



BCW Influence Index Switzerland 2023

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What does the study reveal about political discourse in Switzerland?

1. The loudest are not the most influential - Centre and Liberal politicians with a lot of influence in parliament

When it comes to parliamentary decision-making, polarising politicians do not always contribute much to the success of a deal, even though they often speak out publicly. In order to draw attention to a political issue in parliament, it takes calm parliamentarians with a large network who are able to compromise.

2. Politicians from left- and right-wing parties have a stronger influence on public discourse

In Switzerland's direct democratic system, loud parliamentarians with public influence are political issue-setters and are helpful in the public discourse when a political deal is up for a vote.

3. Data-based public affairs

The Influence Index provides an initial overview of the factual situation in the direct democratic process in Switzerland. The philosophy of BCW's strategic public affairs consultancy is that data analysis can be used to make any political project more agile, efficient and targeted. Unexpected findings from data analysis are incorporated into the consulting process on an ongoing basis.

4. Issue-specific Influence Index

Based on our data analysis, BCW's public affairs and data specialists can create a thematic analysis tailored to your needs. Which parliamentarians should currently be considered for a specific issue, for example in health policy?

These are the most influential members of parliament in 2022/2023

The Influence Index Switzerland uses our unique methodology combining data-driven insights with empirical analysis to rank Swiss parliamentarians, revealing how much influence each politician has in parliament and in shaping public opinion. Influence refers to the ability to shape the political process in parliament or public discourse.

The analysis, which covers the period from June 2022 to July 2023, demonstrates that the most influential politicians in parliament are not necessarily the loudest, but rather the quiet creators who drive the agenda.

Parliamentary influence

The most influential politicians in parliament are the members of the Council of States. Some familiar faces, for example from the Swiss People's Party (SVP), have little influence in parliament: rank 211 Diana Gutjahr, 221 Roger Köppel and 228 Magdalena Martullo-Blocher. In addition, on average the politically most influential MPs are significantly older than the politicians with the highest influence on the public.

The Centre party holds the most significant political influence in parliament. Overall, the centrists dominate the ranking of the 30 most politically influential MPs, with 36.7% (a total of 11 Centre parliamentarians). The Liberal Party (FDP) is the second most influential party in parliament.

One reason for the distribution of influence among these parties in parliament is their role as bridge-builders. While the right- and left-wing parties take a clear party position on issues such as climate change or migration, the Centre and Liberal parties act as potential alliance partners, thus exerting a direct influence on important political decisions.

Public influence

In the public influence ranking, the SP clearly stands out as the most prominent overall. Both SP men and women are the most influential MPs and dominate both councils.

The political parties SP, Greens and SVP have a greater public influence, but fall behind in the political ranking. Polarising parties are known to occupy more space in public than the other, more moderate parties. As a younger party, the Green Liberal Party (GLP) is still building its influence and does not stand out in the ranking.

In terms of public influence, members of the National Council from the right- and left-wing parties dominate the ranking. The majority of FDP members are situated in the middle tier. Notably, FDP women exhibit higher levels of influence compared to their male counterparts in both the National Council and the Council of States, with this gender distinction being particularly pronounced in the National Council.

Without exception, all party presidents have a significant level of public influence and rank among the 30 most publicly influential parliamentarians. This is primarily because they are the voice of their respective parties, leading to greater media exposure and public recognition.

The co-presidency of the Social Democratic Party (SP), held by Cédric Wermuth and Mattea Meyer, has been particularly successful, with both ranking second and sixth, respectively. Similarly, Gerhard Pfister (Centre), Thierry Burkart (FDP), Jürg Grossen (Green Liberal Party), and Cédric Wermuth are all the highest-ranking representatives within their respective parties.

Top 3 - "Parliamentary Influence Ranking"



ERICH ETTLIN

Centre Party, Obwalden (S)

As president and member of important commissions, he has influence on financial, economic, social and health issues.

He actively participates in speeches in parliament and is successful in getting his political initiatives through parliament.



BENEDIKT WÜRTH

Centre Party, St. Gallen (S)

As president and member of important commissions and delegations, he has influence on both foreign and domestic policy issues.

Würth's speeches in parliament are rich in content.



CARLO SOMMARUGA

Swiss Social Democratic Party, Geneva (S)

Carlo Sommaruga is president and member of important commissions and has influence on topics in the fields of law and economics.

Sommaruga has been a member of parliament for over 20 years, making him one of the longest-serving MPs.

