

THE SURVEY

France, immigration strengthens Muslim presence

WORLD

06_07_2024



Lorenza Formicola



It is no coincidence that the political crisis that emerged with the European vote in France, and which led to the super-early legislative, also crystallized around the issue of immigration. The June 30 vote has, quite frankly, deliberated that in the eyes of the

majority of citizens there is no longer any doubt as to how the fate of France is at stake and that through the question of its population the existential issue arises.

Beatrice Giblin, doyenne of French geographers and director of the Institute of Geopolitics at the University of Paris VIII, identified how "the Breton countryside has all voted for the *Rassemblement National*, Pas-de-Calais, Asine, Lot-et-Garonee, Vaucluse: there are departments where Le Pen's right wing could take all the deputies." In Paris, Toulouse, Bordeaux and Nantes, in areas with the highest rates of immigration and where there is a great deal of insecurity, the vote, on the other hand, was certainly different: abstentionism and the far left won.

At this point it is important to note that after the outcome of the elections, the Paris Stock Exchange posted +2.5 percent: a signal that it is not worried about a change of management in the National Assembly.

For if there is one fact that is little plumbed, it is precisely that of immigration, which has strengthened the Muslim presence in France and changed the internal balance.

In fact, according to the Ined-Insee surveys, analyzed by the director of the Observatory on Immigration and Demography, there is a correlation between migration flows in France and the increase in instances related to Islam.

Every year, the Directorate General of Foreigners in France (DGEF) of the Ministry of the Interior publishes **statistics** on immigration, asylum, and access to French nationality. The final figures were published on June 27, 2024, and report that in 2023, France issued 2.4 million visas compared to 1.7 million in 2022, an increase of 40.4 percent. And 326,954 first residence permits were issued, a record figure for the country with a 2.5 percent increase over 2022.

The annual number of first residence permits granted in France to citizens of "third countries" (outside the European space) increased by 172% between 1997 and 2023. In 2021, 72% of beneficiaries of a first residence permit were from an Islamic country. In 2022, it was 61%.

For more than 12 years, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, followed by Afghanistan, Guinea and Turkey have been the top countries of origin for those applying to enter France for the first time. And the Insee **revelations--French** National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies--reports the finding that Muslim immigrant families are the most likely to express family transmission in religious affiliation. And they do so significantly

more than Christian ones.

91 percent of those who grew up in Muslim families claim the religion of their parents, compared with only 67 percent of those who grew up with Catholic parents. This **transmission** rises to 97 percent in families originating in Turkey, the Middle East and Sahelian Africa.

The French Institute of Statistics reports that 76 percent of Muslims believe that religion is very important and involves every aspect of life, compared to 27 percent of Catholics and against 39 percent of other Christian denominations.

But it is for second-generation immigrants that **membership in Islam** remains the very important element. If it is 89% of immigrants from Algeria who declare themselves Muslim, among direct descendants it is 64% who confirm their belief. Same percentages for Morocco and Tunisia.

For Sahelian Africa, the ratio is 84% for parents versus 77% for children. For the other African countries, 38% also remained Muslim in France, and among the offspring the ratio is at 31%. Among Turkish immigrants, 72% say they are Muslim, compared to 67% for their offspring.

For Afghanistan, we are at 88% who say religious affiliation is also predominant for their children. Among immigrants who say they have a religion, Islam is the most cited (55 percent on average), ahead of Catholicism (21 percent) and other Christian denominations (18 percent). It is the only religion for those who say they profess a belief from the Maghreb, and it is vast majority among those from Sahelian Africa, Turkey and the Middle East. Membership in Islam remains significant in the second generation: 52 percent of descendants of immigrants who profess a denomination are Muslim—a percentage that matches the average among the various states of origin. And which reaches 58 percent among immigrants in France who are over the age of 16.

If we consider, moreover, the estimates between admissions and religious affiliation, the relationship between accelerating migration flows and strengthening the demographics of expressly Muslim populations in France emerges overbearingly. In 2017, 44 percent of the **population increase** came from immigrants. In 2019, 38 percent of France's population **growth** was attributed to the Muslim population. While for subsequent years, data have not yet been reported by Insee.

Each year, the Institute for Statistics also publishes data of **concerning** the names given to children born in France since 1900. In 2019, Jérôme Fourquet, director of

IFOP (French Institute of Public Opinion) since 2011, reconstructed the data then published in an essay, *L'Archipel français* (Seuil, 2019). **The study** reports that children given a Muslim name account for 21.73 percent of the total number of new births in France. In 2000, they were 8%; in 2010, 15%. In the Île de France departments, new babies born with an Islamic name exceed 55%.

This is the second time in ten years, then, that two French state bodies, the **Insee** and the National Institute for Demographic Studies (Ined), have provided an **analysis** of the evolution of religions in France. They found that the use of the veil for Muslim women has increased by 55 percent in ten years, from 2009 to 2020. And that 26% of Muslim women between the ages of 18 and 49 advocate its use. Observable increase among all geographic origins, for the second and third generation, with higher percentages, however, among women who arrived from Turkey and the Middle East.

An Ifoppoll for the **Comité Laïcité République reports that 57 percent** of young Muslims believe that *shari'a* law is more important than the law of the Republic. A 10-point increase from 2016. All the data together tell that through the issue of the immigrant population comes the essential question of France's destiny.

Policies regarding immigration are the stakes of conflicts, by no means symbolic, that denounce problems of an essentially social nature.