
Health and healthcare pathways among older adults in French-speaking Switzerland

Information sheet

Dear Sir or Madam,

We invite you to take part in our study.

This study is conducted by Paolo Martinelli, doctoral student at the University of Lausanne (UNIL), under the supervision of Prof. Dario Spini (UNIL) and Prof. Francesca Bosisio (HEIG-VD).

Below, you will find the key points to keep in mind.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. All data collected for this project are subject to strict data protection rules.

Why are we conducting this study?

Some older adults may face difficulties accessing healthcare. For example, obstacles can arise due to language barriers, transportation issues to hospitals, lack of information, or the complexity of the healthcare system. In such cases, many people find solutions by relying on their personal and social resources, such as support from family and friends. In Switzerland, we still know little about the challenges retirees face in the healthcare system and the strategies they use to meet their health needs. This study seeks to better understand these difficulties and identify practical ways to improve access to healthcare for older adults in French-speaking Switzerland.

Who can participate in this study?

This study is open to people aged 65 to 99 who live in French-speaking Switzerland (in one of the following cantons: Fribourg, Geneva, Jura, Neuchâtel, Valais, or Vaud). However, individuals over the age of 99, those living in institutions, or those who no longer have decision-making capacity cannot take part.

If you have been invited to participate, it means that you were randomly selected among older adults currently residing in one of the cantons of French-speaking Switzerland.

What should I do if I agree to participate?

If you agree to participate, we invite you to complete a questionnaire. You may fill it out on your own or with the help of a close relative or friend.

Completing the questionnaire will take **about 20 minutes**. You may complete it **until December 12, 2025**. Once finished, please return it using the **prepaid envelope** provided.

What are the benefits and risks of participating?

Benefits

Your participation will not bring you any direct benefit. However, by completing the questionnaire, you will have the opportunity to reflect on your experience with the healthcare system in French-speaking Switzerland and on the resources (e.g., support from relatives) you use to meet your healthcare needs. In addition, the results of this study may later help improve policies and initiatives that facilitate healthcare access for older adults in this region.

Risks and inconveniences

Participation in this study involves no risks or disadvantages.

Is participation voluntary?

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate, or if you change your mind after having agreed, you do not need to provide any justification. This decision will have no negative consequences. You may withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason. If you withdraw, your data will not be included in the study materials. If you choose to participate, we simply ask that you follow the instructions provided in the questionnaire.

How will my responses be handled?

Your responses will remain confidential and anonymous, in accordance with the Swiss Federal Act on Data Protection. Data will only be analyzed and published in the form of aggregate statistics. Only the researchers responsible for this project—Mr. Paolo Martinelli, Prof. Dario Spini, and Prof. Francesca Bosisio—will have access to your responses. These individuals are bound by professional confidentiality.

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Lausanne (approval code: E_SSP_052025_00001).

How can I consult the study results?

Starting in June 2026, you will be able to consult the main findings of this research on the website of the Center for Research in Health Psychology, Aging, and Sport (PHASE) at the University of Lausanne: <https://www.unil.ch/phase/fr/home.html>. The results will be presented in blog format. If you do not have internet access and would like to receive a summary of the main results, you may indicate your postal address at the end of the questionnaire, and a printed version will be sent to you.

Will I receive any compensation?

You will not receive any compensation for participating in this study.

Who is funding this study?

This study is funded by the University of Lausanne (UNIL) and the School of Engineering and Management of the Canton of Vaud (HEIG-VD).

Who can I contact if I have questions?

You may contact the research team at any time if you have questions about the study or uncertainties during or after your participation:

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