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Research Report – Media Change & Innovation Division

Internet Diffusion and Digital Divides in Switzerland 2025

Thematic Report I of the World Internet Project – Switzerland 2025

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The World Internet Project – Switzerland (WIP-CH) is a project partner of the World Internet Project coordinated by the Annenberg School Centre for the Digital Future, University of Southern California (USC), Los Angeles.

Zurich, December 2025

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Executive Summary

The World Internet Project (WIP) is an international collaborative research project which has been recording the dissemination and use of the internet on an international comparison since 1999. Switzerland has been part of this project since 2011. In 2025, the Media Change & Innovation Department of the IKMZ conducted its eighth representative WIP survey with the World Internet Project – Switzerland (WIP-CH). A representative sample of the Swiss population was interviewed about their internet use and attitudes towards the Internet.

The results are summarized in four thematic reports: Internet Diffusion and Digital Divides, Use of the Internet and Generative AI, Trust and Concerns When Using the Internet, and The Transforming Relationship Between Humans and Technology.

Sustainable stabilization of digital activities: young people in particular go about their everyday lives digitally

- The digitalization push triggered by the Covid pandemic has stabilized at a high level in key areas of everyday life such as shopping and working.
- The majority of all transactions are now cashless, e.g., by card or payment apps (65%), and 4 out of 10 products are purchased online (39%). One-third of work that can be done remotely is done from home (33%).
- One-fifth of leisure time is currently spent online (21%), and 14% of private meetings are held online. This means that there has been a slight decline in the digital share of leisure activities since the pandemic, but the level remains higher than before the pandemic.
- People aged 20 to 29 are the most digitally active age group overall: three-quarters of their purchases are cashless (74%), almost half of their products are bought online (42%), around one-third of their leisure time (37%) and one in five private meetings (21%) are spent on the internet.

Patterns of internet diffusion by age, income, and gender

- Since 2011, the proportion of the Swiss population who uses the internet on the go via mobile devices such as smartphones has risen and currently stands at 82% (vs. 26% in 2011).
- Men (87%) and younger people (20–29: 93%) use the internet more often on the go than women (78%) and older people (70+: 66%).
- Since 2011, mobile internet use has spread rapidly, especially among younger internet users: between 2011 and 2015, the proportion of mobile internet users among 14- to 19-year-olds rose from 36% to 91% and among 20- to 29-year-olds from 28% to 92%, and has since stabilized at a very high level. Among those aged 70 and over, mobile internet usage has risen from 4% in 2011 to 66% (2025).

Perceived digital divides: internet skills and integration into the information society

- In addition to socio-demographic differences in internet penetration and the digitization of everyday life, there are also perceived divides that are reflected in attitudes and assessments of internet use.
- On average, Swiss internet users' self-assessment of their internet skills has remained relatively stable since 2011.
- Older Swiss internet users rate their skills lower than younger users: while 9 out of 10 (91%) of 20- to 29-year-olds rate their internet skills as good to excellent, only 6 out of 10 (59%) of those over 70 do so.
- Women tend to rate their internet skills lower than men: 8 out of 10 male internet users (81%) say they are good to excellent at using the internet. Among women, this proportion is slightly lower (75%).
- Although the internet is very widespread in Switzerland, not everyone feels that they belong to the information society: 34% of users feel that they belong to the information society. Compared to previous years, there has been a significant downward trend in recent years in particular: in 2015, 59% reported a sense of belonging, which remained largely constant until 2021 (2017: 58%, 2019: 59%, 2021: 60%). Since then, the sense of belonging has declined significantly (2023: 47%).
- Older people, people with low internet skills, and people who do not use generative AI (regularly) in particular feel less and less connected to the information society. One-fifth of those over 70 (19%) and those who do not use AI (regularly) (20%) feel connected. Among people who rate their internet skills as poor or adequate, the figure is 14%.

Data Basis WIP-CH

The evaluations are based on representative samples from the entire language-assimilated Swiss population (2011–2021) and, respectively, the Swiss online population (2023–2025) aged 14 and above. Around 1,000 people were surveyed in each survey year. This resulted in the following sample sizes as the basis for the calculations and illustrations:

Sample for	2011	2013	2015	2017	2019	2021	2023	2025
Swiss population	1104	1114	1121	1120	1122	1120	-	-
Internet users	851	949	981	1013	1035	1069	1008	1078
Employed internet users	589	587	706	710	737	715	639	722
Non-users	253	165	140	107	85	51	-	-
Proxy users	90	79	56	54	34	11	-	-

Calculations of absolute figures are based on current data from the Federal Statistical Office (<https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/bevoelkerung.html>) and refer to the Swiss resident population aged 14 and older.

