Selects 2023 Panel Survey: Technical Report

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Selects in a nutshell

The Swiss Election Study "Selects" has been investigating the determinants of turnout and vote choice in national elections since 1995. Selects is mainly funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (research infrastructure no. 198472) and directed by the "Political Surveys" team at FORS. The Selects scientific commission is mandated by the FORS Foundation Board to guarantee the scientific quality of electoral research in Switzerland and to strengthen the interconnection of Selects with the research community and other authorities involved in elections. At the international level, Selects is part of two major comparative projects: The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) and the Comparative Candidate Survey (CCS).

Selects 2023 consists of four complementary components: A post-election survey (PES), a panel survey, a candidate survey, and a media analysis. For more information, see www.selects.ch. This short technical report specifically focuses on the Selects panel survey and provides information about the study design, the sampling procedure, the response rates and weights.

The Panel Survey

The Panel Survey studies the dynamics of opinion formation and vote intention/choice during the different phases of the election cycle. As in previous election years, three waves were conducted in 2023: the first wave before the start of the main campaign period, the second wave during the election campaign, and the third wave after the federal elections. The panel will then be continued with annual waves until the next federal elections in 2027.

As part of the general call for questions and modules for Selects 2023, researchers were invited to propose questions for inclusion in the panel. These proposals were reviewed by renowned international electoral scholars and evaluated by the Selects scientific commission. Six proposals were eventually inserted in one (or several) of the first three panel waves.

Design and Sampling

Selects is considered a research project of national importance. Therefore, since 2011, respondents were randomly drawn from the sampling register of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (SRPH, Stichprobenrahmen für Personen- und Haushaltserhebungen), in accordance with the Ordinance on the Execution of Federal Statistical Surveys (with Art. 13c, para. 2, lett. d). The Panel Survey is based on a random sample stratified by major regions (7 major regions, equivalent to the NUTS 2 regions of EUROSTAT). We received a sample of N=30'872 Swiss citizens with the right to vote, aged 18 and above (no upper age limit) and living in private households. The sample frame not only contains the name and address to contact people, but also information such as birthdate, sex, marital status or country of birth of all sample members and all household members.

The Selects Panel Study is a self-administered online survey. The questionnaire is available in three languages (German, French, Italian). The fieldwork was carried out by the FORS "Data

Collection and Analysis" team. The Selects Panel Survey was approved by the Central Ethics Committee of the University of Lausanne (project no. C_Services centraux_052023_00011).

In wave 1, all sample members received a pre-notification letter, informing them that they would be invited in the following week to participate in a panel survey. The letter also contained an information sheet presenting the aims of Selects as well as a data protection annex. The invitation letter included a personal login to the survey, a free hotline number, an email to get in contact with FORS as well as a link to a webpage with practical information (Q&A) for participants (www.selects.ch/info). Moreover, sample members were told that they would participate in a raffle after completion of the questionnaire (5 x 300 CHF). The invitation letter was followed by up to two reminders. At the end of the wave 1 questionnaire, respondents were asked to indicate an email address for contact in subsequent waves. About 91 percent of all respondents provided a valid email address (N=7'451). In the subsequent waves, respondents were thus contacted with a mix of letters and emails. In each subsequent wave, they received an invitation with a personal login as well as up to two reminders.

Fieldwork and Response Rates

<u>Wave 1</u>
- Data collection (first/last interview): 19.6.2023 – 16.8.2023
- Sample members received a pre-notification letter (12.6.2023), an invitation letter with a personalized login (19.6.2023) and up to two reminders (30.6.2023 and 10.7.2023, respectively)
- Incentive: participation in a raffle of 5x300 CHF
- Initial sample size: 30'872 addresses from FSO sampling frame
- Valid interviews: 8'197
- Median duration of interviews: 27 min

<u>Wave 2</u>
- Data collection: 5.9.2023 – 5.10.2023
- Respondents from wave 1 received an invitation letter with a personal login (5.9.2023), a follow-up email with a link to the survey (8.9.2023) and up to two reminders (by email or letter, 20.9.2023[1] and 29.9.2023)
- Incentive: conditional cash incentive (10 CHF)
- Valid interviews: 6'077
- Median duration of interviews: 13.4 min

<u>Wave 3</u>
- Data collection: 23.10.2023 – 28.11.2023
- Respondents from wave 2 received an invitation letter with a personal login (23.10.2023), a follow-up email with a link to the survey (25.10.2023) and up to two reminders (by email or letter, 3.11.2023 and 16.11.2023)
- Incentive: conditional cash incentive (10 CHF)
- Valid interviews: 5'579
- Median duration of interviews: 16.4 min

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[1] Date of first reminder by letter. Due to a programming error, the email reminder was sent a day later (21st September).

<u>Wave 4</u>

- Data collection: 23.09.2024 – 04.11.2024
- Respondents from wave 3 received an invitation letter with a personal login (23.09.2024), a follow-up email with a link to the survey (26.09.2024 and up to two reminders (by letter, 08.10.2024 and then by email or letter, 21.10.2023)
- Incentive: participation in a raffle of 5x300 CHF
- Valid interviews: 4'919
- Median duration of interviews: 15.7 min

