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Isabelle ATTANÉ*

Chinese Immigration to France

In France, the immigrant population from China now numbers just over 100,000 people, according to INSEE. The economic vigour of this population is often highlighted. However, Chinese immigration to France, which spanned the 20th century and has been increasing over the last 40 years, remains poorly understood. By drawing on all the available but rarely examined demographic and administrative data, Isabelle Attané provides new insights into migration flows and the changes in this population's sociodemographic characteristics.

Chinese immigration to France, which dates to the early 20th century (Box 1), remains marginal in terms of both stocks (slightly more than 100,000 people in 2017) and flows, with Chinese citizens representing 5%–7% of admissions for residence of foreign nationals in recent years (Appendix Table A.1). It is increasing rapidly, however (6 times faster than for other immigrants, at more than 8% per year on average between 1982 and 2017), and the Chinese now rank fourth among nationalities admitted for residence in France.⁽¹⁾ This immigration is the focus of an abundant literature—mainly adopting a qualitative or historical perspective—analysing migration flows to France (Live, 1991; Costa-Lascoux and Live, 1995; Lévy, 2005; Ma Mung, 2009; Lucchini, 2012), migrant trajectories by region of origin in China (Cattelain and Ngugen, 2002; Lévy and Lieber, 2009; Lévy, 2015; Chuang, 2018a; Li, 2021), and migrants' living and working conditions in France (Live, 1993; Yun and Poisson, 2005; Chuang, 2013; Béraha, 2014; Pina-Guerassimoff, 2014; Wang, 2017; Chuang, 2018b; Chuang et al., 2020). Quantitative analyses of Chinese immigration remain scarce, however, except in the context of more general studies of immigration to France (Thierry, 2004; Beauchemin et al., 2015; d'Albis and Boubtane, 2015). Its true extent remains uncertain, due first to continued reliance on estimates of the Chinese diaspora (from Wenzhou in particular) in France which, in the absence of other sources and despite much broader inclusion

(1) Behind Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia (DGEF, 2018).

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criteria than those used to define immigration, often serve as a reference;⁽²⁾ and secondly, to a recurrent tendency to equate immigrants from China with those from other Asian countries (Luguern, 2016; Attané et al., 2021). These uncertainties nurture collective representations of Chinese immigrants that fluctuate between visibility (notably economic; see Li, 2021) and invisibility (mainly social; see Du, 2014).

This article describes the stocks and flows of Chinese immigration to metropolitan France (mainland France and Corsica) and examines its main characteristics, relying primarily on French population censuses to provide background data on the various subgroups that form this population, namely Chinese nationals, immigrants born in China, and the share of Chinese second-generation immigrants identifiable from these censuses. It examines recent trends in Chinese immigration (growth, geographical distribution, role of student migration, length of stay, and acquisition of French nationality) and describes its sociodemographic profile (age structure, sex, and educational level). Last, the scale of the various inflows contributing to Chinese population growth in France is estimated using administrative data (civil records and the Ministry of the Interior).⁽³⁾

I. Chinese foreigners, immigrants, and second-generation immigrants in France

1. A century of Chinese immigration to France

Chinese immigration to France began with the recruitment of around 140,000 Chinese workers during the First World War, above all from the provinces of Shandong and Zhejiang in eastern China (Live, 1991), of whom between 2,000 and 4,000 stayed in France after the war. From the late 1920s, a new wave of migrants arrived from Zhejiang, mainly from the districts of Qingtian and Wenzhou (Live, 1991), and in the 1930s, the first Chinese commercial quarter developed in the Îlot Chalon district of Paris near the Gare de Lyon railway station. From the 1940s, some Chinese immigrants moved to the Arts-et-Métiers district (in the 3rd arrondissement of Paris), often setting up business in restaurants, leather goods, and textiles, and the neighbourhood became a hub for Chinese immigrants from Zhejiang (Live, 1991).

(2) The Chinese diaspora in France (based on a very broad definition as it includes anyone with Chinese ancestry living outside China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, or Macao) was estimated to total between 400,000 and 540,000 people in 2010, depending on the source (Ma Mung, 2009; Lucchini, 2012; Latham and Wu, 2013; Poston and Wong, 2016).

(3) All foreigners over age 18—or over 16 for those wishing to work—must hold a residence permit granted by the Ministry of the Interior. Data on residence permits and their holders are stored in its database (*Application de gestion des dossiers des ressortissants étrangers en France* [AGDREF]).

Box 1. Chinese foreigners and immigrants in French censuses

Several types of datasets are available to users, but modes of access differ by type of data (aggregate or individual-level) and by types of variable included, notably concerning immigrant and/or foreign populations (Thave, 1996):

1. Aggregate data available on the INSEE website detail the country of birth for the immigrant groups most represented in France (including China from 2008) and nationality for the largest groups of foreigners (including Chinese nationality). Apart from total numbers, only distributions by broad age groups and by sex are given for people born in China or with Chinese citizenship. In the tables presenting occupational category and type of activity, they are included in the 'Other countries' or 'Other nationality' category.
2. Detailed datasets (individual-level data) are available for certain years (under the title *Individus localisés à la région*) and can be freely downloaded from the INSEE website. They comprise a limited number of variables with detailed modalities, including restricted access variables (nationality, country of birth, time since arrival in France). In these datasets, China is included among the modalities for 'current nationality' and 'nationality at birth' (for naturalized French citizens), but for 'country of birth', China, is grouped with 'Other countries'. However, these datasets also include an immigration status variable (immigrant/non-immigrant) which, when matched against current nationality or nationality at birth, provides a means to estimate the population of immigrants born in China.
3. Access to datasets made available via the secure data access centre (*Centre d'accès sécurisé aux données*) is limited to the scientific community and their analysis is subject to certain restrictions. These datasets contain most of the variables drawn from the census questionnaires, including nationality (current or at birth). Specific authorization from INSEE is required to obtain the 'detailed country of birth' variable for China, but it can be partly replaced by another directly available variable: 'place of birth abroad'.

The choice of reference years for the analyses presented in this article was determined by ease of access to the different databases and, above all, to the variables not directly available in the detailed datasets.

Emigration from mainland China was halted when the Communists took power in 1949 (Ma Mung, 2009) and did not resume until the 1980s when the Chinese economy started to open and emigration policies were relaxed (Live, 1991; Xiang, 2016). These more recent migrants still come mainly from eastern China (primarily Wenzhou and Qingtian in Zhejiang province, and Fujian province), but the regions of origin and the migrants' characteristics have become more diverse (Chuang, 2013; Lévy, 2015). Northern China has become the second major sending region for migration to France, notably the provinces of Jilin, Heilongjiang, and Liaoning in the north-east (*dongbei* in Chinese), but also Shandong and Tianjin (Bérah, 2012; Du, 2014). The exact numbers of immigrants from these different regions are difficult to determine, however. According to estimates based on regional Chinese statistics, between 110,000 (Li, 2021) and 250,000 (Lucchini, 2012) immigrants from the Wenzhou region alone were present in France in 2010,⁽⁴⁾ a number well above the figure for the total immigrant population from China obtained from French census data.

(4) The local authorities in Wenzhou estimated that 688,000 emigrants from the region were living abroad (in 131 countries) in 2015. In Europe, they are present mainly in France, Italy, the Netherlands, Germany, Greece, and Hungary (see http://www.wenzhou.gov.cn/art/2017/7/19/art_1339962_8477189.html). No information is given about how these emigrants are counted.

According to the International Labour Organization, between 48% and 62% of Chinese immigrants in France at the turn of the 21st century were emigrants from Zhejiang, and between 17% and 26% were from north-east China (Yun, 2004; Yun and Poisson, 2005).

The other major migration stream is linked to French colonial history in South-East Asia. Beginning in 1954, it initially concerned Chinese people originating from Guangdong and Fujian (Live, 1991) who had been living in Vietnam sometimes for several generations and who were repatriated to France after the decolonization of Indochina. They were followed in the 1970s by refugees fleeing the Communist regimes in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. In all, an estimated 145,000 Indochinese repatriates and refugees settled in France between 1954 and the mid-1980s (Live, 1991), of whom around two-thirds were of Chinese origin (Ma Mung, 2000). Among those who arrived after 1975—estimated at between 75,000 (Luguern, 2016) and 110,000 (Costa-Lascoux and Live, 1995)—around 40,000 settled in the Paris region (of whom around 6,000 in the 13th arrondissement of Paris). For most of these immigrants and their descendants, their Chinese filiation is impossible to establish in statistical terms, especially if they were born with French nationality in France. This is probably the case today for a large majority of this Chinese-origin population whose links to China rarely extend beyond the diaspora community (Lucchini, 2012). Moreover, their distinct migration history and socio-economic characteristics (Almén, 2020) set them apart from the immigrants arriving directly from China since the 1980s, and many have never set foot in China, so this population category is not included in the analyses that follow.

