

What people in Switzerland worry about



▲ What do we know about the mood in Switzerland? Over the past 25 years, old-age provision has always been one of the biggest concerns of the Swiss. 123rf.com

What are the five biggest problems in Switzerland? Every year, several thousand residents are asked this question in a nationwide poll. Here's an interactive look at the things that have given the Swiss sleepless nights over the years.

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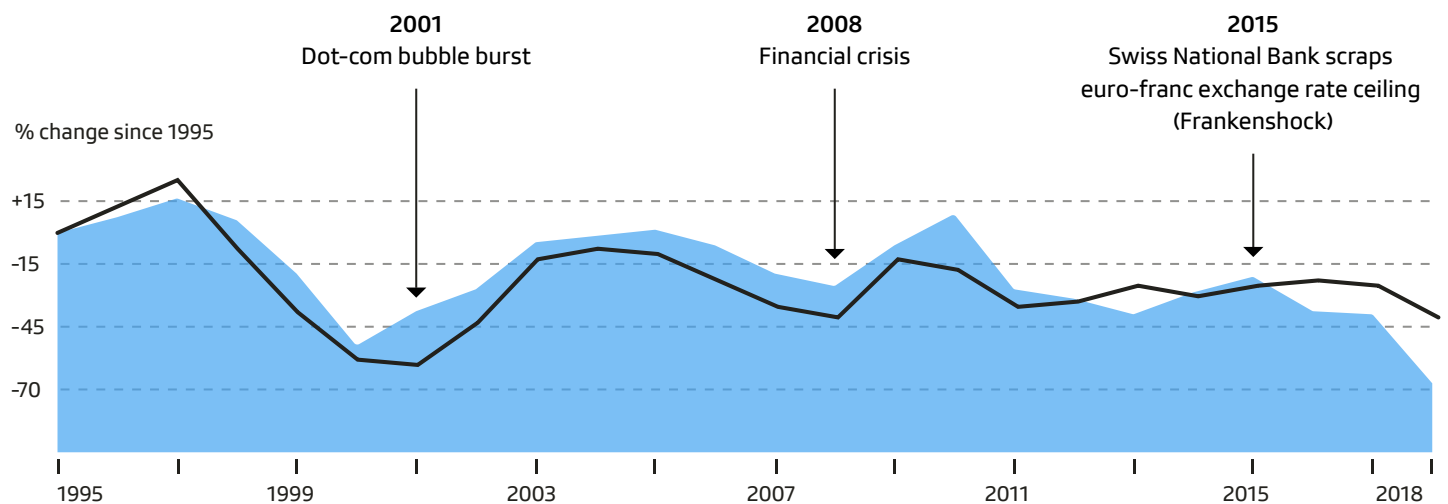
the SRF data team

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The **Worry Barometer** is a well-known survey published every year by Credit Suisse and the gis.bern research institute. The annual ranking of Swiss residents' top concerns is regarded as an important policy tool to find out what's on the electorate's mind. This is especially interesting with the upcoming federal elections this autumn.

The main concerns in 2018 - and how they have evolved since 1995 - provide good insights into the current state of mind of the Swiss people. This chart shows the developments over the years. **The higher and thicker the line, the more often** a particular issue was discussed during the year. Keep scrolling to find out more.





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Where do these worries emerge from? How are they linked? And what has politics got to do with it all?


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Over the past 25 years **unemployment** has almost always been the biggest concern.

In 1997, over 80% of voters said **unemployment** was one of the most pressing problems. In 2018, this fell to 20%. What happened?

The importance of this concern is clearly linked to the state of the economy. Recent events like the **financial crisis** hit the Swiss economy and caused workers to fear for their jobs.

The Swiss are extremely sensitive to how well the economy is doing, for example, **the unemployment rate**. When it goes up, people are much more fearful about their jobs.

