



No more satisfied than the rest

Dutch IT workers decide how they work more often than any group but managers and earn 29% above the median, yet in 2025 they are exactly as satisfied as the average employee and report more burn-out complaints.

Based on Peter van der Meer, Werk en welzijn, maakt werk gelukkig, University of Groningen Press, 2025

Summary

In 2025, 78.7% of Dutch employees in ICT occupations say they are satisfied with their work, against 78.6% of all employees. In 2018 IT led by 4.4 points. That lead is gone while the lead in freedom and pay stayed: 79.8% of IT workers regularly decide how they do their work, against 60.2% of all employees, and the median hourly wage is €34.80 against €26.90. Burn-out complaints run ahead instead, at 24.1% against 20.7%. This paper sets the figures of the Dutch working conditions survey beside the model of labour economist Peter van der Meer, which explains why pay and autonomy do not carry wellbeing at work on their own, and what that means for anyone recruiting IT staff.

Anyone hiring IT staff hears the same explanation: candidates want too much money. Of the Dutch enterprises that recruited or tried to recruit ICT specialists in 2024, 38.9% said salary expectations were a reason vacancies were hard to fill. It is the least cited of the four reasons Eurostat asks about, and still the one employers act on first, by raising the offer.

The figures on the people who already hold those jobs point elsewhere. Dutch IT workers earn well above the median and have more say over their work than almost any other occupational group. In 2025 they are no more satisfied than the average employee, and they report burn-out complaints more often. This paper shows how those facts fit together, using the work of Peter van der Meer, who studied what makes workers happy at the University of Groningen until his retirement in 2024.

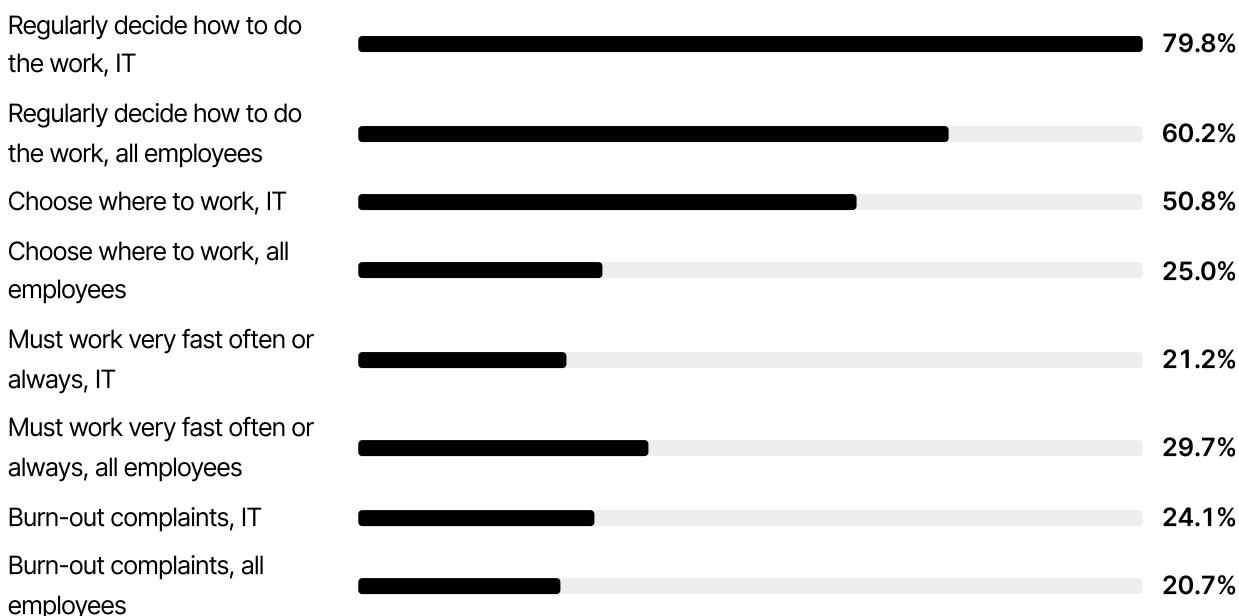
Plenty of freedom, average satisfaction

The Netherlands Working Conditions Survey (NEA), run by Statistics Netherlands (CBS) and TNO, asks employees every year about workload, autonomy and satisfaction. In 2025, 79.8% of employees in ICT occupations say they regularly decide for themselves how they do their work. Across all employees the share is 60.2%. Only managers score higher, at 84.9%. IT workers also set their own hours and workplace more often: 46.1% choose their working times, against 28.7% of all employees, and 50.8% choose where they work, against 25.0%.

Workload is below average and falling. In 2025, 21.2% of IT workers must work very fast often or always, against 29.7% of all employees. In 2014 the IT figure was 31.5%.

Pay sits well above the rest. The median hourly wage in ICT occupations is €34.80 in 2025, against €26.90 for all employees, 29% more. Of the thirteen occupational classes, only managers earn more.

