

Mobility and the coronavirus crisis

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Background

COVID-19 and the social distancing measures are having an impact on the lives of people all over the world, including the Netherlands. Mobility is no exception. The effects on mobility can be seen every day in the streets, on the motorways and in the supermarket. What we cannot see so well is how these changes in mobility are related to personal characteristics, changes in patterns of outdoor activities and changes in people's work situations. Are the changes in mobility the same for everyone, and how are they perceived? Are people just travelling less, or are they travelling differently? And do people think the current situation will leave a mark on how they travel in future?

Objective

The Netherlands Institute for Transport Policy Analysis (KiM) has carried out a study into the effects of the current coronavirus crisis (and the associated social distancing measures) on mobility behaviour and people's experiences of mobility. The research was carried out among the Netherlands Mobility Panel (MPN). The MPN consists of a representative group of Dutch residents who are questioned about their travel behaviour at regular intervals over a period of some years. This makes it possible to compare travel behaviour in the current period with the travel behaviour of the same group of people before the coronavirus pandemic.

Approach

For the study, KiM asked a representative sample of more than 2,000 panel members to keep a 'travel diary' for three consecutive days within the period from 27 March to 4 April 2020, as well as filling in a personal questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed with the aim of identifying the causes of any observed changes in behaviour, related perceptions and experiences, and expectations for the future.

During the data collection period governmental measures to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus (COVID-19) were in place. Schools, the hospitality sector and 'contact professions' (hairdressers, physiotherapists, etc.) were closed and events and gatherings prohibited. In addition, everyone has been urged to adopt social distancing measures by leaving their homes as little as possible and working from home wherever possible, but in any case to stay at least 1.5 metres away from other people and receive no more than three visitors at home.

KiM explicitly asked participants in the study to report their behaviour during these measures. Sometimes respondents had to indicate differences in their behaviour compared with before the coronavirus crisis (retrospective questions). On several topics respondents were also asked about their expectations for the future after the coronavirus crisis. The response amounted to 2,296 completed diaries and 2,494 completed questionnaires – a net response of 82% and 89% respectively.

This report contains a summary of the main findings. The full brochure with more elaborated study findings is [available in Dutch](#) only. For some of the findings the results are broken down by relevant background characteristics, such as age or region. Sometimes the current situation is compared with the situation before the coronavirus crisis. These comparisons are derived in part from the answers to the retrospective questions in the questionnaire. In addition, in some places data from 2019 have been used to draw comparisons with previous results from the panel in which the same respondents took part. It is assumed that many of the changes in behaviour between the two periods are a consequence of the coronavirus crisis. It should be borne in mind, however, that there could be other reasons for the differences between the two periods (weather, life events, non-weather-related seasonal effects, etc.). No corrections have yet been made to take these effects into account.

Highlights

The main insights from the study are:

Outdoor activities

- All age groups in the Dutch population are less active outdoors; older people in particular are much less active than before the crisis (figure 1);

