

# Apprenticeship Pulse Results June 2021

## Other Publication

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1. July 2021

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The Apprenticeship Pulse has been surveying the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on basic vocational training (VET) in Switzerland on a monthly basis since April 2020. The first survey covered the situation during the shutdown, which was gradually relaxed in the following months. After the summer months with a relatively low number of cases and limited restrictions, the second wave arrived with a sharp increase in the number of cases in October, followed by a renewed tightening of the measures (including a home office recommendation). Further tightening followed in the following months, with private meetings further restricted, restaurants, bars as well as cultural, leisure and sports facilities closed again. Teaching at vocational schools continued with the hygiene and behavioral rules, and only a few cantons temporarily switched to distance learning.

In January 2021, a nationwide partial shutdown was imposed. This closed stores selling non-daily goods and introduced a home office requirement. However, schools, hotels and service providers could remain open. This partial shutdown lasted until February 28 and relaxed in three steps: on March 1, all stores were able to open; on April 19, outdoor restaurants and bars, leisure and cultural activities and sports facilities were

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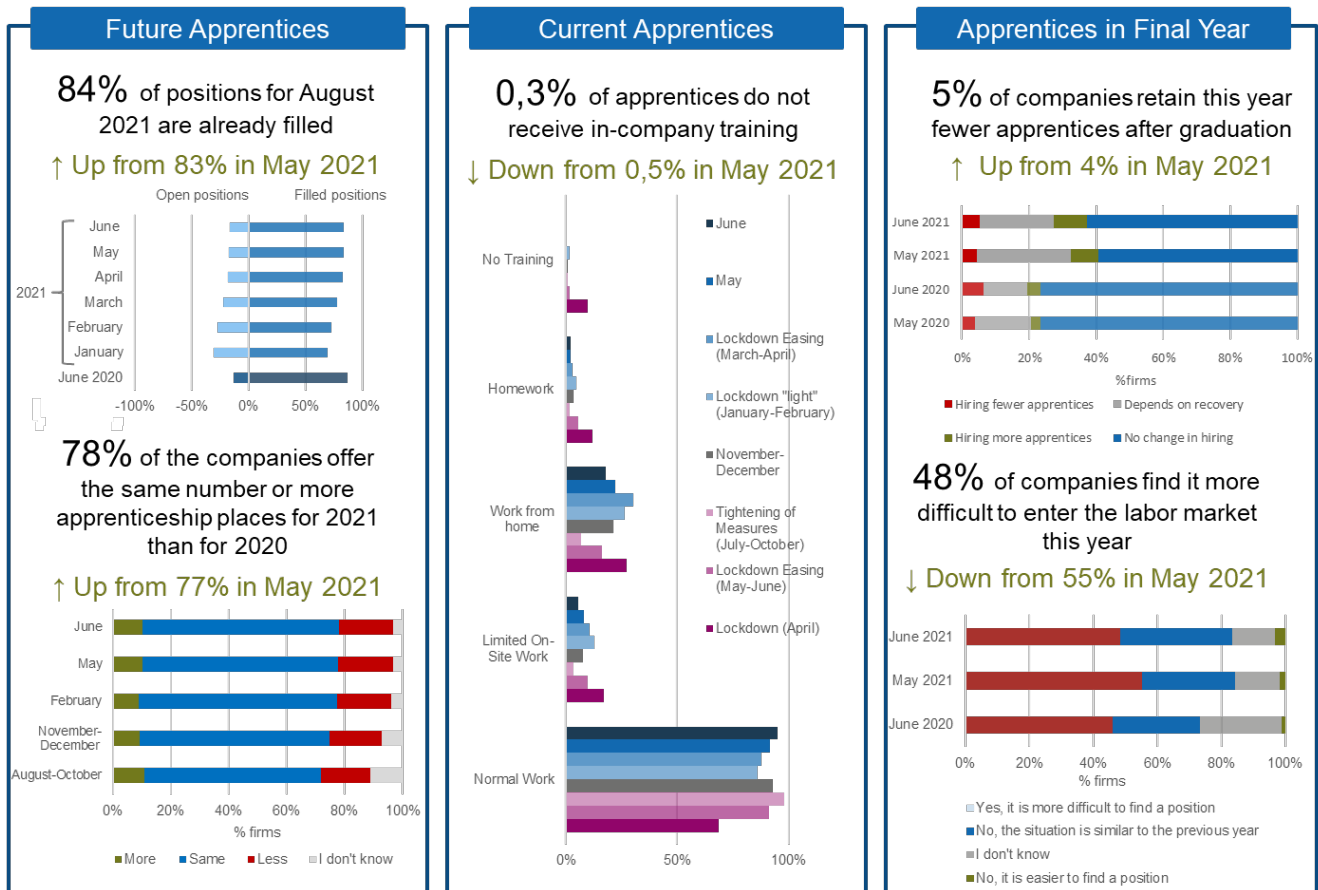
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opened, on May 31, the home office requirement was relaxed, restaurants could also receive guests inside and larger events and meetings were possible again.

