



WHITEPAPER

Job, Career or Calling?

Attitudes toward work in the Netherlands and the relationship to happiness at work - The Dutch Benchmark



► Job, Career or Calling?

How do Dutch employees perceive their work? Do they think of it as a means to put bread on the table and to earn money for their life outside the workplace? Or are they more career-oriented and do they consider their current job as an investment and a stepping stone to the next promotion? Or is their work a calling and one of the most important things in their life?

This whitepaper presents the main outcomes of a national survey in the Netherlands into work orientation and happiness at work, carried out on behalf of the HappinessBureau. The paper is structured as follows:

1. The survey
2. The results
 - Part A: How Dutch employees perceive their work
 - Part B: The relationship between work orientation and happiness at work
 - Part C: Additional results from the data
3. Strategies for more happiness at work

With this whitepaper, we provide more insight into the connection between work attitude and happiness at work, and we would like to contribute to the wider conversation about happiness at work. We hope this paper inspires you to address the wellbeing of your employees more directly, so that your organization can pursue its goals with even more fun.

We hope you enjoy the reading!

HappinessBureau, Lucas Swennen
Steda, Stef ten Dam

Our mission is to make happiness the norm in organizations. One way to contribute to that mission is by providing knowledge and inspiration. This whitepaper presents the outcomes of a national survey carried out with our research partner Steda. We do this annually since 2016.

More information is available via info@HappinessBureau.nl

1. The survey

This study uses the classification system Job-Career-Calling by professor Amy Wrzesniewski (Yale University) and colleagues. They distinguish three orientations toward their work:

Job Orientation

This group of people works to earn an income. They look forward to the weekends and their life outside of work is much more important than the time spent at work.

Career Orientation

These people enjoy their work, but will have another job within five years. They always keep an eye on better, higher positions. They don't always experience their job in a positive way, but they see it through because it's an investment in their career. A promotion means recognition and a better position compared to colleagues.

Calling Orientation

For this group, work is among the most important things in their life. When they talk about themselves, they will soon talk passionately about their work. They tend to work at home and during vacations. Also, their work is an important part of their social life.

These orientations do not necessarily exclude each other, but most people do have one dominant orientation.

Research design

For this study, 934 participants finished an online survey in November 2019. Participants perform at least eight hours of paid labor per week. Self-employed workers were excluded from the study. The sample represents all Dutch employees and is divided proportionally according to sector, co-workers vs managers, and organization size in terms of number of employees.

In the interpretation of results, a 4% margin applies – e.g. '80%' in reality is between 76% and 84%.



2. The results

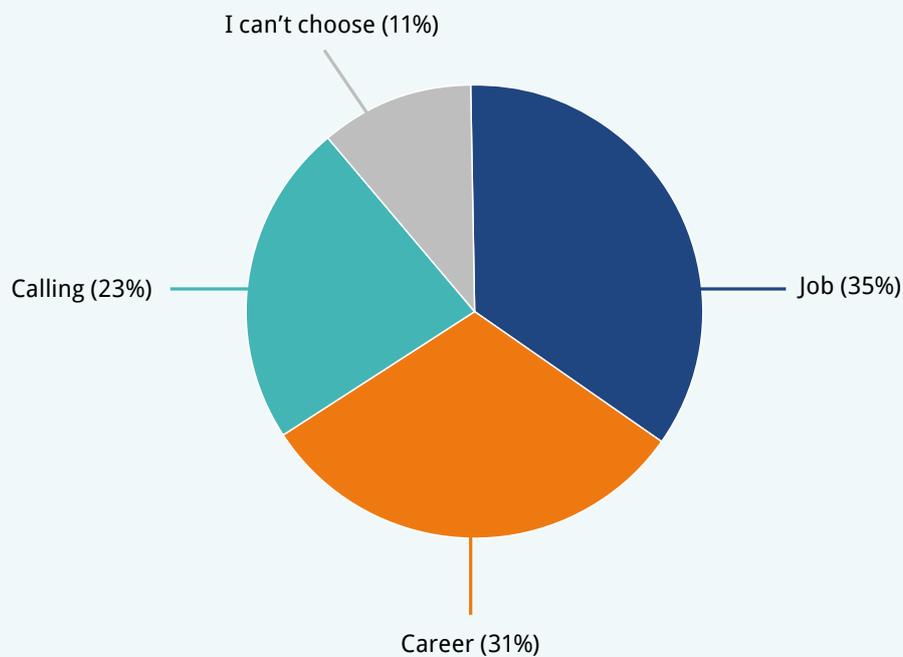
Part A: How Dutch employees perceive their work

Do you have a job to gain income, are you primarily career-oriented or do you think of your work as a calling? We presented employees with these three work orientations and asked them to what extent they identify with these orientations. Then we asked them to choose one orientation that best describes their attitude toward work.

