

*Being Muslim in France*

PART

I



## *The Steady Integration of France's Most Recent and Largest Minority*

Outside observers of Islam in France often paint a picture of a homogeneous Muslim community that is fast gaining on the “native” French population, one whose religious allegiance stands in stark contrast with its secular environment. The rate of expansion of this community—and its perceived drift away from mainstream French society—has been the subject of much speculation and political maneuvering, both by ambitious Muslim leaders and by the extreme right in French politics. The Front National (FN) (National Front) party once printed on its campaign posters the startling and inaccurate prediction that “France will be a Muslim country by 2020.”

In France, which has approximately 5 million residents of Muslim descent, Islam is the “second religion,” following Catholicism, and it has more adherents than the next three non-Catholic minorities combined: Jews (600,000), Protestants (800,000), and Buddhists (150,000–500,000). But to understand what that number means, it is important to establish first the basic characteristics of the French Muslim community. As the data presented in this chapter make clear, any assumption of homogeneity is misguided. Instead, Muslims in France hail from a wide range of nations, although most came from North Africa (Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, known as the Maghreb). Among residents of Muslim background, the degree of self-declared affiliation with Islam does not differ significantly from the degree of self-declared affiliation with Catholicism among French people of Catholic background (around 66 percent in both cases).<sup>1</sup> Among self-declared Muslims, the rate of attendance at mosques also is similar to that of self-declared Catholics at churches, although daily religious observance (for example, private prayer, abstinence

from alcohol, fasting during Ramadan, and so forth) is somewhat more pronounced in the Muslim group.<sup>2</sup> And although the fertility rate of immigrant women who have come to France from Muslim countries is still higher than the national average, there is statistical evidence of acculturation in that the rates tend to converge over time as immigrant women adapt to their new economic and social situations.

Despite their ethnic and national diversity, what Muslims in France increasingly do have in common is their “lived experience,” which includes the bitterness of exclusion as well as successful efforts to integrate. That experience forms the basis of an emergent “French Muslim” identity. The integration of the latest wave of immigrants into the fabric of French society has seen progress, even though more troubling problems have occurred than with previous waves (for example, enduring ghettoization in housing projects and related violence) and new issues linked to religion and identity have arisen that did not exist before. But the attention devoted to these problems should not overshadow the long-term trends toward integration, described at length below.

### **Muslims, Immigrants, or Arabs? Counting a Diverse Minority**

The first Muslims came to France centuries ago, following the occupation of Spain by the Moors in the eighth century. Some settled on the outskirts of Toulouse and even as far north as Burgundy, and there are remains of an eighth-century mosque in Narbonne. In 732, Charles Martel fought back the Muslim invaders at the famous—and partly mythological—Battle of Poitiers (also called the Battle of Tours).<sup>3</sup> Some Muslims fleeing the Spanish Reconquista and, later, the Inquisition settled in Languedoc-Roussillon and in the Basque country, as well as around Narbonne and in the Béarn.<sup>4</sup> By the fifteenth century, the expansion of sea trade brought the French into contact with Islam in the Ottoman empire, in West Africa, and in the Indian Ocean. With imperial expansion, France became a “protector” or colonizer of many territories with majority Muslim populations, as in Egypt (1798), Algeria (1830), West Africa (1880), Tunisia (1881), Morocco (1912), and Syria and Lebanon (1920).

The greatest number of Muslims immigrated to France during the contemporary era, in the wake of the colonial wars of independence (1954–62). Their presence in France today can be traced back to the end of this period of decolonization, when many Muslims were officially recruited for labor, but much of the immigration was spontaneous. The oil crisis and economic

**Table 1-1. *Foreigners of Various Origins Living in Metropolitan France, as a Percent of All Foreigners***

<i>Origin</i>	<i>1900</i>	<i>1920</i>	<i>1940</i>	<i>1960</i>	<i>1980</i>	<i>2000</i>
Europe	98	90	90	72	44	40
Africa				20	42	41
Asia			2	4	10	15
Other					1	5

Source: Mouna Viprey, “L’insertion des jeunes d’origine étrangère” [“The integration of youth of foreign origin”] (Paris: Conseil économique et social, July 2002), p. 122.

downturn of 1973–74 led the French government to end large-scale labor migration from North Africa, but the reunification of families became a continuing source of immigrants during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Family reunification from all countries grew from 55,000 a year in the late 1960s to 81,000 in 1973, before decreasing over time to about 25,000 in 2004. The arrival of foreign spouses, meanwhile, increased from 23,000 in 1990 to more than 60,000 in 2004.<sup>5</sup> Those years saw a shift from a largely single male population to one consisting of nuclear and extended families. Table 1-1 shows the growth of foreign populations of various origins in France over the twentieth century.

#### *Estimates in the Absence of Census Data*

The French republic considers ethnic and religious affiliation a private matter and therefore keeps no such official statistics on citizens of immigrant origin. The last census that indicated respondents’ religion was taken in 1872, and a 1978 law restricts official recordkeeping regarding racial and ethnic data.<sup>6</sup> The precise number of Muslims is thus the subject of some controversy and considerable confusion. It has been estimated that there are between 3.65 million and 6 million residents of Muslim descent living in France, equivalent to roughly 6 to 10 percent of the general population. Though France’s Muslims represent 123 different nationalities, nearly three-quarters are from the countries of the Maghreb: Algeria, Morocco, or Tunisia. The national census does count the total number of immigrants, which includes everyone born outside France to non-French parents (Muslims and non-Muslims). But even naturalization statistics are taboo, and immigrants’ date of arrival in France was removed from the 1975 census.<sup>7</sup>

In the absence of official figures, widely divergent estimates of the Muslim population have circulated, many of which are politically motivated. The

highest approximations (from 6 million to as high as 8 million) have been propagated both by the extreme-right National Front, in order to alarm “traditional” French citizens over what it perceives as excessive immigration and the corresponding threat to French identity, and by Muslim associations with a political interest in inflating the number of Muslims that they claim to represent. The lowest estimates have been provided by researchers such as Michèle Tribalat, a demographer at Institut National d’Etudes Démographiques (INED) (National Institute for Demographic Studies), who has suggested that the government and the public pay too much attention to Muslims per se and thereby encourage Muslims to identify foremost with the Muslim community instead of with France and French society in general.

Tribalat, using large-scale sampling techniques on data collected in the 1999 census (which includes detailed information on three generations of family for more than 380,000 adults), concluded that 24 percent of the population living in France was either foreign-born (4.3 million) or had at least one foreign parent (5.5 million) or grandparent (3.6 million). Foreigners, of course, include people from countries that are members of the European Union, like Spain, Portugal, and Italy.<sup>8</sup> Of these 13.5 million “persons of foreign origin,” 22 percent (3 million) come from the Maghreb, 5 percent come from sub-Saharan Africa, and 2.4 percent from Turkey. Extrapolating from those figures and partly adjusting for religious diversity (especially for sub-Saharan Africans, half of whom are Christians or Animists), Tribalat offers an estimate of 3.65 million as the number of “potential Muslims”—French residents who, given their origin, are highly likely to declare themselves Muslim.<sup>9</sup> However, that figure dates back to 1999 and leaves out converts to Islam (generally estimated at 50,000) and illegal immigrants (perhaps 50,000 to 150,000 at any given time), many of whom are potential Muslims.

The estimates in table 1-2 of the Muslim population in France have been calculated by different sources over the last fifteen years. It should be noted also that these estimates generally count the number of “potential Muslims” or “persons of possible Muslim origin,” not the number of believers in Islam and even less the number of observant Muslims. This book uses the 5 million figure as its point of reference for the number of persons of Muslim background living in France, since that number has emerged as the consensus among Muslim community representatives and government officials and will remain valid for a few years. However, it should be noted that the most scientific estimates available—such as those of Michèle Tribalat and Alain Boyer—point to the lower levels.

Systematic polling regarding religious beliefs—including polls carried out on a regular basis by the Observatoire Interrégional du Politique (OIP)

**Table 1-2. Various Estimates of the Muslim Population in France**

<i>Source</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Methodology</i>	<i>Estimate</i>
Bruno Etienne <sup>a</sup>	1989	Census on immigrants from Muslim countries and French citizens with origins in Muslim countries, plus converts and illegal immigrants	Approximately 2.5 million
Haut Conseil à l'Intégration <sup>b</sup>	1993	Census on immigrants from Muslim countries and French citizens with origins in Muslim countries, plus converts and illegal immigrants	Approximately 3 million
Secrétariat des Relations avec l'Islam <sup>c</sup>	1996	Census on immigrants from Muslim countries and French citizens with origins in Muslim countries, plus converts and illegal immigrants	4.2 million
Charles Pasqua <sup>d</sup>	1996	Unknown	"5 million Muslims, 1 million practicing Muslims"
Michel Gurfinkiel <sup>e</sup>	1997	Average of different press and academic sources	"Over 3 million and quite probably over 4 million"
Jean-Pierre Chevènement <sup>f</sup>	1998	Unknown	"Approximately 4 million persons of Muslim culture"
Alain Boyer <sup>g</sup>	1998	Census on immigrants from Muslim countries and French citizens with origins in Muslim countries, plus converts and illegal immigrants	4.15 million
ADRI <sup>h</sup>	2000	Unknown	5 million
Rémy Leveau <sup>i</sup>	2001	Average of different sources	3.5 to 5 million
Xavier Ternisien <sup>j</sup>	2002	Average between different press and academic sources	Between 4 and 5 million
Nicolas Sarkozy <sup>k</sup>	2003	Unknown	"5 to 6 million Muslims"
Michèle Tribalat <sup>l</sup>	2004	New data from a special study of the 1999 census using a sample of 380,481 people with questions on the country of origin for three generations	3.65 million for 1999
Ministry of Foreign Affairs website <sup>m</sup>	2004	Unknown	Between 4 and 5 million

Source: Authors' compilation from various sources, listed below.

a. Bruno Etienne, *La France et l'islam [France and Islam]* (Paris: Hachette, 1989).

b. Haut Conseil à l'Intégration, "L'intégration à la française" ["The French model of integration"], UGE 10-18 Documents, 1993.

c. In Catherine Barthélémy, Marie-Bruno Laugier, and Christian Lochon, "L'islam en Europe" ["Islam in Europe"], *Les dossiers du Secrétariat pour les relations avec l'islam [Dossiers of the Secretariat for Relations with Islam]*, no. 1 (March 1996) (study associated with the Catholic diocese of Paris).

