

READING IN COMPETITION

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The Time Budget Survey

At the 6th WRRS in San Francisco, time-budget research was shown to be a valuable instrument for enhancing our knowledge concerning (developments in) reading behaviour (Francoise Dupont and Dinah Raimondi, San Francisco).

Recently, the results of the 1995 Intomart Time Budget Survey in the Netherlands became available. This study is the 5th in succession, having been conducted every 5 years since 1975 on behalf of a consortium of publishers, broadcasting companies and governmental institutions. For one thing, this enables us to make comparisons over time.

The Dutch Time Budget survey uses a diary method. Every 5 years during one week in October, a net sample of a little over 3000 respondents keep track of their time.

A sample page of the diary is given in figure 1.

Figure 1
Sample page of the Dutch Time Budget Diary

nacht					zondag				
tijd	thuis	niet thuis		HOOFD tijds-besteding	NEVEN tijds-besteding				
		in eigen woonplaats	andere woonplaats						
24.00-00.15					9	011/016			
00.15-00.30					9	017/022			
00.30-00.45					9	023/028			
00.45-01.00					9	029/034			
01.00-01.15					9	035/040			
01.15-01.30					9	041/046			
01.30-01.45					9	047/052			
01.45-02.00					9	053/058			
02.00-02.15					9	059/064			
02.15-02.30					9	065/070			
02.30-02.45					9	071/076			
02.45-03.00					9	077/082			
03.00-03.15					9	083/088			
03.15-03.30					9	089/094			
03.30-03.45					9				

morgen					zondag				
tijd	thuis	niet thuis		HOOFD tijds-besteding	NEVEN tijds-besteding				
		in eigen woonplaats	andere woonplaats						
06.00-06.15					9				
06.15-06.30					9				
06.30-06.45					9				
06.45-07.00					9				
07.00-07.15					9				
07.15-07.30					9				
07.30-07.45					9				
07.45-08.00					9				
08.00-08.15					9				
08.15-08.30					9				
08.30-08.45					9				
08.45-09.00					9				
09.00-09.15					9				
09.15-09.30					9				
09.30-09.45					9				

In the diary, for every quarter of an hour, people indicate whether they were at home or not, and if not, if they were in their own home town or somewhere else. Further they code their activities for that quarter of an hour, using a 3 digit code, one for their main or principal activity, and a second code for their side activities.

There are 9 main categories of activities, ranging from professional labor to household activities, from child rearing to cultural activities, and from shopping to, of course, media activities. These 9 categories are subdivided in over 250 different separate activities. See Figure 2 for an example of some 'media activities'.

Figure 2
'Media activities' in the Dutch Time Budget Diary

<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>geen kleine zakspelletjes, zie 871; wel pc, home computer, spelcomputer, voor beroep: zie 000 en 010</p> <p>praten met elkaar (geen zakengesprek); zie ook 420 en 750</p> <p>ook eigen dagboek bijhouden; tijdsbestedingsdagboek: zie 905</p> <p>indien zakengesprek: zie 000, 010, 020</p> </div> <div style="width: 45%; text-align: right;"> <p>radio luisteren, televisie kijken, computergebruik, lezen, praten, tijdsbestedingsdagboek bijhouden e.d.</p> </div> <div style="width: 10%; text-align: center; font-size: 2em; background-color: black; color: white; padding: 5px;">9</div> </div>																																							
radio luisteren	<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr><td>computer gebruiken</td><td style="text-align: right;">901</td></tr> <tr><td>praten met huisgenoten</td><td style="text-align: right;">902</td></tr> <tr><td>brieven, kaarten schrijven aan familie, vrienden, kennissen</td><td style="text-align: right;">903</td></tr> <tr><td>telefoneren</td><td style="text-align: right;">904</td></tr> <tr><td>tijdsbestedingsdagboek bijhouden</td><td style="text-align: right;">905</td></tr> <tr><td>ontspannen, niets doen, nadenken, mediteren</td><td style="text-align: right;">906</td></tr> <tr><td>Radio 1, 2, 3, 4 of 5</td><td style="text-align: right;">907</td></tr> <tr><td>lokale of regionale zenders</td><td style="text-align: right;">908</td></tr> <tr><td>Sky Radio, Radio 10 Gold, Radio Noordzee Nationaal</td><td style="text-align: right;">909</td></tr> <tr><td>overige zenders</td><td style="text-align: right;">912</td></tr> <tr><td>radiozender onbekend</td><td style="text-align: right;">913</td></tr> <tr><td>Nederland 1, 2 of 3</td><td style="text-align: right;">914</td></tr> <tr><td>RTL4 / RTL5</td><td style="text-align: right;">915</td></tr> <tr><td>Veronica 6</td><td style="text-align: right;">916</td></tr> <tr><td>SBS 6</td><td style="text-align: right;">917</td></tr> <tr><td>lokale of regionale zender</td><td style="text-align: right;">918</td></tr> <tr><td>overige zenders</td><td style="text-align: right;">919</td></tr> <tr><td>zender onbekend</td><td style="text-align: right;">920</td></tr> <tr><td>video</td><td style="text-align: right;">921</td></tr> </table>	computer gebruiken	901	praten met huisgenoten	902	brieven, kaarten schrijven aan familie, vrienden, kennissen	903	telefoneren	904	tijdsbestedingsdagboek bijhouden	905	ontspannen, niets doen, nadenken, mediteren	906	Radio 1, 2, 3, 4 of 5	907	lokale of regionale zenders	908	Sky Radio, Radio 10 Gold, Radio Noordzee Nationaal	909	overige zenders	912	radiozender onbekend	913	Nederland 1, 2 of 3	914	RTL4 / RTL5	915	Veronica 6	916	SBS 6	917	lokale of regionale zender	918	overige zenders	919	zender onbekend	920	video	921
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However, only media activities can be jotted down as a side activity. As all media activities start with a '9', this figure has already been pre-printed in the column designated for side activities.

