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Access to citizenship and integration of migrants: Lessons from the French case

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Abstract

Access to citizenship is an important factor of integration. We'll compare naturalizations in France and the USA to show differences in integration of migrants. Naturalization data will be used to calculate naturalization rates by cohorts of arrival and census micro-data (US 2000 5% PUMs) and French survey data (Family Survey 1999 and Life Histories Survey 2003) will be used for multivariate analysis of characteristics of naturalized migrants.

Naturalization rates are much lower in France than in the US, and more than a third of naturalizations in France are by marriage, against only 7% in the US that favours more individual access to citizenship. This has consequences on living arrangements of migrants with the main type being couples of both naturalized spouses in the US, and 'French by birth-naturalized migrant' couples in France. But, there are more couples of both foreign spouses (without any voter) in France.

People with low education, low income and frequently unemployed are less naturalized. However, in the US, PhD holders and people with high income are also less naturalized: human capital makes naturalization not necessary. Country of origin has the strongest effects with Mexicans in the US, and Turks and North Africans in France having the lowest naturalization rates. The French model of not selecting migrants leads to low naturalization rates and a poor picture of migrants that hinder integration.

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Naturalization may be the ultimate step in migration, as it represents attachment to country of destination, even including, for nationals of countries who do not allow dual citizenship, renouncing to former citizenship. As such, it may also seem to be a major aspect of integration, with adoption of social and political values linked with the constitution of the host country. France and the USA have very different approaches to migration and integration. Thus, the comparison of the USA and France is expected to show the effects of very different contexts on the phenomenon of naturalization and draw lessons for policies in France.

This paper considers naturalization in the USA and France and its consequences on migrants population as regards living arrangements and socio-economic characteristics of migrants according to their citizenship status. It uses US 2000 census data (PUMs 5% sample), French 1999 census and family survey (EHF) and 2003 Histoire de Vie survey (HDV).

Eligibility for naturalization

In the US, the main eligibility conditions for naturalization is to have been a permanent resident for 5 years without leaving the country for trips of more than 6 months, or having been married to and living for 3 years with a (same) US citizen who must have been himself a US citizen for 3 years. In addition, beyond the ‘no trips abroad of more than 6 months’ condition, an overall physical presence in the US of respectively 30 and 18 months, and 3 months residence in State of application are requested. Special schemes apply for military. People who are currently in the US Armed Forces, have served for 1 year and are permanent resident at time of interview are eligible to become US citizen. Spouses of US citizens ‘who died during a period of honorable active duty service in the Armed Forces’¹ and are a permanent resident on the day of interview are also eligible to become a citizen.

Naturalization is also on three conditions of good moral character, English and civics knowledge and attachment to the Constitution. English test and attachment to the constitution are certainly disincentives for many people to apply.

In France, naturalisation ‘par décret’ is possible for people aged 18 or more who have legal immigrant status (‘titre de séjour’) and habitually resided (‘résidence habituelle et continue’) in France continuously for 5 years (2 years for students who succeeded in two years university courses)². Applicants must show assimilation (ability in French, showing they adopted French habits and customs...), and good moral character. They must also prove that they have stable own income (either from their occupation or from their family) in France to support themselves, and show that all their family attachments are in France.

Naturalization ‘par déclaration’ is possible if you have legal status and have been married to and continuously living with a French citizen for 2 years (without delay if you have a child with this spouse). Children under 18 can be naturalized at the same time as their parents.

Automatic access (*jus soli*) to citizenship for France-born people of foreign parents is conditioned on residence in France, overall 5 years residence³ after age 11 and good moral character⁴. It is possible from age 13 under certain conditions, but usually takes place at age 18.

It is noticeable that many changes in naturalization laws have been directed at the second generation. Since the attempt by Giscard d’Estaing to reject *jus soli*, right wing governments use to discuss if migrants’ children should be given automatically French citizenship at their majority, or if they should fill an application (express the will to become French citizen) and at what age they should do it. There have also been changes in naturalization by marriage, from the former immediate naturalization to a delay of 2 years, then 1 year in 1998-2003 and again 2 years, living with spouse.

