

Apprenticeship Pulse Results January 2021

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Apprenticeship Pulse has been surveying the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on basic vocational training on a monthly basis since April 2020. While Switzerland was still in a shutdown in April, measures were gradually relaxed in the following months. After the summer months with relatively low Corona case numbers and limited measures, the second wave arrived in September. This led to a sharp increase in the number of cases in October and a renewed tightening of measures (including a home office recommendation). In the following months, the measures were again tightened, with private meetings being further restricted and restaurants, bars, cultural, leisure and sports establishments closed again. In addition, the universities again switched to distance learning, while classes at the other schools continued with the appropriate hygiene and behavioral rules.

On January 18, 2021, and thus still during the Apprenticeship Pulse survey in January, a nationwide partial shutdown was imposed, with stores selling non-daily essentials closed and a home office requirement being introduced. However, schools, hotels and service

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providers (e.g. hair salons, post offices, banks) were allowed to remain open.

This fact sheet provides an overview of the impact of the Corona pandemic on apprenticeship companies and apprentices in **January 2021**, and compares these results with those of previous surveys. These are presented in different time phases: shutdown (April), relaxation (May-June), restricted measures (July-October), and November and December with tightened measures again. All results are weighted and are therefore representative for training companies and apprentices in Switzerland.

Currently, Apprenticeship Pulse reports on two groups of young people:

- Group 1: Future apprentices starting in 2021
- Group 2: Current apprentices

There are currently no results for Group 3 (apprentices in their final year of apprenticeship). There are also no new results for the group of apprentices starting their apprenticeship in 2020.

