

Press release

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Crises affect health and happiness of more than 4 in 10 Dutch citizens

Multiple crises within and outside the Netherlands are causing the Dutch population growing distress. These crises impact on the health and happiness of more than 4 in 10 Dutch citizens. Three quarters of the population find that their concerns have an impact on their own resilience; this applies for almost 9 in 10 of young people aged 18 to 35. Most of their worries relate to inflation (64%), wars (57%) and to the costs of, and access to health care (51%). These are followed by issues such as the housing shortage (48%), the climate (46%), migration (39%) and livelihood security. This is shown by an a.s.r. survey into how concerns about national and global events affect the resilience of the Dutch population and the impact that this has on wellbeing and health.

Four in 10 Dutch citizens worry daily about developments in the Netherlands and elsewhere and say that they increasingly experience negative emotions. The highest scores are given for uncertainty (53%), sombreness (41%) and stress (29%). The coronavirus pandemic appears to have been a starting point; more than 6 in 10 say that their worries have increased since then. Nevertheless, pandemics as such are no longer the main reason why the Dutch are losing sleep; 21% of respondents said that they (still) worry about pandemics. Student debt was the only cause for concern with a lower score, of 9%.

Concerns vary by age group

Different age groups have different responses to the causes for concern. The oldest age group (56+) stated that its main causes for concern are wars (70%), health care costs/access to health care (65%), the climate (55%) and migration (51%). Young people (aged 18 to 35) primarily express concern about inflation (70%), housing shortages (61%) and wars (45%). The group aged 36 to 55 is primarily concerned about inflation (63%) and wars (52%).

The emotional responses also vary by age group. Apart from the fact that all age groups assign the highest scores to uncertainty, young people experience notably more stress (48%), anxiety (33%) and despair (20%) than the other groups. Besides uncertainty, the 36 to 55 and 56-plus age groups have higher scores for sombreness (41% and 45% respectively) than young people (36%).

Relationship of resilience to happiness and health

The survey showed that the lower a person's resilience, the greater the negative impact on health and happiness. Respondents who assigned a low score to their own resilience noticed the negative impact of this on their health (93%) and happiness (94%). People who described their resilience as 'satisfactory' or 'good' felt that impact less sharply.

Young people assign their resilience the lowest score of all age groups, of 6.9 out of 10, compared with 7.0 for the 35 to 55 group and 7.4 for the 56-plus group. Young people also notice a greater negative impact of the crises on their happiness and health. Only 13% of the youngest age group said that recent developments had not had any effect on their happiness and 17% noticed no effects on their health. The 56-plus age group appears to be the most stable; 23% experienced no impact on their happiness and 34% experienced no impact on their health.

In terms of work status, pensioners assign themselves the highest score, of 7.5, for resilience. Respondents who are employed assigned themselves an average of 7.2. Respondents who are not working* gave themselves the lowest score, of 6.4.

'I bounce back'

The Resilience Survey, involving a representative survey of more than 1,000 Dutch citizens, was conducted by a.s.r. this autumn to support its [Ik veer mee \('I bounce back'\) programme](#). In addition to providing good health care insurance, a.s.r. aims to help people to deal with unexpected setbacks in life with greater resilience. Participants in the programme can test their resilience and then work on the Five Themes of Resilience: meaning, positive emotions, social support, dealing with change and physical fitness. The programme is available for everyone and teaches participants how to train their resilience. The resilience test has now been completed more than 13,000 times.

(*not working, but below retirement age, e.g. unemployed, disabled, job-seeker).

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