



## COGIS-NL COVID Gender (In)equality Survey Netherlands

### Second *policy brief* Results from June

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#### Overview

We have been studying the impact of the corona crisis on the differences in work, care and well-being between mothers and fathers in the Netherlands since April 2020. Here we present the most recent results from our COVID Gender (In) equality Survey Netherlands (COGIS-NL). These results concern the situation as it was in the Netherlands in June 2020. In June, Dutch citizens were expected to work from home as much as possible, but primary and secondary schools were (partially) reopened, and some social activities became possible again (see Timeline, p.10). How did parents fare during this period?

Where possible, we compare the situation in June with the situation before the COVID-19 pandemic. We also look at possible differences between June and the first national lockdown in April. Since June, we are now also able to compare how the experiences of parents with children under the age of 18 at home differ from the experiences of parents with older children and people without children. When we refer to “parents” (and “mothers” and “fathers”) below, 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 at home.

#### Key findings June 2020:

- 44% of parents worked from home in June, a decline from 54% in April.
- Mothers' perceived work pressure remains high: 40% of mothers experienced more work pressure in June than before the pandemic. Perceived work pressure was lower for fathers: 26%.
- The percentage of fathers who took on a greater share of childcare tasks than before the pandemic continued to increase: 31% in June compared to 22% in April.
- Dutch parents are quite satisfied with the division of household and care tasks. They give an average score of 7.3 (household tasks) and 7.2 (care tasks) on a scale from 1 (low) to 10 (high).
- Dutch parents found it slightly less difficult to combine work and care in June (19%) than in April (29%). This is still higher than before the pandemic (11%).
- Employees without children under 18 at home were twice as likely in June to have difficulty combining work with care and support for those around them than before the pandemic (21% in June compared to 10% pre-pandemic).

## The COVID-19 pandemic and the work location of Dutch parents

The pandemic drastically changed where we work. In April, 54% of Dutch parents worked from home, much more than prior to the pandemic (5%). With the partial relaxation of lockdown measures in June, many parents returned to workplaces outside the home. Less than half of Dutch parents worked from home in June (44%). Among which a relatively small percentage of parents (20%) worked fully from home, compared to 38% in April. At the same time, parents worked from home at least part of the time more often in June (16%) than in April (11%).

### Important differences in work location

- Parents with higher vocational education and university degrees worked from home the most in June (63%). Only 24% of parents with a lower vocational education and 20% of parents with a high school diploma or lower worked from home.
- Parents in essential occupations were much less likely to work from home in June. 57% of parents in non-essential occupations worked fully or partially from home, compared to 28% of parents in essential occupations.

### Changes in work location for everyone

Parents and workers without minor children in the home differ little in where they worked in June. Almost half of the people without children living at home (47%) worked from home in June: 14% of them worked partially from home and 25% worked completely from home. 8% already worked from home prior to the pandemic. Workers without children under 18 living at home were more likely to report working completely from home than parents (25% versus 19%).

### Decline in working from home not always a choice

In June, 61% of parents said they were not allowed to choose where they worked. Especially parents working in essential occupations reported having no say in where they work (70%).

Fathers reported more often than mothers that they could choose where to work (43% vs. 27%).



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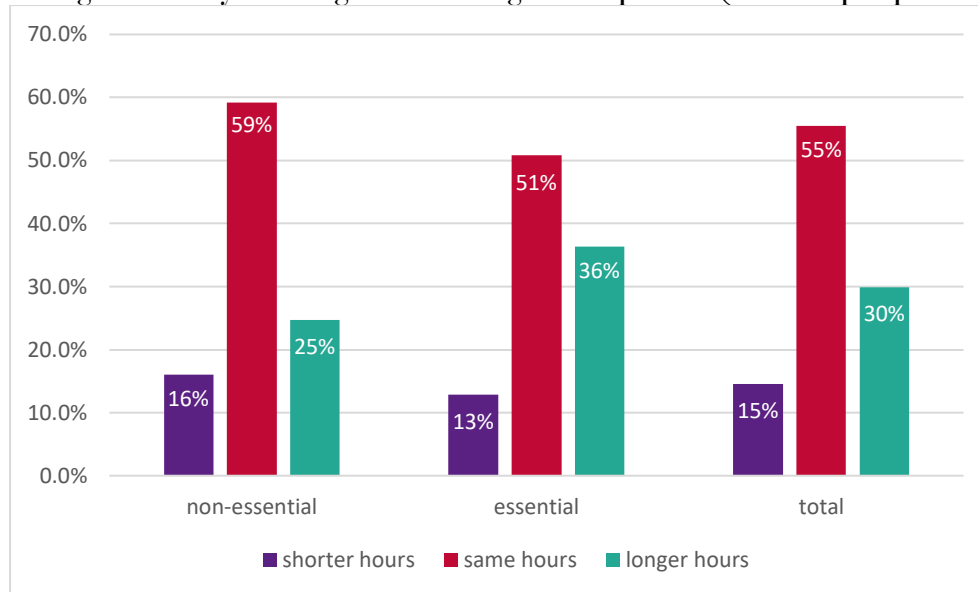
## Almost half of Dutch parents changed their work hours in June

