NEET during the School-to-Work Transition in the Netherlands

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Alexander Dicks and Mark Levels

2.1 Introduction to NEET in the Netherlands

In this chapter, we investigate how individual characteristics can explain school-to-work transitions that are associated with NEET status after leaving secondary school in the Netherlands. The Netherlands is a particularly interesting case to study youth who are Not in Employment, Education, or Training. In 2016, the Netherlands had the lowest NEET rate in the European Union (Eurofound, 2016). This may be attributable to the education system. In the Dutch education system, VET students generally make the school-to-work transition successfully (e.g. Bernardi et al., 2004; Cedefop, 2020). Compared with their counterparts in other European countries, Dutch VET graduates are relatively successful in making the school-to-work transition (Cedefop, 2020). The vocational education system generally succeeds well in teaching students relevant occupationally specific skills, and a vocational degree in the Netherlands is not perceived by employers as a signal of low academic performance (Muja et al., 2019). All of this ensures a relatively smooth labour market allocation for vocationally educated children.

However, the downside to this well-functioning allocation system may well be that those school-leavers who do not succeed in making a successful school-to-work transition are perceived by employers as fundamentally unfit for the labour market. Indeed, early inactivity can act as a trap for Dutch school-leavers (Steijn et al., 2006; Wolbers, 2007) especially when outflow is low, and spells are long (Ryan, 2001; Luijkx and Wolbers, 2009). Also, crowding out is an important issue (Gesthuizen and Wolbers, 2010). Government policies are often criticised for failing to meet the real needs of youth and instead focus policies "on the school-age group, leaving young people who struggle to make successful first steps into the labour market, relatively unattended" (Bekker and Klosse, 2016: p. 249). When asked why they are NEET, youth often highlight "external (no suitable job or course, no decent jobs or courses available) rather than internal causes (not decided what job or course to do, need more qualifications)" (Reeskens and van Oorschot, 2012: p. 380).

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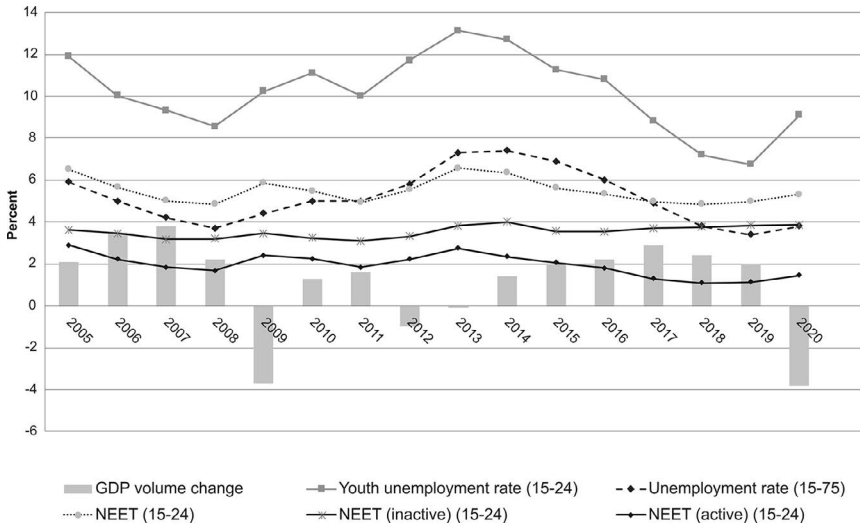

Figure 2.1 Trends in unemployment and NEETs in the Netherlands.

As a consequence, in the Netherlands NEETs are more often inactive than in most other EU countries (Eurofound, 2016). Recent policy changes did not succeed in reducing the number of NEETs (Cammeraat et al., 2017). This leads to the assumption that those who do become NEET in The Netherlands are a particularly negatively selected group, who are relatively immune to policy interventions. This is illustrated further by Figure 2.1, which shows that youth unemployment in the Netherlands is somewhat higher than the unemployment rate of general population. The general unemployment rate, the youth unemployment rate, and the active NEET rate closely follow the trend in vacancy rates. The rate of inactive youth, however, does not.

One main practical advantage of studying NEET in the Netherlands is the high quality of the available data. In particular, we use register data from the Social Statistical Database (SSD) of Statistics Netherlands (CBS) (Bakker et al., 2014). This allows us to follow people throughout their school-to-work transition.

2.2 Institutions and policies in the Netherlands

Many Dutch institutions and policies were a deliberate attempt to counter rapidly rising youth unemployment in the 1980s, when very high rates of youth unemployment, especially among the less educated, paired with and low outflow and educational crowding out were of great concern (Salverda, 1992). Eventually, different institutional changes were made, and specific

policies were introduced, which helped to create the "Dutch miracle" and unemployment plummeted.

2.2.1 The Dutch education system

First and foremost, the Dutch education system is commonly thought to contribute to good labour market allocation of school-leavers and the low number of NEET. The Dutch education system aims to sort pupils according to their ability, provide them with skills relevant to them, and provide them with a qualification that is meaningful and valuable in the labour market. For that, a number of devices are put in place. First, as Figure 2.2 illustrates, the system is highly tracked. Tracking starts relatively early, at age 12. After primary education, children generally can go to one of four secondary vocational tracks, or to one of two general academic tracks. The four secondary vocational tracks (VMBO) in principle prepare for vocational training at the upper secondary level (MBO, also four tracks). All upper secondary tracks have school-based and a workplace-based curriculum. The academic tracks in secondary education (HAVO, VWO) prepare for tertiary vocational education (HBO, equivalent to bachelor's degree) and university, respectively. A diploma at MBO level 4 is also is an entry ticket to the HBO. Special education and practical education tracks are designed for schooling children with special needs or learning disabilities, respectively. In principle, the tracks are a form of ability-based vertical stratification that allows for differentiating. To allow for repairing for initial misplacement, mobility between adjacent tracks is possible, after gaining the necessary entry qualification requirements. Around 5% of pupils are downwardly mobile while another 7% are upwardly mobile with mobility rates also increasing in the last decades (Tieben and Wolbers, 2010). While in theory intra-secondary track mobility is available to everybody, in reality it is more often used by pupils from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, thus exacerbating existing inequalities (Jacob and Tieben, 2009).

The sorting system is highly standardised. Sorting over the educational strata happens based on test results. Track placement in secondary education is determined by the pupils' score on a series of standardised performance tests on a number of indicators (e.g. reading and math literacy, logic, or world orientation) and a teacher evaluation, right at the end of elementary education. Admission to post-secondary and tertiary education programmes is conditional on obtaining credentials from relevant secondary education programmes. To obtain such diplomas, pupils' abilities are tested with centralised exit exams and school exams. This standardisation of output is meant to ensure that Dutch school-leavers at least have gained the minimum requirements to succeed in post-secondary or tertiary education.

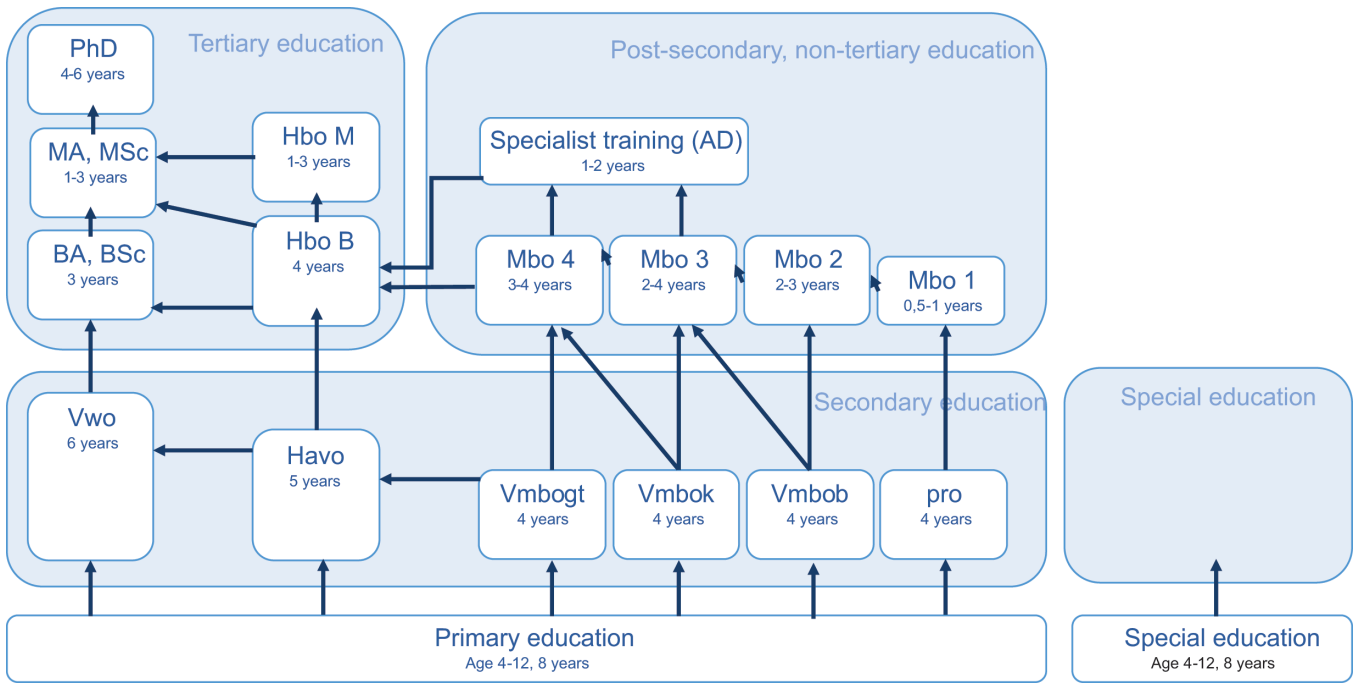

Figure 2.2 Schematic overview of the Dutch education system.

