

Gender-Specific Spatial Interactions on Dutch Regional Labour Markets and the Gender Employment Gap

The Dutch population, like those in many Western European countries, is rapidly aging. Increasing resource transfers to the elderly from a smaller working population base will form a serious challenge for the Dutch government

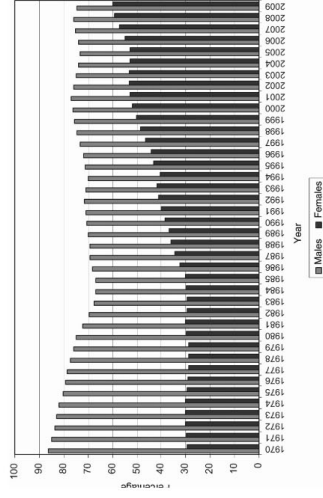


Fig. 1 Gender employment gap – male and female employment rate (%) – in the Netherlands, 1970–2009

1 DETERMINANTS OF EMPLOYMENT

According to Elhorst (1996) the regional participation rate can be interpreted as the proportion of people who are willing to work at the current wage, controlling for a broad range of micro-oriented variables such as taxes and non-wage income, the cost of living, and socio-economic characteristics such as age, education and household situation. An explanatory model of regional participation can be obtained by aggregating the microeconomic framework of the labour force decision across individuals (Elhorst and Zeilstra, 2007).

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

People who are already employed will stay in the workforce and those who are not active on the labour market are stimulated to participate, which can be described as the 'encouraged worker effect'.

For women, their labour market participation is also influenced by the presence of children. According to Vlasblom and Schippers (2004), Dutch women are strongly inclined to take care of their own children, and the birth of a first child drives women out of the labor force. If women decide to permanently withdraw from the labor force, age-specific employment patterns will be unimodal.

3 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Female labor force participation in the Netherlands has risen dramatically since the early 1980s. This rise has further contributed to closing the gender employment gap. However, this gap has not narrowed; women's net and total participation levels continue to be low. This is not just a Dutch phenomenon; it is also happening in many other European countries such as the UK, Denmark and Germany. In the international literature, little attention has been paid to the gender aspects of regional differences in participation rates at the municipal level.

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