

## **Inflow of students by origin at various Dutch universities**

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### **Introduction**

Cultural diversity in the Netherlands is increasing. According to recent Statistics Netherlands (CBS) figures, in 2022 about 14% of the Dutch population had a non-western origin. Especially in large cities like Rotterdam and Amsterdam, we see a lot of diversity; there, respectively 40% and 37% of the population has a non-western migration background<sup>1 2</sup>. This diversity is not reflected everywhere. For example, last year's Barometer Cultural Diversity showed that at Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR), the group of employees with an origin outside Europe is underrepresented in senior academic positions. They are also more likely to have a temporary contract<sup>3</sup>. In addition, we see that students with a non-western migration background less often receive a pre-university education (vwo) recommendation and that they less often enter higher education than students with a Dutch background<sup>4</sup>.

To better understand cultural diversity at universities, it is important to consistently collect reliable data over a longer period. This way, we can examine trends and then take steps to make the university more accessible to all students. Several Dutch universities (Leiden University, VU Amsterdam, the University of Amsterdam, Wageningen University & Research, Utrecht University, and Erasmus University Rotterdam) have therefore asked CBS to provide a dataset (of course, in line with the General Data Protection Regulation, completely anonymous, aggregated, and not retraceable to individuals) with, among others<sup>5</sup>, inflow numbers of bachelor and master students by origin over a period of 14 years (2008-2022) for all participating universities.

### **Outcomes**

For our analyses, we look at the origin of students with a Dutch prior education in order to make the best possible comparisons with previous research<sup>6</sup>. CBS has rounded off all numbers to tens<sup>7</sup>. In addition, groups smaller than 10 are not reported, to avoid traceability.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://opendata.cbs.nl/#/CBS/nl/dataset/84910NED/table?ts=1706169110213>

<sup>2</sup> CBS changed the categorization "migration background" to "origin" in 2022. A person was previously considered to have a migration background if at least one of the parents was born abroad. Origin is based on the country of birth of the person themselves, and the country of birth of the parents. If either the person themselves or one of their parents was born abroad, that person is considered to have an origin outside the Netherlands.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.eur.nl/en/news/results-barometer-cultural-diversity-statistics-netherlands-cbs-published>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.cpb.nl/sites/default/files/omnidownload/cpb-policy-brief-2019-06-inkomensongelijkheid-naar-migratieachtergrond\\_0.pdf](https://www.cpb.nl/sites/default/files/omnidownload/cpb-policy-brief-2019-06-inkomensongelijkheid-naar-migratieachtergrond_0.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> The dataset also contains information on progression and study efficiency (i.e., graduation within 3, 4, or 5 years). Because the numbers for some groups of students are very small, we cannot make any statements about these based on these figures. We are working with CBS on follow-up research so that we can also report on this.

<sup>6</sup> Within CBS' new definition of origin, "expats" and international students are included in the group with an origin outside the Netherlands. Because we assume this group has different experiences than second-generation migrants, we only looked at students with a Dutch prior education in this study. Naturally, it is possible that there are international students with a Dutch prior education. We assume that this is a very limited group and that this group then does have similar experiences as the Dutch group.

<sup>7</sup> The percentages in this report are based on these numbers.

### **Total inflow bachelor and master**

The total inflow of students with a Dutch prior education increased for almost all participating universities for both the bachelor (BA) and master (MA) programs. An exception is the University of Amsterdam (UvA): looking at the difference between 2008 and 2022, there is a decrease of 1040 students in the BA programs. In addition, at Utrecht University (UU), we see a decrease of 200 students in MA programs (Table 1 and Table 2).

<b>Inflow BA students</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>Growth</b>
Erasmus University Rotterdam	4.120	5.890	1.770
Leiden University	4.070	6.020	1.950
Utrecht University	6.640	7.100	460
University of Amsterdam	7.450	6.410	-1.040
VU Amsterdam	4.570	5.600	1.030
Wageningen University & Research	890	1370	480

*Table 1. Inflow first-year BA students with a Dutch prior education per university*

<b>Inflow MA students</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>Growth</b>
Erasmus University Rotterdam	2.960	4.030	1.070
Leiden University	1.910	2.890	980
Utrecht University	3.820	3.620	-200
University of Amsterdam	3.830	4.230	400
VU Amsterdam	3.490	4.390	900
Wageningen University & Research	640	1.100	460

*Table 2. Inflow first-year MA students with a Dutch prior education per university*

If we divide the inflow into the BA programs by type of prior education (vwo or hbo; Table 3), we see that for both Leiden University (LEI) and the University of Amsterdam, there is a decrease in the number of students entering from hbo. At the UvA, we also see a decrease in the number of students entering from vwo.

