

Press Release

Lucerne, 1 October 2026

Digital transformation: between confidence and automation anxiety

Employees in Switzerland are concerned about automation, artificial intelligence (AI), technological dependence and increasing job insecurity. At the same time, the vast majority feel competent enough to meet the new demands and actively shape their own professional future. This is shown by the fourteenth edition of the Swiss HR Barometer, in which around 1,600 employees were surveyed on the topic of "digital transformation".

With the rapid development of digital technologies and AI, the world of work is undergoing increasing change. How well equipped do employees in Switzerland feel for these changes? How do digital technologies shape their everyday working lives? And what opportunities and risks do they see for their professional future? The Swiss HR Barometer 2026 examines these questions from the employees' perspective. The study is based on a representative survey of 1,597 employees from the German-, French- and Italian-speaking regions of Switzerland, conducted between March and June 2026.

Competencies as the most important resource in digital transformation

Employees in Switzerland feel well equipped to keep pace with the digital transformation. Seven out of ten respondents consider themselves to have well-developed transferable competencies. These are competencies that they can apply in different professional situations, such as project management skills, analytical thinking or digital skills. Sixty-two per cent even actively develop their skills and competencies further, both within and outside paid employment. The majority are confident that they will also be able to meet future challenges.

"These self-assessments by employees are positive. Nevertheless, confidence in their own digital skills has declined compared with the figures from 2020," says co-editor Dr Anja Feierabend.

The results show that people acquire relevant competencies not only within companies, but also outside formal education and work contexts. "The support provided by employers for competency development falls short of employees' expectations," says Anja Feierabend. Companies are called upon to catch up by providing suitable competency development opportunities (e.g. learning platforms and individual development plans). "There is a risk that employees with lower levels of qualification in particular will fall behind."

Between a boost to innovation and digital dependence

Around one third of employees experience digital technologies such as artificial intelligence and automation predominantly as a source of relief, particularly because they increase productivity and foster new ideas and innovative ways of working.

At the same time, new challenges are emerging. Almost half of employees report that they depend on reliably functioning digital systems (e.g. email, cloud systems) for their daily work. This points to a high level of dependence on digital technologies in everyday working life.

Optimistic about their own future, sceptical about the labour market

Despite the rapid pace of technological change, the majority of employees are optimistic about their own professional future. Only 11 per cent fear losing their job due to new technologies or artificial intelligence. By contrast, 23 per cent consider it likely that some of their tasks will be automated.

Notably, respondents assess their personal situation more positively than the impact on society as a whole. Thirty-six per cent of respondents expect that automation could lead to an increase in unemployment in the future. Prof. Dr Bruno Staffelbach, who has published the study since 2006, concludes: "Many respondents are therefore convinced that the digital transformation poses fewer risks for them personally than for employees overall."

Digital transformation is also a leadership and HR responsibility

Bruno Staffelbach adds: "The study shows that perceptions of the digital transformation are significantly shaped by organisational conditions." Employees with high levels of autonomy, supportive leadership, opportunities for participation and opportunities for competency development have greater confidence in their digital skills (i.e. digital self-efficacy) and show less automation anxiety.

Conversely, employees who fear automation are also more likely to be stressed, dissatisfied with their work and less committed to their employers. "Companies can address these risks by promoting further training, making development paths visible and involving employees more closely in change processes," says co-editor Dr Manuela Morf.

Alternative career orientations are gaining importance

Overall, the long-term trend analyses paint a positive picture. Job satisfaction, career satisfaction and commitment remain at a high level. At the same time, perceived job insecurity is increasing, and employees assess their own employability somewhat more cautiously than in 2024.

There are also developments that deserve attention. Employee participation has declined slightly, regular performance appraisals are still not a matter of course, and the average number of days spent on further training has decreased. At the same time, alternative career orientations are gaining importance. More and more employees attach less importance to traditional career goals and instead value a good balance between work, family and leisure. Manuela Morf explains: "Companies therefore increasingly need to consider how they can make development opportunities and professional success attractive beyond traditional career steps."

The Swiss HR Barometer

Since 2006, the Swiss HR Barometer has recorded how employees in Switzerland experience their work situation. The topics surveyed include mutual expectations and offers by employees and employers as part of the employment relationship (psychological contract), human resource management practices such as work design and personnel development, leadership, job satisfaction, employability and career orientation. The study is regularly published by the University of Lucerne in cooperation with the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts.

The HR Barometer 2026 is based on a survey of 1,597 employees using the sample register of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office. The current edition focuses on the topic of "Competencies and Disruption". The survey was conducted between March and June 2026 in the German-, French- and Italian-speaking regions of Switzerland.

The HR Barometer 2026 was produced with the support of the Swiss National Science Foundation (funding instrument "Research Infrastructures").

Attachments:

The full report is available for free download at: www.hrbarometer.ch

Factsheet on the Swiss HR Barometer 2026

Figure 1: Digital self-efficacy

Figure 2: Automation anxiety

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Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts – the University of Applied Sciences of Central Switzerland

Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts is the university of applied sciences of the six cantons of Central Switzerland and comprises the Schools of Engineering and Architecture, Business, Computer Science, Social Work, Design, Film and Art, Music, as well as the focus area Health. With around 8,700 students and around 12,000 continuing education participants (including 5,600 MAS, DAS and CAS participants), 235 new research projects and 2,120 employees, it is the largest educational institution in the heart of Switzerland.

About the University of Lucerne

Research and teaching at the University of Lucerne focus on people and their institutions. Its six faculties in the fields of theology, humanities and social sciences, law, economics and management, health sciences and medicine, and behavioural sciences and psychology shape the University's unique human sciences profile. www.unilu.ch

Figure 1: Digital self-efficacy

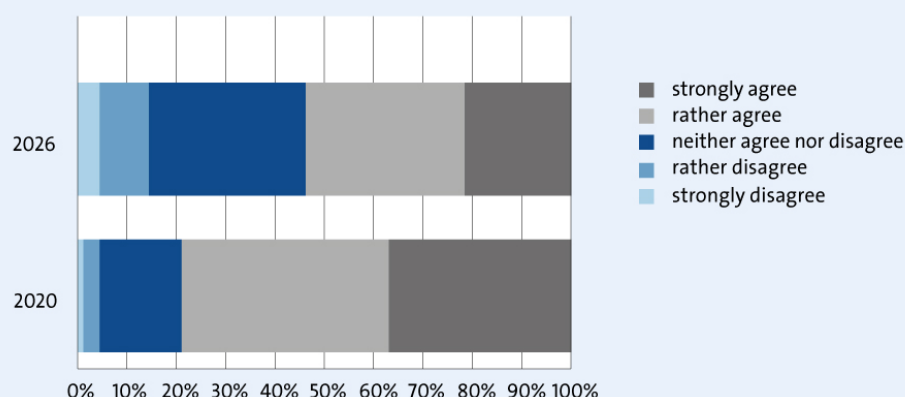


Figure 2: Automation anxiety

