

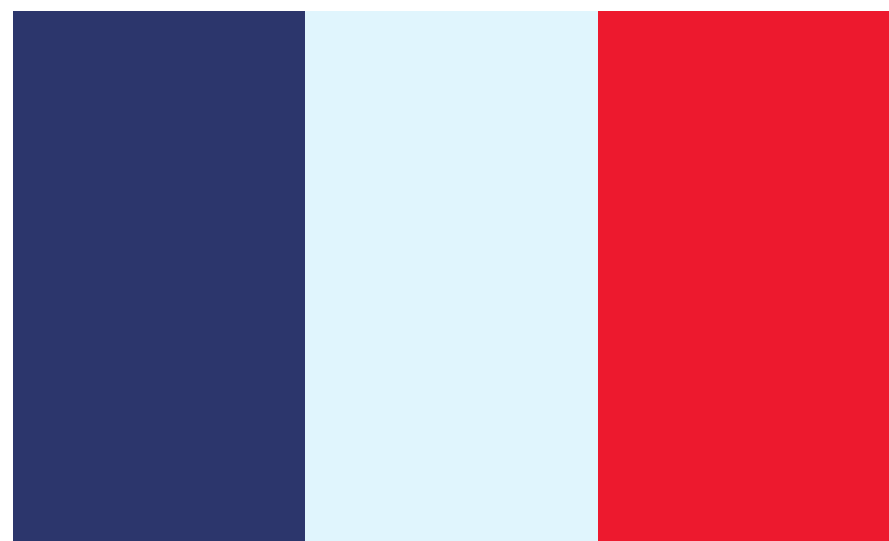
FRANCE

Country Profiles



This profile is a part of our Leading Multiculturalism: Canada's Impact on Global Diversity Policies series

