

INSEE in brief

Understanding... The measurement of foreign and immigrant populations



- Foreigners and immigrants: who are we talking about?
- What is the purpose of measuring these populations?
- How are these populations measured?
- “Ethnic-based” statistics: what is allowed and what is being done?

• Foreigners and immigrants: who are we talking about?

What is an immigrant?

According to the **United Nations definition**, an immigrant is “a person born in another country from the one where they are living”. This definition does not take the person’s nationality into account.

In fact, each country adopts its own definition of an immigrant. In France, the definition is the one used by the **High Council for Integration (HCI)**:

An immigrant is a non-French person born abroad and who lives in France.

So in addition to the UN definition France includes the criterion of nationality at birth.

An immigrant may keep his or her own nationality or acquire French nationality. In both instances they remain immigrants. Immigrant status is therefore permanent.

In France, on 1st January 2012, the immigrant population was estimated at 5.7 million.

Of these, 40% had acquired French nationality.

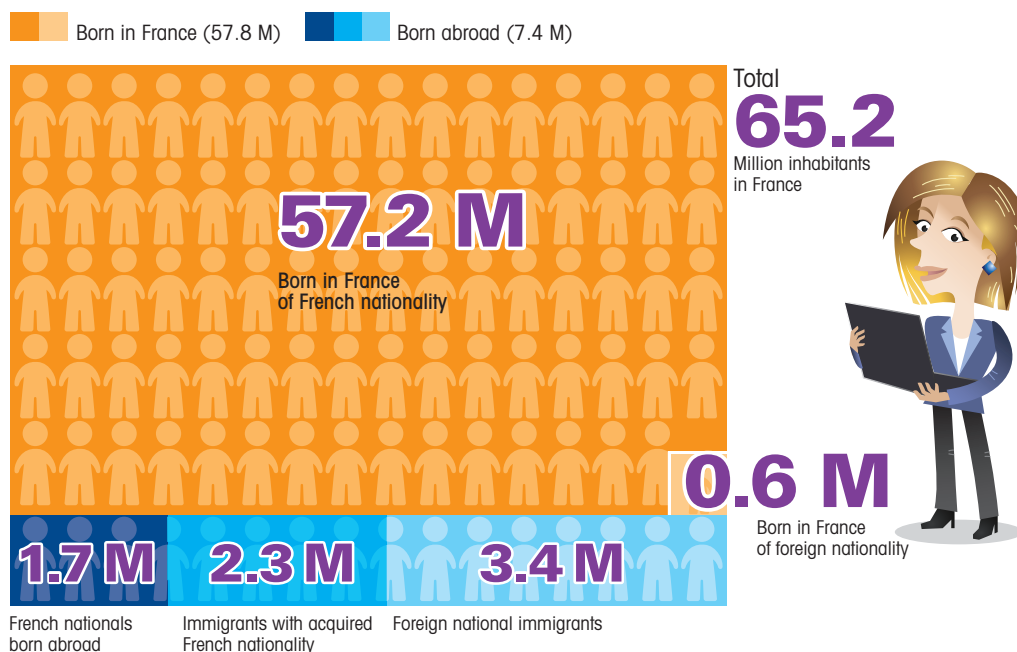


Acquisition of nationality and dual nationality

French nationality can be acquired through various procedures. Some acquisitions fall under the competence of the Ministry of the Interior: naturalisation decrees, declarations by marriage. Others depend on the Ministry of Justice: advance declarations for children born in France to foreign parents, other declarations.

