



# FSO News



01 Population

Neuchâtel, March 2020

## Diversity and coexistence in Switzerland

Results of the 2019 diversity module:  
Attitudes towards persons with an itinerant way of life

The presence of many social groups and a variety of affiliations is a feature of life in Switzerland. This diversity is enriching but can also create challenges. Questions can arise on the acceptance and rejection of certain population groups. As persons with an itinerant way of life represent part of Swiss diversity, this publication addresses the population's attitudes towards them.

The 2019 diversity module of the survey on diversity and coexistence in Switzerland (VeS) aims to present an accurate picture of the issues raised by the coexistence of different groups living in the country. It considers the theme of an itinerant way of life and addresses the manner in which certain groups practise this. The data collected are intended to be used to observe the effect of measures taken as part of the Federal Government's Action Plan which aims to examine ways to improve the framework conditions of those who have chosen an itinerant way of life and also to promote the culture of the Yenish, Sinti<sup>1</sup> and Roma.

In the scope of this publication, figures are presented for three key areas on the situation of persons with an itinerant way of life. Divided into three chapters – itinerant ways of life, halting sites, the Yenish and Sinti – each area considers one aspect of attitudes towards the group.

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### Survey and methodology

The diversity module is part of the survey on diversity and coexistence in Switzerland (VeS). This survey is carried out as part of the Federal Statistical Office's omnibus series of multiple-theme surveys. It is carried out on a sample of 3000 persons aged from 15 to 88 years, selected from administration registers using a strictly random procedure. It is a mixed mode survey which means it can be answered either by completing an online questionnaire (CAWI) or by a telephone interview (CATI). The in-depth diversity module completes the information collected. The theme of this module varies according to need.

<sup>1</sup> In French-speaking Switzerland, the term "Manouches" is used to denote most of the region's Sinti.

# Attitudes towards an itinerant way of life

2019

01 Population



53%

Proportion of the population in favour of withdrawing children of itinerant families from school (5 months)



58%

Proportion of the population in favour of renting a site to park caravans (2 weeks)



67%

Proportion of the population who consider persons with an itinerant way of life to be part of Swiss diversity



56%

Proportion of the population who believe that Switzerland should do more for persons with an itinerant way of life



63%

Proportion of the population who think that **the culture and the music** of the Yenish and Sinti are an enrichment for Switzerland



75%

Proportion of the population who think that more explanations on **the history and culture** of Switzerland's Yenish and Sinti are necessary



Proportion of the population in favour of providing halting sites for **Swiss nationals**

60%

– in their own commune

70%

– in their own canton

71%

– in a canton other than their own



Proportion of the population in favour of providing halting sites for **foreign nationals**

42%

– in their own commune

46%

– in their own canton

48%

– in a canton other than their own

Source: FSO – Survey on diversity and coexistence in Switzerland (VeS), Diversity module

## 1 Itinerant way of life

The itinerant way of life refers to the practices of various groups and is associated with gainful employment. It was symbiotic with the rural economy and standard until the 19th century. A sedentary lifestyle as a predominant model developed with industrialisation and the development of the nation state. Because an association is made between this way of life and ethnic identities, it is necessary to start by attempting to understand this lifestyle independently of ethnicity. The following chapter presents the attitudes of the population living in Switzerland towards an itinerant way of life.

### Key figures

#### Itinerant way of life

##### Acceptance:

Withdrawal of children from school allowed	53%
Refusal to rent a site unjustified	58%

##### Inclusion and support:

Part of Swiss diversity	67%
Switzerland should do more	56%

##### Discrimination:

Secondary problem	61%
Complaints are too frequent	60%

### Comparison of different ways of life

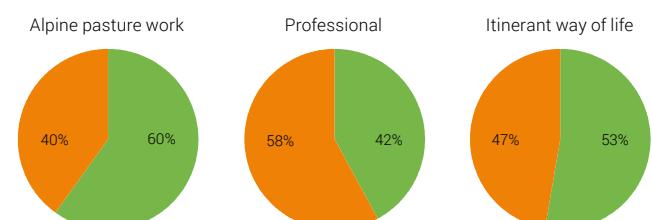
In order to evaluate to what degree an itinerant way of life is accepted by the population, attitudes to various ways of life are compared. A comparison is made across two situations: the withdrawal of children from school for five months of the year and opposition to the rental of a site for two weeks.

