

Living together researching together

What do residents of the Oranjebuurt and Noorderplantsoenbuurt think of their neighborhood?

Achtergrond

About this brochure

This brochure resulted from extensive research into social cohesion in the Oranjewijk, conducted by students of Communication and Information Studies at the University of Groningen (UG). The aim of the brochure is to provide insight into the concerns present in the neighborhood, as well as the ideas and success stories that contribute to improving social cohesion in the Oranjewijk. This brochure was made possible thanks to the Science Shop for Language, Culture and Communication, with direct input from local residents, employees of the Municipality of Groningen, and Wij Groningen.

Why this research?

Neighborhood research by the municipality shows that social cohesion in the Oranjewijk is declining. Local residents, the municipality, and social workers are eager to address this. They want to know which social activities are in demand, how neighbors would like to connect with each other, what concerns exist, and where there is room for the development of new activities.

What did our students do?

In November and December 2024, 113 students from the Communication and Information Studies programme conducted a survey in the Oranjewijk. First, the students distributed flyers in groups throughout the neighborhood. Then, carrying Knols Koek (a local treat), they went door to door. Residents could complete the questionnaire by scanning a QR code on the flyer or by speaking directly with the students at their doorstep. In total, **594 questionnaires** were collected from residents.



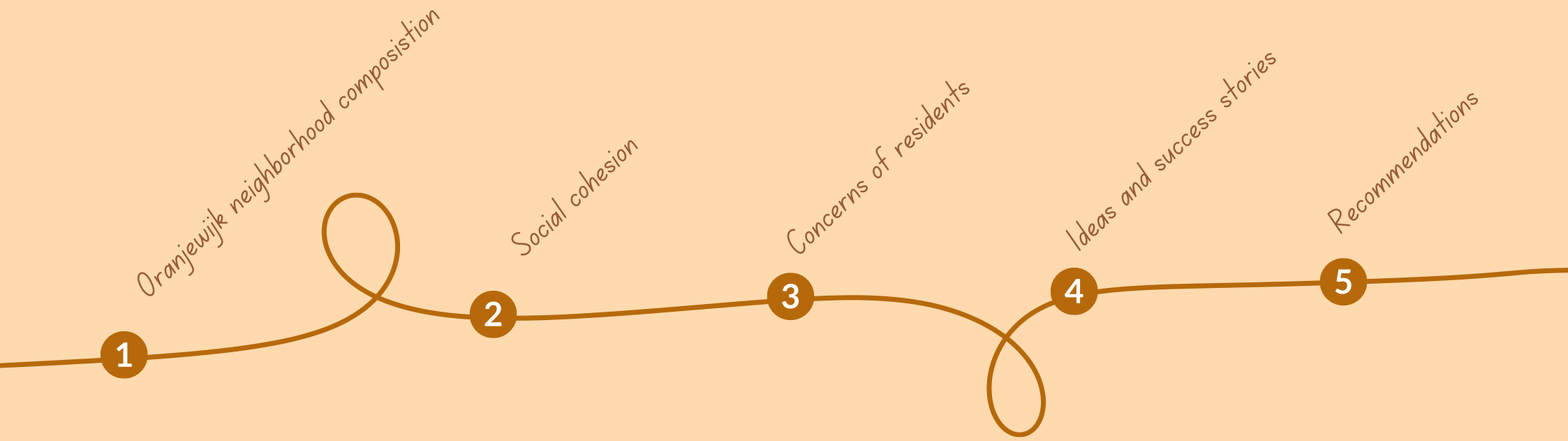
Students in the neighborhood with a Knols Koek

In this brochure...

This brochure highlights various aspects of the Oranjewijk. We begin by describing the neighborhood and its composition. Next, we take a closer look at social cohesion in the area. To what extent do people feel at home in their neighborhood? To explore the theme of social cohesion more in-depth, we discuss two specific topics: one focuses on residents' concerns about the livability of the neighborhood, and the other on ideas and success stories that emerged from the questionnaires. Based on the research, this brochure also offers several recommendations for the various groups within the neighborhood.

Research comittee

To guide the research effectively, a research committee was formed, consisting of representatives from neighborhood boards in the Oranjebuurt and Noorderplantsoenbuurt, supplemented by board members from the local community center. In addition to residents, the municipality (gebiedsteam) and Wij Groningen (social welfare) also participated. The research committee contributed ideas on the research themes, the questionnaire content, and communication about the study.



