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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

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Topic (iii): Dissemination of statistical commentary and stories. How to get them through to the user

**STATISTICS NETHERLANDS' WEBMAGAZINE:
A NEW LINK IN COMMUNICATION**

Contributed Paper

Submitted by Statistics Netherlands¹

In 1998, Statistics Netherlands started a weekly magazine on its website consisting of four newsworthy short articles. Soon it became clear that this so-called Webmagazine was a very successful formula. The articles receive a lot of media attention and are often consulted on the website of Statistics Netherlands. In 2003, the 1000th Webmagazine article was published. Meanwhile, the magazine has obtained a prominent place in the publication policy of Statistics Netherlands. This paper gives information on the formula, the usage and the editorial process of the Webmagazine. Attention is also given to conditions which contribute to the magazine's success.

I. The concept of the Webmagazine

1. The Webmagazine is designed for the general reader who has no special knowledge of or interest in statistics. Basically, the magazine consists of four to six, short articles and occurs every Monday morning at exactly 9:30 a.m. on the homepage of the Statistics Netherlands website. On an annual basis about 200 articles are published in the magazine. Criteria for selection are:

- newsworthiness;
- timing;
- relevance for the target group
- quality of the figures (recent and well-analysed)
- variety of subjects.

2. In the editing process a lot of attention is given to the accessibility of the articles. Every Webmagazine article has a fixed format; 300 to 350 words and 3 graphics at the most (no tables). Texts are short and simple. Long sentences, long-winded language and technical jargon are avoided. If unavoidable, technical information is placed behind links. A lot of attention is given to titles and subtitles which should be short and to the point. The same goes for graphics.

¹ Prepared by Bas van den Elshout, Manager of the editorial staff of Statistics Netherlands (belt@cbs.nl).

These are therefore restricted to a maximum width. The lay-out of all the Webmagazine articles is in accordance with the house style of Statistics Netherlands. The Web-magazine is also translated into English and published on the English-language section of the website.

4. Webmagazine editions are removed from the homepage after one week and the articles are filed away on theme. This archive is directly accessible online.

Appendix 1 gives the titles of and links to the Webmagazine articles released in September 2003. It gives an impression of the variety of subjects published.

Appendix 2 gives an example of a complete article.

II. Coverage by the media

5. In 2002, a total of 200 Webmagazine articles were published in 51 weekly editions. On average, the website of Statistics Netherlands was visited 14,000 times every month. In one thousand cases the English version of a Webmagazine article was scanned. The most popular article in 2002 dealt with the wealthiest municipalities in the Netherlands and was published in November. The article was read more than 6,000 times. Other popular articles dealt with social inequality behind the PC, favourite shopping malls and typical male and female professions.

6. Even more significant is the indirect impact of Webmagazine articles. The Dutch media show great interest in the information as presented in the Webmagazine. The 200 articles published in 2002, resulted in nearly 1,000 items in the Dutch press. In fact, only Dutch newspapers were monitored which implies that the scope was underestimated since radio and television were not taken into account.

7. In addition to Webmagazine articles, Statistics Netherlands regularly publishes press releases, more than 200 each year. Press releases predominantly deal with economic and social key indicators, e.g. economic growth, the consumer price index (CPI), consumer confidence, price and volume trends in important economic sectors, unemployment figures, etc. Such data are often published on a monthly or quarterly basis. The information published in the Webmagazine is more diversified and not frequently recurring. The articles often refer to topical subjects which are beyond the scope of regular press releases.

8. Every week, editors of newspapers and radio and television news programmes are informed by e-mail about the latest edition of the Webmagazine, i.e. titles of articles plus a link to the website of Statistics Netherlands. The Dutch Press Agency (ANP) also plays an important part in the distribution of Webmagazine articles. Every week, the ANP disseminates news reports among the media based on the Webmagazine. The articles are subsequently published in the newspapers. Apart from that, editors of national newspapers increasingly use the Webmagazine as a direct source of information.

III. Editorial process

9. A senior editor and three editors make up the editorial staff of the Webmagazine. The editorial staff is part of the Communication and presentation department which looks after dissemination of the data. The department is responsible for external communication, the information service, the electronic data base, the website and written publications.

10. Draft contributions for the Webmagazine are drawn up by the statistical departments. In the period October-November, the editorial staff agrees with the various departments on the number of contributions to make for next year. During the year, the agreements are laid down in detail and every quarter, the editors of the Webmagazine report back to management of the statistical departments.