Naturalization seems easier in France than in the US, given the five-year residence period starts from arrival with legal status in France against from permanent residence (green card) in the US and there are ways to levy residence condition. Naturalization by marriage is also easier in France. However, assimilation seems to be estimated at the good will of administration - this is also rather the case in the US – and it is not clear what is meant by ‘all family attachments, children, parents, etc.’. Local administrative practices in dealing with individual cases can make naturalization more or less difficult. For instance, in France, shorter delays in application processing have lead to doubling figures between 1990 and 1999.

¹ Spouse must have been married to and living with him/her at the time of his/her death.

² Residence condition is waived for spouse and children of naturalized people, people who were born in former French territories, military, people who rendered exceptional service to France and refugees.

³ Residence condition is waived for people living in a country the official language of which is French (or who studied 5 years in a French teaching school)

⁴ However, from 1998 to 2003, there was no conviction that barred becoming French, but a new law in November 2003 restored this condition.

It is mostly surprising that in France, despite *jus soli*, France-born children of foreign immigrants have to ‘naturalize’ and that there are frequent changes in the law on this point. It seems that governments, mostly right wing, fear ethnic votes and try to put barriers on access to French citizenship for the second generation, to reform or deny *jus soli*.

Naturalization levels

In the US, naturalization is mostly an individual matter. Only 7% of naturalizations are by marriage. In France, after separating naturalization of persons under 18 which represent 52% of naturalization in 2001, 34,3% of naturalizations are by marriage.

From legal aspects above, it could be expected that naturalizations are higher in France. On the contrary, rates are much higher in the US. Although it is difficult to assess, because the population eligible, or ‘at risk’, is not precisely known from censuses, due to the various durations of eligibility, it can be estimated that, in 2000, naturalizations in the US represented 3% of all foreign-born aged 18 and over, it climbs to 4.8% when only those who entered before 1990 are included at the denominator – to account roughly for time to become permanent resident and the 5 years eligibility requirement thereafter. In France, the rate is 2.75% for all foreign-born aged 18 and above. About a third of immigrants did not report year of arrival, so that it is difficult to carry the same correction as for the US. - Given moderate immigration from 1990, a correction would not bring as much change as in the US.

Census data on naturalized people by period of arrival show a tremendous difference between France and the US, when migrants have spent 5 or 10 years in-country and become eligible (figure 1). French levels 15-19 years after arrival are about 20 percentage points lower than US levels, and more than 30 points, 25 years after arrival. The gap reduces only for arrivals before WW2.

Living arrangements by citizenship status

The French and American patterns of naturalization and levels of naturalization by marriage bear important consequences on living arrangements of migrants by citizenship status.

First, it should be noted that, despite easiness of naturalization by marriage in France, significant proportion of people who marry a French citizen did not naturalize. Among people married more than 1 year before EHF survey, 20% of female and one third of male foreign migrants who married a French citizen by birth were not naturalized in 1999. Astonishingly, Algerians have the highest proportion who did not naturalize (table 1). They are followed by American, ‘other EU citizen’ and Portuguese males, Turks for both sexes, American and ‘other Asian’ males. It is noticeable that proportions of people married with a naturalized spouse who are not naturalized themselves are usually lower, reaching 15% for both males and females (table 1).

It is frequently heard that many mixed-marriages in France are actually with second generation migrants and not with European French. Controlling for parents’ country of birth shows that less than 15% of French by birth married to naturalized citizens have two foreign-born parents and less than 20% for those married to foreign citizens⁵. However, it reaches 22% for Moroccans, 28% for Tunisians and Vietnamese and 37% for Algerians.

Compared to the independence hypothesis, actual couples are more concentrated on partners of same citizenship, either citizens by birth, naturalized citizens or foreigners, in France and the US as well, showing that there is a tendency to avoid mixed marriages. However, this tendency is higher in the USA (1.09 against 1.06). In France, due to high levels of mixed-marriages and a large proportion of naturalization by marriage, couples of French citizens by birth and immigrants are also closer to independence than in the US (0.7 against 0.5). But, as a result of lower naturalization rates, there are more couples where both spouses are foreign citizens in France than in the US : 13 times more than predicted by independence hypothesis against 5 times (table 2). In the US, couples where both spouses are naturalized show the highest preference. Altogether, among couples including at least one immigrant there are more couples of both foreigners (with no voter) in France than in the US (31% against 18%).

