

# FORS<sup>+</sup>

Data and services  
for the social sciences

## Annual Report 2025

Lausanne, March 2026

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# 1. Editorial from the FORS Director

## Contributing to Social Sciences beyond Data Collections and Archiving

FORS successfully carried out all planned activities in 2025. We collected high-quality survey data for our own research programmes and for numerous external partners, archived and disseminated datasets with full documentation, and maintained and further developed the SWISSUbase platform and related services. Major data collections included the 26<sup>th</sup> wave of the Swiss Household Panel; Round 12 of the European Social Survey, conducted for the first time as a mixed web/paper survey alongside face-to-face interviews; the ISSP/MOSAiCH surveys; and the fifth wave of the Swiss Election Study panel. In addition, the Data Collection and Analysis team at FORS carried out more than 25 external mandates for academic and public-sector partners throughout the year, reflecting the high level of trust placed in FORS's survey expertise. Archiving activities were also successful, with more than 180 new datasets made available on SWISSUbase in 2025.

The year 2025 also marked the start of a new funding period (2025–2028). FORS concluded a grant agreement with its main funder, the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), which defines the financial and operational framework for all activities and includes an expanded set of Key Performance Indicators for future reporting.

Beyond data collection and archiving, FORS staff are deeply engaged in research through publications, conference participation, and collaborations in Switzerland and internationally. FORS coordinates major research networks such as ISSP, CNES, and CCS, and its staff serve on more than 50 scientific advisory, editorial, or governance boards. FORS also organises training activities for researchers and contributes, on a limited basis, to teaching and the supervision of Master's and PhD theses. In addition, FORS provides and operates technical infrastructures, including its Survey Management Tool (SMT) and SWISSUbase, and hosts numerous websites, both for its own activities and for collaborative projects. In February 2026, FORS became the service owner, on behalf of CESSDA, of the European Question Bank, which provides access to survey questions in their original languages. This sustained engagement in research, teaching, outreach, and technical infrastructure is essential to ensuring high-quality services for the social science research community.

Finally, FORS plays an advocacy role in highlighting the importance of social science research infrastructures to policymakers. An analysis of Swiss national funding streams shows that only around three percent of research infrastructure funding is allocated to the social sciences and humanities combined – a level that has remained largely unchanged for more than a decade. Through initiatives such as FORS's involvement in SSHOC-CH (Social Sciences and Humanities Open Cluster Switzerland) and contributions to new infrastructure proposals, FORS works to strengthen recognition of infrastructure needs in the social sciences and humanities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Georg Lutz', written in a cursive style.

Prof. Dr. Georg Lutz, Director

## 2. Surveys

FORS is responsible for a number of national and international surveys, mostly funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF). The surveys described below are part of the standard FORS data collection funded during the period 2025–2028. FORS academic surveys can also use the sample frame “Stichprobenrahmen für Haushalts- und Personenbefragungen SRPH” of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (SFSO). This sample frame is based on official registers and allows high-precision sampling of individuals resident within Switzerland. The sample frame centralises information from cantonal and communal population registers which are updated on a quarterly basis.

Beyond the SNSF-funded surveys, the Data Collection and Analysis Team (see [Chapter 7. Data collection and analysis DCA](#)) carried out a wide range of projects, many of them highly innovative and offering substantial scientific added value. These projects were often developed in close collaboration with clients and funded through third-party contributions from researchers or public bodies.

### 2.1 Swiss Household Panel SHP

In 2025, the [Swiss Household Panel \(SHP\)](#) continued to consolidate its role as a key longitudinal survey in Switzerland. The year was marked by stable fieldwork performance across all samples, ongoing methodological innovation, and sustained efforts in data preparation, harmonisation, and user support. Alongside major outreach activities and international collaborations, the SHP advanced several forward-looking initiatives that will further enhance the scientific value and analytical potential of the panel in the years to come.

#### Data Collection and Fieldwork

The annual fieldwork, conducted by M.I.S. Trend, began in August 2024 and concluded in March 2025. Across the four samples, a total of 6 347 households and 9 830 individuals participated:

- » SHP\_I, wave 26: 2 083 households; 3 137 individuals
- » SHP\_II, wave 21: 909 households; 1 340 individuals
- » SHP\_III, wave 12: 1 241 households; 1 853 individuals
- » SHP\_IV, wave 5: 2 114 households; 3 500 individuals

Attrition remained within expected limits. SHP\_I continued to demonstrate exceptional stability, retaining 96% of last year's sample. Attrition was slightly higher in the more recent samples, though the SHP\_IV sample showed clear signs of stabilisation after steeper declines in its first waves. Telephone interviews remained the primary mode of data collection, accounting for 81% of household surveys and 70% of individual surveys. The older samples relied overwhelmingly on telephone interviews. In the SHP\_IV, which has a mixed-mode design, around 60% of household questionnaires and 49% of individual questionnaires were completed by phone, with the remainder online. This distribution has remained relatively stable, even though respondents may switch modes from one year to the next.

A team of 155 interviewers and several supervisors across Bern and Lausanne ensured the smooth running of the survey. The interview durations corresponded to expectations. Household interviews averaged 19 minutes by telephone and 14 minutes online; individual interviews averaged 37 minutes by telephone and 32 minutes online. The modules included this year (religion and psychological scales) required somewhat less time compared to last year's political and social participation modules.

Preparation for the 2025/26 fieldwork took place between February and August and involved updating and adapting the questionnaires in the three interview languages and different survey modes, testing scenarios, preparing letters and newsletters for participants, updating interviewer manuals, and conducting training sessions in both Bern and Lausanne. Fieldwork for the new waves began at the end of August 2025 and will continue until March 2026. This wave includes rotating modules on social networks and on leisure and culture. Within the latter, the SHP team introduced an updated set of questions on digitalisation, replacing earlier items that no longer reflected contemporary digital habits. These new questions address internet use, problematic use, and attitudes toward digitalisation and AI. An additional innovation this year stems from a collaboration with the Centre LIVES. Three items were included to support a data challenge in which researchers will attempt to predict respondents' assessments of how happy, meaningful, and psychologically rich their lives have been. Competing teams will preregister their predictions before the data release, and the project will culminate in a collective publication.

## Data Preparation, Documentation and Harmonisation

The SHP continued the incentive reduction experiment in SHP\_II. While household-level participation appeared unaffected, participation among individual household members declined modestly. With the experiment concluding after the current wave of data collection, the team will evaluate its implications for future practice.

From April to December, the SHP team focused on preparing the annual data release. As in previous years, this included data quality checks, cleaning, harmonising, constructing new variables, and preparing the extensive documentation that supports data users. The 2026 release package will include the annual household and individual files, the long household and individual files which combine all waves since 1999 and provide harmonised variables, and several additional data sets (e.g. on data social origin, a monthly employment calendar, imputed income and wealth data, interviewer information), and the harmonised files for the Cross-National Equivalent File (CNEF).

Documentation has become an increasingly important component of the SHP's work as the panel grows in complexity. In 2025 the team updated the general user guide, the long-file guide, the questionnaires, and coding templates for different statistical software. These improvements ensure that both new and experienced users can navigate the data with ease.

International harmonisation efforts also continued. The SHP team delivered an updated harmonised dataset and codebook for waves 1 to 26 to the CNEF collaboration, which includes key household panels from Europe, North America, and Asia. The SHP also continues to be part of the Comparative Panel File project, which offers harmonisation code for comparative life-course research, though the SHP itself is not responsible for preparing these codes.

A growing number of researchers requested access to geographical identifiers that allow linking the SHP to municipal-level (or even neighbourhood-level) contextual data from the Federal Statistical Office. These identifiers, available under stricter data protection conditions, substantially expand the analytical possibilities of the SHP, enabling studies linking individual level data to contextual information such as access to services, environmental characteristics, and population change.

Finally, in collaboration with the FORS IT department, the SHP continued developing the Survey Management Tool, which now supports internal workflows for survey documentation.

## Networking, Outreach, and Academic Support

A major highlight of the year was the biennial conference, which—on the occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> wave of the SHP—was organised jointly with the TREE study under the theme “25 Years of Longitudinal Surveys in Switzerland”. The conference, held on 4–5 June in Lausanne, attracted nearly 110 participants from Switzerland and several European countries. With 56 presentations covering a wide range of substantive and methodological topics, the event celebrated the scientific value of Switzerland’s long-term data infrastructures. A special issue of the *Swiss Journal of Sociology*, prepared by guest editors from TREE and the SHP, will present selected contributions in 2027.

Members of the SHP team, past and present, also served as guest editors for a *Frontiers in Sociology* Research Topic published this year, titled “Exploring social stratification dynamics: insights from longitudinal survey data”, which gathered nine contributions based on the SHP and other panel studies.

International exchange remained a key component of the SHP’s mission. In June, the team welcomed colleagues from the newly established Austrian Socio-Economic Panel for a full-day meeting on methodological and operational aspects of longitudinal household surveys.

Supporting data users has remained a priority. The SHP responded to numerous inquiries from researchers throughout the year, providing guidance and clarifying data questions. These exchanges help maintain the high quality of the dataset and inform ongoing improvements in documentation.

## Innovations and Future Developments

The SHP contributed to a successful SNSF project proposal led by colleagues from the Centre LIVES on the collection of large-scale time diary data. The project will begin in 2026, with the start of the data collection planned for 2027. Participating households will later be incorporated into the SHP, enabling unique linkages between daily activities and long-term outcomes.

Discussions also continued on the potential for collecting genetic data within the SHP. While no concrete timeline has been set, such an extension would considerably broaden the project’s research potential.

Several projects involving linkages between SHP survey data and administrative registers remain ongoing, with one new contract initiated in 2025. Altogether, six projects have either been completed or are currently underway.

**SHP Commission** The SHP Commission met in September to review progress and advise on future developments. The meeting covered the time use project, register linkages, the potential collection of genetic data, challenges posed by mixed-mode survey designs, findings from the incentive experiment, data protection, sampling strategies for future refreshment samples, and user support. The Commission brings together nine experts from Switzerland, the UK, Germany, and the Netherlands, ensuring continued scientific excellence and strategic development of the SHP.

## 2.2 International Surveys

2025 was centred on MOSAiCH 2025 (field, preparation of the next edition, and archiving of the previous one), on ESS R12 (field preparation and realisation), and finally for SHARE the field of Wave 10 with a refreshment sample and data preparation of Wave 10. The International Survey projects are funded through a SFNS Infrastructure project (grant period 2025–2028) except for SHARE (SFNS project grant). Synergies and collaborations between these international surveys are numerous, not only internally at FORS but also on the international level through projects such as Infra4NextGen, where EVS and ESS collaborate, or the SSHOC project (Social Science and Humanities Open Science Cluster).

The team developed and published a video for survey participants entitled “How we protect your data in our surveys”, to help them better understand the data protection information sheets for all FORS surveys. All videos are available on the FORS [RECUNIL channel](#).

**European Social Survey ESS** The European Social Survey (ESS) is an academically driven cross-national survey that has been conducted every two years across Europe since 2002 with very high-quality standards. Switzerland has participated at each round since the very beginning. This general population survey measures the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour patterns of diverse populations in more than thirty nations. In 2025, Switzerland prepared and realised ESS R12, which is the round where self-completion mode was introduced (web and paper) alongside a final face-to-face field.

### Fieldwork

The preparation of ESS R12 included not only the usual tasks such as sampling and translations, but also the adaptations for the self-completion mode. These comprise wordings, formats, revision of country-specific questions such as education, questionnaire implementation, paper questionnaires, pretesting, fieldwork documents, specific contact data files and field

monitoring etc. We also developed a shorter instrument to measure the level of education in the ESS from round 12 on, tested at the end of 2024 and in MOSAiCH 2025. For the team this essentially meant a double survey. The web survey was run on the centralised survey tool by Centerdata, the paper questionnaires were produced by the FORS team, the whole Self-Completion (SC) field was managed by DCA, our internal survey agency, and the face-to-face survey was outsourced to an external survey agency. Also, the coordination with the Central ESS team was particularly burdensome this time, as they centralised and controlled many more aspects than in the past, not allowing for the usual country specific adaptations that we felt were necessary.

The parallel pretest of the face-to-face, web and paper questionnaires was particularly instructive. It clearly showed how far interviewers help making the questionnaire fluid and understandable and how important simple and unambiguous questions and instructions are in SC surveys. The ESS R12 field started September 2 with the face-to-face (FtF) field, followed by the soft-launch and two weeks later the main sample of the SC field. The SC had a sequential design, with a paper version offered with the second reminder. The rotating parts of the questionnaire in R12 are on the topics “Personal and social wellbeing” and “Attitudes to immigrants and refugees”.

The SC field finished at the end of November, with a gross response rate above the expectation (over 40% and 1 000 interviews). Apart from offering a CHF 5 coin as unconditional incentive, we tested an additional CHF 30 cash conditional incentive with the third reminder for the most underrepresented groups (non-nationals and age group 18-29). The response rate to the reminder among these groups was more than doubled compared to the groups without additional incentive, despite their general lower propensity to answer. The incentive was particularly efficient among young Swiss respondents.

The team came close to achieving the most optimistic scenario, namely to complete the FtF fieldwork by the end of December; a few additional days in January 2026 were needed to reach the target of 800 interviews. The FtF field followed a different contact protocol than the previous rounds because of the costs of the double field. Sample units were invited through a letter and CHF 5 unconditional incentive to request an appointment for an interview. An additional CHF 30 was announced for a completed interview. The FtF recruitment at the doorstep was introduced only after a reminder letter. More than half of the interviews could be achieved with self-announced appointments. This strategy led to a much higher share of video interviews than the previous one. The expected response rate is

below 30% but with a much shorter field period than in the two previous rounds, both of which lasted almost 1 year each. Data preparation in 2026 will give the final rates for the self-completion and F2F fields.

### **Data**

The ESS data archive Sikt in Bergen, Norway, published the third release of the ESS R11 data with 28 countries on 2 June, and the fourth release will all 30 participating countries on 21 November. For the first time Ukrainian data are included.

### **Users and publications**

The ESS has over 267 000 registered users (7 600 from Switzerland) as of 28 November. Switzerland is at rank 12 regarding number of registered users, active downloaders and downloaded files despite its small size ([ESS interactive user statistics](#)). The latest bibliographic assessment (2003-23) found 7 060 publications analysing ESS data (Malnar, 2024). Sociology, political science, and economics were primary fields, covering topics like politics, immigration, family, demographics, well-being, culture, welfare, citizenship, work, and inequality. Swiss data featured in 59% of publications, with 274 Swiss authors (rank 9), reflecting high demand and productive use in Switzerland.

### **International coordination**

In 2025, the ERIC National Coordinator Forums took place in April in Warsaw and in November virtually. The main topics of these meetings were: R12 preparations, implementation and first feedbacks, priorities for future SC developments, R13 questionnaire (the module on “social (dis) connectedness” was led by a Professor from the University of Basel), and general matters. From the analysis and discussion of feasibility testing to concrete preparations of the implementation, the transition to self-completion (SC) in R12 was again at the heart of these Forums and exchanges with the ESS Headquarters and National Coordinators of other countries.

The ESS ERIC General Assembly (GA) met in March and November. The strategic plan 2024-2029, the work programme 2025-2029, the centralised platform Centerdata, the renewal of the Scientific and Methods Advisory Board (SAB and MAB), and a discussion about the Research Infrastructure Funding Landscape to secure sustainability were among the central topics. Switzerland is represented in the ESS ERIC General Assembly (GA) by a scientific advisor from the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI). The Swiss Federal Council approved SERI’s request for Switzerland to become a member of ESS ERIC on 9 April. Switzerland’s membership was then unanimously accepted by the ESS ERIC GA on 5 May and subsequently approved by the European Commission. The Terms of

Reference for Switzerland's participation in ESS ERIC were signed between the Swiss National Coordinator and the Swiss national representative. ESS ERIC continues to have the highest number of member countries (30) of any ERIC. In addition, several guest countries are participating in Round 12 (R12).

Since the renewal end of 2025 of the Scientific Advisory Board and Methods Advisory Board there is no Swiss member in the ESS boards anymore (the delegate from FORS and the UNIL ended the mandate as Chair of the Methods Advisory Board). For details about their compositions, see the [ESS website's governance page](#).

## **MOSAiCH / ISSP**

During 2025 the eighth edition of the annual MOSAiCH survey took place. This self-completion survey (web-paper, push-to-web design) conducted in several parts, is realised internally. The content is defined by the ISSP (part 1) and a public call for contribution addressing the Swiss research community (part 2). In 2025, the central topic was "Work Orientations", a module repeated for the fifth time. Switzerland has participated since the second edition in 1997. The team prepared and finalised the data and documentation of MOSAiCH 2025 for a release early 2026. The preparation of the 2026 edition of MOSAiCH was also carried out. At the international level of the ISSP, the team ran the ISSP secretariat and is involved in the ISSP 2027 questionnaire development.

### **2025 Field and research**

MOSAiCH 2025 comprises the ISSP 2025 module on Work Orientations and questions from two different proposals involving five researchers from Switzerland and abroad, complemented by some repeated questions from previous ISSP-MOSAiCH editions on Work Orientations not included in the 2025 module. The topics of the chosen proposals are: 1) Perceived Age Norms for Men and Women's Career Transitions, and 2) Work as a Source of Meaning in Life. The repeated MOSAiCH questions contained a career adaptability scale, as well as items on work and gender perceptions, workplace relationships, health problems, stress, and available support.

While the preparation of the MOSAiCH 2025 questionnaire was mostly achieved during 2024 (call, evaluation of the proposals, development and test of the new questions, and translations of the ISSP and call questions), the survey was set up in early 2025. The MOSAiCH Commission decided to run the 2025 edition in two parts, all respondents of the first part being invited to the second part in the mode of their first response. The second part includes a random allocation of conditions for the age norm module.

The fieldwork of MOSAiCH 2025 started mid-February and ended in July, based on the optimised contact procedure used since 2019 and an unconditional cash incentive as well as a lottery for the second part. At the time of writing this report, the data and documentation are in finalisation phase. The response rate (RR) is around 48% for the first part and 30% for the second part, which corresponds to the usual outcomes with the same incentive scheme. The data will be published in February 2026.

The MOSAiCH 2025 field included an experimental aspect. As for ESS R12 we had to realise substantive savings to be able to run the two parallel fields; we considered reducing the unconditional incentive from a CHF 10 bill to a CHF 5 coin, the idea being that a touchy envelope could invite more people to open the letter, counterbalancing the lower value. To avoid the risk of poor response rates in ESS R12, we tested it with a random subsample of MOSAiCH 2025, in parallel to the usual CHF 10 bill. The field results indicate only a slightly higher response rate for the higher value cash (49% vs 47%).

### **2026 preparations**

The public call for question contributions to the MOSAiCH 2026 edition including the ISSP “Role of Government VI” module has first been published end of 2024. The Scientific MOSAiCH Commission received and evaluated six proposals. During the evaluation meeting in early June, it was decided to retain all of them, involving 14 researchers from Switzerland and abroad. The questions will be administered in a single follow-up wave to the ISSP questionnaire. The accepted questions have been elaborated by the International Surveys team in collaboration with the proposing authors. A quantitative pretest has been realised with the FORS Connect Panel, for assessing and reducing a new scale on policy areas regarding environmental protection and climate change. As usual, all the MOSAiCH 2026 questions were translated into the national languages with the TRAPD procedure.

The call for question contributions to the MOSAiCH 2027 edition, including the ISSP “Social Networks and Social Resources II” module, was published on 11 December 2025. We also ran the ISSP 2027 pretest in November with the FORS Connect Panel and additional sample units from a commercial panel, and prepared the merged data of the six participating countries for the questionnaire drafting group.

### **Data**

The complete MOSAiCH 2024 dataset, including ISSP 2024 (Digital Societies) and all data related to the Call, has been documented and published at SWISSUbase in February. FORS distributed 136 MOSAiCH-ISSP datafiles in 2025.

## **ISSP International**

The international ISSP-archive at GESIS published the final release of ISSP 2022 “Family and Changing Gender Roles V” in August, containing 33 countries. They also updated the cumulations files Social Inequality I - V (1987/1992/1999/2009/2019) in January and Religion I - IV (1991/1998/2008/2018) in February. The final release of ISSP 2023 “National Identity & Citizenship” is foreseen in February 2026. All these international datasets include Swiss data. The GESIS archive distributed in 2025 10 700 ISSP datasets including Swiss data (out of which 216 to Swiss users).

The 2025 General Assembly (GA) was held in-person in Pula, Croatia (May), with three persons from FORS-SSP representing both Switzerland and the ISSP Secretariat. Since 2023, the ISSP has reinstated its regular working principles and procedures regarding membership, voting rights, and committee participation. A return to the standard data deposit deadlines is planned starting with the 2024 module (final data release is planned for August 2026). In 2025, the ISSP regained Ukraine as an ISSP member and now comprises 45 member countries.