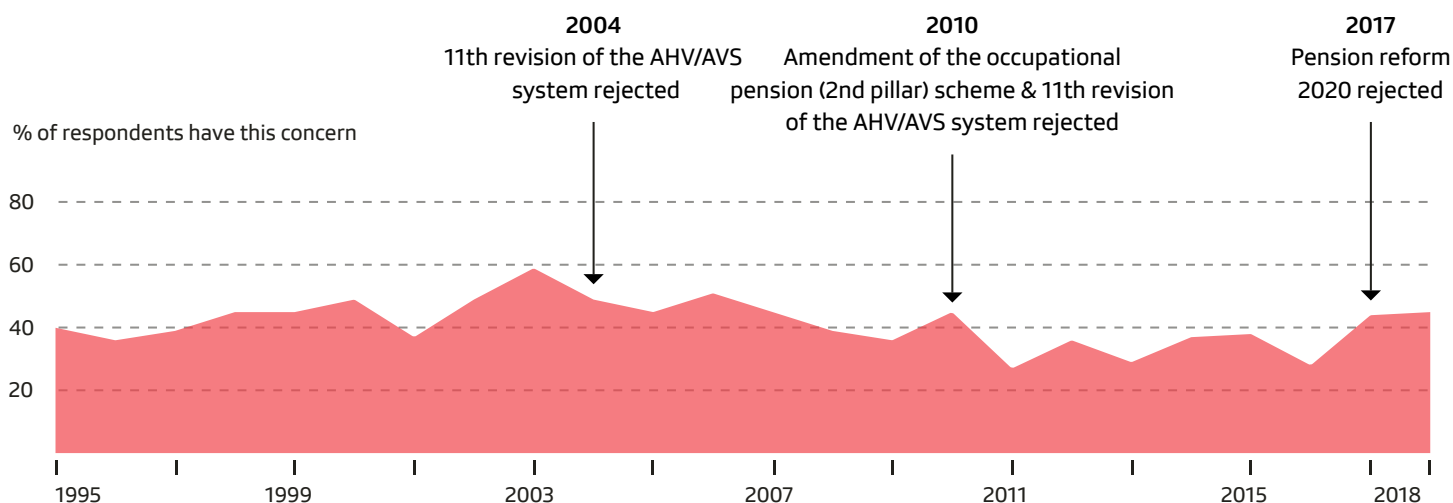
Peoples' worries are complex and have many causes. It would be too easy to attribute them to a single reason. The same goes for unemployment. And yet certain indicators, such as the unemployment rate, are strongly linked to the population's mood.

For Cloé Jans, spokesperson for the gfs.bern research institute, unemployment is a typical Swiss concern: "Compared to the rest of Europe, the situation in Switzerland is relatively comfortable. There is hardly any corruption, huge trust in the state authorities and little crime. If we have no urgent concerns but we worry about unemployment. This is linked to the Swiss work ethic. It's not just about feeding one's family, it's about status and identity."

When a phenomenon intensifies, people's fear grows. This seems quite logical, but specific events are not the reasons behind the concern.

The old age and survivors' insurance scheme (AHV/AVS): a policy with no solutions

People get more worried when politicians fail to find solutions to problems. The best example of this is the old age pension system.



What about my **pensions**? Will I still get a pension in 30 years? These questions have risen up the rankings and were the most frequently cited concerns in 2018.

It's not surprising. The future of **Swiss pensions** lies in politicians' hands. Not a year has gone by without a heated debate on this issue in parliament - but without a satisfactory outcome.

In recent years, Swiss voters have rejected several revisions of the pension system.

Over this period, **eleven popular initiatives**
proposing different solutions also failed at the ballot box.

