





Apprenticeship Pulse Results July 2021

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The Apprenticeship Pulse has been surveying the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on basic dual vocational education and 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 summer 2020 with relatively low case numbers and limited measures, a second wave in October 2020 was followed by a renewed tightening of the measures (incl. home office recommendation) and subsequently restaurants, bars as well as cultural, leisure and sports facilities closed again. Teaching at vocational schools continued with 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 was relaxed in four steps: on March 1, stores were allowed to open; on April 19, outside areas of restaurants and bars as well as leisure, cultural and sports facilities were allowed to open; on May 31, the

home-office requirement was relaxed, large events were allowed again and inside areas of restaurants were allowed to open; on June 26, 2021, the mask obligation for outdoor areas was lifted, home-office was only recommended and COVID-19 certification became mandatory in discos and at large events.

This fact sheet shows the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on training companies and apprentices in **July 2021**. It reports on three groups of young people: future apprentices, current apprentices, and apprentices in their final year of apprenticeship. The results are compared with those of the previous surveys, in particular with those of the previous month (June 2021) and a year ago (July 2020). All results are weighted and are representative for training companies and apprentices in Switzerland.

The Pulse of Apprentices in July 2021 – Main Points

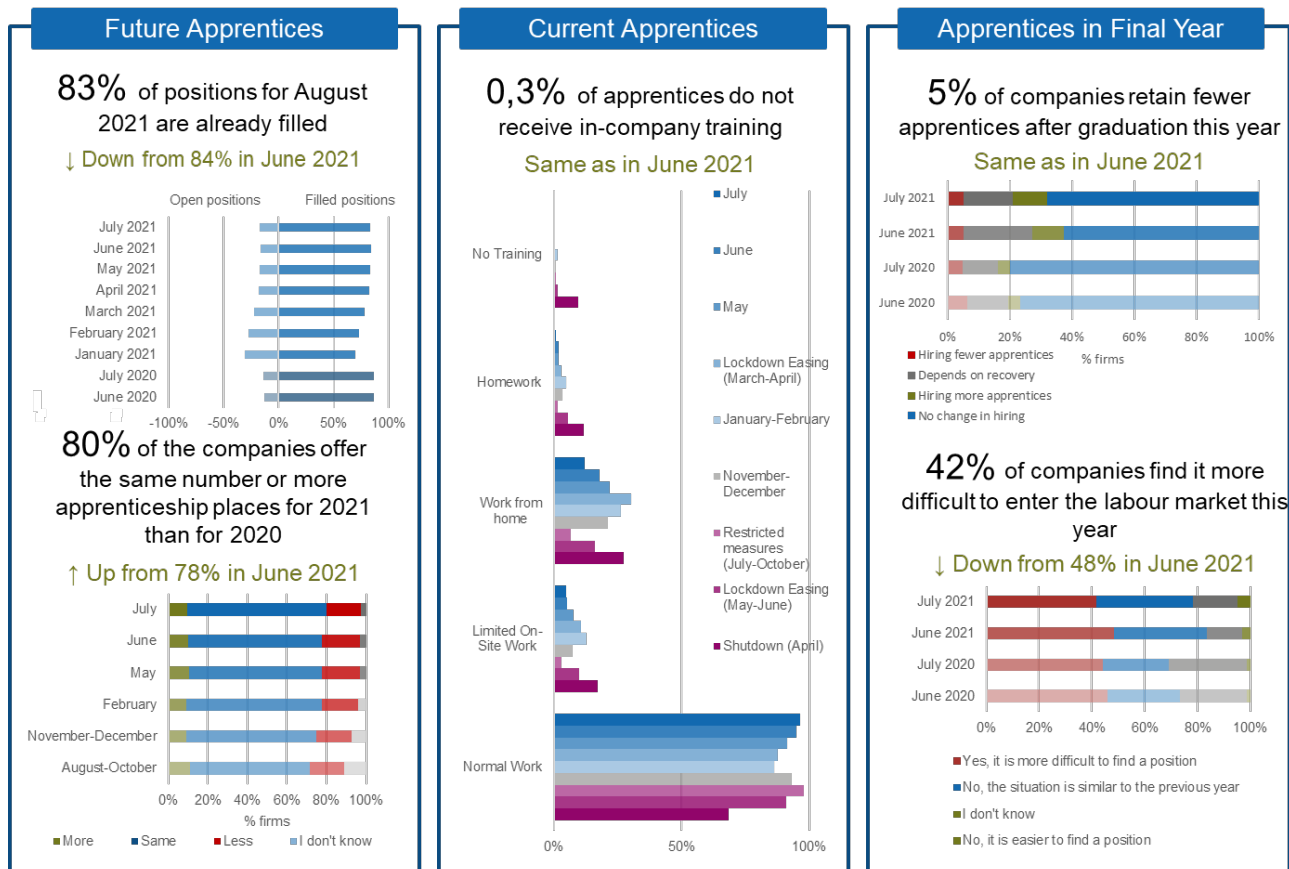


Figure 1: The headlines on Apprenticeship Pulse in July 2021.

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

Future apprentices (Group 1) begin the application process one year before the start of their apprenticeship in German-speaking Switzerland. In French-speaking Switzerland, this process does not start until spring. In July, 80% of the companies reported that they will offer the same number or more apprenticeship positions for the cohort starting in 2022 compared to the previous year (78% in June). The proportion of companies that offer more apprenticeships (10%; same as in June) and those that are still uncertain (3%; same as in June) remained constant. The proportion of companies not changing the number of apprenticeship positions they offer has slightly increased (70%; 68% in June), while the proportion of those who offer fewer has slightly decreased (17%; 19% in June).

Since January, the Apprenticeship Pulse has surveyed the proportion of open or already filled apprenticeship positions for the cohort starting in August 2021. According to companies, 83% of apprenticeship positions offered for

