

Apprenticeship Pulse Results October 2021

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The "Apprenticeship Pulse" has been monitoring the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on basic vocational training in Switzerland every month since April 2020. The first survey reflected the situation during the containment, which then gradually eased. After a summer with a relatively low number of cases and reduced measures, the second wave in October led to a further strengthening of measures (including the recommendation to work at home). Restaurants, bars and cultural, leisure and sports businesses were forced to close. Hygiene and behavioral rules were required to continue teaching in vocational schools, and only a few cantons switched to distance learning for the time being.

In January 2021, a partial lockdown forced many stores that did not sell non-essential goods to close. Telecommuting became mandatory. Schools, however, remained open. These measures were then gradually relaxed: on 1 March, shops were allowed to reopen; on 19 April, restaurants and bars were allowed to open their doors to customers, and cultural and leisure businesses and sports facilities resumed their activities. On May 31, the obligation to telework was relaxed, large events were allowed again, and restaurants were able to welcome guests indoors; on June 26, the obligation to wear

masks outdoors was lifted, teleworking became a recommendation and the Covid certificate was mandatory for discotheques and large events. After a new increase in cases of contamination, the certificate became compulsory on September 13 in indoor areas of restaurants, bars, museums, libraries, fitness and sports centers, zoos, theaters and cinemas. Since September 20, travelers to Switzerland must be tested and since October 11, testing is not free of charge for people over 16 years old.

This fact sheet provides an overview of the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on training companies and apprentices in **October 2021**. Three groups of young people are examined: future apprentices, current apprentices and career starters. In particular, the results are compared with those of the previous month (September 2021) and the year before (October 2020). All results are weighted so that they are representative of the training companies and apprentices in Switzerland.

