

HUMAN GEOGRAPHY AND PLANNING

# THE EFFECT OF CITIZENSHIP ON THE SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS IN THE NETHERLANDS

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## SUMMARY

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Citizenship has become an increasingly important component in the naturalization and assimilation of migrants in the Netherlands. Through citizenship, migrants are able to become Dutch citizens that may integrate into the Dutch society, however, studies have shown that citizenship may not be as influential in accomplishing this process socially as it is politically and economically. Many issues continue to persist even after foreigners become nationals to the Netherlands, which has called into question the effectiveness of a citizenship. This study aims to explore the issue and provide an overview of current literature that exists on the topic, contributing towards the growing body of works. The main research question explored here is, 'To what extent does a Dutch citizenship help integrate migrants socially in the Netherlands?'. Mixed methods have been employed through a survey quantitative research and interview qualitative research. This study shows that although citizenship aims to naturalize migrants to the Netherlands at its best, it fails to do to some extent. Social issues continue to persist, hindering the natural assimilation of foreigners into the Dutch society.

**Keywords:** *Migration; Citizenship; Social Integration; Netherlands; Dutch Society; Migrant; Assimilation; Naturalization;*

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## Introduction

*“We have entered a period of profound change – in fact a moment of disruption – which has shaken our world”* declared Jean-Claude Juncker, president of the European Commission, in 2016 (Juncker, 2016). Juncker’s address to the Brussels-based European Policy Centre reinvigorated the utmost importance of the migrant crisis that had erupted a little less than a year ago. Although in the past several decades more than sixty-five million people had been displaced due to a conflict and persecution, environmental disasters, and economic hardship (Juncker, 2016), Europe witnessed unparalleled numbers of migrants land upon its territory, the largest ever recorded since the second world war (Dumont and Scarpet, 2015). The crisis also underlined how responses and attitudes across the European Union varied significantly (Fourquet, 2015). While some states were more open towards absorbing many of the migrants, others were hesitant and against it (Carrera et al., 2015)

As one of the forefront runners of multiculturalism, the Netherlands has taken an increasing number of international immigrants over the past two decades (Statista, 2021). Data by the United Nations ranks the Netherlands among the top European member states in foreign-born populations and immigrant intakes (United Nations, 2021). In spite of this, there has been a rise in far-right populism over the past twenty years. While government policies, public attitude and efforts to successfully integrate foreigners within the Dutch society have all been exceptionally high prior to the early 2000s, level of discontent towards migrants on both public and governmental levels have grown significantly more recently (Allen, 2021; van Selm, 2000). In November 2015, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte remarked that “big empires go down if the borders are not well protected” (John, 2015).

The sudden, large flow of people into Europe called into question the use and influence of pro-integrative migration policies (Tatarko & Jurcik, 2020). Specifically, being Dutch or having a Dutch citizenship no longer serves as the primary factor that decides if one would ‘count’ as part of the Dutch society. Differences in culture, religion and race do more than ever; and they do so throughout the rest of the EU (Conner, 2019; Fireside, 2002; Taras 2009; Erlanger & Bennhold, 2015). The relationship between citizenship and inequality is no longer as clear as before (Glenn, 2000).

## Problem Statement

Migration has become an increasingly important topic within the contemporary Dutch political debate. With the rising importance of themes like culture, religion and race, questions concerning how migrants can be integrated better – and whether a status of a citizen does anything significant, have become more important than ever (de Ree, 2018).

While there is a large amount of academic literature on the economic assimilation of migrants (Euwals et al., 2010), very little of it explores the social aspect of their integration. These include articles by Zorlu (2013), Pierre et al. (2015), Penninx & Mascareñas (2016), and Simonsen (2017). Most other focus on the social wellbeing of migrants and policies on their social capital (Tatarko & Jurcik, 2020). A limited number delve into the extent to which tools and policies, especially citizenship, help migrants integrate socially (Goodman and Wright 2015).

The purpose of this study is to explore the extent to which citizenship has an effect on the social integration of migrants in the Netherlands. This will be done by answering the research question, *'To what extent does a Dutch citizenship help integrate migrants socially in the Netherlands?'*. Three sub-questions will guide this paper:

- What does current academic literature state about the extent to which migrants are socially integrated into the Netherlands?
- What issues may a citizenship not be able to mitigate or eliminate that may hinder the social integration of migrants?
- How far do migrants feel they are socially integrated within the Netherlands?

## Structure of the Paper

First, a theoretical framework explores the theories and concepts through a literature review. Articles by Zorlu (2013), Pierre et al. (2015), Penninx & Mascareñas (2016), and Simonsen (2017) are some of the more notable texts on the topic. Next is the methodology section which discusses research methods, data collection and ethical considerations. Results are then presented in the results section with data from the surveys and interviews through the lens of the theory established in the theoretical framework. A conclusion section then follows to answer the research question, present a reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of this study and to offer some recommendations for further (and future) research.

## Theoretical Framework

The core concepts of this study are social integration, migration and citizenship. Social integration is universally accepted as the process whereby migrants are assimilated within the social structure of their host society (Alba & Nee, 1997). Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas (2016) explore the concept and define it as “the process of becoming an accepted part of society” (Penninx & Mascareñas, 2016, p.14). Social integration is a dynamic process that evolves differently in different parts of the world, shaped by the political environments of those regions and the individual personal characteristics of the migrants that come from these regions (Penninx & Mascareñas, 2016). The higher the extent to which immigrants are integrated socially, the smaller the social distancing between groups will be. This strengthens the social cohesion between these groups through more consistent values and practises and mends conditions of social fragmentation, disintegration, exclusion and polarization (Alba & Nee, 1997).