1

Oranjewijk Composition

About the Oranjewijk

The Oranjewijk refers to the Oranjebuurt (2,600 residents) and the Noorderplantsoenbuurt (3,800 residents).

The **Noorderplantsoenbuurt** was developed at the end of the 19th century, and the **Oranjebuurt** emerged in the early 20th century. Both neighborhoods are part of the 'old town district' (oude wijken).



The Prinsesseweg on an old postcard (www.beeldbankgroningen.nl).

The **Oranjewijk** is characterized by pre-war architectural styles, including the Amsterdam School, with the Nassauschool as one of its key examples. The community center on Prinsesseweg and Café De Moesker on Moesstraat are examples of local meeting places within the neighborhood.

594 ***Total*** *respondents of this research*

322 *Respondents from the* ***Noorderplantsoenbuurt***

237 *Respondents from the* ***Oranjebuurt***

35 *Respondents did not know which part of the neighborhood they lived.*

In this brochure, the data from the Noorderplantsoenbuurt and the Oranjebuurt are presented separately, unless the data are (nearly) identical.

Demographics

Demographics refer to the composition of the neighborhood. In this study, attention was given to the age distribution, housing situation, education level, and how long residents have lived in the neighborhood.



The average age is
46 years

55% is female
43% is male



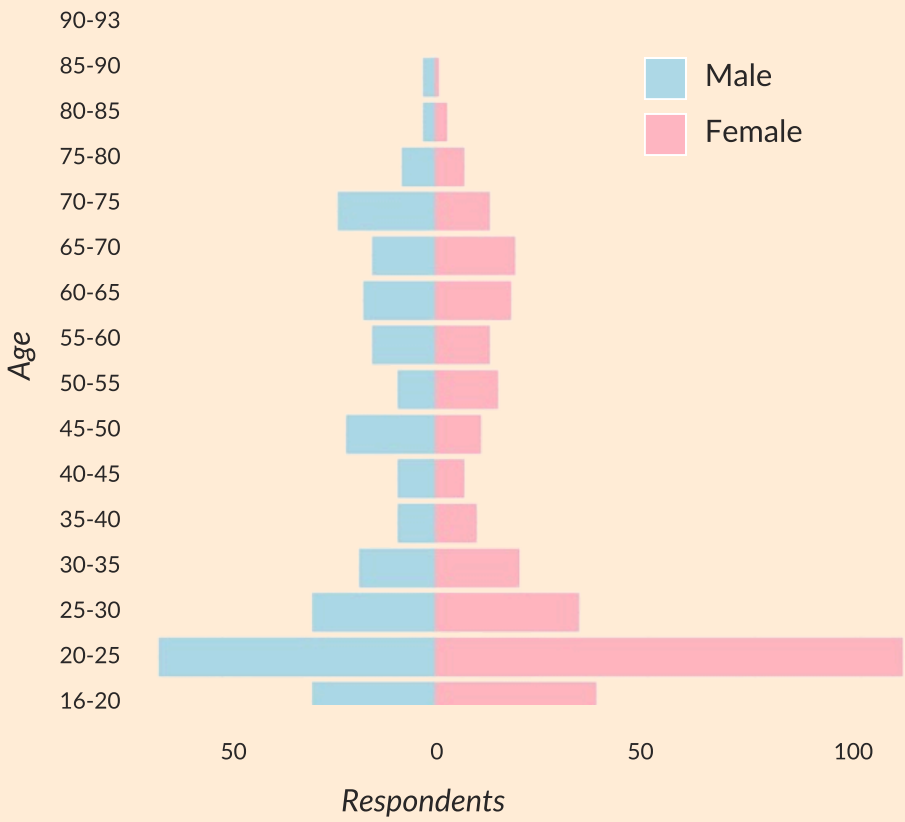
*The other 2% is non-binary or did not want to mention gender