During the 2025 ISSP General Meeting, 10 methodological and substantial papers were presented at the research session. The GA discussed and voted on the questions of the 2026 module on “Role of Government VI”. The topics of the 2027 module “Social Networks and Social Resources” were defined, with a drafting group led by a FORS researcher). The 2028 module will be on Religion. The Background Variables Taskforce (established at the 2024 General Assembly) presented its progress: the group has completed a literature review and will launch a survey among ISSP members on the relevance and utility of the current BV set. A report will be presented at the 2026 General Assembly. A new taskforce to improve visibility and strengthen ISSP membership development has been established and will be chaired by the Swiss secretariat. The next GAs will be held in Prague (2026) and Taipei (2027).

In charge of the Secretariat since 2021, FORS and associated UNIL members have continued the coordination activities of the program. The team has also initiated the process of identifying reliable candidates to take over the ISSP Secretariat from 2027 onwards, after the ending of the maximum two three-year mandates.

Besides the organisation of the annual GA in Croatia and the daily business of coordination, the Secretariat organised several events and outreach activities. A Methods Webinar was organised on 10 April on “Cross-country

and cross-time comparisons using multilevel models”, with 80 attendees. Two ISSP panels were organised at each of the following conferences, covering both substantive and methodological topics: the 5<sup>th</sup> ISA Forum in Rabat, Morocco (July); WAPOR 2025 in St. Louis, Missouri, USA (May); and the ESRA conference in Utrecht, the Netherlands (July). The ISSP also organised one session at WAPOR Asia Pacific 2025 in Tokyo, Japan (November). In November 2025, the 4<sup>th</sup> online ISSP User Conference was held on the topic of Health and Health Care. Four papers were presented with an audience of around 30 researchers. This online conference was organised jointly between the Secretariat and the Editor of the International Journal of Sociology (IJS) to allow presenters to submit their paper for the Special Issue of the journal dedicated to the ISSP health module. The special issue dedicated to the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the ISSP was also published at the end of the year. The ISSP website has as many as 146 visits and 420 actions per day, and the X account was moved to Bluesky and LinkedIn in February.

### European Values Study EVS

The EVS General Assembly took place in Sarajevo (June). The major topic was the preparation of EVS 2026: finalisation of the questionnaire including a common core with the World Values Study (WVS) as outlined in the MoU of 2023, the methodological guidelines, the implementation such as the use of CenterData for the whole survey cycle, funding of fieldwork, and strategies to bring the EVS to the countries’ infrastructure roadmaps and to the ESFRI. Other topics were dissemination, cooperations and the new COST-action. The questionnaire module on individualism/collectivism designed by EVS scholars (including a member of FORS), and included in the MoU with ESS, has been selected by the ESS SAB for inclusion in ESS R14 (2029).

As the 2025-2028 budget of FORS does not cover the EVS, we aim for third party funding to finance the fieldwork costs. A joint MAPS project with partners from Romania and Poland on the topic of social cohesion in Europe was not funded due to high competitiveness of the call (11% success rate). While a COST-Action developed by EVS members together with other stakeholders (CA-24150 VISTA) is funded, due to the federal budget cuts, the initial plan to fund fieldwork through a COST-Action-linked project through SNSF did not materialise either as the funding of such COST-related project has been cut. We therefore aim at partial funding using synergies with other projects in methodological research to fund a fieldwork in self-completion. For the first time, we will do a fieldwork in web-only and compare outcomes between a regular sample and web-only fieldwork with the use of the probabilistic online access panel FORS Connect. Having data on values in Switzerland is important in the context of the COST Action,

which tackles the topic of commonalities and differences in values across Europe in times when the European Core Values are under pressure. A FORS member is a member of the Core Group and vice-chair of a Working Group in this COST Action.

The number of downloaded EVS datasets slowly decreased since the last data release in 2022, but is still high (over 5 800 in 2025, compared to 6 100 in 2024 and 8 000 in 2023), showing that the EVS is a relevant infrastructure for social sciences in Europe and beyond. The EVS bibliography now comprises around 4 000 publications. This also includes publications based on joint EVS-WVS datasets.

### **Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe - SHARE**

#### **Operational activities**

Wave 10 data collection ran from October 2024 to July 2025, with a target of around 2 000 interviews in the panel sample and 2 000 in the refreshment sample. Data collection for Wave 10 proved more challenging than in previous waves, with declining response and retention rates. As a result, adjustments to the fieldwork procedures were necessary, leading to a contractual amendment.

About 1 780 panel interviews were completed (household retention  $\approx$ 78%; individual retention  $\approx$ 70%), and around 1 450 refreshment interviews (household retention  $\approx$ 28%; individual retention  $\approx$ 22%), for a total net sample of  $\approx$ 3 230 interviews. Response and retention rates were lower than in previous waves – especially in the refreshment sample – but comparable to neighbouring countries and consistent with the broader international decline. In Wave 10, a paper-and-pencil questionnaire on end-of-life issues and health literacy was distributed to Swiss participants following their SHARE interview. Approximately 2 600 participants completed this questionnaire ( $\approx$  77% of respondents completing a SHARE interview). Data cleaning and preparation for Wave 10 began in 2025 and will continue throughout 2026. Wave 10 Release 0 (internal release) is planned for April/ May 2026, with the public release scheduled for January 2027.

In autumn 2025, preparations for the Wave 11 data collection began with translation tasks and a first round of testing. In Wave 11, the entire SHARE CAPI questionnaire, as well as CaseCTRL, used during the recruitment phase to monitor contact attempts and schedule appointments, will migrate to Quest (previously run on Blaise). This transition required extensive translation and testing for the country teams.

In April 2026, Switzerland will host a SHARE meeting, which will exceptionally last four days and include a one-day special methodological workshop. The Swiss team was heavily involved throughout 2025 in preparing the event (venues, conference logistics, dinner, and social activities).

The Swiss SHARE team attended the following SHARE meetings:

- » SHARE wave 10 mid-term meeting: 7-9 May (Greece)
- » SHARE wave 11 kick-off meeting: 15-17 October (Antwerp)

### **SHARE 2.0**

The Swiss SHARE team is actively involved in the further development of SHARE-ERIC. It participated in the various working groups organised by SHARE's international coordination to discuss future content and methodology, and it is contributing significantly to the redesign of SHARE's End-of-life questionnaire.

### **Other projects**

In 2025, the Swiss SHARE team remained actively involved in various transversal working groups set up at FORS on linkage and on ethics and data protection issues. The Swiss SHARE team was also involved in the preparation of a PHD training proposal for epidemiologists in collaboration with the Swiss Household Panel and Unisanté. The application was led by Unisanté.

### **Research**

The Swiss SHARE team pursued three main research strands. First, the team continued to examine end-of-life issues and end-of-life literacy based on the questionnaires administered in 2015 and 2019/2020. These analyses were conducted in collaboration with the Lausanne University Hospital and the University of Lausanne and resulted in several scientific articles as well as presentations at multiple scientific conferences. Second, the team continued analysing the data collected in 2021 on technology use among Swiss seniors, with the completion of a second article on internet use, loneliness, and perceived social exclusion during COVID-19. Finally, the third research axis draws on data collected in 2021/2022 on social cognition. A methodological report has been written, and two papers are in preparation, examining links between (1) cognitive and emotional empathy and older adults' social connectedness and social engagement, and (2) theory of mind and social connectedness as well as mental and physical well-being.

### Grant applications

In 2025, the Swiss SHARE team worked on two grant applications. First, an application was submitted to the Swiss–Czech Cooperation Programme of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) in collaboration with the Czech SHARE team. The project will assess early markers of cognitive decline in Swiss Wave 11 participants using smartphone-based voice, smell, and video measures. This project is led by the Czech country team and includes a substantive data collection in Switzerland. Second, the Swiss team, together with the Polish team and SHARE central coordination, applied to the European Weave call to implement HCAP (Harmonised Cognitive Assessment Protocol) in Poland and Switzerland and study cross-country differences in cognition; the proposal is led by the Polish team.

## 2.3 Political surveys

In 2025, the Political Surveys (POLS) team pursued a broad set of activities spanning operational survey work, research, outreach, and national and international networking. A central focus remained on the production, documentation, and dissemination of high-quality political survey data, notably within the Selects programme and the *Swiss Direct Democracy in the 21st Century* (SDD-21) project. At the same time, the team actively contributed to scientific research based on these data, promoted their use within the research community and beyond, and strengthened collaborations with partner projects and international networks in the field of electoral studies.

**Operational tasks** In early 2025, the POLS team released data from Wave 4 of the Selects online panel, which runs from 2023 to 2027. This wave comprises 4 933 valid interviews, corresponding to a retention rate of 89%. In addition to the standard panel questions, the questionnaire included a module on affective polarisation proposed by researchers.

Between April and September, the team prepared the fieldwork for Panel Wave 5. This work primarily involved questionnaire development and translation, as well as communication with respondents. Fieldwork was conducted between late September and early November, with respondents from wave 3 invited to participate in the new wave. After data cleaning, a total of 4 693 valid interviews remained, corresponding to a retention rate of 85%. This wave included questions on social group perceptions proposed by POLS researchers. The data release is scheduled for February 2026.

For the first time, a newsletter entitled *SelectsActuel* was launched for panel respondents. This two-page newsletter presents findings from researchers using Selects data – this first issue focusing on young voters’ disengagement from traditional parties – as well as insights from the current panel wave. The newsletter was also made available via social media to reach a wider audience. More generally, Selects data was actively promoted via various channels throughout the year.

Furthermore, post-election voter survey data from Selects 2023 was included in the second advance release of Module 6 of the *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems* (CSES). This data was made available to the international community in December 2025. Additionally, a new version of the Selects cumulative dataset (1971-2023), including the 2023 post-election survey data, was released in May 2025. Finally, the 2023 Swiss candidate survey was included in the third release of the Module 3 comparative dataset of the *Comparative Candidate Survey* (CCS), which was made available in August 2025.

In the third year of the SNSF-funded research project *Swiss Direct Democracy in the 21st century* (SDD-21), which runs from 2023 to 2027, three cross-sectional post-vote surveys (CSS 6-8) were conducted following the federal popular votes in February, September, and November. At the end of each survey, respondents are recruited in a feed-in long-term panel, resulting in the organisation of three long-term panel waves in 2025 (LTP 6-8). In these three popular votes, Swiss citizens decided on a total of five referendums or initiatives. All data collection is managed by the Data Collection and Analysis (DCA) team at FORS, while the POLS team leader contributes to questionnaire development and testing, as well as methodological developments and analyses.

### Research activities and outreach

POLS team members actively engaged in research and public outreach activities. First, they were involved in the preparation of a Special Issue on the 2023 National Elections, scheduled for publication in June 2026 in the *Swiss Political Science Review* (SPSR). In early April 2025, the co-editors organised an author workshop at the University of Zurich. Fifteen papers were presented at the workshop and subsequently submitted to the SPSR for review in June. All POLS team members are contributing to one or several of these papers. By the end of the year, four papers had been rejected, four revised papers had been accepted for publication, and seven revised papers were still under review.

Second, the POLS team worked on a book project examining longitudinal trends in Swiss national elections over the period 1995–2023. First drafts of the chapters were discussed at an author workshop held in Lausanne in September 2025. The volume consists of twelve chapters plus an introduction and brings together contributions not only from POLS team members, but also from members of the Selects commission and specialised colleagues from five different universities. The book is planned for publication in both French and German in the series *ds.démocratie directe – demokratie.schweiz* at Seismo. Publication is scheduled for early 2027, at the beginning of the federal election year.

Third, POLS team members showcased ongoing research based on Selects data at national and international scientific conferences, including the Annual Conferences of the European Political Science Association and the European Consortium of Political Research. Presented topics included radical-right voting in Switzerland, negative voting, elites' and citizens' views on democracy, and working-class representation, among others. In addition, methodological research was presented at the Biannual Conference of the European Survey Research Association.

## Networking

POLS actively engaged in networking activities with other national election studies. In March, the POLS team organised a two-day workshop with team members of the German and Austrian national election studies in Lausanne, to discuss institutional developments and key methodological challenges facing national election studies. At this meeting, four papers featuring new findings from Selects were presented.

## International collaborations

POLS continued to strengthen its international collaborations and remained actively involved in several major international research networks.

### **CNES (Comparative National Elections Project)**

POLS remained closely involved in CNES activities throughout the year. The fourth and fifth editions of the CNES online seminar series were held in May and November, addressing timely methodological challenges such as sampling in difficult circumstances and the conduct of immigrant election studies. In parallel, the CNES Knowledge Bank was extended through a new release, further supporting the community with updated resources and documentation. In October, a COST Action proposal was resubmitted to consolidate and expand collaboration at the European level. CNES partners

also met in person during the plenary meeting in November, and FORS co-organised a CNES business meeting at the ECPR General Conference in August together with the Comparative Candidate Survey (CCS) network.

### **CCS (Comparative Candidate Survey)**

Within the CCS network, POLS supported major advances in comparative data production and dissemination. The third release of the Module III comparative dataset was published, including four additional national surveys (Iceland 2021, Portugal 2022, Montenegro 2023, and Switzerland 2023). POLS also contributed to community-building and scientific exchange at the ECPR General Conference in August, where a CCS business meeting was co-organised with CNES. In addition, CCS organised its own panel dedicated to candidate survey data, titled “The Comparative Candidate Study at Twenty – Novel Insights into Campaigns and Candidate Behaviour and the Increasing Challenges of Conducting Elite Level Research”, highlighting both new analytical perspectives and the growing complexity of elite-level data collection. Finally, a new Call for Data was launched, resulting in the submission of six additional CCS III datasets for inclusion in the upcoming 4<sup>th</sup> release of the Module III comparative dataset, as well as two CCS IV datasets to prepare the first release of a new Module IV comparative dataset.

### **MEDem (Monitoring Electoral Democracy)**

POLS continued to support the development of MEDem as an emerging European research infrastructure. A major milestone was reached with the submission of the ESFRI Roadmap application in April. This was followed by the signature of the Consortium Agreement and the formal establishment of the MEDem Consortium, bringing together eight partner institutions. POLS researchers also participated in the third MEDem Conference held in Köln in September, contributing to scientific discussions and strengthening links within the network.

For further information, please also see [Chapter 5 Scientific collaborations](#).

## 3. Data Management and Archive services DMAS

Staff from the unit Data Management and Archive Services (DMAS) were active on many fronts in 2025, with significant collaboration across the Data Archive Services (DAS) and Data Management Services (DMS) groups.

As a follow-up to the swissuniversities-funded recORD project (recognise Open Research Data), which ran in 2024, DAS and DMS staff members conducted further research activities in 2025, resulting in various conference presentations and research publications. These outputs contributed to disseminating the project's insights on how to integrate open research data (ORD) into research assessment within the international research community.

In 2025, [Data Live](#) was launched. Data Live is a monthly online Q&A session where DMAS experts provide guidance on various data management and data sharing topics in the social sciences, including topics such as DMPs, informed consents, anonymisation, data protection, depositing data in SWISSUbase, and data access control.

In addition, staff from both groups contributed to teaching lessons for the social science module of the swissuniversities-funded CAS in Data Stewardship (see details below), and produced four AI-assisted instructional [videos](#) guiding researchers in the use of SWISSUbase. In addition, staff from the two groups provided two full-day CUSO courses for PhD students in sociology: one in February focusing on data documentation, and one in November addressing data sharing and reproducibility.

Finally, DMAS oversaw the development of a first draft version of a FORS inventory of activities (“Registre des traitements”) that involve personal data, in collaboration with the external company DPO Associates as well as with all FORS group leaders.

### 3.1 Data Archive Services DAS

In 2025, the DAS group published 180 datasets, compared with 150 in 2024. Of these, 153 were new datasets and 27 were updates of existing datasets reflecting newly available data or corrections. The vast majority of the datasets were quantitative (90%), complemented by a substantial proportion of qualitative datasets (10%). Eight datasets (4%) are directly accessible without requiring login via SWISSUbase. Most dataset descriptions are available in English (80%), followed by German (11%) and French (9%). In

terms of origin, 71% of datasets were submitted from German-speaking Switzerland and 27% from French-speaking Switzerland, while 1% originated from Italian-speaking Switzerland, and 2% from abroad.

The 180 datasets originate from 62 distinct research projects. The number of datasets per project ranges from 1 to 73, with a median of four. This variation reflects differences in data structure and considerations of optimal data reusability. The number of datasets per project is determined by depositors in consultation with a data curation expert during the archiving process. Next, we report on downloads of datasets with restricted access, defined as datasets that require login via SWISSUbase. In 2025, a total of 2 420 downloads were recorded, compared with 2 213 in 2024, carried out by 1 529 distinct users (see also [Chapter 10 FORS in figures](#)).

99% of downloads were for quantitative data, with 1% for qualitative data. More than half of the downloads (54%) were made by students, 25% by staff and faculty; for 22% the status is unknown. Regarding intended use, several purposes can be noted: 75% of users indicated that they planned to use the data for research purposes, followed by education and training (28%), teaching (24%), and other non-commercial purposes (3%). Around one quarter of users (26%) reported plans to publish research based on the downloaded data. For 17% of downloads, prior approval by the data producer was required. The majority of downloads (71%) concerned datasets produced by FORS. The most frequently downloaded dataset was SELECTS, followed by the Swiss Household Panel SHP. In 2025, eight entries were added to the FORS replication service.

In addition to its core mission of curating, publishing, and distributing social science research data, DAS led or contributed to a range of further activities, some of which are outlined below. To better understand user needs, DAS assessed data consumers through two approaches: an analysis of SWISSUbase download metadata since its launch in late 2021, and a user survey administered by the FORS DCA team. Results show that data are mainly used for research and teaching. Users report high satisfaction with the quality of the data and documentation, and many plan scientific publications based on the datasets. Many users learn about FORS data through professional networks and know in advance which data they want to download. The findings inform the further development of DAS services and were presented at several venues, including the International Data Curation Conference in The Hague.

Another focus of the DAS team was data citation. A DAS staff member leads the CESSDA Data Citation Working Group, which successfully developed and published stakeholder-specific recommendations in the [CESSDA Data Citation Guide](#). To engage the Swiss research community on data citation practices, DAS organised a workshop in October with editors of Swiss social science journals. The event aimed to initiate a process toward the developing of shared policies on data citation and data sharing.

In 2025, a DAS staff member was responsible for the service ownership of the mandated CESSDA European Question Bank (EQB). The EQB is a multilingual tool for discovering survey questions and data from important surveys in Europe. As service owner in 2025, DAS oversaw the release of the first public version, together with a senior FORS IT staff member, the CESSDA Main Office and Colectica, on which the EQB software is based. A presentation was given on the EQB at the European Data Documentation Initiative (EDDI) conference in Budapest in December. FORS was awarded the service owner role again for the 2026-27 period.

During the year, one DAS staff member successfully defended her doctoral dissertation.

## 3.2 Data management services DMS

**Data promotion** As part of its outreach activities, the DMS group conducted targeted mailing campaigns to reach out to the PIs of newly funded SNSF social science projects, to the social science community via the FORS data management and the FORS Guides newsletters, and to academic journals. In addition, DMS increasingly promoted its services, achievements, and events through social media.

DMS also produced new promotional materials, including short videos promoting SWISSUbase and the FORS Guides (see the DMAS section), recordings of the webinars delivered during the year, and newly developed flyers. These flyers were created to promote the Data LIVE initiative, the FORS replication service, and the Data Collection and Analysis service, and were distributed at conferences and events attended by DMAS staff and other FORS colleagues.

To promote their services and data, DMS continued reinforcing the outreach and networking efforts. This was achieved by actively contributing to the development of the newly developed SSHOC-CH project, and also by reaching out more systematically to key stakeholders with institutional, disciplinary, and/or strategic influence within the Swiss social science research landscape. In particular, DMAS actively participated in initiatives

of national importance, such as the Swiss Research Data Support Network (SRDSN), the Swiss reproducibility network, and the SWISSUbase Network. In addition to attending annual meetings, they also presented their services by giving presentations and contributed to specific nodes, such as the sensitive data node of the SRDSN network and its related working group on governance and ethics. While we were particularly active at the Swiss level, we also participated in initiatives at the international level, in particular the World Elite Database, and we submitted an expression of interest to host the 2028 IASSIST international conference in 2028, which was approved. The forthcoming conference will offer a good opportunity to boost our visibility and the promotion of our services at both the national and international level.

