

# All-day childcare and schooling

A survey of parental attitudes in Switzerland  
by Cédric Duchêne, Marieke Heers, Laura Bernardi



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## Summary

This report analyses the attitudes of parents in Switzerland regarding all-day childcare, based on data collected from an online panel of 2,161 parents. Providing high-quality childcare is essential for child development, equal educational opportunities, and increasing female participation in the workforce, all of which contribute to Switzerland's economic sustainability. The analyses presented in this report are based on primary data covering various aspects of general parental attitudes towards all-day schooling, contrasted with specific views on the own family. They differentiated between German- and French-speaking parents to shed more light on potential regional differences.

Key results include:

- 1. Regional differences:** Many parents, especially in urban areas, support all-day schooling and care. However, notable differences exist between the German-speaking and French-speaking regions. Parents in German-speaking regions are generally less interested in all-day care for their children than parents in French-speaking regions. When parents are asked about all-day schools in general, there are no significant regional differences between German- and French-speaking Switzerland.
- 2. Age of the child:** The age of children plays an important role with respect to how parents rate the suitability of all-day schooling, with a generally stronger acceptance for older children.
- 3. Motivations and practices:** For parents in both language regions, achieving a better work-family balance is essential. In French-speaking areas, parents place a high value on their children's participation in sports and cultural events, often favouring a unified institution that offers both educational and extracurricular opportunities. Conversely, in German-speaking regions, parents tend to emphasise the importance of maintaining a better work-family balance and frequently see all-day schooling as advantageous to their professional lives.

4. **Attitudinal aspects:** The analysis indicates that attitudes toward the role of the mother and the state influence these differing perspectives. In German-speaking regions the mother's role in education is emphasised, while in French-speaking regions parents perceive a greater role for the state in childcare. Despite these differences, both groups generally support all-day schooling.
5. **Obligatory services:** Obligatory services, for example to stay at school for lunch or during the afternoon, are perceived in different ways. While most parents in the German-speaking region expressed opposition to this obligation, the majority of parents in the French-speaking region favoured it.
6. **Social characteristics:** The findings show that the overall interest in all-day schooling increases with income and educational attainment, being particularly pronounced among non-Swiss parents.

Overall, most parents advocate for all-day schools and care; however, significant regional differences emerge in specific attitudes and motivations. For example, although parents in French-speaking regions are reportedly less inclined to general support for all-day schooling, they are more favourable towards enrolling their own children in all-day programme when available. Parents in French-speaking regions also prefer a younger starting age for childcare compared to parents in German-speaking regions, but they are less likely to support all-day care for children under five. Ultimately, individual attitudes toward gender roles and the state's role, along with socio-demographic factors, play a more significant role in shaping opinions on all-day schooling than regional affiliation.



## Zusammenfassung

Dieser Bericht analysiert die Einstellungen von Eltern in der Schweiz zur Ganztagsbetreuung von Kindern auf der Grundlage von Daten, die in einem Online-Panel von 2161 Eltern erhoben wurden. Eine qualitativ hochwertige Kinderbetreuung ist für die Entwicklung der Kinder, Chancengleichheit in der Bildung und eine höhere Erwerbsbeteiligung von Frauen von zentraler Bedeutung und trägt zur wirtschaftlichen Nachhaltigkeit der Schweiz bei. Die in diesem Bericht vorgestellten Analysen basieren auf Primärdaten, die verschiedene Aspekte der allgemeinen Einstellung von Eltern zur Ganztagschule abdecken und diese mit spezifischen Sichtweisen auf die eigene Familie vergleichen. Um regionale Unterschiede besser ausleuchten zu können, wurde bei der Analyse zwischen deutsch- und französischsprachigen Eltern unterschieden.