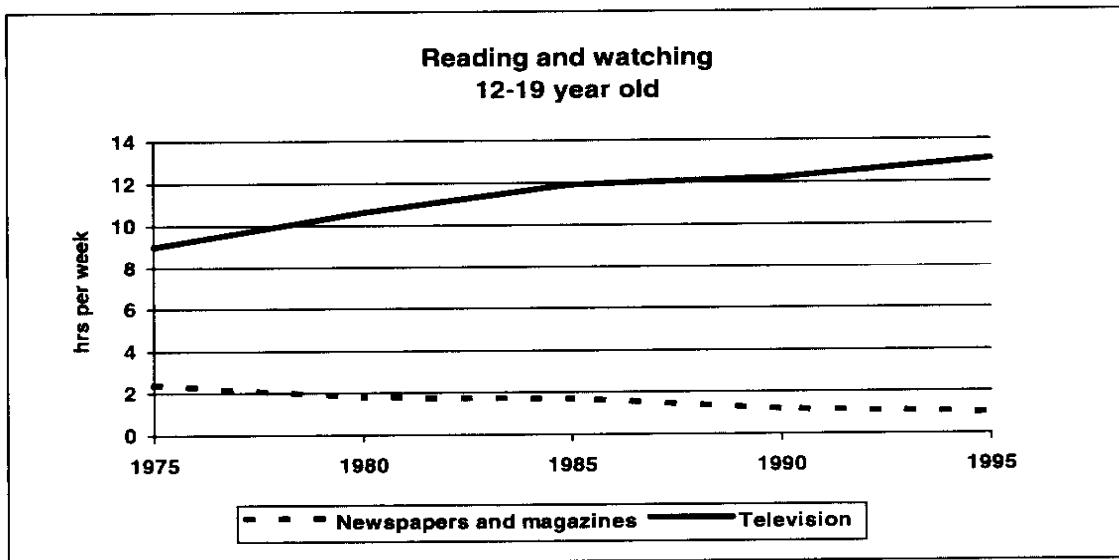
The survey design has its advantages and disadvantages. A comparison of the different methods used in Time Budget Research has been given by Kalfs. (Kalfs 1993, Hour by hour; effects of the data collection mode in time use research, Amsterdam, NIMMO)

E.g. the use of a fixed 15 minute time frame means that only those activities which last for 8 minutes or longer are entered into the diary. A quick glimpse through a newspaper or magazine may therefore go unnoticed. However, it has been proved that, for measuring media behaviour, the diary method is more valid than a retrospective questionnaire. With the questionnaire method social desirability tends to lead to an overestimation of reading behaviour and an underestimation of television viewing (Knulst 1988, Van Woord naar beeld? Onderzoek naar de verschuivingen in de tijdsbesteding aan de media in de periode 1975-1985, Cahier nr. 66, Rijswijk; Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau).

Developments in reading behaviour

The Intomart Time Budget Survey clearly shows that reading for leisure in the Netherlands is declining. This is especially true for the younger generations for whom television has been an ever present part of their life. For example figure 3 shows that in 1995 12-19 year old are watching 5 hours more and reading 1 and a half hour less during the week than their equivalents in 1975 (Sociaal en Cultureel Rapport 1996, Rijswijk, Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau).

Figure 3
Reading and watching 1975-1995 12-19 years old



For the sample as a whole (12 years and over) in the past five years, between 1990 and 1995, viewing has not increased. But there still is a slight decline in reading time. People are spending more time on other activities.

In an elaborate study of this decline in reading time over the past 20 years, Knulst and Kraaykamp found a number of different causes (Knulst en Kraaykamp, Leesgewoonten, Sociale en Culturele Studies - 23, Rijswijk 1996, Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau)

1. A growing number of adults with complex daily responsibilities. Many more Dutch women have entered the workforce, be it on a parttime basis. Men are spending more time on household activities and child education.
2. More competition from other forms of leisure activities, especially going out and sports. A greater choice of activities to spend one's leisure time has become available to larger groups of people.
3. A depreciation of the value of the written word due to an overwhelming offer. This is especially true for magazines.
4. And of course the shift from reading towards watching television.

The perspective Knulst and Kraaykamp see for reading for pleasure (Newspapers, Magazines and Books) is a gloomy one. A further decline is more likely than a sudden upsurge. In the far future Readership Research threatens to become a marginal activity.

The quality of reading

And what about the quality of reading? As mentioned before, the Intomart Time Budget Survey offers the possibility (from 1990 on) to distinguish between reading as a main activity and reading as a secondary activity.

