The French Colorblind Approach to Discrimination and Inequality*

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Abstract

The French color-blind approach to data collection has long been debated. The lack of ethno-racial information in surveys and administrative data has impeded researchers from studying the level of inequality and discrimination against minorities in France. As an alternative to ethno-racial information, the use of factual information such as parents' place of birth has been proposed. In this paper, we discuss the color-blind approach of France and review the evidence of inequality and discrimination based on origins in the country. We then use the Trajectories and Origins 2 survey to address the question of whether collecting information on origins matters and how much information would be missed by exclusively using parents' country of birth. For this scope, we provide a novel index capturing alterity and discuss the extent to which this measure changes our understanding of the level of inequality and discrimination in France. We conclude by providing some recommendations.

JEL codes: J15, J31, J71
Keywords: Racial discrimination, Inequality, France

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1 Introduction

Due to the growing migration flows, societies are becoming increasingly multi-ethnic and diverse. One challenge faced by these societies is to successfully integrate the newly arrived populations and their descendants. The first step in this endeavor is to measure the extent of exclusion and discrimination based on ethnic origin and evaluate the effectiveness of the policy interventions aimed at tackling them. Yet, many countries, especially in continental Europe, have only limited statistics to identify racial and ethnic minorities beyond the migration status (Simon, 2017; Balestra and Fleischer, 2018).
France represents the archetypal of this group of countries: its deep commitment to the unity and indivisibility of the French Republic has led the French state to strongly oppose the creation of ethno-racial statistics in the Census or in any other large official survey. This choice, which some qualify as the color-blind approach and others as the choice of ignorance, is particularly surprising given the long colonial and immigration history of the country and the resulting multiculturalism characterizing French society. In the last decades, the question of whether to collect ethno-racial information has been at the center of a heated debate in the country. On the one hand, opponents of ethno-racial categories argue that forcing the population to choose an ethnic group risks to crystallize identities and being perceived in itself as a form of violence, if not even racism (Bras, 1998).[1] In addition, the Jewish list made during WWII and the ethno-racial categories present in the former French colonies during colonization are often used as cases in point to highlight the risks of having such categories recorded in the state apparatus (Beaud and Noiriel, 2021). Finally, opponents object that available tools, namely audit studies and origin statistics, should be enough to fight discrimination (Piketty, 2022). On the other hand, proponents believe that without these categories discrimination is hard to measure but, more importantly, almost impossible to fight with appropriate policies, as they judge existing tools, such as administrative punishments for perpetrators of racist acts, too blunt for the scope as they would fail to capture indirect discrimination (Simon and Stavo-Debauge, 2004; Simon, 2005).
This debate, referred to as the "demographers' controversy" (Spire and Merllié, 1999; Simon, 2008), originated in academic circles and gradually moved to civil society and institutional organizations, culminating in a 2007 bill

[1] Indeed, Simon and Clément (2006) find that, among university employees and students in Parisian establishments, a large share reports high or very high discomfort in choosing an ethnic category, especially when of for North African origin. The reported discomfort would be substantially lower, though, if the information would be collected exclusively for research or for the Census.

whose purpose was the collection of data on the perception and experience of discrimination. The bill, however, was declared null by a ruling of the Constitutional Council in 2008. The same ruling added that any data collection on race or ethnicity would be deemed unconstitutional as it would violate the first article of the 1958 French Constitution.[2] If ethno-racial statistics are thus unlikely to see the light soon in France, discrimination is nonetheless undoubtedly present in the country. According to the 2015 Eurobarometer, French citizens are more likely to qualify discrimination as a pervasive issue than citizens of other countries. In fact, a meta-analysis of audit studies in nine Western countries puts France on the higher end in terms of discrimination (Quillian et al., 2019).

The controversy, however, had the merit of spurring the discussion on the need to measure alterity, and on the appropriate ways to do so. One compromise has been to introduce questions related to parents' country of birth in a number of surveys. While this information is not collected in the population census yet, there exists a possibility that it might be introduced. This would meet legal requirements and satisfy the concerns of skeptics as it would be based on factual information instead of subjective and self-declared ethno-racial categories. Similarly, information on first names or surnames could provide a proxy of origins without the need to rely on hetero-defined rigid categories. Concerning first names, however, Coulmont and Simon (2019) have shown a high degree of convergence between the minority and the majority groups already among the second-generation. The convergence is almost complete among the third generation. This implies that names are only a good predictor of origin for first-generation migrants. Surnames are arguably more stable across generations but mechanically miss half of the mixed-origin descents.

