

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The LIVES-FORS cohort survey: A longitudinal diversified sample of young adults who have grown up in Switzerland

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The LIVES-FORS Cohort Study (LCS) is a longitudinal annual survey following a cohort of young adults born between 1988 and 1997 who grew up in Switzerland (initial N = 1,691). The LCS was launched in 2013 and complements the Swiss Household Panel (SHP) by over-representing the second generation of immigrants ('secondos'). The principal aim of the study is to observe the transition into adulthood with a focus on the life course and on vulnerability processes, comparing participants whose parents arrived in Switzerland as adults to participants whose parents have grown up in Switzerland. The LCS provides rich data both on the factual (such as education, employment and financial situation) and on the self-judgement (well-being, personality and health, for example) dimensions of respondents' lives. The first wave of the LCS used a life-history calendar to collect information on each respondent's past life trajectory. In this first wave, several life trajectories were investigated (residence, cohabitation, couple's relationship, family, activities and health). This paper provides an overview of the LCS with a specific focus on the first four waves (the last data were released in December 2017).

Key words longitudinal survey • retrospective data • young adults • life-history calendar • second generation of immigrants • Switzerland

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Introduction

Switzerland is a very interesting case with respect to immigrant populations. It is one of the wealthiest countries in Europe and has one of the largest populations with a migratory background. In 2013, approximately 24% of the resident population were foreign, due to the combined effects of immigration and restrictive citizenship policies. Immigration is mainly oriented by the needs of an expanding economy, which has continuously hired new cohorts of foreign workers, as well as of many international organisations that were established in Switzerland. At the same time, as in other European countries, Switzerland has witnessed a resurgence and growth of xenophobic discourses and political parties in the public sphere. It is thus important to understand these societal processes and examine their impact on the social opportunities, integration and life trajectories of the ‘second generation’, a generic term used to designate children of migrants, also popularly called ‘secondos’ in Switzerland (Bolzman et al, 2003).

We present here the LIVES-FORS Cohort Survey (LCS), which aims to describe the life paths to adulthood in Switzerland today and to compare young adults from the second generation to those whose parents have grown up in Switzerland (either born there or arriving as minors). Another important objective is to follow this cohort as long as possible to compare the life trajectories of children of migrants with those of Swiss natives. The LCS is one of the longitudinal studies collected by the National Centre of Competence in Research LIVES (www.lives-nccr.ch), which focuses on the life course and on vulnerability processes (Spini et al, 2017), in collaboration with the Swiss Centre of Expertise in the Social Sciences (FORS).

Migration flows in Switzerland have been substantial since the Second World War (Mahnig, 2005). While the economic migration of unskilled persons (essentially originating from Southern European countries) was dominant until the end of the 1970s, the socio-demographic profile of immigrants became more complex during the 1980s and 1990s, which corresponds approximately to the period during which parents of many LCS respondents settled in Switzerland. First, in addition to the traditional immigration of unskilled people, an increasing number of economic immigrants were skilled people, coming mostly from Germany and Northern European countries. Second, numerous refugees from the former Yugoslavia (especially from Kosovo) and from Turkey (Kurds) sought asylum in Switzerland. The design of the LCS aims to capture the complexity of the migration process in Switzerland. The second-generation population appears to be an interesting one with which to study the transition to adulthood (partnering and family formation, access to the labour market and social mobility) and beyond, in current times, with new waves of immigrants (notably from the former Yugoslavia and Eastern European countries). They can be compared to descendants from more long-established waves

of migration, notably from Southern European countries (Italy, Spain, Portugal) or from the native population. Moreover, the LCS was the opportunity to implement a network-sampling strategy in order to be more effective in collecting data in a specific group and to develop the Swiss Panel LIVES Calendar (Morselli et al, 2013) that was also used in the Swiss Household Panel (SHP).

