

# **FIELDWORK REPORT**

## **REP ELITE SURVEY 2018**

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## 1. Summary

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

The data collection among Swiss national and regional (=cantonal) politicians described in this report were conducted in the framework of the REP Project ([www.unige.ch/rep](http://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. In the data collection phase, additional people were employed on the project (see below). 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 contact procedure and timing of the fieldwork. Third, it describes the settings of the meetings with elected representatives. Third, detailed response rates are given. Finally, it describes the follow-up procedures during the data-handling phase.

## 2. Objectives

The main goals of the REP project 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 15<sup>th</sup> 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 16<sup>th</sup>, 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".

## 4. Method

### 4.1 Population

The population of Members of Parliaments (MPs) consisted of:

- All active MPs at the National level, meaning the first ("National Council", n=192) and second chamber ("Council of States", n=44), but excluding the 10 representatives from the canton of Ticino (Italian speaking).

- All active MPs in the cantonal parliaments of Berne (n=160) and Geneva (n=100). In total, the population consisted of 495 MPs because one MP was seating in both the national parliament and the cantonal parliament in Berne and was only counted towards the population of the national parliament.

#### *4.2 Contact Sequence and Timing*

Before we contacted MPs personally, we held meetings with the parliamentary services of the respective parliaments to inform them about the project and gain cooperation. At those, the principal investigator and the project manager (national parliament and cantonal parliament of Berne) or a project team member (cantonal parliament of Geneva) were present. The goals of these meetings were to introduce the REP project, to obtain information about experiences with past and/or ongoing research projects and to gain support for the REP project overall. These meetings are described in more detail per parliament below.

The citizen survey (described elsewhere) which is part of the REP project had been held right before and during the summer 2018, while data collection with MPs started right after the summer. To ensure no MP had been contacted for the citizen survey (n=10,026), we asked the University-affiliated institute FORS who had managed the citizen survey to check names and addresses of all MPs of the parliaments we planned to survey against the addresses and names of the citizen survey. They identified two MPs who had also been contacted for the citizen survey and one case where the name was identical (but not the address which, in the parliament records, was listed as a business address). Because only so few MPs had been contacted in the citizen survey, we chose to contact all MPs in our lists.

We used the same procedure in each parliament to contact politicians: first, we sent a personal letter to the MPs in their native language (either French or German). Those letters were hand-signed by the principal investigator and the project manager. The letter contained information about the main goals and the funding of the REP project. MPs were also informed that in the upcoming days, someone from the research team would contact them to schedule a meeting. In a separate information sheet that accompanied the letter, we gave more elaborate information such as a description of the meeting's setup (time and place of the meeting) and information about the confidentiality of the data. In the days after politicians reasonably received this letter via postal mail, we called politicians on their personal mobile phone number or another number that was available to us to ask to schedule a meeting. In these phone calls, we followed a protocol. More information about the exact procedures per parliament below.

##### *4.2.1 National parliament*

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July 2018 the principal investigator and the project manager met with Philippe Schwab, the head of the national parliamentary services, at his office. We discussed access to parliamentary buildings that is usually very restricted, the best places to hold the meetings with MPs, whether we should obtain formal approval by the parliamentary party groups for our project and other more general questions. It was made very clear to us that access was only granted if we had a previously scheduled a personal appointment with an MP. It was absolutely not admissible to spontaneously approach MPs within the parliamentary buildings for meetings. However, MPs did not have to register us with parliamentary services for access but we were able to send an overview of meetings to parliamentary services Friday before a week of parliamentary session and we would obtain an access badge to parliamentary buildings (see "2 Data collection files"> "Access to parliamentary buildings" > "Access national level"). This was invaluable as it meant we required less cooperation by MPs (they picking us

up/bringing us to the entrance) and allowed us to be flexible with meetings and their locations during parliament was in session.

