

PRESS RELEASE

Foreign Residents in Switzerland Report Satisfaction with the Country of Their Choice

Neuchâtel, 8 June 2021.

Up to 7,400 foreign residents in Switzerland replied to the Migration-Mobility Survey, led by a team of nccr – on the move researchers from the University of Geneva. The survey results provided some fascinating insights into immigrants' perception of their lives in Switzerland during the COVID-19 pandemic. The majority of the persons surveyed felt that Switzerland was the right place for them, even when restrictions on international mobility prohibited them from traveling to their countries of origin as well as visits of their family members.

One of the major areas of interest of the "[nccr – on the move](#)" is to better understand migrant flows and their circumstances of living in Switzerland. To this end, the center conducts the [Migration-Mobility Survey](#) every two years to collect valuable data on the lives of foreign nationals residing in Switzerland to ultimately help improve the reception and integration of foreigners into the country.

The third wave of the survey, led by Prof. Philippe Wanner of the University of Geneva and his team, was conducted in the fall of 2020 amid the Covid-19 pandemic. The survey covered a range of issues such as the migration experience, employment, family configuration, social contacts, links with their countries of origin, and their living conditions in Switzerland. This time the researchers also introduced a specific module for measuring the impact of COVID-19 on the experience of migrants.

Close to 7,400 foreign residents replied to the questionnaire providing some fascinating insights into their perception of their lives in Switzerland. Contrary to an expected negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on labor market participation, only five percent of the surveyed foreign residents had lost their jobs. On average, entrepreneurs and self-

employed people had faced greater difficulties than employees. Among the categories of demographics, low-skilled foreign workers and younger age groups seemed to have been more affected, than the high-skilled and older age groups.

Compared to the first wave of the survey, the number of foreign residents with tertiary education increased by eight percent (from 51.2 to 59.5 percent). It can therefore be concluded that high-skilled migration to Switzerland is becoming increasingly prevalent. Moreover, nearly 80 percent of the migrants felt that there had been a clear or slight improvement in their professional situation compared to the situation before migration.

Given that the 2020 survey took place in a drastically different context of the pandemic when most of the survey participants had had to spend their confinement in Switzerland, it is interesting to note that the majority had a positive image of Switzerland. Moreover, 77 percent of the migrants felt that Switzerland was the right place for them. Only a minority, namely seven percent, indicated that they would have preferred to remain in their countries of origin. Several indicators suggest that the sense of 'being ill at ease' among the foreign residents has been overall limited. Nonetheless, about 10 percent of the interviewees feared that the pandemic and its consequences would possibly lead to them losing their residence permits.

It seems also interesting to note that people of Asian origin living in Switzerland reported receiving more empathy than other communities (excluding North Americans), and more often saw naturalization as a means to stabilize their residence status in Switzerland.

The impact of the restrictions on international mobility introduced in response to the pandemic, however, was greatly felt. In comparison with 2018, the proportion of migrants who did not visit their country of origin in the last 12 months more than doubled in 2020 (from 14 to 33 percent). Naturally, in the last 12 months, visits of the relatives living in the country of origin also declined sharply (from 72 to 48 percent).

It remains to be seen what the long-term consequences of the restrictions to mobility will be. The next 2022-edition of the Migration Mobility Survey, that Prof. Wanner's team will conduct, may provide some important insights into the mid-to-long-term consequences of the pandemic on foreigners residing in Switzerland. Based on the 2020 survey results, it is already possible to conclude that migrants living in Switzerland seemed to have had a mostly positive experience of being forced to remain in the country during the COVID-19 pandemic.

References:

[The "Migration-Mobility" Survey](#)

[Effects of COVID-19 on the Migrant Population in Switzerland](#)

About the "nccr - on the move"

The "[nccr - on the move](#)" is the National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) dedicated to migration and mobility studies. Launched in June 2014, the NCCR aims to better understand the interaction between migration and mobility, and related phenomena. Managed by the University of Neuchâtel, the network includes 17 research projects from 11 Swiss universities, namely the Universities of Basel, Fribourg, Geneva, Lausanne, Lucerne, Neuchâtel and Zurich, as well as the ETH Zurich, the Graduate Institute Geneva, the University of Applied Sciences of Western Switzerland and the University of Applied Sciences of Northwestern Switzerland. The "nccr - on the move" is led by Prof. Gianni D'Amato, who is also director of the Swiss Forum for Migration and Population Studies (SFM), based at the University of Neuchâtel.

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