<b>Inflow BA students by prior education</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>Growth</b>
<b>University of applied sciences (hbo)</b>			
Erasmus University Rotterdam	760	1.440	680
Leiden University	890	840	-50
Utrecht University	1.230	1.480	250
University of Amsterdam	1.730	1.520	-210
VU Amsterdam	640	1.170	530
Wageningen University & Research	80	80	0
<b>Pre-university education (vwo)</b>			
Erasmus University Rotterdam	3.270	4.350	1.080
Leiden University	2.820	4.720	1.900
Utrecht University	5.130	5.510	380
University of Amsterdam	4.850	4.640	-210

VU Amsterdam	3.710	4.270	560
Wageningen University & Research	800	1.250	450

Table 3. Inflow first year BA students with a Dutch prior education per university by prior education (vwo/hbo) per university

### Inflow from 'traditional migration countries'

BA inflow rates by origin group remain generally stable over time. The percentages range from 0% to 8% of total inflow. For students of Moroccan origin, we see an increase at several universities, with the largest increase seen at VU Amsterdam (VU). For students with an origin from the other traditional migration countries (Indonesia, Dutch Caribbean, Suriname, and Turkey), the percentage remains almost the same. Exceptions are EUR and LEI, where we see a decreasing trend for these groups (see Figures 1 to 6).

In contrast to the inflow rates of students with origins from traditional immigration countries, we see a slight upward trend among students with European origins. The highest increase is seen at Wageningen University & Research (WUR). In addition, at most universities, we see a slight increase in the percentage of students from 'other Asia', with the largest increase at the UvA.

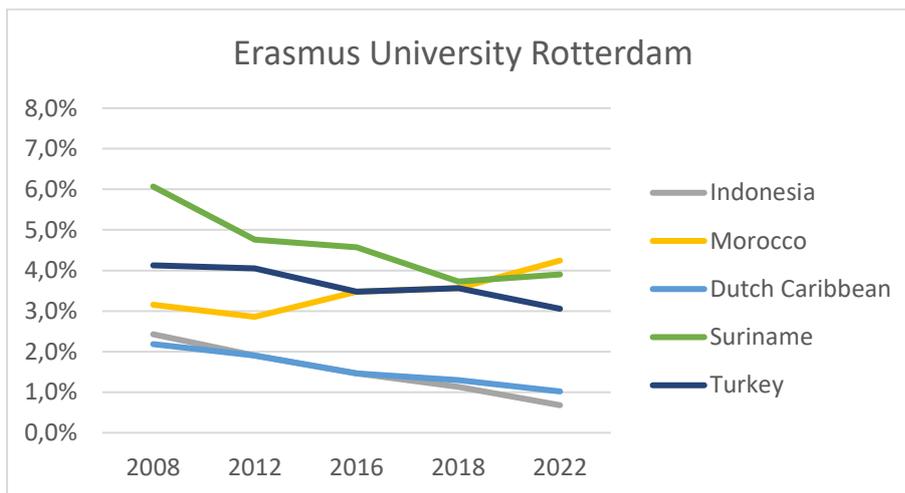


Figure 1. Inflow first-year BA students with a Dutch prior education per university with an origin in the traditional migration countries at Erasmus University Rotterdam.

