo/mavo) <sup>f</sup>	25	28	26	21	20	16
havo, vwo, mbo <sup>f</sup>	39	39	36	31	27	25
hbo, university <sup>f</sup>	60	58	58	50	46	45
Dutch	35	38	38	26	25	25
Turks, Moroccans	18	17	23	9	7	8
Surinamese, Antilleans	21	23	28	12	16	18

a Visit percentage, number of visits per 100 inhabitants, proportion of frequent and occasional visitors and number of visits

b Professional theatre, ballet, classical music, opera. Visit during the 12 months preceding the survey

c Sex, age, ethnicity and education level (highest completed or current education level, population aged 20 years and older).

d At least once per quarter.

e Less than once per quarter.

f vmbo = pre-vocational secondary education

lbo = junior secondary vocational education

mavo = junior general secondary education

havo = senior general secondary education

vwo = pre-university education

mbo = senior secondary vocational education

hbo = higher professional education

Source: SCP (AVO'95-'03)

Across the whole cultural spectrum, more women than men show an interest in cultural activities. This is particularly evident in the interest in the stage (table 8.1). In terms of age, the pattern in 2003 fluctuated, and to a greater extent with museums than with the theatre. After the youngest age group, interest declined, before rising again and peaking in the 50-64 age group, after which it declined again. The cultural reach among children (6-11 years) increased over the period, as it also did for museums among teenagers (12-19 years).

Among the adult population, the reach of both museums and the theatre was considerably higher among those with a higher education level, though in the period 1995-2003 the number of visitors to the theatre fell in all educational categories. This decline occurred to a lesser extent for museums (and exhibitions organised by museums), and only among those with a higher education level.

The cultural reach among Turks and Moroccans is low. This applies especially for visits to the theatre, where there are also few signs of any improvement. Surinamese and Antilleans lag behind to a lesser extent, and are increasingly finding their way to museums and the theatre.

## Media

Media usage patterns largely reflect the preferences of the Dutch for quality information and recreation. In 2005 this media usage accounted for more than 40% of all free time, and has for years remained stable at an average of around 19 hours per head of the population per week (as main activity). However, major shifts have taken place within that overall usage under the influence of technological and social developments, and in particular as a result of PC ownership and Internet access (table 8.2).

Table 8.2

Computer usage by persons aged 12 years and older, 1985-2005 (in percentages and hours)

	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
has a PC at home (%)	18	30	51	70	87
uses a PC in leisure time (TBO-week) (%)	4	13	23	45	68
PC use by PC owners (%)	18	33	40	60	75
Internet access (%)					75
average number of hours spent on PC by users (TBO-week)	3.5	3.7	4.0	3.9	5.6

TBO = Time Use Survey

Source: SCP (TBO)

The proportion of the Dutch population with access to a PC at home increased to 87% between 1985 and 2005. Internet applications such as e-mail and the World Wide Web will have boosted both ownership and use of PCs. It can also be seen from

the table that computer use rises more rapidly than computer ownership, which means that more and more people are actually using the ICT facilities they have at home. ICT use has become a part of everyday life for a majority of the population (Steyaert and De Haan 2007). This has important implications for the use of other media (table 8.3).

Table 8.3

Media use: watching television (including video, DVD, teletext and cable newspapers), listening to the radio (including audio), reading printed media, computer use (including Internet) as main activity, persons aged 12 years and older, 1975-2005 (in percentages and hours per week)

	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
media use: participation (%)	99	100	100	100	99	99	99
TV (incl. video, teletext)	94	96	98	97	96	97	95
audio (radio and music)	68	60	52	50	41	36	28
printed media	96	95	94	91	89	84	81
computer, Internet/e-mail			4	13	23	45	68
media use (hours per week)	18.5	17.8	19.0	18.8	18.8	18.7	18.9
TV (incl. video, teletext)	10.2	10.3	12.1	12.0	12.4	12.4	10.8
audio (radio and music)	2.2	1.8	1.4	1.2	0.8	0.7	0.5
printed media	6.1	5.7	5.3	5.1	4.6	3.9	3.8
computer, Internet/e-mail			0.1	0.5	0.9	1.8	3.8

Source: SCP (TBO)

Today the Dutch – and not just PC owners – spend an average of almost four hours of their leisure time each week using a computer. This takes place largely at the expense of watching television, and to a limited extent at the expense of listening to the radio and reading. Table 8.3 also shows not only that fewer people read, but also that they devote less time to printed media. It is worth remembering, however, that this decline in reading is not a recent phenomenon (Knulst and Kraaykamp 1996; Huysmans et al. 2004).

A closer look at the decline in watching television reveals that it is mainly the public TV broadcasters that have lost out in viewing time (table 8.4). The time spent watching national public broadcasters fell by almost one and a half hours between 1995 and 2005. This was not because people spent more time watching Dutch commercial and other broadcasters (including local and regional channels), because the time spent viewing these channels, too, fell by more than one and a half hours over the same period. In both cases, the reduction in viewing time was mirrored in an increase in the time spent using computers.

Table 8.4

Watching television (as main activity), by type of broadcaster and video/DVD, population aged 12 years and older, 1975-2005 (in hours per week)

	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
television total	10.2	10.3	12.1	12.0	12.4	12.4	10.8
public broadcasters	8.4	8.1	8.8	5.9	4.3	4.0	2.9
commercial broadcasters <sup>a</sup>				3.3	6.1	5.7	5.4
video/DVD			0.5	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.7
other broadcasters	1.8	2.3	2.9	2.1	1.4	2.2	1.9

a Dutch-language broadcasters with general programming (in 2005: RTL4, 5 and 7, SBS6, Net5, Veronica and Talpa).

Source: SCP (TBO '75-'05)

The reduction in reading observed earlier also has repercussions for libraries, which are seeing a reduction in the number of books borrowed. Only a few groups in the population (older people and Turks/Moroccans) are excluded from this trend (Huysmans 2005). The percentage of the population aged 6 years and older who have borrowed a least one book in the past four weeks fell from 32% to 25%. Young people up to the age of 20 have stayed more or less faithful to the library and still borrow the most books. More Turks and Moroccans have begun using libraries.

### Sport and exercise

Sport occupies an important place in people's daily lives, not just as a means of spending leisure time, but also as a way of participating in society and promoting good health. The government supports participation in sport and promotes healthy exercise.

In 2003, 64% of the Dutch population aged 18-79 years took part in sport an average of once per month. Four years earlier, the figure was 60%. Sports which can be practised individually and recreationally are popular, such as swimming, fitness training, cycling, running and walking. Football is still the most widely practised team sport. The popularity of hockey, golf and athletics/running has increased markedly in recent years (Breedveld and Tiessen-Raaphorst 2006).

The increase in sporting activity is also evident from the Time Use Survey (TBO). This survey elicits information on people who participated in sport for at least a quarter of an hour during one week in October. The percentage of people actively participating in sport during this week provides an indication of the number of people who regularly participate in sport. Although this group is of course smaller than the group who participate in sport at least once a month, it has nonetheless also increased in size: in 2005, 45% of the Dutch population were active in sport, compared with

40% in 1995. This increase is also reflected in the average number of hours spent on sport. Despite the fall in the amount of free time available, the time spent on sport and exercise increased from 2.1 hours per week in 1995 to 2.6 hours in 2005. In the intermediate year 2000, the number of hours spent on sport and exercise reached a low point of 1.8 hours per week, though it should be borne in mind that the weather during that year's survey was unusually poor for the time of year, and this may have had an impact on people's willingness to participate.

Young people spend more time on sport than any other age group. However, the biggest increase in time spent on sport occurs among older people (65+).

Table 8.5

Sport and exercise, population aged 12 years and older, 1995-2005

	1995	2000	2005
average number of hours per week	2.1	1.8	2.6
percentage participants (weekly)	40.1	39.0	45.2

Source: SCP (TBO'95-'05)

Participation in sport in an organised context follows the same downward trend as the general decline in organised participation in leisure time activities. Membership of sports clubs fell from 58% in 1995 to 56% in 2003. Fewer women are members than men. By contrast, three-quarters of young people (6-19 years) are members of at least one sports club; there is no sign of a downward trend here

Despite the declining participation in organised sport, the proportion of people taking part in team sport remained virtually constant, at 18% in 1995 and 19% in 2005 (Breedveld and Tiessen-Raaphorst 2006). On the other hand, participation in solo sports increased from 51% in 1995 to 58% in 2005. It would seem that fewer participants are willing or able to gear their sporting activity to that of other people. If social motives for participating in sport are losing their importance, this means that other motives are becoming more important (since more people are taking part in sport). One motive that is broadly endorsed is health; a healthy lifestyle and a fit body are regarded as worthwhile goals. Health, fitness and physical exercise are cited as a reason for participating in sport more often by those involved in fitness training (88%) than by those taking part in sport through a sports club (64%).

## Conclusion

The main trend in leisure time use is the rapid rise of the Internet and e-mail. Today, almost all Dutch households have a PC, and in the vast majority of cases they also have an Internet connection. Time spent on the computer largely impacts on the time spent watching television, reading and visiting. Roughly a quarter of the popu-

lation read a library book once a month. The actual time spent reading has almost halved in 30 years (to 3.8 hours per week).

Although a large majority of the population (80%) visit a museum, theatre performance or concert at least once a year, the percentage of regular visitors is small (5-6%); around a quarter of the population occasionally partake in 'arts and culture'. The participation in sporting activities is much more widespread: 45% of the population spend at least two hours a week taking part in sport.

## 9 Civil society

In the general public debate and in all manner of policy documents and government proposals, heavy emphasis is placed on the participation of citizens and on modern citizenship. Recent examples in the Netherlands are the Social Support Act (WMO) and the Coalition Agreement of the fourth government led by Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende 4 (see chapter 3). A flourishing civil society is seen as the ideal. Voluntary activities and participation in civil society organisations are of great importance for the development of a civic culture, the functioning of democracy and the fostering of social integration (Putnam 2000).

### *Informal social contacts*

As a first form of social participation, table 9.1 shows the frequency with which people maintain social contacts with relatives, neighbours, friends and acquaintances. These figures have changed little in recent years, and the majority of the adult population see these contacts regularly. Despite this, in 2005 around 5% of people said that they never or almost never met their neighbours. Life situation surveys, from which the findings are drawn, also contain questions on the extent to which people belong to social networks and the support they receive from them; these figures, too, show little change since 1997. Seven out of ten Dutch citizens reported in 2004 that they had a circle of friends; 93% knew people with whom they could talk readily, 93% had someone they could turn to and 87% had someone who 'really understood them'. On the other hand, 3% of respondents report that they regularly feel isolated from other people, and 9% report that this is sometimes the case.

Based on these data and data from other surveys, therefore, while there has been virtually no change in the frequency with which the Dutch maintain social contacts (Dekker and De Hart 2004), the time they spend on those contacts has changed; time use research indicates that the time spent on these contacts has been declining steadily since the mid-1970s, both as regards the number of hours set aside for such contacts and the percentage of the (reducing amount of) available (leisure) time that is set aside for them. Whereas in 1975 people spent 12.7 hours (27% of their available free time) on social contacts, by 1995 this had fallen to 10.9 hours (23%), and went down further to 9.1 hours (20%) in 2005 (Breedveld et al. 2005)

People can also maintain social contacts without actually meeting physically. Both fixed and mobile telephones (virtually everyone now has one) and the Internet offer the opportunity for non-physical meetings. Of the total Dutch population aged 12 years and older, three-quarters had access to the Internet at home in 2005 (see table 8.2). Four out of five Internet users also use e-mail; this proportion is virtually unchanged compared with two years earlier. Chatting (and telephoning)

via the Internet is particularly popular among young people aged 12-19 years using applications such as ICQ, MSN and Hyves. This population group spent more than six hours per week online in 2005. Almost four hours of this time was spent exchanging MMS messages and chatting (Steyaert and De Haan 2007: 78). Earlier research by the Netherlands Institute for Social Research/SCP has shown that digital communication does not have a negative influence on the quality of social contacts (De Haan 2004).

Table 9.1

Frequency of social contacts, population aged 15 years and older, 1997-2005 (in percentages)

	1997	2001	2005
<b>with relatives</b>			
1x per week or more	86	89	88
2x per month	6	5	4
< 1x per month	5	4	3
<b>with neighbours</b>			
1x per week or more	71	75	73
1x per 2 weeks	8	8	11
< 1x per 2 weeks	15	10	11
never	5	7	5
<b>with friends, acquaintances</b>			
1x per week or more	70	73	73
2x per month	13	12	11
< 2x per month	17	15	16

Source: CBS (POLS'97-'05)

A more formalised form of social participation is membership of civil society organisations (table 9.2). The table is divided into different categories of organisation. In all cases where comparison with earlier years is possible, membership shows a decline compared with just over ten years ago. This decline is greatest in religious and ideological organisations and rather less marked in leisure organisations. The percentage of Dutch people who are not members of any association increased over the period studied, and over the same period there was a concomitant decrease in the percentage of people who were members or donor members of multiple organisations.

Table 9.2

Membership of organisations, population aged 18 years and older, 1991-2003  
(in percentages, weighted outcomes)

	1995	1999	2003	change 2003-1995 (1995=100)
ideological organisations total <sup>a</sup>	15	12	12	80
interest groups total <sup>b</sup>	26	26	22	85
recreational organisations <sup>c</sup>	42	41	39	93
nature/environmental organisations	.	.	22	
other types of organisation	19	19	16	84
not a member of any of above organisations <sup>d</sup>	42	43	46	110
member of one organisation	34	34	34	100
member of two or more	24	23	20	83
average number (among people who are members) <sup>d</sup>	1.9	1.7	1.5	79
considers self member of a church community	63	62	61	97
population aged 18 years and older (x 1000)	12,039	12,298	12,599	105

a Political party or association, organisation with specific social purpose (action groups, charity shop, Amnesty International, etc.).

b Employees' or employers' organisation, educational or school association.

c Sports club, singing/music/drama club, hobby club, women's association or union, youth organisation, club house, scout group.

d Excluding nature/environmental organisation.

Source: SCP (AV0'91-'03)

Membership records for a number of selected organisations reveal a more complex pattern than the population surveys on which table 9.2 is based. Table 9.3 shows the shifts in membership of five types of organisation, namely trade unions, political parties, churches, sports clubs and organisations concerned with nature or the environment.

Nature and environmental organisations – table 9.2 only presents the figure for 2003 – have grown strongly according to their administrative records, especially in the second half of the 1990s. Over the same period, trade unions saw a modest increase in their membership numbers, but subsequently their membership declined, particularly as regards the percentage of the labour force who are members.

After years of decline, membership of political parties began to increase again between 2000 and 2003. This increase was probably largely prompted by the political turbulence surrounding the rise, death and legacy of Pim Fortuyn (see chap-

ters 3 and 16). The gains can be attributed in very large part to one party, namely the Socialist Party (SCP 2005: 185).

The slight growth in membership of the (largest) sports organisations is in line with the trends in participation in sport, but the figures are not entirely comparable with the data presented in chapter 8 on membership of sports associations in general.

Population surveys suggest that the proportion of the population who regard themselves as members of a church community is falling only slightly (table 9.2). Actual membership is however declining, especially membership of the Christian Church. Despite the rise of missionary Christian churches in the latter quarter of the 20th century, the erosion of church-based Christianity has progressed: in 1970, 75% of the population were affiliated; in 2005 the figure was 45% (Becker and De Hart 2006, 29-36). In the period 1990-2005, migration and population growth meant that the number of Muslims in the Netherlands more than doubled, while the number of Hindus increased by 62%.

Table 9.3

Total membership of organisations in various sectors, x 1,000, since 1995 (absolute numbers)

	1995	2000	2005	% change 1995-2000	% change 2000-2005
trade unions	1,873	1,912	1,899	+2	-1
ditto as % of labour force	28.4	26.6	25.7	-6	-3
political parties <sup>a</sup>	318	294	303	-8	+3
ditto as % of population aged 18 years and older	2.6	2.4	2.4	-8	0
church communities	8,776 <sup>b</sup>	7,980	7,403	-9	-7
ditto as % of the population	57.3	50.3	45.4	-12	-10
15 largest nature and environmental organisations <sup>c</sup>	2,867	3,382	3,413	+18	+1
ditto as % of population	18.6	21.3	20.9	+15	-2
15 largest sports associations	3,451	3,560	3,756	+3	+6
ditto as % of population	22.4	22.4	23.0	0	+3

a At the start of 2007, 311,774 people were affiliated to a political party.

b Estimate.

c It is estimated that around 100,000 people are affiliated to three or more organisations; an average, people are members of two organisations.

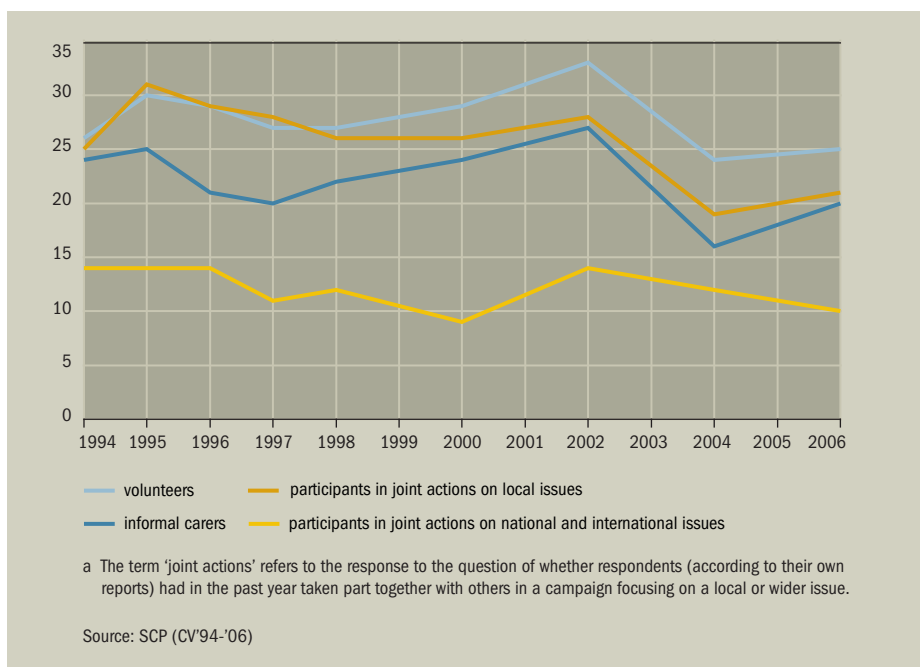
Source: CBS (StatLine), Documentatiecentrum Nederlandse Politieke Partijen (various yearbooks, VARA (Vroege Vogels natuur- en milieuparade, various years), NOC\*NSF (SLT'95-'05)

## Voluntary work

There are also forms of social participation which demand more commitment than purely being affiliated to an organisation, and which involve a personal investment of time and energy.

