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Time use of adolescents in Belgium and the Netherlands

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1 Abstract

In this paper the time use of adolescents in Belgium and the Netherlands are being compared. The activities of youngsters on school days and weekend days are analysed as well as gender differences in time use. This paper is part of a project led by Jiri Zuzanek (Canada – Waterloo University) with the aim of comparing how Canadian adolescents develop in comparison with adolescents in other wealthy countries. This paper provides input from the Belgian Time Use Survey 1999 (VUB - Statistics Belgium) and the Dutch Time Use Survey 2000 (SCP).

This paper shows that on school days Belgian students spend more time to school related matters but they have more free time than the Dutch as well. Watching television takes the biggest share of the leisure activities in both countries, but the Belgian adolescents watch more than the Dutch on school days. Dutch youngsters engage longer in gainful employment, spend more time at personal needs (especially sleep & naps and personal care), social leisure and hobbies on school days than Belgian adolescents. These differences between both countries continue to exist in the weekend. Moreover, Belgian students do more hours of domestic work, read longer and spend more time at games and cultural events (movies, sports and culture) on off school days. Dutch adolescents on the other hand spend more time in front of the computer. Gender differences are prominent at young age. Girls have already a higher workload (school time, paid work and domestic work) and less free time in their teens than boys. In the free time gender differences are less pronounced in the Netherlands than in Belgium.

2 The Belgian Time Use Survey – The Dutch Time Use Survey

The Belgian data on adolescents in this paper are issued from the Belgian Time Use Survey 1999 carried out by Statistics Belgium and the Research Group TOR (Free University of Brussels). Data were collected from 3 December 1998 to 6 February 2000. In the light of this study 8382 respondents aged from 12 to 95 were asked to keep a diary for two days (a weekday and a weekend day). The participants noted their main activity every 10 minutes as well as any people who were present and any travel and modes of transportation (see also Glorieux & Vandeweyer 2003, for methodological issues). An individual questionnaire accompanied the diary. The EUROSTAT recommendations for harmonised time use surveys were largely followed for the design of the research instruments and the methodology that was used.

In this paper adolescents are defined as youngsters from 12 to 19 years living with their parents and at school. University students have been excluded. The school term in Belgium is variable for Flanders and Wallonia. Every secondary school however has summer holiday in July and August. These months have been left out. A school day has been defined as a weekday during the school term which includes at least 60 minutes of class (at

school) time. Only weekend days during the school term are taken into account.

In the Netherlands, time use studies have been conducted since the 1930's. The Dutch data in this paper originate from a time series that dates back to 1975. Since then, data was collected every five years, 2000 being the sixth wave ($n_{2000}=1813$). The research consists of two ways of gathering data. Time-budget data is collected by means of a diary in which respondents report about their main activity in each quarter of an hour over the period of a full week in October, with the aid of a precoded list of activities. Before and after that week, additional information is gathered by means of questionnaires.

All the time use data used in this paper can be found in the tables 1 to 3 in the annexe.

3 Results

3.1 School related time: diligent Belgians and even more zealous girls

Belgian students spend about six hours at school on school days. An extra hour and a half is used for doing homework. In the weekends more than an hour is used for doing homework. On weekdays, Dutch students spend more than one hour less on school related activities than Belgian students. The Dutch adolescents not only pass less time at school, but also devote fewer hours to their homework, on school days as well as in the weekend.

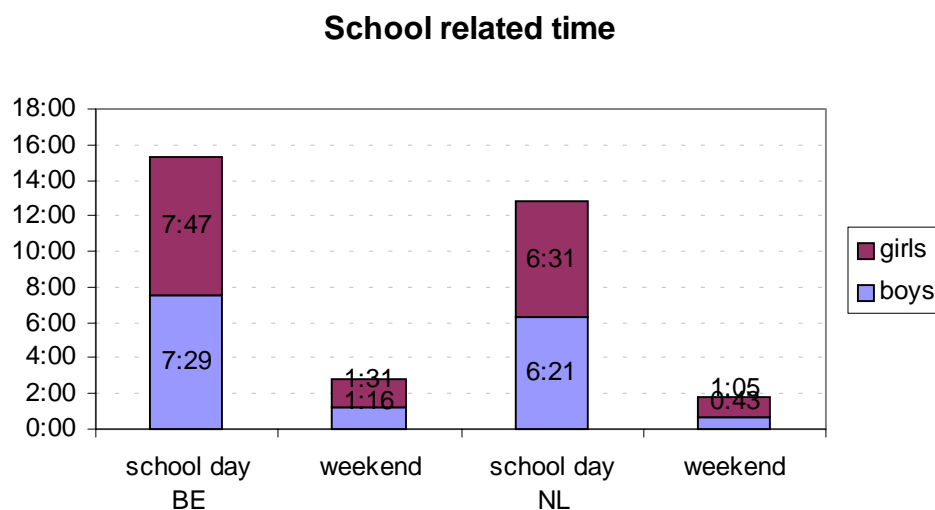
A possible explanation for these differences in time spent at school between the two countries is that Belgian pupils have a longer school day. In Belgium, there are a fixed number of school hours in a week. In general secondary education, pupils have to attend school for 32 hours of 50 minutes a week. In vocational and professional secondary education, this is even 36 hours. In the Netherlands, school hours also last 50 minutes. In general secondary education, the Dutch legislation uses an approach based on study burden. Study burden is the time an average student needs to learn a subject matter. The Dutch curriculum supposes a total study burden of 1600 hours, spread over 40 weeks. Thousand of these 1600 hours must make out the education program of the school, resulting in at least a school week of 25 hours. In vocational education on the other hand, there is an advisory hour table. It supposes 32 hours a week in the first three years and 30 hours a week in the fourth year of secondary education.

Another possible explanation for these differences in time spent at school is a difference in participation in the third grade of secondary education. In Belgium, there is compulsory education until 18 years old. From the age of 15 years, pupils can opt for part-time vocational secondary education and part-time work. As well in the Flemish as in the Walloon part of Belgium, only 1.4% of the pupils choose this option. In consequence, more than 98%

of the Belgian youth is, in theory, participating in full-time education until an age of 18 years old. In the Netherlands, this is not the case.

A third explanation may be that Dutch secondary education in recent years suffered from a high degree of lesson-cancellation, due to a shortage of teaching staff. There is a shortage of teachers, both in sheer numbers as well as because of growing levels of sick-leave.