The contact letter to MPs was sent out on August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2018. The original letters can be found at "2 Data collection files" > "Contact letters and information sheet" > "Invitation letter NR SR\_DE.pdf" (or >"Invitation letter NR SR\_FR.pdf" for the French version). Following this initial letter, a handful of MPs or their assistants spontaneously replied via phone or email to let the research team know that they did not wish to participate. To determine in what order we could call politicians to schedule appointments, we randomly divided all MPs into four contact groups stratified by language and party. PI Frédéric Varone took over the French speaking MPs, Project Manager Luzia Helfer the German speaking MPs. One week after sending the letter, from August 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018, we started calling MPs directly on their mobile phones, or their work phone if no mobile number was available. The content of the communication with MPs thereby followed a specific protocol that had been previously established (see "2 Data collection files" > "Instructions for project team members" > "Phonecall\_intro \_National\_FR\_DE.pdf"). Towards the end of the data collection period, Dr. Sarah Bütikofer was taken on board to schedule and conduct meetings with MPs she knew personally from previous projects (mostly Council of States members). In a few cases, we also tried to establish contact with a MP through other MPs who had already participated. In the last phase of the data collection, we started focusing on MPs from the cantons of Berne and Geneva because we ultimately wanted to compare them with the cantonal politicians from the two cantons. Moreover, special emphasis was given to specific parties to increase the representativity of the sample, always taking into account the randomly created contact groups. Last contact attempts with MPs that had not been previously reached were made on October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018, mainly via e-mail.

If a MP was reached, the most common response was the granting of a meeting, followed by the refusals. Scheduling meetings during parliamentary sessions at parliamentary buildings proved to be a crucial "selling point" because MPs could go cast a vote if needed (leaving the survey/tablet with the REP team member).

The first meeting was held on August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2018, the final meeting on October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018. The majority of meetings were held during the days of the *autumn session* of the parliament, taking place between September 10<sup>th</sup> and September 27<sup>th</sup> (85% of meetings with members of the National Council and 88% of Council of States members). The surveys were administered by five researchers: Prof. Frédéric Varone (principal investigator), Dr. Luzia Helfer (project manager), Prof. Pirmin Bundi, Dr. Sarah Bütikofer and Christian Metzger. Sarah Bütikofer and Christian Metzger were paid for the meetings they held. All meetings were led by one REP team member, except for one with a national-level politician that Christian Metzger held together with project manager Luzia Helfer for training purposes. For details on how many politicians declined to participate and non-contacts see Table 1.

#### 4.2.2 Cantonal parliament: Geneva

The principal investigator and Volkan Graf (master student and REP project member) met with the head of parliamentary services in Geneva M. Laurent Koelliker on July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018 (see "2 Data collection files" > "Access to parliamentary buildings" > "PV\_Rencontre avec le Sautier Grand Conseil Genève.pdf" in French). In the discussion, it was made clear that during sessions, the many votes would hinder meetings with politicians. Therefore, it would be best to schedule meetings with politicians before/after committee meetings. It was agreed to contact MPs individually and not via the parliamentary party group so each MP could decide about his/her participation individually.

The letter was sent to politicians on August 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018 (see "2 Data collection files" > "Contact letters and information sheet" > "GC\_Geneve\_Lettre.pdf"). A week later, MPs were contacted by the REP project team members Volkan Graf, Vincent Milliard and Marion Deville via phone to schedule a meeting. The PI also conducted several phone calls. The same protocol was used for the phone calls as nationally (see contact form "2 Data collection files" > "Instructions for project team members" > "Phonecall\_intro\_National\_FR\_DE.pdf").

The first meeting with a Geneva MP was completed on September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018. The final meeting happened on October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018. The meetings were mainly conducted by Marion Deville, Volkan Graf and Vincent Milliard with Frédéric Varone (PI) conducting two. All meetings were led by one researcher. For details on how many politicians declined to participate and non-contacts see Table 1.

*Table 1: Overview of data collection period, response rates, declined and non-contacts per parliament.*

	National Council		Council of States		GC Geneva		GC Berne	
First meeting	August 28 <sup>th</sup>		September 3 <sup>rd</sup>		September 10 <sup>th</sup>		November 9 <sup>th</sup>	
Last meeting	October 24 <sup>th</sup>		October 18 <sup>th</sup>		October 18 <sup>th</sup>		December 13 <sup>th</sup>	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Participated	124	65%	27	61%	77	77%	140	88%
of those short survey	37	30%	6	22%	-	-	-	-
Declined	44	23%	9	20%	8	8%	18	11%
Non-contact	22	11%	6	14%	15	15%	1	<1%
Missing	2	1%	2	5%	-	-	-	-
<i>Population N</i>	192 <sup>a</sup>	100%	44 <sup>a</sup>	100%	100	100%	159 <sup>b</sup>	100%

*Note.* All dates in 2018.

<sup>a</sup> Population for the National Council and Council of States excludes MPs from the canton of Ticino (n=10).

<sup>b</sup> One MP seated in the GC Bern and National parliament was only counted as national MP.