The population is ambivalent as regards withdrawing children from school for five months a year. Opinions change depending on the reason for withdrawal. The most accepted reason is for work in an alpine agricultural area: 60% of the population believe that this is justified. The rate is 42% for other professional reasons of the parents, and for the practice of an itinerant way of life the rate is 53%. Greater variation is seen in the population's attitude towards the rental of a site by a farmer and opposition from the commune. Rental is more widely accepted for scout camps. 84% of the population believe that in this case, the commune's refusal to rent is unjustified. For a music festival the rate is 61% and for parking caravans housing itinerant families the rate is 58%.

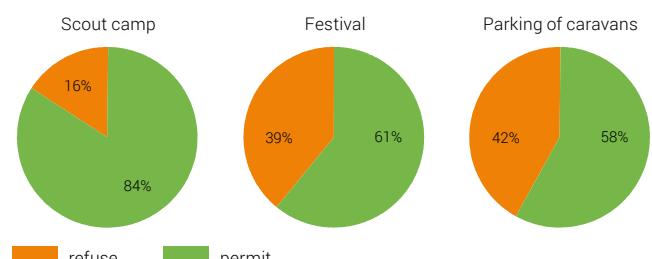
## Attitudes towards an itinerant way of life, 2019

G1

Proportion of the population who consider that withdrawal of children from school for 5 months should be permitted or refused, by reason



Proportion of the population who consider that the rental of a site for 2 weeks should be permitted or refused, by reason



"No indication" taken into account in the calculation of proportions. Non-response varies between 0% and 3%.

Source: Diversity module, Survey on diversity and coexistence in Switzerland (VeS) © FSO 2020

### Summary

The different ways of life tend to be accepted by the population. Although it has a clear view on the work on alpine agricultural areas and scout camps, opinion is divided when it comes to an itinerant way of life. Without reference to specific ethnic groups, this type of lifestyle is nonetheless quite accepted.

### Attitudes towards an itinerant way of life

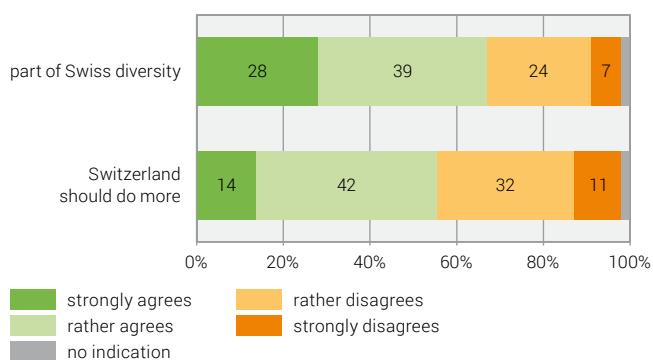
A number of statements about persons with an itinerant way of life were formulated to gage the population's attitudes. They focus on their inclusion in Swiss society, the need to support their lifestyle and their experience of discrimination.

Two thirds (67%) of the population consider that persons with an itinerant way of life form part of Swiss diversity, while almost a third (31%) oppose the statement. As regards support for these persons, 56% believe that Switzerland should do more while 43% oppose this statement. 61% of the population believe that discrimination against persons with an itinerant way of life is a secondary social problem in Switzerland and 37% believe the contrary. As concerns experience of discrimination, 60% believe that complaints from these persons were too frequent while 37% reject this statement.

