

The population of France in 2001

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On 1st January 2002, the population of metropolitan France was estimated to be 59.3 million to which must be added another 1.8 million living in the French overseas departments, bringing the total to 61.1 million [1]. The population in metropolitan France increased by a little more than 300,000 (+0.5%) in 2001, very similar to the year 2000, since the number of births was unchanged and there were slightly fewer deaths (see table on page 3).

◆ The mortality decline continues

The figures published by INSEE indicate that there were 528,000 deaths in 2001 or slightly less than in 2000 (-2%) [1]. Given the small increase in population size, this has resulted in a fall in the crude death rate, from 9.1 to 8.9 per 1,000 inhabitants. Life expectancy at birth has risen by about three and a half months, compared to the year 2000. This gain was the same for men and women, unlike the previous years when it was higher for men, which allowed them to make up some of the difference. The life expectancy at birth reached 75.5 years for males and 83.0 years for females in 2001 and the sex differential remained at 7.5 years.

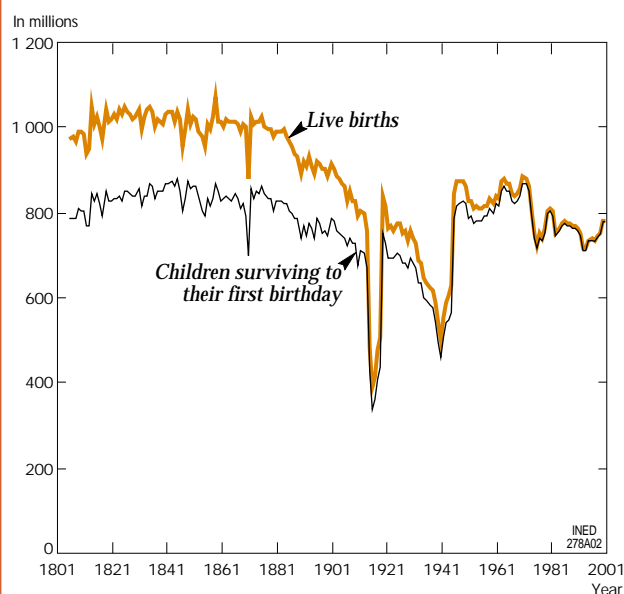
◆ Births are stable

In 2001, 774,800 births were recorded in France as against 774,782 in 2000. The total fertility rate, 1.90 children per woman, remains quite close to the one recorded in 2000 (1.88) and confirms the spurt in fertility observed in recent years. It therefore follows that

the rise in the number of births in 2000 was not really a result of the desire to have a millenium baby, as some had thought.

If the fluctuations in births are seen in the light of the changes that have occurred over a span of almost two hundred years from 1806, the date from which annual statistics are available, the increase in births observed during the last four years appears to be quite modest (figure 1). The annual numbers of births have been surprisingly stable in France during the last two centuries, remaining in the region of one million per year in the 19th century and 750,000 in the 20th, except for periods of war, when they fell temporarily, and

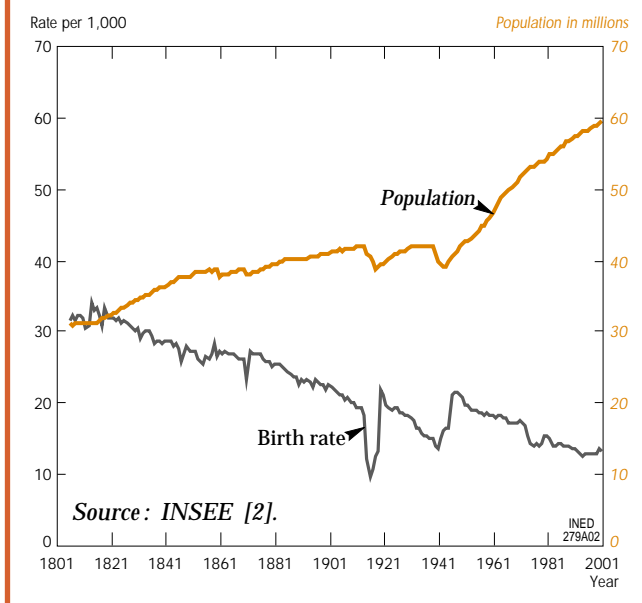
Figure 1 - Changes in the annual number of births in France since 1806



Sources : INSEE [2] and INED [3].

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Figure 2 – Changes in population size and birth rates in France since 1806



during the baby-boom. And if we look at the number of children who survive up to their first birthday, we find that their number has remained practically unchanged during the last two centuries, remaining about 750,000 to 800,000 per annum. No other country in the world has experienced such stability. In all other countries there have been marked variations in births, depending on changes in population size and in fertility.