The LCS has been developed in order to complement data of the SHP (Tillmann et al, 2016) in which the second-generation category was not analysable due to insufficient numbers to define this group. Indeed, as the different waves of the SHP and the LCS run in parallel, both surveys share globally the same questions and modules. The LCS focuses on one particular subgroup among Swiss residents who finished compulsory education, identified by birth years (1988–97) and place of education (Switzerland). While the survey includes a module on living conditions within households, only one household member, part of the targeted subgroup, was interviewed on his/her individual experiences and attitudes (and not all members as in the SHP). As the overarching objective of the survey is to study the dynamics of social inequality during the transition into adulthood, the survey is designed to enable comparative analyses between young adults who have grown up in the same Swiss society, but who are from different family backgrounds, in terms of both the geographic origin and social class of their parents.

Design

General design

At present, the LCS comprises a single sample selected in 2013 of 1,691 individuals interviewed during the first wave (see Table 1). The number of respondents depended on two main criteria: the funding available and a sufficient number of respondents of the second generation to make general inferences concerning this population.

There are three types of questionnaires in the SHP also used in the LCS: a household grid questionnaire to assess household composition; a household questionnaire (which can be administered to the parents of the target respondent); and an individual questionnaire for the target respondent, part of the surveyed cohort.

Table 1: Overview of the sample from wave 1 to wave 4

Year	Wave	Number of respondents (individual questionnaire)	Not secondos (%)*	Secondos (%)**	Retention rate (%)***
2013/14	1	1,691	53.4	46.6	–
2014/15	2	1,395	57.1	42.9	82.7
2015/16	3	1,187	57.7	42.3	85.1
2016/17	4	903	59.4	40.6	76.1

* Respondents with at least one parent who was born in Switzerland or who arrived in Switzerland before the age of 18.

** Respondents both of whose parents arrived in Switzerland as adults.

*** For w2, w3 and w4 the retention rate is calculated based on individual interviews of the previous wave.

Participants

The reference population is defined as individuals (1) born between 1988 and 1997 (inclusive), (2) residing in Switzerland on 1 January 2013 and (3) schooled in Switzerland prior to the age of ten. The sample has been designed as a probability sample with unequal selection probabilities, in which young adults from a minority background are over-represented, in particular descendants of guest workers from Southern, South-Western and South-Eastern Europe.

Sampling procedure

As there is no population frame available that would have allowed direct oversampling of Swiss residents on the basis of their parents' origin, the sampling objectives was reached through a combination of stratified random sampling, screening and controlled network sampling (Elcheroth and Antal, 2013). This innovative sampling approach responds at the same time to a substantive need to generate relational data enabling one to study the role of social capital and social segregation in the production of cumulative inequalities during the transition to adulthood. It was implemented in three successive steps.

Phase 1: Drawing of an initial raw sample with unequal selection probabilities

A total of 4,000 target participants corresponding to the birth year criteria were randomly selected from the Swiss national register of inhabitants by the Federal Statistical Office (FSO). In addition to current place of residency and date of birth, the Swiss national register of inhabitants compiles up-to-date administrative data on, notably, citizenship, type of residence permit for foreigners and place of birth. This allowed us to select respondents within four strata, defined by crossing origin and current residential region. Eligible individuals who are either (1) citizens from or born in one of the countries that have sent a high share of guest workers to Switzerland in the previous generation¹ (and holding either permanent residency in Switzerland or Swiss citizenship), or (2) currently living in one of the Swiss micro-regions with an overall high share of foreign-born residents, were given a higher selection probability. Individuals combining both criteria, (1) and (2) were hence attributed to the stratum with the highest selection probability and individuals fulfilling none of them to the strata with the lowest selection probability.

Phase 2: Sampling by conventional screening

Target participants selected in the previous step were contacted and screened for the schooling criteria and for their parent's place of origin. At this stage, individuals who at their tenth birthday had not yet attended school in Switzerland were excluded from the sample, while individuals with both parents arriving in Switzerland after their 18th birthdays only were oversampled. This approach resulted in a stratified sample of 890 seed respondents.

