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## Population and development in the overseas territories of Europe

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A number of overseas islands and territories – such as Martinique, Guadeloupe, the Canaries and the Azores – are linked to the European Union via certain member states. Do they share any common features? Do they resemble the European mainland in demographic terms? Jean-Louis Rallu presents the diversity of European overseas populations and explains the reasons behind the differences observed.

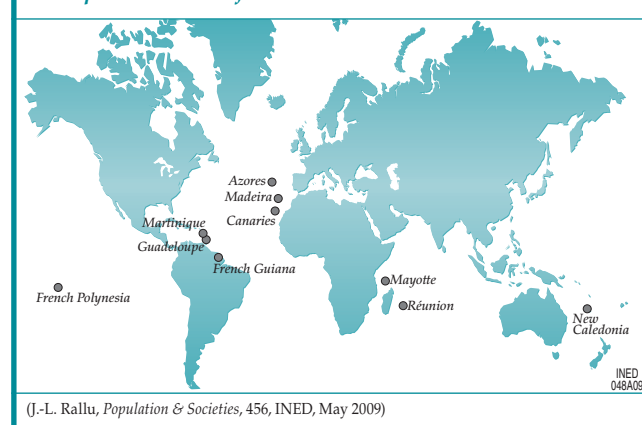
The European Union (EU) counts 27 countries in Europe and a number of overseas islands and territories in America, the Pacific and the Atlantic. While associated with the EU because they belong to one of the 27 EU member states, their relationship with the EU varies. Seven of them have outermost region status, namely, the four French overseas départements (Martinique, Guadeloupe, French Guiana and Réunion) two autonomous regions of Portugal (Azores and Madeira) and the Spanish autonomous community of the Canary Islands. Though located outside continental Europe, these regions form an integral part of the European Union. They benefit from “specific measures” including derogations from EU law to take account of their specific characteristics and constraints. What is the demographic situation in these outermost regions? Is it the same as in Europe? How does it affect employment and the economy? For a broader perspective, we have chosen to include in our comparison several other French overseas entities which form part of the EU but do not have outermost region status, namely Mayotte, New Caledonia and French Polynesia (1).

### ◆ From population stability to rapid growth

The Canary Islands are the most populated outermost region, with two million inhabitants (Table), followed

by Réunion (800,000), Guadeloupe and Martinique (400,000 each). The Portuguese outermost regions and the Pacific territories each count around 250,000 inhabitants. Mayotte and French Guiana have slightly smaller populations. Population density also varies widely, ranging from 511 inhabitants per sq.km in

Map – Location of the overseas territories considered



(J.-L. Rallu, *Population & Societies*, 456, INED, May 2009)

(1) French Polynesia and New Caledonia, formerly French overseas territories (TOM) are now overseas countries, with autonomous status. New Caledonia has its own institutions and certain prerogatives of the French state are progressively, but irreversibly, being handed over. Mayotte is a French overseas collectivity which voted on 29 March 2009 to become an overseas département.

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Table - Population, density and components of population growth (situation in 2007-2008)