(Table continues)

Table 1-2 (*continued*)

d. Minister of the interior (political right), on French TV (7 sur 7), see “Une quatrième personne est décédée des séquelles de l’explosion dans le RER” [“A fourth person has died after the explosion in the RER”], *Le Monde*, December 10, 1996.

e. Michel Gurfinkiel, “Islam in France: The French Way of Life Is in Danger,” *Middle East Quarterly* 4, no.1 (March 1997). Gurfinkiel is editor in chief of *Valeurs Actuelles*, a conservative weekly.

f. Minister of the interior (political sovereigntist, left), “L’islam en France” [“Islam in France”], *Esprit*, November 1998.

g. Alain Boyer, *L’Islam en France [Islam in France]* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998). Boyer is a civil servant and expert on Islam in France. His estimates are still the most widely used.

h. ADRI (Agence pour le Développement des Relations Interculturelles) estimate, in Luc Gruson, *Le point sur l’islam en France [All you need to know about Islam in France]* (Paris: La Documentation française, 2000).

i. Rémy Leveau, “France: changements et continuité de l’islam” [“France: Changes and continuity in Islam”], in Rémy Leveau, Khadija Mohsen-Finan, and Catherine Wihtol de Wenden, *L’Islam en France et en Allemagne: identités et citoyennetés [Islam in France and Germany: Identity and citizenship]* (Paris: La Documentation française, 2001). Leveau is an expert on Islam in France.

j. Xavier Ternisien, *La France des mosquées [The France of the mosques]* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2002). Ternisien is a journalist at *Le Monde*.

k. Minister of the interior (political center-right), quoted in Gilbert Charles and Besma Lahouri, “3.7 millions de musulmans en France” [“3.7 million Muslims in France”], *L’Express*, December 4, 2003.

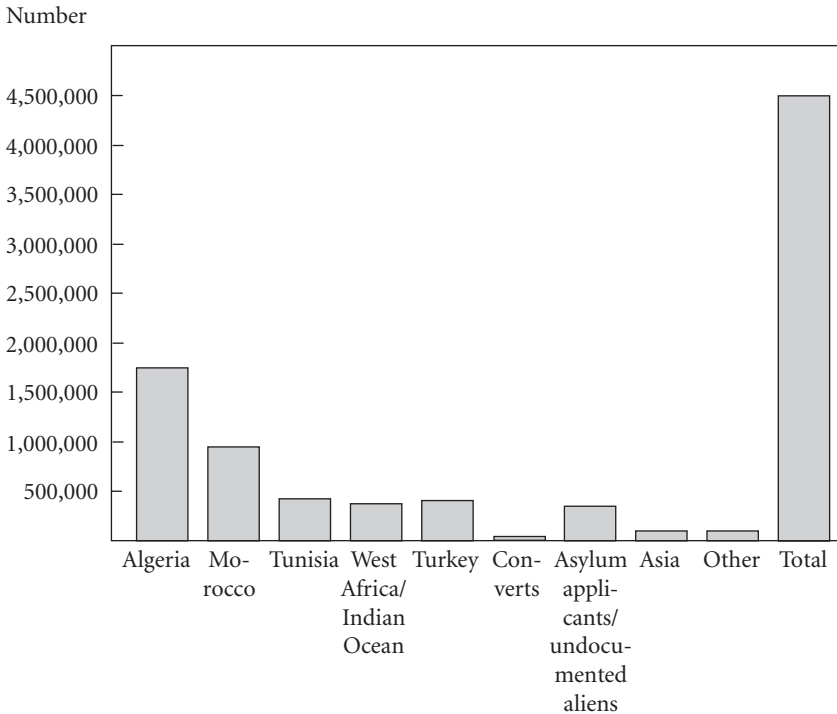
l. Michèle Tribalat, “Le nombre de musulmans en France: qu’en sait-on?” [“The number of Muslims in France: What do we know?”] *Cités*, hors-série [special issue] (Paris: PUF, 2004). Tribalat is a demographer at INED (Institut National d’Etudes Démographiques).

m. See [www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/culture/france/ressources/letour/fr/texislam.html](http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/culture/france/ressources/letour/fr/texislam.html).

(Interregional Center for Policy Studies), a network of local research groups in partnership with the Conseils Régionaux (regional councils), and by the CEVIPOF, a Paris think tank specializing in political issues—do not provide good figures either. Polls result in estimates in the range of 1 million Muslims or fewer, a number that is obviously far too small.<sup>10</sup> Such results can be explained by three factors. First, the CEVIPOF polls (but not those of the OIP) draw on people who are registered voters, and it is generally estimated that half of the people of Muslim origin in France are not French citizens (and half of those who are do not yet fulfill the age requirement to vote). The second factor is the likely underenrollment of French Muslim citizens on voter registration lists. The third factor is the reluctance of Muslims to declare themselves as such to pollsters. However, that reluctance has been diminishing in recent years. In the CEVIPOF’s 2001 poll, twice as many people described themselves as Muslim as in 1998, and that increase clearly cannot be explained by the growth of the Muslim community through immigration or new births alone.<sup>11</sup> This reaffirmation of religious identity will be dealt with in greater detail in chapter 3.

Geographic as well as ethnic diversity makes it difficult to speak in sweeping terms about “the” Muslim population. As shown in figure 1-1, the North



Figure 1-1. *Muslim Population in France, by Origin*

Source: Alain Boyer, *L'islam en France [Islam in France]* (Paris: PUF, 1998).

African majority is divided among subpopulations with distinct cultural and religious identities. The 2 million or so French residents of Algerian descent, for example, fall into two major groups:

—Arab and Berber *harkis* and *Français musulmans* (French Muslims), who served as colonial administrators and foot soldiers, and their French-born children and grandchildren

—The descendants of mostly Arab labor migrants recruited in the decade following decolonization (1962–73).

It is interesting to note that perhaps only half of France's 5 million Muslims are of Arab descent. The rest are Algerian or Moroccan Berbers (800,000); immigrants from Turkey, West Africa, islands in the Indian Ocean, or Asia; or French converts to Islam.

The largest Muslim population centers in France are Paris, Marseille, and Lyon and their outlying suburbs (*banlieues*). Muslims typically form between

Table 1-3. *French Cities with the Largest Muslim Populations*

City	Approximate number of Muslims	Total city population	Muslims as percent of local population
Paris	1,700,000	11,000,000	10–15
Marseille	200,000	800,000	25
Lille	200,000	4,000,000	5
Lyon	150,000	1,200,000	8–12
Roubaix (Lille)	50,000	100,000	50

Source: ADRI (Agence pour le Développement des Relations Interculturelles) estimates, in Luc Gruson, *Le point sur l’islam en France* [All you need to know about Islam in France] (Paris: La Documentation française, 2000).

10 and 15 percent of the metropolitan area population (except in Marseille, where one in four residents is Muslim, and in the small northern city of Roubaix, where the ratio is one to two). The greatest concentration is in the Paris region (Ile-de-France), which is home to 35 to 40 percent of all French Muslims. Fifteen to twenty percent of Muslims live around Marseille and Nice (in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur region); Lyon and Grenoble (Rhone-Alpes) are home to another 15 percent; and 5 to 10 percent live around Lille (Nord-Pas de Calais).<sup>12</sup> Table 1-3 ranks the French cities with the most Muslims.

The age distribution of the population of Muslim origin is skewed toward youth, as seen in tables 1-4 and 1-5. In part because of an initial divergence in Muslim and non-Muslim fertility rates, as much as half of the Muslim population in France is under twenty-four years of age. Indeed, one study showed that approximately 1.5 million French children live in immigrant families from Muslim countries. This population thus makes up a significant minority in French schools. It is estimated that 20 percent of sixth-grade students, for example, live in immigrant households; 10 percent have two immigrant parents, and another 10 percent have one immigrant parent.<sup>13</sup>

#### *Projections and Comparisons with Other European Countries*

Of the approximately 15 million Muslims who currently live in the European Union, France is home to the largest number, equal to around one-third of the total (see table 1-6). Germany follows with 3.3 million, Britain with 1.6 million, and Italy and the Netherlands with as many as 1 million each.<sup>14</sup> The below-replacement fertility rates among nonimmigrant populations throughout western Europe have raised alarm that “native” populations are

**Table 1-4. Number of Children Living with Immigrant Parents of Selected Nationalities**

<i>Country</i>	<i>Number of children</i>
EU countries	930,094
Portugal	428,894
Italy	165,722
Spain	169,330
Algeria	551,560
Morocco	501,939
Tunisia	188,778
Africa <sup>a</sup>	242,070
Turkey	144,183
Other	526,368
Total	3,084,992

Source: Mouna Viprey, “L’insertion des jeunes d’origine étrangère” [“The integration of youth of foreign origin”] (Paris: Conseil économique et social, July 2002).

a. Former French territories.

**Table 1-5. Largest Populations of Children of Immigrants, by Département**

<i>Département</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent of all children<sup>a</sup></i>
Alpes-Maritimes	45,818	19.3
Bouches-du-Rhône	84,959	17.2
Haut-Garonne (Toul)	35,564	13.5
Gironde	33,707	10.2
Moselle	44,914	15.4
Bas-Rhin	45,824	26.4
Haut-Rhin	37,047	18.6
Rhône	95,015	21.2
Paris	142,340	33.3
Yvelines	91,786	21.4
Hauts-de-Seine	102,980	27.2
Seine-Saint-Denis	199,497	27.2
Val-de-Marne	105,832	30.6
Val-d’Oise	108,253	29.6
France	2,312,035	14.4

Source: “L’accueil des immigrants et l’intégration des populations issues de l’immigration,” Rapport au Président de la République [“Welcoming immigrants and integrating populations of immigrant origin,” Report to the President of the Republic], Cour des Comptes, November 2004, p. 427.

a. Children to twenty-four years of age.

