Codebook

Immigrant-origin candidates in Switzerland Dataset

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Please cite as: Nadler, Anna-Lena. (2021). *Immigrant-origin candidates in Switzerland Dataset.*

1. Overview

This is an original longitudinal dataset providing information about the presence of immigrant-origin candidates on electoral voting lists in Switzerland. The dataset covers ballot lists of the seven main political parties encompassing municipal parliamentary elections across 17 Swiss municipalities between 1996 and 2018. Depending on data availability, the last three to six communal elections have been included. The dataset contains 1'731 immigrant-origin and 13'752 native candidates on 573 voting lists.

2. Operationalization

Variable	Operationalisation	Variable name
Municipality	Coded as: Basel, Bellinzona, Bern, Bulle, Fribourg, Genève, La-Chaux-de-Fonds, Lausanne, Lugano, Luzern, Neuchâtel, Renens, St.Gallen, Thun, Vernier, Winterthur, Zürich	Municipality
Year	Canton of residence (each wave)	Year
Party	Coded as: (1) BDP, (2) CVP, (3) FDP, (4) GLP, (5) Grüne, (6) SP, (7) SVP	Party
Alphabetic list order	Coded as: (0) non-alphabetic listing of candidates on voting list, (1) alphabetic order of listing candidates on voting list	Alphabetic
Immigrant-origin candidates	Number of candidates running for office on a given voting list coded as non-Swiss-origin based on the Historic Register of Surnames	Immigrant_candidate
Total number of candidates	Total number of candidates running for office on a given voting list	Total_candidates
Immigrant candidates of Western origin	Number of immigrant-origin candidates coded as Western origin based on *Forebears* and *Worldnames* (e.g. Western Europe, Nordic, English)	Western

Immigrant candidates of Southern European origin	Number of immigrant-origin candidates coded as Southern European origin based on *Forebears* and *Worldnames* (e.g. Italian, Greek)	Southern_Europe
Immigrant candidates of Hispanic origin	Number of immigrant-origin candidates coded as Hispanic origin based on *Forebears* and *Worldnames*	Hispanic
Immigrant candidates of Eastern European origin	Number of immigrant-origin candidates coded as Eastern European origin based on *Forebears* and *Worldnames* (e.g. Polish, Czech Republic)	Eastern_Europe
Immigrant candidates of Slavic origin	Number of immigrant-origin candidates coded as Slavic origin based on *Forebears* and *Worldnames* (e.g. former Yugoslavia)	Slavic
Immigrant candidates of Arab origin	Number of immigrant-origin candidates coded as Arab and Turkish origin based on *Forebears* and *Worldnames*	Arab
Immigrant candidates of other origin	Number of immigrant-origin candidates coded as other, non-European origin based on *Forebears* and *Worldnames* (e.g. Indian, Eastern and Central Asian, non-Arab African)	Other
Highest list position immigrant	Highest list position held by an immigrant-origin candidate on a given voting list	Highest_Immigrant
Immigrant-origin candidates in first half of list	Immigrant-origin candidates placed in the first half of the voting list	Firsthalf_Immigrant
Average list position immigrants	Mean position of immigrant-origin candidates on a given voting list	Mean_position_Immigrant
Average list position natives	Mean position of native candidates on a given voting list	Mean_position_Native
Average list position Western-origin candidates	Mean position of immigrant-origin candidates that are coded as being of Western origin on a given voting list	Mean_position_Western
Average list position non-Western-origin candidates	Mean position of immigrant-origin candidates that are coded as being of non-Western origin on a given voting list	Mean_position_NonWestern

3. Note on the identification strategy of immigrant origin

To distinguish between immigrant-origin and native candidates the dataset makes use of an identification strategy established in existent work (Portmann & Stojanović, 2018). The coding methodology consists in matching data from the Historic Register of Swiss Surnames with the names of the candidates. The Historic Register contains all family names holding Swiss citizenship in at least one Swiss municipality up until 1962. Candidates were coded as immigrant-origin if their family name was absent on the register or the first record appears after 1940. Such method was applied by other scholars in similar studies despite certain drawbacks. For instance, female candidates often adopt the name of their husband upon marriage complicating the identification of origin. Moreover, given cultural and linguistic proximity, immigrant-origin candidates from neighboring countries often hold last names that are also inherent to Switzerland, therefore concealing immigrant background. This implies a potential bias of false negative coding, meaning that some candidates might be coded as Swiss given their non-immigrant sounding name despite them being of immigrant-origin. Nevertheless, this approach by name is appropriate. Since voters in Switzerland typically have very limited information regarding political candidates (first and last name, date of birth, profession, incumbency), a candidate's name most likely provides an important heuristic shortcut conveying information about their immigration background. Indeed, a consecutive study confirms that 85% of the immigrant-origin candidates identified with this strategy self-indicated to have an immigration background (Portmann & Stojanović, 2021). This strategy to identify immigrant-origin candidates doesn't allow differentiating the extent of a candidate's immigration experience, i.e. the definition of immigrant-origin candidates comprises of immigrants of first or second (and potentially more) generation. Note that in some cantons, notably Fribourg, Neuchâtel, Vaud, and Jura (since 2014), non-citizens dispose of passive municipal voting rights. This implies that immigrant-origin candidates in these municipalities can but do not have to hold Swiss citizenship. In all other cases, immigrant-origin candidates are individuals of immigrant-origin with Swiss nationality.

Using the name-coded party lists, the dataset is then constructed using voting list per party per year per municipality as unit of analysis. The dataset contains 1'731 immigrant-origin and 13'752 native candidates on 573 voting lists.

4. Note on coding of region of origin

Immigrant-origin candidates identified through the above-mentioned methodology are further coded into region of origin using the online database "forebears" and cross-checking ambiguous cases on "worldnames", again relying on the identification strategy by Portmann and Stojanovic (2018). The codes distinguish between the following regions of origin: Western European/Nordic/English, Southern European (e.g. Italian, Greek), Hispanic, Eastern European, Slavic (i.e., Slavic names from former Yugoslavia) and Albanian, Arabic and Turkish, and other non-European (Indian, Eastern Asian, Central Asian, and non-Arab African).