

Commitment to Sustainable Development

Voluntary Local Review
of the Canton of Aargau



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The UN 2030 Agenda is the global framework for sustainable development and the reference point for Switzerland's sustainability policy. It brings together regional, national and international efforts to find joint solutions to major challenges such as resource consumption, biodiversity loss and climate change. This report contributes to the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda.



The Canton of Aargau is situated in northern Switzerland and is characterised by rolling landscapes, fertile plains and numerous bodies of water. Historic castles, monasteries and Roman ruins bear witness to a long history. Alongside the urban centres, rural communities offer a balanced lifestyle combining home, work and

leisure. The Canton of Aargau has established itself as a major centre for research and technology, with close links between science, business and educational institutions. The population also benefits from a wide range of cultural, educational and leisure opportunities.

The Government Council of the Canton of Aargau is firmly committed to sustainable development. It acts proactively and prudently to safeguard the region's environmental, economic and social interests in the long term. The Government Council's aim and motivation is to ensure a high quality of life for the people of the Canton of Aargau – both today and in the future.

The Canton of Aargau regularly assesses the extent to which its activities are in line with sustainability goals. I am delighted that we are taking a pioneering lead in this regard and are the first Swiss Canton to publish a Voluntary Local Review (VLR). In doing so, we are making an active contribution to Switzerland's national report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The publication of the VLR is a sign that all levels – from the global level of the UN, Switzerland, the cantons, cities and municipalities, to civil society, business and academia – should play their part in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through partnership.

To support these efforts, the Canton of Aargau is also setting an example within its own administration. It has set itself the climate target of achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2040 for the cantonal administration and has drawn up a comprehensive action plan entitled 'Roadmap to Net Zero 2040'. This plan sets out specific steps and targets for the coming years.

Discover the Canton of Aargau from the perspective of sustainable development. I hope you find this report both insightful and inspiring.

Stephan Attiger

Member of the Government Council
Head of the Department of Civil Engineering, Transport and Environment (CTE)

Sustainable Development in the Canton of Aargau

Sustainable development is firmly embedded in the Canton of Aargau. With its regular and comprehensive sustainability reporting, it ranks among the most committed Swiss cantons. The Canton of Aargau is situated in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. It is the fourth-largest of the 26 Swiss cantons in terms of population and the tenth-largest in terms of area. Like all cantons, it has its own constitution, a parliament and a government, and enjoys a high degree of autonomy in the performance of many state functions. The Canton of Aargau currently has 196 political municipalities.

In 2002, the Government Council established a policy principle on sustainability for the first time. A few years ago, it adopted comprehensive guidelines on sustainability, which reinforce the commitment of the Canton of Aargau to implementing sustainable development and specify the current understanding of the concept. The guiding principles describe how sustainable development is to be systematically integrated into government action and emphasise the partnership-based implementation of sustainable development, also beyond the national borders.

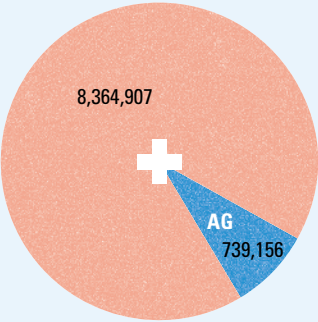
Every four years, the cantonal sustainability report analyses the status of sustainable development across 32 thematic areas, covering the three dimensions of economy, society and the environment, and using 64 indicators. The findings are incorporated into the reporting on the progress made in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda. The sustainability report also serves as a key reference for the four-yearly update of the Canton of Aargau's development strategy, which acts as a strategic framework for the Government Council.

With the Voluntary Local Review (VLR), the Canton of Aargau is introducing a new format for the first time. It presents relevant information from the comprehensive report 'Sustainable Development in the Canton of Aargau' (published in December 2024) in a way that is both accessible to the general public and understandable from an international perspective. The VLR supports Switzerland's national reporting and promotes the canton's partnership-based approach to implementing sustainable development by facilitating comparison and exchange with other regions worldwide.

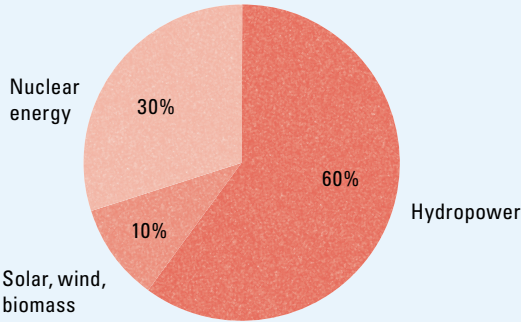
This report documents the progress made in implementing the SDGs in the Canton of Aargau, using selected indicators across six thematically grouped chapters. It also presents specific projects that contribute to the implementation of the respective SDGs. With this report, the Canton of Aargau is making its efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development transparent and invites all actors to participate.

The Canton of Aargau (AG) in Figures

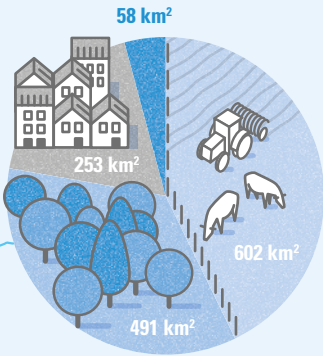
Population of Switzerland
9,104,063 inhabitants



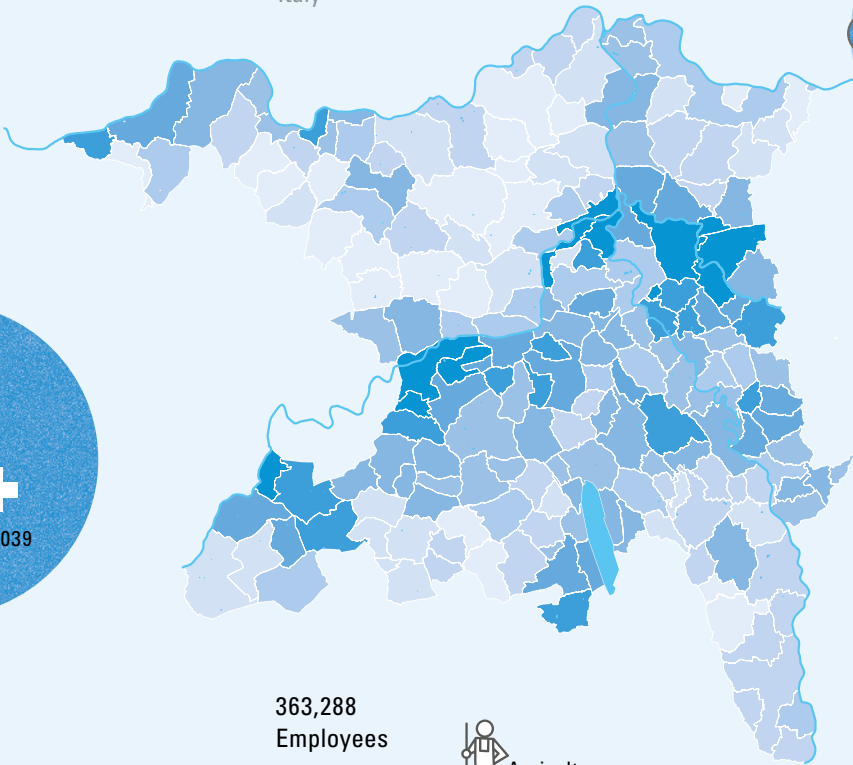
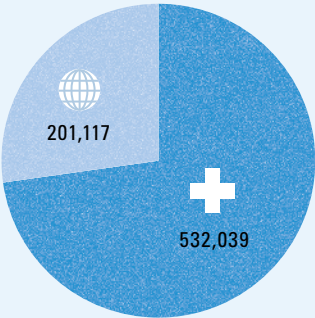
Swiss electricity production



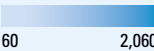
Spatial use
Total area: 1,404 km²



Population
739,156 residents



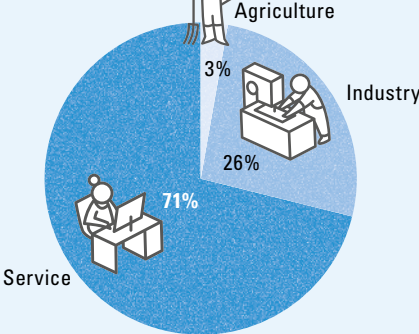
196 municipalities
Population per km²



Population growth
6% from 2020 to 2024



363,288
Employees



Institutions and Partnerships

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Guided by the principles of 'Sustainability for the Canton of Aargau', the canton is committed to embedding and implementing sustainable development. Every four years, the sustainability report assesses whether the canton is on track. It forms an important basis for strategic processes within the departments and for the cantonal development strategy. The 'Sustainability Checklist' is used to assess the impact of cantonal projects on sustainable development.

The Canton of Aargau is actively committed to fostering cooperation among the Swiss cantons: as a founding member of the Network of Cantonal Sustainability Offices (NKNF), it supports regular exchanges between the cantons and cooperation between the cantons and the federal government. Within the 'Cercle Indicateurs', the Canton of Aargau works alongside other cantons and cities to measure sustainable development using comparable indicators. To achieve its climate targets, the Canton of Aargau cooperates at the highest political level with neighbouring cantons and bordering countries, Germany and France.

Within the canton's borders, the canton supports local authorities, businesses and other stakeholders through events, funding schemes and joint projects. In this way, sustainable development is advanced through partnership.



Directives on sustainable procurement: support for local authorities



From IT equipment and furniture to building materials – municipalities in Aargau procure a wide range of products where environmental and social considerations are key. But what criteria are used when making purchases? And how much scope is there for action? The Canton of Aargau supports municipalities wishing to draw up directives on sustainable procurement. An external specialist organisation provides guidance and offers practical templates. Five municipalities have already benefited from this service, including the town of Baden. www.ag.ch/nachhaltigkeit

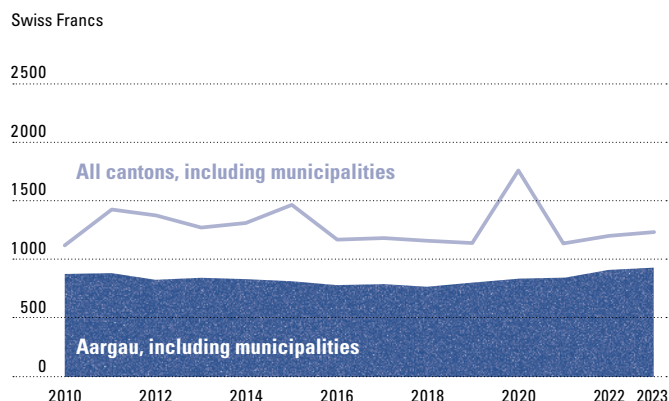


The Canton of Aargau operates in a dynamic environment characterised by complex developments. However, thanks to a stable public budget, it is well positioned. The debt has been fully repaid and the annual budget has been balanced since 2017. The public administration operates efficiently – administrative costs at both cantonal and municipal level are below the Swiss average.

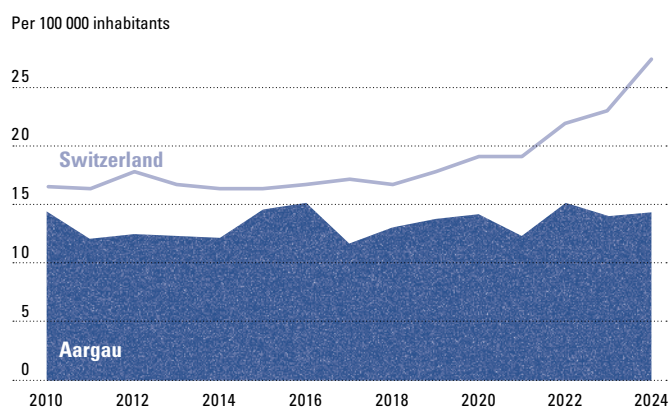
The public sector's strong standing is underpinned by capable and credible institutions that operate transparently. They form the foundation for social development, stability and security, even in the face of geopolitical uncertainties.

In the Canton of Aargau, the number of serious violent crimes is below the Swiss average. Offences under the Criminal Code have increased, particularly property offences. Cases of domestic violence have risen by more than 22% since 2019. In 2024, around 43% of all offences were solved.

Overall administrative costs per person



Severe violent crimes



Help with domestic violence: online training for pharmacy staff



When victims of domestic violence seek help, pharmacies can be important first points of contact. The Canton of Aargau has recognised this potential and has therefore been offering an online training course on violence in relationships for pharmacists since May 2025. As part of the training, pharmacy staff learn to better identify victims of violence, provide professional initial advice and refer those affected to appropriate support services.

www.ag.ch/de/themen/soziales-gesellschaft



The involvement of different segments of the population in political decision-making processes strengthens social cohesion and enhances the legitimacy and balance of decisions.

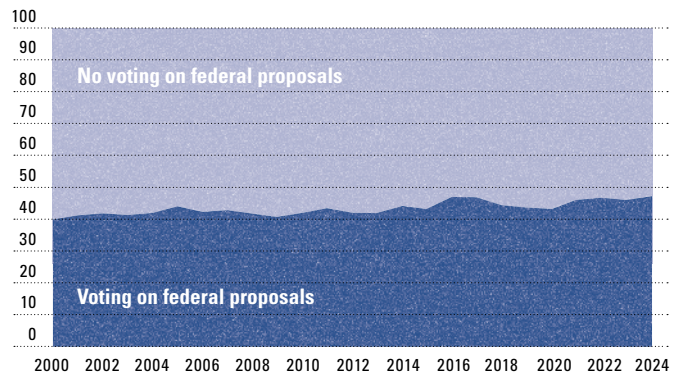
In the Canton of Aargau, participation in federal elections and referendums is in line with the Swiss average or slightly below it. It varies depending on the issue and is lower for cantonal issues than for federal ones. In both cases, it remains below 50%.