11. Editing Webmagazine articles received from the various departments is the core activity of the editorial staff. Webmagazine articles may have a huge impact and therefore meticulous attention is given to the editorial process. The responsibilities of all people involved are laid down in a protocol. The kernel of the protocol is that the statistical department is responsible for the statistical content of the texts, whereas the Webmagazine editors are accountable for producing texts accessible to the average reader. The editors also decide on the subjects chosen and are responsible for the publication of recent figures, etc. In the last stage, a text is checked and approved by one of Statistics Netherlands' directors.

IV. Factors that contribute to the success

12. The following factors contribute to the success of the Webmagazine:

The format of the articles. Due to the condensed format of the articles, a contribution to the Webmagazine is not very time-consuming and makes it easy for the media to broadcast bulletins based on Webmagazine articles.

The diversity of the subjects. The Webmagazine offers a variety of subjects and the majority of readers, including the press, will find something that suits their interests.

Quality and reliability. Meticulous attention is given to the editing of the articles. The fact that responsibilities and tasks of all people involved are laid down in a protocol is conducive to the content and quality of the articles. A new edition of the Webmagazine becomes available every Monday exactly at 9:30 a.m.

Feedback on the progress. In quarterly reports feedback is given on (the number of) contributions in relation to the planning at the level of basic organisation units. A valuable contribution to the Webmagazine will make a good impression.

Support from the board of directors. The board of directors have indicated on numerous occasions to give priority in the publication process to the Webmagazine and to prefer electronic publications to printed ones.

Frequent communication with the press. The Webmagazine is continually brought to the notice of the media in a professional manner. A spokesman can be contacted for every article published in the Webmagazine. In addition, the department for communication with the press can be contacted.

Attention by the media. The fact that the scope of the Webmagazine covers all media stimulates all persons involved to do their utmost to continue the success of the Webmagazine.

APPENDIX 1 The September 2003 editions of the Webmagazine**2 September 2003**

[More and more people taking medicines](#)
[Record number of call-outs for fire services](#)
[Largest families in Urk](#)
[Manufacturers' prices up slightly](#)

9 September 2003

[Hot summer claims more than a thousand lives](#)
[1,3 million people in adult education](#)
[Highest agri-production by market gardeners](#)
[Government deficit larger than expected in 2002](#)
[Commercial services more important for the economy](#)
[Investment by institutional investors falls further](#)

16 September 2003

[Computer branch under pressure](#)
[One in eight households say they don't have enough income](#)
[High response rates for preventive medical screening](#)
[More than one million commercial vehicles](#)

23 September 2003

[Heart disease claims one in three deaths](#)
[Pill still the most popular contraceptive](#)
[Fewer fathers than mothers](#)
[Job losses differ from 1993](#)
[Exports to emerging markets: 20 bln euro](#)

30 September 2003

[Fewer children placed under guardianship](#)
[Interest margins earn banks more than 15 billion euro](#)
[Stagnating growth in corporate services](#)
[Exports to emerging markets](#)

Appendix 2: Example of a Webmagazine article

Statistics Netherlands

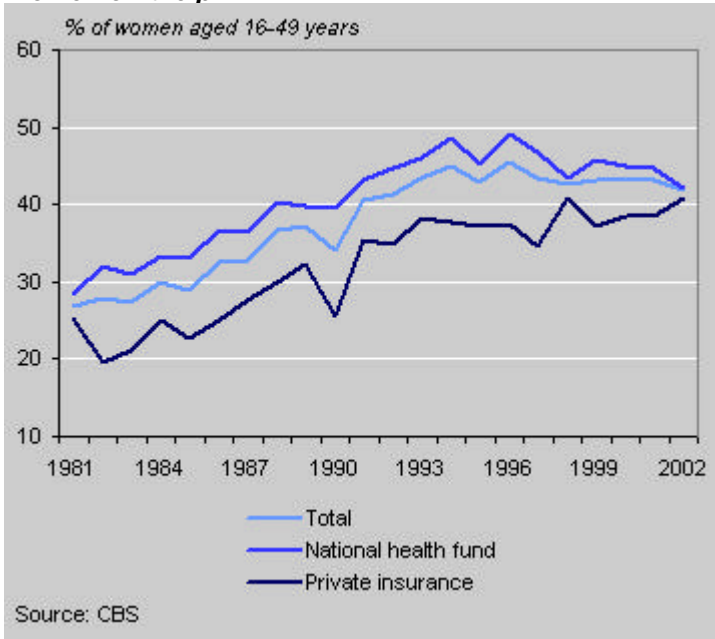
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Publications - [Webmagazine](#)

Pill still the most popular contraceptive

In 2002 an estimated 1.6 million women aged between 16 and 49 years in the Netherlands were taking the contraceptive pill. This is the equivalent of 42 percent of women in this age group. Pill use was slightly lower than in previous years.