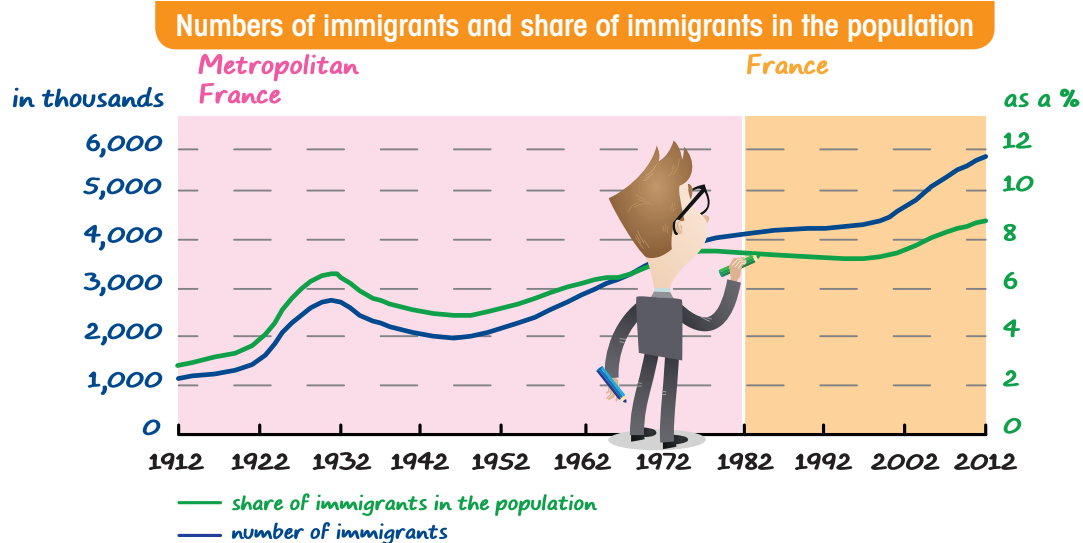
Acquiring French nationality does not mean renouncing one’s original nationality: one then has dual nationality. However, some countries, such as Morocco and Vietnam, do not recognise dual nationality.

Distribution of population living in France by place of birth and nationality, in millions



Scope: France
Source: INSEE, 2012 population census

How has the number of immigrants changed since the beginning of the 20th century?



How to read this chart: the blue line shows the number of immigrants, with the scale on the left side; the green line represents the share of immigrants in the total population, with the scale on the right side. For example, the number of immigrants on 1st January 2012 is 5.7 million, they represent **8.7% of the total population**.
 Scope: Metropolitan France from 1911 to 1982, France from 1982 to 2012.
 Source: INSEE, population censuses from 1911 to 2012.

What is a foreigner?

A foreigner is a person who lives in France and does not have French nationality. On 1st January 2012, the foreign population in France was estimated at 4 million.

So you can be an immigrant but not a foreigner?

Yes, an immigrant is not a foreigner if he or she has acquired French nationality. This is the case for 40% of immigrants, who are French.

Conversely, a foreigner living in France is not necessarily an immigrant. For example, if I was born in France to two immigrant parents who do not have French nationality, I am declared to be a foreign national at birth and I am not an immigrant.

What is a descendant of an immigrant?

A descendant of an immigrant is a person who was born in France and who has at least one immigrant parent.

In 2012, the number of descendants of immigrants in France was estimated at 6.8 million.

• What is the purpose of measuring these populations?

Immigrant or non-immigrant status is one of the sociodemographic characteristics used to describe the resident population of a country, in the same way as sex, age, socio-occupational category, family situation, etc. By measuring these characteristics we can assess the diversity of the resident population.

By measuring immigration, public policies can be put in place or evaluated:

- Immigrant populations may have specific needs, requiring **hosting policies to be put in place**: learning the language of the host country, help with administrative procedures, etc.