This fact sheet shows the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on training companies and apprentices in **June 2021**. It reports on three groups of young people: future apprentices, current apprentices and apprentices in the last year of their apprenticeship.

The results are compared with those of the previous surveys, in particular with those of the previous month (May 2021) and a year ago (June 2020). All results are weighted and are representative for training companies and apprentices in Switzerland.

# The Pulse of Apprentices in June 2021 – Main Points



**Figure 1: The headlines on Apprenticeship Pulse in June 2021.**

Remarks: Results based on weighted data from the monthly Apprenticeship Pulse surveys from April 2020 to June 2021. The left box shows the main results for future apprentices in 2021, the middle box those for current apprentices (not in the final year) and the right box those for apprentices in the last year of apprenticeship.

**Future apprentices (Group 1)** begin the application process in German-speaking Switzerland one year before the start of their apprenticeship. In Latin-speaking Switzerland, this process starts in the spring. In June, 78% of the companies reported that they were offering the same number or more apprenticeships for the cohort starting in summer 2021 compared to the previous year (77% in May). Both proportions - the proportion of those who offer more apprenticeships (10%; same in May) and the proportion of those who offer the same number (68%; 67% in May) - remained roughly constant. The proportion of companies offering fewer apprenticeships (19%; same in May) and the proportion of those who do not yet know (3%; same in May) also remained the same.

Since January, the Apprenticeship Pulse has been surveying the percentage of apprenticeship positions that are still open or already filled for the cohort starting in 2021. According to the companies surveyed, 84% of the

apprenticeship positions offered for summer 2021 were filled in June (83% in May), while 16% were still open<sup>1</sup> (17% in May). The proportion of filled apprenticeship positions has increased steadily since January and is comparable to the situation a year ago. At that time, the majority of the apprenticeships that had not yet been filled in spring could be allocated later - for example due to the surprising lockdown. However, a larger proportion of the apprenticeships offered at that time were filled in June 2020 (87%) than in June 2021 (84%). It should be noted, however, that these figures do not take into account differences in the total number of apprenticeship positions offered at the time of the survey.

**Current apprentices (Group 2)** were also affected by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in June 2021. 95% of the apprentices (91% in May) were working under Federal Office of Public Health

<sup>1</sup> The Apprenticeship Pulse analyzes the proportion of apprenticeships that are still open or already filled based on positions currently offered and is therefore not directly comparable with the completed apprenticeship

contracts recorded by the Task Force Perspektive Berufslern (please check <https://taskforce2020.ch/de/monitoring>).

(FOPH) protective measures (esp. distance and hygiene regulations). 5% of apprentices were at their workplaces to a limited extent (8% in May) and 18% were at least partially in home office (22% in May). 2% of apprentices received homework for the practical part of their training (same in May) and 0.3% did not receive any in-company training (0.5% in May)<sup>2</sup>.