The pandemic is also affecting how much Dutch parents work. In June, 45% of parents adjusted their working hours: 15% worked fewer hours than before the pandemic; 30% worked more. This change in work hours is the same for employees without children under 18 at home. In comparison to the period before the pandemic, parents in essential occupations more often worked longer hours than parents in non-essential occupations in June: 36% versus 25%.

## Mothers in essential occupations worked longer hours

Mothers who worked longer hours in June were more likely to have an essential occupation than mothers who did not change their working hours. This was not the case for women without children under 18 at home. Weekly work hours prior to the pandemic had no influence on the likelihood of working longer hours.

Change in weekly working hours among Dutch parents (June vs. pre-pandemic)



## Mothers experienced more work pressure than fathers

Primary schools and childcare centers partially reopened in May in the Netherlands, reopening fully in June. With the children back at school or daycare, many parents had - in theory - more time for work or other activities. What did this mean for parents' perceived work pressure?

### Support from managers and colleagues

In June, 65% of parents felt supported by their manager. In addition, 75% of parents felt supported by their colleagues. However, this support did not reduce the work pressure experienced by parents in June.



Despite the reopening of primary and secondary schools and childcare centers, one third of parents continued to experience more work pressure in June than prior to the pandemic. In particular, the situation improved for fathers, but not for mothers. 40% of mothers still experienced more work pressure in June than prior to COVID-19; in April this was 39%. The proportion of fathers who experienced greater work pressure decreased from 31% in April to 26% in June. Not all parents experienced work pressure: 17% of Dutch parents experienced no work pressure prior to the pandemic and reported no change to this situation in June. This was 18% in April.

### 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 June. We also found no differences between men and women without children under the age of 18 living at home



## Who is caring for the kids?

Care for children was and remains unevenly distributed within Dutch households. In June, mothers were still doing relatively more childcare tasks than fathers. But the distribution of care responsibilities in the Netherlands appears to be changing during the pandemic. In April, 22% of fathers reported taking on more care tasks for their children compared to before COVID-19. In June, this percentage increased to 31%. A smaller proportion of mothers (21%) also reported providing more care in June than prior to the pandemic. This was an increase from April, when the proportion of mothers who reported providing more care was 12%.

Not all parents reported doing more childcare relative to their partner; some parents have also started doing less. About one third (30%) of parents reported doing fewer childcare tasks in June than before the pandemic. Similar to the situation in April, we found no differences between mothers and fathers in who reported doing less childcare in June. However, the proportion of parents taking on fewer childcare tasks was slightly smaller in April.

## More equal division of care during pandemic

As a result, the division of care for children during the pandemic has become slightly less unequal in the Netherlands. Prior to and during the first lockdown in April, about one-third of Dutch parents indicated that the division of childcare was (nearly) equal. In June, 39% of parents reported that they shared childcare responsibilities equally. In the majority of families with unequal divisions of childcare (61%), the mother continues to do more childcare than the father.

## Mothers spend more time on extra care tasks

Regardless of the division of childcare responsibilities, about half (53%) of Dutch parents spent more hours each week caring for children in June than prior to the pandemic. Amongst parents who spent more time on childcare tasks, we see that mothers spent more time on this each week than fathers: 14.3 hours extra each week compared to 10.5 hours extra per week. Only a small group of parents spent less time caring for children than before the corona crisis (5%). Mothers and fathers did not differ in this regard.

