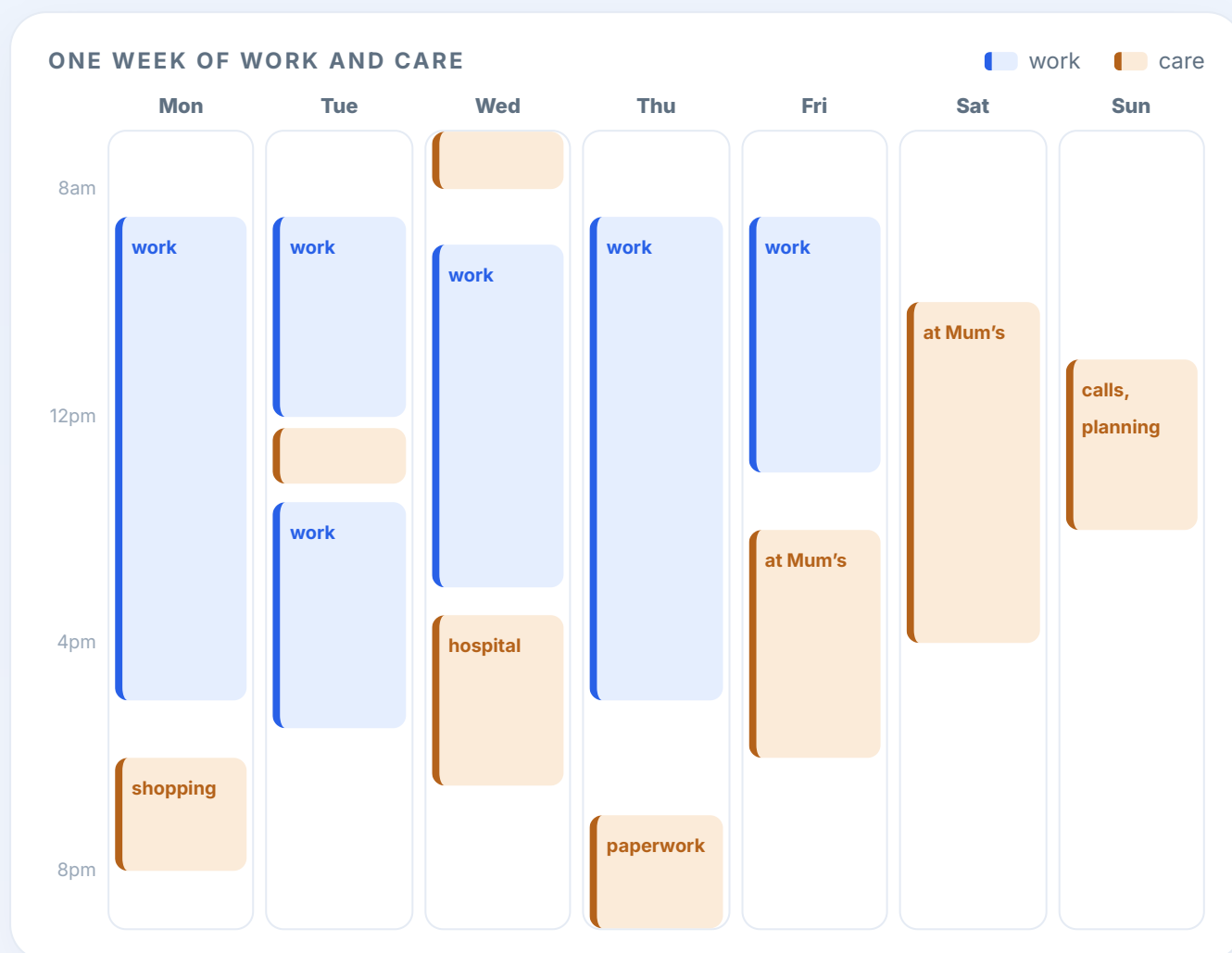


KNOWLEDGE CENTRE · OCTOBER 2026

Two jobs, one schedule

Caring for someone alongside your job: what it does to you, and what it asks of your organisation.



IN BRIEF

Five things to remember

This paper starts with you. Then we look at your colleagues and your organisation.

1

It often starts small.

A drive to the hospital, a form, a phone call during working hours. You rarely call it informal care.

2

You are not the only one.

One in eight workers in the Netherlands cares for someone close to them. Between 55 and 65, it is one in four.