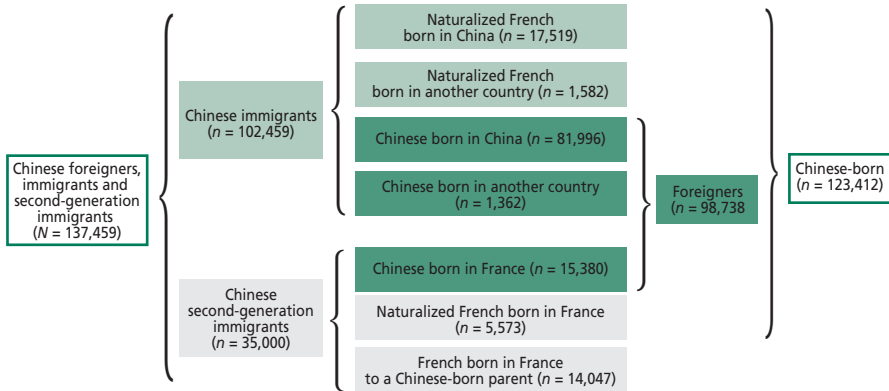
2. The limitations of the French census

Two criteria are used in French statistics to enumerate the foreign population (defined by nationality) and the immigrant population (defined by country of birth). The census provides data on these two variables for the largest population groups, including China (Box 1), and the two categories partially overlap. The census does not provide an exhaustive count of second-generation immigrants, the third major analysis category, as only a fraction of them are identified (those born in France with foreign nationality and who may have acquired French citizenship). Civil registration data must be used to count people born with French nationality in France and who have a foreign-born parent. For people of Chinese origin, a fourth analysis category is that of ‘Chinese-born’. It includes all people with current Chinese nationality or who were born Chinese before acquiring French citizenship. This category encompasses some of the individuals who would otherwise be omitted, making it possible to obtain a more exhaustive count from census data alone (Figure 1).

In 2015, 137,459 Chinese first and second-generation immigrants were enumerated in metropolitan France (Figure 1), of whom 72% were ‘foreigners’,

75% ‘immigrants’, and 25% ‘second-generation immigrants’; 61% were both foreigners and immigrants. This population is heterogeneous as it includes both new arrivals and children born in France to Chinese immigrant parents. To ensure comparability with other immigrant groups, the analyses that follow concern Chinese immigrants only ($n = 102,459$).

Figure 1. Chinese foreigners, immigrants, and second-generation immigrants in France in 2015



Coverage: Metropolitan France.

Sources: INSEE (2018) and detailed datasets from the 2015 census.

II. Recent trends in Chinese immigration

1. Slower growth

According to the aggregate data provided by INSEE (Box 1), there were 6.2 million immigrants in metropolitan France in 2017,⁽⁵⁾ representing 9.6% of the total population. While Chinese immigrants are now the fifth largest non-European immigrant group (INSEE, 2020), they form a small minority at the national level. Slightly more than 100,000 in number, they represented just 1.7% of all immigrants and 0.18% of the population of metropolitan France in 2017 (Table 1).

Chinese immigration to France forms part of a general emigration flow that accelerated sharply after the opening of the Chinese economy from the 1980s (Xiang, 2016). Between 2000 and 2016, the number of Chinese immigrants living in OECD countries doubled from 2.1 million to 4.6 million (OECD, 2019). They are concentrated in a small number of countries, however, primarily the United States (2.5 million in 2018; Echeverria-Estrada and Batalova, 2020), Canada (around 650,000 in 2016; Yan et al., 2019), and Australia (526,000 in 2016; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018). According to incomplete European data, slightly more than 900,000 immigrants from China (including Hong

(5) The census reference date is 1 January.

Table 1. Immigrant population in metropolitan France, 1982–2017

	1982	1999	2010	2015	2017	Mean annual growth (%)				
						1982 1999	1999 2010	2010 2015	2015 2017	
Total immigrants										
Number	4,037,036	4,306,094	5,405,754	5,982,300	6,231,367	0.4	2.1	2.0	2.1	
As % of population of metropolitan France	7.4	7.4	8.6	9.3	9.6	—	—	—	—	
Immigrants born in China										
Number	6,384	30,932	88,115	102,280	104,526	9.7	10.0	3.0	1.1	
As % of immigrant population	0.16	0.72	1.63	1.71	1.68	—	—	—	—	
As % of population of metropolitan France	0.01	0.05	0.14	0.16	0.18	—	—	—	—	
Population of metropolitan France (thousands)	54,335	58,496	62,765	64,300	64,639	0.4	0.6	0.5	0.3	
<i>Source:</i> Aggregate INSEE data, https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques .										

Kong) were living in the European Union in 2020, mainly in Italy (222,408 in 2020), the United Kingdom (210,601 in 2019), Spain (171,456 in 2019), France (113,447 in 2020), and Germany (85,260 in 2011) (Latham and Wu, 2013; Eurostat, 2022).

These immigrants come not only from provinces with a long migration history (Zhejiang especially) that continue to send their emigrants to countries where other Chinese immigrants are settled, but now also from a more diverse range of sending regions (see above). Until 2015, the Chinese immigrant population in France increased more quickly than that of all other immigrants, whose annual growth has remained stable, at around +2%, since 1999. That said, a substantial slowdown has been observed in recent years: +3% annually between 2010 and 2015 compared with +10% between 1999 and 2010. The most recent data confirm this trend, with annual growth now below that of all other immigrants, at +1.1% and +2.1%, respectively, on average, between 2015 and 2017. This slowdown is due partly to the decrease in admissions of Chinese citizens for residence in France, with a drop of 15.5% between the 2013 peak and 2017 versus an increase of 23.5% for other foreigners (Appendix Table A.1). It is also linked to the political changes in China since the accession to power of Xi Jinping in 2013, marked by a strengthening of ties with the diaspora, but also by a more active policy to encourage return migration (Liu and van Dongen, 2016), targeting Chinese overseas students especially (Thunø, 2018; Campus France, 2020).

2. Rapid growth in the provinces, but the Paris region remains the preferred location

Another feature of Chinese immigrants in France is their uneven geographical distribution. According to the 2017 census, two-thirds (66%) live in

Table 2. Distribution of Chinese immigrants across the French regions, 1999–2017

Region	Number				Mean annual growth (%)			2017	
	1999	2010	2015	2017	1999 2010	2010 2015	2015 2017	Distribution (%)	As % of total population
Paris region (Île-de-France)	25,524	58,329	67,540	69,383	7.8	3.0	1.4	66.4	0.71
Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes	1,117	6,381	6,705	6,649	17.2	1.0	-0.4	6.4	0.07
Occitania	565	3,324	4,025	3,904	17.5	3.9	-1.5	3.7	0.07
Grand Est	473	3,315	4,185	3,763	19.4	4.8	-5.2	3.6	0.07
Hauts-de-France	766	3,233	3,642	3,645	14.0	2.4	0.0	3.5	0.06
Nouvelle-Aquitaine	442	2,961	3,331	3,450	18.9	2.4	1.8	3.3	0.06
Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur	822	2,516	3,344	3,360	10.7	5.9	0.2	3.2	0.07
Pays de la Loire	246	1,974	2,401	2,124	20.8	4.0	-5.9	2.0	0.06
Brittany	170	1,427	1,855	2,000	21.3	5.4	3.8	1.9	0.06
Normandy	331	1,900	2,047	1,967	17.2	1.5	-2.0	1.9	0.06
Bourgogne-Franche-Comté	265	1,547	1,671	1,785	17.4	1.6	3.4	1.7	0.09
Centre-Val de Loire	199	1,153	1,452	1,654	17.3	4.7	6.7	1.6	0.07

Source: Aggregate INSEE data, <https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques>.

the Paris region (Île-de-France) (Table 2) compared with just over one-third of other immigrants (38%) and 17% of the French-born population. Among those in Île-de-France, 60% live in Paris and in the Seine-Saint-Denis *département* (vs. 39% of other immigrants in Île-de-France).

Chinese immigrants are also gradually moving to other parts of France, with a sharp decline in the share living in Île-de-France (down from 83% in 1999) in favour of other French regions. The settlement dynamics of migrants born in China vary considerably across the country, however. After a decade of very rapid increase (at least 10% per year between 1999 and 2010 in all regions outside Île-de-France, even topping 20% in Pays de la Loire and Brittany), the pace of growth slowed almost everywhere (excepting the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region and Brittany) to below 5% between 2010 and 2015, and fell to zero or became negative in five regions between 2015 and 2017. Centre-Val de Loire, Brittany, and Bourgogne-Franche-Comté are now the only regions with an annual growth rate of more than 3%, double that of Île-de-France (1.4%).

