

EGGE – EC’s Expert Group on Gender and Employment

National Reports on the Unadjusted and Adjusted Gender Pay Gap

Netherlands

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The Gender Pay Gap in the Netherlands

External report commissioned by and presented to the European commission

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Introduction

Labour market inequality between men and women manifests itself in multiple ways, among which in wage differentials. This report gives an overview of the general wage statistics, national research, the labour market and policies appertaining (in)directly to the (un)adjusted gender pay gap in the Netherlands. It is the Dutch contribution to a European study on gender pay differences carried out by the members of the European Network on Gender and Employment under the auspices of the Equal Opportunities Unit.

1 Pay gap and pay trends

This section describes the overall development of wages during the last decades in the Netherlands. Figures will be given on the development of average gross hourly wage of all employees by gender and by working hours, the incidence of low pay and wage inequality.

1.1 Development of gross hourly wages

Statistics Netherlands is the main provider on national statistics on wages. Unfortunately however, due to changes in definitions it is difficult to compile a reliable trend on wages for a longer period. Basically, there are two datasets. For the period 1977 until 1989, data are based on ‘Half-yearly study on earned wages’ (*Halfjaarlijks onderzoek naar verdiende lonen*). These data cover the wages of males and females aged 21-64. Data on agriculture and the fishing industry are not included in this sample. Figures concern the average gross hourly wage (including paid overtime).

For the period 1990 until 2000, data are based on ‘Survey on employment and wages’ (*Enquête werkgelegenheid en lonen*) also published by Statistics Netherlands. Contrary to the former source, these data include most industries. Exceptions are employees working in private households (SBI95) and employees working at international community offices (SBI99). Therefore, the data on the different periods are not completely comparable. In addition, due to a major revision in the concepts and methodology, the outcomes before and after 1995 are not completely comparable. A second, smaller revision in 1999 hampers the comparability of the newest data and the former ones.

Table 1.1 shows the development of the gross hourly wages of males and females in Euros over time.¹ In addition, the table shows the wage index development of females and males and the development of the unadjusted gender pay gap. All developments are indexed at 1977.

The table contains a number of interesting trends. Not surprisingly, the data indicate a rise of the gross hourly wages of both males and females for the period at hand. However, differences arise when we investigate the extent of these relative increases by means of wage indexes. It turns out that in the from 1977 to the mid-80s, the wages of males increased faster than wages of females, but that for the period from the mid-80s till now, wages of females increase faster than wages of males. This trend is mirrored in the development of the unadjusted gender pay gap.

¹ Data of Statistics Netherlands are published in Dutch Guilders and have been converted to Euros using the following exchange rate: 1 Euro equals 2.203710 Dutch guilders.

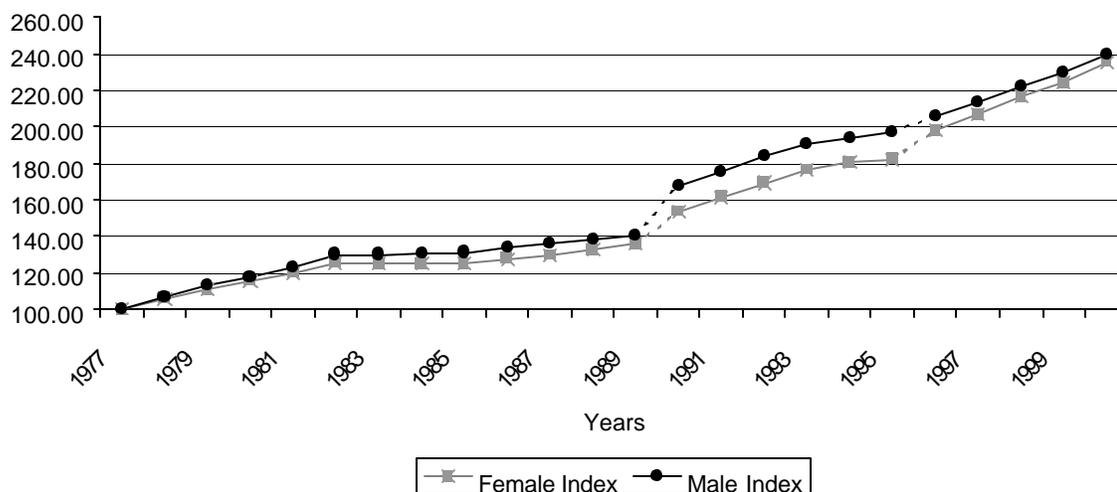
Table 1.1 Gross hourly wage (index) development by gender, 1977-2000

October of the year	Wage of female employees (€)	Wage of male employees (€)	Female index	Male index	Unadjusted gender pay gap (%)
1977	5.65	7.08	100	100	20.18
1978	5.98	7.54	105.84	106.50	20.70
1979	6.25	8.02	110.62	113.28	22.07
1980	6.53	8.35	115.58	117.94	21.84
1981	6.76	8.73	119.65	123.31	22.61
1982	7.08	9.21	125.31	130.08	23.11
1983	7.06	9.21	124.96	130.08	23.31
1984	7.05	9.25	124.78	130.65	23.79
1985	7.07	9.29	125.13	131.21	23.93
1986	7.22	9.46	127.79	133.62	23.69
1987	7.32	9.61	129.56	135.73	23.76
1988	7.49	9.76	132.57	137.85	23.26
1989	7.66	9.94	135.58	140.40	22.80
1990	8.68	11.91	153.63	168.22	27.12
1991	9.12	12.44	161.42	175.71	26.73
1992	9.56	13.04	169.20	184.18	26.69
1993	9.98	13.49	176.64	190.54	26.01
1994	10.20	13.74	180.53	194.07	25.79
1995	10.30	13.97	182.30	197.32	26.31
1996	11.20	14.59	198.23	206.07	23.24
1997	11.69	15.11	206.90	213.42	22.63
1998	12.23	15.76	216.46	222.60	22.40
1999	12.67	16.30	224.25	230.23	22.27
2000	13.30	16.98	235.40	239.83	21.67

Sources: period 1977-1989: CBS (1991)
 period 1990-1995: CBS (1996)
 period 1996-2000: CBS (2002)

The development of the index of the gross hourly wage of men and women for the period 1977 till 2000 is illustrated in the graph below.

