



Swiss Panel Global Cooperation 2023

Attitudes Towards Global Cooperation –
A Three-Year Perspective

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Global conflict and economic uncertainty have not dampened the Swiss public’s concern and engagement on global poverty issues. The Swiss population has strong opinions on how funding for development cooperation should be spent.

In the wake of unprecedented global challenges – the COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts in the Ukraine and Gaza, and economic fluctuations – what are the Swiss public’s perspectives on global collaboration to reduce poverty? Since 2021, ETH NADEL has conducted the Swiss Panel Global Cooperation survey on attitudes and commitments of the Swiss public towards development cooperation. A representative sample of over 3000 Swiss residents participate annually. This report sheds light on the patterns and trends that have surfaced over the past three years and offers insight into the evolving public discourse on global inequality and international cooperation in Switzerland.

The Swiss population continues to be concerned about global poverty

Concern for global poverty among the Swiss population has remained relatively steady. The percentage of respondents expressing any level of concern about global poverty has hovered around 65% over the last three years. However, providing respondents with the fact that over half of the global population still lives on less than \$10 a day raises concern levels to 72%.¹

Level of personal engagement remains largely unchanged

Donation behaviors have shown a marginal decline, with the percentage of individuals donating dropping from

52% to 49%. However, in other aspects of engagement with global poverty, such as donating goods or discussing poverty and inequality with friends and family, there has been no significant change since 2021.

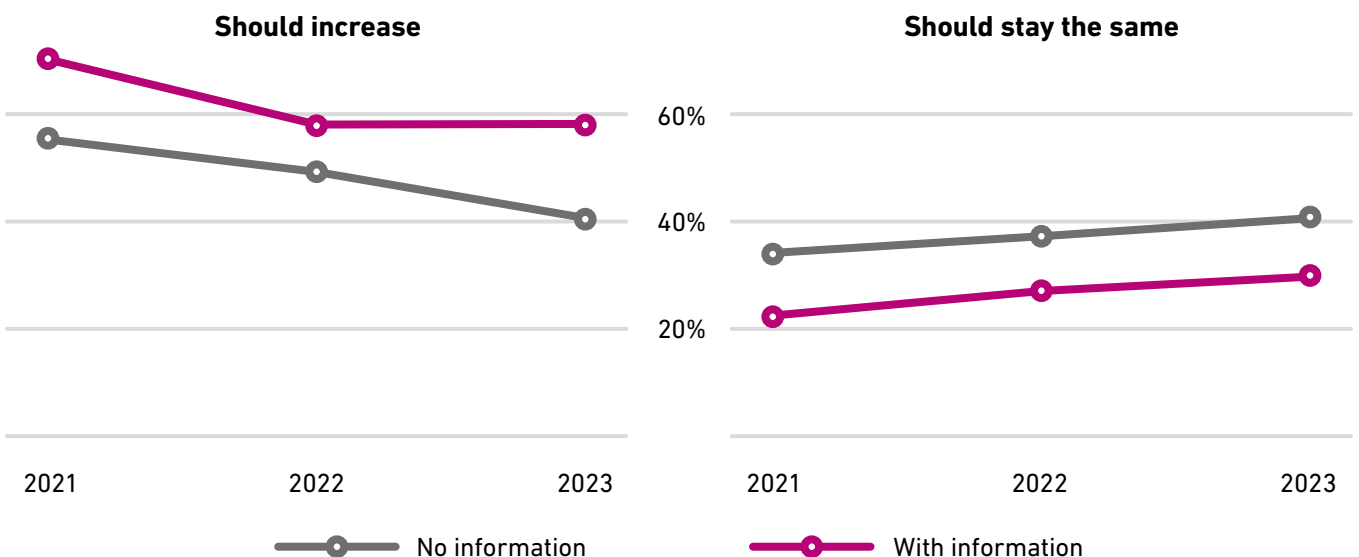
More support for strengthening development cooperation than for military spending

When individuals are informed of Swiss expenditure on development cooperation, i.e. 485 CHF per year and per Swiss resident, 58% of the population supports an increase in Swiss expenditure on development cooperation, and 30% supports maintaining the current level. For comparison, when providing information on Swiss military expenditure, i.e. CHF 650 per year and Swiss residents, 26% of the population supports increasing military expenditure, and 40% is in favor of keeping the current level.

When Swiss residents are informed about the level of spending on development cooperation, demands for an increase in spending have remained consistent over the last two years. However, not knowing the level of public spending on development cooperation, there is a decline in support, dropping from 55% in 2021 to 40% in 2023. This finding underscores the impact of information on public opinion and that the Swiss population is in favor of increasing the funding for international cooperation when provided with the necessary information.

Figure 1:

Should Swiss public spending on foreign aid increase?



Where should development spending be invested in?