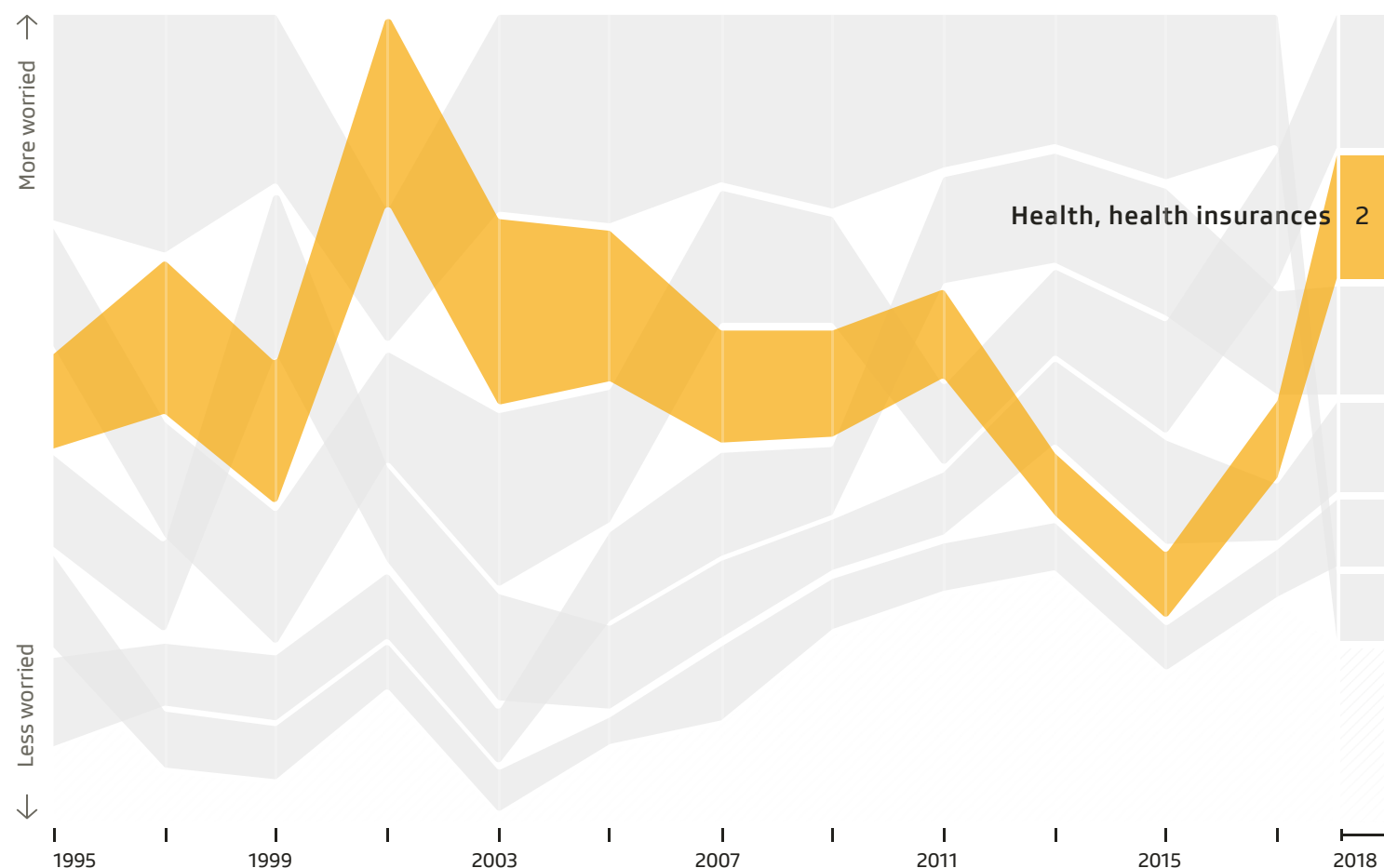
The pressures meanwhile remained high.

Politicians' failure to find a majority solution also had an impact on the confidence of the population. According to gfs.bern, the proportion of dissatisfied voters has risen sharply: in 2018, 45% believed that politicians would fail to deliver on decisive issues.

A few weeks ago, however, Swiss voters accepted a law linking corporate tax and pensions. Jans says this should reduce the pressures slightly, even if it does not totally resolve the pension question.

Health: the sacred cow

Pensions is not the only topic politicians are struggling with. Another constant worry of Swiss voters is how much things cost.

