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### Working status and leisure

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# **Working status and leisure**

## **An analysis of the trade-off between solitary and social time**

**Gerbert Kraaykamp, Wouter van Gils and  
Tanja van der Lippe**

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**ABSTRACT.** Paid labour is often said to come at a price. Using time-budget information on 9063 Dutch respondents and their partners, we investigated whether couples working full time economize on their solitary and social time budget. Results show that individuals who are part of a full-time working couple spend a smaller share of their available time budget on social interaction with relatives and friends than individuals from single-earner families or combination households. Instead, in full-time working couples, partners prefer to spend a relatively large share of their leisure time on institutionalized social interaction, such as volunteering, cultural participation and attending sports events. **KEY WORDS** • couples • full-time work • social time • societal involvement • time budget

### **Introduction**

In this study we examine if and how available time for solitary and social activities is affected when people are part of a full-time working couple. Substantial changes in household routines since the 1960s have been a direct result of the increased inflow of women in the labour market, resulting in ever more full-time working couples (Van der Lippe and Van Dijk, 2001; Van Gils and Kraaykamp, 2008). The emergence of dual-earner couples has resulted in decreasing gender inequality in the western world, but has also brought about significant changes

in how couples organize their private lives. In households where women have taken up more paid labour, this has led to a time squeeze, with solitary and social activities in the middle.

Indeed, problems of time scarcity have been at the centre of attention in social science research on families and households. Especially quality of life in dual-earner families is a shared concern, and most studies report that leisure time has become scarcer and life more harried (Schor, 1991; Robinson and Godbey, 1997; Jacobs and Gerson, 2001; Garhammer, 2003, 2004). Unsurprisingly, of all working couples, those where both partners work full time are the most likely to experience a squeeze between work demands and recreation (Jacobs and Gerson, 2001; Van der Lippe, 2007). In these households, both partners face a time crunch regarding their private leisure consumption and interaction with family members and friends. Additionally, actual time shortage among full-time working couples often is accompanied by a feeling of not having enough time and a speeding up of life (Hochschild and Machung, 2003; Southerton, 2003; Mattingly and Sayer, 2006).

This article examines how the spare time of individuals living in a full-time working couple is distributed over three kinds of leisure activities. This distribution is then compared with that for individuals from single-earner families and from combination households. Our main interest lies in the leisure activities that people may choose to economize upon when compulsory tasks, such as work, education and caring, consume more hours. In order to understand which specific leisure activities are most affected, we distinguish three kinds of leisure pursuits. First is solitary leisure time, which includes individual activities such as reading, listening to music and practising hobbies. The second category is interaction with family and friends, such as talking with relatives, sharing meals and visiting friends. The third category is social interaction in an institutionalized setting, like volunteering, cultural participation and attending sports events. To examine the trade-off between these activities in detail, we use six Dutch time-use surveys conducted between 1975 and 2000.

Research on the consequences of working full time may be seen in the light of growing concern about a potential decline of social capital (Putnam, 1995). When spouses invest more of their available hours in work, this time cannot be dedicated to close social relations with others – relatives and friends – or to societal involvement. This development may hamper social cohesion and connectivity among a society's members.

### **How Do We Spend Our Spare Time?**

On the whole, there is no inequality in the endowment of available time. Everybody has 24 hours in a day that may be spent on paid labour, household

chores, cultural activities, talking with relatives and other activities. Given the nature of time, an increase in working hours is necessarily associated with a reduction of attention to other activities. After all, the time individuals have is restricted, can only be spent once, and cannot be saved for moments when it is most needed (Szalai, 1973). The time people spend working is not the only factor causing a time squeeze, yet it is the most inflexible one, since household chores and errands can be done after working hours at various moments during the day. When people face a shortage of time for leisure consumption they may economize on cleaning, childcare, shopping or education, or they may outsource these tasks to gain more time. In other words, these activities are flexible in nature, whereas paid labour tends to be less flexible. The greatest impact on how people spend their time is therefore expected to result from their level of participation in the labour market.

Level of activity in the labour market is thus vital to our investigation. We chose to examine more than just individual workload, as this is only part of the picture. It is important to also recognize the substantial difference between an individual's time budget and a family's or couple's time budget. As two spouses together are responsible for the management of their family, both experience the resources it provides as well as the restrictions it imposes. Couples who live together either in marriage or cohabitation are therefore constrained by a joint schedule. They combine work, sleep, interaction and consumption, and in so doing uphold a household schedule for their activities (Moen, 2003). Especially among full-time working couples time problems are believed to be prominent. By studying differences in time spent on leisure activities, we aim to show which kinds of activities are most often skipped by people under time pressure and which remain high on their priority list. As described earlier, we distinguish three basic leisure time activities: solitary leisure time, social interaction time with relatives and friends, and institutionalized social time.

