

Becoming a Rotterdammer

A digital action research
to help newcomers
participate in Rotterdam.

A City Lab 010 project by New Momentum,
Stichting Mano and the Erasmus University.

... نستخدم مجموعة دعم لمساعدة بعضنا البعض



... Как няня я выучила язык!



This project is an initiative by



New Momentum



MANO



and has been made possible with a City Lab 010 grant by the Municipality of Rotterdam.



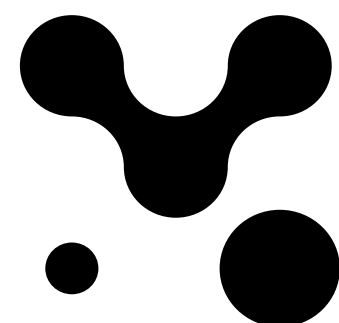


"In every group, there is a minority that uses the same resources *differently*. Their uncommon practices allow them to thrive."

- Jerry Sternin in [*The Power of Positive Deviance: How Unlikely Innovators Solve the World's Toughest Problems*](#)

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Introduction

As a newcomer, it can be challenging to find your way in the Netherlands. In recent years, both the national government and the municipality of Rotterdam have invested in projects and studies to assist newcomers in learning the language and culture, finding a job, and ultimately actively contributing to society.

These studies have shown that, despite these efforts, newcomers often get stuck in the system, and changing that system is complex and requires sustained effort. For those newcomers arriving in Rotterdam right now, systemic changes might come too late.

Hence, we're adopting a different approach. With "Becoming a Rotterdammer" we focused on **finding newcomers that thrive because they do things differently.**

Becoming a Rotterdammer in a nutshell

What does it mean for a newcomer 'to thrive'? Is it having a home, a meaningful job, lots of friends? Academic literature suggests that so-called 'belongingness'¹ is a crucial predictor for all of these things. When newcomers feel like they belong in a city, they will feel more at home and their well-being and participation will increase.

With *Becoming a Rotterdammer*, we have therefore looked for newcomers who score high in belongingness. They may have found strategies that help them feel at home more quickly, perhaps even unknowingly, and other newcomers can learn from these strategies.

Toward self-learning communities

The goal of *Becoming a Rotterdammer* is to use the Positive Deviance strategy to find unlikely innovators

among newcomers, and share their lessons with others. In that way, we basically aimed to establish self-learning communities around three groups of newcomers:

- 1. Young Eritrean and Ethiopian men,
- 2. Afghan and Iranian women aged 20-40
- 3. Refugees from Syria.

These groups were selected based on expertise from Stichting Mano, an organization that works with 'experience experts' to promote newcomer participation, and Dr. Amanda Alencar from Erasmus University, who has long studied newcomers and their use of media. Research agency New Momentum was in charge of planning and executing the research.

In addition to newcomers, *Becoming a Rotterdammer* also focused on the municipality's employment counselors and employers, as both play a role in guiding newcomers to paid employment. Thereby, this project aimed to create opportunities for

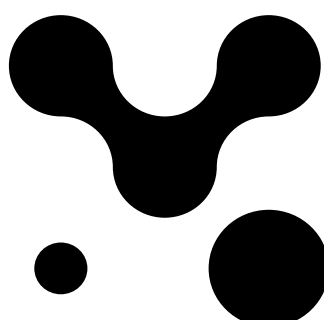
newcomers to participate in Rotterdam's society and contributes to a sustainable economy and a city where people feel free, safe, and comfortable.

This report

This report describes the strides we made on this project. We focus on describing our engagement with the newcomers, supplemented with findings surfacing from working with employers and work counselors.

"Newcomers that feel more at home are more likely to meaningfully participate."

¹ Malone, G. P., Pillow, D. R., & Osman, A. (2012). The General Belongingness Scale (GBS): Assessing achieved belongingness. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 52(3), 311–316. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2011.10.027>



Method


Becoming a Rotterdammer employs the Positive Deviance (PD) strategy¹. PD is based on the idea that, within every community, there are individuals or groups that have found better solutions to deal with problems than others, despite facing the same challenges and having access to the same resources.

Simply put: within a group of newcomers, some feel at home faster than others and can help them by sharing their lessons.

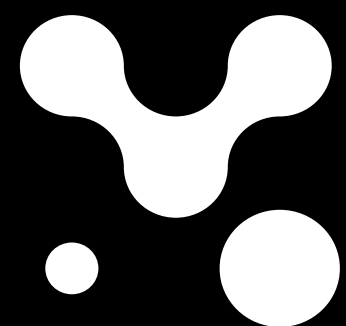
The positive deviance strategy focuses on:

1. Finding these so-called positive deviants,
2. Understanding what they do differently than others,
3. Sharing their lessons within the community.

¹ Pascale, R., Sternin, J., & Sternin, M. (2010). *The Power of Positive Deviance: How Unlikely Innovators Solve the World's Toughest Problems*. Harvard Business Press. <https://www.worldcat.org/title/power-of-positive-deviance-how-unlikely-innovators-solve-the-worlds-toughest-problems/oclc/748813192>



"Positive Deviance
focuses on unveiling
social innovations that
are hidden in plain sight"



About the target groups

Becoming a Rotterdammer focused on unveiling hidden innovations among three separate groups: young Eritrean men, Afghani and Iranian women aged 20-40, and a diverse group of refugees from Syria. Besides newcomers, we also researched employers (companies) and employment counselors working for the Municipality Rotterdam.

Newcomers

We developed and distributed a survey among a large group of newcomers to gather data that would enable us to identify the positive outliers in their midsts. The survey specifically measured the newcomers' level of belongingness, while also mapping factors that could possibly influence their belongingness (e.g., level of education, number of friends, etc.). Using advanced statistical analysis to account for the influence of these factors, we

identified the positive deviants.

Next, we interviewed the positive deviants about the things that they thought made the difference in feeling at home in Rotterdam. We then validated that these practices were indeed making the difference in terms of feeling at home, by checking to what extent other newcomers applied these strategies. From there, we generated a list of behaviors uniquely exhibited by the outliers and - in co-creation sessions - developed ideas to consolidate these lessons at Stichting Mano and share them with other communities.

Employers

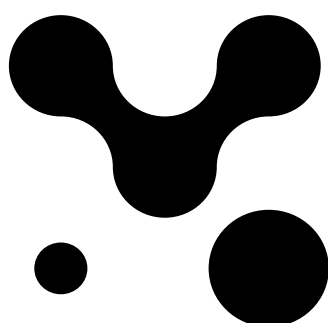
We followed a similar process in working with employers. We conducted surveys to measure how many newcomers companies have hired and how many remain employed. Companies that were particularly successful in retaining newcomers were further analyzed in what they thought made the difference in successfully employing newcomers.

Employment counsellors

Two employment counsellors were interviewed to understand how they effectively support newcomers and how they can improve. Furthermore, the project was presented to a group of employment counselors, before, during and after the project, allowing for reflection on the method and the main findings.

“It's easier to act your way into a new way of thinking, than think your way into a new way of acting.”

- Jerry Sternin in 'The Power of Positive Deviance: How Unlikely Innovators Solve the World's Toughest Problems'



Phase I: Inventarisation

During the first phase, we made an inventarisation of existing knowledge and data, recruited participants, and developed surveys. We held focus group sessions to make sure that the survey would strike the right chord with the target groups. We also used focus groups and interviews to acquire qualitative insights to complement the prospected survey results.

Inventarisation

We started by making an inventarisation of what is already known. We searched for existing projects and data sources and requested access to external organization databases like CBS and the municipality. We also engaged with various organizations and stakeholders like Open Embassy, Newbees, and the Rotterdam municipal language and integration

advisor, among others, to reach a comprehensive understanding of the context of our work.

Outcome measure

We discussed and improved our project and research design with the project’s stakeholders. Based on those engagements, we decided to focus on newcomers’ *sense of belonging* rather than a generic measure of participation. We made this decision for two important reason. First of all, there is no database that tracks employment and/ or participation that can be shared under AVG privacy regulations. Secondly, research shows that a newcomer’s sense of belonging is a more significant predictor of successful participation than ‘hard’

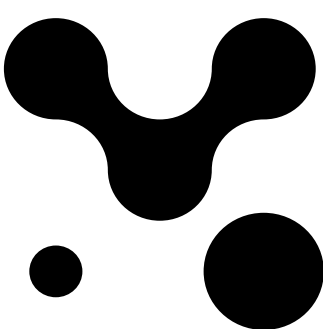
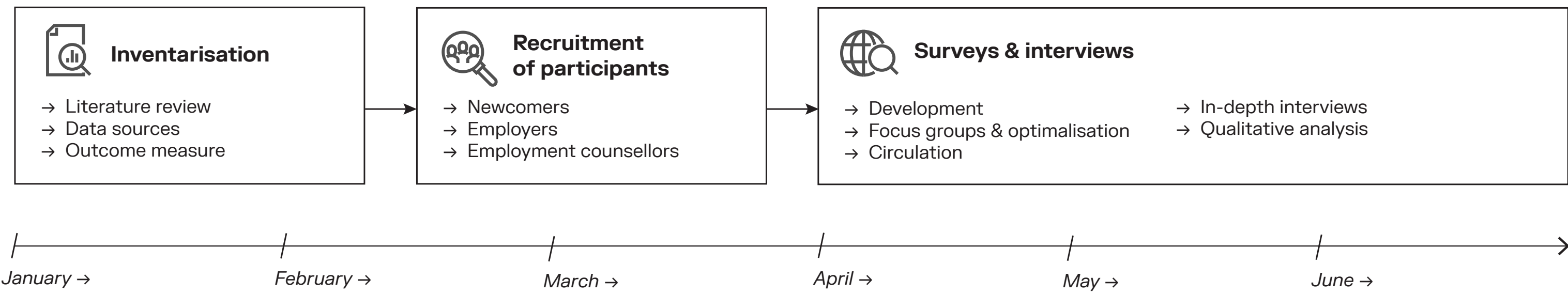
statistics such as education, language proficiency, or employment status.

Recruitment of participants

Newcomers

It was essential to work with relatively homogeneous groups as we can only identify positive deviants if the entire group faces similar challenges. After discussions with stakeholders, we defined the newcomer groups we would work with:

- 1. Young Eritrean and Ethiopian men,
- 2. Afghan and Iranian women aged 20-40,
- 3. Refugees from Syria.



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The selection of these groups was based on the insight provided by project members Stichting Mano, an organization that utilizes experienced experts to foster the involvement of new arrivals, as well as Dr. Amanda Alencar from Erasmus University, who has an extensive background in studying the media usage of newcomers.

Employment counsellors

Originally, the idea was to conduct a Positive Deviance study among a group of work counselors as well. However, this was too big of a commitment for the department with work counselors at the municipality. Therefore, we suggested to interview a group of employment counselors at the beginning and at the end of the project. Eventually, two work counselors were allowed and willing to collaborate and were interviewed in May 2023.

Employers

Originally, the idea was to define two groups of employers (for example: manual labor vs. knowledge work) and conduct a Positive Deviance study with these two groups. After consulting the municipality, we decided to first create a survey for employers and look for patterns that could be used to distinguish two groups.

Surveys and interviews

Newcomers

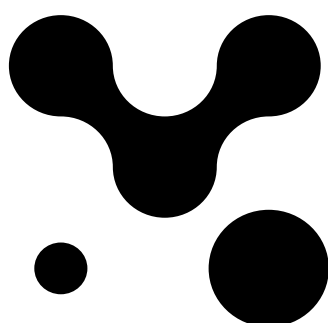
Based on literature research and discussions with stakeholders, we developed a survey that inquired about things such as: country of origin, moment of migration, time and location in Rotterdam, education, language skills, (voluntary) work, family and living situation, friends and social support, social media use, resilience (validated scale¹), and belongingness (validated scale²)

In March 2023, we pre-tested the survey in a focus group with newcomers from all three target groups. Various questions were rephrased and/or simplified. For example, instead of asking for education level, we asked for years of education because systems of education vary across countries. Also, we reduced the number of statements from the resilience and belongingness scales, as some of them were deemed too confusing.

A revised version of the questionnaire was made available in Qualtrics (a state-of-the-art, online survey tool) in five languages: Dutch, English, Farsi, Arabic, and Tigrinya. The survey was distributed via leaflets at Stichting Mano, via e-mail and via WhatsApp

1 Campbell-Sills, L., & Stein, M. B. (2007). Psychometric analysis and refinement of the connor–davidson resilience scale (CD-RISC): Validation of a 10-item measure of resilience. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 20(6), 1019–1028. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jts.20271>

2 Malone, G. P., Pillow, D. R., & Osman, A. (2012). The General Belongingness Scale (GBS): Assessing achieved belongingness. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 52(3), 311–316. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2011.10.027>



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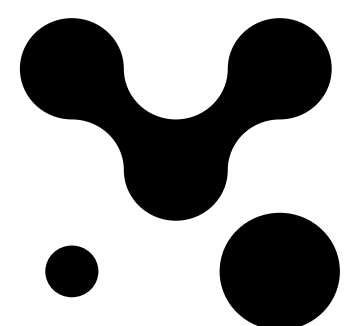
groups (see Appendix 'Newcomer Survey').

In addition to the survey, newcomers connected with Stichting Mano were interviewed, following the questions in the survey plus several follow-up questions (see Appendix 'Interview sheet'). The interviews were recorded, transcribed and qualitatively analyzed.

Employers

A survey was developed and made available via Qualtrics (see Appendix 'Employer Survey'), asking for: sector, company size, newcomers as employees (in the past, and currently), used and experienced support and facilities in hiring newcomers, and reasons why newcomers are not working for the employer anymore (if that was the case).

The survey was distributed via e-mail in March by an employee of the municipality responsible for connecting companies and employers with newcomers. Reminders were sent in April and May. Furthermore, the survey was distributed via the networks of this projects partners, via entrepreneurial societies (for example: OopZ!), and via a paid advertisement targeting entrepreneurs in Rotterdam on LinkedIn.



Phase II: Finding Positive Deviants

During the second phase, we iterated through cycles of exploratory analysis, contextualization and intermediary meetings to arrive at the data set that we used to identify positive deviants. Using sophisticated statistical methods, we controlled for variance and identified the positive deviants.

Newcomers

Exploratory analysis

In May, we started conducting exploratory analyses. This was a continuous process, as we kept recruiting more participants and analyzing interviews to deepen our understanding. In June, an intermediary report was discussed with all project partners, and strategies to recruit more participants were discussed.

Contextualization

The preliminary results of the survey guided the qualitative analysis of the interviews and conduction of additional interviews. As the interviews were qualitatively analyzed, the interviewees and interviewers were regularly asked to clarify statements for us to gain an in-depth understanding.

In-depth analysis

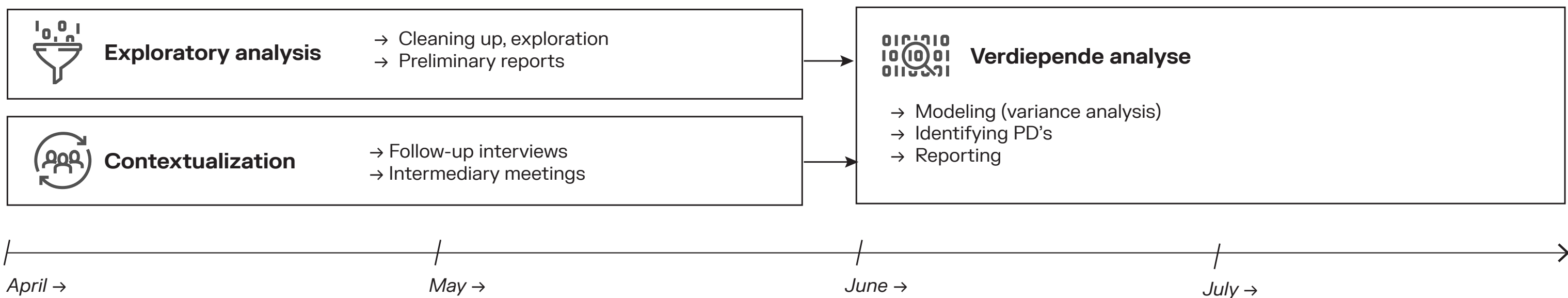
Based on the preliminary analysis, the first contextualization effort, and the definite number of participants, we started building a model that would predict belongingness for each participant based on their other responses. Simply put: we explored to what extent factors such as age, education level,

living situation, and reported resilience predicted belongingness.

Once we arrived at our final model, we predicted the belongingness scores for each of the participants and compared these with the observed score. For each group, we identified the three respondents that scored much higher than the model predicted. In this way, we managed to find the Positive Deviants: the people that – despite circumstances – score much higher than their peers in terms of belongingness and must be doing something differently.

Employers

The survey led to a total of 9 respondents which

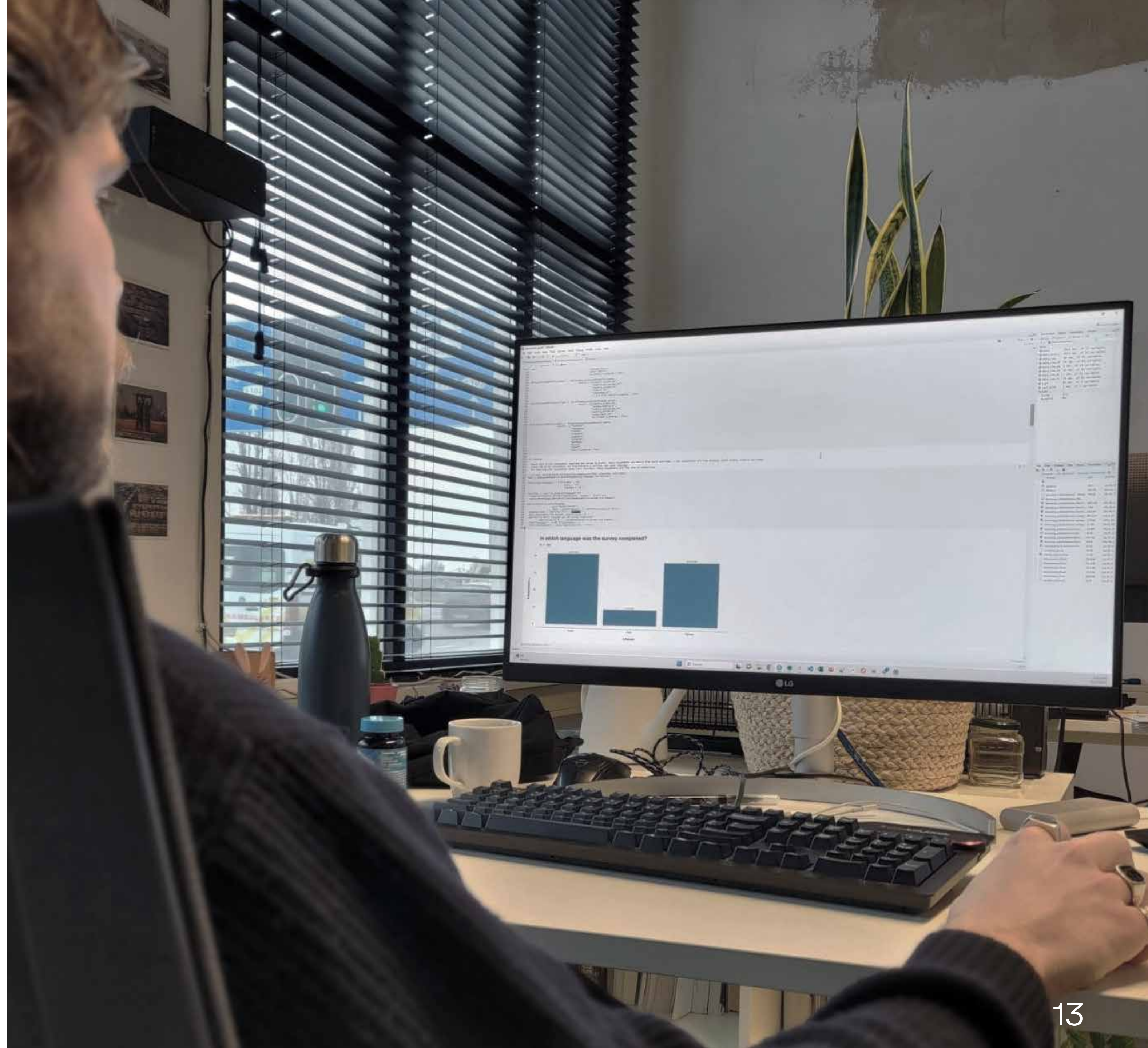


Chapter 2: Method

is too little to distinguish two groups of employers. Furthermore, barely half of these respondents were willing to participate in PD follow-up study.

Exploratory analysis showed that the companies differed in size and sector, but all struggled to (structurally) employ newcomers. In-depth analysis, taking the proportion of newcomers among the current employees, showed that there were no positive outliers.

Yet, we zoomed in on the employers that stood out positively in terms of retaining newcomers to find out how they might be supported better.



Phase III: Zooming in

During the third phase, we aimed to find out what it is that sets the positive deviants apart. Or in other words: what are the behaviors that the positive deviants display, but others do not? During card sorting workshops, the participants engaged in lively discussions about the positive deviants' behaviors in order to identify what the success factors are.

Interviews with PDs

Members of the Mano network interviewed three PD's per group and asked them: (1) what are the 5 things that they did that helped them feel at home in Rotterdam, and (2) what are 5 things that others did that helped them feel at home in Rotterdam. We qualitatively analyzed the interviews and wrote the things that were mentioned down on cards.

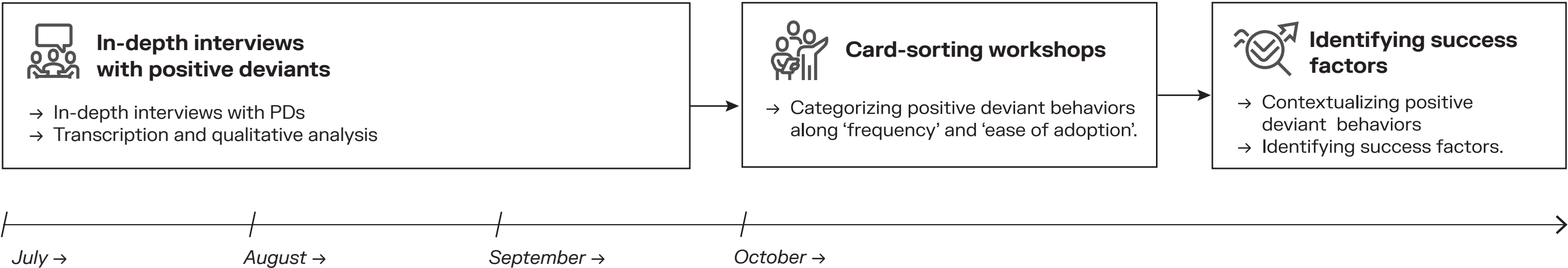
Card sorting workshops

During workshops, we conducted card sorting

exercises where participants categorized the things mentioned during the interviews along two axes: (1) the extent to which they display the behavior themselves (often vs. never), and (2) how easy it is to adopt this behavior (easy vs. hard).

Finding success factors

Behaviors that were categorized as rarely displayed while being easy to adopt, were selected as the PD behaviors, meaning that these are the lessons that can be spread among communities of newcomers. Behaviors that are rarely displayed and that were categorized as hard to adopt, were selected as the PD behaviors that should be facilitated more intensely, for example by Mano, the municipality and employers.



Phase IV: Scaling up and consolidating lessons

During the final phase, we hosted workshops led by media professionals to co-design solutions with the newcomers that can be consolidated within their communities, and spread to others. In 2024, we will engage in various activities to disseminate insights and lessons learned from the project across academia, municipalities and organizations working with newcomers.

Workshops

The media-making workshop sessions began with an extensive group discussion centered around the PD behaviors that were identified in the preceding card-sorting session. This discussion aimed to provide a contextual understanding of these behaviors in relation to the participants' experiences in Rotterdam. Following this discussion, the participants explored

strategies for communicating these behaviors through different platforms such as social media, messaging apps, or other means. They also discussed the possible formats for communication, including visual representations like pictures, leaflets, newsletters, and more. To this end, participants engaged with two experts in media-making and collaborated with their peers to design practical solutions tailored for newcomers, like them, living in the city of Rotterdam.

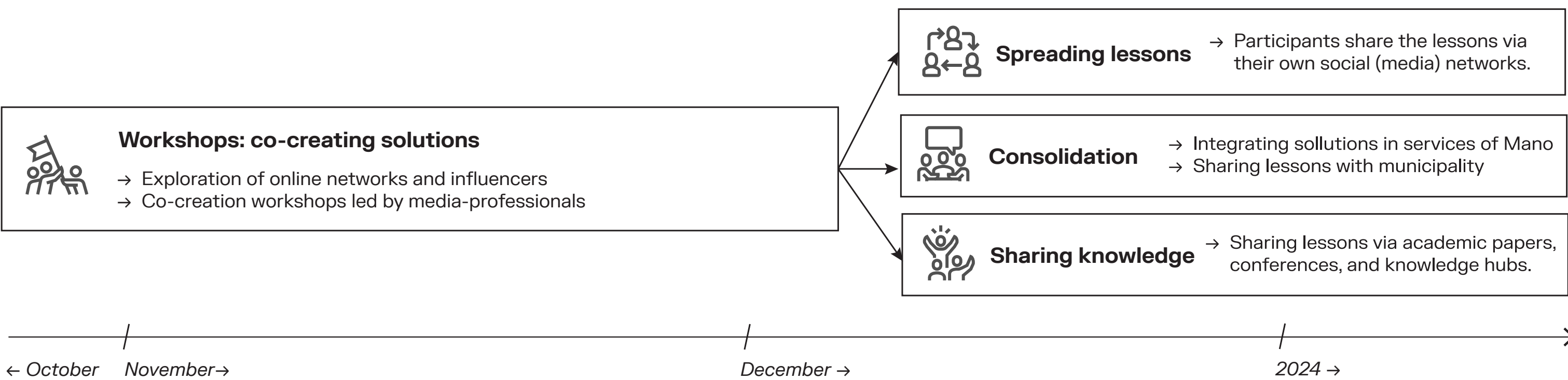
Output dissemination

We will engage in various activities to disseminate insights and lessons learned from the project:

1) Internal consolidation of the findings at stichting Mano and the municipality fo Rotterdam through this report and knowledge sessions.

2) Publication of academic article combining the qualitative and quantitative results as well as findings from the workshops. The scientific article will build on the notions of belonging and resilience to analyze the experiences of settling newcomers and the conditions that can facilitate and hinder belonging.

3) Creation of a Digital Hub to host, promote and take part in various research and applied projects using co-design and co-production with newcomers.



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We will include a dedicated section focused on initiatives in Rotterdam that utilize Participatory Action Research (PAR) with asylum migrants, refugees and other migrant groups. Furthermore, we will incorporate a section that highlights education initiatives, accompanied by guidelines, theoretical tools, and interviews with relevant actors, among other valuable resources for developing co-creation research on migration related topics.

4) Engagement with different newcomer organizations in the Netherlands (New Women Connectors, The Code to Change, We Organization, Vluchtelingenwerk) for disseminating workshop recommendations and thoughts for future action. Similarly, the workshops will also result in concrete guidelines that could be beneficial for initiatives being developed by organizations and companies internationally, such as apps being developed for refugees in Denmark (by Netcompany), or the provision of evidence-based for policy-making reports by organizations working on migrant integration initiatives in Europe, such as Migration Policy Centre (MPI), International Organization for Migration (IOM) and International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD).



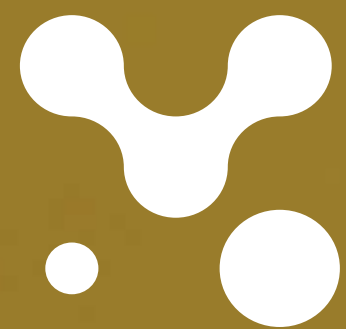
Phase I: Inventarisation

Results

Between April and June 2023, a group of newcomers in Rotterdam completed a survey. The goal of this survey is to gain insights into the characteristics of the newcomers, assess their sense of belonging in Rotterdam ('belonginess'), and evaluate their ability to handle setbacks ('resilience').

In this section, we will use the belongingness and resilience scores as guidelines, since a strong feeling of belongingness is beneficial for the newcomers and the society, where being resilient is beneficial

for the feeling of belongingness. Therefore, for this report, the characteristics of the respondents will be analyzed, and possible relations with belongingness will be investigated.



Research setup

Belonginess and resilience play an important role in newcomers' participation and integration. We used two validated scales to be able to capture the sense of belonging ("belonginess") and the ability to handle setbacks ("resilience") of the newcomers.

Belongingness

Belongingness is the feeling that people belong to a place where they can feel free, have friends, be treated equally and where they contribute meaningfully to society. The concept of belongingness has practical aspects (e.g., finding a job, being economically and socially integrated), as well as subjective aspects (e.g., feeling safe, at home and free). In this report, belongingness is a central concept as it is beneficial to newcomers as well as society.

Resilience

Resilience is one's capability to bounce back after

setbacks. Resilience is an important concept in this project, because highly resilient people are more likely to have a stronger sense of belonging. We want to find strategies that help people that are less resilient to feel like they belong in Rotterdam, too.

Survey development

Besides the belongingness and resilience scales, we came up with questions on the following topics:

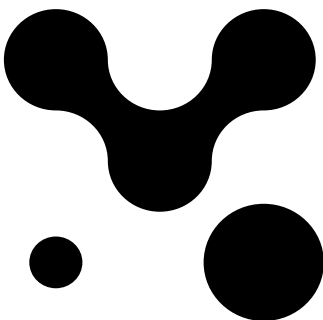
- *How long they live in Rotterdam;*
- *How long and where they followed education;*
- *How well they speak the Dutch language;*
- *If they have (voluntary) work;*
- *If they have and/or live with family members and/or friends, and if they find it easy to connect with others in Rotterdam;*
- *The social media platforms they use.*

Before we created the final survey in Qualtrics and distributed it among the newcomers, we pretested it among a selected group of newcomers in collaboration with Stichting Mano.

