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Are social attitudes changing? A law discriminating against the itinerant way of life has been rescinded. Voters have approved a controversial camping site for itinerant people. And a survey shows that the majority of Swiss are accepting of the itinerant lifestyle.



However, according to a representative survey published in March by the Federal Statistical Office and the Service for Combating Racism, the Swiss seem to be more accepting of the itinerant minorities than was generally thought. Some 67 per cent of those questioned consider the itinerant lifestyle of Switzerland's native Yenish and Sinti communities to be part of Swiss diversity, while 56 per cent believe that Switzerland should do more for persons with an itinerant way of life. Irrespective of these positive attitudes, the concerns of the itin-

A debacle was looming in February, shortly before the aforementioned survey was due to be published. In the canton of Berne, all the signs were that voters would emphatically reject a proposed caravan site for non-Swiss members of the itinerant community. However, a 53.5 per cent majority of Bernese voters approved the loan needed to create the site, which

Photo: Danielle Liniger

Results of the survey
on attitudes towards
people with an itiner-
ant way of life:
oqy.de/swiss-diversity

Representatives of the Yenish, Sinti and Roma communities told "Swiss Review" that the Berne vote, the survey and the court ruling are encouraging "rays of hope" but nothing more. This is because itinerant people remain in a difficult predicament. Any goodwill towards them quickly evaporates once push comes to shove. For example, the Bernese electorate gave a clear thumbs up to the Wileroltigen caravan site while 91 per cent of voters in the village rejected it.