The proportion of the population actively involved in political parties or public office is low. Volunteering in this area has stagnated at a low level of around 1% of the Swiss resident population. Many municipalities struggle to recruit people for executive posts. The proportion of women in political bodies is low: in the Parliament of the Canton of Aargau, the Grand Council, it fell to 30% in 2024, placing it below the Swiss average. In municipal executive bodies, the proportion of women is even lower.

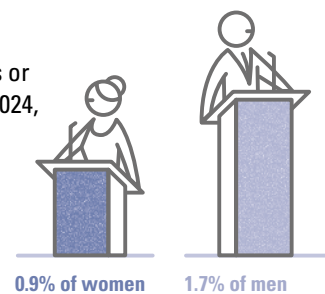
Digital participation is not particularly widespread by international standards. Although the Canton of Aargau performs well compared with other cantons, having scored 44 out of a possible 100 points on the DigiPartIndex – the index for digital political participation in Switzerland – it still has plenty of room for improvement when it comes to enabling effective political participation in the digital sphere.

Voter turnout, Aargau

In percent, averaged over 4 years



Volunteering in political parties or public offices 2024, Switzerland

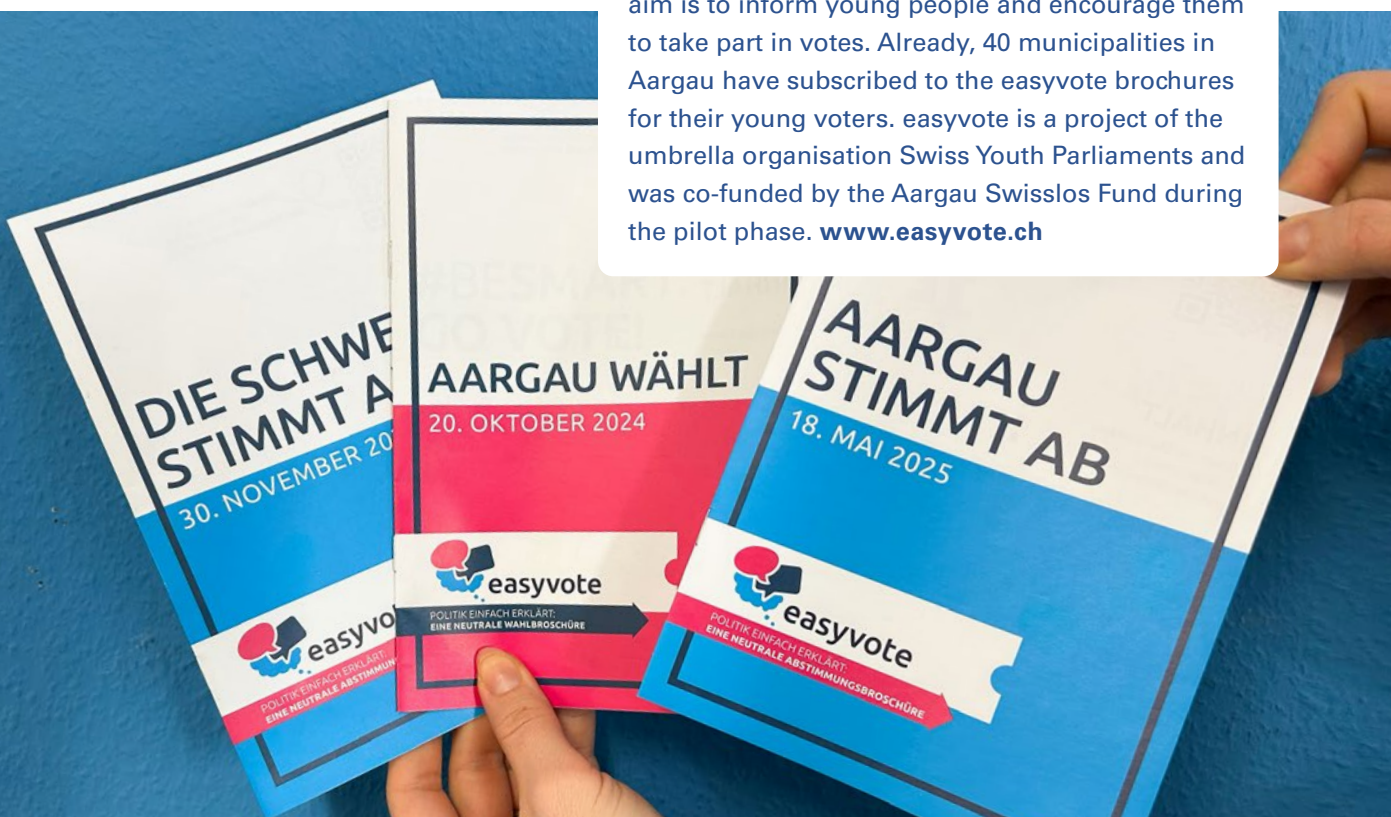


easyvote: empowering and motivating young people to participate in politics



easyvote produces easy-to-understand and politically neutral information on referendums and elections (brochures and explanatory videos)

specifically for young adults in Switzerland. The aim is to inform young people and encourage them to take part in votes. Already, 40 municipalities in Aargau have subscribed to the easyvote brochures for their young voters. easyvote is a project of the umbrella organisation Swiss Youth Parliaments and was co-funded by the Aargau Swisslos Fund during the pilot phase. www.easyvote.ch



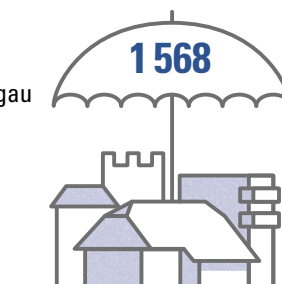
Culture is a unifying force in society. It strengthens the identity of the people of Aargau, brings generations together and contributes to integration. Cultural diversity, contemporary art and the rich cultural heritage give the Canton of Aargau a distinctive character and enhance its appeal as a place to live and do business.

Its prehistoric, Roman and medieval heritage makes the Canton of Aargau one of the most archaeologically rich and diverse cantons in Switzerland. With its palaces and castles, monasteries, churches, chapels and synagogues, as well as buildings and sites of industrial heritage, the landscape of historic monuments is also remarkably varied. The inventory of canton-protected buildings has grown by 32 objects to 1,568 since 2020.

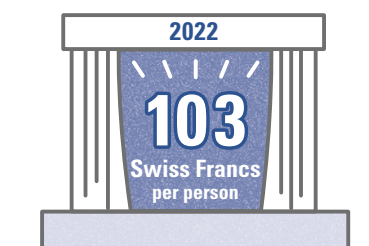
The Canton of Aargau provides funding for museums, the visual arts, heritage conservation, archaeology, libraries, concerts, theatre and cinema, amongst other things. In 2022, this expenditure amounted to around 103 Swiss Francs per person.

The population is satisfied with the cultural services on offer. At the same time, demographic and social changes mean that not all groups in the population feel that the existing services cater to their needs. Language barriers or a lack of accessibility make it difficult to access these services. The Cantonal Cultural Strategy 2023–2028 addresses these challenges.

Inventory of
canton-protected
buildings 2024, Aargau



Cultural spending in 2022,
Aargau



Culture in Schools: funding scheme for cultural education in schools

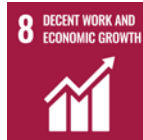
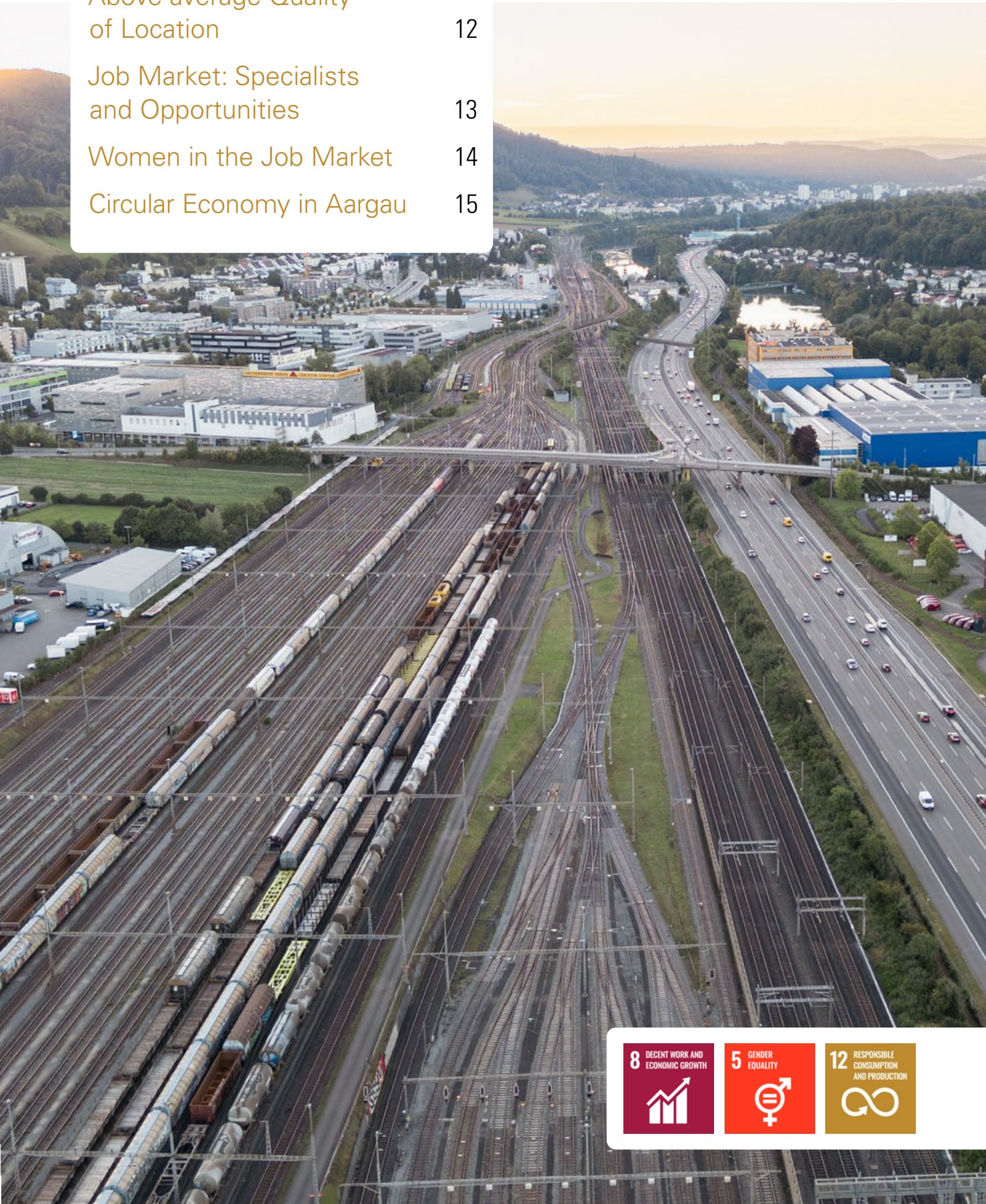


The cantonal programme 'Kultur macht Schule' reaches around 90% of all schoolchildren in Aargau – approximately 95,000 children and young people each year. It provides access to cultural institutions and encourages active participation in artistic activities, thereby fostering future-oriented skills such as cooperation, communication, creativity and critical thinking. Thanks to the comprehensive and wide-ranging network, encounters with cultural practitioners are becoming an integral part of education in the regions of the Canton of Aargau.

www.kulturmachtschule.ch



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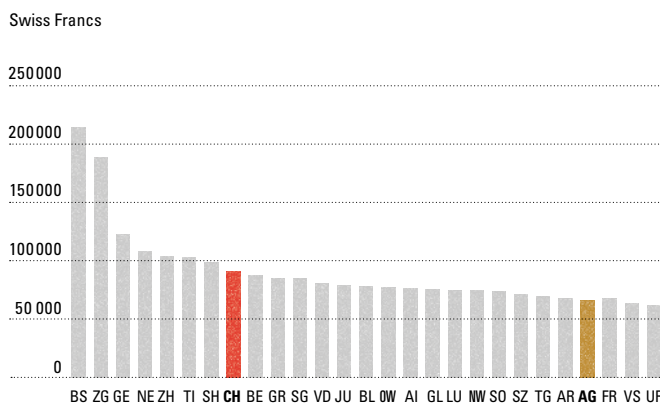
Economic strength is central to prosperity in the Canton of Aargau. A thriving economy fosters individual prosperity and, through tax revenue, strengthens the canton's financial capacity. The Canton of Aargau strives for high-quality growth that is socially and environmentally sustainable and increases labour and resource productivity.

The canton's gross domestic product (GDP) per capita has been rising steadily since 2016, but remains well below the Swiss average. This shows that the Canton of Aargau is primarily a residential canton with a low density of jobs. Aargau's rapidly growing working-age population commutes to the surrounding centres for work. Value added per job is also slightly below the Swiss average.

