

---

## **A picture of online voters in the case of the Carouge municipal referendum of April the 18th, 2004**

This document presents the main results of the survey made on the voters having used Internet to cast their ballot during the municipal referendum in Carouge, a suburb of Geneva, in April 2004. The fate of the local cinema was at stake: should the municipality buy it or not, were asked the Carouge voters? By a 56%-44% margin, they chose to buy it.

All three polling methods gave the same outcome, but by different margins. The postal vote gave 53%-47%, the eVote gave 60%-40% and the polling station vote gave 78%-22%.

It is the first time that Geneva organises an official ballot using Internet in a city. The two ballots that took place in 2003 were organised in villages of 1200 voters for the one and 2500 voters for the other.

### **The survey**

1024 voters have used Internet to cast their ballot in the municipal referendum held in Carouge, or 25,9% of all cast ballots. 2758 citizens (69,3%) have voted by post and 196 (4,8%) cast a ballot at the polling station. Both remote voting possibilities were available from April the 2<sup>nd</sup> to April the 17th. The polling station was open on the morning of April the 18th. There are 9049 registered voters in Carouge, for a population of 18.000.

This document is based in the answers given to the survey that was submitted to online voters after they had completed the voting procedure. It shows trends and tendencies, but it is not an accurate statistical instrument, since the answers we received do not come from a scientifically drawn sample of the voters' population.

In a second stage, the Geneva University will analyse this questionnaire in a thorough manner, using statistical computer programs, in order to make the best out of it.

Form the 1024 Internet voters, 588 (57,4%) have answered the survey.

### **Survey presentation**

#### ***Methodology***

A questionnaire was submitted to the online voters at the end of the voting procedure. They were free to answer it or not, or to answer it only partially. The questionnaire has been elaborated by the Centre for direct democracy studies (C2D, their web page is at <http://c2d.unige.ch/>, there is an English speaking section) of the Geneva University. The questionnaire and the answers given were hosted on the university server, with no connexion to the voting server. Answers are thus totally anonymous.

The reasons why we chose this procedure are :

- Minimal cost
- Questionnaire quick to fill and to decode
- Closed questions
- Potential for a high participation rate

#### ***The questionnaire***

Based on socio-cultural indicators, the questionnaire aims at evaluating the reasons for which citizens have cast a ballot online.

#### ***Organisation***

The survey took place from April the 2<sup>nd</sup> to April the 17th. Data have been transferred in MS-Excel to be analysed.

