Population Structure

The first general population census was conducted in late 1829 and early 1830, although earlier censuses were organized in 1795 for the Batavian Republic and in 1815 at the creation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The two preceding centuries did not encourage census-taking due to the decentralized structure of the federation. Since 1830 population censuses have been taken decennially, but not always at the end or the beginning of each decade. The first two censuses of 1830 and 1840 were not published in separate volumes; instead, the data were included in later titles. The first census to be published in a separate volume was the 1849 census. (For a history of Dutch population censuses see Den Dulk and Van Maarseveen, 1999). During the nineteenth century Dutch statistics were not permanently institutionalized and are characterized by great institutional diversity. A central statistical office was not established until 1899 (Van Maarseveen and Schreijnders, 1999).

Data on population by age, sex, and marital status in one-year age groups are available for the whole time span since 1830. Disaggregations by sex and type of settlement (town or rural community) are available. The later censuses introduced classification by community size.

Vital Statistics

The recording of births, deaths, and marriages was already introduced in 1804, but published data and coherent time series are available only since the 1870s. Vital statistics as historical time series were published by the CBS on the occasion of the centenary of the official Dutch statistics bureau in 1999 (Van der Bie, Dehing, and Smits (1999); see also EURODATA Newsletter no. 10, pp. 33f.; bibliographic documentation for the years 1899–1998 is available from Baarsel and Commandeur (no date)).

Households and Families

Data on households (huishoudens) were collected already in the 1830 census, though only the number of households and household members was given in this census. The following censuses expanded the available information on households. Disaggregations for the eleven provinces of Noordbrabant, Gelderland, Zuidholland, Noordholland, Zeeland, Utrecht, Friesland, Groningen, Drenthe, and Limburg were introduced as early as 1830. Later censuses distinguished between ‘large communities’ and ‘other communities’ (censuses of 1840, 1849, 1859, 1869, 1879, 1889). Households by composition were first introduced in 1869, distinguishing between related and unrelated persons, single persons, and persons in institutional households. This classification was changed in 1879 into households with household heads, children, servants, other persons, and single persons, distinguished by sex. It was repeated in 1889 and constantly used until the 1971 census. Households by size (number of persons) were first published in 1909 in seven categories and combined with the number of servants in nine categories. Households by profession of household head were not published before 1960.

The definition of a household (huishoud, since 1930 called gezin) was more or less the same from 1899 until the last census of 1971. Family households were distinguished from one-person and institutional households and included all those households made up of a family nucleus, whether a married couple with or without children, an unmarried parent with child(ren), or a widowed/divorced person with children. Relatives and servants living in the household were not counted as single persons, but as household members. The reference person for statistical purposes was the household head, which was in most cases a man (the husband or father).

Family statistics did not start before the census of 1930 and were continued in 1947. The 1930 census dealt with household composition, households by number of persons, and households by number of children.

Special investigations of marital fertility were introduced in 1930 and repeated in 1947. Separate volumes for family statistics and fertility statistics have been published since 1930.

Remarks (also see introductory Table 6.1)

Data from 1930 to 1939 have been created by linear extrapolation using the growth rates of the censuses from 1920 to 1930.

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1 See Centrale Commissie voor de Statistiek (1893), p. 58, Table VII, Note 1, stating that before 1879 there are no data comparable with those of 1879 and 1889.