Graph 1.1 Gross hourly wage index development by gender, 1977-2000

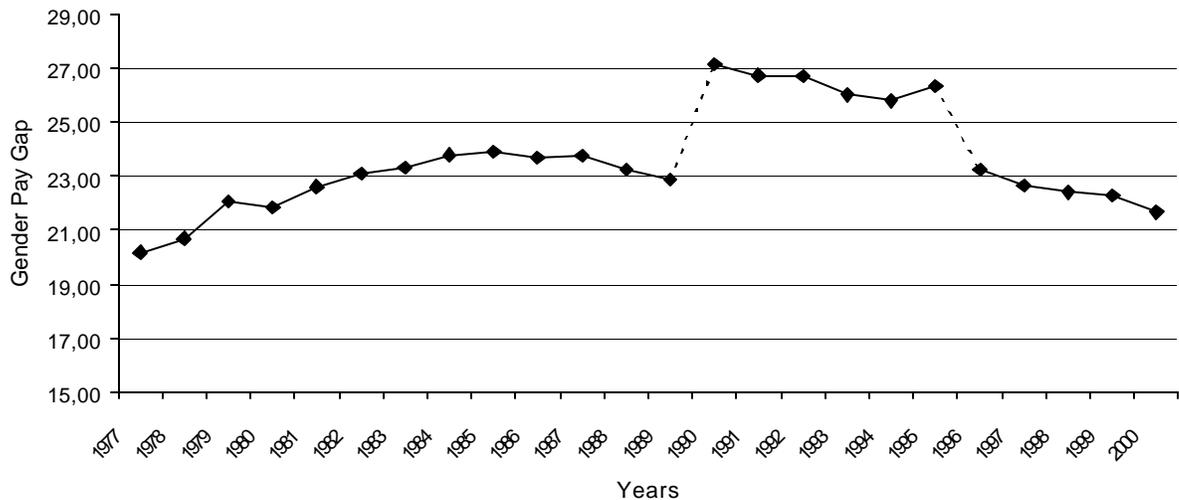


Source: See table 1.1

1.2 Unadjusted gender pay gap

Graph 1.2 summarises the development with regard to the unadjusted pay gap. It should be noted that, due to the differences in datasets the absolute level of the gender pay gap is significantly higher in the period 1990-1995. Nevertheless, it appears that there is a downward trend in the pay gap since the mid-eighties. Given the dramatic changes in the labour market behaviour of Dutch women in the same period, however, this decrease seems rather limited.

Graph 1.2 Unadjusted gender pay gap (in %), 1977-2000



Source: table 1.1

1.3 Wages of full-timers and part-timers

The development of the wages of fulltime jobs with respect to part-time jobs is of interest, since women are over represented in part-time jobs. As a result, wage differentials in full-time and part-time jobs may have an influence on the gender pay gap. Data on full-timers and part-timers are provided by the 'Survey on employment and wages' of Statistics Netherlands and are available since 1987. All developments are indexed at 1987 equals 100.

Table 1.2 Gross hourly wage (index) development by gender and full-time and part-time employees, 1987-1995

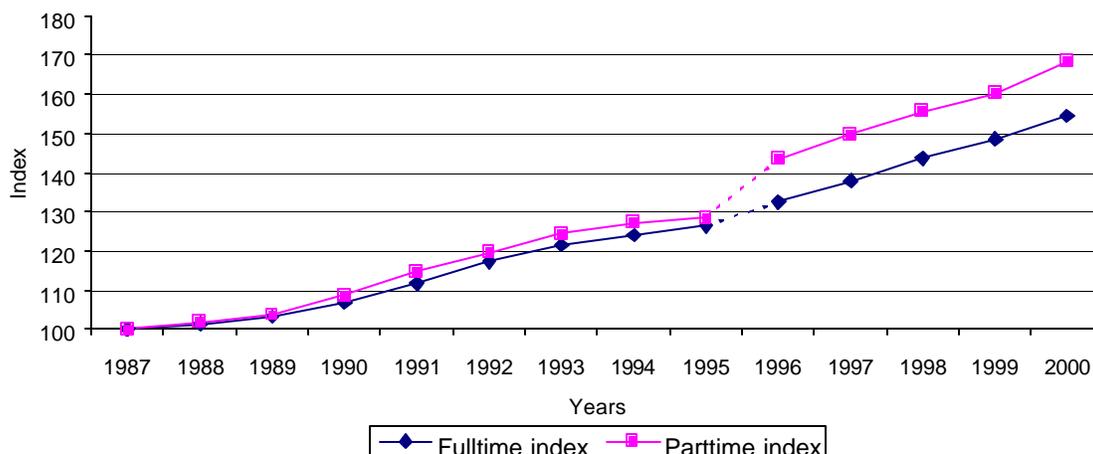
Year	Wage of fulltime employees (€)			Wage of parttime employees (€)			Fulltime index Total	Part-time index Total	Working time wage gap (wage pt/wage ft)	Wage gap female pt male ft
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female				
1987	10.76	11.40	8.18	8.41	9.41	8.13	100.00	100.00	78.2	71.3
1988	10.90	11.54	8.30	8.57	9.48	8.30	101.30	101.90	78.6	71.9
1989	11.10	11.75	8.49	8.72	9.50	8.49	103.16	103.69	78.6	72.3
1990	11.51	12.19	8.85	9.13	9.83	8.90	106.97	108.56	79.3	73.2
1991	12.02	12.72	9.28	9.64	10.43	9.40	111.71	114.63	80.2	73.9
1992	12.62	13.34	9.61	10.06	10.85	9.82	117.29	119.62	79.7	73.6
1993	13.07	13.81	10.81	10.46	11.20	10.20	121.47	124.38	80.0	73.9
1994	13.35	14.11	10.40	10.70	11.45	10.50	124.07	127.23	80.1	74.4
1995	13.59	14.35	10.55	10.80	11.54	10.59	126.30	128.42	79.5	73.8
1996	14.26	14.97	11.44	12.06	13.48	11.59	132.52	143.40	84.6	77.4
1997	14.83	15.55	11.98	12.60	13.96	12.15	137.83	149.82	85.0	78.1
1998	15.46	16.21	12.59	13.09	14.42	12.62	143.68	155.65	84.7	77.9
1999	15.98	16.79	13.05	13.48	14.91	13.02	148.51	160.29	84.4	77.5
2000	16.62	17.45	13.65	14.16	15.64	13.66	154.46	168.34	85.2	78.3

Source: period 1987-1995: CBS (1996)
period 1996-2000: CBS (2002)

When looking at the data, it is hardly surprising that the average gross hourly wage of both full-time and part-time jobs has increased over the entire period. Index development shows a less consistent picture. The average gross hourly wage for part-time jobs has increased faster than the average gross hourly wage for full-time jobs during the period 1987-1995, whereas for the last five years the growth rates are more or less similar. As a result, the working time wage gap has decreased during the first half of the 1990's, whereas in the second half of the 1990's it has hovered around 85 percent. These trends are illustrated in the graph below, which depicts the development of the index of the gross hourly wages for full-time and part-time jobs.

Given the highly gendered working time pattern, the slightly decreasing working time wage gap during the period 1987-1995 is mirrored in the decreasing difference between female part-time and male full-time wages – see the last column of table 1.2. In the second half of the 1990's, this ratio remains more or less the same, which corresponds to the rather stable working time wage gap.

Graph 1.3 Gross hourly wage index development of full-time and part-time employees, 1987-2000



Source: see table 1.2

1.4 Incidence of low pay

Part of the gender pay gap may be related to the fact that women more often have a low paid job than men. Table 1.3 presents some details in this respect. A job paid at minimum wage means that the employee earns at maximum the age related statutory minimum wage. If an employee has a part-time job, the wage level is determined in accordance to the working hours.

