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Transportation Research Procedia 00 (2018) 000–000

Transportation Research Procedia

www.elsevier.com/locate/procedia

World Conference on Transport Research - WCTR 2019 Mumbai 26-31 May 2019

Empirical estimation of effects of flexible working on mobility and congestion in the Netherlands 2000-2016

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Abstract

Flexible working, enhanced by information and communication technologies, seem relevant for transport policy, but information about the development of types of flexible working in the Netherlands and the impact on mobility and congestion is incomplete. The KiM Netherlands Institute of Transport Policy Analysis devised a method to identify the development of flexible working and its impacts on mobility and congestion using an online panel survey and other data. The research findings reveal that working at home and shifting hours to avoid using cars during peak hours are the most important types of flexible working in the Netherlands and that they increased from 2000 to 2016. If there had not been flexible working, the number of car kilometres on working days on all roads in the Netherlands from 2000 to 2016 would have increased 2.6% more than the observed development. Total public transport kilometres would be 2% higher. The hours of delay with all types of flexible working on national roads in the Netherlands from 2000 to 2016 increased by 42%, instead of 60% if there had not been flexible working (an impact of 18% for flexible working). Working at home had the largest impact on congestion avoidance during the entire day. During peak hours, peak hour travel avoidance by car had the largest impact. Approximately 0.1 hours of delay were reduced on national roads by working one day at home or by shifting hours from morning peak to off-peak one time. This reduction was approximately 0.2 during the afternoon peak.

Peer-review under responsibility of WORLD CONFERENCE ON TRANSPORT RESEARCH SOCIETY.

Keywords: travel behavior, traffic congestion; working conditions; flexible working, survey research, impact analysis

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1. Introduction

Various types of flexible working aim to render working more effective, efficient and pleasant for the organisation and its workers. Mobility patterns and road congestion are impacted if flexible working leads to more time- and place-independent work. Developments of flexible working, enhanced by information and communication technologies, seem relevant for transport policy, but information about the development of types of flexible working in the Netherlands and the impact on mobility and congestion is rather incomplete. The KiM Netherlands Institute of Transport Policy Analysis devised a method to identify the development of flexible working and its impact on mobility and road congestion.

The KiM Netherlands Institute for Transport Policy Analysis (KiM) distinguishes six types of flexible working that impact mobility and road congestion:

1. Working at home (instead of at other work addresses), excluding overtime (regular working at home was not considered as flexible working);
2. Working at another company location;
3. Working at a flex office;
4. Shifting working hours at the regular working address (not working at home) to avoid car travel during peak periods;
5. Shifting working hours to avoid travelling on public transport during peak periods;
6. Avoiding car use for business trips;

The research questions are:

1. What was the development of flexible working in the Netherlands from 2000 to 2016?
2. What was the impact of the development of flexible working on the development of mobility by car and public transport, and congestion on the main trunk network (or national roads; especially highways)?

This paper presents the quantitative impacts of flexible working on mobility and congestion and provides a technical description of the applied methods. Another publication focusses especially on the characteristics of flexible working (Van der Loop, et al., 2018).

2. Literature review

Flexible working arose in various countries, including the USA, Canada, Australia, South Korea, United Kingdom, Belgium and The Netherlands (ATAC, 2005). In the USA, Alternate Work Schedules (AWS) comprise telecommuting, compressed work weeks and flexible working hours (Combs, 2010). Figures pertaining to telecommuting, and scenarios about the potential development and impact on energy consumption, are available for the USA and Japan (Scott Matthews, et al. 2005). In 2014, the KiM Netherlands Institute for Transport Policy Analysis conducted research aimed at identifying the opportunities and obstacles of time- and place-independent work (5). From the viewpoint of transportation, time- and place-independent work can be considered as the result of flexible working. In the USA, estimations were made of the degree of telecommuting (Mokhtarian, et al., 2005). The share of employees in the USA that works at least sometimes remotely increased from 39% in 2012 to 43% in 2016 (Hickman and Fredstrom, 2018). The share of Americans working from home also increased from 3.9% in 2006 to 5.2% in 2016 (Maciag, 2017). Higher income earners seemingly telecommuted more frequently than lower income workers, but following similar patterns (He and Hu, 2014).

