



PRESS RELEASE

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Statistics on Swiss Towns 2020: A look beyond the core city limits

In recent years Switzerland's resident population has grown particularly in areas with an urban character. Today almost three quarters of Switzerland's population live in the 49 agglomerations and their core cities. This growth has been accompanied by the building of many new dwellings and the creation of jobs. Currently, 4.1 million jobs in the Swiss labour market are located in the agglomerations, where around 72.6% of establishments are based. These are some of the findings of the new "Statistics on Swiss Towns" from the Swiss Union of Cities and Towns (SSV) and the Federal Statistical Office (FSO), with a special focus on the agglomerations.

Agglomerations are rarely in the limelight despite the fact that they have to cope with challenges similar to those facing the core cities. This year's edition of the "Statistics on Swiss Towns" from the SSV and the FSO therefore paints a more comprehensive picture of these urban landscapes by means of detailed data on population, work and income, construction and housing, tourism and mobility. The "Statistics on Swiss Towns" that appears in the Statistical Yearbook is based on data from 171 towns and urban communes.

According to the FSO definition¹, an agglomeration includes both agglomeration core cities (amongst others, the core cities) as well as the communes in agglomeration belts. The number of agglomerations has doubled since the middle of the last century: According to the agglomeration demarcation in place at the time, in 1950 there were 24 agglomerations in Switzerland. These were home to 2.1 million people (45% of the Swiss resident population)². Today there are 49 agglomerations in Switzerland. 73% of the more than 8.5 million people residing in Switzerland live in these areas.

If we consider all areas of urban character, urban Switzerland accounts for 83% of the population. Agglomeration growth has been particularly strong since the turn of the millennium and at 17.7% even outstrips national population growth of 17.2%. Foreign nationals accounted for 27.7% of the agglomerations' population in 2018. This is slightly higher than the national average of 25.1%.

Driving force in the Swiss economy

Of the 5.2 million jobs in the Swiss labour market, 4.1 million are located in the agglomerations. The vital role played by the agglomerations in the labour market is reflected in the fact that just under three quarters (72.6%) of establishments are found in them. A sixth of Swiss establishments are found in the agglomeration of Zurich alone. 80.2% of jobs in the agglomerations are found in the tertiary sector, 18.3% in the industrial sector and 1.5% in agriculture.

¹ Link to FSO publication: "Switzerland's areas with urban character 2012" (2014)
<https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/statistics/catalogues-databases/publications.assetdetail.349557.html>

² Federal Office for Spatial Development (ARE), Urban space monitoring, Subject area A1: Development of Swiss Towns and Agglomerations, synthesis document Version 01.03



The distribution of unemployed persons is similar to that of jobs: Roughly 80% of unemployed residents in Switzerland can be found in one of the 49 agglomerations; 43% of them in the three largest agglomerations of Zurich, Geneva and Basel.

Housing stock growth keeps apace

To house the some 6.2 million residents, there are more than 3.2 million dwellings in the agglomerations. This represents 70.7% of all dwellings in Switzerland. The biggest change in the number of dwellings was registered in agglomerations with more than 500'000 residents between 2000 and 2009. The agglomeration of Zurich saw its housing stock grow by 64'048 dwellings. In the agglomerations of Geneva and Basel, the numbers of new dwellings were 20'603 and 16'907 respectively. The three largest agglomerations also ranked highest between 2010 and 2017 in terms of new dwelling numbers. It is noteworthy that between 2000 and 2017 approximately the same number of dwellings were built in the five largest agglomerations alone as in the rest of Switzerland.

FDP and SP strongest parties

As in previous editions, the "Statistics on Swiss Towns" also contains data on urban politics. As has been the case in recent years, in 2019 the FDP was the strongest party in urban executive authorities, with a 28.1% share of seats. The SP followed with 20.7%. Compared with the previous year the CVP lost 0.5%, only holding onto a 15.3% share of seats. With 11.6%, the SVP remained in fourth place. The Greens had a 6.9% share. In the agglomerations' parliaments, the FDP held 23.6% of seats, followed by the SP with 21.7% and the SVP with 15.7%. In fourth place came the CVP with 10.2% of seats. The Greens had a 9.8% share of seats.