First, we will look at the results for Dutch employees in general. Afterwards, we will go into more detail and we will see how work orientation is divided per sector, position, age and organization size.

Which of the three profiles corresponds most to your attitude toward your work?

The Netherlands 2019, n=934



Of all Dutch employees:

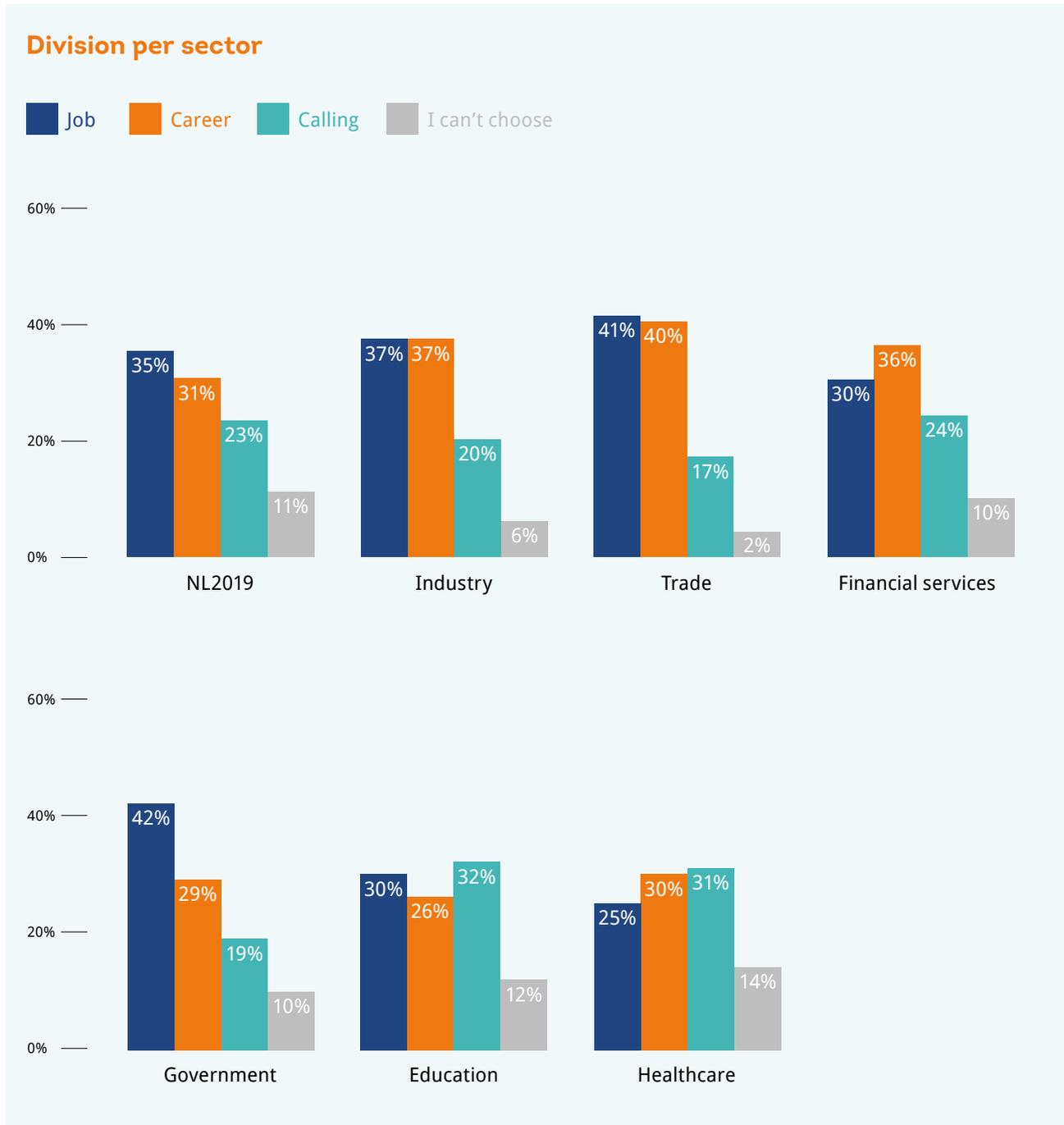
- 35% sees their work as a job
- 31% chooses the Career profile
- 23% thinks the Calling orientation is the best match

11% of the participants says they can't choose between the three options.