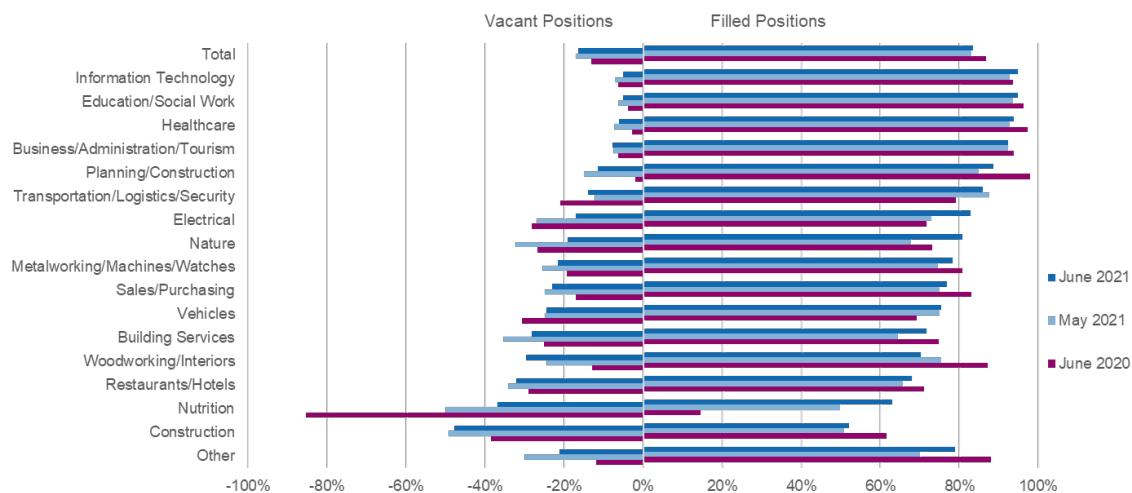
This means that the situation of the apprentices has slightly improved in the last month. While the proportion of apprentices with normal work has increased, the proportion of those with limited on-site work and home office has decreased. The proportion of apprentices with homework for the practical training and without in-company training remain at a very low level. More apprentices were able to return to their workplaces, at least temporarily. This is especially true for the occupation groups that have had the highest proportion of apprentices working from home like “Information Technology” and “Business/Administration/ Tourism.” In June, almost all apprentices were able to work normally again in the occupational field of “Restaurants/Hotels,” which was badly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Apprentices in the final year of their apprenticeship (Group 3)

Typically, some apprentices are employed by their apprenticeship companies after completing their apprenticeship, but not all. In June, 63% of companies indicated they will not change their employment practices

this year compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic (59% in May). In addition, 10% of apprenticeship companies will employ more apprentices than usual (8% in May). However, 5% of companies will employ fewer apprentices this year (4% in May) and 22% (28% in May) haven't decided yet. A comparison of these figures with the previous year shows that a larger proportion of companies employed the same number of apprentices (77%) in June 2020, while a smaller proportion changed their employment practices (6% employed fewer apprentices; 4% employed more apprentices). However, the proportion of companies that did not know yet was also significantly lower in 2020 (13%).

Another question deals with the challenges for apprentices entering the job market after completing their apprenticeship. For them, the question is whether it will be more difficult to find a job after graduation compared to cohorts before COVID-19. In June, 48% of apprenticeship companies believe that looking for a job would be more difficult this year (55% in May), while 35% consider the situation comparable (29% in May). Only 3% of companies predict an easier entry into the labor market (2% in May) and 13% do not know (14% in May). In June 2020, the companies' assessments of the challenges of entering the labor market were similar. However, a smaller proportion of companies found the situation comparable to prior COVID-19 (27%), while a larger proportion were uncertain (25%).



**Figure 2: Open and filled apprenticeship positions by occupational field compared to the previous month and the previous year.**

Remarks: Results based on weighted data from the Apprenticeship Pulse surveys in June 2020, May 2021 and June 2021. The left-hand side of the graphic shows overall and for each occupational field the proportion of apprenticeships positions are still open; the right side shows the proportion of positions are already filled. Occupational fields with fewer than 50 apprenticeship companies are grouped under “Others”

<sup>2</sup> These proportions do not add up to 100%, as various measures can apply at the same time and not all apprentices in a company always complete practical training in the same way, i.e. the companies could select several answers.

## Detailed Results

### Apprentices starting in 2021 (Group 1)

In June, 78% of the companies reported that they were offering the same number or more apprenticeship positions for the cohort starting in 2021 compared to 2020 (77% in May). This proportion is almost the same as in the previous month, while the proportion of apprenticeship companies offering fewer apprenticeship positions has not changed (19%; same as in May). Furthermore, 3% of the companies do not yet know how many apprenticeship positions they are offering for the summer (same in May). The differences between the language regions have decreased in the last month. The proportion of companies offering fewer apprenticeships was still slightly higher in Latin-speaking Switzerland<sup>3</sup> (22%) than in German-speaking Switzerland (18%), while fewer companies in Latin-speaking Switzerland compared to ones in German-speaking Switzerland offer the same amount of apprenticeships as in the previous year (63% vs. 69%).

4.0% of the companies reported in June (5.2% in May) that they can offer additional apprenticeships for those who would not find an apprenticeship otherwise due to COVID-19 (e.g. because of company closures). On average, these companies can offer 1.24 (1.47 in May) additional apprenticeship positions.