summer 2021 were filled in July (84% in June), while 17% were still open (16% in June)¹. After a continuous increase since January, this marginal decrease in filled apprenticeship positions between June and July matches the pattern observed in the previous year, where slightly fewer apprenticeship positions were filled (86% in July 2020 and 87% in June 2020). However, the share of open positions in both July and June 2021 was slightly lower than in the previous year. It should be noted that these figures do not include differences in the total number of apprenticeship positions offered at the time of the survey.

Current apprentices (Group 2) were similarly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in June and July 2021. 0.3% did not receive any in-company training (same as in June). The proportion of apprentices who worked on-site under Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH) protective measures (96% in July; 95% in

¹ The Apprenticeship Pulse analyzes the share of apprenticeship positions that are still open or have already been filled out of the currently offered apprenticeship positions and is therefore not directly comparable with

completed apprenticeship contracts recorded by the Task Force Perspektive Berufslehre (see <https://taskforce2020.ch/de/monitoring>)

June), who were at their workplaces to limited extent (5% in July and June), and who received homework for the practical training (1% in July; 2% in June) remained roughly constant. Compared to the previous months, only the proportion of apprentices working from home has changed, further decreasing to 12% (18% in June)².

This means that the work situation of apprentices has improved again—especially for those who were in home office. The proportion of apprentices without in-company training remains at a low level and slightly fewer apprentices received homework for the practical training. These observations are also reflected in individual occupational fields. The home-office frontrunners, "Information Technology" and "Business/Administration/Tourism", which were able to reduce the proportion of apprentices working from home in June compared to the previous month, experienced a further decline in July.

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

Usually, some of the apprentices are employed by their training companies after their apprenticeship but not all. In July, 68% of companies indicated that they will not change their employment practices this year compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic (63% in June). 11% of

training companies will employ more apprenticeship graduates than usual (10% in June). However, 5% of training companies will employ fewer apprentices this year (same as in June) and 16% have not yet decided (22% in June). As in 2020, the uncertainty regarding the employment of apprentices slightly decreased in June and July (13% in June 2020; 11% in July 2020), but it is at a higher level than in 2020. In July 2020, a larger proportion of companies employed the same number of apprentices (80%), while a lower proportion of companies changed their employment practices (5% employed fewer apprentices; 4% employed more apprentices).

