

Switzerland, Swiss Federation

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1. STATISTICAL DATA

Switzerland is breaking immigration records given that at present (end of 2007) 20.60% of the total population is foreign. Immigrants represent a quarter of the working population. This is a unique situation in Europe, given that there is a situation of almost full employment, with an unemployment rate of 2.50%.

In this figure: Foreign population resident in Switzerland (first and second column)

Office fédéral des migrations CDM, Registre central des étrangers RCE, Service de la statistique, CH-3003 Berne-Wabern



Effectif de la population résidente permanente étrangère¹⁾ par canton de résidence et groupe d'étrangers à fin août 2007

Tableau: 107

Canton de résidence	Total	Pourcentage approximatif d'étrangers ²⁾				Titulaires d'un permis de courte durée				Titulaires d'un permis de séjour				Fiable				
		%	Différence par rapport à l'année précédente		Ch. absolu	En %	Différence par rapport à l'année précédente		Ch. absolu	En %	Différence par rapport à l'année précédente		Ch. absolu	En %	Différence par rapport à l'année précédente		Ch. absolu	En %
			Ch. absolu	En %			Ch. absolu	En %			Ch. absolu	En %			Ch. absolu	En %		
Suisse 2002	1 436 855	19.8	29 652	2.1	8 472	1 119	15.1	346 673	2 046	0.6	1 081 710	19 134	1.8					
Suisse 2003	1 462 687	20.0	29 832	1.8	10 144	1 672	19.7	364 242	17 569	5.1	1 088 301	6 591	0.6					
Suisse 2004	1 487 896	20.2	25 209	1.7	19 747	9 603	94.7	377 631	13 389	3.7	1 090 518	2 217	0.2					
Suisse 2005	1 604 206	20.3	16 309	1.1	25 243	5 496	27.8	388 197	10 556	2.8	1 090 775	257	0.0					
Suisse 2006	1 619 818	20.4	16 673	1.0	36 660	11 307	44.8	397 298	9 111	2.3	1 086 030	- 4 746	-0.4					
Suisse 2007	1 941 931	20.6	22 053	1.5	37 969	1 419	3.9	422 699	25 401	6.4	1 081 263	- 4 767	-0.4					
Zürich	288 111	22.4	3 892	1.3	5 522	1 119	15.1	82 934	4 767	6.1	196 656	- 2 084	-1.0					
Berne	176 701	12.2	1 893	1.6	3 186	564	21.0	32 762	1 555	5.0	89 735	- 346	-0.4					
Lucerne	56 396	15.7	1 054	1.9	1 592	150	9.4	17 880	557	3.4	37 724	347	0.9					
Uri	2 987	8.5	- 11	-0.4	219	- 45	-17.0	307	70	8.4	1 861	- 36	-1.9					
Schwyz	23 758	17.0	782	3.4	601	152	33.9	6 100	483	8.6	17 057	147	0.9					
Obwald	4 022	11.9	168	4.4	167	- 21	-11.2	1 477	84	14.2	2 378	5	0.2					
Nidwald	3 925	9.8	119	3.1	189	- 12	-7.9	1 432	142	11.0	2 354	- 11	-0.5					
Uri	7 312	19.2	- 137	-1.8	153	41	36.6	1 487	36	2.5	5 672	- 214	-3.6					
Zoug	23 247	21.5	1 171	5.5	414	77	22.8	8 101	893	11.8	14 732	241	1.7					
Fribourg	42 735	16.4	2 233	5.5	1 768	- 38	-1.9	12 395	648	5.5	25 954	1 623	6.0					
Soleure	46 274	18.5	1 434	3.2	339	123	64.6	8 618	664	8.3	37 317	637	1.7					
Basle-Ville	65 114	29.9	452	0.8	910	- 49	-5.2	17 554	1 459	8.9	38 659	- 927	-2.5					
Basle-Campagne	47 850	17.9	584	1.2	371	56	17.8	12 467	612	5.2	35 052	- 84	-0.2					
Schaffhouse	16 706	21.7	585	3.5	791	- 64	-25.1	4 170	371	9.9	11 906	- 278	-2.4					
Appenzel AH-Lat.	6 806	12.9	199	3.0	118	29	32.6	1 726	188	10.8	4 962	2	0.0					
Appenzel AH-Int.	1 466	9.6	3	0.2	43	8	22.9	342	- 32	-8.6	1 051	27	2.6					
Saint-Gall	96 431	20.8	2 047	2.2	1 421	107	8.1	21 735	2 096	10.2	73 265	- 166	-0.1					
Glarous	27 527	14.6	798	3.0	2 077	228	12.3	10 901	375	3.6	14 549	195	1.4					
Argovie	176 772	20.3	1 512	1.3	1 054	- 110	-9.5	23 307	1 988	6.9	92 411	114	0.1					
Thurgovie	46 880	19.8	838	1.8	1 083	258	31.3	10 276	469	4.8	35 621	111	0.3					
Tessin	81 640	29.1	837	1.0	1 296	- 298	-18.7	19 581	2 025	11.5	60 763	- 890	-1.4					
Vaud	187 796	28.4	1 745	0.9	4 362	- 767	-15.9	69 335	3 492	6.3	123 499	- 989	-0.8					
Vallée	39 983	18.9	1 891	3.5	3 352	283	9.3	17 408	1 791	7.3	25 145	417	1.2					
Neuchâtel	39 103	23.1	468	1.2	73	- 319	-81.2	10 481	1 190	12.9	28 579	- 413	-1.4					
Genève	139 544	33.9	- 2 382	-1.7	4 379	- 20	-0.5	38 517	549	1.4	96 648	- 2 891	-2.9					
Jura	8 705	11.7	39	0.5	149	- 29	-16.3	1 888	76	4.7	6 268	- 9	-0.1					

