




# Apprenticeship Pulse Results September 2021

## Other Publication

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## Apprenticeship Pulse – Factsheet

# Apprenticeship Pulse Results September 2021

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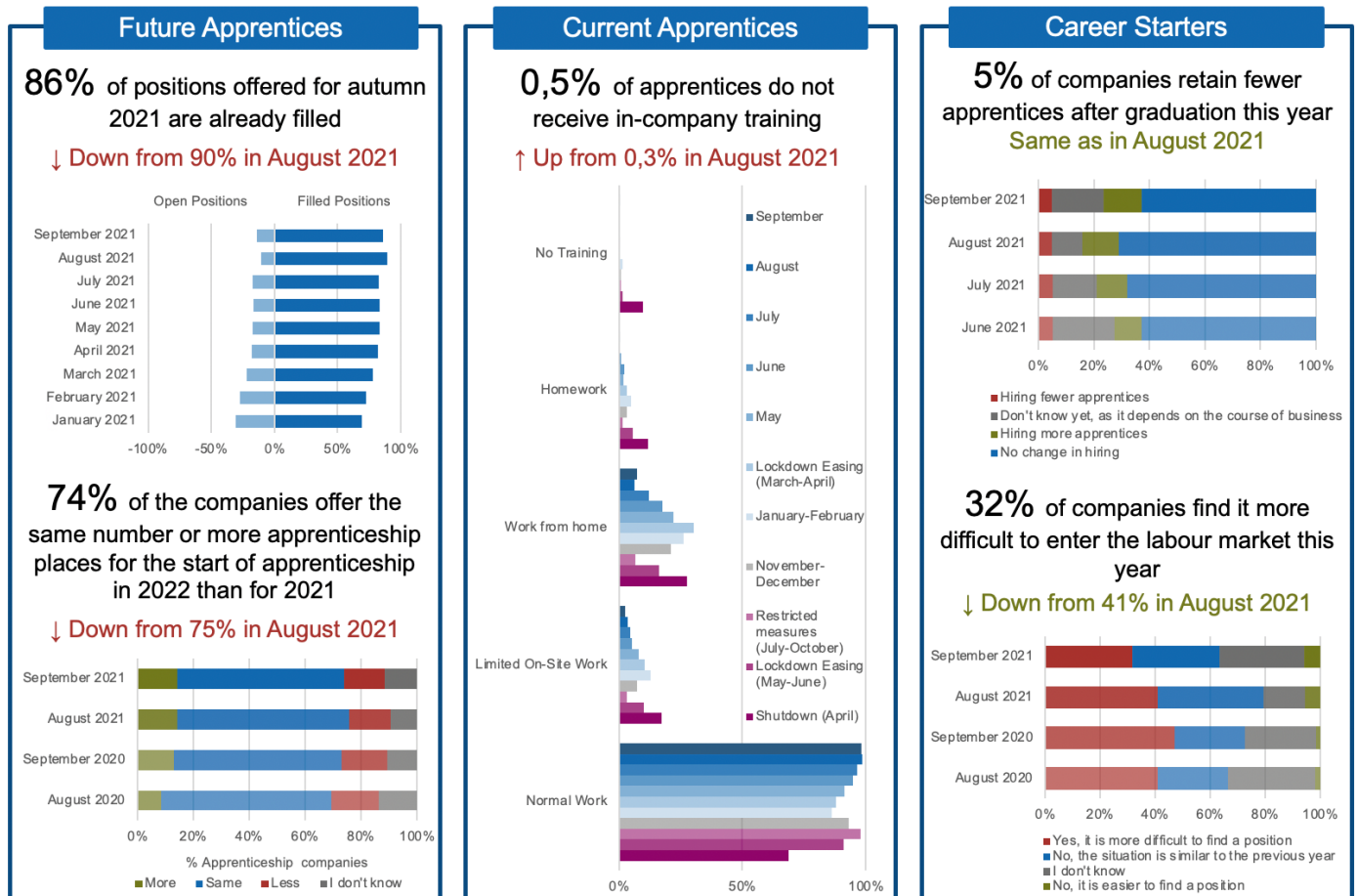
The Apprenticeship Pulse has been surveying the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on basic dual vocational education and training (VET) in Switzerland monthly since April 2020. The first survey covered the situation during the shutdown, which was gradually relaxed in the following months. After summer 2020 with relatively low case numbers and limited measures, a second wave in October 2020 was followed by a renewed tightening of 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. Stores selling non-daily goods were closed and a home office requirement was introduced. However, schools and service providers could remain open. These measures lasted until February 28 and were 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 obligation 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. On September 13, the certificate requirement was extended to many indoor areas: Restaurants, bars, museums, libraries, fitness centers, sports facilities, zoos or even theaters and cinemas.

