



COGIS-NL



Universiteit Utrecht Radboud Universiteit



UNIVERSITEIT VAN AMSTERDAM

COGIS-NL

COVID Gender (In)equality Survey Netherlands

Third policy brief

Results from November 2020

Overview

We have been studying the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the differences in work, care and well-being between mothers and fathers in the Netherlands since April 2020. Our third COGIS-NL policy brief (COVID Gender (In) equality Survey Netherlands) provides insights into how Dutch parents fared in November 2020 compared to the situation before the COVID-19 pandemic. Where possible, we compare the situation in November 2020 with our earlier studies in the same year, in April, June and September. In November, Dutch citizens were in a semi-lockdown (see Timeline, p.11), with the expectation they would still work from home as much as possible. We also compare the experiences of parents to the experiences of people without children under the age of 18 at home. When we refer to “parents” (and “mothers” and “fathers”), we are referring to people with children under the age of 18 at home. We refer to the other group when people do not have children under the age of 18.

Key findings November 2020:

- The percentage of parents working from home continues to fluctuate: from 44% in June, to 35% in September, and to 40% in November.
- Parents' working hours returned to pre-COVID levels in November. The exception? Parents in essential occupations continued to work longer hours than prior to the pandemic.
- Perceived work pressure of many parents remains higher than prior to the pandemic, particularly among mothers (42%) and parents in essential occupations (47%). Nearly one in three fathers (31%) and parents in non-essential occupations experienced more work pressure in November than prior to the pandemic.
- The proportion of fathers who have started taking on more care tasks compared to before the pandemic is declining: from 31% in June to 23% in September, and 18% in November.
- Parents remain satisfied with the division of care tasks, giving an average score of 7.4 on a scale from 1 (low) to 10 (high). Mothers and fathers did not differ. Fathers (7.5) were more satisfied than mothers (6.9) with the division of household tasks.
- On the eve of the second lockdown, parents were just as positive about combining work and care as they were before the pandemic. 58% said it was easy to combine work and care.
- The work-care situation has improved slightly for employees without children. In June 20% said they had difficulty combining work and care with care and support for those around them. In November this 15% (compared to 10% before the pandemic).

The impact of the COVID pandemic on where we work

The percentage of parents working from home during the pandemic varies. At the start of the pandemic, the proportion of parents who worked from home rose sharply, from 5% before the pandemic to 54% in April. After the first lockdown, working from home decreased, also among parents. In June, 44% of parents who worked (partly) from home; in September this was 35%. In November, the percentage of parents working from home increased marginally: 40% of parents said they worked from home one or more days a week. Almost a quarter (22%) worked entirely from home. This differed from September when 15% of parents fully worked from home. Following a significant decline in working from home among parents between April and September, we see that in November, more parents heeded the call to work from home as much as possible.



Essential occupation? Home less often

Parents with primary school children (vs. parents with older or younger children) were more likely to work from home than outside the home in November.

Also, parents in households with more children were more likely to work outside the home. Mothers indicated more often than fathers that they worked at workplaces outside the home because their work couldn't be done at home (52% vs. 39%). In comparison to mothers, fathers more often worked entirely from home (26% versus 18%) or partly from home (14% vs. 10% of mothers). Fathers more often worked on location while they could work from home (14% vs. 10% of mothers). The fact that fathers worked from home more than mothers can partly be explained by the fact that mothers more often worked in essential occupations. Parents in non-essential occupations most often worked from home: 52% of parents in non-essential occupations worked fully or partly from home, compared to 27% of parents in essential occupations. Mothers and fathers in essential occupations were equally likely to work outside the home.

Large educational differences in working from home

From April onwards, highly educated parents have been much more likely to work from home than parents with a lower vocational education or less. More than half of parents with higher vocational education and university degrees worked from home in November (55%). Two out of three parents with a lower vocational degree or less worked at workplaces outside the home. They worked outside the home because their work could not be done at home. This applied to only 30% of the parents with a college or university degree. Highly educated parents were more likely to go to their normal workplace if they could do their work from home (14% compared to 8% of the parents with lower vocational degree and 9% of parents with a high school diploma or less).