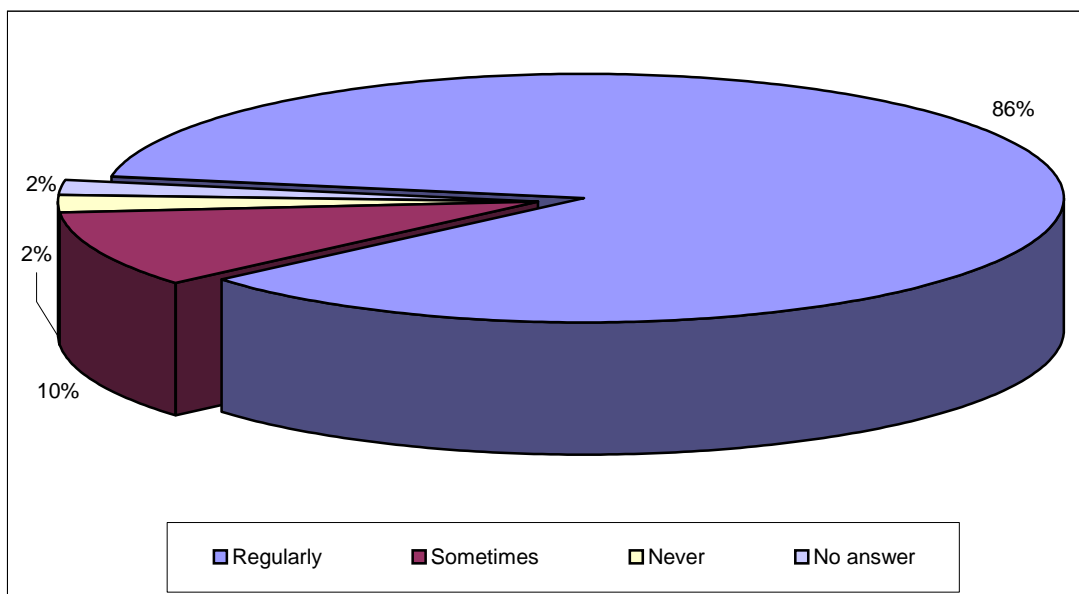
---

## Results

### Voting habits

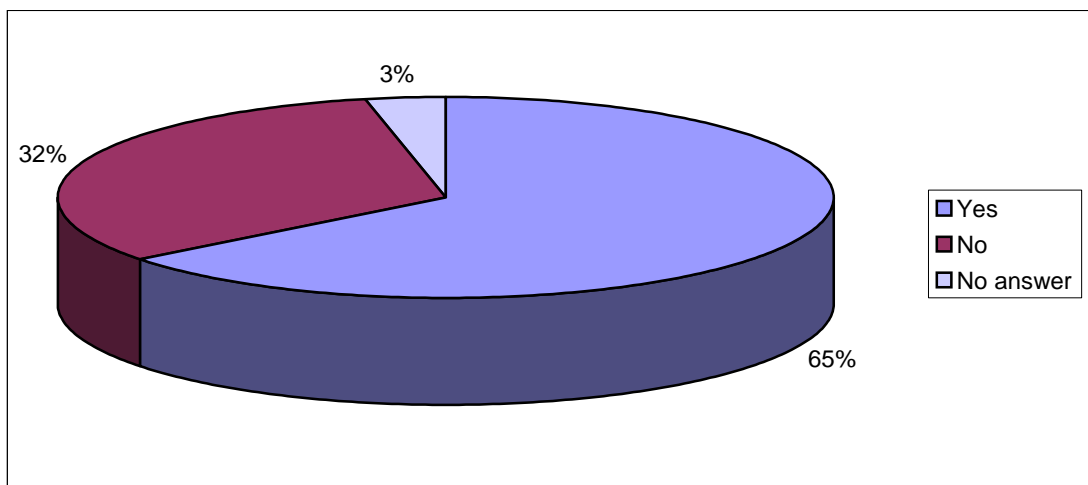
The ability of eVoting to attract new voters to the polls has been confirmed in Carouge, but to lower extent compared to previous eBallots. 85% of those who answered the survey said they voted on a regular basis, to be compared with some 75% in the two previous eBallots Geneva has organised.

We cannot exclude a bias, whereas regular voters would have answered the survey in large numbers, thus altering the real picture. An analysis of the voters' database could give more details, but it will require a few days to be conducted. If we see that young people overwhelmingly voted online, we can reasonably think that many of them being abstainer, eVoting has indeed an impact on turnout.

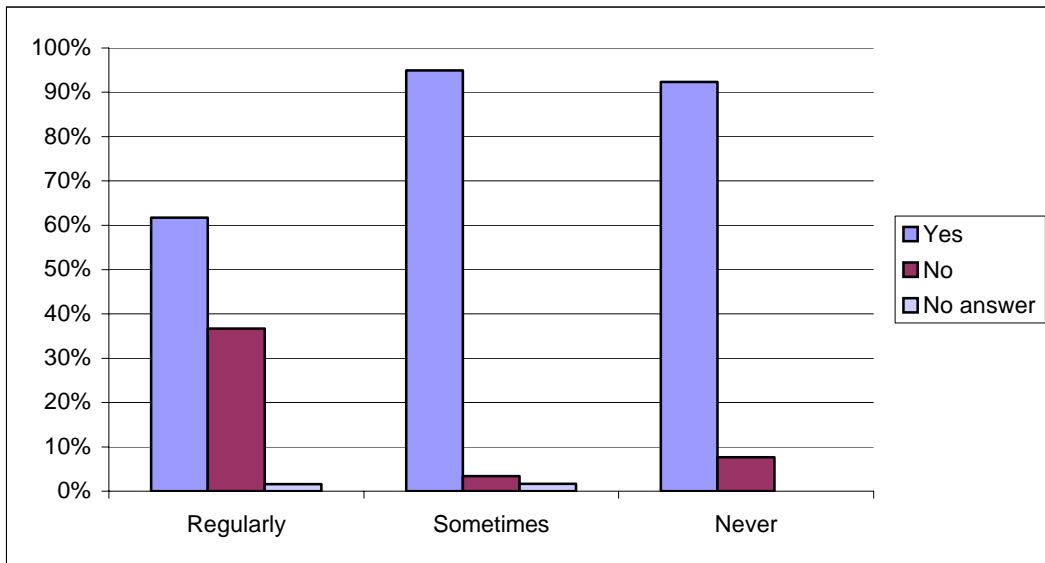


### How often do you vote?

However, the 12% of respondents who say they seldom or never vote are among the vast majority who says the introduction of Internet voting on a regular basis would make them vote more regularly.