#### 4.2.3 Cantonal parliament: Berne

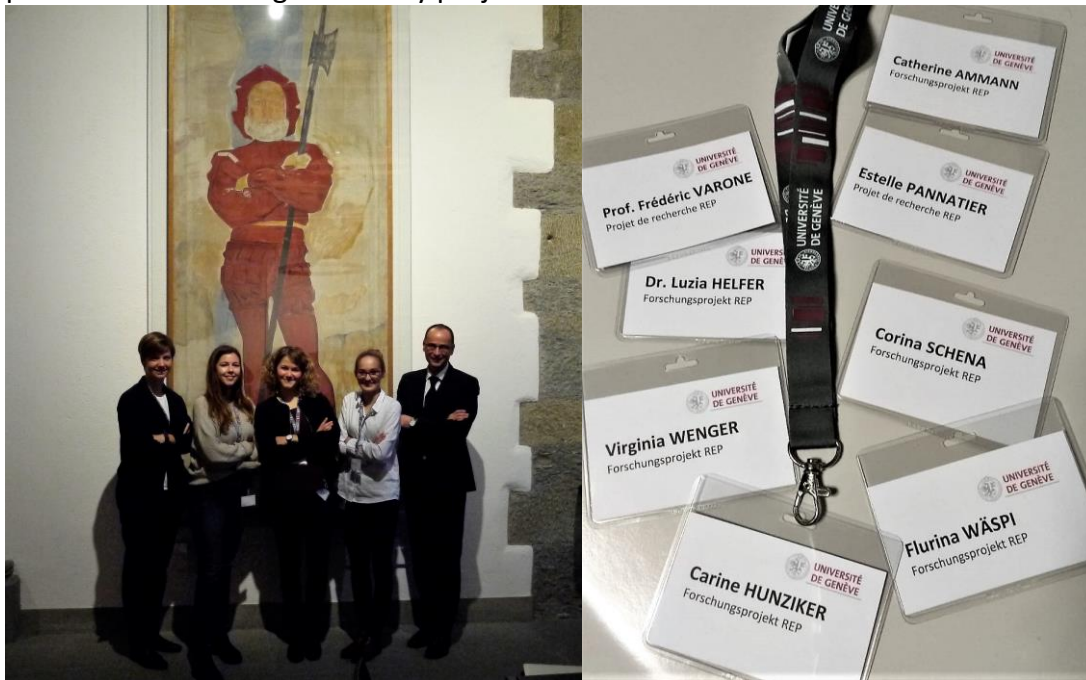
On October 25<sup>th</sup> 2018 the PI and project manager met with the head of the parliamentary services of the canton of Berne Patrick Trees (for the meeting notes see "2 Data collection files" > "Access to parliamentary buildings" > "20181025 Treffen Patrick Trees GR Bern Notizen.pdf" in German). We obtained crucial information about approval for our project from the presidency of the Council and of the office of the Berne Council and how to best approach MPs. Patrick Trees was very forthcoming offering us the possibility to use a meeting room, WiFi access and to have a small table with information about our project in the parliament's entrance hall. Overall, access to the parliament was less restricted than at the national level. Approval for our data collection was obtained from the presidency of the Council on October 29<sup>th</sup> 2018 and of the office ("Büro", which is the presidency plus all parliamentary party group leaders) on November 5<sup>th</sup> 2018. Parliamentary party group presidents were asked to inform their members about our project.

The letter to contact the MPs was sent out on November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2018. During four days in the week after the invitation letter was sent, the team tried to contact every MP personally via phone, leaving messages on the answering-machine and calling back several times if someone could not be reached the first time. Phone calls were made by project manager Luzia Helfer and a group of additional team members hired for this specific data collection (Catherine Ammann, Carine Hunziker, Corina Schena, Flurina Wäspi and Virginia Wenger who contacted the German speaking ones and Estelle Pannatier for all French speaking politicians).

The MPs were randomly distributed across the involved researchers and assigned a random number to determine the order of contact (stratified by party for German speaking politicians). In comparison with national MPs, mobile phones or e-mails were less easily retrieved on-line and we called their work/home more often.

Instructions for these phone calls in the following document: "2 Data collection files" > "Instructions for project team members" > "Phoncall\_intro\_GrossräteBE\_FR\_DE.pdf". The main goal was to fix a meeting with the MP, either during the session (the cantonal parliament's winter session started one week later from November 12<sup>th</sup> to November 23<sup>rd</sup> 2018) or at the politician's convenience. Availability during parliamentary sessions proved an especially useful argument for convincing MPs who at first objected to a meeting on the basis of not having enough time. Many asked us to send them meeting suggestions and/or additional information (i.e. the information sheet we had already sent them) via e-mail. Very often, politicians immediately agreed to a meeting, some requested for a later scheduling (postponing of the decision) and some also refused to participate.

