Educational endeavors: children of immigrants in education in the Netherlands, 1980-2020

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Chapter 3 - A descriptive overview of the educational positions of children of immigrants in the Netherlands between 1980 and 2020

Introduction and theoretical background

This chapter provides an overview of the educational positions of children of immigrants in the Netherlands between 1980 and 2020. The main goal is to offer insight into how children of immigrants with various migration backgrounds fared in education over the last forty years. In the subsequent chapters, these educational positions and the inequalities are analyzed further. Information on the educational positions of children of immigrants in the Netherlands is scattered throughout a plethora of empirical studies, policy or research reports, and publicly accessible data tools. Each of these publications renders interesting and useful insights into the educational positions of children of immigrants, yet these publications provide separate pieces of information, often with different measurements or within specific or limited time frames. For example, track placement in year 3 of secondary education is examined in nearly every *Jaarrapport Integratie* since 2004, yet each edition emphasized the most recent year or compares the current position with a specific earlier year. In this chapter, I gather the information these publications provide and use these as pieces for the bigger puzzle through which a time series can be built. Therefore, I derived data from indicators on primary, secondary, and tertiary education from various editions of *Jaarrapport Integratie* to build time series on the education of children of immigrants.

This chapter provides a distinctive overview of the educational trends among children of immigrants over the last decades. To this end, this chapter deals with the first sub question of this dissertation: how did the educational trajectories of children of immigrants develop over the last decades? Descriptive data are at the core of this chapter and offer an introduction to the educational positions of children of immigrants in the Netherlands. Furthermore, it is important to clarify the development of the educational positions of children of immigrants over time before moving on to the explanatory chapters in this dissertation. The main question in this chapter is: which trends in educational positions throughout the primary, secondary and tertiary stage among children of immigrants can be observed cross-sectionally? Furthermore, what are the differences between the migrant groups in educational positions?

Educational positions are a product of educational performance, advice, and choice (Boudon, 1974; Driessen, 2006a; Timmermans et al., 2018). Test scores for subjects like language or math or standardized tests like CITO since the 1970s are examples of performance-based indicators. Track recommendation in the final grade of primary school is an example of an advice-based indicator. Track placement in the first years of secondary school is, for example, a combination of choice, advice, and admission. These concepts of performance, advice, and choice do not exist in a void. Family background, specifically the family's migration history and socio-economic position, gender of the student, and migrant generation, each affect performance, advice, and choice (Boudon, 1974; Bourdieu, 1973; Broeder & Extra, 1999; Dekkers et al., 2000; Ledoux, 1996; Timmermans et al., 2018; Wolbers & Driessen, 1996). For example, children from immigrant families where a language other than Dutch was spoken at home are likely to start primary education with a Dutch language deficiency as compared to peers for whom Dutch is the first language (Broeder & Extra, 1999; Driessen, 1996; Driessen et al., 2002; Extra & Yagmur, 2010). Another example is that teacher's recommendation on track placement in the final grade of primary school is often biased and based on expectations informed by migration and the socio-economic background of the pupil's family (Timmermans et al., 2015). This means that children with a migration background and children from lower SES families are more often advised to attend vocational tracks, although educational performance would indicate otherwise (Driessen, 2006a; Luyten & Bosker, 2004; Timmermans et al., 2018). In short, background characteristics influence educational performance, advice, and choice. The latter concepts can be operationalized in multiple indicators as illustrated above. Pooling these indicators measured across time provides an insightful picture of the educational position of children of immigrants in the Netherlands.

Several assumptions on the impact of background characteristics on the educational positions of children of immigrants are examined in this chapter. First, the longer immigrant families live in the Netherlands, the higher the educational position of their children will be. This expectation is rooted in the idea that accumulating capital, such as cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1973) but also financial, linguistic, or social capital, takes time and that this capital accumulation benefits the education of children both in their educational performance and their choices in education. This aligns with the theory of primary and secondary effects of socio-economic background on education as described by Boudon (1974). Immigrant families may need some time to amass sufficient socio-economic capital to positively impact the education of their children (Driessen, 2004; Driessen & Merry, 2011; Oomens et al., 2003). Hence, *it could be expected that the younger birth cohorts will outperform the older birth cohorts in education.*

Additionally, differences between first generation parents due to migration histories could indicate subsequently varying levels of Dutch-context specific capital. Due to colonial ties, colonial Dutch-spoken education and partial education in the Netherlands, post-colonial families are likely to have more cultural and linguistic capital that is relevant in the Dutch context (van Amersfoort & van Niekerk, 2006). Their children might benefit from this capital in their education indirectly – such as through speaking Dutch and receiving support in navigating the educational system and its choices – resulting in higher education levels. Therefore, it is expected that: *children of post-colonial migrants – especially of Surinamese descent - are expected to obtain higher education levels than peers with a Turkish or Moroccan migration background.*

Methods

This chapter presents time series of trends in the education of children of immigrants from the 1980s until recent years. The indicators to study these trends are track placement advice, track placement in the first year of secondary education and in the third year, entrance into higher education, and the highest overall education level, see Figure 3.1 for an overview split by stage of education: primary, secondary, or tertiary education. These indicators are examined for children of immigrants with a Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, or Antillean background, across a time frame from 1980 to 2020 for cross-sectional differentiation between cohorts. This chapter focuses on describing the long-term trends in educational positions of children of immigrants, in the subsequent chapters of this dissertation this will be examined further, such as in chapter 4 which zooms in on how the educational positions of children of migrants, in the Netherlands, have been researched in scholarly publications in the Netherlands between 1980 and 2020.

Sources

The data sources are twofold. Primarily, the editions of Jaarrapporten Integratie are used and these are at times supplemented with information from Statline to complete information on the more recent years. Descriptive data on the educational positions of children of immigrants in the Netherlands have been gathered since the 1980s. The most comprehensive overview of the educational positions of children of immigrants can be found in the "*Jaarrapport Integratie*" (Annual Reports on Integration, first edition in 2004) and its predecessors. These reports give a comprehensive overview of the position of immigrants and asylum seekers in the Netherlands regarding socio-economic issues such as education, labor market, housing, demographic issues such as marriage migration and fertility, health issues, as well as crime-related issues. The Dutch government,

specifically the Department of Social Affairs, commissions these reports, and currently Statistics Netherlands (*Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek*) executes the research and publishes the report, whereas the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (*Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau*) published previous editions. Currently, these reports are published bi-annually. They are primarily based on Dutch nationwide register data. Previous editions were based on survey data, especially the earlier ones from the 1980s and 1990s, because at that time register data were not yet widely available. Since 2005, register data have been utilized in these reports, which includes the full population of these groups. Remarkably, in the first edition of these reports, titled "De leefsituatie van Turken en Marokkanen in Nederland" (Living conditions of Turks and Moroccans in the Netherlands) from 1984 concerning demography, housing, labor market, income, social contacts and health, no attention was paid to education. The second generation barely reached school age in the mid-1980s, however, the educational position of the first generation or their 1.5-generation peers remained out of scope as well. The same holds for the 1985 report, in which I searched for indications of the educational positions of children of immigrants. It took until 1993 for education to be included, based on data from 1989 onwards.

The *Jaarrapport Integratie* editions from the 1990s to 2020 were examined with the aim of including indicators from every stage of education. The indicators that provided at least three years in order to draw time series, were included in this chapter. The recurring indicators with at least three years reported across these reports were track placement advice in the final grade of primary school, track placement in the first year of secondary education and in the third year, entrance into higher education, and the highest overall education level, see Table 3.1 for an overview split by stage of education: primary, secondary, or tertiary education.

Table 3.1

The indicators used to examine the educational positions of children of immigrants as included in this descriptive overview

Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Track placement advice	Track placement year 1	Starting higher tertiary education
	Track placement year 3	
	Highest education level achieved (overall)	

Data and method

Data were gathered from various editions of *Jaarrapport Integratie* (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2008, 2018a, 2020; Centraal Bureau voor Statistiek, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016; Gijsberts et al., 2012; Gijsberts & Dagevos, 2009; Huijnk et al., 2014a; Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau / Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en Documentatiecentrum / Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2005; Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 2003, 2007; Tesser, 1993; Tesser et al., 1999; Tesser & Iedema, 2001; Tesser & Veenman, 1997). For track placement in the final grade of primary school the data on the years 1988/1989 were derived from *Jaarrapport Integratie* 2007, the years 1994 to 2005 from *Jaarrapport Integratie* 2009, and 2008 to 2019 from the *Jaarrapport Integratie* 2020. The last year reported in the *Jaarrapport Integratie* 2020 was 2018/2019. Regarding track placement in the first year of secondary school, the data on the year 1989 were derived from *Jaarrapport Integratie* 1997, 1993 from *Jaarrapport Integratie* 1999, and 1999 from the *Jaarrapport Integratie* 2001. For track placement in the third year of secondary school, the data were derived from the editions of *Jaarrapport Integratie* in 1993, 1997, 1998, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2020 for the respective years 1988, 1989, 1993, 1995/1996, 2001/2002, 2004/2005, 2003/2004, 2005/2006, 2006/2007, 2007/2008, 2009/2010, 2010/2011, 2011/2012, 2013/2014, 2015/2016, 2017/2018 and 2019/2020. For early school leavers in MBO, the data were derived from the *Jaarrapport Integratie* 2018 for the years 2004/2005, 2005/2006, 2006/2007, 2007/2008, 2008/2009, 2009/2010, 2010/2011, 2011/2012, and 2012/2013. The data for the subsequent years were derived from *Jaarrapport Integratie* 2020, specifically for the years 2013/2014, 2014/2015, 2015/2016, 2016/2017, 2017/2018, and 2018/2019. For entrance into higher education, the years 1995/1996 to 2010/2011 were derived from *Jaarrapport Integratie* 2011, and the years 2011/2012 to 2015/2016 were derived from *Jaarrapport Integratie* 2016. For the overall education level, the data

on the years 1991 to 2002 were derived from *Jaarrapport Integratie* 2011. From 2003, this was supplemented with Statline-data to draw a time series from the early 1990s to the recent day.