Division per sector

Looking at the division of the three work orientations per sector, the following results stand out:

- Within the government sector, we see the highest proportion of people who see their work as Job.
- Within the trade sector, we see the highest proportion of people who view their work as Career.
- In Education and Healthcare, we see the highest proportion of people who view their work as Calling.
- In no sector is Calling the unique dominant basic attitude, not even within Education and Healthcare.



Division per position

For an employee's attitude to work, it makes a difference whether the person is a co-worker, a manager or a senior manager / director. Employees who see their work as a Calling are a minority among co-workers. Within the group of managers, Career is clearly the dominant orientation (41%). Of all employees, senior managers and directors experience their work most often as a Calling (43%).

Division per position

Per categorie the amount of people that sees their work as Job, Carreer or Calling



Other subgroups

This study also differed the results for several other subgroups: we looked at gender, age, organization size and the number of years the employee has worked for the current employer (seniority).

Other subgroups



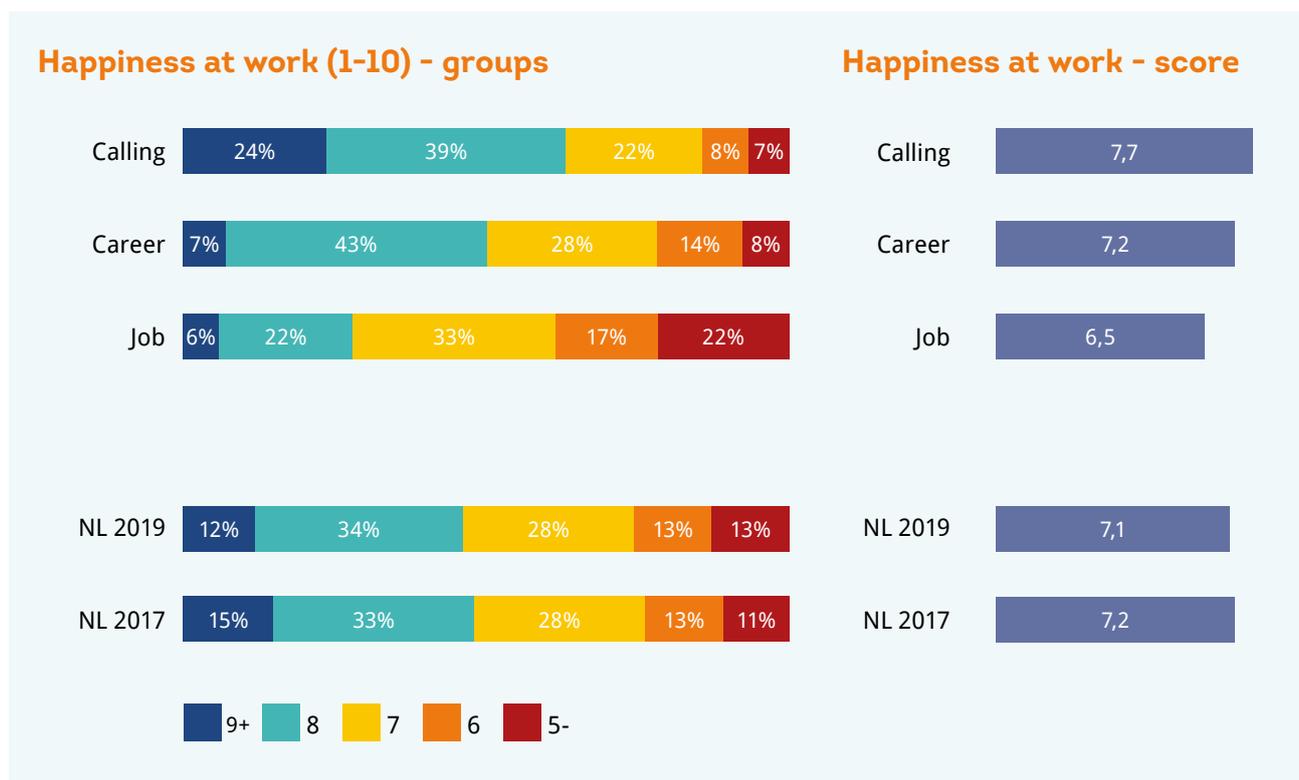
Men and women hardly differ in their work orientation, but the division Job-Career-Calling per age shows an interesting result. The proportion of people who perceive their work as a Job, almost doesn't change per age group. But from the age of 40 onward, the Calling orientation group grows, while the Career orientation group decreases: *meaning and purpose come with age*.

