

AT HOME IN
EUROPE

SOMALIS

IN **AMSTERDAM**

Somalis in European Cities

Somalis in Amsterdam

At Home in Europe

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	5
Preface	7
Somalis in Amsterdam	9
List of Acronyms and Abbreviations.....	14
Executive Summary	15
Methodology	19
1. Introduction	21
2. Population and Demographics	22
3. Policy Context	30
4. Identity and Belonging	44
5. Education	53
6. Employment	62
7. Housing	72
8. Health and Social Protection	78
9. Policing and Security	91
10. Participation and Citizenship	99
11. The Role of the Media	108
12. Conclusions	114
13. Recommendations	116
Annex 1. Bibliography	120
Annex 2. List of Interviewees	127

Open Society Foundations Mission Statement

The Open Society Foundations work to build vibrant and tolerant societies whose governments are accountable to their citizens. Working with local communities in more than 100 countries, the Open Society Foundations support justice and human rights, freedom of expression, and access to public health and education.

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This city report was prepared as part of a series of reports titled Somalis in European Cities. The series focuses on seven cities in Europe with a Somali origin population. The cities chosen, and within them specific neighbourhoods, are Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Leicester, London, Malmö, and Oslo.

The reports have been prepared by At Home in Europe, part of the Open Society Initiative for Europe, Open Society Foundations and in cooperation with local/national based experts.

The Somalis in Amsterdam report has been researched and drafted by the Dr. Gery Nijenhuis, Assistant professor, International Development Studies, Department of Human Geography and Planning and Dr. Ilse van Liempt, Assistant professor, Department of Urban Geography, Utrecht University, with the invaluable assistance and support from the following individuals:

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At Home in Europe has final responsibility for the content of the report, including any errors or misrepresentations.

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PREFACE

A central belief of the Open Society Foundations is that all people in an open society count equally and should enjoy equal opportunities. The Open Society Foundations work day-to-day with civil society organizations across Europe to respond to discrimination, prejudice and injustice; to understand the emergence of new and sometimes worrying political phenomena; to inform better practices in policing and security; to connect those seeking justice and equality with policymakers and institutions; to promote inclusion for Europe's minorities; to support a critical and informed discourse among nongovernmental actors; and to empower grassroots organizations to seek change for themselves, unique to their own local context.

At Home in Europe, part of the Open Society Initiative for Europe, Open Society Foundations, is a research and advocacy initiative which works to advance equality and social justice for groups excluded from the mainstream of civil, political, economic, and, cultural life in Western Europe. It places a high priority on local community and city level practices that mitigate discrimination and seek to ensure access to equal opportunities for all. At Home in Europe engages with policymakers, civil society organisations, and communities at the local, national and international level to improve the social inclusion of Europe's diverse minority and marginalised communities in different ways.

Minority communities – whether Muslim, migrant or Roma – continue to come under intense scrutiny in Europe today. This complex situation presents Europe with one its greatest challenges: how to ensure equal rights in an environment of rapidly expanding diversity. The Somali community is one such emerging minority group on whom a lack of precise data hampers the possibility of achieving meaningful integration.

People of Somali origin have lived in parts of Europe for many generations but in the past 15 years their numbers have increased. There are no accurate figures for the number of Somalis in Europe but on the whole, whilst small in absolute numbers, they are among one of the continent's largest refugee groups and a growing minority population. Europe's Somalis can be divided into three broad categories: people of Somali origin born in Europe, Somali refugees and asylum seekers (who came directly from Somalia or neighbouring countries largely as a result of conflict) and Somalis who migrated to a country in Europe from elsewhere in Europe, such as from Sweden to the UK for example. They are a diverse and vibrant community who suffer from negative and biased media representation and stereotyping. There is a limited understanding on the specific needs of this community and they are in the category of groups that experience significant inequalities in accessing education, employment, health, and housing with resulting poor outcomes. Somali community groups are very present in certain countries in Europe but their engagement with policymakers and in local and national bodies can be relatively limited.

The comparative research series 'Somalis in European Cities' examines city and municipal policies that have actively sought to understand Somali origin communities and their specific needs. The research aims to capture the everyday, lived experiences as well as the type and degree of engagement policymakers have initiated with their Somali and minority constituents. An underlying theme is how Somali communities have themselves actively participated in tackling discrimination and whether the needs of specific groups warrant individual policy approaches in overcoming barriers to equal opportunities.

The 'Somalis in European Cities' series contains seven individual city reports and an overview. The cities selected take into account the population size, diversity, and the local political context. They are: Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Leicester, London, Malmo, and Oslo. All seven city reports were prepared by teams of local experts on the basis of the same methodology to allow for comparative analysis. Each report includes detailed recommendations for improving the opportunities for full participation and inclusion of Somalis in wider society in the selected city. These recommendations will form the basis for At Home in Europe of the Open Society Initiative for Europe's advocacy activities.

Somalis in Amsterdam

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	14
List of Acronyms and Abbreviations	14
Methodology	19
1. Introduction	21
2. Population and Demographics	22
2.1 Settlement History of Somalis in the Netherlands	22
2.2 Demographics	23
2.3 Somalis by Province	26
2.4 Somalis in Amsterdam	28
3. Policy Context	30
3.1 The Political and Administrative Structure of Amsterdam	30
3.2 The Organisation of Services	32
3.3 National Integration Policies	32
3.4 Local Integration Policies	36
3.5 The Civic Integration Model in Amsterdam	37
3.6 Experiences of Somalis with the Civic Integration Programme	39
3.7 Revised Civic Integration Act	41
4. Identity and Belonging	44
4.1 The Position of Amsterdam and the Neighbourhood in Somalis' Identities	44
4.2 Multiple Identities	45
4.3 Transnationalism	48
4.4 Social Interaction and Interethnic Relationships	49
4.5 Initiatives in Identity and Belonging	51
5. Education	53
5.1 The Educational System and Somalis	53
5.1.1 Primary Education	55
5.1.2 Secondary Education	55
5.1.3 Vocational, Professional and Academic Education	57
5.2 The Educational Position of Somalis	58

5.3 Initiatives to Improve the Educational Position of Somalis	60
6. Employment	62
6.1 Labour Market Participation and Unemployment	62
6.2 Types of Employment	64
6.3 Reasons for Labour Market Difficulties	64
6.4 Income	67
6.5 Initiatives in Employment and Income	69
7. Housing	72
7.1 Reception of Asylum Seekers in the Netherlands	72
7.2 The Compulsory Dispersal of Somali Refugees	73
7.3 Housing in the Netherlands	74
7.4 Housing in Amsterdam	75
8. Health and Social Protection	78
8.1 The Health Status of Somalis in the Netherlands	78
8.2 Somalis' Use of Health Care and Social Services	80
8.3 Initiatives to Improve Access to Health Care and Social Services	84
8.4 Female Genital Mutilation	84
8.5 Tuberculosis	86
8.6 The Relationship between Somali Parents and Their Children	87
8.7 Initiatives in Parenting Support	89
9. Policing and Security	91
9.1 Somalis' Experiences with Policing and Profiling	91
9.2 Somalis' Involvement in Crime	93
9.3 Anti-discrimination and Counterterrorism Legislation in Amsterdam	94
9.4 Radicalisation among Somalis	96
9.5 Khat	97
10. Participation and Citizenship	99
10.1 Citizenship in the Netherlands	99
10.2 Somali Participation and Citizenship	100
10.3 Participation in Politics	101
10.4 Participation in Civil Society: Somali Organisations	103

10.5 Measures	107
11. The Role of the Media	108
11.1 Media Use	108
11.2 Coverage of Somalis in the Media	109
11.3 Reactions and Opinions of Somalis on Their Media Coverage	110
11.4 Initiatives to Improve Media Engagement	112
12. Conclusions	114
13. Recommendations	116
11.1 General Recommendations	116
13.2 Integration Policy	117
13.3 Education	117
13.4 Employment	118
13.5 Health Care	118
13.6 Policing and Security	118
13.7 Participation and Citizenship	118
13.8 The Role of the Media	119
Annex 1. Bibliography	120
Annex 2. List of interviewees	127

Index of Tables

Table 1.	Participants in focus group discussions according to gender and year of arrival in the Netherlands	19
Table 2.	Age of participants in focus group discussions	19
Table 3.	Number of Somalis by Amsterdam's city districts, 1 January 2013	29
Table 4.	Responsibilities in the integration of refugees in Amsterdam	38
Table 5.	Value of civic integration programme according to Somali participants (%), 2009	39
Table 6.	Religious conviction, behaviour and adherence to religious rules, by ethnic origin (%), 2009	46
Table 7.	Classification of social contacts, according to ethnic origin (%), 2009 ..	50
Table 8.	Employment and welfare, population 15–65 years (%) 2009	63
Table 9.	Physical and mental health of refugees aged 15–64 in the Netherlands compared with native-born, 2009	79
Table 10.	Use of health services, according to ethnic background and age (%), 2009	81
Table 11.	Parental values of native-born Dutch and Somali parents	88
Table 12.	Somali organisations in Amsterdam	105

Index of Figures

Figure 1.	Registered Somali population in the Netherlands, 1996–2011	24
Figure 2.	Somali requests for asylum in the Netherlands, 1988–2011	25
Figure 3.	Somalis by province, 1 January 2012	28
Figure 4.	The seven city districts of Amsterdam	31
Figure 5.	Amsterdam’s municipal organisation	43
Figure 6.	Educational levels of Afghans, Iraqis, Iranians, Somalis and native-born population aged 15–65, not attending school	54
Figure 7.	Pupils in year 3 of secondary education, according to type of education and ethnic origin (%), school year 2008/2009	56
Figure 8.	Those not attending school aged 20–34 with a basic qualification, according to ethnic background (%), 2009	57
Figure 9.	Coverage of Somalis in Het Parool, 14 October 2012–14 April 2013 according to number of items	110

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BJAA	Child Welfare Bureau Amsterdam (<i>Bureau Jeugdzorg Agglomeratie Amsterdam</i>)
CBS	Statistics Netherlands
COA	Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (<i>Centraal Orgaan opvang Asielzoekers</i>)
DMO	Municipal Department of Social Development
DRC	Dutch Council for Refugees
DWI	Municipal Department of Work and Income
DWZS	Government or Municipal Department of Housing, Welfare and Society
FGM	Female genital mutilation
GGD	Municipal Department of Health
HIRDA	Himilo Relief and Development Association
IND	Immigration and Naturalisation Service (<i>Immigratie en Naturalisatie Dienst</i>)
LGBT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
OOV	Municipal Department of Public Order and Security
OTS	Taking into care (<i>ondertoezichtstelling</i>)
ROA	Asylum Seekers Reception Regulations (<i>Regeling Opvang Asielzoekers</i>)
SCP	The Netherlands Institute for Social Research (<i>Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau</i>)
SOMVAO	Somali Association for Amsterdam and Surrounding Area (<i>Somalische Vereniging Amsterdam en Omgeving</i>)
SONPPCAN	Somali Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect
SVAZ	Dutch Council for Refugees/Amsterdam (<i>Stichting Vluchtelingenwerk van Amstel tot Zaan</i>)
UAF	Foundation for Refugee Students (<i>Stichting voor Vluchteling-Studenten</i>)
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WHO	World Health Organisation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Somalis in Amsterdam form a small group that is still finding its way between two cultures. Larger numbers of Somalis first began arriving in the Netherlands in the 1990s, with a second wave of immigration in 2007. Most of those arriving apply for asylum, with the remainder coming as part of the family reunification process. Currently (on the first of January 2013), 33.750 Somalis are officially registered in the country, but the number fluctuates, largely due to continued onward migration to the United Kingdom and elsewhere. In Amsterdam, Somalis live across the city, with higher concentrations in Nieuw West, West, Zuid Oost and Noord.

Current national immigration policies tend towards assimilation, after decades of policies that had a more multicultural or integration-based approach. Policies are also more generic, rather than targeting specific minority groups. The civic integration programme that focuses on language and employment skills receives high marks in surveys, but was less well received among the Open Society Foundations focus groups because of the huge gap between what is known and what is expected (high levels of illiteracy and a strong oral tradition as against a writing one). A new law on integration puts more emphasis on individual choice responsibility and requires migrants to pay for their own integration; the impact of these changes is still emerging. For refugees it has been negotiated that they can get a loan to pay for their civic integration course and that this debt can be canceled in case they pass the exam.

Identity and belonging: Generally, focus group participants had a stronger Muslim and Somali identity than what they experienced as residents of Amsterdam. It was also remarkable how transnational their lives were, with family and friends living all over the world. Anti-Muslim rhetoric in Dutch society may have contributed to a heightened sense of religious identity, which was pointed out as something relatively new. Social networks varied among the participants, with some interacting with people of many different backgrounds, and others mainly with other Somalis. Initiatives to support young people have provided coaching for Somali young people to help develop their identity and potential, with support from Somali organisations.

Education: Somalis have some of the lowest education levels among refugee groups, with nearly 30 percent of Somali women in particular having no education at all. Other Somali children attend public primary school, with no strong pattern emerging. Almost one-third of Somalis between the ages of 15 and 64 participate in higher education; while the largest number takes part in vocational programmes, some are enrolled at university. The assessment test that determines a student's secondary school route requires excellent Dutch fluency, which may be a factor in Somali students' advancement. School dropouts remain high among Somalis, but the number has declined considerably in the past 10 years.

Employment and income: With just under 30 percent of Somalis reporting a paid job in the Netherlands, labour market participation is low. Most of those with a job work

at less skilled levels. Women face specific problems of labour market access: their education is worse, they are less likely to be proficient in Dutch, and where they are the head of the household, they may be without child-care options, since own contributions for formal child care arrangements are considerable. Some focus group participants reported experiencing discrimination in the labour market, although more generally as immigrants or Muslims, not specifically due to being identified as Somali. A lack of financial planning and, consequently, debt has been noted as problems for Somali households. Many of the households support their relatives in Somalis, which is a burden on the household budget. A number of Amsterdam-based initiatives focusing on helping refugees find work have been undertaken, both in the public and civil society sectors. Support for women's employment has been a particular focus.

Housing: As asylum seekers, most Somalis remain in refugee centres for the first period after arriving in the Netherlands; thereafter, they are dispersed among the various municipalities, which are required to provide housing. In Amsterdam, there are long waiting lists for social housing and the supply for large families is limited. Some focus group participants expressed concerns over the process of getting settled in so large a city, with fairly limited support from state agencies.

Health and social protection: Somalis report better health than several other large refugee groups, but this may be distorted by the underreporting of mental health problems. Somalis also do not use the health services much; focus group participants praised the health care available in the Netherlands, even though previous research has suggested that refugees are not getting the care they need in a timely way. Participants mentioned that language and cultural barriers create misunderstandings between Somalis and health-care providers, and the number of interpreters and Somali-speaking medical staff remains low. In the current climate of economic recession the number of interpreters has also dropped which makes communication more complicated.

A subject of particular concern among Somalis is the growing gap between parents and children, and the contrast between Dutch and Somali parenting styles; local initiatives have been organised to help bridge the gaps.

Policing and security: Focus group participants, especially the young men, related experiences where their skin colour or other appearance seemed to make them more likely to be stopped by the police. Somalis are overrepresented in crime statistics, particularly unaccompanied minors, who have no family in the country to support or guide them. Amsterdam has adopted a series of anti-radicalisation programmes, aimed at both identifying potential threats and improving integration. The recent prohibition on khat has had an impact on the Somali community, and was a topic of concern in the focus groups; some blamed the use of this substance for problems within the Somali community, while others noted that banning its use will only increase criminal activity around it and make prices go up.

Participation and citizenship: Most Somalis in the Netherlands eligible to do so are taking Dutch citizenship. Nevertheless, political participation is low, especially among

young people, similar to young people in general in the Netherlands. No one of Somali background currently serves in the national parliament or the Amsterdam city council which is inherent to the small size of the Somali community in the Netherlands and Amsterdam. Some respondents observed a lack of cohesion in the Somali community, and wondered about its implications for local and national representation. The civil society sector in Amsterdam includes a dozen Somali organisations, most of which are small. The largest runs language classes, helps arrange internships and supports Somali women. Broader, national Somali umbrella organisations represent Somalis at the national level. Young Somalis questioned the legitimacy of Somali organisations and recently established specific youth organisations.

The role of the media: Cellphone and internet-based news sources are increasing popular in the Dutch Somali community; satellite television is also gaining viewers. In terms of how Somalis are featured in Dutch media, piracy appeared most often in a six-month monitoring of Somali-related news, and overall, negative representations of Somalis dominated. Focus group participants also drew attention to stereotyping in the media. A series of short films about various aspects of Somali life in the Netherlands was aired on television in 2012 and 2013, to mixed responses, as it mainly focused on negative aspects such as problems around child welfare and terrorism.

Recommendation: Whilst the community of Somalis in Amsterdam is very small, it is a diverse group scattered across the city. Dutch Somalis balance multiple identities, with their country of origin, religious identity and immigrant status, all playing roles. Struggles with the Dutch educational system and job market are common, as they are among other immigrant groups. A number of initiatives to address the specific concerns of Somalis could be expanded to other sectors; in particular, the role of civil society should be given support and room to grow, as it would enhance the role Somalis take in shaping policies, which has been very limited to date.

- The City of Amsterdam should adopt policies that are general in their aims but recognise diversity by ensuring that such policies are equally effective for groups and individuals who face specific challenges.
- The City of Amsterdam should work with the Dutch Council for Refugees, Somali and other immigrant organisations to assess the impact of the new Integration Act on key indicators of integration, such as the social impact of high unemployment, poor health, inadequate housing, and low educational attainment among immigrants and their children with a view to recommending changes in policy and practice that will deliver better results. Moreover, within the framework of the current refugee policy, opportunities for additional support to Somali and other refugee groups should be explored in order to enhance the effectiveness of civic integration programmes and Dutch language courses.
- The City of Amsterdam should address the key challenges faced by Somalis and other immigrant communities by multiple-faceted partnership

approaches involving a range of interventions by key partners, including a strong role for Somali and other immigrant community organisations. In this way, their skills, knowledge, commitment and professional growth opportunities can be fully utilized in promoting integration, through activities such as information, guidance and advocacy for community members, language courses, training and mentoring, homework support, links with public services, support for parents and other activities.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology for the collection of data included a literature review and field research. Desk research included a review of relevant policy and academic literature, on Somalis in the Netherlands and in Amsterdam in particular. Fieldwork consisted of focus group discussions and interviews with stakeholders. Two Somali research assistants were brought in to run the focus group discussions: one female Somali consultant, with a broad network among Somali organisations, and one young female student. Ten focus group discussions were held with Somalis in Amsterdam, some of them thematic, focusing on education, employment, housing and so on, while the other focus group discussions had a broader outline and addressed multiple issues. While the aim was to organise diverse groups, regarding age, gender and educational level, some of the initial criteria were difficult to meet, such as an equal representation of both men and women in one focus group discussion. It emerged that both sexes spoke much more freely when they were in a room with people of the same sex. As speaking freely was the goal, the report gives more room to focus group discussions that represent only men or women. Another condition that was difficult to apply was that participants should not know each other. This was hard to achieve, as the Somali population in Amsterdam is very small, but by using multiple entry points to this community a broad representation of the Somali community in Amsterdam does appear here. Most group discussions were in Somali, except for the group discussions with young Somalis and a group of older Somalis who have lived in Amsterdam since the early 1990s. All focus group discussions were recorded and transcribed by the research assistants.

Tables 1 and 2 provide an overview of some basic characteristics of the participants in the focus group discussions. About 40 percent of the participants were women, and a majority of all participants had arrived in the Netherlands after 2005. A majority of the participants were relatively young, in their 20s and 30s, which fairly reflects the presumed age distribution of the Somali population in Amsterdam.

Table 1. Participants in focus group discussions according to gender and year of arrival in the Netherlands

	Up to 1995	1995–1999	2000–2004	After 2005	Born in Netherlands
Male (N = 39)	9	3	1	21	5
Female (N = 27)	2	3	3	18	1

Table 2. Age of participants in focus group discussions

Below 20	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s	Unknown
4	26	16	11	5	1	3

In addition, the report draws upon 23 interviews conducted with key individuals, such as city officials working in relevant departments, leaders of Somali organisations representatives of non-governmental organisations working in relevant fields, journalists and policy officers working in the national government. Annex 1 contains a list of all interviewees.

The report consists of 13 sections. After section 1, the Introduction, section 2 describes the demographics of Somalis in the Netherlands, and Amsterdam in particular, and section 3 elaborates on the policy context of the city, including the civic integration programme. Sections 4–11 are thematic, exploring identity (4), education (5), employment (6), housing (7), health and social protection (8), policing and security (9), participation and citizenship (10), and the role of the media (11). Section 12 is the conclusion, and the report ends with recommendations (13).

1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of the study on the participation and social inclusion of Somalis in Amsterdam. The research is a direct follow-up to the earlier At Home in Europe project *Muslims in EU Cities*. At Home in Europe explores the political, social, cultural and economic participation of minority and marginalised groups in western Europe via engagement with residents, civil society, and policymakers. Through policy-oriented research and advocacy, the initiative explores and examines the participation and experiences of communities living in some of Europe's most diverse cities. Since 2007, the programme has focused on the integration of Muslims in 11 cities and has produced a series of reports and policy-oriented recommendations that tackle social exclusion and highlight conditions promoting fairness and opportunities. The *Muslims in EU Cities* research identified the need to examine the integration of other minority groups in Europe, including new communities settled in the last two decades.

Discussions with city officials, practitioners, policymakers and civil society organisations during the *Muslims in EU Cities* research identified the lack of information and data about the views, experiences and concerns of Somalis as a significant knowledge gap in policy planning. People of Somali origin have lived in parts of Europe for many generations, but in the past 20 years their numbers have increased rapidly. The aim of the *Somalis in European Cities* research project is to examine the way in which municipal and national authorities address the integration of Somali communities in European cities, how they counter growing tensions in the current economic climate, and the extent to which they consider the needs of Somalis and involve them in decision-making. The seven cities under study are Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Leicester, London, Malmö and Oslo.

The current study documents the situation and experiences of Somalis in Amsterdam across a wide range of areas: civic integration, identity, interaction and belonging, education, employment, housing, health and social services, policing and security, and participation in social and political life. Unlike the other reports in this series the examples of good practice that are highlighted are from across the Netherlands and not solely from Amsterdam.

The term “Somalis” has been chosen to refer to Dutch Somalis with highly differentiated backgrounds regarding place of birth (the Netherlands, Somalia or elsewhere), migration process and length of stay in the Netherlands. Therefore, the report does not set out to define who is a Somali, but rather reflects the positions of individual Somalis.

2. POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

This section describes the migration history of Somalis to the Netherlands, their ethnic and national backgrounds, their demographic profile in the Netherlands and the local situation in Amsterdam.

2.1 Settlement History of Somalis in the Netherlands

Somalis have come to the Netherlands mainly as refugees seeking asylum. This fact has shaped the types of Somalis who have arrived, when they arrived and their settlement patterns. It makes their experience of arrival, settlement and integration into Dutch society different from migrants who initially came for work.

The first 10 Somali asylum seekers in the Netherlands arrived in 1984, fleeing Siad Barre's repressive regime.¹ A first real peak of Somali arrivals in the Netherlands occurred in 1995, some years after the fall of Siad Barre's regime in 1991. Most of the asylum seekers had spent time in refugee camps in the region, mainly in Kenya, before arriving in the Netherlands, and organising family reunification took some time.² At that time it was mainly Somali people who belonged to the Isaq and Majarteen clan who escaped the country, as Siad Barre had not supported these clans. After the fall of the regime, regime loyalists such as the Darods and minority groups like Reer Hamar who were no longer supported by the majority clans sought asylum abroad. Most of the Somalis who arrived in the Netherlands in the 1990s came from urban areas in the north of Somalia and were well educated; many diplomats, businessmen and other highly educated people arrived in the Dutch asylum seekers centres.³

A second period of Somali immigration into the Netherlands took place around 2007 as a result of the crisis in the south of Somalia. This flow included more young people than the first period and was made up mainly of Somalis from the south, with a

¹ E. van den Reek and A.I. Hussein, *Somaliërs op doorreis, verhuisgedrag van Nederlandse Somaliërs naar Engeland* (Somalis in Transit: Movement Behaviour of Dutch Somalis to the United Kingdom), Wetenschapswinkel, Tilburg, 2003 (hereafter, Van den Reek and Hussein, *Somaliërs op doorreis*).

² A. van Heelsum, *Somaliërs in Nederland. Profiel 2011* (Somalis in the Netherlands. Profile 2011), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken), The Hague, 2011 (hereafter, Van Heelsum, *Somaliërs in Nederland*).

³ J. Klaver, P. Poel and J. Stouten, *Somaliërs in Nederland, een verkenning van hun maatschappelijke positie en aanknopingspunten voor beleid* (Somalis in the Netherlands: an Exploration of Their Societal Positions and Suggestions for Policy), Regioplan, Amsterdam, 2010, p. 17 (hereafter, Klaver et al., *Somaliërs in Nederland*).

majority of people from Mogadishu.⁴ Some of the large clans represented in the south are Hawiya, Rahanwein and Digil. This time there were hardly any Isaq applying for asylum as the north was relatively safe. In contrast with the first group of Somali arrivals, the majority of the recent newcomers have had little or no education and they all have had the experience of living in a country at war.⁵

2.2 Demographics

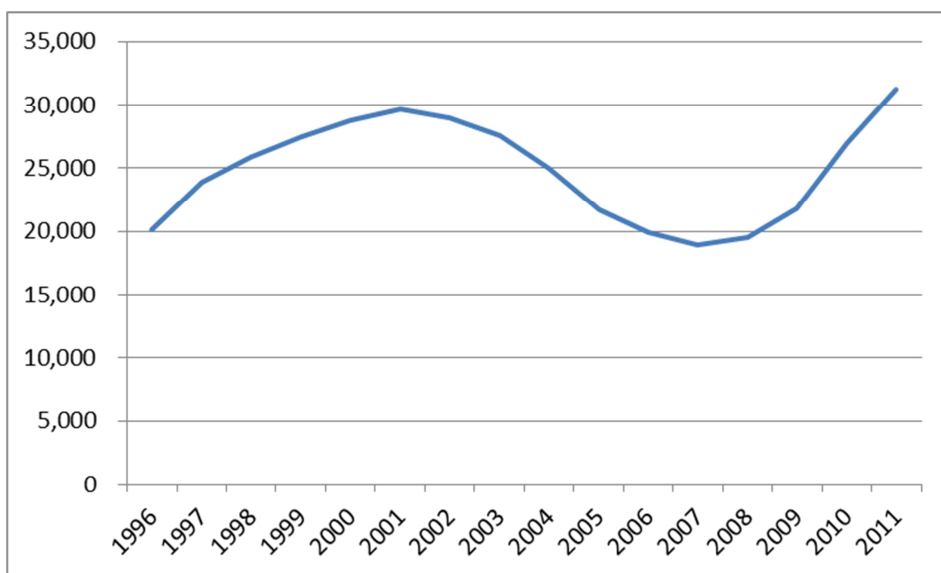
The official number of Somalis in the Netherlands fluctuates between 20,000 and 30,000. On 1 January 2013 the number of Somalis officially residing in Dutch municipalities was 33,750.⁶ The large fluctuation over time (in 2000 there were 28,780 Somalis registered and in 2005 only 21,733) is not the result of changes in birth rates. The number of Somalis born in the Netherlands is stable. These dynamics within the community can be explained by the high numbers of Somalis who are moving onward, mainly to the United Kingdom.⁷ Even though Somalis have felt safe and welcome in the Netherlands and they are grateful for the refugee status they have received, the Netherlands is still perceived as a place of transit by many.

⁴ J.A. Moors, E. van den Reek Vermeulen and M. Siesling, *Voedingsbodem voor radicalisering bij kleine etnische groepen in Nederland, een verkennend onderzoek in de Somalische, Pakistaanse, Koerdische en Molukse gemeenschappen (Breeding Ground for Radicalisation Among Small Ethnic Groups in the Netherlands, an Exploratory Study Among the Somali, Pakistani, Kurdish and Moluccan Communities)*, IVA, Tilburg, 2009 (hereafter, Moors et al., *Voedingsbodem voor radicalisering bij kleine etnische groepen in Nederland*).

⁵ Klaver et al., *Somaliërs in Nederland*, p. 17.

⁶ CBS, Statline, 2013, at <http://statline.cbs.nl/statweb/default.aspx> (accessed 10 June 2013).

⁷ J. Klaver and I. van der Welle, *VluchtelingenWerk Integratie Barometer 2009. Een onderzoek naar de integratie van vluchtelingen in Nederland* ((Dutch Council for Refugees Integration Barometer 2009. A Study on the Integration of Refugees in the Netherlands), VluchtelingenWerk Nederland, 2009 (hereafter, Klaver and Van der Welle, *VluchtelingenWerk Integratie Barometer*); I. van Liempt, "And Then One Day They All Moved to Leicester': the Relocation of Somalis from the Netherlands to the UK Explained," *Population, Space and Place* 17 (3) (2011a), pp. 254–266 (hereafter, Van Liempt, "And Then One Day They All Moved to Leicester"); Van den Reek and Hussein, *Somaliërs op doorreis*.

Figure 1. Registered Somali population in the Netherlands, 1996–2011

Source: Statistics Netherlands (CBS), 2013⁸

These numbers are based on official registration in Dutch municipalities. The real number of Somalis residing in the Netherlands is, however, larger than Figure 1 suggests. Migrants without proper documentation are not counted in the official registration statistics of Dutch municipalities. In 2010 the number of undocumented Somalis in the Netherlands was estimated at between 1,300 and 5,900.⁹ Those residing in asylum seekers centres (1,452 Somalis at 31 December 2012¹⁰ according to the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (*Centraal Orgaan opvang Asielzoekers*, COA) and whose claims are still being processed are also not registered with municipalities.

