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#### Asylum seekers and refugees

## Recent cohorts of refugees in the Netherlands

Note by Statistics Netherlands\*

### *Abstract*

Since 2014, the number of asylum seekers coming to the Netherlands increased significantly. Many of them received permits to remain in the Netherlands. In order to monitor the integration of this group, Statistics Netherlands created cohorts of all permit holders from 2014 to the first half of 2016, using integral data from the system of Social Statistical Datasets (SSD). These cohorts were monitored on integration regarding housing arrangements, education, social security, employment and registered crime during the first 18 months after receiving their permit in the Netherlands.

Most of the permit holders are single, but this number decreases once refugees moved into municipal housing. This is due to family reunification. Refugees who partake in education, predominantly enrol in primary and secondary education; (higher) vocational and scientific education is less frequently attended. After 18 months, still 90% of the permit holders are dependent on social benefits. After 18 months, the number of employed refugees remains low. Permit holders are less often suspected of a crime than other persons with a non-western migration background.

Statistics Netherlands will update and publish this research yearly until at least 2020, making it possible to integrally follow cohorts of refugees over a long period of time.

\*Prepared by Mr. Jeroen Ooijevaar. This paper is derived from the Statistics Netherlands publication: “Van opvang naar integratie” (“from shelter to integration”) by Martine de Mooij, Zoë Driessen, Evelien Ebenau, Corina Huisman and Stephan Verschuren.

## I. Introduction

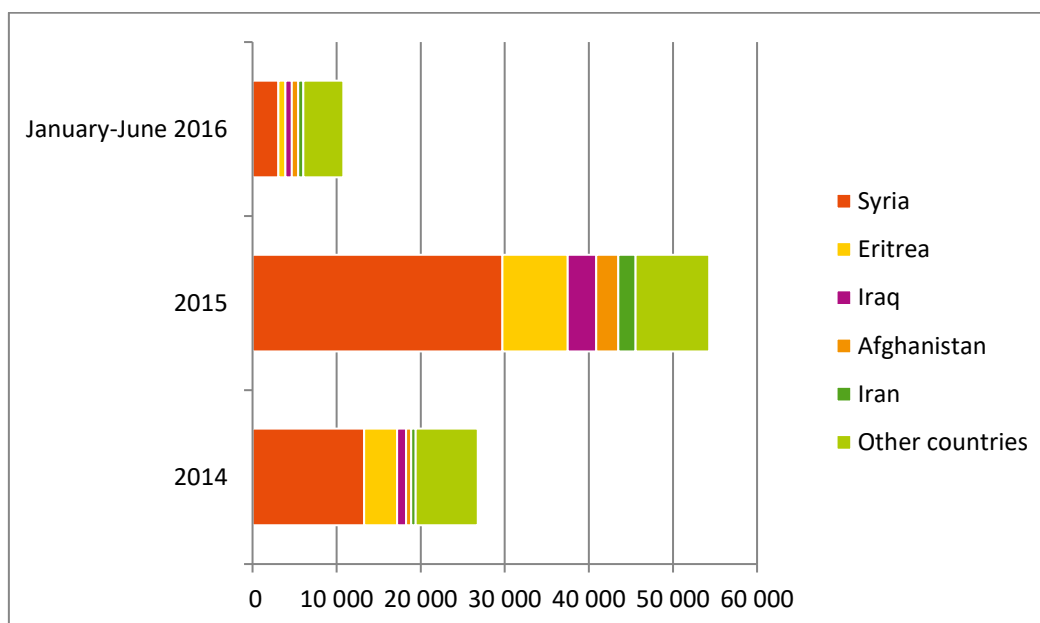
### 1.1. Background

1. In 2014, 27 thousand asylum seekers came to the Netherlands. In 2015, this amount doubled to 54 thousand and in the first half of 2016 11 thousand refugees reported to the Dutch border. These numbers concern persons who found shelter in one of the locations of the central agency for the reception of asylum seekers (COA). Family members of refugees who arrived at a later time and came to an asylum centre are also included in these numbers.