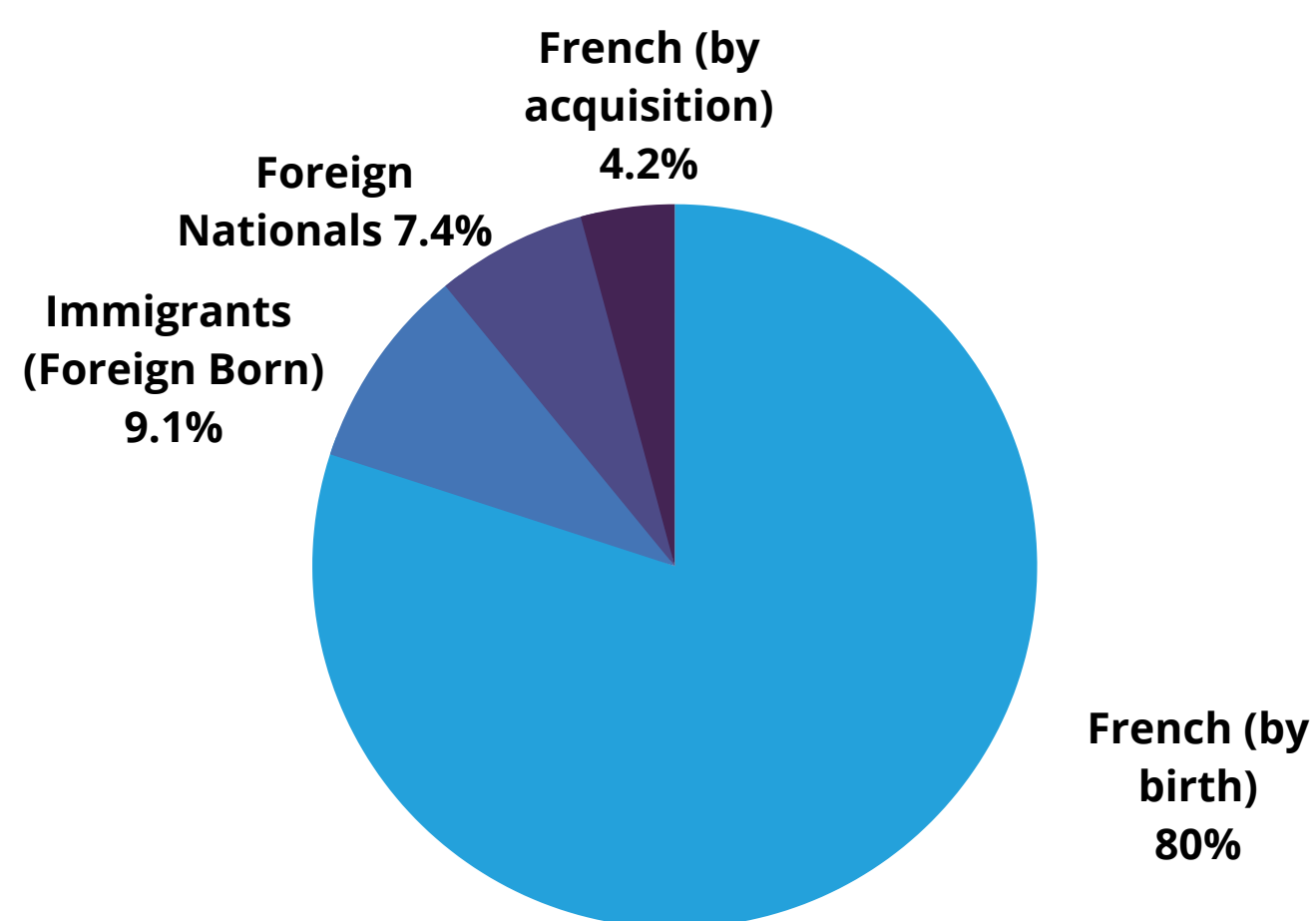
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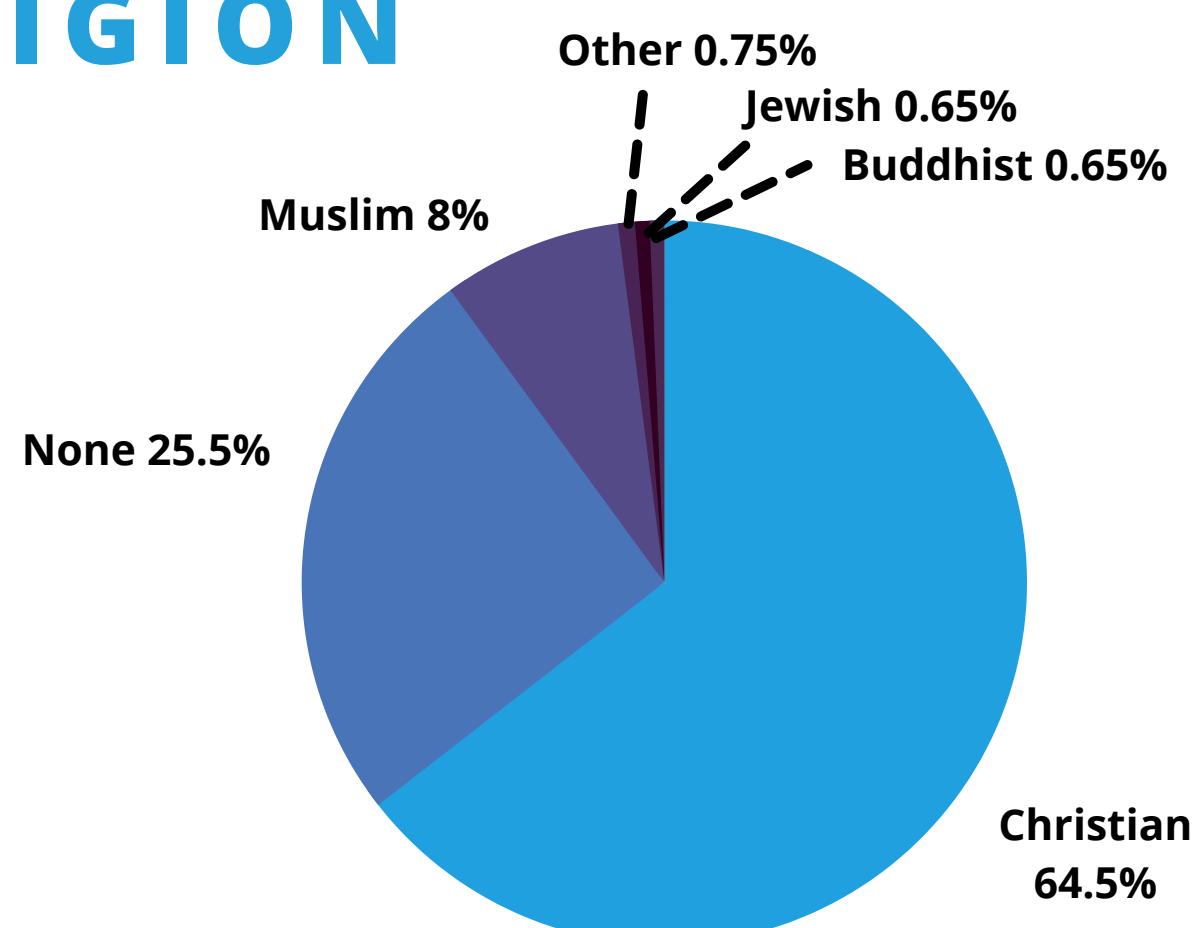
HISTORICAL CONTEXT

France is defined by its imperial history as the centre of the French Empire. This has created a strong focus on the French national identity and pride. In recent years, France has seen a significant influx of migrants and asylum seekers.

