

# Les expatriés et la sécurité à Genève. Enquête 2009 Summary



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Décembre 2009

# LES EXPATRIÉS ET LA SÉCURITÉ À GENÈVE

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ENQUÊTE 2009

## **Summary**

The 2009 survey intends to document the views of the expatriated community active in the private and public sectors (hereafter the “expatriates”) on security issues in Geneva. It is the first of its kind. It was implemented in collaboration with the Permanent Mission of Switzerland at the United Nations Office in Geneva. The survey was conducted during the months of October and November 2009 using a questionnaire sent through postal services or electronic mails. The final sample includes 1198 respondents. 318 of them are diplomats and staff of embassies; 581 are staff of International Organizations (staff in possession of ID cards of type B, C or D); the final 235 are staff of multinational companies.

### ***The sample in short***

51.3% of the surveyed expatriates originate from European countries, three quarters of them being nationals of the Europe of the Fifteen. 11.1% are nationals from Northern America; 12.3% are nationals from Asia and the rest, namely 17.9%, are nationals from Africa, Latin America and Oceania (7.4% did not indicate their nationality). The majority of the expatriates surveyed have been residing in Geneva for over 2 years (66.2%). The neighbourhoods in which most of the surveyed expatriates live are Petit-Saconnex, St-Jean/Servette, Grand-Saconnex, Pâquis/Gare de Cornavin. The diplomats reside mostly on the Right Bank (north of the Rhône River) of the canton. 33.7% of them reside in the localities outside Geneva city on the Right Bank. A significant proportion of the expatriated staff of international companies (36.6%) lives in localities situated on the Left Bank, south of the Rhône River.

### ***The quality of life in Geneva: an overall good note with a small drawback***

77.3% of the surveyed respondents consider that the quality of life is good in Geneva; this result is slightly below the score obtained in 2007. In this latter survey, 84.1% of the Geneva residents estimated that the quality of life in their neighbourhood was good. The slight drawback does not prevent however a large majority of expatriates (92%) to state that they would recommend Geneva as a residing or working location to family and friends. As far as the quality of life is concerned, the neighbourhoods of the Pâquis and the Gare de Cornavin receive the lowest marks; nevertheless, 58.3% of the expatriates living in these neighbourhoods do believe that the quality of life in these areas is good.

The survey allows observing that the subjective sense of insecurity and the exposition to incivilities are the two factors mainly responsible - more than criminality - for a lower opinion on the quality of life. 53.4% of those who feel unsecure after 10 PM consider that the quality of life of their neighbourhood is good. Similarly, the rate of good opinion regarding the quality of life falls to 67.2% if uncivil groups of youth are reported in the neighbourhood.

## ***Crime and incivilities***

If police statistics registered only a moderate increase in crime against property between 2007 and 2008 (1.8% rise), some crime subcategories have jumped significantly to higher levels. This has been the case of burglaries whose number increased by 13.7% in 2008. Burglaries impacted on the community of expatriated as well. 12.4% of the expatriates surveyed have reported having been victims of a burglary at their Geneva home during the past three years.

If we turn to the topic of incivilities, no such increase can be observed. As was demonstrated by the survey conducted with Geneva residents in 2007, incivilities is a social issue affecting almost everybody. According to the 2009 survey, incivilities most common are problems of dirt and wild garbage (75.3% report such problems in their neighbourhood), beggars (65.6%) and acts of vandalism and graffiti (61.1%). Rates of exposition and degree of nuisance are two different things. Indeed, only few incivilities are viewed as particularly problematic by expatriates. Those of particular concern for expatriates are drug scenes, verbal or physical fights (bullying) as well as dirt and wild garbage. Wild parking, beggars and unleashed or aggressive dogs are considered to be lesser incivilities by expatriates. The 57.3% exposition rate to drug scenes in the neighbourhood in 2009 is significantly higher than the rate observed in 2007.