Figure 9.1

Participants in voluntary work, informal help and joint actions<sup>a</sup>, population aged 18 years and older, 1994-2006 (in percentages)



Around 55% of the adult population is active in society in some way (not shown in figure). There are three main categories of social participation: performing voluntary work, providing informal care and participating in collective actions (literally, joining with others in support of a particular issue), focusing on local or wider problems. Figure 9.1 shows the trends over the period 1994-2006. Throughout the entire period of more than a decade, the level of participation remains more or less unchanged, though there are fluctuations. The larger and more frequently conducted Period Life Situation Survey (POLS) by Statistics Netherlands (CBS), on which table 9.4 is based, gives a more detailed picture, though contains figures only up to and including 2004.

The participation rate differs widely depending on the social sector concerned (table 9.4). A downward trend can be observed in most types of voluntary work. Sports associations have the greatest reservoir of volunteers, and lots of people are

also active for religious and ideological organisations and schools. Although ‘tertiary’ organisations such as trade unions and environmental organisations have lots of members, those members maintain virtually no mutual social contacts.

Table 9.4

Participation in voluntary work, population aged 18 years and older, 1997-2004  
(in percentages, weighted results)

	1997	1999	2001	2003	2004
total active in organised context	43	45	43	42	43
of whom in the fields of:					
politics, employment and religion	13	13	12	11	-
politics	1	2	1	2	1
employment organisation	4	4	3	3	2
religious group	9	8	9	8	8
sport, hobby and culture	21	22	21	21	
sports association	12	14	13	14	13
hobby club	5	5	5	5	4
cultural association <sup>a</sup>	5	5	5	5	5
youth work and school	13	13	13	12	
youth work	4	4	5	4	4
school <sup>b</sup>	9	9	9	8	9
other organisations	8	7	7	7	7

a Singing, music, theatre.

b Parents' association, school board, working in library, reading assistant, etc.

Source: CBS (POLS'97-'04)

Some population groups lag behind the rest in terms of their social participation. This has to do with the social position which people occupy and their stage of life. For example, older people maintain less intensive contacts with a circle of friends or acquaintances, while young people (students) have relatively little contact with their neighbours. Other groups, such as single people, people with a low education level, the over-65s, members of ethnic minorities and residents of urbanised areas, are members of associations less than average. People with a higher education level, couples with children and young people, by contrast, are relatively often members of an organisation. The different forms of participation are related to each other (not shown in table). Volunteers are more often active in providing informal care than non-volunteers; volunteers and informal carers are moreover more willing to participate in collective actions. Social contacts also do not occur in isolation, but are associated with broader social orientations. Social isolation is accompanied by a markedly lower level of social participation.

## Conclusion

A flourishing civil society is seen as the ideal. The civil society is based on different forms of social participation. Informal social contacts have changed little in recent years, but the time spent on these contacts has been declining steadily since the mid 1970s. The membership of civil society organisations shows a decline, especially in religious and ideological organisations. There is also a downward trend in most types of voluntary work. The participation rates vary with social position and stage of life.

## 10 Mobility

Mobility is an important aspect of quality of life in today's society. Increases in the scale of society (including geographically) and the interweaving of activities have made mobility a social need. 'Mobility is an asset which allows people to engage in personal development and recreation. Combating mobility would accordingly mean combating social needs' (V&W 2004: 16). Following a policy sea-change in 2004, the way in which this need is met (car, public transport, motorcycle, scooter, cycle, walking) has been primarily a matter of personal preference. The main goal of policy is now to facilitate people's mobility needs and to ensure they are fulfilled in a responsible manner. In particular, the reliability and predictability of car travel needs to improve markedly in the coming years (V&W 2004: 36). To achieve this, major investments will be made in the years ahead in the further expansion and better utilisation of the road network. In addition, the aim is to introduce variability in the costs of car usage (mileage levy). Another key policy objective relates to traffic safety; the trend in the number of road traffic deaths and injuries has been moving downwards for several years, and the government is committed to continuing this trend (TK 2004/2005c: 81).

### Car ownership

In order to complete a journey from A to B, people are dependent on the *availability* of means of mobility. The main development with regard to that availability is the steady growth in car ownership, with more and more households having access to one or more cars. At the same time, the availability of alternatives such as public transport is waning, especially in rural areas. Over the last ten years, the number of cars in the Netherlands has increased by almost one and a half million (an increase of 29%; see table 10.1). Today, more than three-quarters of Dutch households own a car. There has been particularly strong growth in the second car ownership and, in recent years, third car ownership: one in five Dutch households have two or more cars and one in 50 (more than 150,000 households) have access to three or more cars.

Table 10.1

Car ownership, 1995-2007

	1995	2000	2001	2004	2005	2006	2007
number of cars (x 1000)	5581	6343	6539	6908	6992	7092	7230
cars per 1000 inhabitants	362	400	409	425	429	434	442
cars per 1000 households	863	933	952	980	985	992	not yet known

Source: CBS (StatLine) SCP treatment

Which households have access to two or more cars and why? And who has to manage without a car? Breaking down car ownership by a number of household characteristics (not shown in table) reveals that owning a car depends on income, household composition and degree of urbanisation. Ownership of two or more cars occurs mainly with net household incomes of more than € 30,000. Explanations for the growth in the number of second and third cars must be sought primarily in trends such as emancipation (more married women at work) and the individualisation of tasks and activity patterns within households (Harms 2004).

### Mobility patterns

In 2006, Dutch citizens aged 12 years and older travelled an average of more than 35 kilometres per person per day (table 10.2). In 1995 the average was 34 kilometres. The time people spend travelling has remained virtually unchanged since 1995, at around 65 minutes per person per day. The number of journeys has also hardly changed since 1995, at an average of around three journeys per day (21-22 journeys per week) (AVV 2007).

Table 10.2

Number of journeys, duration and distance travelled per person per day, population aged 12 years and older, by means of transport, 1995-2006

	1995	2000	2005	2006
distance travelled (km)	34.2	34.8	34.9	35.1
duration of travel (minutes)	65.4	64.4	64.1	64.7
number of journeys	3.16	3.11	3.03	3.05
of which (%)				
car driver	35	38	37	37
car passenger	13	12	12	11
public transport	6	5	5	5
bicycle/moped	27	26	27	27
walking	18	17	17	18

Source: CBS (OVG'95-'00); RWS-AVV (MON'05-'06)

Half of all journeys undertaken by Dutch citizens are made by car. Two-thirds of those journeys are made by car drivers, the rest by passengers. With a share of 5% of all journeys and 12% of the total distance covered, public transport continues to play a relatively minor role in total mobility. After the car, the bicycle is the most popular means of transport: more than a quarter of all journeys in the Netherlands are made by bicycle. It is worth noting that these averages mask great variation in transport shares according to time and place. For example, the use of trains is particularly high during the rush hour on long and middle distances between the major cities.

During the busiest periods of the week, public transport in these situations achieves shares of almost 50% (AVV 2004: 30).

If the figures are viewed at aggregated level, it becomes clear that there was a marked increase in car use between 1995 and 2005 (+12%), while the number of kilometres travelled by public transport and bicycle remained more or less unchanged (KiM 2007).

Not only are people travelling more often and further by car, but they are also undertaking an ever larger proportion of journeys alone: two-thirds of all car journeys are made with just one occupant. The rise in the number of empty car seats is strongly related to the increase in the number of single-person and two-person households (see also chapter 1), with each household member using their own vehicle for their journeys (Harms 2004).

Total train usage grew by 9% between 1996 and 2005 to 15 billion passenger kilometres per year. However, as the number of passenger kilometres per train fell in the first half of the 1990s, train use per head of the population was still lower in 2006 than in 1991 (KiM 2007). Since the middle of the 1990s, the growth in train use in the Netherlands has occurred mainly in the major urban agglomerations (KiM 2007: 26-27).

### *Social categories*

The figures cited above are averages for the Dutch population as a whole. In reality, however, these averages show considerable variation depending on personal characteristics. To give just two examples, women have a different mobility pattern from men, and people with a higher education level generate more traffic than those with a lower education level. Table 10.3 breaks down the overall mobility pattern in 2005 for different social categories.

One of the most striking facts is that women undertake just as many journeys per day on average as men, but that their journeys are of shorter duration and cover far fewer kilometres. To some extent this can be explained by the differences in activity patterns between men and women: men relatively more often travel to and from work, while women generate more household and care-related mobility. However, the emancipation of women in terms of their participation in the labour market, coupled with increased numbers of women holding driving licences and owning cars, means that the mobility pattern of women has come to resemble that of men more closely in recent years (Harms 2003: 36).

The table also shows that people in the 30-50 age group undertake relatively frequent journeys and travel a large number of kilometres. The explanation for this is not difficult to find: this is generally the busiest period of people's lives, in which activities

and obligations outside the home have to be fitted in to the combination of career and family life.

Table 10.3

Distance travelled, duration of journey and number of journeys per person per day, by means of transport and various personal characteristics, 2005

	distance travelled (km)	number of journeys	duration of travel (min.)	% journeys by car	% journeys by public transport	% journeys by bicycle/ on foot
total	32.4	3.0	60.4	49	5	46
men	38.4	3.0	65.7	53	5	42
women	26.4	3.0	55.3	45	5	49
12-19 years	25.4	2.7	60.7	24	11	65
20-29 years	41.1	2.9	71.3	50	12	38
30-39 years	43.5	3.5	69.6	57	4	39
40-49 years	41.0	3.4	69.5	57	4	40
50-59 years	38.7	3.2	69.0	56	3	41
60-74 years	26.6	2.8	57.8	48	3	49
≥ 75 years	12.7	1.7	33.0	44	5	51%
employed 12-30 hours	33.9	3.6	66.3	53	4	43
employed > 30 hours	50.6	3.2	77.0	64	5	32
unemployed	23.5	2.6	51.8	44	7	48
single-person household	29.9	2.8	61.2	23	14	63
two-person household	35.4	2.9	63.0	43	7	50
> two-person household	36.8	3.2	66.4	42	12	45
lo, lbo, mavo <sup>a</sup>	25.7	2.7	53.8	45	4	50
mbo, havo, vwo <sup>a</sup>	39.3	3.3	69.5	54	6	40
hbo, wo <sup>a</sup>	52.2	3.5	82.9	55	6	39
five largest municipalities (G5)	31.2	2.9	65.9	43	12	45
rest of Netherlands	36.1	3.1	63.9	52	4	44

a lo = primary education  
lbo = junior secondary vocational education  
mavo = junior general secondary education  
mbo = senior secondary vocational education  
havo = senior general secondary education  
vwo = pre-university education  
hbo = higher professional education  
wo = university education

Source: CBS (OVG'95-'00); RWS-AVV (MON'05-'06)

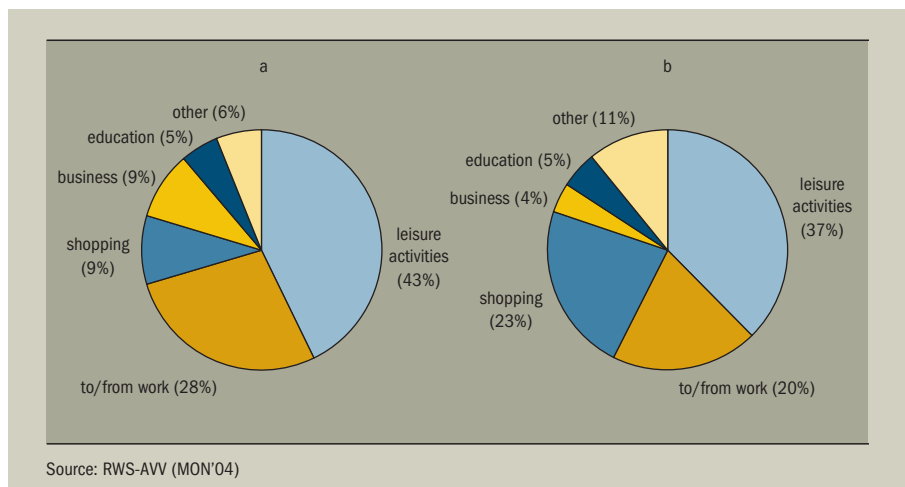
In addition to sex and age, household composition and education level are also found to be determining factors for mobility. The higher a person's education level, the greater the distances travelled and the more frequently people go by car.

### Motives

Despite what is generally assumed, home-work travel is not the biggest individual source of mobility, but rather leisure time: 43% of kilometres travelled and 37% of all journeys are undertaken for leisure activities. By way of comparison, mobility to and from work accounts for 20% of all journeys and 28% of the total kilometres travelled (figure 10.1). The majority of leisure time mobility is devoted to visits to friends and family (social traffic), which accounts for 39% of all leisure journeys and almost 50% of the associated kilometres travelled. Recreational traffic (walking, cycling, car trips) comes in a distant second (21% of journeys and 14% of kilometres travelled) (see Harms 2005).

Figure 10.1

Distances travelled (a) and numbers of journeys (b) by emotive, population aged 12 years and older, 2004



With the exception of journeys to and from educational facilities, the car is the most widely used means of transport for all journeys, accounting for a constant share of around three-quarters of the kilometres travelled and around 50% of the number of journeys (SCP 2005, p. 219). For travelling to and from educational establishments, much more frequent use is made of the bicycle and public transport (64% and 21%, respectively, of all journeys). Here again, the explanation is not difficult to find: the majority of schoolchildren and students are in the age group who do not (yet) own a car, while a proportion of them hold a student travel card giving them free access to public transport.

### Traffic safety

Mobility makes a major contribution to the welfare and well-being of people and society. In addition to benefits, however, mobility also brings a burden. One of the downsides of a mobile society is the occurrence of traffic accidents. In 2005, there were 750 road deaths in the Netherlands and around 9,400 people were injured seriously enough to warrant admission to hospital. These are only the officially recorded figures; the actual numbers are higher. In addition, around 100,000 people require treatment in a hospital A&E department following road traffic accidents (SWOV 2004a). The social costs of this amounted to more than € 6 billion on an annualised basis for material damage in 2003, plus a further € 6 billion for intangible losses (SWOV 2007a).

Table 10.4

Recorded numbers of traffic victims and risk of becoming a victim, 1994-2005

	1994	1999	2003	2004	2005
total number of fatalities <sup>a</sup>	1,298	1,090	1,028	804	750
risk of fatal accident <sup>b</sup>	8.0	6.2	5.7	4.3	4.1
12-19 years	.	10.4	9.4	6.5	5.6
20-29 years	.	7.8	7.2	6.3	5.1
≥ 75 years	43.1	41.9	36.7	31.7	29.6
number of hospital admissions <sup>a</sup>	11,735	12,388	10,596	9,486	9,401
risk of hospital admission <sup>b</sup>	72.1	70.3	58.9	51.1	51.5
12-19 years	.	181.1	147.4	124.2	117.5
20-29 years	.	90.6	74.9	68.9	68.2
≥ 75 years	183.1	204.7	165.4	153.4	141.0

a Recorded figures.  
b Numbers per billion traveller kilometres.

Source: SWOV (2007b) SCP treatment

Compared with 2003, the number of road deaths had fallen by more than 25% in 2005 to a total of 750, while the number of recorded hospital admissions had shrunk to a total of 9,401. The Dutch national road safety research institute swov has concluded on the basis of research that the improvement in safety is due among other things to a reduction in the use of mopeds, fewer infringements of the rules on speeding and alcohol use and an increase in the use of seat belts (Stipdonk et al. 2006).

Relatively speaking, young people account for the highest proportion of road traffic victims. In 2003 there were 233 deaths in the 15-25 age group, almost a quarter of the total number of road deaths. In this age group road deaths have for many years been the main cause of death. The means of transport involved is a significant factor here: more than two-thirds of all road traffic accidents involving people aged 12-18 years

involve a moped. Above the age of 18, the large number of victims mainly consist of newly qualified car drivers: inexperienced drivers aged between 18 and 24 years are four times more likely to have an accident than experienced drivers aged 30-59 years. The risk for young men is even higher, namely six times as great. The main factors here are lack of driving experience and age itself (SWOV 2004b). The elderly are another age group with a high proportion of road traffic victims. In contrast to young people, however, it is not their behaviour that constitutes a risk, but their physical vulnerability, which means that the consequences of an accident are often more serious for them ('not high-risk, but at risk') (Wegman 2002).

### Conclusion

Politicians are increasingly coming to see mobility as a social good and as a basic condition for social participation and personal development. To a greater extent than in the past, the policy is being tailored to the wishes of the citizen. And the citizen is consistently choosing the car: the number of cars in the Netherlands has increased by almost one and a half million since 1995 (+29%; table 10.1). Today, three-quarters of all Dutch households have a car. There has been a particularly marked increase in second and, in recent years, third car ownership. The trend in car usage shows a corresponding line (a total of 12% more kilometres driven). Cars account for half of all journeys. The bicycle is the second most popular means of transport after the car. Public transport plays a relatively modest role, accounting for 5% of journeys and 12% of the total number of kilometres travelled in 2005. Leisure activities are the most important source of mobility.

One of the downsides of a mobile society is the incidence of road traffic accidents. There were 750 road deaths in 2005 and 9,400 hospital admissions in connection with traffic accidents. These figures are substantially lower than around ten years earlier.

## 11 Crime and safety

The extent to which citizens are confronted with crime is an important factor in determining their quality of life. Crime and the perception of crime has acquired an increasingly prominent place on the political agenda in recent years. 'Citizens must be able to move around freely and safely in society' (TK 2004/2005d). As the central theme of the Social State of the Netherlands report is the quality of life of the citizen, this chapter is concerned chiefly with crime that affects citizens directly. Criminal activities such as drug dealing, arms dealing, human trafficking, trafficking of women, fraud, environmental crime and terrorism are largely left out of consideration.

### *Public perception of crime*

Repeated polls in the Cultural Changes in the Netherlands surveys carried out by the Netherlands Institute for Social Research/ SCP reveal crime to be a major problem in the public perception. Out of 16 political objectives, 'fighting crime' and 'maintaining order' have consistently been ranked in the top five over the last decade by respondents when asked what issues they considered to be politically important (see chapter 14). Although in 2006 64% of the population still held the view that 'crime has been increasing recently', this was considerably lower than the figure in 1994, when over 90% of respondents gave this answer. This convincing fall is also reflected in the percentage of people who believe that crime in the Netherlands is becoming a 'real problem': in 1995, 84% held this view, compared with 70% in 2006.