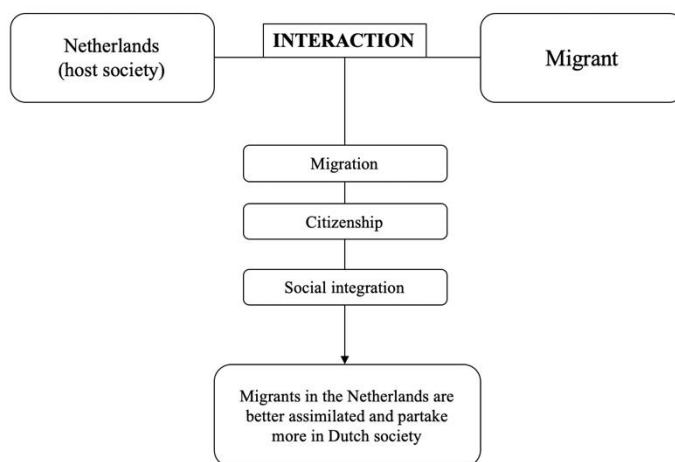
Oftentimes, those that need to be socially integrated – and unfortunately those that struggle in doing so are migrants. A key concept, migration is defined as “the movement of people over some distance”, whether than be “from one usual place of residence” to another or otherwise (Kok, 1999, p.19). It is a concept that is nearly as dynamic as social integration but differs from social integration due to its (few) static features not bound to location. In other words, whereas social integration may be similar between regions but differs in some retrospect everywhere, migration does not. Pierre et al. (2015) examine the way host countries treat migrants, with an emphasis on the Netherlands. They conclude that fair treatment and recognition of all migrants are key aspects for policy making, if the Netherlands are to successfully integrate migrants into their society. Migrants that feel unwanted, unrecognized or unequal to citizens, especially white Caucasians, are more likely to leave than stay (Pierre et al., 2015). Although records have shown that 20-50% of immigrants in Europe leave within five years of their arrival, only 28% of those who entered the Netherlands between 1994 and 1998 left (OECD, 2008). While only around quarter leave the country, it has been estimated that many want to return (Martinovic, van Tubergen & Maas, 2014). In general, the relationship between differential treatment of migrants and their social integration has been confirmed by a substantial body of literature (Major, Quinton & Mc Coy, 2002; Mossakowski, 2003; Williams, Neighbors, & Jackson, 2003). Public treatment and views of migrants are some of the biggest threats to the successful social integration of migrants into the Netherlands.

The third main concept of this study, citizenship does indeed play an important role in the successful assimilation of migrants to the Netherlands. It is a legal tool that entitles citizens to rudimentary legal rights, most notably “formal protections in daily life, and inclusions in civic and social life” (Zolov & Rogers, 2010, p.14). Most notably, it allows for permanent residence within a host state. Once migrants become citizens, interactions with other who have citizenship become more frequent which helps build trust and improve social relations. Ultimately, this forms social cohesion and social trust (Bonjour & Duyvendak, 2018), allowing for what Huddleston (2020) refers to a ‘*comprehensive and holistic approach*’. It is a long-term approach that involves society as a whole and ensures that future parties and policies will also provide the support migrants require to integrate into Dutch society (Huddleston, 2020). They enable progressive, pro-migration parties to participate in parliament and successfully pass legislation which allows the Netherlands to accept more migrants (Ozcurumez & Hoxha, 2020). A benefit of this is that, as McCann et al. explains, many issues that exist between citizens and migrants are mitigated. Ultimately the result is a reduction of cases concerning racism, discrimination, bigotry, cultural disparities and religious disputes (McCann et al., 2020). Migrants’ ethnicities become naturalised into Dutch society. However, obtaining citizenship – a process known as naturalisation, is not a smooth and a simple one. A study by Zorlu (2013) shows that the three biggest obstacles in completing it are living, financial and language requirements, to some extent due to Dutch requirements demanding that applicants be present in the Netherlands during the process (Zorlu, 2013). Due to the conditioning of location, questions with regard to the costs of immigration and the labour markets are often raised. Debates on these have been particularly vociferous over the past five years (Zorlu, 2013).

In the case that migrants succeed in becoming legal Dutch citizens, certain social issues continue to prevent their successful social integration. Concepts such as racism, discrimination, bigotry, cultural diversity and religious differences hinder naturalisation. Although this paper focuses on the three core concepts specified above, it is important to mention these social issues and why they are actually disadvantageous for the naturalisation process. In their study of residential segregation and integration in the Netherlands, Musterd and Ostendorf examine four ethnic minorities: Turks, Moroccans, Surinamese and Antilleans. Musterd and Ostendorf explain that they chose to study these groups as they are “central in most of the political debates” and often over-represented in the largest cities like Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague (Musterd & Ostendorf, 2009, p.1518). Their study therefore

explores these cities. Musterd and Ostendorf conclude that segregation does exist, albeit it has been fluctuating for each group per city. More importantly, however, they conclude that this process is a healthy one. The “promotion of mixed neighbourhoods as a panacea for societal ills” such as discrimination, racism and inequality “should be treated with scepticism” (Musterd and Ostendorf, 2016, p.1529). The paper illustrates two important findings. First, attempts to forcefully introduce migrants into a society - here through the mixing of races and cultures by means of building mixed neighbourhoods - do not work. Migrants need to be provided the opportunities to become citizens, the securities to assimilate and the ability to do so themselves. Second, social issues will persist, even if migrants may have a citizenship. Mixing migrants with white Dutch Caucasians, both with citizenships, will not do anything besides highlight and promote said social issues (Musterd and Ostendorf, 2016).

