[Template:About](/wiki/Template:About" \o "Template:About) [Template:Redirect4](/wiki/Template:Redirect4) [Template:Pp-move-indef](/wiki/Template:Pp-move-indef) [Template:Use dmy dates](/wiki/Template:Use_dmy_dates) [Template:Use British English](/wiki/Template:Use_British_English) [Template:Infobox country](/wiki/Template:Infobox_country) **Switzerland** ([Template:IPAc-en](/wiki/Template:IPAc-en)), officially the **Swiss Confederation** ([Template:Lang-la](/wiki/Template:Lang-la), hence its abbreviation [CH](/wiki/Data_codes_for_Switzerland#Country)), is a [federal republic](/wiki/Federal_republic) in [Europe](/wiki/Europe). While still named the "Swiss Confederation" for historical reasons, modern Switzerland is a [federal](/wiki/Federal_government) [directorial republic](/wiki/Directorial_system) consisting of [26 cantons](/wiki/Cantons_of_Switzerland), with [Bern](/wiki/Bern) as the seat of the federal authorities, called '"federal city" ([Template:Lang-de](/wiki/Template:Lang-de), [Template:Lang-fr](/wiki/Template:Lang-fr), [Template:Lang-it](/wiki/Template:Lang-it)).[[1]](#cite_note-1)<ref group=note>According to the Swiss constitution there is intentionally no *capital* ruling the Swiss Confederation, but in Bern there are governmental institutions, such as the parliament and the Federal Council. The Federal Court, however, is situated in Lausanne. The Federal Court of Criminality is in Bellinzona. The Federal Court of Administration and the Federal Court of Patents are in St Gallen.</ref> The country is situated in [Western](/wiki/Western_Europe) and [Central Europe](/wiki/Central_Europe),<ref group=note>There are several definitions. See [Geography of Switzerland#Western or Central Europe?](/wiki/Geography_of_Switzerland#Western_or_Central_Europe?).</ref> and is bordered by [Italy](/wiki/Italy) to the south, [France](/wiki/France) to the west, [Germany](/wiki/Germany) to the north, and [Austria](/wiki/Austria) and [Liechtenstein](/wiki/Liechtenstein) to the east. Switzerland is a [landlocked country](/wiki/Landlocked_country) geographically divided between the [Alps](/wiki/Swiss_Alps), the [Swiss Plateau](/wiki/Swiss_Plateau) and the [Jura](/wiki/Jura_Mountains), spanning an area of [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert). While the Alps occupy the greater part of the territory, the Swiss population of approximately eight million people is concentrated mostly on the plateau, where the largest cities are to be found: among them are the two [global](/wiki/Global_city) and economic centers [Zürich](/wiki/Zürich) and [Geneva](/wiki/Geneva).

The establishment of the Swiss Confederation is traditionally dated to 1 August 1291, which is celebrated annually as the [Swiss National Day](/wiki/Swiss_National_Day). The country has a long history of [armed neutrality](/wiki/Armed_neutrality)—it has not been in a state of war internationally since 1815—and did not join the [United Nations](/wiki/United_Nations) until 2002. Nevertheless, it pursues an active foreign policy and is frequently involved in peace-building processes around the world.[[2]](#cite_note-2) In addition to being the birthplace of the [Red Cross](/wiki/International_Committee_of_the_Red_Cross), Switzerland is home to numerous international organizations, including the [second largest UN office](/wiki/United_Nations_Office_at_Geneva). On the European level, it is a founding member of the [European Free Trade Association](/wiki/European_Free_Trade_Association), but notably it is not part of the [European Union](/wiki/European_Union), nor the [European Economic Area](/wiki/European_Economic_Area). However, the country does participate in the [Schengen Area](/wiki/Schengen_Area) and the [EU's single market](/wiki/EU's_single_market) through a number of bilateral treaties.

Spanning the intersection of [Germanic](/wiki/Germanic-speaking_Europe) and [Romance](/wiki/Romance-speaking_Europe) Europe, Switzerland comprises four main linguistic and cultural regions: German, French, Italian and [Romansh](/wiki/Romansh_language). Although the majority of the population are German speaking, [Swiss](/wiki/Swiss_people) national identity is rooted in a common historical background, shared values such as [federalism](/wiki/Federalism) and [direct democracy](/wiki/Direct_democracy),[[3]](#cite_note-3) and [Alpine](/wiki/Alps) symbolism.<ref name=j1>[Template:Cite journal](/wiki/Template:Cite_journal)</ref>[[4]](#cite_note-4) Due to its linguistic diversity, Switzerland is known by a variety of native names: *Schweiz* [Template:IPA-de](/wiki/Template:IPA-de) ([German](/wiki/German_language));<ref group=note>[Swiss Standard German](/wiki/Swiss_Standard_German) spelling and pronunciation. The [Swiss German](/wiki/Swiss_German) name is sometimes spelled as *Schwyz* or *Schwiiz* [Template:IPA-gsw](/wiki/Template:IPA-gsw). [*Schwyz*](/wiki/Canton_of_Schwyz) is also the standard German (and international) name of one of the Swiss cantons.</ref> *Suisse* [Template:IPA-fr](/wiki/Template:IPA-fr) ([French](/wiki/French_language)); *Svizzera* [Template:IPA-it](/wiki/Template:IPA-it) ([Italian](/wiki/Italian_language)); and *Svizra* [Template:IPA-rm](/wiki/Template:IPA-rm) or [Template:IPA-rm](/wiki/Template:IPA-rm) ([Romansh](/wiki/Romansh_language)).<ref group=note>The latter is the common [Sursilvan](/wiki/Sursilvan_dialects_(Romansh)) pronunciation.</ref>

Switzerland is one of the most developed countries in the world, with the highest nominal [wealth](/wiki/Wealth) per adult and the [eighth-highest](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(PPP)_per_capita) [per capita](/wiki/Per_capita) [gross domestic product](/wiki/Gross_domestic_product) according to the [IMF](/wiki/IMF).[[5]](#cite_note-5)[[6]](#cite_note-6) Switzerland ranks at or near the top globally in several metrics of national performance, including government transparency, civil liberties, quality of life, [economic competitiveness](/wiki/Global_Competitiveness_Report), and [human development](/wiki/Human_Development_Index). Zürich and Geneva have each been ranked among the top cities in the world in terms of quality of life, with the former ranked second globally, according to [Mercer](/wiki/Mercer_(consulting_firm)).[[7]](#cite_note-7)

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## Etymology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:Anchor](/wiki/Template:Anchor) The English name *Switzerland* is a compound containing *Switzer*, an obsolete term for the [Swiss](/wiki/Swiss_people), which was in use during the 16th to 19th centuries.[[8]](#cite_note-8) The English adjective *Swiss* is a loan from French [*Template:Lang*](/wiki/Template:Lang), also in use since the 16th century. The name *Switzer* is from the [Alemannic](/wiki/Alemannic_German) [*Template:Lang*](/wiki/Template:Lang), in origin an inhabitant of [*Schwyz*](/wiki/Schwyz) and its [associated territory](/wiki/Canton_of_Schwyz), one of the Waldstätten cantons which formed the nucleus of the [Old Swiss Confederacy](/wiki/Old_Swiss_Confederacy). The name originates as an [exonym](/wiki/Exonym_and_endonym), applied [*pars pro toto*](/wiki/Pars_pro_toto) to the troops of the Confederacy. The Swiss began to adopt the name for themselves after the [Swabian War](/wiki/Swabian_War) of 1499, used alongside the term for "Confederates", [*Eidgenossen*](/wiki/Eidgenosse) (literally: *comrades by oath*), used since the 14th century.

The toponym *Schwyz* itself was first attested in 972, as [Old High German](/wiki/Old_High_German) [*Template:Lang*](/wiki/Template:Lang), ultimately perhaps related to [*Template:Lang*](/wiki/Template:Lang) "to burn", referring to the area of forest that was burned and cleared to build.[[9]](#cite_note-9) The name was extended to the area dominated by the canton, and after the Swabian War of 1499 gradually came to be used for the entire Confederation.[[10]](#cite_note-10)[[11]](#cite_note-11)The [Swiss German](/wiki/Swiss_German) name of the country, [*Template:Lang*](/wiki/Template:Lang), is homophonous to that of the canton and the settlement, but distinguished by the use of the definite article ([*Template:Lang*](/wiki/Template:Lang) for the Confederation,[[12]](#cite_note-12) but simply [*Template:Lang*](/wiki/Template:Lang) for the canton and the town).[[13]](#cite_note-13) The [Latin](/wiki/Latin) name *Confoederatio Helvetica* was [neologized](/wiki/Neologism) and introduced gradually after the [formation of the federal state](/wiki/Switzerland_as_a_federal_state) in 1848, harking back to the Napoleonic [Helvetic Republic](/wiki/Helvetic_Republic), appearing on coins from 1879, inscribed on the [Federal Palace](/wiki/Federal_Palace_of_Switzerland) in 1902 and after 1948 used in the official seal.[[14]](#cite_note-14) (The [ISO banking code](/wiki/ISO_4217), "CHF" for the [Swiss franc](/wiki/Swiss_franc), is taken from the state's Latin name). *Helvetica* is derived from the [*Helvetii*](/wiki/Helvetii), a [Gaulish tribe](/wiki/Gaulish_tribe) living on the [Swiss plateau](/wiki/Swiss_plateau) before the [Roman era](/wiki/Switzerland_in_the_Roman_era).

[*Helvetia*](/wiki/Helvetia) appears as a [national personification](/wiki/National_personification) of the Swiss confederacy in the 17th century with a 1672 play by Johann Caspar Weissenbach.[[15]](#cite_note-15)

## History[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) Switzerland has existed as a state in its present form since the adoption of the Swiss Federal Constitution in 1848. The precursors of Switzerland established a protective alliance at the end of the 13th century (1291), forming a loose confederation of states which persisted for centuries.

### Early history[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) The oldest traces of hominid existence in Switzerland date back about 150,000 years.<ref name = Early>[History](https://web.archive.org/web/20100419174957/http://www.swissworld.org/en/history/prehistory_to_romans/prehistoric_times/). swissworld.org. Retrieved on 27 June 2009</ref> The oldest known farming settlements in Switzerland, which were found at [Gächlingen](/wiki/Gächlingen), have been dated to around 5300 BC.<ref name = Early/>

[thumb|left|Founded in 44 BC by](/wiki/File:Theater_Kaiseraugst.jpg) [Lucius Munatius Plancus](/wiki/Lucius_Munatius_Plancus), [Augusta Raurica](/wiki/Augusta_Raurica) was the first Roman settlement on the Rhine and is now among the most important archaeological sites in Switzerland.[[16]](#cite_note-16)

The earliest known cultural tribes of the area were members of the [Hallstatt](/wiki/Hallstatt_culture) and [La Tène cultures](/wiki/La_Tène_culture), named after the archaeological site of La Tène on the north side of [Lake Neuchâtel](/wiki/Lake_Neuchâtel). La Tène culture developed and flourished during the late [Iron Age](/wiki/Iron_Age) from around 450 BC,<ref name = Early/> possibly under some influence from the [Greek](/wiki/Ancient_Greek) and [Etruscan](/wiki/Etruscan_civilization) civilisations. One of the most important tribal groups in the Swiss region was the [Helvetii](/wiki/Helvetii). Steadily harassed by the Germans, in 58 BC the Helvetii decided to abandon the Swiss plateau and migrate to western [Gallia](/wiki/Gallia), but [Julius Caesar's](/wiki/Julius_Caesar) armies pursued and defeated them at the [Battle of Bibracte](/wiki/Battle_of_Bibracte), in today's eastern France, forcing the tribe to move back to its original homeland.<ref name = Early/> In 15 BC, [Tiberius](/wiki/Tiberius), who was destined to be the second Roman emperor and his brother, [Drusus](/wiki/Nero_Claudius_Drusus), conquered the Alps, integrating them into the [Roman Empire](/wiki/Roman_Empire). The area occupied by the Helvetii—the namesakes of the later *Confoederatio Helvetica*—first became part of Rome's [Gallia Belgica](/wiki/Gallia_Belgica) province and then of its [Germania Superior](/wiki/Germania_Superior) province, while the eastern portion of modern Switzerland was integrated into the [Roman province](/wiki/Roman_province) of [Raetia](/wiki/Raetia). Sometime around the start of the Common Era, the Romans maintained a large legionary camp called [Vindonissa](/wiki/Vindonissa), now a ruin at the confluence of the [Aare](/wiki/Aare) and [Reuss](/wiki/Reuss_(river)) rivers, near the town of [Windisch](/wiki/Windisch), an outskirt of [Brugg](/wiki/Brugg).

The first and second century AD were an age of prosperity for the population living on the Swiss plateau. Several towns, like [Aventicum](/wiki/Aventicum), [Iulia Equestris](/wiki/Iulia_Equestris) and Augusta Raurica, reached a remarkable size, while hundreds of agricultural estates ([Villae rusticae](/wiki/Villae_rusticae)) were founded in the countryside.

In about 260 AD, the fall of the [Agri Decumates](/wiki/Agri_Decumates) territory north of the Rhine transformed today's Switzerland into a frontier land of the Empire. Repeated raids by the [Alamanni](/wiki/Alamanni) tribes provoked the ruin of the Roman towns and economy, forcing the population to find shelter near Roman fortresses, like the [Castrum Rauracense](/wiki/Castrum_Rauracense) near Augusta Raurica. The Empire built another line of defense at the north border (the so-called Donau-Iller-Rhine-Limes), but at the end of the fourth century the increased Germanic pressure forced the Romans to abandon the linear defence concept, and the Swiss plateau was finally open to the settlement of German tribes.