2. In 2014 and 2015, the largest group of asylum seekers that came to COA locations were asylum seekers from Syria. Figure 1.1.1 shows that in 2014 and 2015 about half of the total number of asylum seekers has the Syrian nationality. The second largest group has the Eritrean nationality, about 15%.

3. In the first half of 2016, the influx of Syrian and Eritrean asylum seekers has decreased in comparison to 2015, but influx from 'safe nations' has increased. The Syrian group is still largest (28%), but Albanians take the second place (Albanians are part of "other countries" in figure 1.1.1), third are Eritrean asylum seekers and the fourth place is held by asylum seekers from former Yugoslavia.

Figure 1.1.1 Influx into the Netherlands in the period of January 2014 - June 2016



Source: Statistics Netherlands

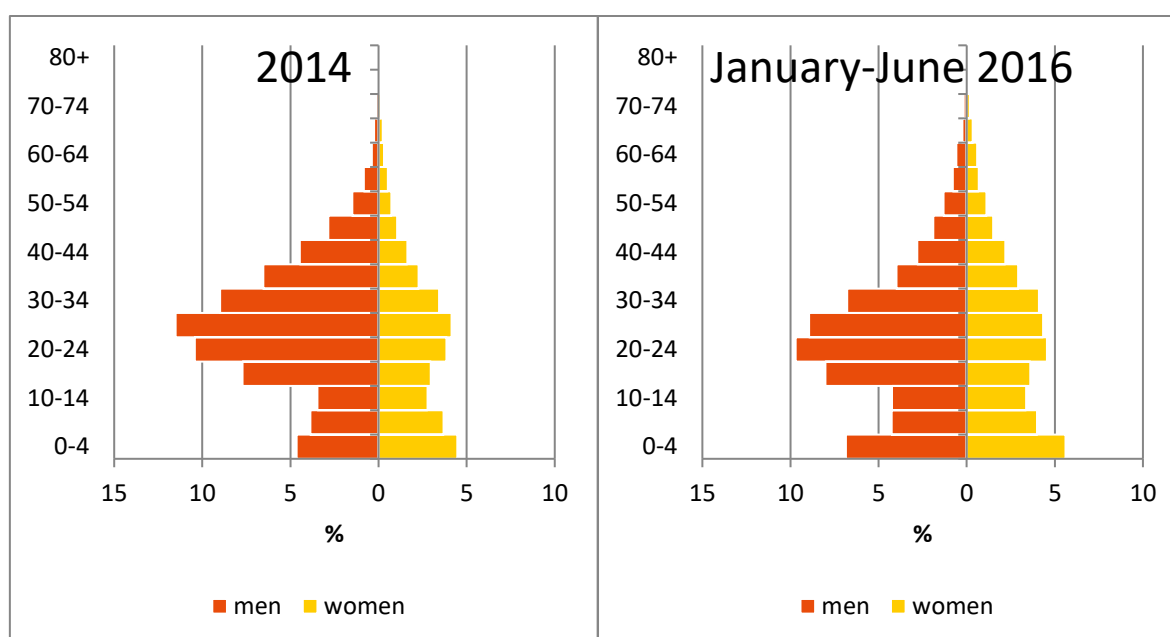
4. Most asylum seekers are young. About half of them are less than 25 years old at the moment of arriving in the Netherlands. Over three-quarters of them are aged below 35. This is the case in all three years: 2014, 2015 and the first half of 2016. Of the total Dutch population in 2016, only 29% are younger than 25 years old and 41% are aged below 35.

5. It is mostly Eritreans who are young when arriving in The Netherlands. Over 50% of Eritrean asylum seekers are aged between 12 and 25 years old, compared to

one-quarter of the Syrians. One of the reasons mentioned in literature is the fact that Eritreans are called upon for military service (United Nations, 2015). Military service is compulsory for Eritrean men and women from the age of 18 for a period of at least 18 months.

6. More men than women come to the Netherlands for asylum, especially from Syria and Eritrea. In 2014 and 2015, two-thirds of the asylum seekers coming to the Netherlands were male. In the first half of 2016, the percentage of men was 61%. The decreasing percentage of men is due to a greater number of women and children registering for family reunification.

