

FIELDWORK REPORT

REP CITIZEN SURVEY 2018

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Based on the report by FORS

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We thank our Belgian POLPOP colleagues at the University of Antwerp, M²P research group under the direction of Stefaan Walgrave, for providing their technical report of the elites as example.

1. Summary

This fieldwork report describes in detail how the data from the REP Citizen survey with Swiss citizen were collected. Its goal is to provide context for the data that we make available to other researchers.

The data collection was conducted in the framework of the REP Project (www.unige.ch/rep). The project is led by Prof. Frédéric Varone (University of Geneva) who serves as the principal investigator (PI), with Dr. Luzia Helfer employed on the project as a Postdoc. The Institute FORS located at Lausanne University was tasked with data collection of the citizen survey. The REP project is financed by the division I of the Swiss National Science Foundation (project number 100017_172559). REP Switzerland is part of the POLPOP project, a joint research consortium with teams in Switzerland, Belgium (Flanders and Wallonia), The Netherlands, Canada and Germany.

First, this report briefly describes the objectives of the REP study and how ethical clearance was obtained. It then extensively describes the methods used. Next, it addresses the procedure of data collection, how weights were constructed and data handling.

2. Objectives

The main goals of the REP project combining information from an elite and a citizen survey are:

- to study to what extent elected Members of Parliaments (MPs) have correct perceptions regarding the preferences of their cantonal constituency and their party electorate;
- to gather some background variables to explain why some MPs hold more accurate perceptions than others;
- to investigate how perceptions of MPs relate to (1) the information that is at their disposal and (2) their own preferences.

3. Ethical Clearance

On March 15th 2018, before the start of data collection, the REP team submitted an ethical dossier to the ethics commission of the Geneva School of Social Sciences (*Commission facultaire d'éthique de la recherche*). In the official application form, details had to be given regarding the objectives of the project, the targeted population, the procedure, the number of participants, the risks and advantages for the participants, the compensation for participation etc. Regarding the confidentiality of the data, every researcher contributing to the project at any stage had to sign a confidentiality agreement. On April 16th, 2018 the ethics commission notified the REP team that it considered the project to be in line with established ethical standards (CER-SDS-7-2018). All related documents, including the confidentiality agreements, can be found in the folder "0 Ethical clearance".

The research team at UniGE never had access to the raw addresses or names of the sample contacted for the survey. This sensitive information rested with the FORS team at all times for confidentiality (as required by the OFS who made the sample accessible, see 4.1).

4. Method

The information in this section is a summary of information provided by FORS IN THEIR "Technical Report" available in French (see folder "2 Data collection" > "Citizen_rep2018_rapport_technique.pdf", created 17th of August 2018).

4.1 Population and sampling of respondents

The population consists of Swiss residents aged 18 years and older, of Swiss nationality. The population excludes the Italian speaking canton of Ticino.

The sample contacted for this data collection was provided to FORS by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (OFS). It consists of people whose primary residence is Switzerland, who live in a private household and who are aged 18 years or older on the 31st of December 2017. A probability sample was taken which is representative at the national level. At the request of the research team, the population was oversampled in the canton of Geneva. This choice was motivated by the research project's focus on cantonal members of parliament in Geneva to which valid comparisons should be made (i.e. estimations of their perception of the cantonal electorate). Overall, the sample consisted of 10,268 individuals for whom FORS had access to the residential address. The file "rep2018_echantillon.xlsx" (in the folder "2 Data collection") contains the gender, year of birth, canton of residence and whether the respondent has participated in the survey. Moreover, a separate column lists whether the invitation letter had not reached the respondent or s/he had moved (n=86), had died (n=22), was too old to participate (n=47) and other issues, or if a respondent had contacted the team to simply refuse participation (n=208).

4.2 Contact Sequence and Timing

The survey was run in a mixed mode, both online and with a paper version. Respondents were first contacted via a mailed letter and invited to participate in the online survey using an access code. With the second reminder letter, a paper version of the survey was sent. At all times, there was a hotline provided for respondents if they had questions (managed by an external company).

On the 28th of May 2018 all individuals in the sample were first contacted with a mailed letter in French and German, depending on the respondents' first language (see "2 Data collection" > "1_ Invitation and reminder letters" > "1_ Invitation letter_180379_BAT2_Lettre BPR et A4_fichier 02.pdf"). The letter contained a postal cheque of CHF 10 as an incentive which respondents could cash at any Swiss postal office.

A first reminder letter was sent to 8,692 persons who had not responded by the 7th of June 2018 asking respondents to participate in the survey online.