In the [Early Middle Ages](/wiki/Early_Middle_Ages), from the end of the 4th century, the western extent of modern-day Switzerland was part of the territory of the [Kings of the Burgundians](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Burgundy). The [Alemanni](/wiki/Alemanni) settled the [Swiss plateau](/wiki/Swiss_plateau) in the 5th century and the [valleys of the Alps](/wiki/Valleys_of_the_Alps) in the 8th century, forming Alemannia. Modern-day Switzerland was therefore then divided between the kingdoms of Alemannia and [Burgundy](/wiki/Burgundy_(region)).<ref name = Early/> The entire region became part of the expanding [Frankish Empire](/wiki/Frankish_Empire) in the 6th century, following [Clovis I's](/wiki/Clovis_I) victory over the Alemanni at [Tolbiac](/wiki/Tolbiac) in 504 AD, and later Frankish domination of the Burgundians.<ref name = Nationsencyclopedia>[Switzerland history](http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Europe/Switzerland-HISTORY.html) Nationsencyclopedia.com. Retrieved on 27 November 2009</ref><ref name = Nationsonline>[History of Switzerland](http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/History/Switzerland-history.htm) Nationsonline.org. Retrieved on 27 November 2009</ref>

Throughout the rest of the 6th, 7th and 8th centuries the Swiss regions continued under Frankish hegemony ([Merovingian](/wiki/Merovingians) and [Carolingian](/wiki/Carolingian_Empire) dynasties). But after its extension under [Charlemagne](/wiki/Charlemagne), the Frankish empire was divided by the [Treaty of Verdun](/wiki/Treaty_of_Verdun) in 843.<ref name = Early/> The territories of present-day Switzerland became divided into [Middle Francia](/wiki/Middle_Francia) and [East Francia](/wiki/East_Francia) until they were reunified under the [Holy Roman Empire](/wiki/Holy_Roman_Empire) around 1000 AD.<ref name = Early/>

By 1200, the Swiss plateau comprised the dominions of the houses of [Savoy](/wiki/House_of_Savoy), [Zähringer](/wiki/Zähringer), [Habsburg](/wiki/Habsburg), and [Kyburg](/wiki/House_of_Kyburg).<ref name = Early/> Some regions ([Uri](/wiki/Canton_of_Uri), [Schwyz](/wiki/Canton_of_Schwyz), [Unterwalden](/wiki/Unterwalden), later known as *Waldstätten*) were accorded the [Imperial immediacy](/wiki/Imperial_immediacy) to grant the empire direct control over the mountain passes. With the extinction of its male line in 1263 the Kyburg dynasty fell in AD 1264; then the Habsburgs under [King Rudolph I](/wiki/Rudolph_I_of_Habsburg) (Holy Roman Emperor in 1273) laid claim to the Kyburg lands and annexed them extending their territory to the eastern Swiss plateau.<ref name = Nationsencyclopedia/>

### Old Swiss Confederacy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:Further](/wiki/Template:Further) [thumb|The 1291 *Bundesbrief* (Federal charter)](/wiki/File:Bundesbrief.jpg)

The Old Swiss Confederacy was an alliance among the valley communities of the central Alps. The Confederacy facilitated management of common interests and ensured peace on the important mountain trade routes. The [Federal Charter of 1291](/wiki/Federal_Charter_of_1291) agreed between the [rural communes](/wiki/Medieval_commune) of [Uri](/wiki/Canton_of_Uri), [Schwyz](/wiki/Canton_of_Schwyz), and [Unterwalden](/wiki/Unterwalden) is considered the confederacy's founding document, even though similar alliances are likely to have existed decades earlier.[[17]](#cite_note-17)<ref name = Brief>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>

[thumb|upright=1.2|left|The Old Swiss Confederacy from 1291 (dark green) to the sixteenth century (light green) and its associates (blue). In the other colors are shown the subject territories.](/wiki/File:Old_Swiss_Confederation.jpg) By 1353, the three original [cantons](/wiki/Cantons_of_Switzerland) had joined with the cantons of [Glarus](/wiki/Canton_of_Glarus) and [Zug](/wiki/Canton_of_Zug) and the [Lucerne](/wiki/Lucerne), [Zürich](/wiki/Zürich) and [Bern](/wiki/Bern) city states to form the "Old Confederacy" of eight states that existed until the end of the 15th century. The expansion led to increased power and wealth for the confederation.<ref name = Brief/> By 1460, the confederates controlled most of the territory south and west of the Rhine to the Alps and the Jura mountains, particularly after victories against the Habsburgs ([Battle of Sempach](/wiki/Battle_of_Sempach), [Battle of Näfels](/wiki/Battle_of_Näfels)), over [Charles the Bold](/wiki/Charles_the_Bold) of [Burgundy](/wiki/Duchy_of_Burgundy) during the 1470s, and the success of the [Swiss mercenaries](/wiki/Swiss_mercenaries). The Swiss victory in the [Swabian War](/wiki/Swabian_War) against the [Swabian League](/wiki/Swabian_League) of [Emperor](/wiki/Holy_Roman_Emperor) [Maximilian I](/wiki/Maximilian_I,_Holy_Roman_Emperor) in 1499 amounted to *de facto* independence within the [Holy Roman Empire](/wiki/Holy_Roman_Empire).<ref name = Brief/>

The Old Swiss Confederacy had acquired a reputation of invincibility during these earlier wars, but [expansion of the confederation](/wiki/Growth_of_the_Old_Swiss_Confederacy) suffered a setback in 1515 with the Swiss defeat in the [Battle of Marignano](/wiki/Battle_of_Marignano). This ended the so-called "heroic" epoch of Swiss history.<ref name = Brief/> The success of [Zwingli's](/wiki/Zwingli) [Reformation](/wiki/Reformation_in_Switzerland) in some cantons led to inter-cantonal religious conflicts in 1529 and 1531 ([Wars of Kappel](/wiki/Wars_of_Kappel)). It was not until more than one hundred years after these internal wars that, in 1648, under the [Peace of Westphalia](/wiki/Peace_of_Westphalia), European countries recognized Switzerland's independence from the Holy Roman Empire and its [neutrality](/wiki/Neutral_country).<ref name = Nationsencyclopedia/><ref name = Nationsonline/>

During the [Early Modern](/wiki/Early_Modern_Switzerland) period of Swiss history, the growing [authoritarianism](/wiki/Authoritarianism) of the patriciate families combined with a financial crisis in the wake of the [Thirty Years' War](/wiki/Thirty_Years'_War) led to the [Swiss peasant war of 1653](/wiki/Swiss_peasant_war_of_1653). In the background to this struggle, the conflict between [Catholic](/wiki/Catholic_Church) and [Protestant](/wiki/Protestantism) cantons persisted, erupting in further violence at the [First War of Villmergen](/wiki/First_War_of_Villmergen), in 1656, and the [Toggenburg War](/wiki/Toggenburg_War) (or Second War of Villmergen), in 1712.<ref name = Brief/>

### Napoleonic era[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)

[right|thumb|The Act of Mediation was Napoleon's attempt at a compromise between the](/wiki/File:Acte_de_Médiation_mg_0643.jpg) [Ancien Régime](/wiki/Ancien_Régime) and a Republic.

In 1798, the [revolutionary French](/wiki/French_Revolution) government conquered Switzerland and imposed a new unified constitution.<ref name = Brief/> This centralised the government of the country, effectively abolishing the cantons: moreover, [Mülhausen](/wiki/Mulhouse) joined France and [Valtellina](/wiki/Valtellina) valley, the [Cisalpine Republic](/wiki/Cisalpine_Republic), separating from Switzerland. The new [regime](/wiki/Regime), known as the Helvetic Republic, was highly unpopular. It had been imposed by a foreign invading army and destroyed centuries of tradition, making Switzerland nothing more than a French [satellite state](/wiki/Satellite_state). The fierce French suppression of the [Nidwalden Revolt](/wiki/Nidwalden) in September 1798 was an example of the oppressive presence of the [French Army](/wiki/French_Army) and the local population's resistance to the occupation.

When war broke out between France and its rivals, Russian and [Austrian](/wiki/Habsburg_Monarchy) forces invaded Switzerland. The Swiss refused to fight alongside the French in the name of the Helvetic Republic. In 1803 [Napoleon](/wiki/Napoleon_I_of_France) organised a meeting of the leading Swiss politicians from both sides in Paris. The result was the [Act of Mediation](/wiki/Act_of_Mediation) which largely restored Swiss autonomy and introduced a Confederation of 19 cantons.<ref name = Brief/> Henceforth, much of Swiss politics would concern balancing the cantons' tradition of self-rule with the need for a central government.

In 1815 the [Congress of Vienna](/wiki/Congress_of_Vienna) fully re-established Swiss independence and the European powers agreed to permanently recognise Swiss neutrality.<ref name = Nationsencyclopedia/><ref name = Nationsonline/><ref name = Brief/> Swiss troops still served foreign governments until 1860 when they fought in the [Siege of Gaeta](/wiki/Siege_of_Gaeta_(1860)). The treaty also allowed Switzerland to increase its territory, with the admission of the cantons of [Valais](/wiki/Valais), [Neuchâtel](/wiki/Canton_of_Neuchâtel) and [Geneva](/wiki/Canton_of_Geneva). Switzerland's borders have not changed since, except for some minor adjustments.[[18]](#cite_note-18)

### Federal state[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|The first](/wiki/File:Bern,_Federal_Palace,_1857.jpg) [Federal Palace](/wiki/Federal_Palace) in Bern (1857). One of the three cantons presiding over the [Tagsatzung](/wiki/Tagsatzung) (former legislative and executive council), Bern was chosen as the federal capital in 1848, mainly because of its closeness to the French-speaking area.<ref name=Bundesstadt/> The restoration of power to the patriciate was only temporary. After a period of unrest with repeated violent clashes such as the [Züriputsch](/wiki/Züriputsch) of 1839, civil war (the [*Sonderbundskrieg*](/wiki/Sonderbundskrieg)) broke out in 1847 when some Catholic cantons tried to set up a separate alliance (the *Sonderbund*).<ref name = Brief/> The war lasted for less than a month, causing fewer than 100 casualties, most of which were through [friendly fire](/wiki/Friendly_fire). Yet however minor the Sonderbundskrieg appears compared with other European riots and wars in the 19th century, it nevertheless had a major impact on both the psychology and the society of the Swiss and of Switzerland.

The war convinced most Swiss of the need for unity and strength towards its European neighbours. Swiss people from all strata of society, whether Catholic or Protestant, from the liberal or conservative current, realised that the cantons would profit more if their economic and religious interests were merged.

Thus, while the rest of Europe saw [revolutionary uprisings](/wiki/Revolutions_of_1848), the Swiss drew up a constitution which provided for a [federal layout](/wiki/Swiss_Federal_Constitution), much of it inspired by the [American example](/wiki/United_States_Constitution). This constitution provided for a central authority while leaving the cantons the right to self-government on local issues. Giving credit to those who favoured the power of the cantons (the Sonderbund Kantone), the national assembly was divided between an [upper house](/wiki/Upper_house) (the [Council of States](/wiki/Swiss_Council_of_States), two representatives per canton) and a [lower house](/wiki/Lower_house) (the [National Council](/wiki/National_Council_of_Switzerland), with representatives elected from across the country). [Referenda](/wiki/Referenda) were made mandatory for any amendment of this constitution.<ref name = Nationsonline/>

[thumb|left|Inauguration in 1882 of the](/wiki/File:Gotthard_Eröffnungszug_Bellinzona.jpg) [Gotthard Rail Tunnel](/wiki/Gotthard_Rail_Tunnel) connecting the southern canton of Ticino, the longest in the world at the time.[[19]](#cite_note-19) A system of single weights and measures was introduced and in 1850 the [Swiss franc](/wiki/Swiss_franc) became the Swiss [single currency](/wiki/Single_currency). Article 11 of the constitution forbade sending troops to serve abroad, though the Swiss were still obliged to serve [Francis II of the Two Sicilies](/wiki/Francis_II_of_the_Two_Sicilies) with Swiss Guards present at the [Siege of Gaeta in 1860](/wiki/Siege_of_Gaeta_(1860)), marking the end of foreign service.

An important clause of the constitution was that it could be re-written completely if this was deemed necessary, thus enabling it to evolve as a whole rather than being modified one amendment at a time.<ref name=HistoiredelaSuisse>*Histoire de la Suisse*, Éditions Fragnière, Fribourg, Switzerland</ref>

This need soon proved itself when the rise in population and the [Industrial Revolution](/wiki/Industrial_Revolution) that followed led to calls to modify the constitution accordingly. An early draft was rejected by the population in 1872 but modifications led to its acceptance in 1874.<ref name = Brief/> It introduced the [facultative referendum](/wiki/Referendum#Switzerland) for laws at the federal level. It also established federal responsibility for defense, trade, and legal matters.

In 1891, the constitution was revised with unusually strong elements of [direct democracy](/wiki/Direct_democracy), which remain unique even today.<ref name = Brief/>

### Modern history[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|General](/wiki/File:Ulrich_Wille.jpg) [Ulrich Wille](/wiki/Ulrich_Wille), Commander-in-Chief of the Swiss Army during [World War I](/wiki/World_War_I) Switzerland was not invaded during either of the [world wars](/wiki/World_war). During World War I, Switzerland was home to Vladimir Illych Ulyanov ([Vladimir Lenin](/wiki/Vladimir_Lenin)) and he remained there until 1917.[[20]](#cite_note-20) Swiss neutrality was seriously questioned by the [Grimm–Hoffmann Affair](/wiki/Grimm–Hoffmann_Affair) in 1917, but it was short-lived. In 1920, Switzerland joined the [League of Nations](/wiki/League_of_Nations), which was based in [Geneva](/wiki/Geneva), on condition that it was exempt from any military requirements.