The Pulse of Apprentices in January 2021 – Main Points

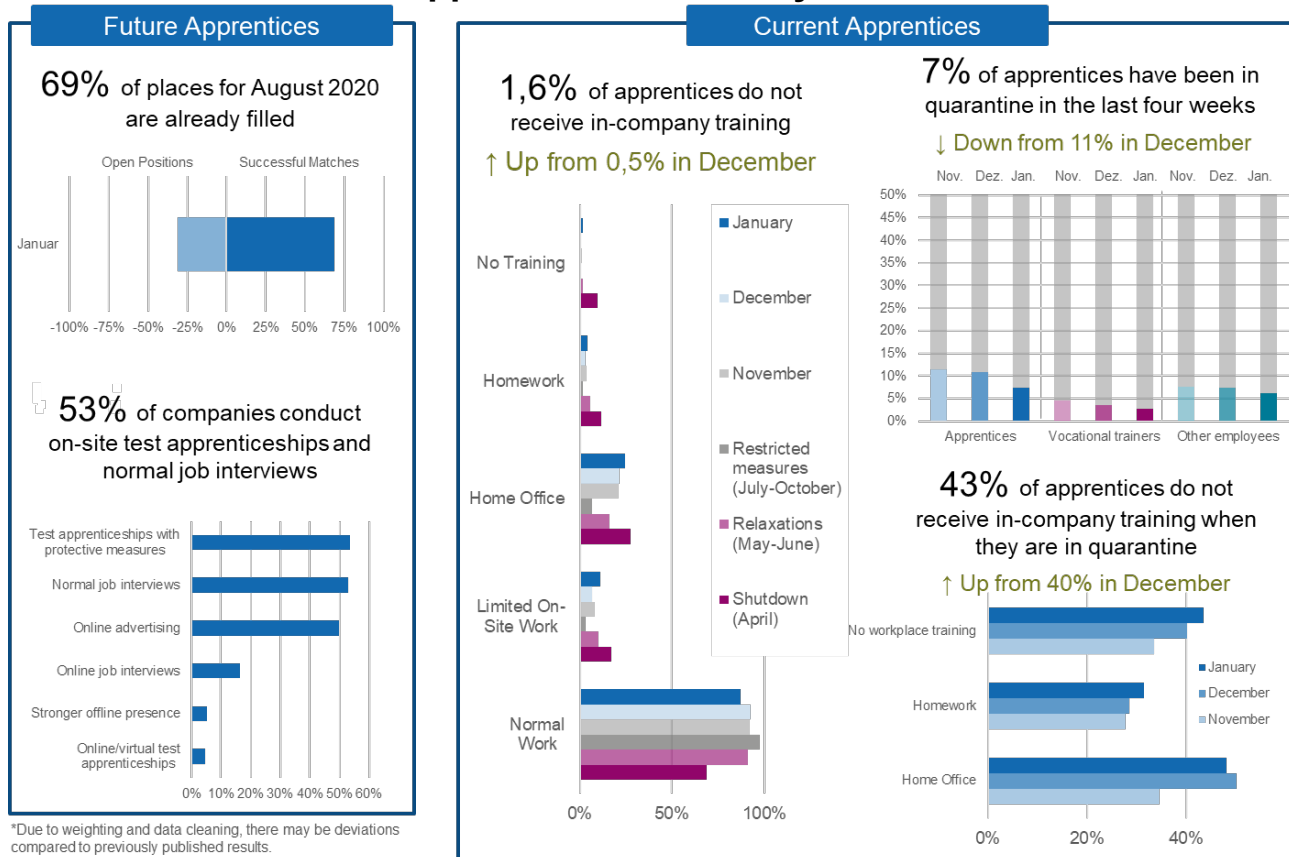


Figure 1: The headlines on Apprenticeship Pulse in January 2021.

Remarks: Results based on weighted data from Apprenticeship Pulse surveys 04.2020 (April), 05.2020 (May), 06.2020 (June), 7.2020 (July), 08.2020 (August), 09.2020 (September), 10.2020 (October), 11.2020 (November), 12.2020 (December), and 01.2021 (January). The box on the top left shows the main results for future apprentices in 2021, while the box on the right shows those for current apprentices.

In German-speaking Switzerland, **future apprentices (Group 1)** begin the application process one year before the start of their apprenticeship. In French-speaking Switzerland, this process only starts in the spring. Since August 2020, there have been open apprenticeship positions to start in Summer 2021. In the January Apprenticeship Pulse survey, the supply of apprenticeship positions in 2021 and the proportion of apprenticeship positions that are still open or have already been filled were surveyed for the first time.

In January, the apprenticeship companies surveyed reported that 69% of the apprenticeship positions offered for Summer 2021 have already been filled, while 31% of these apprenticeship positions are still open. However, these figures only reflect the apprenticeships already on offer and may not take into account apprenticeships that have not yet been advertised (which is likely to be the case in western Switzerland in particular). In the coming months, Apprenticeship Pulse will continue to follow the development of apprenticeship offers.

Training companies use different channels to fill their open apprenticeship positions. A large number of companies still rely on trial apprenticeships on-site using protective measures (53%) and traditional job interviews (53%). Online job interviews and in particular online or virtual trial apprenticeships are only used in a small number of companies (16% and 4%, respectively). However, half of the companies use online advertising (on their own website, well-known portals or social media) to draw attention to apprenticeships that are still open, while only a few increase their offline presence (e.g. at schools, job fairs, job information centers; 5%).

Current apprentices (Group 2) were still strongly affected by the measures taken against the coronavirus pandemic in January. 87% (93% in Dec., 92% in Nov., 98% in July-Oct., 91% in May-June, 69% in April)¹ of apprentices worked normally under protective measures from the Federal Office of Public Health (i.e. distance and hygiene rules). 11% (7% in Dec., 8% in Nov., 3% in July-Oct., 10% in May-June,

¹ Due to the weighting and further data adjustment, there may be slight deviations from the results published in the previous fact sheets.

17% in April) of apprentices were at workplace to a limited extent and 25% (21% in December and November, 6% in July-October, 16% in May-June, 27% in April) were at least partially working from home. 4% (3% in Dec. and Nov., 2% in July-Oct., 6% in May-June, 12% in April) of apprentices got homework for the practical part of their training and 1.6% (0, 5% in December, 0.9% in November, 1% in July-October, 2% in May-June, 10% in April) did not receive any practical training. The January survey thus shows a tendency for the situation of apprentices to deteriorate, with fewer apprentices working normally in companies while the proportion of apprentices with limited on-site work, home office and without practical training has increased. These changes are driven by apprentices in the occupational fields of "Hospitality, Hotel and Restaurant" and "Sales/Purchasing", which were badly affected by the pandemic.