Survey analysis and contextualization

With the insights obtained by the survey, we get to know the newcomers better and we try to find possible links with their belongingness. To get an even better understanding of the conditions that might be beneficial for the sense of belonging in Rotterdam, we followed up our quantitative research by interviewing some of the respondents. Consequently, we were able to interpret the findings of the quantitative research to a greater extent by asking about the same topics included in the survey.

Belongingness is the feeling that people belong to a place where they can feel free, have friends, be treated equally and where they contribute meaningfully to society



Participants

In May and June 2023, a total of 115 newcomers recruited by Stichting Mano filled in the survey. We selected the responses that included answers to the questions on belongingness, due to this being our variable of interest. After filtering out these responses, 86 valid responses were left.

Language and country of origin

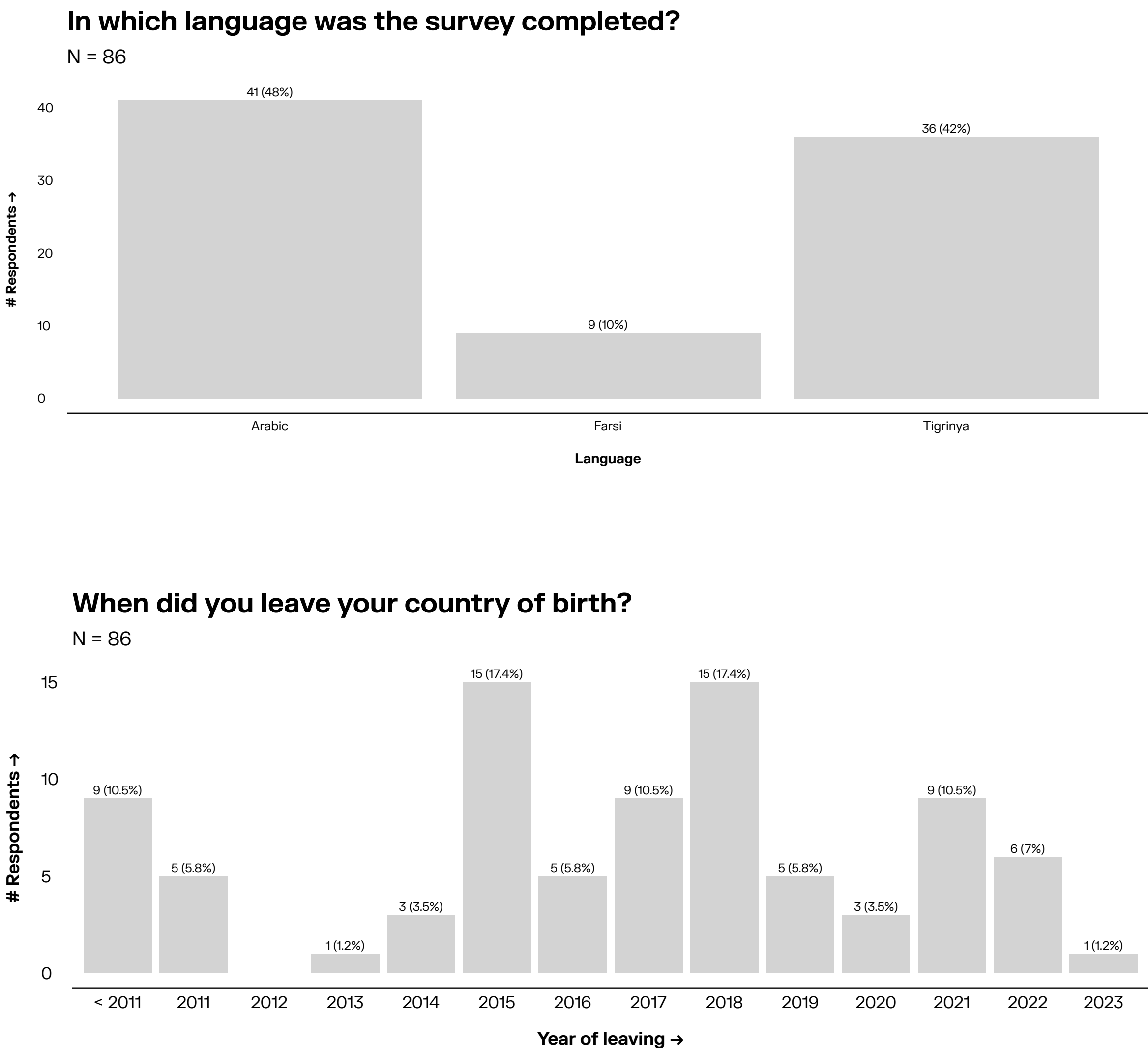
Almost half of the respondents completed the survey in Arabic, who mostly are from Syria and Yemen.

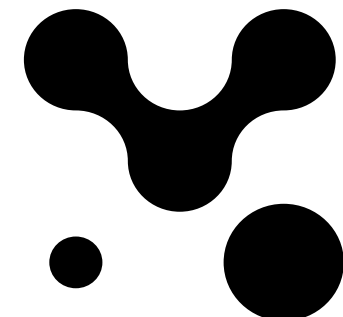
Around 40% of the respondents are from Ethiopia or Eritrea, and speak Tigrinya.

The remaining nine respondents speak Farsi (Persian). These respondents are from Iran or Afghanistan.

Time in Rotterdam

The length and location of living in Rotterdam differs between the respondents. Where some respondents



[illegible]

Belongingness and resilience

We use belongingness and resilience scores as guidelines, since a strong feeling of belongingness is beneficial for the newcomers and the society, where being resilient is beneficial for the feeling of belongingness. The characteristics of the respondents are analyzed and possible relations with belongingness investigated.

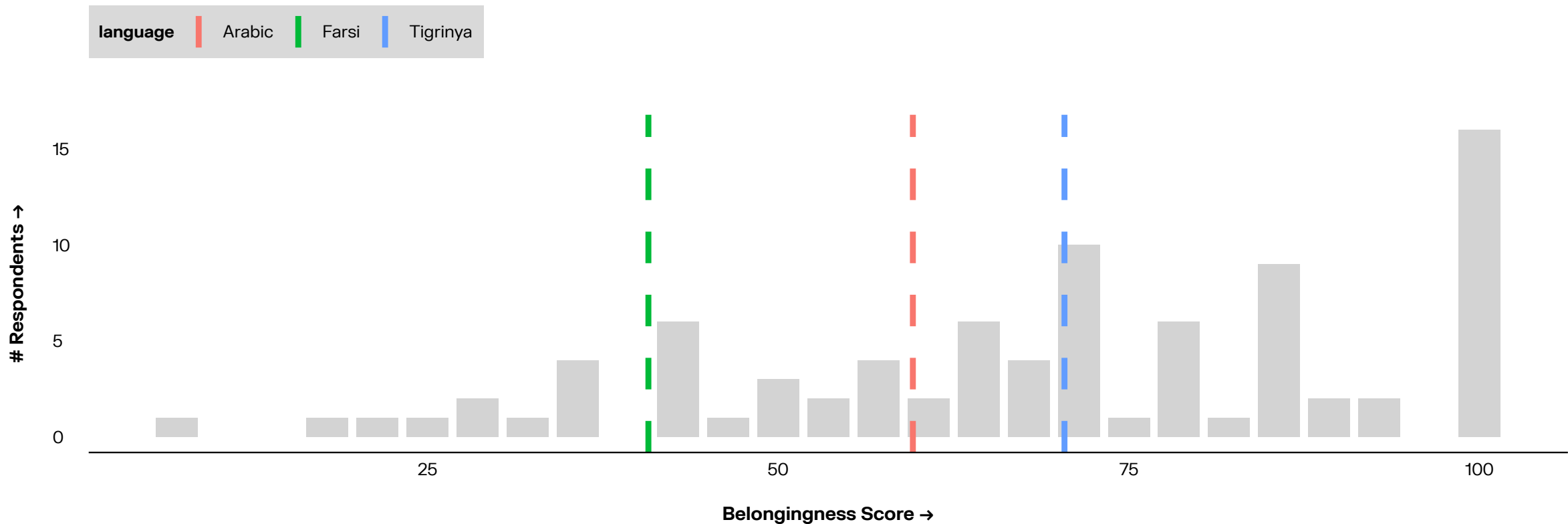
Scales

Respondents' sense of belonging in Rotterdam and their resilience were assessed through a series of statements. For belongingness, seven statements measured the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed, reflecting their sense of belonging in Rotterdam. These questions demonstrated an acceptable level of internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.760, indicating their effectiveness in gauging respondents' feelings of involvement in Rotterdam.

Similarly, resilience was evaluated using ten statements where respondents indicated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement. The questions regarding resilience also exhibited acceptable internal

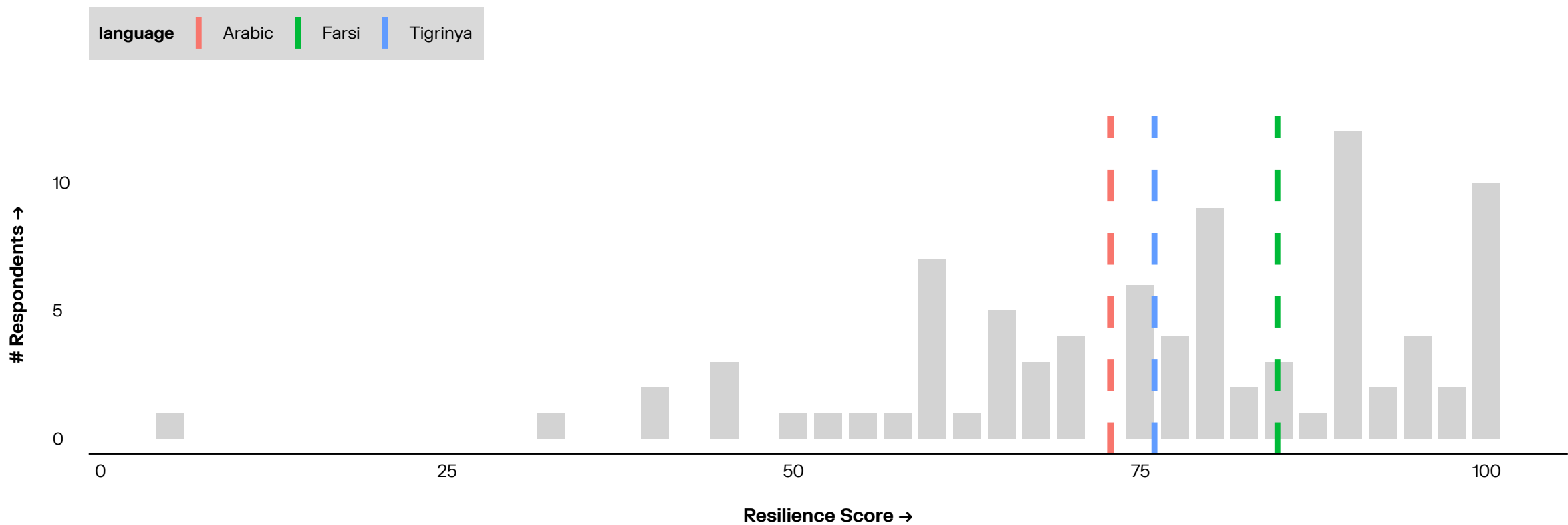
Belongingness

N = 86 , Cronbach's alpha = 0.76 , Mean = 69.2



Resilience

N = 86 , Cronbach's alpha = 0.735 , Mean = 76.6



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consistency, as evidenced by a Cronbach's alpha of 0.735, indicating their suitability for assessing respondents' ability to handle setbacks.

Belongingness

The average belongingness score was 69.2, with 100 as the most frequently occurring score. It is remarkable that the average belongingness scores significantly differs per newcomer group. The average belongingness score of the Tigrinya speaking respondents is almost the same as the overall average score (70.4), while the average belongingness score of the Persian newcomers is almost half of the overall average. The high belongingness score of the Eritrean and Ethiopian newcomers might be explained by the fact that the Erithrean people feel at home in Rotterdam due to a large Erithrean community already present in the city.

Resilience

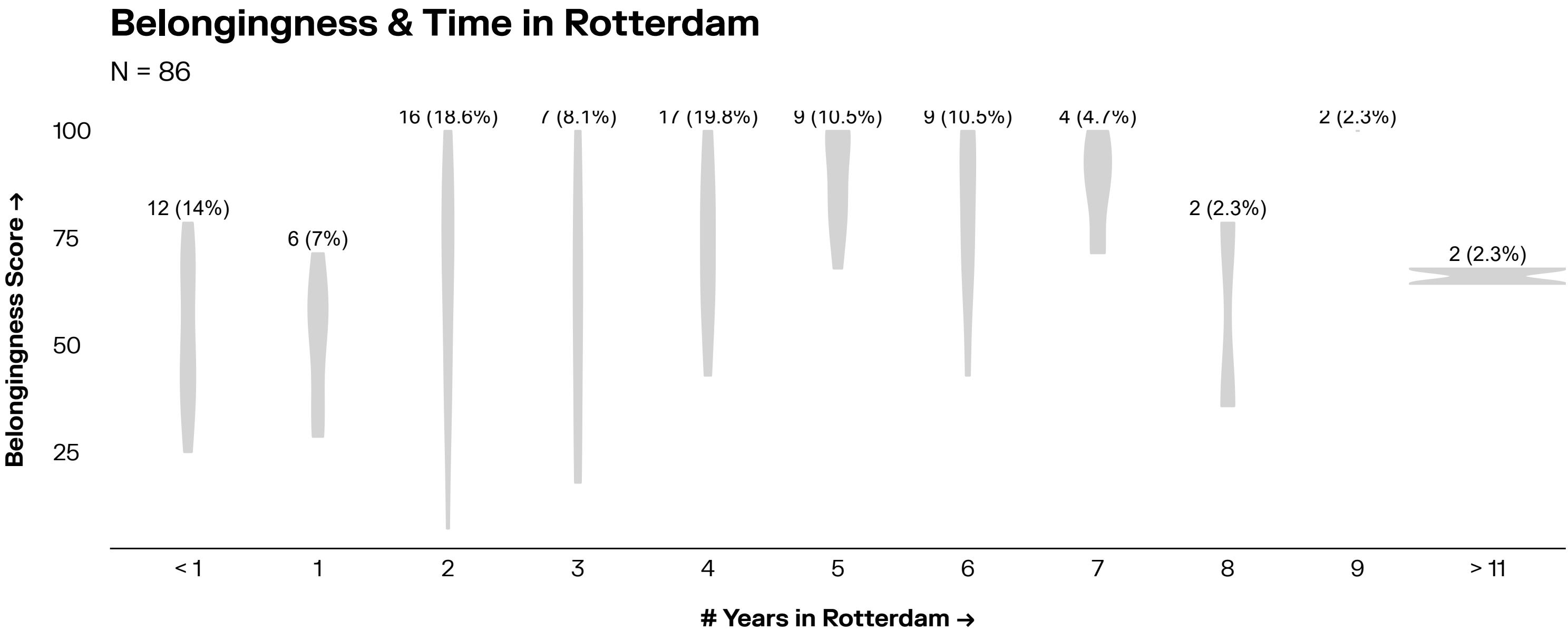
The average resilience score was 76.6, with 90 as the most frequently occurring score. The differences in average resilience scores per language group are noticeably smaller. However, it is remarkable that the Persian newcomers have the highest average resilience score, while their average belongingness score was the lowest. A reason could be that the

low number of Persian respondents. The other two average resilience scores lie around the overall average resilience score.

Newcomers that have spent more time in Rotterdam, score higher on belongingness

The number of years in Rotterdam has a significant influence on the belongingness score of the respondents ($p=0.001$), which can be seen in the violin plot with the relation between belongingness and time in Rotterdam. A violin plot is used to display the distribution of continuous data, where the width of the violin corresponds with the frequency of the data points. So, wider sections indicate higher

data density, while narrower sections represent lower density. Looking at the violin plot of the time in Rotterdam related to belongingness, it seems that the longer a newcomer lives in Rotterdam, the stronger the sense of belonging becomes.



Perceptions and experiences of belonging

In this study, newcomers understand ‘belonging’ as a place where they can feel free, have friends, be treated equally and work, which relates to both views of belonging in terms of its practical aspects (e.g., finding a job, being economically and socially integrated) and subjective aspects (e.g., feeling safe, at home and free).

Some interviewees identified with the city of Rotterdam because it reminds them of the big cities where they come from, such as the crowded spaces, tall buildings and towers as well as the urban infrastructures. Others emphasized the “tolerance atmosphere” in Rotterdam.

The fact that many people with different backgrounds are free to practice their religion, culture and wear what they want. It gives them a feeling of being accepted and being free the way they like (this was often not possible in their home country).

Participants also mentioned safety and security in Rotterdam as a positive point. They feel safe to go around at any time of day or night.

A recurrent theme in the interviews was a sense amongst newcomers that ‘belonging’ is strongly shaped by opportunities to participate in the social life of their community. Many said that having the freedom to celebrate cultural and religious events, such as Eid days and new year festivities, helps them overcome the feeling that they are strangers in their new city while also being able to engage in practices that were prohibited in their host country. For instance, seeing mosques and people being free to wear what they want gives them a feeling of home.

According to participants, the ‘tolerance atmosphere’ in Rotterdam enables people from diverse backgrounds to practice their religion and culture, which in turn makes them feel connected to the city spaces. Some participants also said that visiting different cultural places in Rotterdam made them see themselves as part of the city and its inhabitants.

”Having the freedom to celebrate cultural and religious events, such as Eid days and new year festivities, help to overcome the feeling that newcomers are strangers in a new city”



Employment

When looking at the employment history of the survey respondents, we see that around 23% currently have a paid job and 20% had a paid job in the past, while voluntary work is done a little more often than paid work.

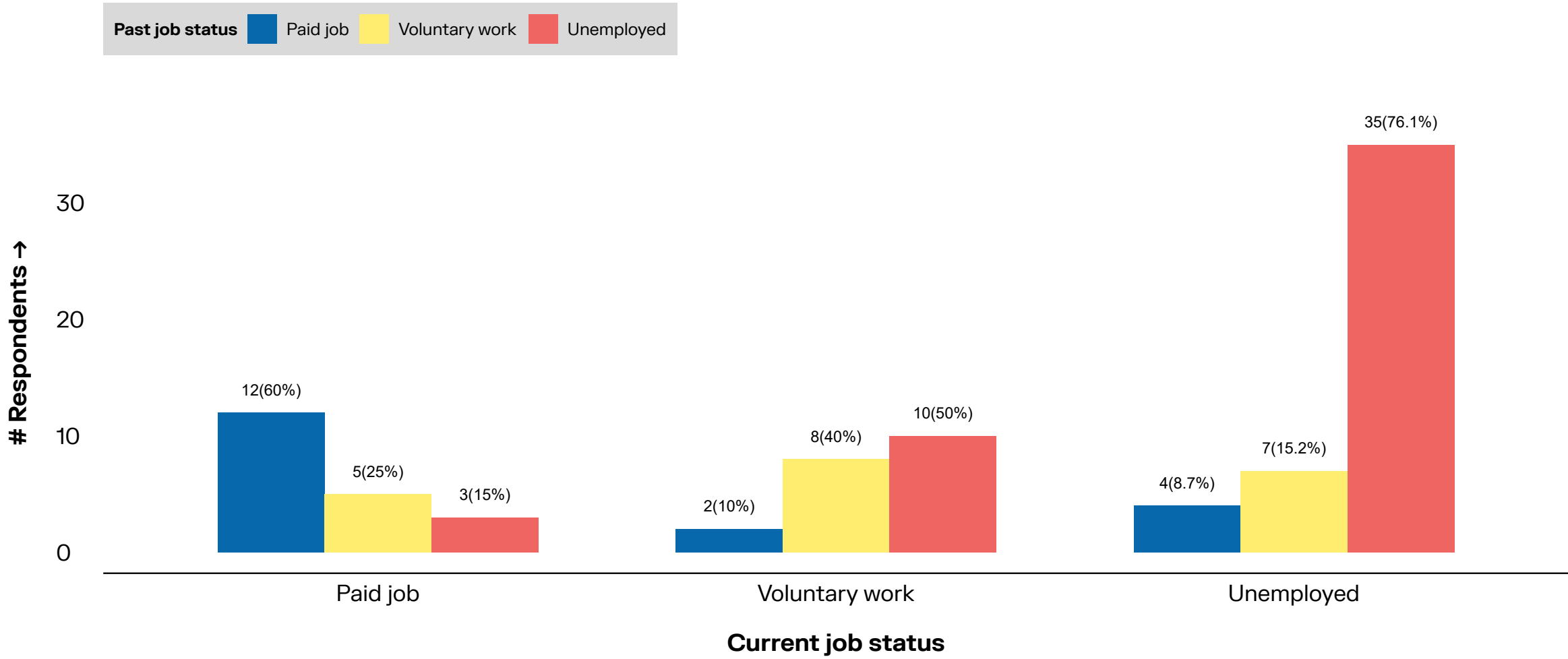
The employment situation of the respondents has not been very stable; about 35% of the respondents the work situation has changed, for example from volunteering to paid work, or vice versa.

Job prospects and place of education

The place and length of education seem to influence the job opportunities in the Netherlands. Half of the respondents who followed a study in the Netherlands and 60% of the respondents who followed a study in another country than their country of origin, has/had a paid job, while ‘only’ 26% of the respondents who followed a study in their country of origin have found a job. Although only around 25% of the respondents did follow a study outside their country of origin, this

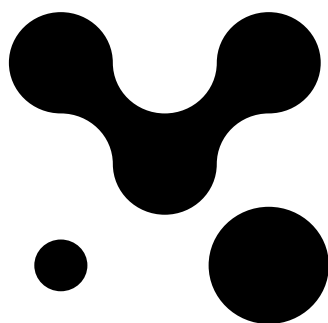
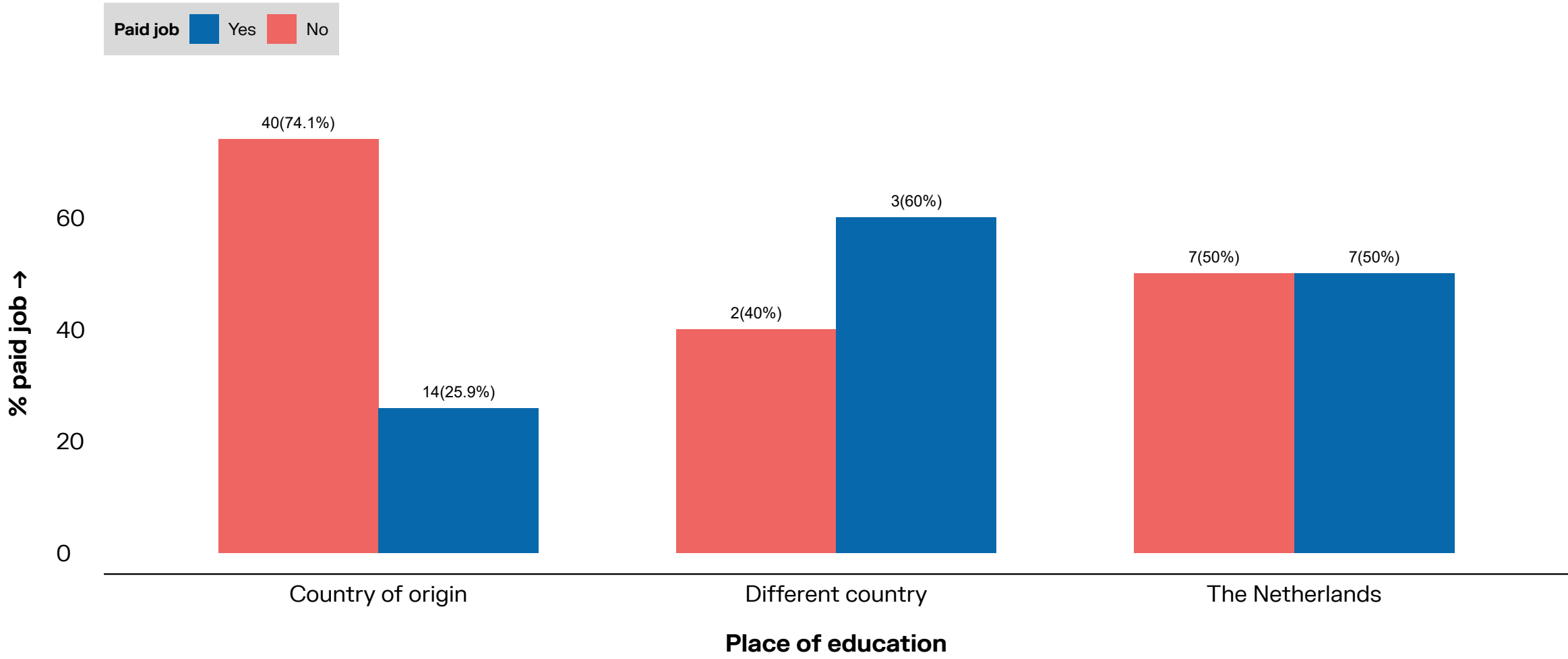
Paid Job Status

N = 86



Does the place of education affect job opportunities?

N = 73



Chapter 3: Results

finding implies that following some form of education in a different country than their country of origin might increase the chance of newcomers finding a job.

Job prospects and length of education

Aside from the place of education, the length of education appears to have a positive influence on the job opportunities in the Netherlands. Where not even 19% of the respondents who followed education for less than 5 years have found a job, more than 35% of the respondents with an education of more than 5 years have or/and had a job. This gives reason to state that the length of education indeed has a positive influence on finding employment in the host country.

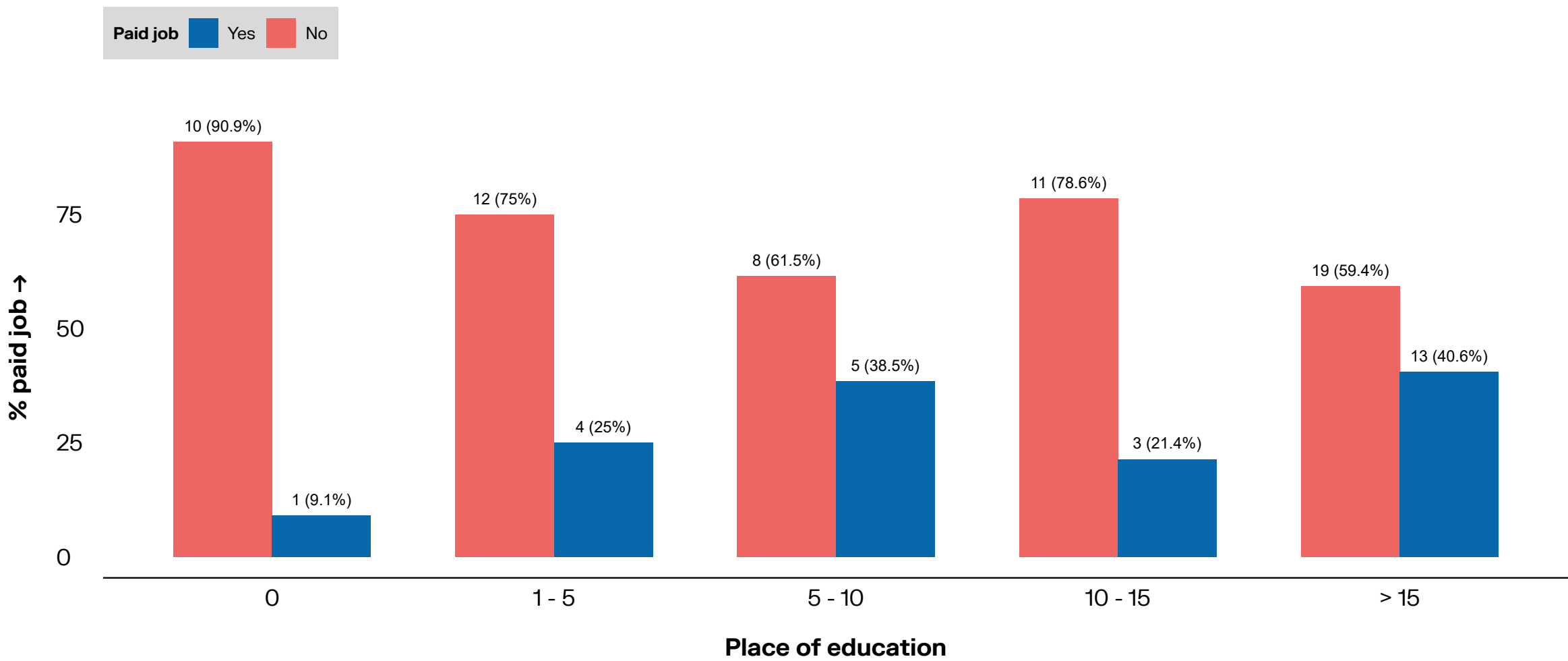
Employment and belongingness

The current job situation of the newcomers appears to have a small influence on their belongingness score, yet not significant ($p=0.151$), while the status of having a job in the past - voluntary or paid - seems to influence belongingness too, yet also insignificantly ($p=0.308$). These findings correspond with the figures of belongingness relative to the current and past job status. While a modest relation can be found between belongingness and the current job situation, this is less the case for the past job situation.

