

The effectiveness of social assistance reintegration instruments in the Southwest district

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Abstract

Active Labour Market programmes are widely used in European countries, specifically in the Netherlands. The Netherlands uses these programmes for the reintegration of social assistance recipients. This research was performed on behalf of the municipality of The Hague to gain more knowledge about the effects of these programmes and to estimate which programmes are most effective for the reintegration of the recipients. With the results, the municipality can improve the reintegration processes for the Southwest district. This is seen as a relatively poor district, with a large socio-economic multi-problem, characterised by poverty, long-term unemployment, radicalisation, polarisation, health problem, and growing underprivileged young people in a socially weak environment. However, due to the dataset's aggregation, no measurement of programmes' effects on the outflow of social assistance is conducted. Therefore, a guideline is provided for the municipality of The Hague. In this guideline, the current situation in data availability is described, the problems with this available data are identified, and practical and institutional changes are advised to implement, which provides an opportunity to answer the research question.

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1. Introduction

In 2019, the central government and the municipality of The Hague formulated the Regional Deal The Hague Southwest in line with the Municipal Coalition Agreement 2019-2022 'Together for the city' (Koenraads, 2022). This deal focuses on four neighbourhoods of the Southwest district: Moerwijk, Morgenstond, Bouwlust and Vredelust. In these neighbourhoods, there is a collaboration between residents, municipality, government and universities to strengthen the Southwest district (Commissie Samenleving, 2021). These collaborations exist because Southwest's residents are more often low-educated, poor and unemployed than elsewhere (Commissie Samenleving, 2021). Many households have a (relatively) low income, and a significant number receive benefits. Compared to other districts of The Hague, the risk of educational disadvantage for children is high and relatively many young people leave school early in the Southwest. On average, those who attend school are advised one school level lower than youth in other neighbourhoods (Commissie Samenleving, 2021). Southwest is in poorer health than the average in The Hague. Many residents do not meet the physical activity standard. Overweight and loneliness are relatively common (Commissie Samenleving, 2021). Those who die in Southwest have lived an average of seven years shorter than other residents of The Hague. The average house value, an indication of the quality, is low. Relatively many residents give their homes an unsatisfactory rating. The Hague Southwest has a rather large number of registered crimes and nuisance reports. This part of The Hague scores poorly regarding the quality of life, pleasant living and social cohesion (Commissie Samenleving, 2021). Compared to the whole of The Hague, the share of minimum households is high. The same applies to the percentage of children (four to eighteen years) growing up in a minimum-income household.

To tackle these wicked problems in The Hague Southwest, the municipality of The Hague is joining forces with various stakeholders to invest in these four neighbourhoods in the coming years. To monitor, evaluate and further develop the Regional Deal for Southwest, the municipality has asked Leiden-Delft-Erasmus universities (LDE) to research policy and practice. A thesis workplace has been established and offers an educational platform where master's students from different disciplines can conduct research in response to the practical challenges formulated by the municipality, projects in Southwest and its residents (Koenraads, 2022). By linking various master's theses to relevant practice-oriented challenges around Southwest, an attempt is made to bridge the gap between scientific knowledge and

practical insights. This research arose within the thesis workplace, and this is the reason why research is conducted in the interest of Southwest.

One of the current relevant practice-oriented challenges of the municipality is the reintegration of social assistance recipients because, as already mentioned, the inhabitants of Southwest are more often low-educated, poor and unemployed than elsewhere. Moreover, many households have a (relatively) low income, and a significant number receive benefits. Identifying where the difference in the outflow of social assistance originated is essential because the individual and social consequences of long-term benefit situations are substantial. If an individual ends up in a long-term benefit situation, this is accompanied by an increasing distance from the labour market and thus even lower job opportunities. Not being able to participate in the work process has a negative effect on income and leaves unused labour potential for the Dutch economy (Huijnk & Muns, 2021). There is also tension in the labour market. The number of vacancies has increased, and the number of unemployed has continued to decrease (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2022). This creates a window of opportunities in which it is possible to help as many people as possible, including those further from the labour market, to find work.

The Participation Act has been in existence since 2015. This law aims to help as many people as possible, including those with little capacity, to find work and minimise benefits dependency (Van Echtelt et al., 2019). The emphasis is on activating people. The implementation of the Participation Act is in the hands of municipalities. They became responsible for the reintegration and the support of the people instead of the central government. If people cannot find work, they are eligible for social assistance, subject to certain conditions. Municipalities have various instruments, such as Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMPs), to guide people to work (Van Echtelt et al., 2019). These ALMPs for unemployed workers and welfare recipients are, for example, wage cost subsidy, WIW and ID jobs, trial placement, sheltered work, job coaching and guidance in the workplace, offering courses and training, volunteering and other social activations.

While such ALMPs have been used for many years in the Netherlands, there is an increasing awareness of the demand to develop scientifically-justified measures of the effectiveness of various ALMPs (Card et al., 2018). Therefore, especially in the recent decades, the number of scientific evaluations has grown tremendously. This offers the ability to learn what programmes are most effective, under what circumstances, and for whom. However, based on the literature, there is little consensus about the effects of ALMPs. Besides that, most ALMPs evaluation research focuses on short-term results. The effects are

often visible after more than two years. Moreover, previous studies estimate overall country effects and do not control for regional differences. At last, few studies include welfare outcomes to identify the social returns to investment in ALMPs.

The conclusions drawn above come mainly from studies evaluating ALMPs based on results from multiple countries. Except for the research by Lammers and Kok (2021). They estimate effects in the Netherlands. These studies use the total number of unemployed individuals but make no further distinctions between them. However, in the Netherlands, there is unemployment insurance and social assistance. The difference is that unemployment benefits are for people laid off less than two years ago (Rijksoverheid, n.d.). Social assistance benefits are for people who are further away from the labour market and are no longer eligible for unemployment benefits (Van Echtelt et al., 2019). Within the Netherlands, few studies specifically identify the effects of the reintegration process for people entitled to social assistance. These studies are mainly qualitative or, if they are quantitative, they were already carried out fifteen years ago. Therefore, hard results are not found or are no longer applicable to the current reintegration process.

The objective of this paper is to overcome the gap in the literature and provide a scientifically-justified measure of the effect of reintegration programmes for social assistance recipients of the municipality of The Hague. Therefore, the research question is formulated as follows: *What is the effect of active labour market policies of the municipality of The Hague on the outflow of social assistance for the Southwest district in the period 2017 up to and including 2020?* The analysis is carried out on a comprehensive dataset of the Central Bureau of Statistics of the Netherlands (CBS). The dataset is the Assistance Monitor of The Hague and contains 174.262 social assistance recipients, of which 42.960 are from Southwest. Given the dataset and the Participation Act, our research period started in 2017.

The main focus of the empirical analysis was to estimate which programmes are most effective, under what circumstances, and for whom. Fifteen ALMPs exist in the municipality of The Hague, which are categorised into five sections: (i) financial compensation, (ii) workplace, (iii) workplace support, (iv) provisions to work or participation, and (v) facilitating programmes. The analysis aimed to identify ALMPs in The Hague by correlating the programme with the outflow of assistance per cohort of social assistance recipients while correlating for possible alternative factors that influence the outcome.

However, due to data aggregation, estimating this correlation is impossible. Therefore, the analysis provides a guideline for the municipality of The Hague. This guideline identifies the current data availability and explains what happens if these data are used for regressions.

After that, an explanation is given of what is necessary to estimate the effect between ALMPs and the outflow of assistance and what is needed to answer the research question.

This research and its analysis are scientifically relevant because it gains more knowledge on reintegration programmes of the municipality of The Hague, in which a distinction is made between different city districts. Moreover, the policy advice offered can allow future studies to estimate policy effects based on quantitative data when implemented. This fills a gap in the literature, as this guideline allows more studies to be conducted evaluating reintegration programmes of municipalities. This research is socially relevant because, with the analysis and policy advice, municipalities know what is necessary to perform quantitative effect measurements for municipalities. With this knowledge and policy advice, more research can be completed in which policy is evaluated in a scientific matter. Policy improvements can result from more scientific research, which benefits society.

To perform an analysis, this research is structured as follows. Firstly, the theoretical framework is presented. A literature study is carried out in this framework. A theory is formed based on previous studies, from which a hypothesis is given about the direction of the effect of ALMPs on the outflow of social assistance. Secondly, an institutional framework is formed, describing the municipal policy and institutions to reintegrate people entitled to social assistance. It is identified to which population this policy applies to and what its developments are over time. Finally, this framework determines what previous studies evaluate the ALMPs of social assistance in the Netherlands. Thirdly, the central concepts of this research are defined in the conceptualisation. Forth the methodology is presented in which the analysis structure is made, and the variables become measurable. The research results are elaborated in the analysis chapter. Finally, a conclusion is formed, and from the results, recommendations are made.

2. Theoretical framework

This research aims to analyse and map the different effects of ALMPs. This section focuses on how and why ALMPs affect the outflow of assistance. This section sums up other research conducted to identify what incentives are used to motivate welfare recipients to reemploy. With this literature review, theories are developed, also called hypotheses. These hypotheses explain a particular aspect of social reality and have two purposes (Little et al., 2014). It firstly allows to order or classify some aspects of social reality and describe it (Little et al., 2014). It secondly provides the possibility to explain phenomena (Little et al., 2014). This means that the hypotheses identify the explanation of the research question, in this case, the effect of reintegration programmes on the outflow of assistance.

2.1. Literature review

The hypotheses are drawn up from the literature review. The literature is studied and evaluated. Based on this, a prediction is made about the possible effect of ALMPs on the outflow of assistance. The introduction mentioned that most existing literature focuses on the short-run impact of ALMPs and that only a few studies analyse the long-term effects (Lammers & Kok, 2021). For that reason, this review is divided into three parts. Firstly, three studies of the short-term effects are described. Secondly, two studies of the long-term effects are reviewed. Finally, the conducted literature review will lead to various hypotheses about the impact of ALMPs on the outflow of assistance.

2.1.1. The short-term effectiveness of ALMPs

Multiple studies on this topic are conducted in different countries within and outside the European Union, “by independent researchers, by researchers commissioned by government bodies, as part of European Social Fund (ESF) programmes, or as national studies contributing to the European Employment Strategy evaluation” (Kluve, 2010, p. 904). In most papers, the evaluation of the effectiveness of ALMPs has been focused on short-term employment effects. However, this short-term research's different estimations, evaluations, and evidence are inconclusive. The literature is inconclusive because there is little consensus about what ALMPs are most effective, whether ALMPs increase the number of workers or decrease unemployment, and the question of what countries can learn from each other given

the effectiveness of their ALMPs (Kluve, 2010). To show this inconclusiveness, this section will compare three studies that estimate short-term evaluations of the effectiveness of ALMPs. The three studies conduct a meta-analysis comprising different programme evaluations in European countries and the US. In summarising, these studies give an overview of the various ALMPs that seem most effective in the short run.

2.1.2. The first short-term research

The first research that will be discussed is the study of Kluve (2010). This paper aims to overcome the inconclusiveness of the most effective ALMPs by using a meta-analytical approach on a dataset that comprises 137 programme evaluations from eighteen European countries and the US conducted between 1978 and 2006. More specifically, a “meta-analysis is a statistical tool for synthesizing research findings across a set of individual studies that all analyze the same or a similar issue, in the same or a comparable way” (Kluve, 2010, p. 906). A meta-analytical approach allows for identifying systemic patterns from the available cross-country evidence on ALMPs’ effectiveness (Kluve, 2010). In other words, this analysis correlates the efficacy of the programme with a set of variables that contain (a) the research design, (b) a specific programme, (c) the institutional context, and (d) the economic background in a country at the time the programme ran (Kluve, 2010). All these different elements may affect the outcome, which in this case is the programme’s performance.

A large variety of programmes are used in the nineteen countries. Kluve (2010) classified these different programmes into six core classes. The first one is (labour market) training. This includes classroom training, on-the-job training and work experience. This class can be a more general training or a specific vocational skill (Kluve, 2010). The second class are the programmes that create incentives that adjust employer and worker behaviour regarding private sector employment (Kluve, 2010). For example, wage subsidies and self-employment grants. A third programme class is the construction of public employment. The aim is to create or provide public work or other activities that produce public goods or services (Kluve, 2010). A fourth class contains the “Services and Sanctions, encompasses all measures aimed at enhancing job search efficiency” (Kluve, 2010, p. 905). For example, job search assistance. A fifth class focuses on target groups such as youth programmes that provide training programmes, wage subsidies and job search assistance (Kluve, 2010). The final class is the category for the disabled. This includes vocational rehabilitation, sheltered

work programmes or wage subsidies for individuals with physical, mental or social disabilities” (Kluve, 2010, p. 905).

