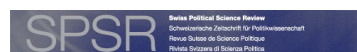


RESEARCH NOTE



Municipality-Level Outcomes of Direct-Democratic Votes in Switzerland, 1866–2023

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Abstract

Switzerland relies heavily on direct-democratic institutions to decide on a wide range of political issues. Since 1848, more than 600 direct-democratic votes have taken place at the national level. However, the lack of comprehensive data has limited the systematic use of these votes for research. This paper introduces a new dataset containing municipality-level outcomes for all direct-democratic votes from 1866 to 1944, and supplements post-1945 data to fill gaps in previous collections. Spanning over 150 years, the new dataset contains more than 1.3 million observations. Several empirical illustrations demonstrate the dataset's potential for research.

KEYWORDS

Direct Democracy, Switzerland, Voting Behavior

Résumé

La Suisse s'appuie fortement sur des institutions de démocratie directe pour décider d'un large éventail de questions politiques. Depuis 1848, plus de 600 votes de démocratie directe ont eu lieu au niveau national. Cependant, le manque de données complètes a limité l'utilisation systématique de ces votes pour la recherche. Cet article présente un nouvel ensemble de données contenant les résultats au niveau municipal de tous les votes de démocratie directe de 1866 à 1944, et complète les données postérieures à 1945 afin de combler les lacunes des collections précédentes. Couvrant plus de 150 ans, le nouvel ensemble de données contient plus de 1,3 million d'observations. Plusieurs illustrations empiriques démontrent le potentiel de l'ensemble de données pour la recherche.

Zusammenfassung

Die Schweiz stützt sich stark auf direktdemokratische Institutionen, um über eine Vielzahl von politischen Fragen zu entscheiden. Seit 1848 haben mehr als 600 direktdemokratische Abstimmungen auf nationaler Ebene stattgefunden. Der Mangel an umfassenden Daten hat jedoch die systematische Nutzung dieser Abstimmungen für die Forschung eingeschränkt. In diesem Beitrag wird ein neuer Datensatz vorgestellt, der die Ergebnisse aller direktdemokratischen Abstimmungen auf Gemeindeebene von 1866 bis 1944 enthält und die Daten ab 1945 ergänzt, um Lücken in früheren Sammlungen zu schliessen. Der neue Datensatz, der sich über 150 Jahre erstreckt, enthält mehr als 1,3 Millionen Beobachtungen. Mehrere empirische Illustrationen zeigen das Potenzial des Datensatzes für die Forschung.

Riassunto

La Svizzera si affida alle istituzioni democratiche dirette per decidere su svariate questioni politiche. Dal 1848, si sono svolti più di 600 votazioni democratiche dirette a livello nazionale. Tuttavia, la mancanza di dati completi ha limitato l'utilizzo sistematico di queste votazioni per la ricerca. Questo articolo introduce un nuovo dataset contenente i risultati a livello comunale di tutte le votazioni democratiche dirette dal 1866 al 1944 e integra i dati successivi al 1945 per colmare le lacune delle raccolte dati precedenti. Il nuovo dataset, che copre oltre 150 anni, contiene più di 1,3 milioni di osservazioni. Diverse illustrazioni empiriche dimostrano il potenziale del dataset per la ricerca.

INTRODUCTION

The political system of Switzerland is often described as “a laboratory of democratic innovation” (Emmenegger et al., 2024a, p. 6), which offers excellent opportunities for social science research. For example, Swiss federalism with its 26 cantons and more than 2'000 municipalities allows scholars to explore a plethora of research questions relying on abundant sub-national variation and a high level of political decentralization (Dardanelli & Mueller, 2019; Vatter, 2024). By now there is a rich literature examining these sub-national laboratories of democratic innovation and public policymaking (e.g., Bühlmann et al., 2013; Emmenegger et al., 2022; Hainmueller & Hangartner, 2019; Leemann & Wasserfallen, 2016; Manatschal & Stadelmann-Steffen, 2014; Walter & Emmenegger, 2019).

While Swiss federalism allows for plenty of exciting research, there is another institutional feature of the Swiss political system, which may offer even more potential for research. Switzerland relies to an unusual extent on direct-democratic institutions to decide on political questions. At the national level, the mandatory referendum, the optional referendum, and the popular initiative allow Swiss citizens to regularly partake in decision-making processes (Stadelmann-Steffen & Leemann, 2024). Although direct-democratic institutions have gained

prominence across the democratic world in recent decades, Switzerland still accounts for roughly 50 percent of all direct-democratic votes in the world (Serdült, 2017, p. 66). Since 1848, more than 600 direct-democratic votes have been launched at the national level. Roughly half of all direct-democratic votes were successful (Bundeskanzlei, 2024).

Researchers were quick to discover this unique source of data, which Seitz (2014) calls a “treasure trove for political science research” (p. 21). In recent years, researchers have examined direct-democratic votes in a variety of policy fields (e.g., Baccini & Leemann, 2021; Basten & Betz, 2013; Brügger et al., 2009; Emmenegger & Walter, 2021; Eugster et al., 2011; Walter & Emmenegger, 2022). Thanks to the data collection efforts by several research teams as well as the Federal Statistical Office, municipality-level data is now available for direct-democratic votes since 1945. In contrast, for the period before 1945, data availability has long been restricted to district-level data, which limits the potential for quantitative analysis due to the small number of observations. From the point of view of political development, however, the period between 1866 and 1945 is important. Many key votes on the democratic system, including male suffrage extension, the adoption of new direct-democratic instruments, and the introduction of proportional representation, as well as core functions of the modern nation state such as direct taxation, major welfare state programs, and trade policies took place before 1945.

This paper fills this important gap in data availability. As part of a project funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation, we have collected the municipality-level outcomes of all direct-democratic votes in the period from 1866 to 1944. With the exception of the 1848 vote on the federal constitution of the Swiss Confederation, which had taken place under somewhat problematic circumstances in the aftermath of a civil war, the Swiss direct-democratic experience at the national level started in 1866. In addition, we have collected data on post-1945 direct-democratic votes to close some of the remaining gaps in the existing datasets. Merging our new dataset (1866–1944) with the already existing data on municipality-level vote outcomes (1945–2023) allows for the analysis of direct-democratic votes over a period of more than 150 years with more than 1.3 million observations.