FIGURE 1



A similarity between the two countries is that girls spend more time on school related matters. In this case, the explanation can not be attributed to school organisational differences. This discrepancy can only be attributed to the differential efforts the two groups put in their school work. Girls in Belgium do not attend more class hours than boys on school days, but they spend somewhat more time (12 minutes) on their homework than Belgian boys do. Especially in the weekend the difference (17 minutes) in performed hours of homework is big between Belgian girls and boys. Dutch students show less gender differences in school related time on school days. In the weekend however Dutch girls are also spending more time (12 minutes) at their homework than boys. One of the hot topics in education research these days is that girls systematically perform better at school than boys. The most important factor in the explanation of differential school achievements between boys and girls is a rejection of school conformity, closely associated with machismo amongst boys (Derks & Vermeersch 2002). Paul Willis (1977) described the boy attitude to school as 'laddish'. The male script of toughness and laddism is characterised by a negative feeling towards school; a greater sense of school alienation and a negative attitude towards pupils who want to commit themselves in school life such as the members of the student council. Boys tend to consider these students as goody goodies or as collaborators with the school authorities. They are also more inclined to believe that one has to undergo the educational system and that it is impossible to change it from within

(Degroof, Elchardus & Stevens 2001; Derks & Vermeersch 2002). Education is something to endure as painlessly as possible and it is important to “*have a laff*” and fool around to survive the long and boring school days (Willis 1997). Apparently, also doing home work does not fit this scheme of laddism. Girls generally have a more positive attitude towards homework (Van de Gaer et al. 2002) and apparently, spend more time doing their homework.

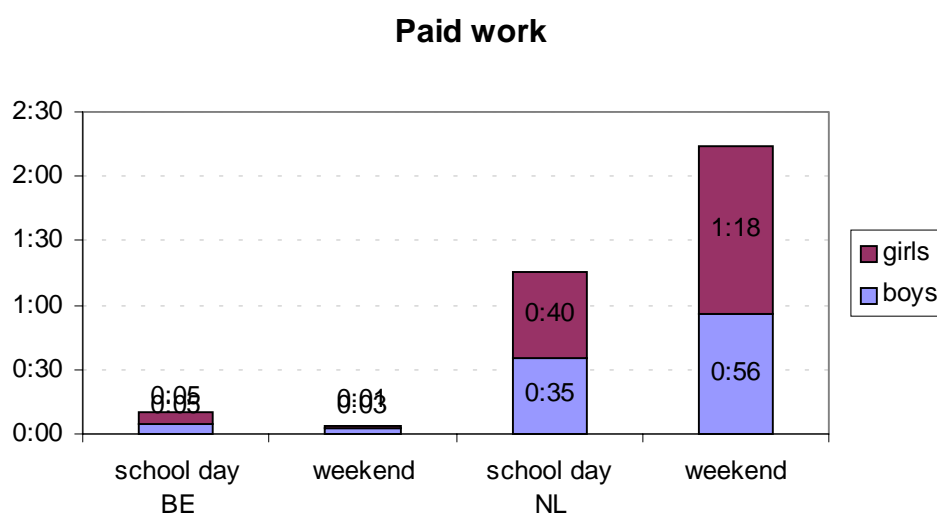
3.2 Learning to combine a household with paid work?

Belgian youngsters spend almost no time at paid labour during the school year. Dutch adolescents are professionally quite active, about half an hour on school days and an hour on weekend days are spent at paid labour.

Once more, this difference can be attributed to differences in participation grades. In the Netherlands, the extension of shop opening hours (in the evenings and on Sunday) in the late 1990's has given many youngsters an opportunity for some earnings on top of their pocket money. This facilitated an increase in paid work by youngsters still at school. Between 1990 and 2000, their hours of paid work doubled (cf. Van den Broek 2003). Other Dutch research shows an increase in the number of secondary students combining their studies and work in the last years (Merens 2000, Oolders & Van Loon 2000). While in 1997 only 47% of the Dutch youth did paid work, this percentage had augmented to 62% of Dutch youngsters between 14 and 19 years in 1999 (Oolders & Van Loon 2000). Dijkstra (2002) even found that two thirds of secondary school pupils had a regular job or did chores.

Research reveals that Belgian pupils tend to participate less in the labour market than their Dutch counterparts. In 2001, only 49.7% of secondary school pupils in the city of Antwerp had a paid job. However, there were considerable differences according to age. Only 35.7% of youngsters between 15 to 16 years worked against 75% of the 17 to 18 year (Mortelmans, Van Assche & Ottoy 2002). A recent survey, held in 2002, representative for the Flemish part of Belgium, showed that only 47.4% of the 15 to 18 year olds had a paid job or did paid chores in the previous year. Also here, participation in the labour market increases with age. Furthermore, most Flemish pupils do not really combine work with study. 75% of the pupils, who had worked in the last year, only did this during the summer holidays. Only 13% of the respondents between 15 and 18 year olds occasionally worked in the weekends during the school year. Working on school days was even more seldom. Only 5.3% of the interviewed youngsters worked on school days, while 3.5% worked very irregularly, doing some extra paid chores.

FIGURE 2



Opposite to later life, girls spend more time on gainful employment. The findings in other research concerning this topic are mixed. Dijkstra (2002) found that boys spend more time doing a job. Oolders & Van Loon (2000) on the other hand found that girls in havo/vwo (general secondary education in the Netherlands) more frequently had a paid job than boys in general secondary education. Boys in vmbo (vocational secondary education) on the other hand were more active on the labour market than girls in vmbo. Something similar can be found in the Belgian data, although the differences are negligible. Boys in vocational secondary education more frequently have a paid job and more frequently do paid chores, while in the other education tracks (general, professional and art secondary education) girls more frequently have a paid job/chores (table1). A possible, yet highly speculative explanation could be that girls in general, art and professional secondary education in Belgium and girls in havo/vwo in the Netherlands baby-sit more than their counterparts in vocational secondary education. Baby-sitting can also account for the gender difference in time spent on paid work.

