

# Action Research Report 30-hour working week

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## Contents

Introduction.....	3
1 Why the 30-hour working week? .....	3
1.1 Who is Femma? .....	3
1.2 Why an action research?.....	3
2 From an idea to a detailed action research.....	4
2.1 Pillar 1: Organisational and legal-technical basis .....	4
2.1.1 Organisational .....	4
2.1.2 Legal-technical.....	6
2.2 Pillar 2: A sound investment.....	7
2.3 Pillar 3: With attention to internal and external support .....	7
2.3.1 Internal support.....	7
2.3.2 External support .....	7
2.4 Pillar 4: A quality research design .....	8
2.4.1 Research questions.....	8
2.4.2 Research partners.....	9
2.4.3 Research population.....	9
2.4.4 Data collection and measuring instruments .....	4
2.5 Limitations of this research .....	6
2.5.1 A limited but homogeneous research population .....	6
2.5.2 A specific type of organisation .....	6
2.5.3 Duration limited to 1 year .....	6
3 Research results .....	6
3.1 Wishes and satisfaction.....	7
3.1.1 Wishes vs. expectations vs. experience .....	7
3.1.2 Satisfaction with time available .....	8
3.2 General trends time use.....	8
3.2.1 Preference for four-day week .....	8
3.2.2 Evolution of time spent in transition to 30-hour working week.....	9
3.3 More peace and balance .....	3
3.3.1 Work-life conflict .....	4

3.3.2	Satisfaction with the combination of work and private life .....	4
3.3.3	Workload .....	3
3.3.4	General time pressure .....	4
3.3.5	Biggest impact immediately after introduction 30-hour working week .....	5
3.4	More time for housekeeping and less household stress .....	5
3.4.1	Time spent doing household work .....	5
3.4.2	Satisfaction with the organisation and distribution of household work .....	7
3.4.3	Household stress .....	9
3.4.4	Multitasking in the household .....	9
3.5	(Informal) care and help .....	10
3.6	More time for yourself .....	3
3.6.1	Leisure and media .....	4
3.6.2	Social participation and volunteering .....	5
3.6.3	Self-care .....	6
3.6.4	Quality and satisfaction leisure time .....	3
3.7	Parents and children have more quality time .....	5
3.7.1	The Parents .....	5
3.7.2	The kids .....	4
3.8	Positive evaluation of workability and quality of work .....	5
3.8.1	Workability .....	6
3.8.2	Quality of the work .....	8
4	Conclusion .....	9
4.1	Research question and design .....	9
4.2	Research results .....	9
4.3	Perspectives .....	10
5	Attachments .....	11
	Annex A: Composition of sounding board group .....	11
	Annex B: profiles of respondent groups according to age, position within Femma and age of youngest resident child. ....	12
	Annex C: Overview of items of scales used in report .....	15

# Introduction

In 2019, Femma studied the 30-hour working week. In this report, we provide a glimpse within the organisation and the outcomes of the action research. The report is divided into four main components. In part 1, we reveal why we opted for an action research on the 30-hour working week. In part 2, we explain how we organised the action research. In part 3, we provide an overview of the main results. Lastly, in part 4, we summarise the key findings and focus on the future.

## 1 Why the 30-hour working week?

### 1.1 Who is Femma?

Femma is an association and movement in one. Femma combines unification and cosiness with a clear social vision and political demands. Femma is both 100 years old and a pioneer. An organisation that focuses on a broad community of women and also expands a foundation for women in a socially vulnerable position.

Femma unites women by organising leisure time. The organisation colours almost all municipalities in Flanders and Brussels with its 730 local women's networks. Every year, volunteers organise 30,000 activities for women in their own neighbourhood. Femma pioneers the creation of highly diverse initiatives. In addition to basic activities, it organises leisure time in other ways. Every year, 600 women travel far and near to get involved. In collaboration with partners all over Flanders and Brussels, Femma annually offers 500 workshops for women in a socially vulnerable position. Femma is also a strong online community in which women share their experiences, opinions and creations. The organisation unites city dwellers around their creative passions in De Maekerij. Femma stands for a gender-equal society. The association provides women with tools to bring meaning to the roles they take up in their families, in their local communities and in society at large. It fights for a balanced and high-quality combination of paid and unpaid work and shares its expertise on this subject in the media, through participation in panels, through advice, with guest lectures or lectures.

Femma's dream? That all women feel free and connected.

Femma's collective ambition? Everyone combines work, care and leisure in a balanced and high-quality way.

### 1.2 Why an action research?

Ensuring that everyone can combine work, care and leisure in a balanced and high-quality manner is a major social challenge. Many people are struggling with this concept. At a social level, its impact varies between women and men. Femma wrote a report addressing the challenge (see [www.gerichtopevenwicht.be](http://www.gerichtopevenwicht.be)) in which the organisation proposes different strategies to make a balanced and high-quality way of combining work, care and leisure possible for everyone. The new full-time - the 30-hour working week - is one of these strategies.

The shorter working week is the subject of much debate at home and abroad: as a tool for redistributing labour, increasing productivity, improving quality of life and combating climate change. Femma approaches the shorter working week explicitly as an instrument to create more equality: socio-economic, between men and women, between paid and unpaid work. Inspired by other practical examples of the shorter working week abroad (Sweden, Finland, UK, New Zealand, USA, Japan, Iceland,

etc.), Femma decided to set up its own action research on the 30-hour working week, the very first in Belgium. With the aim of learning from the research, sharing insights on reducing working hours and inspiring others.

*I'm single. With a loan that has to be paid off, I cannot afford to work part-time. If it were financially feasible, I would choose to do so. I take care of my father who lives with me. If I work full time, I do household chores all weekend. I do the cleaning, the shopping, the laundry and the ironing. In the 30-hour week I did all those things on Fridays, the day I didn't work. Suddenly in the weekend there was room for spontaneous excursions. Or time to read. But I'm not complaining. Femma is a flexible employer with a lot of attention for your private situation. In itself, I find that very valuable." (40 to 45 years, 36h)*

## 2 From an idea to a detailed action research

Following the approval of the Board of Directors in November 2016, an internal steering committee set to work on the action research according to four pillars:

1. Organisational and legal-technical basis
2. With attention to internal and external support
3. A sound investment
4. A quality research design

### 2.1 Pillar 1: Organisational and legal-technical basis

#### 2.1.1 Organisational

Three starting points were the guiding principles for shaping the 30-hour working week:

- with wage retention;
- the organisational goals remain the same;
- the individual workload must not increase.

#### *With wage retention;*

Femma did not negotiate wage losses in exchange for shorter working hours within the social dialogue because it is a study that forms a component of its policy plan 2016-2020 ([www.gerichtopevenwicht.be](http://www.gerichtopevenwicht.be)) and it asked its staff to be the 'subject' of this study. In addition, Femma wanted to investigate the effects of reducing working hours on people's lives. What choices do people make when they work 30 hours a week in paid employment? Reducing wages also plays a role in the decision-making process and the possibilities of the respondents.

#### *How did Femma arrange for its organisation to achieve the same goals in a 30-hour working week as in a 36-hour working week without increasing the individual workload?*

Simply add up the 'minus-hours' of all staff members who work less and replace them (read: recruit new colleagues)? If all the minus-hours to be replaced concern the same work, this is relatively simple. For example, five care workers who each work 6 hours less per week create 1 new 30-hour full-time job. This was not the case with Femma as the task content is too differentiated. Minus hours had to be replaced in accounting, in human resources, in study work, in group supervision, in administrative work and in management. In many expert appraisals, these were not minus hours that could be converted

into a large part-time job or into the new full-time job (of 30 hours). There were simply too few of them.

Femma therefore had to review its work organisation and individual work. After all, even if it decided to replace 100% of the minus hours at organisational level, this did not mean that every colleague saw his/her minus hours replaced 100% personally.

As far as the individual work processes are concerned, Femma assumed that its staff members can work autonomously and with a focus on results. To this end, Femma introduced result-oriented, time- and place-independent working some five years ago. Through regular bilateral consultations with their managers, the staff members were coached to look at their work in the light of the policy plan to be implemented. Through these consultations, the workload is also monitored.

At the organisational level, Femma implemented shifts in recent years, but continued to clash on a number of points: collaborative work within teams and across teams could be better, as could the custom workload for volunteers. The new full-time added a challenge: to achieve the policy plan goals in a 30-hour working week.

Femma decided to start a participatory trajectory towards a new work organisation and called upon Flanders Synergy (now: Workitacts). Flanders Synergy starts from the principle of self-organisation and self-management to shape a labour organisation. This process started at the beginning of 2017 and was completed in June '18. In September '18, new self-directed teams started.

In addition, Femma decided not to replace the full 100% of the minus hours, but 70%. On an individual level, this meant that 2 out of 6 minus-hours per FTE (full-time equivalent) were not replaced. The relevant starting points:

- You don't have to perform less in a 30-hour working week. On the contrary, it can give your work a boost;
- The way in which you organise your work as an individual and as an organisation influences your performance. Femma counted on a positive influence thanks to the new self-managing teams that started in September '18.

The organisation released an investment for replacement employment worth 5 FTEs (FTE = full-time units). The teams decided how to use this investment. Three teams opted for additional in-house expertise. Staff members were given a contract extension and new people were recruited. Two teams opted to invest in expertise they did not have in-house and outsourced assignments.

#### *Four days of 7.5 hours or 5 days of 6 hours?*

Femma focuses on remote working. As a rule, about two days a week. Its staff live and work all over Flanders and Brussels. After social consultation, the organisation decided to give the staff members the choice between a four- or five-day formula of the 30-hour working week. Due to the possibility of teleworking and the long distances that some staff members have to travel to the general secretariat in Brussels, Femma noticed from the start that there would be little choice for the six-hour working day in a five-day working week.

#### *And what if a longer working day was occasionally necessary?*

That was possible, but only to a limited extent. Together with the introduction of the 30-hour working week, Femma also reduced the number of overtime hours that can be worked. This stimulated staff and teams to think carefully about their organisation and planning.

### *Everyone participated but not everyone went from 36h to 30h*

Femma is part of the non-profit sector. In this sector, staff members older than 50 years work a 34-hour working week, staff members older than 55 years work a 32-hour working week. They already benefit from a reduction in working hours thanks to social consultation. They did not have to reduce the organisation from a 36-hour working week to a 30-hour working week, but from a 34-hour or 32-hour working week to a 30-hour working week.

Femma employs a large number of part-time staff as well as full-time staff. The benefit of the reduction in working hours enjoyed by full-time staff members was to be given proportionally by the organisation to its part-time staff members: either in time or in money.

The organisation decided to make a distinction between large (28 or 32 hours) and small (24 or 18 hours) part-time jobs. Employees in small part-time jobs received more pay: 18/30th or 24/30th instead of 18/36th or 24/36th. There was no demand for them to adjust their working hours. From a research perspective (measuring the effect from a 36-hour working week to a 30-hour working week) this was not necessary either. Staff members in large part-time jobs were presented with a choice: either move to the new full-time 30-hour working week in 2019, or stay in their part-time job and receive equal pay. 4 out of 7 staff members in large part-time jobs opted to switch to the new full-time job and thus worked 2 more hours per week in 2019.

Finally, Femma also has staff in end-of-career jobs, a leave system recognised by the National Employment Office (NEO) that gives older staff the opportunity to work less (they then move from a full-time to a part-time contract) by partially compensating for the loss of wages that goes with it. The staff members in a end-of-career job could not be given an equivalent benefit in wages by the organisation. Femma would have had to adjust their contract, as a result of which they would lose their runway. They were the only part-time staff members who were given extra time.

### **2.1.2 Legal-technical**

At the organisational level, Femma concluded a collective labour agreement (CAO) and amended the labour regulations. It chose not to grant the 30-hour working week on a linear basis, but via a system of additional holidays. This system gave each full-time employee as many days off as necessary to go from a 36-hour working week to a 30-hour working week: 43. Staff members in part-time jobs received an equal benefit according to their break in employment. As it examined the effect of an effective 30-hour working week and not the effect of a 36-hour working week with an additional 43 holidays, Femma amended the labour regulations. It stipulated that the additional holidays had to be taken on a weekly basis in order to realise the 30-hour working week.

On an individual level, it adapted the contracts of part-time staff - with the exception of colleagues with end-of-career jobs. Staff members who worked in a large part-time job and chose to work in 'the new full time' of 30 hours a week in 2019 were given a full-time contract for a 36 hour working week. For the other part-time employees, Femma calculated how much salary increase they were entitled to in proportion to their break in employment. This was translated into a new contract.

Finally, Femma felt it was important to place the operation 'reduction of working hours' within a broader legal framework. The law firm Progress Lawyers worked this out in an advisory report. Article 2 of the European Social Charter states that 'reasonable daily and weekly working hours should be set, with the working week progressively reduced in so far as increases in productivity and other factors affecting it allow'. The follow-up to this article can be found in the report on paid and unpaid work at

<https://www.gerichtopevenwicht.be/rapport/op-naar-evenwichtig-en-kwaliteitsvol-combineren/ga-voor-een-nieuw-voltijds-de-dertigurenweek>.

## 2.2 Pillar 2: A sound investment

The investment in the action research consisted of two parts:

- the Femma 'case'
- the research

The Femma case included:

- replacement employment: 148,682.81 euros (this includes the 4 staff members who started working more hours in 2019: 30h instead of 28h).
- outsourcing of tasks: 81,113.99 euros
- the reassessment (those who did not work less received a similar benefit in wages in proportion to their break in employment): 53,148.16 euros

The investment in the research - the time use research by TOR (VUB), by Kind & Samenleving and the legal consultancy - amounted to 83,762 euros. Various individuals and organisations who consider research into the shorter working week to be useful also contributed. The organisations can be found here: <https://www.gerichtopevenwicht.be/steun/actieonderzoek>.

## 2.3 Pillar 3: With attention to internal and external support

### 2.3.1 Internal support

The 30-hour working week meant change, both in the workplace and at home. Femma felt it was important to prepare for this change with all staff members. This ambition was realised by:

- Discussing the action research at the works council on a monthly basis;
- Developing a trajectory for the staff with:
  - o A staff study day on the time-use survey
  - o An exercise 'design your own 30-hour working week'
  - o A staff study day on 'dealing with time in an emancipating way'
  - o A staff study day on 'being an ambassador for the action research'
  - o Workshops on 'bullet journaling'

Femma's board of directors received interim information on the progress of the action research.

Femma informed its many thousands of members and volunteers through its communication channels: the magazine and the Facebook page. Femma groups could also follow the workshops 'How to divide your time', 'Start to organise' and 'Your annual plan for more time and happiness'. In the coming policy period (2021-2025), Femma will continue to focus on the balanced and high-quality combination of paid and unpaid work. Its ambition is for everyone to be able to combine work, care and leisure in a balanced and high-quality way. Femma sees women as drivers of social change and will offer its women's networks action models and methodologies to further reflect on this theme and make themselves actors of social change.

### 2.3.2 External support

The ambition of this action research is to stimulate the social debate on a balanced and high-quality combination and the role of short-time working in this debate.

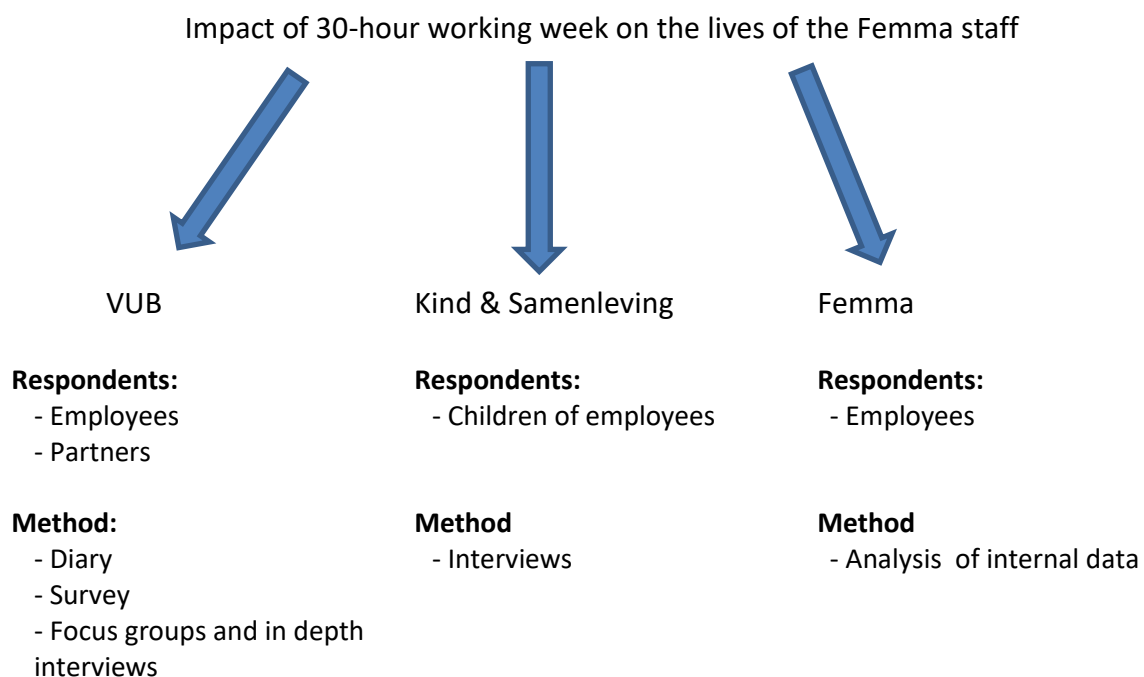


With this in mind, Femma set up a sounding board group in 2017. A group of externals who looked critically at the action research. They reflected on the research design, on the communication and on the results and provided important insights. Annex A shows the composition of this group. We are very grateful to them for their efforts!