The Dutch education system is thought to limit the NEET rate in various ways. First, education is mandatory in the Netherlands until the age of 16. In addition, Dutch pupils between 16 and 18 are obligated by law to obtain a qualifying diploma, which is minimally at the level of MBO level 2, HAVO, or VWO. Pupils who leave the education system before the age of 18 and without a diploma are considered early school-leavers. After the age of 18, the legal pupils between 18 and 23 who do not have a qualifying diploma receive government support from a regional coordinator. This system keeps students in school until they have a qualifying diploma. Second, the costs of education are low. It should be noted here that Dutch youth in education receive ample financial support to help them to engage in studies. Dutch nationals can receive government support (in some cases: a low-interest loan) for education. In general, people who are registered for full-time or dual programmes at a school for VMBO, HAVO, VWO, MAVO, LWOO, Praktijkonderwijs, VSO, or VAVO (secondary education), school-based programmes in the MBO, or programmes at tertiary education are eligible for financial support, if the education programme is accredited and takes longer than one year.

Youth in secondary education and MBO have to be 18 years old to be eligible; for youth in tertiary education, there is no minimum age requirement. Eligibility ends at the age of 30. The general support takes the form of a monthly payment and free travel in public transportation. The amount of the monthly payment depends on the income of parents. Children from low-income families receive higher support. The general support is intended to pay for general study costs and living conditions, to pay for college fees, and additional government loans can be applied for.

2.2.2 Vocational education in the Netherlands

Although the number of students in vocational education has been steadily declining for years, the vocational track is actually still the most common form of education in the Netherlands; over half of all students in secondary education follow VMBO (VET at ISCED 2) (Inspectorate of Education, 2020), and about 40% of all working Dutch adults have been educated in MBO (continued VET or CVET at ISCED 3 or 4) (Karsten, 2016).

As can be seen in Figure 2.2, the vocational tracks in the Netherlands are quite intricate. In secondary education, VET has four tracks. Next to a practical education track for children with low IQs or cognitive challenges, the track generally considered lowest is VMBO-B ("basisberoepsgerichte leerweg"), which teaches students the basic skills of a craft without further specialisation. It is the least academically challenging track in secondary education and has a light central exam and offers general courses (e.g. Dutch, English, math, arts, and culture) at a basic level. The second track is the VMBO-K (or: "kaderberoepsgerichte leerweg"), in which students

also learn by doing, and in which they prepare for a track in the MBO that prepares for a middle management function in a given sector. The VMBO-G ("gemengde leerweg") track not only offers general courses at a higher level, but also offers a modest amount of practical education. It is often combined with the highest track in VET, VMBO-T ("theoretische leerweg"), which offers school-based VET, with theoretical courses in four areas: i.e. technique, care and well-being, economics, and agriculture. This track is an entry ticket into the highest MBO track (4) and the HAVO track. Note that the arrows show routes that students can take through the system, but that other routes are also possible.

In higher secondary and post-secondary, non-tertiary education, CVET also is organised in four tracks. The lowest track (MBO level 1) is an entry-level programme accessible for students who do not have a diploma from secondary education. Its diploma is not considered a starting qualification for the labour market, but a steppingstone for education programmes at level 2 (basic vocational education). However, MBO level 1 students who cannot finish a level 2 programme can enter the labour market as assistants. MBO level 3 programmes are professional training programmes that prepare for independent craftsmanship in professions in various sectors. The highest track (MBO level 4) prepares for middle management functions or functions as specialists but is also an entry ticket to the HBO. The HBO ("hoger beroepsonderwijs") is in essence a form of tertiary vocational education at ISCED level 5.

All programmes in the MBO are offered in two different learning pathways. The BOL pathway is mostly school-based but offers practical training between 20% and 60% of the time. The BBL pathway is a dual-track that offers at least 60% of practical education. To ensure that programmes in the Dutch VET teach relevant occupationally specific skills, there are close institutional linkages with employers. Schools and employers work together in an organisation that is founded for this specific reason (the so-called Samenwerkingsorganisatie Beroepsonderwijs Bedrijfsleven or SBB). One task of this organisation is to ensure that schools and employers collaborate to determine which skills are needed for the various MBO credentials. All CVET programmes base their curricula on so-called competency-based qualification dossiers. These dossiers are national frameworks that describe for each CVET programme which skills, knowledge, and competences students in that programme should learn, and at which level (Van der Meijden and Petit, 2014). This nation-wide policy shift started in 2004 and, after initial resistance and scepticism, was completed in 2012 (Van der Meijden et al., 2013).

2.2.3 The Dutch transition system

Another way in which the Dutch education system is thought to limit NEET rates is by ensuring that the skills taught in education are demanded on the labour market. The Netherlands is a prime example of an occupational

labour market or OLM (Gangl, 2003). As said, Dutch vocational education is characterised by strong institutional linkages, and in many cases, employer organisations affect curricula through the SBB. This implies that skills taught in Dutch vocational education have a high vocational specificity. This is also true for the vocational tracks in tertiary education (HBO). The Netherlands has a strong OLM, and allocation and matching are in principle based on an open market.

2.2.4 Labour market arrangements

The Dutch labour market is highly institutionalised. The government actively works with unions and employer organisations to co-design labour market arrangements. About 75% of all labour contracts are the result of collective bargaining agreements that are mostly negotiated at the industry level (Hartog and Salverda, 2018). Such agreements include seniority-wage scales for occupational groups. Also resulting from this strong collective outlook on employee-employer relations is the fact that the Dutch labour market traditionally has relatively strong employee protection (OECD, 2020c). Permanent contracts can be undone, but only after permission by a court of law or the executive labour organisation (UWV). This strong position for insiders is commonly thought to worsen the position of newcomers on the labour market, and particularly be to the detriment of young people (Muffels, 2013). Indeed, as Figure 2.1 shows, the youth unemployment rate is much higher than the general unemployment rate.

However, a main feature of the Dutch labour market is the rapid flexibilisation in the past two decades. Flexible jobs include jobs with a temporary contract, such as work for a temp agency, zero-hour contracts, and probationary periods of jobs that will eventually become permanent. Just like in other countries, the number of such flexible jobs has increased steadily from 16% in 2001 to 26% in 2016 (Muffels, 2013; Hartog and Salverda, 2018). Temp agency work has been subject to policy since 1996 and turned into (so-called flexicurity) legislation in 1999, increased about 30% between 2001 and 2016 (Hartog and Salverda, 2018). Young people are most likely to have these flexible jobs.

They are also most likely to hold part-time jobs. Between 2001 and 2016, the number of part-time flexible work arrangements has risen significantly, and about half of all employment is currently part-time (meaning less than 35 hours per week (*ibid.*). Among youth aged 15–24, the number of people in jobs of less than 12 hours a week rose from 36% in 2001 to 44% in 2016; an increasing number of the young people with small jobs are also in education (*ibid.*).

Wages are regularly renegotiated by the social partners to adjust for inflation and productivity differences. Outside these collective wage negotiations, Dutch workers usually do not negotiate about their wages. The collective bargaining thus forms the prime source of income increase for

Dutch workers (Hartog and Salverda, 2018). These wages have not changed much between 2001 and 2016 (Hartog and Salverda, 2018). Also relevant is the minimum wage policy: all employees in the Netherlands over 21 are entitled to the legal minimum wage. On July 1, 2019, the minimum wage was determined by law to be €1,635.60, before taxes. Young employees are entitled to the so-called youth minimum wage, which is a percentage of the minimum wage. This depends on one's age: a 16-year old is entitled to a wage of 34.5% of the minimum wage, a 20-year old to 80% (in 2019).

2.2.5 Welfare state arrangements

Part of the Dutch NEETs are unemployed and, as such, may be eligible for unemployment benefits. Young people who become unemployed may be eligible for unemployment benefits. Employees who become fully or partly unemployed are eligible for receiving unemployment benefits ("WW-uitkering") subject to conditions: one must (a) be employed, not on full-time unpaid leave, and not yet retired, (b) not be in the Netherlands illegally, (c) lose at least 5 hours of employment each week and no longer receive income over these hours, (d) be directly available for work, (e) have worked for at least 26 weeks for an employer in the 36 weeks before unemployment, and (f) not become unemployed due to one's own doing. The scheme is designed to stimulate reintegration. Eligible workers who become unemployed are entitled to at least three months of benefits, but the actual length of the period one is eligible for receiving unemployment benefits depends on one's work experience. Generally, the more working years one has gained, the longer one is entitled to receiving benefits. The maximum period for receiving benefits is two years. In collective bargaining agreements, additional periods (up to 38 months) may be agreed to. The actual height of the benefits depends on one's income. In the first two months of unemployment, benefits are set at 75% of the average daily wage earned in the year before unemployment. For the remaining period, benefits are 70% of the average daily wage. This is for those who become fully unemployed. To stimulate reintegration, the WW-programme also supplements income for those who accept a job at a substantially lower wage than the WW-wage (87.5%). People who do not have work after their unemployment benefits end may apply for general welfare.

In general, people over 18 are entitled to general welfare ("Algemene Bijstand") if they do not have sufficient income or capital to pay for basic living standards and are not entitled to other benefits (such as unemployment benefits). Further conditions are that one is a legal resident of the Netherlands and is not institutionalised or in prison. To stimulate reintegration into the labour market, several additional conditions must be met. Welfare recipients must actively work on their reintegration. They (a) must accept and keep any job offered to them, (b) register with an employment

agency, (c) be willing to travel to and from work for 3 hours a day, (d) willing to move to a location where one can find a job, (e) do anything in one's ability to acquire relevant skills and knowledge, (f) cooperate with any government support in finding employment, and (g) dress, behave, and groom oneself in a way that does not hamper one's ability to get a job. The government can withhold payment of benefits for up to three months for non-compliers. These conditions are not applicable to single parents with one or more children under five, or for those who are permanently incapable of working. Further conditions may also apply. For example, the government may demand that welfare recipients perform services, or invest in language skills. All welfare recipients must comply with all government requests for cooperation, information, and identification and behave decently vis-à-vis government officials. The amount of benefits depends on one's age and living situation. People of 21 years old who are married or living together are entitled to 100% of the minimum wage. Singles over 21 receive 70% of the minimum wage; single parents receive an additional payment for children. For youth under the age of 21, the welfare is capped at a lower amount. Youth under the age of 27 are not entitled to general welfare if they can follow education programmes that would entitle them to government study financing programmes.

