



Utrecht University

School of Economics



# Experiences with part-time work in the Netherlands

40 years 40-hour-week in Austria. And now?

Vienna, 21 oktober 2015



## The Dutch part-time model

Since the 1980's the Netherlands have witnessed a strong increase in the participation rate of women, especially mothers.

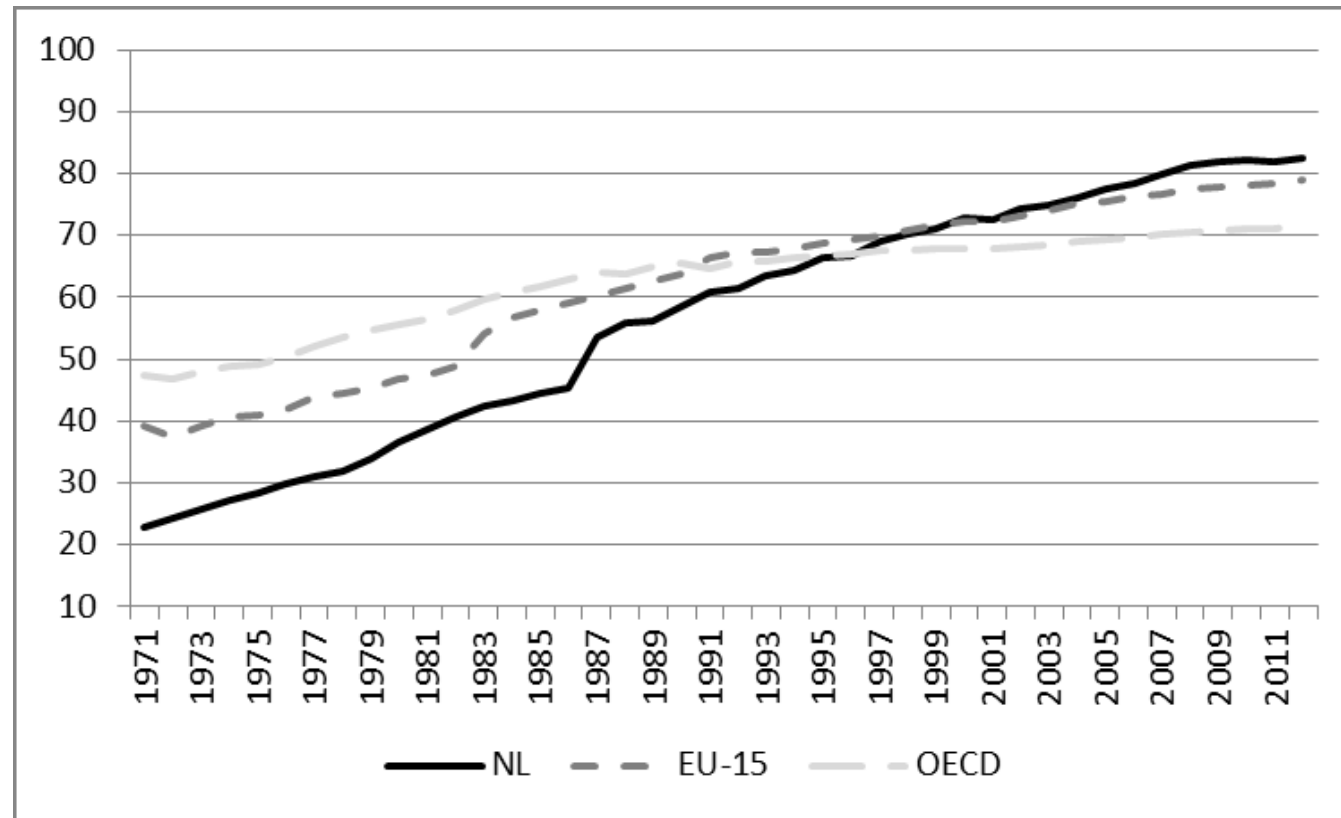
Not unique - yet the scale of the developments makes the Dutch case rather exceptional.