Around 75 percent of Somalis who arrive in the Netherlands apply for asylum. The rest enter the country on the grounds of family reunification. Only 0.5 percent arrives as labour migrants, students or for other reasons. Men are more likely to arrive as

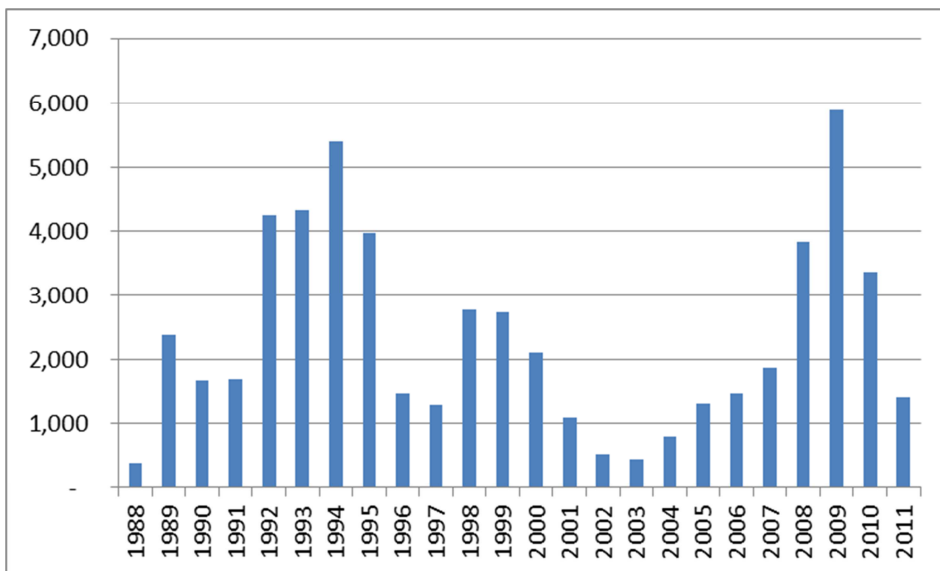
⁸ See: <http://www.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/home/default.htm>

⁹ Klaver et al., *Somaliërs in Nederland*.

¹⁰ Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (*Centraal Orgaan opvang Asielzoekers*, COA), "New Paths. Annual Report of the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers 2012," at www.coa.nl/sites/www.coa.nl/files/publicaties/bestanden/3576.1116_sociaal_jaarverslag_2012_engels_web.pdf (accessed 25 March 2014).

asylum seekers (81 percent) and women more often arrive as family unifiers (74 percent), but the difference is very small.¹¹

Figure 2. Somali requests for asylum in the Netherlands, 1988–2011



Source: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Statistical Online Population Database, 2013¹²

The peaks in Somalis' asylum requests correspond with clear moments of political crisis in Somalia. Between 1993 and 1995 there was a peak due to the fall of Siad Barre's regime. After 2007 there was another notable peak in the number of asylum requests because of the crisis in the south of Somalia that was still affecting security.¹³ At the moment of writing this report (November 2013) Somali Security forces are backed up by African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in response to increasing insecurity in the country's capital Mogadishu.

Policy changes in the Netherlands also play an important role in explaining the peaks in asylum requests, primarily the low points. The fact that the number of asylum

¹¹ CBS, Statline, 2013, at <http://statline.cbs.nl/statweb> (accessed 25 March 2014) (hereafter, CBS, Statline).

¹² See www.unhcr.org/pages/4a013eb06.html (accessed 25 March 2014).

¹³ A study by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ("Algemeen Ambtsbericht Somalië 2012" (General Office Bulletin Somalia 2012) stated that the security situation in south and central Somalia worsened in the period March–October 2012. See <http://www.inlia.nl/uploads/File/Somali%C3%AB%20algemeen%20ambtsbericht%2030%20nov%202012.pdf> (accessed 25 March 2014).

requests from Somalia has decreased since 2009 does not necessarily mean that the situation in the south is safer. In 2009 the Dutch government decided to cancel its categorical protection policy for Somalis from central and south Somalia,¹⁴ protection that had been implemented between 2005 and 2009 and meant that asylum cases from Somalia were determined collectively rather than on a case-by-case basis. The reason for cancelling this policy was the alleged abuse of the system and the increase of children where it was not clear whether they truly were part of a (nuclear) family already residing in the Netherlands. Social benefits fraud and even fingertip mutilation to avoid fingerprint matching were also cited as a basis for the cancellation of the categorical policy.¹⁵

A unique characteristic of the Somali population in the Netherlands is that it is a very young one: around two-thirds of them are under 30, compared with around one-third in the Dutch population as a whole (35.8 percent).¹⁶ In 2010, 58 percent of the Somali asylum seekers were under 18 and 48 percent were under 15 (compared with 21.2 percent and 17.6 percent respectively for the Dutch population as a whole).¹⁷ This specific demographic structure of the Somali population can be explained by the arrival of many young asylum seekers and the high birth rate of the settled community.

So it is not surprising that the majority of the Somali population in the Netherlands is unmarried. The second generation of Somalis in the Netherlands is still very young, some of them are just becoming teenagers recently. The number of unaccompanied minors arriving is declining among Somali asylum seekers, from 375 in 2009 to 38 in 2011.¹⁸

2.3 Somalis by Province

There is no city or region where Somalis can be said to be overrepresented, as they tend to be dispersed all over the Netherlands. Apart from some minor concentrations in the larger cities there is a slight regional concentration in the south and east of the Netherlands where there are large neighbouring asylum seekers centres like Oisterwijk, Vught and Zevenaar. Refugees tend to prefer to stay close to where they initially arrived.

¹⁴ Van Heelsum, *Somaliërs in Nederland*.

¹⁵ Van Heelsum, *Somaliërs in Nederland*.

¹⁶ Klaver and Van der Welle, *VluchtelingenWerk Integratie Barometer*.

¹⁷ CBS, Statline.

¹⁸ Vluchtelingenwerk, "Vluchtelingen in Getallen 2012" (Refugees in Numbers 2012), Vluchtelingenwerk, 2012, at www.pharos.nl/documents/doc/vluchtelingen_in_getallen_2012.pdf (accessed 14 March 2014).

But refugees who have been dispersed also move after a while to new destinations, especially toward the large cities.¹⁹ This is also true for Somalis. Research shows that only one-third of the Somalis in the Netherlands still live at the same address to which they were initially assigned.²⁰ Work, education, the presence of family and friends, and affordable housing²¹ are important reasons for the geographic regrouping of refugees.²²

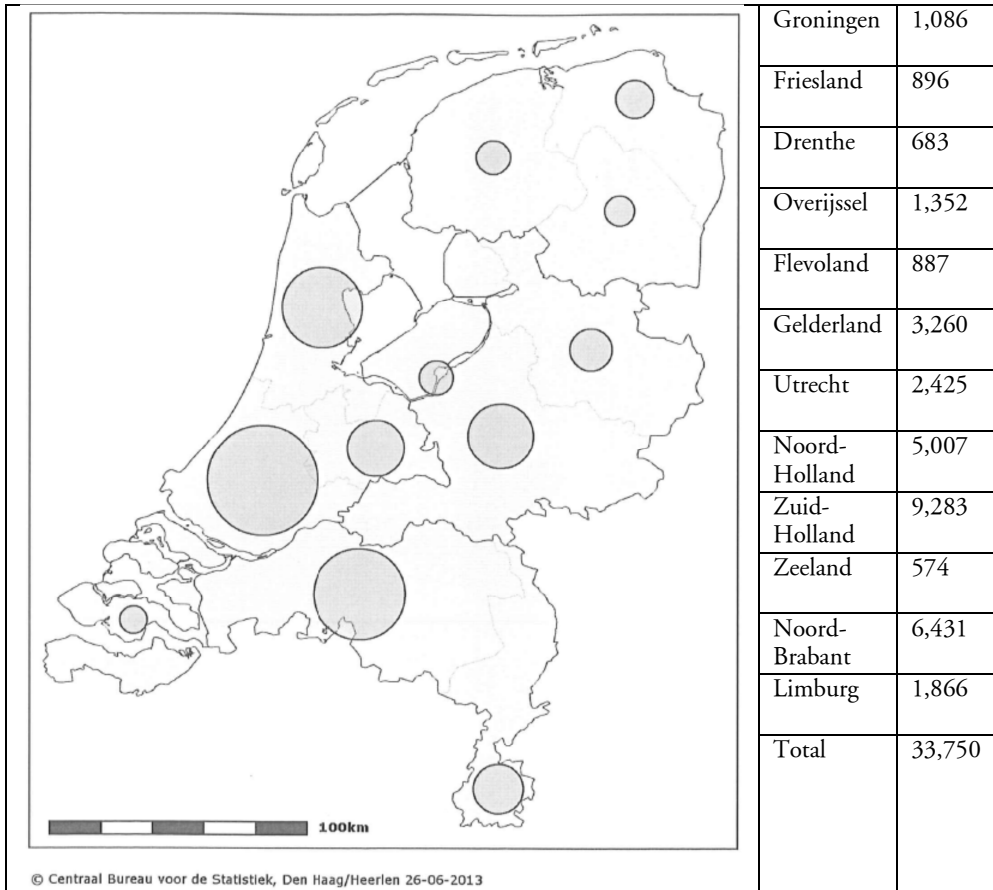
The South Holland region hosts the largest number of Somalis (with The Hague and Rotterdam as known settlement cities), the region of Noord Brabant is second, with the city of Tilburg (1,246 Somalis in 2012) and Eindhoven (872 Somalis in 2012) as popular destinations. The province of Gelderland, in the south-east, has small villages with Somalis, but also two cities which host high numbers of Somalis, Arnhem (514 in 2012) and Nijmegen (575 in 2012) (see Figure 3).

¹⁹ Klaver and van der Welle, *VluchtelingenWerk Integratie Barometer*; A. Zorlu and C.H. Mulder, "Initial and Subsequent Location Choices of Immigrants," *Regional Studies* 42 (2) (2008), pp. 245–264 (hereafter, Zorlu and Mulder, "Initial and Subsequent Location Choices of Immigrants").

²⁰ H. van den Tillaart, *Nieuwe etnische groepen in Nederland* (New Ethnic Groups in the Netherlands), Nijmegen, ITS, 2000 (hereafter, Van den Tillaart, *Nieuwe etnische groepen in Nederland*).

²¹ See also section 7 on Housing.

²² M. Permentier and K. Wittebrood, "De woonsituatie van vluchtelingengroepen in Nederland" (The Housing Situation of Refugee Groups in the Netherlands), in E. Dourleijn and J. Dagevos (eds), *Vluchtelingengroepen in Nederland. Over de integratie van Afghaanse, Iraakse, Iraanse en Somalische migranten* (Refugee Groups in the Netherlands: On the Integration of Afghan, Iraqi, Iranian and Somalian Migrants), SCP, The Hague, 2011, pp. 128 (hereafter, Permentier and Wittebrood, "De woonsituatie van vluchtelingengroepen in Nederland"). Apart from internal moves to larger cities, Somalis are also regrouping across borders, mainly to the UK, as mentioned above.

Figure 3. Somalis by province, 1 January 2012

Source: CBS, Statline, 2013²³

2.4 Somalis in Amsterdam

Although many Dutch municipalities host a few Somalis, the largest Somali communities are concentrated in the three largest cities. In 2012 Rotterdam officially registered 1,968 Somalis, The Hague 1,622 and Amsterdam 1,321.²⁴

The official number of Somalis residing in Amsterdam has increased slightly over time and on 1 January 2013 Research & Statistics Amsterdam (O&S) counted 1,286 Somalis. Interviews with experts indicate that the total number of Somalis residing in

²³ See: <http://www.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/home/default.htm>

²⁴ CBS, Statline.

Amsterdam is probably higher. A leader of a Somali community organisation, for example, estimated the number of Somalis in Amsterdam at around 2,000:

Apart from the undocumented there is another group that is not registered in official databases as Somali residents of Amsterdam. I often come across Somalis who have residence permits with “nationality unknown” written on it. These Somalis did not have proper documents upon arrival and were never officially recognised as Somali.²⁵

Like the pattern for the Netherlands generally, there is no real area of concentration within Amsterdam where Somalis have settled. They can be found in all the neighbourhoods. Most, however, live in the city districts of Nieuw West (287), West (244), Zuid Oost (238) and Noord (205) (see Table 3 and Figure 4).²⁶

Table 3. Number of Somalis by Amsterdam’s city districts, 1 January 2013

City districts (<i>Stadsdelen</i>)	No.
Centrum	51
Westpoort	1
West	244
Nieuw West	287
Zuid	96
Oost	164
Noord	205
Zuid Oost	238
Total	1,286

Source: Research and Statistics Unit (O&S), Municipality of Amsterdam, 2013

²⁵ Interview with Ali Ware, Somali Association for Amsterdam and Surrounding Area (*Somalische Vereniging Amsterdam en Omgeving*, SOMVAO), Amsterdam, 20 February 2013.

²⁶ Personal communication from Research and Statistics Unit (O & S), Municipality of Amsterdam.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

This section presents the political and administrative structure of the city of Amsterdam, and discusses the roles of the municipality and city districts regarding the main thematic fields and briefly introduces integration policies at the national and local level.

3.1 The Political and Administrative Structure of Amsterdam

The City of Amsterdam largely corresponds with the area of the municipality of Amsterdam, and is governed by the city council, an elected entity that controls the managing board and represents the citizens. The current council was elected in 2010, and is a coalition of the Labour Party (PvdA: Partij van de Arbeid, 15 seats, representing 33 percent), followed by the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD: Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie) with eight seats, and both the Democrats 66 (D66: Democraten 66), and Left (Groen Links) have seven seats. The city council is chaired by the mayor, Eberhard van der Laan, who was appointed by the Minister of the Interior in 2010 for a period of six years. The managing board consists of seven aldermen and one managing secretary.

At the time of writing the city consists of seven city districts (*stadsdelen*), which are a political administrative subdivision, Centrum, Nieuw-West, Noord, Oost, West, Zuid and Zuid-Oost, that in their turn are subdivided into neighbourhoods. An elected district council and a day-to-day administration govern the city districts, which were introduced in the 1980s in order to improve communication between the municipal government and the citizens, and for efficiency and effectiveness.²⁷ In 2010, the 14 city districts were merged into seven districts, again for budgetary and efficiency reasons.

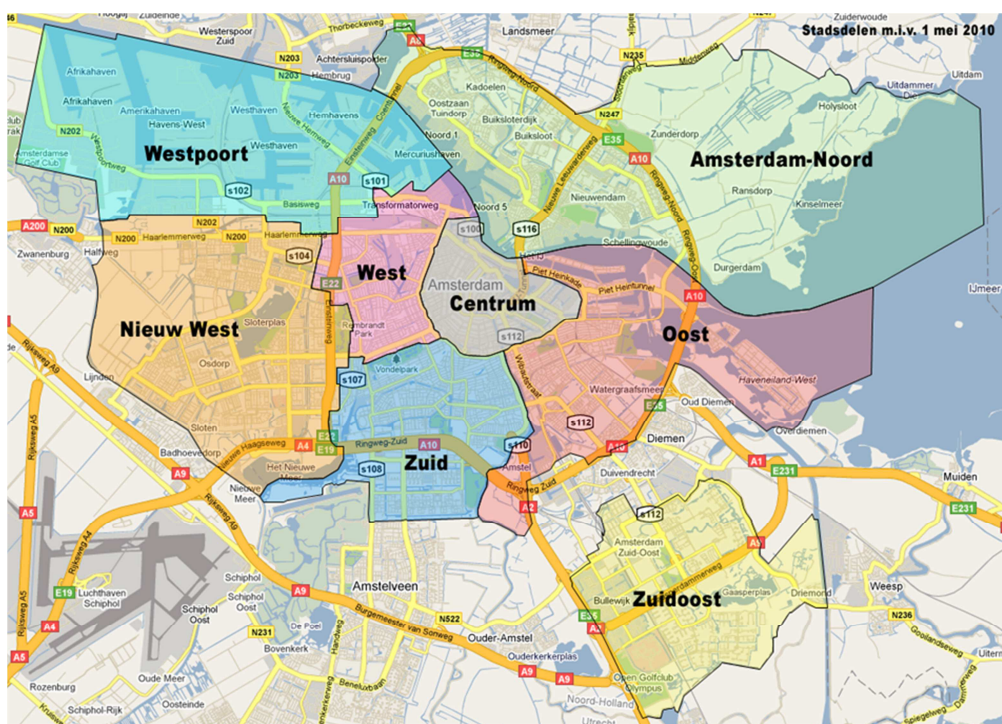
Every city district has approximately 100,000 inhabitants, and is responsible for a set of services similar to other municipalities in the Netherlands. This means that they can be considered as largely autonomous constructs, to which the Municipal Law applies. The Dutch Municipality Law (1851) is very important in understanding the autonomy of Dutch municipalities in making their own regulations. They can introduce regulation as long as it is not contrary to national law. City districts are responsible for spatial planning at the city district and neighbourhood levels, the management and maintenance of public space, the provision of social housing, local services in education, health, sports, arts and culture, service provision to the public (such as sanitation, etc.) and population registration. However, certain tasks are assigned to the

²⁷ Amsterdam Municipality, "Advies effecten kabinetsplannen tot afschaffing deelgemeenten" (Advice on the Effects of the Government Proposal to Abolish City Districts), Advisory Board on City Finances (*Raad voor de Stadsdeelfinanciën*), January 2011 (2011b).

central city administration, such as those that are hard to decentralise, or for which a more top-down approach is needed.²⁸

The national government decided in 2012 that the city district administration will be abolished nationwide from January 2014, a fiercely debated issue. According to the national government, the city districts constitute an additional and unnecessary layer, which also conflicts with the ideal of small and simple local government. Proponents of the city districts point out the important role of the city districts as intermediaries in the communication between municipal government and population, and highlight the costs involved in the second reorganisation in three years. The City of Amsterdam is planning to replace the city districts with locally elected district committees, which will have fewer powers but still control a budget, after the local elections in March 2014.

Figure 4. The seven city districts of Amsterdam



Source: <http://aankoopmakelaaramsterdam.blogspot.nl/p/aangekocht.html>
(accessed 11 March 2014)

²⁸ Amsterdam Municipality, "Verordening op de stadsdelen, geconsolideerde versie, geldig vanaf 01-01-2013" (Regulation on the City Districts, Consolidated Version, Valid from 1 January 2013).

3.2 The Organisation of Services

For this study, the following five departments of the Amsterdam city council are the most relevant:

- DWI Department of Work and Income: implements the Income and Welfare Act. Also, until 2013 DWI implemented the Integration Act, and was responsible for poverty reduction policies in the city of Amsterdam.
- DMO Department of Social Development: this department is responsible for a broad array of policy fields, including education, youth, culture, citizenship, and diversity and sports.
- DWZS Department of Housing, Welfare and Society: implements the Societal Support Act, formulates the housing policy of the municipality, and provides housing services.
- GGD Department of Health
- OOV Department of Public Order and Security

3.3 National Integration Policies

National policies for the integration of migrants into Dutch society have been implemented since the 1980s. Prior to this, the government expected that migrants, in particular the guest workers from Morocco and Turkey, would return to their countries of origin. When it became clear that the guest workers from Morocco and Turkey and the Surinamese who came to the Netherlands in the mid-1970s would stay on a permanent basis, the government introduced ethnic-minority policies. These policies were aimed at migrant groups that would stay in the Netherlands and whose position in Dutch society was vulnerable due to certain socio-cultural and economic bottlenecks, such as language problems, gaps in education and a lack of access to the labour market. The government introduced differential policies based on ethnicity in order to improve the socio-economic position of immigrant groups, while preserving their cultural identity.²⁹ At first, only those groups with a specific colonial relationship with the Netherlands were targeted, such as the Surinamese and migrants from the Dutch Antilles. Later on, other migrant groups were included.

The main foci of these policies were socio-cultural emancipation and instruments to reduce discrimination and to strengthen the socio-economic position of vulnerable migrants. The policies were in retrospect labelled multiculturalist: although immigrants

²⁹ H. Entzinger, "Challenging the Rules while the Game is on: From Multiculturalism to Assimilation in the Netherlands," in Y.M. Bodemann and G. Yurdakul (eds), *Migration, Citizenship, Ethnos. Incorporation Regimes in Europe and North America*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2006, pp. 121–144 (hereafter, Entzinger, "Challenging the Rules while the Game is on").

should become fully involved in society, their differences should be acknowledged and also accepted.³⁰

This policy was heavily criticised, and in the mid-1990s it was replaced by an integration policy with less accommodation for differences, and in which shared citizenship was much more prominent. Increasingly, a normative framework on integration and Dutch citizenship has been imposed in the hope that this will increase shared citizenship and loyalty and identification with Dutch society. At the same time, it is striking that politicians are unable to clearly define what this “Dutchness” is, and what are the typical values and rules of conduct to which immigrants must adapt and integrate.

The integration debate intensified after 9/11 when the Netherlands was confronted with a surprisingly high incidence of violent attacks on mosques and an increase in aggressive behaviour towards individual Muslims.³¹ In 2002 Pim Fortuyn, a Dutch right-wing politician who advocated a stricter immigration policy and far-reaching integration policies, was murdered and the country was in deep shock. In 2004, a Dutch film director, Theo van Gogh, was murdered by a Dutch citizen of Moroccan heritage who objected to his work for religious reasons. Theo van Gogh openly attacked Islam as a religion and had made a controversial short movie called “Submission”. The film contains monologues of Muslim women who have been abused in various ways and highlights three verses of the Koran that give authority to men over women by showing them painted on women’s bodies. The screenplay for this movie was written by the Somali woman and former member of the Dutch House of Representatives for the People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), Ayaan Hirsi Ali.

³⁰ Duijvendak and Scholten point to the presence in the Netherlands of several discourses when it comes to immigrant integration, and consider the labelling of Dutch integration policies as multicultural as a social construct: J.W. Duijvendak and P.W.A. Scholten, “Beyond the Dutch ‘Multicultural Model’. The Coproduction of Integration Policy Frames in the Netherlands,” *Migration and Integration* 12 (2011), pp. 331–348.

³¹ B. Prins, “The Nerve to Break Taboos: New Realism in the Dutch Discourse on Multiculturalism,” *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 3 (2002), pp. 363–379 (hereafter, Prins, “The Nerve to Break Taboos”).

Textbox 1. Ayaan Hirsi Ali³²

Born in 1967 in Mogadishu, Ayaan Hirsi Ali came to the Netherlands as a refugee in 1992. Hirsi Ali received a residence permit within three weeks of her arrival in the Netherlands. Her apparent untruths, however, have raised doubts about other elements of her biography that lack documentary or circumstantial evidence.

Ayaan graduated in political science in the Netherlands and was active in the Labour Party till 2002 when she switched to the Liberal Party. She became a member of the Dutch Parliament for the Liberal Party in 2003. During this period she made controversial statements about Islam, for example calling Islam a backward religion and saying that “by Western standards Muhammad would be considered a pedophile”. A discrimination complaint was filed against her on 24 April 2003. The Prosecutor's office, however, decided not to initiate a case, because her critique did “not put forth any conclusions in respect to Muslims and their worth as a group is not denied”. Her attacks on Islam as a religion and the Islamic communities in the Netherlands alienated her from many of the Muslim women for whom she says she claims to speak. The film she made with Theo van Gogh was a critique on women's position in Islamic society, but considered blasphemous by many Muslims all over the world. A letter pinned to Van Gogh's body by the murderer with a knife was primarily a death threat to Ayaan Hirsi Ali. She went into hiding. In 2006 a television programme called “Zembla” reported that Hirsi Ali had given false information about her real name, her age and the country she arrived from when originally applying for asylum. She had claimed to be fleeing the war in Somalia. However, she had been legally resident in Kenya for many years. Hirsi Ali admitted that she had lied about her full name, her date of birth and the manner in which she had come to the Netherlands, but said that she had fabricated this story while fleeing from a forced marriage. Former Minister for Integration and Immigration Rita Verdonk decided to take away Hirsi Ali's citizenship because it was proved not to be legitimate. Hirsi Ali eventually moved to the United States to work for a conservative think-tank, the American Enterprise Institute.

Current integration policies in the Netherlands have a strong assimilationist character.³³ This is also reflected in the “Integration Agenda” of the newly elected government (2013), which explicitly states that newcomers have primary responsibility for becoming integrated, and for acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary to build up a new future in the Netherlands. This agenda builds strongly upon previous policies.

The policies are regulated in the first place by the Newcomers' Citizenship Act 2007. Under this act integration has a more compulsory character; newcomers are required to take an integration course (*inburgeringscursus*). The main components of this course are language classes and classes on Dutch culture and society, so that newcomers become familiar with Dutch values, traditions and procedures. Under this legislation, municipalities became more responsible for providing support for the integration of

³² Prins, “The Nerve to Break Taboos.”

³³ Entzinger, “Challenging the Rules while the Game is on.”

migrants.³⁴ In January 2013, the act was amended to place responsibility on newcomers for their own integration (see also section 3.7). They must arrange the courses themselves, and are no longer reimbursed for the costs. If newcomers do not pass the integration examination within three years, their residence permit can be withdrawn. Asylum seekers and pastors or imams do have special positions, as they will still receive some assistance during the integration process. Asylum seekers will not lose their residence permit if they do not pass the civic integration course. Furthermore, if they pass the exam they do not have to pay back the loan they received to take the course.

Specific public policies targeting Somalis only are absent at both the national and the local level, although the vulnerable position of Somalis and the need for such policies has been emphatically expressed in many previous studies.³⁵ The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, which is also responsible for the integration policy at the national level, even mentions the position of Somalis, in the letter that introduces the Integration Agenda of the newly elected government (February 2013): “But also the integration of refugee groups – in particular of the Somali Dutch – develops with many difficulties.”³⁶

The main reason for the absence of a minority policy focused on the Somalis is the move away from policies that target specific minorities (*doelgroepenbeleid*) towards more generic policies: all people who need support should be able to get it. It also means that the funding of individual projects is preferred over structural subsidies to organisations.

However, several respondents indicated that projects for specific groups are still feasible, if formulated in “a creative way” using the right terminology that fits the appropriate policy framework.³⁷ One example is the annual network meetings, organised since 2010 by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. These

³⁴ A. van Heelsum, *The Case Study on Intercultural and Interreligious Policies in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, Cities Local Integration Policies*, Eurofound Dublin, 2009; *Diversity Policy in Employment and Service Provision – Case Study: Amsterdam*, The Netherlands, Eurofound, Dublin, 2009.

³⁵ Van Heelsum, *Somaliërs in Nederland*; Klaver et al., *Somaliërs in Nederland*; Dalmar Foundation, “Somalische Nieuwkomers in Nederland” (Somali Newcomers in the Netherlands), Dalmar Foundation ism Vluchtelingen organisaties Nederland en ITS, The Hague, 2010 (hereafter Dalmar, “Somalische Nieuwkomers in Nederland”); The Netherlands Institute for Social Research (*Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau*, SCP), “Jaarrapport Integratie 2005” (Annual report on integration 2005), SCP/WODC/CBS, 2005.

³⁶ “Kamerbrief Integratie” (Letter to Parliament on the Integration Agenda), at <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/kamerstukken/2013/02/19/kamerbrief-agenda-integratie.html>. 2013 (accessed 23 May 2013).

³⁷ In the period 2010–2011, 92 organisations received co-financing, a total amount of €1 million. One of these is the Somali organisation Dalmar, based in The Hague (radio for training/information, to reach the Somali diaspora nationally and internationally).

meetings, attended by representatives of municipalities with a large Somali community, self-organisations and sectoral organisations, were the outcome of an earlier study in 2010 that was concerned with the vulnerable position of Somalis in the Netherlands. Each meeting addresses one specific topic: in 2010 it was the overall position of Somalis, in 2011 parental support and in 2012 khat. The meetings aim to facilitate the exchange of experiences and knowledge, and to create a network. The municipality of Amsterdam has participated in these meetings.

3.4 Local Integration Policies

Amsterdam's overall integration policies for refugees have been viewed by some authors as a model of best practice, as their policies are seen as coherent and integrated. However, local policies targeting Somalis were not considered above average by all interviewees.³⁸ Due to the large size of the municipal organisation, internal coherence is not an inherent natural feature, and high turnover of staff between the different departments is quite common, which affects continuity and thereby the knowledge transfer, an issue emphasised by several respondents.

Integration policies are generally implemented by the city districts, which also results in different approaches to target the population. Certain approaches have a clear ethnic focus: in Slotervaart, for example, meetings were organised for Moroccans and Turks to talk about homosexuality. Other district administrations invited the target groups to come up with their own ideas for projects not linked to a specific ethnic identity.³⁹

Specific policies include the "Wij Amsterdammers" action plan (2005, revised in 2010 and ending in 2012), developed to combat terrorism and prevent radicalisation, stimulate citizen participation and empower society as a whole to cope with polarisation.

Interviews with local policymakers suggested that integration as a topic is gaining less policy attention, as diversity and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights gain prominence on the city policy agenda, together with broader topics like social coherence and citizenship.

³⁸ The municipalities of Nijmegen, Tilburg, The Hague and Groningen are mentioned in this respect as best practice. These are all municipalities where policies targeting Somalis are coordinated and supported by Dutch Somalis (Interview with Ministry of Social Affairs, Marvis Victoria, the Hague, 27 May 2013).

³⁹ M. Ham and J. van der Meer, *De etnische bril. Categorisering in het Nederlandse integratiebeleid* (Seeing through the lens of Ethnicity. Categorisation in Dutch Integration Policy), KNAW (Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen: The Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Science/NIDI (Nederlands Interdisciplinair Demografisch Instituut: Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute), Amsterdam 2012.