This fact sheet shows the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on apprenticeships and vocational in **September 2021**, reporting on the following three groups of young people: future apprentices, current apprentices, and career starters. The results are compared with those of the previous month (August 2021) and with those of the previous year (September 2020).

## The Pulse of Apprentices in September 2021 – Main Points



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

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

**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 September, 74% (75% in August) of the companies reported that they were offering the same number or more apprenticeships for the start of the apprenticeship in 2022 compared to 2021. Here, the proportion of apprenticeship firms planning to offer the same number of places (60%; 61% in August), fewer places (15%; same as in August) and more places (14%; same as in August) was similar to that in August. At 12%, slightly more establishments were uncertain about offering jobs (9% in August). In a year-on-year comparison, these proportions were also similar, with 73% of training companies then wanting to offer the same number or more places for 2021 relative to 2020 in September 2020. This was a slightly higher proportion than in

2020 (69%). Uncertainty about job assignments for 2021 was also similar in September 2020 (11%) to that in September of this year (for 2022) and slightly lower than in August 2020 (14%).

Since the beginning of this year, the Apprenticeship Pulse has been surveying the proportion of open or already filled apprenticeship positions for the cohort starting in 2021, with companies still recruiting apprentices in some cases until October. According to the companies, in September, 86%<sup>1</sup> of the apprenticeship positions offered for the beginning of the year 2021 were filled (90% in August)<sup>2</sup>, while 14% (10% in August) were still open. It should be noted, however, that these figures do not consider differences in the number of apprenticeship positions offered at the time of the survey.

<sup>1</sup> Since companies in September were still offering positions for apprenticeship starts in 2021 as well as already offering positions for apprenticeship starts in 2022, this fact must be considered when interpreting this figure.

<sup>2</sup> The Apprenticeship Pulse analyses 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 the completed apprenticeship contracts recorded by the Task Force Perspektive Berufsllehre (see <https://taskforce2020.ch/de/monitoring>).

**Current apprentices (Group 2)** are restricted in their apprenticeship activities due to the COVID 19 pandemic. In September 2021, 0.5% did not receive any on-the-job training, which is a marginal increase compared to the previous month (0.3% in August). As before, 98% worked with applications of the BAG protective measures (the same as in August). With 2%, a slightly lower percentage of apprentices were used limited on-site (4% in August), a similarly high percentage received homework for the operational part (1%; almost 0% in August) and 7% of apprentices were in the home office (6% in August). This percentage has remained stable compared to the previous month, although it had decreased during the summer months and amounted to 18% in June.<sup>3</sup>

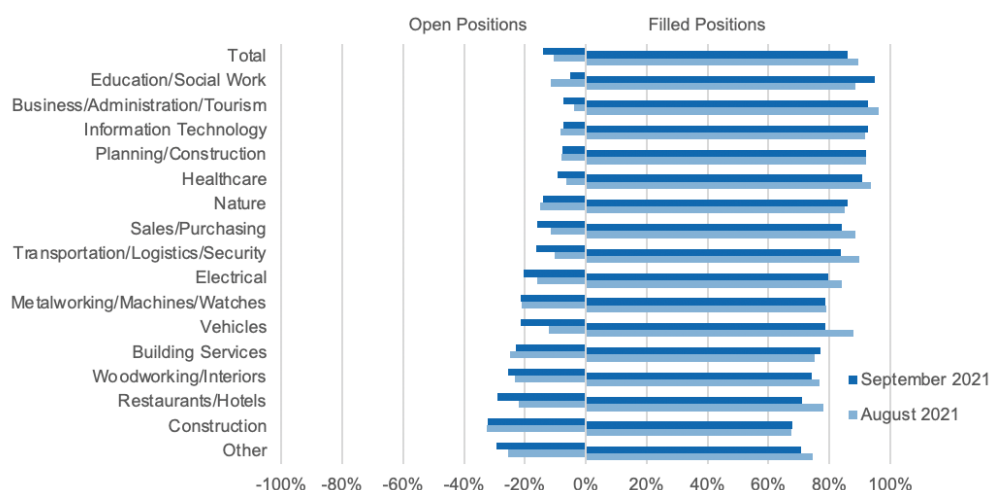
Thus, the situation of apprentices has remained similar compared to the previous month - this is also reflected in the individual occupational fields: compared to August, the proportion of apprentices in the home office remained similarly high in the occupational fields in which, on average, most work is done from home. In the occupational field "Information technology", for example, this proportion was 32% (31% in August) and in "Business, administration, tourism", 13% (the same as in August) also worked from home.

