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Pellenbarg, Piet H.; Van Steen, Paul J. M.

Published in:
Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie

DOI:
[10.1111/tesg.12139](https://doi.org/10.1111/tesg.12139)

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2015

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Pellenbarg, P. H., & Van Steen, P. J. M. (2015). The Foreign Born Population of the Netherlands. *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 106(1), 130-132. <https://doi.org/10.1111/tesg.12139>

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THE FOREIGN BORN POPULATION OF THE NETHERLANDS

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MULTICULTURALISM

Western societies have changed as a result of the growth of global migration in the past half century. Many of them changed from ethnically rather homogeneous countries into multi-ethnic societies, sometimes also denoted as multicultural societies. The term 'multicultural' however has a broader meaning. It not only refers to differences in ethnicity and indigenous people versus immigrants, but also includes the variety of religious, educational and political cultures as well as differing social, economic and sexual lifestyles. Within a country, all of these cultures or lifestyles can be more or less controversial, more or less uniform, and more or less concentrated in space.

The theme 'multicultural society' is suited both for mapping and debate. Multiculturalism can be conceived as a descriptive term, referring to the cultural diversity of communities within society, a subject that can be understood with figures, tables, maps and diagrams. But the term multiculturalism also stands for the belief that groups representing different cultures have a right to remain distinct rather than assimilating to 'mainstream' norms (Johnston *et al.* 2005). In the Netherlands, the belief in multiculturalism as a social and political ideal has been rather strong, especially in the last decades of the 20th century, and in particular among the adherents of left wing political parties. This definitely ended however with the publication of Scheffer's (2000) critical newspaper article on what he called 'the multicultural drama' and the synchronous fall-in of new right wing politicians and parties. Since then, there is an inten-

sive debate in the Netherlands about the yes or no and how of the integration of ethnic and cultural minority groups. The debate heavily concentrates on groups representing Islamic culture. Since the attack on the World Trade Center in New York in September 2001, such groups are associated not only with cultural differences, but also are felt as a safety risk.

In the 2015 map series on 'Multicultural Society', the social/political debate on the issue is not our focus; we will instead concentrate on the descriptive and geographical explanation of multiculturalism in the Netherlands in its broader interpretation. In the successive issues of *TESG's* 2015 volume we will show the distribution of those inhabitants that are of different national origin, and also present maps that will show other interesting aspects of multiculturalism such as religious disposition, mixed marriages, sexual lifestyle and internationalisation in education and research.

THE FOREIGN BORN POPULATION IN THE NETHERLANDS COMPARED WITH OTHER EU COUNTRIES

Statistically, people of foreign origin can be characterized in different ways, and European countries indeed tend to use different definitions in their demographic registration systems. There are registrations of different national citizenship, country of birth, or birth country of one or both parents. Nationality is a tricky measure because it disregards immigrants who could take the nationality of their new home country, which is an option with regulations differing widely between EU Member States and different

THE NETHERLANDS IN MAPS
Multicultural Society (Part 1)
FOREIGN POPULATION

Foreign population per municipality, 2013:
composite variable of number of nationalities
per municipality (for nationalities representing
at least 0.1% of municipal population) and
share of allochthonous population (foreign born,
or at least one parent foreign born)
per municipality

	% of allochthonous pop.		
	< 9%	9-15%	>15%
≤ 10 nationalities			
11-15 nationalities			
>15 nationalities			

15 Municipalities with the highest
number of allochthonous population, 2013

Number of Western, non-Western and total allochthonous
population in total population, 1972-2013, x 1 million

Source: CBS Statline (2014)
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Faculty of Spatial Sciences; University of Groningen
Tijdschrift voor Econ. en Soc. Geografie; 106(2015)1

countries of origin. Being born in another country is a more reliable measure. Eurostat's most recent registration of foreign-born ('allochthonous') persons shows an average for the EU member countries of close to 10 per cent, of which 6.7 per cent are born outside the EU27 as a whole. If we disregard the exceptional cases of Luxembourg and Cyprus, the highest shares of foreign born people in the EU are found in Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Ireland and Sweden (all 15–16 per cent). In the Netherlands the population share of foreign born persons is somewhat higher than the average: 11.5%, of which 8.6% from non EU27 countries (Eurostat 2014). However, in Dutch statistics it is usual to consider not only foreign born persons, but also persons who are born in the Netherlands, with one or two parents who were foreign born, as 'allochthonous'.¹ Widening the definition in such a way leads to a registration of 3.5 million allochthonous inhabitants in the Netherlands (21% of the total population of 16.8 million). Of these, 1.6 million are so-called 'Western allochthones'. In the Dutch registration system these are persons born (or with at least one parent being born) in other European countries including the former Soviet Union, the USA, or Indonesia/the former Dutch Indies. The 'non-Western allochthones' who are the common target of the 'multicultural debate' in the Dutch definition, number 2 million. The largest subgroups in this category, all numbering 350–400,000 persons, have a background from Turkey, Morocco, or Surinam.

THE SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF FOREIGN BORN PEOPLE (ALLOCHTHONES) IN THE NETHERLANDS

The map in this issue of *TESG* shows the spatial distribution of the foreign born population in the Netherlands by municipality. For this, a mix of two indicators was used, that is, the share of all allochthones in the total population, and the number of different nationalities within the allochthonous group. Proportional circles are added for the 15 municipalities with the largest groups of allochthones, namely, greater than 35,000. An inset diagram illustrates the spectacular growth of the non-western allochthones in the past four decades especially.

The combination of indicators produces a clear-cut picture of the Randstad plus some 20 other urban centres in the North, East and West as the scenery of the multicultural drama as far as ethnicity is concerned, both in terms of the high percentage of allochthonous people and the high number of different nationalities. The highest percentages and numbers are found in Amsterdam, The Hague and Rotterdam. In each of these cities the allochthones now represent about half of the total population. The vast majority of them is of non-Western origin (CBS 2013). The only other municipality with a close to 50 per cent foreign born population is Vaals in the extreme Southeast of the country, this concerns mostly people of German origin. The lowest share of allochthones (3%) is found in the small municipalities of Urk in Flevoland and Staphorst in Overijssel, both well-known as the most characteristic strongholds of conservative Protestantism in the Netherlands (cf. Van Steen & Pellenbarg 2012).

Note

1. Persons born abroad with two Dutch parents are not counted as an 'allochthone'.

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