Nov.) of their apprentices were in quarantine in the last four weeks – from mid/late December to mid/late January, while only 3% (in Dec., 4% in Nov.) of the vocational trainers and 6% (7% in Dec., 8% in Nov.) of the other employees were quarantined.

Quarantined apprentices' practical training is also a challenge. According to the January survey, 48% (56% in Dec., 35% in Nov.) of these apprentices complete their practical training in home office during quarantine, 32% (29% in Dec., 28% in Nov.) received homework and 43% (40% in Dec., 34% in Nov.) had no practical training.² This means that the proportion of quarantined apprentices with homework or without practical training has increased over the last month, while the proportion of those working from home has somewhat decreased.

Since November, the Apprenticeship Pulse has also been collecting information on the effects of quarantine regulations on basic vocational training. Apprentices are quarantined relatively frequently. The companies surveyed reported in January that 7% (11% in Dec. and

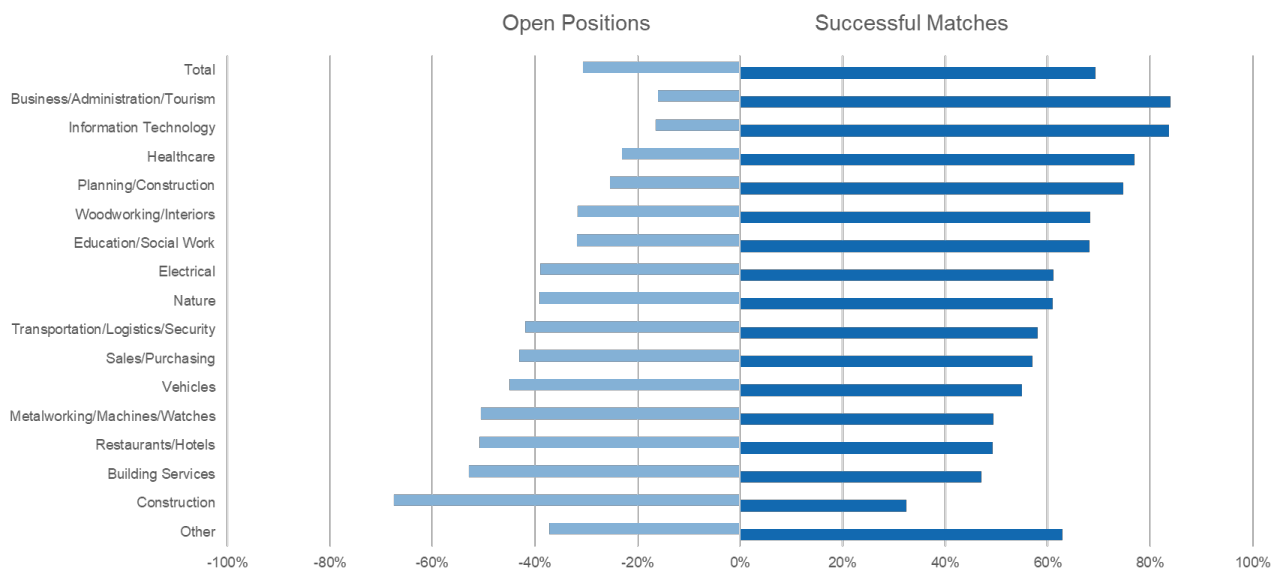


Figure 2: Open and filled apprenticeship positions by occupational field.

Remarks: Results based on weighted data from the Apprenticeship Pulse survey in January 2021. The left-hand side of the graph shows overall and for each occupational field, the proportion of apprenticeship positions are still open; the right-hand side shows the proportion of already filled apprenticeship positions. Occupational fields with fewer than 50 apprenticeship companies are summarized under "Other".

² These percentages do not add up to 100%, as it is possible that not all apprentices in a company complete the practical training during a quarantine, i.e. the companies could select several answers.

Detailed Results

Apprentices starting in 2021 (Group 1)

In January, the surveyed training companies reported that 69% of the apprenticeship positions offered for Summer 2021 had already been filled, which means that 31% of the apprenticeship positions are still open. However, this figure should be used with caution since the recruitment process for apprentices starting in 2021 has not yet started in all language regions and not-yet advertised apprenticeships may not be covered.