Femma lobbies and networks to put the topic on the agenda of political parties, civil society organisations and brings it to the press.

Finally, the organisation works together with the 'industrious communication agency for meaningful projects' Billie Bonkers to communicate effectively to a wide audience.

## 2.4 Pillar 4: A quality research design



### 2.4.1 Research questions

The aim of the 30-hour working week action research is to identify the effects of the shorter working week on the lives of Femma's staff. In concrete terms, Femma is investigating the effects on:

- the combination of work, care and leisure
- general time use
- how the work was organised and experienced
- the organisation and experience of household tasks and child care
- personal leisure
- social relationships
- mental and physical well-being
- the perception of family time by staff members' children

### 2.4.2 Research partners

To illustrate the effects of the 30-hour working week, Femma entered into a partnership with the research group TOR of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) and the Research Centre Kind & Samenleving for data collection and analysis.

*TOR ([www.vub.ac.be/tor](http://www.vub.ac.be/tor)) /hbits ([www.hbits.io](http://www.hbits.io))*

The Research Group TOR (Tempus Omnia Revelat), is part of the Department of Sociology of the VUB. The research group conducts fundamental and applied research on themes such as time use and time regulation, cultural changes in Flanders, media, youth culture, education, life cycle and civil society. Within TOR, online tools and an app were developed for time registration in the context of time user research. This development led to the creation of the spin-off 'hbits' in 2019. Hbits is a pioneer in time use research and uses its modular research platform MOTUS to study behaviour through an objective approach.

TOR's task was to measure the effects on staff. On the one hand, how did they spend their time differently during the 30-hour working week, and on the other hand, how do they experience that 30-hour working week?<sup>1</sup>

Research group TOR will perform further analyses on the data in the future. Via the website [www.welwerk.be](http://www.welwerk.be) you can follow the progress of this.

*Kind en Samenleving vzw ([www.k-s.be](http://www.k-s.be))*

Kind & Samenleving vzw supports the policy of governments and organisations, based on participation and research with children and young people. As a centre of knowledge and expertise, Kind & Samenleving translates the perspective of children and young people into insights and policy recommendations, creating physical and mental space for youth. Core themes are child-friendly public space and mobility, leisure and games, and participation.

Kind en Samenleving was commissioned to map out the experience of family time by children and young people during the transition to a 30-hour working week. Does the transition to the 30-hour working week make the parent more available, does it create more 'quality time' with that parent or with the whole family? Are there any bottlenecks or needs that the shorter working week could have an impact on? What are children's expectations, and are they being met? In order to find an answer to these questions, Kind en Samenleving set up a small-scale qualitative research project.

### 2.4.3 Research population

#### *Research population*

All Femma staff members were invited to participate in the action research. Regardless of whether they worked full-time or part-time before the start of the 30-hour working week. Based on the philosophy that even for a part-time employee whose working hours are not reduced, the start of the 30-hour working week at organisational level may have an impact.

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<sup>1</sup> Mullens, F., Verbeylen, J., & Glorieux, I. 2020 Time expenditure study on the effects of the 30-hour week: Report. Brussels: Free University of Brussels.

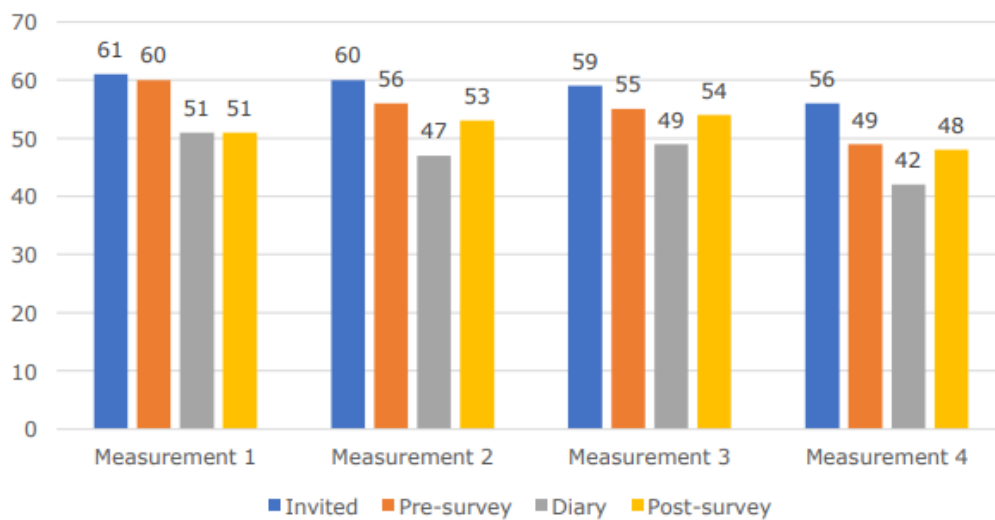
Mullens, F., Verbeylen, J., & Glorieux, I. 2020 Time study on the effects of the 30-hour week: technical report. Brussels: Free University of Brussels.

In order to create as high a response as possible, Femma organised an information meeting in collaboration with TOR. There the staff received all the information about the course of the study and the guarantee that the data will be processed anonymously by the VUB. For those who were not able to attend the information meeting and for the partners, all information was poured into a Q&A movie with the researchers.

The research population changed slightly during the course of the research as some staff members were lost (due to retirement, dismissal or illness).

The response rate of the staff members over the different measuring moments was between 84% and 92%.

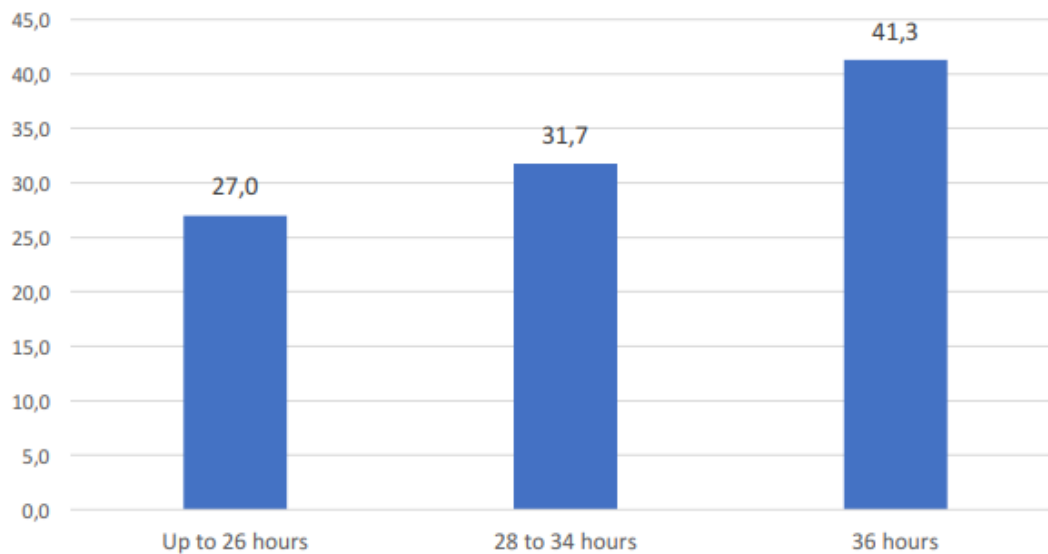
**Figure 1. Number of employees invited to participate in the survey and completed the preliminary questionnaire, diary and questionnaire per measurement**



For the analysis, we divided the personnel group into 3 categories:

- Group up to 26h: these are staff members who worked between 18h and 26h a week in 2018.
- Group 28h-34h: these are the staff members who worked from 28h to 34h in 2018.
- Group 36h: these are the staff members who worked 36h in 2018.

**Figure 2. Percentage distribution of the three groups according to working regime across the organisation in 2018**



In the analysis, we mainly focus on the 36h group, as they were the strongest in terms of number of hours reduced. This group is on average slightly younger than the other two groups and has more respondents who have children living at home than the other two groups.

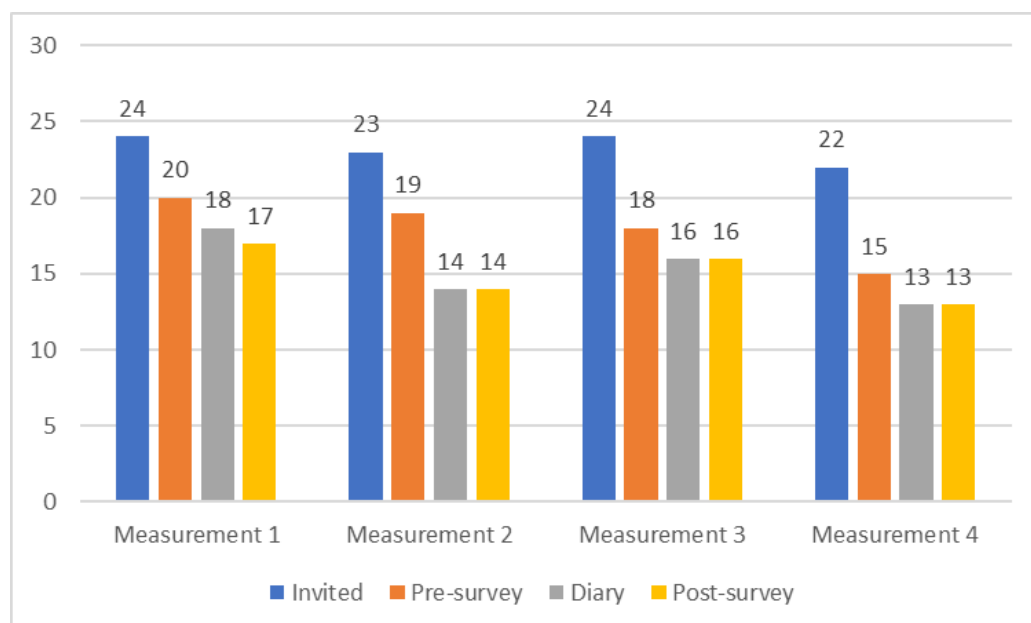
In the 36h group, the age group of 36-45 years is the most represented, the administrative functions are somewhat underrepresented and there are no respondents with the youngest child living at home older than 18 years.

In the group up to 26 hours, the majority are older than 56 years, mainly group supervisors and have no children living at home.

In the 28-34h group, the majority are older than 56 years, mainly group supervisors and have no children living at home.

Partners of staff members were also asked to participate in the VUBs time expenditure survey, albeit in a slightly more slimmed-down form. This data is still being processed.

**Figure 3. Number of partners invited to participate in the survey and completed the preliminary questionnaire, diary and questionnaire per measurement**



#### *Kind en Samenleving vzw ([www.k-s.be](http://www.k-s.be))*

The Kind en Samenleving research focused on children of Femma staff between the ages of 8 and 18. This total research population is rather small: there appeared to be about 10 children of primary school age, and four of secondary school age.

All Femma staff members were invited to participate in the action research. They came from five families of Femma staff. Parents and children were informed about the study and gave permission to cooperate. The children were:

- 4 children of lower primary school age (8, 9, 9 and 10 years at the start of the survey)
- 2 children of high school age (14 and 17 years at the start of the survey)

This included four boys and two girls. All children have brother(s) or sister(s) in the family. Three conversations were held with the primary school children, two with the teenagers.

The research does not reach the greatest possible diversity of children. As individual interviews are more challenging with younger children, it does not include children up to the age of 7. It does not make any statements about how younger children experience the impact of an hour week; the specific needs of toddlers, pre-schoolers and the youngest primary school children remain out of the picture in this study. Moreover, the children are children of staff members with all kinds of jobs and in this sense they come from various families, but we cannot speak here of children with significant additional care needs, for whom the care time provided by the parents would also be additionally relevant.

The six children therefore came from 5 families (in one family we spoke with two children). All Femma personnel whose children have been questioned here are women. These five mothers had a variety of roles within the organisation (management, senior management, policy officer, administrative officer, training officer). 4 out of 5 families were two-income families. All mothers worked full time (36 hours) in 2018, and thus switched to the 30-hour working week in 2019. Three mothers filled this out as a four-day working week with working days of 7.5 hours, two worked 5 days of 6 hours. One of them changed in October 2019 from 5 times 6 hours to a four-day working week. Moreover, working from home was well established: all mothers usually worked one or two days a week from home.

## 2.4.4 Data collection and measuring instruments

### TOR

#### Measuring moments

Five measuring moments took place, 2 during the year (2018) before the start of the 30-hour working week, 2 during the year (2019) of the 30-hour working week and 1 measurement after the end of the 30-hour working week. Respondents were given 4 weeks in those months to participate in the measurement.

Each year, the first measurement took place in March and the second in October. The measurement at the end of the 30-hour working week took place in March 2020. It has not been included in this report because its analysis was hampered by the introduction of the lockdown on 18 March following the outbreak of the Covid19 virus. However, it is part of further analyses that TOR is still planning on the data.

#### Measuring instruments

The data collection consisted of a combination of questionnaires, time registration in the form of diaries, focus interviews and in-depth interviews.

#### Questionnaires

Before the participants could gain access to the diary registration, they first had to fill in a preliminary questionnaire. Through the 20-minute questionnaire, background information (gender, level of education, family situation...) on the current work situation was collected and the subjective experience (work, free time...) was surveyed.

The time measurement was followed by a final short questionnaire of about 10 minutes. The purpose of this questionnaire was to collect information about the registration week. If there were atypical days, this could be indicated here. The questionnaire also looked at the subjective experience related to one's own well-being, the relationship with family members and the possibilities for regulation at home.

#### Time registration by means of diaries

How someone feels their time is spent, may differ from how that time is actually spent. That is why in this study it was decided to use time registration to map out the time spent by people in an objective way.

The time registration was done by means of an online diary (via the MOTUS app or via the MOTUS website). Respondents kept a diary during the five measuring moments for 7 consecutive days. During this week, the participants registered the activities (both work-related and non-work related) each day using a pre-defined list of activities.

For each activity respondents did, they noted the start and end time, whether they were doing something else at the same time, where they were, who was present or took part in the activity, what consideration they took into account (obligation, sense of responsibility, fun...) and how much satisfaction the activity gave them.

### Focus groups and in-depth interviews

In addition to the questionnaires and diaries, the TOR research group organised 4 focus interviews with the respondents during and after the 30-hour working week. Finally, 6 months after the end of the action research, another 20 in-depth interviews took place with the respondents.

### *Kind en Samenleving*

#### Interviews: content structure and methods

Kind & Samenleving spoke with the children before, during and at the end of the 30-hour working week. The interviews took place at the children's home (or at the grandparents'), with the child separately. The children were given information about the study and guarantees of confidentiality. It was stressed that they were permitted to refuse to answer questions or stop the interview. The interviews were in fact ordinary conversations, supported by some techniques that offered the children light guidance.

The first interview series took place at the end of 2018. The intention was to get a good insight into how the children experience their family time. This concerned the general time organisation, how the family time was spent, how available the parents were for the children and what expectations existed for the upcoming 30-hour working week.

A floor plan of the house, drawn on the spot, and pawns which represented the family members and which the children could move themselves, provided a basis for talking about family time at home and the important places (and movements) during the week. The names of the different types of family time were written on separate sheets, so that children could easily look at them and refer to them. A glass of coffee beans explained the difference between 36 hours and 30 hours and its size.

The second interview series was held in April and May 2019, i.e. a few months after the introduction of the 30-hour working week. This second interview showed what changes children saw as a result of that shorter working week. How had time organisation and family time changed? How much impact did the children of the 30-hour working week feel: how visible was it? How did the expectations for the 30-hour working week fit in with reality?

For each child an individual schedule about time organisation (school, childcare, free time) had been made in advance. This was presented to see if anything had changed since the first conversation. A number of the child's quotes from the first interview (about family time and expectations) were tested. The third and final series of interviews took place at the end of the 30-hour rule: in December 2019 and January 2020. How did the children experience the 30-hour working week after a full year? Again (changes in) family organisation and family time were tested, with attention for the summer holidays and the new school year. The impact and visibility of the shorter working week was again addressed, and a survey was carried out into how children looked at the end of the 30-hour working week.

In order to structure the conversation, children drew cards with numbers that stood for a topic of conversation, such as holidays, next year, types of family time, the new school year, etc.

Afterwards the children and teenagers received a small thank-you gift.

The two teenagers who were in high school were interviewed only twice: during the second and third series of interviews. They were able, after a few months during the 30-hour working week, to estimate what had changed compared to the period of the 36-hour working week, we could not expect this from the primary school children.