Factors of naturalization

Census and survey approaches

Analysis of factors of naturalization from census data is difficult because censuses give the situation of people at time of census and not at time of naturalization. They answer to the question ‘who are naturalized people?’ rather than ‘how people naturalize?’. Moreover, it is not easy to separate causes and effects and to know if naturalization facilitates integration or if people who naturalized were more likely to integrate. Naturalization includes also personal aspects, like adhesion to social and political values that are part of ‘assimilation’ and not only socio-economic integration. Moreover,

⁵ Assuming all non-response are foreign-born parents would increase these figures to 20% and 25% respectively.

applying for naturalization also relies on a kind of self-censure: people with lower chances refraining to apply whenever similar or even less qualified people apply and get citizenship. The main advantage of census data is the large number of observations they provide.

A specific survey would certainly be necessary to measure the factors of naturalization, but is difficult to carry on such a sensitive topic. The Histoire de Vie survey carried out by INSEE and INED in 2003 on 8403 people includes information on dates of arrival and naturalization, dual citizenship, spouse's and parents' citizenship, as well as many information on social, political and cultural activities. Work biographies also enable us to measure the effect of naturalization on integration on the labour market.

Actually, a precise analysis of factors of naturalization necessitates to separate sub-populations. We'll study separately singles who entered after age 18 and eventually naturalized 'on their own', and married people, part of whom naturalized by marriage. We can expect them to be rather different and the former show more clearly individual socio-economic factors of naturalization.

Data

The 5% PUMs of US census 2000 include 1.5 millions foreign-born - 60% of whom were naturalized ; 850,000 entered before 1990 and 40,800 were still singles. The family survey associated with the 1999 census of France (in short, we'll refer to it as '1999 census' or census data) include 24,000 foreign immigrants who entered before 1990, of whom 42% are naturalized ; only 470 were still single. Unfortunately, Histoire de Vie survey includes only 1200 foreign immigrants, about half of which are naturalized. Moreover, they include children who were naturalized before age 18 with their parents, and only 670 entered after age 18, of whom 226 are naturalized that we could call naturalized 'on their own'.

Proportions of naturalized people by period of arrival from census data have been presented above (fig. 1). Differences by country of origin (current/former citizenship) (table 3) are very important. Whenever immigrants naturalize more in the US than in France, there are large gaps according to origin, between Mexican and Asians for instance. However, Africans are about twice as much naturalized in the US as in France, but they are a small selected population, with much higher qualification than in Europe. Asians are the only ones who have similarly high rates in both countries. Those with the lowest education and occupation : Mexicans in the US and North African and Turks in France, have the lowest proportions of naturalized people. The proportions of naturalized people are rather similar in France and the US at the level of high school graduate/baccalauréat (table 4). But people without diploma are more often naturalized in the US, as well as people with high education, except PhDs.

Results

Results of logistic regressions (fig. 2) show that endogenous variables : duration in country and English ability have significant effects. Serving in Army, another case that favours eligibility, is also significantly associated with naturalization (see below).

Education is strongly correlated with naturalization, migrants with no or low diplomas are less likely to be naturalized, but, surprisingly, it is also the case of people who have a PhD. A similar reverse U (or J) curve appears for income. This is probably because higher qualification and income enable migrants to integrate economically without needing a push from US citizenship. Managers are also less often naturalized, but technicians, professionals and mostly people serving in Army (for 'all') are more often naturalized than office workers (ref.). The less often naturalized are farm and construction workers and single people in Armed Forces. Home ownership, with or without mortgage, is positively associated with naturalization, as well as receiving public assistance (for 'all' sample only), probably because those who receive public assistance have better knowledge of administration and of their rights. These variables are not significant for singles.

The strongest effects appear between countries of birth, confirming the importance of origin on naturalization. However, it is not possible to say if Mexican naturalize less because they apply less or because their applications are more often rejected (or even if they don't apply thinking they will be rejected because of poor English and low education), and vice-versa for Asians who are the most naturalized migrants – it is noticeable that single Mexican females naturalize more than males. The role of law on dual nationality in country of origin has not been tested.

Except for Army, factors of naturalization are in the same direction for singles and other sub-populations. But singles show greater contrast to reference group, mostly for education, occupation and sex. This is as expected: effects of individual characteristics are stronger for those who naturalize 'on their own'.

