



RESULTS OF THE ANONYMOUS QUESTIONNAIRE

PRELIMINARY SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

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Respondents to the anonymous multilingual questionnaire were free to express their opinions by providing comments at the end of each of the 15 questions. This summary presents the main messages conveyed by this means, with the aim of complementing or even nuancing the results provided by the statistical data. These comments shed light on trends in the opinion of the population, including migrants and refugees. Opinions that differ from the majority view have been included to reflect diversity. It is important to remember that the confusion between refugees and migrants, explicit or implicit in these comments, is very common and is part of the Geneva reality (where these two categories are mixed) as well as the perceptions of the population.

1. **Before the 1990s, the reception of migrants was not always pleasant. We are aware of the progress and differences from the past.**

Several respondents report that reception has gradually improved since the 1990s, particularly because access to employment is easier today, and migration legislation and policies have been improved, notably with the introduction of D, E and B permits. Similarly, access to health services and language courses has been facilitated, and assistance to new arrivals is better. But there are more bureaucratic "rigidities" in procedures and criteria, very high asylum refusal rates and sometimes "inhumane" situations.

However, some express a contrary opinion, saying that there were more job opportunities for migrants 30 or 40 years ago, especially for manual workers who arrived in Switzerland already having work contracts as seasonal workers. There were more job opportunities, but also "more discrimination and arbitrariness" than today - not to mention that the families of seasonal workers did not have residence permits. According to some, today's labour market offers fewer opportunities, is more competitive, and inflation complicates the situation - and "housing remains a problem".

Racist attitudes seem to be less frequent nowadays, but it is noted that they persist in many forms, particularly with regard to Africans. And sometimes "among the migrants themselves". "It was later that I understood what my father had experienced as a migrant, heartbreak, low profile, accepting any job and no gifts, saving up to send to the family back home. Sacrifice and submission.

It was noted that the number of migrants has increased in recent years, which poses new challenges - although the perception of the total number of migrants and refugees in Geneva is generally unclear and confused. One commentary suggested that a clear distinction should be made between these two categories. Another reminds us that the ageing of Geneva's population implies that there is a need to receive more immigrants.

2. From an integration perspective, language continues to be a barrier, and access to employment a prerequisite. Policies are more respectful of rights, but there is room for improvement. "We are better received if we blend in....

Many comments point out that the level and quality of integration depends primarily on learning French and access to employment. Integration is rarely easy, but each individual journey is different. For some, it is "a path of the cross".

Others note that country of origin, culture and religion are also important for integration in Geneva and Switzerland in general, and can be obstacles. However, a majority of comments state that it is important to avoid discrimination based on the country of origin of migrants and refugees. What emerges from the comments is the search for a "difficult balance" between respect for diversity, adaptation to the values and attitudes of the host society, and inclusion without discrimination. This sometimes requires, say some comments, a case-by-case approach rather than a country-by-country approach, especially for refugees who have suffered trauma, as "a suffering situation has nothing to do with origin".

In general, the complexity of integration is well understood: "Migrants and refugees do not face the same difficulties (...) Difficult and easy are both too broad and empty terms to designate a level of difficulty in integration.

Some comments refer to animosity on the part of some political refugees towards those they perceive as "economic refugees". In this vein, one comment states that "migrants seek to integrate and have worked, unlike the majority of refugees" and that "often work brings less than welfare". Moreover, although integration is not always easy, "a country cannot just give; at some point you have to pay back the aid by making the effort to enter the

labour market". One person mentions the "grey area between real refugees and refugees from the oligarchy or rich".

Compared to other parts of Switzerland, the specificity of Geneva as an international city facilitates integration.

Very often, migrants and refugees are in Geneva for family reasons (primarily to join a spouse) or professional reasons. Their integration process is therefore to a large extent linked to this initial motivation. Hence the positive role of a "well-integrated" diaspora such as the Italians, Spanish speakers or Kosovars.

Despite the support for their cause and their urgent needs, all comments unanimously deplore the "preferential" treatment given to Ukrainian refugees by the Swiss authorities (and to some extent by the public) compared to refugees from other war-torn countries such as Syria or Afghanistan. When special treatment is given to a group like the Ukrainians, it should be limited to a specific period of time, someone says. "At the moment some are being pushed aside for the benefit of Ukrainians. Interestingly, few seem to know how many Ukrainian refugees there are in Geneva.

The main message from the comments is that there should be no discrimination, neither between refugees nor between migrants.

One comment was directed at Switzerland's development policy, which "should think about helping people in their own countries, where possible, as many do not integrate and assimilate the habits of the host country.

Responses recalled that refugee status is a human right. It follows, as noted by several comments, that policies to facilitate integration should take into account the values of the country of origin, and give priority to language courses and gender equality. One commentary emphasised the recognition of diplomas "to really enable refugees to integrate with respect and dignity".