In this paper, we aim to contribute to the debate on the relevance of collecting information on individuals' origins to gain insights into the composition of the French population, as well as, to investigate the extent of discrimination faced by minority groups. We first review the existing literature and evidence of inequality and discrimination based on origins in France. In the next step, we characterize the French population according to different definitions of majority and minority groups to understand the extent to which different origin groups would be misclassified depending on the classification systems used and its consequences for the measure of inequality and discrimination. We use the Trajectories and Origins 2 survey which is a unique survey that

[2]Article 1, Constitution of 1958: 'France is an indivisible, secular, democratic and social Republic. It ensures equality before the law of all citizens regardless of origin, race, or religion.'

collects information on origins, namely the places of birth of the individuals, their parents, and grandparents, and perceived discrimination. In addition to the standard classifications based on the places of birth, we provide a novel index that captures the degree of physical alterity of individuals in the population by exploiting the level of reported discrimination due to skin color. We chose to focus on skin color for several reasons. First, skin color is a salient somatic feature over which people are discriminated against. Second, while individuals might have some control over other factors related to origins such as their names, religion, language skills, or accent, skin color is a rather immutable feature that is passed on from one generation to the next. We discuss the extent to which these measures change our understanding of the level of inequality and discrimination in France. Based on our findings, we emphasize the need to measure diversity more precisely. At the very least, parents' place of birth should be introduced in different surveys and census data, even if, as we discuss, this might become less and less informative over time. We conclude with some recommendations.

2 Evidence of ethno-racial discrimination

Due to the political choice made, ethno-racial data are practically non-existent in France. As a consequence, quantitative research on ethno-racial issues in social sciences is also relatively scant. One method that has proven both legal and effective in measuring discrimination in the French context is correspondence studies. By sending two otherwise identical CVs, but varying the supposed ethnic origin of the surname, researchers have been able to study the extent to which individuals with a French-sounding name were more likely to be called back after applying for a job compared to those with a North African (and in some cases sub-Saharan) name. These studies overwhelmingly show that North African-sounding names are significantly discriminated against in the labour market. They find that a North African candidate, both immigrant or second-generation French, needs to send between 1.3 to 4 times the number of applications of French descent to receive the same number of callbacks. For instance, Cediey and Foroni (2008) finds a factor of 2 to 1, while Duguet et al. (2010) and Berson (2012) find a factor of 4.[3] More recent studies find lower ranges, between 1.3 and 2.[4] However, due to the diversity of the samples and methods used in each of them, no

[3] Duguet et al. (2010) reaches a factor of 20 when comparing French-sounding names to immigrants from North Africa, but the sample size is very small.

[4] Pierné (2013, 2018) finds, for different sectors, factors of approximately 1.8 and 1.4 respectively; Edo et al. (2019) 1.5; Foroni et al. (2016) 1.3; IPP (2022) 1.5

clear conclusion can be made on whether discrimination has been declining in the last decade (L'Horty and Petit, 2023). To our knowledge, Challe et al. (2022) are the only ones to have systematically tested two professions (medical helpers and administrative managers) over time. They find that between 2015-16 and 2021-22, discrimination has remained stable at around 1.2-1.3 CVs for each CV sent by a candidate with a French-sounding name to have the same probability of callback. While correspondence studies have clear advantages, especially in the absence of ethno-racial information in surveys, they also have limitations. First, they are expensive and thus cannot be run continuously. In addition, scaling up this method might eventually reduce its power as it increases the risk that these experiments are detected by firms. More fundamentally, only one or a few dimensions can be tested at a time. The vast majority of the correspondence studies in France look at the disadvantages of North African descendants. Other important minorities, such as those of sub-Saharan descent or Muslim faith have not been extensively studied despite some evidence that they face as much discrimination or more (Cediey and Foroni, 2008; Adida et al., 2010; Pierné, 2013; Adida et al., 2014; Valfort, 2020). In addition, while first contact is very important, discrimination can occur all along the hiring process: to the best of our knowledge, Cediey and Foroni (2008) are the only ones to have tested discrimination until the actual trial offer was made. They found that a minority, but still substantial part of the overall lower hiring rate came from these additional steps. Similarly, Cahuc et al. (2019) have introduced the possibility that depending on firms' types, discrimination mainly occurs at different stages, namely the callback or the interview stage, of the hiring process. The absence of callback discrimination thus will not necessarily translate into the absence of hiring discrimination. Finally, besides hiring, minorities are likely to face various other penalties, for instance in compensation and promotions, that might persist even once hired.[5] For all these reasons, while correspondence studies can be a powerful tool when carried out with large samples and in a consistent way over time, they are not enough to grasp the full extent of the problem.

Concerning large-scale surveys, the beginning of the 2000s marked a definitive halt to the introduction of ethno-racial categories in French statistics. In the same years, however, it also opened up the possibility of introducing meaningful proxies such as the parents' countries of origin. The 1999 Family History survey was the first survey of large magnitude to introduce this

[5] Correspondence studies testing female penalties are a good example of this possibility: IPP (2021) finds that, on average, there are no differences in call rates by gender.