The data for each indicator by year by migrant group were entered into a database. These numbers were obtained from either the table or the figures in the respective editions of the *Jaarrapport Integratie*. For indicators lacking data until today, the data tool Statline was searched to complement the data from the *Jaarrapport Integratie*. This was particularly used for the overall highest education level, which was added to the database. The time series provided here are tabulated from this.

For the indicators pooled from the editions of the *Jaarrapport Integratie*, i.e. track placement advice, track placement in year 1 and in year 3, the population across years includes everyone with a Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, or Antillean migration background – irrespective of migrant generation. However, given the demographic development of these groups over 90 percent of the pupils with a Turkish, Moroccan, or Surinamese migration background belongs to the second generation from approximately 2008 onwards (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2020). For entrance into higher education, again students were included based upon migration background rather than generation – i.e. first and second generation combined. The exceptions were the years between 1995 and 2020, where exclusively the second generation was included for those with a migration background. For the indicator on overall education level, once more, no differentiation was made regarding migrant generation.

Results: a historical synthesis

Education level across the population

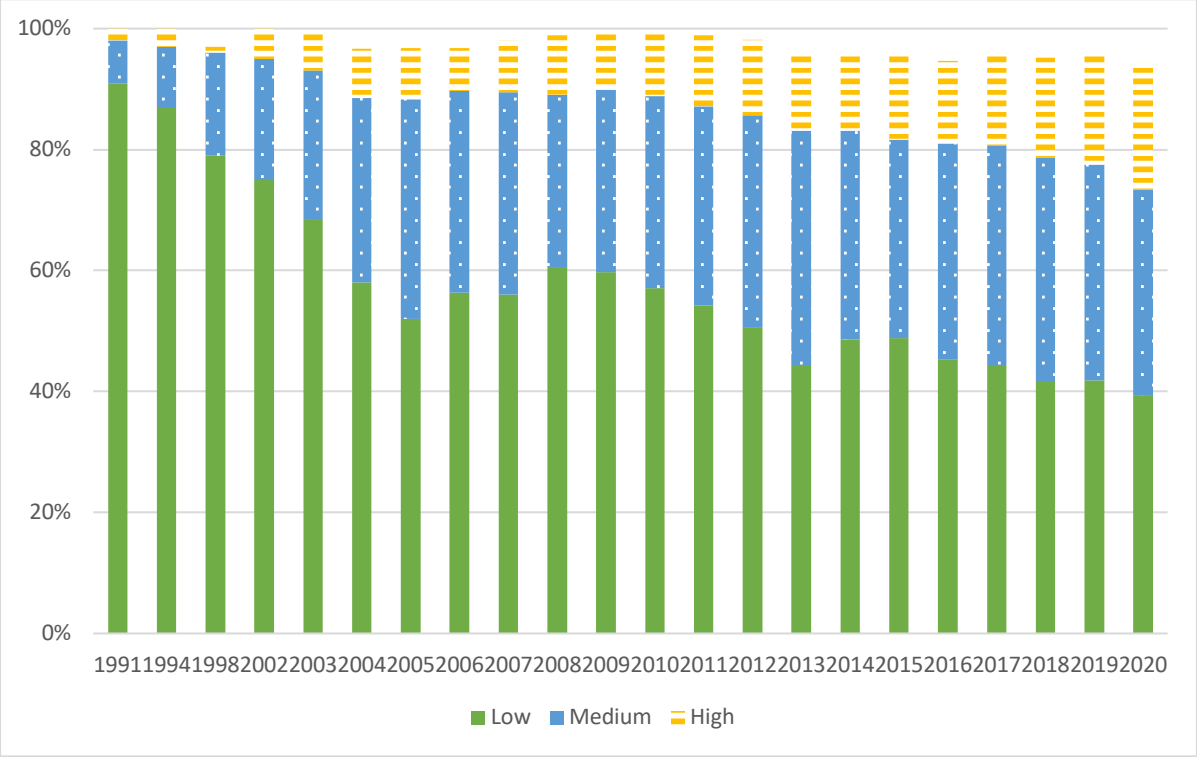
The overall educational level of people with a migration background increased over the years as shown in Figures 3.2.1 to 3.2.4, although the share of those with a higher education among the non-migrant people continued to outpace the respective shares among the four migrant groups discussed here.
In these figures, 'lower educated' refers to primary school, a VMBO track or MBO level 1 as the highest attained education, and the 'middle' category means a HAVO or VWO diploma in secondary education or an MBO level 2, 3, or 4 in tertiary education, whereas a 'higher' education means a degree from the university of applied sciences (HBO) or an academic degree (WO). In certain cases, the figures do not add up to one hundred percent, the missing few percentages are those for whom the educational level was unknown.

The figures below present the percentages for the total population with the respective migration background, i.e. Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese and Antillean, across generations and above the age of 15. The data split by women and men were only available between 2003 and 2019. The figures split by gender can be found in Appendix A. The main take-away from the figures split by gender was that the general trends per migrant or non-migrant group were alike, though slightly more women obtained higher education in the recent years than their male counterparts did.

Figure 3.2.1 shows that the share of people with a Turkish migration background that is lower educated decreased from almost 69% in 2003 to 42% in 2019. In other words, the share of people with a Turkish migration background with a medium-level education or higher education grew correspondingly. Around 25% of people with a Turkish migration background had a medium-level education in 2003 and this increased to almost 36% in 2019. Over 6% of people with a Turkish migration background had a higher educational degree in 2003 which then tripled to over 18% in 2019. Hence, upward trends in education level for people with a Turkish migration background can be observed. This increase might be linked to the demographic changes as presented in Chapter 2: the Turkish second generation grew with time, while for the Turkish first generation this growth came to a halt around the time stricter marriage migration policies came into effect. The Turkish second generation thus might be a catalyst for the upward educational trend shown among the overall population with a Turkish background, which preliminarily supports the first expectation (i.e. the second generation will outperform the first generation in education).

Figure 3.2.1

Time series on the education level of people with a Turkish migration background in the Netherlands, above the age of 15, all generations, in percentages, 1991-2020.

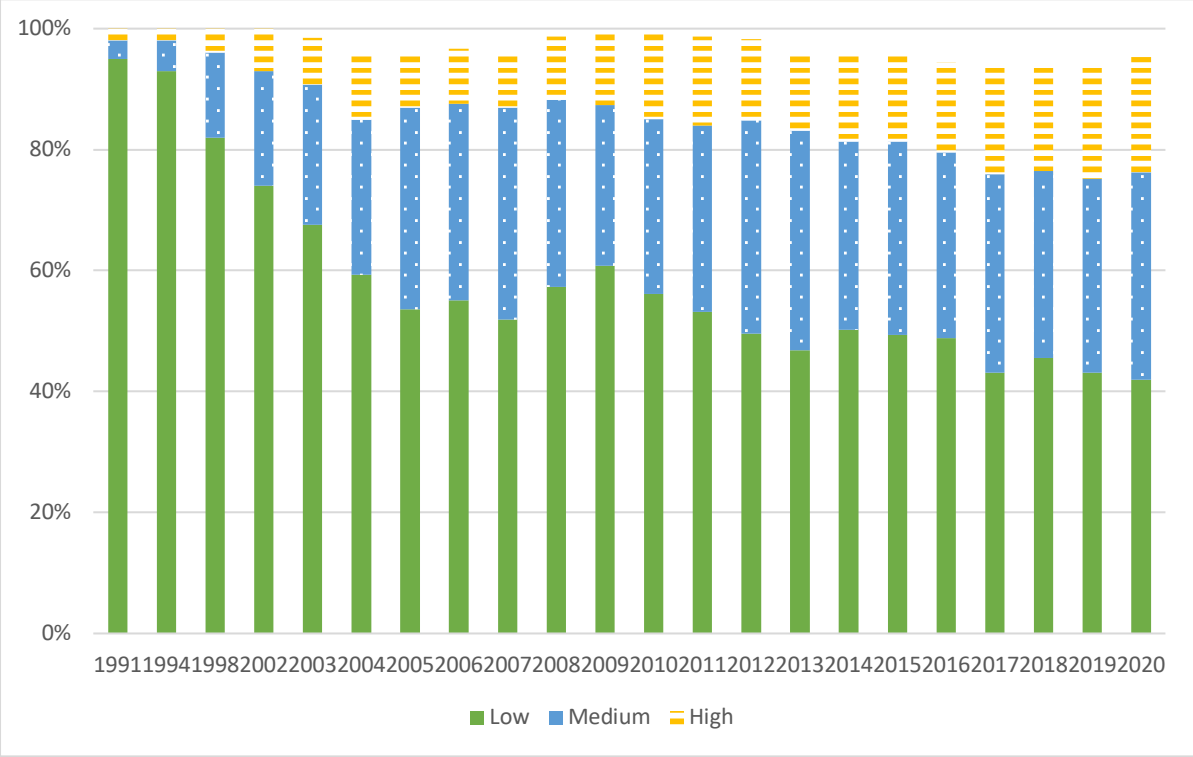


Note. For the years 1991 to 2002 the data in this figure is derived from Jaarrapport Integratie 2011. From 2003 onwards the data were derived from Statline.