Figure 2 shows that the proportion of vacant and filled apprenticeships varies according to occupational field. The highest proportion of already filled apprenticeships are in the occupational fields of “Business, Administration, Tourism” and “Information Technology” (84% each).

In contrast, the occupational fields of “Construction” (32%), “Building Technology” (47%), “Hospitality, Hotel Industry” (49%) and “Metal, Machines, Clocks” (49%) have the most vacant apprenticeships.

In order to fill the vacant apprenticeship positions, 50% of the companies surveyed use online advertising (on their own website, well-known portals or social media). 53% of training companies offer trial apprenticeships in the company (with protective measures), while 16% use options for online or virtual trial apprenticeships. While 53% of companies conduct normal job interviews, only 4% do online job interviews. A few training companies have increased their offline presence (e.g. at schools, job fairs, job information centers; 5%) to recruit more apprentices.

	Apprentices at work		Apprentices at home		
	Normal Work	Limited On-Site Work	Home Office	Homework	No workplace training
Total	87%	11%	25%	4%	1.6%
Building	99%	3%	1%	1%	1%
Education/Social Work	99%	2%	5%	2%	0%
Electrical	98%	4%	11%	2%	1%
Vehicles	97%	1%	1%	1%	3%
Restaurants/Hotels	77%	12%	2%	10%	9%
Building Services	98%	2%	2%	4%	0%
Healthcare	98%	3%	4%	2%	1%
Woodworking/Interiors	99%	1%	4%	2%	2%
Information Technology	64%	14%	63%	5%	0%
Metalworking/Machines/Watches	100%	3%	2%	3%	0%
Nature	99%	1%	2%	4%	1%
Planning/Construction	86%	7%	32%	3%	0%
Sales/Purchasing	96%	12%	16%	5%	5%
Transportation/Logistics/Security	80%	3%	2%	2%	0%
Business/Administration/Tourism	99%	12%	38%	4%	1%
Other	83%	14%	15%	5%	6%

Figure 3: Effects of the pandemic on the training of apprentices by professional field.

Remarks: Results based on weighted data from the Apprenticeship Pulse Survey in January 2021. For each measure and occupational field, the table shows the proportions (%) of apprentices among all apprentices covered by the apprenticeship companies surveyed in the respective occupational field (multiple answers possible); Occupational fields with fewer than 50 apprenticeship companies are grouped under “Others”.

Current apprentices (Group 2)

Figure 3 shows the effects of the pandemic on apprentices’ practical training overall and by occupational field. With an average of 87% (93% in December, 92% in November, 98% in July-October, 91% in May-June, 69% in April), apprentices worked mostly normally in most occupational fields in January (with protective measures

mandated by the Federal Office of Public Health). A quarter were at least partially in home office in January (25%; 21% in December and November; 7% in July-October, 16% in May-June, 27% in April) and this proportion was above average in the fields of “Information Technology” (63%), “Business, Administration, Tourism” (38%) and “Planning, Construction” (32%).

The proportion of apprentices with limited on-site work was 11% in January (7% in Dec., 8% in Nov., 3% in July-October, 10% in May-June, 17% in April), those with homework for the practical part 4% (3% in Dec. and Nov., 2% in July-Oct., 6% in May-June, 12% in April) and those without practical training 1.6% (0.5% in December, 0.9% in November, 2% in July-October, 6% in May-June, 12% in April). The proportion of apprentices without practical training was comparatively high in the occupational fields of "Hospitality, Hotel Industry" (9%) and "Sales, Purchasing" (5%), with various companies in the latter category closed due to the partial shutdown in January. In the occupational field of "Hospitality, Hotel Industry" there is also the fact that relatively few apprentices work normally in the company (77%), while an above-average number of apprentices are given limited on-site work and/or homework.³

Figure 4 shows the development over time of the proportion of apprentices with normal work, in home office, with limited on-site work, with homework, and without practical training. It also shows daily COVID-19 case numbers and the measures or relaxation steps. While the proportion of apprentices with normal work increased steadily until October, it decreased again with the renewed tightening of measures in November and has remained roughly constant since then. Other impacts show a decrease from April to October before jumping again in November; in particular, home office and limited on-site work. The proportion of apprentices in these two types of on-the-job training also increased again in January compared with December, consistent with the partial shutdown that occurred mid-month.