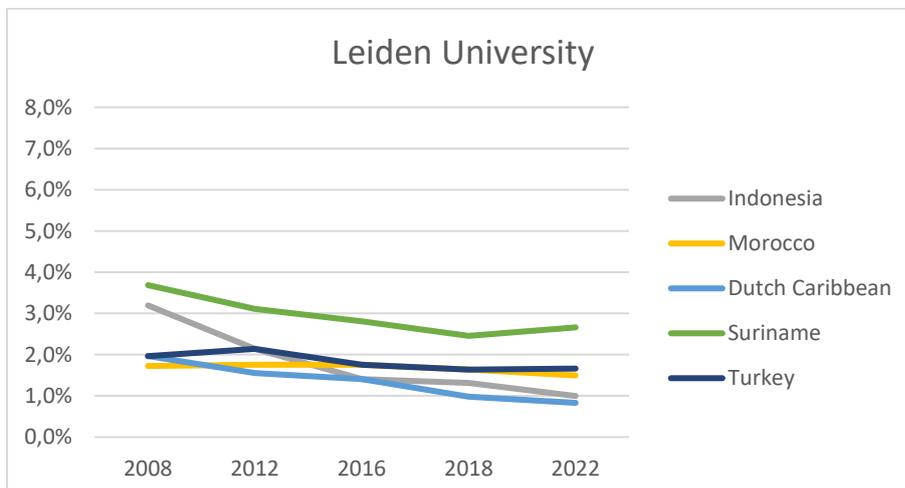


Figure 2. Inflow first-year BA students with a Dutch prior education per university with an origin in the traditional migration countries at Leiden University.

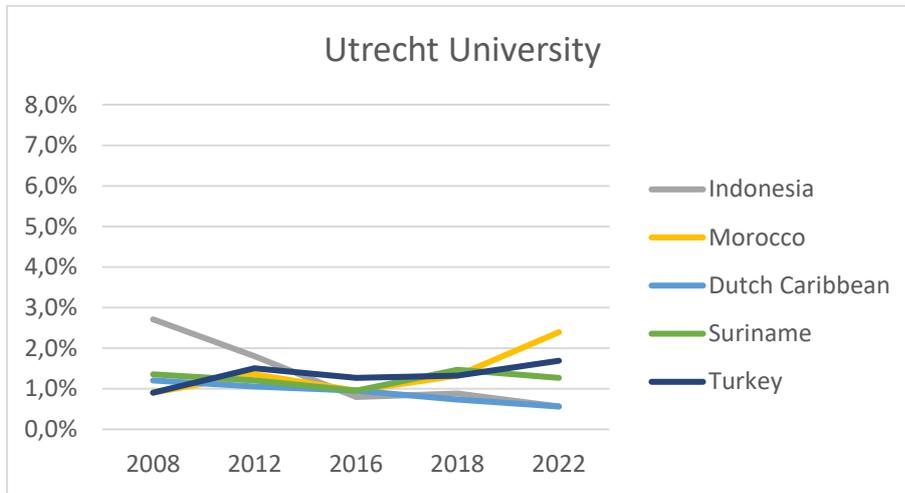


Figure 3. Inflow first-year BA students with a Dutch prior education per university with an origin in the traditional migration countries at Utrecht University.

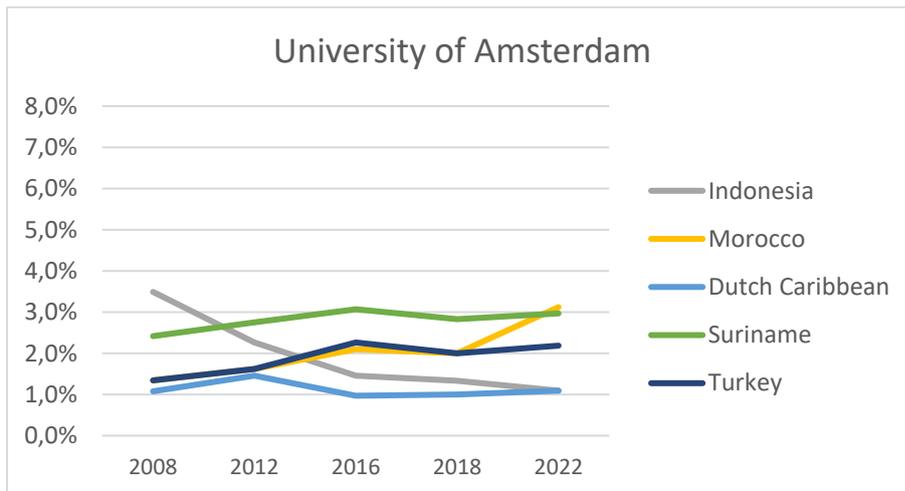


Figure 4. Inflow first-year BA students with a Dutch prior education per university with an origin in the traditional migration countries at the University of Amsterdam.