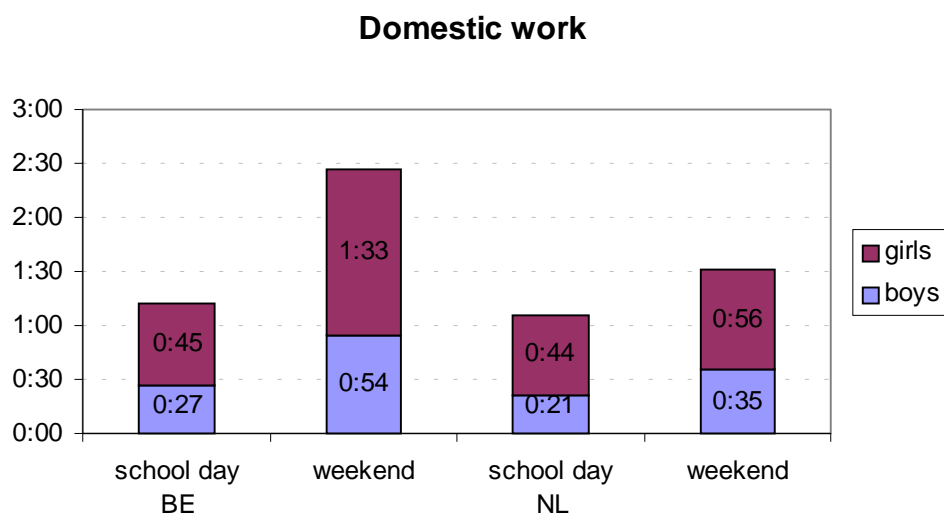
TABLE 1: PARTICIPATION IN PAID WORK OF 15 TO 18 YEAR OLDS ACCORDING TO GENDER AND EDUCATION TRACK IN FLANDERS (BELGIUM)

EDUCATION TRACK	PERCENTAGE BOYS HAVING A PAID JOB/DOING PAID CHORES	PERCENTAGE GIRLS HAVING A PAID JOB/DOING PAID CHORES
GENERAL SEDONDARY EDUCATION	42.3%	45.4%
PROFESSIONAL SECONDARY EDUCATION	49.1%	53.2%
ART SECONDARY EDUCATION	62.5%	66.7%
VOCATIONAL SECONDARY EDUCATION	53.6%	52.6%
TOTAL	46.9%	47.8%

A gendered use of time however comes to the surface when considering domestic work. Already from an early age helping in the household is rather a female activity. The amount of domestic work done by Belgian and Dutch adolescents is quite the same on school days. Whereas this time doubles for Belgian youngsters in the weekend, it is only slightly increasing for adolescents in the Netherlands. The most common domestic work are household tasks, followed by shopping and errands (especially in the weekend). Adolescents also spend some minutes a week looking after siblings.

Once more, these data seem to corroborate earlier research. From an early age on, children are socialized into traditional roles by a gendered and traditional division of domestic work (Kaesemans 2000). A recent survey done by the Department of Sociology of the Free University of Brussels found that, in Flanders 11.9% of the boys between 14 and 16 years never had to help out in the household (like doing the dishes, helping prepare the family meals, cleaning ...); this was only the case of 2% of the girls of that age. On the other hand 30% of the girls helped daily in the household against only 15% of the boys. Boys on the other hand, were more than girls implicated in typical household chores like putting the garbage out, working in the garden, repairing...If the parents are self-employed; boys, more than girls, had to help out in the business of their parents.

FIGURE 3



All in all, Belgian students have a higher total workload than Dutch adolescents on school days. The total workload is the sum of school related time, paid work and domestic work. In both countries girls have a higher total workload than boys. The difference rounds to half an hour on school days and increases to more than 50 minutes in the weekend

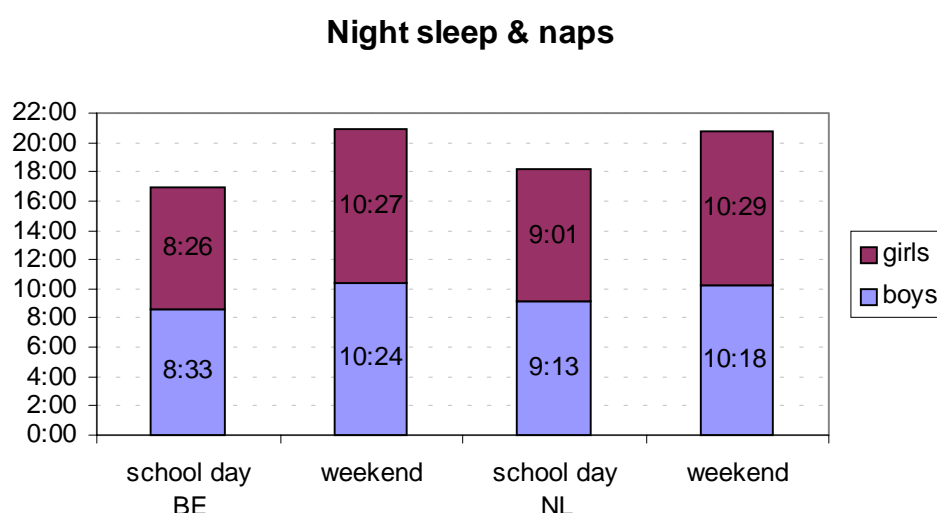
3.3 Personal needs

Adolescents need almost half a day for personal needs. Most of this time is used for sleeping, especially in the weekend.

3.3.1 Sleep

Belgian students get a good eight and a half hours of night sleep on school days. On weekend days the sleeping time increases with an extra two hours.¹ Dutch adolescents sleep (naps included) half an hour longer on school days than the Belgians. Equal to the Belgian students they sleep almost 10 hours and a half in the weekend. In both countries school girls sleep less than school boys on a school day. Girls catch up in the weekend when they are sleeping somewhat longer.

FIGURE 4



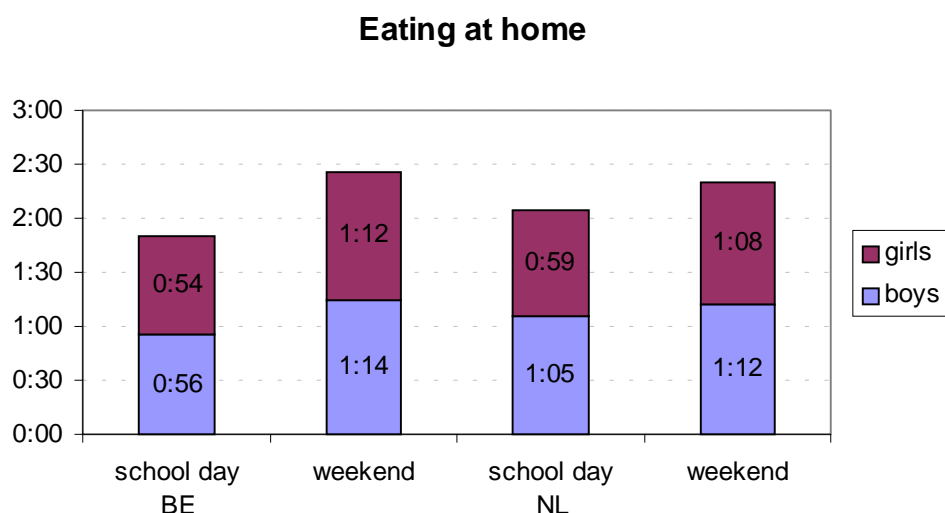
3.3.2 Eating at home and personal care

Eating at home takes around one hour on school days for Belgian adolescents. On weekend days Belgian adolescents spend more time eating at home. This is not the case for the Dutch adolescents. On school days, as in the weekend, their eating at home takes about one hour. A probable explanation why there is a difference in time eating at home between