**Table 1-6. Approximate Muslim Populations and Prayer Spaces, Selected Countries, 2003<sup>a</sup>**

<i>Country</i>	<i>Largest groups, by national origin (first- and second-generation immigrants)</i>	<i>As percent of total immigrant population</i>	<i>As percent of total population<sup>b</sup></i>	<i>Prayer spaces</i>
<b>Germany</b>	Turkey	2,600,000		
	<i>Sunni</i>	2,100,000		
	<i>Alevi</i>	500,000		
	Bosnia	283,000		
	Iran	125,000 (Shiite)		
	Morocco	109,000		
	Afghanistan	86,000		
	Pakistan	60,000 (Ahmadi)		
	Palestine	60,000		
Total	3,300,000 <sup>c</sup>	40	3–4	2,300
<b>France</b>	Algeria	1,750,000		
	Morocco	950,000		
	Tunisia	425,000		
	Turkey	407,500		
	West Africa/ Indian Ocean	375,000		
	Asians	100,000		
	Other	100,000		
	Total	5,000,000 <sup>d</sup>	75	7–8
<b>United Kingdom</b>	Pakistan	750,000		
	Bangladesh	200,000		
	India	150,000		
Total	1,500,000–2,000,000 <sup>e</sup>	40	3–4	1,000
<b>Italy</b>	Morocco	227,616		
	Albania	233,616		
	Tunisia	60,572		
	Senegal	47,762		
	Egypt	44,798		
	Pakistan	30,506		
	Bangladesh	32,391		
	Total	700,000–1,000,000 <sup>f</sup>	75	1-2
<b>Spain</b>	Morocco	240,000		
	Algeria	20,000		
	Senegal	16,000		
	Pakistan	13,000		
	Gambia	10,000		
	Total	350,000–800,000	30	1-2

Country	Largest groups, by national origin (first- and second- generation immigrants)		As percent		
			of total immigrant population	As percent of total population <sup>b</sup>	Prayer spaces
Holland	Turkey	284,679			
	Morocco	247,443			
	Suriname	35,638			
	Iraq	28,502			
	Somalia	26,050			
	Iran	17,432			
	Pakistan	15,115			
	Afghanistan	15,020			
	Egypt	12,272			
	Other	48,000			
Total		750,000–950,000	75	5-6	400
<b>Total in the</b>					
EU-25 <sup>g</sup>	15–17 million				

## Sources:

*Germany:* Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Ausländerfragen, “Bericht über die Lage der Ausländer in Deutschland” [Federal Commissioner for Foreigners’ Issues, “Report on the Status of Immigrants in Germany”], August 2005; France: Alain Boyer, *L’islam en France [Islam in France]* (Paris: PUF, 1998).

*United Kingdom:* Timothy M. Savage, “Europe and Islam: Crescent Waxing, Cultures Clashing,” *Washington Quarterly* 27 (Summer 2004): 25–50; Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities conducted in 1997 by the Policy Studies Institute in London by Tariq Modood; Nico Landman, “Islam in the United Kingdom,” in *Islam, Europe’s Second Religion: The New Social, Cultural, and Political Landscape*, edited by Shireen Hunter (Praeger: Westport, 2002), for figure on number of prayer spaces.

*Italy:* Roberta Aluffi Beck-Peccoz and Giovanna Zincone, eds., *The Legal Treatment of Islamic Minorities in Europe* (Leuven: Peeters Press, 2004); Caritas-Migrantes, *Dossier Statistico 2002 and 2004* (Rome: Caritas).

*Spain:* High estimate of total population is from a Spanish Justice Ministry official, quoted in Renwick McClean, “Spain Considers Financing for Major Religions,” *New York Times*, August 3, 2004; low estimate is from Bernabe Lopez Garcia and Ana I. Planet Contreras, “Islam in Spain,” in Hunter, ed., *Islam, Europe’s Second Religion*; Nieves Ortega Pérez, “Spain: Forging an Immigration Policy,” Migration Information Source, Washington, Migration Policy Institute.

*Holland:* U.S. Department of State, “International Religious Freedom Report 2004”; Nico Landman, “Islam in the Benelux Countries,” in Hunter, ed., *Islam, Europe’s Second Religion*.

*Total:* The number of prayer spaces is from “International Religious Freedom Report 2005” ([www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irt/2005/51571.htm](http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irt/2005/51571.htm)).

a. All totals are approximate. See table 1-2 for additional sources.

b. Citizens and noncitizens; percentage estimates from Farhad Khosrokhavar, *L’islam dans les prisons [Islam in the prisons]* (Paris: Balland, 2004).

c. Including naturalizations and converts. Of 2.3 million immigrants of Turkish origin, 1.9 million still hold only Turkish citizenship; around 750,000 are German citizens.

d. Around 3,000,000 are French citizens. Only half are of voting age, including those of North African descent.

e. Around 800,000 are British citizens.

f. Around 50,000 are Italian citizens.

g. The twenty-five members of the European Union.

shrinking across the continent—and that has led to intense debate regarding the level of immigration that will be required to maintain the workforce and social welfare systems. But France, because of its comparatively higher total fertility rate, depends the least on immigration. Just 20 percent of its population growth comes from immigration, while the corresponding figure is 50 percent in Ireland, 70 percent in the United Kingdom, 82 percent in Spain, and 97 percent in Italy.<sup>15</sup> France (along with Ireland) thus appears to be less plagued by the general European problem with population replacement. The French population is actually predicted to grow, under some projections, to 75 million in 2050 (from today's roughly 61 million, or 63 million including overseas territories), which would make France the largest nation among the twenty-five current members of the European Union. The fertility rate of the immigrant population accounts for part of that growth, but the relatively higher fertility rate of French women of French origin makes up the bulk of the growth differential with countries like the United Kingdom, Italy, and Germany—all of which are expected to experience a steady need for immigrant labor (and welfare state contributions) as their national fertility rates fall and life expectancy continues to grow.

There are three ways that legal immigration to France—one source of a growing Muslim population—takes place today: through family reunification and marriage, immigration of high-skilled labor, and application for political asylum. Net legal immigration to France in the first two categories stayed relatively consistent throughout the 1990s, at between 100,000 and 120,000 people a year. Africans (mostly from the Maghreb) represented around 60 percent of the new arrivals, EU nationals accounted for 20 to 25 percent, and Asians (mostly from China) for about 18 percent. The rest were non-EU Europeans, or they were from the former USSR or the Americas.<sup>16</sup> However, the annual rate has not been perfectly stable; in 2002 and 2003 net legal immigration rose to 156,000 and then peaked at 173,000, including approximately 60,000 foreigners who became residents by marrying French citizens in each year.<sup>17</sup> These figures do not include adult asylum applicants (90,000 in 2003, including minors), who are allowed to stay in France until they receive a hearing (only 15 percent of cases were successful in 2003). Most applicants for asylum in 2003 hailed from Turkey (15 percent), China (10 percent), or Congo (10 percent), and the highest acceptance rates were for applicants from Rwanda, Ethiopia, Bosnia, Tunisia, Russia, and Burundi.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, there is considerable debate about annual *illegal* migration to France.<sup>19</sup> Statisticians estimate it to include from 10,000 to 20,000 individuals, replenishing a stable population of at least 60,000 *sans papiers* (undocumented

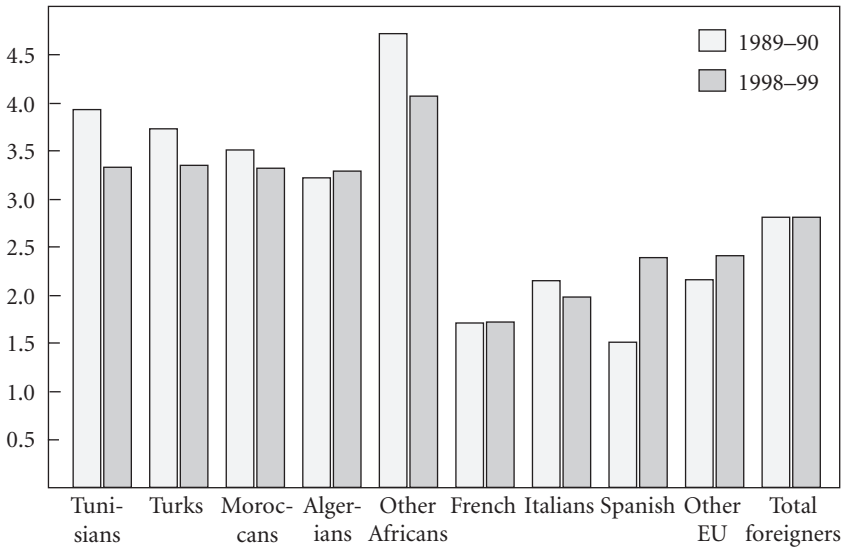
aliens), many of whom are from China and Southeast Asia.<sup>20</sup> But Nicolas Sarkozy, the minister of the interior, has said that the real figure might be closer to a total of 300,000 *sans papiers*, with 80,000 entering France every year (although often they are en route to the United Kingdom).<sup>21</sup> There has been speculation that the countries of the Maghreb, where unemployment can reach 40 percent, will remain a source of potential illegal immigration in coming years. (President Jacques Chirac was greeted with cries of “Visas!” during his 2003 state visit to Algeria.) The French government has pursued a policy that is strict with regard to interdicting illegal entrants at the country’s borders, but it has regularly granted amnesty to long-time illegal residents. However, a law passed in summer 2003 gives mayors the power to enforce the provisions of short-term visas (including by ordering the deportation of violators), aiming thereby to improve administrative efficiency and so keep tourists and short-term employees from overstaying their welcome. New measures also were taken in 2005 to restrict the terms of family reunification, and a comprehensive immigration bill in spring 2006 proposed to end the automatic naturalization of *sans papiers* after ten years of residence (see chapter 7).<sup>22</sup>