Women on the pill



Source: CBS

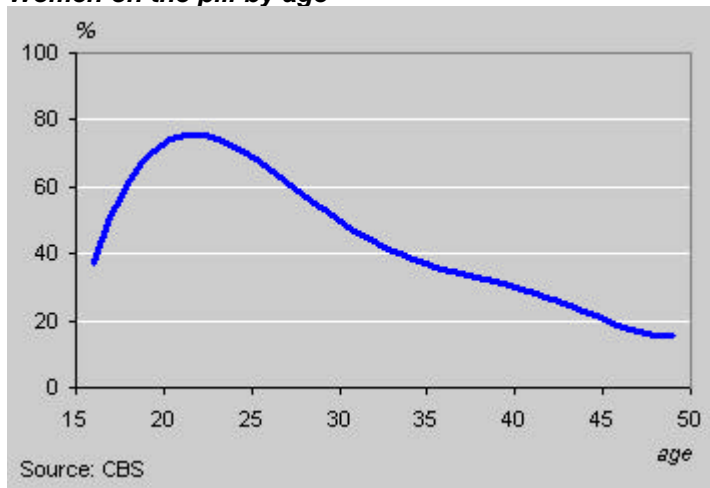
Pill most popular contraceptive
The contraceptive pill is by far the most widely used means of contraception. Forty-two percent of Dutch women aged between 16 and 49 years use it. One quarter of women use other methods of contraception such as sterilisation, condoms, an IUD etc., and one in three women in this age group do not use any form of contraception.

Pill use decreased after mid-nineties
Since 1981 the percentage of women taking the pill has increased yearly, from 27 (1981) to around 45 (1994). After that it decreased slightly, to 42 percent in 2002. The slight decrease of pill use in recent years was caused by women insured under the national health fund. The total number of women insured under this fund between 16 and 49 years of age who are on the pill was 1.2 million in 2002, of whom 930 thousand were aged 22 and older.

23 September 2003

- [Heart disease claims one in three deaths](#)
- [Pill still the most popular contraceptive](#)
- [Fewer fathers than mothers](#)
- [Job losses differ from 1993](#)
- [Exports to emerging markets: 20 bln euro](#)
- [mail us](#)

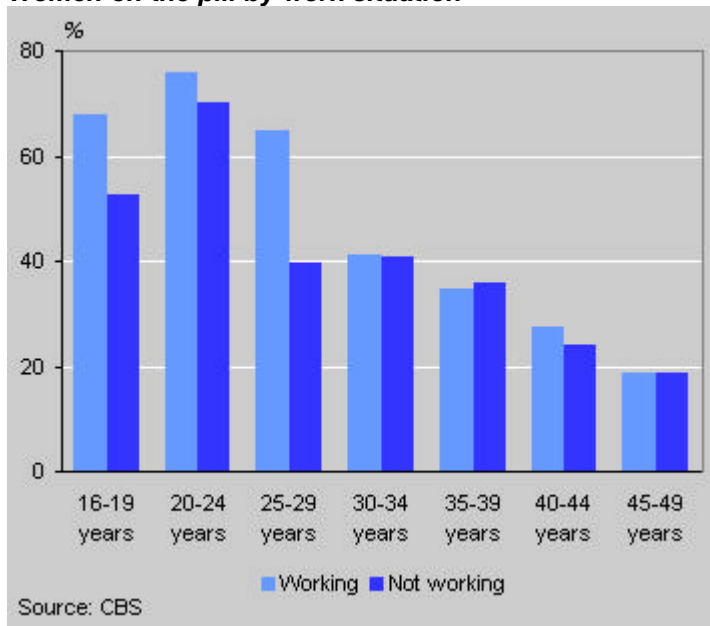
Women on the pill by age



Pill mainly used by young women

From the age of 16 years, the percentage of women who use the pill increases quickly, from 40 percent to 75 percent among 22 year-olds. From then on it decreases gradually to around 15 percent of women aged 49 years. Obviously, the decrease in pill use is connected with the desire to start a family. Once women have completed their families, they often switch to other forms of contraception, such as an IUD or sterilisation. Men also often undergo sterilisation, so that their partners can stop using the pill.

Women on the pill by work situation



Work and the pill

At younger ages there is a difference in pill use between working and non-working women. Nearly 70 percent of working women younger than thirty are on the pill, compared with 56 percent of non-working women. Above the age

of thirty there are hardly any differences in pill uses between women with and without a job.

Frans Frenken

Source: [StatLine](#)

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