1) sans les locataires internationaux et les membres de leur famille, les titulaires d'un permis de courte durée <12 mois et les requérants d'asile

2) par rapport à l'année précédente de la population résidente permanente

Source: Federal Office for Migration - FOM

Like most countries, the Swiss data do not take into account illegal immigrants and, despite the efforts of the authorities, it is very difficult to know how many people are living in the country illegally.

According to a «Rapport sur la migration illégale» published by the Federal Office for Migration in 2004, there is an estimated number of between 50,000 and 300,000 illegal immigrants. Another study by the University of Linz talks about 90,000 illegal immigrants in Switzerland, while the association «Sans nous rien ne va plus», which brings together various entities of illegal immigrants, the figure would be above 100,000 people. In any case, all estimations consider that there is a third more than ten years ago.

Until 1970 the foreign population of Switzerland could be described as homogeneous, although it consisted mainly of workers from southern Europe (over half of them Italians). This is not currently the case and the proportion of people from non-European countries in the foreign population amounts to 14.60% of this foreign population. Even so, the following are the four main countries of origin:

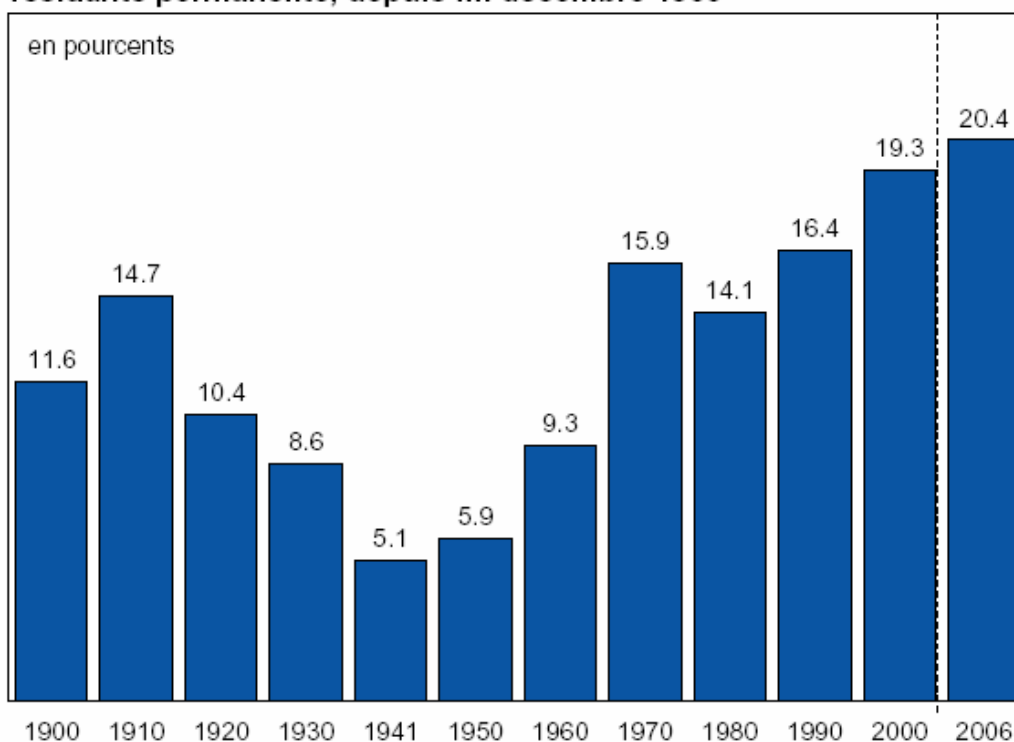
- **Italy** (291,684 people in 2006, 19.10% of the total foreigners and 3.90% of the total Swiss population)
- **Serbia** (190,794 people in 2006, 12.50% of the total foreigners and 2.56% of the total Swiss population)