The other way in which the Muslim population in France will continue to grow long after the end of mass immigration is, of course, through births on French soil. The fertility rate of Tunisian, Moroccan, and Algerian women living in France has been in decline since 1981, but it is still between 2.57 (for Algerians) and 2.9 (for Moroccans) children per woman; this is higher than that of French women overall, whose rate is 1.94 per woman.<sup>23</sup> With native European populations shrinking at current birthrates, some studies suggest that the Muslim population could double to 20 percent of the total French population by 2020, which would represent a real increase to about 8 million total. However, that estimate does not take into account the decreasing fertility of Muslim women living in France, which makes such a dramatic increase unlikely.<sup>24</sup>

Figures 1-2 and 1-3 document only a slight decrease in the fertility rate of foreign women living in France between 1989 and 1999, but the data, from the Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques (INSEE) (National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies) also show fertility to be closely tied to length of residence in France. In other words, the longer immigrant women live in France, the fewer children they have; their fertility rate approaches that of native-born French women. Women who arrived in France between 1980 and 1990 exhibit a far lower fertility rate than women from the same country who arrived in France between 1990 and 1999.<sup>25</sup> That

Figure 1-2. *Fertility Rates of Foreign Women Living in France*

Children per woman



Source: All data in this figure were taken from Françoise Legros, “La fécondité des étrangères en France: une stabilisation entre 1990–1999” [“Immigrant fertility: Stabilization between 1990 and 1999”], *Cellules statistiques et études sur l’immigration* [Office for Statistical Analysis and the Study of Immigration], *INSEE Première* no. 898 (May 2003).

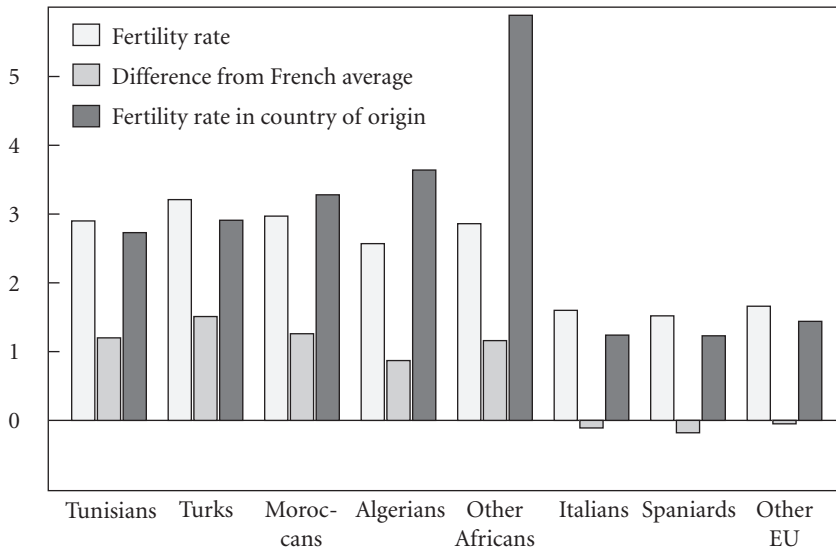
suggests that the experience of living in France decreases the number of children that a woman will have. Since new immigration accounts for an ever-smaller percentage of the overall Muslim population, this minority is not expected to continue to grow at a significantly faster rate than the overall French population over time.

In 1999, foreign women gave birth to 75,000 children in France, 6,000 fewer than in 1990. The 75,000 children include 26,866 born to women from North Africa (10,854 to Algerian, 12,879 to Moroccan, and 3,111 to Tunisian women); North African women thus accounted for 36 percent of births to foreign mothers in 1999 (down from 44 percent in 1990 and 53 percent in 1982).<sup>26</sup> By way of comparison, 669,683 children were born to French women in 1999. Although the fertility rates of women of foreign origin is still somewhat higher than the French average, these data show that immigrants adapt to local norms (and, perhaps, to the cost of living) soon after arrival. The change may reflect acculturation, a reaction to living in close quarters, the



**Figure 1-3. Average Immigrant Fertility Rates, 1991–98**

Children per woman



Source: Laurent Toulemon, “La fécondité des immigrés: nouvelles données, nouvelle approche [“Immigrant fertility: New data, new approach,”], *Population et Société*, no. 400 (April 2004).

entry of women into the workforce, or improved socioeconomic status compared with that in their homeland, where extra children might have been welcomed as eventual contributors to household income.

## The Economic and Social Gap

The term “integration” has been the nonpartisan mantra of generations of French politicians and social workers, and it is the key word—and the key solution—in a host of interrelated challenges, from social unrest to anti-Semitism, emanating from the settlement of new immigrant populations. But the term itself is somewhat problematic. First, it lacks a clear definition or corresponding set of accepted sociological characteristics that would make it a scientifically useful metric. Many observers have instinctively looked to changing cultural, social, or demographic indicators, such as immigrants’ use of the French language at home, number of children, children’s performance at school, sources of income, national origin of friends and associates, and so forth. Others use available poll data on declared feelings of belonging to the

national community or even on degree of declared patriotism—and conversely, for first-generation immigrants (that is, those who left their country of origin for France), the degree of nostalgia for their homeland. But if such criteria were applied to specific groups of French citizens of French origin, such as Catholics or extreme-left activists, they also would be likely to respond in a less than perfectly patriotic fashion.

Second and more important, some *beurs* (as second-generation Arab immigrants are called in French slang), reject the concept of integration as a matter of principle. After all, they have always lived in France, they are French citizens, and they do not see why they should have to transform themselves in any way or reach out to a society that ought naturally to consider them full and equal members. Furthermore, some see *intégration* not as a formal process—that is, the process of becoming full-fledged French citizens, attaining a certain level of prosperity, and engaging in political activities—so much as a cultural requirement that really means something like “check your identity at the door.” To them, integration sounds more like “disintegration.”

The visible differences of children of immigrants cannot be considered an adequate measure of their integration; after all, the few who do wear *jellabas* or headscarves may actually be better integrated in social and political terms than their parents, who may dress in a European fashion but may socialize exclusively with fellow immigrants and barely speak French. Finally, the desire to integrate in French society is something of a double paradox: not only have most *beurs* always lived in France, but because of racism and discrimination many also have been denied the very opportunities—in terms of good jobs and well-situated housing, for example—that would help them integrate. That reinforces and perpetuates a vicious cycle of failure and exclusion. Social scientists and politicians, therefore, should employ the word “integration” with caution. Here, it is used to describe the degree of difference between the Muslim community and the rest of the French population with regard to the main economic, social, and political indicators, as well as the process by which (and the extent to which) those differences are being reduced.

Although it might seem otherwise, France has a long history of integrating foreign populations.<sup>27</sup> Beginning in the nineteenth century, it became a country of immigration—not of emigration, like Germany, the United Kingdom, and Italy—receiving waves of Poles, Belgians, Italians, Spaniards, Portuguese, and East Europeans, including Jews (especially in the 1930s). That occasionally led to xenophobic rhetoric in politics and even to mob violence, especially during times of economic crisis. For example, there were anti-Italian riots in the 1880s and 1890s, with several Italians killed at Aigues-Mortes in 1893, and anti-Semitic violence followed the unrest surrounding the Dreyfus

affair several years later. It could be said that each generation of immigrants was deemed “unable to integrate,” especially religious, working-class families from southern countries like Italy, Portugal, and Spain. The same has been said of Arabs today, but today that claim is accompanied by a new set of arguments that emphasize their non-European and non-Christian heritage. Muslims’ culture and religion are viewed as being qualitatively different from those of previous immigrants. In addition, the part that trade unions and the army played earlier in integrating immigrants has been drastically reduced, and the famous assimilating power of the French public education system has been chastened by recent problems in the schools (see the discussion below on “the school gap”). It has been argued, moreover, that the economic stagnation of the urban peripheries is more entrenched than during previous slumps.

### *The Unemployment Problem*

Like most immigrants in industrialized countries, the Muslims who came to France during the second half of the twentieth century have endured lasting economic and social hardships. They first had low-level jobs, predominantly in the industrial sector, when they arrived in the 1960s and early 1970s. Their situation became more difficult as the abundant, stable jobs of the postwar boom disappeared in the economic downturn of the 1970s and 1980s. That helps explain why the economic and social indicators for this population have been so unfavorable. Immigrants have experienced higher unemployment than the rest of the population; a higher incidence of accidents on the job; housing problems, such as being isolated in large, high-density housing projects on the outskirts of big cities that were slowly deserted by native French families; problems at school; and high levels of crime and unrest. Those problems have been reinforced by the economic situation in France, especially the stagnant job market, and they failed to improve in the 1990s. Meanwhile negative stereotypes and racism have continued to take their toll.

Although the integration of Muslim immigrants and their children into French society and their overall situation have not improved as fast as for previous waves of immigrants, substantial, if largely invisible, progress is nonetheless being made. This somewhat paradoxical situation can be assessed with the help of statistical indicators.

