

Demographic Challenges and Opportunities and their Impact on Individual and Societal Well-being

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Introduction

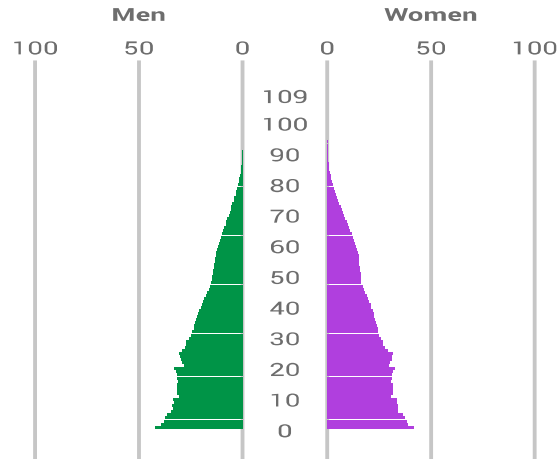
Demographic change and ageing as “megatrend”:

- Shrinking population (low fertility): Between 1960 and 2024 the population in the EU increased from 350 to 450 million. According to a recent publication of Eurostat (2023), the EU population will reach its peak in 2026 and then gradually decrease (to 420 million in 2100).
- Ageing society: Longer life expectancy (and healthy life years), increase of the median age, and a changing age structure/shape of the population pyramid (from pyramid to urn shape). Until 2100 the number and share of people aged 80 and over will more than double (from 6% to 15%).
- Increasing migration flows: since the mid-1980s the EU has become a region of net immigration.
- Smaller households: more but smaller households, one third are single person households (an increase of 19% since 2010).
- Considerable heterogeneity and diversity of population trends between countries and regions (and of the contributions of natural population change vs. net migration to decreasing or rising population).

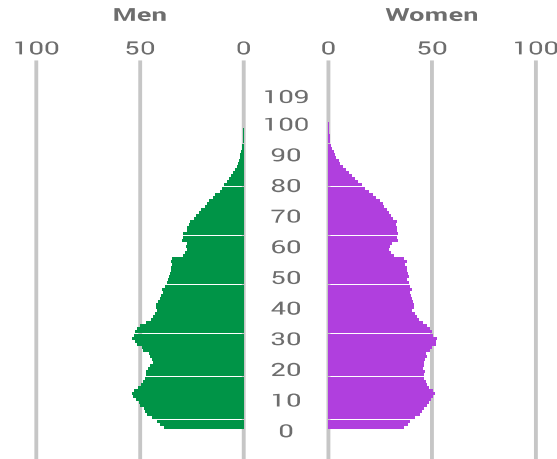
Population Pyramid by Age and Sex

(Switzerland, 1900-2050, Number of people in 1000s)

