

# Linguistics and geography, the surname case

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## 1. Introduction

People migrate and this leads to diffusion of, among others, their cultural and linguistic identities. One of these is the surname. The surname is the fixed and hereditary name used by subsequent generations after it was chosen by or given to the ancestor. For some, the surname has a very long history that goes back to the early Middle Ages, for many the surname was adopted in the 17th and 18th centuries, and for a minority the usage was enforced in The Netherlands by Napoleonic law of 1811. The older the surname, the longer and wider it may have been diffused through patrilinear family lines. If there would have been no migration at all, the surname nowadays would still be found in the same place the ancestor lived – and thus, like toponyms, could be an old sign of local culture and language use. And of genetic properties of the ancestor as well, since his Y-chromosome is kept in the patrilinear line that is directly linked to the surname.

When nowadays, as a consequence of limited migration, a surname is found in a regional area, this may point to local consanguinity and old cultural connections. In this paper an attempt will be made to identify surnames that can be considered as regional names.

## 2. Regional surnames

A requirement put here on a regional surname is that it be mainly found in a limited area (defined in section 3). This rules out quite a few surnames that are not specific and found throughout the country. Many ancestors had the same first name which developed into a patronymical surname (*Willems*), occupation (*Schouten*), came from a residence with a generic toponym (*van Dijk*), or had the same physical properties (*de Lange*) (see Marynissen 2010 for an overview of the geographic spread of these categories). For these names likely more than one ancestor adopted the name and they are therefore called polygenetic names. They are usually widespread and have a high frequency. This in contrast to monogenetic surnames, which are supposed to have a single ancestor and place of origin, and, depending on the migration of descendants, may have remained regional.

But even in the category of likely polygenetic surnames, there are surprising regional exceptions such as the toponymical surnames *van de Ven* (centred around Eindhoven, 11,911 individuals) and *van der Plas* (Katwijk, 6200), and the patronymic surname *Derksen* (Lingewaard, 6918). From the viewpoint of (lack of) diffusion, these names are as interesting as monogenetic names.

The current number of name bearers brings us to the intriguing question whether this figure could indicate the number of ancestors of the surname, and thus indicate the distinction between a monogenetic or polygenetic origin of a name. This relation, of course, very much depends on the time of the surname's genesis. An ancestor from the Middle Ages can easily have 20 generations of descendants and thousands of name bearers today, but there also is a probability that an old family name has (almost) died out by lack of male offspring. An ancestor who adopted the surname in 1811 perhaps can have eight later generations and no more than a few hundred name bearers at most (male and female together). But if more than one ancestor adopted the same name in 1811, the current total number of bearers may still be considerable. In general, it may be concluded that a polygenetic origin becomes likely when the number of current name bearers is rather high, for instance over 5.000. Lower figures are not conclusive in this respect.

Another consideration is that immigration – whether for political, religious or economic reasons - has always contributed to new surnames in The Netherlands. This ongoing process is most obvious when viewing the increase of the total number of surnames from about 120,000 in the 1947 census to 314,000 surnames, only sixty years later in 2007. Surnames that come to The Netherlands may be considered monogenetic from the moment of immigration, but that is not necessarily the case if the earlier history of the family is taken into account. Different surnames may have a common ancestor outside The Netherlands. An example is the Flemish name *Biesbroeck* occurring as early as the 14th century: family members moved to the north and the name can be found as *Biesbroeck* (around Hulst), *Biesbroeck* (Haarlem), *Bies(e)broek* (Ridderkerk) (see [www.biesbroeck.net](http://www.biesbroeck.net)).

Irrespective of immigration, for any original surname many spelling variants may have been generated over time. These variants can be considered as new surnames and monogenetic from the moment of creation. If these variants are found in the same region, this can be an argument to hypothesise a common ancestor. This is, for instance, the case with *Bloothoof*t and *Bloothoof*d in northern North-Holland for which a single ancestor can be shown from genealogical research. Another example are the surnames *Blaauwendraad* (Woudenberg), *Blaauwendraat* (Renswoude), *Blauwendraat* (Baarn), for which the minor spelling variations and the regional occurrence, in combination with the rare semantics (blue thread), suggest a common ancestor. As with *Bloothoof*t, these spelling variants could easily be used interchangeably for the same person (even today), but were formally laid down in 1811 (with *hoof*t and *draat* as the older spelling sometimes maintained and *hoof*d and *draad* as the new spelling - because of the plurals *hoofden* and *draden* – likely influenced by the spelling reform of Siegenbeek 1804). But a small amount of spelling variation is not always indicative of family relations: the *Bloothoof*t family has no connections to two families with the comparable surname *Blootshoof*d (one around Aalsmeer – died out in the 19th century –, and one originating from around Werkendam). Only genealogical research can give a definite answer to the question

whether a surname, or spelling variants of surnames, point to a single ancestor and could be called monogenetic. For the topic of a common cultural, linguistic or genetic basis of surnames, this issue is not really important, however.