From table 1.3 it appears that the concentration of women among the minimum wagers and among the employees earning a maximum of 110% of the minimum wage is indeed relatively high. This translates into an above average share of women among minimum wagers and among employees earning at maximum 110% of the minimum wage. The table also indicates that the share of low paid jobs among male and female employees diminishes during the period at hand, presumably due to the positive economic climate during the second half of the 1990's. This development can be ascertained for both men and women, as a result of which the share of women among the low paid jobs remains rather stable. This value hovers around 56%.

Table 1.3 Low paid jobs, 1995-2000

Year	Minimum wage:			110% of minimum wage:		
	% of male workers	% of female workers	share of women	% of male workers	% of female workers	share of women
1995	3,4	6,7	56,6	6,0	12,8	58,3
1996	3,9	7,3	55,5	6,7	12,8	56,0
1997	3,8	7,1	56,3	6,7	12,6	56,4
1998	3,4	6,7	57,8	6,4	12,4	57,6
1999	3,3	5,9	56,9	6,0	11,3	58,1
2000	3,0	5,6	55,8	5,5	10,4	56,0

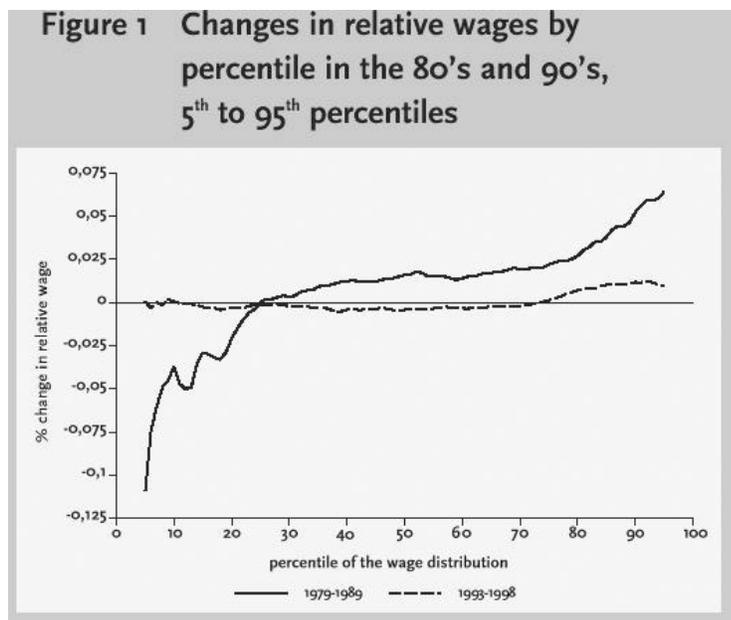
Source: Enquête Werkgelegenheid en lonen (CBS, 2002)

1.5 Wage inequality

Having sketched the development of the gender pay gap and the development of low income, it may be useful to investigate the overall development of wage inequality in general as well. Using different micro datasets, Stegeman and Waaijers (2001) have investigated the development of wage inequality over the period 1979-1998. They calculate changes in the relative wage by percentile in order to show the development of inequality for wages over the whole wage distribution.

More specifically, they calculated the (average) wage per percentile in the beginning- and end-year, and then calculated the deviation from the average wage. After this, they subtracted the beginning-year relative wage from the end-year relative wage. If wage inequality increases, then employees with a low wage in the starting year will normally become relatively worse off, while high wage workers become relatively better off.

The figure below, taken from Stegeman & Waaijer (2001), shows that according to this measure inequality has risen, both in the 1980's and the 1990's. In the 1980's, the lowest 30% of the wage distribution became worse off, while the remaining 70% became relatively better off. In the 1990's the picture becomes rather different. Until the 10th percentile, the relative wage remains stable, and from the 10th to the 75th percentile, the relative wage decreases. The relative wages in the upper quartile of the wage distribution increase, resulting in more wage inequality in the upper part of the wage distribution (Stegeman & Waaijer, 2001: 51).



In order to investigate the causes, the wage differences are decomposed in changes in observed returns, unobservables and composition effects. More in particular, it is demonstrated that composition effects partly mask the increasing return to skills. This was mainly due to the increased supply of highly educated workers. If in the coming years this composition effect no longer diminishes the increase of the skill returns, the

wage differential will widen further, given the same increase in demand. This is not unlikely given the emphasis on skill-biased technical change.

It is not completely clear what the impacts of these developments have been or will be on the gender wage gap. In general, an increase in wage inequality goes hand in hand with an increase in the gender wage gap. At the same time, the authors conclude that the wage differential between men and women remained fairly constant during the period at hand.

2 National research

The gender pay gap has been the subject of study quite a few times resulting in several reports and policy documents. This section intends to give an overview of the most important results focussing on policy documents and recent initiatives.

2.1 Dutch Labour Inspectorate Research

In what has almost become a tradition, originally started by the Office on Wage-issues ('*Loontechnische Dienst*') the Dutch Labour Inspectorate ('*Arbeidsinspectie*') has studied the labour position of male and females on the Dutch labour market on several occasions, starting in 1993. A second and a third report were published in 1996 and 1998. A fourth report is expected in fall 2002.

The research of 1993 (I-SZW, 1995) and 1996 (Spijkerman & Venema, 1998) concentrates on the labour position of male and females in the private sector, whereas the research of 1998 (Spijkerman, 2000) also deals with the public sector.

2.1.1 Data sources and sample restrictions

Whereas the information used in Chapter 1 was gathered by Statistics Netherlands, the Dutch Labour Inspectorate uses its own primary sources. More specifically, the report is based on Research on Conditions of Employment 1999 (*Arbeidsvoorwaardenonderzoek 1999*) (Spijkerman, 2000: 1).

The data on employees in the private sector and parts of the public sector were collected using a stratified sample. For the other parts of the public sector, data files were made available by specialised services (Spijkerman, 2000: 59-60). There are some sample restrictions. First of all, in order to make a comparison possible between the research of 1993 and 1996, members of the board of directors, persons with the highest job levels and the category 'unknown' were excluded from the sample (Spijkerman, 2000: V). Secondly, not all background characteristics are known with respect to the data files provided by specialist services of the public sector. For example, data on education, position, ethnicity and job levels were missing, whereas job levels for the public sector had to be based on salary scales. As a result, the data have to be treated with the usual caution (Spijkerman, 2000: 60).

In addition, it has to be noted that a distinction has been made between adult employees (aged 23 and over) and youth (aged 22 and under) (Spijkerman, 2000: VI). The reason given for doing this is that the pay system for the youth differs from that of the adult employees. The wage of adult employees is determined by experience and other characteristics, whereas the wage level of young employees is rather strictly based on age. Incorporating youth in the analysis could possibly lead to a smoothing of the pay gap between males and females. The Dutch Labour Inspectorate found the following gender pay gaps for young employees.