In France, these two components of the birth rate have nonetheless undergone considerable change during the last two centuries. The population has almost doubled from 31 million in 1806 (in the present borders) to 59 million in 2001 (figure 2). The birth rate has more than halved during the same period, falling from 31 births per 1,000 in 1806 to 13 per 1,000 in 2001 (1).

If the number of births has remained relatively stable in France over the last two centuries, it is because these two components have moved in opposite directions at almost the same time and their respective effects on the birth rate have tended to cancel each other out. However, as we have seen above, this is not exactly the case. In the 19th century, the number of births was somewhat higher, in the region of about one million per annum, while in the 20th century it was about 750,000, the change having taken place during the last quarter of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century. But due to high infant mortality during the 19th century and its gradual decline to a very low level at the end of the 20th century, the number of children surviving to their first birthday has remained almost constant over two centuries.

(1) The fact that in 1806 France had a population of 31 million and a birth rate of 31 per 1,000 is a pure coincidence that will be greatly appreciated by admirers of mnemonic association.

◆ Average age of mothers at childbearing continues to rise

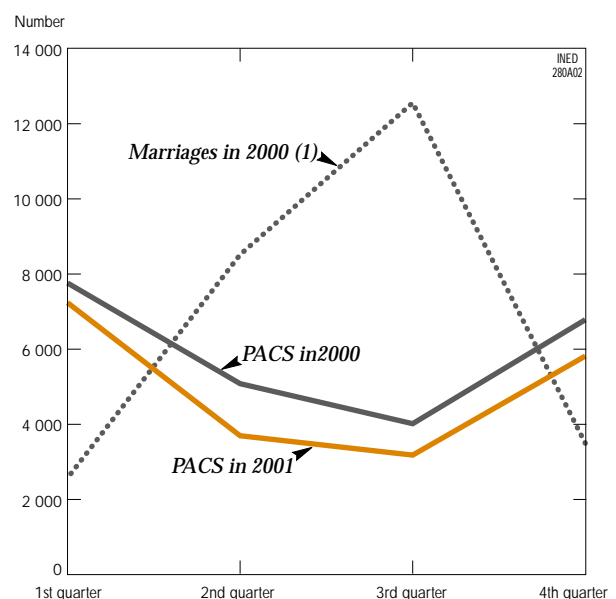
The trend towards later childbearing observed during the last twenty years continues. The women who gave birth in 2000 were aged 29.4 years on average against 26.5 years in 1977. If the fertility of women over 30 has risen since the late 1970s, that of women below 25 has also shown a slight increase during the last three years, while it previously declined regularly [4]. This reversal is undoubtedly due to two recent changes: the age at which women complete their studies has stopped rising and their economic situation has improved on the whole.

A study of cohort fertility shows that women born in 1951, who turned 50 in 2001 and have therefore completed their reproductive life, produced an average of 2.11 children. Women born in 1961, who were 40 years old in 2001, already have 2.05 children and the total is expected to reach 2.1 by age 50, like their elders. As for the younger generations, their childbearing years are far from over and it is risky to predict how many children they will have by the time they reach 50.

◆ PACS in winter, marriages in summer

The number of marriages that took place in 2001 was about the same as in 2000 (303,500 as against 305,000). The increase recorded in 2000 was therefore not simply

Figure 3 – Number of PACS contracted per quarter as compared to the number of marriages

