

**OFFICIAL NAME:** Kingdom of the Netherlands  
**CAPITAL:** Amsterdam  
**SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT:** Constitutional Monarchy  
**AREA:** 39,931 Sq Km (15,417 Sq Mi)  
**ESTIMATED 2000 POPULATION:** 15,716,600

---



**LOCATION & GEOGRAPHY:** The Netherlands is located in North West Europe. It is bound by the North Sea to the north and west, Germany to the east and Belgium to the south. The country is largely a delta comprised of silt from the mouths of the Rhine, Waal, Maas, IJssel and Schelde Rivers and is generally low and flat except for the southeast where hills rise. The inland area, which is in some places below sea level, is protected by coastal dunes and manmade dykes. Without these sea defenses around 40% of the country would be under water. The above mentioned rivers also give access for sea-going vessels to the inland waterways of Belgium and Germany. Major Cities (pop. est.); Amsterdam 724,100, Rotterdam 598,500, The Hague 445,300, Utrecht 234,100, Eindhoven 196,100 (1994). Land Use; forested 10%, pastures 31%, agricultural-cultivated 28%, other 31% (1993).

---

**CLIMATE:** The Netherlands has a temperate maritime climate influenced by the North Sea and Atlantic Ocean. Since the country is small there is little variation in climate from region to region, although the marine influences are less inland. Rainfall is distributed fairly evenly throughout the year with average annual precipitation exceeding 700 mm (28 inches). Average temperature ranges are from -1 to 4 degrees Celsius (30 to 39 degrees Fahrenheit) in January to 13 to 22 degrees Celsius (55 to 72 degrees Fahrenheit) in July.

---

**PEOPLE:** The principal ethnic majority are the Dutch who account for 96% of the population and are an ethnically homogeneous people of Saxon, Frankish and Frisian origins. Around 1% of the population are immigrants and repatriates from the Dutch East Indies that include Surinamese, Indonesian and Moluccans.

---

**DEMOGRAPHIC/VITAL STATISTICS:** Density; 443.4 persons per sq km (1,148.4 persons per sq mi) (1991). Urban-Rural; 88.5% urban, 11.5% rural (1990). Sex Distribution; 49.4% male, 50.6% female (1990). Life Expectancy at Birth; 74.0 years male, 80.2 years female (1991). Age Breakdown; 18% under 15, 24% 15 to 29, 24% 30 to 44, 17% 45 to 59, 12% 60 to 74, 5% 75 and over (1991). Birth Rate; 13.2 per 1,000 (1990). Death Rate; 8.6 per 1,000 (1990). Increase Rate; 4.6 per 1,000 (1990). Infant Mortality Rate; 7.1 per 1,000 live births (1990).

---

**RELIGIONS:** Mostly Christians with 36% of the population Roman Catholic while 18.5% are Dutch Reformed and 8.4% are of other reformed churches.

---

**LANGUAGES:** The official language is Dutch which is spoken by almost the entire population. The principal minority language is Frisian while English and German are also widely understood.

---

**EDUCATION:** Aged 25 to 64 and having attained: primary education 16.7%, secondary 61.8%, higher 20.0%, other 1.5% (1985). Literacy; literate population aged 15 or over virtually 100% (1990).

---

**MODERN HISTORY - WWII TO 1993:** From 1948 to 1958 a coalition government led by Willem Drees held power. In 1949 the Netherlands granted independence to the Dutch East Indies, most of which became Indonesia and in the same year joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In 1953 devastating North Sea floods killed around 2,000 people. In 1954 the colonies of Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles became equal partners in the Dutch Kingdom. In 1957 the Netherlands became a founding member of the European Community (EC). In 1962 the Netherlands gave up control of Netherlands New Guinea (now Indonesian Irian Jaya) to the UN. In 1973 Joop den Uyl was elected Prime Minister. In 1975 Suriname was granted independence and during the 1970's South Moluccan exiles began terrorist attacks as a result of their homeland being integrated into Indonesia. In 1982 Ruud Lubbers of the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) became Prime Minister and was re-elected in 1986. In 1986 the island of Aruba seceded from the Netherlands Antilles and became an equal partner in the Dutch Kingdom. In the same year the parliament approved the controversial installation of US cruise missiles on its territory. In Sept. 1989 after the governing coalition party fell apart, Lubbers was reelected and formed another coalition government. In Aug. 1990 the Netherlands sent two marine frigates to the Gulf to support the UN trade embargo against Iraq. On June 15, 1991 the Netherlands Communist Party dissolved itself after 82 years and merged with the Political Party Radicals, the Evangelical People's Party and the Pacifist Socialist Party to form the Groen Links (Green Left) party. In Sept. 1991 there were massive demonstrations and country-wide strikes organized by unions in protest to the government's economic austerity measures which involved reductions in social security benefits and health services. On Sept. 28, 1991 the government survived a vote of no confidence and on Oct. 5, 1991 some 250,000 people participated in mass demonstrations in The Hague, although government policy remained unaffected by all the protests. On Nov. 13, 1991 two bombs exploded causing property damage, although no loss of life with the Revolutionary Anti-Racist Action (RARA) declaring the attacks in protest to the Secretary of State's policy on political asylum. On Feb. 7, 1992 the formal signing of the Maastricht Treaty on European Union took place in which a timetable and the framework was established for European Union. On Feb. 28, 1992 the government approved its country's involvement in peacekeeping operations in

