

NETHERLANDS

- The population of the Netherlands is ageing, although to a relatively lesser extent than other countries in Europe.
- The data situation is rather favourable, and there appear only few gaps in the data as to the main themes of demographic change.
- However, the continuation of long-term surveys and their open accessibility to researchers will be a major challenge in times of fiscal austerity.



1. Demographic context

The population of the Netherlands is currently almost 16.8 million. The net growth of the population in 2012 is just below 0.3%, about one quarter of which is due to net inward migration. The total fertility rate is 1.76. The population of the Netherlands is ageing, although within Europe it belongs to a subgroup of countries with a less aged population than the norm. Life expectancy has been rising, and the proportion of the population older than 65 has risen from 9% in the 1960s to 16% in 2012. The proportion of the population older than 50 was just over 36% in 2012. By 2040, current prognoses are that the proportion of people over age 65 will be between 24 and 29 per cent. The life expectancy at birth now stands at just over 79 for men, and 83 for women. Remaining life expectancy at 65 is currently 18 years for men and 21 years for women, which is likely to increase by about another six years by 2040.

Until recently, individuals in the Netherlands became eligible for state pensions at the age of 65, but starting in 2013, this age has been increased to 65 years plus one month. The current plans are to have the age of eligibility increase by one month per year in the coming years, after which it will rise in line with life expectancy. The pension system is mixed with a basic state pension supplemented by an income-related component.

There are three main pillars supporting the old-age social security system. The first pillar is the basic state pension (Dutch acronym: AOW). This is an insurance-type system which covers all people (formerly) resident in the Netherlands. Until the recent changes, entitlement for residents is accumulated with 2% per annum between the ages of 15 and 65. The financing of this system is based on the “pay-as-you-go” model: the funds required for the population currently receiving AOW are provided through the premiums that the under-65 population currently pay. Since the scheme is based on years of residency, immigrants or nationals who have spent considerable amounts of time outside the Netherlands can experience substantial reductions in pension entitlements. For this reason an additional scheme exists that is intended to guarantee a minimum income for those cases where otherwise insufficient pension entitlements exist.

The second pillar is an employee insurance scheme: normally financed jointly through contributions paid by the employer and contributions paid by the employee. Workers who are self-employed would have to make their own arrangements. The third pillar are private pension schemes offered by a variety of providers. Also workers that do have some form of pension provision through the second pillar may opt to supplement their pension by taking out third-pillar insurance.

Participation in the labour force among the age group 60-65 has more than doubled in the past decade, and in 2012 the participation rate stood at just under 40%. The participation rate among the age group 55-60 is just under 70 per cent, and is thus indistinguishable from the participation rate of the total labour force (15-65). While there is still a substantial gender difference in the labour force participation in the older age groups, this gap has been decreasing. The dependency ratio, that is the ratio between the number of people aged over 65 and younger than 20, and the number of 20 to 65-year-olds, currently stands at 65.3 and is projected to rise to 89.5 by 2040.

A public access, English-language resource for descriptions and analysis of demographic changes and ageing in the Netherlands can be found at the website of Statistics Netherlands in the dossier "Population ageing": <http://www.cbs.nl/en-GB/menu/themas/dossiers/vergrijzing/nieuws/default.htm?Languageswitch=on>

2. Demographic change and policy concerns

Statistics Netherlands is the independent national institute and provides Dutch ministries with factual data. These data are also published through the Statline website. Laws and statutes, along with any amendments, will be published in the Dutch State bulletin (Staatscourant) before taking effect. The five most relevant ministries for the purposes of the JPI are listed below, each of which maintains an English-language version of their website:

- The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment:
<http://www.government.nl/ministries/szw>
- The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport:
<http://www.government.nl/ministries/vws>
- Ministry of Education, Culture and Science:
<http://www.government.nl/ministries/ocw>
- Ministry of Economic Affairs:
<http://www.government.nl/ministries/ez>
- Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment:
<http://www.government.nl/ministries/ienm>

3. Data sources

General issues

One of the roles of Statistics Netherlands is to make as much of its data as possible publicly available, within the limits of privacy and competitiveness legislation, and the practical operational limits of its resources. Its

website provides a wide variety of social data in tabular form at varying levels of aggregation can be consulted, free of charge, and without obtaining specific permission (<http://statline.cbs.nl/statweb/?LA=en>).

For its source data, Statistics Netherlands has the authority to make use of all of the administrative registers held by public bodies, such as local authorities and municipalities, and also has agreements with many other Dutch organisations to have the same access to their administrative data. Given this very comprehensive use of register data, the statistics produced often cover all of the residents of the Netherlands.