### Would you vote more regularly if Internet voting were available at each ballot?

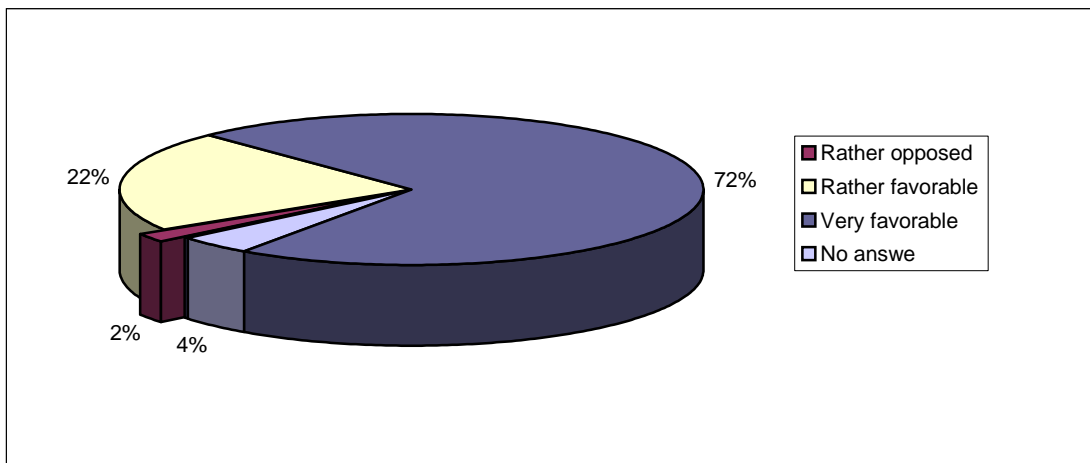


**Would you vote more regularly if Internet voting were available at each ballot?**

The splitting of the answers to this question according to the frequency of ballot attendance shows that full- or partial-abstainers have the highest percentages of “yes” answers.

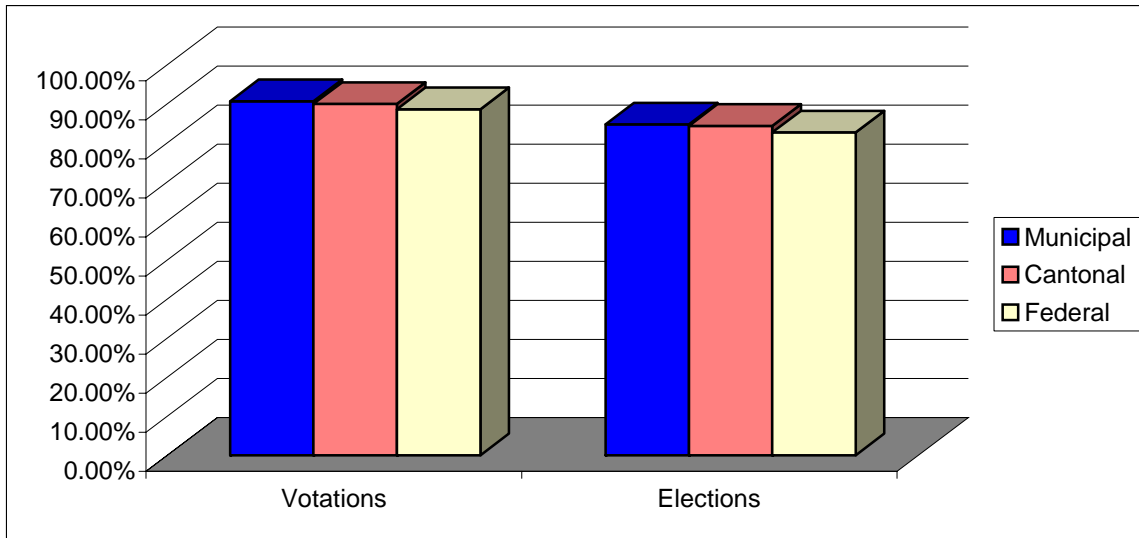
**Introduction of Internet voting on a regular basis**

94% of the voters who answered the survey said they favoured the introduction of Internet voting on a regular basis.