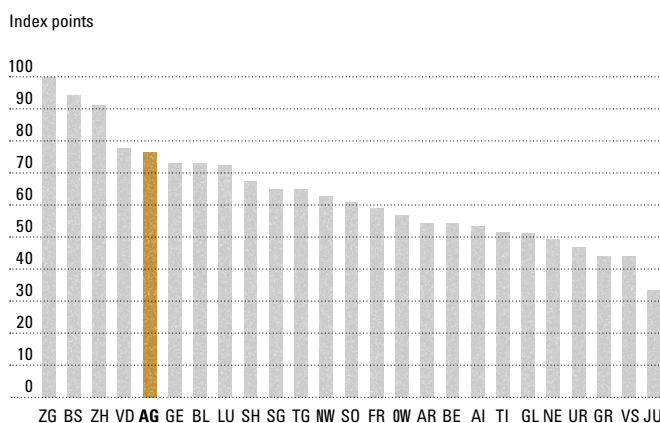
At the same time, the Canton of Aargau offers an above-average quality of location – particularly thanks to a low tax rate for natural persons and good transport links.

Aargau's economic structure is well diversified and innovative. Compared with other cantons, it is less dependent on individual sectors or companies. To encourage start-ups, businesses to set up in the canton and expansion, the Canton of Aargau aims to create economic conditions that are favourable by inter-cantonal and international standards.

Gross domestic product per capita in 2024



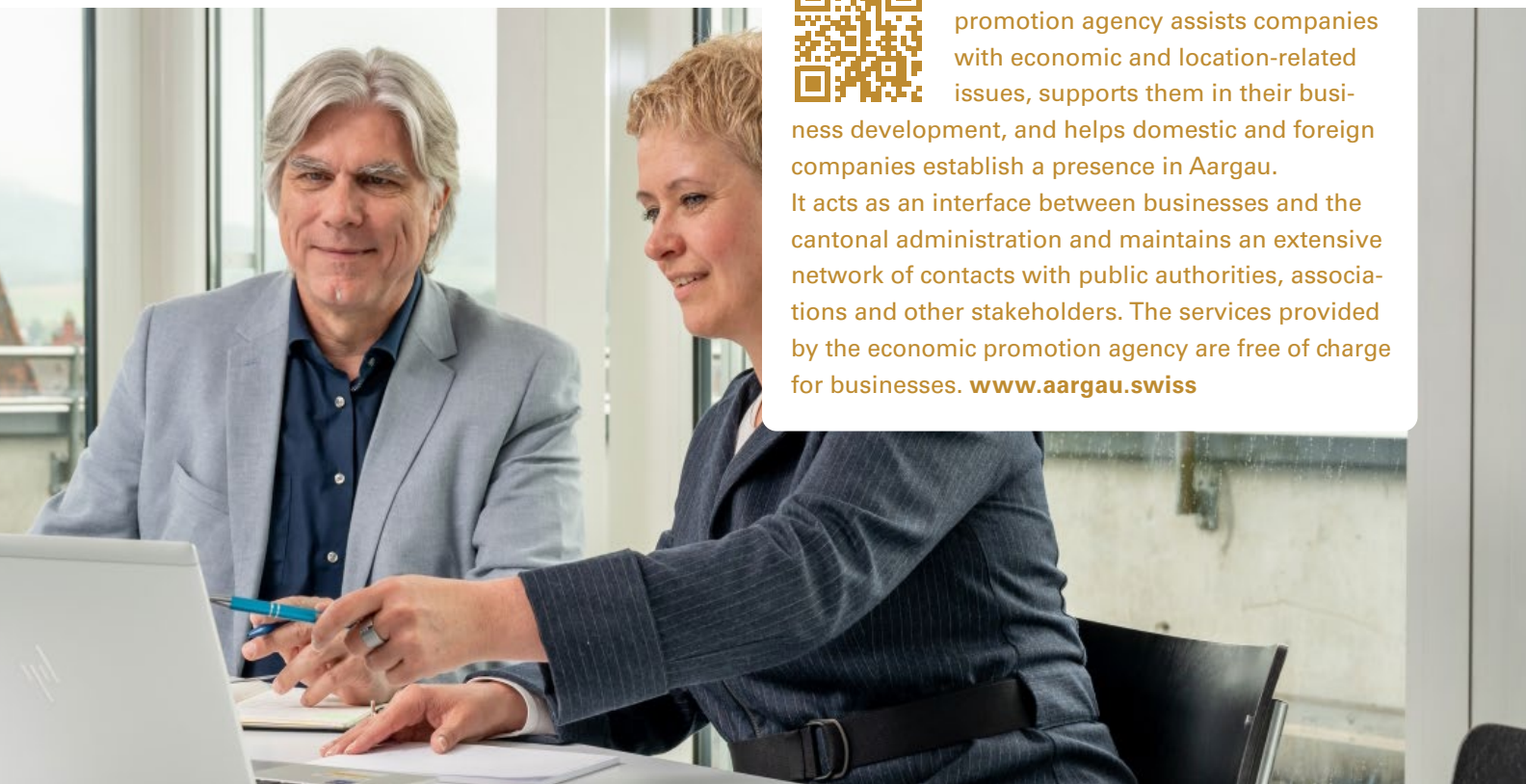
Cantonal Competitiveness Indicator 2025



Economic Promotion Agency: support for businesses



The team at the cantonal economic promotion agency assists companies with economic and location-related issues, supports them in their business development, and helps domestic and foreign companies establish a presence in Aargau. It acts as an interface between businesses and the cantonal administration and maintains an extensive network of contacts with public authorities, associations and other stakeholders. The services provided by the economic promotion agency are free of charge for businesses. www.aargau.swiss



A functioning labour market with productive jobs and a skilled workforce forms the basis for economic dynamism. Paid work not only secures people's economic livelihoods, but also fosters a sense of identity and social inclusion.

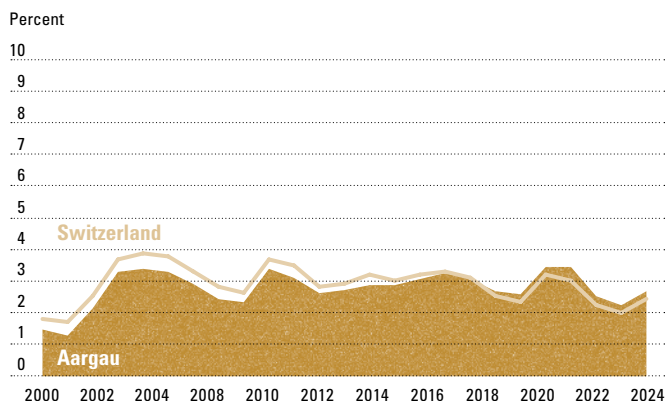
The labour supply is growing faster than in other cantons due to population growth, but not everyone is successfully integrating into the labour market. Older staff, women and asylum seekers, in particular, have the potential to increase their participation in the labour market.

Part-time work is widespread: in 2023, the proportion in Aargau stood at 31%, which is in line with the Swiss average. However, due to the long weekly working hours associated with full-time roles, the average working week of 36 hours still places the canton in the mid-range in a European comparison.

The unemployment rate in the canton of Aargau stood at 2.6% in 2024 – a fall compared with the pandemic period, but still slightly above the Swiss average. At the same time, the rising number of job vacancies shows that there is a shortage of suitable workers in many sectors.

The shortage of skilled workers has become more acute in recent years. However, it remains less severe than the Swiss average. The sectors most affected are healthcare, technical professions, the information and communications sector, and the hospitality industry.

Unemployment



Aargau Vocational Fair



Vocational education and training is highly valued in Aargau – as it is throughout Switzerland: around 80% of young people in the Canton of Aargau opt for it every year. The Aargau Vocational Fair, organised by the Aargau Trade Association, provides young people with an informative and engaging overview of around 200 apprenticeship trades in a compact setting. It takes place every two years and attracts over 35,000 visitors each time. The Canton of Aargau is a supporting partner of the Vocational Fair. www.aargauische-berufsschau.ch



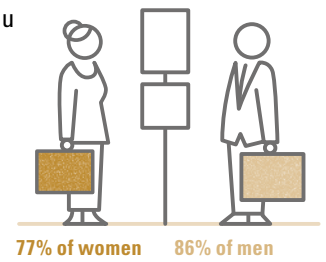
In the Canton of Aargau, there is a large pool of qualified women who are not or only partially available to the labour market. Their employment rate is significantly lower than that of men and has hardly changed since 2010.

In 2024, women account for around three-quarters of part-time workers. Although more men work part-time than they did ten years ago, over 60% of all couples in Switzerland follow a traditional division of roles, with the woman working part-time or not in employment and the man working full-time. The reverse arrangement is hardly common, accounting for around 3% of couples with children.

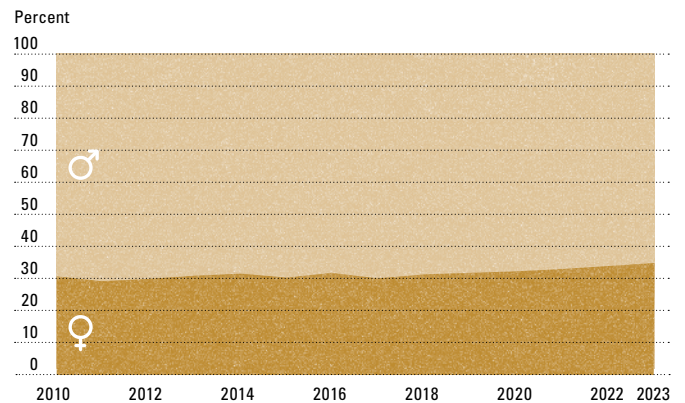
Women are also under-represented in economic decision-making bodies. In Aargau, they account for around a third of management positions, which is slightly below the Swiss average – despite the fact that a higher proportion of women graduate from universities.

To make better use of the domestic pool of skilled workers, it is essential to improve the work-life balance. Achieving this requires a range of affordable childcare options that meet people's needs and complement family and school life. New working models can also play a part. The tax law revision that came into force in 2025 improves tax relief for childcare costs, thereby providing additional incentives.

Net employment rate 2023, Aargau



Filling senior management roles, Aargau



Study on the balance between family and work



In 2024, the Canton of Aargau published an initial study on the current situation and the need for action regarding childcare that complements family and school life. To enable people to balance family life and work and to meet the demand for skilled staff, a childcare provision tailored to needs is required. In the coming years, targeted support measures are to be implemented and various funding options examined in order to strengthen extrafamilial childcare.

www.ag.ch/vereinbarkeit



Consumption and production patterns in Switzerland exceed the Earth's capacity to regenerate by around three times. The circular economy is a key lever for reducing resource consumption and safeguarding economic performance. It closes material cycles and enables the sustainable use of materials.

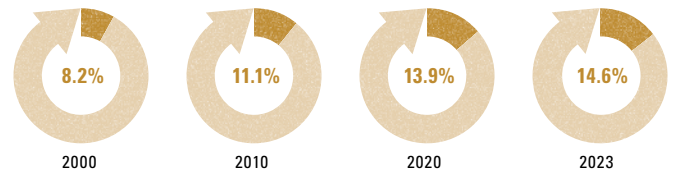
Despite progress in recycling and a decline in material intensity, the circular economy is still in its early stages. Only around 7% of the raw materials used come from secondary sources, whilst resource consumption continues to rise, particularly due to imports and the construction sector. The increasing use of recycled building materials in Aargau is a positive development, but gravel extraction continues to rise.

Switzerland is one of the world's leading producers of municipal waste. In Aargau, the figure stands at around 150 kilograms per person per year – an indicator of high consumption, with two-thirds of the resulting environmental impact occurring abroad. In addition to technical solutions, therefore, adopting sufficiency-oriented behaviour is crucial.

The circular economy offers future opportunities for businesses in Aargau. There is significant potential for the strong industrial sector and key industries such as energy and electrical engineering. The Canton of Aargau is therefore currently developing its recycling strategy into a circular economy strategy.