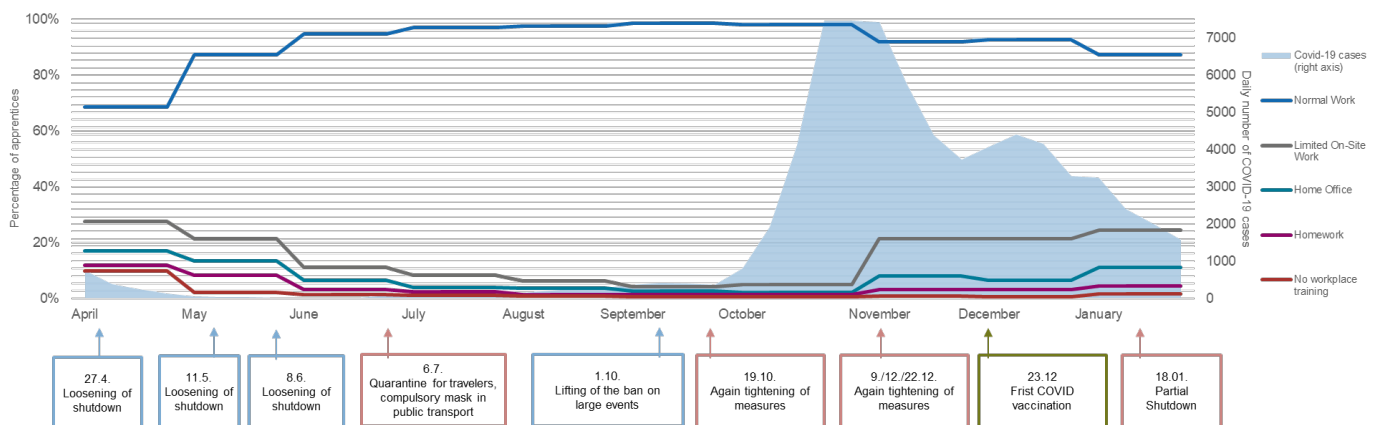


Figure 4: Effects of the corona pandemic on the training of apprentices over time.

Remarks: Results based on weighted data from the monthly Apprenticeship Pulse surveys from April 2020 to January 2021. The figure shows on the vertical axis on the left side per measure for in-company training the proportions (%) of apprentices out of all apprentices covered by the surveyed training companies (multiple answers possible). The vertical axis on the right shows the Corona case numbers per day (weekly average) from April 2020 to January 2021.

Quarantine measures

The quarantine regulations to protect against further Corona infections are also currently relevant for the economy and society. These measures mean that some apprentices are temporarily faced with interruptions in their basic vocational training. 28% (38% in Dec. and Nov.) of apprenticeship companies surveyed in January said they had quarantined apprentices in the past four weeks. 11% (14% in Dec., 15% in Nov.) of the training companies had quarantined apprentices during this period and 47% (55% in Dec. and Nov.) had quarantined other employees.

In the four weeks prior to the January survey, a total of 7% (11% in Dec. and Nov.) of apprentices, 3% (the same in Dec., 4% in Nov.) of vocational trainers and 6%

(7% in Dec., 8% in Nov.) of other employees were in quarantine. Figure 5 shows, the proportion of apprentices, vocational trainers and other employees that were in quarantine for each occupational field according to the surveys from November to January. An above-average number of apprentices (11% each) were affected in the occupational fields of "Healthcare", "Hospitality, Hotels", "IT" and "Business, Administration, Tourism".

³ These percentages do not add up to 100% because not all learners in a

company may complete the on-the-job training in the same way, i.e., companies could select multiple responses.