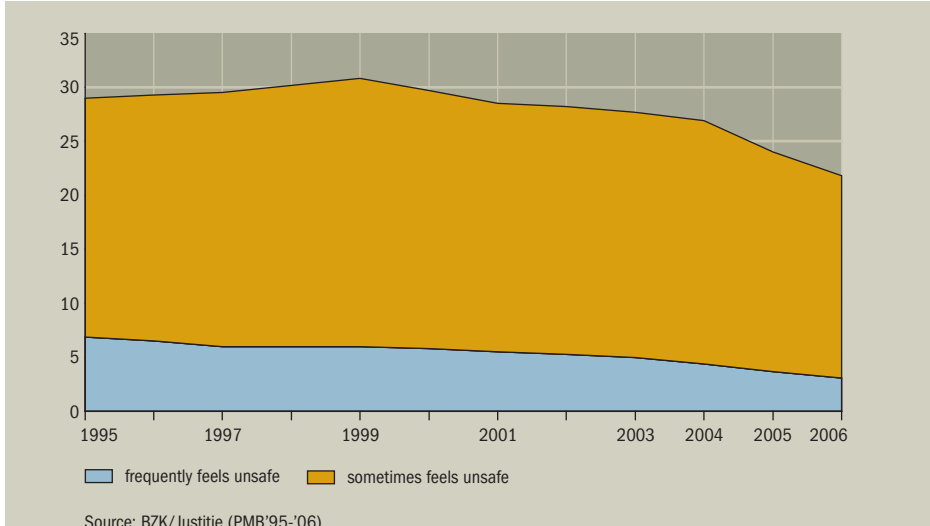
The above views reflect to people's concerns about crime as a social problem, and the figures suggest that those concerns have reduced considerably in recent years. However, people's perception of crime also relates to their own situation. In 2006, 22% of the population sometimes felt unsafe; one in seven of this group frequently felt unsafe. After a slight increase, the percentage of people who occasionally or frequently feel unsafe has fallen since 1999, reaching its lowest point since measurements began (figure 11.1). The differences in the degree to which people feel unsafe vary by social group, and particularly by age and sex. Young people and women are more often afraid of crime; this is connected with lifestyle, vulnerability and earlier negative experiences (Oppelaar and Wittebrood 2006).

The reduction in the proportion of people who generally feel unsafe corresponds with a fall in the percentage of people who are sometimes afraid to be at home alone (down from 23% in 1994 to 16% in 2004) or who report unsafe localities in their neighbourhood (down from 35% to 29% in 2004) (CBS 2007c). When asked specifically about particular localities, 19% report that they sometimes feel unsafe around groups of young people on the street, 13% in their own neighbourhood, 12% around

nightlife areas, 10% in shopping centres, 9% on public transport and 6% on their own home (Politie-monitor bevolking 2005).

Figure 11.1

Perceived lack of safety among the Dutch population aged 15 years and older, 1995-2006 (in percentages)



### Extent and development of crime

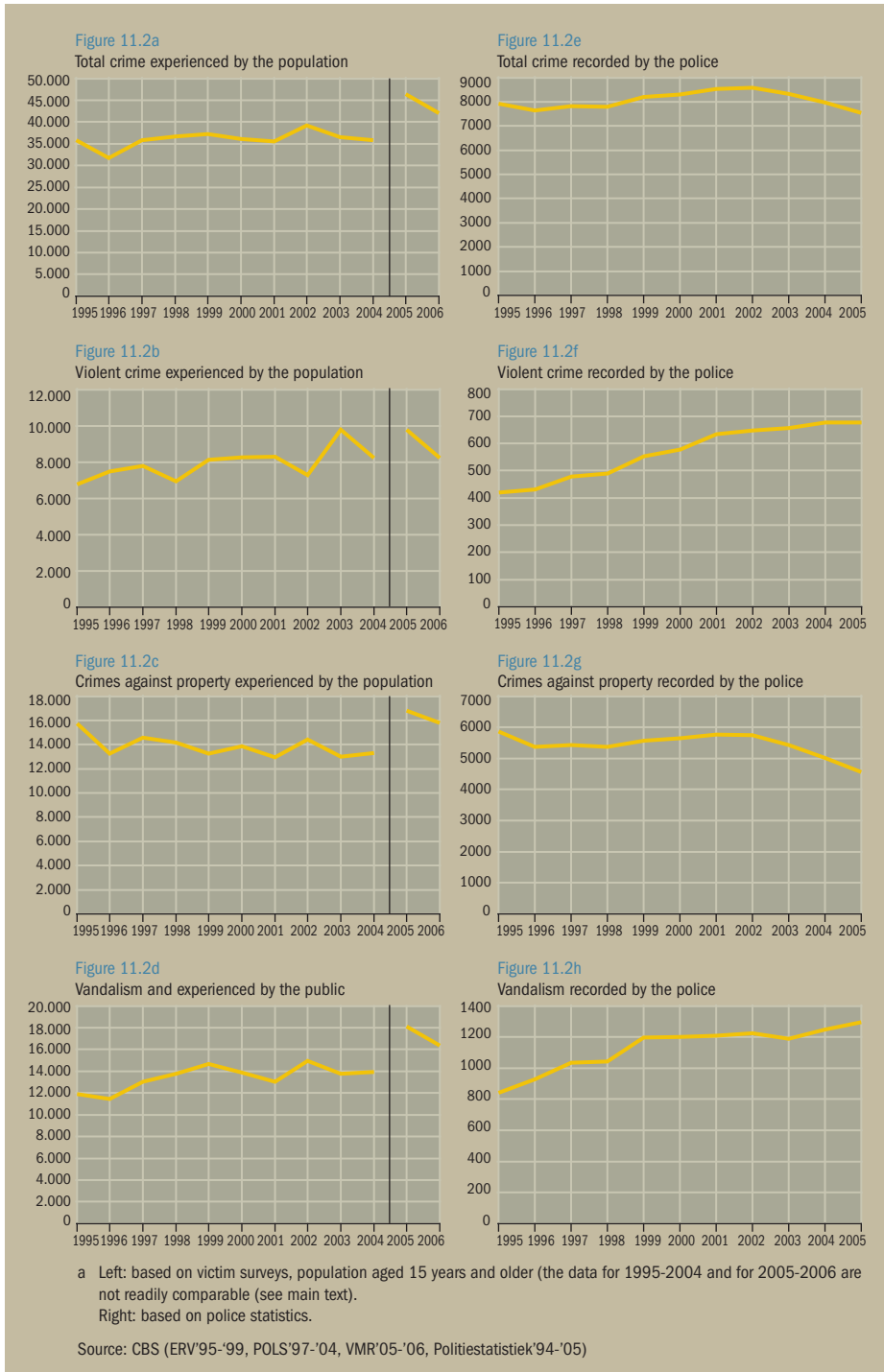
To gain an impression of the extent of and trend in crime in the Netherlands, two different data sources were consulted, namely victim surveys and police records.

In 2006 an estimated 5.6 million offences were committed, calculated on the basis of the victim survey. 40% of these offences were crimes against property (such as bicycle theft and burglary), with a similar percentage being accounted for by vandalism (e.g. damage to cars). Just over 20% of the total were crimes of violence (such as intimidation or sex offences).

The total crime figures appear to have fallen slightly since 2002 after initially rising (see figure 11.2). Although there was a trend break between 2004 and 2005 due to the recalibration and merging of the studies from which the data are drawn, the new survey method still shows a downward trend, albeit with higher crime levels owing to the amended question formulation. Crimes against property, vandalism and above all crimes of violence show a downward trend. The first category contains a rising proportion of burglaries and bicycle theft, while the second category involves more sexual violence; vandalism has fallen due to a downturn in the number of cases of damage to vehicles.

Figure 11.2

Extent of crime per 100,000 of the population, 1995-2006 (in absolute numbers)<sup>a</sup>



The offences reported by victims and businesses or organisations and/or entering the police records via detection resulted in 1.2 million recorded crimes in 2005. Of this total, 9% involved violence, 60% were crimes against property and 17% involved vandalism. These figures are the result of a selection process, in which both characteristics of the offences and of the victims and perpetrators play a role. For example, more offences reported by women, and to a lesser extent by the elderly and younger people, were recorded than offences reported by men. Low socio-economic status on the part of the victims also made it less likely that reported offences would be recorded (Wittebrood 2006).

According to estimates, just under 2.1 million offences were reported to the police in 2006. The group most ready to report offences were victims of property crimes (46%) mainly in connection with insurance claims. 31% of the declining number of violent crimes were reported and just over 27% of the cases of vandalism. A further selection process takes place in the drawing up of official police reports, as a result of which 74% of the reported crimes against property, 64% of reports of 'vandalism and public order offences' and 54% of violent crimes end up in the police records.

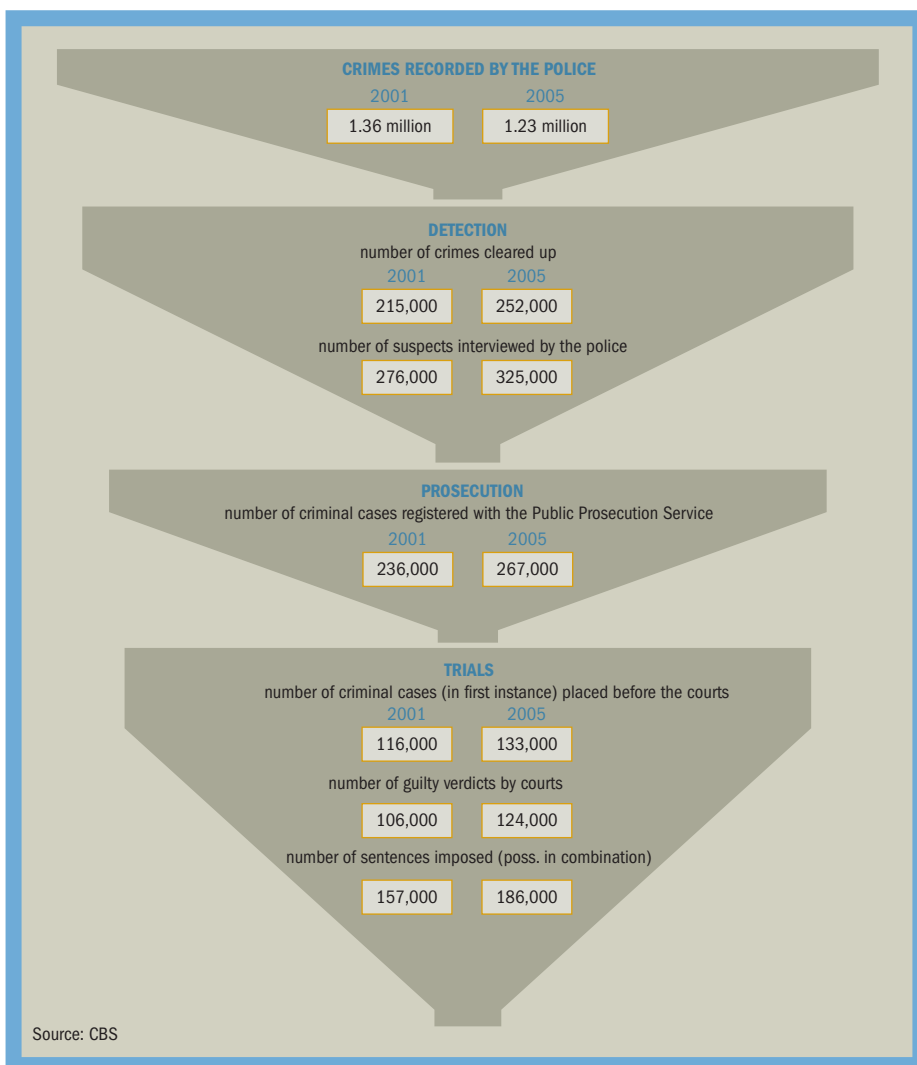
After initially rising, total recorded crime has been falling since 2002, mainly due to a decrease in the number of crimes against property (see figure 11.2). Vandalism, and in particular violent crime, has shown a steady though slowing increase since the middle of the 1990s. The increase in violent crime and vandalism that is visible in recent years is more marked in the police records than would be expected based on the population surveys. This is very probably due to the increased public and political attention for certain forms of crime, and the consequent higher priority given to these offences by the police and the Public Prosecution Service (Wittebrood and Junger 2002; Wittebrood and Nieuwbeerta 2006).

### *Criminal justice chain*

Figure 11.3 shows a diagrammatic representation of the 'criminal justice chain': the process of detection, prosecution and trial.

Only a limited proportion of the offences recorded by the police are cleared up, in the sense that at least one suspect is known to the police, even though that suspect may be on the run or deny the offence. The number of crimes solved fell through the 1990s, reaching 190,000 in 2000, rising again to 279,000 in 2004. 252,000 offences were cleared up in 2005. In percentage terms, too, the clear-up rate fell, from just over 20% to less than 15% in 2000, though this rose again to 21% in 2005. The clear-up rate for recorded crimes differs widely depending on the type of offence: in 2005, 50.9% of recorded violent crimes were solved, compared with 10% of offences against property and 16% of vandalism and public order offences.

Figure 11.3  
Flow chart of the criminal justice chain in 2001 and 2005



Only a proportion of suspects end up appearing in the public prosecutor's office, where the number of cases dealt with fell between 1994 and 2000 from 273,000 to 233,000. The number of recorded cases rose again after 2000, however, reaching 267,000 in 2005.

For each case logged by the Public Prosecution Service the public prosecutor, based on the criteria set out in government policy, takes a decision on whether to instigate a prosecution or whether to deal with the case without the intervention of the courts. The number of decisions not to prosecute has declined in recent years in both

absolute and relative terms (from 60% in 1993 to 46% in 2005). A process of selection is also involved here, based on grounds other than legal and technical factors. For example, the Public Prosecution Service more frequently sets aside complaints from women or deals with them outside the courts. Similarly, working people more often receive a fixed penalty, while cases against schoolchildren and students are more often dropped (Wittebrood 2006).

Criminal cases which are not dealt with by the Public Prosecution Service are placed before the courts. There were 96,500 such cases in 1994 (sometimes combined); in 2005 the number had risen to 133,000. The number of guilty verdicts pronounced by the courts fell slightly to 93% in 2005, after remaining stable at 95% for several years; there are few differences in these figures depending on the type of offence. In many cases the courts imposed a combination of punishments; this took the total number of penalties and measures imposed to 186,000.

In 2005, 27% of all penalties and court orders imposed involved imprisonment. The proportion of prison sentences handed down is reasonably stable over time in percentage terms, but in absolute terms an increase can be observed, from 45,000 in 2001 to just over 52,000 in 2003, before falling again to 42,000 in 2005. In almost 30% of cases, a fine was imposed. Other penalties were also handed down, the main one being community service orders (21%). The number of fines has fallen in the last decade as a percentage of all penalties; by contrast, the proportion of community service orders has increased.

As well as shifts in the type of penalties imposed, changes can also be observed in the severity of penalties over the last decade. After falling in the 1990s, the length of (non-suspended) prison terms has increased slightly since 2000, from an average of 130 days in 2000 to an average of 152 days in 2005. The proportion of short prison sentences (less than one month) has fallen in recent years, while the share of prison sentences ranging from one to six months has increased. The percentage of long prison terms has also increased slightly. Based on the available data, it cannot be concluded observed that the severity of the penalties imposed is also increasing: the changes could also be due to the fact that certain offences are occurring more frequently, for example (Eggen and Van der Heide 2005)

### *Perpetrators*

In 2005, 235,000 individuals residing in the Netherlands were suspected of committing a crime; they were held responsible for more than 400,000 offences. Young people relatively often figure among the suspects: in 2005, over 38% of all suspects were aged between 12 and 24 years. The majority of suspects are male, though the proportion of females among juvenile suspects in particular has been increasing in recent years (Emmett et al. 2006).

In addition to age and sex, ethnic origin is an important and widely discussed characteristic of suspects. Younger members of ethnic minorities are recorded as suspects by the police considerably more frequently than indigenous young people: among girls aged between 12 and 17 years, 1.2% and 0.5%, respectively, appear in the records as suspects; the comparable figures for boys are 4.9% and 2.0%, respectively (table 11.1). In the 18-24 age range, the proportions are the same for girls as in the younger age category; among boys, by contrast, 7.5% of ethnic minority boys are crime suspects compared with 3.8% of their indigenous peers.

The detailed figures confirm the general picture of youth crime among Antilleans and the Moroccans. Both the first and second generations of the Moroccan community are much more often crime suspects than the indigenous population and most other ethnic groups. Among Antilleans, this applies mainly for young people from the first generation (SCP/WODC/CBS 2005, appendix B9.1).

When recording a suspect, the police make a note of the type of offence for which they have detained the person in question: a violent crime, an offence against property, vandalism and public order disturbance, a traffic offence or another kind of offence. Younger members of ethnic minorities in both age groups cited above are more often suspected of crimes of violence or crimes against property than their indigenous counterparts (SCP/WODC/CBS 2005, appendix B9.2). When it comes to vandalism and public order disturbances, indigenous suspects, especially those in the 12-17 age range, are more often the subject of a police report than the entire group of young non-Western ethnic minorities.

Almost half the overrepresentation of ethnic minorities in the suspect figures can be explained by the deviating profile of ethnic groups in terms of age and sex compared with the indigenous population. In addition, a considerable part of the differences is found to disappear after controlling for socio-economic status (Blom et al. 2005).

## Victims

The extent of crime was described earlier on the basis of the number of offences. The question addressed now is how many victims are involved and which characteristics and circumstances increase the chance of becoming a victim. In 2006, 20.7% of the Dutch population aged 15 years and older were the victims of crime. This translates into 3.6 million victims. People are most at risk of becoming victims of property crimes (14%), followed by the chance of being the victim of vandalism (12%); the chance of becoming a victim of violent crime is much smaller, at 5%.

Victims of domestic violence have received extra attention in recent years. Wittebrood and Veldheer (2005) calculated that on average one in eight (12%) adults in the Netherlands have at some time been confronted with physical violence perpetrated by a current or former partner, and that roughly 4% have faced such violence in the

last five years. Women have more often been victims at some time than men (16% versus 7%). No differences are observed between indigenous and ethnic minority women.

The chance of being a victim is not equally distributed among the population; age, sex, ethnicity and household income are particularly significant factors. For example, young people are relatively more often victims, especially of violent crimes; men are more often the victims of commonly occurring crime and women are more often victims of sexual violence and pickpocketing. People from single-parent families, people living alone, people living in urban areas and people with a higher education level also run a relatively higher risk of becoming victims (Wittebrood 2006).

Having or not having certain social characteristics does not of course have a direct influence on the chance of becoming a victim of crime. The differences in victimisation between social groups can be explained mainly on the basis of their day-to-day activities and lifestyles (whether or not they go out, for example). Moreover, it is not only individual factors which determine the chance of becoming a victim; contextual factors also play a role. For example, in neighbourhoods with a low economic status the chance of being a victim of violence is greater than in neighbourhoods with a high economic status, regardless of the individual characteristics of the residents of those neighbourhoods (Wittebrood 2000; Van Wilsem et al. 2003).

### Conclusion

The Dutch are and continue to be concerned about crime, though the perception that crime is on the rise has reduced in recent years and people today feel safer. Victim surveys show that roughly 4.6 million offences were committed in 2006, 40% of which involved theft and vandalism and 20% violence or the threat of violence. 1.2 million offences were recorded by the police; around 20% of these were cleared up and half were brought before the courts, which imposed prison sentences in around a third of cases (averaging just over 150 days).

Younger men, and in particular young men from ethnic minorities, constitute the biggest group of crime suspects. Attention for victims by the police and the judiciary has increased greatly in recent years. Each year, almost 100,000 victims make use of help designed specifically for them.