Additionally, DMS continued extending our network and positioning ourselves as experts within the Open Science Swiss landscape by actively contributing to the follow up of the recORD project (see DMAS section), acting as an Open Science reviewer, and contributing to two swissuniversities mandates on the topics of a) establishing ORD expertise as an independent career path at HEIs by 2028, and b) establishing a framework for systematic communication between trainers and data stewards to facilitate professionalisation and the exchange of experiences, best practices, needs and training modules. The related reports, which contained a landscape analysis and recommendations, were approved by swissuniversities.

As a way to better promote our services and SWISSUbase, they continued offering workshops and presentations to both the research community and data stewards (see section below on data management). The group also promoted specific projects through individual expertise, such as the OBELIS data on elites, which led to numerous presentations to both the academic community and the larger public (see [Chapter 8.2 Events](#)). In particular, it allowed us to increase media coverage in academic magazines, newspapers, TV and radio, and as such also to promote our institution and wider services.

## Data management

As in previous years, during 2025 the group continued to provide individual consultations throughout the research life cycle and offered advanced data management trainings. These included teaching activities as well as in-person and online workshops and presentations.

With respect to teaching activities, the team has been busy developing, providing, and evaluating the four-day social science module of the University of Lausanne CAS in data stewardship, which took place during the spring. The CAS provided us with a good opportunity to develop strong strategic ties with the twelve participating data stewards coming from academic institutions of both the French and German speaking regions of Switzerland, but also to develop more advanced courses and new materials. The topics covered included: research data in the social sciences; data management planning; data documentation; data anonymisation; informed consent; data sharing; and reproducibility. It also gave us the opportunity to develop AI competences, in particular when it comes to using AI tools to facilitate data documentation. Furthermore, the team was invited on several occasions as guest lecturers, either to promote the OBELIS data or to contribute on specific data management skills.

Additionally, the team was involved in providing in-person expertise workshops and presentations in the domain of data management, open science, and elite studies to both data stewards and researchers (including PhD students) throughout the year. Some examples include a training on the management of public data at the University of Lausanne, a presentation on data stewardship at the University of Lausanne, a presentation on FORS services and the use of SWISSUbase at the University of Basel, and a seminar on research ethics at the University of Lausanne based on OBELIS data.

The team also provided online presentations, for example on Open Research Data, as part of a SWISSUbase DSU Network sharing session, and on the FORS replication service during the Love Data week. We were centrally involved in the FORS-DaSCH webinar series, which we coordinated and taught together with a DaSCH partner and in collaboration with DAS. In 2005, four webinars were provided. The first webinar took place in February and focused on the FAIR and CARE principles. The second webinar, which was on authority data, standards, and metadata, took place in May. It was then followed in September by a webinar on how to effectively document research data. Finally, the last webinar of the year was given in December on informed consent.

Next to this, the team was involved in research-related activities in the fields of ORD and data management, essential to gain the trust of the social science community as well as further develop skills and know-how when it comes to the implementation of data sharing and reuse. In particular, we collaborated on two proposals, which were submitted to the SNSF and the Horizon funding scheme, respectively. The first proposal consisted in a (strongly revised) resubmission of a previous proposal developed by a team

of researchers from the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW) and the University Psychiatry Clinics (UPK) in Basel and involving the reuse of qualitative data. If funded, this would provide valuable hands-on experience to FORS when it comes to reusing interview data, and would result in a practical handbook of best practices for the social science community. The other proposal was a large-scale Horizon project led by the University of Zurich and involving some 44 international institutions. If funded, it will amongst other outputs develop an international curriculum for the training of data management for both data stewards and researchers, and which would also integrate AI.

In 2025 the team gave presentations and presented posters at various international conferences, including: the International Digital Curation Conference (IDCC) in the Hague; the Congress of the International Association for Social Science Information Service & Technology (IASSIST) conference in Bristol; the “Research Evaluation in Social Sciences and Humanities” conference in Helsinki; the Congress of the Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics (SASE) in Montreal (online presentation); the “Homology in field analysis” workshop in Paris; and the Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management conference in Copenhagen.

Furthermore, the team produced scientific publications in the field of data management, open research data, and elite studies. In particular, a paper on Swiss financial elites was published in the *Swiss Journal of Sociology*, a handbook chapter on financial elites was published in the *Oxford Handbook of Global Elites*, a paper on recognising Open Research Data in research assessment was published in the journal *Science and Public Policy*, a paper on open research data and data stewards was published in the *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, and finally an autoethnographic exploration of data stewards everyday challenges was published in the *IASSIST Quarterly*.

Last but not least, the team also worked on three new FORS Guides on documentation, managing prosopographical data, and informed consent, all to be released in 2026.

## 4. Infrastructure and Development INDEV

**IT developments** Throughout 2025, FORS IT remained strongly committed to securing applications, infrastructure, and data through a combination of awareness-raising, capacity building, risk assessment, and operational measures. To strengthen security culture and internal expertise, several targeted initiatives were carried out during 2025, including security training, technical workshops and a seminar for the whole organisation on security risks and best practices.

The IT team initiated a structured security assessment, starting with the Data Collection and Analysis (DCA) group. Using a standard methodology, it identified critical assets, key systems, and potential threats, providing the foundation for risk-based prioritisation of human, operational, and technical measures. In 2026, the assessment will extend to all FORS teams to establish an organisation-wide prioritisation framework and enhance overall security and resilience.

Complementing these strategic efforts, IT support actions in 2025 focused on reinforcing day-to-day operational security and reliability. All FORS computers were encrypted, staff directories were cleaned, and user access rights were updated, contributing directly to improved data protection and more secure management of IT resources across the organisation.

A major milestone in 2025 was the successful integration with the European Question Bank (EQB), a platform developed within the CESSDA framework and coordinated by FORS that offers researchers a centralised repository of survey questions. The IT team contributed to defining the functional and technical requirements and developed all necessary components to achieve full integration in compliance with the standardised DDI Lifecycle 3.2 metadata format. As a result, all FORS data stored in the internal Survey Management Tool (SMT) can be accessible through the European central repository.

As part of the evolution of the FORS branding launched in 2025, the IT team supported the refresh of the FORS website. Also, the team connected the FORS website with several third-party applications, as IRIS (Research Information System of the University of Lausanne). Additional functional enhancements were implemented across multiple websites, and all websites (WordPress based) were updated to strengthen security, stability and overall technical performance.

At the end of 2025, the IT team deployed a dedicated in-house application that enables the Data Collection and Analysis (DCA) group to efficiently create and customise landing pages for survey participants.

## SWISSUbase

SWISSUbase is the national archiving and sharing platform and service, developed in collaboration with the UNIL and Zurich (UZH), with the mission to empower the Swiss scientific community to share and preserve research data for future reuse. It was officially launched for the entire Swiss social sciences community in December 2021. In September 2022, it was launched for the Swiss linguistics community and in 2023 for UNIL. The original member institutions have formed a Simple Association as the legal form of the SWISSUbase Consortium. In July 2023, the University of Neuchâtel joined the SWISSUbase Consortium and set up an institutional Data Service Unit to support the research community from its four faculties. In April 2024, a contractual agreement was signed between the members of the SWISSUbase consortium and the DaSCH - Swiss National Data and Service Center for the Humanities as a collaborating partner, providing nationwide data support and curation for humanities researchers.

In Spring 2025, due to significant budget cuts, the University of Lausanne decided to withdraw from the SWISSUbase Consortium as of January 2026. Nevertheless, all researchers in the social sciences, linguistics, and humanities continue to have access to SWISSUbase and can deposit their data through FORS, LaRS, and DaSCH.

SWISSUbase currently has over 9 000 active users and features over 12 380 projects and over 1 290 datasets. In 2025, SWISSUbase counted 2 565 downloads of datasets with a restricted contract and 639 downloads of datasets with a creative commons license.

During 2025, the development focus was on the publication of datasets without physical data files in the SWISSUbase catalogue to support cases where data are stored elsewhere or will be deposited at a later stage. Secondly, the Humanities metadata schema was implemented for the Humanities research community in Switzerland in order to deposit their data on SWISSUbase. Furthermore, the implementation of a version history for both projects and datasets as well as the integration of a canonical DOI have improved the transparency, reproducibility and citability of the published data. In addition, all legal documents (download and deposit contracts, terms of use and privacy policy) have been reviewed by a legal team and updated in the platform.

Major efforts were undertaken to refactor the backend, in particular the file handling, to significantly improve stability and maintenance.

The SWISSUbase [info website](#), set up in 2024 to inform the research community about the SWISSUbase Consortium, the platform and the services, has been continually enriched with new documentation and resources to provide the best experience to SWISSUbase users. A series of “Did you know?” articles were published and shared through different communication channels to highlight key features, updates, and best practices for using SWISSUbase and to offer short, accessible insights into the platform, its services, and related topics.

Aiming at further strengthening the services that are an integral part of the platform, a SWISSUbase DSU Network Session was held in April 2025 to discuss and exchange on the topic of Open Research Data recognition in research evaluation across Swiss higher education. In addition, an in-person DSU Network Event was held focusing on the roles and responsibilities of the different actors within the DSU ecosystem and the updated legal documents in SWISSUbase. In 2025, the LaRS Data Service Unit in charge of the curation of linguistics data is the second SWISSUbase DSU to obtain the CoreTrustSeal certification.

Some promotional activities were carried out: SWISSUbase presentations at the University of Bern and the University of Applied Sciences Lucerne - HSLU as well as a SWISSUbase workshop in collaboration with DMAS for the psychology community at the University of Geneva. SWISSUbase has also continued to be active on LinkedIn to regularly promote news, features, published datasets and events.

### Collaboration in national research infrastructure initiatives

#### DaSCH

DaSCH (Swiss National Data and Service Center for the Humanities) and FORS collaborate on various issues. A contractual agreement between the members of the SWISSUbase consortium and the DaSCH is in place since 2024, providing nationwide data support and curation for humanities researchers. An in-person workshop on SWISSUbase data curation workflows was held in September 2025 for the DaSCH data curation team. The Humanities metadata was implemented and made available in July 2025, followed by a pilot phase in collaboration with DaSCH launched in October 2025.

### **SRDSN**

The Swiss Research Data Support Network (SRDSN) was established in 2024 with the objective to create a dynamic, inclusive community for research data support across Switzerland, fostering collaboration, sharing knowledge, and developing best practices among professionals in libraries, IT services, core facilities, and research management offices. In 2025, DTS has co-led the focus group interviews and co-authored the report of the swissuniversities mandate B5.1 “Establish and maintain/update Swiss-wide best practices of ORD expertise” together with other members of the Swiss Research Data Support Network (SRDSN).

### **FAIR Metadata Working Group**

The FAIR Metadata Working Group (WG) was established to improve the quality of metadata from data providers that play a key role in the Swiss Open Data Ecosystems. The initiative aims to implement concrete solutions to overcome the current problems and to promote the secondary use of FAIR data for research and education in Switzerland. The DTS group is a member of this Working Group along with other members such as SWITCH, the Federal Office of Statistics, the Swiss Institute of Bioinformatics, DaSCH, and the University libraries of Lausanne and Zurich, amongst others.

### **LiRI**

LiRI, the Linguistic Research Infrastructure at the University of Zurich, provides a Virtual Research Infrastructure for the linguistics research community. INDEV provided support for LiRI users of the API that allows for the integration and automatic ingest of linguistic data into SWISSUbase.

### **EOSC Swiss Task Force**

The EOSC Swiss Task Force brings together representatives from major Swiss research data infrastructures, funding agencies and infrastructure providers. It coordinates the collaborative reflections and efforts needed to build a federated, FAIR-compliant research ecosystem aligned with European standards. FORS is a member of this initiative.

### **SENPro**

In September 2025, the Swiss EOSC Node Prototype project, SENPro (senpro-project.ch), was launched as a national initiative to design and test a federated framework connecting Swiss research infrastructures with the European Open Science Cloud. Funded by swissuniversities under the Open Science Programme II, SENPro brings together a multidisciplinary consortium including ETH Zurich, FORS, the Swiss Institute of Bioinformatics, the Swiss National Science Foundation, SWITCH, the University of Basel, the University of Lausanne and the University of Zurich. The project is structured around three pillars focusing on community and

needs assessment, technical development and integration, and validation, governance and sustainability of a future Swiss EOSC Node. Within this framework, FORS co-leads Work Package 5 together with the Swiss Institute of Bioinformatics.

### **ORD Sounding Board of Service Providers**

In 2025, FORS began chairing the ORD Sounding Board of Service Providers (SB SP) for a two-year mandate covering 2025 to 2026. The Sounding Board brings together DaSCH (Swiss National Data and Service Center for the Humanities), FORS (Swiss Centre of Expertise in the Social Sciences), NICT (Network ICT Services for Swiss Higher Education), SDSC (Swiss Data Science Center), SIB (Swiss Institute of Bioinformatics), SLiNER (Swiss Library Network for Education and Research), SPHN (Swiss Personalised Health Network), and SWITCH. The SB SP supports the ORD Strategy Council, which coordinates national actors in education, research, and innovation to strengthen Switzerland's Open Research Data ecosystem. It provides expert input from service providers to inform strategic decision making and foster alignment across infrastructures and institutions.

## **Collaboration in international research infrastructure initiatives**

### **CESSDA Artificial Intelligence Task Force (AI TF)**

The CESSDA AI TF was established in March 2025 to coordinate reflections and activities on the use of artificial intelligence across the CESSDA consortium. FORS has chaired the Task Force since its creation, bringing together members from multiple organisations to define shared priorities. During 2025, the group developed a 2025-2026 work plan and organised a public webinar to share insights with the wider community. Building on these achievements, the Task Force prepared its transition to a formal CESSDA AI Working Group, which FORS will chair for a two-year mandate covering 2026 and 2027.

### **EOSC Data Commons**

The EOSC Data Commons project (2025-2028) will deliver innovative EOSC Exchange services that will improve and accelerate data lifecycle management supporting discovery, analysis, deposition, preservation, sharing, use, and reuse of research data in a European data and compute continuum. FORS will be mainly contributing to the design and implementation of the use cases from the social sciences to improve the re-use of data thanks to better discoverability.

## Artificial intelligence (AI)

In line with the rapid technological developments in AI in 2025, FORS acknowledges AI's strategic potential to improve internal processes and support researchers related workflows and services. At the same time, FORS is taking a responsible approach to the use of the AI, ensuring that appropriate skills, governance and safeguards are in place before broader deployment.

### Trainings

INDEV staff upskilling began in 2025 and included participation in online training courses, as well as enrolment in a dedicated master's program "Artificial Intelligence MSc" focused on getting the needed technical inside knowledge to lead the technical deployment of AI within FORS. In parallel, attention to fair, ethical, and responsible AI use was reinforced through the completion by FORS staff of the AI Ethics, Regulation and Compliance Programme at the University of Oxford, which focused on responsible AI practices and the shift from preventing harm to creating positive impact.

### Development

In 2025, an initial analysis was conducted to identify the potential benefits of introducing AI at FORS. AI was identified as a key enabler for more efficient, intuitive, and scalable exploitation of the organisation's collective knowledge base, which is currently distributed across multiple systems and organisational structures. Services based on Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) would allow staff to query internal documentation and datasets using natural language and significantly improving operational efficiency.

Beyond advanced document search, AI would enable additional use cases, including intelligent metadata management, automated generation of DDI-compliant documentation, variable harmonisation across survey waves, identification of conceptual links between studies, automated coding and more.

A central requirement across all these use cases is data sovereignty. For this reason, FORS decided to run open-source large language models on local infrastructure to ensure that respondent data, internal procedures, unpublished research, and institutional knowledge remain fully within FORS premises without compromising data protection or compliance.

To move from concept to practice while managing risks, FORS adopted a prototype-driven approach. In 2025, the FORS IT team initiated the deployment of the first in-house AI server, based on the NVIDIA DGX Spark platform. This system was selected for its ability to combine high-end AI compute performance, large, unified memory, and a comprehensive AI

software ecosystem within a compact, desktop-friendly form factor. It provides a robust foundation for experimentation, skills development, and future service expansion.

The implementation of the initial prototype began in 2025 and will be finalised in 2026. The first phase has already been completed, featuring a simple user interface that enables direct interaction with open-source language models (such as Llama, Gemma, Ministral and Nemotron). In 2026, the objective is to complete the infrastructure, implementing authentication mechanisms, and ensuring full security and compliance to be able to test more advanced, FORS-specific AI applications.

In parallel with the prototype mentioned above, other initiatives have been pursued. A beta AI service was developed to streamline the deposit process for researchers in SWISSUbase, aiming to significantly reduce the time required by automatically extracting metadata from content provided by researchers, such as PDFs, URLs, and other formats.

### **FORS AI Working Group**

In October 2025, FORS conducted an internal AI survey to assess current practices, needs, and concerns across the organisation. Results showed a high level of AI adoption, with most staff using general tools such as chatbots and DeepL primarily for support tasks like correspondence and translation, and overall satisfaction with these tools rated positively. At the same time, FORS staff highlighted the importance of continued development of AI tools, the refinement of institutional policies and ethical guidance, and further training activities, with data protection and Swiss hosting emerging as key priorities.

Building on these findings, FORS initiated the creation of an internal AI Working Group to coordinate reflections, develop guidance, and structure future activities related to AI use across the organisation. The AI Working Group is tasked with supporting tool development, governance, and training and learning needs, ensuring that AI developments at FORS remain aligned with ethical, legal, and strategic considerations while responding to staff expectations identified through the survey.

## 5. Scientific collaborations

### Host university

The University of Lausanne hosts FORS, providing crucial in-kind contributions such as office space, the IT infrastructure and human resources services for its more than 60 staff members. Additionally, the university funds a joint research program that supports the employment of 14 staff members—partially or fully—across various levels, amounting to 13 full-time equivalents (FTEs): [Developments in Research and Methods in the Social Sciences \(DReMSS\)](#). Three FORS staff members also hold professorial positions within the SSP Faculty and participate in the program alongside other colleagues from FORS and the SSP faculty associated with the program. The program operates under a formal agreement between FORS and the SSP Faculty, with oversight from a steering committee (“Comité de pilotage”) composed of three members from each institution. This committee convenes multiple times a year to guide the program’s development.

The collaborative program aims to strengthen the reputation of both FORS and the University of Lausanne as leading institutions in social science research, both nationally and internationally. It focuses on enhancing quantitative expertise in Switzerland, advancing survey methodologies, fostering innovation in social science research, and promoting dialogue among key stakeholders in social science methods. The program is structured around three research axes, one on “Inequality, gender and life course”, one on “Survey methodology”, and a newly opened axis on “Elections and Democracy”.

The opening of a new research axis “Elections and Democracy” was a major decision in 2025. A second development was the launch of a new exchange format, the [DReMSS Sessions](#) that replaces the previous *Methods and Research Meetings*. This new series builds on three exchange formats: biannual webinars showcasing methodological research and analytic methods, a semesterly Survey Surgery for discussing methodological challenges and work in progress, and a semesterly Expert Workshop offering in-depth skills refreshers with leading methodologists (also see [Chapter 8.2 Events](#)).

FORS has actively contributed to various national policy-related initiatives and projects.

Building the [SSHOC-CH](#) (Social Sciences & Humanities Open Cluster – Switzerland) continued in 2025. The objective of SSHOC-CH is to facilitate the exchange and collaboration of research infrastructures to support researchers and their projects, identify and leverage synergies, and, where feasible, develop joint platforms and services or improve the interoperability of existing ones. SSHOC-CH was recognised as an important disciplinary initiative in the “[ORD Task Force Social Sciences and Humanities Data Report](#)” published by the ORD Strategy Council in April. Preparatory work to map the national SSH infrastructure landscape started in 2025 with the objective to give an overview of nationally relevant infrastructures in Switzerland. A SSHOC-CH working group with representatives responsible for national longitudinal surveys was formed in autumn 2025 to jointly reflect on synergies and collaborations around national surveys in Switzerland.

Another significant area is the secondary use of existing data. The Federal Department of Justice put in place an expert group to accompany the establishment of a new law for secondary use of data and FORS was invited to participate in this working group. Such a law is seen as important from the perspective of FORS since access to existing data is still very restricted and complicated and a lack of clarity exists around if and how existing data can be used in research within the current data protection framework. Such a law should define the legal and institutional framework to use data, especially personal data, for non-personal use in research. The expert group received a framework document for the new law by end of 2025, which took into account the different inputs given by FORS. The expert group continues to be involved in 2026 when an actual law will be drafted.

FORS chairs the **Swiss National Open Research Data (ORD) Strategy Council’s Sounding Board of Service Providers** since January 2025. The ORD Strategy Council (StraCo) is composed of nine senior officeholders of major Swiss research organisations. The Sounding Board facilitates StraCo’s decision-making by providing expertise and assembling specialists from service providers involved in ORD services. While the Strategy Council started a reflection on its own role in 2025 and the future role of StraCo remains unclear, the Sounding Board members saw the opportunity for exchange and coordination as very valuable independent of StraCo and continued to exchange throughout 2025.