In this paper, we present the new municipality-level dataset on direct-democratic votes. First, we briefly introduce the direct-democratic institutions at the national level in Switzerland. We then document the data collection process and how the new dataset relates to existing sources. In this section, we pay special attention to how we dealt with changing municipal boundaries. We conclude this first part of the paper with some descriptive information to document the coverage of the new dataset.

In the second part of this paper, we provide some empirical illustrations to demonstrate the dataset's potential for research. On the one hand, direct-democratic votes can be used to examine popular support for specific policies. Existing research often relies on public attitudes or indirect measures such as party vote shares to examine public opinion. Direct-democratic votes enable researchers to investigate popular support for policies more directly (e.g., Emmenegger et al., 2024b). The wealth of direct-democratic votes in Swiss political history allows researchers to examine issues ranging from food security to military organization to electoral reform. On the other hand, the new dataset allows for the examination of long-term developments in Swiss politics. For example, researchers can explore the congruence between the parliament's position and municipalities' votes on the same political issue over time, and in this way examine the formation of a national voting body.

DIRECT DEMOCRACY IN SWITZERLAND

Direct democracy allows citizens to vote on substantive issues (Stadelmann-Steffen & Leemann, 2024). At the national level, Switzerland relies on three direct-democratic

institutions: the mandatory and optional referendums, and the popular initiative. In the following, we briefly describe these three institutions.¹

The mandatory referendum is the oldest direct-democratic institution in Switzerland. It was introduced in 1848 with the federal constitution and first used in 1866.² Mandatory referendums are necessary whenever the parliament decides to amend the federal constitution. After 1921, the use of the mandatory referendum was gradually expanded to cover important international treaties as well as membership in supra-national organizations or organizations for collective security. In each case, a ballot vote is held, which requires a so-called ‘double majority,’ that is, a majority of those who vote and popular majorities in a majority of cantons must confirm the decision.³ Otherwise, the decision is rejected.

The optional referendum was introduced in 1874 and first used in 1875. It allows groups to challenge any act of parliament, the ratification of international treaties of unlimited duration, or federal decrees (provided that the federal constitution or an act so requires). To launch an optional referendum, groups have to collect the signatures of 50’000 citizens (30’000 citizens before 1978) within 100 days of the act’s official publication. The approval of an optional referendum requires a simple majority of those who vote but not popular majorities in a majority of the cantons. Hence, there is no ‘double majority’ requirement.

Finally, popular initiatives allow voters to demand a partial or a complete revision of the federal constitution without requiring the approval of legislative or executive bodies. If approved at the ballot box, proposals must be implemented. To launch a popular initiative, groups have to collect the signatures of 100’000 citizens (50’000 citizens before 1978) within 18 months. The popular initiative to demand the complete revision of the federal constitution was already introduced in 1848 but only used once (in 1935). The popular initiative to demand the partial revision of the federal constitution was introduced in 1891 and first used in 1893 (Leemann et al., 2025). In both cases, for a popular initiative to be successful, the majority of those who vote and popular majorities in a majority of cantons are required (the aforementioned ‘double majority’). In response to a popular initiative, the parliament can draft its own bill, known as a direct counter-proposal, which is then voted on in direct competition with the popular initiative. The voters may vote in favor of both proposals. In a third question, the so-called tie-breaker, voters can express their preference in case both proposals are accepted.⁴

Since their introduction, these three direct-democratic institutions have been regularly used. Table 1 provides an overview of the number of referendums and initiatives in the period between 1848 and 2023 (for general discussions of direct democracy in Switzerland, see Kriesi & Trechsel, 2008; Linder & Mueller, 2017; Sciarini, 2024; Vatter, 2016).

Most mandatory referendums have been approved at the ballot box, which is in line with theoretical expectations. Legislative majorities are aware that the issue will have to pass the ballot box. In anticipation of this additional hurdle, they formulate moderate proposals to avoid eventual failure (Leemann & Wasserfallen, 2016). Optional referendums, where the ballot box vote is not certain at the moment the parliament passes a bill, have a success rate of about 58% (see Table 1). Because ballot box votes only happen if a political party or an

¹This section is based on Stadelmann-Steffen and Leemann (2024, pp. 157–159).

²The introduction of the federal constitution in 1848 was also subject to a referendum, but for the 1848 vote, there was no constitutional basis.

³For the majority of cantons, cantons are defined as districts. If a majority of voters in these districts supports the decision, the canton is counted as supporting the decision. All cantons have equal weight with the exception of six ‘split-cantons’ whose weight is only half of a full canton (Appenzell Ausserrhoden, Appenzell Innerrhoden, Basel-Landschaft, Basel-Stadt, Nidwalden, and Obwalden).

⁴When the popular initiative was first introduced, voters were allowed to reject both the popular initiative and the parliamentary counter-proposal, but they were not allowed to accept both proposals. In this way, parliamentary counter-proposals often split popular majorities in favor of change. This prohibition of the ‘double yes’ was abolished in 1987.

TABLE 1 Referendums and Popular Initiatives, 1848–2023.

	Mandatory referendums	Optional referendums	Popular initiatives	Direct counter-proposals	Tie-breaker questions
Total	200	209	229	42	3
Accepted	150	122	25	26	
Rejected	50	87	204	16	

Source: Swissvotes, 2024.

organization collects a sufficient number of signatures, there are typically informal negotiations at the early parliamentary stage that try to accommodate potential opponents and in this way avoid a referendum challenge (Kriesi & Trechsel, 2008; Neidhart, 1970).