Illustration 1. Group picture at the parliamentary building with several team members and picture of the of badges worn by project members for identification at the GC Berne.



When a MP could not be reached by phone in this first week, the MP was personally approached at the parliamentary buildings by project manager Luzia Helfer once parliament was in session. Contacting MPs personally at parliamentary buildings, often via other MPs from the same party who had participated already, paid off as of all 150 MPs, only one (soft) non-contact resulted of one MP who let us know via others that s/he did not want to participate. MPs were also motivated because they wanted to "beat" the 77% response rate we had obtained in the cantonal parliament of Geneva. Indeed, the president of the council mentioned the status of our data collection on two separate days at the end of the parliamentary sessions and urged members to participate. Also parliamentary party group leaders were sometimes curious to hear whether "their" people participated but we could not disclose this information due to confidentiality. For details on how many politicians declined to participate and non-contacts see Table 1.

## 4.3 Meeting Context

### 4.3.1 General meeting procedure

The meeting procedure is detailed in "2 Data collection files" > "Instructions for project team members" > "Meetingprocedure\_general.pdf" and in the same folder the document "Guidelines meeting expenses and conduct.pdf". In yet another document we have answers to questions frequently asked by MPs, this document is for interviewers only (same folder as mentioned, "FAQs\_REP project CH.pdf"). Meetings and surveys were always in a MP's preferred/main language, French or German.

The meetings started with a short introduction and clarification if MPs had any questions about procedures or goals of the research (see "Meetingsprocedures\_general.pdf"). It was repeated the respondents were guaranteed anonymity once they had accessed the survey and assured that their data would be treated confidentially. Then, they were handed a tablet on which they could fill in the survey independently. The tablet did not require an internet connection as we used the Qualtrics offline app. The MPs were informed that should they have any questions during the survey, the researcher conducting the meeting was happy to help. While the respondents were filling in the survey, the REP project member made sure that he or she did not see the screen (to ensure the confidentiality of the MP's answers) and to be busy. In case of a technical issue or a MP's personal preference towards paper, printed questionnaires were used (which team members always had with them as backup). A total of 5 paper questionnaires were used across all four parliaments (about 1% of all data). In some rare cases, the MP wished to have the questions read to him or her and answer directly to the REP member. Once a MP had finished the survey, he/she were asked the open questions about his/her political work (if time permitted). These answers were not recorded, but directly noted on paper or a laptop by the REP team member and later copied into an online form (see 6.1).

After the open questions or when the MP wished to end the meeting, the MPs were thanked for their participation and asked not to discuss specific questions with their colleagues in order not to influence their results. Each MP, whether she/he completed the survey/questions or not, received a small box of chocolates from a known Geneva chocolatier (Philippe Pascoët) as a token of appreciation (worth 6 CHF). The MPs were usually pleasantly surprised and really appreciated the gift. If they did not want the gift we encouraged them to accept it and give it to others, for example for parliamentary staffers. Only very few MPs did not accept the gift.

Illustration 2. Chocolate gift boxes and content given to all MPs.



#### *4.3.2 National parliament*

Despite their busy schedules, MPs mostly kept to the time slots scheduled for the meeting. The research team was as flexible as possible concerning time and place of the meeting. Most meetings were held during the three weeks in the fall when parliament was in session. Some meetings were held in offices or cafés/restaurants in various cities, and some in the trains between major Swiss cities (train time of 1h or more). In some cases when meetings were held in public places (e.g. cafés) MPs were aware that others were listening and answers to open questions were probably not as open as in a more private place. During meetings at the federal parliament, interruptions of the meetings because of votes or approaching colleagues or journalists were sometimes unavoidable. However, REP members always made sure the tablet/survey stayed with them and that MPs returned and/or the meeting was rescheduled so they could finish it. Right at the beginning of data collection, two MPs left the meeting. They had expected an actual "interview" and were not happy with us just handing them a tablet with questions. After this, we adjusted the wording of our confirmation e-mail once a meeting was scheduled so it was clear that the meeting consisted of two parts: closed questions on a tablet and a discussion about a few open questions. Thereafter, this issue did not arise anymore.