3.5 The Civic Integration Model in Amsterdam

Almost all Somalis living in the Netherlands, including Amsterdam, have refugee status. Asylum policies in the Netherlands are primarily administered centrally, since permits are issued by the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (*Immigratie en Naturalisatie Dienst*, IND). The COA is responsible for reception in the asylum seekers centre (Asiel Zoekers Centrum, AZC), supervision and departure (from the centre) of asylum seekers. Once they receive a permit, they must leave the AZC and are dispersed to a municipality to live in. Municipalities are required to host refugees, they cannot deny access and must provide housing. The refugee receives support while involved in the civic integration process, including language training, and gets access to welfare and health care.⁴⁰

In Amsterdam this support is provided by the municipality and the Dutch Council for Refugees in Amsterdam (*Stichting VluchtelingenWerk van Amstel tot Zaai*, SVAZ, hereafter Dutch Council for Refugees/Amsterdam),⁴¹ which is set out in a formal agreement, “Refugee Policy 2011–2014”. Amsterdam is one of the few municipalities that have formulated a refugee policy, together with the Dutch Council for Refugees/Amsterdam. The policy – or arrangement as it is known – emphasises collaboration among the different municipal units and the societal agencies involved in the process of settlement and participation of refugees. The main objective is to increase labour market participation (see Amsterdam Municipality (2011a) for an overview), including the specific objectives that all refugees should pass the integration exam within three and a half years from settlement; and that 45 percent of all refugees should secure a sustainable job in this same period, and that this amount should increase over time.

Housing, work, income and health services are provided by different municipal departments (see Table 4), while the Dutch Council for Refugees/Amsterdam is responsible for the overall societal supervision of refugees, for a period of three and a half years. During this process the organisation offers a broad range of support to refugees, such as walk in hours twice a week, the opportunity to discuss all kind of questions concerning income, housing, education and integration during office hours, and different training modules, targeting different backgrounds.

⁴⁰ D. Engelhard and R. Weiler (eds), *Fietsen met tegenwind* (Biking in an Adverse Wind), Vluchtelingenwerk, Amsterdam, 2012 (hereafter, Engelhard and Weiler, *Fietsen met tegenwind*).

⁴¹ The Dutch Council for Refugees/Amsterdam (SVAZ) is a regional office, forming part of the Dutch Council for Refugees, an independent non-governmental organisation founded in 1979. In total 600 employees and over 7,000 volunteers offer refugees practical support in the Netherlands. See <http://www.svaz.nl/index.php?go=home.showPages&pagenr=17&vp=4> (accessed 25 March 2014). See also <http://www.vluchtelingenwerk.nl/english> (accessed 25 March 2014).

Table 4. Responsibilities in the integration of refugees in Amsterdam

Phase	Municipal unit	Strategic partners
Housing: house	DWZS	Housing corporations
Income: allowance	DWI	Employment offices (<i>Werkpleinen</i>)
Integration: integration certificate/matriculation	DWI RVE Sector, Education and Integration	Team integration/language providers
Work: preparation for job	DWI Employment offices	Sagènn/re-integration firms/UWV Werkbedrijf/Dutch Council for Refugees/Amsterdam/Emptooi/UAF
Health: life in balance	GGD Amsterdam	GGD/mental-health agencies (I-psy, Mentrum, Centrum 40–45, Alle Kleur Zorg, Pharos) and health insurance companies
Support by Dutch Council for Refugees/Amsterdam		

Source: Amsterdam Municipality, *Vluchtelingen in Amsterdam. Beleidsvoornemens voor de periode 2011–2014*, Refugees in Amsterdam. Policy resolutions for 2011–2014. Amsterdam Municipality/DWI, Amsterdam, 2011a

In brief, the responsible department for housing (DWZS) assigns a house to refugees upon their arrival in Amsterdam, and they receive an allowance through DWI. After securing a house and income, refugees participate in the civic integration programme (*inburgeringsprogramma*), in which a certain proficiency in the Dutch language and sufficient knowledge of Dutch society and history are the main objectives. The ultimate goal is passing the civic integration exam within a period of three and a half years. In practice, this means that integration for refugees in the Netherlands only starts after having acquired the permit; they are not allowed to work during the procedure, which severely obstructs their integration.

According to the second report on Refugee Policy 2011–2014,⁴² 67 percent of all refugees⁴³ who have settled in Amsterdam since 2007 are no longer required to take the integration exam. There are a number of factors that could account for this: they have passed the exam with success, or are exempt from the exam, have moved to another country, have an EU passport or have been naturalised. This is 17 percent higher than in 2012. In 2013, 75 percent of the remainder, people who do need to take the exam, were actively working on it.

⁴² Amsterdam Municipality, DWI, *2^e Rapportage Vluchtelingenbeleid 2011–2014. Monitor inburgering en inkomen* (2nd Report Refugee Policy 2011–2014. Monitor of Integration and Income), Amsterdam Municipality, Amsterdam, 2013 (hereafter, Amsterdam Municipality, *2^e Rapportage Vluchtelingenbeleid*).

⁴³ Specific data on Somalis in Amsterdam are not available in this report.

3.6 Experiences of Somalis with the Civic Integration Programme

According to a 2011 national comparative survey by Dagevos and Odé,⁴⁴ the majority of Somalis are either satisfied or very satisfied with the civic integration programme in which they participated. Table 5 presents the data for the Somalis: they give high scores for several dimensions of this programme, and they value the programme higher than the other refugee groups in the study.

Table 5. Value of civic integration programme according to Somali participants (%), 2009

Overall satisfaction: % (very) satisfied	88
Dutch language is improved: % (fully) agree	84
Easier to find a job: % (fully) agree	58
Broader social network: % (fully) agree	80
Better understanding of Dutch society: % (fully) agree	79
Learning Dutch in daily life was quicker compared with civic integration programme: % (fully) agree	68

Source: J. Dagevos and A. Odé, “Inburgering en Taal,” Civic integration and language in E. Dourleijn and J. Dagevos (eds), *De positie van vluchtelingen in Nederland*, The position of refugees in the Netherlands SCP, The Hague, 2011, p. 63.

In the focus group discussions and the expert interviews, opinions on the civic integration programme were far less positive.⁴⁵ During the roundtable meeting it was stressed that the answers were probably socially desirable answers. Somalis may be satisfied with the programme at first, but when it becomes clear that their high and sometimes unrealistic expectations of job opportunities are not always met, it may lead to disappointment and even migration to the UK.

A number of issues were highlighted by interviewees and focus group participants. First, the duration of the language course, for some of them one year with two classes (mornings/afternoons) per week, is considered too short to obtain basic proficiency in Dutch. Second, the quality of the language schools is inadequate, a comment that was mainly expressed in the expert interviews. In January 2013, 34 different language schools were operating in the civic integration programme in Amsterdam, after the closing of ROC, Regionaal Opleidings Centre, Regional Community College, a professional educational organisation that used to provide the language training. The quality of the other schools has been questioned, however: in some schools classes are cancelled, and in others a large part of the programme focuses on independent study at home and online or on a computer. This is not well adapted to the Somali community,

⁴⁴ J. Dagevos and A. Odé, “Inburgering en Taal,” in E. Dourleijn and J. Dagevos (eds), *De positie van vluchtelingen in Nederland*, SCP, The Hague, 2011.

⁴⁵ See also Van Heelsum, *Somaliërs in Nederland*.

which mostly relies on oral communication. The fact that many Somalis – and Somali women in particular – are illiterate is also a problem, as this poses a huge barrier to learning another language.⁴⁶

Apart from specific programme issues, several sources reported that the results vary greatly. According to a study by Dalmar, a Somali organisation based in The Hague, the level of Dutch proficiency among Somalis who arrived in the Netherlands after 2006, is very low: 80 percent of this group hardly speaks Dutch. Although the group that arrived in 2007 scores a bit better, nevertheless 75 percent of this group does not speak or hardly speaks Dutch, although the majority of this group did take the civic integration course (28 percent) or was taking the course at the time (38 percent).⁴⁷ These figures illustrate the great diversity among Somalis, as those who arrived before 2006 were better educated on arrival and had more learning skills. Some nuance is needed in this respect, as younger Somalis tend to speak Dutch much better. Also, some young boys appear to speak English quite well, for example because they had received a private education in Mogadishu.

Another problem concerns the delays in the civic integration trajectories observed by local client managers. This concerns women in particular, including some Somali women, where their husbands do not see the need for their wives to participate in the training: “There is no need for her to speak Dutch’ is an often heard argument,” according to an integration official with the local government. Difficulties finding a good day care centre for their children and pregnancy also pose obstacles. During their maternity leave most women hardly practise Dutch, and although they continue after their maternity leave, they need some additional months to catch up again, to reach their previous proficiency level. Financial problems can also result in delays: it has been reported that Somali women do not attend their training because they do not have money to pay for public transport to get there.

Even if the exam is successfully passed, it appears difficult to maintain a certain level of proficiency, in particular when people do not have a job, and lack the funds to invest in additional training. Conversation classes are an important and popular way to deal with this, as practising Dutch is very important. In Amsterdam such classes are offered by the Somali Association for Amsterdam and Surrounding Area (*Somalische Vereniging Amsterdam en Omgeving*, SOMVAO), a Somali community organisation, which were subsidised by the municipality until 2011. SOMVAO also offers education in native Somali-language courses, to provide illiterate Somalis with some basic language skills, in order to prepare them for the civic integration programme. Another interesting initiative consists of the language classes offered and broadcast by Dalmar,⁴⁸ which has

⁴⁶ R. Vogels, “Onderwijspositie,” Education in E. Dourleijn and J. Dagevos (eds), *De positie van vluchtelingen in Nederland*, the position of refugees in the Netherlands The Hague, SCP, 2011 (hereafter, Vogels, “Onderwijspositie”).

⁴⁷ Dalmar Foundation, “Somalische nieuwkomers in Nederland.”

⁴⁸ See <http://www.stationnederlands.nl/publicaties/stationnederlands> (accessed 25 March 2014).

a national (and even global, as these classes can be downloaded from every location via the internet) reach. Another approach is the language training for women with an ethnic background provided by the Foundation Amsterdams Buurvrouwen Contact (ABC). Some 250 volunteers, mainly women, visit potentially vulnerable, isolated women at home to practise Dutch, provide information on Dutch society and increase self-reliance. The Dutch Council for Refugees/Amsterdam has different projects that support refugees, among whom are Somalis, in the path towards work and income. Writing and oral Dutch-language skills are always part of these projects. Examples are the Language Buddy-initiative (*Taalmaatjes*), based on volunteers who support refugees in learning Dutch and becoming more familiar with Dutch society; the neighbourhood volunteers, local Dutch people who visit a refugee once every week for a couple of hours at home, to explore the neighbourhood, practise the Dutch language, and provide advice and information on practical issues; and a training module “*Beter in Balans*” (Better in Balance), a training of 12 sessions that targets refugees with psychological and social problems.⁴⁹

3.7 Revised Civic Integration Act

The implications of the Revised Civic Integration Act that came into force in January 2013 are still not clear. This new law stipulates that newcomers must take greater responsibility for their civic integration. They have to organise and pay for the programme themselves, and pass the exam successfully within three years.⁵⁰ After successful lobbying by the Dutch Council for Refugees/Amsterdam, special provisions were made for refugees. They are given a loan to cover the cost of the course; however, they do not have to repay it if they pass the exam within three years. Under the new law it is the newcomers’ responsibility to pass the exam. If they do not pass the exam within three years they have to pay a higher rate for their permit or it can even be withdrawn, implying that people may have to leave the country; however, this last condition does not apply to refugees. Where there is a valid reason for failing the integration course, the period of three years can be prolonged, or dispensation can be provided. Formally, there is no longer a role for the local municipality for support in this process.

Interviews for this report indicated significant concern about this new law among some officials in the municipality of Amsterdam. They noted that the municipality has invested time and money in the current system: there is a well-functioning organisation and good infrastructure. They would prefer to see a continued role for the municipality in the provision of support and supervision; the municipality has a direct interest in

⁴⁹ Other examples include the project “Waar moet ik heen?” (Where Can I Go?) targeting Somali women, to help them get access to different care institutions; a project by the Dutch Council for Refugees/North Netherlands on support for Somali women in financial administration; and a Mind-Spring project for psychosocial support to refugees, a joint project by several refugee support organisations.

⁵⁰ Before 1 January 2013, this was three and a half years.

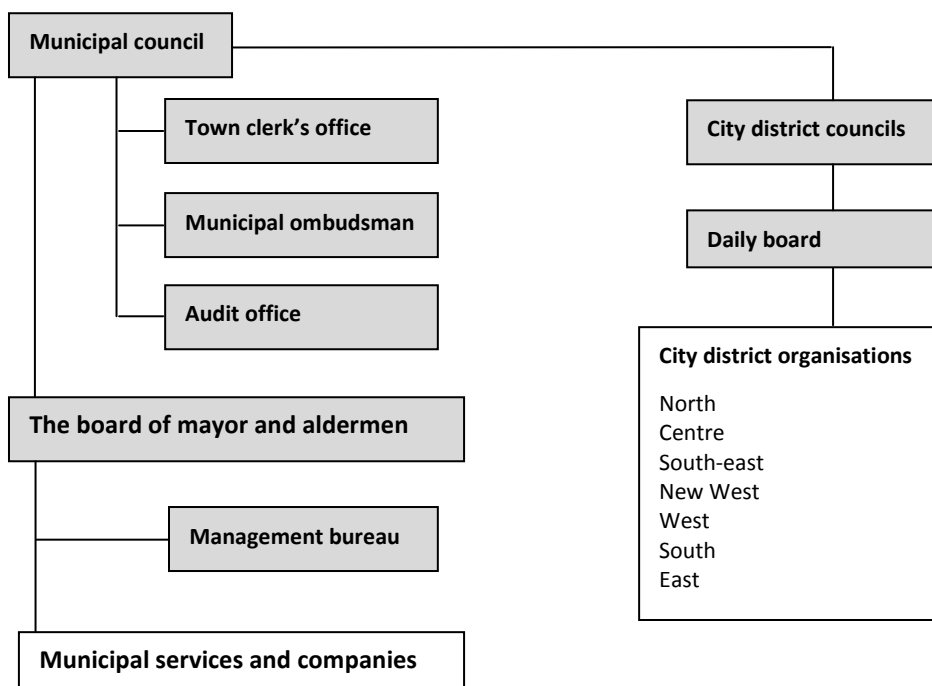
ensuring the successful completion of integration courses because it increases opportunities for employment and therefore reduces claims on welfare (for which the municipality is responsible).⁵¹

The Dutch Council for Refugees/Amsterdam has expressed concern about the consequences of this law, as they observe a risk that people might postpone the language courses and might make poorly informed choices, such as selecting an inexpensive and inadequate language school. Others see advantages to the new approach; the Foundation for Refugee Students (UAF), observes that this new approach gives more freedom to choose and so to differentiate according to level, an advantage for higher skilled refugees. However, according to the UAF, it is difficult, not to say impossible, for refugees without any societal support to find the most appropriate language school. As such, both the Dutch Council for Refugees/Amsterdam and the UAF mentioned this as an important issue, and will motivate and support refugees to start their integration process at the appropriate level.⁵²

During the roundtable several participants stressed the importance of informing refugees about the integration courses at an early stage and to identify specific needs for support as they might differ from person to person.

⁵¹ Interview with the municipality/DWI, Paul Hoornweg, Amsterdam, 4 March 2013.

⁵² Interview with Erik van den Bergh, Foundation for Refugee Students (UAF) and SFAZ.

Figure 5. Amsterdam's municipal organisation**Seat distribution of political parties, 2011**

Party	No. of seats
Labour Party (PvdA)	15
Liberals (VVD)	8
Green Left (Groen Links)	7
Democrats 66 (D66)	7
Socialist Party (SP)	3
The Call of Christian Democracy (CDA)	2
Save Amsterdam (Red Amsterdam)	1
Party for the Animals (Partij voor de dieren)	1
Proud of the Netherlands (Trots op Nederland)	1

4. IDENTITY AND BELONGING

This section is about identity, interaction and belonging. The first part explores the attachment of Somalis to their neighbourhood and the city of Amsterdam. The multiple identities of Somalis in Amsterdam are central to the second part, and transnational relationships are discussed in the third. The fourth deals with Somalis' social interactions. The fifth section discusses the relationship between Somali parents and their children, which is related to the presence of multiple identities. The section ends with a short overview of existing initiatives and measures to improve the situation of Somalis here.

4.1 The Position of Amsterdam and the Neighbourhood in Somalis' Identities

Most Somalis in the focus group discussions liked living in Amsterdam, but they did not express particular attachment to the city, although there were some minor differences. In conversations on identity and the role of the city, most focus group participants emphasised the importance of their other identities, Muslim and Somali, which appear to be more important to them than being a resident of Amsterdam.

First I am Somali, than Muslim, and then Dutch. I do not have anything to do with Amsterdam. (Male student, 25 years old)

I feel like a Dutch Somali, not a Somali Amsterdammer, because I did not grow up in the city, I am not that much attached to Amsterdam. (Male student, 21 years old)

This finding contrasts with other more long-standing minority groups where studies have found that the Amsterdam identity is very strong and binding for young people with Moroccan, Turkish and Surinamese backgrounds who were born in Amsterdam. The Amsterdam identity is an important way to distinguish themselves from the rest of the Netherlands, which they associate with wooden shoes and windmills.⁵³ The difference for Somalis might have to do with the fact that the Somali population is still a new community that is dispersed all over the Netherlands when they first arrive in the country and have also lived in various places before arriving in the Netherlands.

Attachment to a certain neighbourhood was also absent, in the sense that the participants did not feel they belonged to a particular neighbourhood, or would like to be associated with that neighbourhood. This does not imply that they do not have their preferences with respect to neighbourhoods, but these are not based on the specific identity of the area, but on other characteristics of these neighbourhoods. Some women with children mentioned, for example, that they feel at ease in their

⁵³ I. van der Welle, "Flexibele burgers? Amsterdamse jongvolwassenen over l ale en nationale identiteiten" (Flexible Citizens? Amsterdam Young Adults on Local and National Identities), PhD thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2011, at nicis.platform31.nl (accessed 17 March 2014).

neighbourhood and like to live there, because there are many other Somali women living in the same neighbourhood.

Dutch identity seems to be important, compared with an Amsterdam identity, in particular for young Somalis, but less so for older respondents. Attachment to Dutch identity appears to become more important when travelling abroad:

You observe some kind of Dutch identity among the Somali population that migrated from the Netherlands to Leicester, Birmingham. They celebrate the birthday of the queen, eat Dutch cheese, and buy *hagelslag* [chocolate sprinkles].⁵⁴

Similar observations were noted in a study conducted by Van Liempt on Somalis in London and Leicester who had lived in the Netherlands before.⁵⁵

I feel 50 percent Somali, 60 percent Dutch, when I am abroad I feel very Dutch – no matter where I am, but when I am in the Netherlands, I feel much more Somali, I would never label myself as being Dutch, not in the Netherlands. Abroad, I would say that I am Dutch. (19-year-old female student)

4.2 Multiple Identities

Respondents in the focus group discussions appeared to feel their Muslim and Somali identities were much more important, although the share of each identity sometimes differed, reflecting the dynamic and changing character of identity formation.

I am a Muslim, Somali and Dutch, in that order – being a Muslim is always some kind of overarching identity. (24-year-old female student)

The significance of religion in Somali identity has been confirmed by other studies, with findings that Somalis strongly internalise and experience their religion as an important part of their identity.⁵⁶ Table 6 lists some findings of a study on the role of religion among four different refugee groups. It shows that Somalis have a relatively high attachment to religion. Participants at the roundtable suggested that the emphasis on religion as part of Somali's identity is something that has grown in the last ten years mainly as a result of growing anti-Muslim sentiments in Dutch society.

⁵⁴ Interview with Fatumo Farah, Himilo Relief and Development Association (HIRDA), Amsterdam, 5 March 2013.

⁵⁵ I. van Liempt, "Young Dutch Somalis in the UK: Citizenship, Identities and Belonging in a Transnational Triangle," *Mobilities* 6 (4) (2011b), pp. 569–583 (hereafter, Van Liempt, "Young Dutch Somalis in the UK").

⁵⁶ M. van Doorn, "Sociaal-culturele positie en religie," social cultural position and religion in E. Dourleijn and J. Dagevos (eds), *Vluchtelingengroepen in Nederland. Over de integratie van Afghaanse, Iraakse, Iraanse en Somalische migranten* (Refugee Groups in the Netherlands: On the Integration of Afghan, Iraqi, Iranian and Somalian Migrants), SCP, The Hague, 2011 (hereafter, Van Doorn, "Sociaal-culturele positie en religie").

Table 6. Religious conviction, behaviour and adherence to religious rules, by ethnic origin (%), 2009

I...	Afghan	Iraqi	Iranian	Somali	Native-born Dutch
Regard myself as religious	90	84	51	95	46
Find it hurtful if someone says something bad about my religion	67	67	44	74	33
Attend religious gatherings never or less than once a year	54	54	68	28	29
Agree that Muslims should be allowed to live entirely according to the rules of Islam (question only submitted to Muslims)	37	32	17	69	–
Pray five times a day (question only submitted to Muslims)	23	38	15	69	–

Source: E. Dourleijn and J. Dagevos (eds), “Summary and conclusions,” in E. Dourleijn and J. Dagevos (eds), *Vluchtelingengroepen in Nederland: Vluchtelingengroepen in Nederland. Over de integratie van Afghaanse, Iraakse, Iraanse en Somalische migranten* (Refugee groups in the Netherlands: On the integration of Afghan, Iraqi, Iranian and Somali migrants), SCP, The Hague, 2011, p. 231.

Although respondents did consider themselves Somali and were attached to that identity, they also observed that they do not fit in Somalia. This applies in particular to the second generation and young Somalis who arrived in the Netherlands at a very early age:

I had one period, in which I thought “I am very Somali,” but right now I do not have that feeling any longer; some relatives visited us, and then I noticed that I am actually quite Dutch, in the way we talk, what we do....I had not spoken in Somali for quite some time, I really find it difficult to pick upmany Somalis also think differently than Somali that grew up in Europe. (19-year-old female student)

I have now a 50-50 feeling [...] when you are here you are a Somali, but when you are in Somalia you are – I guess – considered a foreigner. (19-year-old female student)

I have been to Somalia, but they immediately see that you are from abroad, I dressed in the same way, but they noticed. I didn’t dare to speak Somali, those

people speak it so well, I rather said nothing, otherwise they might think “She cannot speak Somali.” (20-year-old female student)

Apart from Muslim, Somali and Dutch identities, the issue of African identity was raised in the focus group discussions. Interestingly, most respondents saw themselves not as Africans, although the younger generation was more inclined to be open to this. They pointed to a feeling of distance from Africa and other Africans among their parents:

They feel better than other Africans, consider other Africans as inferior – to a certain extent; like Somali is an island that does not want to belong to Africa. (25-year-old male student)

The clan structure is the foundation of social life in Somalia,⁵⁷ and is still an important factor in the Somali community in the Netherlands, according to several experts interviewed. Many Somali civil organisations are organised according to clan, and there are networks that operate through the clan structure:

The clan structure has a lot of impact, this is deeply rooted in Somali society and even makes it more difficult to get things done. If they know you are from a specific clan, they do not want to work with you, there is a lot of distrust.⁵⁸

Younger Somalis are aware of the clan structure, but often do not know the details. They consider clan an element of their identity, but believe that conflicts between clans belong in Somalia, not in the Netherlands.⁵⁹ Furthermore, they would like to keep the clan issue in the background, an argument often heard from leaders of Somali youth organisations: “We want to be an open organisation, accessible to all: we agreed that we will not speak about clans.” For their parents, however, clans are still important:

Even if you have a girlfriend, the first thing they ask: what is her clan? Her father’s? And of her mother? That is always the first question, not even “Did she study?” (21-year-old male student)

Some Somalis reportedly pretend that they belong to a different clan when they are applying for asylum status, as they think that it might improve their chances of getting a residence permit.⁶⁰ Some studies have stated that Somalis have to invent and

⁵⁷ See I.M. Lewis, *A Pastoral Democracy: A Study of Pastoralism and Politics Among the Northern Somali of the Horn of Africa*, London: International African Institute/Oxford University Press, 1961.

⁵⁸ Interview with Fatumo Farah, Himilo Relief and Development Association (HIRDA), Amsterdam, 5 March 2013.

⁵⁹ Moors et al., *Voedingsbodem voor radicalisering bij kleine etnische groepen in Nederland*.

⁶⁰ Van Doorn, “Sociaal-culturele positie en religie”.

maintain a fictional story, which can be confusing, in particular for their children, who do not know where they really belong.⁶¹

4.3 Transnationalism

The Somalis in Amsterdam have strong transnational contacts. They remit money to relatives in Somalia and have frequent phone contact.⁶² Emotional bonds with Somalia are strong, which is expressed in the priority given to sending remittances, which is sometimes considered more important than covering the main basic needs in Amsterdam. There are also less tangible indications of an orientation towards Somalia: in particular, older Somalis are well informed about politics, read Somali news on the internet and discuss new developments with other Somalis.

Recent studies counter the dominant view of the link between transnational engagement and integration, which is that migrants who have close ties with their countries of origin are not integrating in their countries of settlement. A Migration Policy Institute (MPI) study⁶³ in 2008 shows that migrant organisations in the United States, in addition to stimulating migrants' transnational activities, offer all kinds of services to help their members integrate into American society. The findings of Portes et al. (2008)⁶⁴ are in line with these results. These studies show that it is generally the higher educated, better-integrated migrants who are involved in development activities. According to an expert:

There is a huge difference between transnational development activities and remittances: remittances are not development activities, it is compulsory, a moral plight. People always feel the pressure, you get phone calls every day, SMS: "When will you send money?" The vast majority of the Somali in the Netherlands are not involved in development activities, in structural activities, no, they just remit.⁶⁵

⁶¹ G. Schlee and I. Schlee, "Limits to Political Engagement: The Case of the Somali Diaspora," Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle, 2010, Working Paper no. 125, at http://www.eth.mpg.de/cms/en/publications/working_papers/pdf/mp-i-eth-working-paper-0125.pdf, p. 6 (accessed 14 March 2014); Interview with Adri van den Berg, Country of Origin Expert, Office for Country Information and Language Analysis, Immigration and Naturalisation Service, Rijswijk, 22 March 2013.

⁶² See also Moors et al., *Voedingsbodem voor radicalisering bij kleine etnische groepen in Nederland*; Van Heelsum, *Somaliërs in Nederland*.

⁶³ MPI, 2008. *Hometown associations: An untapped resource for immigrant integration?* Washington DC: MPI.

⁶⁴ A. Portes, C. Escobar and R. Arana, "Bridging the Gap: Transnational and Ethnic Organizations in the Political Incorporation of Immigrants in the United States," *Ethnic and racial studies* 31(6) (2008), pp. 1056–1090.

⁶⁵ Interview with Fatumo Farah, Himilo Relief and Development Association (HIRDA), Amsterdam, 5 March 2013.

Young Somalis are also highly involved in transnational contacts, with relatives in Somalia and Europe, although their parents initiate and maintain these contacts. The family remits money to the relatives in Somalia, for example, and children are asked to make a financial contribution as well. Parents ask their children to make phone calls to relatives abroad:

I have four sisters, that live all over the world, and my father tells me to call them, ask them how life is going ... I don't like that, I mean, yes, these are my sisters, but I do not know them, we do not have a shared past, I feel very uncomfortable calling them. (19-year-old female student)

It has been mentioned that some Somalis also do not consider the Netherlands as their final destination: they would like to move on. A certain culture of moving is ascribed to them, in keeping with their perceived nomadic background: Somali as transnational migrants. According to an interviewee:

Some Somalis never had the intention to stay in the Netherlands, that was never the final destination, and that is why they do not invest in language, in integration.⁶⁶

Furthermore, the lack of cultural and religious opportunities in the Netherlands and the imposed integration policies make Somalis want to move to a more multicultural environment with greater possibilities to express ethnic and religious identity.⁶⁷

4.4 Social Interaction and Interethnic Relationships

Somalis are a socially active group. Many Somalis have frequent interactions with both the native-born population and other Somalis (see Table 7). At the same time, a large proportion compared with other refugee groups has limited contacts with the native-born population, and many contacts within their own community.

⁶⁶ Interview with Fatumo Farah, Himilo Relief and Development Association (HIRDA), Amsterdam, 5 March 2013.

⁶⁷ Van den Reek and Hussein, *Somaliërs op doorreis*; Van Liempt, "And Then One Day They All Moved to Leicester."

Table 7. Classification of social contacts, according to ethnic origin (%), 2009

	Many contacts native-born/many contacts own community	Many contacts native-born/few contacts own community	Few contacts native-born/many contacts own community	Few contacts native-born/few contacts own community
Afghan	35	26	14	25
Iraqi	33	30	13	25
Iranian	32	31	13	24
Somali	46	20	21	14

Source: M. van Doorn, “Sociaal-culturele positie en religie,” (Socio-cultural position and religion) in E. Dourleijn and J. Dagevos (eds), *Vluchtelingengroepen in Nederland. Over de integratie van Afghaanse, Iraakse, Iraanse en Somalische migranten* (Refugee Groups in the Netherlands: On the Integration of Afghan, Iraqi, Iranian and Somali Migrants), SCP, The Hague, 2011, p. 168.

