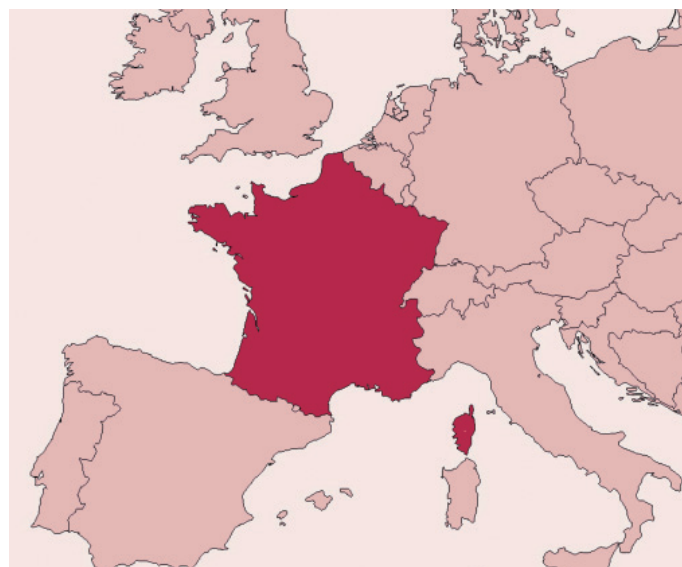


# France

France has a long history of immigration, including three phases of large-scale immigration. The first phase already began in 1830 and brought steady immigration of millions of immigrants from the countries of Central, Eastern and Southern Europe. In a second phase, during the economic boom after 1945, a primarily male workforce immigrated to France. The third phase, which began in the 1970s and continues to the present, has been characterized by family reunification.

Patterns of immigration and integration have been heavily influenced by France's colonial history. The integration of immigrants from South Africa, the Caribbean and above all from North Africa has been at the centre of social and political debate since at least the mid-1980s. The cleavage between those espousing republican secular values ("laïcité") and those supporting the right to freedom of religion, particularly among the growing Muslim community, has deepened since the 1990s, becoming a highly controversial theme in French politics.



## Background information

**Capital:** Paris

**Official language:** French

**Area:** 543,965 km<sup>2</sup> (for comparison, Germany: 357,027 km<sup>2</sup>)

**Population (January 2004):** 60.2 million (61.98 million including areas overseas)

**Population density:** 109 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>

**Population growth (1995–2004):** +0.4 %

**Percentage of gainfully employed of total population:** 45 % (2003)

**Foreign population as a percentage of total (1999):** 3.26 million (5.6 %)

**Percentage of foreign employees of gainfully employed:** 6.0 % (2000)

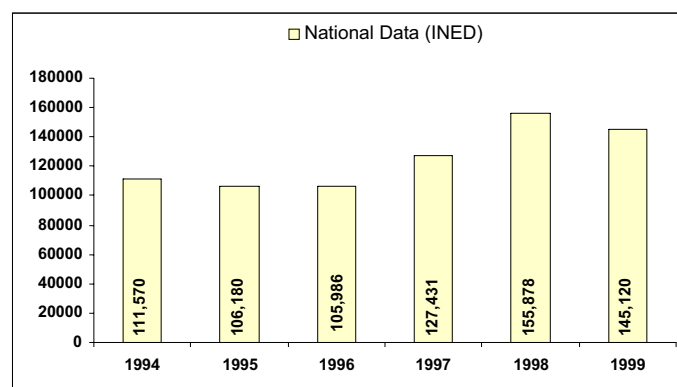
**Unemployment rate:** 9.7 % (2003); 8.9 % (2002); 8.8 % (2001)

**Main religions (2001):** 48.84 million Catholics (78.8%), 5 million Muslims (8.3 %), 950,000 Protestants (1.6 %, primarily Calvinists), 650,000 Jews (1.1 %), 200,000 Orthodox Christians (0.3 %)