Figure 1. Responses over time split by response mode and with the reminders marked.

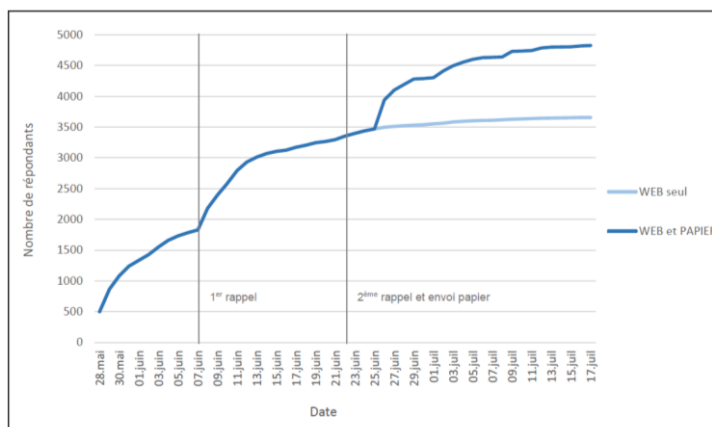


Figure from FORS (2018). Rapport Technique, page 6.

The second and final reminder letter was sent on the 22nd of June 2018 to 6,944 persons. Of these, 114 had started but not finished the survey and received a letter with a

slightly different wording. Respondents received a paper version of the survey with this reminder letter, including a response envelope. In addition, 51 persons who had contacted us saying that they wanted to fill it out on paper received the paper version. Figure 1 illustrates that the paper version significantly increased responses in the last stage of data collection.

Some called or otherwise contacted us to let us know they did not wish to participate (n=208). Moreover, some invitation letters did not reach the respondent because of an invalid address (n=86), the person had died (n= 22), was too old to participate (n=47) and other issues (for a list see the folder "2 Data collection" > "rep2018_echantillon.xlsx").

4.4 Participating sample and response rates

In total, 4,677 respondents participated in the survey, of which 3,641 on line and 1,036 using the paper version of the survey. Among the online responses, 161 were incomplete. Responses over time are pictured in Figure 1.

Table 1: Comparison of population and respondents on key characteristics.

Switzerland		
Gender	Population	Sample
Male	0.480	0.499
Female	0.519	0.499
Education	Population	Sample
No postobligatory education	0.161	0.065
Secondary degree: professional education	0.401	0.400
Secondary degree: general education	0.118	0.104
Tertiary degree: advanced professional education	0.152	0.267
Tertiary degree: university	0.168	0.157
Age category	Population	Sample
18-24	0.092	0.078
25-44	0.292	0.255
45-64	0.356	0.403
>65	0.253	0.264
Party	Population	Sample
UDC/SVP	0.143	0.190
PS/SP	0.091	0.199
PLR/FDP	0.080	0.160
PDC/CVP	0.056	0.081
VERTS/GPS	0.034	0.061
PVL/GLP	0.022	0.050
PBD/BDP	0.020	0.034
Other party	0.039	0.043
Didn't vote	0.515	0.183

Note. Party names in French/German. Source for the population data for gender, education, age: Structural Survey by the Federal Statistical Office, 2017. For the party variable: Party strength in percent in the election of the Federal Council, 2015. Party vote of the sample calculated based on response to the question of vote at previous election in 2015, complemented with information from the party they would vote for if elections were held today if respondents said they did not remember/don't know.

Table 1 shows that respondents are overall representative of the Swiss population from which they were sampled with regards to gender and age. There is some overrepresentation of respondents with advanced professional education (26.7% in the sample versus 15.2% in

the population) and an underrepresentation of respondents with no postobligatory education (6.5% versus 16.1% in the population). This is a known issue in (political) surveys and we had paid special attention when formulating the invitation letter as to not alienate respondents not particularly interested in politics. Evaluating the representativity of the sample with regards to the parties is more challenging as only a small percentage of respondents (18.3%) said they had not voted while we know that participation in elections often does not reach the 50% mark (i.e. in the 2015 elections, 51.5% of the Swiss voting population had not voted).

5. Questionnaires

Full versions of the surveys can be found in the folders (in the original languages German and French in " 1 Questionnaires" > "Questionnaires") as downloads from Qualtrics (.qsf and Word) and as PDFs of the paper versions of the survey that had been sent out (in French and German). Moreover, in the Variable Description file all questions are mentioned in English (in English in "3 Data Files" > "REP Elite 2018 Variable description").