A similar pattern is observed for people with a Moroccan migration background, as shown in Figure 3.2.2. Almost 68% had a lower education in 2003 and this decreased to 43% in 2019. More people with a Moroccan migration background had a medium-level education or higher education over time: for medium-level education, 23% in 2003 to 32% in 2019 and for higher education, 8% in 2003 to 18% in 2019. Again, keeping the demographic development of a growing second generation in mind, this seems to support the argument that with generations, the educational positions of Moroccan immigrants improved. In other words, this gives a preliminary indication that the second generation with a Moroccan migration background outperforms the co-ethnic first generation in education, in line with the first expectation.

Figure 3.2.2

Time series on the education level of people with a Moroccan migration background in the Netherlands, above the age of 15, all generations, in percentages, 1991-2020.



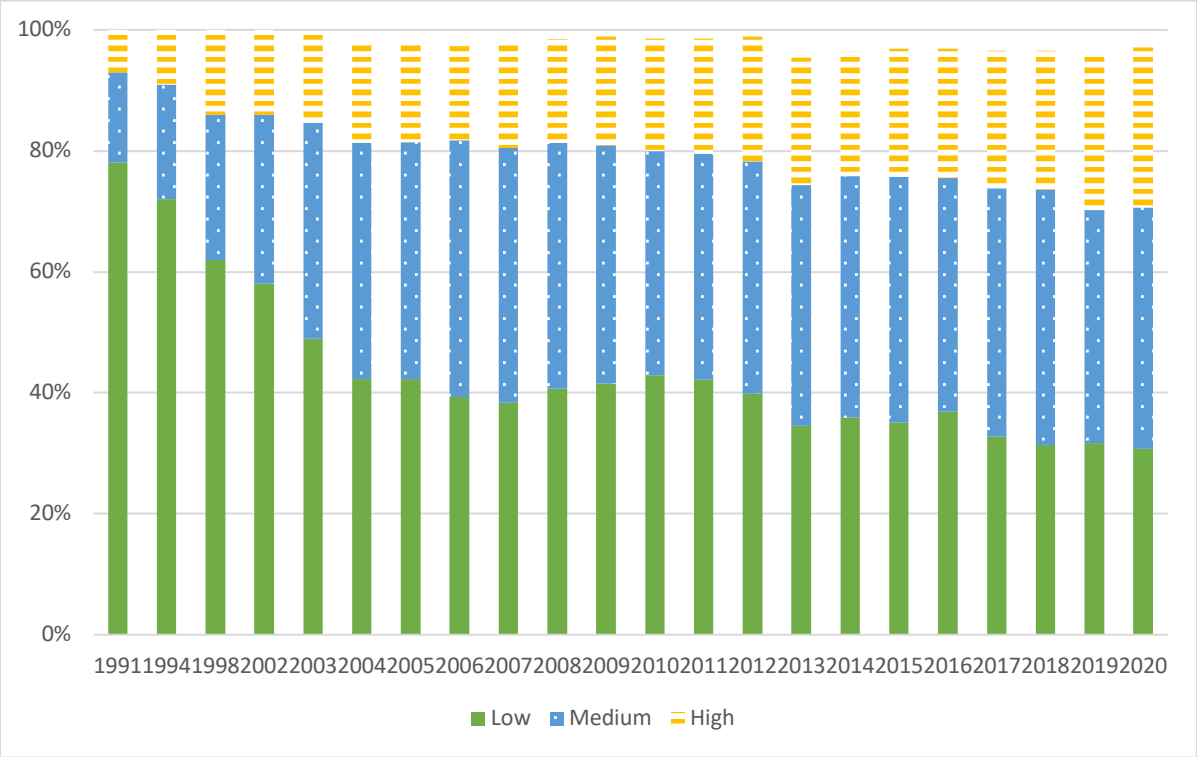
Note. For the years 1991 to 2002 the data in this figure is derived from Jaarrapport Integratie 2011. From 2003 onwards the data were derived from Statline.

In Figure 3.2.3, the overall education level of people with a Surinamese migration background is shown. The percentage of people with a Surinamese migration background that is higher educated has been higher consistently over time, compared to people with a Turkish or Moroccan migration background. Of the people with a Surinamese migration background in the Netherlands, almost 15% had finished higher education in 2003, against 25% in 2019. A feasible explanation could be that the first-generation Surinamese immigrants had linguistic and cultural capital that was beneficial in the Netherlands. The education system and curriculum in Suriname, before and after independence, was rather like the Dutch education system (van Amersfoort & van Niekerk, 2006), which provided cultural capital beneficial to the Dutch education system. Moreover, Dutch was the language of instruction of education in Suriname (van Amersfoort & van Niekerk, 2006; van Niekerk, 2000, 2004). Hence, first-generation immigrants from Suriname were likely to be educated in an educational system that taught linguistic skills that were advantageous in the Dutch educational system. Even more importantly, many

Surinamese students came to the Netherlands to enroll in tertiary education, for example, doctors and nurses (Cottaar, 2003; Oostindie & Maduro, 1986). Higher education was thus the migration motive of many first-generation Surinamese.

Figure 3.2.3

Time series on the education level of people with a Surinamese migration background in the Netherlands, above the age of 15, all generations, in percentages, 1991-2020



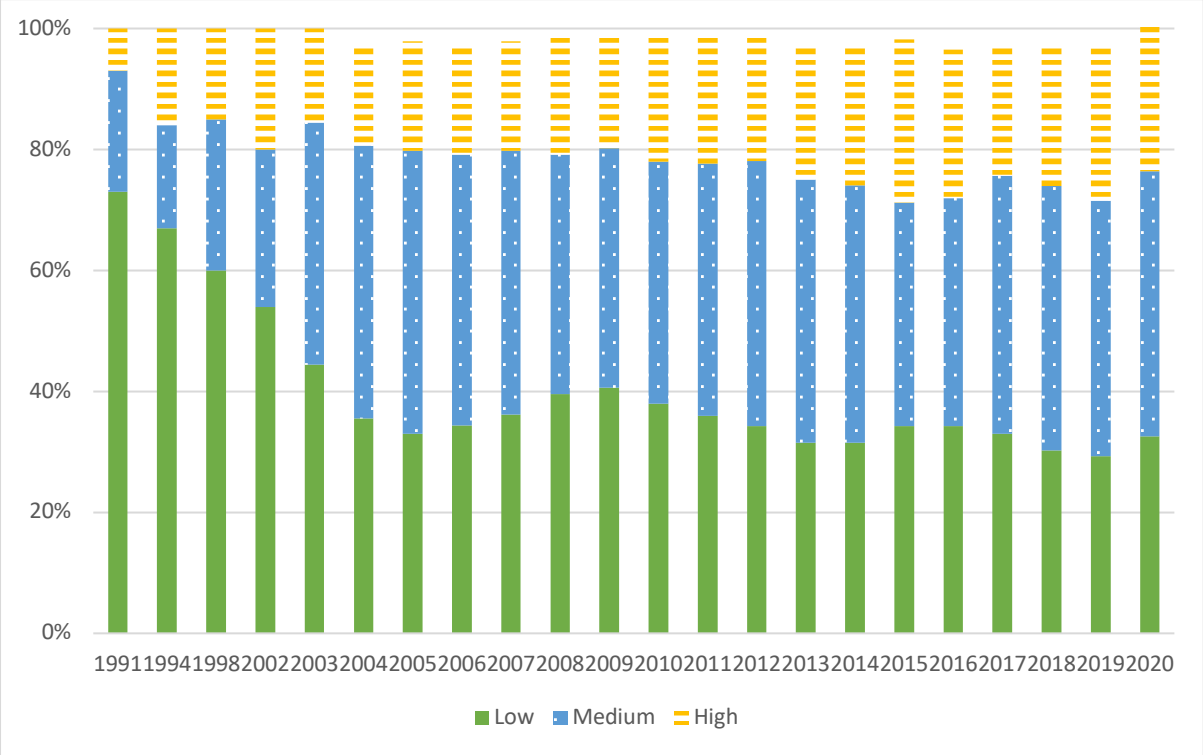
Note. For the years 1991 to 2002 the data in this figure is derived from Jaarrapport Integratie 2011. From 2003 onwards the data is derived from Statline.