### Career Starters (Group 3)

Some vocational trainees are retained in the company after graduation. Some of these companies plan to maintain their retention practices, while others are changing them compared to before the COVID pandemic. In September,

a similar number of companies as in August wanted to change their continued employment practices, with 5% fewer (the same as in August) and 14% more (13% in August) apprenticeship leavers than before COVID. However, compared to the previous month, 63% (71% in August) fewer companies said they wanted to retain the same number of apprentices. At the same time, uncertainty increased, with nearly one-fifth of training companies being uncertain about their continued employment practices (19%; 11% in August).

After the share of establishments that considered job entry to be more difficult compared to before COVID-19 was always higher than 40% over the summer months (41% in August), this share decreased to 32% in September 2021. Thus, establishments were less pessimistic about the job search of entry-level workers last month. At 6%, the same number of establishments predicted an easier entry into the labour market as in the previous month, although the share of establishments that considered the situation comparable to before COVID-19 was slightly lower (31%; 38% in August). However, uncertainty increased sharply relative to the previous month, with 31% (15% in August) of establishments unsure how the situation on the labour market for entrants to the labour market compared with before COVID-19. In the previous year, the proportion of companies that considered it more difficult for apprenticeship graduates to find a job was higher at 47%.



**Figure 2: Open and filled apprenticeship positions by occupational field and in comparison with the previous year**

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

<sup>3</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 the practical training in the same way, i.e., the companies could select several answers.

## Detailed Results

### Apprentices starting in 2021 (Group 1)

In September, 74% of the apprenticeship companies said they planned to offer the same number of or more apprenticeship positions for the start of apprenticeships in 2022 compared with 2021, with this proportion being similar to that in August (75%). In other respects, too, the forecasts were like those of the previous month: 14% (the same as in August) wanted to offer more places, 60% (61% in August) the same number, 15% (the same as in August) fewer and 12% (9% August) were still unsure about the number of places they would offer for 2022. In the previous year, the distribution of responses was also similar: 13% said they would offer more places for the start of apprenticeships in 2021 compared to 2020, 60% wanted to offer the same number, 16% fewer and 11% did not yet know. At that time, optimism had increased slightly between August and September 2020, with 69% of companies still wanting to allocate the same number or more places for 2021 compared to 2020. Differences between the language regions were particularly apparent in terms of uncertainty: while 10% of companies in German-speaking Switzerland did not yet know how many jobs they intended to offer in 2022 compared with 2021, this was the case for 24% in Latin Switzerland<sup>4</sup>. In addition, the proportion of German-speaking Swiss companies planning to offer the same number of jobs, or more was also higher in September at 75% (62% in Latin Switzerland).

Normally, apprentices start their apprenticeship in the summer, but companies can continue to recruit apprentices until October. In September, 10% of apprenticeship companies took advantage of this opportunity, which was a slightly lower proportion compared to the previous year (12% in September 2020). In addition, 6% (5% in August) of companies reported offering additional positions for apprentices who would not find an apprenticeship because of COVID-19, with a company offering slightly fewer such positions on average than in the previous month (1.28; 1.45 in August).

Overall, 86% of the positions offered for the fall were filled in September according to the companies (90% in August), with slightly higher coverage in German-speaking Switzerland (86%) than in Latin Switzerland (78%). Figure 2 shows the breakdown of filled positions by occupational field. The occupational field "education, social services" occupied the top position in September with 95% (89% in August). High percentages of occupied positions were also observed in the occupational fields of "Economy, administration, tourism" (93%), "Information technology" (93%), "Planning, construction" (92%) and "Health" (91%). The occupational groups "Construction" (68%) and "Hospitality" (71%) were in the lower rank.