## *Femma*

Femma mainly collects data at company level: financial data (investments, fundraising, etc.), human resources figures (contract hours, work schedules, absences, etc.) and quantitative and qualitative data on the impact and quality of work (progress reports).

## **2.5 Limitations of this research**

This action research around the 30-hour working week obviously has its limitations.

### *2.5.1 A limited but homogeneous research population*

An action research of the 30-hour working week at an organisation of Femma's size means that the research population is fairly limited in number.

In addition, the staff - except for one - are women. This partly skews the findings because on average the time spent by men and women differs greatly in a number of areas. On average, women spend more time on unpaid work and have less free time than men. The homogeneity is a plus because it allows you to achieve significant research results with a small research population.

### *2.5.2 A specific type of organisation*

This action research took place within a specific business context. Femma is a socio-cultural organisation which employs mainly knowledge workers. An organisation that already offers a high degree of autonomy to its staff: Femma works independent of time and place. This business context naturally colours the research findings. That is why it is always interesting to place it alongside the findings of other organisations that introduced and/or examined the shorter working week, such as a residential care centre in Sweden, a company which manages trusts, wills and estate planning from New Zealand or a car garage from Finland.

### *2.5.3 Duration limited to 1 year*

Femma decided to experiment with the 30-hour working week for 1 year. This limited duration has consequences for the data generated by the research and the choices people make. People probably do not enter into long-term commitments for the duration of one year. Also, the limited period of time does not allow us, for example, to make firm statements about absenteeism, because coincidences play too big a role in it.

## **3 Research results**

In the analysis that follows, we mainly focus on the results of the 36h group as they are the personification of Femma's current full-time job, and the transition to the 30-hour working week had the greatest impact on them.

When interpreting the time use data, it is important to note that we start from the parameter 'duration per respondent'. This is the time spent on a particular activity in a week, calculated for all participants



in this survey. The 'duration per respondent' refers to everyone, including those who did not carry out the activity in question.

When we talk about a significant decrease or increase in the results, we mean that it is a statistically significant increase or decrease. This means that the trend you see in the sample can be generalised to a population with a similar profile. Significance says nothing about the size of the increase or decrease.

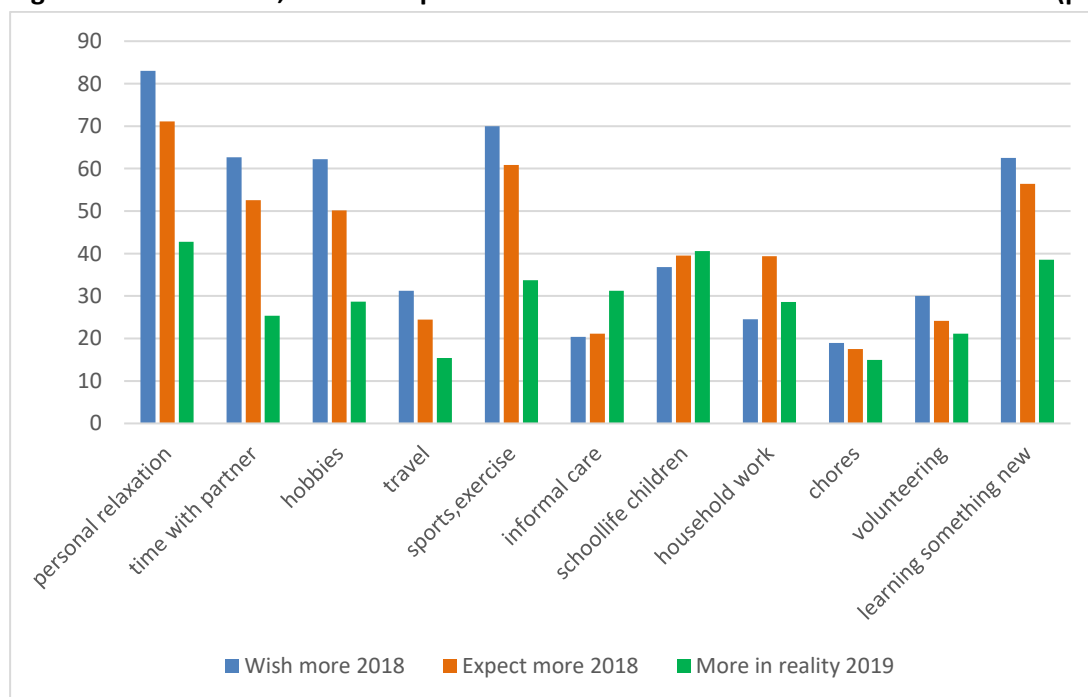
## 3.1 Wishes and satisfaction

Prior to the transition to the 30-hour working week, respondents who had reduced working hours were asked how they would like to spend those freed-up hours and how they expect those freed-up hours to be filled in. During the 30-hour week, we asked them how they thought the hours would be filled in.

Before the start of the 30-hour working week, respondents wished mainly to spend extra time on leisure for themselves. The daily reality made this partially successful. Nevertheless, the majority is satisfied with the way they spent their time.

### 3.1.1 Wishes vs. expectations vs. experience

**Figure 4. % more wish, % more expectation and % more realistic use of available time (perception)**



The activities that most respondents wanted to spend more time on during the 30-hour working week were 'personal relaxation' (83%), 'sports and exercise' (69.95%), 'time with partner' (62.7%), 'learning something new' (62.55%) and 'hobbies' (62.2%).

For all these activities, however, respondents expected to be able to spend less time in the 30-hour working week than desired. This expectation was also validated. For example, we see that the difference between desired and perceived fulfilment differs the most for 'personal relaxation' (83% vs. 42.8%), time with the partner (62.7% vs. 25.35%), 'sports & exercise' (69.95% vs. 33.75%).

The least priority was given to the activities 'chores' (18.75%), 'informal care' (20.35%), household work (24.5%), volunteering (30.05%) and travel (31.5%).

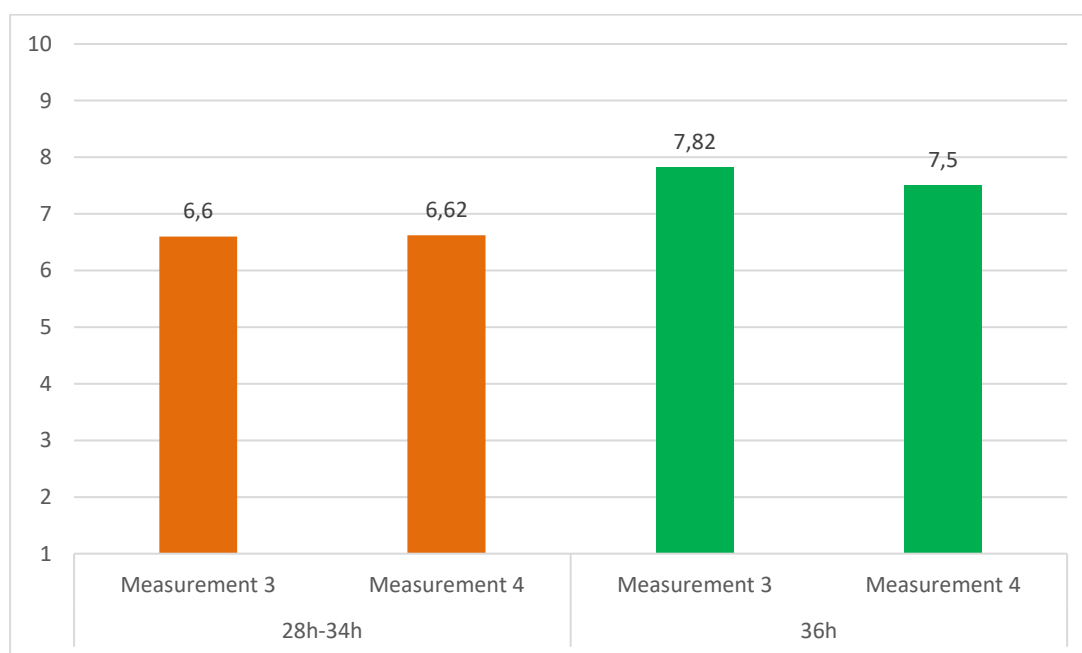
According to their experience, respondents will also spend more time on some of these activities, without wishing to do so beforehand: 'informal care' (31.2% vs. 20.35%), 'school life children' (40.55% vs. 36.8%) and 'household work' (28.6% vs. 24.5%).

*I just want to get a lot done. I thought it was important to volunteer, to get involved, socially. I like to sing and I want to be able to study well for that. I thought 'yes wow, I'm going to be able to sing a lot and do better than in previous years'. And I also wanted to be there for my son. Especially the youngest, because he is still in primary school. And above all I wanted a lot of rest. I also wanted alone time and I wanted to read books and I just wanted a lot. You just don't get all that stuffed into one extra day. And I knew that in advance, but I fell for it a bit. (46 to 55 years, 36h)*

### 3.1.2 Satisfaction with time available

Despite the fact that the perceived use of time sometimes differs from the wishes and expectations, the majority of respondents during the 30-hour working week are satisfied with the way in which they fill in the freed up time. The satisfaction of the 36h group is higher than that of the 28h-34h group.

**Figure 5. Satisfaction with the use of freed up time by working regime (scale 1 to 10)**



## 3.2 General trends time use

### 3.2.1 Preference for four-day week

Respondents who switched to the 30-hour working week clearly prefer the four-day formula. In the four-day formula, the design of 4 working days at 7.5 hours is the most chosen. Wednesday and Friday are the most popular days off.

**Table 1. Choice of design for the 30-hour working week**

	5 days of 6 hours	4 days 7.5 hours	3 days 8 hours 1 day 6 hours	3 days 8.5 hours 1 day 4.5 hours	2 days 8.5 hours and 2 days 6.5	Vary per week	Other (strong preference 4 day week other regime)
Measurement absolute	3	21	1	1	2	5	6
Measurement percentage	7.7%	53.8%	2.6%	2.6%	5.1%	12.8%	15.4%

*With a day off you will have a little more freedom to plan certain things, I thought. While if you work for a shorter working hours every day, you still have to deal with the structure of that day, even if you can shorten it a bit. I had the feeling that a larger block was becoming available that I could schedule. Otherwise it would be small pieces everywhere that would be freed up. Those little pieces then sometimes turn into other things that are already going on. For example, if you are working and you have the feeling that you haven't really achieved what you wanted to achieve today, then you are quick to say that you will continue to work for a while and you won't actually take up your free hours anyway. Whereas a day, that is easier to block off actually. And it's also easier to say that you don't work on Fridays, either at work or externally. That's easier than saying that you only work until half past three or so. (36 to 45 years, 36h)*

### 3.2.2 Evolution of time spent in transition to 30-hour working week

Through the diary registration we get an accurate picture of how the time spent by the respondents changed in reality. For the 36h group, the transition to the 30-hour working week meant that the number of hours of paid work decreased by an average of 4h55min.<sup>2</sup> In addition, we also see a decrease in work-related travel time by an average of 2h18min. This means that respondents in the 36h group could redistribute an average of 7h13min normally related to work to other activities.

On average they will spend more time per week on household work (+ 2h40min), personal care (+1h26min), leisure (+1h20min), social participation and unpaid help (+23min) and child care (+28min).

<sup>2</sup> For managers, working less proves to be the most difficult task. They initially succeed, but are unable to keep up due to a number of unforeseen factors: the unclear framework for the socio-cultural sector after the May '19 elections, the merger with the World Women, and the process towards a new labour organisation require extra attention (see below). This is also a team that went from 4 to 3 FTE (full-time equivalents) at the end of 2018 and only made limited use of the replacement employment budget.

**Table 2. Evolution of time spent by respondents according to work regime (in hours and minutes per week)**

		Paid work	Household work, chores, shopping and service visits	Child care	Personal care, food and drink	Sleep, rest and other personal needs	Education	Social contacts, volunteering and unpaid help	Leisure and media	Work-related travel	Leisure, household and family related travel	Other/undefined time	Waiting
up to 26h	2018	23:48	18:37	2:59	20:57	57:12	0:23	12:54	17:40	6:06	4:34	2:24	0:15
	2019	22:17	21:29	3:08	19:30	60:37	0:32	12:26	15:42	5:43	4:29	1:30	0:25
	Difference	- 1:31	+2:52	+0:09	-1:27	+3:25	+0:09	-0:28	-1:58	-0:23	-0:05	-0:54	+0:10
28h - 34h	2018	31:36	15:54	3:18	16:25	57:29	0:19	8:55	20:48	6:11	4:14	2:27	0:14
	2019	28:40	17:57	3:07	17:04	57:41	0:31	12:12	18:17	6:17	4:10	1:36	0:18
	Difference	-2:56	+2:03	-0:11	+0:39	+0:12	+0:12	+3:17	-2:31	+0:06	-0:04	-0:51	+0:04
36h	2018	34:03	10:38	7:13	13:17	59:04	0:56	9:06	18:12	8:30	5:19	1:22	0:10
	2019	29:08	13:18	7:41	14:43	59:12	1:01	9:29	19:32	5:52	5:29	2:03	0:20
	Difference	-4:55	+2:40	+0:28	+1:26	+0:08	+0:05	+0:23	+1:20	-2:38	+0:10	+0:41	+0:10

Respondents in the 28h-34h group spent on average 2h56min less per week on paid work and 6min less on work-related travel. Which comes to 3h02min.

In the 30-hour working week they also spend more time on household work (+2h03min.) and personal care (+39min.). And remarkably more time for the category 'social contacts, volunteering, unpaid help' (3h17min.). On average, we see a decrease in 'child care' (-11 min.) and a decrease in the category 'leisure and media' (-2h31min.).

In the following chapters, we look at the time spent in the various main categories (household work, child care, personal care, social contacts, leisure, paid work,...) in more detail. But first, we will zoom in on the respondents' general perception of the combination of all these different areas of life.

### 3.3 More peace and balance

Earlier we saw that the respondents were quite satisfied with the way they filled in the freed-up hours. This satisfaction is related to the fact that respondents seem to find more balance and rest in the 30-hour working week than in the 36-hour working week. We use the following indicators to back up these findings:

- The work-life conflict: investigates possible negative influences of work on the private sphere. Such as being less involved with family/extended family/friends, no time for hobbies, difficult to relax at home...
- The satisfaction with the combination of work and private life.
- The workload: workload is the sum of paid work, household work and care work.
- The general time pressure: measures the stress and pressure that people experience around their time in general.

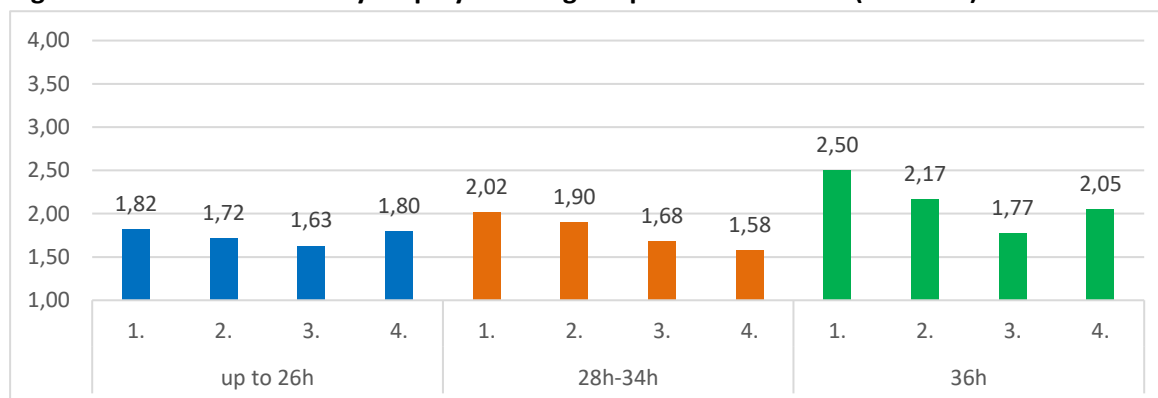
The items on the basis of which these indicators are surveyed can be found in Annex C of this report.

### 3.3.1 Work-life conflict

The decrease in paid working hours means that on average respondents experience less work-life conflict.

In both the 36h group and the 28-34h group, we see a significant decrease in work-life conflict in the 30-hour working week. In the 36h group, it does rise back in the last measurement, but remains below the level of the first two measurements (in the 36-hour working week). This group also recorded the highest degree of work-life conflict at the outset.