[During World War II](/wiki/Switzerland_during_World_War_II), [detailed invasion plans](/wiki/Operation_Tannenbaum) were drawn up by the Germans,[[21]](#cite_note-21) but Switzerland was never attacked.<ref name = Brief/> Switzerland was able to remain independent through a combination of military deterrence, concessions to Germany, and good fortune as larger events during the war delayed an invasion.<ref name = Nationsonline/><ref name = Stonebooks>[Book review: Target Switzerland: Swiss Armed Neutrality in World War II, Halbrook, Stephen P.](http://stonebooks.com/archives/981111.shtml) stonebooks.com. Retrieved on 2 December 2009</ref> Under General [Henri Guisan](/wiki/Henri_Guisan) central command, a general mobilisation of the armed forces was ordered. The Swiss military strategy was changed from one of static defence at the borders to protect the economic heartland, to one of organised long-term attrition and withdrawal to strong, well-stockpiled positions high in the Alps known as the [Reduit](/wiki/National_Redoubt_(Switzerland)). Switzerland was an important base for espionage by both sides in the conflict and often mediated communications between the Axis and Allied powers.<ref name = Stonebooks/>

Switzerland's trade was blockaded by both the [Allies](/wiki/Allies_of_World_War_II) and by the [Axis](/wiki/Axis_Powers). Economic cooperation and extension of credit to the [Third Reich](/wiki/Third_Reich) varied according to the perceived likelihood of invasion and the availability of other trading partners. Concessions reached a peak after a crucial rail link through [Vichy France](/wiki/Vichy_France) was severed in 1942, leaving Switzerland completely surrounded by the Axis. Over the course of the war, Switzerland interned over 300,000 refugees[[22]](#cite_note-22) and the [International Red Cross](/wiki/International_Red_Cross), based in Geneva, played an important part during the conflict. Strict immigration and [asylum](/wiki/Right_of_asylum) policies as well as the financial relationships with [Nazi](/wiki/Nazi) Germany raised controversy, but not until the end of the 20th century.[[23]](#cite_note-23) During the war, the Swiss Air Force engaged aircraft of both sides, shooting down 11 intruding [Luftwaffe](/wiki/Luftwaffe) planes in May and June 1940, then forcing down other intruders after a change of policy following threats from Germany. Over 100 Allied bombers and their crews were interned during the war. During 1944–45, Allied bombers mistakenly bombed a few places in Switzerland, among which were the cities of [Schaffhausen](/wiki/Schaffhausen), [Basel](/wiki/Basel) and [Zürich](/wiki/Zürich).<ref name = Stonebooks/>

After the war, the Swiss government exported credits through the charitable fund known as the Schweizerspende and also donated to the [Marshall Plan](/wiki/Marshall_Plan) to help Europe's recovery, efforts that ultimately benefited the Swiss economy.[[24]](#cite_note-24) During the [Cold War](/wiki/Cold_War), Swiss authorities [considered the construction](/wiki/Switzerland_and_weapons_of_mass_destruction) of a Swiss [nuclear bomb](/wiki/Nuclear_bomb).[[25]](#cite_note-25) Leading nuclear physicists at the [Federal Institute of Technology Zürich](/wiki/ETH_Zürich) such as [Paul Scherrer](/wiki/Paul_Scherrer) made this a realistic possibility. However, financial problems with the defense budget prevented the substantial funds from being allocated, and the [Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty](/wiki/Nuclear_Non-Proliferation_Treaty) of 1968 was seen as a valid alternative. All remaining plans for building nuclear weapons were dropped by 1988.[[26]](#cite_note-26) Switzerland was the last Western republic to grant women the [right to vote](/wiki/Suffrage). Some Swiss cantons approved this in 1959, while at the federal level it was achieved in 1971<ref name = Brief/><ref name = FCO>[Country profile: Switzerland](https://web.archive.org/web/20130116072104/http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/country-profile/europe/switzerland?profile=today). UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (29 October 2012).</ref> and, after resistance, in the last canton [Appenzell Innerrhoden](/wiki/Appenzell_Innerrhoden) (one of only two remaining [*Landsgemeinde*](/wiki/Landsgemeinde)) in 1990. After obtaining suffrage at the federal level, women quickly rose in political significance, with the first woman on the seven member [Federal Council](/wiki/Swiss_Federal_Council) executive being [Elisabeth Kopp](/wiki/Elisabeth_Kopp), who served from 1984–1989,<ref name = Brief/> and the first female president being [Ruth Dreifuss](/wiki/Ruth_Dreifuss) in 1999.

[thumb|In 2003, by granting the](/wiki/File:Bundesrat_der_Schweiz_2003.jpg) [Swiss People's Party](/wiki/Swiss_People's_Party) a second seat in the [governing cabinet](/wiki/Swiss_Federal_Council), the Parliament altered the [coalition](/wiki/Magic_formula) which had dominated Swiss politics since 1959.

Switzerland joined the [Council of Europe](/wiki/Council_of_Europe) in 1963.<ref name = Nationsonline/> In 1979 areas from the canton of [Bern](/wiki/Bern) attained independence from the Bernese, forming the new [canton of Jura](/wiki/Canton_of_Jura). On 18 April 1999 the Swiss population and the cantons voted in favour of a completely revised [federal constitution](/wiki/Swiss_Federal_Constitution).<ref name = Brief/>

In 2002 Switzerland became a full member of the United Nations, leaving the [Vatican City](/wiki/Holy_See) as the last widely recognised state without full UN membership. Switzerland is a founding member of the [EFTA](/wiki/European_Free_Trade_Association), but is not a member of the [European Economic Area](/wiki/European_Economic_Area). An application for membership in the [European Union](/wiki/European_Union) was sent in May 1992, but not advanced since the EEA was rejected in December 1992<ref name = Brief/> when Switzerland was the only country to launch a referendum on the EEA. There have since been several referenda on the EU issue; due to a mixed reaction from the population the membership application has been frozen. Nonetheless, Swiss law is gradually being adjusted to conform with that of the EU, and the government has signed a number of [bilateral agreements](/wiki/Bilateralism) with the European Union. Switzerland, together with [Liechtenstein](/wiki/Liechtenstein), has been completely surrounded by the EU since Austria's entry in 1995. On 5 June 2005, Swiss voters agreed by a 55% majority to join the [Schengen treaty](/wiki/Schengen_treaty), a result that was regarded by EU commentators as a sign of support by Switzerland, a country that is traditionally perceived as independent and reluctant to enter supranational bodies.<ref name = Nationsonline/>

## Geography[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=8)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|upright=1.1|Physical map of Switzerland](/wiki/File:Reliefkarte_Schweiz.png) [thumb|Switzerland map of Köppen climate classification.](/wiki/File:Switzerland_map_of_Köppen_climate_classification.svg)

Extending across the north and south side of the [Alps](/wiki/Alps) in [west](/wiki/Western_Europe)-[central Europe](/wiki/Central_Europe), Switzerland encompasses a great diversity of landscapes and climates on a limited area of [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert).<ref name=Geo>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> The population is about 8 million, resulting in an average [population density](/wiki/Population_density) of around 195 people per square kilometre (500/sq mi).<ref name=Geo/><ref name=maps>[Template:Cite map](/wiki/Template:Cite_map)</ref> The more mountainous southern half of the country is far more sparsely populated than the northern half.<ref name=Geo/> In the largest Canton of [Graubünden](/wiki/Graubünden), lying entirely in the Alps, population density falls to 27 /km² (70 /sq mi).[[27]](#cite_note-27) Switzerland lies between latitudes [45°](/wiki/45th_parallel_north) and [48° N](/wiki/48th_parallel_north), and longitudes [5°](/wiki/5th_meridian_east) and [11° E](/wiki/11th_meridian_east). It contains three basic topographical areas: the [Swiss Alps](/wiki/Swiss_Alps) to the south, the [Swiss Plateau](/wiki/Swiss_Plateau) or Central Plateau, and the [Jura mountains](/wiki/Jura_mountains) on the west. The Alps are a high mountain range running across the central-south of the country, comprising about 60% of the country's total area. The majority of the Swiss population live in the Swiss Plateau. Among the high valleys of the Swiss Alps many glaciers are found, totalling an area of [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert). From these originate the headwaters of several major rivers, such as the [Rhine](/wiki/Rhine), [Inn](/wiki/Inn_(river)), [Ticino](/wiki/Ticino_(river)) and [Rhône](/wiki/Rhône), which flow in the four cardinal directions into the whole of Europe. The hydrographic network includes several of the largest bodies of freshwater in Central and Western Europe, among which are included [Lake Geneva](/wiki/Lake_Geneva) (also called le Lac Léman in French), [Lake Constance](/wiki/Lake_Constance) (known as Bodensee in German) and [Lake Maggiore](/wiki/Lake_Maggiore). Switzerland has more than 1500 lakes, and contains 6% of Europe's stock of fresh water. Lakes and glaciers cover about 6% of the national territory. The largest lake is Lake Geneva, in western Switzerland shared with France. The Rhône is both the main source and outflow of Lake Geneva. Lake Constance is the second largest Swiss lake and, like the Lake Geneva, an intermediate step by the Rhine at the border to Austria and Germany. While the Rhône flows into the Mediterranean Sea at the French Camargue region and the Rhine flows into the North Sea at Rotterdam in the Netherlands, about 1000 km apart, both springs are only about 22 km apart from each other in the Swiss Alps.<ref name=Geo/>[[28]](#cite_note-28) [Template:Multiple image](/wiki/Template:Multiple_image)

48 of Switzerland's mountains are [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) above sea in altitude or higher.<ref name=Geo/> At [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert), [Monte Rosa](/wiki/Monte_Rosa) is the highest, although the [Matterhorn](/wiki/Matterhorn) ([Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert)) is often regarded as the most famous. Both are located within the [Pennine Alps](/wiki/Pennine_Alps) in the canton of [Valais](/wiki/Valais), on the border with [Italy](/wiki/Italy). The section of the [Bernese Alps](/wiki/Bernese_Alps) above the deep glacial [Lauterbrunnen](/wiki/Lauterbrunnen) valley, containing 72 waterfalls, is well known for the [Jungfrau](/wiki/Jungfrau) ([Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert)) [Eiger](/wiki/Eiger) and [Mönch](/wiki/Mönch), and the many picturesque valleys in the region. In the southeast the long [Engadin](/wiki/Engadin) Valley, encompassing the [St. Moritz](/wiki/St._Moritz) area in canton of [Graubünden](/wiki/Graubünden), is also well known; the highest peak in the neighbouring [Bernina Alps](/wiki/Bernina_Alps) is [Piz Bernina](/wiki/Piz_Bernina) ([Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert)).<ref name=Geo/>

The more populous northern part of the country, comprising about 30% of the country's total area, is called the Swiss Plateau. It has greater open and hilly landscapes, partly forested, partly open pastures, usually with grazing herds, or vegetables and fruit fields, but it is still hilly. There are large lakes found here and the biggest Swiss cities are in this area of the country.<ref name=Geo/>

### Climate[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=9)]

The Swiss climate is generally [temperate](/wiki/Temperate_climate), but can vary greatly between the localities,<ref name=Climate>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> from glacial conditions on the mountaintops to the often pleasant near [Mediterranean climate](/wiki/Mediterranean_climate) at Switzerland's southern tip. There are some valley areas in the southern part of Switzerland where some cold-hardy palm trees are found. Summers tend to be warm and humid at times with periodic rainfall so they are ideal for pastures and grazing. The less humid winters in the mountains may see long intervals of stable conditions for weeks, while the lower lands tend to suffer from [inversion](/wiki/Inversion_(meteorology)), during these periods, thus seeing no sun for weeks.

A weather phenomenon known as the [föhn](/wiki/Foehn_wind) (with an identical effect to the [chinook wind](/wiki/Chinook_wind)) can occur at all times of the year and is characterised by an unexpectedly warm wind, bringing air of very low relative humidity to the north of the Alps during rainfall periods on the southern face of the Alps. This works both ways across the alps but is more efficient if blowing from the south due to the steeper step for oncoming wind from the south. Valleys running south to north trigger the best effect. The driest conditions persist in all inner alpine valleys that receive less rain because arriving clouds lose a lot of their content while crossing the mountains before reaching these areas. Large alpine areas such as [Graubünden](/wiki/Graubünden) remain drier than pre-alpine areas and as in the main valley of the [Valais](/wiki/Valais) wine grapes are grown there.<ref name=FederalClimateMaps>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>

The wettest conditions persist in the high Alps and in the [Ticino](/wiki/Ticino) canton which has much sun yet heavy bursts of rain from time to time.<ref name = FederalClimateMaps/> Precipitation tends to be spread moderately throughout the year with a peak in summer. Autumn is the driest season, winter receives less precipitation than summer, yet the weather patterns in Switzerland are not in a stable climate system and can be variable from year to year with no strict and predictable periods.

[Template:Multiple image](/wiki/Template:Multiple_image)

### Environment[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=10)]

Switzerland's ecosystems can be particularly fragile, because the many delicate valleys separated by high mountains often form unique ecologies. The mountainous regions themselves are also vulnerable, with a rich range of plants not found at other altitudes, and experience some pressure from visitors and grazing. The climatic, geological and topographical conditions of the alpine region make for a very fragile ecosystem that is particularly sensitive to [climate change](/wiki/Climate_change).<ref name=Climate/>[[29]](#cite_note-29) Nevertheless, according to the [2014 Environmental Performance Index](/wiki/Environmental_Performance_Index), Switzerland ranks first among 132 nations in safeguarding the environment, due to its high scores on environmental public health, its heavy reliance on renewable sources of energy ([hydropower](/wiki/Hydropower) and [geothermal](/wiki/Geothermal) energy), and its control of [greenhouse gas](/wiki/Greenhouse_gas) emissions.[[30]](#cite_note-30)

## Politics[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=11)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)

[thumb|The](/wiki/File:Bundesrat_der_Schweiz_2016.jpg) [Swiss Federal Council](/wiki/Swiss_Federal_Council) in 2016 with President [Johann Schneider-Ammann](/wiki/Johann_Schneider-Ammann) (front, center)<ref group = note>As shown in this image, the current members of the council are (as of January 2016, from left to right): Federal Councillor [Alain Berset](/wiki/Alain_Berset), Federal Councillor [Didier Burkhalter](/wiki/Didier_Burkhalter), Vice-President [Doris Leuthard](/wiki/Doris_Leuthard), President [Johann Schneider-Ammann](/wiki/Johann_Schneider-Ammann), Federal Councillor [Ueli Maurer](/wiki/Ueli_Maurer), Federal Councillor [Simonetta Sommaruga](/wiki/Simonetta_Sommaruga), Federal Councillor [Guy Parmelin](/wiki/Guy_Parmelin) and Federal Chancellor [Corina Casanova](/wiki/Corina_Casanova)</ref>

The [Federal Constitution](/wiki/Federal_constitution_of_Switzerland) adopted in 1848 is the legal foundation of the modern federal state. It is among the oldest constitutions in the world.<ref name=Politics>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> A new Constitution was adopted in 1999, but did not introduce notable changes to the federal structure. It outlines basic and political rights of individuals and citizen participation in public affairs, divides the powers between the Confederation and the cantons and defines federal jurisdiction and authority. There are three main governing bodies on the federal level:<ref name=Federalism>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> the [bicameral](/wiki/Bicameralism) parliament (legislative), the [Federal Council](/wiki/Swiss_Federal_Council) (executive) and the [Federal Court](/wiki/Federal_Supreme_Court_of_Switzerland) (judicial).

[thumb|upright|left|The](/wiki/File:Bern_104.jpg) [Federal Palace](/wiki/Federal_Palace), seat of the [Federal Assembly](/wiki/Federal_Assembly_of_Switzerland) and the [Federal Council](/wiki/Swiss_Federal_Council).