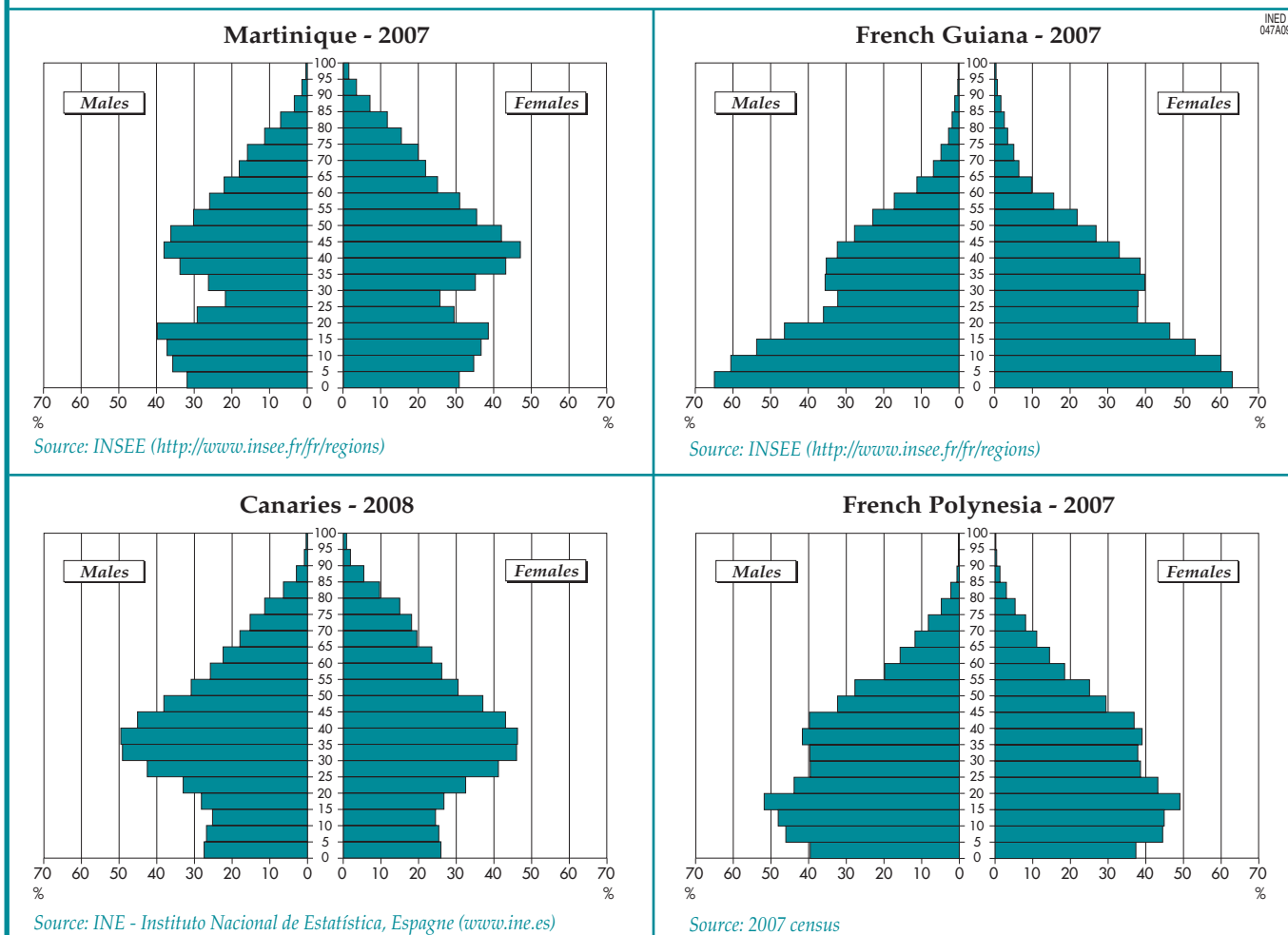
	Population (thousands of inhabitants)	Land area (thousand sq. km)	Density inhabitants per sq.km	Fertility (children per woman)	Life expectancy at birth <sup>(1)</sup> (years)	Birth rate (‰)	Death rate <sup>(2)</sup> (‰)	Growth <sup>(2)</sup> (‰)		
								Natural increase <sup>(3)</sup>	Net migration <sup>(4)</sup>	Total growth
<b>Outermost regions of the European Union</b>										
Canaries	2,062	74	277	1.2 <sup>(6)</sup>	72.5 <sup>(6)</sup>	9.8	6.5	3	20	23
Madeira	247	0.8	308	-	74.1 <sup>(7)</sup>	11.0	10.4	1	-4	-3
Azores	244	2.3	105	-	75.3 <sup>(7)</sup>	11.7	9.2	3	-1	2
Martinique	402	1.1	356	1.9 <sup>(5)</sup>	79.5 <sup>(5)</sup>	13.4	6.6	7	-1	6
Guadeloupe	406	1.6	249	2.2 <sup>(5)</sup>	78.5 <sup>(5)</sup>	15.9	6.4	10	-4	6
French Guiana	222	86.5	3	3.5 <sup>(5)</sup>	75.7 <sup>(5)</sup>	30.0	3.4	27	10	37
Réunion	802	2.5	319	2.5 <sup>(5)</sup>	76.1 <sup>(5)</sup>	18.3	5.5	13	-2	11
<b>Other entities</b>										
Mayotte	187	0.4	511	- <sup>(8)</sup>	- <sup>(8)</sup>	43 <sup>(8)</sup>	4 <sup>(8)</sup>	39	-8	31
New Caledonia	244	19.1	13	2.2 <sup>(6)</sup>	76.1 <sup>(6)</sup>	16.9	5.0	12	6	18
French Polynesia	260	4.2	62	2.2 <sup>(6)</sup>	74.9 <sup>(6)</sup>	17.8	4.4	13	-1	12