**Figure 6. Work-life conflict by employment regime per measurement (scale 1-4)**

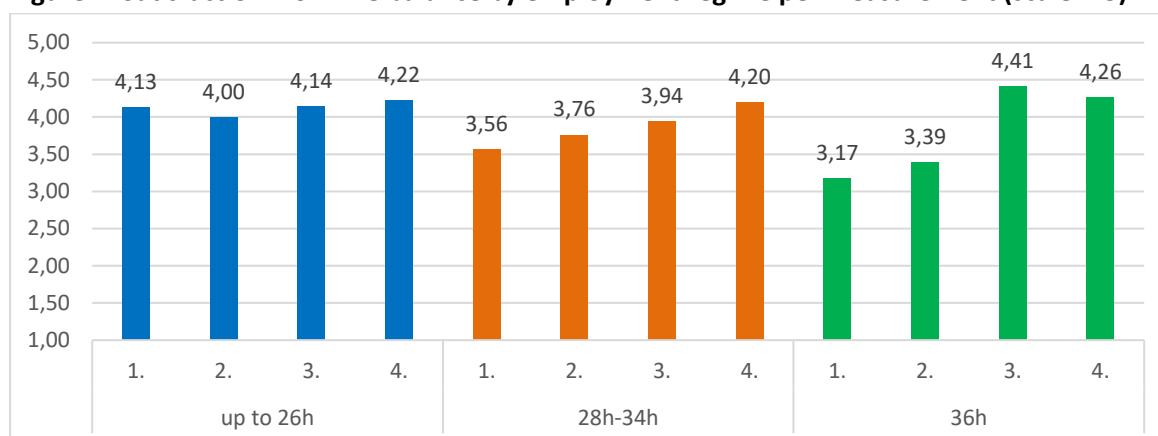


*"After giving it a try for a month, I did feel a lot calmer. Quieter in my head, but also quieter in my heart. Because of the time available, I can organise my household better anyway. Taking care of my children is a bit easier (read: a less stressed-out mom). And I can do somebody else a favour without having to push aside my own needs." 26 to 35 years, 36h)*

### 3.3.2 Satisfaction with the combination of work and private life

When asked about their satisfaction with the way they can combine work and private life, we see a significant improvement for the 36h group in the 30-hour working week.

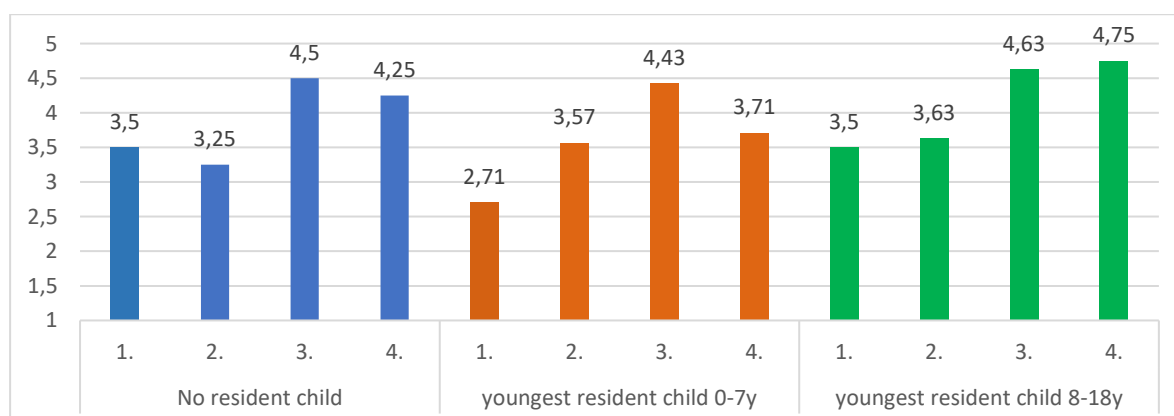
**Figure 7. Satisfaction work-life balance by employment regime per measurement (scale 1-5)**



In the 28-34h group, the increase in satisfaction is not significant. Respondents from the 36h group recorded the lowest satisfaction before the start of the 30-hour working week and are on the same level as the other two groups in measurement 4.

If we also look at the age of the youngest resident child in this 36h group, we see that especially families with the youngest resident child between 0-7 years of age and families with the youngest resident child between 8-18 years of age are significantly more satisfied with their work-life balance during the 30-hour working week. Families without resident children do not experience a significant increase.

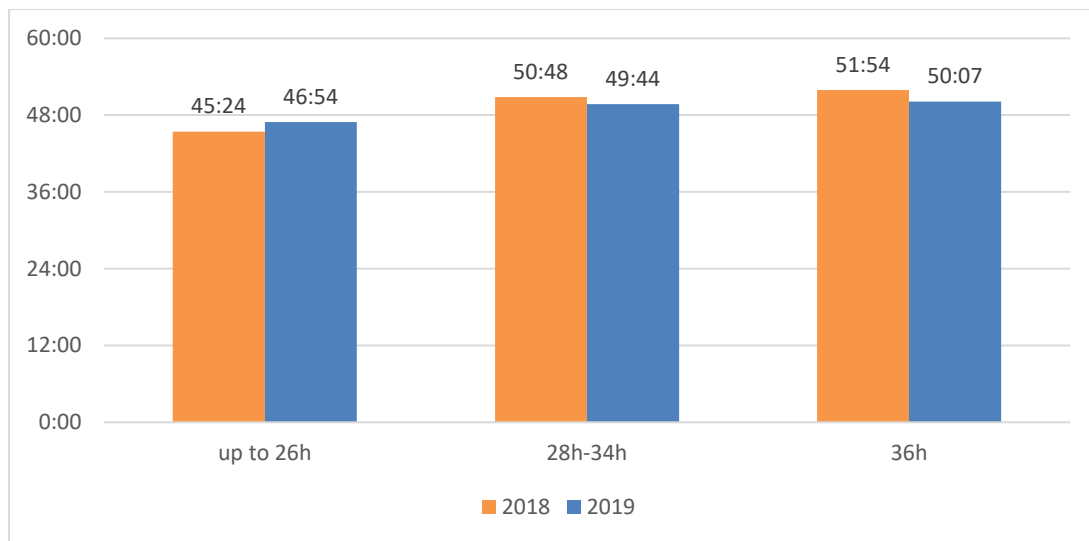
**Figure 8. Satisfaction work-life balance of 36h group by age of youngest resident child per measurement (scale 1-5)**



### 3.3.3 Workload

Another indicator that indicates that respondents find more rest and balance in the 30-hour working week is the decrease in the workload. The workload is the sum of paid work, household work and care work. For the 36h group, the workload decreased with the transition to the 30-hour working week by an average of 1h47 min per week. In the 28-34h group, we see an average decrease of 1h04 min. This decrease indicates that the time released from paid work was not fully taken up by household work and/or care work. The respondents will therefore not simply replace one form of labour with another. There is more room for leisure, personal care and social contacts. The 26h group's workload increased in the same period by an average of 1h30 min.

**Figure 9. Evolution of workload according to work regime (in hours and minutes per week)**

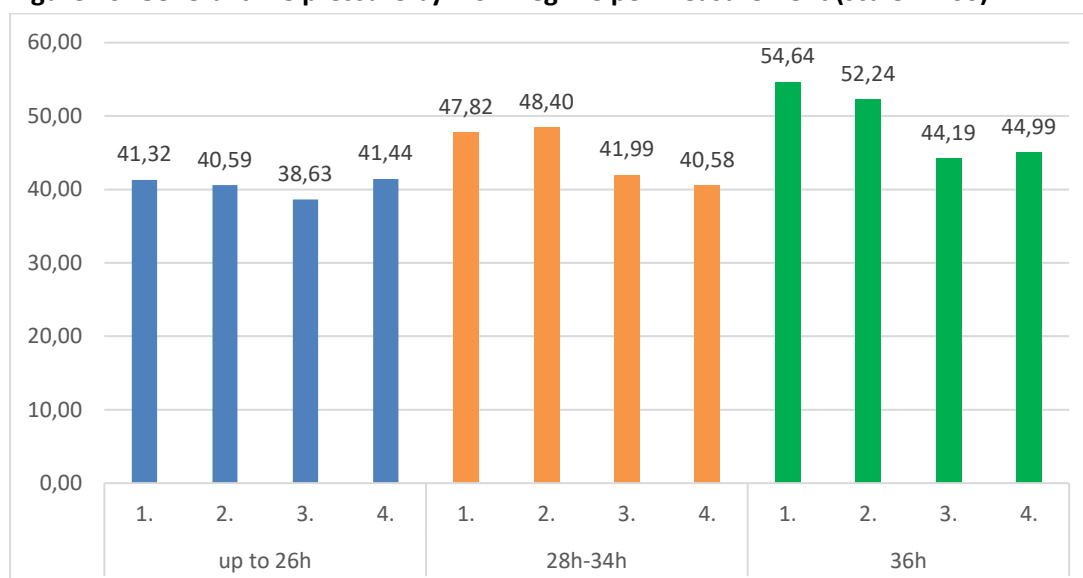


*If you work 4/5ths, you actually cut off a day and work less than the others. Now it was just the same for everyone and I was actually working full time anyway because I think that's important. I got that from home as well: you work full time as a woman so you won't be in trouble afterwards. So I really liked that, that you're still very meaningful within the organisation, but still have the peace and quiet of home. I hope Femma does this again next year. (36 to 45 years, 36h)*

### 3.3.4 General time pressure

In the 36-hour working week, the 36h group has on average the highest general time pressure. With the transition to the 30-hour working week, the general time pressure decreases the most for them (the only significant difference between measurement 4 and 1 and measurement 3 and 1). It indicates that the respondents did not fill the time available. This would increase the time pressure again.

**Figure 10. General time pressure by work regime per measurement (scale 1-100)**



### 3.3.5 Biggest impact immediately after introduction 30-hour working week

It is especially in the period immediately after the start of the 30-hour working week that the effect on respondents is greatest. But we also continue to see positive effects long after the start of the 30-hour working week. Moreover, for some things there is an improvement from measurement 2, even though the 30-hour working week was not yet in force. There are a few explanations for this. Femma prepared the employees for the 30-hour working week through workshops. Respondents are aware of this and are looking forward to working fewer hours. The Hawthorne effect may also play a role: the fact that someone is allowed to participate in a study usually has a positive effect.

## 3.4 More time for housekeeping and less household stress

Although spending more time on household work was not high on many respondents' wish lists at first, a significant proportion of their time off went to it. Depending on the working regime and family composition, more time is spent on certain types of household work (cooking, cleaning, shopping, household organisation, etc.).

In the 30-hour working week, respondents will also take on a larger share for some tasks. This sometimes creates tensions in the relationship. Respondents are more emphatic about their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the division of tasks during the 30-hour working week.

More time for domestic work also has positive effects. We see that there is a slight increase in satisfaction with the organisation of the household, that respondents experience less household stress, less multitasking and perceive some tasks as less annoying.

### 3.4.1 Time spent doing household work

The 36h group spends an average of 2h40min more time on household work in the 30-hour working week, while the 28-34h group spends an average increase of 2h03min.



**Table 3. Evolution of time spent on household work according to work regime (in hours and minutes per week)**

	28h-34h	36h
2018	15:54	10:38
2019	17:57	13:18
<b>Difference</b>	+2h:03	+2h:40

If we divide the main category of household work into sub-activities, we see that the group spends 36 hours more time on 'setting the table/cooking/dishwashing', 'cleaning/washing/ironing', 'household administration and organisation' and 'shopping and making purchases'. For the 28-34h group, the increase in 'shopping and making purchases' is particularly noteworthy. They don't necessarily clean more, because that's where a lot of their time was already spent compared to the 36h group.

**Table 4. Evolution of time spent on types of tasks according to work regime (in hours and minutes per week)**

		Setting/clearing the table, cooking, doing the dishes	Cleaning, tidying, washing, ironing, maintenance of clothing	Caring for plants and animals, gardening	Administration and organisation of the household	Do-it-yourself, maintenance, moving	Shopping and making purchases
28h-34h	2018	4:24	6:12	1:02	1:03	0:16	2:41
	2019	4:45	6:00	1:01	0:58	0:27	4:31
	<b>Difference</b>	+0:21	-0:12	-0:01	-0:05	+0:13	+1:50
36 hours	2018	4:05	3:06	0:23	0:42	0:33	1:42
	2019	4:58	3:34	0:26	1:08	0:49	2:10
	<b>Difference</b>	+0:53	+0:28	+0:03	+0:26	+0:16	+0:28

*I must honestly admit that at the end of the year, my free hours mainly went to child care and household chores. And that really wasn't my intention at the beginning. When we were working on it in the fall of 2018, I didn't think I would spend my extra time on this. I'd really use that for myself. I haven't done enough, I guess. I don't think so actually, I'm sure. (36 to 45 years, 36h)*

If we take into account the family situation for the 36h group, we see that the group without resident children in the 30-hour working week has the largest absolute increase, in terms of time spent on household chores. They're going to do more 'cooking' and 'shopping'. Families with young resident children (0-7 years) mainly spend more time on the category 'cleaning/washing/ironing'.

**Table 5. Evolution of time spent on types of tasks for 36h group according to age of youngest resident child (in hours and minutes per week)**

		Setting/clearing the table, cooking, doing the dishes	Cleaning, tidying, washing, ironing, maintenance of clothing	Caring for plants and animals, gardening	Household administration and organisation	Do-it-yourself, maintenance, moving	Shopping and making purchases	Visit to services
36h - no resident children	2018	3:49	2:32	0:31	0:29	0:53	1:55	0:06
	2019	5:16	2:03	0:48	1:20	2:00	3:07	0:06
	Difference	+1:27	-0:31	+0:17	+0:51	+1:07	+1:12	-
36h - Youngest resident child between 0 and 7 years old	2018	4:36	4:08	0:15	0:43	0:38	1:59	0:01
	2019	4:53	5:19	0:31	0:53	0:22	2:08	0:07
	Difference	+0:17	+1:11	+0:16	+0:10	-0:16	+0:09	+0:06
36h - Youngest resident child between 8 and 18 years old	2018	4:08	2:31	0:27	0:38	0:13	1:20	0:00
	2019	5:04	2:53	0:07	1:24	0:27	1:43	0:15
	Difference	+0:56	+0:22	-0:20	+0:46	+0:14	+0:23	+0:15

### 3.4.2 Satisfaction with the organisation and distribution of household work

When asked about the division of tasks related to the household, respondents indicated before the start of the 30-hour working week that, according to their estimation, they take up the largest share of almost all tasks. Only for 'handywork' and 'maintaining the garden', they take a smaller share. In the 30-hour working week, respondents in the 36h group increased their share compared to their partner's share in 'household organisation', 'shopping' and 'cooking'. The 28-34h group mainly takes up a larger part of the 'doing laundry'.

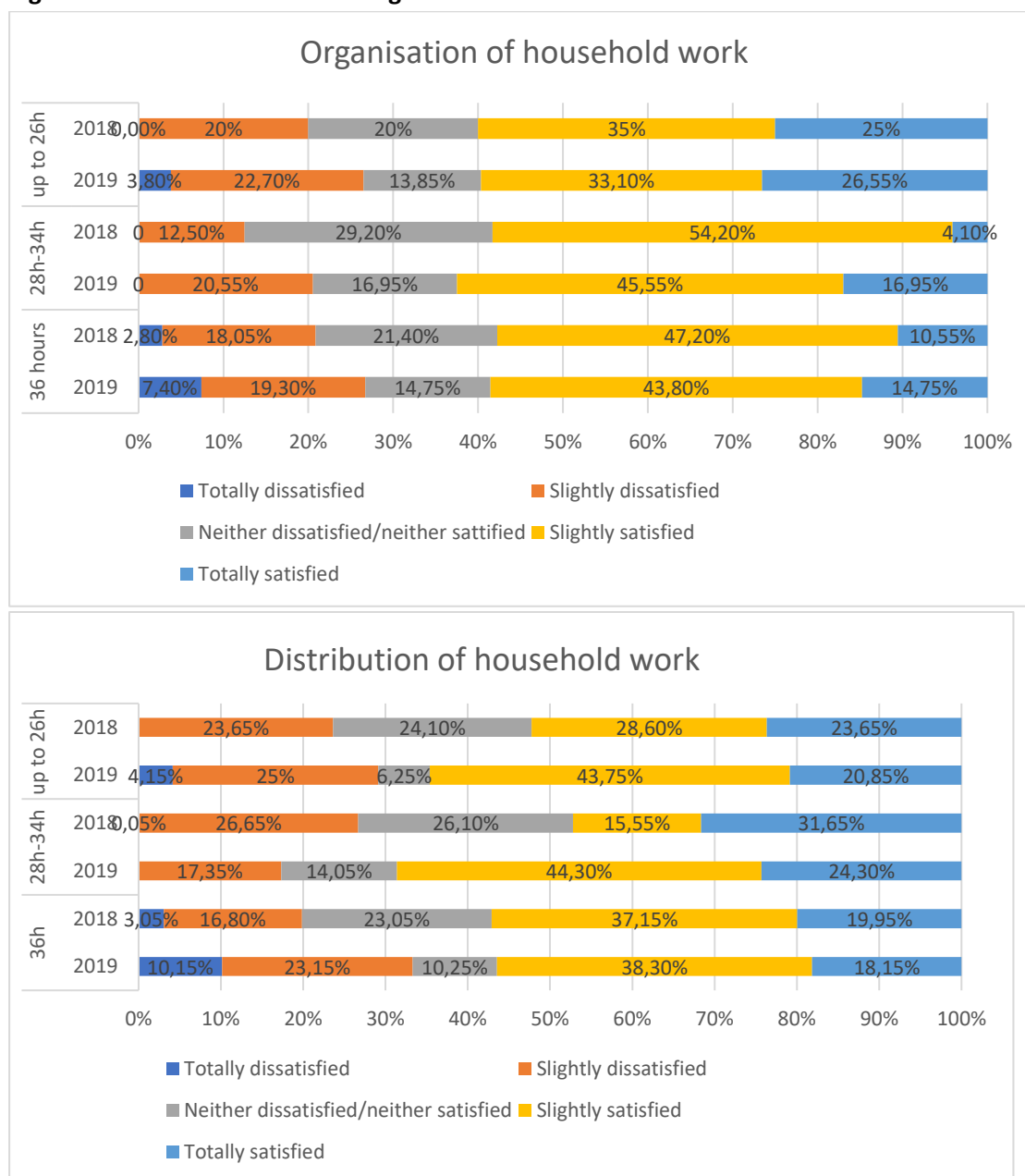
In the 30-hour working week, slightly more respondents were satisfied with the organisation of the household work, but there was also a larger group of respondents who were more emphatically dissatisfied (36h group and 28-34h group).