Who decides where we work?

The percentage of parents who said they were not allowed to decide where they worked increased slightly from 61% in June to 64% in November. Parents and people without children at home did not differ in their work location. People without children did, however, indicate more often that they were allowed to choose where they worked. In particular, parents in essential occupations said they had no choice in where they worked (72%). Fathers reported more often than mothers that they could choose where to work (37% vs. 27%).

Working hours back to pre-pandemic levels

In the first months of the pandemic, many parents in non-essential occupations worked fewer hours. Since then, parents have returned to their normal working hours or have worked more. In November, 64% of parents worked the same number of hours as prior to the pandemic. Eight percent worked fewer hours than before the pandemic; 28% worked more. More people worked 40 hours or more per week in November compared to the period before the pandemic.

Parents in essential occupations work more

Parents in essential occupations remained the exception. Parents in essential occupations were twice as likely to work more hours in November than prior to the pandemic than parents in non-essential occupations. Were there no children under the age of 18 at home? Then people were more likely to work more hours than parents. But parents and people without children under 18 at home did not differ in the likelihood that they worked fewer hours in November.



No difference in job performance between mothers and fathers

While we are unable to study the direct impact of the pandemic on job performance due to data limitations, we can say something about people's job performance in June. With job performance, we mean things like taking on new, extra, or challenging tasks at work, maintaining professional knowledge or skills, seeking creative solutions in your work, and actively participating in work meetings. Together, [these eight activities](#) give us an idea of additional job tasks undertaken in June. Surprisingly, we found no differences between mothers and fathers in the additional job tasks they took on in November. We did find differences between people with and without children under 18 at home. Parents reported more additional job tasks in November than people without children under 18 at home. We also saw that people who worked more from home more often performed extra job tasks compare to people working at their regular workplace.

Who determines when parents work?

In November, 39% of parents said their working hours were entirely determined by their employer. Almost one in ten parents (9%) said they could choose from a range of schedules. In contrast, 35% of parents were able to determine their hours themselves within certain limits. Almost one in five (17%) of parents could determine their hours entirely by themselves.

Higher-educated workers more autonomy in working time

Mothers and fathers differed little in the autonomy they experienced in determining their working hours. However, we did find a difference between higher and lower educated parents. 63% of parents with a high school diploma or less said their work schedule was entirely determined by their employer. In contrast, two out of three parents with a college or university degree said that they could usually (45%) or completely (20%) determine their working times themselves. People in essential occupations were less likely to set their working time themselves (42%) compared to people in non-essential occupations (63%). People who worked from home also had much more freedom to determine when they worked, either entirely themselves or within certain limits, compared to people who worked on location.

More or less autonomy to determine when we work since the pandemic?

Some parents experienced an increase in working time autonomy during the pandemic, whereas others experienced a decrease, as shown in the table below. Numbers in green represent an increase in working time autonomy compared to before the pandemic; the red numbers show a decrease in autonomy. If nothing changed, the numbers are shown in black. For example, 84% of the parents whose employer fully set their work schedules in November said this was also the case before the pandemic. The rest of them had less freedom to determine their work schedules in November compared to before the pandemic.

November					
		Employer determines (39%)	Can choose between shifts (35%)	Self-determined within limits (9%)	Fully self-determined (17%)
Prior to the pandemic	Employer determined	84%	26%	12%	7%
	Could choose between shifts	5%	36%	4%	1%
	Self-determined within limits	10%	33%	74%	35%
	Fully self-determined	2%	5%	10%	57%
	Total	100% ^a	100%	100%	100%

^a This does not total to 100% due to rounding.