The Pulse of Apprentices in October 2021 – Main Points

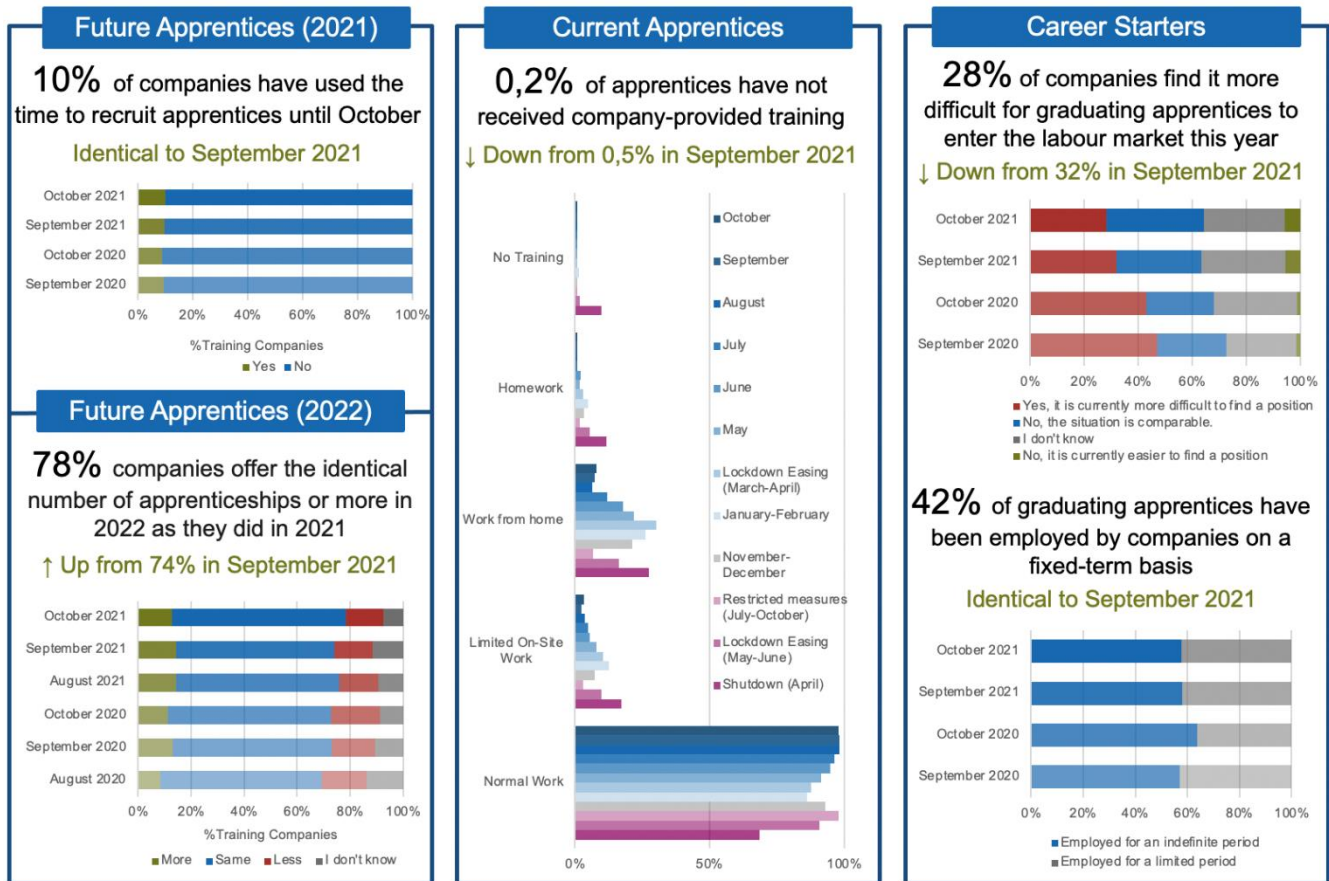


Figure 1: The headlines on Apprenticeship Pulse in October 2021.

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

In the German-speaking part of Switzerland, **future apprentices (group 1)** start the application procedure one year before the start of their training. In the French-speaking part of Switzerland, this process only begins in Spring. This group includes apprentices who started their apprenticeship in 2021 and those who will start this process in the summer of 2022. Normally, apprenticeships start during the summer months. However, companies can still use the period until October to recruit more apprentices. In October, 10% of companies made use of this possibility (as many as in September). This share is like that of last year. In October 2020, 9% of companies were still recruiting their apprentices in Fall for the start of the 2020 apprenticeships.

For young people willing to start their apprenticeship in 2022, the outlook is slightly better than that of last month: 78% (74% in September) of the companies surveyed indicate that they will offer the same or more apprenticeship positions in 2022 than in 2021. A slightly higher percentage, 65% (September: 60%), would like to offer the same number of apprenticeship positions. At the same time, uncertainty has declined somewhat from the previous month (7%; 12% in September). As in the previous month, 13% (14% in September) want to offer more apprenticeship positions and 14% (15% in September) want to offer fewer

positions in 2022 than in 2021. In October 2020, companies were slightly more pessimistic than in 2019 about their expectations for the coming year (i.e., 2021): 18% wanted to offer fewer apprenticeship positions and 11% more in 2021, a higher score than in 2020 in the first case and a lower score in the second.

Apprentices in training (group 2) were still partly restricted in their activities in October, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Compared to the previous month, the picture that emerges has changed little: 0.2% (0.5% in September) of the apprentices did not receive any in-company training, which is a marginal decrease compared to September. As in September, 98% of the apprentices worked according to the protective measures of the FOPH, 3% were present at their workplace to a limited extent (2% in September) and the share of apprentices who received homework for the practical part of their training was close to zero (1% in September). The share of apprentices who teleworked also remained similar, with 8% (7% in September) working from home. This share has increased minimally (6%) since August, while it had decreased sharply during the summer months.¹

¹ 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.

The situation of the apprentices is therefore at a similar level as in the last two months, especially in teleworking, where there is less change, both in general and in the different professional categories: in the category "IT", 30% of the apprentices were still teleworking in October, a rate which was 12% in the category "Economy, administration, tourism".

Career starters (group 3) finished their apprenticeship this summer and are now entering the job market. Not all of them are able to take the plunge easily. According to the companies, however, the situation has improved compared to previous months: in October, only 28% of them thought that it was more difficult for young people to enter the labor market this year than before the pandemic.

Compared to September (32%) and August (41%), companies are significantly more optimistic. 36% (31% in September) of companies consider the situation to be comparable, 6% (the

same as in September) expect an easier entry into the labor market compared to the pre-pandemic period and 30% (31% in September) are still uncertain. The previous year, companies were much less optimistic. In October 2020, only 43% thought that young professionals would have a harder time finding a job than before Covid-19.

Some companies are hiring apprentices who completed their apprenticeship in the summer, but on varying terms. In particular, companies were asked whether they offered limited or unlimited duration contracts. The results show that in October, 42% (the same as in September) of the young professionals are employed for a limited period, while 58% have a permanent contract. In October 2020, the share of apprentices with a limited duration contract was even higher (64%).