Figure 1.1.2 Refugees in COA housing by age and sex, 2014 and first half of 2016



Source: Statistics Netherlands

7. The large influx of asylum seekers is reminiscent of the 1990s, when many refugees from former Yugoslavia, Iraq and Afghanistan came to the Netherlands. Research among refugee migrants from the '90s shows that integration into Dutch society is difficult: fifteen years after arrival in the Netherlands, labour participation among refugees is lower than that of persons with a Dutch background and dependency on social benefits is higher (Engbersen et al, 2015). At the same time, young refugees who came to the Netherlands in the '90s as well as the second generation in the '90s as well as the second generation, have a better position in education than other Dutch persons with a non-western migration background (Maliapaard, Witkamp & Jennissen, 2017).

## 1.2. Research design

8. The ministries of Social Affairs and Employment (SZW), Security and Justice (V&J), Education, Culture and Science (OCW) and Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS) requested Statistics Netherlands (CBS) to monitor the situation of refugee

migrants who arrived from 2014 in the coming years on the fields of asylum procedure, labour market, social security, education and criminality.

9. For the first time it is possible to follow the individual trajectory that asylum seekers in the Netherlands take – from reception to the steps taken after the obtainment of the residential permit.

10. The research population exists of the following groups:

- i. Asylum seekers who arrived in the period between 1 January 2014 and 1 July 2016 in a COA location.
- ii. Persons who received a residence permit from the Immigration and Naturalization Service (IND) in the period between 1 January 2014 and 1 July 2016.
- iii. Family members of permit holders who reunited in 2014 and 2015.

11. A person can be part of more than one group. A person with a residence permit who resides in a COA location belongs to the population of asylum seekers, but also to the population of permit holders.

12. Permit holders are asylum seekers who obtained an asylum residence permit: a document that allows a former asylum seeker the right to remain within The Netherlands. The residence permit is valid for 5 years. This is the period in which integration in Dutch society starts and should be monitored. Therefore, this paper will focus on permit holders.

13. The data used in this research are derived from the System of Social Statistical Datasets (SSD) of Statistics Netherlands. SSD is a system of linked statistical registers and surveys, covering a broad range of demographic and socio-economic variables. The SSD is based on data from sources such as municipal population registers, tax offices, labour offices and public education institutes (Bakker et al. 2014).

14. The population in this research, permit holders, are all recorded in the SSD. Therefore, it is possible to monitor them in the field of housing arrangements, education, social benefits, employment and crime. The cohorts shown in chapter 2 are based on integral data and report on all registered permit holders living in The Netherlands.

## II. Permit holders

15. This chapter concerns the first steps of permit holders towards integration in Dutch society. It concerns permit holders who received their license within the period between 2014 and the first half of 2016.

16. Most permit holders started their stay in the Netherlands in an asylum centre. A total of 33 thousand refugees received a license in 2015, of whom 95% came to the Netherlands through a COA location.