For 36% of the parents who could only choose between schedules in November, this was the same situation as before the pandemic. For a quarter (26%) of this group, choosing between work schedules meant an increase in working time autonomy. For 38% of them, it meant a decrease in autonomy compared to the situation before the pandemic. For the parents with the autonomy to determine their work schedules within certain limits prior to the pandemic, this remained unchanged for the vast majority of them (74%). 16% of this group experienced more working time autonomy in November and 1 in 10 experienced less working time autonomy compared to the situation before the pandemic. More than half (57%) of parents who could fully determine their work schedules in November already had this autonomy prior to the pandemic. 43% of the parents in this group experienced an increase in working time autonomy compared to the situation before corona.

Parents continue to experience work pressure

Despite a semi-lockdown put in place on October 14th, primary schools and day care centres remained open in November. What did this mean for parents perceived work pressure? In November, 37% of parents experienced more work pressure than prior to the pandemic. This percentage has been fairly stable since our first measurement during the first lockdown in April. At that time, 35% of parents experienced more work pressure than before the pandemic.



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Mothers continue to experience more work pressure than fathers

Mothers' perceived work pressure remains higher than for fathers, a picture that has been stable throughout the pandemic. 42% of mothers experienced more work pressure in November than prior to the pandemic. In April and June this was around 40%. Perceived work pressure among fathers is less stable. During the first lockdown in April, 31% of fathers reported feeling more work pressure than before the pandemic. This percentage decreased in June (26%) and September (27%), but increased again in November (to 31%).

Difference in perceived work pressure

Not all parents experienced work pressure: 15% of parents experienced no work pressure in November and didn't experience this before the crisis either; this percentage was around 18% in April, June and September. In addition, we found clear differences in perceived work pressure between parents with and without essential occupations. Nearly half (47%) of parents with an essential occupation experienced more work pressure in November than before the pandemic compared to 28% of parents in non-essential occupations. We found no differences in perceived work pressure between men and women or between essential and non-essential workers among people without children under the age of 18 at home.

Support from supervisors and colleagues

In November, 69% of parents said they felt supported by their supervisor. In addition, 79% felt supported by their colleagues. With this, parents said they feel a little more supported than in June. However, this support did not reduce the workload in November. That was not the case in June either.

Greater role for fathers in childcare declines

Child care remains unevenly distributed among Dutch parents: mothers still do more than fathers. Yet a growing proportion of fathers appeared to take on a greater role in during the pandemic. During the lockdown in April, 22% of fathers reported doing more care tasks compared to the situation before the pandemic. In June, this percentage rose to 31%. Did this increase continue? No. Since June, the proportion of fathers who said they have become more involved in childcare since the pandemic has declined. In September, the percentage declined to April levels (23%). In November the percentage fell further to 18%. Some mothers have also started to take on more care tasks than prior to the pandemic. This percentage has been increasing since April (from 12%) and has been stable since June, at around 20%. While the proportion of fathers who started caring more initially was greater than that of mothers, we no longer see that difference in November.

Division of care tasks returns to pre-pandemic level

The distribution of care for children became slightly less unequal between mothers and fathers during the pandemic. Before and during the first lockdown in April, about a third of parents said the distribution was (almost) equal. In June and September this group was slightly larger (around 40%). In November, the percentage of parents who said they shared the care equally fell to 33%. In families where care is not evenly distributed (67%), it is still mainly mothers who care more than fathers.

Mothers spend more extra time on care

Regardless of the division of care responsibilities, about one third (32%) of parents cared for children more hours per week in November than before the pandemic. That is a clearly smaller group than in June (53%). We found no differences between mothers and fathers. When parents spent more time caring for children, on average, they spent an additional 9.1 hours per week on care. Only a small group of parents spent less time caring for children than before the pandemic (4%), averaging 7.6 hours less per week, with no difference between mothers and fathers.

Are parents satisfied with the division of care?

In November, as in June, parents were reasonably satisfied with the division of care responsibilities. On a scale from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest), parents gave the current distribution of care tasks an average score of 7.4. This is higher than in June, when the score of 7.2 was the same as before the pandemic. Fathers were slightly more satisfied than mothers in June (7.4 compared to 7.1), but in November this was no longer the case.