Respondents in the focus group discussions had very varied social networks. Some of them, in particular the older, less skilled Somalis who had arrived in Amsterdam recently, had a network consisting mainly of Somalis. The same was true for women with young children, whose networks were also based on other Somali women. Somalis who arrived in the Netherlands in the early 1990s indicated that they had a broader social network, including Dutch and people from other ethnic communities. The greatest diversity in social networks was among young Somali. Younger people with better skills had social contacts with the native-born population, and also with Somalis and friends in other ethnic communities. Also, there are better educated young Somalis who have hardly any contact with other Somalis. According to one source, the more educated explain this avoidance by a certain assumed difference: “These [less-educated] Somalis live in their own world, are ‘super-religious’ or ‘problematic youngsters’”.⁶⁸

I do not have Somali friends, not because I don’t want to, but I simply never met them, I grew up in Groningen ... it would be nice to have Somali friends, I mean, I have very good Dutch friends, but they do not understand certain things, as it is so different. For example in the relationship with your parents, you are not going to argue with your parents, no way, you need to show respect, and you don’t say no when your mother asks you a favour. My Dutch friends are surprised to see that. “Huh,” they say, “that is so different in our family.” (19-year-old female student)

Social interaction with other ethnic communities varies a great deal. According to one study, while the majority of Somalis (63 percent) had a best friend who was also of

⁶⁸ Moors et al., *Voedingsbodembodem voor radicalisering bij kleine etnische groepen in Nederland*.

Somali background, the background of the best friend of 18 percent was native-born Dutch, and for 20 percent their best friend belonged to another ethnic group.⁶⁹

My network of friends is very mixed: before I came to Amsterdam, it consisted mainly of Dutch, I was in this so called “white school” ... right now, it is much more mixed: Afghans, Turks ... that was also the reason to join a Somali organisation. (24-year-old female student)

Social contacts with other refugee groups are more common than with Moroccans and Turks, although some respondents said that young Somali men tended to have contact with Moroccans as well. Somalis keep some distance from Moroccan youngsters, according to one study, and do not want to be associated with Moroccans, because of negative representations of Moroccan youngsters in the Dutch media.⁷⁰

The proportion of mixed marriages, among Somalis is 16 percent, which is high compared with other refugee groups in the Netherlands. Tolerance towards a non-Somali partner appears to be high, according to a study by Van Doorn.⁷¹ Focus group discussions brought a more nuanced perspective, as both parents and children mentioned a certain preference for a Somali partner.

I had quite a few Antillian friends in the past, and my mother told me, “Oh no, not an Antillian.” I told her that I met a very nice Moroccan guy, but she said “No way, you will not marry a Moroccan ...” But then I said, “I will marry this Somali guy, but he only has primary education, and is from another clan” ... Then she would say, “In that case please marry this Moroccan guy.” (24-year-old female student, residence permit)

4.5 Initiatives in Identity and Belonging

“Getting opportunities, taking opportunities” (*Kansen krijgen, kansen grijpen*) is a project initiated by the DIR Foundation, a Dutch Ethiopian development organisation, and implemented in collaboration with SOMVAO, a Somali organisation in the period 2009–2011. The project aimed to stimulate the integration of Ethiopian and Somali refugee youngsters in the Netherlands, by coaching them in education, the labour market and by providing recreational opportunities. The project was concerned with 60 young people (30 with an Ethiopian and 30 with a Somali background). All participants were assigned to one of the three (Ethiopian and Somali) coaches who helped them in their search for identity and a position in society. The youngsters met every two weeks to exchange experiences and to have a chat with their coaches. Other elements included thematic sessions on the educational system; help with internship problems; looking for a job, how to apply, etc.; computer training; and

⁶⁹ Van Doorn, “Sociaal-culturele positie en religie.”

⁷⁰ Moors et al., *Voedingsbodem voor radicalisering bij kleine etnische groepen in Nederland*.

⁷¹ Van Doorn, “Sociaal-culturele positie en religie.”

a soccer competition every Saturday evening. Moreover, 25 parents participated in parenting courses in which parenting between two cultures was the main theme. According to the final report, the project was a success, as commitment was high, with very good attendance in all activities and low turnover. It was noted that at the start of the project, the young people lacked initiative and showed limited responsibility. The coaches were critical of this, and motivated the young men to take a more active role. The coaches provided direct, practical support instead of acting as intermediaries. The Somali group included a significant number of new arrivals to the Netherlands, who had to cope with language problems, as well as difficulties with housing, education and money. The project provided additional support for the newcomers, by assigning more volunteers to this group. The meeting point organised by the project was frequently used by the Somali youngsters, though hardly at all by the Ethiopians.⁷²

Another initiative was the Motivation Project Somalis (*Stimuleringsproject Somaliërs*) in the city of Tilburg, implemented in 2001–2003 by the Dutch Council for Refugees/Tilburg, in collaboration with the municipality and other partners. This project aimed to increase the labour market participation of Somalis in Tilburg, as well as improving social and educational self-reliance. The project trained three Somali coaches to support 200 Somalis. It recruited women in particular, as their position was considered most problematic, but it was difficult to reach them, so most of the participants were males. Individuals needed support for a longer period of time than expected. This was mainly because of the intensity and complexity of the problems of the clients.⁷³

⁷² See <http://www.zonmw.nl/nl/projecten/project-detail/kansen-krijgen-kansen-grijpen/samenvatting> (accessed 14 March 2014).

⁷³ K. Nauta, *Stimuleringsproject Somaliërs. Procesbeschrijving en evaluatie van de resultaten* (Somali Motivation Project. Description of the Process and Evaluation of the Results), PON, Tilburg, 2003, p. 28.

5. EDUCATION

Education is decisive in the fields of participation and inclusion, as it is fundamental to the ability to participate, but can also be a basis for exclusion. This section will start with the educational position of Somalis in the Netherlands, regarding level, types of schools and qualifications. The second part will focus more on the underlying processes. The last part highlights some interesting educational initiatives that could also benefit Somalis.

5.1 The Educational System and Somalis

The Netherlands has a system of compulsory education starting the day a child turns five, until the age of 16. Compulsory education also applies to children of migrants who do not have a residence permit or are still in the procedure of getting one. Those aged 16–18 are bound by a qualification requirement that they should continue to study until a basic qualification is obtained: a diploma acquired at the secondary level is considered a basic condition of participation in the Dutch labour market. A diploma of HAVO/VWO or level 2 MBO are all considered basic qualifications.⁷⁴

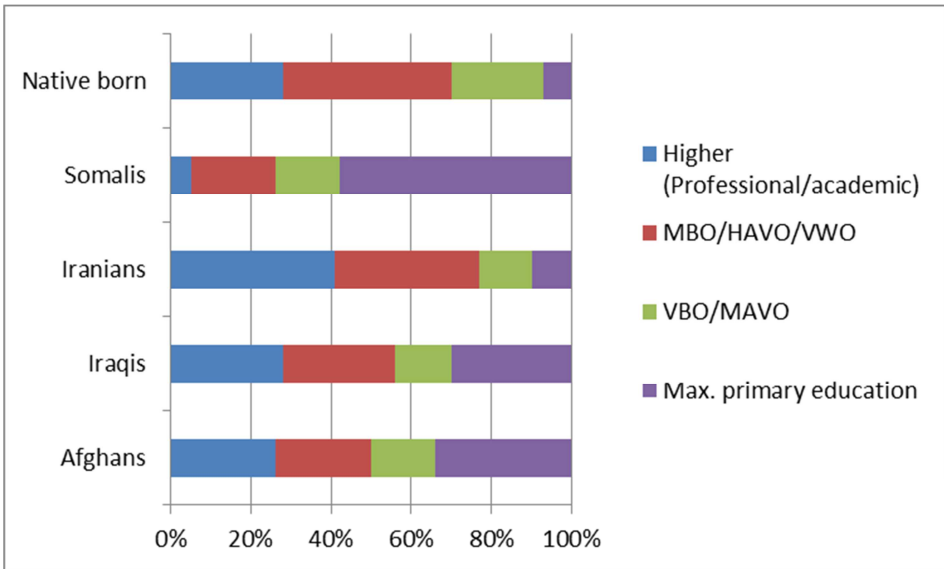
For a good understanding of the educational position of Somalis, it is useful to compare it with the educational position of other refugee groups in the Netherlands. Figure 6 shows the educational levels of four refugee groups (aged 15–65, not attending school). The educational level of Somalis is relatively low, in particular when compared to the educational level of other refugees groups in the Netherlands. The majority (30 percent) has primary education as the highest educational level attained,⁷⁵ while 28 percent did not have any education at all.⁷⁶ Women dominate this last group, with 62 percent of Somali women also having received no education at all.

⁷⁴ Vogels, “Onderwijspositie.”

⁷⁵ Van Heelsum, *Somaliërs in Nederland*.

⁷⁶ Vogels, “Onderwijspositie.”

Figure 6. Educational levels of Afghans, Iraqis, Iranians, Somalis and native-born population aged 15–65, not attending school⁷⁷



Source: R. Vogels, “Onderwijspositie,” Education in E. Dourleijn and J. Dagevos (eds), *De positie van vluchtelingen in Nederland. Over de integratie van Afghaanse, Iraakse, Iraanse en Somalische migranten* (Refugee Groups in the Netherlands: On the Integration of Afghan, Iraqi, Iranian and Somali Migrants), SCP, The Hague, 2011, p. 85.

Other refugee groups in the Netherlands, such as the Afghans and Iranians, include highly educated people, many of them with an academic background, while Somalis, particularly the newcomers, have had to cope with less access to education in their country of origin, Somalia, prior to their arrival in the Netherlands.

Overall, the educational level of the Somali population in the Netherlands has decreased over time: the proportion of people without secondary education increased from 55 percent to 58 percent in 2009, and the proportion of people with a higher or academic education decreased during the same period from 8 percent to 5 cent.⁷⁸ This can be explained by the inflow of Somali refugees after 2007, a group that had less access to education in Somalia due to the conflict there.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ VBO/MAVO refers to lower educational levels, while MBO/HAVO/VWO refers to medium/higher levels of education; the latter is considered as the basic qualification, the minimum required to participate in the labour market.

⁷⁸ Vogels, “Onderwijspositie.”

⁷⁹ Klaver et al., *Somaliërs in Nederland*.

5.1.1 Primary Education

Although compulsory education starts at age five, most children start in primary school the day they turn four. For children with a language deficit, regardless of background, there are *schakelklassen* (transition classes) for additional support. These may take the form of extra class hours and separate classes. In addition, there are also *kopklassen*: one extra year at primary school to prepare children with language problems for secondary education.⁸⁰

Information on the participation of Somali children in primary education in general or in these *schakelklassen* in Amsterdam is not available, but the focus group discussions gave some background. A pattern does not emerge of the type of school Somali children attend. Although some respondents send their children to an Islamic primary school, there are also some households with children at a public primary school.

When I needed to choose a primary school I asked other people with children in school – Somali friends, but also neighbours and other people in the area – about their experiences. I am content with this (public) primary school, it is possible to practise your religion here. (31-year-old woman)

The main reason respondents gave for opting for an Islamic school is that this fits the values and norms of Islam and Somali parenting traditions better, while other parents opt for the best school in combination with the open character of a public school. They do so by checking the reviews published by the Ministry for Education. There are six Islamic primary schools in Amsterdam, three in city district West, two in Nieuw West, and one in Zuid Oost.⁸¹

5.1.2 Secondary Education

At around 12 years of age, children move from primary to secondary school. There are various educational trajectories that can be followed in secondary school. Looking at the educational levels of third-year secondary-school pupils (Figure 7), a high proportion of Somalis can be found at the VMBO-Basic, the lowest level. Overall, the participation of Somalis in the upper levels of secondary education is lower than that of other refugee groups, although the differences between them and pupils with a Turkish or Moroccan background are less profound. In a positive trend, over the period 2003–2009, Somalis started to move upwards on the educational ladder by participating more in the higher levels of the VMBO.⁸²

Precise information on the schools attended by Somali pupils in Amsterdam is not available. There is no Islamic secondary school in Amsterdam, after the only Islamic school, the Islamic College Amsterdam, closed in 2011 due to financial problems. This

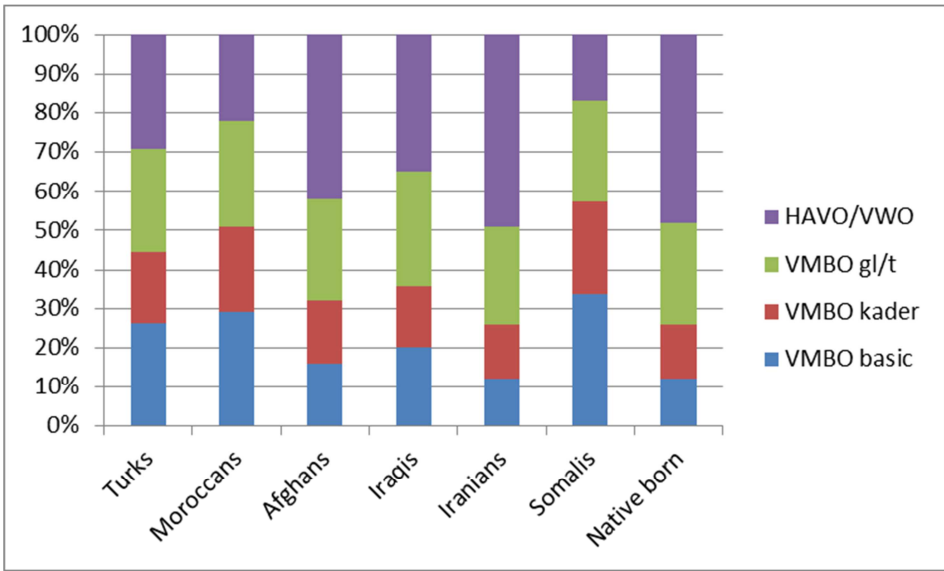
⁸⁰ Vogels, “Onderwijspositie,” p. 95.

⁸¹ See www.vindeenschool.nl/ves (accessed 14 March 2014).

⁸² Vogels, “Onderwijspositie,” p. 97.

followed the decision of the Minister of Education in 2010 to stop funding the school, because of the poor quality of education. In 2011, there was an initiative for a new Islamic secondary school in Amsterdam supported by the Minister of Education. However, progress in setting this up was in part blocked by the Municipality of Amsterdam as they did not want to facilitate the provision of a school building.⁸³

Figure 7. Pupils in year 3 of secondary education, according to type of education and ethnic origin (%), school year 2008/2009⁸⁴



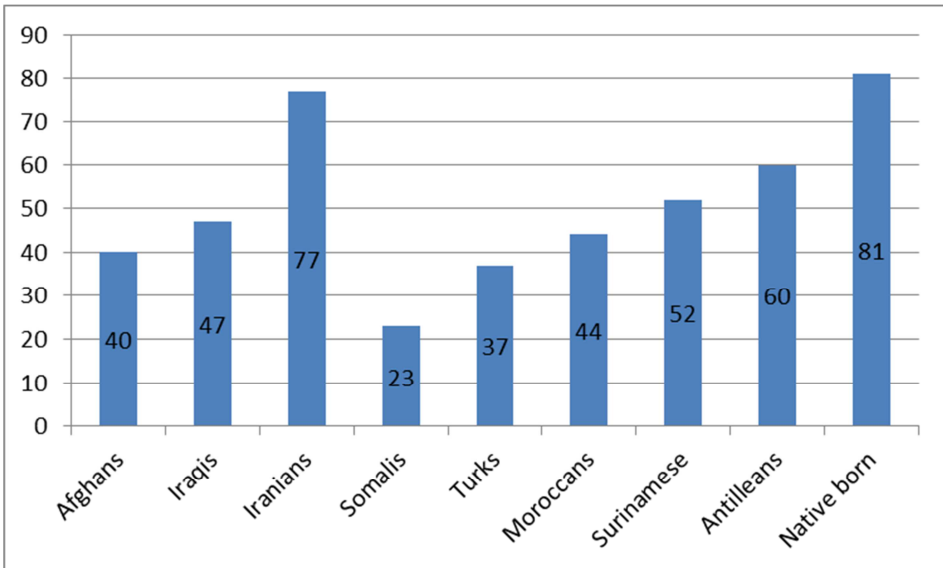
Source: R. Vogels, "Onderwijspositie," Education in E. Dourleijn and J. Dagevos (eds), *De positie van vluchtelingen in Nederland. Over de integratie van Afghaanse, Iraakse, Iraanse en Somalische migranten* (Refugee Groups in the Netherlands: On the Integration of Afghan, Iraqi, Iranian and Somali Migrants), SCP, The Hague, 2011, p. 98.

⁸³ See nos.nl/artikel/275069-plan-voor-nieuw-islamitisch-college-adam.html (accessed 14 March 2014); www.trouw.nl/tr/nl/4556/Onderwijs/article/detail/3498887/2013/08/27/Geef-slechte-school-geen-tweede-kans.dhtml (accessed 14 March 2014); www.onderwijsraad.nl/upload/publicaties/748/documenten/definitief-briefadvies-gemeente-amsterdam.pdf (accessed 14 March 2014).

⁸⁴ VMBO, Voorbereidend Middelbaar Onderwijs (preparatory middle-level vocational education) is a school track that lasts four years, from the age of twelve to sixteen. It combines vocational training with theoretical education in languages, mathematics, history, art and sciences. VBO/MAVO refers to lower educational levels, while MBO/HAVO/VWO refers to medium/higher levels of education; the latter is considered the basic qualification, the minimum required to participate in the labour market.

The proportion of dropouts, that is, pupils leaving school without a basic qualification, is still high among Somali youngsters, although the overall proportion of school dropouts has decreased significantly in the last 10 years, from 8.3 percent to 4.5 percent in 2007–2008.⁸⁵ This is also illustrated in the low proportion (23 percent) of the Somali population in the 20–34 age group leaving school with a basic qualification (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Those not attending school aged 20–34 with a basic qualification, according to ethnic background (%), 2009



Source: R. Vogels, “Onderwijspositie,” Education in E. Dourleijn and J. Dagevos (eds), *De positie van vluchtelingen in Nederland. Over de integratie van Afghaanse, Iraakse, Iraanse en Somalische migranten* (Refugee Groups in the Netherlands: On the Integration of Afghan, Iraqi, Iranian and Somali Migrants), SCP, The Hague, 2011, p. 98.

5.1.3 Vocational, Professional and Academic Education

Almost one-third of the Somalis in the age group 15–64 participates in a higher education programme at various levels.⁸⁶ Comments from focus group participants suggested that those young Somalis who continue their higher education are influenced by their religion in their decisions, such as the choice of programme and the college or university.⁸⁷ Both education and later, profession, should be consistent with religious

⁸⁵ Vogels, “Onderwijspositie,” p. 99.

⁸⁶ Van Heelsum, *Somaliërs in Nederland*.

⁸⁷ Moors et al., *Voedingsbodemp voor radicalisering bij kleine etnische groepen in Nederland*, p. 39.

identity. This is also reflected in the choice of the small group of Somalis among the interviewees who participates in higher professional and academic education. Many of them study at the VU University Amsterdam (VU), one of the two universities based in the city. Its strong multicultural identity was also mentioned as an important reason to prefer the VU over the University of Amsterdam (UvA).

I once went to VU, and noticed a huge difference, they have a location for prayers, it is more friendly compared to the UvA. But I should add to that as well that I never had any negative experience at the UvA. However, if I had known before I would have chosen the VU. This has not only to do with this prayer room, I assume I would feel more at ease there. Right now, in debates on Islam etc. I am always the spokeswoman, I always need to contribute to the discussion, as I am often the only Muslim in the classroom. I am always special, and at the VU I guess it is normal to have a Muslim background. (19-year-old female student, studying at the UvA)

In vocational education, the problem of access to internship positions for students as a compulsory component of their educational programme was specifically mentioned in both the focus group discussions and the expert interviews. Many students face serious difficulties securing one of these positions, as they are scarce overall, and apparently even more so for Somalis. This is not only an issue of discrimination: at least, it was not labelled as such in the focus group discussions and the expert interviews. On the other hand, some respondents added that this may reflect the fact that Somali students tend to start their search for an internship relatively late.

5.2 The Educational Position of Somalis

The educational position of Somalis is a vulnerable one; according to the focus group discussions and interviews, Somalis' disadvantaged educational position is related to a combination of language problems, a lack of knowledge of the system and cultural differences. The interviews and the focus groups showed that many Somali parents consider education to be very important. The comments in focus groups also support the findings in other studies that point towards Somali parents' high expectations for the future of their children.⁸⁸

Somali parents expect their children to become doctors or lawyers,⁸⁹ and are disappointed when they realise they need to adjust their ambitions, are angry about the teachers' advice to go to the VMBO because they feel their child can do better.⁹⁰ The transition from primary to secondary education appears to constitute a difficult

⁸⁸ Klaver et al., *Somaliërs in Nederland*; Moors et al., *Voedingsbodem voor radicalisering bij kleine etnische groepen in Nederland*.

⁸⁹ Klaver et al., *Somaliërs in Nederland*, p. 20.

⁹⁰ Moors et al., *Voedingsbodem voor radicalisering bij kleine etnische groepen in Nederland*, p. 39.

moment, starting in grade 8.⁹¹ At that point, pupils in Dutch primary schools receive a recommendation for the type of secondary education they should take up, which is based on a formal assessment called the *Cito Eindtoets Basisonderwijs* (literally Cito final test primary education). This test is designed to recommend the type of secondary education best suited for a pupil. In recent years this test has gained authority but the recommendation of the teacher along with the pupil's and parents' opinions remain a crucial factor in choosing the right form of secondary education.

At primary school my mother pushed me a lot: I should get high grades, do the utmost. She also performed a very active role in the choice of secondary education. According to the CITO assessment, I could do VWO (the highest level, preparing for academic education), not with ease, but I got sufficient points to do so. However, the teacher suggested taking the HAVO (one level lower), and my mother then protested against this decision – with success! (24-year-old female student at the VU)

The CITO assessment requires a good understanding of the Dutch language to interpret the questions; this seems to be a barrier for Somali children. Somali parents in some of the focus groups were quite surprised about the school recommendation their children received.

It all went well, according to the school, year after year, we never heard any complaints, or received any signals that our son was doing not well at school. And then, in grade 8 the advice was the VMBO, of course, we were surprised, how was this possible? We thought he could do VWO or any other secondary trajectory that prepares at least for higher education. (45-year-old man)

Somali children observe the growing gap between their parents and themselves, as their parents are not able to advise them on educational decisions. Somali is often the main language at home. Parents have no tradition of supervising their children's homework, and find it difficult to do so, as they do not speak Dutch. Primary school could be a good place to educate parents as well, especially for parents who are illiterate and have very little education. On the one hand, they can improve their own skills, and on the other they can guide their children.⁹²

Furthermore, children regard their parents as rather passive in communicating with schools and teachers:

Somali parents are often not aware of the possibilities of their own position, the fact that they have a role to play in the choice of secondary education for

⁹¹ Moors et al., *Voedingsbodemp voor radicalisering bij kleine etnische groepen in Nederland*.

⁹² E. Bohnenn, C. Ceulemans, C. van de Guchte, J. Kurvers and T. van Tendeloo, *Laaggeletterd in de Lage Landen. Hoge prioriteit voor beleid (Low literacy in the Low-lands. High priority for policy)*, Nederlandse Taalunie, The Hague, 2004.

example. The teachers give advice, and most parents just accept that, they do not question that decision. (24-year-old female student)

There is some kind of bias: if the parents come to the information meetings at school, are interested, committed, I am convinced the teachers will advise for a higher level. (19-year-old female student)

Somali parents tend to be very focused on the basic needs for their children: going to school, being properly dressed and getting sufficient food. But of course, more is needed to function properly in higher education, such as reading books and newspapers, going to a museum, discussing politics. (22-year-old male student)

Cultural differences not only affect the communication between school and parents, but also influence how a pupil's performance is judged at school. Qualities that are highly valued in the Dutch school system, such as being critical, responsive, assertive and expressing opinions in class, are not as highly valued by Somali parents, and sometimes even seen as negative. They do not see why their children, while obedient, polite and respectful, are not as successful in class, and find it hard to deal with the values that are cultivated there.⁹³

Female-headed, single-parent households form a specific vulnerable group in educational terms. Single mothers are responsible for many different roles in the household, and there is little time to help children with their homework. Their own educational opportunities are affected, as they responded in the sessions that they did not have time to spend on the language course that is part of the compulsory civic integration programme, or did not want to bring their children to a child-care centre while they are studying.⁹⁴

One particular problem raised in the focus group discussions and certain interviews was the difficulty of continuing an educational trajectory after passing the civic integration programme. The Dutch-language state examination (NT2) is often a prerequisite to start other education and training programmes. However, many people do not have the means to cover the fees (€180) for this process (see also section 3 on the civic integration programme).

5.3 Initiatives to Improve the Educational Position of Somalis

Apart from the *schakelklassen* and *topklassen* mentioned above, there are a few other interesting initiatives in education, although not directed at Somalis in particular. The municipality of Amsterdam has an agreement with the Foundation for Refugee Students (UAF) signed on 5 June 2013 on the improvement of services to better

⁹³ See also B. Tuk, in collaboration with K. Mahamed and A. Baabbi, *You Don't Want To Lose Your Child. Parental support for Somali parents*, Pharos, Utrecht, 2010.

⁹⁴ Respondents' focus group discussion for women <45 years.

educated refugees in Amsterdam. In accordance with the current local refugee policy, the municipality aims for a 100 percent success rate in the civic integration exam for refugees. Also, labour market participation of refugees should increase to 45 percent after three and a half years of settlement in Amsterdam. The agreement⁹⁵ aims at higher educated (professional and higher/academic level) refugees living in Amsterdam who are eligible for welfare, and includes those students who completed a programme in their country of origin, as well as those students who have the potential and the ambition to study but were not able to start or finish their studies in their country of origin, because of a war or conflict. Those who qualify will be exempted from the compulsory job application, so they are able to continue receiving welfare while they study. According to the UAF, this is one of the most far-reaching agreements with a municipality thus far in the Netherlands, as the municipality and the UAF will cooperate closely. The municipality will assign specific client managers who will be trained to work with higher-skilled refugees, in collaboration with experts from the UAF, and the UAF supervisors will be allowed to make use of the municipal computer system.

The municipality of Amsterdam has also advocated for internships for undocumented students in the city. It reflects the open attitude of the city council towards refugees, in contrast with national policy. The then councillor Lodewijk Asscher⁹⁶ wrote a letter to Parliament in March 2012, in which he argued that it should be possible for students without a permit to do their internship – for many students a compulsory element of their study programme – in Amsterdam. According to the minister, however, an internship on these terms conflicts with the crime of having undocumented status.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ See Amsterdam Municipality/Foundation for Refugee Students (UAF), *Werkafspraken bij 'de Overeenkomst over de verbetering van de dienstverlening aan hoger opgeleide Amsterdamse vluchtelingen'* (Agreement for the improvement of services to higher educated refugees in Amsterdam), Versie 10 January 2013.

⁹⁶ The current Minister for Social Affairs and Employment in the Netherlands.

⁹⁷ See also www.uaf.nl/actueel/nieuws/nieuws_detail/newslistid/2/newsitemid/38 (accessed 14 March 2014); www.parool.nl/parool/nl/3587/POLITIEK-BINNENLAND/article/detail/3215961/2012/03/03/Stageverbod-illegalen-maakt-opleiding-zinloos.dhtml (accessed 14 March 2014).

6. EMPLOYMENT

This section explores the employment and income position of Somalis in Amsterdam. The first part provides insight into their participation in the labour market and unemployment, followed by a description of employment characteristics. The third part explores the barriers that Somalis face in employment. Income is central to the fourth part, while the final part discusses initiatives to improve the employment and income position of Somalis in Amsterdam.

6.1 Labour Market Participation and Unemployment⁹⁸

Labour market participation among Somalis is relatively low; data at the national level reveal that approximately 29 percent of Somalis have a paid job. Labour market participation among Somali women is particularly low: in 2009, 17 percent of women in the age group 15 – 65 had a job.

⁹⁸ Data are only available at the national level; the most recent (31 December 2011) figures show that 19 percent of the Somali population aged 15–64 years in the Netherlands had a job, 37 percent participated in integration, 27 percent received welfare, and 17 percent did not have a job, were not integrating and did not receive benefits.

Table 8. Employment and welfare, population 15–65 years (%) 2009

	Afghans	Iraqis	Iranians	Somalis	Native-born
People with a paid job (age 15–64)					
Total	36	35	49	29	70
Men	48	45	55	38	78
Women	22	18	43	17	62
Length of stay in Netherlands					
0–4 years	9	8	35	17	n/a
5–9 years	26	18	41	25	
10–14 years	39	42	44	31	
More than 14 years	48	47	57	43	
Permanent job position					
Total	69	68	78	57	
0–4 years	–	–	–	11	
5–9 years	68	–	65	40	
10–14 years	66	70	76	74	
> 14 years	82	80	85	70	
Unemployed	28	28	20	33	4
Receiving welfare/unemployment benefits⁹⁹	23	30	18	36	2

Source: J. Dagevos, “Positie op de arbeidsmarkt” (Position in the labour market), in E. Dourleijn and J. Dagevos (eds), *Vluchtelingengroepen in Nederland. Over de integratie van Afghaanse, Iraakse, Iraanse en Somalische migranten* (Refugee Groups in the Netherlands: On the Integration of Afghan, Iraqi, Iranian and Somali Migrants), SCP, The Hague, 2011, pp. 108–125 (data are from 2009).¹⁰⁰

The labour market participation rates of Somalis vary significantly depending on length of stay in the Netherlands and educational background. The proportion of Somalis with a paid job increases over time to 43 percent of those who arrived in the Netherlands before 1995. Similarly, those with higher educations are more likely to have a paid job.

Self-employment, that is having your own company, is not found in the national statistics concerning the Somalis, with 0.8 percent of the population in the age group

⁹⁹ In January 2013, 479 Somali in Amsterdam received welfare (WWB) allowance from the municipality, that is, 297 men and 182 women. By age group: 15–26 years, 83; 27–34 years, 213; 35–44 years, 164; 45–54 years, 19, 55+, 0.