## Who is doing the housework?

### What do parents think about the division of care?

Parents were reasonably satisfied with the division of care responsibilities in June. On a scale from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest), parents rated the current division of childcare responsibilities at 7.2. Parents were slightly less satisfied in June than prior to the pandemic, when the average score was 7.4. Fathers were slightly more satisfied with the division of childcare in June than mothers: 7.4 versus 7.1.



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Housework, like childcare, is not shared equally between Dutch parents. Nearly two-thirds (69%) of parents reported in June that the division of housework with their partner was not equal. In these families, mothers reported more often than fathers that they do more. The percentage of households where household tasks are evenly divided is fluctuating somewhat during the COVID-19 pandemic. In April, the division of household tasks had become slightly more equal than before the pandemic (36% versus 32%) but in June the percentage of households equally sharing household tasks returned to pre-pandemic levels (31%).

### Some parents do more

We see that in June, one-fifth (22%) of Dutch parents reported doing more housework than prior to the pandemic. This was a slight increase from April (then 17%). In April, more fathers than mothers reported doing more housework than prior to the pandemic (17% of fathers versus 7% of mothers). This difference was no longer visible in June. Parents with multiple children living at home or those whose partner works outside the home more often reported doing more household tasks than prior to the pandemic.



### Some parents do less

Not all parents were doing more housework in June: more than a quarter of Dutch parents (28%) reported doing less in the household than before the pandemic. This is a larger group of parents than in April (13%). Mothers and fathers did not differ here. Parents working in essential occupations were more likely to report doing less than parents in non-essential occupations.

### How satisfied are we with the division of housework?

While the division of household tasks has changed slightly within Dutch households, the division of tasks between fathers and mothers remained uneven. Yet we find that Dutch parents are relatively satisfied with the division of household work. On a scale of 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest), fathers rated the current division of housework at 7.3. This is a higher score than mothers, who rate the division at 6.8. Satisfaction among parents in June decreased slightly in comparison to the situation before the pandemic. Pre-pandemic scores were 6.9 for mothers and 7.4 for fathers.

### Mothers spend more time on extra household tasks

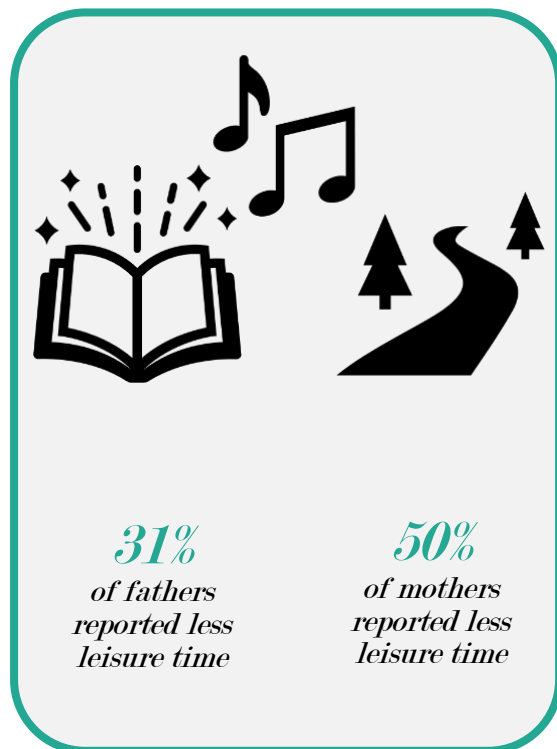
Regardless of the division of household labor, 38% of Dutch parents spent more hours each week doing household tasks in June than prior to the pandemic. Amongst the parents who spent more time on household tasks, we again see that mothers spent more time on this each week than fathers: 11.3 hours versus 7.5 hours. There is also a small group of parents (11%) who are spending less time each week on household tasks in June than before the pandemic. Fathers and mothers do not differ in this regard. They both report spending almost 8 hours less each week on household tasks in June.

### More often equality without children at home

In households without children under 18 at home, the division of household tasks was slightly more equal than in households with children under 18 at home (40% versus 31%). This proportion has not changed during the pandemic.

## Mothers have less leisure time due to COVID-19

Leisure time is very important for our physical and mental health. Without sufficient time to relax and recover after work, we can eventually experience health problems, such as burnout. Parents' leisure time has decreased drastically during the pandemic, particularly among mothers. Half (50%) of mothers reported having less leisure time in June than prior to the pandemic; this was true for 31% of fathers. In April, 57% of mothers and 36% of fathers reported a decrease in leisure time. There has thus been an equal amount of improvement for both groups in the amount of leisure time between April and June. But the overall decrease in leisure time remains substantial.