For people with an Antillean migration background, the picture resembles that of the Surinamese population as presented in Figure 3.2.4. More than half of the people with an Antillean migration background had a medium or higher education. In particular, the share of people with higher education increased over these years: from nearly 16% in 2003 to 25% in 2019. This seems to suggest that over time people of Antillean descent become higher educated, this was contrary to research in the 1990s that concluded that newer immigrant cohorts were lower educated than previous ones (Van Hulst, 1997; Van San, 1998). The differences in conclusions likely stem from the differentiation in

aggregation level: the data presented here concern the population – i.e. macro – level over time whereas the research of the aforementioned authors zoomed in on the lower-educated and working-class people who migrated from the Dutch Antilles to the Netherlands in the nineties and earlier. Moreover, due to circular migration and higher mobility of people with Antillean heritage, the Antillean population in the Netherlands is ever-changing. The composition of those with an Antillean background included over the various years is likely to be dynamic and thus this graph in all likelihood captures different people over the years.

Figure 3.2.4

Time series on the education level of people with an Antillean migration background in the Netherlands, above the age of 15, all generations, in percentages (1991-2020)



Note. For the years 1991 to 2002 the data in this figure is derived from Jaarrapport Integratie 2011. From 2003 onwards the data were derived from Statline.

The education level of people without a migration background is shown in Figure 3.2.5. Among people without a migration background, fewer obtained lower education over time: from 33% in 2003 to 26% in 2019. At the same time, there are more 'higher educated' people without a migration background

than any of the four migrant groups discussed previously. Moreover, the percentage with higher education increased from 17% to 26% over these years. Yet, it should be noted that direct comparisons between certain migrant groups and the population without a migration background should be approached with caution. Some migrant groups occupied – on average - rather lower socio-economic strata within Dutch society, and drawing direct comparisons with the overall Dutch population may provide a negatively skewed image. Analogously, comparing certain migrant groups with only a segment of the Dutch population – for example, the lower socio-economic strata – overlooks the socio-economic diversity within migrant groups.

Figure 3.2.5

Time series on the education level of people without a migration background in the Netherlands, above the age of 15, all generations, in percentages (1991-2020)

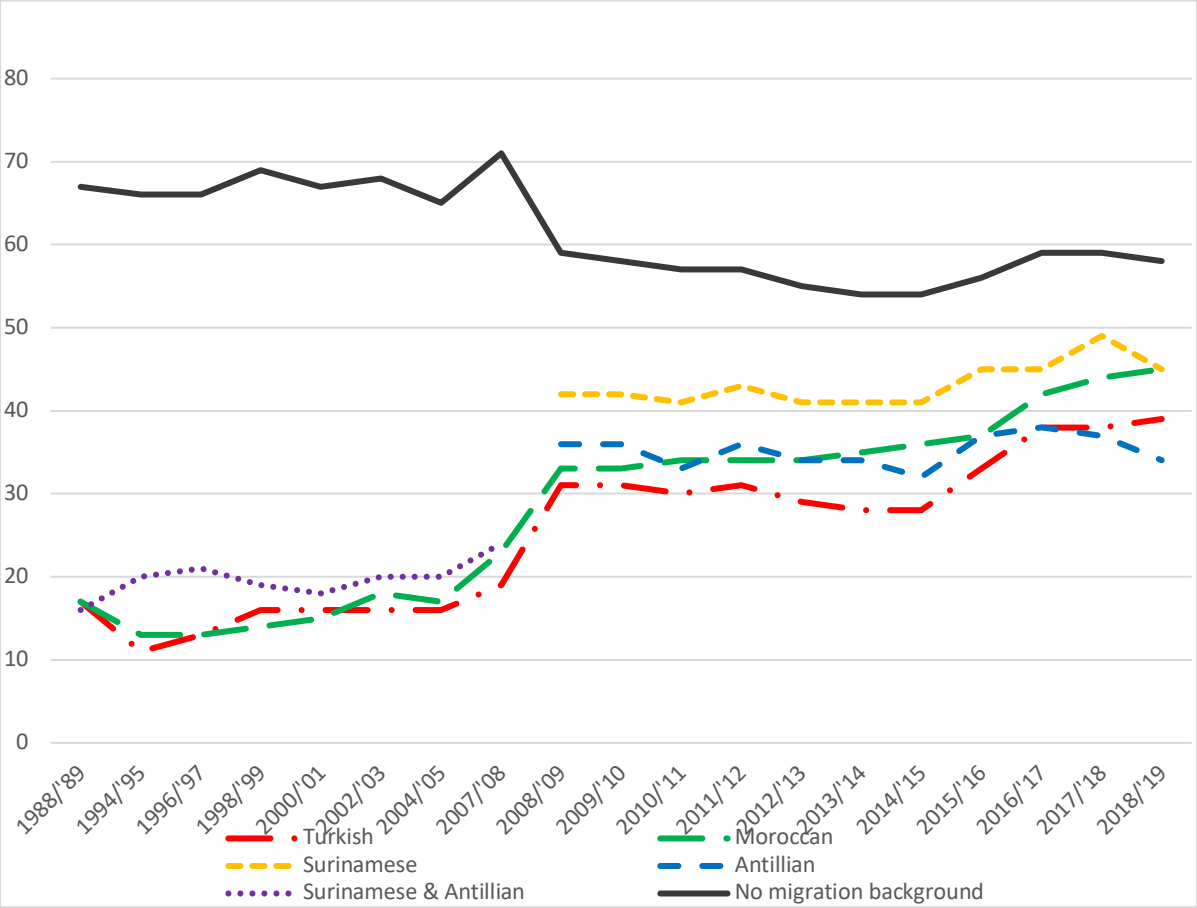
Note. For the years 1991 to 2002 the data in this figure is derived from Jaarrapport Integratie 2011. From 2003 onwards the data were derived from Statline.

End of primary education: track placement advice

In the final year of primary education, around the age of 12, pupils are advised to attend a certain track in secondary education. The track placement advice is offered by the teacher of the final grade in primary education. This advice is based upon the test scores throughout primary education, the results of a standardized test that the majority of pupils take in their last year in primary school, and the evaluation of the teacher. The weight of these three elements in the track placement advice has varied throughout the last forty years, see Chapter 2 for an elaboration on these policy changes.

Figure 3.3.1

Percentage of pupils with HAVO/VWO track placement advice in the final grade of primary education, by year and migration background



Note. Different data sources were used: the years 1988/1989 are derived from Jaarrapport Integratie 2007, the years 1994 to 2005 from Jaarrapport Integratie 2009, and 2008 to 2019 from the Jaarrapport Integratie 2020. The last year reported in the Jaarrapport Integratie 2020 was 2018/2019. From 1988 to 2008, pupils with a Surinamese or Antillean migration background were studied as one group. From 2009-2009 onwards, these groups were studied separately.