Table 2.1 (Un)adjusted gender pay gap for young employees (aged 22 years and under) by sector, 1993, 1996 and 1998

Year	Public sector		Private sector	
	Unadjusted	Adjusted	Unadjusted	Adjusted
1993	Unknown	Unknown	10%	6%
1996	Unknown	Unknown	12%	0%
1998	-17%	0%	10%	0%

Source: Spijkerman, 2000: VI

Within the public sector, the wage difference is –17%, which means that young women earn in fact more than men. This result may be influenced by a difference in age composition between men and women. In the private sector, there is an unadjusted wage gap between men and women of approximately 10%, which has remained more or less stable. For the public and private sector, the adjusted wage difference has disappeared.

2.1.2 Unadjusted & adjusted gender pay gap

Table 2.2 combines the results of the Labour Inspectorate research for the years 1993, 1996 and 1998. The unadjusted and the adjusted gender pay gap in the public sector are smaller than the private sector. When looking at the development of the (un)adjusted gender pay gap within the private sector, it is noticeable that it has decreased, albeit slowly. When corrected for background characteristics, women earn 7% less than men in the private sector and 4% less than men in the public sector. The absolute levels and the downward trend of the gender pay gap correspond with the results of section 1.2.

Table 2.2 (Un)adjusted gender pay gap for employees aged 23 years and over by sector, 1993, 1996 and 1998

	Public		Private	
	Unadjusted	Adjusted	Unadjusted	Adjusted
1993	Unknown	Unknown	26%	9%
1996	Unknown	Unknown	24%	7%
1998	15%	4%	23%	7%

Source: Spijkerman, 2000: 52-53

2.1.3 Method of decomposition

Basically, the adjusted gender pay gap is the unadjusted gender pay gap corrected for background characteristics, such as education, age, etc. There are numerous techniques available to accomplish this. The Dutch Labour Inspectorate has opted for OLS regression analyses to derive the adjusted gender pay gap (Spijkerman, 2000: 71-72).

2.1.4 Background characteristics

The independent variables used in OLS analyses for the private sector are clustered into three categories:

- personal characteristics like ethnicity, age, education (categorised as low, medium, high and unknown) and experience (years of employment at current employer);

- occupational characteristics like full-time/part-time, job level (categorised in eight levels, of which the highest two are not included in the actual analyses), occupation (categorised in seven groups: technical and manual workers, administrative jobs, jobs in automation, commercial jobs, caring jobs, creative jobs and managerial jobs) and other wage components (categorised as personal allowance, allowance for unsocial hours and allowances in kind);
- other characteristics like industry and company size.

In the analyses for the public sector the independent variables are age, experience, part-time/full-time working hours and job level (Spijkerman, 2000: 4-16). The main results of the analyses are:

Ethnicity

Non-native women earned 6% less than non-native men, whereas native women earned 7% less than native men. Since there's hardly a difference between the native and the non-native gaps, this characteristic has no influence on the gender pay gap (Spijkerman, 2000: 29)

Age, education, experience

Women are relatively younger, have a lower education and have less years of work experience at their current employer. All these factors contribute to a higher gender pay gap (Spijkerman, 2000: 4-6, 13-14, 26).

Full-time/part-time

Fulltime or part-time working hours have an influence on the level of the gross hourly wage. Part-timers with a large part-time job earn 3% less than fulltimers, whereas this is 4% for persons with a small part-time job. Females are more often than men part-time employed. This increases the gender pay gap (Spijkerman, 2000: 29).

Job level

The higher the job level increases, the higher the gross hourly wage. As women are over represented in the lower job levels and underrepresented in the higher job levels, this increases the gender pay gap (Spijkerman, 2000: 27, 30).

Occupations

Employees in service and caring occupations earn 2% less than employees in technical/manual occupations. Almost half of the women are employed in the service or care sector, whereas just a quarter of the men work in that sector (Spijkerman, 2000: 11, 22-23, 27)

The relative weight of the background characteristics on the unadjusted gender pay gap in the private sector are shown in the table 2.3. Unfortunately, no such data are available for the public sector.

Table 2.3 Relevance of the independent variables, private sector 1998

Background characteristics	Percentage explained variance
• job level	38%
• part-time / fulltime	11%
• education	7%
• occupation	6%
• age	5%
• experience	4%
• other	3%
• unexplained	26%
Total	100%

Source: SZW, 2002a: 33

Over a quarter of the unadjusted gender pay gap cannot be explained by any of the above-mentioned variables. There may be methodological reasons for this unexplained part: relevant background characteristics may be missing, characteristics may be measured incorrectly etc. In addition, the unexplained part may also be the result of sex discrimination (Spijkerman, 2000).

2.1.5 Latest initiatives

Although the Dutch Labour Inspectorate report on the labour market position of males and females in the public and private sector 2000 will not be published before October 2002, the results have already been discussed in the Second Progress Report on Equal Pay (SZW, 2002b).

Contrary to former reports in which youngsters, employees in higher job levels and members of the board of directors were left out, the study based on data of 2000 covers all employees in the private and the public sectors. In order to make a relevant comparison, the Labour Inspectorate also provides the results based on a sample excluding the new categories. From the table 2.4 it appears that between 1998 and 2000 the gender pay gap has remained more or less the same.

Table 2.4 (Un)adjusted gender pay for public and private sector, 1998 and 2000

	Public Sector		Private Sector	
	Unadjusted gender pay gap	Adjusted gender pay gap	Unadjusted gender pay gap	Adjusted gender pay gap
1998	15%	4%	23%	7%
2000	15%	3%	20%	7%
2000 (new sample)	15%	3%	23%	5%

Source: SZW, 2002b: 3-4

Again, there remains an unexplained part of the gender pay gap. According to the Labour Inspectorate, this may be attributed to wage discrimination, but could also be the result of other factors, not included in the study such as the impact of the double burden or gender differences in the amount of fringe benefits.

Other interesting results refer to the fact that the unadjusted gender pay gap is higher among older employees, the higher educated and among employees with more experience.

2.1.6 Policy recommendations

The Labour Inspectorate research contained no explicit policy recommendations, as it was meant as an overview of the position of males and females on the Dutch labour market.

2.2 Wage-index (Loonwijzer)

More recently there has been another major research with respect to the gender pay gap in the Netherlands. This research, called the Wage-index (*Loonwijzer*), is split up in the Men's wage Index (*Mannenloonwijzer*) and the Women's wage Index (*Vrouwenloonwijzer*) and differs from the general CBS statistics and the Dutch Labour Inspectorate report in two ways. Firstly, it uses a different data set, namely an online survey. Secondly, it makes use of a different method of decomposition, namely the Oaxaca method.