The [Swiss Parliament](/wiki/Swiss_Parliament) consists of two houses: the [Council of States](/wiki/Swiss_Council_of_States) which has 46 representatives (two from each canton and one from each [half-canton](/wiki/Half-canton)) who are elected under a system determined by each canton, and the [National Council](/wiki/National_Council_of_Switzerland), which consists of 200 members who are elected under a system of [proportional representation](/wiki/Proportional_representation), depending on the population of each canton. Members of both houses serve for 4 years. When both houses are in joint session, they are known collectively as the [Federal Assembly](/wiki/Federal_Assembly_of_Switzerland). Through [referendums](/wiki/Referendum), citizens may challenge any law passed by parliament and through [initiatives](/wiki/Initiative), introduce amendments to the federal constitution, thus making Switzerland a [direct democracy](/wiki/Direct_democracy).<ref name=Politics/>

The Federal Council constitutes the federal government, directs the [federal administration](/wiki/Federal_administration_of_Switzerland) and serves as collective [Head of State](/wiki/Head_of_State). It is a collegial body of seven members, elected for a four-year mandate by the Federal Assembly which also exercises [oversight](/wiki/Regulation) over the Council. The [President of the Confederation](/wiki/President_of_the_Swiss_Confederation) is elected by the Assembly from among the seven members, traditionally in rotation and for a one-year term; the President chairs the government and assumes representative functions. However, the president is a [*primus inter pares*](/wiki/Primus_inter_pares) with no additional powers, and remains the head of a department within the administration.<ref name = Politics/>

The Swiss government has been a coalition of the four major political parties since 1959, each party having a number of seats that roughly reflects its share of electorate and representation in the federal parliament. The classic distribution of 2 CVP/PDC, 2 SPS/PSS, 2 FDP/PRD and 1 SVP/UDC as it stood from 1959 to 2003 was known as the "[magic formula](/wiki/Magic_formula)". Following the [2015 Federal Council elections](/wiki/Swiss_Federal_Council_election,_2015), the seven seats in the Federal Council were distributed as follows:

1 seat for the [Christian Democratic People's Party (CVP/PDC)](/wiki/Christian_Democratic_People's_Party_of_Switzerland),

2 seats for the [Free Democratic Party (FDP/PRD)](/wiki/Free_Democratic_Party_of_Switzerland),

2 seats for the [Social Democratic Party (SPS/PSS)](/wiki/Social_Democratic_Party_of_Switzerland),

2 seats for the [Swiss People's Party (SVP/UDC)](/wiki/Swiss_People's_Party).

The function of the Federal Supreme Court is to hear appeals against rulings of cantonal or federal courts. The judges are elected by the Federal Assembly for six-year terms.<ref name=FederalCourts>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>

### Direct democracy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=12)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|The](/wiki/File:Landsgemeinde_Glarus_2006.jpg) [Landsgemeinde](/wiki/Landsgemeinde) is an old form of [direct democracy](/wiki/Direct_democracy). It is still practised in two cantons. [Direct democracy](/wiki/Direct_democracy) and [federalism](/wiki/Federalism) are hallmarks of the Swiss political system.<ref name=CHPS>[Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)</ref> Swiss citizens are subject to three legal jurisdictions: the municipality, canton and federal levels. The 1848/1999 federal constitution defines a system of direct democracy (sometimes called *half-direct* or *representative direct democracy* because it is aided by the more commonplace institutions of a [representative democracy](/wiki/Representative_democracy)). The instruments of this system at the federal level, known as popular rights ([Template:Lang-de](/wiki/Template:Lang-de), [Template:Lang-fr](/wiki/Template:Lang-fr), [Template:Lang-it](/wiki/Template:Lang-it)),<ref name=PopularRights>[Template:HDS](/wiki/Template:HDS)</ref> include the right to submit a *federal initiative* and a *referendum*, both of which may overturn parliamentary decisions.<ref name = Politics/>[[31]](#cite_note-31) By calling a federal *referendum*, a group of citizens may challenge a law passed by parliament, if they gather 50,000 signatures against the law within 100 days. If so, a national vote is scheduled where voters decide by a [simple majority](/wiki/Majority) whether to accept or reject the law. Any 8 cantons together can also call a constitutional referendum on a federal law.<ref name = Politics/>

Similarly, the federal *constitutional initiative* allows citizens to put a [constitutional amendment](/wiki/Constitutional_amendment) to a national vote, if 100,000 voters sign the proposed amendment within 18 months.<ref group=note>Since 1999, an initiative can also be in the form of a general proposal to be elaborated by Parliament, but because it is considered less attractive for various reasons, this form of initiative has yet to find any use.</ref> The Federal Council and the Federal Assembly can supplement the proposed amendment with a counter-proposal, and then voters must indicate a preference on the ballot in case both proposals are accepted. Constitutional amendments, whether introduced by initiative or in parliament, must be accepted by a [double majority](/wiki/Double_majority) of the national popular vote and the cantonal popular votes.<ref group=note>That is a majority of 23 cantonal votes, because the result of the popular vote in the six traditional [half-cantons](/wiki/Half-canton) each counts as half the vote of one of the other cantons.</ref><ref name=CHPS/>

### Administrative divisions[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=13)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)

The Swiss Confederation consists of 20 cantons and 6 half cantons:<ref name=Politics/><ref name=CHAuthorities>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>

|  |
| --- |
| valign="top" align=left|[500 px|Swiss cantons](/wiki/File:Kantone_der_Schweiz.svg) |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Canton** | | **ID** | **Capital** | **Canton** | | **ID** | **Capital** |
| [14px](/wiki/File:Wappen_Aargau_matt.svg) | [Aargau](/wiki/Aargau) | 19 | [Aarau](/wiki/Aarau) | [14px](/wiki/File:Wappen_Nidwalden_matt.svg) | \*[Nidwalden](/wiki/Nidwalden) | 7 | [Stans](/wiki/Stans) |
| [14px](/wiki/File:Wappen_Appenzell_Ausserrhoden_matt.svg) | \*[Appenzell Ausserrhoden](/wiki/Appenzell_Ausserrhoden) | 15 | [Herisau](/wiki/Herisau) | [14px](/wiki/File:Wappen_Obwalden_matt.svg) | \*[Obwalden](/wiki/Obwalden) | 6 | [Sarnen](/wiki/Sarnen) |
| [14px](/wiki/File:Wappen_Appenzell_Innerrhoden_matt.svg) | \*[Appenzell Innerrhoden](/wiki/Appenzell_Innerrhoden) | 16 | [Appenzell](/wiki/Appenzell_(town)) | [14px](/wiki/File:Wappen_Schaffhausen_matt.svg) | [Schaffhausen](/wiki/Canton_of_Schaffhausen) | 14 | [Schaffhausen](/wiki/Schaffhausen) |
| [14px](/wiki/File:Coat_of_arms_of_Kanton_Basel-Landschaft.svg) | \*[Basel-Landschaft](/wiki/Basel-Landschaft) | 13 | [Liestal](/wiki/Liestal) | [14px](/wiki/File:Wappen_Schwyz_matt.svg) | [Schwyz](/wiki/Canton_of_Schwyz) | 5 | [Schwyz](/wiki/Schwyz) |
| [14px](/wiki/File:Wappen_Basel-Stadt_matt.svg) | \*[Basel-Stadt](/wiki/Basel-Stadt) | 12 | [Basel](/wiki/Basel) | [14px](/wiki/File:Wappen_Solothurn_matt.svg) | [Solothurn](/wiki/Canton_of_Solothurn) | 11 | [Solothurn](/wiki/Solothurn) |
| [14px](/wiki/File:Wappen_Bern_matt.svg) | [Bern](/wiki/Canton_of_Bern) | 2 | [Bern](/wiki/Bern) | [14px](/wiki/File:Coat_of_arms_of_canton_of_St._Gallen.svg) | [St. Gallen](/wiki/Canton_of_St._Gallen) | 17 | [St. Gallen](/wiki/St._Gallen) |
| [14px](/wiki/File:Wappen_Freiburg_matt.svg) | [Fribourg](/wiki/Canton_of_Fribourg) | 10 | [Fribourg](/wiki/Fribourg) | [14px](/wiki/File:Wappen_Thurgau_matt.svg) | [Thurgau](/wiki/Thurgau) | 20 | [Frauenfeld](/wiki/Frauenfeld) |
| [14px](/wiki/File:Wappen_Genf_matt.svg) | [Geneva](/wiki/Canton_of_Geneva) | 25 | [Geneva](/wiki/Geneva) | [14px](/wiki/File:Wappen_Tessin_matt.svg) | [Ticino](/wiki/Ticino) | 21 | [Bellinzona](/wiki/Bellinzona) |
| [14px](/wiki/File:Wappen_Glarus_matt.svg) | [Glarus](/wiki/Canton_of_Glarus) | 8 | [Glarus](/wiki/Glarus) | [14px](/wiki/File:Wappen_Uri_matt.svg) | [Uri](/wiki/Canton_of_Uri) | 4 | [Altdorf](/wiki/Altdorf,_Uri) |
| [14px](/wiki/File:Wappen_Graubünden_matt.svg) | [Graubünden](/wiki/Graubünden) | 18 | [Chur](/wiki/Chur) | [14px](/wiki/File:Wappen_Wallis_matt.svg) | [Valais](/wiki/Valais) | 23 | [Sion](/wiki/Sion,_Switzerland) |
| [14px](/wiki/File:Wappen_Jura_matt.svg) | [Jura](/wiki/Canton_of_Jura) | 26 | [Delémont](/wiki/Delémont) | [14px](/wiki/File:Wappen_Waadt_matt.svg) | [Vaud](/wiki/Vaud) | 22 | [Lausanne](/wiki/Lausanne) |
| [14px](/wiki/File:Wappen_Luzern_matt.svg) | [Lucerne](/wiki/Canton_of_Lucerne) | 3 | [Lucerne](/wiki/Lucerne) | [14px](/wiki/File:Wappen_Zug_matt.svg) | [Zug](/wiki/Canton_of_Zug) | 9 | [Zug](/wiki/Zug) |
| [14px](/wiki/File:Wappen_Neuenburg_matt.svg) | [Neuchâtel](/wiki/Canton_of_Neuchâtel) | 24 | [Neuchâtel](/wiki/Neuchâtel) | [14px](/wiki/File:Wappen_Zürich_matt.svg) | [Zürich](/wiki/Canton_of_Zürich) | 1 | [Zürich](/wiki/Zürich) |

\*These cantons are known as half-cantons and are thus represented by only one councillor (instead of two) in the [Council of States](/wiki/Swiss_Council_of_States).

The cantons have a permanent constitutional status and, in comparison with the situation in other countries, a high degree of independence. Under the Federal Constitution, all 26 cantons are equal in status. Each canton has its own constitution, and its own parliament, government and courts.<ref name=CHAuthorities/> However, there are considerable differences between the individual cantons, most particularly in terms of population and geographical area. Their populations vary between 15,000 (Appenzell Innerrhoden) and 1,253,500 (Zürich), and their area between [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) (Basel-Stadt) and [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) (Graubünden). The Cantons comprise a total of 2,485 [municipalities](/wiki/Municipalities_of_Switzerland). Within Switzerland there are two [enclaves](/wiki/Enclave): [Büsingen](/wiki/Büsingen) belongs to Germany, [Campione d'Italia](/wiki/Campione_d'Italia) belongs to Italy.[[32]](#cite_note-32)

### Foreign relations and international institutions[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=14)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) Traditionally, Switzerland avoids alliances that might entail military, political, or direct economic action and has been neutral since the end of its [expansion](/wiki/Growth_of_the_Old_Swiss_Confederacy) in 1515. Its policy of neutrality was internationally recognised at the [Congress of Vienna](/wiki/Congress_of_Vienna) in 1815.<ref name = Neutrality>[Neutrality and isolationism](http://www.swissworld.org/en/politics/foreign_policy/neutrality_and_isolationism/) swissworld.org, Retrieved on 23 June 2009</ref>[[33]](#cite_note-33) Only in 2002 did Switzerland become a full member of the [United Nations](/wiki/United_Nations)<ref name = Neutrality/> and it was the first state to join it by referendum. Switzerland maintains diplomatic relations with almost all countries and historically has served as an intermediary between other states.<ref name = Neutrality/> Switzerland is not a member of the [European Union](/wiki/European_Union); the Swiss people have consistently rejected membership since the early 1990s.<ref name = Neutrality/> However, Switzerland does participate in the [Schengen Area](/wiki/Schengen_Area).[[34]](#cite_note-34) [thumb|upright|left|The](/wiki/File:Flag_of_the_Red_Cross.svg) [monochromatically](/wiki/Monochrome) reversed Swiss flag became the symbol of the Red Cross Movement,<ref name = FCO/> founded in 1863 by [Henri Dunant](/wiki/Henri_Dunant).[[35]](#cite_note-35)

A large number of international institutions have their seats in Switzerland, in part because of its policy of neutrality. [Geneva](/wiki/Geneva) is the birthplace of the [Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement](/wiki/Red_Cross_and_Red_Crescent_Movement) and the [Geneva Conventions](/wiki/Geneva_Conventions) and, since 2006, hosts the [United Nations Human Rights Council](/wiki/United_Nations_Human_Rights_Council). Even though Switzerland is one of the most recent countries to have joined the United Nations, the [Palace of Nations](/wiki/Palace_of_Nations) in Geneva is the second biggest centre for the United Nations after New York, and Switzerland was a founding member and home to the [League of Nations](/wiki/League_of_Nations).

Apart from the United Nations headquarters, the Swiss Confederation is host to many UN agencies, like the World Health Organization ([WHO](/wiki/WHO)), the International Labour Organization ([ILO](/wiki/International_Labour_Organization)), the International Telecommunication Union ([ITU](/wiki/International_Telecommunication_Union)), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](/wiki/United_Nations_High_Commissioner_for_Refugees)) and about 200 other international organisations, including the [World Trade Organization](/wiki/World_Trade_Organization) and the [World Intellectual Property Organization](/wiki/World_Intellectual_Property_Organization).<ref name = Neutrality/> The annual meetings of the [World Economic Forum](/wiki/World_Economic_Forum) in [Davos](/wiki/Davos) bring together top international business and political leaders from Switzerland and foreign countries to discuss important issues facing the world, including health and the environment. Additionally the headquarters of the [Bank for International Settlements](/wiki/Bank_for_International_Settlements) (BIS) are located in [Basel](/wiki/Basel) since 1930.

Furthermore, many sport federations and organisations are located throughout the country, such as the [International Basketball Federation](/wiki/International_Basketball_Federation) in Geneva, the Union of European Football Associations ([UEFA](/wiki/UEFA)) in [Nyon](/wiki/Nyon), the International Federation of Association Football ([FIFA](/wiki/FIFA)) and the [International Ice Hockey Federation](/wiki/International_Ice_Hockey_Federation) both in [Zürich](/wiki/Zürich), the [International Cycling Union](/wiki/Union_Cycliste_Internationale) in [Aigle](/wiki/Aigle), and the [International Olympic Committee](/wiki/International_Olympic_Committee) in [Lausanne](/wiki/Lausanne).[[36]](#cite_note-36)

### Military[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=15)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|upright|A Swiss Air Force](/wiki/File:Switzerland_-_Air_Force_McDonnell_Douglas_FA-18C_Hornet_-_cropped.jpg) [F/A-18 Hornet](/wiki/F/A-18_Hornet) at [Axalp Air Show](/wiki/Axalp_Air_Show)

The [Swiss Armed Forces](/wiki/Military_of_Switzerland), including the [Land Forces](/wiki/Ground_Forces) and the [Air Force](/wiki/Swiss_Air_Force), are [composed](/wiki/Conscription_in_Switzerland) mostly of conscripts, male citizens aged from 20 to 34 (in special cases up to 50) years. Being a [landlocked](/wiki/Landlocked) country, Switzerland has no navy; however, on lakes bordering neighbouring countries, armed military patrol boats are used. Swiss citizens are prohibited from serving in foreign armies, except for the [Swiss Guards](/wiki/Swiss_Guard#Pontifical_Swiss_Guard) of the [Vatican](/wiki/Vatican_City), or if they are [dual citizens](/wiki/Dual_citizen) of a foreign country and reside there.