1 Overview of Internet Diffusion

Internet diffusion is surveyed in many country-specific and comparative studies. How is the situation regarding internet diffusion in Switzerland?

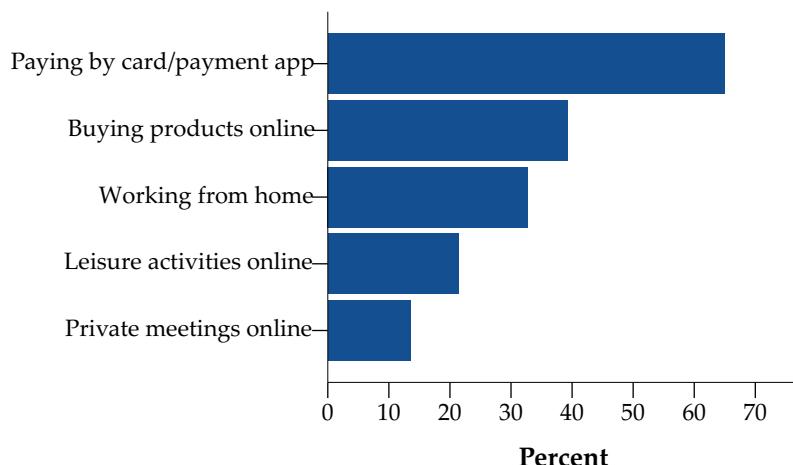
The proportion of internet users in Switzerland has risen steadily between 2011 and 2021 (2011: 77%, 2013: 85%, 2015: 88%, 2017: 90%, 2019: 92%, 2021: 95%). Since 2013, internet diffusion has only increased by a few percentage points, which is due to the already very high diffusion of the internet among the Swiss population. According to the Federal Statistical Office, 97% of the Swiss population used the internet in 2023 (FSO, 2023). Therefore, since 2023, only internet users have been surveyed as part of the WIP-CH.

The outbreak of the Covid pandemic in Switzerland in March 2020 further accelerated the digitalization. Large parts of everyday life shifted to the digital realm as physical contact had to be minimized. In 2021, a special report was dedicated to the changes in internet usage caused by the Covid pandemic. Since then, the pandemic situation has calmed down considerably. However, the digitalization push that was triggered continues to have a lasting impact on the everyday lives of Swiss internet users in 2025.

1.1 Proportion of Digital Activities

This report first examines the extent to which various activities in the everyday lives of the Swiss online population are now carried out digitally. The percentages in the following figures represent the proportion of the total indicated by the respondents (e.g., the proportion of work done from home in relation to the total amount of work done).

Figure 1: Proportion of Digital Activities



Data basis: (Employed) Swiss internet users, WIP-CH 2025.

Internet diffusion in the phase of saturation

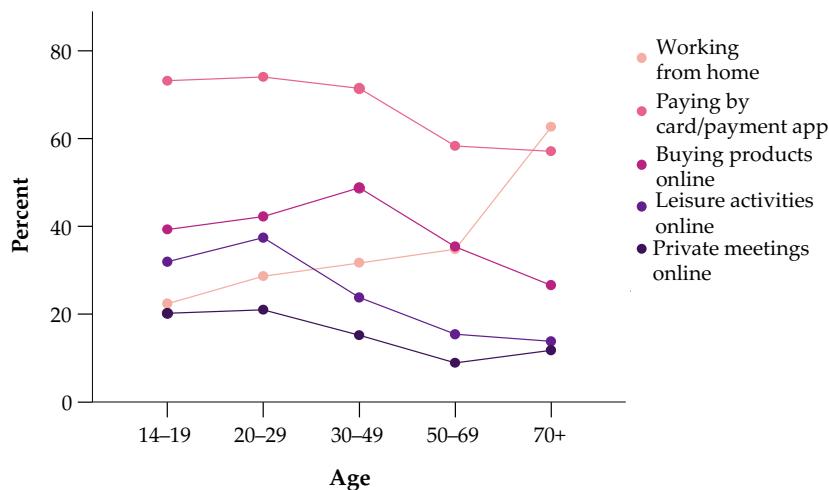
Sustainable digitalization push due to the Covid pandemic

Proportion of digital activities varies: shopping is most commonly done digitally

- The digital share is highest among the Swiss online population when it comes to shopping. Swiss internet users pay for two-thirds (65%) of their purchases by card or payment app and buy just over a third (39%) of their products online.
- In terms of work, employed internet users whose jobs can generally be done from home say that they do a third of their work (33%) from home.
- The digital share is slightly lower when it comes to leisure. 21% of leisure activities and 14% of private meetings take place online.