When asked whether it will be more difficult for apprentices to find a job after graduation this year compared to cohorts before COVID-19, 42% of training companies in July believe that it will be (48% in June), while 37% believe the situation is comparable (35% in June). 5% predicted an easier entry into the labor market (3% in June) and 17% were still uncertain about the situation compared to the previous month (13% in June). In July 2020, the companies' assessments of the challenges of entering the labor market were similar. However, a smaller proportion found the situation comparable to before COVID-19 (25%), while a larger proportion were uncertain (29%).

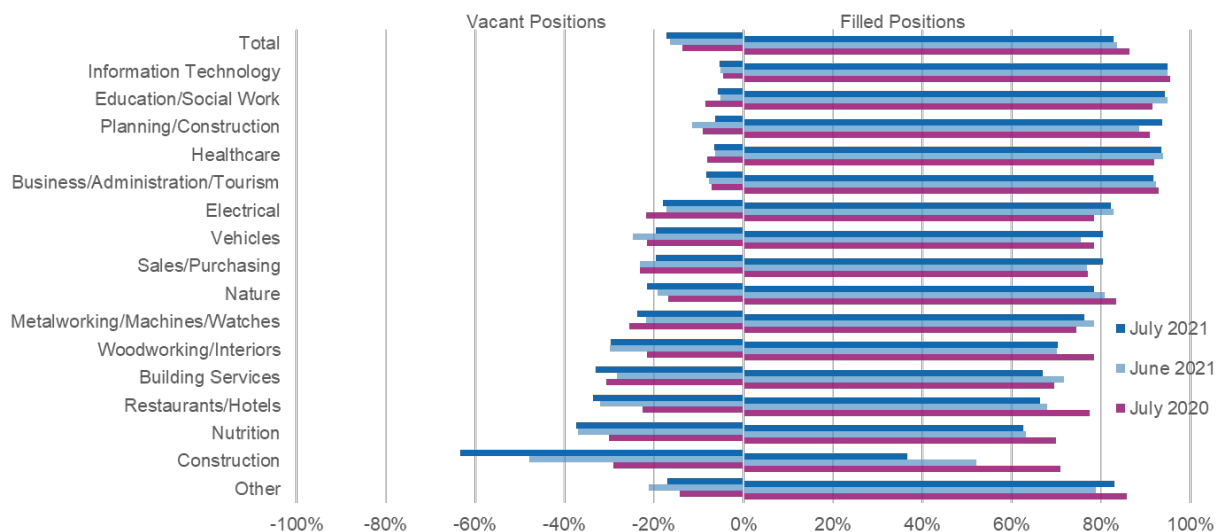


Figure 2: Open and filled apprenticeship positions by occupational field and in comparison with the previous month and the year.
 Remarks: Results based on weighted data from the Apprenticeship Pulse surveys in July 2021, June 2021 and July 2020. The left-hand side of the graphic shows in total and for each occupational field what proportion of apprenticeships are still open; the right side shows which part is already occupied. Occupational fields with fewer than 50 apprenticeship companies are grouped under "Others".

² 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 the practical training in the same way, companies could select several answers.

Detailed Results

Apprentices starting in 2021 (Group 1)

In July, 80% of companies reported that they were offering the same number of or more apprenticeship positions for the cohort starting in 2021 compared to 2020 (78% in June). This proportion is slightly higher than in the previous month, although the proportion of training companies offering fewer apprenticeships has slightly decreased (17%; 19% in June). Furthermore, 3% of the companies do not yet know how many apprenticeship positions they will offer next summer (same in June). As in June, the difference between language regions was less evident again. The proportion of companies offering fewer apprenticeship positions was only slightly higher in Latin-speaking Switzerland³ (19%) than in German-speaking Switzerland (17%). In July, the proportion of companies offering the same number of apprenticeship positions is slightly different in Latin-speaking Switzerland compared to German-speaking Switzerland (69% vs. 71%).

6% of companies reported in July (4% in June) 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 1.39 additional apprenticeship positions (1.28⁴ in June).

