Selects 2023 Post-Election Survey (PES): 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 Candidates 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 post-election survey and provides information about the study design, the sampling procedure, the response rates and weights.

The Post-Election Survey (PES)

The Post-Election Survey studies citizens' participation and abstention in national elections and the reasons thereof. Importantly, it sheds light on the question who votes for a certain party or candidate and why. As in previous election years, this survey was fielded among a large representative sample from all Swiss cantons starting the day after the federal elections.

As part of the general call for questions and modules for Selects 2023, researchers were invited to propose questions for inclusion in the Post-Election Survey. These proposals were reviewed by renowned international electoral scholars and evaluated by the Selects scientific commission. Three proposals were eventually inserted into the Post-Election Survey.

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 (i.e., with Art. 13c, para. 2, lett. d). The Post-Election Survey is based on a random sample stratified by cantons. This means that the respondents were not selected at random across Switzerland as a whole, but canton by canton. Small cantons were oversampled to have at least 50 respondents in each canton. An additional oversampling was done in the cantons of Geneva and Ticino thanks to the financial support of these two cantons. We received a net sample of N=10'395 Swiss citizens with the right to vote, aged 18 and above (no upper age limit) and living in private households in Switzerland. The sample frame not only contains the name and address to contact people, but also additional information such as birthdate, sex, marital status or country of birth of all sample members and all household members.

The Selects Post-Election Survey is a self-administered survey conducted using a sequential mixed-mode design with web offered as the first option: 90% responded in this way, while 10% responded by returning the paper questionnaire that was sent out later to those not having completed the web questionnaire. 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 Post-Election Survey was approved by the Central Ethics Committee of the University of Lausanne (project no. C_Services centraux_092023_00004).

Around one week before the federal elections, all sample members received a pre-notification letter, informing them that they would be invited in the following week to participate in the survey. The letter also contained an information sheet presenting the aims of Selects as well as a data protection annex. One day after the federal elections of 22 October 2023, the sample members received an invitation letter which included a personal login to the online survey, a free hotline number, an email to get in contact with FORS as well as an unconditional cash incentive of 10 CHF. The invitation letter was followed by up to three reminders. In mid-November, all sample members who had not yet completed the online questionnaire were sent a paper questionnaire together with the second reminder. The deadline for completed questionnaires to be taken into account was 11 January 2024.

Fieldwork and Response Rates

- Data collection (first/last interview): 23.10.2023 – 11.01.2024
- Sample members received a pre-notification letter (16.10.2023), an invitation letter with a personalized login (23.10.2023) and up to three reminders (03.11.2023, 16.11.2023, and 05.12.2023 respectively). Those who had not yet completed the web questionnaire by the time of the second reminder received not only the reminder but also a paper questionnaire.
- Incentive: unconditional cash incentive (10 CHF)
- Initial sample size: 10'395 addresses from the Federal Statistical Office sampling frame
- Valid interviews: 5'033
- Median duration of (web) interviews: 32.6 min

Table 1   Response rate, Selects 2023 Post-Election Survey

	N	In %
Total sample / invitations	10'395	100.0
Interviews	*5'370*	*51.7*
Valid complete questionnaires (>80% of web questionnaire completed or paper questionnaire returned)	5'014	48.2
Valid partially completed questionnaires (50%-80% of web questionnaire completed)	19	0.2
Invalid questionnaires (<50% of web questionnaire completed and/or web questionnaire completed in less than a third of the median duration)	173	1.7
Substitution (other person completed questionnaire)*	164	1.6
Informed non-responses	*757*	*7.3*
Active refusal (no interest, language problems, etc.)	580	5.6
Health problems, age	72	0.7
Deceased sample members	9	0.1
Address not traceable	96	0.9
Non-responses (no information)	*4'268*	*41.1*
Response rate (AAPOR 2)		**48.4**
Online participation	4'512	89.6
Participation via paper questionnaire	521	10.4

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

Weighting

Weights were included to adjust the oversampling of certain cantons, reported turnout rates and party vote shares to official statistics.

Table 2 shows the distribution of respondents by canton in 2023 ("Sample"), the share of the population with the right to vote in each canton according to the Federal Statistical Office ("Official") and the resulting weights for each canton (design weight, "weight_d"). These weights are equivalent to the quotient of the share of people eligible to vote in each canton divided by the share of respondents from the same canton. Applying the design weight to the data makes it possible, a posteriori, to equalise a respondent's probability of being selected to participate in the survey between all cantons.