The impact of telecommuting on vehicle miles travelled was modelled using a multivariate time-series analysis of nationwide USA data from 1966-1999, revealing that telecommuting reduces annual vehicle miles travelled by 0.8% or less (Choo et al., 2002). Studies in the USA also found a compensating impact of telecommuting on vehicle miles travelled by car for other purposes (than home to work commutes) by members of the household (Kim et al., 2015). A comparison of the level of telecommuting in different countries and of telecommuting's impact on traffic was analysed in Australia (Vu and Vandebona, 2007) by modelling a supply and demand function. In Belgium (TML, 2013), telecommuting's rebound effects were also estimated in a model study that found that approximately 70% of the reduction in car use could be compensated for by increased energy use at

home, longer commuting distances, and induced traffic. We found no literature providing quantitative impacts of flexible working on the historic development of mobility and congestion.

3. Method

3.1. Use of the survey to measure flexible working and impacts on mobility and congestion

For the Netherlands, data sources ─ particularly the *Nationale Enquête Arbeidsomstandigheden* (National Survey of Working Conditions, NEA) (Hooftman et al., 2017). ─ are available regarding working at home by employees, e.g. in terms of average hours per week. However, no data are available for identifying other forms of flexible working, nor its impact on mobility and congestion.

To identify the degree and development of flexible working and its effects on mobility and congestion, KiM commissioned I&O Research to conduct online panel surveys in three waves in March 2014, 2015 and 2016, each involving 14,000 working people, and using Telepanels. These surveys made it possible to identify and determine the development of flexible working, its determinants, the impact that flexible working had on the use of transport modes (car, public transport and bicycle), and the routes avoided on the main trunk road network.

For each wave of surveys, I&O Research first derived a sample of 6,000 working people from the Panel Clix and Panel Inzicht online panel surveys for March 2014, 2015 and 2016. This sample was drawn at random and stratified according to age, gender and region, with the aim being to present a representative sample. To identity impacts of flexible working, a sufficient number of flexible workers must be measured. Consequently, a second sample was drawn of 8,000 working people who had indicated that they would engage in one of the types of flexible working (types 1-4). Approximately half of respondents participating in the 2015 and 2016 samples also participated in the survey of the previous year. Approximately one-third of the respondents in the 2016 sample participated in all three surveys. Using this two-stage sampling method, a sufficient number of workers with characteristics of flexible working were available to determine the impacts on mobility and congestion. Weighting factors were calculated to match the distribution of age, gender, education (per region), sector, status (employee, independent contractor with or without employees), region, car use and public transport use for commuting, and shares of type of flexible working, to targets derived from the NEA, the first I&O Research sample, and Statistics Netherlands' OViN mobility survey.

Participants in the survey were asked on which days and hours they worked at home, at another location or flex office, or had shifted working times to avoid peak hour travel (7:00-9:00; 16:00-18:00). For respondents engaging in flexible working on fixed days of the working week, the frequency with which they engaged in types of flexible working was based on the hours during a recent representative week. People who had no fixed day(s) for types of flexible working, or did so less than once a week, were asked to indicate their average frequencies (e.g. 2 days per month). Moreover, the use of transport modes was determined on days that workers travel to their regular working address, to another location or a flex office, and for days they worked at home. Flexible workers were also asked which modes they would have used if they had instead travelled to their regular working address. Further, for people travelling by car, the routes (and time periods) on national roads they (would have) travelled on were determined. When people do not use their cars on a certain day to commute (e.g. because they work at home), it was determined if other members of the household used their cars on those days instead. All mobility data were summated and scaled up to determine the (nationwide) yearly totals.

For the survey years, the impact of flexible working on car and public transport use was determined by registering the changes that flexible working caused in how people used transport modes during each of the two consecutive years that they participated in the Telepanel.

3.2. Method to measure the development of flexible working 2000-2016

To identify the development of flexible working in the years prior to the panel surveys, data from external sources were used, supplemented with analyses explaining the development of types of flexible working.