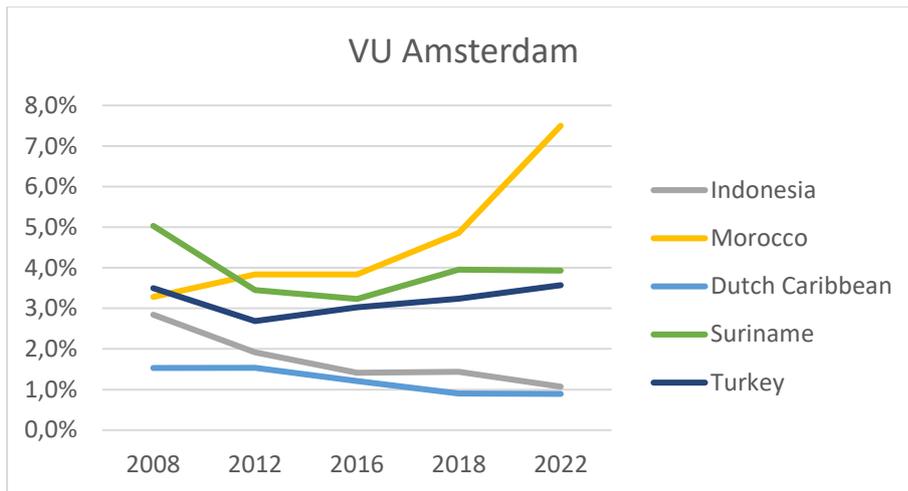


Figure 5. Inflow first-year BA students with a Dutch prior education per university with an origin in the traditional migration countries at VU Amsterdam.

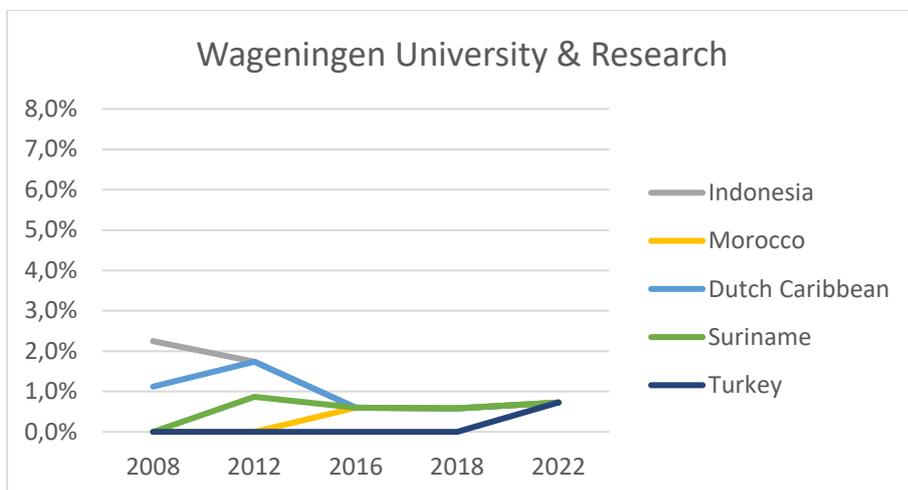


Figure 6. Inflow first-year BA students with a Dutch prior education per university with an origin in the traditional migration countries at Wageningen University & Research.

If we break down the data by prior education (vwo, hbo; Table 4), we see at all universities that the percentage of students with origins from traditional immigration countries entering from hbo is higher than the percentage entering from vwo. Furthermore, at both EUR and LEI, we see a decrease in the percentage of students with origins from traditional immigration countries entering from both hbo and vwo, but the decrease is larger for students from hbo.