Wichtigste Ergebnisse:

- 1. Regionale Unterschiede:** Viele Eltern, insbesondere in städtischen Gebieten, befürworten Ganztagschulen und Ganztagsbetreuung. Zwischen deutsch- und französischsprachigen Regionen gibt es aber deutliche Unterschiede. Eltern in den deutschsprachigen Regionen sind generell weniger an einer Ganztagsbetreuung für ihre Kinder interessiert als Eltern in den französischsprachigen Regionen. Werden die Eltern nach Ganztagschulen im Allgemeinen gefragt, gibt es aber keine signifikanten regionalen Unterschiede zwischen der Deutschschweiz und der Romandie.
- 2. Alter des Kindes:** Das Alter der Kinder spielt eine wichtige Rolle bei der Beurteilung der Eignung von Ganztagschulen durch die Eltern, wobei die Akzeptanz für die älteren Kinder generell höher ist.
- 3. Beweggründe und Praktiken:** Für Eltern in beiden Sprachregionen ist es wichtig, Beruf und Familie besser vereinbaren zu können. In den französischsprachigen Regionen legen die Eltern grossen Wert auf die Teilnahme ihrer Kinder an sportlichen und kulturellen Aktivitäten und bevorzugen häufig eine einzige Einrichtung, die sowohl schulische als auch ausserschulische Angebote macht. Eltern in deutschsprachigen Gebieten betonen hingegen eher die Bedeutung einer besseren Vereinbarkeit von Familie und Beruf und sehen Ganztagschulen häufig als vorteilhaft für ihr Berufsleben an.

4. **Einstellungen:** Die Analyse zeigt, dass die Einstellungen zur Rolle der Mutter und zum Staat die jeweiligen Perspektiven beeinflussen. In den deutschsprachigen Regionen wird die Rolle der Mutter in der Erziehung betont, während die Eltern in den französischsprachigen Regionen eine stärkere Rolle des Staates in der Kinderbetreuung sehen. Trotz dieser Unterschiede befürworten beide Gruppen im Allgemeinen die Ganztagschule.
5. **Verpflichtende Angebote:** Verpflichtende Angebote, etwa zum Mittagessen in der Schule zu bleiben, werden unterschiedlich wahrgenommen. Während sich die Mehrheit der Eltern im deutschsprachigen Teil gegen eine solche Verpflichtung ausspricht, befürwortet sie die Mehrheit der Eltern im französischsprachigen Teil.
6. **Soziale Merkmale:** Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass das Interesse an Ganztagschulen mit steigendem Einkommen und Bildungsniveau zunimmt und bei nicht schweizerischen Eltern besonders ausgeprägt ist.

Insgesamt befürworten die meisten Eltern Ganztagschulen und Ganztagsbetreuung, allerdings gibt es erhebliche regionale Unterschiede in den spezifischen Einstellungen und Motivationen. So tendieren Eltern in französischsprachigen Regionen zwar weniger dazu, Ganztagschulen im Allgemeinen zu befürworten, sie sind aber eher bereit, ihre eigenen Kinder in Ganztagsprogrammen anzumelden, wenn diese zur Verfügung stehen. Eltern in französischsprachigen Regionen bevorzugen auch ein früheres Eintrittsalter in die Kinderbetreuung als Eltern in deutschsprachigen Regionen, sind aber weniger geneigt, Ganztagsbetreuung für Kinder unter fünf Jahren zu unterstützen. Letztlich spielen individuelle Einstellungen zu Geschlechterrollen und zur Rolle des Staates zusammen mit soziodemografischen Faktoren eine wichtigere Rolle bei der Meinungsbildung zur Ganztagschule als die regionale Zugehörigkeit.

## Résumé

Ce rapport analyse les attitudes des parents en Suisse à l'égard de l'accueil à journée continue des enfants, sur la base de données recueillies auprès d'un panel en ligne de 2161 personnes. Offrir des structures d'accueil de qualité est essentiel pour le développement de l'enfant, l'égalité des chances en matière d'éducation et l'augmentation de la participation des femmes au marché du travail, autant d'éléments qui contribuent à la durabilité économique de la Suisse. Les analyses présentées dans ce rapport reposent sur des données primaires qui couvrent différents aspects de la position générale des parents envers l'école à journée continue, en contraste avec des perceptions familiales spécifiques. L'étude fait la distinction entre les parents germanophones et francophones pour mettre en évidence les disparités régionales éventuelles.