Despite low naturalization by marriage, spouse's citizenship has the most important effect on being naturalized for the sub-population 'couples with spouse present', probably because couples apply together, or naturalized people are more

likely to marry together. People married to a naturalized person are 6 to 10 times, according to regions of origin, more likely to be naturalized than those married to foreign European citizens (ref.) and the effect of naturalized spouse against foreign spouse is about the same for any origin. It is surprising that those married to a native US citizen are less likely to be naturalized than those married to a naturalized citizen (2.5 times more than reference group against 6 to 10 times). It is very interesting to see that effects of spouse's education, income and occupation (for 'no occupation', service and sales workers) are in the opposite direction to interviewee's education and income. People whose spouse has low education or income are more often naturalized. But effect has the same sense for PhD holders and managers. It seems that there is a strategy inside couples or in the decision to marry to use naturalization as a security against own or spouse's low human capital.

Like for the US, French results (fig. 3) show that males, people with low education and low occupations are significantly less naturalized. A decline also occurs at higher education levels (2nd and 3rd cycles), but is only significant for couples. Contrary to the US, highest occupations, 'cadres' and professionals, are significantly more naturalized for all sub-populations. But the group 'craftsmen and traders' that includes managers are less naturalized – however, there should not be many foreign-born directors of large companies in the sample. No data are available on income and tenure. Those who never worked (ref.) are less naturalized than those who worked, with the higher probability for those who experienced work interruption. This could translate the fact that those in higher positions or with more work security are less likely to naturalize, like in the USA.

Desire (or uncertainty) to return to country/region of childhood strongly reduces the probability of being naturalized comparatively to those who don't want to return⁶. Like for the US, origin⁷ has the strongest effects. After controlling for other variables, Asians naturalize 6 to 13 times (up to 22 times for couples) more than 'other EU citizens' (ref.), but Turks naturalize 15% less. Algerians and Portuguese naturalize only 11% and 7% more than reference group, but Spanish, Italians and 'other non EU Europeans' 2 to 3 times more.

The number of singles is small and some categories had to be pooled together. They show rather similar trends but differences are more marked. However, results are in the opposite direction for low diplomas.

As expected, given high proportions of naturalization by marriage, the effect of marrying a French citizen by birth is strongly associated with being naturalized, but it is still stronger with a naturalized citizen. However, the difference is less than in the US where naturalization by marriage is not common and couples consist less frequently of a native and a naturalized US citizen. Results by origin for couples are different from the 'all' sample : Algerians, Portuguese naturalize almost 3 times more than reference group, and Turks almost 5 times. Spouse's education is not much significant.

Hints at effects of naturalization

Analysis of Histoire de Vie survey is still in an exploratory phase at time of writing this paper. It is clear that migrants gain access to public sector jobs after naturalization, but that's mostly true for those who entered before age 18. Note that there are foreign citizens working in the State sector as well, and it is not uncommon to leave the public sector after naturalization.

Proportion of labour force participation time spent as unemployed before and after naturalization is lower for males after naturalization, but for females, improvement is mainly observed for 'unstable employment' (successions of short jobs and unemployment – a group that interferes with 'unemployment' and is even more frequent for females). This may be connected with the fact that younger women are in the child-rearing phase and cannot have a stable job.

It is difficult to answer the question : do migrants improve their job position after naturalization? Given the low position of migrants at their first jobs, all tend to improve their position, but those who will naturalize improve it much more, and they actually start even before naturalization. However, naturalized people experience various up and downs before as well as after naturalization and some migrants may choose a time they have a good job to apply for citizenship. But, those who did not yet naturalized lag much behind and most of them remain in lower positions at time of survey. However, it seems difficult to separate the roles of selection, including self-selection in applying, and of naturalization on careers.

Conclusion

⁶ The group with higher naturalization are those who answered 'already there' ; they are people who immigrated as young children and still live in the region of their childhood.

⁷ We used former nationality as indicator of origin to avoid bias due to French people born abroad or in former colonies ; former nationality is not available for the US and country of birth was used instead.

Naturalization of migrants is strongly dependent on policies, but socio-economic characteristics are also an important factor of naturalization. It is easier to apply and be granted citizenship for migrants who have a good social package. Integration on the labour market is also mostly dependent on human capital and naturalization does not seem to change much things in this. Access to a stable job is probably more a condition than a result of naturalization.

