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# Swiss HR-Barometer 2020

Focus  
Digitisation and Generations

## Executive Summary

Published by Gudela Grote and Bruno Staffelbach



# Executive Summary

## Latest edition

The eleventh survey of the Swiss HR Barometer was conducted at an extraordinary moment in world history: coinciding with the start of the survey in mid-March 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) categorised the spread of the Covid-19 disease as a worldwide pandemic. As with the previous surveys, this year's HR Barometer analyses the working climate of employees in Switzerland. The focus topic this year is titled Digitisation and Generations. It looks at digitisation from a generational perspective, one that has been little researched to date. It examines how employees from different generations experience digitisation, how they deal with it, and what impact it has on their attitudes to work and their behavioural intentions.

## Sample

The survey was based on a random sampling of the sample register kept by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office. It took place between March and June 2020. Respondents could choose between online and paper versions of the questionnaire. In all, 1995 responses were received from employees in the German-, French- and Italian-speaking regions of Switzerland.

## Focus: digitisation at a company level

Respondents reported that employers in Switzerland demonstrate a relatively high degree of openness towards new technologies: more than 74% of those surveyed revealed that their employers are willing to use digital solutions. This picture is reflected in the degree of digitisation measured at a company as well as at an employee level. Digital means of communication, in particular, are now widespread, while artificial intelligence is, to date, the least-deployed digital technology.

## Focus: empowerment and monitoring

Individual responsibility is playing an increasingly important role in the digital working environment: 66% of those surveyed stated that they are empowered by their superiors in terms of independent decision making. On the other hand, respondents also reported electronic monitoring by their employers: 46% of respondents revealed that the employer blocks access to certain web content, and 22% have their online activity monitored. The employer monitors the content of business emails in 14% of cases, while 8% of respondents indicated that phone conversations are recorded. And 7% of respondents stated that their employer deploys video monitoring, fingerprint scanning or electronic location tracking. That said, most of those surveyed (82%) reported that they did not feel that their employer violated their privacy, or not to any great extent.

## Focus: age stereotypes

In the context of digitisation, age stereotypes against older employees appear to be widespread in Switzerland's companies: only just over 10% of respondents reported no negative age stereotypes against older employees in their

**Focus:**  
**attitude towards**  
**digitisation in the working**  
**environment and digital**  
**self-efficacy**

department. This shows considerable potential for improvement by employers: where negative age stereotypes prevail, older employees tend to retire earlier and are less committed to their work.

Generally speaking, the vast majority of Swiss employees have a positive attitude towards digitisation. Of those surveyed, 82% view digitisation in their working environment somewhat or very much as an opportunity. On average, the various generations of employees do not differ in this regard. However, there are generational differences when it comes to how digital self-efficacy is viewed. Digital self-efficacy describes the confidence that a person has in their ability to achieve objectives with the help of digital technologies. While 79% of respondents rated their digital self-efficacy as somewhat good or good, older employees were on average less confident.

**Focus:**  
**differentiation between**  
**private and working life**

On the whole, employees in Switzerland say that they prefer to keep their private and working lives separate. However, generally speaking this does not tally with what happens in reality: most employees answer at least some work-related messages in their free time and private messages during working hours. Older employees are considerably less likely to respond to private messages at work than younger employees. For employees between age 26 and 35, private life on average takes up more time during the working day than vice versa.

**Focus:**  
**factors encouraging a**  
**positive attitude towards**  
**digitisation, retirement age**  
**and digital self-efficacy**

Employees with a higher level of education and greater digital self-efficacy are more positive about digitisation in their immediate working environment. Those in IT and research and development also tend to display a more positive attitude. Age stereotypes have a detrimental effect on digital self-efficacy, whereas greater employee autonomy can lead to greater digital self-efficacy. Employers can encourage working beyond retirement age by offering «reverse mentoring», where younger employees provide older ones with support.

**Focus:**  
**effects of digitisation in the**  
**company on work attitudes**  
**and behavioural intentions**

The Swiss HR Barometer survey found that higher levels of digitisation in the immediate work environment are associated with lower job satisfaction: this implies that new technologies need to be properly integrated into existing work processes to maintain employee satisfaction and motivation.

**Trend:**  
**career orientations**

This year again, four different career orientations were identified, two of which can be categorised as traditional, and two new. As in previous years, most of those surveyed have a traditional career orientation, with the traditional promotion-oriented career orientation being slightly more represented than the traditional security-oriented one. More than a third of those surveyed are aiming for a career characterised by hierarchical advancement and a high level of loyalty to the company. There are also differences in attitudes towards digitisation: employees with an independent career orientation exhibit a particularly positive attitude towards digitisation, whereas

**Trend:  
human resource management**

individuals with a traditional security-oriented career orientation are comparatively more sceptical about it.

As in previous years, employees in Switzerland generally tend to categorise the way their work is structured in terms of task variety, task completeness, task significance, feedback, and autonomy as high. That said, a slight downward trend is discernible.

In terms of performance management and personnel development, action is clearly needed in these two HRM areas: less than half of employees receive regular performance appraisals, and the average number of training days has fallen.

With regard to leadership and participation, the picture is mixed. While a slight upward trend can be observed in leadership and thus in the relationship quality between employees and their superiors, participation has again declined. This reinforces the need for appropriate action.

The findings in the HR area of compensation show little change overall relative to previous years, with fewer and fewer employees in Switzerland receiving only a fixed salary component. Variable salaries appear to have gained ground.

**Trend:  
psychological contract**

The quality of the employment relationship was assessed on the basis of the psychological contract. The trend analysis indicates that employees' expectations toward their employer are relatively stable: above all, they continue to expect adequate remuneration, loyalty and job security. As in previous years, a degree of discrepancy exists between their expectations and the perceived employer offer. From the employees' point of view, the biggest discrepancy is in remuneration and professional development opportunities. Also apparent is the fact that employees have a certain expectation to work with the latest digital technologies, although this attitude is less pronounced compared to other aspects of the psychological contract. In this regard, companies in Switzerland appear largely to be meeting employee expectations.

**Trend:  
job insecurity**

Despite the current pandemic and economically turbulent times, job insecurity has not increased since last year's survey. Nevertheless, detailed analyses have revealed strong divergences between sectors: for instance, increased job insecurity in the hospitality sector has been observed. This means that more investment in employability needs to be put into this sector so that employees have alternatives if they lose their jobs.

**Trend:  
job satisfaction, commitment and intention to give notice**

The trending issues of job satisfaction, commitment and intention to give notice remain at constant levels among employees in Switzerland. Employees appear to be generally satisfied with what they currently have and are aware that certain aspects cannot be changed at the moment. Commitment is at a similarly high level, while the intention to give notice is at a correspondingly low level.

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