

The Role of French Language Proficiency in the Social Integration of France's Immigrant Populations

1. INTRODUCTION

The goal of my thesis is to investigate the integration of the large immigrant community currently living in France. I define the role of French language proficiency in immigrants' labor market success, measured through household income. From a policy-making perspective, I determine which characteristics of the individual immigrant affect his or her ability to learn French. I evaluate the language assimilation policies currently in place France in service of the immigrant population and, based on the results of the study, conclude whether these policies are efficiently focused. Questions that I address include 1) on which policies should the French government invest its resources in order to best integrate its immigrant population into the social and economic community? 2) How integral is the role played by language acquisition in this integration process? 3) Should language-teaching policies target certain immigrant groups more than others and on certain minorities or age groups?

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 THE FRENCH LANGUAGE CONFRONTING GLOBALIZATION

France's recent wave of xenophobia towards incoming immigrants, exacerbated by the current economic environment, reflects a national sentiment of cultural superiority that was centuries in the making. French today serves as the official language of many international organizations, including the United Nations, the European Union, the International Olympic

Committee, Doctors Without Borders, the African Union, and the European Commission. This diverse group illustrates France's evolving, many-faceted role in the global community: first as an intellectual leader of the 1600s Enlightenment, a proponent of human rights and inspiration of revolutions, an empire which under Napoleon disseminated French society across Europe, an indefatigable colonial giant which cultivated the French language as far from France as Haiti and Vietnam, and finally as a founding member of the Council of Europe. According to the International Francophone Organization (OIF), French is spoken today by 220 million individuals in over 75 nations and on five continents. French is the sole official language of France and is an official language of twenty-eight other countries, mostly in Africa and Europe. (French Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014).

The impressive numbers and lists do not encapsulate the decades of war, decolonization and Marshall Plan aid that have gradually humbled this once superpower. Modern day France is struggling to accept a new world order in which its cultural reputation cannot alone earn it respect and in which its language is no longer the primary international language of diplomacy (Schiffman 1996). The French Ministry of Culture and its many partner organizations play an essential role in defending French culture on the world stage. The fight against English invasion is strong and written into legislation. For example, the Toubon law of 1994 seeks to protect France's linguistic tradition by promoting the "enrichment of the language; obligation to use the French language; and advocacy of French as the language of the Republic" (Compendium of Cultural Policies 2014). It demands the use of French in all public documents, in workplaces, contracts, public schools, and broadcast audiovisual works; it establishes a minimum quota of French language songs to be played by all radio stations. In 1998 the OIF declared the first International Day of Francophonie, celebrated annually on March 20th, and during which a week

of staged events celebrating and educating the public about French linguistic traditions is held (OIF).

Concerning domestic language policies, France's Parliament is currently debating the Council of Europe's Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, which France signed in 1999 but failed to ratify. The Charter promotes the protection and usage of Europe's dying regional dialects as gems of cultural diversity and prevents discrimination against these dialects that would prevent them from flourishing. In France and many overseas territories, regional languages that would fall under this category include Flemish, Basque, Corsican, Creole, Tahitian, and some Arabic dialects like Berber and Yiddish which came to France via immigration. According to the 1999 census, only about a third of adults who speak these minority languages pass them on to their children (Barbière 2014).

France's constitution states that French is the Republic's official language and leaves no room for the recognition of regional diversity. This policy harkens back to the Third Republic, a relatively peaceful period in which were passed a series of education reforms, known as the Jules Ferry laws, named after the Minister of Public Instruction in the 1880's. These reforms focused on centralizing the Republic and creating a uniform system of public education in order to solidify a strong state. By calling for the punishment of children who used dialects other than standardized French in school, regional languages like Breton (from the Brittany region) and Occitan (from Provence) were uprooted. These local dialects, which until that point were widely spoken, have been forgotten by all but *les grandparents* and the occasional quirky scholar (French Ministry of Education).

France, therefore, is a nation trying to enforce and balance a strong national identity with the forces of globalization, which pressure for the cultivation of minority identities and

unconditional openness to the diverse cultures of immigrants and refugees that come knocking on its doors in search of a better life (Council of Europe).

How can France find the paradoxical balance between allowing foreign identities to take root on its home soil and protecting its own national identity? The General Delegation for the French language and the languages of France (DGLFLF) is charged with the mission for find this balance. It recognizes that

of all the bonds which tie together members of a society, the bond of their language is the strongest, because it creates the sentiment of belonging to a community. Because the globalization of trade and the construction of the European community are continually redefining this bond, it's called upon the government to reaffirm a language policy which, as it guarantees the preeminence of French on French soil, also pursues social cohesion and contributes to the promotion of Europe's and the world's cultural diversity.

The debate is underway. France faces the challenge of cultural redefinition – its own brand of the identity crisis faced by every nation of the world – introspection amidst globalization. Its reluctance to ratify the Council of Europe's minority language charter shows a significant fear of the invading "other;" this fear prevents public officials from accepting the inevitability of heavy migration flows and from establishing immigration policies that reflect this modern reality.

2.2 *IMMIGRATION INTO FRANCE*

France's migrant population provides a living history of the country's location as a crossroad, its imperial and colonial past, and its current membership in the European Union. Immigrants today arrive from the Maghreb in North Africa, ex-French colonies in West Africa and off the East African coast, Vietnam and all of ex-Indochina, the French-speaking Caribbean,

Turkey, Spain, Italy, and Portugal, and many other countries. Centuries of these incoming immigrants reflect France's modern history. In the 19th century the reputation of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen drew migrants fleeing injustice in their homelands (e.g. Jews fleeing discrimination in tsarist Russia). France's sizeable industrial development drew foreigners in search of jobs. Refugees from two centuries of European wars often settled there. And France's many ex-colonial countries continually sent immigrants to France after their wars of independence in the 20th century, e.g. Algeria and Indochina (Cité Nationale 2013).

Most recently, the creation of the EU has made the free movement of European peoples not only commonplace but entirely legal, even obligatory for member states. In response to this and in recognition of the many non-European citizens living within the EU, the European Commission established in 2007 an integration fund, recognizing that

immigration has a valuable role to play in strengthening the EU's competitiveness, addressing current and future demographic challenges and filling labour shortages. The key to maximizing the benefits of immigration is the successful integration of migrants into their host societies (European Commission 2014).

In practice though, France exhibits the same paranoia as other popular immigrant-receiving countries, a tendency only worsened by strained economic conditions. One of the axioms of France's far-right wing Front National party is the protection of a "French national identity" that, it claims, cannot include the huge North African population that has made Islam France's second religion. Nor are other European migrants welcome, with Roma, Bulgaria and other Eastern European nationals being the notorious scapegoats in government threats to deport poor temporary workers (Marlowe 2013).

Compared to other industrialized nations, France receives relatively few foreigners: its annual immigration flow amounts to only about 0.3 percent of the already-established population. This is about half the rate of the Netherlands (0.6 percent) and about a fourth that of Norway (1.2 percent) (Immigration, Asile, Accueil 2014). France's rate is the lowest of all European countries except the Czech Republic, yet its anti-immigrant activists are among Europe's most passionate. To prevent further misperceptions of the immigration reality, more surveys and studies are needed in order to quantify the numbers arriving in France as well as their subsequent effects on the local economy and culture.

