

Aubervilliers, December 21, 2022

## **RECENT DEMOGRAPHIQUE TRENDS IN FRANCE** *Demographic behaviors still affected by COVID-19 at both the regional and national levels*

Every year, as part of its mission to inform the public on demographic questions, INED publishes an article on recent demographic trends in France. Using data available so far, this year's article focuses on the year 2021, during which the COVID-19 epidemic continued to affect all components of France's population dynamics. Demographic behaviors were less affected than in 2020, but the indicators—numbers of births, induced abortions, formal unions (marriages and civil partnerships), and deaths—have not yet returned to their pre-COVID crisis levels, a sign that the country has only partially recovered. Regarding migration, in 2020 the health crisis had unprecedented effects on migration flows from countries requiring a residence permit. This year's study is particularly attentive to regional contrasts.

### **France remains the main driver of European Union population growth**

On January 1, 2022, the population of France stood at 67.8 million, 187,000 more than on January 1, 2021. Natural increase in 2021 was 81,000—lower than net migration as estimated by INSEE. In 2021, France was one of nine EU countries (out of 27) to show a positive natural balance (births minus deaths). The country's demographic dynamics are characterized by strong geographical diversity.

### **Fewer entries of “third”-country nationals (required to have a residence permit) than in 2019**

In 2020, the most recent year for which statistics are available, 211,255 nationals required to have a residence permit to live in France entered the country, as against 257,137 in 2019, a drop of 17.8% due in large part to the difficulty if not impossibility of movement during the health crisis. The decrease in number of persons entering for occupational reasons was particularly sharp. In metropolitan France, the Île-de-France region received the largest proportion of the inflow (38.4%), while in overseas France, the island *département* of Mayotte absorbed 50.2% of migration inflow.

### **Birth numbers partially restored**

In 2021, 742,500 children were born in France, 7,300 more than in 2020 but still 10,900 fewer than in 2019, the year preceding the COVID crisis. The increase in births is due almost entirely to rising fertility: the total fertility rate increased slightly in 2021, reaching 1.83 (as against 1.80 in 2020). Women aged 30 to 34 and 35 to 39 had the most children on average. France is still the EU country with the highest fertility, but Romania is now close behind.

### **Fertility-by-age models that vary by region**

Four different regional fertility profiles are found in France: women bearing children relatively early in their reproductive lives (with a peak between the ages of 25 and 29), who live primarily in the northern half of the country (Picardie, Nord-Pas-de-Calais, Centre-Val de Loire, Bourgogne, Poitou-Charentes); women bearing children relatively late (with a peak between the ages of 30 and 34), who live primarily along France's segment of the Atlantic Arc and in the South of France (Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur [PACA], Bretagne, Aquitaine, Midi-Pyrénées, Languedoc-Roussillon); the overseas *départements*, where rates among women

aged 20-24 are higher than elsewhere in the country; and atypical metropolitan *départements* (Corse, with a very low fertility rate and a plateau in childbearing at 25 to 34 years of age, and Île-de-France, with a high peak in the 30-34 age bracket).

### **Abortion numbers stable**

The figure for induced abortions in 2021 is 224,000, as against 222,300 in 2020 and the higher number of 233,300 in 2019. With the diffusion of medical abortion, the number of surgical abortions has fallen every year recently while the proportion of medical abortions, supervised primarily in private physicians' offices, is rising (77% in 2021). While most abortions in 2021 were still performed in healthcare facilities (65%), the proportion of medication abortions taking place in physicians' offices rose (to 35% in 2021, compared to 20% in 2015). Abortion rates vary considerably by region, with above-average rates in most Île-de-France, PACA, and Languedoc-Roussillon *départements* and in overseas *département*-regions.

### **Higher number of marriages in 2021 after historically low figures the preceding year**

After dropping to a historic low in 2020, the number of marriages rose in 2021, though not to the 2019 level. The number of civil unions for 2021 is not yet known, but in 2020 their total number pulled ahead of marriages for the first time since the PACS (Pacte Civil de Solidarité) was instituted in France in 1999. Same-sex unions represented 2.7% of marriages in 2021, 0.3% less than in 2020; and for the second consecutive year France recorded more female than male same-sex marriages. Nuptiality rates vary distinctly from one region to another. Marriage is more frequent on the country's Eastern flank, from Alsace to the Mediterranean, while civil unions dominate on the Atlantic coast and in the Southwest. Moreover, a geographical study of same-sex unions shows that those between men are concentrated in Île-de-France while those between women are spread across the country.

The health crisis not only made it difficult to get married or PACSed but also to get divorced. Divorce statistics cover only legal divorces and do not include divorce by mutual consent. The number of legal divorces fell in 2020 (to 57,400), a drop of 13% from 2019. Unions are dissolved more frequently in the South and East of France, whether by divorce or PACS dissolution; the figures are considerably lower in the Northwest.

### **France has not yet entirely recovered its pre-COVID life expectancy levels**

657,000 deaths were recorded in France in 2021, 1.70% fewer than in 2020 but still 7.2% more than in 2019. Between 2020 and 2021, life expectancy rose 2.4 months for men (to 79.3 years) and 3.6 months for women (to 85.4 years), after decreasing 7 and 5 months respectively between 2019 and 2020. Estimated excess mortality is 6.3% (as against 7.5% in 2020). The year 2020 was no "ordinary" one: the COVID-19 epidemic scrambled the traditional regional mortality ranking, and the regions undergoing the highest excess mortality were not the same as in 2019, in metropolitan France at least. The Île-de-France and Southeast regions experienced high excess mortality, whereas general mortality is usually low there. Lorraine, Nord-Pas-de Calais, Basse-Normandie, and Picardie, with relatively high initial mortality levels, were also hard-hit.

[Click here to download the full article from the journal \*Population\*\\* 4: 2022](#)

\* Every year, the INED journal *Population* publishes an article on recent demographic trends in France that offers a detailed analysis of demographic developments in the country over the preceding decades. The data presented are generally not as recent as those published by INSEE in its January demographic overview, but the longer temporal perspective in the INED article allows for presenting more detailed data on the year or period studied and finer-grained analysis. Each year the *Population* article focuses on a specific thematic component of the data. This year, the authors chose to examine indicators at the scale of France's former regional administrative units [the country's *régions* were redrawn in 2015], not only to highlight regional contrasts and facilitate comparison with regions of other European Union countries, but also to investigate the effects of the COVID crisis in terms of internal spatial variations in demographic behaviors.

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### **About INED:**

The French Institute for Demographic Studies (Ined) is a public research institute specialized in population studies that works in partnership with the academic and research communities at national and international levels. Ined's approach to demography is resolutely open and interdisciplinary, implicating a wide range of disciplines including economics, history, geography, sociology,

anthropology, biology and epidemiology. With its 10 research units and 2 research units in partnership, Ined promotes communication and exchange within the scientific community and the general public while conducting numerous European and international research projects.

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