The Women's wage Index started in 2001. Basically, the Women's wage Index is an online survey, which asks visitors to fill in a questionnaire with details on educational level, age, etc. This research project was initiated by FNV (the most important trade union organisation in the Netherlands) and the University of Amsterdam (UvA). One of the goals of this research is to create a better insight in the dynamics of the gender pay gap. The first survey was published in May 2001 and contained only data on women. The second one also incorporated men, which made it possible to acquire data on the gender pay gap (Tijdens et al, 2002).

2.2.1 Data sources

Data from the Wage Index research are gathered between May 18, 2001 and January 22, 2002. The questionnaire has been completed 13,688 times. Between January 23 and April 18, 2002 it has been completed 2,723 times. Because both questionnaires have a large overlap, it has been decided to merge the two data sets in order to create one large one consisting of 16,411 respondents. The resulting data set is called Wage Indices 2001/2002 (*Loonwijzers 2001/2002*).

2.2.2 Sample restrictions

Generally, the sample mirrors the composition of the Dutch labour population rather closely. The information of women working over 12 hours a week has been compared to the same population within the Labour force survey (*Enquête Beroepsbevolking*) of Statistics Netherlands with regard to characteristics like industry, amount of working hours, age categories and educational attainment. In most case the divergence is less than 5 percentage points below or above the average.

Not surprisingly, the number of women who completed the questionnaire was larger than the number of men, namely 55% women compared to 45% men. Among the active population, this proportion is the other way around. Therefore, the results have been weighted accordingly.

There are also differences with respect to the distribution across age categories. Most likely this has to do with the use of Internet. Elderly tend to use the Internet less than younger people. In the Wage Indices 2001/2002, the age category 25-34 is over represented with 15 percentage points, whereas the age category 45-54 is underrepresented with 10 percentage points (both males and females). With respect to the rest of the age categories, the difference remained within the 5% limit. Therefore, the data have also been weighted according to age (Tijdens et al, 2002: 2-3).

It should be noted that, since data on the gender pay are gathered for only one year, it is hard to verify the reliability of the outcomes. Future research will yield more observations and therefore more substantial outcomes.

2.2.3 *Unadjusted & adjusted gender pay gap*

From table 2.5 it appears that, on the basis of this research, the unadjusted gender pay gap can be estimated as 11.3% and the adjusted gender pay gap as 3.2%. As much as 71.5% of the unadjusted gender pay gap could be explained by differences in background characteristics. That means that over a quarter of the gender pay gap could not be explained. This unadjusted gender pay gap is substantially lower than the one found in section 1.2 and the one found by the Dutch Labour Inspectorate, whereas the adjusted gap is almost the same for all three reports (around 4%).

Table 2.5 Unadjusted and adjusted gender pay gap

	Unadjusted gender pay gap	Adjusted gender pay gap
Wage Indices 2001/2002	11.3%	3.2%

Source:Tijdens et al., 2002: III

2.2.4 *Method of de composition*

In addition to the Dutch Labour Inspectorate, which only uses OLS regression analysis, wage differentials in the Wage Indices were analysed by means of the standard Oaxaca-Blinder technique. Firstly, the wage functions for men and women were estimated. After estimating the wage functions for the different categories, they calculated the components of the wage differentials (Tijdens et al., 2002: 150).

2.2.5 *Background characteristics*

The Loonwijzer utilized a number of variables to adjust for differences in productivity related factors. The background characteristics are: education, experience, number of years employed at current employer, working in a male dominated jobs, type of labour contract, size of company, working below educational level, working under a collective labour agreement, working part-time, having a child living at home, industry and region (Tijdens et al, 2002: 5-8).

As stated, 8.1 percentage-points of the pay gap (the difference between the unadjusted and adjusted pay gap) can be explained by differences in background characteristics. The most significant in this respect are education and experience (men have a higher education and are more experienced). 3.2 percentage points can be attributed to discrimination. This may be positive or negative for women. Women have a lower return of years of experience. Having a child at home also has a negative impact: working women with a child at home earn less than men having a child at home.

However, there also seems to be ‘positive’ discrimination. For example, women have a higher return on education (which counter effects the composition effect). Also, women working in a male-dominated job earn on average more than men working that same job and women working under a collective agreement earn more than men working under a collective agreement.

The Oaxaca-Blinder technique is hardly used in the Netherlands. Unfortunately, the results are described rather unaccessible. The results seem to suggest that the ‘nett’ result is positive for women, that is when the background characteristics should be the same for men and women, women would earn more than men.

2.2.6 Policy recommendations

The *Vrouwenloonwijzer* research contains no policy recommendations.

2.2.7. Concluding remarks

The Wage Indices are relatively unique in the sense that they contain descriptions of job prospects for 99 separate jobs. In order to bring the report to life, the box below discusses two female-dominated professions, namely care and retail, and deal with their job and wage prospects.

Box 2.1 Job prospects in ‘care’ and ‘retail’

Care

Home helps (doing household tasks and/or caring tasks), geriatric helpers and nurses together make up the section ‘care’.

The care-sector is a female-dominated sector, as almost all respondents are female and indicate that most of their colleagues are females too. Employees in the ‘care’ sector often work part-time (around 75%), on average 25 hours.

Dissatisfaction is high in the care sector, as currently around 60% of the employees are unsatisfied with their current wages. Moreover, on average only one out of four has ever been promoted. Despite this fact, labor mobility is low, as many employees have stayed longer than 5 years with their current employer. Although they believe they’ll easily find another job, they remain pessimistic about their wages: only half of the respondents thought they would earn more in another job.

Moreover, on average around 33% of the women have interrupted their career to take care of their children, one of the highest scores. However, around ¾ of them consider the combination of work and care to be manageable.

Retail

Shop assistant and cash register clerk together make up the sector ‘retail’.

The ‘retail’ sector is a female-dominated sector, as almost 4 out of 5 of the respondents are female and indicate that most of her colleagues are female as well. Employees in the ‘retail’ sector often work part-time (around 56%), on average 26 hours.

Dissatisfaction is high in the retail sector, as currently around 69% of those employees are unsatisfied with their current wages. Moreover, only 22% has ever been promoted. Labour mobility is high as well, as many employees stay shorter than two years with their current employer. Three fourths believe they’ll easily find another job and the average, namely 61% of the respondents thought they would earn more in another job.

3 Institutional background

Wages are in principle a matter of supply and demand. At the same time, this process of supply and demand is not relegated to a vacuum. Institutional factors, such as legislative and regulatory measures, create the background against which the matching processes occur. This section will shortly describe the system of wage setting and, in more detail, the minimum wage legislation. The section will also describe two important institutional factors that influence the labour market position of women, namely child care arrangements and leave facilities.

3.1 System of wage setting

Wages are regulated by means of Collective Labour Agreements (*Collectieve Arbeidsovereenkomsten* or so-called *CAO's*). Collective agreements can be negotiated at the company-level or the industry level. There are nearly one thousand collective agreements in the Netherlands, which cover the lion share of employees. Increasing flexibility or in more general terms, providing tailor-made solutions has become a central issue with regard to negotiations of wages, working time and working hours.