- **Portugal** (173,477 people in 2006, 1.40% of the total foreigners and 2.33% of the total Swiss population)
- **Germany** (172,580 people in 2006, 11.30% of the total foreigners and 2.32% of the total Swiss population).

This table shows, in percentage terms, the proportion of foreigners in relation to the overall permanent population, resident in Switzerland, since 1900.

Office fédéral des migrations - ODM

Proportion d'étrangers par rapport à l'ensemble de la population résidante permanente, depuis fin décembre 1900



The distribution of the different origin groups of the foreign population among the different Swiss regions and agglomerations varies greatly. The foreign population is above all concentrated in the urban areas and in both the outlying areas and the centres of the agglomerations. In 2000 the city of Geneva had the highest proportion of foreigners (43.8% of the population), followed by Lugano (36.90%) and Lausanne (35.80%), while the rural canton of Uri has a much lower proportion (8.80%).

2. INTEGRATION POLICIES

Legal categories

Switzerland issues up to 11 different types of residence permit for foreign immigrants, depending on the duration, short (residence) or long (establishment), the countries of origin (European Union, European Free Trade Association, or the so-called third States – the rest, with the exception of those coming from the United States of America and from Canada who have special provisions), the situation (asylum-seekers, refugees, cross-border workers, people requiring protection, ...), etc.

There is moreover the group of illegal immigrants, identified in two clearly differentiated groups: illegal immigrants seeking work and those who, for different reasons – including the possible perversion of the legal system itself – have lost their authorization to reside in Switzerland. We could even identify a third group of illegal immigrants, which is children and adolescents, minors in an illegal situation.

Rights and obligations

There tend to be numerous rights and the most important obligations concern the contract of employment and the job. There do not tend to be restrictions as regards economic and labour market rights. There are some reservations in relation to general provisions concerning healthcare and trade matters. Legally established foreigners are on an equal footing with Swiss citizens as regards access to the labour market. Contracts of employment with a duration of less than one year give an entitlement to residence permits limited to the duration of the contract. The authorization of establishment is normally granted for an unlimited duration after 10 years of residence.

Thanks to the effort of various associations, illegal immigrants have relatively numerous rights (to join a union, medical insurance, invalidity, unemployment, accidents, professional welfare, retirement, ...).

Powers

	STATE (federal)	REGIONAL (cantonal)	LOCAL (municipal)
establish quotas	X	-	-
control flows	X	-	-
residence permit	-	X	-
work permit	X	X	-
naturalizations	X	X	X

The Federal Office for Migration (FOM) is accountable to the Federal Department of Justice and Police.

The federal law on the residence and establishment of foreigners dates back to 1931.

The last regulation is from 1986.

A new federal law on foreigners will come into force on the first of January 2008.

Powers relating to the aliens police are divided between the Confederation and the cantons.

Although the federal state tends to have the last word, the powers are shared and have to be exercised by both administrations (the Confederation and the cantons).

The lawsuits are administrative in relation to aliens, and not political, and are solved by appeal to the Federal Department of Justice and Police.