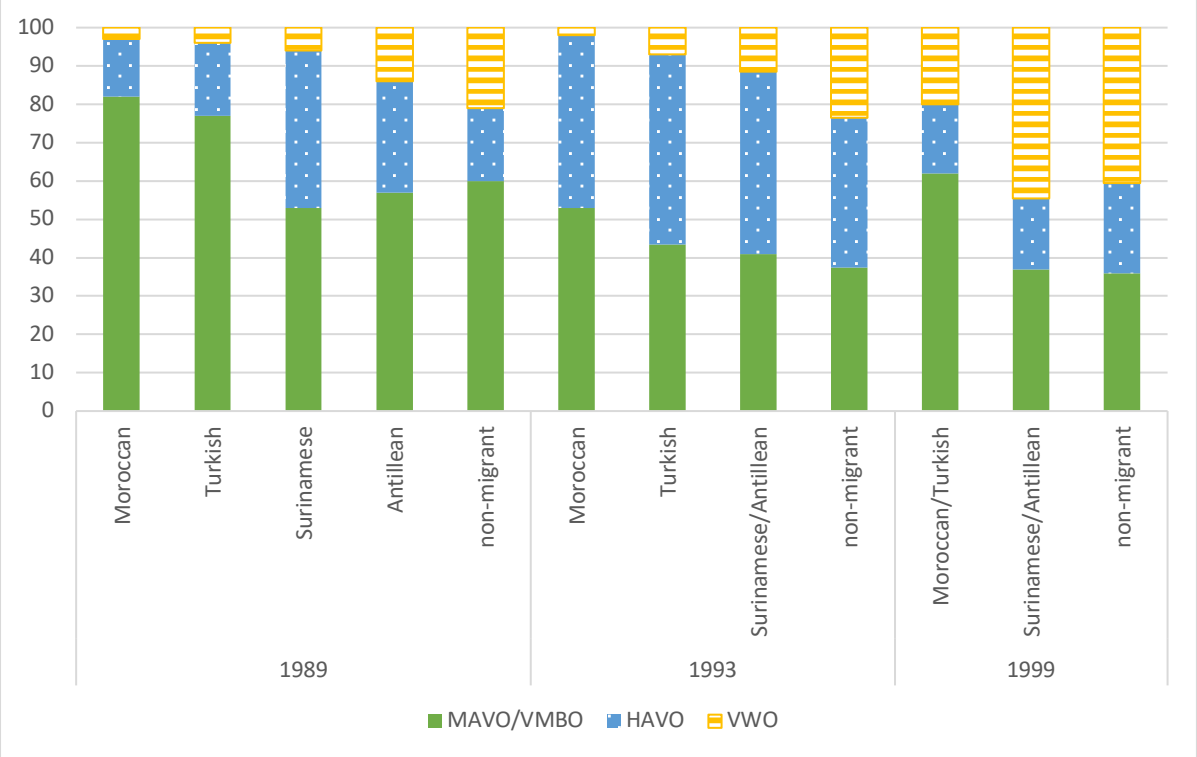
The track placement advice has six main options: VMBO-basis, VMBO-kader, VMBO-gemengd, VMBO-theoretisch, HAVO, and VWO. These track placement options in secondary education are categorized from vocational secondary education (the four VMBO options), a preparatory college - or applied sciences - track (HAVO) and a preparatory university track (VWO), see Chapter 2 for a detailed explanation of these tracks. This reflects the current educational tracks, prior to 1990 the vocational secondary options were LBO (lower vocational education), VBO (preparatory vocational education), and MAVO (theoretical vocation education). Figure 3.3.1 presents the percentage of the pupils that were advised to attend a HAVO or VWO track in the first year of secondary education. These two tracks are the preparatory options to enter higher education such as the university of applied sciences or a university in tertiary education. Pupils without a migration background received the advice to attend a HAVO or VWO track the most frequently throughout the years. For the four immigrant groups studied here, the advice to attend a HAVO or VWO track increased slightly over the years. Pupils with a Surinamese migration background were advised more frequently to attend a higher track in secondary education than pupils of the other three migration backgrounds. In 2018/2019, 45 percent of students with a Surinamese migration background as well as 45 percent of students with a Moroccan migration background were advised to attend a HAVO/VWO track. A spectacular increase in advice to attend a HAVO/VWO track was observed: from 17% in 1988 to 45% in 2018/2019 among students with a Moroccan migration background. A similar trend occurred among pupils with a Turkish migration background: the percentage of pupils with a HAVO/VWO advice increased from 17% in 1988 to 39% in 2018/2019. The percentage of pupils with an Antillean migration background that were advised to attend a HAVO/VWO track was rather stable during the last decennium: 36% in 2008/2009 and 34% in 2018/2019. The remarkable increase of students with a Turkish or Moroccan migration background – in recent years those with a Moroccan migration background reached a similar level as students with a Surinamese migration background - as well as the relatively stable and lower recommendation of a HAVO/VWO track of students with an Antillean migration background indicate that the ‘colonial bonus’ as described by Oostindie (2011) might not stand the test of time. This ‘colonial bonus’ described how colonial groups are expected to benefit from their colonial ties and history regarding their position in the Netherlands, yet for education at least it is not supported.

Start secondary education

Track placement is the key outcome indicator in secondary education in the Netherlands. It refers to the placement of the student in one of the available tracks (VMBO Basis/Kader, VMBO Gemengd/Theoretisch, HAVO, VWO). In the first year of secondary school – around the age of 12 - students are placed into a track based on their test scores and recommendation by the teacher in the last grade of primary school. Hence, this is an indirect combination of educational performance, choice, and advice in which migration background and socio-economic background of the family play an important role. Figure 3.4.1 presents a time series across 10 years from 1989 to 1999 on the track placement of children of migrants in the first year of secondary education.

Figure 3.4.1

Time series on track placement of children of immigrants in the first year of secondary education. (1989-1999)



Note. The data on the year 1989 is derived from Jaarrapport 1997, 1993 from Jaarrapport 1999, and 1999 from the Jaarrapport Integratie 2001.

During the 1990s the majority of students with these four migration backgrounds attended a MAVO/VMBO track in the first year, especially in the earlier years (1989) and among students of Moroccan or Turkish descent. Moroccan and Turkish students attended a MAVO/VMBO track more often than students of Surinamese or Antillean descent: respectively 82% and 77% versus 53% and 57% in 1989, and 53% and 43.5% versus 41% in 1993 and 62% versus 37% in 1999. Over time, an increase in attendance in HAVO and VWO tracks can be observed for students of all migration backgrounds. At first, this mainly concerns an increasing attendance in HAVO tracks between 1989 and 1993. In 1999, this upward trend in track attendance in the first year took place among students in the VWO track too. Against this backdrop, the percentage of Turkish and Moroccan students that attends a MAVO/VMBO track increased between 1993 and 1999. This could indicate a switch from over-advisement to under-advisement. In the final year of primary education, the teacher recommends a track for secondary education. For children of immigrants, in the 1980s and early 1990s over-advisement was more prevalent, i.e. children were recommended to attend a higher track in secondary school than their performance indicated. In the late 1990s and 2000s by contrast, under-advisement became more prevalent, e.g. students were advised to attend a lower track than their performance suggested (Claassen & Mulder, 2003).

Figure 3.4.1 should be interpreted with caution, however. The data on track placement in year 1 were only available for the late 1980s and 1990s. Later reports mainly focused on the track placement in year 3. Moreover, the categorization of students with a Surinamese or Antillean migration background were combined in 1993 and 1999, as well as students with a Turkish or Moroccan migration background in 1999. This is all the more remarkable as the next section sheds light on the meaningful differences between these groups in their track placement in year 3, the indicator that will be discussed next.

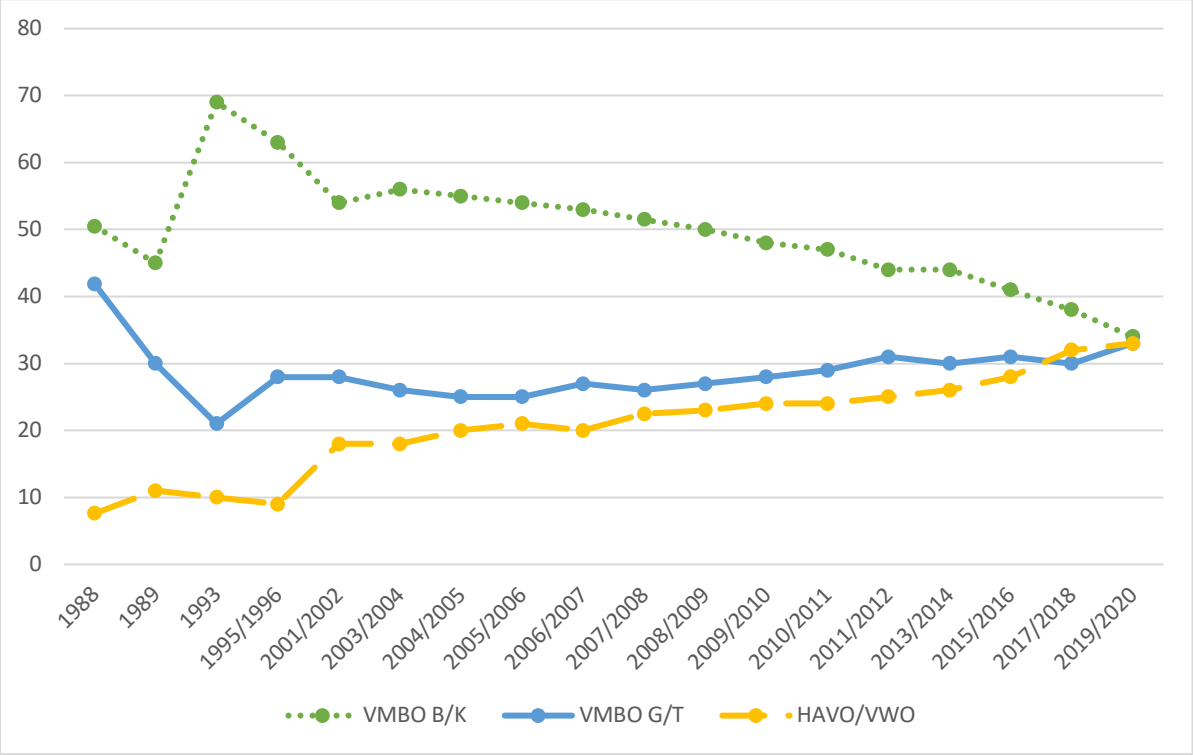
Half-way through secondary education

Switching between tracks is most common between the second and third years of secondary education. Moreover, the possible over-advising or under-advising of children of immigrants at the start of secondary education can be corrected in the first years of secondary education. In other words, children who attended a lower track than their performance indicated can switch to a higher track and the other way around. Hence, track placement in the third year of the secondary school provides a better insight into the educational position in secondary school than track placement in the first year.

