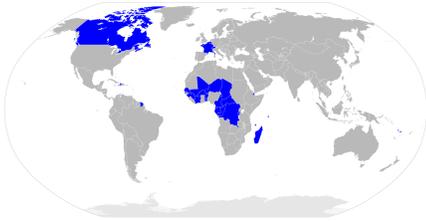


French no longer comes from France

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States in which French is an official language marked in blue

Anna Johnson - While smaller than Great Britain's, France's colonial empire was extensive. At one point or another, France colonized 20 African states, spreading its culture and language worldwide. In each of those 20 former colonies, [French is an official language or is used by at least 10%](#) of the population. All those people in former colonies plus additional French speakers in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Equatorial Guinea add up. Today, at least 60% of daily French speakers live in Africa. Demographers expect that majority to grow to [nearly 85%](#) by 2060.

France has put forth great efforts to protect its use inside its country of origin and ensure the language doesn't fall out of favor with native speakers. In 2018, French President Emmanuel Macron released the International Strategy for the French Language and Multilingualism, a set of official policies meant to ["restore the French language's position and role in the world."](#) These policies and France's cultural commitment to preserve the French language within the state are part of a commitment to their [national identity](#). By using French daily, citizens show their commitment to the state and continue to build up French culture. This commitment goes back beyond 2018. The Académie Française was created in 1634 as an official institution committed to preserving the language. Over centuries, the Académie Française has worked to protect the French language from dying out. But now, they face a new challenge from growing innovations in the language from speakers outside France. Growing populations of youth in Africa are reinventing the French language every day to suit their realities. French does not have the words to describe their lived experience and they

create new slang terms, combining French and African words to communicate with one another. Some have even described the language as a form of ["creolized French,"](#) representing it as a new language. By adapting French to meet their needs and having their new words adopted by French speakers in France, these African populations are challenging the ability of the language to build up French nationalism.

Organizations like the Académie Française have worked for centuries to protect French from being lost to globalization. But the real threat to the language as it exists today was created by French colonialization. By establishing a language [region](#) spanning most of the African continent through its empire building, France created the conditions within which its language is being changed. These evolutions mix native African languages with classical French language, and those changes are being exported back to France through the use of popular media like [television shows and hip-hop music](#). They are being incorporated into daily use by France's youth population and have even snuck into [French dictionaries](#). With French-speaking populations in Africa predicted to outnumber those within France in the coming decades, institutions like the Académie Française will have to adapt their approach to protecting the language to accept these innovations.

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