In addition we see the 'irrepressible' rise of married women working part-time

→ Indeed, to quote from Freeman's famous article on the 'War of the Models', the Netherlands is "*the only part-time economy in the world (...)*,



## Female labour force participation





## The Dutch part-time model

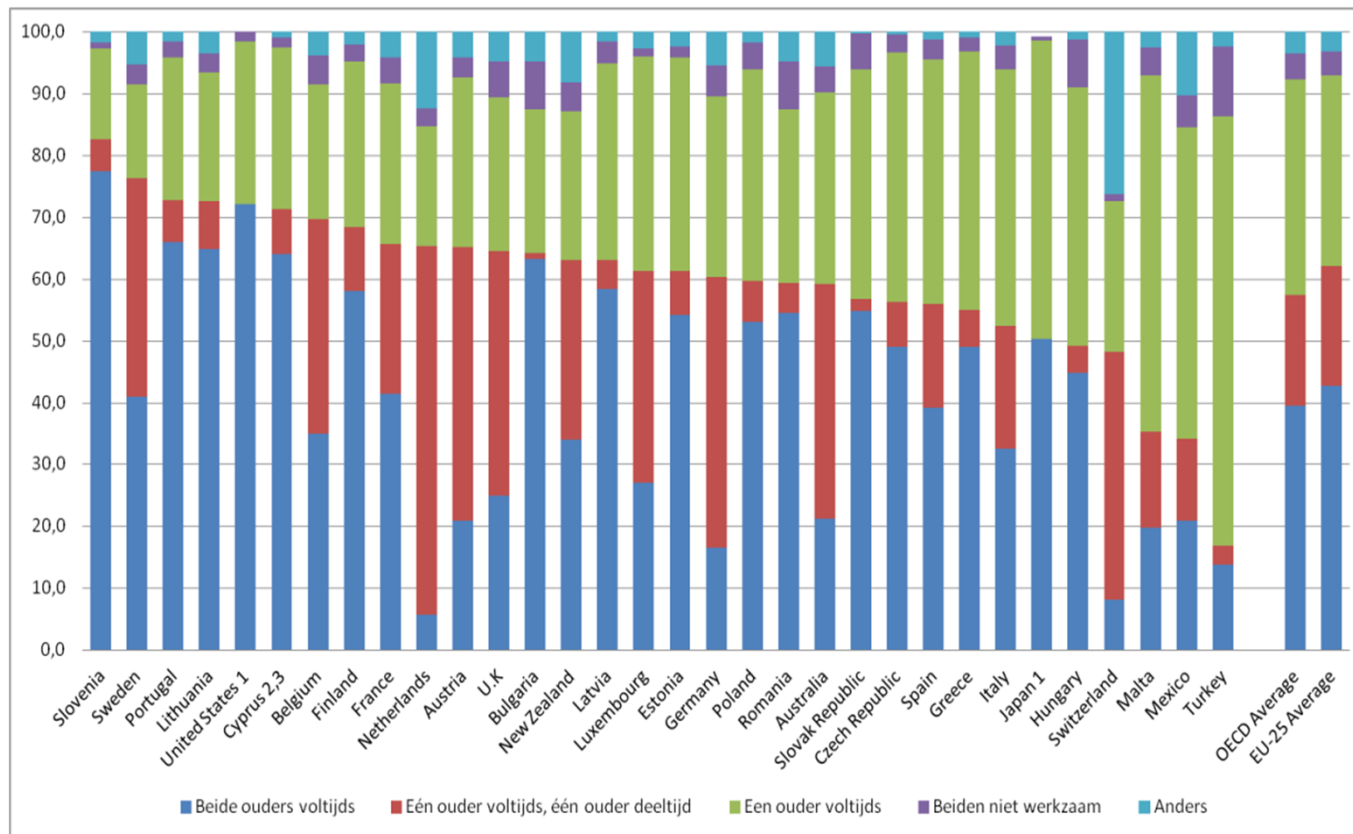
What's so positive about part-time working hours:

- Central government is in favour of part-time working hours given the potential to redistribute work;
- Employers are in favour of part-time working hours given the flexibility it offer to match supply and demand;
- Employees are in favour of part-time working hours, given the opportunities to combine paid and unpaid work.

→ Within three decades Netherlands developed from a rather traditional breadwinner model towards a one-and-half working time model, with an above average female participation rate.



## The Dutch part-time model



Nb: for the Netherlands fulltime work is defined as >35 hours



## The Dutch part-time model

### Institutional setting:

In 1993 the hour thresholds were removed from the entitlement to minimum wage and most of the social security legislation.