Top 3 - "Public Influence Ranking"



ROGER KÖPPEL

Swiss People's Party, Zurich (N)

Roger Köppel has the strongest public influence. Due to his polemic and belligerent manner, he is present in both social and, to a slightly lesser extent, traditional media.

Köppel is very active on X (formerly Twitter). Out of all parliamentarians, he has the largest reach and the second highest number of followers.



CÉDRIC WERMUTH

Swiss Social Democratic Party, Aargau (N)

Cédric Wermuth stands out due to his media presence and activities on X. He also achieves the second-best ranking due to his function as co-party president and the associated level of public awareness.

Wermuth is very active on social media. Of all parliamentarians, he publishes the most posts on X and has the most mentions - and is therefore often a topic of discussion on the platform.



EVA HERZOG

Swiss Social Democratic Party, Basel-City (N)

Eva Herzog stands out due to her media presence. Her candidacy for the Federal Council as successor to Simonetta Sommaruga played a major role.

In comparison, she reaches 43rd place in the parliamentary ranking.



Influence Index Switzerland 2023: The Facts in Brief

The loudest are not the most influential politicians

The Influence Index Switzerland 2023 demonstrates that the most influential politicians in parliament are not necessarily the loudest, but rather the quiet creators who drive the agenda. The top positions among the most influential politicians in parliament are occupied by members of the Council of States. This means that when it comes to the agenda in parliament, polarising politicians do not always contribute much to the success of a political deal, even though they often speak out publicly via the media or social media.

On the other hand, loud parliamentarians with public influence in Switzerland's direct democratic system are political issue-setters and are helpful in the public discourse when a political issue is put to a vote. Therefore, the quiet creators and the rather loud, well-known politicians complement each other in a democratic system like Switzerland.

The political parties SP, SVP and the Greens polarise and have greater public influence but fall behind in parliament

The SVP, the SP and the Greens achieve a lower score in terms of political influence when compared to other parties. It is noteworthy that these three parties wield significant influence in the public sphere, with the SP even showing a remarkably high level of influence. Despite their strong public presence, these parties exert less influence in parliament than their public image suggests. Due to the fact that the SVP and SP are the two polar parties in parliament and that the Greens also contribute to polarization through their policies, it is logical that they occupy more space in public than the more moderate parties.

Roger Köppel (SVP/ZH), for example, leads the public ranking by a wide margin. Conversely, he is among the 30 weakest parliamentarians in terms of parliamentary influence. The situation is similar for other well-known SVP, SP and Green names such as Magdalena Martullo-Blocher (SVP/GR) or Meret Schneider (Greens/ZH).

Moderate parties successfully shape the political process

On the other hand, the moderate parties, which are less influential in the public sphere than the right- and left-wing parties, have more influence in the political arena. The Centre, FDP, and GLP outperform the other three parties in the political ranking, although they cannot rival the SP, SVP, and the Greens in the public arena.

Overall, 23 of the 30 most politically influential parliamentarians come from moderate parties, with Erich Ettlin (Centre/OW) and Benedikt Würth (Centre/SG) topping the ranking. Conversely, among the 30 least politically influential parliamentarians, only six belong to the Centre party, and Andreas Meier (Centre/AG) holds the 243rd place overall, making him the least influential representative of a moderate party (he moved up during the data collection period).

There are many reasons for this. For instance, moderate parties often act as bridge-builders in parliament and in the public sphere, enabling compromise on political matters. While other political parties take a clear party position on issues such as climate change or migration, the Centre and the FDP, in particular, act as possible alliance partners and thus exert direct influence on important political decisions. Additionally, the distribution of seats in the Council of States, where the Centre and FDP are again leading, also plays a role.

Since fewer members are elected to the Council of States overall, individual Councillors of States can assume an important and decisive role more quickly in commissions or as rapporteurs.

In addition, the political network in the Federal Parliament also plays a role: Since a large number of younger politicians, especially from the Greens, the SP and the GLP, were newly elected to parliament in 2019, they often still lack the experience and network to be able to take a leading role on certain issues.



Female MPs have a greater public influence than their male colleagues

On average, female MPs are more influential in the public sphere than their male counterparts. Female politicians in both the National Council and the Council of States are clearly more influential in public discourse. If the analysis is extended to the individual parties, a somewhat more differentiated picture emerges.

