

First aid fact sheet



First aid in Switzerland

The 7 key facts from the study

A joint study by Helsana and the Swiss Red Cross, carried out by gfs.bern in March 2026.

First aid in Switzerland 2026 – the key facts

“Only one in two people feels confident enough to help in an emergency.”

A study by the Swiss Red Cross and Helsana on first aid in Switzerland.

Around 2000 people aged 18 to 74 across Switzerland were surveyed for the study in March 2026. The survey was based on gfs.bern's in-house online panel, "Polittrends". The results are representative of the linguistically integrated resident population between the ages of 18 and 74 and allow a sound assessment of the current state of first aid in Switzerland.

Helsana

Swiss Red Cross



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Fact 1: Many have experience with medical emergencies involving others

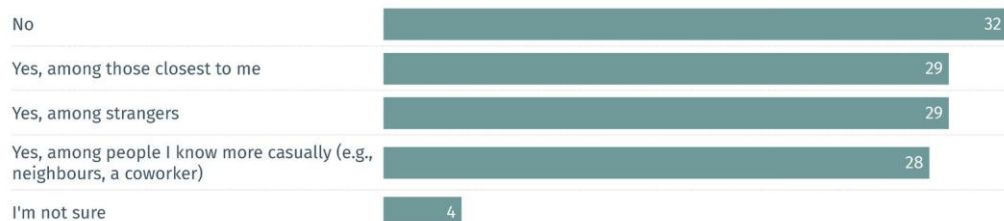
Around two thirds of the population have witnessed at least one medical emergency involving another person first-hand, whether in their immediate personal environment, in their wider social circle or among strangers. Medical emergencies were most often witnessed in a private context – specifically at home.

Witnessing someone else's medical emergency

Have you personally witnessed someone else's medical emergency firsthand?

Multiple answers allowed

as % of the population aged between 18 and 74



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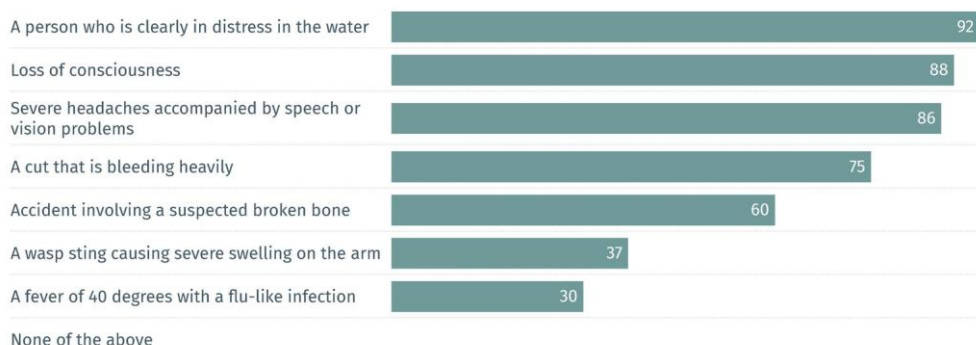
Fact 2: The definition of emergencies is narrowing

A clear majority of the population defines life-threatening situations – such as loss of consciousness (88%), severe headaches accompanied by speech or vision problems (86%) or a person in distress in the water (92%) – as emergencies.

Personal definition of an emergency

Which of the following events or situations would you consider an emergency? Please check all that apply.

as % of the population aged between 18 and 74



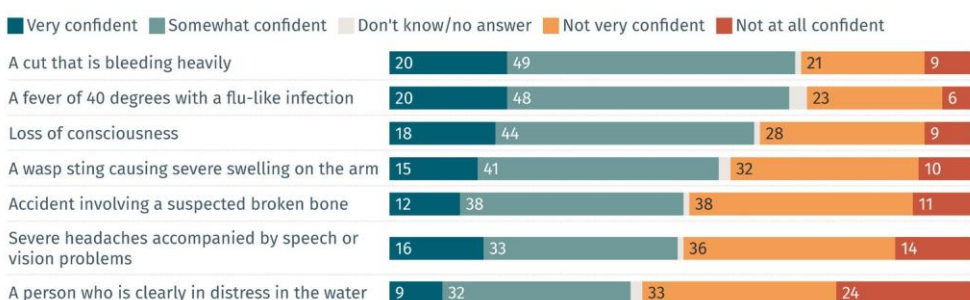
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In the general self-assessment, around half of the population feels somewhat to very confident in dealing with emergencies. The perceived confidence in taking action varies significantly depending on the emergency: confidence is high in straightforward and more common situations, but much lower with increasing complexity and especially when it comes to emergencies in the water.