Besides a large share of active NEETs, another large group of NEETs in the Netherlands seems to be long-term inactive. Many of these may be disabled (Eurofound, 2016). They could be entitled to benefits under the Disablement Assistance Act for Handicapped Young Persons (Wajong) and the Participation Act of 2015. Young people can get disability benefits if – before the age of 18 – they contracted an illness or disability that is so serious that they cannot work. Youth between 18 and 30 can be eligible for these benefits if they become seriously ill or disabled during education. In all cases, additional conditions are that these young people have not gained any work experience and cannot work, are living in the Netherlands, are older than 18 (but not retired), have not been in prison for longer than a month, and follow a number of rules. Evaluation of the ability to work is done regularly by a central executive agency (UWV). Young people with a disability or illness that permits them to work will be helped to find a job in two programmes. First, the job creation programme ("banenafspraak") is a collaboration between the government and employers, to create jobs for partly disabled youth. Young people who can work, but who cannot make the minimum wage, are eligible for this programme. Government subsidies make hiring these youth attractive to employers. Second, youth who need extra support to work can be placed at so-called sheltered jobs ("beschut werk"), for example at social workplaces specifically designed to employ people with disabilities. Youth who became ill or became disabled at a young age but have possibilities to work are not eligible for Wajong benefits but may be eligible for general welfare.

2.2.6 Family policies

First, maternity, paternity, and parental leaves are important for understanding cross-national differences in labour market participation. Paid leave enables parents to temporarily disengage from the labour market and take care of their children without fear of losing their jobs or reducing their incomes. Countries differ widely in the availability of paternity, maternity, and parental leaves, in the length of the period covered, and in the amount. Dutch pregnant workers who take maternity leave are entitled their full salary costs; employers are compensated 100% by the government. Pregnant workers are eligible to receive four- to six-week pregnancy leave before childbirth and at least ten-week maternity leave after childbirth. If a pregnant woman takes less than six-week pregnancy leave before childbirth, the remaining amount can be added to her maternity leave after giving birth. Maternity leave always begins after the actual birth, and the total may therefore be longer than 16 weeks (Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, 2001). The Netherlands also has paternity leave, but it is much narrower in scope. Van Belle (2016) cross-nationally compared parental leave policies and shows that the Netherlands had a relatively short paternity leave of two days, which also were not compensated, but that the uptake is relatively common. Since 2019, young fathers are entitled to 5 days of paternity leave (Rijksoverheid, 2016). Parental leave can be taken at any point in time for anyone with children under the age of 8. Parental leave is generally unpaid.

Second, public childcare is an important explanation for cross-national differences in the labour market effects of children (Uunk et al., 2005). However, Dutch parents are traditionally disinclined to make use of full-time formal childcare options (Portegijs et al., 2006), possibly because formal childcare has long been looked upon as of low quality (Leitner, 2003). Dutch parents rely on informal care relatively often; mostly, such care is provided by grandparents (Knijn and Liefbroer, 2006; Mills et al., 2014). Those who do use childcare do so in part-time: attendance is much higher for shorter stays than it is for longer stays (Mills et al., 2014). Poor people are also much less likely to use childcare than rich people (Mills et al., 2014). The Childcare Act of 2005 intended to increase the labour participation rate of young parents (CPB, 2011). It did so by increasing child subsidies for low-income households and increasing subsidies for formal childcare for lower-income families. The 2005 law ensures that parents can receive government compensation for the costs of formal childcare. The size of the compensation is partly based on household income, with parents with higher incomes receiving lower subsidies. Furthermore, the allowance also depends on the total costs of childcare, and on the number of children one has. There is a minimum allowance. There is also a maximum allowance, based on a maximum number of hours of childcare per child per month and a maximum rate. Parents are entitled to childcare support if (a) they are

eligible and (b) make use of childcare in a registered childcare facility or registered host parent. Eligible are only working couples or single working parents. Parents who do not work are eligible if they are in a reintegration track and actively try to return to the labour market, migrants in an integration course, teen parents who are in education, and students. Note that under this law, childcare is not subsidised if neither parent is working or in education. A large-scale evaluation study found that the 2005 reform indeed increased labour market participation of young mothers. However, lower educated young mothers were not affected (CPB, 2011). Subsidies were cut again in 2012, mostly in response to the Great Recession.

2.3 Hypotheses

Following theoretical assumptions described in Section 1.3, we expect that in the Netherlands, most NEETs remain so only for a short period of time (Hypothesis 1), but also that there exists a group with Long NEET spells (Hypothesis H2a). The school-to-work transition in the Netherlands on average is rather smooth, and most school-leavers succeed in finding jobs (see, for example, ROA, 2016,). However, there is a downside to that: those who do fall out of the labour market during the school-to-work transition are negatively selected and may experience problems (re-)entering. This is probably aggravated by the strong employment protection legislation, which favours the position of insiders. We thus expect that those who do experience long-term NEET status are more likely to experience long-term scarring effects (H2b).

The Dutch institutional context leads to very specific expectations about the size, composition, and gravity of NEET in the Netherlands. Given the strong stratification and differentiation of Dutch education, job queuing and sorting by employers are based on credentials, which should result in higher long-term NEET rates for early school-leavers who lack diplomas (H3a). Also, the quality of vocational education, its good reputation, the relevance of the occupationally specific skills taught, and the close links between schools and employers all imply that the school-to-work transition of VET-trained youth is relatively smooth and that, in comparison to their generally educated peers, they are less often NEET and less often problematic NEET (H3b).

Socioeconomic background is not expected to play a huge role in explaining NEETs in the Netherlands. In the highly stratified Dutch system, tracking happens relatively early, which is associated with stronger social background effects. However, track placement takes place after high-stakes cognitive testing, which partly mitigates this effect (Korthals and Dronkers, 2016). There is a relationship between SES and being in vocational education. However, given the relatively good reputation of vocational education and the strong emphasis on skills, we expect that those with a relatively low SES background are relatively successful in making the school-to-work transition, and not more likely NEET (H3c).

Immigrants are expected to be vulnerable. In a selective labour market, youth from immigrant backgrounds also face many disadvantages, even if their conditions of access to the labour market vary depending on their social and educational characteristics. On average, immigrant children achieve lower levels of education, are more often early school-leavers (ROA, 2016), and are less likely to find relevant internships, while at VET which hampers their integration into the labour market (Inspectorate of Education, 2017). Furthermore, ethnic discrimination can be observed in the Dutch labour market (Thijssen, 2020). This would lead us to believe that immigrant youths will be more likely to become NEETs, and also more likely to become NEET for longer periods of time (H3d).

Generally, the number of NEETs and long-term NEETs is expected to be relatively low in the Netherlands, if compared to other countries. There are a few exceptions. First are young women with children. This is perhaps rather surprising, since the extent to which child-rearing affects women's decisions to disengage from the labour market at a young age is reduced by at least two cultural idiosyncrasies. First, the Dutch have a very liberal contraceptive culture. About half of young women aged 16–30 use birth control pills (Statistics Netherlands, 2017). Abortion laws are very liberal, but abortion is very rare: family planning and accessible contraception reduce the need for abortion (Levels et al., 2012). Second, and perhaps related, Dutch women on average transition to motherhood relatively late. The mean age at first birth in the Netherlands was 29 in 2018, which is relatively high (Human Fertility Database, 2018). However, the traditional male breadwinner model has long been dominant in the Netherlands (Clerkx and Van IJzendoorn, 1992). While this culture has changed partly, childcare is still regarded by many as the responsibility of women (Mills et al., 2014); combining child-rearing with a full-time job is less accepted by women (Van Peer and Moors, 1996). As such, the Netherlands is still generally regarded as an example of a conservative model of work-family reconciliation (Gornick and Meyers, 2003). In addition, welfare may be a trap into NEET status for some young women. Welfare benefits are generally not granted to Dutch youth, so welfare does not play a big role in explaining Dutch NEETs in general. However, single parents are exempt from certain activating measures. Thus, we expect that young women (H4a) with children (H4b) are probably more likely long-term NEET.

2.4 Data and measurements

2.4.1 Data

We select from the registers those individuals who have left secondary education and follow their activities in the registers for ten years. We take a 25% random sample of the 1987 birth cohort. We chose 1987 because it allows us to observe these youth from the age of 16 onwards and observe their outcome at age 30. We draw a random sample because of computational issues

regarding the optimal matching algorithm. Furthermore, we only select those for whom we have at least nine out of ten years of full sequence information and who spent at least one month as NEET during the observation window. After the listwise deletion of missing values on our core variables of interest, our final analytical sample consists of N = 23,342. The analysis of the NEET patterns is done with sequence and cluster analysis on data from the SSD of CBS (Bakker et al., 2014). In these data, we have monthly information about the employment and education activities of the entire Dutch population. We obtain the monthly activity after merging two datasets from the SSD. One includes spell data on the main economic activity based on the main source of income. We recode the original variable into (a) Working (including employee, shareholder, self-employed, other activities), (b) NEET (including recipients of unemployment insurance, recipient of welfare, recipient of other social benefits, recipient of illness and disability benefits, recipient of pension), (c) VET education (including [not yet] pupil/student with income, [not yet] pupil/student without income, other without income), and (d) Higher Education. The second dataset includes spell data on registrations in publicly funded education. We merge the two variables, whereas education always overwrites other states. We distinguish between "Secondary Education and below" (including primary education, practical education, secondary education) and "Further education" (including MBO, HBO, WO). We start our observation in 2001 and end in 2017. From every year, we exclude the month of August. We do this because, in the register data, school leaving seems to be an artefact because of school registers ending in July and starting in September. Based on this data, we would underestimate the timing of school leaving for many. We then align sequences on the first month spent out of secondary education.

2.4.2 Measurements

A person's *gender* was obtained from public registers. We distinguish women (1) from men (0). From the same data, we also know youth's *immigration background* and distinguish between native-born with two native-born parents (coded as 0), born abroad with at least one foreign-born parent (coded as 1), and pupils born abroad with two foreign-born parents (coded as 2). The *country of birth* of the pupils and the parents was obtained from Dutch administrative records, as was information about the *provinces* in which youths lived when they were leaving school. The *educational level* distinguishes between those with no diploma at school leaving (0), those with a diploma at VMBO or MBO level 1 (1), or those with a diploma at MBO level 2, HAVO, or VWO (2). Socioeconomic status is measured in various ways. First, we measure the *employment status of the father* as the modal state of employment during the year our population of interest was 16 years old. We distinguish working (and education) (0) from unemployment/welfare (1), sickness/pension (2), and not matched in registers (3). We

measure *homeownership*, distinguishing youth who live in a home that is owned (0) from rentals with (1) and without subsidies (2). We also measure the average monthly *household income* in the year they were 16.