(1) Estimates are uncertain and may be strongly biased due to migration. (2) annual births, deaths or increase per 1,000 inhabitants. (3) surplus of births over deaths, rounded to whole numbers. (4) difference between migrant arrivals and departures, estimated by difference between natural and total growth. (5) 2004. (6) 2006. (7) 2007. (8) Because of children born to women living in Comoros who give birth in Mayotte and who give an address in Mayotte, the natural growth rates are difficult to estimate precisely; French Guiana is also affected but to a lesser extent.

Sources: Statistical offices - INE, INE, INSEE, ISEE, ISPF

(J.-L. Rallu, Population & Societies, 456, INED, May 2009)

Figure 1 - Population pyramid in selected overseas regions (2007-2008)



Note: Relative population sizes, for 1,000 inhabitants (the pyramids have the same surface area).

(J.-L. Rallu, Population & Societies, 456, INED, May 2009)

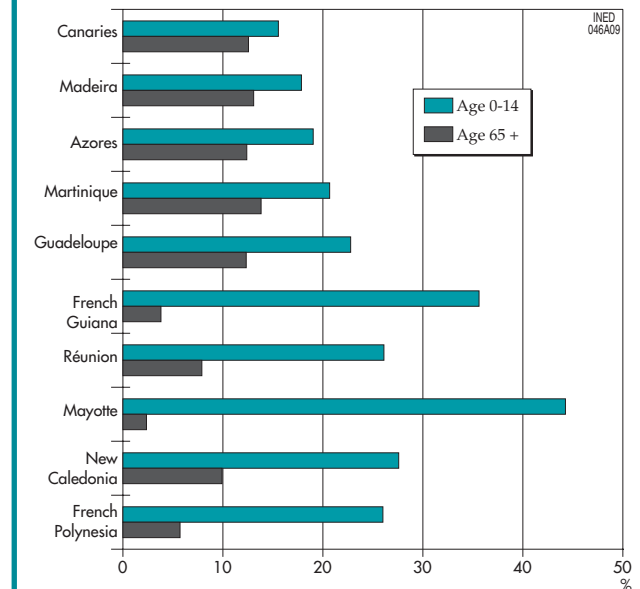
Mayotte to just 12 in New Caledonia and 3 in French Guiana. The Canaries, Madeira, Guadeloupe, Martinique and Réunion have densities of between 250 and 350 inhabitants per sq.km.

Fertility and migration flows also vary widely, resulting in diverse demographic trends. Population size is practically stationary in the Portuguese outermost regions and is increasing slowly at an annual rate of around 6 per 1,000 in Guadeloupe and Martinique (Table). Growth is just above 10 per 1,000 in French Polynesia and Réunion, but as high as 18 per 1,000 in New Caledonia, 23 per 1,000 in the Canary Islands and above 30 per 1,000 in Mayotte and French Guiana, where the population will double in 23 and 20 years, respectively, if growth continues at this rate. The Atlantic outermost regions (Canaries, Azores and Madeira) have very low fertility, like the countries of which they form part, and this explains the slow population growth in the Portuguese regions. In the Canaries, on the other hand, foreign and European immigration is producing rapid population growth; the island is a popular retirement location for older Europeans. In the Caribbean outermost regions the transition to low fertility was completed more than a decade ago. Net migration (the difference between migrant inflows and outflows) is slightly negative. Departures are frequent, among young adults aged 20-34 especially (Figure 1), and not fully offset by arrivals. Inflows comprise people from the French mainland, natives of other French overseas *départements* and neighbouring islands (for Guadeloupe) and return migrants. French Polynesia and New Caledonia have almost completed their demographic transition, although immigration to New Caledonia and the absence of large-scale emigration from French Polynesia are maintaining population growth at above 10 per 1,000 in these regions. This is also the case for Réunion, where, at 2.45 in 2004, the total fertility rate remains above replacement level (2.1) and the migration balance is slightly positive. Rapid population growth in French Guiana (37 per 1,000) and Mayotte (31 per 1,000) is due to fertility of more than 3 children per woman and large-scale immigration from neighbouring countries: from Brazil and Surinam for French Guiana, and from the Comoros for Mayotte, where the arrival of Comorians partly compensates for the departure of native residents.