Mainly due to the female politicians of the SVP, FDP and Greens, women are more influential in public discourse than their male counterparts within these parties – however, this does not apply to the female members of the Centre, GLP and SP.

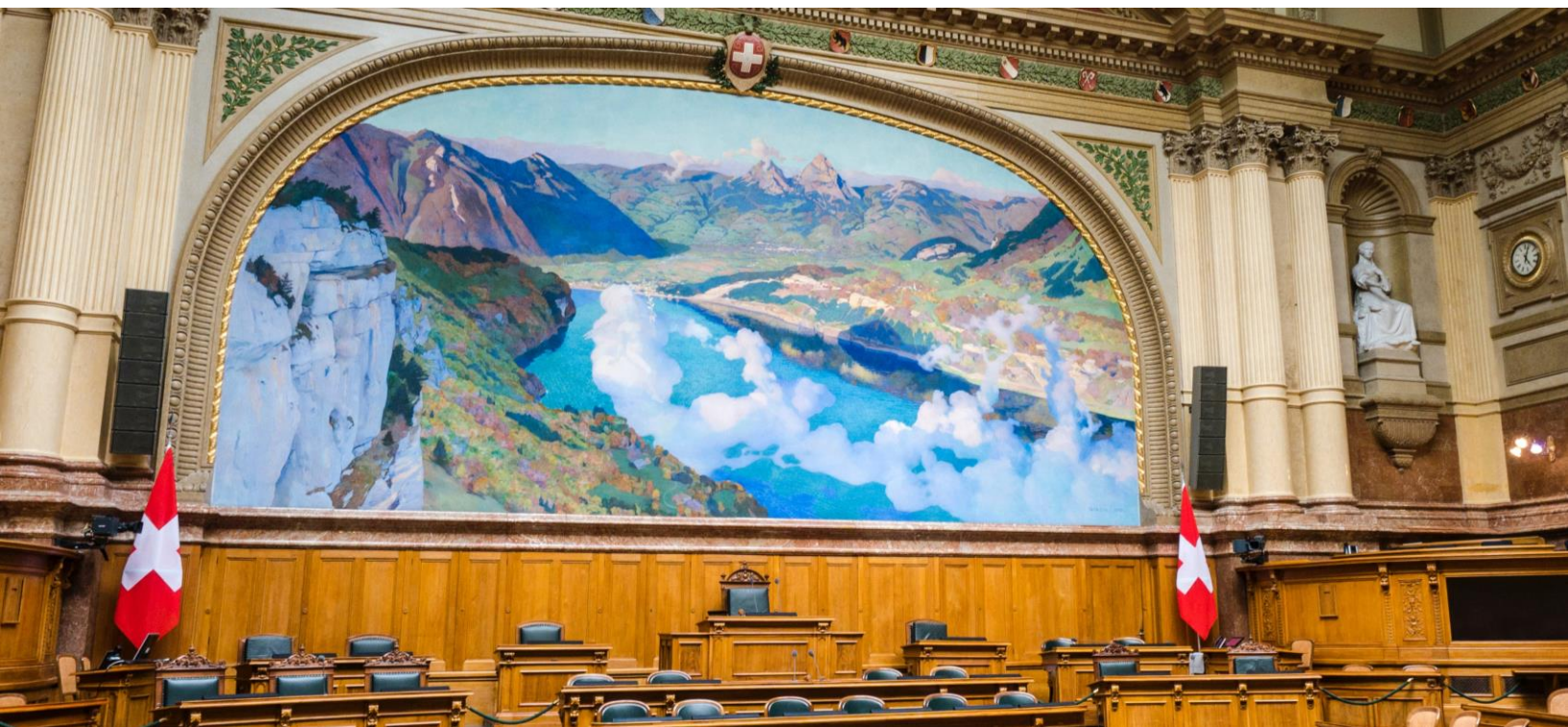
Thirteen of the 30 most influential politicians in the public ranking are women, with six of them making it into the top 10. Left-wing MPs are particularly influential here: eleven of the top 13 come from the SP or the Greens. While two come from the SVP, no female representative from a centre party makes it into the 30 most publicly influential MPs. The representation of the parties is more diverse among the 17 men who make it into the top 30: seven come from the SVP, five from the SP, two from the Centre and one each from the FDP, GLP and the Greens.