In two cases, politicians had started the survey but wanted to start again because they said that they had understood the question wrong about estimating public opinion (they got the estimations twice, once for the opinion in their district and once for their party's electorate). For example, they had had their electorate in mind while we had actually asked them to estimate the opinion of the people in their electoral district. We allowed this and later in the data combined the answers before the estimation from when they filled it in the first time with the answers they gave for the second round of estimation questions. This is transparently documented in the preparatory syntax and such observations are marked with the variable "doublesurvey" in the data set.

Several MPs thought the meeting to be too time-consuming, especially some high-ranking MPs. To accommodate and get their cooperation nevertheless, we eventually decided to offer the possibility of a shorter version of the survey to the national MPs of both chambers from September 19<sup>th</sup> (for the exact questionnaire in French/German see "1 Questionnaires" > "PDFs" > "Survey National\_German and French\_short.pdf"). This shorter survey was taken by 6 members of the Council of State (22% of all responses) and 37 of the National Council (30% of responses). Towards the end of the data collection, more short versions of the survey were fielded.

Two MPs filled out a paper version of the questionnaire. The mean duration of an appointment (including the open questions part) on the national level was approximately 51 minutes for the normal version of the survey (short version: 25 minutes).

Because of the tendency of MPs being in a hurry, the open questions had to be skipped more often at this level compared to the cantonal parliaments in Geneva and Berne.

#### *4.3.3 Grand Council Geneva*

As on the national level, the survey was filled in by MPs independently on a tablet. Meetings were held all over Geneva – in offices, at the University or in restaurants/hotels. This was also because parliamentary sessions in Geneva are scheduled for a few days every few weeks and many votes take place (sessions are thus not in blocks of two or more weeks like in Berne and at the national level, making the parliament building a good spot for meetings).



In one case, a visually impaired MP was assisted in doing the survey on the tablet, meaning that the survey was read aloud to him. In three cases, the politicians had technical issues with the survey on the tablet because they had accidentally hit a button which re-launched the survey from the start. They started again from the beginning. One MP filled out the paper version of the survey. For Geneva MPs, the mean duration of an appointment (including the open questions part) was about 60 minutes.

#### *4.3.4 Grand Council Berne*

With the experience of two other parliaments and knowing that we only had a little over one month to complete data collection before the end of the year, a larger research team was recruited for data collection in Berne (names mentioned above). Throughout the parliamentary winter sessions (see 4.2.3) we were present with one or more (maximally three) team members to hold the individual meetings. Consequentially, we held most meetings in the cantonal parliament's building. Only very few meetings were completed in cafés, restaurants or offices near the parliament and even fewer outside of the city of Berne, in the MPs' villages or workplaces.

Illustration 3. Team member Flurina Wäspi taking the survey from a member of the GC Berne at the parliamentary buildings (permission for reprint obtained from the MP).



In two cases, politicians had started the survey and when it came to the questions about estimating public opinion, they wanted to start again because they had understood the question wrong. For example, they had had their electorate in mind while we had actually asked them to estimate the opinion of the people in their constituency. In this case, we combined the answers before the estimation from when they filled it in the first time with the answers they gave for the second round of estimation questions. For one additional politician, the survey did not display the policy proposals correctly and we met with him again at a later date to obtain the answers to the estimation questions on the statements only. This is documented in the preparatory syntax and such observations are marked with the variable "doublesurvey" in the data set.

Even though the meetings were mostly held in the parliament, the atmosphere was less busy than in the federal parliament and distractions from background noises or other people approaching the politicians were comparatively rare. Most of the time, the survey was filled by the MPs in concentrated silence. Interruptions because a MP had to go vote happened regularly, but MPs usually returned within a short period of time to complete the survey (the survey/tablet always remained in the care of the REP team member). Several MPs who had scheduled a meeting after sessions by phone asked to reschedule their meeting for during session when they noticed that we conducted that many meetings at the parliament. Because the project manager was present at the parliament every day during the two weeks parliament was in session and also conducted many meetings herself, MPs sometimes stopped for a chat and asked how the project was getting along. MPs and the presidency of the council were very engaged in the project. For Berne MPs, a meeting lasted on average 42 minutes. Two MPs filled in paper versions of the survey for technical reasons.

**4.4 Response Rates**

Response rates for each parliament range between 61% and 88% of the population. In total, we recorded responses from 368 Swiss MPs, which equals to an overall response rate of 75%. Table 1 above lists responses and declined/non-contacts.

From the National Council and Council of States two responses are missing each. In the Council of States, these two had participated but their responses were not uploaded in the survey, probably due to technical issues. One National Council member only gave us 10 minutes and wanted to exchange ideas on the topic of our study, meaning we do not have any data. One discontinued the meeting after the introduction because there had been different expectations with regards to the meeting procedure (an oral interview instead of filling in a survey on a tablet, see also elaboration above).