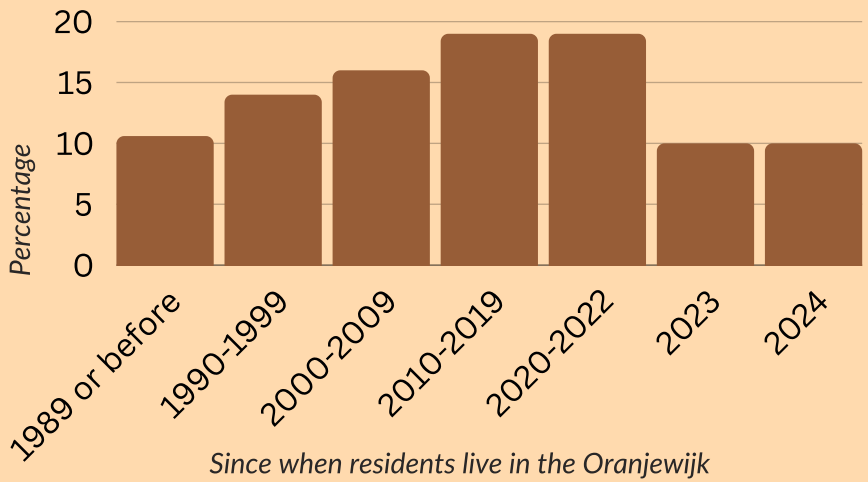


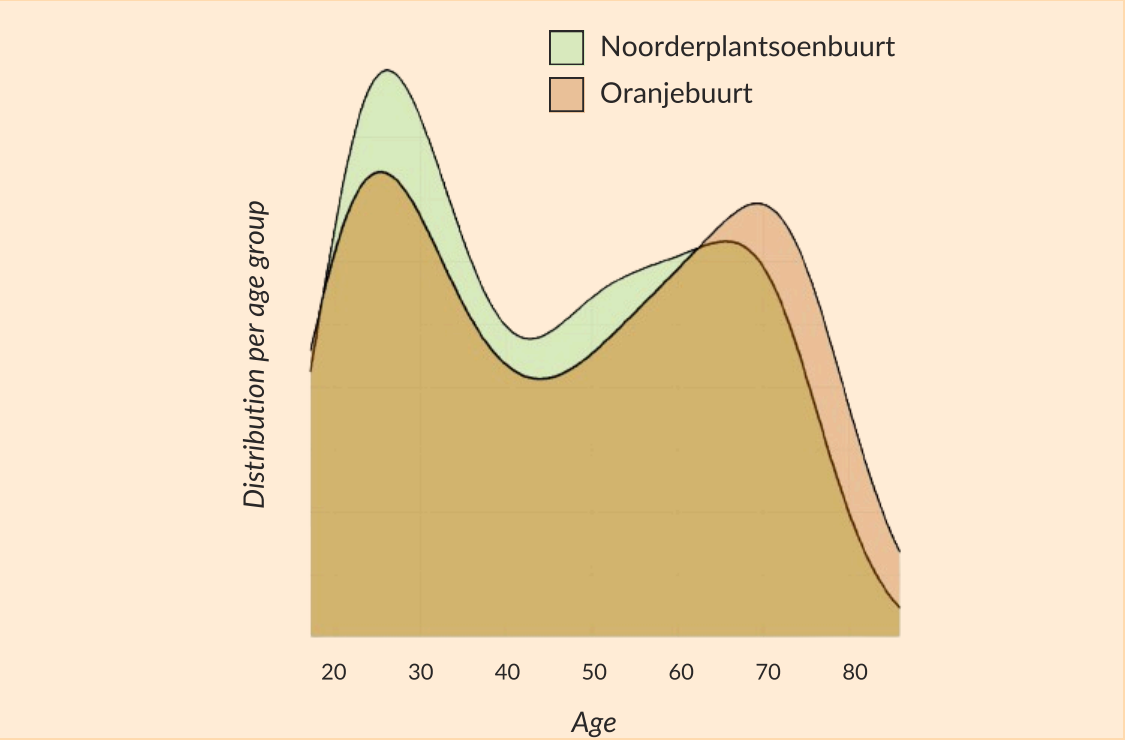
How many students?

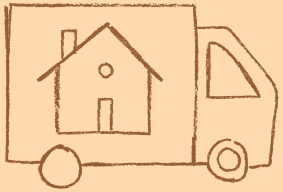
Noorderplantsoenbuurt	**18.6%**
Oranjebuurt	**17.8%**
Average in Groningen	**16%**

(Gronometer, 2024)







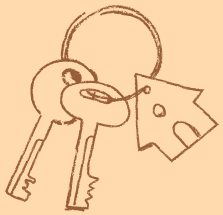


When did you move to the Oranjewijk?