Circular material use rate, Switzerland

Proportion of waste recovery in total material consumption



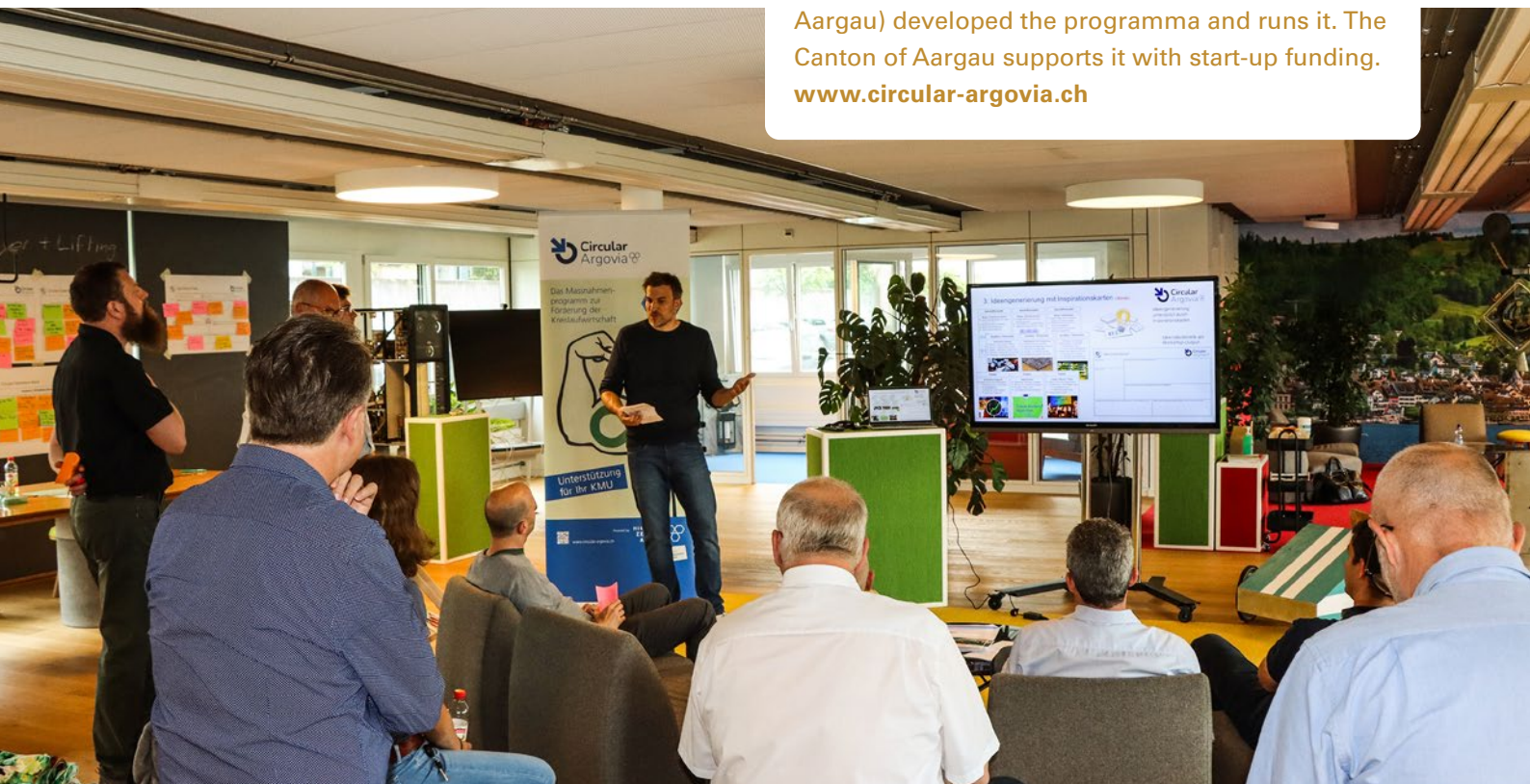
Household waste per person, Aargau



Circular Argovia for a more circular economy



Circular Argovia is a programme designed to promote the circular economy in the Canton of Aargau. It raises awareness among businesses and supports them in implementing their own solutions as they move towards greater circularity and a more sustainable future. The programme has a modular structure, allowing companies to join at any stage, depending on their level of knowledge and progress. The Hightech Zentrum Aargau (High-Tech Centre Aargau) developed the programme and runs it. The Canton of Aargau supports it with start-up funding. www.circular-argovia.ch



Social Inequalities, Poverty and Health

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At around 84 years, life expectancy among the Swiss population is among the highest in the world. In 2022, men could expect to live 70.7 years in good health, and women 71.1 years. This also applies to the Canton of Aargau.

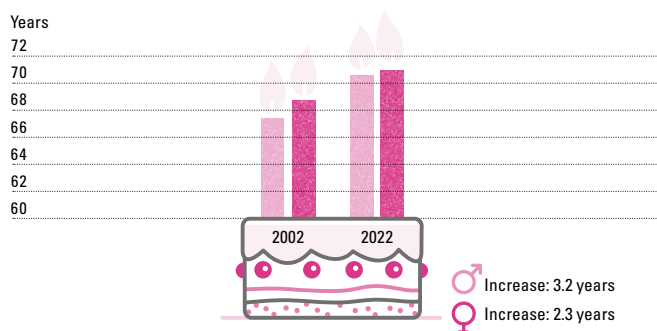
However, data from Aargau shows that an increasing number of people are suffering from depression, stress, loneliness, sleep disorders or other symptoms of mental distress. Children and young people are particularly affected. In 2022, 33.9% of schoolchildren aged 11 to 15 reported feeling somewhat or very stressed by school.

Diet-related diseases such as diabetes and obesity are also a concern in every age group. In the Canton of Aargau, 14.2% of the population was affected by obesity in 2022. Among secondary school pupils, the proportion stood at around 25% in 2021/22. Generally speaking, the Swiss population does not eat a balanced diet. For example, sugary and salty snacks are consumed in excess.

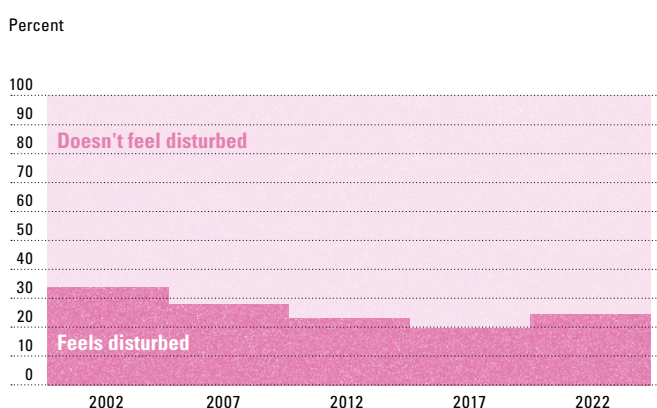
Excessive traffic noise can also have long-term effects on health. In the Canton of Aargau, around 23% of the population said they were regularly disturbed by traffic noise (from cars, trains or aeroplanes) at home in 2022.

Increasingly, the Canton of Aargau must also expect the negative health effects of climate change.

Life expectancy in good health, Switzerland



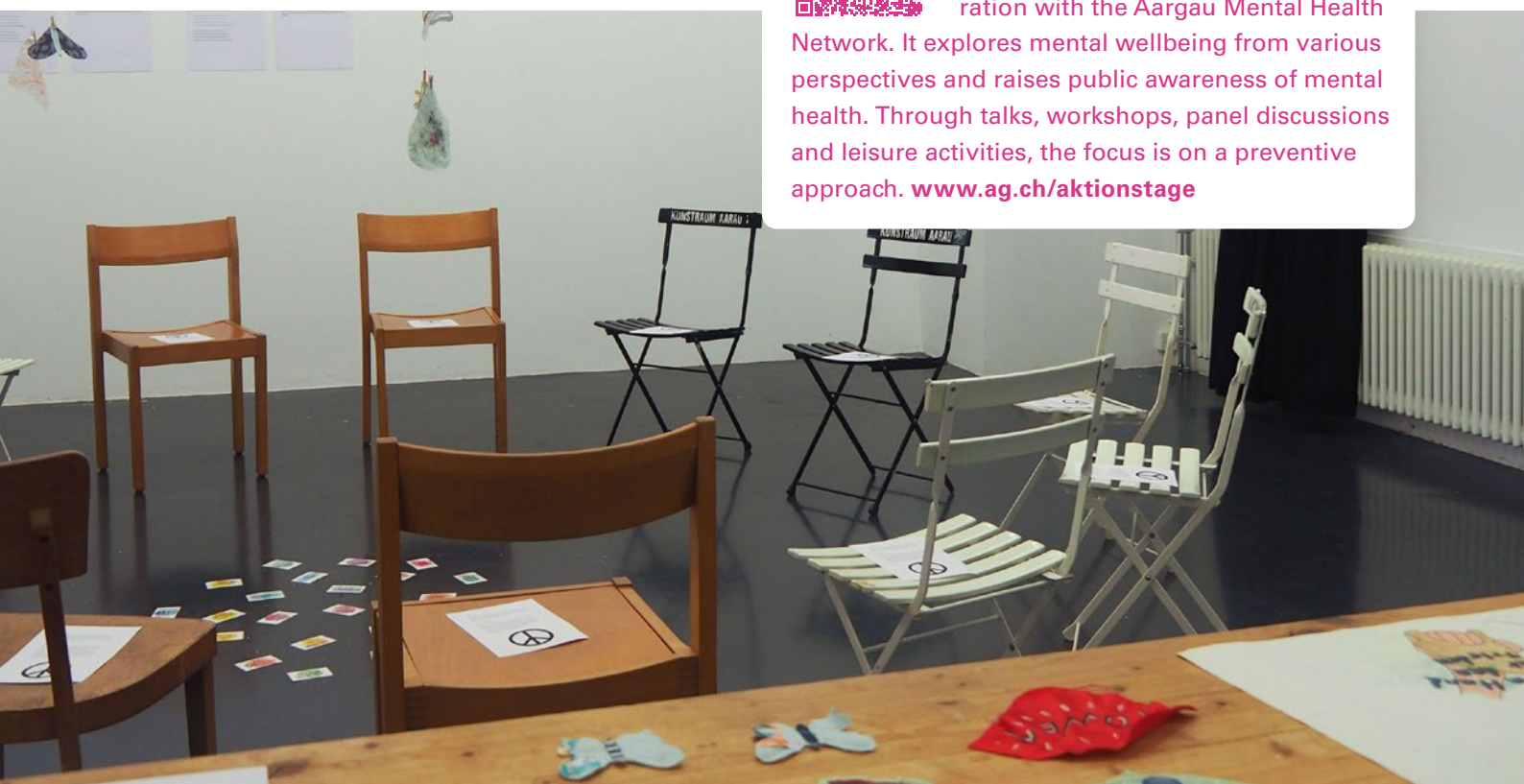
Proportion of the population affected by traffic noise, Aargau



Mental Health Awareness Days



The 'Mental Health Awareness Days' series of events is organised annually by the Canton of Aargau in collaboration with the Aargau Mental Health Network. It explores mental wellbeing from various perspectives and raises public awareness of mental health. Through talks, workshops, panel discussions and leisure activities, the focus is on a preventive approach. www.ag.ch/aktionstage



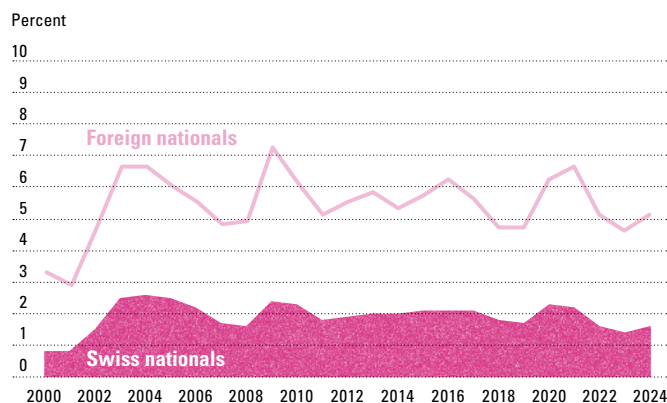
Action is needed in the Canton of Aargau to integrate the foreign population. Disparities between the Swiss and foreign resident populations are apparent in various areas of life.

In the labour market, people with a migration background are more likely to be affected by unemployment than Swiss nationals. Language barriers, lower levels of professional qualifications and administrative hurdles can make it difficult to integrate into the labour market, thereby jeopardising migrants' economic independence. This challenging situation can ultimately have an impact on a person's overall social integration.

By the age of 25, young foreign nationals are less likely than their Swiss counterparts to have completed basic vocational training (an apprenticeship) or further general education following compulsory schooling.

In general, people with an immigrant background have a lower quality of life, particularly in terms of housing and health. For example, they are more likely to go without dental care for financial reasons than people without an immigrant background. Furthermore, they generally rate their own well-being as lower and often experience racial discrimination.

Unemployment, Aargau



Integration through education, social interaction and employment (BBB)



Every Saturday, BBB organises activity-based events in the Aarau region for migrants, enabling them to engage with their new surroundings. It provides information and facilitates encounters with people from Aargau-based clubs and institutions. Volunteer companions regularly take part in the activities. The BBB is run by the Aargau Integration Contact Point and the Aargau Youth Red Cross, and is co-funded by the integration programme of the Canton of Aargau. www.integrationaargau.ch/bbb



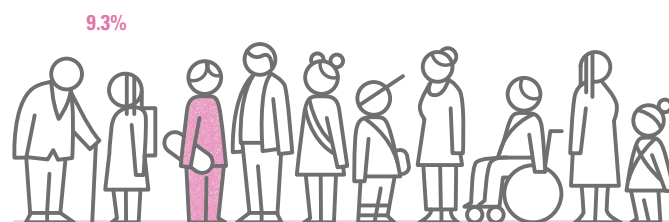
Poverty can be captured using various data points. In the Canton of Aargau, almost one in ten people lives in a household with a total income below the poverty line (poverty rate). In 2023, the poverty line stood at 2,315 Swiss Francs per month for a single person.

Poverty primarily affects single-parent households, people with low levels of education, adults living alone and people from migrant backgrounds. Among other factors, rising rents could have a greater impact on the poverty rate in the Canton of Aargau in the future.

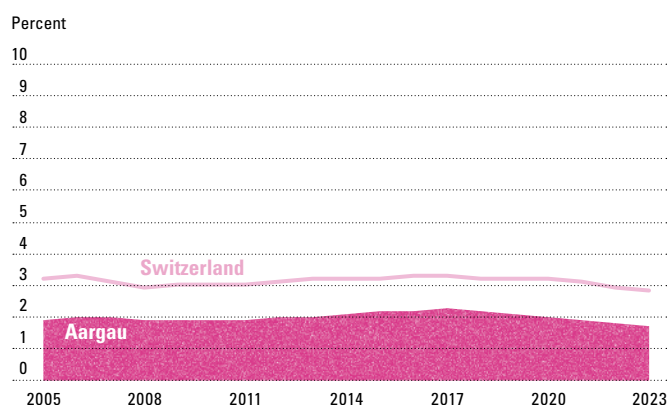
People who are no longer able to support themselves can apply for social assistance from the state. In the Canton of Aargau, less than 2% of the population received social assistance in 2023. This is the lowest figure since social assistance was introduced in 2005. At the same time, more families are relying on social assistance. Children and young people account for around a third of social assistance recipients – a figure that is rising – and represent by far the largest group. For this age group, there is an increased risk of facing unemployment and poverty themselves in adult life.