In addition to the constructive influence of traditional nuclear family structures, three pillars of French society helped immigrants to integrate in the between-war and early post-World War II period: the public school system, military service, and the workplace. However, today schools have been increasingly confronted with social problems and have lost some of their

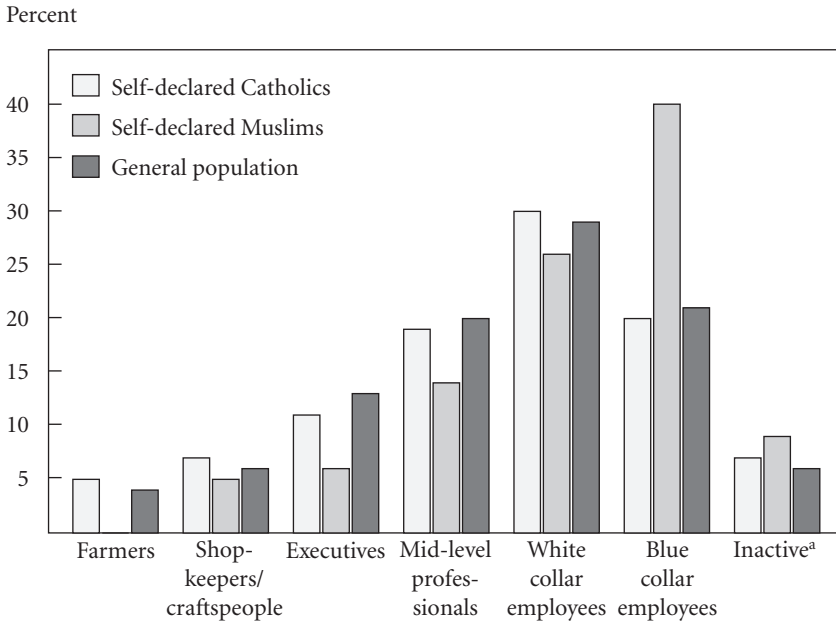
integrative capacity. Obligatory military service for men was discontinued at the end of the 1990s. Though high levels of military and state-supported employee recruitment play a role in getting some immigrants or second-generation immigrants into the army and the workforce, the job market displays some troubling trends.<sup>28</sup>

Unemployment, however, remains the biggest obstacle to integration and the biggest impediment to advancement for immigrants and their children and grandchildren, whom it affects disproportionately. There is no doubt that the worst enemy of integration is the difficulty of entering—or, more precisely, the incredible delays in entering—the national workforce. Jean-Paul Fitoussi, a well-known economist, illustrates the problem by evoking the image of people waiting in long lines in front of a counter at which jobs in different categories are being offered. The effects of discrimination are amplified by the length of the waiting line: the longer one waits, the more disaffected one becomes.<sup>29</sup> The urban riots of November 2005 had many causes, but they had a lot to do with unemployment. The unrest was both a direct result of the idleness of many youth of immigrant origin and an indirect result of the creation of a vicious cycle in which because these young people have little hope of getting a good job in the future, they have no real incentive to succeed at school and therefore become less employable. It is no wonder, under such conditions, that many observers, from those in the U.S. press to Nicolas Sarkozy, have called for drastically opening the job market by doing away with many of the regulations that protect the French social model and workers' job security but that are now accused of indirectly impeding integration (see chapter 7).

The unemployment rate of populations of immigrant origin is generally twice the rate of the overall population, and that rate is even higher among youth of North African origin.<sup>30</sup> In 1999, foreigners represented 8.6 percent of the working population but made up 15 percent of the unemployed; moreover, while 22 percent of all immigrants were unemployed, only 13 percent of the French workforce was. Foreign women were even more adversely affected—their unemployment rate was 25 percent.<sup>31</sup> (It should be noted that statistics on immigrants and foreigners pertain only to noncitizens and first-generation immigrants. Since most French Arab youth were born in France and already have French citizenship, they are not included in figures on foreigners and immigrants.)

Part of the difference in unemployment rates is undoubtedly due to differences in skill level, since low-skill jobs are the most adversely affected by a weak economy and immigrants tend to hold low-skill jobs.<sup>32</sup> Two-thirds of immigrants are low-skilled workers. Low-skilled workers are especially present

**Figure 1-4. Percent of Self-Declared Muslims and Catholics in Selected Occupations**



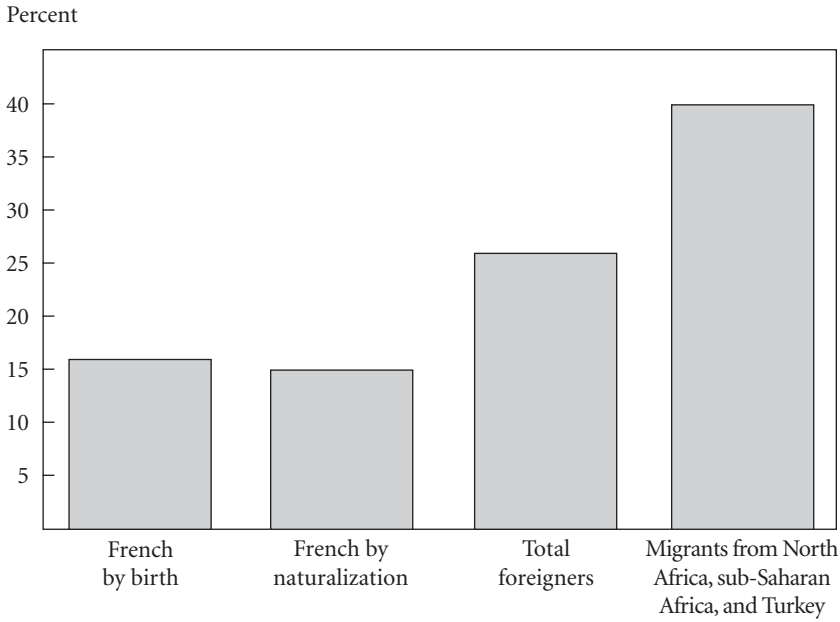
Source: Poll (1998–2001) by the Observatoire Interrégional du Politique [Interregional Center for Policy Studies] in partnership with the Conseils Régionaux [regional councils], in Claude Dargent, “Les musulmans déclarés en France: affirmation religieuse, subordination sociale, et progressisme politique [“Self-declared Muslims in France: Religious affirmation, social subordination, and political progressivism”], *Cahier du CEVIPOF* no. 34 (February 2003).

a. The Inactive category does not include the unemployed, who have been assigned to their former job category. “Inactive” persons have never held a job and stay at home. Among Muslims, 85 percent of them are women.

in the construction industry and domestic services (*services aux particuliers*)—both have a 15 percent immigrant workforce—and in the automobile industry and service jobs in offices (*services aux entreprises*), where 10 percent of employees are immigrants.<sup>33</sup> Figure 1-4, which looks at self-declared religious affiliation (rather than citizenship status or national origin), shows that Muslims are twice as likely as the rest of the population to be concentrated in the “worker” category.

But even at similar skill levels, foreigners are more likely than the general population to be unemployed. In 2002, the rate of unemployment for immigrants with a college degree (16 percent) was still twice that of natives with a college degree (8 percent).<sup>34</sup> Also, Algerian immigrants and youth of Algerian

**Figure 1-5. Percent of Unemployed Fifteen- to Twenty-Nine-Year-Olds, by Origin**



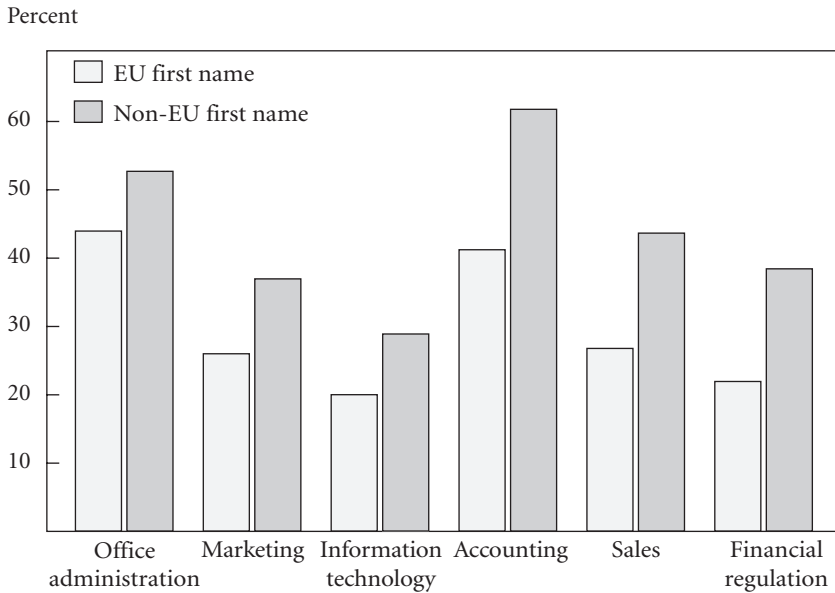
Source: Dominique Andolfalto and others, *L'état de la France 2002* [*The State of France 2002*] (Paris: La Découverte, 2001).

origin under the age of thirty who held a high school diploma had an unemployment rate of 32 percent while the rate was just 15 percent for French youth in the same category.<sup>35</sup>

Furthermore, the unemployment problem disproportionately affects foreigners from predominantly Muslim countries. Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish immigrants experience rates that are lower than the French average, while immigrants from Turkey, North Africa, and Africa have higher-than-average rates. Unemployment is worst for the youngest immigrants, that is, those between fifteen and twenty-nine years of age. There are signs that the unemployment phenomenon, meanwhile, is not linked simply to a stagnant economy. Data for the fifteen- to twenty-nine-year-old category showed that while unemployment among young people of French origin gradually dropped over time from 25 percent to 18 percent, the decrease among non-EU foreigners was less, from 46 percent to 37 percent (see figure 1-5).<sup>36</sup>

The antiracism organization SOS Racisme (see chapter 2) conducted a study that pointed to one potential cause of the problem. It looked at the

**Figure 1-6. Percent of Unemployed Workers in Selected Categories, by European and Non-European First Names**



Source: Samuel Thomas, “Rapport d’analyse des affaires récentes de discriminations à l’embauche poursuivies par SOS Racisme” [“SOS Racisme report on recent instances of discrimination in hiring”] (Paris: SOS Racisme, March 2005).

records of two major employment agencies—Michael Page and Page Intérim—and examined the success rate of 20,000 job candidates in six separate employment categories.<sup>37</sup> Using a somewhat imprecise methodology, they drew the candidates’ names from those of the 264,000 job seekers in the agencies’ databases. The study showed that those with “non-European” first names were, on average, one and a half times as likely to be unemployed in every category, adding further impetus to policy proposals that the agencies should distribute anonymous resumes (see figure 1-6), without names and addresses, to potential employers (see chapter 7). Samuel Thomas, the report’s author, observed that candidates with non-European names were especially likely to face unemployment in sales and accounting.