Response rates per party in each parliament are in Table 2. To ensure confidentiality, a letter was assigned randomly to each party in each parliament. This means party A in one parliament is not the same party as party A in another parliament.

*Table 2: Response rates per party per parliament.*

	<b>National Council</b>	<b>Council of States</b>	<b>GC Geneva</b>	<b>GC Berne</b>
Party A	64% (gov)	60% (gov)	87% (gov)	93% (gov)
Party B	55% (gov)	58% (gov)	82% (gov)	75% (gov)
Party C	83% (gov)	58% (gov)	68% (gov)	92% (gov)
Party D	56% (gov)	75% (gov)	92% (gov)	87% (gov)
Party E	64%	-	55% (gov)	100% (gov)
Party F	71%	-	88%	60%
Party G	43%	-	78%	80%
Party H	-	-	-	100%
Other parties (1-2 seats)	100%	100%	-	100%

*Note.* Letters allocated to parties randomly. Party A in one parliament is not the same as party A in another parliament.

Table 3 moreover lists the distributions for language (French or German), female politicians and the mean age for the sample and the population. We see that across parliaments, French-speaking MPs are slightly overrepresented in comparison to the parliament overall. As this group is relatively small (9-24% of politicians in multi-lingual

parliaments) this was done on purpose to allow for comparison between groups of German- and French-speaking MPs. With the exception of female National Council members who were less likely to participate in our study than their male colleagues, participants in our study can be considered representative for the MPs' population.

*Table 3: Number of participants and response rates compared with the distribution in the population for language, gender and age per parliament.*

	National Council		Council of States	
	Sample	Population	Sample	Population
French speaking	36 (29%)	46 (24%)	8 (28%)	10 (23%)
Female	34 (27%)	64 (33%)	5 (17%)	7 (16%)
Age in years (SD)	51.69 (10.44)	52.19 (10.12)	58.48 (7.83)	58.07 (8.02)
	GC Geneva		GC Berne	
	Sample	Population	Sample	Population
French speaking	77 (100%)	100 (100%)	15 (11%)	15 (9%)
Female	27 (35%)	32 (32%)	50 (36%)	55 (35%)
Age in years (SD)	49.32 (14.46)	50.44 (13.87)	50.58 (10.18)	51.57 (10.12)

## 5. Questionnaires

Full versions of the surveys can be found in the folders (in the original languages German and French in "1 Questionnaires") and in the Variable Description file (in English in "3 Data Files" > "REP Elite 2018 Variable description"). In January and April 2018 pre-tests with five former MPs (mostly national level) were held. Surveys were only slightly adjusted, these were most useful for suggestions on gaining access to MPs.

The questionnaires are largely identical across parliaments. However, there are a few important adjustments for each parliament (questions are also marked accordingly in the Variable Description file):

- (1) Option to respond to a shorter survey for some national MPs: As mentioned above (section 4.3.2), towards the end of the data collection at the national level, we also offered the option of an abbreviated survey (National council n=37, Council of states=6). This survey can be found in "1 Questionnaires and statement selection" > "Questionnaires" > PDFs in the original languages. It contained questions Q1 (specialization), Q2 (Specialization), Q3 (Congruence with party), Q6 (representation focus), Q7 (fox-hedgehog), Q8 (time spent with constituents), for the policy statements: the respondents' own opinion (Q10), estimation of the positions of their party electorate (Q15 and Q16), Q14 (importance of each policy statement), Q13 (certainty of estimation), Q18 (talking about citizens' preferences), Q19 (name of peer), Q20-Q22 (ambitions, next elections).

The short version of the survey did not ask respondents to estimate the opinion in the district on the statements, the TIPI or Ultimatum Game (see below), the block on the interest groups or their accountability beliefs.

- (2) Manipulation of the perceived socio-economic status [Berne], variables SP\_: With cantonal MPs from Berne an experiment was run in the "Perceived Status"-Block. Two conditions with higher and lower perceived socio-economic status were included. Those were followed by questions about support for spending on specific policies and

the overall judgment of importance of these policy areas. Moreover, the perceived development of inequalities and the question about the fairness of inequalities follow this experiment and have received a different variable name because they are likely influenced by the manipulation we conducted on the status (tests reveal a significant difference in their answers to these two questions by the experimental groups).