It is likely that some people affected by poverty choose not to claim social assistance. This is probably due to feelings of shame, stigma, a lack of awareness, or administrative hurdles.

Poverty rate 2022, Northwestern Switzerland (BS, BL, AG)



Recipients of social assistance



Poverty Monitoring



The Cantonal Social Services Department and Statistics Aargau are working in collaboration with Bern University of Applied Sciences on a pilot project to monitor poverty at cantonal level. The aim is to examine the poverty situation in the Canton of Aargau and to publish the findings in a poverty report by the end of 2026. The report is intended to highlight which groups of people (measured by indicators such as gender, age, education and household type) are particularly affected by poverty in the Canton of Aargau, and also to provide figures on those not drawing social assistance.

www.ag.ch/ksd

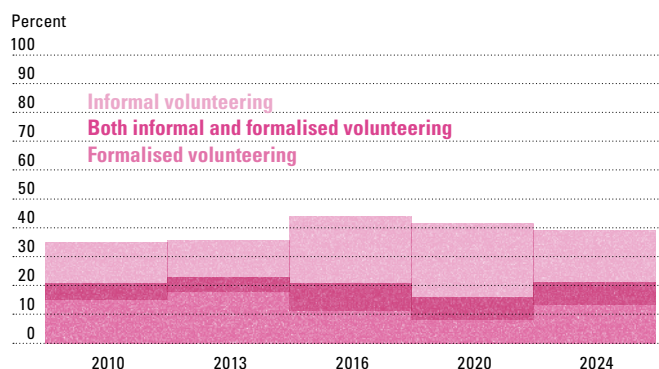


A sense of community and acting in solidarity are essential prerequisites for social cohesion and a well-functioning society. In Aargau, around 40% of the population was involved in at least one form of unpaid voluntary work for the benefit of society in 2024. Across Switzerland, volunteers contribute an average of 3.9 hours per week. Men are more likely to take on formalised roles, for example in sports and cultural clubs or associations. Women tend to do more informal voluntary work, such as caring for relatives or helping neighbours.

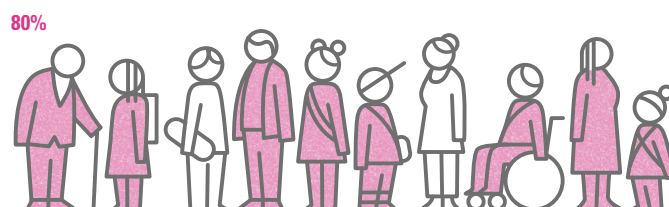
The proportion of institutionalised commitment has risen again following a low point – presumably triggered, at least in part, by the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, the increasing multiple pressures on the working population and the growing difficulty of balancing family and work are holding back voluntary work.

In 2023, around 80% of the population of Aargau reported high or very high levels of satisfaction with their personal relationships. Across Switzerland, people aged 65 and over are more satisfied than average, whilst 16- to 24-year-olds report the lowest level of satisfaction. In this age group, the proportion of those who frequently or very frequently feel lonely more than doubled between 2017 and 2022 – from 4% to 10%.

Participation of the population in voluntary work, Northwestern Switzerland (BS, BL, AG)



High and very high satisfaction with personal relationships in 2023, Aargau



Aargau Family Day



Aargau Family Day strengthens social cohesion, raises awareness of services for families and brings together those involved in family support work. Local authorities know best what their families need and bear primary responsibility for family policy. The canton supports local authorities through financial contributions, coordination and knowledge-sharing. An active family policy benefits everyone: when children grow up in a supportive and safe environment, it has a positive impact on their entire life course. www.ag.ch/familientag



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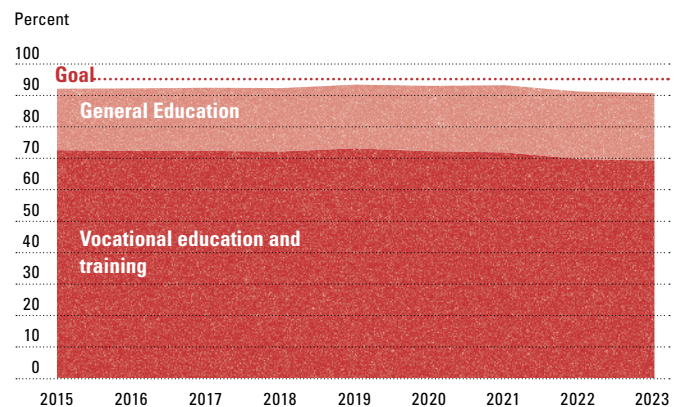


Education is the foundation of sustainable development and thus a key indicator of quality. It fosters independent, responsible individuals while also strengthening society. The canton is well-positioned in this regard: overall, the people of Aargau have a high level of education.

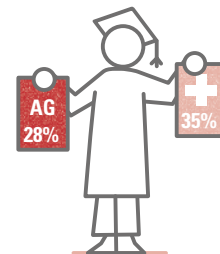
An upper secondary level diploma is crucial for a successful entry into the labor market. The federal government and the cantons share the goal that 95% of all 25-year-olds should complete either basic vocational training or a general school-based education (Baccalaureate). This goal has not yet been achieved in Aargau, where the rate stands at 90.4%. While an above-average number of people in Aargau complete basic vocational training, the number of those who obtain a Baccalaureate is below the Swiss average. A Baccalaureate qualification provides access to higher education institutions. In the Canton of Aargau, the proportion of higher education graduates has risen from 22.2% (2010) to 28% (2024), but remains below the Swiss average of 34.5%.

Promoting practical skills in the area of sustainable development is an integral part of the educational mission of the compulsory education in the canton of Aargau. Topics such as 'climate protection' and 'adaptation to climate change' are mandatory components of the Aargau curriculum for compulsory education.

First qualifications at the upper secondary level up to age 25, Aargau



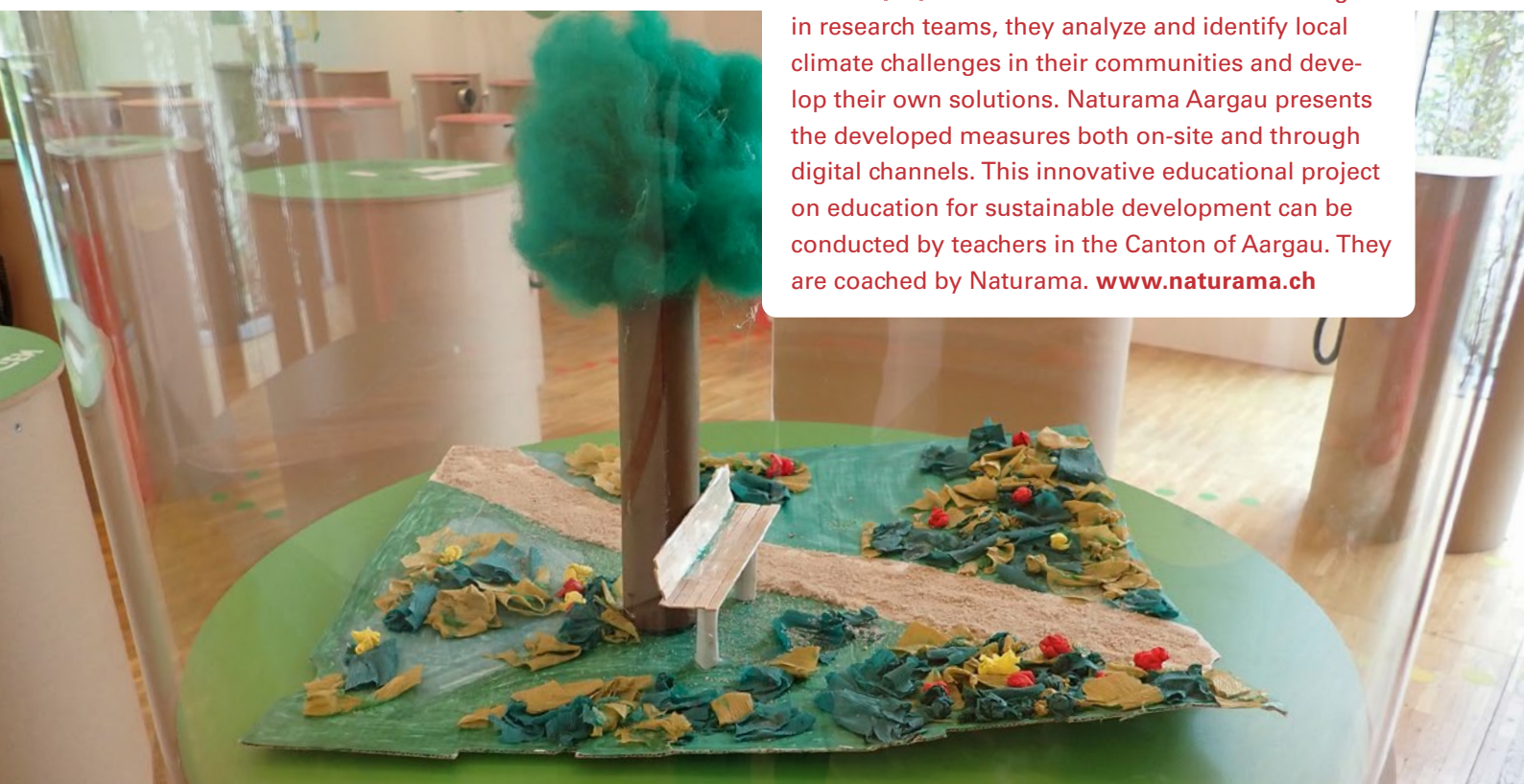
Higher education graduates 2024



School for the Climate – engagement in the community



'School for the Climate' raises awareness of climate change among Argovian schoolchildren and motivates them to take action. Working in research teams, they analyze and identify local climate challenges in their communities and develop their own solutions. Naturama Aargau presents the developed measures both on-site and through digital channels. This innovative educational project on education for sustainable development can be conducted by teachers in the Canton of Aargau. They are coached by Naturama. www.naturama.ch

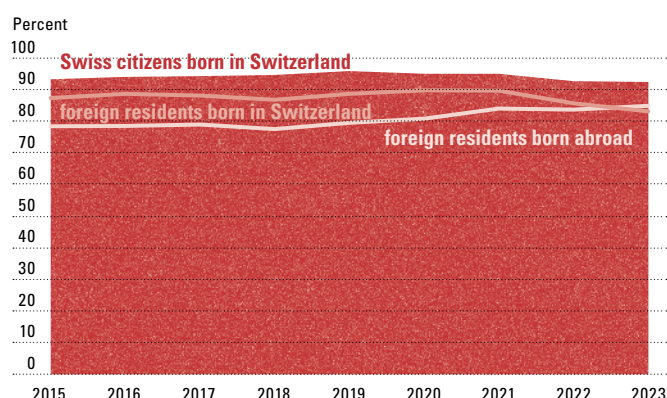


Differences emerge in educational paths between children and adolescents with Swiss and foreign citizenship: both in the transition from compulsory schooling to upper secondary education and in the completion of that level. At around 84%, foreign adolescents are significantly less likely to achieve the target of 95% for upper secondary school completion rates. Swiss adolescents still met this target in 2022, but their completion rate has since fallen again.

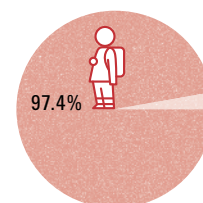
At the higher education level, a above-average number of Aargau high school graduates successfully complete their bachelor's degree: 85% compared to the Swiss average of 80%. Academic success is also linked to socioeconomic background. Students whose parents hold a college degree or have completed advanced vocational training, as well as students from communities with fewer socioeconomic challenges, are more likely to earn a bachelor's degree at a university.

Compared to the rest of Switzerland, children and adolescents with disabilities in Aargau are educated in regular schools at a lower-than-average rate. The transition to further education and working life is particularly difficult for them. To better support their integration, disability-specific counseling services for regular schools have been expanded.

First qualifications at the upper secondary level by nationality, Aargau



Integration into regular schools in 2024, Aargau



German language support before kindergarten



Between 2021 and 2024, the Canton of Aargau carried out successful pilot projects in twelve municipalities to promote German language skills before kindergarten. The participating children made significant progress in their German language skills. Based on the findings, the canton plans to introduce early language support starting in 2027. As a first step, municipalities will be able to conduct a language assessment in 2026, one and a half years before children enter kindergarten. This will allow them to identify the need for early language support measures in a targeted manner.

www.ag.ch/sprachstandserhebung

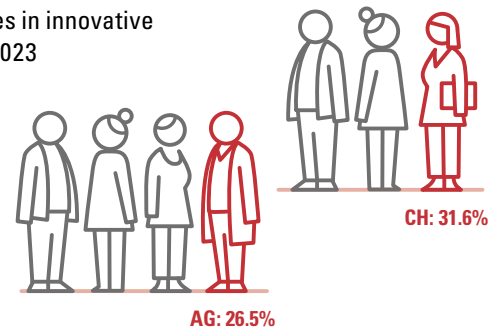


The Canton of Aargau places great emphasis on high-quality education and supports it at all levels, right up to cutting-edge research. Research and innovation enhance the canton's appeal as a place to work. The conditions are favourable: numerous technology, research, and innovation institutions create a dynamic environment that has a direct impact on the job market. About a quarter of the workforce is employed in innovative sectors such as the manufacture of pharmaceutical products, electronics and optics, financial services, or mechanical engineering.