## 12 Housing

In addition to protection against the elements, having a roof over one's head also offers independence and an opportunity for the personal development of individual household members. A certain minimum standard of housing is a prerequisite for this, while the neighbourhood is also important for people's sense of well-being: people must be able to feel at home in their residential setting. It is for these reasons that the government is responsible for ensuring an adequate supply of homes, which are made affordable for those who have insufficient means to pay the full cost on their own, and which are of sufficient quality. The first three governments led by Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende devoted special attention to the functioning of the housing market. In particular, steps were taken to prepare the rental market for liberalisation as an incentive to encourage housing which 'matched' income and thus to foster movement up the housing ladder. Liberalisation was also expected to boost private housing construction. When the fourth Balkenende government took office, however, a complete standstill on this front was agreed for the coming four years: there would be no interference with the rent protection and annual rent increases would be capped at very modest levels (no higher than inflation). In exchange, it was agreed that the financial structures in relation to home ownership (mortgage interest tax relief) would be left intact. In most cases, Dutch homebuyers can obtain full relief on their mortgage interest payments, potentially cutting the real cost of a mortgage by half.

### *Housing stock*

At the end of 2006 there were approximately 7 million homes in the Netherlands; this compares with 6.1 million in 1994. Changes in the housing stock proceed slowly. Since 2002, an average of 73,000 new homes have been built each year, with 14,000 being demolished. In addition, existing homes are improved, thus raising the housing quality.

The expansion of the housing stock in the last decade occurred mainly in the years before 2002 (CBS-StatLine). The growth has levelled off since 2003, whereas the number of people living in the Netherlands continues to grow strongly (see chapter 1). New housing construction, in particular, falls a long way short of the target of 80,000 new homes per year (actual figure: 72,000 in 2006). The economic recession, combined with rising house prices, was a key factor in the stagnation on the housing market in 2000-2005. The result was a slump in the number of people moving from rented to owner-occupied homes compared with the period 1996-1998 (RIGO 2003). The knock-on effect of this has been to increase demand for rented homes, a problem exacerbated by the limited number of older people moving out of rented accommodation.

Of the total of 7.1 million households in the Netherlands, more than 95% live independently. In addition, 150,000 elderly people live in long-term residential care and nursing homes (De Klerk 2005). There are also more than 134,000 households aged over 55 who live independently whilst drawing on care services; this figure has increased sharply in recent years. More than 35,000 people live in residential or semi-residential institutions for people with intellectual disabilities. 200,000 households (almost 3% of the total) live in independent or dependent community-based residential units. These are mainly young people living in rented rooms (dependent units) or in independent units with their own kitchen and sanitary facilities but with a shared entrance. More than 20,000 people live on houseboats or in caravans.

In 2006, as in previous years, there were an estimated 175,000 people actively looking for homes who did not yet have an independent dwelling. This figure comprises mainly young people living at home and young people already living independently in a room. There are also around 30,000 people a year who do not leave behind a vacant dwelling when they move house, for example because of divorce or because their existing home is demolished. People looking for starter homes faced an average waiting period of a year in 2006 (ABF 2007).

### *Housing type and size*

The 'average' Dutch home is still a single-family dwelling, though the number of flats has grown in recent years and now accounts for a third of the total housing stock. The share of detached and semi-detached homes remains unchanged, at 15% and 13%, respectively, of the total. Terraced housing accounts for around a quarter of the housing stock. In the four largest municipalities the share of high-rise housing had fallen between 1994 and 2002 from 82% to 76%, but has risen again since to 78% (VROM 2006).

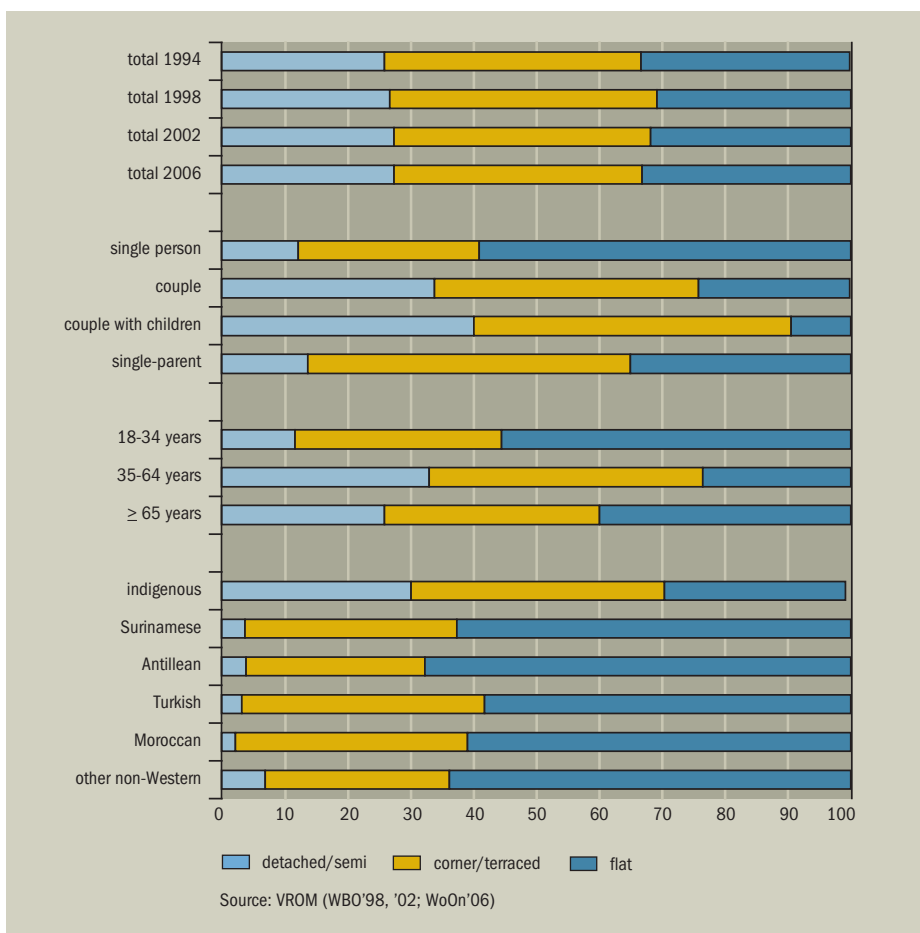
The occupancy figures reveal that changes are taking place in people's 'housing careers'. Over the years, it is still mainly couples, with or without children, who move from a flat to a single-family dwelling, but they are doing so later and later in life. Of those born in around 1963, for example, almost 70% were already living independently in a single-family dwelling by the age of 30; among those born in around 1971, the figure is 56% (figure 12.1). The proportion of flat-dwellers in the age group up to 35 years was more than 55% in 2006 (figure 12.1), and 24% in the 35-65 age group. The percentage of flat-dwellers also increased in this age group, but much less rapidly (not shown in figure). Just under 10% of couples with children and more than a third of single-parent families occupy flats, but many families do not see this as their final position on the housing ladder. More than a third of all families with children living in rented flats are actively looking for a single-family dwelling (RIGO 2003). More than half of all people living alone live in flats.

The distribution of the over-65s across the different housing types remained unchanged, partly because a proportion of single-family homes are suitable for people with impairments or can be made suitable with some adaptations. This does however mean that fewer single-family dwellings become available for young families.

A final noteworthy observation is that households of non-Western origin almost never occupy a detached dwelling. This is partly because they live predominantly in urban areas. These households also less often live in a single-family dwelling; rather, several members of the same household tend to share flats offering less living space.

Figure 12.1

Trend in housing types 1994-2006 and housing types by household characteristics, 2006



In 2006, the average Dutch home offered living space of just over 124 square metres. In 2002 the figure was 120 square metres. Homes dating from the 1990s are bigger (averaging approx. 134 square metres), and later homes are even larger (averaging 140 square metres) (VROM 2006). By contrast, the plots on which new owner-occupied single-family dwellings are built have become smaller over the last 15 years, with the exception of plots in the west of the Netherlands in 2005 and 2006, which were slightly bigger (Kullberg and Ras 2004; Monitor Nieuwe Woningen 2007).

Table 12.1

Average home sites in square metres and average number of square metres per household member, by income, ethnic group and size of municipality, 2002 and 2006

	home size in square metres		square metres per household member	
	2002	2006	2002	2006
lowest 20% incomes	86	86	71	72
20%-80% incomes	118	120	61	63
highest 20% incomes	164	172	60	63
indigenous	124	128	65	68
Surinamese	89	89	49	50
Antillean	86	82	51	48
Turkish	88	92	36	39
Moroccan	81	85	33	38
other non-Western ethnic minority	87	89	44	47
four largest municipalities	84	86	54	54
21 largest municipalities	111	114	62	64
other municipalities	131	135	66	68
total	120	124	63	65

Source: VROM (WBO'02; WoON'06)

The amount of living space occupied by households, both within the dwelling and in the garden, depends mainly on their financial capacity. The upper 20% of incomes have around twice as much living space (171 square metres) as the lowest 20% of incomes (86 square metres). On the other hand, higher-income households are larger on average than households in the lowest income group (which includes many elderly and young persons), so that they actually have slightly less living space per household member.

In addition to income, location is also important. In the four largest municipalities, the average garden measures 75 square metres; in smaller municipalities (outside the biggest 25), the garden averages 175 square metres. Although homes in the four

largest municipalities are smaller than elsewhere, so are the households on average, so that the number of square metres in living space per household member shows less of a contrast with other regions.

As table 12.1 shows, a number of ethnic minority groups (Turks, Moroccans and 'other non-Western ethnic minorities') saw an improvement in the amount of living space between 2002 and 2006, but still tend to have less living space than other groups, because their homes are smaller and their households larger than average. Moroccans have the smallest amount of living space but are also making up the most ground.

In some respects, ethnic minority groups are in a less favourable housing position, because they mainly live in 'concentration neighbourhoods' (in the large cities), as already stated in chapter 1. The objective housing situation in these concentration neighbourhoods and in the large cities is considerably less favourable than in neighbourhoods with a lower concentration of ethnic minorities (SCP/WODC/CBS 2005, appendix B8.8-B8.10). Residents of 'coloured neighbourhoods' occupy single-family dwellings much less often and much more often live in flats. The amount of living space per person is also considerably less, especially for Turks and Moroccans. Residents of concentration neighbourhoods also less often own their own home; this applies both for non-Western ethnic minorities and for indigenous occupants (SCP/WODC/CBS 2005, appendix B8.6). Home ownership has however increased in recent years, especially among Turks and Moroccans.

Taken in the round, the housing situation of non-Western ethnic minorities remains less favourable, even after controlling for demographic and socio-economic characteristics (Kullberg et al. 2005; Van der Laan Bouma-Doff 2005).

### Renting or buying

The rate of home ownership increased in the 1990s and the early years of the present century from 48% in 1994 to 56% in 2005 (VROM 2007). This increase was driven mainly by the building of new owner-occupied homes, though housing associations also sold off varying numbers of rented homes. The peak year for this was 2002, when 26,400 rented homes were sold off. The number of rented homes sold in 2003 and 2004 was around 10,000 fewer than this, but rose again to 21,300 in 2005 (CFV 2006: 10). Almost 7% of owners report that they were formerly tenants in the same dwelling.

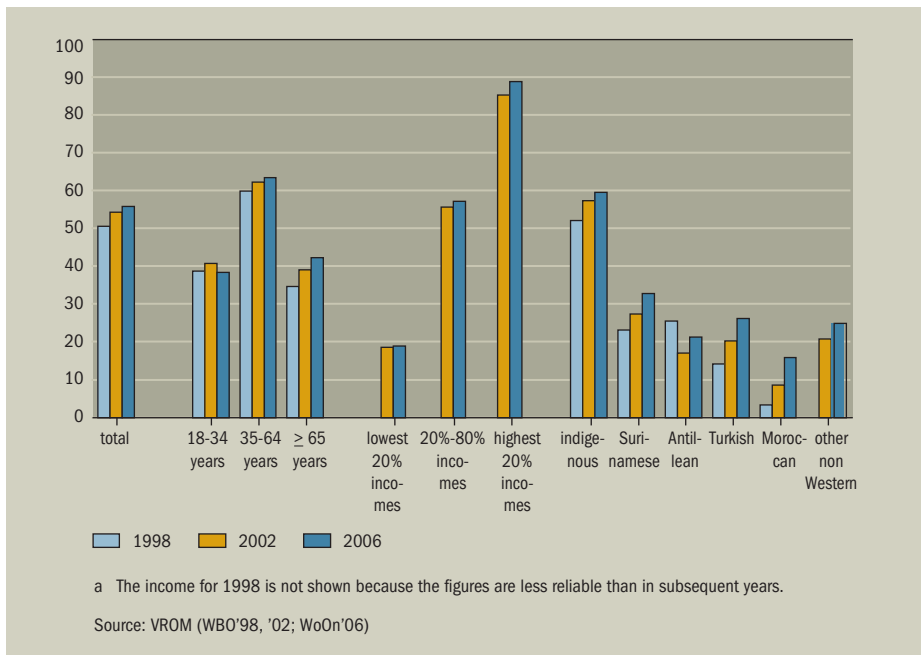
Home ownership has also risen sharply in the largest municipalities – which have traditionally had a very high proportion of rented homes – from 20% in 1994 to 28% in 2005 (VROM, 2007). In absolute terms, the number of owner-occupied homes in the four largest municipalities showed a net increase to 301,000 in 2005/2006; the

number of rented homes stood at 694,000. This trend fits in with the drive to create a greater diversity of housing within the cities, based partly on financing category.

The proportion of people buying their own home in the lowest income brackets (the bottom 20% of the income distribution) fell between 1998 and 2002. The proportion of home-owners in the highest income brackets, and it remained unchanged in the middle income groups (figure 12.2). Earlier research has suggested that home ownership has reached saturation point in the highest income brackets (SCP 2003), with the main growth occurring in the middle income groups.

Figure 12.2

Home ownership by age, income and ethnic group, 1998-2006<sup>a</sup> (in percentages)



The growth in home ownership has occurred in the over-35 age group, and most notably among the elderly. There is a cohort effect here: younger generations of owner-occupiers have grown older. In addition, people show virtually no willingness to move from an owner-occupied to a rented dwelling. They hold onto their owner-occupied home for longer, with the exception of people aged over 75 and living alone; this group are relatively vulnerable and are more interested in special elderly housing, which for the moment is still largely in the rented sector – though the number of owner-occupied homes being built specially for older people (accessible and often fitted with alarm systems) is increasing (Kullberg and Ras 2004).

The steep rise in house prices in the 1990s and early years after 2000 has made it more difficult for first-time buyers to own their own home. The fears of a sharper division between renters and buyers as expressed in a housing report by the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (*Evaluatie nota volkshuisvesting in de jaren negentig*) (VROM 1999) have become a reality.

Young first-time buyers are finding it increasingly difficult to get a foot on the housing ladder, and home ownership in this group has reduced, against the general trend. Not only do first-time buyers usually have a lower income, but they also have not built up any equity in an existing home. In addition, assuming an unchanged age (28/29 years), first-time buyers increasingly tend to be single (20% in 1985, 36% in 2006 ([www.vrom.nl](http://www.vrom.nl))). The competition from people trading up means they have virtually no chance of buying single-family homes, which means that buying a flat is the only alternative for them.

As indicated earlier, members of ethnic minorities predominantly live in the major cities. As a result, they are overrepresented in the rented sector, even after controlling for age, family composition and income (Van der Laan Bouma-Doff not yet published). Against this background it is striking that home ownership is increasing among ethnic groups, especially Moroccans, where the proportion of owner-occupiers has almost doubled since 2002 (figure 12.2).

### Satisfaction with housing situation

The vast majority of occupants are happy with the quality of their home, and this proportion grew between 1998 and 2006, with 89% reporting that they were satisfied or very satisfied (VROM 2007). Breaking down the figures (figure 12.3) reveals that both the age of the occupants and their income (shown in figure) are significant factors in determining their degree of satisfaction. As they proceed through their life cycle, households acquire more purchasing power, enabling them to afford a better quality home.

The above differences in satisfaction are limited. This changes when it comes to the differences between indigenous and ethnic minority households, where the differences are greater (at around 20 percentage points); the same applies for occupants of single-family dwellings and rented apartments.

Also striking is the sharp increase in the degree of satisfaction of Moroccan and Turkish Dutch citizens among the 'other' non-Western ethnic minorities; this is logical given the improvement in the position of these groups highlighted earlier.

An interesting trend can be observed with regard to apartments. The general picture is that flats are less attractive to broad sections of the population (with older people the main exception) than single-family dwellings. However, once people live

in an owner-occupied flat, they are only marginally less satisfied with their home than occupants of owner-occupied single-family dwellings. This small difference remained unchanged in the period 1998-2006. There is also a high degree of satisfaction with owner-occupied apartments among young buyers (aged up to 35 years), especially in the large cities, where buying a flat appears to be accepted as a fact of life by a group of buyers who are predominantly single. Only 61% of families with children are satisfied or very satisfied with a rented apartment (WoON 2006).

Those who are less happy with their home most often cite lack of outside space as the main shortcoming (21%). 15% feel their home is too small and 12% are dissatisfied with the standard of maintenance (Bijl et al. 2007, table 9.3).

Satisfaction with the residential neighbourhood shows a fluctuating picture. In the period 1998-2002, the proportion of people saying they were satisfied or very satisfied fell from 88% to 84%. The main issues were neglect in the neighbourhood, traffic nuisance and social aspects of the neighbourhood (the resident mix, fear of being robbed and nuisance from immediate neighbours) (SCP 2005: 272-275). The political and social situation (see chapter 3) may also have been a significant factor. In 2006 the figure was up again: 86% were satisfied or very satisfied, and there was a particularly marked improvement in the large cities. Residents were less troubled by vandalism and disorderliness in the streets (VROM 2007: 66-72).

### Housing costs

Housing costs increased between 2002 and 2006 for both owner-occupiers and tenants (Buys et al. 2007; see figure 12.3). The net outlay for owner-occupiers comprises the mortgage repayments after allowing for tax relief, while for tenants it comprises rent after deduction of housing benefit (now replaced by rent benefit). The housing costs of tenants and owner-occupiers are not readily comparable because for owner-occupiers they depend on how they have financed the purchase of their home and the extent to which they have repaid their mortgage. Moreover, owner-occupiers have to allow for maintenance costs. An alternative approach would be to compare the utility cost, but this is also not entirely problem-free (Ras et al. 2006).

Supplementary housing costs have risen particularly steeply in recent years, especially energy costs. This applies particularly for owner-occupiers living in larger homes. Local taxes have also increased more for this group in absolute terms, for example property tax for owner-occupiers. Families with children face particularly high housing costs. There are however considerable regional differences for owner-occupiers due to the regionally determined differences in house prices. The differences for tenants are levelled off by the home valuation system which is applied uniformly across the whole country to determine the maximum permitted rent for a dwelling.

