



# Swiss Panel Global Cooperation 2022.a

Political leanings and values, not group identities, drive attitudes towards global cooperation

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**What influences Swiss residents' positions on international cooperation? Much debate centers on characteristics like age, gender, income, language or living in urban or rural areas, but a survey shows that none of them play a decisive role. The only significant factor consistently correlated with attitudes towards global cooperation is political leaning.**

Opinions among Swiss residents are divided on the role Switzerland should play in fighting global inequalities. For example: How much money should be spent on poverty reduction or humanitarian aid? What should Switzerland do to combat the global climate crisis? Which immigration policies are desirable? What is less clear, however, is where the fault lines between different factions of society run. Is the divide between young and old, rich and poor, women and men, or is it the much-discussed urban-rural divide? Or are there big differences because more than one-third of people living in Switzerland has a migration background?

Our representative survey of more than 3,000 Swiss residents shows that these commonly mentioned explanations do not explain much of the differences in respondents' positions. We find only one driver that is correlated with people's positions on global challenges and how policies should address them: respondents' political leaning.

Humans form opinions about policies based on their values and basic normative attitudes. For example, some people describe themselves as being rather close to positions of the political right, i.e., emphasizing the role of individual freedom, personal responsibility, and a limited role for the state. Others lean towards the political left, i.e., putting more emphasis on mutual responsibility and the role of the state and the international community to actively promote social equality; or people take a middle ground.

These political leanings signify which values different people prioritise as they consider how we should live together in society. We find that general political position, informed by value priorities, is the only factor that explains differences in attitudes towards international cooperation and that self-classification into left, middle or right is highly correlated with respondents' preferences for political parties in Switzerland (see Statistical Annex, Table 29).

**Attitudes towards global poverty**

About 65% of the Swiss population is concerned about global poverty, with little difference in age, gender, language, migration background, income, or urban residence. The only noticeable difference is between the left and right: 81% on the left of the political spectrum are concerned about global poverty, but only 44% are on the right. About 22% of respondents "strongly agree" that Switzerland must do much more to combat global poverty. Across socio-demographic groups, people share this opinion: for example, the proportion of women who strongly agree is only 2 percentage points higher than that of men. The picture is different, however, when the responses are broken down by value preferences. Among those who identify themselves more on the left, 44% strongly agree with the statement, compared with only 9% of those who identify themselves more on the right.

Figure 1: Percentage of the population concerned about global poverty

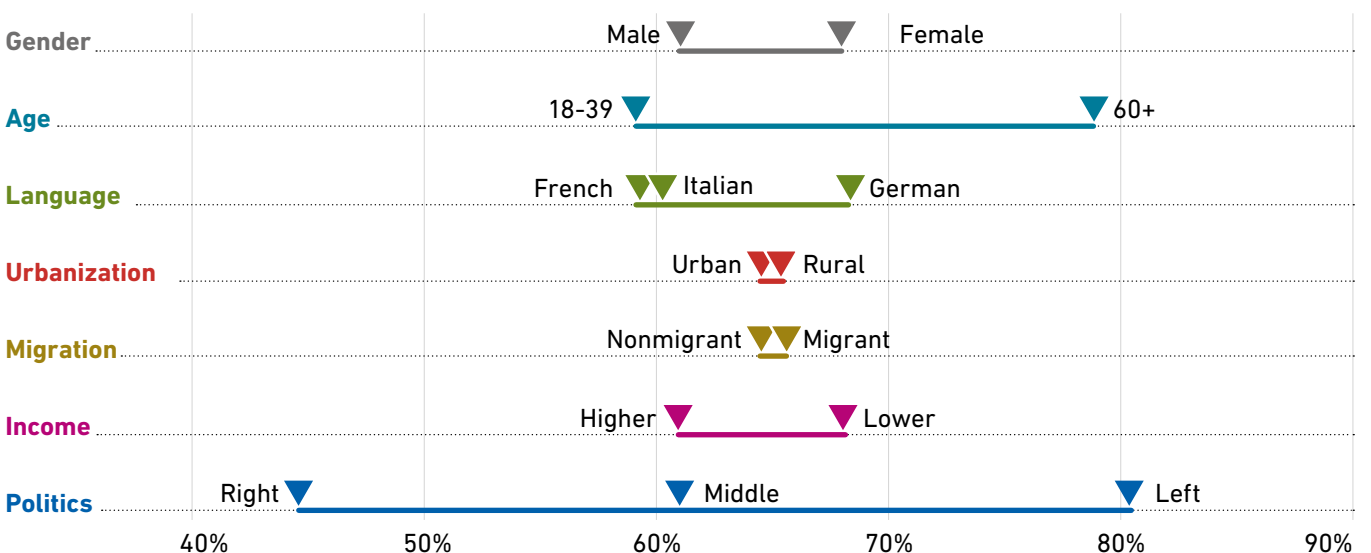


Figure 2:

**How group identities influence positions on international cooperation**



### Attitudes towards migration

Attitudes towards migration also show the dominance of normative positions over socio-demographic differences. There are slight differences between age groups, with 18-39-year-olds generally being more open to migration than those over 60. Among 18-39-year-olds, 42% strongly agree with the statement: "It is a good thing that Switzerland is made up of people from many different countries," but only 25% of those over 60 agree. Women are less likely than men to see a multicultural population as a threat to Switzerland. While these differences exist, they are relatively small compared to the differences between those who identify more with the left versus the right of the political spectrum: while 2% of those on the left see migration as a threat to Switzerland's political stability, 27% of those who identify with the right of the political spectrum see migration as a threat.