It is up to the respondents to indicate whether or not reading has the focus of their attention. If a reader regards his or her reading as 'secondary' then how does this affect the quality of reading? One might at least assume a reduced amount of attention for the content of what is read.

If we compare the three different media groups, television, radio and print, in their competitive situation, we see that the average time spent on TV per week totals 906 minutes, on radio 554 minutes, and that Print accounts for 238 minutes of the available leisure time per week.

The division between time spent on a medium in total concentration, and time where the attention is divided between one or more mediantypes is shown in figure 4, 5 and 6 in the appendix.

The analyses were done for the sample as a whole, and for 4 different target groups:

- young people 12-19 years;
- young male 20 - 50 years;
- young women 20 - 50 years;
- 40 years and over.

As we look at all people from 12 years and over (The first column in each graph) we see that radio is a secondary medium, which, incidentally, should not come as a surprise. Its strength lies partly in this 'secondariness'. Radios are playing while at work, while driving the car, etc. etc. If we look at other media we notice that radio goes especially well together with the reading of newspapers and magazines.

Television is the most solitary medium and the least combined with others.

A little over 50% of reading time is spent on reading without competition from other media. Radio is often present while reading a newspaper or magazine, but can be regarded more as a "natural companion" of reading than a true competitor.

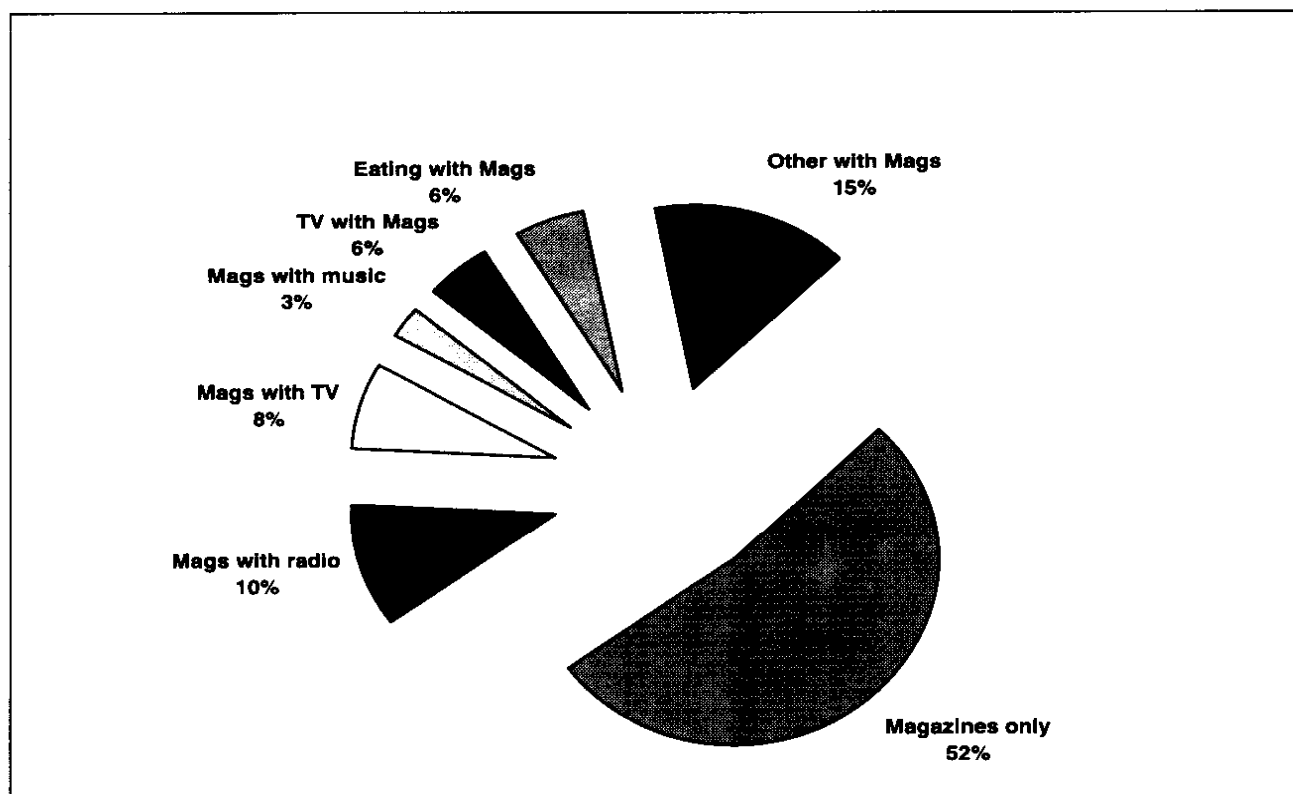
Therefore television can be regarded as the main competitor for reading. The presence of the noisy and ever flashy 'tube' makes it difficult to concentrate on reading and 'demands' to become the centre of attention itself. It must be added that in the Netherlands, with its long tradition of subtitling the mostly foreign program content of its television channels, people watching television are in fact almost reading a book (of subtitles) every evening.

The table in the appendix shows these compressed results.

If we take a look from a somewhat closer perspective we can also distinguish between the reading of magazines and the reading of newspapers.

