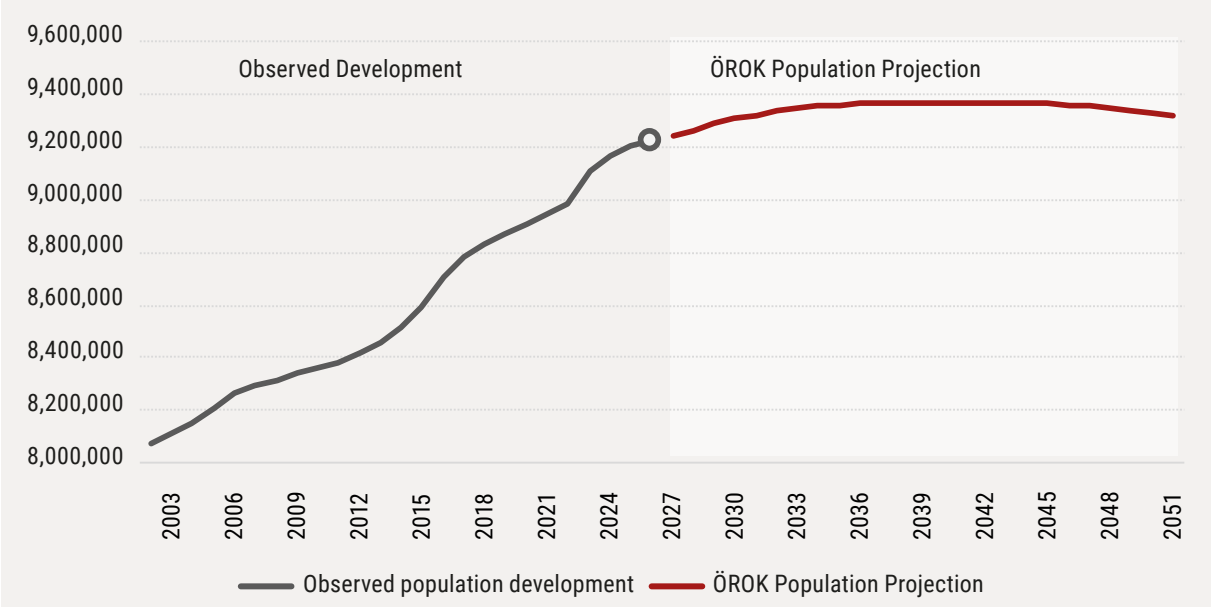
Summary

The regional population projections from the Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning (ÖROK) provide a consistent, Austria-wide assessment of future population trends that is spatially differentiated and serve as a common information base for long-term planning and decision-making processes in spatial and regional planning as well as in various sectoral policies.

This ÖROK population projection shows that demographic trends in Austria are on the verge of a structural turnaround: Low birth rates and rising life expectancy are leading to an increasingly aging society and a persistently negative natural increase. Against this backdrop, natural population growth is increasingly taking a back seat, while international immigration has become the driving force behind current population growth and has so far offset the decline in births. This will change over the forecast period through 2051. Immigration will no longer be able to offset the rising number of deaths coupled with a decline in births.

As a result, Austria will experience a profound change in the composition of its total population, as well as increasing regional differentiation by 2051. The population is projected to rise from about 9.22 million at the beginning of 2026 to a peak of about 9.37 million in 2041, before declining to about 9.32 million by 2051. Consequently, at the end of the projection period, the population will be only 1.2 % higher than in 2026.

