

Summary

Poverty Survey 2019

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Poverty Survey 2019 is the third edition of the SCP series on poverty to be released in the form of a digital publication. Each ‘page’ addresses a research question such as: What is poverty? How many poor people are there in the Netherlands? Which groups are most at risk of poverty? And how large is a poor household’s shortfall? Additionally, this edition also contains information on the number of people in poverty per Dutch municipality. The study is based on data from 2017.

Further reduction in poverty in 2017; just under 939,000 people living below the poverty line

- Poverty has been falling in the Netherlands since 2013. In that year, more than 1.2 million people were living below the SCP’s ‘modest but adequate’ poverty threshold; in 2017 the figure was just under 939,000. That is 5.7% of the Dutch population.
- More than 272,000 of these are children: 8.1% of all children in the Netherlands.
- Just under 92,000 of the 666,000 adults living in poverty are aged 65 or over.
- For a third of the total of 666,000 adults living in poverty, work is their main source of income: the number of working poor in 2017 was just under 220,000.
- The reduction in the poverty rate since 2013 has occurred in almost all sections of the population. People of Syrian origin are the only group where poverty has risen sharply in recent years: almost 55% of them were living below the poverty line in 2017, compared with around 40% in 2013.
- The median amount by which poor households fall short is almost €3,000 per year. In other words, the shortfall in half of the poor households is greater than this and in the other half it is smaller. In total, it would cost almost €2.2 billion to make up the income shortfalls.
- Rotterdam is the municipality with the highest percentage of people living in poverty (10.9%). The postcode area with the highest poverty rate is in Arnhem.

These are the main conclusions of the *Poverty Survey 2019*. This digital publication presents the most recent figures on poverty in the Netherlands. It provides an update of the data from the *Poverty Survey 2018*. It contains information on the total number of people living in poverty, on poverty rates in a number of at-risk groups and on the amount of the shortfall in poor households. This edition also presents data on poverty per municipality and on the twenty Dutch postcode areas with the highest poverty rates.

Number of people in poverty in the Netherlands falls below 939,000

The number of people in the Netherlands living below the SCP’s ‘modest but adequate’ poverty threshold was just under 939,000 in 2017. That is 5.7% of the population. If the stricter ‘basic needs’ criterion is used as a measure, the 2017 figure falls to around 618,000, or 3.8% of the population.

Both figures were higher in 2016: 982,000 were poor according to the ‘modest but adequate’ criterion and 660,000 measured by the ‘basic needs’ criterion. The downward trend has been under way since 2013, when there are more than 1.2 million people in poverty according to the ‘modest but adequate’ criterion and almost 790,000 based on the ‘basic needs’ criterion. The downward trend did however become less steep after 2015.

If we take debts into account, the poverty rate rises. According to the ‘modest but adequate’ criterion, 6.7% of the Dutch population were then in poverty in 2017 (4.6% according to the ‘basic needs’ criterion).

Children and people aged over 90 at increased risk of poverty

Both the youngest and the very oldest members of society are at increased risk of poverty. Roughly 9% of all children in the Netherlands aged up to 12 years are growing up in poverty according to the ‘modest but adequate’ criterion. In 2017, a total of more than 270,000 children and adolescents (aged up to 18 years) were living below the poverty line, equivalent to 8.1% of the total population aged 18 years and under.

The poverty rate among the over-65s in the Netherlands is low, at around 3%. Age is however a factor: the percentage of people in poverty is higher in the older age categories, reaching almost 11% among those aged 90 and over. This is due to the (non-reimbursed) care costs incurred by members of this group; once these costs have been deducted from their income, what remains is relatively often below the SCP poverty threshold.

One third of adults in poverty are in work

For a third of the total of 666,000 adults living in poverty, work is their main source of income: the number of working poor in 2017 was just under 220,000. Just over half of these (125,000 persons) are in waged employment; the remainder (95,000) are self-employed.

As well as those in work, there are two other large groups of adults living in poverty: social assistance benefits claimants (over 150,000 persons) and pensioners (over 105,000). The latter group are mainly people who have reached the state retirement age (89,000 persons), though some are early retirees or people in receipt of surviving dependants' pension (together just under 17,000 persons).

Almost half of adults in poverty have a migration background

In 2017, 326,000 adults in the Netherlands with a migration background were living below the poverty line, accounting for 49% of all adults in poverty. Non-Western migrants are more likely to be poor than Western migrants. First-generation migrants (born outside the Netherlands themselves) are also more often poor than members of the second generation (parents born outside the Netherlands). Migrants from refugee countries are at the greatest risk of poverty. This applies especially for Syrians: 54% of this group are poor. They are also the only group whose risk of poverty has increased in recent years. This is mainly caused by those who came to the Netherlands after 2014: the few who are in paid work tend to be in low-skilled, temporary jobs. Migrants from other refugee countries are also frequently poor, though the poverty rate in these groups has declined since 2013: among migrants from Eritrea, for example, the poverty rate has fallen from 52% to 33%, while among migrants from Afghanistan it has gone down from 35% to 21%.

Annual shortfall of almost €3,000 for poor households

Poor households fell almost €3,000 short of the amount needed to lift them out of poverty in 2017. That is a median amount: half of these households thus face a bigger shortfall, and half have a smaller shortfall. The median shortfall has been rising for a number of years: in the period 2011-2014 it stood at around €2,200 per year, in 2015 approximately €2,700 and from 2016 onwards around €3,000. It is likely that the strengthening economy has lifted households with a relatively small shortfall out of poverty, leaving households with a large shortfall behind.

Making good the income shortfall of all poor households in the Netherlands would have cost almost €2.2 billion in 2017. The reduction in the number of people in poverty means that this is less than would have been needed in 2013 (€2.6 billion).

Poorest municipality and postcode area

Rotterdam is the Dutch municipality with the highest percentage of people in poverty (10.9%), closely followed by Amsterdam (10.5%) and The Hague (10.3%). The poverty rate in all three of these municipalities has however declined by 4-5 percentage points since 2013.

Amsterdam is the municipality with the largest absolute number of people in poverty, at just under 83,000. Rotterdam and The Hague follow at some distance, with just over 65,000 and 51,000 people, respectively, in poverty.

The postcode area with the highest percentage of people in poverty is in Arnhem: 22.5% of those living in this postcode area are below the poverty line. Other poor postcode areas are found mainly in Rotterdam (nine poor postcode areas) and The Hague (seven poor postcode areas).