### ◆ Varying degrees of demographic ageing

The entities with the highest natural growth, Mayotte and French Guiana, and to a lesser extent Réunion, French Polynesia and New Caledonia, have the youngest populations, with a high, or even very high, proportion of under-15s (Figures 1 and 2). The French West Indies are in an intermediate situation, while the Atlantic outermost regions have very low proportions of young people due to their low fertility. And along with the French West Indies, they also have the highest proportion of old people, with the immigration of retirees intensifying the process of “natural” ageing

Figure 2 - Share of under-15s and over-65s (in 2006-2008) (%)



Note: the proportion of persons aged 15-64 ranges from 53% in Mayotte to 72% in the Canaries.

(J.-L. Rallu, *Population & Societies*, 456, INED, May 2009)

Sources: Statistical offices - INE, INE, INSEE, ISEE, ISPF.

due to declining fertility and longer life expectancy. Old people represent a very small proportion of the populations of French Guiana and Mayotte, on the other hand (Figures 1 and 2).

The proportion of under-15s in overseas regions remains higher than on the mainland, and that of old people remains lower. The dependency ratio (2) in the French West Indies and Réunion is nonetheless close to that of mainland France (53%), but with a very different distribution of the dependent population between the under-15s and the over-65s. It is much higher in Mayotte (87%) and French Guiana (65%). In the Atlantic outermost regions, which count slightly more young people and far fewer old people than the mainland, the situation is very different. The dependency ratio of the Canary Islands is below that of Spain (46%), and likewise for Madeira and the Azores with respect to Portugal (49%).

### ◆ Can tourism be a driver of employment?

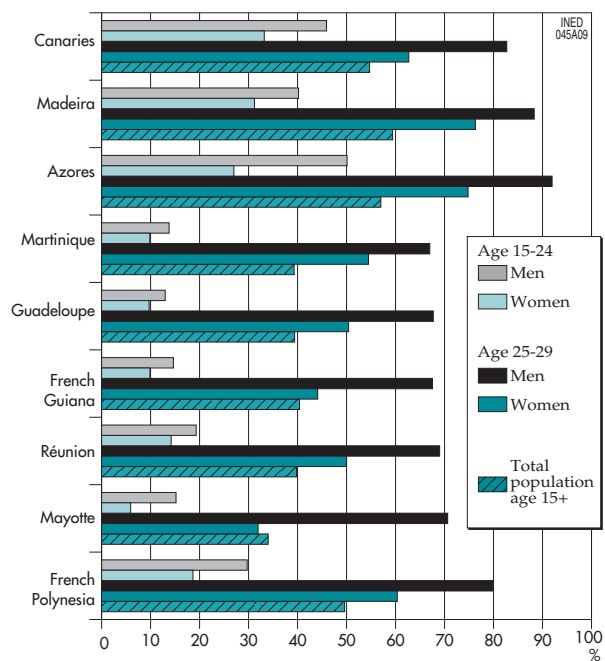
The youth employment rate (3) is much higher in the Atlantic outermost regions, where 40-50% of men aged 15-24 are in employment, than in the French overseas regions, where the rates are 14% in the French West Indies and French Guiana, 16% in Mayotte and 19% in Réunion. Only French Polynesia fares better, with a

(2) Ratio of under-15s and over-65s to adults aged 15-64, expressed as a percentage.

(3) The employment rate by age-group is the ratio of persons of a given age group in employment to the total population of the same age group. It does not take informal employment into account.

(4) Only figures for “all ages” are available for New Caledonia (55% for men and 40% for women). They are slightly below those of French Polynesia.

Figure 3 - Employment rate by sex and age (around 2006-2008) (%)



\* Canaries, ages 25-54; Azores and Madeira, ages 25-44

Note: the proportion of persons aged 15-64 ranges from 53% in Mayotte to 72% in the Canaries.