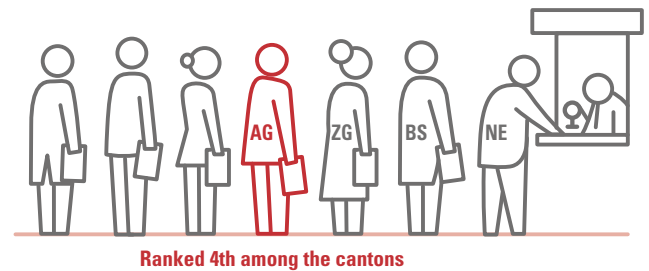
Patent applications are an indicator of innovative strength. In this regard, Aargau ranks among the leading cantons. With 414 patent applications, it ranked fourth in the population-weighted comparison in 2022. When it comes to patents in the life sciences research fields, Aargau is even far ahead of general global technological progress.

With institutions such as the High-Tech Center Aargau, Park Innovaare, and the Paul Scherrer Institute (PSI), the canton is ideally positioned to promote innovation. The focus is on targeted knowledge and technology transfer between universities and the business community in order to strengthen the innovative capacity of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in particular.

Employees in innovative sectors 2023



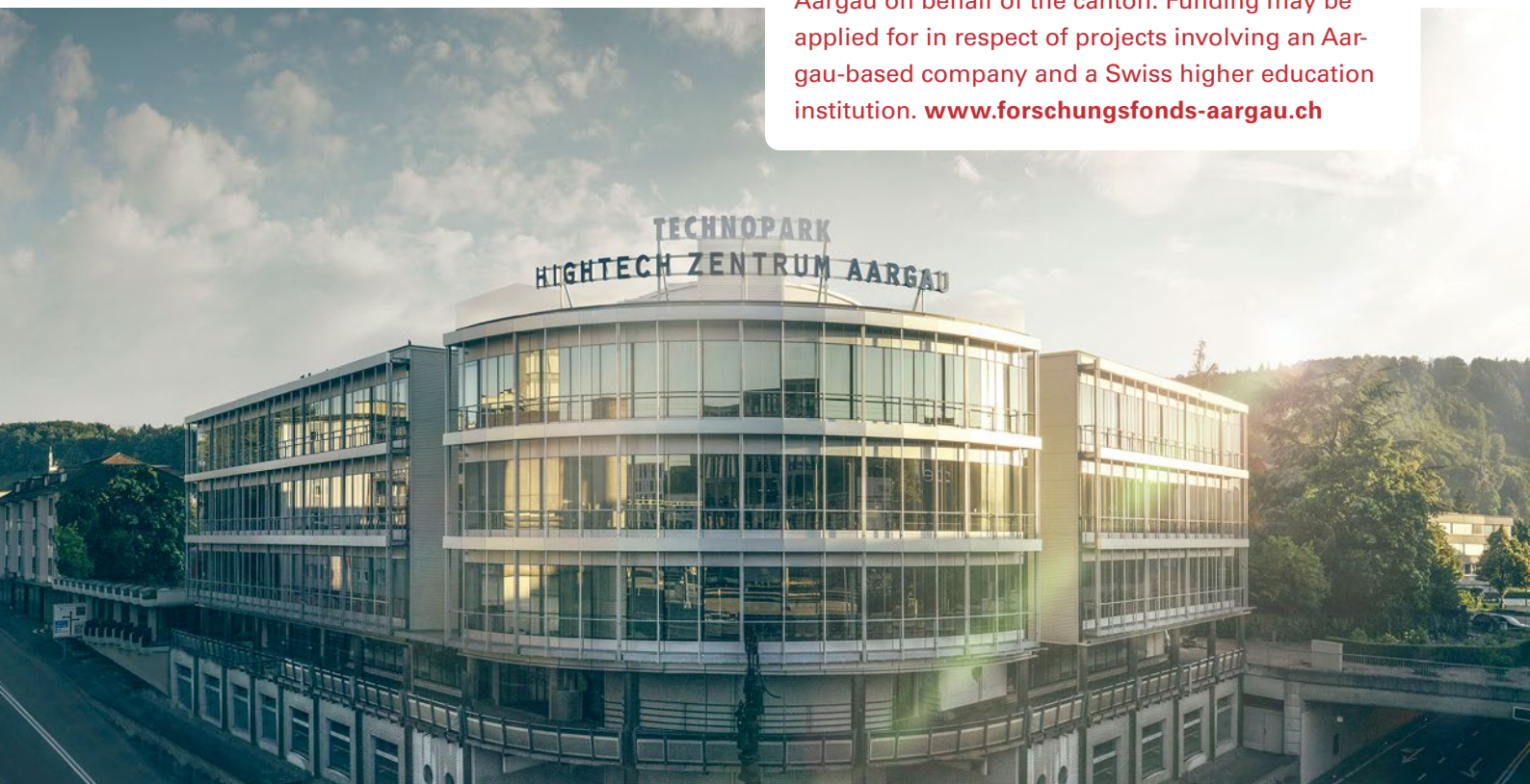
Patent applications in 2022, Aargau



Aargau Research Fund



The Aargau Research Fund promotes innovation in the Aargau economy, supports the transfer of knowledge and technology between higher education institutions and businesses, and creates incentives for innovative, high-value-added companies to establish themselves in the canton of Aargau. It is administered by the High-Tech Centre Aargau on behalf of the canton. Funding may be applied for in respect of projects involving an Aargau-based company and a Swiss higher education institution. www.forschungsfonds-aargau.ch



Biodiversity and Water Quality

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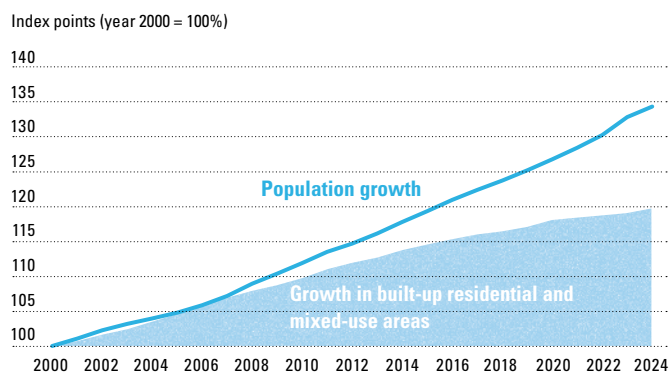


The Canton of Aargau is experiencing above-average population growth. This poses major challenges in managing the limited natural resources of land and the landscape. To relieve pressure on the landscape and agricultural land from urban sprawl, the structure plan promotes inward development.

In Aargau, existing development zones are being utilised more effectively, and the population is living in denser communities. In 2023, there were an average of 52 residents per hectare of developed residential, mixed-use and town centre zones. The decoupling of population growth from the expansion of built-up residential and mixed-use zones has increased – inner-city development is progressing.

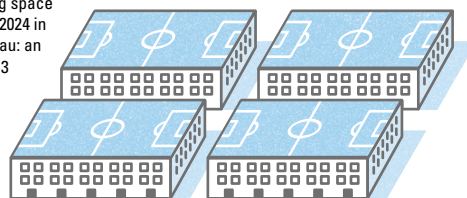
Aargau is part of the intensively farmed Swiss Plateau, characterised by large areas of built-up land and a dense, expanding transport network. From a landscape perspective, the canton is one of the most fragmented regions in Switzerland. The continuing increase in built-up areas outside the building zone also contributes to landscape fragmentation. There remains a significant need to catch up when it comes to establishing high-quality ecological infrastructure. On the positive side, however, is the ongoing quantitative and qualitative enhancement of habitats through the floodplain conservation park, as well as the restoration of rivers and streams.

Population growth and built-up residential and mixed-use areas, Aargau



Annual increase in building space outside the building zone

Increase in building space between 2018 and 2024 in the canton of Aargau: an average of around 3 hectares per year



High-quality inward development: planning guide and toolkit



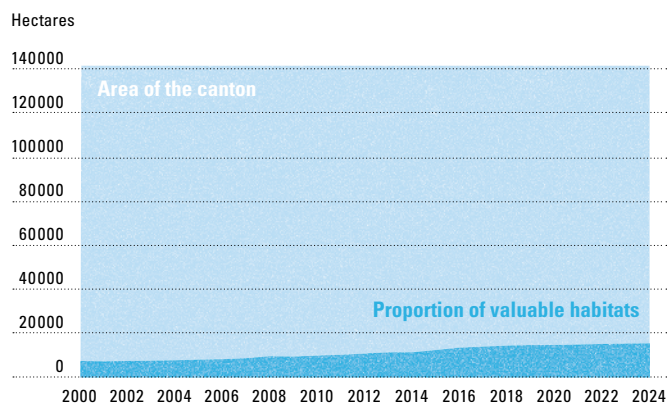
The Kunz Areal in Windisch is a prime example of how a historic industrial site can be transformed into an attractive residential and working district through redevelopment and complementary new construction. Today, it offers a high quality of life with generous open spaces and a dynamic community life. The Canton of Aargau promotes high-quality inward-looking urban development, as successfully achieved in Windisch, through a planning guide and funding. www.ag.ch/innenentwicklung



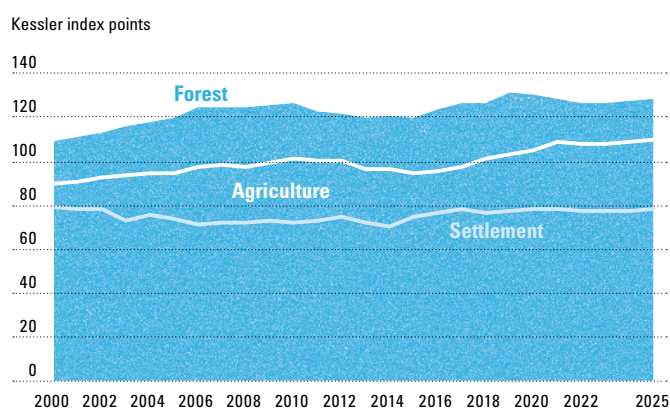
The Canton of Aargau is also affected by the biodiversity crisis. Although valuable habitats for animals and plants are increasing, at around 11% of the canton's total area, their share remains far too small to support a functioning ecological infrastructure. This growth is primarily driven by biodiversity areas in agricultural zones, whilst the area of nature reserves remains stagnant. Dry grasslands and fens, which are sensitive nature conservation areas, continue to suffer from excessive nitrogen inputs from the air.

In Aargau, common and moderately common breeding birds, butterflies, snails and plants are recorded using the 'Kessler Index'. This index has shown a stagnation in forest and agricultural areas for several years. In settlements, it has remained at a low level since measurements began. Regardless of this, rare and specialised species in Aargau that have high habitat requirements are generally under significant pressure. Climate change is also altering species composition: climate-positive species, which benefit from the changing climate, are becoming more common than closely related climate-negative species. This can be observed, for example, in butterflies. In addition, increasing light pollution is disrupting the natural behaviour of nocturnal animals. To protect native flora and fauna, the Canton of Aargau is taking various measures, including action against invasive alien species.

Valuable habitats, Aargau



Biodiversity, Aargau



Nature finds the city



The 'Nature finds the city' project promotes biodiversity in urban areas – in public green spaces and private gardens. The aim is to help as many people as possible to enhance nature in their immediate surroundings using simple methods, thereby improving the quality of life in these areas. The project has been running successfully in Aargau since 2018, with 30 municipalities participating to date. In 2021, 'Nature finds the city' won the Binding Prize for Biodiversity, Switzerland's most highly endowed award in the environmental sector.

www.naturfindetstadt.ch

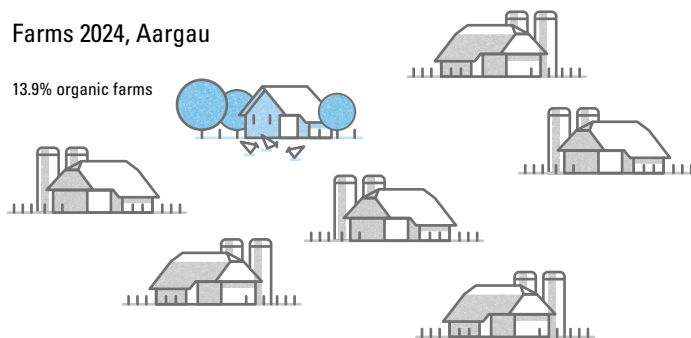


In 2023, the area of agricultural land in the Canton of Aargau stood at 60,260 hectares, accounting for around 43% of the total area. Two-thirds of this is arable land, which is particularly important for food security and has remained stable for almost ten years. Aargau thus meets the federal requirements. 21% of the agricultural land consists of biodiversity-promoting areas, of which around 70% are classified as being of particularly high quality. In 2024, around one in seven farms in Aargau was managed according to organic criteria, which is below the Swiss average. The imbalanced interaction between producer prices and direct payments places an economic burden on farmers. Added to this are the challenges of climate change, with increasing weather extremes such as drought and heavy rainfall.