One comment on the urgent and special measures taken to accommodate Ukrainian refugees since March 2022 was that "it is the country that caused the [Ukrainians] to leave to pay the bill". Many deplore "their preferential treatment compared to other refugees [which] is quite shocking" because "refugees from other war-torn countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea, have suffered similar situations to Ukrainians. Creating privileged treatment for them is incorrect and politically dangerous."

3. Migrant and refugee women: special needs.

There are differing opinions in the comments to the question: do women find it more difficult to adapt to their new life in Geneva than men? Some note that many women stay at home and take care of the children, while men work. From this point of view, men integrate better and faster through their work than women who stay at home. It is noted that "the role of men in providing economic security for the family reduces the opportunities for

women to share this responsibility with them, and so priority is given to finding a job for men to speed up the integration process. But staying at home to care for children is not entirely negative, notes one person, as links are often created between women and the host society through their children attending school.

However, "Switzerland offers opportunities to women who have more to gain than men, and they are aware of this and grateful for it.

Religious beliefs and habits of migrants and refugees (e.g. wearing a hijab) can create additional difficulties for women. Learning about gender equality is not easy for some groups. "The culture shock makes some women confine themselves even more to their beliefs, cultural practices, they cling more to what they know, which can limit their progress towards satisfactory integration. "They have this extra mental burden, and it's no small thing. Women who are mistreated and discriminated against in their country of origin deserve special assistance.

The comments seem to indicate a lack of information about migrant women, their role, their integration processes which vary according to the gender values and attitudes of the country of origin. Finally, someone remarked that the situation of children is more difficult than that of women, and that age is a factor to be taken into consideration.

4. How different are the attitudes of those who arrive and the perceptions of the residents...

There are comments indicating that having friendships is part of the integration process of newcomers; conversely, from the perspective of the Geneva population, having friends among migrants and refugees reveals their attitude towards the arrivals. Some comments illustrate both perspectives. It is not surprising to find diametrically opposed comments on the empathy of the Geneva population: there is praise as well as criticism in this respect.

The list of countries of origin of friendships among migrants and refugees is very long. It shows that in Geneva it is difficult not to have friends among them. However, one person notes that "often they [*unspecified*] choose to keep to themselves", and another that it is "professional acquaintances rather than real friendships". Another remarked that "the older migrant generations were more introverted than us...".

As for the contribution of refugees and migrants to the economic and social life of Geneva, opinions are very divided (some positive, others negative). But it was noted that Geneva being an international city, social diversity is part of its nature, and this facilitates integration. Although, according to one comment, there is a "retreat from the tradition of welcome and a rise in political movements with xenophobic tendencies. But "the international character of Geneva facilitates integration compared to other regions."

As the comments on integration indicate, initial motivations are often decisive: if the aim in leaving the country of origin was to work and settle in Geneva, adaptation will be easier than when the arrival in Geneva is the result of chance circumstances. For refugees in particular, integration is greatly facilitated if they can settle in Geneva with their families.

5. Practical suggestions: if I could decide, I would change ...

Several comments criticise overly restrictive and bureaucratic measures. But most consider that their integration is largely positive despite the difficulties in finding a job and learning French - factors already reported as the most important for integration in Geneva.

It was considered very important to develop French language courses, education and training in general (even in English), and above all access to employment from the moment of arrival, taking into account the cultural values of migrants and refugees -- including through artistic activities that facilitate communication and mutual understanding. Psychological support and follow-up towards professional integration are also mentioned: "this could avoid entering the spiral of social assistance, enhance the individual and create added value to the local economy. Efforts should also be made for all minority groups or those who are out of the ordinary (psychological problems, disabilities, social breakdown, etc.).

In general, the comments reflect gratitude to the authorities for the French courses and other training and integration opportunities offered by the authorities, the importance of which is recognised. But there are exceptions: "Many migrants/refugees complain that they do not have a big flat soon (...) Very little recognition when they are out of danger. They quickly forget about those who are still under fire. Little compassion.

It was pointed out that access to information on the rights and obligations of refugees and migrants as well as on Swiss and Geneva services and structures for them should be developed. It would be important, said one person, "not to be 'singled out' just because you have undocumented status.

There is a desire for more measures aimed at interaction with the local population, such as "public meeting places like the covered lanes of Saint Jean (a car-free place where children can play and parents can talk together)", and to avoid hostels as much as possible.

One comment pointed out that the opening hours of the reception centres in Geneva are "not adapted to reality" because they close at 5pm and at weekends: "it would be better not to receive them than to leave them in despair and without a place to sleep".

Some feel rejected by the population or have been victims of racism, have had very negative experiences in shelters, and require psychological support, especially in cases of trauma for those coming from conflict areas.

One suggestion is that social assistance should be reimbursed or time-limited (maximum one year), and "people who want to work should have easier access [to employment]".