According to the companies surveyed in June, 84% of the apprenticeships offered for summer 2021 have already been filled (83% in May), leaving 16% is still open (17% in May). Figure 2 shows that the proportion of vacant and

filled apprenticeship positions varies according to occupational field. As in the previous month, the highest proportion of filled apprenticeships is in the occupational fields of "Information Technology" (95%), "Education/Social Work" (95%), "Healthcare" (94%), and "Business/Administration/Tourism" (92%). In contrast, only half of the apprenticeship positions in "Construction" could still be filled (52%), while "Catering" (63%) and "Restaurants/Hotels" (68%) were able to catch up compared to the previous month. When the shares of apprenticeship positions filled in June 2021 is compared with those a year ago, it is noticeable that the occupational fields of "Construction", "Woodworking/Interiors" and "Planning/Construction" had a significantly higher percentage of filled apprenticeships in June 2020 than they did in June 2021.

### Current Apprentices (Group 2)

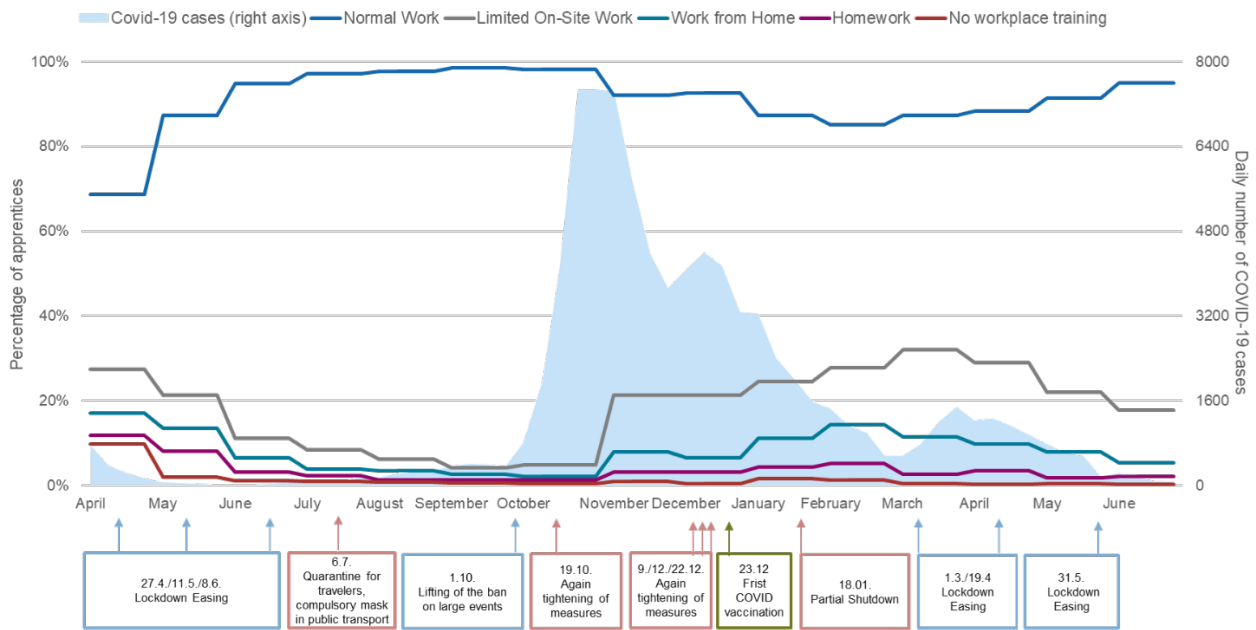
Figure 3 shows the effects of the pandemic on the training of apprentices overall and by occupational field. With an average of 95% (91% in May), apprentices worked normally in most occupational fields in June (with FOPH protective measures). In addition, 5% of apprentices had limited on-site work (8% in May). 18% of apprentices were at least partially working from home (22% in May) and this proportion was still relatively high in the occupational fields of "Information Technology" (55%), "Business/Administration/Tourism" (28%) and "Planning/Construction" (19%) even as it has declined in other occupations.