¹⁰⁰ J. Dagevos, “Positie op de arbeidsmarkt” (Position in the labour market), in E. Dourleijn and J. Dagevos (eds), *Vluchtelingengroepen in Nederland. Over de integratie van Afghaanse, Iraakse, Iraanse en Somalische migranten* (Refugee groups in the Netherlands: On the integration of Afghan, Iraqi, Iranian and Somali Migrants), SCP, The Hague, 2011, pp. 108–125 (hereafter, Dagevos, “Positie op de arbeidsmarkt”).

15–64 being self-employed. However, since self-employment also tends to be statistically invisible, real figures might be higher. Expert interviews and observations suggest that many Somalis are involved in some kind of voluntary work and are entrepreneurs. Studies also show that the obstacles in the Netherlands to starting one's own business are an important reason for Somalis from the Netherlands to move to the UK, where there are fewer hurdles.¹⁰¹

6.2 Types of Employment

Somalis with a paid job generally work in lower-skilled jobs, with 80 percent at the elementary or low-skilled level, 18 percent at the medium-skilled level, and 2 percent at the higher or academic level. Of these jobs, 43 percent are temporary; the percentage of people in permanent employment increases according to their length of stay in the Netherlands. Among Somalis who arrived before 1995, 70 percent had a permanent job, compared with 11 percent of those who arrived after 2005.¹⁰²

Jobs are generally in the lower segments of the labour market: men mentioned cleaning, manufacturing and the flower auction in Aalsmeer. Women are involved in cleaning, and the care sector, such as elderly care. In addition, there are some self-employed Somalis in retail and community advice. Again, there is a sharp divide between Somalis who arrived in the Netherlands in the early 1990s and those who arrived after 2006.

Many Somalis, or 36 percent in the age group 15–65, receive state benefits, primarily welfare.¹⁰³ Dependence on welfare is particularly high among those aged over 45 and among women.

6.3 Reasons for Labour Market Difficulties

There are many reasons for Somalis' vulnerable position in the labour market. First, language is a problem, in particular for those who arrived after 2006. Although some of the men do speak some Dutch, their proficiency is not adequate and is a serious obstacle in the search for work.

The limited participation of women is also related to gender roles in the household, according to expert interviews. Broader cultural expectations that both men and women seek to conform often make it unusual for women to work outside the home. Their position is mainly in the house, caring for children. A specific barrier for women who are the head of the household and seeking to work is the combination of child and family care. There are very few opportunities for those without other family support.

¹⁰¹ Van den Reek and Hussein, *Somaliërs op doorreis*; Van Liempt, "And then one day they all moved to Leicester."

¹⁰² Dagevos, "Positie op de arbeidsmarkt."

¹⁰³ Dagevos, "Positie op de arbeidsmarkt."

I would like to work, but am a single parent, who will take care of the children? Indeed, that is the issue: for a single Dutch mother it is not so difficult to work, even if she has three children. She has this safety net of grandmas, neighbours and friends that can take care of the children. Somali women often do not have such a safety net. (28-year-old woman)

In the focus group discussions it emerged that proficiency in Dutch among these women is also low and often not good enough to get a job. Many women are participating in the integration programmes and take language courses, but they feel that one year is not enough time to prepare for the exam, despite their efforts to prepare by taking additional Dutch-language classes. Some women referred to the lack of education they had received in Somalia as a contributing factor making it more difficult to learn Dutch. Another criticism of the integration programme was about the limited number of class hours: it was regarded as unrealistic for students to master a foreign language in only six hours of teaching a week.

Both men and women discovered that the integration certificate did not guarantee a job: additional training and education was necessary to prepare for the labour market. Some interviewees found that their Somali or Kenyan certificates were often not recognised, and they were obliged to take additional training in the Netherlands, although they possessed relevant qualifications.

The economic downturn has also affected the position of Somalis in the labour market. Temporary low-skilled jobs via employment agencies are often the only option available to Somalis without a certificate and limited proficiency in Dutch. However, even temporary jobs have become scarce, and available jobs can be classified as “3-D jobs”: dirty, dangerous and demeaning.

Besides a decrease in the job supply, Somalis also reported experiencing increasing discrimination at employment agencies as the labour market has become tighter at employment agencies as well.

I wanted to apply for a job as garbage man. They told me the job is only for people that have Dutch nationality. I told the guy that is fine, I am Dutch. Well, he said, I’m sorry, but you can’t have the job. (32-year-old man)

Somalis recognise this, although they do not perceive this as something that touches Somalis in particular, as most refugees and immigrants have similar experiences. According to the anti-discrimination bureau in Amsterdam, there are few formal claims of discrimination by Somalis, which of course does not imply that it does not exist. One of their cases concerned a woman who was refused a job because of her headscarf. Indeed, clothing is a factor that can influence access to the labour market. Examples mentioned in the interviews and focus group discussions included refusal of jobs because of the dress of the applicant.

Some people mentioned “I certainly would like to hire you, you are a nice girl, but I am afraid our clients will have problems with you.” Or this one: “I would like to hire you, but only if you remove your headscarf.” (19-year-old woman)

In this way, the expression of religious identity clashes with work. However, it was mentioned in the focus group discussions that such expressions of discrimination were more likely to be experienced in villages than in cities.

Tension between the expression of religion and work was mentioned frequently, showing different experiences.

One of our clients, a young Somali woman, was offered a job in a nursing home. However, as she did not want to wash the male residents, she decided not to take this job, but to look for a job in the care home sector. In this sector, she could negotiate certain issues, and the organisation could quite easily fit that into the schedule.¹⁰⁴

All respondents agreed that is necessary to express and explain any requests, to negotiate, so that employers can understand the specific situation and act accordingly.

The structure of the Dutch labour market, with entrance requirements based on formal education, was also frequently referred to as problematic for Somalis. As neither their formal certificates nor their informal qualifications are recognised, it is hard to find a job. They find themselves trapped in a vicious circle: training and learning Dutch requires money, without proper educational background there is little access to a job, and without a job – even a temporary one – there is no way to gain the necessary experience. Many Somalis in Amsterdam enter this vicious circle immediately upon arrival in the Netherlands, as asylum seekers are only allowed to work 26 weeks per year while their claim is being processed.¹⁰⁵

Somali respondents found the formalised structure of the Dutch economy and society limits opportunities for starting up a business. Respondents felt that this was a pity as promising initiatives are thus stifled. Respondents pointed to the UK and the United States, where they think it is much easier to start up a business, and also mentioned this specifically as a factor for the outflow of Somalis to the UK in the last decade.

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Dutch Council for Refugees/Amsterdam.

¹⁰⁵ According to the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (“The IND explained: Annual results 2012”), in 2012, 88 percent of all claims are processed within the official time period (six months, which may be extended to one and a half years). See https://ind.nl/EN/Documents/A6_ENG_WEB%20Annual%20results%202012.pdf (accessed 14 March 2014).

The weak position of Somalis on the Dutch labour market is also reflected by a recent regression analysis of the CBS (2013)¹⁰⁶ that analysed the relationship between the labour market position of refugees and their background characteristics (gender/age/year/country of origin and location). This analysis shows that compared with other refugee groups, Somalis have fewer chances to get a job, once background characteristics are accounted for.

6.4 Income

Not much is known about the financial position of Somalis. In 2005, over 50 percent of Somali households had a low income, of around €850 per month.¹⁰⁷ As noted in section 6.1 above, a large group of Somalis are not in paid employment. Many of them can be classified as unemployed: they are not in paid work, but would like to be. Others can be classified as economically inactive, that is, outside the labour force. There are several reasons for this: poor health or disability (18 percent), studies (33 percent), school (15 percent) and – most important – child care (25 percent).¹⁰⁸ The Dutch welfare system is the main source of income for this last group.

Although respondents praised the Dutch welfare system, there were also critical observations. One comment concerned the high amount of welfare, and the slight difference from the minimum wage in the Netherlands.

I do not think the system is fair. I work 40 hours per week, get up at 5.30 every day, spend eight hours in a noisy factory, and return home tired. For all this, I receive €1,200 every month. Igaal here gets up at 10.00, watches television all day, and receives only €100 less. (45-year-old man)

Others, mainly Somalis who arrived in the 1990s, argued that Somalis are made too dependent on the welfare system in the Netherlands.

Those receiving a welfare allowance mentioned the feelings of humiliation that they felt in their meetings with counsellors at the Department of Work and Income.

¹⁰⁶ L. Muller, J. Van den Tillaart and C. van Weert, “Vluchtelingen in Nederland. Relatie tussen arbeidsmarktpositie en achtergrondkenmerken” (Refugees in the Netherlands. Relationship between labour market position and background characteristics), CBS, 2013, at <http://www.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/informatie/beleid/publicaties/maatwerk/archief/2013/130122-vluchtelingen-in-nederland-deel3-mw.htm> (accessed 14 March 2014).

¹⁰⁷ The average household monthly income in the Netherlands in 2005 was €1,492 (CBS, Statline). See J. Dagevos and G. Linden, “Niet-westerse allochtonen en armoede” (Non-natives and poverty), in C. Vrooman, A. Soede, H.J. Dirven and R. Trimp, *Armoedemonitor 2005*, pp. 84–102, SCP/CBS, The Hague/Voorburg, 2005.

¹⁰⁸ Dagevos, “Positie op de arbeidsmarkt,” p. 114.

She checks all my expenses,¹⁰⁹ I need to tell her exactly how I spent the money. Two months ago, I sent €100 to my family in Somalia, it was months ago that I did so, and since they take care of my child, I just couldn't wait any longer ... well, she accused me of being too generous. (42-year-old woman)

Indebtedness is a common problem among Somali households in Amsterdam.¹¹⁰ Of course, unemployment partly explains this, but other factors also contribute to a precarious financial position. According to some experts, financial planning constitutes a large problem for many households. They are not used to planning expenses, and find it difficult to do long-term planning.

We had some clients, young couples, who arrived in the city, and started a family: one child, another one, and then they ran into problems, did not expect that having children affects the household income, that you need to buy food, diapers, buy medication in case the child is ill, etc. It is not a case of deliberate bad planning, they are just not aware of the system, how it works.¹¹¹

Financial planning is also affected by a lack of knowledge about certain things that may be common knowledge for the general population. One example is health insurance: every individual (with a residence permit) in the Netherlands has compulsory health insurance, which covers the most basic medical costs, and through which children have access to free health care; but there are some exceptions to this. One of these is the orthodontist, and some parents are unpleasantly surprised when they realise that this is not covered by the basic insurance.

Supporting the family in Somalia, particularly parents, is also a burden on many household budgets, as they remit a substantial part of their income to family and friends in Somalia back home. This practice is part of Somali culture and tradition, an Islamic duty and hard to avoid.¹¹²

Sometimes you visit your clients at home, in their apartment, and then you notice their shabby conditions, only a few chairs, etc. All refugees receive a loan, to furnish their apartment, but sometimes they do not spend it on furniture, they send it to Somalia, to support their families which are highly depended on these funds.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Counsellors are entitled to check account details, but clients are allowed to hide the precise expenses. However, if there is reason to believe that clients spend more money on a certain item than is financially healthy, counsellors can ask about the details.

¹¹⁰ See also Moors et al., *Voedingsbodem voor radicalisering bij kleine etnische groepen in Nederland*.

¹¹¹ Focusgroup discussion, volunteer at a support organisation.

¹¹² Interview with Fatumo Farah, Himilo Relief and Development Association (HIRDA), Amsterdam, 5 March 2013.

¹¹³ Interview with Dutch Council for Refugees/Amsterdam.

6.5 Initiatives in Employment and Income

Formal local policies to encourage the employment of Somalis are implemented by the Department of Work and Income of the municipality of Amsterdam. Generally, this implies that people that depend on welfare are required to respond to vacancies (at least once a week) and should be available for jobs. Generally speaking, Dutch local government authorities do not implement specific policies aimed at the integration of the foreign-born population into the labour market. A study from 2008 showed that policy officers do not consider the absence of a minority policy (*doelgroepenbeleid*) for this population group as an issue. First, they mentioned that they do not receive signals from the workforce that this group might need a special approach. Second, they do not know the position of the foreign-born group compared with the native-born population, as ethnicity is not registered (and is therefore not analysed).¹¹⁴ However, the government does recognise that refugees, among them many Somalis, appear to face specific problems in accessing the labour market. As a consequence, some programmes have been developed to address high unemployment rates.

The Refugee Job Offensive (*Banenoffensief Vluchtelingen*) was a direct response to ethnic tensions after the murder of Theo van Gogh and the renewed attention being paid to the integration of migrants into Dutch society. This programme was initiated by the Dutch Council for Refugees, and implemented in 2005–2008 in collaboration with Work for Refugees (*Emplooi*), the UAF and the division Werkbedrijf, the Public Employment Service, UWV Werkbedrijf, an independent entity, set up by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. This division is engaged in job placement and re-integration and actively seeks cooperation with labour market partners like municipalities, employers and temporary employment agencies. They focus on job seekers who are at a great distance from the labour market and employers who are willing to hire these job seekers.

The programme was subsidised by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (€3 million, 2005–2008), and also received grants from the European Refugee Fund and the National Postal Code Lottery (sponsoring the Dutch Council for Refugees). In 2008 all the partners contributed to get the €6 million needed. The three main objectives of the programme were:

- A paid job for at least six months for 2,600 refugees (additional to the regular placements by the institutions involved);

¹¹⁴ M.J. van Gent and R.C. van Waveren, “Re-integratie van allochtone bijstandsccliënten. De gemeentelijke aanpak door de etnische bril bekeken” (Reintegration of allochthonous clients depending on welfare. An analysis of the municipal approach from an ethnic point of view), Onderzoek in opdracht van het Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en werkgelegenheid, Final Report, Regioplan, Amsterdam, 2008, p. 12.

- increasing awareness among participating institutions, so that services to refugees should be offered in a more holistic manner and permitted to continue;
- Involvement of the private sector.

The results were promising: 2,327 refugees were offered employment, the majority of them a paid job for at least six months, and a minority were internship positions. Refugees who benefited most from the Job Offensive were those who faced the lowest barriers for getting into the labour market, that is, refugees with specific skills and competences. The Refugee Job Offensive proved to be less successful for those refugees who required more supervision, with more distance to enter the labour market.

Employers were quite enthusiastic about the initiative, and demand even exceeded supply, as it was difficult to find qualified refugees. To involve more refugees, it was also recommended to make more use of existing networks and platforms, such as community organisations. Among the challenges that the project faced was the limited participation of local governments and a lack of trust in the rather informal approach of the Refugee Job Offensive. The Netherlands' decentralized welfare system allows municipalities to choose varying degrees of in-house and outsourced provisions of reintegration services. Since most municipalities also collaborate with private reintegration companies, they could not or did not want to divert from the binding contracts they have with them. Reintegration companies often considered the Refugee Job Offensive as a competitor.¹¹⁵

Another example of a successful initiative is the ongoing “*Talent uit Isolement*” (break down barriers that isolate talent), which started in 2011. This was carried out by the Dutch Council for Refugees/Amsterdam, and aims at facilitating refugee women's labour market access (including Somali women). The programme consists of six months of training, which develops Dutch-language skills and other professional skills such as writing an application letter. The training is followed by a six-month internship at a company or institution, for example a care home agency, and it empowers women and supports personal development. It also contributes to proficiency in Dutch, as participants meet each other in multicultural groups, and to broadening social networks.¹¹⁶ Although it does not guarantee employment, the first results are promising.

Finally, Stichting Somalische Vrouwen IFTIN, a Somali women's organisation in Amsterdam, helps women to participate in Dutch society. In cooperation with

¹¹⁵ Refugee Job Offensive (*Banenoffensief Vluchtelingen*), *Waardevolle mensen in bijzondere omstandigheden. Banenoffensief Vluchtelingen 2005–2008* Highlights van een project dat werkt (Valuable people in specific situations. Job Offensive 2005–2008, highlights of a project that works), Amsterdam, 2008.

¹¹⁶ Interview with Dutch Council for Refugees/Amsterdam, Hans van Stee, Amsterdam, 7 March 2013

SOMVAO and the Somali Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (SONPPCAN),¹¹⁷ two Somali organisations, IFTIN provides support and training for Somali women to set up their own business and/or help them find paid work in order to increase their economic independence. Somali women between the ages of 25 and 55 who are unemployed and on benefits are offered six days of training based on their aspirations in the labour market. Awareness meetings are also organised about gender roles within the family and in the labour market.

¹¹⁷ SONPPCAN is a non-governmental, non-profit making humanitarian organization established in 1989 in Mogadishu, Somalia to improve the living conditions of the Somali children, provide protection and prevent maltreatment, abuse and neglect of children in Somalia through advocacy, lobbying and the establishment of community oriented projects.

7. HOUSING

This section discusses the housing situation of Somali asylum seekers, refugees and Dutch citizens with a Somali background in the Netherlands. It also looks into the specifics of the Amsterdam housing market, the motivation of Somalis to choose the city, and barriers that Somalis may face in the housing market.

7.1 Reception of Asylum Seekers in the Netherlands

The first asylum seekers centre was opened in the Netherlands in 1987 and it is only since the mid-1980s that a centrally organised reception system for asylum seekers has existed in the Netherlands. The sudden and unexpected arrival of large numbers of Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka in Amsterdam and The Hague led to discussions about existing reception policies. Local municipalities had until then been responsible for the reception of asylum seekers, but they became overwhelmed and complained about the increasing burden the asylum seekers were placing on their communities and their local housing market. These discussions eventually led to a reorganisation and centralisation of the housing policy for asylum seekers in the Netherlands. In 1987 the Asylum Seekers Reception Regulations (*Regeling Opvang Asielzoekers*, ROA) was introduced. The main drive behind this was to distribute the costs more evenly and to take some of the pressure off large cities.¹¹⁸

At the same time, a new state agency supervised by the Ministry of Safety and Justice (then Ministry of Welfare, Health and Sports), the COA, became responsible for the asylum seekers' reception, supervision and departure from the reception centres, the AZCs. Gradually, all asylum seekers were hosted in reception centres and no longer in independent housing, although it is still possible to find a house or to live with friends or families outside the reception centres, an option known as self-care arrangement (*Het Zelfzorgarrangement*). Asylum seekers who use this option are required to check in once a week at local reception centres to keep the authorities informed of their whereabouts.

This move to reception in closed institutions had an impact on asylum seekers' integration into Dutch society. First, reception centres are often physically isolated from society and located away from cities, making it more difficult to participate socially. Asylum seekers are only allowed to work a limited number of weeks per year while their claim is being processed. Moreover, policies at reception centres are indirectly aimed at preventing integration and instead prepare asylum seekers for the possibility that they will not be granted refugee status and will therefore need to return to their country. Over time there have been different policies on learning the Dutch language inside reception centres. On the one hand, the sooner a refugee learns Dutch

¹¹⁸ M. Arnoldus, T. Dukes and S. Musterd, "Dispersal policies in the Netherlands," in V. Robinson, R. Andersson and S. Musterd (eds), *Spreading the "Burden"? A Review of Policies to Disperse Asylum Seekers and Refugees*, Policy Press, Bristol, pp. 25–64.

the better, on the other, people should not be given false hopes of remaining in the Netherlands.¹¹⁹

In the Netherlands asylum seekers have the right to reception and basic needs as long as they are taking part in the asylum procedure. One study found that Somali asylum seekers on average spent 18 months in reception centres and on average move twice from reception centre to reception centre.¹²⁰ The Dutch Council for Refugees has often raised awareness of the possible dangers of housing asylum seekers in closed centres where they do not have the right to work and run the risk of hospitalisation, and where many experience a lack of privacy, insecurity and uncertainty.¹²¹

7.2 The Compulsory Dispersal of Somali Refugees

Those asylum seekers who are not granted refugee status have four weeks to leave the reception centre and the country. Many, however, end up on the streets because they cannot or do not want to return to Somalia. A group of about 100 failed asylum seekers who were hosted in the Vluchtkerk (Flight Church) reflects such desperate situation. The Vluchtkerk refers to St Joseph's Church in Amsterdam-West which has hosted a group of about 100 failed asylum seekers, among whom are quite a few Somalis since November 2012. The aim of this group is to confront the Dutch government with failed asylum policies, with refugees as victims. By the end of March 2013 it was announced that the group could stay in the church till 1 June 2013. The local government of Amsterdam tolerated their stay, under certain conditions. Financial support was provided by the Protestant Church of Amsterdam, and a large group of volunteers offered daily support.¹²² From 31 May 2013, the group was housed in an empty squatted apartment building (the Vluchtflat) in Amsterdam Slotervaart and an empty office called Vluchtkantoor, and at the time of writing they had been moved to a former prison, the Vluchtgevangenis.¹²³

Those asylum seekers who succeed in obtaining refugee status in the Netherlands are helped to find suitable housing by the COA. In the past this often took a long time, although municipalities are obliged to offer appropriate accommodation to refugees within three months. Refugees can try to state their preferences for where they would like to live, but only in cases of medical urgency is this taken into account. The dwellings offered to refugees can be located anywhere in the Netherlands.

Somali refugees like to live together, but they cannot always succeed. In the Netherlands we have a dispersal policy. We, as the Dutch Council for Refugees,

¹¹⁹ Engelhard and Weiler, *Fietsen met tegenwind*.

¹²⁰ Permentier and Wittebrood, "De woonsituatie van vluchtelingengroepen in Nederland."

¹²¹ Engelhard and Weiler, *Fietsen met tegenwind*.

¹²² See also <http://www.devluchtkerk.nl> (accessed 14 March 2014).

¹²³ See also <http://www.devluchtkerk.nl> (accessed 14 March 2014).

can help to negotiate in urgent individual cases. But we cannot do a lot because almost everybody wants to live in the larger cities and that is just impossible.¹²⁴

Each municipality in the Netherlands is thus legally required to host a number of refugees, depending on the number of inhabitants of the municipality (its “housing target”, *de huisvestings taakstelling*). The result of this dispersal policy is that refugees are scattered all over the Netherlands and often isolated from family members and friends. It is estimated that around 60 percent of refugees do make use of the offers made by municipalities.¹²⁵ Refugees are not obliged to make use of this housing system, they can also look for a house themselves. There are many different reasons why they would want to live somewhere else: they might prefer to stay close the reception centre because that has become a familiar environment, as mentioned in the focus group on housing

Everybody likes to stay in the region where they lived before. That is where you have your friends. (24-year-old man, three and a half years in Amsterdam)

Other reasons might be that they would like to stay close to friends and relatives, or have a strong preference for living in a city or a small village.

7.3 Housing in the Netherlands

Very little research has been done on the housing situation of Somalis. Van den Tillaart reported that in 2000 almost all Somalis lived in rented houses in an ethnically mixed neighbourhood;¹²⁶ this was confirmed in 2011.¹²⁷ Only 3 percent of the Somali population has bought a house.¹²⁸ During one of the focus groups it became clear that it is difficult for some Somalis to buy a house due to the lack of banks in the Netherlands that provide mortgages regarded as *halal*, that is, compliant with their religious principles relating to the charging of interest on loans. Somali families with sufficient income that have lost their rights to the social housing sector are limited to the private housing market with its very high rents.

Compared with other refugee groups Somalis live in apartments more often than in single-family houses. Two-thirds of the Somali population in the Netherlands lives in an apartment, compared with only half of the Afghan, Iraqi and Iranian populations and a quarter of the Dutch. This difference in type of housing can be explained by the fact that the Somali population in the Netherlands is very young, with a high number

¹²⁴ Interview with Roswitha Weiler, Dutch Council for Refugees, Amsterdam, 21 January 2013.

¹²⁵ Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, *Een gekleurd beeld van wonen* (A coloured picture of housing), Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, The Hague, 2005, p 2.

¹²⁶ Van den Tillaart, *Nieuwe etnische groepen in Nederland*.

¹²⁷ Permentier and Wittebrood, “De woonsituatie van vluchtelingengroepen in Nederland.”

¹²⁸ Permentier and Wittebrood, “De woonsituatie van vluchtelingengroepen in Nederland,” p. 138.

of single people who can live in smaller houses. According to a study on the housing situation of refugees, the monthly housing costs of Somalis are the lowest compared with other refugee groups: Somalis pay on average €351 per month, compared with Iranians at €515 and Afghans at €417.¹²⁹

The number of rooms available per household is also the lowest for the Somali population (3.3 compared with 3.9 for Afghans).¹³⁰ This again can be explained by demographics, but it might also indicate that Somalis' housing situation is worse than that of other refugee groups because Somali families are often large.

The process of geographic regrouping takes some time with refugees but it is a common phenomenon.¹³¹ Researchers expect refugees to live in ethnically concentrated neighbourhoods to the same extent as traditional (economic) immigrant groups after a period of time. Looking at the areas where Somalis are living, Somalis are the most strongly represented of all refugee groups in deprived neighbourhoods, at 46 percent compared with only 29 percent of Iranians. Their length of stay also does not seem to affect their wish to move out of these areas. It was also found that Somalis have the most contact with neighbours of all refugee groups and evaluate their neighbourhood positively.¹³²

7.4 Housing in Amsterdam

Housing is a critical problem in Amsterdam in general. There are long waiting lists for social housing and house prices are among the highest in the Netherlands. In the focus group on housing it was pointed out that once a priority code¹³³ is assigned people can look for social housing themselves anywhere in the country, but because the waiting lists are so long (even if one has priority), most Somalis end up accepting houses offered by the COA.

According to the Dutch Council for Refugees/Amsterdam, the houses refugees are offered in Amsterdam are of good quality, but Amsterdam's housing stock consists mainly of small houses and apartments, which has resulted in an overrepresentation of single refugees there. Somali families tend to accept houses in the Amsterdam suburbs, like Diemen. Another particularity of the Amsterdam housing stock is that the rents

¹²⁹ Permentier and Wittebrood, "De woonsituatie van vluchtelingengroepen in Nederland."

¹³⁰ Permentier and Wittebrood, "De woonsituatie van vluchtelingengroepen in Nederland," pp. 137–138.

¹³¹ Zorlu and Mulder, "Initial and subsequent location choices of immigrants."

¹³² Permentier and Wittebrood, "De woonsituatie van vluchtelingengroepen in Nederland," pp. 128–129.

¹³³ Asylum seekers who are granted refugee status no longer have access to shelter in asylum seekers centres. Technically they thus become homeless and for that reason are given priority in the social housing system. This means they choose first from the housing supply.

are high. "In Amsterdam refugees sometimes spent half of their income on housing," indicated Hans van Stee, of the Dutch Council for Refugees/Amsterdam.

During the focus group discussion on housing, several Somali participants observed that they felt that COA was very helpful in the process of finding a house, but that the transition towards living independently in an unfamiliar environment was too abrupt and that more support was needed with settling into a large city like Amsterdam.

In a village the support is much better, in Amsterdam you are left on your own, they only help you with bills and letters, but all the other things like finding your way around in the tram, with the chip card, getting electricity and a phone connection in your house, we actually need help with issues like that. (25-year-old man, four years in Amsterdam, single)

The discussions in the focus groups showed a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards Amsterdam as a place to settle. On the one hand, it is a city of opportunities in terms of jobs and education and the Somali organisations make it easy to get to know other Somalis.

We like Amsterdam, we are single, we do not have children, here there is a lot you can do, there are Somali organisations and it is always fun and you can hang around in the city centre. (25-year-old man, four years in Amsterdam, single)

On the other hand, it is a big city where people are anonymous, where major institutions are difficult to access and support is not easily found. Many participants in the focus group on housing noted that people they know who moved to small villages were doing much better in terms of integration.

When I first arrived in the Netherlands I was sent to a reception centre in Dronten, that was in 2008. The people I met there who went to villages in Friesland, they speak much better Dutch than I do; they are much better integrated. I think it is better in a small village where people can help you. In Amsterdam everybody is busy. And here, in Amsterdam, you only get one year of language support, then you need to pass the civic integration test, but I heard in villages people sometimes get three or four years of language support. (Man, nine months in the Alblasserwaard reception centre, five years in Amsterdam)

The Dutch Council for Refugees¹³⁴ admits that there is an imbalance in support between larger cities and small villages in the Netherlands:

In Amsterdam a refugee officially gets 3.5 years' support. This should ideally be the same everywhere, but in practice it is not. In a small village you will probably be supported more intensively and perhaps even for a longer time. There are relatively many volunteers. In Amsterdam it is more anonymous and business-

¹³⁴ Interview with Roswitha Weiler, Dutch Council for Refugees, Amsterdam, 21 January 2013.

like, the office hours are for example in the head office of the Dutch Council of Refugees which is for some a barrier to come.

Other respondents¹³⁵ shared this view, and mention the availability of only a few Somali speaking advisers and the rather formal procedures. The Dutch Council for Refugees/Amsterdam does not recognise the problem about their accessibility, and states that their office is visited frequently, by Somali as well as other refugees.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Focus group discussions on participation and education; interview with Ali Ware, Somali Association for Amsterdam and Surrounding Area (*Somalische Vereniging Amsterdam en Omgeving*, SOMVAO), Amsterdam, 20 February 2013.

¹³⁶ Personal communication with Hans van Stee, Dutch RefugeeCouncil/Amsterdam, 7 March 2013.

8. HEALTH AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Access to adequate health care is important for social inclusion. Long-term illness affects people's opportunities for economic and social participation, reducing employment opportunities and income levels that in turn affect people's opportunities for social and leisure activities. This section begins with an overview of the data on the health status of Somalis in the Netherlands. Unfortunately there are no data available on Somali's health situation at the municipal level, and the data that are available at the national level for various reasons need careful interpretation. This section also discusses the experiences of Somalis using the health and social services and initiatives to improve access to social services and health care. Finally, the section deals with the changing relationship between Somali parents and their children upon arrival in the Netherlands, and the implications of this relationship for the social position of Somalis.