It is remarkable that the respondents with the lowest belongingness scores have and had a paid job, where

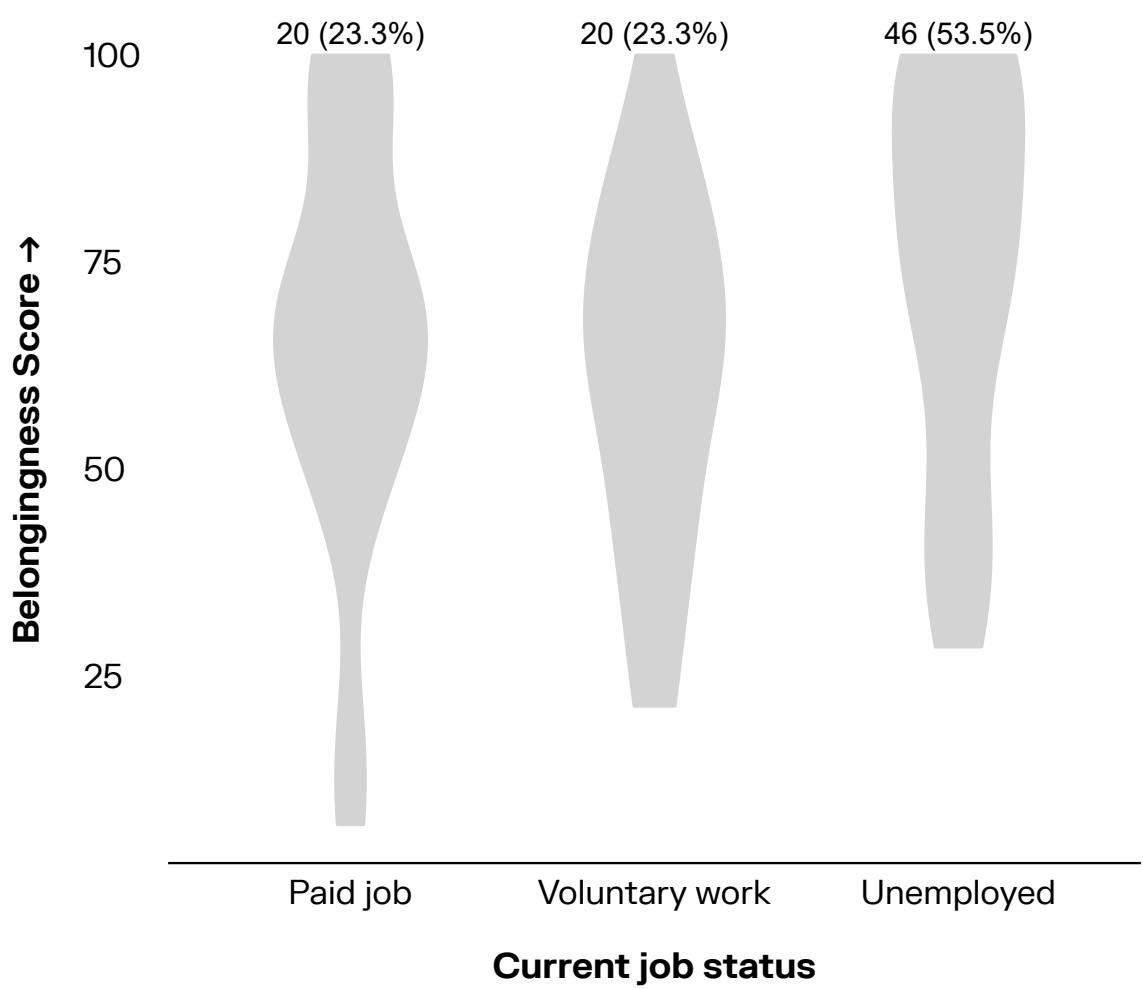
Does the length of education affect job opportunities?

N = 73



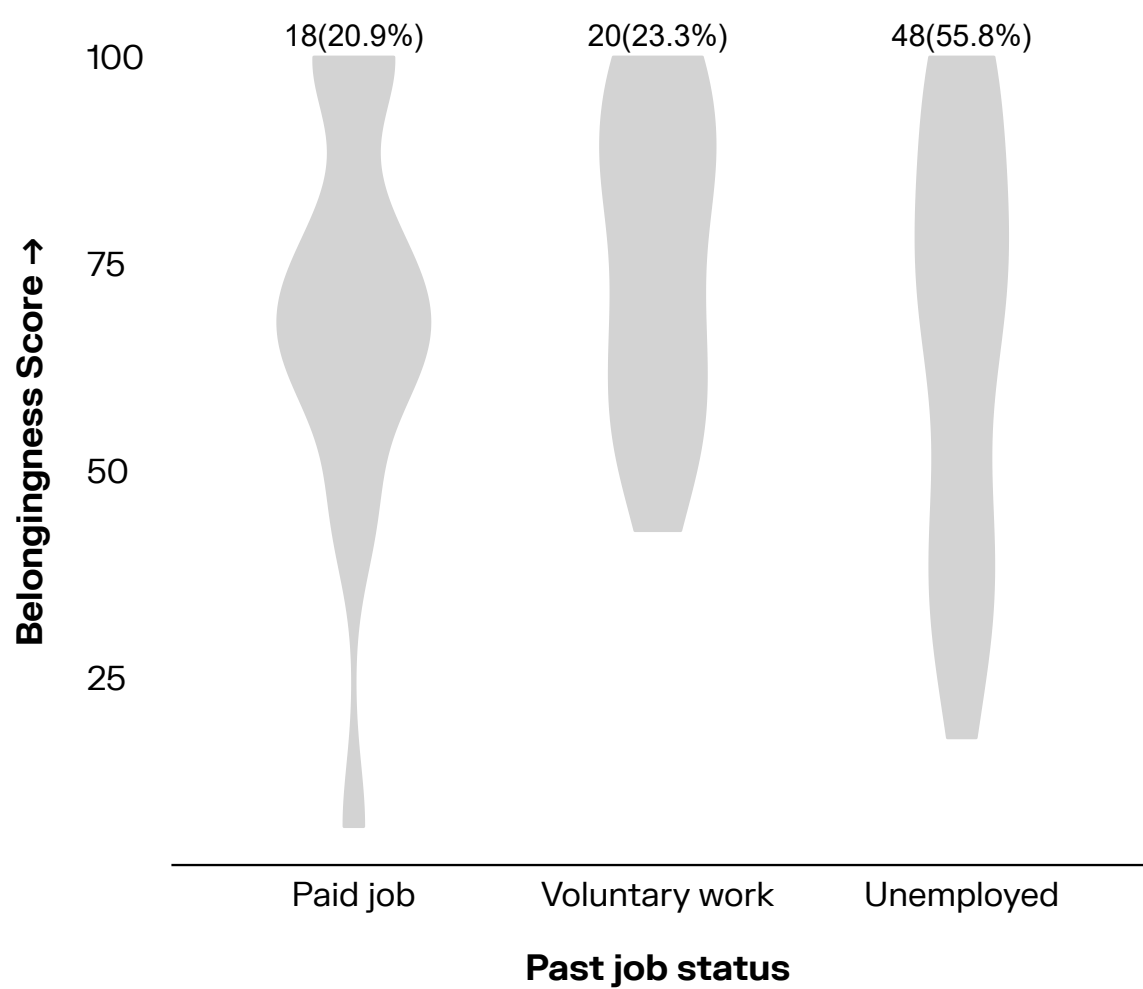
Belongingness and job

N = 86



Belongingness and past job

N = 86



Chapter 3: Results

the currently unemployed newcomers tend to have the highest belongingness scores. This finding might be related to the factors discussed in the text boxes; although having a job - paid or voluntarily – is seen as an important step in integrating in a host country, it does not necessarily mean that having any kind of job is beneficial for the sense of belonging in a new country.

"I would like a job that can give me a feeling of happiness at work, make me feel that I am useful for the society, and also have a decent income"

Finding employment

Within the migration literature, employment has been regarded as a key indicator of socio-economic integration of newcomers in their host society^{1,2}. Being economically integrated into host countries confers not only financial advantages but also social and emotional benefits upon newcomers.

For instance, having a job gives newcomers the possibility to establish more social interactions with members of the host community and learn the host country's language, which in turn enhances their well-being and sense of self-worth. This was particularly the case of a woman from Iran, who highlighted the benefits of work for his social and economic life in the Netherlands:

"To be honest, because I haven't engaged with the society much, I have a little fear of the society. But well, I would like a job that can give me a feeling of happiness at work, make me feel that I am useful for the society, and also have a decent income."

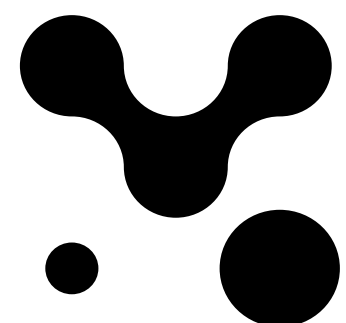
However, research has consistently shown that migrants, in particular those holding the legal status as refugees, experience several obstacles to find employment as well as access jobs that are adequate to their education level.³ In one case, a man from Syria reported that their lack of knowledge of the local job market prevented him from accessing employment:

"At the beginning, it was a difficult issue because you need to understand the system. Life here is hard, because it is a country that is 180 degrees different from the places that I used to live."

¹ Strang, A., & Ager, A. (2010). Refugee Integration: Emerging Trends and Remaining Agendas. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 23(4), 589–607. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feq046>

² Phillimore, J., Morrice, L., Kabe, K., Hashimoto, N., Hassan, S., & Reyes, M. (2021). Economic self-reliance or social relations? What works in refugee integration? Learning from resettlement programmes in Japan and the UK. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 9(1), 17. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-021-00223-7>

³ Betts, A., Omata, N., & Bloom, L. (2017). Thrive or Survive? Explaining Variation in Economic Outcomes for Refugees. *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, 5(4), 716–743. <https://doi.org/10.1177/233150241700500401>



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A woman from Afghanistan encountered challenges in independently navigating the Dutch job market, and despite securing employment, she ultimately made the decision to resign in order to care for her newborn child. As she says:

“I personally could not find a job by myself. There was a Dutch lady who found a job for me and I worked there for a year. Then I became pregnant and left the job because of my baby.”

Tackling challenges

To tackle the challenges of finding employment, newcomers employ a range of strategies, with the potential to enhance their employment prospects. These strategies include establishing connections with organizations dedicated to supporting migrants, actively participating in local community gathering spots, and utilizing social media platforms as a tool for job searching. While corroborating insights from previous research on the role of social capital for enhancing migrants' economic integration, the approaches developed by newcomers in our study enable them to develop important knowledge, abilities, and motivation from interacting with others. For instance, participants said they have joined networks and organizations that work directly with migrants, including Mano, VWN (Voice of All Women), which have proven to be vital tools.

“I found my job by looking for organizations that work with refugees, and of course because I have a lot of experience in international organizations. I know this helped me.”

These organizations are reported to have helped newcomers build networks with other immigrants by facilitating links with the job market. Thanks to these connections, participants are able to learn about job chances (e.g., through word-of-mouth recommendations). Moreover, participants stated that the volunteers and employees of migrant organizations play a key part in offering individualized counselling and help in locating career opportunities that suited their particular circumstances. Attending language schools is also a good source of help, according to newcomers in this study, who said that migrants from different backgrounds in these places share their experiences on best practices to find jobs.

Voluntary work

Besides organizations that help with integrating and finding employment, voluntary work plays a major role in the context of the Dutch refugee integration framework. Newcomers in our study also reported engaging in voluntary jobs, which may vary depending on their education background level. People with higher

education opt for volunteer positions that are in line with their educational background, as opposed to interviewees with lower education levels who, for instance, obtained training in cooking or cleaning before doing an internship.

Doing voluntary work can also function as a strategy deployed by highly educated newcomers to find and/or help them prepare for the jobs that are aligned with their experiences and goals. Furthermore, doing voluntary jobs was not only associated with opportunities to develop skills as preparation for the job market. It was emphasized by newcomers as a way of creating new social connections with the members of the host community that could potentially lead to recommendations for future jobs.

“I found work by looking for organizations that work with refugees.”

Education

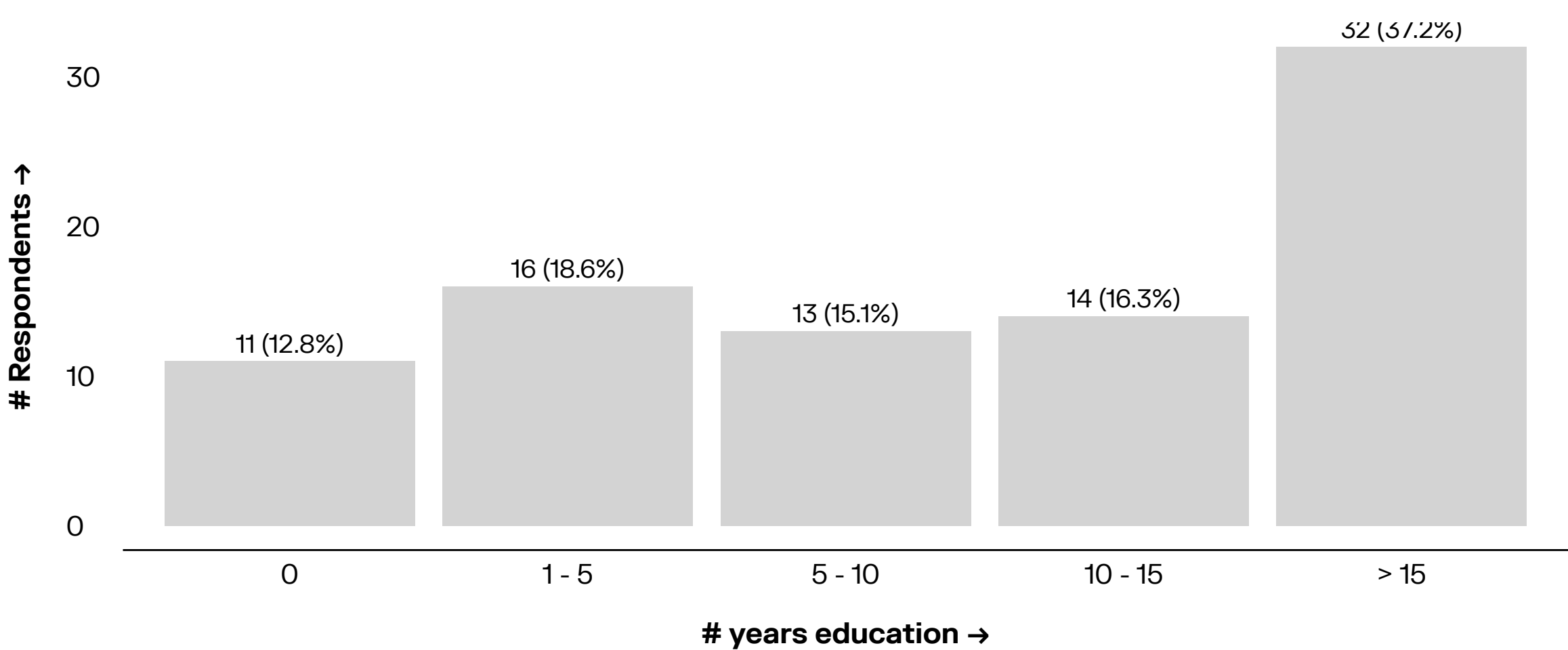
To get an idea of the educational background of the respondents, we asked them how long and where they followed their education, as well as what their level of education was.

However, the level of education is probably hard to interpret, because the education system per country can have large differences. Therefore, it may be better to look at the number of years they have had education, than looking at the educational level.

More than half of the respondents followed a study for multiple years in their country of origin, while almost 50% of the respondents even have had education for more than 10 years. We see that the number of education years have a significant influence on the sense of belonging in Rotterdam ($p=0.001$), in a counter-intuitive way, though. We expected that the length of education would have a positive influence on belongingness, because it might help with finding a job and therefore with feeling more included in society.

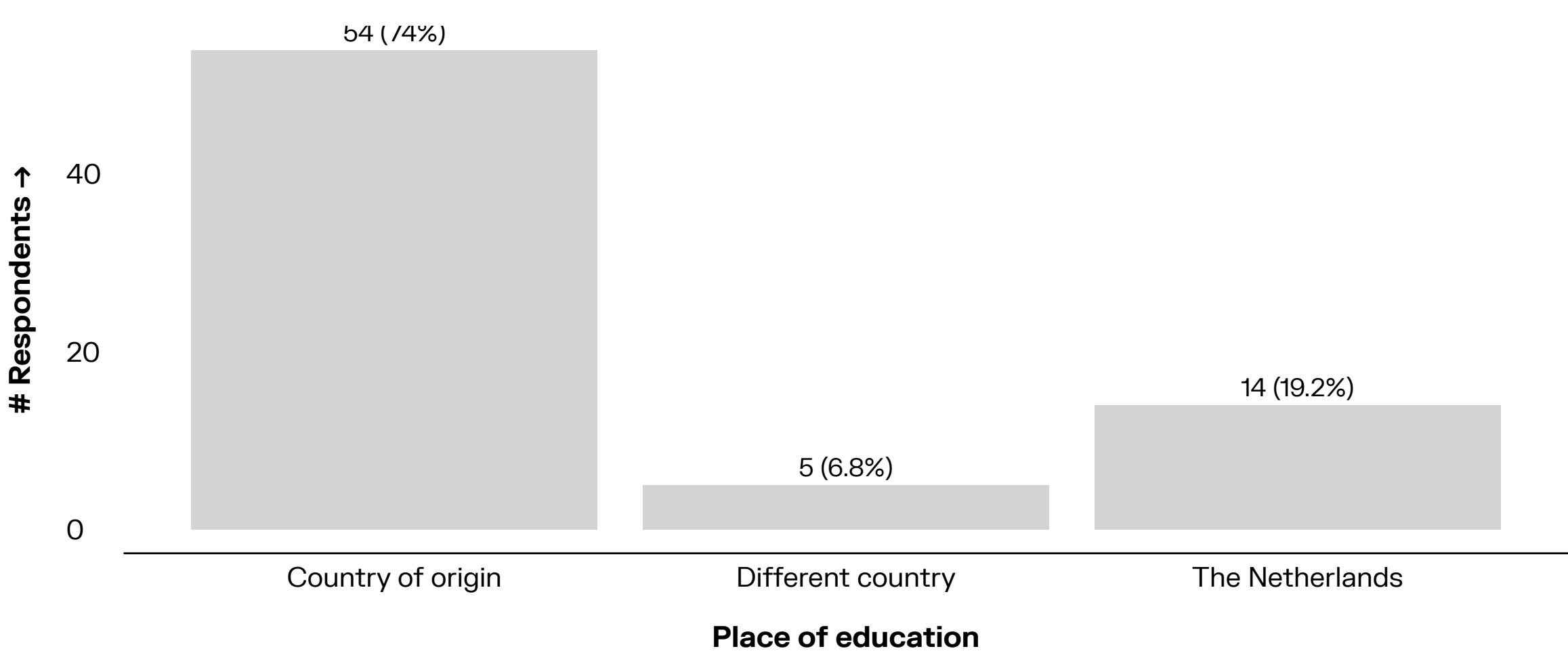
How many years of education have you had?

N = 86



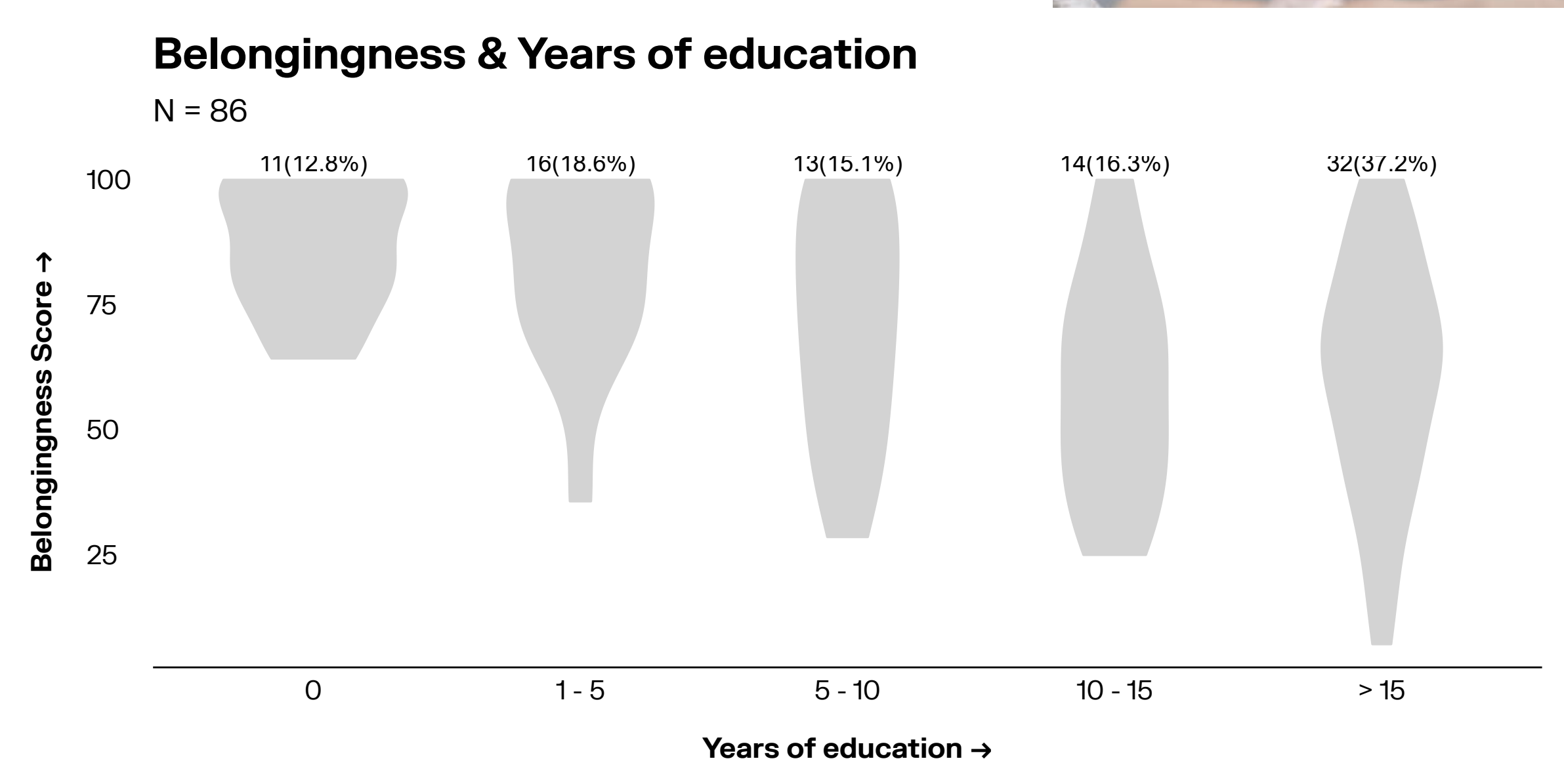
Where did you follow this education?

N = 73



Chapter 3: Results

Looking at the relation between belongingness and the number of education years, we can conclude that the longer a newcomer has followed education, the lower his/her sense of belonging is. This is in line with the conclusion in the previous section. It seems that finding a job in the area of expertise of the newcomer becomes harder when the newcomer has had extensive education, which consequently might lead to a lower sense of belonging.



Education

There were accounts of newcomers who shared the difficulties they faced to land in the jobs they aspired. A man from Syria, a graduate in French literature, shared that he had challenges when trying to apply for a job as a social worker, even though this was his field of study during his master's programme:

“It was difficult at the beginning, because they always told me: 'No, you are a graduate of French literature, so you cannot work in social work.'”

Language

Research has consistently shown that migrants, in particular those holding the legal status as refugees, experience several obstacles to find employment as well as access jobs that are adequate to their education level.¹ In our study, the majority of participants mentioned issues related to limited language skills as a barrier to finding jobs. A man from Syria stated:

“I was tormented a lot by this subject, because - of course - if there would not be a language barrier, then I could work as a teacher because I was excellent at this at home. Language made it a problem for me [...]”.

¹ Betts, A., Omata, N., & Bloom, L. (2017). Thrive or Survive? Explaining Variation in Economic Outcomes for Refugees. Journal on Migration and Human Security, 5(4), 716–743. <https://doi.org/10.1177/233150241700500401>

Language

We asked the newcomers if they could rate their level of listening, reading, speaking and writing in Dutch.

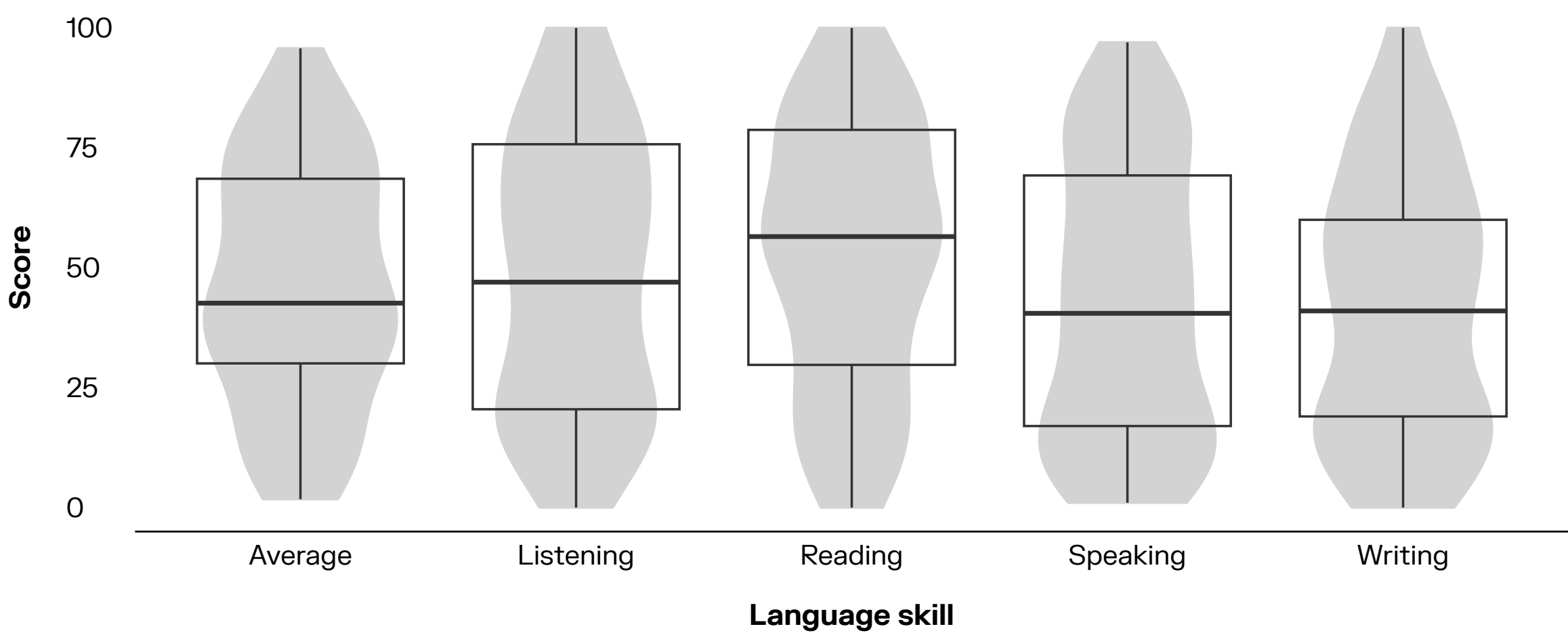
Among the respondents there are newcomers who think they have mastered the Dutch language well with an average score of 95, but there are also newcomers who think they do not master the Dutch language (yet) with an average score of less than 10. On average, reading and listening seems easier than writing and speaking for the respondents. Where speaking and writing are on average equally difficult for the newcomers, speaking has a wider variance than writing.

Language and belongingness

Against our expectations, we found that there is no correlation at all between mastering the Dutch language and the belongingness of the respondents. Apparently, not being experienced with the Dutch language does not stop the newcomers in feeling like they belong in Rotterdam.

How well do you master the Dutch language?

N = 86



Language

Learning the host country’s language has been emphasized as a fundamental pillar of the refugee integration approach in Dutch cities.

Existing research recognizes the critical role played by language in refugees’ experiences of accessing the labour market of their host country.¹ As mentioned before, some participants highlighted the importance of learning Dutch in order to access the specific jobs and career opportunities they aspire to pursue. Yet, even though language is referred to as a key component of the Dutch integration program, the newcomers’ perspectives, needs and strategies to learn Dutch extend beyond the prescribed framework of integration policies that are primarily focused on economic participation. Participants’ aspirations to interact with their surroundings and establish connections with the individuals in their community serve as a cornerstone in their pursuit of learning the Dutch language.

One Syrian man in our study indicated that acquiring

knowledge of Dutch would allow him to engage socially with the Dutch. As he put it:

“I just feel that if I would have the Dutch language as my mother tongue instead of Arabic, I would have thousands of Dutch friends.”

In an effort to overcome linguistic barriers, participants reported developing self-learning strategies that involved following Dutch courses online and engaging with a diversity of digital contents in Dutch on a daily basis, including news, documentaries and TV series.

“I also watch videos or read books in Dutch. Anything at hand, like the news, for example. Let me say that in the news I hear new words sometimes. So I look them up and learn.”

Language and belongingness

Newcomers associated their “belongingness” with perceptions of Rotterdam as a city that embodies a cosmopolitan identity, where they can safely engage with urban spaces and embrace the city's openness to diverse

cultures, values, and religions. In this sense, language seems to function as a tool for reinforcing a sense of belonging rather than serving as its ultimate goal.

“I watch videos or read books in Dutch. Anything at hand, like the news, for example. Let me say that in the news I hear new words sometimes. So I look them up and learn.”