Inflow BA by prior education and country of origin	University of applied sciences (hbo)		University pre-education (vwo)	
	2008	2022	2008	2022
<b>Erasmus University Rotterdam</b>				
Indonesia	3,90%	1,40%	2,40%	0,70%
Morocco	5,30%	5,60%	3,10%	3,70%

Dutch Caribbean	3,90%	2,10%	1,80%	0,90%
Suriname	9,20%	4,90%	5,50%	3,40%
Turkey	5,30%	4,90%	4,00%	2,50%
<b>Leiden University</b>				
Indonesia	3,40%	1,20%	3,20%	0,80%
Morocco	4,50%	3,60%	1,10%	1,30%
Dutch Caribbean	4,50%	1,20%	1,80%	0,80%
Suriname	5,60%	3,60%	3,20%	2,50%
Turkey	4,50%	2,40%	1,40%	1,70%
<b>Utrecht University</b>				
Indonesia	3,30%	0,70%	2,50%	0,50%
Morocco	1,60%	4,10%	0,80%	2,00%
Dutch Caribbean	1,60%	1,40%	1,20%	0,50%
Suriname	1,60%	1,40%	1,20%	1,30%
Turkey	1,60%	2,70%	0,80%	1,30%
<b>University of Amsterdam</b>				
Indonesia	3,50%	0,70%	3,30%	1,30%
Morocco	2,30%	4,60%	1,00%	2,60%
Dutch Caribbean	1,70%	2,00%	0,80%	0,90%
Suriname	4,60%	3,90%	2,10%	2,80%
Turkey	1,70%	3,30%	1,20%	1,90%
<b>VU Amsterdam</b>				
Indonesia	3,10%	0,90%	3,00%	1,20%
Morocco	6,30%	7,70%	3,00%	7,30%
Dutch Caribbean	1,60%	1,70%	1,60%	0,90%
Suriname	10,90%	5,10%	4,30%	3,70%
Turkey	6,30%	5,10%	3,00%	3,00%
<b>Wageningen University &amp; Research</b>				
Indonesia	-	-	2,50%	0,80%
Morocco	-	-	-	0,80%
Dutch Caribbean	-	-	1,30%	0,80%
Suriname	-	-	-	0,80%
Turkey	-	-	-	0,80%

Table 4. Inflow first year BA students with an origin in the traditional migration countries per university within type of prior education (hbo/vwo).

Among the inflow in MA programs, we see a consistent decrease in the percentage of students of Indonesian origin. Other than some fluctuations, the percentages remain stable over time (Figures 7 to 12). In addition, at EUR, we see a notable decrease in students of Surinamese and Dutch Caribbean origin.

Again, we see some contrasts with other origin categories. For example, there is a slight increase in the percentage of students of European origin at LEI, VU and WUR, and there is a

consistent but small increase in the percentage of students of 'other Asia' origin. The largest increase is seen at the UvA.

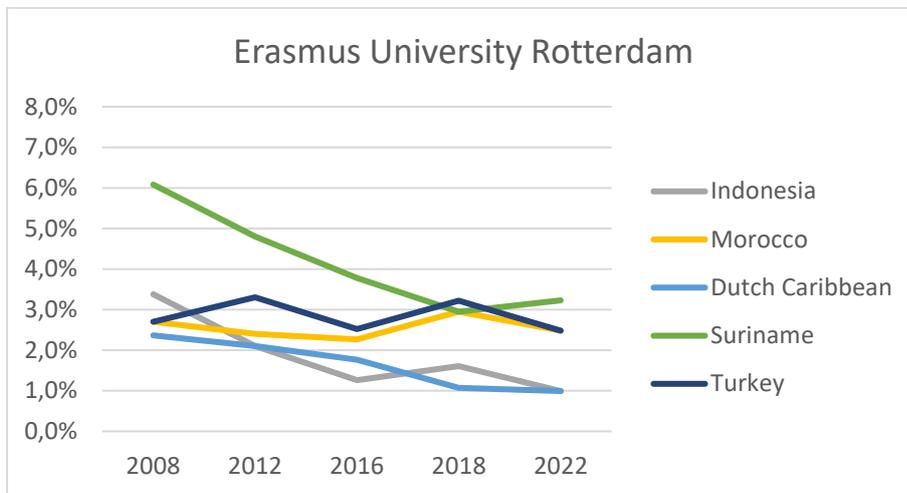


Figure 7. Inflow first-year MA students with a Dutch prior education per university with an origin in the traditional migration countries at Erasmus University Rotterdam.