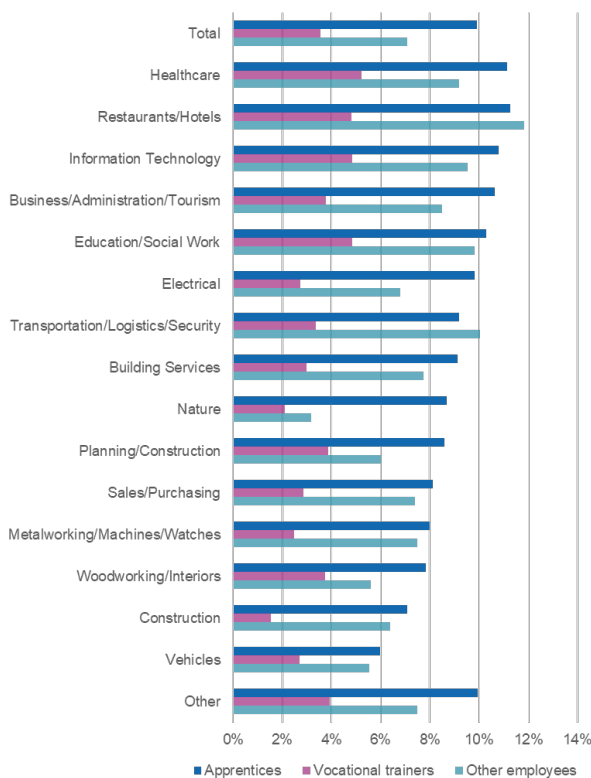


Figure 5: Proportion of apprentices, vocational trainers and other employees in quarantine by occupational field.

Remarks: Results based on aggregated and weighted data from the Apprenticeship Pulse surveys from November 2020 to January 2021. The graph shows the proportions of apprentices (blue), vocational trainers (pink) and other employees (light blue) who were in quarantine for each occupational field.

Companies also reported that 48% (56% in Dec., 35% in Nov.) of quarantined apprentices are able to complete their practical training at home, 32% (29% in Dec., 28% in Nov.) have homework, and 43% (40% in Dec., 34% in Nov.) receive no practical training. However, apprenticeship companies believe that practical training is rather weakly affected by the quarantine measures (score of 1.86 on a scale of 1 "weak" to 5 "strong"; 1.79 in Dec., 1.85 in Nov.) and there are only minor differences across occupational fields.

Effects on practical and theoretical knowledge

The companies were also asked how the changes since the first COVID-19-related shutdown have affected apprentices' practical and theoretical knowledge. A worsening of the situation is evident for both practical operational and theoretical knowledge, even if the effects are relatively small.

The companies believe that the practical knowledge of the apprentices has rather decreased (value of -0.26 on a scale from -2 "much worse knowledge" to 2 "much better knowledge"; the same in Dec., -0.18 in Nov., -0.02 in Oct.). The left pie chart in Figure 6 shows that the apprenticeship companies surveyed attributed 51% (39% in Dec.) of this change to learning content being more difficult to teach in the home office, 27% (38% in Dec.) to quarantine measures leading to missed content due to absences, and 23% (same in Dec.) to other reasons.

According to the surveyed training companies, the theoretical knowledge of the apprentices has decreased somewhat more (value of -0.35 on a scale from -2 "much worse knowledge" to 2 "much better knowledge"; -0.28 in Dec., -0.26 in Nov., -0.16 in Oct.). The companies attribute this decrease in theoretical knowledge in particular to home schooling (64%; 52% in Dec.), which makes it more difficult to impart learning content, but also to quarantine measures (23%; 30% in Dec.) and the content missed due to absences. 13% (17% in Dec.) of these changes were due to other reasons.

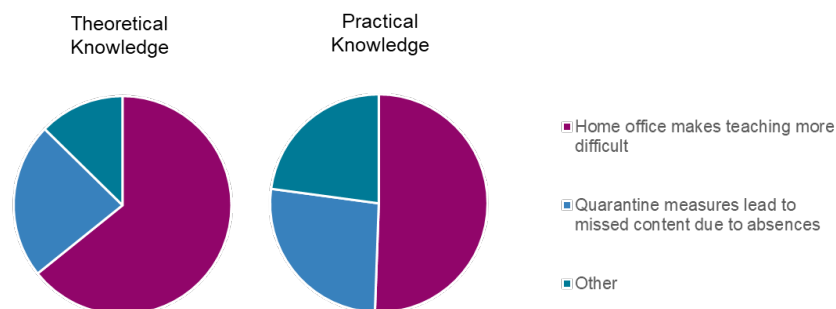


Figure 6: Reasons for the poor practical and theoretical knowledge of the apprentices.