	Apprentices at work		Apprentices at home		
	Normal Work	Limited On-Site Work	Work from Home	Homework	No workplace training
Total	98%	3%	8%	0%	0.2%
Construction	99%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Education/Social Work	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Electrical	100%	1%	2%	0%	1%
Vehicles	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Hospitality	99%	0%	0%	1%	1%
Building Services	100%	1%	1%	0%	0%
Healthcare	100%	1%	1%	0%	0%
Woodworking/Interiors	100%	1%	0%	1%	0%
Information Technology	93%	6%	30%	1%	1%
Metalworking/Machines/Watches	99%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Planning/Construction	97%	2%	6%	0%	2%
Sales/Procurement	99%	2%	1%	0%	0%
Transportation/Logistics/Security	99%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Business/Administration/Tourism	98%	3%	12%	0%	0%
Other	99%	2%	3%	0%	0%

Figure 2: Effects of the coronavirus pandemic on apprenticeship training by occupational category.

Remarks: The results are based on weighted data from the October 2021 "Apprenticeship Pulse" survey. The table shows the share (%) of apprentices in all surveyed training companies in the respective occupational category by measure and occupational category (multiple answers possible); occupational categories with fewer than 50 training companies are grouped under "Other".

Detailed Results

Future apprentices (Group 1)

The future apprentices of the year 2021 are young people who start their apprenticeship in autumn, a little late, as the normal start of apprenticeships is in summer. However, companies still have the option of recruiting until October, which 10% of those responding to the survey did. This share is similar to that of September (10%) and last year. In October 2020, 9% of companies were still looking for apprentices.

Future apprentices starting their training in 2022 can expect a slightly higher supply of apprenticeship positions than this year: In October, 78% (74% in September) of companies indicated that they wanted to offer as many or more apprenticeship positions for the start of apprenticeships in 2022 than in 2021, which is a slight increase compared to the previous month. 14% (15% in September) of companies say they want to offer fewer apprenticeships next year. At 13% (September: 14%), the proportion of companies that intend to offer more apprenticeship positions is similar to that of the previous month. At the same time, the proportion of companies that do not want to change their offer of apprenticeship positions for the year 2022 has increased slightly (65%; 60% in September), and the proportion of those

that are still uncertain about their future apprenticeship policy has decreased (7%; 12% in September). When compared to the previous year, companies were slightly less optimistic in October 2020 about the number of apprenticeships they would offer in 2021. At that time, 73% said they would offer the same or more places for the start of apprenticeships in 2021 than in 2020. In particular, the share of those who thought they would offer fewer places for 2021 was slightly higher, while the share of those who thought they would expand their offer was lower, at 11%. When comparing linguistic regions, it appears that there are slight differences in the uncertainty about the supply of apprenticeship positions in October 2021. Slightly more companies in Latin Switzerland (12%) than in German-speaking Switzerland (7%) say they do not yet know how they will proceed next year.

Current Apprentices (Group 2)

Young people in full apprenticeship are partially limited in their activities by the Covid-19 pandemic. Figure 2 shows, in aggregate, the effects of the pandemic on apprentices' in-company training and in the different occupational categories².