The meta-analysis uses the programme impact as the dependent variable. This outcome can be “positive”, “negative”, and “significant”. Kluve (2010) uses different explanatory variables, specifically, programme type, the research design and the institutional context, and the country's economic background when the programme was active. To investigate the correlations of ALMPs’ effectiveness, Kluve (2010) fit ordered probit models to the evaluation database.

The results of Kluve (2010) are as follows. The main patterns estimated by the meta-regression analysis correlate with the programme type. The first class, traditional training programmes, creates a slight positive and significant effect on the post-programme employment rate. Private sector incentive programmes and Services and Sanctions show a significant positive correlation. This positive correlation is 30 to 50 percentage points higher than the training programmes. The third class, direct employment programmes, is 25 percentage points less likely to estimate a significant positive effect on employment. A final interesting outcome of this article is that they consistently find “that programmes targeting youth are less likely to be effective” (Kluve, 2010, p. 915). Kluve (2010) does not clarify the reason for this result.

According to Kluve (2010), three possible issues should be considered in further research. Firstly, more recent studies, which are included in the analysis of Kluve, have a lower probability of estimating significant treatment effects. This may be because more recent studies are based on better data. Secondly, there is an indication that ALMPs work better when the unemployment rate is high. Thirdly, there is proof that strict employment protection lowers ALMPs’ effectiveness.

2.1.3. The second short-term research

Another research evaluating ALMPs is from Card, Kluve and Weber (2010). This research is essential to analyse because it also presents a meta-analysis where 199 programme impacts from 97 studies conducted between 1995 and 2007 are analysed. The aim of Card et al. (2010) was to answer the question of how participation in an ALMP affects the labour market outcomes of the participants themselves. The sample of Card et al. (2010) is built on recent ALMP evaluations worldwide. They collected these evaluations via two leading research networks: the Institute for the Study of Labour (IZA) and the National Bureau of Economic

Research (NBER). These different evaluations vary in the dependent variable and have another econometric modelling. Therefore, in their primary analysis, Card et al. (2010) classified the estimates by “whether the post-programme impact on the participants is found to be significantly positive, statistically insignificant or significantly negative” (Card et al., 2010, p. 453). This classification of sign and significance allows them to compare across studies that have different dependent variables.

The next step in their process was identifying and defining the types of ALMPs that arouse individuals to reemploy. Card et al. (2010) imposed four restrictions on the projects included in their analysis. Firstly, the ALMPs have to be one of the following types: “classroom or on-the-job training”, “job search assistance or sanctions for failing to search”, “subsidised private sector employment”, and “subsidised public sector employment” (Card et al., 2010, p. 455). A combination of these programmes can also be possible. Secondly, they “narrowed the definition of private or public employment subsidies to include only individual-level subsidies“ (Card et al., 2010, p. 455). This means they excluded firm-level subsidy projects that allow employers to select those individuals whose wages are subsidised. Thirdly, this restriction focuses on time-limited programmes, excluding open-ended entitlements such as child care programmes and education grants (Card et al., 2010). Fourthly, they only focus on programmes with active components (Card et al., 2010). They exclude financial programmes, such as “manipulations of the benefits available to participants in unemployment insurance, welfare or disability programs” (Card et al., 2010, p. 455).

The results of their analysis are comparable to the effects of Kluve (2010) and other previous literature, such as Heckman et al. (1999) and Kluve and Schmidt (2002). The first conclusion of Card et al. (2010) is that short-term evaluations are less favourable than long-term evaluations. For instance, classroom and on-the-job training programmes. In the short run, these programmes are not effective. However, these programmes show more positive impacts after two years. A second result is that it matters which data source is used to measure programme effects. Studies that analyse outcome time in registered unemployment present more positive short-term effects than evaluations based on employment or earnings. A third result is that subsidised public sector employment programmes are almost ineffective compared to other programmes. Job search assistance and complementary programmes have positive effects (Card et al., 2010). Card et al. (2010) find their fourth result comparing across groups of participants. They found no differential effects of ALMPs on men versus women, and programmes for youths are less likely to yield positive impacts than untargeted programmes.

Besides these results, Card et al. (2010) warn other research of selection bias. They state that ALMP evaluation literature issues the difficulty of controlling for selection bias. Selection bias can lead to deceptive negative or positive programme effects. A standard method for evaluating social programmes is to compare nonparticipants' outcomes with the programme participants' outcomes (Heckman et al.,1998). "The difference between participant and nonparticipant outcomes is the estimated gross impact of a programme reported in many evaluations" (Heckman et al.,1998, p. 1017). The discrepancy in outcomes nonparticipant group may differ systematically from the outcome without the programme. This creates a selection bias (Heckman et al.,1998). When focused on evaluating the performance of ALMPs, these social experiments tend to have difficulty assigning a control and treatment group. This issue will be taken into account in this research and will be explained in the methodology.

Furthermore, Card et al. (2010) point out several limitations of their evaluated studies. One of those limitations is that only a few studies include information about a judgement of the benefits of a programme relative to its costs. Another issue is that the methodological designs often do not consider welfare-relevant outcomes. For employment, hours of work, or earnings (Card et al., 2010).

2.1.4. The third short-term research

The third short-term research is the study of Card, Kluve and Weber (2018). This research also evaluates the longer-term effects of more than two years. However, their primary focus is on short-term results. Again a meta-analysis is conducted where the estimates from over 200 recent studies of ALMPs and 857 separate programme estimates are summarised. Compared to the previous meta-analyses described above, Card et al. (2018) analysis focuses on the type of programme and participant group. It distinguishes between three different post-programme time horizons. Making this distinction in the post-programme horizon shows the variation in programme effects at different points in time. Besides that, they can more accurately measure average programme impacts by type of programme and post-programme time horizon. Moreover, they can compare the relative efficacy of the programmes for different groups. Card et al. (2018) make use of the same sample as Card et al. (2010), but they extend it by doubling the number of studies and increasing the separate programme estimates from 343 to 857 (Card et al., 2018).

The independent variables they use are classroom or on-the-job training, job search assistance, monitoring or sanctions for failing to search, subsidised private sector employment, subsidised public sector employment and other programmes combining two or more of the above type (Card et al., 2018). The dependent variable is the probability of work. Card et al. (2018) use three different time horizons in their study. The first horizon is the short-term horizon, which is the programme effect that arises within one year. The second is the medium-term, which is the effect of one to two years. The third is the longer-term effect, so more than two years.

The results of this study state that ALMPs have relatively small average effects in the short run but larger average effects in the medium and long run. Furthermore, they find that the time profiles of ‘work first’ style programmes that offer, for example, job assistance or incentives to enter work more rapidly differ from the profiles of ‘human capital’ training programmes and public sector employment programmes (Card et al., 2018). Human capital programmes have minor, sometimes even negative, short-term and more significant impacts in the medium or long run. On the other hand, work first programme impacts are more stable. Public sector programmes negatively affect all time horizons (Card et al., 2018).

Another result is the different effects of ALMPs across groups. Larger effects are found for females and participants drawn from the pool of long-term employed, and more minor average impacts for youth and older workers (Card et al., 2018). There is also evidence that different programmes work better for specific participants. For example, job search assistance turns out to be relatively more successful for disadvantaged participants. At the same time, private-sector employment subsidies tend to have a larger average impact on the long-term unemployed (Card et al., 2018). Also, in this research, Card et al. (2018) show that the efficiency of ALMPs differs in the business cycle. In recessionary periods, programmes tend to have larger average impacts, especially if the downturn is relatively short-lived (Card et al., 2018).

Card et al. (2018) find methodological patterns in the recent ALMP literature. They identify that the estimated effects derived from randomised controlled trials do not differ from non-experimental estimates. They also find “no evidence of publication bias in the relationship between the magnitude of the point estimates from different studies and their corresponding precision” (Card et al., 2018, p. 929).

2.2. The long-term effectiveness of ALMPs

Few studies have been conducted to estimate the long-term effects of ALMPs. This section will zoom in on two studies. The first long-term research that will be summarised is research conducted in the Netherlands by Lammers and Kok (2021). The second research that is described is the research of Lechner and Wiehler (2013). These literature reviews divide the long-term research from the short-term because it wants to understand the different effects of ALMPs in these periods and identify if the order and timing of ALMPs matter.

2.2.1. The first long-term research

“Active labor market policies are an important tool to decrease (long-term) unemployment, especially during an economic downturn” (Lammers & Kok, 2021, p. 1719). However, the short-run impact of ALMPs can be different from the long-run impact. For example, adverse short-run effects can appear due to lock-in effects (Lammers & Kok, 2021). This means that during training, the job search efforts of unemployed individuals decline or sometimes cease. This causes a decrease in the probability of employment for those attending training programmes. For this reason, Lammers and Kok (2021) decided to conduct research where they explicitly look at the medium- and long-term effects of ALMPs.

Lammers and Kok (2021) “estimate the effects on earnings from employment and confront these returns from ALMPs with their costs” (Lammers & Kok, 2021, p. 1720). They focus on the medium-run effects after inflow, and the long-run effects, seven years after inflow. The data Lammers and Kok (2021) use are from CBS, in which individuals are tracked eight years after the start of a programme.

Lammers and Kok (2021) use the same static approach, named matching methods, as Lechner et al. (2011), to evaluate programmes. Moreover, Lammers and Kok (2021) confirm that the results for Germany in their previous study, Lechner et al. (2011), also holds for the Netherlands. Particularly, Lammers and Kok (2021) find that all ALMPs have a positive and long-lasting effect on the probability of employment in the long term in the Netherlands. This long-term effect is estimated at 60 to 96 months after the inflow into unemployment insurance. In the short run, ALMPs only show minor effects.

Lammers and Kok (2021) select two groups of individuals. The first group are the individuals who received unemployment insurance benefits in 2003. The second group collected benefits in 2006. The first group is selected because the dataset consists of labour

market history two years before 2003. This is used as background information in the matching procedure allowing Lammers and Kok (2021) to retain eight years after inflow to study long-term effects. The second group is selected because training programmes are independently identifiable in the data from that year onwards so that Lammers and Kok (2021) can also evaluate the effects of individual training modules.

According to the law, municipalities in the Netherlands were obligated to buy training programmes from private reemployment companies from 2003 to 2005. Because of this, Lammers and Kok (2021) had to study the following ALMPs: career counselling, training and placement services. Career counselling consists of one or more career tests, conversations with a career counsellor, and personality assessments (Lammers & Kok, 2021). Training is to provide individuals with a course to acquire job-specific skills. Placement services aim to bring an unemployed individual under the attention of employers (Lammers & Kok, 2021). After 2006 they studied the regular programme, training, and individual budget. A regular programme and personal budget consist of three steps. The first step is drafting a plan, the second is activities toward placement, and the third is follow-up during placement. With the regular plan, a private reemployment company sets out a personal programme for the individual. With an individual budget, an individual can approach a private company and negotiate what programme they want. These programmes both consist of training programmes. However, from 2006 onwards, training could also be assigned as a separate module. For example, computer skills, administrative skills training, or training to become a taxi or personal driver.

As seen above, a lot of the programmes are built on training. Lammers and Kok (2021), therefore, identified a lock-in effect. The lock-in effect creates the difference between the short- and long-term effects. Their study confirms this lock-in effect. Only four to seven years after the programme's start, ALMPs have a positive and persistent effect on the probability of employment. Placement services have no lock-in effect because individuals are assisted in searching for a job. This immediately increases employment probabilities. Another significant result is that almost all ALMPs are more effective for individuals with a relatively low likelihood of finding work (Lammers & Kok, 2021). "The programme does not 'lock them in,' since they cannot find a job without any assistance" (Lammers & Kok, 2021, p. 1738).

2.2.2. The second long-term research

The second long-term study is by Lechner and Wiehler (2013), which differs from previous studies because it evaluates multiple programmes, programmes' timing, and the programmes' order. This allows for dynamic selection into different stages of programmes. This analysis is based on data from the Austrian Labour Force. Individuals are followed for three years who flew into an ALMP between 2000 and 2003. Lechner and Wiehler (2013) use a dynamic potential outcome approach. Their findings are interesting because they conclude that, regarding timing, the first two years after the inflow in a programme are more effective than the third year. So, the first and second year after initial unemployment entry performs better than the third year. However, these findings account for the following three programmes: participation in active job search, qualification measures, and course subsidies.

Lechner & Wiehler (2013) had to overcome selection bias because they evaluated different programmes over time. Selection bias appears because not all who started the programme will reach its end. Instead, for reasons possibly associated with the effects of the early components of the programme, participants may drop out (Lechner & Wiehler, 2013). According to Lechner and Wiehler (2013), to overcome the problem of selection bias, the data have to be comprehensive administrative labour market data, it has to rely on individuals who complete the programme, and this group has to contain a large number of such individuals. Only then selection bias can be avoided.