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

and open apprenticeship positions varies according to occupational field. The highest proportions of filled apprenticeship positions are in the occupational fields "Information Technology" (95%), "Education/Social Work", "Planning/Construction" and "Health" (94% each). Lagging fields "Planning/Construction" (89% vs. 94%) and "Transportation/Logistics/Security" (86% vs. 92%) were able to catch up compared to the previous month, with a sharp decrease in filled apprenticeships in "Construction" (37%⁵; 52% in June). Compared to the previous year (July 2020), a significantly higher proportion of apprenticeships were filled, especially in the occupational fields of "Construction," "Restaurants/Hotels," and "Woodworking/Interiors."

Current Apprentices (Group 2)

Figure 3 shows the effects of the pandemic on apprentices' training overall and by occupational field. With an average of 96% (95% in June), apprentices worked normally in most occupational fields in July (with FOPH protective measures) and 5% of apprentices had limited on-site work (same in June). 12% of apprentices were working from home and this proportion has noticeably decreased again (18% in June). This development was also evident in the occupational fields of "Information Technology" (37%; 55% in June) and "Business/Administration/Tourism" (18%; 28% in June), which are the occupational fields have the highest proportion of apprentices working from home.

	Apprentices at work		Apprentices at home		
	Normal work	Limited on-site presence	Working from home	Homework	No training
Total	96%	5%	12%	1%	0.3%
Construction	100%	1%	0%	1%	0%
Education/Social Work	99%	1%	1%	0%	0%
Electrical engineering	100%	1%	1%	1%	0%
Vehicles	100%	1%	0%	0%	1%
Hospitality	98%	3%	1%	2%	1%
Building Services	99%	1%	1%	0%	1%
Healthcare	99%	0%	0%	1%	1%
Woodworking/Interiors	100%	1%	1%	0%	0%
Information Technology	84%	12%	37%	0%	0%
Metalworking/Machines/Watches	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Nature	100%	0%	1%	0%	1%
Planning/Construction	98%	1%	5%	0%	0%
Sales/Procurement	98%	3%	2%	2%	1%
Transportation/Logistics/Security	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Business/Administration/Tourism	95%	6%	18%	0%	0%
Other	95%	5%	10%	0%	0%

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 July 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".

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

⁴ This figure was due to a new calculation method adapted retrospectively and therefore differs from the fact sheet in June.

⁵ Due to the weighting of the data, individual companies may be overrepresented in the results, thus this value should be viewed with caution.

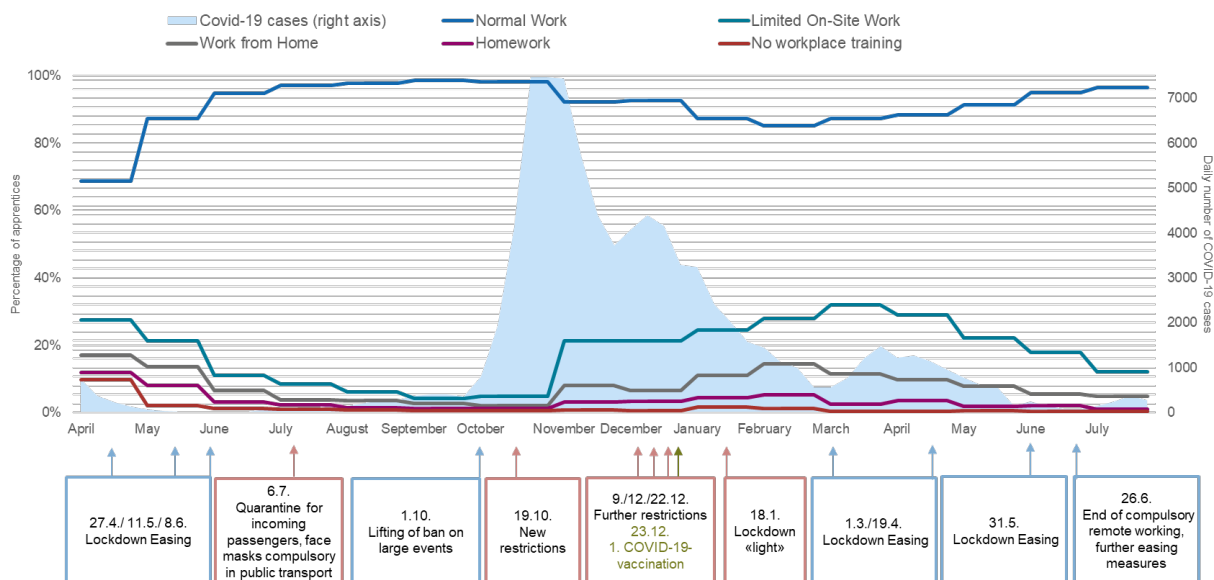


Figure 4: Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on training of apprentices over time.