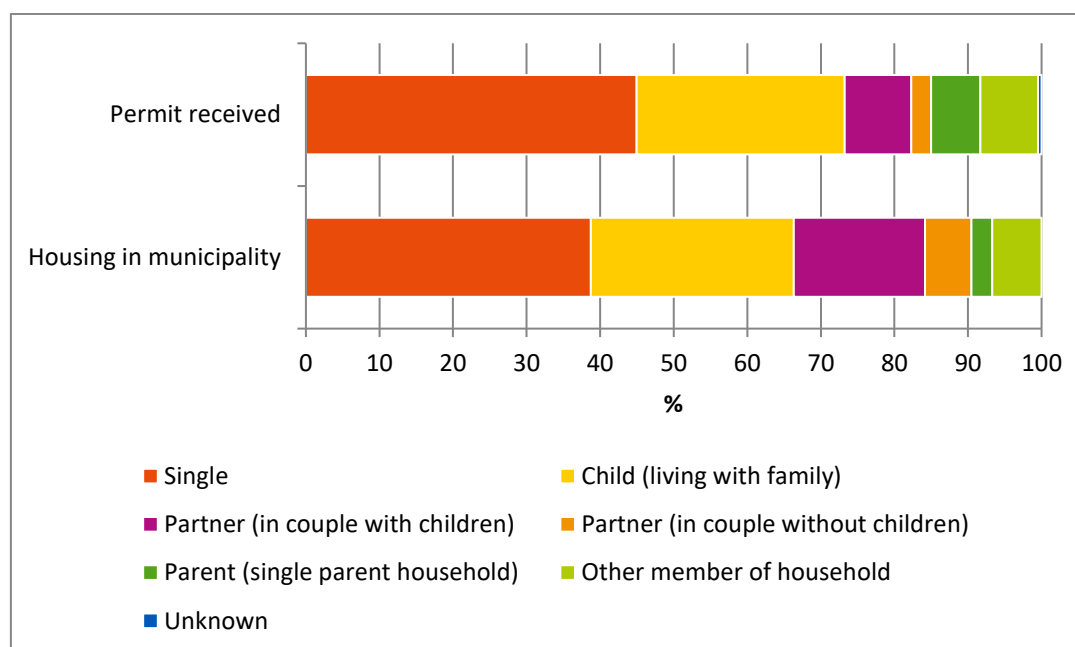
17. This chapter focusses on integration regarding housing arrangements, education, social security, employment and registered criminality during the first 18 months of stay in the Netherlands.

## 2.1. Housing arrangements

18. Permit holders are meant to be housed in a municipality as soon as possible after receiving the permit. However, municipalities seem to have trouble finding suitable residences for singles (Smits van Waesberghe & Razenberg, 2016). Apart from the fact that there are less suitable homes available, municipalities have difficulties estimating how many family members will follow after a refugee receives a license. Municipalities would therefore rather wait with appointing a residence until the family has been reunited in the asylum. However, of the 53 thousand asylum seekers of 2014 and 2015 who received a permit, 48 thousand were housed within a municipality.

19. The greater part of refugees is single. 45% of all persons that applied for a residence permit in 2014 is single at the moment they received the permit. At the time permit holders of 2014 are being housed in a municipality, 38% is single.

Figure 2.1.1 Persons who received their residence permit in 2014, by household position at the time of receiving the permit and at the time of being housed in a municipality (first month outside the COA location)



Source: Statistics Netherlands, N(permit received) = 19,595, N(housing in municipality) = 19,135

20. The decline in the share of singles at the time of receiving the permit and the time of being housed in a municipality is caused by family members who arrived later. Figure 2.1.1 shows that the share of partners (with or without children) rises in the period between receiving the permit and the moment of relocation to a residence.