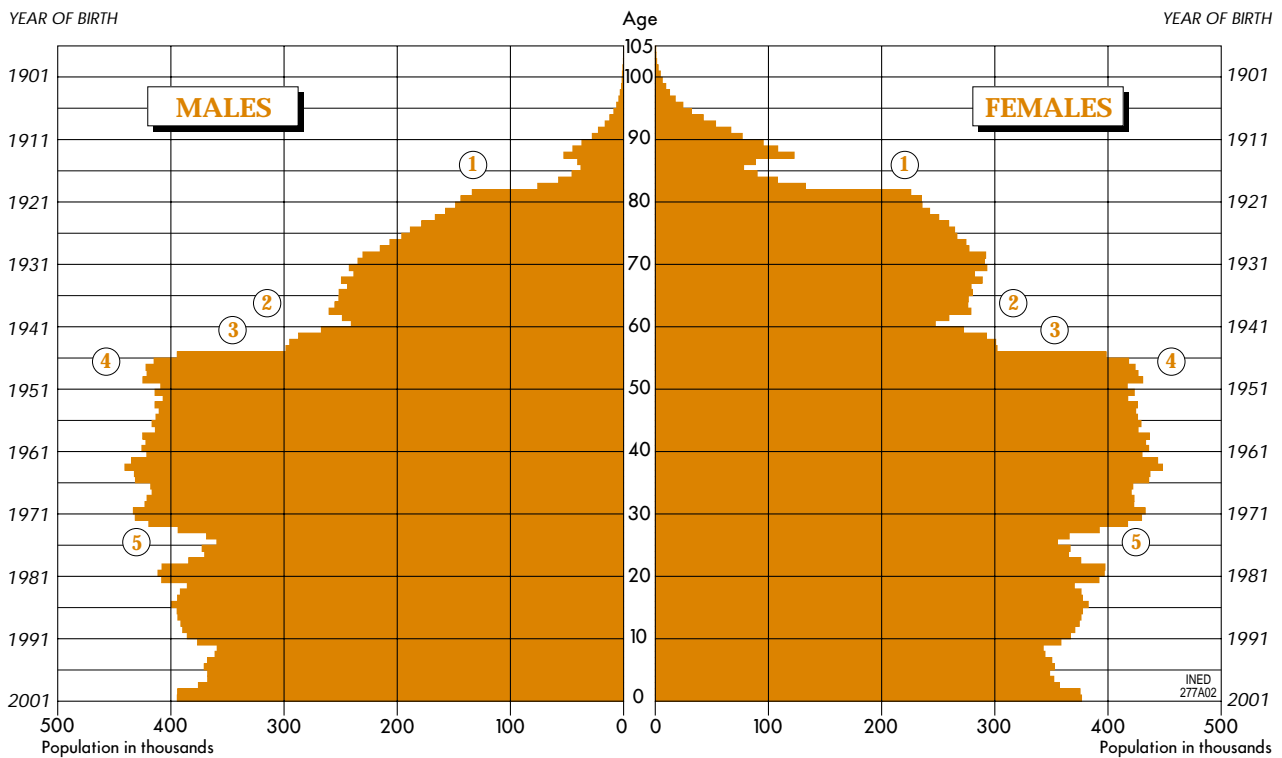


(1) The distribution of marriages per quarter is calculated on the basis of a total annual figure which is the same as for the PACS in 2000.

Sources: Civil Solidarity Pacts (PACS): Ministry of Justice; Marriages: INSEE.

POPULATION OF FRANCE

PROVISIONAL ESTIMATE ON 1st JANUARY 2002



- ① Reduction of births due to World War I (depleted cohorts)
 ② Depleted cohorts reach reproductive age

- ③ Reduction of births due to World War II
 ④ Baby boom
 ⑤ End of baby boom

Source: INSEE.

Table – Population indicators from 1950 to 2001. Metropolitan France

	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000(p)	2001 (p)
No. of births (m)	858	816	848	800	762	744	712	711	730	734	727	738	745	775	775
No. of deaths (m)	530	517	540	547	526	522	532	520	532	536	530	534	538	536	528
Natural increase (m)	328	299	308	253	236	222	179	191	198	199	196	204	207	238	247
Net migration (m)	35	140	180	44	80	90	70	50	40	35	40	45	45	50	60
Total growth (m)	362	439	488	297	316	312	249	241	238	234	236	249	252	288	307
Birth rate (t)	20,5	17,9	16,7	14,9	13,4	13,0	12,4	12,3	12,6	12,7	12,5	12,6	12,7	13,2	13,1
Death rate (t)	12,7	11,3	10,6	10,2	9,3	9,1	9,3	9,0	9,2	9,2	9,1	9,1	9,2	9,1	8,9
Infant mortality rate (r)	51,9	27,4	18,2	10,0	7,3	6,8	6,5	5,9	4,9	4,8	4,7	4,6	4,3	4,5	4,5
Total fertility rate (e)	2,93	2,73	2,47	1,94	1,78	1,73	1,65	1,65	1,71	1,73	1,73	1,76	1,79	1,88	1,90
Life expectancy:															
male (a)	63,4	67,0	68,4	70,2	72,7	73,2	73,3	73,7	73,9	74,1	74,5	74,8	75,0	75,2	75,5
female (a)	69,2	73,6	75,9	78,4	80,9	81,4	81,4	81,8	81,9	82,0	82,3	82,4	82,5	82,7	83,0
No. of marriages (m)	331	320	394	334	287	271	255	254	255	280	284	271	286	305	303
Marriage rate (t)	7,9	7,0	7,8	6,2	5,1	4,7	4,4	4,4	4,4	4,8	4,9	4,6	4,9	5,2	5,1
Population (I) (m)	42 010	45 904	51 016	54 029	56 893	57 369	57 565	57 753	57 936	58 116	58 299	58 497	58 749	59 037	59 344
Under 20 (I) (m)	12 556	14 665	16 748	16 419	15 632	15 330	15 180	15 084	15 058	15 056	15 027	15 018	15 015	15 003	14 991
65 yrs and above (I) (m)	4 727	5 288	6 174	7 541	8 036	8 366	8 524	8 686	8 858	9 011	9 164	9 285	9 414	9 517	9 631
Under 20 (I) %	29,9	31,9	32,8	30,4	27,5	26,7	26,4	26,1	26,0	25,9	25,8	25,7	25,6	25,4	25,3
65 yrs and above (I) %	11,3	11,5	12,1	14,0	14,1	14,6	14,8	15,0	15,3	15,5	15,7	15,9	16,0	16,1	16,2

(a) in years – (e) children per woman – (m) in thousands – (p) provisional – (r) per 1,000 live births – (t) per 1,000 inhabitants – (I) at the end of the year.