The structure of the Swiss militia system stipulates that the soldiers keep their Army issued equipment, including all personal weapons, at home. Some organizations and political parties find this practice controversial[[37]](#cite_note-37) but mainstream Swiss opinion is in favour of the system. [Compulsory military service](/wiki/Conscription) concerns all male Swiss citizens; women can serve voluntarily. Men usually receive military conscription orders for training at the age of 18.[[38]](#cite_note-38) About two thirds of the young Swiss are found suited for service; for those found unsuited, various forms of alternative service exist.[[39]](#cite_note-39) Annually, approximately 20,000 persons are trained in recruit centres for a duration from 18 to 21 weeks. The reform "Army XXI" was adopted by popular vote in 2003, it replaced the previous model "Army 95", reducing the effectives from 400,000 to about 200,000. Of those, 120,000 are active in periodic Army training and 80,000 are non-training reserves.[[40]](#cite_note-40) [thumb|left|Swiss built](/wiki/File:SKdt-Fahrzeug_-_Schweizer_Armee_-_Steel_Parade_2006.jpg) [Mowag Eagles](/wiki/Mowag_Eagle) of the Land Forces Overall, three general mobilisations have been declared to ensure the integrity and neutrality of Switzerland. The first one was held on the occasion of the [Franco-Prussian War](/wiki/Franco-Prussian_War) of 1870–71. The second was in response to the outbreak of the [First World War](/wiki/First_World_War) in August 1914. The third mobilisation of the army took place in September 1939 in response to the [German attack on Poland](/wiki/German_attack_on_Poland); [Henri Guisan](/wiki/Henri_Guisan) was elected as the General-in-Chief.

Because of its neutrality policy, the Swiss army does not currently take part in armed conflicts in other countries, but is part of some peacekeeping missions around the world. Since 2000 the armed force department has also maintained the [Onyx](/wiki/Onyx_(interception_system)) intelligence gathering system to monitor satellite communications.[[41]](#cite_note-41) Following the end of the [Cold War](/wiki/Cold_War) there have been a number of attempts to curb military activity or even abolish the armed forces altogether. A notable referendum on the subject, launched by an [anti-militarist group](/wiki/Group_for_a_Switzerland_without_an_Army), was held on 26 November 1989. It was defeated with about two thirds of the voters against the proposal.[[42]](#cite_note-42)[[43]](#cite_note-43) A similar referendum, called for before, but held shortly after the [11 September attacks](/wiki/11_September_attacks) in the US, was defeated by over 78% of voters.[[44]](#cite_note-44) [Gun politics in Switzerland](/wiki/Gun_politics_in_Switzerland) are unique in Europe in that a relatively high percentage (29%) of citizens are legally armed. The large majority of firearms kept at home are issued [militia](/wiki/Militia) weapons, but ammunition is not issued.

## Economy and labour law[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=16)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also)

[thumb|The](/wiki/File:Vintage_Omega_Speedmaster_145.012-67.jpg) [Omega Speedmaster](/wiki/Omega_Speedmaster) worn on the moon during the [*Apollo*](/wiki/Apollo_program) missions. In terms of value, Switzerland is responsible for half of the world production of watches.<ref name = FCO/>[[45]](#cite_note-45) Switzerland has a stable, prosperous and high-tech economy and enjoys great wealth, being ranked as the wealthiest country in the world per capita in multiple rankings. In 2011 it was ranked as the wealthiest country in the world in per capita terms (with "wealth" being defined to include both financial and non-financial assets), while the 2013 Credit Suisse Global Wealth Report showed that Switzerland was the country with the highest average wealth per adult in 2013.[[46]](#cite_note-46)[[47]](#cite_note-47)[[48]](#cite_note-48) It has the world's [nineteenth largest economy](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(nominal)) by nominal [GDP](/wiki/GDP) and the [thirty-sixth largest](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(PPP)) by [purchasing power parity](/wiki/Purchasing_power_parity). It is the [twentieth largest exporter](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_exports), despite its small size. Switzerland has the highest European rating in the [Index of Economic Freedom](/wiki/Index_of_Economic_Freedom) 2010, while also providing large coverage through public services.[[49]](#cite_note-49) The nominal per capita [GDP](/wiki/Gross_Domestic_Product) is higher than those of the larger Western and Central European economies and Japan.[[50]](#cite_note-50) If adjusted for purchasing power parity, Switzerland ranks 8th in the world in terms of GDP per capita, according to the World Bank and IMF (ranked 15th according to the CIA Worldfactbook[[50]](#cite_note-50)).

The World Economic Forum's [Global Competitiveness Report](/wiki/Global_Competitiveness_Report) currently ranks Switzerland's economy as the most competitive in the world,[[51]](#cite_note-51) while ranked by the [European Union](/wiki/European_Union) as Europe's most innovative country.[[52]](#cite_note-52) For much of the 20th century, Switzerland was the wealthiest country in Europe by a considerable margin (by GDP – per capita).[[53]](#cite_note-53) In 2007 the gross [median household income](/wiki/Median_household_income) in Switzerland was an estimated 137,094 [USD](/wiki/US_Dollar) at [Purchasing power parity](/wiki/Purchasing_power_parity) while the median income was 95,824 USD.[[54]](#cite_note-54) Switzerland also has one of the world's largest [account balances as a percentage of GDP](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_current_account_balance_as_a_percentage_of_GDP).

[thumb|upright|left|The Greater](/wiki/File:Aerial_view_of_Zurich.JPG) [Zürich](/wiki/Zürich) Area, home to 1.5 million inhabitants and 150,000 companies, is one of the most important economic centres in the world.[[55]](#cite_note-55)

Switzerland is home to several large multinational corporations. The largest Swiss companies by revenue are [Glencore](/wiki/Glencore), [Gunvor](/wiki/Gunvor_(company)), [Nestlé](/wiki/Nestlé), [Novartis](/wiki/Novartis), [Hoffmann-La Roche](/wiki/Hoffmann-La_Roche), [ABB](/wiki/ABB_Group), [Mercuria Energy Group](/wiki/Mercuria_Energy_Group) and [Adecco](/wiki/Adecco).[[56]](#cite_note-56) Also, notable are [UBS AG](/wiki/UBS_AG), [Zurich Financial Services](/wiki/Zurich_Financial_Services), [Credit Suisse](/wiki/Credit_Suisse), [Barry Callebaut](/wiki/Barry_Callebaut), [Swiss Re](/wiki/Swiss_Re), [Tetra Pak](/wiki/Tetra_Pak), [The Swatch Group](/wiki/The_Swatch_Group) and [Swiss International Air Lines](/wiki/Swiss_International_Air_Lines). Switzerland is ranked as having one of the most powerful economies in the world.[[53]](#cite_note-53) Switzerland's most important economic sector is manufacturing. Manufacturing consists largely of the production of specialist [chemicals](/wiki/Chemical_industry), [health and pharmaceutical](/wiki/Pharmaceutical_industry_in_Switzerland) goods, scientific and precision [measuring instruments](/wiki/Measuring_instrument) and [musical instruments](/wiki/Musical_instrument). The largest exported goods are chemicals (34% of exported goods), machines/electronics (20.9%), and precision instruments/watches (16.9%).[[57]](#cite_note-57) Exported services amount to a third of exports.[[57]](#cite_note-57) The service sector – especially [banking](/wiki/Banking) and [insurance](/wiki/Insurance), [tourism](/wiki/Tourism), and [international organisations](/wiki/International_organization) – is another important industry for Switzerland.

Around 3.8 million people work in Switzerland; about 25% of employees belonged to a trade union in 2004.[[58]](#cite_note-58) Switzerland has a more flexible [job market](/wiki/Job_market) than neighbouring countries and the [unemployment](/wiki/Unemployment) rate is very low. The unemployment rate increased from a low of 1.7% in June 2000 to a peak of 4.4% in December 2009.[[59]](#cite_note-59) The unemployment rate is 3.2% in 2014.[[60]](#cite_note-60)[[71]](#cite_note-71)[[72]](#cite_note-72) In addition, there are various [Universities of Applied Sciences](/wiki/Universities_of_Applied_Sciences). In business and management studies, [University of St. Gallen](/wiki/University_of_St._Gallen), (HSG) and [International Institute for Management Development](/wiki/International_Institute_for_Management_Development) (IMD) are the leaders within the country and highly regarded internationally. Switzerland has the second highest rate (almost 18% in 2003) of foreign students in tertiary education, after Australia (slightly over 18%).[[73]](#cite_note-73)[[74]](#cite_note-74) As might befit a country that plays home to innumerable international organizations, the [Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies](/wiki/Graduate_Institute_of_International_and_Development_Studies), located in [Geneva](/wiki/Geneva), is not only continental Europe's oldest graduate school of international and development studies, but also widely believed to be one of its most prestigious.[[75]](#cite_note-75)[[76]](#cite_note-76) Many [Nobel prizes](/wiki/Nobel_prize) have been awarded to Swiss scientists, for example to the world-famous physicist [Albert Einstein](/wiki/Albert_Einstein)[[77]](#cite_note-77) in the field of physics who developed his [Special relativity](/wiki/Special_relativity) while working in Bern. More recently [Vladimir Prelog](/wiki/Vladimir_Prelog), [Heinrich Rohrer](/wiki/Heinrich_Rohrer), [Richard Ernst](/wiki/Richard_R._Ernst), [Edmond Fischer](/wiki/Edmond_H._Fischer), [Rolf Zinkernagel](/wiki/Rolf_Zinkernagel) and [Kurt Wüthrich](/wiki/Kurt_Wüthrich) received Nobel prizes in the sciences. In total, 113 Nobel Prize winners in all fields stand in relation to Switzerland[[78]](#cite_note-78)<ref group=note>Nobel prizes in non-science categories included.</ref> and the [Nobel Peace Prize](/wiki/Nobel_Peace_Prize) has been awarded nine times to organisations residing in Switzerland.[[79]](#cite_note-79) [thumb|The](/wiki/File:LHC,_CERN.jpg) [LHC](/wiki/Large_Hadron_Collider) tunnel. CERN is the world's largest laboratory and also the birthplace of the [World Wide Web](/wiki/World_Wide_Web).[[80]](#cite_note-80)

Geneva and the nearby French department of [Ain](/wiki/Ain) co-host the world's largest [laboratory](/wiki/Laboratory), [CERN](/wiki/CERN),[[81]](#cite_note-81) dedicated to [particle physics](/wiki/Particle_physics) research. Another important research center is the [Paul Scherrer Institute](/wiki/Paul_Scherrer_Institute). Notable inventions include [lysergic acid diethylamide](/wiki/Lysergic_acid_diethylamide) (LSD), the [scanning tunneling microscope](/wiki/Scanning_tunneling_microscope) (Nobel prize) and [Velcro](/wiki/Velcro). Some technologies enabled the exploration of new worlds such as the pressurized balloon of [Auguste Piccard](/wiki/Auguste_Piccard) and the [Bathyscaphe](/wiki/Bathyscaphe) which permitted [Jacques Piccard](/wiki/Jacques_Piccard) to reach the deepest point of the world's oceans.

Switzerland Space Agency, the [Swiss Space Office](/wiki/Swiss_Space_Office), has been involved in various space technologies and programs. In addition it was one of the 10 founders of [the European Space Agency](/wiki/European_Space_Agency) in 1975 and is the seventh largest contributor to the ESA budget. In the private sector, several companies are implicated in the space industry such as [Oerlikon Space](/wiki/Oerlikon_Space)[[82]](#cite_note-82) or Maxon Motors[[83]](#cite_note-83) who provide spacecraft structures.

### Switzerland and the European Union[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=18)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) Switzerland voted against membership in the [European Economic Area](/wiki/European_Economic_Area) in a referendum in December 1992 and has since maintained and developed its relationships with the European Union (EU) and European countries through bilateral agreements. In March 2001, the Swiss people refused in a popular vote to start accession negotiations with the EU.[[84]](#cite_note-84) In recent years, the Swiss have brought their economic practices largely into conformity with those of the EU in many ways, in an effort to enhance their international competitiveness. The economy grew at 3% in 2010, 1.9% in 2011, and 1% in 2012.[[85]](#cite_note-85) [Full EU membership](/wiki/Future_enlargement_of_the_European_Union#Switzerland) is a long-term objective of some in the Swiss government, but there is considerable popular sentiment against this supported by the conservative [SVP](/wiki/Swiss_People's_Party) party. The western French-speaking areas and the urban regions of the rest of the country tend to be more pro-EU, however with far from any significant share of the population.[[86]](#cite_note-86)[[87]](#cite_note-87) The government has established an Integration Office under the [Department of Foreign Affairs](/wiki/Federal_Department_of_Foreign_Affairs) and the [Department of Economic Affairs](/wiki/Federal_Department_of_Economic_Affairs). To minimise the negative consequences of Switzerland's isolation from the rest of Europe, Bern and Brussels signed seven bilateral agreements to further liberalise trade ties. These agreements were signed in 1999 and took effect in 2001. This first series of bilateral agreements included the free movement of persons. A second series covering nine areas was signed in 2004 and has since been ratified, which includes the [Schengen Treaty](/wiki/Schengen_Treaty) and the [Dublin Convention](/wiki/Dublin_Convention) besides others.[[88]](#cite_note-88) They continue to discuss further areas for cooperation.[[89]](#cite_note-89) In 2006, Switzerland approved 1 billion francs of supportive investment in the poorer Southern and Central European countries in support of cooperation and positive ties to the EU as a whole. A further referendum will be needed to approve 300 million francs to support Romania and Bulgaria and their recent admission. The Swiss have also been under EU and sometimes international pressure to reduce banking secrecy and to raise tax rates to parity with the EU. Preparatory discussions are being opened in four new areas: opening up the electricity market, participation in the European GNSS project [Galileo](/wiki/Galileo_positioning_system), cooperating with the European centre for disease prevention and recognising certificates of origin for food products.[[90]](#cite_note-90) On 27 November 2008, the interior and justice ministers of European Union in [Brussels](/wiki/Brussels) announced Switzerland's accession to the Schengen passport-free zone from 12 December 2008. The land [border checkpoints](/wiki/Border_checkpoint) will remain in place only for goods movements, but should not run controls on people, though people entering the country had their [passports](/wiki/Passport) checked until 29 March 2009 if they originated from a Schengen nation.[[91]](#cite_note-91) On 9 February 2014, Swiss voters narrowly approved by 50.3% a ballot [initiative](/wiki/Popular_initiative_(Switzerland)) launched by the [national conservative](/wiki/National_conservatism) [Swiss People's Party (SVP/UDC)](/wiki/Swiss_People's_Party) to [restrict immigration](/wiki/Federal_popular_initiative_%22Against_mass_immigration%22), and thus reintroducing a quota system on the influx of foreigners. This initiative was mostly backed by rural (57.6% approvals), suburban (51.2% approvals), and isolated cities (51.3% approvals) of Switzerland as well as by a strong majority (69.2% approval) in the canton of [Ticino](/wiki/Ticino), while metropolitan centres (58.5% rejection) and the French-speaking part (58.5% rejection) of Switzerland rather rejected it.[[92]](#cite_note-92) Some news commentators claim that this proposal *de facto* contradicts [the bilateral agreements](/wiki/Switzerland–European_Union_relations) on the free movement of persons from these respective countries.[[93]](#cite_note-93)[[94]](#cite_note-94)

