

ROOM FOR DISCRIMINATION: UNCOVERING INEQUALITIES IN THE MAASTRICHT HOUSING MARKET FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

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Six Maastricht University students undertook an interdisciplinary research project through the Honours+ programme. With all of us having experienced the challenging housing situation in Maastricht, our team embarked on an investigation into potential discrimination against international students in the local housing market. Recognizing a gap in research on this topic specifically in Maastricht, our aim was to uncover instance of discrimination and promote equal access to housing for all students. Therefore we investigated the reserach question: How are international students discriminated against in the Maastricht housing market as compared to Dutch students, and what roles do legal, economic and psychological factors play?

WHAT IS THE SITUATION NOW?

Housing crisis:

- Negative impact on students, especially internationals (i.e., 51% of students in Maastricht University are internationals).
- Has led to long search times, higher rent, more scams.
- Some students had to resort to camping sites or temporary accommodation.

Discrimination in the Dutch Housing Market:

- Three main types of discrimination: statistical, taste-based, and unconscious discrimination.
- Dutch constitution and the Good Landlordship Act prohibits discrimination based on nationality, race, etc.,.
- However, nation-wide studies have shown that there is discrimination in the Dutch housing market against ethnic minority groups, including international students. (i.e., not being invited to a viewing because of their nationality).
- This study examines how international students are discriminated against in the Maastricht housing market, focusing on legal, economic, and psychological factors.

RESEARCH PURPOSE:

The research seeks to understand the challenges that international students in Maastricht encounter, propose solutions to combat discrimination, and improve their access to housing, with the ultimate goal of promoting fairer housing practices and achieving greater equality.

METHODOLOGY:

- Survey:**
 - Included binary (yes/no), numerical and open-text questions.
 - Collected responses from a wide range of students (N=135)
- Qualitative Interviews:**
 - Conducted two semi-structured interviews.
 - One interview with an international student tenant.
 - Another interview with a representative from a local housing agency.

Findings from Survey & Interviews

ECONOMIC ASPECTS:

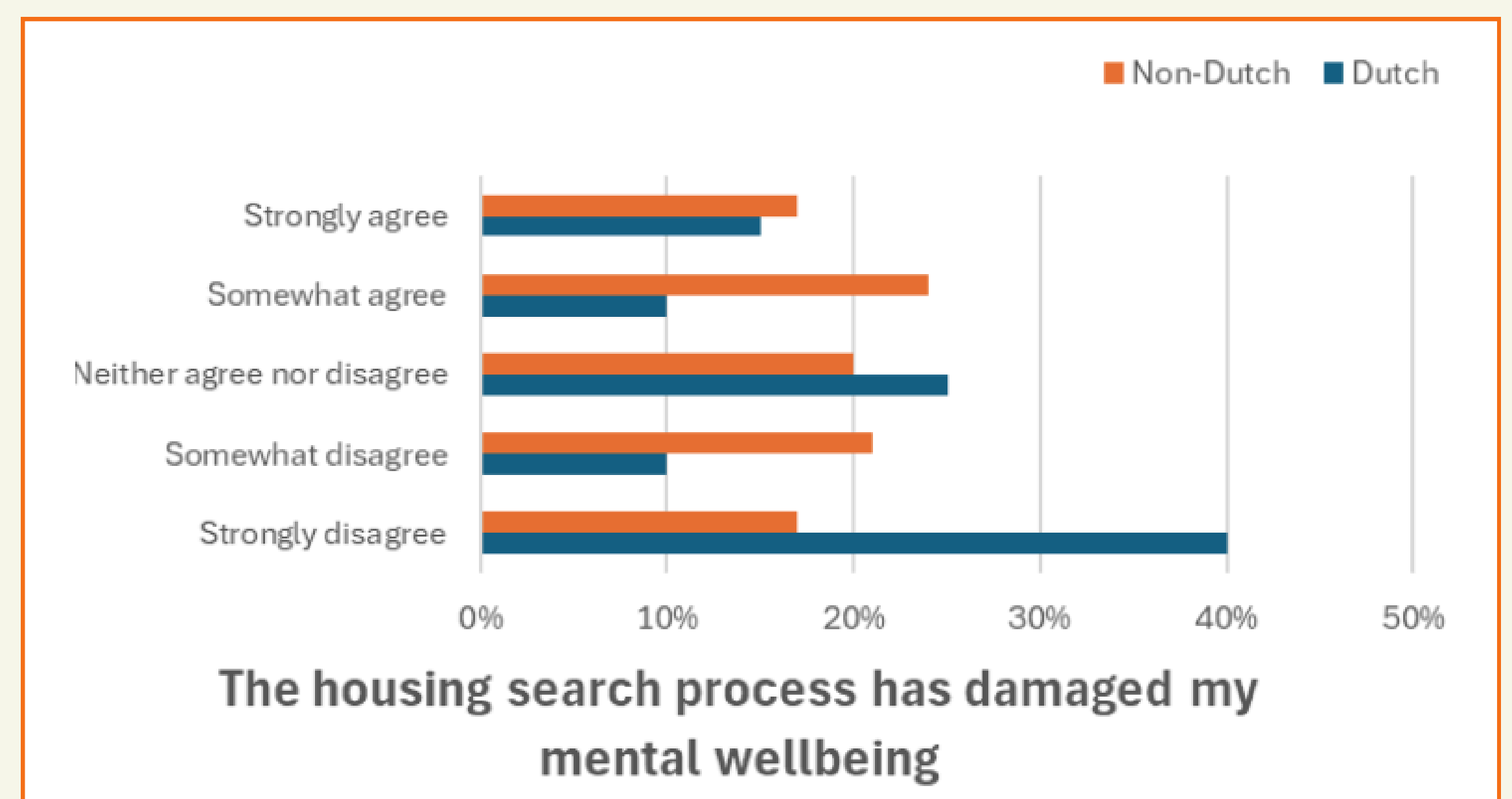
- Duration of Housing Search:** Dutch students searched for an average of 8.7 weeks, compared to 8.55 weeks for international students. International students may sign contracts quicker due to perceived higher difficulty.
- Rent Paid for Housing:** 40% of Dutch students pay 300-500 euros, another 40% pay 500-700 euros, and only 10% pay over 700 euros, while 21% of international students pay over 700 euros, increasing to 25% for those with a non-European background.
- Budget Increase:** 40% of Dutch students had to raise their housing budget, compared to 54% of international students, with international students needing an average budget increase of 164.2 euros more than Dutch students.
- Experience of Scams:** 19% of Dutch students experienced scams, compared to 47% of international students, indicating international students are more prone to scam risks.

LEGAL ASPECTS:

- Language of Contracts:** 42% of international students received contracts only in Dutch, leading to feelings of frustration and anxiety.
- Lack of Legal Awareness:** 68% of international students were unaware of the Good Landlordship Act. Even those who knew often did not file complaints due to perceived strictness and complexity of the process, or to avoid jeopardizing their housing situation.
- Rejection Due to Non-Dutch Origin:** Only one Dutch student experienced rejection due to nationality, while 24% of international students believed their rejection was due to non-Dutch origin, with 9% explicitly told that nationality was the reason.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS:

- High stress levels** → due to high rents international students often have to work, which can lead to having to compromise studies and social life
- Lack of belonging and integration struggles**