## Attitudes towards an itinerant way of life: inclusion and support, 2019

G2

Proportion of the population agreeing or disagreeing with the statements

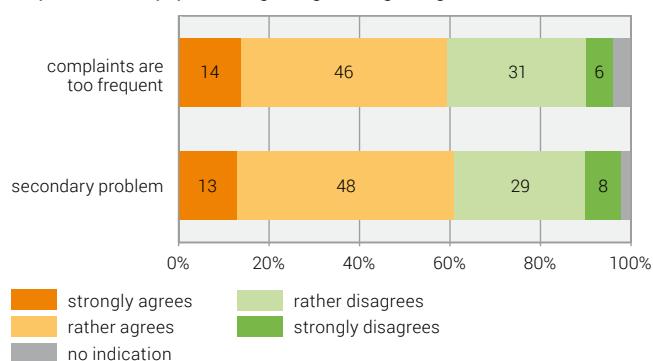


Source: Diversity module, Survey on diversity and coexistence in Switzerland (VeS) © FSO 2020

## Attitudes towards an itinerant way of life: discrimination, 2019

G3

Proportion of the population agreeing or disagreeing with the statements



Source: Diversity module, Survey on diversity and coexistence in Switzerland (VeS) © FSO 2020

## Summary

Although an itinerant way of life is accepted, the population shows some degree of ambivalence when it comes to the need to do more to support and promote this lifestyle. It shows a tendency to reject the idea of existing discrimination towards groups following this way of life.

Attitudes towards an itinerant way of life vary depending on geographical proximity to the phenomenon, its specific characteristics and its capacity to influence personal life. Two indicators measure attitudes towards the phenomenon: attitudes in the case of no direct link to one's personal life and attitudes in the case of a direct link to one's personal life (see "Construction of indicators" info box).

## Attitudes in the case of no direct link to one's personal life (distance)

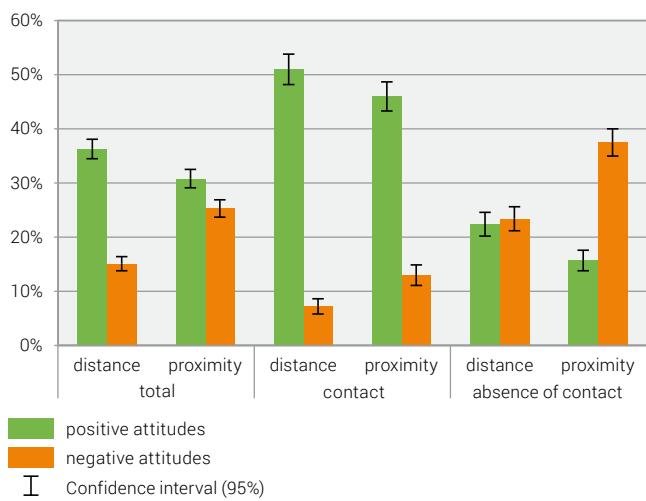
Attitudes to the itinerant way of life are more positive than negative if there is no direct link to one's personal life. 36% of the population show positive attitudes compared with 15% who show negative attitudes. A link exists between attitudes and contact with persons with an itinerant way of life (see "Contact" info box). Among persons in contact with this group in their everyday life, 51% have positive attitudes; among those without contact, the rate is 22%. Persons in contact with this group have the least negative attitudes (7%).

## Attitudes in the case of a direct link to one's personal life (proximity)

Attitudes to the itinerant way of life are also more positive than negative if it is directly related to one's personal life. However, the gap between the positive and negative attitudes is smaller in this case than in the absence of a direct link to one's personal life. 31% of the population show positive attitudes compared with 25% who show negative attitudes. There is a strong link between attitudes and contact with persons with an itinerant way of life. Among persons in contact with this group in their everyday life, 46% have positive attitudes; among those without contact the rate is 16%. Persons without contact with this group have the most negative attitudes (38%).

## Attitudes towards an itinerant way of life, by proximity and contact, 2019

G4



Source: Diversity module, Survey on diversity and coexistence in Switzerland (VeS) © FSO 2020

## Summary

Overall, attitudes towards an itinerant way of life are more positive than negative. They are all the more positive when the phenomenon is considered generally and without any impact on one's personal life – for example when it involves halting sites far from the own place of residence. However, attitudes become more negative if it is assumed that the phenomenon will have a greater impact on everyday life. In all analysed contexts, a link is seen between interpersonal contacts and attitudes. Attitudes are more open in the case of contact with persons who practise an itinerant way of life.