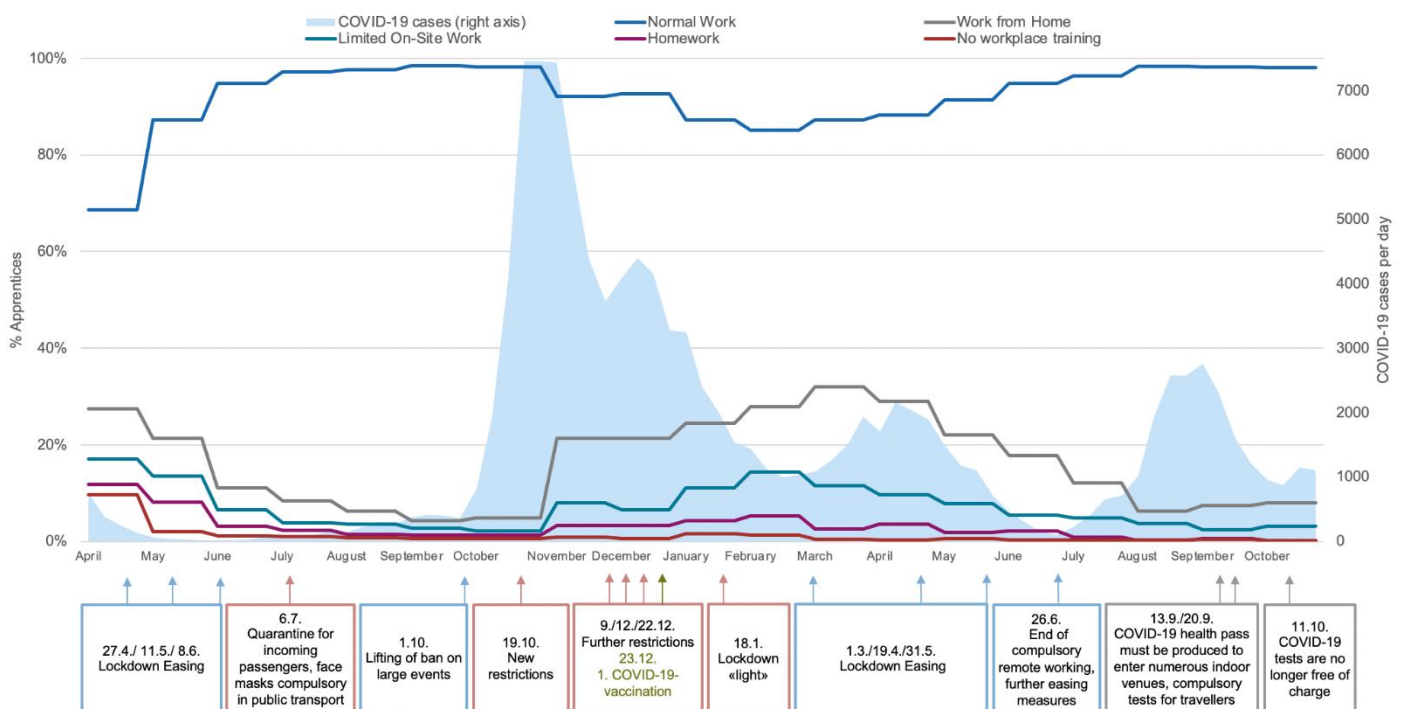


Figure 3: Effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on apprenticeship training over time.

Remarks: results are based on weighted data from monthly "Apprenticeship Pulse" surveys conducted between April 2020 and October 2021. The figure shows, on the vertical axis on the left, the shares (in %) of all apprentices covered by the surveyed training companies (multiple quotes possible) by company training measure. The vertical axis on the right represents Covid-19 cases per day (weekly average) from April 2020 to October 2021.

The situation of apprentices in October was similar to that of the previous month: 98% (the same as in September) were still working normally in the company, applying the protective measures of the FOPH. Only a slightly higher proportion was trained on site, to a limited extent (3%; 2% in September), while

the proportion of apprentices realizing the practical part of their in-company training from home decreased to almost zero (1% in September). Finally, 0.2% (0.5% in September) of apprentices did not receive any in-company training. The

² The occupational category "Nature" was not considered for this question in October due to distortions in the results due to weighting.

share of apprentices working from home also remained stable, with 8% (7% in September) of apprentices working from home in October, according to the companies. This observation is confirmed in the different professional categories, with the share of teleworking apprentices being highest in the category "IT" (30%; 32% in September) and "Economy, administration, tourism" (12%; 13% in September). The heterogeneity in the language regions has decreased somewhat compared to the previous month, as in October, 9% (8% in September) of the apprentices in German-speaking Switzerland were still teleworking, which is slightly more than in Latin Switzerland (7%; 4% in September).

Figure 3 shows the temporal evolution of the apprentices' activities as a whole, in relation to the daily Covid-19 cases and the authorities' measures. Thanks to the gradual relaxations, it is mainly the share of apprentices in teleworking that decreased between March and August. In March it was still 32%, but only 6% in August. While some apprentices returned to their workplace during the summer months, there was no further reduction in the fall.

Who has been most affected by the pandemic? Compared to the previous month, slightly more companies believe that all apprentices are impacted by the pandemic to the same extent (55%; 48% in September). 23% of companies often mentioned the weakest apprentices; in September, a higher proportion of

companies (29%) held this view. In October, first-year apprentices were mentioned slightly less often (15%), followed by those in the process of completing their apprenticeship (7%) and those in their final year (15%).

Quarantine measures

Due to the quarantine rules to prevent coronavirus infections, the training of apprentices is temporarily interrupted. The impact of these absences on companies decreased slightly again in October, after the share of companies with apprentices, trainers and other employees in quarantine (during the last four weeks before the survey) had increased again: 11% (17% in September) reported having apprentices in quarantine. In 3% (4% in September) of the companies, trainers were in quarantine and in 21% (31% in September) other employees were involved. The proportion of people in quarantine also fell slightly in these companies: 2% (4% in September) of apprentices, 1% (the same as in September) of trainers and around 2% (3% in September) of other employees were in quarantine on average. Compared to the previous month, fewer apprentices in isolation did not receive on-the-job training (40%; 54% in September), while a higher proportion of apprentices in quarantine worked at home (55%; 41% in September).

