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**THE YEAR OF ENTRY IN FRANCE:
INTEREST OF A NEW QUESTION IN THE 1999 CENSUS**

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Summary

In France, international migrants are defined as people born abroad and who are foreigners at birth. In order to quantify such a population, this definition requires at least two key variables : the place of birth and the first nationality held by individuals in question. In 1999, an additional question was introduced in the census: every individual born abroad is required to declare his or her date of arrival in France. This paper attempts to illustrate the statistical interest. Firstly, we pay special attention to the reliability of this information, since a large percentage of people do not answer (around 20%), and we conclude that respondents do not differ significantly from non respondents. Next, we analyse cross-tabulation related to this information in order to determine to what extent it provides new insights on international migration. Better knowledge is related to the measurement and the characteristics of inflows. It appears that the figures generally admitted for newcomers seem to be under-estimated, although flows shown by census are necessarily incomplete due to the retrospective view. We also show that the educational attainment of immigrants increases in new cohorts: immigrants who arrived in France in recent years have a higher education by far than that of immigrants who arrived in France in the past. On average, immigrants over the last decade are more educated than non-immigrants of the same age. This new data gives a better understanding of integration processes among immigrants. For instance, we may calculate the frequency and the time elapsed between the arrival and the acquisition of nationality by sex, period, age at entry and country of birth. Outputs are consistent with specific surveys, but without the sample limitation of the latter. Differences between immigrants of various origins may be clearly assessed by monitoring the duration of stay in France. We may also consider the position on the labour market as an indicator of socio-economic segmentation, and when associated with the year of arrival of an individual, new insights on the mobility inter-sector over time are established.

¹ Paper prepared by Xavier Thierry.