Source: INSEE.

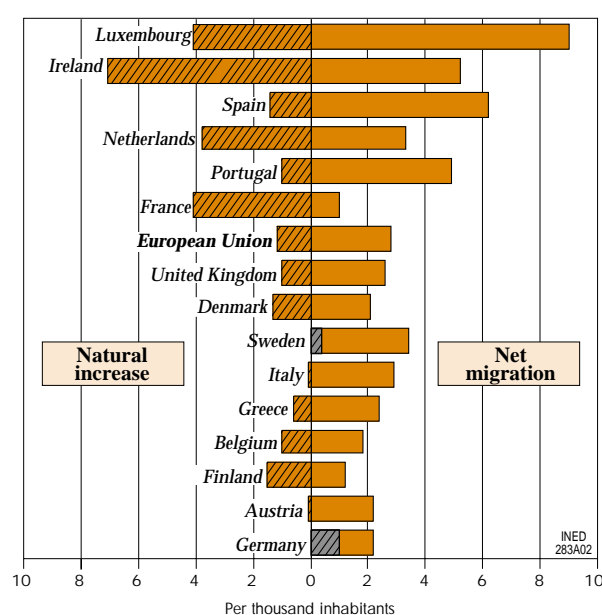
millennium-related. It was due to a longer-lasting trend that has not been affected by competition from the Civil Solidarity Pact (PACS) contracts following the new law passed in 1999. In fact, 19,809 PACS contracts were signed in 2001 as compared to 23,718 in 2000, a drop of 16%. This drop was expected once the many couples who had been waiting for the law to be enacted had contracted their PACS. The number of PACS signed during the last quarter of 2001 was even lower than in the last quarter of 2000, an indication that the decline has not stopped and that things have not yet assumed their normal pace (figure 3). The number of new contracts varies from quarter to quarter and the seasonal fluctuations noticed in 2000 were repeated in 2001. It has been observed that the first quarter of the year is the most active, followed by the fourth and the second, the summer holidays being a slack period. Marriages, on the other hand, follow the opposite course, with more marriages taking place in summer than at any other time. It would therefore appear that contracts and marriages do not follow the same logic!

It is to be regretted that under French law no information can be collected, even anonymously, on how many PACS concern heterosexual and how many concern homosexual couples. This information is available in other European countries (Denmark, Norway, Sweden and the Netherlands) having laws similar to the French law that allow contracts between homosexual couples. There, it is possible to follow the trend and evaluate the law's impact. Unless the French law is modified in this respect when it comes up for review, no objective statistical analysis can be made [5].

◆ What about other European countries?

The total population of the 15 European Union countries is estimated to have risen by 0.4% in 2001, reaching 379 million on 1st January 2002 according to the provisional estimates published by Eurostat [6]. There were slightly more births than deaths, leading to a natural increase of 410,000 inhabitants (0.1% of the population). But this represents barely one-third of the total population growth in the European Union, with net migration, estimated to be just over a million, accounting for two-thirds. All 15 EU member states grew in 2001, but the pace of growth varied considerably (figure 4). Luxembourg and Ireland had the highest growth rates (more than 1%) and Germany and Austria the lowest (about 0.1% and 0.2%). France is closer to the European average, but it has the lowest net migration among the 15 members. Unlike most European countries, population growth in France is mainly due to an excess of births over deaths. The situation is just the opposite in Spain and Portugal,

Figure 4 – Population growth in the 15 European Union countries in 2001 (per thousand inhabitants)



The 15 European Union countries have been classed by decreasing order of total population growth (i.e. natural increase plus net migration). Natural increase (births minus deaths) is indicated by hatched colour and net migration by plain colour. Net migration was positive in 2001 in all 15 countries (i.e. more immigrants than emigrants). In 13 countries, there were more births than deaths, while in Germany and Sweden the deaths were more numerous (indicated by grey hatching).

Source: Eurostat [6].

which until recently had a large number of emigrants. Their population grew substantially in 2001 due to net migration which is now among the highest in Europe. Had there been no migration in Sweden and Germany the population would have decreased and in Austria and Italy it would have increased only very slightly.

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