Phase 3: Network oversampling with proxy screening

All seed respondents were asked to list their regular contact network (acquaintances with whom they had at least weekly conversations over the last three months)

and to indicate for all listed contacts if their parents have come from abroad. New target respondents were then randomly drawn on the spot among all presumably eligible members of the contact network, with a computer algorithm that allocated a four times higher selection probability to individuals whose parents had presumably migrated to Switzerland. Given the much lower frequency of second-generation immigrants (in the reference population and hence among the quoted network members), this procedure resulted in a sample composition that increased the precision of measures among second-generation immigrants and of the comparison between respondents from different backgrounds. Design weights provided with the data set correct for unequal selection probabilities and render possible statistical inference at the level of the birth cohort overall as well as of the second-generation subgroup only (for more information on the sampling procedure and the weighting system, see [Antal, 2016](#)). In addition, a subset of variables has been collected by proxy for all quoted network members (not only those selected as new respondents) and allow for a more complete analyses of network compositions.

Follow-up procedure

All individuals who completed at least the grid questionnaire in the first wave were approached again. Individuals who were not reached at all during the first wave or those who did not supply any information at the time of the first wave were not included in the panel in later waves. Individuals were not approached if they refused to participate any longer, moved away from Switzerland or moved to an institution.

Fieldwork and measures to increase response

The fieldwork began with sending a letter to the participating individuals informing them of the upcoming interviews. Starting from the second wave, enclosed with this letter, participants received a newsletter containing some results of recent analyses of the LCS. To encourage survey participation, each targeted respondent received an unconditional incentive enclosed with the preliminary letter (10 CHF cash).

Cohort maintenance

To limit individuals dropping out from the panel because of unsuccessful tracing (due to moving, changed phone numbers, household separations and so on), several measures ensured that contact could be re-established with the respondents in later waves. In addition, a newsletter was enclosed with the advance letter at the start of each fieldwork phase, and respondents were asked to provide their mobile number and email address. If respondents were not willing to provide this information or did not have it, they were asked to leave the address of a proxy (such as a family member living outside the household or a close friend) who could help in case we lost track of the respondent. Third, during the fieldwork period, individuals were called on different days of the week and at different times during the day in order to minimise noncontact. Fourth, a bilingual ((Swiss) German and French) interviewer was responsible for relocating lost respondents. This interviewer tried to contact the

respondent by mobile phone or email, or through the auxiliary, and by searching through different directories and registers.

Survey mode and interview length

The LCS has been conducted annually from November to April by the survey institute MIS Trend. Interviews are conducted in (Swiss) German, French and Italian. The interview mode for the household questionnaire was computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI). Alternative modes were offered in the first wave of the survey; if no telephone number was available, respondents completed the household questionnaire by computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI). The biographical and network questionnaire in the first wave were administered with an interviewer present. Since 2014 (wave 2), in addition to the CATI, CAPI and computer-assisted web interviews (CAWI) have been offered as alternative survey modes to those who initially refused to participate. The interviews require approximately 15–20 minutes to administer the grid and the household questionnaire and approximately 35–40 minutes to complete the individual questionnaires.

Survey content

Survey content overview

Like in the SHP, the household and individual questionnaires cover a broad range of topics. They are also designed to collect both factual data, such as financial resources, social position and participation, as well as subjective data, such as satisfaction scores, values and attitudes. The questionnaire at the household level covers composition of the household; accommodation; standard of living; and the household's financial situation. The individual questionnaires cover the household and the family; health and quality of life;² social origin; education; employment; income; participation, integration and networks; politics and values; leisure and media; and some psychological scales³ (see [Tillmann et al, 2016](#) for more details). Since the second wave, the questionnaire has also included a life-events module assessing the occurrence of different events, and an occupational calendar module assessing (on a monthly basis) the respondent's employment situation in the 12 months prior to the interview.