2.5 Analyses and results

Like in the other chapters, we analyse the data in four steps. First, we perform sequence analyses.[1] This ensures that sequences that are most alike are clustered, and that the clusters are as distinct as possible. This produces a number of patterns that can be seen as typical and representative to typical patterns that can be discerned in the data.[2] For this, we use TraMineR (Gabadinho et al., 2011). Second, we explain which trajectory is followed by way of multinomial logistic regressions. We take the patterns as dependent variables and socioeconomic characteristics as independent variables, to assess the extent to which various patterns can be explained by characteristics of individuals and their families. Third, we analyse the number of NEET months after school leaving. Fourth, we use the patterns from the sequence analysis as independent variables to investigate the extent to which the different STW-patterns can explain the income at the age of 30.

2.5.1 Descriptive analyses of Dutch NEETs

In Figure 2.3, we present school-to-work transition sequences of our full sample in a state distribution plot. The graph depicts how often each status occurs in each month and thus illustrates how the relative frequencies of statuses evolve over time. After leaving school, most Dutch youths remain in education and continue into post-secondary or tertiary education. These statuses are coloured dark blue. Others move into employment, and their proportion increases over time; these statuses are green. Months spent as NEET are coloured orange.

We see that those with NEET status are a minority, but also that they are non-negligible. We also see a slight increase in NEET rates over time. Given the institutional configuration of the Netherlands, we expected that VET-trained youth would be less often NEET and less often long-term NEET and that early school-leavers, immigrants, and women with children would be more likely long-term NEET. Table 2.1 presents the comparison of our analytic sample with youth who never become NEET during the STW on standard demographic variables. These descriptions already provide some first clues about our hypotheses. First, in general, our sample with those who experience at least one month of NEET status differs on some interesting points from the overall sample. The percentage of people without a diploma after first-time school leaving is indeed larger in the NEET sample (17%–13.4% in the general population). Also, first-generation (5.4%) and second-generation (16.8%) migrants are somewhat more represented in the analytic sample than in the overall sample (where the percentages are 4.3% and 13.9%, respectively). However, other than we expected, graduates from VET are not more likely NEETs.

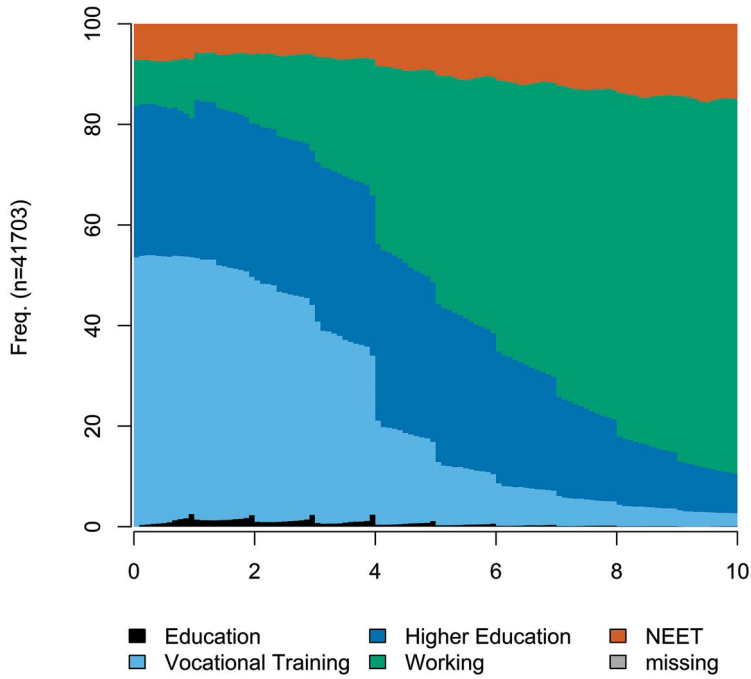

Figure 2.3 Transversal state distribution plot for the sample as a whole.

Next, we test parametrically whether these descriptive differences are statistically interesting and perform logistic regression analysis on the occurrence of at least one month of NEET. We analyse a multivariate model with all variables we included in the descriptive analyses, including school-leaving diploma, gender, immigration background, province, father's and mother's employment at age 16, house ownership, and household income. Figure 2.4 presents the results of the logistic regression. We present average marginal effects. These analyses largely confirm the descriptive conclusions. Those without a diploma are much more likely to be NEET, compared to those who have a credential from HAVO or VWO; however, those from the lower vocational tracks are not more likely to have experienced one month of NEET.

Both first- and second-generation immigrants are more likely to experience one month of NEET than Dutch natives. Young women more probably experience one month of NEET, but the differences are not huge. Also interesting is that among those who have experienced at least one month of NEET, the father is less likely to be employed and more often not matched at all. Also, NEETs were more likely to grow up in rented housing, and in households with lower incomes.

Table 2.1 Summary statistics by sample

	Never NEET		*NEET ≥ 1 month*		*Total*	
	Freq.	*%*	*Freq.*	*%*	*Freq.*	*%*
Gender						
Male	9,522	51.8	11,751	50.3	21,273	51.0
Female	8,843	48.2	11,591	49.7	20,434	49.0
School-leaving diploma						
No diploma	1,613	8.8	3,976	17.0	5,589	13.4
HAVO/VWO	7,017	38.2	7,591	32.5	14,608	35.0
VMBO	9,735	53.0	11,774	50.4	21,509	51.6
Immigration background						
Native	15,978	87.0	18,149	77.8	34,127	81.8
First generation	506	2.8	1,270	5.4	1,776	4.3
Second generation (one parent)	1,881	10.2	3,923	16.8	5,804	13.9
Father's employment status (age 16)						
Working (or education)	16,149	87.9	18,381	78.7	34,530	82.8
Unemployment/Welfare benefits	513	2.8	1,237	5.3	1,750	4.2
Sickness/Other benefits/ Pension/No income	1,021	5.6	2,013	8.6	3,034	7.3
Not in registers	682	3.7	1,711	7.3	2,393	5.7
Mother's employment status (age 16)						
Working (or education)	12,646	68.9	14,348	61.5	26,994	64.7
Unemployment/Welfare benefits	723	3.9	2,183	9.4	2,906	7.0
Sickness/Other benefits/ Pension/No income	4,737	25.8	6,388	27.4	11,125	26.7
Not in registers	259	1.4	423	1.8	682	1.6
Household homeownership (age 16)						
Owned	13,914	75.8	14,614	62.6	28,528	68.4
Rented w/Subsidies	1,459	7.9	3,962	17.0	5,421	13.0
Rented	2,992	16.3	4,765	20.4	7,757	18.6
Province						
Drenthe	570	3.1	796	3.4	1,366	3.3
Flevoland	455	2.5	666	2.9	1,121	2.7
Friesland	769	4.2	985	4.2	1,754	4.2
Gelderland	2,504	13.6	2,710	11.6	5,214	12.5
Groningen	546	3.0	840	3.6	1,386	3.3
Limburg	1,217	6.6	1,596	6.8	2,813	6.7
Noord-Brabant	2,863	15.6	3,401	14.6	6,264	15.0
Noord-Holland	2,408	13.1	3,631	15.6	6,039	14.5
Overijssel	1,464	8.0	1,607	6.9	3,071	7.4
Utrecht	1,310	7.1	1,672	7.2	2,982	7.1
Zeeland	490	2.7	504	2.2	994	2.4
Zuid-Holland	3,769	20.5	4,934	21.1	8,703	20.9
Household income (age 16), mean	41,879		38,753		40,130	
	(20,775)		(22,127)		(21,598)	
Total	18,365		23,342		41,707	

Source: Statistics Netherlands, own calculations.

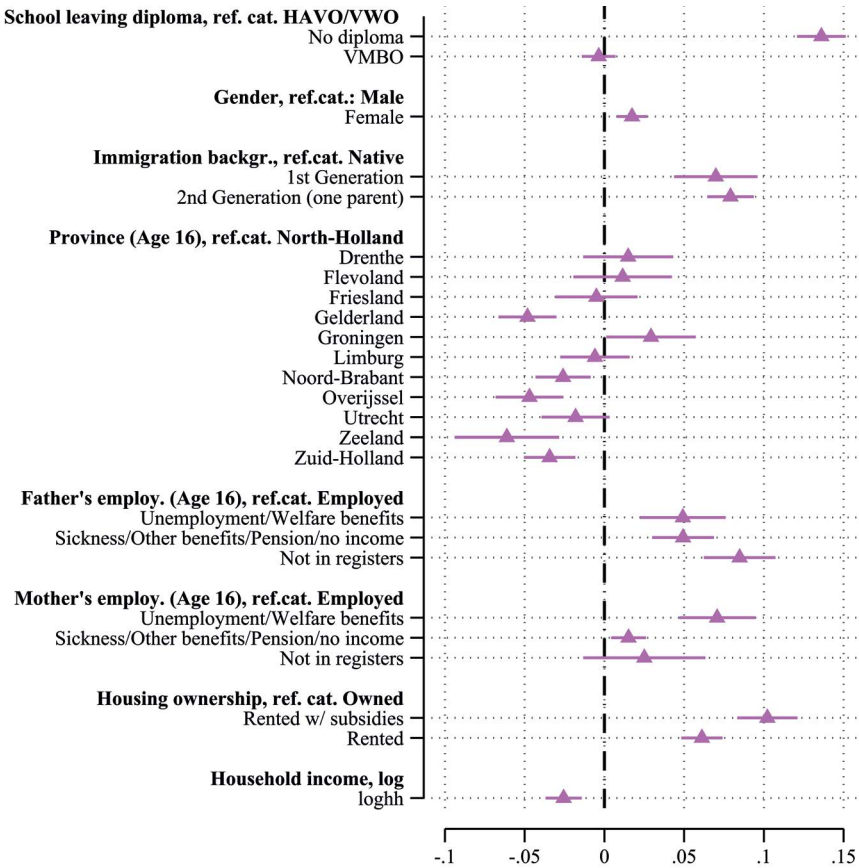

Figure 2.4 Logistic regression of NEET sample selection (never-NEET vs NEET for at least one month), average marginal effects.