In 1995 during the whole week 52.5% of the time spent reading magazines was reported to be the main activity only, without doing anything else. So only little over half the time magazines have the readers undivided attention. During 21% of the magazine reading time the magazine came first, but something else was done as well (mainly listening to the radio and watching television). 26.4% of magazine reading time, other activities were the main focus of attention. Watching TV and eating/drinking were the most important culprits. See figure 5.

Figure 7
Reading of magazines and side activities



22.3% of reading time shared with other secondary activities (i.e. listening to the radio or watching television) and 26.2% where the newspaper itself is a side activity. Only newspapers seem to be, far more than magazines the perfect company of a meal.

The big question is of course whether we should value reading as a solo or as a main activity different from reading as a side activity. Is a solo contact with a paper or magazine worth more than a contact where the attention of the reader is divided?

The competition between media during the course of a normal working day is shown in Figure 8 in the appendix, where reading in combination with other activities during weekdays is depicted. Some remarkable observations can be made. The morning paper's peak is from 07.00 to 10.00 o'clock. A second peak is lunch time, where reading as a secondary medium is combined with lunch as a main activity. The evening papers and magazines show a triple peak at 17.00, 19.30 and 21.00 hrs. The deep canyons in between correspond strongly with two television news peaks in the Netherlands mainly due to the main news bulletins from the public broadcasters. The highest reading peak also shows the highest competitive situation for reading. Almost a quarter of this reading occurs whilst television is the secondary medium consumed. The opposite happens during the 20.00 hours news where reading becomes a secondary activity next to watching television.

During the weekend (Figure 9), reading starts at a later point in time, and is more evenly spread over the day. One could say, gradually fading out.

Though there is less watching during the weekend the pattern of watching over the day for television shows remarkable similarities if one compares weekdays and Saturdays and Sundays (Figures 10 and 11).

Radio has fewer listeners during the weekend as well. And the people that do tune in mainly listen during morning hours. (Figure 12 and 13)

We are living in a culture of more. A culture where the participants are getting busier every day with getting more, doing more and experiencing more. A culture of thrill seekers. A culture where time is running out. People are forced to do more things at a time. The leisurely pace of the written word is gradually being replaced by the fast lane of pictures and sounds. Reading is changing. People are no longer willing to spend hours on end reading books, papers or magazines. The publishers of papers and magazines are responding by changing the editorial content of their products. More pictures, shorter articles. In a way they are making it possible for the readers to divert, and divide their attention. As reading moments are getting shorter and the attention for reading is diminishing, readership research also has to change. The main question we have to ask ourselves as researchers, is whether the questions we validated years ago are still valid today. In fact, our analyses of the time budget data have shown that for instance, the validity of the frequency of reading question is doubtful. But that is an entirely different paper.

Appendix

Table 1

	All	share	idx	12-19Y	share	idx	M20-49	share	idx	F20-49	share	idx	50+	share	idx
TV															
solo	685.90	75.75	100.00	740.59	85.93	113.43	623.46	77.27	102.00	586.47	69.71	92.02	811.30	77.13	101.82
radio second	2.33	0.26	100.00	0.88	0.10	39.47	2.15	0.27	103.57	1.10	0.13	50.85	4.18	0.40	153.99
print second	9.71	1.07	100.00	2.65	0.31	28.72	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	13.60	1.29	120.59
radio main	0.12	0.01	100.00	0.51	0.06	442.55	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.09	0.01	66.87
print main	18.70	2.07	100.00	2.76	0.32	15.51	20.90	2.59	125.39	18.70	1.98	96.08	24.55	2.33	113.00
other main	188.72	20.84	100.00	114.51	13.29	63.74	180.38	19.88	95.36	237.06	28.18	135.19	198.14	18.84	90.38
	905.48	100.00	100.00	861.91	100.00	100.00	806.89	100.00	100.00	841.33	100.00	100.00	1051.85	100.00	100.00
RADIO															
solo	29.97	5.41	100.00	30.73	11.28	208.47	32.77	4.97	91.88	11.12	2.27	41.92	44.27	7.11	131.45
tv second	0.12	0.02	100.00	0.51	0.19	856.39	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.09	0.02	69.12
print second	0.40	0.07	100.00	0.18	0.06	90.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.70	0.11	156.36
tv main	2.33	0.42	100.00	0.88	0.32	76.39	2.15	0.33	77.56	1.10	0.22	53.38	4.18	0.67	159.17
print main	30.23	5.46	100.00	5.87	2.15	39.46	23.05	3.50	64.06	20.07	4.09	74.99	55.01	8.84	161.91
other main	490.94	88.82	100.00	234.34	85.99	97.04	601.28	91.21	102.92	458.22	93.42	105.41	518.35	83.25	93.95
	554.00	100.00	100.00	272.51	100.00	100.00	659.25	100.00	100.00	490.52	100.00	100.00	622.61	100.00	100.00
PRINT															
solo	130.95	55.01	100.00	48.17	62.47	113.56	98.55	47.55	86.44	90.12	54.26	98.63	229.85	60.76	110.45
tv second	18.70	7.86	100.00	2.76	3.58	45.58	20.90	10.29	131.00	16.70	10.05	127.93	24.55	6.49	82.59
radio second	30.23	12.70	100.00	5.87	7.61	59.92	23.05	11.35	89.37	20.07	12.09	95.15	55.01	14.54	114.50
tv main	9.71	4.08	100.00	2.65	3.44	84.38	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	13.60	3.59	88.14
radio main	0.40	0.17	100.00	0.18	0.23	136.68	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.70	0.19	110.57
other main	48.04	20.18	100.00	17.48	22.67	112.31	62.55	30.81	152.63	39.21	23.60	116.95	54.59	14.43	71.48
	238.04	100.00	100.00	77.11	100.00	100.00	203.04	100.00	100.00	166.10	100.00	100.00	378.30	100.00	100.00