Life-history trajectories

The first wave of the LCS implemented a life-history calendar (LHC) to collect information on the previous life trajectory ([Figure 1](#)). The LHC is a useful survey tool for collecting retrospective data on respondents' life trajectories ([Freedman et al, 1988](#)). It is typically presented as a two-way grid with the temporal dimension on one side and different life domains (family, employment, health) on the other. With this tool, respondents can report different types of events, relating them to time markers (year, age) or to other concurrent events. A relatively large body of literature has shown that when compared to conventional question lists, the LHC can improve the precision of retrospective life-course data (for example, [Belli, 1998](#); [Belli et al, 2001](#); [Van der Vaart and Glasner, 2007](#); [Morselli et al, 2016](#)). A paper-and-pencil

Figure 1: LIVES SHP Life-history calendar

self-administered LHC was used in the LCS. The design was inspired by the French Ageven tradition (Vivier, 2006) and previous experience with the use of LHCs in the Swiss context (see Morselli et al, 2016).

This LHC was presented as a 42 cm × 49 cm paper sheet folded into a 14 cm × 14 cm square. The LHC included instructions on the information to report, provided in a schematic and graphical manner at the top of the grid. Along with the calendar, respondents received a package that included examples and an FAQ section. Research conducted in the framework of the SHP has shown that this self-administered calendar can produce results of comparable quality to those produced with interviewer-administered LHC, which is the typical mode for this type of questionnaire (Morselli et al, 2018). The LHC asked for the following information from birth to the present: the residential mobility trajectory; the history of residence permits; living arrangements and co-residence; partner relationships and changes in civil status; family events such as births, adoptions and deaths of children, parents'

separations and divorces, births and deaths of siblings; jobs and career, including main and secondary activities, unemployment and inactive spells, social benefits; and health trajectories.

Sample description

Defining the second generation as a category in a quantitative survey is a tricky task (Lessard-Phillips et al, 2017). The LCS includes descendants of parents who have grown up in Switzerland as well as descendants of parents who migrated to Switzerland. All of them have this in common: they grew up in Switzerland. As only residents who were already living in Switzerland at their tenth birthday were eligible, they presumably did the bulk of their compulsory education in Switzerland. Within this cohort, individuals whose two parents had migrated to Switzerland as adults were systematically over-selected during the sampling phases 2 and 3 already described. Moreover, this last criterion defines belonging to the 'secondos' category in the LCS (Table 1). As shown in Table 1, four waves of the LCS were conducted between 2013 (N = 1,691) and 2017 (N = 903). In the first wave 46.6% of participants were secondos, and in the fourth wave the proportion slightly decreased to 40.6%. The initial response rate (based on eligible persons) is 30.6%, which is rather low, but quite common in Swiss surveys on similar age groups. The subsequent retention rate (based on the previous wave's participants) is variable and ranges from 76.1% in wave 4 to 82.7% in wave 2. A fifth wave in 2017/18 will complement the data already available.

The total number of participants in the study was 1,961. Among the 1,691 initial respondents, 22% (432) were definitively lost after the first wave but 136 individuals started to participate after wave 1. Respondents who completed only the grid in the previous waves were contacted again in the next wave; thus, there are some people who were integrated in the panel after the first wave and participated only in one wave (99), two waves (131) or three waves (185). There are also individuals who responded to the grid and household questionnaires in the first wave of the study but did not complete the life-history calendar. A total of 35.4% of individuals took part to all four waves (694).

Table 2 describes the characteristics of the respondents according to the wave and shows that there is no systematic bias related to the cohort of participants. As for participant's nationality, in wave 1, 59.1% were Swiss, and 40.9% had other nationalities. In wave 4 the percentage of Swiss citizens grows slightly (66.7%) in comparison to individuals with others nationalities. At the beginning of the study, the nationalities most represented in the sample came from the Eastern/South-Eastern and South-Western European regions. Of these two regions, participants originating from Eastern/South-Western Europe decreased in a more pronounced manner compared to the others region.