Furthermore, we see that the Job orientation group grows as the company size grows; it's the dominant group among companies with 1000+ employees. Finally, we see that the Career attitude decreases drastically as people remain employed within the same organization for longer periods of time. If there are many long-term employees in your company, it's probably wise to think about how to boost your employees' motivation or how to retain ambitious employees.

Part B: The relationship between work orientation and happiness at work

One of this study's goals was to gain insight into the relationship between work orientation and happiness at work. That relationship turns out to be strong: those who perceive their work as a Calling, experience more happiness at work (score 7,7) than those who have different work orientations. Employees with a Job orientation score significantly lower; a relatively big part of this group is unhappy at work (22% of them score 5 or lower).

NL 2017 and NL 2019 are the happiness at work benchmark scores for the total Dutch population.



Happiness at work versus happiness at home

In general, Dutch employees are happier at home than at work (score 7,6 vs 7,1). If we differentiate between work orientations, we see that the group of people who consider their work as a Calling, are equally happy in the two spheres (7,7 for both). In the Job orientation group, we see the highest difference between happiness in personal life and happiness at work: their happiness at work is strikingly low compared to their personal happiness.



In the underlying study of this whitepaper, scores for happiness at work were also differentiated between the other subgroups (sector, gender, age, organization size and seniority). In all groups, people with a Job orientation have the lowest scores for happiness at work, and those with a Calling orientation have the highest scores. For the purpose of conciseness, we will not go into further detail for every subgroup.