### *Housing Problems and the Ghetto Phenomenon*

Recent immigrants and their descendants tend to concentrate in public housing projects that were built in the 1960s and 1970s in low-rent neighborhoods; in France, these projects are located on the urban outskirts, known as

*banlieues* or *cités*. Approximately 6 million people live in these areas, of whom 33 percent are under the age of twenty (only 23 percent of the general population fall in that category).<sup>38</sup> The local nonimmigrant French populations and successful immigrants alike tend to abandon these neighborhoods as soon as their incomes allow. Nonetheless, it is not technically accurate to speak of them as “ghettos,” since no area is occupied exclusively by immigrants of a single ethnic origin or religion. The proportion of residents of North African origin may be very high, but it is never all inclusive; other Africans, Turks, and nonimmigrant French live alongside Arabs and Berbers from Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia.

Something rather like a “ghetto phenomenon,” however, based on the sheer concentration in the *banlieues* of individuals who have failed to integrate, is indeed a reality. These neighborhoods are marked by poverty, welfare dependence, black markets, broken families, and single mothers. Fathers have lost some of their importance in the family because often they do not work or are absent. The ghetto phenomenon generates a specific alternative culture similar to that in many other places in the world, including the United States; in fact, when Hollywood movies are dubbed into French, African Americans are made to speak with an accent from the *cités*.<sup>39</sup> In these neighborhoods one finds a mix of everyday violence, gang-type social systems (although organized, powerful Los Angeles–style gangs are not a factor in France), an indigenous code of conduct and honor, the assertion of “masculine” identity, and an emphasis on territoriality (outsiders, therefore, are not welcome, and young men rarely venture far from their own *cités*). It was these *cités* and not the *banlieues* in general—and certainly not the city centers (with the exception of Lyon)—that erupted in flames in November 2005.<sup>40</sup>

More than one-quarter of all public housing is located in the Paris region, although other important urban centers also have large immigrant populations—for example, Rhone-Alpes (around 10 percent of public housing); Nord-Pas de Calais (7 percent), and Provence-Alpes-Cote d’Azur (6 percent).<sup>41</sup> Foreign nationals are much more likely than the general population to live in such housing projects, which are called *habitations à loyer modéré* (HLMs). Of the general French population, 17.6 percent live in these subsidized units, while roughly 50 percent of all North African immigrants, 37 percent of other African immigrants, and 36 percent of Turkish immigrants reside in such housing.<sup>42</sup> Of the 4.2 million households living in French public housing, just over 700,000 are immigrant households (17 percent of all HLM households); Algerians account for 158,253 (3.8 percent), Moroccans for 119,756 (2.9 percent), Tunisians for 45,858 (1 percent), and Turks for 34,819 (0.08 percent).<sup>43</sup>



Département 93 (the North Paris suburb of Seine-Saint-Denis) provides a snapshot of life in the *banlieues*. Nearly a half-million foreigners live in this former industrial center, more than in any other *département* (administrative district). Whereas recent naturalizations have had the effect of lowering the number of Algerian citizens by nearly 10 percent, the number of Turkish and Chinese nationals, by contrast, are growing fast—by 27.8 percent and 16 percent respectively between 2002 and 2003.<sup>44</sup> Eighteen percent of this *département's* 1.38 million residents live below the poverty line (5.5 percent more than residents of the Paris region at large). The conditions in which first-generation immigrants live can be very poor indeed: nearly one-fifth of them have no hot water at home (versus 7.9 percent of the general French population), and a quarter of the housing units have either no indoor bathroom or shower (versus 12.2 percent of French housing overall).<sup>45</sup> Though some new businesses have recently moved into the *banlieue* of Saint-Denis, the income of about 60 percent of the households there and in nearby Aubervilliers and Bobigny is low enough to be exempt from income tax (the average exemption rate in the greater Paris region is 35 percent).<sup>46</sup>

A report by the Renseignements Généraux (RG), the police agency that monitors radical groups in France, warned in summer 2004 that half of the “sensitive neighborhoods” that they had studied with a high Muslim population showed worrying signs of “community isolation” (*repli communautaire*) from national social and political life. These areas were home to “large numbers of families of immigrant origin”; they had developed networks of ethnic businesses, community associations, and prayer rooms; and they showed evidence of higher rates of polygamy, anti-Semitic and “anti-Western” graffiti, and wearing of non-Western and religious apparel than other neighborhoods.<sup>47</sup> The study was not conducted in a scientific manner, and its authors did not claim to produce any definitive statistics; they sought only to discern, in their words, “trends based on local examples.” They found that 300 neighborhoods (with roughly 1.8 million inhabitants) fit the description of isolated communities: “In ghettoized neighborhoods, families of immigrant origin acquire social and cultural handicaps,” the report found. “These populations conserve cultural traditions that result in endogamy and the maintenance of traditional ways of life and parallel institutions for social regulation and conflict resolution.” Furthermore, the report indicated that residents of European origin were moving out on a large scale and that traditional French businesses were closing. The RG had painted a portrait of a ticking “time bomb,” said *Le Monde*.<sup>48</sup> A 2004 report by the Haut Conseil à l’Intégration, however, gauged the number of “ultrasensitive neighborhoods” to be 50 percent less than the DST’s assessment, or about 200.<sup>49</sup>

The physical concentration of residents of foreign background in one area can lead to feelings of isolation and ultimately may reinforce a community-based identity. The *banlieues*—and more precisely the *cités*—have suffered a declining quality of life and higher unemployment and crime rates than the rest of the country. Speaking of the challenges of the *cités*, the Ministry of Urban Affairs noted in 2003 that unemployment in the housing projects was four times higher than the national average, sometimes reaching as high as 42 to 44 percent.<sup>50</sup> (The rate is compounded by the fact that the resident population is much younger than the national average.) If the issue of community isolation is not addressed, ghettos may slowly develop. But increasingly specialized initiatives undertaken by the Ministry of Urban Affairs throughout the past decade suggest that there is a growing awareness of that danger (see chapter 7 on French policy responses).

### *The School Gap*

Children of immigrants do as well as or better in their course work than children of French parents of the same socioeconomic class.<sup>51</sup> That is both good news and bad news, however: more than two-thirds of immigrant children are from a working-class background, and like their nonimmigrant socioeconomic counterparts, they do not have high success rates overall. According to a study cited in *Le Monde*, in the best-performing high schools an average of 29 percent of the student body were children of professionals and 26 percent were children of teachers; in the worst high schools an average of 39.2 percent of the student body were children of workers and 33.4 were children of nonworking parents. Forty percent of high schools (598 schools) met the study's standard for "best-performing"; 13 percent (189 schools) were classified as "least well-performing."<sup>52</sup>

High levels of unemployment, especially in the French Arab/Muslim community, perpetuate a cycle of negative feedback. That and children's low level of self-confidence and their skepticism regarding the equality of the opportunities that they are offered has led to underachievement and a lower rate of educational advancement. That assessment was confirmed after the urban uprisings of November 2005 by the fervent debates among the French political class regarding the appropriateness of expanding affirmative action within the educational system.<sup>53</sup>

Some school districts with a large concentration of immigrant children experience intense educational problems. In the Créteil district outside Paris, for example, the high school graduation rate is 71.8 percent, markedly lower than the national average of 80 percent, and a declining number of students

graduate with any type of honors.<sup>54</sup> Studies have found that the level of student achievement breaks down along class lines. “The massive presence of an underprivileged student population weighs negatively on any school,” said one study, “just as the best schools enroll the students of the highest social categories.”<sup>55</sup> That assessment would be an obvious challenge for any government wishing to promote equality. Several policies have been adopted in certain areas targeting concentrations of immigrant families and thus, implicitly, Muslim populations.

According to Michèle Tribalat, in the 1990s just 15 percent of the children of Algerian immigrants received a university degree, and 23 percent received no diploma at all; the figures were 23 percent and 13 percent, respectively, for the children of French parents.<sup>56</sup> If one focuses only on self-declared Muslims, both citizens and noncitizens, rather than solely on the immigrants in Michèle Tribalat’s 1995 data, the problems appear in a roughly similar light.<sup>57</sup> The result of that gap between Muslims and the general population in level of education is a commensurate gap in professional status, as shown in figures 1-7 and 1-8.

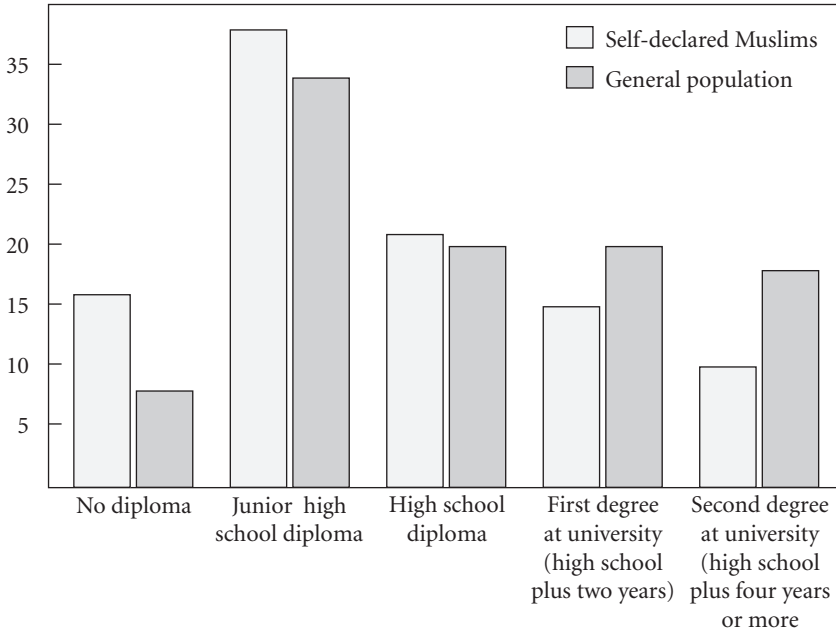
### *The Crime Gap*

Many poor neighborhoods, and especially housing projects (*cités*) in the *banlieues*, are plagued by a high rate of criminal behavior, often involving small-time drug dealing. Riots have erupted in these places, especially after incidents involving the police, as was the case in late October and November 2005, when 10,000 cars were set ablaze in a matter of weeks. One of the reasons that rioters gave journalists for their rage was that Nicolas Sarkozy, the minister of the interior, had vowed to rid the *cités* of the *racailles* (rabble). “*Racailles*” is a term frequently used by the inhabitants of the *cités* themselves to refer to local delinquents, but they resented it when it was used by Sarkozy, who promised to clean the troublemakers out with a Kärcher, a well-known brand of high-pressure water hose.