¹ Belgian students do not report any time spent at taking a nap. This has probably to do with the fact that the Belgian survey used an open time use diary (respondents choose freely the denomination of their activities) while the Dutch survey uses a coding list (respondents choose in a list of activities which activity corresponds best to what they are doing for the moment). Belgian adolescents might not have thought of naming it 'taking a nap' but rather 'rest or relax'. However the time reported for 'rest and relaxation' under free time is quite the same for both countries, so it looks rather like Belgian adolescents get less sleep and rest than the Dutch on school days, while they get slightly more sleep and rest in the weekend.

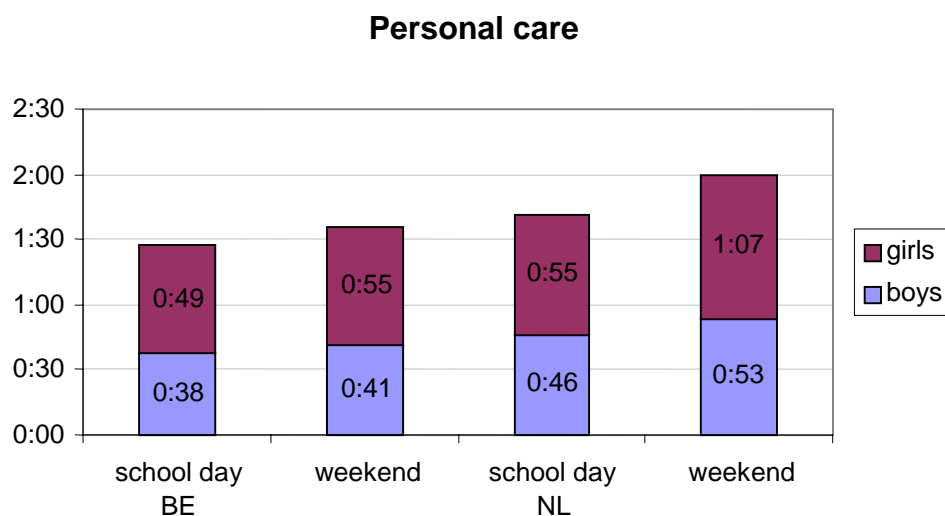
schooldays and weekend days in Belgium, but not in the Netherlands, is the system of warm meals at school. Secondary schools offering warm meals during lunch break are more the rule than the exception in Belgium. However, in 1996 only 13% of the Flemish youth made use of this service (Vereecken, Maes & Van De Mierop 1998). In the Netherlands, this system is not that known, although some primary schools are experimenting whether Dutch families are interested in warm meals at school (www.warmemaaltijden.nl). There are no gender differences in the amount of time needed to eat.

FIGURE 5



Activities such as washing, dressing and professional care (personal care) get almost as much attention by Belgian students on school days as in the weekend (around three quarters a day). Dutch adolescents however spend slightly more time to their personal care in the weekend. Overall, the Dutch spend more time to personal care than the Belgians. Previous research has shown that personal care is a much gendered activity (Glorieux & Vandeweyer 2002; Coppens e.a. 2001; Breedveld & van den Broek (eds.) 2000). Despite the increasing market for men’s health and body care products, at young age boys still spend less time to personal care than girls do.

FIGURE 6



3.3.3 Voluntary work

Volunteering is not big among adolescents, and concentrated in the weekends, when they on average spend about a quarter of an hour on helping in an organisation or giving other voluntary help. It has to be said that in Belgium this voluntary work mostly involves voluntary work within youth organisations. Boys are keener on voluntary work than girls, especially in the Netherlands. This is quite a surprising finding. Recent research into participation of youngsters in associations finds that there is hardly any gender difference in the participation in youth organisations and youth clubs amongst Flemish youth (De Groof & Siongers 1999, Stevens & Elchardus 2001). In the Netherlands though, girls are more active in associations, such as youth clubs (Zeijl 2003). International, Flemish and Dutch research projects find that girls are more inclined than boys to participate in organisations with a social goal and in voluntary work (De Groof & Siongers 1999; Roker et al. 1999; Smits 2000, Stevens & Elchardus 2001, Zeijl 2003).

3.3.4 Religious activities: not very popular among youngsters

Adolescents use only some minutes of their time for religious activities and this only in the weekend, illustrating that religion is not that important in the lives of many youngsters in both countries. Dutch adolescents are somewhat more involved in religious practices than the Belgians. One of the main reasons is the difference in composition of denominations in the religious population of the two countries. The division of the Low Countries in two separate states is a consequence of the Religious Wars in Europe in the 16th and 17th century, leading to a separate southern area with a predominantly catholic religious tradition and a Northern independent state with a majority of Protestants. In protestant churches personal religious activities, such as reading the bible, praying ... are more important than in

the Catholic Church. But even in the same religious denomination there are differences between the two countries. Prins et al. (1997) investigated the religious practices of students at the Catholic University of Nijmegen in the Netherlands and compared them with the religiosity of students at the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium. According to this study the religious activities of the Belgian catholic students were more passive (limited to going to mass) than the religious activities of the Dutch catholic students.