3

Hours make the difference.

Most people manage the combination well. It tips over when the care becomes intensive.

4

It often stays unspoken.

Over four in ten managers do not know. Yet nearly all of them are open to the conversation.

5

Support works.

An understanding manager and flexibility in time keep people in work and in balance.

***Those who care for others often care for themselves last.
Even if you are an HR leader.***

CHAPTER 1 · DOES THIS SOUND FAMILIAR?

An ordinary Tuesday

No crisis. Just a day when two schedules run into each other. Sound familiar?

TUESDAY: MARIEKE, 56, HR MANAGER

 work  care

- 07:15**  Setting out your mother's medication on the way to work.
- 08:45**  Management team meeting. Phone on silent, but you still check it.
- 10:12**  The home care service calls: they won't come until three today.
- 11:30**  Meeting about an absenteeism case. Your mind is only half on it.
- 12:30**  Lunch break: calling the pharmacy, and the hospital.
- 15:00**  You move a meeting. "Something personal", you say.
- 19:30**  Paperwork for your mother, at the kitchen table.
- 22:40**  One last look at your email. Tomorrow it starts again.

4

moments when care cuts into working hours

0

colleagues who know what is going on

1

word she never uses for it herself: informal care

Marieke is fictional. Her Tuesday is put together from what working carers often describe.

CHAPTER 2 · THE FACTS

You are not the only one

Informal care is not a fringe issue. It is in every team, and most common at the age of many HR leaders.

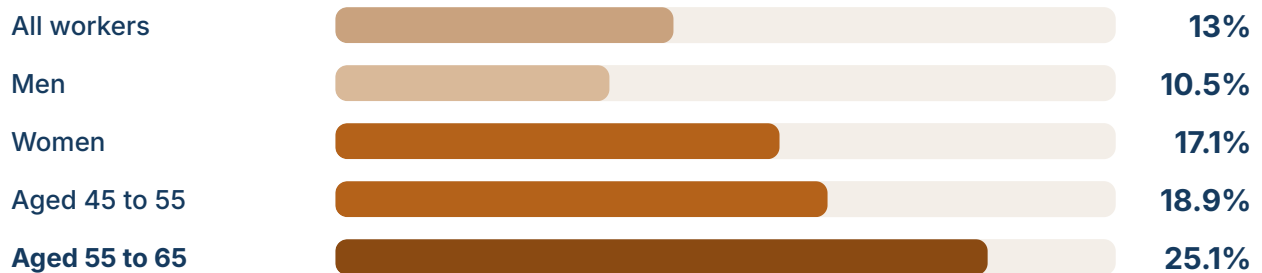
1 in 8

workers in the Netherlands provide informal care alongside their job.

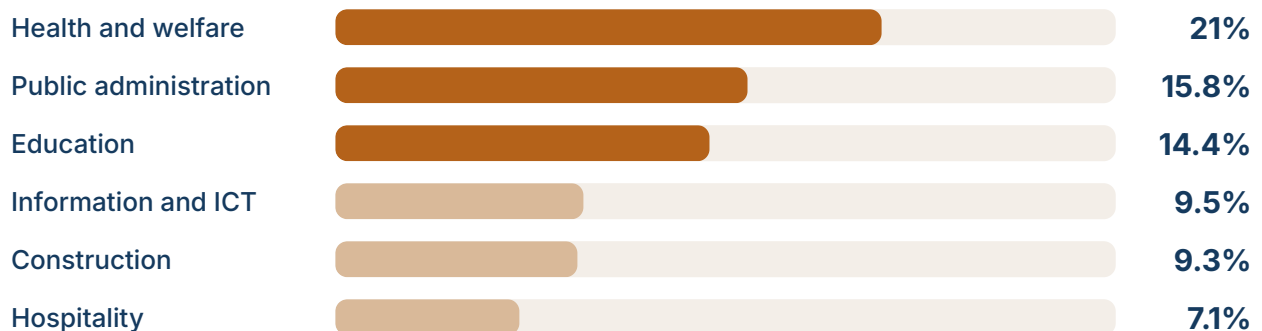
1 in 4

workers aged 55 to 65. The group you may belong to yourself.

WHO CARES? SHARE OF WORKERS PROVIDING INFORMAL CARE



BY SECTOR



The share of workers who feel **heavily burdened** rose from 2% in 2016 to just over 3% in 2024. Two thirds of them are women. Their average age: 51.