While the rate of felonies, such as murder, has been stable or even in decline in France in recent years, minor delinquency has risen.<sup>58</sup> Unemployment has had a destabilizing effect on families and often translates into weak motivation at school among children in families with an out-of-work parent. A study by Sebastian Roché and Monique Dagnaud of juvenile delinquents in Grenoble, in the department of Isère, found that they had common experiences of poverty, parental alcoholism, and problems at school. Two-thirds of minors judged in criminal court there had a father born abroad (50 percent from North Africa), and 60 percent had a mother born outside France.<sup>59</sup>

**Figure 1-7. Level of Diploma and Religious Affiliation, Eighteen- to Thirty-Four-Year-Olds**

Percent

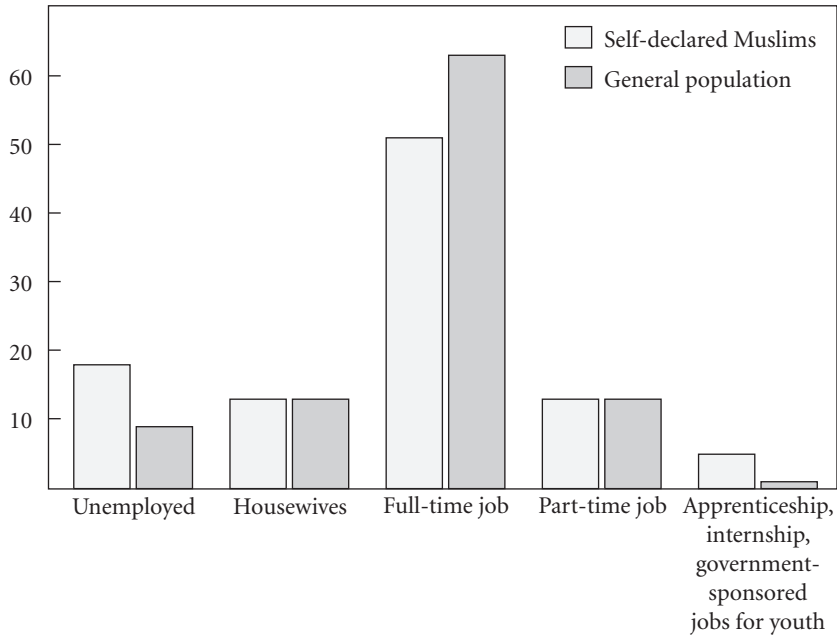


Source: Poll (1998–2001) by the Observatoire Interrégional du Politique [Interregional Center for Policy Studies] in partnership with the Conseils Régionaux [regional councils], in Claude Dargent, “Les musulmans déclarés en France: affirmation religieuse, subordination sociale, et progressisme politique” [“Self-declared Muslims in France: Religious affirmation, social subordination, and political progressivism”], *Cahier du CEVIPOF* no. 34 (February 2003).

As a result of the alienation and desperation stemming from such socio-economic handicaps, persons of Muslim origin constitute a majority of the French prison population. According to Farhad Khosrokhavar, a noted sociologist and expert on Islam who has done a great deal of field research in prisons, they make up as much as 70 to 80 percent of inmates in prisons located on urban peripheries, even though they usually constitute just 15 percent of urban populations.<sup>60</sup> It should be noted that the French penitentiary system, while running at capacity, has enough space for only 60,000 inmates, reflecting an incarceration rate of less than 1 per 1,000 residents; it is drastically smaller than the system in the United States, which has an incarceration rate of 7 per 1,000 residents.<sup>61</sup> French authorities do not report crime rates by

**Figure 1-8. Percent of Muslims and of General Population in Selected Job Categories**

Percent

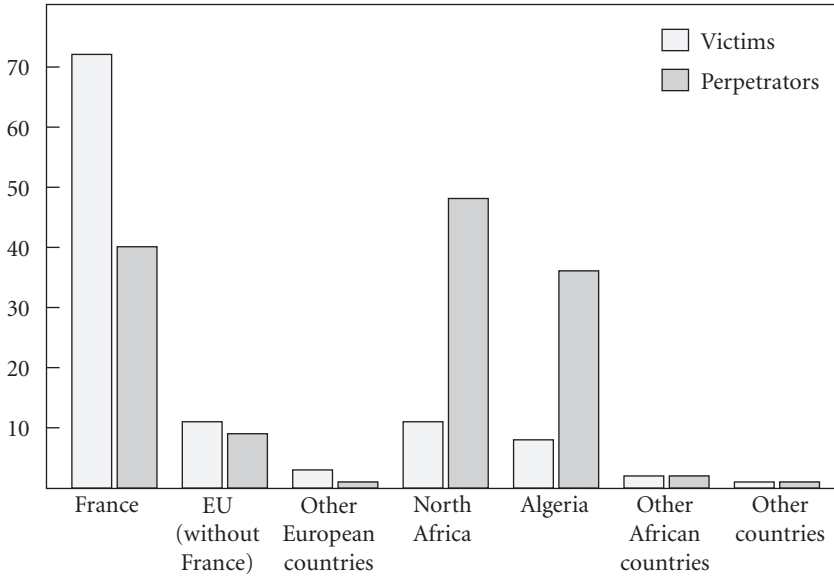


Source: Poll (1998–2001) by the Observatoire Interrégional du Politique [Interregional Center for Policy Studies] in partnership with the Conseils Régionaux [regional councils], in Claude Dargent, “Les musulmans déclarés en France: affirmation religieuse, subordination sociale, et progressisme politique [“Self-declared Muslims in France: Religious affirmation, social subordination, and political progressivism”], *Cahier du CEVIPOF* no. 34 (February 2003).

ethnic or religious group, but it is estimated that around 40 percent of prison inmates in France have a father born abroad, including 25 percent with a father from North Africa. Muslims are greatly overrepresented in prisons and within the eighteen- to twenty-four-year-old age group in particular: they make up only 8.5 percent of that age cohort in France, yet 39.9 percent of all prisoners in the cohort. Those who have a French father, in contrast, account for 75 percent of all eighteen- to twenty-four-year-olds in France yet make up just 38.8 percent of prisoners in that age group.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, Khosrokhavar finds that prisoners with a North African father outnumber prisoners with a French father by 9 to 1 for the eighteen- to twenty-nine-year-old group and by 6 to 1 in the thirty- to thirty-nine-year-old group.<sup>63</sup>

**Figure 1-9. Victims and Perpetrators of Serious Crimes, by National Origin<sup>a</sup>**

Percent



Source: Study by Sebastian Roché and Monique Dagnaud, reported by Nathalie Guibert, “Selon une étude menée en Isère, deux tiers des mineurs délinquants sont d’origine étrangère” [“According to a study in Isère, two-thirds of juvenile delinquents are of foreign origin”] in *Le Monde*, April 16, 2004.

a. One or both parents born abroad.

The Grenoble study by Roché and Dagnaud found that integration problems are partly to blame for elevated crime rates but also that crimes involving young Muslims are prosecuted more vigorously than those of their peers, which leads to a slight distortion of the available statistics. The study’s authors concluded that “we are faced with a justice system that concentrates its energies on youth of foreign origin.” Youth of immigrant origin may also lose some faith in the justice system given that it does not always protect them from crime in equal measure either. Prosecution of racist acts against citizens of North African origin, for example, has been rare (see figure 1-9). Although hundreds of incidents were reported, just seven cases were brought to court in 1999, twelve in 2001, and twenty-nine in 2002.<sup>64</sup> One *Le Monde* article concluded, “How could these young people not perceive a biased conception of justice?”<sup>65</sup>

## Acculturation and Changing Social Practices

The existence of neighborhoods afflicted by poverty and the professional and educational difficulties encountered by immigrant youth does not mean that integration is not getting better overall. In a major study conducted at the beginning of the 1990s, Michèle Tribalat found that a majority of immigrants increasingly—and almost exclusively—spoke French. Mixed marriages (between immigrants and French citizens) were on the rise, the fertility rate among immigrant women was approaching that of French women, and the religious practices of immigrants were not that different from those of the French. In other words, despite their religious and ethnic diversity, recent immigrant populations are undergoing the same process of integration as previous immigrants—despite perceptions of the opposite (which were, of course, present with regard to other immigrant groups too) and spectacular demonstrations of specific problems (like the November 2005 riots). In 2002, 41 percent of French respondents thought that “most immigrants have a culture too distinct from the French to be able to integrate into French society,” while 54 percent rejected that statement.<sup>66</sup>

The immigrant population as a whole has shown increasing mastery of the French language, which plays an important role in acculturation since there is no other legally or informally used language, as is the case with Spanish in the United States. Fully 77 percent of the children of Algerians speak only French with their parents (compared with 79 percent of the French children of Spanish immigrants), and when just one parent is of foreign origin, those figures jump to 92 percent and 94 percent respectively.<sup>67</sup>