### 3. Top-20 per province

An appeal to Civil Registration provided the surnames of all Dutch residents (16.3 million individuals with 314,000 different surnames), and their place of residence in 2007 (see [www.knaw.meertens.nl/nfb](http://www.knaw.meertens.nl/nfb)). Surnames were excluded with fewer than 50 bearers, leaving 39,566 names (from 14.4 million individuals). Surnames from recent immigration were excluded, just as those not meeting the requirement of 10 or more name bearers in the 1947 census. This resulted in 33,353 surnames from 12.9 million individuals. In Civil Registration surnames do not change by marriage, and surnames are given by birth on the basis of a patrilinear system of naming. Only since 1998 has it become possible to choose the surname of the mother for children. The annual number of surname changes in The Netherlands is very low.

In 2007, The Netherlands had 443 municipalities. Each municipality is localised by its geographic centre as the average of maximum east-west and south-north borders. For each surname the municipality was determined with the highest number of name bearers, and for all municipalities within a distance of 30 km of this place (based on their geographic centres), the number of name bearers were summed (without distinction of gender). When more than 50% of all name bearers lived in these municipalities, the surname was considered to be regional. 13,624 surnames fulfilled this condition, 3.2 million individuals having one of these names. Of these, 2 million still reside in the region where concentration of the surname is highest, and of which it may be expected that the ancestor once lived there as well. This is one out of eight individuals of the Dutch population.

When a smaller radius of 20 km from the centre is applied, there still are 8,645 surnames for which 50% of the name bearers live in that areas, with a total of 1.65 million individuals, one million of which reside in this more limited region.

In table 1, the top-20 of regional names is given by province (top-6 for Flevoland because this only concerns the former island of Urk). They demonstrate well-known regional features such as the patronymic suffixes *-ma* in the provinces of Friesland and Groningen (Frisian), *-ing* in Drenthe and *-ink* in Overijssel (Saxonian), *-se* in Zeeland, *-s* in Limburg, the many 'van' names in Noord-Brabant pointing to a village of descent, and monosyllabic names in Holland (see Ebeling 1992 for an overview). Also noteworthy is that surnames with places of descent are often not found in the place itself, but nearby (or farther away) *van Breukelen*, *van Woudenberg*, *van Diemen* in Utrecht, *van Gils* in Breda, *van Gestel* in Tilburg, and many more.

**Table 1. Top-20 of regional surnames per province. Surname, municipality with highest frequency, and total frequency of the name are given. Over 50% of all name bearers live within 30 km of this centre municipality (in 2007).**