Nearly 40% of residents in the Oranjewijk have moved to the neighborhood within the past four years. Interestingly, a quarter of the residents have lived in the neighborhood for more than 25 years!

How many people live alone?

Noorderplantsoenbuurt	**37%**
Oranjebuurt	**29%**



People in the Noorderplantsoenbuurt are more likely to live alone. This may be due to the larger number of young people in the neighborhood and the relatively smaller size of the homes.

Neighborhood differences

Our research shows that the two neighborhoods do not differ significantly in many demographic characteristics. However, the study does indicate that the Noorder-plantsoenbuurt has a larger group of young people, while the Oranjebuurt has a larger group of older residents.

2

Social cohesion

About social cohesion

Social cohesion, community spirit, sense of unity, or a feeling of “us” — these are examples of terms used when talking about the connection between people and the sense of belonging among different (groups of) residents in a neighborhood. It’s not only about how residents feel toward one another, but also how that sense of connection is expressed. This might include (the absence of) social activities or the willingness to care for fellow neighbors.

There are several ways to measure social cohesion. The Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) measures social cohesion in neighborhoods using a set of statements. We adopted part of these statements in our research, so they can be compared with the data from the CBS.

What do residents say?

One of the residents of the Noorderplantsoenbuurt said the following about social cohesion:

"Social cohesion used to be very strong. Neighbors took care of the elderly in the area together, but the composition of residents has changed significantly. Due to extensions and rooftop additions to buildings, there are now many short-term residents, whom you don't get to know — and who often don't speak Dutch."

- Female (64 years)

In the following pages, we take a closer look at the contact between residents, the awareness of local organisations in the neighborhood, and the ways in which residents stay informed about what’s happening in their area.

The statements

In this study, we asked residents of the Oranjewijk how they felt about the following statements:

I have a lot of contact with my neighbors



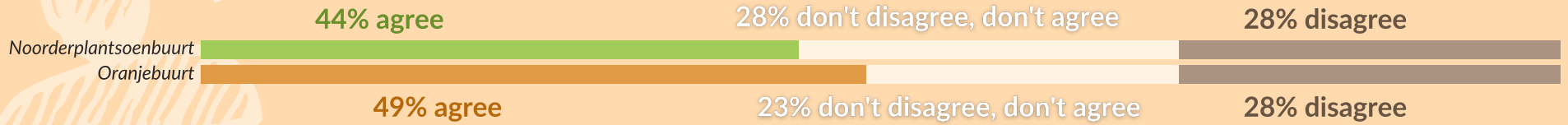
I have a lot of contact with other residents from my neighborhood



People in this neighborhood treat each other nice



I live in a cosy neighborhood where people feel they belong



If I were to go on vacation or be away for a period, I would feel comfortable giving my house key to my neighbors.



Precence of institutions

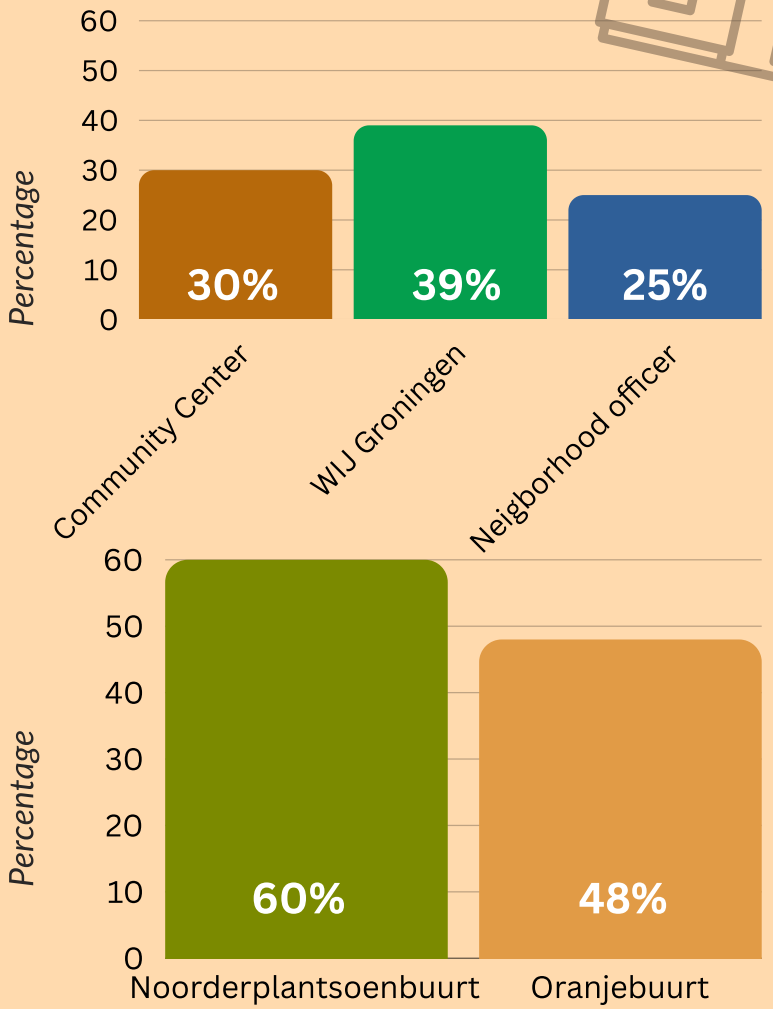
The presence of neighborhood institutions and welfare organisations can promote social cohesion in the neighborhood. How well-known (and easy to find) are these organizations?