### **Solitary Leisure**

The time we take for ourselves, devoted mostly to personal activities like hobbies, sports and reading, may be characterized as flexible, and not set by a fixed schedule. It is controlled by individuals themselves and is perceived as less mandatory than other activities. Solitary leisure activities are mostly unbound, require little planning and communication with others and are perceived as very enjoyable (Gershuny and Sullivan, 1998). A number of studies suggest that the more time people spend in paid labour, the less they are involved in solitary leisure (Schor, 1991; Gershuny, 2000; Clarckberg and Merola, 2003; Blekesaune, 2005). For instance, Nomaguchi and Bianchi (2004) showed that hours worked significantly reduces the time people devote to personal exercise. They argue that given the

nature of this activity, it is easily squeezed out by work and family demands, and therefore skipped more often than other pursuits. In a similar fashion, Mattingly and Bianchi (2003) demonstrated that working hours reduce solitary leisure time for both men and women. Not only does paid work reduce the amount of private leisure, its perceived quality also tends to be lower as a result of time-squeeze effects. In both studies, these effects are stronger for women than for men.

### **Social Interaction with Relatives**

Whether time spent in paid labour is negatively associated with the time people spend with their relatives is a topic of recent debate (Garhammer, 2004). People's informal social contacts with friends and family members contribute to a sense of belonging to a social group in society. Therefore, the strength of social contacts is important for the development of a personal and group identity (Cote, 1996). Research is nonetheless ambivalent on the negative effects of working long hours on family time. Nock and Kingston (1989) demonstrated that parents spend significantly less time with their children when they work more, and this effect is stronger if parents work irregular hours or weekend and night shifts. Coleman (1988) argued that children of working parents miss out on parental interaction during the day, which causes a serious decline of social capital (Daly, 2001). Gauthier et al. (2004), however, showed an increase in parental time investment in children over time; parents appear to be devoting more time to children than they did 40 years ago.

We here concentrate on the social activities people undertake with their relatives and friends. It is believed that a time squeeze would seriously restrict the opportunity for these interpersonal contacts. Note that we disregard caring activities in our definition of family time.<sup>1</sup>

### **Institutionalized Social Interaction**

Social interaction in an institutional setting constitutes the third area for which we study the effects of paid labour. With this we refer to social interaction outside of the close social circle of family and friends. Since this kind of interaction is performed in an external institutionalized setting and mostly requires advance planning, it entails extensive management and communication.

Participation with and among others generally is believed to provide the external social cohesion in a society. Putnam (1995) rang the alarm on declining civic engagement in the United States; decreasing memberships of voluntary organizations, dropping voter turnouts and declining civic engagement overall underscore his arguments. One of the causal mechanisms behind this trend is the

entry of women in the labour market (Tiehen, 2000). Yet, the relation between paid work and social integration is not as straightforward as it may seem. Indeed, longer working hours do increase time-budget problems for institutionalized social activities. On the other hand, paid labour provides an environment that may stimulate social integration, because workers meet others while performing their job. This may encourage volunteering among people active in the labour force and result in lower rates of volunteering among the non-employed (Wilson, 2000). Participation in institutionalized social activities nonetheless requires a time investment that may not be easy to make by people from dual-career households.

## Theoretical Background

### Time pressure and leisure time

A foundation for expectations on time pressure and leisure can be derived from a general consideration of time budgets. If people want to spend time on leisure activities, they must find an empty time slot that fits the characteristics of the chosen activity (Gershuny, 2000; Southerton, 2003). In other words, an individual needs a certain amount of spare time, and must be able to use that time to conduct a certain activity. Finding this as yet unused time, or time that may be reallocated from another activity, is more difficult for some than for others. Individuals in full-time working couples have their days filled with more obligatory tasks than people from single-earner families or combination households. More working hours invoke more constraints and fewer options to create empty time slots. Based on this argument we expect full-time working couples to spend less time on solitary leisure consumption, interaction with friends and relatives, and institutional social contacts than people living in single-earner or combination households.

