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REFUGEE POVERTY IN THE NETHERLANDS



In 2018, the Netherlands' government reported that 584,000 households, or 7.9% of the general population, were subsisting on an income at or below the poverty line. In other words, they were making less than 60% of the national median disposable income. This is relatively low; [the Netherlands has the fifth-lowest rate of poverty](#) [<https://longreads.cbs.nl/european-scale-2019/poverty/>], amongst the nations in the European Union, and poverty rates have been on the decline over the past several years due to economic growth and lower unemployment rates. However, refugee poverty in the Netherlands remains a major concern.

The Netherlands' Reputation

Refugees and immigrants have always been attracted to the country because of its [historically high levels of tolerance](#).

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[\[https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/migration-netherlands-rhetoric-and-perceived-reality-challenge-dutch-tolerance\]](https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/migration-netherlands-rhetoric-and-perceived-reality-challenge-dutch-tolerance). The

Netherlands is also notorious for being a nation of prosperity, egalitarianism, and humanitarian aid. For instance, in World War I, 900,000 Belgians sought refuge in the Netherlands, which was neutral, to escape fighting. During the Holocaust, tens of thousands of people fleeing the Nazis hid in the Netherlands until it was occupied by Axis powers.

Fast forward to the twenty-first century, and once again, tens of thousands of people from all over the world are [applying for asylum in the Netherlands](https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/migration-netherlands-rhetoric-and-perceived-reality-challenge-dutch-tolerance) [\[https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/migration-netherlands-rhetoric-and-perceived-reality-challenge-dutch-tolerance\]](https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/migration-netherlands-rhetoric-and-perceived-reality-challenge-dutch-tolerance) each year. Although some are moving around within the European Union, many are escaping their war-torn countries of birth. In 1998, this was due to the Yugoslav wars, which kept the number of asylum seekers at high numbers until 2004. In 2015, the Syrian Civil War commenced the flow of a new wave of refugees that are still coming in high numbers today.

Refugees Struggle Financially

Although these refugees are welcomed into the country, they do not fare as well economically as their Dutch counterparts. Currently, 79% of Syrian refugees are making less than the low-income threshold, and 95% rely on income support as their main source of income. The nationality of refugees that are best off, Iranians, are still four times as likely to be living in poverty as their Dutch counterparts. In total, [53% of refugee households have a low income](https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/news/2018/46/half-of-refugee-households-at-risk-of-poverty) [\[https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/news/2018/46/half-of-refugee-households-at-risk-of-poverty\]](https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/news/2018/46/half-of-refugee-households-at-risk-of-poverty).

A cycle has developed because sectors of the Dutch economy, such as agriculture and labor, depend on migrant workers. However, these jobs consistently do not pay well, and few efforts have been made to increase their wages. Because refugees typically do not have schooling on par with those from the EU, they have limited job options, and they [continue to struggle economically](https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/news/2018/46/half-of-refugee-households-at-risk-of-poverty) [\[https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/news/2018/46/half-of-refugee-households-at-risk-of-poverty\]](https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/news/2018/46/half-of-refugee-households-at-risk-of-poverty).

Who Is Helping

The Dutch government has done a lot to help incoming refugees. To ensure that immigrants are adjusting well to a new country, immigrants must take a [national integration exam within three years of arrival](https://www.resettlement.eu/country/netherlands) [\[https://www.resettlement.eu/country/netherlands\]](https://www.resettlement.eu/country/netherlands). There are

additional levels of support for highly educated refugees resettling in the Netherlands. The Foundation for Refugee Students (UAF) allows for better planning of “educational guidance, language training and educational courses once refugees arrive in the Netherlands.” UAF provides housing for refugees in areas that are close to universities and higher education establishments, and it has recently created a mentor program that matches Dutch students with resettled refugees to provide them with support to settle into university life.

The Netherlands has been a place refugees immigrated to during many different conflicts, including the 2015 Syrian Civil War. However, an economic gap still remains between native-born Dutch citizens and refugees. In order to address this issue, the government and UAF have been working to make the transition into the country easier and positively impact refugee poverty in the Netherlands.

– *Sophie van Leeuwen*

Photo: Pixabay [<https://pixabay.com/photos/amsterdam-netherlands-crowd-people-3736145/>]

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GLOBAL POVERTY, THE NETHERLANDS

POVERTY IN THE NETHERLANDS



Poverty in the Netherlands? Pockets of poverty still exist.

Around 2.5 million people in the Netherlands

[<http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2014/10/25-million-people-in-the-netherlands/>]

live below the poverty line. With a population of 17 million, that means around 14 percent or one in seven people lives below the poverty line [<https://borgenproject.org/poverty-rate-in-the-netherlands/>].

Poverty in the Netherlands: Implications and Solutions

The poverty line for the Netherlands

[<https://borgenproject.org/poverty-rate-in-the-netherlands/>] is drawn at approximately €1,040 a month for a single individual and up to €1,960 for a couple with two children. These figures calculate to \$1,174 up to \$2,213 and they are considered the bare minimum necessary to eat, live and partake in social activities in the Netherlands.

Some 217,000 Dutch households

[<http://www.nltimes.nl/2015/12/16/one-in-eight-dutch-kids-grow-up-in-poverty-poor-families-set-to-decrease/>], were found, in 2014, to have lived on or below the poverty line for at least four consecutive years, indicating a lack of support from the Netherlands' government to help its less fortunate citizens since the worldwide economic crash of 2008.

Those family units most likely to land below the poverty line

[<https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/news/2013/49/poverty-survey-2013-sharp-rise-in-poverty-in-2012-but-growth-expected-to-weaken>] in the Netherlands are single parents, singles over the age of 65, non-Western households and anyone living solely on social assistance benefits, all of whose poverty rates have risen dramatically since 2012.

To help single parents below the poverty line, the Dutch government affected the Child-Care Schemes Reform Act in 2015 [http://europa.eu/epic/countries/netherlands/index_en.htm]. The act provides income specifically for a child or children based on the parent's income to help offset the considerable cost of rearing children. Netherlands' government will also award double the amount of financial aid to parents of severely disabled children who require round-the-clock care.

There is still much work to be done to help combat poverty in the Netherlands; organizations such as CARE [<http://www.carenederland.org/english/>] and Cordaid [<https://www.cordaid.org/en/topics/cordaid-in-the-netherlands/>] work tirelessly to create employment opportunities and build thriving communities in the Netherlands. With their work and continued support from the government, poverty in the Netherlands will decrease in the years to come.

– Bayley McComb

Photo: [Flickr](#)

[<https://www.flickr.com/photos/faceme/14583295546/in/photolist-odFcG7-5ihxaF-5inbN9-5igYe6-5imT8d-5imXVo-5ih2UP-5ihBZk-5ihAnv-5in5ju-mzqmuM-5ikQ8o-5igxRZ-5im1hY-5igQev-5igysv-5igMMg-5ihNz8-5ikQGm-5imtK1-5igqtX>]

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