



Statistics on Social Assistance Recipients

Description

The Statistics on Social Assistance Recipients (social assistance statistics) provide information on the number social assistance recipients, the type of means-tested social benefits for poverty reduction that they receive, the duration for which they have been in receipt of benefits and their family structure. The detailed results close the previous information gap at national, cantonal and commune levels.

For the purposes of the social assistance statistics, data are collected on economic social assistance, means-tested social benefits for poverty reduction and social assistance in the field of refugees and asylum seekers. The social benefits listed are included in the inventory of means-tested social benefits for poverty reduction.

The statistics provide information on:

- the situation and structure of the benefit recipient population at national, cantonal and commune levels
- the social and economic circumstances of benefit recipients
- the composition the social benefits received
- the composition of recipient groups
- the development and duration of benefit receipt and the reasons for the termination of benefits

Available since:

2000: Pilot survey on economic social assistance where the social assistance costs are financed by the cantons and communes

2005-2006: First results on economic social assistance where the social assistance costs are financed by the cantons and communes

2007: Introduction of the survey on other means-tested social benefits for poverty reduction

2009: Data collection on social assistance recipients for whom the Confederation reimburses the cantons through global flat-rate subsidy type 2 for refugees. This encompasses refugees granted asylum and refugees for whom less than five years have passed since their asylum application and temporarily admitted refugees who have been in Switzerland for less than seven years. These data are collected within the scope of the Social Assistance Statistics in the Context of Refugees (SH-FlüStat).

2014–2016: Project to extend the Social Assistance Statistics to include data on social assistance recipients for whom the Confederation compensates the cantons through global flat-rate subsidy type 1 for refugees. This encompasses asylum seekers and temporarily admitted persons who have been in Switzerland for less than seven years.

Since 2017: Survey to collect data for the Statistics on Social Assistance in the Context of Asylum (SH-AsylStat). The results from the 2016 survey year were published in December 2017.

2019–2026: Project to modernise the social assistance statistics, primarily by switching from an annual survey to monthly transmission of data drawn from data providers' day-to-

day case management. Data is selected for transmission to the FSO on the basis of the recipient accounting system: data from any case file containing a transaction in the previous month is transmitted to the FSO. The FSO then harmonises the data from the accounting system and applies standardised rules to determine whether a case is relevant for statistical purposes. A social assistance recipient is defined as any person whose case file indicates that they have received benefit payments.

Methodology

Individual data for the social assistance statistics are transmitted monthly at the commune level; data for a given month are transmitted the following month (comprehensive survey).

Data provision and data analysis:

Transaction data from the recipient accounting system are submitted to the FSO on a monthly basis. At the FSO, these data are categorised according to statistical financial variables for analysis purposes. In accordance with Article 14 of the Federal Statistics Act (FStatA), only case files, recipient and transaction data that have been identified by the FSO as relevant for statistical purposes are processed and analysed further.

The eSOSTAT program is provided free of charge to the authority conducting the survey if it does not have its own case management system.

Variables:

The variable catalogue can be found on the Homepage [Statistics on Social Assistance Recipients](#) (in German, French or Italian).

Survey period:

01.01 to 31.12

Periodicity:

Annual

Degree of regionalisation:

Switzerland, cantons, communes

Data linkage:

Population and Households Statistics (STATPOP)

Administrative data from the Federal Social Insurance Office, State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM)

Revision policy

Routine revisions:

None

Methodological revisions:

Methodological revisions are carried out as necessary (e.g. revision of sources or concept adjustments).

Revisions to date:

2011 data: STATPOP replaces ESPOP as the reference population.

The social assistance rate and the recipient household rate are calculated as a proportion of the permanent resident population. The statistics are based on data from the previous year's STATPOP survey.

2024-2025 data: Modernisation of social assistance statistics – Data providers' transition to the updated data collection system took place in stages during 2024 and 2025. From the 2025 survey year onwards, the published results are based entirely on the modernised methodology.

The social assistance rate and the recipient household rate are expressed as proportions of the permanent resident population.

For detailed information about the methodology, visit the Homepage [Statistics on Social Assistance Recipients](#).

Legal basis

Federal Statistics Act (FStatA) of 9 October 1992 (SR 431.01) and Federal Statistics Ordinance of 30 April 2025 (SR 431.011). Annex No. 08.04. *Erhebung für die Statistik der Sozialhilfeempfängerinnen und Sozialhilfeempfänger* [Data Collection for the Statistics on Social Assistance Recipients]

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