information. Since then, it has been included in several other large surveys, notably the labor force survey. In Table 1 we summarize the main surveys containing meaningful proxies of ethno-racial information, but other smaller or not continuously run surveys with similar information exist. One question that has been widely investigated with these sources is how well the offspring of migrants are integrated into the labor market. A failure to integrate the second generation, raised and educated in the country, might in fact stem from discrimination. All available statistics point to the fact that, despite being born in France, migrants' descendants are more likely to be unemployed or to hold precarious jobs or lower positions (INSEE, 2023). This is not true for all ethnic origins though: Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish descent do as well as French descent starting from the second generation. On the contrary, those groups classified as visible minorities (Beauchemin et al., 2010; Safi and Simon, 2013), such as individuals with origin from Maghreb or sub-Saharan Africa, fare considerably worse. Like in the US, Asian origin represents somewhat of an exception to this trend, although they constitute a small share of the population. The alterity penalty persists also controlling for education and many other characteristics relevant to success in the labor market. This means that discrimination is likely to play a role in the differential access to employment or to better positions (Silberman and Fournier, 1999, 2006; Meurs et al., 2006; Meurs, 2017). Importantly, this disadvantage is found for men and for women alike, despite the last ones being often portrayed as a better model of integration (Meurs and Pailhé, 2008). Additionally, religion has been shown to play a role even within narrowly defined countries of origin: for instance, Adida et al. (2010), using a nationally representative retirement survey, found that even within two narrowly defined Senegalese groups, Muslim families were poorer than Christian ones. Yet, in the absence of Census information, no full population administrative data can be

leveraged to study finer-grained discrimination.

Table 1: Main Available Sources

Survey	**Year**	**Institution**	**Content**
FPQ	1993 2003 2015	INSEE	Parents' country of birth
Étude de l'Histoire Familiale	1999	INSEE	Parents' country of birth
Génération 1998	2001 2003 2005 2008	INSEE	Parents' country of birth
Enquête Emploi	2005 -	INSEE	Parents' country of birth
TeO	2008/9 2018/9	INSEE, INED	Parents' and grandparents' country of birth
Expérience et perception de discrimination en Île de France	2015	Défenseur des droits	Ethnoracial cat.
Accès aux Droits	2016	Ordis	Ethnoracial cat.

3 Data & Methodology

In this analysis, we use the Trajectories and Origin (TeO) 2019 survey which is a unique and rich source of data on origins and discrimination in France. Importantly for our scope, TeO oversamples individuals with a migrant background and collects information on the place of birth of three generations (the persons being surveyed, their parents, and their grandparents). This structure of the data allows us to classify individuals based on their migration history as first, second, or third-generation French and foreign-born. Additionally, there is a complementary module for the children of the surveyed person, if any, enabling us to do the same for the next generation, i.e. the one that will be in the working-age group in the next decades.
Over the 20^{th} century, there were several migration waves from different origin countries. The subsequent wave of migrants consisted of Italians and

Spanish at the beginning of the century, followed by Portuguese and Northern Africans (Algerians, Moroccans, and Tunisians) in the 1970s, and finally Turks to a relatively lesser extent in the 1990s (Weil, 2004). Furthermore, during this period, following the third wave of decolonization, a smaller but continuous flow of people came from Sub-Saharan Africa. Finally, in 1946, the 4 oldest colonies of France, Guadeloupe, Guyane, La Réunion, and Martinique, became French overseas departments. Given the timing and the structure of the TeO 2019 survey, we believe that using information from all grandparents' places of birth should capture the full extent of diversity in the country.

In addition to origins, a large section of the survey is dedicated to the measurement of the experience of racism and discrimination through self-reported answers. In this analysis, the main question of interest is: "In the last 5 years, do you think you have been subjected to unequal treatment or discrimination?". If answered positively, respondents are further asked to elucidate the perceived reasons underlying such treatments with factors including age, sex, skin color, religion, accent, and origin, among others.

We focus on skin color as we consider it a salient and rather immutable physical trait that is passed on from one generation to the next, unlike accents, or to some extent religion, or names. We develop a novel index to measure the degree of alterity of individuals. We start by estimating the level of reported discrimination based on skin color by countries of birth of first-generation migrants. We then assign these scores from 0 (not discriminated) to 1 (highly discriminated) to each parent and grandparent based on their respective countries of birth g. We estimate an alterity index for individual i as the average of her/his parents' or her/his grandparents' scores, as in equation 1 and 2:

$$AlterityIndexP_i = \frac{M_{ig} + F_{ig}}{2} \tag{1}$$

$$AlterityIndexGP_i = \frac{MM_{ig} + MF_{ig} + FM_{ig} + FF_{ig}}{4} \tag{2}$$

where M and F in equation 1 are the mother's score and father's score respectively. In equation 2, MM, MF, FM, and FF are the scores of the mother's mother, mother's father, father's mother, and father's father respectively. To operationalize this index, in Table 2 we group countries into macro-aggregates based on the skin color discrimination scores of first-generation migrants. Quite naturally, these aggregations end up reflecting