- The occupation of the respondent was automatically matched with the OFS and later the ISCO codes for the occupation in the online survey. Respondents just had to start typing the first letters of their occupation. We used these codes later for constructing a measure of social class (based on Oesch). See the folder "Codes for the professions OFS ISCO" for the lists programmed into the French and German survey.
- The Ultimatum Game questions at the end of the survey, where respondents had to indicate how much of 1000 CHF they would give/receive from another person, were not fielded in the paper version of the survey (sent with the 2nd reminder letter). Randomizations would not be balanced in the paper versions.

6. Data Handling

6.1 Survey data

FORS handled the surveys and automatically read the paper versions of the survey into the existing data set. Combining the online and paper versions was thus done by FORS before delivering the data available to the researchers. A variable in the survey marks the mode of response of each survey and other meta-data.

Data were provided to the research team by FORS on the 17th of August 2018 as a complete data set in SPSS format (.sav, file with information on the timing and one without) and Stata (.dta, no timing information).

A measure for social class based on occupation was also added in the data. For constructing this 5-class-scale, we relied on Oesch and Rennwald (2018)¹. In the online survey, the ISCO code for the occupation was added automatically using a macro provided by FORS which they have used for collecting data for other large-scale surveys. The answers which did not have a code attached, mostly from the paper version of the survey, were later hand-coded using the information from the automatic coding where possible. The automated codes were never changed. The coding can be found in "2 Data collection" > "3 Social Class coding".

¹ Oesch, Daniel and Line Rennwald (2018). Electoral competition in Europe's new tripolar political space: Class voting for the left, centre-right and radical right, *European Journal of Political Research*, 57:4, 783-807.

6.2 Constructing weights

At the request of the research team, Erika Antal from FORS created weights in the data set at the national level (whole of Switzerland, excl. Ticino) and for each canton in July 2019. The weighing procedure was slightly adapted and updated weights added to the data set in November 2020. The procedure is detailed in "3 DATA FILES" > "FORS - Technical report weighting REP.PDF" in English.

To summarize the more detailed report: weights were created based on level of education, gender and age using post-stratification, combined in a second step with iterative proportional fitting using the partisanship (party) of the respondent. This two-step procedure was used because we did not have detailed information on the composition of the partisans of each party (i.e. their age, gender, education distribution).

For some cantons no cantonal weights were constructed due to a low number of observations (AI, AR, UR, NW, OW, GL; n=178 respondents). Yet, all cantons/respondents were included for constructing the weights at the national level.

6.3 Data storage and sharing

In line with our data policy outlined in the ethical clearance, all information related to the project and the data set containing the answers to the survey questions are stored on secure servers located in Switzerland (SWITCH) during the data collection phase. The PI and the project manager have access.

The project team makes all documentation associated with the REP project available on the repository of Geneva University Yareta to make sure those are retrievable for other researchers (non-commercial use). However, access to the complete data set including the identifying information is restricted. If requests are made, after careful review, the project team aims to make the data available for research purposes (always in line with ethical guidelines and in line with the promises made to participants).

7. Publication of results

7.1. Report to participants

At the end of the survey, all participants were asked if they wished to receive a report with the results of the study in an e-mail (and a few paper versions at special request of respondents) on the 22nd of August by FORS (from info@fors.unil.ch). It went to 985 addresses in German and 447 addresses in French (E-Mail message at "4 Publication of results" > "Email_DE/FR_participants.docx"). The reports in the respective language are at "4 Publication of results" > "Bericht REP – Bevoelkerung.pdf" and "Rapport REP – Population.pdf" and on the project website at www.unige.ch/rep.

7.2. Publication in scientific journals

REP was also part of a larger comparative project with data collected in Belgium (Stefaan Walgrave and Jean-Benoit Pilet), Canada (Peter Loewen and Lior Sheffer), Germany (Christian Breunig and Stefanie Bailer) and Netherlands (Rens Vliedhart). Hence, there are publications that focus on the Swiss data only, for example because they use specific questions that were only part of the Swiss surveys. There are also a number of publications that use the larger data set collected in the project (POLPOP). These publications are listed here and can be accessed via relevant journal pages or by contacting the (co-)authors.

To date, most publications use the data from the citizen survey explained here as a benchmark against which to assess the accuracy of the perceptions of members of parliament (MPs). That is, whether MPs' estimation of the percentage of citizens supporting a specific policy proposal is accurate (and to what extent).

Lists last updated July 2021.