Many sociologists have measured integration through exogamy rates, the degree of marriage outside the community. Exogamy has been portrayed, in part, as a function of continuity in traditional family structures, and it has even been linked to the imposition of headscarves on young girls—that is, to how tightly “immigrant families control the sexuality of their daughters.”<sup>68</sup> The greater the degree of individualism—and the right, therefore, to marry whomever one wants—the argument goes, then the less family and social structures are likely to be transmitted from generation to generation. Forced marriages in immigrant families are not unknown; it is thought there are as many as 70,000 such arrangements in France, and the government recently raised the age of consent from fifteen to eighteen years of age.<sup>69</sup> But a 2005 poll found that 79 percent of Muslims were, in fact, “comfortable with people of different religions dating or marrying” and that 59 percent “would not object if [their] daughter married a non-Muslim.”<sup>70</sup> Another large-scale poll,

**Table 1-7. Origin of Spouse of Algerian Immigrants and of Individuals Born in France to Algerian Parents<sup>a</sup>**

<i>Gender of immigrant/individual</i>	<i>Origin of spouse (percent)</i>		
	<i>Native French</i>	<i>Immigrant</i>	<i>Born in France to immigrant parents</i>
<b>Male</b>			
arrived in France after age 15	20	73	7
arrived in France before age 16	25	54	21
born in France to Algerian parents	50	17	33
<b>Female</b>			
arrived in France after age 15	10	85	5
arrived in France before age 16	14	77	9
born in France to Algerian parents	24	47	29

Source: Michèle Tribalat, *Faire France: une grande enquête sur les immigrés et leurs enfants* [*Making France: A large-scale study of immigrants and their children*] (Paris: La Découverte, 1995).

a. First marriage, civil or otherwise. The figures are lower when only civil marriages are counted.

conducted by Vincent Tiberj and Sylvain Brouard in 2005, showed similarly that 32.3 percent of persons of North African or Turkish origin (including 60 percent of self-declared Muslims) would disapprove if their daughter married a non-Muslim man and 14.7 percent would disapprove if their son married a non-Muslim woman (the difference in attitudes may be explained by the assumption that a woman will adopt her husband's religion and culture). In contrast, 18 percent and 19 percent of French persons of French origin would disapprove if their son or daughter, respectively, married a Muslim woman or man.<sup>71</sup>

Statistics suggest that intermarriage, the most intimate form of integration, is well under way. Among the younger generations, as many as one-quarter of Muslim women are married to non-Muslim men and half of young Muslim men cohabit with non-Muslim women (see table 1-7).<sup>72</sup> Turks in Germany also had far lower rates of exogamy—by a factor of two to three for men and ten to fifteen for women—than Algerians raised in France.<sup>73</sup> Mixed marriages between an immigrant (or child of immigrants) and a native French person (born in France to French parents) are more frequent with Spanish or Portuguese immigrants than with North Africans, although the incidence varies according to the country of origin, from Morocco (33 percent



of mixed marriages) to Tunisia and sub-Saharan Africa (44 percent and 45 percent respectively).<sup>74</sup> Such marriages are slightly more prevalent among the more educated classes of society, native French and immigrant, and less frequent with women of foreign origin than with men. Between 1975 and 1990, the proportion of births to a couple consisting of an Algerian father and a French mother increased from 12.5 percent to 19.4 percent, and the rates were similarly high for births to a French father and an Algerian mother (rates were lower for Moroccans and Tunisians, who were more recent immigrants at the time the study was conducted).<sup>75</sup>

The proportion of immigrant women who work outside the home—an important factor in the acculturation process—is comparable to that of French women. In 1999, the employment rate for immigrant women was 57.1 percent, compared with 63.1 percent for French women (in 1982, the rate was 41 percent, compared with 54 percent).<sup>76</sup> Differences exist among immigrants of different origins: Turkish women, for example, are much less likely to work outside the home than women from sub-Saharan Africa.

Intergroup socializing is another indicator of the degree of integration. Public housing projects tend to close immigrants off within their own neighborhoods, as they do French natives. Their isolation can be explained as much by the geographical distance of the projects from the city center—they are in the suburbs, not in the “inner city”—as by a community’s tendency to stick together. Social visits take place among networks of acquaintances, after all, who often are people who live or work in the same place. For immigrant populations living outside housing projects, social intermixing is more likely to take place, both among groups of foreigners and with native French.

Thus, writes Michèle Tribalat, “when young people of Algerian origin live in a nonimmigrant neighborhood, neighborly relations with people of the same origin are much less common; their frequency is the same as among young people of Portuguese origin.”<sup>77</sup> The proportion of young people of Algerian origin who maintain close ties exclusively to other Algerians drops from 25 percent in community neighborhoods (where Algerians make up a majority of the inhabitants), to 11 percent in immigrant neighborhoods (where immigrant populations are diverse), and to just 7 percent in nonimmigrant neighborhoods. It is nonetheless worth mentioning Tribalat’s observation that “even in nonimmigrant neighborhoods, neighborly contact with native French is clearly less prevalent among young people of Algerian origin (around one-third) than among those of Spanish or Portuguese origin (around half).” But the 2005 poll conducted for the U.S. Department of State found that only 30 percent of French Muslims preferred to socialize with

people of the same ethnic and religious background, while 36 percent of the French public did. Almost all French Muslims claimed to have non-Muslim friends: 61 percent said that they had “many” French friends, and 36 percent said “a few”; 9 percent and 36 percent said the same, respectively, of Jewish friends; and 79 percent said they had “a few” or “many” friends of African descent.<sup>78</sup>

Tribalat also mentions some more personal indicators, like the type of food prepared by immigrants when they have guests. Such habits can be a useful (if anecdotal) benchmark for measuring degree of acculturation, and, in fact, the evidence shows an evolution across generations. The proportion of the population of immigrant origin that prepares “ethnic” food when entertaining guests is high among the first generation—35 percent of Algerians and 25 percent of Portuguese—but their children do not carry on those traditions. Only 6 percent of the children of Algerian immigrants and just 4 percent of the children of Portuguese prepare traditional dishes for guests.<sup>79</sup>

### **But Do They Feel French?**

A less oblique measure of integration is Muslims’ attitudes toward French institutions and French identity, as well as their articulation of a “desire” to integrate. On October 6, 2001, an ominous event unfolded. In a long-planned public relations initiative, France faced Algeria in a “friendly” soccer match that was supposed to celebrate the renewed friendship between the two nations. Contrary to script, however, some young immigrant soccer fans booed the national anthem, threw objects at two government ministers, and—once the French lead had reached 4 to 1—ran onto the field of the Stade de France (some of them waving Algerian flags), forcing the cancellation of the game. The impression conveyed by the game’s spectacular ending was not the one desired by its organizers. Indeed, the event occurred on the very site where the multicultural dream team of Zinedine Zidane had triumphed in the World Soccer Cup of 1998, inspiring an idealized image of France as a “*black-blanc-beur*” nation. French public opinion suffered a profound shock, and the event was credited with bringing new voters to Le Pen’s Front National party, which was victorious in the first round of presidential elections in April 2002. “Where are the *beurs* going?” asked the cover of *Le Nouvel Observateur*, above photographs of second- and third-generation immigrant youth invading the soccer field. More generally, this event was heralded as a demonstration of the ultimate failure of integration among the young—and of their contempt for France as represented by its symbols (its flag, its representatives, and its national anthem).

In poll after poll, however, self-declared Muslims and, more generally, French of African and foreign origin continue to declare their profound desire to integrate, their attachment to France, and their generally optimistic outlook, which is markedly more optimistic than that of other groups. The U.S. State Department poll taken in 2005, for example, indicated that 68 percent and 65 percent of self-declared Muslims had confidence in local and national government respectively. And at least as many had confidence in the judicial system (56 percent) and even in the police (54 percent) as in Muslim religious leaders (56 percent). Eighty-nine percent expressed confidence in the public schools, while 51 percent did so for the (practically nonexistent) Islamic schools. Even while reporting widespread discrimination, they voiced a favorable overall opinion of France (95 percent favorable and 5 percent unfavorable).

Another promising indication of lasting integration is self-declared Muslims' opinion of French democracy and their optimism for the future compared with the attitudes of adherents of other religions. The OIP study conducted between 1998 and 2001 found that fully 69 percent of Muslims thought that French democracy was functioning well; in comparison, 58 percent of Catholics and 63 percent of Protestants did. The same poll reported that 21 percent of Muslims were "very optimistic" about France's future, more than twice the number of Catholics (8 percent) and Protestants (9 percent).<sup>80</sup> Last but not least, the large-scale study conducted by Brouard and Tiberj in 2005 confirmed that optimism, this time among French of African and Turkish origin in general (62 percent believed that democracy was functioning well in France, while only 56 percent of the French population in general did). Finally, it showed that among these "recent French," feelings of closeness with other French people were significantly higher (85 percent) than feelings of closeness with other Europeans (56 percent), people from the same religious group (71 percent), or people of the same national origin (77 percent). Interestingly, the widespread feeling of closeness with other French people was even higher among self-declared Muslims (90 percent) than among survey respondents in general, and in both cases, it was slightly higher than among the general population (84 percent). Finally, looking for signs of community-mindedness (such as having a political agenda for minority rights or feelings of being left out by mainstream society), Brouard and Tiberj found only a tiny minority (4 percent) who fit that description.<sup>81</sup>

So which picture is more accurate: the one painted by the events at the soccer match on October 6, 2001, and the urban riots of November 2005, which tend to indicate a failure of integration and a rejection of France itself, or the many statistical indicators that consistently show Muslims' strong desire to integrate or an already high level of integration?

This paradox can be reconciled by studying geographical and social differentiation. On one hand, there has clearly been a failure of integration in the *cités*, home to a young population that has little hope for the future, little education, and that does not consider itself fully French. These are the young people who boo the national anthem and burn cars and schools in their own neighborhoods. On the other hand, in the background, millions of people of Muslim descent are undergoing the process of integration into French society, and it is this overwhelming majority that responds to pollsters, not the teenagers from the *cités* (although some surveys have targeted school-age respondents).<sup>82</sup> The task, of course, is to determine which social process—alienation or acculturation—will prevail in everyday life and in the media and the political sphere and whether the first is strong enough to undermine the second. The only certainty is that both aspects of integration exist in France today, and they are likely to do so for years to come.