2.5.2 Sequence analyses: The patterns of NEET in the Netherlands

The goal of the sequence analyses is to explore whether we can observe meaningful regularities in patterns related to NEET status during the STW-transition. We analyse young people who experience at least one month of NEET in the ten years after leaving education for the first time. Our method produces six meaningful distinctions, as can be seen in Figure 2.5. The accompanying status proportion plots (or state distribution plots) are depicted in Figure 2.6.

The first cluster (HE, N = 6,897) represents individual trajectories of school-leavers who follow a typical higher education trajectory after leaving secondary education. As can be seen in Figure 2.6, the sequences in this trajectory are characterised by very short and infrequent NEET episodes

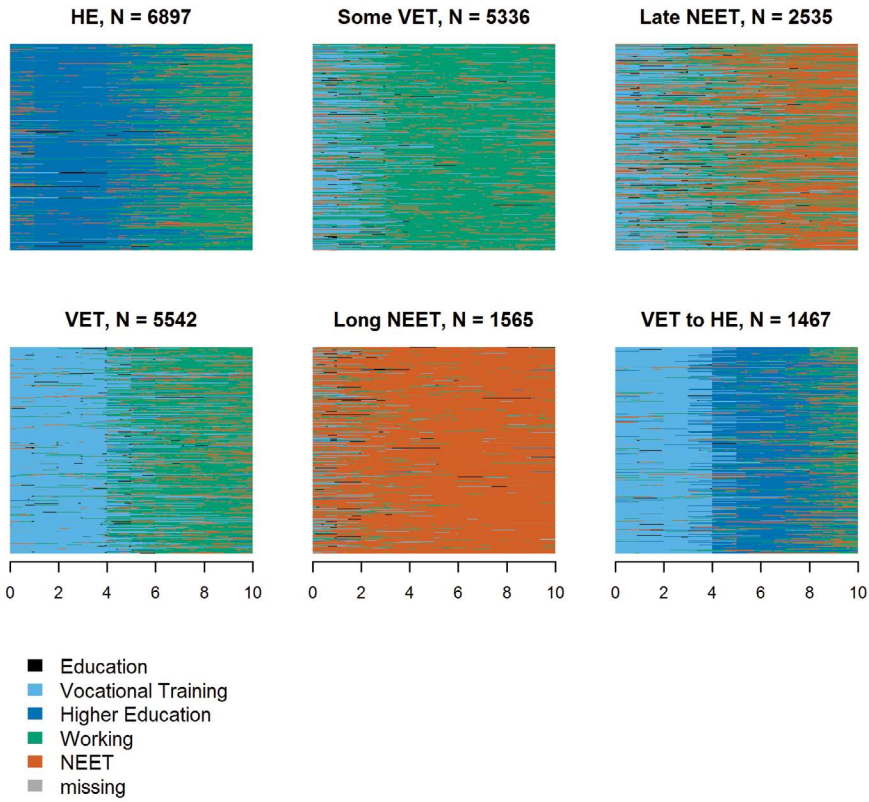

Figure 2.5 Index plots of NEET patterns in the Netherlands.

during the STW-transition; people in this cluster usually leave NEET-hood quite rapidly. Most people in this cluster eventually end up employed. The remaining clusters mostly describe different STW-pattern through VET. In turn, this also means that NEET after higher education is very rare and that, as expected, one of the most important factors in explaining NEET is education.

The first of these clusters (some VET, N = 5,336) represents a trajectory of finding employment relatively soon after secondary education and some vocational training or short stints in higher education. Another relatively straightforward trajectory is represented by VET (N = 5,542). This represents the classical vocational training trajectory. Many people follow this trajectory successfully into employment. Another VET-related cluster groups are people who first follow VET, then transition to higher education, and then to the labour market (VET to HE, N = 1,467).

This underlines our expectation that those with a VET education are less likely problematic NEET. We find two distinct patterns of people who

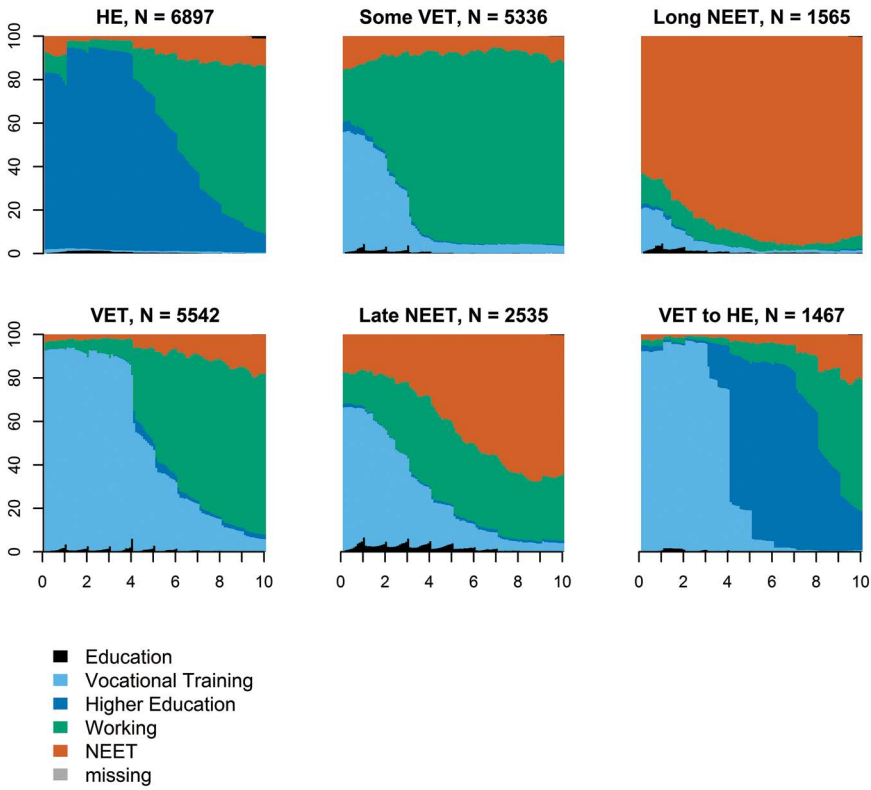

Figure 2.6 Status proportion plots of NEET patterns in the Netherlands.

largely become NEET. First is Long NEET (N = 1,565). More than half of these youth become NEET right after second education and they do not integrate into the labour market. Some first go through some short VET or experience short employment episodes, but the vast majority of youth in this cluster stay in NEET for the rest of the ten-year observation period. Second is Late NEET (N = 2,535) who largely first goes through VET, then goes through some short spells of employment, and then generally (about 60%) ends up as NEETs.

In Table 2.2, we describe the clusters. The higher education cluster has the highest share of women (55.8%); it should also be noted that the two problematic NEET clusters have an about equal gender distribution. Unsurprisingly, those who leave education without a starting qualification are overrepresented in the Long NEET and Late NEET clusters, with Late NEET are most likely those that leave education with a VMBO diploma, and those who leave school without a diploma are overrepresented in the Long NEET cluster. Migration background also correlates with being in a Long

Table 2.2 Distribution of covariates across clusters

	Late NEET		*Long NEET*		*Some VET*		*VET*		*VET to HE*		*HE*		*Total*	
	2.535		*1.565*		*5.336*		*5.542*		*1.467*		*6.897*		*23.342*	
Total N	*Freq.*	*%*	*Freq.*	*%*	*Freq.*	*%*	*Freq.*	*%*	*Freq.*	*%*	*Freq.*	*%*	*Freq.*	*%*
Gender														
Male	1.262	49.8	773	49.4	3.060	57.3	2.910	52.5	700	47.7	3.046	44.2	11.751	50.3
Female	1.273	50.2	792	50.6	2.276	42.7	2.632	47.5	767	52.3	3.851	55.8	11.591	49.7
School-leaving diploma														
No diploma	669	26.4	1.015	64.9	1.276	23.9	722	13.0	246	16.8	48	0.7	3.976	17.0
HAVO/VWO	62	2.4	64	4.1	617	11.6	160	2.9	91	6.2	6.597	95.7	7.591	32.5
VMBO	1.804	71.2	486	31.1	3.443	64.5	4.660	84.1	1.129	77.0	252	3.7	11.774	50.4
Immigration background														
Native	1.541	60.8	1.097	70.1	4.447	83.3	4.240	76.5	1.109	75.6	5.715	82.9	18.149	77.8
First generation	315	12.4	119	7.6	200	3.7	330	6.0	76	5.2	230	3.3	1.270	5.4
Second generation (one parent)	679	26.8	349	22.3	689	12.9	972	17.5	282	19.2	952	13.8	3.923	16.8
Father's employment status (age 16)														
Working (or Education)	1.603	63.2	926	59.2	4.236	79.4	4.369	78.8	1.187	80.9	6.060	87.9	18.381	78.7
Unemployment/Welfare benefits	259	10.2	177	11.3	281	5.3	254	4.6	70	4.8	196	2.8	1.237	5.3
Sickness/Other benefits/ Pension/No income	334	13.2	244	15.6	446	8.4	516	9.3	117	8.0	356	5.2	2.013	8.6
Not in registers	339	13.4	218	13.9	373	7.0	403	7.3	93	6.3	285	4.1	1.711	7.3
Mother's employment status (age 16)														
Working (or Education)	1.219	48.1	645	41.2	3.220	60.3	3.376	60.9	948	64.6	4.940	71.6	14.348	61.5
Unemployment/Welfare benefits	487	19.2	341	21.8	486	9.1	523	9.4	103	7.0	243	3.5	2.183	9.4

(Continued)

