



Press release

Statistics Netherlands

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One quarter of Dutch population regular church goers

In 1999 four out of ten Dutch people were non-religious: that is, they did not consider themselves as belonging to a religious or ideological denomination. Nearly one quarter of the population attended church regularly, at least once a month. There were more regular church attendees among the Calvinists than among the Dutch Reformed and Roman Catholics. Moslem people are most true to their faith, and Dutch Reformed people least likely to carry on in their parents' faith, according to Statistics Netherlands' survey on religion and church attendance.

Four in ten people non-religious

One and a half centuries ago, nearly everyone in the Netherlands considered themselves as belonging to a religious denomination. Today, over 40% of the population label themselves as non-religious. The Dutch Reformed Church has lost most followers, from 55% of the population in 1849 to 14% in 1999. The fall in the number of Roman Catholics has been less drastic, from 38% to 31%. The share of Calvinists in the population has remained fairly stable in the last hundred years, at around seven per cent. Eight per cent of the population adheres to another denomination, including some five per cent Moslems. Significant shifts between the denominations have taken place in the last five years.

Calvinists most regular church attendees

Two-thirds of the population go to church hardly ever or not at all, one in ten go less than once a month. Nearly one quarter of the population go to church at least once a month. There are more regular church attendees among the Calvinists than among the Dutch Reformed and Roman Catholics. Just over seventy per cent of Calvinists go to church regularly, compared with 36% of the Dutch Reformed, and 30% of Roman Catholics.

Moslem people true to their faith

The percentage of people who adhere to a different faith than their parents varies per religious denomination. Moslems are most likely to follow in their parents' footsteps, children of Dutch Reformed parents least likely to do so. Eighty per cent of people born to Moslem parents be-

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tween 1945 and 1964 are themselves Moslems today, four per cent have taken another faith and sixteen per cent are non-religious. Two-thirds of people born into the Catholic faith in 1945-1964 were still Catholic in 1998, while thirty per cent had becomes non-religious. For both Calvinists and Dutch Reformed, nearly half of the people born into these denominations have kept their faith. The Dutch Reformed church has suffered the highest drop-out rates: just over forty per cent of people born to a Reformed father in the period 1945-1964 are now non-religious. For the Calvinists this rate was lower: thirty per cent. Shifts in faith have occurred mostly between related denominations: most often between certain movements within the Calvinist and within the Dutch Reformed Churches.

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