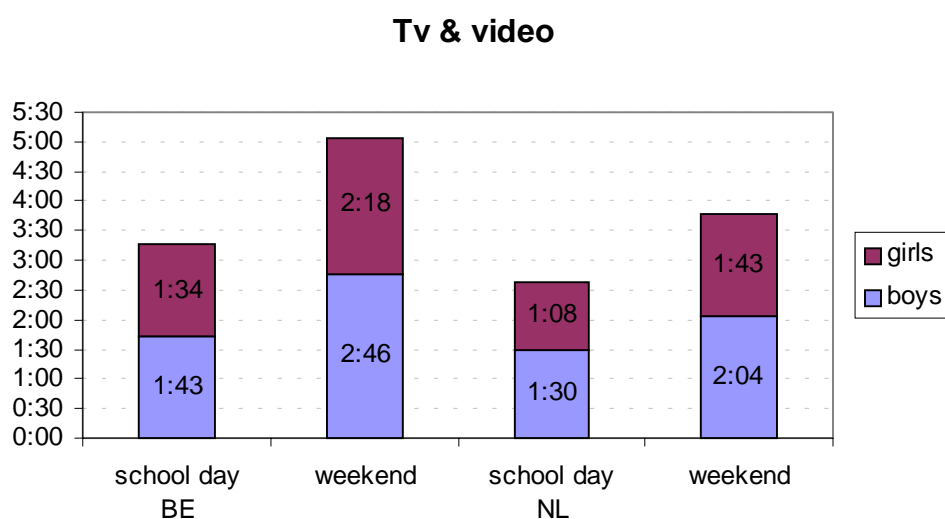
3.4 Free time

Biological needs (personal care & sleeping & eating) take the biggest share of the time budget of youngsters (as incidentally, is the case for adults). On school days, going to school is the second most important activity and is followed by free time. Belgian adolescents have about 4 hours of free time on school days and seven and a half hours on off school days. Dutch adolescents also enjoy an additional three and a half hours of free time per day in the weekend, but their total amount of free time is a quarter lower than that of Belgian adolescents. Boys have more free time at their disposition than girls.

3.4.1 Television & video most popular leisure activity among youngsters

This does not necessarily mean that it is their favourite activity. Watching television is often done to combat boredom (Kaeseman 2000). On a school day Belgian adolescents watch for about an hour and a half, an extra hour is added in the weekend. The Dutch youngsters watch less television on school and off school days than the Belgians. In Holland, youngsters recently delayed part of their interest in watching the screen from the television to the PC (Breedveld & Van den Broek 2000). Between 1995 and 2000, they cut down their television-watching by 20% (from over 13 to less than 11), their leisurely computer-use increased one-and-a-half hour per week.

FIGURE 7



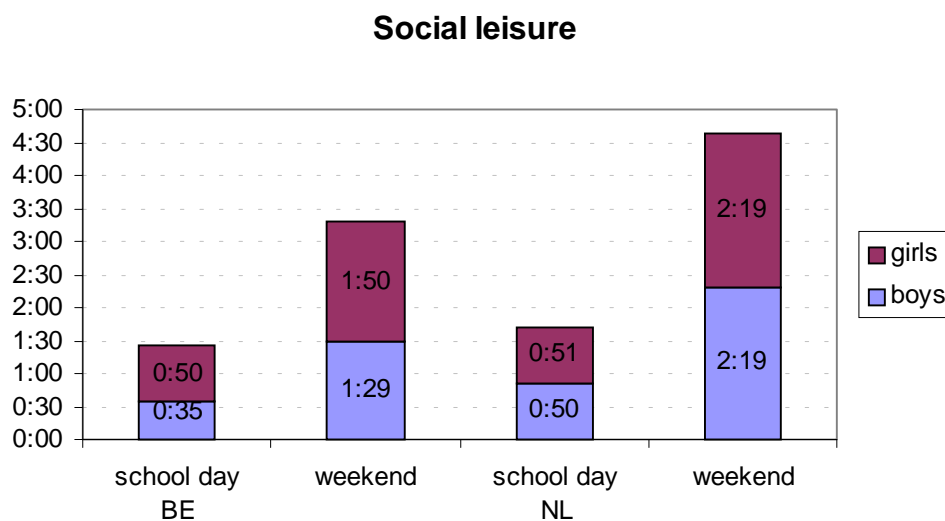
Boys spend more time in front of the television on school days, especially in the Netherlands, while the difference between girls and boys in the weekend is the same in both countries. This difference between the two countries is consistent with earlier research. The more southerly in Europe, the more time people spend in front of their television screen. This phenomenon is even observed within Belgium, where people in the northern region of Flanders spend less time before the television than people in the southern region of Wallonia (Glorieux & Vandeweyer 2002). This is also the case amongst adolescents. On school days, Walloon youth watches 1 hour 48 minutes television, the Flemish are 1 hour 36 minutes in front of the television, while the youth in the Brussels region only watches 1 hour 22 minutes. Although, during the weekend, Flemish youth is watching television longer than the Walloons. In the weekends, in Wallonia youngsters watch television for 2 hours 29 minutes, while Flemish youth watch 2 hours and 38 minutes. Once again, in the weekends the Brussels youth is less keen on watching television with only 2 hours 22 minutes.

3.4.2 Social leisure

Social activities, such as parties, visiting others, going for a drink and phoning, are the second most frequently done free time activities. Especially on off school days between one and a half hour and two hours are spent on it. Adolescents in the Netherlands even spend more time on social leisure in the weekend than on watching television. Their amount of social leisure is higher than that of Belgian students throughout the week, although during the school week, there are only differences in time spent on social leisure between the boys of the two countries. On school days, Dutch boys spend 15 minutes longer with other people than their Belgian counterparts. This is in contradiction to earlier research. Belgian youngsters report more than Dutch young people to hang around with friends in their spare time (Bral

1999, Van Lieshout 2000). Furthermore, Belgian adolescents, and especially Belgian boys, claim to have more friends than Dutch teenagers. On average, youngsters in Belgium say to have 5 to 6 best friends against 4 best friends in the Netherlands. In 1990 11% of the Dutch youth did not have any friends (Van der Linden 1990). In more recent polls this number has even increased (Van Lieshout 2000). In Flanders, only 1 percent of students between 12 and 18 years old do not have a friend (Goedseels et al. 2000, Stevens & Elchardus 2001). Stevens & Elchardus (2001) hypothesized that the differences in friendships between the two countries and registered through survey methods is due to a difference in the definition of a 'friend'. Laermans et al. (2001) showed that for boys in vocational education in Flanders knowing someone, getting along with that person and sharing the same interests, is sufficient to call someone a friend. It does not necessarily mean that one has to spend time together. The findings of this research seem another corroboration of this hypothesis. Maybe in the Netherlands, friendship between youngsters implies actually spending time together? Another possibility, although highly unlikely, is that Belgians do have more friends, but these contacts are more evanescent.

FIGURE 8



Overall, female adolescents in Belgium have a higher amount of social leisure in their agenda while in the Netherlands there is no gender difference. Some authors assert that there is a distinct difference between girl's and boy's friendship. Girl's friendships are close relationships, marked by talking to each other, phoning each other... Usually, the term bedroom culture is used to describe this pattern of friendship amongst girls (De Hartog 2001, Pahl 2000, Van Lieshout 1999). Boy's friendships on the other hand are less based on communication, but on doing something together. These data seem to suggest that the model of bedroom culture is more apt to describe the gendered differences in friendship relations in Belgium than in the Netherlands.