Resources within Statistics Netherlands

All of the data that Statistics Netherlands collect on Dutch residents and nationals through a variety of registers, or through its surveys, are stored in a single relational database in which all of the data for any given person can be coupled through an encrypted version of a Citizen Service Number, which is a unique identifier for all Dutch residents. This is the Social Statistical Database (SSD).

These source data are the basis of many publications by Statistics Netherlands. However, for the protection of citizens' privacy, these data are not generally accessible. This is because even though the personal identifier is encrypted, the coupling of a sufficiently large number of variables could accidentally disclose the identity of individuals. Permits for access for scientific statistical purposes can, however, be arranged. In most circumstances, this will require the researcher to provide a detailed research proposal specifying and justifying which variables are required. If approved, the researcher must work on-site, and data cannot be transferred outside. An alternative to accessing microdata is to have made-to-measure aggregate tables produced (at a cost), or to consult standard aggregate tables, which are freely accessible through the Statistics Netherlands website. The SSD is not specifically targeted at a selected population of people over the age of 50. A simple selection procedure that SSD access tools can facilitate will allow the researcher to focus on any desired subset of the Dutch population. At the same time, the strength of a resource such as the SSD is that it will allow researchers to compare the statistical properties of the population aged 50+ with the general population of the Netherlands.

Resources external to Statistics Netherlands

Because of its particular role, many of the data resources can be found at Statistics Netherlands, which is reflected in the attached tables. However, other organisations have been consulted for additional resources, including the following:

- Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute: <http://www.nidi.knaw.nl/smartsite.dws?lang=EN&ch=NID&id=2807>
- The Netherlands Institute for Social Research: <http://www.scp.nl/english/>
- Netspar, Network for Studies on Pensions, Aging and Retirement: <http://www.netspar.nl/>
- The National Institute for Public Health and the Environment, with special websites for data: The Dutch National Atlas of Public Health: <http://www.zorgatlas.nl/algemeen/menu/english/>
- The National Public Health Compass: <http://www.nationaalkompas.nl/algemeen/menu-rechts/english/>
- Data from Cost of Illness studies: <http://www.kostenvanziekten.nl/systeem/service-menu-rechts/homepage-engels/>
- Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency: <http://www.pbl.nl/en/>
- VU University Medical Centre (Amsterdam) and in particular the Amsterdam Centre on Aging: <http://www.emgo.nl/research/cross-campus-collaborations/aca/>
- The Trimbos Institute: <http://www.trimbos.org/>
- TNO Work and Employment: http://www.tno.nl/content.cfm?context=thema&content=innovatiegebied&laag1=891&laag2=904&item_id=904&Taal=2

For some specific topics other institutions provide data, e.g. the Netherlands Institute for Social Research about social and cultural trends in the Netherlands, or the Trimbos institute about mental health and addiction care or TNO Work and Employment, a knowledge transfer organisation operating on the interface between academia and society.

Health and Performance

The principal sources of data on health can be reviewed on the website of the JPI Data Mapping Project (<http://jpi-dataproject.eu/home/topic/1?country=NL>). Further resources include the Rotterdam Study carried out by the Erasmus Medical Centre in Rotterdam and the Lifelines research programme of the Groningen University Medical Centre. However, these studies are more specific to regions or subgroups of the population.

The type of questions for which the reviewed data are well-suited concern the social factors that influence both health and wellbeing, and the continued ability to function and participate in society into older age. The data mainly focus on sociological aspects, and are there-

fore less appropriate for studies of biological factors in the ageing processes.

Social systems and welfare

The data on social systems can be used in studies on the variety of life courses in the Netherlands and the consequences of particular life events. Through the possibilities that are opened up by the linking of a wide variety of demographic variables with the use of social welfare, issues of gender equality and diversity can be explored. It might be possible to assess the impact of past changes in labour market policies, to the extent that such influences can be disentangled from developments in the wider (global) economy, e.g. the recent increase in the minimum age of eligibility for a state pension has had on the number of state pension recipients.

Work and productivity

The available data can be used to explore the distribution of the labour force as a whole in the various sectors, as well as the distribution of subgroups across particular age ranges, genders or cultural or ethnic backgrounds, as well as combinations thereof. To explore the relationship between health and work and work-life balance over the life-course, it is necessary to link the databases across the main themes covered by the JPI. While this is possible, it could be difficult to maintain integral coverage of the population of the Netherlands. The cross-section between several sampled surveys tends to become very small in terms of the numbers of people for whom data are available.