### Energy, infrastructure and environment[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=19)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumb|upright=1.4|Switzerland has the](/wiki/File:Mauvoisin_Dam.jpg) [tallest dams](/wiki/List_of_tallest_dams_in_the_world) in Europe, among which the [Mauvoisin Dam](/wiki/Mauvoisin_Dam), in the Alps. Hydroelectricity is the most important domestic source of energy in the country. [Electricity](/wiki/Electricity) generated in Switzerland is 56% from [hydroelectricity](/wiki/Hydroelectricity) and 39% from [nuclear power](/wiki/Nuclear_power), resulting in a nearly CO2-free electricity-generating network. On 18 May 2003, two [anti-nuclear](/wiki/Anti-nuclear) initiatives were turned down: *Moratorium Plus*, aimed at forbidding the building of new [nuclear power plants](/wiki/Nuclear_power_plants) (41.6% supported and 58.4% opposed),[[95]](#cite_note-95) and Electricity Without Nuclear (33.7% supported and 66.3% opposed).[[96]](#cite_note-96) The former ten-year moratorium on the construction of new nuclear power plants was the result of a citizens' initiative voted on in 1990 which had passed with 54.5% Yes vs. 45.5% No votes. Plans for a new nuclear plant in the [Canton of Bern](/wiki/Canton_of_Bern) have been put on hold after the [accident at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant in 2011](/wiki/Fukushima_Daiichi_nuclear_disaster). The Swiss Federal Office of Energy (SFOE) is the office responsible for all questions relating to energy supply and energy use within the [Federal Department of Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications](/wiki/Federal_Department_of_Environment,_Transport,_Energy_and_Communications) (DETEC). The agency is supporting the [2000-watt society](/wiki/2000-watt_society) initiative to cut the nation's energy use by more than half by the year 2050.[[97]](#cite_note-97) On 25 May 2011 the Swiss government announced that it plans to end its use of nuclear energy in the next 2 or 3 decades. "The government has voted for a phaseout because we want to ensure a secure and autonomous supply of energy", Energy Minister Doris Leuthard said that day at a press conference in Bern. "Fukushima showed that the risk of nuclear power is too high, which in turn has also increased the costs of this energy form." The first reactor would reportedly be taken offline in 2019 and the last one in 2034. Parliament will discuss the plan in June 2011, and there could be a referendum as well.[[98]](#cite_note-98) [thumb|left|Entrance of the new](/wiki/File:Lötschberg_Tunnel.jpg) [Lötschberg Base Tunnel](/wiki/Lötschberg_Base_Tunnel), the third-longest railway tunnel in the world, under the old [Lötschberg railway line](/wiki/Lötschberg_railway_line). It is the first completed tunnel of the greater project [AlpTransit](/wiki/AlpTransit). The most dense rail network in Europe<ref name = FCO/> of [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) carries over 350 million passengers annually.[[99]](#cite_note-99) In 2007, each Swiss citizen travelled on average [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) by rail, which makes them the keenest rail users.[[100]](#cite_note-100) The network is administered mainly by the [Federal Railways](/wiki/Swiss_Federal_Railways), except in Graubünden, where the [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) [narrow gauge railway](/wiki/Narrow_gauge) is operated by the [Rhaetian Railways](/wiki/Rhaetian_Railways) and includes some World Heritage lines.[[101]](#cite_note-101) The building of new railway base tunnels through the Alps is under way to reduce the time of travel between north and south through the [AlpTransit](/wiki/AlpTransit) project.

Swiss private-public managed road network is funded by [road tolls](/wiki/Road_pricing) and vehicle taxes. The Swiss autobahn/autoroute system requires the purchase of a [vignette](/wiki/Vignette_(road_tax)) (toll sticker)—which costs 40 [Swiss francs](/wiki/Swiss_franc)—for one calendar year in order to use its roadways, for both passenger cars and trucks. The Swiss autobahn/autoroute network has a total length of [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) (as of 2000) and has, by an area of [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert), also one of the highest [motorway](/wiki/Motorway) densities in the world.[[102]](#cite_note-102) [Zürich Airport](/wiki/Zürich_Airport) is Switzerland's largest international flight gateway, which handled 22.8 million passengers in 2012.[[103]](#cite_note-103) The other international airports are [Geneva Airport](/wiki/Geneva_Airport) (13.9 million passengers in 2012),[[104]](#cite_note-104) [EuroAirport Basel-Mulhouse-Freiburg](/wiki/EuroAirport_Basel-Mulhouse-Freiburg) which is located in France, [Bern Airport](/wiki/Bern_Airport), [Lugano Airport](/wiki/Lugano_Airport), [St. Gallen-Altenrhein Airport](/wiki/St._Gallen-Altenrhein_Airport) and [Sion Airport](/wiki/Sion_Airport). Swiss International Air Lines is the flag carrier of Switzerland. Its main hub is Zürich.

Switzerland has one of the best environmental records among nations in the developed world;[[105]](#cite_note-105) it was one of the countries to sign the [Kyoto Protocol](/wiki/Kyoto_Protocol) in 1998 and ratified it in 2003. With [Mexico](/wiki/Mexico) and the [Republic of Korea](/wiki/Republic_of_Korea) it forms the Environmental Integrity Group (EIG).[[106]](#cite_note-106) The country is heavily active in recycling and anti-littering regulations and is one of the top recyclers in the world, with 66% to 96% of recyclable materials being recycled, depending on the area of the country.[[107]](#cite_note-107) The 2014 Global Green Economy Index ranked Switzerland among the top 10 green economies in the world.<ref name=ggei>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>

In many places in Switzerland, household rubbish disposal is charged for. Rubbish (except dangerous items, batteries etc.) is only collected if it is in bags which either have a payment sticker attached, or in official bags with the surcharge paid at the time of purchase.[[108]](#cite_note-108) This gives a financial incentive to recycle as much as possible, since recycling is free.[[109]](#cite_note-109) Illegal disposal of garbage is not tolerated but usually the enforcement of such laws is limited to violations that involve the unlawful disposal of larger volumes at traffic intersections and public areas. Fines for not paying the disposal fee range from [CHF](/wiki/Swiss_franc) 200–500.[[110]](#cite_note-110) Switzerland also has internationally the most efficient system to recycle old newspapers and cardboard materials. Publicly organised collection by volunteers and economical [railway](/wiki/Railway) transport logistics started as early as 1865 under the leadership of the notable industrialist Hans Caspar Escher (Escher Wyss AG) when the first modern Swiss [paper](/wiki/Paper) manufacturing plant was built in [Biberist](/wiki/Biberist).[[111]](#cite_note-111)

## Demographics[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=20)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:Further](/wiki/Template:Further) [thumb|Population density in Switzerland (2016)](/wiki/File:Bevölkerungsdichte_der_Schweiz_2016.png) [thumb|Percentage of foreigners in Switzerland (2016)](/wiki/File:Ausländeranteil_der_Schweiz_2016.png) In 2012, Switzerland's population slightly exceeded eight million. In common with other developed countries, the Swiss population increased rapidly during the industrial era, quadrupling between 1800 and 1990. Growth has since stabilized, and like most of Europe, Switzerland faces an [aging population](/wiki/Aging_population), albeit with consistent annual growth projected into 2035, due mostly to immigration and a fertility rate close to [replacement level](/wiki/Replacement_fertility_rate).[[112]](#cite_note-112) As of 2012, resident foreigners made up 23.3% of the population, one of the largest proportions in the developed world.[[113]](#cite_note-113) Most of these (64%) were from European Union or [EFTA](/wiki/European_Free_Trade_Association) countries.[[114]](#cite_note-114) [Italians](/wiki/Italians) were the largest single group of foreigners, with 15.6% of total foreign population, followed closely by [Germans](/wiki/Germans) (15.2%), immigrants from [Portugal](/wiki/Portugal) (12.7%), [France](/wiki/France) (5.6%), [Serbia](/wiki/Serbia) (5.3%), [Turkey](/wiki/Turkey) (3.8%), [Spain](/wiki/Spain) (3.7%), and [Austria](/wiki/Austria) (2%). Immigrants from [Sri Lanka](/wiki/Sri_Lanka), most of them former [Tamil](/wiki/Sri_Lankan_Tamil) refugees, were the largest group among people of Asian origin (6.3%).[[114]](#cite_note-114) Additionally, the figures from 2012 show that 34.7% of the permanent resident population aged 15 or over in Switzerland (around 2.33 million), had an immigrant background. A third of this population (853,000) held Swiss citizenship. Four fifths of persons with an immigration background were themselves immigrants (first generation foreigners and native-born and naturalised Swiss citizens), whereas one fifth were born in Switzerland (second generation foreigners and native-born and naturalised Swiss citizens).[[115]](#cite_note-115) In the 2000s, domestic and international institutions expressed concern about what was perceived as an increase in [xenophobia](/wiki/Xenophobia), particularly in some political campaigns. In reply to one critical report, the Federal Council noted that "racism unfortunately is present in Switzerland", but stated that the high proportion of foreign citizens in the country, as well as the generally unproblematic integration of foreigners", underlined Switzerland's openness.[[116]](#cite_note-116)

### Languages[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=21)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|Official languages in Switzerland (2016):](/wiki/File:Karte_Schweizer_Sprachgebiete_2016.png) [Template:Legend](/wiki/Template:Legend) [Template:Legend](/wiki/Template:Legend) [Template:Legend](/wiki/Template:Legend) [Template:Legend](/wiki/Template:Legend)

Switzerland has four [official languages](/wiki/Official_language): principally [German](/wiki/German_language) (spoken by 63.5% of the population in 2013); [French](/wiki/French_language) (22.5%) in the west; and [Italian](/wiki/Italian_language) (8.1%) in the south.<ref name=LangStat>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> The fourth official language, [Romansh](/wiki/Romansh_language) (0.5%), is a [Romance language](/wiki/Romance_languages) spoken locally in the southeastern trilingual canton of [Graubünden](/wiki/Graubünden), and is designated by Article 4 of the Federal Constitution as a national language along with German, French, and Italian, and in Article 70 as an official language if the authorities communicate with persons who speak Romansh. However, federal laws and other official acts do not need to be decreed in Romansh.

In 2013, the languages most spoken at home among permanent residents aged 15 and older were [Swiss German](/wiki/Swiss_German) (60.1%), French (23.4%), [Standard German](/wiki/Standard_German) (10.1%), and Italian (8.4%). More than two-fifths (42.6%) of the permanent resident population indicated speaking more than one language regularly. Other languages spoken at home included English (4.6%), Portuguese (3.5%), Albanian (2.6%), Serbian and Croatian (2.5%), Spanish (2.2%), and Turkish (1.3%).<ref name=LangStat/>

The federal government is obliged to communicate in the official languages, and in the federal parliament simultaneous translation is provided from and into German, French and Italian.[[117]](#cite_note-117) Aside from the official forms of their respective languages, the four linguistic regions of Switzerland also have their local dialectal forms. The role played by dialects in each linguistic region varies dramatically: in the German-speaking regions, [Swiss German](/wiki/Swiss_German) dialects have become ever more prevalent since the second half of the 20th century, especially in the media, such as radio and television, and are used as an everyday language, while the [Swiss variety of Standard German](/wiki/Swiss_Standard_German) is almost always used instead of dialect for written communication (c.f. [diglossic usage of a language](/wiki/Diglossia)).<ref name=dialhls>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> Conversely, in the French-speaking regions the local dialects have almost disappeared (only 6.3% of the population of Valais, 3.9% of Fribourg, and 3.1% of Jura still spoke dialects at the end of the 20th century), while in the Italian-speaking regions dialects are mostly limited to family settings and casual conversation.<ref name=dialhls/>

The principal official languages (German, French, and Italian) have terms, not used outside of Switzerland, known as [Helvetisms](/wiki/Helvetism). German Helvetisms are, roughly speaking, a large group of words typical of [Swiss Standard German](/wiki/Swiss_Standard_German), which do not appear either in [Standard German](/wiki/Standard_German), nor in other German dialects. These include terms from Switzerland's surrounding language cultures (German *Billette*[[118]](#cite_note-118) from French), from similar term in another language (Italian *azione* used not only as *act* but also as *discount* from German *Aktion*).<ref name=CHDuden>[Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)</ref> The French spoken in Switzerland has similar terms, which are equally known as Helvetisms. The most frequent characteristics of Helvetisms are in vocabulary, phrases, and pronunciation, but certain Helvetisms denote themselves as special in syntax and orthography likewise. [Duden](/wiki/Duden), one of the prescriptive sources for Standard German, is aware of about 3000 Helvetisms.<ref name=CHDuden/> Current French dictionaries, such as the [Petit Larousse](/wiki/Petit_Larousse), include several hundred Helvetisms.[[119]](#cite_note-119) Learning one of the other national languages at school is compulsory for all Swiss pupils, so many Swiss are supposed to be at least [bilingual](/wiki/Multilingualism), especially those belonging to linguistic minority groups.[[120]](#cite_note-120)

### Health[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=22)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) Swiss citizens are universally required to buy health insurance from private insurance companies, which in turn are required to accept every applicant. While the cost of the system is among the highest it compares well with other European countries in terms of health outcomes; patients who are citizens have been reported as being, in general, highly satisfied with it.[[121]](#cite_note-121)[[122]](#cite_note-122)[[123]](#cite_note-123) In 2012, life expectancy at birth was 80.4 years for men and 84.7 years for women[[124]](#cite_note-124) — the highest in the world.[[125]](#cite_note-125)[[126]](#cite_note-126) However, spending on health is particularly high at 11.4% of [GDP](/wiki/Gross_domestic_product) (2010), on par with Germany and France (11.6%) and other European countries, and notably less than spending in the USA (17.6%).[[127]](#cite_note-127) From 1990, a steady increase can be observed, reflecting the high costs of the services provided.<ref name = OECD>[OECD and WHO survey of Switzerland's health system](http://www.oecd.org/document/47/0,2340,en_2649_201185_37562223_1_1_1_1,00.html) oecd.org. Retrieved on 29 June 2009</ref> With an ageing population and new healthcare technologies, health spending will likely continue to rise.<ref name = OECD/>