## Conceptual Model



**Figure 1:** Conceptual Model

The conceptual model in Figure 1 illustrates a simplified flow of the naturalisation process in the Netherlands. The two agents, the *migrants* and the *Netherlands* interact with each other. This is represented by two independent lines that merge into one after their interaction. This then leads to the three concepts essential for this paper: migration, citizenship and social integration. While migrants migrate, obtain citizenship and eventually socially integrate within their new host society, the Netherlands facilitates those processes and opportunities. They make it possible for migrants to naturalise within Dutch society. This is represented by lines that lead from one concept to another. The end product (represented by a one-way

arrow) is that migrants in the Netherlands are better assimilated and ultimately partake more into Dutch society.

## Expectations and Hypothesis

Previous research has shown that citizenship is key in a successful integration in the Netherlands. It is very effective in creating and strengthening social cohesion (Bonjour & Duyvendak, 2018) and in reducing the effect of social issues (McCann et al., 2020). However, a citizenship fails to completely overcome these issues albeit it mitigates their effects. Therefore, based on the current literature, the first expectation is that although citizenship enables migrants to better integrate socially in the Netherlands, social issues will continue to influence them. In particular, five social issues will be explored in this study: *racism, discrimination, gender inequality, and cultural and religious differences*. According to a substantial amount of the current literature, these issues are the most common (McCann et al, 2020; Major, Quinton & Mc Coy, 2002; Mossakowski, 2003; Williams, Neighbors, & Jackson, 2003). The second expectation is that the process of obtaining a citizenship will be a time-consuming and even difficult process. These expectations will be explored through qualitative research, where interviews will specifically ask interviewees whether they have experienced any social issues and whether obtaining a citizenship was a difficult process. The interviews will also investigate deeper into each theme.

For the quantitative research, the surveys will also elaborate on the first expectation by asking participants whether and which of the five social issues they have experienced. Such approach will also allow for a multiple linear regression that can test the relationship between the independent variable *experience of social issues*, and dependent variable *role of citizenship*. The null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) will therefore be:

*'H<sub>0</sub> = There is no relationship between the role of citizenship and the experience of social issues'*

An alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) would be:

*'H<sub>a</sub> = There is a relationship between the role of citizenship and the experience of social issues'*



## Methodology

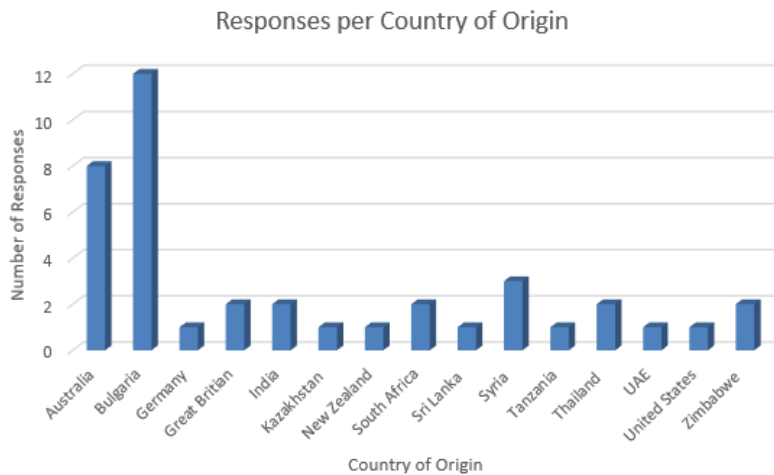
### Mixed Methods

Data was obtained using a mixed methodology. Quantitative data was collected through surveys which contained mostly closed-questions and multiple-choice questions with some open questions. The purpose of the surveys was to collect a large amount of data based on specific questions that could be answered online and relatively quickly. The data would then give a general idea of whether a citizenship helps migrants, a question that was also asked at the end of each survey. Qualitative data was collected through interviews with open questions bound for discussion. By performing interviews, more detailed information on matters concerning citizenship and social integration could be discussed. Migrants were given the opportunity to provide more information the surveys could not record.