Remarks: Results based on weighted data from the monthly Apprenticeship Pulse surveys from April 2020 to July 2021. On the left 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 July 2021.

The proportion of apprentices with homework was 1% in July (2% in June) and the proportion of those without any in-company training was 0.3% (same as in June). There are only slight difference across the occupational fields compared to June. In July, the proportion of apprentices without any in-company training does not exceed 1% in any occupational field.

In July, the difference between language regions is most notable in the proportion of apprentices in home office (4% in Latin Switzerland vs. 13% in German Switzerland), although these proportions were higher and very similar across language regions (18% Latin Switzerland vs. 19% German Switzerland) in June.

Figure 4 shows the development over time of these shares together with daily COVID-19 cases and FOPH measures. Thanks to the gradual easing of the partial shutdown in recent months, apprentices' situations have improved again. In July, fewer apprentices were in home office, while other training situations remained stable or slightly improved.

The share of companies that stated that all apprentices were equally affected by the COVID-19 pandemic remained constant at a high level (at 47%; 48% in June). The share of companies that believe the weaker apprentices are the most affected group slightly increased (30%;

28% in June), while lower proportion of companies believe that apprentices in their final year are the most affected group compared to June (18%; 20% in June). The proportions remained roughly the same for companies believing that the heaviest effects fall on apprentices in their first year of training (17%; 16% in June) and apprentices in the middle of their apprenticeships (6%; same as in June).

Quarantine measures

Due to the quarantine regulations to protect against COVID-19 infections, apprentices can be confronted with interruptions in their training. This concern slightly decreased in July. 4% of companies stated that they had quarantined apprentices in the four weeks before the survey from mid/end of June to mid/end of July (8% in June). 2% of companies had vocational trainers (same as in June) and 13% had other employees in the same situation (17% in June). In these companies, only a small proportion of apprentices and other employees were in quarantine (1%; 2% in June) and this value was almost zero for vocational trainers (1% in June⁶).

36% of quarantined apprentices were able to continue their training through home office (46% in June), 25% received homework (23% in June) and 57% did not receive any in-company training (42% in June).

⁶ Due to weighting and data cleaning, there may be slight deviations from the results published in the previous fact sheets.

Impact on operational and theoretical knowledge

The companies find that the practical knowledge of apprentices has tended to decrease due to the changes since the shutdown caused by the COVID-19 (to -0.23 on a scale from -2 "much poorer knowledge" to 2 "much better knowledge"), same as in May⁷). The left bar chart in Figure 5 shows that the companies surveyed attribute this change to the fact that learning content is more difficult to convey in home office (44%; 54% in May). This value has slightly decreased compared to May, and the proportion of companies attributing the loss of practical knowledge to other reasons increased (33%; 25% in May).

According to companies, apprentices' theoretical knowledge is -0.30 (on a scale from -2 "much poorer knowledge" to 2 "much better knowledge"; -0.33 in May), although a slight improvement is evident compared to the previous month. The companies attributed this to distance learning (66%; 67% in May), although this proportion remained fairly constant compared to May. In general, the reasons for poor theoretical knowledge hardly changed, but there were slight shifts in the reasons for the poor practical knowledge.

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 remainder of their apprenticeship and compares these results with the development of the COVID-19 case numbers and FOPH measures. In July, companies think that apprentices cannot fully catch up on *in-company training* (4.12 on a 5-point scale, where 5 means "can certainly be made up"; 4.09 in June), *inter-company courses* (4.12; 4.05 in June),

and *school-based training* (3.88; 3.87 in June). These figures improved slightly in July. The greatest confidence increase among apprenticeship companies was about the material covered in inter-company courses, although companies still see the most problems on catching up with the material covered in school-based training.

