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# France, a Country of Immigration and... Emigration

Source: Population & Avenir, No. 730, November-December 2016, [www.population-demographie.org/revue03.htm](http://www.population-demographie.org/revue03.htm) ; [www.cairn.info/revue-population-et-avenir.htm](http://www.cairn.info/revue-population-et-avenir.htm)

Calais, Vintimille, “humanitarian centre” for migrants in Paris, CAOs (reception and orientation centres), CADAs (reception centres for asylum seekers)... The migration issue in France is very much in the news, but the figures quoted are often unreliable, one way or another. We will try to clarify the components of French migrations.

By Gérard-François Dumont



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## More inflows than outflows

For this purpose, we will examine the inter-censal period 2006-2013, actually covering census surveys that took place from 2004 to 2015<sup>1</sup>. Over a 7-year period the net migration in France excluding Mayotte, in other words mainland France plus the four overseas departments (Guyane, Guadeloupe, Martinique and the Reunion Island, as well as the French overseas collectivities), is estimated at 405,000 people. This is a net result, the difference between those who came to live in France –the inflows– and those who decided to leave France to go and live in another country –the outflows.

The numbers behind this net result reveal a significant mobility<sup>2</sup>. Indeed, 2,475,000 people came to live in France whereas 2,070,000 went to live abroad.

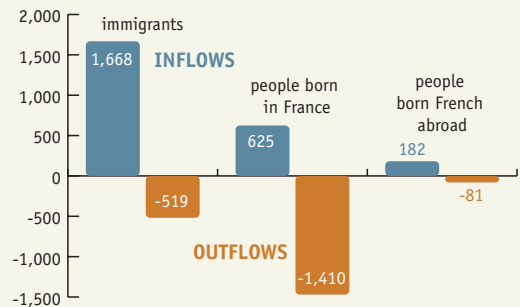
## The positive net migration of immigrants counterbalances...

There are six types of migratory flows, involving three distinct categories of people. The first category concerns people who migrate for residential reasons but who were born in a foreign country and had foreign nationality at birth, according to the French definition of the term immigrant<sup>3</sup>. During the 2006-2013 period, such immigrants represented more than two thirds of all inflows into France, 67.4% precisely, but only a minority of the outflows (25.1%). The in-out balance of immigrants directly contributed to an increase of the population in France of 1,149,000 inhabitants in seven years. This can be explained by the 5 following factors, in decreasing order of importance:

- ◆ the first one is the arrival of initial migrants’ families, in particular under the “family reunification” provisions pertaining to article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights;

- ◆ the second one is the humanitarian aspect, such as the possibility of seeking asylum or reception on health grounds;
- ◆ the third one is linked to student inflows;
- ◆ another, less important, flow is the economic one linked to people who come to France for professional reasons;
- ◆ the last, and least, “miscellaneous” flow<sup>4</sup> includes in particular foreign minors.

## NET MIGRATION IN FRANCE BETWEEN 2006 AND 2013 (IN THOUSANDS)



## ...the negative migratory flows of people born in France

The migration of people born in France (mostly of French nationality) is the complete opposite of that of immigrants. Indeed, their in-out balance is a negative 845,000 persons. This negative amount shows the low attractiveness of France during the period under review, as it involves many French people who believe that they have a better chance of professional success abroad, and therefore leave the country, as witnessed for example by the presence of several hundred thousand French people in United Kingdom.

The third category of migratory flows is that including people born abroad with French nationality, for instance children of people commonly referred to as “expatriates”. These children migrate into France either when they follow their parents back to their home country after a professional period abroad, or because it is in France that they find opportunities for graduate studies, after having attended, for instance, a French “lycée” abroad.

Overall, the picture of French migrations is highly contrasted, as the country is attractive to foreigners but repels people born in France. Globally, this migratory system is demographically winning in number of inhabitants; economically, it could only be winning if the training and innovative spirit of newcomers were higher than those of the leavers. ☺

(Translation: Sylvie Vanston)

1. Cf. Dumont, Gérard-François, « Le nouveau recensement : une méthode duale et quinquennale », *Population & Avenir*, n° 667, March-April 2004.

2. On the geographical effects and forecasts related to these migratory movements, cf. Dumont, Gérard-François, « L’immigration étrangère en France et le développement des territoires », *Futuribles*, n° 343, July-August 2008 ; « La France et ses territoires dans les flux migratoires internationaux », *Futuribles international*, *Vigie Analyse prospective*, n° 193, 26 May 2016.

3. *Insee Analyses*, n° 22, October 2015.

4. According to the department for statistics, studies and documentation (DSED) of the French public service in charge of foreigners present in France (Direction générale des étrangers en France).