



AMSTERDAMS INSTITUUT VOOR ARBEIDSTUDIES
UNIVERSITEIT VAN AMSTERDAM



YOUNGSTERS IN THE SUPERMARKET

(Translation of a paper in Dutch: Jongeren in de supermarkt)

Research based on the Dutch *WageIndicator*



Maarten van Klaveren, STZ advies & onderzoek, Eindhoven

Kea Tijdens, AIAS, Universiteit van Amsterdam

Amsterdams Institute for Labour Studies
University of Amsterdam
Plantage Muidersgracht 4, 1018 TV Amsterdam, NL
tel. +31 (20) 525 4199, aias@fee.uva.nl www.uva.nl/aias

17 May 2005

YOUNGSTERS IN THE SUPERMARKET

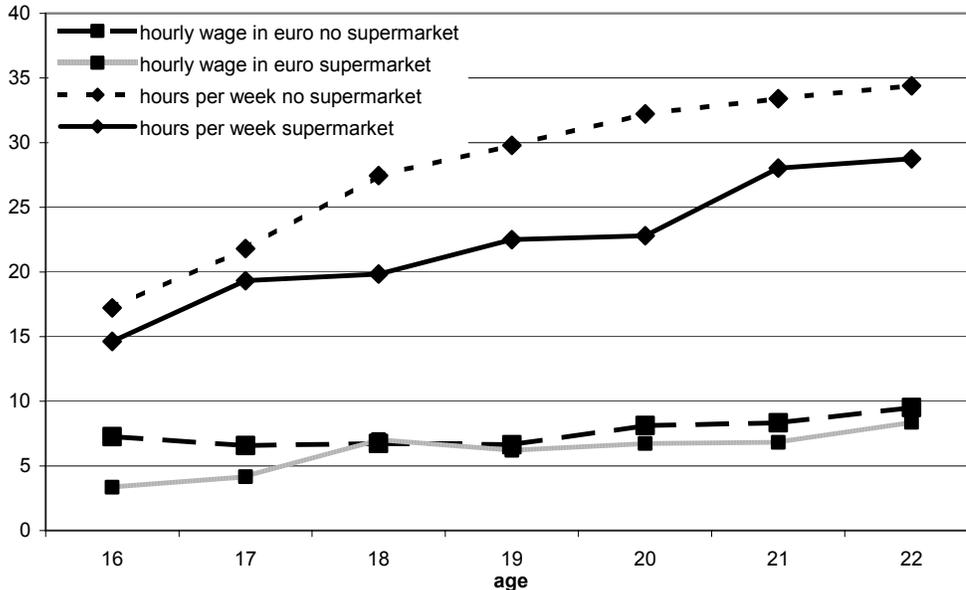
You may meet them daily, the young checkout operators and shelf stackers working in the supermarket. 60 percent of total Dutch supermarket staff is younger than 23 of age, which means that they are entitled to the statutory Minimum Youth Wage. What's more, one-sixth of all working youngsters under age 23 has a supermarket job. Why are the supermarkets such an attractive branch for juvenile workers? Do they are more in the supermarket, do working hours fit them more, or is it that supermarkets are located so nicely nearby? Supported by the WageIndicator questionnaire, we try to find an answer. Between January 2002 and April 2005 9,323 youngsters between ages 16 and 23 filled out this questionnaire; 621 of them worked in a supermarket. Compared with the figures of Statistics Netherlands, the supermarket workers among the youngsters were under-represented. Yet, this is not a substantial problem, as we only make comparisons between youngsters working in the supermarkets and those working elsewhere.

What about earnings in the supermarkets? Here, youngsters earn on average 20 percent less than elsewhere. Only the 18 years of age earn somewhat more than those of the same age working in other branches. According to the WageIndicator, youngsters in the supermarkets on average have a 23 hours' working week: considerably shorter than their peers elsewhere, making average working weeks of 32 hours. A 19 year old on average earns Euro 130 per week in the supermarket, against Euro 183 on average elsewhere. However, the fact has to be considered here that supermarkets are especially workplaces for students and secondary school pupils. More than a quarter out of all 19 years old boys and girls working in the supermarkets are students and pupils, against one-sixth elsewhere.

If money isn't that decisive, are working hours? Much more than other juvenile workers, the youngsters in the supermarkets are working on schedule, have split working days, and their starting and ending times are much more registered. Moreover, they work much more on Saturdays. On the other hand, they have much less night and Sunday shifts. It is also a remarkable fact that youngsters working in the supermarkets want to work more hours than they do. This is especially so for the boys, less for the girls. How younger the supermarket workers, how more hours they prefer to work.

How important is commuting time? Indeed, youngsters working in the supermarkets spend less commuting time than their peers working elsewhere. Three-quarters of the supermarket youngsters live at less than one quarter from the workplace, a share that is less than half for those working in other branches. Thus, we can conclude that the main attractiveness of the supermarkets for youngsters to be employed are the opportunities they offer for working outside the classical opening hours but not on unappealing working hours like at night and on Sundays, and even more so the fact that they are nearby. Obviously, many youngsters take the comparatively low wages they earn in the supermarkets for granted.

Graph 1 Mean hourly wages in euro and mean working week in hours in supermarkets and elsewhere, breakdown by age, N=9.323 total, of which 621 in supermarkets) NB Hourly wages at the level of 2004.



Source: WageIndicator 2002-2005, unweighted data

Maarten van Klaveren is senior researcher/consultant at STZ advies & onderzoek, Eindhoven, NL

Kea Tijdens is reserach coordinator at AIAS, University of Amsterdam, NL

The Dutch *WageIndicator*-project consists of a website www.loonwijzer.nl with a salary check for wages of more than 160 occupations, as well as descriptions of occupations, a continuous questionnaire and related information. The project is currently enlarged to 15 countries. For information, see www.wageindicator.org. The authors are involved in the analyses of the data generated from the questionnaire. In the Dutch *WageIndicator*-questionnaire youth and women are over represented, but the data have been weighted to improve the representativeness of the labour force in the Netherlands.