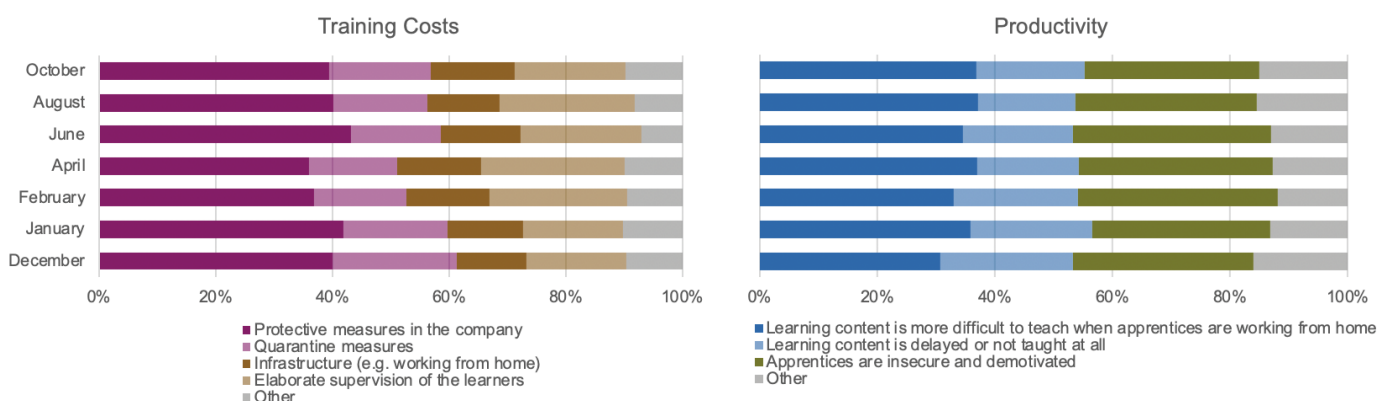


Figure 4: Reasons for increased training costs and decreased apprentice productivity.

Remarks: The results are based on weighted data from the "Apprenticeship Pulse" surveys of December 2020 and January, February, April, June, August and October 2021. The graphs show for each month and separately for training costs and productivity the share of reasons for changes due to Covid-19 in an average training company.

Effects on training costs and productivity

Overall, companies believe that training costs for apprentices have increased somewhat as a result of the pandemic, a situation that was similar in October³, to that of August (0.19 on a scale of -2 "significantly lower costs" to 2 "significantly higher costs"; 0.2 in August). The left-hand side of Figure 4 shows the reasons for these changes, with companies mainly attributing the changed costs to protective measures in the company (39%; 40% in August). The more complicated supervision of apprentices

was slightly less important in October (19%; 23% in August). Companies also continue to believe that the

productivity of apprentices has suffered somewhat from the effects of the pandemic. On this point, however, they are slightly more optimistic than in August (-0.23 on a scale of -2 "significantly lower productivity" to 2 "significantly higher productivity"; -0.25 in August). The right-hand side of Figure 4 shows that companies attribute the drop in productivity primarily

³ These questions are only asked one every two months.

to the fact that learning content is more difficult to convey while teleworking (37%; the same as in August). This is closely followed by the fact that apprentices are destabilized and demotivated (30%; 31% in August). In general, evaluations of training costs and productivity changed little between August and October.

Catching up on missed material

Figure 5 shows the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on apprentice skill acquisition and compares the results with changes in the number of Covid-19 cases and actions taken over time. In October, companies were again slightly more optimistic than in the previous month that apprentices will be able to make up for missed material in practical training on the job (4.27 on a scale of 5 for "can certainly be made up"; 4.21 in September), in theoretical

training (3.98; 3.94 in September) and in inter-company courses (4.20; 4.17 in September).

Career starters (group 3)

Entering the job market presents some young professionals with challenges. In October, companies were again slightly more optimistic than at the beginning of the fall: 28% (32% in September; 41% in August) believe that entering the job market this year is more difficult than before the health crisis. 36% (31% in September) feel that the situation is comparable to that before the pandemic, 6% (the same as in September) say that entering the labour market is easier this year, and 30% (31% in September) say that the market situation is uncertain.