## ***How do expatriates perceive security in Geneva?***

In contrast to the opinion expressed by Geneva residents in 2007, expatriates do not consider security as their prime concern in 2009. Housing occupies this first position for 54.3% expatriates. Lagging far behind, security and traffic congestion rank second and third. 17% of expatriates mention security as their top concern in Geneva while 14.3% estimate that the palm belongs to traffic congestion instead. Complementing these results, the survey shows that most expatriates believe that security has deteriorated during the past years in Geneva. 45.6% report a slight deterioration, while 33.2% report a substantial deterioration. Those affected by a burglary or witnessing incivilities in their neighbourhood are most likely to state that security has deteriorated in Geneva.

Traditionally, Geneva has enjoyed an image of a low crime and disorder city and it may be speculated that the gap between the cliché and the reality has weighted significantly on the opinion of expatriates regarding the recent deterioration of security in Geneva. Despite the scratches on the myth, the expatriates are almost unanimous to assert that the level of security enjoyed in Geneva is higher than in their own country or in their previous country of residence. On a 10-point scale, security obtains a 7.62 mark in Geneva against an average of 6.33 for the previous country of residence of the expatriates. Nevertheless, several countries have scored higher than Geneva on this scale. Singapore, Japan and Norway occupy the top three positions of this ranking, according to expatriates. By contrast, most of the European and Northern America countries receive lower marks than Geneva. The United Kingdom, for instance, obtains a modest score of 5.98 according to the opinion of the expatriates who have resided there before moving to Geneva.

## ***The sense of insecurity***

Measured at neighbourhood level and after 10 PM, the sense of insecurity among the expatriates (29.1% of unsecured) appears marginally higher than in 2007 (28.7% of unsecured residents). The

sense of insecurity proves much higher than average in the neighbourhoods of the Pâquis and the Gare de Cornavin (45.3% of unsecured). Localities of the Right Bank, north of the Rhône, such as Bellevue, Grand-Saconnex, Meyrin, Pregny-Chambésy, Vernier and Versoix, witness average levels (about 30% of unsecured). Similar rates are found in neighbourhoods close to the city centre other than the Pâquis and Cornavin. The Petit-Saconnex, Champel and Florissant are the neighbourhoods with the lower sense of insecurity (20.1% of unsecured).

The sense of insecurity is strongly associated to incivilities and, in particular, to incivilities found particularly disturbing. For instance, the rate of “unsecured” in a neighbourhood after 10 PM rises to 38.5% when drug scenes in the neighbourhood are reported. A positive opinion regarding the quality of social ties in the neighbourhood tempers the impact of incivilities without, however, removing completely the sense of insecurity.

### ***Expatriates behaviour related to crime and security issues***

Caution is the rule after 10 PM in neighbourhoods situated in downtown Geneva and the urban arch around the lake (the Pâquis, Gare de Cornavin, Rues Basses and Eaux-Vives). These neighbourhoods are also those considered less safe by expatriates. In general, expatriates exercise more caution when using public transports, walking in public parks, and penetrating an underground parking.

The rate of crime reporting is situated at 78.3%. For incivilities, the rate drops significantly (12.9%). When reported, incivilities are reported to the police rather than to the cantonal or municipal civil administration or diplomatic representations. Few conflicts involving neighbours are formally reported to the police; the reporting rate for this type of conflict remains low at 12.7%. This general finding uncovers a paradox. While incivilities are seldom reported officially to the police, it appears that the police image suffers from higher levels of incivilities. This is what can be seen from the next section.

### ***The police image in the neighbourhood***

In absolute terms, the image of the police at neighbourhood level is good. 79.1% of expatriates surveyed estimate that the police do a good job in their residential neighbourhood. However, this score is significantly below the average observed in the 2007 survey. In 2007, 86% of the Geneva residents were satisfied with the work of the police in their neighbourhood.

There are spectacular variations within the canton. The image of the police is significantly lower in neighbourhoods otherwise judged less safe and more prone to incivilities. A bottom is reached in the neighbourhoods of the Pâquis and the Gare de Cornavin where negative opinions outnumber positive ones (by 50.8% to 49.2%). Satisfaction rates (over 80%) are highest in localities on the Right and Left Banks and in residential areas of Geneva City (Champel, Petit-Saconnex, Florissant).