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

The apprentices in the last year of their apprenticeships will complete their apprenticeship in summer 2021, so they have already completed their qualification procedures (QV, final exams) and received their grades. This year's QVs were carried out normally, while the 2020 practical QVs had to be partially adjusted for 41% of the apprentices in the surveyed training companies. As in the previous year (July and August 2020), a new question was asked whether the grades of the school-based or practical QVs were different this year than before COVID-19⁸. These results are shown in Figure 7. In practical QVs, the companies stated that grades were the same as before COVID-19 for 72% of apprentices (46% in July 2020), which is a higher proportion than a year ago. However, the proportion of apprentices whose grades were better than before the pandemic was higher a year ago (5%; 26% in July 2020).

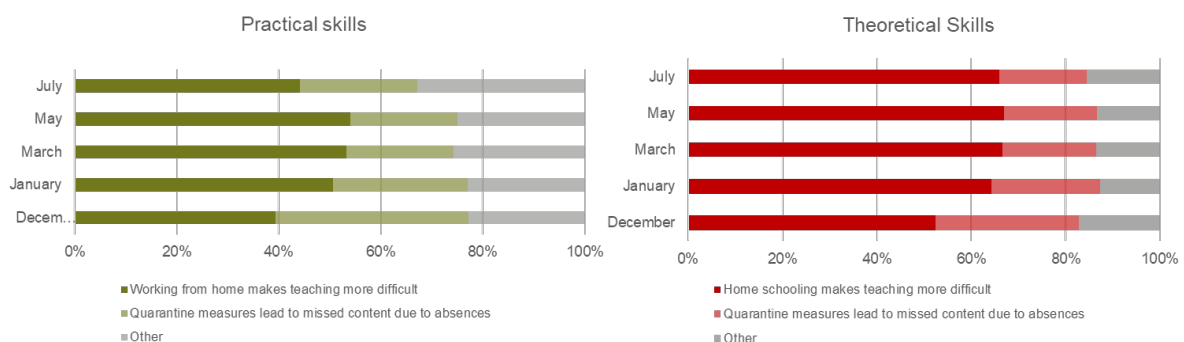


Figure 5: Reasons for the poor practical and theoretical knowledge of the apprentices.

Remarks: Results based on weighted data from the Apprenticeship Pulse surveys from December 2020 as well as January, March, May and July 2021. The graphics show the proportions of the various reasons for the COVID-related changes for each month and separately for practical and theoretical knowledge an average training company.

⁷ These questions are only asked every other month.

⁸ Last year, this question was slightly different: "Were the grades of the school/work-based part of the QV different from last year?"