8.1 The Health Status of Somalis in the Netherlands

The *Amsterdam Health Monitor* is a four-yearly survey of the health status of the Amsterdam population. The last published *Monitor* dates from 2008 and showed that men are in better health condition than women, younger people are in better health than older people and more highly educated people are in better health than those with worse educations. This counts for all ethnic groups, including Dutch. However, data also show that there are differences in health status between non-Western immigrants and the native-born population. Lower socio-economic status and integration problems are likely contributing factors to the lower health status of non-Western immigrants. The *Amsterdam Health Monitor* focuses on the largest immigrant groups in the Netherlands, which are Turks, Moroccans and Surinamese.

There are some national data available on Somalis' health, on which a report on the position of refugees in the Netherlands presents somewhat surprising data. Based on self-assessment, Somalis are in relative good health compared with three other refugee groups, Afghans, Iraqis and Iranians (see Table 9).

Table 9. Physical and mental health of refugees aged 15–64 in the Netherlands compared with native-born, 2009

	Afghans	Iraqis	Iranians	Somalis	Native-born
Physical health	78.5	77.7	78.6	83.6	85.2
Age:					
15–24	91.8	90.8	92.1	90.7	89.9
25–44	76.8	78.5	81.9	80.8	88.2
45–64	58.2	59.3	64.2	63.8	80.6
Gender					
Male	81.1	80.7	79.1	86.7	87.5
Female	75.4	72.9	78.0	79.5	83.1
Educational background: ¹³⁷					
Max primary	68.2	66.7	62.1	82.1	79.1
VBO/MAVO	80.5	79.6	70.6	82.9	84.0
MBO/HAVO/VWO	83.3	82.5	79.1	85.3	84.6
HBO/WO	79.9	79.2	83.2	89.9	88.3
Mental health	81.6	81.6	79.7	86.2	93.5
Age:					
15–24	91.5	91.9	90.0	89.8	96.4
25–44	78.7	80.7	81.3	85.1	91.9
45–64	70.1	71.0	70.0	71.9	93.8
Gender					
Male	83.8	84.6	79.9	87.6	94.7
Female	78.9	77.0	79.5	84.3	92.3
Educational background:					
Max primary	72.7	74.1	67.8	83.0	88.5
VBO/MAVO	82.7	84.5	74.4	87.8	92.8
MBO/HAVO/VWO	84.9	86.4	79.2	89.7	95.1
HBO/WO	83.5	79.8	83.5	91.6	93.8

Note: Scale is 1–100, the higher the healthier

Source: R. Schellingerhout, “Gezondheid en Zorggebruik” (Health and use of health services), in E. Dourleijn and J. Dagevos (eds), *Vluchtelingengroepen in Nederland. Over de integratie van Afghaanse, Iraakse, Iraanse en Somalische migranten* (Refugee Groups in the Netherlands: On the Integration of Afghan, Iraqi, Iranian and Somali Migrants), p. 146 (hereafter, Schellingerhout, “Gezondheid en Zorggebruik”)

Qualitative research suggests that these data may not reflect Somalis’ health,¹³⁸ because studies show that traumas and mental health problems are very much present in the

¹³⁷ VBO/MAVO refers to lower educational levels, while MBO/HAVO/VWO refers to medium/higher levels of education; the latter is considered as basic qualification, the minimum requirement to participate in the labour market; HBO/WO refers to higher and academic education.

Somali community. In particular, the situation in Somalia, the migration process to Europe and the asylum experience in the Netherlands seem to have had a huge impact on Somalis' health. The Somali European Forum reports that for the second wave of refugees traumas as a result of war and the escape from conflict are a fact for almost all involved.¹³⁹ For those who came earlier, social and psychiatric problems are also still often an issue.

One of the explanations for a bias in the data presented in Table 9 might be that the survey questions behind this data are closed and very general such as "How often did you feel calm and quiet in the last four weeks?" or "How often did you feel down?" Respondents may have given very general answers to these questions. Another explanation might be that Somalis seem to have problems with the term "psychiatric problems" because they have a different understanding of what these are and because they may result in stigma in their own community.¹⁴⁰ These questions may have resulted in underreporting of Somalis' health. Access to health care seems a crucial topic for further investigation.

8.2 Somalis' Use of Health Care and Social Services

It is striking that Somalis make the lowest number of visits of any refugee group in the Netherlands to the doctor, medical specialists, hospital and mental health care services (see Table 10). Somalis' low use of health and social services could of course be an indicator of good health, but based on insights from qualitative research about Somalis' health, it seems more likely that they experience barriers to accessing health care.

¹³⁸ Klaver et al., *Somaliërs in Nederland*; Moors et al., *Voedingsbodem voor radicalisering bij kleine etnische groepen in Nederland*; Pels and de Gruijter, *Vluchtelingengezinnen*; M. Kromhout and M. van San, *Schimmige werelden, nieuwe etnische groepen en jeugdcriminaliteit* (Shadowy worlds, new ethnic groups and youth criminality), The Hague, WODC, 2003 (hereafter, Kromhout and M. van San, *Schimmige werelden, nieuwe etnische groepen en jeugdcriminaliteit*).

¹³⁹ Moors et al., *Voedingsbodem voor radicalisering bij kleine etnische groepen in Nederland*.

¹⁴⁰ Van Heelsum, *Somaliërs in Nederland*; K. Bhui, A. Abdi, M. Abdi, S. Pereira, M. Dualah, D. Robertson, G. Sathiamoorthy and H. Ismail, "Traumatic events, migration characteristics and psychiatric symptoms among Somali refugees," *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology* 38 (2009), pp. 35–43; N. Warfa, K. Bhui, T. Craig, S. Curtis, S. Mohamud, S. Stansfeld, P. McCrone and G. Thornicroft, "Post migration geographical mobility, mental health and health service utilisation among Somali refugees in the UK: A qualitative study," *Health and Place* 12 (2006), pp. 503–515.

Table 10. Use of health services, according to ethnic background and age (%), 2009

	Afghans	Iraqi	Iranian	Somali	Native-born
GP¹	44.5	44.3	44.8	38.2	33.2
Age					
15–24	26.6	28.9	33.3	26.0	29.6
25–44	49.8	45.6	40.9	43.8	32.2
45–64	64.5	60.6	58.5	60.5	33.1
Medical specialist²	24.7	23.2	25.2	19.8	20.3
Age					
15–24	14.9	13.0	15.3	9.2	19.3
25–44	25.6	23.7	22.6	24.1	18.9
45–64	40.4	34.5	36.3	46.5	22.3
Hospitalisation³	12.2	16.3	14.6	11.0	11.5
Age					
15–24	6.0	15.1	12.4	7.2	14.8
25–44	13.5	15.2	12.4	12.8	9.7
45–64	20.8	19.7	19.7	16.7	11.4
GGZ (mental health service)⁴	10.8	8.9	13.3	6.8	8.3
Age					
15–24	4.8	3.6	6.4	4.3	5.9
25–44	13.8	10.9	14.1	7.8	10.0
45–64	14.8	10.3	16.7	14.0	7.8

Notes:¹ Visited the GP for self in the past two months.² Had contact with a medical specialist for self in the past two months.³ Was hospitalised in the last 12 months.⁴ Used mental health services the last 12 months.**Source:** Schellingerhout, “Gezondheid en Zorggebruik”, p. 158.

The focus group discussion on health raised some important concerns about access to health care in the Netherlands. First, the quality was praised. Participants appreciated that the facilities they have here would not be available to them in Somalia. However, particular worries were raised. In February 2013, the National Ombudsman for the Netherlands, Alex Brenninkmeijer, announced research into the medical care of (rejected) asylum seekers. This was a response to several serious complaints by doctors who volunteered to help rejected asylum seekers who were camping in Ter Apel to draw attention to their dire situation. The doctors were shocked to find many asylum seekers had health problems that should have been treated much earlier on. The fact that these people all went through the Dutch asylum system raised questions about the health care offered to them on arrival. In 2009, a new health-care system for asylum seekers was introduced, according to which it was to be provided by the regular

channels. In this new system COA acts as a broker, informing asylum seekers about the different health-care provisions available to them. An initial review found deficiencies in the functioning of this new system, in particular as regards accessibility and care for children. A follow-up study carried out by the Ministry of Health indicated that changes to improve the situation have been implemented, but there still are quite some issues of concern.¹⁴¹ In general, there are still questions about access to health care for immigrants who are residing in the Netherlands but do not have legal documents. Recent research by Doctors of the World in five European cities (Munich, Brussels, Nice, Amsterdam, London) showed that 29 percent of undocumented migrants in Amsterdam do not have access to the health care they need. Doctors seem to be unaware of the special rules that apply for undocumented patients (they can get 80 percent of the costs reimbursed by the state), and there is a reluctance to take up the greater load of administrative work this special group requires.¹⁴²

Concerns were also raised about the increasing costs of health insurance in the Netherlands. Focus group participants pointed out that taking care of and sending money to relatives in Somalia or paying the rent came before personal health. Dentistry was especially neglected due to the high personal contributions patients must make.

I think the dentist is too expensive. I am a father of small children and it is expensive, how can I afford this own contribution? My children need to wear braces and they told us that the dentist was free for children under 18, but that is not true. The brace cost me €2,000! Look, in that case, people will avoid health care. (43-year-old father of five children, three years in the Netherlands)

Misunderstanding is an important cause of frustration; visits to the dentist are free in the Netherlands for children under 18, but special treatment such as seeing an orthodontist are paid for by the patient. Language and cultural understanding seem to be a big barrier in general for access to health care and this has a huge impact on how people experience Dutch health institutions.

Language problems appear to be at the root of many misunderstandings between clients and doctors. Doctors in asylum seeker centres need to work with interpreters, in hospitals there are often interpreters as well, but in general, doctors usually do not have a budget to bring in interpreters. In that case people are asked to bring someone who can interpret for them, which obviously is not ideal. The lack of Somali health-care workers was pointed out several times as a problem. Focus group participants reported

¹⁴¹ Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, *Naleving normen nieuwe zorgmodel voor asielzoekers verder verbeterd en grotendeels op orde. Vervolgonderzoek 2011/2012* (Compliance with norms new health care model for asylum seekers has been further improved and are now largely conform model. Follow up study 2011/2012). Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport/Health Care Inspection, The Hague, 2012.

¹⁴² Doctors of the World, *Access to health care for vulnerable groups in the European Union in 2012. An overview of the condition of persons excluded from health care systems in the EU*, Doctors of the World, 2012.

that they often feel misunderstood by Dutch health practitioners and not taken seriously, which can result in anger and frustration.

I once had difficulty with making it to the bathroom. The doctor told me I had to walk a lot, drink water and then it will disappear. But I wanted antibiotics. That is what my doctor in Somalia always gave me, but he did not want to give it to me. So I got angry and upset. Later, when I went to see a doctor with an immigrant background who explained to me why it is not healthy to take so many antibiotics I understood. (38-year-old man, seven years in the Netherlands)

Miscommunication and lack of understanding can be dangerous. A Somali woman in the discussions remembered how her neighbour was complaining about a serious headache. When she went to see her doctor he recommended she drink water, take painkillers and to try to go for a walk in the park every day.

Because she sits at home with a lot of children and she does not work they think headaches are caused by stress and isolation, but she was in real pain. My husband and I, we were really worried. A couple of weeks later she died from a brain tumour. (43-year-old woman, mother of three children, 13 years in the Netherlands)

An expert, a Somali sexologist and medical doctor in psychiatry, confirmed the need for more information about the Dutch health-care system, better cultural understanding and more time to listen to the patient and take them seriously.

There is a real lack of understanding here in the Netherlands when it comes to Somalis' background. Dutch practitioners often say that they apply the same rules for everyone. You could have this strategy, but then you are only targeting the extremely well-integrated. There are people, like for example elderly who sit at home, who do not speak the language and who do not behave as Dutch. With this policy they are excluded from health care ... Besides there are issues which are difficult to discuss, take for example incontinency or vaginitis. Somali women will not tell their doctor, if they ask to see a specialist this may not be because they do not trust the doctor but just because they want to talk in private about this with a specialist. It is important to take more time, listen to the patient and to take them seriously.¹⁴³

When Somalis do not feel welcome or understood by Dutch health-care workers they may look for alternative solutions. Imams play an important role in curing people in the Somali culture.

If someone develops mental illness it may be interpreted in a traditional way. So rather than calling the hospital or the psychiatrist, they may opt for a Koran

¹⁴³ Interview with Suaad Abdulrehman, Psychiatrist specialising in sexology, Amsterdam, 3 April 2013.

reading. The imam will read the Koran to this person to calm him/her down and it may work for a while, but it is no long-term solution.¹⁴⁴

Sometimes children with mental health or other problems are sent back to Somalia because their parents do not trust the Dutch care system and fear that the problems will only become worse in the unfamiliar Dutch context. In 2012 the Dutch Federation of Refugee Organisations (VON) conducted research on the use of mental health care organisations by refugees in Amsterdam. One of its recommendations was that refugees' mental health in the four big cities of the Netherlands (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht) should be monitored because they are vulnerable and may have special needs.

8.3 Initiatives to Improve Access to Health Care and Social Services

Aside from the regular mental health care centres, there are some intercultural care initiatives which merit attention. In Amsterdam there is a branch of I-Psy, a centre for intercultural psychiatry. It offers specialised and easily accessible help to people with psychological or psychiatric problems that are often related to migration and changes in culture, social relations and living circumstances. The specialists often belong to ethnic minorities themselves and clients have the opportunity to receive services in Turkish, Arab, Spanish, Portuguese, English, Dari, Farsi and recently Polish. The treatments aim to be respectful of the cultural background and religious convictions of the clients. According to a Somali psychologist, Somalis do not frequently use the services of I-Psy because there are no Somali specialists working there; the main target groups are Turkish and Moroccans.

As long as there are only two Somali doctors in the Netherlands it will be difficult to set up a specialist group, but who knows for the future? I know some good female Somali students who are about to graduate.¹⁴⁵

The need for more Somali intermediaries in order to improve access to (mental) health care institutions has also been pointed out by others, like Pharos, the National Knowledge and Advisory Centre on Migrants, Refugees and Health Care Issues.¹⁴⁶

8.4 Female Genital Mutilation

Somali women face one specific health problem: female genital mutilation (FGM), also known as female circumcision or female genital cutting. The World Health

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Suaad Abdulrehman, Psychiatrist specialising in sexology, Amsterdam, 3 April 2013.

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Psychiatrist specialising in sexology, Amsterdam, 3 April 2013.

¹⁴⁶ A. Mehraz, S. Halame, S. Gaale and S. Abdurehman, *Geef me raad. Handboek deskundigheidsbevordering geestelijke gezondheid Somaliers voor GGZ professionals* (Please advise me. Handbook for skills advancement of mental health care to Somalis for mental care professionals). Pharos Foundation, Utrecht, 2009.

Organisation (WHO) defines FGM as "all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons."¹⁴⁷ The practice came to the Netherlands in the 1990s, with immigration from countries where FGM is practised, including Somalia. At the moment it is estimated that there are around 30,000 women with FGM living in the Netherlands. Most of them are from Somalia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Eritrea or Kurdish Iraq. In the reception centres 35 percent of all women have undergone FGM, most of whom fall within the reproductive age. The situation requires discussion among doctors and other health-care workers.¹⁴⁸

Activities against FGM in the Netherlands started with short-term projects aimed at breaking the taboo through awareness raising, education and the development of expertise in dealing with FGM. In 1993 the Dutch government officially declared all forms of female genital mutilation as intolerable and forbidden in the Netherlands. A policy was designed where awareness raising, prevention as well as criminalisation were included as means to combat the practice of FGM. Since 2005 the government has been under an increasing sense of urgency to find a way to put an end to this custom and the State Secretary for Health, Welfare and Sport has continuously put FGM high on the political agenda in the Netherlands.

FGM is treated as a very serious and damaging form of child abuse. It is prosecutable under general criminal legislation with a maximum term of 12 years' imprisonment or a maximum fine of €76,000.¹⁴⁹ If FGM is carried out by one of the parents, the prison term can be increased by one-third. In cases where the parents arrange the procedure, pay or provide means that will be used for FGM, or assist during FGM, they are liable as well. On top of that children from risk countries are closely watched by health institutions and parents are informed about the criminalisation of FGM even upon arrival when claiming asylum. The risk of FGM, however, remains high when families visit their home country. Estimates of the number of girls who have the operation in their country of origin are between 40 and 50 girls a year for all children in the Netherlands coming from risk countries.¹⁵⁰

Many initiatives have been taken to train Somali people to raise awareness and conduct education on FGM. Recent research shows that there has been a shift in mentality because of awareness campaigns on health concerns (and because the ban is strictly maintained).¹⁵¹ Dutch medical practitioners also seem to have developed a better understanding of what FGM is, they show more respect for the person rather than

¹⁴⁷ See <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs241/en> (accessed 14 March 2014).

¹⁴⁸ M. Exterkate, *Female Genital Mutilation in the Netherlands. Prevalence, incidents and determinants*, Pharos, National Knowledge and Advisory Centre on Migrants, Refugees and Health Care Issues, Utrecht, 2013 (hereafter, Exterkate, *Female Genital Mutilation in the Netherlands*).

¹⁴⁹ Sections 300–304, 307, 308 of the penal code.

¹⁵⁰ Exterkate, *Female Genital Mutilation in the Netherlands*.

¹⁵¹ Exterkate, *Female Genital Mutilation in the Netherlands*.

being shocked, and they are better equipped to help women who may have complications in childbirth.

I give training to Somali on FGM, but of course, not every Somali attends these sessions. I really do see improvements, compared to 15 years ago. Women developed a different attitude. We are not there yet, but the situation is much better nowadays. Also medical practitioners seem to realise what FGM is about.¹⁵²

Nevertheless, there are still pregnant Somali women who do not seek medical attention although they know they have medical problems, because they are too ashamed. Increased attention is now being paid to the need for psychological care for women with FGM, and since 2010, a number of projects have been implemented, for example research into the psychological, social and relational consequences of FGM,¹⁵³ developing a model protocol medical care for women and girls with FGM and training of midwives as FGM advisors to help with consequent problems with childbirths.

A particularly successful approach was a programme which was introduced in 2006 with an integrative preventive chain approach (*geïntegreerde preventieve ketenbenadering*), in which the Department of Health worked with Pharos, the Federation of Somali Associations in the Netherlands (FSAN) and VON (a national refugee organisation) to fight FGM. One of the strengths of the programme was that various ethnic groups worked together and that migrant organisations and key persons were actively involved in the implementation of national policy. The programme has been evaluated and improved since then, including getting more medical and mental support for circumcised women.

8.5 Tuberculosis

Another specific health risk for Somalis is tuberculosis. The Association of Community Health Services (GGGD) in the Netherlands recently started a project on tuberculosis in collaboration with Pharos. Somalis tend to suffer from tuberculosis quite often, which obviously is a health risk for the whole society. The project tries to better monitor recent arrivals who often drop out of sight after their first health check. The low level of health care in asylum seekers centres, detention centres and the lack of access to health care for undocumented migrants plays an important role here as well.

¹⁵² Interview with Suaad Abdulrehman, Psychiatrist specialising in sexology, Amsterdam, 3 April 2013.

¹⁵³ E. Vloeberghs, J. Knipscheer, A. van der Kwaak, Z. Naleie and M. van der Muisenbergh, *Veiled pain. A study of the psychological, social and relational consequences of female genital mutilation*, Pharos, Utrecht 2011.

8.6 The Relationship between Somali Parents and Their Children

Certain differences between parents and children were noted in section 5 on education. One of the issues that was raised very often in the focus group discussions and expert interviews was the growing gap between parents and children, and the urgent need for both policymakers and the Somali community to address it.

Most problems still have to come among Somali: that will happen when these guys, the newcomers, will get children. There are huge parenting problems in this community, and you will get clashes when the children go “Dutch,” in language, practices and culture. Also everything remains behind closed doors, they would like to solve problems themselves, but do not always succeed.¹⁵⁴

Several studies have observed conflicts between parents and children, and offer various explanations.¹⁵⁵ Parents see that children learn Dutch quickly, and so are more open to Dutch society. The parents fear being marginalised and that their children will no longer fit into Somali culture. Somali parents “sometimes fall back on traditional parental values to keep their children from behaviour they see as a sign of moral decay”.¹⁵⁶ Table 11 presents an overview of parental values, according to Dutch and Somali parents, in order of importance. Overall, Somali parental values are strongly guided by Islam.

It should be stressed that apart from anything else, the background of Somalis, marked by war, trauma and stress, as well as insecurity about the relatives that are still in Somalia, make parenting more difficult.

The role of the father is often mentioned as parenting problem in the Netherlands. Traditionally, fathers play an important role in Somali society, not so much in day-to-day parenting practice, but by representing family authority and the role of breadwinner. In the Netherlands, this role is changing, as due to unemployment they are no longer the source of financial support. Also, enforcing obedience, making their authority known by submission and physical aggression are strongly condemned in the Netherlands, which leaves men with empty hands and decreases their status in the family.¹⁵⁷

There are a number of single-parent Somali families, headed by women who raise their children on their own, without support from male family members. The boys assume

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Dutch Council for Refugees/Amsterdam.

¹⁵⁵ T. Pels and M. de Gruijter (eds), *Vluchtelingengezinnen en integratie. Opvoeding en ondersteuning in Iraanse, Irakese, Somalische en Afghaanse gezinnen in Nederland* (Refugee families and integration. Parenting support for Iranian, Iraqi, Somali and Afghan families in the Netherlands), Van Goesum, Assen, 2005 (hereafter, Pels and de Gruijter, *Vluchtelingengezinnen*); Tuk, *You don't want to lose your child*; M. Bouwmeester, M. Dekovic and H. Groenendaal, *Opvoeding in Somalische Vluchtelingengezinnen in Nederland*, University of Utrecht, Van Gorcum, Assen, 1998.

¹⁵⁶ Tuk, *You don't want to lose your child*, p. 15.

¹⁵⁷ Tuk, *You don't want to lose your child*, p. 17.

they have to be independent, and mothers do not know how to control their children.¹⁵⁸

Table 11. Parental values of native-born Dutch and Somali parents

Native-born Dutch parents	Somali parents
Sense of responsibility	Good grades, high education
Caring for others	Obedience
Making independent judgements	Being civilised, polite, showing good behaviour
Good manners	Respect
Tolerance	Taking care of oneself
Good results in school	Intelligence
Being helpful	Marriage
Respect the elderly	Kindness
Wanting to know why things happen as they do	Preserving culture and language
Diligence and being ambitious	Helpful and caring to parents
Obedying parents	Caring for others
Intelligence	Having good relationships with others
	Making independent decisions

Source: B. Tuk, in collaboration with K. Mahamed and A. Baabbi. *You Don't Want to Lose Your Child. Parental Support of Somali in the Netherlands*, Pharos, Utrecht, 2010, p. 15.

Parents are aware of the need to adjust their parenting practices to Dutch society and values in order to support their children. On the other hand, they do not always agree with these Dutch values, such as assertiveness, the lack of respect for the elderly and sexual freedom. Merging Somali parental values with Dutch values appears to be difficult, and creates tensions between parents and their children.

You live in three different worlds: the Islamic, the Somali and the Western, and these are sometimes hard to combine. My mother would like me to marry a Somali girl, and when I had a relationship with a Dutch girl she did not really approve. (23-year-old male student)

Parents are ambitious, they want their children to study, to reach a good position in society. However, they are not always able to guide children in this process, and are disappointed when their children fall short in their eyes, such as by dropping out of school, or achieving a lower educational level than expected (see also section 5 on education). According to respondents, some Somali parents send their children to Somalia to reacquaint them with that culture. Others suggested that this is a more common practice in the UK than in the Netherlands.

¹⁵⁸ Tuk, *You don't want to lose your child*.

Sending a child to Somalia is also seen as a response to fears of losing their child to the Child Welfare Council, who would place the child in foster care. The fear that Dutch authorities will take away their children was addressed several times in the focus group discussions. This suspicion of state agencies, which illustrates the overall distrust in state authorities, common among Somalis and caused by the problematic relationship between the state and civil society in Somalia, leads to distrust and frustration and makes communication with children's services more complex.

Our three-months-old baby had some problems with his arm, he was crying a lot, and when we took him to the hospital they said his shoulder was dislocated. They were highly suspicious, we had to answer all kind of questions and remained under supervision for two years. (38-year-old woman)

Parenting practices between Somalia and the Netherlands differ greatly, and Somali parents often use an authoritarian parenting style. This was also expressed in the focus group discussions and expert interviews.¹⁵⁹

There are a lot of parental problems, Somalis who arrived recently in the Netherlands are vulnerable, they come out of a situation of war, are traumatised, and do not have peace in their heads. For these people, it is very difficult to spend time, and attention, on their children. (47-year-old man)

Some Somali parents shout against their children, very loud, "Do this, don't do that," and when their children do not directly obey, they give them a slap. (37-year-old woman)

Serious suspicions of child abuse and neglect can be reported to the Advice and Reporting Desk for Child Abuse (Advies- en Meldpunt Kindermishandeling (AMK). During the roundtable meeting it was stressed that the fear in the Somali community of the institutions that deal with child support is even turning into a self-fulfilling prophecy. When regular meetings with consultation agencies are, for example, avoided by Somali families, suspicion of these families increases and may even result in children being put under the supervision of family guardians.

8.7 Initiatives in Parenting Support

In 2012, the Child Welfare Bureau Amsterdam (*Bureau Jeugdzorg Agglomeratie Amsterdam*, BJAA) introduced a family-oriented approach, in which the focus is no longer only the child, but the family as a whole. Every family is supported by one family manager. Results thus far are promising: the number of children taken into care (*ondertoezichtstelling*, OTS) is at the lowest level since 2005. Since the start in 2012,

¹⁵⁹ Interviews with Fatumo Farah, Himilo Relief and Development Association (HIRDA), Amsterdam, 5 March 2013; Frea Haker, Pharos, Utrecht, 28 February 2013; Shukri Said, IFTIN, Amsterdam, 13 February 2013; Ali Ware, Somali Association for Amsterdam and Surrounding Area (*Somalische Vereniging Amsterdam en Omgeving*, SOMVAO), Amsterdam, 20 February 2013.

the number of OTS decreased by 32 percent, and the number of children who were placed away from home by 39 percent. According to the BJAA, clients say they have more confidence in the future because of the support of the BJAA.

According to the BJAA, the approach could work out well for Somali families, as they are visited at home, which reduces the physical burden of coming to the office. Also, by taking the family as the focal point, a more integrated approach, other problems are tackled as well. Finally, families are no longer confronted with a huge variety of different offices and officers, but with only one case manager. This helps to build up a relationship.¹⁶⁰

Another interesting initiative, a methodology for parental support for Somalis, has been developed by Interlokaal, a local organisation in the city of Nijmegen, that works in the field of social and legal services, NIM Social Work (in Nijmegen) and Pharos. The focus of the course is on the fathers and provides skills to make them more aware of their position. According to the initiators, the strength of the course is the ethnic background of the trainers, who are a Somali and a Moroccan, since they speak the same language and recognise the main problems Somalis are facing.

IFTIN, a Somali women's organisation in Amsterdam run by six Somali women also organises training on parental support, aimed at single women. The organisation's founder, Shukri Said, is a trained pedagogist who sees parental support as one of the key problems emerging within the Somali community at the moment.

In 2005 we started IFTIN. At that time a lot of Somali families were leaving for the United Kingdom. Most of the time the man, the provider of the family, went first. These men were highly educated and not satisfied with their situation, living on benefits was not why they had come to the Netherlands. The Somali women who were left behind with their children did not have a lot of support at that time. There was no place for them to go to. So we provided for that. We noticed a lot of problems emerging within the Somali community as a result of parenting in between two cultures, in a situation where the father is often absent and when there is a lack of information about what Dutch institutions can do for you.¹⁶¹

Finally, a project initiated by SONPPCAN focuses on pedagogical support to parents to prevent child abuse and neglect, through workshops dealing with educating parents about children's rights.

¹⁶⁰ Personal communication with Robert Thijssen, Child Welfare Bureau Amsterdam (*Bureau Jeugdzorg Agglomeratie Amsterdam*, BJAA), 4 October 2013.

¹⁶¹ Interview with Shukri Said, IFTIN, Amsterdam, 13 February 2013.

9. POLICING AND SECURITY

This section considers the experiences of Somalis in relation to policing and criminal justice and addresses anti-discrimination policies. Discrimination in the workplace was discussed in the section on employment, but this is only one dimension of discrimination experienced by Somalis, as it is part of their everyday life: they also experience discrimination in public areas, on public transport for instance, and when they meet friends and relatives. This section documents Somalis' experiences with the procedures of policing and profiling. It also discusses Somalis' involvement in crime, with a focus on Dutch counterterrorism legislation, because this is a growing concern and one of Amsterdam's policy priorities. The section finishes with an examination of the recent ban on khat in the Netherlands and raises some questions about the possible effects.

9.1 Somalis' Experiences with Policing and Profiling

During a focus group meeting with 11 young Somali men under 25 it became clear that most of the young men felt the police looks at skin colour and clothes and that being both black and Muslim often results in more suspicion. Many related how they were often stopped for no reason and questioned with the purpose of profiling. One 19-year-old man gave a telling example:

I have been stopped and searched many times, once I was even put in jail for no reason. I was cycling on a second-hand bike and stopped. The police officer asked me how I got that bike and whether I had a receipt on me. I told him I had the receipt at home. Then I was taken to the police station because I had a big mouth and needed to "cool down". My parents had to come to show the receipt to the police officer. It was summer holiday and I was imprisoned for four hours. Later they came to apologise, a bike had been stolen and they thought it was the bike I was riding. In that case it really makes you wonder whether you are arrested because you are black.