With respect to the distribution of the household work with the partner, the proportion of satisfied respondents in the 36h group remains at about the same level, while a larger group is emphatically dissatisfied. In the 28h-34h group we see that the proportion of respondents who are very satisfied or dissatisfied decreases in favour of 'more satisfied'.

Polarisation occurs both in the organisation of the household work and in the distribution of the household work with the partner. A possible explanation for this is the study itself. This forces the

respondents to think about the theme. If certain expectations are or are not fulfilled, this translates into a more emphatic opinion. However, it is also likely that a number of respondents whose partners do not work in the new full-time regime will be frustrated by the fact that a larger proportion of the household work will be their responsibility.

**Figure 11. Satisfaction with the organisation and distribution of household work**

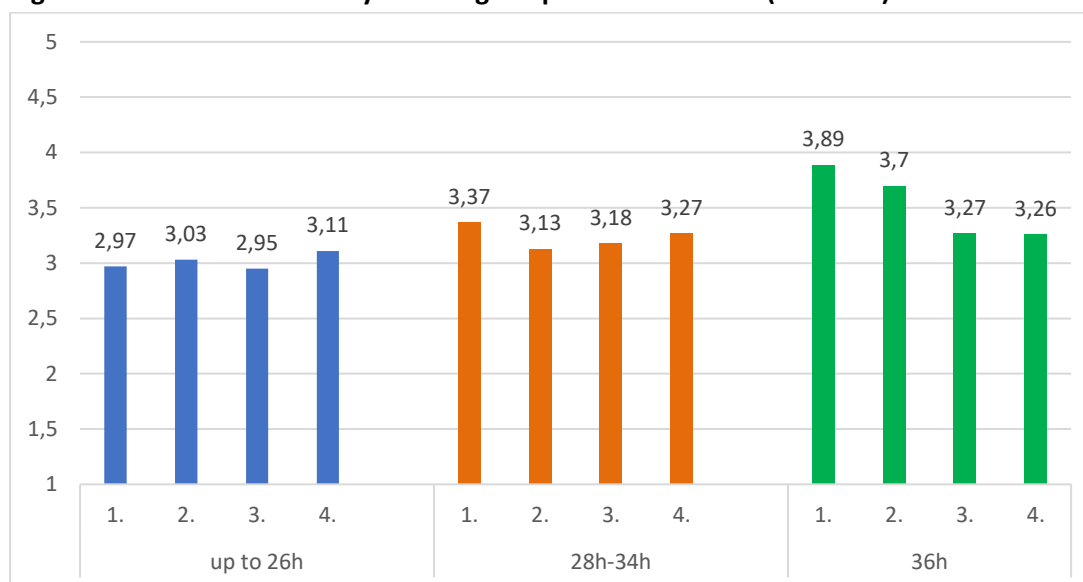


The fact that respondents now have more time and spend on household work means that household work can be organised differently and that it can provide a different perception of those household tasks.

### 3.4.3 Household stress

For example, we see that household stress decreases significantly for the 36h group (significant difference between measurements 4, 1 and 2). Household stress, or stress related to household tasks, was measured on 4 items and scored on a scale of 1-5.

**Figure 12. Household stress by work regime per measurement (scale 1-5)**



*As far as household work and care work are concerned, the fact that it is less under pressure simply makes it more pleasant. Then preparing a meal is just something that can also be a Zen exercise. (46 to 55 years, 28-34h)*

### 3.4.4 Multitasking in the household

This is probably linked to the fact that in the 30-hour working week they will combine fewer domestic tasks with other activities.<sup>3</sup> Both the 36h group and 28-34h group will combine less domestic tasks with other tasks. This way they can focus more on 1 task and don't mix 5 different tasks.

**Table 6. Percentage of tasks that are not combined with secondary activity by working regime**

		Setting/clearing the table, cooking, doing the dishes	Cleaning, tidying, washing, ironing, maintenance of clothing	Caring for plants and animals, gardening	Household administration and organisation	Do-it-yourself, maintenance, moving	Shopping and making purchases
up to 26h	2018	62.80%	47.67%	20.23%	20.56%	16.72%	45.19%
	2019	67.35%	53.85%	29.17%	26.93%	19.45%	39.83%
	<b>Difference</b>	+4.55%	+6.18%	+8.94%	+6.37%	+2.73%	-5.36%
28h – 34h	2018	63.18%	65.17%	22.52%	14.21%	9.17%	36.14%

<sup>3</sup> Although the combination of different tasks does not necessarily have to be negative. Sometimes it can also make the task more enjoyable. For example, the combination of folding laundry and watching TV.

	2019	64.25%	53.75%	14.39%	11.67%	8.34%	25.48%
	<b>Difference</b>	+1.07%	-11.42%	-8.13%	-2.54%	-0.83%	-10.66%
36h	2018	71.59%	61.73%	15.13%	22.89%	10.00%	39.80%
	2019	63.90%	48.12%	11.92%	22.29%	18.26%	27.32%
	<b>Difference</b>	-7.69%	-13.61%	-3.21%	-0.6%	+8.26%	-12.48%

In terms of perception, we also see that in the 30-hour working week, respondents indicate slightly more often that they perform certain household tasks because of the pleasure they derive from them compared to, for example, obligation or necessity.

### 3.5 (Informal) care and help

*So I have to admit that I didn't have my day off to myself. But I also made that click of choosing my day off not only for me, but also to be able to be there more for my [adult]son who needs a little extra guidance [...] Now it sounds a bit like I haven't had much for myself, but somehow it gives me satisfaction that I have been able to achieve things in raising my children as well. (46-55 years, 34h)*

In the 30-hour working week, unpaid help and care for children not living at home and others increased, mainly among respondents without children living at home. The 28-34h group without children living at home spends on average 1h02min. per week more on unpaid help to children not living at home and others. The 36h group without children living at home spends on average 36min per week more on unpaid help to children not living at home and others.

Not only the time spent on unpaid help and care outside the home is increasing. More respondents also provide unpaid care and assistance to children and others not living in the house. The participation rate for the 28-34h group without children living at home rises from 29.09% (2018) to 45% (2019). The 36h group without resident children did not provide unpaid help or care to children not living at home and others in 2018, but did in 2019: the participation rate is 28.34%.

The results with regard to help and care for an adult housemate are quite variable. Help and care for an adult housemate in the 28-34h group mainly occurs among respondents with youngest resident child between 8 and 18 years and respondents without resident children. Help and care for an adult housemate decreased in 2018 and 2019 with an average of 19min in the 28-34h group without resident children, and raised by 16min in the 28-34h group with the youngest resident child between 8 and 18 years. In the 36h group without resident children, the help and care for an adult housemate decreased with an average of 21 min between 2018 and 2019. The participation rate rises for the 28-34h group with youngest resident child between 8 and 18 years (+8.34%) and for the 36h group without resident children (+1.2%).

**Table 7. Duration and participation rate of informal care by working regime and age of youngest resident child**

			Duration (hours and minutes per week)		Participation rate (%)	
			Help and care for adult housemate	Unpaid help to children not living at home and others	Help and care for adult housemate	Unpaid help to children not living at home and others
<b>28h-34h</b>	No resident children	2018	0:33	1:04	19.09%	29.09%
		2019	0:14	2:06	5.00%	45.00%
		<b>Difference</b>	-0:19	+1:02	-14.09%	+15.91%
	Youngest resident child between 0 and 7 years old	2018	0:00	0:00	0.00%	0.00%
		2019	0:00	0:00	0.00%	0.00%
		<b>Difference</b>	/	/	/	/
	Youngest resident child between 8 and 18 years old	2018	1:25	0:00	37.50%	0.00%
		2019	1:41	0:00	45.84%	0.00%
		<b>Difference</b>	+0:16	/	+8.34%	/
<b>36h</b>	No resident children	2018	0:30	0:00	17.14%	0.00%
		2019	0:09	0:36	18.34%	28.34%
		<b>Difference</b>	-0:21	+0:36	+1.2%	+28.34%
	Youngest resident child between 0 and 7 years old	2018	0:00	0:17	0.00%	7.15%
		2019	0:00	0:02	0.00%	7.15%
		<b>Difference</b>	/	-0:15	/	/
	Youngest resident child between 8 and 18 years old	2018	0:00	0:00	6.25%	0.00%
		2019	0:00	0:12	0.00%	7.15%
		<b>Difference</b>	/	+0:12	-6.25%	+7.15%

### 3.6 More time for yourself

*I used to go to the gym or to the hairdresser, but it was also often just to get some time for myself. That's something I can be enormously satisfied with, and I've been able to do that thanks to fewer hours of work.*

*While I used to keep running around all the time and then sometimes the Monday morning started working exhausted and I had no energy. I felt much more often a lack of energy in the old full-time than in the new, in that 30-hour week. (56+, 28-34h)*

The 30-hour working week ensures that respondents have more time for leisure, social contacts and self-care ('personal care, eating and drinking' and 'sleeping').

The 36h group spends an average of 1h20min more on 'leisure and media' during the 30-hour working week, 23min more on 'social contacts and volunteering' and 1h26min more on 'personal care, food and drink' and 13min more on sleep. In the 28-34h group, in contrast to the 36h group, we see a decrease in 'leisure and media' (-2h31min.), but also a much larger increase in social contacts and volunteering (+3h17min.). The group 28-34h also spends more time on 'personal care, food and drink' (+39min), their sleeping time decreases slightly (-22min).

**Table 8. Evolution of time spent by leisure, social contacts, personal care according to work regime (in hours and minutes per week)**

		Leisure and media	Social contacts and volunteering	Personal care, food and drink	Sleep
28h – 34h	2018	20:48	8:55	16:25	56:09
	2019	18:17	12:12	17:04	55:47
	Difference	-2:31	+ 3:17	+ 0:39	- 0:22
36h	2018	18:12	9:06	13:17	55:39
	2019	19:32	9:29	14:43	55:52
	Difference	+1:20	+ 0:23	+ 1:26	+0:13

*On Friday, I plan the weekly chores: shopping, tidying up, cleaning... It's also the day I take my racing bike out of storage. I need that, that moment for myself. And also, that way I don't have to feel guilty about it because it doesn't nibble at our family time together. (26 to 35 years, 36h)*

### 3.6.1 Leisure and media

Respondents of the 36h group do not necessarily make time for new hobbies or activities at the transition to the 30h working week, but spend their time mainly on hobbies and activities they already did.

If we dive deeper into the leisure activities, we see that respondents without children living at home spend much more time on their hobbies. Respondents with children spend extra free time reading, watching TV & video, surfing the internet and using computers. Also relaxing and doing nothing rises in this group. 'Active time' - even though it was a wish of many respondents - didn't receive more time. Respondents from the 36h group spent about the same amount of time on 'sport and physical exercise'. The time for 'recreation, excursions and recreational sports' declined.

**Table 9. Evolution of time spent on leisure and media 36h group according to age of youngest resident child (in hours and minutes per week)**

		Hobby and game	Sport and exercise	Recreation, excursions, recreational sports	Going out	Culture and Entertainment	Watch TV and video	Listening to music and radio	Reading (also digital)	Surfing the net, computer use	Relaxation and doing nothing
Only 36h											
No resident children	2018	1:49	1:18	3:26	3:01	1:00	8:54	0:18	0:57	0:45	2:36
	2019	5:17	1:12	2:51	3:21	1:37	9:43	0:05	1:14	0:30	2:21
	<b>Difference</b>	+3:28	-0:06	-0:35	+0:20	+0:37	+0:49	-0:13	+0:17	-0:15	-0:15
Youngest resident child between 0 and 7 years											
	2018	0:11	0:36	2:25	3:00	0:47	6:56	0:00	0:30	0:03	0:21
	2019	0:14	0:44	1:18	2:31	0:50	8:02	0:00	0:51	0:57	0:36
	<b>Difference</b>	+0:03	+0:08	-1:07	-0:29	+0:03	+1:06	/	+0:21	+0:54	+0:15
Youngest resident child between 8 and 18 years											
	2018	4:25	1:50	0:18	1:17	1:24	8:39	0:02	0:28	1:04	0:25
	2019	3:26	1:48	0:09	0:52	0:13	9:55	0:00	2:06	1:23	0:53
No resident children	<b>Difference</b>	-0:59	-0:02	-0:09	-0:25	-1:11	+1:16	-0:02	+1:38	+0:19	+0:28

### 3.6.2 Social participation and volunteering

In the category 'social participation and volunteering', it is noticeable the 36h group of respondents with resident children in the 30-hour working week, assign significantly more time to social contacts: to talking, discussing, visiting and being visited. Respondents without resident children have less time for social contacts.

In the social activities, the focus is more on children and family and less on friends. The share of social participation with children and family increases for the 36h group from 33.73% to 40.36% and from 22.49% to 30.97% respectively. The share they spend with friends on social participation is decreasing: from 46.92% to 41.66%.

The time for volunteering decreases slightly. Perhaps this can be explained by the fact that meetings are not organised on a weekly basis (and therefore sometimes fall within a measurement and sometimes not).



**Table 10. Evolution of time use of volunteering and social contacts 36h group by age of youngest resident child (in hours and minutes per week)**

Only 36 hours		Association life, volunteering	Social contacts, communication and e- mail (private)
No resident children	2018	2:22	8:42
	2019	1:40	6:04
	<b>Difference</b>	-0:42	-2:38
Youngest resident child between 0 and 7 years	2018	1:52	5:15
	2019	1:26	7:25
	<b>Difference</b>	-0:26	+2:10
Youngest resident child between 8 and 18 years	2018	4:12	5:09
	2019	4:29	6:38
	<b>Difference</b>	+0:17	+1:29

*"On my day off, I take time off for myself. During the first six months, this was a bit of a search. I didn't find it that easy to fill in the day. Even felt a little guilty when I did something for myself and not for others. I've now found the right balance in this. I involve myself in my kids' school, for example. I'll take care of the collection box. I also participate in creative projects and help where and when I can". (36 to 45 years, 36h)*

### 3.6.3 Self-care

Personal care increased significantly among respondents with resident children and particularly those with young children. Especially on 'food and drink' they spend more time. Respondents without children living at home have less time for social contacts. All groups (both respondents with and without resident children ) spend more time on the subcategory 'professional and personal care'. In other words, there is more room for the hairdresser, the doctor, the dentist and the physiotherapist. The sleeping time increased slightly for respondents with young children (by 45 min.) and for respondents without children (by 13 min.). It remains constant among respondents with children between 8-18 years of age.

**Table 11. Evolution of time use of personal care sub-activities 36h group by age of youngest resident child (in hours and minutes per week)**

Only 36 hours		Food and drink	Dressing, washing and care	Professional care: hairdresser, manicurist, doctor, physiotherapist..	Sleep
No resident children	2018	08:34	06:39	00:06	55:39
	2019	07:40	07:11	00:21	55:52
	<b>Difference</b>	-0:54	+0:32	+0:15	+0:13
Youngest resident child between 0 and 7 years old	2018	06:39	05:04	00:09	54:11
	2019	08:05	05:43	00:32	54:56
	<b>Difference</b>	+1:26	+0:39	+0:23	+0:45
Youngest resident child between 8 and 18 years old	2018	08:29	03:59	00:08	56:39
	2019	09:36	03:56	00:40	56:36
	<b>Difference</b>	+1:07	-0:03	+0:32	-0:03

### 3.6.4 Quality and satisfaction leisure time

For the quality of leisure time and social participation we look at the following indicators:

- The combination with secondary activities: measures the combination of main activities - in this case leisure and social participation - with secondary activities. This indicator monitors how many activities people are doing at the same time.
- Leisure pressure: measures the stress and pressure that people experience around their leisure time, for example because they have too little free time or because the free time is interrupted too much.
- The satisfaction with the amount of leisure time.

Based on these indicators, we can state that the quality of and satisfaction with leisure time and social participation increases during the 30-hour working week.

#### *Combination with secondary activities*

For the 36h group, for example, we see that leisure activities and social participation in the 30-hour working week are less combined with other activities such as housekeeping, care and personal care. In other words, less multitasking is done.