2.3. Hypotheses

Based on the above-written literature, there is little consensus about what ALMPs are most effective, and most of the previous studies evaluate the short-term effects of ALMPs. In contrast, the effects are more identifiable after more than two years. The results of that literature, except the study of Lechner and Wiehler (2013), state that most ALMPs are, on average, more effective after one or two years. Especially for the classroom, on-the-job, and labour market training, they see minor and sometimes negative effects in the short term. The literature believes that this is due to lock-in effects. Other programmes, such as Services and Sanctions, programmes to motivate private employment, job search assistance, career counselling and placement services, have more long-lasting positive effects throughout the measured period. Still, these effects are higher after one year of inflow into a programme. For subsidised public employment, no positive result is found. Card et al. (2018) even saw a

negative impact. Youth programmes are often not so effective, but the short term is usually analysed.

Besides these estimated effects, previous literature also accounts for implications. The literature isolates the research time horizons to one or maybe two years. This is a shortcoming of the literature evaluating ALMPs because some programme effects are higher after two years. Moreover, almost all studies estimate overall country effects or use multiple countries in their samples. However, previous literature does not focus on regional effects and therefore does not consider regional differences. This is not per se an implication but a shortcoming of prior literature. Current research will measure the impacts in one municipality where different groups of respondents are compared with each other and the municipality's total. This makes the results generalisable because the different outcomes can be compared to similar population groups. Furthermore, few studies include welfare-relevant outcomes to assess the programme's benefits relative to its costs. It is necessary to compare and evaluate the social returns to investment in ALMPs. Last, it is not clear in the literature what ALMPs are most effective.

Previous literature, especially the three meta-analyses, brings together many studies evaluating ALMPs. They provide comprehensive administrative data estimates that enable this research to formulate the following hypotheses:

H0: A reintegration programme of the municipality of The Hague does not affect the outflow of social assistance.

H1: A reintegration programme of the municipality of The Hague does affect the outflow of social assistance.

This study will focus on the abovementioned implications of the literature and try to give more insight into the effects of ALMPs in the municipality of The Hague on the outflow of social assistance. This is done based on 174.262 respondents from the Assistance Monitor of the municipality of The Hague.

3. Institutional framework

The previous section reviews the recent literature on the evaluations of ALMPs. It is focused on international and broad studies that noticed different incentives of individuals to reemploy again. However, current research evaluates the ALMPs of the municipality of The Hague. Therefore, before assessing ALMPs, the municipality's policies and institutions to reintegrate unemployed individuals are described.

Firstly, this section explains the studied population and what policy is evaluated. This explanation is necessary because, in the Netherlands, there is a difference between unemployment and social assistance benefits. The focus of this research is on social assistance. Secondly, recent developments in social assistance are examined. This description is necessary because the research period runs from 2017 to 2020. Thirdly, what does the Participation Act, enforced in 2015, mean for the municipality of The Hague? Fourthly, various reintegration trajectories within the assistance are described. Fifthly, the social assistance process of the municipality of The Hague is summarised. Finally, studies are examined that evaluate the impact of reintegration trajectories of municipalities in the Netherlands on the outflow of social assistance.

3.1. The difference between social assistance and unemployment benefits

In the Netherlands, there are two different income insurances one can apply for when individuals cannot support themselves without help. For those individuals, there is employee insurance or social assistance. Employee insurance consists of four insurance policies: Unemployment Insurance Act (WW), Disability Insurance Act (WAO), Work and Income According to Work Capacity Act (WIA) and the Sickness Benefits Act (ZW) (Belastingdienst, n.d.). You are entitled to one of these insurances if you are an employee and become wholly or partially unemployed, lose five hours or more of your working hours per week and are not entitled to wages for those hours, are immediately available for paid work, had worked for at least 26 weeks in the 36 weeks before you became unemployed, and not have become unemployed through no fault of your own (Rijksoverheid, n.d.). Other specific conditions determine precisely which insurance policy you fall under. This research does not focus on these particular employee insurances. Therefore, it is not necessary to go into further detail.

However, it is necessary to describe the definition of employee insurance because the Dutch social system also provides social assistance. Social assistance distinguishes itself from employee insurance. An individual is entitled to general social assistance if that individual does not have enough income or assets to support him- or herself and when they are not eligible for another provision or benefit, such as employee insurance. Other conditions are that the person is eighteen years of age or older, lives lawfully in the Netherlands, and is not in prison (Rijksoverheid, n.d.). On the other hand, some individuals have had employee insurance but are no longer entitled to this insurance. Employee insurance stops after two years of unemployment. After these two years, individuals can apply for social assistance benefits (Rijksoverheid, n.d.). In the Netherlands, employee insurance is for employees, and social assistance has a more comprehensive range and provides help for almost everyone who cannot support themselves. These two assurances cannot be separated, which is why they are both described.

Besides the reasons given in the previous paragraph, there are more reasons why individuals apply for social assistance instead of employee insurance. The main reason is that people resign (Dräbing et al., 2017). If a person resigns, they cannot apply for unemployment benefits and can only apply for social assistance. They can also not apply for employee insurance if they have not yet built up sufficient entitlement to receive unemployment benefits or because they had already used up previously accrued unemployment benefits (Dräbing et al., 2017). Furthermore, immigration is an important reason for the influx of social assistance (Dräbing et al., 2017). People immigrate to the Netherlands and cannot immediately find a job or earn a sufficient income. They are, therefore, not eligible for employment insurance. In addition to the reasons above for enrolment, the completion of a study also plays a role. These are both early school leavers as graduates (Dräbing et al., 2017). They also do not find a job immediately and apply for social assistance. They can also not apply for unemployment insurance because they have not yet entered the labour market. Some reasons for the influx of social assistance recipients are not identifiable (Dräbing et al., 2017). According to Dräbing et al. (2017), this can have multiple reasons. For example, it may be that a job as a self-employed person or abroad has ended, and they apply for social assistance in the Netherlands. Also, status holders are not allowed to use it. However, some still receive social assistance (Dräbing et al., 2017). This is not measurable.

3.2. The recent developments in social assistance

Since 1 January 2015, the Participation Act has been in force. This law replaces the Work and Social Assistance Act (Wwb), the Social Work Provision Act (WSW) and a large part of the Work and Employment Support for Young Disabled People Act (Wajong) (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2019). The Participation Act aims to have one regulation that leads as many people as possible to work and saves costs. Anyone who can work, but cannot provide a decent income without the help of others, falls under the Participation Act (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2019). These people have been covered by the same regulation since 2015 and have the same rights and obligations (Van Echtelt et al., 2019). The expectation was that these decentralised laws would provide starting points for making connections between areas in the social domain to make policy more effective.

Introducing the Participation Act had various consequences for municipalities and implementing organisations that carry out reintegration processes (Rekenkamercommissie, 2021). These relate to the income component (conditions for obtaining and maintaining social assistance benefits), the merging of the target groups and the reintegration instruments. Firstly, the income component. In summary, it can be stated that the Participation Act has stricter conditions for the income share than the former WWB (Rekenkamercommissie, 2021). The Participation Act prescribes the municipality to impose several labour obligations on the social assistance recipient. These labour obligations are discussed in detail in section 3.5. The duties must help ensure that an individual is (permanently) out of social assistance as soon as possible (Rekenkamercommissie, 2021). Secondly, the target groups are merged. The merging of various laws in the Participation Act means that the reintegration instruments for former Wajong and WSW people have changed. Wajong recipients are with the Participation Act eligible for the reintegration instruments that apply to all individuals with social assistance benefits (Rekenkamercommissie, 2021). Lastly, the reintegration instruments. The municipalities can choose which tools they want to use to offer to social assistance recipients (Rekenkamercommissie, 2021). The consequence of introducing the Participation Act is that many municipalities and implementing organisations have now examined and adapted their own set of instruments. This has put tremendous pressure on implementing organisations, which have had to change their organisation and work processes. These changes generally take several years and have not yet been fully implemented in many municipalities (Rekenkamercommissie, 2021). This also accounts for the municipality of The Hague, which

is explained in section 3.3. Therefore, the investigated period of this research is a period in which a lot has changed because of the time it takes to implement a new policy.

The reasons for introducing the Participation Act fit into a longer trend towards a more activating system of unemployment and disability schemes. In recent decades, the social security system in the Netherlands has undergone several changes, emphasising activation and the duties imposed on the right to a benefit (Van Echtelt et al., 2019). With the introduction of the Work and Social Assistance Act in 2004, municipalities were given more responsibility for the budget for benefit provision and reintegration. This would provide a more substantial financial incentive for municipalities to help people find work, shifting the focus from income protection to activation and integration (Van Echtelt et al., 2019). The introduction of the Participation Act also fits in with this movement.

According to the explanatory memorandum of the law, a regulation like the Participation Law was necessary because too many people were ‘on the sidelines’ (TK 2012/2014a). The government wants a society where everyone participates, including those with a work disability (TK 2012/2014a). Everyone should be allowed to participate, which also accounts for people with occupational disabilities. At the same time, the government must also ensure that people do not make unnecessary use of the provisions in the social system (TK 2013/2014a: 41). In addition, financial considerations are also mentioned (Van Echtelt et al., 2019). The number of benefits was considered to be too high (TK 2013/2014a: 37). This is particularly true for the Wajong, which has grown considerably in size since its introduction in 1998 (Van Echtelt et al., 2019). Van Echtelt et al. (2019) also stated that the system was too complex and led to uncertainty among citizens applying for social assistance. The excessive diversity and differences between schemes constitute a fourth argument for introducing the Participation Act. The last reason for introducing the Participation Act is that the old regulations can reduce support for the social system (TK 2013/2014a: 37). Given these reasons, the Dutch government implemented the Participation Act on 1 January 2015.

3.3. What does the Participation Act mean for the municipality of The Hague?

With the implementation of the Participation Act and the phasing out of the Social Work Provision Act (WSW), a need arose for precise and central control over the implementation of the Participation Act by the municipality (Gemeente Den Haag, 2020). In 2017 the municipality decided to integrate two organisational units in the social domain: the Employers Service Point and the Haeghe Group. The Employers Service point was a partnership between

Employee Insurance Executive Institute (UWV), the municipality, educational institutions and various knowledge centres. The Haeghe Group was a company of the municipality of The Hague which connected people with a distance to the regular labour market with companies and governmental institutions in The Hague (Gemeente Den Haag, 2020). Integrating these institutions, the municipality has bundled expertise, infrastructure, and a guidance network for vulnerable target groups (Gemeente Den Haag, 2020).

By 2020, the integration was completed, and a new institution under The Hague Works had emerged. This institution has three tasks. Firstly, developing skills on the work floor at the employer and directing the development of candidates. Secondly, they invest in candidates by developing them through training and investing in sustainable cooperation with employers. This increases the chances of sustainable work for the target group (Gemeente Den Haag, 2020). Lastly, the TO GWB (as of 1 January 2020, The Hague Works) offers sheltered workplaces (Gemeente Den Haag, 2020). As mentioned in the previous section (3.2), it takes time to implement a new policy. The municipality of The Hague took five years to implement the Participation Act fully.

3.4. The various reintegration programmes of social assistance the municipality of The Hague offers

Since the Participation Act, municipalities have developed various instruments to reintegrate social assistance recipients. In part, those are instruments that already exist before the Participation Act, such as placement service, secondment, guidance and job coaching, individual budget, workplace adjustment, no-risk policy, job application training, participation places and voluntary work (Van Echtelt et al., 2019). In addition, two new, commonly used reintegration instruments have originated: wage cost subsidy and sheltered work (Van Echtelt et al., 2019). Municipalities themselves determine, within the legal frameworks, who is eligible for which instrument. Before this research, an interview was conducted with two policy officers, Thirza Wegman and Cyril Chappin. It is essential to mention that they spoke about more reintegration instruments of the municipality of The Hague. However, these programmes often change because the municipality buys those trajectories from private reemployment companies (T. Wegman & C. Chappin, personal communication, April 7 2022). Not all of these programmes are included in the data. Therefore, only those included in the dataset are examined. This is explained more in the next section.

3.5. How do an individual and the municipality arrange reintegration?

When an individual receives WW, WAO, or WIA benefits, which are different employee insurances, the UWV is responsible for the reintegration (Shulinck, n.d.). However, social assistance is provided by the municipality. Therefore, the municipality is responsible for the reintegration from social assistance (Shulinck, n.d.). The municipality will help an individual. However, it does expect the following of an individual. The municipality agrees with an individual on how they will look for work. For example, how many times a week they will apply and what kind of vacancies they will respond to (Gemeente Den Haag, 2021). When a caseworker of the municipality has registered an individual for a training, workshop or another activity, the individual is obligated to be there on time and participate actively. Furthermore, there are rules, such as no use of aggression, a good command of the Dutch language, and an individual must notify changes in their environment in time. Changes include receiving other income in addition to benefits, moving away, or living with someone (Gemeente Den Haag, 2021).