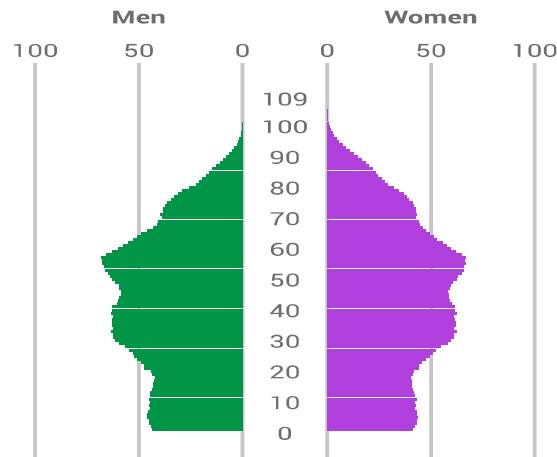
1900



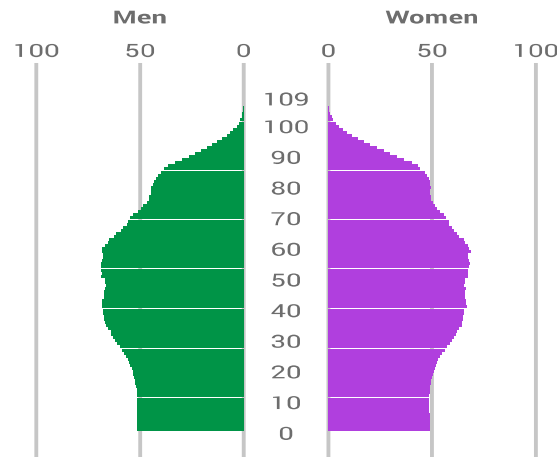
1975



2020



2050¹



¹ according to scenario A-00-2020