## Immigration

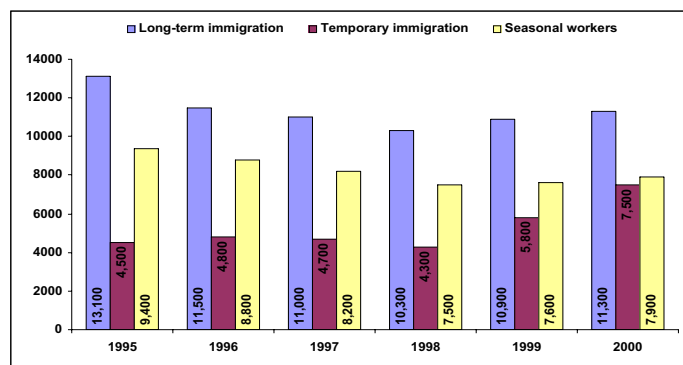
In the years after the Second World War, France recruited labour from Belgium, Germany, Poland, Russia, Italy and Spain. In the 1950s and 1960s, immigration from the former colonies increased in the context of struggles for independence and the process of decolonisation. Notably, the French-Algerian War (1954–62) and Algerian independence in 1962 brought a significant wave of immigration to France. During the economic crisis of the early 1970s, France followed the example of other

### Annual immigration (total)\*



Source: Institut National d'Etudes Démographiques; \* gross, not including emigration

## Annual labour force immigration



Source: OECD

European countries and discontinued all programmes to recruit foreign labour in 1974.

Nevertheless, immigration continued, primarily in the form of family reunification. In the early 1990s, the conservative Minister of the Interior Charles Pasqua (RPR)<sup>1</sup> continued to pursue the goal of zero immigration ("immigration zero"), and numerous regulations were tightened. The waiting period for family reunification was extended from one to two years and foreign graduates at French universities were prohibited from taking up employment in France. However, the introduction of the so-called "Pasqua Law" was highly controversial. Protests reached a climax in 1996 when a group of Africans and Chinese, who had lived in France for many years without residence permits and wanted to draw attention to their precarious situation, occupied a church in Paris. Thousands of people supported this protest action initiated by the "sans papiers"<sup>2</sup>.

From 1997, under the centre-left government of Prime Minister Lionel Jospin (PS)<sup>3</sup>, many of the restrictive regulations were withdrawn or weakened. A special immigrant status for highly skilled workers, scientists and artists was created. In addition, in 1997 a regularisation procedure was launched for foreigners who were in the country illegally. Through this programme, the status of 87,000 of the 150,000 unauthorized immigrants applying for residence permits was legalized. Since the change of government in 2002, observers have noted a return to a restrictive immigration policy (See below: Current Developments).

The two political changes in the 1990s are also reflected statistically in the number of long-term new annual immigrants (see the chart above "Annual immigration").

Note on the data and statistics: the last population census was

held in 2004. Complete data on this census will be available shortly. General information on this topic can be accessed at: [www.insee.fr](http://www.insee.fr)

## Illegal immigration

250,000 people are without legal documents ("sans-papiers" (Government Report 2004); other estimates are significantly higher.

## Foreign resident population

At the time of the last population census in 1999, around 3.3 m. foreigners lived in France, equivalent to 5.6% of the total population. The percentage of foreigners has remained relatively stable over the past 25 years. Statistics on immigration, which include both foreigners and those born abroad who subsequently acquired French citizenship (foreign-born nationals), put the figure at 4.31 m. people or 7.4% (1982: 4.04 m.).

The largest group of foreigners living in France is Algerian. Other important countries of origin are Morocco, Turkey and sub-Saharan Africa. However, immigration from Asia, primarily from China, Pakistan, and India has been gaining increasing importance.

## Immigrant population and foreign nationalities since 1982

	1982	1990	1999	2004 (preliminary data)
<b>Immigrant population</b>	<b>4,037,036</b>	<b>4,165,952</b>	<b>4,306,094</b>	<b>4,500,000</b>
Women	1,858,220 (46.0%)	1,997,681 (48.0%)	2,139,776 (49.7%)	50.3%
Men	2,178,816 (54.0%)	2,168,271 (52.0%)	2,166,318 (50.3%)	47.3%
Naturalised	1,167,368	1,307,926	1,556,043	
Foreigners	2,869,668	2,858,026	2,750,051	
Born in France	651,000 (16.1%)	737,000 (17.7%)	508,488 (11.8%)	

Source: INED <http://www.ined.fr/population-en-chiffres/france/index.html> (Status as of October 2002)