Crime and the fear of crime have become important components of the governmental policy and the criminal justice system has become increasingly focused on the prevention of crime.¹⁶² This has resulted in a need for identifying risky persons or groups of persons, which puts a great deal of discretionary power in the hands of law enforcement officers. The police, for instance, work with images of risky groups and selective profiles. People who fit the selective profile will be stopped and searched

¹⁶² J.P. van der Leun and M.A.H. van der Woude, "Ethnic Profiling in the Netherlands? A Reflection on Expanding Preventive Powers, Ethnic Profiling and a Changing Social and Political Context," *Policing and Society* 21 (4) (2011), pp. 444–455.

earlier than others.¹⁶³ The police have carried out targeted stop and search operations, questioning the identities of specific groups, such as West Africans.¹⁶⁴ These practices bear the risk that such powers may be carried out (in part) on the basis of generalisations concerning race, ethnicity, religion or nationality instead of on the basis of individual behaviour and/or objective evidence. Moreover, as the Open Society Justice Initiative concluded in an extensive report on ethnic profiling in the European Union, ethnic profiling may contribute to feelings of polarisation and stigmatisation among those who are subjected to it.¹⁶⁵

The supposed relationship between ethnicity and crime and antisocial behaviour has progressively become a political issue in the Netherlands, resulting in extreme political statements, such as the calls for “the deportation of convicted criminals with Moroccan nationality” and “special stop and searches for Antillean youths in Rotterdam”.¹⁶⁶

In a focus group on policing, three out of 11 young Somali men pointed out that it would be helpful if more Somali would work for the police. They could play an important role in gaining access to Somali youngsters as well as instructing and informing their colleagues about cultural and social aspects that are important for understanding and interacting with Somalis. Moreover, they could be role models: the police in Amsterdam is diverse, but there appear to be no Somali police officers. It would be good to become more visible. The other participants of this focus group, especially ones who had bad experiences with the police, stressed their mistrust of the police and said that they would never identify themselves with such an organisation. During the roundtable it was stressed that the negative image of the police could be based on experiences from the past and that it is extremely important to bring the police and the Somali community into conversation with each other. Within the wider Somali community, profiling is considered a real problem, not only by the police in Amsterdam, but also at the airport and while travelling abroad. Immigration officers were often mentioned as officials who profile and make Somalis’ lives complicated. One 25-year-old man who is pursuing higher education in Amsterdam recounted:

At airports I am always the one who has to show his passport. Even when I travel with a group of, let’s say 15 friends, it is always me they pick out. I often say to my Dutch friends, watch out, they will ask me and they say no that cannot be

¹⁶³ S. Cankaya, *De controle van marsmannetjes en ander schorriemorrie: het beslissingsproces tijdens proactief politiewerk* (The Control of Martians and Other Scum: the Decision-making Process during Proactive Police Work), Boom Lemma, The Hague, 2012.

¹⁶⁴ National Ombudsman, *Onderzoek inval vreemdelingenpolitie in Amsterdams café* (Study on the raid of the Aliens Police in an Amsterdam café), National Ombudsman, The Hague, 2009.

¹⁶⁵ Open Society Justice Initiative, *Ethnic profiling in the European Union: pervasive, ineffective and discriminatory*, Open Society Institute, New York, 2009.

¹⁶⁶ R.P.W. Jennissen, *Criminaliteit, leeftijd en etniciteit: Over de afwijkende leeftijdsspecifieke criminaliteitscijfers van in Nederland verblijvende Mar kanen en Antillianen* (Criminality, Age and Ethnicity. On the Diverging Age-specific Criminality Figures of Moroccans and Antilleans in the Netherlands), Boom Legal, The Hague, 2009.

true, but it is always true! And then they are shocked and I think, well, that is my life.

9.2 Somalis' Involvement in Crime

A 2003 study on criminality among ethnic groups found that some groups in the Netherlands appeared to be overrepresented in crime figures, including Somalis.¹⁶⁷ Their number is relatively high, but it must be stressed that in absolute numbers crime among Somalis is a minor problem.¹⁶⁸ There are around 800 police cases with Somali suspects a year in the Netherlands, the majority being men. Of these, 34 percent lead to conviction and 15 percent result in imprisonment.¹⁶⁹ The majority of Somali offenders are young, and half of them are convicted for offences against property.¹⁷⁰ In general, the crimes that Somalis are most often convicted of in the Netherlands are offences against property, criminal damage to property and violence.¹⁷¹

In the focus group discussion, responses about involvement in crime often included a comparison with the experience of Somalis in the UK.

If I look at Somali youngsters here in the Netherlands, in comparison to the United Kingdom, I think they are doing fine. There they talk with knives and they have a real problem with gangs. (21-year-old man, with a Dutch passport)

One of the participants in the focus group on crime explained that he had seen some of his friends end up involved in crime at a young age because there was nothing else for them to do.

When I was 13 we all went to Quran lessons together, all very peaceful, later we went to play soccer together. At that time there were many places where we could play for free. But then Somali organisations took over and started to organise events and they told us you shut up and pay, or you leave. So the boys who could not afford it they ended up in the streets. They started smoking weed because they were bored and then later I saw them on TV, on "*Opsporing Verzocht*" (Most Wanted). (18-year-old man in higher education, with a Dutch passport)

¹⁶⁷ Kromhout and M. van San, *Schimmige werelden, nieuwe etnische groepen en jeugdcriminaliteit*.

¹⁶⁸ This is also confirmed by a 2011 internal document of the Rotterdam-Rijnmond area police, where about 2,300 Somalis reside. According to this note, the criminality picture of Somalis is fairly stable. Registered criminality and problems caused by Somalis even declined a bit in the period January 2008–September 2011.

¹⁶⁹ Klaver et al., *Somaliërs in Nederland*. Again, there are no specific data available on the representation of Somalis in Amsterdam's crime figures, probably because the group is too small. Amsterdam has the largest number of crimes per 1,000 inhabitants in the Netherlands.

¹⁷⁰ Klaver et al., *Somaliërs in Nederland*.

¹⁷¹ Kromhout and van San, *Schimmige werelden, nieuwe etnische groepen en jeugdcriminaliteit*.

Experts point out that unaccompanied minors are a specific risk group when it comes to crime in the Somali community and that their number is high. These minors have come to the Netherlands on their own, and because they lack any type of family structure or social control, there is a greater risk that they may become involved in crime. Other risk factors mentioned are a poor education, little participation at the labour market, and loss of status and financial problems.¹⁷² The situation in Somalia where there is a lack of authority and the rule of law has broken down is also an important risk factor.¹⁷³ The resulting chaos and anarchy have been the norm for most new arrivals from Somalia;¹⁷⁴ almost everyone suffers from war trauma and many have been raised in broken families. Moreover, they often have irrational expectations of what life in the West will bring them and are disappointed and frustrated.¹⁷⁵

9.3 Anti-discrimination and Counterterrorism Legislation in Amsterdam

After the murder of Theo van Gogh in 2004, the Amsterdam municipality initiated the action programme “Wij Amsterdammers” (We the citizens of Amsterdam), which aimed to develop a stronger shared identity among people in the city. One of its pillars was equal treatment and inclusion, in recognition of the fact that feelings of discrimination, especially among Muslims, have been growing in the last years.

After the murder of van Gogh anti-discrimination policies were implemented. Before that time it all depended on the personal interest of an MP, now there really is a framework in which we can take concrete measures.¹⁷⁶

Anti-discrimination policies in Amsterdam were formalised in this programme, which was also reflected in public campaigns that were organised to encourage people to report discrimination to the Amsterdam Anti-discrimination Bureau (*Meldpunt Discriminatie Regio Amsterdam*, MDRA). Nevertheless, the number of complaints from Somalis in Amsterdam is surprisingly low: only five official complaints have ever been made.¹⁷⁷ There might be a problem with the visibility of the Amsterdam Anti-discrimination Bureau among Somalis. Another legal obstacle is that refugees are excluded from equal-treatment policies because they fall under the Aliens Law. In 2010

¹⁷² Klaver et al., *Somaliërs in Nederland*.

¹⁷³ Kromhout and van San, *Schimmige werelden, nieuwe etnische groepen en jeugdcriminaliteit*.

¹⁷⁴ Moors et al., *Voedingsbodem voor radicalisering bij kleine etnische groepen in Nederland*.

¹⁷⁵ Moors et al., *Voedingsbodem voor radicalisering bij kleine etnische groepen in Nederland*.

¹⁷⁶ Interview with Jessica Silversmith, Amsterdam Anti-discrimination Bureau, Amsterdam, January 2013.

¹⁷⁷ Interview with Jessica Silversmith, Amsterdam Anti-discrimination Bureau, Amsterdam, 18 February 2013.

most of the action plans were discontinued, or as the city council prefers to put it, they were mainstreamed into general policy.¹⁷⁸

The only action plan that was kept separate was the plan for fighting radicalisation. Before Van Gogh's murder, the municipality of Amsterdam had a general counterterrorism policy, but when it emerged that Van Gogh's killer had been flagged as a potential problem even before the murder, the need for a different policy, more oriented towards individuals, became clear. In 2004 a budget of €5 million, the largest budget of all major cities in the Netherlands, was apportioned to counterterrorism in the city.¹⁷⁹

Part of this money went to research commissioned by the Amsterdam City Council into the motivations for radicalisation among Muslim youth in Amsterdam.¹⁸⁰ This study showed a need for greater attention to integration and social cohesion as important elements of fighting radicalisation.

Another concrete measure that has been taken in the city of Amsterdam to counter radicalisation was the installation of Registration Point Radicalisation (*Meld en Adviespunt Radicalisering*). This point was established in 2005 and is run by the city council, in collaboration with the police. Professionals can make a report when they are worried about a person. The city council has a network that consists mainly of youth workers, health-care workers and teachers who are known and trusted in neighbourhoods and communities. The city council trains these "good people" in order to promote interventions by this kind of professional rather than by the police who may only trigger more distrust. Special attention has also been placed on breaking down women's social isolation and supporting people with radical sympathies to help them become more resilient against negative influences and radical ideas.

On average 25 reports of radicalisation are made every year at the Registration Point Radicalisation: 25 percent of these reports are considered benign, 30 percent serious and all the rest are a grey area.

Some reports are ideologically driven, but not problematic or they are a lot of problem but there is no ideology involved.¹⁸¹

In 2012 Amsterdam's anti-radicalisation policy was evaluated. The main conclusion was that the city council should take an even more risk-based, individual approach

¹⁷⁸ Interview with Pieter Jan van Slooten, policymaker on anti-radicalisation, City Council of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, 4 March, 2013.

¹⁷⁹ Interview with Simon Bontekoning, policymaker on counter terrorism, municipality of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, 4 March 2013.

¹⁸⁰ M. Slootman and J. Tillie (2006), *Processen van radicalisering, waarom sommige Amsterdamse moslims radicaal worden* (Processes of radicalisation: why some Muslims in Amsterdam turn radical), Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies (IMES), Amsterdam, 2006 (hereafter, Slootman and Tillie, *Processen van radicalisering*).

¹⁸¹ Interview with a policymaker on anti-radicalisation, City Council of Amsterdam.

than they already do. The focus on individual cases and the collaboration with specialised community figures is considered a best practice. The city budget for counterterrorism has shrunk, however. From 2013 onwards there will be between €700,000 and €800,000 available from the city council and no more money from the state.¹⁸²

Counterterrorism policy in Amsterdam is very much aimed at Moroccans. The city council has acknowledged that it does not have strong connections with the Somali community and that they should invest more in their network. On the other hand, they also observe that Somalis are not a big problem when it comes to radicalisation.

There has been one case in an asylum seekers centre in Dronten where a Somali man was expelled to the United States because he was suspected of terrorism and one Somali from The Hague has been arrested in Kenya. But other than that there are no real cases in the Netherlands with Somalis. It is, however, a group that is visible in terms of negative publicity, pirates, terrorists and female genital mutilation. These are all heavy images laid on a community.¹⁸³

9.4 Radicalisation among Somalis

In 2010, with the increase of power of Al Shabaab, the Secret Service (AIVD) named Somalia and Yemen as new territories that presented a terrorist threat. In the same year, 12 Somalis were arrested by the police in Rotterdam because they were suspected of preparing a terrorist attack. All of them were released without charge and some of them have now received compensation.¹⁸⁴ According to a study on radicalisation in the Netherlands in general, there is no concrete evidence for Somali involvement in extremist networks in the Netherlands related to al-Qaeda.¹⁸⁵ Newcomers are seen as a risk group because they might have been in contact with radical organisations in Somalia affiliated to al-Qaeda. Experts point out that the young Somali men who have recently immigrated to the Netherlands often left Somalia to escape from such groups.

Somali youth who have been raised in the Netherlands may be susceptible to radicalisation. A study concluded that the following factors may contribute to a higher susceptibility to radicalisation: the deprived socio-economic situation of Somali families in the Netherlands (financial, educational, as well as living and working

¹⁸² Interview with Pieter Jan van Slooten, policymaker on anti-radicalisation, City Council of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, 4 March, 2013.

¹⁸³ Interview with Pieter Jan van Slooten, policymaker on anti-radicalisation, City Council of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, 4 March, 2013.

¹⁸⁴ The size of the compensation is unknown, although some sources state that the amount of money must be sizeable, since it is kept confidential: see <http://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2011/01/14/snelle-schadevergoeding-voor-somali-ernstig-excuus> (accessed 14 March 2014). The Somali community responded quickly to these arrests. FSAN organised meetings to discuss the case and several Somalis expressed their disbelief and concern in the media.

¹⁸⁵ Moors et al., *Voedingsbodem voor radicalisering bij kleine etnische groepen in Nederland*.

conditions); the enormous burden of war trauma and psychological problems among Somalis; and youngsters who have been brought up in unstable families and need religious identity building.¹⁸⁶ Even though the risks are there, it is important to stress that there are still very few cases known of violent radicalisation among Somalis in the Netherlands.

9.5 Khat

Khat is a leaf-based drug that when chewed releases juices that act as natural stimulants, which is popular in the Somali community. For a long time, the Netherlands and the UK were the only European countries where the import of khat was legal. The Netherlands was functioning as a hub to transport khat imported from the Horn of Africa to other European countries. In some local communities there have been nuisance reports around the distribution of khat, such as in Eindhoven, Tilburg and recently Uithoorn where khat arrives and is distributed three times a week. The police have sometimes banned khat because of these concerns.

The use of khat was frequently mentioned in both our focus group discussions and the interviews with experts:

The consequences of khat are very serious. I fully support a complete ban, as khat results in serious psychological, health, social and economic problems.¹⁸⁷

Khat is a serious problem in this community. I agree with the ban, as it is getting more expensive, you can no longer use it every day. (34-year-old man)

In January 2013 the government introduced a ban on khat, and decided to criminalise khat as a drug. The effects of using khat on Somali communities is high, as khat is often mentioned as one of the possible explanations for why young Somalis may get involved in crime. When families are destabilised, for example because of a parent's khat addiction, the risk is higher that young people will end up in the street.

There are concerns that the drug can cause psychosis or trigger schizophrenia and is the main cause for many social as well as economic problems in Somali families. However, the government cited noise, litter and the perceived public threat posed by men who chew khat as the most important reasons for outlawing it. Some advocate a more nuanced approach to khat use:

We should not discuss the use of khat here, in this discussion, the use of marijuana and visiting a prostitute are also legal activities in the Netherlands, so why bother with the use of khat? (47-year-old man)

¹⁸⁶ Moors et al., *Voedingsbodem voor radicalisering bij kleine etnische groepen in Nederland*.

¹⁸⁷ Interview with Suaad Abdulrehman, Psychiatrist specialising in sexology, Amsterdam, 3 April 2013.

Everybody supported this ban on khat, even the more leftist parties. But when you talk with Somalis on khat ... they consider it as a social activity, like having a cup of coffee is for us. Through this ban, you take away one of their traditions. Of course, there are cases of excessive use, but when you talk with the Trimbos Institute (a centre of expertise on mental health and addiction) they tell you that real addicts will get their khat anyway, anyhow.¹⁸⁸

It is uncertain what will happen as a result of the ban. It is very unlikely that khat will disappear from the Netherlands and people will stop using it; on the other hand, when it becomes less accessible and more expensive, fewer people might use it. City authorities should be prepared for a larger criminal involvement in this specific drug trade as long as it is no longer legal.

¹⁸⁸ Telephone interview with Rob Pieterse, journalist, Utrecht, 3 April 2013.

10. PARTICIPATION AND CITIZENSHIP

In this section, first the procedure for acquiring Dutch citizenship is described. The meaning of citizenship to Somalis in Amsterdam is explored: which factors influence their feeling of citizenship? In the third part political participation is discussed, through voting behaviour in local and national elections and membership of political parties. In the following part, the focus is on civil participation through Somali community organisations. Again the section ends with initiatives being taken to promote participation and citizenship among Somali in Amsterdam.

10.1 Citizenship in the Netherlands

To become eligible for citizenship, people have to meet a set of criteria:

- be aged 18 years or older;
- hold a permanent resident permit or a valid residence permit with a non-temporary reason for stay, e.g. family formation and/or reunion;
- have five years of continuous residence in the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao, or Sint Maarten with a valid residence permit prior to the application date. Residency under a temporary reason of stay (e.g. study) is counted in those five years. There are a number of exceptions to this rule;
- be sufficiently integrated in Dutch society and be able to read, write, speak and understand Dutch. This must normally be proved by taking a naturalisation test. Successful completion of an eligible civic integration course is an alternative.
- have no criminal record;
- take an oath of his or her adherence to the values of the Dutch state;
- give up current nationality (with certain exemptions, such as refugees).

Only Dutch nationals can vote in general elections. But since 1985 all third-country nationals in the Netherlands have the right to vote and to be elected¹⁸⁹ in municipal

¹⁸⁹ FORUM, “Politieke participatie van allochtonen” (Political participation of foreign-born), FORUM Factsheet, November 2010, 23 March 2013, at <http://www.forum.nl/Portals/0/publicaties/Factsheet%20Politieke%20Participatie.pdf> (accessed 25 March 2014) (hereafter, FORUM, “Politieke participatie van allochtonen”).

elections, provided that they have resided in the Netherlands for at least five years.¹⁹⁰ An important reason to introduce voting rights to migrants was the potential contribution to integration, as migrants would read party programmes, become familiar with political parties and also be able to voice their opinions.¹⁹¹

The governing agreement of the 2012 VVD-PvdA coalition proposed certain amendments to the process of naturalisation and voting rights, among others by prolonging the term of residence from five years to seven years, by introducing conditional citizenship and enabling the withdrawal of Dutch citizenship. Thusfar, these amendments have not been approved.

10.2 Somali Participation and Citizenship

When asked what makes someone a Dutch citizen, the Somali respondents in the focus group discussion on participation and citizenship mentioned proficiency in Dutch, participation in society, paying taxes and respect for the law as distinguishing features of a citizen. However, some also noted that although many Somalis meet all these different criteria, they still do not consider themselves to be Dutch citizens.

I arrived here as a guest, and the host has given me the impression that I am welcome here, “on the condition that”, and that constrained me, to only participation .., The idea of citizenship has been undermined, due to all kind of factors, the PVV, etc.. You can observe that here, in the Netherlands, but also at the EU level. I am a Somali, and I will remain a Somali, and I no longer have the feeling that I can get the feeling of belonging here, of Dutch citizenship. I participate, but I am not a citizen. (46-year-old man, in the Netherlands since 1990)

Some respondents considered themselves mainly as residents: they perform all kind of roles in society, they work, live and participate, but do not feel themselves to be Dutch citizens. The lack of voting rights, which is the case for many Somalis in the Netherlands, is also identified as excluding people from the most profound notion of citizenship. Somalis who arrived in the Netherlands in the early 1990s expressed this feeling of constrained citizenship the most.

In the focus group discussions Somalis who arrived more recently believed that the UK or the United States is much more welcoming to Somalis:

¹⁹⁰ Kees Groenendijk, *Local voting rights for non-nationals in Europe: what we know and what we need to learn*, Migration Policy Institute (MPI)/Transatlantic Council on Migration, Washington, DC, 2008.

¹⁹¹ CBS, “Bijna 850 duizend mensen hebben meer dan één nationaliteit” (Almost 850,000 have more than one nationality), online magazine, 14 October 2002, www.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/themas/bevolking/publicaties/artikelen/archief/2002/2002-1063-wm.htm (accessed 3 May 2013) (hereafter, CBS, “Bijna 850 duizend mensen hebben meer dan één nationaliteit”).

I have the feeling that you are not welcome in Europe and the Netherlands, not like in the case in the USA or UK. I guess that, if I would be embraced I would definitely like to settle here. But right now it is the opposite: I do not feel embraced, welcomed, and ask myself: how does the EU see Somalis? In the USA you are considered an American after three years, while in the Netherlands, well, they always emphasise ... the difference. (28-year-old man)

This fits the trend of the early 2000s, when many Somalis migrated to the UK (see section 2), in search of better opportunities.¹⁹²

The majority of the Somalis in the Netherlands renounced their original nationality in favour of Dutch citizenship, although recognised refugees are not required to do so. This is related to the human rights situation in their country of origin. If people return to their country of origin and run into trouble there, it is easier to support them there when they have a Dutch passport. Only 700 in total Somalis in the Netherlands have Somali or a dual (Somali/Dutch) nationality, according to a CBS study in 2002.^{193, 194}

The first-generation Somalis expect that the second generation will have fewer problems in this respect:

If your host does not welcome you, then you will respond to that, that is logical. I think many Somalis do not feel like a citizen here, children will behave differently, but my generation will never be a citizen. I participate 100 percent, speak the language, respect the rules, but after 23 years I do not have the feeling “I am a Dutch citizen,” and I do not expect to get that feeling. (46-year-old man, in the Netherlands since 1990)

10.3 Participation in Politics

Political participation among Somalis differs greatly. Some people are very active at the local party level, but there are also people who never vote. Some of the respondents in the focus group discussions vote in local elections, and, when they are allowed to do so, in national elections. According to a 2009 study, half of the young Somalis interviewed did not vote in elections.¹⁹⁵ The reasons given for not voting included indifference to politics, too young to vote and not having the right to vote. When Somalis do vote, they tend to vote for the Labour Party (PvdA). These general observations are in line

¹⁹² See also Van Liempt, “And then one day they all moved to Leicester.”

¹⁹³ Moors et al., *Voedingsbodem voor radicalisering bij kleine etnische groepen in Nederland*; CBS, “Bijna 850 duizend mensen hebben meer dan één nationaliteit.”

¹⁹⁴ It is difficult to put this figure in the context of the potential number that could be Dutch citizens, by excluding those below 18 or who have been in the Netherlands for less than the required five years. Also, presumably those who left the Netherlands for the UK had Dutch citizenship.

¹⁹⁵ Compared with the voting behaviour of young people in the Netherlands in general, Somali young people tend to vote less in national elections (CBS, Statline 2013).

with studies on the political participation of migrant groups in the Netherlands.¹⁹⁶ Leftist parties are the most popular, with 80 percent of migrants voting for the Labour Party (PvdA), Socialist Party (SP), Green Left (Groen Links) and Democrats 66 (D66). Voter turnout among migrant groups in the Netherlands, which form 9 percent of the national constituents, tends to be lower – and sometimes much lower – than the native-born population (respectively 34 percent compared with 74.6 percent).¹⁹⁷ Nationally, 7.3 percent (11) of the Members of Parliament in the Rutte II government (elected in the August 2012 elections) had a migrant background, 4 percent less than the previous period. At the national level, 3 percent of all municipal councillors have a migrant background (303 in total: 163 Turks, 66 Moroccans).¹⁹⁸

Currently, there are no Somalis in Parliament,¹⁹⁹ nor in the Amsterdam City Council, and among cities with a large Somali community only one in the municipality of Delft. Direct political engagement is scarce, although one Somali interviewed volunteered for the Labour Party (PvdA) during the local elections.

I worked with the Labour Party (PvdA) in Amsterdam, during the local elections, that is my party, and at a certain moment we prepared some brochures with information on the campaign, for the Turks and the Moroccans. I proposed to make one for the Somalis as well. They replied: “How many Somali live in Amsterdam, 2,000? They don’t vote, so get off.” My party only counts the people that express their vote, not the people that never show up, who are invisible. (43-year-old man)

Participation in local policymaking is also limited, though perhaps largest among the group that arrived in the Netherlands in the early 1990s. Some people would like to make a difference, to protest against certain decisions, but face problems mobilising the Somali community.

If we want to influence policies then we should do something, we cannot always hide and say, “We are so few, so badly organised, with a nomadic life style.” Also, we cannot mention that it is their fault. We should start to organise ourselves, become member of a political party – Labour Party (PvdA) or Socialist Party (SP), or Green Lefts (Groen Links) – we should write letters, invite politicians, we cannot always remain passive ... But I do not think that I can mobilise the Somali community here, even with 27,000 Somali in the Netherlands, I cannot get 1,000. (49-year-old man)

¹⁹⁶ See FORUM, “Politieke participatie van allochtonen.”

¹⁹⁷ Forum, “Politieke participatie van allochtonen.”

¹⁹⁸ Forum, “Politieke participatie van allochtonen.”

¹⁹⁹ Ayaan Hirsi Ali is without doubt the most famous Somali politician in the Netherlands. Before she left for the United States she was in Parliament for the liberals (VVD) in the period 2003–2006.

Respondents were somewhat cynical about the opportunities for change from within the Somali community.

There are ample opportunities to participate, the problem is ours: we are too divided, we do not fully participate, are too isolated, we are involved in all kinds of issues in Somalia. (39-year-old man)

Again, Somalis are in a kind of vicious circle: too few to really make a difference, fragmented and isolated. Although they lack a policy context that enables participation, there were also observations that the Somali community never asks to be involved, they do not submit proposals for change or try to enforce participation.

There appears to be a divide between the Somalis who arrived in the Netherlands in the 1990s and the more recently arrived group. The first group expresses its concerns about the problems the newcomers are facing, but also disassociates itself from them: they are different, have a different background and are difficult to reach.

10.4 Participation in Civil Society: Somali Organisations

There are approximate 160 Somali organisations in the Netherlands, a large part of them in the Randstad area, but also quite a few in other regions, reflecting dispersion policies. According to a 2011 study, the number of Somali organisations decreased slightly in the past few years, but the density is still fairly high.²⁰⁰ The focus of many Somali organisations is on development in Somalia, instead of integration in the Netherlands. Religious organisations, the most dominant form among Moroccan and Turkish organisations in the Netherlands, are almost absent: few Somali organisations are connected to a mosque.²⁰¹ Many are, however, organised according to clan structure, although many respondents stated that they remain neutral about clans.

According to the register of the Chamber of Commerce, Amsterdam counts 12 Somali organisations.²⁰² The overwhelming majority of these are very small, volunteer organisations, led by one person and without resources to become a real player in the field of integration. Table 12 lists the most important organisations encountered during Open Society Foundations research, and provides some background on their main activities. They represent a mixture of associations, some with members (such as SOMVAO, where members contribute a small fee), and organisations without formal membership (such as HIRDA). Most organisations in Table 12 can be described as service providers, as they provide services such as conversation classes and information on parenting to their clientele, sometimes with financial support from the local or national government.

²⁰⁰ Van Heelsum, *Somaliërs in Nederland*.

²⁰¹ The only Somali mosque, the Dar al Hijra mosque, in the Netherlands is based in Rotterdam.

²⁰² Trade Register of the Chamber of Commerce, at www.kvk.nl/?gclid=CKuKvt35g7gCFcVa3godMSYAkA (accessed 14 June 2013).

SOMVAO is the largest organisation in terms of social reach. They have two paid staff members, on a part-time and project basis, and two people in the social work unit, and about 20 volunteers. They offer language courses for people who still have to start their civic integration programme but need some literacy preparation before they can start. Apart from this, they offer conversation classes for those who have completed their civic integration programme and want to keep practising their Dutch. Both courses are run by volunteers, with consulting hours, information meetings, homework supervision and computer lessons. Other activities include arranging and mediating internships for young people (they offer four positions each year at the SOMVAO office), and educating women on health and child raising issues, in collaboration with other organisations. Specific projects have been developed for Somali young people, offering classes on Somali language and culture, a programme on homework support for teenagers and computer training. Moreover, the organisation is a place of first resort: many Somali in Amsterdam go to SOMVAO when they need practical support, as when they get a letter from an official institution, for a question on schools, the tax service, divorce, etc. The office is open seven days a week, and very accessible. According to SOMVAO:

We reach 80 percent of the Somalis in Amsterdam, but of course it is not always our responsibility to support people. There are other institutions that are subsidised to do so, the Refugee Council Amsterdam for example. But the people come here, with all their questions, we are easily accessible, our staff and volunteers speak Somali, while at the Refugee Council, they don't.²⁰³

The important role SOMVAO performs for Somalis in Amsterdam is recognised by the Dutch Council for Refugees/Amsterdam. Several respondents drew attention to the fact that the workload for SOMVAO is high, and that by offering people continuous support with practicalities, Somalis remain dependent and do not learn how to solve certain things themselves, for example by asking support from a neighbour. One participant in the focus group discussions, a volunteer at a support organisation, confirmed this picture:

Compared to other refugees, they expect a lot of support, they want you to arrange everything, they don't even open their post, the envelope, they want you to take care of everything.

A few organisations try to stimulate political participation by organising information meetings on the electoral programmes of the different parties to stimulate debates.

²⁰³ Interview with Ali Ware, Somali Association for Amsterdam and Surrounding Area (*Somalische Vereniging Amsterdam en Omgeving*, SOMVAO), Amsterdam, 20 February 2013.