Despite women's success in 2019 elections - male MPs still with more influence

Despite women's achievements in the 2019 elections, male politicians are still more influential in parliament. Female politicians are still noticeably less influential than their male counterparts in both the National Council and the Council of States. The difference between genders is especially pronounced in the Council of States but relatively narrow in the National Council.

Hence, only four women manage to secure a place among the top 30 most politically influential MPs. Here, too, no female centrist or GLP politician makes it into the top list. Conversely, men dominate the list with 26 out of the top 30 positions, including the entire top 10, comprising eleven from the Centre and ten from the FDP.

A look at the individual parties shows that the women of the SVP, Mitte, FDP, GLP and SP have less influence than their male party colleagues. Only the female representatives of the Greens are more influential overall than their male colleagues.



Large age gap between parliamentary influentials and public influentials

The analysis reveals that the 30 most politically influential parliamentarians, on average, are 8.76 years older than the 30 most publicly influential MPs. The comparison shows that in the top 30 of the political ranking, only three politicians are under 40: Damian Müller (FDP/LU), Johanna Gapany (FDP/FR) and Philippe Nantermod (FDP/VS). Hannes Germann (SVP/SH) and Kurt Fluri (FDP/SO) are the two oldest politicians in the top 30, at 67 and 68 years old, respectively. Conversely, there are five under-40s among the 30 least influential parliamentarians.

In the top 30 of the public ranking, however, seven politicians are under 40 years old, including three in the top 10: Cédric Wermuth (SP/AG), Meret Schneider (Grüne/ZH) and Mattea Meyer (SP/ZH). Eva Herzog (SP/BS) and Jacqueline Badran (SP/ZH) are the two oldest MPs in the top 30, both at the age of 61. Among the 30 weakest politicians in the public ranking, there is only one MP under the age of 40, Stefanie Heimgartner (SVP/AG).

Party presidents shape the public discourse

Without exception, all party presidents have a significant level of public influence and rank among the 30 most publicly influential parliamentarians. This is primarily because they are the voice of their respective parties, leading to greater media exposure and public recognition. The co-presidency of the Social Democratic Party (SP), held by Cédric Wermuth and Mattea Meyer, has been particularly successful, with both ranking second and sixth, respectively. Similarly, Gerhard Pfister (Centre), Thierry Burkart (FDP), Jürg Grossen (Green Liberal Party), and Cédric Wermuth are all the highest-ranking representatives within their respective parties.



Canton of Lucerne with disproportionate parliamentary influence - the cantons of Zurich and Berne do not make use of their potential

The most populous cantons hold the greatest overall influence. However, when we compare the number of seats each canton has with the utilised potential of parliamentary influence per canton, it becomes evident that the canton of Lucerne exerts a disproportionate level of influence in parliament in terms of parliamentary seats. It is closely followed by the cantons of Valais and Zug.

In contrast, the larger cantons of Vaud, Aargau, Zurich, and Bern face challenges in realising their full potential of parliamentary influence.

This is mainly for two reasons: Due to the size of these cantons and the substantial number of parliamentary seats, not all parliamentarians have the opportunity to fully develop their potential. It is noticeable that particularly in these densely populated cantons, politicians from both left- and right-wing parties have limited influence. This is also linked to the fact that these parliamentarians often advocate positions that appeal to a minority within parliament.



The Influence of the Major Parties at a Glance

SVP: could be more politically influential

Of all the parties in parliament, the Swiss People's Party (SVP) holds the potential for the highest overall political influence but does not fully capitalise on it. Consequently, the Centre and the Liberal Party (FDP) wield more overall influence.

When assessed individually, both male and female members of the SVP rank the lowest on average in the parliamentary rankings compared to representatives of other parties. There are major differences within the two councils. In the Council of States, for instance, the SVP is just ahead of the SP in second place, with the SVP men having significantly more influence than the SVP's only female representative in the Council of States. In the National Council, on the other hand, the SVP clearly has the least influence of all parties and is in last place behind the Greens. The differences between the genders are also less pronounced in the National Council, with SVP women just ahead of SVP men in terms of influence.

A total of 13.3% of the 30 most politically influential parliamentarians come from the SVP: three SVP members of the Council of States (Hannes Germann, Alex Kuprecht and Werner Salzmann) and one SVP National Councillor, Céline Amaudruz. Of the 30 politicians with the least political influence, 60% come from the SVP, a total of 18 SVP parliamentarians (all from the National Council), including Magdalena Martullo-Blocher (227th) and Roger Köppel (220th).