2.3 *IMMIGRATION AND LANGUAGE INTEGRATION POLICIES*

2.3.1 *Immigration Politics: 2013-2014*

Manuel Valls, Minister of the Interior, gave a press conference this past January on the government's immigration politics (Immigration, Asile, Accueil 2014). France is currently home to 6.1 million people of foreign background, about 9.4% of the total population. This includes some 2.3 million who became French citizens and foreign nationals who were born either abroad or in metropolitan France. Almost a quarter of 25-54 years olds are either immigrants or children of immigrants. Of those born abroad, approximately 40% were born within the European Union.

Yet, as mentioned above, France takes a particularly adamant stance on maintaining its national identity; no room is left in the rhetoric for a future as a melting pot of world cultures. French politicians of all parties speak not of the *integration* of foreign cultures but their total *assimilation* into French society. Valls addresses those who migrate for political reasons or to join family members. He states that "moving to and living in France, these are rights and duties as well. It means accepting to share republican values, including secularism. It also includes

learning the language in order to have a place in the national community.” He addresses the government’s intentions to welcome more student migrants as a means of generating cultural soft power: “What better ambassador for France, what better bridge between two countries than a young person who we’ve welcomed, formed and who leaves with a bit of France in him?” (2). He denounces “the illusions of those who would like for France to welcome everyone – it cannot!” as well as “the errors, sometimes outrageous, of those who plead for ‘zero immigration,’ a cookie-cutter slogan which goes against France’s history, and the reality of our modern world” (1).

The Minister of the Interior then discusses objectives for 2014, including reforms of the strategy combatting illegal immigration, the system of detention and repatriation of migrants, and the process for recognizing and granting asylum according to European-wide directives. He also calls for an emphasis on greater transparency of facts and numbers, by which policymakers and the population might better understand the immigration reality and to diminish the omnipresent fear of the other (10). Such statements are common among immigration host countries. The implementation of efficient policies to implement these ideals is left to be seen.

2.3.2 History of Integration Organizations

In the fall of 1945 General de Gaulle signed the ordinance creating the National Immigration Office (ONI), which in the immediate postwar era held the exclusive power of “all the operations associated with the recruitment and introduction into France of workers originating from overseas territories and abroad.” The efforts of the ONI are partially to thank for France’s post-war success. From the immediate post-war to present day, the ONI underwent changes in its format and policies, according to the shifting international economic climate and

the accompanying levels of xenophobia in the French population. Its most recent transformation, the Office of Immigration and Integration (OFII), governs all matters concerning legal immigration into the country. Established in 2009 under the Ministry of the Interior, its mission includes “the welcoming and integration of those immigrants authorized to live long-term in France,” those who have signed the State’s welcome/integration contract, those demanding asylum, and those foreigners who need help to return to their countries of origin.

The sixty-year transition from ONI to OFII shows the increasing influence of international human rights standards, the European Union’s recognition of ethnic minorities, and the government’s own realization that the foreigners on its soil are no longer temporary workers but intend to make France their home. The principle sign of this shift is OFII’s emphasis on integrating foreigners linguistically, economically and culturally into French society.

OFII’s integration program for legal immigrants centers on its *Welcome and integration contract* (CAI), established in 2006. The program is obligatory for those immigrants who wish to live permanently in France; these immigrants are 1) family members of those who have already immigrated to France, 2) foreign members of French families, 3) refugees, or 4) without citizenship who hope to establish themselves permanently in France. The process is begun either upon arrival in France or in one of OFII’s international offices, located in countries with large minority populations in France: Morocco, Tunisia, Mali, Senegal, Cameroon, Turkey, Romania, Armenia, and Canada. In principle, signing the CAI establishes a “relationship of mutual confidence and obligation” between the new arrival and France, offering free classes in exchange for a promise to uphold the values of the Republic. A signing of the contract includes an interview used to evaluate the immigrant’s written and spoken French proficiency, reasons for moving to France, and whether or not he or she needs assistance becoming established in the

community; this interview serves as a basis for assigning each immigrant to the appropriate language and culture classes needed to gain autonomy in the new environment.

The part of the integration process that is critical to my paper is the effectiveness of these French language classes. CAI interviewers can grant dispensation from these classes if an immigrant is deemed sufficiently fluent; for everyone else they are obligatory, under penalty of not receiving a renewal of the long-term visa. A maximum of 400 class hours are free. Each of France's 99 geographic departments has a training center where classes occur. Courses target the needs of numerous migrants, including those who arrived in France before the implementation of the CAI and these services became more widely available.

Other programs exist that emphasize the linguistic education of female migrants, especially those dependent on their husbands, and for whom learning French is a means of gaining independence. These are created especially for women from countries where women are legal dependents and unaccustomed to the same rights and privileges as men.

With the cooperation of the Department of Education, the Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Community Development financed an experimental program in 2008 for immigrant parents who want to follow their children's progress in school but who face a formidable language barrier. Ten academies in various regions accompany the parents' free CAI language classes with classes on the structure and functions of the French school system (Ministère De L'intérieur 2008). Parents can become informed on student and parent rights and learn strategies on how they can enhance their children's educations. Children have a higher chance at academic success, and parents have an easier, deeper transition into the local community.

A 2004 addition to France's labor laws entitles immigrants in the workforce to French instruction as a means to find and keep jobs for which they otherwise would be unqualified (French Ministry of the Interior 2011). On the whole, integration policies include a wide variety of immigrant audiences (professional, unemployed, new-comers, etc.) and show creative effort to pinpoint those groups of migrants most in need of language integration. Most of these policies are too new for any formal evaluation process. Ideally, officials in charge of French instruction for immigrants would develop an evaluation system by which to gauge students' progress in CAI classes and similar programs. Future studies should examine the effectiveness and long-run benefits of the body of programs that teaches French to immigrants.

3. LANGUAGE CAPITAL: FOUNDATIONS and THEORY

Research on the economics of language expanded greatly in the 1970's, motivated in large part by work by Barry Chiswick. He approached language as country specific human capital, capable of increasing returns to other forms of human capital investment (like education) by improving job prospects and earnings. The choice to invest in learning a language depended on these perceived future benefits as well as the costs of books, classes, and time. For example, an immigrant trained as a doctor in his home country could only use his education in a host country if he learned the local language. Two major themes of Chiswick's work were 1) the causes of language acquisition of immigrants in the host country, and 2) the effects of language proficiency on an immigrant's earnings. He showed that an immigrant's decision to learn the new language was based on costs and benefits. The expected future benefits of language proficiency included higher wages, a greater feeling of belonging, a broader social network, and the ability to be politically active.

Chiswick (2008) divided the determinants of immigrant destination-language proficiency into three categories that he calls the three “E’s”: Exposure, Efficiency and Economic incentives.

Exposure included whether or not the immigrant came from a country where the destination language was spoken, like a former colony; other variables included years since migration, ethnic enclave neighborhoods, the permanence of one’s stay in the host country, and the nationality and language skills of the spouse. The presence of children in the household could improve the proficiency of the family: they learn language skills in school and teach their immigrant parents. Or children might have a negative effect on language acquisition if parents only use their native language in the house and do not integrate the family into the new society.

Efficiency depended on an individual’s characteristics that make him/her a better language learner. Children absorb language rapidly, so younger ages at migration increased an individual’s likelihood of learning the host-country language. Education reflected general learning skills and intelligence that contributed to language acquisition. Language groups mattered. For example, an immigrant from Spain could more easily learn French than Mandarin because of familiarity with Romance languages. An immigrant’s reasons for migrating also influence efficiency. For example, immigrants on worker visas were more efficient learners than refugees. The former arrived with the intention of joining a new labor market where knowledge of the local language was an asset; the latter arrived fleeing their home countries and without incentives to learn the new language.

