

OFFICIAL NAME: French Republic

CAPITAL: Paris

SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT: Multiparty Republic

AREA: 549,183 Sq Km (212,041 Sq Mi)

ESTIMATED 2000 POPULATION 59,047,000



LOCATION & GEOGRAPHY: France is located in West Europe and the territory includes the island of Corsica in the Mediterranean Sea as well as various other overseas departments and territories. It is bound by Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany to the north and northeast, Switzerland, Italy and Monaco to the east, the Mediterranean Sea to the southeast, Spain and Andorra to the south and the Atlantic Ocean to the west. France is distinguished topographically by the four Hercynian Massifs. (1.) The Ardennes in the western tip. (2.) The Vosges to the south. (3.) The Armorican which protects the Paris Basin to the west and (4.) the Central Massif which separates the north and south of France. All of these massifs are composed of granite, sandstone or shale. Between the massifs lie undulating floors of lowland corridors which include the Paris Basin, the Poiteau Gate, the Basin of Aquitaine, the Garonne Basin and the coastal plain. Beyond these lowland corridors rise the walls of the Jura Mountains, the Alps and the Pyrenees which form the frontiers of France. The drainage system of France is based on its five major rivers, the Loire, Garonne, Rhone, Rhine and Seine. Major Cities (pop. est.); Paris (metropolitan area) 9,060,000, Marseille 1,231,100, Lyon 1.262,200, Toulouse 608,400, Nice 475,500, Strasbourg 338,500, Nantes 492,300 (1990). Land Use; forested 27%, pastures 20%, agricultural-cultivated 35%, other 18% (1993).

CLIMATE: France's climate ranges from a Mediterranean in the south with warm humid winters and hot dry summers to a maritime in the northwest with mild winters and cool summers as well as frequent fine rain or drizzle. In the east a continental climate is dominant, characterized by cold winters with frost, long periods of snow cover and warm summers with thunderstorms. France receives an average of 450 billion cubic metres of precipitation per annum as either rain or snow and no part of the country receives less than 508 mm (20 inches) annually. Average temperature ranges in Paris are from 1 to 6 degrees Celsius (34 to 46 degrees Fahrenheit) in January to 14 to 25 degrees Celsius (57 to 77 degrees Fahrenheit) in July.

PEOPLE: The French are largely of Celtic or Latin origin and account for around 91% of the population. Other ethnic minorities include people of Teutonic, Slavic, North African, Indo-Chinese and Basque origins.

DEMOGRAPHIC/VITAL STATISTICS: Density; 104.7 persons per sq km (271.1 persons per sq mi) (1991). Urban-Rural; 74.3% urban, 25.7% rural (1990). Sex Distribution; 48.7% male, 51.3% female (1990). Life Expectancy at Birth; 72.7 years male, 80.9 years female (1990). Age Breakdown; 19% under 15, 22% 15 to 29, 23% 30 to 44, 16% 45 to 59, 13% 60 to 74, 7% 75 and over (1990). Birth Rate; 13.5 per 1,000 (1990). Death Rate; 9.3 per 1,000 (1990). Increase Rate; 4.2 per 1,000 (1990). Infant Mortality Rate; 7.4 per 1,000 live births (1990)

RELIGIONS: Mostly Christians with around 76% of the population Roman Catholic while other Christian denominations account for 4% and Muslims account for 3% of the population.

LANGUAGES: The official language is French. Other languages and/or dialects spoken are Provençal, Breton, Corsican, German, Dutch and Basque.

EDUCATION: Employed adult population having attained: primary 60.2%, lower secondary 22.9%, upper secondary 9.2%, higher 7.7% (1982). Literacy; literate population aged 15 or over 41,112,000 or 98.8% (1980).

