



# Federal Population Census, 1850-2000

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## Description

Every 10 years, from 1850 to 2000, a census was realized with the help of a questionnaire to which the whole population of Switzerland had to answer. Its results showed the demographic, spatial, social and economic developments of the country. They were used for policy planning and decision-making in many areas: employment, education, family and social policies, environmental protection, transport and settlement policies, business development. The census was also a vital tool used in sampling surveys (weighting and extrapolation).

Available since:

First statistical reference year: 1850

Features registered:

Individuals, households and economically active persons within the resident population (both economic domicile and (from 1990) the legal residence was taken into account), linked to georeferenced buildings and dwellings (completely from 1990, partially for the years 1970 and 1980), places of work and places of study.

Key variables:

Individuals (not all variables are available for the entire survey period 1850 – 2000): date or year of birth, gender, marital status, citizenship, place of residence, place of birth, position in household, number of children, religion, languages, education, learnt and practised profession, current employment situation, job title, place of work/study, distance travelled to place of work/study, means of transport used, commute time  
Households: size of household (number of individuals living in the household), type of household

Accommodation (data available from 1960): apartment floor, number of rooms, surface area, kitchen, type of occupant, amount of rent paid

Building (data available from 1960): geocoordinates (from 1990), type of building, time of construction, renovation, number of floors, heating, hot water, building floor, type of owner

Derived variables: type of commune, urban areas, language region, socioprofessional categories, household reference person

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## Methodology

Complete enumeration with written questionnaires. Participation mandatory. In 2000, most of the inhabitants received the questionnaires by mail, in some communes they were distributed by enumerators. The questionnaires could be sent via Internet (E-Census); 4.2% of the population took advantage of this possibility.

Degree of regionalisation:

Until 1960 information is available on the level of the communes, from 1970 on the level of buildings

Periodicity:

Every ten years. Last census held in 2000.

Reference period:

1850 to 2000, usually in December (5 December for the year 2000)

Statistical quality of data:

In 2000, 1.3 per thousand of the population did not take part in the Federal Population Census. Missing data for variables date of birth, gender, marital status, place of residence, citizenship, main language, position in household, current employment situation were completed to reach 100 per cent. For other variables, missing data depended on the

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quality of the replies and the volume of data which could be added by automatic corrections or programs of imputation.

Revision:

Starting with 2010, the Population Census takes place annually, under a new form. The SFSO uses primarily data from population registers to collect information and combines it with sample surveys. Only part of the population (about 5%) is interviewed, either by written questionnaires or by phone. Census statistics now include (article 3 of the Swiss Federal Ordinance on the Federal Population Census of 19 December 2008, CC 431.112.1): a. basic statistics; b. structural statistics; c. topic-based statistics; d. statistics on topics of current interest (statistics Omnibus). The basic statistics on persons and households are called "Statistic on population and households" (STATPOP) and the structural statistics "Structural survey". Their day of reference is the 31st of December of each year. More information will be found in their respective overviews.

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## Legal bases

Swiss Federal Law of 26 June 1998 on the Federal Population Census (CC 431.112)  
Swiss Federal Ordinance of 13 January 1999 on the Federal Population Census (CC 431.112.1)

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## Organization

Federal Statistical Office (FSO), with the help of the cantons, the communes and external companies

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