The total housing costs to income ratio (*woonquote*) is the share of disposable income that the occupant spends on housing, after allowing for rent benefit (tenants) and mortgage interest tax relief (owner-occupiers) and including costs of energy, water and local taxes. This ratio increased for tenants from just over 30% in 2002 to more than 36% in 2006. For owner-occupiers it increased from 21.6% to 25% over the same period. In the period 1998-2002 the housing costs ratio remained stable in both the rented and owner-occupied sectors (Buys et al 2007: 47; Kullberg et al. 2005). Rents rose by 12.6% between 2002 and 2006, while the supplementary costs increased by no less than 37%. The increased housing costs ratio for tenants masks a selection effect in addition to the rise in energy costs. This is because the average income of tenants fell over this period. As discussed earlier, people with higher incomes increasingly buy their own homes, so that tenants as a group become poorer and increasingly comprise single-person households. This in turn has an influence on the trend in the housing costs to income ratio. Costs for owner-occupiers increased, whereas their average income remained roughly unchanged. As a result, the average ratios also increased for this group. There are wide differences in the housing costs ratios between different population groups, and these differences remain unchanged compared with a few years ago. The lower the income, the higher the housing costs ratio tends to be, for both tenants and owner-occupiers.

### Conclusion

In 2007 there were 16.4 million people in the Netherlands living in 7.1 million dwellings. That number means it is not easy to provide a roof over the head of the rapidly growing number of households, especially in the densely populated Randstad region in the west of the country. Dutch families tend to live in terraced homes, and generally prefer to live in houses rather than flats. 56% of Dutch households own their own home, while more than two-thirds of tenants live in social housing. House prices have risen steeply in the last ten years, while there is often a waiting list for rented homes, as a result of which prospective new tenants have to wait an average of a year for their first home.

## 13 Life situation

Each of the previous chapters looks at different individual aspects of life situation. This chapter presents an overall description of life situation using a measurement instrument which aggregates objective data to produce a single figure in the form of an index. This Life Situation Index is the result of a combination of indicators on eight key aspects of life situation, namely health, housing, (social) participation, participation in sport, ownership of consumer durables, mobility, leisure activities and holidays. The Life Situation Index is a relative instrument: it does not measure a person's absolute life situation at any given time, but rather maps the trends over time, or the trend in different groups relative to each other.

Important determinants of people's life situation are the 'resources' to which they have access, such as health, income, employment and education. These are discussed below.

Finally, this chapter devotes attention to subjective views on life situation. This corresponds with an alternative approach in life situation research in which well-being is defined in terms of the degree to which needs are satisfied, based on the idea that only individuals themselves can express an opinion on their well-being. Relevant aspects here are happiness, contentment and satisfaction (Berger-Schmitt and Jankowitsch 1999; Veenhoven 2002).

For an explanation of the underlying reasoning used in this approach, reference is made to the previous English summary of *The Social State of the Netherlands* (SCP 2004b, can be consulted via [www.scp.nl](http://www.scp.nl)).

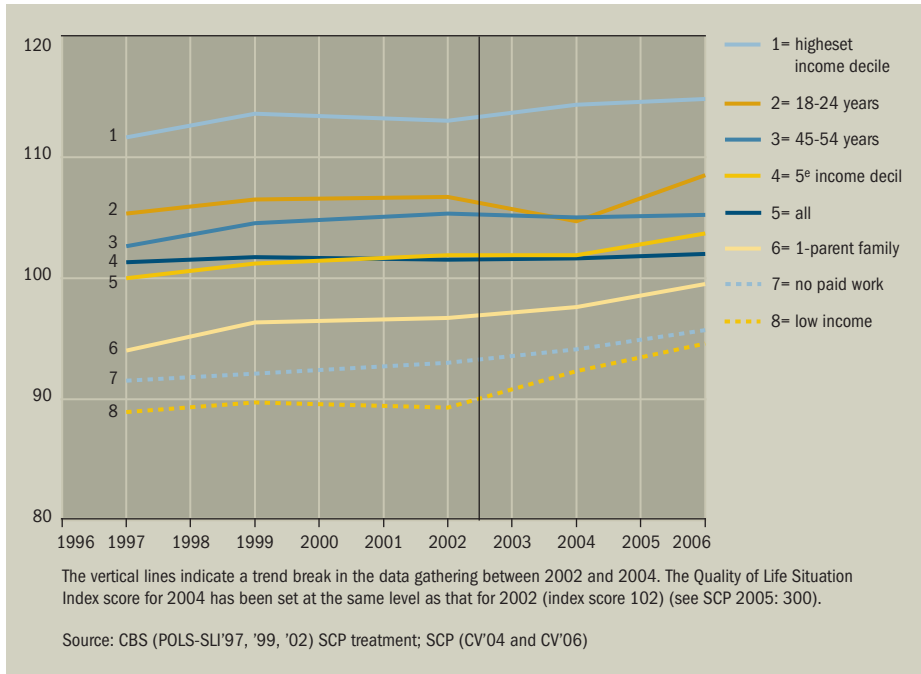
### *Trends in life situation since 1997*

The Life Situation Index stood at 100 in 1997 and rose to 104 in 2006. In 2006 older people had a below average score on the Index (age 65+: Index score 92); the same applied for people with an income below the low-income threshold (95), people not in employment (96), non-Western ethnic minorities (96) and people with a low education level (98). By contrast, the Index score is notably better than average for young people (18-24 years: score 108), people with a high education level (110), people with a high income (top 20%: 113), people in paid employment (109) and people with a partner (105 without children and 108 with children).

Almost all social groups have seen an improvement in their life situation since 1997, though the trend faltered for some groups in 2004. Figure 13.1 presents a selection.

Not everyone's life situation has improved to the same extent. There has been a better than average improvement for those aged over 65 years (+8; for people aged 75 years or older as much as +10), people with a low income (below the low-income threshold: +6), single-parent families (+6) and couples without children (+6). Some of this improvement marks a catching-up exercise on the part of these groups: in 2006 their Life Situation Index score was still below the average (with the exception of couples without children, whose score is now slightly better than average). By contrast, there was a lower than average improvement in the life situation of people aged between 45 and 54 years (+2) and people on middle incomes (fifth decile: +1); the life situation remained unchanged for these categories in the period 2004-2006. The Life Situation Index score of people with no more than a primary education level deteriorated over the period by two percentage points (not in figure 13.1), but began to improve again in the period 2004-2006.

Figure 13.1  
Trend in the life situation of life of a number of social groups, 1997-2006

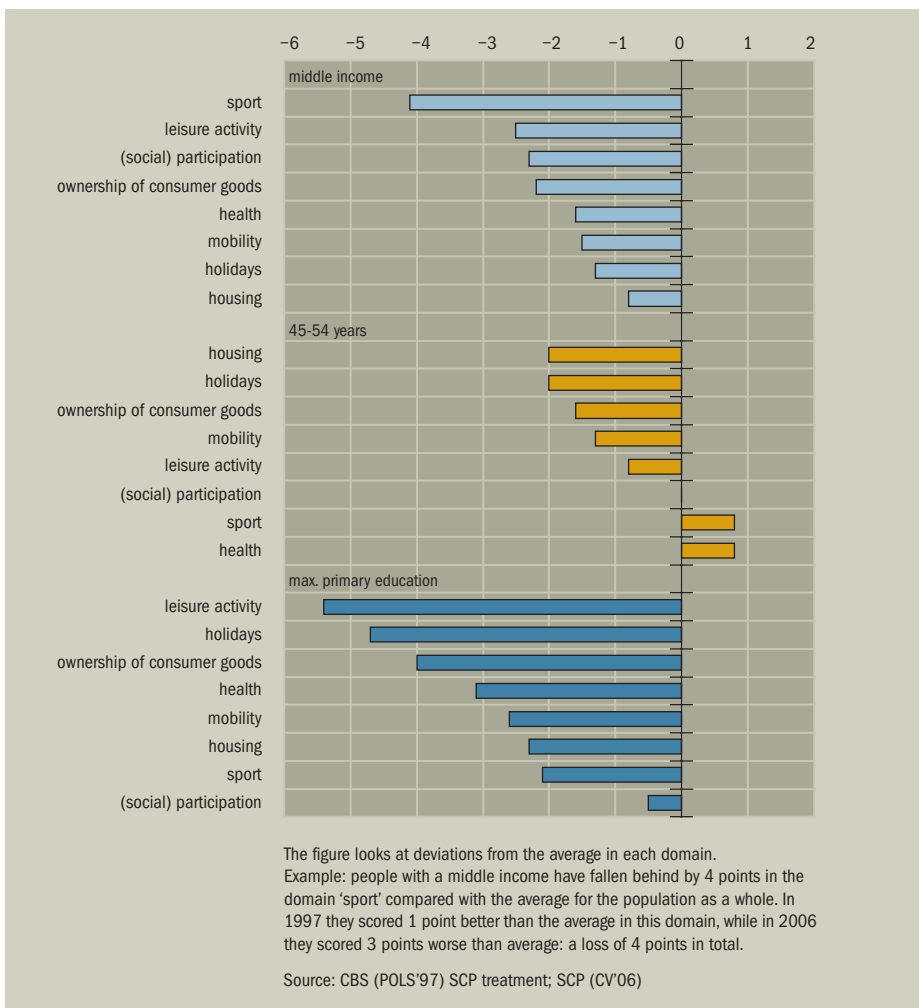


Looking at the individual domains of life situation enables an impression to be gained of the areas where it has deteriorated. Figure 13.2 shows the groups which have lagged behind in relative terms. The relative standstill among the middle incomes reported earlier occurs in all domains included in the Index, but most in the area of leisure time. This may be a compositional effect: this group comprises a relatively high proportion of elderly households, who (of necessity) fill their time in

a less active way. Those with at most primary education lag behind on leisure time and consumer goods. This appears to be not only an effect of the low income of most households in this category, but is probably also a consequence of the lack of competences in various fields. The picture among 45-54 year-olds is more complex. Here there is progress in the areas of sport and health, but this is not enough to offset the shortfall in other domains.

Figure 13.2

Trend in life situation domains, groups whose life situation has improved less markedly, difference between 1997 and 2006 (index scores)

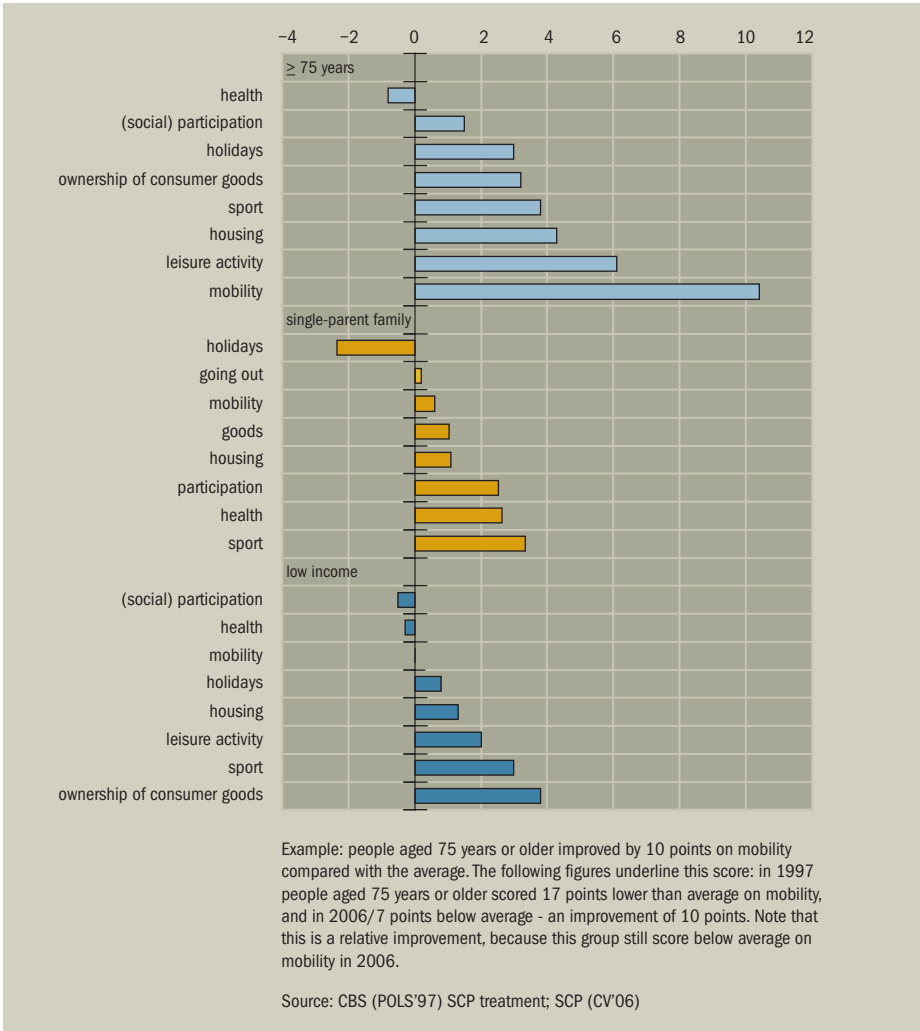


For the three groups which have seen a relatively marked improvement in their life situation, this has occurred in virtually all domains (figure 13.3). Particularly strik-

ing is the big increase in the mobility of people aged 75 years or older (car ownership has become more and more common among this group, too). At the same time, they lag behind somewhat in terms of health; the same applies for the number of holidays for single-parent families and the social participation and health of people with a low income.

Figure 13.3

Trend in life situation domains, groups whose life situation has shown a relatively marked improvement, 1997-2006 (in index scores)



### Determinants of life situation

A person's life situation depends on a number of factors, such as personal choices and personal and household characteristics. These factors are called 'resources', and include income, employment, education and health. The take-up of provisions and the social and physical setting also play a role. The government can create the conditions to give everyone equal opportunities and can compensate for social disadvantage.

As expected, a relationship is found between life situation and resources. People with a high education level have a better life situation than people with a low education level, and so on (table 13.1). The inequality in life situation between those with the best resources and those with the poorest partly increased and partly reduced between 1997 and 2006. The difference between those with the lowest and highest education level increased by four percentage points to 25. The difference between people who feel healthy and those who feel unhealthy increased from 19 points in 1999 to 27 in 2006. This factor appears to be gaining in significance.

Table 13.1

Resources and life situation, 1997-2006 (Index scores)

	1997	1999	2002	2004	2006
all	100	101	102	102	104
lowest income decile	87	87	88	86	91
highest income decile	112	114	113	114	115
lowest education level (maximum primary education)	87	87	88	84	85
highest education level (higher professional or university)	108	109	109	109	110
non-workers	92	92	93	94	96
workers <sup>a</sup>	106	106	107	107	109
perceived health very good		107	108	108	110
perceived health (very) poor		88	86	83	83

a Workers are defined as persons working for 12 hours a week or more. In fact there is little difference in the life situation of people who work more and people who work less than 12 hours per week (see appendix 12.2)

b Since the indicators for health were completely different in 1993 than in 2004, and are therefore not comparable, no statements can be made on the differences in objective health. Differences in perceived health are therefore shown. These are in fact a good predictor of health status (see chapter 6).

Source: CBS (DLO'93; POLS-SLI'99 and '02) SCP treatment; SCP (CV'04)

If these determinants of life situation are viewed together and their influence on life situation are examined, it is found that the resources, supplemented by the background characteristics age, household composition and source of income, explain more than half the differences in life situation in all years (in 2006: 54%). Of the characteristics included here, income is the most important determinant, followed

by education, health and age. The other factors have a considerably smaller combined influence (Bijl et al. 2007, table 9.3; Boelhouwer and Roes, 2004).

### Satisfaction and happiness

The Life Situation Index is an objective criterion based on 'objective' observations. This description need not necessarily correspond with the opinions expressed by people themselves about their life situation, or with how happy they feel. For example, a person may be very satisfied with their home, even though seen objectively it is fit only for demolition. Similarly, a person can be happy without working, taking part in sport or owning a car. This raises the question as to the relationship between satisfaction and (individual-specific) life situation.

The level of satisfaction with a number of aspects related to life situation – housing, residential setting, social position, circle of acquaintances, household financial resources and education – is generally high (between 7.1 and 8 out of 10). The scores in 2006 are higher across the board by one or several tens of percentage points than in 1997. One exception is the degree of satisfaction with the financial position, which was markedly higher in the economically prosperous second half of the 1990s (7.4) than the 7.1 recorded in 2006. The level of satisfaction with Dutch society, at 6.5, is substantially lower than the score for people's views on their personal life situation. Similar differences also existed in the past. The score for 2006 was slightly higher than the 6.2 recorded in 2004. The generally high degree of satisfaction on the different personal aspects of life can be summarised in the score that people assign to 'the life they are leading at present'; in 2006 this averaged 7.7.

As may be expected, there is a positive correlation between objective life situation and people's subjective views; this applies both in 1997 and in 2006 (Bijl et al. 2007, table 10.11). The correlation is stronger for satisfaction about personal aspects such as circle of friends and education than for satisfaction with society. For all aspects, however, the better a person's life situation, the more satisfied they are.

Satisfaction also translates into feelings of happiness: the vast majority of the Dutch population (82%) were happy or very happy in 2006. Here again there is a positive correlation with life situation: feelings of happiness go hand-in-hand with a good life situation. Of those with a good life situation, 93% are (very) happy, compared with 60% of people with a poor life situation. Moreover, 13% of this latter group are either not very happy or are unhappy (Bijl et al. 2007, table 9.12).

### Conclusion

The Life Situation Index shows the extent to which the prosperity and well-being of the Dutch population improves or deteriorates over time. It also enables differences in prosperity and well-being between different groups in the population to be mapped out. Over the last ten years there has been a modest though substantial

improvement in life situation, though the differences between those with a high and low education level, for example, remain strikingly wide. In general, people themselves are more satisfied with their personal life situation than with the state of society as a whole. A very large majority of the Dutch population (82%) regards themselves as happy or very happy.

## 14 Picture of policy

Views on public affairs, and in particular on the government's social policy, vary over time and are related to the economic climate. The Dutch economy was not in a very robust condition in the period 2002-2003, and from 2002 onwards government policy was aimed at curbing government spending, and in particular at reducing the take-up of social provisions (see chapter 3). The economy recovered rapidly thereafter, and in 2006 the growth in gross domestic product was again above 3%.

### Economy

Despite economic fluctuations, the majority of the Dutch population still believe that the Netherlands is a prosperous country and that they are themselves also prosperous (table 14.1). It is quite normal for respondents to express more positive views in surveys about their own situation than about the country as a whole, and fluctuations in the responses can also be traced which correspond with the ups and downs of the economy. In 2006, 74% of respondents felt that the Dutch economy was performing well. Roughly half the respondents were unreservedly satisfied with their own income and a similar figure were satisfied with their own financial reserves. Although people assess the prosperity of the country and of themselves positively, 60% of respondents still believe that the government could do more.

Economic optimism was on the up again in 2006: 68% of the population believed that the prosperity would continue, compared with 42% in 2002.

The figures in table 14.1 broadly reflect the rises and falls in the economic tide at the time of the survey. Prosperity in the Netherlands was growing strongly in the middle of the 1990s and the economic outlook was excellent. Public opinion also appeared to be positive for the coming years.