Other caregivers

In many families, children are sometimes cared for by others, especially grandparents. Before the pandemic, this happened in a quarter (25%) of households. During the first lockdown and afterwards, many alternative caregivers weren't available (for example, because of concerns for coronavirus infection). In November we saw that the proportion of parents who relied on grandparent care was still lower than before the pandemic, namely 20%. For households reliant on formal childcare (just over 12%) and / or out-of-school care (about 16%), we found no differences in the use of these care forms between November and the period before the pandemic.

Division of household tasks relatively stable and unequal

Similar to the division of childcare, housework is not equally shared between parents. Almost two in three parents (66%) said housework was unevenly distributed in November. In these families, mothers were much more likely to report doing more than fathers. This means the proportion of households in which housework was equally divided remained reasonably stable during the pandemic. In April, we saw a slight increase in the equal division of household tasks compared to before the pandemic (36% versus 32%). In June, this percentage fell to 31%. In September and November, the percentage of households with an equal distribution of household tasks increased slightly to 34%.

Fluctuations in who does more

Throughout the pandemic, we're seeing fluctuations in the share of parents who started doing more housework than prior to the pandemic. In November, 13% of parents said they did more housework than before the pandemic (compared to 17% in April). The temporary increase in the share of parents who said they started doing more in June (22%) has therefore gone back down. Did fathers mostly start doing more in the household? In April, yes. At that time, fathers more often reported they had started doing more housework than before the pandemic (17% of fathers vs. 7% of mothers). Since then, we no longer see this difference. In November, just as in June, parents with more children said they more often do more housework than before the pandemic. Parents with school-aged children, on the other hand, were less likely to say they had started doing more housework.



Satisfaction with the division of housework?

Despite the unequal division of housework between fathers and mothers, parents remain reasonably satisfied. On a scale from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest), fathers gave the division of housework an average score of 7.5. They clearly scored higher than mothers, who gave the division a 6.9. Parents are therefore slightly more positive in November than they were in June (fathers 7.3, mothers 6.8). This level of satisfaction was comparable to that before the pandemic.

Mothers spend more time on extra housework than fathers

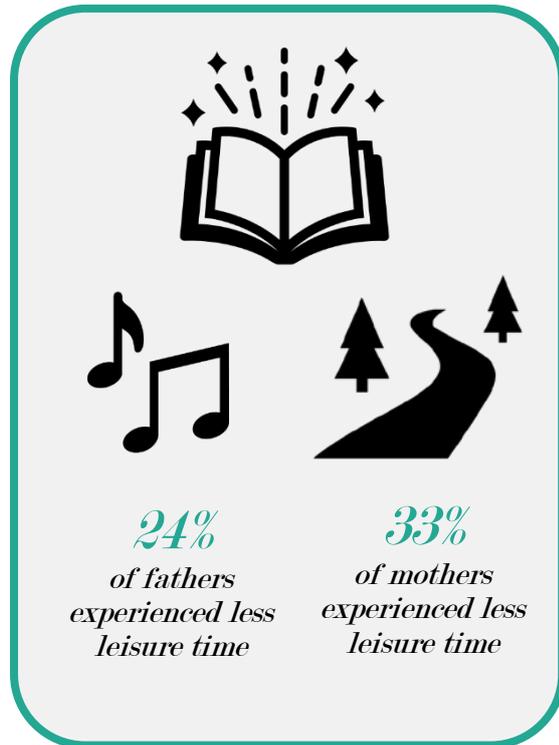
As in June, we still see that regardless of the division of housework, about one third (34%) of parents spent more hours on housework than before the pandemic. Mothers and fathers didn't differ in this regard. In November, fathers and mothers also didn't differ in the number of additional hours they spent on housework (6.2 per week). This differs from June, when mothers were clearly doing more additional hours of housework than fathers (11.3 versus 7.5 hours). There is also a small group of parents (6.5%) who spent fewer hours per week on the household compared to before the pandemic (this was 11% in June). Again, mothers and fathers didn't differ in this regard. They also did not differ in the fewer hours they spent on housework in that case (about 7 hours less; in June this was almost 8 hours).

