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## Population Growth of Cities in the Netherlands

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*Published in:*  
Journal of Economic and Social Geography

*DOI:*  
[10.1111/tesg.12182](https://doi.org/10.1111/tesg.12182)

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*Document Version*  
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

*Publication date:*  
2016

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*  
van Steen, P. J. M., Pellenbarg, P. H., & Groote, P. D. (2016). Population Growth of Cities in the Netherlands. *Journal of Economic and Social Geography*, 107(1), 126-128.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/tesg.12182>

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## THE NETHERLANDS IN MAPS

# POPULATION GROWTH OF CITIES IN THE NETHERLANDS

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### INTRODUCTION: URBAN GROWTH

Today's world is characterised by an ongoing urbanisation process (Florida 2010). The share of population and economic activity that is to be found in cities is increasing in many countries around the world, including developed countries like the Netherlands. Since the early 1990s, larger Dutch cities have evidenced population growth, and this growth has accelerated since 2010 (CBS 2015). More and more young people move to cities, and less families move out of cities (PBL 2015). Not only in terms of population, but also in terms of economic activity the world is becoming more 'spiky'. It is against these backgrounds that the 2016 volume of *The Netherlands in Maps* will focus on the growth and performance of cities in the Netherlands.

### CITIES AND MUNICIPALITIES

The Netherlands has three levels of government: national government, provinces and municipalities. There are no so-called unincorporated areas; all land and inland waters belong to a municipality, and all municipalities always belong to one and not more than one of the twelve provinces. As a general rule, municipalities consist of one continuous area. The notable exception is the municipality of Amsterdam, that includes the





physically separated neighbourhood of 'Amsterdam Zuidoost' (formerly known as the Bijlmer).

The number of Dutch municipalities has decreased significantly over time: from 1,121 in 1900 to 537 in 2000 and 393 in 2015 (Lisci-Wessels 2004), indicating the ongoing desire to create a more efficient level of local government and delivery of public services. With the gradual disappearance of smaller municipalities, the relationship between core cities and towns and the names of the municipalities has become more loose – and the population size of the administrative unit, the municipality, is more and more often mistakenly interpreted to be the population figure of the main city, especially when the name of that central city is also the name of the municipality. The municipality of Breda for example has almost 180,000 residents, but the population figure for the city of Breda within that municipality is only 147,000 (CBS 2015). And the town of Emmen is home to only about half of the total municipal population of 108,000 residents – but Emmen often is included in lists of largest 'Dutch cities' or 'Dutch cities with more than 100,000 residents'. Also, in a growing number of newly created or merged municipalities the name of the municipality is unique in the sense that it is not the name of an existing city or town. For example, the municipality of Westland would, in a Google-based search for the largest Dutch


THE NETHERLANDS IN MAPS  
 Cities in the Netherlands (Part 1)

**POPULATION GROWTH 2000-2015 OF DUTCH CITIES**

Population growth 2000-2015 of municipalities of >100,000 residents (in 2015) and population growth of provinces 2000-2015 (excluding municipalities >100,000 residents in 2015) (national average 6.5%)

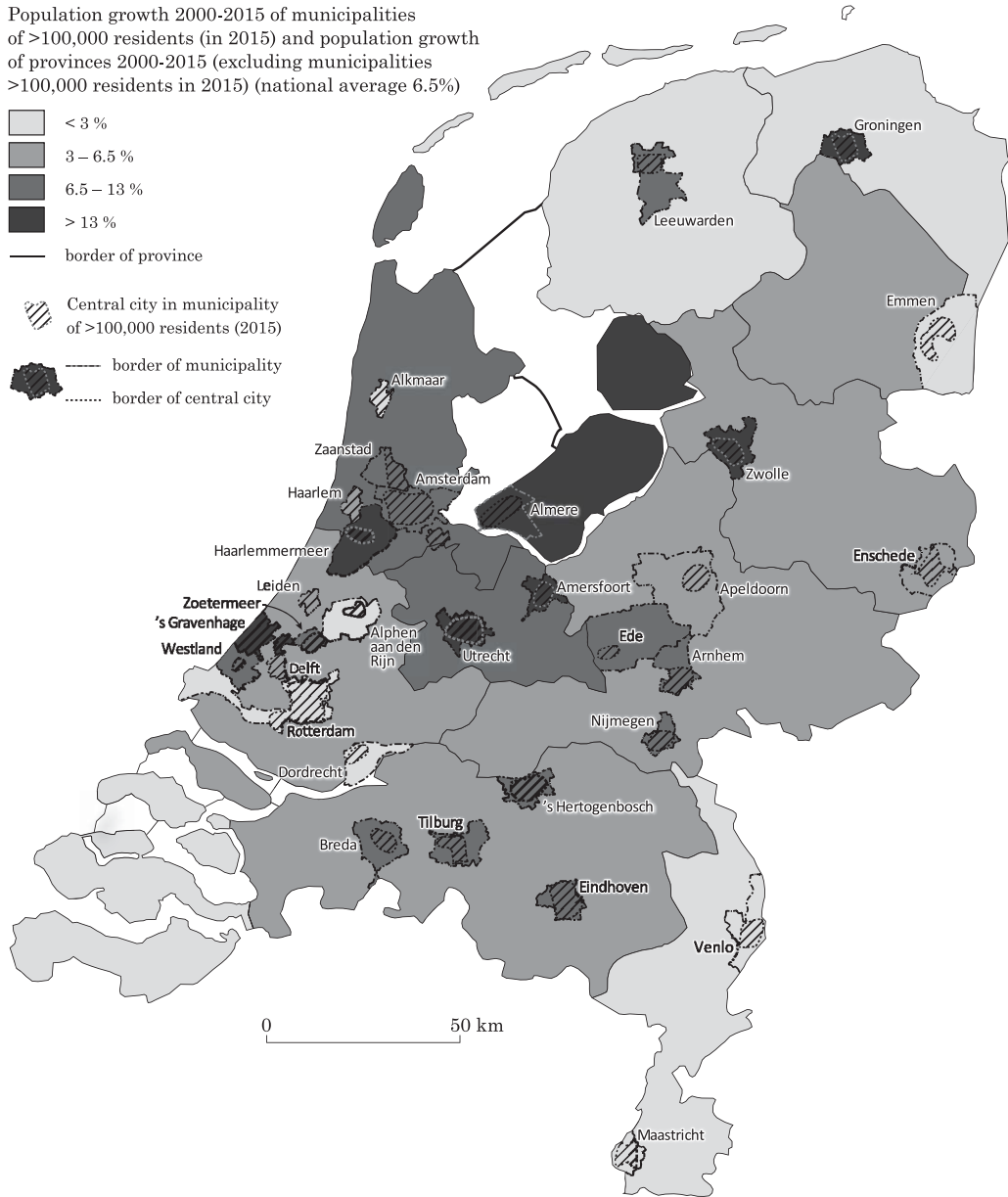
-  < 3 %
-  3 – 6.5 %
-  6.5 – 13 %
-  > 13 %