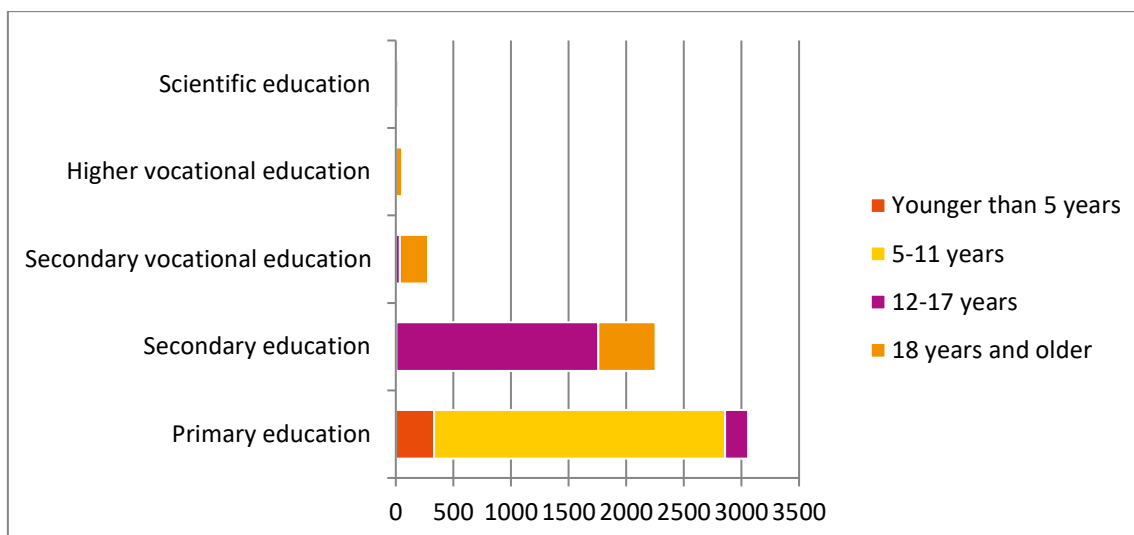
## 2.2. Education

21. Since children of refugees hardly speak any Dutch upon arrival in the Netherlands, most spend the first year of education in international transitional

classes. This can be in a school that exclusively focusses on new arrivals, but also in a special class for new arrivals in a regular school.

22. Most primary school pupils spend a period of several weeks to one year in this type of education, with a two years maximum. Secondary education pupils spend one to two years in transitional classes, after which they proceed within regular education. Almost all permit holders subject to compulsory education (5 until 17 years old) receive education. Of all permit holders of 2014 who are enrolled in education on the first of October 2015, 56% is in primary education and 41% in secondary education. Virtually all participants of secondary education are enrolled in general courses that are not differentiated into educational levels. The international transitional classes do also belong to these general courses. About 280 permit holders are enrolled in secondary vocational education (figure 2.2.1). The greater part of them (63%) is simultaneously enrolled in secondary education. That is explained by the cooperation between secondary schools and vocational schools. New arrivals are offered to partake in international transitional classes in a vocational school instead of a secondary school.

Figure 2.2.1 Education of permit holders in 2014 on 1 October 2015, by type of education and age



Source: Statistics Netherlands

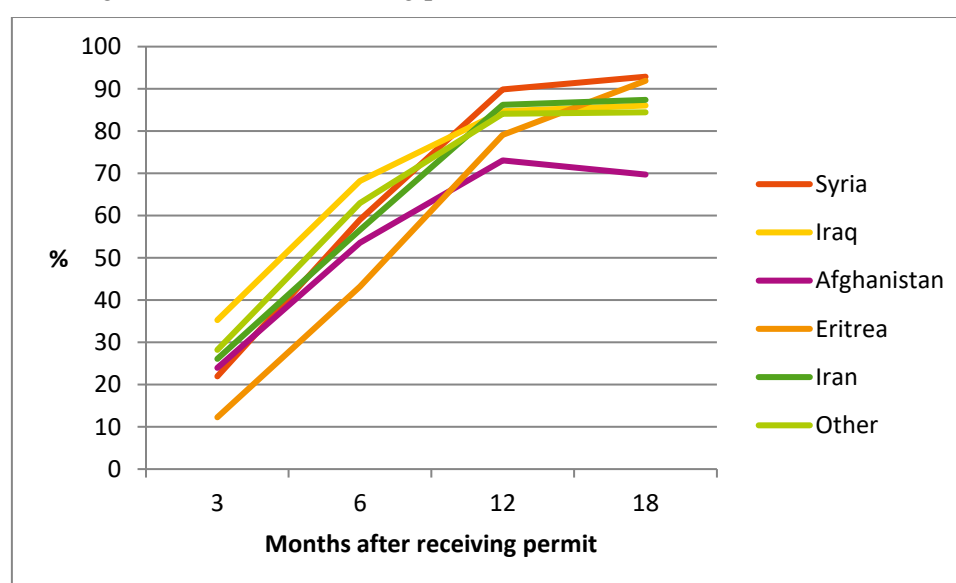
23. Only 1% of permit holders enrolled in education is student in higher vocational or scientific education. Iranian persons score better in this respect: 11% of Iranian students are enrolled in higher vocational education. According to the Social Economic Council (SER, 2016) a number of factors obstructs the partaking of permit holders in the higher levels of (vocational) education. First of all, the previous education of permit holders is low. Unfortunately, registrations do not tell us anything about the level of education of permit holders who came to the Netherlands since 2014. Even if permit holders have diplomas, they don't always carry them with them. It is also possible that their diplomas are of lesser value here than they were in the country that issued them. Another problem is that many permit holders have not yet acquired the level of Dutch needed to enrol in higher (vocational) education. Also the costs of partaking in education have an obstructing influence on the enrolment.