¹ Strang, A., & Ager, A. (2010). Refugee Integration: Emerging Trends and Remaining Agendas. Journal of Refugee Studies, 23(4), 589–607. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feq046>

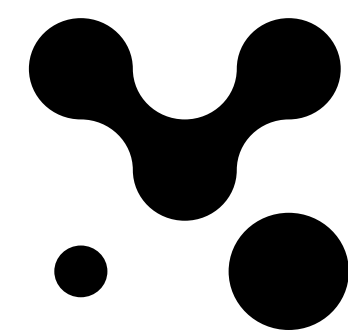
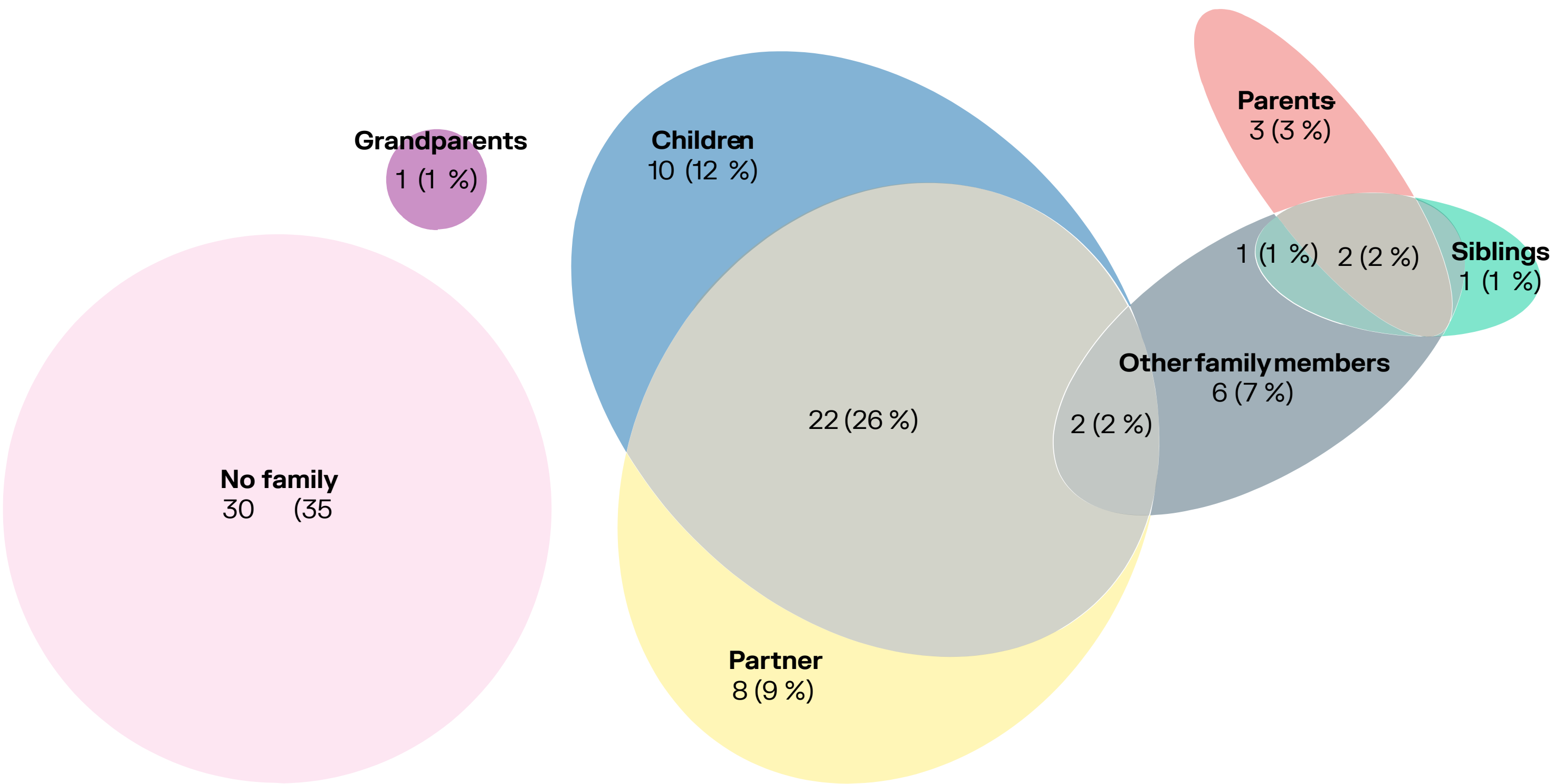


Family

Two-thirds of the respondents live with the family. The ones who live with family were asked with which family members they live with.

Nearly 40% of the participants reside with their partners and/or children. A smaller number of respondents live with their parents, siblings, or grandparents. Additionally, 11 participants share their homes with other relatives, such as aunts or uncles.

Exploring the specific household composition reveals varied living arrangements. One quarter of the households comprise parents and their children. In contrast, eight participants live exclusively with their partners, while in ten instances, only children reside with the newcomer. Two respondents indicated they live with their partner, children, and other relatives. Seven households consist solely of grandparents or other extended family members. There are also a few households that include a combination of parents, siblings, and other relatives. The majority of respondents who do not live with their immediate family reported that their relatives still reside in their country of origin. Among the newcomers, about half provide financial support to their family members living abroad.



Friends

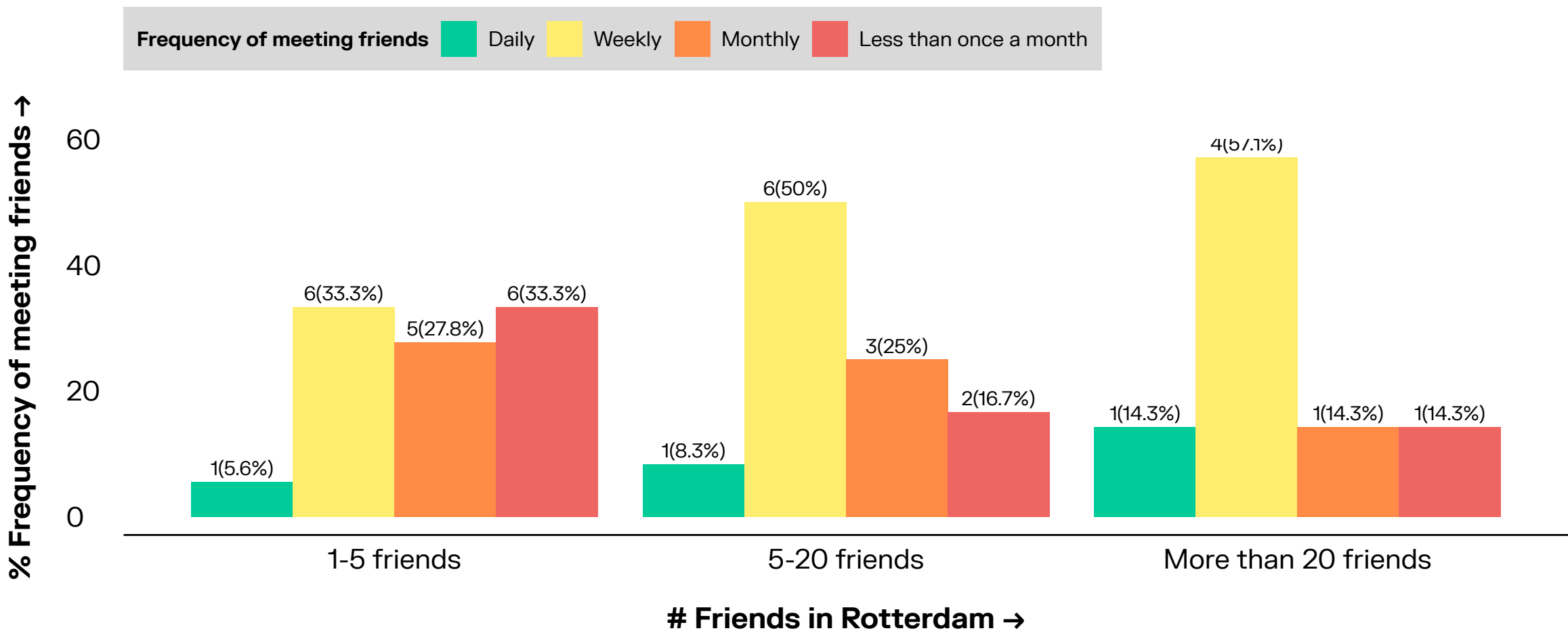
We expect friendships to play an important role in the sense of belonging in Rotterdam. We explored various aspects related to their social connections in the city.

Number of friends and contact frequency

Twelve participants reported having no friends in Rotterdam. As a result, these individuals were not queried about the frequency of interactions with friends or the origins of these friends. About 15% of participants claim to have more than 20 friends, raising the question of mutual friendship perception. Among those who discussed meeting frequency (N=37), a quarter see their friends less than once a month. This finding aligns with previous observations. It is also expected that those with more friends tend to meet them more frequently. Notably, over 70% of respondents with more than 20 friends meet them at least weekly, compared to less than 40% of those with a maximum of five friends meeting weekly.

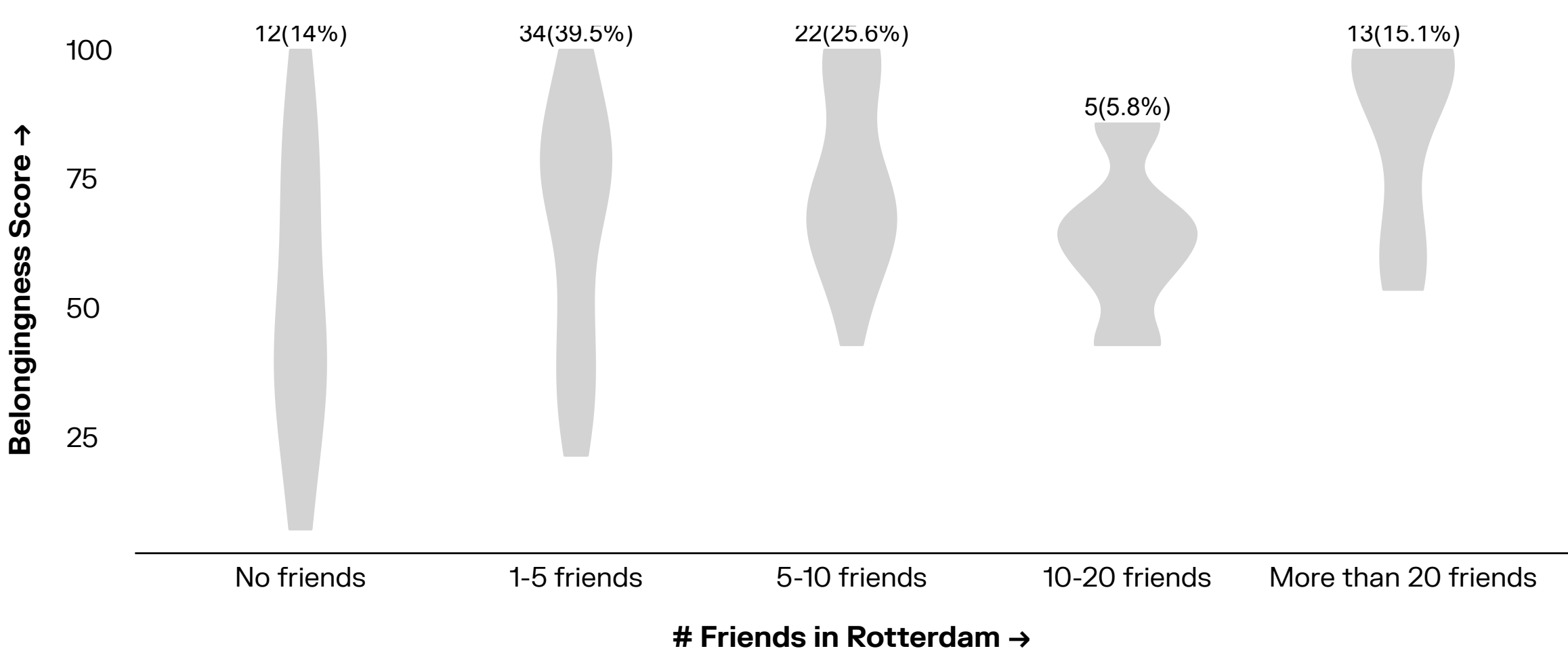
How often do you see your friends in Rotterdam?

N = 37



Belongingness & Friends in Rotterdam

N = 86



Chapter 3: Results

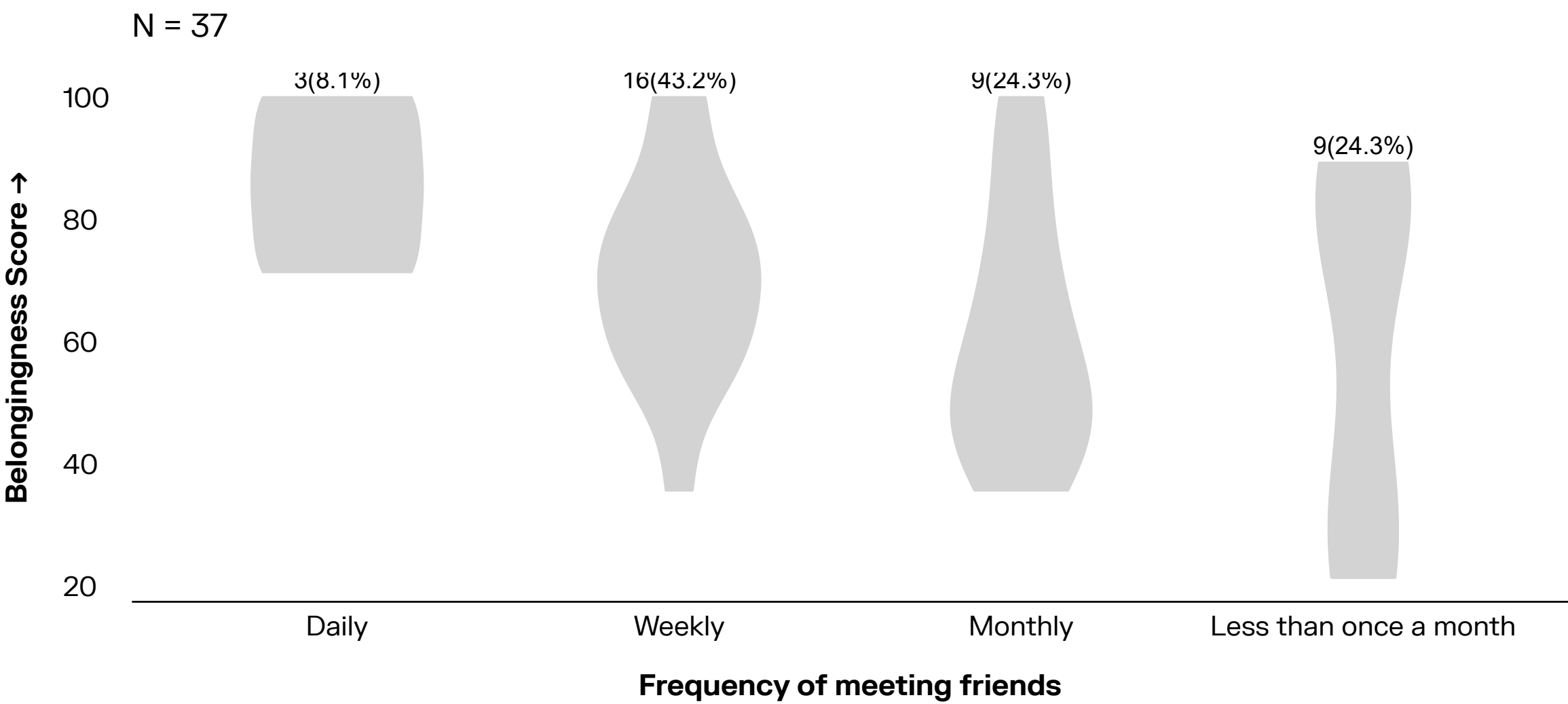
Friends and sense of belonging

Consistent with predictions, the number of friends in Rotterdam significantly positively impacts the sense of belonging ($p=0.003$). The more friends newcomers have, the higher their sense of belonging, as illustrated in the relevant figure. However, the frequency of meeting friends does not significantly affect belongingness ($p=0.229$), despite suggestions to the contrary from the figure. This discrepancy may stem from the low number of participants who responded to the question about meeting frequency.

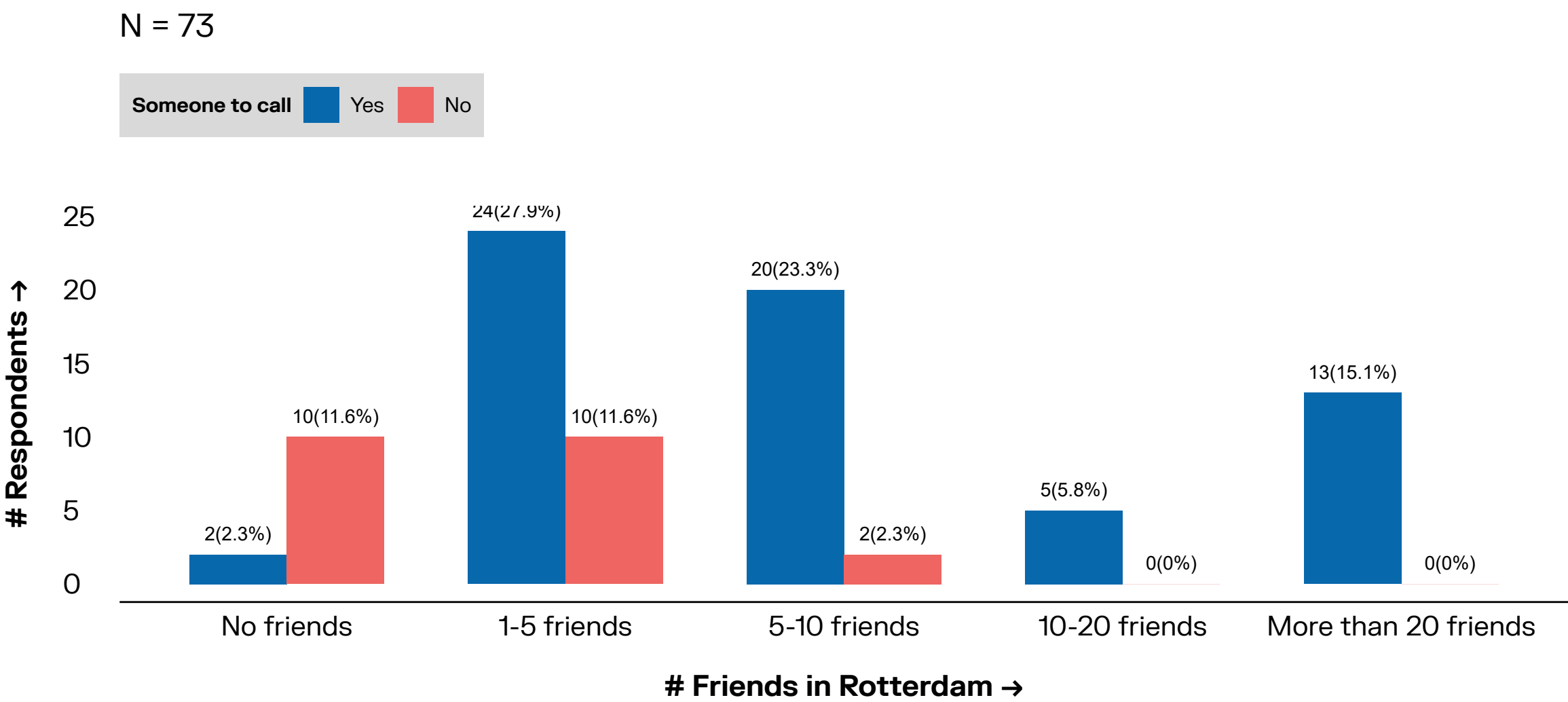
Availability of Support and Belonging

Approximately one quarter of respondents lack friends or acquaintances to consult for problem-solving. Most of these individuals also have few or no friends in Rotterdam. Of the 22 respondents without a confidant, 10 have no friends in the city, and another 10 have between 1 to 5 friends. Having someone to call for assistance significantly correlates with a higher sense of belonging ($p<0.001$), as supported by the associated figure.

Belongingness & Frequency of meeting friends



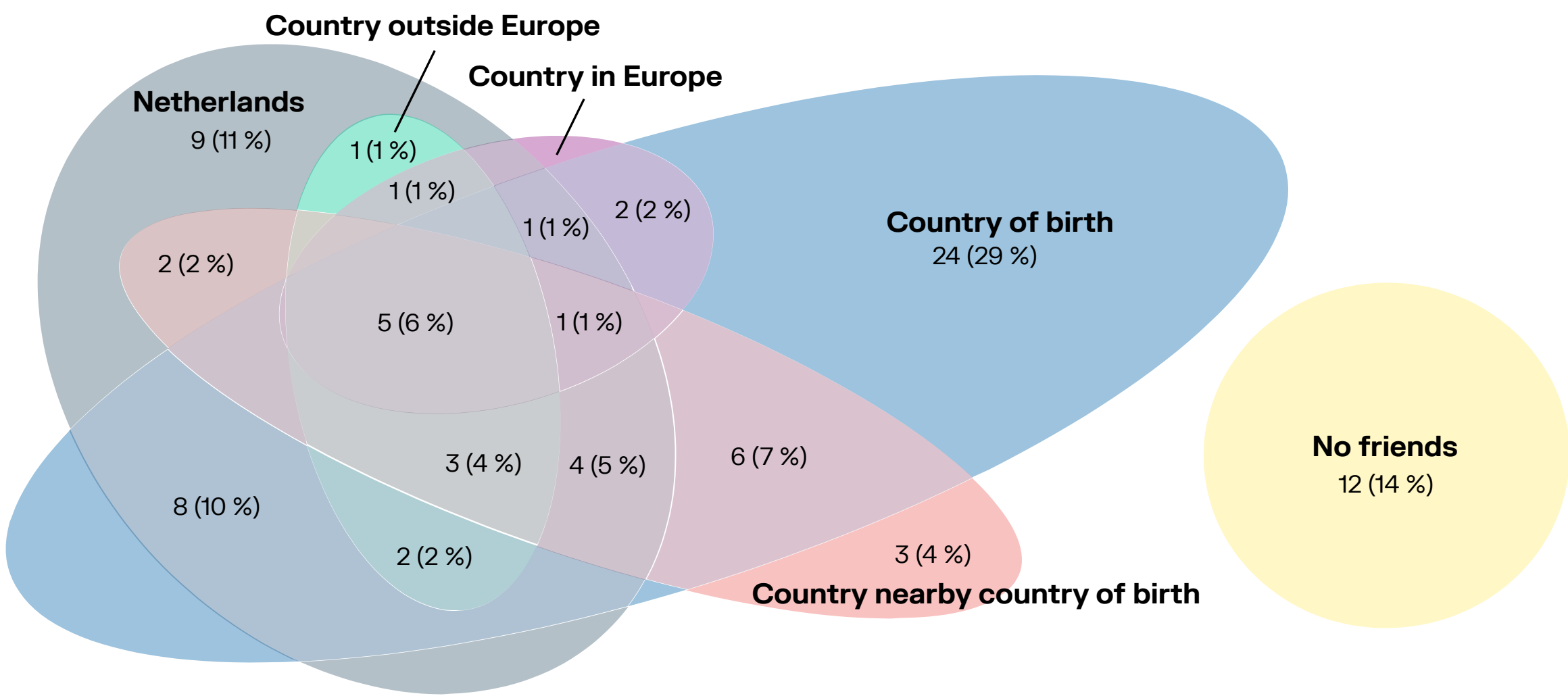
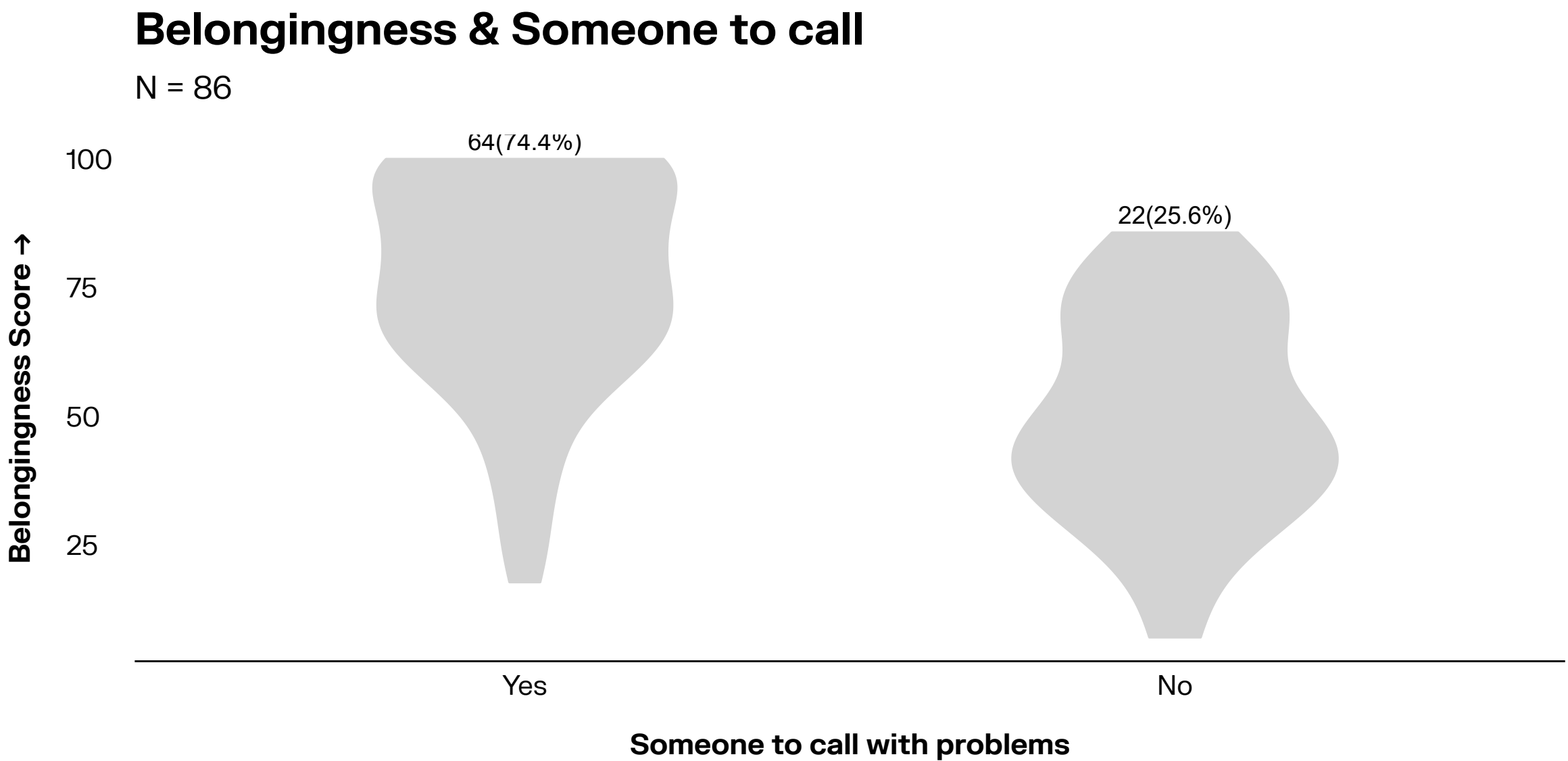
Friends in Rotterdam & Someone to call with problems



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Diversity in friends' origins

The respondents' friends' origins are varied, with the majority having friends from their home country (two-thirds) and/or the Netherlands (two-fifths). The largest subgroup (28%) exclusively befriends people from their home country. Additionally, 11% have only Dutch friends, and 9% maintain friendships with individuals from both the Netherlands and their home country.



Friends

Social relationships play a crucial role in refugees’ prospectsof anewlifeintheirhost country^{1,2}. Some participants emphasized how important it is for them to make friends in order to overcome loneliness, as was the case of two newcomers who said that they almost have no friends in Rotterdam.

The meaning of friendship can vary among newcomers. For some, having friends can help find jobs, whereas for others it eases the process of settling in a new place, especially if friends share the same culture and religion. In line with survey findings, the interviews also revealed that establishing social connections and making friendships in Rotterdam help newcomers cope with problems as they can have one to rely on or talk to. When asked about who they consider as a friend, the participants were

unanimous in the view that it needs to be someone who they are close to in terms of sharing personal issues and visiting each other’s house.

Friends and work

One participant added that their chances of finding a job that more closely matched their needs and prior experiences can be improved by having a Dutch friend who can provide guidance through the intricacies of the job market in the Netherlands.

“[Finding a job] is difficult, but not too much. If you make friends with Dutch people, it becomes easier. You can find jobs better “via via”. It is impossible to find a job alone.”

“If you have a Dutch friend, you can find a job through them”.

Finally, in almost all cases, LinkedIn was emphasized as a relevant resource to look for jobs. Yet, the platform seems to be a complementary tool to the professional networks

“A friend is someone I can tell everything to. He can’t be afraid when I tell him anything. And I don’t fear for what he tells me. You can find him there for me at any time.”

1 Alencar, A., & Tsagkroni, V. (2019). Prospects of Refugee Integration in the Netherlands: Social Capital, Information Practices and Digital Media. Media and Communication, 7(2), 184–194. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v7i2.1955>
2 Borselli, M., & van Meijl, T. (2021). Linking Migration Aspirations to Integration Prospects: The Experience of Syrian Refugees in Sweden. Journal of Refugee Studies, 34(1), 579–595. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feaa043>



Friends

that have been established by newcomers through the work of organizations and their personal connections with the host community, both Dutch citizens and newcomers.

Friends and belonging

Given the importance attributed to social bonds when it comes to building belonging, newcomers reflected on some of the challenges they face in making friends and how they go beyond these challenges.

First, language barriers can hinder newcomers' possibilities to make friends in their new place. There were suggestions that learning Dutch can help newcomers to further embed themselves with Dutch people. As a man from Syria said:

“Of course, at the beginning it is difficult to speak Dutch, because you need to find a new way of communicating, while you have adapted to speaking English before.

Dutch people speak English of course, but they prefer Dutch. For example, when you speak Dutch

they feel that you are more close to them and to their culture.”

Interviews also revealed that acquiring the host country's language also brings benefits in terms of establishing connections between newcomers and other migrants from different national ethnic groups who also reside in Rotterdam.

Yet, limited knowledge in the Dutch language is not the only factor that can hinder newcomer's socialization. Some participants, for example, mentioned that even though they experience freedom and safety to practice their religion and celebrate their culture, they find it difficult to make friends with people who do not share their culture and language. Cultural differences, especially regarding understanding of social relationships, play a role in this process.

“[Finding a job] is difficult, but not too much. If you make friends with Dutch people, it becomes easier. You can find jobs better “via via”. It is impossible to find a job alone.”

“In Rotterdam, everyone is busy with their own life and it is difficult to make friends.”



Social media use

The survey also inquired about the social media influencers most followed by the respondents. To gain insights into their media consumption, we analyzed the YouTube and Instagram networks surrounding these influencers.

It's evident that social media serves as a platform for accessing content from both their native countries and from immigrant communities within the Netherlands. Notably, they follow a diverse range of content creators, including an Iraqi photographer based in Rotterdam and a Syrian family creating YouTube content.