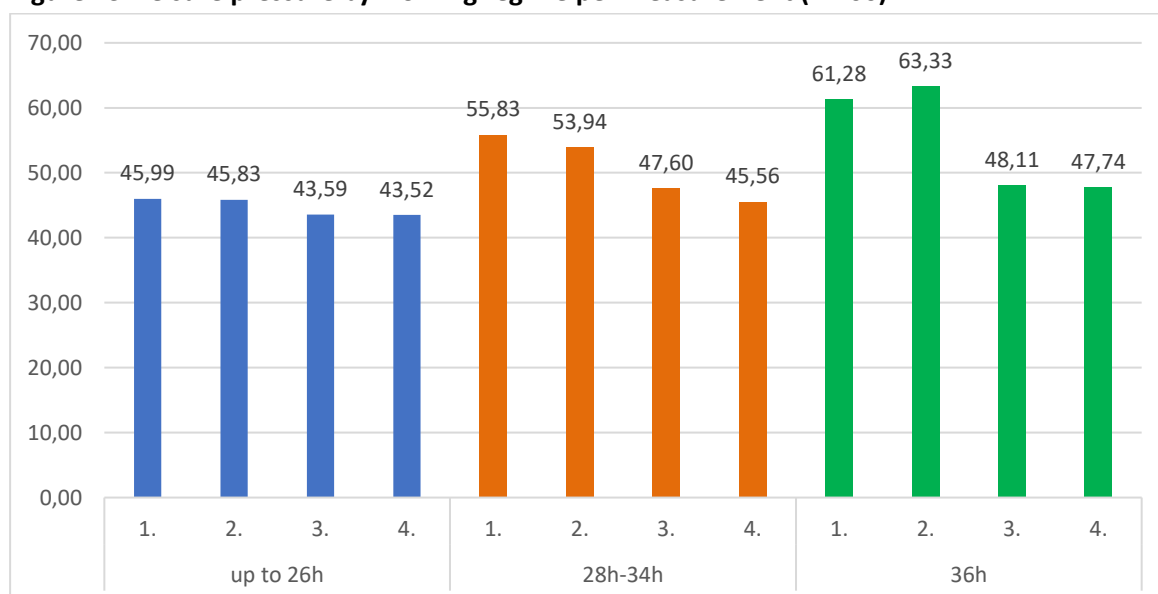
**Table 12. Combination with secondary activities by work regime (in hours and minutes per week)**

		Social participation without secondary activity	Leisure time without secondary activity	Social participation and secondary activity household work	Leisure time and secondary activity household work	Social participation and secondary activity care	Leisure time and secondary activity care	Social participation and secondary activity personal care	Leisure time and secondary activity personal care
up to 26h	2018	4:30	9:36	0:36	0:36	0:19	0:16	1:10	0:45
	2019	4:13	7:12	0:38	0:21	0:08	0:02	1:50	1:16
	Difference	-0:17	-2:24	+0:02	-0:15	-0:11	-0:14	+0:40	+0:31
28h – 34h	2018	3:47	10:36	0:16	0:16	0:01	0:04	1:35	1:15
	2019	3:50	10:11	0:21	0:18	0:07	0:08	2:01	0:57
	Difference	+0:03	-0:25	+0:05	+0:02	+0:06	+0:04	+0:26	-0:18
36h	2018	3:16	7:14	0:33	0:24	0:35	0:47	1:45	0:54
	2019	4:39	9:47	0:18	0:27	0:21	0:38	0:43	0:39
	Difference	+1:23	+2:33	-0:15	+0:03	-0:14	-0:09	-1:02	-0:15

### Leisure pressure

Respondents from 28-34h and 36h groups reported a significant decrease in 'leisure pressure' in the 30-hour working week.

**Figure 13. Leisure pressure by working regime per measurement (1-100)**

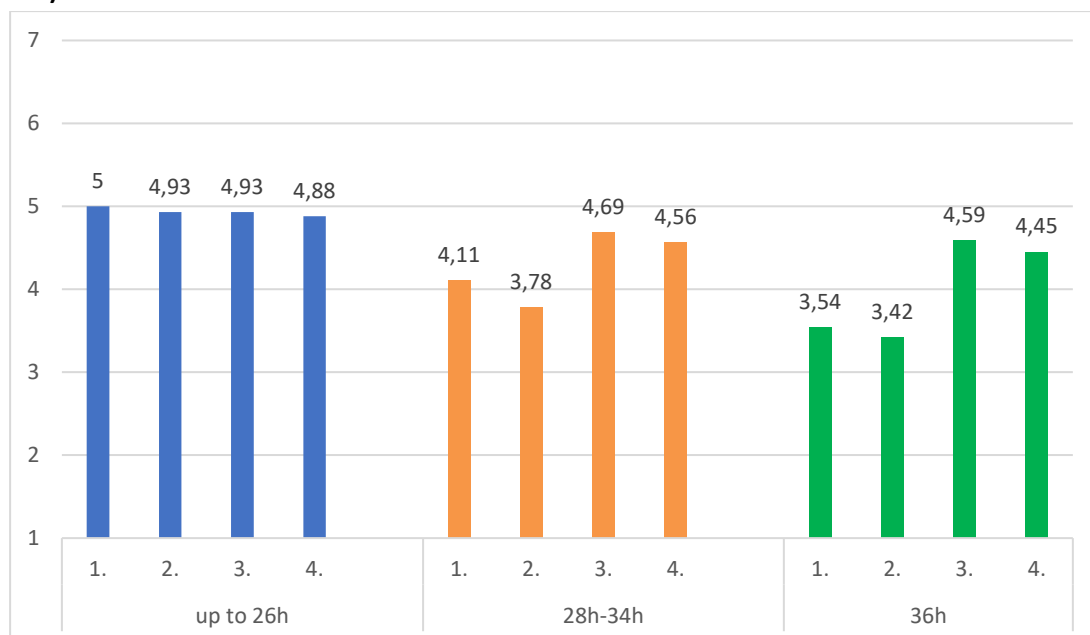


### Satisfaction amount of leisure time

Finally, we see that respondents who experience a decrease in working hours in the 30-hour working week are more satisfied with the amount of free time they have. The increase is strongest in the 36h

group. The 36h group almost reaches the level of the 28-34h group, but both remain below the level of the 26h group.

**Figure 14. Satisfaction with the amount of leisure time by working regime per measurement (scale 1-7)**



*When I was working full time, I spent the whole weekend doing household chores. I was cleaning, shopping, washing and ironing. All those things I do on Fridays, the day I don't work. Suddenly there is room during the weekend for spontaneous outings, for example. (36 to 45 years, 36h)*

### 3.7 Parents and children have more quality time

The impact of the 30-hour working week on the children can be seen from two angles. On the one hand through the time use survey conducted among the parents and on the other hand through the qualitative survey among the children themselves.

Both parents (36h group) and their children indicate that the 30-hour working week has a valuable effect on their relationship and the time they spend together.

#### 3.7.1 The Parents

##### *Being together and doing things together*

The time use survey shows that respondents with children living in the 30-hour working week spend a little more time with their children. Moreover, we see a slight shift from 'being together' to 'doing things together'.

**Table 13. Evolution time 'being together' and 'doing things together' (sleeping without activity) with child for 36h group with resident children(in hours and minutes per week)**

Group 36h with resident children	Being together with children	Doing things together with children	Total
2018	15:25	22:41	38:06
2019	14:53	24:06	38:59
<b>Difference</b>	-0:32	+1:25	+0:53

#### *Share of activities with children*

The activity of which parents do the largest part together with the children is, not illogical, 'care, upbringing and guidance of children'. After that comes personal care, food and drink', 'social participation' and 'leisure'. In the 30-hour working week, that order remains the same. We do see shifts within the categories. Within the categories 'care, upbringing and guidance of children', 'social participation' and 'personal care, food and drink', the share of parents with their children is increasing. Within the 'leisure' category, this share is decreasing.

Incidentally, this does not mean that there are fewer leisure activities with children in absolute time.

**Table 14. Evolution of share of activities that respondents from 36h group with resident children do together.**

		Paid work	Household work	Care and upbringing of children	Personal care, food and drink	Social participation	Leisure	Travel	Others
36 hours	2018	0.27%	11.06%	61.57%	33.70%	22.49%	19.89%	15.58%	3.23%
	2019	0.07%	10.27%	65.10%	35.03%	30.97%	14.84%	19.96%	2.33%
	<b>Difference</b>	-0.20% points	-0.79% points	+3.53% points	+1.33% points	+8.48% points	-5.05% points	+4.38% points	-0.9% points

#### *Care & upbringing and guidance of children*

Respondents with a youngest resident child between 0-7 years of age experience a strong increase (32%) in time spent in parenting and guidance. Respondents whose youngest resident child is 8 - 18 years old show a decrease in time with respect to parenting and guidance. A possible explanation for this is the study itself. With aging children, parents see a shift in the time spent with children from the category 'care, upbringing and guidance of children' to 'social participation'. In Kind & Samenleving's research, the children themselves also indicate something similar. The appreciation of time together-apart changes with aging. Where some older children first (in 2018) indicate 'doing things together with parents' as their favourite kind of time, we see 1 year later (2019) that they enjoy being apart for a while.

**Table 15. Evolution of time spent caring for baby and children and upbringing and guidance of children, only 36h group (in hours and minutes per week)**

Only 36 hours		Caring for baby and children	Upbringing and guidance of children
No resident children	2018	0:06	0:08
	2019	0:06	0:35
	<b>Difference</b>	/	+0:27
Youngest resident child between 0 and 7	2018	6:54	3:33
	2019	6:42	4:41
	<b>Difference</b>	-0:12	+1:08
Youngest resident child between 8 and 18	2018	3:06	6:02
	2019	3:08	4:36
	<b>Difference</b>	+0:02	-1:26

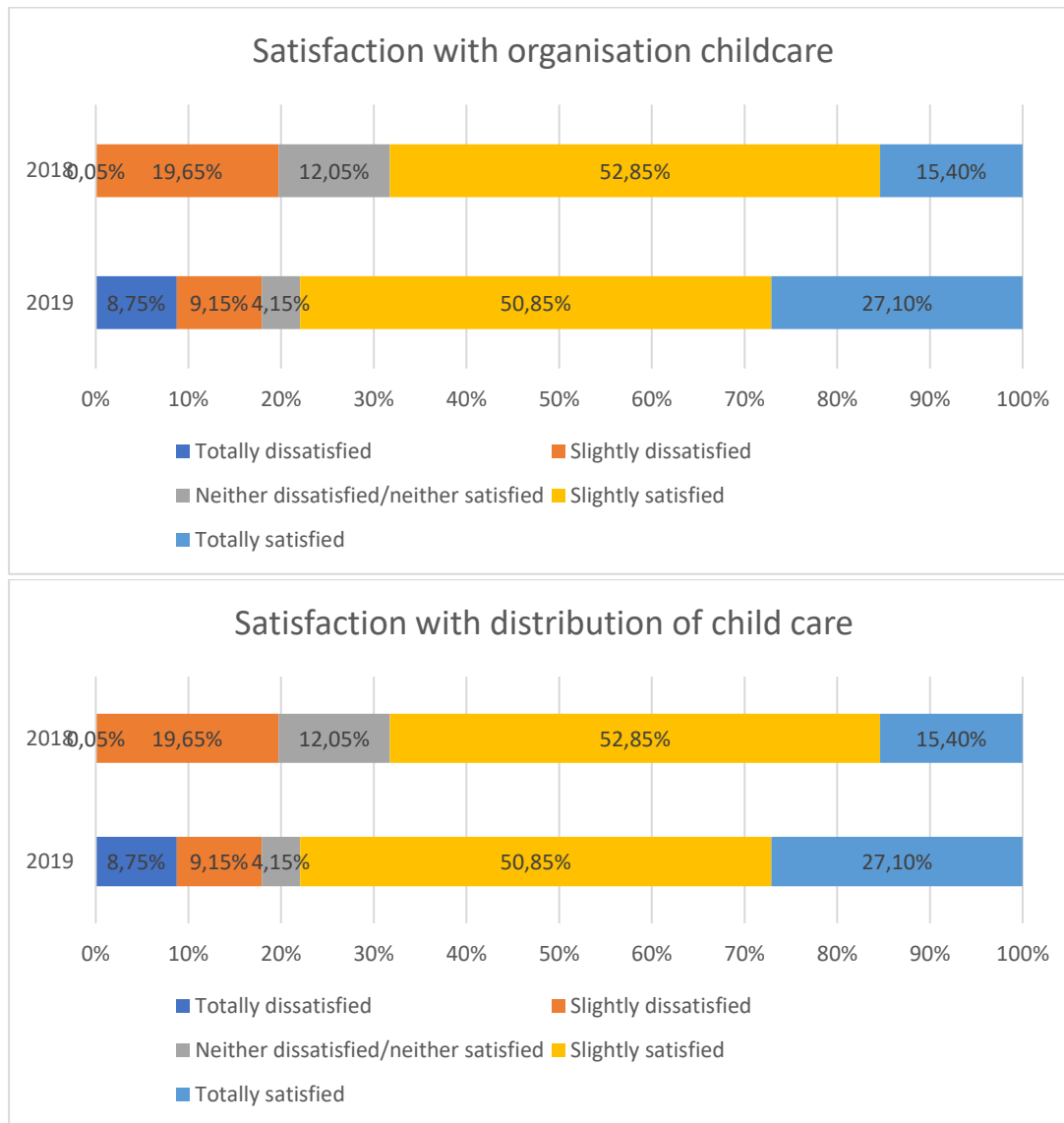
*Interviewer: So how did she [daughter] deal with it when you went back to work more?*

*Respondent: Yeah, she's a little older now. She is 11 now and has less need of that presence than last year. [...] But yes, she regrets that she had to return pre-corona to the daycare. She also said that "oh back to daycare again". I also had to work a few times on Fridays so she sometimes had to spend four days at daycare and she had a hard time with that. (36 to 45 years, 36h)*

### *Organisation and child care satisfaction*

The 30-hour working week ensures that respondents are more satisfied with the organisation of child care and its distribution with the partner. As with the organisation and distribution of household tasks, we also notice a polarisation here. Satisfaction with the organisation of child care strengthens and increases. Satisfaction with the organisation of child care strengthens and increases. Satisfaction with the distribution of child care increases, as does dissatisfaction with the distribution of child care.

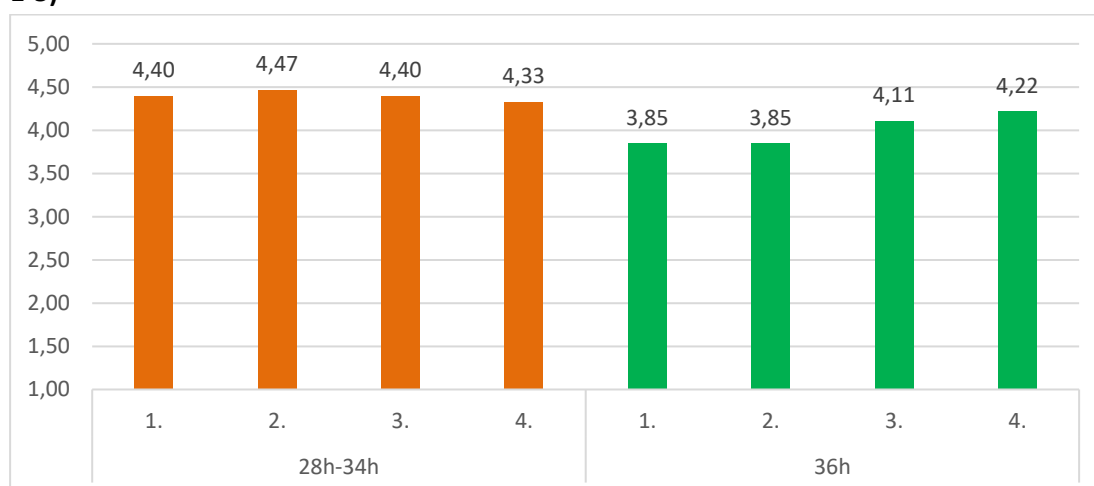
**Figure 15. Satisfaction with the organisation and distribution of child care**



### *Experience time with children*

As mentioned earlier, the better work-life balance and the increased peace and quiet in the household and in leisure time are also reflected in the bond with the children. Asked about the quality of the time and the bond with their children, parents who used to work 36 hours indicate that it has significantly improved.

**Figure 16. Quality of the time and the bond with children by work regime per measurement (scale 1-5)**



*"Because I work from home more often, I can pick up my children from school on time. The extracurricular daycare here is well-organised, but it was sometimes long days for them. When I worked 36 hours, I had to go to Brussels for several days and then I was on the road for more than three hours. My partner also works until late at night. As a result, the children stayed in daycare until the last moment. It wasn't ideal.*

*I'm also less tired at night. Everything can be done at a slower pace. I feel like I'm spending more 'real' time with my kids. (36 to 45 years, 36h)*

In addition, the parents (36h group) in the 30-hour working week also have more fun in the guidance and upbringing of their children. From the second measurement (October 2018), respondents could indicate per activity for which reasons (multiple answers per activity possible) they did that activity. When raising and supervising children, the reason 'because I enjoy it' rises from 56% to 63.5%.