### 2.3. Social security

24. One and a half year after receiving a residence permit, 90% of permit holders in the ages of 18-64 receive social benefits. Figure 2.3.1 shows that not everyone receives social benefits at once. Many permit holders stay within the COA location in the first few months, where they do not receive social benefits but an allowance. Only after permit holders are relocated into municipalities they qualify for social benefits.

25. Unemployment benefits and disability allowances were also examined for the purpose of this investigation, but these were, as was to be expected, hardly ever present.

Figure 2.3.1 Share of beneficiaries among permit holders in 2014, aged 18-64 according to months after receiving permit.

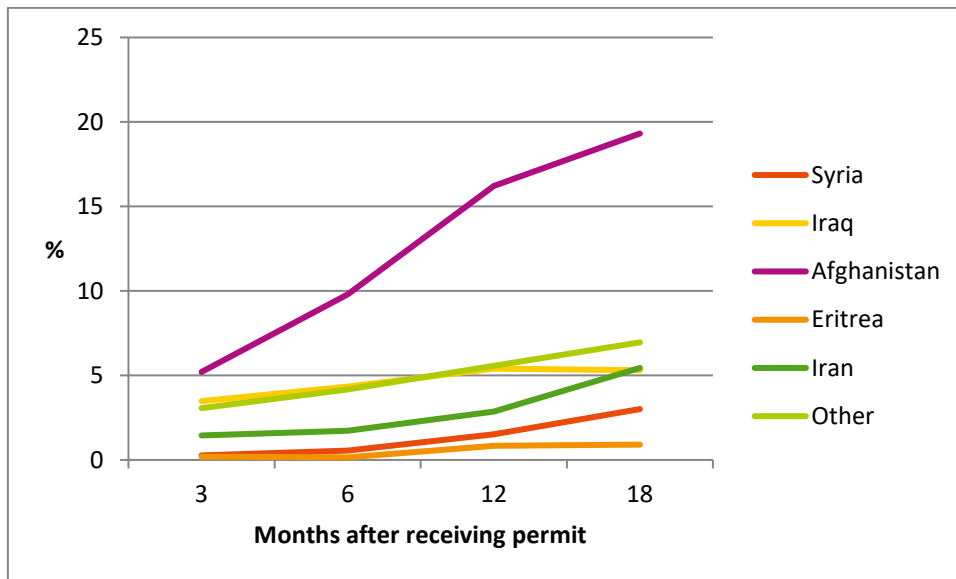


Source: Statistics Netherlands. N(Syria) = 6,690, N(Iraq) = 430, N(Afghanistan) = 385, N(Eritrea) = 3,190, N(Iran) = 345, N(other) = 1,760

### 2.4. Employment

26. Permit holders are allowed to work in the Netherlands, in wage labour or in their own company. Asylum seekers without a residence permit need an employment license in order to be able to work. One and a half year after obtaining their permit, Afghan persons have a job more often than people with other nationalities. Figure 2.4.1 shows that 18 months after obtaining their permit, 19% of Afghan permit holders of 2014 have a job as a wage labourer – against 4% of all permit holders. These findings correspond with a pattern seen with refugees in the '90s. Back then, Afghan persons were, two years after arrival, working more often than Iraqi or Iranian refugees (Sprangers et al, 2004).

Figure 2.4.1 Share of employees among permit holders in 2014, aged 18-64, according to number of months after receiving permit.