3.4.3 Boys prefer sports

The amount of time used for sport activities is quite the same in both countries. Adolescents involve in sports for about 20 minutes on school days and about 45 minutes in the weekend. Physical active leisure seems to attract more boys than girls in both countries. Also this is in line with surveys. In both countries, boys are actively more participating in sport clubs than girls (De Groof et al. 2002, Stevens & Elchardus 2001, Zeijl 2003). Furthermore, boys more frequently sport on their own, outside the framework of a sporting club (De Groof 2003).

FIGURE 9

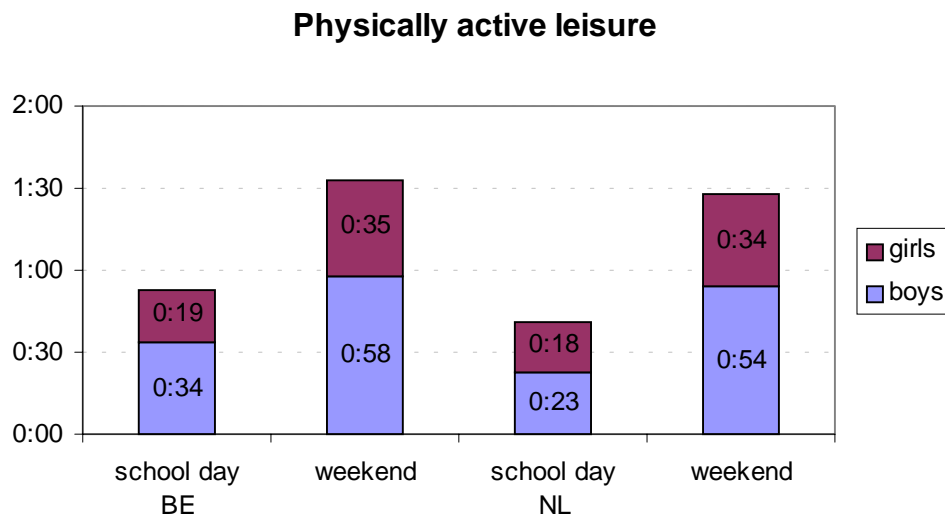


Table 2 shows that adolescents in Belgium do far more sports than adults. All sport types have a higher participation rate among youngsters. Ball sports are the most popular sport activity among boys, while girls prefer swimming (see also Scheerder 2002). A similar pattern prevails in the Netherlands (Breedveld 2003).

TABLE 2: PARTICIPATION AT SPORT ACTIVITIES IN THE FREE TIME DURING PAST FOUR WEEKS IN BELGIUM (%)

	12-19			20-64
	BOY	GIRL	TOTAL	TOTAL
N=	444	394	838	5673
Jogging, running competition	20%	17%	19%	8%
Cycling	33%	28%	31%	21%
Swimming	38%	43%	40%	16%
Gymnastics (fitness)	29%	37%	33%	8%
Ball sports	49%	29%	39%	9%
Water sports	7%	7%	7%	2%
Other sports	36%	29%	33%	17%

3.4.4 Computer use: smaller gender gap in the Netherlands

Belgian adolescents use the computer as a leisure device for about 20 minutes on a school day and 30 minutes on weekend days. Most of this time

is used for playing games on the computer. Students in the Netherlands also use the computer more frequently in the weekend, even up to 46 minutes. Also this is in concurrence with previous research (Pasquier et al. 1998). The Netherlands, together with the Scandinavian countries, is one of the forerunners in computer use and internet connections at home. Belgium lags behind in this matter. This is translated in less time spend before the computer by youngsters. Boys spend more time to computer use than girls, although the gap between both sexes is smaller in the Netherlands than in Belgium. Also this is in line with international studies concerning the digital divide. The more computer and internet are disseminated in a society, the less steep the gap between males and females becomes (DiMaggio 2001, Haythornwaite 2001, Tyler 2002).

3.4.5 Reading and listening to the radio and recorded music

Belgian students are keener on reading than the Dutch, especially in the weekend. There is no difference in reading time between the three Belgian regions (Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels). Adolescents in the Netherlands read as much on school days as in the weekend. The difference in reading between the two countries though can be completely attributed to the drop out of Dutch boys. Dutch boys only spend half the time reading of that of Belgian boys, Belgian girls and Dutch girls. Girls in the Netherlands read twice as much on school days than boys. In the weekend girls read more than boys in both countries. Research into gendered differences in cultural participation finds traditionally that women read more than men (Katz-Gerro 1999). Apparently, this is already the case in adolescence.

This finding is quite in contrast with the general population. The Dutch spend more time reading than the Belgians. The Dutch read 3 hours 54 minutes a week (Huysmans & De Haan 2001), while the Belgians only spend 3 hours 23 minutes a week reading (Glorieux & Vandeweyer 2001). The Protestant tradition of reading the Bible is often invoked to support this difference in reading culture between the two countries. This does not necessarily point to a generational shift in reading practices. The difference in reading between adults and adolescents can be a life-stage effect.

More time is spent listening to music on weekend days than on school days. Youngsters in both countries and of both sexes spend similar amounts of time at this activity. In the weekend Dutch boys listen to music more than girls.

3.4.6 Hobbies and games

The amount of time spent by youngsters for hobbies is far more important in the Netherlands than in Belgium and increases in the weekends. Boys spend more than twice as much time to hobbies than girls in the Netherlands.

Cards, board games and the likes on the contrary demand more time in the life of adolescents in Belgium, especially in the weekend. Are the Dutch playing more computer games and the Belgian more traditional games in the weekend?

3.4.7 Movies, sports and culture

Outgoing activities such as attending movies; watching sport games and cultural events are predominantly weekend activities. In Belgium these activities take 21 minutes a day in the weekend. Dutch adolescents only spend half of this time to these activities.

There are no gender differences between Belgian adolescents. In the Netherlands girls spend more time to this category of activities during weekends than boys.

The monthly visits to cultural events (table 3) deducted from the questionnaire, show another picture for Belgium. Girls go more often to the movies, theatre and museum compared to boys. The same is true for Dutch adolescents. Belgian youngsters attend more often legitimate forms of culture than the Dutch. In this respect, Dutch findings are markedly different, Dutch adolescent lagging behind culturally (e.g. De Haan and Knulst 2000), which inspired cultural policies to target specifically at fostering juvenile cultural participation.