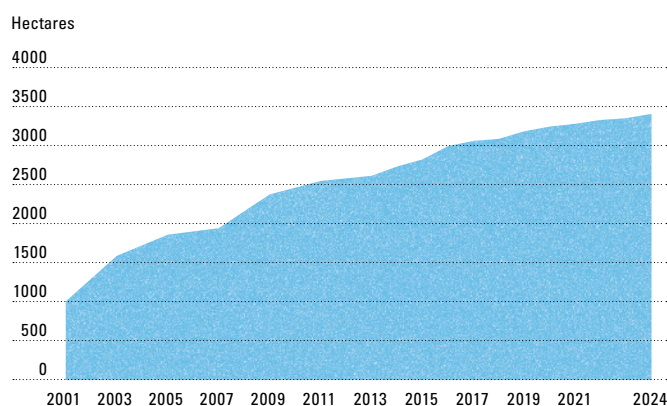
Around a third of the canton's area is covered by forest. The forest area has remained stable for the past 100 years and is managed sustainably. In recent years, the average amount of timber regrown has matched the amount harvested or lost as deadwood. Nature conservation areas within the forest are increasing and promoting biodiversity, particularly among fungi. Around 16.2 million trees grow in the forests of Aargau. Their growth and their resistance to drought and pests continue to be affected by high levels of nitrogen input.

Farms 2024, Aargau

13.9% organic farms



Natural forest reserves and deadwood islands, Aargau



Agroforestry Award



In 2023, the Canton of Aargau awarded prizes to five agroforestry projects run by farmers in Aargau. These projects demonstrate how agricultural production can be adapted to extreme weather conditions caused by climate change, whilst simultaneously creating added value for biodiversity and agriculture. Implementation will take place in steps until 2026 – courses are being held on the participating farms to promote the exchange of know-how. This will enable other farmers to benefit from the award winners' experiences.

www.ag.ch/klima-massnahmen



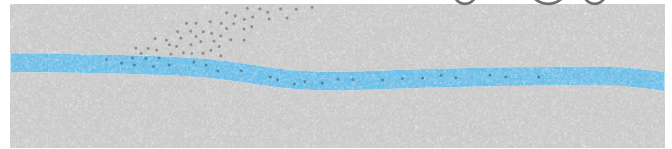
With important rivers such as the Aare, Rhine, Reuss and Limmat, Aargau is one of the cantons with the most water in Switzerland. The water quality of these watercourses, as measured by various chemical parameters, improved up until 2019, but has been declining again since then.

The necessary drinking water resources are generally available in Aargau. However, in 2024, nitrate levels exceeded the required limit for groundwater used for drinking water supply at 29% of water abstraction points. In addition, just under two-thirds of Aargau's water supplies show elevated levels of pesticide residues. The main cause is intensive agricultural use. However, foreign substances from transport and industry, pharmaceutical residues and the particularly persistent and harmful per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are also detected in the groundwater. These pollutants and pesticides are also found in watercourses and can ultimately end up in the North Sea.

Rising temperatures caused by climate change pose a challenge to water quality and security of supply. Pressure on Aargau's groundwater is increasing as the withdrawal of drinking water, as well as water for industrial and irrigation purposes, rises. To address future challenges regarding water availability and use, the Canton of Aargau is developing a comprehensive water strategy.

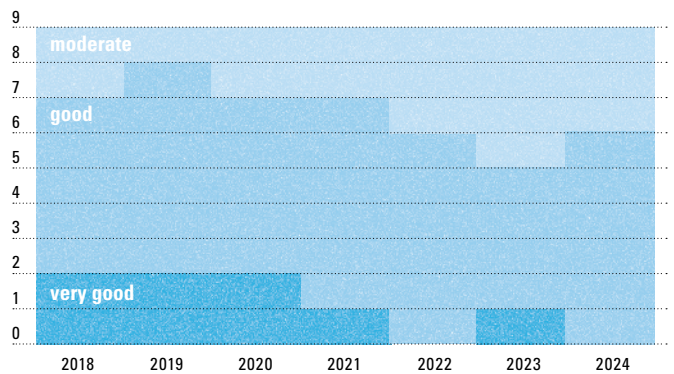
Nitrate levels in drinking water 2024, Aargau

In 29% of groundwater abstraction points, the required value for drinking water has been exceeded.



Water quality in watercourses, Aargau

Number of watercourses



Reusegg floodplain restoration



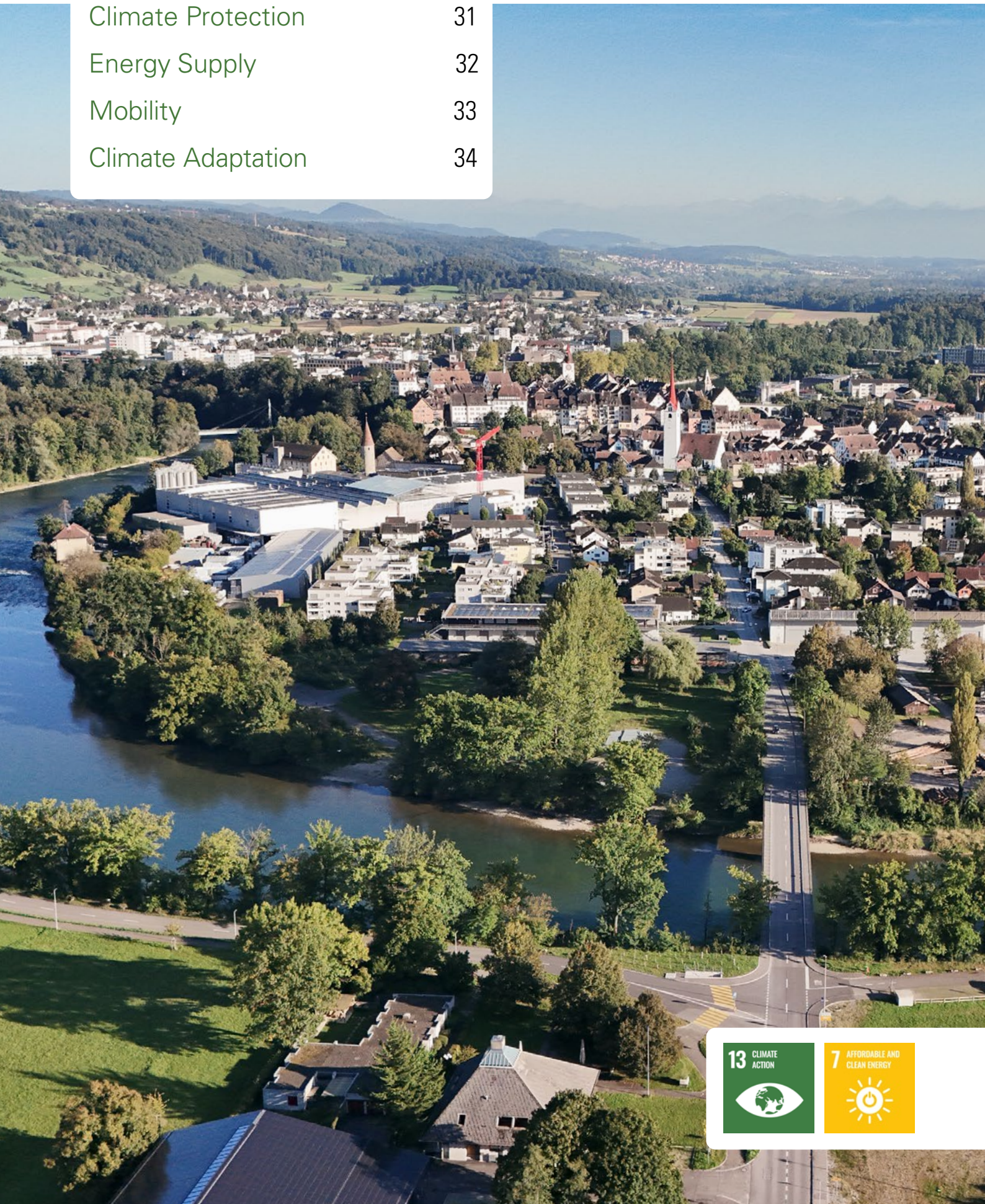
The Canton of Aargau and Pro Natura Aargau have created a new floodplain area of around 20 hectares in the municipality of Sins. The restoration has brought back the natural dynamics of the Reusseger Schachen and created diverse, interconnected habitats for numerous species. Various ecological measures, such as the newly created side channels and amphibian ponds, contribute to the high level of biodiversity. Today, local farms maintain the area in collaboration with the canton.

www.ag.ch/umwelt



Climate Protection and Adaptation to Climate Change

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13 CLIMATE ACTION



7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

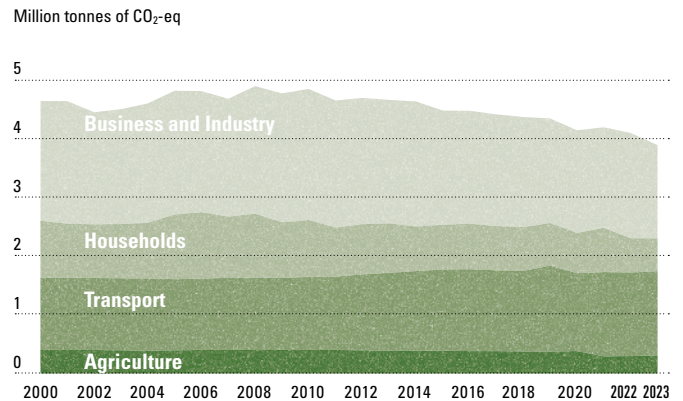


The Canton of Aargau supports international and national climate targets and has specified these in the cantonal climate strategy adopted by the Cantonal Government: net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and the minimisation of climate-related risks. With the adoption of the climate paragraph by the Aargau electorate, the canton and municipalities have also been constitutionally obliged to protect the climate since 2024.

Greenhouse gas emissions in the Canton of Aargau have fallen by around 20% since 1990, despite population and economic growth. This is primarily due to efficiency measures and the replacement of fossil fuels in the 'households' and 'business and industry' sectors. Further efforts are needed to achieve the net-zero target, particularly to decarbonise transport and to make a complete switch to renewable heating energy.

The pressure to act is increasing. The Aargau cantonal administration is therefore set to lead by example and become climate-neutral by 2040. In doing so, the Canton of Aargau will meet the requirements of the national Climate and Innovation Act. To this end, the Aargau Government Council has adopted the Net Zero 2040 Roadmap. Over the coming years, concrete measures to reduce emissions will be implemented in the emission-intensive sectors of buildings, vehicles and procurement.

Greenhouse gas emissions by sector, Aargau

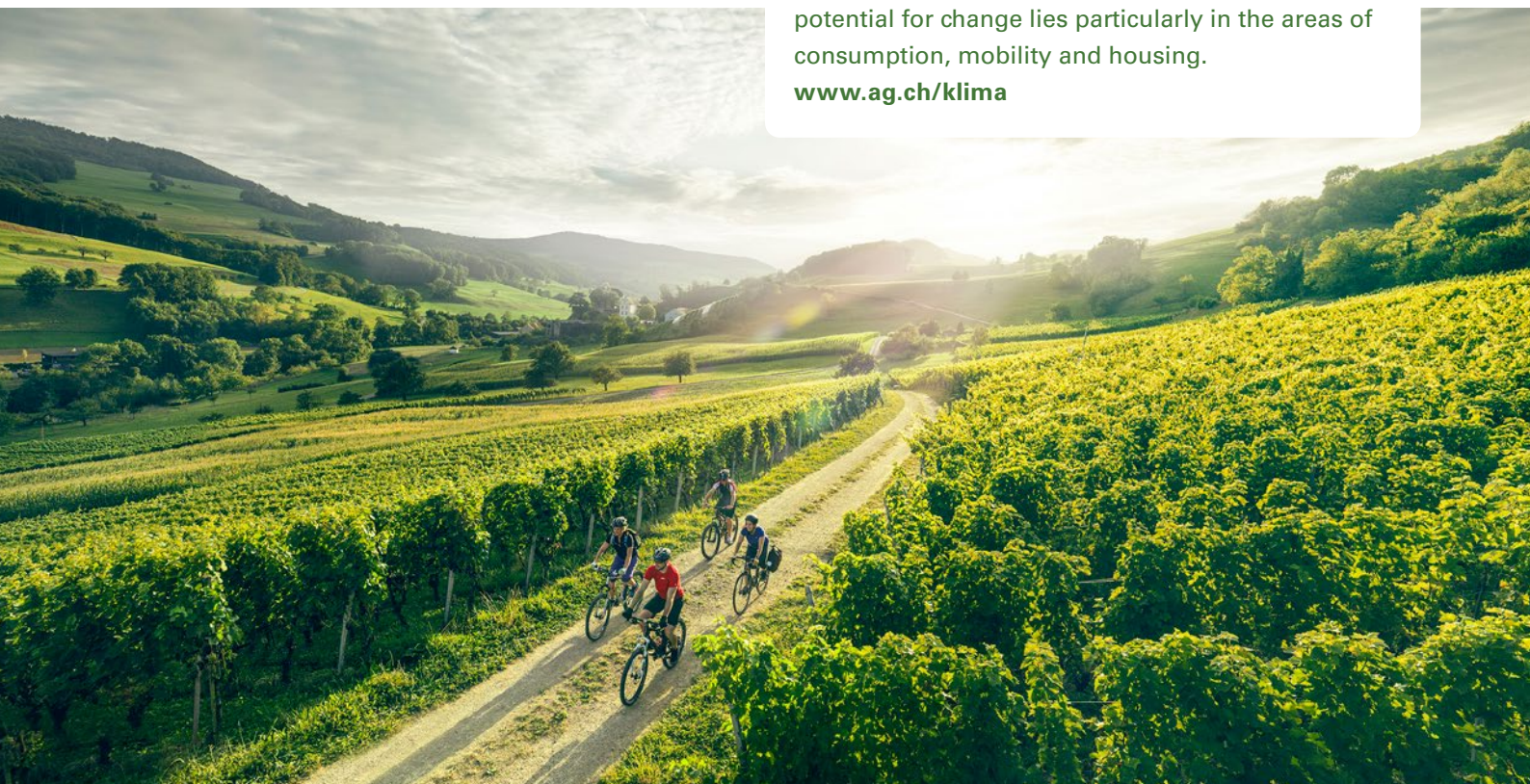


Tips for climate protection in everyday life on the cantonal website



In addition to the climate protection measures taken by the federal government, cantons and municipalities, citizens can also make a significant contribution. On its website, the Canton of Aargau offers tips for the public on how to contribute to climate protection, the 'Net Zero by 2050' target and thus SDG 13 through simple measures. The aim is to raise awareness of the personal impact on CO₂ emissions and energy consumption – the greatest potential for change lies particularly in the areas of consumption, mobility and housing.

www.ag.ch/klima



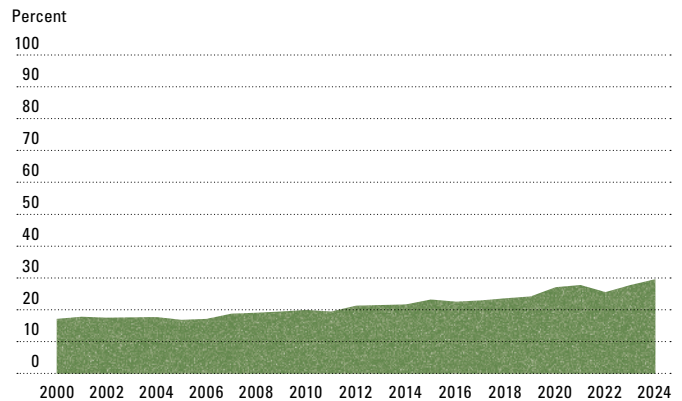
Through its energy strategy, the Canton of Aargau aims to reduce per capita energy consumption, cut the share of fossil fuels and increase the use of renewable energy.