SURNAME CENTRE				TOTAL	Drenthe			
<b>Friesland</b>					1	<i>Benjamins</i>	Hoogeveen	2067
	1	<i>Nicolai</i>	Achtkarspelen	1799	2	<i>Meppelink</i>	Coevorden	725
	2	<i>van der Bij</i>	Achtkarspelen	1445	3	<i>Assen</i>	Coevorden	660
	3	<i>van Kammen</i>	Dantumadeel	1056	4	<i>Scholing</i>	Hoogeveen	647
	4	<i>Bekkema</i>	Smallingerland	956	5	<i>Okken</i>	Hoogeveen	616
	5	<i>Alma</i>	Achtkarspelen	782	6	<i>Takens</i>	Aa en Hunze	588
	6	<i>van der Galiën</i>	Dantumadeel	765	7	<i>Jeurig</i>	Emmen	579
	7	<i>Stoelwinder</i>	Heerenveen	760	8	<i>Gruppen</i>	Hoogeveen	523
	8	<i>Wijnsma</i>	Dantumadeel	704	9	<i>Dolfing</i>	Midden-Drenthe	476
	9	<i>Hansma</i>	Achtkarspelen	675	10	<i>Nijstad</i>	Hoogeveen	462
	10	<i>Wijnja</i>	Sneek	660	11	<i>Hadders</i>	Aa en Hunze	453
	11	<i>Annema</i>	Dantumadeel	629	12	<i>Hartlief</i>	Tynaarlo	440
	12	<i>Gjaltema</i>	Achtkarspelen	620	13	<i>Middeljans</i>	Emmen	419
	13	<i>Oenema</i>	Skarsterlân	612	14	<i>Waninge</i>	De Wolden	417
	14	<i>Rinsma</i>	Leeuwarden	592	15	<i>Smeenge</i>	Assen	411
	15	<i>Paulusma</i>	Smallingerland	581	16	<i>Zantingh</i>	De Wolden	403
	16	<i>Wijnstra</i>	Smallingerland	525	17	<i>Bonder</i>	Aa en Hunze	399
	17	<i>Altenburg</i>	Skarsterlân	483	18	<i>Enting</i>	Aa en Hunze	376
	18	<i>Schievink</i>	Achtkarspelen	475	19	<i>Hadderingh</i>	Aa en Hunze	374
	19	<i>de Meer</i>	Smallingerland	473	20	<i>Suurd</i>	Noordenveld	374
	20	<i>Kleefstra</i>	Boarnsterhim	439	<b>Overijssel</b>			
<b>Groningen</b>					1	<i>Nijhuis</i>	Enschede	4769
	1	<i>Renkema</i>	Grootegast	1290	2	<i>Voortman</i>	Rijssen-Holten	2245
	2	<i>Wubs</i>	Stadskanaal	1018	3	<i>Geerdink</i>	Hengelo	1869
	3	<i>Medema</i>	Groningen	817	4	<i>Beens</i>	Zwartewaterland	1632
	4	<i>Hamminga</i>	Hoogezand-S.meer	737	5	<i>Kappert</i>	Raalte	1593
	5	<i>Cazemier</i>	Leek	717	6	<i>Beltman</i>	Deventer	1592
	6	<i>Nieborg</i>	Groningen	714	7	<i>Lansink</i>	Tubbergen	1509
	7	<i>Potze</i>	Vlagtwedde	598	8	<i>Morsink</i>	Hof van Twente	1461
	8	<i>Moorlag</i>	Stadskanaal	592	9	<i>Leferink</i>	Haaksbergen	1422
	9	<i>Meems</i>	Stadskanaal	544	10	<i>Vrielink</i>	Hof van Twente	1409
	10	<i>Doddema</i>	Veendam	525	11	<i>Damhuis</i>	Losser	1378
	11	<i>Tjoelker</i>	Grootegast	496	12	<i>Lohuis</i>	Dinkelland	1195
	12	<i>Bronsema</i>	Groningen	485	13	<i>ter Braak</i>	Hengelo	1117
	13	<i>Wilts</i>	Stadskanaal	471	14	<i>Ekkel</i>	Twenterand	1058
	14	<i>Folkersma</i>	Slochteren	452	15	<i>Logtenberg</i>	Olst-Wijhe	961
	15	<i>Korthuis</i>	Veendam	446	16	<i>Paalman</i>	Rijssen-Holten	936
	16	<i>Balkema</i>	Groningen	437	17	<i>Lammertink</i>	Wierden	899
	17	<i>Oudman</i>	Groningen	417	18	<i>Kerkdijk</i>	Twenterand	848
	18	<i>Wiltjer</i>	Groningen	410	19	<i>Maathuis</i>	Tubbergen	848
	19	<i>Oostland</i>	Groningen	401	20	<i>Riezebos</i>	Kampen	845
	20	<i>Feiken</i>	Veendam	399				

**Flevoland**

1	<i>Romkes</i>	Urk	1213
2	<i>Koffeman</i>	Urk	570
3	<i>Pasterkamp</i>	Urk	531
4	<i>Loosman</i>	Urk	400
5	<i>Weerstand</i>	Urk	313
6	<i>Woord</i>	Urk	304