Funding for development cooperation is used in many different ways. This year, we asked survey respondents which areas Switzerland’s development cooperation money should prioritize. The answers show a large consensus across the political spectrum, gender, and age groups: 21% of the respondents give the highest priority to support in education. This is followed by prioritizing food security (20%) and health (17%). Interestingly, this public opinion overlaps with a recent review of the existing evidence on the effectiveness of development cooperation, which finds that most confidence can be put into development cooperation with a focus on education and health.²

There is very little support from the Swiss public for two areas. Promoting the local private sector and supporting good governance and democracy are seen as the most important priorities by only 1.6% and 4% of respondents,

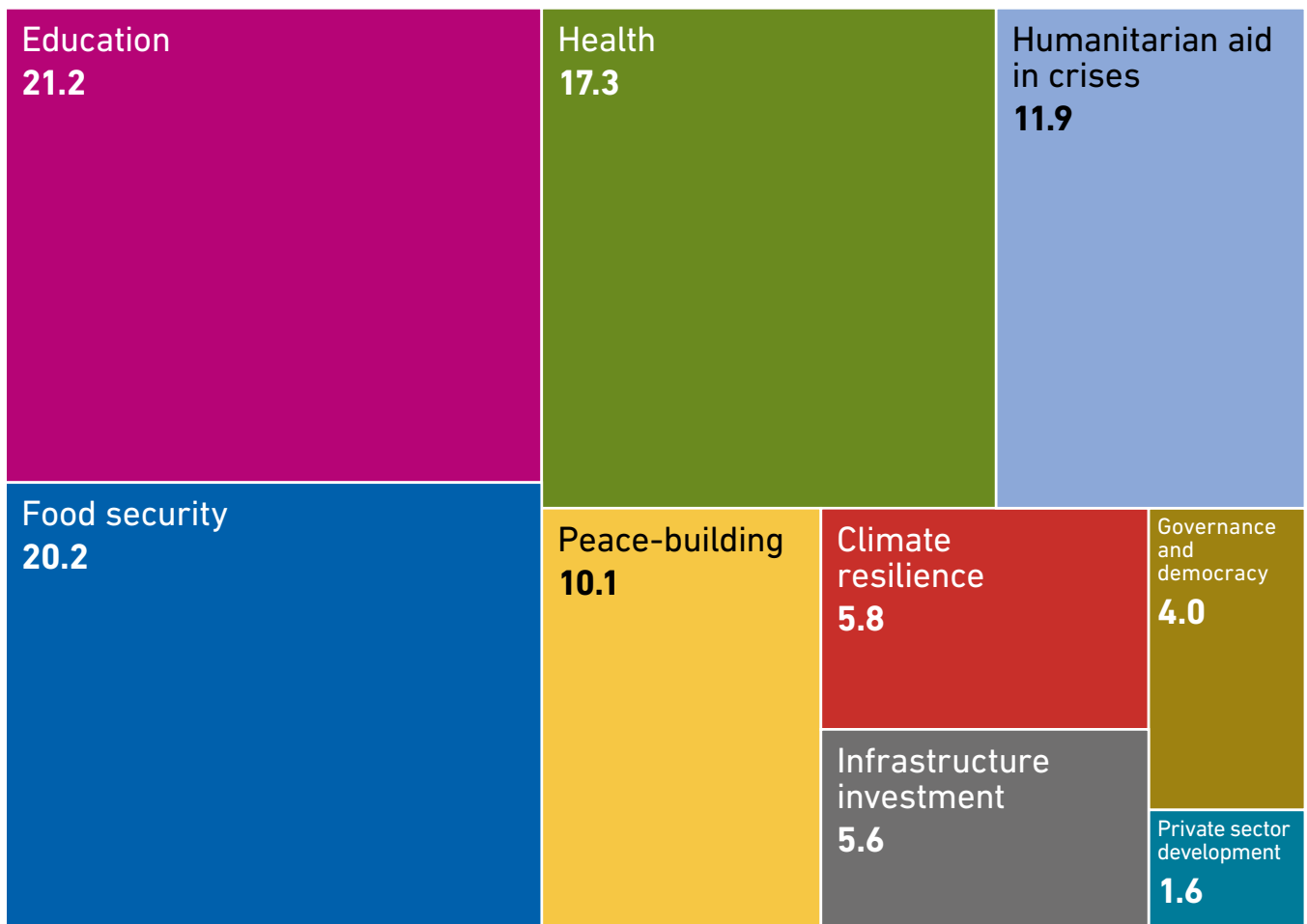
respectively. Study participants of all political orientations, genders, and age groups agree on this attitude. These attitudes of the Swiss public somewhat contradict the strategy of Swiss development policy, which seems to focus mainly on good governance and private sector development.³

Support for investment in infrastructure (electricity, roads, water) is also low at just 5.6%, with participants from the right-wing spectrum more likely to see these projects as a priority (8.3%) than those from the left-wing camp (3.5%).

And what about adaptation to climate change? Only 5.8% of all respondents listed this as the most important priority, with political orientation playing a major role: 9.6% of those on the left and 4.1% of those on the right consider it very important that development cooperation helps people to adapt to the consequences of climate change.

Figure 2:

Which areas of development cooperation should Switzerland prioritize?



Endnotes

- 1 \$10 in Purchase power parity adjusted (PPP) international Dollars
- 2 Thiele, R (2021). Development cooperation, growth and poverty reduction: a survey of the evidence. In I. Günther & R. Lahoti (Eds.), Transitioning to no poverty (pp. 271-283). Transitioning to Sustainability Series 1. Basel: MDPI
- 3 Switzerland's International Development Cooperation Strategy 2025-28: https://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/eda/en/documents/aktuell/dossiers/Flyer-Strategie-IZA-2025_EN.pdf

In fall 2023, 4,071 Swiss residents took part in the third wave of the ETH Swiss Panel Global Cooperation. Comparing the sample with population data from the Swiss Federal Statistical Office, the survey participants are mostly representative of the Swiss adult population. Detailed summary statistics for all survey questions and response options as well as more details about the methodology are available in the complementary statistical annex: <https://nadel.ethz.ch/swiss-panel.html>

ETH NADEL would like to thank the survey participants for their time and willingness to share their opinion. The survey will be repeated annually until 2030.

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