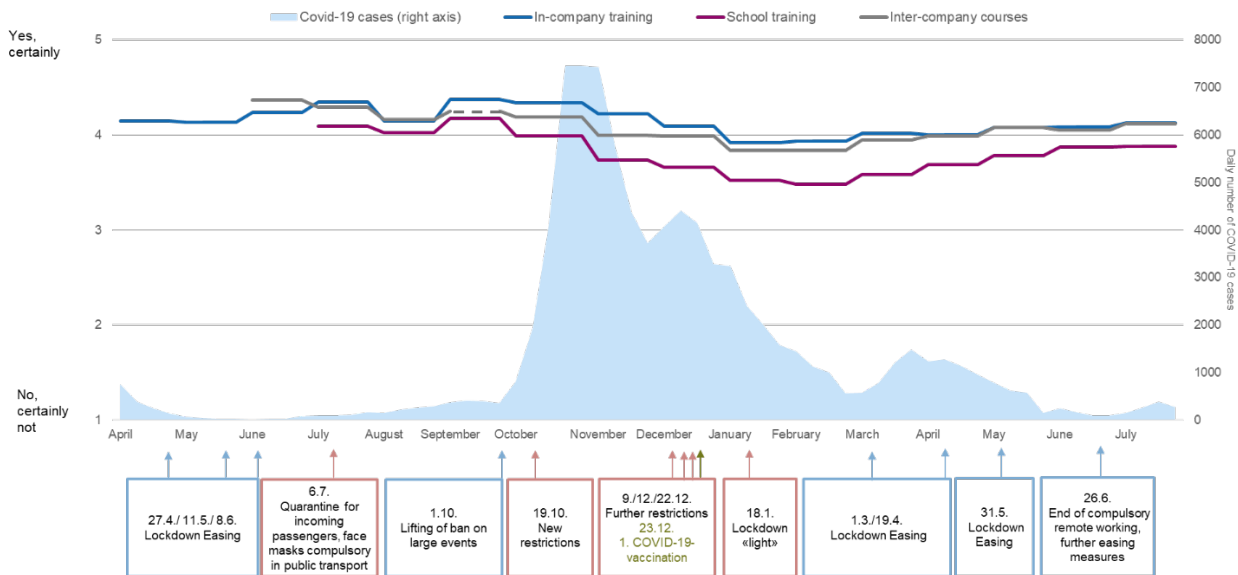


Figure 6: Catching-up on the missed material due to COVID-19 pandemic over time.

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

The proportion of apprentices for whom the companies do not know how grades were affected was also higher in 2020 (16%; 23% in July 2020). According to the companies, slightly more apprentices had worse grades than before COVID-19 (8%; 5% in July 2020). For the school-based QV, the proportion of apprentices with unchanged grades in July 2020 was also lower than in July 2021 (42% vs. 65%) and more apprentices also had better grades compared to before COVID-19 (28% vs. 5%). However, a higher proportion of apprentices had lower grades on the school-based QV compared with the practical QV in July 2021 than before the pandemic (15%; 6% in July 2020).

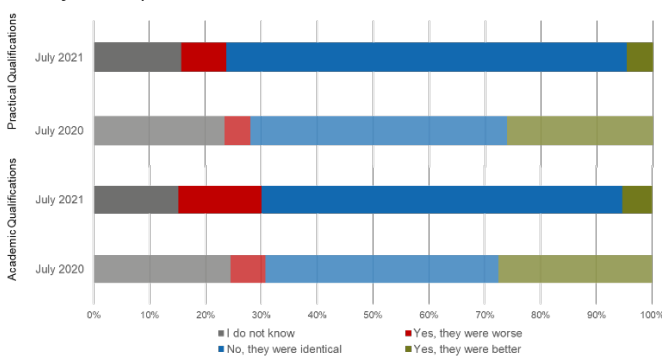


Figure 7: Final grades of the practical and academic part of the QV.

Remarks: Results based on weighted data from the Apprenticeship Pulse surveys in July 2020 and 2021. The graph shows the values for an average apprentice.

68% of companies stated that they will keep the same number of apprentices after graduation as before COVID-19 (63% in June). 11% of companies will employ more apprentices (10% in June), while 5% will keep fewer (as

in June). In July 2020, a significantly higher proportion of companies stated that they will not change their employment practices (80%), but the uncertainty about employment practices was slightly lower at the time.

Many training companies still believe that the job search this year is more difficult than before COVID-19 (42%; 48% in June), although the situation has improved slightly compared to June. 37% think the situation is comparable (35% in June), 17% do not know (13% in June) and slightly more companies predict an easier entry into the labor market (5%; 3% in June). The assessments are similar to those in July 2020, although the uncertainty was greater at that time (29%) and fewer companies found the situation comparable to before the pandemic (25%).

58% of apprentices received support from their training companies to facilitate their entry into the labor market (as in June). 65% received support with their applications (62% in June), a slight increase compared to June. Last year, this type of support also slightly increased in July (65%; 61% in June 2020). Other types of support were a transitional solution of 3-12 months' employment in their training companies (55%), advice on further education and training opportunities (43%), a job offer within the company or internal labor market (28%), a job placement within the industry (24%), and a job placement abroad with partner companies (2%).

Effects on training companies and apprentices

The surveyed companies and their apprentices were also affected to varying degrees by the COVID-19 pandemic in July. However, there are only minor changes compared to the previous months. Figure 8 shows that 94% of companies were working normally with FOPH protective measures (same as in June). The proportion of companies with staff on short-time work (9%; 10% in June) and with staff including apprentices on short-time work (4%;

same as in June) have remained constant, although protective measures that particularly affect apprentices slightly decreased (7%; 11% in June). In addition, the proportion of companies with temporary closure orders or risk of bankruptcy is still at a low level at 1% or less (0% in June). Compared to the previous year, the situation of the training companies has significantly improved, and only slight changes have been evident during the past few months.