Equality more likely with no kids at home

Were there no kids under 18 at home? In these households, we found a slightly more equal division of housework than in households with children under 18 at home in November (38% versus 32%). This share has hardly changed during the pandemic.

Mothers have less leisure time during the pandemic

Our previous measurements in April and June showed that parents' free time decreased during the pandemic, especially among mothers. There appeared to be a slight improvement in November. In June, 50% of mothers reported they had less free time compared to before the pandemic, in November this fell to 33%. The situation also improved for fathers: 31% said they had less free time in June compared to 24% in November. Thus, for both mothers and fathers, there is an improvement in the amount of free time between April and November. But the decrease in free time compared to the period before the pandemic remains considerable.



Less leisure time for parents in essential occupations

Parents with an essential occupation were much more likely (36%) to say they had less free time in November than before the pandemic compared to parents in non-essential occupations (26%). For people without children under the age of 18 at home, this difference was much smaller: 16% of this group in non-essential occupations reported less leisure time, versus 19% of this group with an essential occupation. The fact that people in essential occupations without children had less leisure time can be explained by the fact that they more often worked outside the home.

This is different for parents. The difference between parents with and without an essential occupation is only partly explained by the fact that they more often work outside the home. A more important explanation for their decrease in leisure time is the number of children living at home.



The relationship with our partner

The pandemic also affects the relationship with our partner. Before the pandemic, 20% of parents said they had arguments about their own working hours, 15% about the working hours of their partner and 30% about caring for the children. In November, 19% of parents said they argued more about caring for the children than before the pandemic (compared to 21% in April and 24% in June).

How satisfied are we with our relationship?

Prior to the pandemic and in November, parents rated the satisfaction with their relationship at 7.5 on a scale from 1 (low) to 10 (high).

Disagreement about working hours

What else was argued about? 17% of parents said they argued more often about their own working hours in November than before the pandemic, which is the same as in June. 11% said they argued less often about their own working hours in November than before the pandemic. This is a significant decrease compared to June, when 22% of parents said they argued less about their own working hours. We see a similar picture in disagreements about the partner's working hours. 13% of parents argued more often about the partner's working hours in June and November than before the pandemic. Only 9% of parents said they had fewer arguments about this topic, compared to 22% in June. For a larger proportion of parents (72%), the extent of disagreement was the same as before the pandemic.

Did parents have fewer or more arguments in November compared to before the pandemic?

Fewer arguments: More arguments:

11% of parents had fewer arguments about their work hours in November

17% of parents had more arguments about their work hours in November

9% of parents had fewer arguments about their partner's work hours in November

13% of parents had fewer arguments about their partner's work hours in November

6% of parents had fewer arguments about childcare in November

19% of parents had more arguments about childcare in November

Differences between parents?

Fathers and mothers reported an equal amount of disagreements with their partners in all areas. Parents didn't differ from people without children under the age of 18 at home in how often they argued in November. In other words, the pandemic is moderately affecting the relationship with our partner, whether children live at home or not. We did find differences based on children's stage of schooling. Parents with secondary school children experienced a smaller decrease in arguments than parents with primary school children between November and before the pandemic.

More disagreements without kids or essential occupations?

In households with no children under 18 at home, we saw a clear difference in the amount of arguments between people who worked in essential occupations and those who didn't. People from this group with an essential occupation were much less likely (8%) to argue more about their own working hours than people from this group without an essential occupation (19%). Did their partner work in an essential occupation? Then people from this group reported more arguments about their own working hours (22%) than if the partner did not have an essential occupation (9%).

Work and care during the pandemic: easy or difficult?