- (3) Evaluation of the socio-economic status of other MPs [national and Geneva], variables SP\_: National MPs were asked where they would position national MPs, and Geneva MPs were asked where they would position cantonal MPs. Cantonal MPs from Berne were not asked to place fellow MPs on the scale.
- (4) Direct democracy experiment [Geneva and Berne, variation], variables DD\_: Two descriptions of situations were given to MPs, one describing a situation with a direct democratic vote looming and one without. They were asked to state how they would position themselves in parliament (pro/con). The dependent variables differ per parliament: at the national level and in Geneva a binary dependent variable was used while we used a continuous scale (from 0 (disagree) to 10 (agree)) in the cantonal parliament in Berne using the same stimulus.
- (5) Electoral Safety and Ambition [Berne], variables Q150 and Q151: Concerning the "Electoral Safety and Ambition"-block, only Berne MPs were asked if they were planning to run for a seat at the national parliament (National Council or Council of States, or both) next to running for their cantonal elections.
- (6) Ultimatum Game Experiment (as developed by Peter Loewen & Lior Sheffer, Canadian POLPOP team) [national], variables UG: These questions were only asked in the normal version of the questionnaire for the national MPs, but not in the cantonal questionnaires for Geneva and Berne or the short versions of the national MPs.

## 6. Data Handling

### 6.1 Closed meeting part

All of the datasets (Berne, Geneva, National) were cleaned by Luzia Helfer one by one per parliament/survey and then merged. Once completed, the code was checked by Flurina Wäspi step by step (starting from the raw Qualtrics data to the file including the Biodata (see below)). Part of the data-cleaning consisted in double-proofing the correct MPs were identified in the data using the anonymized calendar notes that had been used to coordinate the meetings (see "2 Data collection files" > "Log files and calendar" > "REP Elite Survey - Calendar Export all interviews.pdf" and per parliament the confidential files<sup>1</sup> "REP Elite Survey - Interview Log Export.xlsx"), removing or correcting inaccurate records or variables as well as double entries, handling missing data, adding informative variable names and labels etc. At a later stage (end 2020 and beginning of 2021) in coordination with colleagues in Antwerp, the syntax was slightly adjusted on some variables where the overall project had agreed on a procedure or merging of variables.

To add the survey responses for those who had used the paper version, an Excel file was used to automatically create the Stata code (details in "3 Data Files" > "1 National" > "Data" > "Paper versions for CH national 2016 6011.xlsx"). The scanned versions of the paper surveys are also stored ("3 Data files" > "Paper surveys").

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<sup>1</sup> These files contain contact details (phone number, address) and information on participation per MP which are confidential. Please contact the PI if you have questions.

## *6.2 Biographical data coding*

The survey data were complemented by biographical data (such as age, gender, committee membership, number of preferential votes, and so forth) for those MPs who had participated in the study. Two coders (Vincent Milliard for Geneva MPs and Joël Häusler for other MPs) were instructed to collect this information. The instructions they received can be found in "Data collection files" > "Biodata coding" > "Biodata\_CH\_Joel.doc" and "Biodata\_CH\_Vincent.doc".

In addition, Max Joosten (PhD Candidate at Geneva University) coded the socio-economic status of politicians based on their occupation. The Coding instructions for the social class coding is in "Data collection files" > "Biodata coding" > "Codebook social class coding in REP.pdf". The occupations had been obtained in the coding step described before. Eventually, these separately coded data were merged with the survey answers into one comprehensive data file and all variables are described in the Variable Description file REP elite survey (see folder "3 Data files – public version").

## *6.3 Open questions part*

During the meetings, the REP project team members took notes of the MPs' answers (on paper or directly on a computer, with the latter turning out to be much faster/more efficient). After the meetings, they transferred their notes into a form created in Qualtrics too. No audio-recordings were made of the answers to the open questions. The project manager regularly checked the quality of these notes and contacted REP members with additional instructions or clarification questions if needed. A list of the open questions asked in each parliament can be found at "3 Data Files" > "Answers to open questions" > "Interview answers\_anonymized.xlsx".

## *6.4 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. Lists of the MPs names associated with the anonymous codes we had randomly allocated to each MP were only shared with project members in SWITCH. In the Confidentiality Agreement they had to sign, project members were explicitly instructed not to save any information on other cloud services or share them with third parties.

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 because individual MPs and/or parties could be identified in these data (which our ethical clearance forbids). 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 as detailed in the information sheet they received).