TABLE 3: AVERAGE MONTHLY ATTENDANCE TO CULTURAL ACTIVITIES (PER 100 INHABITANS)

	BELGIUM			THE NETHERLANDS		
	BOY	GIRL	TOTAL	BOY	GIRL	TOTAL
N=	444	394	838	95	80	175
Movies	0,47	0,69	0,57	0,54	0,73	0,63
Theatre, ballet, concert, opera	0,00	0,24	0,16	0,04	0,11	0,07
Exposition, museum	0,13	0,27	0,20	0,11	0,13	0,12

In Belgium youngsters participate more in most cultural events than adults (table 4). Half of the adolescents have gone to a library the past four weeks and 42% went to the movies. In line with other research done on cultural participation, girls participate more in legitimate culture than boys.

TABLE 4: PARTICIPATION AT CULTURAL EVENTS IN THE FREE TIME IN THE LAST FOUR WEEKS IN BELGIUM (%)

	12-19			20-64
	BOY	GIRL	TOTAL	TOTAL
N=	444	394	838	5673
Movies	37%	48%	42%	21%
Theatre, ballet, concert, opera	11%	17%	14%	13%
Exposition, museum	11%	19%	15%	14%
Library	44%	54%	49%	19%
Sport manifestation (as spectator)	29%	20%	25%	18%
Excursions, visiting city or amusement park	28%	34%	31%	25%
Other amusement	37%	40%	39%	32%

3.5 Travelling

The amount of travelling is higher on school days than on weekend days among adolescents. This is due to the home-school travel movements on school days.

3.6 Health situation

Almost all Belgian adolescents report to be in a good health situation (table 5). 72% of them describe their health as very good. Only 41% of the adults report a very good health situation. Adolescents in the Netherlands are less satisfied. Only 38% of them say to have a very good health and 57% claim a good health. Probably the difference between 'good' and 'very good' is just a question of perception. More important is that about 95% of the youngsters feel healthy.

TABLE 5: SUBJECTIVE HEALTH SITUATION

	BELGIUM				THE NETHERLANDS		
	20-64	12-19		TOTAL	12-19		
	TOTAL	BOY	GIRL		BOY	GIRL	TOTAL
N=	5673	444	394	838	95	80	175
Very good	41%	74%	70%	72%	41%	34%	38%
Good	44%	24%	25%	24%	58%	56%	57%
Average	11%	2%	5%	3%	1%	9%	5%
Poor	3%	0%	1%	1%	0%	2%	1%
Very poor	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

4 Conclusion

Historical youth research stresses the importance that youth is a socially constructed concept. Until the end of the 19th century, youth as a social category hardly existed. At the end of the 19th century, the idea of adolescence as a life-stage between childhood and adulthood emerged. These adolescents were capable to do more things than children, but on the other hand, they lacked certain competences and skills to participate fully in the adult world. To guideline these 'imperfect adults' modern, industrialised countries developed specific social institutions to prepare these adolescents for the real world. As a result of this new definition of the life cycle, children and youngsters were withdrawn from the labour market and put together in a new setting, the education system, up till then a privilege for the rich. Now, adolescence and youth seem to be 'natural' concepts. Learning is not longer seen as a privilege for the elite, but as self-evident. In western countries, education has become one of the major expenditures of the national budget.

Nonetheless, Western countries differ in the way they organise the institutional settings in which adolescents grow up. For instance, making up a comparison of the educational system of two countries is a highly

intellectual endeavour. The organisation of these institutional settings affects directly the daily lives of young people and the way they spend their time. This is clearly shown by this study.

Belgium, since the introduction of compulsory education in 1982, has resolutely chosen for a very distinct separation of working life and learning life for youngsters: there is a time to learn and there is a time to work. Learning is confined to the formal setting of schools and education is a prerequisite to have success on the labour market. As such, it also influences the social appreciation of learning and working in the lives of youngsters. This principle translates itself in deeds and in attitudes of adults and of young people. In the Netherlands on the other hand, youngsters have not been so radically cut off from the labour market. There is not a system of compulsory education until 18 and the labour market is organised more flexible. This makes it easier to combine study and work. One of the main differences in time use between Belgian and Dutch youngsters concerns education and work. The emphasis on education in Belgium results in a higher number of hours at school and a longer period spent on homework. Dutch youngsters more often combine formal learning in school with informal learning in settings such as the labour market.

Although Belgian youngsters have a greater work load than their Dutch counterparts, they tend to spend less time on sleeping, personal care and religious activities. Consequently, they have more free time. It is this free time that youngsters enjoy the greatest autonomy (Bouverne-De Bie 1992). The Belgian youngsters opt to fill this extra free time predominantly with watching television and in a lesser extent with cultural activities such as reading, going to movies, theatre, going to sport manifestations and other outgoing activities. Dutch youth spends more free time to social leisure and in front of the computer screen.

Although the differences between the two countries are remarkable, in both countries girls and boys keep a different agenda. Girls tend to spend more time on school related activities and are more involved in helping out in the household. In the Netherlands girls are also working longer than boys. In both countries, already in adolescence, girls have a greater workload, while boys stay longer in bed and enjoy more free time. Apparently, girls are already prepared at an early age to combine household work with a job. Boys spend more time before the television, on physical activities such as sports and in front of their computer. Girls on the other hand are more actively involved in legitimate culture. Belgian boys spend less time doing social leisure activities than Belgian girls, while Dutch boys read less than Dutch girls. In general and concerning free time, it has to be said that gendered differences in time use are less pronounced in the Netherlands than in Belgium.

Some of the findings of this study are surprising and are complementary to existing youth studies. For instance, the time boys spend doing voluntary

work deepens our knowledge of social participation during adolescence. Youth research mostly encompasses traditional survey methods. Time budget analyses can render additional information about the daily lives of adolescents.