<u>Oranjewijk institutions</u>

- 30% of all residents are familiar with the **Oranjewijk Community Center** on the Prinsesseweg.
- 39% say they are familiar with the welfare organisation **Wij Groningen**.
- 25% of the residents are familiar with the **neighborhood police officer**.

<u>Neighborhood specific institutions</u>

- 60% of residents in the Noorderplantsoen neighborhood are familiar with the **Noorderplantsoen Neighborhood Association.**
- 48% of people in the Oranjebuurt know their own **Oranjebuurt Neighborhood Association**.



Want to get in touch with one of these initiatives yourself? Then check out our colophon & contact page. There you'll find all the information about the different neighborhood initiatives in one place.

Use of (social) media

In our research, we looked at ways in which residents connect with each other. One aspect of this is the use of (social) media. The main media platforms are listed below. Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and Snapchat were not included due to low usage.

Whatsapp

83% of residents use WhatsApp (with nearly half of them being part of a neighborhood app group).

Of these users...

29% *use a Whatssap group to stay informed about local events*

56% *use it to contact neighbors*

Facebook

31% Of the residents use Facebook.

Of these users...

17% *use a Facebook group to stay informed about local events*

6% *use it to contact neighbors*

www.facebook.com/Oranjebuurt

Nextdoor

9% of the residents use Nextdoor

Of these users...

71% *use a Nestdoor group to stay informed about local events*

25% *use it to contact neighbors*

Other media



Mailing group 'Lopend vuurtje'

Website of the neigborhood association

News letters

www.buurtcentrumoranjewijk.nl
www.noorderplantsoenbuurt.nl
www.oranjebuurtgroningen.nl

3

Concerns of residents

The data on social cohesion only tell part of the story of the Oranjewijk. Neighborhood residents indicated that it is equally important to highlight the concerns of residents regarding various 'experienced' issues. This chapter will address the most commonly mentioned concerns of residents. The data will be supplemented with quotes from local residents.



What problems do people experience in the Oranjewijk?

A total of 116 residents (20%) answered the question, '*What do you think are the biggest problems the neighborhood is facing?*' The following themes were mentioned most frequently:



1 Student nuisance

The theme of students was mentioned by 20 residents, making it the most frequently cited issue. They report experiencing (noise) nuisance or believe there are too many student houses in the Oranjewijk.



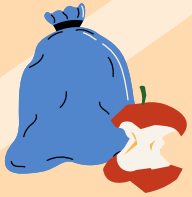
2 Traffic nuisance

About 13 residents experience problems with traffic. Cars drive too fast in some areas, it's too busy, and it causes noise disturbance.



3 Parking policy

According to 10 residents, there are too few parking spaces in the neighborhood. This makes it difficult to park your own car or receive visitors



4 Crime and waste

Both crime and waste were mentioned as themes the same number of times - 9 times. Although crime, particularly drug-related nuisance, seems to occur most frequently in the Oranjebuurt, waste is a problem that is found in both neighborhoods.