Yugoslavia. In March 1992 the Labor Party (PvdA) elected both Felix Rottenberg and Ruud Vreeman as the new two-headed leadership. On Oct. 4, 1992 an Israeli Boeing 747 cargo plane crashed into an Amsterdam 10-story high rise apartment building killing an estimated 100 people. In Nov. 1992 the government ratified the treaty by acclamation and in Dec. 1992 Dutch farmers marched in protest to an EU-US agricultural accord. On Jan. 12, 1993 the government announced plans to reduce its military force by 44% by 2002 with the army reduced by 54% and the navy by 25%. On Jan. 28, 1993 the Parliament passed new legislation on disability benefits, ending the debate and protests that began in 1991 and on Feb. 9, 1993 after 20 years of debate the Parliament also passed a bill that would permit doctors to carry out euthanasia under strict medical and ethical guidelines. In May and June 1993 a parliamentary inquiry into fraudulent disability benefit allegations by retrenched workers in the 1980's began, although it found no such proof of irregularities. Also in June 1993 the Secretary of State for Social Affairs, Elske ter Veld resigned following an emotional debate over social welfare, leaving serious rifts within the Parliamentary party faction. In Nov. 1993 the Senate passed the euthanasia bill that fell short of legalizing euthanasia but alleviated criminal prosecution as long as strict guidelines were adhered to by doctors.

---

**CURRENCY:** The official currency is the Euro divided into 100 cents.

---

**ECONOMY:** Gross National Product; USD \$316,390,000,000 (1993). Public Debt; USD \$195,935,000,000 (1993). Imports; NG 234,972,000,000 (1993). Exports; NG 258,226,000,000 (1993). Tourism Receipts; USD \$4,690,000,000 (1993). Balance of Trade; NG 41,982,000,000 (1994). Economically Active Population; 6,406,000 or 41.9% of total population (1993). Unemployed; 7.5% (1993).

---

**MAIN TRADING PARTNERS:** Its main trading partners are Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg, France, the USA and East European countries.

**MAIN PRIMARY PRODUCTS:** Cereals, Fish, Fruit and Vegetables, Livestock, Oil and Gas, Potatoes, Poultry, Salt, Sugar Beets.

**MAJOR INDUSTRIES:** Agriculture, Chemicals, Clothing, Diamond Cutting, Fertilizers, Fishing, Food Processing, Forestry, Iron and Steel, Oil and Gas Production and Refining, Printing, Ship Building, Textiles, Tobacco Processing.

**MAIN EXPORTS:** Chemicals, Dairy Produce, Flower Bulbs, Fruit and Vegetables, Iron and Steel, Machinery, Meat, Natural Gas, Petroleum Products, Textiles.

---

**TRANSPORT:** Railroads; route length 2,828 km (1,757 mi) (1989), passenger-km 10,162,000,000 (6,314,000,000 passenger-mi) (1989), cargo ton-km 3,094,000,000

(2,119,000,000 short ton-mi) (1989). Roads; length 115,305 km (71,647 mi) (1989). Vehicles; cars 5,509,000 (1990), trucks and buses 555,000 (1990). Merchant Marine; vessels 1,227 (1990), deadweight tonnage 4,724,765 (1990). Air Transport; passenger-km 25,296,000,000 (15,718,000,000 passenger-mi) (1989), cargo ton-km 2,084,600,000 (1,427,743,000 short ton-mi) (1989).

---

**COMMUNICATIONS:** Daily Newspapers; total of 64 with a total circulation of 4,600,000 (1994). Radio; receivers 13,400,000 (1993). Television; receivers 5,675,000 (1993). Telephones; units 7,630,000 (1993).

---

**MILITARY:** 70,900 (1994) total active duty personnel with 60.9% army, 20.2% navy and 12.7% air force while military expenditure accounts for 2.4% (1993) of the Gross National Product (GNP).