**Gelderland**

1	<i>Derksen</i>	Lingewaard	6918
2	<i>Hop</i>	Harderwijk	2370
3	<i>Toonen</i>	Wijchen	2291
4	<i>van Veldhuizen</i>	Ede	2134
5	<i>Hardeman</i>	Ede	1918
6	<i>van Roekel</i>	Ede	1594
7	<i>Verwoert</i>	Neder-Betuwe	1586
8	<i>van Heumen</i>	Wijchen	1523
9	<i>Loeffen</i>	Wijchen	1507
10	<i>van Zetten</i>	Buren	1464
11	<i>van de Weerd</i>	Ede	1457
12	<i>Kuster</i>	Lingewaard	1393
13	<i>van Eldik</i>	Neder-Betuwe	1381
14	<i>Rikken</i>	Lingewaard	1326
15	<i>van de Bunt</i>	Nijkerk	1325
16	<i>Hazeleger</i>	Ede	1321
17	<i>Davelaar</i>	Barneveld	1313
18	<i>Witjes</i>	Lingewaard	1308
19	<i>van de Werken</i>	Zaltbommel	1307
20	<i>Foppen</i>	Harderwijk	1291

**Utrecht**

1	<i>Koelewijn</i>	Bunschoten	3847
2	<i>van Manen</i>	Veenendaal	2273
3	<i>de Kruijf</i>	Utrecht	2230
4	<i>Hilhorst</i>	Soest	1986
5	<i>Boere</i>	Oudewater	1800
6	<i>Vernooij</i>	Utrecht	1683
7	<i>van Woudenberg</i>	Utrecht	1535
8	<i>van Vulpen</i>	Utrechtse Heuvelr.	1506
9	<i>Oostveen</i>	Utrecht	1474
10	<i>Budding</i>	Veenendaal	1425
11	<i>van de Haar</i>	Veenendaal	1422
12	<i>Goes</i>	Utrecht	1416
13	<i>van Breukelen</i>	Utrecht	1398
14	<i>Miltenburg</i>	Utrecht	1384
15	<i>Diepeveen</i>	Veenendaal	1349
16	<i>Jongorius</i>	Utrecht	1269
17	<i>Janmaat</i>	De Ronde Venen	1252
18	<i>Stekelenburg</i>	Utrecht	1244

19	<i>van Diemen</i>	De Ronde Venen	1193
20	<i>Blankestijn</i>	Veenendaal	1134

**Noord-Holland**

1	<i>Veerman</i>	Edam-Volendam	4542
2	<i>Tol</i>	Edam-Volendam	3817
3	<i>Schilder</i>	Edam-Volendam	3582
4	<i>Rood</i>	Heerhugowaard	1938
5	<i>Beentjes</i>	Heemskerk	1908
6	<i>Vlaar</i>	Koggenland	1672
7	<i>Konijn</i>	Koggenland	1645
8	<i>Steur</i>	Edam-Volendam	1612
9	<i>Duin</i>	Heemskerk	1554
10	<i>Appelman</i>	Stede Broec	1526
11	<i>Schrama</i>	Haarlemmermeer	1522
12	<i>Jonk</i>	Edam-Volendam	1430
13	<i>Vriend</i>	Drechterland	1422
14	<i>Fokker</i>	Bussum	1409
15	<i>Koper</i>	Zandvoort	1352
16	<i>Kaandorp</i>	Castricum	1343
17	<i>Bon</i>	Amsterdam	1338
18	<i>Rebel</i>	Huizen	1327
19	<i>Baltus</i>	Castricum	1306
20	<i>Majoer</i>	Laren	1212

**Zuid-Holland**

1	<i>van der Plas</i>	Katwijk	6200
2	<i>Stolk</i>	Rotterdam	5467
3	<i>van Duijn</i>	Katwijk	5339
4	<i>Heemskerk</i>	Katwijk	5125
5	<i>Versluis</i>	Zederik	4543
6	<i>Spaans</i>	's-Gravenhage	3391
7	<i>van der Zwan</i>	's-Gravenhage	3299
8	<i>van der Spek</i>	's-Gravenhage	3297
9	<i>Hoogenboom</i>	Alkemade	2842
10	<i>Poot</i>	Vlaardingen	2720
11	<i>Groenewegen</i>	Westland	2708
12	<i>van der Helm</i>	Pijnacker-Nootd.	2629
13	<i>van der Waal</i>	Rotterdam	2535
14	<i>Ouwehand</i>	Katwijk	2507
15	<i>van Wingerden</i>	Ridderkerk	2475
16	<i>van der Knaap</i>	Westland	2447
17	<i>Bezemer</i>	Zwijndrecht	2329
18	<i>Groeneweg</i>	Rotterdam	2325
19	<i>Warmerdam</i>	Hillegom	2274
20	<i>Kuijt</i>	Katwijk	2213