However, it appears difficult to mobilise people, as they tend to be more focused on Somali politics.²⁰⁴

Table 12. Somali organisations in Amsterdam²⁰⁵

Name	Date established	Main activities
FSAN	1994	Umbrella organisation, representing 56 organisations
HIRDA	1998	Development organisation, main focus on Somalia, although also some activities aimed at integration (soccer games)
IFTIN	2005	Women's organisation
Somali Next Generation	not available	Youth organisation, informing, networking
SOMVAO	1994	In Amsterdam, to increase participation of the Somali community
SONPPCAN	2004	Children's rights

Source: Open Society Foundations

The organisations listed in Table 12 operate mainly at the local level. At the national level, there is one umbrella organisation, FSAN, which was established in 1994, at the instigation of the Dutch government,²⁰⁶ which preferred to talk with one umbrella organisation, representing different Somali organisations. FSAN has currently 56 member organisations, 80 percent of which can be classified as “active organisations”.²⁰⁷ Any organisation can become a member, provided they are registered at the Chamber of Commerce. Apart from lobbying and advocacy, they implement some projects (currently five) in collaboration with other partners, on FGM, youth empowerment and capacity building for key people in the Somali community. According to the spokesman, they are also formally recognised by the Dutch government, and the various ministries, in particular the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. This is quite new, as FSAN faced some problems in the past:

²⁰⁴ The Labour Party (PvdA), in collaboration with other organisations, aimed to run a trip before the 2010 national elections to Leicester and Birmingham where quite a few Somalis with optional voting rights live, but it was cancelled as the goals were too ambitious given the time frame, according to an interview with FSAN.

²⁰⁵ Apart from these Amsterdam-based organisations, there are other Somali organisations that have a national reach, such as Dalmir, based in The Hague.

²⁰⁶ This is a usual strategy of the Dutch government, meant to simplify life by speaking to one partner; in the 1980s, Moroccan, Turkish and Surinamese consultation bodies were established for the same purpose.

²⁰⁷ Interview with Mohamed Elmi, Federation of Somali Organisations Netherlands (FSAN), Den Bosch, 15 April 2013.

We were quite divided, started to implement projects but were not able to finalise these, etc. So, we really had to prove ourselves, to the ministry as well: can you really live up the expectations? It took us one and a half years, but now we have a good working relationship with the ministry.²⁰⁸

Younger Somalis in the focus group discussion indicated that they did not feel represented by all Somali organisations.

These are Somali organisations that have been established in the 1990s, well, but that is a complete different generation, you notice that when they talk about the Somali community, that is often very negative, stigmatising, and they always show bad examples. I noticed in Delft how people of my generation are much more Dutch than the older generation. There is a gap in how these organisations present themselves and to the Dutch community: the Somali community as victims, I really don't see it that way, and don't agree with that. (28-year-old male student)

Other young Somali pointed towards the legitimacy of some organisations:

One organisation for all Somalis, that represents all Somalis in the Netherlands? That sounds neither very realistic nor desirable to me, I would detest that. (23-year-old male student)

In the past few years, specific youth organisations have been established: Somali Next Generation, with a specific branch for students (Arday) and the Somali Student Network. One of the aims of both organisations is to have a neutral identity, unaffiliated to any clan.

At present there are only a few Somali religious organisations in Amsterdam, and there is no Somali mosque. This means that apart from Somali organisations there is no place where Somalis can go to get advice. A Somali mosque would provide an additional place where Somalis could go for consultation and meet people.²⁰⁹

There are a few well-functioning Somali organisations performing a key role in the integration of Somalis in Amsterdam. They reach a large part of the Somali population and offer highly accessible and practical support to the Somali community. Many Somalis prefer these organisations over welfare organisations that are equipped to give this support, such as the Dutch Council for Refugees/Amsterdam, since they do not offer that kind of basic support. This implies that Somali organisations devote much of their time to very practical support for Somalis, which may not be the most strategic role, against the background of decreasing budgets. There is limited collaboration among the Somali organisations and significant fragmentation. Dutch organisations

²⁰⁸ Interview with Mohamed Elmi, Federation of Somali Organisations Netherlands (FSAN), Den Bosch, 15 April 2013.

²⁰⁹ This was also a recommendation of a previous study on Somalis in the Netherlands: see Van Heelsum, *Somaliërs in Nederland*.

have observed this situation, and state that Somalis are not well organised and are hard to collaborate with.

10.5 Measures

To support participation and citizenship, the city of Amsterdam provides subsidies to some Somali community organisations, such as SOMVAO. In the past, this was in the framework of minority policies; under the new policies, this concerns mainly subsidies for certain activities that do not specifically target one specific migrant group, but cover a wider variety of groups. The municipality actively promotes alliances between different organisations, representing different ethnic minorities, with the purpose of stimulating intercultural collaboration and exchange. Until January 2013, the municipality facilitated the housing of several refugee organisations in the Wereldpand (Worldhouse), an office building where organisations could rent a relatively inexpensive office and organise meetings. The subsidy (€490,000 on an annual base) was ended in January 2013 due to budgetary cuts, so that these refugee organisations had to look for alternative housing.

At the local and national level there are numerous programmes that aim at increasing the social participation of immigrants, such as those of the Foundation for the Stimulation of Societal Participation (*Stichting Bevordering Maatschappelijke Participatie*). There are no other specific initiatives targeting the Somali community in this field known at present.

11. THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

This section presents findings on the roles of all the media on the lives of Somalis in Amsterdam. First, it briefly discusses the media sources Somalis rely on for news and information about local, national and international affairs. Then it describes the coverage of Somalis, Somalia and concerns related to Somalia in the media, followed by Somalis' experiences of this representation in the media. In the last part of this section, details of initiatives to improve the media engagement of Somalis are brought to the fore.

11.1 Media Use

Oral communication media linking up with the strong oral tradition in Somalia are highly popular among Somalis, and news spreads quickly through the Somali *tam-tam*, as it was referred to in the focus group discussions. The mobile phone was the most preferred tool among Somalis; sending text messages or emails was less common. Web-based media such as news sites have also quickly gained popularity, especially among young Somalis and those with higher education. Two sites that were often mentioned are Hiiraan.com, praised as a critical and trustworthy site, and Dayniile.com, enjoyed for gossip, but less reliable, according to some Somalis.²¹⁰ Young Somalis read free newspapers available on the train and watch Dutch soaps, but hardly use other media.²¹¹ Al Jazeera was mentioned as source for news on television. A new and popular phenomenon is the satellite television channel based in the UK (Universal TV), established by a Dutch entrepreneur, which broadcasts all kinds of news and cultural issues on and by Somalis. This is a commercial channel, which might affect the quality of the programmes broadcast, since they broadcast all items, as long as they are paid.²¹² There is no editorial check, and selection criteria seem absent. Watching "*Het Journaal*," the Dutch 8 p.m. news, is less common, and according to some sources only those who speak Dutch very well watch it.

Apart from the news, media such as Somali radio stations perform a role in education by offering language courses and providing information on Dutch society. The Hague-based Somali organisation Dalmar is an example of such an organisation. It started in 2003 offering Dutch lessons for Somalis on the radio. Since 2005 it has collaborated with ITTA, the language expertise centre of the University of Amsterdam. The project was co-financed by the municipalities of Amsterdam and The Hague, although the latter stopped funding in 2011 because of budget cuts. The radio course "Dutch for Somalis" contains 70 lessons in total: 35 lessons for beginners and 35 for advanced

²¹⁰ Interview with Mohamed Elmi, Federation of Somali Organisations Netherlands (FSAN), Den Bosch, 15 April 2013.

²¹¹ Moors et al., *Voedingsbodem voor radicalisering bij kleine etnische groepen in Nederland*.

²¹² Interviews with Ahmed Abdulwahad, Dalmar, The Hague, 29 March 2013; Mohamed Elmi, Federation of Somali Organisations Netherlands (FSAN), Den Bosch, 15 April 2013.

learners. Six main topics are covered, in close consultation with the target group: health, looking for a job, at work, children and school, at and around home and requesting information.²¹³

11.2 Coverage of Somalis in the Media

To get an impression of the way Somalis and Somalia are represented in the media the Open Society Foundations conducted a print media monitoring of the local Amsterdam newspaper *Het Parool* between 14 October 2012 and 14 April 2013, searching the digital archives for news items containing the term “Somali”, “Somalia” or “Somalian”,²¹⁴ identifying 79 different news items. Figure 9 shows the top thirteen of stories.

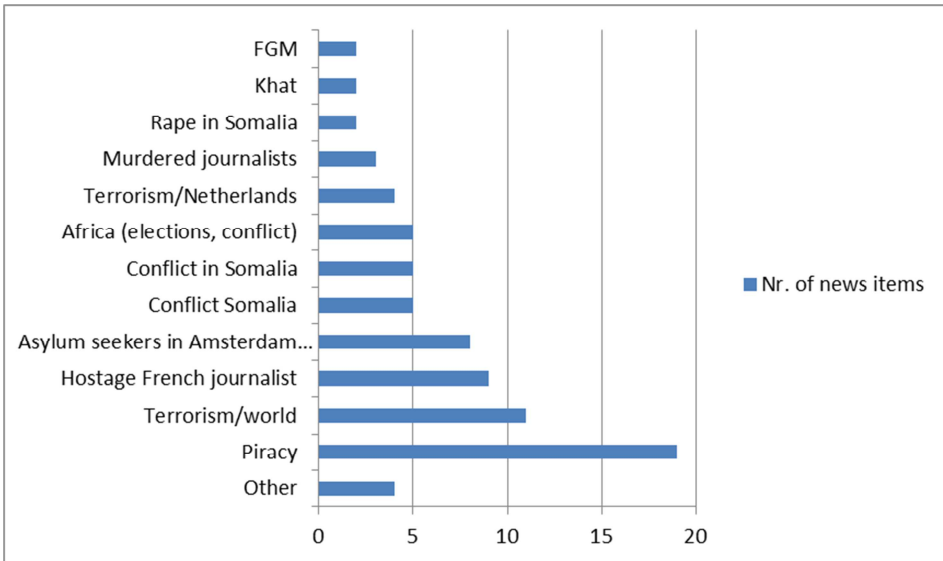
The category that came first in order was piracy, consisting of news items on Somali pirates and the contribution of Dutch marines to the prevention and control of this phenomenon. Second were items on international terrorism. Examples were the role of young (European) Muslims in Syria, that of al-Qaeda in Africa and similar items. The killing of a French spy (hostage) by Al Shabaab was the third most frequent item. Next was the only local category: a group of asylum seekers in the Vluchtkerk in Amsterdam.²¹⁵ Overall, international news items tended to dominate the news relating to Somalis. The only other national categories were that on the khat ban in January and policies on immigration and asylum seekers.

²¹³ Interview with Ahmed Abdulwahad, Dalmar, The Hague, 29 March 2013.

²¹⁴ In Dutch “Somaliër,” “Somalië” and “Somalisch(e)”.

²¹⁵ See also section 7.2 and www.devvluchtkerk.nl (accessed 17 March 2014).

Figure 9. Coverage of Somalis in *Het Parool*, 14 October 2012–14 April 2013 according to number of items



Source: <http://www.parool.nl> (accessed 14 April 2013)

A closer look at the news items shows that in particular the tone of the language used in the headlines is negative: only 1 of the 79 news items in this period could be considered positive, on the recognition of Somalia by the International Monetary Fund. Overall, stereotyping language and negative items dominate, causing negative representation. Examples of such headlines are “Vluchtkerk accommodation amounts to €160,000”, “Who are these Dutch jihad youngsters precisely?” and “Rape concerns Somali refugee camps”. Pejorative language and labels are also found in the text of the news items, such as the frequent use of the term “illegals”.

Although the monitoring showed bad representation of Somalis in the newspaper, there are other newspapers and journalists who provide a more nuanced picture of Somalis, by writing background articles.²¹⁶ At the time of writing, there was no journalist who specialised in Somalis in the Netherlands, nor a Somali journalist working in the mainstream media.

11.3 Reactions and Opinions of Somalis on Their Media Coverage

In the focus group discussions, opinions varied on the way Somali are represented in the media. Some observed the use of emotive and stereotyping language.

²¹⁶ An example is the series by Rob Pietersen on Somalis who migrated to Leicester for the newspaper *Trouw*.

In the media, we are being portrayed as pirates, people that are mad ... I once went to a fancy dress party – with pirates as the main theme – and people told me “You can go like yourself, you do not have to change clothes.” (23-year-old male student)

The Somali community is labelled as “Muslims”, “swindlers”, “veiled” and “terrorists”. Politics and media determine these labels, and if the media write these labels down, and politics correct that, nuance that: that is fine. But here, politics do not correct any longer. (46-year-old man)

The information presented is stigmatising, but, as one of the interviewees put it, “that is a natural process, in the sense that ‘good news is no news’”. Newspapers will not pay attention to issues that are normal or even positive, there should be a news factor involved. Somali organisations emphasise that almost all news items on Somalis are written by non-Somali journalists. The respondents were not aware of a Somali journalist working in the Netherlands.

We are hardly visible, I never see a Somali on television in the Netherlands. We are a much smaller group, compared to the Moroccans, but there should be some kind of voice. In the UK, there is Rageh Omaar, that is a journalist. But when it is about Somali, it is often not a Somali expert, and that is frustrating. (25-year-old male student)

Somali organisations are frequently approached by the media with requests for information on certain issues (FGM, use of khat) or to link a journalist who wants to do an item on Somalis in the Netherlands to the Somali community.

An example of this is the story of a the journalist who wanted to do a news item on Somali asylum seekers who deliberately mutilate their fingertips to prevent identification, and who was looking for “two such people” in the Netherlands to interview them. He approached Dalmar, which was unable to help the journalist with his request, but offered instead to put him in touch with some failed asylum seekers, and to write about their precarious situation, an offer that was declined.

Stereotyping and negative representation lead to frustration, basically because the media portray Somalis as a homogeneous, undifferentiated group.

And all these studies conclude: it is not going well with the Somalis in the Netherlands, and again, you hear the same list of deficiencies: school dropouts, use of khat, child abuse, FGM, high dependency on welfare. I do not recognise myself in this picture, nor my family, but when this is labelled as mainstream thinking, it is difficult to avoid. (43-year-old man)

Reports make a comparison between Somalis and other refugee groups. It is quite common in many studies to position the Somalis in the wider framework of integration and participation, and this is also a delicate issue, as the media reports often do not add the full methodology and context of the study:

Everybody says the position of Somalis is bad, but what is your framework for comparison? The other refugee groups in the Netherlands? But they are so different from us, they had education in Iraq and Iran, while we had nothing. Compared to the Somalis in Somalia, we are doing fine, but you will never read that in the newspaper, there is no background. (47-year-old man)

A study on the representation of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK concludes that apart from frustration, negative representation could lead to a lack of self-esteem a sense of insecurity and the feeling that they are set apart from society, belonging to another category.²¹⁷ A similar conclusion may be true for the Netherlands.

11.4 Initiatives to Improve Media Engagement

Active engagement by Somalis with the media could be advantageous and the Somali organisations interviewed appeared to be well aware of the opportunities and risks when it comes to contact with the media.

Representation is also an issue we are involved in, what do we show to the media, what do we want them to show? It is not just the outside world that is looking at us, but also what do we tell the outside world? Thus far, that is hardly happening, we do not do that as a community, we are rather passive. We always hear this: a black community highly dependent on welfare, etc., and we just accept that, go along with it, instead of saying, “But that’s only part of the reality, there are many people that are doing fine,” (28-year-old male student)

A spokesman for FSAN pointed to the role Somali organisations and representatives have when it comes to representation:

When we started, we wanted to change certain issues, you know, you can imagine the picture that is created when it is about khat, and the 8 o’clock news interviews a representative of a Somali organisation that cannot speak Dutch, who needs subtitles, what does that tell the Dutch public?²¹⁸

An example of active engagement is the collaboration between the Somali organisation Dalmar and the BNN programme, “*Spuiten en Slikken*” (“Shoot and Swallow”), in October 2010.²¹⁹ At the request of BNN, one episode dealt with the use of khat in the Netherlands. Dalmar decided to collaborate with an interview, and arranged for a young Somali who supplied the khat and showed how to use it. In this way they showed agency, demonstrated what khat is and how it affects users.

²¹⁷ S. Buchanan and B. Grillo, *What’s the Story? Results from Research into Media Coverage of Refugees and Asylum Seekers In the UK*, Article 19, London, 2003.

²¹⁸ Interview with Mohamed Elmi, Federation of Somali Organisations Netherlands (FSAN), Den Bosch, 15 April 2013.

²¹⁹ See also www.youtube.com/watch?v=EUml4iOg6Pg (accessed 3 May 2013).

Another noteworthy initiative is the television series *"Nomads & Pirates"* by Yasmine Allas on the situation of Somalis in the Netherlands, broadcast on the public channel (BNN) in October 2012 and May 2013. She showed in four short (25-minute) films the negative dimensions of the experiences of Somalis in the Netherlands: piracy, children placed in custody and terrorism.²²⁰ That provoked quite some debate, among Somalis as well, who complained about the pessimistic picture it provided of Somalis in the Netherlands. The only positive story in the series was the clip on the director of Universal TV, the Somali television channel based in the UK, and very popular among Somalis in the Netherlands: he had a good idea, translated that into a smart business plan, and is a role model of a successful entrepreneur for other Somalis.²²¹

²²⁰ See www.uitzendinggemist.nl/programmas/8893-nomaden-en-piraten (accessed 3 May 2013).

²²¹ A movie that provoked a lot of debate, and which is not directly an example of improved media engagement, was "Submission," the script written by Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a Dutch Somali author and former politician, and produced by Theo van Gogh. The short movie criticises the treatment of women in Islamic societies. Van Gogh was murdered a few months after the release of this movie, leading to an upheaval of anti-Islamic sentiments in the Netherlands (see also section 2).

12. CONCLUSIONS

This report documents and analyses the situation and experiences of Somalis in Amsterdam across a wide range of topics: civic integration, identity, interaction and belonging, education, employment and income, housing, health and social services, policing and security, participation in social and political life and coverage by and use of the media. This section briefly reviews the main findings, and highlights the most important and significant developments in the processes of integration and participation.

Somalis in Amsterdam form a very small community, with an official count of 1,286 persons, although the actual number might be higher, as undocumented Somalis and those who have not been ever formally recognised are not included in this number. The vast majority has applied for asylum.

There is great diversity among Somalis in Amsterdam, between those who arrived in the early 1990s and those having arrived after 2007 (the so-called newcomers), between men and women, between better and worse educated, and between generations. This diversity is not always recognised, which adds to adverse representation in the media and to frustration among Somalis.

Somalis live scattered across Amsterdam, and although they generally like the neighbourhoods they live in, they do not appear to be strongly attached to them. Their attachment to the city of Amsterdam is also weak, a contrast with the feelings of belonging among Moroccans and Turks in Amsterdam, reflecting their shorter time in the city and perhaps the fact that they are less concentrated in specific neighbourhoods.

Somalis tend to draw upon several identities, with the Muslim identity as a kind of overarching one, followed by their Somali and Dutch identities. Somali youngsters express the coexistence of several sub-identities, and also the confusion that living in three different worlds can create. They have a strong feeling of belonging to Somalia, but at the same time they observe they are no longer part of it.

Emotional bonds with Somalia are very strong, especially for older Somalis, which is illustrated by all kinds of transnational practices, such as the sending of remittances, frequent phone calls with relatives and friends in Somalia, and the use of websites and satellite television channels to read and watch news on Somalia. Young Somalis' transnational practices are often fostered by their parents, who hope this will link their children to Somali culture and society.

The socio-economic position of many Somalis is weak, with low educational levels, limited access to the labour market, and high dependence on welfare. The findings in this report point towards a decisive influence of the first years upon arrival, when Somalis start with a civic integration programme to learn the Dutch language. Many of them do not succeed in reaching or maintaining a good level of proficiency in Dutch, which seriously affects their access to training and the labour market.

The presence of an increasing gap between the different generations, between parents and their children, is of concern to the Somali community. Parents experience difficulties in overcoming the enormous difference between Somali and Dutch parental values. Children are integrating into Dutch society and learning to speak Dutch much more rapidly than their parents do. Parents cannot support their children in school, and have problems understanding the Dutch school system. This creates conflicts and clashes, as parents do not know how to deal with their children in the social context of the Netherlands.

These observations call for special policies for Somalis, as has been signalled in previous studies. However, minority policies (*doelgroepenbeleid*) were abolished some years ago, so that targeting one specific minority does not fit the current policies of the city of Amsterdam. Certain challenges Somalis are facing are, however, not a unique Somali problem; other groups face them as well, for example in parenting. There are opportunities, although one needs to search for the niches in policies, and to explore collaboration with other groups.

Two issues are crucial. First, Somalis could try to form alliances through their organisations, not only with each other, but also with other minority groups in Amsterdam, to explore collaboration on challenges that other groups are facing too. This would fit into the multi-actor partnership approaches that are preferred by the municipality. Second, in order to create a voice, Somalis could enhance their local visibility. At the moment there are no Somalis involved in either local Amsterdam politics or local decision-making. The findings show that thus far Somalis have not played a very active role in formulating responses or demands to the municipal government. By actively reacting to certain policies and local decisions, Somalis could ask for and create more room for manoeuvre.

One basic condition to make this happen is for the city government to take an active attitude: it should reach out to the Somalis by engaging them in local decision-making processes.

Finally, some very interesting initiatives have emerged in civic integration, education and employment, and parenting. These initiatives share certain characteristics, such as the presence of trainers with a Somali background, which proved to be vital for success, the use of oral communication tools to transmit knowledge and skills, the use of role models from the Somali community, and support that is accessible and open to the existing diversities in the client group.

13. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations are aimed at local and national policymakers, Somalis and their organisations, and civic and social organisations. They advocate for Amsterdam city council to further engage with this small but growing community. At the same time, the responsibility also lies with the community, to initiate actions and efforts that bring about changes in policies, practice and behaviour. The small size of the Somali community makes lobbying and advocacy difficult. However, this research shows that the problems this group faces call for more measures aiming at improved social inclusion, which would also be in the interest of the city.

11.1 General Recommendations

1. The City of Amsterdam should adopt policies that are general in their aims but recognise diversity by ensuring such that policies are equally effective for groups and individuals who face specific challenges.
2. The City of Amsterdam should address the key challenges faced by Somalis and other immigrant communities by multiple-faceted partnership approaches involving a range of interventions by key partners, including a strong role for Somali and other immigrant community organisations. In this way, their skills, knowledge and commitment can be fully utilized in promoting integration, through activities such as information, guidance and advocacy for community members, language courses, training and mentoring, homework support, links with public services, support for parents and other activities.
3. To implement this multi-faceted approach, the City of Amsterdam should designate a coordination point in municipal government that can encourage relevant departments to convene planning and delivery groups of key partners who can develop and implement a range of measures which will improve outcomes for Somalis and other immigrants in civic integration, education, employment and health.
4. The platform that was established a few years ago by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, and which is now coordinated by Pharos, should continue. This platform is crucial for improving horizontal collaboration with municipalities concerning the participation of Somali refugees, as well as vertical collaboration among central government and local government (or between the national and the local). National and local/regional NGOs and relevant Somali community organisations could also be invited to contribute.
5. The City of Amsterdam and social organisations should consider the following factors which are of prime importance for success when developing and implementing collaborative initiatives:

- trainers and instructors with a Somali background who speak Somali and understand the background of the target group;
- an understanding of Somali oral traditions;
- the use of role models with a Somali background.

13.2 Integration Policy

6. The City of Amsterdam should work with the Dutch Council for Refugees and Somali and other immigrant organisations to assess the impact of the new Integration Act on key indicators of integration, estimate the social impact of high unemployment, poor health, inadequate housing and low educational attainment among immigrants and their children, and recommend changes to integration policy and practice that will deliver better results.
7. The City of Amsterdam and the Dutch Council for Refugees/Amsterdam, within the framework of the current refugee policy, should explore the opportunities for additional support to Somalis and other refugee groups to enhance the effectiveness of the civic integration programme and Dutch-language courses and implement or recommend steps to encourage their effectiveness through changes such as more oral practice, increasing class hours per week and better coordination, with language and conversation classes provided by civil society organisations.
8. Somali organisations with experience of effective literacy courses should submit a proposal to the Municipality of Amsterdam for literacy courses in Somali that would be effective in preparing illiterate Somalis for the civic integration programme.

13.3 Education

9. The City of Amsterdam in collaboration with Somali organisations and the Dutch Council for Refugees/Amsterdam should link up with existing promising initiatives, such as the course on parental support developed by Pharos in collaboration with Interlokaal and NIM in Nijmegen, to better inform Somali parents on specific problems they are facing.
10. The City of Amsterdam, in collaboration with schools, should review the monitoring of pupils' educational achievement in order to identify specific interventions that can meet the specific needs of Somali and other pupils with similar needs.
11. The City of Amsterdam, through its education department, should more closely monitor the internship arrangements of secondary-school pupils in general, and explore opportunities for more internship positions in the Amsterdam region, in collaboration with the schools and the private sector.

12. Somali organisations should seek to expand homework support activities by establishing the levels of need and taking steps to ensure that support is available to Somali parents throughout Amsterdam.

13.4 Employment

13. Information on state support for entrepreneurs should be disseminated effectively to Somalis and other immigrant groups.
14. Employment service advisers should be guided on how to help refugees and immigrants address their problems, including foreign qualifications and language. The guidance should incorporate learning from previous projects such as the Refugee Job Offensive, "*Talent uit Isolement*" and others.

13.5 Health Care

15. The City of Amsterdam in collaboration with health institutions (GGD, DWI, Centrum 40/45, GGZ inGeest, a public mental health care institution, and Argan) should continue to evaluate their monitoring of the use of health services by Somalis.
16. Health institutions should invest in making their services more accessible to Somalis, by re-establishing the support of interpreters and diversifying health staff. Training for health staff should include trauma and FGM-related problems with childbirth.
17. The City of Amsterdam, in collaboration with social care institutions such as the BJAA, should consider involving family coaches for Somali families to offer parental support, tailored to the specific needs of Somali households. Joint action by the Ministries of Security and Justice, and Health, Welfare and Sport is also required to free the necessary funds to implement this new approach, with a focus on support rather than punishment.

13.6 Policing and Security

18. The City of Amsterdam should ensure that its strategy for policing a diverse population includes effective measures for engaging with immigrant communities. Such a strategy should agree and implement steps to improve mutual trust and understanding, assess the effectiveness of profiling, consider alternative police practices to eliminate profiling and identify measures to recruit a police service that represents Amsterdam's diverse population.

13.7 Participation and Citizenship

19. Somali organisations should reconsider their roles and guide Somalis towards a greater independence. Their strength is their role as intermediary between the

government and civil society. They could also perform as broker among Somalis, for example by facilitating walk-in consultation hours, in which Somalis can get practical support of other Somalis in the community, in this way not burdening the organisation but leading to more independence and the involvement of the broader community.

20. Somali organisations could explore opportunities for further collaboration, with organisations of other ethnic minorities, as this offers economies of scale and facilitates the application for subsidy.
21. Somali organisations should explore the opportunities to link up with existing initiatives by the municipality of national activities such as World Africa Day.

13.8 The Role of the Media

22. The City of Amsterdam and FSAN should bring together associations of media professionals and media representatives to identify media professionals who can mentor Somali community and faith organisations on proactively developing media contacts and explore ways of using these contacts to increase the range of positive stories and achieve a more balanced coverage of the Somali community.

ANNEX 1. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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ANNEX 2. LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Abdulrehman, Suaad	Psychiatrist specialising in sexology
Abdulwahad, Ahmed	Dalmar (Somali organisation)
Berg, Adri van den	Immigration and Naturalisation Service/Ministry of Security and Justice
Bergh, Erik van den	UAF (Foundation for Refugee Students)
Bontekoning, Simon	Amsterdam Municipality, OOV (Department of Public Order and Security)
Elsen, Ingrid van den	Dutch Council for Refugees
Elmi, Mohamed	FSAN (Federation of Somali organisations)
Farah, Fatumo	Himilo Relief and Development Association (HIRDA)
Habassi, Mostafa	Dutch Council for Refugees/Amsterdam
Haker, Frea	Pharos
Hoessein, Mohamed	Somali Student Network
Hoorweg, Paul	Amsterdam Municipality, DWI (Department of Work and Income)
Kempenaar, Iwan	Amsterdam Municipality, DMO (Department of Social Security)
Marvis, Victoria	Ministry of Social Affairs/Integration
Narain, Jagrup	Amsterdam Municipality, DWI
Pietersen, Rob	Journalist on Trouw
Said, Shukri	IFTIN (Somali women's organisation)
Silversmith, Jessica	Amsterdam Anti-discrimination Bureau
Slooten, Pieter Jan van	Amsterdam Municipality, OOV
Stee, Hans van	Dutch Council for Refugees/Amsterdam
Toutay, Elbahia	Dutch Council for Refugees/Amsterdam
Ware, Ali	SOMVAO (Somali organisation)
Weiler, Roswitha	Dutch Council for Refugees

Minority communities – whether Muslim, migrant or Roma – continue to come under intense scrutiny in Europe today. This complex situation presents Europe with one its greatest challenges: how to ensure equal rights in an environment of rapidly expanding diversity.

At Home in Europe, part of the Open Society Initiative for Europe, Open Society Foundations, is a research and advocacy initiative which works to advance equality and social justice for minority and marginalised groups excluded from the mainstream of civil, political, economic, and, cultural life in Western Europe.

Muslims in EU Cities was the project's first comparative research series which examined the position of Muslims in 11 cities in the European Union. Somalis in European cities follows from the findings emerging from the Muslims in EU Cities reports and offers the experiences and challenges faced by Somalis across seven cities in Europe. The research aims to capture the everyday, lived experiences as well as the type and degree of engagement policymakers have initiated with their Somali and minority constituents.