When an individual receives a confirmation that they are entitled to assistance, they visit the Municipal Intake Department. During this meeting, the individual will take a test, in writing or on the computer, to test the individual's talents (Gemeente Den Haag, 2021). The results of this test are discussed with the individual in a personal meeting. With a caseworker focused on the individual's preferences and test scores, the options for going to work are explored. In this private meeting, the caseworker decides what trajectory an individual will follow to reintegrate. Again, once assigned to a programme, the individual is obligated to follow and finalise this programme and obey the rules given in the previous paragraph (Gemeente Den Haag, 2021).

If a person does not follow the rules and does not complete the programme, that person can be sanctioned. The municipality can stop the benefit, can oblige an individual to pay back the benefits received, or the individual will receive a lower benefit (Gemeente Den Haag, 2021). These sanctions are imposed by the Participation Act and apply in all municipalities (Rekenkamercommissie, 2021).

3.6. The impact of reintegration programmes of municipalities on the outflow of social assistance

Some researchers evaluated the effects of reintegration instruments in municipalities in the Netherlands. However, these researches have implications. The most recent and most corresponding researches found are research conducted by the SEO Economic Research in 2019 on social assistance recipients in the Netherlands, research into the effectiveness of the reintegration processes in the municipality of Berkelland, and a research of the same evaluation but in the municipality of Veenendaal and Rhenen.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment in the Netherlands was interested in the effectiveness of reintegration resources for social assistance claimants. For that reason, the SEO Economic Research evaluated the reintegration instruments (Kroon et al., 2019). A group was selected of people who entered social assistance in 2003 and followed for eight years to identify the long-term effects. The effectiveness of the following reintegration programmes has been studied: job placement, career choice advice, and training. Effectiveness was calculated by comparing outcomes for participants in programmes with outcomes without a programme, where they controlled for ‘hard’ characteristics such as education level and employment history. For the job placement programme, they see a substantial increase in job opportunities in the short term, less than two years after the inflow in social assistance (Kroon et al., 2019). Career choice advice, however, slightly decreases job prospects in the short run. This is due to lock-in effects (Kroon et al., 2019). Training does not seem to have any significant effects in the short and long term. Therefore, Kroon et al. (2019) conclude that training does not affect job opportunities for people with social assistance in the Netherlands.

Another research that evaluates the reintegration programmes is the research of the Rekenkamercommissie (2021) in the municipality of Berkelland. This study aims to determine the extent to which the reintegration processes are effective for those entitled to social assistance and whether the Corona outbreak affects the outcomes (Rekenkamercommissie, 2021). The research period is 2016-2020. This is different from the current research because it evaluates programmes based on document analysis and in-depth interviews, while current research focuses on quantitative data collected by CBS. However, the evaluation of the municipality of Berkelland is important to discuss because it is part of the previous literature on the evaluation of reintegration programmes in the Netherlands. The results show that the period from 2014 to 2017 is characterised by a large national influx of

social assistance. From 2017 onwards, the outflow is larger than the inflow (Rekenkamercommissie, 2021). The figures in this research show that the instruments coaching to workplaces or participation, training, courses and education, voluntary work and wage subsidy are increasingly being used. It also shows the number of recipients that flow out to work. However, this research shows implications. Because Rekenkamercommissie (2021) conducts a qualitative analysis, it is unclear whether going through reintegration processes contributes to outflow. When a social assistance recipient has followed several trajectories (which is increasingly the case during the research period), it is unclear whether outflow has been achieved by following one path or the other. Therefore, this research cannot evaluate the effects of programmes. This does emphasise the significance of the current research because a regression analysis is conducted to assess the impact of reintegration programmes of social assistance in municipalities on the outflow of assistance.

The previous research discussed is the evaluation in the municipality of Veenendaal and Rhenen. Again, this is qualitative research where a combination of 39 interviews with customers and customer managers and file analysis provides a good picture of all important aspects: what is essential to the customer, how do they assess the development during and after the reintegration process (Rekenkamercommissie, 2017). The 39 interviews that were held, however, are not representative of all people following or who have followed a reintegration programme at the municipality of Veenendaal. The research population is not large enough (Rekenkamercommissie, 2017). Furthermore, with the applied qualitative method, it is again impossible to get 'hard' figures on how reintegration programmes affect job opportunities (Rekenkamercommissie, 2017). The reason for this is that the file in which respondents of social assistance were systematically tracked was not complete. Still, with their approach, they gain insight into what the implementation of reintegration processes and experiences with it means for the respondents. However, the recipients' perception differs from the world in which current research measures the effectiveness of reintegration.

Based on previous evaluations of municipalities, it is clear that the effectiveness of reintegration processes in social assistance has not yet been mapped out in the Netherlands. However, to achieve the aim of the Participation Act, which is to lead as many people as possible to work and save costs, a municipality must know which programmes are most useful. This emphasises the social relevance of the current study. Furthermore, this research provides an insight into the evaluation of social assistance programmes, which is beneficial to the literature on the effectiveness of reintegration programmes, emphasising the scientific relevance.

4. Conceptualisation

This section defines the current research concepts to be operationalised in the methodology. The effect between reintegration programmes and the outflow of assistance is analysed in a deductive way and a quantitative study. For that reason, the X- and Y-variables must be defined. The X-variables or also named the independent variables, the various reintegration programmes, are first described. The Y-variable, also called the dependent variable, is the outflow of assistance and is described second.

4.1. SRG programmes

Almost all programmes provided by the municipality are described by the Regional Toolbox and CBS (Arbeidsmarktregio's Haaglanden & Zuid-Holland Centraal, 2021). The reintegration programmes often change because they are bought from private companies. Therefore, the dataset does not take into account all reintegration programmes. The dataset includes fifteen programmes which are described below. These fifteen programmes are categorised into five different groups. However, the data of the Assistance Monitor are aggregated. The dataset contains privacy-sensitive information from people entitled to social assistance. To avoid disclosing information about individuals, CBS decided to aggregate the data of individual social assistance recipients (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2022). It is only possible to see if an individual is entitled to a programme or not but not to which programme they are entitled.

However, it is essential to summarise the different programmes included in the concept of the SRG programme, which the dataset uses as an umbrella name for reintegration programmes. Besides that, for the understanding of further research, this research must define which programmes are examined. Moreover, it is necessary because it emphasises the need to provide insight into the Assistance Monitor's microdata evaluating specific reintegration programmes.

The consequence of using this aggregated data is that it becomes impossible to identify the effect of one programme on the outflow of assistance. This is an implication of current research because it aims to identify the different reintegration effects for the municipality of The Hague. However, with aggregated data, it is only possible to estimate the average impact of all programmes together.

The dataset summarises the various reintegration programmes into one concept: *an SRG programme or not*. An SRG programme means that at the reference moment, an individual has one or more reintegration and participation provisions, defined below, under the Participation Act or does not.

4.1.1. Financial compensation

The financial compensation includes the following three programmes that help people on social assistance reintegrate: *wage cost subsidy, flat-rate wage cost subsidy, and temporary wage cost subsidy*. Wage cost subsidy can be used for people who cannot earn the statutory minimum wage (WML) with full-time work but have opportunities for labour participation (Van Echtelt et al., 2019). Employers who hire someone with an occupational disability are compensated for the loss of productivity. The wage cost subsidy is based on the wage value of the employee: the economic valuation of the actual work delivered, expressed as a percentage (Van Echtelt et al., 2019). The employer receives a wage cost subsidy from the municipality for the difference between the determined wage value and the WML, whereby the subsidy amounts to a maximum of seventy per cent of the WML.

Second, flat-rate wage cost subsidy. A flat-rate wage cost subsidy is a subsidy of fifty per cent of the WML for a maximum of six months of employment. After that, the fair wage value must be determined with a validated wage value instrument in the workplace (Van Echtelt et al., 2019).

Third, temporary wage cost subsidy. A temporary wage cost subsidy is a temporary allowance for wage costs. The subsidy is intended to compensate for lower labour productivity in the first phase of employment and is an incentive for the employer to hire a person.

4.1.2. Workplaces

This category comprises five programmes: *WIW and ID jobs, participation place, trial placement, sheltered work and other workplaces*. The first is the WIW and ID jobs programme. This programme relates to 'old' subsidised work. These are funded jobs based on the Job Seekers and In- and Transition Jobs Act. In-and-through-flow jobs (ID jobs) are funded based on the In- and Transit Jobs Act. As of January first, 2004, it is no longer possible to enter this programme, and it is phased out on a decentralised basis. The same

applies to the WIW jobs (work experience places for the long-term unemployed, based on the Decree on Employment of Job Seekers), for which no influx is possible as of 1 January 2004 (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2022).

The second is the participation places. As mentioned in the Participation Act, this programme relates to a specific form of work with retention of benefits, whereby additional activities are performed without payment and in the context of reintegration. This distinguishes the participation programme from the wage cost subsidy. After all, a wage cost subsidy involves compensation for the work performed. Additional work is understood to primarily aim at employment integration, which is performed under the municipality's responsibility, in addition to a regular job, and does not lead to displacement in the labour market. The purpose of the activities is not primarily the realisation of a business goal. Persons who are eligible for participation places are people entitled to social assistance with a slight chance of entering the labour market as a result of personal work obstacles, who are therefore unable to be placed in the labour market (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2022).

The third is the trial placement. A person who qualifies for a wage cost subsidy under the Participation Act can work on a trial basis with an employer for no more than three months, financed by the municipality. The purpose of the trial placement is to carry out the wage valuation. During this trial placement, the person retains their benefits, and the employer does not have to pay wages (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2022).

The fourth is sheltered work. If necessary, the municipality organises a sheltered workplace for a person. This means working in an environment under adapted circumstances. In sheltered work, the person is employed by an employer and receives wages for the work they perform for a certain period. The degree of guidance and workplace adaptation is so high that a regular employer cannot be expected to hire people who need this support, not even in combination with additional or other provisions from the municipality or the UWV. That is why the municipality takes on the responsibility of a sheltered workplace (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2022).

The last is the other workplaces. This type of facility is intended for all other workplaces offered by the municipality in the context of reintegration, where the person works or learns simultaneously. The person may work while retaining benefits. There may also be an employment contract for the person who has not yet moved on to a regular position in which the municipality is still involved. Examples are hybrid facilities, hiring construction or secondment, learning-work programmes, orientation places, trial placements (except trial

placement for wage valuation, mentioned above), work experience places, employment projects or internships (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2022).

4.1.3. *Workplace Support*

In this category, the municipality of The Hague offers two trajectories: *job coach and guidance in the workplace and workplace adaptation*. Job coach and guidance programmes are all forms of guidance in the workplace for disabled and non-disabled people by an internal (the company where the employee works), external or municipal counsellor (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2022).

Workplace adaption is for a person with an occupational disability under the Participation Act. Workplace adaption for these individuals is necessary to function in the workplace (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2022).

4.1.4. *Provisions to work or participation*

The following different provisions are included in the data and offered by the municipality of The Hague: *coaching towards work or participation, training, courses and education, volunteering and other social activation*. First to define is coaching towards work or participation. A person is supported to move from unemployment towards work or participation. At the time of deployment of the programme, the recipient is not yet employed. The coaching programme aims to acquire personal or work-related competencies and takes place one-on-one. The programme can be used for short-term and long-term unemployed (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2022).

Second, training, course and education programmes. This programme includes following a training, course, education or education that promotes access to the labour market. The goal of this programme is to develop the person to prepare them for the labour market and obtain a certificate or diploma. The programme can be provided short- or long-term. It may only concern non-regular education, so education that does not fall under the Education Executive Agency of the Netherlands (DUO) (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2022).

Third, programmes where individuals perform unpaid and voluntary work for others or society. The initiative for this may lie with the municipality: the municipality can offer a volunteer place or encourage the person to do voluntary work. The initiative can also lie with the person himself. For example, if the person is already doing voluntary work before the start

of an SRG programme or starts doing so during an ongoing SRG programme. In those cases, the municipality must determine whether voluntary work is essential for reintegration or participation. If so, the volunteer work must also be provided as a programme for the SRG. The general terms and conditions of volunteer work are: it is in the public interest or a particular social interest, it is not for money, it does not cost the labour market any jobs and does not replace a paid job, the job is at the initiative of the municipality, or the municipality has assessed that the volunteer work is essential for the reintegration or participation of the person, and the work does not take place within the framework of compensation (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2022).

