

**Zeitschrift:** The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK  
**Herausgeber:** Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom  
**Band:** - (1983)  
**Heft:** 1808

**Artikel:** Swiss elections  
**Autor:** Farmer, Colin  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-690276>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 18.04.2026

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**



## Swiss elections

– one in two did not vote

GENERAL elections have been held in Switzerland. The rest of the world hardly noticed. And with more than half the country not turning out to vote, most Swiss themselves apparently did not care.

But the end of October still saw thousands of solid citizens streaming to the ballot box to elect a new parliament for a four-year term.

The result – a modest swing to the conservative right and marginal gains by anti-foreigner and environmentalist groups.

But as predicted in pre-vote analyses, the balloting brought no significant change to the



overall political pattern which has symbolised Switzerland's stability for almost a quarter of a century.

Since 1959 the four main parties have been allies in a coalition cabinet, a collegiate body without a prime minister. With the Swiss continuing to enjoy high living standards, low inflation and almost no unemployment, spectacular surprises were not expected and

election campaigning was quiet.

As London's *Financial Times* observed: "The surprising feature of Swiss politics is that there are no surprises". The government partners remain the Radicals, the Christian Democrats and the Peoples Party, with the Social Democrats playing an "opposition" role within this coalition quartet.

In the 200-member House of Representatives, these parties now hold 166 seats – an overall loss of three since the 1979 elections. The Radicals (representing the Swiss "establishment") gained three seats to emerge as the strongest single party with 54 representatives – the party's best showing since 1928.

The Social Democrats, split by ideological feuding, lost four seats and now have 47. The Christian Democrats, who draw most of their support from the Roman Catholic electorate, lost two seats and now have 42. The Peoples Party, supported by many of the farming fraternity, retained its 23 seats.

Of the smaller parties, the extreme right wing National Campaign and its allies – which seek stricter immigration controls – improved their representation from three to five. And the "Greens" environmental movement

attracted increased support to step up their seats from one to three.

A slight swing from the Social Democrats to the Radicals also marked voting for the 46-seat Senate.

The elections were contested by fewer than 37 parties and groups. Many were small



regional groups, and several had no real political platform; one called itself 'Pleasure, Peace, and Plum Cake'.

Of the total 246 members of the new parliament in male-dominated Switzerland, 25 are women – the same number as before. But five women were among the 11 candidates polling the highest votes.

Voter turnout was only 48.9 per cent – a slight increase on 1979, when the figure slumped to its lowest level in Swiss political history. The lowest turnout this time was the 24 per cent recorded in Appenzell Innerrhoden; the highest (nearly 74 per cent) was recorded in Schaffhausen – the only canton in Switzerland where abstainers are fined.