**When is Internet voting appropriate?**

We asked voters whether they thought Internet voting should be implemented for all kinds of ballots, elections as well as referendums, and at all levels, municipal, cantonal and federal. More than 90% said it should be implemented at all levels and more than 80% said it should be used for elections at all levels too.

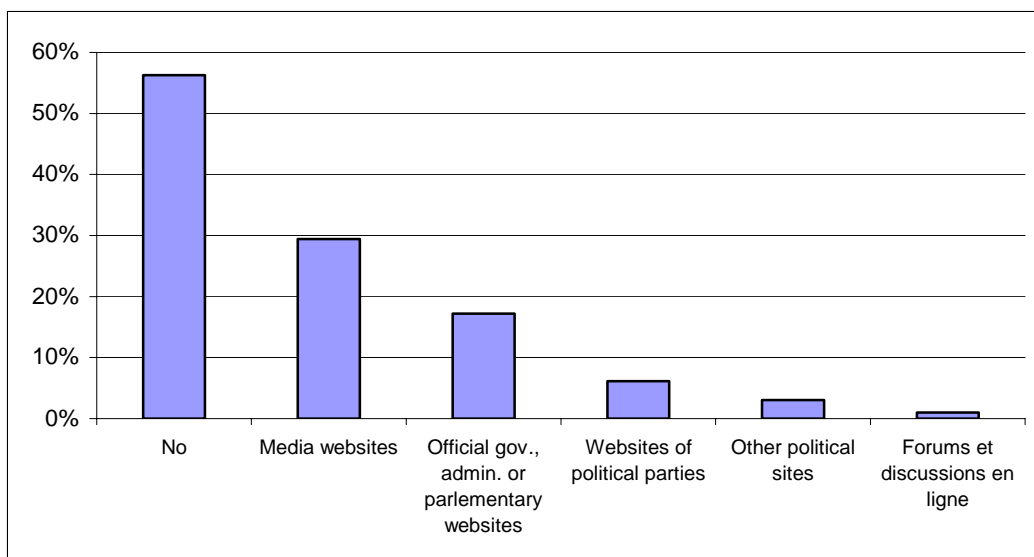


**Is Internet a source of information ?**

While Internet as a voting tool is highly appreciated, 56% of the respondents said they don't use it to get political information.

Those who use Internet as a source of information surf in priority the web sites of TV stations and newspapers, that is established media. The official web sites (public authorities web sites) come only second to the media. The political parties web site come last.

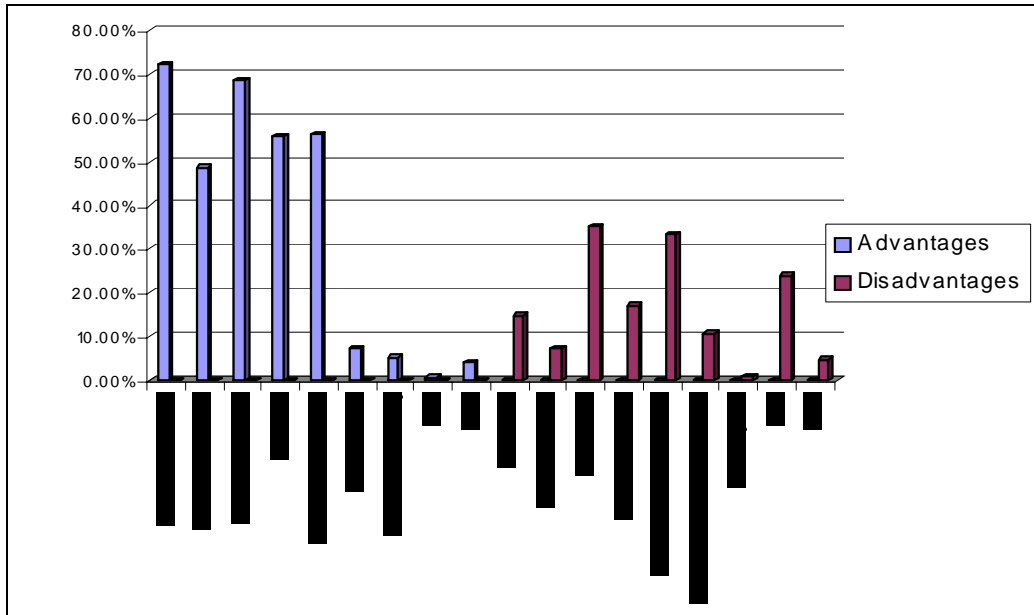
The vision of a fully electronic democracy seems to be somewhat elusive, as only 1% of respondents say they use Internet interactivity to chat online and post messages on newsgroups.