The parties agreeing to the Collective Labour Agreement can request the CLA to be broader applied, namely also to the employers, who are non-aligned with the CLA-parties. This request for a generally binding declaration (*Algemeen verbindend verklaring AVV*) is sent to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (Plantenga and Van Velzen, 1993: 12). The law on 'declaration of generally binding' is an important element in the Dutch system of wage negotiations because it allows the minister of social affairs and employment to influence the wage determination process in an indirect way. By declaring (parts of) a sector-level collective agreement 'generally binding', the agreement extends to all employers and employees working in that particular sector.

With regard to the actual bargaining process it appears that women are, in general, poorly represented in bargaining committees. Research done by Sloep (1996) shows that emancipation in general was not a hot issue in negotiations. When raised however, it was done by unions with a relatively high share of women. This situation may have been improved since the research has been conducted, but matters still leave a lot to be desired.

3.2 Minimum wage legislation

Minimum wage legislation is an important element in the Dutch system of wage-setting, providing employees a certain minimum wage, corresponding to their age. The official statutory minimum wage for male and female workers aged between 23 years and 65 years was introduced by law in 1969. The same law also guaranteed a minimum holiday allowance (as a percentage of the wage). An effective minimum wage for 'adult' labour already existed before 1969, based on a national agreement between employers and unions in 1964. In 1974, a legal minimum wage was introduced for youth labour (younger than 23), calculated as a specific percentage of the adult minimum wage (Plantenga & Van Velzen, 1993: 15).

At the moment, there appears to be no public debate at any level on minimum wages as a way of preventing gender pay discrimination, although in the Netherlands such a discussion occurred when the relevant legislation was originally introduced (Grunell, 2002: 4).

3.2.1 Minimum (youth) wage coverage

Every employee aged 65 and under is entitled to a minimum wage. For employees in the range 23-65 this constitutes the lawful minimum wage. Employees aged 23 and under are entitled to the minimum youth wage. In order to qualify as an employee, one has to be contractually employed. Holiday workers and domestic personnel also belong to this category. There is no legal minimum wage for persons aged 14 and under, although children aged 13 and 14 are allowed to work 2 hours a day at home or in the neighbourhood.

As of January 1, 1993, the distinction between employees working more and employees working less than one third of the normal working week was invalidated. Since that date, both employees with fulltime jobs and employees with (small) part-time jobs are covered by the minimum wage legislation.

The only group of workers, which cannot claim the minimum wage, are those workers who do not have an (official) employment contract. The present law is only applicable to work covered by an official employment contract, and flexible work relationships are often grey areas when it comes to determining whether they are in fact contracts in the sense intended by law (Plantenga and Van Velzen, 1993: 16). The Flexibility and Security Act (*Wet Flexibiliteit en Zekerheid*) states that in case of uncertainty a presumption of employment contract is supposed to exist if an employee has worked since three months each week or at least 20 hours per month for the same employer (De Klaver et al., 2000)

3.2.2 Changes in the minimum wage

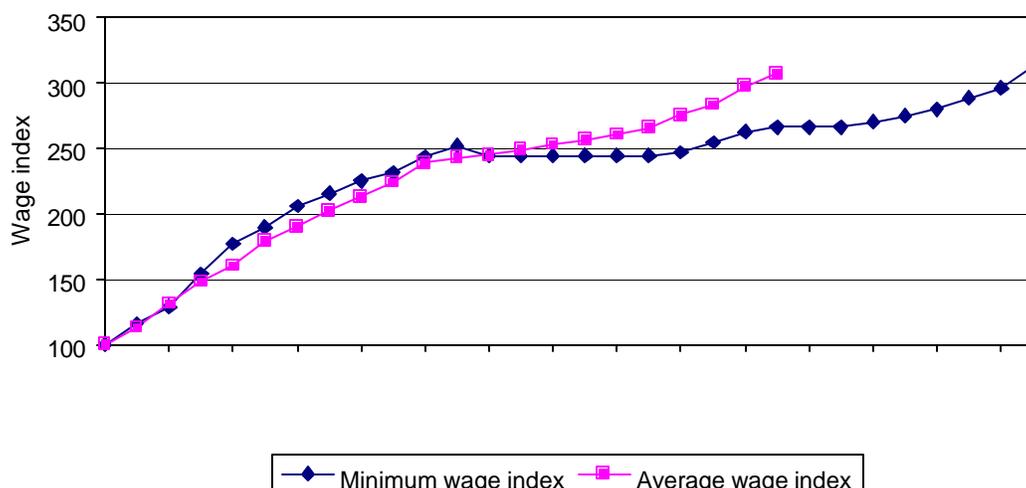
If we index the minimum wage and compare this to the index of the average wage in manufacturing and the service industries, we can investigate whether the average wage rose faster than the minimum wage. Table 3.1 shows the development of the minimum wage (index) and the average wage (index). Wages have been indexed at 1972. From the table it appears that the average wage has increased faster than the minimum wage during the period at hand (1972-1993). Among other things, this implies that the relevance of the minimum wage with regard to the gender pay gap diminishes.

Table 3.1 Minimum and average wage (index) development, 1970-1997

Year	Minimum wage (€)	Minimum wage index	Average Wage in manufacturing and services (€)	Average Wage Index
1970	310	Not included	Unknown	Unknown
1971	327	Not included	Unknown	Unknown
1972	369	100.00	606	100.00
1973	427	115.72	686	113.20
1974	476	129.00	796	131.35
1975	569	154.20	897	148.02
1976	653	176.96	972	160.40
1977	698	189.16	1084	178.88
1978	759	205.69	1152	190.10
1979	795	215.45	1227	202.48
1980	829	224.66	1288	212.54
1981	854	231.44	1357	223.93
1982	898	243.36	1447	238.78
1983	930	252.03	1469	242.41
1984	902	244.44	1483	244.72
1985	902	244.44	1508	248.84
1986	902	244.44	1532	252.81
1987	902	244.44	1553	256.27
1988	902	244.44	1577	260.23
1989	902	244.44	1609	265.51
1990	910	246.61	1668	275.25
1991	938	254.20	1717	283.33
1992	968	262.33	1801	297.19
1993	982	266.12	1860	306.93
1994	982	266.12	Unknown	Unknown
1995	982	266.12	Unknown	Unknown
1996	996	269.92	Unknown	Unknown
1997	1013	274.53	Unknown	Unknown
1998	1033	279.95	Unknown	Unknown
1999	1064	288.35	Unknown	Unknown
2000	1092	295.93	Unknown	Unknown
2001	1154	312.74	Unknown	Unknown
2002	1207	327.10	Unknown	Unknown

Source: CBS, data provided on request

Graph 3.1 Minimum and average wage index development, 1970-1997



Source: See table 3.1

3.2.3 Minimum youth wages

The minimum youth wages as a percentage of the standard minimum wage are shown in the table below

Table 3.2 Minimum youth wages as a percentage of minimum wage by age

Age	Youth wage per month, July 2002
23 years and over	€231,80
22 years	85% of minimum wage
21 years	72% of minimum wage
20 years	62% of minimum wage
19 years	52% of minimum wage
18 years	45% of minimum wage
17 years	40% of minimum wage
16 years	35% of minimum wage
15 years	30% of minimum wage

Source: SZW, 2002c

3.2.4 Uprating agreements

The minimum (youth) wage is changed twice a year, namely the first of January and the first of July. This is done based on forecasts by the CPB Netherlands Bureau for economic policy analysis (*Centraal Plan Bureau; CPB*) on the increase of the wages as negotiated in Collective Labour Agreements. This rule has been legalized in the Coupling with Adjustment-possibilities Act (*Wet Koppeling met Aanpassingsmogelijkheden, Wka*). This way, the minimum wage develops in line with the average increase in wage levels. It may be the case that there is a difference between the forecasts and the actual increase of the wages. This is accounted for in the changes in January (SZW, 2002d).