Popular initiatives are typically rejected. To understand this, it helps to look at the different purposes of initiatives. According to Linder and Mueller (2017), the initiative can take on four different functions. First, it can serve as a valve for interests that, despite the consociational system, cannot achieve change through the parliamentary route. Second, it can be used not in the hope of changing the constitution directly, but to bring about change indirectly. This also explains why the committees sometimes withdraw their initiatives after the parliament has met some of their demands. Third, it can act as a catalyst, bringing new issues and problems to the fore. Finally, popular initiatives can also serve as a tool to boost a party's electoral campaign (Leemann, 2015). These different motivations, many of which are not primarily aimed at winning votes at the ballot box, help to explain why the majority of initiatives fail.

DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

We are of course not the first ones to collect data on direct-democratic votes in Switzerland. Research teams led by Rolf Nef and Peter Gilg as well as Michael Hermann and Heiri Leuthold collected district-level outcomes of direct-democratic votes (Gilg & Frischknecht, 1976; Hermann & Leuthold, 2003; Nef, 1979, 1980). Wolf Linder, Christian Bolliger, and Regula Zürcher merged and significantly expanded the existing datasets on district-level outcomes (Linder et al., 2007, 2008, 2010). The latter database has been subsequently completed to cover all direct-democratic votes from 1848 to 2000, although data coverage before 1874 is limited (e.g., for the 1848 vote on the federal constitution, only 25 percent of the districts are covered). In parallel, the Federal Statistical Office has collected the municipality-level outcomes of direct-democratic votes and gradually expanded coverage to include all votes since 1945 (Federal Statistical Office, 2024). Hence, together, these sources offer municipality-level outcomes for the votes from 1945 onward (with more than 2'000 municipalities) and district-level outcomes for the votes before 1945 (with roughly 150 to 200 districts).⁵

Our dataset provides the municipality-level outcomes of all direct-democratic votes between 1866 and 2023 (Emmenegger et al., 2025b). With the exception of the 1848 vote on the federal constitution of the Swiss Confederation, for which district- and municipality-level data is unfortunately largely missing, the Swiss direct-democratic experience at the national level started in 1866. To collect the data, our research team conducted thorough archival research to gather raw data for votes held between 1866 and 1944. This involved consulting cantonal archives as the primary source. Typically, vote outcomes were documented in official cantonal gazettes or

⁵The Swissvotes database (Swissvotes, 2024) offers additional information on all direct-democratic votes such as parties' vote recommendations or expenses on campaigns.

similar authoritative publications. In instances where vote results were not accessible through these channels, the team extended their search to the federal archive and consulted historical newspaper archives. Subsequently, the collected vote results were digitized manually. Priority was given to official documents, with supplementary information extracted from newspaper reports where necessary. To ensure accuracy, we recruited research assistants proficient in the language of the respective regions.

Subsequently, we merged the new dataset (covering the period from 1866 to 1944) with the already existing data on municipality-level vote outcomes provided by the Federal Statistical Office (1945–2023). The latter dataset, however, features some missing data, in particular in the period from 1945 to 1981. Employing the same data collection approach described above, we attempted to address missing data within the dataset covering votes from 1945 to 2023. However, where data remained unavailable within the mentioned sources, our dataset maintains gaps. Table A1 in the appendix documents the gaps that we were able to fill in the dataset provided by the Federal Statistical Office.

Switzerland's municipal landscape has undergone substantial changes over time, marked by mergers and divisions. Between the first year of our dataset (1866) and the most recent year with available data (2023), there has been a notable decrease in the number of municipalities. In 1866, Switzerland had a total of 3'205 municipalities. But by the year 2023, due to municipal mergers, this number had declined by roughly one-third, leaving only 2'136 municipalities. However, to analyze developments at the municipal level over time, it is essential to establish a consistent and comparable spatial reference.

To this end, we provide two versions of our dataset. The first version covers the period from 1866 to 1999 and is based on the municipality state of 1999. This choice was made because a significant portion of municipal mergers occurred after this year. To identify mergers that occurred prior to 1999, the research team referred to the official municipal directory of Switzerland, which is made available by the Federal Statistical Office. Subsequently, to address these mergers, research assistants aggregated the data from the merged municipalities. Results for votes from 1945 onward, sourced from the Federal Statistical Office, were recorded based on the municipal state at the time of the vote. To standardize them to the municipal state of 1999, we utilized the R package SMMT, as provided by Knechtel and Stutzer (2021). The second version of our dataset covers the entire period from 1866 to 2023 and is based on the municipal state of 2023. Additionally, besides municipal mergers, changes in municipal boundaries also occurred due to municipal splitting. Please refer to the codebook (Emmenegger et al., 2025a) for details on how vote results were documented for split municipalities from 1866 to 1944.

To ensure the quality of our data, we implemented several measures. As mentioned, research assistants assigned to collect and digitize raw data from archives were fluent in the language spoken in the specific canton. Moreover, official sources were prioritized for digitization; only when these were unavailable did we digitize vote results published in newspapers. For additional checks, votes were selected randomly to verify that research assistants handled municipal mergers and splits correctly and to ensure the accurate notation of vote IDs when multiple votes occurred on the same day. Additionally, the dataset was scrutinized for potential errors, such as duplicate votes and municipality combinations, outliers, instances where both yes and no votes were recorded as zero, and cases where either yes or no votes were missing.

Figure 1 shows the share of votes with available data per municipality in the period from 1866 to 1999. We stop in 1999 because a significant portion of municipal mergers occurred after this year. Moreover, for the period from 2000 to 2023, the data provided by the Federal Statistical Office is complete (see Figure A1 in the appendix). Figure 1 shows that data coverage is virtually complete for most cantons with the notable exceptions of Aargau, some parts of Fribourg, and to a lesser extent Ticino. Importantly, most of the missing data for Ticino stems from the period from 1945 to 1999 and not from votes before 1945 (see Figure A2–A3 in the appendix). The gaps in Aargau and Fribourg result from our inability to locate the data



FIGURE 1 Percentage of Votes with Available Data per Municipality, 1866–1999.