Table 1   *Response rates, Selects 2023 Panel Study*

	Wave 1	In %	Wave 2	In %	Wave 3	In %	Wave 4	In %
Total sample / invitations	30'872	100.0	8'088	100.0	6'070	100.0	5'535	100.0
Interviews	*8'899*	*28.8*	*6'196*	*76.6*	*5'633*	*92.8*	*4'983*	*90*
Valid questionnaire (>80% completed)	8'152	26.4	6'058	74.9	5'574	91.8	4'914	88.8
Valid partial questionnaire (50%-80% completed)	45	0.1	19	0.2	5	0.1	5	0.1
Invalid questionnaire (< 50% completed and/or in less than a third of the median duration)	505	1.6	85	1.1	23	0.4	38	0.7
Substitution (other person completed questionnaire)*	197	0.6	34	0.4	31	0.5	26	0.5
Informed non answers	*1'211*	*3.9*	*45*	*0.6*	*19*	*0.3*	*36*	*0.7*
Active refusal (no interest, language problem, etc.)	795	2.6	34	0.4	14	0.2	9	0.2
Health problem, age	173	0.6	3	0	4	0.1	0	0
Deceased respondent	28	0.1	1	0	0	0	2	0
Address not traceable	215	0.7	7	0.1	1	0	25	0.5
Nonresponse (no information)	*20'762*	*67.3*	*1847*	*22.8*	*418*	*6.9*	*516*	*9.3*
Response rate (AAPOR 2)		**26.6**		**75.1**		**91.9**		**88.9**

*reported age and/or sex did not correspond to the sampling frame

Table 1   continued

	Wave 5	In %	Wave 6	In %	Wave 7	In %
Total sample / invitations						
Interviews						
Valid questionnaire (>80% completed)						
Valid partial questionnaire (50%-80% completed)						
Invalid questionnaire (< 50% completed and/or in less than a third of the median duration)						
Substitution (other person completed questionnaire)*						
Informed non answers						
Active refusal (no interest, language problem, etc.)						
Health problem, age						
Deceased respondent						
Address not traceable						
Nonresponse (no information)						
Response rate (AAPOR 2)						

*reported age and/or sex did not correspond to the sampling frame

Weighting

Weights were included to adjust reported turnout rates and party vote shares to official results. For instance, it is well-known that post-election surveys regularly overestimate voter turnout by 10 points or more.[2] Table 2 confirms that this is also the case of the Selects Panel Study. Reported turnout rates (waves 2 and 3 combined) reached 78.7% in our sample, whereas the official participation rate in the 2023 federal elections amounted to 46.7% according to the Federal Statistical Office, producing a "turnout gap" of more than 30 points. Such gaps may result from overreporting due to social desirability (measurement bias), but also from an overrepresentation of actual voters in the survey (nonresponse bias).[3]

When such biases are corrected by weighting, this is done based on certain assumptions. The turnout weight *weight_t* applied in the present study assumes that self-reported voters and non-voters in the samples are each representative of the corresponding segments in the population. This weight is calculated as the quotient of the actual turnout rate according to the Federal Statistical Office and the reported turnout rate in the sample. Respondents with missing answers to the turnout question received a weight of 1.

Table 2   *Turnout weight (weight_t) based on the official turnout rate according to the Federal Statistical Office and the reported turnout rate in the sample (waves 2 and 3 combined, in %)*

Turnout	Official	Sample	Weight_t
Yes, participated in the election	46.7	78.7	0.59
No, did not participate in the election	53.3	21.3	2.50

In a similar way, we also included a weight *weight_p* to adjust the party vote shares reported in the sample to the official election results. Respondents who did not participate in the elections and for whom we have missing answers to the party choice variables received a weight of 1. Table 3 reports the calculated weights.

In addition, a total weight *weight_tot* was calculated by multiplying the party and turnout weights.

Table 3   *Party weight (weight_p) based on the official party shares according to the Federal Statistical Office and the party shares reported in the sample (waves 2 and 3 combined, in %)*

Party	Official	Sample	Weight_p
Swiss People's Party (SVP)	27.9	20.8	1.34
Liberals (FDP.Die Liberalen)	14.3	13.3	1.08
The Centre	14.1	15.1	0.93
Green Liberal Party (GLP)	7.6	10.1	0.75
Social-Democratic Party (SP)	18.3	23.6	0.78
Green Party (GPS)	9.8	10.4	0.94
Other party	8	6.7	1.19

The fourth wave also includes a party weight *(W4_weight_p)*. It adjusts the party choice intentions (variable W4_f10851main6, party choice if elections held next Sunday) to the official

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[2] E.g. DeBell M. et al. (2020). The Turnout Gap in Surveys : Explanations and Solutions. *Sociological Methods & Research* 49(4) : 1133-1162.
[3] E.g., Sciarini, P. and Goldberg, A.C. (2017). Lost on the way. Nonresponse and its influence on turnout biais in post-election surveys. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 29(2): 291-315.

election results from 2023 (see Table 3). In the absence of any other official reference, we consider the election results as a proxy for real party choice intentions.

Furthermore, *longitudinal weights* adjust the sample of the respondents from the second to the fourth wave to the respondents of the first wave (N=8197, variables *W2_longweight* to *W4_longweight*).

We estimated logit models to calculate predicted probabilities to participate in the second to the fourth wave using the relevant independent variables from the sampling frame (age, age squared, sex, household size, migration background, marital status, language region, commune type, whether both parents were both in Switzerland) plus the relevant independent survey variables from wave 1 (whether survey was taken on mobile telephone, working status, political interest in the waves this variable was asked, intention to vote, number of votes participated, left-right self-assessment, satisfaction with democracy, education, equivalized household income, whether voted for SVP in the waves this variable was asked, four questions on the survey experience). Missing variables were imputed using chained equations. Only respondents from wave n have been invited to participate in wave n+1.

Citation of dataset

Selects. (2025). Selects 2023 Panel Survey (waves 1-4) (Version 2.0) [Data set]. FORS.