



Press release

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Population growth continues to fall

The population of the Netherlands increased by 15 thousand people in the first quarter of 2003. In the same period last year the increase was 20 thousand. According to figures from Statistics Netherlands the slower growth was mainly caused by fewer immigrants and more emigrants.

Population growth continues to slow down

The growth rate of the Dutch population has been slowing down since the beginning of 2001. In 2002 population growth was 123 thousand, in 2001 it fell to 118 thousand and in 2002 it decreased further, to 88 thousand. The slowdown continued into the first quarter of 2003. If the growth rate continues at this level total population growth in 2003 will be below 83 thousand.

Lower immigration

Population growth was 5 thousand lower in the first quarter of 2003 than in the same period last year. The decrease was caused by a decrease in immigration of 4 thousand people and an increase in emigration of 3 thousand. However, the decrease was tempered by an increase in births of 700 and a decrease in deaths of 800 people.

Immigration continues to fall

In the first quarter of 2003, 26 thousand immigrants registered in the Netherlands. In the first quarter of 2002 this figures was 30 thousand. The strongest decrease was for people from the former Soviet Union and from the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba. There were also fewer immigrants from countries where many asylum-seekers come from, such as Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran. Immigration did not decrease for all countries of origin. More immigrants than in the same period last year arrived from the three traditional countries of origin for the Netherlands: Turkey, Morocco and Suriname.

Immigration peaked in 2001, when 133 thousand people arrived in the Netherlands. In 2002 it fell to 124 thousand. This year it is expected to fall further, to 120 thousand.

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Increasing emigration

Emigration rose strongly last year, from 77 thousand in 2001 to 96 thousand in 2002. In the first quarter of 2003 it rose further. If this trend continues more than 100 thousand people will leave the Netherlands in 2003, a new record.

Forty-four percent of emigrants are people who were born in the Netherlands, the remaining 56 percent are immigrants, who leave the Netherlands again. Most of these are labour migrants.

Still no fall in births

Fifty thousand babies were born in the Netherlands in the first quarter of 2003. This is about the same number as in the first quarter of last year. On the basis of the economic slowdown, Statistics Netherlands expects the number of births to fall in the course of this year. In the past there has been a correlation between people's confidence in the economy and the birth rate. When consumer confidence falls, the birth rate shows a dip about one and a half to two years later. As the confidence index has dropped substantially since the beginning of 2002, a drop in the birth rate is foreseen in the course of this year.

Slightly fewer deaths

The number of deaths was slightly lower in the first quarter than twelve months previously. This fall is probably only temporary. In the coming years, the annual number of deaths will increase strongly as the population continues to age. In 2002 143 thousand people died; according to Statistics Netherlands' most recent population forecast, some 150 thousand people will die in 2007. Annual mortality will subsequently increase to some 200 thousand people in 2030.