



Focus on regions Summary

The Netherlands, 2025-2026



Tomorrow's challenges

The Dutch labour market is experiencing major shifts. Due to serious staff shortages, employers are having difficulties finding suitable people. At the same time, staff retention has become a real challenge for businesses and organisations alike.

Employees and jobseekers need job security, development and career options and a healthy work-life balance. Additionally, the market is being confronted with an ageing population and the emergence of new technologies, such as AI.

The Netherlands has the tightest labour market in the European Union and is among the countries with the highest labour participation rates. Even so, there remains a great deal of untapped potential among people who would like to work and are able to do so, but do not get sufficient opportunity to demonstrate their talents.

In this dynamic playing field, one thing is clear: today's challenges call for collaboration – between the government, education, employers, employees and civil-society organisations.

We are proud to present the first report, *'Focus on regions, The Netherlands'*. It exposes figures and trends and, even more importantly, offers a compass for collaboration. This report is intended to facilitate administrators and policy-makers by providing them with current insights into labour market themes.

In this report we map out bottlenecks on the labour market, identify challenges, highlight opportunities and indicate the steps that will need to be taken to ensure policy effectiveness. As such, the report serves as a starting point for planning.

In this context, we distinguish between economic, social and development tasks, as reflected in the national and regional multi-year agendas.



With this report, therefore, we lay the foundation for a knowledge-driven approach to labour market policy.

Moreover, the perspective of a labour market region is not confined to its regional boundaries. After all, through its approach and solutions, every labour market region potentially represents an important piece of the puzzle for another region.

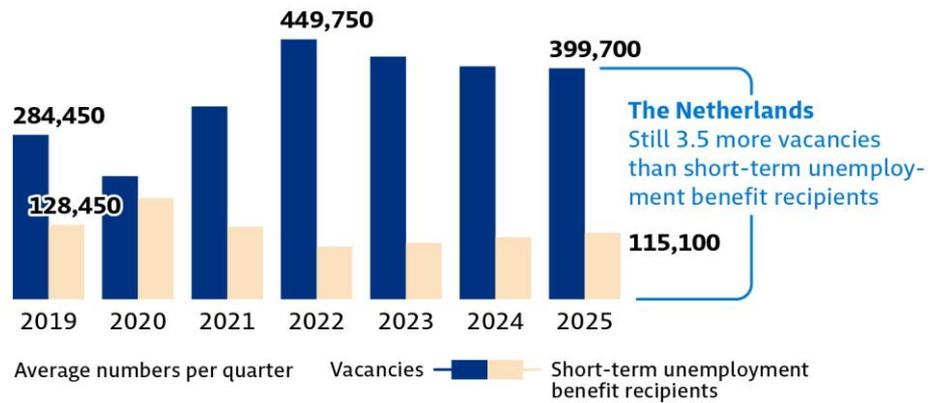
Accordingly, this report is not the final word, but a further step towards a future-proof labour market.

We invite the National Consultation Group and all parties involved to use these insights in their efforts to develop concrete actions. Together we can take on tomorrow's challenges.

Rob Witjes,
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Still many vacancies and a tight labour market

The number of unfilled vacancies rose sharply between 2020 and 2022, while fewer people received short-term unemployment benefits. Despite the slight decline in vacancies since 2022, there are still 3.5 times as many vacancies as short-term unemployment benefit recipients in 2025.



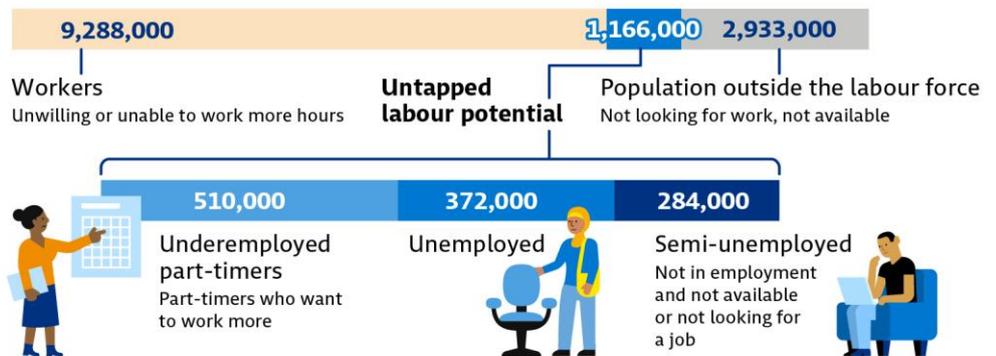
Staff shortages hamper growth in key sectors

Sectors such as healthcare, childcare, security, ICT and technology are crucial for society. However, staff shortages have caused waiting lists in healthcare and childcare sectors, for instance. Such staff shortages are hampering progress in the energy transition and digitalisation.



Greater focus on untapped talent

There are people who want to work (or work more) but are not doing so. This is known as the untapped labour potential, which includes underemployed part-time workers, the unemployed and the semi-unemployed. This group includes nearly 1.2 million individuals.



Focus on skills

Lifelong development is crucial in a changing society, given trends such as robotisation, digitalisation and AI in the workplace. Investing in the development of new or different skills helps people stay employable in the long term.



For **workers** and **jobseekers** alike, it is important to acquire new skills and remain up to date.



For **employers**, a focus on skills is important. This will increase the number of potential candidates for a vacancy.

Focus on regions, The Netherlands - 2025-2026

Summary

The labour market remains tight. Employers continue to struggle with staff shortages. Lifelong learning is essential for people to be able to compete in a changing labour market. Below is a summary of current developments on the Dutch labour market:

Economy, jobs and vacancies

- International tensions and uncertainty about economic developments are slowing economic growth.
- Until 2027 the number of jobs will grow by a modest 1.1%.
- In healthcare and social care, specialised business services and ICT, more jobs are being created, while the number of jobs in the temporary employment sector and wholesale trade is declining.
- Metropolitan Amsterdam, the central Utrecht area and Southeast-Brabant are seeing strong growth in job numbers. In contrast, job numbers are falling in Limburg, Zeeland, Achterhoek and Drenthe.
- In 2025 there were 400,000 vacancies in a tight labour market. There were 3.5 times as many vacancies as short-term jobseekers.
- In the central Utrecht area, Zeeland, Gorinchem and FoodValley, there were more than five times as many vacancies as short-term jobseekers.

Challenges

- More and more people are feeling the consequences of staff shortages.
- According to Statistics Netherlands (CBS), the share of workers relative to the population in the 15-75 age bracket increased to 73.2% in 2024.
- The share of workers in central Utrecht, Amersfoort and Gorinchem is even higher, at nearly 76%.
- Yet there are people who are willing and able to work but are still unemployed. This is the untapped labour potential, which, in the Netherlands as a whole, comprises nearly 1.2 million people.

Solutions

- The tight labour market is encouraging employers to look for alternative solutions. Increasingly, they use technology as a substitute for hiring new staff.
- By engaging in lifelong learning and investing in education and training, workers and jobseekers keep their knowledge and skills up to date.
- A focus on skills is also important for employers, as it helps them find new and suitable employees. But it is also important for employers to invest in the knowledge and skills of their existing workforce, to make sure employees keep performing their tasks effectively.

Final note

From an economic perspective, it is important to reduce the quantitative and qualitative mismatch between supply and demand and to align the labour market with key transitions.

From a social perspective, it is crucial to boost job security, prevent incapacity and use untapped labour potential.

Society calls for a dynamic labour market and permanent investment in people's skills and talents.

It is all about remaining agile in a changing economy and society.

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