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Panorama of Swiss Society 2024:
Ageing and Old Age in Contemporary Society

Older people are living longer and feeling younger

The Swiss population is ageing. Life expectancy is rising and after retirement people can look forward to making active use of a number of years in good health. Older people believe that old age starts at 80. There is increasing diversity in lifestyles and household types in the post-retirement life phase. Inequalities in people's financial situation, health and social participation are observed. These are some of the findings published in the second edition of A Panorama of Swiss Society, which focuses on the topic of ageing and old age in contemporary society.

In nine chapters, the new *Panorama of Swiss Society* publication takes a look at various aspects of ageing and old age. Its aim is to delve deeper into selected topics, painting a discerning and multi-layered picture of different aspects and dimensions of ageing in Switzerland.

The new quality of ageing

Today's senior citizens not only have a longer life expectancy than previous generations; they are also generally well educated and the majority has sufficient financial security. They also remain healthy for a relatively long time. Many older people are personally or socially active and thus contribute to social cohesion. They therefore no longer correspond to the conventional deficit-based image of ageing, which is associated with a decline in physical and cognitive abilities, inactivity, social withdrawal, loneliness, need and dependency. This can also be seen in older people's own assessment of old age: The subjectively perceived start of 'being old' has risen from an average of 69 years in the 1990s to around 80 years at present.

However, longer life expectancy does not protect against illness and physical limitations. In addition, individual biographical events as well as social advantages and disadvantages systematically accumulate over the entire life course for certain population groups according to gender, and social or migration background. Ageing is therefore characterised by increasing diversity and differentiation of life situations, as well as by greater leeway and persistent social inequalities. Life in the 'third age' (between 65 and 80) when the majority of older people are still active and healthy, contrasts with the 'fourth age' (over 80), in which older people become increasingly dependent and frail. It is this group of very old people (80+) that is growing the fastest.

Voluntary work, more mobility and more outpatient care

Just under a quarter of 65–74 year olds and a tenth of over 74 year olds are involved in organised voluntary work in associations and institutions. The figures for informal voluntary work are 40% and 20% respectively. Informal volunteering is often done for other older people or for the care of (grand)children.

The greater heterogeneity and diversity of the living situations of older people is also a consequence of increasing mobility in a globalised world. International mobility and migration behaviour is influenced by various factors, e.g. cost of living, family motives, home ownership, leisure time and climate—both for people with and without a migration background.

Against the backdrop of rising life expectancy and the increasing diversity of individual ageing, long-term care for older people has changed considerably in recent years. Institutional care (old-age and nursing homes) is declining, outpatient care and intermediate structures (day care, night care, short stays in old-age and nursing homes, retirement housing, etc.) are increasing in scope. The boundaries between inpatient care and remaining at home are becoming blurred. Although this development is general, there are major differences between regions and cantons.

Education and income—important factors in inequality

Although the situation of most older people is good, poverty in old age persists. In particular, people whose income consists mainly of first-pillar benefits (Old-age and Survivors' Insurance (OAS I) and, where applicable, supplementary benefits) are often in a poor financial position and are affected by above-average material and social deprivation. Several other characteristics of poverty in old age include gender, age, partnership, nationality and level of education—the same factors that shaped 'traditional' old-age poverty throughout the 20th century. They also play a role in health inequalities: The level of education, income, migration experience and social isolation can influence the state of health in old age and impact on life expectancy.

The same applies to opportunities for social participation. The level of participation is closely linked to educational level, income and other factors of social inequality. This holds true despite the fact that the range of opportunities for older people to participate in further education, physical and sporting activities, voluntary work, political participation or digital activities has increased, as have opportunities to continue with professional activities.

This edition of the *Panorama of Swiss Society* demonstrates that the way individuals and society age is changing and will continue to change under the influence of a complex interplay of factors.

Panorama of Swiss Society
The 'Panorama of Swiss Society' series is jointly published by the Federal Statistical Office, the Universities of Neuchâtel and Fribourg and the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences and is the continuation of the previous 'Swiss Social Report' that has been published every four years since 2000 on different subjects. The aim of the new series is to make important findings on key socio-political topics and fundamental trends in Swiss society accessible for public interest. The first issue in 2020 focused on the topic of migration. The current issue is dedicated to the ageing of society.
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Chapter	Authors	Title
Chapter 1	Monica Budowski, Jürg Furrer, and Christian Suter (University of Fribourg, Federal Statistical Office and University of Neuchâtel)	Introduction: New life situations and continuities in ageing
Chapter 2	François Höpflinger (University of Zurich)	Life situations of older people—observations and trends
Chapter 3	Martina Guggisberg, Stephan Häni, Caterina Modetta, Dominique Oehrli, and Michaël Papinutto (Federal Statistical Office)	Financial situation of the retirement-age population
Chapter 4	Alexander Seifert and Mike Martin (University of Applied Sciences Northwestern Switzerland and University of Zurich)	Social participation and exclusion in today's ageing society
Chapter 5	Adrian Fischer, Markus Lamprecht, Hanspeter Stamm, and Nicole Schöbi (Lamprecht & Stamm Sozialforschung und Beratung and Federal Statistical Office)	Voluntary work by and for older people
Chapter 6	Mihaela Nedelcu and Laura Ravazzini (University of Neuchâtel)	Ageing in place, abroad, or across borders
Chapter 7	Sonia Pellegrini (Swiss Health Observatory Obsan)	Developments in long-term care
Chapter 8	Monica Budowski and Ivo Staub (University of Fribourg)	Planning and preparation for ageing and old age
Chapter 9	Sabina Misoch (University of Applied Sciences of Eastern Switzerland)	Demographic transition and very old age by international comparison

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Access to results

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