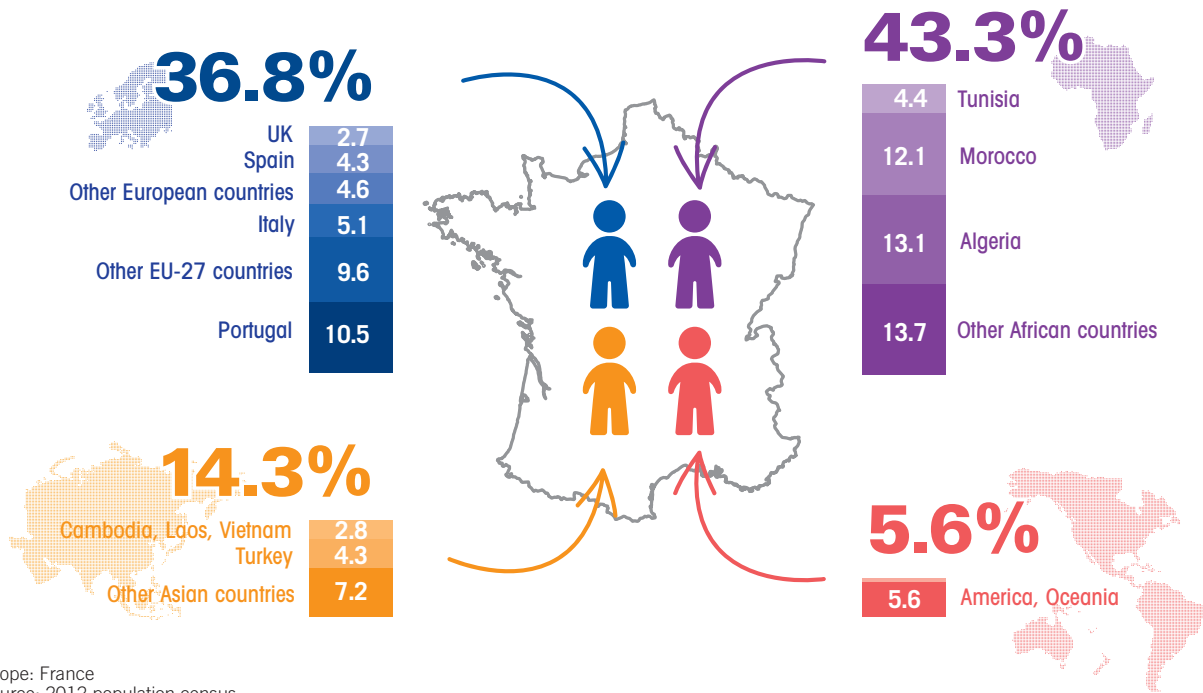
- Foreign or immigrant populations need to be identified in order to measure their integration **into the job market**, to check, for example, that they have no particular difficulty in gaining access to employment, or whether, on the contrary, they experience discrimination.

- Arrivals and departures of migrants can impact on **housing** needs.



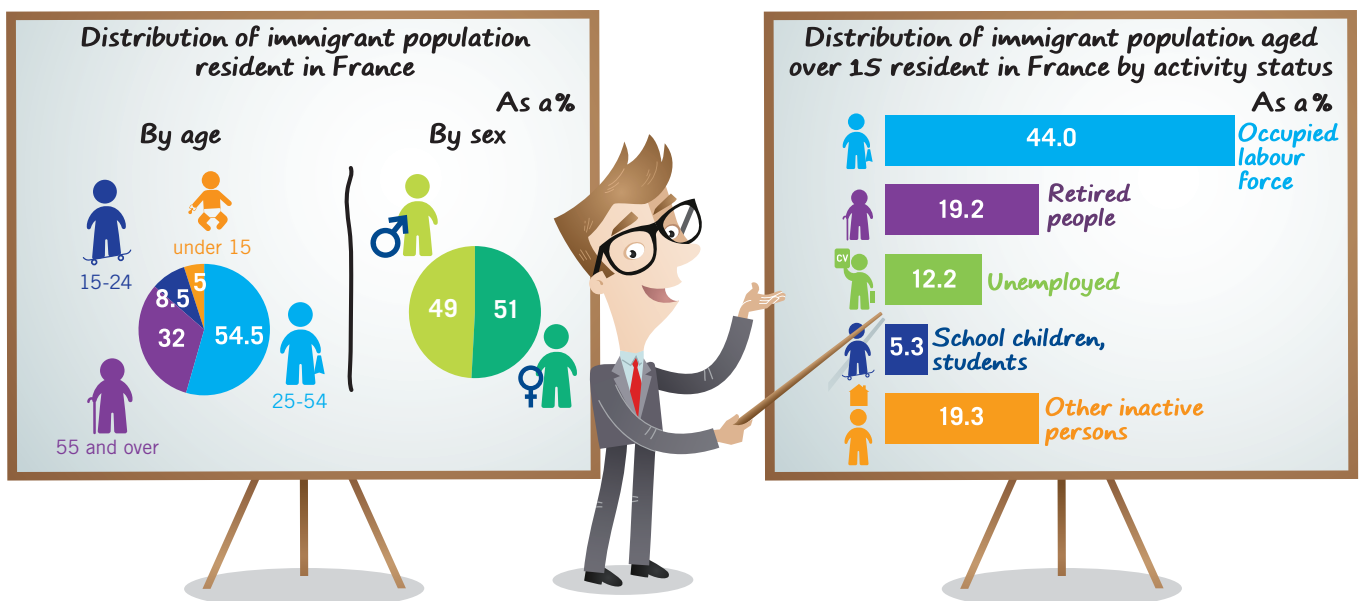
Characteristics of the immigrant population in 2012

Distribution of immigrants by country of birth as a %



Scope: France
Source: 2012 population census

Distribution of immigrants by age, sex and activity status



Source: 2012 population census

• How are these populations measured?

