

Mapping Demographic Composition as a Predictor of Far-Right Success in the 2023 Swiss Federal Election

Exploring Interactions between Anti-Migration Sentiment and Ethnocultural Diversity

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Abstract

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1 Introduction

The most recent parliamentary elections in Switzerland took place on October 22, 2023. Switzerland’s bicameral parliament comprises the National Council, which proportionally represents the Swiss population with seats allocated to each canton based on its population, and the Council of States, where all cantons have equal representation. As the National Council reflects the population proportionally, its election results are often regarded as an indicator of trends in public opinion regarding politics and policy.

Over the past several decades, the distribution of dominant political parties in Swiss national elections has remained relatively stable. The primary parties represented in the federal parliament, along with their respective campaign focuses in the most recent elections, are detailed below. For improved readability, this paper will rely on german-language party names.

Party	2023 Campaign Focus
SVP	Right-wing, anti-immigration, anti-welfare, free market policies
SP	Left-wing, pro-welfare, pro-worker policies, reducing cost of living
FDP	Center-right, free market policies and improved access to international markets
Die Mitte	Conservative centrist, defense spending, lower tax for married couples
GLP	Progressive centrist, climate protection, EU alignment, liberal market policies
GPS	Left-wing, climate protection, biodiversity, state regulation of business

Source: bdp.de TBD

While many European countries have seen an extraordinary rise of right-wing politics throughout the 2010s, not much had shifted in Switzerland. The right-wing SVP (Schweizerische Volkspartei, in french: Union démocratique du centre UDC) has been part of the governing coalition since the 1990s. Certain segments of the party have been classified as far-right and right-wing extremist, most notably due to the party’s hardline positions on migration and strict opposition to any legal protection of social, cultural and religious minorities like swiss muslims or LGBT citizens.

The relationship between regional demographic composition and voting behavior has been a subject of ongoing research and debate, particularly if areas with lower proportions of migrants tend to support stricter immigration policies compared to ethnoculturally diverse regions. In this study, we examine the most recent Swiss election to analyze potential correlations between the percentage of non-Swiss residents and the electoral performance of the Swiss People’s Party (SVP), which centered its campaign on an anti-immigration platform. To control for cofounding variables, other demographic markers as age and education will be included.

2 Background

2.1 Core Concepts

Notes:

- Short historical primer on elections in Switzerland (1 paragraph)
- Short explanation on the voting system and the chambers (1 paragraph)
- Explaining the demographic setup, defining Swiss, Non-Swiss from statistical perspective (2-3 paragraphs)

2.2 State of Research

Notes:

- Is there research on this exact question? If yes, can we make an assumption about the outcome of our analysis (1-2 paragraph)
- What is known about voting behaviors and their relation to demographic structural markers (2-3 paragraphs)
- What is known about anti-migration sentiment in the general public? Can we make an assumption on the outcome based on that? (2-3 paragraphs)
- What is known about voter participation? Who actually goes to the ballots? (2-3 paragraphs)

2.3 Research Question and Hypothesis

Notes (1 page approx.):

- Formulating the research hypotheses: “There is a positive correlation between ethnocultural homogeneity and success of far-right party in the 2023 Swiss elections.”
- Related questions: can we quantify the influence of other predictors like age, educational level on election outcomes?

3 Method

3.1 Data Set

Notes (0.5 page approx):

- List the Data Sets that were used in a table
- Explain Characteristics of the Data Sets: Source, Size, Processing etc.

3.2 Research Process

Notes (0.5 page approx):

- A paragraph or a table on the research steps from developping the research questions up to the analysis.

3.3 Statistical Methods

Notes (0.5 page approx):

- Statitiscal Methods that were applied e.g. Correlation, Multiple Linear Regression

4 Results

4.1 Tables

Some tables.

4.2 Plots

Several elaborate plots with descriptions.

4.3 Maps

5 Limitations

What can not be measured with the results?

Notes (1 page approx.):

- High percentage of population that does not vote at all. Their opinion can't be measured.
- Some people might vote for SVP for other reasons than migration policy
- Different approaches to statistical modelling can produce different results, therefore there is no absolute “truth” (e.g. weighted correlation vs. non-weighted)

6 Discussion

Details of the analysis.

7 Conclusion

How to understand the results.

8 Sources