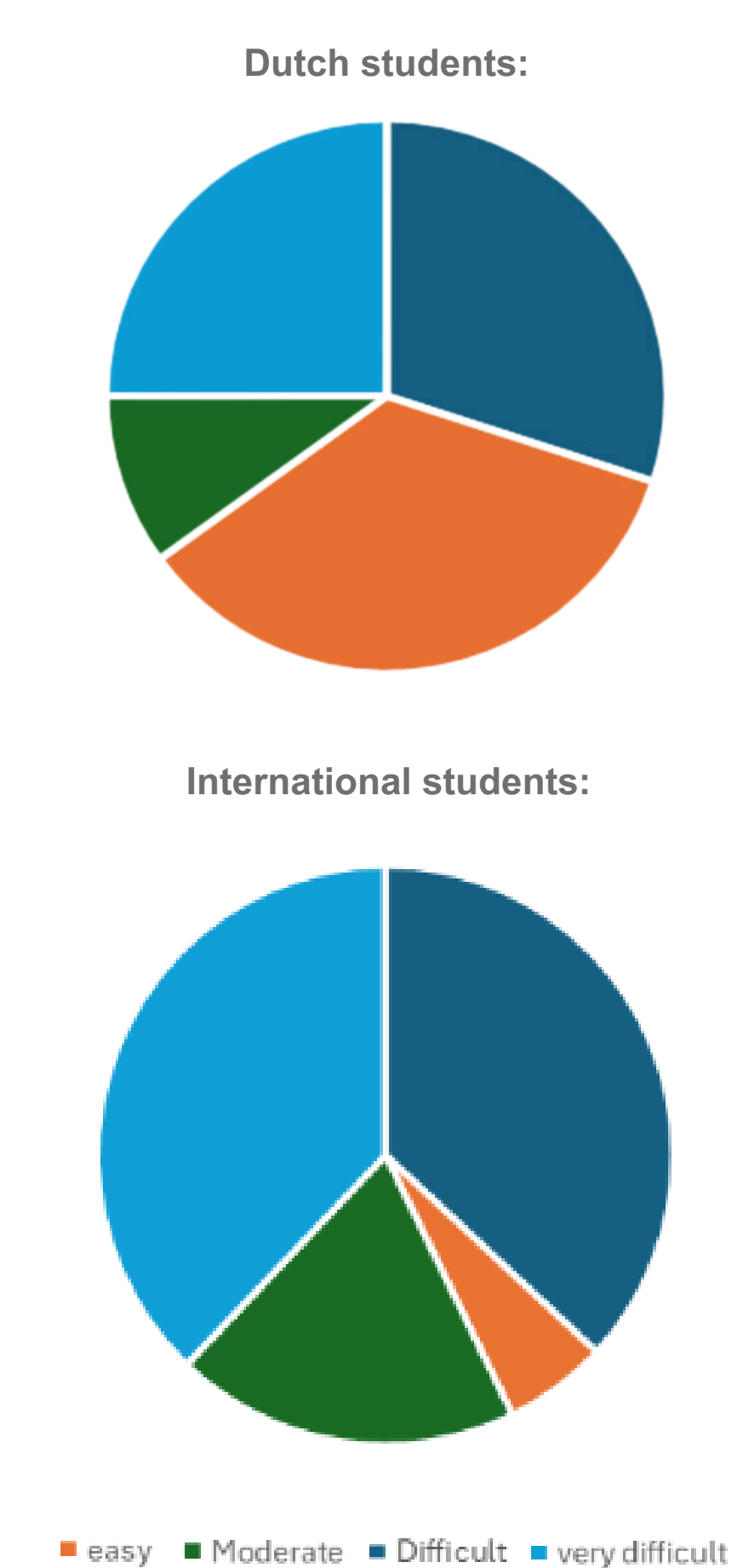


Conclusion & Recommendations:

CONSEQUENCES:

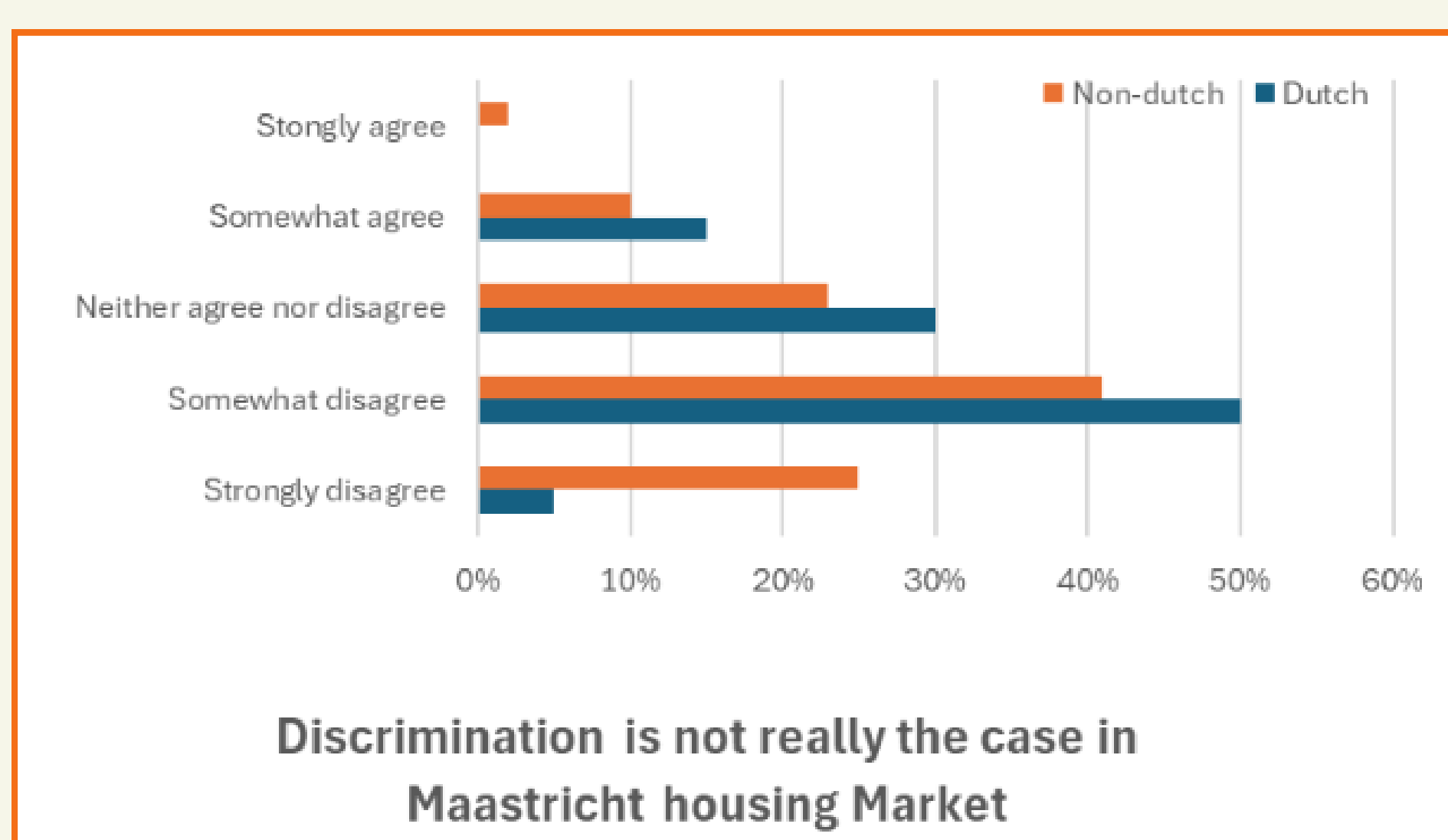
- Discrimination is not only perceived to be higher among international students as compared to Dutch people, but also the results of the economic, legal, and psychological factors point to instances of taste-based and statistical discrimination.
- This in turn could explain, why it is so much more difficult for international students to find housing.

Difficulty to find housing:



WHAT WE CAN LEARN:

- Economic Discrimination**
 - International students in Maastricht face higher rents and budget increases
 - They are more likely to be targeted by scams and face housing rejections due to discriminatory practices like "Dutch girls only."
 - High study fees for non-EU students add to the financial burden.
- Legal Barriers**
 - Contracts are often in Dutch → can lead to long-binding contracts and unfavorable terms.
 - Many international students are unaware of their legal rights and support systems, increasing their risk of exploitation.
- Psychological Impact**
 - Rejection and discrimination during the housing search can lead to stress and a sense of isolation or lower acknowledgment.
- Need for Comprehensive Solutions**
 - Improved online housing resources
 - Housing hotline hour for immediate assistance
 - University housing portal
 - Expanded scam prevention services
 - More university dormitories
 - Streamlining municipal processes



REPORT DISCRIMINATION