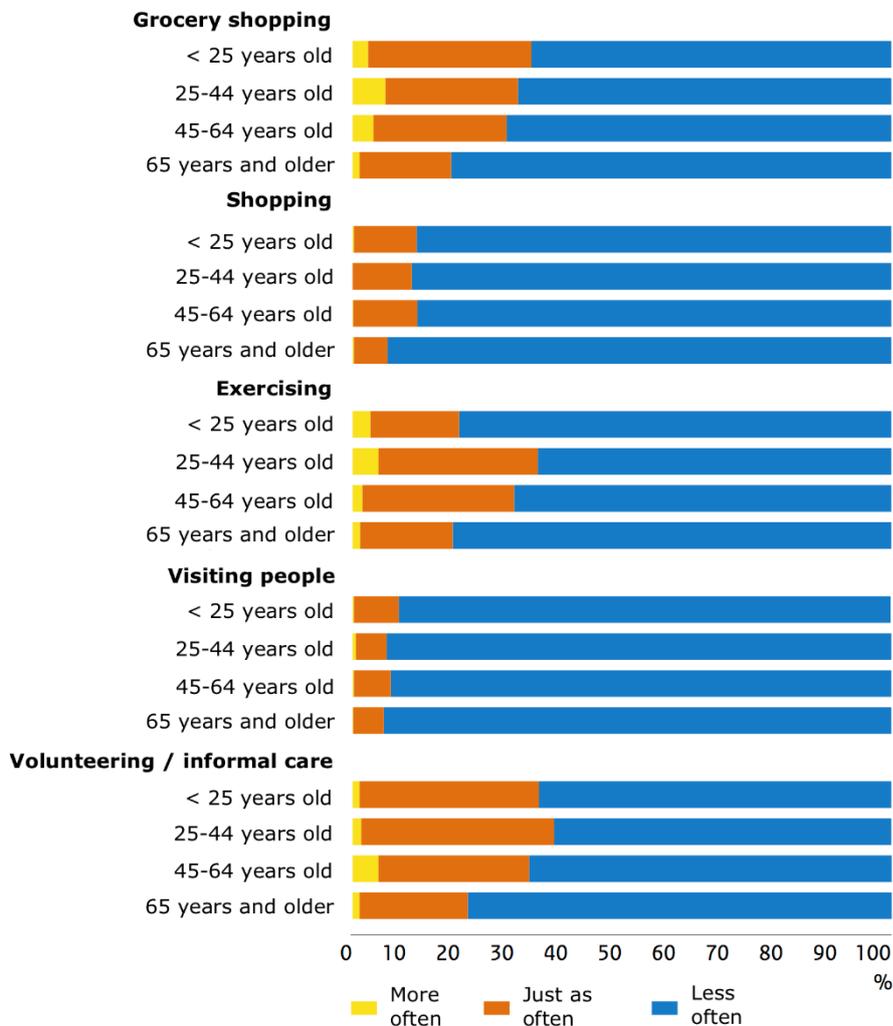


Figure 1. Change in outdoor activities since corona crisis, per age group

- The appeal by the government to stay at home is the main reason for the reduction in outdoor activities;
- About 40% of people are currently not happy about the possibilities for social contact, with no differences between age groups or household composition;
- The vast majority of people (>90%) do not expect that the current changes in outdoor activities will continue after the coronavirus crisis (figure 2).