Remarks: Results based on weighted data from the Apprenticeship Pulse surveys in January 2021. The graph shows the proportions of the various reasons for COVID-related changes in an average training company.

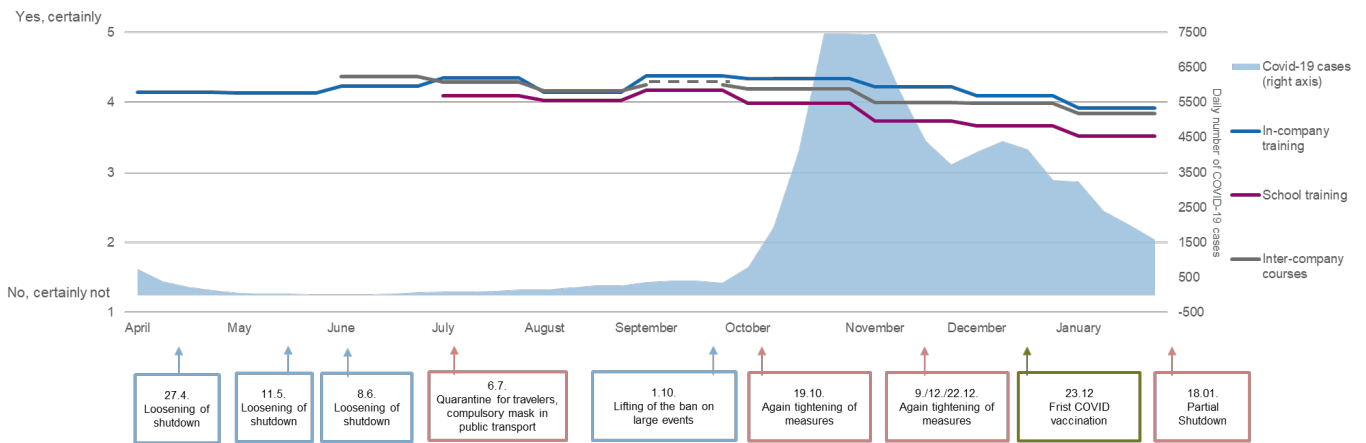


Figure 7: Catching up on the material missed due to the corona pandemic over time.

Remarks: Results based on weighted data from the monthly Apprenticeship Pulse Surveys from April 2020 to January 2021. The graph shows on the vertical axis on the left side whether companies think apprentices are certainly not (1) or certainly (5) still able to catch up with the material. The vertical axis on the right shows the Corona case rates per day (weekly average) from April 2020 to January 2021.

Catching up on missed material

Figure 7 shows that in January, apprenticeship companies again became less confident that apprentices would be able to catch up on the school material missed due to the COVID-19 pandemic before the end of their apprenticeships. With a score of 3.92 (4.09 in Dec., 4.22 in Nov., 4.23 in July-Oct., 4.15 in May-June, 4.10 in April) out of a maximum of 5 points (5 stands for "can certainly be made up"), the apprenticeship companies surveyed believe that apprentices will not be able to make up all of the material they missed during their in-company training in the remaining apprenticeship period.

The value for *school-based training* is somewhat more pessimistic (3.52; 3.66 in Dec., 3.74 in Nov., 3.97 in July-Oct.). For inter-company courses, the value is 3.84 (3.99 in Dec., 4.00 in Nov., 4.13 July-Oct., 4.24 in May-June, 4.12 in April) and thus between those for school-

based training and company-based training. In January, the training companies were thus once again more pessimistic about catching up on missed material and this applies to all three parts of the training.

The training companies were also asked which apprentices were most affected by the COVID pandemic. 43% (47% in Dec.) of apprentices are in companies that believe all apprentices are equally affected, while about one-fifth are in companies that believe first-year apprentices (20%; 18% in Dec.) and final-year apprentices (19%, 17% in Dec.) are most affected. 32% (28% in Dec.) of apprentices are in the companies that identify weaker apprentices as the most affected group.