The proportion of digital activities varies significantly according to age:

Figure 2: Proportion of Digital Activities by Age

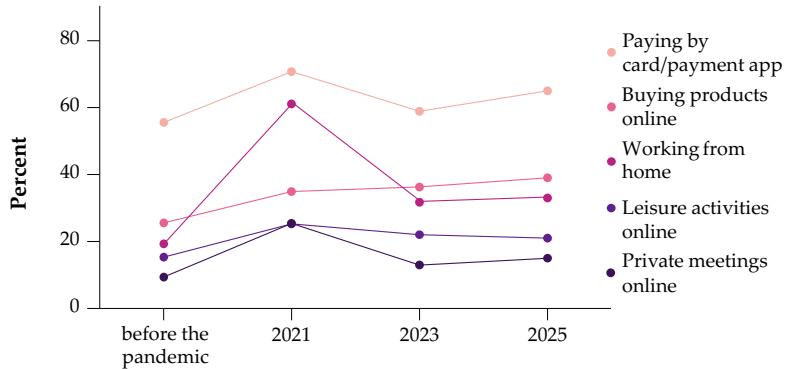


Data basis: (Employed) Swiss internet users, WIP-CH 2025.

20–29-year-olds are the most digitally active

- Overall, 20- to 29-year-olds are the most digitally active age group: they pay for three-quarters of their purchases cashless (74%), buy almost half of their products online (42%), spend around a third of their leisure time (37%), and one in five private meetings (21%) on the internet. Regarding online shopping, they are surpassed by 30- to 49-year-olds (49%), and when it comes to working from home, the older age groups are ahead with shares between 32% and 63%.

Respondents were also asked in 2023 and 2021 to indicate the proportion of their activities carried out digitally. In 2021, they also retrospectively indicated the respective proportion "before the pandemic". The long-term comparison shows the areas in which the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered lasting digitalization.

Figure 3: Proportion of Digital Activities over Time, 2021–2025

Data basis: (Employed) Swiss internet users, WIP-CH.

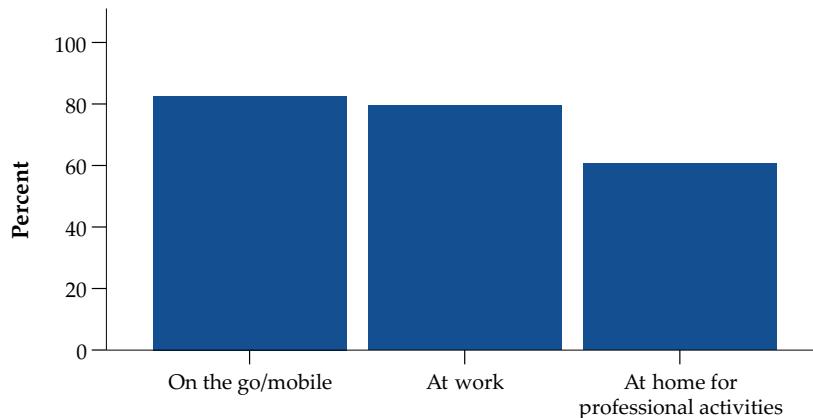
- In 2025, the proportion of activities carried out digitally is higher than before the Covid pandemic in all areas surveyed. While the digital share in the leisure area has declined over time, it has stabilized at a high level in the areas of payments, shopping, and working from home.
- Paying by card or payment app was already on the rise before the pandemic. 56% of transactions were done cashless. During the pandemic, this share rose to 71% of transactions and has stabilized at a high level with slight fluctuations over the years (2023: 59%, 2025: 65%).
- Before the pandemic, the proportion of products purchased online by Swiss internet users was 26%. This proportion has risen slightly since the pandemic (2021: 35%, 2023: 36%, 2025: 39%).
- Working from home experienced the strongest digitalization push during the pandemic. Before the pandemic, 19% of work that could be done remotely was done from home. During the pandemic, this figure rose to 61%. After the end of the pandemic, this proportion decreased significantly again and has since stabilized at one-third (2023: 32%, 2025: 33%).
- Before the pandemic, 15% of leisure activities were spent online. During the pandemic, this share rose by 9 percentage points and has remained at a similar level since then (2021: 24%, 2023: 22%, 2025: 21%).
- While 9% of private meetings took place online before the pandemic, this share rose to 25% during the pandemic and has since fallen slightly (2023: 13%, 2025: 14%).

Sustainable digitalization push in payments, shopping, and work

Respondents were also asked to indicate the locations from which they access the internet.

1.2 Locations of Internet Use

Figure 4: Locations of Internet Use



Data basis: Swiss internet users; employed internet users, WIP-CH 2025.