In the public ranking, the SVP is in the midfield with the Greens and ahead of the Centre, GLP and FDP. Overall, SVP women have more public influence, despite the fact that the SVP did not provide a female member of the Council of States in the period analysed (Esther Friedli's election to the Council of States was not taken into account in the analysis).

30% of the 30 most influential politicians in the ranking on public influence come from the SVP. Roger Köppel leads the ranking; among the 30 least influential parliamentarians, there are ten SVP politicians (33.3%), all from the National Council.



In the upper midfield: FDP politically influential, publicly average

The FDP secures the second-highest position in the political rankings - behind the Centre party - and makes above average use of its influence potential.

Overall, FDP women are more influential than representatives from other parties; this is mainly due to the good positioning of Johanna Gapany as the only FDP member of the Council of States in 16th place. In the National Council, the FDP women are just behind the representatives of the Centre. The FDP men, on the other hand, are the most influential in the National Council compared to the other party representatives but are only in fourth place in the Council of States.

In total, 11 FDP representatives are among the 30 most influential MPs in parliament (36.7%), including Damian Müller in 4th place and Damien Cottier in 9th place, two of the top 10. There are three female FDP representatives among the last 30 members. The FDP thus represents 10% of the least influential parliamentarians.

In terms of public influence, the FDP is in the middle. In both the National Council and the Council of States, FDP women are more influential than their male party colleagues. This gender difference is particularly clear in the National Council.

Overall, only Thierry Burkart, as party president, makes it into the 30 most influential politicians in terms of public influence (a total of 3.3% of the top 30). On the other hand, 13.3% of the 30 least influential MPs come from the FDP (four FDP representatives).

FDP
Die Liberalen

The Centre, party of extremes: leader in parliamentary influence, taillight in public influence

The Centre Party stands out as the strongest party in parliament in terms of parliamentary influence. Overall, men are more influential than women within the Centre Party in both the National Council and the Council of States. Compared to the other parties, the Centre parliamentarians have the most influence in the Council of States but fall behind the FDP representatives in the National Council. The Centre women, on the other hand, have the most influence in the National Council compared to the other party representatives and are also just ahead of the FDP women. In the Council of States, they are well in the middle.

Overall, 36.7% of the 30 politically most influential councillors come from the Centre (a total of 11 Centre members), including six in the top 10: Erich Ettlin (1st place), Benedikt Würth (2nd place), Peter Hegglin (5th place), Beat Rieder (7th place), Pirmin Bischof (8th place) and Benjamin Roduit (10th place).

The Centre women neither make it into the top 30 nor among the weakest 30 parliamentarians. In total, there are only two representatives of the Centre (Andreas Meier, 243rd) and Marc Jost (242nd) among the 30 least influential representatives, i.e., a total of 6.7%.

In the ranking of public influence, the Centre is in last place compared to the other parties. Although the Centrists in the National Council are somewhat more influential than, for example, the FDP or GLP representatives, this is not enough to compensate for the comparatively poorer ratings of the members of the Council of States and the Centrist women in both councils.

Unsurprisingly, the Centre represents only 6.7% (two representatives) of the 30 most influential politicians in the public sphere: Gerhard Pfister in 13th place and Martin Candinas in 18th place. On the other hand, 20% of the 30 least influential parliamentarians are Centre representatives (a total of 6 Centre members).



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GLP, party of the average: in the midfield both parliamentary and publicly

The Green Liberal Party (GLP) makes optimal use of its parliamentary influence potential, outperforming both the SVP and the Greens in this regard.

Overall, male members of the GLP exhibit a higher level of influence compared to their female counterparts, although they rank in the middle when compared to representatives from other parties. In a party comparison, the GLP women are in second place overall (just ahead of the SVP representatives), although they are in the midfield in the National Council.

Only one GLP politician (3.3% of the top 30) is among the 30 most politically influential representatives: Roland Fischer in 27th place. This is also reflected at the other end of the ranking: with Céline Weber in 234th place, the GLP makes up 3.3% of the 30 least influential parliamentarians.

In the public ranking, the GLP is also in the midfield, together with the other centre (-right/-left) parties. Here, too, the GLP men are slightly more influential than their female party colleagues. Among the centre parties, the GLP representatives are the most influential overall - but fall behind the Centre representatives in the National Council. In the National Council, the GLP women fall behind the other party representatives in second place, just as they do in the overall comparison.