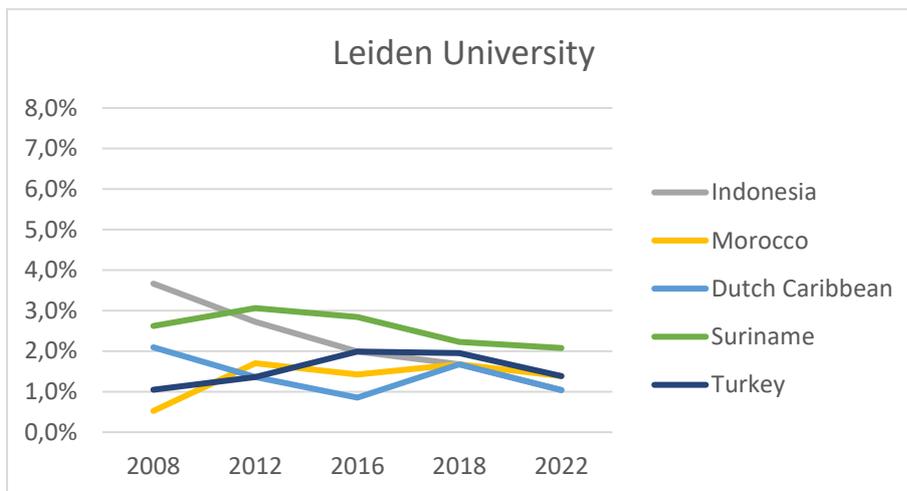


Figure 8. Inflow first-year MA students with a Dutch prior education per university with an origin in the traditional migration countries at Leiden University.

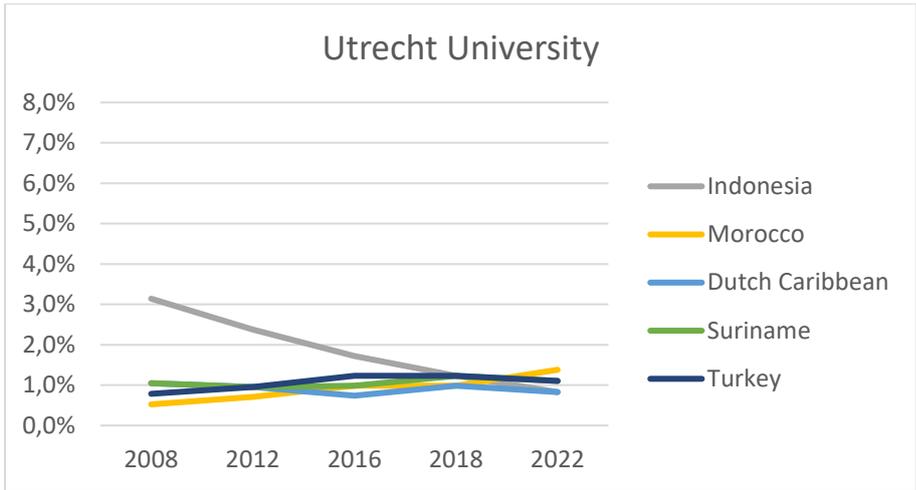


Figure 9. Inflow first-year MA students with a Dutch prior education per university with an origin in the traditional migration countries at Utrecht University.

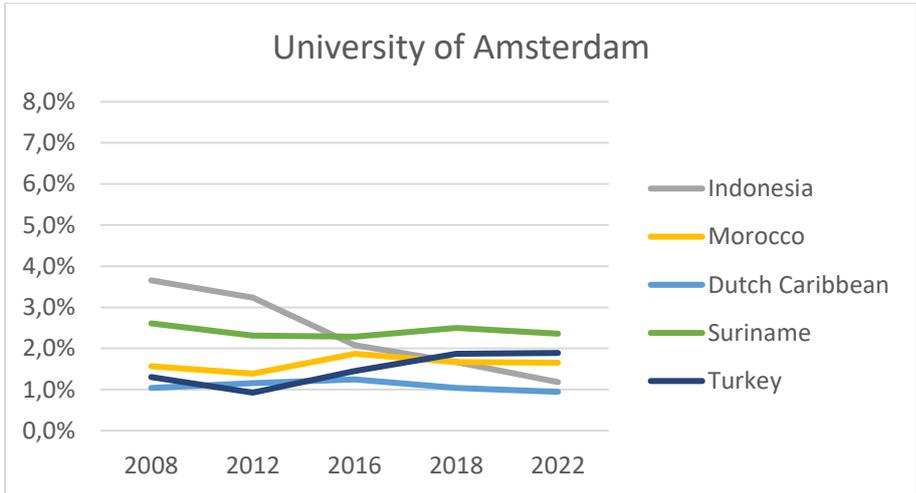


Figure 10. Inflow first-year MA students with a Dutch prior education per university with an origin in the traditional migration countries at the University of Amsterdam.