Table 2.2 Distribution of covariates across clusters *(Continued)*

	Late NEET		*Long NEET*		*Some VET*		*VET*		*VET to HE*		*HE*		*Total*	
	2.535		*1.565*		*5.336*		*5.542*		*1.467*		*6.897*		*23.342*	
Total N	*Freq.*	*%*	*Freq.*	*%*	*Freq.*	*%*	*Freq.*	*%*	*Freq.*	*%*	*Freq.*	*%*	*Freq.*	*%*
Sickness/Other benefits/ Pension/No income	773	30.5	524	33.5	1.533	28.7	1.545	27.9	390	26.6	1.623	23.5	6.388	27.4
Not in registers	56	2.2	55	3.5	97	1.8	98	1.8	26	1.8	91	1.3	423	1.8
Household homeownership (age 16)														
Owned	1.042	41.1	592	37.8	3.038	56.9	3.338	60.2	1.017	69.3	5.587	81.0	14.614	62.6
Rented w/Subsidies	846	33.4	574	36.7	897	16.8	982	17.7	200	13.6	463	6.7	3.962	17.0
Rented	647	25.5	399	25.5	1.401	26.3	1.221	22.0	250	17.0	847	12.3	4.765	20.4
Province														
Drenthe	95	3.7	51	3.3	150	2.8	214	3.9	50	3.4	236	3.4	796	3.4
Flevoland	100	3.9	41	2.6	182	3.4	160	2.9	38	2.6	145	2.1	666	2.9
Friesland	118	4.7	52	3.3	202	3.8	262	4.7	82	5.6	269	3.9	985	4.2
Gelderland	275	10.8	185	11.8	607	11.4	658	11.9	170	11.6	815	11.8	2.710	11.6
Groningen	92	3.6	94	6.0	119	2.2	241	4.3	65	4.4	229	3.3	840	3.6
Limburg	181	7.1	111	7.1	354	6.6	363	6.5	94	6.4	493	7.1	1.596	6.8
Noord-Brabant	327	12.9	211	13.5	903	16.9	753	13.6	209	14.2	998	14.5	3.401	14.6
Noord-Holland	397	15.7	217	13.9	833	15.6	819	14.8	226	15.4	1.139	16.5	3.631	15.6
Overijssel	143	5.6	119	7.6	322	6.0	435	7.8	109	7.4	479	6.9	1.607	6.9
Utrecht	170	6.7	100	6.4	378	7.1	376	6.8	93	6.3	555	8.0	1.672	7.2
Zeeland	52	2.1	30	1.9	121	2.3	126	2.3	31	2.1	144	2.1	504	2.2
Zuid-Holland	585	23.1	354	22.6	1.165	21.8	1.135	20.5	300	20.4	1.395	20.2	4.934	21.1
Household income (age 16), mean (SD)	31,234	15,622	29,667	14,399	35,851	18,294	36,028	17,539	39,823	19,006	47,786	28,350	38,753	21,598

Source: Statistics Netherlands.

or Late NEET cluster. In both clusters, natives are by far the largest group, the share of first- and second-generation migrants is quite sizable, although in the case of Long NEET not higher than should be expected based on population distribution. Interestingly, second-generation immigrants are much more likely to be in problematic NEET clusters than first-generation immigrants. Socioeconomic background also matters: compared to the other clusters, youth in the Late and Long NEET clusters are much more likely from homes with parents who do not work, live in a rental house, and have lower incomes.

2.5.3 Multinomial regressions: Explanations of Dutch NEET patterns

The sequence analyses have revealed a classification of six meaningfully distinct patterns of labour market entry trajectories with at least one month of NEET spells. A second step is to analyse whether certain trajectories are associated with characteristics of the individuals. To answer this question, we estimate a multinomial logistic regression model in which cluster

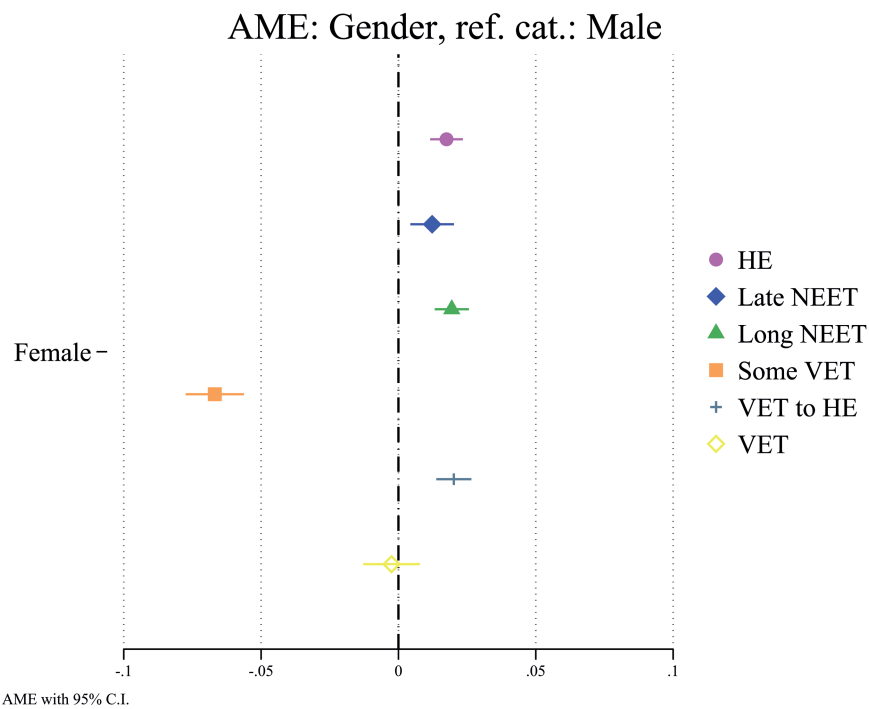

Figure 2.7 Average marginal effects of gender on STW-transitions.

memberships are dependent variables and demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of school-leavers are independent variables. In these analyses, the reference category is a group of individuals who never experienced an episode of NEET that lasts over one month during the ten years after leaving school. In the following, we present the average marginal effects for each of the relevant variables.[3] We focus on describing the membership of the most problematic clusters, i.e. Long NEET and Late NEET.

Figure 2.7 shows that there are some distinct gendered patterns in the school-to-work transitions of school-leavers who experience at least one month of NEET. Women are more likely to follow a trajectory through higher education than men and are also more likely to follow a trajectory through VET and HE. They are considerably less likely to go straight to employment (after finishing some VET) than men. Most to our interest, and in line with our expectations, women are (slightly) more likely than men to experience long-term NEET and later NEET spells than men.

In Figures 2.8 and 2.9, we show that this is indeed partly due to the association between having a child during the STW-transition and the various trajectories. We find that having a child is associated with a higher likelihood of being in some VET/early employment trajectories. Only after interacting

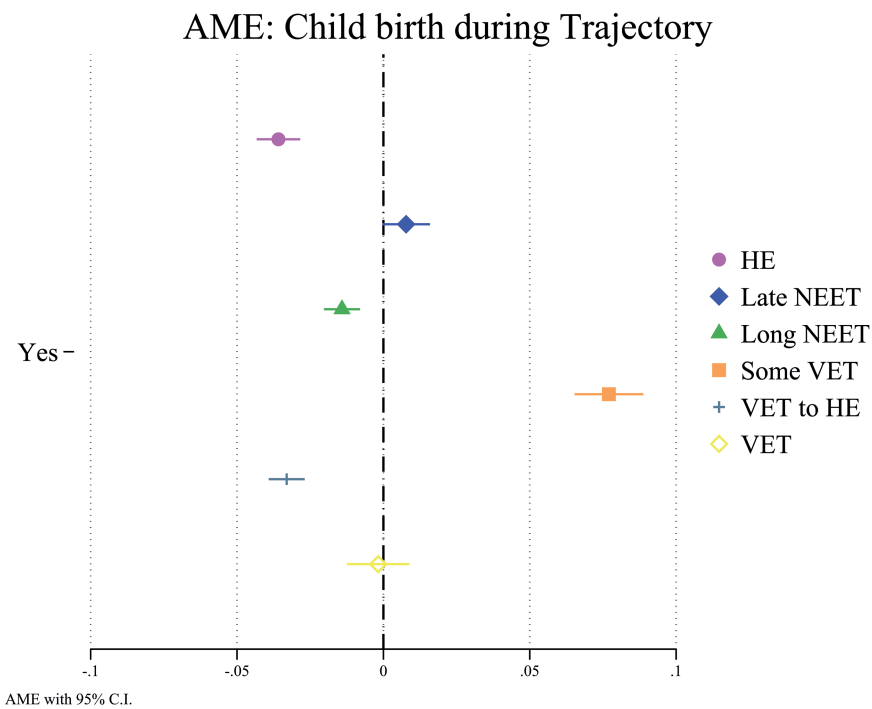

Figure 2.8 Average marginal effects of childbirth on STW-transitions.

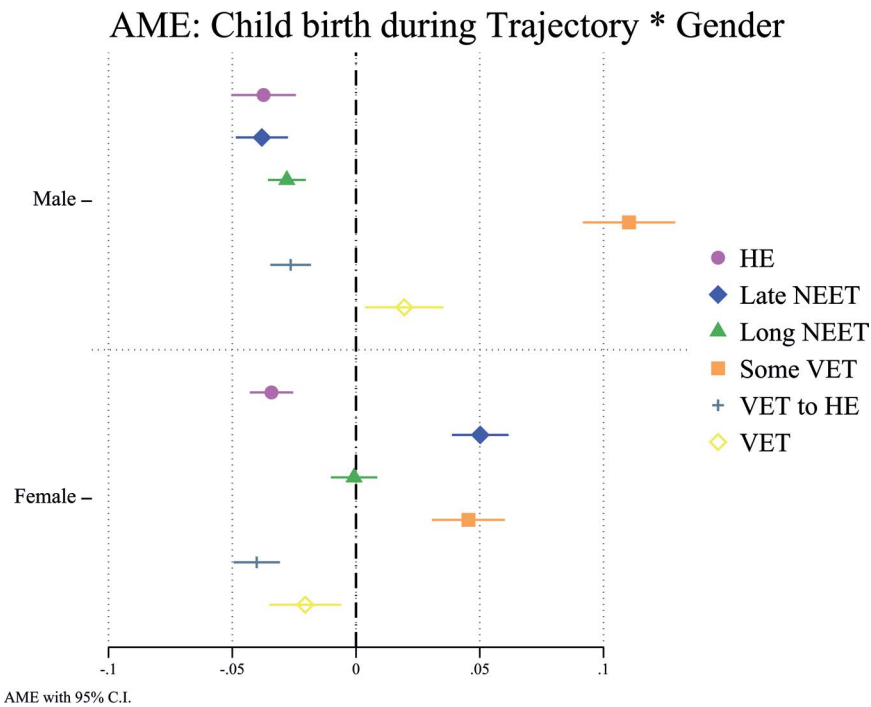

Figure 2.9 Average marginal effects of childbirth*gender on STW-transitions.

child with gender, we find more pronounced associations. In Figure 2.9, we see that women with children are not more likely long-term NEET but are more likely to become Late NEET. Interestingly, and also in line with our expectations, men with children, on the other hand, are also less likely to become long-term NEET.