Table 14.1

Opinions on the economy and income, 1995-2006 (population aged 16 years and over, in percentages)

	1995	2002	2004	2006
the Netherlands is prosperous	80	-	67	74
own family is prosperous	86	-	79	81
satisfied with own income	55	44	52	52
government doesn't do enough for my prosperity	51	49	59	48
optimism about the economy	67	42	45	68

Naturally, not all categories of Dutch citizens hold the same views on the economy and the level of prosperity. People on lower incomes, in particular, feel the effects of an unfavourable economic climate and the associated government spending cuts and the imposition of an additional burden. They are accordingly more negative than average in their views during periods of economic stagnation regarding the level of prosperity and their own income; they also expect more from the government.

The low-income group (< € 23,000) less often feel that the Netherlands is prosperous (63%) and that their own family is prosperous (60%), compared with 85% and 95%, respectively, of the highest income group. 35% of people with a low income are satisfied with their own income, compared with 75% of the highest income group (no data are available for earlier years). The view that the government should do more to help the respondent's prosperity also correlates strongly with their income position: 29% of the lowest income group say that the government does not do enough, compared with 63% of those on the highest incomes.

### Benefits

Figure 14.1 presents opinions on the adequacy of the different types of benefits (social assistance benefit, old-age pension, surviving dependant's benefit, sickness benefit, unemployment benefit and disability benefit) for the years 1995-2006 in graph form. Since the early 1990s the proportion of the population who believe that benefits are adequate has been shrinking, and a smaller proportion are satisfied. From 1998 onwards, a growing section of the population described benefits as adequate. There is a turning point in 2002. More people in 2004 and 2006 would like to see higher benefits. The fluctuations largely correspond with the trend in the economy. A strong economy means a more generous attitude towards benefit claimants. If the economy slows, the public tend to follow in the footsteps of politicians in their willingness to assert that benefits are already high enough.

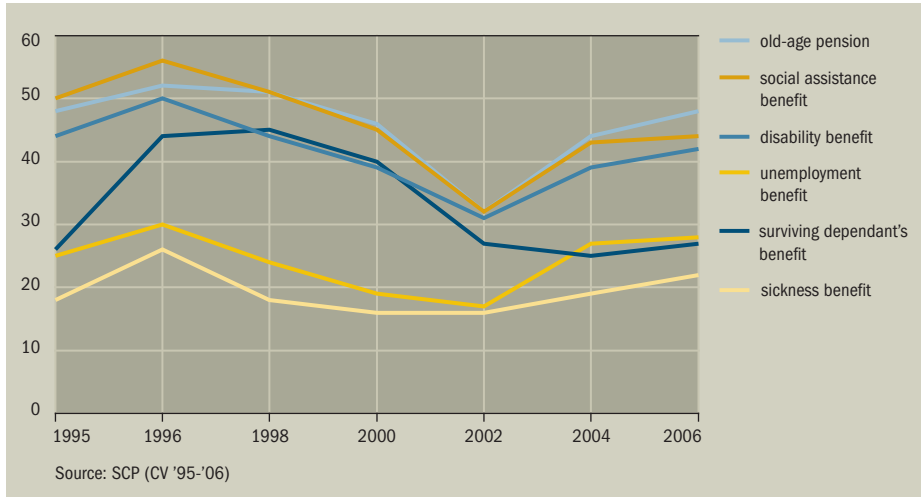
The different kinds of benefits are not all regarded in the same way. The public clearly set higher standards for the level of national insurance benefits than of employee insurance benefits. The background to this could be that the former category provide no more than minimum benefits and that recipients are generally dependent on the benefit for an extended period. Surviving dependant's benefit is one exception; here, the changed views on the role of men and women as breadwinners probably play a role. Moreover, access to this benefit and also the length of time for which it is paid have been adapted to these changing circumstances.

Figures for 2002-2004 show that the views on the various benefits (sickness benefit, old-age pension, etc.) vary according to the socio-economic position of the respondent, with education level being more significant than income level; people with a lower education level support benefits more than those with a high education level.

Political orientation is also a significant factor, with citizens on the right of the political spectrum in particular believing that benefits are adequate or too high.

Figure 14.1

Satisfaction with benefits in the Netherlands (benefit insufficient), population aged 16 years and older, 1995-2006 (in percentages)



### Government spending

Views on government expenditure generally change over time (table 14.2). Between 2004 and 2006 there was a growing preference for increased government spending and support for spending cuts declined. A large majority of the population wanted to see more money spent on social provisions. The fluctuations over time are limited; support grew between 2004 and 2006 to 68% and 30%, respectively, the highest level in the last decade.

The Dutch public would like politicians to address social issues and put in place provisions for them. Table 14.3 summarises what citizens see as problems. The data are drawn from the National Survey of Voters (NKO) (Aarts et al. 2007). In response to the question 'What do you feel are the most important problems in our country?', 96% of voters questioned mentioned at least one (codeable) problem, and the average was 2.5. The problems cited are clustered into 15 domains in table 14.3. At the top are problems relating to minorities (39%), followed by problems in relation to health care (29%). Crime, socio-economic issues and ethical issues also achieve fairly high scores. Ranged against these broadly shared problem domains are topics such as the environment, war and peace, women's emancipation, culture and leisure time, which are cited much less often. Differences are found between men and women in relation to health care, crime, politics and traffic. The differences by education level are more limited.

Table 14.2

Views on government spending, population aged 16 years and older, 1995-2006  
(in percentages)

	1995	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006
to make all manner of public provisions possible, the government should							
have more money	58	60	62	62	61	60	68
have less money	10	8	6	6	7	9	5
in general, government spending							
should rise	14	15	.	25	.	22	30
should fall	36	31	.	19	.	29	19

Source: SCP (CV'95-'06)

Table 14.3

The most important problems in the Netherlands: clustering of problems cited by respondents into domains, by sex and education level, population aged 18 years and older, 2006  
(in percentages of the electorate)

	cited <sup>a</sup>	all	relative attention <sup>b</sup>				
			sex		education level		
			male	female	low	medium	high
minorities, immigration, integration, discrimination	39	18	19	18	20	19	16
health care, care system, care for specific groups	29	13	10	15	13	13	12
crime, safety, police and judicial apparatus	24	11	9	12	13	10	9
income, poverty, prices, taxes	21	10	10	9	11	9	7
ethics, norms and values, religion	21	10	10	10	9	9	14
politics, government, government policy	14	6	8	4	6	6	6
economy, government finances, spending cuts	12	5	6	5	5	5	5
benefits, social provisions, welfare state	12	5	5	5	6	5	5
education and science	12	4	3	5	2	5	7
traffic, traffic jams, public transport, infrastructure	11	4	6	3	3	6	5
work, unemployment, working conditions	9	4	4	3	4	4	3
spatial planning, housing, overpopulation	9	4	4	3	3	4	5
environment and nature, energy	9	3	3	3	2	3	5
defence, war, foreign relations	4	2	2	1	1	2	2
other (incl. emancipation, recreation, media)	3	1	1	1	1	1	1
total	228	100	100	100	100	100	100
average number of problems cited		2.5	2.4	2.6	2.2	2.4	2.8
(n)		(2508)	(1225)	(1283)	(757)	(982)	(594)

a Proportion of respondents citing one or more problems in a particular domain.  
b Average proportion of all problems cited by respondents which relate to the domain.

Source: SKON (NK0'06) socio-demographically weighted results

## Priorities

In order to gain an insight into the political priorities of the Dutch public, interviewees in the National Survey of Voters (NKO) were asked to rank 16 political objectives in order of importance (see table 13.4). Although there are some shifts over the period from 1995 to 2006, the ranking does not change completely.

The findings for 2006 generally differ from the 2004 results by only a few percentage points. There is a notable increase in support for freedom of speech and a friendlier society. Protecting freedom of speech is ranked in sixth place in 1995, moves into the top five in 1998 and by 2006 is at the top of the list of political objectives, with 55%. This issue has probably gained in importance in public opinion as a result of incidents and political turbulence (see chapter 3). Where freedom of speech received more support in the past from those on the political left than the political right, in 2006 it is regarded as just as important by people at both ends of the political spectrum. Support for socio-economic objectives is consistently high throughout the period studied, but fluctuates in line with the economic climate.

Fighting crime and maintaining public order have scored less highly since 2002, and this corresponds with other views in this area. The view that crime in the Netherlands is increasing and/or is a real problem receives less support today than it did in the middle of the 1990s (Bijl et al. 2007, table 3.5). In line with this, there is also less support for the imposition of heavier sentences on offenders (with the exception of sex offenders) and for the reintroduction of the death penalty. Taken together, these findings reflect the stabilisation of the crime figures (see chapter 11).

After years of decline, there is again growing support for combating environmental pollution. In 1992 (not shown in table), this objective was ranked second in the list of priorities; thereafter it went into freefall, reaching a low point in 2004. The downward trend was reversed in 2006, when this objective is among the most strongly supported in percentage terms. This topic receives the most support in relative terms from the well educated, the high income groups, residents of the four largest cities and people on the political left. The importance of this issue in public opinion has probably increased due to greater attention in the media, partly in the wake of the release in autumn 2006 of the alarming film *An inconvenient truth* by former American Vice President Al Gore.

The desirability of providing good reception facilities for immigrants is supported by only a small group of respondents through the years. This is probably due to some extent to the rather dated question formulation, so the view that migrants themselves should make the effort to integrate will also play a role. In 2006, 61% of respondents felt that foreigners should adhere less rigidly to their own culture, and no fewer than 95% believed they should make more effort to learn the Dutch language. These percentages have changed little over the last few years.

Table 14.4

The most important political objectives to aim for, population aged 16 years and older, 1995-2006 (in percentages, order of priority in 2006)<sup>a</sup>

	1995	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006
protecting freedom of speech	45	46	(5) 46	43	(5) 47	(5) 50	(1) 55
maintaining the level of social security	(2) 50	(2) 53	(3) 53	(3) 55	(3) 54	(1) 53	(2) 52
sustaining a stable economy	(5) 49	(5) 48	(4) 50	(4) 50	(4) 54	(2) 53	(3) 50
fighting crime	(1) 57	(1) 53	(1) 63	(1) 63	(2) 56	(4) 51	(4) 50
maintaining public order	(3) 50	(3) 48	(2) 59	(2) 58	(1) 59	(3) 52	(5) 49
a friendlier society	33	32	44	(5) 44	43	33	40
reducing unemployment	(4) 50	(4) 48	35	25	30	45	38
fighting price increases	26	28	20	25	31	32	30
sustaining economic growth	28	26	21	21	23	31	28
fighting environmental pollution	41	35	32	33	24	19	26
attaching importance to ideas	20	21	23	25	23	20	21
giving citizens a greater say	16	21	16	18	18	22	20
giving people a greater say in their work and housing	16	19	18	19	17	18	17
good reception facilities for immigrants	11	11	10	11	10	8	11
smartening up towns and the countryside	5	5	7	8	7	6	7
a strong army	4	3	4	3	5	6	5

a The percentages relate to the first five positions in a ranking from 1 to 16, where 1 is the most important and 16 the least important. The five most important objectives in each year are shown between brackets in the table.

Source: SCP (CV'95-'06)

### Appreciation of public provisions

Dutch citizens expect a great deal from their government, especially when it comes to protecting freedom of speech, health care, social security, fighting crime and maintaining public order. Public appreciation of the achievement of the government in these domains, expressed as a score, shows considerable variation over time.

The scores for all areas of government policy are higher in 2006 than in 2004 (table 14.5), but the share of the population scoring the government performance on any policy as better than satisfactory is a good deal lower than in 1998 and 2000. The policies on education, child care and leisure time score relatively highly through the years, and top the list in 2006. The relatively good scores for the policy on employment, maintaining public order, the environment, asylum and social security are also striking, however; a much higher proportion of citizens score these policy domains better than satisfactory in 2006 compared with 2004. Despite wide policy attention and extra funding, health care policy still receives a low score. However, the lowest score is reserved for the anti-inflation policy. On the other hand, some improvement can be observed in both these domains between 2004 and 2006.

Table 14.5

Assessment of government performance as 'better than satisfactory' in a number of policy domains (score 7-10), population aged 16 years and older, 1995-2006 (in percentages)

	1995	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006
policy on vocational education	46	45	48	40	35	35	40
policy on leisure time and sport	45	42	43	44	39	30	39
policy on child care	.	.	.	30	31	28	39
employment policy	20	27	54	62	31	15	38
cultural policy	41	35	42	36	34	27	37
general education policy	46	45	41	35	31	31	37
policy on maintaining public order	22	26	17	21	13	26	34
environmental policy	33	32	34	38	28	26	34
asylum policy	38	37	30	36	24	25	29
social security policy	35	27	36	40	34	17	28
policy on car ownership and use	.	.	.	.	.	.	28
policy on quality of life	24	23	23	26	17	19	24
public transport policy	.	.	.	.	.	.	24
Health care policy	27	23	17	13	17	16	20
policy on cost of living	30	28	37	31	14	12	17

Source: SCP (CV'95-'06)

## Conclusion

Public opinion on government policy fluctuates strongly in line with the economic trend. The recession in 2002-2005 was accordingly reflected in public views on the prosperity of the Netherlands and the optimism for the future. In 2006, 68% of the population expressed optimism about the economy; in 2002 the figure was 42%. Following the recovery in the economy, people are again expressing the view that benefits are too low, and that government spending needs to increase again. Freedom of speech now heads the list of political objectives. Almost all Dutch citizens expect immigrants to do their best to learn the Dutch language.

## 15 The Dutch on Europe

In an international publication on social and political trends in the Netherlands, it would be unthinkable not to include a chapter on Dutch public opinion on Europe. International readers will welcome information on the background to the unexpected 'No' vote in the Dutch referendum on the European Constitution on 1 June 2005, and on the trend in public opinion since then. According to the official outcome of the referendum, 61.6% of the electorate voted against approval of the new European Treaty, with 38.5% in favour. The turnout was 63.3%. The question put to voters was: *Are you for or against the Netherlands giving its consent to the Treaty to adopt a Constitution for Europe?* The referendum result was not only of political significance, with consequences for the process of European integration, particularly in the short term, but also served as an illustration of the uncertain political climate in the Netherlands (see chapter 16).

This chapter is based on *European Outlook 4* (CPB/SCP 2006: 7-36) and *European Outlook 5* (CPB/SCP 2007). It first explores the trend in general political support for Europe in the Netherlands between 2001 and 2006. It then presents a more detailed description of public opinion formation before and just after the 2005 referendum. In interpreting the data, a link will be made to the general Dutch political climate at the time of the referendum. Finally, the chapter presents a brief discussion of what the Dutch 'really' think of Europe.

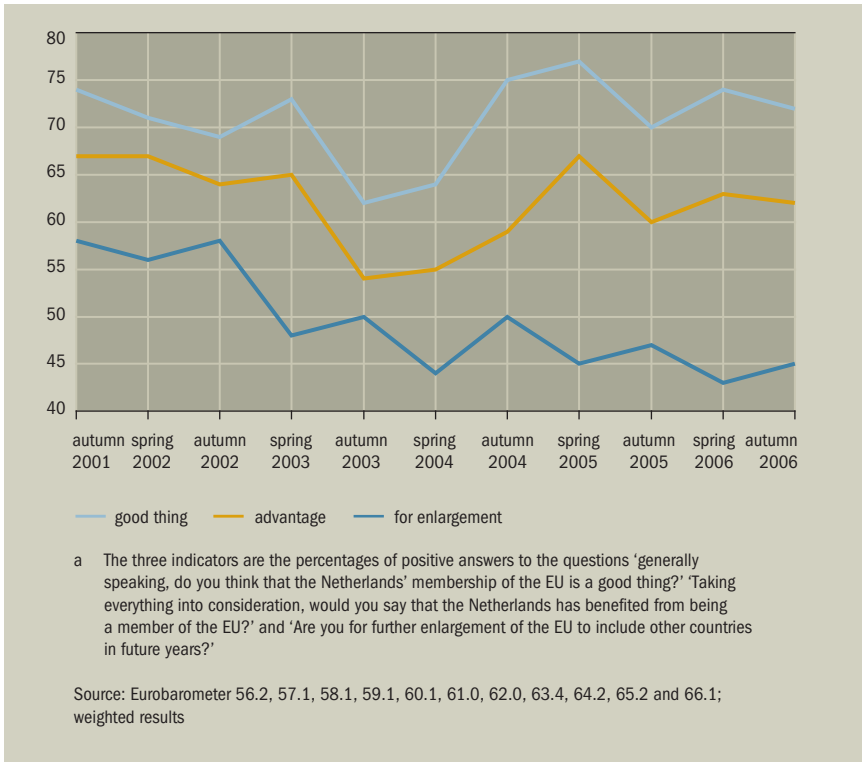
### *Support and involvement 2001-2006*

Figure 15.1 shows changes over time in indicators for support for and involvement in European unification (CPB/SCP 2007).

Support for European unification dipped in the Netherlands at the end of 2003 and early 2004, but began to pick up again in autumn 2004, as evidenced from public attitudes to Dutch EU membership. During the spring of 2005 – before the referendum – support for Europe was back to its high level of 2001. It is striking that there was less general political support a couple of years before the referendum than during the referendum campaign. That support fell back again slightly afterwards, but on balance, in 2006 three-quarters of the Dutch population believed that Dutch membership of the EU was a good thing, and more than 60% felt that the Netherlands benefited from its membership. It would therefore seem that the negative referendum result had virtually no adverse impact on general support for Europe. There is no question of a broadly shared Euroscepticism, and Dutch support for European integration appears to be as strong as ever.

Figure 15.1

Developments in support for EU membership and for enlargements, 2001-2006<sup>a</sup> (in percentages)



During the run-up to the referendum, support for Europe was high in the Netherlands in an international perspective. Of the four countries which held referenda (France, Spain, the Netherlands and Luxembourg), only Luxembourg scored higher (Dekker and Wennekers 2005: 627-630). In surveys held after the referendum, support in the Netherlands was the lowest of the four countries, though the differences were not large. A majority in all four countries, even among those who voted against, felt that membership of the EU was a good thing. Compared with the other 21 EU member states and based on other indicators, too, the Netherlands remains one of the most pro-European countries (CPB/SCP 2005: 42).