### Construction of indicators

*Attitudes in the case of no direct link to one's personal life (distance):*

The indicator measures attitudes towards an itinerant way of life if it is not directly related to one's personal life. The indicator is compiled on the basis of three variables: "persons with an itinerant way of life are part of Swiss diversity", establishment of a halting site in the canton for Swiss persons, establishment of a halting site in the canton for foreign persons.

*Attitudes in the case of a direct link to one's personal life (proximity):*

The indicator measures attitudes towards an itinerant way of life if it is directly related to one's personal life. The indicator is compiled on the basis of three variables: "Switzerland should do more for persons with an itinerant way of life", establishment of a halting site in the commune for Swiss persons, establishment of a halting site in the commune for foreign persons.

### Contact

In order to gage contact between the population and persons with an itinerant way of life, the following questions were asked:

*In your everyday life, are you sometimes in contact with the Yenish or Sinti? (Yes/no)*

*In your everyday life, are you sometimes in contact with Roma? (Yes/no)*

## Identifying discrimination

Using everyday situations, the figures below show how the population perceives certain behaviours that are considered as discriminatory by persons with an itinerant way of life. They show to what extent the opinions about what is considered discriminatory are shared.

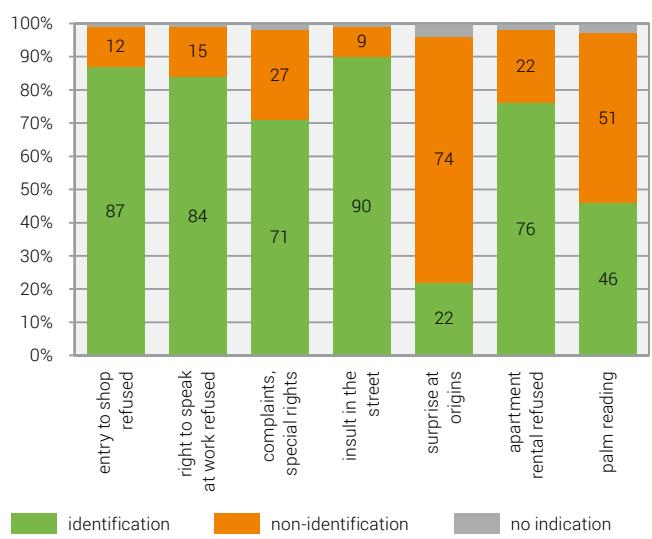
In most situations, between 70% and 90% of the population perceive a discriminatory act towards persons with an itinerant way of life. Almost 90% believe that refusal of entry to a shopping centre based on one's clothing and an insult in the street are discriminatory behaviour. For a refusal to listen to a person with non-sedentary origins in the workplace, the rate is 84%. For a refusal to rent an apartment to a family practising this way of life, the rate is 76%. Two situations stand out from others: a woman knocking on a caravan door to request a palm reading and a pupil's surprise at their teacher's origins. The first situation is seen as of a discriminatory nature by 46% and the second only by 22%.

### Summary

The population recognises discriminatory behaviour towards persons with an itinerant way of life. It is nonetheless difficult to say whether the results reflect the population's capacity to identify discrimination or rather the generally positive attitudes towards this way of life.

### Identifying discrimination of persons with an itinerant way of life, by type of situation, 2019

G5



Source: Diversity module, Survey on diversity and coexistence in Switzerland (VeS) © FSO 2020

## 2 Halting sites

Halting sites are key to an itinerant way of life. Their establishment in the communes is often an issue for both sedentary and non-sedentary populations.