In Figure 2.10, the relationship between immigration background and the STW-trajectories is presented. Compared to natives, both first- and second-generation migrants are more likely to end up in Late NEET-trajectories. This is in line with what we expected. Contrary to what we expected, however, immigrants are not more likely to be long-term NEETs, though.

Figure 2.11 explores the role of early school leaving in the school-to-work transition. Here, the reference is those with a qualifying diploma (i.e. those with a HAVO, VWO, or MBO level 2 diploma). Perhaps unsurprisingly, those with these diplomas are more likely to follow paths through higher education. As we expected, those with no diploma are more likely to follow NEET-trajectories that are problematic: Long NEET and Late NEET. Those who followed VET but did not achieve a qualifying diploma are somewhat more likely to be Late NEET than those who have followed general education. Differences are rather small, however.

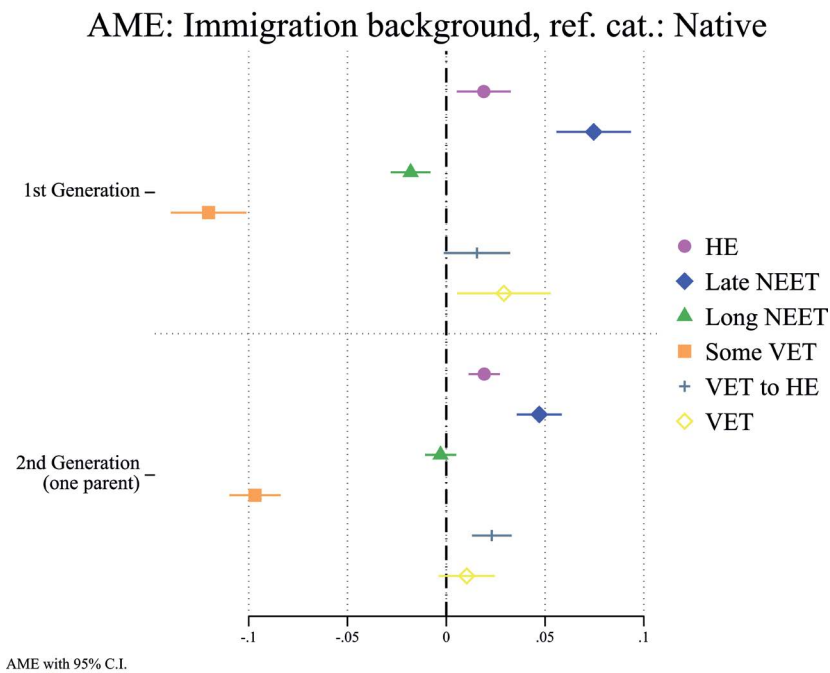

Figure 2.10 Average marginal effects of immigration background on STW-transitions.

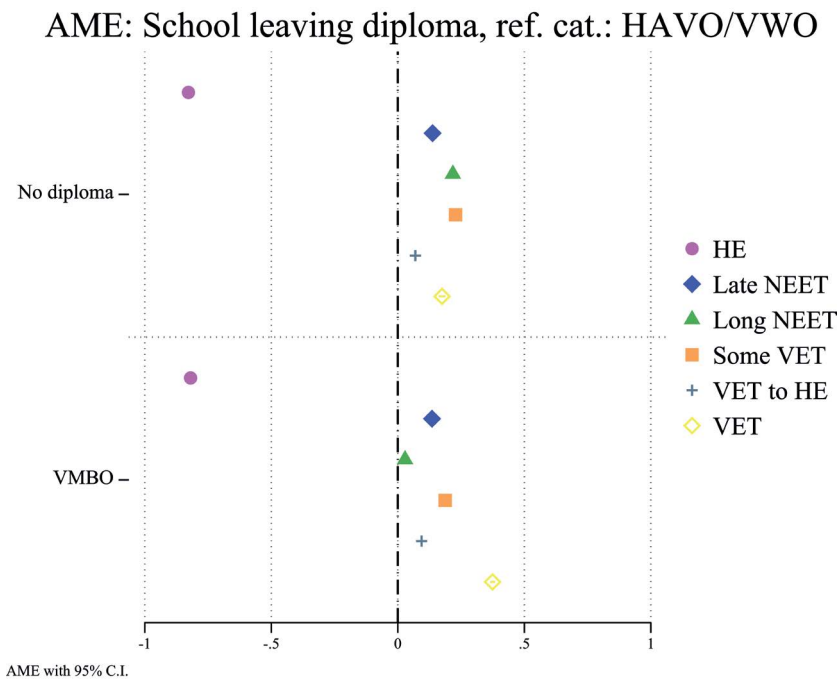

Figure 2.11 Average marginal effects of early school leaving on STW-transitions.

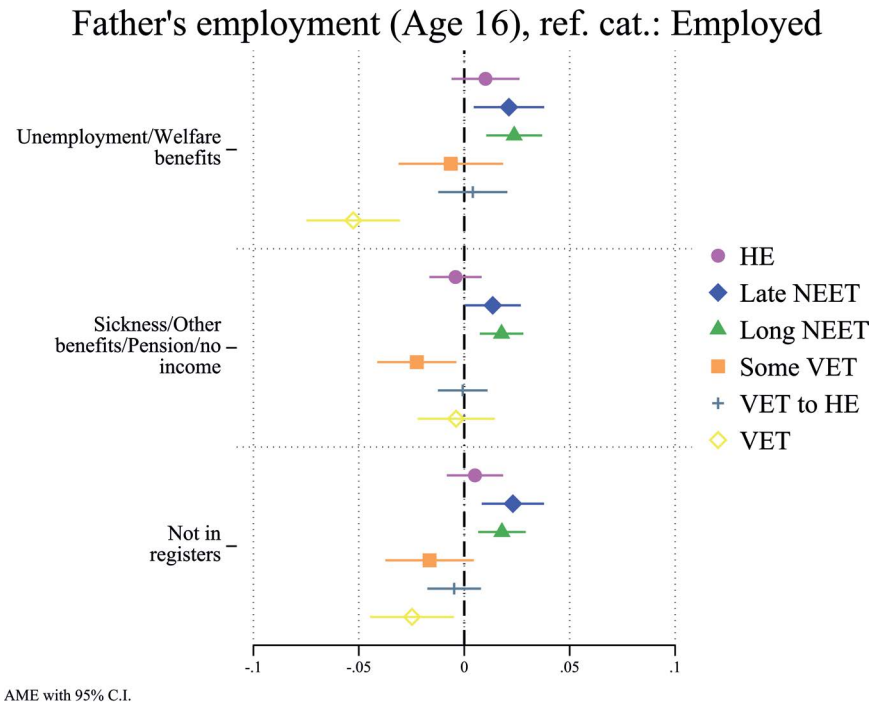

Figure 2.12 Average marginal effects of father's employment on STW-transitions.

Our analyses do suggest that – contrary to our expectations – intergenerational factors play a strong role in explaining problematic school-to-work transitions in the Netherlands. Figure 2.12 presents the role of the father's employment status in the school-to-work transitions of young school-leavers who experience at least one month of NEET. Working fathers form the reference category. Compared to having a working father, all other categories are associated with a higher risk to become Late NEET and Long NEET. In Figures 2.13 and 2.14, the relationships between NEET-trajectories and homeownership as well as household income are shown. The patterns are not as we expected. As compared to those whose parents own a house, those who live in a rented house are more likely to experience the problematic STW-patterns Late NEET and Long NEET. Regarding household income, unsurprisingly, those whose parents have had higher incomes during their youth are less likely to be in the Late NEET and Long NEET clusters. So, what predicts the length of the NEET period in the Netherlands? Figure 2.15 shows the same variables just discussed used to explain a related but different outcome variable, namely the total number of months spent in NEET during the ten-year observation window. From this analysis, we can see that especially early school leaving and graduating from non-qualifying VET are important correlates of long-term NEET-trajectories. Immigrants are slightly more

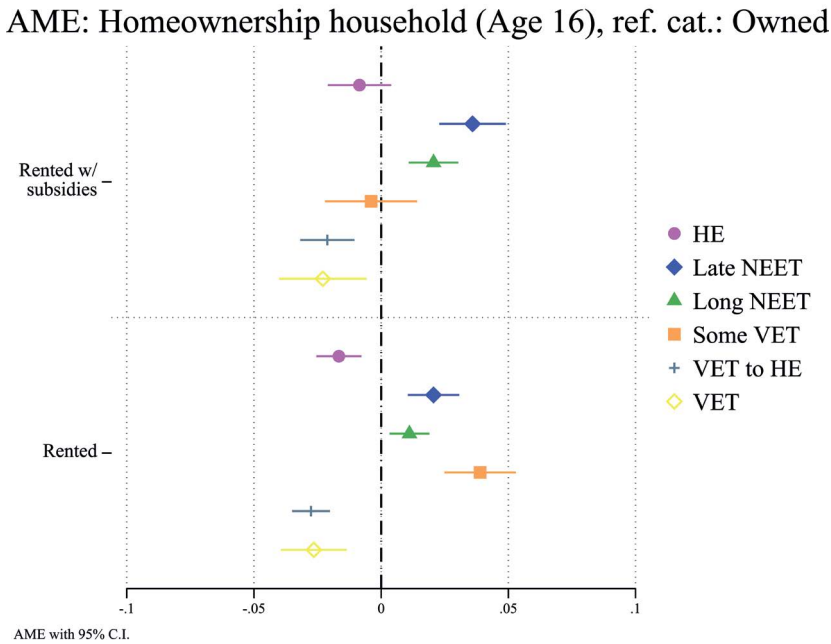

Figure 2.13 Average marginal effects of household homeownership on STW-transitions.