Services provided by the administrations

In Switzerland integration, as it is understood by the state, is implemented by the three political levels of the country: the Confederation, the cantons and the town councils or communes.

	STATE (federal)	REGIONAL (cantonal)	LOCAL (municipal)
Socio-economic	Subsidies for compulsory insurance	Socio-healthcare provisions	Social aid
Financial			
Labour		Unemployment insurance	Professional information centres
Linguistic	School education		
Religious	School		
Political	Voting right		

A FOM report from August 2007 defines the integration of foreigners in Switzerland as a success, on a general level. However, it considers that there are considerable gaps and deficiencies both in the state's implementation of certain measures and in the use of some services by foreigners. The FOM's opinion is that many foreigners do not take sufficient advantage of the opportunities offered by the different public offices.

Language and culture courses

The promotion of languages in Switzerland is a multidisciplinary task which involves, among others, school education, vocational training, unemployment insurance and adult education. The federal structure of the Swiss educational system has cantonal and municipal powers. There are specific integration classes in different municipalities.

It should, however, be recalled that Switzerland has great diversity, despite the fact that each Canton is in charge of a very specific native population which, in general, is monolingual and monocultural.

There are also programmes with federal support such as the general promotion of standard language or the programme for the development of linguistic competence in the case of young people with learning difficulties.

Associative fabric

In Switzerland there are consultative and participatory bodies on all three administrative levels. On the federal level there is the Federal Commission for Foreigners.

The Forum for the integration of migrants is the organization which brings together the associations of immigrants in Switzerland.

There is a broad private fabric of bodies which go from ecclesiastic organizations to sports clubs which are in charge of integration. The entities to help illegal immigrants are particularly well organized in big cities such as Geneva, Zürich, Basle or Bern.

Voting right

This subject is a regional power and therefore each canton has a different criterion in this respect. Five cantons currently recognize municipal voting rights for foreigners. A further three cantons offer each municipality the possibility to legislate to this end and to decide whether or not immigrants can vote. Finally, there are five cantons in which it is not possible for immigrants to vote. The eligibility of immigrants is a subject still pending resolution.

3. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DIMENSION

Economic impact of immigration

Swiss economic growth was 3.2% in 2006 and 2.8% in 2007. The public accounts are in excellent health and this Swiss prosperity is greatly indebted to foreigners. There is an overall consideration of foreigners which covers both immigrant workers and tax exiles and tourists with large fortunes.

Switzerland is the fourth country in the world in the remittance of money abroad.

The Federal Council has announced the forthcoming publication of an economic report on the importance of the flow of money sent from Switzerland by foreign workers, including illegal immigrants, to their families and in their developing countries.

Self-employment

In Switzerland the percentage of self-employed workers has increased from 9.20% in 1990 to 12.80% in 2000 (without counting the agricultural sector). The percentage of freelance workers of foreign origin is practically the same as that of Swiss people although a little lower. For some nationalities it is much lower. The percentage of freelance workers is 13.80% among Swiss people, compared with 12% among Germans, 9.60% among Turks, 5.9% among Africans and 4.1% among the Portuguese.

Underground economy

In Switzerland, like everywhere, there is this blemish which has been increased even further by the results of a policy of deregulation. The underground economy is normally accompanied by an unprecedented increase in the flexibilization and precariousness of jobs.

In Switzerland it is estimated that undeclared employment represents 9.30% of GDP. The most frequent sectors are the usual ones: domestic work, agriculture, the hotel and catering trade, construction, ...

In June 2004 a federal law was passed against undeclared employment which has implied different positive measures but which has not even come close to eradicating the underground economy.

The above-mentioned federal law against undeclared employment goes in this direction and involves four types of measures: administrative, so that certain jobs like domestic service have social security; organizational, the cantons necessarily having to have inspection services in the territory; IT, with the updating of databases and the crossing of data between the police, the tax authorities, social security, ... regardless of whether they are federal, cantonal or municipal authorities; and, finally, a reinforcement of the sanctions.