**Table 16. Reason for conducting activities 'caring for babies and children' and 'upbringing and guidance of children'**

Only 36 hours	Measurement	Because I am or will be obligated	Because I think it's important, out of duty, to please someone else	Out of necessity, because it's necessary to be able to do something else	Because I enjoy it
Caring for baby and children	Oct '18	3.8%	38.2%	59.9%	25.5%
	Mar '19	7.1%	37.8%	60.9%	26.3%
	Oct '19	2.2%	41.8%	59.2%	27.7%
Upbringing and guidance of children	Oct '18	2.4%	46.4%	17.9%	56%



	Mar '19	5.4%	50%	23.9%	55.4%
	Oct '19	1.9%	48.1%	14.4%	63.5%

### 3.7.2 The kids

The qualitative research conducted by Kind & Samenleving with children confirms that children appreciate the attention of parents and presence. They feel stress and the loss of it. Older children like to be apart together, younger children like to do things together. Quiet(er) evenings are a relief for them. The 30-hour working week (together with working from home) has or can have an effect (and is therefore valuable) when children feel bottlenecks in family time (less time than desired to do things together, too busy mornings or evenings, parents not so available). In families where there are few bottlenecks for children, the effect for children is limited (although it is often there as well).

*"No, I don't really notice. Only sometimes I get to choose what time she comes to pick me up at school. But other than that, I'm not home during the day so I don't notice." Daan, 11 years old*

*"I'm studying at the university and I'm often home in the morning. I like the fact that there's someone else in the house (my mom). Sometimes I talk about my studies and that's cool". Lucas, 18 years*

If children experience certain bottlenecks, then the 30-hour working week has the potential to respond and make a difference for children as well. Lotte, for example, indicates that she likes the fact that there is more time at home and that this time is also more qualitative. Her mother is free on Wednesdays and she has to stay less in the daycare.

*"Then I'll have a lot more time, read a lot or play with Lego, and watch TV. That's better for me.", Lotte, 10 years*

For three children from the study, the 30-hour working week made little difference, but they didn't mind that much either. For one child, the new scheme made no difference, although there were bottlenecks. For two children, the 30-hour working week did make a big difference: they noticed positive effects.

Even though the impact of the 30-hour working week was not visible to every child and the new full-time working week does not mean that bottlenecks experienced by children simply disappear, the research shows that the 30-hour working week has a valuable effect on the families from this research in three (overlapping) ways: there is more time, there is more quality time and children get more autonomy.

#### *The 30-hour working week logically creates more time*

The 30-hour working week logically creates more time. For parents it makes the organisation of time in and around the family easier, indicates the time expenditure research. As a result of the new full-time job, the extra time for children and for the family is mainly invested in the transitional moments of the day: the moments when family members split up in the morning and come together again in the evening. For those moments, more time can be taken or they need to be combined less with other tasks. Children speak with appreciation about that possibility: *'today I can sleep a little longer because*

*mom doesn't have to go to work'. In this way, it is also possible that the time in daycare after school becomes shorter - which is all the more interesting when daycare time is boring - or that children can choose more when they are picked up from the daycare.*

There is not only more time to combine family time with other activities: there is also more time for the time in and with the family itself. For the children in this study, the greatest value lies in this: there is more time than before for them to play games, to do homework together, to do things together.

*"Sometimes she sits on the computer for work. But she usually plays games with us when we're home. That happens more often than before." Lisa, 9 years*

### *The 30-hour working week logically creates more time*

Parents indicate that the quality of the time spent and the bond with their children improved. The children say the same thing. Children often have the desire to have more time together and really do things together, preferably something like playing games together. That's pure interaction, but on the child's level. With the 30-hour working week, there will be room for this in some families. In addition, functional time can also become more qualitative: doing homework together with mom or preparing a test, for example. The possibility of valuable time arose because more time was available. It is up to the parents whether or not to respond to the time wishes of their children. But in any case, in addition to the greater availability of parents, it is the reason for children to evaluate the 30-hour working week positively.

*"Yeah, I'm very happy with the 30-hour week. And then we (my mom and I) studied well and I did great on my test." Lotte, 10 years*

### *The 30-hour working week also gives, to a certain extent, more autonomy to children*

Having time is a basic condition for autonomy. Thanks to the parent's breathing space, the children also have more control over family time. There is more opportunity to ask to play a game together, more opportunity to do the homework at home and not at school. Children sometimes also get more control over the time outside the house over which they have just a little more choice, for example about how long they stay at daycare

*"Now I can choose when she (mom) comes to get me. I have football on Friday. So if mom has to go to work and she comes to get me at a quarter past five, that's a bit tight. So it's convenient that she can come and get me at four. Because if I eat shortly before football, I sometimes suffer (during training) from the fact that I have just eaten" Daan, 11 years old*

## **3.8 Positive evaluation of workability and quality of work**

We measure the impact of the introduction of the 30-hour working week on the quality of work and the work itself, both at the level of the respondents (via the VUB time use survey) and at the level of the organisation (via Femma analysis).

The transition to the 30-hour working week did not increase the work pace or the work pressure among the respondents. They do, however, indicate that the 30-hour working week has made them more focused and efficient.

With regard to mental exhaustion, work atmosphere and job satisfaction, we see mixed results. The last measurement shows an increase in mental exhaustion and a decrease in work atmosphere and pleasure at work. This is due to difficulties with regard to the renewed work organisation introduced by Femma before the 30-hour working week started. Over time, the renewed work organisation proved to be sub-optimal for some individuals and teams and had a negative influence on their job satisfaction. This also had a partial impact on absenteeism due to illness. Femma handled the issues and made a number of organisational and strategic adjustments.

In the 30-hour working week, more respondents are convinced that the regime allows them to continue working until the statutory retirement age compared to the 36-hour working week.

Finally we see a positive evaluation of the impact of the 30-hour working week on the quality of the work itself, both at the level of the respondents and at the level of the organisation.

### 3.8.1 Workability

#### Working pace

A majority of respondents indicated that the introduction of the 30-hour working week meant that they did not feel compelled to work faster or work more hours than had been agreed in advance. However, just over half of the respondents indicated that the introduction of the 30-hour working week meant that there were certain tasks that they could spend less time on than they would like.

*That freedom of white space, that's another kind of freedom, it wasn't there anymore. Not having any white space, that's the first thing that's gone, isn't it? Saying "okay I'm going to spend half a day reading these books and I'll look that up and do some research, that interests me or that course ..." Externally I've hardly been there. You focus on the necessary, but open your door and say "I'd like to learn that or that", no, we didn't do that in 2019. (36 to 45 years, 36h)*

1 out of 5 respondents in the 28-34h group and 1 out of 3 respondents in the 36h group indicated taking fewer breaks during work. The length of the midday break is only touched upon by a very small minority of respondents.

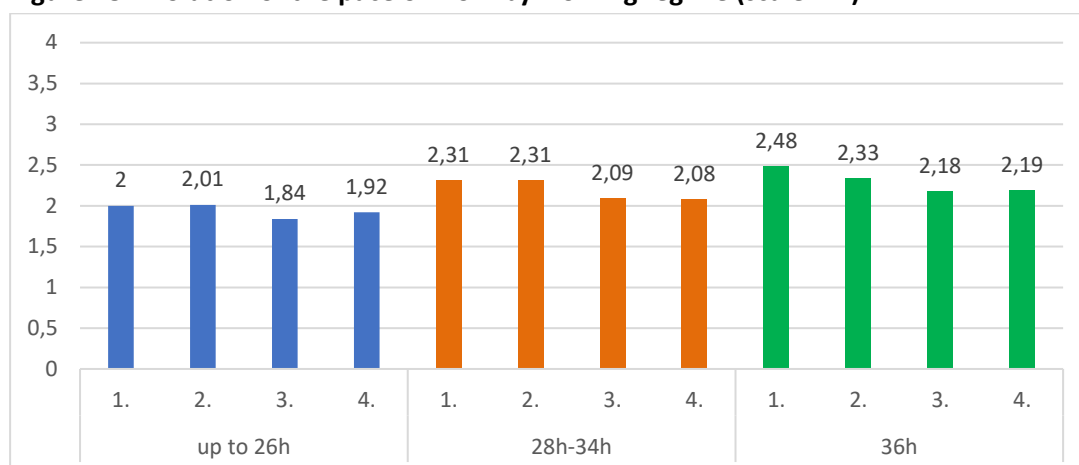
**Table 17. Respondents' experiences of impact 30-hour working week on their work pace**

	As a result of the introduction for the 30-hour week		Disagree	Neither disagree, nor agree	Agree
Oct-19	I feel compelled to work faster	up to 26h	50.00%	25.00%	25.00%
		28h-34h	50.00%	7.10%	42.80%
		36h	47.80%	17.40%	34.70%

	I feel compelled to work more hours than agreed	up to 26h	37.50%	12.50%	50.00%
		28h-34h	50.00%	21.40%	28.60%
		36h	52.10%	26.10%	21.70%
	I don't always get to finish my duties for Femma on time	Up to 26h	50.00%	12.50%	37.50%
		28h-34h	78.60%	7.10%	14.30%
		36h	56.50%	21.70%	21.70%
	there are certain tasks that I can spend less time on than I'd like	Up to 26h	37.50%	12.50%	50.00%
		28h-34h	28.60%	21.40%	50.00%
		36h	34.70%	8.70%	56.50%
	I take less time for my lunch break	Up to 26h	66.70%	22.20%	11.10%
		28h-34h	50.00%	42.90%	7.10%
		36h	78.20%	4.30%	17.40%
	I take less breaks	Up to 26h	55.60%	22.20%	22.20%
		28h-34h	57.10%	21.40%	21.40%
		36h	43.40%	21.70%	34.80%

When asked about the pace of work, we see that respondents rate it slightly lower after the introduction of the 30-hour working week. The pace of work gauges the extent to which they feel they have too much work, have to work too fast, work under time pressure.

**Figure 18. Evolution of the pace of work by working regime (scale 1-4)**



### *Focus and efficiency*

In the 30-hour working week, the respondents work with more focus and efficiency. The contamination of work activities with other tasks is an indicator of this. Respondents combine less work tasks with other activities. They were clearly coached on working with more focus, because the effect also occurs (but less) in the 26h group.

**Table 18. Share of main activities with secondary activity out of total main activity**

		Share of main activities with secondary activity out of total main activity
up to 26h	2018	48.05%
	2019	38.98%
	Difference	-9.07%
28h – 34h	2018	59.29%
	2019	45.58%
	Difference	-13.71%
36h	2018	57.14%
	2019	42.00%
	Difference	-15.14%

The 30-hour working week does not affect the average length of time they spend on a work activity.

**Table 19. Fragmentation of paid work (the longer the less fragmentation). Duration in hours and minutes per week)**

		Average time spent on work activity
up to 26h	2018	2:11
	2019	2:08

	<b>Difference</b>	-0:03
28h – 34h	2018	2:03
	2019	1:51
	<b>Difference</b>	-0:12
36h	2018	1:43
	2019	1:46
	<b>Difference</b>	+0:03

*After a very short time you realise "okay, I have to plan my work differently". You're working much more intensively. At some point you actually get much more done in those 30 hours than you used to get done in those 40 hours. That was my experience. [...] Your level of working is much more intense. If I started at 7am, I knew I would work a set number of hours that day but at 2pm I was finished working and experienced the luxury of extra time. You really have a lot of time left. And the moment you realise that and you then dedicate 30 hours so fully to your work, that worked extremely productive for me. You're working much more intensively. (36 to 45 years, 36h)*

Respondents also indicate that they work with more focus and efficiency. The impact here is greatest for the 36h group. In the second measurement in the 30-hour working week, 87% of respondents in the 36h group indicated that they should work more efficiently, 78.3% that they plan their work better and 82.6% that they work more focused. The 30-hour working week means that respondents speak to each other less but adapt their work more to the availability of their colleagues.

**Table 20. Respondents' experiences with impact 30-hour working week on their paid work**

	As a result of the introduction for the 30-hour week		Disagree	Neither disagree, nor agree	Agree
Oct '19	I feel compelled to work more efficiently	up to 26h	25.00%	37.50%	37.50%
		28h-34h	35.70%	7.10%	57.10%
		36h	8.70%	4.30%	87.00%
	I plan my work better than before	up to 26h	50.00%	0.00%	50.00%
		28h-34h	35.70%	28.60%	35.70%
		36h	21.70%	0.00%	78.30%
	the work is more coordinated	up to 26h	37.50%	25.00%	37.50%

		28h-34h	46.20%	46.20%	7.70%
		36h	34.80%	21.70%	43.50%
	I work more focused	up to 26h	50.00%	0.00%	50.00%
		28h-34h	38.50%	38.50%	23.10%
		36h	13.00%	4.30%	82.60%
	I work more toward the objectives of my team	up to 26h	0.00%	11.10%	88.90%
		28h-34h	23.10%	30.80%	46.20%
		36h	8.60%	21.70%	69.60%
	I speak to some of my colleagues less	up to 26h	11.10%	0.00%	88.90%
		28h-34h	21.40%	21.40%	57.10%
		36h	22.70%	4.50%	72.70%
	I align my work more to the availability of my colleagues	up to 26h	37.50%	12.50%	50.00%
		28h-34h	28.50%	35.70%	35.70%
		36h	30.40%	4.30%	65.20%

### *Mental exhaustion*

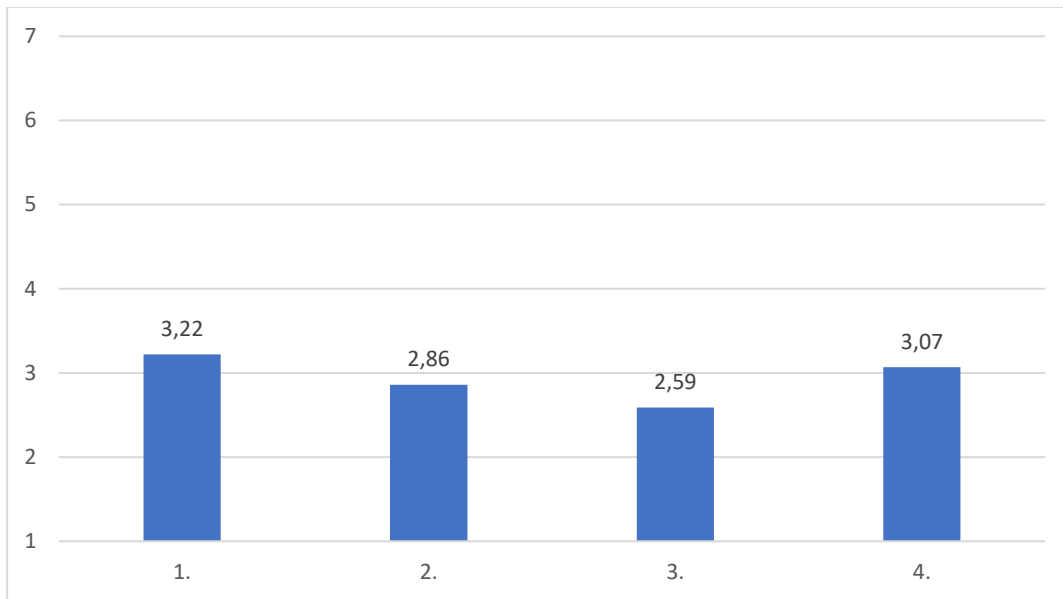
The mental exhaustion scale measures the degree to which a person is mentally exhausted, frustrated and tired from work.

As far as mental exhaustion is concerned, we see that it first decreases for all respondents up to and including measurement 3 and then increases in measurement 4. Checked for respondents who participated in all measurements, this trend is significant.

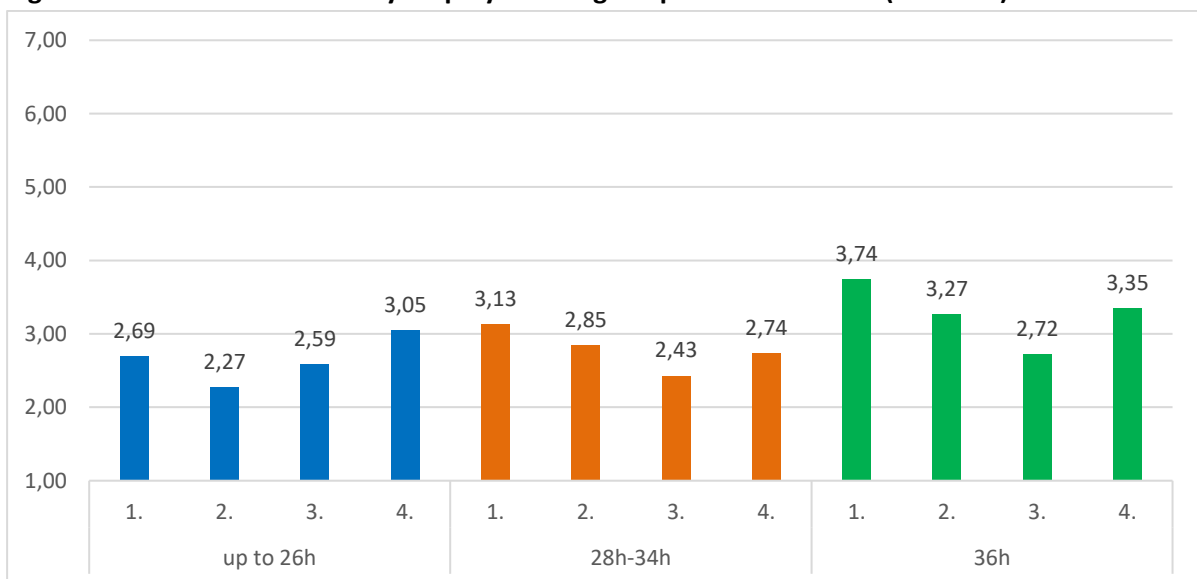
The significance lapses in the event of a breakdown by working regime. For the 28-34h group and 36h group, the mental exhaustion decreases up to measurement 3, but in measurement 4 it rises again to

about the level of measurement 2. In the 26h group, which therefore did not decrease in working hours, we see fluctuations between measurement 1 and 3 and also an increase in measurement 4.