Finally, **Economic incentives** motivate new language acquisition. Immigrants anticipated income premiums from knowing the host country language.

The primary model to estimate the effect of language proficiency on immigrant labor market earnings was a human capital earnings function in which the natural log of wages was

regressed on a set of explanatory variables, including language. A strong, positive relationship between earnings and language proficiency was found consistently in the literature; the greater the level of proficiency, the higher the earnings.

The foundation of my model is Chiswick's theory. Most studies focused on one of the many language variables used in Chiswick's research and explored its effect on the integration into the labor market.

4. PREVIOUS EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

There is a wide range of research on the effects of language proficiency on immigrants' economic assimilation. The bulk of these studies centered on English-speaking host countries well-known as immigrant destinations – the US, Canada, and the UK. In more recent years the literature has included some EU countries – Germany and Spain.

South Africa shares part of the U.S. interest in language economics, as both countries have histories of significant racial inequality. In South Africa English is a minority language, but without English skills it is extremely difficult to find employment and living wages. Recent studies have looked at the role of English proficiency in the labor market success of South Africa's black population. Casale and Posel (2011) estimated regression models of wages and found very large returns to English language proficiency. Once English proficiency was controlled in the model, workers' characteristics contributed significantly to earnings. The wage premium for African language proficiency was four times lower than the premium for English proficiency.

A study of India examined the wage returns to English proficiency. Azam, Chin & Prakash (2013) first considered the difference in the returns to English for men and women and

controlled on education, age and social caste. They found that there was a 34% increase in men's hourly wages if they were fluent in English; this wage premium was significant and as large as the return to completion of high school. The effect of English on women's wages was comparable to the effect on men's wages but only in urban areas where English was more widely used and human density and ease of transportation made it easier for women to find jobs that fit their skill set. The authors divided the data by caste and found that the wage premium was almost twice as high for upper castes compared to the lowest castes; the authors attributed this difference to discrimination against the lowest ranked persons in Indian society that made their human language capital irrelevant to wages.

An interesting paper on Sweden evaluated a pay-for-performance scheme that compensated local districts whose immigrant populations performed well on language tests. These tests were part of a free tuition system that provided basic reading and writing training to immigrants. The study examined how these financial awards affected language capital accumulation among adult immigrants. The authors found a substantial average impact of these bonuses on students' language achievement level. This improvement was more significant in metropolitan areas; most of this premium was due to Stockholm's high achievement levels, probably affected by advantages of better transportation and faster rates of enrollment in the capital. The authors admitted that, because this study was so unique and the first of its kind, more research on this incentives system was needed to gauge its effectiveness (Aslund & Engdahl 2012).

A Chinese study took a slightly different approach and focused on interregional rather than international immigrants. Standard Mandarin was treated as the destination language, and cities were the destination "countries." This adaptation of language theory illustrated the

overlooked significance of regional dialects in an individual's labor mobility even within his or her own country. The authors found that wages were 42.1% higher for those proficient in standard Mandarin. This study also controlled for the endogeneity of language acquisition by using Instrumental Variable (IV) estimates (Gao & Smyth 2011).

Finally, few studies focused on language's influence on wages in France. A 2009 study discussed the role of intermarriage between an immigrant and a French partner on that immigrant's integration into the French labor market. The authors found a 17% wage premium for both male and female intermarried immigrants, and this premium was much higher among African migrants (Meng & Meurs 2009). Many African migrants in France come from francophone countries, and the premium from intermarriage was attributable more to increased knowledge of the French labor market and easier cultural integration than to an advantage in language skill.

5. DATA

The data are from the 2008 survey Trajectoires et Origines (TeO) or "Trajectories and Origins." The goals of this survey were to increase public knowledge of the standard of living, culture and possible discrimination experienced by immigrants and descendants of immigrants living in France (INED). There was little concrete data with which to evaluate immigrant assimilation or establish informed immigration policies, on which sound immigration policies might be founded. TeO was the first survey of its kind in France to focus on minority populations and provide specific data on French language proficiency.

Immigrants and immigrant descendants were overrepresented in order to obtain more detail on the standard of living for immigrants in France, especially persons from ex-Indochina,

Turkey, and francophone Africa (Central Africa, the Gulf of Guinea and the Sahel Sub-Saharan region). Second-generation immigrants were tracked through birth registries available in local city halls/mayor's offices. The questionnaires were sent out to participants during the summer of 2008.

The survey divided participants into five categories: immigrants who were born abroad who had lived in France for at least one year (8,300 persons); direct descendants of immigrants who were born in France to one or two immigrant parents (8,200 persons); people born in a French overseas department (700 persons); people born in metropolitan France to at least one parent born in a French overseas department (700 persons); and French "natives" who were born in France to parents both born in France (3,900 persons). Emphasis was placed on the first two categories; over 19,000 of 24,000 surveyed were immigrants or their descendants. The surveys were given via a face-to-face interview process. Translators were utilized when needed for those participants with weak knowledge of French.

Participants were selected from the population of people living in households in metropolitan France who had participated in the 2007 census. Special preference was given to people with an immigrant or overseas background. The targeted age group was 18 to 60 years old – the workforce population. These individuals answered personal questions as well as questions concerning their entire household. After all the surveys were reviewed, only households that gave sufficiently long and informative interviews were kept in the data, the final number of respondents was 21,761.

The questionnaire focused on three broad topics. The first was family/social environment, including descriptions of extended family, members of a household or lodging, and social networks. Particular attention was given to an individual's choice of spouse/partner and the

functioning of the network through which the individual found and chose a spouse (the local “marriage market”). Numerous very detailed questions probed into family environment when the individual was a child and in school. The second category of questions focuses on access to resources. These included household income, sources of income, and assistance received from government social programs. These questions examine the participant’s access to education, health services, political participation, and employment services. Specific questions ask if the participant had been refused employment, medical care or real estate because of race, gender or age.

The third category concerned cultural particularities and ethnic origins. Details on the geographic region of origin, place of birth, nationality of one’s parents, reasons for having migrated, languages spoken and religions practiced were collected. Questions on self-perception and personal identity were asked to gauge participants’ sense of belonging in their French communities. Do you best define yourself by your nationality, religion, political opinions or other characteristic? Respondents were asked if they see themselves as French and if they gave up their origins in order to be accepted in France.

I assume that all persons born in France are proficient in French, so I include in the final data set only persons who were born outside of Metropolitan France. Of these foreign-born I exclude all those who report that their native language was French. Not all questions in the survey were answered by all respondents. I further narrowed the data to include only those respondents who responded to questions concerning income and proficiency. The final sample size included 6,641 households.

6. VARIABLES and MODEL

6.1 DEPENDENT VARIABLE

Income is a measure of the individual's household's monthly resources, measured in euros. This includes the total of all residents' salaries, rents, interest on savings, and social security. This sum was converted into a per capita measure of household resources by dividing total income by the number of adult equivalents in the household. I used the modified OECD equivalence scale in which the household head adult receives a weight of 1.0, all other adults receive a 0.5 weight, and all children receive a 0.3 weight. The data indicate the total number of members in a household, the number of adults (18 years and older) and the number of children (younger than 18 years old). It also indicated how many of the children had salaries; these individuals were counted as adults in the calculation of per capita weights.