Men and younger people use the internet more frequently on mobile devices

Mobile internet usage stabilizes at a high level

- 8 out of 10 Swiss internet users (82%) stated that they access the internet while on the go.
- 4% of respondents stated that they do not use the internet on the go. However, due to incomplete information provided by some respondents, it can be assumed that the actual proportion of mobile internet users is higher.
- Mobile internet is used by a clear majority in all population groups. However, there are slight gender-specific differences: 87% of male internet users and 78% of female internet users use the internet on the go via mobile devices.
- In addition, mobile internet use declines significantly with age. It stands at 85% among 14- to 19-year-olds and 93% among 20- to 29-year-olds. Among 30- to 49-year-olds, the figure is 91%, decreasing to 78% among 50- to 69-year-olds. In the oldest group (70+), 66% use the internet on the go.
- The dissemination of mobile internet use has risen sharply since 2011 and has now reached a saturation point: from 26% (2011) to 46% (2013), 72% (2015), 79% (2017), 87% (2019), 91% (2021), 86% (2023) to 82% (2025).
- A comparison over time also shows that mobile internet has spread rapidly since 2011, especially among younger internet users. Between 2011 and 2015, the proportion of mobile internet users among 14- to 19-year-olds rose from 36% to 91% and among 20- to 29-year-olds from 28% to 92%, and has since stabilized at a very high level. Among older people, the spread of mobile internet was somewhat slower. Among internet users over the age of 70 in particular, mobile internet usage was still low in 2011 and has risen overall since then: from 4% (2011) to 21% (2013), 30% (2015), 41% (2017), 60% (2019), 69% (2021), 72% (2023), and to 66% (2025).

- 6 out of 10 employed internet users (61%) use the internet at home for professional activities. This proportion is slightly higher than in 2011 (54%).
- 8 out of 10 (79%) use the internet at their workplace. This proportion has risen by 17 percentage points since 2011 (2011: 62%).
- Employed men are more likely to use the internet at home for professional activities (69%) and at work (86%) than women (52% and 72%, respectively).
- Employed internet users aged 20 to 29 have seen the strongest increase since 2011: their internet use at home for professional activities rose by 27 percentage points (2011: 43%, 2025: 70%) and at their workplace by 35 percentage points (2011: 51%, 2025: 86%).
- Since 2011, the proportion of employed men who use the internet at home for professional activities has also risen (2011: 53%, 2025: 69%). Among women, however, the proportion has hardly changed (2011: 55%, 2025: 52%). However, both genders use the internet significantly more often at their workplace than in 2011 (men: 64% (2011), 86% (2025); women: 59% (2011), 72% (2025)).

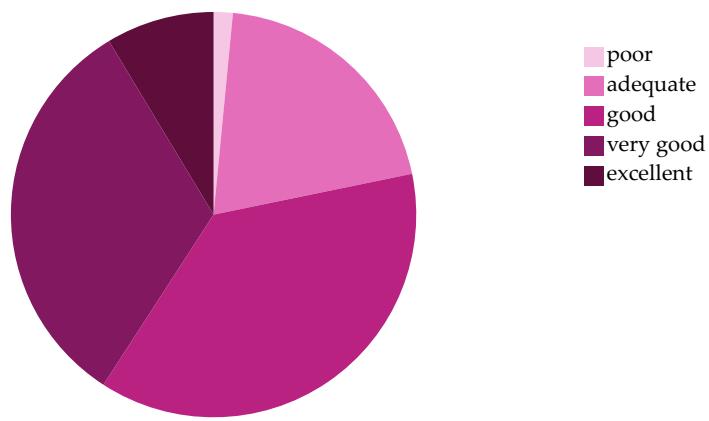
Increasing internet use at home for professional activities and at the workplace, especially among 20- to 29-year-olds

2 Perceived Digital Divides

In addition to sociodemographic differences in the digitization of everyday life and the locations where the internet is used, there are also perceived divisions within the Swiss online population. These are reflected, among other things, in the internet users' assessments of their own internet skills and in their sense of belonging to the information society.

2.1 Internet Skills

Figure 5: Self-Assessment of Internet Skills



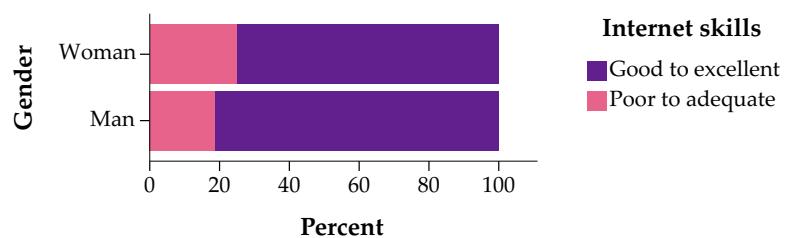
Data basis: Swiss internet users, WIP-CH 2025.