Source: Statistics Netherlands. N(Syria) = 6,690, N(Iraq) = 430, N(Afghanistan) = 385, N(Eritrea) = 3,190, N(Iran) = 345, N(other) = 1,760

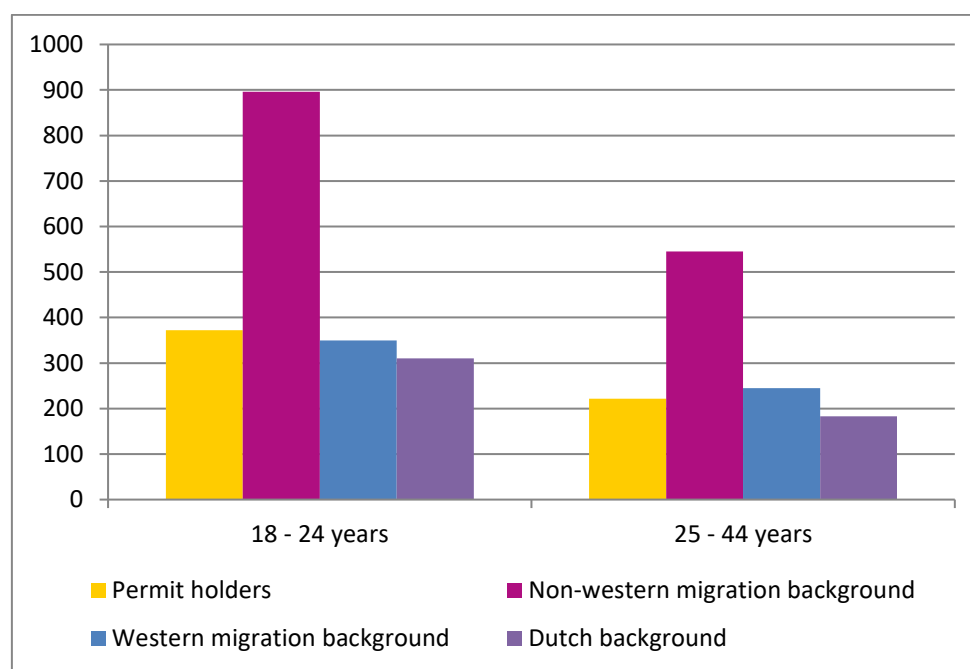
## 2.5. Crime

27. This paragraph looks into the number of permit holders who were suspect of a crime. It concerns anyone who is registered as a suspect in the police's Incident Register System (BVH). A person is being registered as a suspect when there is reasonable suspicion of guilt to a crime. These data do not concern convicted persons.

28. Permit holders are less often suspect of a crime than persons with a non-western migration background. Figure 2.5.1 shows the share of suspects in 2015 among permit holders who received their permit in 2014, compared to other backgrounds, age and gender taken into account. Male permit holders are relatively more often suspect of a crime than males with a western migration background or Dutch background, but less often than males with a non-western migration background. In this research, other factors that can explain overrepresentation in crime statistics, like income or educational level, were not taken into account. The amount of permit holders suspect of a crime is too small to legitimize further research into the type of crime people were suspected of.

Figure 2.5.1 Number of male suspects per 10,000 males in 2015 by age, among permit holders in 2014 and persons with and without migration background





Source: Statistics Netherlands. N(permit holders) = 325

### III. Conclusion

29. This research allows scientists and policy makers to monitor the integration of permit holders into Dutch society. Register based data from the system of Social Statistical Databases (SSD) create a unique opportunity to follow integral cohorts of permit holders during their first months and years in the Netherlands. A variety of socio-economic and demographic variables is linked to these cohorts.

30. At this moment, it is possible to follow permit holders from 2014 for two years on the topics of education, social security and work. In these two years, many permit holders dedicate their time and energy to moving to a new home, family reunion and the start of their integration period. For this reason, participation in the labour market is still limited and dependency of social benefits is large.

31. Once the permit holders remain in the Netherlands for a longer period of time, the importance of this type of research will increase. Many research questions will be addressed as soon as the length of the cohorts increase. About three years after the obtainment of the residence permit, the integration period, in which refugees should pass their integration exam, ends. Do integrators pass their exams and does that lead to increasing of labour participation? Most of the children are yet in primary or general secondary education.

32. Next year, the first children will have completed their international transitional classes. At which level will they enrol in regular education? And will permit holders stay (in the vicinity of) the municipality where they were initially housed? Statistics Netherlands will repeat and publish this research yearly until at least 2020, making it possible to integrally follow cohorts of refugees over a long period of time.

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