Les principaux résultats sont les suivants :

- 1. Disparités régionales :** de nombreux parents, en particulier dans les zones urbaines, sont favorables à l'école et à l'accueil à journée continue. Il existe néanmoins de nettes différences entre les régions germanophones et francophones. Les parents des régions germanophones sont généralement moins intéressés par l'accueil à journée continue de leurs enfants que ceux des régions francophones. Si l'on interroge les parents sur l'école à journée continue de manière générale, aucune différence régionale significative n'est en revanche observée entre la Suisse alémanique et la Suisse romande.
- 2. Âge de l'enfant :** l'âge de l'enfant joue un rôle important dans l'évaluation par les parents de la pertinence de l'école à journée continue. Celle-ci bénéficie généralement d'une acceptation plus forte pour les enfants plus âgés que pour les plus jeunes.
- 3. Motivations et pratiques :** pour les parents des deux régions linguistiques, atteindre un meilleur équilibre entre vie professionnelle et vie familiale est essentiel. Dans les régions francophones, les parents accordent une grande importance à la participation de leurs enfants à des activités sportives et culturelles, privilégiant souvent un seul établissement qui propose à la fois des activités scolaires et extrascolaires. En revanche, les parents germanophones soulignent l'importance d'une meilleure conciliation entre vie familiale et vie professionnelle. Souvent, ils considèrent l'école à journée continue comme un avantage pour leur activité professionnelle.

4. **Facteurs liés aux attitudes :** l'analyse montre que les conceptions du rôle de mère et de l'État créent des points de vue différents. Dans les régions germanophones, le rôle de la mère dans l'éducation est particulièrement mis en avant, tandis que, dans les régions francophones, les parents attribuent un rôle plus important à l'État dans la prise en charge des enfants. Malgré ces divergences, les deux groupes sont généralement favorables à l'école à journée continue.
5. **Structures obligatoires :** les structures obligatoires, telle que l'obligation de rester à l'école pour le repas de midi, sont perçues de manière différente. Alors que la plupart des parents des régions germanophones s'y opposent, la majorité des parents des régions francophones y sont au contraire favorables.
6. **Caractéristiques sociales :** les résultats montrent que l'intérêt pour l'école à journée continue augmente avec le revenu et le niveau d'éducation, et qu'il est particulièrement marqué chez les parents non suisses.

Dans l'ensemble, la plupart des parents sont favorables à l'école et à l'accueil à journée continue. En ce qui concerne les attitudes et les motivations spécifiques, des disparités régionales importantes sont observées. Par exemple, bien que les parents des régions francophones soient moins enclins à soutenir l'école à journée continue en général, ils se montrent plus favorables à inscrire leurs propres enfants à des programmes d'une journée complète lorsque ceux-ci sont disponibles. Par rapport aux parents des régions germanophones, ils préfèrent que l'âge d'entrée dans les structures d'accueil soit plus précoce, mais ils sont moins enclins à soutenir l'accueil à journée continue pour les enfants de moins de cinq ans. En fin de compte, les attitudes individuelles concernant le rôle des hommes et des femmes et celui de l'État, ainsi que les facteurs sociodémographiques, exercent une plus grande influence que l'appartenance régionale sur la formation de l'opinion à propos de l'école à journée continue.

## 1. Introduction

Childcare is central to family life and organisation, affecting children from early childhood to adolescence. In recent years, the all-day school debate has gained traction on political agendas in Switzerland. To illustrate, in the autumn of 2022, voters in the city of Zurich supported the introduction of all-day schooling (Tagesschule). Similarly, the canton of Neuchâtel has conducted pilot tests under the initiative “Ma journée à l’école”. These tests showed strong parental interest in all-day childcare coordinated by a single institution for both school and after-school activities (Neumann et al. 2022; Canton de Neuchâtel 2023). In the canton of Bern, legislation has mandated the municipalities to offer all-day school modules based on demand since 2008. This has contributed to a yearly increase in schools with all-day options (Canton de Berne 2023) where pupils can, but do not have to, be enrolled mornings and afternoons. Furthermore, at the national level, the topic was addressed by the Federal Council and the Committee on Science, Education, and Culture in spring 2023. However, they opted not to pursue it further (Gaitzsch 2020). In several cantons, there are schools with all-day options. In this report though, we refer to all-day school offers that are usually called ‘Tagesschule’ in German<sup>1</sup> and ‘écoles à journée continue’ or ‘journée continue’<sup>2</sup> in French.