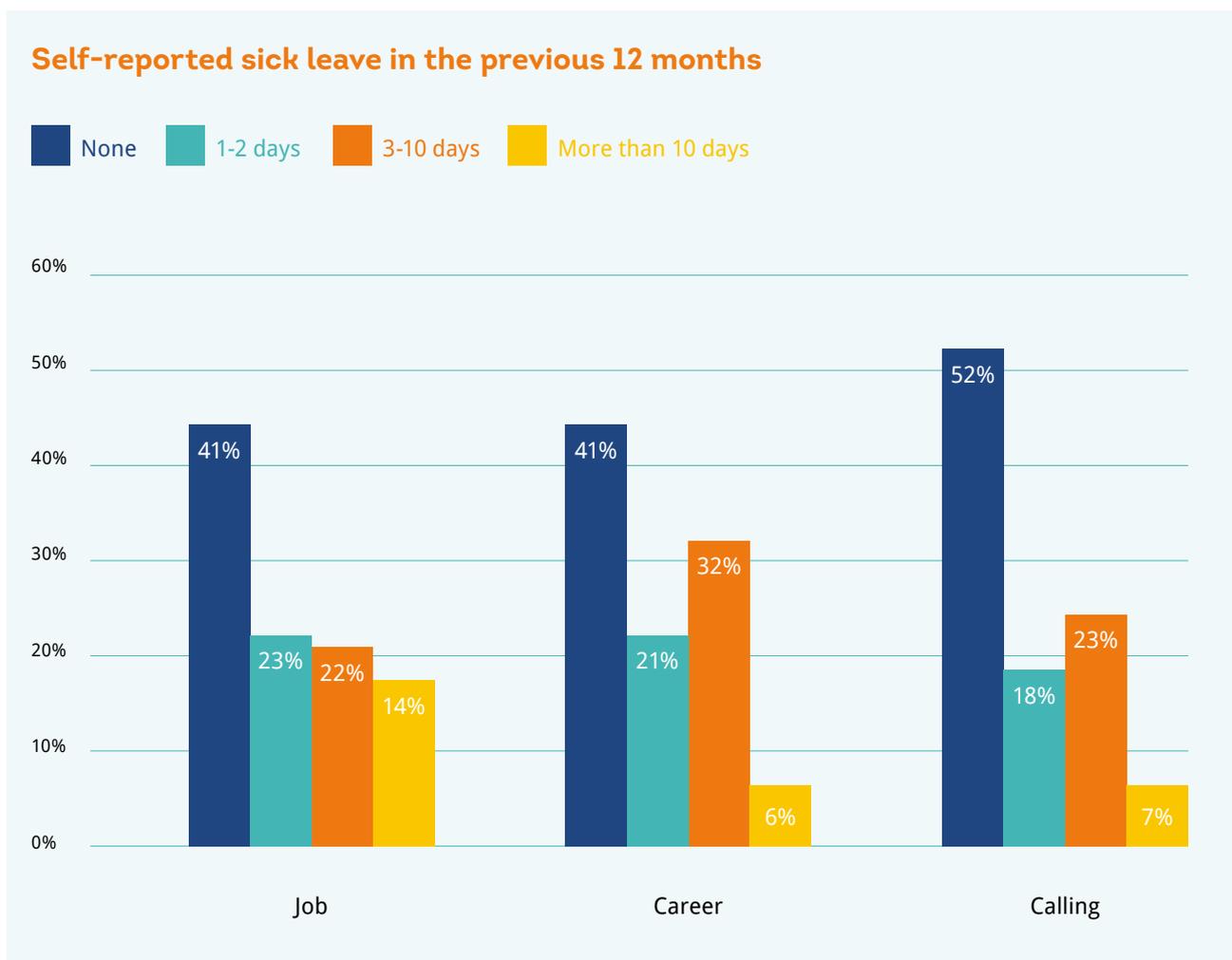


Part C: Additional results from the data

In this inquiry into the work orientation of Dutch employees, we also incorporated several other topics, which we will discuss briefly.

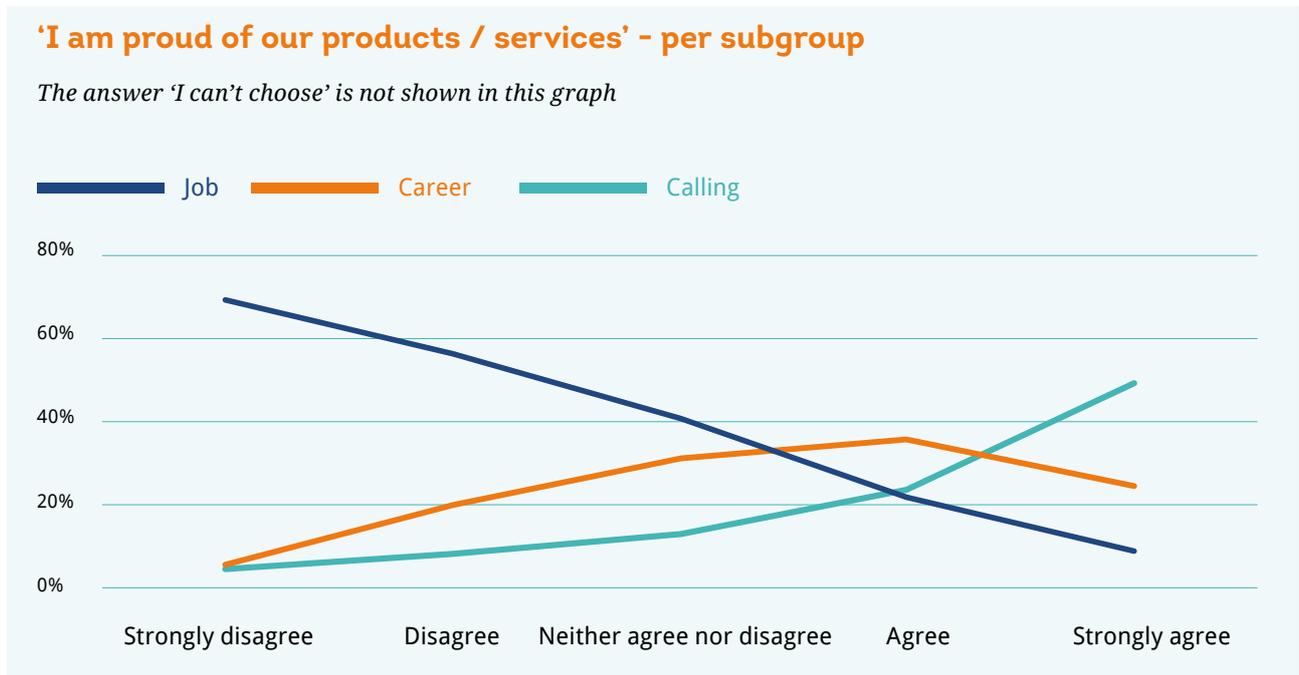
Work orientation and sick leave

Is there a relationship between work orientation and sick leave? According to the self-reported answers in this study, there is. The Calling orientation group is significantly less absent due to illness, than employees with other attitudes to work. Addressing employees' work orientation and helping them to experience more fulfillment and purpose, *appears* to be a good strategy in terms of absenteeism reduction. Because the sick leave in this study is self-reported we therefore have to be reluctant in interpreting these results.