Naturalization opens to more rights for migrants as citizens have more rights than migrants workers. It also enables participation in political life. In the US, migrants' access to both labour market and citizenship is much larger than in France and naturalization is more a personal matter, that is not felt necessary by people who have high human capital. In France, in the absence selective migration policies, most migrants have low qualification and access to citizenship is mostly by marriage. However, marriage is often not followed by naturalization, maybe because it is considered a security in itself or because of a will to retain former citizenship.

Finally, it seems that the current migration pattern feeds a vicious circle where unqualified migrants cannot integrate, have difficulties to naturalize which further rejects them out of the socio-political life, leading to 'communautarism' that in turn raises fear of immigration or, at least, fear of ethnic votes. Selective immigration is the most urgent policy that should be implemented in France. It would ease access of migrants to jobs and to citizenship. It would also deeply change the overall picture of migrants and their higher contribution to the production of wealth would be economically profitable for all.

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Proportion (%) naturalized by period of arrival, France and the USA, 1999 and 2000 census

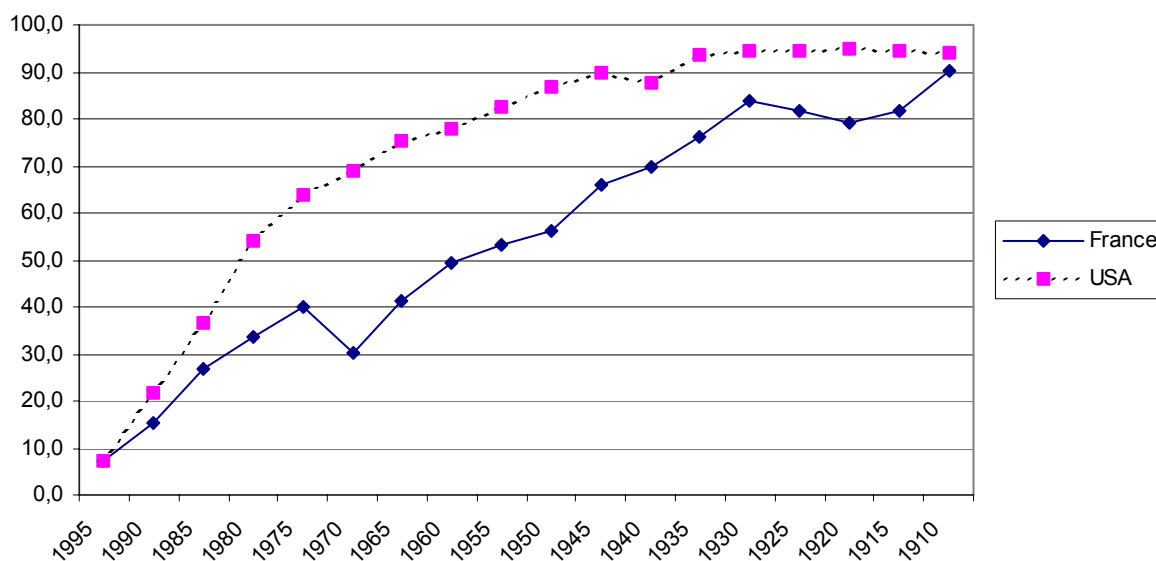


Table 1 : Proportion (%) of married spouses of French by birth and naturalized people who are not naturalized, by sex and citizenship. France 1999 EHF (family survey).

	spouse of French by birth		spouse of naturalized French	
	F	M	F	M
Spain	9,8	28,5	6,8	9,8
Italy	6,3	31,7	2,8	13,0
Portugal	28,3	50,4	12,3	27,2
other EU	40,2	55,6	31,3	16,6
other Europe	10,4	16,9	3,2	12,0
Algeria	52,9	57,3	40,5	34,2
Morocco	24,8	31,9	26,1	26,0
Tunisia	17,5	33,5	24,0	14,1
other Africa	36,4	40,3	33,6	11,5
Turkey	43,2	43,7	38,4	38,1
Cambodia	26,2	6,5	0,0	9,6
R Lao	0,0	28,7	5,9	5,0
Viet Nam	9,1	12,3	17,6	4,2
other Asia	43,2	21,8	22,4	7,6
America-Oceania	43,1	54,9	23,3	25,3
n.s.	1,1	3,1	3,4	2,7
total	20,4	33,3	14,7	15,3

Table 2 : Differences of actual living arrangements by citizenship status to independence hypothesis.