Last is the other social activations. These are used for independent social participation or to prevent social isolation. Social activation is not carried out in exchange for money or in kind. It is mainly about the person doing something for their good and not something that benefits third parties or society (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2022).

4.1.5. Facilitating programmes

Facilitating programmes consist of *transport facilities and other facilities*. Transport facilities and travel allowances are provided to persons in social assistance. Examples are reimbursements for commuting or refunds for transport to a training location (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2022). Providing a bicycle is also included in this facility.

Other facilities are dependent on the situation of the social assistance recipient. The facilities consist of all that enables a person, disabled or not, to work. These could be, for example, portable facilities for people with an occupational disability. Such as braille equipment or orthopaedic shoes. Furthermore, these can be intermediary facilities, such as interpreters for people with a hearing impairment or reading aid. But it can also be, for example, book money, money for clothing, Certificate of Good Conduct, driver's licence, identity card, or childcare financed by the municipality (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2022).

4.2. The outflow of assistance

As mentioned in the hypotheses (section 2.3) and by Card et al. (2010), few previous evaluations of reintegration programmes include welfare-relevant outcomes and assess the benefits of programmes relative to their costs. However, due to the privacy-sensitive

information microdata contains and therefore the aggregation of the currently used dataset, it is impossible to include welfare-relevant data, costs and benefits as outcome variables. The dataset, however, does contain the outflow of social assistance. The dataset consists of twelve different types of outflow: *assistance without work, assistance with employment, continuous work, partly work, self-employed, elsewhere on social assistance, unemployment insurance or other benefits, not in the Netherlands or deceased, married or cohabitation, detained, institutional household and other or unknown* (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2022). These different outcome variables give the possibility to evaluate the SRG programme of the municipality.

The definition of the different outcome variables is given for an exhaustive conceptualisation. First, assistance without work is the individuals that still receive assistance at the reference moment and live in The Hague. Assistance is understood to mean a benefit that is provided under the Participation Act, the Income Provision for Older and Partially Disabled Unemployed Employees Act (Ioaw), the Income Provision of Older and Partially Disabled Former Self-Employed Persons Act (Ioaz), the Decree on Assistance for the Self-Employed (Bbz) (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2022). This also includes assistance to individuals without an address and those cared for elsewhere. Second, at the relevant reference moment, assistance with employment consists of recipients who have work and receive social assistance benefits. Work is understood as an agreement under which a person performs work for a company or institution for financial compensation (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2022). This can be as an employee or as a self-employed person. A person can have multiple jobs. An oral or written employment contract is concluded for employee jobs, in which salary and other employment conditions are laid down.

In the third place, continuous work conceptualises itself by the individual that does not have social assistance benefits and does not live at a valid address in The Hague and has had a job as an employee every month for the past six months at the referenced moment (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2022). Fourth, partly work means that at the referenced moment, an individual has no social assistance and does not live at a valid address in The Hague and has had a job as an employee for at least one month in the past six months (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2022). Fifth, a self-employed individual is an individual that, at the referenced time, does not have social assistance, does not live at a valid address in The Hague, and is self-employed (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2022). Sixth, elsewhere in social assistance means that an individual is on social assistance but does not live (any longer) in The Hague (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2022). Seventh, an individual is, at the

referenced moment, not on social assistance but receives other benefits, such as unemployment insurance or other benefits (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2022).

Eighth, not in the Netherlands or deceased means that a person does not live at a valid address in the Netherlands at the time of reference. This variable also includes people who have died in the meantime (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2022). Ninth, married or cohabitation means that at the referenced moment, the person is married or cohabited (with or without children) and not six months afterwards or before (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2022). The tenth outcome variable is detainment. This means the person is criminally detained at the referenced moment (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2022). Eleventh, an individual belongs to an institutional household at the referenced moment and did not six months before and after. Institutional households are one or more persons who live together in a living space and are provided with the daily necessities. This housing takes place on a commercial basis. These concerns institutions such as nursing homes, care homes, children's homes, family replacement homes, rehabilitation centres and penitentiary institutions (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2022). Last, other and unknown is the residual category. The individuals that do not belong to the situations given above (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2022).

5. Methodology

5.1. Data

This section describes the methodology that underpins how the research is conducted. This is deductive research, in which a theory is drawn up in the theoretical and institutional framework based on previous research. This basis ensures that hypotheses are formed that allow measuring the effect between X and Y. These hypotheses are tested using the data obtained from the Assistance Monitor of CBS. This monitor consists of an aggregated dataset. With adjustments, it is possible to use this dataset for regression analyses. This ensures the current research has a quantitative character.

The Assistance Monitor is a dashboard about the social assistance of the municipality of The Hague. It shows how many people in The Hague have flown in and out of social assistance, according to different background characteristics. These social assistance recipients are followed between the period 1 July 2017 till 1 July 2020. To measure the changes in situations, recipients are divided six into cohorts and followed as cohorts. An image is made of what happened six, twelve and eighteen months later to the people on social assistance in The Hague at a particular reference moment. Due to the dataset's aggregation, it is impossible to follow respondents for longer than eighteen months. This research can therefore not estimate longer-term effects after eighteen months. Every cohort is followed after their inflow. This inflow is six months apart from every cohort. So, the first cohort is observed from the first of July 2017 onward, the second group from the first of January 2018 and so on. Because the published dataset from the monitor is aggregated, PhD student of Leiden University Heike Vethaak has moulded the dataset into a new form so that it is possible to use the data for descriptive analyses.

The Assistance Monitor categorises its data into districts of The Hague. The municipality consists of the following nine districts: the Centre, Escamp excluding Southwest, Haagse Hout, Laak, Leidschenveen-Ypenburg, Loosduinen, Scheveningen, Segbroek, and Southwest. The current research was carried out on behalf of the municipality of The Hague, which wants to know more about the effects of the reintegration processes of social assistance for the Southwest district. Therefore, the impact for the Southwest district is estimated and compared to other districts and the average of all city districts.

The Southwest district of The Hague consists of four neighbourhoods: Moerwijk, Morgenstond, Bouwlust and Vredelust. In these neighbourhoods, there is a collaboration

between residents, municipality, government and universities to strengthen the Southwest district (Commissie Samenleving, 2021). These collaborations exist because Southwest's residents are more often low-educated, poor and unemployed than elsewhere (Commissie Samenleving, 2021). Many households have a (relatively) low income, and a significant number receive benefits. The monitor contains 174.262 respondents. That are almost all social assistance recipients of the municipality of The Hague. 42.960 of those recipients live in the district Southwest. These include both the recipients with and without a reintegration programme.

Several restrictions in the dataset are necessary before analyses are performed. First, only the respondents that receive social assistance and live in the municipality of The Hague are selected for the analyses of this research. Second, the respondents are separated into two groups. The first group are the respondents with an SRG programme and the second group are the respondents without a programme. Card et al. (2010) mentioned that ALMP evaluation literature issues the difficulty of controlling for selection bias. Previous literature often evaluates social programmes by comparing the outcomes of nonparticipants with the outcomes of the programme participants (Heckman et al., 1998). However, the outcomes nonparticipant group may differ systematically from what the outcome would have been without the programme. This creates a selection bias. In this research, comparing two groups within social assistance makes equal groups to compare apples-to-apples and, therefore, prevent selection bias.

Third, another selection is made in these two groups of social assistance respondents. The respondents are between 27 and older and are separated into three groups. The monitor already does this. The first group are the respondents till 27 years, the second group is 27 till 50 years, and the third group is 50 years or older. It is not possible to change these groups because the data are aggregated. However, this separation into a youth group is not a problem because Kluve (2010), Card et al. (2010), and Card et al. (2018) find that reintegration programmes have minor effects or are not so effective for youths. It must be taken into account that these results are for unemployment insurance recipients and that current research identifies the results for social assistance recipients. However, with the separation of the youth group, it can be estimated if this group also shows different results. The separation into older groups is essential because the results of the second group will not be influenced by the early retirement decision (Lammers & Kok, 2021). Fourth, only fully unemployed individuals are selected when they flow into social assistance. Fifth, all individuals that are on social assistance are selected. This does not mean all respondents are following a reintegration

programme. Finally, this research does not look past twelve months ahead for the monitor's reference point of 1 July 2019. For the reference point of 1 January 2020, further than six months is not taken into account because the dataset does not provide data past 1 July 2020.

5.2. Research methods

In this study's analysis, it is impossible to perform a regression due to the limited available data. Therefore, it is also impossible to answer the research question completely. However, this does not mean that this research ends here. In its analysis, this research discusses what is needed to perform regression analysis and to be able to measure the effect of reintegration programmes based on data. That way, analysis is still carried out but not statistically. This section explains how the analysis in the next section is structured.

“The modern econometric paradigm exemplified by Dale and Krueger (2002) treats regression as an empirical control strategy designed to capture causal effects.” (Angrist & Pischke, 2017, p. 5). Regressions are automated matchmakers that provide within-group comparisons (Angrist & Pischke, 2017). This means that there is a single causal variable of interest. In the current study, this is a reintegration programme. At the same time, other regressors measure circumstances and conditions that must be held fixed when estimating the effects of the causal variable (Angrist & Pischke, 2017). Including these control variables in a multivariate regression model keeps these variables fixed and hopefully gives the regression coefficient on the causal variable a *ceteris paribus*, apples-to-apples interpretation (Angrist & Pischke, 2017). However, this research cannot create an apples-to-apples interpretation and, therefore, a *ceteris paribus* interpretation because of the data aggregation. This aggregation prevents estimating an effect of X on Y while controlling for circumstances and conditions.

The analysis of the results section is therefore structured as follows. Firstly, as many descriptive statistics as possible are shown to come as close as possible to the effect of reintegration programmes on the outflow of assistance. This is done using the moulded data from the Assistance Monitor. Secondly, the current situation in terms of data availability is shown. Thirdly, an identification of what goes wrong with this availability of data takes place. This is both practical and institutional. At last, an explanation is given of what is needed to make it possible to answer the research question.

Based on the design of the analysis, the validity and reliability are guaranteed. First, this study is valid because it measures what it wants to measure. This research tries to gain more insight into the problem of aggregated data and achieve the following goal. This study

aims to provide a manual for the municipality of The Hague. This manual contains instructions for the municipality to ensure that data are made available so researchers can perform quantitative policy effect measurements. Secondly, this research is reliable because it is almost impossible to perform regressions with the current data status. For that reason, studies with a similar research question and the same dataset must conclude that it is necessary to publish a micro dataset to be able to perform regression analyses and estimate causal effects. Thirdly, this research guarantees reliability and validity because the data used for the descriptive statistics comes from CBS. CBS provides data about Dutch society. By law, CBS has the task of publishing reliable and coherent statistical information that responds to the needs of society (CBS, 2022). From CBS, 174.262 respondents from the municipality of The Hague are retrieved, all social assistance recipients from 1 July 2017 till 1 July 2020. This means that these data are valid and reliable. Moreover, this means that the sample size is large enough and provides a realistic representation of reality.

