



Press release

Statistics Netherlands

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Highest number of marriages since 1992

Some 89 thousand marriages took place in the Netherlands in 1999, the fourth year in succession that the number of marriages increased. According to Statistics Netherlands' figures, the number of marriages in 1999 was the highest since 1992. In addition to the marriages, three thousand couples registered their partnership officially with a municipal registrar. Most marrying couples are around thirty years of age. Only one in five couples did not live together before getting married.

Younger and older couples

Young people are waiting longer before getting married. Today the average bridegroom is in his early thirties, and his bride just under thirty. Their parents were five years younger when they married. Not everybody waits this long though: in 1999 one in five brides were younger than 25, and the same share of bridegrooms were 40 years or older.

Living together before marriage

One of the reasons for the increasing ages at marriage is that most partners live together before getting married; only one in five couples do not.

It was still quite rare for couples to live together in the seventies, when fewer than one in five - mostly only higher educated - couples did so. It has become much more common since then, and today four out of every five men and women live together without being married.

Although most of these couples decide to get married at some time, they seem to be taking longer to reach this decision. In the early seventies, 60% of women who lived together married within three years. Twenty years on this was only one quarter of women.

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Reasons for getting married

One in five women living with a partner give children as a reason to get married. One in ten state buying a house as a motive. The continuing economic growth and the high number of babies born in 1999 might have contributed to the increase in the number of marriages. Most couples, however, do not give any particular reason for getting married, just saying they felt it was time to take this step.

Half of women who did not live together before marrying say they are against unmarried cohabitation in principle.

Immigrant couples

Immigrant couples more often marry at young ages than native Dutch couples. There are large age differences between Moroccan brides and grooms. Moroccan women are 21 on average when they marry, Moroccan men 27. For Turkish couples the differences are smaller: both the men and the women are relatively young when they marry.

Dutch men who marry women from countries like Poland, the Philippines, Thailand and the Dominican Republic are often substantially older than their brides.

Second marriages

One in every five people who marry has done so before. Divorced men who remarry are on average 44 years old, nearly four years older than divorced women marrying again. For widowers the difference is five years. Divorced men more often remarry than divorced women. One reason for this is that after a divorce children more often stay with their mothers.

Wedding plans

Nearly everyone born in the postwar generations got married. Nearly 95% of women born between 1945 and 1950 married. Younger generations are in less of a hurry. Part of this is just postponement: they just wait longer before getting married. But the proportion who never marry is increasing. Eighty per cent of women born in the seventies expect to get married at some time.

Effect of partnership registration no longer noticeable

In 1999 3.3 thousand partnerships were officially registered, down from 4.6 thousand in 1998. The number of same-sex relationships registered fell particularly strongly, from 3.0 thousand in 1998 to 1.8 thousand in 1999. This probably has to do with the fact that 1998 was the first opportunity for these couples who wanted to register to do so. The number of male-female partnerships who registered, about 1.5 thousand duizend, hardly changed in 1999.

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