In comparison to other European countries, Switzerland offers limited state support for families, considering childcare arrangements largely a private concern (Burstrom et al. 2010; Rossier et al. 2023). In a comparison of family-friendly policies across over 40 countries Switzerland ranked 31st (Chzhen et al. 2019). The Swiss context reflects traditional family models, with one-and-a-half earners being common. While fathers are increasingly involved in childcare, mothers still bear the primary responsibility for it. The majority of working mothers in Switzerland are employed on a part-time basis (McMunn et al. 2015; Federal Statistical Office 2023b). Childcare costs are generally high and vary depending on whether subsidised public care or private care is chosen. Additionally, costs are influenced by the region and the number of children in a household. Family care-related deductions exist, but they vary across regions (Ryser and Heers 2023).

1 Described as follows in the questionnaire: ‘Tagesschule, durchgehende Schule, Ganztagschule und Tagesstruktur bedeutet, dass die Schülerinnen und Schüler von morgens bis nachmittags in einer ihrem Alter entsprechenden Einrichtung betreut werden.’

2 Described as follows in the questionnaire: ‘L’école en continu ou à journée continue, signifie que les élèves sont pris en charge du matin jusqu’à l’après-midi par un établissement correspondant à leur âge.’

Institutionalised childcare usage varies significantly between urban and rural areas, as well as among language regions. In the French-speaking cantons, in urban cantons such as Basel-Stadt and Geneva, and in cantons with large cities such as Zurich, over 70% of parents make use of non-parental childcare, mainly institutional services. On the other hand, in the rural areas of German-speaking Switzerland and in the Ticino, parents are more likely to rely on non-institutional options, mainly relying on family members such as grandparents (Federal Statistical Office 2023a).

Calls for all-day childcare and schooling have emerged at several instances (Schüpbach 2015), however, there is no consensus on this issue. It has to be noted that since a diversity of all-day childcare and schooling arrangements exist, it is expected that parents bear the responsibility for arranging their children's extracurricular activities.

The objective of this report is to enhance understanding of parental views on all-day childcare and schooling. The main hypothesis of this study posits that views on work, family, and gender equality significantly influence perspectives on all-day care and education. While the focus is on the observed reluctance of parents in the German-speaking region to embrace all-day care, a comparative perspective will also shed light on the French-speaking region, helping to differentiate cultural, social, and contextual factors tied to the observed differences in childcare uptake. Data on attitudes and actual practices were collected.

This study was commissioned by the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences, which has been examining various facets of the Swiss education system for many years. The findings presented in this report are based on an online survey conducted in November and December 2022. Data were gathered and analysed from 2,161 parents with children aged 0 to 18 years (refer to the methodology section in the annex for details). This document provides a concise summary of the research team's findings, as delivered in March 2024.

The topic of parents' perspectives on all-day childcare and schooling is a widely debated issue in Switzerland, yet it remains insufficiently researched. This report seeks to enhance understanding of these viewpoints and contribute evidence-based insights to the ongoing discussions. Given the significant implications of the findings, policy recommendations are included at the conclusion of the report.

## 2. Five dimensions of parental preferences regarding all-day schools

### Parents' attitudes

Parents' attitudes on all-day schooling were evaluated through three key questions: (1) their general support for the concept of all-day schools, (2) their willingness to consider this option for their own child, and (3) their views on the centralisation of curricular and extracurricular activities under a single authority.

The results revealed a strong interest in all-day schooling, with 81% of parents expressing general support. However, the level of support varied depending on the specific question. When considering all-day schooling and care for their own child, support dropped slightly to 75%. The idea of centralizing all activities under a single authority received the lowest level of approval, with only 72% of parents in favour.

Significant regional differences were observed, with French-speaking parents expressing stronger interest in all-day schooling and care for their own child (85%) compared to their counterparts in the German-speaking region (69%). The same trend was observed regarding centralizing activities, i.e. that all activities take place within the school, with 78% of French-speaking parents in favour compared to 70% in the German-speaking region. However, no statistical differences were found between regions regarding the general availability of all-day schooling. This finding suggests that parents are tolerant of other parents who choose a different childcare model to their own.

Socio-demographic factors also influenced parental support for all-day schooling. Younger parents (under 45 years of age), foreign-national parents, and mothers with higher levels of education (tertiary, maturity, or compulsory school and advanced vocational training) were observed to express greater interest. Household income also played a role, with higher-income households showing more support. No significant differences were observed between nuclear and single-parent households or between mothers and fathers.