Notes: Grey lines represent municipal borders, white lines correspond to cantonal borders.

in either the respective cantonal archives or the federal archive. Moreover, vote results were rarely published in newspapers in these two cantons, further contributing to the missing data.

Figure 2 displays the share of municipalities with available data for each vote in the period from 1866 to 2023. Roughly 60 percent of all municipalities are covered in the period from 1866 until the mid-1880s, about 80 percent in the period from the mid-1880s to 1970, and almost 100 percent thereafter.

EMPIRICAL ILLUSTRATIONS

The new dataset allows researchers to explore popular support for diverse direct-democratic votes. Researchers are often interested in popular support for specific policies. To capture popular support, researchers typically rely on public attitudes, as expressed in surveys, or indirect measures such as party vote shares. However, survey data is not consequential and rarely available for earlier periods, while electoral support may be influenced by a variety of considerations and policy issues. By relying on direct-democratic votes, researchers can examine popular support directly. The rich history of direct democracy in Switzerland gives researchers access to a large set of specific policy proposals that have been subject to a popular vote.

For instance, there is broad scholarly interest in the origins of direct taxation (e.g., Aidt & Jensen, 2009; Emmenegger et al., 2021; Mares & Queralt, 2015; Morgan & Prasad, 2009). Data from direct-democratic votes in Switzerland can be used to contribute to this debate. Figure 3 displays popular support for the introduction of the direct tax at federal level in 1918. At first sight, the figure seems to suggest that the proposal did not stand a chance at the ballot box, as the overwhelming majority of municipalities is colored in red, which indicates low yes shares. However, this should not be confused with low levels of popular support for this proposal, which amounted to 45.9 percent of the total population. This proposal found most support in the population-rich industrial centers, while it was mainly opposed in the rural regions. The popular initiative had been launched by the Social Democrats and is an early example of the emerging capital-labor conflict in Switzerland. The figure also shows the gap in support between the French-speaking (mostly dark red) and the German-speaking regions

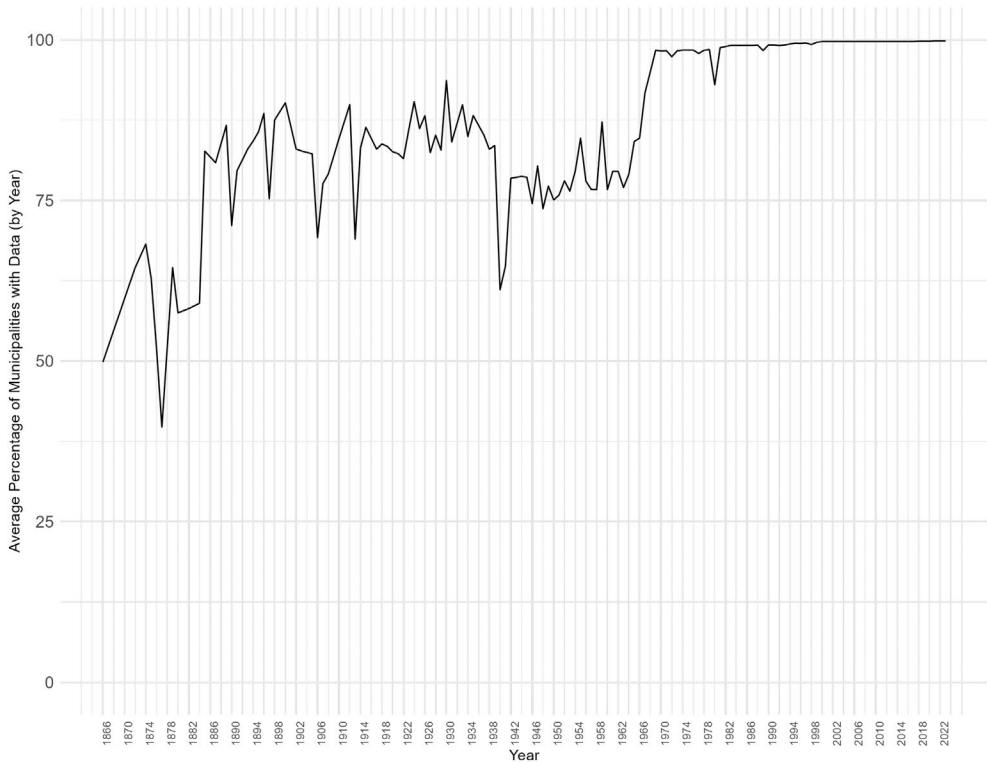


FIGURE 2 Share of Municipalities with Available Data per Vote, 1866–2023.

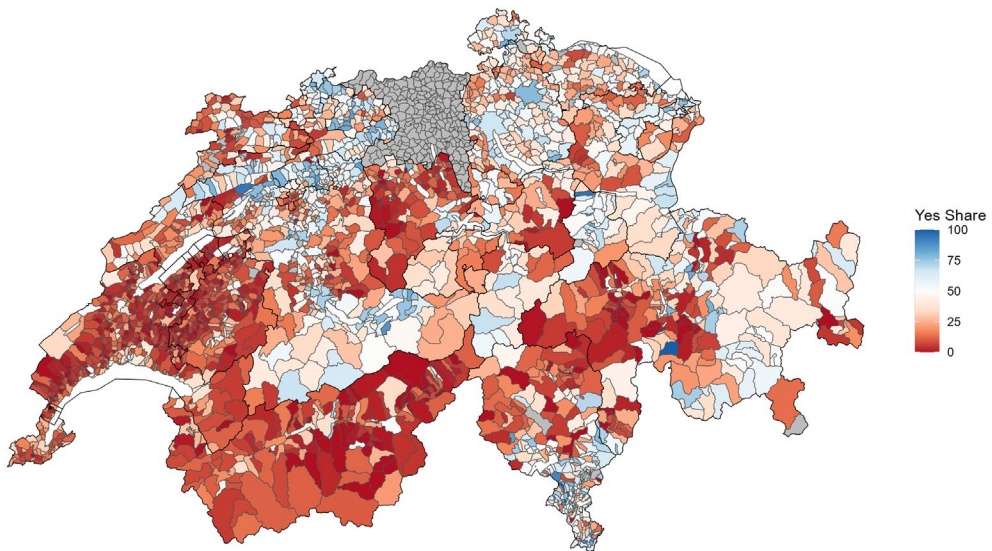


FIGURE 3 Municipality-Level Support for the Introduction of the Direct Tax at Federal Level (1918).