## National research projects

FORS collaborators contributed to a number of different and separately funded research projects:

- » “Swiss Direct Democracy in the 21st Century”, Daniel Kübler (UZH/ZDA Aarau), Anke Tresch (FORS/UNIL), Marc Bühlmann (UniBe), Denise Traber (UniBAS), Lionel Marquis (UNIL), funded by Swiss National Science Foundation, 2023–2027 (see also [Chapter 2.3 Political Surveys](#))
- » “The Covid Generation: Identifying risks and protective factors for young people’s pathways through the COVID-19 pandemic in Switzerland”, Stephanie Steinmetz (UNIL), Leen Vandecasteele (UNIL), Núria Sánchez-Mira (UNIL), Dawid Gondek (FORS), Teuta Mehmeti (UniNe), funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (NRP80 Covid-19 in Society), 2023–2026.
- » “Populism and Conspiracy in the COVID-19 Pandemic and beyond: Linking Discourses and Attitudes in Four European Countries”, Oscar Mazzoleni, Klaudia Koxha, Emilia Meini (UNIL) & Reinhard Heinisch, Martin Dolezal, Diana Hofmann (University of Salzburg), funded by the Swiss national Science foundation and the Austrian Science Fund, 2023–2026.
- » “Arbeitslosigkeit und Erwerbentscheide aus einer Haushaltsperspektive”, Ursina Kuhn & Debra Hevenstone, study funded by the State Secretariate of Economic Affairs (SECO), 2025–2026.
- » “Digital Trust: Understanding and addressing its impact on digital data collection in surveys”, Carline Roberts and Michèle Ernst Stähli, funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation, 2025–2029 (see Chapter 6 Methodological Research)

FORS conducts a larger number of other projects on a mandate basis mainly by the DCA group (see [Chapter 7 Data collection and analysis DCA](#)).

## International collaborations

At the **international level**, FORS continued its considerable involvement in the establishment and development of European and international research infrastructure. These activities are important to connect Switzerland to European and international research infrastructures and to increase the international visibility of Swiss social sciences. FORS hosts the Secretariat of three international cooperation projects ISSP, CSS and CNES (for details see [Chapter 2.2 International Surveys](#)).

- » **International Social Survey Programme (ISSP)**. Switzerland was selected to host the ISSP Secretariat for a second term from 2024–2027. The Secretariat is appointed for a period of three years and

takes over all organisational and coordinating tasks of this survey programme, which has around 50 members from all over the world and covers many cultures and languages. The detailed activity report can be read in [Chapter 2.2 MOSAICH/ ISSP > ISSP International](#).

- » **Comparative Candidate Survey (CCS)**. FORS has also had a coordinating role for CCS for several years which includes organising the general assembly and participate in the CCS Board. FORS ensures the integration and harmonisation of the CCS data, and the data are published on [SWISSUbase](#). CCS developed the Module 4 of this comparative study in 2024 that will be in the field in the coming years for candidate surveys, and a second release of the Module 3 comparative dataset was finalised and is available through SWISSUbase.
- » **The Consortium of National Election Studies (CNES)** is the network of scientific national election studies that conduct voter surveys for national general elections. CNES was founded in 2022 and FORS was awarded hosting of the Secretariat for a period of four years. CNES promotes the exchange of data, knowledge and standards on national elections and election studies to improve the understanding of electoral behaviour and electoral democracies through national and comparative election research. The CNES activities 2025 included organising different [online seminar series](#), re-submitting a proposal for a COST Action and further updated the [knowledge bank](#) with information on election studies. Work was also started to prepare for the establishment of a comparative data file with national election study data.
- » FORS continues to be involved in setting up the **Monitoring Electoral Democracies (MEDem)** project, which aims to link various comparative political science projects (including CCS and CNES) and to aim for ESFRI roadmap status in 2026. FORS alongside with the UNIL will host the “Centre for Survey Data” as part of the MEDem consortium. MEDem by now has a broad support from many countries, research institutions, projects, and individual researchers. The ESFRI application was submitted in April 2025.
- » FORS is collaborating with the UNIL and researchers in Switzerland to become part of the **Gender and Generations Programme (GGP)**, which made it onto the ESFRI roadmap in 2022, and establish the national data collection node. Switzerland included the participation in GGP in the new national roadmap for research infrastructures published in 2023 after a positive evaluation by the Swiss National Science Foundation. While GGP still has no stable funding, it will become possible to collect data for GGP in 2026 through a research grant of the SNSF that will cover 2026-2029 data collections (“(Un)changing gender

relations and family diversity in Switzerland: causes, consequences, and challenges from a comparative perspective (GenFam)”, led by Stephanie Steinmetz from the University of Lausanne.

- » The **SERI** has taken over the **official representation** of Switzerland in the **social science European Research Infrastructure Consortiums (ERIC) CESSDA, ESS and SHARE** in 2023 after this representation for many years previously had been delegated to FORS. . Switzerland created the legal conditions for full membership of ERICs in 2022 and CESSDA was among the first ERICs to which Switzerland applied for full membership, which was granted. For the time being Switzerland remains an observer in SHARE and ESS, but may also apply for full membership of these ERICs in the near future. FORS staff nevertheless remains active in taking part in the coordinating bodies of all the three organisations.
- » **FORS is responsible for representing Switzerland** in various other European and International projects. ORS staff represents Switzerland in the ISSP Annual meeting, which decides on modules for the coming period. FORS collaborators represent Switzerland in governing bodies of various political science networks, such as the Comparative Study of Electoral System (CSES) and the Comparative Candidate Survey (CCS) and the European Value Study (EVS).
- » In 2025, DMAS continued to lead the **CESSDA Data Citation Key Topic Working Group**, which included members from 11 CESSDA service providers. The primary objective of the working group is to enhance data citation practices within the academic community by enabling and facilitating data citation and promoting their interoperability. In addition, FORS participated in the **CESSDA Sensitive Data Working Group**, where synergies are sought for solutions to improve access to sensitive data within research infrastructures.

## 6. Methodological Research

As in previous years, FORS staff and associated researchers were highly active in methodological research, publishing and reviewing scientific papers and preparing research proposals alongside their core activities. These included the design of questionnaires and surveys, data collection, processing and documentation, as well as teaching and advising data users. In 2025, this work resulted in seven peer-reviewed publications and nineteen presentations at conferences and workshops. The research continues to generate valuable insights into maintaining and improving survey quality, keeping pace with technological developments, and reducing survey costs.

### Changing to the web mode

*This line of research examines the consequences of shifting from face-to-face surveys to self-administered modes for data quality, comparability, and representativeness.*

Many surveys have replaced the face-to-face “gold standard” mode by self-administered methods due to declining response rates and rising costs. A research note published in [Frontiers in Political Science](#) examines the implications of this transition for the quality of political measures. Drawing from telephone, web, and mail modes of the LIVES-FORS mixed mode experiment and face-to-face interviews of the ESS 2012, the results show only small mode differences in favour of face-to-face interviews in terms of political measures. Additional analyses based on the web/paper based MOSAiCH confirm that self-administered questionnaires could provide estimates of political variables that are of similar quality as those from face-to-face interviews.

To maintain sample size and representativeness in household panel surveys, it is essential that 1) household reference persons provide the contact details of all household members who have left the household, and 2) these members continue to participate in the survey and encourage their co-dwellers to do the same. Without the assistance of an interviewer, who typically provides motivation and exerts some sort of social control, there is a risk of significant underreporting of moved household members in the web mode. In a new FORS Working Paper, the telephone and web modes are compared using data from the SHP IV mode experiment and the SHP IV refreshment sample. The results of the experiment suggest no mode effects. The refreshment sample, however, in which households are pre-assigned to modes based on the availability of a telephone number, shows

that reference persons in the web group report fewer new addresses, although the web group contains more mobile sample members. This issue should be considered when shifting to the web. A version of the working paper is currently under review at *Survey Research Methods*.

In push-to-web surveys with a paper follow-up, fewer people answer using the paper questionnaire, and the per-unit cost of this mode rises. FORS continues to analyse effects of potentially dropping paper questionnaires on representativeness and data quality in the Selects 2019 and 2023 post-election surveys and in MOSAiCH since 2018. In Selects, age bias has decreased between 2019 and 2023, and citizens living in a one-person household and those with less political knowledge are still more likely to choose the paper version. A research note will soon appear in the *Swiss Political Science Review*'s special issue on the 2023 federal elections.

### Low-cost measures to improve response

*Several experiments focus on low-cost design features aimed at facilitating access to surveys and improving response without increasing respondent burden.*

One measure to facilitate access to web surveys is by providing a QR code. One DDS21 (probability-based web-only) cross-sectional survey experimented with including or not including a QR code in the invitation letter. While there was the expected strong increase in mobile phone use compared to computer use, there was no difference in response rates, sample composition, response speed, or response quality. This suggests that part of the sample switched from computer to mobile phone, with no device effect. Importantly, the use of a QR code, which may give the impression of a short survey, led mobile phone users to perceive the 30-minute survey as too long. This mismatch between expectations and the actual survey experience may have reduced panel consent rates in the QR condition. These results were published in *Survey Methods: Insights from the Field*.

Still using experimental data from the DDS21 survey, FORS investigated possibilities to improve response by using prenotification letters in cross-sectional and longitudinal surveys. First results show higher starting and finishing rates particularly in the longitudinal design, and earlier starting dates. In the cross-sectional survey, the sample is slightly more representative of the population in terms of typically underrepresented groups, but panel consent is slightly lower. This reflects the inclusion of

people with a generally lower propensity to respond. These results will be presented at the 18<sup>th</sup> Workshop der Panelsurveys im deutschsprachigen Raum (Wiesbaden, 2026).

Another experiment in the DDS21 survey tested the inclusion of a topic-specific logo on the envelope of a survey invitation. Drawing on theories of leverage-salience, authority, and trust, it was hypothesised that the presence of a logo referencing FORS or the SDD project would affect not only overall response rates but also the socio-political composition of the responding sample. Preliminary findings, however, provide only limited support for these hypotheses. Preliminary results were presented at the Annual Congress of the Swiss Political Science Association.

Relatedly, members from FORS and the Centre LIVES examined if downplaying the political topic of the Selects 2023 panel survey by using a neutral flyer can improve the recruitment of non-voters and help mitigate the underrepresentation of supporters of the far-right Swiss People's Party. While it helped increase response, it also resulted in higher attrition in the second survey wave. To be more effective, it should be complemented by additional measures such as targeted communication strategies and incentives. This paper will soon appear in the *Swiss Political Science Review's* special issue on the 2023 federal elections.

A PhD thesis finalised in 2025 investigated smartphone participation in web surveys based on experiments in the FORS Connect recruitment survey and Selects-Civique. The findings highlighted problems of participation and representativeness and how a better inclusion of mobile devices in these surveys can help with solving these issues. It also explored unique opportunities offered by smartphone technology, focusing on app-based surveys and data donations. While such novel approaches show promise for improving the depth of survey data, they also raise important methodological challenges for implementation in general population samples. A first paper was published in *Information, Communication and Society*, and additional papers are in preparation.

*This strand of research investigates how different incentive strategies affect participation and retention, particularly in mature and large-scale panel surveys.*

The question of whether reducing incentives negatively affects participation and retention rates in a mature panel remains largely unexplored. The SHP team continued to analyse the results of an experiment involving a subsample of the 2004 refreshment sample. For this group, the unconditional incentive was lowered from CHF 20 to CHF 10 in 2023. While there was no evidence of additional attrition at the household level, the share of household members completing the individual questionnaire was slightly lower in the reduced-incentive group. Results from the second wave confirm this pattern. To produce more conclusive findings, the SHP decided to extend the experiment to three waves. A paper was submitted to the International Panel Survey Methods Workshop 2026 in Nuremberg.

Being interested in smaller incentives for budget reasons in ESS R12, the international survey team experimented with a CHF 5 coin versus a CHF 10 banknote in MOSAiCH 2025. The idea was that the tactile feel of the coin in the envelope could counterbalance its lower value. First results show that the CHF 10 banknote yielded only a slightly higher response rate. Encouraged by this result, the CHF 5 unconditional incentive was applied to the full ESS R12 sample (without a control group). The resulting response rate was satisfactory.

Advance letters are often left unopened, and a growing body of survey methodology research shows that both envelope characteristics and letter format can influence whether recipients open the letter and ultimately decide to participate. Prior studies indicate that envelopes that appear more personal, salient, or distinctive (e.g., thicker envelopes, inclusion of small unconditional incentives, or non-standard formats) are more likely to attract attention. Positive effects have been observed both on initial response rates and on longer-term retention. In the SHARE Wave 10 refreshment sample, a padded envelope experiment was implemented to test whether a thicker envelope containing a cotton bag leads to higher response rates and retention compared to a standard envelope. As SHARE is a face-to-face survey, interviewers can collect information at first contacts on whether the advance letter was actually opened, providing a rare opportunity to distinguish between failures of contact, failures of opening, and refusals after reading the letter. The data are currently being prepared and processed. The results will be presented at the internal international SHARE meeting, the SHARE DACH-L (including Luxembourg) User Conference, and an international methodological conference and a paper is planned to be published.

A similar experiment, integrated into a pilot survey for a nationally representative Time Use Survey (discussed later), tested whether a thicker envelope (containing a “day planner” notepad) would lead to higher start and completion rates. In this case, no difference was observed between the heavier and lighter invitation envelopes. In this study, the unconditional financial incentive (CHF 10) was by far the most effective strategy among those who opened the envelope.

**Testing design features to increase participation and retention**

*FORS researchers tested a range of survey design features to better understand how communication, feedback, and trust-related mechanisms influence participation and retention.*

Members of the international surveys team and UNIL tested in MOSAiCH 2024 whether sending preliminary results of Part 1 can motivate participants to answer also the follow-up survey (Part 2). Half of the invited people received an infographic on a A5 postcard, the other half did not. First results showed a significant positive effect on participation. However, further analyses conducted within the SNSF project *Digital Trust: Understanding and addressing its impact on digital data collection in surveys* – and presented at ESRA as well as at the Survey Surgery DReMSS session of the FORS–SSP programme in October 2025 – revealed a problem with the random allocation of the two groups. When controlled by sample frame variables, there is no longer a significant effect of this treatment on participation. There is however an interaction effect: treatment raises participation for those who have higher digital trust but lowers it for those who have lower trust (willingness to share data).

Because of the error in randomisation, the experiment will be repeated in MOSAiCH 2026. The SNSF project will further use data from a new module of questions in MOSAiCH to investigate how components of digital trust relate to willingness to participate in app-based surveys, and will test alternative “trust-building” methods aimed at increasing participation.

In early 2025, a large-scale pilot study for a Time Use Survey (TUS), co-financed by FORS, the Centre LIVES, and the UNIL SSP Faculty, was conducted on a probability-based sample of adult residents in the French- and German-speaking regions of Switzerland. The main purpose was to field-test methods to inform the design of a future nationally representative TUS, for which project funding was submitted to the SNSF in April 2025. Given the numerous methodological challenges involved in implementing a

TUS and motivating participation, the pilot study provided an opportunity to test different design features, particularly those relevant to conducting a TUS online.

A key objective for planning a future larger-scale survey was to test alternative digital data collection tools for collecting time-diary data, in which participants must record all their activities and related contextual information for two 24-hour periods. The two tools compared in the pilot were the Modular Time Use Survey (MOTUS) research platform and the Extended Light Digital Diary Instrument (ELiDDI). MOTUS offers respondents the option to participate via a mobile app or a browser, while ELiDDI is a novel and visually appealing browser-based tool. In addition, alternative monetary and non-monetary incentives were tested.

The results of the study were presented at the “Mobile Apps and Sensors in Surveys” workshop at the London School of Economics and at the ESRA conference in Utrecht. The data will be further exploited in a doctoral thesis by one of the DReMSS PhD candidates. The pilot highlighted limitations with both diary tools and identified areas for future tool development in diary studies. It also underlined the importance of offering generous monetary incentives to compensate participants for the additional burden of completing the diary. These insights contributed to the eventual success of the SNSF grant application.

In September, the consortium of applicants coordinated by the Centre LIVES, including researchers at FORS and other Swiss higher education institutions, was awarded CHF 2.6 million for a four-year project. The project will conduct a large-scale TUS alongside recruitment for the next refreshment sample of the Swiss Household Panel (SHP). The survey will address an important data need in Swiss social sciences by providing high-quality time use data. Furthermore, aligning the design of the planned TUS with the SHP will make it possible to integrate the sample into future waves of the SHP, offering an innovative opportunity for longitudinal follow-up. The data will be analysed as part of the project, which focuses on the social stratification of time use across different phases of life. The TUS data will be made available to other researchers via SWISSUbase alongside SHP data.

*Ongoing research addresses representation bias, measurement quality, and equivalence across survey modes, designs, and populations.*

Continuing work on representation bias, the international surveys team gave four presentations at the Swiss Political Science Association conference in Geneva, the Zurich Population Research Conference, the ESS Future of Surveys Conference in Warsaw, and the ISA conference in Rabat. Based on MOSAiCH data, the first two presentations focused on a substantive model using predictors of institutional trust to study attrition between the two survey parts, as well as across the subsequent three COVID waves. The risk of bias in the measurement of variables and in the model estimates was low across the two parts, but increased considerably in the panel setting. The third presentation added a comparison between face-to-face and different web/paper designs of a similar model using EVS 2017 data, while the fourth provided qualitative insights on mode switching based on the ESS R12 pretests. Overall, all designs were feasible and yielded comparable substantive results, but representation biases may vary depending on question wording and survey design. Therefore, measures to reduce the risk of representation bias should ideally start at the question formulation stage, and analyses should be tailored to the methods applied.

At ESRA 2025, the international surveys team organised a session on “Exploring non-respondents in self-completion survey”. Despite having seven interesting papers, no-one managed to characterise these non-respondents adequately. The team presented the non-respondent-survey in MOSAiCH 2024 on the topic of “digital society”. The idea was that in a push-to-web survey on digital behaviour, non-response is not only a matter of willingness to participate. As the response to the NR survey was low, participation was analysed as a continuum, from the very interested respondents (participating fast on web to both parts, and agreeing to be part of the panel), to total non-respondents.

Researchers from FORS, UNIL, and Stockholm University constructed a new hierarchical measure of occupations (“occupations earnings potential” - OEP), calculated as percentiles of the overall earnings structure. National OEP scales were constructed using annual microdata pooled over several decades for Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK and the US. OEP is a simple and parsimonious indicator of economic advantage that can be meaningfully interpreted. Several presentations were given and a paper published in the *European Sociological Review*.

Members from FORS and UNIL continued work on gender measurement in quantitative surveys. A FORS Guide which summarises current best practice on survey inclusivity was published. The guide provides specific recommendations for measuring sex assigned at birth, gender identity, and sexual orientation in population surveys. Moreover, a book chapter has been submitted arguing that growing social and legal recognition of gender minorities requires high-quality, inclusive measures of sex and gender to reduce measurement error and improve comparability. It reviews one-step, two-step, and extended measurement approaches for gender identity through the Total Survey Error framework, outlining key design considerations and concluding with general recommendations and open challenges. A number of presentations were given at various occasions and two ESRA conference sessions were organised, where the work has been presented.

Furthermore, members of this group have submitted four papers to peer-reviewed journals. The first examines the added value of continuous gender measures in understanding gender's impact on behaviours and attitudes in various fields of social sciences. The second investigates the acceptability of more inclusive gender measures among the general population, with particular attention to more conservative segments. The third investigates whether more inclusive sex and gender survey measures affect data quality and how perceptions of gender diversity vary across regions in Switzerland. The final one examines whether continuous measures of self-ascribed femininity and masculinity explain political left-right self-placement beyond binary gender and other standard predictors. Three of the papers have generated presentations in 2025, and the final one will be presented in New York at a workshop organised by the Russell Sage Foundation. Finally, a group of FORS researchers is currently working on a FORS Guide on broader inclusive practices in survey methodology. This project aims to provide guidelines and reflective guidance for addressing inclusivity in surveys, specifically targeting sexist, racist, ageist, ableist, and heteronormative stereotypes.

## New initiatives

In 2025, FORS researchers launched new methodological initiatives aimed at strengthening teaching, knowledge transfer, and innovation in survey methodology.

Two researchers from FORS and UNIL published a pedagogical primer on fixed effects to help scholars from social science discipline other than economics and sociology to understand this tool in *Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science*.

The international surveys team launched a new research initiative on survey question design, in which they synthesise their practical experience with developing survey questions. The aim of this initiative is to produce teaching materials and methodological guides.