Another singular feature of Chinese immigrants is their almost exclusive concentration in urban units (Brutel, 2016).⁽⁶⁾ In 2017, 98% were urban dwellers compared with 83% of other immigrants and 77% of the non-immigrant population (Appendix Table A.2). This much higher percentage urban than the rest of the population is observed across all regions, including the most rural ones

(6) Under the INSEE definition, an urban unit is a municipality or set of municipalities comprising a continuous built-up area or with at least 2,000 inhabitants.

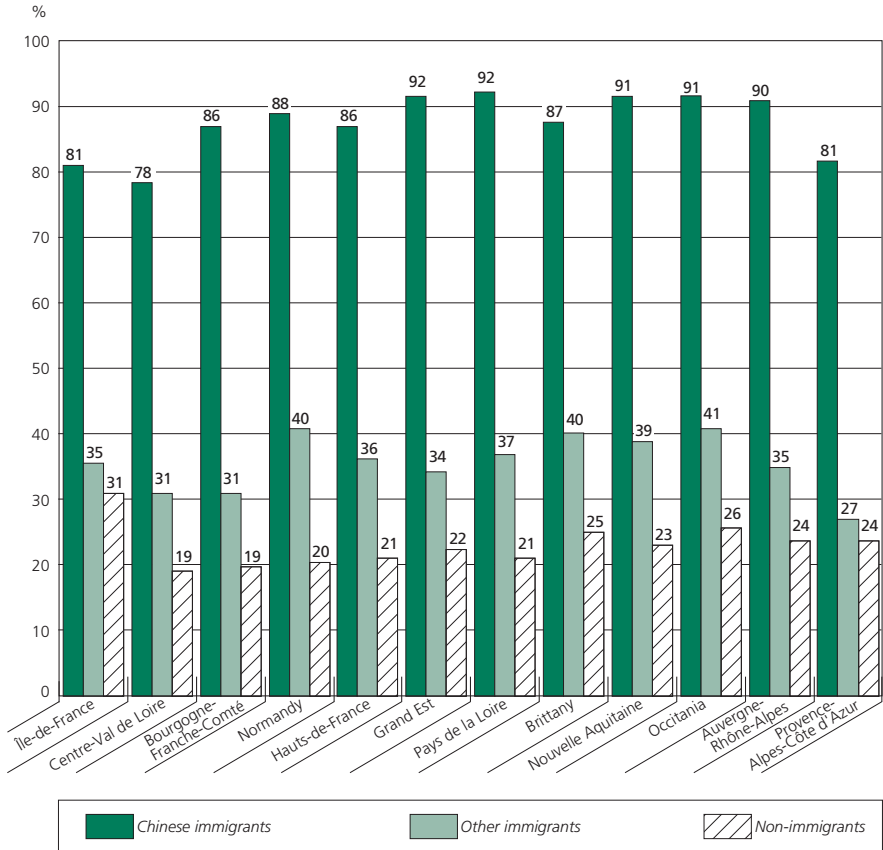
such as Bourgogne-Franche-Comté and Normandy. It corresponds to a rationale of ‘economic-urban’ concentration (Live, 1992) due partly, notably among Wenzhou immigrants, to the existence of migration networks centred on the geographical and linguistic community of origin (Ma Mung, 2009). By providing links between new arrivals and people already settled in France, these networks not only encourage migrants to join communities within relatively circumscribed geographical areas (Li, 2021) but also favour the development of an ‘ethnic labour market’ within these areas (Ma Mung, 2009). Moreover, this labour market is centred on the essentially urban activities of commerce and catering which employ the majority of economically active Chinese immigrants (close to 60% in Île-de-France compared with below 15% among the rest of the population in this region). Despite this rapid growth in most regions, in the 2000s especially, Chinese immigrants still only represent a minute share of the total population (below 1%), including in the Paris region where most of them live, and a very small minority of the immigrant population. This urban concentration is also linked to the large numbers of Chinese overseas students who necessarily live in urban centres close to their universities.

3. Chinese students: a major component of migration flows

Chinese overseas students are a major component of regular immigration flows from China. In 2017, they represented 64% of all Chinese citizens admitted for residence, while for all other nationalities, students accounted for just 28% of total inflows (Appendix Table A.1). Unlike the economic migrants who have entered France since the 1980s and who come mainly from a relatively limited number of regions in China (Box 1), the geographical origin of students is more diverse. Moreover, they mostly belong to the more affluent social classes (Bao, 2020) and generally have little contact with the other Chinese immigrants.

Over the entire observation period (1999–2017), almost 131,000 first residence permits valid for 1 year or more—around two-thirds of the total granted to Chinese citizens—were granted for educational reasons (Appendix Table A.1). The census confirms this singularity: 86% of Chinese immigrants arriving in France between 2010 and 2014 were enrolled in education on 1 January 2015, a proportion 2.4 times higher than among other immigrants (35%) and 3.5 times higher than among people born in France (24%) in the same age range. This proportion exceeded 90% in five regions (Figure 2), including Grand Est, Pays de la Loire, Occitania, and Nouvelle-Aquitaine, where the recent increase in the Chinese immigrant population is due primarily to this massive influx of students. In absolute terms, the Paris region still attracts the largest number of Chinese students. Out of more than 15,000 who arrived in France between 2010 and 2014 and still in the country on 1 January 2015, almost 5,000 were living in Île-de-France compared with just 1,800 in Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes and 1,200 in Occitania. Of these 15,000 students, 61% are women.

Figure 2. Percentage of immigrants present in France for less than 5 years and of people born in France enrolled in education among 20- to 29-year-olds in 2015



Coverage: Metropolitan France.

Source: Detailed datasets from the 2015 census.

The growing presence of Chinese students in France is representative of a global trend. China is now the country with the largest number of students enrolled in education overseas (Xiang, 2016). France, whose higher-education institutions have been widely promoted in China, ranked eighth in the world in 2015 for the number of Chinese students hosted in the country, and third among non-English-speaking host countries, behind Japan and South Korea (Campus France, 2018). The attractiveness of France is explained largely by its low tuition fees compared with those in English-speaking countries, the high value of French qualifications on the Chinese labour market, the low selectivity of French universities, and the quality of their teaching (Sztanke, 2005). The cooperation agreements signed between France and China to strengthen partnerships in higher education are another factor weighing in

France's favour. Chinese overseas student-placement agencies also strongly encourage students to choose France for the reasons given above (Bao, 2020). However, the number of Chinese students admitted to France has fallen in recent years (–18% between 2010 and 2017), more sharply than admissions of Chinese nationals for other reasons (–10%) (Appendix Table A.1). Political signals in China suggest that this downtrend may continue in coming years, especially as the Chinese government is now encouraging its best students to pursue their education at home (Campus France, 2020).

While the French regions (outside Île-de-France) are relatively attractive for Chinese students, especially as the cost of living is lower than in the Paris region, they attract only a small share of other Chinese migrants, economic migrants in particular. Among non-student Chinese nationals aged 20 or over who arrived in France between 2010 and 2014, only 2,600 settled in the provinces compared with 3,200 in the Paris region alone. This imbalance reflects two different sets of migration dynamics: in the regions (excluding Île-de-France) on the one hand, which benefit substantially from the demographic contribution of students, but only temporarily because these students either leave France after graduating or remain, but with a different residence status (Borrel, 2008); and the Paris region on the other, which benefits more from the demographic contribution of economically active Chinese immigrants, a presumably more lasting contribution than that of students. We have no detailed information, however, on the share of students who return to China after graduating or on the numbers who remain in France over the longer term.⁽⁷⁾ For the cohort that arrived in France in the early 2010s, there is a large discrepancy between the 2015 census (in which, as indicated above, around 15,000 Chinese immigrants enrolled in education and still present on 1 January 2015 reported arriving in France over the period) and statistics on admission for residence, which indicate that more than 42,500 Chinese students were admitted for residence between 2010 and 2014. This suggests that more than half (around 27,000) either returned to China after graduating, migrated to another country, or continued to live in France but no longer as a student. However, according to Campus France (2020), in recent years a large share of overseas students has returned to China after graduating.

4. A relatively recent immigration stream

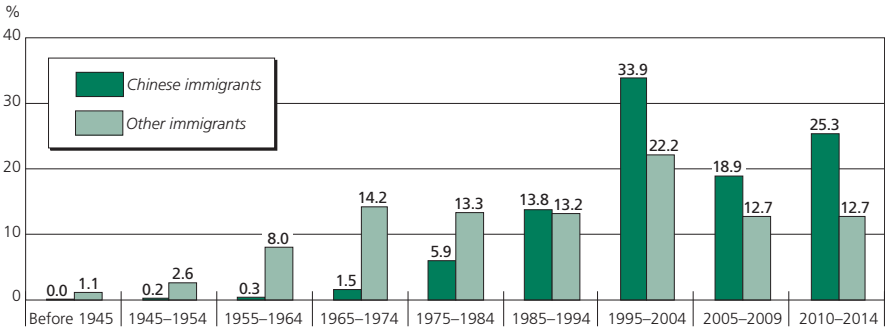
Chinese immigration to France is also more recent than immigration waves from other countries of the world.⁽⁸⁾ Among Chinese immigrants still present

(7) Of the 1,067,000 students who studied in the European Union between 1978 and 2006, only 275,000 are thought to have returned to China. However, the share returning to China after graduation appears to have increased in recent years (more than 50% in 2009) (Latham and Wu, 2013).