Time is not only scarce, but time devoted to one activity often must be traded off against time devoted to other activities (Treas and Hilgeman, 2006). To answer questions on which activity people under time pressure trade off against another one, we use insights from two theoretical traditions: temporal organization theory and social motivation theory. These theories contain the building blocks for expectations on how people set priorities among the three categories of activities.

First, temporal organization theory focuses on how activities are ordered throughout the day (Southerton, 2006). Central to the theory is the description of people's daily actions as (dis-)continuations of regular activities; people shape their time horizon with formerly conducted activities. This habitual sequence can be adjusted, albeit slowly and with small changes (Gershuny, 2000). Temporal organization theory seeks to understand the rhythm of an ordinary day

by employing five time dimensions, originally distinguished by Fine (1996), that is, duration, tempo, sequence, synchronization and periodicity. Duration is simply the time an event takes from start to finish. Tempo is the pace at which activities take place. Sequence is the order in which practices are conducted. Synchronization refers to a certain order dependence with other practices, for instance whether private leisure time is frequently interrupted by other obligations. Periodicity refers to the frequency and repetition of activities. These qualities may give us clues as to which activities are more difficult to maintain in a busier schedule (Southerton, 2006).

Since our main interest is in the trade-off between solitary activities, social interaction with loved ones and institutionalized social interaction, temporal organization theory may be used to formulate expectations about the priority given to these leisure activities. By and large, solitary leisure pursuits tend to be short term, non-fixed, regular and frequent. Because there is little or no interaction with others and the execution is not (always) fixed to a geographical location or specific time, they are easily fit into empty time slots. Social interaction with family members and friends tends to be more routine and regular in nature, and is not bound by geographical location. Institutionalized social interaction, especially with non-household members, has a fixed location, requires a high degree of planning, has a long duration, and does not occur regularly. These institutionalized social contacts are therefore perceived as difficult to maintain when they compete with other, more flexible activities. We thus expect that individuals living in a full-time working household will primarily economize on institutionalized social activities, and to a lesser extent, on social interaction with family members and friends and solitary leisure activities.

Second, social motivation theory zooms in on the social payoffs of certain activities (Argyle, 1996). Its core argument is that leisure time exemplifies freedom of choice, intrinsic motivation and pleasure (Mannell and Kleiber, 1997; Shaw, 2001), and activities that provide such benefits are generally preferred above others. Research on the motives to perform certain leisure activities also shows that individuals choose to engage in them not only for their own benefit. Shaw (2001) argued that family functioning is an important goal of various leisure activities. Similar results were found by Orthner and Mancini (1990), who positively related leisure activities to family satisfaction, interaction and bonding. An adjacent line of research studied what people like to do in their spare time. US time-budget surveys showed that informal conversation, coupled activities, outings, social events and playing with children are rated most important. Solitary activities like reading, watching television and doing a hobby were ranked lower (Kelly, 1996). Similar results emerged from research by Robinson and Godbey (1997). The least compulsory activity is watching television. Respondents rated interaction with others (family), sports, cultural events and entertainment as most important.



From social motivation theory it thus follows that interaction with family and friends and institutionalized social interaction are the most relevant activities. So, we expect these activities to be the ones that people under time pressure, like those in full-time working couples, will be least likely to give up. Note that this premise contrasts with the expectations from temporal organization theory.

### **Partner effects: differences between husbands and wives**

Our central argument here is that the trade-off between solitary and social time is related to the working status of a couple. A person in a full-time working couple obviously experiences more time pressure than an individual in a single-earner or combination household. Yet, lumping together the working hours of spouses might mask relevant differences among couples. The time spent on solitary and social activities may be lower or higher as a result of a spouse's working hours. Given the significant differences found between men and women in previous research, we chose to include these partner effects along the gender line, by looking separately at the working hours of husbands and wives (Bittman and Wajcman, 2000; Mattingly and Bianchi, 2003; Cousins and Tang, 2004). Including partner effects and at the same time differentiating by sex may reveal whether the impact of paid labour is different for men and women. Details about women's work schedules point to severe difficulty in juggling work, family and leisure (Bryant and Zick, 1996; Van der Lippe, 2007). A direct cause is often an uneven distribution of unpaid labour at home resulting in a gender gap of spare time. Not only do men have slightly more time to spare, the quality of that time tends to be higher (Bittman and Wajcman, 2000; Mattingly and Bianchi, 2003). We therefore investigate whether this affects the trade-off between solitary activities, social interaction with relatives and friends, and institutionalized social interaction.