Large majority with good to excellent internet skills

- 8 out of 10 Swiss internet users (78%) consider themselves to be at least good at using the internet. 37% describe their internet skills as good, 32% as very good, and 9% as excellent.
- One-fifth of internet users say they have sufficient internet skills (20%), and only 2% rate their internet skills as poor.

Sociodemographic differences in the Swiss online population are also evident in terms of internet skills.

Figure 6: Self-Assessment of Internet Skills by Gender



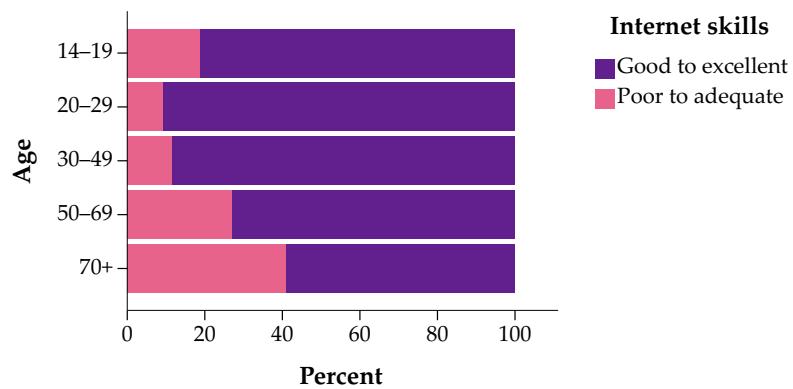
Data basis: Swiss internet users, WIP-CH 2025.

Men rate their internet skills slightly better than women

- 8 out of 10 male internet users (81%) say they have good to excellent internet skills. Among women, this figure is slightly lower (75%). A

quarter of female internet users in Switzerland (25%) feel that their internet skills are poor or adequate. Among men, this figure is 6 percentage points lower (19%).

Figure 7: Self-Assessment of Internet Skills by Age

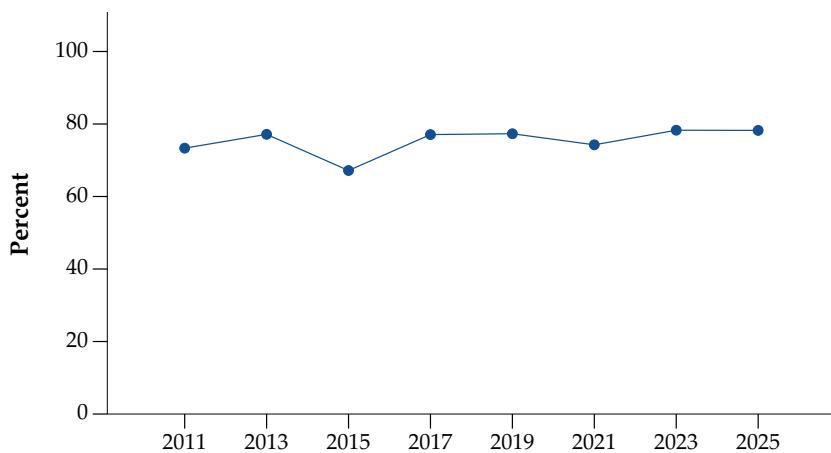


Data basis: Swiss internet users, WIP-CH 2025.

- There are clearer divides between the different age groups: the proportion of internet users who say they are good to excellent at using the internet decreases with age. While 9 out of 10 20- to 29-year-olds (91%) rate their internet skills as good to excellent, only 6 out of 10 (59%) of those over 70 do so.

Self-assessed internet skills decline significantly with age

Figure 8: Self-Assessment of Internet Skills as Good to Excellent over Time, 2011–2025



Data basis: Swiss internet users, WIP-CH.

Internet skills have remained largely stable since 2011

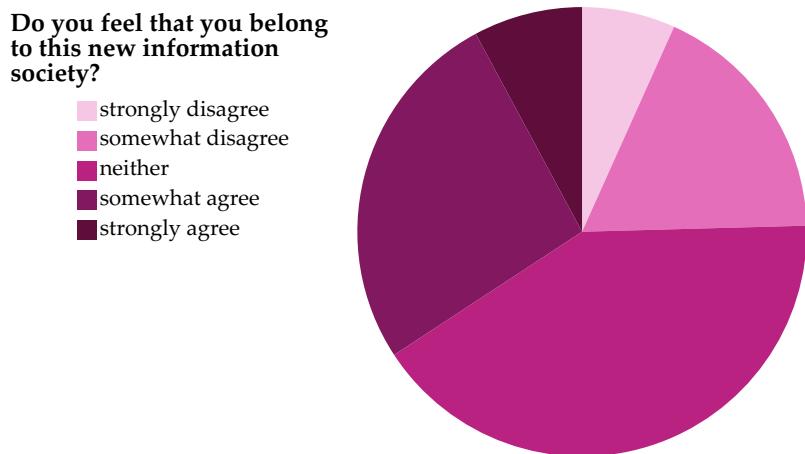
Since 2011, the following developments have been observed regarding internet skills.