Confidence in taking action in emergency situations

How confident do you feel about administering first aid yourself in the following situations?

as % of the population aged between 18 and 74



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Fact 3: There is a strong willingness to help in emergencies – but limited confidence in taking action

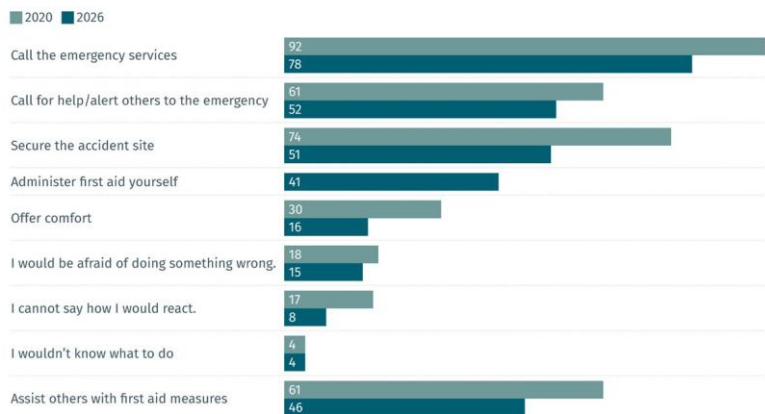
The general willingness to help remains strong among the Swiss population. At the same time, there has been a slight decrease in the willingness to take action in certain situations compared to 2020, despite a slight increase in perceived confidence. Fewer people say they would call the emergency services, secure the accident site or initiate first aid measures themselves. But this failure to (potentially) intervene is not due to a lack of interest, but rather uncertainty – lack of experience and fear of doing something wrong are the most common reasons cited.

Trend: response to medical emergency

Imagine you happen to come across someone who is having a medical emergency. How do you think you would react?

Multiple answers allowed

as % of the population aged 18 and over who have not yet witnessed an emergency involving others



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Fact 4: Broad basic knowledge is offset by gaps in practical application

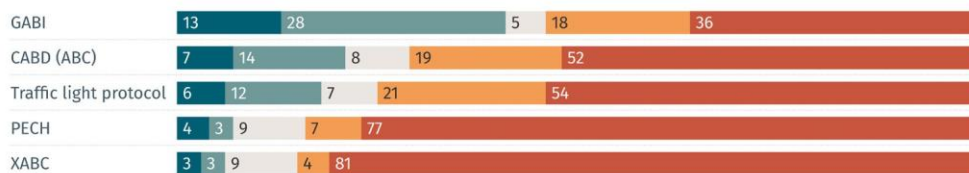
Key elements of first aid, such as calling the emergency services or knowing how a defibrillator works, are broadly established. Levels of knowledge are much more heterogeneous when it comes to specific first aid protocols. GABI, CABD and the traffic light protocol are only known to a portion of the population, and the percentage of those who have actually used a protocol remains significantly smaller than those who are only familiar with them.

Knowledge of the protocols for emergency aid

There are various protocols for providing immediate assistance in medical emergencies. How familiar are you with the following protocols?

as % of the population aged between 18 and 74

■ I have used this protocol myself. ■ I'm familiar with this protocol and know what the letters and abbreviations stand for. ■ Don't know/no answer ■ I've heard of this protocol before. ■ I'm not familiar with this protocol.



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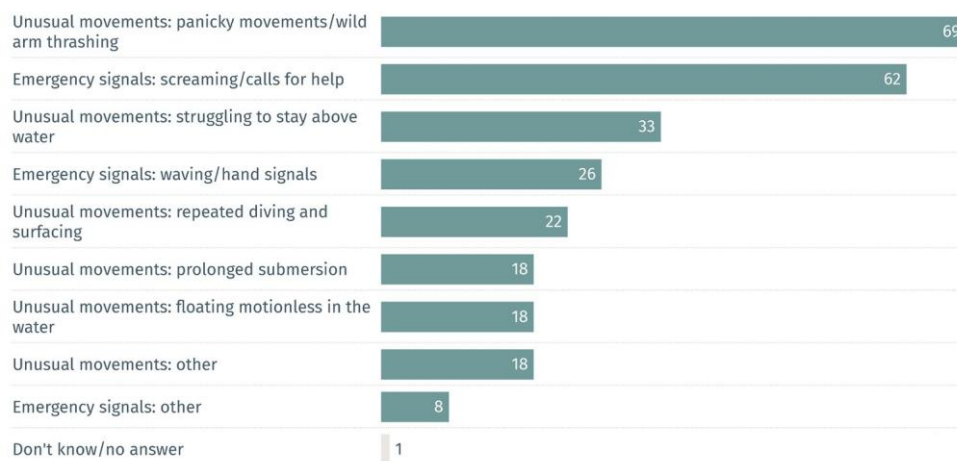
Fact 5: Perceived confidence is lowest in the case of water emergencies