Police image is a complex notion deriving from a number of different factors. The main factors are the opinion regarding security in Geneva in general, the sense of insecurity in one’s neighbourhood, the opinion regarding the fairness of the police as well as the experienced levels of burglary and incivilities. The impact of the sense of insecurity on the police image is quite remarkable. 85.6% of the « secured » are satisfied with the work of the police in their neighbourhood, while only 56.7% of the “unsecured” share this opinion. This finding confirms that dedicating resources to improving the

sense of security will translate into better rates of satisfaction with police services at neighbourhood level.

### ***Visibility, contact, and the opinion on the fairness of the police***

The visibility of the cantonal police seems fairly limited in the eyes of expatriates. The survey reveals that a great majority of the expatriates (70.7%) see gendarmerie patrols less than two times a week in their residential area. The figure is lower for the Police de la Sécurité Internationale. 92% of the expatriates see patrols of this agency less than two times a week in their residential area. Cantonal variations between localities are not significant.

A majority of 54% of expatriates have never had any direct contact with the police. When a contact did take place, the reason was reporting a crime (36.2%), reporting a problem or a suspicious behaviour (13.2%), or reporting a traffic accident and providing other information to the police (9.1%). Far less often, the contact took place within the context of a traffic control or another routine check (6.2%).

In most cases, the contact with the police has been judged satisfactory by the expatriates (54.2%). However, it should be reminded that the satisfaction rate was much higher in 2007. At that time, 72.6% of the Geneva residents declared themselves satisfied with the contact with the police. In 2009, 23.4% have remained neutral with their judgement, expressing neither satisfaction nor dissatisfaction. But 22.4% of the expatriates (N=175) having had an encounter with the police have expressed dissatisfaction with the contact. The reasons for dissatisfaction are multiple. In the majority of the cases (61.1%), the motive for dissatisfaction has been a perceived « passivity » of the police. A “poor interest demonstrated” by the police to one’s case is often a reason for dissatisfaction. If one retains only the first motive of dissatisfaction named, it appears that 56 expatriates – or in 27.1% of the cases where dissatisfaction was expressed – the attitude of the police officer (politeness, prejudices) motivated the dissatisfaction.

The opinion of expatriates regarding the fairness of the police is significantly better than in 2007. 62.7% of the surveyed expatriates consider that the police treat fairly everybody. In 2007, only 42.4% of the residents of Geneva expressed this opinion.

74.5% of the expatriates claim that they never had any direct contact with the Police de la Sécurité Internationale. Encounter with this agency takes place in principle at the airport or during working hours in international organizations. Only 5% of the expatriates declare themselves dissatisfied with the contact they had with this agency.

### ***What are the measures favoured by expatriates for a safer Geneva?***

To respond to insecurity in Geneva, expatriates favour a greater visibility of the police (54.3% of first responses) and the guarantee of a rapid intervention in case of an incident (14.4% of first responses). More public lights, video surveillance or cleaning of public spaces are mentioned more marginally; they are considered only as complementary measures to improve security and are not meant to replace a stronger police presence in the streets.

When asked to choose between street foot patrols, rapid patrol car interventions and a police station in the neighbourhood, expatriates plebiscite foot patrols (51%); rapid patrol car interventions come second (40.3%) and the neighbourhood police station third (8.7%). The choice in favour of foot patrols is much clearer than in 2007. In 2007, residents of the City of Geneva were already 44% to favour foot patrols against 46.1% who preferred rapid patrol car interventions. Foot patrols had their best score in a few suburban neighbourhoods of the canton in 2007. In 2009, the tendency seems to have strengthened significantly and, at least for the expatriates, foot patrols have become the clear priority in terms of police services.

Asked to prioritize their preferences in terms of strategic objectives for the police, expatriates declared that the first three priorities should be the fight against criminality in general (68.3%), drugs scenes (60.8%) and finally juvenile delinquency (40.7%).