**Advantages and disadvantages of Internet voting**

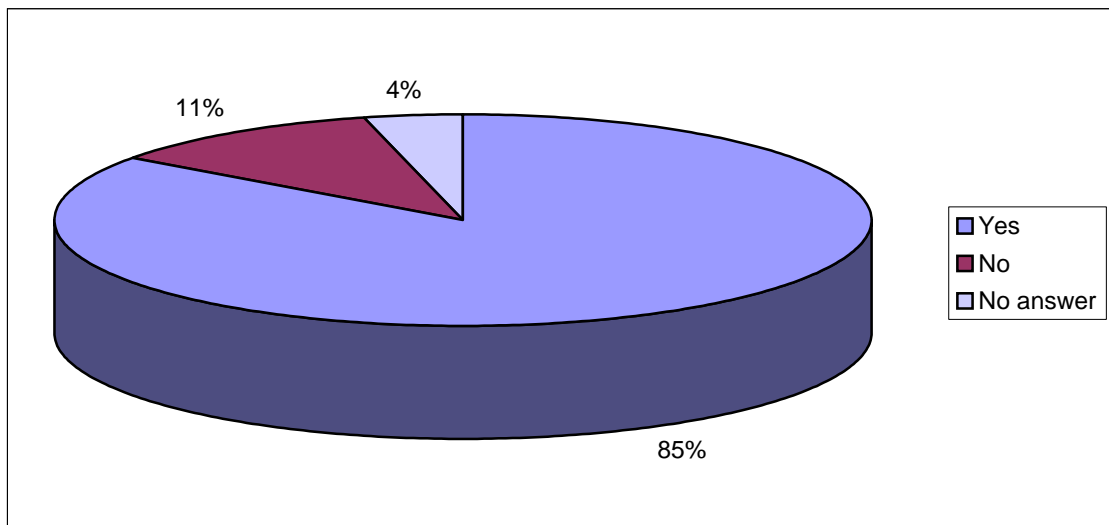
For the respondents, the Internet voting advantages far outweigh its disadvantages. As advantages, the voters see the rapidity of ballot reading, the power of Internet to increase turnout and a possibility of lowering the ballots' cost.

As drawbacks, voters have mentioned the risk of social inequality between the citizen connected to Internet and those who are not. The security has also been seen as a potential weakness of the system.



**The computers security**

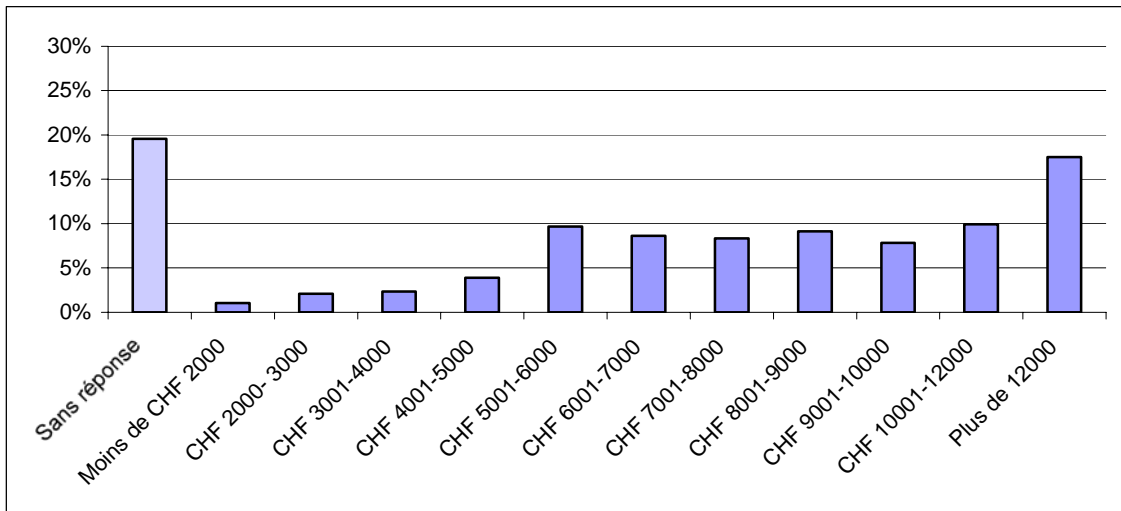
Our survey shows that security is a major preoccupation for voters. More than 85% say they have taken steps to ensure their PC's security, by installing firewalls or antivirus software, for instance. From our point of view, this is very positive as it shows that citizens take seriously their responsibilities as actors (and not only consumer) of a ballot.