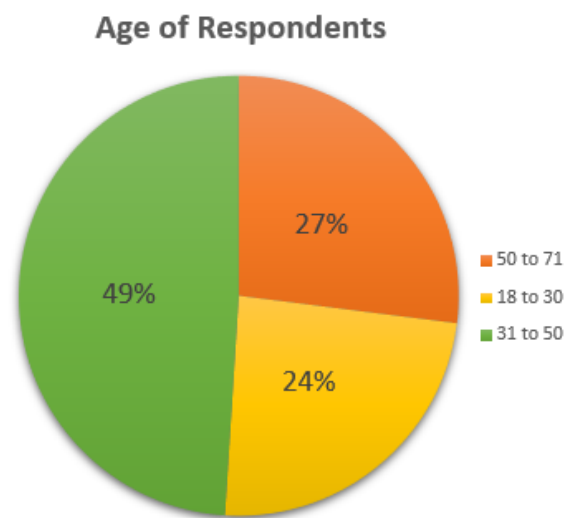
### Quantitative Data - Surveys

For this study, SurveyMonkey was used to create the surveys. SurveyMonkey provides a user-friendly interface and avoids many of the problems that other data collection websites such as Google Forms and Qualtrics have. The surveys contained a short introduction to the research, followed by twenty-two questions. The first three questions were required questions, meaning that participants had to answer them and could not skip them. This ensured that they met three key criteria and fell into the population sample. These criteria were: 1) to be above the age of eighteen, 2) to have a Dutch citizenship, and 3) to be a foreign born migrant to the Netherlands. After the twentieth question, participants were asked whether they wanted to participate in a potential interview. If an answer 'yes' was selected, a contact form with fields for the names, email address and/or phone number was displayed.

The surveys were posted in several Facebook groups. These were groups for specific nationalities and were randomly selected. There were two larger groups however, where the survey was posted every week for a total of four weeks: 'Expats in the Netherlands' and 'Expats in Amsterdam'. Each post contained a short description of the research. A request to share the post was also made, which is known as a snowball methodology. In total, forty-nine responses were recorded, nine of which were excluded (due to incomplete responses or some questions being not answered). Figure 2 shows where respondents came from to the Netherlands, most being from Bulgaria and Australia. Figure 3 shows that most respondents were between 31 and 50 years of age.



**Figure 2:** Bar Chart of the number of responses per country of origin



**Figure 3:** Pie chart of the three different ages which respondents indicated to be

### Qualitative Data - Interviews

Qualitative data was collected through interviews. Seven interviews were conducted with interviewees from different parts of the world. Ten open questions were asked to each interviewee, paving way for in-depth open conversations on several topics relevant to the study’s theme, including personal backgrounds, reason for moving to the Netherlands and social integration into Dutch society. This allowed a larger amount of important information to be recorded, data that would not have been possible through the surveys. The interviews took between thirty and forty-five minutes to complete.

### Ethical Considerations

This study is governed by the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (ALLEA, 2017) and the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, the latter of which adopts five principles: honesty, scrupulousness, transparency, independence and responsibility

(VSNU, 2018; TUDelft, 2021). Remaining as ethical as possible during this research has been of the utmost significance.

Data manipulation has been avoided as much as possible, both for the literature review and the data collection and analysis. The data has been collected through SurveyMonkey, a secure platform that provides encryption online and therefore ensures that the data is entirely private. Personal information, including names, phone numbers and email addresses has been entirely optional to provide in the surveys. Each survey began with a clear statement of the purpose and each candidate was free to close the survey at any given moment without any information being recorded until all questions were answered. The interviews were entirely voluntary and survey participants could participate by filling in their information at the end of each survey. They were then contacted through email during Dutch working hours. Each interview was recorded at times proposed by the interviewees, with no pressure or duration to ensure that they could share as much information as they wanted to. Each interviewee could withdraw from the interview at any time and their answers would be safely disposed of. None requested to do so. At the end of this study, they were offered to view my research, but none of them requested to do so.

## Results

### Descriptive Statistics

In total, forty-nine responses and seven interviews were recorded and conducted. Of all the respondents, twenty-two were male (55%) and eighteen were female (49%). Most were aged between thirty-one and fifty years old (45%) and there was an equal share of respondents of ages eighteen to thirty and fifty-one to seventy years (each 27,50%). Most of respondents have lived in the Netherlands for more than ten years (60%), however, a relatively large share has also been living in the Netherlands for less than five years. This is significant as Dutch citizenship requirements demand a minimum of five years of life in the Netherlands before citizenship can be accessed. However, there are several exceptions and recent data by the CBS shows that Dutch citizenship has become more accessible to more- and younger people nowadays. Although most respondents (52,50%) did not experience any social issues during their time in the Netherlands, a significant share did (30%) before and after obtaining their citizenship. Discrimination was the most prevalent (50%), followed by cultural issues (33,33%), racism (16,67%), and gender inequality (16,67%).

## Quantitative Data Analysis

The following tables present the results of the whole model of invariable analysis in SPSS:

### ANOVA<sup>a</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.479	8	.060	.760	.639 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	2.284	29	.079		
	Total	2.763	37			

Dependent Variable: Role of citizenship;

Predictors: Age, Life in the Netherlands; Religious status; Experience of social issues; Household status; Previous year's (collective) net income; Member of social group; Participation in social activities;

**Table 1:** A SPSS ANOVA Table with the influence of citizenship (on the social integration of migrants) as a dependent variable

### Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.682	.297		5.668	.000		
	How old are you?	-.056	.077	-.158	-.729	.472	.610	1.639
	For how long have you lived in the Netherlands?	.031	.023	.293	1.319	.198	.577	1.733
	Are you religious?	.015	.054	.051	.273	.787	.819	1.221
	Have you experienced any social issues whilst in the Netherlands?	-.047	.077	-.114	-.611	.546	.821	1.218
	Do you live together with others or alone?	.155	.109	.260	1.419	.167	.849	1.178
	What was your (collective) net income last year? (Includes labour income, business income, rental income, pensions, dividends, interest, social security, and any other income that tax paying adults in your household have)	-.018	.030	-.110	-.602	.552	.858	1.165
	Are you a member of any social group(s)?	.140	.109	.241	1.281	.210	.804	1.244
	Do you participate in any social activities?	-.044	.101	-.086	-.433	.668	.727	1.375

Dependent Variable: Role of citizenship;

Predictors: Age, Life in the Netherlands; Religious status; Experience of social issues; Household status; Previous year's (collective) net income; Member of social group; Participation in social activities;

**Table 2:** A SPSS Coefficients Table

The data from the survey allowed for a multiple linear regression test to be conducted in SPSS. The results of that test are presented in tables 1 and 2 with a confidence interval of ninety-five percent (95%). The dependent variable *role of citizenship* was tested against several independent variables which are presented in the *predictors* box beneath each table. The questions that participants were asked are presented into table 2 and have been converted into their variable names in the boxes below the two tables respectfully.

