

How the British have made southwest France their home

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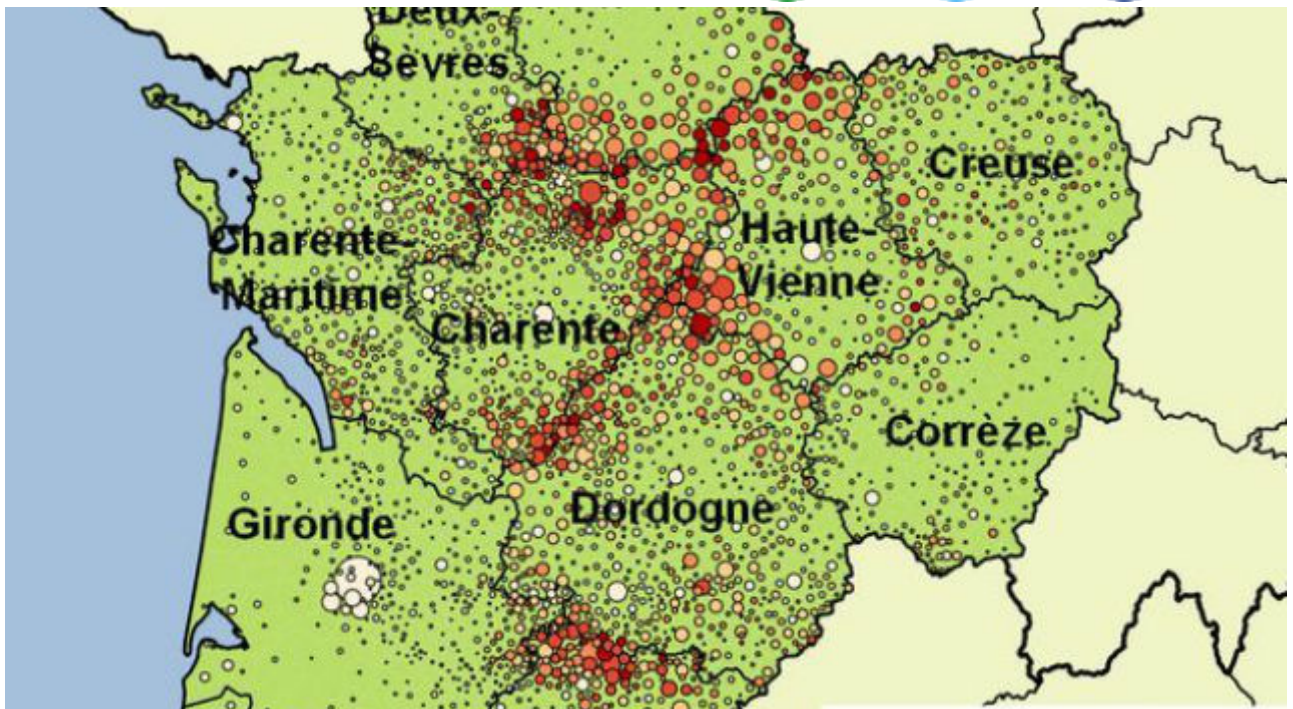


Photo: AFP

The Nouvelle-Aquitaine region of western and southwest France is home to the most Brits of all France's regions. Here's a breakdown of how they have made the region, or at least part of it, their home.

Nouvelle-Aquitaine was recently formed when the government redrew the administrative map of France, bringing together the old regions of Aquitaine, Poitou-Charentes and Limousin.

The super-region stretches from the Spanish border in the southwest up the Atlantic coast to La Rochelle and deep into central France to take in the departments of Correze and Creuse.

It includes departments, that have long been associated with migrating British citizens, such as Dordogne (Dordogneshire to many), and Charente.



The Numbers:

There are some 39,000 British citizens living in the giant Nouvelle-Aquitaine region, [a new report from French statistics agency INSEE reveals](#).

That represents 0.7 percent of the region's overall population and means that after the Portuguese, Brits represent the second biggest community of foreigners.