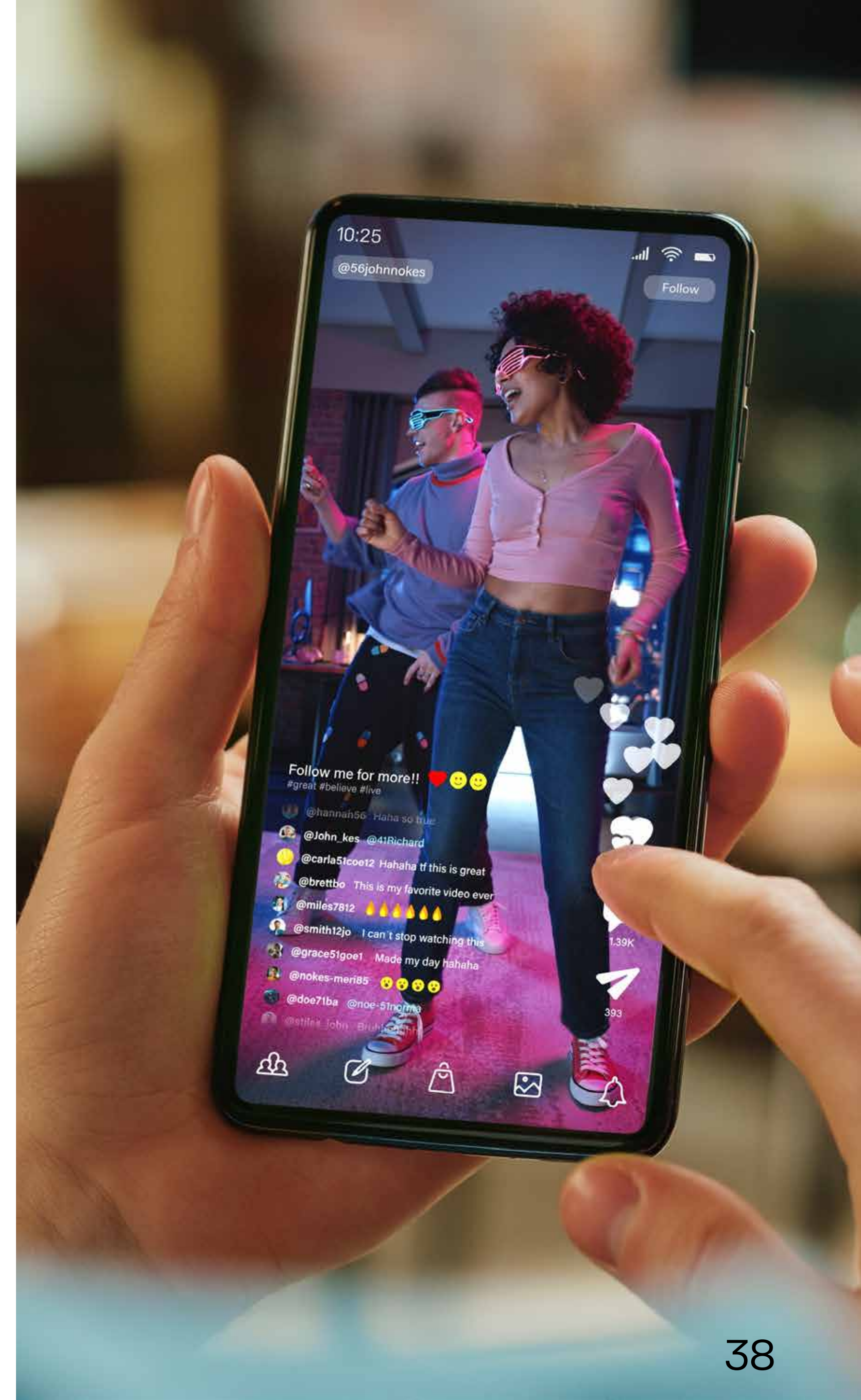
Furthermore, we observed a keen interest among newcomers in learning about Dutch language and culture via social media. They engage with educational content on YouTube, including language lessons. They also follow immigrant vloggers who interact with Dutch citizens on the streets, gathering

perspectives on Dutch culture and how the locals view immigrant cultures.

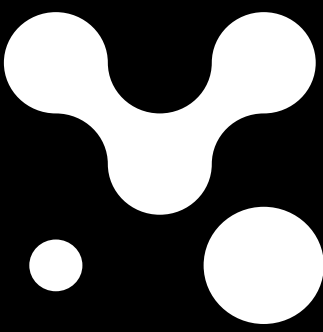
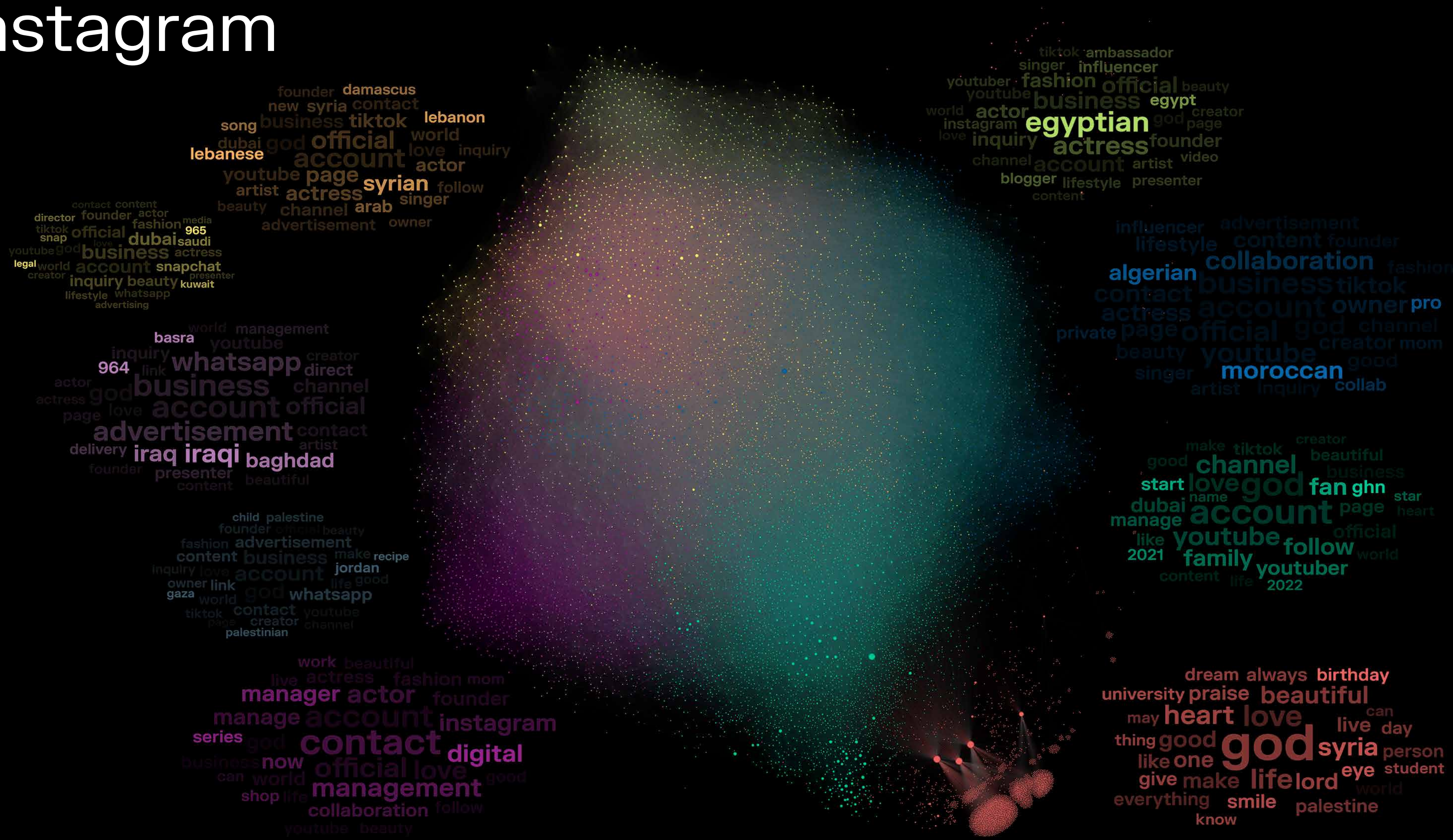
Understanding the social media networks

In the subsequent pages, we present visual representations of the social media networks. These diagrams feature dots symbolizing Instagram and YouTube accounts, interconnected by lines that indicate following relationships. The various color-coded clusters represent tightly-knit online communities. For each community, word clouds have been created to highlight the most frequently used words in Instagram bios or YouTube descriptions.

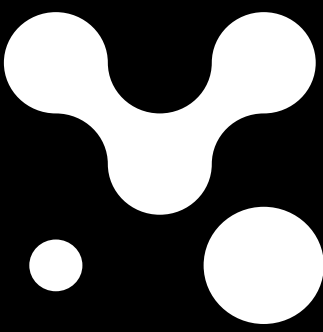
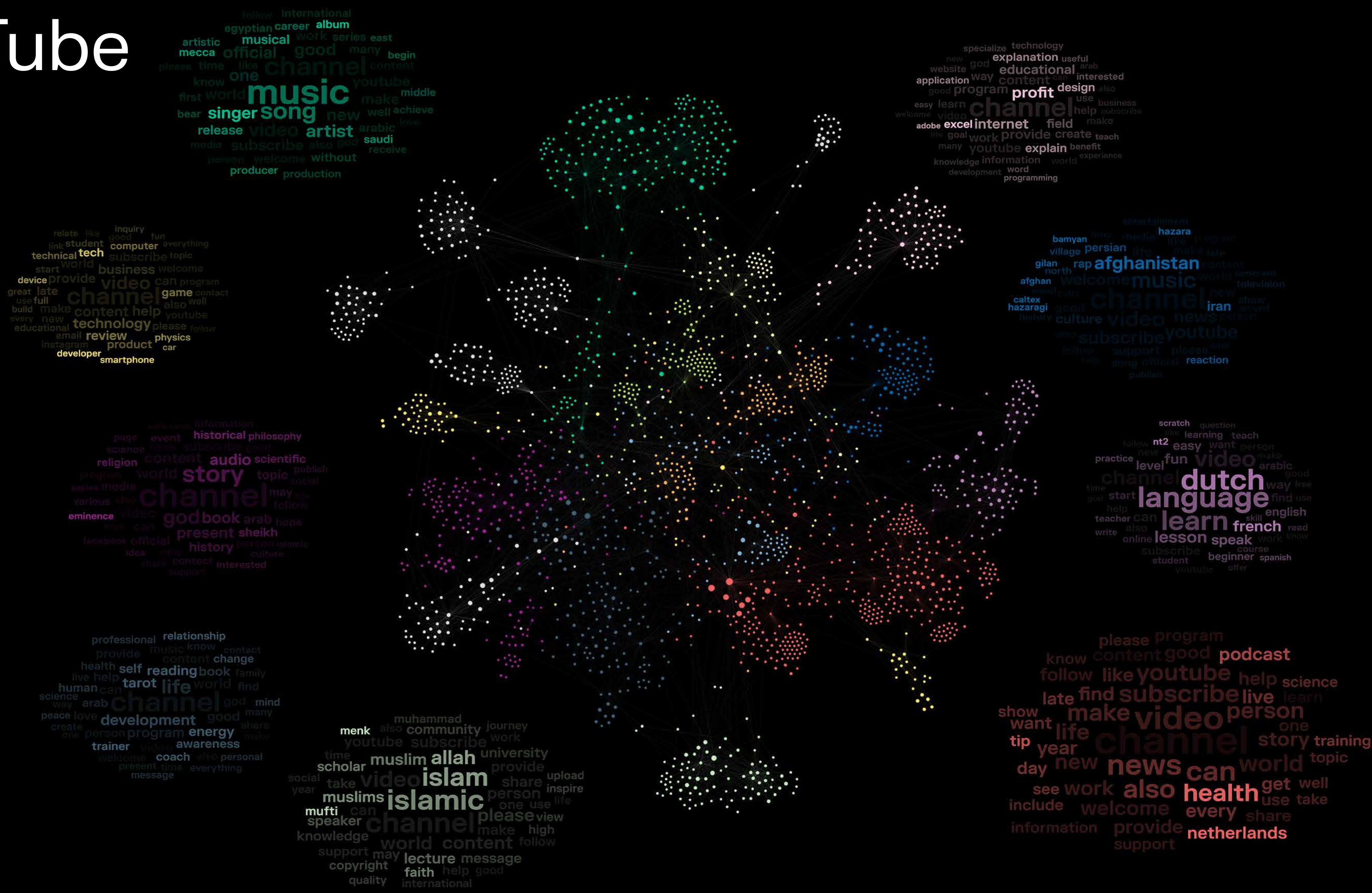
This approach provides a deeper understanding of the interests and cultural engagements of the newcomers.



Instagram



YouTube



Key Take-Aways

The "Becoming a Rotterdammer" project, focusing on the integration of newcomers in Rotterdam, reveals various aspects that contribute to making them feel at home in the city.

Survey objective and participants: The survey, conducted between April and June 2023 with newcomers in Rotterdam, aimed to understand their characteristics, sense of belonging, and resilience. Belongingness relates to feeling a part of society, having freedom, and contributing meaningfully, while resilience is about bouncing back after setbacks. Both are crucial for successful integration.

Demographic details: The survey involved 115 newcomers, primarily Arabic speakers from Syria and Yemen, Tigrinya speakers from Ethiopia and Eritrea, and Farsi speakers from Iran and Afghanistan. More than half of the respondents have lived in Rotterdam for over three years, residing mainly in the south

(Charlois, Feijenoord, IJsselmonde) and parts of the city center

Social relationships and friendship: Building social relationships, often influenced by shared cultural and religious backgrounds, is crucial for newcomers to overcome loneliness and settle in the city. The number of friends and having someone to call significantly affect the sense of belonging.

Employment as a key to socio-economic integration: Securing employment enhances social interactions, well-being, and self-worth, and is crucial for engaging more with the host community and learning the local language.

Challenges in job market navigation: Newcomers face obstacles in finding employment that matches their education level, with systemic barriers and a lack of knowledge about the local job market often hindering employment opportunities.

Education and employment alignment: The place and duration of education significantly impact job

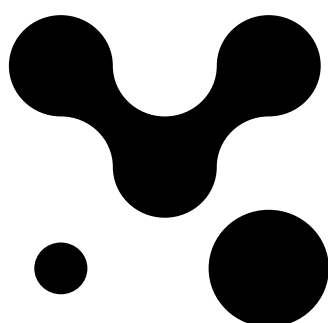
opportunities, with higher education sometimes not aligning with local job market dynamics.

Language barriers in employment: Limited Dutch language skills are significant barriers to employment. Overcoming these barriers is essential for accessing suitable job opportunities, as highlighted by many participants in the study.

Learning Dutch for integration: Language proficiency is a fundamental aspect of integration, facilitating access to specific jobs and career opportunities, and going beyond the economic focus of integration policies.

Social engagement through language acquisition: Social engagement through work turns out to be a very important factor, sometimes, even beyond language, since work can allow for more opportunities to have spontaneous social encounters.

Self-learning strategies for language proficiency: Newcomers often use self-learning strategies to improve their Dutch language skills, such as engaging



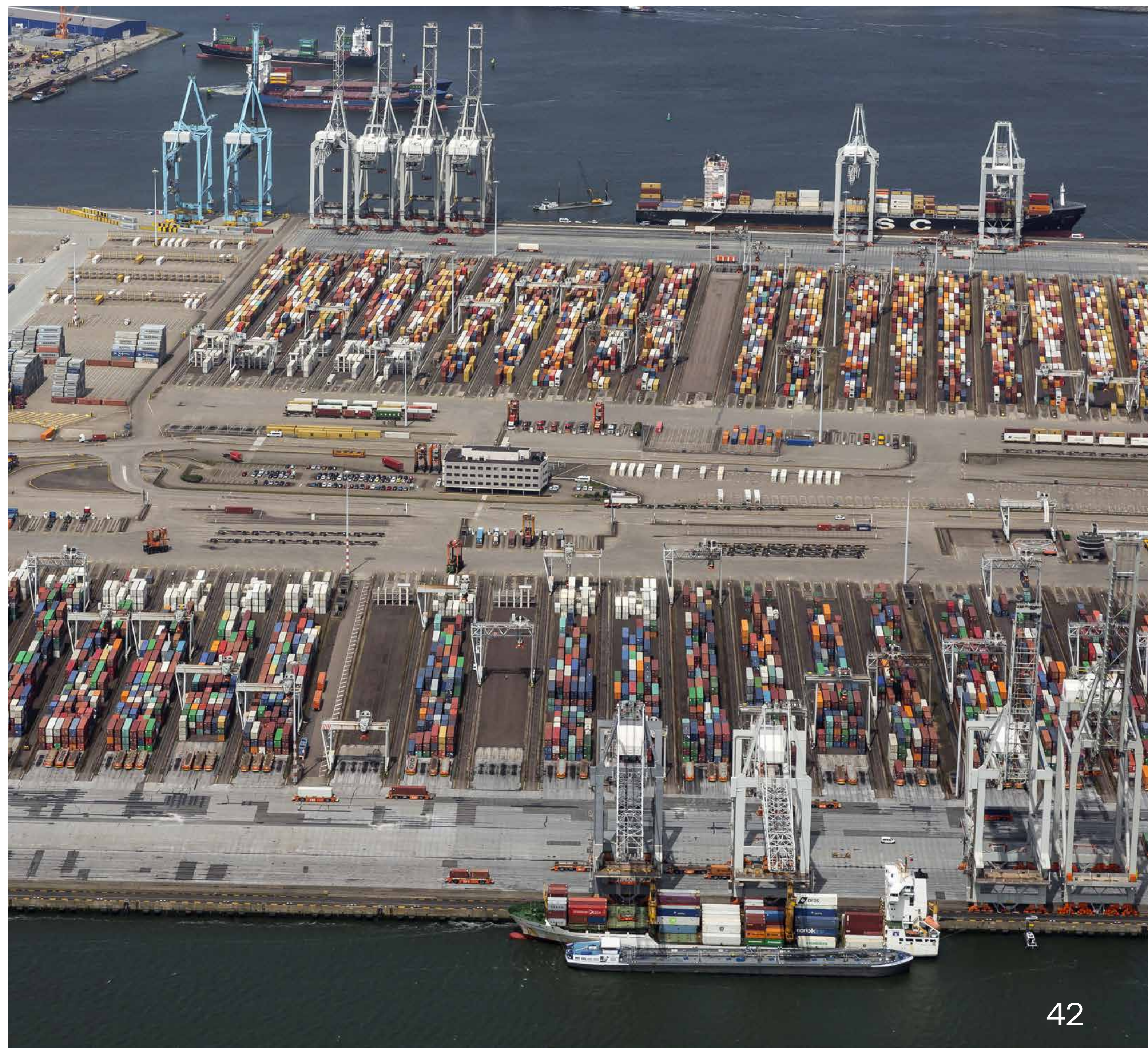
Key Take-Aways

with various Dutch-language digital contents and following online courses.

Language as a tool for belongingness: Mastery of the Dutch language enhances the ability to engage with urban spaces and the community, associated with a stronger sense of belonging in Rotterdam's cosmopolitan setting.

Cultural openness of Rotterdam: The city's openness to diverse cultures, values, and religions plays a crucial role in making newcomers feel welcome and integrated. Newcomers' sense of belonging is influenced by Rotterdam's urban atmosphere, tolerance for diverse backgrounds, and freedom to practice their culture and religion.

Impact of residence duration: The length of time living in Rotterdam significantly influences the sense of belonging, with a longer duration correlating with stronger feelings of belonging.



Phase II: Finding Positive Deviants

Positive Deviants

Positive deviants are respondents who - against the odds - felt quickly at home in Rotterdam. In other words, we identify participants as positive outliers when they have a remarkably high belongingness score while their circumstances would suggest otherwise.

Identifying positive outliers is not simply a matter of selecting the respondents with the highest belongingness scores. After all, ones' sense of belonging is not simply the outcome of what a person does to feel at home. Things such as the level of education or personality characteristics such as resilience may influence belongingness, too.

In this project, we have therefore corrected for

these variables before identifying positive outliers by using a Multiple Indicator - Multiple Cause (MIMIC) model. This model estimates an expected belongingness score using variables that have shown to significantly affect belongingness. If the actual belongingness score is (much) higher than the estimated belongingness score, we speak of a positive outlier.

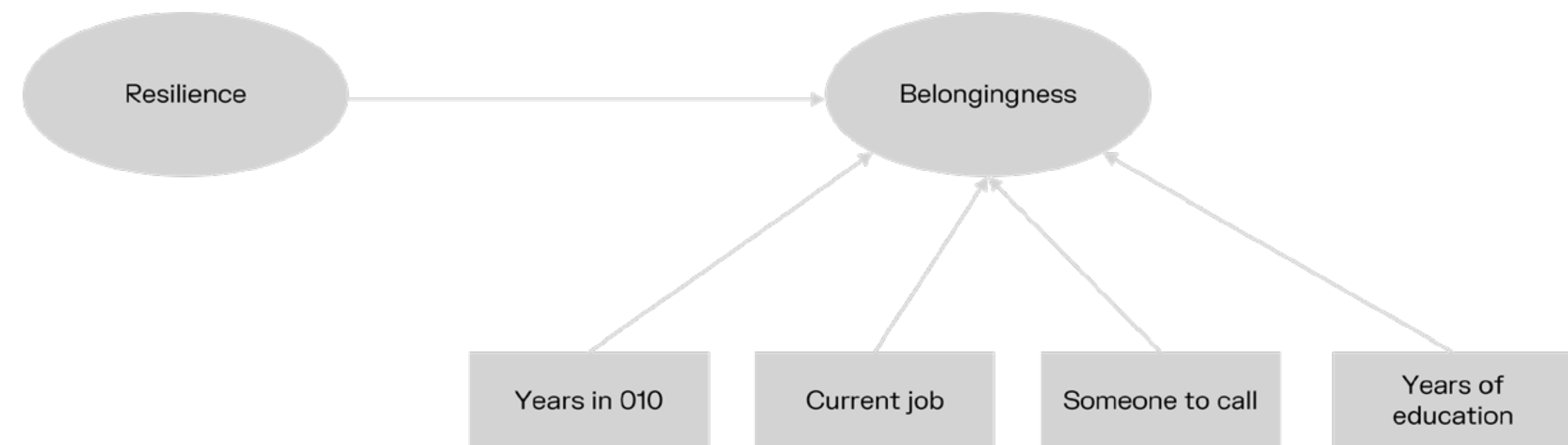


Controlling for variance

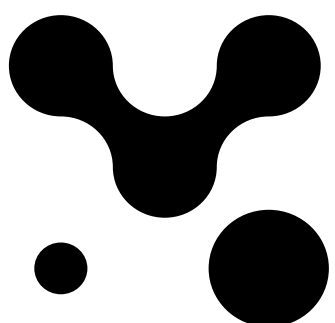
To identify positive deviants while controlling for variance, we employed a Multiple Indicator - Multiple Cause (MIMIC) model. This modeling approach provides a powerful framework for understanding latent variables, such as belongingness, by considering two perspectives.

First, we derived the belongingness score directly from the belongingness scale. Secondly, we used other variables that influence belongingness, to estimate belongingness. The selection of variables is based on the significance of the effect of these variables on the belongingness score. The variables that we used to estimate belongingness, include: resilience, years in Rotterdam, current job, if they can call someone in times of crisis, and the number of years of education.

In evaluating the performance of our MIMIC model, we assessed its goodness-of-fit using the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) statistic. The



The MIMIC model shows that belongingness can be predicted based on **resilience**, the number of **years in Rotterdam**, whether somebody currently **has a job**, whether someone has **somebody to call** in times of crisis, and the **years of education**.



Chapter 3: Results

RMSEA score obtained for our model was 0.065, which falls within the range of what is considered acceptable for model fit. This suggests that our MIMIC model adequately represents the relationships between belongingness and the other variables.

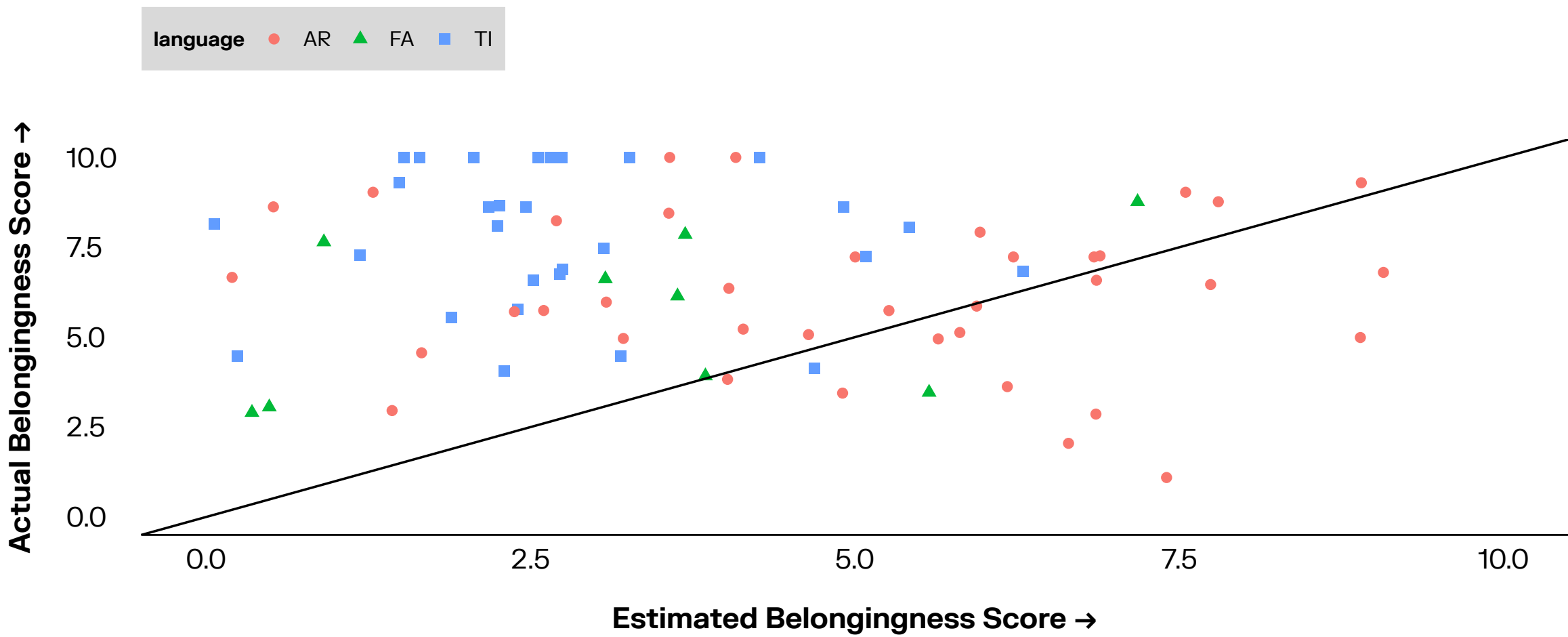
Positive deviance

Using the MIMIC model, the belongingness score was estimated and compared with the actual belongingness score of each participant (top figure). Next, we identified the five respondents with the largest positive difference between the estimated and observed belongingness score (bottom figure). We chose five positive outliers per language group (Arabic, Farsi, Tigrinya).

For each participant, we used the model to estimate their belongingness and compared that with their actual belongingness score.

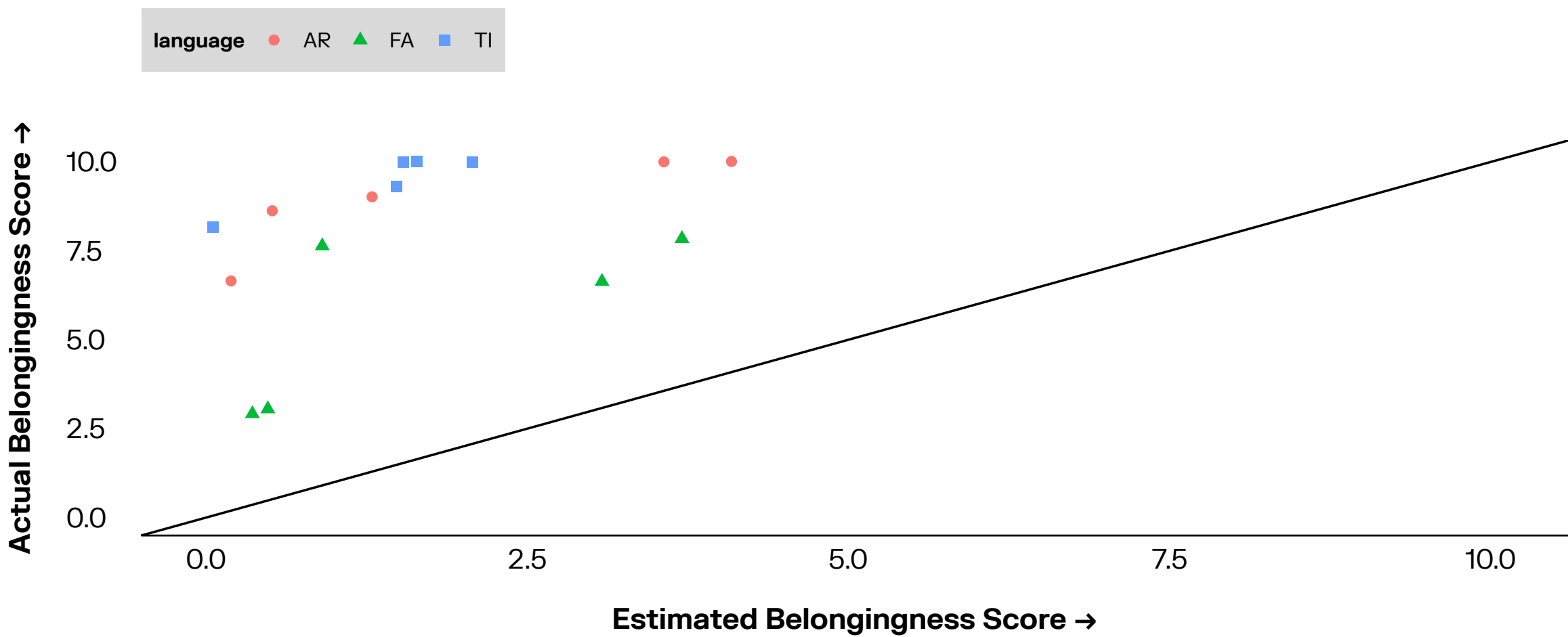
Estimated belongingness vs. actual belongingness

N = 86



PD's selected for in-depth interviews

N = 86



Key Take-Aways

The outcomes of the second phase, offer a focused perspective on the elements that contribute to successful integration and a sense of belonging among newcomers in Rotterdam, complementing the broader findings from Phase I.

