



# Swiss Panel Global Cooperation 2022.b

How information impacts attitudes towards global inequality and development cooperation

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**The majority of the Swiss public feels well informed about global inequality, but almost half of the population still desires more information. Updating existing knowledge with information on global inequalities shifts attitudes towards global cooperation. The Swiss media, the primary source of global inequality information for the Swiss public, might consider how it frames that information, as it influences how people perceive efforts to reduce global poverty.**

How does information on global poverty affect how people perceive global cooperation? Results of the second wave of the Swiss Panel Global Cooperation conducted by ETH NADEL, for which more than 3,000 Swiss residents were interviewed, suggest that the availability and framing of information changes attitudes towards global cooperation — and that close to 50% of respondents would like to know more about living realities around the world.

**Swiss residents feel well informed about global inequality, but there is an opportunity to learn more**

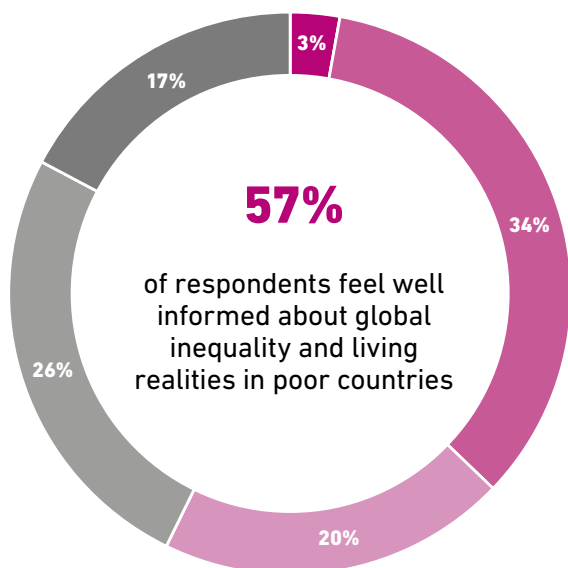
About 57% of survey respondents feel well informed about global inequality and living realities in poorer countries. To compare, 80% of the population feels well informed about climate change and its impact on societies. However, three out of four respondents believe that the number of people living in *extreme poverty* has increased in the past two decades — even though there has been a 50% decrease, with more than a billion people around the world climbing out of extreme poverty since 1990. On the other hand, respondents underestimate the extent of general poverty. More than half believe the number of people living on less than \$10 a day globally is three billion or less, although the actual number is close to five billion people. Furthermore, only 17% of the Swiss population surveyed say they have heard of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and could explain the general idea to someone.

**5 billion**  
worldwide live on less than \$10 a day.

**1 billion**  
worldwide live on less than \$2 a day.

Extreme poverty has decreased by more than **50%** since 1990.

Regardless of whether people feel well informed or not, 46% said they would like to know more about living realities around the world. On the other hand, about 17% say they are “happily uninformed” about global inequality, i.e., they do not feel well informed and do not want to know more. For climate change, for comparison, the share of “happily uninformed” is 8%.



**Figure 1:**  
**Self-assessed knowledge about global inequality and living realities in developing countries**

- In my opinion, I am...**
- very well informed
  - well informed
  - well informed, but I would still like to know more
  - not well informed, but I would like to know more
  - not well informed, but I don't feel like I need more information



### Information changes Swiss residents' preferences for development spending

We asked respondents whether they think Swiss public spending on foreign aid should increase, decrease, or stay the same. Half of the respondents (chosen at random) received information about the actual spending on Swiss development cooperation, whereas the other half did not receive this information before answering the question.

Our results show that without being informed of the level of spending on foreign aid, 49% of respondents are in favor of increasing spending on foreign aid. When people receive information about the amount of public spending on development cooperation, 65% of respondents think that spending on foreign aid should increase. This large difference can be explained by the fact that most respondents overestimate the current level of Swiss development cooperation — 68% of respondents believe that Swiss development cooperation is more than double the current spending — 400-450 CHF per person.

