

# DEMOGRAPHICS AND POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

## *Defending the interests of French citizens in the Indo-Pacific region*



The 52 countries that make up the Indo-Pacific region are home to three-quarters of the world's population, some 5.9 billion people. Four of five most populous countries – India, China, Indonesia and Pakistan – are located there.

Some 1.8 million French people live in the Indo-Pacific region, the vast majority of whom – almost 90 percent – reside in the French overseas departments, regions and communities (*see Fact sheet No.1 – Overseas Territories*). There are almost 1.6 million French nationals in the French territories, compared with just over 190,000 expatriates in the countries of the region. These French citizens are all represented in the French National Assembly and Senate.

French citizens in the Indo-Pacific region serve as conduits for French influence and outreach, fostering commercial exchanges (*see Fact sheet No.8 – Economic cooperation and business*), intercultural connections (*see Fact sheet No.9 – Cultural cooperation and Francophonie*) and the development of enduring relationships. Above all, they are essential links in the development of French initiatives.

### FRENCH OVERSEAS CITIZENS

La Réunion is the most populous territory, with over 870,000 inhabitants, ahead of Mayotte (approx. 300,000), French Polynesia (approx. 280,000), New Caledonia (approx. 270,000), and Wallis and Futuna (approx. 10,000). Incidentally, there are a few hundred French citizens in the French Southern and Antarctic Territories, and Clipperton is uninhabited.

Mayotte is the overseas territory with the strongest demographic growth over the last five years, the highest proportion of foreigners (over half), and the youngest population (only 4 percent over 60). By contrast, the population of Wallis and Futuna is shrinking (-1.1 percent in five years) and, along with Réunion Island, has the oldest population, with almost 17 percent over 60.

The French overseas territories are represented in the National Assembly and Senate by 15 elected representatives and 11 senators. As a result of administrative redistributions in recent years, Réunion (+2 with 7 representatives), Mayotte (+1 with 2 representatives) and French Polynesia (+1 with 3 representatives) have seen their number of representatives increase. New Caledonia and Wallis and Futuna have 2 and 1 representatives respectively.

There is an Overseas Delegation in both parliamentary chambers. One is chaired by representative Rimane of French Guiana, the other by senator Artano of Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon, neither of whom is an elected representative of the Indo-Pacific region.

### FRENCH NATIONALS LIVING ABROAD

In 2021, the Indo-Pacific countries accounted for 12 percent of French nationals registered in the Register of French nationals established outside France, or just over 190,000 people<sup>1</sup>. This figure remains modest given the size of the region. There are almost as many French nationals in Switzerland as in the entire region.

In 2021, there were only four Indo-Pacific countries in the Top 25 of countries hosting French nationals: the United Arab Emirates (13<sup>th</sup>, 24,390), China (14<sup>th</sup>, 24,092), Australia (19<sup>th</sup>, 21,233) and Madagascar (24<sup>th</sup>, 15,434). Next in the region are Thailand (13,117), Singapore (12,776), Japan (9,952) and Mauritius (9,586).

For the first four countries, trends in the number of French nationals over the past ten years have varied widely: a doubling in the United Arab Emirates, a 30 percent increase in Australia, a slight decline of 10 percent in China, and a sharp drop of 25 percent in Madagascar. More generally, there was stagnation across the region, with a strong impact from the Covid pandemic.

Between 2020 and 2021, the number of French citizens living in the region declined. Many left countries in crisis, such as Yemen (- 85 percent) and Burma (- 50 percent). There was a drop of almost 10%

<sup>1</sup> As registration on consular registers is a non-mandatory personal process, the number of registrants per country is systematically underestimated in relation to the actual number of people residing in the country.



in Indonesia and China, stagnation in Laos and Sri Lanka, and an increase of almost 10 percent in Tanzania and Vanuatu<sup>2</sup>. In this Pacific archipelago, there were just over 2,000 French nationals on the register in 2021.

## CITIZEN REPRESENTATION

French expatriates are represented by two representatives in the French National Assembly, representing the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> constituencies, comprising 48 countries (Near East, Central, Eastern and Southern Africa) and 49 countries (Russia, Asia and Oceania) respectively, and around 140,000 voters each. To these must be added the twelve senators representing all French citizens living abroad.

The Councillors for the French expatriates (*Conseillers des Français de l'étranger*) are elected for a six-year term and represent their fellow countrymen at embassies and consulates. Numbering 82 in the Indo-Pacific region, they are the point of reference for all matters of daily life. Their representation is quite uneven: one elected representative for every 1,000 French nationals in South Korea, compared with one for every 5,000 French nationals in the United Arab Emirates.

## ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT FOR CITIZENS

A Minister attached to the Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEAE) is responsible for Foreign Trade, Competitiveness and the French Nationals living abroad. Most importantly, the Department of French Nationals Abroad and Consular Administration (DFAE) is specifically dedicated to them.

French nationals in the Indo-Pacific can rely on an extensive consular network: 17 consulates general and almost 70 consular agencies, plus honorary consuls. In Australia, in addition to the Consulate General of France in Sydney, there are seven honorary consuls (Adelaide, Brisbane, Cairns, Darwin, Hobart, Melbourne and Perth). France is the only country with a Consulate General in Pondichery (India) and Kyoto (Japan). Other countries have opted to set up consulates in the neighboring cities of Chennai and Osaka (*see Fact sheet No. 3 – Diplomatic network and official visits*).

Some of the children of French nationals living abroad benefit from French-language schooling in one of the 96 establishments within the French overseas education network present in the region (*see Fact sheet No. 10 – Education and human rights*).

The DFAE provides financial support to local mutual aid and solidarity organisations (OLES), organisations that help French people abroad. A fund to support the associative fabric of French nationals living abroad (STAFE) completes this scheme. In 2023, 39 projects of an educational, charitable, cultural or socio-economic nature were subsidized in the region, for almost 360,000 euros, *i.e.* 25 percent of the subsidies granted by this fund.

French nationals can also count on the MEAE's Crisis and Support Center (CdCS), set up in 2008. In the event of a crisis abroad, it coordinates with the Interior Security Services (*see Fact sheet No. 5 – Security and police cooperation*) and the armed forces (*see Fact sheet No. 4 – Military presence and defence diplomacy*) to ensure their protection and evacuation<sup>3</sup>. In June 2022, under the French Presidency of the European Union, the CdCS co-organised with the European Union External Action Service a crisis management exercise in the Philippines, with an evacuation scenario following a major typhoon.

## CITIZENS OF THE INDO-PACIFIC IN FRANCE

A significant number of nationals from Indo-Pacific countries reside in mainland or overseas France. The largest community is that of the Comoros, with almost 140,000 nationals in 2021, mainly in Mayotte. Next come communities from China (112,000), Madagascar (84,000), Vietnam (77,000), India, Cambodia, and Sri Lanka (49,000 each). France has historical and linguistic ties with some of these countries (*see Fact sheet No. 9 – Cultural cooperation and Francophonie*). Political reasons may also have played a part in the development of these diasporas.

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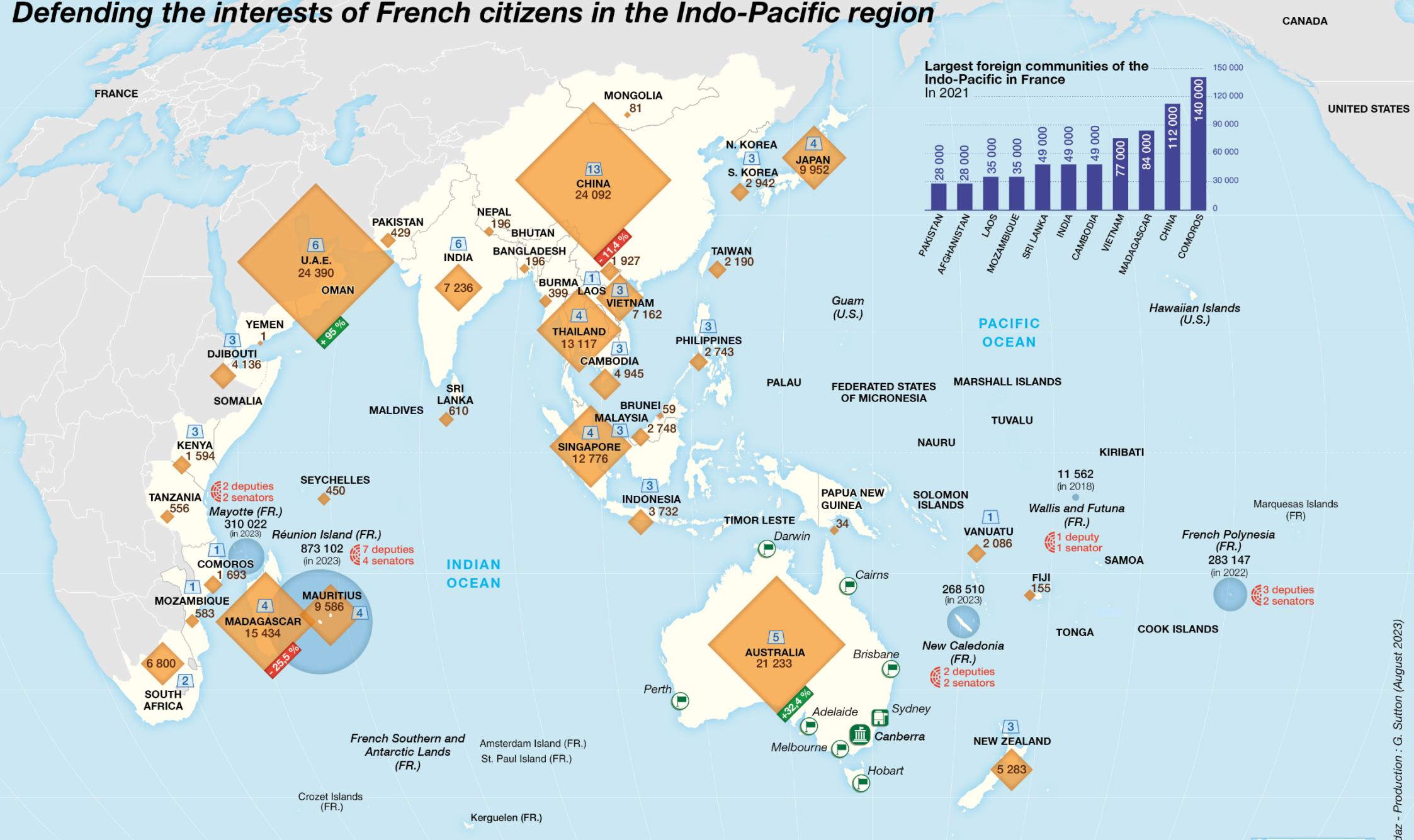
<sup>2</sup> « Rapport du Gouvernement sur la situation des Français établis hors de France », MEAE, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Travel advice issued by the MEAE is key: @ConseilsVoyages on social networks and the dedicated web page.