(8) The 'time since arrival in France' variable provides an imperfect measure of successive migration waves as 15% of the individuals concerned did not provide this information. Moreover, the estimate presented here does not take account of mortality between the date of arrival and 1 January 2015, or of the people who have left France.

in France on 1 January 2015 and who reported their year of arrival in France, three-quarters (78.2%) had arrived since 1995 compared with less than half (47.6%) of other immigrants; 1 in 4 (25.3%) had arrived in the most recent period (between 2010 and 2014) compared with 12.7% of other immigrants (Figure 3).⁽⁹⁾

Figure 3. Distribution of immigrants (%) in 2015 by time since arrival in France



Coverage: Metropolitan France.

Source: Detailed datasets from the 2015 census.

While increasing, the share of Chinese immigrants in succeeding arrival cohorts remains low. In the 2015 census, they represented 0.1% of all immigrants in France who arrived before 1965 and 3.6% of those who arrived between 2010 and 2014. This latter percentage is around half that of Chinese people among total admissions for residence over this last period (between 6.4% and 7.3% depending on the year, i.e. an average of 6.7% over 2010–2014; see Appendix Table A.1). This is again a sign of more frequent return migration or remigration to a third country among Chinese immigrants than among other immigrants, probably linked to the large numbers of overseas Chinese students, and suggests a lesser propensity to settle long term in France.

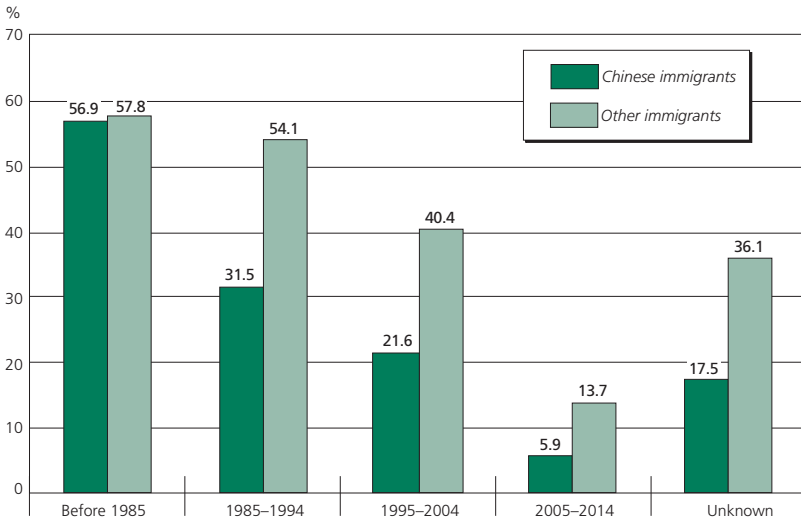
5. Less frequent acquisition of French nationality

This hypothesis of less frequent long-term settlement is confirmed by the fact that far fewer Chinese immigrants have acquired French nationality—an act that generally reflects a desire to remain in the country (Richard, 1998)—than other immigrants. Only 19% have been naturalized compared with 40% of other immigrants. The high proportion of Chinese immigrants who arrived in France in the most recent period (Figure 3), compared with other immigrants (21.3% and 10.7%, respectively), may account for some of this difference, particularly for naturalizations by decree due the minimum length of residence

(9) Time since arrival in France is calculated in years between arrival date and 1 January 2015.

in France required, set at 5 years for most applicants.⁽¹⁰⁾ It may also be due to the over-representation of overseas students, who presumably are less inclined to settle long term in France than people who migrated for economic or family reasons (Le Bail and Shen, 2008). The difference nonetheless persists across immigration cohorts (except those who arrived in France before 1985). For an equivalent length of stay in France, the share of Chinese immigrants who have acquired French nationality is only around half that observed among other immigrants (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Percentage of immigrants who have acquired French nationality by period of arrival in France, in 2015



Coverage: Metropolitan France.

Sources: Detailed datasets from the 2015 census.

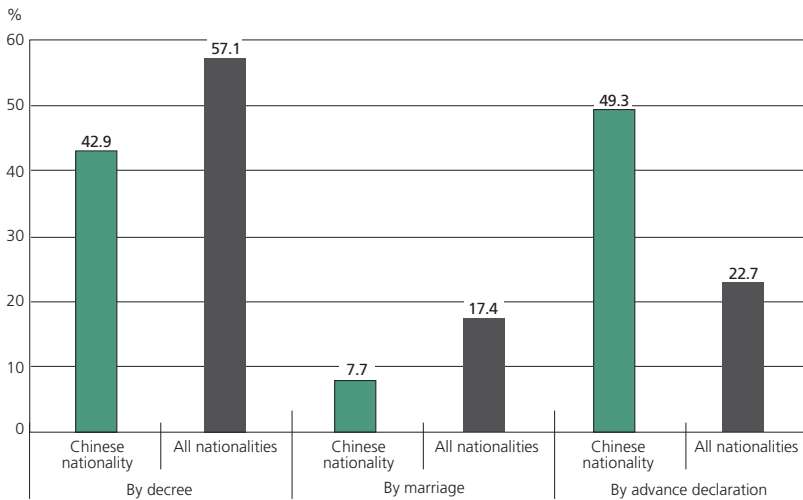
Another factor may be a poor command of French (for Chinese students, see Bao, 2020) and hence an inability to reach the skill level required (i.e. B1, or ‘Independent User’ level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) to obtain French nationality by decree. Applications for French nationality by Chinese immigrants might be more often rejected for this reason. Aware that their level of French is inadequate, they may exercise a form of self-censorship and do not apply for citizenship. This problem does not seem to arise in English-speaking countries where Chinese people have a better command of the language (Bao, 2020). In the United States, for example, 53% of Chinese immigrants have acquired US nationality, a proportion slightly higher than that of other immigrants (51%) (Echeverria-Estrada and Batalova, 2020). As China does not recognize dual nationality, the ‘symbolic rupture’

(10) See: <https://www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/Accueil-et-accompagnement/La-nationalite-francaise/Les-conditions-et-modalites-de-l-acquisition-de-la-nationalite-francaise>

associated with a change of nationality may also be especially dissuasive for Chinese immigrants, even though, here again, this factor does not seem to have an impact in the United States. Another hypothesis is that in the French context, where Chinese immigrants are generally less qualified than in the United States and where immigration is dominated by people from Wenzhou who generally maintain close links with their community of origin in China (Li, 2021), Chinese immigrants may prefer more short-term residence in France, with the option of returning home at the end of their working period.

This hypothesis is consistent with the observation that while the share of Chinese citizens among foreigners acquiring French nationality is increasing slightly (0.6% in 1999 and 1.6% in 2015; Appendix Table A.1), in 2016, half of these acquisitions concerned minors born in France who obtained French nationality by advance declaration before their 18th birthday, a proportion double that of all other nationalities (Figure 5).⁽¹¹⁾ Chinese nationals may less frequently apply for naturalization (by decree), or their applications may be more frequently rejected. In addition, the share of Chinese nationals who acquire French citizenship through marriage is lower than for all other nationalities (7.7% vs. 17.4%) despite the increasing share of mixed marriages between French and Chinese partners (2.5% in 2015 vs. 0.9% in 1999).⁽¹²⁾ Some of these differences may also stem from Chinese immigrants' more

Figure 5. Acquisitions of French nationality by main modes of acquisition in 2016 (%)



Source: Ministry of the Interior (<https://www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr>).

(11) Since 1998, under French law, all children born in France to foreign parents automatically acquire French nationality on their 18th birthday, except if they specifically refuse it, and they can apply for French nationality by advance declaration from the age of 13 (<https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr>).

(12) INSEE (<https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/2656612#tableau-Figure2c>).

recent arrival in France, given that foreigners who marry a French national must wait for 4 years before applying for French citizenship.⁽¹³⁾ Last, while acquiring French nationality suggests a desire to settle permanently in France, more than 2,600 of the 18,742 Chinese nationals who became French between 1999 and 2014 (Table 3) were not enumerated in the 2015 census,⁽¹⁴⁾ either because they had left France in the meantime (if they were not deceased) to return to China or to a different country, or because they had been living in France for less than 6 months per year.⁽¹⁵⁾ It would thus appear that for Chinese people, acquiring French nationality does not necessarily signal the end of their migration trajectory.