# **7. Publication of results**

## *7.1. Report to MPs and presentation at meetings*

At the end of the meetings, all MPs were asked if they wished to receive a report with the results of the study in an e-mail. The documents were published on our website

([www.unige.ch/rep](http://www.unige.ch/rep)) and can be found here: "4 Publication of results" > "Reports and presentation for MPs", including the e-mail messages we sent to MPs in May 2019.

A total of 44 National MPs had wished to receive a report of the results. An e-mail with a link to the reports was also sent to the 77 participants of the Grand Council of Geneva and 125 members of the Grand Council in Berne. In the latter, we adjusted the wording of the message based on whether we were scheduled to present the results at the meeting of the MPs' parliamentary party group (n=78) or not.

To all parliamentary party groups/MPs, we offered to present the results at a separate personal meeting. Only parties of the GC of Berne took us up on the offer. The PI and project manager held presentations at the SVP/UDC, SP/PS and GLP/PVL of the Grand Council of Berne on the 4<sup>th</sup> of June 2019. Sessions were scheduled during the afternoon of the parliamentary group meetings at the Berne parliament buildings and lasted about 30mins with part of the time reserved for discussion. MPs were overall receptive and interested in the results. At the request of some MPs, we produced a follow-up report with the information of the position of the party voters on each of the policy statements which we sent to MPs of the parties where we had held presentations and uploaded on our website ("Zusatz – Bericht REP – Grossrat Bern.pdf" German only).

## 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 Vliedenthart). 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.

*Lists last updated July 2021.*

### Publications using Swiss data only:

1. Eichenberger, Steven, Frédéric Varone and Luzia Helfer (2021). 'Do interest groups bias MPs' perceptions of party voters' preferences?' *Party Politics*, *accepted* - forthcoming.
2. Helfer, Luzia, Flurina Wäspi and Frédéric Varone (2021). 'Does direct democracy enhance politicians' perceptions of constituency opinion? Evidence from Switzerland', revised and resubmitted at *Swiss Political Science Review*.
3. 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 Vliedenthart (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 Vliegenthart (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 Vliegenthart (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 Vliegenthart 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 – public version

- 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")
- **Folder: Confidentiality Agreements signed [confidential – please contact the PI]**

#### 1 Questionnaires and statements' selection

- Folder: Questionnaires as PDFs and Qualtrics QSF downloads (DE/FR)
  - a. Grand Council Berne, German and French

- b. Grand Council Geneva, French
- c. National Parliament, French and German, normal length
- d. National Parliament, French and German, short
- *Folder: Open questions*
  - a. Open questions files per parliament
  - b. Interview questions all parliaments (from Qualtrics form)
- *Folder: Statements*
  - a. Statements' selection document from POLPOP?
  - b. Results of the pre-test for Swiss statements
  - c. Codebook for coding the specialization of MPs in the issue (e.g. Varone and Helfer 2021, see "7.2 Publication" above)

## 2 Data collection files

- *Folder: 1 Access to parliamentary buildings*
  - a. National level: General procedure and lists for access to national parliamentary building for each week
  - b. Minutes of the preliminary meeting with the head of parliamentary services Berne
  - c. Minutes of the preliminary meeting with the head of parliamentary services Geneva
- *Folder: 2 Members of the parliaments (one folder per parliament)*
  - a. List of the members
  - b. List of disclosed interest ("Interessenbindungen"), national and Berne only
  - c. List of committee membership, national and Berne only

Please note: for Geneva the interests and committees are in the Excel file with the list of members.
- *Folder: 3 Contact letters and information sheet (DE/FR)*
  - a. Invitation letter for politicians (DE/FR)
  - b. Information sheet for politicians (DE/FR)
- *Folder: 4 Instructions for project team members*
  - a. Contact protocol (DE/FR)
  - b. FAQs document
  - c. Folder: Interview part of the meeting
- *Folder: 5 Log files and calendar*
  - a. Calendar export for all interviews with MPs' ID and interviewer name
  - b. Interview Logs per parliament [confidential – please contact the PI]
  - c. All combined Interview logs [confidential – please contact the PI]
- *Folder: 6 Biodata coding instructions*
  - a. Biodata general coding instructions (one for French/Vincent and for German/Joël)
  - b. Codebook social class coding

## 3 Data files – public version

- Elite Codebook 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]



- Folder: Biodata codes [confidential – please contact the PI]
  - a. Biodata original file with MP NAMES [confidential – please contact the PI]
- Data REP elite (data file) [confidential – please contact the PI]
- Folder: Interview data [confidential – please contact the PI]

#### **4 Publication of results**

- *Folder: Reports and presentation for MPs*
- For the scientific publications please see the list under 7.2 above.