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# No.2 - DEMOGRAPHICS AND POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

## Defending the interests of French citizens in the Indo-Pacific region



**French citizens overseas**

- Number of inhabitants per territory
- Elected representatives of overseas French citizens  
+2 MPs from the 10th and 11th constituencies of French citizens abroad

**French citizens living abroad**

- Number of French citizens registered (in 2021)
- Demographic evolution over 10 years (2010-2021)

Number of councillors for French citizens living abroad (in 2021)

**Case study: Consular network in Australia**

- Embassy
- Consulate General
- Honorary consulates



## ABOUT THE PROJECT

**France in the Indo-Pacific - Proactive power and solutions provider** is an unprecedented research project to compile, synthesize and map France's actors and actions in a region of vital importance to national interests.

**The publication of a dozen thematic fact sheets** is intended to provide greater visibility and highlight what is being done in the field for the benefit of the French people and local populations by ministries, state actors but also French companies and NGOs.

**This project ties in with research by the FRS and follows two policy papers** entitled “La France, une puissance d’initiatives en Indo-Pacifique” in November 2022<sup>5</sup> and “Reconceptualizing French foreign and security policy in the Indo-Pacific” in July 2023<sup>6</sup>.

### List of Fact Sheets as of September 15th, 2023

- No.1 - Overseas territories
- No.2 - Demographics and political representation
- No.3 - Diplomatic network and official vis-its
- No.4 - Military presence and defence diplomacy
- No.5 - Security and police cooperation
- No.6 - Development aid and the environment
- No.7 - Humanitarian aid, crises and natural disasters
- No.8 - Economic cooperation and companies
- No.9 - Cultural cooperation and Francophonie
- No.10 - Education and human rights
- No.11 - Scientific cooperation and innovation

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

This project was initiated by **Antoine BONDAZ, Ph.D.**, director of the “Observatory for Multilateralism in the Indo-Pacific”. He was assisted by **Marie DESBONNETS**, a Sciences Po student and a graduate of IEP Lyon. **Nathan BLUJUSTAN**, a graduate from SOAS, translated.

**The Foundation for strategic research (FRS)**, founded in 1992, is a foundation with public utility status (decree of February 26, 1993) that operates in complete independence. Its mission is to analyse strategy and international security issues, and to contribute to the strategic debate in France and the promotion of French thinking abroad.

**FRS conducts research on and in the Indo-Pacific through regional and thematic approaches**, publishes policy papers and reports, organises international conferences, conducts high-level strategic dialogues (bilateral and trilateral), pilots a European exchange platform on the Indo-Pacific and has signed cooperation agreements with the region’s leading think tanks.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.frstrategie.org/publications/notes/france-une-puissance-initiatives-indo-pacifique-2022>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.frstrategie.org/en/publications/notes/reconceptualizing-french-foreign-and-security-policy-indo-pacific-2023>