If you're experiencing issues such as noise, waste, or other disturbances in the Oranjewijk, you can report them to the Meldpunt Overlast & Zorg of the Municipality of Groningen. https://gemeente.groningen.nl/overlast-en-zorg-melden or via phone: 14050.

What do residents say?

Issues of student nuisance during the summer, particularly in the Noorder-plantsoen
- Male (69 years) from Noorderplantsoenbuurt

In my opinion, there are no major problems, except for occasional nuisance from students and groups of youths loitering at Nassauplein
- Female (20 years) from Oranjewijk

Traditional old families are not very tolerant of any student and or fun activities, especially elderly.
- Female (23 years) from Oranjebuurt

That everyone is very focused on themselves, which makes it feel like you live among strangers.
- Female (32 years) from Noorderplantsoenbuurt

Lack of community spirit and too many bikes on the sidewalk. With a wheelchair or mobility scooter, it's impossible to move around
- Female (70 years) from Oranjebuurt

In the summer when people don't clean up their waste
- Female (57 years) from Noorderplantsoenbuurt

Too many students and too little families.
- Male (77 years) from Noorderplantsoenbuurt

Hidden poverty

An important recurring theme in the discussions with neighborhood residents was 'hidden poverty.' In this study, we refer to hidden poverty as experiences that residents have regarding their financial situation.

A total of about 9% of residents reported experiencing financial worries. This could mean that they sometimes cannot participate in social activities due to a lack of money or need help from others to make ends meet. The question was left unanswered by almost 12% of residents.

This research shows that financial concerns exist across all levels of the neighborhood. The largest group with financial worries is young people aged 16-26. Of this group, 14% experience financial concerns.

In every layer of society

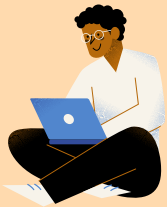
9% experiences financial worries
12% left the question unanswered





Every age group,
from **17** till **78 years**

14% of **young people** between
16 and 25 years old





Families, but mostly **singles**

full-time workers, as well as **retirees and students.**



Do you ever experience financial worries? For example, are you unable to always participate in social activities in the neighborhood? You can always visit the walk-in consultation hours of Wij Groningen at the Community Center (every Monday and Friday from 10:00–12:00 at Prinsesseweg 44-1) or the GeldWIJs financial consultation hour (every Wednesday from 13:30–16:00). For more information, visit wij.groningen.nl/activiteit/financieel-spreekuur.