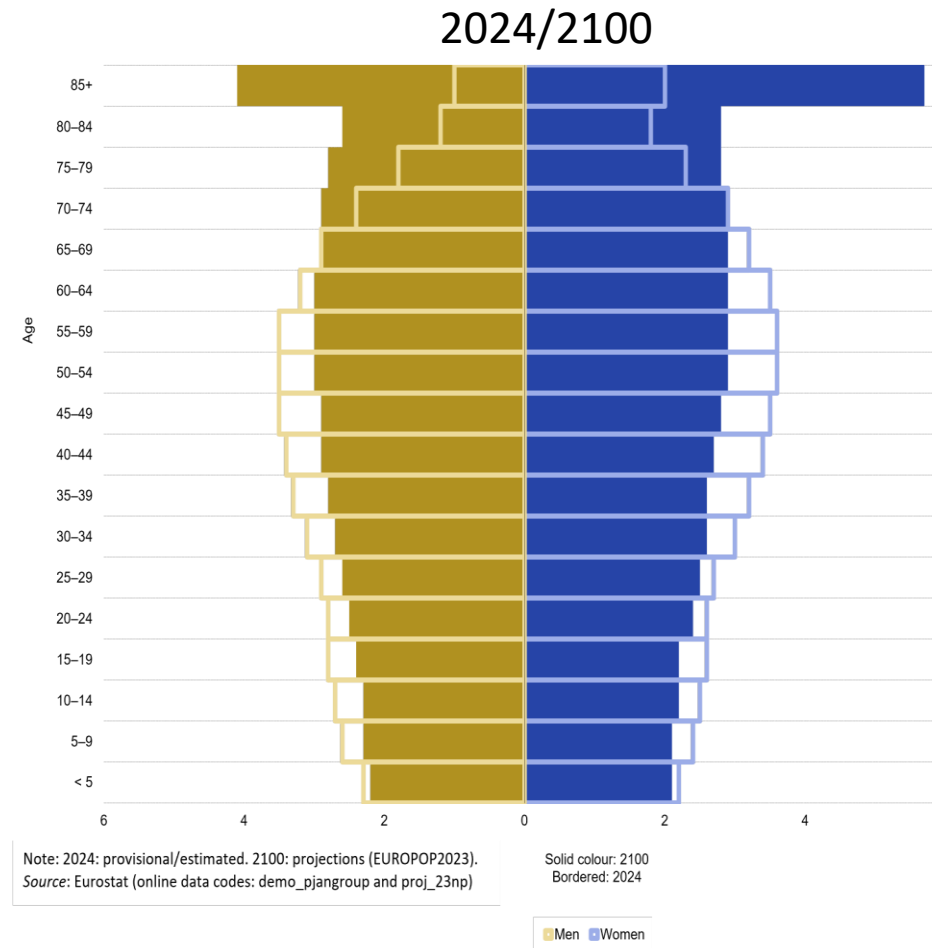
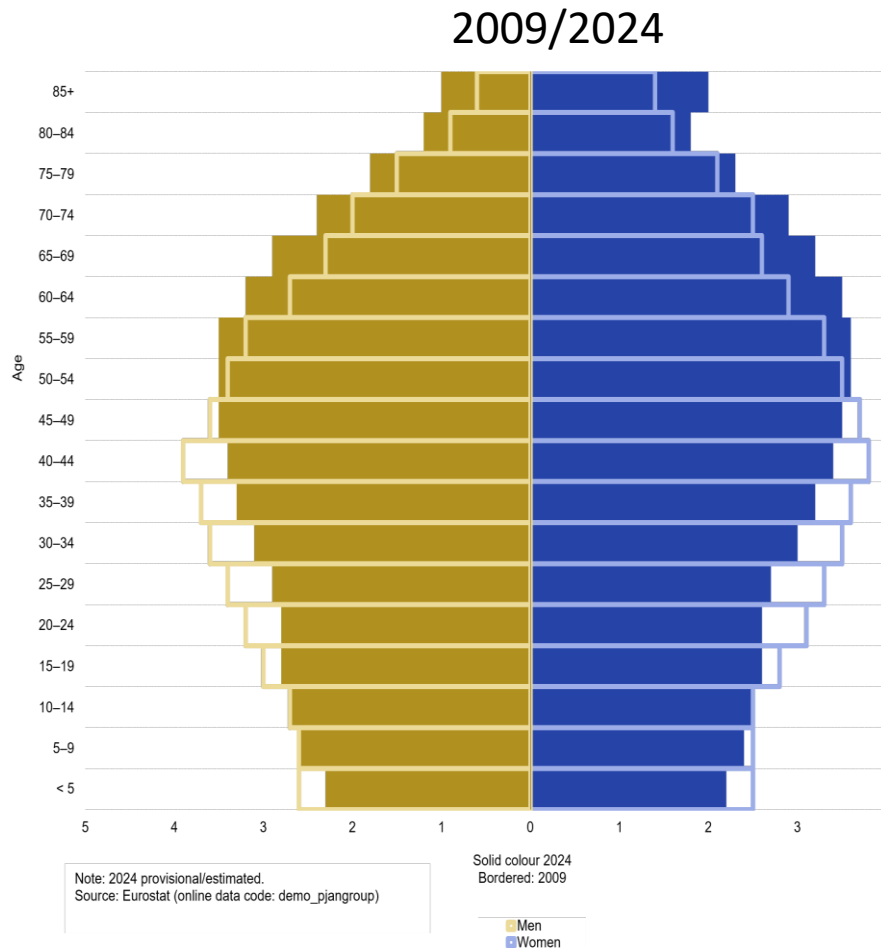
Source: FSO – ESPOP, FPC, SCENARIO, STATPOP