Table 2　　　*Design weight (weight_d) based on the share of eligible voters in each canton according to the Federal Statistical Office and the share of respondents from each canton in the sample*

Canton	Official	Sample	weight_d	Canton	Official	Sample	weight_d
ZH	17.3	10.9	1.59	SH	1.0	1.8	0.53
BE	13.4	8.7	1.55	AR	0.7	2.0	0.35
LU	5.1	3.4	1.49	AI	0.2	2.2	0.10
UR	0.5	1.6	0.29	SG	5.9	3.3	1.81
SZ	1.9	2.1	0.93	GR	2.5	2.8	0.91
OW	0.5	2.2	0.23	AG	7.9	4.5	1.77
NW	0.6	1.9	0.30	TG	3.2	2.0	1.62
GL	0.5	1.7	0.29	TI	4.0	13.3	0.30
ZG	1.4	1.7	0.81	VD	8.5	4.3	1.96
FR	3.9	2.3	1.66	VS	4.2	2.9	1.43
SO	3.3	2.8	1.18	NE	2.0	2.2	0.94
BS	2.0	1.5	1.34	GE	5.0	13.3	0.37
BL	3.4	3.1	1.10	JU	1.0	1.5	0.67

It is well-known that post-election surveys regularly overestimate voter turnout by 10 points or more.[1] Table 3 confirms that this is also the case of the Selects Post-Election Survey. Reported turnout rates reached 66.8% in our whole 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 20 percentage 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).[2]

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. The same procedure is applied to calculate the

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[1] E.g., DeBell M. et al. (2020). The Turnout Gap in Surveys: Explanations and Solutions. *Sociological Methods & Research* 49(4): 1133-1162.
[2] 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.

turnout weights for the cantons of Zurich, Geneva and Ticino to allow for separate analyses in these cantons.

Table 3   Turnout weight (weight_t) based on the official turnout rate according to the Federal Statistical Office and the reported turnout rate in the sample

	Turnout		*Official*	*Sample*	*weight_t*
Switzerland	yes		46.7	66.8	0.70
	no		53.3	33.2	1.60
Canton of Zurich	yes		47.0	70.1	0.67
	no		53.0	29.9	1.77
Canton of Geneva	yes		39.9	59.8	0.67
	no		60.1	40.2	1.50
Canton of Ticino	yes		48.0	63.9	0.75
	no		52.0	36.1	1.44

In a similar way, we also included a party 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. Again, the same procedure is applied to calculate the party weights for the cantons of Zurich, Geneva and Ticino to allow for separate analyses in these cantons. Table 4 reports the calculated weights.

Table 4   Party weight (weight_p) based on the official party shares according to the Federal Statistical Office and the party shares reported in the sample

	Party	*Official*	*Sample*	*weight_p*
Switzerland	Swiss People's Party (SVP)	27.9	25.4	1.10
	Liberals (FDP)	14.3	14.8	0.96
	The Centre (former CVP/BDP)	14.1	15.0	0.94
	Green Liberal Party (GLP)	7.6	8.0	0.95
	Social-Democratic Party (SP)	18.3	21.1	0.87
	Green Party (GPS)	9.8	7.7	1.27
	Other party	8.0	8.0	0.99
Canton of Zurich	Swiss People's Party (SVP)	27.4	24.5	1.12
	Liberals (FDP)	12.5	16.0	0.78
	The Centre (former CVP/BDP)	8.2	8.8	0.93
	Green Liberal Party (GLP)	12.4	16.0	0.78
	Social-Democratic Party (SP)	21.1	23.7	0.89
	Green Party (GPS)	9.9	5.3	1.86
	Other party	8.5	5.6	1.52
Canton of Geneva	MCG (*Mouvement Citoyens Genevois*)	12.3	10.3	1.19
	Swiss People's Party (SVP)	15.3	14.0	1.09
	Liberals (FDP)	15.7	13.8	1.14
	The Centre (former CVP/BDP)	8.2	7.4	1.11
	Green Liberal Party (GLP)	6.7	6.3	1.06
	Social-Democratic Party (SP)	18.4	24.6	0.75
	Green Party (GPS)	15.4	14.0	1.10
	PST-POP (*Parti Suisse du Travail – Parti Ouvrier Populaire*) / EàG (*Ensemble à Gauche*)	2.5	3.7	0.68
	Other party	5.5	5.8	0.94

Canton of Ticino	Lega	13.5	5.4	2.50
	Swiss People's Party (SVP)	15.1	21.3	0.71
	Liberals (FDP)	21.2	25.2	0.84
	The Centre (former CVP/BDP)	17.7	14.4	1.23
	Social-Democratic Party (SP)	12.5	15.4	0.81
	Green Party (GPS)	9.1	5.9	1.54
	Other party	10.9	12.3	0.88

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

Citation of dataset
Selects. (2024). Selects 2023 Post-Election Survey (Version 1.0) [Data set]. FORS.