**Zeeland**

1	<i>Dieleman</i>	Terneuzen	1727	7	<i>Ramakers</i>	Maastricht	2135
2	<i>van Belzen</i>	Middelburg	1458	8	<i>Dohmen</i>	Sittard-Geleen	1669
3	<i>de Nooijer</i>	Middelburg	1202	9	<i>Dassen</i>	Maastricht	1658
4	<i>de Feijter</i>	Terneuzen	935	10	<i>Lemmen</i>	Horst aan de Maas	1645
5	<i>Minderhoud</i>	Veere	900	11	<i>Beurskens</i>	Venlo	1525
6	<i>Dingemanse</i>	Veere	879	12	<i>Coumans</i>	Sittard-Geleen	1520
7	<i>Wondergem</i>	Middelburg	793	13	<i>Penders</i>	Maastricht	1475
8	<i>Traas</i>	Borsele	764	14	<i>Litjens</i>	Venray	1431
9	<i>Slabbekoorn</i>	Reimerswaal	738	15	<i>Brouns</i>	Stein	1405
10	<i>de Kraker</i>	Terneuzen	710	16	<i>Gommans</i>	Helden	1405
11	<i>Francke</i>	Veere	701	17	<i>Wetzels</i>	Sittard-Geleen	1348
12	<i>Walhout</i>	Borsele	690	18	<i>Caris</i>	Leudal	1330
13	<i>de Putter</i>	Terneuzen	682	19	<i>Bouten</i>	Venlo	1299
14	<i>Maljaars</i>	Veere	669	20	<i>Heuts</i>	Maastricht	1291
15	<i>Roelse</i>	Vlissingen	649				
16	<i>Braber</i>	Oostflakkee	647				
17	<i>Meulmeester</i>	Middelburg	644				
18	<i>Davidse</i>	Middelburg	639				
19	<i>de Koeijer</i>	Reimerswaal	579				
20	<i>Verhelst</i>	Terneuzen	572				

#### **Noord-Brabant**

1	<i>van de Ven</i>	Eindhoven	11911
2	<i>van Gils</i>	Breda	6085
3	<i>Swinkels</i>	Helmond	4966
4	<i>Manders</i>	Deurne	4857
5	<i>de Laat</i>	Tilburg	4521
6	<i>van Erp</i>	Oss	4177
7	<i>van Esch</i>	's-Hertogenbosch	4109
8	<i>Schellekens</i>	Tilburg	4076
9	<i>Vogels</i>	Helmond	3744
10	<i>van de Wiel</i>	Heusden	3697
11	<i>van Gestel</i>	Tilburg	3628
12	<i>van der Aa</i>	Sint-Michielsgest.	3613
13	<i>van de Sande</i>	Tilburg	3556
14	<i>van Uden</i>	Oss	3481
15	<i>van Hout</i>	Helmond	3371
16	<i>van Lierop</i>	Helmond	3284
17	<i>van der Zanden</i>	Helmond	3250
18	<i>van Gool</i>	Tilburg	3173
19	<i>van Riel</i>	Tilburg	3115
20	<i>Pijnenburg</i>	Tilburg	2967

#### **Limburg**

1	<i>Lemmens</i>	Sittard-Geleen	4681
2	<i>Houben</i>	Sittard-Geleen	4491
3	<i>Habets</i>	Maastricht	3022
4	<i>Kessels</i>	Venlo	2787
5	<i>Jongen</i>	Maastricht	2434
6	<i>Maessen</i>	Echt-Susteren	2338

Table 2 below gives the top-20 regional surnames for the whole country. *Van de Ven* is the regional top name with 11,911 name bearers [as a reference: absolute top name *de Jong* has 85,557 bearers]. This high figure is actually quite surprising: the surname *Van de Ven* is a generic toponym and may be connected to many ancestors, and a *ven* (a small lake in the woods) can be found throughout the country. That most bearers are found around the city of Eindhoven is unexpected. In view of its number of name bearers and its toponymic origin it may be hypothesized that *Van de Ven* is a polygenetic surname, but one should be careful here. The patronymic surname *Benjamins* strongly dominates the top-list of the province of Drenthe with 2067 name bearers and could be thought of as a polygenetic surname. But most name bearers in Drenthe seem descendants from *Benjamin Goossens* (1724-1789) in Hoogeveen. The fourth generation of this family consisted already of 30 males in the middle of the 19th century, who stood at the basis of fertile further expansion. But this case seems exceptional, and it cannot be excluded (it is even likely) that elsewhere in the country other ancestors at some point started a *Benjamins* family as well.