### Key figures

#### For the establishment of halting sites

*For Swiss persons:*

Own commune	60%
Own canton	70%
Other canton	71%

*For foreign nationals:*

Own commune	42%
Own canton	46%
Other canton	48%

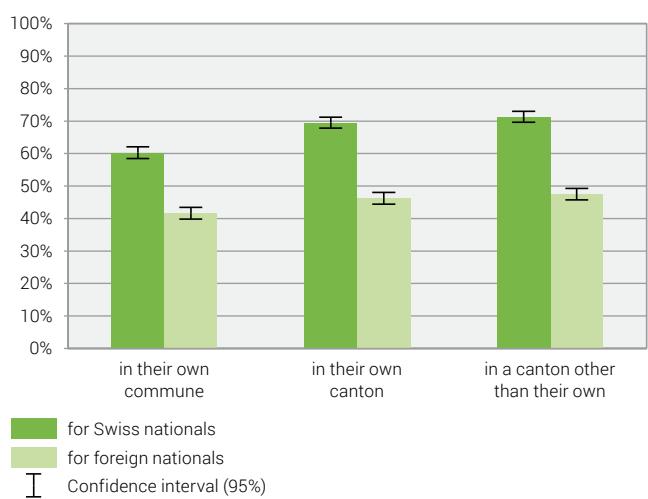
### Acceptance and refusal

A distinction is made between sites for Swiss nationals and those for foreign nationals. In general, regardless of the location of the halting site, the population is more favourable to provision for Swiss nationals with an itinerant way of life (54%) than for foreign nationals (38%).

The place where the site is located is important, particularly the geographic distance separating it from one's own home. For sites intended for Swiss nationals, around 70% of the population are in favour of a site in their own canton or another canton. The rate decreases to 60% if the potential site is located in their own commune. Although less accepted, the same trends are seen with halting sites intended for foreign nationals. At the level of the canton or other cantons, between 46% and 48% of the population are in favour of a site, and in their own commune, the rate falls to 42%.

### Proportion of the population in favour of providing halting sites, by origin of potential users and location, 2019

G6



Source: Diversity module, Survey on diversity and coexistence in Switzerland (VeS) © FSO 2020

### Consequences for the communes

Various consequences affect the communes following the establishment of halting sites. Real, imaginary or linked to stereotypes, the population has their say on the potential consequences. Overall, the population sees more positive consequences (27%) than negative ones (13%).

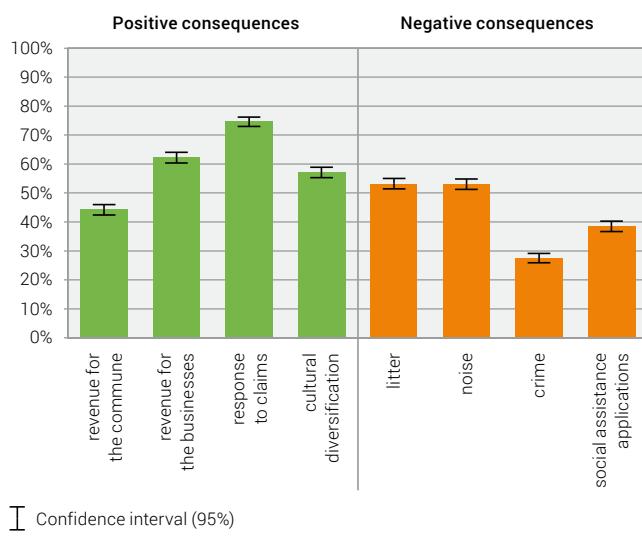
A majority agrees with the statements that halting sites respond to legitimate claims of minorities (75%), generate revenue for local businesses (62%) and create cultural diversity (57%). Less than half (44%), however, believe that halting sites benefit the communes financially. 53% see the negative consequences of the establishment of a halting site, either through an increase in noise or an increase in litter in the commune. 39% believe that an increase in social assistance applications is possible. 28% think that there could be an increase in crime in the commune; this is the negative consequence with the lowest percentage share among the population.

<sup>2</sup> Proportion of the population who agree with all the suggested positive consequences, i.e. an increase in revenues for the commune and for local shops and stores, meeting the needs of minorities and creating cultural diversity.

<sup>3</sup> Proportion of the population who agree with all the suggested negative consequences, i.e. litter, noise, crime and an increase in social assistance applications.