	Apprentices at work		Apprentices at home		
	Normal Work	Limited On-Site Work	Work from Home	Homework	No workplace training
<b>Total</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>
Building	99%	0%	2%	1%	1%
Education/Social Work	100%	1%	2%	0%	1%
Electrical	99%	3%	5%	1%	0%
Vehicles	100%	3%	1%	3%	3%
Restaurants/Hotels	97%	3%	0%	1%	2%
Building Services	99%	1%	3%	1%	1%
Healthcare	100%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Woodworking/Interiors	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Information Technology	70%	19%	55%	3%	0%
Metalworking/Machines/Watches	100%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Nature	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Planning/Construction	97%	3%	19%	1%	0%
Sales/Purchasing	97%	3%	7%	1%	1%
Transportation/Logistics/Security	100%	1%	0%	0%	3%
Business/Administration/Tourism	92%	7%	28%	2%	0%
Other	88%	4%	11%	7%	7%

**Figure 3: Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the training of apprentices by occupational field.**

Remarks: Results based on weighted data from the Apprenticeship Pulse survey in June 2021. The table shows the proportions (%) of apprentices per measure and occupational field of 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".

<sup>3</sup> Due to the low number of responses in Latin-speaking Switzerland, especially in Ticino, these language regions were combined.



**Figure 4: Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on training of apprentices over time.**

Remarks: Results based on weighted data from the monthly Apprenticeship Pulse surveys from April 2020 to June 2021. On the left-hand vertical axis, the figure shows the proportions (%) of apprentices per measure for in-company training among all apprentices covered by the apprenticeship companies surveyed (multiple answers possible). The right vertical axis shows the number of COVID-19 cases per day (weekly average) from April 2020 to June 2021.

The proportion of apprentices with homework was 2% in June (same as in May) and those without any in-company training was 0.3% (0.5% in May). Most of the apprentices without in-company training were still in the occupational field of "Restaurants/Hotels" (2%), "Vehicles" (3%) and "Transport/Logistics/Security" (3%).

There were differences between the language regions in May, mainly in the proportion of apprentices working from home (15% in Latin-speaking Switzerland vs. 23% in German-speaking Switzerland). This difference was negligible in June (18% vs. 19%) and the proportion of apprentices working from home in Latin-speaking Switzerland increased.

Figure 4 shows the development of these proportions over time with daily COVID-19 cases and FOPH measures. Thanks to the gradual easing of the partial shutdown in recent months, apprentices' situation has improved again. In June, more apprentices worked normally at the workplace, while fewer apprentices had limited on-site work or were working from home.

In addition, the proportion of companies believe that all apprentices are equally affected by the COVID-19 pandemic has slightly increased again compared to the previous month (to 48%; 46% in May). The weaker apprentices continued to be identified as the most affected group

by 28% of companies (31% in May), even if this proportion slightly decreased. The proportions remained roughly the same for companies believing that the heaviest effects fall on apprentices in the final year (20%; 19% in May), apprentices in the first year of apprenticeship (16%; same as in May) and apprentices in the middle of an apprenticeship (6%; 7% in May).

### Quarantine measures

Due to the quarantine regulations to protect against COVID-19 infections, apprentices are confronted with interruptions in their training. Companies and apprentices were slightly less affected in June. 8% of the companies stated that they had quarantined apprentices in the four weeks prior to the survey (15% in May) from mid/end of May to mid/end of June. 2% of companies had vocational trainers (5% in May) and 17% had other employees in the same situation (28% in May). In these companies, 2% of the apprentices (3% in May), 1% of the vocational trainers (1% in May<sup>4</sup>) and 2% of the other employees were in quarantine (3% in May).

46% of quarantined apprentices were able to complete their training through home office (53% in May), 23% received homework (same as in May) and 42% received no in-company training (39% in May).

<sup>4</sup> Due to the weighting and further data cleaning, there may be slight deviations from the results published in the previous fact sheets.

## Effects on costs and productivity

The companies surveyed believe that their *training costs* have risen due to the changes since the COVID-related shutdown (0.17 on a scale from -2 “much lower costs” to 2 “much higher costs”; 0.20 in April<sup>5</sup>). The left bar chart in Figure 5 shows that the apprenticeship companies attribute 43% of these changes to the protective measures (36% in April), 15% to the quarantine measures (same as in April), 21% to more extensive apprentice supervision (25% in April), and 14% on the infrastructure (e.g. for home office; same as in April) and 7% of the cost changes have other reasons (10% in April).

Companies also believe that the productivity of apprentices has slightly decreased since the beginning of the pandemic (-0.27 on a scale from -2 “much lower productivity” to 2 “much higher productivity”; -0.33 in April). The right bar chart in Figure 5 shows that the surveyed companies attribute 35% of this change to the fact that learning content is more difficult to convey in home office (37% in April), 19% to the fact that learning content is delayed or not taught at all (17% in April). 34% said that apprentices were insecure and demotivated (33% in April) and 13% had other reasons (same as in April).