### **Controls**

Examining how exactly working status matters for leisure requires controlling for characteristics that are associated with both the execution of certain leisure activities and with working full time as a couple. Disregarding these effects would cause biased estimations in our modelling.

First, a person's educational attainment is relevant. Research shows that most full-time working couples consist of highly educated individuals (Van Gils and Kraaykamp, 2008). These higher-educated people have the ability to perform multiple tasks and to stick to a strict scheduling in their daily routine. Moreover, a high education is an indication of high job status. Higher-grade professionals are less bound by the clock at work than many lower-class workers, and though their contract often requires a 40-hour work week, the specific timing

of the job is often less strict. Higher-grade professionals may thus have more possibilities to synchronize leisure time with work obligations (Warren, 2003). The higher educated also have a higher level of institutionalized leisure, that is, cultural participation and volunteering (Wilson, 2000; Van de Werfhorst and Kraaykamp, 2001). Consequently, it is essential to control for educational level, since higher education corresponds to a higher likelihood of full-time work (as a couple) and of institutionalized leisure recreation.

Second, the life course is filled with events and transitions that may speed or slow the pace of life (Elder, 1985). Job changes, geographical relocations, retirement and, above all, having children are important in this respect. It is therefore not surprising that the number of full-time working couples is high among young adults and drops considerably as partners grow older (Van Gils and Kraaykamp, 2008). The presence of children intensifies the need for household members to synchronize schedules, constituting a heavy load on the time available. To control for these life-course effects we include a person's stage of life in our modelling. Stage of life is associated with the likelihood of a couple's working full time as well as with the time left for social interaction and solitary activities.

## Data and Measurements

### Time-use surveys 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995 and 2000

To test our expectations we used time-use surveys 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995 and 2000 conducted by the Social and Cultural Planning Office of The Netherlands.<sup>2</sup> In these years a random sample of the Dutch population older than 12 years of age was invited to participate in the surveys. Respondents kept a diary in which they self-recorded their main and secondary activity per 15-minute episode in a booklet. This diary was kept for a whole week in October starting on a Sunday. Additionally, respondents answered a structured written questionnaire containing questions on their background, household structure, education, employment and spousal information.

### Measurements

Using the detailed information provided by the diaries of respondents we constructed measures for solitary leisure activities, social interaction with relatives and friends and social interaction within an institutionalized setting. Private leisure consists of the total hours per week spent reading books, newspapers and magazines, watching television, listening to the radio or music, practising solitary hobbies and relaxation. Social interaction with relatives and friends consists of the weekly hours spent with family members and playing with chil-

dren, eating and conversing with relatives, playing games, taking a walk or stroll together and visiting friends. Institutionalized social time is measured by the weekly hours spent doing voluntary work, going to a café, restaurant or bar, participating in cultural events, attending church, going to public events and participating in sports. We analysed the time an individual spent per week on these three groups of pursuits. Table 1 shows that social interaction occurs most frequently (22.79 hours per week). Institutionalized social interaction is least common, on average 6.35 hours per week.

Our independent variables are (household) working status, educational level, family life stage, age, woman and time period. Table 1 provides an overview of the range, means and standard deviation of our instruments. To score all respondents on the basis of their household working hours, we selected all married or cohabiting respondents and tagged their and their spouse's working status as 'not employed', 'part-time employed' or 'full-time employed'. Following the definition of Statistics Netherlands (CBS, 2005), working fewer than 12 hours is considered not employed, part time is defined as working 12 to 34 hours, and full time is working at least 35 hours. Household working status then consists of four types: (1) full-time working couples (9%); (2) combination households where both spouses work and at least one partner works part time (20%); (3) single-earner households with a full-time working man and a non-working woman (56%); and (4) the non-employed (15%), where both spouses are inactive in the labour market (or are active less than 12 hours per week). Educational level of respondents is harmonized across survey years and recorded in six levels ranging from primary school only (1), to college degree (6). Family life stage is recorded as: (1) no children or children older than 12, (2) youngest child aged 0–4, and (3) youngest child aged 5–12. Age of respondents is restricted to a maximum of 65 and a minimum of 21. Below and above these limits, most are not yet or are no longer active in the labour market and are therefore not apt to make a trade-off between working hours and leisure time. Survey year is included to observe whether the time spent on solitary or social activities has changed over the years; it is bottom-coded at 0 for the year 1975. In total, we analysed complete information on 9063 respondents over six survey years; models for men contain 3683 observations and models for women 5380 observations.