Figure 3.5.1 presents a time series on track placement of students with a Moroccan migration background in the third year of secondary education. Generally, a converging trend in track placement can be observed. This means that the differences between track placement within the group of Moroccan students decreased over time. In the late 1980s and 1990s, there was a substantial gap in track placement among students with a Moroccan background: around 50% or more of the students with Moroccan background attended a vocational track (i.e. 'VMBO basis or kader') and around 10% of these students attended a 'HAVO or VWO' track. This gap shrunk: in the school year of 2017/2018, 38% of these students attended a 'VMBO basis or kader' track, 30% a 'VMBO gemengd or theoretisch' track, and 32% a 'HAVO or VWO' track. The attendance rate at 'HAVO or VWO' increased remarkably over time: from around 8% in 1988, this quadrupled to 32% in 2017/2018. The attendance rate at 'VMBO gemengd or theoretisch' fluctuated between 20% and 30% from 1993 to 2017/2018 with a slight upward trend. This means that students of Moroccan descent became higher educated over time. Seemingly, younger birth cohorts outperformed older birth cohorts of Moroccan descent in the third year of secondary education.

Figure 3.5.1

Time series on track placement of students with a Moroccan migration background in the third year of secondary education, 1988-2020

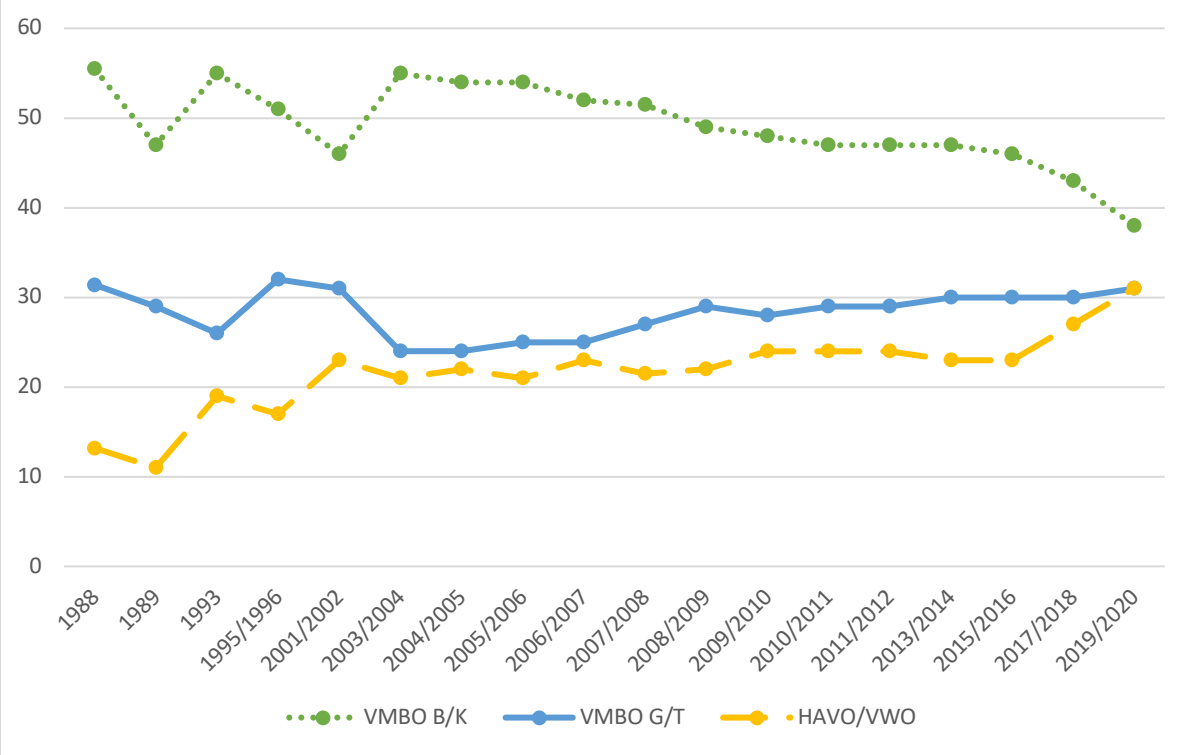


Note. The data was derived from the editions of Jaarrapport Integratie in 1993, 1997, 1998, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2020 for the respective years 1988, 1989, 1993, 1995/1996, 2001/2002, 2004/2005, 2003/2004, 2005/2006, 2006/2007, 2007/2008, 2009/2010, 2010/2011, 2011/2012, 2013/2014, 2015/2016, 2017/2018 and 2019/2020.

Figure 3.5.2 presents the time series on track placement of students with a Turkish migration background in the third year of secondary education. Again, a converging trend is observed: over time students with a Turkish migration background attended the 'VMBO gemengd or theoretisch' or 'HAVO or VWO' tracks in increasing numbers while decreasing amounts attended 'VMBO basis or kader' tracks. Specifically, track placement in 'VMBO basis or kader' tracks diminished by more than 10% from 55.5% in 1988 to 38% in 2019/2020. Attendance in the 'HAVO or VWO' tracks doubled from 13.2% in 1988 to 31% in the most recent year. The tracks 'VMBO gemengd or theoretisch' showed a slight upward trend as well, but generally levitated between 25% and 30% over time. In sum, we can conclude that more children with a Turkish migration background attend a HAVO/VWO track over time, and fewer children attend a lower VMBO track. So, younger birth cohorts outperform older birth cohorts of Turkish descent in the third year of secondary education.

Figure 3.5.2

Time series on track placement of students with a Turkish migration background in the third year of secondary education, 1988-2020

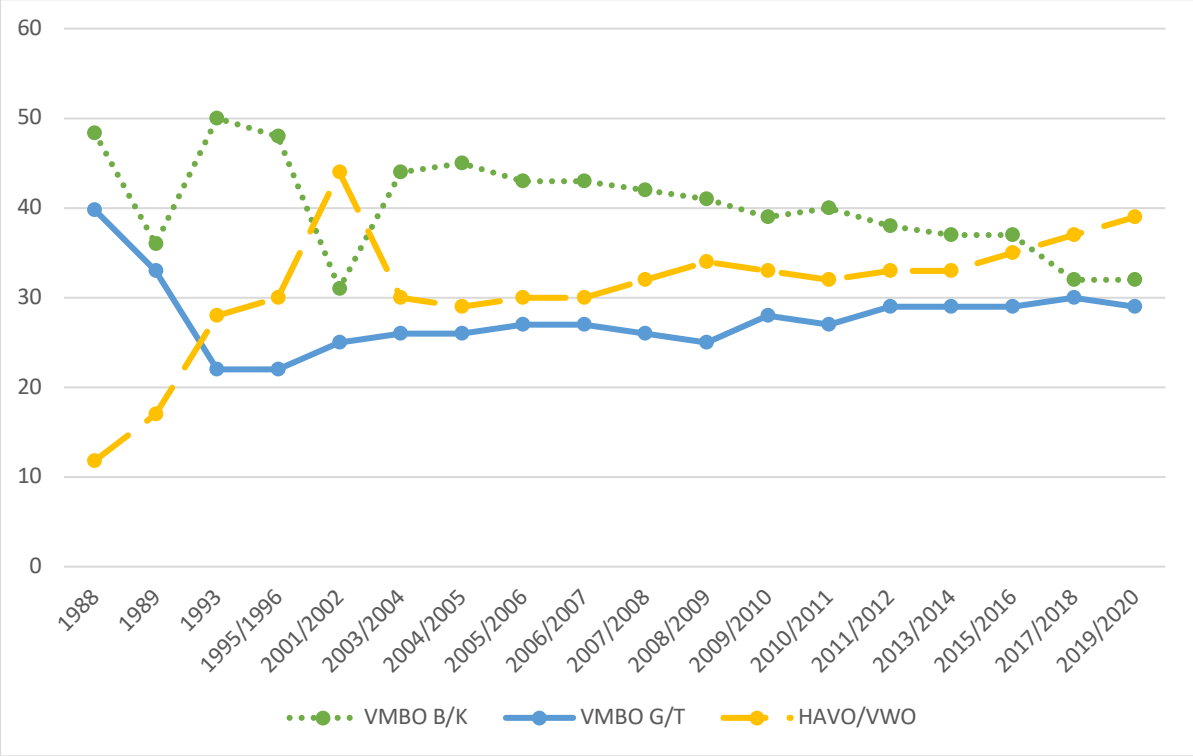


Note. The data are derived from Jaarrapport 1993, 1997, 1998, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020 for the subsequent years – respectively derived from the listed Jaarrapport editions: 1988, 1989, 1993, 1995/1996, 2001/2002, 2004/2005, 2003/2004, 2005/2006, 2006/2007, 2007/2008, 2009/2010, 2010/2011, 2011/2012, 2013/2014, 2015/2016, 2017/2018 and 2019/2020.

Figure 3.5.3 presents the time series on track placement of students with a Surinamese migration background in the third year of secondary education. The trend of convergence was also noticeable among these students: by 2019/2020 attendance across the three categories drew near to one another between 29% and 39%. In the late 1980s, a majority of the students attended a 'VMBO basis or kader' track or 'VMBO gemengd or theoretisch' track, respectively 48% and 40% in 1988 and 36% and 33% in 1989. The attendance of students of Surinamese descent of a 'HAVO or VWO' track more than tripled: from 12% in 1988 to 39% in 2019/2020. From 1993 onwards, more students with a Surinamese migration background attend a 'HAVO or VWO' track in the third year than a 'VMBO gemengd or theoretisch' track, and in 2019/2020 even more students attended a 'HAVO or VWO' track than VMBO options in this figure. To sum up, younger birth cohorts outperform older birth cohorts of Surinamese descent in the third year of secondary education, in line with the second expectation.