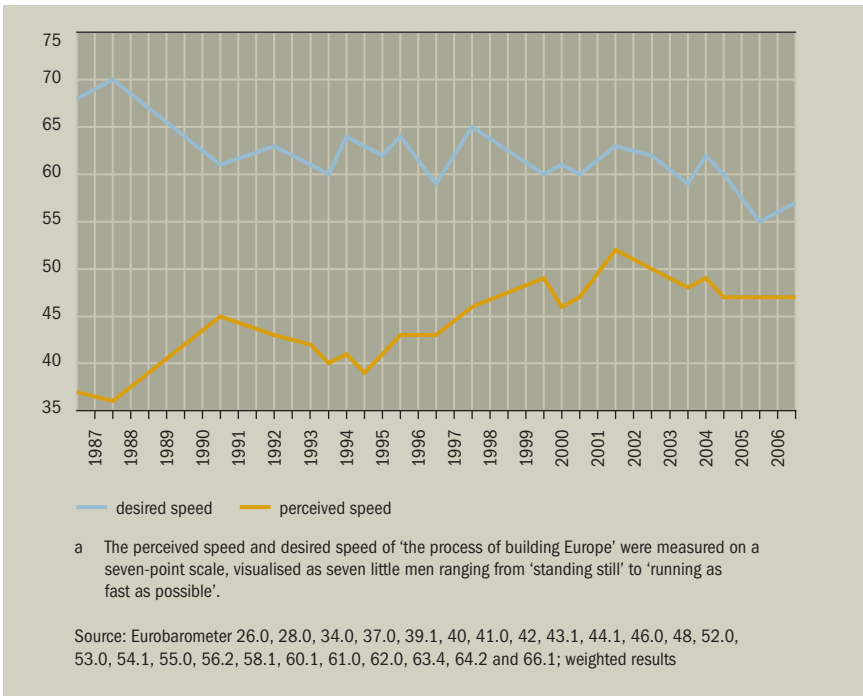
These comments need to be qualified with two observations. First, public opinion on further enlargement of the EU has become gradually more negative. As figure 15.1 shows, support for enlargement has fallen over the last five years from 58% to 43% in spring 2006 – the same level of support as in the spring of 2003, at the time of the accession of ten Central and Eastern European countries. By the autumn of 2006, support had increased again by a few percentage points. Several studies (e.g. Renselaar and Bom 2006, Anker 2006, CPB/SCP 2006) suggest that there is substantial

resistance to further enlargement. It remains to be seen whether the percentage of opponents will now stabilise at a level of around 45% or will rise again if there is a prospect of new entrants.

The second observation relates to the speed of the European integration process. After the referendum the Dutch government concluded that European integration was moving ‘too quickly’ for the public. However, a longitudinal study by the European Commission suggests that many Dutch citizens would actually like European integration to proceed more quickly than (they perceive it to be doing) at present (figure 15.2). Although support for faster integration fell relatively sharply during the referendum, even in 2005 a large majority were in favour of accelerating the integration process, with 26% feeling that integration was proceeding too quickly, i.e. the perceived speed of integration was higher than the desired speed (not shown in figure). A year later the fall in support had reversed again, and only 21% felt that the integration process was moving too quickly. It remains to be seen whether this trend continues as the European project continues to move forward.

Figure 15.2

Perceived and desired speed of European integration,<sup>a</sup> 1986-2006 (in percentages)



*European Outlook 2007* (CPB/SCP 2007) compares support for the EU in 1996 with that in 2006, and also explores whether that support has declined or increased in specific social groups. Age, and in particular education level, are found to be key determinants of Dutch support for Europe. In addition, a positive view of their own lives and optimism regarding their (anticipated) prosperity contribute to a favourable attitude towards the EU.

Comparing the findings from 1996 and 2006 reveals that all social and cultural characteristics in both years deviate in the same direction from the population figure, though the extent to which particular groups deviate from the average sometimes varies. Young people are relatively more positive in their attitude to EU membership in 2006 than in 1996; by contrast, people with a lower education level are relatively more negative in 2006 than ten years earlier.

Party preferences also play a very important role. People who reported a political preference on the left of centre in 2006 (D66, Green Left or Christian Union parties) showed stronger support for Dutch EU membership than the average for the Dutch population as a whole; around eight out of ten supporters of these three parties were in favour of Dutch membership of the EU. Although support for Dutch EU membership fell in the Dutch population as a whole, among voters for Green Left and the Christian Union parties it remained as high in 2006 as in 1996. Compared with the Dutch population at large, supporters of the more right of centre CDA (Christian Democrats), and particularly the VVD (Liberal) parties showed more support for Dutch EU membership in both 1996 and 2006. Nonetheless, support for EU membership was lower among voters for these two parties in 2006 than in 1996. Supporters of the PvdA (Labour) party showed slightly less support for EU membership in 2006 than the average for the Dutch population. This was different in 1996, when supporters of this party showed relatively more support than average. Less support for EU membership is also found among voters for the socialist SP party, though the difference between these voters and the average for the Dutch population was less marked in 2006 than in 1996. Least support for EU membership is found among voters supporting the Calvinist SGP party. Right from the start this party has voiced its opposition to Dutch membership of the EU, using loss of sovereignty and allegiance to 'Orange' as key arguments.

### *Opinions on a Constitution for the EU*

Table 15.1 tracks the trend in a number of opinions on Europe in 2005, up to the beginning of May of that year. Views on the European Union, and particularly the Constitution, turned more negative during this period, and by around 1 May the lead enjoyed by supporters of the Constitution had virtually evaporated. According to an identical poll by the same research agency, at the end of May 39% were in favour and 45% against the Constitution (the rest did not plan to vote or were still undecided). During the referendum a few days later, the dominance of the opponents was even

greater. Strikingly enough, the regular Eurobarometer surveys from around this time continued to show a majority in favour of a Constitution. According to these surveys, in the autumn of 2004 73% of the Dutch were in favour of 'a Constitution for the European Union', and in the spring of 2005 there were still 53% who held this view. As it turned out, 'a' constitution proved to be more popular than 'the' Constitution on which the referendum was held. A similar difference can be observed in views on the introduction of the euro (CPB/SCP 2005). The difference between 'a' and 'the' (whether constitution or euro) is very telling; people support the idea, but not its controversial implementation.

Table 15.1

Trend in various views (%) by the Dutch population, January-May 2005

	3-8 January	25 Feb. -4 March	30 March -6 April	26 April -7 May
attitude towards the European Union:				
(very) positive	40	38	35	35
(very) negative	14	17	16	20
trust in the European Union at this moment				
(very) great deal of trust	14	14	12	12
no trust (whatsoever)	27	28	30	31
views on the European Constitution				
supporter	61	54	52	42
opponent	21	27	26	37

Source: Data Kwantitatief onderzoek Referendum Europese grondwet (Marktresponse P1041)

Focus group sessions provide some insight into the underlying views and processes. In the latter months of 2004 and the early months of 2005 the SCP conducted a series of discussions with groups of around seven 'ordinary Dutch citizens' with roughly the same education level, to ascertain their involvement with and views on Europe. In all groups, Europe is at best considered to be a fairly dull subject. The level of knowledge and involvement are low. At no point was enthusiasm actively voiced in the groups; the most positive attitude appears to be one of putting the disadvantages and things that go wrong into perspective in the light of the (economic) necessity of the Union and Dutch membership of it. The drawbacks and scandals generally dominate the discussions. The most important negative issues are the expensive euro, the threat of competition from cheap workers from the new member states and the position of the Netherlands as a net contributor. The common theme in the discussion is the economic position of the participants themselves. People have the feeling of losing out as a result of 'Brussels', and that employment and their income position are under threat.

Negative associations with 'Brussels' also emerged in the discussions with people with a higher education level, though these associations related mainly to themselves and were more concerned with the bureaucracy, incomprehensible rules, superfluous subsidies, monthly changes of venue between Brussels and Strasbourg and the fiddling of expenses by Euro MPs.

One conclusion which may be drawn is that public opinion was more positive according to surveys than the referendum result would suggest. The more general the questions, the more positive are people's attitudes; as 1 June 2005 (the date of the referendum) approached, the issues sharpened up and became more tangible, and attitudes turned more negative. The focus group discussions reveal which arguments and considerations played a role here.

### Background to the rejection

Maurice de Hond (CPB/SCP 2007) provides figures on the socio-demographic diversity, which inform the background to the actual (reported) voting behaviour. A number of contrasting groups taken from this survey are shown in table 15.2 for the 'no'-voters. The table sets off the largest group of 'no'-voters against the smallest group of 'no'-voters as regards various personal characteristics.

Table 15.2

No-voters in various population categories: groups with the highest and lowest % of no-voters per characteristic

	% no-voters		% no-voters
all	62	religious affiliation:	
		non-practising	65
		Catholics	54
		regular newspaper readers:	
sex:		none	74
female	66	Telegraaf	69
male	58	NRC	46
age:		broadcasting association membership:	
45-54	69	Veronica	73
65+	48	NCRV	38
level of education:		party supported in 2003 parliamentary elections:	
low	82	LPF and SP	92
high	51	CDA	52

Source: Post-referendum survey by Peil.nl (2005)

In the case of the socio-demographic characteristics the less well-educated stand out for their mass rejection of the Constitution. Women, 45-54 year-olds and people

lacking any religious affiliation voted 'no' relatively often. NCRV Broadcasting Association members (Protestant believers) and NRC newspaper (highly educated) readers are the only groups in this table with a minority vote against the Constitution. On the basis of the party supported in the 2003 Parliamentary elections, no one party emerges with a minority of 'no'-voters. Given the explicit support given by most parties to the Constitution this is a notable finding, which also attracted considerable attention in political circles.

At first sight this result is also difficult to square with the theory by Janssen (2001) and others, that people were primarily guided by political elites in deciding what position to take on Europe. In the Netherlands there has traditionally been a broad, cross-party pro-Europe consensus – a consensus consistent with the widespread and diffuse public support for the EU among the public. In *European Outlook 2004* (CPB/SCP 2004: 23), however, it was noted that large groups of voters regard the party of their choice as being more in favour of European unification than they themselves are. This discrepancy presumably widened during the months of the run-up to the referendum. In any event, the campaigns in favour of the Constitution conducted by the coalition parties and the two opposition parties did not manage to convince the rank and file.

As far as the influence of the government on public opinion is concerned, there is even evidence of a negative effect. According to the surveys conducted by Maurice de Hond, 38% of voters gave the stance taken by the government a negative rating on 30 April, a figure that had risen to 59% on May 21. Most of those taking a highly positive view of the EU and overwhelmingly intending to vote in favour of the Constitution also rated the stance taken by the government negatively (Peil.nl 2005). This is more than just a matter of a difference of opinion between the political elite in The Hague and the general public: there is also a discrepancy between the attitudes of many large organisations in civil society (which generally favoured the Constitution) and the public. Established political and civil society organisations no longer automatically have the same hold over public opinion they once had. This does not however mean that the importance of elites as such has fallen sharply. In all probability 'independent' commentators, columnists and other opinion-leaders exerted a stronger influence on public opinion formation. The process of public opinion formation on Europe is not necessarily less elite-led, but has become more diffuse and less predictable.

### *Pragmatic judgment*

The outcome of the referendum should be seen as the result of a combination of circumstances, including a mood of low political confidence and especially a process of public opinion-formation with a dynamic all of its own. Such circumstances can influence attitudes to the EU because of a lack of involvement. There is an almost complete absence of political debate about Europe in the Netherlands. Dutch support

for European cooperation is more pragmatic than idealistic and has traditionally been based mainly on economic considerations. The research literature also shows that considerations such as national identity and national pride are less important than the balance of perceived advantages and disadvantages (McLaren 2004). Support for the EU is based more on utilitarianism than a sense of European identity (Thomassen 2007). The lack of a solid political foundation means that support for Europe depends partly on the general climate of opinion and is influenced by people's perceptions of the (economic) development of the country. When economic confidence is restored, public opinion offers more scope for policymakers to break through the stagnation surrounding the Constitutional Treaty and the institutional reforms in the EU.

### Conclusion

As one of the six founder-members of the European Union, the Netherlands has always politically supported the development and enlargement of the EU. In general, public opinion has also long been positive towards the EU, though there is criticism of 'Brussels' and further enlargement no longer enjoys much support. In 2005 the Dutch public rejected the idea of a Constitution for Europe (over 60% of voters saying 'No' in a turnout of more than 60%). Despite this, in 2006 75% of the Dutch public believed that Dutch membership of the EU was 'a good thing', making clear that Dutch support for the EU is primarily utilitarian in nature.

## 16 Political climate

Dutch politics has been in a state of flux for a number of years. Dutch citizens have become assertive and look after their own interests steadfastly, and appear to be less interested in politics, or at least in the traditional political parties. Political preferences swing widely and election results have become a roller coaster for the established political parties. New political parties are finding their way into the Lower House of Parliament with unprecedented numbers of seats, with examples such as the List Pim Fortuyn (2002) and the Partij voor de Vrijheid (Freedom Party) (2006). These changes have contributed to a great sense of unrest within almost every political party in recent years. It would seem that the Netherlands will have to get used to a climate of political instability (Mair 2001, De Vries 2005).

In addition, the agendas of the public and of the established political system show great divergence on themes such as the sustainability of the welfare state, the labour market, health care, immigration and integration of minorities and environmental policy. These differences were also thrown into very sharp relief during the European referendum; the formation of opinions on this issue was outlined in the last chapter. Underlying these issues is a fundamental discussion focusing on the responsibilities of the (neo-liberal) state in relation to international organisations, the market and the citizen's own responsibilities (Ankersmit 2006).

Many commentators and politicians perceive a gulf between electors and their elected representatives, between citizens and the administration. As a corollary to this, a debate has been under way since the early 1990s on the issue of whether or not more elements of direct democracy should be incorporated into the prevailing representative system (TK 1990/1991). Several political scientists take a more nuanced view on this received gulf (Erwin and Van Holsteyn 2002) and in fact take the view that politicians do not distance themselves enough from the vagaries of day-to-day events and the public opinion surrounding them (De Beus et al. 2006).

Citizens and the media are also highly critical of government policy, as chapter 14 showed. Several crises and disasters have occurred in recent years in which, to put it mildly, the government has not got away scot-free as regards its reputation on prevention and enforcement. Examples include the handling of the Bijlmer air crash disaster, the Dutchbat debacle in Srebrenica, the New Year's Eve disaster involving a nightclub fire in Volendam and the firework disaster in Enschede (Schnabel 2003: 57-58). More recently still there was the fire in the cell complex for illegal immigrants at Amsterdam Airport Schiphol. A high proportion of the population demonstrated their concern about a number of these events. It is in any event the case that public satisfaction with and trust in the government has reached unprecedented

lows in recent years; it was not until 2006 that signs of an improvement could be observed.

This chapter presents an empirical exploration of trends in the political climate over the last ten years and investigates the background to and resilience of the changes that have taken place. The central focus is on political involvement, opinions about politics and public (dis)satisfaction with and (lack of) trust in the government.

*Political involvement*

Research by SCP shows political involvement to be a reasonably constant phenomenon. However, as has been observed on several occasions, there are considerable differences between different social groups, with education and income level being particularly important factors. The changes over time are limited. In periods of political turbulence (2002-2004), public interest is somewhat greater than in other years. The assertiveness of the public is expressed in a need to have a say in events, a high level of acceptance of political protest and a willingness to take action. Here again, the changes over time are limited.

Table 16.1

Political involvement and views on democracy, population aged 16 years and older, 1995-2006 (in percentages)

	1995	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006
considers self to be 'very' or 'normally' interested in politics	48	48	42	56	51	48
reads about domestic politics, e.g. newspaper reports, 'regularly' (not 'occasionally' or less)	41	39	34	46	44	42
would be 'very' or 'somewhat' likely to try to do something if Parliament was passing a law he or she considered unjust	48	52	48	52	51	49
would approve if someone decided because of an unjust law to hinder the work of the government with sit-in demonstrations, mass meetings or protest marches	63	65	61	.	69	68
feels the public should be given 'a lot' or 'a little' more say in local and provincial administration	66	69	69	71	69	66

Source: SCP (CV'95-'06)

Other indicators for public involvement are membership of a political party and the turnout at elections. The level of political organisation is very low in the Netherlands; 2.5% of the electorate are currently members of a political party, one of the lowest figures in Western Europe. The drop in membership of the major political parties is due in no small measure to the ageing of the rank-and-file membership. There are however exceptions, such as the Socialist Party, which has been growing

steadily for some time and which in terms of membership numbers is now the third largest party in the Netherlands. The character of the parties has also changed, with a steady decline in the ability of ideologically inspired mass parties to attract politically interested citizens. It is also no longer an obvious step for (highly educated) people at the forefront of society to become active in party politics, and the ties within civil society have also weakened.

Considering that there is no compulsory voting system, the turnout figures at national elections are very creditable in the Netherlands and show no sign of falling in recent years. In 1994, 78.8% of those entitled to vote did so; in 1998 the figure was 73.3%, in 2002 79.1%, in 2006 80.35% (CBS, StatLine).

The above figures show no evidence of a decline in political involvement over the last ten years. Rather, a shift appears to have taken place, in which the modern citizen also seeks out other ways than the traditional political party system to exercise influence.

### *Views on politics*

In line with these shifts in political involvement, fluctuations can also be observed in attitudes to politics. In 2004, public attitudes were a good deal more negative than in previous years, especially towards the government and MPs. The picture in 2006 is more moderate across the board, though the views on politics are still fairly cynical. Anti-political opinions such as these have always been around, but Dutch politicians have faced increasing negativity in recent years; some politicians actually encourage this in order to boost their own profile, reaffirming the opposition between the people and the political elite (Koole 2006).

The most striking finding is the continued high percentage of respondents who in 2006 support fewer rules and would like to see strong, dedicated leaders. The twofold message contained within this statement makes it difficult to decide how this call should be explained. The sudden rise after 2002 can be related to the uncertain times, a growing aversion to bureaucracy and the attachment of negative, authoritarian connotations to the notion of 'strong leader'. It may be that there is a growing need in our times, which applies much more generally than for politics alone, for guides, idols and heroes who lend themselves to collective adoration (De Hart 2005: 65). Interestingly, the support for strong leadership is often combined with support for a greater say for the public. This combination of more leadership and more direct influence on policy is somewhat populist in nature and may be a testimony to 'civic impatience' (Dekker 2006).

A lack of trust in politics is usually accompanied by a lack of political self-confidence. According to the 2006 National Survey of Voters (NKO), only 54% of the population now have a good understanding of the political issues, 60% think poli-

tics is too complicated for them to understand what is going on and only 20% of the population feel able to play an active role in politics. These figures are less favourable than in 2003 (Aarts et al. 2007).

Table 16.2

Views on politics and social trust, population aged 16 years and older, 1996-2006 (in percentages)

agrees (completely) with the following statements	1996	2000	2002	2004	2006
whatever the government does is of little use for everyday life	21	.	.	36	29
people like me have no influence over what the government does	46	52	49	54	50
I don't think MPs and ministers care much about what people like me think	42	48	46	51	46
when I see the way politicians act, I think they're arrogant	.	.	48	55	49
MPs pay too much attention to the interests of a few powerful groups rather than to the general interest	54	58	60	64	59
what we need are fewer laws and institutions and more courageous, tireless and dedicated leaders whom the people can trust	29	32	.	59	54
thinks that in general 'most people can be trusted' (rather than 'you can't be too careful' and 'don't know')	56	47	52	53	51

### Political satisfaction

As might be expected on the basis of the figures for the appreciation of government policy reported in chapter 14, the general opinion of the government and the public administration improved in 2006. Despite the strong increase (67% satisfaction rate), however, this appreciation has not yet reached the high level of 2000.