In the context of the [DReMSS programme](#), a researcher from UNIL has been collaborating with researchers at the London School of Economics and Political Science on a project investigating ways to integrate generative AI in questionnaire design, evaluation and testing procedures. The project forms part of the ESRC-funded Survey Data Collection Methods Collaboration, “Survey Futures”, and includes both research and knowledge transfer activities. Research findings were presented in 2025 at ESRA and at expert workshops in the UK and Canada addressing the broad question of using AI in survey research. Two short courses have been given (at ESRA, and for research students at the LSE) on the subject of integrating LLMs in the questionnaire design process.

Furthermore, after many years of stimulating exchanges in the joint FORS/SSP Methods and Research Meetings, the [DReMSS Sessions](#) replaced the old format in 2025. This new series takes three formats: webinars, in which FORS/SSP researchers present results from recent methodological research or demonstrate analytical methods; survey surgeries, where researchers meet to discuss specific methodological challenges; and expert workshops, which offer DReMSS members an in-depth skills refresh with leading experts on methodological developments currently impacting survey practice (see [Chapter 8.2 Events](#)).

## 7. Data collection and analysis DCA

Beyond its internally managed surveys, the DCA offers services spanning the full survey lifecycle to researchers, academic institutions, public bodies, and non-profit organisations. These external mandates fulfil a dual function: they constitute an important supplementary funding stream for FORS, while ensuring that staff continuously apply and refine the methodological expertise essential to delivering reference-standard survey research.

The nature of collaboration varies by client. With academic researchers, the DCA acts as a methodological partner, contributing to study design and instrument development to strengthen the scientific foundation of each project. These collaborations typically focus on methodological support and data collection. With institutional clients, mandates usually encompass the full project cycle from questionnaire design through data collection to data analysis and final reporting. These projects provide an opportunity to apply rigorous survey methodology to policy-relevant questions, demonstrating the value of evidence-based approaches in applied settings.

Below is a description of all the projects conducted by the DCA in 2025:

### **Panel Lémanique, Laboratory of Urban Sociology, EPFL 2022–2026**

The DCA continued its mandate from EPFL to conduct a panel survey observing changes in the habits of inhabitants of the Lake Geneva cross-border region in terms of mobility, housing, energy and resource consumption. The project is mainly financed by the Cantons of Vaud and Geneva. The survey uses a mix of email invitations and postal contacts to reach panel members in both Switzerland and France. In 2025, Wave 4 on consumption patterns was fielded from June through September, including three reminders, with the cleaned dataset delivered in November. For Wave 3 (mobility), fieldwork had concluded in late 2024; data preparation and delivery were completed in early 2025.

### **Study on Eating Habits in Switzerland (SES), University of Zurich 2023–2027**

The Study on Eating Habits in Switzerland (SES) is funded by the SNSF, focusing on meat consumption among German-speaking Swiss residents. The study includes five core questionnaire waves, three survey bursts, and an experimentally designed intervention. In 2025, Wave 2 with Burst 2 and the intervention was conducted from April to May, with data delivered in June. Wave 3 took place between November and December, with data delivery completed by year-end. Preparation for Wave 4 began in autumn 2025.

### **Survey on Past Doctoral Students, University of Lausanne 2021–**

The DCA was mandated by the Graduate Campus of UNIL to conduct the annual survey among former PhD students who received their degree three years prior. The 2025 survey targeted doctoral graduates from 2022 and was conducted during autumn and winter. About 300 individuals were invited to participate. Data cleaning was initiated, with integration into the cumulative dataset planned for early 2026.

### **Generations and Gender Programme (GGP), University of Lausanne 2024–2029**

This project implements the Swiss part of the Generations and Gender Programme (GGP), a cross-national longitudinal survey on family dynamics and gender relations. FORS provides technical coordination, methodological review, questionnaire management and fieldwork administration. In 2025, activities focused on project planning, international coordination, questionnaire translation into French, German, and Italian, Translation Management Tool setup, and support in the development of country-specific questions. Fieldwork is planned for spring 2026.

### **Survey on Professional Integration of Asylum Seekers in the Valais Healthcare Sector – HES-SO Valais-Wallis 2024–2025**

Commissioned by the Département de la santé, des affaires sociales et de la culture (DSSC), the HES-SO Valais-Wallis initiated a project to facilitate the professional integration of asylum seekers into the healthcare sector in the canton of Valais. FORS implemented the quantitative survey component targeting approximately 220 healthcare institutions, with data collection completed in late 2024. In January 2025, the DCA delivered the cleaned dataset and technical report, completing the project.

### **Library User Survey, ETH Zurich 2024–2025**

The DCA conducted a survey among the ETH Zurich library user community, including external users, to evaluate usage and satisfaction levels of library services. Data collection concluded in late 2024. In March 2025, the DCA delivered the final reports. Beyond standard quantitative analysis, open-ended responses were analysed using a combination of manual recoding and AI-based qualitative methods.

### **PALM 2025 Public Consultation Report, Canton of Vaud 2024–2025**

As part of the fifth-generation Lausanne-Morges agglomeration project (PALM 2025), a public consultation was conducted in late 2024 under the framework of the Swiss Federal Guidelines for Agglomeration Projects. The

online questionnaire received 150 completed responses, with additional data from partially initiated surveys. In 2025, the DCA completed report finalisation and delivered the final report in April.

#### **Staff Satisfaction Survey, University of Lausanne 2024–2025**

As part of an initiative to assess staff satisfaction with working conditions, UNIL's leadership commissioned a study evaluating workplace indicators among university employees, with a particular focus on remote work arrangements. FORS was subcontracted by the IDHEAP to handle the data collection component and provide support from a methodological standpoint. Fieldwork was conducted in February and March 2025, with data delivery completed by May.

#### **Ask the Patient: Improving Swiss Healthcare Value through Patient-Reported Outcomes (PROs), Zurich University of Applied Sciences 2024–2025**

The Ask the Patient project, led by the ZHAW and funded by the SNSF, aims to enhance the quality of Swiss healthcare through the systematic use of Patient-Reported Outcomes (PROs). FORS was in charge of the national survey, involving approximately 4 400 participants stratified by linguistic regions, age, and gender. Fieldwork was conducted in early 2025 with invitations and reminders sent via postal mail. Data delivery was completed mid-2025.

#### **Staff Satisfaction Survey, HES-SO Valais-Wallis 2025**

This project involved conducting the staff satisfaction survey for HES-SO Valais-Wallis, building on the 2021 study. Fieldwork was conducted in March 2025. The DCA completed the final report and school-specific reports by August, with presentations delivered to the direction in September and to staff in October.

#### **Panel Lémanique – Complementary Wave on Daily Rhythms, Laboratory of Urban Sociology, EPFL 2025–2026**

This complementary wave is part of the longitudinal panel conducted by EPFL (LASUR) on residents of the cross-border Lake Geneva region. The survey focused on daily rhythms and nighttime insecurity. In 2025, the DCA conducted fieldwork from March to April using mixed-mode contact with two reminders. The final dataset was delivered in July, and the project concluded in October 2025.

### **Survey on the Implementation of Psychiatric Liaison Services – Direction générale de la cohésion sociale (DGCS), Canton of Vaud 2024–2025**

As part of a broader initiative, FORS conducted a study examining psychiatric liaison services in the Canton of Vaud, focusing on long-term care facilities and psychiatric practitioners. Following data collection in 2024, the DCA completed the final report and presented the results in 2025.

### **Workplace and Study Climate Survey, University of Lausanne 2024–2025**

The UNIL Workplace and Study Climate Survey examines well-being, discrimination, and sexual and psychological harassment among the entire UNIL community, including students and staff. This marked the second wave of the survey, following the first conducted in 2022. Data collection concluded in late 2024, and in 2025 the DCA completed data analysis, delivered the final report and held multiple presentations to stakeholders.

### **Catering and Mobility Survey, University of Lausanne 2024–2025**

The UNIL Catering and Mobility Survey targets the entire UNIL community to assess campus dining options and mobility habits. The 2025 edition combined the previously separate studies into a single survey. Data collection was conducted in May 2025, with the report and a presentation of the results to the food Committee delivered in late 2025. This mandate also provided an opportunity to pilot a new reporting format developed in R. These are more automated and concise, centred on tables and visualisations rather than narrative text, designed to streamline deliverables for mandates that do not require a detailed public report.

### **Library User Survey, University of Lausanne 2024–2025**

The UNIL Library User Survey aimed to assess the usage and satisfaction levels of the library's services at the Unithèque facility. The survey was designed, programmed, and distributed using LimeSurvey. In 2025, FORS provided support for questionnaire design, programming, distribution and statistical analyses.

### **Personality and Civic Engagement Across the Adult Lifespan (Percival) – Department of Psychology, University of Zurich 2022–2025**

Percival is a social psychology study commissioned by researchers from the University of Zurich to investigate the development of personality and civic engagement among the Swiss population over time. FORS was tasked with the data collection of five survey waves between September 2022 and November 2024. In 2025, the project moved into its closure phase, with feedback distribution to participants, prize draw administration, and data deletion across all platforms.

### **Empirical Study on Mobility Practices, EPFL 2025**

This project implements the 2025 edition of the biennial empirical study on mobility practices among the EPFL community. Through a bilingual survey targeting students and staff, the study assesses commuting habits, transport modes, and travel frequency. In 2025, the DCA conducted the complete survey cycle from fieldwork through to final report delivery in December, except for the delivery of the 2025 data and the time series, which will be carried out in early 2026. This edition ensures continuity of the time series initiated in 2003, supporting the institution's sustainability strategies.

### **Methodological Test of Time-Use Survey Data Collection Tools, University of Lausanne 2024–2025**

FORS collaborated with UNIL on testing two data collection tools for time-use surveys, aiming to assess their feasibility for large-scale implementation in Switzerland. The project focuses on occupational measures collected via time diaries and is funded by the SNSF, UNIL, Centre LIVES, and FORS. In 2025, data collection was conducted using the FORS Connect Panel and a newly recruited general population sample. The study tested multiple experimental conditions comparing a web-based tool and a mobile application for diary entries.

### **Workplace and Study Climate Survey, University of Fribourg 2025–2026**

The University of Fribourg is conducting a comprehensive survey to assess how students and staff perceive their work and study environment, while documenting experiences of discrimination and harassment. As part of the Uni-Respect project, FORS will implement the survey, contribute to questionnaire development, analyse the data, and produce a final report. In 2025, activities included steering committee meetings, questionnaire development support, and study design. Fieldwork is planned for 2026.

### **Survey on Economic Mobility, KOF Swiss Economic Institute, ETH Zurich 2025–2026**

This project, conducted in collaboration with ETH Zurich's KOF Swiss Economic Institute, investigates perceptions of economic mobility by surveying respondents about their own economic situation and that of their parents. Through data linkage with Federal Statistical Office records, the study compares subjective perceptions with objective measures of actual economic trajectories. In 2025, the DCA provided in-depth support for questionnaire development, proceeded to questionnaire programming and testing for complex methodological experiment.

### **Survey on Student Precarity, University of Lausanne 2025–2026**

This project, conducted in collaboration with the Fédération des associations d'étudiant·e·s (FAE) of UNIL, investigates the socio-economic situation and precariousness of the student body. The bilingual web-based survey targets the UNIL student population to identify different forms of precariousness and their impact on academic trajectories. In 2025, the DCA completed questionnaire programming, filter implementation, and testing.

### **Neutrality and Sustainability Education Survey – UNIL, HEP Vaud, EPFL 2025–2026**

This project investigates the ideal of neutrality and education for sustainability in higher education, targeting teaching staff and students across UNIL, HEP Vaud, and EPFL. The study is funded by swissuniversities. In 2025, the DCA participated in questionnaire development, worked on programming and testing, conducted contract negotiations with participating institutions, and coordinated translation. Fieldwork is planned for spring 2026.

### **Survey on E-Voting, Federal Chancellery 2025–2027**

This project, in collaboration with the Swiss Federal Chancellery, involves a survey on electronic voting targeting voters in selected cantons and municipalities. The mandate covers the entire study, from sampling plan definition and questionnaire development to data analysis and reporting. In 2025, activities focused on study design, sampling and planning meetings with stakeholders. Fieldwork is planned for Autumn 2026.

### **Survey on Travel Agency Services, EPFL 2025–2026**

The study assesses the entire travel process at EPFL, from planning and booking to expense reimbursement, as well as user satisfaction with the travel services and the online booking platform. In 2025, activities included project kick-off, planning, and questionnaire review. Fieldwork is scheduled for early 2026.

### **Healthcare Needs Survey, Commune of Val de Bagnes 2025–2026**

This project, conducted in collaboration with HES-SO Valais-Wallis for the Municipality of Val de Bagnes, investigates therapeutic and medical service needs. Through a survey targeting approximately 4 000 permanent residents, as well as secondary residence owners, the study assesses satisfaction with existing services and identifies demand for future healthcare provision. In 2025, the DCA completed questionnaire development, coordinated with the municipality, and prepared study materials. Fieldwork is planned for February 2026.

### **Survey on Workplace Experience of Women Aged 45 and Over – ZHAW, CHUV, Unisanté, HUG, Inselspital 2025–2026**

This SNSF-funded study, led by Professors Nicky Le Feuvre and Isabelle Zinn (UNIL), documents the professional experiences of women aged 45 and over working in hospitals or healthcare institutions, with or without menopause symptoms. The goal is to identify ways to improve working conditions and better support these women. In 2025, the DCA provided methodological review of the questionnaire, coordinated planning across the three mandating institutions, and completed questionnaire programming. Fieldwork is planned for 2026.

### **The 2026 Job Stress Index Survey – Health Promotion Switzerland, University of Bern, Brunner Analytics 2025–2026**

This project, carried out in collaboration with Health Promotion Switzerland, Brunner Analytics, and the University of Bern, implements the 2026 edition of the Job Stress Index survey. An online questionnaire will be sent to approximately 19,800 Swiss residents aged 16 to 65, drawn from a random sample provided by the Federal Statistical Office, with the goal of collecting around 4,000 responses from employed individuals. The study examines work-related stress, available resources, and their effects on health and productivity. In 2025, the DCA prepared and negotiated the offer with the client, supported the ethics commission application and the drafting of documents for participants, revised the questionnaire following approval, and programmed it. The contract was finalised in October and the sample request submitted to the Federal Statistical Office. Fieldwork is scheduled for early 2026.

## 8. Outreach, output and events

### 8.1 Publications

FORS is committed to advancing research by promoting data sharing, reuse, and collaboration within the scientific community. Through our publications, we showcase the value of open research data (ORD), acknowledge the work of data providers, and support the dissemination of methods, tools, and findings. This contributes to more accessible knowledge, stronger research quality, and greater scientific and societal impact. Explore all our publications on our [website's dedicated page](#).

To strengthen dissemination and foster engagement, FORS communicates about its public online platforms, publication series, and journals through a variety of channels, including the FORS website, social media, distribution lists, mailing campaigns, and newsletters. The following section provides an overview of these resources.

#### The FORS Guides to Survey Methods and Data Management

The peer-reviewed open access series *FORS Guides to Survey Methods and Data Management*, launched in 2019, aims to foster knowledge transfer on survey methods and data management both within FORS and beyond. The FORS Guides are specifically designed for the Swiss research community and for researchers working with Swiss data.

In 2025, the FORS Guides series featured two new publications. The first, “Capturing the last phase of life in surveys”, addresses the methodological challenges of surveying a crucial yet often underexplored stage of life. It discusses common issues such as health shocks, cognitive decline, and mortality, which can lead to attrition and incomplete data, and highlights strategies drawn from existing surveys to better capture this sensitive period. It also provides recommendations to improve data collection and outlines key considerations for researchers analysing such data. The second, “Measuring assigned sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation in population surveys”, supports survey practitioners and researchers in measuring gender differences more comprehensively and accurately in general population surveys. It addresses key methodological considerations, reviews current measurement practices for the main concepts, and recommends one question per concept for effective use in surveys. All FORS Guides are freely accessible on our [website's dedicated page](#).

### The FORS Working Paper Series

This series publishes papers related to survey research from both methodological and substantive viewpoints. They are written by researchers within and outside FORS and reflect the evolution of key topics in Swiss and international survey research—from mode effects, item nonresponse, and sampling challenges, to network analysis, wellbeing measurement, political behaviour, social inequality, and family dynamics. In 2025, one paper was published in this series, examining whether web-based surveys are as effective as interviewer-based modes in maintaining the participation of household members who have moved out. All papers can be viewed on the series' dedicated [webpage](#).

### Social Change in Switzerland

The online publication series [Social Change in Switzerland](#), which is bilingual in French and German, is a collaborative effort between FORS and the Centre LIVES, the Swiss Competence Centre for Research on Life Course and Vulnerabilities. Its objective is to analyse transformations in areas such as employment, family, income, mobility, voting, and gender within the Swiss context. As in previous years, the series published three contributions in 2025. The articles addressed long-term fertility trends in Switzerland between 1946 and 2022, highlighting the growing divide between two-child families and childlessness; examined the economic and social costs of traditional marriage models in terms of income loss, poverty, and social protection after divorce; and analysed the effects of wealth taxes on the distribution of wealth across Swiss cantons from 1969 to 2018.

The most viewed articles focused on long-term fertility trends in Switzerland (published in 2025), the perception of professions in Switzerland (published 2023), and the evolution of inheritances in Switzerland since 1911 and their implications for taxation (published 2019). All publications, press releases, and media coverage can be consulted on the journal's dedicated webpage. Web statistics indicate that the journal continues to attract sustained attention. Website traffic increased slightly compared to the previous year, with visits remaining predominantly from Switzerland, followed by France, Germany, and the United States.

### DeFacto

In October, [DeFacto](#), a platform carried by all Swiss political science institutes, celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In its tenth year of activity, DeFacto mainly focused on recruiting new team members, planning and implementing a new event format (a live show during the election of a new member of the Federal Council), creating new series, pursuing content-sharing partnerships and organising several round tables as part of the collaboration with the Politforum Berne. Since 2023, DeFacto has been

part of the Swiss Political Science Association (SPSA), which assumes financial and administrative responsibility for the platform. The platform nevertheless continues to be funded by contributions from the various institutes and departments of political science in Switzerland.

FORS researchers contribute to the platform as authors, and FORS provides technical support by acting as webmaster for the platform. The five-member editorial team corresponds to less than one full-time equivalent. In 2025, editorial activity was higher than in the previous year, almost reaching the record level of 2023. A total of 176 articles were published, 18 more than in 2024. Since October 2022, articles can also be published in English. While English-language contributions accounted for a fifth of the volume in 2024, they represent a sixth of the articles published in 2025. In 2025, DeFacto again managed to slightly increase its audience through public events, including a new format, as well as through its presence on social networks.

### **Survey Methods: Insights from the Field**

The peer-reviewed international online journal [Survey Methods, Insights from the Field](#), jointly published with GESIS and Digitize!, published a total of 14 articles during the reporting year, 11 of which appeared in regular issues and three as Online First publications. One issue was published as a special issue on *Exploring Error and Quality Indicators in Social Research*. This represents a clear increase compared to nine articles published in the previous year. During the same period, 11 manuscripts were rejected. From January to December, the journal's website recorded 31 059 page views, indicating sustained interest and a continued growth compared to the previous year. The majority of visits originated from the United States, followed by Germany and China. The most consulted articles were *Using Facebook and Instagram to Recruit Web Survey Participants*, followed by *The Effect of Quick Response (QR) Codes on Response Rates and Respondent Composition*, and *Response Rates in the European Social Survey*.

## 8.2 Events

Throughout the year, FORS collaborators participated in numerous scientific events, workshops, and training activities beyond the centre's own programmes. Complementing this broad engagement, FORS organised and co-organised a number of key events in 2025, held both online and in person. An overview of the main events is provided below:

### Conference: Celebrating 25 Years of Longitudinal Surveys in Switzerland

A major highlight of the year was the conference “Celebrating 25 Years of Longitudinal Surveys in Switzerland,” jointly organised by the Swiss Household Panel (SHP) and the TREE study and held on 4–5 June in Lausanne. With over 50 presentations, the event celebrated the scientific value of Switzerland's long-term data infrastructures and offered a rich programme covering both substantive and methodological perspectives. The programme included keynote talks and thematic sessions on education and labour market pathways, health and well-being, socio-economic inequality and mobility, family dynamics, gender and migration, politics and attitudes, as well as methodological issues in longitudinal surveys. Selected contributions will be featured in a special issue of the Swiss Journal of Sociology planned for 2027, prepared by guest editors from TREE and the SHP. For further information see [Chapter 2 Swiss Household Panel](#).