Poverty, unemployment, marginalization

According to the guidelines of the Swiss Conference of Social Assistance Institutions (CSIAS) to calculate social aid, over 200,000 foreigners are poor or are in considerable danger of becoming poor. If 10.40% of the native Swiss population is poor, for foreigners this percentage amounts to 21.40%. In any case, among the foreign population it varies greatly within the different nationalities existing. Bulgarians, Turks and Romanians have a poverty rate of 29.20%.

While immigrants from the EU-15 have a slightly higher rate of employment than the Swiss themselves, people from other origins have a considerably lower rate of participation in the working life of the country. The table below gives an example:

	Switzerland	EU-15 north	EU-15 south	Others	Total foreigners
Employment rate (15-64)	81.70	83.70	83.30	73.20	79.5
Unemployment rate	2.80	3.50	6.30	13.10	8.40
Unemployment rate (15-24)	6.10	9.00	11.40	15.60	13.60

In 2003, the latest data obtained, 48.90% of prisoners convicted by the judiciary were foreign. Only 28.30% of people requesting aid on being victims of crime were foreign. The high foreign criminality rate in Switzerland is explained by the important proportion of young men from highly disadvantaged social classes.

There are no data on the number of foreigners carrying out prostitution in Switzerland. Prostitution is one of the sectors in which undeclared employment is most widespread.

Access to financial institutions

There are no data on the number of foreigners who obtain credits in Switzerland. Self-employment is very widespread among foreigners and despite the lack of data there do not appear to be too many financial problems for these economic initiatives.

Access to housing

The families of immigrants tend to be more numerous than those of natives. Accommodation, on the other hand, is the same or smaller. It is difficult to find accommodation in Switzerland without a residence permit. Illegal immigrants are often forced to rent small and very expensive accommodation. This is also a very diverse issue depending on the different nationalities existing.

School

School is one of the first sectors for the integration of children, given that many means are provided to favour the learning of the local language in order to incorporate them more quickly into society. Normally, immigrant children obtain worse results than the average for the Swiss and leave school earlier in favour of practical training. In this respect, Swiss schools do not promote the equal opportunities that they advocate. Second-generation youth tend to obtain better results than newcomers. Those from the second generation also have more opportunities as regards salaries and quality of jobs. Few work in the public administration. Swiss schools represent a considerably effective tool of integration for second-generation immigrants but not for those of the first generation.

Swiss schools transmit very sound social and cultural values. Even so, as the level of education rises, the number of foreigners attending goes down. It is even possible to talk about a certain degree of segregation of foreigners or of their children toward certain training areas, above all professional, and to a large extent the labour market does not favour upward social mobility. In this respect, the school integration of migrant children in Switzerland is far from being entirely satisfactory. It could certainly be said that the Swiss school system, both at primary and secondary level, favours a certain marginalization of foreigners.

4. XENOPHOBIA

Openly xenophobic parties/movements

The Swiss party UDC (Democratic Union of the Centre), currently the majority party in almost all the country and the leading Swiss political party, has a more moderate centrist wing but also has a right wing which is described as extreme right. This party's objectives include reducing immigration, defending national independence and reducing the state's influence in society. As regards immigration, the UDC is fighting to reduce social welfare, to make the conditions to obtain political asylum more severe and to strengthen the control of and the administrative measures for foreigners.

Some of its election campaigns have rightly been accused of encouraging racism and its positions receive frequent accusations of xenophobia.

The Ticino League is the equivalent of UDC in the canton of the same name. It uses the same methods, has the same discourse and obtains equally good election results.

Evolution of voting

With 29% of votes in the last general election of 21 October 2007, the UCD is the leading political party in Switzerland. This party, thanks to its more right-wing flank, went from 11% to 26.5% between 1992 and 2003, reaching the aforementioned 29% in 2007.

Factors of rejection

The Swiss xenophobic movement arose in the 1960s as a result of a struggle in favour of stopping immigration. Ideas such as associating immigration with delinquency or ideas on the dissolution of national identity have made an impression on the population. It is common to talk in public about the arrival of "hordes" of "culturally inassimilable" newcomers. This obsession of the citizens is reflected in some opinion polls: 58% of Swiss citizens proclaim that they are xenophobic. Switzerland certainly has the most severe immigration legislation in Europe and applies strict quotas for foreigners (with the exception of those from the EU-15, from Norway and from Iceland).

