



Press release

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Growing number of unmarried parents

On 1 January 2002 there were almost 200 thousand unmarried couples in the Netherlands with children living at home. This number has increased substantially in recent years, whereas the number of married couples with children living at home decreased. Consequently, more and more children have parents who are not married. There are 4.6 million children living at home, including 310 thousand children whose parents cohabit. Approximately 635 thousand children live in single parent families as figures by Statistics Netherlands show.

10% of all couples with children not married

The number of unmarried couples with children living at home has risen by 75 thousand from 123 thousand in 1997 to 198 thousand in 2002. In the same period the number of married couples with children living at home has fallen by more than 70 thousand. Hence, the total number of couples with children remained stable in recent years, although the number of unmarried parents rose sharply. Currently, almost 10% of couples with children are not married, five years ago the corresponding percentage was 6.

Marriage less relevant to prospective parents

More than 25% of unmarried parents bring children from former marriages into their new relationship. The majority of unmarried parents, however, has never been married before and their children are born from non-marital relationships. The share of never-married parents has risen considerably in recent years, five years ago it was 60%, now it is well over 70%. Increasingly, young couples prefer to remain unmarried before having children.

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Majority of unmarried couples have one child

More than half of all unmarried couples have one child. This number has slightly declined in recent years, whereas the number of unmarried couples with two children is growing. Five years ago, 33% of unmarried couples had two children; currently, this percentage is 36. Altogether, more than 310 thousand children have cohabiting parents.

More children have single parents

Not only do more children have unmarried parents than several years ago, also the number of children living in single parent families is on the increase. At the moment there are 410 thousand single parents in the Netherlands, some 40 thousand more than in 1997. As a consequence, the number of children in single parent families has grown from 565 thousand to 635 thousand in the last five years.