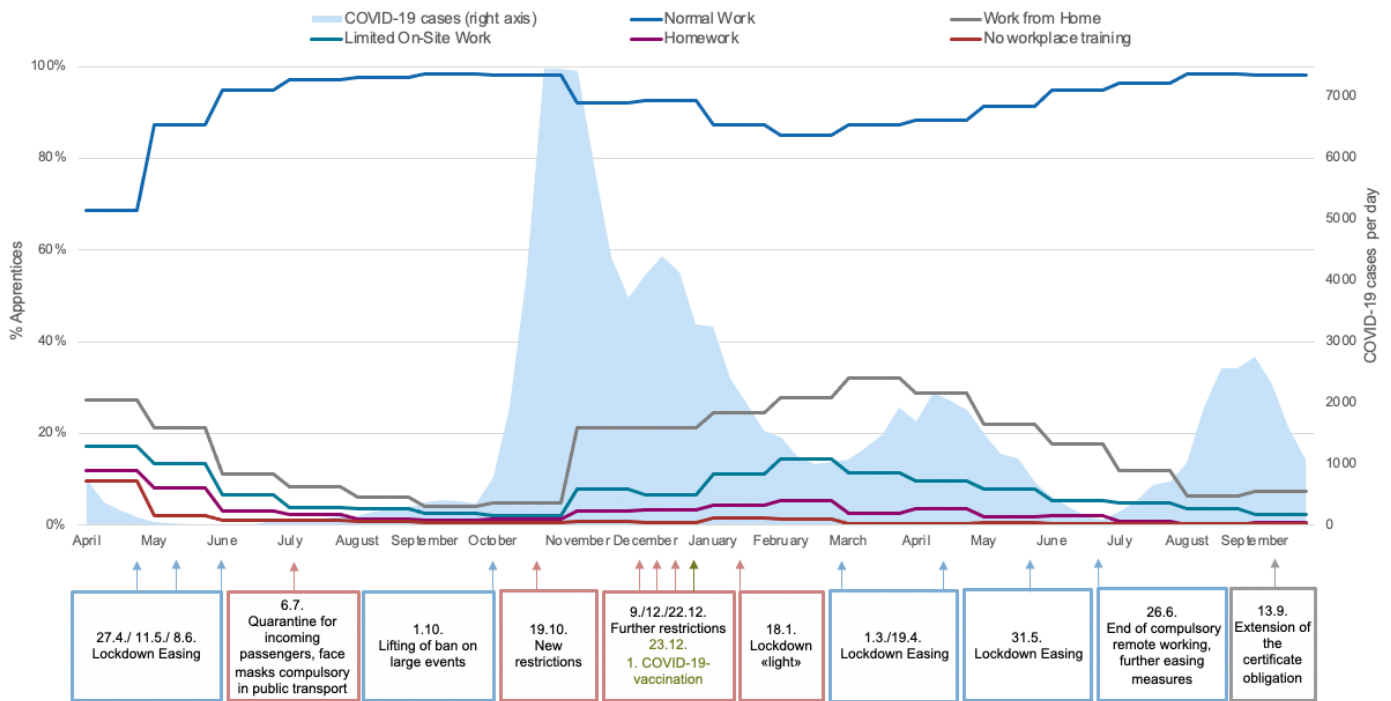
	Apprentices at work		Apprentices at home		
	Normal Work	Limited On-Site Work	Work from Home	Homework	No workplace training
<b>Total</b>	<b>98%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>0.5%</b>
Building	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Education/Social Work	100%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Electrical	100%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Vehicles	99%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Hospitality	99%	2%	1%	0%	1%
Building Services	100%	1%	1%	0%	0%
Healthcare	100%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Woodworking/Interiors	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Information Technology	91%	11%	32%	0%	0%
Metalworking/Machines/Watches	99%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Nature	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Planning/Construction	99%	1%	7%	0%	0%
Sales/Procurement	98%	4%	5%	0%	0%
Transportation/Logistics/Security	99%	1%	0%	1%	1%
Business/Administration/Tourism	97%	4%	13%	1%	0%
Other	93%	5%	5%	0%	2%

**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 September 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>4</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 September 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 September 2021.