Workers aged 18 to 75 in the Netherlands, 2024. Source: Statistics Netherlands (CBS), Werkende mantelzorgers in beeld (2026), based on the Health Monitor. Other sources count differently and arrive at higher figures, up to 15% of workers.

CHAPTER 3 · WHAT IT DOES TO YOU

The tipping point lies in the hours

Most people combine work and care well. Until the care slowly grows bigger than you had planned.

HOURS OF CARE PER WEEK

approximate thresholds



0 TO 4 HOURS

Usually easy to combine

Most working carers are here. It takes energy, but it fits.



4 TO 10 HOURS

The strain builds up

Especially above four hours a week, pressure rises sharply.



10 TO 20 HOURS OR MORE

Work starts to give way

Here people work fewer hours, and sometimes stop. Heavily burdened working carers give 14 hours of care a week on average.

Informal care is not the problem. The problem is when it grows, and nobody sees it. Not even you.

Carers are slightly more likely to work fewer hours. The effect is small, and concentrated in intensive care from about 10 to 20 hours a week.

Bauer and Sousa-Poza, 2015; review



The most consistent effect is on the carer's mental health, not on their physical health.

Bauer and Sousa-Poza, 2015; review



72% of working carers have no problems with the combination. A quarter find it somewhat difficult.

SER (Social and Economic Council), 2026; figures for 2022



CHAPTER 4 · THE SILENCE

Open doors, closed lips

Almost every manager is open to the conversation. Yet many of them do not know what is going on.

42%

of working carers say: my manager does not know.

93%

of managers say: I am open to that conversation.

Stichting Werk&Mantelzorg, 2019; poll of 5,000 working carers. Practice-based research, not a scientific study.

WHY PEOPLE DON'T SAY ANYTHING

"I don't see myself as a carer."

It's just your mother, your partner, your child.

"I'll sort it out myself."

You don't want to be an exception, or a burden.

"It never comes up."

Nobody asks, so you say nothing.

Reasons from the 2023 annual publication of Werk&Mantelzorg. In it, 44% do not talk to their manager about caring tasks.

HOW YOU CAN SAY IT

"I'm currently caring for my mother. I'd like to tell you what that means for my work, and what I need. I'd rather keep the details to myself."

Three things: that you care, what it means for your work, and what you want. That is all.

AND AS AN HR LEADER?

You know the arrangements. You hold these conversations with others. That is exactly why it can be extra hard to talk about yourself. You want to set a good example, not be an exception.

CHAPTER 5 · AND YOU?

And you?

A page for yourself. No test, no score. Just a moment to take an honest look.

DO SOME OF THESE SOUND FAMILIAR?

- ☐ You take days off from your holiday for caring tasks.
- ☐ You plan your work around the care, and nobody at work knows.
- ☐ You more often cancel things that give you energy.
- ☐ You are thinking about working fewer hours.
- ☐ You spend your evenings on someone else's paperwork.

WHAT THIS TELLS YOU

Nothing about how well you are doing. But it does show that care has a place in your week. You may say so, at work too.

Finding it hard going? Talk to someone you trust, your GP or your municipality's carer support service.

THREE QUESTIONS FOR YOURSELF

How many hours a week do I spend caring now, honestly counted?

What would change if my manager knew?

What do I need to keep this up, at work and beyond?

What you arrange for yourself shows your organisation it is allowed.

CHAPTER 6 · WHAT HELPS

What helps, according to research

The good news: what helps most costs little. A conversation, some flexibility, and knowing what is possible.

CONSIDERING ANOTHER EMPLOYER

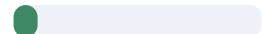
Working carers, by how well they can combine work and care.

combine poorly



39%

combine well



5%

1

A manager who asks about it



Support that is specifically about work and private life is more strongly linked to less conflict between the two than general support from a manager.

Kossek et al., 2011; meta-analysis, 85 studies

2

Understanding in the workplace

PRACTICE

Carers who feel supported call in sick less often and report fewer physical complaints and less exhaustion.

Werk&Mantelzorg, 2019; poll

3

Flexibility in time and place

PRACTICE

Of those who can work flexibly, 70% actually use that flexibility. It is the most widely used form of support.

Werk&Mantelzorg, 2019; poll

4

Knowing what is possible



Many carers do not know the arrangements, and get stuck in paperwork and red tape.