geographic constructs. Note that overseas departments, due to their colonial legacy, are separated from mainland France, and report substantially more discrimination rates. Second, we create 4 groups based on discrimination intervals. These groups should be interpreted as going from lighter to darker skin colors, although, obviously, they cannot and should not be associated with any particular color. Further, note that other somatic traits might vary across ethnic groups as well as for individuals with mixed origins. Skin color, however, seems to be the most salient somatic feature over which people experience discrimination (Primon and Simon, 2018). In a small sample of employees and students of Parisian universities, one of the rare cases where ethno-racial information was collected, more than 95% of individuals with European and French origin chose the category "White", and Africans and Caribbeans overwhelming chose the category "Black" (Simon and Clément, 2006). More importantly, Simon and Clément (2006) argue that the ethno-racial category was well-aligned with the ancestry country of birth.
One interesting feature of this index is that it encompasses cases of mixed origin that can span over three generations and that are otherwise difficult to define, even for the interviewed person. For instance, an individual with one parent from the overseas departments and one from mainland France will have a predicted discrimination index of 11.35% and would thus be still classified as group 4. If, however, two of her/his grandparents were born in mainland France, one in the overseas departments, and one in Maghreb, she/he will be classified in group 3, having a discrimination index of 7%. As inter-group marriages are present and growing over time in France (Collet, 2012), we believe that this measure is better at capturing a complex reality without having to rely on self-declared answers.

4 Stylized Facts

In this section, we describe the composition of the French population, the discrimination faced by its individuals, and their labor market attachment based on different measures of origin.

4.1 Composition of the population

As the country of origin is the most widespread classification used in the literature on this topic in France, in Table 3 we classify the population by their own countries of birth, that of their parents, and that of their grandparents. According to this matrix, in 2019, slightly less than 15.5% of the French population was foreign-born. Only 60% had all four grandparents born in

Table 2: Share of first-generation individuals declaring being discriminated on skin color by group of country of birth

	%	Range	Group
France metropolitan	0.6		
West Europe	0.9	0%-1.5%	1
East Europe	1.1		
Turkey and Middle East	1.9	1.5%-4.5%	2
Maghreb	4.3		
Central & South America	4.9	4.5%-8%	3
Asia	7.8		
Haïti	19.6		
Overseas dept. & territories	21.7	>8%	4
Subsaharan and other Africa	26.6		
N	18,937		

This table reports the share of first-generation immigrants who declare being discriminated against on the basis of their skin color by the groups of country of birth. The share for metropolitan France corresponds to the share for those born in metropolitan France with no migration history. The column "Group" shows how the group of countries is categorized based on their average level of skin color discrimination as a proxy for individuals with lighter skin colors (Group 1) to darker skin colors (Group 4). The column "Range" gives the range to be classified in the different groups when applying our metric to second and third-generation French-born individuals.

France, implying a high rate of inter-group marriages, at least among the oldest migration waves. In Table 4, we repeat the same exercise based on the constructed alterity index groups. Several important stylized facts emerge from this table and the comparison with the previous one. First, France's population is also quite diverse when using our alterity index. Second, as in the previous table, the degree of diversity is substantially amplified when we include information on the parent's country of birth. Third, differently from before, however, including information on the grandparents does not significantly alter the share of the population in the different groups. We can thus conclude that, at least concerning alterity, having information on the parent's countries of birth is a good approximation to characterize the current population.

Table 3: Share of the population by origin by generation

Origins	**Ego**	**Parents**	**Grandparents**
Ego born abroad	15.4	15.4	15.4
All (grand)parents born abroad		6.3	8.8
At least one (grand)parent born abroad		5.8	14.9
Ego or all (grand)parents born in France	84.6	72.5	60.9

This table reports the share of individuals that are in the different origin groups based on: (i) their own place of birth (Ego born abroad or born in France) in the first column, (ii) their parents' place of birth in the second column (both parents born abroad, one parent born in France and one born abroad) and (iii) their grandparents' place of birth (all four grandparents born abroad, at least one grandparent born abroad, and all four grandparents born in France).

Table 4: Share of the population by alterity groups and generations

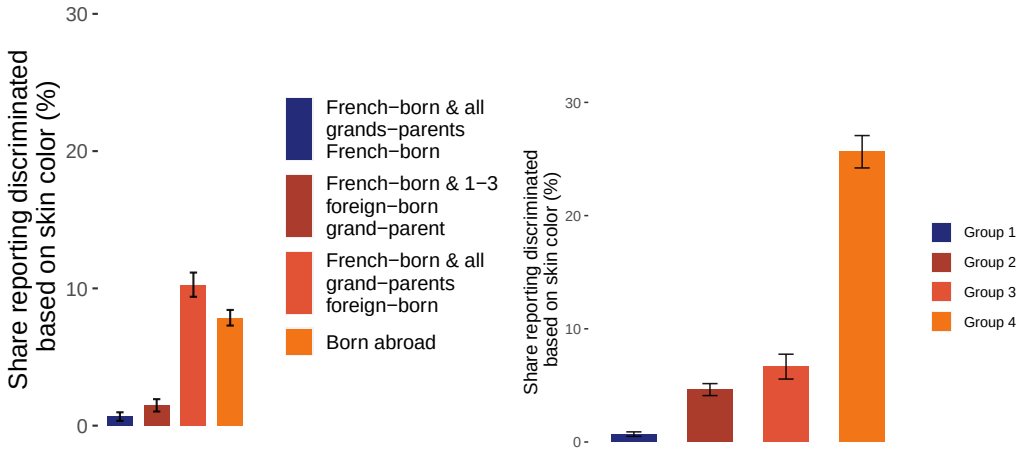
Group	**Ego**	**Parents**	**Grandparents**
Group 1 (lighter skin color)	87.8	80.4	79.5
Group 2	6.4	12.0	12.6
Group 3	1.8	1.9	2.3
Group 4 (darker skin color)	4.0	5.7	5.6

This table reports the share of individuals in the different alterity groups going from lighter (Group 1) to darker (Group 4) skin colors based on their parents' (first column) and grandparents' (second column) scores.