As a result, the companies' assessments of *training costs* and *productivity* have hardly changed compared to April. However, the effects have become slightly weaker and, with the relaxation of the home office requirement, there has been a shift in costs.

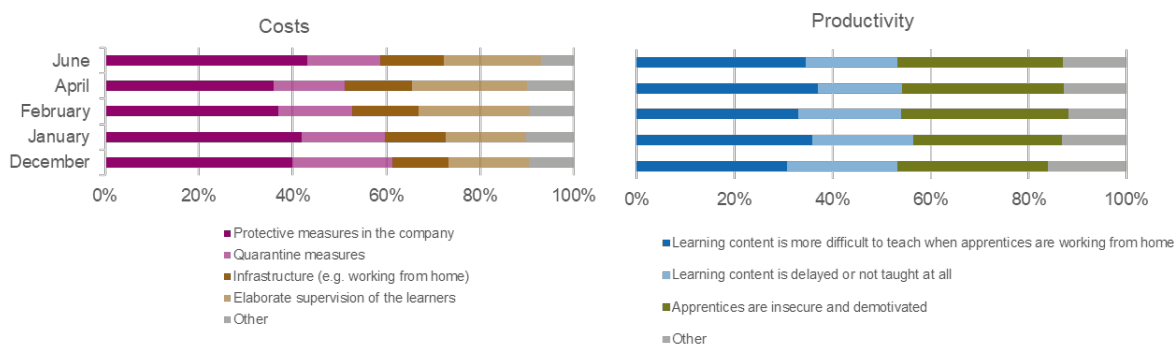
## Catching up on missed material

Figure 6 shows whether companies think that their apprentices can catch up on the material they missed due to the COVID-19 pandemic in the remaining apprenticeship period, comparing these results with the development of the COVID-19 case numbers and FOPH

measures. In June, companies believe that apprentices cannot fully catch up on their in-company training (4.09 on a 5-point scale, where 5 means “can certainly be made up”; 4.08 in May), inter-company courses (4.05; 4.08 in May), and school-based training (3.87; 3.78 in May). In the case of school-based training, however, companies have become even more confident in the last month that apprentices can catch up on missed material, in line with the improvements in case numbers and regulatory relaxation. Moreover, companies' assessments of catching up on missed material are comparable to the situation a year ago. Another reason for the confidence is possibly that the apprenticeship companies are no longer focusing on the apprenticeship graduates but on the current apprentices who will graduate in summer 2022 at the earliest.

## Apprentices in the last year of apprenticeship (Group 3)

The apprentices in the last year of their apprenticeships will complete their apprenticeship in summer 2021 and have already completed their qualification procedures (QV, final exams). The majority of this year's QVs were carried out normally, while a year ago practical QVs had to be partially adjusted for 41% of apprentices in the surveyed apprenticeship companies. However, in June 2021, apprenticeship companies believe that not all apprentices had a fair chance at the QV this year (3.92 on a scale from 1 “definitely not” to 5 “definitely yes”; 4.13 in May) compared to prior to COVID-19 (4.29). This inequality of opportunity was not as high as the surveyed apprenticeship companies forecasted in May.