**Table 2. Top-20 of Dutch regional surnames.**

	<b>SURNAME</b>	<b>CENTRE</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
1	<i>van de Ven</i>	Eindhoven	11911
2	<i>Derksen</i>	Lingewaard	6918
3	<i>van der Plas</i>	Katwijk	6200
4	<i>van Gils</i>	Breda	6085
5	<i>Stolk</i>	Rotterdam	5467
6	<i>van Duijn</i>	Katwijk	5339
7	<i>Heemskerck</i>	Katwijk	5125
8	<i>Swinkels</i>	Helmond	4966
9	<i>Manders</i>	Deurne	4857
10	<i>Nijhuis</i>	Enschede	4769
11	<i>Lemmens</i>	Sittard-Geleen	4681
12	<i>Versluis</i>	Zederik	4543
13	<i>Veerman</i>	Edam-Volendam	4542
14	<i>de Laat</i>	Tilburg	4521
15	<i>Houben</i>	Sittard-Geleen	4491
16	<i>van Esch</i>	's-Hertogenbosch	4109
17	<i>Schellekens</i>	Tilburg	4076
18	<i>Koelewijn</i>	Bunschoten	3847
19	<i>Tol</i>	Edam-Volendam	3817
20	<i>Vogels</i>	Helmond	3744

When the provinces are compared by number of bearers of names in the top-20 lists, quite large differences can be observed. Table 3 presents the total number of inhabitants by province and the number of bearers of the 20th regional name (which is more stable in the distribution). There is a general tendency for there to be more bearers of the most popular regional names when there are more inhabitants in a province. This can be explained by two mechanisms. First, for surnames with a polygenetic basis the more inhabitants a province has and had, the higher the

probability of polygenetic names, with higher totals as result. Second, for monogenetic surnames differences in the number of bearers can likely only originate from the age of the surname: but the more inhabitants in a province, the higher the probability of older names. In addition, it should be taken into account that surnames were gradually adopted in the country from south to north between the 17th and 19th centuries. This may explain the relatively high numbers in the southern provinces of Noord-Brabant, Limburg and Zeeland (with older surnames), and lower numbers in the northern provinces of Drenthe, Friesland and Groningen.

**Table 3. Inhabitants per province (CBS, 2009) in millions and number of bearers of the 20th regional name.**

province	inhabitants (million)	name-20
Zuid-Holland	3,5	2.213
Noord-Holland	2,7	1.212
Noord-Brabant	2,4	2.967
Gelderland	2,0	1.291
Utrecht	1,2	1.134
Limburg	1,1	1.291
Overijssel	1,1	845
Friesland	0,6	439
Groningen	0,6	399
Drenthe	0,5	374
Flevoland	0,4	<304
Zeeland	0,4	572

For each surname the percentage of name bearers is available living within 30 km of a centre municipality. So far it was just required that this percentage be higher than 50%. Now the surnames will be turned to for which the percentages are highest. When reducing total number of bearers of a surname, the probability that the bearers live close to each other automatically increases. To avoid this mechanism to some extent, a minimum of 300 bearers was assumed. Table 4 shows the top-20, with percentages over 87% in the 30 km range. The names are distributed over the country, from Staphorst to Edam-Volendam, Westland, Etten-Leur, and Heerlen showing that non- or just slowly migrating families can be found everywhere. The top name *Kaffa* are descendants from *Pieter Caffa* (Den Haag, 1765-1824); they mainly still reside in Den Haag.

**Table 4. Top-20 of surnames with over 300 bearers, with highest occurrence (>87%) within 30 km of the centre municipality.**

