



Summary

Asylum and integration

2019

Cohort study on asylum seekers and status holders

Executive summary

As of 2017, Statistics Netherlands (CBS) monitors all asylum seekers who have entered reception centres of the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum seekers (COA) and status holders including family reunification applicants and their following family members. The third edition of the annual report on this cohort study sheds light on the recent influx of asylum seekers at COA reception centres as well as the composition of the newest group of status holders. Furthermore, this web publication provides an up-to-date account of how the status holders have fared who have received an asylum residence permit since 2014. Figures presented here include the inflow and outflow at COA reception centres, the waiting period for an asylum residence permit, housing, civic integration, household composition, family reunification, education, work and income, health care utilisation and crime. At least two more annual updates on this research are forthcoming. This research has been commissioned by the Dutch Ministries of Social Affairs and Employment, Justice and Security, Education, Culture and Science and Health, Welfare and Sport.

Described below are recent developments in the new influx and duration of stay of asylum seekers at COA reception centres:

- **Inflow at COA reception centres down slightly in first half of 2018** – Relative to one year previously, fewer asylum seekers were taken in at COA reception centres. This includes the inflow of following family members through COA reception centres.
- **More asylum seekers from safe countries** – There has been a rising influx from safe countries such as Morocco and Algeria, in recent years especially. The number of Turkish nationals applying for asylum in the Netherlands saw a sharp increase as well in 2018.
- **Share of following family members no longer rising** – Family members joining the asylum applicant are more numerous among Syrians and Eritreans. Of the incoming Eritrean asylum seekers in 2017, a share of 59 percent were following family members.
- **Asylum seekers still young** – Over three-quarters of all asylum seekers are aged under 35 years at their time of arrival in the Netherlands.
- **Syrian asylum seeker population showing an increasingly even age distribution** – In 2016–2017 in particular, the shares of women and younger children were slightly higher than in previous years. This is largely due to a rising influx of family members from Syria in those two years.
- **More Eritrean asylum seekers arriving with family members** – In 2017, 60 percent of all asylum seekers travelled to the Netherlands as a family. In 2018, this share stood at 50 percent. In 2014 and 2015, relatively more asylum seekers travelled to the Netherlands by themselves.

- **Fewer relocated asylum seekers at COA shelters** – During the first six months of their stay, asylum seekers at COA shelters moved to a different reception centre slightly more than once on average in the period 2015–2017.
- **Most Syrians and Eritreans given asylum residence permit after 12 months** – Of all Syrians and Eritreans who entered COA reception centres in the period 2014–2016, around 90 percent had obtained a temporary asylum residence permit after 12 months. This share ranged between 12 and 57 percent among other nationalities.
- **After 3.5 years, 570 asylum seekers were still staying at COA shelters without a residence permit** – Not all of these people are still awaiting a residence permit. Some remain in a reception centre after being rejected to await their departure, others are pending a court ruling after an appeal. Following a rejection, applicants may file another (second or subsequent) asylum application; for instance, when their situation has changed or because new information has become available about their country of origin.
- **Housing allocation faster for Syrians arriving in 2014 than for Eritreans** – Twelve months after arrival at a reception centre, 70 percent of the Syrians have been provided housing, against 45 percent of the Eritreans. Only after two years are the percentage shares of Syrian and Eritrean asylum applicants who have been provided housing more or less equal.
- **Eritreans arriving in 2015 and 2016 remain at shelters more briefly, due to more family members** – for those Eritreans who entered the Netherlands in 2015, the situation did improve: in this group, 61 percent had been provided housing after twelve months. This share stood at 79 percent for the cohort arriving in 2016. This is due to the fact that, in recent years, a considerable share of asylum seekers have been following family members.
- **Afghans stay at shelters longer and depart/return more often** – The initial asylum application of Afghan asylum seekers is being rejected relatively often compared to for example Syrians and Eritreans. As they often file subsequent applications for asylum, their duration of stay at the reception centre is also longer than average. Also, a relatively large share of the Afghan asylum seekers have departed after twelve months.
- **Barely any family members arriving after two years** – Residence permits (MVs) are only issued to following family members if the application is filed by the permit holder within three months after obtaining the asylum residence permit. These MVs are valid for 90 days only. Any following family members must travel to the Netherlands within 90 days from the date of issue.

Described below are recent developments in the housing and civic integration of status holders and their following family members as well as family reunification applicants:

- **Number of residence permits issued has declined** – For the first time since the start of this cohort study, we see a decline in the total number of residence permits issued (as of 2017). In this study, status holders also include the following family members who have obtained a (derived) asylum residence permit.
- **Top 5 nationalities has hardly changed** – Syrians and Eritreans constitute the largest and second largest share of status holders respectively. Throughout these years, the top 5 has further included Afghan and Iraqi nationals.
- **More following family members among Eritrean permit holders** – In 2014, 27 percent of the asylum resident permits was issued to a following relative. This share has gone up to 49 percent by 2017. Among Eritreans in particular, the share of residence permits issued to following family members went up (from 4 percent in 2014 to 66 percent in the first half of 2018).
- **Average waiting time for Eritreans shortest in family reunification** – Syrian and Eritrean family members obtain a residence permit relatively quickly. Due to the short waiting time for family reunification, the average waiting time has been reduced. Relatively many family members are included in the most recent cohort, particularly among Eritreans.
- **Status holders increasingly found in urban areas** – In the 2014 cohort, 51.6 percent were living in strongly or very strongly urbanised areas after two months; this had increased to 54.3 percent after 36 months. The level of urban residents also shows a slight increase among the 2015 and 2016 cohorts.
- **Increasingly few single status holders** – The drop in the share of single residents among status holders is partly due to the rising influx of following family members. Another reason is that allocation of housing to single status holders poses a problem for municipalities.
- **Status holders not at school age also enrolled in education** – A growing number of people who obtained an asylum residence permit in 2014 are enrolled in education (40 percent in 2018). Even young people over the age of 18 who are not at school age are progressively likely to be in education as their duration of stay becomes longer.
- **Higher enrolment in MBO, higher MBO levels** – Many status holders who leave secondary education move on to senior secondary vocational education (MBO). As of October 2018, 33 percent of all status holders in education who received an asylum residence permit in 2014 were enrolled in MBO. Most were enrolled in MBO Level 1, although the number of status holders enrolled at Level 2 is increasing gradually.

- **30 percent of 2014 cohort have no integration requirement obligation** – 14 percent of all asylum permit holders in the 2014 cohort have not yet completed the compulsory civic integration programme, but have also not (yet) exceeded the maximum time frame, for example because they were given extra time to complete it. Another 1 percent of the total permit-cohort 2014 have failed to complete the programme within the time constraints and therefore received a penalty.
- **58 percent of the 2014 cohort have passed the civic integration exam** – When merely taking into account those in the 2014 cohort with a civic integration requirement, 58 percent had passed the civic integration exam by October 2018. Almost 19 percent obtained either a waiver or exemption. A share of 21 percent have not yet passed the exam, but have been given time to do so. Two percent have not passed the exam yet and have consequently exceeded the maximum time frame for civic integration.
- **Share of employed status holders rising steadily** – Out of the full cohort obtaining a residence permit in 2016, a slightly larger share (7 percent) are in work compared to the cohort obtaining a residence permit in the previous year (5 percent). Likewise, the share of status holders in employment is slightly higher in the 2015 cohort compared to the 2014 cohort (4.5 percent after 18 months). In the 2014 cohort, approximately one-quarter of all status holders aged 18 to 64 years are in employment after 3.5 years. Not only do we see a steadily rising labour participation rate, but the gaps in labour participation among the nationalities have also become narrower. The majority of status holders in employment are part-time workers (81 percent) while 89 percent are on a temporary contract.
- **Eritreans and Syrians same share of social assistance recipients** – 18 months after having obtained the asylum residence permit in 2014, 90 percent of all 18 to 64-year-olds in these groups are on a social assistance benefit. Two years later – altogether 3.5 years after obtaining a residence permit – this share is down to 67 percent with smaller differences between the various nationalities.
- **Dependency on social assistance declines slightly** – After 18 months, 63 percent of the 2014 cohort were receiving their primary income from either welfare or pension. After three years, this share is down to 53 percent. In most cases, this concerns social assistance (income support). Although more and more status holders hold a (part-time) job, these jobs often provide insufficient income. As a result, this group still largely depends on welfare benefits.

- **Social assistance dependency highest among Eritreans** – Three years after obtaining their residence permit, approximately 70 percent of Eritrean status holders are receiving welfare or pension as the main source of income while 21 percent are enrolled in education. In comparison: out of the (relatively smaller group of) Afghan status holders, approximately 42 percent are receiving social assistance benefits and 40 percent are in education after three years.
- **High welfare dependency means few income differences** – This is due to the fact that the overwhelming majority of status holders live on social assistance benefits, which are fixed amounts depending on the family situation.
- **Health care used more frequently, among Eritreans in particular** – Of all status holders in the 2014 cohort aged 18 and over and not staying in COA shelters by the end of 2015, 80 percent had health care costs; 77 percent actually consulted a GP and 23 percent merely registered with a GP. One year later, in 2016, nearly 95 percent of the status holders from the 2014 cohort had had health care costs related to visits to the GP. Health care use among Eritrean status holders saw the sharpest increase: whereas in 2015, 67 percent had GP-related health care costs, by 2016 this was 90 percent.
- **Share of young people in youth care increasing** – Of all young people (aged 21 or younger) who obtained a residence permit in 2014 or 2015 and who were no longer residing at a COA reception centre, approximately 3.5 percent were using some form of youth care in 2016. One year later, this percentage had increased to 5 percent. This refers to care provided to young people and their parents in case of psychological, psychosocial or behavioural problems, a mental handicap or (parents') parenting problems.
- **Hardly any change in share of registered crime suspects** – Male status holders are (still) relatively more likely to become criminal suspects than native Dutch men or men with a western migration background, but less likely compared to men with a non-western migration background.