### FORS–DaSCH webinar series: Data Management for the Social Sciences and Humanities

FORS and DaSCH continued their joint series of free online data management webinars for researchers in the social sciences and humanities. Four webinars were held during the year, each co-organised and co-hosted by a collaborator from FORS and DaSCH to ensure balanced disciplinary perspectives. The sessions addressed key topics including the FAIR and CARE principles, authority data, standards and metadata, research data documentation, and informed consent. Across the series, speakers combined conceptual introductions with concrete case studies, highlighting both shared challenges and discipline-specific practices related to data collection, documentation, interoperability, reuse, and ethical considerations. The webinars were well attended, and recordings and materials were made available online. All future and past events can be consulted [here](#).

### FORS Lunch seminars

In 2025, nine FORS lunch seminars were held, covering a broad range of substantive and methodological topics in the social sciences. Several presentations addressed questions of social inequality and stratification, including analyses of socioeconomic and spatial differences in willingness to pay for environmental protection across European countries, the societal participation of housewives over time in Switzerland, and the measurement

of occupational earning potential as an indicator of social hierarchy. Other seminars focused on political behaviour and electoral dynamics, examining the impact of the war in Ukraine and its economic and energy-related consequences on voter preferences in the 2023 Swiss federal elections.

Methodological and infrastructural topics were also discussed, including an overview of the Swiss Open Government Data (OGD) landscape, its opportunities and challenges for research and data-driven institutions, and a presentation of the FORS Replication Service, which supports transparency and reproducibility by enabling researchers to share replication materials linked to published articles. A seminar examined how to measure assigned sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, and gender expression in population surveys, and proposed and discussed practical solutions. A seminar, primarily intended for internal audiences, also addressed cybersecurity and the individual and collective measures required to ensure enhanced security. Finally, one seminar explored the use of polygenic indices in life course research, highlighting their potential for understanding genetic influences on social outcomes. The detailed programme can be viewed on the seminar's [dedicated webpage](#).

#### **Data Live: monthly Q&A on data management and data sharing**

In 2025, FORS launched Data Live, a new interactive monthly online Q&A session on research data management and data sharing. Held every second Thursday of the month, the format offers researchers the opportunity to ask questions directly to experts from the FORS Data Management & Archiving Services unit DMAS and receive practical guidance in real time. The sessions cover a broad range of topics relevant to social science research, including data management plans (DMPs), informed consent, anonymisation, handling personal and sensitive data, documentation standards, and best practices for depositing data in SWISSUbase, including access control options.

#### **DReMSS Sessions**

After many years of stimulating exchanges through the joint Methods and Research Meetings seminar series, a new format was introduced in 2025: the [DReMSS Sessions](#). The sessions are part of DReMSS (Developments in Research and Methods in the Social Sciences), a joint research programme in which members from with the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences (SSP) at the University of Lausanne, and FORS take part.

The DReMSS Sessions continue to promote methodological exchange and innovation, bringing together researchers to discuss survey methodology and quantitative social science data collection and analysis. The programme is structured around three complementary formats: webinars presenting

recent research and analytic methods to an international audience, a Survey Surgery offering consultation and feedback on work in progress, and expert workshops providing in-depth training on emerging methodological approaches. In 2025, the series addressed topics such as rethinking gender measures in population surveys, designing persuasive survey communications through an interactive Survey Surgery format, and fixed-effects panel modelling in practice.

**The 29th Swiss  
Summer School  
on Methods  
in the Social  
Sciences**

Jointly organised by USI and FORS, the 29<sup>th</sup> Swiss Summer School on Methods in the Social Sciences took place at the Università della Svizzera Italiana in Lugano from August 7 to August 22, 2025.

The following workshops were offered (number of participants in parentheses, a \* denotes an online-only workshop):

- » First week (August 11–15): D. Conway - Ethnographic methods(25), E. Davidov/P. Schmidt - Introduction to Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) (18), M. Bergman - Mixed Methods (21), M. Gibbert - Mastering Case-Study Research Designs: Before, During and After Qualitative Data Collection (13), M. Grätz - Causal Analysis with Observational Data (16), T. Hills - Using Social Network analysis to Understand Data(16), E. Horber - Multivariate Methods for Social Researchers(10), P. Mello - Exploring Casual Complexity with Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA)(13), V. Mottier - Discourse Theory and analysis(14), M. Steenbergen - Introduction to Machine Learning (10).
- » Second week (August 18–22): D. Beach - Using Methods to Improve your Theoretical Argument - bridging theory and methods with case studies and comparative research to develop more interesting theories (10), G. Colavizza - Large Language Models for Social Science Research (19), J. Drzewiecka - Qualitative Analyses of Interview Data (25), T. Hills - Content Analysis and Natural Language Processing (14), B. Kittel - Designing Experiments in the Social Sciences (18), B. Lepori/A. Rocci - How to Forge Arguments in Writing (Social Sciences) Scientific Paper (10), O. Lipps/U. Kuhn - Longitudinal Analysis with Panel Data (12), A. Mira/F. Denti - An Introduction to Bayesian Methods for the Social Sciences(19), M. Ochsner/A.Pollien/M. Stähli - Survey Design and Implementation (12), R. Samuel - Creating Groups from Data. Cluster Analysis and Latent Class Analysis (16), C. Silver - Integrating AI in the Qualitative Research Workflow (26).

- » Optional two- or three-day preliminary workshops (August 7–9): P. Gruber, Introduction to R and RStudio\* (36); O. Lipps/ U. Kuhn, Introduction to Stata\* (6); E. Horber, Statistics with SPSS for Social Scientists\* (25).

84% of the 316 participants were students from Swiss and foreign universities. 51% (162) participants came from Switzerland. Participants from other countries: Germany (26), United Kingdom (17), Italy (16), Netherlands (13), Austria (10), Belgium (9), Poland (7), Denmark (6), France (5), Bulgaria (4), Canada (3), Czech Republic (3), Norway (3), two students from China, Finland, India, Luxembourg, Morocco, Slovenia, Spain (2) and United States; one from Colombia, Croatia, Estonia, Georgia, Ireland, Japan, Lithuania, Macedonia, Malaysia, Malta, Pakistan, Portugal, Russian Federation, Sweden, Trinidad and Tobago and the United Arab Emirates.

The largest group of participants are working in Sociology (48), followed by Business Studies (47), Political Science (36), Educational Sciences (32), Communication (27), Psychology (21) and Health (20).

### Love Data Week Switzerland

As in 2024, FORS contributed to the 2025 edition of the Love Data Week Switzerland, a global initiative highlighting the importance of research data and research data management (RDM). Through three free online sessions, FORS promoted open science practices and provided practical guidance on data sharing, preservation, and reuse.

On 10 February, FORS hosted a live demonstration on how to deposit data on SWISSUbase, introducing the platform and answering participants' questions. The same day, a short presentation on replication challenges and the FORS Replication Service addressed the role of replication in scientific transparency and showcased FORS's dedicated service for sharing replication materials. On 11 February, a third session presented the services offered by FORS and SWISSUbase to support researchers with data sharing, preservation, and re-use, offering hands-on advice tailored to researchers' needs.

### GREC

Established in 2017, the research group on Elections and Political Citizenship (GREC) is a research unit of the Institute of Political Studies ([IEP](#)) at UNIL. The GREC serves as a forum for intellectual exchange and discussion for researchers and doctoral candidates from IEP and other institutions working in the fields of elections and referendums, social movements, activism, and political citizenship.

Furthermore, GREC's mission is to encourage the use of FORS surveys (particularly SELECTS and SHP) and to strengthen collaboration between IEP and FORS. This collaboration is particularly evident in the SNSF-funded research project "Direct Democracy in the 21st Century" ([DDS21](#)), in which GREC members from UNIL and FORS are centrally involved as co-PIs.

In 2025, the GREC organised a rich programme of academic events, including two international conferences and workshops (a project closing event on negative voting and a workshop on the socio-economic aspects of radical right populism), and a regular conference series, addressing key issues in contemporary political research. The topics of the different events covered ranged from populism and radical right politics, political participation and turnout bias, and the transnationalisation of illiberal movements, to economic inequality, climate politics, and negative voting. Several events were co-organised with partners such as DReMSS and LAGAPE, reflecting the GREC's engagement with international research networks and its support for academic exchange and scholarly debate.

## Obelis

[OBELIS](#) (Observatoire des élites suisses), affiliated with the SSP Faculty of the University of Lausanne, is an interdisciplinary research initiative on Swiss elites. FORS is represented within OBELIS by a researcher who actively contributes to the project's scientific activities and is part of the coordination team. To mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of OBELIS, a public outreach event (Dix ans d'OBELIS : en quête du portrait des élites suisses) was jointly organised by UNIL and the OBELIS coordination team on 6 November. The event attracted a wide audience and media interest and aimed to present OBELIS data, available via SWISSUbase, to the general public. In addition, a FORS researcher moderated the two-day academic workshop "Education and training of the entrepreneurial elite: life paths and world views", jointly organised by OBELIS and CRAPUL (Centre de recherches sur l'action politique de l'Université de Lausanne). The workshop took place on 16–17 October 2025. Earlier in the year, OBELIS organised a scientific workshop entitled "Dans les coulisses du pouvoir : ethnographier et interviewer les élites" on 3 June.

## Data Re-use Award

The [FORS Data Re-use Award](#) encourages researchers to reuse existing social science data available via SWISSUbase. It mainly targets early career researchers and highlights studies that make good and innovative use of shared data. Through this award, FORS promotes open science and supports transparent and high-quality research. The 2025 edition of the award was awarded to an article that provides practical evidence on how to maximise compliance and reduce bias in data donation studies using digital trace data.

## 8.3 Communication and outreach

In 2025, FORS's communication and outreach activities focused on strengthening the visibility and coherence of its messages across communication channels, while prioritising those that most effectively reached key audiences. The Communications Officer coordinated these activities by combining targeted dissemination, systematic monitoring of communication channels and their performance, and strategic reflection on outreach practices. This work helped to strengthen the visibility of FORS's events, publications, services, and institutional initiatives, and informed decisions on the respective roles of mailings, social media, media relations, and the website within FORS's broader communication and rebranding strategy.

### 8.3.1 Communication channels and media presence

#### Mailing campaigns

Mailings constitute a central communication channel for FORS's outreach activities. Mailwizz is FORS's email communication and registration tool, hosted on FORS servers, and is used to manage targeted mailings, event registrations and related communication workflows. Based on registration data collected via Mailwizz, FORS regularly analyses how participants learn about its events. Recent results show that targeted mailings are the main source of information for event participants, clearly ahead of other channels. Participants also reported learning about events through partner institutions and professional networks, followed by colleagues, social media and, to a lesser extent, the FORS website. These findings confirm that direct, targeted mailings are the most effective driver of event registrations, while other communication channels play a complementary role in supporting visibility. In 2025, 44 mailing campaigns (including the widely read FORS Bulletin) were sent out to targeted audiences, compared to 38 campaigns in 2024.

#### Social media

Building on an internal social media input paper prepared at the end of 2024, the corporate FORS social media accounts—specifically LinkedIn, X, and Bluesky—were reviewed. The review assessed posting practices and available engagement indicators in the context of FORS's broader communication and rebranding efforts. The review identified LinkedIn as the platform generating the strongest reach and engagement for FORS, while confirming that social media primarily functions as a relay channel to share updates and direct audiences to the FORS website.

Based on these findings, several recommendations were formulated: to focus communication efforts on LinkedIn, to maintain a light but active presence on Bluesky while monitoring its development, to continue targeted mailings as a key communication instrument, and to consider the use of a social media management tool to streamline workflows and support monitoring and reporting.

In 2025, FORS's presence on LinkedIn continued to grow significantly. By December 2025, the LinkedIn account reached 2 117 followers, compared to 1 328 followers at the end of October 2024, representing an increase of 789 followers over the year. On Bluesky, FORS counted 241 followers by December 2025, reflecting a still limited but developing audience.

During the same period, the social media landscape evolved rapidly. While FORS has retained its account on X, the platform has lost relevance for a large number of academic actors. As many researchers and institutions migrated to Bluesky, FORS also began sharing content on this platform. The X account has not been deleted to date, but activity has been significantly reduced in line with observed shifts in audience behaviour.

Looking ahead to 2026, FORS plans to further consolidate its presence on LinkedIn, continue monitoring the evolution of Bluesky, and strengthen coordination between social media, newsletters and website content in order to improve coherence, efficiency and reporting across communication channels.

### **Media coverage**

Overall, 67 media cuts were recorded in 2025, referring to coverage in news media, including newspapers, magazines and broadcast outlets (online, print, radio and television). Media coverage was predominantly national, while a smaller but notable share of media cuts appeared in international media.

Thematically, coverage was dominated by Swiss politics and institutions (20 media cuts), reflecting interest in political parties, electoral dynamics and political financing. Substantial attention was also devoted to youth, social networks and family ties (14 media cuts), alongside fertility, demographic change and family norms (11 media cuts). Gender norms and equality within couples (13 media cuts) formed another prominent theme, while more targeted coverage addressed economic elites and power structures (5 media cuts) as well as gender differences in political behaviour and party positioning (4 media cuts combined).

### Website traffic

In 2025, the FORS website recorded a total of 141 753 page views, compared to 145 572 page views in 2024. The majority of visits in 2025 originated from Switzerland, followed by France, the United States, China, and Germany. In 2024, most visits came from Switzerland, France, Germany, the United States, and the United Kingdom.

The FORS homepage was the most visited page in 2025, followed by the News and Staff pages. Pages related to the Swiss Household Panel (SHP), including the SHP documentation page, were also among the most visited. Information pages for MOSAiCH and SELECTS were also among the most consulted sections of the website, reflecting interest in FORS's main survey programmes. It should be noted that page view figures indicate overall trends rather than exact usage, as users' privacy settings may prevent the tracking of their behaviour.

### 8.3.2 Rebranding strategy

In 2025, FORS advanced its rebranding process in collaboration with a Swiss communication agency to strengthen its visibility and sharpen its positioning within the research community in Switzerland and internationally. This work addressed key challenges identified during the strategic phase, including uneven recognition of FORS across linguistic regions, varying perceptions of FORS depending on stakeholder groups, and the complexity of a service portfolio that was not always immediately understood by external audiences. Building on the results of the analysis and internal consultations, FORS moved from strategy to the development of a renewed corporate identity. The rebranding approach deliberately followed a “soft lifting” logic: it modernised the FORS brand while preserving continuity and the recognition already built over time. The corporate logo was refined to become more distinctive and recognisable, while maintaining a minimalist design and ensuring optimal legibility. At the same time, the rebranding work reinforced the immediate association of FORS with its Swiss identity, supporting clearer and more consistent brand recognition.

FORS also strengthened its positioning by developing a new baseline that brought greater clarity and precision to FORS's role. The baseline was designed to be concise, descriptive, and internationally relevant, and it was applied to the corporate FORS identity to support stronger visibility and understanding across audiences. In parallel, FORS structured its brand architecture to improve coherence across its many activities, services, and projects. The corporate FORS brand was positioned as the primary level of

the architecture, while project brands were organised according to whether they were FORS-led or developed in collaboration. This framework improved consistency and supported a clearer representation of FORS's contribution across partnerships, while preserving the visibility of collaborative initiatives.

The renewed identity was prepared for progressive rollout across major communication channels, including the website, social media platforms, templates, email signatures, stationery, and communication materials. This work provided a framework for consistent implementation and further development in the coming years. In 2026, FORS will begin work on the development of a new website, while the roll-out of the rebranding across key communication channels and materials will continue.

### 8.3.3 Teaching

*Sharing knowledge and shaping future researchers through teaching is an important task of FORS.*

In 2025, a total of 15 FORS staff members gave 24 different courses, for a total of 306 hours taught at all academic levels (bachelor's, master's, and PhD), as well as in the context of continuing education (see list in [Chapter 10 FORS in Figures](#)). The topics covered were predominantly data analysis and data management, but also survey methodology.

There was a significant increase in the number of lecturers, courses and hours taught compared to the previous year (7 lecturers, 6 courses and 169 hours), due to FORS's significant investment in the CAS (Certificate in Advanced Studies) in Data Stewardship, organised at the University of Lausanne. However, it should be noted that it is difficult to make a comparison with previous years due to the high number of courses given in 2025 covering a limited number of hours in the aforementioned CAS. As a result, most of our courses were given in French-speaking Switzerland (71%) at the University of Lausanne, but there was also a significant investment (21%) in the summer school programme in social sciences methods at the University of Italian Switzerland (Lugano), while one course (1%) was given abroad.

Thus, slightly more than a third of eligible FORS staff were involved in teaching activities. FORS will continue to contribute to the training of young scientists according to its possibilities and resources.

- » Araujo Pedro, Pablo Diaz, Alexandra Stam 8/5/2025. “Introduction to Research Data in the Social Sciences”, course given for the CAS in Data Stewardship, University of Lausanne.
- » Heers Marieke 23/5/2025. « Data Re-use in the Social Sciences”, course given for the CAS in Data Stewardship, University of Lausanne.
- » Hildebrandt Meret 27/5/2025. “Data sharing and reuse”. course given for the CAS in Data Stewardship, University of Lausanne.
- » Kuhn Ursina 5/2/2025. “The Swiss Household Panel: Example of a Cohort Study”, course given for the SSPH and Interuniversity Graduate Campus at the of the University of Lausanne, doctoral level.
- » Lipps Oliver. February 2025. “The theory behind fixed-effects panel models” + “Fixed-effects panel models in practice” + Q&A session”. course given at the LIVES Doctoral Programme, University of Lausanne, doctoral level.
- » Lipps, Oliver and Ursina Kuhn. August 2025. “Applied Panel Data Analysis”. course given at the 29<sup>th</sup> Summer School in Social Science Methods, Lugano.
- » Lipps, Oliver and Ursina Kuhn. August 2025. “Introduction to Stata”. online course given at the 29<sup>th</sup> Summer School in Social Science Methods, Lugano.
- » Lutz, Georg. Spring semester 2025. “Elections et votations en Suisse: Analyse de données d’enquête”. University of Lausanne, IEPI, bachelor level (with Lionel Marquis).
- » Marmier Auriane 10/1/2025. “Data Handling: Documentation.” course given for the CAS in Data Stewardship, University of Lausanne.
- » Marmier Auriane 27/2/2025. “Research Data management: Documentation and Metadata Workshop”. course given at the Romandy Doctoral Programme in Sociology of the CUSO (University Conference of Western Switzerland), doctoral level.
- » Marmier Auriane, Mathilde Panes 5/5/2025. “Data management in social science », course given for the CAS in Data Stewardship, University of Lausanne.
- » Marmier Auriane 15/5/2025. “Documentation and Metadata in social science», course given for the CAS in Data Stewardship, University of Lausanne.
- » Marmier Auriane 18/11/2025. “Data SteWhat? Une introduction au data stewardship.”, course given for the HEC Executive Education, at the University of Lausanne.
- » Morgan de Paula Emilie, Carmen Borrât-Besson 23/5/2025.” Reproducibility in the social sciences”, course given for the CAS in Data Stewardship, University of Lausanne.

- » Morgan de Paula Emilie and Meret Hildebrandt 11/11/2025. « A guide to effective data sharing », course given at the Romandy Doctoral Programme in Sociology of the CUSO (University Conference of Western Switzerland), doctoral level.
- » Ochsner, Michael. Autumn Semester 2025. “Problèmes sociaux et politiques sociales au travers des étapes de vie. », University of Lausanne, SSP/HEP, master level.
- » Ochsner, Michael, Alexandre Pollien and Michèle Ernst-Staehli. August 2025. “Survey design and implementation”. course given at the 29<sup>th</sup> Summer School in Social Science Methods, Lugano.
- » Rennwald, Line 25/3/2025. “Etudier le populisme de droite en Suisse: base électorale et données Selects », course given at the University of Lausanne, SSP, bachelor level.
- » Ryser Valérie-Anne. Spring semester 2025. “Approches pluridisciplinaires des parcours de vie: Introduction ». University of Lausanne, SSP, bachelor level.
- » Ryser Valérie-Anne. Autumn Semester 2025. « Vulnérabilité et Résilience: How to get life course data: retrospective and prospective longitudinal studies”. online course given at the University of Paris Créteil, master level.
- » Ryser Valérie-Anne. Spring semester 2025. “Natalité et mode de garde: Etat des lieux ». course given at the University of Lausanne, SSP, master level.
- » Stam Alexandra and Pablo Diaz 15/5/2025. “Informed consent”, course given for the CAS in Data Stewardship, University of Lausanne.
- » Stam Alexandra, Pedro Araujo and Libby Bishop 22/5/2025. “Anonymisation in practice”. course given for the CAS in Data Stewardship, University of Lausanne.
- » Tresch Anke. Spring semester 2025. “Campagnes électorales”. University of Lausanne, IEPI, bachelor level (with Flavien Bonelli).