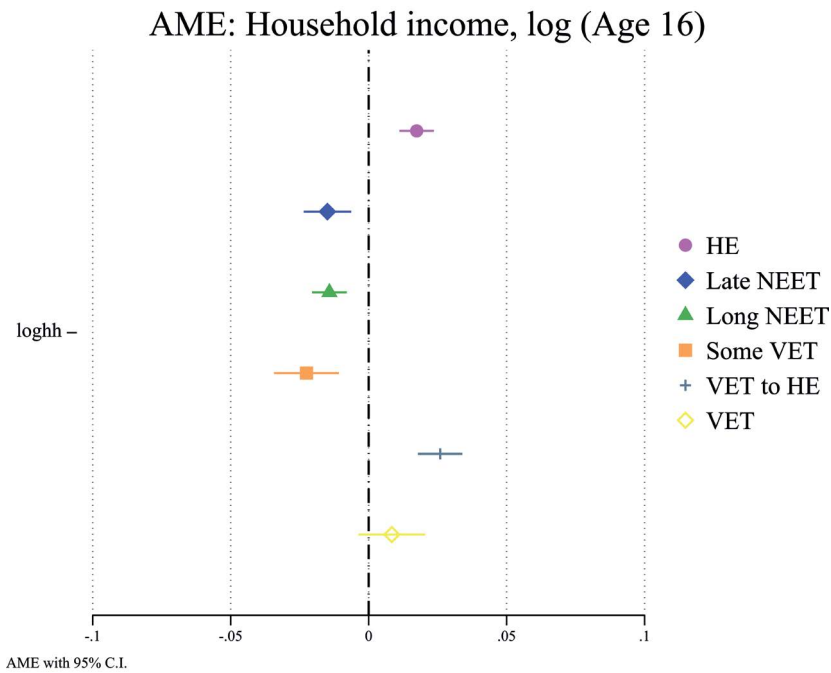

Figure 2.14 Average marginal effects of household income on STW-transitions.

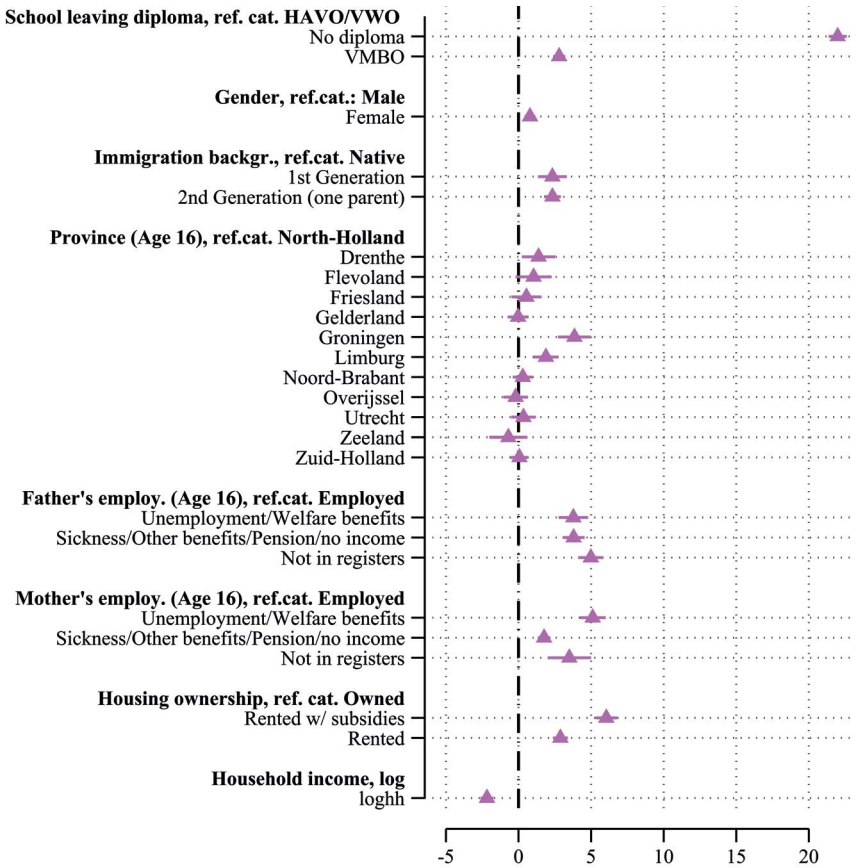

Figure 2.15 Linear regression of NEET months during ten years after leaving school.

likely to be NEET longer as well as those from a background of parents who are unemployed and live in rental housing.

2.5.4 Predictive analyses: Long-term consequences of NEET patterns

Finally, we want to study longer-term consequences of being NEET during the school-to-work transition. More specifically, we study whether cluster membership during the school-to-work transition predicts wage differences later in life. Figure 2.16 shows that at age 30 those young people who were either long-term NEET or Late NEET during the school-to-work transition have a considerably lower monthly salary than those who

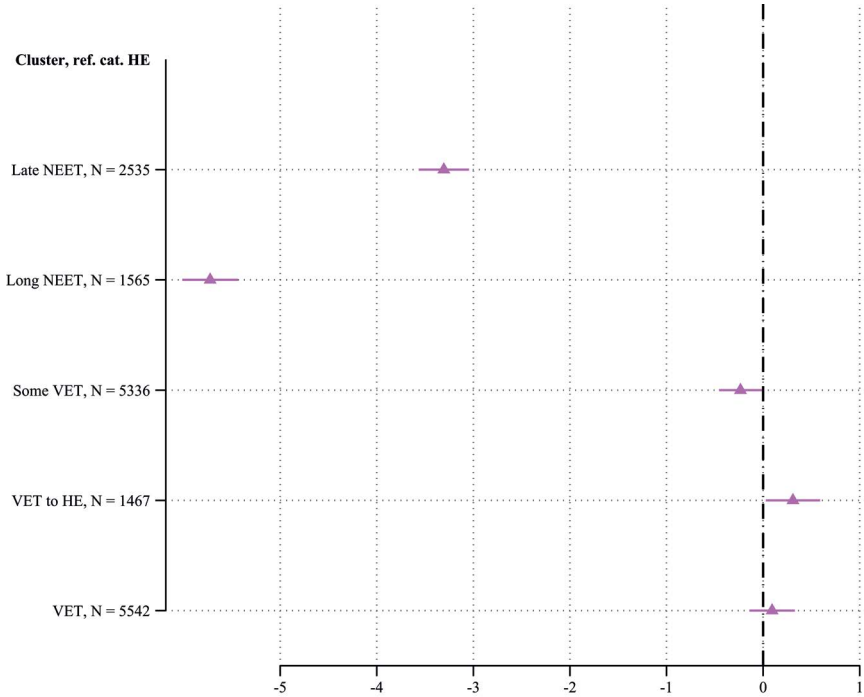

Figure 2.16 Linear regression of income at age 30 on NEET-trajectories.

follow more standard trajectories. For the other clusters, we do not see such scarring effects.

2.6 Conclusions and discussion

In this chapter, we studied NEET patterns of young people in the Netherlands using longitudinal data and following youth during their entire school-to-work transition. We should interpret the findings in this chapter against the backdrop of the Dutch institutional context. The Netherlands have a highly stratified, educational system, that tracks relatively early into a myriad of tracks. It is also rather vocationally oriented with, with fully developed educational VET tracks at different levels. Selection is mainly done based on standardised high-stakes tests. The Dutch labour market is an OLM, with a high level of employment protection. Welfare is generally not available for school-leavers, and family policies may contribute to gender-specific patterns in the school-to-work transition.

We first estimated logistic regression models to see which personal characteristics explain experiencing at least one month of NEET during the

school-to-work transition. These analyses suggested that early school-leavers are much more likely to be NEET for at least a month, but also that having a vocational education does not necessarily protect against being NEET during the school-to-work transition. We did find that first- and second-generation immigrants are more likely to experience one month of NEET than Dutch natives. Young women are only slightly more likely than men to experience one month of NEET. We also found indications for the relevance of social backgrounds: those with unemployed fathers and those living in rental houses are more likely to experience NEET.

We then focused on youth who experienced at least one month of NEET status and used sequence analysis to identify clusters of typical trajectories. We found six clusters. By far most youth who experienced one month of NEET status actually have a fairly normal school-to-work transition. Only 6.7% of all youth who experience NEET status can be considered long-term NEET. Another 10.9% is potentially problematic, as they become NEET later in the school-to-work transition. Since our data are right-censored, they may actually be long-term NEET that experiences problems later on. Taken together, less than 18% of all Dutch youth who experience NEET are to be considered potentially problematic. We expected the Netherlands would have a relatively low number of problematic NEETs compared to the other countries. As a comparison with similar analyses that other chapters will show, the Netherlands ranks a bit higher than France (about 13% of NEET are long term), Germany (about 12%), and England (16.9%). Only in Japan, more school-leavers are late (15%) or long-term (17%) NEETs.

We found that women are more likely than men to experience long-term NEET and later NEET spells than men. As we expected, this seems indeed partly a motherhood penalty. Interestingly, women with children are not more likely long-term NEET but are more likely Late NEET, which is in line with the expectation that Dutch women on average make the transition into motherhood relatively late and suggests that motherhood is not the gateway into long-term disengagement. Interestingly, and also in line with our expectations, men with children are less likely to become long-term NEET. This corresponds with the dominance of the male breadwinner model. We also found that migrants are more likely to experience Late NEET-trajectories but not more likely to be long-term NEETs. As we hypothesised, early school-leavers (those without diplomas or with non-qualifying credentials) are much more likely to follow NEET-trajectories that are problematic: Long NEET and Late NEET. Early school leaving is actually the strongest predictor of problematic transitions. Finally, the multinomial analyses confirm the importance of family background and suggest that intergenerational factors strongly contribute to problematic school-to-work transitions in the Netherlands. In fact, parental unemployment seems intergenerationally transmissible to children. Finally, our analyses also suggest that being long-term NEET or Late NEET during the school-to-work transition has considerable scarring effects: youth in these groups earn a much lower salary at age 30.

Notes

1. We use Ward's algorithm for clustering. Costs are set to 1.2. We have no substantial reasons, theoretical or otherwise, to assume a different cost structure (cf. Brzinsky-Fay, 2007; Brzinsky-Fay and Solga, 2016).
2. However, the data-driven nature of our analysis should not be over-stated. As researchers, we chose the number of clusters. Although based on data-driven indicators, we also make theoretical decisions for which number of clusters makes the most sense. We can then describe typical patterns of sequences based on our understanding of the patterns in the data.
3. The full multinomial regression table is provided in the online supplement.

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