## Sociological profile of respondents

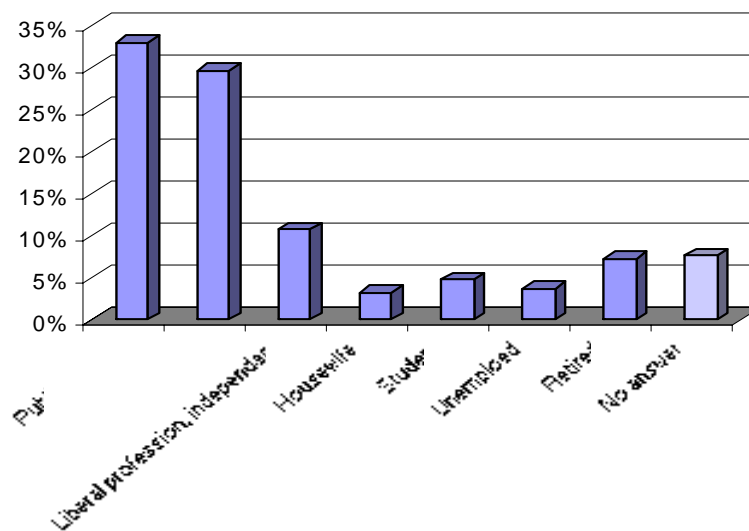
### Income

19% of the respondents skipped this question. We can nevertheless see that eVoters belong to the middle class and upper middle class. This fits into the picture of Internet use patterns and is not specific to eVoting.

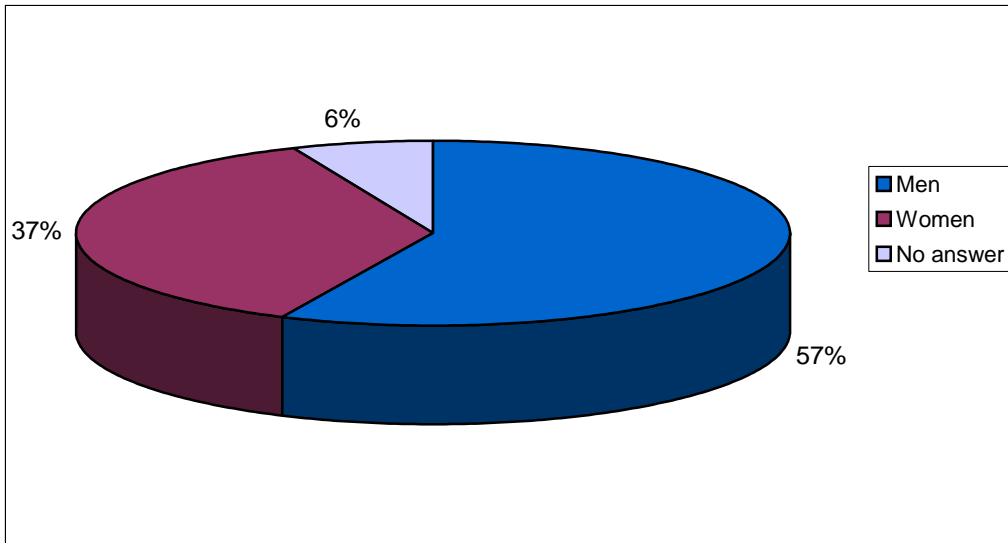


### Profession

A third of eVoters are civil servants. This shows that this projects is being seen as a motivating enterprise project and that civil servants are proud to belong to the entity that carries it .To be noted also the high percentage of liberal professions and self-employed people.



**Gender**



The gender balance reflects the gender balance among the web users in Switzerland, according to the official statistical data available from the Swiss Federal Office for Statistics.

**Civil state**

50% of eVoters are married, 30% are single.