Descendants of parents from South-Western and Eastern/South-Eastern Europe, from where the bulk of guest workers in Switzerland originate, have been systematically oversampled (Table 3). Children of migrants from Eastern/South-Eastern Europe represent almost one third of the interviewees, and 34% of the second-generation's respondents in wave 1, while 20.7% of mothers and 22.6% of fathers of the interviewees in wave 1 came from South-Western Europe. While the

Table 2: Descriptive characteristics of respondents according to the wave(s) in which they participated

	Wave 1		Wave 2		Wave 3		Wave 4	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Birth cohort								
1988–90	247	14.7	156	13.9	137	13.5	107	13.8
1991–92	299	17.8	187	16.6	175	17.2	144	18.6
1993–94	365	21.7	247	22	231	22.8	174	22.4
1995–96	410	24.4	277	24.6	240	23.6	180	23.2
1997–99	359	21.4	257	22.9	232	22.9	171	22
Total	1,680	100	1,124	100	1,015	100	776	100
Sex								
Male	815	48.3	669	48	561	47.3	435	48.1
Female	873	51.7	726	52	626	52.7	469	51.9
Total	1,688	100	1,395	100	1,187	100	904	100
First nationality*								
Switzerland	1,000	59.1	890	63.8	766	64.5	603	66.7
Southern and South-Western Europe	341	20.2	285	20.4	252	21.2	192	21.2
Eastern and South-Eastern Europe	294	17.4	176	12.6	129	10.9	78	8.6
Central and Northern Europe	26	1.5	20	1.4	18	1.5	12	1.3
Other	27	1.7	24	1.7	22	1.8	19	2.1
Total	1,688	100	1,395	100	1,187	100	780	100

**Southern and South-Western Europe:* Spain and territories, Portugal, Italy; *Eastern and South-Eastern Europe:* Albania, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Turkey; *Central and Northern Europe:* Germany, Belgium, France and territories, the UK; *Other:* Bolivia, Brazil, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Honduras, Colombia, Mexico, Paraguay, Democratic Republic of Congo (Zaire), Nigeria, Togo, Central African Republic, Morocco, Eritrea, Algeria, Iraq, Sri Lanka, Japan, Canada and the US and territories.

proportion of children of Swiss parents increase with the progress of the study, those with Eastern/South-Eastern European parents become scarce.

Data access

LCS data are available free of charge. Users must sign a contract (available at the SHP website) and announce the research topics for which they intend to use the data. Since late 2017, four waves of data are available to users (<https://forscenter.ch/projects/swiss-household-panel/data/>).

Conclusions

The LIVES Cohort Survey is a unique longitudinal survey following young adults born between 1988 and 1997 who grew up in Switzerland. It collects detailed data on various domains since 2013 in parallel to the SHP by over-representing the second generation of immigrants. Moreover, the LCS has also innovated by using a controlled network-sampling strategy. This sampling procedure proved effective in producing

Table 3: Mother (m) and father (f) place of birth by wave(s) (%)

	W1		W2		W3		W4	
	m	f	m	f	M	F	M	f
Switzerland	29.5	30.3	34.5	35.2	35.2	36.5	38.8	39.5
Eastern and South-Eastern Europe	33.8	33.8	27	26.8	25.3	25.3	21.7	21.9
South-Western Europe	20.7	22.6	21.6	23.9	21.5	24.5	21.4	24.7
Central and Northern Europe	5.2	4.6	5.5	5	5.8	4.5	6.4	4.7
North and Latin America	4	2.1	4.3	2.2	4.6	2	4.5	2
Africa	3.6	3.8	4.1	4.2	4.2	4.3	4.3	4.5
Asia	3.1	2.8	3.1	2.7	3.4	3	2.6	2.7
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