- Overall, Swiss internet users' self-assessment of their internet skills has remained relatively stable since 2011. One possible reason for this is that, even though users are acquiring more and more skills, the requirements are also increasing at the same time.
- Regarding the respondents' age, slight differences can be observed in the development of self-assessment of their own internet skills. Among 14- to 19-year-olds, internet skills have declined slightly since 2011, from 87% to 81%. The age groups 20–29 (2011: 81%, 2025: 91%), 30–49 (2011: 78%, 2025: 89%), and 50–69 (2011: 62%, 2025: 73%) show an increase of around 10 percentage points each. The oldest group (70+) remained constant (2011: 58%, 2025: 59%).

2.2 Sense of Belonging to the Information Society

In addition to internet skills, there are also divides within the Swiss online population in terms of their sense of belonging to the information society. Although the internet is very widespread in Switzerland, not everyone feels integrated into the information society.

Figure 9: Sense of Belonging to the Information Society

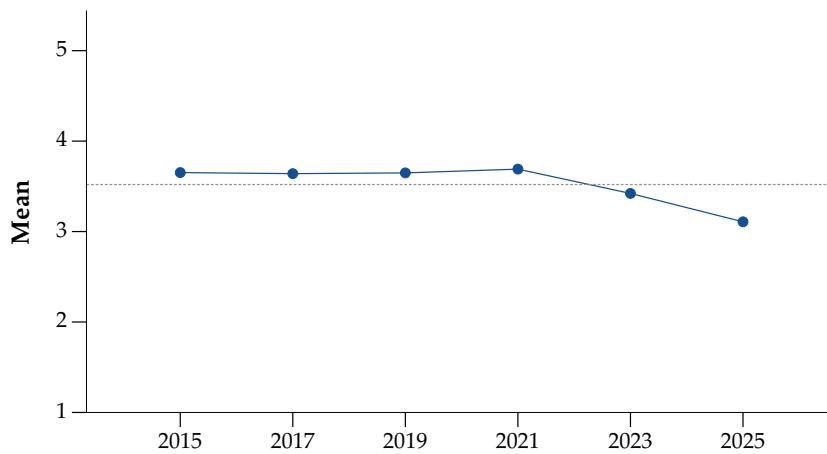


Data basis: Swiss internet users, WIP-CH 2025.

- Overall, a slightly larger proportion of the online population feels that they belong to the information society than not: one in three feels somewhat or completely integrated (34%), while one in four (25%) feels not or somewhat not integrated. 4 out of 10 (41%) neither agree nor disagree.

However, over time, the sense of belonging has declined. The following figures show the respondents' answers as mean values on a scale from 1 (do not agree at all) to 5 (strongly agree).

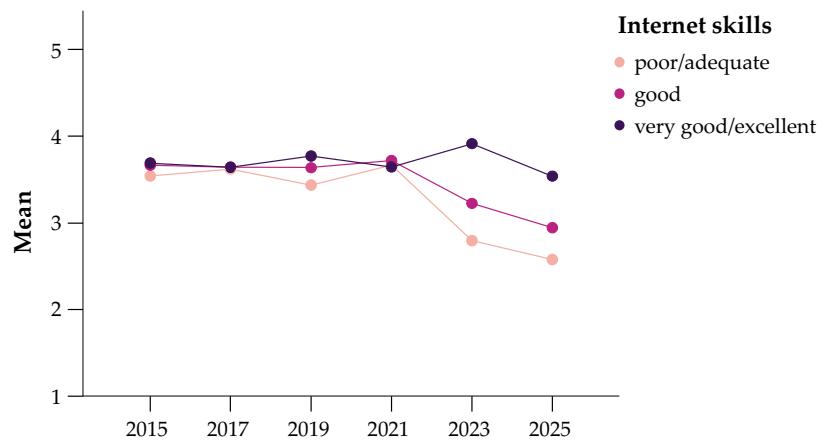
Figure 10: Sense of Belonging to the Information Society over Time, 2015–2025



Data basis: Swiss internet users, WIP-CH.
Reference line: mean of all internet users (3.6).