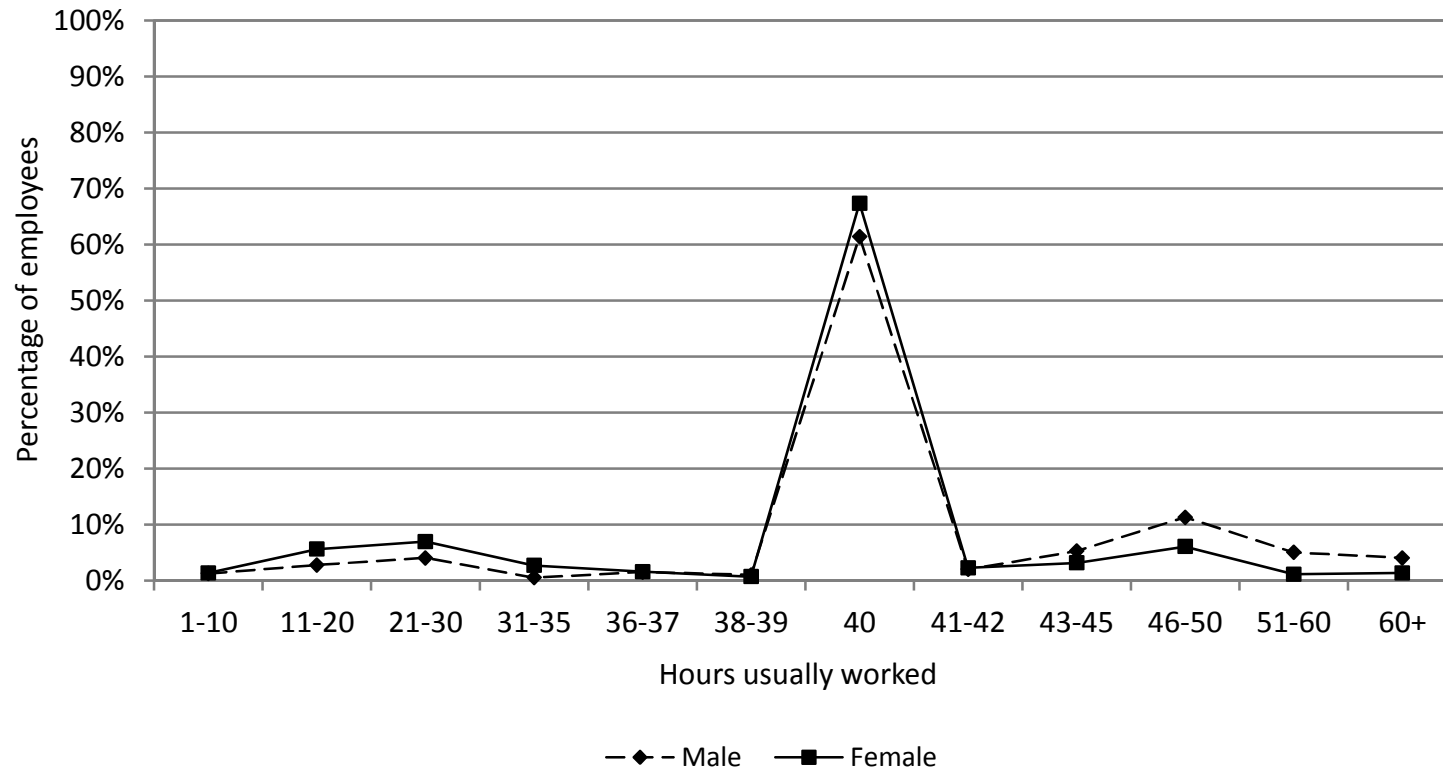
In 1996 legislation prohibited discrimination between employees based on working hours → right to equal treatment in areas negotiated by social partners, such as wages, holiday pay and entitlement, bonuses and training;

In 2001 the Working Hours (Adjustment) Act. Employees are entitled to adjust their working hours. Employers can only refuse request from their employees for reasons of considerable business interest. Small firms (less than 10 employees) are exempted from this regulation.

→ Part-time work in the Netherlands is in no longer atypical work.