Positive Deviants: We identify positive deviants as individuals who feel a strong sense of belonging in Rotterdam despite challenging circumstances, marked by higher-than-expected belongingness scores.

MIMIC Model: A Multiple Indicator - Multiple Cause (MIMIC) model was employed to assess belongingness. The model's effectiveness was confirmed using the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), with a score of 0.065 indicating a good fit and validating the approach.

Predicting belongingness: The model highlights resilience, duration of stay in Rotterdam, current

employment, having a friend to call during bad times, and educational background as significant factors in predicting a newcomer's sense of belonging.

Integration is complex: The model shows that integration is not just about economic stability and speaking the language; it's a blend of employment, social networks, personal resilience, language proficiency, education, and the time spent in the host community that collectively contribute to a newcomer feeling at home in Rotterdam.

Identification of Positive Outliers: By comparing estimated belongingness scores from the model with actual scores, we identified key positive outliers.



Phase III: Zooming In

Tracing Success

To find out what explains the success of newcomers that feel remarkably quickly at home in Rotterdam, the selected positive deviants were invited for in-depth interviews.

They were asked to mention and elaborate on five things that they did that made them feel at home, and five things others did to help them.

In workshops, participants engaged in a card sorting exercise to find out which behaviors set the positive deviants apart from the rest.



Identifying positive deviants

The positive deviants were contacted and interviewed in-depth. During the interviews, they were asked to mention and elaborate on (1) five things that they have done to make them feel at home in Rotterdam, and (2) five things that others have done to make them feel at home in Rotterdam (see right side).

Workshops

During workshops, participants that were not identified as positive deviants engaged in a card sorting exercise, categorizing the positive deviant behaviors along two axes:

1. frequency (how often one displays this behavior)
2. threshold (how easy it is to display this behavior)

During this card sorting exercise, the PD's did

Potential positive deviant behaviors

The interviews were transcribed and analyzed, and the behaviors were written down on cards:

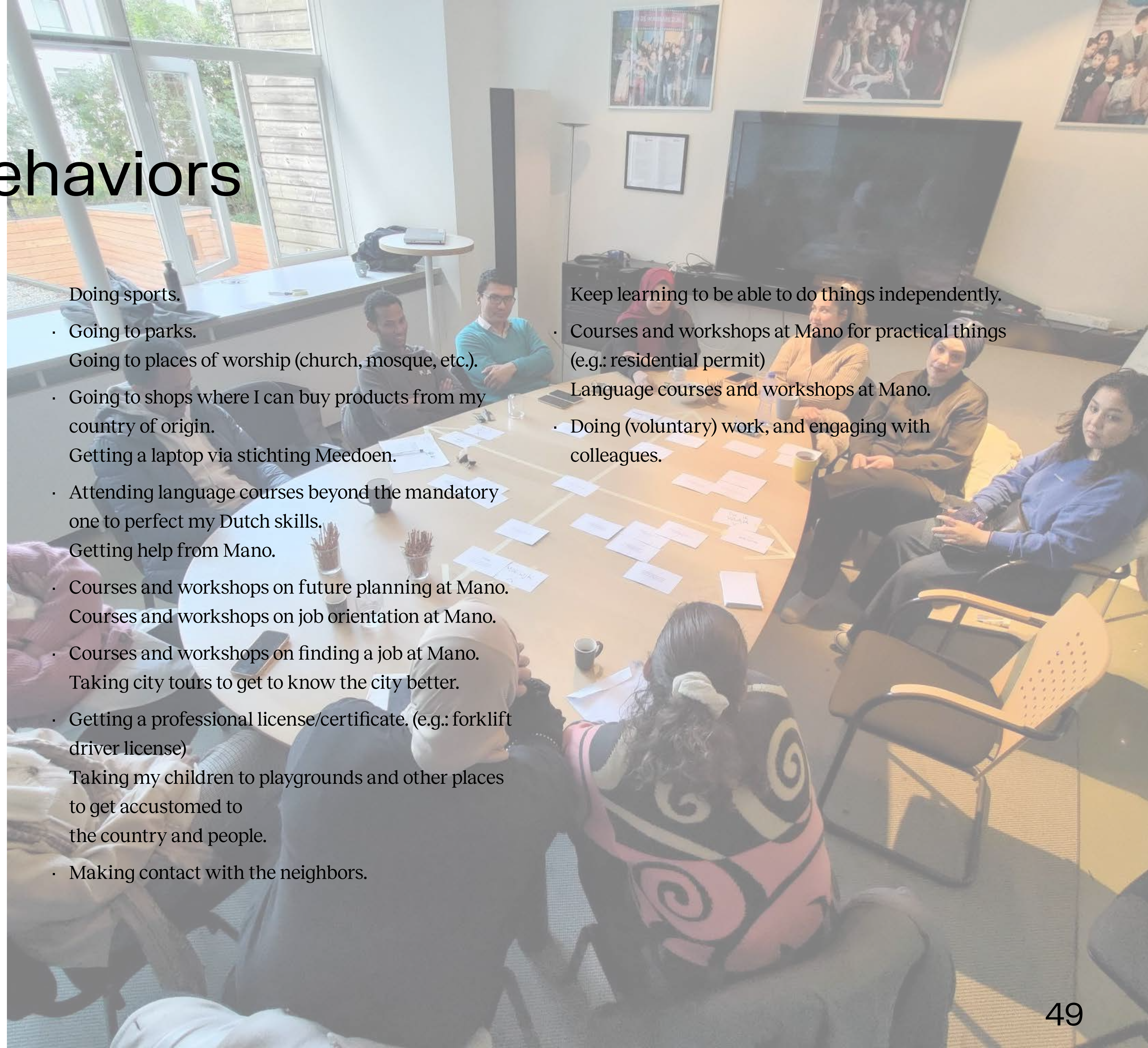
- Attending mandatory language courses.
- Going to trainings and workshops organized by the Gemeente Rotterdam.
- Finding friends from my country of origin.
- Using LinkedIn to find a job.
- Using social media to find a job.
- Using LinkedIn to find friends.
- Using social media to find friends. Using the Rotterdam Pas (for sports, culture, etc.).
- Doing voluntary work at Mano.
- Getting a bicycle to get around the city.
- Sharing my ideas freely (and having interesting conversations as a result).
- Going to museums to learn about Dutch history.
- Using public transportation to get around.
- Doing a bachelor's or master's with financial support of DUO.
- Participating in the language buddy program.
- Listening to Dutch podcasts.
- Watching Dutch TV with subtitles.
- Going to the library regularly.
- Read about Dutch culture on the web and social media.
- Trying to understand cultural differences to overcome them.
- Using social media to motivate others to achieve their goals.
- Watching videos to practice self-motivation.
- Language courses and workshops at Mano.
- Getting help from VWN.
- Getting help from SNTR.
- Having my family around me.
- Working with a SNTR coach to deal with the things I may encounter in Rotterdam.

Identifying PD behaviors

not participate. This allowed us to identify the behaviors that the participants hardly displayed as positive deviants behaviors. During a follow-up workshop, the behaviors were contextualized by discussing them with the positive deviants and placing them onto a timeline to estimate when this is most relevant for a newcomer.



- Doing sports.
- Going to parks.
- Going to places of worship (church, mosque, etc.).
- Going to shops where I can buy products from my country of origin.
- Getting a laptop via stichting Meedoen.
- Attending language courses beyond the mandatory one to perfect my Dutch skills.
- Getting help from Mano.
- Courses and workshops on future planning at Mano.
- Courses and workshops on job orientation at Mano.
- Courses and workshops on finding a job at Mano.
- Taking city tours to get to know the city better.
- Getting a professional license/certificate. (e.g.: forklift driver license)
- Taking my children to playgrounds and other places to get accustomed to the country and people.
- Making contact with the neighbors.
- Keep learning to be able to do things independently.
- Courses and workshops at Mano for practical things (e.g.: residential permit)
- Language courses and workshops at Mano.
- Doing (voluntary) work, and engaging with colleagues.



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PD behaviors that newcomers can adopt easily

Listening to podcasts

Very easy, very uncommon / After 6 months

- The PD has listened to podcasts via thedutchonlineacademy.com (or their Spotify / Apple Music channel), where newcomers can sign up for podcasts that suit their interests (theme) and level of Dutch (difficulty). There are also YouTube videos available.
- The podcasts are subtitled and there are scripts available for each podcast that allow newcomers to read back.
- The PD argues that podcasts are great because you can listen to them while doing something else. During the group discussion, we brainstormed about the best moments to listen to podcasts: while walking, cooking, traveling, cleaning, cycling, etc.
- *For newcomers, it seems most important to be aware of the Dutch Online Academy, with which podcasts to start, and how to find time to listen to podcasts.*



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Participating in the language buddy program

Quite easy, very uncommon / After 3 months

- The PD has signed up via the language buddy program via hetbeginmettaal.nl, connecting newcomers who are learning the language with volunteers for 6 months, based on their level of Dutch.
- The PD met up once a week and online with his buddy, which was very helpful. It is also possible to meet up more often and offline.
- One participant said that she has been talking to her language buddy for over 4 years already, as her buddy actually became her friend. The group responded that this is rare however: you need to be lucky to have a click with your buddy and – officially – the program only takes 6 months.
- The group stressed that their experiences with volunteers are much better than with some professional teachers, as the teaching quality varies while a lot while volunteers help newcomers ‘from the heart’.
- The group thought that having speed dates to find a suitable language buddy was a good idea too, because the advantages of a language buddy depend a lot on whether you have a click or not.

- *For newcomers, it seems most important to be aware of this program, how to sign up for it, and speak up when there is no match with the buddy (and how to speak up) so they get the most out of the program.*

Using social media to find friends

Easy, very uncommon / from the start

- The PD used LinkedIn to find friends, by simply following the friendship suggestions that the LinkedIn algorithm made based on her volunteer experience at Amnesty International and her expressed interests in the field of conflict and peace.
- Furthermore, the PD joined various Telegram groups (Telegram is used often by Iranians as the platform isn’t censored like other messaging apps) that she came across while living in an AZC for a year. From those groups, she got to know others directly and ‘via-via’.
- Others in the group chimed in with other strategies. A man from Eritrea joined language groups on Facebook to get to know other Eritreans in the Netherlands with whom he also connects one-on-one via Facebook Messenger and Zoom. It seems

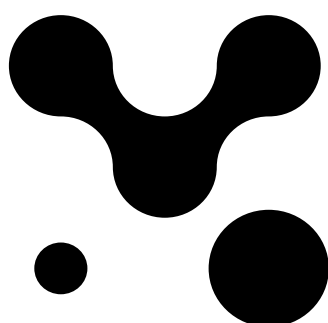
that he ‘eased into’ friendships from group contact, to messenger contact, to face-to-face contact.

- A man with Syrian background talked about a WhatsApp group called ‘Walk-and-Talk’ that connected him to a group of newcomers and Dutch volunteers that take hikes while talking Dutch regularly.
- *For newcomers, it seems important to know which platforms they can use and what groups to join that suit their background and situation.*

Taking city tours to get to know the city

Very easy, very uncommon / After 6 months

- Although the PD’s weren’t present, this behavior resonated within the group as most of the had taken city tours to get to know the city better, such as:
 1. Tours hosted by the (language) school, such as ‘Top Taal’ – an 8-week program that hosts a cultural tour at the end.
 2. The Spido port-tour
 3. Visiting the Kubus-woningen
 4. Visiting the Euromast
 5. Visiting Blijdorp and the Efteling with Dutch



Chapter 3: Results

friends

6. Cycling home with the Dutch teacher

7. Joining school trips of the children

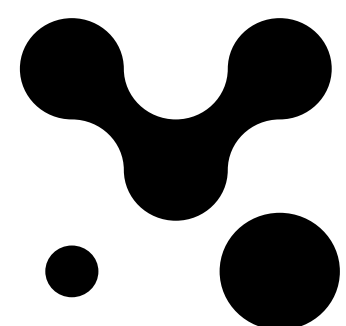
8. Audio-tours using an app for the smartphone.

- Most of these tours were offered by (language) schools, started spontaneously, or were offered highlighted in the leaflet that comes with the Rotterdam Pas – offering discounts on things to do in the city.
- *For newcomers, it seems most important to know which tours they can take, how to do that for free or for little money (Rotterdam Pas), or which initiatives they can join to get to see more of the city or country (volunteering to join school trips).*

Inspiring other newcomers via social media

Easy, Uncommon

- With the PDs not being present, there was some confusion in the group whether this behavior meant that you'd inspire others or let oneself be inspired by others. The latter resonated among some members of the groups and seemed to come quite naturally – especially for avid social media users.
- The group shared that they used messaging apps, social media groups, and social media to find inspiring



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stories of newcomers in the Netherlands, but also to ask and respond to questions. In messaging apps and social media groups, people are helping each other.

- A drawback that was mentioned is that when people ask a certain question on social media (for example: I need a dining table), they'd be exposed to many advertisements for dining tables in the days thereafter.
- *For newcomers, it seems important to know which platforms they can use and what groups to join that suit their background and situation.*

Taking my children to playgrounds to meet other people

Easy, Fairly uncommon

- During the previous workgroup, this behavior was categorized as fairly uncommon as some of the members of the group were afraid to let their children play with others and make contact with other people.
- However, during this workshop, some members noted that this is especially true for other cities than Rotterdam. Rotterdam is an international environment where it is easy to make contact

with others as most of them also have a migration background.

- *For newcomers, it seems important to know which playgrounds they can go to, and simple tips and tricks on making contact with others.*

PD behaviors that can be better facilitated for newcomers to adopt them more easily

Doing sports

Quite hard, Fairly uncommon

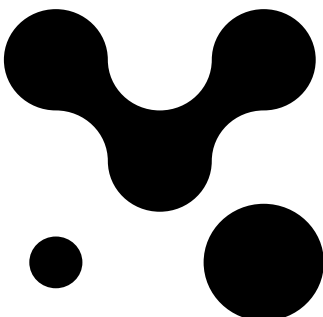
- During the previous workgroup, this behavior was categorized as hard because the costs of joining a sports club were considered too high of a threshold.
- The PD in the group found a way to work out regularly without joining a formal sports club. She played volleyball or basketball with a group of neighbors every Thursday on the playground of a school in her neighborhood. A man in the group told that he does something similar with a group of football players in his neighborhood. He only occasionally needs to chip in for materials and such.

- During the group discussion, we found out that joining a sports club is free for children (when using the Jeugdfonds). The Jeugdfonds also offers financial support for parents unless they make 'too much money'. The exact rules remained unclear.
- Another way to do sports or other hobbies is via the Huizen van de Wijk.
- *For newcomers, it seems important to know how they can use the support of the jeugdfonds for their children and for themselves. Also, an overview of free or not-too-costly initiatives would help a lot.*
- *The municipality could invest in newcomers joining sports clubs as all research shows that this is a way to (1) stay physically healthy, (2) stay mentally healthy, (3) get to know other people and the language.*

Working with an SNTR coach to deal with things that I encounter as a newcomer

Quite hard, Fairly uncommon

- SNTR is Stichting Nieuws Thuis Rotterdam and was a pilot that was available for 200 newcomers from Syria offering them comprehensive support in finding a home, arranging practical things, having a coach and a translator, etc. The PD in the group was



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very enthusiastic about the support she received. Especially because she – as a Syrian refugee – did not have to live in an AZC and got a home and comprehensive support almost immediately.

- Others in the group responded that they would also have liked to have received this kind of support. One man said that he spent already five years in the Netherlands and haven't gotten any help like that. The SNTR initiative is amazing, but it has also led to unequal treatment – or it seems/feels like that at least.
- *Anecdotal evidence leads us to believe that the SNTR initiative was a great and effective initiative. The government and/or municipality could make it available to more/all newcomers.*

Watching Dutch TV with subtitles

Quite hard, Fairly uncommon

- During the previous workshop, watching Dutch TV with Dutch subtitles was categorized as a little bit hard and a little bit uncommon. During this workshop, all participants watched Dutch tv with subtitles, but in different ways:
 1. On YouTube with auto-generated subtitles

2. On YouTube with subtitles and half the speed
3. Using teletext page 888 (which appears to be an international standard).

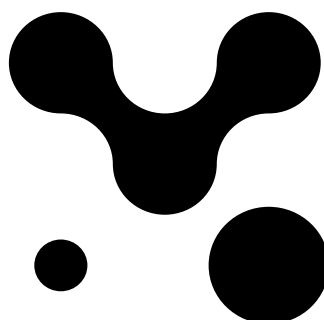
- *Newcomers could benefit from being told about the different ways in which they can watch Dutch TV with subtitles.*

Doig a bachelor's or master's with financial help from DUO

Quite hard, Fairly uncommon

- During the previous workshop and this workshops, getting help from DUO was categorized as fairly hard because of various reasons:
 - International degrees are not always acknowledged by the Dutch system.
 - Before getting DUO support, you need to speak a certain level of Dutch, also if the program one is aiming to get is taught in English.
- Therefore, DUO support is mostly interesting for the children of newcomers growing up in the Netherlands. For the newcomers themselves, UAF is interesting, as it offers opportunities for degrees on other levels – including practical education and degrees in other countries.

- One participant said that the DUO support also has a drawback. Because the grant must be paid back in full, there is a lot of pressure.
- *Newcomers could benefit from a clear overview of the options they have for education and financial support.*



Key Take-Aways

For newcomers:

Language and cultural education: Engage in language courses (e.g., attending mandatory and additional language courses), learn about Dutch culture (e.g., visiting museums, reading online about Dutch culture), and listening to Dutch podcasts to improve language skills.

Active social networking: Utilize LinkedIn and other social media for job searching and making friends, connecting with people from one's country of origin for cultural support (e.g., using social media to find friends, LinkedIn to find jobs and friends).

Community engagement: Participate in local activities and trainings organized by Gemeente Rotterdam, and volunteer at organizations like Mano (e.g., doing voluntary work, participating in language buddy programs, attending workshops at Mano).

Utilizing local resources: Take city tours to familiarize oneself with Rotterdam, seek support from local organizations such as Mano (e.g., getting

a laptop via stichting Meedoen, using the Rotterdam Pas for cultural and sports activities).

Personal development: Participate in courses for future planning, job orientation (e.g., workshops on finding a job at Mano), and enhance independent living skills (e.g., courses and workshops at Mano for practical things like residential permits).

Newcomer organizations (e.g., Mano):

Educational and social support: Offer a range of language courses, workshops on job orientation, and future planning sessions. Provide social media coaching by training Mano's 'experience experts'.

Resource provision: Develop maps of playgrounds and communal spaces for social interactions, and provide info packages with links to podcasts, city tours, and ways to watch TV with subtitles.

Education guidance: Give an overview of educational

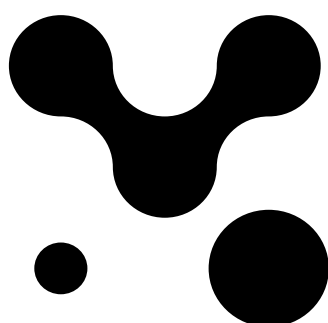
options available to newcomers, assisting them in making informed decisions about their educational pursuits.

For municipalities:

Language and cultural integration programs: Establish local language buddy programs and offer city tours, including museum visits, to aid cultural integration. Distribute welcome packages to newcomers with relevant information.

Recreational accessibility: Facilitate free or discounted access to sports facilities and club memberships for newcomers, promoting social interaction and physical well-being.

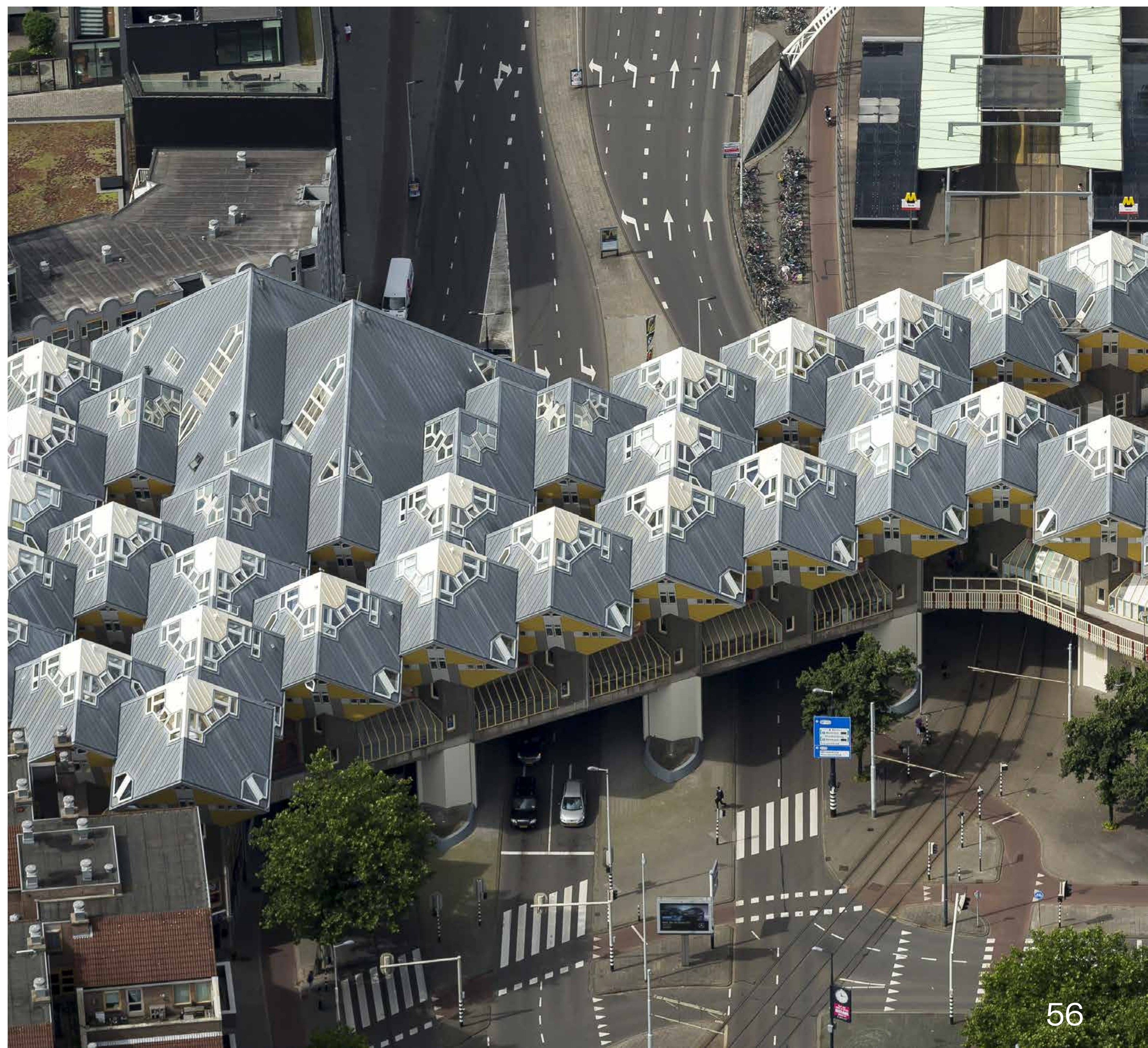
Equality in support programs: Evaluate and potentially continue comprehensive support initiatives, while ensuring equitable treatment and access for all newcomers.



Key Take-Aways

For Employers:

Workplace integration: Create opportunities for newcomers to engage with colleagues (e.g., team-building activities, mentoring programs) to build professional networks and adapt to workplace culture



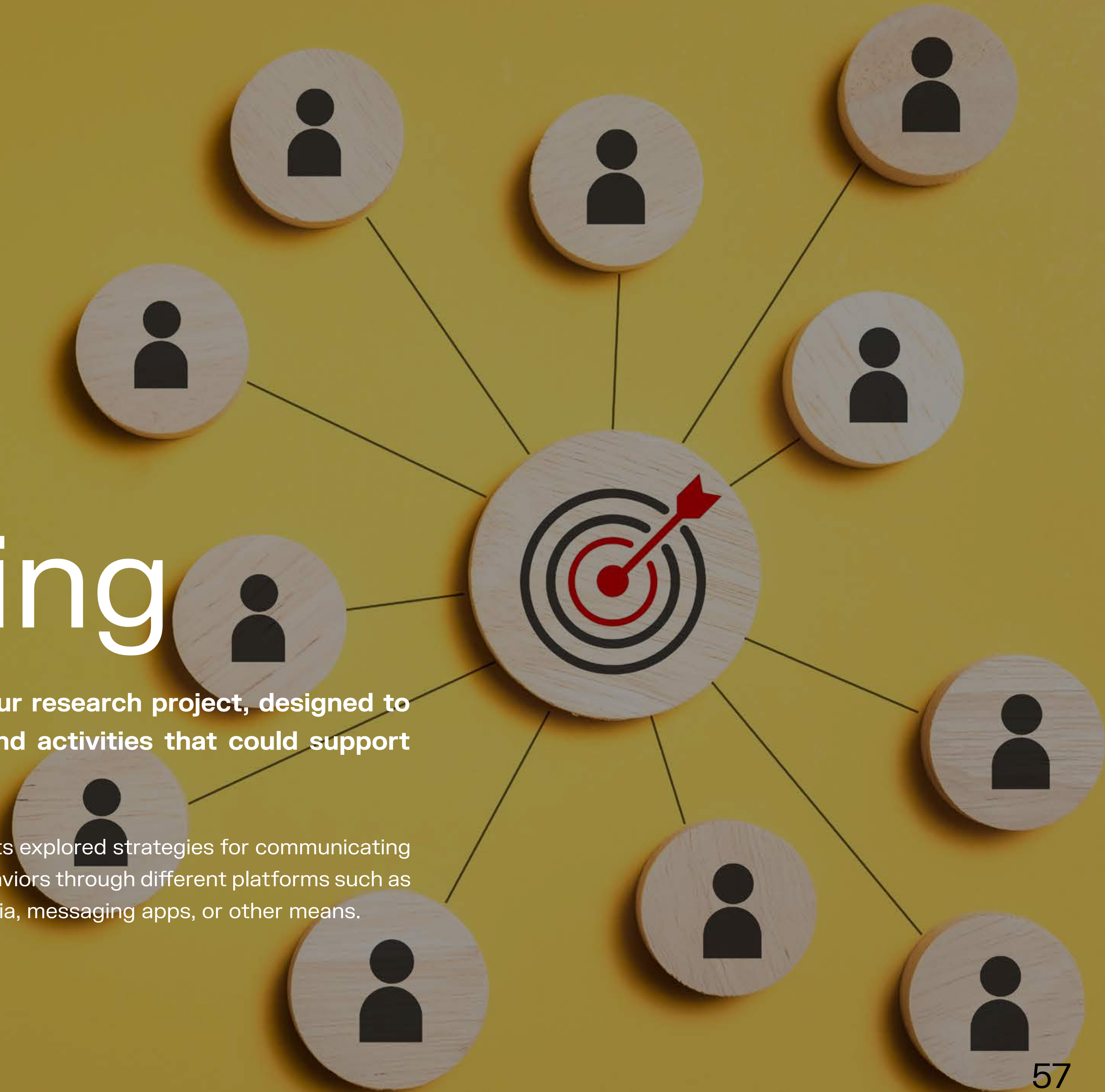
Phase IV: Scaling up

Co-designing

The workshops served as a pivotal component of our research project, designed to facilitate the exchange of ideas about initiatives and activities that could support newcomers in feeling at home in Rotterdam.

The goal of the workshop sessions was to co-create solutions based on the activities and 'positive deviant' (PD) behaviors identified through the previous phases.

Participants explored strategies for communicating these behaviors through different platforms such as social media, messaging apps, or other means.



Co-creation workshops

The media-making workshop sessions began with an extensive group discussion centered around the PD behaviors that were identified in the preceding card-sorting session. This discussion aimed to provide a contextual understanding of these behaviors in relation to the participants' experiences in Rotterdam. By doing so, it facilitated a conversation about the various ways in which these PD behaviors could be effectively applied to benefit other newcomers.

Following this discussion, the participants explored strategies for communicating these behaviors through different platforms such as social media, messaging apps, or other means. They also discussed the possible formats for communication, including visual representations like pictures, leaflets,

newsletters, and more. To this end, participants engaged with two experts in media-making and collaborated with their peers to design practical solutions tailored for newcomers, like them, living in the city of Rotterdam.

As an outcome of the media-making workshop, participants proposed the development of the three practical solutions for supporting newcomers' needs and experiences and aspirations of belonging in Rotterdam. Detailed description of the solutions by newcomers can be found in the subsequent sections.

1. ManoApp

The first solution refers to the design of ManoApp (see figure →), an application that encompasses a range of resources that newcomers can use to navigate information about services, locations, bureaucratic processes, language learning, socialization, and entertainment in their new city. As noted by participants involved in the co-design



Chapter 3: Results

exercise, the app is a tool that aims to fulfil the daily needs of newcomers, regardless of their time living in Rotterdam.

Furthermore, they underscore the significance of garnering support from crucial stakeholders like Mano and the municipality of Rotterdam to ensure the app's successful development, implementation, and long-term viability. This support is vital for enhancing the app's adoption and impact among newcomers. Additionally, participants suggested a co-dissemination strategy for introducing ManoApp in the newcomer community. The strategy involves the distribution of fliers, videos and text and voice messages through WhatsApp and Facebook groups formed by newcomers and Mano, as well as LinkedIn. Telegram was also highlighted by participants as an important platform for sharing the app initiative with those newcomers originating from countries facing government restrictions to social media access, such as the case of Iran.

