

Summary

Population decline does not, by definition, lead to less mobility. Although the size and composition of the population do influence mobility and traffic congestion levels, the defining factor is in fact the sum total of various other developments, such as, for example, economic, spatial and social-cultural changes. This is the reason why mobility will continue to increase in the coming decades, even in regions where the population is in decline.

More and less population: more 'in the hand', less in the borderlands

Although the population in some areas of the Netherlands is declining, the population of the Netherlands as a whole is growing: there will be approximately 1 million additional residents by 2030. Population growth is especially expected to occur in the Randstad (i.e. the Amsterdam-Utrecht-Hague-Rotterdam conurbation) and in the Randstad's surrounding cities: Almere, Alkmaar, Zwolle, Arnhem, Breda, Tilburg and Eindhoven. To a certain extent the Randstad will therefore become a 'Handstad' (a hand with fingers). The population will however contract in rural and borderland regions of the Netherlands: Northeast-Groningen, Zeeland Flanders, the Achterhoek and also South-Limburg.

Population decline will not render quiet regions quieter

A decrease in the population does not lead to less traffic congestion in the so-called population declining regions. An important explanation for this is that the effect of there being fewer people is compensated for by higher travel rates per person. The region Northeast-Groningen is one such example: owing to population decline, car use will decrease by a maximum of 8 percent by 2030. Due to other factors, however, car use will in fact rise by 30 percent. Ultimately, this accounts for a total growth of 22 percent. Population decline will also have a similarly limited effect on freight transport. Regional public transport however will come under increasingly greater pressure.

Due to population growth, congested regions become more congested

Population growth leads to greater pressure being exerted on the road network in major urban areas, particularly in the Randstad and its surroundings. Breda and the surrounding area is one such example: owing to population growth, car use will increase by a maximum of 9 percent by 2030. But owing to other factors, car use will rise by another 37 percent. Ultimately, this will result in an increase of 46 percent.