(J.-L. Rallu, *Population & Societies*, 456, INED, May 2009)

Sources: *Instituts de statistique - Ine, Ine, Insee, Isee, ISPF.*

rate of approaching 30% (4) (Figure 3). For young women, the differences are of a similar magnitude. The 1999-2001 censuses show that educational attendance partly explains the observed differences in employment rate, notably for women in the French West Indies. The proportion of men aged 15-24 who are “neither students nor in employment” was around 22% in the French West Indies, 28% in French Guiana and Réunion, 12% in the Azores and Madeira and 18% in the Canaries. Among young women, the proportion was 20% in the French West Indies similar to Madeira and the Canaries, compared with 28% in the Azores and more than 30% in French Guiana and Réunion. The employment rates are less divergent at older ages.

Low youth employment and, to a lesser extent, adult employment, remain a key problem in the French overseas territories, despite large-scale emigration from the French West Indies, the Canaries and Mayotte. The situation is identical in French Guiana, which has positive net migration. In the Canary Islands, immigration and employment are both high, as is the case, though to a lesser extent, in New Caledonia. Note, however, that the informal sector is more developed in the French overseas regions than on the mainland.

Islands are popular tourist destinations and tourism is a labour-intensive sector. The mean annual number of tourists per inhabitant ranges from above 4 in the Atlantic outermost regions to 1.6 in Martinique, around 1 in Guadeloupe, New Caledonia and French Polynesia, 0.5 in Réunion and French Guiana and 0.2 in Mayotte. These ratios are reflected in the proportion of jobs in the hotel and restaurant trade: 9% in French

Polynesia (in 2007), versus 14% in the Canaries. The French overseas regions are less attractive and more expensive for tourists than the Atlantic outermost regions because they are more remote and the cost of living is higher.

More generally speaking, another reason for the economic difficulties of the French overseas regions is their economic misalignment with respect to neighbouring countries. Located in developing regions, The French overseas territories are islands of prosperity buoyed up by substantial support from the French mainland. Prices are higher and labour costs likewise. This situation drastically reduces the scope for regional exports. Because of high production costs, many of the products that could be produced locally are imported, while the major trading and transport companies that work with the mainland strive to protect their business interests.

Rapid or very rapid population growth, sometimes tempered by emigration, combined with low employment, economic fragility linked to assisted development and a high cost of living are the main factors that set the French outermost regions apart from those of Portugal and Spain. They are also the main challenges to their development.

#### ABSTRACT

Statistical offices:

- INE - Instituto Nacional de Estatística (Portugal), [www.ine.pt](http://www.ine.pt)
- INE - Instituto Nacional de Estatística (Spain), [www.ine.es](http://www.ine.es)
- INSEE - regional sites and regional economic tables, <http://www.insee.fr/fr/regions>, in particular INSEE Antilles-Guyane (AntianÉchos)
- ISEE - Institut de la statistique et des études économiques / Nouvelle-Calédonie, [www.itsee.nc](http://www.itsee.nc)
- ISPF - Institut de la statistique de la Polynésie française, [www.ispf.pf](http://www.ispf.pf)

Direction du Tourisme - Le tourisme dans l'outre-mer français, October 2007, [http://www.tourisme.gouv.fr/fr/z2/stat/etudes/att00017746/outre-mer\\_octobre07.pdf](http://www.tourisme.gouv.fr/fr/z2/stat/etudes/att00017746/outre-mer_octobre07.pdf)

#### ABSTRACT

The outermost regions of the European Union have contrasting demographic situations. Although fertility is low in the Atlantic outermost regions (1.2 children per woman on average in the Canaries) and in Martinique (1.9), and the rate of natural increase similar to that of the mainland countries to which they belong (around 3 per 1,000), French Guiana and Mayotte still have high fertility levels and a young population (35% and 44% of their inhabitants, respectively, are under 15), as do New Caledonia (28%) and French Polynesia (26%). In the Canaries, large-scale immigration more than offsets low fertility, resulting in sustained population growth (+23 per 1,000). In French Guiana and Mayotte, immigration and fertility are both high, and their populations are growing rapidly (+37 per 1,000 and +31 per 1,000, respectively). Employment rates are much higher in the Atlantic outermost regions (60%) than in the French overseas *départements* (40%). Regional integration, extending beyond tourism, is now a major challenge for the development of these overseas regions.