### Urbanization[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=23)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)

[thumb|Urbanization in the](/wiki/File:Bisse_de_Clavau.jpg) [Rhone Valley](/wiki/Rhone) (outskirts of [Sion](/wiki/Sion,_Switzerland)) Between two thirds and three quarters of the population live in urban areas.[[128]](#cite_note-128)<ref name = Cities>[Städte und Agglomerationen unter der Lupe](http://www.are.admin.ch/dokumentation/00121/00224/index.html?lang=de&msg-id=27412) admin.ch. Retrieved on 26 June 2009</ref> Switzerland has gone from a largely rural country to an urban one in just 70 years. Since 1935 urban development has claimed as much of the Swiss landscape as it did during the previous 2,000 years. This [urban sprawl](/wiki/Urban_sprawl) does not only affect the plateau but also the Jura and the Alpine foothills[[129]](#cite_note-129) and there are growing concerns about land use.[[130]](#cite_note-130) However, from the beginning of the 21st century, the population growth in urban areas is higher than in the countryside.<ref name = Cities/>

Switzerland has a dense network of cities, where large, medium and small cities are complementary.<ref name = Cities/> The [plateau](/wiki/Swiss_plateau) is very densely populated with about 450 people per km2 and the landscape continually shows signs of human presence.[[131]](#cite_note-131) The weight of the largest metropolitan areas, which are [Zürich](/wiki/Zürich), [Geneva](/wiki/Geneva)–[Lausanne](/wiki/Lausanne), [Basel](/wiki/Basel) and [Bern](/wiki/Bern) tend to increase.<ref name = Cities/> In international comparison the importance of these urban areas is stronger than their number of inhabitants suggests.<ref name = Cities/> In addition the two main centers of Zürich and Geneva are recognized for their particularly great quality of life.[[132]](#cite_note-132)

### Religion[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=24)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|right|The Reformed church of](/wiki/File:Glarus_Stadtkirche_Langhaus.jpg) [Glarus](/wiki/Glarus) [thumb|Religion in Switzerland in 2016](/wiki/File:Karte_Religionen_der_Schweiz_2016.01.01.png)

Switzerland has no official [state religion](/wiki/State_religion), though most of the [cantons](/wiki/Cantons_of_Switzerland) (except [Geneva](/wiki/Canton_of_Geneva) and [Neuchâtel](/wiki/Canton_of_Neuchâtel)) recognize official churches, which are either the [Catholic Church](/wiki/Catholic_Church) or the (Protestant) [Swiss Reformed Church](/wiki/Swiss_Reformed_Church). These churches, and in some cantons also the [Old Catholic Church](/wiki/Old_Catholic_Church) and [Jewish](/wiki/Jewish) congregations, are financed by official taxation of adherents.[[133]](#cite_note-133) [Christianity](/wiki/Christianity) is the predominant religion of Switzerland (about 71% of resident population[[134]](#cite_note-134) and 75% of Swiss citizens[[135]](#cite_note-135)), divided between the Catholic Church (38.21% of the population), the Swiss Reformed Church (26.93%), further [Protestant](/wiki/Protestant) churches (2.89%) and other Christian denominations (2.79%). There has been a recent rise in [Evangelicalism](/wiki/Evangelicalism).[[136]](#cite_note-136) [Immigration](/wiki/Immigration_to_Switzerland) has established [Islam](/wiki/Islam) (4.95%) and [Eastern Orthodoxy](/wiki/Eastern_Orthodoxy) (around 2%) as sizeable minority religions.[[134]](#cite_note-134) According to a 2015 poll by [Gallup International](/wiki/WIN/GIA), 12% of Swiss people self-identified as "convinced atheists."[[137]](#cite_note-137) As of the 2000 census other Christian minority communities included Neo-[Pietism](/wiki/Pietism) (0.44%), [Pentecostalism](/wiki/Pentecostalism) (0.28%, mostly incorporated in the [Schweizer Pfingstmission](/wiki/Schweizer_Pfingstmission)), [Methodism](/wiki/Methodism) (0.13%), the [New Apostolic Church](/wiki/New_Apostolic_Church) (0.45%), [Jehovah's Witnesses](/wiki/Jehovah's_Witnesses) (0.28%), other Protestant denominations (0.20%), the [Old Catholic Church](/wiki/Old_Catholic_Church) (0.18%), other Christian denominations (0.20%). Non-Christian religions are [Hinduism](/wiki/Hinduism) (0.38%), [Buddhism](/wiki/Buddhism) (0.29%), [Judaism](/wiki/Judaism) (0.25%) and others (0.11%); 4.3% did not make a statement. 21.4% in 2012 declared themselves as unchurched i.e. not affiliated with any church or other religious body ([Agnostic](/wiki/Agnostic), [Atheist](/wiki/Atheist), or just not related to any official religion).[[134]](#cite_note-134)[[138]](#cite_note-138) The country was historically about evenly balanced between Catholic and Protestant, with a complex patchwork of majorities over most of the country. [Geneva](/wiki/Geneva) converted to Protestantism in 1536, just before [John Calvin](/wiki/John_Calvin) arrived there. One canton, Appenzell, was officially divided into Catholic and Protestant sections in 1597. The larger cities and their cantons (Bern, Geneva, Lausanne, Zürich and Basel) used to be predominantly Protestant. [Central Switzerland](/wiki/Central_Switzerland), the [Valais](/wiki/Valais), the [Ticino](/wiki/Ticino), [Appenzell Innerrhodes](/wiki/Appenzell_Innerrhoden), the [Jura](/wiki/Canton_of_Jura), and [Fribourg](/wiki/Canton_of_Fribourg) are traditionally Catholic. The [Swiss Constitution](/wiki/Swiss_Constitution) of 1848, under the recent impression of the clashes of Catholic vs. Protestant cantons that culminated in the [Sonderbundskrieg](/wiki/Sonderbundskrieg), consciously defines a [consociational state](/wiki/Consociational_state), allowing the peaceful co-existence of Catholics and Protestants. A 1980 initiative calling for the complete [separation of church and state](/wiki/Separation_of_church_and_state) was rejected by 78.9% of the voters.[[139]](#cite_note-139) Some traditionally Protestant cantons and cities nowadays have a slight Catholic majority, not because they were growing in members, quite the contrary, but only because since about 1970 a steadily growing minority became not affiliated with any church or other religious body (21.4% in Switzerland, 2012) especially in traditionally Protestant regions, such as Basel-City (42%), canton of Neuchâtel (38%), canton of Geneva (35%), canton of Vaud (26%), or Zürich city (city: >25%; canton: 23%).[[140]](#cite_note-140)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Religion (age 15+) in Switzerland – 2014[[141]](#cite_note-141) | | |
| **Affiliation** | **% of Swiss population** | |
| [**Christianity**](/wiki/Christian) | align=right| [**Template:Bartable**](/wiki/Template:Bartable) |  |
| [*Roman Catholic*](/wiki/Roman_Catholicism_in_Switzerland) | align=right| [**Template:Bartable**](/wiki/Template:Bartable) |  |
| [*Swiss Reformed*](/wiki/Swiss_Reformed_Church) | align=right| [**Template:Bartable**](/wiki/Template:Bartable) |  |
| [*Eastern Orthodox*](/wiki/Orthodox_Christianity) | align=right| [**Template:Bartable**](/wiki/Template:Bartable) |  |
| [*Evangelical*](/wiki/Evangelicalism) | align=right| [**Template:Bartable**](/wiki/Template:Bartable) |  |
| [*Lutheran*](/wiki/Lutheranism) | align=right| [**Template:Bartable**](/wiki/Template:Bartable) |  |
| [*Anglican*](/wiki/Anglicanism) | align=right| [**Template:Bartable**](/wiki/Template:Bartable) |  |
| [*Old Catholic*](/wiki/Old_Catholic_Church) *or other Christian* | align=right| [**Template:Bartable**](/wiki/Template:Bartable) |  |
| **Non-Christian faiths** | align=right| [**Template:Bartable**](/wiki/Template:Bartable) |  |
| [*Muslim*](/wiki/Muslim) | align=right| [**Template:Bartable**](/wiki/Template:Bartable) |  |
| [*Buddhist*](/wiki/Buddhism_in_Switzerland) | align=right| [**Template:Bartable**](/wiki/Template:Bartable) |  |
| [*Hindu*](/wiki/Hinduism_in_Switzerland) | align=right| [**Template:Bartable**](/wiki/Template:Bartable) |  |
| [*Jewish*](/wiki/Judaism_in_Switzerland) | align=right| [**Template:Bartable**](/wiki/Template:Bartable) |  |
| *Other non-Christian faith* | align=right| [**Template:Bartable**](/wiki/Template:Bartable) |  |
| [**Unaffiliated**](/wiki/Irreligion)\* | align=right| [**Template:Bartable**](/wiki/Template:Bartable) |  |
| **Total** | [**Template:Bartable**](/wiki/Template:Bartable) |  |
| *\*of whom: 42%* [*theistic*](/wiki/Theism)*/*[*ietsistic*](/wiki/Ietsism)*, 32%* [*atheistic*](/wiki/Atheist)*, 25%* [*agnostic*](/wiki/Agnostic) |  |  |

## Culture[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=25)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also)

[thumb|](/wiki/File:Vals06.JPG)[Alphorn](/wiki/Alphorn) concert in [Vals](/wiki/Vals,_Switzerland) Three of Europe's major languages are official in Switzerland. Swiss culture is characterised by diversity, which is reflected in a wide range of traditional customs.[[142]](#cite_note-142) A region may be in some ways strongly culturally connected to the neighbouring country that shares its language, the country itself being rooted in western [European culture](/wiki/Culture_of_Europe).[[143]](#cite_note-143) The linguistically isolated [Romansh](/wiki/Romansh_language) culture in [Graubünden](/wiki/Graubünden) in eastern Switzerland constitutes an exception, it survives only in the upper valleys of the Rhine and the Inn and strives to maintain its rare linguistic tradition.

Switzerland is home to many notable contributors to literature, art, architecture, music and sciences. In addition the country attracted a number of creative persons during time of unrest or war in Europe.[[144]](#cite_note-144)Some 1000 museums are distributed through the country; the number has more than tripled since 1950.[[145]](#cite_note-145) Among the most important cultural performances held annually are the [Paléo Festival](/wiki/Paléo_Festival), [Lucerne Festival](/wiki/Lucerne_Festival),[[146]](#cite_note-146) the [Montreux Jazz Festival](/wiki/Montreux_Jazz_Festival),[[147]](#cite_note-147) the [Locarno International Film Festival](/wiki/Locarno_International_Film_Festival) and the [Art Basel](/wiki/Art_Basel).[[148]](#cite_note-148) Alpine symbolism has played an essential role in shaping the history of the country and the Swiss national identity.<ref name=j1/>[[149]](#cite_note-149) Nowadays some concentrated mountain areas have a strong highly energetic [ski resort](/wiki/Ski_resort) culture in winter, and a [hiking](/wiki/Hiking) (ger: *das Wandern*) or [Mountain biking](/wiki/Mountain_biking) culture in summer. Other areas throughout the year have a recreational culture that caters to tourism, yet the quieter seasons are spring and autumn when there are fewer visitors. A traditional farmer and herder culture also predominates in many areas and small farms are omnipresent outside the cities. Folk art is kept alive in organisations all over the country. In Switzerland it is mostly expressed in music, dance, poetry, wood carving and embroidery. The [alphorn](/wiki/Alphorn), a trumpet-like musical instrument made of wood, has become alongside [yodeling](/wiki/Yodel) and the accordion an epitome of traditional [Swiss music](/wiki/Music_of_Switzerland).[[150]](#cite_note-150)[[151]](#cite_note-151)

### Literature[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=26)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|upright|](/wiki/File:Rousseau_Geneve.JPG)[Jean-Jacques Rousseau](/wiki/Jean-Jacques_Rousseau) was not only a writer but also an influential philosopher of the eighteenth century[[152]](#cite_note-152) (his statue in [Geneva](/wiki/Geneva)). As the Confederation, from its foundation in 1291, was almost exclusively composed of German-speaking regions, the earliest forms of literature are in German. In the 18th century, French became the fashionable language in Bern and elsewhere, while the influence of the French-speaking allies and subject lands was more marked than before.[[153]](#cite_note-153) Among the classics of Swiss German literature are [Jeremias Gotthelf](/wiki/Jeremias_Gotthelf) (1797–1854) and [Gottfried Keller](/wiki/Gottfried_Keller) (1819–1890). The undisputed giants of 20th century Swiss literature are [Max Frisch](/wiki/Max_Frisch) (1911–91) and [Friedrich Dürrenmatt](/wiki/Friedrich_Dürrenmatt) (1921–90), whose repertoire includes *Die Physiker* ([The Physicists](/wiki/The_Physicists)) and *Das Versprechen* ([The Pledge](/wiki/The_Pledge:_Requiem_for_the_Detective_Novel)), released in 2001 as a Hollywood film.<ref name = Literature>[Literature](http://www.swissworld.org/en/culture/literature/german_speaking_authors/) swissworld.org, Retrieved on 23 June 2009</ref>

Prominent French-speaking writers were [Jean-Jacques Rousseau](/wiki/Jean-Jacques_Rousseau) (1712–1778) and [Germaine de Staël](/wiki/Germaine_de_Staël) (1766–1817). More recent authors include [Charles Ferdinand Ramuz](/wiki/Charles_Ferdinand_Ramuz) (1878–1947), whose novels describe the lives of peasants and mountain dwellers, set in a harsh environment and [Blaise Cendrars](/wiki/Blaise_Cendrars) (born Frédéric Sauser, 1887–1961).<ref name = Literature/> Also Italian and Romansh-speaking authors contributed but in more modest way given their small number.