78.7% of IT workers are satisfied with their work in 2025, against 78.6% of all employees



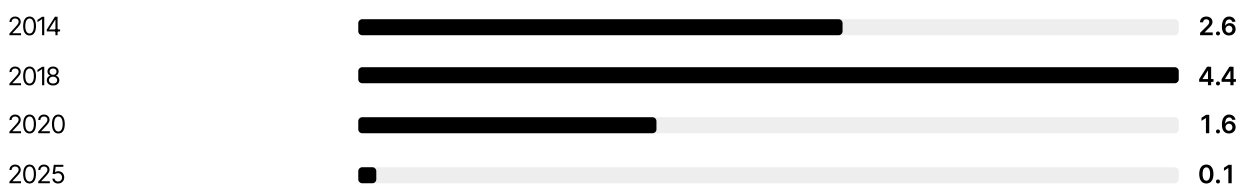
Employees aged 15 to 74, ICT occupations (class 08) against all occupations, 2025. CBS StatLine, Netherlands Working Conditions Survey, tables 84434NED and 84436NED, read on 9 September 2026.

Then satisfaction. 78.7% of IT workers are satisfied or very satisfied with their work. Across all employees it is 78.6%. The difference is nil, and the confidence interval on the IT figure, 77.0% to 80.2%, comfortably contains the national figure. On satisfaction with working conditions IT does score higher, 81.7% against 77.3%.

The lead that disappeared

It used to be different. In 2018, 81.0% of IT workers were satisfied with their work, against 76.6% of all employees, a lead of 4.4 points and well outside the margin of error. Since then IT satisfaction fell 2.3 points while the figure for all employees rose 2.0 points. The two lines met in 2022 and have run together since.

4.4 points IT's lead over all employees in job satisfaction in 2018, against 0.1 point in 2025



Difference in percentage points between the share of satisfied employees in ICT occupations and in all occupations. CBS StatLine, table 84434NED, read on 9 September 2026.

Burn-out complaints ran ahead in IT and still do. In 2014, 17.8% of IT workers reported work-related psychological fatigue, against 14.4% of all employees. In 2025 it is 24.1% against 20.7%. Both groups rose by exactly 6.3 points. Among the thirteen occupational classes IT ranks fourth, behind teaching, the creative occupations and the residual class, and above health and welfare at 23.9%.

Why money and freedom are not enough

In 2025 Peter van der Meer gathered fifteen years of research on work and wellbeing in a book, *Werk en welzijn, maakt werk gelukkig*, published open access by the University of Groningen Press. His framework is the model of Cassar and Meier, which splits the return on work into a monetary and a non-monetary reward. The second has four parts: autonomy, using and developing competence, relatedness to colleagues, and the meaning of the work. The first three come from the self-determination theory of Deci and Ryan. The fourth is whether the work matters to other people.

His thesis is that those four weigh at least as much as pay, and that they do not simply substitute for one another. Two of his findings bear directly on IT. First, income and meaningful work look like substitutes: the same level of wellbeing at work can come from a more meaningful job that pays less or from a better paid job that means less. Second, ICT occupations rank low on perceived meaning. In his ranking of 44 occupational groups drawn from the 2015 European Working Conditions Survey, ICT specialists sit 21st, and in the 2015 International Social Survey Programme 34th. Care workers, doctors and teachers sit at the top.

Read the Dutch figures through that model. IT workers collect high pay and high autonomy, two of the five parts. That buys a satisfaction that is exactly average. The other three, competence, relatedness and meaning, have to make the difference, and that is the ground most employers leave unused.

Van der Meer also points to technology. He says information technology tends to raise workload rather than lower it, in the Netherlands and elsewhere in Europe, and that working from home invites longer hours and so drives up psychological fatigue, despite the autonomy it brings. IT workers choose their workplace more often than anyone. Burn-out complaints in IT staying above average while measured workload falls fits that reading: the strain is not in the pace but in the boundaries.

What cuts against this

- IT is not one group. The 424,000 specialists, software and application developers, system administrators and network specialists, and systems analysts and ICT advisers, are 79.3% satisfied in 2025, 81.7% of them regularly decide how they work, and their median wage is €36.00 an hour. The 55,000 associate professionals, mostly user support, sit at 72.4%, 61.3% and €25.10. When people say IT they usually mean the first group. The second looks more like the average employee, with less freedom.
- The satisfaction figure for the small associate group carries a wide interval, 66.4% to 77.7%. It moves several points from year to year without anything having to change.
- The survey changed parts of its collection and processing from the 2022 reporting year, and CBS says figures from 2022 may not be fully comparable with earlier years. The convergence in satisfaction falls exactly on that break. The break applies to both series, but not necessarily equally.
- The meaning ranking is European and from 2015, not Dutch and not current. No StatLine table measures meaning by occupation.
- The rise in burn-out is not specific to IT. All employees rose by the same 6.3 points since 2014. What sets IT apart is the level, not the pace.
- Van der Meer is cautious about his own finding on income and meaning. He says the research on it is in its infancy.
- The survey measures what employees say, not what they do. Satisfaction is a judgment, not a turnover rate.

