DigiVox – Project Completion

DSI Infrastructures & Labs

Final report / 08-2026

Title of the DSI Infrastructure/Lab:	DigiVox - The Swiss Panel Survey on Digitalization
Official starting date:	01.10.2021
End date of agreement:	30.06.2026

Project overview / Lay summary (for the DSI Website

Digital transformation is profoundly reshaping politics, the media landscape, and democratic processes in Switzerland: media consumption has shifted online, political discourse is increasingly shaped by digital campaigns, and public attitudes toward data privacy continue to evolve, as for example in the 2021 eID referendum and, more recently, in public debate around generative AI tools such as ChatGPT. Despite the growing importance of these issues, Switzerland has lacked the scientific infrastructure to track systematically how digitalization shapes public opinion and behavior. Existing studies tend to focus on narrow subgroups, specific issues, or political elites, are usually cross-sectional, often funded by private interests, or lack key attitudinal measures. Prior to DigiVox there existed no nationally representative, longitudinal panel data on digitalization. As a result, both policymakers and researchers have had little systematic evidence on how the Swiss population adopts and thinks about digitalization over time.

DigiVox, the Swiss Panel Survey on Digitalization, was built to close this gap. It is a nationally representative, interdisciplinary longitudinal panel that was fielded annually in German, French, Italian, and English. Its four waves, collected between 2022 and 2025 in both online and paper format, covered a broad set of topics that include digital skills, data privacy attitudes, and use and perceptions of AI tools, combined with rich sociodemographic, party-preference, and political-behavior measures. Fielded in one of the world's most digitized and democratic countries, DigiVox gives researchers a unique longitudinal dataset for studying digitalization-related attitudes within a multiparty political context. DigiVox was led by Abraham Bernstein, Karsten Donnay, Eszter Hargittai, and Lucas Leemann, with infrastructure funding from DIZH/DSI, and the University of Zurich's Technologieplattform (TPF) fund. Further information on the project is available at www.digivox.uzh.ch.

Project achievements / Milestones

The panel includes data from over 7,300 respondents in Wave 1 (Sep. 2022), with around 4,000 in Wave 2 (Oct. 2023), over 2,500 in Wave 3 (Sep. 2024), and more than 1,700 responding in Wave 4 (Sep. 2025). Across the different waves the survey collected longitudinal data on a core battery of questions around the impact of digitalization and usage and attitudes towards AI, as well as a broad range of sociodemographic, party-preference and political-behavior dimensions. In addition, the survey covered a range of digitalization-related

topics, including digital skills, social media usage, internet access, preferences for and usage of digital government services, cyber security, and challenges with tech and digital services.
The project achieved the core milestones set out in the original infrastructure application: a national longitudinal survey panel across four waves. The panel generated substantive research output, including papers on digital inequality in the Swiss population and in AI skills, and methodological work on survey invitation mode and sample bias corrections, alongside a paper introducing the panel itself to the scientific community. One planned goal was only partly achieved: establishing DigiVox as a cost-efficient, open survey infrastructure for the broader UZH research community by integrating externally submitted item batteries. This succeeded on a limited scale.

A pilot set of items around attitudes towards digital health services from colleagues in medicine at UZH were successfully included in Wave 2. To test this model more systematically, an open call for participation was run ahead of Wave 3, including a public information event through DSI. However, after a thorough vetting process, no additional external batteries from that call were ultimately included: several proposals had insufficient thematic overlap with DigiVox's core digitalization focus, one request was already covered by existing items, and one battery (from a colleague at IKMZ) had to be withdrawn because the required respondent-tracking design for their research question could not be achieved in the DigiVox setup.

This pilot showed that establishing a standardized, reliable process for external researchers to submit and integrate survey items was much more difficult than originally anticipated. One key factor was timing: submission and editing workflow should have been developed and tested as early as Wave 2 to allow enough time for refinement. Successfully integrating externally contributed content would likely require the financial security of about three fully funded waves, which exceeded the remaining project duration. As a result, and given our limited remaining project funds, no further open call was launched for the last wave in 2025.

The data collected as part of DigiVox is unique in its longitudinal coverage and was collected at a very salient time that spans the broad introduction of generative AI tools and the accelerated adoption of digital tools. It also covers a period of lively political debates and decisions around the introduction of a Swiss eID. The first wave was fielded after the first (rejected) referendum in 2021 and the last wave fielded around the second (successful) referendum in 2025. The project has already supported multiple papers on digital inequality, AI usage and attitudes, a methodological paper, and one introducing the panel to a broader scientific audience. Fully anonymized panel data covering all four waves (2022–2025) will be released in FAIR-compliant repositories; details on access will be published on the project website.

Publications

Eszter Hargittai, Abraham Bernstein, Karsten Donnay, Lucas Leemann, and Jonas Ineichen. (2025). “Digital Inequality in ChatGPT Knowledge and Use: Results from a National Survey.” Paper presentation at the *Conference of the Swiss Association of Communication and Media Research 2025*, Chur, Switzerland.

Karsten Donnay, Jonas Ineichen, Lucas Leemann, Abraham Bernstein, and Eszter Hargittai. (2026). “DigiVox: The Swiss Panel Survey on Digitalization.” *Working Paper*.

Eszter Hargittai, Abraham Bernstein, Karsten Donnay, and Lucas Leemann. (2026) “Mapping Variations in People's AI Skills: Implications for an Equitable Digital Public.” Paper presentation at the *Digital Publics Conference 2026*, Zurich, Switzerland.

Jonas Ineichen, Lucas Leemann, Karsten Donnay, Abraham Bernstein, and Eszter Hargittai. (2026). “Do Mode and Sample Source Matter for Survey Representativeness? Evidence from a Swiss Panel Survey.” *Working Paper*.

Future

Information on DigiVox will remain available through the project website at www.digivox.uzh.ch, including DigiVox *Insights* for a broader public. The website will also include all information on how to access the structured, longitudinal data release once it is publicly available. A senior researcher (Oberassistent) starting in one of the participating teams in September 2026 will focus on analyzing the longitudinal data for various papers. With the end of the project, we were required to delete all identifiable data about respondents due to data privacy which means no future waves of DigiVox are possible.

Optional: Feedback on the process /recommendations for improvement

We profited considerably from and are very grateful for the flexible timeframe and multiple extensions of the project duration that made it possible to conclude data collection and analysis of our last wave in 2025 and bring the project to a successful conclusion. Any similar future project should budget for a dedicated postdoctoral researcher to lead the data collection efforts. Lacking such a staff member, the PIs were more involved in the day-to-day operations of data collection and had less time for data analysis and writing up research results.