

avenir analysis

Half of Switzerland's Voters Are Over 60

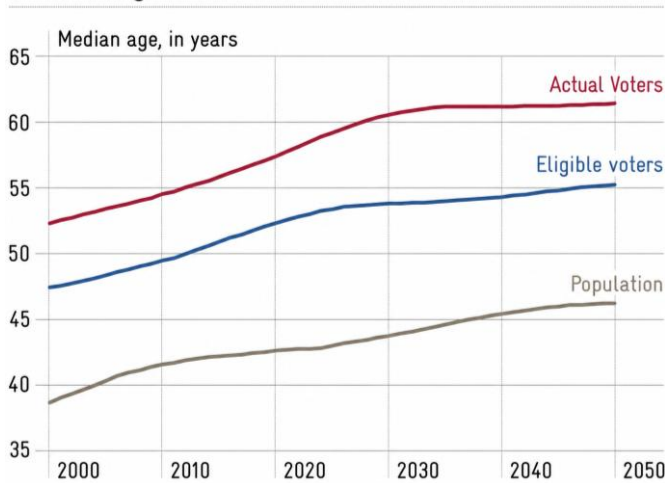
People approaching retirement or already drawing a pension are playing an increasingly decisive role in Swiss referendums. A new analysis by Avenir Suisse shows that demographic aging, combined with markedly higher turnout among older citizens, is reshaping the electorate.

The median age of those who actually vote in nationwide referendums is now about 60, according to new calculations by Avenir Suisse. In other words, half of all active voters are older than 60. Since 2000, the median age has increased by seven years.

As a result, the people who decide about referendums are becoming increasingly distinct from the broader population:

- The median age of Switzerland's **overall population** is about 43.
- The median age of **eligible voters** is 53.5.
- Those who **actually participate in votes** are more than six years older on average, largely because older citizens turn out at roughly twice the rate of younger ones.

The Age Gap Between the Population and Voters Is Growing



These findings help explain several political developments in recent years. With the median voter now around 60 years old, it is perhaps less surprising that proposals such as the introduction of a 13th AHV monthly pension secured majority support. As the electorate grows older, political influence increasingly reflects the preferences of older generations. Looking ahead, this trend is likely to translate into greater redistribution in favor of retirees and older citizens.

The paper also examines a range of proposals aimed at addressing this imbalance, including lowering the voting age to 16 and

extending voting rights to foreign residents. The author highlights, however, that such measures would only marginally reduce the median age of voters while introducing new challenges of their own. More far-reaching interventions would raise difficult questions about democratic legitimacy.

A high median voter age is not necessarily a problem. It is, however, a political reality that deserves attention, particularly when the costs and benefits of major policy decisions are unevenly distributed across generations.

avenir analysis: “Das alte Stimmvolk” (The Aging Electorate), by Lukas Rühli, 7 pages, available online from June 25, 2026, at 5:00 a.m. in German and French at www.avenir-suisse.ch/en/

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