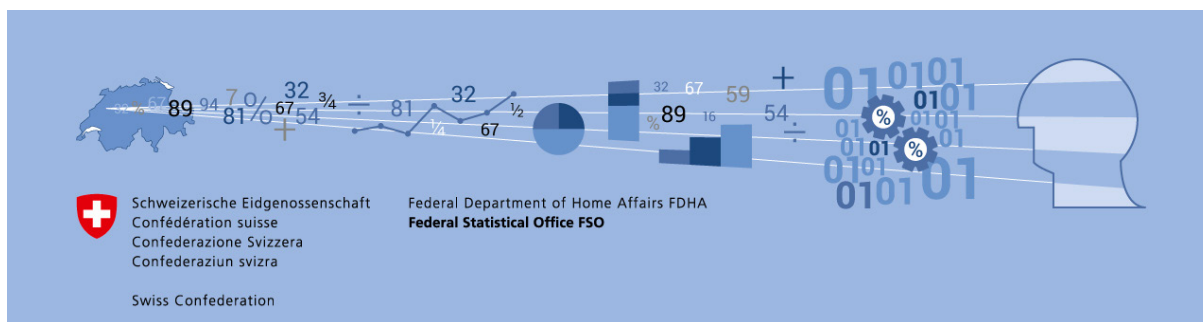




Press release

Embargo: 16.6.2023, 8:00

01 Population

Population censuses in Switzerland before 1850

Population figures from before 1850 available for the first time at the local level

This publication from the Federal Statistical Office (FSO) provides an overview of all population censuses in Switzerland from the period before the first federal census of 1850. It includes the Helvetic Republic population census of 1798/99 at commune level and also all spatially complete surveys during the Ancien Régime and the first half of the 19th century. The author of the work, Martin Schuler, researched in all of Switzerland's cantonal and episcopal archives as well as in some neighbouring territories.

Population data from parishes and communes form the centrepiece of the publication. Newly developed maps visualise the territorial structures down to the local level for the end of the Ancien Régime, during the Helvetic Republic and for the period after 1803/15. A chapter is devoted to each canton. The publication also deals with the territories that belonged to the Old Swiss Confederacy until 1789. The chapters consist of a brief historical outline of how the territory developed, an analysis of the population surveys and population trends. Tables with population figures from all of the surveys covered are also included.

The publication also has a historical introduction on the development of Switzerland's territory as a whole, and provides a definition of the different types of population surveys as well as a description of their respective quality and political context. The Helvetic Republic population census of 1798/99 and the population census of the Swiss Diet of 1837/38 are described and documented across the whole of Switzerland. The cantonal surveys vary widely, ranging from annual surveys in Neuchâtel to a complete lack of data from non-church related surveys in other cantons.

Link to publication and data download or QR code:

<https://www.census1850.bfs.admin.ch/de/vor1850.html> (in German)

<https://www.census1850.bfs.admin.ch/fr/avant1850.html> (in French)



German



French

Historical statistics: Cooperation between federal statistics and research

On the occasion of previous censuses, the FSO issued publications on historical trends in the population figures of Swiss communes starting with the first federal census in 1850, in each case with information on the changes in the population of the communes. Founded in 1860, the "Statistical Office", predecessor of today's FSO, collected, processed and analysed quantitative information down to the local level from the beginning of its activities, thus providing important foundations for the young Confederation.

However, in contrast to France or the Scandinavian countries, for example, Switzerland has only a few and incomplete older data series for the period before 1850. A few years ago, the geographer Martin Schuler suggested to the FSO that it publish a publication with the detailed communal results of the Helvetic Republic census. With increasing clarity, the project was extended to data sources not previously considered and now includes not only the 1798 data series, but all population surveys conducted in the territories of the Old Confederation and the present-day cantons. This comprehensive approach also required reconstruction of the territorial changes in the cantons, districts and communes, as well as in the territories prior to 1798. Thus, for the first time, this work contains a list of all commune splittings and mergers as well as commune reallocations to different districts or cantons.

Information

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New Publication

«Population censuses in Switzerland before 1850»,
Publication available only in German (FSO number: 2223-2300) and French (2224-2300)
Order: tel.: +41 58 463 60 60, email: order@bfs.admin.ch

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Access to results

This press release has been established on the basis of the European Statistics Code of Practice, which ensures the independence, integrity and accountability of national and community statistical offices. Privileged access is supervised and under embargo.

No privileged access has been granted for this press release.