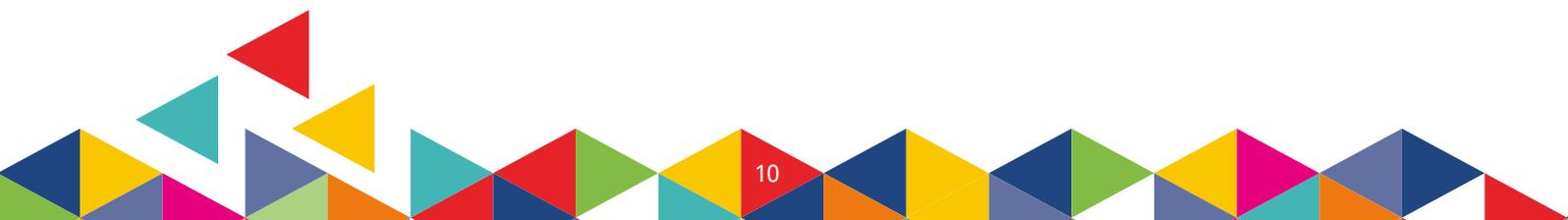
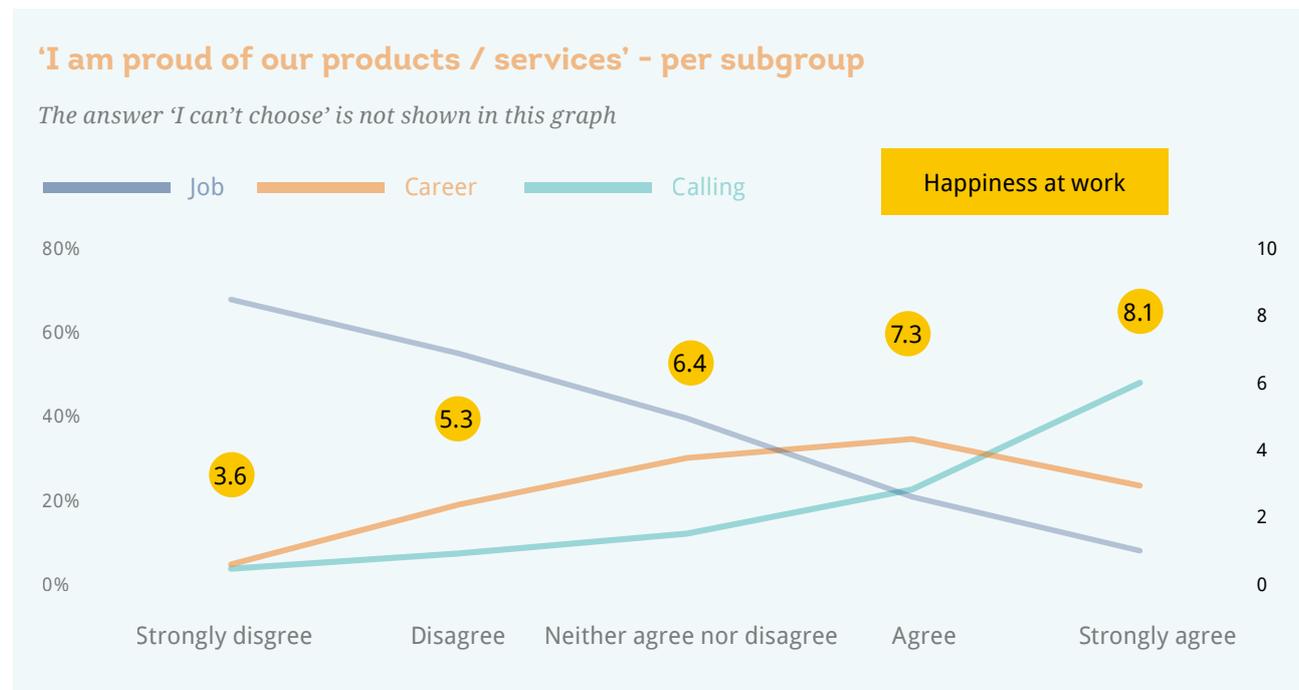


Work orientation and pride

We asked the respondents whether they are proud of the products or services of their organization. The difference in response between people with a Job or Calling orientation is considerable.