## Results

We performed two OLS regressions with which we tested our expectations. Table 2 focuses on absolute differences in time spent per week on solitary and social activities. Table 3 explores the relative difference in time spent on these activities: the so-called 'trade-off'. We estimated three models for each type of leisure. Model 1 includes household working status and shows whether individ-

**TABLE 1**  
**Description of measurements**

	minimum	maximum	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
solitary leisure	0.00	88.50	20.72	10.05	9063
social interaction with relatives and friends	0.00	70.75	22.79	9.05	9063
institutionalized social interaction	0.00	77.00	6.35	6.39	9063
total leisure time budget	0.00	116.75	49.86	13.56	9063
full-time working household	0.00	1.00	0.09	0.28	9063
combination household	0.00	1.00	0.20	0.40	9063
single-earner household, man working	0.00	1.00	0.56	0.50	9063
non-employed household	0.00	1.00	0.15	0.36	9063
male full-time employed	0.00	1.00	0.76	0.42	3683
male part-time employed	0.00	1.00	0.06	0.24	3683
male not employed	0.00	1.00	0.18	0.38	3683
female partner full-time employed	0.00	1.00	0.11	0.31	3683
female partner part-time employed	0.00	1.00	0.19	0.39	3683
female partner not employed	0.00	1.00	0.70	0.46	3683
female full-time employed	0.00	1.00	0.08	0.28	5380
female part-time employed	0.00	1.00	0.20	0.40	5380
female not employed	0.00	1.00	0.72	0.45	5380
male partner full-time employed	0.00	1.00	0.81	0.39	5380
male partner part-time employed	0.00	1.00	0.05	0.22	5380
male partner not employed	0.00	1.00	0.14	0.34	5380
educational level	1.00	6.00	3.10	1.40	9063
age	21.00	65.00	39.50	11.37	9063
no children or older children (ref)	0.00	1.00	0.49	0.47	9063
youngest child < 4	0.00	1.00	0.27	0.44	9063
youngest child < 13	0.00	1.00	0.24	0.43	9063
time period	0.00	25.00	12.79	7.38	9063
female	0.00	1.00	0.59	0.49	9063

*Source:* Time-use surveys (1975–2000).

uals in a full-time working couple have on average more or less time for solitary and social pursuits compared to people living in single-earner or combination families. Model 2 pertains to men, and presents the effects of a man's own working status and the effects of his partner's working status separately. In Model 3 the same analytical procedure is repeated for women.

### **Working status and solitary and social activities**

Table 2 compares individuals from full-time working couples, single-earner families and combination households. It is not surprising to observe that people living in a full-time working household devote significantly less time to solitary leisure, social interaction with relatives and friends and institutionalized social interaction. A large difference is observed for interaction with friends and family; people living in a combination household spend 2.63 hours per week more on these social activities than people in a full-time working couple. Compared to individuals living in a single-earner household, this difference adds up to 5 hours per week.

Differences are much smaller when it comes to solitary leisure activities and institutionalized social interaction. Individuals from a combination household seem to spend a little more time on solitary activities (1.13 hours) than members of full-time working couples, and members of single-earner households spend 2.86 hours more on solitary activities. Yet, smaller differences are found for institutionalized social interaction, adding up to differences of almost one hour a week (0.96) comparing full-time workers to single-earner households and 1.44 hours comparing them to people from non-employed households. No significant differences for institutionalized social interaction were found between members of a full-time working and combination household.

Models 2 and 3 of Table 2 present the effects separately for men and women. There seems to be no difference in the amount of solitary time between full-time working and part-time working men. However, men who are not employed report almost eight hours more for solitary activities than men working full time (7.72 hours). Having a working wife has no additional effect. The situation, however, is quite different for women. Full-time working women report 1.88 fewer hours for solitary activities compared to part-time working women. Women living with a full-time working man experience an additional disadvantage. They report 1.33 fewer hours of solitary time when their husband works full time (compared to those women with a part-time working husband). Apparently it is an additional task for women to buffer the burden of full-time employment of their husband. Hence, partner effects seem to be relevant only for women.