Austria's population development, total 2026–2051



Source: ÖROK Population Projection 2026–2051, Adapted: JR-POLICIES

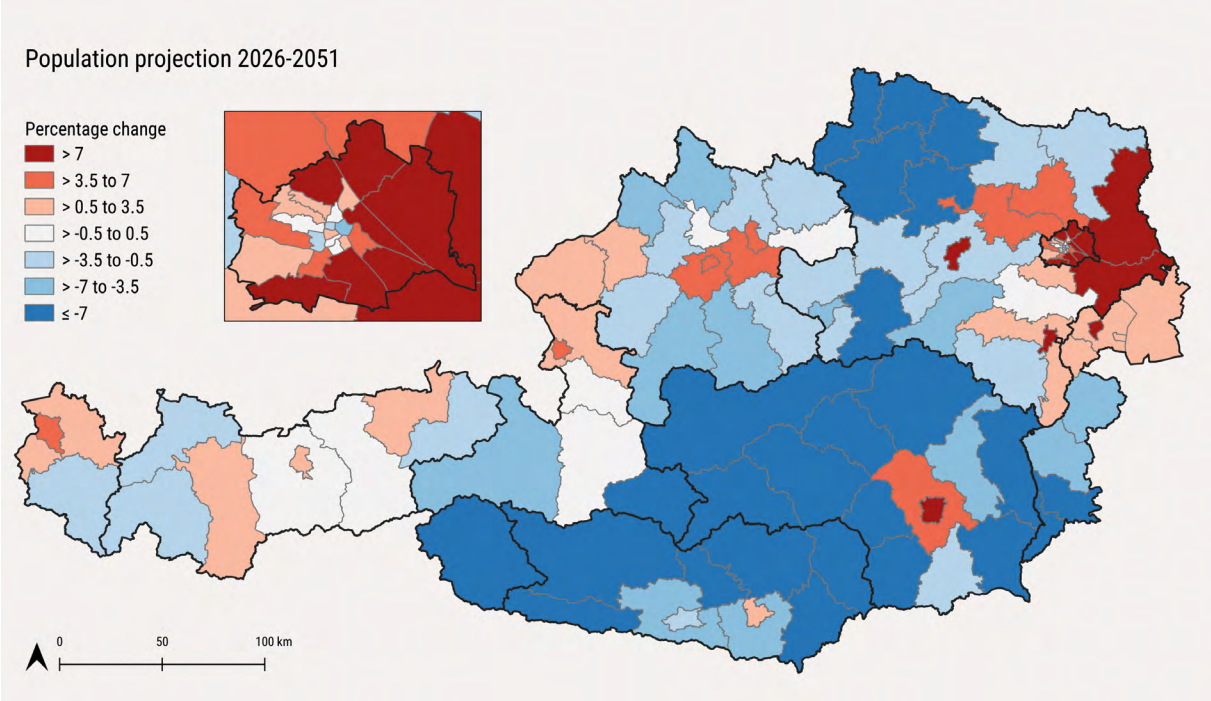
Behind this trend lies significant changes in the population structure: The working-age population is projected to decline by about 370,000, while the number of people aged 85 or older is expected to more than double, with an increase of about 280,000. At the same time, the number of deaths will increasingly exceed the number of births. International migration will therefore have an even greater impact on population trends in Austria than in the past.

The latest regional ÖROK Population Projection provides a common planning framework for Austria, its federal states and districts. It illustrates how the total population, age structure, and demographic composition are projected to evolve between 2026 and 2051, highlighting the expected regional differences.

Among the most important findings of the ÖROK Population Projection are:

- The population is aging at an ever-faster rate. The number of people of retirement age is projected to increase by about 676,000 by 2051. The number of very elderly people will increase particularly sharply: The number of people aged 85 or older is expected to more than double, with an increase of about 280,000. At the same time, the number of children and adolescents will decline by about 200,000, and the number of people of working age will fall by about 370,000.
- International migration contributes to stabilizing population trends. A positive net migration rate will initially offset the increasingly negative natural population change (more deaths than births). However, starting in 2041, this will no longer be sufficient, and the total population will begin to decline. The share of the population born abroad is projected to rise from 22.9% in 2026 to 28.4% in 2051. This increase will be spread across all of Austria, meaning that the number of people born abroad will grow in every district.
- Regional disparities are increasing. By 2051, Vienna is expected to see 8.6% growth and Vorarlberg 1.7%, while Lower Austria, Salzburg, Upper Austria, and Tyrol will largely stagnate. Burgenland, Styria, and Carinthia in particular will experience a population decline. At the district level, these differences are even more pronounced: Population growth is concentrated in larger cities and their surrounding areas, while peripheral regions – particularly in the inner-Alpine districts of Carinthia and Styria, as well as in the Waldviertel – are facing significant population declines.
- Even regions with sustained population growth are heavily affected by aging. Population growth does not automatically mean an increase in all age groups. The number of children and adolescents will decline in nearly every Austrian district, and the working-age population will also shrink in large parts of Austria. Conversely, the number of older people – especially the very elderly – will rise significantly almost everywhere.

Population development from 2026 to 2051 in Austria's districts



Source: ÖROK Population Projection 2026–2051, Adapted: JR-POLICIE