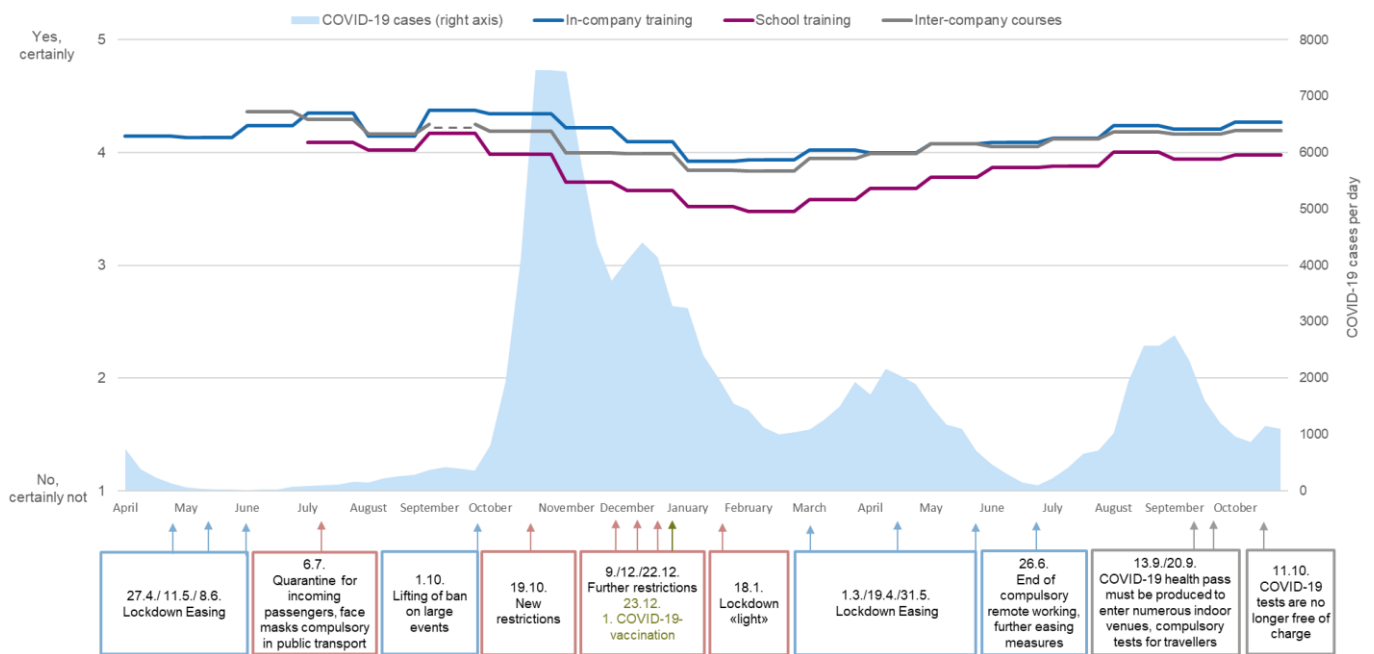


Figure 5: Catching up on material missed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Remarks: results are based on weighted data from monthly "Apprenticeship Pulse" surveys conducted between April 2020 and October 2021. The graph shows, on the vertical axis on the left, whether companies think apprentices will definitely (1) or definitely (5) fail to catch up on missed material. The vertical axis on the right represents Covid-19 cases per day (weekly average) from April 2020 to October 2021.