Publications using Swiss data only:

1. Helfer, Luzia, Flurina Wäspi and Frédéric Varone (2021). 'Does direct democracy enhance politicians' perceptions of constituency opinion? Evidence from Switzerland', accepted for publication at *Swiss Political Science Review*.
2. Helfer, Luzia and Nathalie Giger (2021). 'Perceptions of inequality and support for redistribution: a direct comparison of citizens and legislators', submitted at *West European Politics*.

Collaborative/comparative publications using Swiss and other countries' data:

Published or submitted manuscripts with Swiss co-authors only

1. Varone, Frédéric and Luzia Helfer (2021). 'Understanding MPs' perceptions of party voters' opinion in Western democracies', *West European Politics*, accepted - forthcoming.
2. Walgrave, Stefaan, Arno Jansen, Julie Sevenans, Karolin Soontjens, Stefanie Bailer, Nathalie Brack, Christian Breunig, Luzia Helfer, Peter Loewen, Toni van der Meer, Jean-Benoit Pilet, Lior Sheffer, Frédéric Varone and Rens Vliegthart (2021). 'Inaccurate Politicians. Elected Representatives' Estimations of Public Opinion in Four Countries', submitted at *The Journal of Politics*.
3. Sevenans, Julie, Stefaan Walgrave, Arno Jansen, Karolin Soontjens, Stefanie Bailer, Nathalie Brack, Christian Breunig, Luzia Helfer, Peter Loewen, Jean-Benoit Pilet, Lior Sheffer, Frédéric Varone and Rens Vliegthart (2021). 'Projection in Politicians' Perceptions of Public Opinion', submitted at *Political Psychology*.
4. Sheffer, Lior, Peter Loewen, Stefaan Walgrave, Stefanie Bailer, Christian Breunig, Luzia Helfer, Jean-Benoit Pilet, Frédéric Varone, Rens Vliegthart (2021). 'How Do Politicians Bargain? Evidence from Ultimatum Games with Legislators in Five Countries', submitted at *American Political Science Review*.
5. Bundi, Pirmin and Frédéric Varone, Peter Loewen, Christian Breunig (2021). 'Personality Traits and Political Congruence of Representatives', submitted at *The Journal of Politics*

Work in progress with Swiss co-authors

1. Varone, Frédéric and Pirmin Bundi, Julie Sevenans, Stefaan Walgrave. Do representatives know the policy priorities of their party voters? Sobering evidence from Switzerland and Belgium (Paper presented at the International Public Policy Association conference 2021)
2. Pilet, Jean-Benoit, Luzia Helfer, Lior Sheffer, Frédéric Varone, Rens Vliegthart and Stefaan Walgrave. 'Conservative bias among members of parliament. An exploration in four countries' (Paper for submission at *Research & Politics*
3. Wüest, Reto, Luzia Helfer and Frédéric Varone. 'Shared class shared opinion? Policy preference congruence between citizens and legislators' (Paper presented at Swiss Political Science Association conference 2020 and European Political Science Association conference 2020).

4. Hug, Simon, Frédéric Varone and Luzia Helfer (potentially Stefaan Walgrave and Lior Sheffer). 'Does better knowledge of public opinion make a politician more successful?', (Paper presented at Swiss Political Science Association conference 2021).

8. Overview of accompanying documents and files

Documents **marked in blue** are not public.

Technical report (ENG, pdf)

0 Ethical clearance

- Application to the ethics commission (EN, titled: "VaroneHelfer_March_2018_Formulaire soumission commission ethique SDSD.pdf")
- Approval of the ethics commission (EN, titled: "March 2018submit_avis CER-SDS-7-2018.pdf")
- Staff Confidentiality Agreement (EN, titled "REP_Confidentiality_Agreement.pdf")

1 Questionnaires and statements' selection

- *Folder: Questionnaires online and Paper (DE/FR)*
- *Folder: Statements*
 - a. Statements' selection document from POLPOP
 - b. Results of the pre-test for Swiss statements

2 Data collection files

- *Folder: 1 Letters*
Invitation, reminder 1 and reminder 2 as Word files in German and French
- *Folder 2: Codes for the professions OFS ISCO*
- *Folder 3: Social class coding of respondents based on the Oesch Index*
- *Folder 4 Reports and documents FORS*
 - a. Official Technical Report by FORS (in French)
 - b. Various documents checking (preliminary) responses

3 Data files – public version

- Codebook Citizen Survey Switzerland (ENG, pdf), public

The following files from the folder "3 Data files" can be accessed after approval by the PI and signing a confidentiality agreement only:

- **Folder: Survey data [confidential – please contact the PI]**

4 Publication of results

- *Folder: Report for participants*
- For the scientific publications please see the list under 7.2 above.