4.2 Discrimination

Beyond their shares in the population, we are interested in knowing if these groups experience discrimination on skin color based on their ancestors' country of origin. To do so, in Figure 1, we plot the individuals' reported level of discrimination based on our classification groups. To assign individuals to groups, in Panel a) we use their grandparents' immigrant background, while in Panel b) we apply our alterity index constructed at the grandparents' level. In both cases, the fairer groups (all French-born grandparents, group 1 in panels a and b respectively) report the lowest level of discrimination. For more mixed/darker individuals, there is again in both cases an increasing gradient of discrimination. Interestingly, French-born with all non-French-born grandparents report higher discrimination levels than foreigners. This is probably due to the more acute perception of discrimination driven by a feeling of entitlement being born in the country (Primon and Simon, 2018). Despite the similarity in the gradients of discrimination in the two panels, the highest level reported in Panel a) is substantially lower than the highest level reported in Panel b). This fact confirms that our classification better captures the alterity of individuals and is more informative to study the issue of racial discrimination than simply using information on migration history.

Figure 1: Skin color discrimination rate based on their grandparents' place of birth, and their grandparents' alterity scores



(a) Grandparents' place of birth

(b) Grandparents' alterity score

4.3 Employment

Does alterity and the associated discrimination also translate into a labor market penalty? As a first attempt to answer this question, we plot the employment levels of the different groups. In Figure 2, we start again by the migration history classification. Unsurprisingly, migrants are less employed than French. The gap is sizeable and highly statistically significant. Within the French-born population, as before, there is a gradient based on the migration history of parents (Panel b) and grandparents (Panel c). In both cases, having some foreign origins lowers the employment probability. This mechanically implies that the benchmark group, individuals with no migration history, fares even better in the labor market. Turning to the alterity groups in Figure 3, the picture is similar but even more stark. The ones reporting significantly lower employment levels are those groups with some signs of alterity. Since the population shares in the alterity groups did not change much whether based on the parents' or grandparents' scores, results on employment are similar across the two specifications.
While these figures show the level of labor market inequality between the groups, these are not necessarily proof of labor market discrimination. Other important factors, such as educational attainments or experience, might be playing a role in explaining these gaps. If all differences are explained by human capital differences, society should only work to remove those barriers and as a consequence, the inequalities would disappear. If, instead, discrimination plays a role, inequality will persist, even if all other characteristics are exactly the same. Even if we detect discrimination, we cannot yet conclude that it is driven by alterity rather than other factors such as religion which might be correlated with it. To rule out these other possible explanatory factors, in the next section, we turn to regression analysis.

5 Results

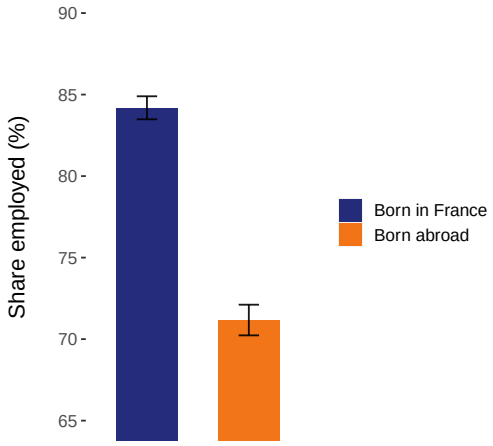
5.1 Main analysis

In order to grasp the extent to which skin color matters, we run the following regression:

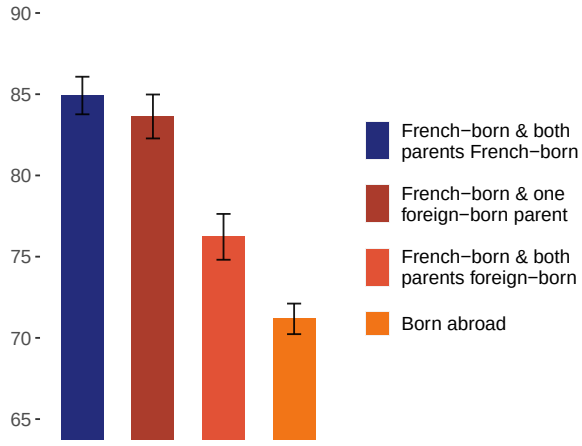
$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta Alteritygroup_i + \delta X_i + \lambda_{dept} + \epsilon_i \tag{3}$$

where Y are several labor market outcomes: whether individual i is employed or not and the log of net salary. *Alteritygroup* is our constructed index of alterity based on grandparents' scores categorized into 4 groups. X is a set