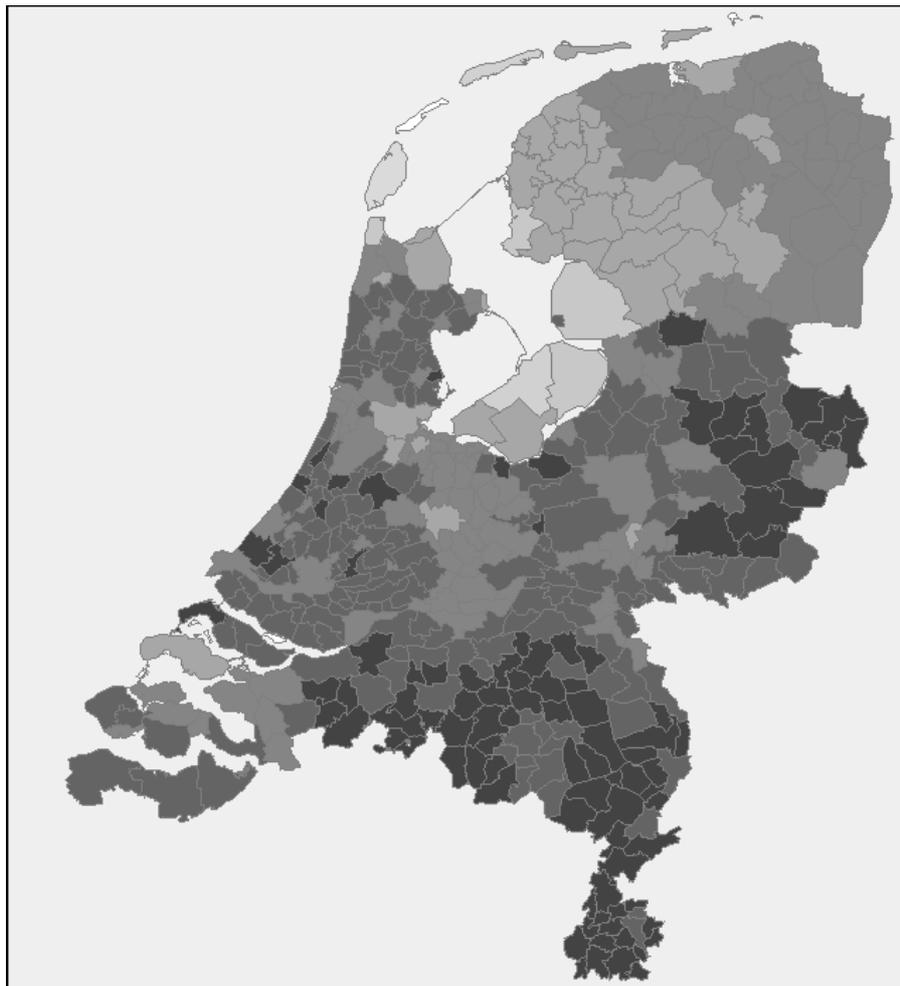
	SURNAME	CENTRE	TOTAL
1	Kaffa	's-Gravenhage	305
2	Bukkems	Someren	347
3	van Vijfeijken	Laarbeek	360
4	Veijer	Staphorst	338
5	Meulenbroeks	Bladel	434
6	Baremans	Etten-Leur	352
7	van Kester	Westland	392
8	Cörvers	Heerlen	338
9	van de Schoot	Oirschot	350
10	Fitters	Heusden	321
11	Meessen	Heerlen	505
12	van Meijl	Cranendonck	414
13	van den Einden	Someren	350
14	van der Doelen	Maasdonk	761
15	Bond	Edam-Volendam	662
16	Besten	Hellendoorn	310
17	Duisters	Cranendonck	337
18	van Happen	Eindhoven	321
19	van Kaathoven	Laarbeek	566
20	Bloemert	Staphorst	409

#### 4. A map of regional surname density

Which parts of The Netherlands host (relatively) many individuals bearing a regional name, or, in other words, where do most people live who likely have ancestors from the same region, and who possibly carry cultural traditions and old linguistic / dialect features? To answer this question, per municipality the number of individuals was counted bearing a regional name, but only when they resided in the 30 km regional radius of their surname. Using both this number and the total number of inhabitants in a municipality, per municipality the percentage of the population was computed with a regional name. These percentages are presented in a map of regional name density in figure 1.

The density of regional surnames is definitely not homogeneous across The Netherlands. The highest percentages of regional names (between 20-43 %) can be found in the provinces of Noord-Brabant and Limburg, the Achterhoek and Twente in the east of the country, and a series of isolated communities around the former Zuiderzee (the fisherman villages of Volendam, Bunschoten-Spakenburg, Elburg, Urk; and Staphorst, Putten, Renswoude) and scattered municipalities in Zuid-Holland, with Katwijk topmost with 43% of the population bearing a regional name. Also fisherman village Scheveningen would score high if not for the fact that this village is now an administrative part of Den Haag. Between 10 to 20% of the population in most of the west of the country, in the provinces of Noord- and Zuid-Holland, and Zeeland, has a regional name. An exception is the island of Schouwen-Duiveland and its surroundings in Zeeland. After the disastrous flood of **1953**, many

farmers from Schouwen-Duiveland, Tholen and Zuid-Beveland left the province for the new, reclaimed Noordoostpolder in the IJsselmeer (the former Zuiderzee), and families were scattered.