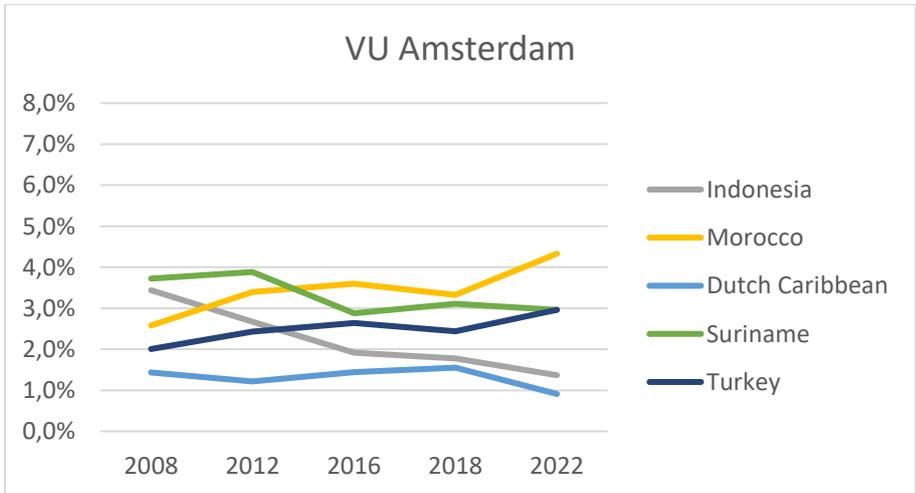


Figure 11. Inflow first-year MA students with a Dutch prior education per university with an origin in the traditional migration countries at VU Amsterdam.

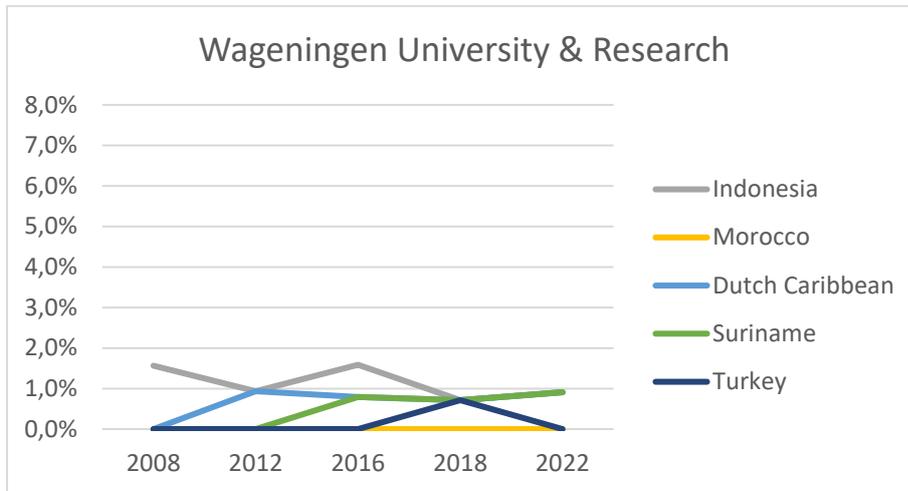


Figure 12. Inflow first-year MA students with a Dutch prior education per university with an origin in the traditional migration countries at Wageningen University & Research.

## Discussion

For both BA and MA programs, we see that the percentage of students with a Dutch prior education and an origin from traditional migration countries remains about the same at most participating universities, and decreases at some of these universities. Thus, the increase in cultural diversity we see in the Netherlands and especially in the big cities is not reflected in the inflow at the participating universities.