– The average sense of belonging among Swiss internet users remained constant between 2015 and 2021 (2015: $m=3.7$, 2021: $m=3.7$). Since then, it has decreased significantly and, in 2025, it is just above the scale's midpoint (3) ($m=3.1$). This decline might be related to the increasing demands that the advancing digitalization places on the Swiss population, in particular the shift of everyday activities to the digital space and the increasing spread of applications with generative artificial intelligence (AI), as described above.

Figure 11: Sense of Belonging to the Information Society by Internet Skills over Time, 2015–2025



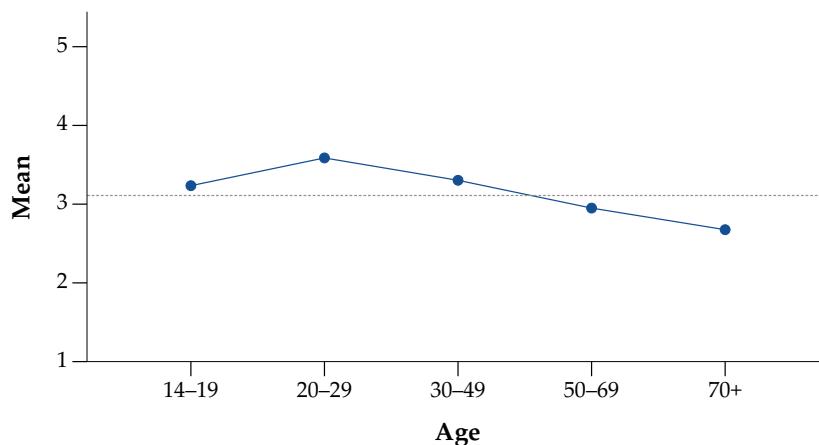
Data basis: Swiss internet users, WIP-CH.

Users with poor and adequate internet skills no longer feel that they belong to the information society

- The decline in the sense of belonging to the information society is not uniform across all internet users. Since 2021, the sense of belonging has increasingly differed in terms of assessed internet skills: users with poor and adequate internet skills in particular feel less connected to the information society ($m=2.6$), while users with good ($m=3.0$) or very good to excellent ($m=3.5$) skills feel a stronger sense of belonging.
- Accordingly, more than half of users with at least very good internet skills feel integrated into the information society (54%). The proportions are significantly lower among those with good or poor to adequate skills (25% and 14%, respectively).

There are also differences in the sense of belonging to the information society between age groups.

Figure 12: Sense of Belonging to the Information Society by Age



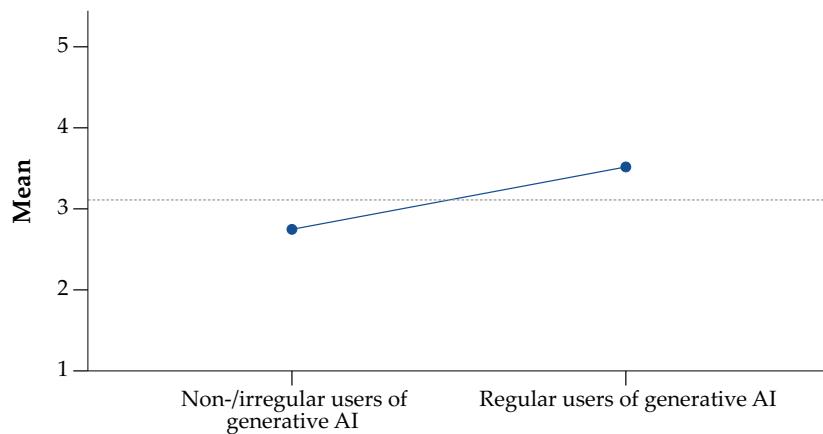
Data basis: Swiss internet users, WIP-CH 2025.
Reference line: mean of all internet users (3.1).

Sense of belonging to the information society declines with age

- The sense of belonging to the information society is highest among 20- to 29-year-olds ($m=3.6$). Then, a steady decline is evident with increasing age. Among 50- to 69-year-olds, the mean is already below the overall average, and among those 70 and older, the sense of belonging to the information society is lowest ($m=2.7$).
- These differences are also clearly reflected in the approval ratings: while more than half of 20- to 29-year-olds (54%) feel that they belong to the information society, the figure for those 70 and older is 19%.

With the increasing spread of generative AI applications such as ChatGPT and Google Gemini, it is also apparent that the sense of belonging to the information society differs between regular AI users and non-users or irregular AI users.

Figure 13: Sense of Belonging to the Information Society by Use of Generative AI



Data basis: Swiss internet users, WIP-CH 2025.
Reference line: mean for all internet users (3.1).