Mass media

In general the mass media are against the UDC but in the end it is this political party which benefits from this. Switzerland has fallen into the trap of devilizing the UDC instead of opening up a calm debate on the contents of the votes.

Part of the press and some television channels use the subject of immigration in a sensationalist manner. Some headlines are very expressive: Expel criminal immigrants? Abolish the anti-racist criminal regulation? Moslems of Switzerland: adapt or leave!

Episodes of conflict

There have indeed been certain not very edifying examples, such as that of a bar owner who beat and seriously injured an immigrant in mid-June 2006, and in retaliation about twenty of this immigrant's compatriots looted the bar. There is racist graffiti, ...

At present things have calmed down, there are reception centres and some conscientious immigrants likewise favour a new more constructive spirit. Employment programmes and security patrols are also current measures.

In any case the evolution of the xenophobic feeling has experienced different stages since the 1960s. We should not forget that Switzerland, with the productive system intact after the Second World War and with a great need for labour, has received successive migratory waves since then. Together with the United Kingdom, Switzerland is the only European country which has refused immigration during its recent history due to purely xenophobic pressures aside from economic reasons.

5. SUBJECTS OF DEBATE

Historical evolution

After the end of the Second World War, Switzerland had an urgent need to resort to foreign labour. Notwithstanding this, the model desired was that of the seasonal worker, preferably based on a rotational model whose object was to prevent any permanent or even lasting integration of workers in Switzerland. Foreigners were considered purely as instruments to regulate a specific moment of the labour market. In the 1960s it was common to think that it was impossible to integrate Italians and Spaniards into Swiss life.

Seasonal work permits forced immigrants to work for 9 months and then to return to their country of origin for 3 months. Only after 10 years under this regime did they allow the immigrant to apply for permanent residence or the right of establishment in the country. The ban on property ownership and not allowing family reunification was the origin of many abuses and the existence of large number of families obliged to live in secrecy.

It is not until later that this family reunification is allowed and that the stabilization of the foreign population is promoted. In any case, the non-European population still finds it very difficult to settle legally.

As a result of the mass immigration of poor Italians and Spaniards, in the mid-1960s and even in the 50s, Switzerland was very interested in developing the figure of the temporary or seasonal immigrant, who hardly enjoyed any rights. Non-seasonal workers were subject to strict quotas

while there was more permissiveness with seasonal workers, who did not have any entitlement to family reunification, for example. In the 80s, political asylum-seekers appeared, a new figure almost unknown until then and which later experienced a huge boom with those arriving from the former Yugoslavia.

At present Switzerland is experiencing a very marked diversification of immigration flows. This diversification in the origin of migrants is also accompanied by a transformation in the reasons for their arrival, in their educational qualifications and in their professional characteristics.

Areas of origin and cultural cohesion

Like elsewhere, the phenomenon of immigrants continuing to have a strong feeling of belonging to their community of origin also exists in Switzerland. The relations between natives and immigrants are not as frequent as would be desirable and social integration is not always easy.

First-generation immigrants are more closed in their own communities. Second-generation immigrants have more contact with immigrants from other countries than with the Swiss.

Most important elements

The constant provocation of the party that received the highest number of votes means that the debate always concerns red-hot issues. Juvenile delinquency is talked about a lot, as is the new aliens law, the deportation of criminal immigrants, ... At present the main issue is the government's negotiation of the extension of the free movement of persons, advocated by the EU-27, to Bulgaria and Romania.

Other aspects

The complex and demanding process of naturalization of immigrants foreseen by Swiss legislation should be considered seriously. Naturalization can be considered as the last stage of a successful integration process. The excessive demands imposed by the legislation in force (12 years of residence in Switzerland, social integration, knowledge of Swiss habits, culture, customs and practices, a life in accordance with "Swiss law", ...) prevent not just second generations but also third generations from becoming naturalized. Having to pass Swiss history and culture tests which many natives would not be capable of passing not only discourages the children of immigrants from taking the step of naturalization but also generates a feeling of rejection of Swiss identity because of its elitist assumptions.

Unfortunately we are currently witnessing a rejection of everything to do with the country's identity among large social groups. Symptoms of xenophobia are also appearing among groups arising from different migratory waves with a view to obtaining citizenship rights in the country.