— border of province

 Central city in municipality of >100,000 residents (2015)

— border of municipality

..... border of central city



Source: CBS Statline (2015)

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*Tijdschrift voor Econ. en Soc. Geografie*, 107(2016)1

municipalities, pop up as a ‘city’ of over 100,000 residents, but in reality it is a recent merger of five smaller municipalities, with the town of Naaldwijk as the largest centre (with less than 20,000 residents). In some cases the name of the municipality confuses even more – close to 150,000 people live in the Haarlemmermeer (‘Harlem Lake’) municipality, a region that indeed was once a lake but was pumped dry in the middle of the 19th century and now not only includes the main town of Hoofddorp (‘main village’) but also Amsterdam Schiphol Airport. The municipality of Zaanstad (‘Zaan city’) has one larger city, Zaandam, but also a large area that is predominantly rural.

In the first map of this year’s volume, we have visualised all 31 municipalities with a population of over 100,000 residents on 1 January 2015. The map shows, for most of these municipalities, the smaller truly ‘urban’ area of the main city or town. For the municipalities of Alkmaar, Delft, Haarlem, Leiden and The Hague, the urban area or city almost completely coincides with that of the municipality. In other cases, however, such as Leeuwarden or Emmen, it is clear that the central town or city is part of a much larger municipality that also includes (much) smaller towns and villages as well as rural areas.

## URBAN POPULATION GROWTH

The map also shows figures for population growth between 2000 and 2015 for all municipalities with more than 100,000 inhabitants. We have worked with the municipal definition of 2015. If necessary, we reconstructed the 2000 population figures to include the (parts) of municipalities that were added to the municipalities between 2000 and 2015. In these 15 years, the population of the Netherlands grew by 6.5 per cent to 16.9 million residents. The population growth was well above average in the municipalities of Almere (+38%), Utrecht (+32%) and Haarlemmermeer (+30%). Low growth figures are seen in Dordrecht (–1%), Maastricht (0%), Emmen (+2%) and Venlo (+2%), but also in Rotterdam (+3%). The below average population growth of Rotterdam, the country’s second largest municipality (624,000 residents in 2015), is in sharp contrast

with the other largest municipalities of Amsterdam (822,000 in 2015, +12%), The Hague (515,000, +17%) and Utrecht (334,000, +32%).

Finally, in order to test if larger urban areas in the Netherlands indeed demonstrate higher than average growth rates, the map also shows growth rates for each province excluding the 31 municipalities of more than 100,000 residents in 2015. In other words, the provincial growth rates visualise the aggregate population growth of all municipalities with less than 100,000 residents in that province. Flevoland, the ‘newest’ province, which was created by means of a series of land reclamations in the middle of the 20th century, was the smallest province in the country in the year 2000 with 317,000 residents. Since then, it has seen very strong growth of the city of Almere (now close to 200,000 residents) as well as a strong population growth in the other municipalities (together +17%). Overall, the population growth in the provinces of Utrecht and North-Holland was also above average.

In most provinces, one or more municipalities can be identified with a growth rate higher than that of the surrounding region. The notable exception is the Southeastern province of Limburg. Parts of this province, as well as parts of the province of Zeeland in the Southwest and the provinces of Groningen and Friesland in the North, are characterised by population decline (cf. Haartsen & Venhorst 2010).

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