The public primarily recognises obvious, dramatic signs of emergencies in the water, such as calling for help or panicky movements, while real drowning often occurs quietly and inconspicuously. The level of uncertainty is correspondingly high. The public feels less confident in taking action in water emergencies than in any other kind of emergency. Three quarters of those surveyed have also never attended a course that covers how to respond in the event of a drowning incident. Emergencies in the water are a prime example of situations involving a high degree of uncertainty, emotional stress and conflicting goals regarding personal safety.

Recognising the signs of drowning

In your opinion, how can you tell if someone in the water is in distress and needs help?

as % of the population aged between 18 and 74



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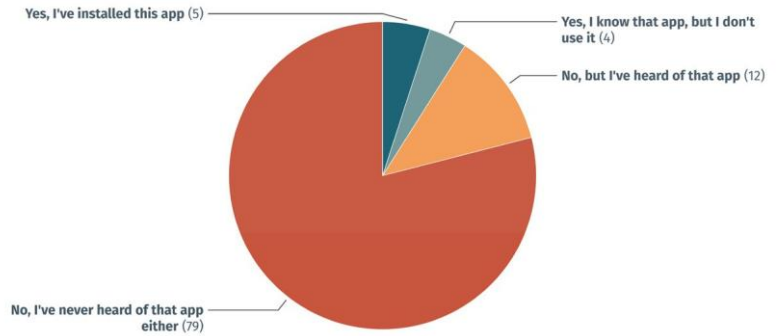
Fact 6: Digitalisation provides support – but use remains low

Digital tools are generally viewed as helpful, but actual use is low. Only 21% are aware of the Red Cross's first aid app. Meanwhile, there is a predominant belief that the availability of digital tools could cause people to neglect their own knowledge or to be more passive. Digitalisation therefore offers clear potential – a potential that to date has only been partially exploited.

Familiarity with the Red Cross "First Aid" app

Have you heard of the Red Cross "First Aid" app?

as % of the population aged between 18 and 74



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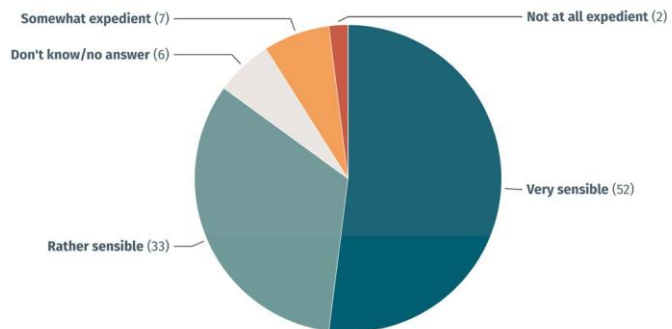
Fact 7: The public wants to see structural support for first aid

Respondents consider national information campaigns to be expedient (85%). Support for specific measures is even greater: mandatory courses in schools (94%) and the workplace (89%) and more defibrillators in public spaces (88%) meet with broad approval. Boosting people's ability to act is thus clearly seen as a task for society as a whole. In terms of funding, the picture is clear: most respondents believe that the main responsibility lies with the federal government.

The importance of national first aid information campaigns

How effective do you think national first aid awareness campaigns are?

as % of the population aged between 18 and 74



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Summary of the study

The study shows that the willingness to help is strong in Switzerland, but the ability to act is limited. Knowledge alone is not enough. Closing the gap will require regular refresher training, early education and targeted awareness-raising. This is precisely what the public is calling for – and it sees first aid as a task for society as a whole.

You can find further information on the study in the final report: www.helsana.ch/redcross

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