Figure 3.5.3

Time series on track placement of students with a Surinamese migration background in the third year of secondary education, 1988-2020

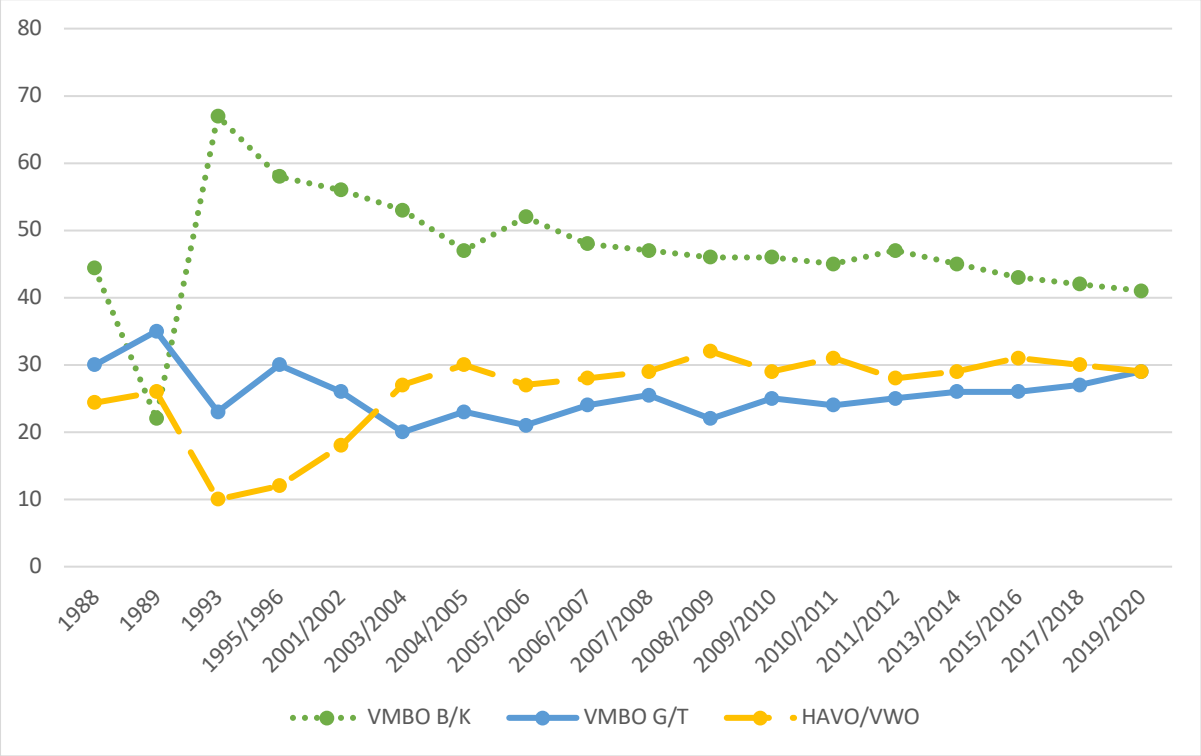


Note. The data are derived from Jaarrapport 1993, 1997, 1998, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012,2014, 2016, 2018, 2020 for the subsequent years – respectively derived from the listed Jaarrapport editions: 1988, 1989, 1993, 1995/1996, 2001/2002, 2004/2005, 2003/2004, 2005/2006, 2006/2007, 2007/2008, 2009/2010, 2010/2011, 2011/2012, 2013/2014, 2015/2016, 2017/2018 and 2019/2020.

Figure 3.5.4 presents the time series on track placement of students with an Antillean migration background in the third year of secondary education. In line with the results from the other migrant groups, the track attendance among Antillean students indicated a converging trend. The differences in attendance rates between the three categories decreased over time. With some stark fluctuations in the late 1990s and early 1990s, from 1995/1996 onwards a downward trend of 'VMBO basis or kader attendance' commenced, respectively 58% in 1995/1996 to 41% in 2019/2020. Track placement in a 'VMBO gemengd or theoretisch' track oscillated between 20% and 30% from the early 1990s up until the most recent years. Since 2003/2004, more students with an Antillean migration background attended a 'HAVO or VWO' track than a 'VMBO gemengd or kader' track in the third year of secondary education. Yet, the 'HAVO or VWO' attendance fluctuated around the 30% mark for almost 15 years, from 2003/2004 to 2019/2020.

Figure 3.5.4

Time series on track placement of students with an Antillean migration background in the third year of secondary education, 1988-2020



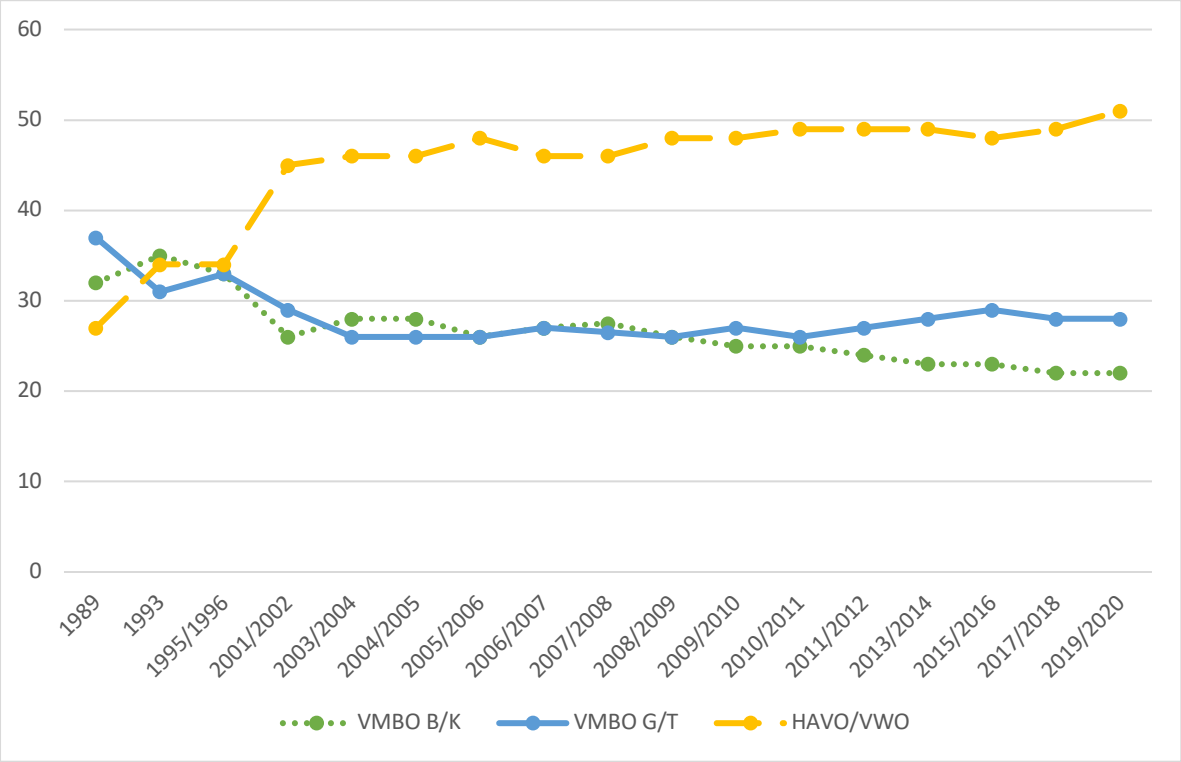
Note. The data are derived from Jaarrapport 1993, 1997, 1998, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2010,2011, 2012,2014, 2016,2018, 2020 for the subsequent years – respectively derived from the listed Jaarrapport editions: 1988, 1989, 1993, 1995/1996, 2001/2002, 2004/2005, 2003/2004, 2005/2006, 2006/2007, 2007/2008, 2009/2010, 2010/2011, 2011/2012, 2013/2014, 2015/2016, 2017/2018 and 2019/2020.

In Figure 3.5.5, we can see that over the years almost half of the children without a migration background attended a 'HAVO/VWO' track and around 20% to 30% a VMBO track, either B/K or G/T, in the third year of secondary education. The stark fluctuations in the 1980s and 1990s are likely due to sampling and data issues. Later on, register data was used in the reports, and from that moment on the trend remained relatively stable as can be seen from the years 2001/2002 onwards. For children of immigrants - of all four migration backgrounds - an upward trend occurred. For children with a migration background, the most attended track was the 'VMBO B/K' track, even though attendance of this track shrank across the years. For children without a migration background however, the 'HAVO/VWO' track was the most attended one. Moreover, among children with a migration background, younger cohorts outperformed older cohorts. In other words: the track placement of children of immigrants became better over time, in line with the second expectation. By contrast, the track placement of children without a migration background was relatively stable. Yet,

this should be contextualized within the limitations of comparing migrant and non-migrant populations and the issues of socio-economic stratification by demographic groups.

