

Population changes in english and french north american colonies



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Though France began exploring North America well before England, English colonists vastly outnumbered those from France for a variety of economic and social factors. In terms of economics, England's Atlantic coast colonies were well-suited for agriculture; the South's warm climate was suited for cash crops like tobacco, rice, and later cotton. Despite Virginia's early struggles, it was well-financed by companies which sent large numbers of indentured servants (and African slaves) to work the land. France's colonies were spaced farther apart in the continent's interior and oriented less toward farming than toward trapping and trading.

Partly because it was less land-hungry, France built better relations with Native Americans than England, whose many settlers were eager to seize Indian lands. In addition, England's North American colonies were populated by large numbers of families, particularly large numbers of religious dissenters (Puritans in New England and Quakers in Pennsylvania) seeking freedom to practice their faiths. With a relatively equal gender ratio, natural increase meant that British North America grew relatively quickly, while France's fishing and fur-trading colonies attracted far fewer families and fewer self-sustaining agricultural settlements.

French citizens had fewer compelling reasons to leave Europe, did not find the New World as attractive (particularly Louisiana), and thus far fewer made the voyage than the more harried English. By the mid-eighteenth century, Britain's North American colonies had grown far more populous and prosperous than those of France, which had much less a social and economic stake in the region. For the English, the "push" factors at home (religious

persecution) and the “ pull” factors in the New World (available arable land) were stronger than for the French, who had less reason to migrate.