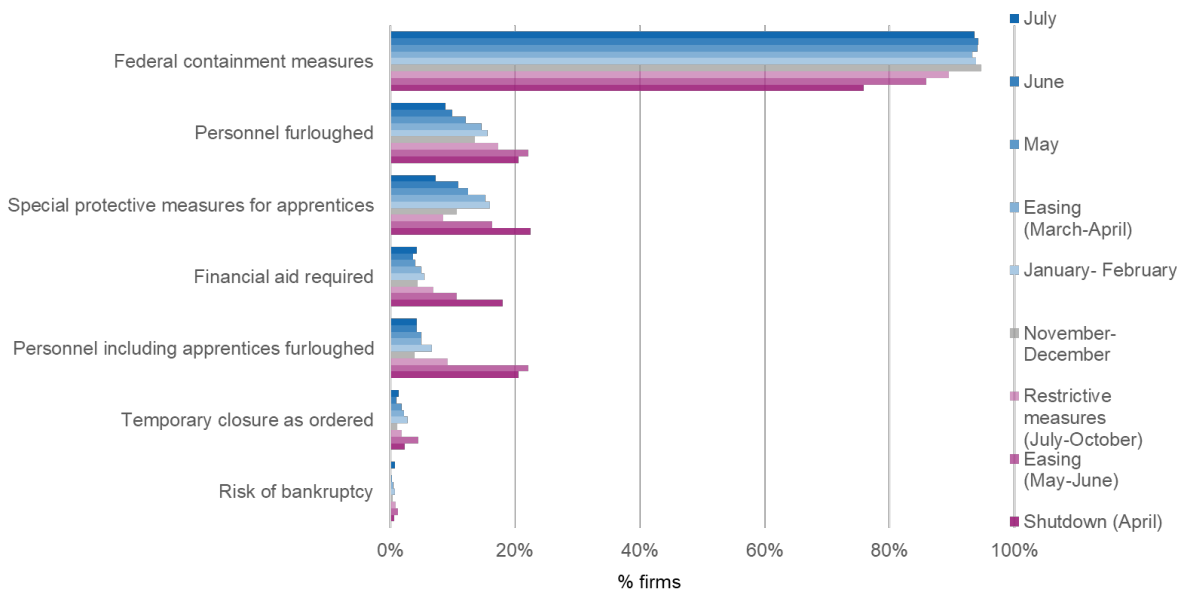


Figure 8: Training companies and their apprentices affected by the COVID-19 pandemic

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

Data and Representativeness

The Apprenticeship Pulse survey in July 2021 includes 1,818 training companies (1,888 in June) of various sizes from all cantons and occupational fields. The questions were answered by people with different functions in their respective training companies, with vocational trainers, HR specialists, and managers all represented. Since a total of 44,660 training companies were contacted for the survey, the Apprenticeship Pulse achieved a response rate of 4.07% in July (4.23% in June). However, the calculation of the response rate is not exact because the survey was not only sent directly to these companies, but was also disseminated using other channels.

The training companies who responded offer 14,686 apprenticeship positions (14,193⁹ in June) in a wide variety of regions and occupational fields. They also cover a total of 1.99% of all training companies in Switzerland (2.00% in June). The coverage in German-speaking Switzerland (2.45%; 2.55% in June) is better than in Latin-speaking

Switzerland (0.54%; 0.61% in June). There are also major differences across occupational fields. In July, "Information Technology" (5.08%), "Electrical engineering" (4.58%), "Planning/Construction" (4.14%) and "Transportation/Logistics/Safety" (4.07) are covered the best, while "Sales/Purchasing" (1.79%), "Vehicles" (1.69%) and "Nature" (1.59%) tend to be underrepresented. Large companies were also more likely to be overrepresented than SMEs.

The weighting procedure¹⁰ corrects for differences in representativeness by company size, language region, and occupational field.

⁹ 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 the fluctuations in the number of apprentices.

¹⁰ 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.

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