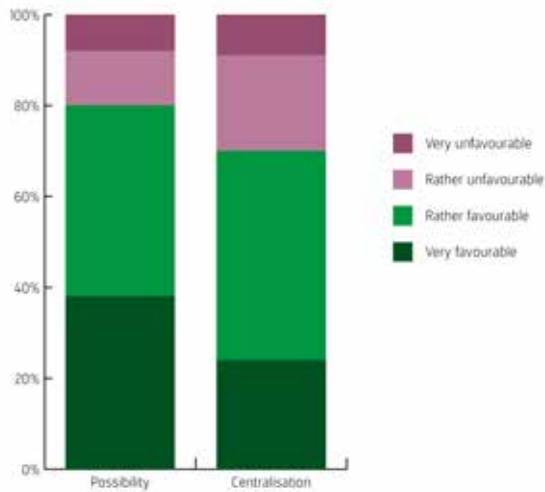


Figure 1. "Possibility": Proportion of parents who are in favour or against the school's all-day care and schooling support for pupils in general (weighted). "Centralisation": Proportion of parents who are in favour of or against the centralisation and management by a single player of school, extracurricular activities, supervised homework, lunch and sports and cultural activities in general (weighted).

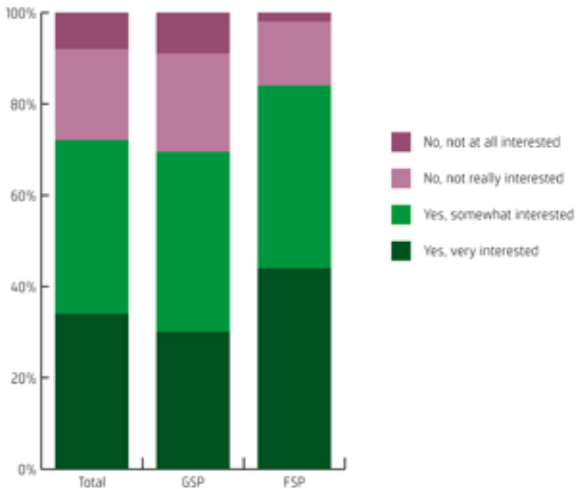


Figure 2. "Own child": Proportion of parents who are interested in an all-day care and schooling support proposed by the school for their own children. Parents from the German-speaking part (GSP), the French-speaking part (FSP) and together (weighted).



## Families' everyday organisation and activities

The survey concentrated on two main aspects: (a) the time spent by students at school and in extracurricular activities during the morning, midday, and afternoon, and (b) lunch arrangements.

The amount of time students spend at school is closely tied to parental interest in all-day schooling. Parents who prefer longer school days often adjust their children's schedules to meet this preference, while others may be hesitant due to a limited familiarity with full-day care. On average, children attend educational facilities for approximately seven hours daily, with regional differences observed: six hours and fifty minutes in the German-speaking region and seven hours and forty minutes in the French-speaking region.

Regarding lunch breaks, 41% of children eat at home every day during the week while almost half do not have lunch at home every day. The rest of the children don't eat at home. Conversely, a significant portion also eats at school, but only 15% do so four days or more per week.

Regarding extracurricular activities, 68% of children participate, with sports being the most popular choice (81%). Overall, interest in all-day care is typically higher when extracurricular activities are not available outside of school. The location of these activities plays a crucial role; they are generally more accessible—closer to home or the workplace—in the German-speaking region compared to the French-speaking region.

In terms of support, 47% of children are accompanied to school<sup>3</sup>, with higher rates observed in the French-speaking region. This disparity suggests that cultural factors and school proximity play a role in parental decisions. German-speaking parents may prioritise fostering greater independence in their children, a choice further supported by the shorter distances to school in their regions.

<sup>3</sup> The corresponding question was formulated as follows: "Qui accompagne habituellement [NAME] à l'établissement scolaire et préscolaire (crèche/jardin d'enfant inclus)?" "Wer begleitet [NAME] normalerweise in die Schule oder vorschulische Einrichtung (einschliesslich Krippe/Kindergarten)?" The questionnaire did not specify how children were accompanied, e.g. by car or on foot, but it simply means that the children do not walk alone but are accompanied by an adult.