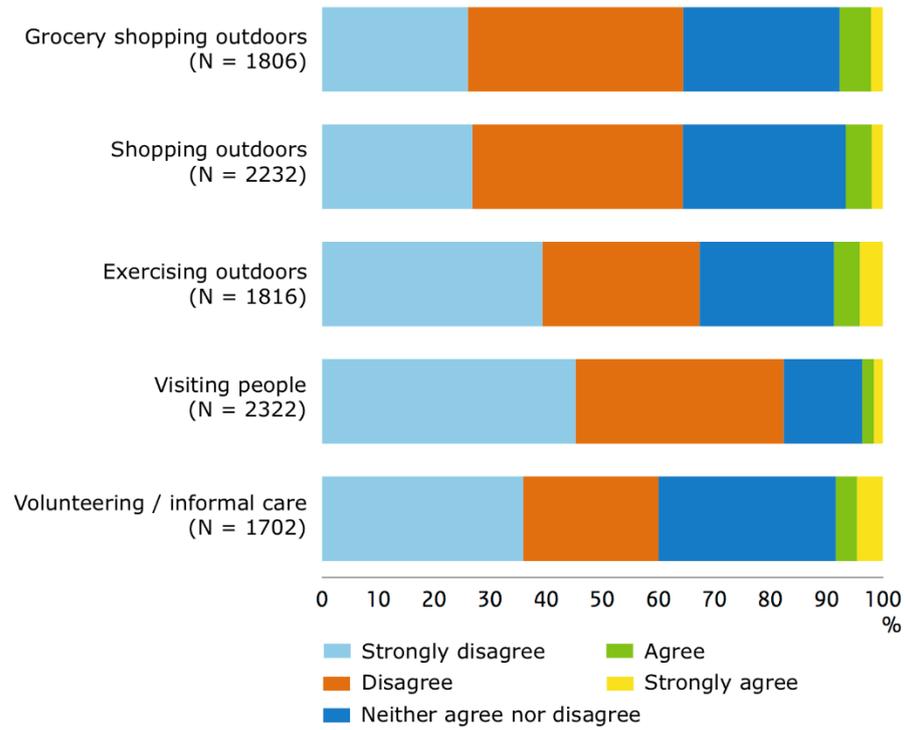


Figure 2. Opinion on the statement "I also expect to do fewer outdoor activities after the corona situation compared to the situation before corona."

Work and education

- About 44% of workers have started to work from home or are working more from home as a result of the coronavirus crisis. The equivalent figure for remote meetings is about 30% (figure 3);

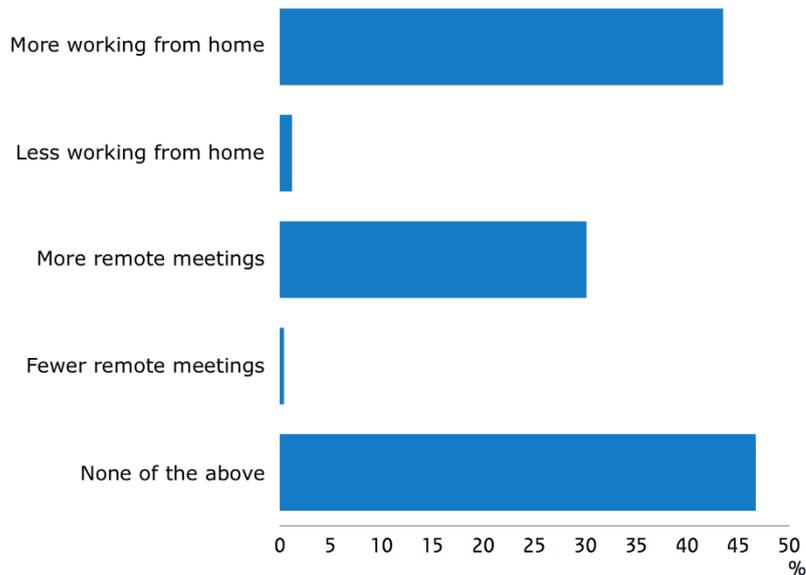


Figure 3. Changes in working remotely

- Experiences with working from home and remote meetings are predominantly positive; school pupils and students are less positive about having lessons at home;
- About 27% of home workers expect to work from home more after the coronavirus crisis; about 36% of those who have remote meetings more often also expect to do so more often after the coronavirus crisis; just a small number of pupils and students expect to take part in more online lessons at home after the coronavirus crisis (about 13%) (figure 4 and 5).