6. Results

6.1. Descriptive statistics

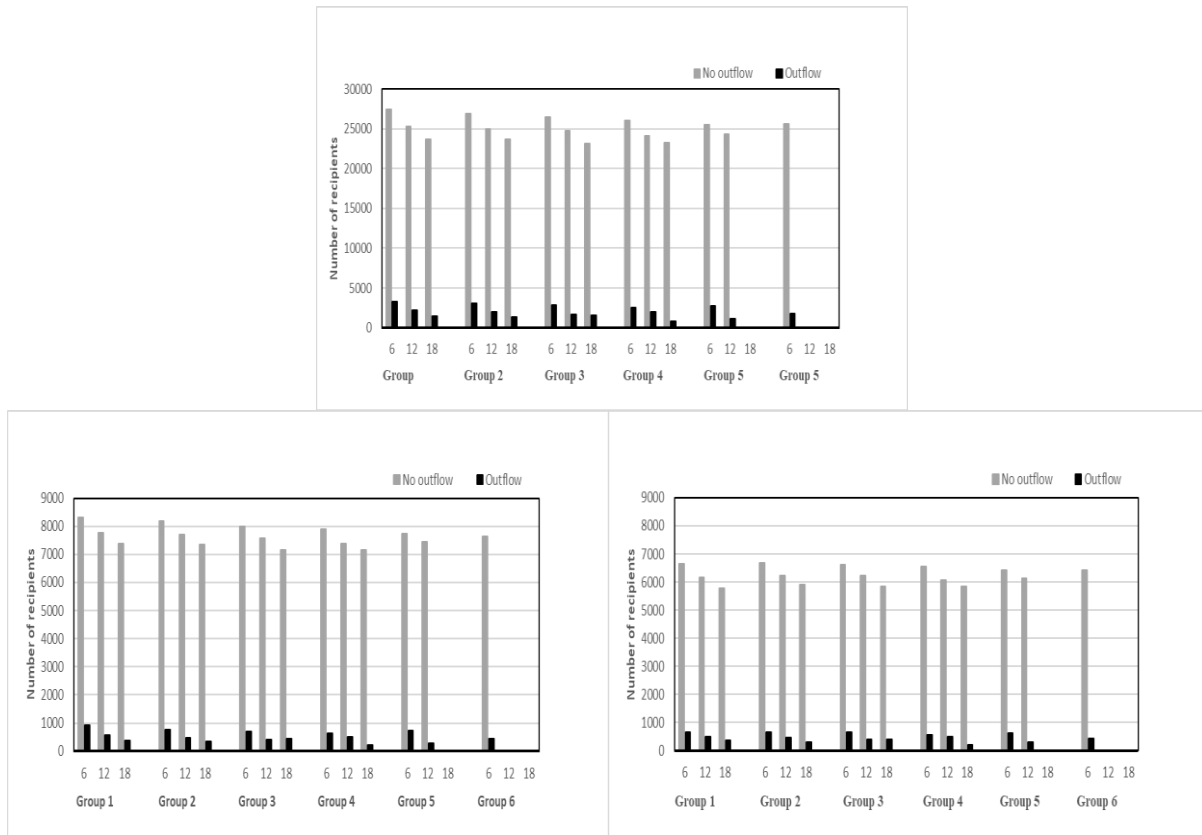
Based on the dataset's various restrictions, it is possible to compute descriptive statistics. Firstly, an investigation of the outflow of assistance of Southwest is performed and compared to the whole municipality and the Centre district. This helps identify specific patterns in recent years. After that, the recipients with SRG programmes and those without are compared to see whether there are some implementation effects. The literature showed that the implementation of the Participation Act took time. This research will identify whether this is also visible in the data. At last, the percentages of the outflow of the municipality in total, the Centre and Southwest are estimated. With those percentages, this research tries to analyse if SRG programmes ensure that social assistance recipients flow out more quickly than groups without SRG programmes.

In Figure 1, two districts are placed side by side and compared to the municipality's total. The upper histogram of Figure 1 is, therefore, the municipality. Below that, on the left is the Centre, and Southwest is on the right. This is done because a comparison between a relatively poor district, Southwest, and a more prosperous part of the city and the municipality's total is made (Gemeente Den Haag, 2022). These comparisons give a better idea of how Southwest performs compared to the rest. For Southwest, the average income in 2016 was 25.075 euros, and for the Centre, it was 34.339 (Gemeente Den Haag, 2022). In 2019 there was still a difference. For the Southwest, it was 30.409 euros, and for the Centre, it was 38.300 (Gemeente Den Haag, 2022). To put it into more perspective, the average income of the municipality in 2016 was 38.300, and in 2019, it was 43.400 (Gemeente Den Haag, 2022). An observation of the number of inhabitants shows that the Southwest had 66.809 inhabitants in 2016 and 69.888 in 2019. The Centre had 102.076 inhabitants in 2016 and 105.440 in 2019. The municipality counted 520.697 inhabitants in 2016 and 539.040 in 2019 (Gemeente Den Haag, 2022).

Figure 1 shows the total amount of social assistance recipients per district. The histograms show different groups and the progression of the groups over time on the horizontal axis. Each group flows into assistance at a different time, and then the change of this group after six, twelve and eighteen months is registered in the histogram. The first group flows into assistance on 1 July 2017, the following group six months later and the groups after that also six months after each other. This allows measuring the difference in assistance

Figure 1

No outflow and outflow The Hague, Centre and Southwest



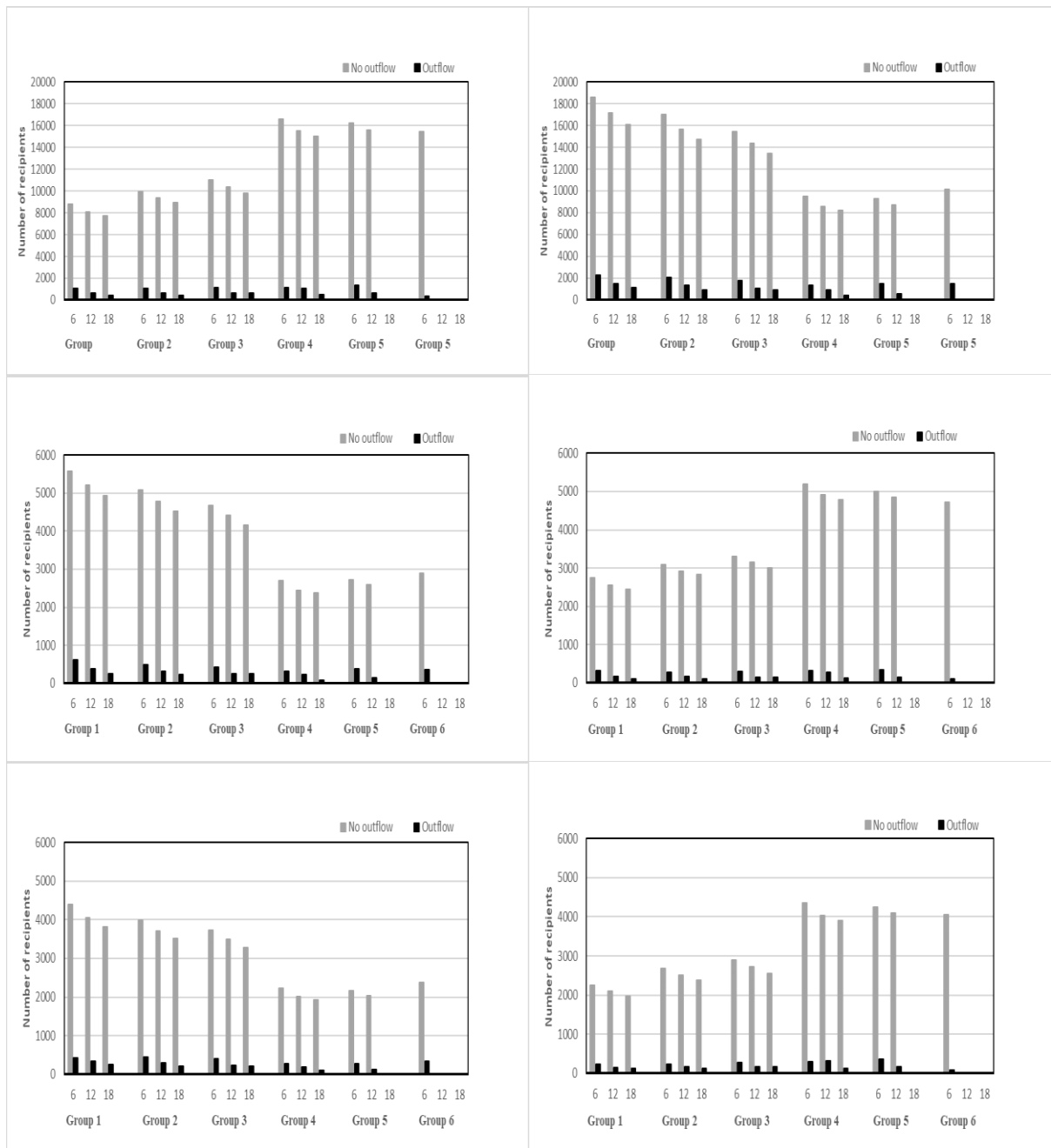
Note. The Appendix contains tables of recipients' (no) outflow per area.

recipient groups over time. Furthermore, the black bar is the outflow, and the grey bar shows the recipients who do not flow out.

The histograms of Figure 1 show that the Centre has more social assistance recipients in all the groups compared to the Southwest. This is because the population group in the Centre is larger. The second result is that the inflow into assistance decreases over time for the Centre district and the total of The Hague. It is visible because, in those histograms, every new group of recipients is smaller than before. This is in line with the common trend because, since 2017, unemployment numbers have decreased in The Hague (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2022). However, for the Southwest district, in the bottom right histogram, the overall inflow into social assistance relatively does not decrease as much as in the other histograms. It almost stays the same throughout the groups and the different inflow periods. Southwest does not follow this common trend of decreasing social assistance recipients because it has a large socio-economic multi-problem, characterised by poverty, debt, long-term unemployment, radicalisation, polarisation, health problems and growing underprivileged young people in a socially weak environment (Gemeente Den Haag, 2019).

Figure 2

SRG Programme The Hague, Centre and Southwest



Note. The Appendix contains tables of recipients' (no) outflow per area.

The histogram of Figure 2 divided the total of recipients visible in Figure 1 into two groups. The left histograms contain the recipients with SRG programmes and the right without a programme. The first row of histograms is The Hague total, the second the Centre and the last the Southwest. After group 3, an unusual change in group size is identified. The inflow into SRG programmes becomes more extensive, and the influx of recipients without

SRG programmes is lower. This is because the municipality needed time to implement policy, in this case, the Participation Act. Since 2015, the municipality, instead of the central government, has been responsible for reintegrating unemployed individuals who are distanced from the labour market. This transfer of responsibility, the budget the municipality receives from the central government for the reintegration process and the time needed to implement this policy resulted in that after group 3, the municipality placed more individuals into SRG programmes. After that group, on 1 January 2019, the municipality created a reintegration system for social assistance recipients, explained in detail in section 3.3. Therefore, an increase in SRG programme recipients after group 3 is visible.

Previous literature states that over time the probability of outflow of assistances increases and that reintegration programmes are more effective in the long term. Therefore, the reintegration numbers of a particular group of social assistance recipients should increase over time. Figures 1 and 2 show that the outflow of recipients decreases over time. Still, the group of assistance recipients also becomes smaller. For that reason, in Figure 3, the percentages of outflow of social assistance within different groups and different areas are estimated to identify whether the outflow of social assistance indeed decreases over time or follows the common trend.

Table 1 shows these percentages of the total outflow. The outflow and no outflow percentages are ordered per district and monitored over time in this table. Based on this figure, the probability of flowing out of assistance does not increase over time because the percentage of outflow decreases after six months in almost every group in all areas. Only in group 3 a higher outflow rate after eighteen months is visible compared to twelve months after inflow for the Centre and Southwest. This means that after twelve months for this group, there is a slight increase in the probability of flowing out of assistance. However, for the municipality in total, this increase is not visible. Therefore, based on the percentages of outflow, this research cannot conclude that over time, the probability to flow out of assistance increases for the municipality of The Hague. This is in contrast with previous literature.

In the outflow percentages of Southwest, it is noticeable that they flow out more in percentage than, for example, the Centre. However, this difference is relatively small. This might be because the social assistance recipients in the Southwest face more

Table 1*Outflow per cent for The Hague, Centre and Southwest*

Months after inflow	Group 1		Group 2		Group 3		Group 4		Group 5		Group 6	
	No outflow	Outflow	No outflow	Outflow	No outflow	Outflow	No outflow	Outflow	No outflow	Outflow	No outflow	Outflow
(a) Total												
6	89%	11%	90%	10%	90%	10%	91%	9%	90%	10%	93%	7%
12	92%	8%	93%	7%	94%	6%	92%	8%	95%	5%		
18	94%	6%	95%	5%	94%	6%	96%	4%				
(b) Centre												
6	90%	10%	91%	9%	92%	8%	93%	7%	91%	9%	94%	6%
12	93%	7%	94%	6%	95%	5%	94%	6%	96%	4%		
18	95%	5%	96%	4%	94%	6%	97%	3%				
(c) Southwest												
6	91%	9%	91%	9%	91%	9%	92%	8%	91%	9%	94%	6%
12	93%	7%	93%	7%	94%	6%	92%	8%	95%	5%		
18	94%	6%	95%	5%	94%	6%	96%	4%				

difficulties in flowing out than the Centre district because they face large socio-economic multi-problems. However, based on Table 1, this is not the case. The reason for this is that recipients of social assistance are often far away from the labour market. Regardless of where they live, these people face trouble reintegrating. The percentages of reintegration will, therefore, not differ much per district.