**Figure 18. Mental exhaustion for all respondents (scale 1-7).**



**Figure 19. Mental exhaustion by employment regime per measurement (scale 1-7)**

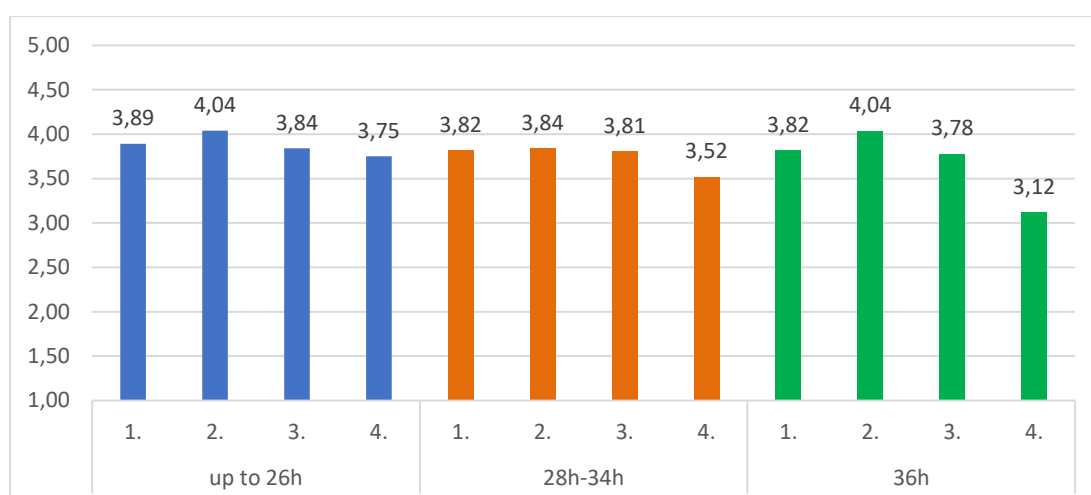


### *Working atmosphere*

The scale working atmosphere measures the collegiality and the atmosphere on the work floor. The working atmosphere clearly shows a dip in measurement 4, especially among the respondents of 28-34h group and 36h group. This decrease is significant.



**Figure 20. Work atmosphere by employment regime per measurement (scale 1-5)**

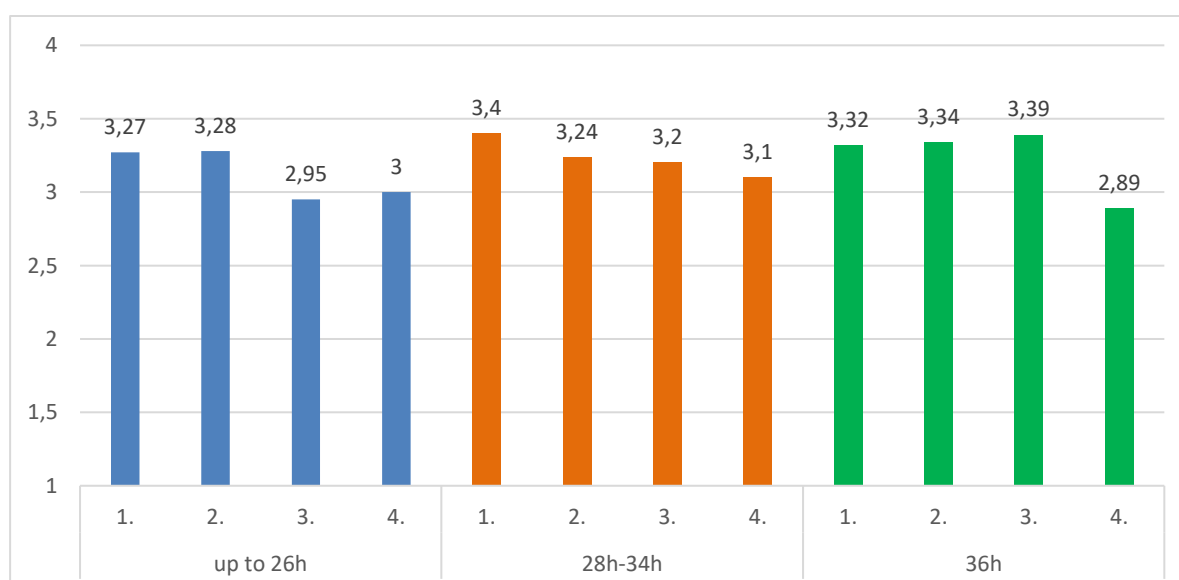


### *Pleasure in work.*

We use the pleasure in work scale to measure the extent to which respondents enjoy starting their working day, whether they find their work meaningful, engaging and challenging.

Concerning pleasure in work, we see a varied picture. In the 26h group, we see a significant decrease between measurement 2 and measurement 3. In 28-34h group, we mainly see a decrease between measurement 1 and 2 (this is not significant). For 36h group we see a decrease in measurement 4 (narrowly not significant).

**Figure 21. Pleasure in work by employment regime per measurement (scale 1-4)**



### *Absenteeism due to illness*

With a study that lasted only 1 year, we can only make very cautious statements about the relationship between working time reduction and absenteeism. General absenteeism is not good for 2019: it rose

from 6% in 2018 to 11% in 2019. Femma experienced some serious medical setbacks among the staff and the altering of the work organisation also had an effect on absenteeism in 1 team.

Nevertheless, we dare to state (cautiously) that the 30-hour working week had a positive effect on the well-being of staff members. Absenteeism remained almost constant for the 36h group: from 7% (2018) to 8% (2019) and the number of off-days<sup>4</sup> decreased in this group - and not in the other groups - from 54 days in 2018 to 42 days in 2019.

### *Maintainability until retirement age*

When we gauge whether respondents are happy to work under the current regime up to the statutory retirement age, we see a clear increase in the response category 'definitely' in the 30-hour working week. And this for the 28-34h group as well as the 36h group.

**Table 21. Maintainability until retirement age**

		Not sure	Certainly
28h-34h group	Mar '18	66.60%	33.40%
	Oct '18	53.90%	46.10%
	Mar '19	25%	75%
	Oct '19	27.30%	72.70%
36h group	Mar '18	77.80%	22.20%
	Oct '18	89.50%	10.50%
	Mar '19	13.60%	86.40%
	Oct '19	8.60%	91.40%

### *3.8.2 Quality of the work*

#### VUB time use research

A majority of respondents indicated that the introduction of the 30-hour working week meant that they did not feel compelled to work faster or work more hours than had been agreed in advance. A minority of the 36h group reports that the tasks are not always completed on time, but the need to work more hours is only indicated by a small group.

**Table 22. Respondents' experiences of impact 30-hour working week on their quality of work**

	As a result of the introduction for the 30-hour week		Disagree	Neither disagree, nor agree	Agree
Oct '19	the quality of my work is deteriorating	up to 26h	42.90%	42.90%	14.30%

<sup>4</sup> An off-day is a day of absence for which no medical certificate is required.

		28h-34h	71.40%	14.30%	14.30%
		36h	65.20%	26.10%	8.70%
	the quality of my work is improving	up to 26h	42.90%	57.10%	0.00%
		28h-34h	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%
		36h	30.40%	43.50%	26.10%

#### Analysis by Femma

In implementation of its policy plan, Femma draws up an annual progress report consisting of quantitative and qualitative parameters. In order to evaluate the impact and quality of its work, the 2019 progress report was analysed and compared with that of 2018. On this basis, we can state that the organisation achieved the vast majority of its goals in 2019.

This doesn't mean everything simply went smoothly. As discussed in 2.1, the 30-hour working week coincided with the introduction of a new work organisation. This new work organisation turned out not to be optimally focused on realising the basic work (supervising groups and setting up new initiatives) and Femma adjusted this in mid-2019.

## 4 Conclusion

### 4.1 Research question and design

In this action research, we were looking for an answer to the research question: Can a 30-hour working week contribute to a balanced and high-quality combination of paid and unpaid work by men and women? Therefore, Femma's staff worked a 30-hour working week for 1 year (2019). The time use research group TOR (VUB) investigated, qualitatively and quantitatively, the effects of the shorter working week on staff. The research centre Kind & Samenleving carried out a qualitative study into the effects on 6 children.

### 4.2 Research results

The results show that the combination of work, care and leisure was more balanced. Satisfaction improved significantly, there were fewer conflicts between work and private life and the overall workload (the sum of paid work, household work and care work) decreased. Moreover, a decrease in

the general time pressure showed that people did not exchange 'busy at work' for 'a busy schedule in leisure time'.

The better balance between work, care and leisure meant less household stress and less pressure on leisure time. The quality of household and leisure time increased. There was more time for personal leisure - a wish that was at the top of the wish list. Parents indicated that the bond with their children improved and experienced the time they spent with their children as more qualitative.

The 30-hour working week did not meet all the time wishes of the children and was not always very visible to the children. Nevertheless, the 30-hour working week had a valuable effect on the families surveyed. Children indicated that they had more autonomy. They reported that the mornings and evenings were calmer and that there was more room to do things together.

Femma focused on replacement employment (recruitment of personnel and outsourcing of tasks) of 70% of the minus-hours and adapted her work organisation. Halfway through 2019, the work organisation was adjusted in function of optimising the organisational goals with regard to volunteer work. The staff worked more efficiently and with more focus. The workload didn't increase. In contrast to the 36-hour working week, staff believe that the 30-hour working week enables them to work until they reach retirement age.

### 4.3 Perspectives

This research shows how the new full-time was experienced by adults and children and how valuable it was found. It knew its limitations in time and research population. What impact does the new full-time job have on very young children (0-6 years) who were left out of the picture? What are the effects of a sustainable introduction of working time reduction? What does reducing working hours mean in other business and organisational contexts? It is important to **explore the diversity in further research**. Femma researched working time reduction from the perspective of quality combining work, care and leisure. The time use research group TOR (VUB) investigated, qualitatively and quantitatively, the effects of the shorter working week on staff. There is a lot of potential in **linking a shorter working week to other social issues than what was investigated here**.

## 5 Attachments

### Annex A: Composition of sounding board group

- ✓ Mirjam de Rijk, Director Policy and Strategy FNV
- ✓ Steven Hermans, Director Business Development and Social Innovation CM
- ✓ Catherine Ongenae, storytelling expert, lecturer in media and diversity, creative director VR&soundscapes
- ✓ Chris Serroyen, head of study department ACV
- ✓ Jan van den Nieuwenhuijzen, director at social and cultural organisations
- ✓ Sandra Vandorpe, Talent Lead Engie Belgium
- ✓ Patrizia Zanoni, Professor of Organisation Studies UHasselt

## Annex B: profiles of respondent groups according to age, position within Femma and age of youngest resident child.

**Table B1: Respondent group profile according to age**

		Up to 35 years	36-45 years	46-55 years	+56 years
up to 26 hours	N	0	1	2	13
	Group up to 26h	0.0%	6.3%	12.5%	81.3%
	% in age group	0.0%	6.3%	25.0%	48.1%
	% total group of respondents	0.0%	1.7%	3.4%	22.0%
28 hours to up to 34 hours	N	3	1	2	14
	% in 28-34h group	15.0%	5.0%	10.0%	70.0%
	% in age group	37.5%	6.3%	25.0%	51.9%
	% total group of respondents	5.1%	1.7%	3.4%	23.7%
36 hours	N	5	14	4	0
	% in 36h group	21.7%	60.9%	17.4%	0.0%
	% in age group	62.5%	87.5%	50.0%	0.0%
	% total group of respondents	8.5%	23.7%	6.8%	0.0%

**Table B2: Respondent group profile according to position**

		Administrative assistant	Educational assistant	Manager	Group supervisor
up to 26 hours	N	3	4	1	7

	Group up to 26 h	20.0%	26.7%	6.7%	46.7%
	% in age group	25.0%	22.2%	14.3%	31.8%
	% total group of respondents	5.1%	6.8%	1.7%	11.9%
28 hours to up to 34 hours	N	6	6	3	5
	% in 28-34h group	30.0%	30.0%	15.0%	25.0%
	% in age group	50.0%	33.3%	42.9%	22.7%
	% total group of respondents	10.2%	10.2%	5.1%	8.5%
36 hours	N	3	8	3	10
	% in 36h group	12.5%	33.3%	12.5%	41.7%
	% in age group	25.0%	44.4%	42.9%	45.5%
	% total group of respondents	5.1%	13.6%	5.1%	16.9%

**Table B3. Respondent group profile according to youngest child living at home**

		No resident children	Youngest resident child between 0 and 7 years	Youngest resident child between 8 and 18 years	Youngest resident child older than 18 years
up to 26 h	N	14	0	2	0
	Group up to 26 h	87.5%	0.0%	12.5%	0.0%
	% in age group	38.9%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%
	% total group of	23.7%	0.0%	3.4%	0.0%

	respondents				
28 hours to up to 34 hours	N	14	1	0	4
	% in 28-34h group	73.7%	5.3%	0.0%	21.1%
	% in age group	38.9%	11.1%	0.0%	100.0%
	% total group of respondents	23.7%	1.7%	0.0%	6.8%
36 hours	N	8	8	8	0
	% in 36h group	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%	0.0%
	% in age group	22.2%	88.9%	80.0%	0.0%
	% total group of respondents	13.6%	13.6%	13.6%	0.0%



## Annex C: Overview of items of scales used in report

Scale	Items	Range of response options
General time pressure		Range 1-5: totally disagree - totally agree
	I never have time for myself	
	A day has too few hours for me	
	Too much is expected of me	
	I often have to cancel appointments I've made	
	I have to do more than I want to do	
	I never get updated	
	I don't have time to do the things I want to do	
	More is expected of me	
	Often in my spare time I don't get to do the things I actually want to do	
	I have to consider others too often in my spare time	
	I find it hard to relax in my spare time	
	It takes a lot of effort to plan my leisure activities	
	There are so many things I want to do in my spare time that I often feel like I'm running out of time	
	Too many of my leisure activities are fragmented	
Household stress		Range 1-5: totally disagree - totally agree
	There are times when I'm short of hands in the household	
	I feel stressed when I think of the household chores that still have to be done	
	I often postpone my household chores	
	Household time is predetermined and planned	

Quality time and bond with children		Range 1-5: totally disagree - totally agree
	I can enjoy the time I spend with my child(ren)	
	I don't see time spent on child care as 'working'	
	I have a good relationship with my child(ren)	
Mental exhaustion		Range 1-7: never - every day
	I feel mentally exhausted by my work.	
	At the end of a working day I feel empty	
	I feel tired when I get up in the morning and have another working day ahead of me.	
	I feel 'burned out' by my work.	
	I feel frustrated by my work.	
	I think I'm too committed to my work.	
Pleasure in work		Range 1-4: never - every day
	I do like to start the workday	
	I still find my work fascinating, every day	
	I enjoy my work	
	I guess I can say I look forward to my work	

	I like the challenge in my work	
	I feel like my work is purposeful	
Leisure pressure		Range 1-5: totally disagree - totally agree
	Often in my spare time I don't get to do the things I actually want to do	
	I have to consider others too often in my spare time	
	I find it hard to relax in my spare time	
	It takes a lot of effort to plan my leisure activities	
	There are so many things I want to do in my spare time that I often feel like I'm running out of time	
	Too many of my leisure activities are fragmented	
Work-life conflict		Range 1-4: never - every day
	your responsibilities at work take precedence over your family life?	
	you worry about problems at work at home?	
	you have problems with childcare because of your work?	
	you are less involved with your family/family/friends because of the demands of your work?	
	you feel like you're struggling to keep up with your home situation?	
	you've got so much work to do that you don't get around to your hobbies?	
	the demands of your work make it difficult for you to feel relaxed at home?	
Working atmosphere		Range 1-5: totally disagree - totally agree
	Femma has a good team spirit and collegiality	
	The working atmosphere within Femma is good	

	I can ask my colleagues for help if I need it	
	Ideas can be expressed openly without being condemned	
Working pace		Range 1-4: never - every day
	Do you have to work very fast?	
	Do you have too much work to do?	
	Do you have to work extra hard to get something finished?	
	Do you work under time pressure?	
	Do you have to rush?	
	Do you have a backlog of work to do?	
	Would you like to take things easier at work?	