Eleven years in one line

The period from 2014 to 2025 shows three movements. The number of employees in ICT occupations nearly doubled, from 253,000 to 479,000. The wage lead over the median narrowed slightly, from 35% in 2014 to 29% in 2025. And confidence that another job is easy to find peaked at 88.0% in 2022 and fell to 82.2% in 2025, in step with the cooling described in earlier papers in this library. All employees fell from 80.6% to 78.8% over the same years.

The Dutch Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) concluded in January 2020, in its report *Het betere werk*, that 38% of working people must often or always work fast, that nearly half experience a lack of autonomy, and that 17.5% had burn-out complaints in 2018. The council calls autonomy a buffer against intensification. IT is the class where that buffer is thickest, and still the class with the fourth highest burn-out score. The buffer works against pace, not against everything.

Abroad the salary explanation carries more weight. Among enterprises that recruited ICT specialists in 2024, 54.3% in Germany named salary expectations as a difficulty, against 38.9% in the Netherlands, 39.8% in Belgium and 41.9% across the EU. Hard-to-fill vacancies were reported by 72.4% of German recruiters, 63.1% of Dutch ones, 62.6% of Belgian ones and 57.5% across the EU.

What this means

- **The quotable figure.** In 2025, 78.7% of Dutch IT workers are satisfied with their work, against 78.6% of all employees. In 2018 IT led by 4.4 points.
- **Bidding on pay does not buy satisfaction.** IT already pays 29% above the median. Winning or keeping a candidate rarely turns on the offer any more. It turns on the four non-monetary parts.
- **Autonomy no longer sets an IT employer apart.** Four in five IT workers already have it. Remote work and flexible hours are the norm, not an argument.
- **Meaning and development are the open ground.** Say in the vacancy and in the interview whose situation the work changes, and what the person will learn. Van der Meer says Dutch training budgets go underused every year.
- **Watch the boundaries, not the pace.** Workload in IT is falling and burn-out complaints are rising. When someone leaves or declines, ask about hours and reachability, not only about pressure.
- **Tell the two ITs apart.** User support has less freedom, less pay and less satisfaction than the specialists. There a plainly better offer still works.

Method and sources

The Dutch figures come from the Netherlands Working Conditions Survey of CBS and TNO, through CBS StatLine: table 84434NED (sustainable employability of employees by occupation) for satisfaction with work and working conditions and the perceived ease of finding another job, and table 84436NED (psychosocial workload of employees by occupation) for workload, autonomy and work-related psychological fatigue. Both run from 2014 to 2025, were read on 9 September 2026 and are licensed CC BY 4.0. The occupational classification is the Dutch BRC 2014. ICT occupations is class 08, with 081 ICT specialists and 082 ICT associate professionals as its parts. All percentages are point estimates; where the paper gives an interval, it is the 95% interval from the same table. Work-related psychological fatigue is the

share of employees who, across five statements about exhaustion, answer a few times a month or more often on average, the definition CBS uses for burn-out complaints. Autonomy is the share who regularly decide how they carry out their work; workload is the share who must work very fast often or always.

Hourly wages come from CBS StatLine table 86355NED (employees, hourly wage and occupation), median per occupational class, 2014 and 2025, read on 9 September 2026, CC BY 4.0. The wage lead is the median of ICT occupations divided by the median of all employees.

The recruitment figures come from Eurostat, dataset isoc_ske_itrcrn2, enterprises with ten or more persons employed, all activities except the financial sector (C10 to S951 without K), reference year 2024, CC BY 4.0. Reasons are expressed as a percentage of the enterprises that recruited or tried to recruit ICT specialists.

The model comes from Peter van der Meer, *Werk en welzijn, maakt werk gelukkig*, University of Groningen Press, 2025, open access under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0, DOI 10.21827/683d9e5f545df. That licence allows citation and summary, not adaptation or reproduction of text or figures; everything here is in our own words. The meaning ranking is appendix 3 of that book, which summarises the 2015 European Working Conditions Survey and the 2015 International Social Survey Programme. Those two source files were not read for this paper. The model of Cassar and Meier, the self-determination theory of Deci and Ryan and the work of Layard and De Neve on wellbeing policy were read as Van der Meer presents them, not in the original publications.

The WRR report *Het betere werk* (report 102, 15 January 2020) was read in its summary. The WRR gives 38% of working people who must often or always work fast and 17.5% with burn-out complaints in 2018. StatLine gives 36.4% and 17.3% for employees in 2018. The difference comes from the population, working people including the self-employed against employees, and possibly from later revisions. Both figures stand here side by side. The WRR publishes no reuse licence; the report is cited, not reproduced.

Hiring, Salary, IT

Sources

- CBS StatLine (84434NED), sustainable employability of employees by occupation, NEA, CC BY 4.0
- CBS StatLine (84436NED), psychosocial workload of employees by occupation, NEA, CC BY 4.0
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- Peter van der Meer, *Werk en welzijn, maakt werk gelukkig*, University of Groningen Press, 2025, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0
- WRR, *Het betere werk, de nieuwe maatschappelijke opdracht*, report 102, 15 January 2020