The development of working at home (types 1 and 2) from the 2014-2016 surveys was extrapolated to cover the total 2000-2016 period, using statistical data (historical yearly average hours per week and number of jobs from the National Survey of Working Conditions (NEA). For type 3 (flex office) we used the development of

telecommuting from yearly surveys of companies by Statistics Netherlands) to extrapolate the trend of type 3 to 2000-2016.

In order to extrapolate the development of shifting work hours to avoid peak hour travel (type 4 in Table 1) to 2000-2016, the first step involved estimating the number of these shifts per week for a total of 23,000 workers from the panel data, using a logistic regression analysis at the micro level that included as explaining factors the possibility of flexible work hours, sector, hours per week, distance to work, congestion and amount of traffic commuting to work, vehicle type, and region. In a second step, aimed at determining how the number of shifts per week and of workers per year had developed from 2000-2016, the impacts of the key factors (possibility of flexible work hours, sector, working hours per week, distance to work and congestion), estimated as elasticities, were multiplied with the national statistics (such as NEA and OViN) pertaining to those factors.

3.3. Method to measure the impact of flexible working on mobility 2000-2016

To determine the impact that working at home had on mobility from 2000 to 2016, data were obtained from the development of working at home (obtained in the previous step) and from observed developments in the (average) distance to work for each transport mode, and in the total and work-related mobility for each transport mode and time period (peak, off-peak and day). Data pertaining to distances to work and mobility figures for 2000-2016 were obtained from the OViN mobility survey. The impact that shifting working hours had on transport mode use was determined by multiplying the degree of shifting and the impact of shifting, as estimated using the 2014-2016 surveys, while controlling for the development of distance to work. No historical information was available for the development of working at a company's other location (type 3) or in a flex office (type 4). Type 3 was therefore assumed to follow the development of working at home 2000-2016 (that is, similar to type 1), as working at a company's other location would have already existed prior to the year 2000. Type 4 was assumed to follow the development of telecommuting, because, like telecommuting, working at flex offices was virtually inexistent in 2000, having been facilitated by the emergence of internet services.

To determine the impact of flexible working types 1-4 on the use of the main trunk road network, commuters in the surveys were asked which ramps and exits on the national road network they used (or would have used) to travel to work by car and at what time periods. Further, respondents were asked if they used another route to work on days when travelling to work at another time than normally (e.g. if they first worked at home for a couple of hours). From these locations, the ArcGIS program's Network Analyst was used to reconstruct for each respondent in each situation the (fastest) commuting routes for their home addresses and regular working addresses. The changes in trips from each of the three survey waves 2014-2016 were converted to changes in traffic flow, with a distinction between day of the week and the nine time periods (two peak periods, four shoulders of the peak periods and three off-peak periods) of each working day. These (avoided or shifted) traffic flows were matched to observed data of stretches of the main trunk road network. Data for approximately 3,000 stretches, with an average length of approximately 1 kilometre, are available, containing observed traffic flow, average speed and vehicle loss hours per 15 minutes. Hence, the impact of flexible working on network use was obtained for each stretch of the network, each day of the week and each of the nine periods in a day. During peak hours, less traffic on average used the network because of flexible working (e.g. people instead work a day at home or travel to work later), while during off-peak hours network use on average increased because of flexible working. These general results may of course differ for individual road stretches.

3.4. Method to measure the impact of flexible working on congestion 2000-2016

To identify the impact on congestion (in terms of in vehicle hours of delay referred to as hours of delay), KiM used a regression-based method that it had previously developed for explaining trends in congestion on national roads in the Netherlands, as based on traffic amounts in vehicle kilometres, accidents, road works, weather, and policy measures (Van der Loop et al., 2014; Van der Loop et al., 2016). The regression is based on monthly data per road stretch (around 2,500 stretches on average per month) and for a long time-series: 2000-2016 (Formula 1). To be able to calculate the effect of shifts between day time periods, separate regression analyses were conducted for AM peak, PM peak and off-peak traffic.