Education and learning

Register-based data on learning predominantly cover the younger segments of the population who are enrolled in formal education. Informal and non-formal learning are, by their very nature, somewhat less likely to be fully reported, even among those sub-populations who are surveyed for this purpose. To study the social aspects of learning, individuals' underlying motivation or its impact on the quality of life and social inclusion, the availability of long-term data is important. While some data of this kind are available, more years of data collection will be required to paint a more complete picture. The online archive of articles of Statistics Netherlands <http://www.cbs.nl/en-GB/menu/themas/onderwijs/publicaties/artikelen/archief/2013/default.htm> provides a number of examples of research, although these are predominantly relevant for younger age ranges, rather than for the older population.

Housing, urban development and mobility

The geographical distribution of people in the Netherlands, or subgroups of the population, is easy to provide

with the available data. This is also true for the older part of the population, again including aspects of diversity. The transport needs and usage levels of the population—and, by extension, mobility over larger distances—can be charted as well.

Public attitudes towards old age

Data on public attitudes towards old age are collected through surveys, the most important of which are listed on the website of the JPI Data Mapping Project. The impact of attitudes, or self-assessed abilities and behaviours of the older population, can be studied using these surveys, for example the NIDI Work and retirement panel, the Labour demand panel, the Labour supply panel, the Study on Transitions in Employment, Ability and Motivation (STREAM), the Netherlands Employers Work Survey (NEWS), the Activating Senior Potential in Ageing Europe (ASPA).

Social, civic and cultural engagement

Data on the extent to which people participate in society and in social activities come primarily from surveys, and are therefore somewhat limited in scope across the population. It is also likely that more formal roles will be reported by the population surveyed more readily than informal activities. Assessing the wider impact of such activities will therefore remain difficult. In addition, smaller subgroups of the population may not be well represented. This implies that particular forms of civic and cultural engagement primarily exercised by such smaller subgroups will be largely unknown.

Uses of technology

While surveys concerning the (private) use of modern technology do exist, this is an area that is likely to see very rapid change, as the uptake of new technology appears to be increasing among older people, partly due to advances in the interfaces between the technology and the user. In addition, as time goes by, the portion of the population who have “grown up” with modern technology will increase. Existing surveys can reflect such trends, but the extrapolation of these trends for populations in the coming years are likely to miss the mark. economy, is very high.

Wellbeing

Wellbeing is an area that tends to be covered in surveys concerning health and self-perceived health. The results

concerning particular small subgroups of the population might therefore be relatively uncertain. The wider meaning of wellbeing, including how socially included or excluded people feel, is probably more difficult to assess. Unless feelings of social exclusion are affecting people to the point where there is a medical impact, such as depression, it is likely to remain difficult to measure with existing data.

Intergenerational relationships

Data on intergenerational relationships, beyond the ties of parents-children, marriage, and other forms of civil union, need to come from relevant surveys. While these exist, the extent and detail of the questions in these surveys may not allow for substantial, in-depth studies into factors influencing relationships or generational inequality.

4. The data and the policy agenda: gaps and challenges

Statistics Netherlands is committed to supporting efforts to make government, both central and local, more open and accountable, as well as more evidence-based. In the Netherlands, the statistical use of registers underpins the evidence base for assessing the past performance of government, and the data the agency compiles are essential for planning purposes. As to the main themes of the JPI, there appear only few gaps in the Dutch data. This conclusion needs some qualification, however. First, concerning public and individual attitudes, the existing surveys may not allow for answering detailed (policy) questions. This is because the number of questions in a survey is limited, and even register-based data, collected for one particular purpose, may not be adequate for answering all questions potentially relevant to the JPI. Second, there is a threat to any data that can only be collected through surveys. The pressure to reduce administrative burdens and costs always has the greatest impact on the most costly part of any national statistics agency or research institute, these typically being surveys with lots of individual-level data that needs to be collected and collated. To reduce costs, surveys can be dropped from programmes or reduced in size. Obtaining long-term survey data and providing these data to researchers will hence be a major challenge in future years.

This policy brief summarises the major data sources for the ten policy fields identified by the working group of the Data Mapping Project of the Joint Programming Initiative “More Years, Better Lives”. An extended version of the original text and more information on the described sources are available at <http://www.jpi-dataproject.eu/>.

Imprint:

Author: Dr. Frank Pijpers, CBS (Statistics Netherlands), The Hague, Netherlands

Editor: Dr. Wenke Apt, VDI/VDE Innovation + Technik GmbH, Berlin, Germany

All rights reserved. Sole responsibilities for any information contained therein or for any use of this information lies with the authors.