Fossil fuels – oil, gas and coal – currently account for almost 85% of domestic greenhouse gas emissions. However, the share of renewable energy is slowly increasing and stood at 30% across Switzerland in 2024. In electricity generation, it accounts for around 70%. Hydropower makes the largest contribution, but solar energy offers the greatest potential for expansion. It currently accounts for around 11% of renewable electricity production, yet the technical potential of almost seven terawatt-hours per year on roofs and facades in the Canton of Aargau alone has only been exploited to a small extent.

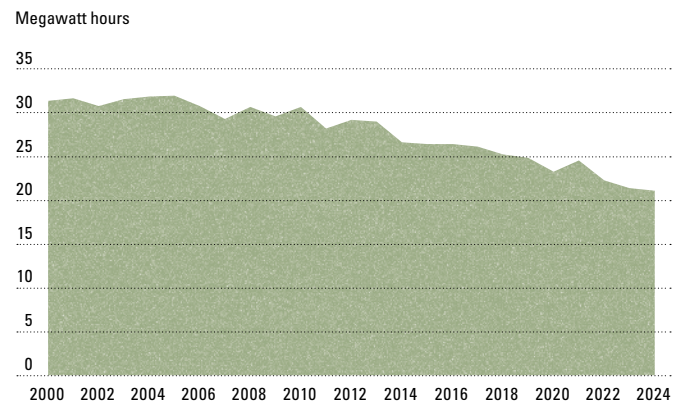
To meet the legal requirement to switch to renewable heating energy, all oil and gas heating systems must be replaced or converted to renewable fuels by 2050. To achieve this, the current annual replacement rate in Aargau will have to be more than doubled.

Final energy consumption per person in Aargau has fallen by around 32% since 2000 and is on track to meet the targets set out in the cantonal energy strategy. However, maintaining this path will require increasingly greater efforts: the 'low-hanging fruits' – measures that are easy to implement – have largely been exhausted.

Share of renewable energy in final energy consumption, Switzerland



Final energy consumption per person, Aargau



Solar energy systems for cantonal buildings



In accordance with the Aargau Real Estate Strategy 2026–2034, the canton's properties are to be managed sustainably. This includes the use of solar thermal and photovoltaic systems. The solar systems installed by 2023 already generate 1,120 megawatt hours of electricity per year. This is equivalent to the consumption of around 225 Swiss households. For new builds and roof renovations, it is routinely assessed whether the installation of solar systems is possible and advisable.

www.ag.ch/de/themen/planen-bauen/immobilien



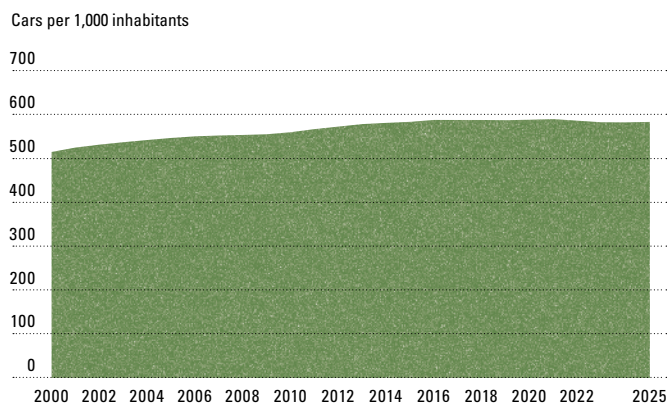
Through its 'mobilitätAARGAU' mobility strategy, the canton aims to provide an efficient, safe and environmentally friendly transport system that is aligned with spatial development. The aim is to reduce negative impacts such as traffic jam hours, noise, emissions and land usage.

After housing and food, transport is the third-largest contributor to environmental impact in Switzerland. Around a third of greenhouse gas emissions are attributable to transport, with passenger transport (cars, motorbikes, coaches) accounting for the largest share. To achieve the net-zero target, all vehicles must be zero-emission by 2050. Despite the growth in electric mobility, additional efforts are needed to achieve this.

The transport infrastructure in the Canton of Aargau is currently reaching its limits at peak times – both on the roads and on the railways. Leisure is the most common reason for travel, followed by work and shopping. Most journeys are made by car. The number of cars per 1,000 inhabitants in the Canton of Aargau remains high and is above the Swiss average. According to the cantonal mobility strategy, private motorised transport is to be reduced in almost all types of areas.

The proportion of the population with good to very good public transport links has remained static at around 50%, and less than half of all stops are accessible to people with disabilities – both figures are set to rise.

Level of motorisation, Aargau



Quality of public transportation services 2023, Aargau

Proportion of people living in areas with very good (A) to minimal (F) public transport links. Assessed on the basis of the distance to the nearest stop and the frequency of connections.

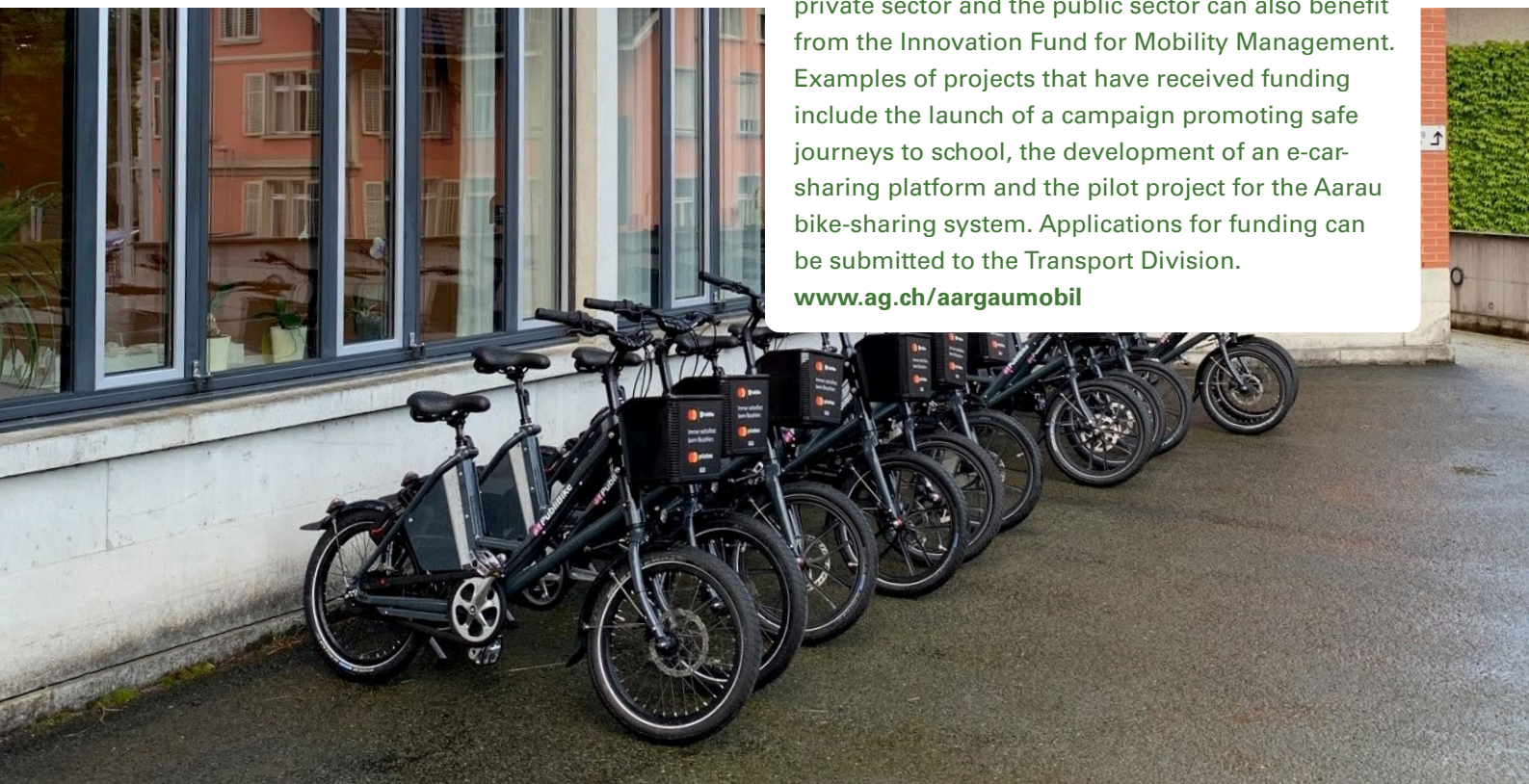


Innovation Fund for Mobility Management



The Canton of Aargau supports pilot projects that make an innovative contribution to the efficient and sustainable use of transport. In addition to the mobility sector, the research community, the private sector and the public sector can also benefit from the Innovation Fund for Mobility Management. Examples of projects that have received funding include the launch of a campaign promoting safe journeys to school, the development of an e-car-sharing platform and the pilot project for the Aarau bike-sharing system. Applications for funding can be submitted to the Transport Division.

www.ag.ch/aargaumobil

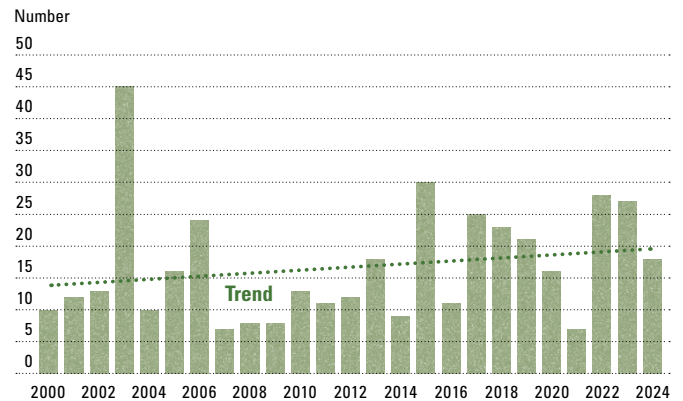


Increasing drought, heat stress, flood risks, and changes in biodiversity make it clear: climate change is also affecting the Canton of Aargau. The number of hot days, with temperatures of at least 30 degrees Celsius, is rising. Even with the successful implementation of planned climate protection measures, around 40 hot days per year are expected in the future. More severe and frequent natural events, such as storms or heavy rain, are causing greater damage to buildings and infrastructure. The average damage ratio relative to the building insurance value has increased nearly fifteenfold since the 1950s and stood at 9% in 2023.

Climate protection remains a central goal, but adapting to unavoidable consequences is equally necessary. The Canton of Aargau aims to protect its population, property, and natural resources, and to strengthen the resilience of the economy, the environment, and society. In its climate strategy, the canton identifies areas of action and measures, and emphasizes dialogue with various stakeholders. Advice, resources, and funding instruments are intended to enhance the capacity to take action.

Climate adaptation offers opportunities for attractive improvements, such as heat-reducing green spaces and water bodies. Yet the proportion of this green and blue infrastructure in urban areas is declining, partly due to infill development, even though it provides the public with valuable recreational and leisure spaces.

Hot days, Aargau



Climate Consulting for Municipalities



This easily accessible advisory and awareness-raising program supports municipalities in Aargau that wish to pursue climate-adapted urban development. One important and easily implementable measure is the removal of impermeable surfaces, for example in public squares or along streets. The long-term goal is to empower municipalities to incorporate the risks of climate change, such as heat, drought, and heavy rainfall, into their planning processes. www.ag.ch/klima-massnahmen



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The 2030 Agenda, with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), serves as the common framework for the international community, to which the canton of Aargau is also committed. For more information, visit: www.ag.ch/agenda-2030

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Information current as of February 2026

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The original language of the Voluntary Local Review is German. This English translation is intended to provide an introduction to the Canton of Aargau's sustainability reporting for non-German-speaking readers. However, many of the links and sources are available in German only.

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