$$Y_{ijk} = C_i+\beta_{il}P_{il}+\gamma_s S_{il}+\delta_j Y_j+\phi_i M_i+\eta V_{ijk}+\varepsilon_{ijk} \quad (1)$$

Y_{ijk} = hours of delay per month *i*, year *j* (2000-2016) and road stretch *k*
C_i = constant per road stretch *i*
P_{il} = set of indicators P defining whether a policy measure p on location *l* is active ("1") or not ("0") in month *i* (indicating the difference before and after the implementation of the policy measure)
S_{il} = set of indicators defining situational characteristics per month *i* on road stretches around location *l* with accidents, road works, weather conditions and the *reciproque* of the road capacity (as constant)
Y_j = set of variables for each year (2000-2016)
M_i = set of variables for each month (Jan-Dec)
V_{ijk} = vehicle kilometers with and without flexible working per month *i*, per year *j* and road stretch *k*
$B, \gamma, \delta, \phi, \eta$ = partial regression coefficients indicating the impact on hours of delay per road stretch per month of the explain variables
ε_{ijk} = error term

The coefficients resulting from the regression were multiplied by the developments in the explanatory variables and related to the number of hours of delay in the base year (2000). To identify the impact of flexible working, two variants were calculated: one with the impact of the observed, actual traffic amount (including the impact of flexible working), and the other with the traffic amount that would have occurred without flexible working, as based on the traffic flows and routes measured in surveys (types 1-4). The difference between these two effects is the impact of flexible working in the survey years.

As the survey data provides detailed information on flexible working for 2014-2016, the regression analysis calculated the impact of flexible working on traffic congestion only for those years. To extend the analysis of flexible working's impact on traffic congestion from the survey years to the period 2000-2016, elasticities were estimated of the changes in traffic amount and hours of delay due to changes in flexible working. These elasticities were based on the impacts of flexible working for 2014-2016, as described above. Moreover, these elasticities were estimated for three time periods (7:00-9:00; 16:00-18:00; and rest of the day), for four regions (North of the Randstad agglomeration, South of the Randstad agglomeration, Noord-Brabant province, and rest of the country), and for each of the four types of flexible working. The impact that the four types of flexible working had on traffic amount and hours of delay was determined by applying the estimated elasticities to the development of these types from 2000-2016.

The findings of this method for determining the impact of flexible working on the hours of delay were checked and found to be consistent with the average ratio that generally exists between the increase in traffic and the increase in hours of delay on national roads in the Netherlands from 2000-2016.

4. Developments in flexible working

The workers in the Netherlands (8.4 mln in 2016) not only included employees (84%), but also independent contractors without employees (12%), and independent contractors with employees (4%). Of all workers, approximately 35% worked at home in 2014-2016 (Table 1). Working at home not only includes telecommuting at home (16% of workers in 2016 in NEA), but also other forms of working at home instead of at another regular working address without means of telecommunication (35% of workers in 2016, including teleworkers at home in NEA). Working at home (type 1) consists of workers who combined in a single day working at home and shifting working hours to avoid using cars during peak hours (9%), workers who work at home and avoided travelling by car during the peak hours (13%), and workers working at home but not avoiding peak hours by car (e.g. using public transport or driving during off-peak hours). The overview of types of flexible working in Table 1 reveals that working at home, instead of at another regular work location, and shifting work hours to avoid peak hours, had the highest occurrences.

Working at a company's other locations and at a flex office occurred less frequently than working at home and shifting working hours to avoid travelling by car during peak hours. Regularly working at home was not considered as flexible working.

Table 1 All six types of flexible working in the Netherlands 2014-2016 (KiM surveys).

Types of flexible working	Share of workers (%)		
	2014	2015	2016
0) Working at home regularly (no flexible working)	6.4	6.1	6.0
Shifting working location			
1) Working at home instead of other working address (including the avoiding of peak hour travel by car at the same day)	36.0	35.3	35.3
2) Working at another location of the company	1.1	1.0	1.0
3) Working at a flex office	5.3	6.2	6.2
Shifting working hours			
4) Shifting working hours at working address (not working at home) to avoid peak hour travel by car	10.3	10.9	11.2
5) Shifting working hours to avoid peak hour travel by public transport	4.1	4.9	5.0
Other forms of flexible working			
6) Avoid car use for business trips	1.4	1.2	1.2

The number of days people work at home consists partly (about half) of working full days and the rest of working only part of the day at home. Of the workers avoiding peak hours by shifting work hours, approximately 50% usually only avoids the morning peak, 20% only the evening peak, and 30% both.