Figure 4. Experience with working from home

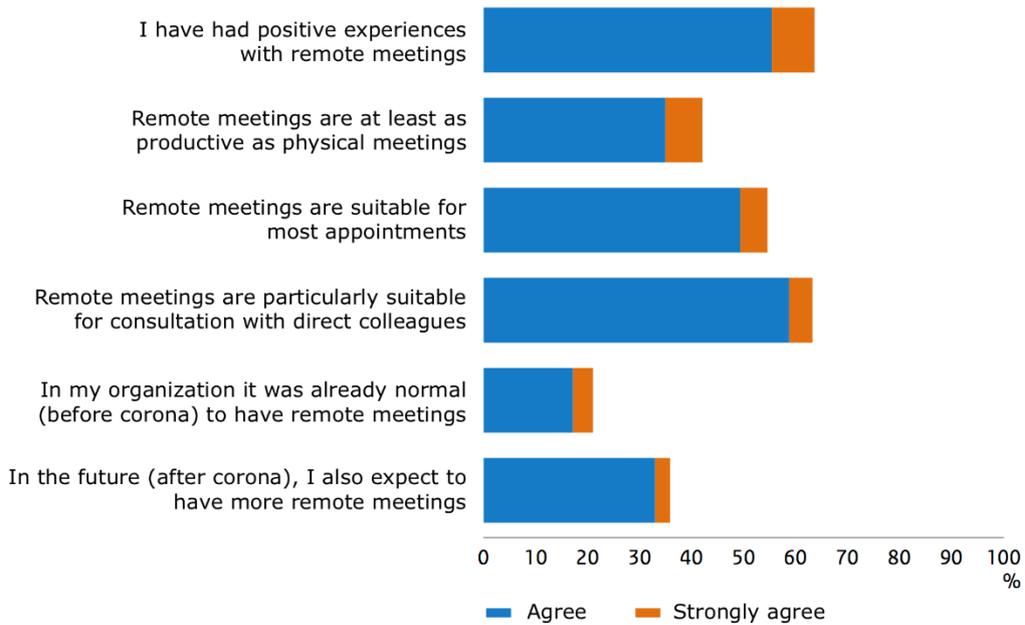


Figure 5. Experience with remote meetings

Travel behaviour

- The proportion of people that on an average day do not go outside has risen from about 20% to around 50%. People who do go outside are now more likely to do so to go for a walk, go for a bicycle ride or walk the dog;
- The number of trips and the total distance travelled has declined by 55% and 68% respectively compared with before the coronavirus crisis. The number of journeys by foot has declined less, resulting in an increase in the share of walking;

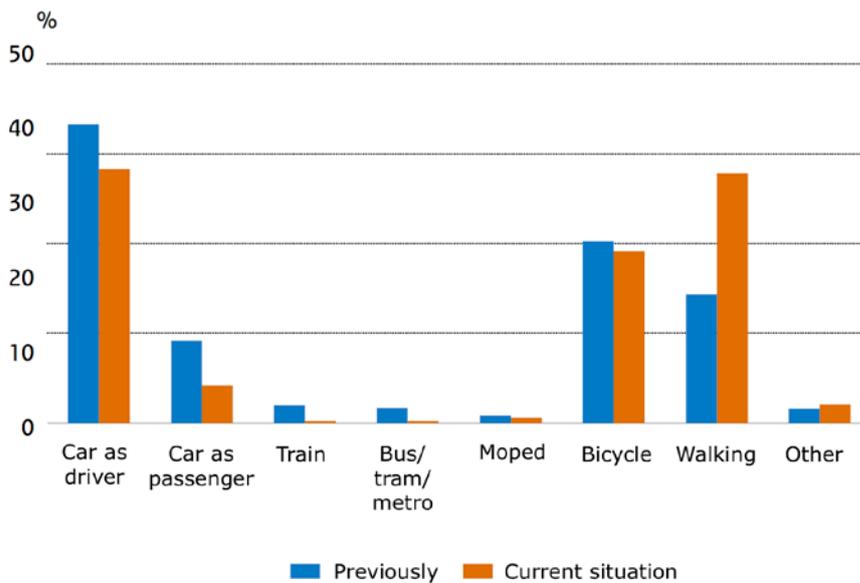


Figure 6. Share of travel modes in current situation with corona (in trips)

- People rate public transport much more negatively now than in the situation before the coronavirus crisis; at the moment people prefer to use personal transport;
- The vast majority of people (approx. 80%) expect that after the coronavirus crisis they will go back to the modes of transport they used before the crisis. However, about 20% do think they will walk and cycle more (figure 7) and about 20% say they will fly less.