### Information and framing changes public beliefs about global inequality now and in the future

Respondents were also asked how concerned they are about global poverty. Before responding, half were informed that 60% of the world's population lives on less than \$10 per day, while the other half received no information. In the group that received no information, 65% report being concerned about global poverty, while among those

The Swiss government spends about CHF 3.6 billion for global development cooperation, which corresponds to 0.5% of the gross national income, or **400-450 CHF** per Swiss resident.

that received factual information about global poverty, the level of concern rose to 73%.

We also asked respondents about how likely they think it is that the global community will succeed in ending extreme poverty by 2030. A randomly selected half of the sample received information that extreme poverty (living on less than \$2 a day) has been reduced by 50% over the last 20 years and the other half received information that extreme poverty still affects close to one billion people worldwide. Overall, the public is highly skeptical that the global community will achieve the United Nations' goal of ending extreme poverty by 2030. Only 9% of respondents who received positive trend information think this goal might be achieved. But of those who received the information on poverty levels, a third fewer respondents, i.e., only 6%, thought this goal might be achieved.

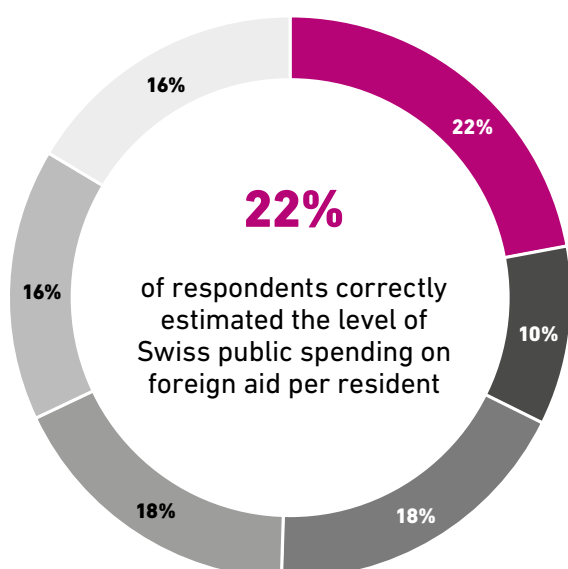


Figure 2:

### Estimated level of Swiss public spending on foreign aid per resident

- Less than 500 CHF
- 500 CHF to 999 CHF
- 1,000 CHF to 1,999 CHF
- 2,000 CHF to 4,999 CHF
- 5,000 CHF to 9,999 CHF
- 10,000 CHF or more

### The role of media and school curricula in global inequality knowledge

According to the survey, the most common information sources on living realities around the globe are television (53%) and online media (48%), followed by radio and print media (both 28%), and friends and colleagues (14%). As expected, there are large differences between age groups. The number one media source among the 18-39-year-olds is online media (51%), whereas it is TV for the 60+ generation (72%). Social media still plays a minor role in Switzerland, but YouTube and Instagram/TikTok both reach 12% among the 18-39-year-olds. Only 10% of all respondents cite charitable organizations or school education as a source of knowledge. Knowledge on global poverty, however, is about 10 percentage points higher among the population that cited charitable organizations or school education as their source of knowledge as compared to the population who only cited media as their information source.

Of those who believe they are well informed, 63% reported that they learnt little or nothing about global inequality in school. However, if we look only at the younger respondents between 18 and 29 years old, only 45% indicate that they learnt nothing or little about global inequalities in school, indicating that the topic has received more attention in school curricula recently.