The multilinear regression test explored the relationship between the dependent and independent variables in order to test whether there was any significance, or a relationship, between the dependent and independent variables. Although the main focus of the null hypothesis and alternative hypothesis concerned the independent variable *experience of social issues*, it is important to test for any relationship. However, the significance values in table 2 are well above the significance value of 0,05 for all independent variables, which means that the test was insignificant. The two variables with the closest significance levels to 0,05 are *Life in the Netherlands* (0,167) and *Household Status* (0,198), however, they are still deemed insignificant. The insignificant results means that the null hypothesis, *“there is no relationship between the role of citizenship and the experience of social issues”* cannot be rejected. It can be concluded, therefore, that there is no linear relationship between the role of citizenship and the experience of social issues, or any relationship between the role of citizenship and any of the independent variables. Table 2 also presents VIF and Tolerance levels. For all independent variables, the VIF values were lower than 10 and the Tolerance values higher than 0,1 which means that there is no multicollinearity in this model. Therefore, there is no correlation between the dependent and independent variables.

Although current literature states that there is a relationship between some of these variables, such as religion and life in the Netherlands, this cannot be concluded from this study’s analysis. However, it is important to acknowledge that a relatively small sample was collected in this study, which may not be enough to reveal a statistically significant correlation. Future studies may therefore deviate from these results, if they conduct larger samplings with more variables. This may also be affected in case future research focuses on specific cultures or origins of the migrants, as differences in, for example, culture and religion from those of the Netherlands, may have an important influence.

## Qualitative Data Analysis

The data from the interviews demonstrated three important points clearly. First, most interviewees argued that a citizenship had helped them integrate socially into Dutch society to a certain extent. Second, all interviewees stated that the process of obtaining a citizenship was time consuming and at times difficult, which could potentially discourage migrants from obtaining a citizenship. Third, social issues persisted even after a citizenship had been obtained, thus preserving the social tension and reducing social cohesion that a citizenship could potentially bring, as argued by the literature (Bonjour & Duyvendak, 2018; Huddleston, 2020; McCann et al., 2020).

Five out of seven interviewees (71%) believed that a citizenship had helped them socially integrated into the Netherlands to some degree. These five interviewees were Barbara (USA), Francesca (UK), Melissa (Australia), Georgi (Bulgaria) and Mark, the first three obtained their citizenship through family ties while Georgi and Mark did so through the naturalisation procedure. According to them, citizenship did not help much with their social integration, but more with life in the Netherlands and their economic integration

*“I was born in the United States to a Dutch mother, but I didn't grow up there [Netherlands]...my mother's family all live here in the Netherlands, which was the reason why I moved to the Netherlands later in my life, of course possible through a dual-citizenship only. After living here for some time, I felt I was somewhat integrated socially, but I also felt that it was not as much as if you were a Dutch born citizen.” (Barbara, 10-30-2021)*

*“I came to the Netherlands on a working holiday visa...however, I couldn't get a visa through my mother at that stage, so I gained the Dutch nationality through my mother. After having lived for several years here, I realised that a citizenship is what allowed me to stay here and work, and it was very useful finding work, but not so much socially, because of a bunch of things.” (Melissa, 10-11-2021)*

*“Moving over here to study as a Dutch student came with a lot of benefits but mostly economic and not so much social... For example, studying in the UK was crazy expensive.” (Francesca, 13-11-2021)*

For interviewees A (UAE) and B (Syria), who requested that they remain anonymous, the most important function of their Dutch citizenship concerned living in the Netherlands and changes in culture. When asked for specifics, both agreed that their home countries lacked in

certain “*cultural and social freedoms*”, however, “*the change in environment from a Muslim dominated society to the more Christian one which the Netherlands is hasn’t contributed to a social integration because people still see us as Muslims and then come recent events and historical things that hinder anything social really*”.

All interviewees also mentioned that the process of obtaining a Dutch citizenship was a time-consuming and stressful. Interviewees A and B did not comment much on it, however, both mentioned that the process was especially “difficult and dissuading from obtaining it [citizenship]”. Furthermore, Interviewee B said that it was especially difficult for him as he did not know any English and relied on Interviewee A’s support almost entirely. With regard to the other five:

*“My only path to citizenship was through the option procedure...that entailed getting my mother's original birth certificates...luckily I had family near there who could go to the Gemeente and get the paperwork, because they would not mail it to me...It took me probably eight or nine months to get all of the paperwork that I needed. And then every piece of paperwork had to be sent to the corresponding us authority to get an apostle certification... And you better be sure you have all your documents [for the apostle certification]. If you show up to that appointment and you're missing one dot, they send you away and you have to start over with the appointment.” (Barbara, 10-30-2021)*