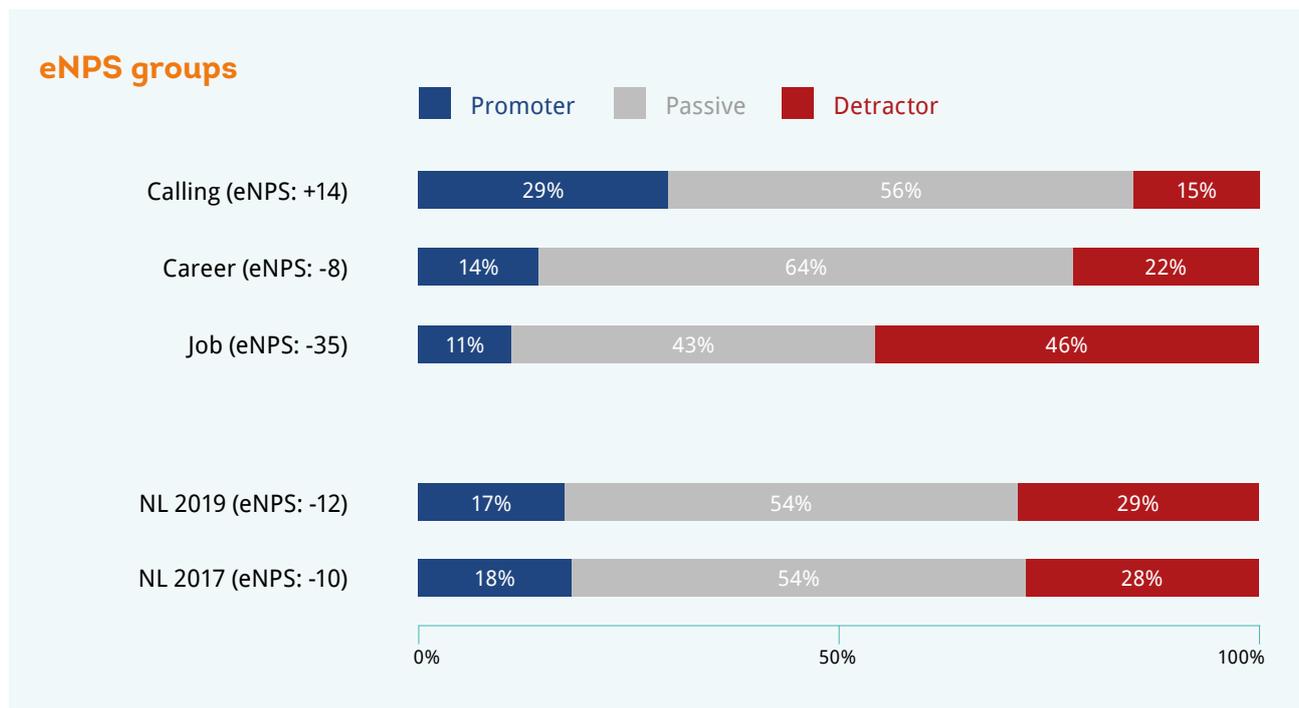
There is also a relationship between happiness at work and the extent to which employees are proud of the products and / or services from their employer. Employees who are not proud usually have a Job orientation and give their happiness at work-score an average of 3.6. Those who are really proud ("strongly agree") often come from the Calling group. Their average happiness at work score: an 8.1.



Work orientation and promoting the organization

The extent to which employees are willing to recommend their employer, is an indicator of the organization's recruitment potential. Based on the question whether an employee would recommend their employer to family members or friends (on a scale from 0 to 10), an employee is a Detractor (0-6), Passive (7-8) or Promoter (9-10). The percentage of Promoters minus the percentage of Detractors is the employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS).