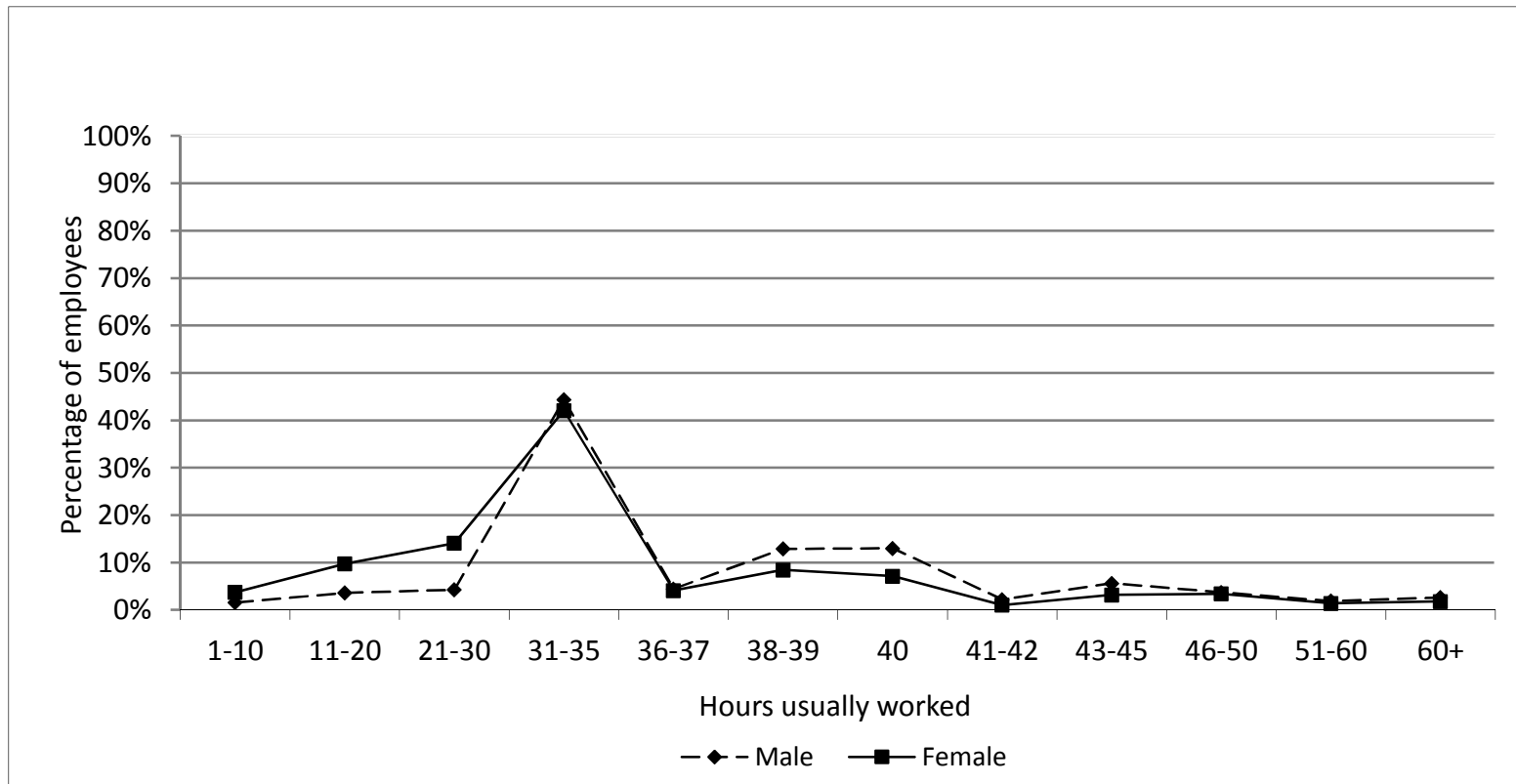


## International benchmark: Hungary





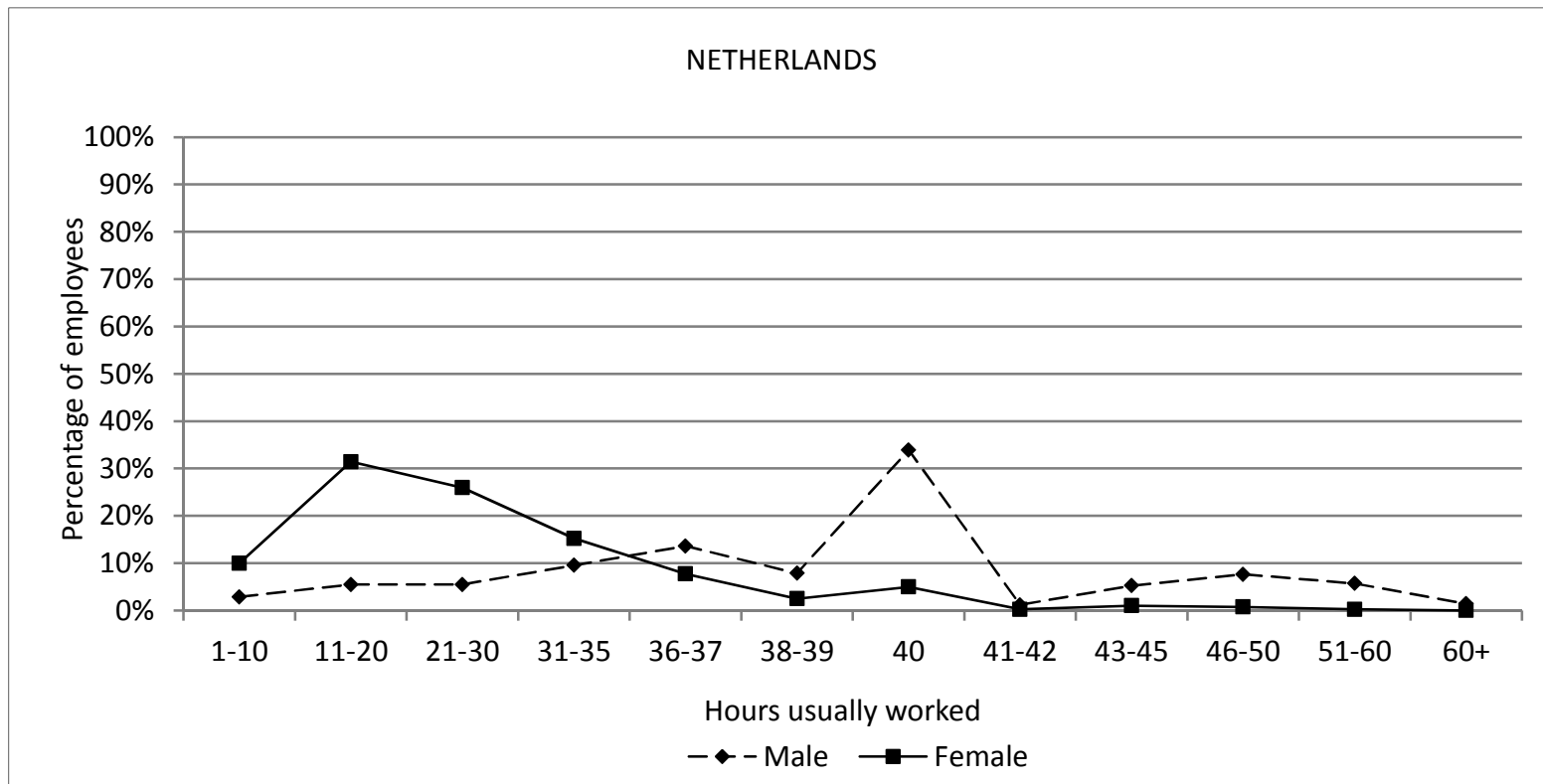
## International benchmark: France







## International benchmark: The Netherlands





## The Dutch part-time model

How about gender equality:

Benefit: it facilitates the combination of work and care in a reasonable acceptable manner → high female participation rate;

Cost: traditional division of tasks is reinforced by part-time working inequality between men and women. Despite all emphasis on working hours, among men full time working hours is still very much the norm, whereas especially among women, the popularity of part-time work has resulted in a de-standardisation of working hours.

→ rather strong vertical segregation, low share of women among CEO's, large differences in monthly income/ wealth.



## The Dutch part-time model

Specific Dutch part-time model is embedded in and contributes to the specificities of the Dutch care regime, which is also organised on a part-time basis.

In a typical case:

Young parents opt for parental leave for one or two days a week. Childcare facilities will also be used on a part-time basis in order to cover the 2 to 3 simultaneous working days.

After the leave period 'she' most probably continues to work on a part-time basis, whereas 'he' increases his working time again to full time. The result is a one and a half earner model with women in the role of secondary earner.



## The Dutch part-time model

More gender-equal solutions:

Full equality would imply either lower (full time) working hours of men (twice three quarter model) or higher full time working hours by women.

NB: recent debate about introducing 36 working week (4 x 9); in addition, there is some consensus that women working part-time should be given scope and incentive to increase their working hours.

At the same time, the willingness to change the specifics of the Dutch part-time model from an equal opportunities point of view do not seem to be particularly large, nor the perceived need.

NB: strong emphasis on quality of life argument.

More pressure from demographic developments than from remaining inequalities?



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