(more mixed colors), which was linked to the political minorities' concerns about fiscal centralization (Walter & Emmenegger, 2023), although support for the direct tax was surprisingly high in the comparatively poor Italian-speaking part of Switzerland.

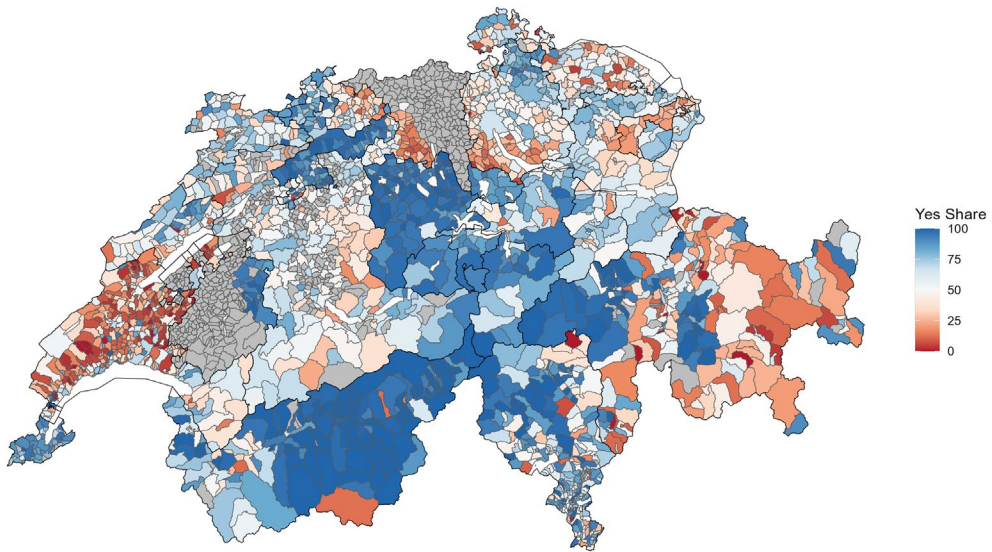


FIGURE 4 Municipality-Level Support for the Introduction of the Popular Initiative (1891).

Figure 4 offers another example of how municipality-level data from direct-democratic votes can be used for research. The figure shows the municipality-level results of the direct-democratic vote to introduce the popular initiative for partial revisions of the constitution. Support for the popular initiative primarily came from minority parties, including the Catholic Conservatives (the main opposition party at the time), the Socialists, and the so-called Democrats. These minority parties saw the popular initiative as a means to gain political influence. In contrast, the politically dominant Radical Party and the allied Liberal Party feared that the popular initiative would weaken parliamentary influence and, consequently, their political dominance (Leemann et al., 2025). However, the radical-liberal coalition was deeply divided on the issue, because openly opposing the demand for more direct democracy would have contradicted their self-proclaimed identity as the ‘progress party’ and defenders of democracy (Michel, 2021; Rielle, 2010). In any case, Figure 4 shows high levels of support for the proposal in the former Special League (Sonderbund) cantons (Fribourg, Luzern, Nidwalden, Obwalden, Schwyz, Uri, Valais, and Zug), which suggests that voters in these regions considered the popular initiative as a means to improve their political representation (Leemann et al., 2025). In contrast, support for the introduction of the popular initiative was comparatively low in the three cantons that dominated federal politics in the first decades of the federal state: Bern, Vaud, and Zürich (Altermatt, 2020, 2021).

The new dataset can also be used to examine long-term developments in Swiss politics. Figure 4 suggests that voters in the former Special League cantons supported the adoption of the popular initiative to improve their political representation. This lack of representation at the federal level can also be analyzed by comparing the congruence between municipalities' positions on direct-democratic votes and the parliament's position on the same issue. Figure 5 shows the percentage of votes a municipality's vote outcome (yes or no) was in accordance with the parliament's position on these issues (see Figure A4 in the appendix for the congruence with the federal council's positions). The data on the parliament's and the federal council's positions are from Swissvotes (2024). For the periods before 1921, Figure 5 shows the strong congruence between the parliament's positions and municipalities' votes in regions such as Basel-Landschaft, Basel-Stadt, Bern, Neuchâtel, Schaffhausen, Solothurn, Thurgau, Vaud, and Zürich. In contrast, the congruence is low in both Appenzell, all of central Switzerland, Fribourg, Jura, and Valais. Finally, some regions such as Graubünden, St.Gallen, and Ticino feature high levels of regional variation with regard to congruence. Most of these stark regional