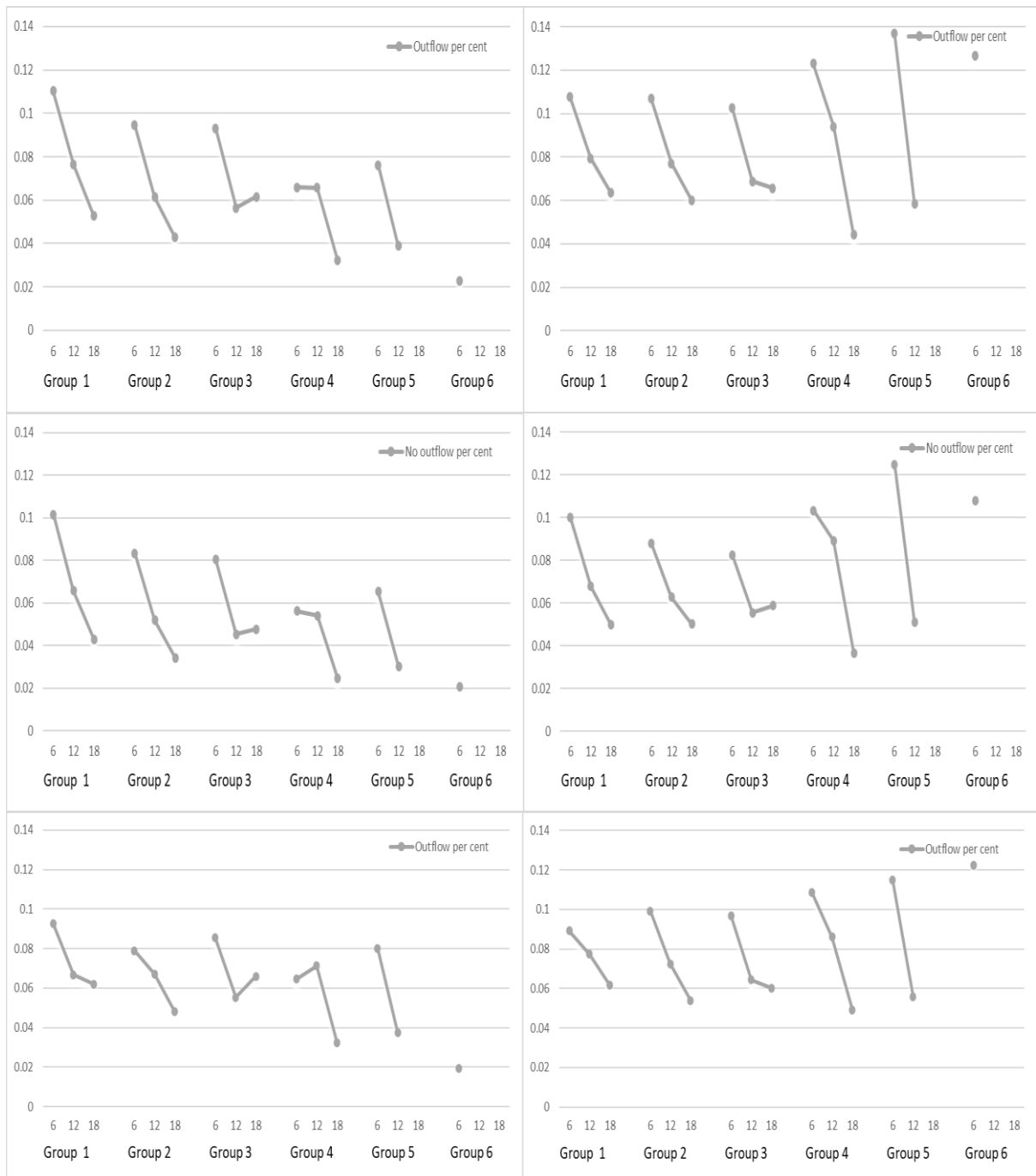
Table 1 provides an overview of the total outflow per district but does not show which recipients follow an SRG programme and which do not. This is necessary to integrate to answer the research question. In Figure 3, the outflow of recipients with SRG programmes is shown and compared to recipients without a programme because it sets out different percentages of outflow over time and divides it into recipients with SRG programmes and recipients without. The left figures contain the recipients with an SRG programme, and the right shows recipients without. Again, the first row of histograms is The Hague, the second is the Centre district recipients, and the last is Southwest. Furthermore, some groups in the data were on assistance during the Corona pandemic. Therefore, the effectiveness of SRG programmes is evaluated, and possible Corona effects are identified.

However, these measurements are purely based on descriptive data. Possible external factors influencing the outflow of assistance are not controlled, which prevents estimating causal effects and the effectiveness of SRG programmes. Nevertheless, SRG programmes help individuals with distance from the labour market to reintegrate into the labour market. Therefore, it is expected that more individuals with a programme will flow out of social assistance than those without. However, comparing the percentage of outflow of recipients with an SRG programme to the outflow of the group without a programme in Figure 3, the outflow of social assistance is higher for individuals without SRG programmes. This conclusion holds for all three districts. In Figure 3, this is visible because the points on the right graphs are higher than those on the left. This means that the percentage of outflow is higher for the recipients without SRG programmes. Based on the descriptive data, it cannot be concluded that SRG programmes improve the probability of the outflow of social assistance for The Hague.

This conclusion is succinct because there is an explanation for the lower percentages of outflow from the SRG programme group. The reason for this lower outflow is that the municipality of The Hague determines which people should proceed in an SRG programme based on conversations between caseworkers and welfare recipients. These caseworkers determine which recipients are distanced from the labour market and which face less distance. The recipients who need it most, those further from the labour market, are offered an SRG

Figure 3

The difference in outflow SRG programme The Hague, Centre and Southwest



Note. The Appendix contains tables of recipients' (no) outflow percentages per area.

programme (T. Wegman & C. Chappin, personal communication, April 7 2022). Those closer to the labour market, that is people with a relatively higher chance of finding a job without an SRG programme, are often not offered a programme (T. Wegman & C. Chappin, personal communication, April 7 2022).

The months after the first twelve of group 5 and the first six of group 6 are not included in the data because these months are too recent for the dataset. These are data after 1 July 2020. Corona appeared in the Netherlands at the beginning of 2020, and a lockdown was announced in the second quarter of 2020. For that reason, the possibility that the Coronavirus may influence the reintegration numbers is also included. Group 4 and onwards contain inflow and outflow periods during the Corona pandemic and are, therefore, experiencing the effects of Corona.

In Figure 3, group 4 is obliged to reintegrate during Corona after eighteen months of social assistance, group 5 after twelve months and group 6 completely during Corona. The percentage of outflows during this period is lower than the groups that do not reintegrate during Corona. Especially for the recipients with SRG programmes. For group 4, in all left histograms, after eighteen months, the outflow is lower relative to other groups. For example, the Southwest district, the bottom left histogram, has an outflow of almost three per cent after eighteen months for group 4. At the same time, the outflow of the previous groups after this period does not come below four per cent. The same accounts for group 5 after twelve months and group 6 after six months for all recipients with SRG. In all the right histograms, these Corona effects for the recipients without SRG are not visible. Only for group 4, the outflow after eighteen months is lower, relative to other groups, but not for Southwest. In group 6, an increase in outflow is identified compared to other groups in the same period. Especially for Southwest, a relatively higher percentage of outflow is visible. This may be the result of the common trend, which means there was less and less unemployment in the years before Corona. However, any relative factors cannot be controlled for, nor are there more Corona-influenced data available, making it almost impossible to explain the sudden increase in the outflow. Thus, it is essential to mention and identify that the Corona pandemic may influence the reintegration of social assistance recipients. This must be taken into account in the results and further research.

6.2. Analysis

Based on the descriptive statistics, it is impossible to conclude the effectiveness of reintegration processes. The descriptive data show that the outflow for social assistance claimants without an SRG programme is higher in percentage than the outflow with a programme. Many possible factors influence the outflow that cannot be controlled for due to the aggregation of the dataset. Therefore, this research arrives at the above conclusion.

Because of this conclusion, the analysis of this study does not focus on a regression analysis but will provide a manual for the municipality of The Hague. It is too short-sighted to conclude that merely more data are needed because problems can arise by making data more available. One of these problems is, for example, privacy issues. The manual this research provides is structured as follows. Firstly, the current situation in terms of data availability is described. Secondly, identifying what goes wrong with the currently available data takes place. Finally, an explanation is given of what practical and institutional changes need to be made to make it possible to answer the research question.

Article 37 of the Act on the Central Bureau of Statistics of the Netherlands states that data are only made public in such a way that no identifiable data about a person, household, company or institution can be derived unless, in the case of data relating to concerns, a company or institution, there is reason to believe that the company or institution concerned has no objections to the disclosure. In short, this means that CBS may only publish aggregated data, especially when it is information from welfare recipients. Aggregated data are combined by adding underlying data and displaying totals or subtotals (Autoriteit Persoonsgegevens, 2020). Therefore, the dataset in this study also consists of data that have been combined by adding up underlying data and displaying totals or subtotals of the number of people in The Hague who have flown in and out of social assistance according to different background characteristics.

On request, the Director-General (DG) of CBS can grant access to a collection of data or provide data for statistical and scientific research if appropriate measures have been taken to prevent the recognition of individual persons, households and companies (Article 41 of the CBS Act). With the help of remote access, the data are analysed by other institutions, and the research results are published on an aggregated level. The DG can only grant (organisational units of) institutions access to analysis files if their sole purpose is to conduct scientific research (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2021). Moreover, the DG can also approve requests for microdata from researchers if they have the sole purpose and task of conducting scientific research (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2021). However, for this research, the request for the micro dataset is not approved. The consequence of this is that the available aggregated data are used. PhD student Heike Vethaak moulded the data into a usable dataset for descriptive statistics. Still, in the period this research was written, it was impossible to shape the data further to make it functional for regressions.

It is possible to perform regressions based on aggregated data. However, there are several potential problems when using these data and using them to form conclusions about

individuals. Firstly, and most importantly, with the results obtained from combined data, you can make erroneous inferences about individual behaviour based on population-level data (Pollet et al., 2015). Within the social sciences, this is called the “ecological fallacy” (Pollet et al., 2015, p. 728).

Secondly, it is difficult to control for external factors influencing the outcome. The dataset is merged and ordered so that it is only possible to control for two variables when estimating the effect of X on Y, the effect of a reintegration programme on the outflow of social assistance. Consequently, over-determination occurs when two or more sufficient and distinct causes exist for the same effect (Kingston & Malamuth, 2011). It is necessary to control for external factors because they can influence the outcome. Without them, no conclusion can be made that results are the cause of reintegration programmes.

Thirdly, data aggregation can lead to a loss of information (Pollet et al., 2015). This loss occurs when multiple observations are reduced to a single value, such as means, ratios, or proportions (Pollet et al., 2015). If the research question contains an aggregated measure, then this is an approach to test relevant predictions. For example, does a reintegration programme cause substantially more outflow? “In many cases, however, ignoring variation means ignoring information” (Pollet et al., 2015, p. 728). In our research, this is the case. Attending only to the central tendency and ignoring the variance can lead to wrong estimates of how effective reintegration programmes are. Person X might flow relatively faster out of assistance than others in the SRG programme group, but this might be because of specific individual characteristics others do not have. So, while the aggregated hypothesis is about the individual outflow of assistance, more insight is gained by examining matters at the individual observation level (Pollet et al., 2015). Aggregation can also lead to lower statistical power (Pollet et al., 2015, p. 729). In the data of the Assistance Monitor, for example, there are three observation periods and twelve types of outflow. For every ten respondents, the sample size is reduced for the analysis to 36 instead of 360 collected. A significance test based on these aggregated data is severely underpowered and possibly unable to observe an effect (Pollet et al., 2015).

Given these problems with the dataset aggregation, it is necessary to shape data further to make it functional for regressions or to use a micro dataset. Another solution is that the availability of the data has to increase. Then this thesis can formulate an answer to the research question. However, this transition of more availability is a difficult task and requires a change that is both practical and institutional.

Practical because the data can be made available in a non-aggregated form, such as microdata. “Data analysts often prefer access to data in the form of original tuples (i.e., microdata), instead of pre-aggregated statistics, since the former offers advantages in information flexibility and availability” (Zhang, 2008, p. 1). However, before releasing microdata, two problems should be addressed. First, the data must be anonymised before it is released. This means that individual privacy is adequately protected (Zhang, 2008). “Second, the utility of the anonymised microdata should be maintained and common aggregate queries should be answered with reasonable accuracy” (Zhang, 2008, p. 1). In other words, the challenge is to publish more data without giving away confidential information but with minimum loss of the detail and accuracy sought by database users (Domingo-Ferrer & Torra, 2001) Statistical disclosure control (SDC) is widely used for this challenge. “SDC methods for microdata are usually known as masking methods, of which there is a wide range” (Domingo-Ferrer & Torra, 2001, p. 1). These methods are organised into two categories. The first category is perturbative, meaning the dataset is distorted before publication. As a consequence, unique combinations of scores in the initial dataset may disappear, and new unique combinations may appear in the perturbed dataset (Domingo-Ferrer & Torra, 2001). This modification is useful for preserving statistical confidentiality. This method ensures that the perturbed dataset does not differ significantly from the original dataset (Domingo-Ferrer & Torra, 2001). The second method is nonperturbative. This means that the data are partially suppressed, or the details are reduced compared to the original dataset (Domingo-Ferrer & Torra, 2001). However, further research is necessary for which a balance is found between making CBS data more available without giving away confidential information that can be linked to specific respondents. Moreover, further research can identify which SDC method is most applicable for CBS data, especially the data used in this research.