Available in digital form and as Open Government Data

In addition to data on the agglomerations, the 81st edition of the "Statistics on Swiss Towns" is also full of information on subjects such as population, work and income, finance, mobility, and education. Contents are, of course, available digitally with interactive graphs via an app and in a web publication. The data forming the basis of the publication will also be available for further use to a wide audience via the FSO data catalogue and on the opendata.swiss platform.

Additional information:

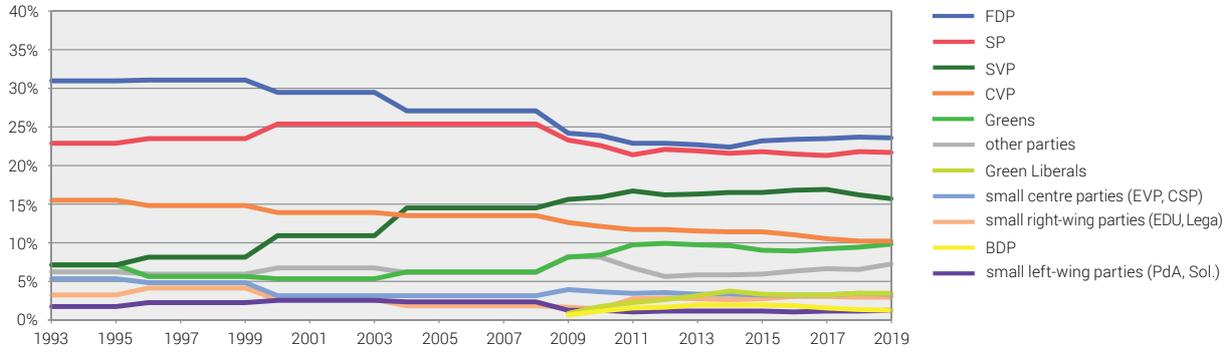
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Background information about Swiss Union of Cities and Towns

The Union of Cities and Towns represents the interests and concerns of Swiss towns, agglomerations and urban communes. It is the voice of urban Switzerland, where three quarters of Switzerland's population lives and where 84% of the country's economic output is produced.

Change in seat distribution in urban parliaments, 1993–2019

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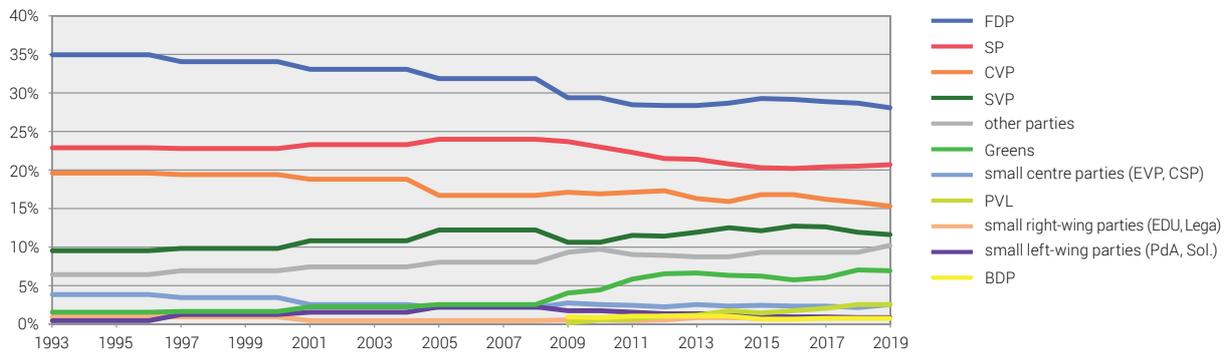


Source: FSO – Swiss Union of Cities

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Change in seat distribution in urban executive authorities, 1993–2019

G2



Source: FSO – Swiss Union of Cities

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