



Press release

Statistics Netherlands

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One third more single people in 2015

The number of single people has increased in the nineties, from 1.8 million in 1990 to 2.2 million in 1999. According to the new household forecasts of Statistics Netherlands the number of singles will increase strongly in the next few years, and by 2015 almost 3 million people will be single, one third more than now.

Growth of single young people declines

Since the sixties more and more young people started to live alone for a while between leaving their parents and living together with a partner. Social trends, such as individualisation and emancipation were at the basis of this phenomenon. The increase in the number of young single people was partly connected with an increase in the number of young people going on to study at tertiary level; the distance between the parental home and the educational institute often made it necessary to leave home. The average level of education of young people nowadays is quite high and will not become much higher, therefore the number of single young people will only increase slightly. Nowadays more than 450 thousand single people are younger than 30, in 2015 this number will only be 50 thousand higher.

Unexpectedly single

Young single people consider living alone as a temporary stage in their lives: nine out of ten singles (20-30 years) want to live together in the future. Nowadays it is usual to live together before getting married. Relationships of cohabiting non-married couples are in general less stable than marriages; the chances of breaking up are about three times as high. One effect of this is that the increase in the number of unmarried couples causes an increase of the number of broken relationships, which in turn causes more people to live alone. In the coming years this will be an important factor in the growth of the number of singles at higher ages too. Now there are about 650 thousand singles in the age group 30-49 while this number will be more than 850 thousand by 2015.

Divorced and single

In the beginning of the seventies only one in ten marriages ended in a divorce. Since then the number of divorces has increased rapidly, although since the beginning of the nineties the divorce rate has not increased further, it is now about 25%. Statistics Netherlands expects that this rate will stay the same in the future. About 50% of divorcees do not re-marry and therefore there will be more middle-aged single people in the future. Now there are just over 250 thousand singles aged of 50-59, in 2015 there will be about 450 thousand. When children are involved, divorce leads to a one-parent family; today there are about 350 thousand one-parent families, in 2015 this number will be about the same.

Bereaved and single

At higher ages the death of the spouse is an important reason why people live alone, particularly for women as the chance of them surviving their male partners is twice as great as the chance of dying first. Women not only live longer than men (80 years against 75 years) but moreover they also marry men who are, on average, two years older. Now there are more than 850 thousand singles aged 80 years and older, in 2015 there will be 300 thousand more. Living alone becomes more difficult as people get older. At the moment some 250 thousand people live in old people's homes. It is expected that this number will stay the same in the coming years, despite the fact that there will be more old people. Older people in general want to live on their own for as

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long as possible and government policy anticipates this. In the forecasts it is expected that this trend will continue.

Marriage less popular

Until the beginning of the seventies most children left home to get married. About 90% got married and had children. Important social trends broke the standard life cycle of getting married and having children and ultimately dying or being widowed. However, the family is still popular: hardly anyone wants to live alone permanently and almost everyone wants a family with two children. Marriage on the other hand has become less important: Statistics Netherlands expects that in the future only 60% of all men will ever get married. Unmarried cohabitation has taken the place of marriage, and more and more children are born out of wedlock: one in four first children are now born to unmarried parents.

Number of couples stable

Although the number of single people has increased strongly, the number of couples (married/unmarried, with or without children) is still twice as high. At this moment there are 4.2 million couples living together. In the future this number will only increase slightly, to 4.3 million in 2015. The number of married couples will decrease from 3.5 million now to 3.3 million in 2015, but on the other hand the number of unmarried couples will increase from 700 thousand to 1 million. The growth of the total number of households from 6.8 million now to 7.7 million in 2015 is mainly on the account of the single households, which will increase by 0.7 million

More small households, more demand for small houses?

The expected growth in the number of households (almost 1 million) will increase the demand for housing. Although the growth consists mainly of small households, it remains to be seen whether the strong growth of single households will result in a greater demand for small houses. According to public housing studies this will depend on the economic climate as well as on social-cultural trends. Bigger houses can also be attractive to single people. Because the number of couples (with children) will hardly increase in the future, this factor will probably not cause a greater demand for family houses.

Uncertainty

The figures on the future development in the number of households published in this press release are uncertain, so a margin of error should be taken into account. For 2015 it is estimated that the chance is about 66% that the actual number of households will lie between 7.5 and 8 million.

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