The number of hours that employees work at home instead of at another location increased from 10.1 million hours per week in 2000 to 13.9 million hours per week in 2016 (+38%)(see 3.2 for the method). The amount of peak avoidances by workers increased from 1.7 million in 2000 to 2.4 million per week in 2016 (+40%).

5. Effects of flexible working on car and public transport use

If there had not been flexible working from 2000 to 2016, the car kilometres on all days on all roads (national, regional and municipal) in the Netherlands would have increased by 2.6% more than the observed development including flexible working (Table 2). During peak hours (7:00-9:00; 16:00-18:00), the car kilometres on all roads (national, regional and municipal) in the Netherlands would have increased by 14% more if there had not been flexible working than the observed development. Total public transport kilometres would be 2% higher, and during peak hours 3% higher, than the observed development. The impact of flexible working prior to 2008 was higher than after 2008, owing to the economic recession and more lanes being added after 2008.

Further zooming in on the impact of flexible working on commuting, car kilometres for commuting on all roads would have increased 3% more if there had not been flexible working than the observed development. Both working at home and avoiding peak hour travel contributed to the increased impact of flexible working.

The impact of shifting working hours to avoid car use during peak hours is larger than the impact of working at home. The reason for this is that not all people who work at home instead of at their other working addresses routinely use cars (68% routinely use cars during 77% of the days), or do so during the peak hours (58% use cars during peak hours). Consequently, car use during peak hours was only actually avoided on 31% of the days spent working at home. Additionally, workers shifting working hours to avoid car use during peak hours did so during on average more days per week than workers working at home. Further, workers shifting working hours travel longer distances to work (38 km vs. 28 km for people who work at home) and have a relatively high share of use of the national road network (90% vs. 75% use of the national road network; 51% vs. 39% daily).

Shifting working hours to avoid car use during peak hours only occurs if these workers can choose their working hours. Some 80% of this group indicated that avoiding congestion was one of the reasons for their choice to avoid peak hour travel; moreover, the more years that they had already avoided peak hour travel, the more often they mentioned avoidance of congestion as a reason, which supports the conclusion that avoidance of peak hour travel had already been impacting car use for several years.

Table 2. Impact of flexible working (types 1-6) on use of cars (vehicle kms Dutch passenger cars on all roads) and public transport (passenger kilometres) on working days from 2000 to 2016 in the Netherlands

	Observed kilometres travelled per year (with flexible working)(bln kms)			Increase of kilometres travelled per year if there had not been flexible working (bln kms)			Increase of kilometers travelled if there had not been ...			
							flexible working		work at home	shift hours
	2000	2008	2016	2000	2008	2016	2008-2016	2000-2016	2000-2016	2000-2016
Mo-Fr										
Car,	61.2	71.0	69.3	1.8	2.4	3.4				
all motives				(+3%)	(+4%)	(+6%)	+1.8%	+2.6%	+2.6%	+0.0%
PT,	18.3	19.4	19.2	0.6	0.7	1.0				
all motives				(+9%)	(+8%)	(+13%)	+1.6%	+2.2%	+2.2%	+0.0%
Peak (7-9; 16-18)										
Car,	23.3	27.3	26.5	+3.8	+5.3	+7.1				
all motives				(+16%)	(+23%)	(+31%)	8%	14%	+10.6%	+3.8%
Car,	10.5	17.7	17.0	+3.8	+5.3	+7.1	7%	3%	+0.8%	+2.2%
commuting				(+27%)	(+23%)	(+31%)				
PT,	8.4	9.4	8.4	+1.2	+1.6	+2.0	2%	3%	+0.9%	+2.1%
all motives				(+4%)	(+5%)	(+7%)				
PT,	3.0	4.8	3.8	+1.2	+1.6	+2.0				
commuting				(+29%)	(+25%)	(+34%)	5%	9%	+1.5%	+3.8%