SCP (Netherlands Institute for Social Research) and VU Amsterdam, 2026

Bars: two means meta-analysis or broad review, one means single study or report. Practice is a poll without scientific testing. Correlation is not proven causation: people whose caring load is lighter may also experience more support.

CHAPTER 7 · WHAT IS POSSIBLE

What is already in place

Many people do not know this, even in HR: in the Netherlands, you are entitled to leave when you care for someone close to you.

Short-term care leave

Twice your weekly working hours per twelve months.

Your employer pays at least 70% of your salary.

For example: if you work 32 hours, that is 64 hours.



2 × your working week

Long-term care leave

Six times your weekly working hours per twelve months.

Unpaid, unless your collective agreement (cao) or employer arranges otherwise.

For example: if you work 32 hours, that is 192 hours.



6 × your working week

Emergency leave

For a sudden situation, for as long as needed to make the first arrangements.

On full pay.

For example: a fall, a hospital admission, a phone call from the hospital.

immediate, and short

GOOD TO KNOW

- The leave covers care for your partner, child or parent, but also for a brother, sister, grandparent, housemate or acquaintance.
- Your collective agreement or staff regulations may be more generous. Check there first.
- Besides leave, you can request different working hours or a different place of work.
- The SER issued advice on informal care and work in 2026. Rules can change: check the current situation.

Source: Dutch Work and Care Act (Wet arbeid en zorg), as of October 2026; Rijksoverheid. This is not legal advice.

CHAPTER 8 · YOUR ORGANISATION

From you to your organisation

What helps you also helps your colleagues. Four steps to make informal care something people can talk about.

ASK**Ask the question**

- Mention informal care at onboarding and in the review cycle.
- Don't just ask: do you care for someone? Also ask: how is the combination going?

SEE**Make it visible**

- Explain which arrangements exist, in one place.
- Share your own story, if you want to. It opens doors.

ACT**Make room**

- Train managers to hold the conversation.
- Agree per person what helps: time, place, leave.

MEASURE**Check whether it works**

- Ask about caring tasks and balance in your employee survey, anonymously.
- Track it by group: age, sector, team.

**HOW DEEPLER HELPS YOU MEASURE**

In Deepler Research you add your own questions to your employee survey (from Plus), for example about caring tasks alongside work. Answers are anonymous and groups only become visible from six respondents. The Workload and Reducing absenteeism modules show where the pressure lies.

MODULE Workload**MODULE** Reducing absenteeism**POINTS TO WATCH WHEN MEASURING**

Ask about caring tasks, not about a loved one's illness. Report by group only. Explain beforehand why you are asking and what you will do with it. Involve your privacy officer and works council.

CONVERSATION CARD

The conversation, in three steps

For every manager, and for yourself when you start the conversation with your own manager.

HOW TO START

"You seem to have more to arrange lately. How are you doing?"

"Do you care for someone besides work?"

"What would help you keep this up?"

BEST AVOIDED

Solving it for the other person, without asking what they want.

Asking about their loved one's illness or details.

Making an agreement and then never coming back to it.

HOW TO CLOSE

Agree what is needed now, and when you will discuss it again.

Point to the arrangements, the confidential adviser or company social work.

Discuss what the team may know, only with consent.

FOR THE MANAGER

You don't need to have a solution. Asking and listening is already support. Research shows that it is precisely support about work and private life that makes the difference.

FOR THE EMPLOYEE

You don't have to tell everything. Say what you need, and what you would rather not share. That is enough to agree something together.

OUR AGREEMENT

We will discuss it again on: _____

Based on the conversation advice of Werk&Mantelzorg and Kossek et al. (2011). Feel free to copy this page for your managers.

METHODOLOGY

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Evidence: two bars means meta-analysis or broad review, one means single study or report, practice means a poll. **What we do not claim:** figures on informal care differ by source, because sources define it differently. The thresholds in hours are approximate. Correlation is not causation. Marieke and her week are fictional. This is not medical or legal advice.

About Deepler. Deepler was founded in 2021 by four change managers. We help organisations listen to their people, and see what is needed. Better performance through better listening. deepler.io/en/about-us

FURTHER READING

What happens to absenteeism when care stays out of sight?

Scan the code and read how an employee survey shows you where absenteeism starts, before someone drops out.

deepler.io/en/modules/what-is-absenteeism →