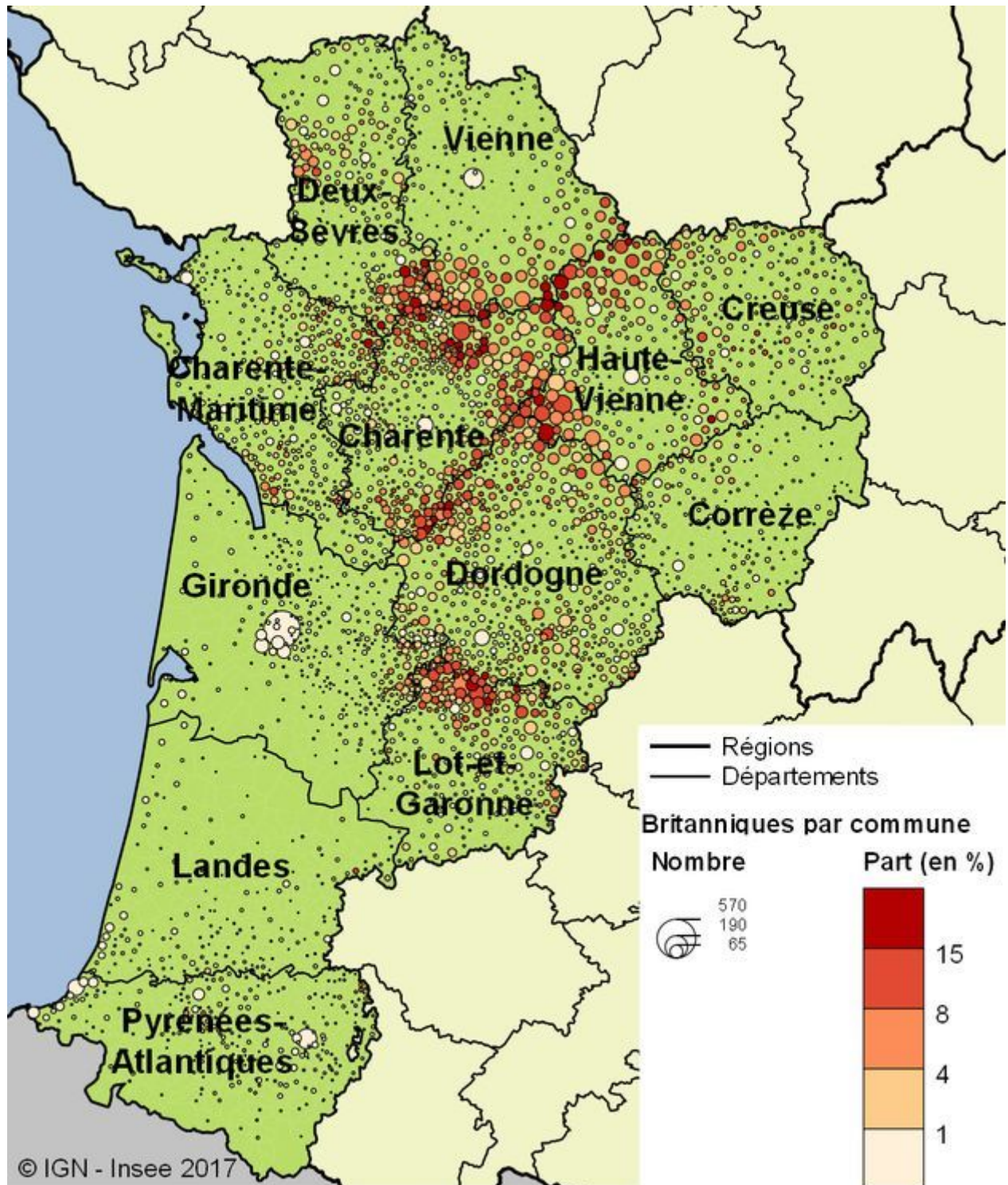
Those 39,000 represent 26 percent of the 150,000 Brits officially registered as living in France. That makes Nouvelle-Aquitaine the region of France that is home to the most Brits.

In second place is neighbouring Occitanie, which is home to 25,500 Brits, and in third place is the greater Paris region of Ile-de-France where 19,500 Brits have set up home.

Where exactly do they live?

As the map below shows, the Brits are not really that impressed by France's Atlantic coast, with most settling inland, preferring the rural areas far from the sea.

INSEE notes that most live in villages and towns on the borders of the departments Dordogne, Charente, Lot-et-Garonne, and Haute-Vienne.



The departments of Landes and Gironde are largely avoided, apart from the large number who live in and around Bordeaux.

The coastal department of Charente-Maritime further north appears to be more attractive, although again it is more the inland areas that have attracted British expats.

Their choice of location may be as much to do with the desire to live in peaceful rural France as with house prices which tend to be cheaper the further from the coast you go.

In some villages that have seen an exodus of locals, Brits make up more than 15 percent of the population. These can be seen in the dark red spots on the map above.



Who are they and what do they do?

The average age of Brits in Nouvelle-Aquitaine is 52 and over half of the British population are over 58 years old. The 39,000 citizens are split into 21,300 households. Three-quarters of those households are uniquely British, suggesting couples and families have left the UK together for an adventure in France.

Around 90 percent of those households own their property.

Some 70 percent of the British living in the region are classed by INSEE as "*inactif*", meaning retired rather than sitting in the garden doing nothing at all. Although that may indeed be the case for some.

Here's a breakdown of what they do in further detail: 26 percent are actively working, 3.8 percent are registered as unemployed, 47.6 percent retired, 4.7 percent are students or pupils, 8.7 percent are under 14, 5.1 percent are housewives/husbands, and the last 3.8 percent are "inactive other".

Among the Brits employed, some 37 percent run their own business.

The retired

The retired British population of Nouvelle-Aquitaine is the biggest of any French region, ahead of Brittany and then Normandy. That's in contrast to the northern France region of Hauts-de-France, where almost half of the British population are actively working.

In France as a whole, the number of Brits actively working slightly outnumbers the number of retired.

When did they all come?

According to INSEE, in 1968 there were only 840 Brits registered as living in the Nouvelle-Aquitaine region, which back then was actually three regions - Aquitaine, Poitou-Charentes and Limousin. (Were you one of them?).

So the population has multiplied by 50.

But it wasn't until 1999 that number of Brits in the region really started to rise, indeed faster than the rate of the locals. That growth began to slow down in 2008, when the global financial crisis hit.