### 8.3.4 Collaborative research projects

*Developing and maintaining linkages and synergies between FORS staff and the outside research community is a key activity for FORS.*

In 2025, 29 FORS staff members were involved in 97 collaborative projects with outside organisations. Thus, around 75% of eligible FORS staff were involved in research activities. We can note a slight decrease compared to last year (114 collaborative projects). This is due to cyclical and circumstantial effects but can mainly be attributed to the change of postdocs, who are in the process of building their research networks.

A little less than 3 out of 4 (71%) of these collaborative projects were with individuals from the French-speaking part of Switzerland, 17% with colleagues from the German-speaking part of Switzerland and 29% with foreign institutions (some projects involved several institutions from different regions; thus, the total exceeds 100%).

This concentration in the French-speaking part of the country is due in particular to the close ties of some collaborators with other institutions in Lausanne and Geneva (in particular LINES/LIVES). Our international collaborations are very diversified, including a broad range of foreign countries or regions (22).

To this can be added a further 22 collaborative research projects involving only FORS members, which highlights the richness of scientific exchanges and collaborations within the institution.

We must also put the numerical significance of this indicator into perspective, as some research projects are significantly more ambitious and promising than others. All things considered, what stands out most is the extensive scientific network of our collaborators, year after year.

## 9. FORS Governance

As an independent national organisation FORS has various bodies in place that ensure its good governance: the foundation board, a scientific advisory board as well as the FORS management team.

As a foundation, listed in the Swiss commercial register, FORS has its own statutes, financial regulations and various other agreements in place. Among them are the collaboration agreements with the University of Lausanne and the Social and Political Science Faculty, a collaboration agreement around SWISSUbase, which is an independent simple association, and a collaboration agreement with DaSCH, our partner organisation from the humanities. Special mandates are also in place for three commissions for the national survey (Selects, MOSAiCH, Swiss Household Panel), that have the academic responsibility for the respective surveys. The FORS Foundation board elects these commissions and gives them their mandate for a four-year period.

Between 2008 and 2020, the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) and the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) jointly financed most of the activities of FORS. Since 2021, SNSF has taken over fully the federal part of funding for FORS' key activities, including data services. The SNSF agreed to continue funding FORS for a new 4-year funding period (2025-2028) and a grant agreement between FORS and the SNSF was concluded in September 2025. FORS was granted the same amount as it received during the 2021-2024 funding period, which left a funding gap given risen salaries and other costs. However, since FORS had started to budget conservatively in recent years and had unused funds left, no drastic saving measures needed to be taken at this stage. FORS and the SNSF administrative office exchange regularly to discuss practical aspects of the service level agreement and ensure coordination. The grant agreement also includes a more comprehensive delivery of key performance indicators.

### Foundation Board and Scientific Advisory board

The Foundation Board, the governing body of FORS, has been chaired by Professor Estelle Doudet of the host university since 2021. Comprising eight designated members representing key stakeholders (swissuniversities, the University of Lausanne, the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (SFSO), the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences, and DaSCH), the Foundation Board meets twice a year. In March 2025, the Board approved the 2024 annual accounts and audit report and mandated the Scientific Advisory Board to evaluate the overall functioning of FORS. During the same meeting, the

Board discussed and approved a newly established risk register outlining FORS's key risks and corresponding mitigation measures. The Board also approved the Grant Agreement 2025–2028 between FORS and the SNSF and the MEDem Consortium Agreement. In November, the Board approved the 2025 budget and annual planning. During this meeting, it also discussed and approved a revised *Règlement d'Organisation de la Fondation FORS*, developed by a working group of Foundation Board members. This revised regulation clarifies the competencies of the FORS Executive Board, particularly in relation to the Foundation Board. Furthermore, the Foundation Board decided to establish two committees—one for Finance and Human Resources and one for Strategy—to strengthen FORS governance. The Board also elected the members of the Scientific Advisory Board for the 2026–2029 term.

The Scientific Advisory Board held an in-person meeting in March 2025, chaired by Professor Mick Couper. The FORS Director provided an update on several important developments at FORS, with a particular focus on infrastructures developments. The Board then discussed plans for a time use survey in cooperation with the Swiss Household Panel (SHP), as well as an assessment of data re-use within the Swiss social science research community. A joint meeting of the Foundation and the Scientific Advisory Board also took place in March 2025. In addition to exchanging on key developments, the two Boards discussed the Grant Agreement between FORS and the SNSF and the new risk register. Both Boards took note of the evaluation report from the Survey Unit and discussed the mandate for the overall evaluation of FORS.

## **FORS** **Management**

The FORS Executive Board, chaired by the FORS Director, comprises the heads of the Surveys, Data Management and Archive Services (DMAS), and Infrastructure and Development (INDEV) units, as well as the Head of Finance and Human Resources. The Board typically meets twice a month, with the Communications Officer also attending. Minutes of the meetings are recorded and shared with the President of the Foundation Board to keep her informed of ongoing activities.

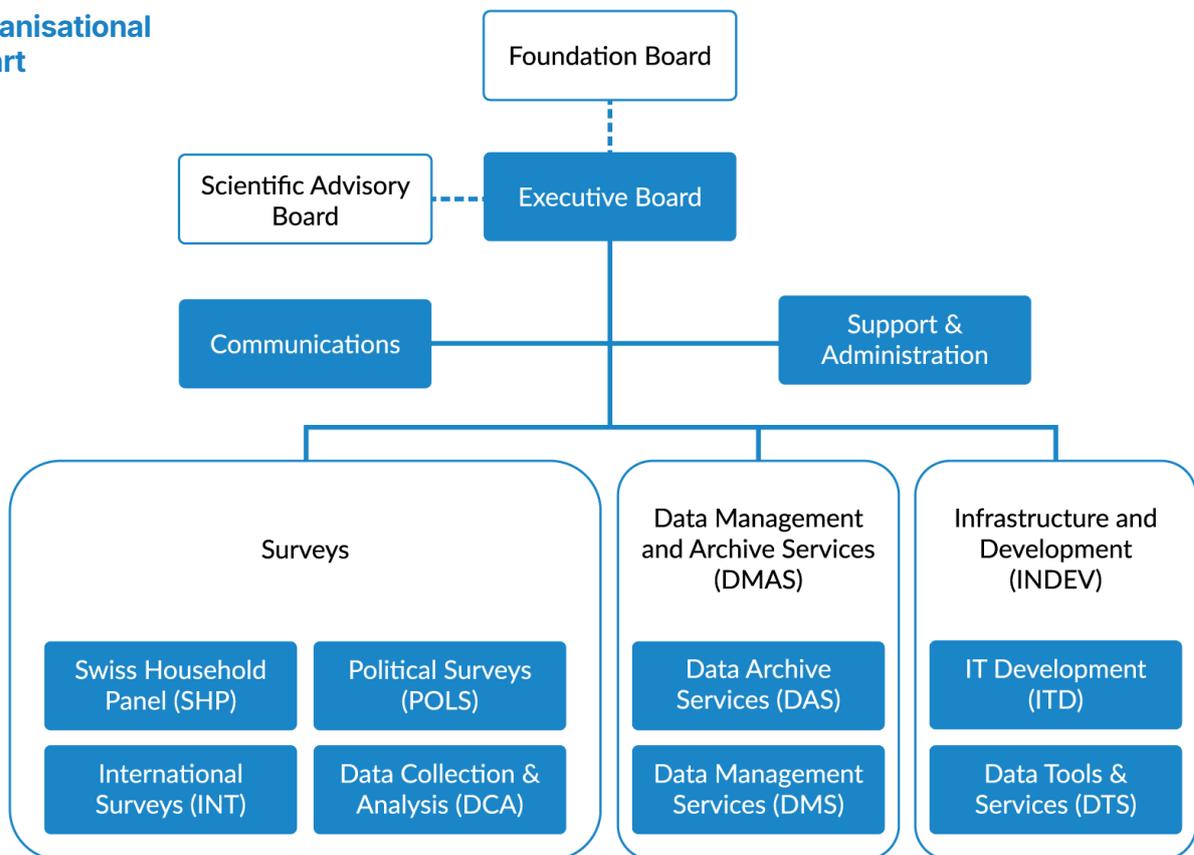
Key formal decisions on day-to-day operational matters are taken during Executive Board meetings. FORS also relies on several instruments for longer-term planning, including a fixed annual planning and budgeting cycle in which all units and groups participate. This process results in an annual work plan outlining key priorities along with a corresponding budget. Both documents are approved annually by the Foundation Board.

In addition, FORS conducts annual scientific reporting, the systematic collection of key performance indicators (KPIs) through this report, and regular financial reporting and auditing.

In 2022, FORS initiated a more structured internal evaluation process aimed at reflecting at regular intervals on the tasks and functioning of its various units, in order to gain broader perspectives beyond day-to-day operations. To carry out these evaluations, the Foundation Board mandates the Scientific Advisory Board, potentially involving external experts. The most recent evaluation focused on the overall functioning of FORS. An expert panel engaged with FORS staff as well as external stakeholders toward the end of the year. The resulting report and recommendations will be discussed during the Foundation Board meetings in 2026.

As part of its new branding strategy, FORS released a new logo and the tagline “Data and services for the social sciences” in autumn 2025 and implemented the new visual identity across all communication channels. A key element of this identity is the clearer visibility of FORS’s role across its various projects and products. The new logo will therefore be used alongside existing project logos and visual identities in the future (see [Chapter 8.3.2 Rebranding Strategy](#)).

### Organisational Chart



## 10. FORS in figures

### Performance indicators

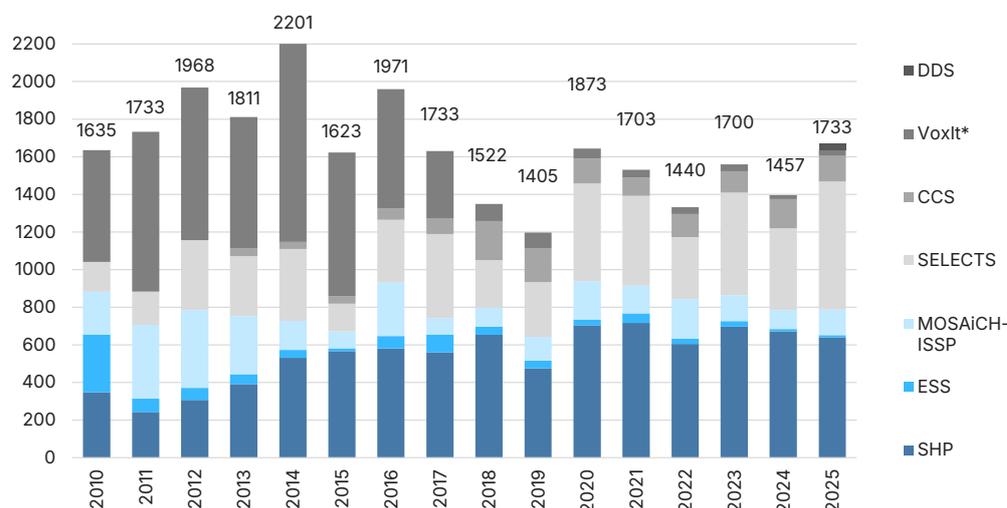
FORS maintains a set of indicators that allow us to assess accomplishments and progress on different fronts. Below are various results for 2025.

#### Number of events and participants

FORS staff organised or co-organised 61 scientific or training events in 2025 with around 1 354 participants. Note that many events did not require a registration, and therefore the number of participants is estimated.

#### Number of datasets produced by FORS surveys that were distributed to researchers

A total of 1 733 FORS-produced datasets were distributed by FORS to researchers in 2025.

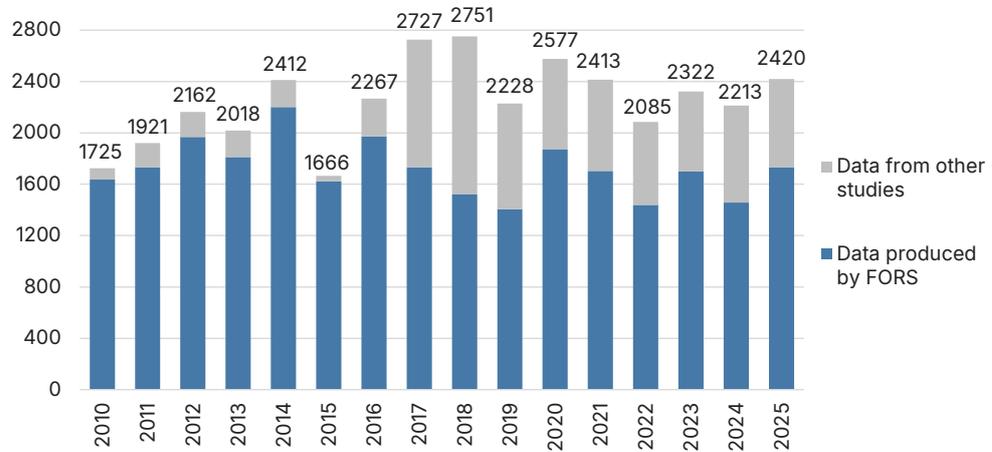


\* The reason for the decline in downloads of the Voxit dataset is probably the better availability of the individual Vox datasets on FORSbase.

In addition to the distribution by FORS, the Swiss parts of the studies ESS and ISSP data can also be downloaded from the international websites of these projects. The data for the Survey of Health, Aging and Retirement in Europe (SHARE), conducted by FORS, are only available in this way.

## Number of datasets from the FORS data service distributed to or downloaded by researchers

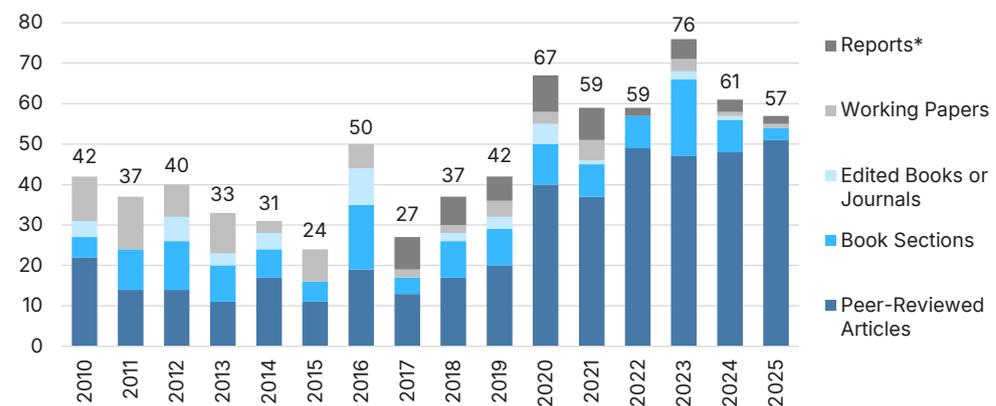
2 420 datasets in the social sciences were downloaded from SWISSUbase in 2025.



## Number of new research project descriptions in the research project catalogue

The research project catalogue comprised around 12 400 descriptions in the social sciences, with 167 newly published entries by the end of 2025.

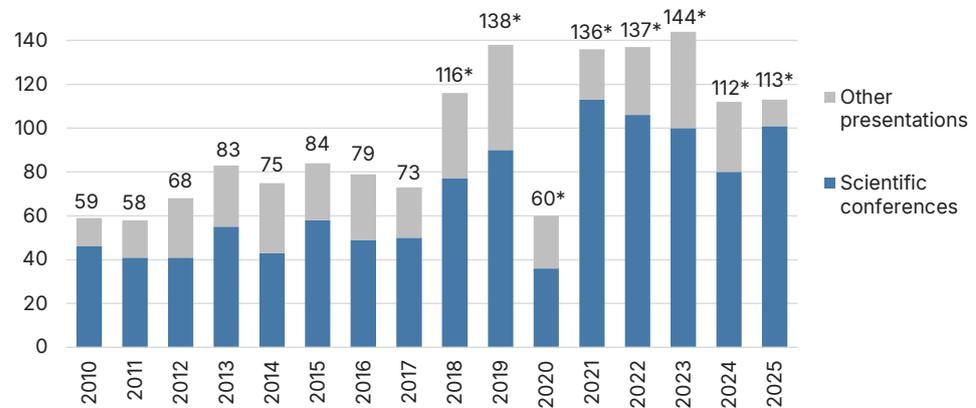
## Publications by FORS staff



\* Until 2016, the reports were included in the category "Working papers".

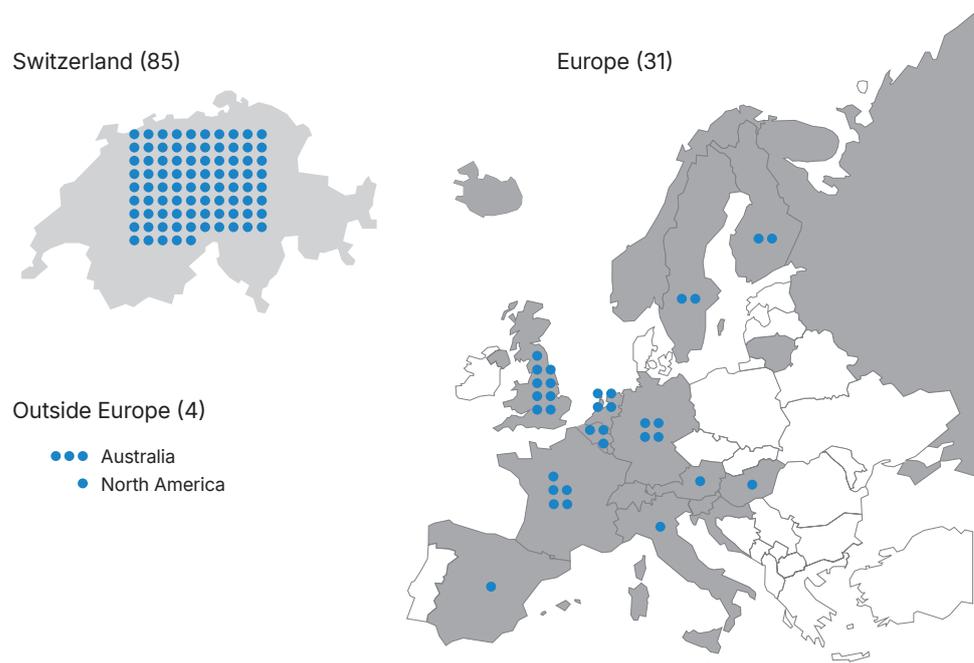
## Presentations by FORS staff at conferences and scholarly meetings

There were 113 presentations of FORS staff and associated researchers at conferences and scholarly meetings in 2025, compared to 144 in 2024. 101 of the presentations were scientific in nature, while 12 were public.



\* From 2018 not only the collaborators, but also the associated researchers were asked to hand in their presentations.

## Number of national and international collaborative research projects

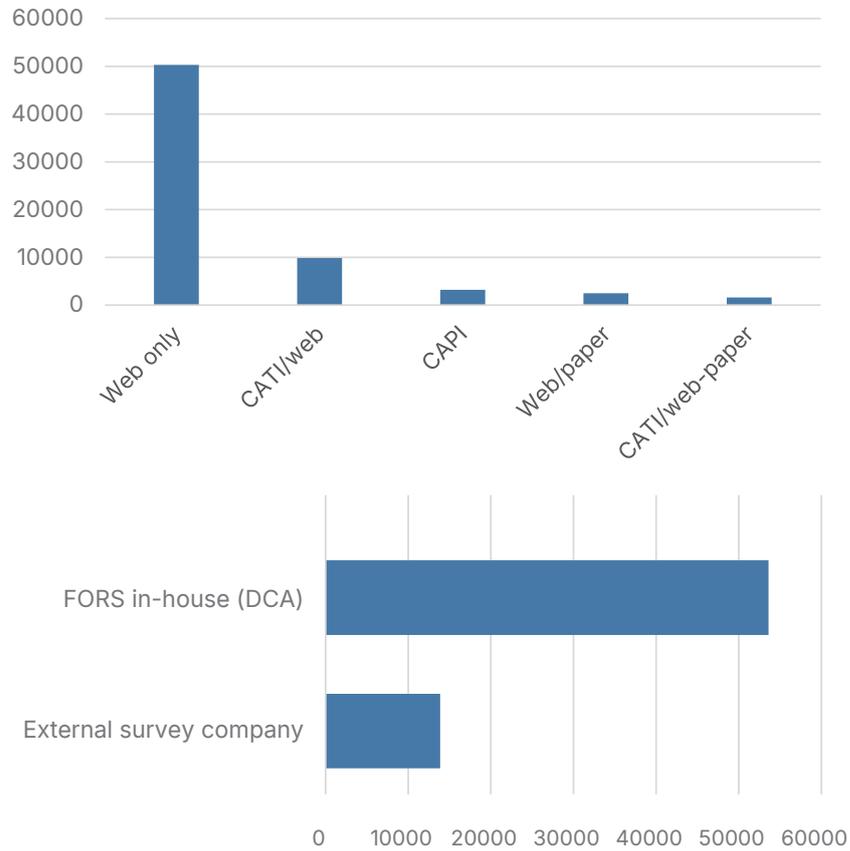


Developing and maintaining linkages and synergies between FORS staff and the outside research community is a key activity for FORS. This indicator addresses collaborative links with researchers in Switzerland and abroad. For detailed information see [Chapter 8.3.4 Collaborative research projects](#).

