



## PEDIATRIC RESEARCH | POPULATION STUDY

# The world's tallest nation has stopped growing taller: the height of Dutch children from 1955 to 2009

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## Abstract

### Background:

Records show that mean height in The Netherlands has increased since 1858. This study looks at whether this trend in the world's tallest nation is continuing. We consider the influence of the geographical region, and of the child and parental education, on changes in height.

### Methods:

We compared the height of young Dutch people aged 0–21 y as determined on the basis of the growth study of 2009, with the height data from growth studies conducted in 1955, 1965, 1980, and 1997.

### Results:

The analysis sample included 5,811 boys and 6,194 girls. Height by age was the same as in 1997. Mean final height was 183.8 cm (SD = 7.1 cm) in boys and 170.7 cm (SD = 6.3 cm) in girls. The educational levels of both children and their parents are positively correlated with mean height. Since 1997, differences between geographical regions have decreased but not vanished, with the northern population being the tallest.

### Conclusion:

The world's tallest population has stopped growing taller after a period of 150 y, the cause of which is unclear. The Dutch may have reached the optimal height distribution. Alternatively, growth-promoting environmental factors may have stabilized in the past decade, preventing the population from attaining its full growth potential.

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