France	USA						
	Fr by birth	natur	foreign	US cit	Natur	not US cit	
Fr by birth	1,063	0,679	0,165	US cit	1,093	0,545	0,239
natur	0,652	7,881	1,235	Natur	0,438	20,187	4,929
foreign	0,259	1,168	13,641	not US cit	0,120	2,286	5,000

France 1999 and the USA 2000 censuses

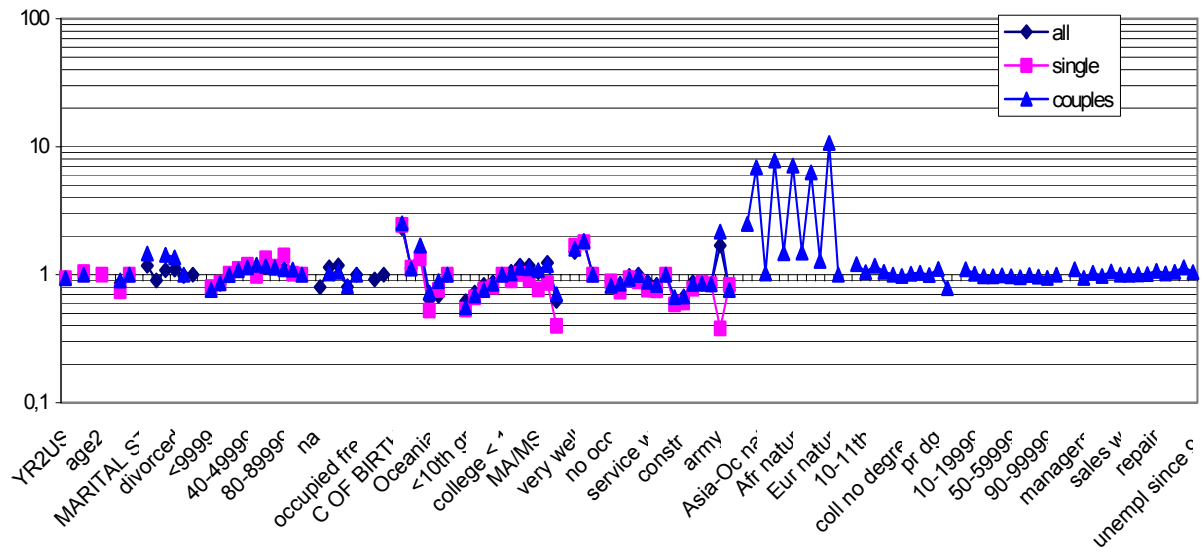
Table 3 : Proportion naturalized (%) by country of current/former citizenship persons entered < 1990, France 1999 and US 2000 censuses.

	France	USA
Spain	63,6	74,3
Italy	65,4	
Portugal	32,2	
other EU	48,0	
other Europe	76,6	
Algeria	29,7	
Morocco	32,5	
Tunisia	48,2	
other Africa	49,7	66,1
Turkey	20,6	36,9
Cambodia	70,3	73,9
R Lao	70,5	
Viet Nam	84,7	
other Asia	57,3	
America-Oceania	48,2	59,2
n. s.	82,0	
total	49,5	60,1

Table 4 : Proportion naturalized (%) by educational level persons entered < 1990, France 1999 and US 2000 censuses.

	France	USA
no diploma	36,1	43,1
CEP (1ary)	57,0	
BEPC (lower 2ary)	57,8	48,1
CAP	60,9	
BEP	62,1	
	12th	57,0
Bac	60,7	62,2
tech bac	66,0	66,3
	coll > 1y	68,5
	coll no degree	72,9
	Ass dg	76,0
DEUG (Univ 2 y)	62,1	76,0
2/3rd cycle (univ > 2 y)	64,1	76,3
	MA/MS	78,3
	prof dg	68,8
	PhD	68,8
total	51,8	60,1

Results for all migrants, couples and singles, USA 2000



Results for all migrants, couples and singles, France EHF 1999