## Childcare and work-family balance

Parents interested in all-day care and school support reported lower levels of satisfaction with their work-family balance compared to other parents. They identified mismatches between childcare hours and working hours, as well as the high cost of childcare, as the primary challenges. Notably, their interest in all-day care was not driven by a desire to spend more time with their children or to increase their working hours.

Most parents expressed satisfaction with their current family arrangements regarding lunch breaks, meals, and extracurricular activities. Satisfaction levels were notably higher in the German-speaking region compared to the French-speaking region. Parents uninterested in all-day care and school support were generally more satisfied with the organisation of lunch breaks and extracurricular activities than those who showed interest.

The study also examined parental satisfaction with work-family balance. Parents who believed the state should assume greater responsibility for childcare reported lower satisfaction levels. Additionally, in the French-speaking region, parents who felt that a child suffers when the mother works full-time were less satisfied than their counterparts in the German-speaking region.

Socio-demographic factors also played a role in satisfaction levels. Women and those with higher levels of education reported lower satisfaction overall. In the German-speaking region, logistical challenges and childcare costs were the primary sources of dissatisfaction with work-family balance. In contrast, in the French-speaking region, dissatisfaction stemmed mainly from a desire to spend more time with their children. Thus, dissatisfaction in the German-speaking region tends to be driven by logistical and organisational issues, while in the French-speaking region, it is more influenced by social factors.

## Interest in extracurricular offers

The study investigated parental interest in various forms of supervision and extracurricular activities offered as part of all-day schooling, such as the option for children to spend their lunch break at school, participate in supervised homework sessions, or join optional extracurricular activities. Parents who supported all-day schooling and care were significantly more likely to endorse these offerings. For instance, a large majority (82%) were in favour of schools providing lunchtime care, and 84% supported supervised homework during school hours. By contrast, only 62% of parents who were not interested in all-day care expressed support for these services.

Regional differences also emerged regarding the obligation to stay at school for lunch in the afternoon. While most parents in the German-speaking region opposed this requirement, the majority of parents in the French-speaking region supported it. Overall, parents showed a strong interest in extracurricular activities provided during lunch breaks, after school, or as part of the school day, with interest in these activities closely linked to support for all-day care and schooling.

One key rationale for all-day schooling is to support parental employment, particularly for mothers, while also fostering children's social participation (Heers et al. 2016). However, the challenge of balancing work responsibilities with children's extracurricular schedules remains, especially due to mismatched timetables and transportation issues. In this study, parents were asked about these challenges, with women reporting greater difficulties than men. Families with older children or fewer children generally reported fewer difficulties overall.

## Age of children and schooling

Parental attitudes towards all-day schooling and childcare were also found to be influenced by the age of the child. Parents in the French-speaking region favoured a younger starting age for external childcare compared to their counterparts in the German-speaking region.

Further investigation revealed parental perceptions of the minimum age for different types of care: childcare, school, and all-day school. The latter implies that, for example, homework is done in the school or that other activities such as music or theatre lessons take place after the regular classes. Parents generally favoured starting childcare, school, and all-day continuous support before a child reaches the age of seven, with a lower starting age preferred for childcare compared to school. Interestingly, a larger proportion of parents preferred to delay all-day continuous support compared to the other two options, indicating a higher threshold for this type of care.

Parental preferences regarding the minimum age for childcare, school, and all-day care and schooling revealed a clear trend towards a preference for later entry for schooling compared to childcare. This was especially evident for all-day care and schooling, with parents showing a preference for delaying this type of arrangement. These findings are likely influenced by the legal framework that establishes a minimum school age, while no such regulations exist for pre- and after-school care.

Significant regional differences were observed in parental preferences regarding the minimum age for childcare, school, and all-day care and schooling. Parents in the French-speaking region were more likely to favour a younger starting age for all three types of care compared to parents in the German-speaking region, particularly when it came to all-day care and schooling. This regional variation aligns with the earlier findings on parental attitudes towards all-day care and schooling, with parents in the German-speaking region showing greater reluctance to support these arrangements.

### 3. Explanatory frameworks

In the survey, parents were presented with a scenario involving all-day schooling and asked to respond, even though such an arrangement is not currently available. As discussed in Chapter II, parents generally express positive attitudes toward all-day schooling, though a more detailed analysis reveals several nuances. This prompts the question of how these attitudes can be explained in both the German-speaking and French-speaking regions of Switzerland. The following section will outline four possible explanatory approaches.