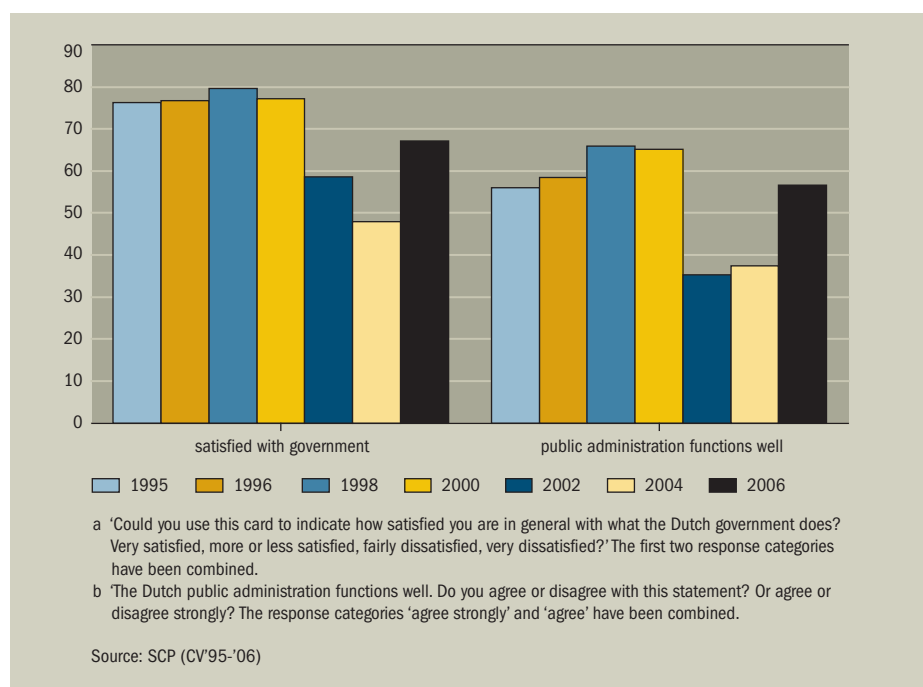
The general satisfaction with the Dutch government and public administration began to fall in 2000, after showing a slight but steady improvement for a number of years. In 2000, 77% of the public were satisfied, in 2002 59% and in 2004 48% (figure 16.1). Opinions on the functioning of the public administration show a similar trend, though the decline is bigger, with the proportion of people saying they were satisfied virtually halving between 2000 and 2002. Satisfaction with the government is systematically slightly higher than satisfaction with the functioning of the public administration.

There are limited differences between different population categories in the degree of satisfaction with the government (not shown in figure). There is only one factor which makes a real difference, namely political orientation. In 2006, 57% of left-wing respondents were satisfied, compared with 79% of those on the right. This is

likely to be connected with the fact that the government was made up of a centre-right coalition from 2004. In the preceding eight years the government had consisted of a broad coalition of left and right (the 'purple' coalitions) and there were virtually no differences between left, centre and right. This partly explains the high scores in those years. Political orientation is also reflected in the scores for the functioning of the public administration, but the differences are less marked.

Figure 16.1

Opinions of the government and public administration in general, population aged 16 years and older, 1995-2006 (in percentages)



### Social and political trust

Chapter 14 reports on the public satisfaction with the various components of government policy and, preceding this, on opinions on the government and the functioning of the public administration. The meagre results in this area are attributed not only to the relatively low satisfaction with government policy or its actual outcomes, but also to a fundamental lack of trust in politics and government. In line with this view, the first government under Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende made 'Restoring trust' (2002) a central plank of its government programme (see chapter 3).

It is difficult to define precisely what is meant by trust in the government. It has to do with issues such as knowing what concerns the people, the competence to tackle

social problems, stickability and keeping agreements and promises. Precisely what respondents mean when they answer questions about trust in the government is a matter of guesswork, but the responses do at least reflect the public perception (Dekker 2006). The lack of an accurate definition is less problematic here, because the focus is on the position of the government relative to other political institutions and on trends over time.

Table 16.3 shows how trust in social and political institutions developed between 1997 and 2006. The trend is heavily dominated by the high score in 1999 and also by the exceptionally low score in 2003. All social institutions included enjoyed less public trust in 2003, but Parliament, government and political parties experienced a dramatic fall. Moreover, the decline in trust is stronger than for comparable institutions in other European countries (Dekker and Van der Meer 2004). In 2006, the average level of institutional trust was back to a more or less normal level for the Netherlands, but the political institutions have not (yet?) recovered fully from the damage.

Table 16.3

Trust in institutions,<sup>a</sup> population aged 15 years and older, 1997-2006 (in percentages)

	1997	1999	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
charitable institutions	69	74	60	63	65	70	77	.
radio	79	81	79	72	69	75	73	72
the police	71	72	71	61	60	65	73	72
television	75	86	72	72	68	69	69	62
the armed forces	54	71	60	58	55	67	68	75
the press	62	75	67	58	56	63	65	64
trade unions	63	61	48	55	52	62	62	62
the judiciary/the legal system	55	61	63	57	51	58	61	61
the United Nations	60	62	60	64	53	64	60	59
Parliament	66	65	65	61	43	50	51	54
large corporations	55	55	44	45	39	41	46	.
the Church	44	48	40	40	39	41	46	49
the European Union	38	45	47	51	40	50	42	45
the Dutch government	68	66	64	64	38	38	41	49
political parties	41	41	34	37	28	35	34	38
average	60	64	58	57	50	57	58	60

a The institutions are ranked in declining order of trust at the end of 2005. The question was: 'How much trust you place in certain institutions. Could you tell me for each of the following institutions whether you tend to trust it or not trust it.' The table shows the percentages reporting 'tend to trust' of those who chose between 'tend to trust' and 'tend not to trust' at least ten times (and thus replied 'don't know' a maximum of five times).

Source: European Commission (EB 48.0 (autumn 1997), 51.0 (Spring 1999), 55.1 (Spring 2001), 57.1 (Spring 2002), 60.1 (autumn 2003), 62.0 (autumn 2004), 64.2 (autumn 2005) and 66.1 (autumn 2006)) weighted results

### *Possible explanations*

The background to this lack of political trust has been touched on in all sorts of ways in the political and social debate. The political turbulence of 2002/2003 discussed briefly earlier will undoubtedly have had an impact on the negative scores in 2003, and the divergence of political agendas and negative opinions of policy achievements highlighted in the introduction will also have played a role. The fact that the recent change in public opinion about the government and government policy is accompanied by greater political trust points to this. More generally, social changes and the associated uncertainties appear to be relevant (Elchardus 2005). The decline in trust in all institutions mentioned could support this observation, and the fact that the low-educated in particular have little institutional trust across the board also points in this direction.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the role played by the media. In general it has to be borne in mind, including when considering the figures presented in table 16.3, that when answering questions about their trust of institutions, people will often not be able or willing to call on their own experiences, but will have to rely on the media and hearsay. It is therefore perfectly possible that the deterioration in public trust in politics is partly the result of reports and discussions of earlier measurements of that trust.

These alternative – and not mutually exclusive – explanatory models for individual differences in the lack of trust – designated using the respective terms individual backgrounds, general social discontent, (opinions on) policy and (cynical) attitudes towards politics – have been studied in their interrelationship to each other using data from 2004 (SCP 2005; see also Dekker 2006).

According to this analysis, the reasons for the lack of trust are to be found to a large extent both in opinions about the policy and in the image of politicians. Explanations relating to the policy and those based on the way in which the business of politics operates score equally well (explained variance around 26%), and significantly better than explanations based on general social discontent (13%). However, background characteristics continue to be relevant (6%). For example, the simple fact of having a low education level still has a sizeable effect, even after controlling for political attitudes and opinions which are generally related to educational differences. If the items from all the explanatory models are taken together, 39% of the variance can be explained. All in all, this exploratory analysis based on data from 2004 provides a clear indication of where the causes of the lack of trust lie.

The complex explanatory model encapsulated in the above analysis also offers pointers for explaining the recent increase in political trust. At the end of 2006, public opinion appeared to be responding to anticipated changes of course in politics, both as regards content (see chapter 3) and in terms of the way in which politics

is conducted, with politicians adopting a stance closer to the citizen and being more responsive. This interpretation may however be too easy; there was a general improvement in institutional trust in 2006, and opinions on all manner of social issues became more moderate. It may be that political institutions are benefiting particularly from this phenomenon and that it remains to be seen whether the recovery in political trust is sustained.

### Conclusion

In the 1990s, during the era of the 'purple' coalitions of parties from the left and right (1994-2002), Dutch politics enjoyed a period of relative calm and stability. Public satisfaction with the government reached great heights, and people were also generally satisfied with the way in which the public administration functioned. At the end of 2001, a period of great political unrest began, reaching a dramatic low point with the murder of Pim Fortuyn, and characterised by the rapid rise (and fall) of new political parties and by a low level of trust in the government and public administration. In 2007 the fourth government led by Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende (a coalition of Christian Democrats, Labour Party and Christian Union) took office. Thanks first and foremost to the economic recovery, this government is once again enjoying a more positive public image.

## Annex 1 Framework for monitoring

### Concept of life situation

The Social State of the Netherlands (SSN) is a monitor centring around the life situation of the citizen. In terms of designating the content, the concept of 'life situation' is neutral. Related terms are living standard, quality of life, welfare, liveability, social exclusion and social cohesion. Many countries and international organisations have developed their own standards and have constructed specific measures in order to objectify these concepts. In addition individual social scientists and research groups are in the process of developing theoretical frameworks and constructing specific measures for these kinds of broad and diffuse concepts (Hagerty et al. 2000).

The multitude of monitoring instruments and the indicator sets based on them may be classified along two axes. One axis relates to the question of whether the monitoring system in question is concerned with objective characteristics or with experiential aspects and satisfaction levels. The other axis concerns the object of monitoring: these may be individuals or collectivities (municipalities, countries, etc.) (Berger-Schmitt and Noll 2000).

The question of collectivity versus individual depends primarily on the objective of the monitoring instrument. Life situation research within countries is usually concerned with individuals; comparative research at the level of countries or other units, such as municipalities, tends instead to relate to systemic features of the units in question (e.g. national income, political regime and level of provision, etc.). Such systemic features are however also relevant as background information for the interpretation of data on citizens' life situation.

The objectifying approach is based on the concept of living standard. This is defined as access to resources that are capable of influencing a person's own living conditions. Examples include income, education and social networks, which can be employed in the various domains of life in order to make social progress. At issue therefore are indicators for objectively determining factors that are decisive for a person's living circumstances. This approach is heavily slanted towards monitoring in the interests of social policy. The Scandinavian countries in particular follow this approach (Vogel 1995). Ranged against this is the approach based on people's needs, especially satisfaction and people's happiness in general and/or satisfaction in relation to the various aspects of their life situation, such as satisfaction with family and friends, health, work and education, etc. These types of factors determine the extent to which a life situation can be described as good. This approach was developed in the United States in the 1960s, but found major resonance in the Netherlands in the 1970s when the concept of welfare – as the counterpart of prosperity – was

introduced as a policy concept. Veenhoven developed this approach further for international comparative research in the form of an index for happy life expectancy (Veenhoven 1996).

The final important questions concern the scope of the monitor and the way in which a particular outcome is labelled good or bad. Life situation is a multidimensional concept. Most monitoring systems include indicators for a number of life domains, such as health, housing, the availability of consumer goods, the nature of leisure activities and the nature of social relations. The choice of domains is prompted by policy considerations or based on empirical research. In practice this is dealt with pragmatically. Most monitoring systems cover a number of key domains, such as family and friends, welfare and health, material prosperity, productive employment, personal safety and participation in local society (Hagerty 2000: 40).

If a single composite measure of life situation is to be constructed, the question of course arises as to the weight to be assigned to the various domains. This may be based on a theoretical framework, political priorities, individual preferences of the respondents or statistical criteria – a method employed by SCP in the construction of the Life Situation Index (chapter 13).

The level problem – i.e. where does the boundary between positive and negative values lie? – may also be approached in various ways. Generally, however, minimum norms that have been determined politically or in policy terms apply in certain domains. These may then be taken as the starting point.

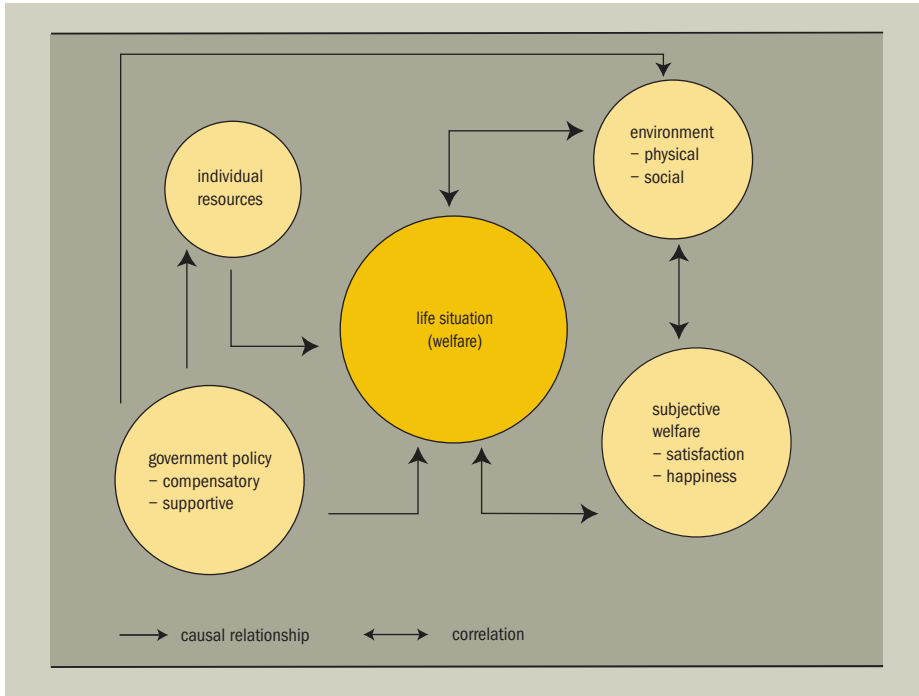
It should also be noted that monitors tend in particular to generate interesting information if it is possible to compare the results of various groups or the results over time. In that case it is sufficient to use relative measures. Needless to say it will then be necessary for reliable and valid data to be available for a number of years.

### Model

It is against the background of these considerations that SCP has compiled the SSN, thereby fleshing out the concept of life situation. A broad approach has been adopted, under which the various types of data are presented as an interrelated whole. The SSN is based on the causal model shown in figure A.1.

As noted, the life situation of the citizen and the quality of their existence have been taken as the central themes. This approach embraces the following domains: health, leisure activities, possession of consumer durables, social participation, residential situation, mobility and security. A number of indicators have been selected for each cluster. These aspects of life situation are discussed in the various chapters of the SSN and are also presented in the overarching measure: the Life Situation Index.

Figure A.1  
Model for life situation



Citizens have individual resources to help them achieve a good life situation. In present-day society the main resources are education, employment and income. To these might be added indicators such as health and self-reliance, but no data are available on this. Age – especially old age – is however relevant for the extent to which people are generally self-reliant. The household situation provides an indication of the extent to which people will receive support in the event of problems. Finally, ethnic and/or cultural origin is also an indicator for the availability of social resources.

The model is based on a causal relationship between resources and life situation: the more resources at a person’s disposal, the greater their chance of a good life situation. The government, which is concerned with the creation of equal opportunities, exercises influence over the availability of such resources. It redistributes income and helps citizens to acquire social resources through public provision. The government therefore plays a supporting role in helping prevent social disadvantage. Where the social process and personal choices according to the norms of the community result in disadvantage, the government will compensate for this as far as possible.

In line with the Scandinavian approach, the reporting in the SSN concentrates both on the resources and the situation in the aforementioned domains. As such the SSN

largely presents primary *output* or *situational indicators*. The resources and life situation of individuals and households are identified on the basis of objective indicators. This in turn enables favourable or unfavourable trends to be identified, while the observed situation can be compared against the desired situation, developments over time can be followed and the situation of different groups and regions can be compared.

The social and physical settings are also important conditions for the life situation of the individual citizen. Socio-scientific research reveals the physical and social environment to be an autonomous factor affecting the life situation of the citizen either directly or indirectly. In the chapter on the quality of the residential setting, the SSN therefore reports on a number of physical characteristics of that setting.

Something different from the *actual situation* in which people find themselves is the way that people *rate* their life situation (or elements in it) and the extent to which people are more or less happy. Where data are available, each chapter therefore establishes the relationship between the (objectively measured) life situation and the subjective assessments of it. This then casts a more detailed light on the objectified results. An objectively good life situation will not always be recognised as such by public opinion or the individual him or herself, for example because of high expectations. Knowledge of such perceptions is not just important for the political process in a narrow sense – the securing of public support for a particular policy – but is also relevant for the process of formulating social objectives.

The (causal) relationships presented in figure A.1 are not all identified for each domain. Where relevant, a relationship is established in each chapter between age, household situation, education, labour market position and income on the one hand and, and the results in a particular domain on the other. The Life Situation Index is discussed in chapter 13 and provides a means of exploring the correlations more systematically.

As may be deduced from the above, the SSN concentrates on the life situation of the individual citizen. Little attention is devoted in this report to the collectivity of Dutch society and its institutional characteristics. These are reported on in the *Social and Cultural Report (SCR)*.

### *Choice of indicators*

Although this causal model provides a certain frame of reference for ordering and selecting from the numerous possible topics, it does not help greatly in the practical choice of aspects/sub-aspects and associated indicators – i.e. the composition of data – that best represent the situation in a particular field. In this regard empirical research, drawing as it does on public opinion concerning what is important for the standard of living and welfare of citizens, provides a guide for determining what is

usable and for making a selection. SCP has a solid tradition in reporting on social trends and life situation. The choice of concrete indicators for the SSN is accordingly based to a significant extent on previously conducted empirical research.

In addition, prevailing political and policy considerations have played a role in the selection. These must be discounted in the system of indicators if the SSN is to fulfil an identifying and policy-evaluating function. The important political subjects can be derived from the Government Coalition Agreements and Programmes in the previous years and from the agreements reached on social policy in the context of the Maastricht and Amsterdam Treaties. The EU and the member states have undertaken to promote employment, to improve working and living conditions, to provide social security, to develop human capital and to combat social exclusion. Following the decision taken at the EU Summit on employment in November 1997, Eurostat has developed a set of indicators in collaboration with the statistics offices of the European countries in order to monitor developments in these fields. The fields in question and the indicators that have been developed were where possible taken into consideration when deciding on the arrangement of the SSN (Eurostat).

Finally, a number of practical considerations played a role in the determination of the domains, aspects and indicators. Needless to say, the availability of relevant research data is of decisive importance. In particular there is a need for databases containing information on a large number of life situation aspects. For the SSN, SCP is able to draw on the results of a number of large longitudinal surveys, such as the Periodic Life Situation Survey (POLS) by Statistics Netherlands (CBS), the Housing Survey carried out jointly by Statistics Netherlands and the Dutch Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (VROM), SCP's Amenities and Services Utilisation Survey (AVO) and SCP's Cultural Changes survey (CV). In addition, data have been drawn from numerous other CBS statistics.

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