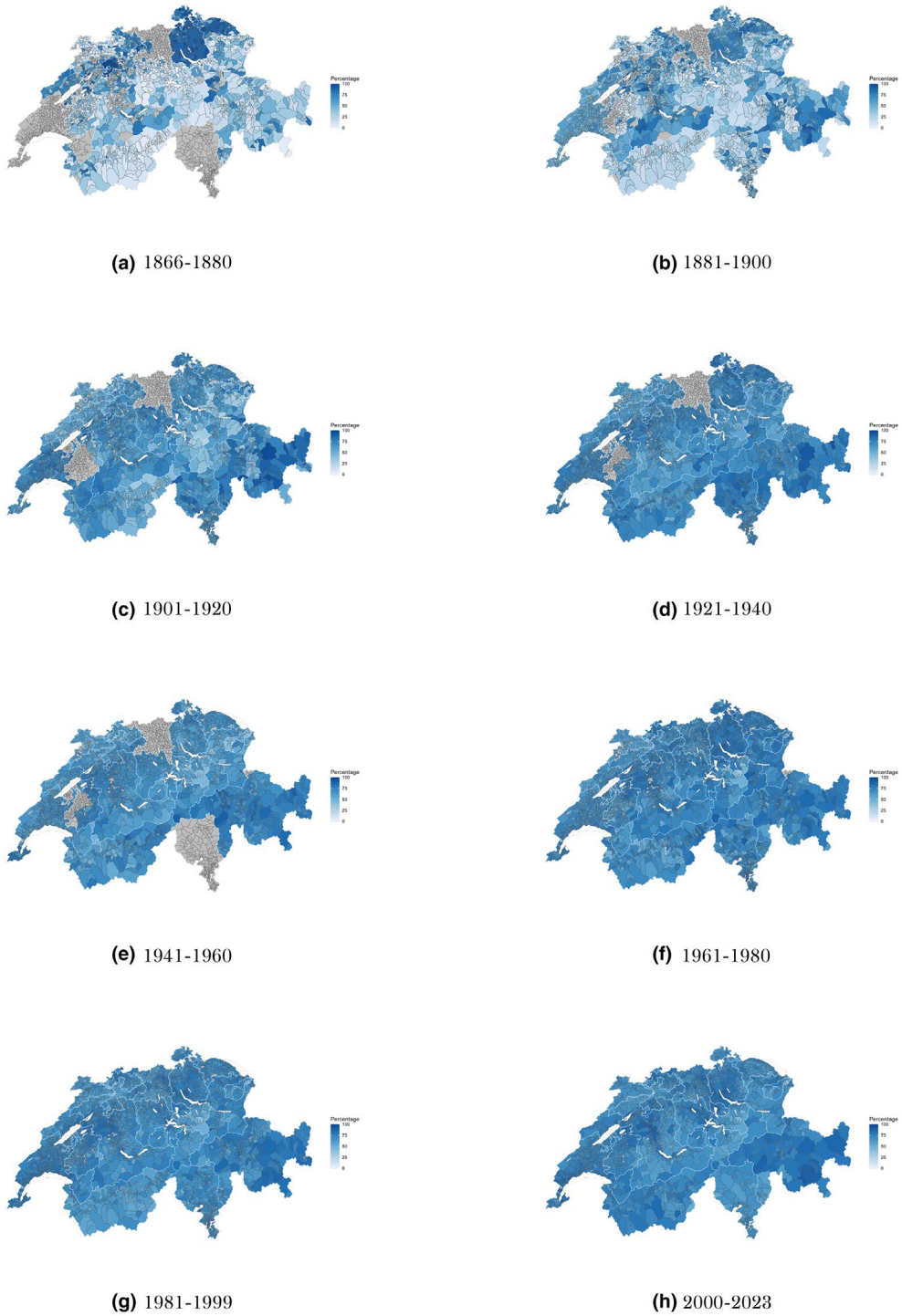


FIGURE 5 Percentage of Votes a Municipality's Vote Outcome was in Accordance with the Parliament's Position on the Issue, by Period.

Note: Municipalities were excluded if more than half of the observations within a specific time period are missing.

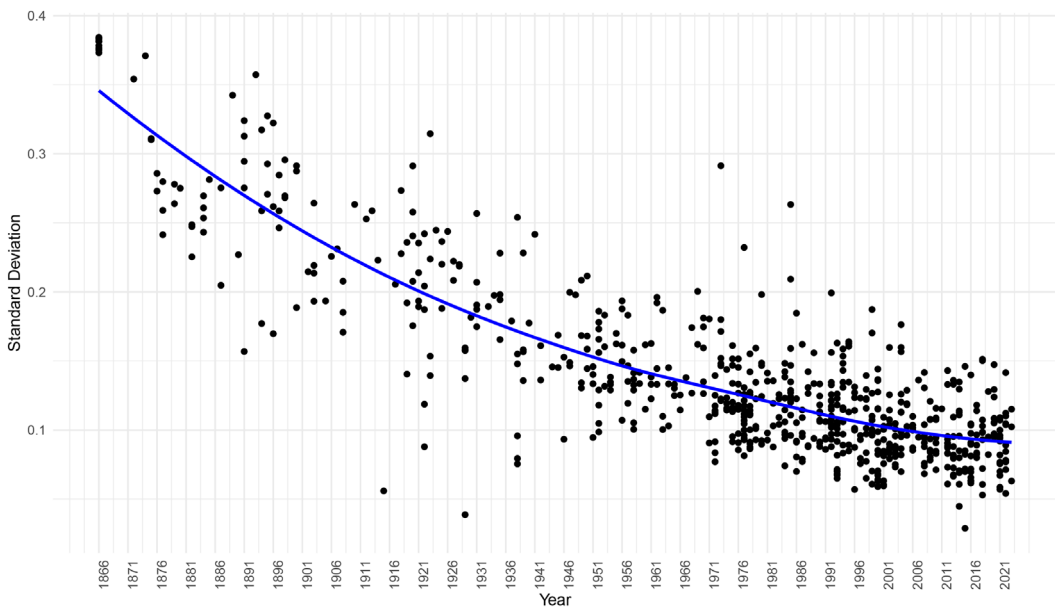


FIGURE 6 Standard Deviation of Yes Share over Time.

Notes: Dots represent the standard deviation of the yes share for each vote. The blue trend line represents a LOESS curve, highlighting the overall trend over time.

differences disappear after 1920, which suggests that some of the conflicts originating in the 1847 Civil War had finally been overcome.

Figure 6 quantifies this congruence development over time. It shows the standard deviation of the yes share across municipalities for each vote. The blue LOESS curve highlights the overall trend over time. We use the standard deviation, rather than the coefficient of variation, because yes shares are measured on the same scale for all votes (from 0 to 100 percent). The figure shows that the standard deviations have constantly declined, which suggests that the direct-democratic voting behavior has gradually converged over time. This development reflects a nationalization of politics and the formation of a national voting body (Caramani, 2004). Figure A5 in the appendix shows the corresponding figures for the ‘cantonalization’ of politics in the 26 cantons. In all cantons, we observe a similar development, although differences between cantons in initial levels of within-canton deviation are sometimes stark, as the comparison of Graubünden (comparatively high deviation) and Zürich (comparatively low deviation) demonstrates.