### Overview of completed interviews

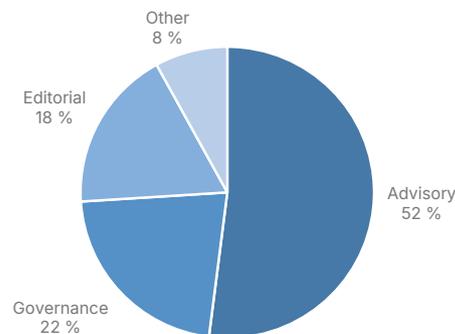
In 2025, FORS carried out a total of 67 470 interviews across 19 studies. Five studies (19 155 interviews) were FORS-managed studies, while 14 studies (48 315 interviews) were external and funded through third party funds.

### Interview modes and agents

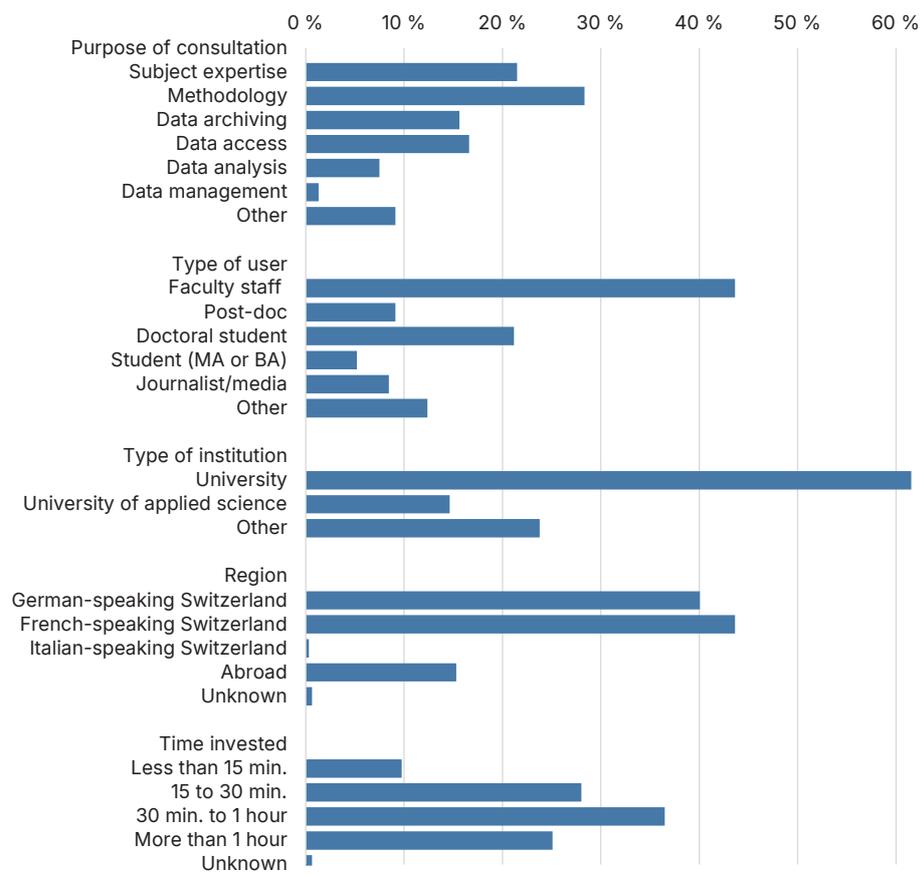


### Board Memberships

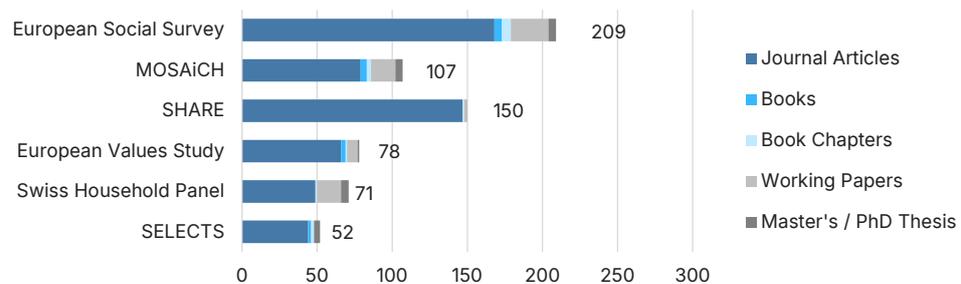
As of 2025, FORS participates in 50 scientific and governance boards contributing to the advancement of SSH disciplines.



## Characteristics of consultations by FORS collaborators



## Number of 2025 publications based on data produced by FORS



In 2025, there were at least 667 publications worldwide that used the Swiss data from surveys produced by FORS, including 209 for the ESS, 150 for SHARE, and 107 for MOSAiCH. Most of the publications (83%) were peer reviewed articles in academic journals. Six percent of the publications were methodological in nature.

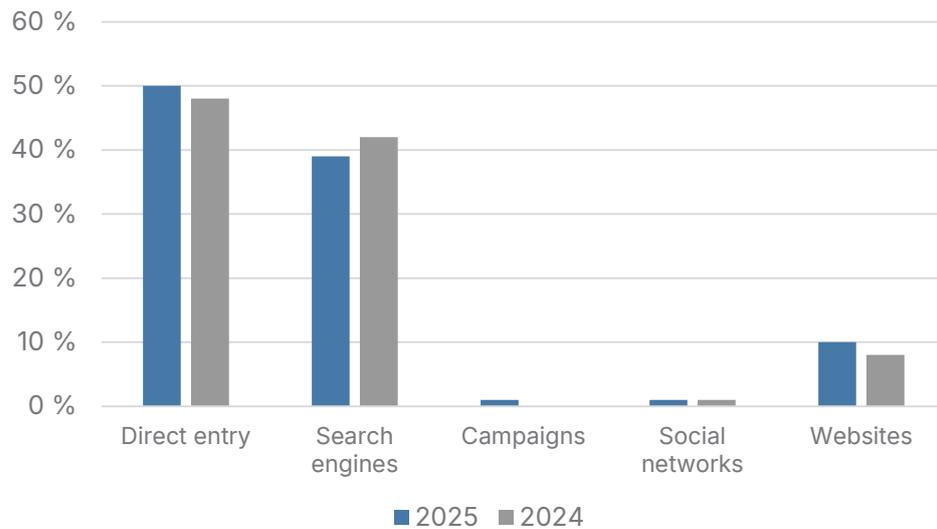
## Website

### Website page views

In 2025, the FORS website recorded a total of 141 753 page views, compared to 145 572 page views in 2024.



### Website traffic sources

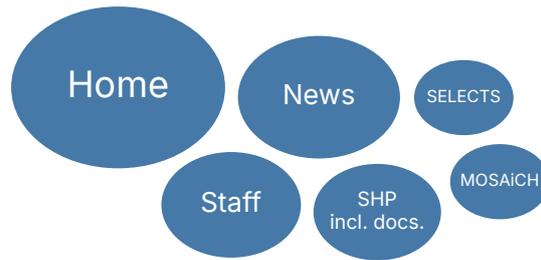


### Visits by continent



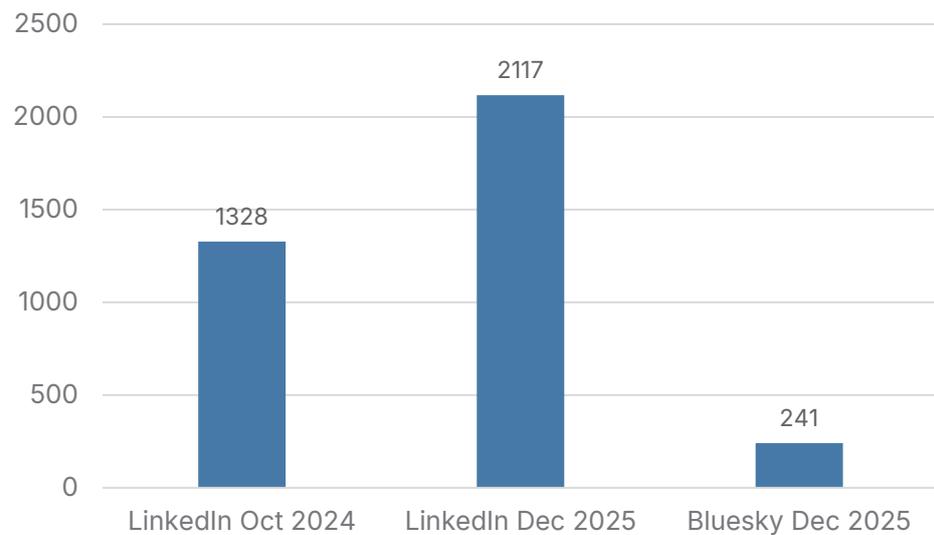
The majority of visits in Europe in 2025 originated from Switzerland, followed by France, the United States, China, and Germany. In 2024, most visits came from Switzerland, France, Germany, the United States, and the United Kingdom.

## Most Visited Page Categories



## SoMe

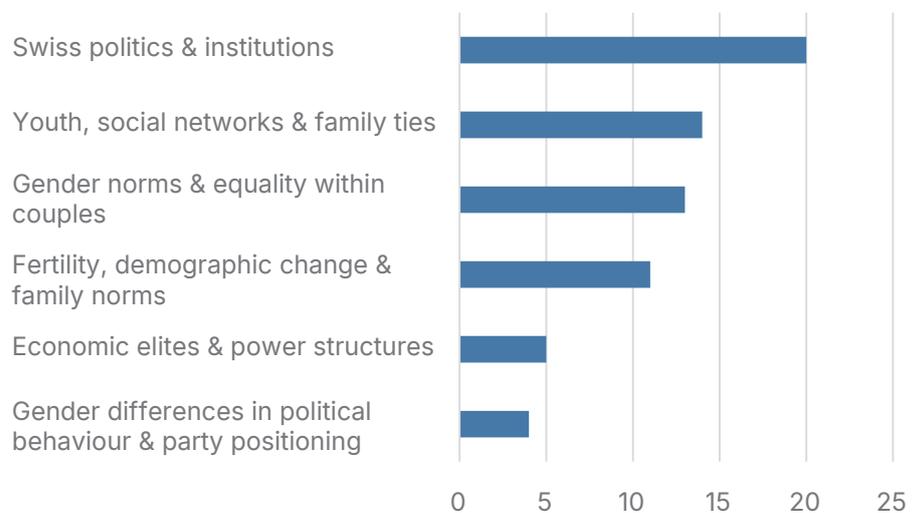
### Growth of FORS Social Media Followers



LinkedIn followers increased by 59,4% (+789) from October 2024 to December 2025.

## News media

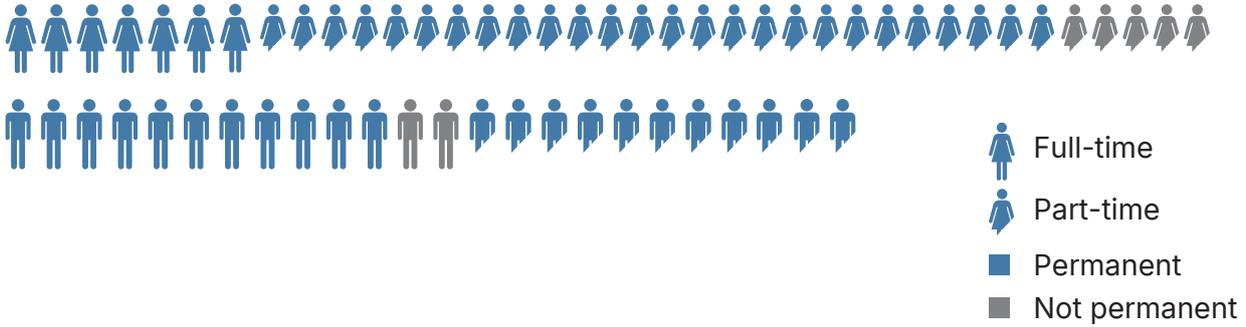
### Media Coverage by Theme



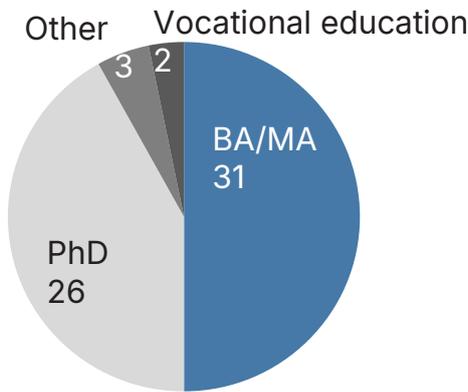
# Staff

## Status of employment

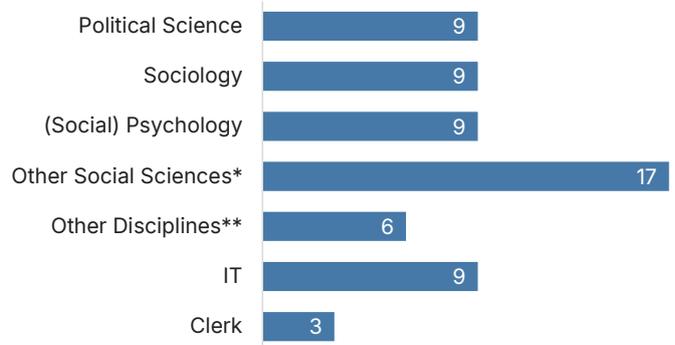
62 employees, 48.75 full-time equivalents



## Degree of education



## Disciplines



\* Social sciences, ethnology, behavioral science, communication, demography, economics, education, human geography

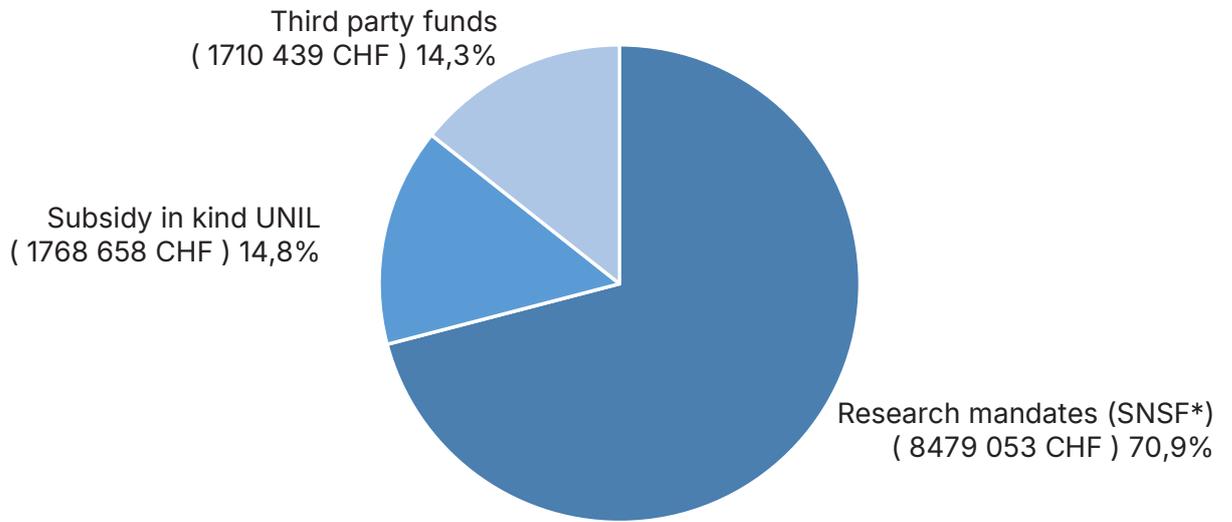
\*\* History, humanities, linguistics, mathematics, statistics, translation

## Nationalities and mother languages

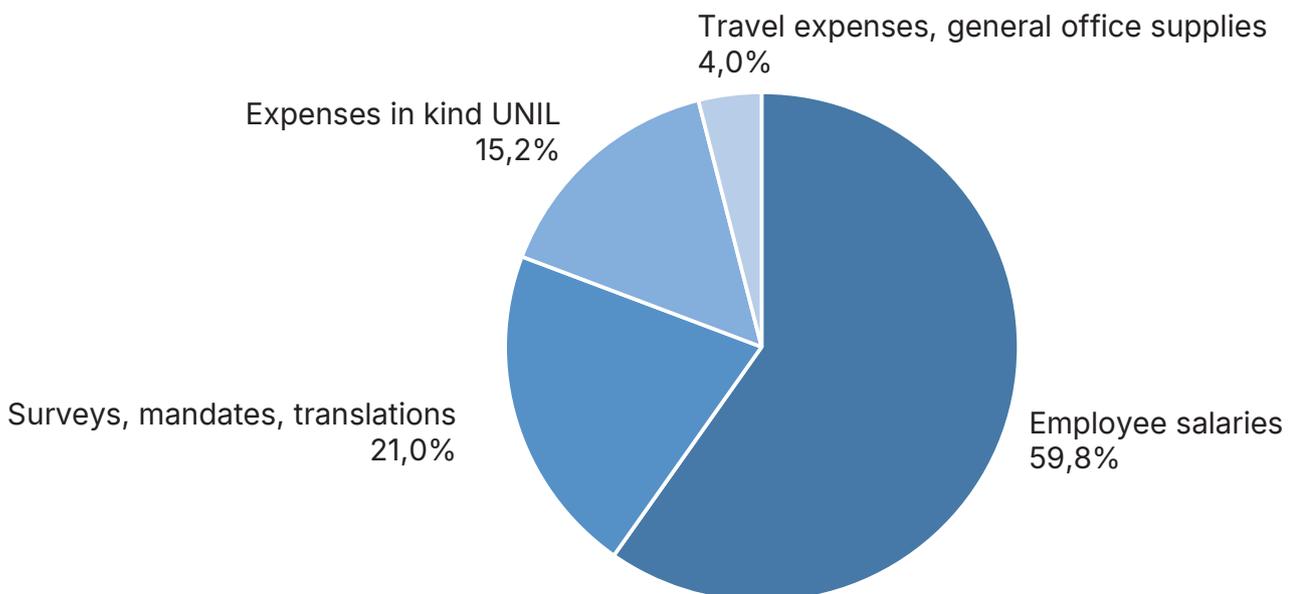
- 48 Swiss
- 5 German
- 4 French
- 2 Finnish
- 2 Spanish
- 1 USA
- 1 Australian
- 1 British
- 1 Dutch
- 1 Hungarian
- 1 Italian
- 1 Polish
- 1 Portuguese
- 1 Romanian
- 1 Serb



## Income



## Expenses



## 11. List of Abbreviations

CCS	Comparative Candidate Survey
CESSDA	Consortium of European Social Science Data Archives
CNEF	Cross-National Equivalent File
CNES	Consortium of National Election Studies
DAS	Data Archive Services
DaSCH	Data and Service Center for the Humanities
DCA	Data Collection and Analysis
DMAS	Data Management and Archiving Services (previously DARISS)
DMS	Data Management Services
DReMSS	FORS-UNIL researchprogramme: Développement de la recherche et des méthodes en sciences sociales
DSUs	Data Service Units
EQB	European Question Bank, a centralised repository of survey questions
ERIC	European Research Infrastructure Consortium
ESFRI	European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures
ESS	European Social Survey
EVS	European Values Study
FAIR	Findability, Accessibility, Interoperability, and Reuse of digital assets.
GESIS	Leibniz-Institut für Sozialwissenschaften
ISSP	International Social Survey Programme
LiRI	Linguistic Research Infrastructure, University of Zurich
LIVES	Swiss Centre of Expertise in Lifecourse Research LIVES
MEDem	Monitoring Electoral Democracies (European Research Infrastructure)
MOSAiCH	Measurement and Observation of Social Attitudes in Switzerland
SELECTS	Swiss Electoral Studies
SFSO	Swiss Federal Statistical Office
SHARE	Survey on Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe
SHP	Swiss Household Panel
SMT	Survey Management Tool
SNSF	Swiss National Science Foundation
SSHOC-CH	Social Science and Humanities Open Cloud Switzerland
SWISSUbase	National cross-disciplinary data repository
SWITCH	Swiss Foundation managing digital services
UNIL	University of Lausanne (Host University)

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