4

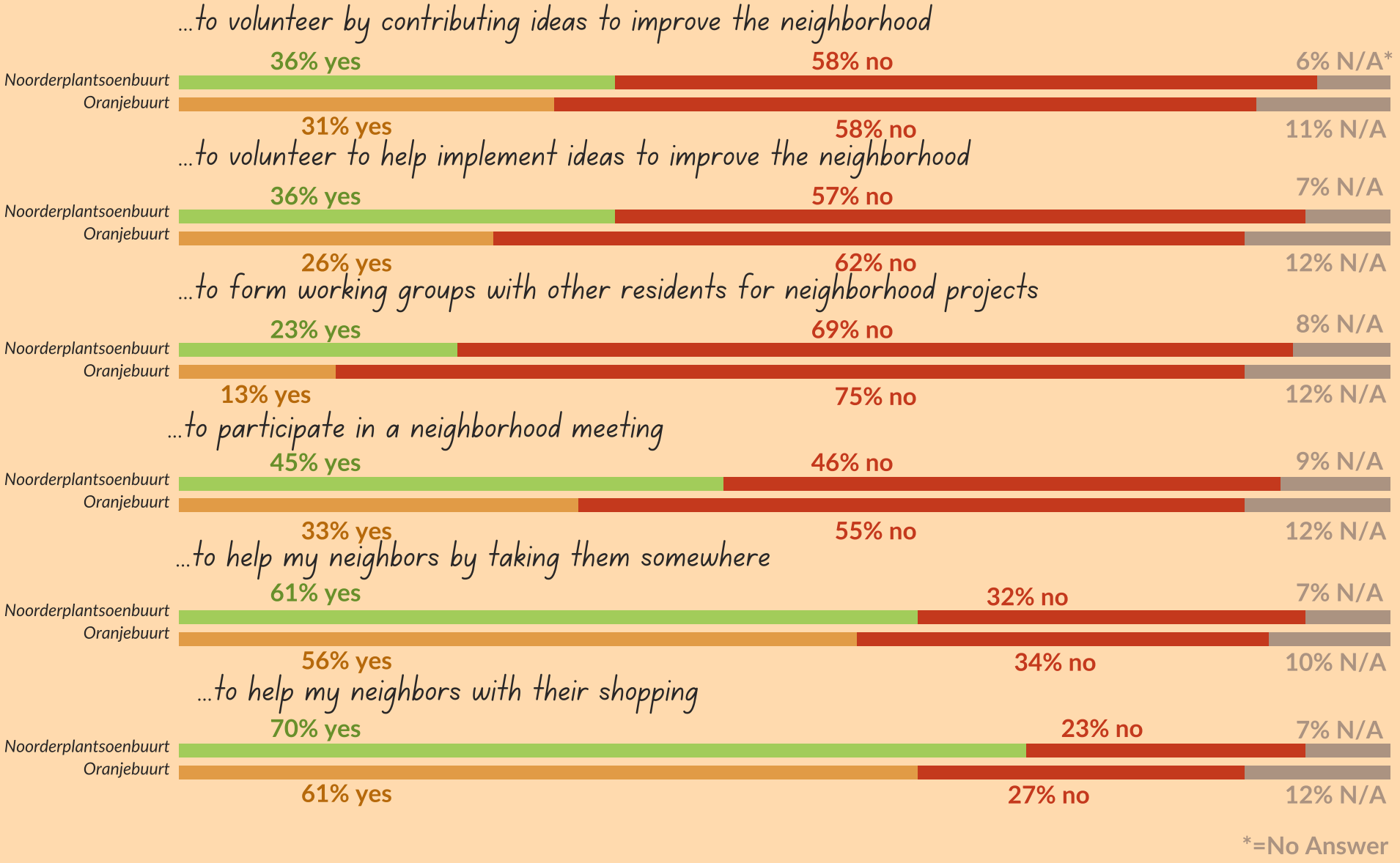
Ideas and stories of success

In order not to focus solely on the concerns of local residents, the members of the research committee advised including questions in the survey about ideas for the neighborhood or examples of successful initiatives in the area.



Willingness to contribute to the neighborhood

All 594 respondents in the study were able to indicate to what extent they were willing to contribute to the neighborhood. Residents were asked whether they were willing to...



*=No Answer

Willingness to contribute to the neighborhood

For the open-ended question, *'I am willing to help my neighbors with something else...'*, 169 residents (28%) responded. Of those, 103 residents provided a specific answer. We have listed the most mentioned services below.



1 Minor tasks in or around the house

21 residents indicated that they would like to help neighbors with small tasks around the house. This could include minor repairs or lending equipment.



2 Caring for pets

15 neighbors were open to taking care of other people's pets. This includes occasionally walking dogs or looking after pets during vacations.



3 Gardening

10 residents were willing to help neighbors with gardening.



4 Social activities

4 people from the Oranjewijk were open to having informal contact with others.

In total, 4 residents indicated that they themselves needed assistance.

Ideas and success stories for the Oranjewijk

IIn total, 207 residents (35%) responded to the question: '*Do you have any ideas to encourage more contact between neighbors, such as ideas for activities or meeting places?*' The following themes were mentioned most often:

1 Drinks, BBQ's and street parties

Residents were open to organising small-scale gatherings, barbecues, or parties to bring the neighborhood together. For example, one resident mentioned having started a small drinks group on their own initiative. Others mentioned organising a street party or a Neighbors' Day as successful when it involved their street or local area.

2 Public space

Nineteen residents gave suggestions for improving the public space. In many cases, these involved community gardens, tree benches, gardens beds, and other seating areas.

3 More attention to internationals

About 14% of the participants completed the survey in English. Two internationals expressed concerns about not feeling welcome in the neighborhood, while two other participants indicated that there is room for activities suitable for English speakers as well. Additionally, it was suggested that certain activities can be communicated bilingually.

4 "De Huiskamer"

Four residents spoke positively about *De Huiskamer*, a community initiative next to the supermarket, where people could easily drop in and have a coffee. Neighborhood residents mentioned that they miss initiatives like De Huiskamer.