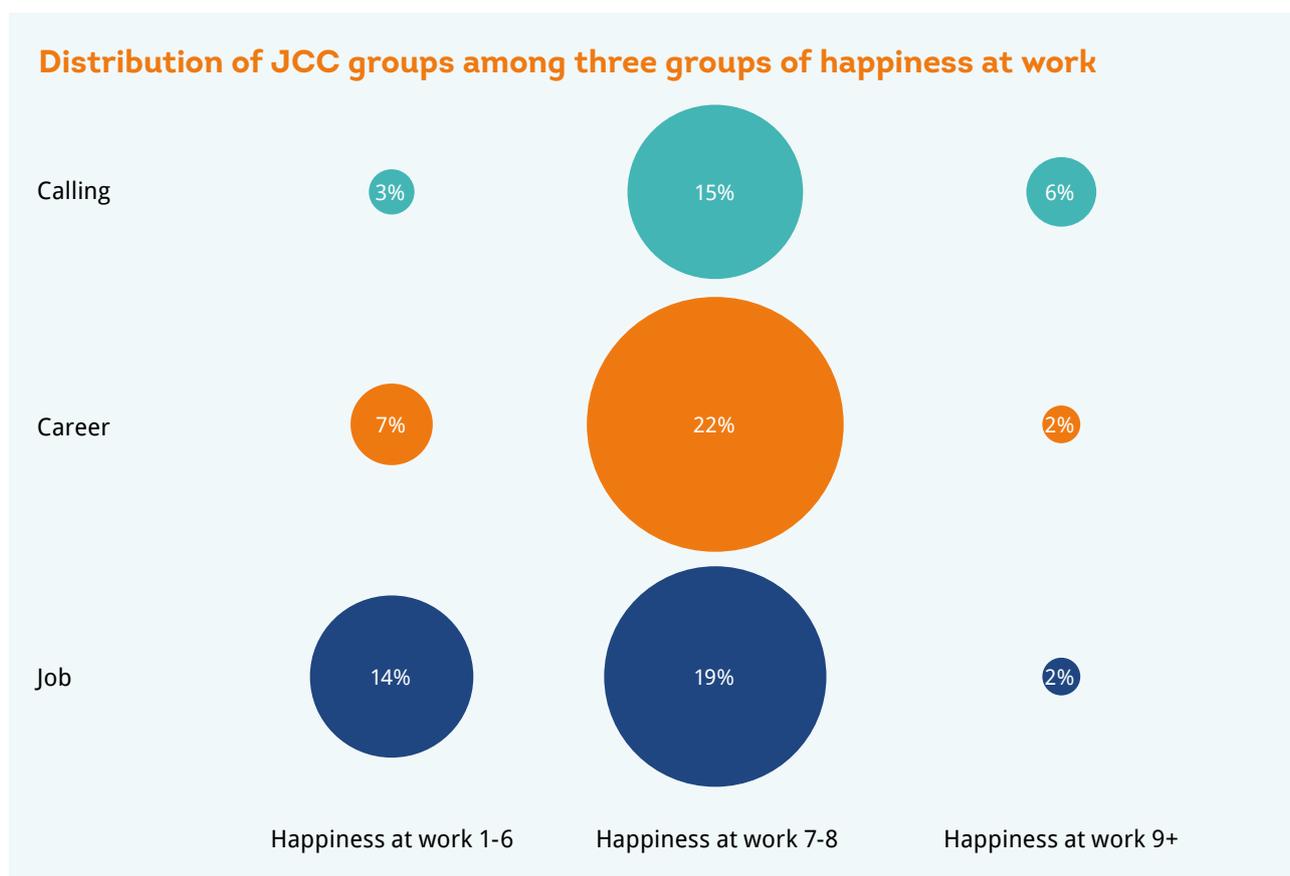
The average eNPS in the Netherlands in this study is -12; two years ago it was -10. That corresponds to the Western European average. The Calling group is the only orientation with a positive eNPS and thus the group that is strongly inclined to recommend the organization.



3. Strategies for more happiness at work

The HappinessBureau has a mission to make happiness at work the norm in the Netherlands and abroad. One of the goals of this study into Job-Career-Calling is to find strategies which increase happiness at work.

For that purpose, we matched the groups Job, Career and Calling with three groups of increasing happiness at work (scores 1-6, 7-8 and 9-10), for the total population of Dutch employees (excluding the 11% who said they couldn't choose between orientations). The result is presented in the figure below. As an example of how to read it: 14% of all employees has a Job orientation toward work and a happiness at work score between 1 and 6.



To increase happiness at work, the goal is to move employees from the left of the figure to the right. To illustrate this, we'll look deeper into the group which has the most to gain: the group on the bottom left. What do we know about them, based on this study? This group:

- Mainly consists of co-workers and hardly (senior) managers and directors.
- Has a relatively big proportion of part-time employees who work 3 to 4 days a week.
- Has an average score of 4,9 for happiness at work.
- Has an eNPS of -78.
- Is not very proud of their company's products and services.
- Often has long sick leaves (20% is absent for 11+ days).

The HappinessBureau has developed an approach to increase happiness at work, with the aim of moving employees with (mainly) a Job orientation towards the Career or Calling orientations. Want to know more about this approach? Feel free to contact us.

Conclusion

The way employees perceive their work – as a Job, Career or Calling – is strongly related to their happiness at work. With few exceptions, those who primarily view their work as a Calling, are happier than those who focus on their Career. In turn, they are happier than those who think of their work as a Job.

This study shows the strength of that relationship. Also, it offers more insight on connections with other factors such as absenteeism, pride, and willingness to recommend the organization.

The combination of work orientation and happiness at work in one chart (Figure 10), offers a practical framework from which to get started in your organization. On the one hand, you could create an overview of the different groups by setting up a survey. On the other hand, you could use the chart as a starting point for progress or performance conversations and ask questions like: with which group do you identify yourself? Are you satisfied with your position on the chart? What holds you back and what helps? What do you need to move from one group to another?

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We will take this knowledge into organizations and help them improve; we hope you do, too. Do you want to respond or share your experiences with us, please contact the HappinessBureau via info@HappinessBureau.nl.