Table 3. Components of Chinese population growth in metropolitan France

	Children born in France to two parents with Chinese nationality ⁽¹⁾ (a)	Deaths of Chinese-born individuals	Admissions for residence of Chinese nationals ⁽²⁾		Acquisitions of French nationality (c)	Subtotal (a + b)
			Total (b)	of which students		
1999–2004	8,014	1,185	36,363	24,688	5,991	44,377
2005–2009	7,569	967	57,603	40,092	5,349	65,172
2010–2014	7,726	1,008	65,165	42,512	7,402	72,891
1999–2014	23,309	3,160	159,131	107,292	18,742	182,440

(1) In accordance with French law, Chinese minors included in this total keep their Chinese nationality until age 13 at least. Above this age, they can apply for French citizenship by advance declaration.
(2) First residence permits valid for at least 1 year.
Source: Civil records and Ministry of the Interior (AGDREF database).

III. Sociodemographic profile of Chinese immigrants

1. A young population with an over-representation of women

Another singular feature of the Chinese immigrant population is the over-representation of women (60% in 2017 vs. 51% among other immigrants), which increases across immigration cohorts (Figure 6). Already brought to light in qualitative studies (Lévy and Lieber, 2009; Pina-Guerassimoff, 2014; Lévy, 2015), this tendency is due to the growing female presence in inflows of Chinese nationals; the proportion of women rose from 56% in 1999 to 62% in 2017 (Appendix Table A.1).

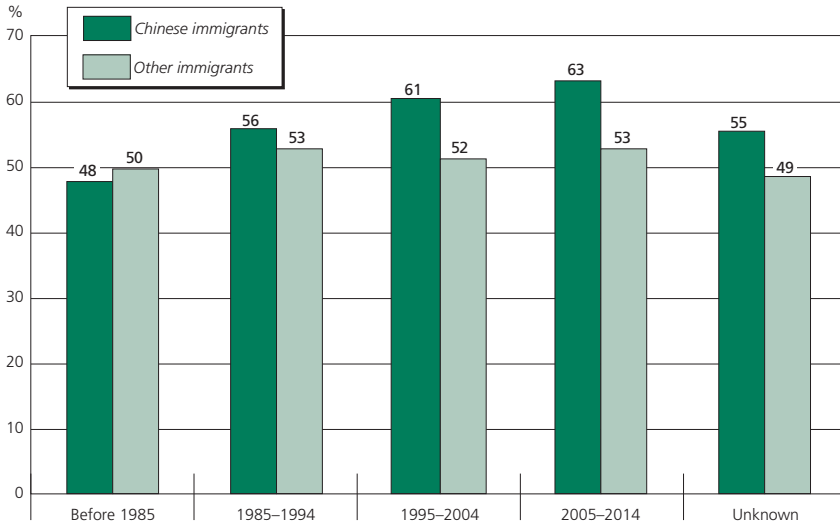
The Chinese immigrant population is also relatively young, despite the low proportion of children under age 15, equivalent to that of other immigrants (below 5% vs. almost 20% in the population born in France). Young adults are strongly over-represented (54% were aged 20–39 in 2017 vs. 29% of other immigrants and 23% of non-immigrants) (Figure 7), due partly to the massive

(13) Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères (<https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr>).

(14) INSEE (<https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/2656612#tableau-Figure2c>).

(15) This criterion is a condition for inclusion in the French census count.

Figure 6. Percentage of women in the different immigration cohorts in 2015



Coverage: Metropolitan France.

Source: Detailed datasets from the 2015 census.

presence of Chinese overseas students. This relative youth is also due to the low share of over-65s (4% vs. 20% in the rest of the population). The median age of Chinese immigrants is much lower than that of the rest of the population of metropolitan France: 36 years in 2017 compared with 47 years for other immigrants and 41 years for the population born in France.

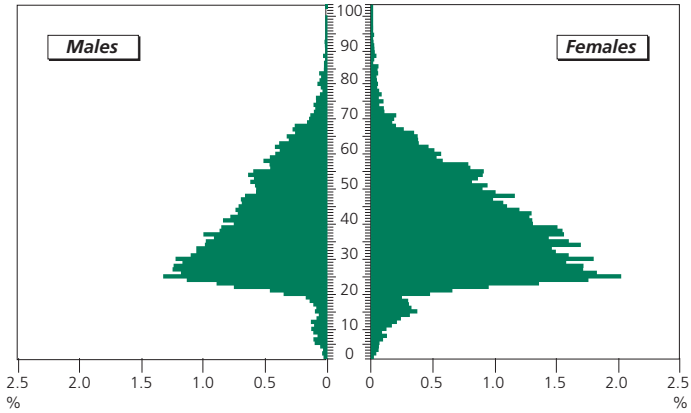
2. An increasingly qualified population

Research on Chinese immigrants across the world shows they are more qualified, on average, than immigrants from other countries, but also than native-born individuals in the host country (Li, 2008; Echeverria-Estrada and Batalova, 2020). While this reflects the impact of selective migration policies in countries such as the United States or Canada (Koslowski, 2014), a similar tendency is observed in France where, among all adults aged 20–59, the share with a tertiary qualification is higher among Chinese immigrants (50%) than among other immigrants (32%) and native-born French people (40%) (Figure 8).

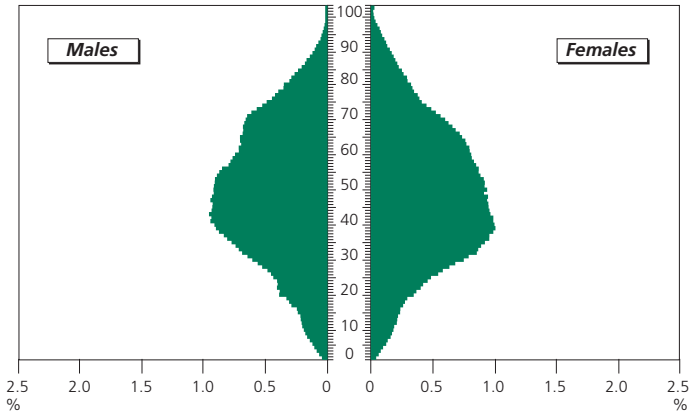
This characteristic concerns only the youngest Chinese immigrants (20–39 years). There is a strong cohort effect for education, with the oldest Chinese immigrants (40–59 years) much less qualified, on average, than other immigrants and native-born people (Figure 8). In all cohorts of immigrants, people with no or few qualifications and those with tertiary qualifications are relatively over-represented, while the proportion holding an intermediate qualification (vocational or general secondary) is low compared with the rest of the population

Figure 7. Age-sex structure of the population in 2017 (%)

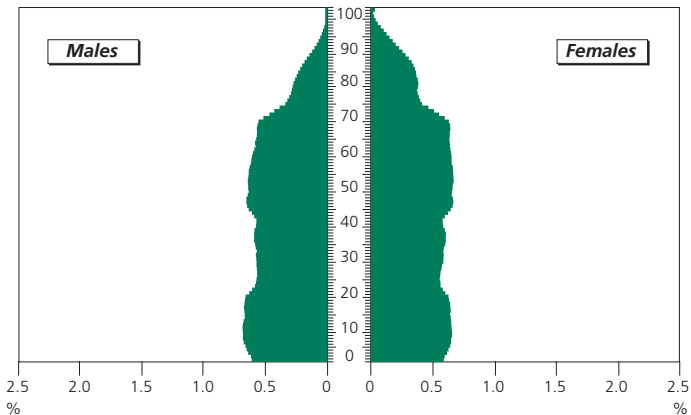
A. Chinese immigrants (0.2% of the population of metropolitan France)



B. Other immigrants (9.4% of the population of metropolitan France)



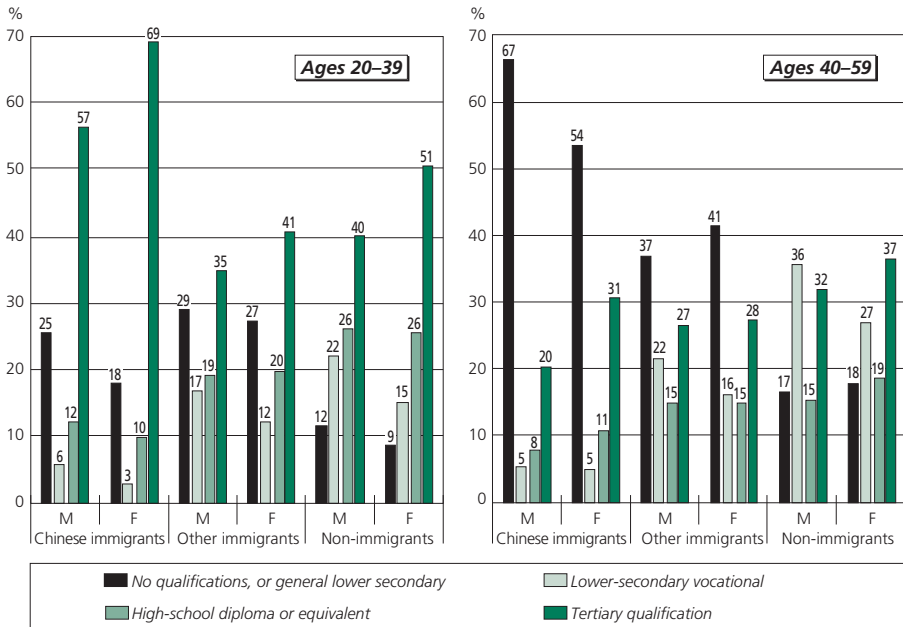
C. French-born population (90.4% of the population of metropolitan France)



Coverage: Metropolitan France.