Figure 4. RADIO as main and secondary activity

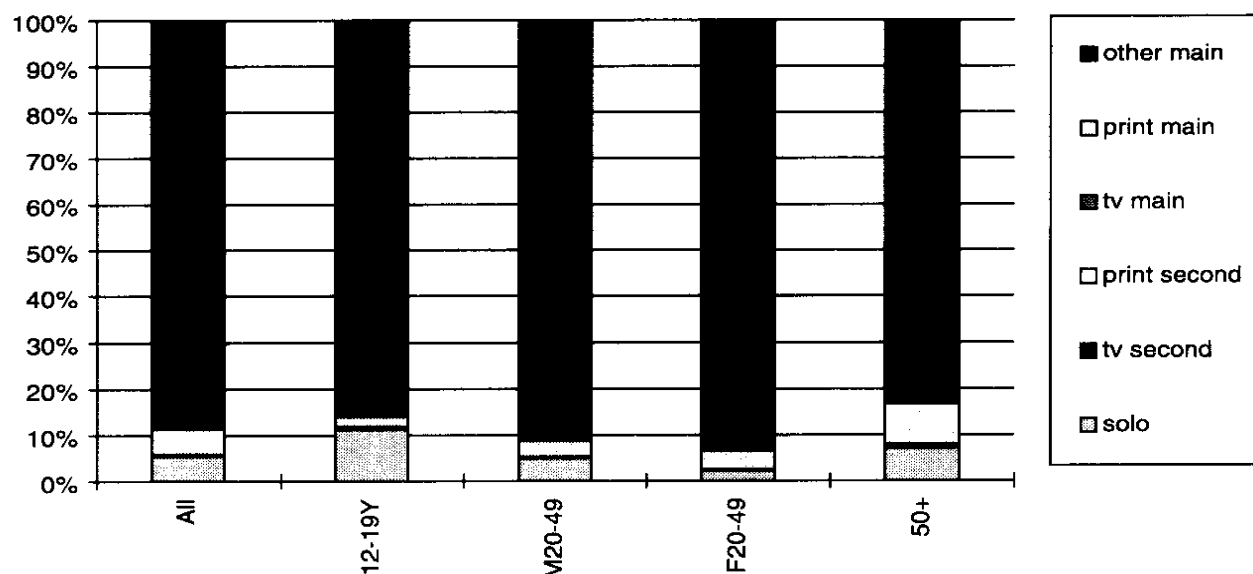


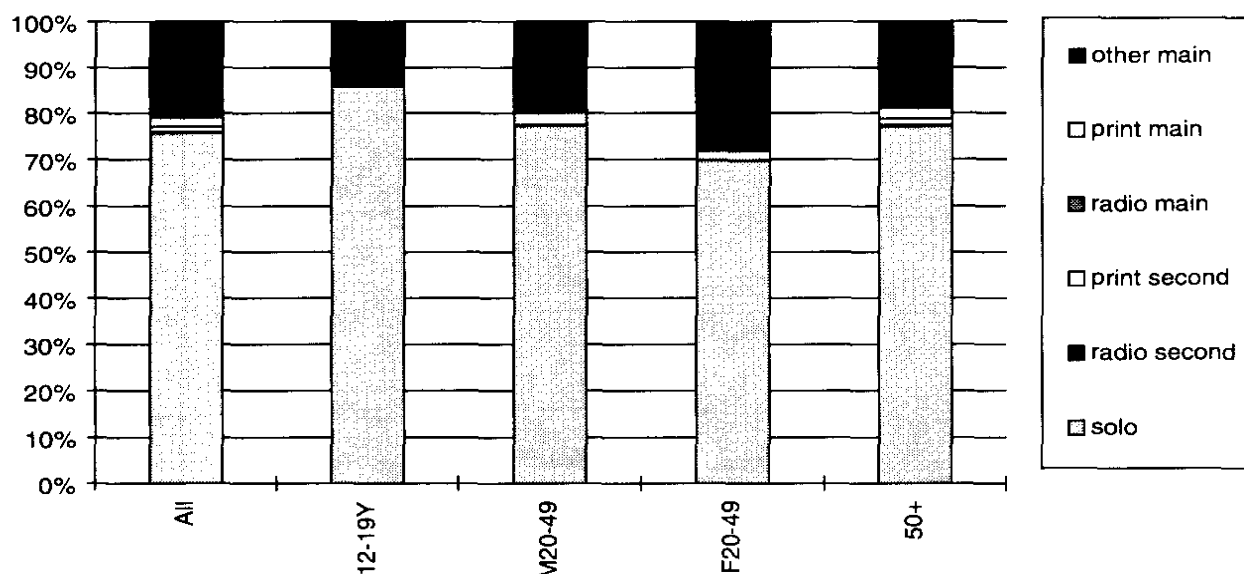
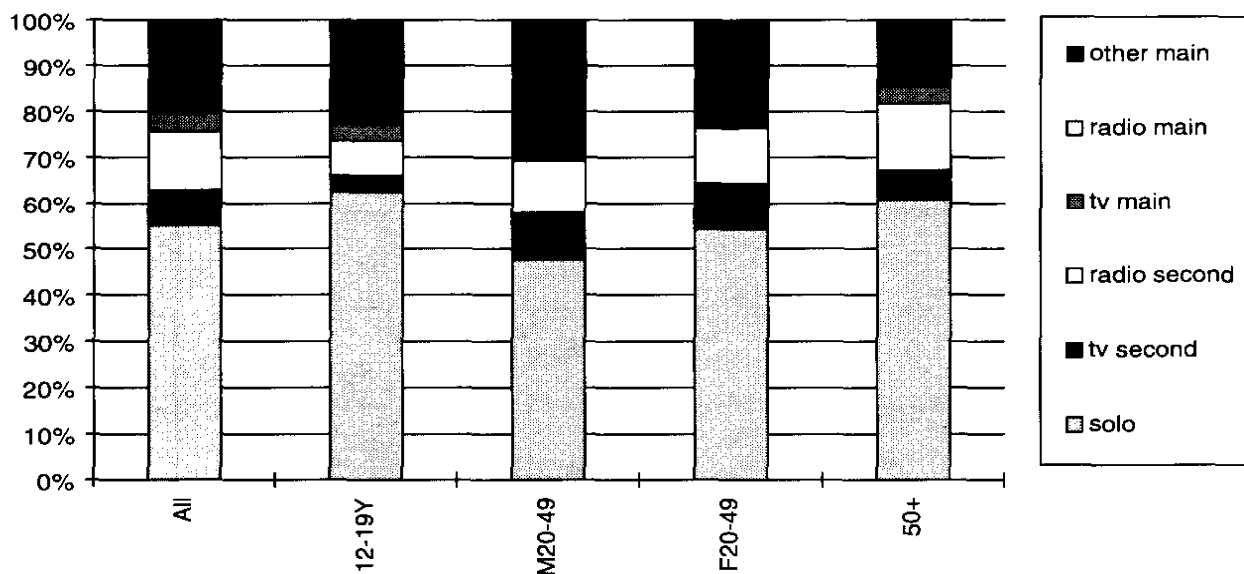
Figure 5. TV as main and secondary activity**Figure 6. PRINT as main and secondary activity**