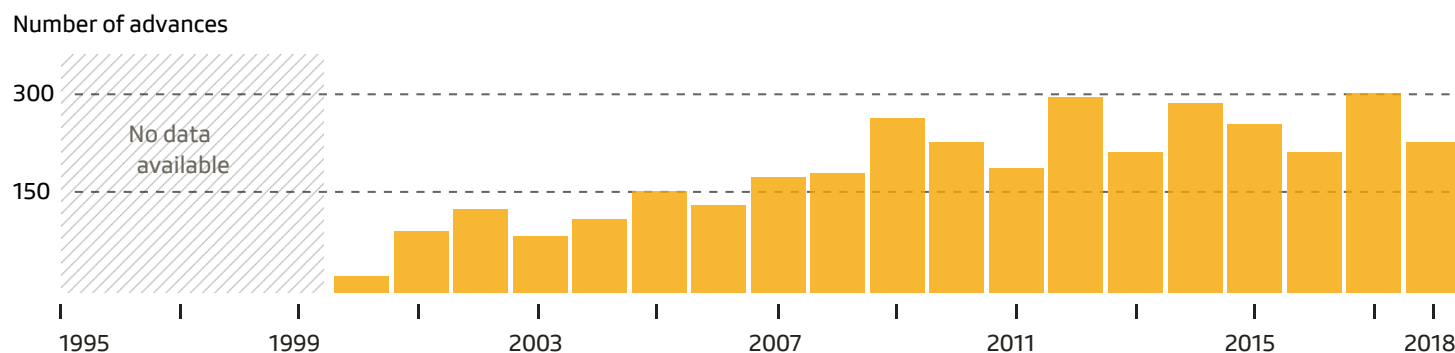


The issue of **health** can generate many concerns, such as fears of illnesses, deteriorating health or worries about the quality of hospital services. And then there are skyrocketing healthcare costs.

The healthcare market is growing. Every year, people use more services. New, expensive treatments are being developed and the Swiss are getting older. This has consequences.

Since the introduction of compulsory basic health insurance in 1996, **health costs** have more than doubled. The Swiss healthcare system has become one of the most expensive in the world.

But parliament has been busy. Over a short period of time, both hospital and nursing care financing were regulated. The healthcare system is gradually being restructured and the number of parliamentary initiatives on health issues has grown.

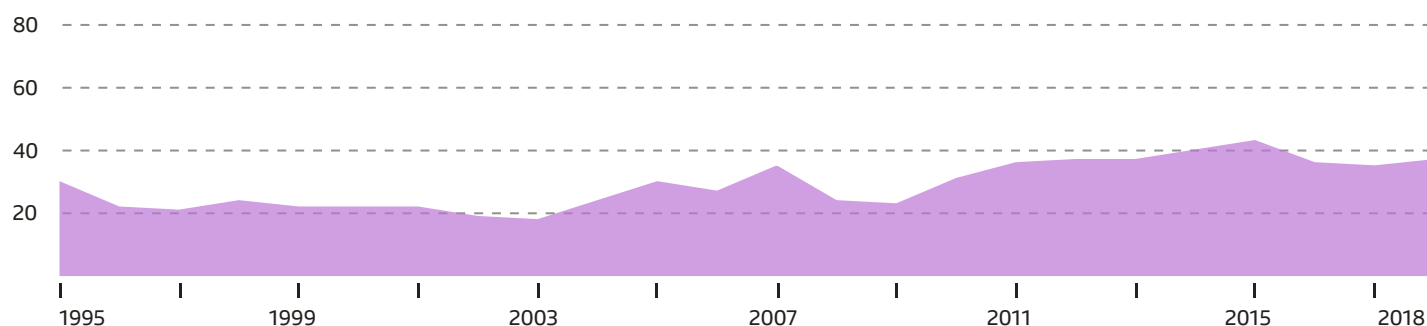


But concerns remain. For Cloé Jans, health is a special case: "The thing about healthcare is that the population finds it too expensive, but nobody wants it to be reduced." But certainly the large number of reforms is an indication to the electorate that things are moving.

Foreigners and asylum

In recent years, the issues of "foreigners" and "refugees/asylum" have been omnipresent in Switzerland. There can be broken down into two categories, but they essentially the same thing: worries about the consequences of immigration. Under slogans like "density stress", "Islamisation" or "mass immigration", these concerns have found their way into the political debate.

% of respondents have this concern



Refugees / asylum refers to persons seeking protection who apply for asylum in Switzerland. **Foreigners** refers to people who move to Switzerland to live and work either from the European Union or from third countries.

With **refugees / asylum** the case is clear: the **evolution of annual asylum applications** has an impact on the concerns of the population. Asylum applications correspond to geopolitical events such as the war in Kosovo.

But where do rising concerns about **foreigners stem from?**

One indication is the development of **immigration** to Switzerland. This has grown since 2002 and the entry into force of the Free Movement of Persons agreement with the EU.