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Source: Furrer et al. 2024, A
Panorama of Swiss Society

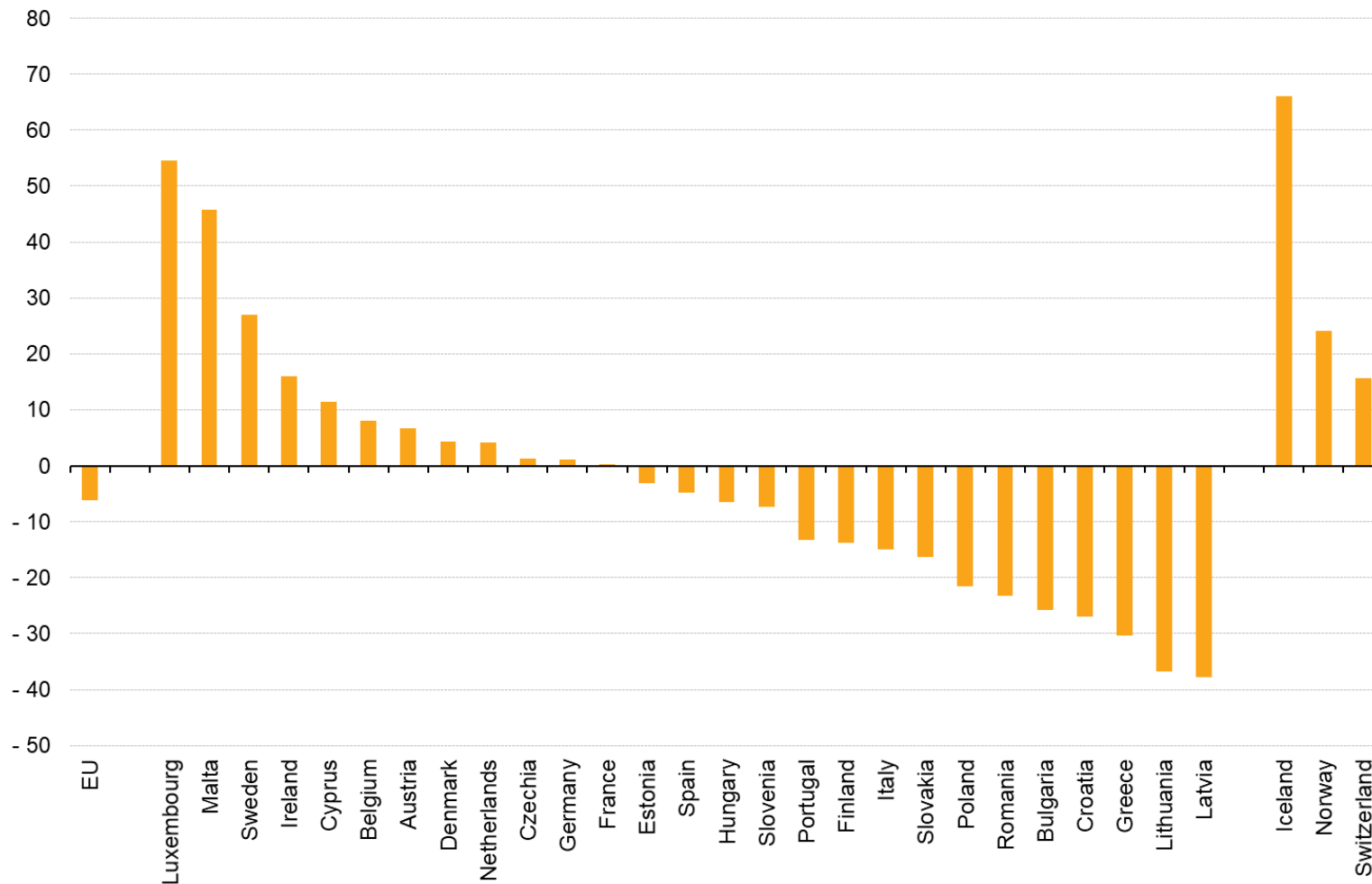
EU Population Pyramid, 2009/2024 & 2024/2100

(percent of total population; Eurostat 2025b)



Projected Population Change 2022-2100

(in percent, by country; Eurostat 2023)



Note: Ranked on projected population change.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: proj_23np)

Impacts and challenges

- Increasing heterogeneity and diversity of life situations in old age.
- A shrinking working-age population, a smaller work-force, and a rising old-age dependency ratio (from 1:3 to 2:3 until 2100), including respective challenges and opportunities, for instance,
 - need of more flexible and more inclusive labour markets, improving working conditions in order to enhance workforce participation of the elderly, females/parents, disabled;
 - rising financial pressure on public budgets and welfare state spending.
- Challenges for long-term health care: new care models (like outpatient care in addition to institutional care).
- Challenges for housing (affordability, barrier-free facilities for elderly, etc.)
- Challenges for solidarity and cohesion between generations.
- Challenges of persistent (or even widening) social inequalities, including health inequalities, old-age poverty.
- Growing regional disparities, polarization, spatial segregation (and adverse effects on access to services and physical, social, digital infrastructure).
- Increasing conflicts on control of population (Russian invasion in Ukraine)

References

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