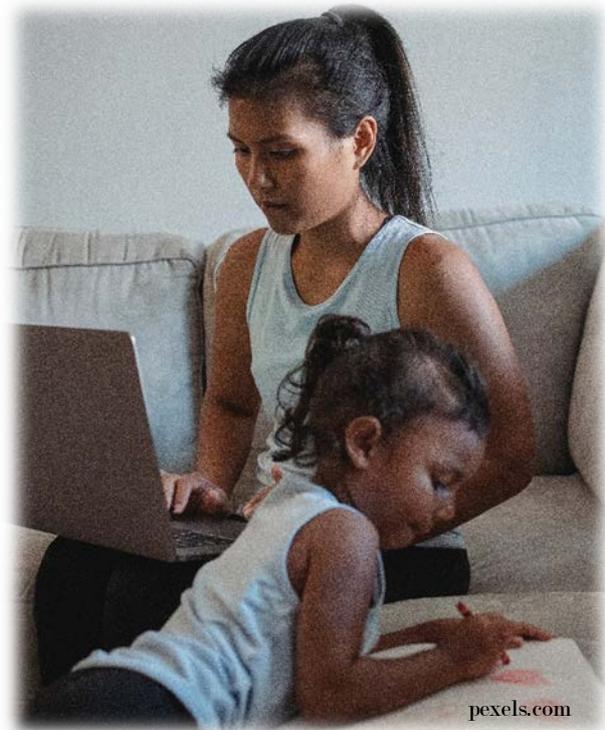
In November, just before the Netherlands entered into the strictest lockdown to date, parents were just as positive about combining work and care as they were before the pandemic. In November, more than half (58%) of parents said combining work and care was easy, compared to 54% before the pandemic. In June, 19% of parents found it difficult to combine work and care, this had dropped to 10% by November. Prior to the pandemic this percentage was 11%. Parents seemed to have an easier time combining work and care in November than before the pandemic.

Was it more difficult for mothers or fathers?

Yes. Mothers reported more difficulty combining work and care than fathers. Compare to parents who thought it was neither easy nor difficult to combine work and care, more mothers (10%) than fathers (4%) said it was (very) difficult to combine work and care in November.

Difficult with young kids?

Contrary to our earlier findings from April and June, parents with young children found it no more difficult than parents with older children to combine work and care. It also didn't matter whether children were in primary or secondary school.



Use of services

Some parents can make use of household services to ease the load of household tasks. This includes things like domestic help or grocery delivery services. We saw that the proportion of households that had a domestic help was slightly lower in November than before the pandemic (20% versus 16%). We also saw a small increase in the use of grocery delivery services (23% in November, 19% before the pandemic) as well as a slight increase in delivery services for meals (28% in November, 24% before the pandemic).

No kids at home?

In November, combining work with care and support for those around them was more difficult for people without children under the age of 18 at home than for parents with young children. Before the pandemic, 10% of this group said it was difficult to combine work with care and support for those around them (versus 8% of the parents). In November, 15% of this group said combining work and care was difficult. This is an improvement compared to June, when 21% of this group said it was difficult to combine work with care and support for those around them.

About our study

The interdisciplinary Covid19 Gender (In) equality Survey Netherlands (COGIS-NL) study began in April 2020 and examines differences in work, care and well-being between men and women in households with at least one child under 18 living at home and at least one working parent. Since June 2020, we also examine differences between men and women in families without children under the age of 18 living at home.

Our previously published policy briefs for [April](#) (wave 1, in Dutch), and [June/July](#) (wave 2) are now accompanied by this report from November. This wave includes data from 1097 respondents in 901 households. Statistics reported for previous waves can differ slightly from earlier reports. All surveys are administered by CentERdata, located at Tilburg University, the Netherlands, using their LISS panel (Longitudinal Internet Studies for the Social Sciences, <https://www.lissdata.nl>). The LISS panel is a representative, online survey panel based on a true probability sample drawn by the Dutch National Statistics Office (CBS) from Dutch population registers. Our study was made possible by a grant from [ODISSEI](#) and the Faculty of Social Sciences at Utrecht University.

Timeline of the COGIS-NL study and lockdown measures in the Netherlands



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