# Environment, foreigners, women's rights

What are the burning issues in Swiss votes?

Since 1848, the Swiss have had their say on over 600 nationwide ballots. Are there issues that have recently been more popular?

Half of the states in the world have some form of direct legislation. But Switzerland stands alone in how extensively it uses it. The Swiss go to polls about four times a year for national votes. swissinfo.ch looked at all the ballots' themes since Switzerland's first constitution in 1848.

We used data compiled by [Centre for Research on Direct Democracy](http://c2d.ch/), which tagged all the votes to take place on a national level in Switzerland (more than 600) with keyword themes. Each ballot was assigned between one to three themes. Below you can see the frequency of the main themes.

ontent/43245692GRAPHIC 1: What are the most common themes in Switzerland's federal ballots?

* Please fill up this google sheet: [https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1URxqHwFdPDMMi9Fj4uxI-oSC0y70lHFWuc3sSBcqbho/edit - gid=0](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1URxqHwFdPDMMi9Fj4uxI-oSC0y70lHFWuc3sSBcqbho/edit#gid=0)
* Standalone graphic preview: <https://interactive.swissinfo.ch/2017_06_08_DDballo_themes/keyword_worldcloud_50_EN.html>
* Row: 8-42, themes were pre-filled with google translate. **Please review and overwrite the text if necessary!**
* As usual, please duplicate the master story. Once the graphic is deployed in your language, you just have to replace **EN**in the iframe src url with your language abbreviation, one of: **FR, DE, IT, PT, RU, ES, JA, ZH**

If you're looking for more detailed information on the outcome of these votes, or on how these issues developed, the graphic below offers a more complete view showing the ballots by topic, over time.

There are three types of votes represented in the following graphic, all of which are part of a direct democracy: mandatory referendums, optional referendums and people's initiatives. These different types of votes are explained at the end of this article.

In general, people's initiatives are rejected much more often than referendums. Swiss citizens turn down about 90% of all people's initiatives, while they accept over 70% of mandatory referendums.

ontent/43245732GRAPHIC 2: What is Switzerland's direct democracy about?

* Please fill up the same google sheet (row 43 onwards): [https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1URxqHwFdPDMMi9Fj4uxI-oSC0y70lHFWuc3sSBcqbho/edit - gid=0](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1URxqHwFdPDMMi9Fj4uxI-oSC0y70lHFWuc3sSBcqbho/edit#gid=0)
* Standalone graphic preview: <https://interactive.swissinfo.ch/2017_06_08_DDballo_themes/chVotes_byKeyword_prod_EN.html>
* As usual, please duplicate the master story. Once the graphic is deployed in your language, you just have to replace **EN**in the iframe src url with your language abbreviation: **FR, DE, IT, PT, RU, ES, JA, ZH**

There is some subjectivity in defining the key topic of a ballot. But based on the data available, we can see a recent rise in people's initiatives on the environment, immigration and the status of women. We also know that since the 1970s, the  [number of national people's initiatives put to vote has increased](https://studio.silium.ch/blueprint/servlet/page/eng/politics/explore-600-national-votesadd-the-underlinehow-direct-democracy-has-grown-over-the-decades/41481992?p13n_test=true&p13n_testcontext=0)

**INFOBOX**

**Switzerland's direct democracy and its three types of ballots**

* Mandatory referendums (since 1848): In the case of a change, even small, to the constitution by parliament, the people must have their say. The same goes for membership of supranational communities or the adoption of laws that have been declared urgent.
* Optional referendums: (since 1874): Swiss citizens can also contest all laws adopted or modified by parliament. For an 'optional referendum' vote to take place, at least 50,000 signatures from citizens must be filed.
* People's initiatives: (since 1891): People’s initiatives allow citizens to propose changes to the constitution by introducing new provisions, or by amending or repealing existing provisions. For an initiative to be submitted for a verdict at the polls, its proponents must gather at least 100,000 signatures from citizens eligible to vote.

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