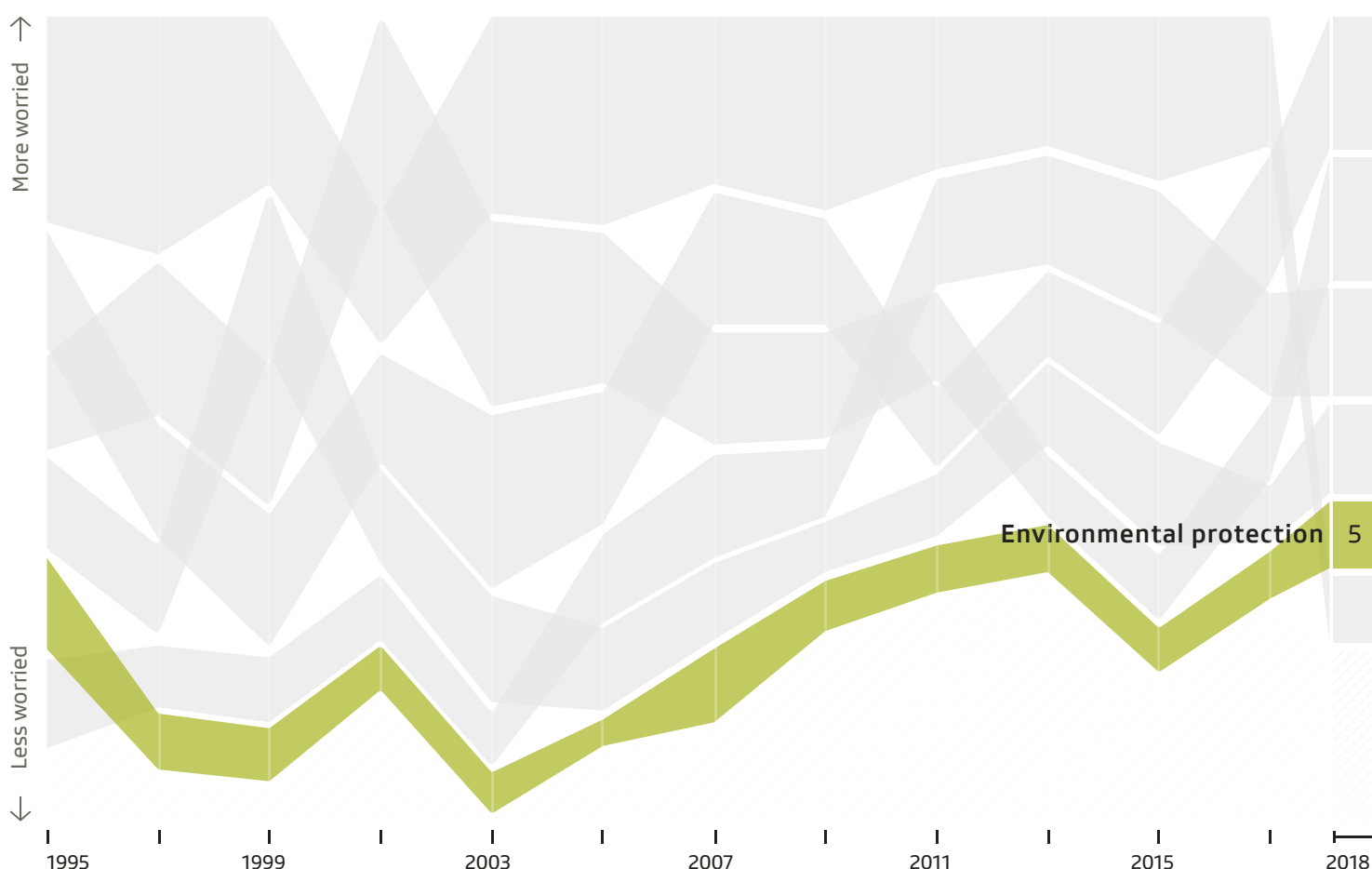
Another answer is the public debate in Switzerland in 2007. At that time, there were big discussions around the deportation initiative put forward by the conservative right Swiss People's Party.

During its campaigning, the People's Party was successful when it combined issues such as "crime" and "foreigners". In the 2007 parliamentary elections, the party won significantly and the initiative was accepted. The public debate had an obvious effect on the issues the population worried about.

When a political party cultivates a theme, it's able to help shape specific concerns and benefit from them. But what comes first: the worry or the political programme? This is often unclear. But what is clear is that they have an influence on each other.

Environmental protection: grassroots momentum

Politics and voters' concerns interact constantly. But the media can have an amplifying effect.