Source: Detailed datasets from the 2017 census.

Figure 8. Distribution of immigrants and non-immigrants (%) by highest qualification held in 2015



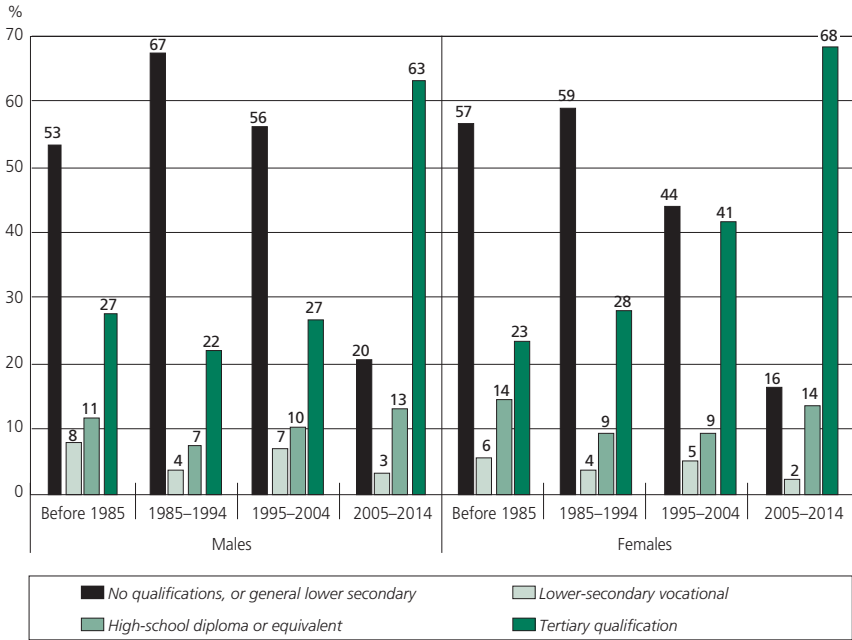
Coverage: Metropolitan France.

Source: Detailed datasets from the 2015 census.

(Figure 9). However, measures of lower-secondary qualifications obtained abroad are potentially inaccurate as no French–Chinese educational equivalence scale exists. This observation is nonetheless consistent with that of Xiang (2016), based on analysis of immigration flows from China, who pointed up a polarization between highly qualified (and often highly paid) migrants and low-educated migrants (generally with low incomes).

The disparities between these two generations of immigrants should be viewed in the light of two factors: first, the overall rise in educational levels across the the population of France, including Chinese immigrants; and second, the massive expansion of higher education in China since the late 1990s (Bao, 2020), which has substantially modified the profile of Chinese migrants arriving in France. Additionally, gender differences are clearly visible in the cohorts that arrived in France between the mid-1990s and the mid-2000s (Figure 9), which remain proportionally the largest group among Chinese immigrants still living in France. This points to—but cannot prove—the existence of two separate immigration streams within this generation, the first comprising relatively low-educated men, probably from Wenzhou, a sending region of generally low-educated migrants (Yun, 2004; Du, 2014), and the second comprising more highly educated women, largely from north-eastern China (Lévy, 2005). A clue is nonetheless provided by the

Figure 9. Distribution of Chinese immigrants (%) in 2015 by highest qualification and period of arrival in France



Coverage: Metropolitan France.

Source: Detailed datasets from the 2015 census.

over-representation of men from this immigrant generation in the restaurant trade (46% vs. 27% of women). Chinese women are slightly over-represented in activities requiring higher levels of qualification, such as the finance, insurance, and teaching sectors (13% in all vs. 7% of men). This is also the case for personal services (4% of women vs. 0.7% of men and 2% of other economically active immigrants who arrived during the same period), with many women, who include numerous newly arrived migrants from north-eastern China, working as domestic helpers for families from Zhejiang (Pina-Guerassimoff, 2014).

IV. Estimating inflows and outflows

French censuses give a snapshot of stocks of foreigners and immigrants in the country at a given moment and provide an indirect means to estimate net annual flows by comparing the numbers of people in these two groups across two successive censuses. However, they do not distinguish between changes due to natural growth (births and deaths in France) and those due to net migration or changes of nationality (notably the acquisition of French nationality, which mechanically reduces the number of foreigners). Other

sources are needed, therefore, to tease out the roles of these different factors in Chinese population dynamics.

Civil records provide information on the parents' nationality for all recorded births, and on the deaths of individuals born abroad, which can be used to estimate the contribution of natural increase to the changes observed.⁽¹⁶⁾ The Ministry of the Interior also publishes statistics on admissions for residence (first residence permits, extracted from the AGDREF database; see Note 3) and acquisitions of French nationality (Table 3). Departures are much more difficult to measure (d'Albis and Boubtane, 2015), so the stock of Chinese nationals actually present in France remains uncertain, especially the potentially large share of undocumented immigrants (Yun and Poisson, 2005; Lucchini, 2012).⁽¹⁷⁾ Their number can be roughly estimated using available data, although this type of estimation is necessarily approximate as some categories partially overlap. Individuals may be counted more than once in these statistics, either simultaneously or at different moments of their life. People who have acquired French nationality are also counted in residence permit statistics and in those of births in France to parents with Chinese nationality. Undocumented migrants may remain uncounted.

1. Several estimation methods

Since 1998, French birth records include the nationality of both parents.⁽¹⁸⁾ They can therefore be used to estimate the share of immigrant flows attributable to natural increase, although this measure remains imperfect as it records the parents' nationality at the birth of their child but not their nationality at their own birth; births to Chinese citizens who became French before having a child are omitted. The share of inflows attributable to immigration can be estimated via the number of first residence permits valid for at least 1 year granted to Chinese nationals. It remains difficult, however, to estimate stocks based on statistics on admissions for residence. Persons holding a valid residence permit may no longer be present in France on the date considered, and their death or acquisition of French nationality may also introduce bias into the estimate (d'Albis and Boubtane, 2015). Statistics on admissions for residence provide an imperfect estimate of inflows as they do not count all foreign-born minors

(16) Death records made available to users (<https://www.insee.fr/fr/information/4769950>) include the decedents' country of birth but not their nationality, so the natural increase of the Chinese and/or immigrant population in France can only be estimated.

(17) The collection method used by INSEE tends to underestimate the population and hence the number of foreigners living in France (DGEF, 2018). Moreover, inconsistencies are sometimes observed when numbers counted on the basis of nationality or country of birth are compared with administrative data or sources published by local authorities in China (Ma Mung, 2002; Li, 2021). According to a Senate inquiry committee, 10,000 applications for regularization were submitted in 1998 by undocumented Chinese nationals, representing 28.5% of all applications. Those processed before 30 April 1998 received a favourable response in 92.6% of cases, a proportion that corresponds to 15% of all Chinese immigrants enumerated in 1999 (<https://www.senat.fr/rap/197-4701/197-470135.html>).

(18) Before 1998, the father's nationality was not always recorded, so it is impossible to produce reliable estimates for earlier years.

who migrate with their parents; some do not hold their own residence permit until they reach their majority (Thierry, 2004).⁽¹⁹⁾

If births in France to two Chinese parents⁽²⁰⁾ between 1999 and 2014 are added to the 159,131 Chinese nationals admitted for residence over the period, we obtain a net inflow of 182,440 Chinese citizens over this 16-year period (Table 3). However, a fraction of the people included in this net inflow is missing from the 2015 census. There is a large difference between the net growth of the Chinese population deduced from the stocks enumerated between 1999 and 2015 ($98,738 - 28,319 = 70,419$ persons; Appendix Table A.3) and that resulting from total births and admissions for residence of Chinese nationals (+182,440; Table 3) minus the deaths in France of Chinese nationals (3,160) and of Chinese-born people who have acquired French nationality (18,742). This differential of 90,119⁽²¹⁾ provides an initial estimate of net outflows of Chinese citizens between 1999 and 2014.