*“I had to supply a huge amount of paperwork. Lucky my grandmother had kept a lot of bits and pieces from their immigration coming to Australia. But the entire process is very tiring and dissuading and it almost makes you doubt your sanity” (Melissa, 10-11-2021)*

Georgi however stated mentioned that due to his firm and academic profession, he obtained his citizenship relatively easier than other people:

*“Applying for a citizenship wasn’t as difficult because my faculty sorted it out, my colleagues spoke English and everything was written in English... I also decided to learn Dutch because it was clear that I needed to remain longer in the Netherlands and all the subjects in my department were in Dutch, which posed some difficulty...And as far as I am understood, the idea was to limit the double-citizens rather than to increase their numbers but I was able to obtain one relatively quick and therefore with not so much difficulty.” (Georgi, 11-11-2021)*

The third and final key finding of the interviews is that social issues generally persisted even after a citizenship had been obtained. For Barbara, Francesca and Melissa, stereotypes about their countries continued:

*“I have an American accent with my Dutch. And as soon as they hear me, they start to speak English. And then come the questions... It happens everywhere. And so I have to answer this barrage of questions...I just get so tired of it.” (Barbara, 10-30-2021)*

*“I have a very British accent. So people just immediately assume I'm British, which I am. So then, you get asked about Brexit. Why did you study here? And then when I tell them, I have a Dutch passport, they're kind of shocked about it, but in a kind of a good way... But they're like, 'oh, so you get all the Dutch benefits'” (Francesca, 14-11-2021)*

Francesca also explained that despite her citizenship, language barriers and possibly her non-Dutch provoked other students to speak Dutch:

*“She [A student] would intentionally speak Dutch, so that I would not understand what was going on in the group, because everybody else could understand that. And then even when I would address it, or kind of mention it, she would just kind of brushed it off, or she would kind of ignore me, and then just continue speaking Dutch...I think it's even though you do have that Dutch citizenship, because you don't have the language.” (Francesca, 14-11-2021)*

Mark noted that a similar form of zoning out and cultural segregation occurred:

*“Despite I'm German-Dutch, my German background sometimes makes Dutch people treat me differently and I sometimes feel like I am not integrated into their environment. It's really weird sometimes because they expect me to be always German and be distant from them, even though I speak fluent Dutch, they keep treating to me as a foreigner and someone who isn't Dutch. But then, I also see other Germans who speak Dutch sometimes, they form these closed groups and I feel like I should be with them sometimes. These kind of stereotypes are what make me less integrated despite I have my citizenship. It's just a paper sometimes.” (Mark, 25-11-2021)*

Mark's experiences illustrate the idea of segregation which Musterd and Ostendorf (2009) portrayed in their research on the Netherlands, albeit it contradicts the positive effect of that segregation.



## Discussion and Conclusion

### Discussion of Results and Reflections

The results presented by the surveys and interviews illustrate that citizenship does not have a significant effect on the social integration of migrants into Dutch society. The insignificant results presented by the multilinear regression reject the relationship between experiencing social issues like racism, discrimination and issues regarding culture and religion, and whether a migrant has a Dutch citizenship. Although this does not directly contrast with current literature that argues that social cohesion is strengthened and built where it does not exist, as argued by Bonjour & Duyvendak (2018), it somewhat contradicts other research, such as that by Alba and Nee (1997), with regards to the mending of social fragmentation. Furthermore, it deviates from the ideas and concepts presented by McCann et al. (2020) in the sense that citizenship mitigates social issues between (Caucasian) citizens and the migrants, ultimately resulting in a reduction of cases that concern racism, discrimination and other major problems. While the interviews generally agree with it as well, they also confirm some contemporary research on obtaining a citizenship. It is a time-consuming process that is complicated and may pose serious challenges, if migrants do not meet all requirements. This confirms views displayed by Zorlu (2013), which several interviewees confirmed they had experienced too. The interviews also somewhat contrasted findings on social segregation of migrants in the Netherlands, in particular relating to Musterd and Ostendorf (2016) in the sense that segregation does not always benefit migrants, but in fact sometimes isolates them.

In terms of limitations, this paper had several. First, there is a lack of research and contemporary texts on social integration, the social influence of citizenship and migration to the Netherlands from abroad. This made research into the topic more challenging, especially because the political and economic sides of migrants' integration into the Netherlands have been researched so well today. Therefore, finding texts on the social aspect of that integration was more difficult, as papers on the social and political aspects kept appearing instead. Further research could explore the social side in more depth. Second, this study collected over forty survey responses and conducted seven different interviews. Most Facebook groups for migrants have a large number of daily posts, which made it also difficult to find people for the surveys, and also for the interviews. The relatively small sample in the quantitative research could be a reason for the insignificant results and the lack of multicollinearity. Therefore, future research should focus on obtaining larger samples and even ask different questions. Some particular regions of the Netherlands where segregation occurs could also be

studied. Third, technical issues with Qualtrics and ultimately SurveyMonkey caused major issues with regard to time management. Finally, the current COVID-19 pandemic posed a challenge as well. All interviews were recorded online as the pandemic had forced many migrants to return home or be unavailable in person due to safety precautions and financial reasons. Organizing meetings required more time due to communication issues and even time barriers (as in the case of Barbara and Melissa). Therefore, future research could focus on conducting data in-person as the pandemic subsides.