Probably the most famous Swiss literary creation, [*Heidi*](/wiki/Heidi), the story of an orphan girl who lives with her grandfather in the Alps, is one of the most popular children's books ever and has come to be a symbol of Switzerland. Her creator, [Johanna Spyri](/wiki/Johanna_Spyri) (1827–1901), wrote a number of other books on similar themes.<ref name = Literature/>

### Media[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=27)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) The freedom of the press and the right to free expression is guaranteed in the federal constitution of Switzerland.<ref name = Media>[Press and the media](http://www.ch.ch/private/00085/00090/00479/00480/index.html?lang=en) ch.ch. Retrieved on 25 June 2009</ref> The [Swiss News Agency](/wiki/Schweizerische_Depeschenagentur) (SNA) broadcasts information around-the-clock in three of the four national languages—on politics, economics, society and culture. The SNA supplies almost all Swiss media and a couple dozen foreign media services with its news.<ref name = Media/>

Switzerland has historically boasted the greatest number of newspaper titles published in proportion to its population and size.<ref name = Press>[Press in Switzerland](http://www.pressreference.com/Sw-Ur/Switzerland.html) pressreference.com. Retrieved on 25 June 2009</ref> The most influential newspapers are the German-language [Tages-Anzeiger](/wiki/Tages-Anzeiger) and [Neue Zürcher Zeitung](/wiki/Neue_Zürcher_Zeitung) NZZ, and the French-language [Le Temps](/wiki/Le_Temps), but almost every city has at least one local newspaper. The cultural diversity accounts for a large number of newspapers.<ref name = Press/>

The government exerts greater control over broadcast media than print media, especially due to finance and licensing.<ref name = Press/> The Swiss Broadcasting Corporation, whose name was recently changed to [SRG SSR](/wiki/SRG_SSR), is charged with the production and broadcast of radio and television programs. SRG SSR studios are distributed throughout the various language regions. Radio content is produced in six central and four regional studios while the television programs are produced in [Geneva](/wiki/Geneva), [Zürich](/wiki/Zürich) and [Lugano](/wiki/Lugano). An extensive cable network also allows most Swiss to access the programs from neighboring countries.<ref name = Press/>

### Sports[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=28)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|Ski area over the glaciers of](/wiki/File:Allalinhorn_4027_2007_04_17.JPG) [Saas-Fee](/wiki/Saas-Fee) [Skiing](/wiki/Skiing), [snowboarding](/wiki/Snowboarding) and [mountaineering](/wiki/Mountaineering) are among the most popular sports in Switzerland, the nature of the country being particularly suited for such activities.[[154]](#cite_note-154) Winter sports are practiced by the natives and tourists since the second half of the 19th century with the invention of [bobsleigh](/wiki/Bobsleigh) in [St. Moritz](/wiki/St._Moritz).[[155]](#cite_note-155) The first [world ski championships](/wiki/FIS_Alpine_World_Ski_Championships) were held in [Mürren](/wiki/Mürren) (1931) and St. Moritz (1934). The latter town hosted the second [Winter Olympic Games](/wiki/Winter_Olympic_Games) in 1928 and the fifth edition in 1948. Among the most successful skiers and world champions are [Pirmin Zurbriggen](/wiki/Pirmin_Zurbriggen) and [Didier Cuche](/wiki/Didier_Cuche).

[thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Innenaufnahme_Vaillant_Arena_Davos.JPG)[Spengler Cup](/wiki/Spengler_Cup) in [Davos](/wiki/Davos) [thumb|left| The](/wiki/File:Suisse_vs_Argentine_-_équipe_de_Suisse.jpg) [Switzerland national football team](/wiki/Switzerland_national_football_team) lining up against Argentina in 2012 Most prominently watched sport events in Switzerland are [football](/wiki/Football_in_Switzerland), [ice hockey](/wiki/Schweizerischer_Eishockeyverband), [Alpin skiing](/wiki/FIS_Alpine_World_Ski_Championships), "[Schwingen](/wiki/Schwingen)", and [tennis](/wiki/Tennis).[[156]](#cite_note-156) The headquarters of the international football's and ice hockey's governing bodies, the [International Federation of Association Football (FIFA)](/wiki/International_Federation_of_Association_Football) and [International Ice Hockey Federation(IIHF)](/wiki/International_Ice_Hockey_Federation), are located in Zürich. Actually many other headquarters of international sports federatios are to be found in Switzerland. For example, the [International Olympic Committee (IOC)](/wiki/International_Olympic_Committee), IOC's [Olympic Museum](/wiki/Olympic_Museum) and the [Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS)](/wiki/Court_of_Arbitration_for_Sport) are located in [Lausanne](/wiki/Lausanne).

Switzerland hosted the [1954 FIFA World Cup](/wiki/1954_FIFA_World_Cup), and was the joint host, with Austria, of the [Euro 2008](/wiki/Euro_2008) tournament. The [Swiss Super League](/wiki/Swiss_Super_League) is the nation's professional football club league. Europe's highest football pitch, at [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) above sea level, is located in Switzerland and is named the *Ottmar Hitzfeld Stadium*.[[157]](#cite_note-157) Many Swiss also follow [ice hockey](/wiki/Ice_hockey) and support one of the 12 clubs in the [League A](/wiki/National_League_A), which is the most attended league in Europe.[[158]](#cite_note-158) In 2009, Switzerland hosted the [IIHF World Championship](/wiki/2009_IIHF_World_Championship) for the 10th time.[[159]](#cite_note-159) It also became [World Vice-Champion](/wiki/2013_IIHF_World_Championship) in 2013. The numerous lakes make Switzerland an attractive place for sailing. The largest, [Lake Geneva](/wiki/Lake_Geneva), is the home of the sailing team [Alinghi](/wiki/Alinghi) which was the first European team to win the [America's Cup](/wiki/America's_Cup) in 2003 and which successfully defended the title in 2007. Tennis has become an increasingly popular sport, and Swiss players such as [Martina Hingis](/wiki/Martina_Hingis), [Roger Federer](/wiki/Roger_Federer), and most recently, [Stanislas Wawrinka](/wiki/Stanislas_Wawrinka) have won multiple [Grand Slams](/wiki/Grand_Slam_(tennis)). Swiss professional wrestler [Claudio Castagnoli](/wiki/Claudio_Castagnoli) is currently signed with [WWE](/wiki/World_Wrestling_Entertainment), and is a former [United States champion](/wiki/WWE_United_States_Championship).

[thumb|upright|In a nine-year span,](/wiki/File:Federer_Cincinnati_(2007).jpg) [Roger Federer](/wiki/Roger_Federer) has won a record 17 Grand Slam singles titles, making him the most successful men's tennis player ever.[[160]](#cite_note-160) [Motorsport](/wiki/Motorsport) racecourses and events were banned in Switzerland following the [1955 Le Mans disaster](/wiki/1955_Le_Mans_disaster) with exception to events such as [Hillclimbing](/wiki/Hillclimbing). During this period, the country still produced successful racing drivers such as [Clay Regazzoni](/wiki/Clay_Regazzoni), [Sébastien Buemi](/wiki/Sébastien_Buemi), [Jo Siffert](/wiki/Jo_Siffert), [Dominique Aegerter](/wiki/Dominique_Aegerter), successful [World Touring Car Championship](/wiki/World_Touring_Car_Championship) driver [Alain Menu](/wiki/Alain_Menu), [2014 24 Hours of Le Mans](/wiki/2014_24_Hours_of_Le_Mans) winner [Marcel Fässler](/wiki/Marcel_Fässler_(racing_driver)) and 2015 [24 Hours Nürburgring](/wiki/24_Hours_Nürburgring) winner [Nico Müller](/wiki/Nico_Müller). [Switzerland](/wiki/A1_Team_Switzerland) also won the [A1GP World Cup of Motorsport](/wiki/A1_Grand_Prix) in [2007–08](/wiki/2007–08_A1_Grand_Prix_season) with driver [Neel Jani](/wiki/Neel_Jani). Swiss [motorcycle racer](/wiki/Motorcycle_racer) [Thomas Lüthi](/wiki/Thomas_Lüthi) won the 2005 [MotoGP](/wiki/MotoGP) World Championship in the 125cc category. In June 2007 the [Swiss National Council](/wiki/Swiss_National_Council), one house of the [Federal Assembly of Switzerland](/wiki/Federal_Assembly_of_Switzerland), voted to overturn the ban, however the other house, the [Swiss Council of States](/wiki/Swiss_Council_of_States) rejected the change and the ban remains in place.[[161]](#cite_note-161)[[162]](#cite_note-162) Traditional sports include Swiss wrestling or "[Schwingen](/wiki/Schwingen)". It is an old tradition from the rural central cantons and considered the national sport by some. [Hornussen](/wiki/Hornussen) is another indigenous Swiss sport, which is like a cross between baseball and golf.[[163]](#cite_note-163) [Steinstossen](/wiki/Steinstossen) is the Swiss variant of [stone put](/wiki/Stone_put), a competition in throwing a heavy stone. Practiced only among the alpine population since [prehistoric times](/wiki/Prehistory), it is recorded to have taken place in [Basel](/wiki/Basel) in the 13th century. It is also central to the [Unspunnenfest](/wiki/Unspunnenfest), first held in 1805, with its symbol the 83.5 kg stone named *Unspunnenstein*.[[164]](#cite_note-164)

### Cuisine[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=29)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|left|200px|](/wiki/File:Full_cheese_fondue_set_-_in_Switzerland.JPG)[Fondue](/wiki/Fondue) is melted cheese, into which bread is dipped The cuisine of Switzerland is multifaceted. While some dishes such as [fondue](/wiki/Fondue), [raclette](/wiki/Raclette) or [rösti](/wiki/Rösti) are omnipresent through the country, each region developed its own gastronomy according to the differences of climate and languages.[[165]](#cite_note-165)[[166]](#cite_note-166) Traditional Swiss cuisine uses ingredients similar to those in other European countries, as well as unique [dairy products](/wiki/Dairy_product) and [cheeses](/wiki/Cheese) such as [Gruyère](/wiki/Gruyère_(cheese)) or [Emmental](/wiki/Emmental_(cheese)), produced in the valleys of [Gruyères](/wiki/Gruyères) and [Emmental](/wiki/Emmental). The number of fine-dining establishments is high, particularly in western Switzerland.[[167]](#cite_note-167)[[168]](#cite_note-168) [Chocolate](/wiki/Swiss_chocolate) has been made in Switzerland since the 18th century but it gained its reputation at the end of the 19th century with the invention of modern techniques such as [conching](/wiki/Conching) and [tempering](/wiki/Why_Chocolate_Melts) which enabled its production on a high quality level. Also a breakthrough was the invention of solid milk chocolate in 1875 by [Daniel Peter](/wiki/Daniel_Peter). The Swiss are the world's largest consumers of chocolate.[[169]](#cite_note-169)[[170]](#cite_note-170) Due to the popularization of [processed foods](/wiki/Processed_food) at the end of the 19th century, Swiss [health food](/wiki/Whole_food) pioneer [Maximilian Bircher-Benner](/wiki/Maximilian_Bircher-Benner) created the first nutrition-based therapy in form of the well-known [rolled oats](/wiki/Rolled_oats) [cereal](/wiki/Cereal) dish, called [Birchermüesli](/wiki/Muesli).

The most popular alcoholic drink in Switzerland is wine. Switzerland is notable for the variety of grapes grown because of the large variations in [terroirs](/wiki/Terroir), with their specific mixes of soil, air, altitude and light. [Swiss wine](/wiki/Swiss_wine) is produced mainly in [Valais](/wiki/Valais_(wine_region)), [Vaud](/wiki/Vaud) ([Lavaux](/wiki/Lavaux)), [Geneva](/wiki/Geneva_(wine_region)) and [Ticino](/wiki/Ticino_(wine_region)), with a small majority of white wines. Vineyards have been cultivated in Switzerland since the Roman era, even though certain traces can be found of a more ancient origin. The most widespread varieties are the [Chasselas](/wiki/Chasselas) (called [Fendant](/wiki/Fendant) in Valais) and [Pinot noir](/wiki/Pinot_noir). The [Merlot](/wiki/Merlot) is the main variety produced in Ticino.[[171]](#cite_note-171)[[172]](#cite_note-172)

## See also[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=30)]

* [Index of Switzerland-related articles](/wiki/Index_of_Switzerland-related_articles)
* [Outline of Switzerland](/wiki/Outline_of_Switzerland)
* [Template:Books-inline](/wiki/Template:Books-inline)

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## References[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=32)]

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## Bibliography[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=33)]

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## External links[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=34)]

[Template:Sister project links](/wiki/Template:Sister_project_links) [Template:Cookbook](/wiki/Template:Cookbook)

Government

* [The Federal Authorities of the Swiss Confederation](https://www.admin.ch/)
* [The Federal Council](https://www.admin.ch/gov/en/start/federal-council.html)
* [Switzerland's information portal](https://www.eda.admin.ch/aboutswitzerland)
* [Swiss Statistics](http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/en/index.html) at the [Swiss Federal Statistical Office](/wiki/Swiss_Federal_Statistical_Office).
* [Practical informations](https://www.ch.ch/en)

Reference

* [Switzerland](http://ucblibraries.colorado.edu/govpubs/for/switzerland.htm) at *UCB Libraries GovPubs*.
* [Switzerland](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/577225/Switzerland) entry at [*Encyclopædia Britannica*](/wiki/Encyclopædia_Britannica).
* [Template:Dmoz](/wiki/Template:Dmoz)
* [Switzerland profile](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-17980650) from the [BBC News](/wiki/BBC_News).
* [Template:CIA World Factbook link](/wiki/Template:CIA_World_Factbook_link)

Geography

* [Template:Wikiatlas](/wiki/Template:Wikiatlas)
* [Federal Office of Topography](http://www.swisstopo.ch/)
* [Searchable interactive map (search.ch)](http://map.search.ch/)
* [Template:Osmrelation-inline](/wiki/Template:Osmrelation-inline)

Travel

* [Tourism](http://www.myswitzerland.com/en/accueil.html)

History

* [Template:De icon](/wiki/Template:De_icon) [Template:Fr icon](/wiki/Template:Fr_icon) [Template:It icon](/wiki/Template:It_icon) [Historical Dictionary of Switzerland](http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/index.php)
* [Swiss American Historical Society](http://swissamericanhistoricalsociety.org/)

Languages

* [swiss-linguistics.com](http://www.swiss-linguistics.com/), a portal on current linguistic research in Switzerland.

News media

* Daily newspapers
  + [Template:De icon](/wiki/Template:De_icon) [*Tages-Anzeiger*](http://www.tages-anzeiger.ch/)
  + [Template:De icon](/wiki/Template:De_icon) [*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*](http://www.nzz.ch/)
  + [Template:Fr icon](/wiki/Template:Fr_icon) [*Le Temps*](http://www.letemps.ch/)
  + [Template:It icon](/wiki/Template:It_icon) [*Corriere Del Ticino*](http://www.cdt.ch/)
* [swissinfo.ch, Swiss News – Worldwide](http://www.swissinfo.ch/)

Education

* [Universities in Switzerland](http://www.swissuniversity.ch/)
* [The Swiss School System](http://www.educa.ch/)

Science, research, and technology

* [State Secretariat for Education and Research, SER](http://www.sbf.admin.ch/)
* [The Swiss Portal for Research and Innovation](http://www.myscience.ch/) (private source).

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