6.2 LANGUAGE VARIABLES

A series of variables on current and past **French skills** covers reading, writing and speaking; all of these variables are self-gauged by the survey participants and can be biased; education, fear of discrimination, and insufficient knowledge on gauging language abilities may affect responses. These language variables are aggregated into a single variable for proficiency with four different levels: 1) knows French very well, 2) speaks and understands very well, 3) has some lesser knowledge of French, or 4) knows no French. I label a person as proficient if he or she falls in the first category and "knows French very well." This meant that he or she read, wrote, spoke and understood French very well.

All of the respondents included in my study were born outside of France. Because of confidentiality concerns, detailed information on country of origin and country-specific

citizenship was not distributed to the public. However I do know if a respondent is a citizen of 1) France, 2) another of the EU's member states, or 3) a country outside of the EU. French citizenship status should correlate highly with French proficiency since language is required to become a naturalized citizen of the Republic ("Conditions").

6.3 *DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES*

One variable indicates whether a respondent comes from any of France's ex-colonies in **Sub-Saharan Africa**, including Benin, Burkina-Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, the Comoros, the Congo, Ivory Coast, Djibouti, Gabon, Republic of Guinea, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Gambia, Chad and Togo. This is the only available variable on immigrants' region of origin; I utilize it as a means of comparing incomes and living standards of immigrant populations from different ethnic and geographic groups.

Participants range from 18 to 60 years of age. **Years spent in France** ranges from 0 to 56 and is based on the age at which the participant migrated. An additional variable indicates whether immigrants arrived before or after age 16, a threshold age after which learning new languages becomes increasingly more difficult and costly (Chiswick 2008).

Legal marital status indicates whether the participant is single, married or remarried, widowed or divorced. It's uncertain what effect this would have on household income per capita, though in previous studies, married men tend to have higher wages, especially more traditional societies where only the father works to support an entire family.

Number of children in the home ranges from 0 to 11. **Number of persons in the household** ranges from 0 to 14.

6.4 *EDUCATION VARIABLES*

Highest diploma level obtained represents education level and includes schooling completed both in France and abroad. I divided education into four dummy variables: 1) high school diploma or less, 2) Baccalaureate degree, 3) two years of university, and 4) more than two years of university. A Baccalaureate (BAC) level indicates the end-of-high school exams on various disciplines, that earns students either technical degrees or entry into university level study. All BAC levels have been aggregated into a single indicator variable.

Education gained in France may have a different effect than education gained abroad. **Place of schooling** is included in the model to control for these potential differences in returns to education. This variable indicates whether a participant was educated only in France, only abroad, or both.

6.5 *COMMUNITY VARIABLES*

Geographic region of residence is limited to the 21 regions of Metropolitan France located on the European continent (Figure.6). I divided this variable into three subgroups: urban, semi-urban, and rural. The urban group includes the regions containing France's three largest cities: Ile-de-France (Paris), Rhône-Alpes (Lyon), and Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (PACA) (Marseille). The semi-urban region contained six regions containing the six next most populated cities: Midi-Pyrénées, Pays-de-la-Loire, Alsace, Languedoc-Roussillon, Aquitaine and Nord-Pas de Calais. The rural group contained the remaining twelve regions. Corsica was excluded from the survey. I am not certain what effect region has on household income, although income may be affected by the presence of an industrial center or large city. For example, Ile-de-France –

Paris and its environs – has a particularly high cost of living compared to that of the rest of France.

6.6 *DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS*

The final sample consisted of 6,641 individuals; they provided information of their personal characteristics as well as general household characteristics. **Table.1** shows that 1,026 immigrants were from Sub-Saharan Africa. 5,615 were immigrants of other ethnic backgrounds. The average monthly income of the 6,641 households was about €2,551. For Africans this was lower – only €200/month, 16% lower than the average income of non-Africans (€2,615/month).

Almost 68% of Africans were proficient in French compared to only 44% of non-Africans. This makes sense since Africans came from ex-French colonies where they would have had exposure before arriving in France. Less than 1% of all participants had no French skills.

Among immigrants whose native language is not French 20% reported that French was spoken in their home countries. 17% of the total group reported learning French through family and friends. 44% learned French through school. Approximately 2.5% used cassette tapes and workbooks, and about 5% learned at the workplace, though these numbers are negligible. About 30% of the 6,641 individuals said they had taken courses outside of school in order to learn to speak, read or write French. 53% of Africans confirm that French was spoken in their home country, and 67% report learning French through school. Only 14% of non-Africans were proficient in French; 40% of them learned French in school. Non-Africans took more French courses outside of school than non-Africans (32% compared to 19%). **Figures 4 and 5** show the average incomes for four groups of varying French proficiency. As expected from the literature,

income rises with language skills. Men have slightly higher incomes than women for all proficiency levels.

Of non-Africans, 20% were EU citizens and 40% were French citizens. Almost 63% of Africans had foreign citizenship, and about 37% were French citizens.

The sample shows an almost even gender divide, with a slightly higher percentage of women than men respondents. 71% of respondents were married. Africans tended to be single – only 57% were married. Figure.1 shows the age distribution of the data set. Approximately 30% of individuals are 18-35 years old; 45% are 36-50; and 25% are 51-60 years old. Africans are on average younger than non-Africans and have spent two thirds as much time in France as other immigrants (Table.1 “Demographics”). Figure 3 shows number of years spent in France by all immigrants; the largest waves of migrants had been in France for one to ten years, 18 to 20 years, and 26 to 30 years.

A large majority of individuals – 73% – arrived in France after the age of 16. Age at arrival (*Figure 2*) shows a large majority of immigrants arriving between the ages of 18 and 26. Another, smaller hump in the graph shows many immigrants arriving as children between the ages of 5 and 11. Households have on average 3.5 members and between 1 and 2 children.

Almost 40% of all respondents lived in Ile-de-France, and 58% of individuals lived in regions containing one of France’s three largest cities. The strikingly high number of immigrants concentrated within the small surface area of the Paris region reflects the extreme centralization of the State and the capital city’s essentiality to all transportation, business, and industrial networks. Only 21% of all respondents lived in one of the twelve most rural regions.

In Table.1 the variable “immigrant neighborhood” means that half or more of residents in the respondent’s neighborhood are of the same ethnic background. “Non-immigrant

neighborhood” indicates that the ethnic concentration was less than half. A majority of Africans (55%) lived in one of these enclaves compared to 44% of non-Africans.

A surprisingly high number of respondents, almost one out of four, indicate completion of more than two years of college, either in France or abroad. More than 29% of Africans held these higher degrees. Less than 9% of Africans have high school diplomas compared to 13% of other immigrants. Only 3% of Africans were educated only in France, compared to 46% educated both abroad and in France. Most non-Africans (62%) received their education only abroad.

A large majority of respondents (66%) hold a job. Of these, only half are proficient in French. Either many immigrants are employed in less prestigious or less services-based positions, or they find employment within their ethnic enclaves. About 14% of all individuals are either housewives or husbands. About 12% are homeless. 3% are students.

6.7 *MODEL*

My study fills a hole in the current literature, in which very few studies focus on France and its immigrant communities. Most of the previous literature uses earnings data to measure immigrants’ labor market success. My study crosses this standard model with an estimation of a more general standard of living, measured by household income rather than individual earnings. I use the human capital characteristics of the person responding to the survey to represent the human capital of all household members. For example, I assume that the education of the respondent reflects the importance of education in the whole household.

The TeO income variable aggregates all sources of household income. I assume in my model that total income is affected by the human capital investment of all household members.