## Less leisure time for essential workers

Parents in essential occupations clearly had less leisure time than parents working in non-essential occupations. Half (49%) of parents in essential occupations said they had less leisure time in June, compared to 36% of parents in non-essential occupations. The decrease in leisure time was also related to the age of the children and whether or not parents work from home. The decrease in leisure time was more common among parents with a younger child and among parents who did not work from home compared to parents with an older child and who worked (partly) from home.

The decrease in leisure time was primarily reported by parents with children under 18 at home. However, people without children also reported having less leisure time in June than prior to the pandemic (22% of men and 18% of women). For these respondents, being an essential worker and working outside the home also meant having less leisure time.



## Relationships with our partner

The pandemic is also affecting the relationship with our partner. When we asked parents in June about how often they argued before and during the pandemic, parents reported that prior to the pandemic, they had arguments at least once a month with their partner about their own working hours (20%), their partner's working hours (15%) and childcare (30%). Childcare remains a prickly issue for Dutch parents. In June, 24% of parents reported they argued more about childcare in June than prior to the pandemic. This was a further increase from April, when 21% of parents reported having more disagreements about childcare than prior to the pandemic. It appears the re-opening of schools and daycare centers did not reduce the frequency of disagreements about childcare among Dutch parents.

### How satisfied are we with our relationship during COVID?

Relationship satisfaction is relatively high among Dutch parents. When asked how satisfied they were with their partner on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest) parents had an average score of 7.5 both prior to the pandemic and in June.

## Disagreements about work hours

Childcare is not the only prickly issue for parents: 17% reported arguing more often about their own working hours in June than prior to the pandemic. A further 22% of parents said they argued less about this topic. We see a similar picture related to arguments about the partner's working hours. 13% of parents said they argued more often about the partner's working hours in June than before the pandemic. 22% of parents said they argued less about this topic.

## Equal reports of arguments

Parental reports of the frequency of arguments did not differ between mothers and fathers. This was true across all areas, including their own and their partner's working hours, as well as childcare. Moreover, parents did not differ from respondents without children under the age of 18 at home in how often they reported arguing. In other words, the pandemic is equally affecting the relationships with our partner, for mothers and fathers, and for those with and without children under 18 at home.

### Weekly arguments? pre-pandemic: in June 2020:

4% of Dutch parents reported having weekly arguments about their working hours

17% of Dutch parents reported having weekly arguments about their working hours

3% of Dutch parents reported having weekly arguments about their partner's working hours

13% of Dutch parents reported having weekly arguments about their partner's working hours

9% of Dutch parents reported having weekly arguments about childcare

25% of Dutch parents reported having weekly arguments about childcare



## Work and care during the pandemic

In June, nearly half (48%) of Dutch parents said combining work and care was easy, compared to 54% before the pandemic. Only 11% said combining work and care was difficult before the pandemic. In June, 19% of the parents found it difficult to combine work and care. While still higher than pre-pandemic levels, this percentage is lower than in April, when 29% of the parents reported having difficulty reconciling work and care. This decline is likely related to the re-opening of schools in June. In contrast to April, we also found that the percentage of parents who found it easy to combine work and care differed slightly among fathers and mothers. Just over half of Dutch fathers (52%) said combining work and care was easy in June compared to 45% of mothers.



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## Does children's age matter?

The younger the youngest child in the household, the more difficulty parents had combining work and care in June. At the same time, parents with children in both primary and secondary school had more difficulty combining work and care than parents with children only in primary school. This differs from our finding in April, when parents with children solely in primary school had the greatest difficulty combining work and care. This difference may be due to the fact that primary schools fully reopened in June, while secondary schools did not fully reopen until after the summer holidays.

## No kids, no worries?

The pandemic is also making it more difficult for people without children under the age of 18 at home to combine work and care. Only 10% of this group found it difficult to combine work with care and support for those around them prior to the pandemic. In June, this percentage had doubled to 21%.

## Stressed parents despite the reopening of schools and day care

Although Dutch primary schools and day care centers reopened partially in May and fully reopened in June, children could be refused entry if they had a cold or symptoms associated with a cold. This led to a fair amount of stress for parents with children under 18 at home. Roughly one-fourth of parents (22%) reported worrying about their children having to stay at home. Mothers and fathers were equally concerned.