South-Western Europe: Spain and territories, Portugal, Italy; *Eastern and South-Eastern Europe:* Albania, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Turkey, Montenegro, Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Ukraine, Russia, Poland; *Central and Northern Europe:* Germany, Belgium, France and territories, the UK, Denmark and territories, Ireland, Netherlands and territories, Norway and territories, Austria, Sweden; *North and Latin America:* Canada, the US and territories; Bolivia, Brazil, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Honduras, Colombia, Mexico, Paraguay, El Salvador, Jamaica, Cuba, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Venezuela, Argentina, Chile; *Africa:* Democratic Republic of Congo (Zaire), Nigeria, Togo, Central African Republic, Ivory Coast, Morocco, Eritrea, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Ethiopia, Angola, Guinea, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Congo (Brazzaville), Libya; *Asia:* Bangladesh, Turkmenistan, Iraq, Sri Lanka, Mongolia, Philippines, Korea (South) (Republic of Korea), Thailand, Vietnam, Japan, Cambodia, Laos, Lebanon, Taiwan, China, India, Indonesia, Iran.

a sample difficult to reach in a standard survey, and a wealth of relational data in addition to individual survey responses. Finally, the life-history calendar collected in wave 1 provided rich information on the past life trajectories in various spheres of all respondents up to the time of wave 1. For example, [Rossignon et al, \(2018\)](#) used the richness of the life-history calendar in order to test, using a combination of sequence and survival analyses, the factors explaining the departure from the parental home. Second-generation immigrants from Eastern or South-Western countries are less likely to leave home than Swiss natives. Conversely, having a Northern-Western European or a North-American background increases the risk of leaving home. The analyses also showed that the succession of different events (divorce, being the older sibling and so on) explained the higher probability to leave parental home.⁴

Outside the richness of information provided by the questionnaires the LCS has various advantages over other comparable surveys. The first is that it is an oversample of the third sample of the Swiss Household Panel, which means that with appropriate weights the LCS and the SHP can be matched and analysed together, notably for analyses on the transition to adulthood. Another advantage is that the data is available to the international research community at the same time as it is available for the NCCR LIVES research community. This means that the access is total and direct.

However, as all surveys, the LCS has also some limits. First, it is particular to Switzerland, which means that comparisons and generalisations are limited. In the future, possibilities of comparing LCS with other longitudinal studies like the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study [CILS] ([Portes and Rumbaut, 2005](#)) in the US or similar European longitudinal surveys in Spain ([ILSEG, 2016](#)), Germany, England, Netherlands and Sweden ([CILS4EU, 2016](#)) should be developed. Second, the whole household was not interviewed here, which somewhat limits the comparisons with the SHP. Third, the number of respondents is limited, which strongly restricts the possibility of making comparisons among secondos from all origins. Finally, the sample

at baseline was still young, which means that the life calendars do not document long life trajectories and even the transition to adulthood, taking into account classical markers like first job or marriage, was not completed for many respondents, which means that there is a need to complement this life-course information in future waves.

In sum, the LCS provides a rich longitudinal data set on second-generation young adults and on their life trajectories and their attitudes on a large number of topics. Moreover, it is easily accessible and free of charge. We hope that the research community will be encouraged to use it for future analyses and publications.

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Notes

- ¹ Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Italy, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Portugal, Spain, Serbia or Turkey.
- ² Questions are asked regarding general illness and health problems, doctor and hospital visits, long-term disabilities, threats or attacks endured, self-perceived state of health, estimated evolution of the state of health, satisfaction with health and with life in general, feelings of safety, tobacco consumption and physical activities.
- ³ Including scales or items on emotions, identity, anomie, self-perception, discrimination or perceived stress.
- ⁴ Publications concerning the LCS published by LIVES are fully available on LIVES' website or on request to the first author.

Conflict of interest statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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