This rule only applies if the so-called i/a ratio (the number of inactive persons divided by the number of active persons) does not exceed a certain level. Currently, this ratio is set at 82,6. If the i/a ratio becomes higher than this value, the government is allowed to decide to decouple the development of the minimum wage from the development of the average national wage. The CPB expects an i/a ratio of 66 for the year 2002 (SZW, 2002d).

3.2.5 Regulation of pay (and other benefits) for part-time workers

Since 1996 it is prohibited to make a distinction between employees, solely on the basis of a difference in working hours (*Wet verbod van onderscheid op grond van arbeidsduur*, WOA). This entails that a part-time employee has a right to proportionally the same wage, allowances, vacation days and pension as a fulltime employee. In addition, if a probationary period has been agreed upon, the length of this is the same for every employee, regardless of the hours to be worked.

Applying the ‘pro-rato’ rule is not always justified. For example, when it comes to travelling-allowances, an employee working twenty hours a week, spread over 5 days, has to receive the same travelling-allowance as a colleague working full-time. Only if the part-time employee works less than five days, it is justified to award him a lower compensation. Another difficulty relates to working overtime. Part-timers are not entitled to paid overtime unless they exceed the normal amount of working hours per day, for example a week consisting of 36, 38 or 40 working hours (Plantenga, 2002).

3.3 Childcare and parental leave

In general, it is assumed that better childcare and parental leave facilities contribute to reconciling work and care and thereby strengthen the labour market position of women. Although the childcare sector is in the process of being expanded and the leave facilities are being extended, the situation in the Netherlands still leaves much to be desired. There is still a heavy demand for affordable child care facilities, whereas leave facilities are fragmented and often unpaid. This is detrimental to the labour market position of women and as such to their relative wage. In the words of the OECD (1999:): “Dutch women may be bearing a disproportionate share of costs of the present system on two fronts. First, public childcare arrangements and the opening hours of schools (generally unsupported by afterschool care) do not cover the full working day. In consequence, in the interest of parental time with children, Dutch women occupy the great majority of part-time jobs and pay the major costs of lost opportunity. Second, their salary level remains lower than male earnings. Women, for example predominate in lowly-paid sectors, including within the childcare field itself” (OECD 1999, no. 93).

3.3.1 Childcare – present situation

Childcare facilities in the Netherlands are growing fast. In 1998, during the second ‘Purple’ cabinet (a coalition between social-democrats and (conservative) liberals) it was agreed that child care should be expanded. In June 1999, government announced a detailed plan that aimed to almost double the number of childcare places with an additional 71,000 places, of which 60% aims at primary school children (SZW, 2002a). This entails that childcare centres should be able to harbour 160,000 children in total. The emphasis with respect to this expansion lies with the creation of childcare places for children ages 4-12. At the end of 2000, already over 32,000 childcare places had been created. In 2001, already 60,000 childcare places were realized and the expectation is that at the end of 2002 the goal of creating 72,000 extra childcare

places will be surpassed. In fact, 187,000 places in total are expected to be available at the end of 2002.

As most parents use formal childcare facilities only on a part-time basis, the 154,000 places available at the end of 2001 were sufficient to meet the needs of around 315,000 children. At that time, organized childcare provision was available for approximately a quarter of all children under the age of 3. Out-of-school care was available for 8% of children aged between 4 and 12 (Netwerkbureau, 2002).

3.3.2 Childcare - changes

The cabinet has adopted a law called the Childcare (Basic Provision) Act ('*Wet basisvoorziening kinderopvang*' or *WBK*), which will be in force in 2004. This law is meant to make it easier for men and women to combine work and care. The Childcare (Basic Provision) Act tries to achieve this by producing a free market in childcare. Making childcare demand-driven is expected to lead to an adequate supply. In addition, the government hopes to achieve that also people on low and average incomes will be able to enter the market for childcare services by means of a non-income-related contribution from the employer and an income-related contribution from the government (SZW, 2002a: 22).

3.3.3 Parental Leave - present situation

The parental leave act (*Wettelijke regeling ouderschapsverlof*) gives employees a statutory right to unpaid parental leave for children up to 8 years. The leave entitlement is calculated in hours and equals thirteen times the average weekly working time. In principle, the standard regulation provides a 6-month entitlement to part-time leave, which corresponds to a full-time leave of 13 weeks. From 1 July 1997 the leave can be taken full time or the leave can be spread over a period of more than 6 months if the employer agrees. Since the introduction of the Work and Care Bill in December 2001 the parental leave may be split up in parts with a maximum of three times, but only if the employer agrees (Staatsblad, 2001).

3.3.4 Parental leave – changes

Recently, with the coming to power of the new centrum right government in summer 2002, a new proposal aims to transform a number of existing leave schemes into a new 'life cycle leave facility'. The idea is that every employee can save a certain amount of money at a personal account, which can be used at a later stage as an income facility when taking (unpaid) leave. In the proposal it is suggested that the government will add a bonus of 30% to the total savings. Although it is an interesting attempt to create more flexibility into the life course of employees, it is unlikely that the new facility will make much difference from a reconciliation point of view. The maximum amount of savings is rather limited, and the personal account does not give a right to (unpaid) leave. Both elements make the facility less useful as an instrument to combine work and care.

4 National policies

There are several law and policies (in)directly related to closing the gender pay gap. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment deals with equal pay in different ways, like explicit equal pay legislation, policy initiatives and more generally in their equal opportunities policy.

4.1 Laws on equal pay

Article 5 of the Equal Treatment Act (*Algemene Wet gelijke behandeling*) prohibits making a distinction between employees on the basis of the conditions of employment. This also includes wage. The Equal Treatment Act further prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, conviction, political affiliation, race, sex, nationality, hetero- or homosexuality or marital status. This general law has been evaluated, but not in terms of gender inequality or the gender pay gap (Asscher-Vonk & Groenendijk, 1999).