Next, we look at the models for social interaction with family and friends. Model 2 shows that men who work part time spend 2.37 more hours on social interaction with family and friends than men working full time. Partner effects are important too; men living with a full-time working wife have 1.46 fewer hours to spare with family and friends compared to men living with a part-time working wife. These results underline the fact that restrictions within a couple affect both partners. Model 3, for women, shows no significant partner effects. Women who work full time clearly have less time for social interaction than part-time working and non-working women, but a husband's working hours are

unimportant. We can be brief about Models 2 and 3 for institutionalized social interaction. There are differences between non-employed and employed men and women, but no significant variation is observed between the part-time and full-time working. Also, no significant partner effects were observed.

With respect to the controls, it seems true that the higher educated participate more in institutionalized social interaction. In contrast, the lower educated are somewhat more involved in solitary leisure, and lower-educated women spend more time maintaining social contacts with family and friends. Indeed our life stage indicators proved relevant in explaining the distribution of spare time. The older people are, the more they invest in solitary activities. Moreover, older women devoted more time to social interaction within their close network. Further, the presence of young children cuts considerably into leisure consumption. Especially having children younger than age four seriously reduces time for solitary activities and for institutionalized social interaction.

### **Working status and the trade-off between leisure activities**

In Table 3 we study the trade-off between the three leisure activities directly. For that reason we chose to analyse relative time budgets, controlling for the actual hours of leisure time. This method has proven successful in research on husbands' share of household labour, given the total amount of household labour (Blair, 2003). To employ relative budgets, we calculated the ratio of the time spent on either solitary or social activities, given a person's total amount of leisure time. For solitary activities this is  $\text{time for solitary activities} / (\text{time for solitary activities} + \text{time for social interaction with relatives and friends} + \text{time for institutionalized social interaction}) * 100$ . Analysing this ratio acknowledges that people make choices regardless of their total amount of spare time. This ratio may be interpreted as the percentage of the total time budget that is spent on solitary activities. Note that an increase in the time spent on solitary activities necessarily comes at the expense of time spent on the other two activities (social interaction with family and friends and institutionalized social interaction). We presume that in analysing this ratio the actual trade-off between activities is exemplified. We controlled for the amount of leisure time people have, since this varies greatly between people with a different household status.

Model 1 in Table 3 foremost shows that people from a full-time working couple spend on average a significantly smaller proportion of their leisure time on social interaction with family and friends. By comparison, combination households spend 2.14 per cent more of their leisure time on their contacts with family and friends, single-earner households spend 2.88 per cent more, and people in non-employed households 3.15 per cent more. So, it seems that when full-time workers have to prioritize, they most likely cut back on family time. This choice made by full-time working couples largely favours institutionalized social inter-

**Table 2**  
**OLS regression on hours per week spent on solitary activities, social activities**  
**with relatives and friends, and institutionalized social interaction,**  
**unstandardized coefficients**

	solitary activities					
	all		men		women	
	1		2		3	
	b	se	b	se	b	se
educational level	-.67**	.08	-.80**	.12	-.71**	.10
age	.13**	.01	.17**	.02	.09**	.01
no (young) children (ref)	<i>ref.</i>		<i>ref.</i>		<i>ref.</i>	
youngest child < 4	-2.61**	.29	-1.36**	.48	-3.57**	.36
youngest child < 13	-.70**	.27	.02	.46	-1.16**	.32
time period	-.04**	.01	-.05*	.02	-.02	.02
full-time working household (ref)	<i>ref.</i>					
combination household	1.13**	.42				
single-earner household, man working	2.86**	.41				
non-employed household	7.31**	.49				
male full-time employed (ref)			<i>ref.</i>			
male part-time employed			.47	.69		
male not employed			7.72**	.52		
female partner full-time employed (ref)						
female partner part-time employed			.34	.65		
female partner not employed			.15	.63		
female full-time employed (ref)					<i>ref.</i>	
female part-time employed					1.88**	.51
female not employed (ref)					4.86**	.50
male partner full-time employed (ref)						
male partner part-time employed					1.33*	.53
male partner not employed					1.94**	.40
constant	15.93**	.57	16.94**	.91	16.09**	.73
<i>N</i>	9063		3683		5380	
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> adjusted	.15		.19		.14	

Significance: \* ( $p < 0.05$ ); \*\* ( $p < 0.01$ )

Source: Time-use surveys (1975–2000).