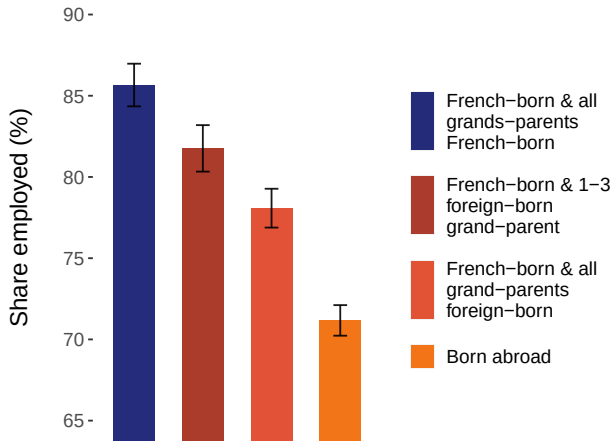
Figure 2: Employment rate based on individuals', their parents', and their grandparents' places of birth



(a) Individual's place of birth



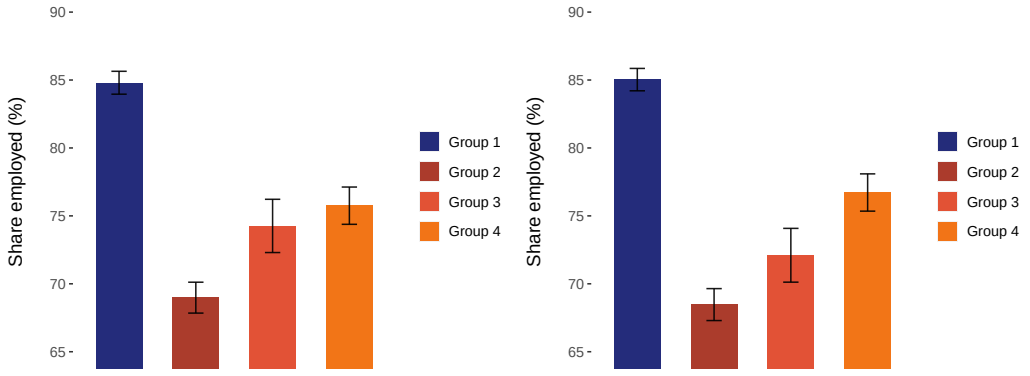
(b) Ego's parents' place of birth



(c) Ego's grandparents' place of birth

of control variables that includes sex, age, age^2, level of education, marital status, number of children, french nationality, born in metropolitan France or not, and whether the person declares being Muslim or not. Finally, we also include departmental fixed-effects to account for geographical sorting in residence, which is quite strong in the French context. Standard errors are clustered at the departmental level. All regressions are based on the broad working-age population between 25 and 60 but results are even stronger

Figure 3: Employment rate based on their parents', and their grandparents' alterity scores



(a) Parents' alterity score

(b) Grandparents' alterity score

looking at the prime working age 30-55 as in Table 8 in Appendix A.
Table 5 reports the main results. Columns 1 and 4 display the results for the whole French population, thus including foreigner-born individuals. Columns 2 and 5 exclude first-generation immigrants. Finally, in columns 3 and 6, we include being Muslim as an additional explanatory variable. Not surprisingly, the strongest effects are measured when including first-generation immigrants. More nuanced but similar patterns are observed even when restricting the analysis to the French-born population only. Group 3 is the one changing the most. This group consists mostly of second-generation migrants from Asian countries. They tend to fare significantly better than their parents for two reasons: their parents were among the most positively selected individuals from their home countries and experienced significant skill downgrading in France due to cultural and language barriers. Introducing a control for being Muslim captures most of the effect on employment and substantially reduces the effect on salaries, especially for Group 2, where the majority reports being Muslim. These effects are however hard to disentangle, especially with a small sample size, and this is why in Column 6 neither Group 2 nor Muslim are significant compared to Group 2 being significant by itself. The effects are large in magnitudes: up to 13 percentage points lower employment, and up to 13 percent lower earnings.

Table 5: Regression Results

	Employment	**Employment**	**Employment**	**Log Salary**	**Log Salary**	**Log Salary**
Group 2	-0.129***	-0.110***	-0.0549	-0.102***	-0.0650**	-0.0463
	(0.0223)	(0.0318)	(0.0474)	(0.0243)	(0.0307)	(0.0386)
Group 3	-0.105**	-0.175	-0.172	-0.116***	0.0171	0.0178
	(0.0454)	(0.117)	(0.117)	(0.0431)	(0.0277)	(0.0273)
Group 4	-0.0591***	-0.0457**	-0.0279	-0.128***	-0.0921**	-0.0858**
	(0.0177)	(0.0218)	(0.0242)	(0.0314)	(0.0397)	(0.0373)
Muslim			-0.131***			-0.0471
			(0.0488)			(0.0494)
Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X
Dept FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
First-gen. migrants	Incl.	Excl.	Excl.	Incl.	Excl.	Excl.
Observations	18,937	10,011	10,011	12,571	7,131	7,131
Adj. R-squared	0.105	0.086	0.089	0.334	0.351	0.351