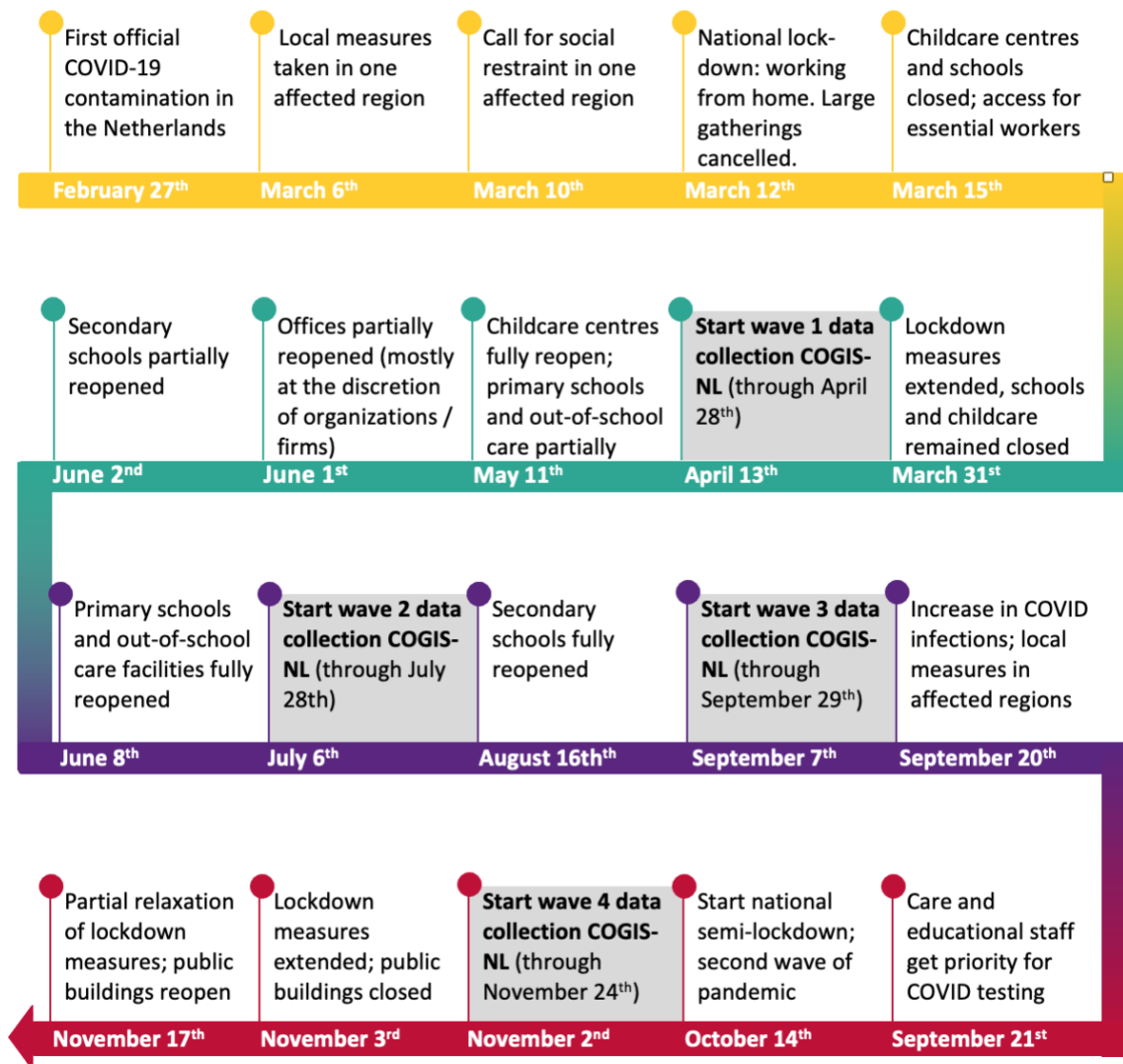


## About our study

The Covid19 Gender (In) equality Survey Netherlands (COGIS-NL) study began in April 2020 (wave 1) 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.

In July (wave 2, reporting on the situation in June), a total of 1229 respondents in 1013 households participated. 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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