## Conclusion

A key element of the well-being of migrants is their integration into the country within which they live in (Becker, 2022). Unfortunately, the main instrument through which this is done, citizenship, struggles with overcoming many social issues. This study has explored the effect of citizenship on the social integration of migrants by covering some of the main literature texts on the topic and by collecting and analysing data. This data predominantly concurs with that literature, concluding that there is no relationship between the role of citizenship and migrants' experience of social discrepancies and that obtaining a citizenship does not integrate migrants socially as much as it does so politically and economically. In other words, and to answer the main research question of this paper, a Dutch citizenship helps integrate migrants socially to the Netherlands to a certain extent.

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# Appendix

## Survey Questions



### Citizenship and Migration to the Netherlands

#### Introduction

Thank you for willing to participate in this survey! As a student currently conducting my Bachelor Thesis at the University of Groningen, a top 100 university worldwide, I am trying to better understand how Dutch citizenship may or may not influence migrants' social integration in the Netherlands.

Participating in this study will help better understand this. Your honest response to these questions is therefore incredibly valuable. None of the answers will be shared with anyone else and everything will be kept private for this study only!


\* 1. Are you 18 years or older?  0 



Yes

No



### Citizenship and Migration to the Netherlands

 PAGE TITLE


\* 2. Do you have a Dutch citizenship?  0 

Yes

No

## Citizenship and Migration to the Netherlands


⊕ PAGE TITLE

\* 3. Where were you born?  0

- In the Netherlands
- Abroad


## Citizenship and Migration to the Netherlands

⊕ PAGE TITLE

\* 4. Which country were you born in?  0

## Citizenship and Migration to the Netherlands

⊕ PAGE TITLE

\* 5. How old are you?  0

- 18 to 30
- 31 to 50
- 51 to 70
- 70 or older
- Prefer not to say



## Citizenship and Migration to the Netherlands

⊕ PAGE TITLE

\* 6. For how long have you lived in the Netherlands? 🗨 0

- Less than 5 years
- 5 years
- 6 years
- 7 years
- 8 years
- 9 years
- 10 years or more

## Citizenship and Migration to the Netherlands

### Religion

\* 7. Are you religious? 🗨 0

- Yes
- No
- I don't know
- Prefer not to say



## Citizenship and Migration to the Netherlands

⊕ PAGE TITLE

8. What religion do you believe in?

(Select multiple if you need to) ↕ 0

- Christianity
- Judaism
- Islam
- Hinduism
- Buddhism
- Other
- Prefer not to say



## Citizenship and Migration to the Netherlands

⊕ PAGE TITLE

\* 9. Have you experienced any social issues whilst in the Netherlands? ↕ 0

- Yes
- No
- Not really sure

## Citizenship and Migration to the Netherlands

⊕ PAGE TITLE

10. Which ones have you experienced?

*(Select multiple if you need to)* ☞ 0

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Discrimination    | <input type="checkbox"/> Issues concerning my religion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Racism            | <input type="checkbox"/> Issues concerning my culture  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gender Inequality | <input type="checkbox"/> Other(s)                      |

## Citizenship and Migration to the Netherlands

⊕ PAGE TITLE

\* 11. Have you experienced any of these issues before, after or both during and before your citizenship? ☞ 0

- Before I obtained citizenship
- After I obtained citizenship
- Before and after I obtained citizenship

## Citizenship and Migration to the Netherlands

⊕ PAGE TITLE

\* 12. Do you live together with others or alone? ☞ 0

- Together with others
- Alone
- Prefer not to say

## Citizenship and Migration to the Netherlands

⊕ PAGE TITLE

\* 13. What was your (collective) net income last year?

*(Includes labour income, business income, rental income, pensions, dividends, interest, social security, and any other income that tax paying adults in your household have)* 🗨 0

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> €0 - €19,999      | <input type="radio"/> €60,000 or more   |
| <input type="radio"/> €20,000 - €39,999 | <input type="radio"/> I don't know      |
| <input type="radio"/> €40,000 - €59,999 | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say |

## Citizenship and Migration to the Netherlands

⊕ PAGE TITLE

\* 14. Are you a member of any social group(s)? 🗨 0

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

## Citizenship and Migration to the Netherlands

⊕ PAGE TITLE

\* 15. Do you participate in any social activities? 🗨 0

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

## Citizenship and Migration to the Netherlands

⊕ PAGE TITLE

16. Could you please briefly describe them?  0

## Citizenship and Migration to the Netherlands

⊕ PAGE TITLE

\* 17. Have Dutch policies helped you better integrate in the Netherlands  0

- Yes
- No
- I don't know
- Prefer not to say


## Citizenship and Migration to the Netherlands

⊕ PAGE TITLE

18. Could you explain which ones?  0

## Citizenship and Migration to the Netherlands


⊕ PAGE TITLE

\* 19. Do you think there need to be more policies that help immigrants in the Netherlands?  0

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

## Citizenship and Migration to the Netherlands

⊕ PAGE TITLE

20. Do you have any suggestions? Can be anything!  0

## Citizenship and Migration to the Netherlands


⊕ PAGE TITLE

21. Do you think that a Dutch citizenship has helped you better integrate socially in the NL?  0

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

## Citizenship and Migration to the Netherlands

⊕ PAGE TITLE


\* 22. An interview would allow for a greater understanding of the issues mentioned in this survey. Would you like to participate in one?  0