Would you like to contribute to your neighborhood? Get in touch:
For the Noorderplantsoen neighborhood: bestuur@noorderplantsoenbuurt.nl | noorderplantsoenbuurt.nl
For the Oranjebuurt: oranjebuurtingroningen@gmail.com | oranjebuurtgroningen.nl

What do residents say?

In our street, we have a central green square that is already being used frequently for meeting and engaging in activities with neighbors. Such squares could also help stimulate contact between neighhors in other parts of the neighborhood.

- Male (27 years) from Noorderplantsoenbuurt

A tool lending service and a repair cafe seem like a great idea to me.

- Female (56 years) from Noorderplantsoenbuurt

The community center is quite isolated from the neighborhood and should be more 'outward-facing.' A temporary initiative like the 'Oranje Huiskamer' worked quite well for this reason. Sometimes, the second-hand store on Graaf Adolfstraat feels more like the heart of the neighborhood than the actual community center.

- Male (73 years) from Oranjebuurt

There is quite a bit of contact, such as a street cleaning day, a gathering, and chats on the street. I think most of our neighbors are not interested in more activities due to their busy schedules.

- Male (29 years) from Noorderplantsoenbuurt

Street benches and other seating areas work well

- Male (77 years) from Noorderplantsoenbuurt

We have a street party once a year. Maybe we could do it more often. It's always very fun and brings people together.

- Female (38 years) from Oranjebuurt

I have seen lots of activities or meetings advertised in Dutch, it would be useful to also include English for non Dutch speakers that would still like to be involved with the community.

- Female (35 years) from Noorderplantsoenbuurt

5

Recommendations

For the residents

Increase awareness of the community center

Around 30% of neighborhood residents are familiar with the community center on Prinsesseweg. This awareness can be increased through targeted actions and activities.

Organise neighborhood-wide initiatives

Residents of the Oranjewijk express a need for neighborhood-wide initiatives such as *Gluren bij de Buren*, a repair café, or a tool lending service. WhatsApp groups are a useful communication tool to connect residents interested in these initiatives.

Take internationals into account

Approximately 14% of participants completed the survey in English. There is an opportunity to facilitate activities for internationals, including offering activities in both Dutch and English.

For the municipality

Pay attention to families

Although the average age in the Oranjewijk is 46, there are relatively few residents in that age group. The neighborhood is characterized by a large group of older people and a large group of young people, while families are underrepresented. Making the neighborhood more attractive for young starters and families is important for diversity, which can also strengthen social cohesion in the area.

Facilitate meeting places

There is a need for accessible, small-scale meeting places in the neighborhood, such as De Huiskamer, the thrift store (Kringloopwinkel), or a Michi-Noeki (like in the Oosterpark-wijk). Adequate seating areas and small garden squares also offer opportunities for social interaction, especially for older residents.

For Wij Groningen

Offer expertise for neighborhood activities

The Oranjewijk is relatively active, and the neighborhood associations are fairly well-known. However, residents could use support in launching new activities—by, for example, sharing knowledge and experiences from Gluren bij de Buren to inspire similar efforts in the Oranjewijk.

Facilitate Q&A sessions with police

Research shows that the community police officer is not yet well known among residents of the Oranjewijk, even though there are concerns about nuisance and crime.

Facilitate conversations about financial concerns

9% of neighborhood residents experience financial concerns. It would be helpful to communicate where people can turn for support. Especially for young residents (14% are concerned about their finances)

Colophon & Contact

This brochure is developed by:
Ilse Steenkist and Vincent Hazelhoff

Editorial review:
Yfke Ongena

This brochure was made possible thanks to:
Robert Bleeker, Sietze Jan Boer, Petra Drijver, Roberto Elmont, Vincent Hazelhoff, Klaske ten Hoor, Lars Jansen, Els Lugthart, Afsaneh Moghadam, Yfke Ongena, Sipke van der Ploeg, Ilse Steenkist

Want to do something yourself?
Contact the following organisations/institutions:
Board of the Noorderplantsoenbuurt: bestuur@noorderplantsoenbuurt.nl
Board of the Oranjebuurt: oranjebuurtingroningen@gmail.com
Board of the Community center Oranjewijk: buurtcentrumoranjewijk@outlook.com
Welfare organisation *Wij Groningen*: wijschilderswijkcentrum@wij.groningen.nl

Want to more about this research?

Science Shop Language, Culture and Communication

tawi@rug.nl
www.rug.nl/wewi