Figure 3.5.5

Time series on track placement of students without migration background in the third year of secondary education, 1989-2020



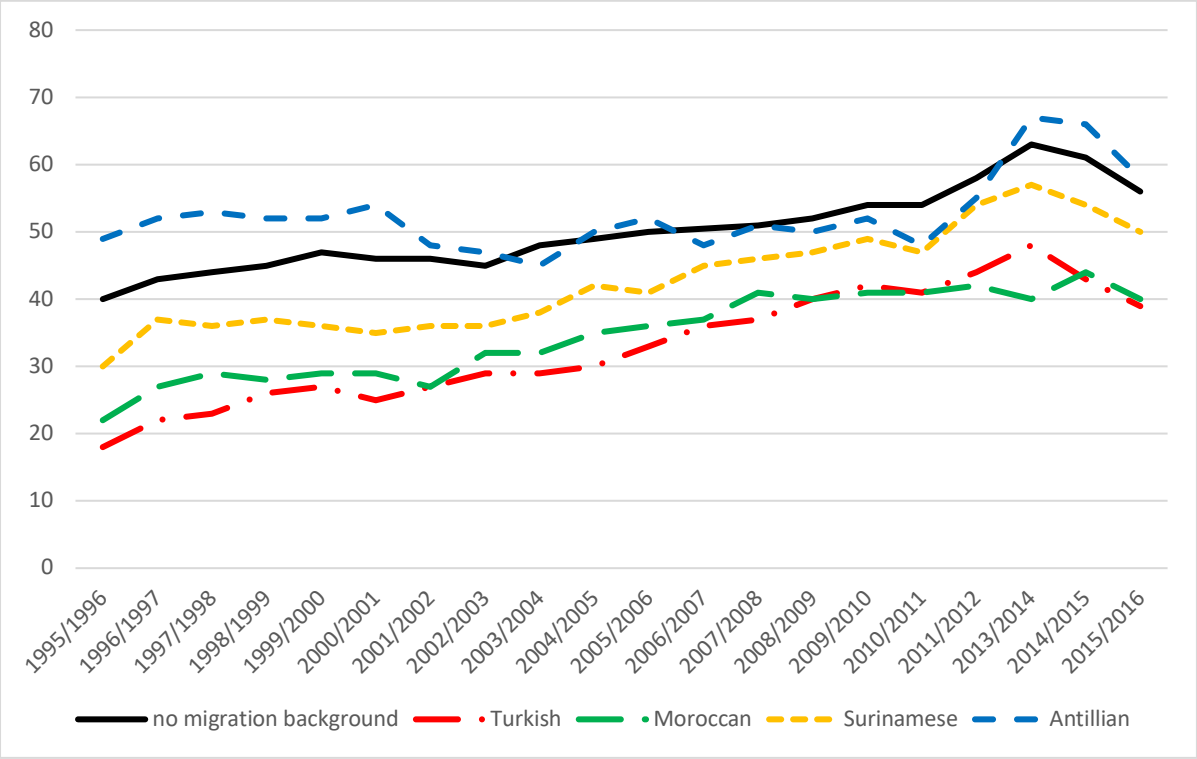
Note. The data were derived from Jaarrapport 1993, 1997, 1998, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020 for the subsequent years – respectively derived from the listed Jaarrapport editions: 1988, 1989, 1993, 1995/1996, 2001/2002, 2004/2005, 2003/2004, 2005/2006, 2006/2007, 2007/2008, 2009/2010, 2010/2011, 2011/2012, 2013/2014, 2015/2016, 2017/2018 and 2019/2020.

Entrance into higher tertiary education

The share of students that started higher education has increased over time for all migration backgrounds, as presented in Figure 3.6.1. Remarkably in 1995/1996, a relatively higher share of students with an Antillean migration background started tertiary education than students without a migration background.

Figure 3.6.1

Percentage of students starting higher tertiary education (HBO or university), by year and migration background



Note. The years 1995 to 2010 concerned only those 24 years of age and younger. The years 1995 to 2010 concerned exclusively the second generation for those with a migration background. Sources: The year 1995/1996 to 2010/2011 were derived from Jaarrapport Integratie 2011, and the years 2011/2012 to 2015/2016 were derived from Jaarrapport Integratie 2016.

In the most recent year – 2015/2016 – this was still the case: 58% among Antillean students and 56% among students without a migration background. The largest increase was observed among students with a Turkish migration background: from around 18% in 1995 to nearly 40% in 2015. This paints an optimistic picture: more and more students with a migration background enroll in higher education

over time. This provides some preliminary evidence for the expectation that younger birth cohorts outperform older birth cohorts in education. Specifically, the year 1995 to 2010 only included students with a second-generation migration background, yet this trend holds true. This provides some preliminary evidence for the expectations that the second generation will perform better than the first.

Nonetheless, this figure only showed the percentage of students that started higher tertiary education. This is no guarantee that all of these students completed higher tertiary education. However, the larger the percentage of students that starts the more likely a larger share obtain a higher tertiary degree.

Discussion

From this historical synthesis of the educational trends among children of immigrants over the last decades several conclusions emerge. First, an upward trend in education level appears true across the four migrant groups. The education level of students with a Moroccan, Turkish, Surinamese, and Antillean migration background increased over time and especially for the second generation of these migrant groups. This is in line with the expectation that educational positions increased over time. Moreover, this may imply that the educational positions of migrant groups could approach the positions of the non-migrant population. This is more remarkable when we realize that the Dutch comparison group has not been stratified for socio-economic background in this chapter. If that were the case, the gap between migrant and non-migrant groups could have decreased even faster. However, when compared to all people without a migration background, a sizeable gap remains in 'medium' or 'higher' educated even though these discrepancies have become much smaller over time. These conclusions provided some preliminary support for the first expectation that the younger birth cohorts will outperform the older birth cohorts in education. This is only a descriptive exploration of these data and trends, yet the increase in education level seems to align with the increasing population share of the second generation across these four migrant groups.

Second, the key pattern in track placement in the third year for all migrant groups was one of convergence. Fewer students attended a 'VMBO basis or kader' track over time, whereas slightly more students of various migration backgrounds attended 'VMBO gemengd or theoretisch' tracks. Meanwhile, more children of immigrants attended a HAVO/VWO track. Students with a Surinamese and Antillean migration background attended a 'HAVO or VWO' track more frequently than students with a Turkish or Moroccan background. Particularly, students with a Surinamese migration

background attended ‘HAVO or VWO’ tracks in increasing numbers, to the point where they surpassed attendance of ‘VMBO gemengd or theoretisch’ over time. This provides some preliminary support for the second expectation in this chapter that children of post-colonial migrants – especially of Surinamese descent - are expected to obtain higher education levels than peers with a Turkish or Moroccan migration background. Yet these numbers were not on par with the children without a migration background. Moreover, this trend in the third year of secondary school followed the track placement in the first year of secondary school. Throughout the 1990s, more students from the four migration backgrounds attended HAVO and VWO tracks in the first year. However, given the track mobility options after the first year of secondary school as well as after two or three years of secondary school attendance, the track placement in the third potentially offers a more appropriate measure to examine secondary school attainment than track placement advice or track placement in year one.

These conclusions should nevertheless be interpreted with caution. The research population varied over time and by report. Some reports included all children with a certain migration background, regardless of whether this was a first-generational or second-generational status, whereas other reports did not unequivocally disclose the exact definition of their research population though most likely included children of various migrant generations. This curtailed the option to compare across generations. In addition, the categorization of the tracks into three groups: ‘VMBO kader or basis’, ‘VMBO gemengd or theoretisch’, and ‘HAVO or VWO’ may overlook discrepancies within these broad categories. This caution is most relevant to the ‘HAVO or VWO’ category because this lumped together two very distinct tracks.

This chapter mainly presented data zooming in on a subset of students: those with a HAVO or VWO track placement advice and those who entered higher education. Therefore, potentially only including those in the ‘higher tracks’ in the education system. Data on the vocational tracks were only included in the track placement in secondary school. This chapter therefore may overlook two vital aspects: (1) the educational trajectories of those in vocational tracks in secondary education (VMBO) and tertiary education (MBO) and (2) the drop-out rates in secondary and tertiary school. Hence, the sixth chapter investigates the patterns of school drop-out across various school tracks further.

The research questions addressed in this chapter were: which trends in educational positions throughout the primary, secondary, and tertiary stage among children of immigrants can be observed cross-sectionally? Moreover, what are the differences between the migrant groups in educational positions? The key conclusion was that a converging trend can be observed for all migrant groups. The education level of all migrant groups showed an upward trend. With time, more people with a migration background became ‘medium’ or ‘higher’ educated and more children attended a ‘HAVO/VWO’ track in school. Yet these numbers were not on a similar level to the population without

a migration background, even though it should be noted this was not stratified by socio-economic positions. To sum up, the gaps between children of immigrants and children without a migration background in education are tapering. Although these developments are a cause for optimism, we should keep in mind that shining a light on the increasing numbers of students attending HAVO or VWO still overlooks the majority who do not attend these tracks. Potentially, the subset of students who are attending HAVO or VWO will enroll in higher education too. This is a seemingly self-propelling effect of students who performed well in secondary education and who keep on moving forward and upward after. Keeping these trends and conclusions on education among children of immigrants in the Netherlands in mind, the next chapter examines the scholarly literature on this theme.