

Mayors Dialogue on Growth and Solidarity

City profile: Amsterdam, Netherlands



Population: 872,757 (2020)
GDP per capita: \$66,827 (2018)
Major industries: services (ICT, business, financial)
Percentage of migrants: 33.4% (2020)
Mayor's name: Femke Halsema | **Next election date:** 2022

Socioeconomic profile

Amsterdam is the capital city of the Netherlands. Located in the North Holland province, it is the country's most populated city, with 872,757 residents recorded in 2020 (Statistics Netherlands, n.d.a). It is part of the wider Amsterdam metropolitan area, which has around 2.5 million residents (Metropoolregio Amsterdam, n.d.) and is the most densely populated part of the country, with 5,214 inhabitants/km². Population growth has accelerated over the past decade when Amsterdam has experienced a population growth rate of 1.4% per annum (Statistics Netherlands, n.d.b). The city's government anticipates around 11,000 additional inhabitants and 5,000 new homes each year (as well as a growing numbers of visitors), implying significant challenges as homes become increasingly unaffordable, and public spaces and transport grow more congested (City of Amsterdam, n.d.a).

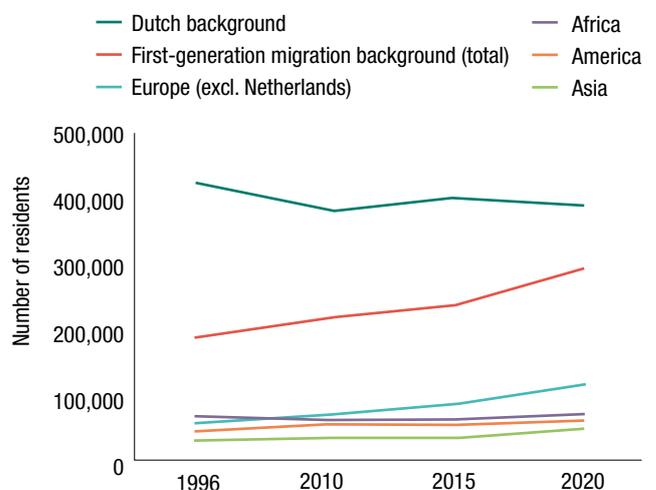
The GDP per capita in Amsterdam is \$66,827, among the highest across European cities.¹ The economy of Amsterdam is characterised by a strong service sector, including a prominent ICT cluster, business and financial services (SEO Economisch Onderzoek, 2009). The city is also a key hub for international trade, the import and export of raw materials and food, with the Port of Amsterdam ranked as the fourth busiest cargo port in Europe (McCarthy, 2019). In addition, the city has experienced a sustained increase in the number of jobs in the tourism industry (Statista, 2019). There is traditionally very low unemployment in the Netherlands (Statistics Netherlands, n.d.c). Amsterdam's unemployment rate, although one of the highest in the country, was only 3.9% in 2018 (OECD Stats, n.d.). Although unemployment is low, poverty remains a challenge. Amsterdam has one of the highest rates of poverty in the country: in 2017, 17.2% of Amsterdam households had low incomes and 18.3% of children

in the city were growing up in poverty (NL Times, 2019a). The city has made progress to reduce youth unemployment in recent years (NL Times, 2019b) and there is a high level of satisfaction (94%) reported by residents (European Commission, 2016).

Migration profile

Between 2015 and 2018, about three-quarters of population growth in the Netherlands came about through international migration (Statistics Netherlands, 2019). Migrants are mainly settling in cities. In Amsterdam, 33.4% of residents have a first-generation migration background (Statistics Netherlands, n.d.a). If both first and second generations are taken into account, then just under 56% of residents have a migration background (Statistics Netherlands, n.d.a). The migrant population is diverse. While the majority are from European countries, migrants from Africa and

Migration profile of Amsterdam



Source: Statistics Netherlands (n.d.a)

¹ Figure is provided in nominal US\$ and is not comparable with other cities profiled. See OECD Stats (2018). Information is extracted in US\$, constant prices at constant PPP, converted into local currency using OECD PPP – local currency conversion rate, then converted into nominal US\$ using OECD's local currency to US\$ conversion rate.

the Americas also constitute an important part of the city's population. Although Amsterdam experiences relatively low unemployment compared with many European cities, people with a migrant background are more likely to be unemployed, particularly if they are from a non-Western background (van den Bossche, 2019). Amsterdam also hosts refugees and asylum-seekers. The city decided to house a maximum of 2,000 asylum-seekers in Asylum Seekers' Centres (Asielzoekerscentra, AZCs) (City of Amsterdam, n.d.b) and is also experimenting with options to provide more affordable housing for refugees. Nine blocks of shipping containers stacked on a former sports ground have been transformed into housing units for 565 residents, half allocated to refugees and the other half to young people from the Netherlands (Le Blond, 2018). In recent years, refugees have primarily arrived from Syria and, to a lesser degree, from Iraq, Eritrea, Iran and Afghanistan (Statistics Netherlands, 2019). Poverty rates are more than six times higher among refugee households (Statistics Netherlands, 2018).

Governance structure

The governing bodies of Amsterdam consist of the city council, the College of Mayor and Alderpersons, and its district committees (City of Amsterdam, n.d.c). Together these form the Amsterdam city government. The city

council is the highest governing body and consists of elected representatives of the people of Amsterdam. City council elections are held every four years, when residents vote to elect the 45 council members, as well as the members of the district committee that will manage their city district. Amsterdam has seven city districts: Centre, Nieuw-West, Noord, Oost, West, Zuid, Zuidoost, each with its own district committee.

The Mayor is the chairperson of both the College of Mayor and Alderpersons and the city council. The city council, chaired by the Mayor, determines policy, while the College of Mayor and Alderpersons is responsible for daily operations and policy implementation. The city has developed its 'Structural Vision for 2040'. This includes, among other aims, plans to: build an additional 70,000 homes by 2040; expand the public transport system throughout the metropolitan area with connections both inside and outside the city; improve public streets, squares, parks and quaysides to enable more space and safety for pedestrians and cyclists as the city's housing grows; and expand green spaces (City of Amsterdam, n.d.a). The council is also working to make the city climate-proof, constructing green roofs for improved rainwater collection and investing in solar roofing, more efficient heating systems, additional wind turbines in the Port of Amsterdam and a wind farm in the North Sea (City of Amsterdam, n.d.a).

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