In addition, article 7:646 lid 1 of the Civil Code (*Burgerlijk Wetboek*) prohibits making a distinction between employees on the grounds of labour conditions. This also includes wage. Furthermore, Article 7:648 of the Civil Code prohibits employers to make a distinction between employees on the grounds of differences in the amount of working hours and the conditions under which the labour agreement was entered, continued or discontinued.

An important institution with regard to the Equal Treatment Act is the Commission of Equal Treatment (*Commissie gelijke behandeling*). The Commission is an independent organization founded by the government, where civilians can file their complaints concerning unequal treatment. The Commission deals with direct and indirect discrimination. In 2000, the Commission came to a verdict 101 times. That is eleven times less than in 1999. As in preceding years, the lion share of the rulings in 2000 appertained to disputes concerning sex and race. The number of verdicts concerning unequal treatment on the basis of sex has increased from 42 in 1999 to 51 in 2000. Although the decisions are not binding, they do serve as a basis for governmental policies and actions. See box 4.1 for a case with regard to (indirect) wage discrimination.

4.2 Policy initiatives with regard to equal pay

Besides creating a framework of laws within which equal pay should be safeguarded, national government is involved in a number of initiatives which deal with combating the gender pay gap. These initiatives gained momentum since the start of the Action Plan Equal Pay in spring 2000. (TK 1999-2000). This Action plan provided an analysis of the gender wage gap (based on the report of the Labour Inspectorate of 1998) and an overview of policies targeted at diminishing unjustified wage differences. In this Action Plan and more specifically the overview of policy initiatives, it is quite clear that a diminishing of the gender wage gap is not seen as the responsibility of the national government only. Social partners, works councils and employees are explicitly addressed as important partners who should take their responsibilities for closing the gender pay gap. Examples of policy initiatives are (SZW 2001 & 2002b):

- a grant awarded to the Equal Treatment Commission to fund the development of a quick scan method which can be used to provide ready insights into the pay structures of individual companies. The development of the instrument will be reported on during 2002 (SZW, 2002a: 33)

- a study conducted on gender pay inequality in flexible pay schemes. The main conclusion is that 9% more men than women receive flexible pay. The main problem seems to be the difference in the access of women into flexible pay schemes, because these schemes are often connected with high level jobs or jobs that are performed outside the office. Since women are under represented in these kind of jobs, they gain less in terms of flexible pay (PCW, 2002: 119).

- the development and introduction of an instrument to assess the gender neutrality of job-evaluation systems (*Toetsinstrument voor de beoordeling van seksneutraliteit van functiewaarderingsystemen*). This instrument has been developed in cooperation with social partners, system holders and the Commission for Equal Treatment. System holders are asked to utilize the instrument, in order to realize gender-neutral job evaluation systems and to ensure equal pay for labour of equal worth. This instrument will be applied on a voluntary basis and evaluation will follow in 2003 (Veldman, 2000).

- stimulating micro-economic research. Because the research performed by the Dutch Labour Inspectorate contains figures of wage differentials on a macro-level, it is not possible to determine whether unjustified wage differentials occur at the company level. Especially social partners have urged for a different methodology, focussing more on the micro (company) level. This research is currently underway and the first pilot (conducted in three organizations) is scheduled for October 2002. This pilot is also intended to develop a scientifically sound research methodology to study equal pay on a company level. In order to accomplish this, men and women will be compared pair wise. It still has to be decided if and in which form this research will be continued on a national level (SZW, 2002b: 5-6).

- information service. Observing there is no significant debate on pay equity, (Grunell, 2002: 1) government policies mainly concern attempts to increase the awareness of gender inequality in the Netherlands by means of instruction, education and public campaigns.

- trying to get the topic of equal pay on the agenda of the works councils. In the autumn of 2002 a project will start to inform works council on equal pay issue, and raise their interest. Again, social partners and the Commission of equal treatment will participate in this project.

Box 4.1 Commission of Equal Treatment

A famous case of the Commission of Equal Treatment with regard to wage discrimination is the case of the so-called 'Hossers', referring to the unequal payment of men and women in secondary education.

In 1985, the Restructuring Educational Salaries (*herstructurering onderwijsschalen*) was introduced. This meant a real deterioration of wages for persons entering (or re-entering) the educational system as a teacher. At the same time a so-called transitional provision (*overgangsrecht*) was introduced, stating that this deterioration did not apply to employees who already had a job as a teachers and were likely to have a higher salary in 2000. Given the fact that after 1985 the number of female new (or re-entering) employees grew rather rapidly, this transitional provision resulted in a large wage difference between employees working before 1985 in secondary education (with a relatively low share of women) and the employees entering secondary teaching after 1985 (with a relative high share of women). The wage difference may amount to more than a 1000 Euro per month. The wage difference in principle adds up until retirement age but also has repercussions for the pension level. In 2000 there were 2,5 times as many men than women to whom the transitional provision applied..

The commission stated that this was gross violation of the Equal treatment Act, in particular because of the duration of the inequality which may amount to several decades. Especially the ministry of education, together with the social partners, are held responsible because they determine the financial framework and negotiate on the terms of employment.

Source: Commissie Gelijke Behandeling, 2001

5 Conclusion

An important finding of this research is that both the unadjusted and the adjusted gender pay gap in the Netherlands has been diminishing over the past years, albeit rather slowly. Moreover, if we consider the tremendous change in the labour participation of women of the last years, this decrease is in fact rather limited.

At the moment, the debate concerning the extent of the gender pay gap focuses on the advantages and disadvantages of the use of the unadjusted and the adjusted gender pay with respect to each other. This is reflected in the national reports from the Labour Inspectorate and the Wage indices presented in this report. An inherent danger in focusing intensively on the adjusted gender pay gap is that it takes the angle out of the gender equality debate. The fact that the unadjusted and the adjusted gender pay gap are two sides of the same coin requires attention. Differences in for example job level and experience should not be simply cast aside in an apparently objectively justified way. That is, the adjusted gender pay gap may be minimal or even zero entailing that after correcting for job level, age, position, etc. males and females are rewarded equally for work of equal worth. However, correcting for these characteristics diverts the attention from several other gender gaps. The unadjusted pay gap is, in fact, still a very informative indicator about the unequal labour market position of men and women.

The role of the Dutch government with respect to equal pay is rather limited. Apart from creating a legal framework within which social partners have to realise equal pay, the policy initiatives are 'soft' and often indirect, even after the introduction of the Action Plan Equal Pay in Spring 2000. At the same time, it should be acknowledged that the issue of gender wage inequality has at least re-entered the policy agenda.

In general terms, however, equal pay does not seem to be seen as a direct point of departure for policy by either government or unions. Instead, the improvement of the relative wage rate of women is considered a consequence of a more general policy aimed at improving the labour market position of women. In this respect, future prospects are not completely reassuring. Although the number a child care places is still supposed to increase, the new government emphasises the importance of (traditional) family structures. This becomes evident in the latest policy initiatives in which various benefits and tax reductions are proposed to apply to households instead of individuals.

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