interaction with relatives and friends						institutionalized social interaction					
all		men		women		all		men		women	
1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
b	se	b	se	b	se	b	se	b	se	b	se
-.10	.07	-.10	.10	.24*	.09	.46**	.05	.33**	.08	.51**	.07
.01	.01	.03	.02	.04**	.01	-.01	.01	-.02	.01	-.01	.01
<i>ref.</i>		<i>ref.</i>		<i>ref.</i>		<i>ref.</i>		<i>ref.</i>		<i>ref.</i>	
-1.19**	.27	-1.59**	.42	-.34	.33	-2.00**	.20	-1.38**	.34	-2.53**	.24
-1.17**	.25	-1.37**	.40	-1.08**	.30	-.47*	.18	-.55	.33	-.48*	.21
-.24**	.01	-.30**	.02	-.23**	.02	.03**	.01	.01	.02	.05**	.01
<i>ref.</i>						<i>ref.</i>					
2.63**	.39					.28	.28				
5.00**	.38					.96**	.28				
7.88**	.45					1.44**	.33				
		<i>ref.</i>						<i>ref.</i>			
		2.37**	.59					.35	.49		
		6.55**	.44					1.87**	.36		
		1.46**	.56					.75	.46		
		2.19**	.54					.57	.45		
				<i>ref.</i>						<i>ref.</i>	
				2.69**	.48					.45	.34
				6.05**	.47					1.61**	.33
				.45	.50					.01	.36
				.28	.38					-.57*	.27
21.98**	.53	21.19**	.79	20.29**	.68	4.65**	.39	6.00**	.65	3.90**	.49
9063	3683		5380		9063		3683		5380		
.11		.17		.11		.03		.02		.04	



**TABLE 3**  
**OLS regression on the relative amount of time spent on solitary activities,**  
**activities with family and friends, and institutionalized social interaction,**  
**unstandardized coefficients**

	ratio of total budget spent on solitary activities <sup>a</sup>					
	all		men		women	
	1		2		3	
	b	se	b	se	b	se
educational level	-1.07**	.12	-1.09**	.18	-1.48**	.16
age	.15**	.02	.18**	.03	.06**	.02
no (young) children (ref)						
youngest child < 4	-.28	.47	1.26	.77	-1.59**	.59
youngest child < 13	.56	.43	1.86*	.73	-.05	.52
time period	.11**	.02	.20**	.04	.10**	.03
total leisure-time budget	.04**	.01	.03	.02	.08**	.02
full-time working household (ref)	<i>ref.</i>					
combination household	-.86	.67				
single-earner household, man working	-1.53*	.67				
non-employed household	-.48	.82				
male full-time employed (ref)			<i>ref.</i>			
male part-time employed			-1.99	1.09		
male not employed			-.11	.88		
female partner full-time employed (ref)						
female partner part-time employed			-1.42	1.04		
female partner not employed			-2.40*	1.00		
female full-time employed (ref)					<i>ref.</i>	
female part-time employed					-.37	.84
female not employed (ref)					-.95	.84
male partner full-time employed (ref)						
male partner part-time employed					.82	.87
male partner not employed					1.76**	.65
constant	36.27**	1.08	37.19**	1.72	36.99**	1.38
N	9063		3683		5380	
R <sup>2</sup> adjusted	.03		.03		.04	

<sup>a</sup> The ratio equals the time spent on solitary activities given the total amount of leisure time: solitary time / (solitary time + social interaction with relatives and friends + institutionalized social interaction) \* 100

Significance: \* ( $p < 0.05$ ); \*\* ( $p < 0.01$ )

Source: Time-use surveys (1975–2000).

ratio of total budget spent on social interaction with relatives and friends						ratio of total budget spent on institutionalized social interaction					
all		men		women		all		men		women	
1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
b	se	b	se	b	se	b	se	b	se	b	se
.13	.12	.30	.17	.52**	.16	.95**	.09	.79**	.15	.97**	.12
-.09**	.02	-.09**	.03	-.00	.02	-.06**	.01	-.10**	.02	-.06**	.02
2.84**	.45	.55	.71	4.96**	.56	-2.55**	.37	-1.81**	.62	-3.37**	.45
-.32	.41	-1.31	.67	.19	.50	-.24	.34	-.55	.59	-.13	.40
-.26**	.02	-.33**	.04	-.26**	.03	.14**	.02	.13**	.03	.16**	.02
-.08**	.01	-.10**	.02	-.12**	.02	.04**	.01	.06**	.02	.04**	.01
<i>ref.</i>						<i>ref.</i>					
2.14**	.64					-1.27*	.52				
2.88**	.64					-1.35**	.52				
3.15**	.78					-2.67**	.63				
		<i>ref.</i>						<i>ref.</i>			
		3.08**	1.01					-1.09	.88		
		1.80*	.82					-1.69*	.71		
		1.42	.96					.00	.84		
		2.95**	.93					-.55	.81		
				<i>ref.</i>						<i>ref.</i>	
				1.38	.80					-1.01	.64
				1.83*	.80					-.88	.64
				-.33	.83					-.50	.66
				-.46	.62					-1.29**	.50
53.4**	1.04	50.83**	1.59	53.79**	1.32	10.25**	.84	11.98**	1.39	9.22**	1.05
9063	3683	3683	5380	9063	9063	3683	3683	5380	5380	3683	5380
.05	.04	.04	.06	.06	.04	.03	.03	.05	.05	.05	.05