In my model I consider geographic location, family size, number of children, and ethnic enclaves in addition to variables determining individual human capital that are used often in the literature:

$$Y = \beta \times \textit{French proficiency} + \delta \times \textit{Control variables} + \alpha$$

(Rooth & Saarela 2007).

The ordinary least squares method was used to estimate the effects of French skills on Y, household monthly income per capita, controlling for various individual and household characteristics. I ran three separate regressions to determine which determining variables had the greatest effect on household per capita income. The first model included the entire sample of households. The second included non-Sub-Saharan African immigrants. The third included only immigrants from ex-French colonies in Sub-Saharan Africa. I contrast these models to determine if discrimination contributes to the discrepancies in average income between Africans and non-Africans.

I then run a Blinder-Oaxaca decomposition using African immigrants as the control group. I use this technique to determine how much of the income gap between African and non-African immigrants is explained by characteristic group effects like education and French proficiency and how much of the gap is due to unexplained factors. This unexplained portion is due to either unobserved characteristics or discrimination (Jann 2008).

Based on the data and trends in earlier literature, I expect increases in French proficiency, education, regional urbanization, and time spent in France to positively affect per capita household income. French and European citizenship and being married should also have positive effects. Being African will have a negative effect based on the descriptive statistics. The effects of the other variables are uncertain.

7. THE RETURNS to FRENCH-LANGUAGE SKILLS

7.1 DETERMINANTS of HOUSEHOLD INCOME PER CAPITA

Table.2 shows results for the three OLS estimations. Column 1 shows estimates for the whole sample; column 3 shows results for only those immigrants from ex-French colonies Sub-Saharan Africa; column 2 shows results for all other immigrants. Stars indicate significant levels of coefficients.

Being proficient in French has a statistically significant income premium of 13.6% for Africans. For non-Africans, proficiency created an income premium of 8.4% though this value was not significant. These effects are large but less significant than expected effect based on the returns to language proficiency found by Casale & Posel (2011) and most other studies that estimate proficiency's effect on earnings. This might be due to respondents' overestimation of their language skills. It may be due to my use of household income rather than individual earnings data; the proficiency level reported by respondents may overestimate the skills of other household members who also contribute to total income. There's also the possibility of reverse causality; those families with higher incomes have more resources to invest in language training.

Africans face an income loss of 6.3% compared to incomes of other immigrants. This result was expected based on the average income shown in Table.1. African immigrants reported much higher French levels than non-Africans. But these numbers may reflect a stronger proficiency in African dialects of French than in the standardized French used in France. Speakers of dialects would be recognized as foreign, provoking discrimination from some employers.

All levels of education have positive, significant effects on incomes. Returns to educational investment are similar for Africans and non-Africans except at the university level:

non-Africans receive twice as much benefit (43%) from their university educations as Africans (22%). This positive correlation between education and income may be due to families whose higher wealth and resources allow them to invest in better education.

As predicted, years spent in France and EU and French citizenship status increase incomes for both immigrant groups. An extra year spent in France increase household income by 0.5%. Africans receive over a 100% increase in income for being European citizens and a 23% increase for being French citizens. Non-African immigrants receive premiums of 35% and 21% for EU and French citizenship status. These numbers are much larger and more significant than those for French proficiency. This may be due to the fact that citizens, being more politically active and invested in their communities than non-citizens, were more likely to respond to the TeO questionnaire and are therefore overrepresented in the sample. These results might also suggest that families who have linguistically and culturally integrated into French society live considerably better than those who speak the language but have not formally committed to learning the values of the Republic.

Table.2 Returns to French language proficiency

Variable	all	Non- Africans	Sub-Saharan Africans
	b/se	b/se	b/se
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Proficient	0.093 (0.10)	0.084 (0.10)	0.136*** (0.04)
Knows some French	0.012 (0.10)	0.007 (0.10)	
From Sub-Saharan Africa	-0.063*** (0.02)		
Years in France	0.005*** (0.00)	0.006*** (0.00)	0.006* (0.00)

EU citizen	0.365*** (0.02)	0.354*** (0.02)	1.186* (0.50)
French citizen	0.219*** (0.02)	0.209*** (0.02)	0.229*** (0.04)
High school diploma or less	0.075*** (0.02)	0.081*** (0.02)	0.072 (0.06)
Baccalaureate degree (BAC)	0.188*** (0.02)	0.196*** (0.02)	0.137** (0.05)
Some university education or higher	0.401*** (0.02)	0.434*** (0.02)	0.220*** (0.05)
_cons	6.453*** (0.14)	6.522*** (0.15)	5.934*** (0.24)
N	6641	5615	1026
F	157.388	141.591	24.653
r2	0.288	0.288	0.268

Notes: The omitted region variable is “urban” and represents residence in Ile-de-France, Rhône-Alpes or PACA. No Africans responded ‘yes’ to “Knows some French,” creating a missing value in column 3. The omitted variable indicating location of education is that for education achieved “only abroad” (Appendix Table.2). The omitted citizenship variable is foreigner status. The omitted proficiency variable is “no proficiency”. Standard deviations are shown below the coefficients. Asterisks denote significance levels (*=.10, **=.05, ***=.01).

Relative to an education only in the immigrant’s home country, an education both abroad and in France has a positive effect on income; a France-only education has a negative effect on income compared to an education in both countries. This may point to discrimination in the French school system against students with foreign backgrounds. None of these results on location of education is significant (Appendix Table.2).

Age has a significant positive effect for all immigrant groups; being a year older increases income by 4.7% for Africans and 2.2% for non-Africans. Age² has almost no effect, indicating that age effects stay consistent as immigrants get older. Being married also increases income, suggesting that immigrant households that are structured around a marriage enjoy higher standards of living. The number of persons in the household has a negative effect. But since

children consumer less resources than adults, and because my variable for household size does not distinguish between adults and children, this effect is likely overestimated.

Households living in semi-urban and urban regions have incomes 15 and 16% lower than households in France's three most urbanized regions. This difference may reflect a higher cost of living in large cities, in which case a higher household income does not necessarily indicate higher standards of living. The big-city income premium may also reflect denser transportation networks and ease of finding a job to match one's skills set.

7.2 *SOURCES of INCOME DISCREPANCY*

Table.3 (Appendix) shows output from the Oaxaca decomposition. The two groups whose incomes are being compared are African and non-African immigrants. In my sample the mean of the log income is 7.04 for non-Africans and 6.88 for Africans, producing an income gap of 0.17. The increase of 0.109 in the example indicates that explained group differences in human capital characteristics, like education and French proficiency, account for about two-thirds of the wage gap between Africans and non-Africans. Years spent in France, EU citizenship, age, and being married make the most significant contributions to these differences between the two immigrant groups. Non-Africans have spent more time in France, are older, and are more likely to be married than African immigrants. The coefficients indicate the mean increase in Africans' income if they had the same characteristics as non-Africans. If Africans were EU citizens their log income would increase by 7.3%. And if Africans fit the same age distribution as non-Africans, their log income would increase by 10.5%.

Unexplained differences account for about a third of the income gap between the two immigrant groups. These coefficients represent the change in Africans' incomes if non-Africans'

coefficients were applied to Africans' characteristics. Of these, the most significant coefficient is that for university education: Africans' characteristics would earn an income increase of 6.1% if they had the same coefficients as non-Africans. It is not certain if discrimination contributes to the unexplained difference in incomes.