### Attitudes towards climate change

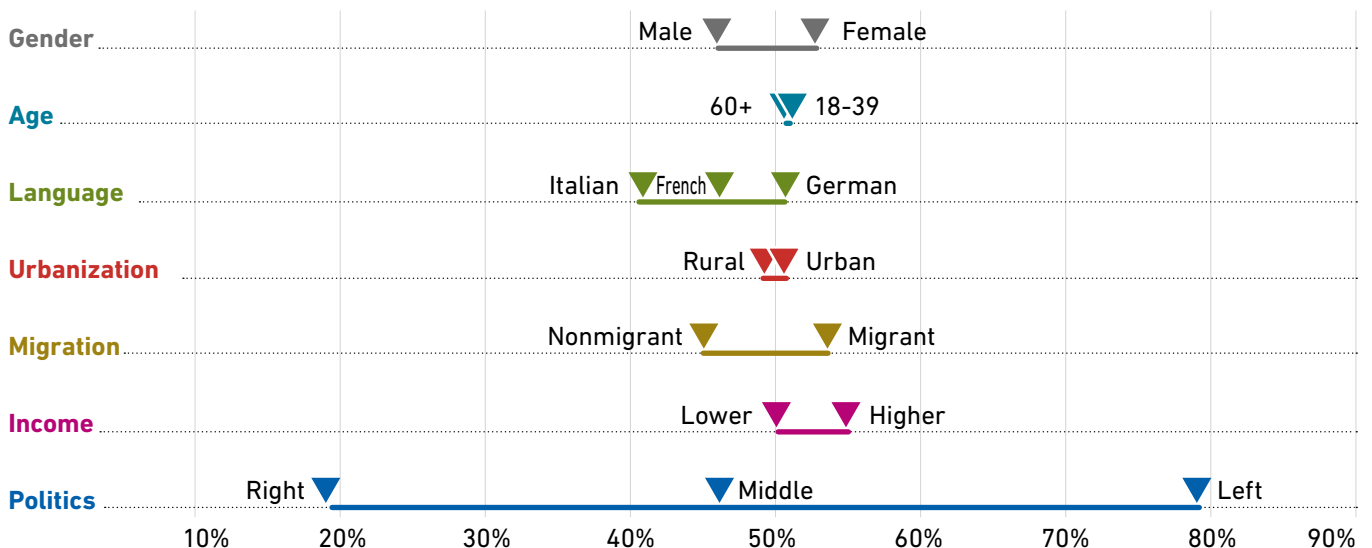
Along with poverty reduction and migration, climate policy is a third key area of international cooperation. The same pattern repeats itself here. The statement, "Switzerland must reduce its carbon footprint to protect the world's most vulnerable communities from the effects of climate change," is strongly supported by 12% of respondents on

the right, compared with 64% on the left. When analysed by socio-demographic group, the most significant difference is 10 percentage points between respondents in the high-income group and those in the low-income group.

### Attitudes towards development cooperation

Regarding public financial resources for international cooperation, across all respondents, 49% support an increase in Swiss public spending. Yet, this share rises to 79% among respondents on the left and falls to 19% among those on the right. The figure for centrists is 46%. Similarly, while 12% of the population strongly agrees with the statement, "Switzerland should focus on its own development instead of providing aid to other countries," this share rises to 33% on the right and is only 1.4% on the left. Regarding the role of private actors in the fight against global poverty and climate change, 49% strongly support requiring companies to audit their supply chains and 27% support measures to prevent tax shifting from low-income countries to Switzerland. Support for these two policies is three to five times higher on the left than on the right.

Figure 3: Share of respondents who state Swiss development aid should increase



### Centrist attitudes are not uniform across poverty, migration and climate change

If values drive political preferences, what does this mean for the 45% of respondents who self-identify as centrists, falling somewhere between the left and the right? There are policy issues where centrists take a centrist position. On other issues, however, the centrist position is closer to those who identify as “left” and on others closer to those who identify as “right”. For example, when asked about the political and economic effects of migration into Switzerland, centrists tend to take a left-leaning position. However, when asked about policy measures on the same political issue, their answers are closer to right-leaning positions. On climate change, centrists take a middle position — both for additional support for poor countries to protect from the consequences of climate change, as well as for a Swiss commitment to reduce its own CO2 emissions, so that poor countries are less exposed to the effects of climate change.

### Attributing policy positions to socio-demographic factors creates non-existent rifts

The survey results suggest that when we discuss international cooperation, the debate we need to have should focus on the values around which we organize as a society. We often seem to avoid this debate by attributing different political positions to socio-demographic factors, most recently to the rural-urban divide. Blaming policy disagreements on socio-demographic differences is too simplistic and might create previously non-existent rifts between different groups of society, making it even more difficult to make decisions and find ways to move forward on critical issues.

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In fall 2022, 3,256 Swiss residents took part in the second 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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