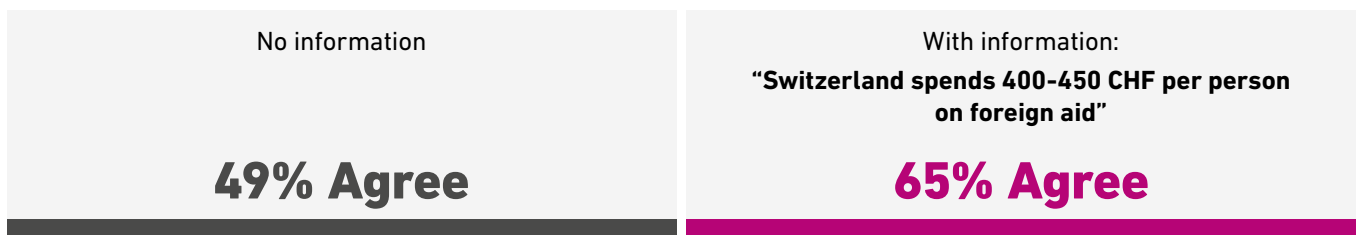
### Call to action for more information

All together these results indicate that accurate information plays an important role in shaping attitudes towards global poverty and cooperation. Given that 46% of respondents would like to know more about living realities in low-income countries, and that the media is their preferred information source, this seems to be a call to action for the media. When the media does provide information, a more balanced treatment of topics linked to global sustainability might be warranted. For example, about 80% of survey respondents feel well informed about climate change, whereas only 57% feel well informed about living realities in poorer countries. According to our results, this gap is not due to differences in school curricula.

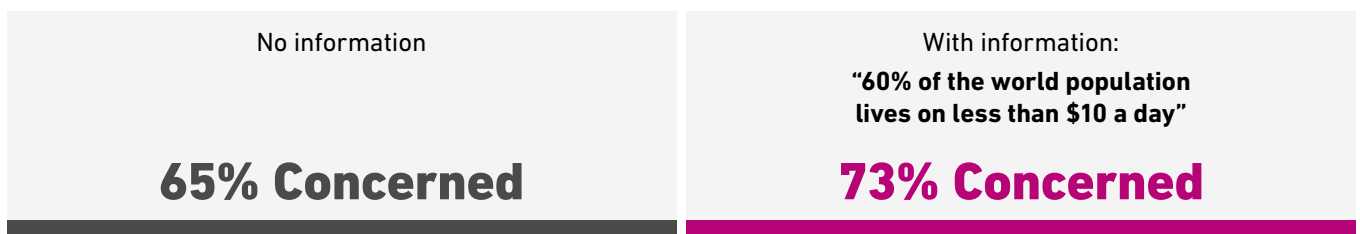
Furthermore, framing is crucial. As the responses to differently-framed information about global poverty demonstrate, framing can lead to large differences in public attitudes. Those providing information need to be aware of their responsibility and those consuming information should constantly be aware of how information is framed — even if correct — by various actors.

Figure 3:

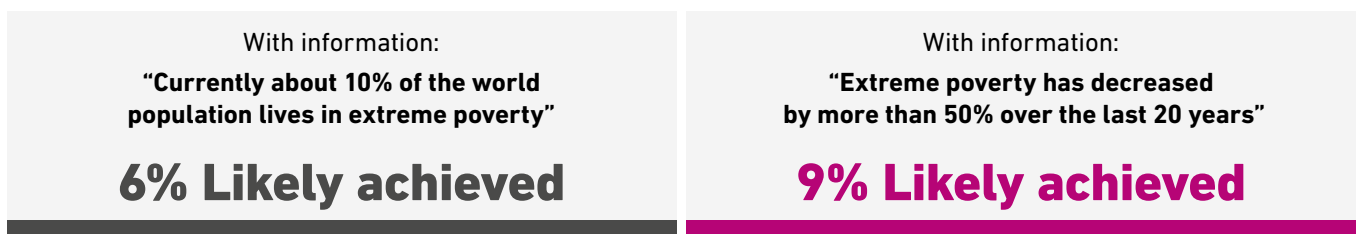
#### Should Swiss public spending on foreign aid increase?



#### Are you concerned about global poverty?



#### Will the world end extreme poverty by 2030?



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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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