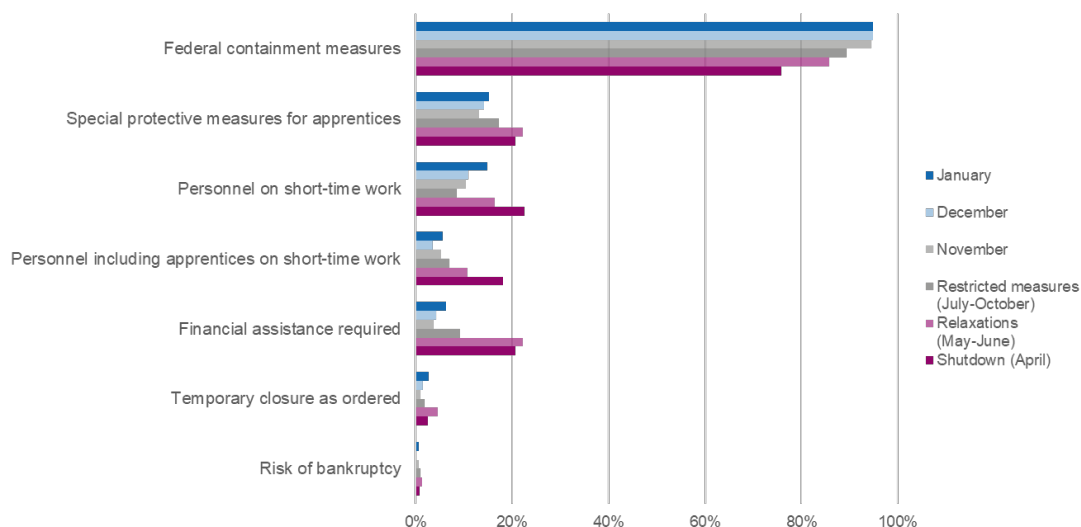


Figure 8: How the training companies and their apprentices were affected by the corona pandemic

Remarks: Results based on weighted data from the monthly Apprenticeship Pulse surveys from April 2020 to January 2021. The graphic shows the proportion of apprenticeships affected (in%) of all apprenticeships surveyed for each impact of the corona pandemic.

Impact on training companies and apprentices

Companies were affected differently by the Corona pandemic in January as well. Figure 8 shows that 95% (the same in Dec. and Nov., 89% in July-Oct., 86% in May-June, 76% in April) of the companies were working with protective measures according to the Federal Office of Public Health. Short-time work has regained some relevance for apprentices, with 6% (4% in Dec., 3% in Nov., 9% in July-Oct., 22% in May-June, 34% in April) of companies having their staff including apprentices on short-time work in January.

Data and Representativeness

2,466 training companies (2,500 in Dec., 2,292 in Nov., 2,552 in Oct.) of various sizes, from all cantons and occupational fields participated in the Apprenticeship Pulse survey in January 2021. The questions were answered by persons with different functions in the respective training companies, with vocational trainers as well as HR specialists and managers are represented. Since a total of 44,660 training companies were contacted for the survey, the Apprenticeship Pulse achieved a response rate of 5.52% in January (5.60% in Dec., 5.13% in Nov., 5.71% in Oct.). However, the calculation of the response rate is not exact because the survey was not only sent directly to this list of apprenticeship companies, but was also distributed using other channels.

There was also an increase in the proportion of training companies with protective measures affecting apprentices in particular (15%; 11% in Dec., 12% in Nov., 9% in July-Oct., 17% in May-June, 25% in April).

The surveyed training companies cover a total of 2.69% (2.72% in Dec., 2.50% in Nov., 2.78% in Oct.) of all training companies in Switzerland. The coverage for German-speaking Switzerland is better than for the other two language regions. German-speaking Switzerland is more strongly represented in the January survey with 3.50% (3.54% in Dec., 3.21% in Nov., 3.52% in Oct.) of the training companies than Latin (French-speaking and Italian-speaking) Switzerland with 1.41% (1.58% in Dec., 1.56% in Nov., 1.81% in Oct.). In addition, large companies tend to be overrepresented compared to SMEs. However, the weighting procedure⁴ corrects for differences in representativeness by language region, occupational field and company size.

The apprenticeship companies surveyed offer a total of 21,699 apprenticeship positions (23,158 in Dec., 24,046 in Nov., 22,556 in Oct.) in a wide variety of regions and occupational fields.

⁴ The fact sheet «Weighting and representativeness of the results» provides more detailed information on the weighting method used:

Further Information at
www.lehrstellenpuls.ch.

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