The results from the six participating universities show that while there is an increase in numbers in students with origins from traditional migration countries, there is an even stronger increase among students of Dutch origin or origin from the other categories ('Europe', 'other Asia', 'other Africa', and 'other America and Oceania').

These findings raise important questions for follow-up research: First, it is advisable to obtain such data from all Dutch universities and institutes of higher education in order to get a clear picture of the trends. For instance, it is possible that other higher education institutions do have an increase in students with origins from traditional migration countries that is proportional to the increase of this group in society.

That said, it is important to also conduct follow-up research within the participating universities as to why the percentage of students from this group within the participating universities does not appear to be increasing and in some cases is even decreasing. Our data suggest that universities like EUR, VU and UvA are failing to bring in regional talent with origins from traditional migration countries. In addition, it is important to examine the inclusiveness of open days, recruitment materials and the image of universities in general: how accessible and welcoming are these institutions really?

## **In conversation about the state of affairs at Erasmus University Rotterdam**

We presented these data to Prof. Dr. Annelien Bredenoord, Rector Magnificus at EUR, Prof. Dr. Semiha Denктаş, Chief Diversity Officer at EUR, and Prof. Dr. Vinod Subramaniam, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Diverse and Inclusive Higher Education.

Prof. Dr. Vinod Subramaniam: "It is important to provide insight into progress on diversity and inclusion in the sector in order to enable data-based policy. This research is an important step in gaining insight into whether the sector succeeds in creating equal opportunities for all students."

Prof. Dr. Semiha Denктаş sees these data as a great start to gain a better understanding of cultural diversity within EUR and other Dutch universities. "I am very happy that we have such a rich dataset in our hands and can look closely at different trends. It is striking that although Rotterdam is an incredibly culturally diverse city, this is not the case to the same extent at our university. We have seen this before among staff<sup>2</sup>, and now we see it among students as well. In the future, it is very important that we do our best to welcome local talents, from all different kinds of backgrounds, at EUR."

Prof. Dr. Annelien Bredenoord, adds "And the first steps have already been taken. We have a wonderful Academic Outreach Program that aims to promote equal educational opportunities for all students in primary and secondary education in Rotterdam. We have designed several workshops and programs that are now being offered at ten schools in Rotterdam. Of course, we also do research to improve these workshops and programs and share our insights and results with others. We also have a Student Council for Equity Diversity and Inclusion (SCEDI), who function as ambassadors during open days. I am very curious to see what the impact of the program will be, and how such interventions will change our enrollment figures!"

Prof. Dr. Semiha Denктаş: "And for our new students, there are several initiatives to make sure that everyone can get to know the university and academic life better, and to make sure that everyone can feel at home at our university. For instance, every summer there is the Pre Academic Programme for new students, and we work very hard on inclusive onboarding and inclusive education. And our Student Engagement Officer help new, often diverse, student associations to find their way at the university."

Prof. Dr. Annelien Bredenoord: "It's definitely important to keep monitoring so we can see if cultural diversity at EUR is increasing. And in addition, it is important to realize that we need to look beyond the numbers, and also research how our students are doing: do they feel at home, and what can we as EUR do to improve the sense of connection and inclusion? We will be working on this in the coming months!".

## **Considerations**

The current research also raises several questions around the definition and categorization of 'origin'. For example, the current categories of 'Europe', 'other Asia', 'other Africa', and 'other America and Oceania' include many different countries, but it is not desirable to include all of these countries under the same label. Within the group of students with a European origin, for example, we can expect differences between students with an origin from more affluent Western European countries and students with an origin from the so-called CEE countries (Central and Eastern European countries that have joined the European Union since 2004 and therefore can travel freely within

Europe), whereby there are concerns about the younger generation regarding, among other things, education<sup>8</sup>. The current classification does not allow for further investigation of this group.

In addition, the number of young people with a third-generation migration background (i.e., one of the grandparents was born abroad)<sup>9</sup> is growing. In the current CBS classification, they are not counted as having an origin outside the Netherlands, but it is plausible that they experience similar obstacles as young people with a second-generation migration background.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.pharos.nl/kennisbank/zorgen-om-kinderen-uit-midden-en-oost-europese-eu-landen/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/nieuws/2016/47/wie-zijn-de-derde-generatie->