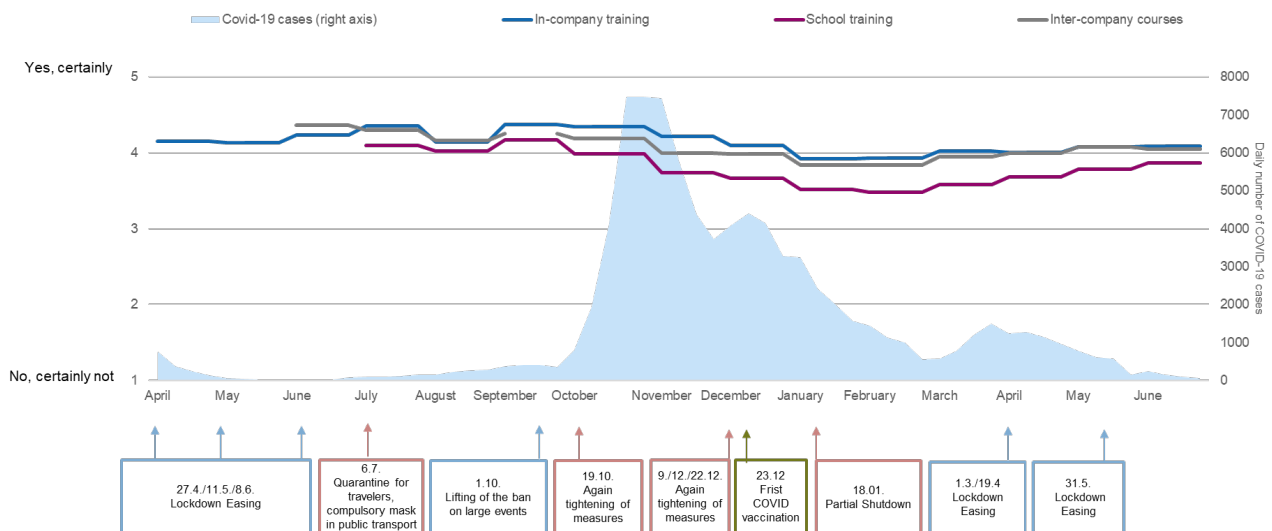


**Figure 5: Reasons for the higher training costs and lower productivity of the apprentices.**

Remarks: Results based on weighted data from the Apprenticeship Pulse surveys from December 2020 and January, February, April and June 2021. The graphs show the proportions of the various reasons for the COVID-related changes in an average apprenticeship company for each month and separately for training costs and productivity.

<sup>5</sup> This question has only been asked since September 2020 and every two months, which is why no comparative values are available in this factsheet

from May 2021 and the previous year.



**Figure 6: Catching-up on the missed material due to COVID-19 pandemic over time.**

Remarks: Results based on weighted data from the monthly Apprenticeship Pulse surveys from April 2020 to June 2021. On the left vertical axis, the figure shows whether the companies think that the apprentices will certainly not (1) or certainly (5) still can catch up with the material. The right vertical axis shows the number of COVID-19 cases per day (weekly average) from April 2020 to June 2021.

Figure 7 shows that COVID-19 will have a moderate influence on the final grades of the school-based and company-based QV in 2021 (2.8 for the school-based (2.6 in May) and 2.4 for the company-based (2.2 in May); 1 means “no influence at all”, 5 means “very strong influence”). Thus, companies estimate the impact of the pandemic on the final grades to be less than they did a year ago (3.2 for the school-based and 2.7 for the company-based in June 2020).



**Figure 7: Influence of COVID-19 on the final grades of apprentices.**

Remarks: Results based on weighted data from the Apprenticeship Pulse surveys in May and June 2020 as well as May and June 2021. The graph shows the values for an average company.

63% of the companies stated in June that they will keep the same number of apprentices after graduation this year as in the period prior to COVID-19 (59% in May).

10% of the companies will continue to employ more apprentices (8% in May), while 5% will keep fewer apprentices (4% in May). In June 2020, a significantly larger proportion of companies stated that they will not change their employment practices (77%).

In addition, 48% of apprenticeship companies believe that the job search is more difficult this year (55% in May), while 35% find the situation comparable (29% in May). 13% of companies do not know (14% in May) and 3% predict an easier entry into the labor market (2% in May). These assessments of the challenges on entering the labor market are similar to those in June 2020, although the uncertainty was greater at that time (25%).

To ease their entry into the labor market, 58%<sup>6</sup> of apprentices received support from their training companies (as in June 2020) while 62% received support with job applications (61% in June 2020). 46% received advice on training and further education opportunities (44% in June 2020), 53% transitional solutions of 3-12 months within the company (51% in June 2020), 30% a job offer in their own company or internal labor market (20% in June 2020), 21% a job placement within the industry (25% in June 2020) and 2% (1% in June 2020) a job placement abroad (to partner companies).