Instead of releasing more microdata, another practical change can be implemented to create a secure environment where analysis can be performed. In the personal meetings with the municipality, an attempt was made to create an internship at the municipality where the current research could be carried out (M. Koenraads, personal communication, March 24 2022). This internship could create a workplace where the microdata are used in a secured setting. In the short period this research was conducted, it was impossible to design this workplace. However, this solution, in which students do an internship to conduct research for the municipality and can use the secured data, offers possibilities for future collaboration between universities and the municipality.

In addition to these practical changes, institutional change is also necessary. Institutional in the sense that the municipality, in combination with CBS, grants more access to data for students conducting research. The municipality would prefer that students choose a practice-oriented challenge, for example, an estimation of the effect of reintegration programmes. However, the municipality does not correspond with CBS about the availability of microdata to measure these effects. Within the rules of CBS, it is possible to provide students with data if they have the sole purpose and task of conducting scientific research, which they do. They conduct scientific research on behalf of the municipality. Therefore, the municipality must agree with CBS that students can use anonymised microdata to conduct practice-oriented research on behalf of the municipality. This is an institutional change as there was no collaboration during this study, and the request for more data, especially microdata, was rejected.

7. Conclusion

This thesis provides a guideline for the municipality of The Hague. The analysis describes the current situation of the data openness, identifies what goes wrong with the currently available data and explains what is necessary to estimate effects based on regressions and, therefore, answer the research question. The study's objective was to investigate systematic patterns of ALMPs and the different types of programme impacts on the outflow of social assistance in district Southwest. However, due to the aggregation of the CBS dataset, it is impossible to estimate the controlled effects of AMLPs on the outflow of assistance. Therefore, the objective of this study is to provide the guideline mentioned above.

Building on earlier studies, this research argues that there is little consensus on what ALMPs are most effective. Most studies focus on the short-term effects, while in contrast, the effects are identifiable after more than two years. Moreover, in previous studies, the evaluations of the effectiveness of ALMPs in the Netherlands are not estimated by quantitative research. This is surprising because of the rich data that the Netherlands possesses. This emphasises the scientific relevance of studies on the effectiveness of ALMPs. Studies estimating this effect are additions to the Dutch policy effects literature.

With the descriptive research, this research tried to formulate an answer to the research question. However, based on these data, a conclusive answer is not possible. The descriptive data firstly show that the Participation Act was not fully implemented at the start of the study period. It takes time to implement policy. Therefore, a sudden increase in recipients with an SRG programme is visible two years after the Participation Act was introduced. Secondly, this research identifies Corona's effects at the end of the period, which may influence the impact of ALMPs. Finally, a higher percentage of respondents without an SRG programme flow out compared to the respondents with a programme. This is most likely because the group with an SRG programme are more distanced from the labour market than the group without a programme. However, to measure a causal effect between an SRG programme and the outflow of assistance, it is necessary to control for alternative factors that may influence the outcomes.

The current CBS data publication law ensures that no identifiable data about a person, household, company or institution is made public. Therefore, CBS publishes its data aggregated. Due to this CBS law, this research was bound to use aggregated data. It is possible to perform regressions based on these data. However, various problems can arise. Firstly, adjusting data to make it usable for regressions takes time. It was not possible to do

this within the period of this study. Secondly, based on population-level data, false assumptions can be made about individual behaviour. Thirdly, alternative factors may influence the results. However, with aggregated data, this is difficult to control. Finally, reducing observations to single values, in other words, aggregation may lead to a loss of information and, therefore, lower statistical power.

Given the current situation of data availability and the problems that arise when using aggregated data, the following policy recommendations for the municipality of The Hague are made. The first advice is to make more data available for students who conduct research for municipalities. CBS legislation states that it is possible to publish micro datasets if researchers have the sole purpose and task of conducting scientific research. However, further study is necessary to find a balance between the availability of data and the protection of the identity of respondents. The second recommendation is that better cooperation between the municipality, CBS and universities is necessary so that more opportunities lay ahead for master's students to conduct quantitative research for municipalities. This advice is an addition to the first advice. The municipality of The Hague has approached universities about whether master's students want to devote their master's thesis to a current topic within the municipality. In which particular attention is drawn to the Southwest district. If the municipality arranges that CBS is aware that these studies are conducted, then CBS can consider that micro datasets are requested. With a collaboration between the different institutions, students can submit their research proposals and indicate which data are needed. CBS can be informed about this study and make the microdata available to the student.

The third piece of policy advice is to offer an internship. This is already mentioned in the analysis. Offering an internship from the municipality makes it possible to work with the data in a secure environment. Students work on the data on a secured computer in a location set up by the municipality. This avoids the possibility of a data breach because the data does not circulate over different computers. However, it must be taken into account that students might need to ask questions to their capstone about the organisation of the dataset and the regressions.

The three policy recommendations cannot be viewed isolated from each other. To work safely with data, especially when microdata are made available, a balance must be found between privacy and loss of information. In addition, CBS must be involved in the collaboration so that students can estimate policy effects based on quantitative data for the municipality of The Hague. This research is conducted most safely by offering an internship.

The above study has three implications. The first implication is the main implication of this study is that no regression analysis is performed, and partly because of this, the research question is not answered. Nevertheless, the analysis performed is expected to be a step towards increasing the literature on policy performance based on quantitative studies conducted by students. The second implication of this study is that further research is needed to identify how more microdata can be made available. CBS is allowed to publish microdata to researchers. CBS must anonymise these data to prevent the identification of respondents without much information being lost. This study does not describe how a balance is found between privacy and no loss of information. This research recommends the municipality offer internships. However, this study has not precisely identified how this internship is filled in. The reason is that the municipality did not provide insight into how they envisioned this internship.

8. Literature

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9. Appendix

Table 2

No outflow and outflow Centre

Months after inflow	Group 1		Group 2		Group 3		Group 4		Group 5		Group 6	
	No outflow	Outflow	No outflow	Outflow	No outflow	Outflow	No outflow	Outflow	No outflow	Outflow	No outflow	Outflow
(a) Total												
0	9250		8940		8690		8510		8470		8070	
6	8320	930	8170	770	7990	700	7890	620	7730	740	7620	450
12	7770	560	7690	480	7580	410	7370	510	7440	290		
18	7390	370	7350	340	7160	430	7150	220				
(b) SRG programme												
0	3050		3360		3600		5510		5350		4820	
6	2740	310	3080	280	3310	290	5200	310	5000	350	4720	100
12	2560	180	2920	160	3160	150	4910	280	4850	150		
18	2450	110	2820	100	3000	150	4790	120				
(c) No programme												
0	6200		5580		5100		3000		3120		3240	
6	5580	620	5090	490	4680	420	2690	310	2730	390	2890	350
12	5210	380	4770	320	4420	260	2450	240	2600	140		
18	4940	260	4530	240	4160	260	2370	90				

Table 3*No outflow, and outflow The Hague*

Months after inflow	Group 1		Group 2		Group 3		Group 4		Group 5		Group 6	
	No outflow	Outflow	No outflow	Outflow	No outflow	Outflow	No outflow	Outflow	No outflow	Outflow	No outflow	Outflow
(a) Total												
0	30710		30000		29290		28540		28280		27410	
6	27390	3320	26940	3060	26410	2880	26030	2510	25490	2790	25580	1830
12	25250	2160	25010	1960	24740	1690	24060	1970	24310	1190		
18	23720	1510	23670	1330	23150	1560	23200	860				
(b) SRG programme												
0	9890		10990		12130		17750		17580		15820	
6	8800	1090	9950	1040	11000	1130	16580	1170	16240	1340	15460	360
12	8110	670	9330	610	10380	620	15480	1090	15600	630		
18	7690	430	8920	400	9760	640	14990	500				
(c) No programme												
0	20830		19050		17180		10810		10740		11600	
6	18590	2240	17010	2040	15420	1760	9480	1330	9270	1470	10130	1470
12	17140	1480	15680	1310	14350	1060	8580	890	8710	540		
18	16040	1090	14750	940	13400	940	8230	380				

Table 4*No outflow and outflow Southwest*

Months after inflow	Group 1		Group 2		Group 3		Group 4		Group 5		Group 6	
	No outflow	Outflow	No outflow	Outflow	No outflow	Outflow	No outflow	Outflow	No outflow	Outflow	No outflow	Outflow
(a) Total												
0	7300		7340				7120		7060		6840	
6	6640	660	6670	670	6620	670	6560	560	6420	640	6420	420
12	6150	490	6210	470	6220	400	6050	510	6120	300		
18	5780	380	5890	320	5830	390	5830	220				
(b) SRG programme												
0	2480		2910				4650		4620		4140	
6	2250	230	2680	230	2890	270	4350	300	4250	370	4060	80
12	2100	150	2500	180	2730	160	4040	310	4090	160		
18	1970	130	2380	120	2550	180	3910	130				
(c) No programme												
0	4820		4430				2490		2440		2700	
6	4390	430	3990	440	3730	400	2220	270	2160	280	2370	330
12	4060	340	3710	290	3490	240	2020	190	2030	120		
18	3810	250	3510	200	3280	210	1930	100				

Table 5*No outflow and outflow per cent Centre*

Months after inflow	Group 1		Group 2		Group 3		Group 4		Group 5		Group 6	
	No outflow	Outflow	No outflow	Outflow	No outflow	Outflow	No outflow	Outflow	No outflow	Outflow	No outflow	Outflow
(a) Total												
6	90%	10%	91%	9%	92%	8%	93%	7%	91%	9%	94%	6%
12	93%	7%	94%	6%	95%	5%	94%	6%	96%	4%		
18	95%	5%	96%	4%	94%	6%	97%	3%				
(b) SRG programme												
6	90%	10%	92%	8%	92%	8%	94%	6%	93%	7%	98%	2%
12	93%	7%	95%	5%	95%	5%	95%	5%	97%	3%		
18	96%	4%	97%	3%	95%	5%	98%	2%				
(c) No programme												
6	90%	10%	91%	9%	92%	8%	90%	10%	88%	13%	89%	11%
12	93%	7%	94%	6%	94%	6%	91%	9%	95%	5%		
18	95%	5%	95%	5%	94%	6%	96%	4%				

Table 6*No outflow and outflow per cent The Hague*

Months after inflow	Group 1		Group 2		Group 3		Group 4		Group 5		Group 6	
	No outflow	Outflow	No outflow	Outflow	No outflow	Outflow	No outflow	Outflow	No outflow	Outflow	No outflow	Outflow
(a) Total												
6	89%	11%	90%	10%	90%	10%	91%	9%	90%	10%	93%	7%
12	92%	8%	93%	7%	94%	6%	92%	8%	95%	5%		
18	94%	6%	95%	5%	94%	6%	96%	4%				
(b) SRG programme												
6	89%	11%	91%	9%	91%	9%	93%	7%	92%	8%	98%	2%
12	92%	8%	94%	6%	94%	6%	93%	7%	96%	4%		
18	95%	5%	96%	4%	94%	6%	97%	3%				
(c) No Programme												
6	89%	11%	89%	11%	90%	10%	88%	12%	86%	14%	87%	13%
12	92%	8%	92%	8%	93%	7%	91%	9%	94%	6%		
18	94%	6%	94%	6%	93%	7%	96%	4%				

Table 7*No outflow and outflow per cent Southwest*

Months after inflow	Group 1		Group 2		Group 3		Group 4		Group 5		Group 6	
	No outflow	Outflow	No outflow	Outflow	No outflow	Outflow	No outflow	Outflow	No outflow	Outflow	No outflow	Outflow
(a) Total												
6	91%	9%	91%	9%	91%	9%	92%	8%	91%	9%	94%	6%
12	93%	7%	93%	7%	94%	6%	92%	8%	95%	5%		
18	94%	6%	95%	5%	94%	6%	96%	4%				
(b) SRG programme												
6	91%	9%	92%	8%	91%	9%	94%	6%	92%	8%	98%	2%
12	93%	7%	93%	7%	94%	6%	93%	7%	96%	4%		
18	94%	6%	95%	5%	93%	7%	97%	3%				
(c) No Programme												
6	91%	9%	90%	10%	90%	10%	89%	11%	89%	11%	88%	12%
12	92%	8%	93%	7%	94%	6%	91%	9%	94%	6%		
18	94%	6%	95%	5%	94%	6%	95%	5%				

Figure 4

Outflow per cent for The Hague and Southwest