A second estimation method, no more robust than the first, involves matching the number of first residence permits granted over a given period against the stock of residence permits still valid at the end of this period. For 2015, for example, the AGDREF database includes 103,933 Chinese nationals with a currently valid residence permit,⁽²²⁾ but this figure is doubly inconsistent. First, it is more than 5,000⁽²³⁾ higher than the number of Chinese nationals counted in the 2015 census (98,738; Appendix Table A.1). Second, it is well below the number of first residence permits granted over the period for which information is available (159,131 between 1999 and 2014; Table 3), with a net difference of 55,198.⁽²⁴⁾ While the first difference can be partially ignored due to the limits of using the stock of currently valid residence permits to enumerate foreigners living in France,⁽²⁵⁾ the second, after subtracting acquisitions of

(19) Immigrants arriving as minors are not required to hold a residence permit until they reach age 18, or age 16 if they are in employment (Thierry, 2004).

(20) Only children born in France to two Chinese parents systematically take Chinese nationality at birth and keep it until age 13 at least (see Note 13). This total thus excludes children with one Chinese parent who may have taken the nationality, French or otherwise, of the other parent.

(21) This figure was obtained as follows: sum of births and admissions for residence of Chinese nationals (182,440), from which we deduct net Chinese population growth deduced from the stocks enumerated in 1999 and 2015 (70,419), Chinese-born people who have acquired French nationality (18,742), and deaths (3,160), to obtain a total net outflow of 90,119.

(22) <https://www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/Info-ressources/Actualites/Focus/Les-etranangers-en-France-Rapport-au-Parlement-sur-les-donnees-de-l-annee-2017> and <https://www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/Info-ressources/Actualites/Focus/Les-etranangers-en-France-Rapport-au-Parlement-sur-les-donnees-de-l-annee-2018>

(23) $103,933 - 98,738 = 5,195$.

(24) $159,131 - 103,933 = 55,198$.

(25) First, the number of currently valid residence permits may overestimate the number of foreigners actually present in France as the database is not updated in real time, so some permit holders who have left France, died, or acquired French nationality may be wrongly included for a short time. In addition, the data collection method used by INSEE leads to under-reporting of foreigners in population censuses (only inhabitants living in the dwelling for 'most of the year' are enumerated) (DGEF, 2017, p. 14).

French nationality⁽²⁶⁾ and deaths over the period (Table 3), gives an order of magnitude for the number of people whose status is no longer that of a foreigner living in France on a regular and long-term basis (33,296).⁽²⁷⁾

A third crude method involves comparing the number of admissions for residence between 1999 and 2014 (159,131; Table 3) with the number of Chinese citizens and French nationals with Chinese nationality at birth who, in the 2015 census, reported arriving in France from 1999 (62,235). After subtracting estimated deaths over the period (3,160), we obtain a difference of 93,736 departures, consistent with our first estimation, corresponding to the number of people admitted for residence over the period and liable to have since left the country.

These three estimates place the number of departures in a broad range of between around 33,000 and 94,000 from 1999 to 2014, equivalent to 21% and 60%, respectively, of all arrivals of Chinese nationals over the period (159,131; Table 3). D'Albis and Boubtane (2015) have estimated that departures of foreigners of all nationalities represented 51.6% of the number of arrivals over the period 1998–2013.⁽²⁸⁾ These estimates assume that, on average, between 1999 and 2014, Chinese nationals accounted for between 2.5% and 7.1%⁽²⁹⁾ of all departures of foreigners against 5.5% of arrivals (Appendix Table A.1).

2. Undocumented migrants

These estimates of outflows do not show any major inconsistencies.⁽³⁰⁾ However, while a share of these losses to observation may correspond to migrants who have indeed left the country, particularly students returning to China after completing their studies, some migrants may have remained in France after their residence permit expired (notably those who came to France with a tourist visa;⁽³¹⁾ see Lucchini, 2012) and therefore be wrongly counted among departures. The main uncertainty, which cannot be lifted, concerns 'invisible' immigration of Chinese nationals entering France either with a visa or residence permit issued by another country in the Schengen area, or illegally (Cattelain and Ngugen, 2002). These migrants are absent from administrative statistics of stocks and flows and, given their sometimes precarious situations (Du, 2014), are more likely to be omitted from census counts.

(26) People still in France in 2015, who totalled 15,948 (see Note 16).

(27) $159,131 - 03,933 - 8,742 - 3,160 = 33,296$.

(28) D'Albis and Boubtane (2015) estimate that there were 89,232 annual departures, on average, over the period 1998–2013. Assuming this figure was equivalent in 2014, we obtain a total of 1,338,480 departures of foreigners between 1999 and 2014.

(29) $33,296/1,338,480 \times 100$ and $93,736/1,338,480 \times 100$.

(30) In theory, the population census counts all inhabitants, including undocumented migrants, who are not identified as such.

(31) In recent years, visas granted to Chinese nationals have outnumbered those granted to any other nationality: 849,550 in 2017 (all types of visas), double the number granted to Algerian nationals, who rank in second place (Ministry of the Interior, 2018).

The only available estimate of undocumented Chinese nationals in France, produced by the International Labour Organization in 2005, gave a figure of 50,000 (Yun and Poisson, 2005). We do not know their number today, but if it has increased at the same pace as admissions for residence over the period (+39.7%),⁽³²⁾ they may well total almost 70,000. Assuming the majority are omitted from the census—a plausible hypothesis given their precarious economic and housing situations (Du, 2014; Wang, 2017)—these undocumented immigrants, added to the 102,459 Chinese immigrants enumerated in 2015 (Figure 1), may raise the number actually present in France to more than 170,000. This would also imply that at least three-quarters of the losses to observation estimated above do not correspond to departures but to Chinese nationals who have remained illegally in France. However, this purely indicative estimate bears no resemblance to an earlier one based on statistics of admissions for residence drawn from Thierry (2004), according to whom, in the early 2000s, among the Chinese nationals admitted for residence in the preceding years, only 6% (a rate well below that of other nationalities) had previously been undocumented.

Conclusion

The constraints of measuring migration flows from China are the same as for flows from other foreign countries (Thave, 1996; Héran, 2002). In particular, given the difficulty of measuring outflows (d'Albis and Boubtane, 2015) and of quantifying 'invisible' immigration, the actual size of the Chinese population in France (and hence its true characteristics) remains uncertain. This uncertainty is probably greater for the Chinese than for other immigrants due to the diasporic nature of their emigration (especially among migrants from Wenzhou who are numerically dominant in France), which is partly reliant on well-established migration networks operating from abroad (Ma Mung, 2000). However, the observations presented above provide no evidence to support the hypothesis that Chinese immigration is measured less accurately than immigration from other parts of the world, or that Chinese people would 'flood into Western countries in their millions' (Héran, 2002, p. 67). The descriptive analyses in this article paint a potentially partial picture of Chinese immigration in France and must be considered with the usual degree of caution. They nonetheless reveal the particularities of the 'visible' share of the Chinese immigrant population with respect to other 'visible' immigrants, whose situations necessarily span very contrasting realities (Beauchemin et al., 2015).

A first key finding is the high concentration of Chinese immigrants in the Paris region (Île-de-France), particularly within certain neighbourhoods of

(32) A total of 9,103 admissions for residence of Chinese nationals were recorded in 2005 compared with 12,717 in 2014 (Appendix Table A.1), an increase of 39.7%.

Paris and the Seine-Saint-Denis *département*,⁽³³⁾ a feature that distinguishes them from the other main immigrant groups distributed more widely across the country (Sagot, 2010). This uneven spatial distribution results in high public visibility (notably in the retail and restaurant sectors) in these areas of concentration, but also relative invisibility in certain French regions where most Chinese immigrants are students. Students, women especially, represent a large share of overall Chinese migration flows, in terms of both inflows and probable return migration, this latter being influenced by policies designed to encourage young graduates to return home, first implemented in China in the 1990s (Le Bail and Shen, 2008). Young and qualified, Chinese overseas students are gradually modifying—temporarily if they return to China after graduating or more permanently if they remain in France on other grounds—the general sociodemographic profile of Chinese immigrants in France by contributing to their relatively young mean age and to the significant increase in their mean level of education across cohorts.

Secondly, while this research avenue could only be partially explored with the data available here, we observe that, for an equal length of stay, the proportion of Chinese immigrants who have acquired French nationality is lower than that of other immigrants, partly due to the language barrier. This trait may also be linked to the predominance of Wenzhou immigrants who maintain strong ties with their region of origin in China and who, for this reason, may migrate on an intermittent or shorter-term basis. This dimension of Chinese immigration is only touched upon in the descriptions presented here, but there is an abundant literature on this topic (Li, 2021), notably concerning Wenzhou business owners with a strong presence in the Paris region. It suggests that Chinese people may be less willing than other foreigners to make the ‘symbolic break’ (Mlati and Duarte, 2005), especially with respect to family and peers, implied by a change of nationality, and may thus be less inclined to settle long term in France.

Last, it remains to be seen whether the downtrend in Chinese arrivals in France that began in 2010 (Appendix Table A.1) is confirmed in coming years, thus opening a new page in the history of Chinese immigration to France.