5.2 Analysis on Overseas departments

How does discrimination evolve over generations? Does it remain the same, or does it tend to vanish or increase? Those who defend the idea of relying on parents' countries of birth instead of ethno-racial statistics argue that as long as discrimination is roughly constant across generations beyond the second one, measuring the discrimination faced by the second generation would be enough to seize the extent of the discrimination problem Piketty (2022). To test this claim, we would have liked to compare the effect of skin color across generations. Unfortunately, due to the migration history of France, we do not observe enough individuals with alterity traits in the third generation to test the persistence of discrimination across generations.

The historical context of France, however, allows us to indirectly test this. We do so by studying the discrimination faced by a group with some degree of alterity that has been French for at least 3 generations: individuals from the overseas departments (DOM). Before becoming departments of France in 1946, these territories were in fact the oldest colonies of the French empire. Like many French and British agricultural-intensive colonies, their population was predominantly formed by ex-slaves from Africa and to a lesser extent, ex-indentured laborers from India. This would explain why in Table 2, a sizeable share of individuals from these departments report a high discrimination rate based on skin color. Given this peculiar history, most people from overseas departments can be considered the longest non-white French. Their relation to France is thus not far from that of African Americans in the US.

In this section, we repeat the above exercise, substituting the $Alteritygroup_i$ with DOM_i which is an indicator that takes value 1 if individual i is of DOM origin and 0 if the person is born in metropolitan France and belongs to Group 1. While the institutions are identical, some differences in culture, habits, or skills might still persist due to the colonial heritage and the large distance separating these departments from mainland France. For instance, a slightly different French accent might distinguish overseas individuals from other French. Even if minor, these differences might still constitute a confounding factor. To rule out these channels, in our analysis, we control for whether the person is born in metropolitan France or in the overseas departments. We classify individuals as having DOM origins if at least one parent is born in the DOM. As confirmation of the similarity of the two groups except for the skin color, in Table 9 of Appendix A, we report the results of regressing different measures of discrimination on the variable DOM and controls. Skin color is the only index that turns out large, positive, and highly statistically significant. Accents or names, instead, are small and do not seem to be relevant. Table 6 reports the results on the labor market outcomes: even after including a large set of controls, having at least one parent born in the DOM, i.e. being more likely to be darker skin, translates into a penalty in the labor market. We conclude that the penalty does not seem associated with the number of generations in France: in fact, even individuals from overseas departments, French for at least three generations, still experience this penalty. How big are these penalties?

Table 6: Regression results for DOM

	Employment	Log Salary
DOM	-0.0371	-0.0919**
	(0.0238)	(0.0441)
Controls	X	X
Dept FE	X	X
Observations	5,626	4,148
Adjusted R-squared	0.079	0.362

Our estimates are around 3,7 percentage points lower employment probability and 9.2% lower earnings. These estimates are sizable although the one on employment is marginally statistically not significant. These results sharply contrast with the labor market premium observed for individuals born in

metropolitan France residing in the DOM (Govind, 2020). They are also comparable but smaller than those reported for African-Americans in the US (Lang and Lehmann, 2012). Note that in our case, unlike the US evidence, we do not observe direct information on skin color, and we are simply using a proxy for it, thus introducing measurement error. Interestingly, although the DOM constitutes only 18% of Group 4's population, the estimated penalties are very similar between Tables 5 and 6.

6 Discussion

We can summarize the main results of this paper in four points. First, only collecting information on individual's own country of birth, as is the case of the French population census, is inadequate to grasp the full extent of inequality and discrimination in the French society. Second, nowadays, parents' place of birth seems to be sufficient to approximately characterize the alterity of the French population. Third, darker-skinned individuals suffer from a penalty in the labor market, even after controlling for relevant factors such as religion or education. Finally, these discriminations based on skin color persist across generations. Based on these findings, our conclusion is that the government should hasten to introduce parents' countries of birth in all surveys and the Census. Would this be enough?

Parents' place of birth is indeed a better measure of alterity than the individual's own place of birth as the latter conceals heterogeneities based on origins (as seen in Figures 1 and 2). In addition, given the timing of the migration waves in France, the picture only changes marginally if we use information on grandparents rather than parents. This suggests that for the current generations, parents' place of birth captures diversity well. However, this is likely to be less and less the case with every subsequent generation.

To get a sense of this, we estimate the extent of diversity in the next generation by exploiting the module on Ego's children in the Teo 2 survey. Combining information on Ego, Ego's spouse, and their respective ancestry, we can re-construct our alterity index on three generations, shifting to one generation ahead. This exercise allows us to characterize the degree of alterity of the population that is below 18 years old today, that will reach the working-age in the next decades. As shown in Table 7, using the children's place of birth only, the majority of individuals are mechanically classified in Group 1. Exploiting information on their parent's country of birth substantially changes the picture: only 82% of them would still belong to Group 1. Differently from before, introducing the grandparents' places of birth further changes the distribution of the children across the 4 groups, with 74% assigned to

the first group. This implies that 8.6% of the children would be erroneously considered as part of the majority group in the population while they are not. By focusing only on parents, thus, we would miss 33% of the overall alterity, a sizeable share.