DEMOGRAPHICS



RELIGION



MULTICULTURALISM POLICY

- **Term:** secularism.
- **Approach:** top-down, as the government upholds secularism in the constitution and policies. The absence of religious, racial, and ethnic distinctions is meant to ensure equality for all.

DOMESTIC

- Article I of France's Constitution (1958) promotes secularism.
- Article II recognizes French as the only official language.
- Policy focuses on the maintenance of French culture and national identity.
- Affirmative action policies and multicultural approaches to integration are strictly unconstitutional as they reinforce differences.

INTERNATIONAL

Treaties

- ✓ International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- ✓ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (with significant reservations)

France

Backgroundⁱ

- Population: 68,084,217 (2021 est., with overseas regions)
- Demographics: Main ethnic group is Celtic and Latin with Teutonic, Slavic, North African, Indochinese, Basque minorities. 88% French by birth, 4.6% French by acquisition, 7.4% foreign nationals, 10% immigrants.ⁱⁱ
- Languages: French 100%, with declining regional dialects (Provençal, Breton, Alsatian, Corsican, Catalan, Basque, Flemish, Occitan, Picard)
- Religions: Christian (primarily Roman Catholic), 63-66%; Muslim, 7-9%; Buddhist, 0.5-0.75%; Jewish, 0.5-0.75%; Other, 0.5-1.0%; None, 23-28% (2015 est.)
- Term: Secularismⁱⁱⁱ
- Top-down or Bottom-up: Top-down

France is a mid-sized Western European country with a population of around 68 million including its 5 overseas territories.^{iv} France is an interesting country to study due to its history as one of the two main groups to colonize the land now called Canada, and its lasting influence on the province of Quebec. In recent years, France has seen a significant increase in migration due to its location at the Southern edge of Europe.^v France's approach to diversity contrasts from Canada's Multiculturalism Policy, as it retains rigid secularism and national identity policies.

The French Constitution of 1958 states that the country is to remain secular in order to maintain equality of all people, "without distinction of origin, race or religion".^{vi} Modern French policy upholds this standard, with the justification that increasing cultural diversity has the potential to divide society.^{vii} The policy of secularism here refers to the absence of religious, racial, and ethnic distinctions.^{viii} This translates to most official government publications, which tend to exclude ethnic background from statistics. Rather, the most detailed descriptors in most government documents are "French citizens", "immigrants", and "foreigners".^{ix}

France's approach to diversity and multiculturalism hinges on the strong cultural and social values of French national identity and citizenship over smaller group identities.^x Ethnic distinctions, according to France's approach, work to divide the people, weaken identity, and increase opportunity for discrimination.^{xi} This translates to the country's lack of multiculturalism policy and its participation in the international sphere. Affirmative action policies and multiculturalism as a means to integration are strictly unconstitutional as they reinforce differences. Internationally, France has signed the main treaties which correlate to the rights of minority ethnic and religious groups, but with a multitude of reservations and declarations. These objections effectively limit the influence that treaties can have on French culture and society.

Comparative Analysis: Domestic Legal

Approach

Government-led. Top-Down, through legislation.

- The practices of secularism and the strong focus on national identity over smaller group identities is traceable within the constitution, notably Articles I and II.

Constitutional Protections

Article I presents secularism as a means to unite the people and ensure that there is equality without distinction of race, religion, or place of origin.

Article II states that the only language of France shall be French.

Article III declares equal voting rights for all majority-aged citizens.

Explicit Recognition of Multiculturalism

There is no explicit recognition of diversity or multiculturalism in the French Constitution. There is recognition of the term “secular”, but no official recognition of ethnicities or religions.^{xii}

Comparative Analysis: Domestic Practical

Valuing and Active Promotion of Diversity

France recognizes and allows the organizations of ethnic minority groups under the Law on Association (1901), which was extended to French immigrants and foreign-born residents in 1980.^{xiii} These groups are required to adhere to the principles stated in Article I of the constitution.

These organizations have received funding from the Fonds d'Action Sociale (Fund for Social Action or FAS) since 1958.^{xiv} This program was primarily intended to provide integrative services specifically for new migrants from Algeria.