Acknowledgements: I would like to thank Wilfried Rault, an INED researcher, for his valuable comments during the writing of this article, and Laurent Toulemon, who helped me to access census data via the CASD as part of the AQRDEDA project.

(33) Notably Belleville, the ‘Triangle de Choisy’ in the 13th arrondissement, and the northern 19th arrondissement of Paris; and, in the Seine-Saint-Denis *département*, Aubervilliers, Bobigny, Pantin, Bagnolet, and La Courneuve.



APPENDICES

Table A.1. Admissions for residence and acquisitions of French nationality by Chinese nationals, 1999–2017

First year of residence permit validity	Admissions for residence (receipt of a first residence permit valid for at least 1 year)						Acquisitions of French nationality by Chinese nationals	
	Total	China			Chinese as a percentage of the total	Share of women among Chinese nationals (%)	Numbers	% of total
		Total	Of which admissions for educational reasons	Students (% of total)				
1999	111,726	2,194	1,305	59.5	2.0	56.4	834	0.6
2000	137,027	3,697	2,287	61.9	2.7	55.1	964	0.6
2001	164,866	5,345	3,428	64.1	3.2	56.2	866	0.7
2002	187,353	7,382	5,517	74.7	3.9	56.8	894	0.7
2003	200,709	8,911	6,338	71.1	4.4	57.7	1,255	0.9
2004	201,531	8,834	5,813	65.8	4.4	57.9	1,178	0.7
2005	199,892	9,103	5,930	65.1	4.6	58.3	1,078	0.7
2006	195,042	11,113	6,326	56.9	5.7	56.8	965	0.7
2007	177,411	10,987	7,689	70.0	6.2	59.2	759	0.6
2008	184,329	12,644	10,100	79.9	6.9	n/a	1,122	0.8
2009	189,501	13,756	10,047	73.0	7.3	60.1	1,425	1.0
2010	184,534	13,273	9,322	70.2	7.2	60.0	1,403	1.0
2011	177,741	12,440	8,422	67.7	7.0	61.1	1,336	1.2
2012	180,077	12,674	8,314	65.6	7.0	61.8	1,331	1.4
2013	192,419	14,061	8,414	59.8	7.3	61.2	1,497	1.5
2014	200,044	12,717	8,040	63.2	6.4	61.8	1,835	1.7
2015	210,337	12,433	7,944	63.9	5.9	61.5	1,830	1.6
2016	218,355	12,732	8,097	63.6	5.8	62.5	2,057	1.7
2017	237,681	11,873	7,607	64.1	5.0	62.0		

n/a = not available.

Sources: Our thanks to Élodie Baril (INED), for extracting these data on admissions for residence from the AGDREF database. They are generally consistent with those obtained by d'Albis and Boubtane (2015). The data series on acquisition of French nationality were obtained from the Ministry of the Interior (<https://www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr>). For 1998–2012, they can be accessed at: <https://www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/Info-ressources/Etudes-et-statistiques/Statistiques/Chiffres-cles-sejour-visas-eloignements-asile-acces-a-la-nationalite/Archives/Statistiques-publiees-en-2013/L-acces-a-la-nationalite-francaise>

Table A.2. Percentage of the population living in an urban unit in 2017

Regions	Chinese immigrants	Other immigrants	Non-immigrant population
Île-de-France	99.7	89.0	95.7
Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur	97.0	89.8	93.6
Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes	95.7	83.9	75.9
Occitania	95.5	76.4	72.8
Grand Est	94.7	79.5	69.7
Hauts-de-France	94.7	83.0	77.9
Normandy	94.4	73.7	62.7
Centre-Val de Loire	94.3	78.1	64.4
Brittany	94.1	67.8	68.5
Pays de la Loire	92.9	76.5	72.2
Nouvelle-Aquitaine	92.0	66.8	64.3
Bourgogne-Franche-Comté	89.3	71.2	54.4
Metropolitan France	98.0	82.6	76.6

Coverage: Metropolitan France.
Source: Detailed datasets from the 2015 census.

**Table A.3. Chinese citizens and naturalized French citizens
with Chinese nationality at birth, by age and sex, in 1999 and 2015**

Age group	1999			2015		
	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females
Chinese nationality						
0-4	1,597	857	740	5,291	2,658	2,633
5-9	1,236	634	602	5,566	3,001	2,565
10-14	1,743	1,014	729	4,712	2,352	2,360
15-19	2,110	1,041	1,069	3,387	1,577	1,810
20-24	2,499	1,126	1,373	15,736	6,417	9,319
25-29	3,388	1,354	2,034	15,646	6,406	9,240
30-34	3,788	1,625	2,163	11,558	4,507	7,051
35-39	4,046	1,940	2,106	9,057	3,574	5,483
40-44	2,881	1,475	1,406	7,828	3,109	4,719
45-49	1,836	979	857	6,378	2,604	3,774
50-54	962	491	471	5,310	2,325	2,985
55-59	490	298	192	3,476	1,667	1,809
60-64	496	245	251	2,224	1,050	1,174
65-69	422	200	222	1,201	625	576
70-74	281	144	137	571	281	290
75-79	255	111	144	353	169	184
80-84	166	78	88	227	109	118
85+	123	66	57	216	99	117
Total	28,319	13,678	14,641	98,738	42,530	56,207
Naturalized French citizens with Chinese nationality at birth						
0-4	384	189	195	232	83	149
5-9	368	153	215	826	223	603
10-14	295	141	154	2,494	724	1,770
15-19	340	181	159	2,631	1,226	1,405
20-24	420	210	210	1,876	916	960
25-29	596	215	381	1,999	957	1,042
30-34	834	299	535	2,327	987	1,340
35-39	1,315	526	789	2,340	854	1,486
40-44	998	447	551	2,160	731	1,429
45-49	842	358	484	1,919	629	1,290
50-54	548	294	254	1,938	744	1,194
55-59	327	146	181	1,468	547	921
60-64	298	152	146	928	467	461
65-69	232	116	116	597	260	337
70-74	277	102	175	346	186	160
75-79	262	105	157	268	104	164
80-84	115	46	69	167	68	99
85+	124	24	100	158	63	95
Total	8,575	3,704	4,871	24,674	9,769	14,905

Source: 1999 and 2015 population censuses.

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Isabelle ATTANÉ • CHINESE IMMIGRATION TO FRANCE

While still marginal across France as a whole, in terms of both stocks and flows, immigration from China has increased 6 times faster than that from other countries since the 1980s. This article aims to fill the quantitative knowledge gap on Chinese immigration. It begins by analysing census data to describe the main sociodemographic characteristics of Chinese immigrants with respect to those from other origins. Then, it uses administrative data to describe the inflows that have contributed to Chinese population increase in France, and to estimate outflows. These analyses produce two main findings: first, a strong residential concentration in the Paris region (Île-de-France) and in the most urbanized areas; and second, large student inflows gradually modifying the general sociodemographic profile of Chinese migrants in France.

Isabelle ATTANÉ • L'IMMIGRATION CHINOISE EN FRANCE

L'immigration chinoise, bien que toujours marginale à l'échelle de la France métropolitaine, à la fois en termes de stocks et de flux, a connu depuis les années 1980 une croissance six fois plus rapide que celle en provenance des autres pays. Cet article vise à pallier la relative méconnaissance de cette immigration sur un plan quantitatif. Il analyse tout d'abord les données des recensements afin d'en décrire les principales caractéristiques sociodémographiques par comparaison aux autres immigrés. Il se fonde ensuite sur des données administratives afin d'étudier les flux alimentant la croissance de la population chinoise en France et d'estimer les flux de sortie. Deux principaux résultats ressortent des analyses : d'une part, une forte concentration résidentielle en Île-de-France et dans les zones les plus urbanisées du pays ; d'autre part, l'apport significatif de la migration étudiante, qui modifie progressivement le profil sociodémographique général des migrants chinois en France.

Isabelle ATTANÉ • LA INMIGRACIÓN CHINA EN FRANCIA

La inmigración china, aunque sigue siendo marginal a escala de la Francia metropolitana, tanto en términos de volumen como de flujos, ha experimentado desde los años ochenta un crecimiento seis veces más rápido que la procedente de otros países. Este artículo pretende paliar el relativo desconocimiento de esta inmigración en un plano cuantitativo. En primer lugar, analiza los datos de los censos para describir sus principales características sociodemográficas en comparación con otros inmigrantes. A partir de datos administrativos se describen entonces los flujos que alimentan el crecimiento de la población china en Francia y se estiman los flujos de salida. Se desprenden dos resultados principales: por una parte, una fuerte concentración residencial en Île-de-France y en las zonas más urbanizadas del país; por otra, la contribución significativa de la migración estudiantil, que modifica progresivamente el perfil sociodemográfico general de los migrantes chinos en Francia.

Keywords: Chinese immigration, immigrant generations, student migration, France

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