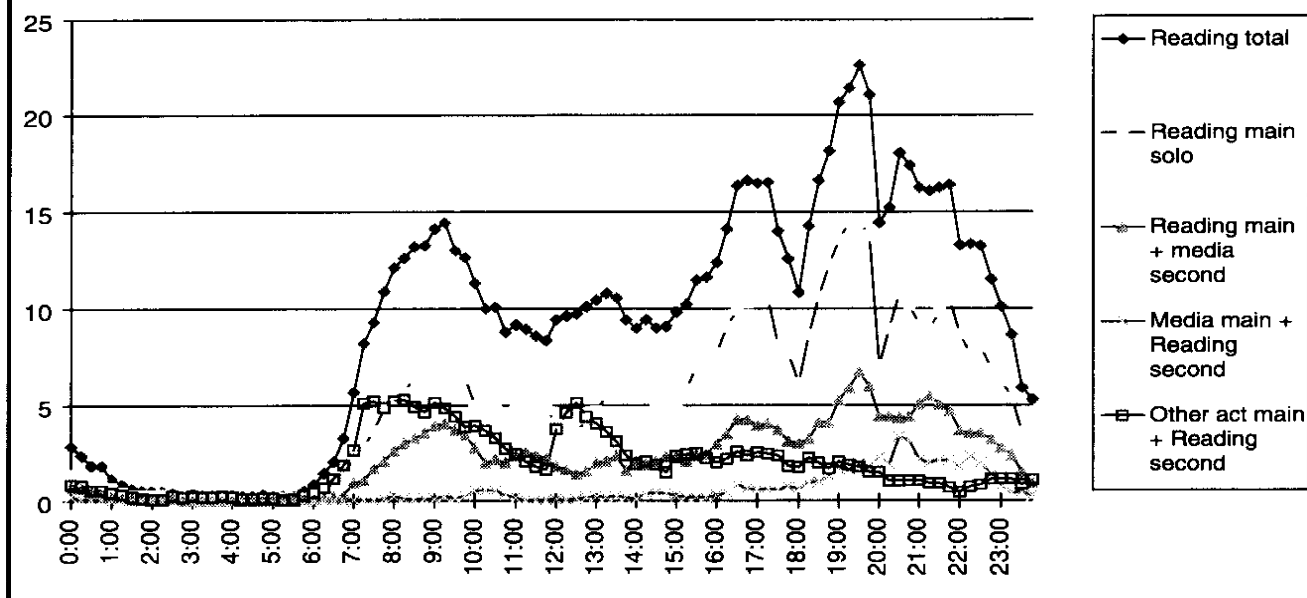
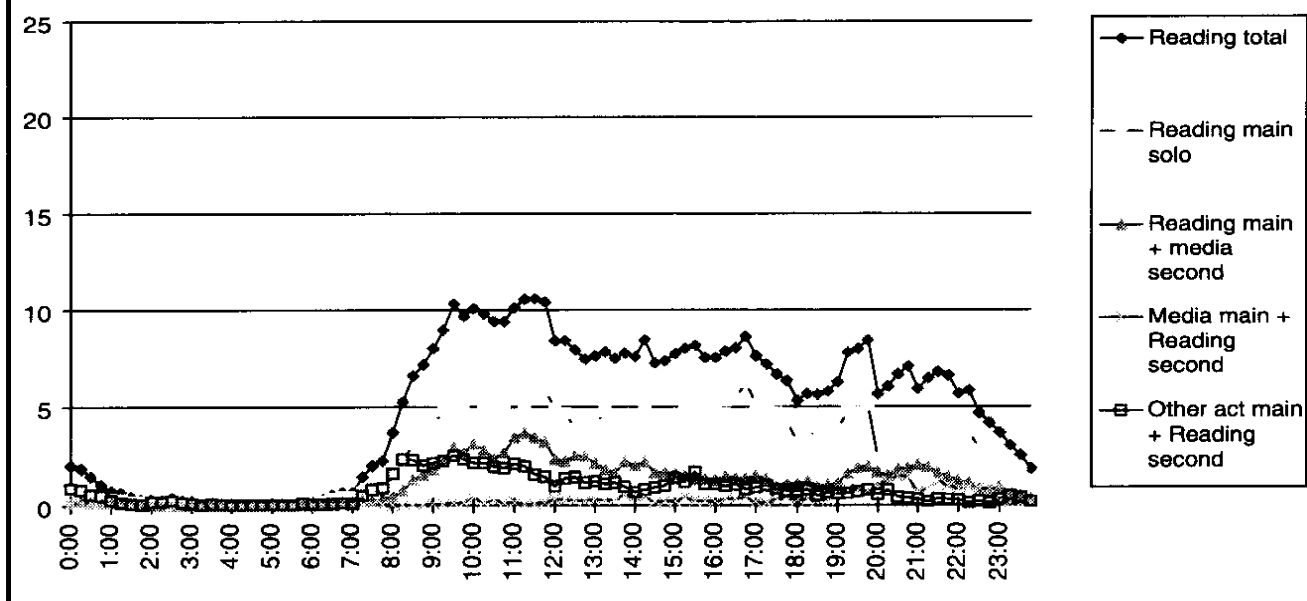
Figure 8. Reading weekdays reach per quarterhour**Figure 9. Reading weekend reach per quarterhour**