action, as they spend a significantly larger proportion of their leisure time on this activity compared to individuals from combination households, single-earner households and non-employed households, at 1.27 per cent, 1.35 per cent and 2.67 per cent, respectively. Further, the larger the total leisure time budget, the lower the relative amount of time for friends and family, and the larger the proportion of time for solitary and institutionalized leisure.

Models 2 and 3 resemble the household effects. Men working full time spend significantly less time on social interaction with family members and friends (3.08%) than men working part time. A non-working wife, however, adds to a man's time allocation for social interaction (2.95%). When looking at the ratios for solitary time and institutionalized social interaction, hardly any of the effects are significant. These results underline that looking at a couple's work status is essential to understand the trade-offs made between solitary, family and social time as the findings stress the importance of couple characteristics for both spouses.

### Conclusion and discussion

Does living in a full-time working couple matter for the activities one undertakes in one's spare time? This study used time-budget information on 9063 Dutch respondents and their partners to answer this question. It seems true that people living in a full-time working couple have significantly fewer hours per week to spend on solitary and social activities than people from a single-earner or combination household. Especially, in comparison with non-workers or single-earners the effects are substantial, but most interesting is that in comparison with people from combination households, full-time workers are the ones that have cut back on leisure most heavily.

Which activities suffer the most when people are in a time squeeze? To answer this question we introduced two theoretical perspectives to derive expectations on the possible trade-off between activities. From temporal organization theory we expected that institutionalized social interaction would suffer most from working full time. It requires significantly more management and communication with others, and is therefore more difficult to bring about than other activities. The results of the analyses, however, did not confirm this idea. Contrarily, full-time workers choose to spend a relatively larger share of their leisure budget on institutionalized social interaction compared to people from couples with other working arrangements. In accordance with social motivation theory, we predicted that particularly close social relations with family members and friends would be continued in a situation of time shortage. The possible pay-off from social interaction was deemed greater than that from solitary leisure, and the latter would therefore be cut back when people are pressed for

time. Our results, however, point to a drain of attention from the nuclear family and close social relations with friends. Full-time working hours of individuals and couples are negatively associated with time investments in social relations. So, we must conclude that both theoretical insights to some extent fall short in predicting the actual trade-off in leisure activities. Future research may want to look for explicit arguments on why in The Netherlands full-time workers prefer institutionalized social interaction over solitary activities and interaction with family and friends.

This study shows that there are meaningful effects of working full time as a couple for leisure-time pursuits. Full-time workers principally cut back on family time and maintain their societal involvement at a less intensive level. In the current debates on social capital and cohesion this would probably be construed as a mixed result. On the one hand, time pressure resulting from work obligations does not seem to affect the incentives for people to participate in society. Certainly, they have less time available, but when they have to prioritize, the trade-off does not lead to an extensive individualization or a turning-away from society. On the other hand, full-time workers do cut back on their time with family and friends. This time seems to be perceived as most flexible and therefore easiest to decrease. Future research should go into the question of whether this cutback has consequences for the quality and intensity of partner and network relationships.

## Notes

1. In this article we do not regard caring activities as social time. The reason for this is twofold. First, when children are small they primarily need care, which parents can hardly choose to refrain from providing. In contrast it is possible to minimize or maximize social interaction with relatives. Second, not all people in our survey had 'young' children who needed care. If we were to include caring time for some people it would constitute the largest share of their family time. This would considerably affect the results, and in an uncertain way.
2. Our time-budget data holds only information until the year 2000. Unfortunately, data for more recent years are not yet available to researchers.

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