

### **French by Nationality and by Origin**

The French census tracks "nationality" as a category and distinguishes between those who are born in France, those who have acquired French citizenship, and those who are foreigners. After the 1990 census, based on recommendations by the government's High Council for Integration, the French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) also adopted the category of "immigrant," defined in France as "a person born abroad with a foreign nationality."

French statistics on immigration are best understood in three categories:

French by birth. This includes the offspring of French citizens who were born either in France or abroad.

French by acquisition. This includes individuals who have acquired French by naturalization after moving to France, by declaration (as with children born in France of immigrant parents), and some others.

Foreigners. This includes individuals in France who were born abroad as well as children, under the age of 18, who were born in France of immigrant parents. It also includes any individual born in France of foreign parents who chooses not to adopt French nationality at the age of 18.

Thus, because of the peculiarities of French nationality laws, not all foreigners are immigrants, because the children born in France of foreigners generally remain foreigners until the age of 18.

In 1999, the stock of foreigners born in France totaled 510,000. Another 1,580,000 immigrants born abroad had become French by acquisition.

By adding the category of "foreigners" to those who became "French by acquisition," a new category is derived - "foreigners by nationality or origin." This new category includes only a proportion of the descendants of immigrants. In total, this new category included nearly 10 percent of the population of France in 1999 (see Table 1).

The 1999 census shows that new immigrants compose a growing proportion of the foreign-born population in France, which has grown by 6.8 percent over its 1982 level, from 4,037,000 to 4,310,000. Algerians, still the largest group, make up 13.4 percent (575,740) of the immigrant population, slightly less than the 14.8 percent

(597,644) in 1982. Similarly, Italian and Spanish populations in France are declining in terms of relative population.

**Table 1: Population living in France according to nationality and place of birth, in 1999 (in thousands)**

Nationality	Place of birth		Total	%
	Born in France	Born Abroad		
French by birth	51,340	1,560	52,900	90.4
French by acquisition	800	1,580	2,360	4.0
Foreigners	510	2,750	3,260	5.6
Total population	52,650	5,870	58,520	100.0
Of which				
Foreigners by nationality or origin	1,310	4,310	5,620	9.6
Foreign born			4,310	7.4

Source: INSEE, Census 1999

More dynamic currents in the 1999 census include Moroccans (521,000 or 12.1 percent), Turks (176,000 or 4.1 percent) and people from sub-Saharan Africa (400,000 or 9.3 percent). With an increase of 43 percent, these groups have undergone the greatest increase in the period between 1990 and 1999, compared with the 3.4 percent increase of the overall immigrant population over the same period.

It is also important to note that immigrants from Southeast Asia are also increasing in number, especially those from China, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh.

Since the 1990s, naturalizations have been on the rise. In 1995, 92,400 people assumed French nationality, including 61,884 by naturalization and 30,000 children of immigrants who assumed nationality. In 2000, 150,025 applications were approved. The origins of these new French citizens are North Africa (48 percent), Europe (16 percent), sub-Saharan Africa (7.5 percent), and Turkey (8.5 percent).

The results of the next census will be available in 2005.

### Managing a Mosaic

The visibility of immigrants, especially from North Africa, has shed new light on the difficulties of integrating immigrants and managing diversity. France's long tradition of equating French citizenship with equal treatment has meant that the government has not tracked ethnic origins in official statistics, unlike in the United States or Great Britain. (France has traditionally viewed the retention of ethnic identity as an obstacle to both integration and national solidarity.)

Yet, since the mid-1990s, discrimination has become a new preoccupation of the authorities and scholars. Breaking with the French model of integration that emphasized French identity over ethnic identities, new terms have emerged to help identify these communities, such as the "second generation" or "persons born in France of immigrant parents." These terms have helped to provide more information on the scope of discrimination and its mechanisms.

The prime minister announced on July 8, 2004 the creation of a "cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration" (National Center for Immigration History), akin to the Ellis Island Museum in New York City. This center will promote the memory and heritage of different immigrant groups and explore their contributions to French society. It is an important step towards recognizing the crucial place of immigrants in contemporary French history.