Even among the most publicly influential politicians, only 3.3% come from the GLP: party president Jürg Grossen is the only GLP member to make it into the top 30. Among the 30 least influential are two GLP members, Michel Matter (226th) and François Pointet (218th) (6.7%).



SP has greatest public influence, but only ranks fourth in parliament

The Social Democratic Party (SP) holds the fourth-highest level of influence among all parties in parliament.

In the Council of States, the SP has significantly more political influence than in the National Council, with male SP members in the Council of States ranking as the second most influential after the Centre Party representatives. In the National Council, the SP men fall behind the FDP, Mitte and GLP. SP women are in the middle of the pack both overall and in the two councils, together with their colleagues from the centre parties.

6.7% of the 30 most influential politicians in parliament come from the SP: Carlo Sommaruga is in third place and Ursula Schneider Schüttel in 28th place. Emmanuel Amoos is the only representative of the SP among the 30 least influential parliamentarians (share overall: 3.3%).

In the ranking on public influence, the SP clearly comes out on top. Both SP men and women are the most influential overall and dominate both councils. Although the SP only has two women in the Council of States, they have on average more than twice as much influence as the SP members of the Council of States. In the National Council, however, SP women lag somewhat behind their male party colleagues.

The fact that the SP has the most influence in the public sphere is also shown by a look at the top 30 in the ranking: 36.7% of the top 30 come from the SP, with six of the eleven members (Cédric Wermuth, Eva Herzog, Mattea Meyer, Daniel Jositsch, Jacqueline Badran, Flavia Wasserfallen) making it into the top ten. On the side of the 30 parliamentarians with the least influence in the public sphere, there are six SP members, making up a share of 20%.



Party of differences: Greens influential in public sphere, not setting tone in parliament

In terms of parliamentary influence, the Green Party ranks second to last.

This is also reflected in the gender comparison: when compared to colleagues from other parties, both Green Party men and women are placed second to last, ahead of only the SVP representatives. In the two councils, however, the situation is somewhat different. Although the Greens are in second to last place in both the Council of States and the National Council, the Greens outnumber their SVP, Centre and SP colleagues in the Council of States. However, this greater influence disappears again in the National Council. The Greens tend to be more influential in the Council of States than in the National Council.

3.3% of the 30 most influential politicians in parliament come from the Green Party: Maya Graf in 11th place is the only member to make it into the top 30. Among the 30 least influential parliamentarians, the Greens account for 16.7% (five members, including three women). Overall, Green women politicians are more influential than their male party colleagues.

In terms of public influence, the Greens make the best use of their potential after the SP. Again, female party members are more influential than their male counterparts in both the Council of States and the National Council, with the female Green politicians in the National Council being more influential than their party colleagues in the Council of States. While Green representatives fall behind SVP representatives in the comparison (in both councils), Green women representatives are more influential than their SVP colleagues. Overall, Green women are the most influential women parliamentarians in the public sphere behind SP women.

Of the 30 most influential MPs in the public ranking, 20% are Green representatives (five Green members in total). Among the least influential, on the other hand, there are only two Green members, Denis De La Reussille (242nd) and Stefania Prezioso Batou (216th), for a total of 6.7%.



About the Index

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Methodology

The BCW Influence Index uses a data-driven methodology to measure who exerts the greatest influence in parliament. The rankings are part of an empirical analysis.

The results do not reflect any support of parliamentarians or their positions by BCW.

Influence is measured by two largely independent dimensions:

- Parliamentary influence: the ability to influence legislation, shape the political agenda, win votes and gain positions of power.
- Public influence: the ability to gain visibility in the public sphere, reach audiences on the internet and in the media, gain public exposure and reach supporters for one's ideas.

A wide range of over 1 million data points are collected based on a defined set of parameters. These reflect a variety of influence indicators, which are then combined into a single score for both parliamentary and public influence, using a commonly accepted statistical method to calculate indices.

Measurement period: data collection took place between 1 June 2022 and 31 July 2023.

About BCW

BCW is the global communications agency built to move people. BCW partners with clients in the B2B, consumer, corporate, crisis management, healthcare, public affairs, purpose and technology sectors to set strategic direction for all communications and create powerful and unexpected ideas that earn attention. BCW uses earned media, paid media, creative technology, data, AI and an expanding suite of innovative capabilities to move people with power and precision to move its clients forward. BCW is a part of WPP (NYSE: WPP), a creative transformation company. For more information, visit www.bcw-global.com.

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