Measuring numbers on a given date

The number of immigrants and the number of foreigners are obtained from **the annual population census surveys**. In the census questionnaire, respondents are asked for:

- a Their **country of birth**
- b Their **current nationality**
 - If they are a foreign national, they are asked their nationality.
 - If they are a French national, they are asked:
 - > If they were born French.
 - > If they have acquired French nationality: they are then asked their nationality at birth.

Tells us the number of immigrants

Tells us the number of foreigners

RECENSEMENT
de la population

2 Date et lieu de naissance

Né(e) le :
jour mois année

à :
commune (et arrondissement pour Paris, Lyon, Marseille)

Foreign country of birth

département n° DOM pays pour l'étranger, territoire pour les TOM

3 Si vous êtes né(e) à l'étranger, en quelle année êtes-vous arrivé(e) en France ?
année

4 Quelle est votre nationalité ?

• Française

- Vous êtes né(e) français(e)..... 1

- Vous êtes devenu(e) français(e) (par exemple : par naturalisation, par déclaration, à votre majorité)..... 2

↳ Indiquez votre nationalité à la naissance :

Foreign nationality at birth

• Étrangère 3

↳ Indiquez votre nationalité : **Current nationality**

* Population census

To be counted as an **immigrant**, respondents must have given a foreign country of birth and:

- either given a foreign nationality
- or have become French.

To be counted as a **foreigner**, respondents must have given a foreign nationality.

Does the population census also measure the number of descendants of immigrants?

No, because the census questionnaire does not ask for the place of birth or the nationality at birth of the parents.

Sample-based surveys can be used to obtain this information on the parents, for example the *Labour Force Survey* or the *Family and Housing Survey*.

Does the population census also show the number of people with dual nationality?

No, the census cannot take two nationalities into account. However, using the *Trajectories and Origins Survey* (TeO) carried out by INSEE and INED the number of people with dual nationality living in France can be estimated.

It is estimated that two out of ten immigrants aged 18 to 50 have dual nationality. Furthermore, of those who acquired French nationality in 2013, 43% said at the time they made their application that they intended to retain their nationality of origin.

Is a foreign student who comes to France to study counted as an immigrant?

Is a foreign worker who comes to work in France for a company of his own country (expatriate) counted as an immigrant?

Only if they are part of the resident population. To be counted in the resident population in France they must have lived on French territory for at least one year or intend to remain there for at least one year.

Are illegal immigrants taken into account?

The population census counts all inhabitants. It therefore counts illegal immigrants as it does every other person living in France, but does not identify them as such.

The census agent never asks the person being counted for identification.

• How are these populations measured?

Measuring the number of people entering France over the course of the year

To find out how many people entered France in 2013, the census survey conducted at the start of 2014 is used.

People born abroad are asked the date of their arrival in France. If a person says they arrived in 2013, or if they say they **were living abroad on 1st January 2013, they are counted as entries for 2013.**

Also counted as entries for 2013 are **people born in France who returned in that year after time spent abroad.** It is the fact that they were living abroad on 1st January 2013 which defines them.

Where on 1st January?



If a person who was born abroad says they arrived in 2013, they are counted as entries for 2013



3 Si vous êtes né(e) à l'étranger, en quelle année êtes-vous arrivé(e) en France ?

2013
année

The question on place of residence on 1st January is also used to measure the number of immigrants who arrived in France but did not give their year of entry, such as French people returning after time spent abroad



6 Où habitez-vous le 1^{er} janvier 2013 ?

Les enfants nés après cette date ne sont pas concernés.

- Dans le même logement que maintenant 1
- Dans un autre logement de la même commune (ou du même arrondissement pour Paris, Lyon, Marseille) .. 2
- Dans une autre commune (ou un autre arrondissement pour Paris, Lyon, Marseille) 3

↳ Indiquez cette autre commune :

commune (et arrondissement pour Paris, Lyon, Marseille)

département

n° DOM

Country of residence on 01/01/2013

pays pour l'étranger, territoire pour les TOM

So how many entries were there in 2013?

There were **332,000 entries** in 2013.