**Proportion of the population foreseeing consequences of halting sites on communes, by type of consequence, 2019**

G7



Source: Diversity module, Survey on diversity and coexistence in Switzerland (VeS) © FSO 2020

## Summary

The population is more in favour than it is against the establishment of halting sites. The population primarily foresees positive consequences for the communes. However, it distinguishes between sites intended for Swiss nationals and those intended for foreign nationals. Where a choice is given, the population prefers the halting site to be located outside its own commune.

## 3 The Yenish and Sinti

The Yenish are a native minority who has always lived in Switzerland. Together with the long-resident Sinti, they are recognised by Switzerland as a minority within the scope of The Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities<sup>4</sup>. For both minorities, the itinerant way of life is a central aspect of their cultural identity and self-image; despite the fact that, today, most of them live a sedentary life, sometimes under duress.

### Key figures

*Knowledge:*

Correct knowledge (measured)	9%
Explications necessary	75%

*Culture:*

Enrichment for Switzerland	63%
Must be particularly promoted	43%
Must be abandoned for integration	18%

### Knowledge

The population knows little about the Yenish and Sinti. To the four questions asked relating to the caravan lifestyle, national origins, payment of taxes and military service (see the "Knowledge" info box), the share of the population saying that they do not know the answer varies between 40% and 60%. The non-response rate for the question on the caravan way of life is 60%. Despite this, the majority of the population who believe they know the answer gives a correct answer. Over 60% know that the Yenish and Sinti do not necessarily live in a caravan (63%) and that they pay taxes (64%). Over 80% know that some Yenish and Sinti are born Swiss (83%). The question on military service divides the population: 51% of persons say that the Yenish and Sinti must do military service while 49% think the contrary. Around 9% of the population knows the correct answer to all four questions.

### Knowledge questions

The following questions were asked to gage the population's knowledge of the Yenish and Sinti:

*Do you think that most of Switzerland's Yenish and Sinti live in a caravan?*

*Right answer: no*

*Do you think that the Yenish and Sinti living in Switzerland pay taxes here?*

*Right answer: yes*

*Do you think that there are Yenish and Sinti who have always been Swiss?*

*Right answer: yes*

*Do you think that the Swiss Yenish and Sinti do military service?*

*Right answer: yes*

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bak.admin.ch/bak/fr/home/sprachen-und-gesellschaft/les-yeniches-et-les-manouches-sont-une-minorite-nationale.html>

## Attitudes

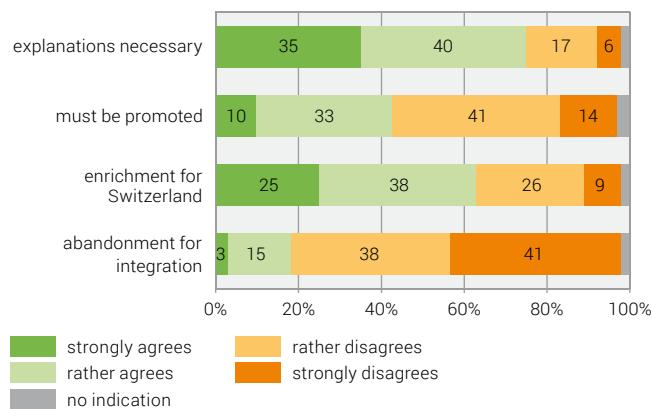
A number of statements on the Yenish and Sinti were formulated to gage the population's attitudes. They focus on their culture and its promotion.

Almost two thirds (63%) of the population consider that the culture and the music of the Yenish and Sinti are an enrichment for Switzerland, while almost a third (35%) oppose the statement. Only 18% think that this culture must be abandoned for integration. With regard to the promotion of their culture, 43% believe that this is important and 55% oppose this. Three quarters of the population (75%) think that more explanations on the history of Switzerland's Yenish and Sinti should be provided and are necessary.

### Attitudes towards the Yenish and Sinti: culture, 2019

G8

Proportion of the population agreeing or disagreeing with the statements



Source: Diversity module, Survey on diversity and coexistence in Switzerland (VeS) © FSO 2020

## Summary

The population has little information on the Yenish and Sinti and would like to find out more about these groups. It thinks that the culture of these groups is an enrichment for Switzerland without necessarily seeing the need to increase the efforts for its promotion.

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