8. CONCLUSION

In this study I've sought to illuminate France's immigration reality. The unique, detailed TeO survey provided data on characteristics of individual immigrants as well as their households' standard of living. Almost all survey respondents have at least some French skills; almost half are completely proficient. Most of them arrive after age 16, and more than a quarter have some university education. 39% of immigrant households are located in the environs of Paris. Immigrant households in France do not have equal incomes: immigrants from ex-colonial Sub-Saharan African colonies have average monthly incomes 16% lower than those of immigrants from other regions.

I used a human capital model to estimate factors influencing immigrant household income. Immigrants who are proficient in French have a 9% higher household income than those who have no French skills, but only for Africans is this relationship significant. My results show that EU and French citizenship play larger, more significant roles than language proficiency in determining income. EU citizenship is associated with a 37% higher income, French citizenship with a 22% higher income. Results from an Oaxaca decomposition indicate that a third of the income gap between African and non-African immigrants is due to unexplained differences, of which discrimination may be a part.

Despite an economic climate that is hostile to foreign workers, French policymakers have in the last few years begun implementing policies that encourage the full integration of immigrant communities into French society. By signing the CAI contract, immigrants have access to free instruction on the culture, language, politics and legal system of their new country; ideally they are put on the path to becoming citizens of the Republic. But these integration programs currently in effect in France are too new to have made a significant impact on immigrant communities. Efforts should be made now to track the employment paths of immigrants who take part in government-sponsored language and cultural classes. Such information is invaluable for future studies intending to evaluate whether such integration programs are worthwhile investments of government funds and immigrants' time and resources. Integration programs must also be expanded by offering more classroom facilities, especially in large cities where migrant communities congregate.

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Appendix: Tables and Graphics

Table.1 Descriptive Statistics

Variable	All	Non- Africans	Africans	min (All)	max (All)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
<i><u>Income</u></i>					
Monthly sum of household income per capita (€)	2550.85 (2070.79)	2615.03 (2052.36)	2199.6 (2136.03)	20	55,000
Household income per capita	7.02 (0.61)	7.046 (0.61)	6.877 (0.58)	2.996	10.915
<i><u>Language</u></i>					
French proficiency	2.061 (0.95)	1.996 (0.95)	2.416 (0.88)	0	3
Proficient	0.478 (0.50)	0.442 (0.50)	0.677 (0.47)	0	1
Some French skills	0.518 (0.50)	0.554 (0.50)	0.323 (0.47)	0	1
No French skills	0.004 (0.06)	0.005 (0.07)	0 (0.50)	0	1
French spoken in home country	0.2 (0.40)	0.14 (0.35)	0.531 (0.50)	0	1
Learned French through family/friends	0.17 (0.38)	0.145 (0.35)	0.307 (0.46)	0	1
Learned French through school	0.439 (0.50)	0.398 (0.49)	0.667 (0.47)	0	1
Learned French through cassettes/workbooks	0.025 (0.16)	0.026 (0.16)	0.022 (0.15)	0	1
Learned French through work	0.052 (0.22)	0.055 (0.23)	0.033 (0.18)	0	1
Took French courses outside of school	0.303 (0.46)	0.322 (0.47)	0.194 (0.40)	0	1
EU citizen	0.171 (0.38)	0.202 (0.40)	0.001 (0.03)	0	1
French citizen	0.401 (0.49)	0.407 (0.49)	0.366 (0.48)	0	1

Demographics

Male	0.476 (0.50)	0.481 (0.50)	0.449 (0.50)	0	1
Sub-Saharan African	0.154 (0.36)			0	1
Married	0.709 (0.45)	0.733 (0.44)	0.574 (0.50)	0	1
Age	41.879 (10.53)	42.544 (10.54)	38.241 (9.74)	18	60
18-35 years old	0.299 (0.46)	0.277 (0.45)	0.417 (0.49)	0	1
36-50 years old	0.449 (0.50)	0.448 (0.50)	0.458 (0.50)	0	1
51-60 years old	0.252 (0.43)	0.275 (0.45)	0.125 (0.33)	0	1
Years in France	20.124 (12.42)	21.123 (12.64)	14.658 (9.46)	0	56
Arrived before age 16	0.269 (0.44)	0.293 (0.46)	0.141 (0.35)	0	1
Arrived after age 16	0.731 (0.44)	0.707 (0.46)	0.859 (0.35)	0	1
Number of persons in household	3.502 (1.67)	3.469 (1.59)	3.686 (2.04)	1	14
Number of children in household	1.666 (1.46)	1.612 (1.38)	1.962 (1.81)	0	11
0 children in household	0.27 (0.44)	0.275 (0.45)	0.248 (0.43)	0	1
1-3 children in household	0.63 (0.48)	0.639 (0.48)	0.58 (0.50)	0	1

Geography

Region Code	1.628 (0.81)	1.643 (0.81)	1.546 (0.80)	1	3
Ile-de-France	0.391 (0.49)	0.362 (0.48)	0.553 (0.50)	0	1
Urban	0.583 (0.49)	0.57 (0.50)	0.65 (0.48)	0	1
Rural	0.211 (0.41)	0.214 (0.41)	0.196 (0.40)	0	1
Immigrant neighborhood	0.46 (0.50)	0.444 (0.50)	0.549 (0.50)	0	1
Non-immigrant neighborhood	0.54 (0.50)	0.556 (0.50)	0.451 (0.50)	0	1

<u>Education/Experience</u>					
High school diploma	0.125 (0.33)	0.132 (0.34)	0.087 (0.28)	0	1
BAC	0.148 (0.36)	0.148 (0.36)	0.147 (0.35)	0	1
University or higher	0.26 (0.44)	0.254 (0.44)	0.292 (0.46)	0	1
Educated abroad and in France	0.323 (0.47)	0.299 (0.46)	0.459 (0.50)	0	1
Educated only in France	0.083 (0.28)	0.093 (0.29)	0.03 (0.17)	0	1
Employed	0.659 (0.47)	0.658 (0.48)	0.668 (0.47)	0	1
Student/Intern	0.035 (0.18)	0.029 (0.17)	0.069 (0.25)	0	1
Housewife	0.135 (0.34)	0.143 (0.35)	0.092 (0.29)	0	1
Homeless	0.119 (0.32)	0.113 (0.32)	0.15 (0.36)	0	1

Notes: The sample consists of individuals aged 18-60 who reported income and French proficiency levels from the Trajectoires et Origines Survey, 2008. Standard deviations are shown in parentheses below the means.

Table 2. Returns to French language proficiency

Variable	all b/se	Non- Africans b/se	Sub-Saharan Africans b/se
Educated both abroad and in France	0.016 (0.02)	0.014 (0.02)	0.055 (0.04)
Educated in France only	-0.023 (0.03)	-0.027 (0.03)	0.060 (0.10)
Age	0.024*** (0.00)	0.022*** (0.01)	0.047*** (0.01)
Age ²	-0.000*** (0.00)	-0.000*** (0.00)	-0.001*** (0.00)
Married	0.192*** (0.02)	0.180*** (0.02)	0.254*** (0.04)
Number of persons in household	-0.097*** (0.00)	-0.102*** (0.00)	-0.085*** (0.01)
Semi-urban region	-0.149*** (0.02)	-0.153*** (0.02)	-0.100* (0.05)
Rural region	-0.161*** (0.02)	-0.156*** (0.02)	-0.154*** (0.04)
_cons	6.453*** (0.14)	6.522*** (0.15)	5.934*** (0.24)
N	6641.000	5615.000	1026.000
F	157.388	141.591	24.653
r ²	0.288	0.288	0.268

Notes: The omitted region variable is “urban” and represents residence in Ile-de-France, Rhône-Alpes or PACA.