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6 Annexes

TABLE 1: TIME USE OF BELGIAN AND DUTCH STUDENTS (12 TO 19 YEARS) ON SCHOOL DAYS AND WEEKEND
DAYS

N	Belgium		The Netherlands	
	school day	weekend	school day	weekend
	624	838	175	175
School related time	7:38	1:23	6:26	0:47
Attending classes/ at school	6:05	0:06	5:04	0:07
Doing homework	1:33	1:16	1:22	0:40
Paid work excluding travel	0:05	0:02	0:37	1:07
Domestic work excluding travel	0:36	1:12	0:32	0:45
Housework	0:22	0:44	0:14	0:23
Shopping and errands	0:05	0:15	0:11	0:14
Child and family care	0:08	0:12	0:06	0:08
<i>Total workload</i>	<i>8:20</i>	<i>2:38</i>	<i>7:35</i>	<i>2:39</i>
Personal needs	10:09	12:27	11:00	12:33
Night sleep	8:30	10:25	8:56	10:14
Nap	0:00	0:00	0:11	0:09
Eating at home	0:55	1:13	1:02	1:10
Personal care	0:43	0:48	0:50	1:00
Voluntary organisations	0:02	0:14	0:02	0:13
Religious activities	0:00	0:03	0:00	0:08
Free time	4:02	7:24	3:43	7:13
Watching tv and video	1:39	2:33	1:20	1:54
Reading	0:15	0:23	0:12	0:14
Social leisure	0:42	1:39	0:51	2:19
Dining out in a restaurant	0:03	0:07	0:01	0:03
Physically active leisure	0:27	0:47	0:21	0:45
Movies, sports, culture	0:04	0:21	0:03	0:12
Hobbies	0:04	0:09	0:13	0:27
Games (cards, board games, etc.)	0:07	0:19	0:02	0:08
Computer total	0:21	0:40	0:25	0:46
Computer and video games	0:17	0:34		
Computer use, surfing internet	0:04	0:06		
Listening to radio and recorded music	0:07	0:13	0:08	0:16
Rest and relaxation	0:11	0:15	0:09	0:10
Travelling	1:23	1:10	1:28	0:53

TABLE 2: TIME USE OF BELGIAN AND DUTCH STUDENTS (12 TO 19 YEARS) ON A SCHOOL DAY BY SEXE

School day	Belgium			The Netherlands		
	Boy	Girl	Total	Boy	Girl	Total
N	320	304	624	95	80	175
School related time	7:29	7:47	7:38	6:21	6:31	6:26
Attending classes/ at school	6:02	6:08	6:05	5:03	5:05	5:04
Doing homework	1:27	1:39	1:33	1:18	1:26	1:22
Paid work excluding travel	0:05	0:05	0:05	0:35	0:40	0:37
Domestic work excluding travel	0:27	0:45	0:36	0:21	0:44	0:32
Housework	0:17	0:27	0:22	0:12	0:17	0:14
Shopping and errands	0:04	0:06	0:05	0:07	0:16	0:11
Child and family care	0:06	0:10	0:08	0:02	0:11	0:06
<i>Total workload</i>	<i>8:03</i>	<i>8:38</i>	<i>8:20</i>	<i>7:17</i>	<i>7:51</i>	<i>7:35</i>
Personal needs	10:09	10:10	10:09	11:04	10:54	11:00
Night sleep	8:33	8:26	8:30	9:00	8:52	8:56
Nap	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:13	0:09	0:11
Eating at home	0:56	0:54	0:55	1:05	0:59	1:02
Personal care	0:38	0:49	0:43	0:46	0:55	0:50
Voluntary organisations	0:04	0:01	0:02	0:02	0:03	0:02
Religious activities	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:01	0:00	0:00
Free time	4:19	3:45	4:02	4:00	3:20	3:43
Watching tv and video	1:43	1:34	1:39	1:30	1:08	1:20
Reading	0:16	0:14	0:15	0:08	0:16	0:12
Social leisure	0:35	0:50	0:42	0:50	0:51	0:51
Dining out in a restaurant	0:03	0:03	0:03	0:01	0:01	0:01
Physically active leisure	0:34	0:19	0:27	0:23	0:18	0:21
Movies, sports, culture	0:04	0:05	0:04	0:03	0:04	0:03
Hobbies	0:02	0:06	0:04	0:19	0:06	0:13
Games (cards, board games, etc.)	0:08	0:07	0:07	0:03	0:02	0:02
Computer total	0:33	0:09	0:21	0:32	0:16	0:25
Computer and video games	0:27	0:07	0:17			
Computer use, surfing internet	0:06	0:02	0:04			
Listening to radio and recorded music	0:08	0:06	0:07	0:07	0:09	0:08
Rest and relaxation	0:11	0:11	0:11	0:06	0:13	0:09
Travelling	1:23	1:23	1:23	1:27	1:33	1:28

TABLE 3: TIME USE OF BELGIAN AND DUTCH STUDENTS (12 TO 19 YEARS) ON A WEEKEND DAY BY SEXE

Weekend day	Belgium			The Netherlands		
	Boy	Girl	Total	Boy	Girl	Total
N	444	394	838	95	80	175
School related time	1:16	1:31	1:23	0:43	1:05	0:53
Attending classes/ at school	0:07	0:05	0:06	0:07	0:09	0:08
Doing homework	1:08	1:25	1:16	0:40	0:56	0:45
Paid work excluding travel	0:03	0:01	0:02	0:56	1:18	1:07
Domestic work excluding travel	0:54	1:33	1:12	0:35	0:56	0:45
Housework	0:34	0:55	0:44	0:20	0:26	0:23
Shopping and errands	0:10	0:21	0:15	0:13	0:15	0:14
Child and family care	0:09	0:16	0:12	0:01	0:15	0:08
<i>Total workload</i>	<i>2:15</i>	<i>3:05</i>	<i>2:38</i>	<i>2:14</i>	<i>3:19</i>	<i>2:45</i>
Personal needs	12:20	12:34	12:27	12:22	12:45	12:33
Night sleep	10:23	10:27	10:25	10:10	10:19	10:14
Nap	0:01	0:00	0:00	0:08	0:10	0:09
Eating at home	1:14	1:12	1:13	1:12	1:08	1:10
Personal care	0:41	0:55	0:48	0:53	1:07	1:00
Voluntary organisations	0:16	0:12	0:14	0:19	0:04	0:13
Religious activities	0:03	0:04	0:03	0:09	0:07	0:08
Free time	7:55	6:50	7:24	7:42	6:38	7:13
Watching tv and video	2:46	2:18	2:33	2:04	1:43	1:54
Reading	0:20	0:27	0:23	0:12	0:17	0:14
Social leisure	1:29	1:50	1:39	2:19	2:19	2:19
Dining out in a restaurant	0:06	0:09	0:07	0:03	0:03	0:03
Physically active leisure	0:58	0:35	0:47	0:54	0:34	0:45
Movies, sports, culture	0:21	0:21	0:21	0:09	0:15	0:12
Hobbies	0:08	0:10	0:09	0:35	0:18	0:27
Games (cards, board games, etc.)	0:22	0:16	0:19	0:07	0:10	0:08
Computer total	0:60	0:18	0:40	1:02	0:28	0:46
Computer and video games	0:53	0:12	0:34			
Computer use, surfing internet	0:07	0:06	0:06			
Listening to radio and recorded music	0:12	0:13	0:13	0:13	0:21	0:16
Rest and relaxation	0:13	0:16	0:15	0:07	0:14	0:10
Travelling	1:09	1:11	1:10	0:56	0:50	0:53