**Figure 1. Density of regional surnames in The Netherlands. The five grey-shades indicate 1-2% (light), 2-5%, 5-10%, 10-20%, 20-50% (dark) of inhabitants in a municipality with a regional name.**

In the northern provinces of Drenthe, Groningen and Friesland, the percentages of regional names do not exceed 10%, with scores lower than 5% in the south-western part of that area. The explanation may be that surnames came late to this area, many

were enforced by Napoleonic law of 1811. This may have had several consequences. Firstly, a family with a unique name only has had a limited number of generations to expand, and possibly does not exceed yet our threshold of 50 members. Secondly, it is simply difficult to invent a unique name. Patronymics or occupational names, when adopted, are seldom unique. Thirdly, new and fixed surnames did not undergo the process of spelling variation, by which unique variants could arise with regional spread. In addition, likely more than in the rest of the country, considerable migration has taken place from these mainly rural provinces to the industrial centres elsewhere, thus scattering the regional surnames.

It does not come as a surprise that the newly reclaimed IJsselmeer polders do not show a significant presence of regional surnames (with the exception of the island of Urk). Just like big cities, they are a melting pot of names. Almere took a considerable part from the Amsterdam population, and has about the same regional surname percentage as the capital. In many cases the urban areas are a gray shade lighter than their rural environment, implying about half as many bearers of regional names. Note Amsterdam, Utrecht, Rotterdam and Den Haag, but also the cities in the province of Noord-Brabant, notably the area around Eindhoven; the industrial cities of Almelo, Hengelo and Enschede in the east; the mining industry areas in Limburg with Heerlen and Kerkrade; and so on. A fairly large region in the middle of the country, including a major part of the province of Utrecht, also has a relatively low percentage of 5 to 10% of regional surname bearers. This suggests a kind of transfer function of this region, with relatively more in- and outward migration than found in other rural parts of the country.

The Wadden islands have a distance of smaller than 30 km to only a few municipalities on the mainland. This implies that over 50% of the name bearers reside on the island, or that the centre of a name is close to the mainland coast. That usually is not the case, resulting in low percentages of regional names on the islands – this could also be considered a kind of distance artefact. To some extent this also holds for the islands in Zeeland, but there with the already mentioned, additional effect of the 1953 flood. Also, it has yet to be established to which extent surnames in The Netherlands are found in the neighbouring countries - but presence there could affect the current figures in border areas.

## **5. Discussion**

This study of regional surnames in The Netherlands provides some insights in the stability of the population. Not surprisingly, this stability is higher in traditional rural than in urban areas. In rural villages the percentage of people with a regional name, and thus likely living not far from where their ancestor started the surname, can be as high as over 40%. Migration in these areas has been limited for many to a distance of no more than 30 km, even to this day. This may have contributed to the survival of cultural traditions, and dialect properties.

The relation between surname distribution and dialect distribution has been studied by Manni et al. (2006), who found no statistically significant association between the two. They analysed variation in isonymy – a measure of similarity of surname distributions - between 226 locations in The Netherlands. They excluded very frequent and rare surnames from their computations, being left with 19,910 surnames of 1.3 million individuals from phone book entries, constituting about half

the size of the material used here. Of interest is the relation between the results of their analysis and our map of regional surname density. If in an area the regional surname density is high, one may expect there to occur a relatively unique composition of the set of surnames, and population stability over centuries. This would increase isonymy within in the area, and decrease the isonymy with locations outside the area. Isolated villages with a high percentage of regional names stand out for low isonymy with their surroundings, and in terms of Manni et al. this would lead to surname boundaries. The same would hold for larger areas of regional names, such as the Twente region in Overijssel, the provinces of Noord-Brabant and Limburg. These areas are stretched to such a degree, however, that internal boundaries may exist as well; this would hold between southern Limburg and northern Limburg, between western and eastern Noord-Brabant, and between the Achterhoek and Twente in the eastern part of the country. There are indeed correspondences between the borders presented by Manni et al. (their fig. 3) and the areas with different percentages of regional names in our figure 1, with possibly more detail in the latter. It lies beyond the scope of the current paper to compare the density map of regional surnames with dialect borders, but the issue is of interest for further research.

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