



One in 25 changes employer every quarter

In the second quarter of 2026, 320,000 Dutch employees moved to another employer, 4.0% of the total. At the peak of the tight market the quarterly rate reached 5.3%.

Summary

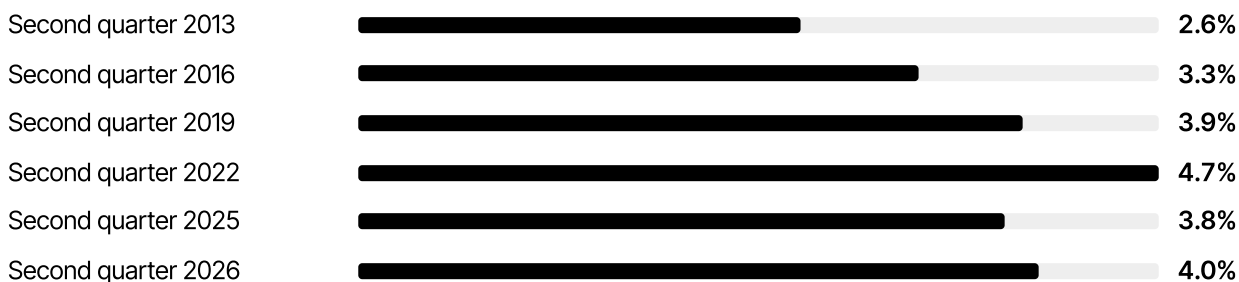
Every quarter, hundreds of thousands of Dutch employees start work for a new employer. In the second quarter of 2026 the count was 320,000, or 4.0% of all employees, roughly one in 25. Since 2013 the quarterly rate has moved between 2.6% and 5.3%, and the tight-market peak has fully unwound: the current pace sits almost exactly on the 2019 level. The flow is carried by the flexible layer: more than six in ten switchers leave a flexible contract, and 85% start on one again after the move.

Labour market reporting mostly describes positions: so many vacancies, so many unemployed, so much tightness. This paper measures the current underneath: how many employees start work for a different employer each quarter. That flow is large, stable, and it is the actual size of the market a recruiter can address in any given quarter.

320,000 moves in a quarter

In the second quarter of 2026, 320,000 employees changed employer, 4.0% of all Dutch employees. Roughly one in 25. Across the thirteen and a half years the series covers, the quarterly rate has never left the band between 2.6% and 5.3%.

320,000 employees changed employer in the second quarter of 2026



Share of employees changing employer, second quarters throughout. CBS StatLine, table 85390NED, retrieved 31 August 2026.

Even the slowest quarter in the series, the second quarter of 2013, in the aftermath of the euro crisis, counted 181,000 moves. Calendar year 2025 adds up to more than 1.2 million.

Who does the moving

The 4.0% average hides most of the story. Employees who held a flexible contract before their move switched at 7.8% in the second quarter of 2026. Employees with a permanent contract: 2.2%.

7.8% of employees on a flexible contract changed employer in the second quarter of 2026



Share changing employer per group, second quarter of 2026. CBS StatLine, table 85390NED.

Of the 320,000 switchers, 197,000 came out of a flexible contract, more than six in ten, while flexible contracts cover 31% of all employees. Women moved slightly more often than men, 4.3% against 3.7%. Age divides the market most sharply: 8.5% of employees aged 15 to 25 moved in the quarter, against 1.6% of those aged 45 to 75.

A switch usually costs the permanent contract

Whoever changes employer nearly always starts flexible again. Of the 320,000 switchers, 273,000, or 85%, held a flexible employment relation immediately after the move. Of the 123,000 who left a permanent contract, at most 47,000 stepped straight into a new one.

That explains much of the gap above. For a permanent employee, a move carries a price that never shows up in the salary comparison: an open-ended contract is traded for a temporary one at an unfamiliar employer. At 2.2% per quarter, the average permanent employee changes employer roughly once every eleven years.

The wave has passed

At the peak of the tight market the pace ran more than a percentage point higher. In the third quarter of 2021, 5.3% of employees moved, the highest share in the series. The largest count came a year later: 404,000 moves in the third quarter of 2022.

Compared by second quarters, the rate fell from 4.7% in 2022 to 3.8% in 2025 and settled at 4.0% in 2026. Over those four years the number of employees grew by 373,000 while the quarterly flow of switchers shrank by 38,000.

The current pace is not low, it is normal. The second quarter of 2019 stood at 3.9%, against 4.0% now. What looked like a permanently more mobile labour market in 2021 and 2022 was a peak, and it has returned fully to trend.

Within a year the flow keeps a rhythm. In eleven of the thirteen years measured, the top quarter fell in the second half of the year. The exceptions are 2020 and 2023, where the first quarter led.

What this figure does not say

- Employees are not the workforce. The self-employed sit outside the table, so "5% of the workforce moves every quarter" overstates twice: the figure covers employees, and over the past four quarters it moved between 3.8% and 4.1%.
- The count compares against three months earlier. Someone who was not an employee then, because they were studying, unemployed or self-employed, does not count as a switcher. Total labour market dynamics are therefore larger than this figure.
- Adding quarters counts moves, not people. Whoever switches twice in a year appears twice in the annual total.
- These are survey figures, from the Dutch labour force survey, with a redesign in 2021 that limits comparisons across that break.

What this means

- **The quotable number.** 4.0% of employees changed employer in the second quarter of 2026, and calendar 2025 counted more than 1.2 million moves. Anyone quoting "5% of the workforce per quarter" is inflating twice over.
- **The flow runs through the flexible layer.** More than six in ten switchers leave a flexible contract. Sourcing among permanent staff means fishing where 2.2% moves per quarter, not 4%.
- **A permanent contract up front is a distinctive offer.** 85% of switchers start flexible again. The employer who offers certainty immediately stands out to exactly the group that moves least.
- **A cooler market thins the flow, it does not stop it.** The slowest quarter since 2013 still counted 181,000 moves. Less tightness means fewer switchers, not none.
- **The second half of the year is switching season.** In eleven of thirteen measured years the peak fell in the third or fourth quarter.

Method and sources

All figures come from CBS StatLine, table 85390NED, Werknemer; wisseling van werkgever, quarterly figures from the first quarter of 2013 through the second quarter of 2026, retrieved on 31 August 2026, licensed CC BY 4.0. The table is based on the Dutch labour force survey and covers persons aged 15 to 75; people living in institutions are excluded. A switch is established as a change of workplace against three months earlier.

Permanent means, in this table, an open-ended contract with a fixed number of hours. Flexible is everything else, from fixed-term contracts to on-call and agency work. Shares in this paper are computed from the published counts in thousands and can therefore differ a tenth of a point from roundings published elsewhere. Comparisons over time use second quarters throughout, so seasonal effects do not distort them.

Two limits belong here. The survey was redesigned in 2021, so figures from 2021 onward are not directly comparable with earlier years. CBS aligned the series through 2020 at the aggregate level, differences can remain in the breakdowns, and the table publishes no value for the first quarter of 2021. And the table covers employees only: no comparable quarterly series for the self-employed or for other countries is included, so the context in this paper is the Dutch series itself.

Mobility, Hiring, All markets

Sources

- CBS StatLine (85390NED), Werknemer; wisseling van werkgever, CC BY 4.0