The omitted variable indicating location of education is that achieved only abroad. The omitted citizenship variable is foreigner status. The omitted proficiency variable is “no proficiency” (Table.2 page 26). Standard deviations are shown below the coefficients. Asterisks denote significance levels (*=.10, **=.05, ***=.01).

Table 3. Oaxaca Decomposition Results

Group 1: non-Africans		Number of observations = 6641	
Group 2: Africans		Group 1 = 5615; Group 2 = 1026	
Monthly sum of household income (€)		Coefficient	z
overall			
	Group 1	7.045874	862.43
	Group 2	6.877457	378.78
	difference	0.1684169	8.46
	explained	0.1085738	8.16
	unexplained	0.059843	3.17
explained			
	Proficient	-0.0223893	-0.77
	Some French skills	0.0031715	0.11
	Years in France	0.0356173	5.17
	EU citizen	0.0732282	16.45
	French citizen	0.0089568	2.46
	High school diploma	0.003369	2.95
	BAC	0.0002207	0.1
	2 years of university or more	-0.015131	-2.45
	Educated both abroad and in France	-0.0025233	-0.92
	Educated only in France	-0.0015366	-0.89
	Age	0.1057081	4.49
	Age ²	-0.1234706	-5.14
	Married	0.0307957	7.55
	Number of persons in household	0.0211629	3.2
	Region	-0.0086057	-3.41
unexplained			
	Proficient	-0.0310767	-0.35
	Some French skills	0.0014245	0.04
	Years in France	-0.0012428	-0.03
	EU citizen	-0.0030489	-2.58
	French citizen	-0.0073574	-0.52
	High school diploma	0.0010329	0.19
	BAC	0.0085584	1.16
	2 years of university or more	0.0611294	4.04
	Educated both abroad and in France	-0.0188275	-1.03
	Educated only in France	-0.002984	-0.79
	Age	-0.9764961	-1.8
	Age ²	0.5701102	2.06
	Married	-0.044099	-1.74
	Number of persons in household	-0.0622345	-1.69
	Region	-0.0111982	-0.33
	_cons	0.5761528	1.91