Flexible working also can have an impact on car use for business purposes (type 6), because, for example, workers might choose a location for conferencing that is situated close to their home address, instead of at the office of the inviting company. The impact of flexible working on car use for business purposes was estimated to be at maximum 0.25% of the 2 billion car kilometres devoted to business purposes on all roads in the Netherlands in 2016. This impact is small in comparison to the impact that flexible working had on car use for commuting purposes. The estimation of 0.25% derives from the fact that 11% of the respondents stated that they made 25% fewer business trips during peak hours, which can be related to flexible working in 9% of the cases.

6. Impacts of flexible working on road congestion

Because of flexible working, the amount of traffic (in vehicle kilometres) on national roads (highways) in the Netherlands during the period 2000-2016 increased by 27%, instead of 32% without flexible working (an impact of -5 percentage points for flexible working) (Table 3). Moreover, because of flexible working, hours of delay (in vehicle hours, with reference to 100 km/h) increased by 42%, instead of 60% (an impact of -18 percentage points for flexible working). Working at home (-9%) had the largest impact on congestion avoidance during the entire day (Table 2). During peak hours, peak hour travel avoidance had the largest impact. Without flexible working hours of delay in 2016 on national roads would be 72 instead of 62 million.

The impact that working at home and telecommuting had on hours of delay on national roads corresponds to the share of telecommuting workers working at home (49%). A separate calculation of a regression model ─ estimating (per stretch) hours of delay per year from population growth (per municipality), car use per inhabitant, working days per inhabitant, and teleworking days per inhabitant (from the NEA National Survey of Working Conditions) ─ found that the impact of the increase telecommuters on hours of delay of -4%. Because the impact of the increase of working at home on hours of delay is -9%, this is consistent with the 49% share of telecommuters in workers at home.

Table 3. Impact of flexible working (types 1-6) on car use (vehicle kms) and hours of delay on national roads in the Netherlands 2000-2016, on working days and during peak hours*.

	Observed development (with flexible working)				Increase of development from 2000 without flexible working			Increase of development from 2000 without		
								work at home	work at other company location or flex office	shifting hours
	2000	2008	2013	2016	2008	2013	2016	2016		
Car use (vehicle kms)										
Day	100	113	117	127	+2%	+2%	+5%	+2%	+2%	+1%
AM peak	100	113	123	132	+19%	+19%	+30%	+7%	+2%	+21%
PM peak	100	109	121	128	+14%	+13%	+20%	+4%	+1%	+15%
Hours of delay										
Day	100	158	101	142	+11%	+9%	+18%	+9%	+4%	+5%
AM peak	100	142	92	117	+16%	+14%	+23%	+6%	+4%	+13%
PM peak	100	170	111	178	+33%	+25%	+49%	+20%	+8%	+21%

* Observed developments peak are 6-10h and 15-19h. Impacts of flexible working are 7-9h and 16-18h.

The impact of hours working at home on car use and hours of delay increased gradually from 2000 to 2016. The impacts of shifting working hours followed another pattern. From 2000 to 2008, the impact of shifting working hours on the decrease of car use and hours of delay during peak hours increased significantly, which can be explained by the increase in congestion during that period. From 2008 to 2013, the impact of shifting working hours remained at the same level. From 2013 to 2016, the impact of shifting working hours increased again, similar to the level of congestion. The reasons why shifting working hours has more impact on mobility than working at home (see previous paragraph) also apply here. The impact that shifting working hours to avoid peak hour car use has on hours of delay appears to be largely compensated for by the increase in hours of delay during off-peak hours, which is likely due to the fact that shifting primarily occurs on congested roads, and because congestion during the hours before and after the peak hours is partly caused by avoiding the peak hours.