CONCLUSION

Direct-democratic votes provide social scientists with a “treasure trove” for quantitative research (Seitz, 2014, p. 21). They have sparked interest in the research community, but limited data availability for direct-democratic votes before 1945 has hampered scholars' ability to take advantage of this data source. With this paper, we have tried to close this gap in data availability. We have collected the municipality-level outcomes of direct-democratic votes in the period from 1866 to 1944. In addition, we have addressed missing data in existing datasets from the Federal Statistical Office for the post-1945 period where possible. To collect the data, our research team conducted extensive archival research, primarily consulting cantonal archives and official gazettes. When official records were unavailable, the search was extended to the federal archive and historical newspapers. The resulting dataset allows researchers to examine more than 600 popular votes over a period of more than 150 years and 1.3 million observations.

This paper has shown what researchers may be able to do with such a rich data source. On the one hand, researchers can examine individual votes to investigate popular support for specific policies without relying on attitudinal data or indirect measures such as party vote shares. For instance, the 1918 vote on the introduction of direct taxation at the national level enables researchers to explore whether minority-majority divisions affect popular support for fiscal centralization (Walter & Emmenegger, 2023). On the other hand, direct-democratic votes allow researchers to explore long-term political developments. For instance, in the paper, we have shown that researchers can use direct-democratic votes to examine the formation of a national voting body.

In conclusion, we hope that the new dataset will prove to be a useful resource for social science research and spark even more interest in the Swiss political system.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The dataset as well as all code necessary to reproduce the results in this manuscript are available at the Harvard Dataverse (<https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/DDIVS8>).

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APPENDIX



FIGURE A1 Percentage of Votes with Available Data per Municipality, 2000–2023.
Notes: Grey lines represent municipal borders, white lines correspond to cantonal borders.

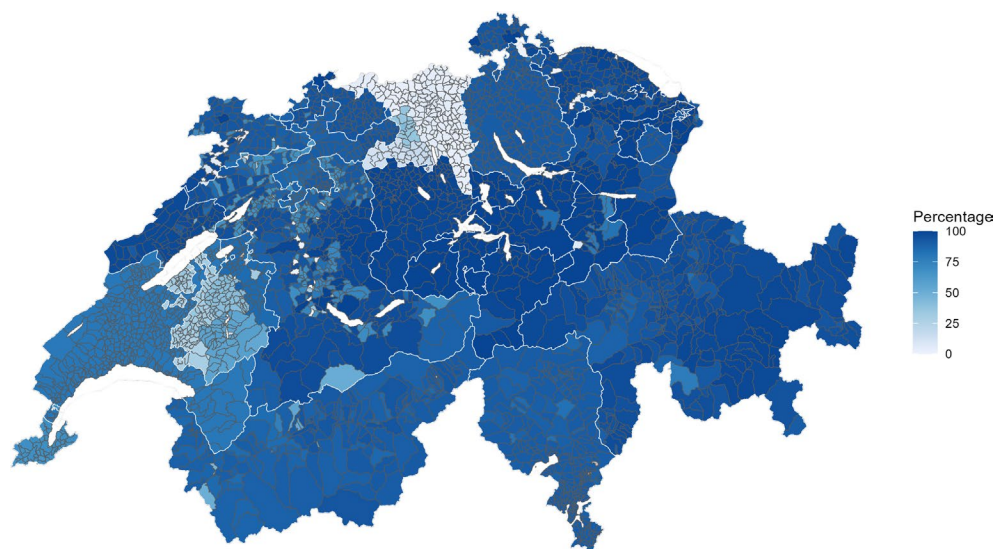


FIGURE A2 Percentage of Votes with Available Data per Municipality, 1866–1944.
Notes: Grey lines represent municipal borders, white lines correspond to cantonal borders.

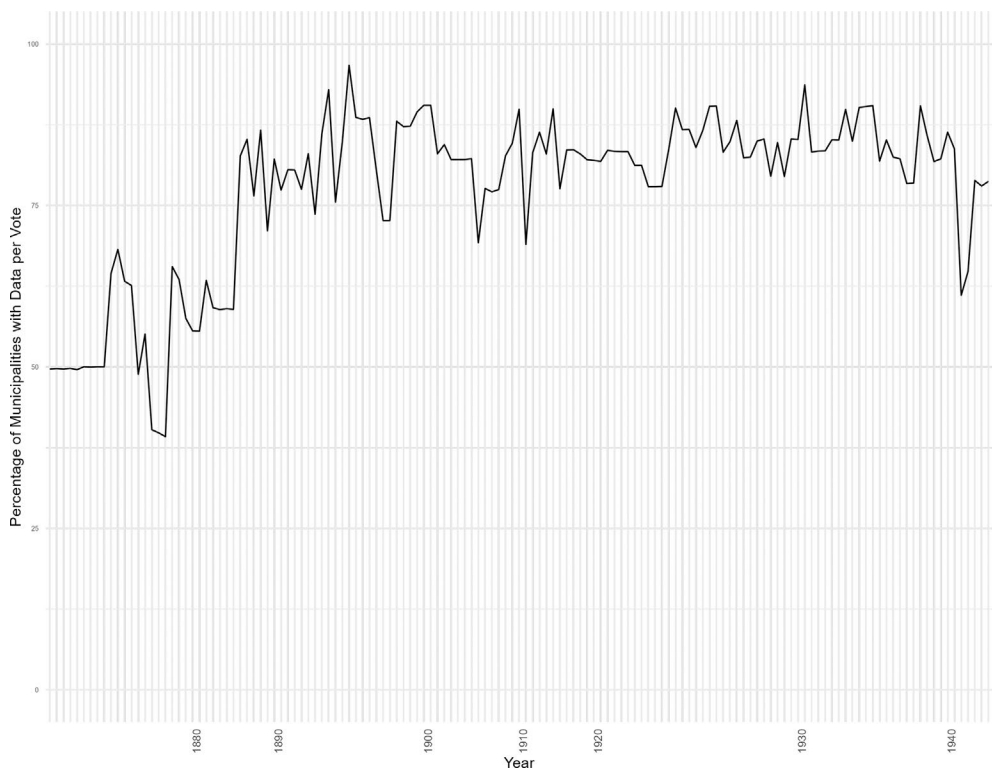
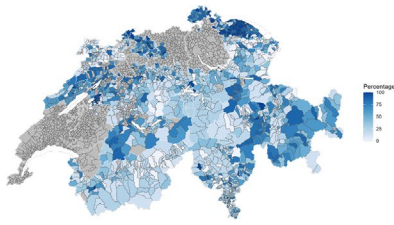
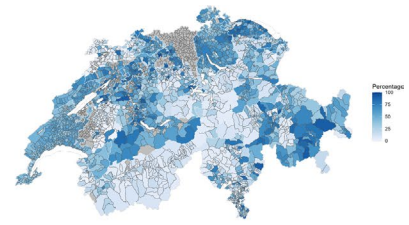