The Agence Nationale pour la Cohésion Sociale et L'égalité des chance (Agency for Social Cohesion and Equal Opportunities), was established in 2006. This agency is responsible for strengthening social cohesion in urban areas and preventing discrimination, alongside other issues.^{xv} This was a result of bottom-up movements or unrest— specifically the Paris riots from 2005-6.^{xvi}

Multiculturalism as a Means to Integration

There are no domestic policies that promote Multiculturalism as a means to integration.

In 2007, President Nicolas Sarkozy established the Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Codevelopment, which focused on the social integration of migrants and the promotion of national identity. It was dissolved in 2010 and criticized for its promotion of integration of immigrants into French society and culture.

Affirmative Action Policies

Article I of the French Constitutions prohibits any distinction on the basis of race, ethnicity, or religion. Therefore, there is no government affirmative action program based on these identity factors.

In 1980, an affirmative action program called Zones d'Education Prioritaire (“Priority Education Zones”) was introduced. This policy provides additional resources to select primary and secondary schools in zones that are considered “disadvantaged”.^{xvii}

Comparative Analysis: International

International Treaties

France acceded to the International Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 1971.^{xviii}

France acceded to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) in 1980. France has made several reservations and declarations in regard to this treaty. Notably, the Republic has cited Article II of the French Constitution (focused on sovereignty) as justification for the non-recognition of Article 27 of the ICCPR. Article 27 advocates for the promotion of cultural diversity and different cultural practices.^{xix}

International Promotion of Multiculturalism

No promotion in the international sphere.

ⁱ “France,” The World Factbook, Central Intelligence Agency, accessed February 23, 2021.

ⁱⁱ “The Basics on ... Immigrants and Foreigners,” The National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE), accessed February 23, 2021.

ⁱⁱⁱ “Constitution of October 4, 1958”, Government of France, accessed February 23, 2021.

^{iv} Central Intelligence Agency, “France”.

^v Kimberly Hamilton, Patrick Simon, and Clara Veniard, “The Challenge of French Diversity,” Migration Policy Institute, November 1, 2004, www.migrationpolicy.org/article/challenge-french-diversity.

^{vi} Government of France, Constitution of October 4, 1958”.

^{vii} “Secularism and Religious Freedom,” Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, accessed February 23, 2021, <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/coming-to-france/france-facts/secularism-and-religious-freedom-in-france-63815/article/secularism-and-religious-freedom-in-france#:~:text=%22France%20is%20an%20indivisible%2C%20secular,states%20the%20Constitution%20of%201958.>

^{viii} Ministry for Europe, “Secularism and Religious Freedom”.

^{ix} INSEE, “The Basics on ... Immigrants and Foreigners,”.

^x “Interview granted by French President Emmanuel Macron to Al-Jazeera,” The National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE), 31 October 2020, <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/coming-to-france/france-facts/secularism-and-religious-freedom-in-france-63815/article/president-macron-interviewed-by-al-jazeera-30-oct-2020>.

^{xi} INSEE, “Interview granted by French President Emmanuel Macron”.

^{xii} “Law of December 9, 1905 Concerning the Separation of Church and State”, Legifrance, Government of France, accessed February 23, 2021, <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/LEGITEXT000006070169/>.

^{xiii} Legifrance, “Law of December 9, 1905”.

^{xiv} Amelia H. Lyons, “Social Welfare, French Muslims and Decolonization in France: The Case of the Fonds D'action Sociale”, *Patterns of Prejudice* 43 no.1 (2009), 66.

^{xv} “National Agency for Social Cohesion and Equal Opportunities (ACSE)”, National Center for Territorial Public Service, accessed February 23, 2021, <https://www.cnfpt.fr/nous-connaître/partenaires/agence-nationale-cohesion-sociale-legalite-chances-acse/national>.

^{xvi} Elaine Sciolino and Ariana Bernard, “Anger Festering in French Areas Scarred in Riots”, The New York Times, October 21, 2006, <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/21/world/europe/21france.html>.

^{xvii} Roland Bénaboua, Francis Kramarz, and Corinne Prost, “The French zones d’éducation prioritaire: Much ado about nothing?”, *Economics of Education Review* 8 (2009), 347.

^{xviii} “Status of Ratification Interactive Dashboard”, United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, accessed February 23, 2021, <https://indicators.ohchr.org/>.

^{xix} “Status of Ratification Interactive Dashboard”, United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, accessed February 23, 2021, <https://indicators.ohchr.org/>.