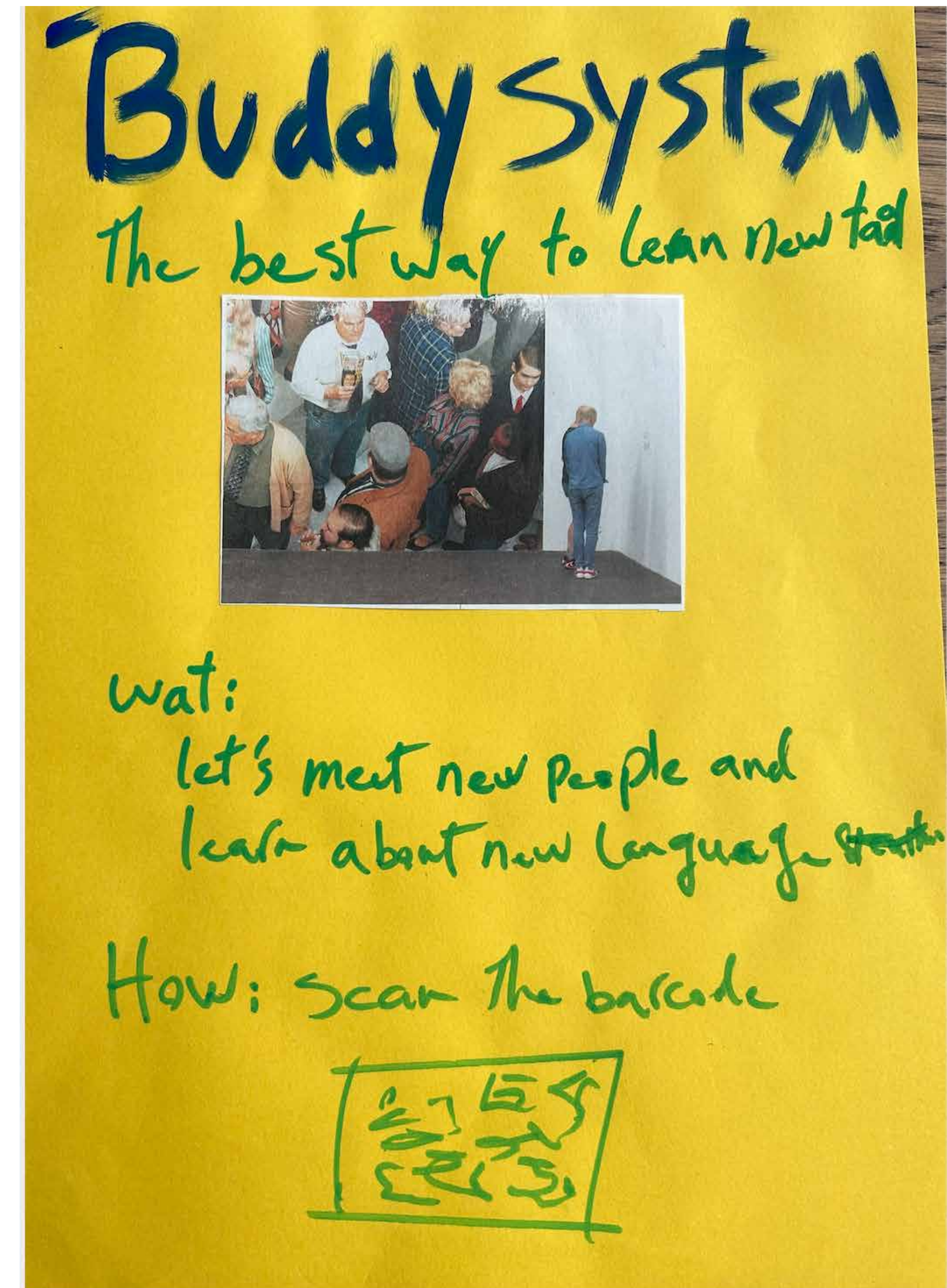
2. Buddy System

The second solution entails the continuation and/or local adaption of the Buddy System program, (hetbegintmettaal.nl) which has demonstrated remarkable popularity and effectiveness within both

the newcomer community in Rotterdam and the broader context of the Netherlands (See figure →).

One of the important additions to the extended version of the program is that newcomers can be more actively involved in the selection of their buddies. As an example, participants highlighted that newcomers might occasionally encounter a lack of connection with their assigned buddies. In such cases, having the opportunity to collaborate with another volunteer would greatly facilitate the process. On the other hand, extending the duration of engagement with buddies who establish a strong rapport would prove beneficial for newcomers' learning and social integration.

Furthermore, participants emphasized the importance of making the Buddy program visible and accessible to more newcomers through formal communication channels from Mano and the municipality of Rotterdam and informal networks, such as WhatsApp and Facebook groups. To attract a larger number of newcomers, participants said the program's dissemination would require a visually appealing approach.



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3. Community-support initiative

The third solution revolves around the idea of a community-support initiative designed to help women newcomers through the provision of information about places and networks in Rotterdam where they can have access to better resources, learning opportunities, and employment.

This initiative can be characterized as a community-driven project that can be realized through the active participation and collaboration of newcomers and other residents of the host city. It involves the utilization of a platform that serves as a supportive infrastructure, facilitating information sharing, promoting socialization, and providing skills training specifically geared towards women newcomers. The community-support initiative would also enable the exchange of experiences among newcomers in the city of Rotterdam through meetings, events, and food celebrations. Ideas to promote the initiative include its introduction via Mano, both through formal presentations and informal conversations. The women proposing the project envisioned a visual design to showcase the kinds of activities and resources that can be offered (See figure →).



Key Take-Aways

Co-Design workshops: Workshops focused on co-creating solutions and strategies for communicating positive deviant behaviors to support newcomers in feeling at home in Rotterdam, utilizing various media platforms.

Development of ManoApp: A major outcome was the proposal of ManoApp, a comprehensive resource for newcomers covering essential services, language learning, and socialization. Its success depends on support from stakeholders like Mano and the Rotterdam municipality.

Dissemination strategy for ManoApp: A strategy involving the distribution of the app through various channels, including social media and messaging apps, to effectively reach the newcomer community, including those from countries with restricted media access.

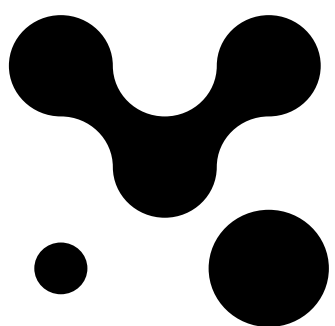
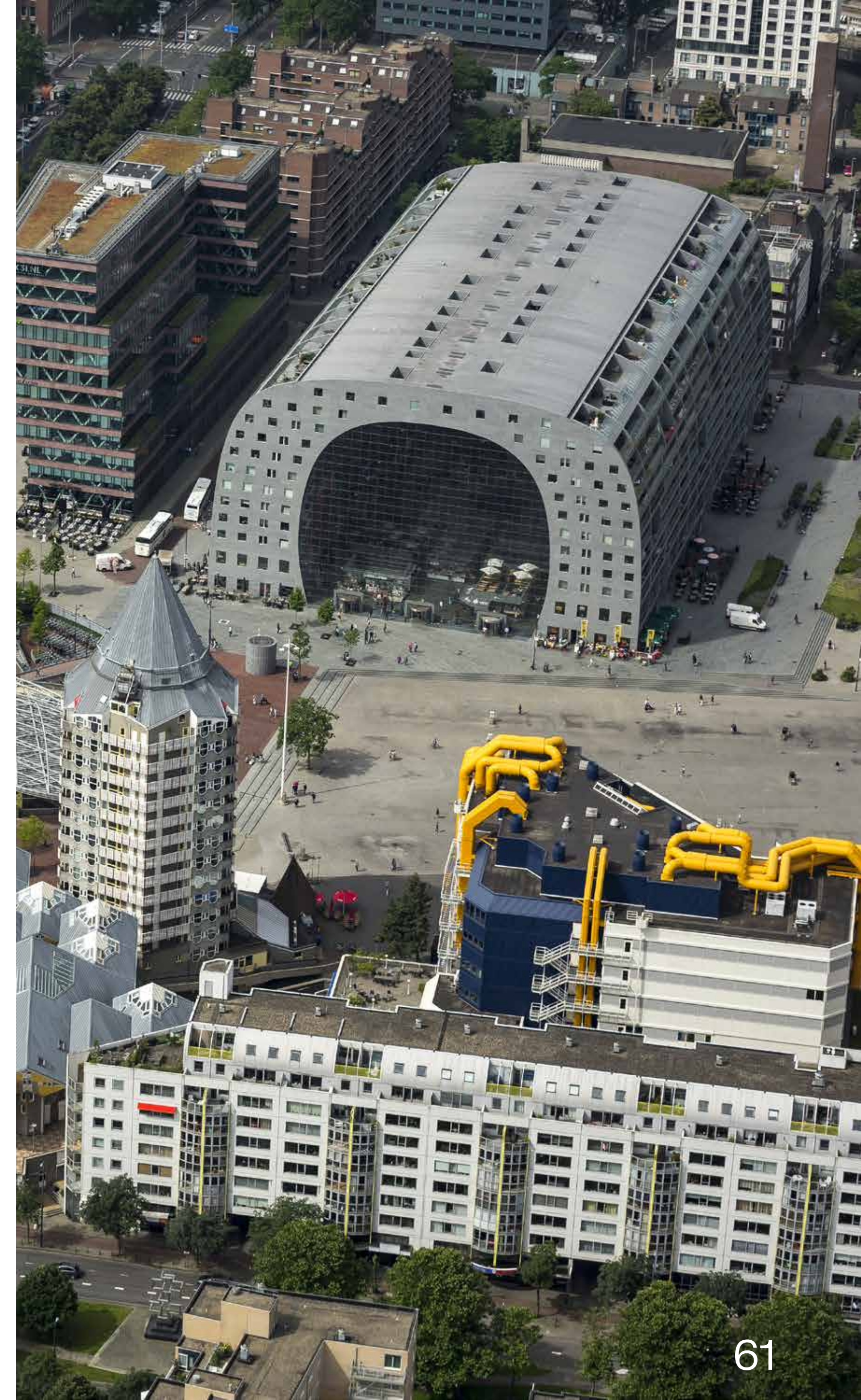
Expansion of the buddy system program: Enhancements to the Buddy System include more autonomy for newcomers in selecting buddies and extending the duration of successful buddy

relationships, improving learning and social integration.

Increased visibility for the buddy program: Proposals to make the Buddy program more visible and accessible, using formal channels and social networks, with an emphasis on visually appealing communication methods to attract more newcomers

These takeaways from Phase IV underscore the importance of collaborative, innovative approaches in communicating and implementing practical solutions to aid newcomers in integrating into life in Rotterdam.

Implementation of community-support initiative: This initiative should prioritize providing comprehensive information for female newcomers on educational opportunities and employment prospects. By facilitating access to such vital resources and networks, this initiative can significantly contribute to the successful integration and empowerment of women newcomers in Rotterdam.



Phase I-IV

Employment counselors



The semantic network on the right shows the words that we mentioned most frequently by the interviewees. The lines between the words show how the words were combined. Using this and the word clouds on the following



Counselor 1

Counselor 1:

[illegible]

Counselor 2

[illegible]

Employment counselors

many young immigrants, particularly from Africa and Syria, are not accustomed to thinking about personal aspirations or career plans, as their life path in their home countries was often predetermined.

3. Providing perspective and promoting autonomy and choice: Empowering newcomers by allowing them to make their own decisions and supporting them in these choices is a key strategy. For example, the counselors mention the case of a young man who felt more in control and positive once he was given the choice regarding an unfortunate housing situation, even though he eventually chose to stay in the same place.

4. Developing communication skills: The counselor emphasizes the importance of being vocal and assertive in the Dutch context. He encourages young people to speak up for their needs, as this is a cultural norm in the Netherlands and essential for getting help and opportunities.

5. Cultural adaptation and understanding: Acknowledging and adapting to the cultural differences in terms of expectations, social norms, and communication styles is crucial for newcomers. This involves educating them about the Dutch way of life and helping them navigate these differences.

6. Encouraging social and community engagement: The counselor stresses the importance of engaging in social activities and community life. This could be through sports, clubs, or other social gatherings where newcomers can meet people, build networks, and feel a sense of belonging.

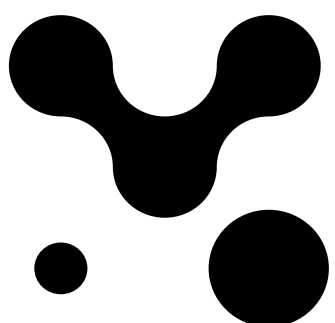
7. Providing personalized support: Offering tailored support based on individual needs and backgrounds is important. This includes understanding their unique challenges and guiding them through the various systems in the Netherlands, such as housing, education, and employment.

8. Empathetic and patient approach: A patient and empathetic approach is necessary, especially

given the varied and complex backgrounds of the newcomers. Building trust and a supportive relationship is key to effective assistance.

9. Career and educational guidance: Guiding newcomers in their educational and career paths, and helping them understand the Dutch educational system and job market is vital. This includes assisting them with practical aspects like CV writing and job applications.

"Empowering newcomers by allowing them to make their own decisions and supporting them in these choices is a key strategy."



Employment counselors

Counselor 2:

The interview with the second counselor provides additional insights into strategies for assisting newcomers in the Netherlands. Here are the key strategies and observations from the interview:

1. Early engagement in work and social activities:

The counselor emphasizes the importance of newcomers starting (voluntary) work early. Engaging in work helps with language acquisition, building social networks, and integrating into society. Additionally, participation in social activities, such as sports clubs or community events, is encouraged.

2. Language acquisition: Mastery of the Dutch language is a crucial element for feeling at home and being able to manage independently. The counselor notes that language proficiency aids in building social contacts, understanding societal norms, and accessing opportunities.

3. Building trust and relationships: Establishing trust is a significant factor. Many newcomers come

from backgrounds where mistrust of authorities is common. Building a trusting relationship can lead to more open communication and effective support.

4. Adapting to individual needs and characters:

The counselor's approach varies depending on the individual. The counselor tailors support based on the person's character, needs, and their level of motivation and openness.

5. Confrontational approach when necessary:

In some cases, a more confrontational and direct approach is effective, especially with young people who might need a push to take action and assume responsibility for their integration.

6. Understanding and addressing trauma:

Recognizing that many newcomers arrive with trauma is essential. Providing support and referrals to appropriate psychological services can be crucial in their ability to integrate and feel at home.

7. Explaining and navigating the Dutch systems:

Educating newcomers about the Dutch educational

system, job market, and societal norms helps them understand their new environment and make informed decisions.

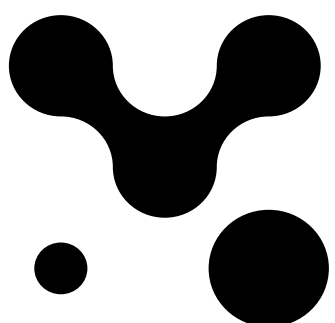
8. Encouraging self-reliance: Promoting self-reliance and responsibility is a key strategy. The counselor focuses on encouraging newcomers to take charge of their integration process.

9. Use of visual tools and practical examples:

To make information more comprehensible and relatable, the counselor uses visual tools and practical examples. This approach helps in breaking down complex processes into manageable steps.

10. Resilience and mental health awareness:

Acknowledging the role of resilience and mental health in the integration process is important. The counselor notes the varied responses of newcomers to trauma and the need for tailored mental health support.



Employment counselors

Recommendations

The strategies that both counselors have in common, can be considered to be positive deviant behaviors. Both interviews underscore the need for a comprehensive, empathetic, and flexible approach, tailored to the individual circumstances of newcomers, to facilitate their successful integration into Dutch society.

1. Understanding individual backgrounds:

Recognize the diverse backgrounds of newcomers and tailor support to their unique experiences, challenges, and cultural contexts.

2. Language proficiency: Encourage and support the acquisition of the Dutch language as it is key to integration, social connections, and understanding societal norms.

3. Personal goals and autonomy: Promote the development of personal perspectives and goals. Empower newcomers to make their own choices and support these decisions.

4. Active social and work engagement: Facilitate early involvement in work and social activities, such as sports clubs or community events, to aid in language skills, build networks, and foster a sense of belonging.

5. Building trust and relationships: Establish trust with newcomers, especially considering their varied backgrounds and potential experiences of mistrust in authorities.

6. Adaptability in approach: Tailor strategies based on individual needs, character, and level of motivation. Use confrontational approaches when necessary to encourage action and responsibility.

7. Navigating Dutch systems: Provide guidance on the Dutch educational system, job market, and societal norms, helping newcomers to understand and navigate their new environment effectively.

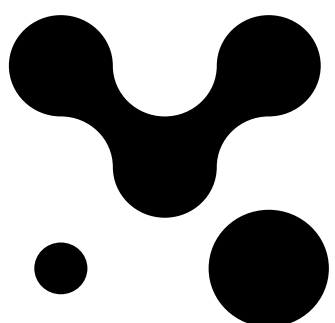
8. Addressing trauma and mental health: Recognize and address the trauma and mental health issues that many newcomers face. Offer support and

referrals to psychological services.

9. Encouraging self-reliance and resilience: Promote self-reliance and responsibility in the integration process. Acknowledge the importance of resilience and mental health awareness.

10. Use of practical tools: Employ visual tools and practical examples to make information more comprehensible and relatable, helping to simplify complex processes.

"Promote self-reliance and responsibility in the integration process, while sketching an appealing future perspective."



Phase I-IV

Employers



Employers

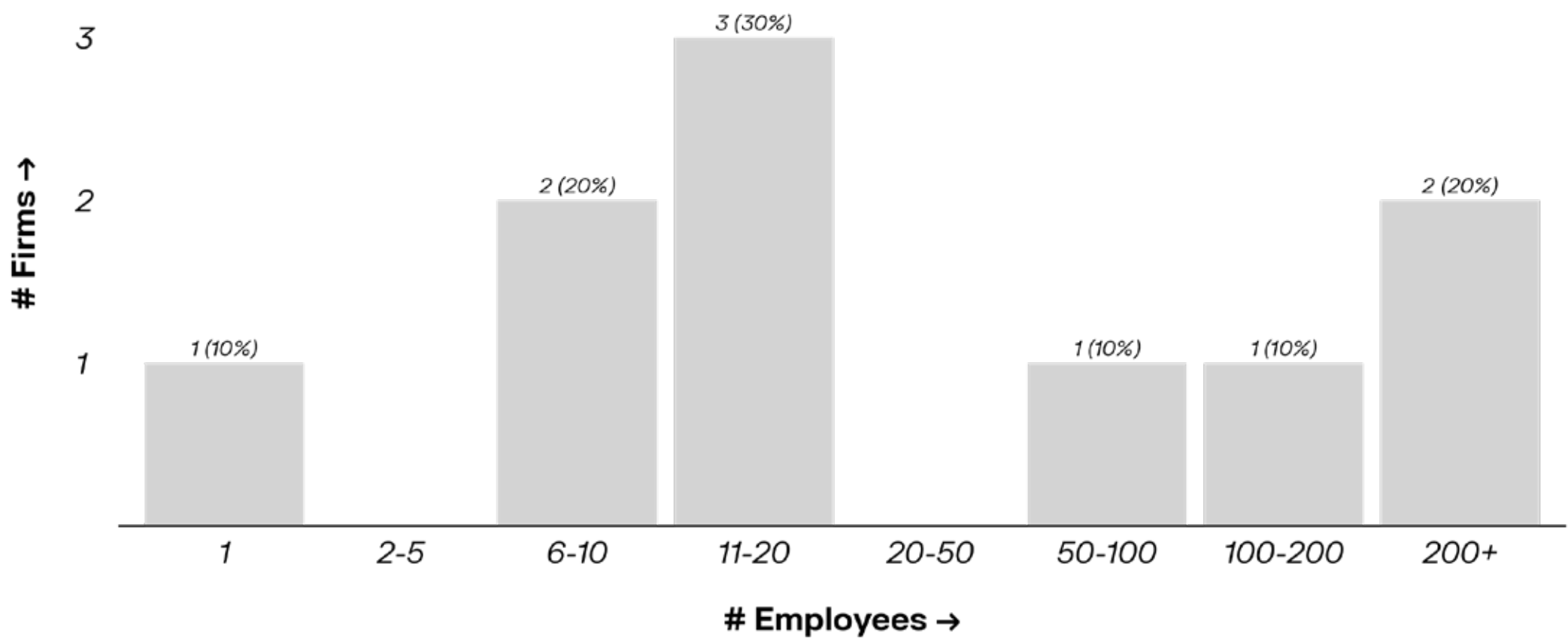
In the first half of 2023, a survey resdponded to by 11 employers provided valuable insights into their engagement with newcomer employees. This survey delved into various aspects: business activities, workforce size, the number of newcomers hired (both historically and at present), types of support received, and the reasons for either terminating or not extending contracts with these employees.

Survey scope and distribution

The survey was open from February to May and distributed through the networks of both the municipality and project partners. Despite the limited number of responses and the variation in sectors and business sizes making direct comparisons difficult, the data collected sheds light on effective strategies for supporting companies in the employment of newcomers.

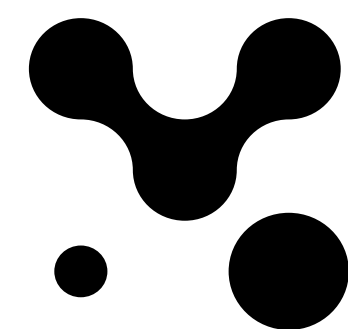
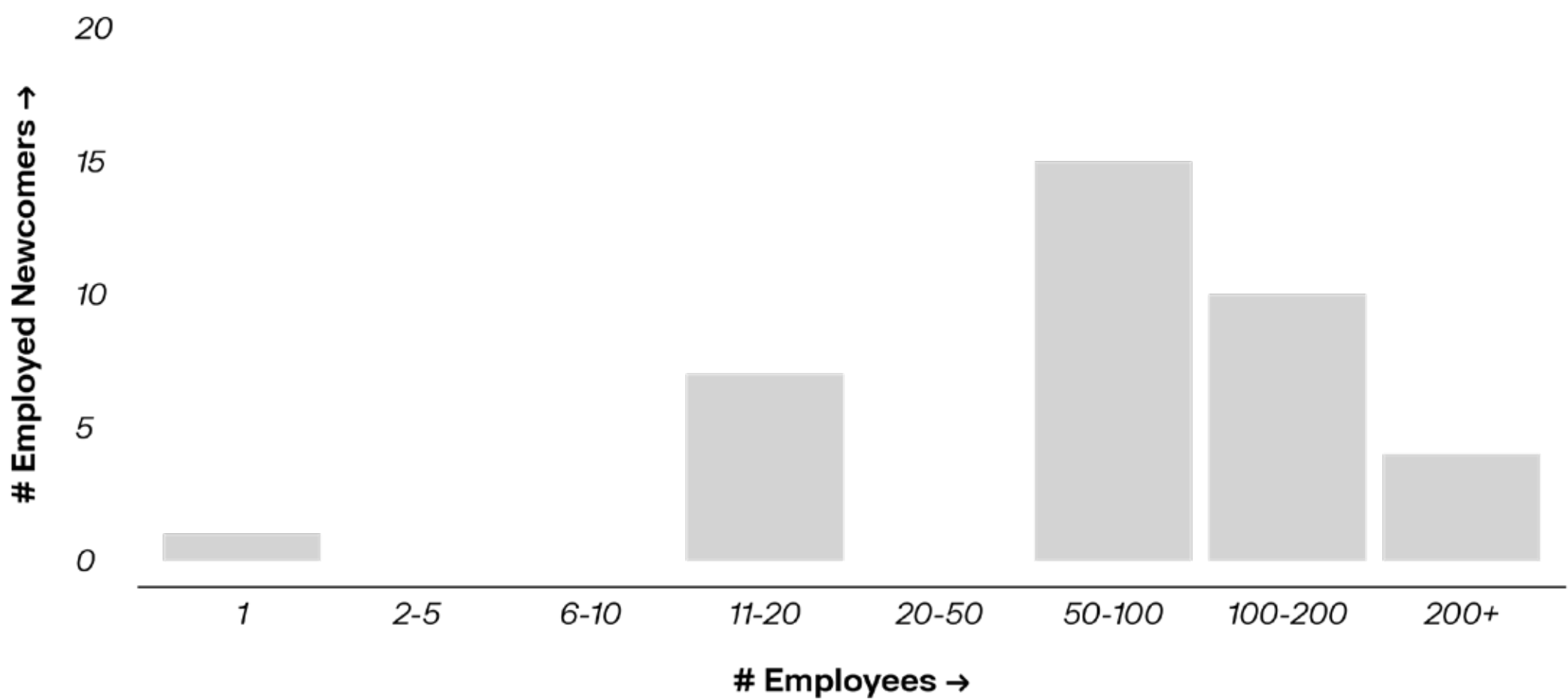
Number of employees

N = 10



Number of employed newcomers

N = 5



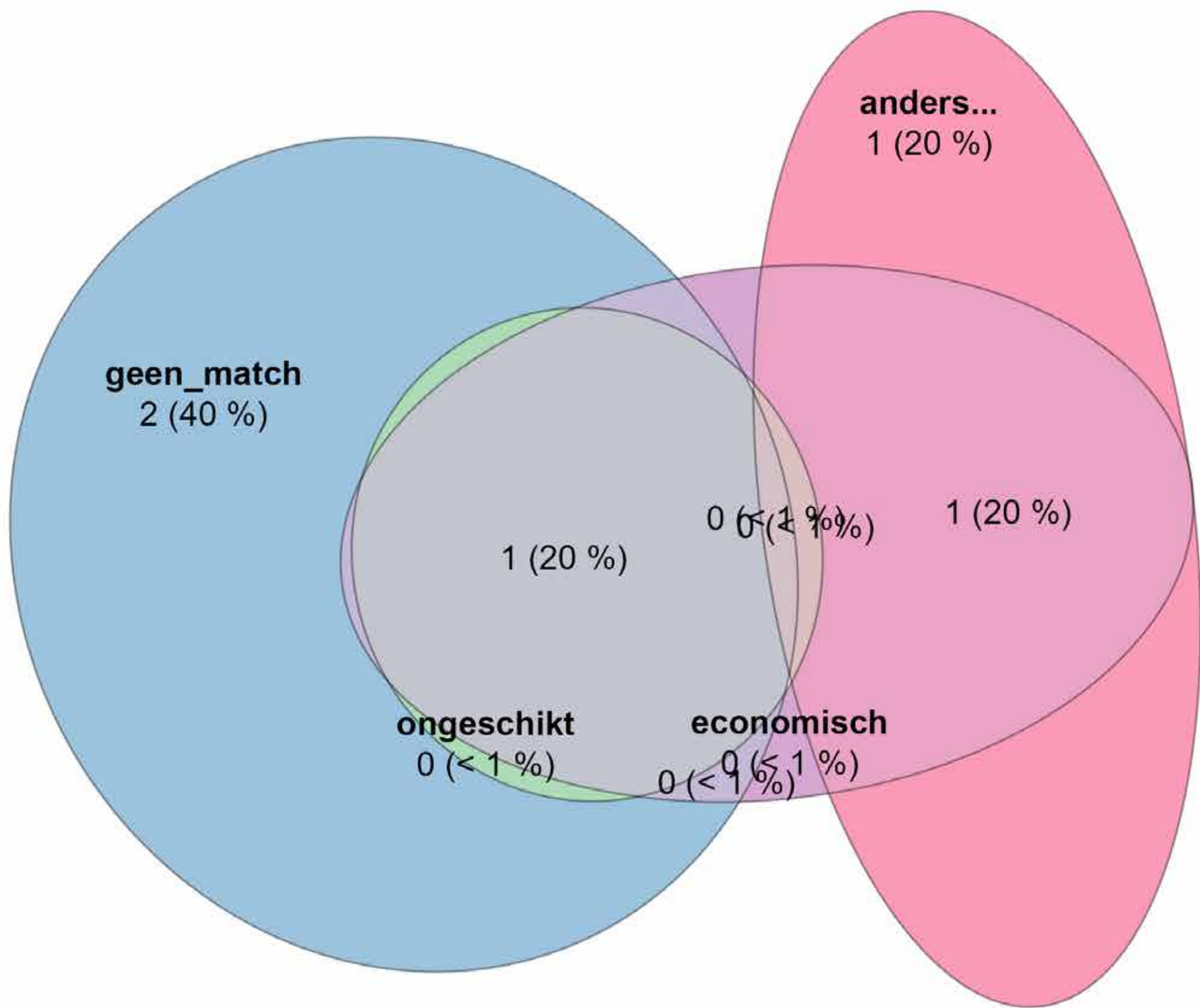
Employers

Diverse Business Sectors

The responding firms operate in a range of sectors, illustrating the diversity of opportunities for newcomer employment. This includes two firms in cleaning and maintenance, two in the hospitality industry, and others in construction, research, and government. The size of these firms varies significantly, with employee numbers ranging from just one to over 200.

Employment of Newcomers

All surveyed employers have experience hiring newcomers. However, only a minority disclosed specific numbers, limiting our ability to draw definitive conclusions about the relationship between the total workforce and the proportion of newcomers. Interestingly, seven employers received some form of assistance from the municipality, either financially (five respondents) or through practical advice (five respondents), underlining the role of governmental support in facilitating newcomer employment.



Employers

Retention of newcomer employees

The survey revealed varied retention rates among the participating companies. Three companies successfully retained all the newcomers they hired. In contrast, two others saw a decline in their newcomer workforce, indicating differing levels of success in integrating and retaining these employees over time.