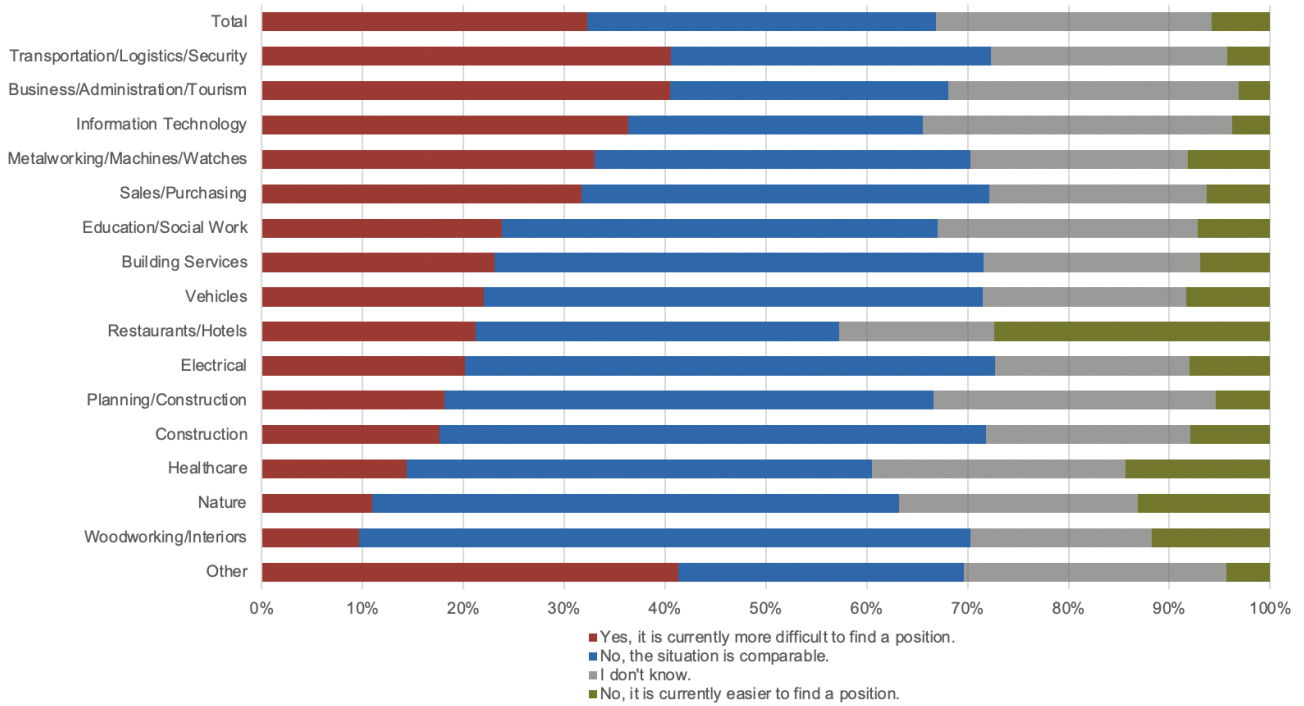


Figure 6: Assessment of the difficulty of entering the labor market compared to the period before Covid-19, by occupational category. Remarks: Results are based on weighted data from the monthly "Apprenticeship Pulse" surveys, aggregated from August 2021 to October 2021. The figure shows whether companies think that the situation for graduate apprentices looking for a job is more difficult, comparable, easier, or uncertain this year than before the pandemic.

Last year, companies also considered the situation of these young people to be difficult: in October 2020, 43% of companies thought that finding a job would be more difficult than before Covid-19. Also last year, a smaller share of companies thought that entering the labor market would be easier (1% in October 2020).

The estimates of labor market entry also differ to some extent by occupational category. Figure 6 shows the heterogeneity of these labor market entry forecasts, broken down by occupational category for late summer or fall 2021 (data from August to October 2021). The occupational categories "Transport, logistics, security" (41%), "Economics, administration, tourism" (41%) and "IT" (36%) are the least optimistic about the entry of young professionals into the labor market, while the share of companies that consider the job search this year to be more difficult than before Covid-19 is highest in these categories. At the same time, the "Wood, interior design" (10%), "Nature" (11%) and "Health" (14%) categories are the least pessimistic about the difficulty of accessing the job market. Optimism in the "Restaurant, Hotel" category was also high, with 27% of companies indicating that entering the job market was easier this year than before the pandemic.

Some companies are hiring apprentices who completed their apprenticeship in the summer. In October, 42% (33% in September) of them did so. This means an increase compared to the previous month and the previous year. In October 2020, however, 34% of companies had hired young graduates in the summer.

91% (89% in September) of these young people stayed with the company that trained them and 9% came from another training

company. In October, 12% came from another company.

Slightly more than half of the young professionals were hired on an open-ended contract (58%, the same as in September), while 42% received a limited-term contract. This share was slightly higher compared to the previous year, while in October 2020, only 36% were hired with a limited duration contract and 64% of apprentices with an unlimited duration contract.

The share of full-time employees was also lower compared to the previous month and October 2020: 78% of apprentices work full-time (between 80 and 100%), while in September 2021 this rate was 83%; in October 2020 it was 90%. As a result, 22%, respectively 17% in September 2021 and 10% in October 2020 of the young people were employed part-time. It should be noted here, however, that a relatively large share of these part-time employees are in parallel training.

Effects on training companies and apprentices

Figure 7 shows that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on training companies remained stable in October: 94% (95% in September) of training companies were working in compliance with the FOPH's protective measures (the same as in September), particularly with regard to apprentices. Slightly fewer had staff on short-time working

(5%, 7% in September) and 2% (the same as in September) had staff, including apprentices, on short-time working. A still small proportion of companies were dependent on financial assistance (3%; 2% in September) or had to close down temporarily by order of the authorities (1%, the same as in September). The share of companies facing the threat of closure was, as in September, almost zero.