Figure 1. Age Distribution of Survey Respondents

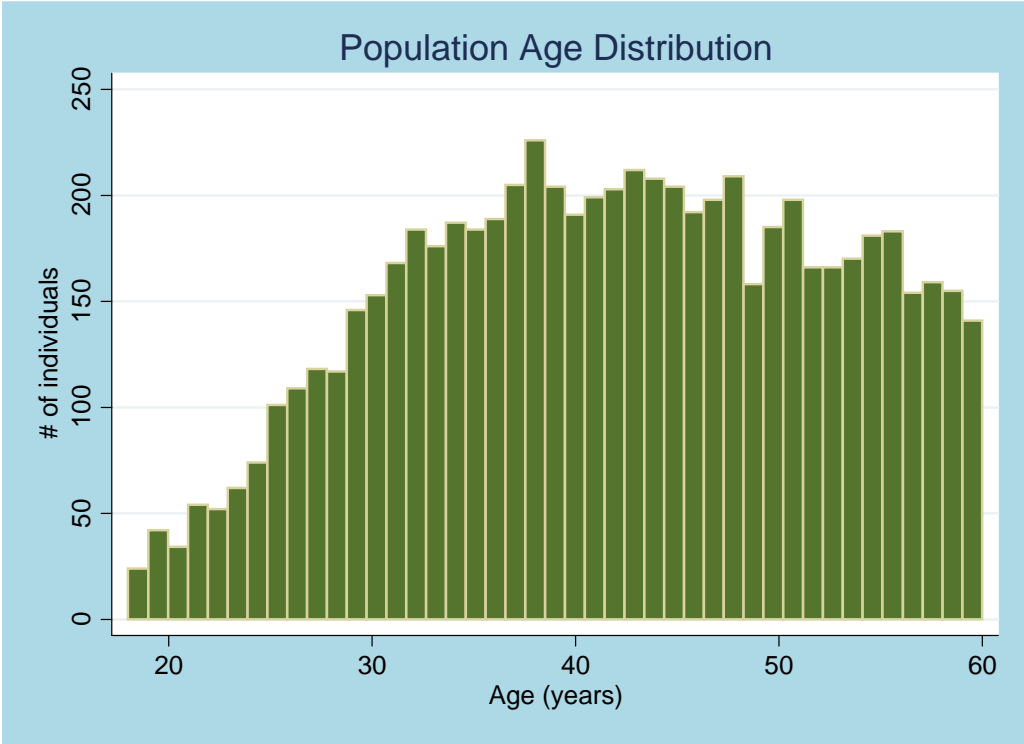


Figure 2. Ages of immigrants' arrival in France

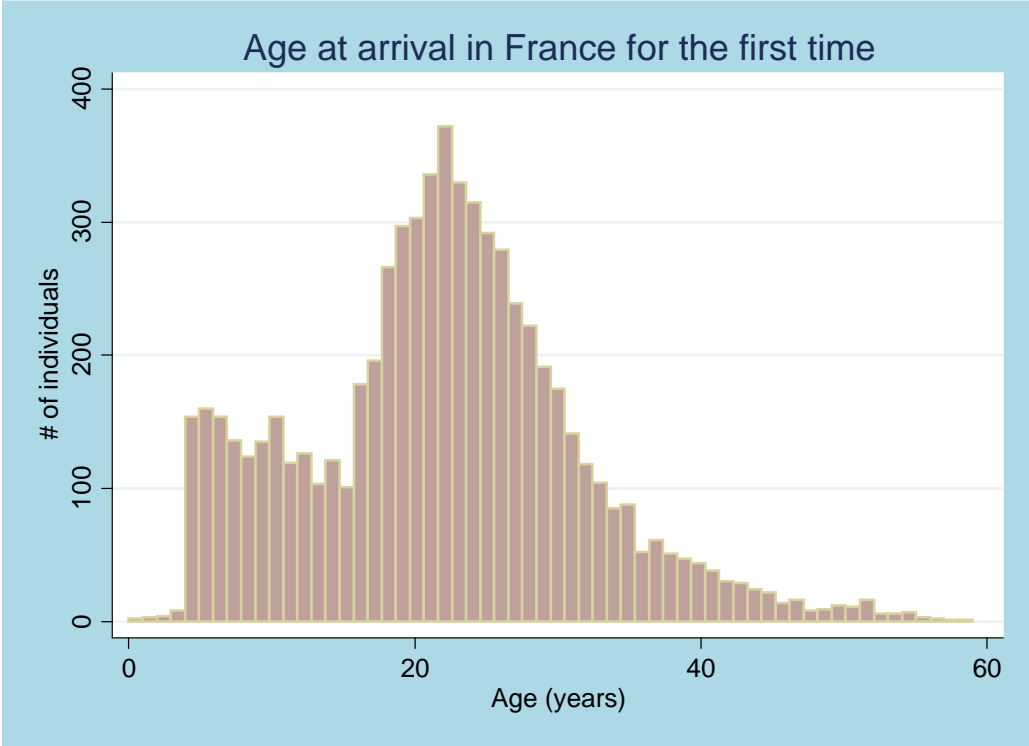


Figure 3. Number of years having lived in France

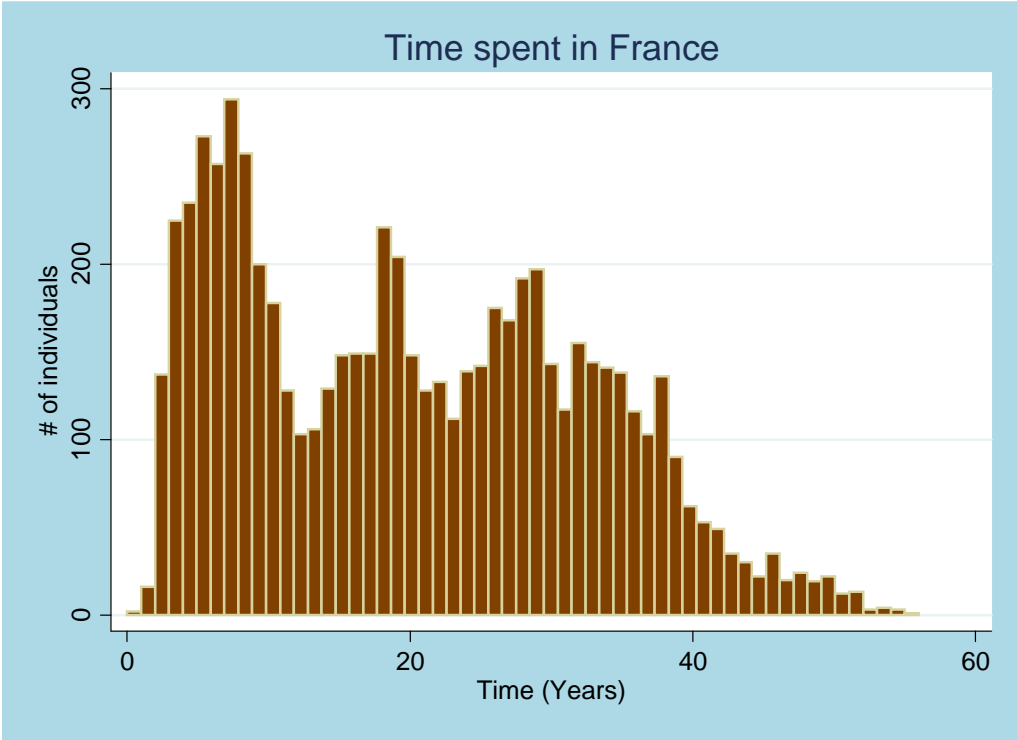


Figure 4. Income increases with increasing French proficiency

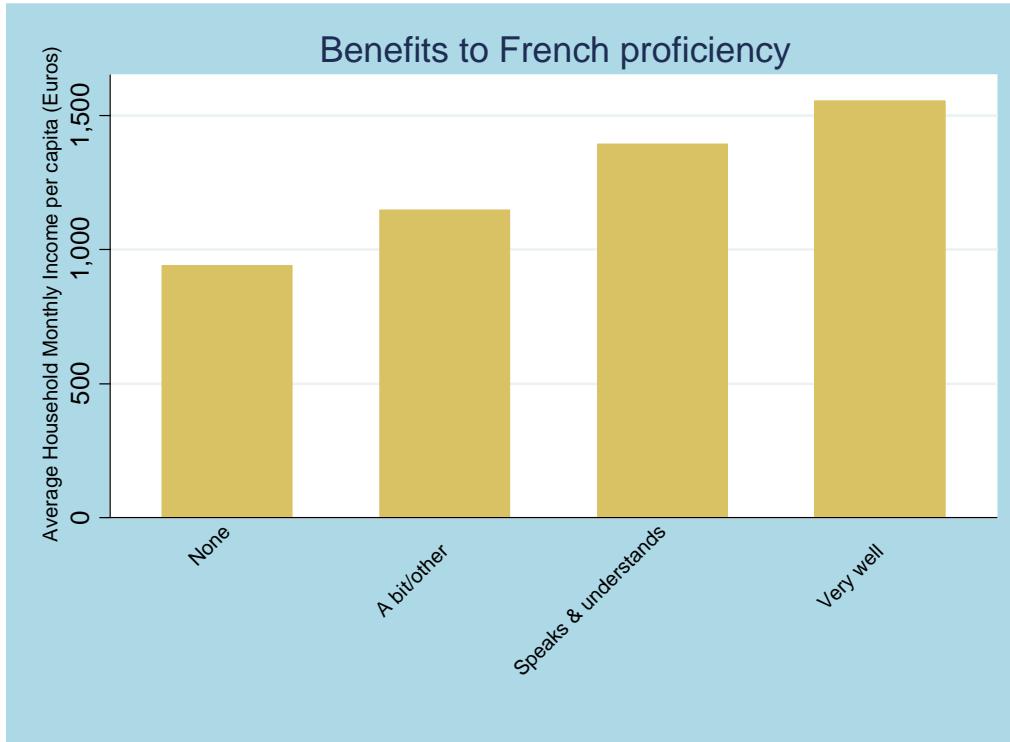


Figure 5. Income increases with increasing French proficiency: Men vs. Women

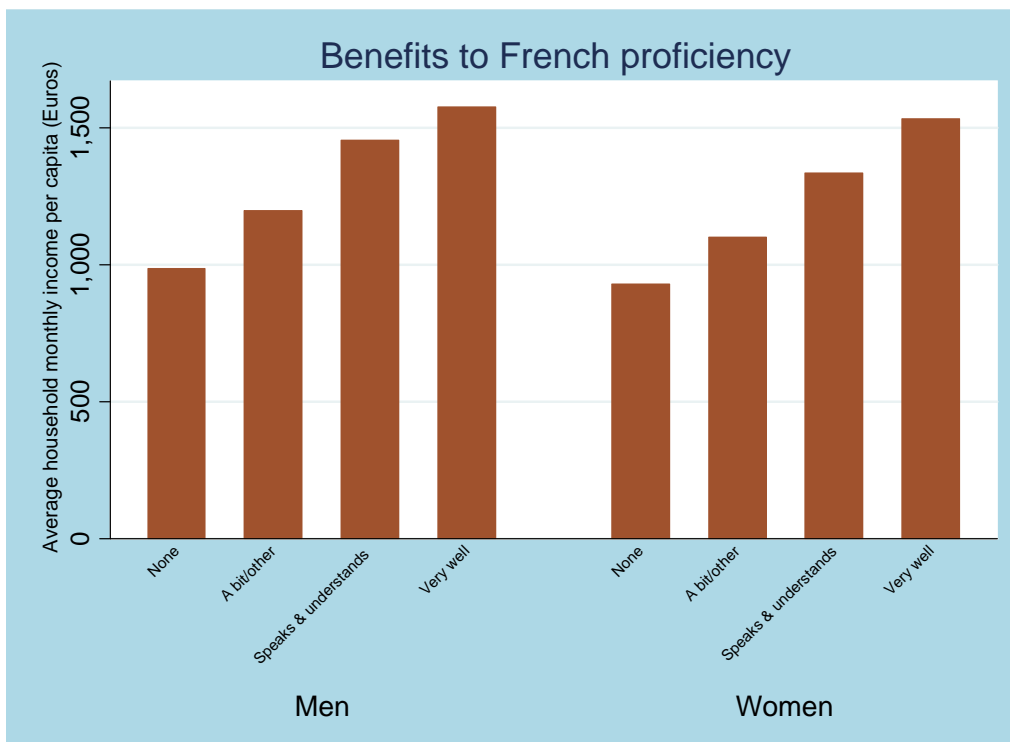


Figure.6 Political Regions of France