Table 7: Share of the population by alterity groups and generations

Group	**Ego**	**Parents**	**Grandparents**
Group 1 (lighter skin color)	97.8	82.7	74.1
Group 2	0.9	11.5	18.2
Group 3	0.4	1.1	2.4
Group 4 (darker skin color)	0.8	4.8	5.3

This table reports the share of individuals in the different alterity groups going from lighter (Group 1) to darker (Group 4) skin colors based on the child's score (first column), their parents' (second column) and grandparents' (third column) scores.

These results suggest that with an increasingly diverse society, relying on individuals' or their parent's place of birth will no longer capture the true extent of diversity. If, as we showed, individuals with a migration background are discriminated against over several generations, then the inability to reliably identify minorities in the data will lead us to underestimate the extent of the issue. In addition, as the countries of origin become more ethnically diverse, the countries of birth will be less and less informative, and induce larger measurement errors. This is already the case for some countries such as the U.S., South Africa, and the U.K., but also for the overseas departments of France. These considerations bring up the question of whether information on the countries of birth is and will continue to be adequate.

7 Conclusion

In this paper, we discuss the colorblind approach to data collection adopted by France. We show that although the aim of the policy is to ensure equality for all, non-white French citizens do suffer from discrimination in the labor market. Since ethno-racial statistics are very unlikely to see the light in the foreseeable future in France, parents' country of birth has been proposed and included in a few surveys as a meaningful and legal proxy to measure origin. It is however still not included in most surveys and in the population census. We contribute to the debate on measuring alterity in France by exploiting the TeO 2 survey which collects information on parents' and grandparents'

places of birth, thus encompassing most migration waves of the twentieth century. We construct an alterity index using the discrimination reported by first-generation immigrants averaged by country of origin. We then use it to assign an alterity measure to the French-born population based on their parents' or grandparents' places of birth. We first estimate the share of the population that would be misclassified as having no sign of alterity when focusing only on the individuals' or the parents' place of birth versus grandparents' place of birth. Overall, we find that, up to now, parents' place of birth would be enough to provide a good enough classification of the population, and subsequently, their labor market discrimination.
However, analyzing the data for the children of the interviewed individuals, i.e., the future adult generation, we do see that a sizable part of the population would wrongly be designated as the majority group when relying only on parents' information. While parents' place of birth is still quite informative, using grandparents' information provides a more precise picture of the diversity of the population. France, thus, has the choice of further introducing this information or accepting a degree of error that will grow over time. Alternatively, if no ethno-racial categories should be ever introduced, a serious effort to eliminate discrimination should be carried on now, when alterity is still fully statistically visible and thus discrimination correctly measured.

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A Appendix

Table 8: Regression Results with individuals aged 30-55

	Employment	**Employment**	**Employment**	**Log Salary**	**Log Salary**	**Log Salary**
Group 2	-0.121***	-0.0847***	-0.0309	-0.109***	-0.0681*	-0.0496
	(0.0168)	(0.0243)	(0.0306)	(0.0308)	(0.0397)	(0.0515)
Group 3	-0.0482**	-0.0233	-0.0203	-0.0965**	0.0592**	0.0604**
	(0.0233)	(0.0393)	(0.0394)	(0.0428)	(0.0286)	(0.0284)
Group 4	-0.0449**	-0.0603***	-0.0464**	-0.135***	-0.0838**	-0.0788**
	(0.0174)	(0.0221)	(0.0230)	(0.0395)	(0.0394)	(0.0384)
Muslim			-0.123***			-0.0444
			(0.0308)			(0.0529)
Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X
Dept. FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
First-gen. migrants	Incl.	Excl.	Excl.	Incl.	Excl.	Excl.
Observations	15,175	7,874	7,874	10,304	5,751	5,751
Adj. R-squared	0.118	0.099	0.102	0.352	0.372	0.372

Table 9: Experience of different forms of discrimination

	Discrimination on skin color	**Racism on skin color**	**Racism on accent**	**Racism on name**
DOM	0.175***	0.336***	0.0329	-0.0191
	(0.0328)	(0.0432)	(0.0357)	(0.0166)
Controls	X	X	X	X
Dept. FE	X	X	X	X
Observations	5,615	5,599	5,610	5,604
Adj. R-squared	0.0583	0.0760	0.0465	0.0292

This table reports the regression results similar to the ones in Table 6 for outcomes related to different experiences of discrimination. Column 1 refers to the answer to the following question: "In the last 5 years, do you think you have been subjected to unequal treatment or discrimination based on your skin color?". Columns 2 to 4 refer to answers to the following question: "Do you think that you could be a victim of racism in France based on X, even if this has never happened to you?", where X is skin color, accent, and name respectively.