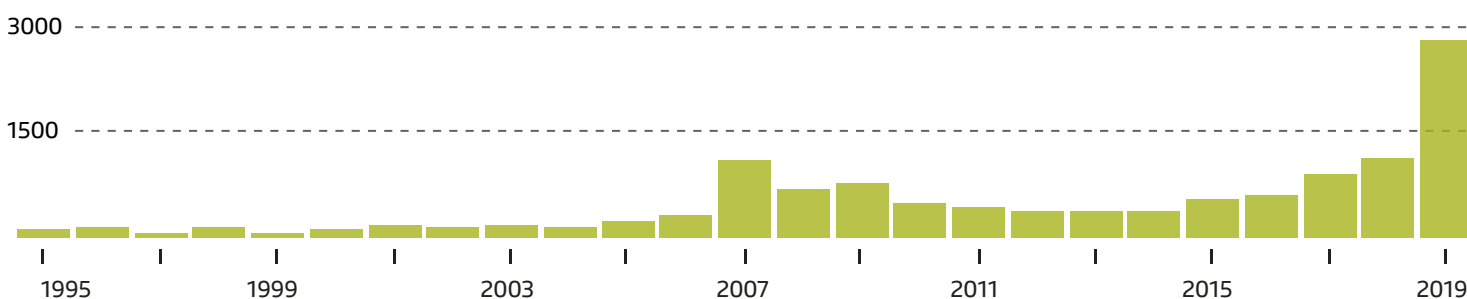


School children take to the streets demanding better protection of the **environment**. The Greens make gains thanks to the climate debate in the government elections. Even the Radical Liberals have taken up the cause.

In 2006, only one in ten Swiss people believed **environmental protection** was one of the five most urgent problems. By 2018, a quarter of respondents thought so. What happened?

For Cloé Jans, environmental protection, which includes climate protection, is a grassroots movement. “Climate change is a long-term, structural problem which alters our look on specific concerns. First, people needed to be willing to worry about it at all. There were also real events at home and abroad that are connected,” she said. One factor driving these worries is weather events like the dry, hot summer of 2018. But it has been the Greens who have been the main ones to make political capital out of the issue. When Greta Thunberg entered the stage at the end of 2018, it was a perfect mix for the media. Last year there was a sharp rise in the number of Swiss media articles on climate change.