MODERN HISTORY - WWII TO 1993: After World War II France became one of the five great UN powers and played an important part in the Cold War between the communist countries and the western nations. In 1949 France became a charter member of the anticommunist North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), while in 1946 the first revolt by a French colony began in Indo-China led by the communist Ho Chi Minh rebels. On May 7, 1954 after a humiliating defeat France was forced at the Geneva Convention to withdraw from Indo-China which was eventually divided into Kampuchea (Cambodia), Laos, North Vietnam and South Vietnam. In the same year a revolution broke out in the French territory of Algeria and Pres. Charles de Gaulle sent troops to Algeria resulting in a full scale civil war. To prevent revolutions in Morocco and Tunisia, France granted them independence in 1956 while other French Colonies in Africa received their independence by 1960. In 1957 France and other West European nations formed the European Union (EU) and by 1958 large numbers of French people wanted to end the fighting in Algeria which angered French army leaders. In May 1958 they rebelled and threatened to overthrow the government. A new constitution was set up on Sept. 28, 1958 which established the fifth French republic. In 1961 it was realized that only Algerian independence would end their civil war and Pres. de Gaulle negotiated a ceasefire in March 1962. Algeria gained its independence in July 1962 and in March 1966 France withdrew militarily from NATO but remained a member politically. In May 1968 many demonstrations, strikes and violence due to the dissatisfaction with de Gaulle's government resulted in the deaths of three people when riot police were sent in and on May 30, 1968 Pres. de Gaulle dissolved the National Assembly blaming communists for the trouble. Since the mid 1960's France has supported the government of Chad against

rebels by supplying military aid and at times troops. In May 1981 Francois Mitterrand was elected President and in 1982 France sent troops to Lebanon as part of a peacekeeping force. In 1983 a terrorist bombing killed 54 French troops in Beirut which resulted in France withdrawing its troops from Lebanon in 1984. In July 1985 the French defense ministry sent secret service agents to sink the Rainbow Warrior, a Greenpeace ship, which was preparing to protest French nuclear testing in the Pacific. The sinkage resulted in the death of one crew member. In May 1988 Pres. Mitterrand was reelected and in 1989 France celebrated the bicentenary of the French Revolution. In May 1990 there was an outbreak of anti-Semitic racial crimes principally against Arabs as well as a marked increase in the publication of anti-Semitic literature. In 1991 France sent troops and equipment to Saudi Arabia and played a major part in the US-led coalitions removal of Iraq from Kuwait. Anti-government sentiment also arose after a police officer was dismissed for investigating the ruling Socialist Party's secret financing networks and the removal of a judge who also attempted to investigate the matter himself. On May 5, 1991 Pres. Mitterrand replaced Prime Minister Michel Rocard with Edith Cresson. In Aug. and Sept. 1991 there were mass demonstrations by nurses and farmers, with some 200,000 farmers taking to the streets of Paris in protest to the government's policy towards agriculture. The protests and outcry lasted several weeks and resulted in the Prime Minister issuing a security order on Oct. 21, 1991 restricting government ministers to Paris and Pres. Mitterrand demanding the government to "reestablish order in the Republic". After poor regional elections results in Mar. 1992 Prime Minister Cresson was forced to resign and was succeeded by the Finance Minister Pierre Beregovoy. In July 1992 a drivers licensing reform based on a points system initiated by the former Prime Minister Cresson took effect and resulted in the truck drivers' lobby organizing a blockade of several large cities that caused havoc during the busy vacation season. Prime Minister Beregovoy responded by sending an unarmed tank to clear the roadblock along the main north highway. In Aug. 1992 prison guards went on strike following the murder of several guards by prisoners during an escape. In Sept. 1992 the French voted in a referendum on the Maastricht Treaty and ultimately European economic unity which resulted in a slim 51.05% "Yes" vote majority. In the same month severe flash-floods caused widespread property damage. In Oct. 1992 officials from the National Blood Transfusion Center were convicted by a Paris tribunal after infecting and knowingly distributing HIV contaminated blood to 1,300 hemophiliacs during 1985, later the former Prime Minister Laurent Fabius and two of his ministers were sent before the High Court of Justice for their part in the HIV-blood scandal. Also during 1992 alleged corruption scandals against members of the ruling Socialist Party continued to plague the government throughout the year. In 1993 corruption scandals continued with Prime Minister Beregovoy himself implicated in a interest-free million Franc loan in 1986 from Roger-Patrice Pelat, close friend of Mitterrand and one of the persons implicated in the 1989 insider-trading scandal over the takeover of the state-owned Pechiney. In Mar. 1993 the Socialist Party lost the general elections with the conservative parties of the right winning the majority of seats in the National Assembly. On Mar. 29, 1993 Pres. Mitterrand named the former finance minister Edouard Balladur of the Gaullist Rally for the Republic (RPR) as the country's new prime minister. On May 1, 1993 former Prime Minister Beregovoy committed suicide on the bank of a canal which resulted in a dispute between judges and journalists over responsibility for his death. In May 1993 Prime Minister Balladur implemented a number of economic and social reforms aimed at