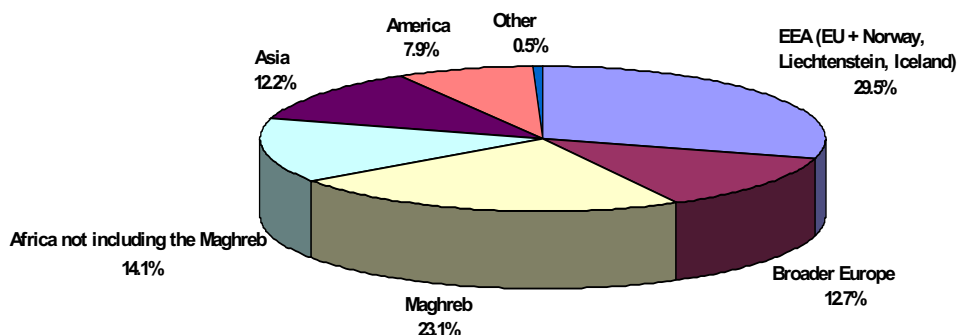
The regions in France with the highest percentage of foreigners are: Ile-de-France (Metropolitan Paris), Rhône-Alpes and Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur. Two-thirds of

## Immigrant population by country of origin (parameters)

	1982	1990	1999
Algeria	597,644	555,715	574,208
Portugal	638,492	599,661	571,874
Morocco	367,896	457,456	522,504
Italy	570,104	483,695	378,649
Spain	471,968	397,126	316,232
Tunisia	202,564	207,127	201,561
Turkey	121,212	168,359	174,160
Germany	115,584	114,288	123,186
Poland	157,712	129,401	98,571
Belgium	95,828	91,629	93,622
Former Yugoslavia	68,636	67,122	75,262

Source: INED <http://www.ined.fr/population-en-chiffres/france/index.html> (Status October 2002)

## Immigration in 1999 by region of origin



Source: INED <http://www.ined.fr/population-en-chiffres/france/index.html>

foreigners live in the major cities of each region: Paris, Lyon und Marseille.

## Refugees and asylum

At the end of the 1980s, the number of applications for asylum increased significantly (1982: 22,500; 1989: 61,400). This can be partially explained by the fact that other legal possibilities for entry had been limited, and an asylum application remained the only option for immigration. However, it is generally supposed that more rigorous procedures and lower approval rates had led to a decrease in numbers of applicants by the 1990s. In addition to asylum under the Geneva Refugee Convention, a second asylum status was created in 1997: so-called “asile territoriale” (see: “Migration und Bevölkerung” 9/98). This status, which bestows considerably fewer rights, was originally created exclusively for the refugees of the Algerian Civil War. However, following legal action taken by refugee rights organisations, it was opened to all nationalities.

In contrast to the Europe-wide trend, the number of applications for asylum under the Geneva Convention began to rise once more, from 22,463 (1998) to 52,204 (2003) at the end of the 1990s. There are a growing number of applicants from China and Turkey. In contrast, the number of applications for asylum from African countries has decreased. The largest numbers of asylum applicants of African origin in France are from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The conservative government under Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin (UMP)<sup>4</sup> introduced further changes to the asylum law in 2003. Procedures for assessing applications were accelerated, a new definition for the term “refugee” was introduced and the structure of the asylum authorities was

reorganised (see: “Migration und Bevölkerung” 8/02).

## Citizenship

Children of foreign parents born in France automatically acquire French citizenship (jus soli) at the age of 18. Persons born abroad and living in France can acquire French citizenship if they fulfil certain requirements. They must be able to prove that they have been a resident for at least five years and are fluent in the French language. Moreover, they must not be dependent

on social security benefits.

At the end of the 1990s, the number of naturalisations increased appreciably. In 2000, 150,025 persons were naturalised (1995: 92,400). Of these, the majority came from North Africa (48%). Other important regions of origin were Europe (16%), sub-Saharan Africa (7.5%) and Turkey (8.5%).

## Current developments

Since Jean-Pierre Raffarin’s conservative government came to power in 2002, there has been a discernible change in immigration policy. Asylum law has been tightened, control of entry and residence has been tightened, and the authorities have stepped up measures to combat illegal migration. In 2004, the government also introduced so-called “integration contracts”, intended to promote more effective integration of immigrants. These impose a number of requirements on immigrants, including participation in language courses as well as courses on French society and values. In addition, these integration measures envisage offering more intensive individual support for adolescents from socially difficult backgrounds. (see “Migration und Bevölkerung” 4/03).

For several years, and especially since 11 September 2001, the French government has made efforts to strengthen a form of moderate Islam that is reconcilable with the French Constitution. France hosts the largest Islamic community in Europe, at around 5 million Muslims. In 2003, the first French Islamic Council (CFCM)<sup>5</sup> was elected. The Council was mandated to represent all Muslims living in France vis-à-vis the government and was also responsible for the education of the imams, Muslim spiritual leaders. (see: “Migration und Bevölkerung” 4/03).

