



Press release

Statistics Netherlands

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200 thousand babies born last year

In 1999 200 thousand babies were born in the Netherlands, the highest number since 1972 and six thousand up on 1998. According to Statistics Netherlands' figures, the increase in the number of births in 1999 was caused mainly by women aged over thirty who had their first baby a few years ago, having their second last year. As women are postponing childbirth more and more, the number of women who will ultimately remain childless is increasing.

More second children

In recent years more and more women have been having their first child around the age of thirty. As most women have their second child two to three years after their first, more second children were born in 1999: 70.7 thousand, compared with 69.9 thousand in 1998.

Tomorrow never comes for some women

Women are delaying the birth of their first child by longer and longer. Half of thirty year-old women are still childless. Postponing childbirth leads to an increase in the number of women who will ultimately remain childless. Of the generation of women born in the fifties, 15% did not have any children. This is expected to rise to 20% of women born in the seventies.

Some women now in their thirties who have not yet started a family have made a conscious choice not to. Others, however, remain childless involuntarily because they can no longer become pregnant. An estimated 4% of women born in the seventies will remain involuntarily childless.

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Involuntary childlessness

The longer women wait before trying for a baby, the greater the chance that they won't be successful. Eight per cent of women who try to conceive for the first time when they are past thirty remain involuntarily childless. For women under thirty this is only 3%.

The chances of having a second baby also diminish with age. Eleven per cent of women trying for a second baby after 32 years of age do not become pregnant. Again, for women under 32 this is 3%.

Medical intervention

Most women trying to become pregnant succeed within three months. If pregnancy is not forthcoming, couples can seek fertility treatment. One in five women see a doctor before their first pregnancy. Half of these women (or their partners) undergo treatment. About 80% of women undergoing fertility treatment become pregnant. However, it is not clear how many of these women would also have become pregnant without treatment.

An estimated 13% of women over thirty would remain childless involuntarily without fertility treatment. With the aid of medical intervention, this percentage drops to 8%.

Fertility treatment cannot fully compensate the decrease in fertility caused by the delay in childbearing. Postponing motherhood to past age thirty will therefore result in an increase in involuntary childlessness by an estimated 4%. Another 16% will remain childless for other reasons.

Number of births will decrease

The number of births will fall again in the next ten years as a consequence of the drop in the seventies which means that the number of women reaching childbearing ages will decrease in the coming years. Moreover, the number of women remaining childless is increasing. Statistics Netherlands expects the number of births to fall from 200 thousand in 1999 to 176 thousand in 2010.

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