On a normal weekday in 2016, on average some 150,000 fewer passenger cars travel during the morning peak (7:00-9:00) on national roads in the Netherlands as a consequence of flexible working. During the afternoon peak, that figure is around 100,000 fewer cars. During the off-peak hours there are some 200,000 more cars (especially due to those people shifting working hours to avoid peak hour car travel). These figures are based on the number of cars using the national roads less during peak hours and more during off-peak hours due to flexible working, according to the surveys. The effects are slightly larger on Mondays and Thursdays, and smaller on Wednesdays and Fridays.

There were no major regional differences in the development of flexible working in the Netherlands from 2013 to 2015. However, owing to differing levels of congestion per region, the impact on congestion does differ between regions. Flexible working had the largest impact on congestion on the national roads surrounding Amsterdam and Utrecht (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Change in traffic flows (vehicles per stretch per hour) on national roads in the Netherlands by flexible working morning peak (6:00-10:00) in 2014 in comparison with 2013

The impact of flexible working in the Netherlands has also been identified in general terms, in order to render the

results applicable for other situations. The impact of working at home and shifting working hours to avoid car use during peak hours has therefore been expressed in terms of the number of hours of delay reduced per day working at home and per time of peak avoidance.

Approximately 0.1 hours of delay on national roads were reduced by working at home for one day or by shifting hours from peak to off-peak during the morning peak one time (Table 4). This reduction was approximately 0.2 during the afternoon peak. Separate analyses were used to identify the impact that policy measures offering financial rewards for peak avoidance in the Netherlands from 2013-2016 had on reducing hours of delay, according to the same method described above. The impact these peak avoidances had on hours of delay appeared to be 0.1 during the morning and afternoon peaks (Van der Loop et al., 2017). Apparently, shifting working hours without the influence of financial reward has a larger impact than with a financial reward, which seems logical, as the reduction of travel time is likely larger for those drivers who make their own decisions and on their own initiative.

The reduction of hours of delay per event or day shows that one day of peak avoidance has a larger impact on hours of delay in the peak hours than does working at home for one day. This is logical, because one peak avoidance by definition eliminates one peak hour trip, while with one day working at home the avoided trip could have also occurred during off-peak hours. Further, with peak avoidance, the avoided trips are predominantly long-distance trips that use national roads, while working at home also frequently involves shorter commuting distances. Finally, peak avoidances likely occur more often in situations of congestion, because that is the primary reason for shifting working hours.

Table 4. Impact of working at home (type 1) and shifting working hours to avoid peak hours by car (type 4) per day/time on hours of delay on national roads in the Netherlands 2014-2016.

	7:00-9:00	16:00-18:00	Working days
Days working at home (per week per year)	350,000	3,000,000	1,000,000
Reduction of hours of delay per day working at home	0.09	0.2	0.11
Peak avoidances (per week per year)	900,000	700,000	1,600,000
Reduction of hours of delay per peak avoidance	0.14	0.27	0.07

7. Discussion

This study reveals that by using survey data, statistics and traffic data the degree and development of flexible working can be identified, as well as its impacts on mobility and traffic congestion over many years. In order to develop this method, rather complex and time-consuming statistical analyses were required. The data requirements are also high, as sufficient coverage of the working population and the road network is necessary. This study shows that with these data and analyses, useful insights can be obtained about how flexible working contributes to historical trends in mobility and road congestion.

The results of the analyses presented in this paper were expressed in entities that allow for comparison with other studies. Moreover, the results in terms of these entities can be used for other applications, e.g. to estimate the impacts anticipated in comparable situations.

This study demonstrates that flexible working has played an important role in reducing the growth of car use and congestion in the Netherlands, especially during the peak hours. Similar results hold for public transport. The development of types of flexible working, as well as their impacts on the use of cars and public transport, are relevant for policy, suggesting that possibilities for further growth exist.

To date, empirical research of flexible working patterns in relation to transport seemingly primarily focuses on telecommuting. Commuters reacting to traffic congestion by shifting working hours appears to be a particularly important factor in traffic congestion, but this has not been measured thus far, as least not in the Netherlands. Moreover, only very little empirical research was available pertaining to the impact that types of working at home and other forms of flexible working have on mobility and traffic congestion.

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