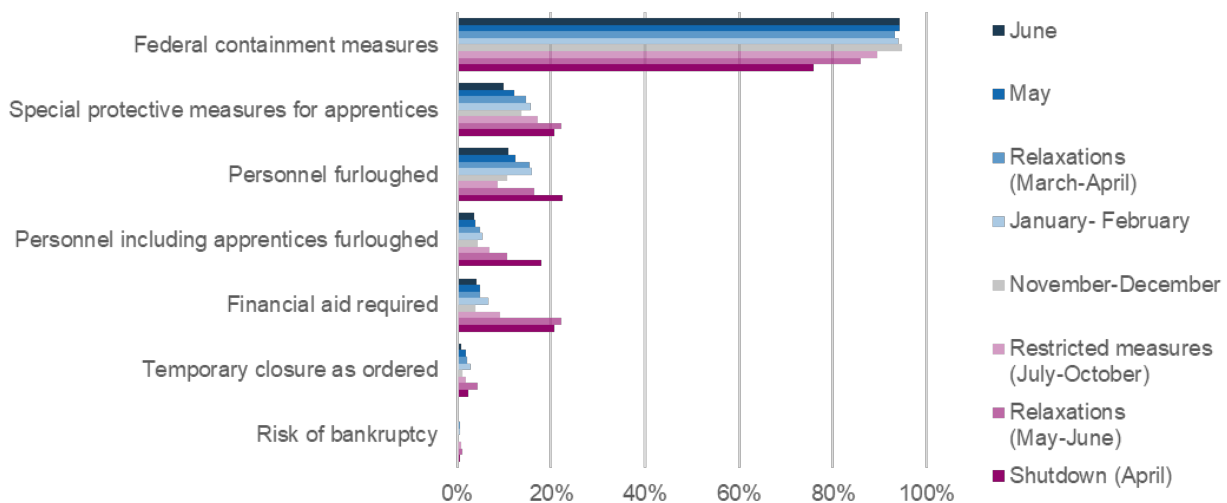
<sup>6</sup> This question was asked for the first time in June 2021, so no comparative values from the previous month are available.



## Effects on training companies and apprentices

The surveyed companies and their apprentices were affected to varying degrees by the COVID-19 pandemic in June as well, but there are only minor changes compared to the previous months. Figure 8 shows that 94% of the companies were working with FOPH protective measures (same as in May). The proportion of companies with staff on short-time work (10%; 12% in May), with staff including apprentices on short-time work (4%; 5% in May) and

working with protective measures (11%; 12% in May) remained roughly same. In addition, the proportion of companies with temporary closure orders or risk of bankruptcy remains at a low level. Thus, the situation of apprenticeship companies has considerably improved compared to a year ago, even if there are no major changes in the extent to which the companies been affected in the last few months.



**Figure 8: The extend of apprenticeship companies and their apprentices affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.**

Remarks: Results based on weighted data from the monthly Apprenticeship Pulse surveys from April 2020 to June 2021. The graphic shows the proportion of apprenticeship companies affected (in%) of all training companies surveyed for each impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Data and Representativeness

The Apprenticeship Pulse survey in June 2021 includes 1,888 training companies (2,615 in May) of various sizes from all cantons and occupational fields. The questions were answered by people with different functions in the respective training companies, with vocational trainers as well as HR specialists and management all represented. Since a total of 44,660 training companies were contacted for the survey, the Apprenticeship Pulse achieved a response rate of 4.23% in June (5.86% in May). However, the calculation of the response rate is not exact because the survey was not only sent directly to these companies, but was also distributed using other channels.

The training companies surveyed offer a total of 14,193 apprenticeship positions (23,701<sup>7</sup> in May) in a wide variety of regions and occupational fields. In addition, they cover a total of 2.05% (2.86%<sup>8</sup> in May) of all training companies in Switzerland. The coverage for German-speaking Switzerland (2.55%; 3.56% in May) is better than for Latin-speaking Switzerland (0.61%; 0.67% in May). There

are also major differences across occupational fields: The occupational fields “Information Technology” (5.29%), “Planning/Construction” (4.76%), “Metal/Machines/Clocks” (4.17%) are covered best and “Electrical Technology” (4.16%), while “Vehicles” (1.55%), “Sales/Purchasing” (1.53%) and “Nature” (1.48%) tend to be underrepresented. In addition, large companies are more likely to be overrepresented than SMEs.

The weighting procedure<sup>9</sup> used corrects for the differences in representativeness according to company size, language region and occupational field.

<sup>7</sup> The number of apprentices in a training company is only asked for the first time they participate in the survey (not in every month). However, this information was collected again from all participating companies from the March survey onwards in order to compensate for fluctuations in the number of apprentices in the meantime.

<sup>8</sup> In the fact sheet on the May results, incorrect figures were reported here for representativeness, which have now been corrected.

<sup>9</sup> The fact sheet “Weighting and Representativeness of the Results” provides more detailed information on the weighting method used: <https://doi.org/10.3929/ethz-b-000454763>

Further information at  
[www.lehrstellenpuls.ch](http://www.lehrstellenpuls.ch).

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