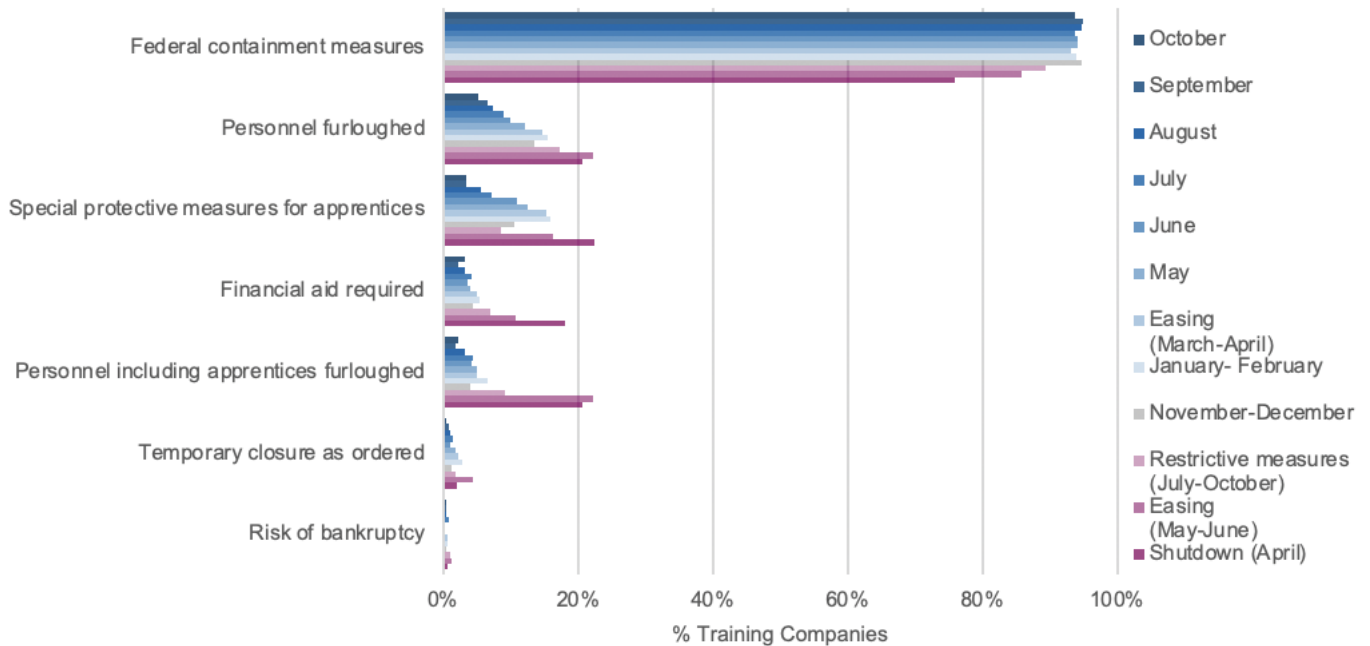


Figure 7: Training companies and their apprentices affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

2,105 training companies (2,301 in September) of various sizes, from all cantons and occupational categories, took part in the "Apprenticeship pulse" in October 2021. People in various positions in these companies answered the questions, including vocational trainers, human resources specialists and managers. A total of 44,660 training companies were contacted to participate in the survey. The return rate for the October Apprenticeship Pulse was 4.71% (5.15% in September). The return rate calculation is not exact, however, as the survey was not only sent directly to these training companies, but also distributed through other channels.

The companies surveyed offered a total of 17,547 apprenticeship positions (18,182⁴ in September) in various regions and occupational categories. In October, they covered 2.03% (September: 2.52%) of all training companies in Switzerland. Coverage is better in German-speaking Switzerland (2.91%; 3.14% in September) than in Latin Switzerland (0.54%; 0.67%

in September). There are differences between the occupational categories: In October, the best represented were "IT" (5.62%), "Electrical engineering" (5.29%) and "Planning, construction" (4.80%), while "Sales, purchasing" (1.73%) and "Nature" (1.77%) were rather underrepresented. The cantons of Basel-Stadt and Appenzell Innerrhoden showed that large companies were rather over-represented compared to SMEs.

However, the weighting procedure used⁵ corrects for differences in representativeness according to company size, language region and occupational field.

⁴ 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.

⁵ 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>

You can find more information on
www.lehrstellenpuls.ch.

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