Yes

No

## Citizenship and Migration to the Netherlands

⊕ PAGE TITLE

23. Please fill in your contact information  0

Name

Email Address

Phone Number

## Survey Results

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>Percentage of Responses</b>
<u>Gender cat owner</u>		
Male	22	55,00%
Female	18	45,00%
<u>Age of respondent</u>		
18 to 30 years old	11	27,50%
31 to 50 years old	18	45,00%
51 to 70 years old	11	27,50%
<u>Life in the Netherlands</u>		
Less than 5 years	9	22,50%
5 years	2	5,00%
6 years	1	2,50%
8 years	3	7,50%
9 years	1	2,50%
10 years or more	24	60,00%
<u>Living situation of respondent</u>		
Alone	11	27,50%
Together	29	72,50%
<u>Religious Status of respondent</u>		
Religious	13	32,50%
Not religious	20	50,00%
I don't know	1	2,50%
Prefer not to say	6	15,00%
<u>Religious Specificity</u>		
Christian	7	53,85%
Muslim	4	30,77%
Buddhist	2	15,38%
<u>Household income</u>		
€ 0 – € 19.999	5	12,50%
€ 20.000 – € 39.999	8	20,00%
€ 40.000 - € 59.999	4	10,00%
€ 60.000 or more	12	30,00%
I don't know	1	2,50%
Prefer not to say	7	17,50%
<u>Experience of Social Issues</u>		
Yes	12	30,00%
No	21	52,50%
Not really sure	7	17,50%
<u>Specific social issues experienced</u>		
Discrimination	6	50,00%
Racism	2	16,67%



<i>Gender Inequality</i>	2	16,67%
<i>Issues concerning religion</i>	1	8,33%
<i>Issues concerning culture</i>	4	33,33%
<i>Other(s)</i>	2	16,67%
<u><i>Time of experiencing social issues</i></u>		
<i>Before obtaining citizenship</i>	2	18,18%
<i>After obtaining citizenship</i>	4	36,36%
<i>Both during and after</i>	5	45,45%
<u><i>Member of social group(s)</i></u>		
<i>Yes</i>	21	52,50%
<i>No</i>	18	45,00%
<i>Prefer not to say</i>	1	2,50%
<u><i>Participation in social activities</i></u>		
<i>Yes</i>	25	62,50%
<i>No</i>	13	32,50%
<i>Prefer not to say</i>	2	5,00%
<u><i>Have Dutch policies helped better socially integrate in the Netherlands?</i></u>		
<i>Yes</i>	8	20,00%
<i>No</i>	14	35,00%
<i>I don't know</i>	17	42,50%
<i>Prefer not to say</i>	1	2,50%
<u><i>Do you think there need to be more policies that help immigrants in the Netherlands?</i></u>		
<i>Yes</i>	15	37,50%
<i>No</i>	9	22,50%
<i>I don't know</i>	16	40,00%
<u><i>Do you think that a Dutch citizenship has helped you better integrate socially in the NL?</i></u>		
<i>Yes</i>	2	5,00%
<i>No</i>	35	87,50%
<i>I don't know</i>	1	2,50%

**Table 3:** Demographics of 40 respondents included in the survey

## Brief information on the Interviewees

<i>Name</i>	<i>Country of Origin</i>
<i>Barbara</i>	United States of America
<i>Melissa</i>	Australia
<i>Francesca</i>	United Kingdom (Isle of Man)
<i>Georgi</i>	Bulgaria
<i>Mark</i>	Germany
<i>Interviewee A</i>	United Arab Emirates
<i>Interviewee B</i>	Syria

**Table 2:** Brief information on the interviewees

## Interview Consent Form

You are being invited to participate in a research study titled ‘The effect of citizenship on the social integration of migrants in the Netherlands’. This study is being done by Stefan Dakovski from the University of Groningen on November 2, 2021.

The purpose of this research study is to explore the extent to which Dutch citizenship helps integrate migrants to the Netherlands into the Dutch society. The data will be used for creating a general overview of how far migrants to the Netherlands believe they are integrated into Dutch society. Unless you specifically say that you wish otherwise, none of the information of this survey will be shared with anyone and your details will be kept. This interview, however, may have its transcript included at the end of the study. Would you like to include your name in the transcript?

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. You are free to not answer any question, without having to give a reason.. Could you acknowledge your consent to participate in this study please?

## Interview Questions

### **General Questions:**

1. Could you provide some personal background?
  - a. E.g. where you come from, your background, current lifestyle?
2. How long have you lived in the Netherlands?
3. Why did you decide to come to the Netherlands?
4. Have you particularly enjoyed any specific aspects of Dutch society?

5. What distinguishes the Netherlands from America for you?

**Social integration questions:**

1. How did you obtain your Dutch citizenship?
  - a. What was the process behind it?
  - b. Was it a difficult process?
  - c. Is it common how you obtained it?
2. Are you part of any groups or do you partake in any social activities?
  - a. You are part of Americans in the Netherlands on FB.
  - b. Maybe any social clubs or activities?
  - c. Maybe she learned or knows Dutch? (If yes, did that help integrate)?
3. Have you experienced any social problems as an American who lives in the Netherlands?
  - a. Especially with the elections in the US or maybe now with Biden?
4. Did any Dutch policies help you specifically? Or are you unsure?

**Future:**

1. Do you have any future plans?
  - a. Stay in the Netherlands, move back to the USA, etc.