This number is broken down as follows:

- + **235,000 immigrants**
- + **20,000 people born abroad** of French nationality
- + **77,000 people born in France** who returned after time spent abroad

And what do they do in other countries?

The sources available to measure foreign and immigrant populations and migratory flows are often linked with the country's history.

• **United Kingdom**

For population **enumeration**, the sources are the population census and various surveys. For **migratory flows**, most data come from administrative systems whose function is to control immigration.

To this is added the **International Passenger Survey**, made possible because Britain is an island. This survey provides information not only on migratory flows into the UK but also on flows out of the UK and their destinations.

• **Countries with population registers**

Norway, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands and Iceland are the countries that have had population registers in place for longest.

All data come from a population register, which is above all an administrative management tool and only incidentally a statistical data collection tool. These registers are usually held at local level. .

• **In other countries**, figures are taken from the census.



The European Union and the OECD harmonise definitions to ensure that comparisons are possible.

● “Ethnic-based” statistics: what is allowed and what is being done?

Going beyond objective measurements: a “feeling of belonging”

- INSEE and the entire official statistical system have long produced statistics aimed at **measuring diversity**, based on **objective data**:

country of birth, nationality at birth, current nationality are available in many surveys and in the population census.

For the most part, possible forms of discrimination or integration difficulties experienced by certain population groups can be identified and clarified using these objective criteria. In order to look beyond these criteria but remaining within the bounds of the law (see page 11 “A very strict regulatory framework for ethnic-based statistics”), any interpretation must be based on a “feeling of belonging”, which is less reliable and more subject to interpretation than the objective criteria.

- Since the decision by the Constitutional Council in 2007, an official statistical survey called “Trajectories and Origins” (TeO) has addressed questions on the feeling of belonging and religion. This survey was conducted by INSEE and INED in 2008-2009 and focused on the impact of origins on standards of living and social trajectories

This statistical operation was very strictly controlled:

- it covered a sample of people rather than exhaustive data collection
- it received a positive opinion from the CNIS (National Council of Statistical Information) which clearly legitimised the usefulness and timeliness of the survey and of all the questions asked. It also obtained authorisation from the CNIL, the French Data Protection Authority.



A very strict regulatory framework for ethnic-based statistics

In France, the preparation of ethnic-based statistics is strictly controlled from a legal standpoint:

- by the 1978 “Information technology and freedoms” Act,
- then in 2007 by a Decision of the Constitutional Council.

The 1978 Act states that:

“The collection or processing of data of a personal nature revealing either directly or indirectly a person’s racial or ethnic origin, political, philosophical or religious opinions or trade-union membership, or relating to a person’s health or sexual life is prohibited.”

Some of the main exceptions are:

“statistical processing carried out by the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies or any of the ministerial statistical offices, in accordance with the 7 June 1951 Act on legal obligation, coordination and confidentiality in the field of statistics.”

Decision of the Constitutional Council in 2007

In its commentary¹, the Council stated that:

- “the processing necessary for carrying out studies to measure the diversity of origin of peoples, discrimination and integration may relate to objective data but such processing cannot, without infringing the principle laid down in Article 1 of the Constitution, be based on ethnic origin or race.
- It would be contrary to the Constitution to define a priori an ethno-racial classification.
- Name, geographic origin, nationality prior to French nationality are considered as objective data.
- Subjective data, such as that based on the ‘feeling of belonging’, may also be processed.”

1. Cahier no. 24 of the Constitutional Council - Commentary on Decision no. 2007-557 DC of 15 November 2007

For more information:




- Born in France with an immigrant parent - A diverse population reflecting the history of migratory flows, Insee Premiere N° 1634 February 2017 <https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/2575541>
- The geographical location of immigrants – A high concentration in the Paris urban area, Insee Premiere No 1591, April 2016, <https://www.insee.fr/en/statistiques/2121531>
- Analysing migratory flows between France and the rest of the world in the period 2006-2013 - Increased mobility, Insee Analyse N°22, October 2015 <https://www.insee.fr/en/statistiques/1304061>
- French, foreign and immigrant populations in France since 2006, Insee Focus N°38, October 2015, <https://www.insee.fr/en/statistiques/1304052>
- Recent immigrants to France - Increasingly European immigration, Insee Premiere N°1524, November 2014, <https://www.insee.fr/en/statistiques/1283872>

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