Challenges in employment continuity

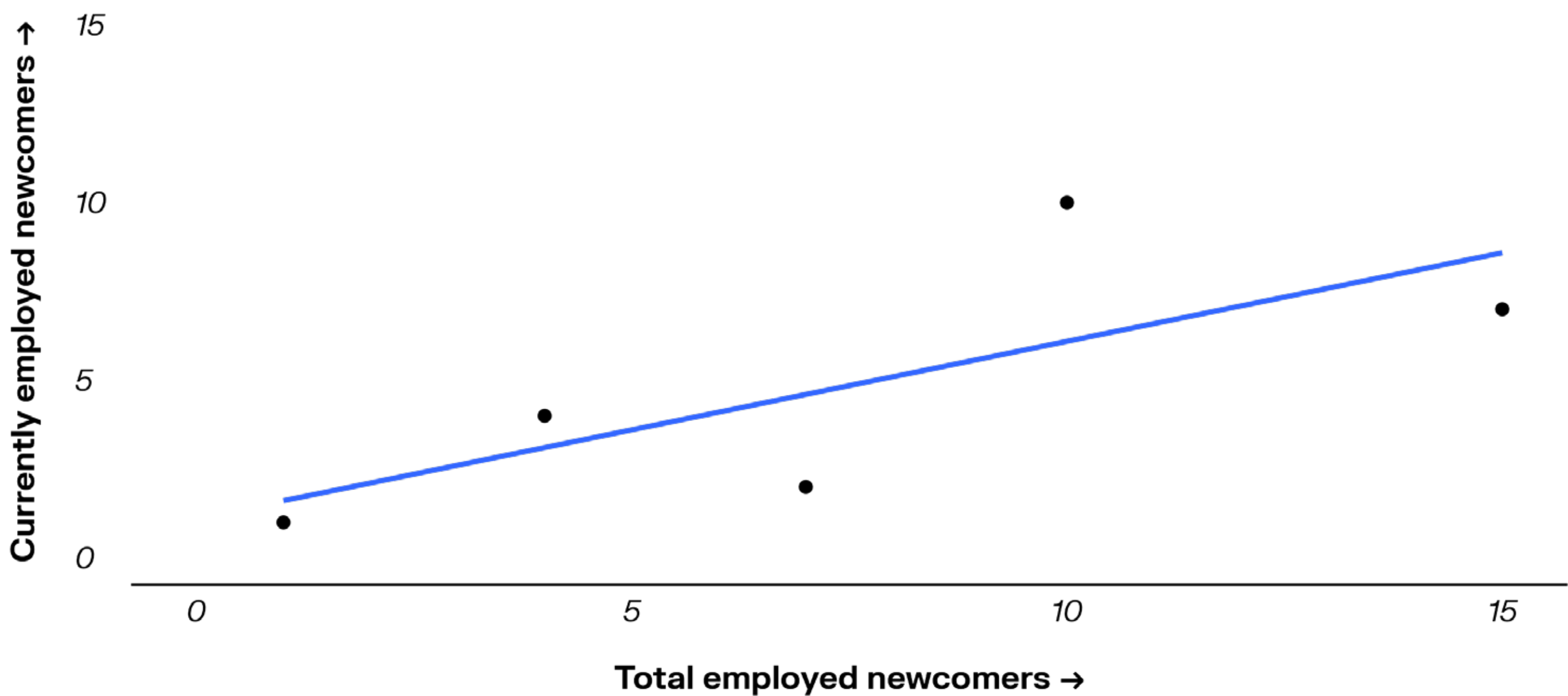
Employers cited several reasons for the departure of newcomer employees. These included team incompatibility, economic constraints, lack of qualifications, and other unspecified reasons. Notably, in a couple of instances, newcomers left for welfare benefits or due to the seasonal nature of the work.

Analysis of success factors

Among the respondents, two companies stood out for their positive track record in employing and retaining newcomers. These firms, active in cleaning, maintenance,

Employed newcomers difference

$N = 5$

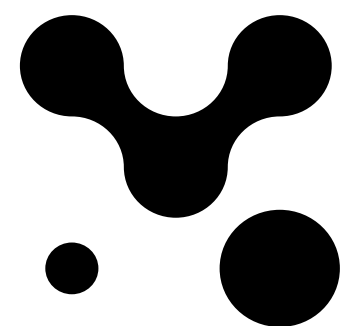


Employers

and industrial sectors, benefited from both financial support and substantive advice from the municipality. Conversely, two companies in the maintenance and hospitality sectors faced challenges, with contract terminations or non-renewals often driven by economic factors, seasonal work, or the newcomers' preference for other employment opportunities or welfare benefits.

Concluding observations

Although the response rate is too low for broad generalizations, the survey highlights critical areas for support and intervention in the employment of newcomers. It suggests that municipal support, both financial and advisory, can play a crucial role in enhancing employment opportunities for newcomers, particularly in sectors with fluctuating demand or specific skill requirements.



Key Take-Aways

The take-aways underscore the need for both employment counselors and employers to understand newcomer backgrounds, provide tailored support, and foster environments that encourage adaptation, learning, and long-term employment.

For employment counselors:

Diverse backgrounds understanding: Recognize the varied cultural and societal backgrounds of newcomers for effective guidance.

Personal goals encouragement: Help newcomers develop personal goals and autonomy, crucial for their adaptation and success in the Netherlands.

Communication Skills Development: Emphasize the importance of assertive communication as a cultural norm in the Dutch context.

Cultural adaptation support: Assist newcomers

in adapting to Dutch cultural norms and encourage participation in social and community activities.

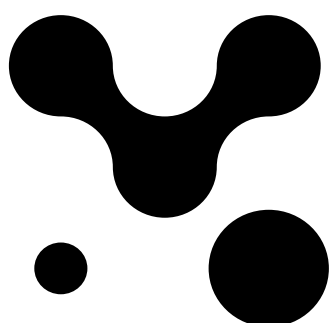
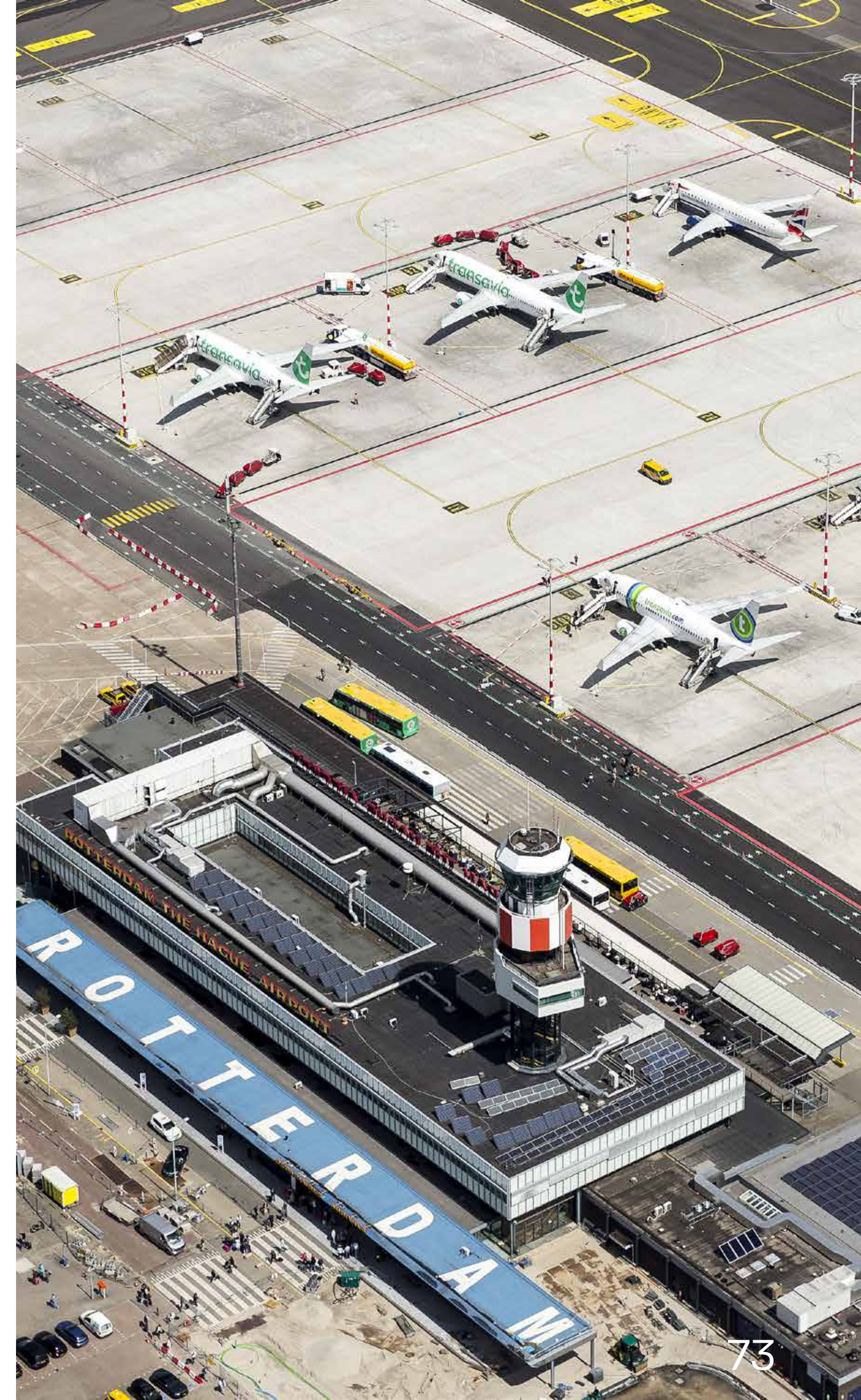
Career and educational guidance: Provide newcomers with career guidance and help them navigate the Dutch educational system and job market.

For employers:

Newcomer employment support: Some employers have successfully employed newcomers, often with financial and practical aid from the municipality.

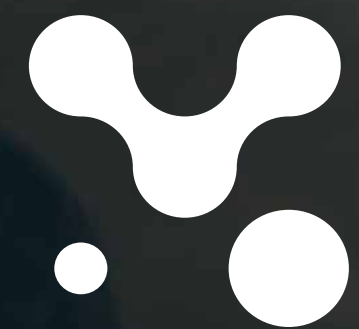
Retention variability: Retention rates of newcomers vary, with reasons for non-extension including mismatch, economic reasons, and personal choices of newcomers.

Effective retention strategies: Successful retention is linked to receiving financial help and advice from the municipality and offering supportive work environments.



Recommendations

Based on the insights gathered from this project, the following recommendations are proposed to further enhance the integration of newcomers in Rotterdam. These recommendations are structured to address the roles of the municipality, newcomer organizations, employers, and the newcomers themselves.



Recommendations

For the municipality of Rotterdam

1: Ensure the effectiveness and continuous improvement of integration programs: Ongoing evaluation and feedback mechanisms should be established to continuously assess the impact of integration programs on newcomers and make necessary adjustments for continuous improvement. One effective approach to gathering feedback from newcomers is to embrace co-creation and co-design as a default strategy. By actively involving newcomers in the process of shaping and designing the community-support initiative, their perspectives, needs, and insights can be directly incorporated into its development. This involves strengthening foundational programs like local language buddy systems and cultural orientation tours and continuously evaluating and refining existing programs to ensure effectiveness and accessibility.

2: Facilitate the establishment of peer support networks among newcomers: Through these networks, newcomers can connect and support

each other in their integration journey. These networks can provide a sense of community, shared experiences, and a platform for socialization and mutual assistance.

3: Incorporate “everyday cultural orientation programs” as part of integration initiatives: These programs can help familiarize newcomers with local customs, social norms, and community resources. These programs can support newcomers in navigating social interactions, understand cultural expectations, and facilitate smoother inclusion into the host community.

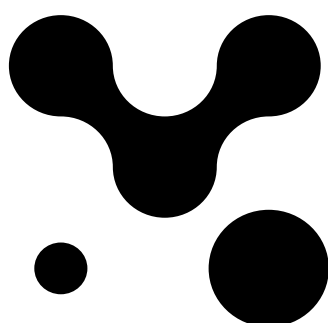
4: Develop comprehensive integration programs: Continue implementing foundational programs like local language buddy systems and cultural orientation tours, including museum visits, to support cultural immersion and linguistic proficiency.

5: Increase accessibility to recreational activities: Further enhance access to sports facilities and club memberships, either free or subsidized, to

encourage newcomers’ physical well-being and social interaction. This includes expanding subsidies for sports facilities and club memberships and implementing mechanisms to assess the impact and accessibility of subsidized recreational activities.

6: Support employers in newcomer employment: Provide both financial aid and practical advice to businesses hiring newcomers, facilitating their effective integration into the workforce. This includes providing financial aid and practical advice to businesses hiring newcomers and facilitating inclusive workplace policies and practices through workshops and guidance.

7: Ensure equitable access to integration programs: Sustain and evaluate programs and ensure they are accessible to all newcomers, thereby preventing feelings of inequity or unfair treatment. This involves implementing measures to address potential feelings of inequity or unfair treatment and sustaining and evaluating programs to ensure accessibility for all newcomers.



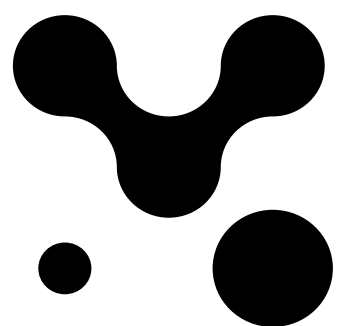
Recommendations

8: Collaboration and information sharing: Foster collaboration between different municipal departments to share insights and improve integration strategies. Establish a centralized platform for information sharing and coordination among relevant stakeholders.

Newcomer organizations such as Mano:

1: Expand educational and social support services: Continue offering diverse language courses, workshops, and social media coaching, integrating practical life skills training and job orientation programs. This expansion should include diversifying language courses, workshops, and coaching to encompass practical life skills training and job orientation programs. Additionally, collaborating with other organizations can offer a comprehensive range of educational and social support services, broadening the support network available to newcomers.

2: Facilitate social networking opportunities: Strengthen efforts in creating and distributing resources like maps of communal spaces and playgrounds, and an information



Recommendations

package with educational and cultural resources. This should involve enhancing efforts to create and share resources that guide newcomers to communal spaces and playgrounds. Developing an information package with educational and cultural resources will support newcomers in understanding and integrating into their new environment.

3: Professional development programs: Introduce programs that focus on professional development and career advancement for newcomers. This includes collaborating with local businesses to create networking and skill-building opportunities. Such programs will provide newcomers with the necessary tools and connections to succeed professionally in their new community.

4: Community engagement initiatives: Organize community events and initiatives to facilitate interactions between newcomers and the local community. Encouraging newcomers to participate in local activities that promote social integration is crucial. This approach fosters a sense of belonging

and aids in the development of meaningful connections within the community.

5: Feedback and evaluation mechanism: Establish a feedback mechanism to assess the effectiveness of programs and services. It is essential to regularly evaluate the impact of educational and social support initiatives and make improvements accordingly. This continuous assessment ensures that the services provided remain relevant and effective in meeting the needs of newcomers.

For employers in Rotterdam:

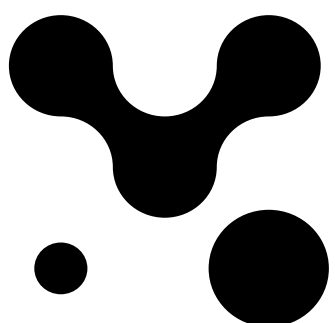
1: Collaborate with newcomer employment support organizations: Establish partnerships with local refugee employment support organizations. These organizations can provide valuable resources, guidance, and support in the hiring process of refugees.

2: Recognize transferrable skills: Recognize the skills, experiences, and qualifications that newcomers

bring from their home countries. Newcomers often have diverse backgrounds and professional experiences that can contribute positively to the workplace. Avoid making assumptions solely based on their refugee status.

3: Establish mentorship or buddy programs in the workplace: Programs where current employees can provide support and guidance to refugee hires help facilitate their integration into the workplace, fosters relationships, and provides a support system for refugees in their new work environment.

4: Foster inclusive workplace cultures: Develop and enhance team-building activities and mentoring programs tailored to the needs of newcomers, integrating opportunities for professional development. This includes implementing diversity and inclusion training for existing staff to create a welcoming and supportive environment and establishing clear communication channels for addressing concerns related to diversity and integration.



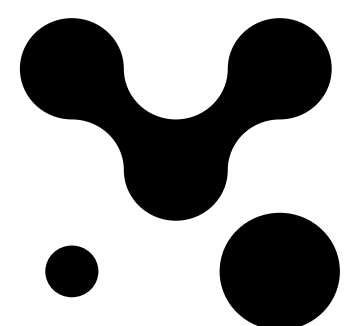
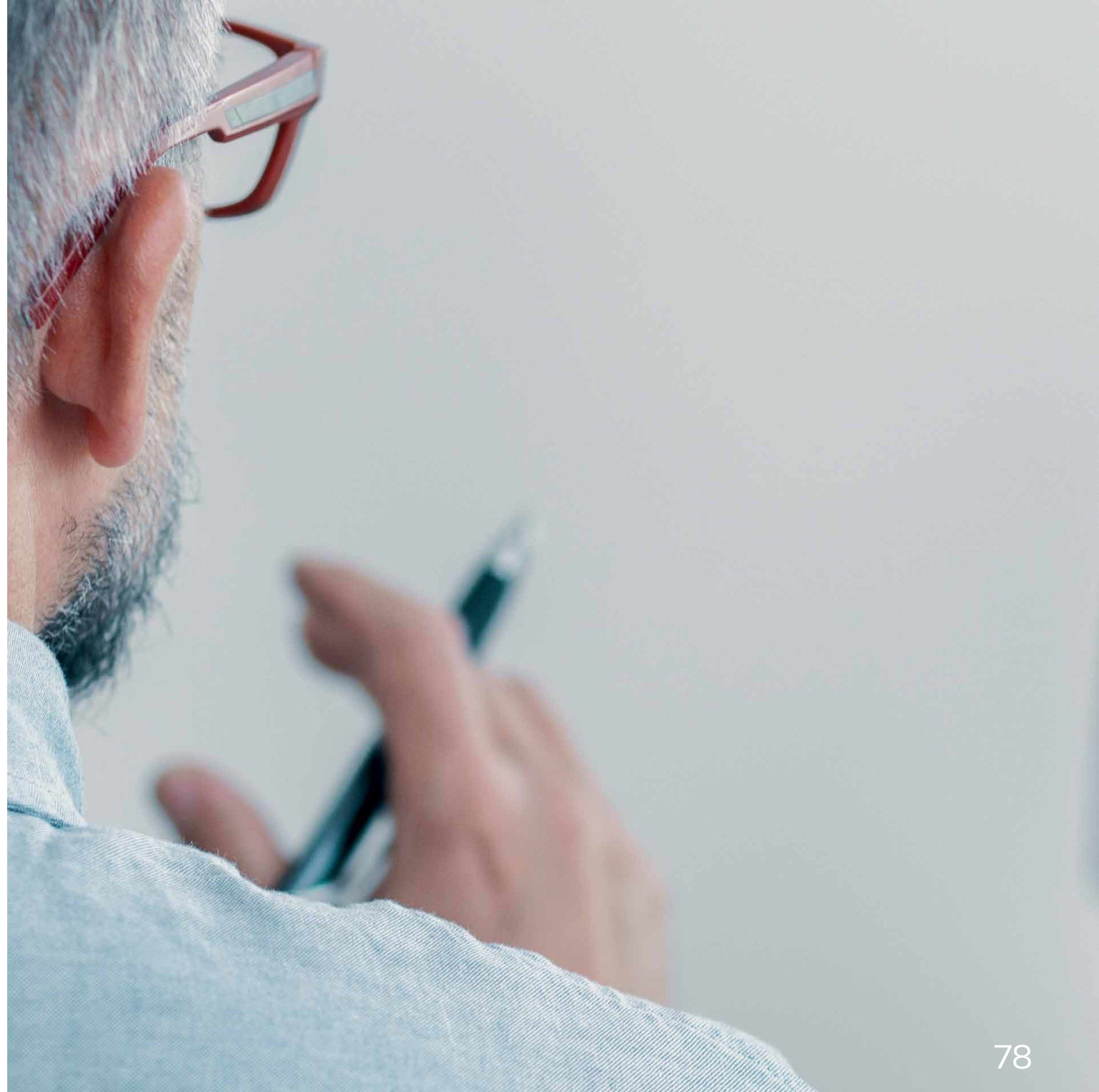
Recommendations

5: Support language acquisition and cultural adaptation:

Extend support for in-house language training or subsidize external language courses for newcomer employees, and encourage cultural exchange programs within the workplace. This initiative can greatly enhance cross-cultural understanding and facilitate smoother integration into the workplace.

6: Community engagement initiatives: Encourage participation in community events and initiatives to foster connections between employees and newcomers. Collaborate with municipal programs to facilitate joint events that promote social integration. This can strengthen ties between the workplace and the wider community, benefiting both employees and newcomers.

7: Feedback mechanism: Establish a feedback mechanism to understand the needs and concerns of newcomer employees. Regularly assess the effectiveness of integration strategies within the workplace to ensure they meet the needs of newcomer employees and contribute to a supportive and inclusive environment.



Recommendations

For newcomers:

1: Engage in language learning and cultural activities:

Continue active participation in mandatory and supplementary language courses, and immerse in local culture through museums, reading, podcasts, and engagement with local media. This includes actively participating in language courses and immersing in the local culture through visits to museums, reading, and engagement with local media.

2: Proactively build social networks: Use platforms like LinkedIn for professional networking and social media for connecting with the local community and individuals from their country of origin. This involves utilizing professional networking platforms like LinkedIn for career development and leveraging social media for connecting with the local community and individuals from the same cultural background.

3: Participate in community and volunteer activities: Engage in local activities and volunteering at organizations like Mano to enhance integration

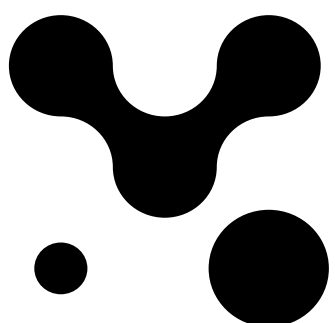
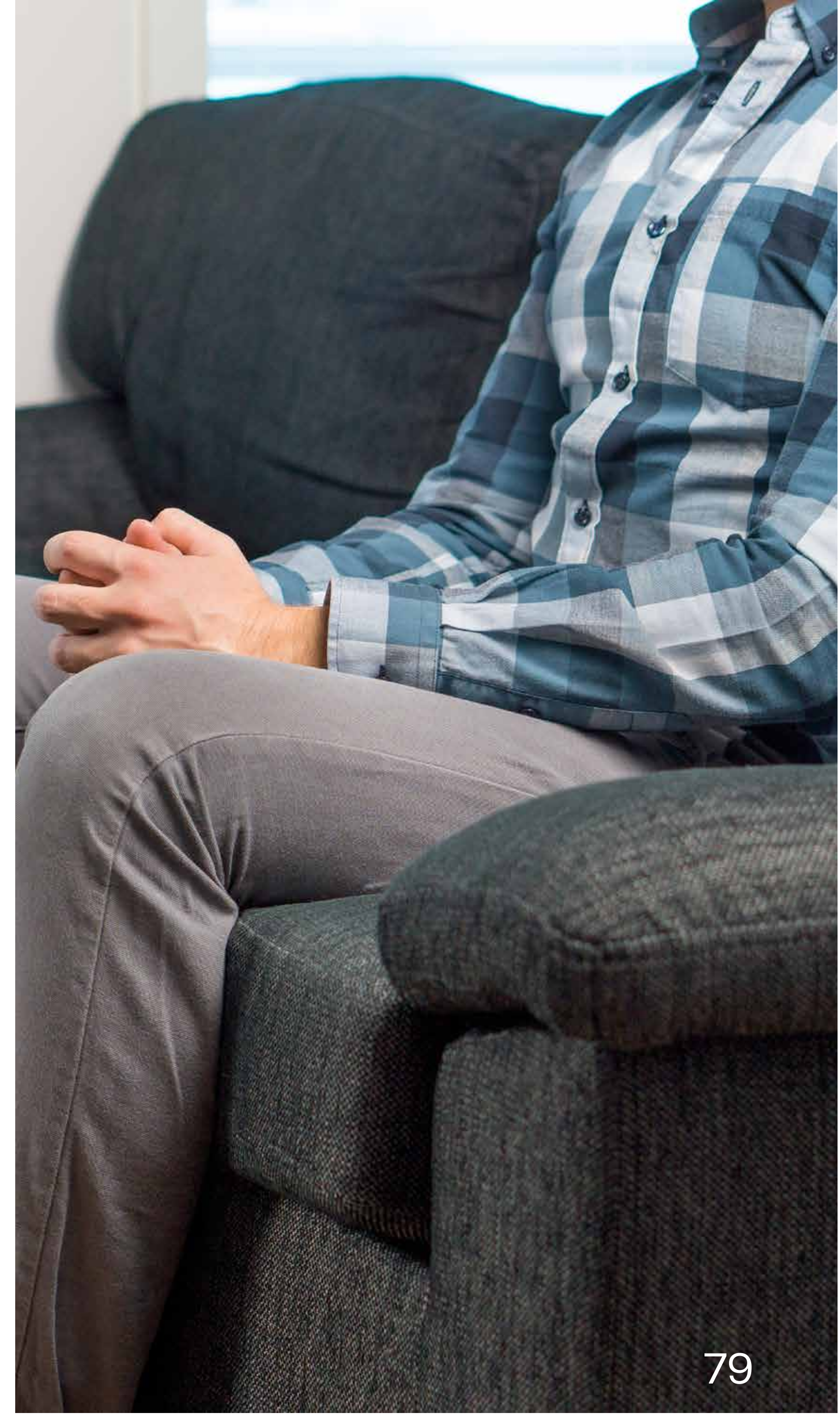
into the Rotterdam community. This includes leveraging community involvement as a means to build a social support network and engaging in local activities and volunteer at organizations like Mano for community integration.

4: Utilize educational and social support services:

Take advantage of diverse language courses, workshops, and social media coaching provided by newcomer organizations. Explore practical life skills training and job orientation programs offered by organizations like Mano.

5: Cultural adaptation and networking workshops:

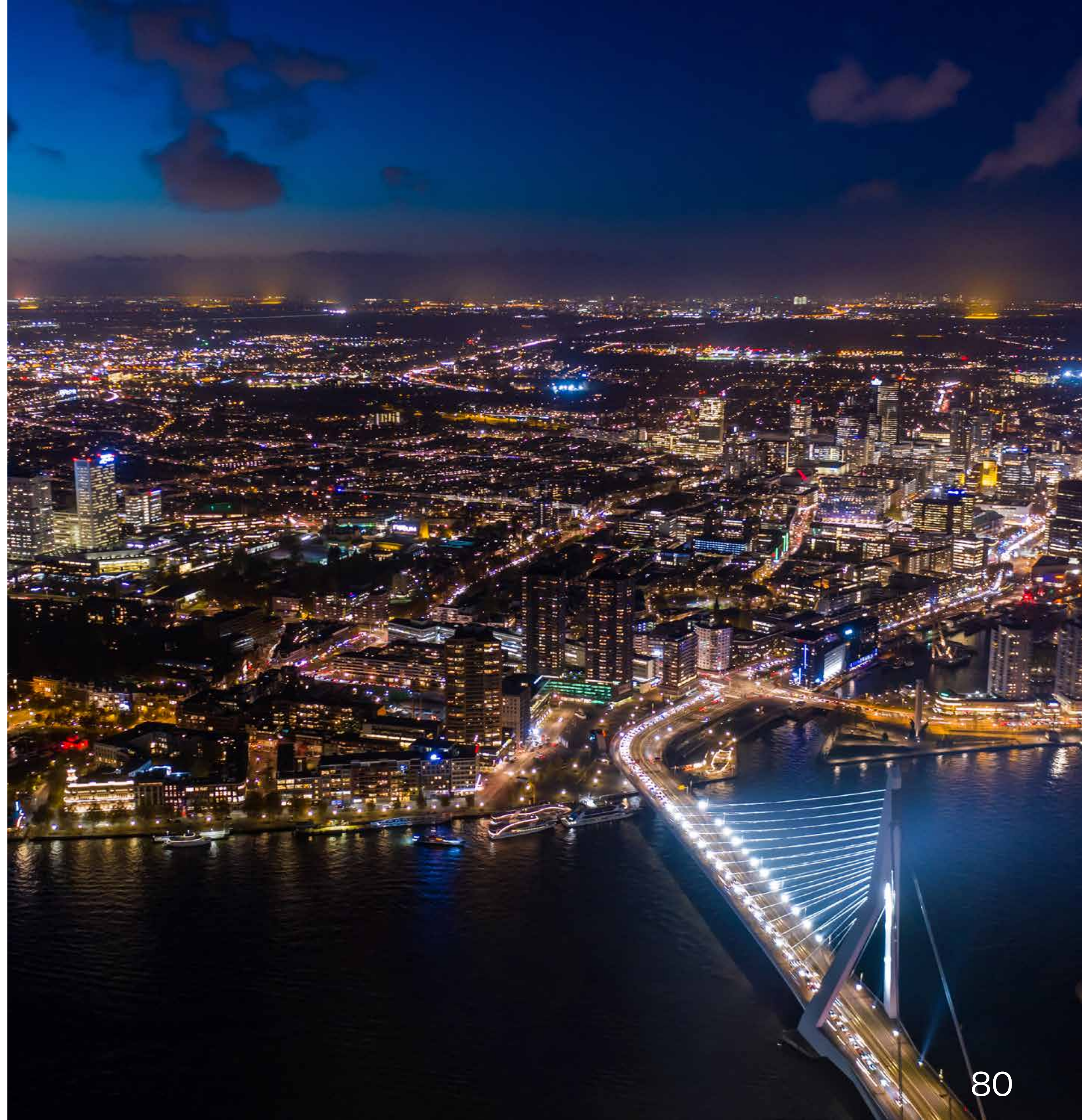
Attend workshops focused on adapting to Dutch cultural norms and building social networks. Seek guidance from newcomer organizations on navigating social and community activities effectively.

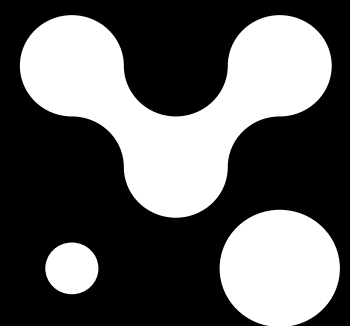


Recommendations

Conclusion

The successful integration of newcomers in Rotterdam hinges on a synergistic collaboration among various stakeholders, including the municipality, newcomer organizations, employers, and the newcomers themselves. Each plays a vital role in weaving a robust support network that fosters cultural, professional, and social integration. The municipality's commitment to continuous improvement of integration programs, coupled with the educational and community engagement initiatives by newcomer organizations like Mano, forms a strong foundation for newcomer support. Employers in Rotterdam contribute significantly by recognizing the diverse skills of newcomers and fostering inclusive workplaces, while newcomers themselves proactively engage in language and cultural activities, build social networks, and participate in community life. This collective effort not only smoothens the integration process for newcomers but also enriches the dynamic cultural mosaic of Rotterdam, enhancing the city's vibrancy and communal harmony.





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