- People who use generative AI regularly, i.e., at least once a month, feel significantly more that they belong to the information society ($m=3.5$) than people who do not use generative AI (regularly) ($m=2.8$). This points to the emergence of a new digital divide along the integration of AI applications into everyday life.
- In terms of approval ratings, half of regular AI users (51%) feel they belong to the information society. Among people who do not use AI (regularly), the proportion is significantly lower (20%).

Regular AI users feel significantly more that they belong to the information society

World Internet Project – Switzerland

The Media Change & Innovation Division of the IKMZ at the University of Zurich has been the Swiss country partner of the World Internet Project (WIP) since 2010. The WIP is an international, collaborative research project which has tracked the dissemination and use of the internet on an international comparison since 1999. It is located in the Center for Digital Future of the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California (USC) in Los Angeles and is chaired by Prof. Jeff Cole. As of today, universities and research institutions in over 30 countries, e.g., Italy, Sweden, Portugal, Belgium, United Kingdom, Qatar, China, Indonesia, Taiwan, Chile, Colombia, and New Zealand, are partnering in the WIP.

Internationally comparable long-term data on the social, political, and economic implications of internet development

The WIP aims to collect independent and internationally comparative long-term data on the development of the internet. The dissemination and use of the internet, as well as the associated social, political, and economic implications, form the focal point of research. The WIP produces a variety of scientific publications and organizes annual conferences. Findings are further shared within the fields of politics, administrations, economics, media, and interested civil societies.

The relevance of the WIP stems from a number of qualitative specifics:

- The combination of international comparability and long-term character, whereby general changing trends as well as characteristics of internet development can be measured in participating countries of the WIP.
- The combined survey of behaviours (What is used in what intensity?) and perceptions (What impact does internet use have in the private, professional, and political sphere?) enabling analyses of meaningful statistical relationships.
- The combination of an internationally standardized core questionnaire and a country-specific extension means that national focus areas can be set according to need.
- The periodic (CH: biennial) adaptation of the questionnaire, which allows for the inclusion of current issues and trends, such as the dissemination of convergent technologies.

World Internet Project – Switzerland 2011–2025

In 2025, Switzerland conducted its eighth representative survey for the World Internet Project – Switzerland (WIP-CH), asking the Swiss online population about their internet use and attitudes toward the internet.

Methods

The WIP study is a representative survey of Swiss internet users aged 14 and above, which is based on a periodically repeated random sample. In Switzerland, as in other partner countries, a country-specific catalogue of questions was added to the internationally standardized WIP questionnaire by the Media Change & Innovation Division of the IKMZ (University of Zurich). The 2025 Swiss survey was conducted in three languages as an online survey by the market and opinion research company gfs.bern from 2 June to 27 August 2025 in Switzerland.

Representative survey of Swiss internet users

The first six WIP surveys in Switzerland were conducted as telephone surveys (CATI – Computer Assisted Telephone Interview). Unlike purely online surveys, CATI surveys make it possible to reach both internet users and non-users. As the proportion of internet users in Switzerland has grown steadily from 2011 to 2021 and internet penetration is now reaching its saturation point (2021: 95% internet users), the 2023 and 2025 surveys were conducted as purely online surveys. Although this means that non-users are no longer included in the survey, this change promises a higher willingness to participate and enables expanded survey options (e.g., inclusion of image material). Despite this methodological change from a telephone to an online survey, the long-term comparability of the data remains intact. When interpreting the results, it should be noted that the two survey methods can lead to slightly different results, especially for sensitive questions, and that social desirability effects are less prevalent in online surveys (see, among others, Dillman, 2009; Milton et al., 2017).

Since 2023: Switch from telephone to online survey

Recruitment for the online survey was carried out using a combination of two different panels (the Politrends panel with slightly more highly educated, more intrinsically motivated individuals and the Bilendi panel with slightly less educated, more monetarily incentivized individuals) to enable high-quality statements. The total sample of 1,078 individuals is representative of Swiss internet users aged 14 and above in terms of age, gender, education, household income, and the three language regions of Switzerland (German-speaking, French-speaking, and Italian-speaking). To ensure the representativeness of the findings and to compensate for minor deviations of the sample from the population, the data was weighted to reflect the actual circumstances. With the number of respondents, a maximum confidence interval of ± 2.98 percentage points is achieved at a 95% confidence level.

Recruitment from two online panels

The survey took an average of 19 minutes to complete. The online survey was conducted on desktop and mobile devices.

Interviews conducted in absolute numbers:

Age	Total	D-CH	F-CH	I-CH
14–19	83	63	13	5
20–29	141	96	39	4
30–49	359	240	97	15
50–69	345	250	77	14
70–88	150	107	33	8
	1078	756	259	46

Further Literature

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