## Current Apprentices (Group 2)

Figure 3 shows the impact of the pandemic on the in-company training of vocational trainees overall and in the individual occupational fields. The situation in September was similar to that of the previous month: 98% (the same as in August) of apprentices worked normally in the company (with protective measures from the FOPH), 2% (4% in August) were deployed on site on a limited basis, 7% (6% in August) worked in the home office, 1% (almost 0% in August) of apprentices received homework for the company part and 0.5% (0.3% in August) were not trained in the company at all. After the percentage of apprentices in the home office had decreased over the summer months, this percentage remained similar in September as in August. This observation is also reflected in the individual occupational fields: About one-third of apprentices in the occupational field "Information Technology" were in a home office (32%; 31% in August) and in "Business, Administration, Tourism" 13% (the same as in August) were still working from home in September.

As in the previous month, differences between the language regions were most evident in the home office, with this share of apprentices at 8% in German-speaking Switzerland and 4% in Latin Switzerland. Figure 4 shows the evolution over time of learner activities overall, together with the daily COVID-19 caseload and measures. Thanks to the gradual relaxations, the proportion of learners in

home offices was reduced between May and August. The situation otherwise remained stable.

Who was most affected by the pandemic? As in August, most companies felt that all apprentices were equally affected by COVID-19 (48%; 53% in August). A slightly smaller proportion of training companies stated that weaker apprentices were most affected (29%; 26% in August), although this proportion increased slightly compared to the previous month. Furthermore, similar to August, 16% of the companies named apprentices in their 1st year of apprenticeship, 6% apprentices in the middle of their apprenticeship and 15% apprentices in their final year.

## Quarantine measures

Due to the quarantine regulations to protect against COVID-19 infections, the training of apprentices is temporarily interrupted. The level of concern among establishments due to such outages increased in September. 17% (9% in August) reported that they had quarantined apprentices during the four weeks prior to the survey - i.e., from mid/late August to mid/late September. Vocational trainers were quarantined in 4% (2% in August) of the companies and other employees in 31% (18% in August). Thus, the percentage of companies with apprentices and other employees in quarantine has not been this high since February 2021. The share of people in quarantine

has also slightly increased in these establishments: 4% (1% in August) of apprentices, 1% (almost 0% in August) of trainers and 3% (2% in August) of other employees were in quarantine on average. In isolation, more than half of the apprentices received no on-the-job training (54%; 48% in August), slightly fewer than in the previous month worked in a home office (41%; 46% in August) and 23% (16% in August) received homework for the on-the-job part while in quarantine.

### Impact on practical and theoretical knowledge

Also in September, the companies believed that the practical knowledge of the trainees had rather deteriorated due to the changes by COVID-19, although they were slightly more optimistic than in July.<sup>5</sup> (-0.19 on a scale from -2 "much worse knowledge" to 2 "much better knowledge"; -0.23 in July). The left-hand side of Figure 5 shows the reasons for these changes, with training companies attributing poorer knowledge most to the fact that home offices make it more difficult to teach learning content (51%; 44% in July). Slightly more companies than in July also blamed quarantine measures for the loss of company knowledge (26%; 23% in July), with 23% seeing other reasons (33% in July). Establishments also indicated that theoretical knowledge had declined somewhat since the shutdown due to COVID-19, with this theoretical knowledge loss estimated to be slightly greater than the loss of operational knowledge, as in July (-0.30 on a scale of -2 "much worse knowledge" to 2 "much better knowledge"; same as in July). The right side of figure 5 shows that 62% (66% in July) of the establishments attributed the change in theoretical knowledge to the fact that learning content was more difficult to convey through distance learning, whereby this proportion was higher than for practical knowledge. 23% (18% in July) of the establishments cited quarantine measures as the source of