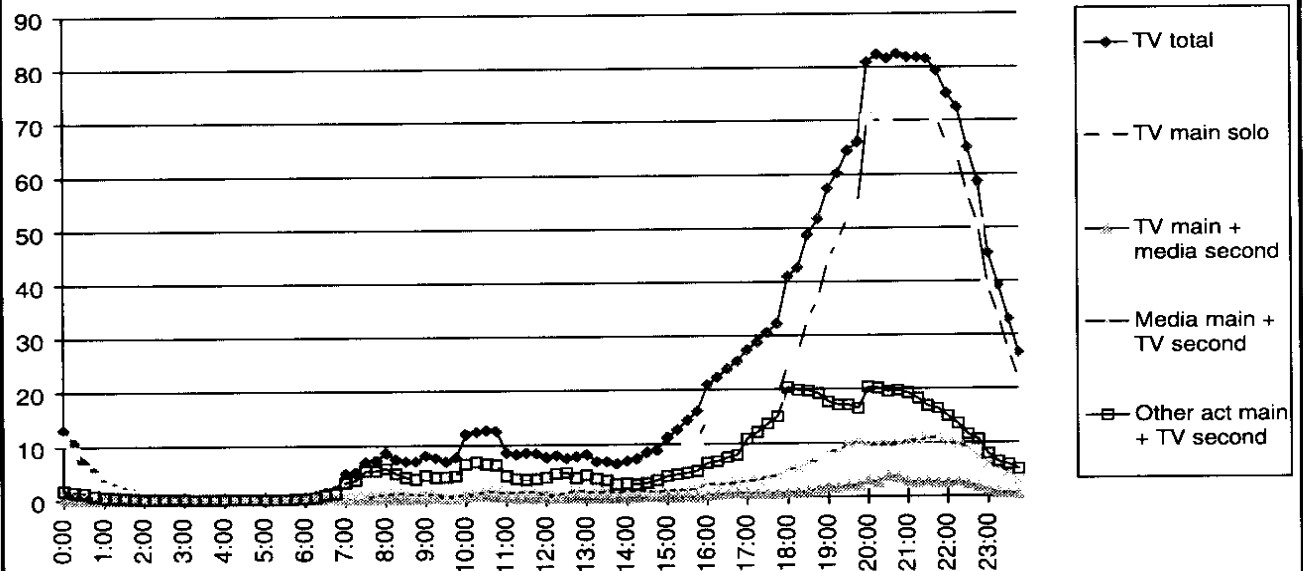
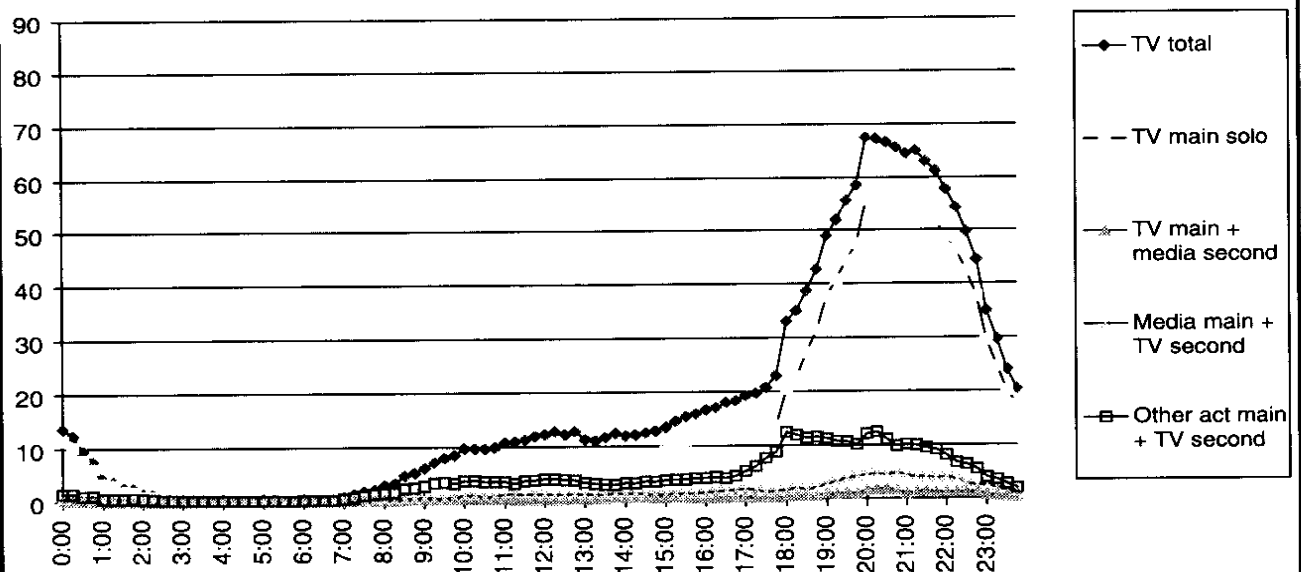
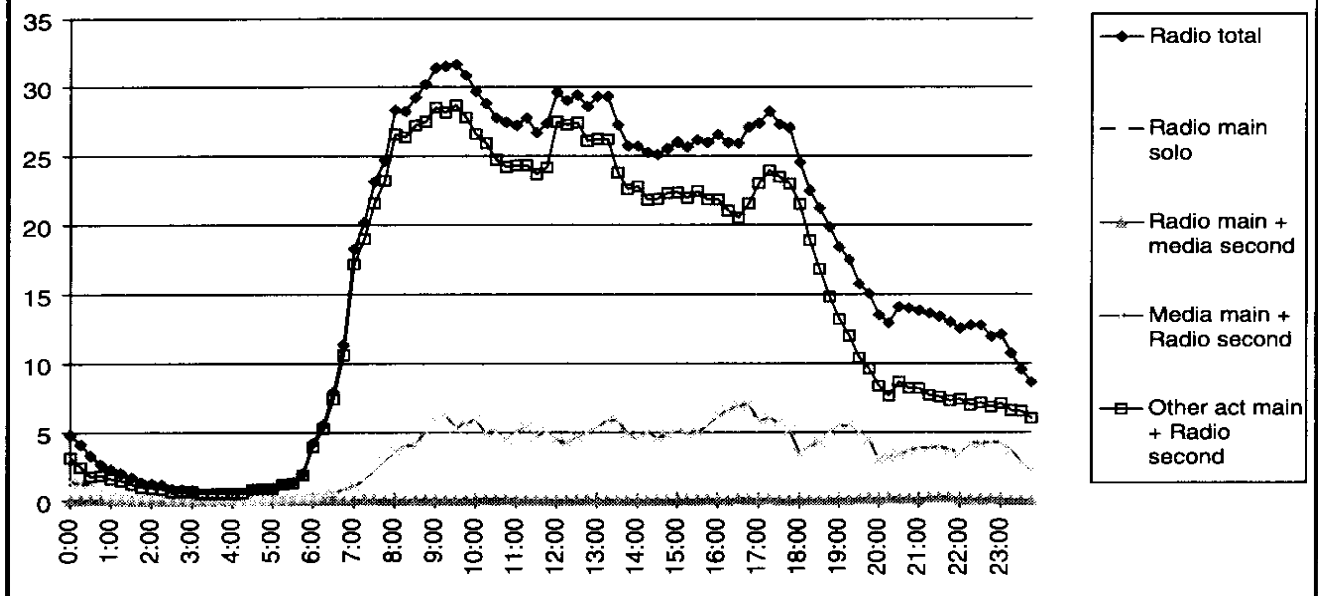
Figure 10. TV weekdays reach per quarterhour**Figure 11. TV weekend reach per quarterhour**

Figure 12. Radio weekdays reach per quarterhour**Figure 13. Radio weekend reach per quarterhour**