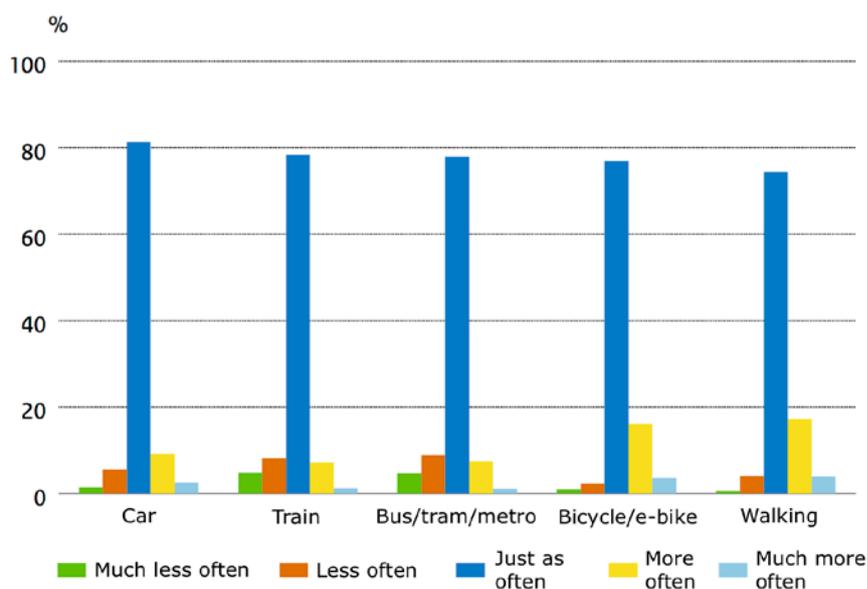


Figure 7. Expected use of modes of transport in the future after corona compared to the situation before corona

Perceived impact of the coronavirus

- Older people in particular are afraid of becoming infected with the coronavirus;
- Almost all of the population (approx. 90%) expect the coronavirus crisis will have a long-term effect on society (figure 8).

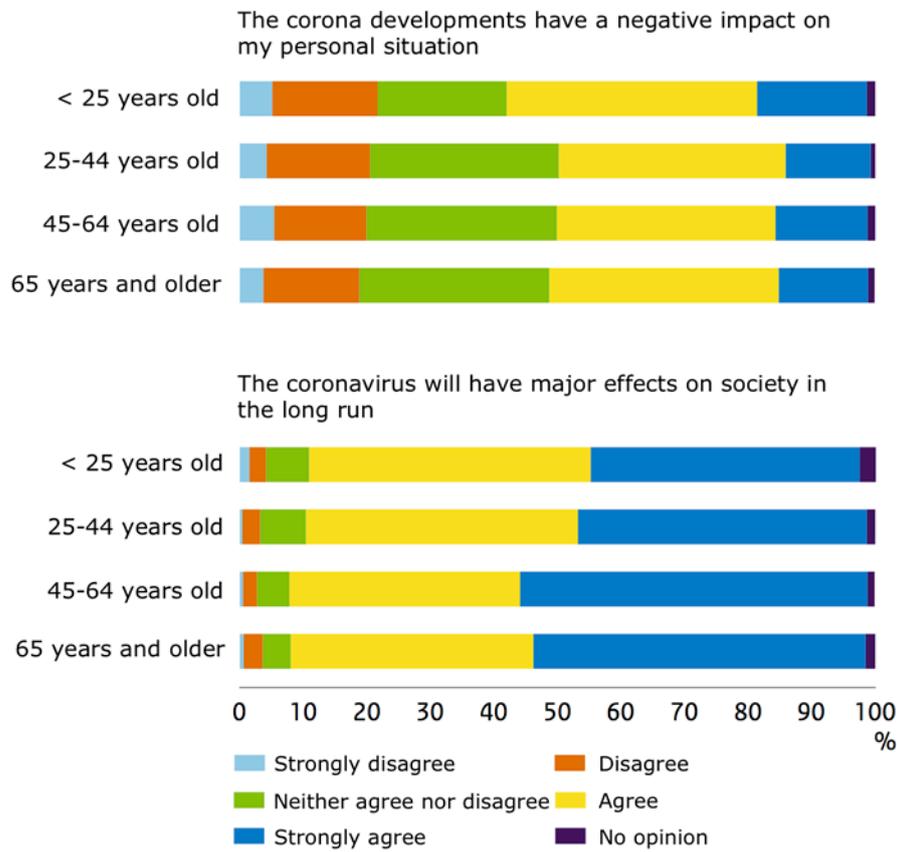


Figure 8. Experienced impact of corona on personal situation and society