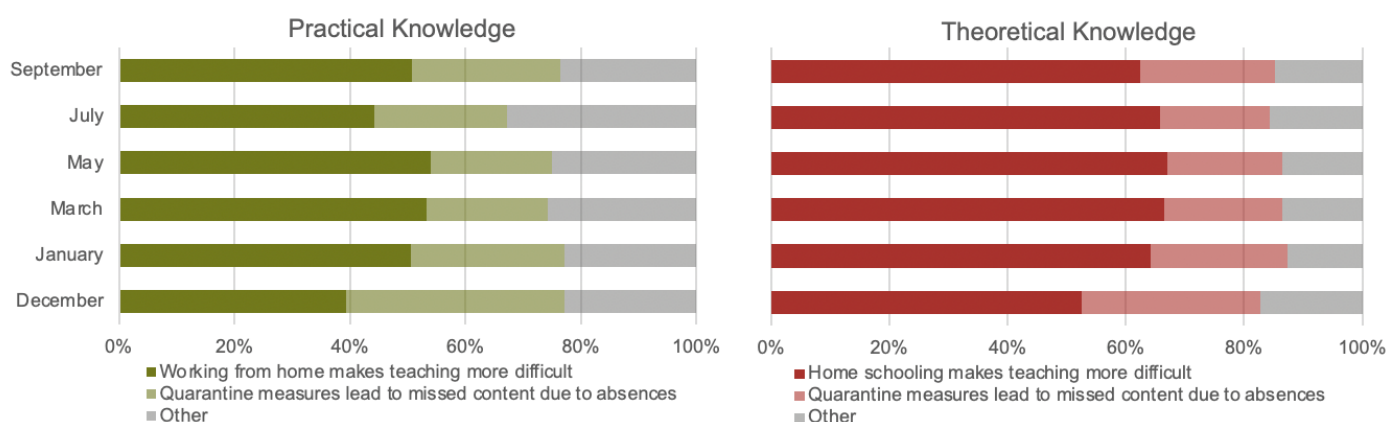
the loss of theoretical knowledge and 15% (16% in July) saw other reasons.

### Catching up on missed material

Did the COVID-19 pandemic have an impact on apprentices' skill acquisition? Figure 6 shows the results of this question and compares the results with trends in COVID-19 case rates and measures over time. In September, the training companies were again of the opinion that the apprentices would not be able to fully make up for the material they had missed in company-based training (4.21 on a 5-point scale, where 5 means "can certainly be made up"; 4.24 in August), school-based training (3.94; 4.00 in August) and inter-company courses (4.17; 4.19 in August). The companies were somewhat less optimistic in their assessment than in the previous month. However, the values have remained at a similar level since the start of the survey and are subject to only minor fluctuations.

### Career starters (Group 3)

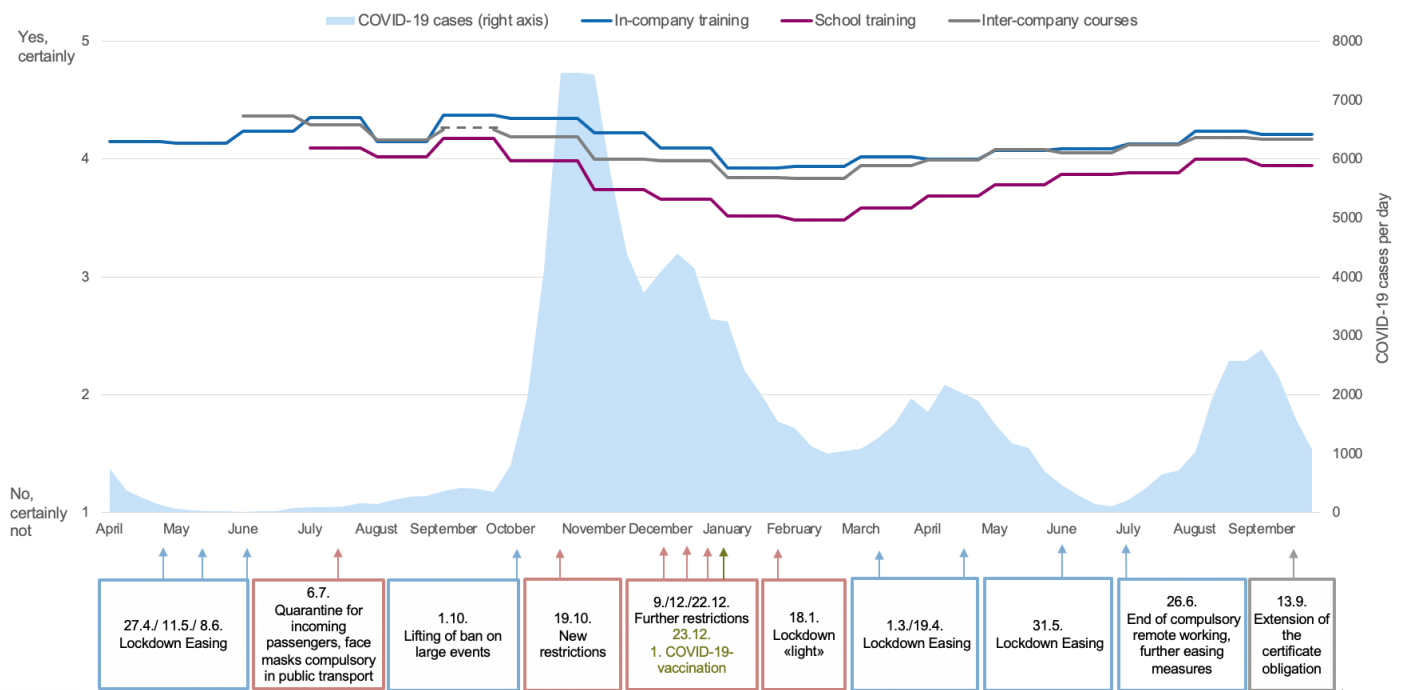
When asked whether training companies are changing their continued employment practices compared to before COVID-19, slightly fewer (63%; 71% in August) said they would retain the same number of apprentices after graduation as in the previous month. Uncertainty also increased slightly from the previous month, with 19% (11% in August) not knowing how they planned to conduct their post-employment practice. A total of 19% (18% in August) of apprenticeship companies wanted to make a change, which was a similar proportion to the previous month. At the same time, 5% (the same as in August) wanted to retain fewer and 14% (13% in August) more apprenticeship graduates.