However, let us first consider the reasons provided by parents in the survey. The most common reason for supporting all-day care is the desire for a better work-family balance (61%), followed by the opportunity for children to participate in sports or cultural activities (49%). Practical concerns, such as avoiding frequent schedule changes or taking charge of homework, were mentioned by a third to a quarter of respondents. Additionally, about a quarter of parents cited the desire for children to spend more time with their classmates. The least mentioned reason is to improve the child's language skills.

	German-speaking	French-speaking	Total
Better work-life balance	69%	45%	61%
Possibility of pursuing sports or cultural activities	44%	60%	49%
A global solution for out-of-class care	31%	44%	35%
No need to redefine schedules every year	31%	43%	35%
Avoid frequent changes of location	25%	42%	31%
Take charge of homework	17%	45%	27%
Spend more time with classmates	29%	23%	27%
Increasing the professional activity of household members	24%	14%	21%
Having a single reference for my child or all my children	16%	27%	20%
Possibility of working in a professional position that meets expectations	22%	14%	20%
Improve my child's language skills	17%	21%	18%
Other	3%	2%	3%

Table 1. Reasons for interest in all-day care and schooling support of the child throughout the day (N=1596). The darker the colour, the higher the percentage (weighted).

## Regional differences in all-day schooling and children's care

There are notable differences in attitudes towards all-day schooling and care between linguistic regions. While parents in the French-speaking region show greater interest in using all-day school options, these regional differences become less pronounced when other factors are considered. Specifically, when individual attitudes towards gender roles and the role of the state are considered, parents in the French-speaking region are generally less inclined to support all-day schooling. This inclination is influenced by traditional views, with parents who hold more conventional beliefs—such as those related to gender roles—tending to be less supportive of all-day education.

Furthermore, the relationship between attitudes toward gender roles and support for all-day schooling varies by region, being more pronounced in the French-speaking region. Additionally, parents who believe the state should ensure sufficient childcare options for working parents are more likely to favour all-day care and schooling. This suggests a certain degree of parents' call for responsibility to be taken by the state with respect to offering all-day care and schooling. Overall, there is a complex interplay between regional perspectives and individual attitudes regarding all-day education.

## Attitudes towards appropriate childcare

Attitudes play a crucial role in shaping the inclination toward all-day schooling, transcending regional differences. Our investigation reveals that a more favourable outlook on all-day schooling and care is linked to a reduced belief that preschool children suffer when their mothers work full-time.

Additionally, there is stronger support for the view that the state should be responsible for providing adequate childcare services for working parents. While half of the surveyed parents agree that a preschool child suffers if the mother works full-time, around a quarter remain neutral, and another quarter disagree.

Parents in the German-speaking region show significantly higher agreement with this viewpoint compared to their French-speaking counterparts. However, both regions have the same proportion of parents who disagree (25%). Among parents who express no interest in all-day care, 67% believe children suffer

when mothers work full-time, compared to only 44% of those who are inclined to support all-day schooling.

## Expectations towards the state

Attitudes toward all-day schooling and care are closely linked to expectations regarding the role of the state. While 62% of parents believe that the state should be responsible for ensuring sufficient childcare services for working parents, 16% of parents disagree with this view, and 22% fall into a neutral category. Parents in the German-speaking region tend to agree with this assertion, but to a lesser extent than parents in the French-speaking region. Among parents interested in all-day care and schooling, 72% support the idea that the state should take responsibility, compared to just 35% of parents who are not interested in all-day care and schooling.

## Socio-demographic characteristics

Socio-demographic characteristics significantly influence parents' perspectives on all-day schooling. Women generally express more support for all-day options than men; however, this difference diminishes when individual attitudes are accounted for. In addition, social characteristics, such as income and education, also impact parents' inclination towards all-day schooling. For example, higher levels of education are associated with greater interest in all-day schooling, while households with mothers working less than 30% or not at all are less likely to utilise all-day care and school support.

Although women demonstrate more support, this trend can be attributed more to individual attitudes rather than socio-demographic factors alone. Parents with higher incomes and education levels tend to be more supportive of all-day care options. It is also notable that Swiss respondents are less favourable towards all-day options than those from other nationalities.

