



Police identity checks

What you need to know

This leaflet explains how police identity checks work.
You will find information here about your rights and obligations.



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The police have several important roles: protecting people, ensuring public safety and enforcing the law. In order to do this, they may carry out identity checks.

The aim of this leaflet is to help you understand what the police can and cannot do during a police check.

The information contained in this leaflet is intended for everyone, especially young people, migrants and those in situations of vulnerability.

You have the right to respect and dignity, which is why the police act in accordance with certain rules and procedures. They cannot check your identity based solely on your appearance, your origin or your clothing.



What are your rights during a police check?

- You have the right to ask for the identification number of the uniformed police officer.
- You can ask to see their police badge and police ID card if they are in plain clothes.
- You can ask for the reason for the check; the police are required to provide this information upon request.
- You have the right to remain silent, meaning you do not have to answer any questions except those concerning your identity.
- You can refuse to provide any information that could incriminate you or a member of your family.

Useful information

- In the event of a contentious situation, remain calm and write down what happened: the place, the time, the names or badge numbers of the police officers. Keep a record of any inappropriate behaviour or comments and get the contact details of any witnesses so you can get in touch with them later.
- If you feel that the police have been disrespectful, you can send a complaint to the Cantonal Police (Police cantonale) or the Cantonal Office for the Integration of foreigners and the prevention of racism (Bureau cantonal pour l'intégration des étrangers et la prévention du racisme - BCI). You'll find the contact details at the end of this leaflet.
- If you believe that the police are breaking the law, you have the right to file a criminal complaint. When you write to the Public Prosecutor's Office, you can send any evidence you have, such as a medical certificate.
- You can request the presence of a lawyer (possibly at your own expense) during criminal proceedings.

What happens during a check?

- If the situation allows, the police must explain why they are checking you and what they suspect.
- If the police think you have done something illegal or that there is danger, they have the right to check your identity and see if you are a wanted person.
- If the police think you may have a dangerous object, or if they suspect that you may have committed an offence or are about to commit one, they have the right to search you and look through your belongings and your vehicle.

In general, a male police officer will conduct searches on men and a female police officer will conduct searches on women. If you are transgender or intersex, you can discuss the matter with the police officers and decide together how to proceed. A search conducted in public must be limited to minor inspections (e.g. patting down clothing) and must respect the person's dignity.

The police may seize a phone for investigation, but access to its contents requires the consent of its owner, who agrees to provide the passcode. Without consent, access to the phone's contents can only be obtained with a court order. The court's decision to seize a phone can be appealed.

The police may also need to search your home. They can only do so with written or verbal authorisation from a court official, except in an urgent situation where they may need to act quickly.

If you are being checked, you must identify yourself. If you resist and prevent the police from doing their job, they are allowed to use proportionate force. This is for your own safety and that of others around you.

Lastly, the police have the right to take you to a police station if:

- they have doubts about your identity (for example, if you do not have your identity documents with you or refuse to show them);
- they believe you have done something that is against the law.

The police are required to maintain confidentiality. This means that they are not allowed to speak about you outside of their job.

Minors are covered by special laws, including a juvenile criminal code and special criminal procedures. In all cases, if a minor is arrested or if their property is seized, the minor's legal guardians must be notified.

Your cooperation and compliance with instructions will facilitate the smooth running of the police check.

What laws govern police action?

- Cantonal Police Act – LPol
- Federal Road Traffic Act – LCR
- Swiss Code of Criminal Procedure – CPP
- Municipal regulations

Contacts

Vaud Cantonal Police (Police cantonale vaudoise)

Threat and Complaints Management Division (Division gestion des menaces et doléances)

Route de la Blécherette 101

1014 Lausanne

Email: info.police@vd.ch

People who encounter racist situations can make an appointment at one of three consultation centres:

Cantonal Office for the Integration of foreigners and the prevention of racism (Bureau cantonal pour l'intégration des étrangers et la prévention du racisme - BCI)

Telephone: 021 316 49 59

Email: info.integration@vd.ch

Info-racism hotline of the Lausanne Office for Immigrants (Bureau lausannois pour les immigrants - BLI)

Telephone: 021 315 20 21

Email: inforacisme@lausanne.ch

Protestant Social Centre (Centre social protestant - CSP) in the Jura-Nord Vaudois and Broye-Vully regions

Walk-in service without appointment: Fridays from 12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Hotline at 021 577 66 60: Fridays from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Email: inforacisme@csp-vd.ch

Who produced this brochure?

- The Vaud police force
- The Cantonal Office for the Integration of foreigners and the prevention of racism (Bureau cantonal pour l'intégration des étrangers et la prévention du racisme - BCI)
- Member associations of the platform for exchange and dialogue between the police and foreign communities



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