**Figure 5: Reasons for apprentices' poorer operational and theoretical knowledge.**

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

<sup>5</sup> These questions are only asked every second month.



**Figure 6: Catch-up over time of material missed due to COVID-19 pandemic.**

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

The figure shows on the left vertical axis whether the companies think that the apprentices cannot (1) or definitely (5) still catch up with the material. The right vertical axis shows the number of COVID-19 cases per day (weekly average) from April 2020 to September 2021.

To facilitate their entry into the labour market, slightly more than half (56%; 57% in August) of job entrants received support from companies. In this context, 61% (67% in August) received support with their job application, with a slight decrease compared to the previous month. 56% (same as in August) received a transitional solution of 3-12 months within the company or advice on training and continuing education opportunities 46% (47% in August). At 31% (25% in August), a slightly higher proportion of apprentices received a job offer in their own company or internal labour market compared to the previous month, 23% (26% in August) received a job placement within the industry and for 1% (same as in August) of apprentices a job abroad was placed with partner companies.

After more than 40% of the companies assessed the job search during the summer months as more difficult this year compared to before COVID-19, the companies were less pessimistic in September regarding job entry. However, 32% (41% in August) of the companies still said that it was more difficult for job entrants to find a job this year. 31% (38% in August) assessed the situation as comparable and 6% (the same as in August) predicted an easier entry into the job market compared to before COVID-19. However, uncertainty increased compared to the previous month, with 31% (15% in August) of the companies assessing the situation of job entrants on the job market as uncertain.

market as uncertain. Compared to the previous year (September 2020), the proportion of companies that considered it more difficult for apprenticeship leavers to find a job was higher at 47%, while forecasts for an easier entry into the labour market were also slightly less common at 2%.