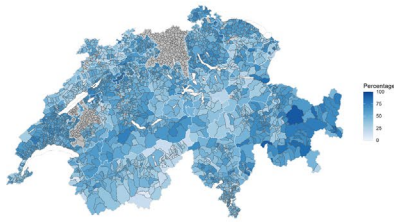
FIGURE A3 Share of Municipalities with Available Data per Vote, 1866–1944.



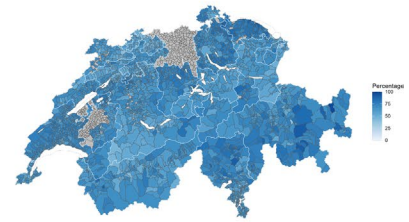
(a) 1866-1880



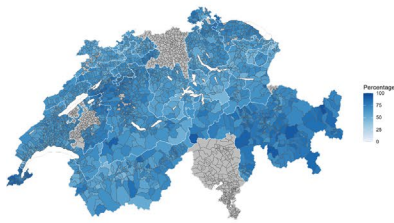
(b) 1881-1900



(c) 1901-1920



(d) 1921-1940



(e) 1941-1960



(f) 1961-1980



(g) 1981-1999



(h) 2000-2023

FIGURE A4 Percentage of Votes a Municipality's Vote Outcome was in Accordance with the Federal Council's Position on the Issue, by Period.

Note: Municipalities were excluded if more than half of the observations within a specific time period were missing.

TABLE A1 Votes From 1945 Onward Included to Supplement Gaps in Existing Datasets.

Canton	Vote Number(s)	Year(s)	Note
Schwyz	156.2	1951	
Fribourg	138–190; 192–215	1945–1968	only few districts
	216–223	1968–1970	
	225–273; 275–300; 305	1971–1981	
Aargau	163–164; 167; 170–171; 174–175	1952–1956	data incomplete
	195–196	1961	
	197; 199; 202–203; 207–223; 225–229; 231–273; 275–305	1961–1981	
Ticino	138–140; 143–144	1944–1947	
	149	1949	
	214–223; 225–305	1967–1981	
Vaud	149	1949	data incomplete
Valais	138	1945	data incomplete
Genève	149	1949	
	186–187	1958	

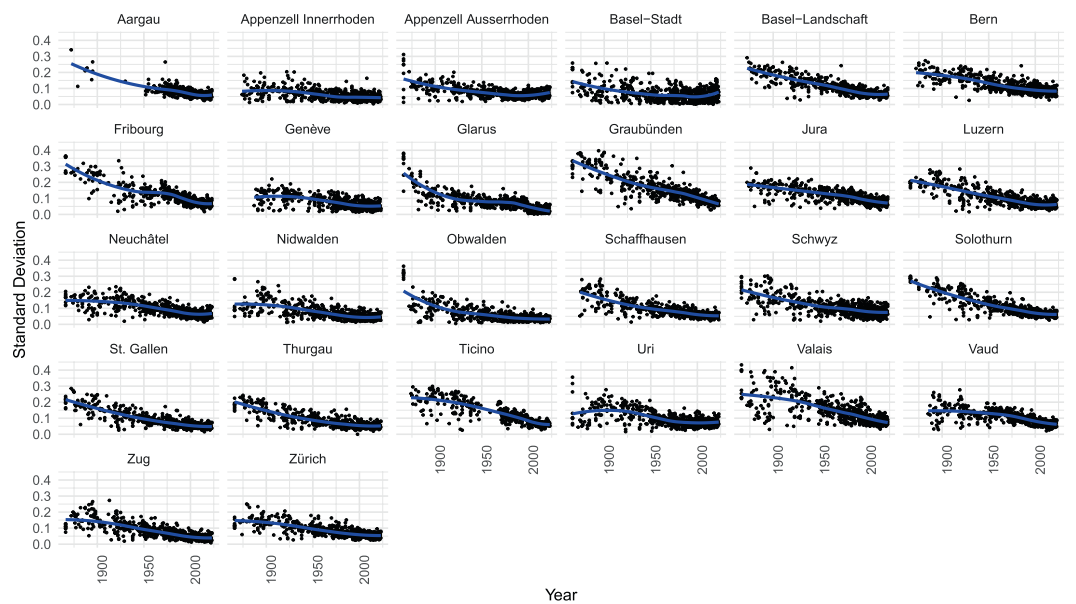


FIGURE A5 Standard Deviation of Yes Share over Time per Canton.

Notes: Dots represent the standard deviation of the yes share for each vote. The blue trend line represents a LOESS curve, highlighting the overall trend over time. Note that only votes were included for which at least one third of the municipalities was available.

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