"the rectification of France" while his popularity as prime minister surpassed 60% for many months. In Oct. 1992 the government relinquished its austerity plans for Air France after a 16 day strike by workers who occupied the runways and air access into Paris. In Nov. 1993 the Senate approved a controversial scheme to create a 32-hour workweek with cuts in pay. Also in 1993 unemployment reached 3.4 million while the Franc also temporarily fell 3% against the German DM as a result of the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM). Also during the year there were French fears of a united Europe when it came to GATT after the US launch attacks, under the so-called Blair House compromise, against French agriculture.

CURRENCY: The official currency is the Euro divided into 100 cents.

ECONOMY: Gross National Product; USD \$1,317,950,000,000 (1992). Public Debt; F 2,246,000,000,000 (1994). Imports; F 1,279,663,000,000 (1994). Exports; F 1,311,798,000,000 (1994). Tourism Receipts; USD \$23,410,000,000 (1993). Balance of Trade; F 87,800,000,000 (1994). Economically Active Population; 25,485,500 or 44.0% of total population (1994). Unemployed; 12.4% (1994).

MAIN TRADING PARTNERS: Its main trading partners are the USA, Japan, the former USSR, Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg, the UK and the Netherlands.

MAIN PRIMARY PRODUCTS: Barley, Bauxite, Cattle, Coal, Fruit and Vegetables, Grapes, Iron Ore, Maize, Oats, Oil and Natural Gas, Pigs, Potash, Potatoes, Poultry, Salt, Sheep, Sugar Beets, Timber, Uranium, Wine, Wheat.

MAJOR INDUSTRIES: Aircraft, Agriculture, Aluminum, Cars, Cement, Chemicals, Electrical Goods, Electronics, Engineering, Fishing, Food Processing, Forestry, Iron and Steel, Oil and Gas Refining, Perfume, Textiles.

MAIN EXPORTS: Cars, Cereals, Chemicals, Clothing, Electrical Equipment, Iron and Steel, Leather Goods, Petroleum Products, Processed Foods, Textiles, Wine.

TRANSPORT: Railroads; route length 34,421 km (21,388 mi) (1989), passenger-km 63,588,000,000 (39,512,000,000 passenger-mi) (1990), cargo ton-km 51,528,000,000 (35,292,000,000 short ton-mi) (1990). Roads; length 804,450 km (499,862 mi) (1989). Vehicles; cars 23,010,000 (1989), trucks and buses 5,175,000 (1989). Merchant Marine; vessels 900 (1990), deadweight tonnage 5,573,925 (1990). Air Transport; passenger-km 49,452,000,000 (30,728,000,000 passenger-mi) (1989), cargo ton-km 3,939,000,000 (2,698,000,000 short ton-mi) (1989).

COMMUNICATIONS: Daily Newspapers; total of 116 with a circulation for 90 newspapers of 10,096,000 (1993). Radio; receivers 49,000,000 (1993). Television; receivers 29,300,000 (1993). Telephones; units 31,600,000 (1994).

MILITARY: 409,000 (1995) total active duty personnel with 59.0% army, 15.7% navy and 21.8% air force while military expenditure accounts for 3.4% (1993) of the Gross National Product (GNP).