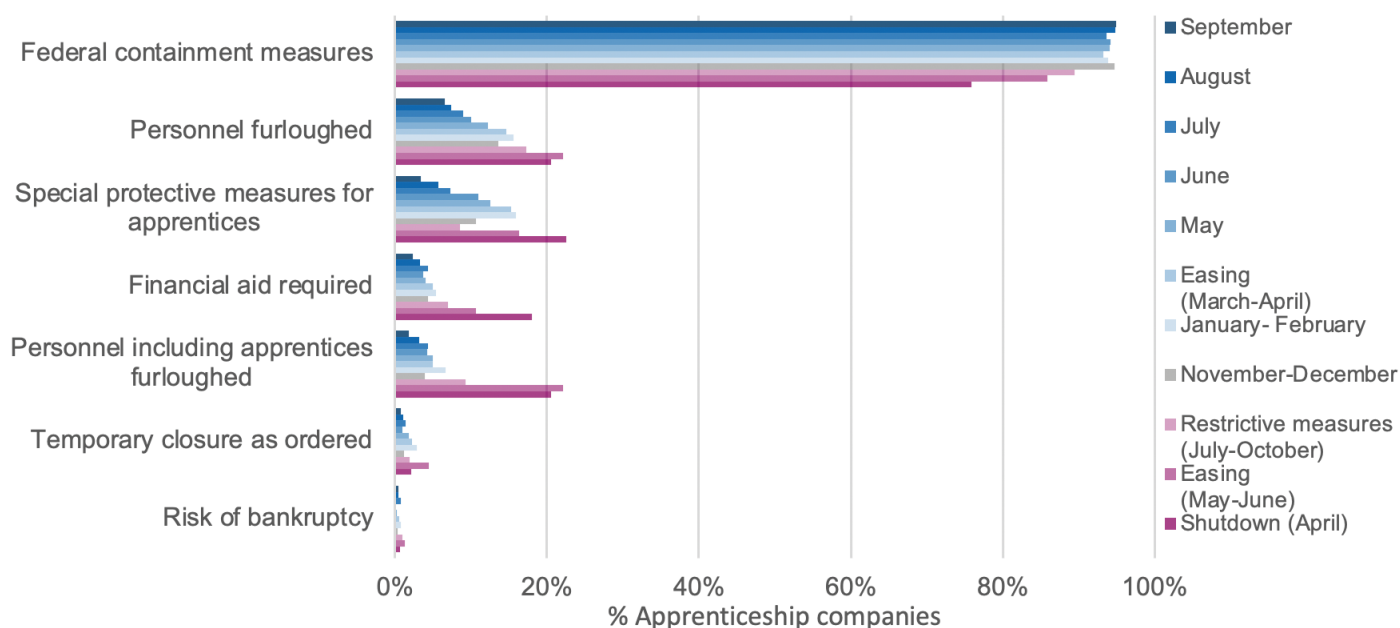
Overall, 33% (36% in September 2020) of companies hired apprenticeship leavers who had completed their apprenticeship in the summer, a slight decrease compared to the previous year. Of these apprentices, 89% (96% in September 2020) completed their apprenticeship in their own company (11% were trained in another company). This proportion was slightly lower than last year, although there were also differences in the workload of those entering the profession compared to the previous year: While in September 83% of apprenticeship graduates worked full-time (80-100%) and 17% part-time in these companies, the proportion of full-time workers in September 2020 was slightly higher at 89% (11% part-time). At the same time, 85% (82% in September 2020) of these part-time employees completed further education, while 15% (18% in September 2020) did not. At 42% (43% in September 2020), a similar number of entry-level employees were hired on a temporary basis as in the previous year, while 58% (57% in September 2020) were hired on a permanent basis.



## Effects on training companies and apprentices

Figure 7 shows that the number of training companies affected by the COVID 19 pandemic has changed only slightly compared to the previous month and has remained stable for some time. Thus, in August, 95% of the training companies were working with protective measures according to the FOPH and with 3% (6% in August) slightly fewer companies were working with protective measures that particularly affect the apprentices

compared to the previous month. 7% (same as in August) of the companies had staff on short-time work and 2% (3% in August) had staff including apprentices on short-time work. A still small proportion of companies were dependent on financial assistance (2%; 3% in August) or had to temporarily close their operations (1%; same as in August). As in the previous month, the proportion of businesses facing the threat of closure was also almost zero.



**Figure 7: 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 September 2021. The graph shows the proportion of training companies affected (in %) of all training companies surveyed per impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Data and Representativeness

The Apprenticeship Pulse survey in September 2021 includes 2'301 training companies (1'617 in August) of various sizes from all cantons and professional 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 5,15% (3,62% in August). 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 surveyed offer 18'182 apprenticeship positions (13'988<sup>6</sup> in August) in a wide variety of regions and occupational fields of all training companies

in Switzerland. Coverage was better in German-speaking Switzerland (3.14%; 2.22% in August) than in Latin Switzerland (0.67%; 0.34% in August). There are also differences in the occupational fields: "Information technology" (6.15%), "Electrical engineering" (5.62%) and "Planning, construction" (5.29%) were best covered in September, while "Nature" (1.76%) and "Sales, purchasing" (1.84%) were rather unrepresented. Also, the cantons of Basel-Stadt, Appenzell Innerrhoden and Schwyz as well as large companies tended to be overrepresented compared to SMEs.

The weighting procedure used<sup>7</sup> corrects for differences in representativeness according to company size, language region and occupational field.

<sup>6</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 to compensate for fluctuations in the number of apprentices in the meantime.

<sup>7</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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