Number of articles

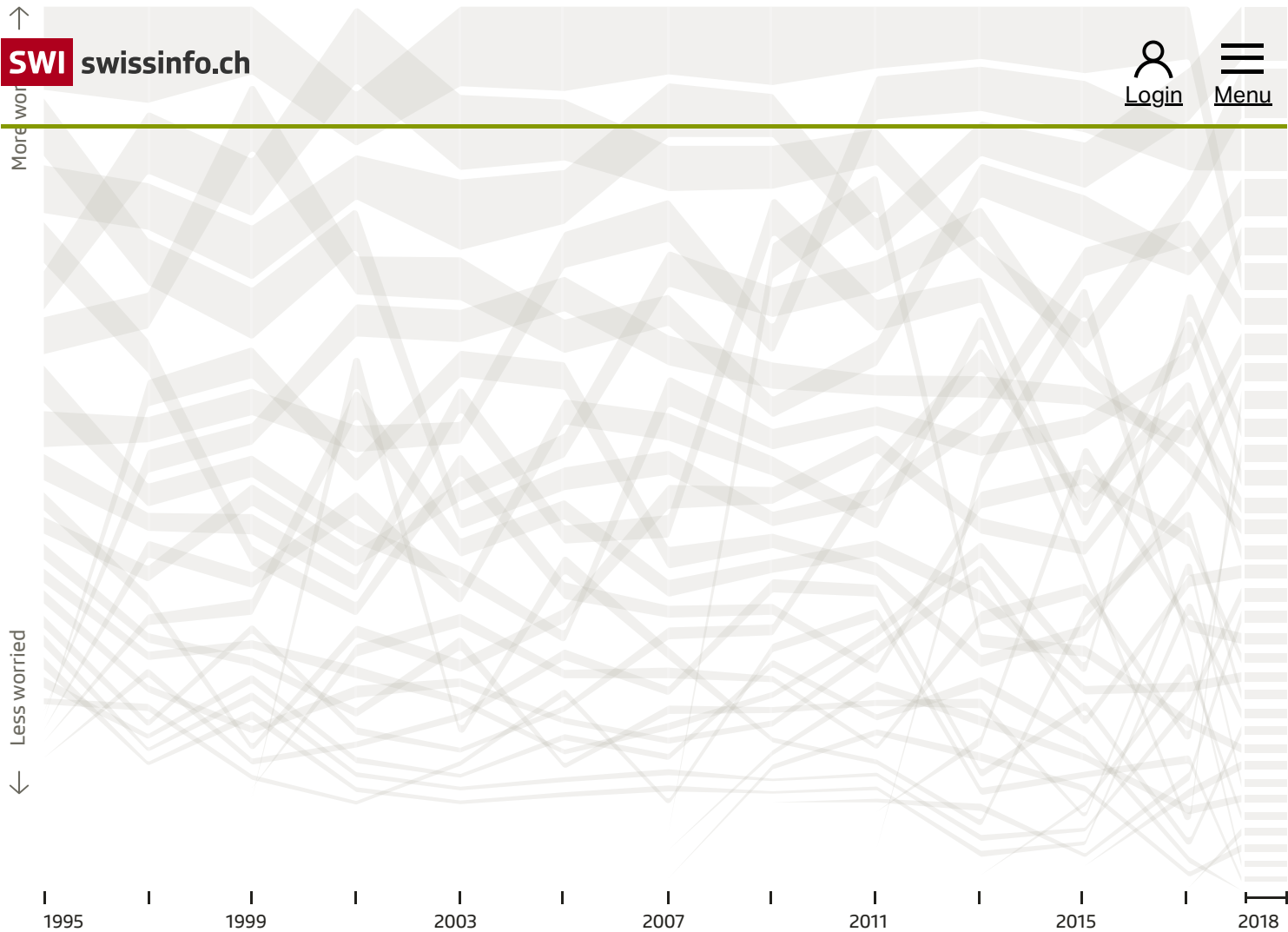


So will these environmental trends shape the 2019 elections in Switzerland? That will depend on the parties, but also on events. Will other issues come to the forefront? Will there be another hot summer? Like the general public, politics is influenced by many different factors.

Discover all the concerns the researchers asked about

Researchers at gfs.bern identified 34 problem areas. You can see how each one has evolved since 1995 in the following interactive chart. Explore the entire chart or find a particular concern.

Select care



Sources and methodology

Swiss concerns

Why Switzerland is struggling to guarantee pensions for the next generation

Switzerland faces a unique obstacle when it comes to preventing the pension system from collapsing with time.

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~~What this survey shows is that humans only think about themselves. It is not for the collective good, it is all about - what about me, and only me, and more about Me!~~

I think we would have better luck if we worked for the "common good" i.e. :

1) How can we contribute so that there is less chance of economic problems i.e. not being in debt, being less materialistic, cost management, etc.

2) What can we do so that there is less likelihood of high unemployment i.e. continue to acquire better/more skills, train your staff better, become more efficient, expect more and deliver more, become more competitive (produce more for less) or create a new model based on reduced consumption.

3) What can we do so that we are less worried about our health and retirement - do not retire until you cannot walk i.e. work until your last day. Why not? Work keeps you healthier, out of trouble. Retired people are more prone to illnesses, stress and depression. Work contributes to the society, and keeps us independent (and not dependant on welfare provided by other tax payers). With population explosion and longer lives, do we need more retired/non-working people, or do we need people eager and happy to do whatever job their skills allow them to do? Who will win - the non-working or the hard/smart-working? We only have to look at how nature works.

4) Illegal migration and refugee problems? Vote for laws which make it difficult for illegal migration to exist. This is not a bad thing, but a good thing - as, in a democracy we should ask people who pay the most taxes and carry the most burden - Where would you like your tax money spent?

Reduce the welfare/benefits, and more people will be eager to work, and may reduce illegal migration problem as well.

It is not that hard, but we find it much easier to worry and complain, than actually work hard for the common good. We would rather not talk about problems such as illegal migration, because - why bother or it is politically incorrect, let it be someone else's problem - I will just worry myself.

This sort of mindset is global, and not restricted to any one country. If you ask the same questions from people in most countries, you will be drawing the same fancy graph lines with lot of scrolling!

Solution lies in collective innovative thinking and decisive leadership which is not worried about political correctness, and is not shy to say - People we are ALL responsible for the challenges we

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ANONYMOUS

2019-06-03 10:11

Really good article.

Balanced. Opinion largely removed from the wording. Statistics heavy and a very nice statement on the role and impact the media itself has on topics. By this I mean that the media itself has an important role to play in balancing coverage to avoid conflating issues due to the editorial or personal position of staff and journalist. It's not your job to fight for the causes.

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