Furthermore, traditional gender role attitudes relate to increased interest in all-day schooling. This indicates that socio-economic conditions are associated with parental perceptions of the state's role in providing adequate services.

## 4. Recommendations

### 1. Enhance all-day schooling and childcare and meet regional demands

The results indicate that families living in Switzerland have a strong demand for all-day schooling and childcare. However, services such as lunchtime care and after-school activities need to be established to meet this demand. The availability of these services varies geographically, even within the same canton (Statistique Vaud 2022). Implementing all-day schooling requires tailoring the offerings to the specific territorial characteristics of each region.<sup>4</sup>

### 2. Address socio-economic disparities in all-day school offer

Parents' motivations for all-day schooling are generally positive, but their views on the advantages and disadvantages of all-day schooling are heterogeneous, depending on parental education and income. Parents with higher education and income are more favourable towards all-day schooling, while parents with lower income are less favourable. One explanation for this may be the current financial burden associated to all-day school arrangements. Another explanation might be that lower educated individuals more often have traditional roles as compared to higher educated ones. Although fees decrease progressively with lower parental income, costs remain high and the trade-off between paid care and low-paid work is often negative.

### 3. Resolve the issue of mismatched schedules and transportation needs with children's extracurricular activities to support work-family balance

Parents in Switzerland believe that all-day schooling and childcare would enable them to achieve a better balance between their professional and personal lives, as well as their children's sports and cultural activities. French-speaking parents are more inclined to support these opportunities for their children compared to their German-speaking counterparts, who are less enthusiastic about them. However, to effectively balance work commitments with children's extracurricular activities, addressing the issues of mismatched schedules and transportation needs remains a challenge.

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<sup>4</sup> The data do not allow us to further investigate the rural urban gap. This would be an interesting and important topic for future research.



#### **4. Take into account the parental need for offers to be voluntary**

Obligatory offers to stay at school for lunch are perceived in different ways. While the majority of parents in the French-speaking region favoured an obligation, the majority of parents in the German-speaking region expressed opposition to this obligation. In this context, it is important to consider the need for voluntary options, particularly in German-speaking Switzerland.

#### **5. Respond to the unmet needs for family and education policies**

In the spring of 2023, the National Council discussed the issue of all-day schooling and childcare but decided not to pursue it further. In view of the findings presented above, we recommend that the discussion on the development of all-day structures (all-day schooling and childcare) be continued. This is crucial from both a family and an education policy point of view and, in times of increasing labour shortages, is also becoming increasingly important from an economic point of view.



## Annex

### Survey Methodology and Data Collection

The current report utilises primary data to facilitate comparisons between the French- and German-speaking regions of Switzerland and provides in-depth analyses of attitudes and values among different population subgroups. The reference population comprises parents residing in urban areas of both linguistic regions, each having at least one child under 18.

The survey replicates various questions from prior studies, including those from the Canton de Neuchâtel (2023), the Swiss Household Panel (SHP), the German National Educational Panel Study (NEPS), the Fertility and Family Survey (FFS), and the European Social Survey (ESS, round 4). Additional questions addressing parents' attitudes towards school attendance were drawn from Dalziel et al. (2004) and the Swiss Labour Force Survey (SLFS 2022). The questionnaire also included original questions about parental attitudes and the organisation of family life while accounting for relevant socio-demographic factors.

The data collection was carried out by the market research company LINK, using an online panel of approximately 100,000 individuals who engage with the internet for personal purposes at least once a week. In November and December 2022, LINK invited 18,481 panel members to participate, achieving a total of 2,161 completed questionnaires (17% response rate). The sample maintained the demographic ratio of German-speaking (N=1,538, 71.2%) and French-speaking (N=623, 28.8%) respondents. The resulting sample showed an over-representation of respondents with Swiss nationality (92%) and an under-representation of parents with low educational attainment, a common trend in survey samples. To explain differences in attitudes toward all-day childcare and schooling, a range of uni-, bi-, and multivariate analyses was conducted. It is essential to emphasise that the findings present associations rather than causal relationships, acknowledging the likelihood of reverse causality where higher maternal employment may influence opinions favourable to all-day schooling and vice versa.

The data will be made available via SWISSUbase.<sup>5</sup>

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5 <https://www.swissubase.ch/en/catalogue/studies/20161/latest>

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