At the same time, a more intensive effort has been made to defend the secular values of the Republic which were legally codified in 1905 – the 100th anniversary of this event will be celebrated this year. In this context, a law was adopted to prohibit religious symbols in schools (see “Migration und Bevölkerung” 1/04), which came into force in September 2004 at the beginning of the new school year. This law was preceded by a lengthy discussion on “laïcité”, that is, on how to separate state and church/

## Data on flight and asylum

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
<b>Asylum under the Geneva Convention</b>						
Applications	22,375	30,907	38,747	47,291	51,087	52,204
- approvals	19.4%	19.3%	17.1%	18.0%	16.9%	14.8%
<b>“Asyle territoriale”</b>						
Applications	1,339 *	6,938	11,809	17,267	22,786	27,741
- approvals	3.6% *	6.1%	2.9%	1.5%	0.5%	0.3%

\* Figures cover 6 months

Sources: <http://www.forumrefugies.org/pages/stats/tab5.pdf> (Asylum approval rate)  
<http://www.forumrefugies.org/pages/stats/tab4.pdf> (“Asyle territoriale”)

religion. Under this law, “especially ostentatious” religious symbols are prohibited at schools, including the wearing of headscarves by Muslim schoolgirls, the issue that had initially triggered the discussion. Despite expectations to the contrary, the introduction of new regulation on the whole met with little conflict. According to information from the French Minister of Education François Fillon (UMP), on the first day of school, only about 240 schoolgirls showed up at their schools with headscarves. Of these, 170 were persuaded to remove their headscarves after a discussion at the entrance of the school. Further discussions were held with the rest of the schoolgirls and their parents. Another reason for the relatively smooth introduction of the new law was that the Muslim organization opposed to the prohibition of headscarves had abandoned their protests following the abduction of two French journalists in Iraq. The kidnappers had been demanding that the headscarf ban at French schools be retracted and were threatening to kill the hostages. In solidarity with the kidnapped journalists, who were freed in December 2004, the imams of all the leading mosques in France called upon girls to take off their headscarves before they entered school (see “Migration und Bevölkerung” 7/04). The French minister of education has now called for an extension of this law to universities.

A further law introduced by the Raffarin government is aimed at combating religious fundamentalism. It regulates the treatment of persons who invoke “the provocation of violence against a specific person” and provides for possible deportation in these cases (see “Migration und Bevölkerung” 5-7/04).

#### footnotes

<sup>1</sup> RPR: „Rassemblement pour la République“

<sup>2</sup> “sans papiers”: persons without legal documents

<sup>3</sup> PS: “Parti Socialiste”

<sup>4</sup> UMP: formerly: „L'Union pour la Majorité Présidentielle“ ; today: „L'Union pour un Mouvement Populaire“

<sup>5</sup> CFCM: „Conseil français du culte musulman“

## Sources

- National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies for Metropolitan France and Overseas Possessions “Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques” (INSEE): [www.insee.fr](http://www.insee.fr)
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD): [www.oecd.org](http://www.oecd.org)
- National Institute for Demographic Studies “Institut National d'Études Démographiques” (INED): [www.ined.fr](http://www.ined.fr)
- Fischer Weltalmanach: [http://www.weltalmanach.de/staat/staat\\_detail.php?staat=frankreich](http://www.weltalmanach.de/staat/staat_detail.php?staat=frankreich)

## Further information

- <http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rsd?search=c&ISO=FRA>
- <http://www.migrationinformation.org/Profiles/display.cfm?ID=21>
- <http://www.migrationinformation.org/feature/display.cfm?ID=87>
- <http://www.recensement.insee.fr> (Census)
- <http://www.ofpra.gouv.fr/> (French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless People OFPRA)
- <http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/brp/notices/024000275.shtml> (OFPRA Report 2001)
- <http://www.ecre.org> (European Council on Refugees and Exiles)
- [http://www.vie-publique.fr/dossier\\_polpublic/immigration/](http://www.vie-publique.fr/dossier_polpublic/immigration/)
- [http://www.gisti.org/dossiers/reformes/2003-entree-sejour/loi\\_sarkozy](http://www.gisti.org/dossiers/reformes/2003-entree-sejour/loi_sarkozy) (Human rights organisation)
- <http://www.forumrefugies.org/> (Refugee organisation)
- <http://www.ambafrance-uk.org/asp/service.asp?SERVID=100&LNG=en&PAGID=316>

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