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IKMZ – Department of Communication and Media Research

Research Report – Media Change & Innovation Division

Trust and Concerns When Using the Internet in Switzerland 2025

Thematic report 3 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

Table of Contents

List of Figures

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.

Internet content: Less trust in generative AI and social media than in professional sources of information

- Around 7 out of 10 Swiss internet users (73%) believe that at least half of all internet content is trustworthy. While there was a significant decline in the perceived trustworthiness of internet content from 2013 onwards, it has risen again since 2017.
- The assessment of trustworthiness differs significantly depending on the specific source of information: websites of governments and governmental authorities, websites of the SRG and paid newspapers are considered to be predominantly trustworthy. Websites from free newspapers, AI-generated content, and feeds on social media are trusted less.
- Younger and regular users of generative AI such as ChatGPT trust AI-generated content more. 14- to 19-year-olds rate this content as similarly credible to paid newspapers.

Importance of the internet: most important source of information and entertainment in an intermedia comparison

- As in 2021 and 2023, the internet remains the most important source of media information for the Swiss online population in 2025. Newspapers, television, and radio lag behind.
- In 2025, the internet as a source of information is, for the first time, roughly equally important as interpersonal (non-media-mediated) contacts.
- Since 2019, the internet has also been the most important source of entertainment media and has continued to gain in importance in 2025.
- For older people (aged 70 and above), traditional media such as television, newspapers, and radio are more important than the internet, both as sources of information and entertainment.

Importance of new and traditional sources for everyday decisions

- Generative AI and influencers are less important than established sources for the Swiss online population when it comes to everyday decisions.
- 13% of internet users consider generative AI to be important for decisions regarding their physical health. 24% consider other internet sources to be important for such decisions.
- Generative AI is important for 7% when it comes to political decisions such as referendums and elections, while other internet sources are important for 27%.
- Younger and regular users of generative AI attach slightly more importance to these new sources of information. Three out of ten 14- to 19-year-olds (29%) rely on generative AI for financial decisions (vs. 70+: 4%). AI is an important source of advice for decisions concerning finances, career, and physical health for 2 out of 10 regular AI users (21–22%).

Growing feeling of overconsumption and strong desire to reduce internet use

- 38% of internet users in Switzerland report spending more time online than they would like, and 31% believe that using the internet takes time away from more important things.
- Half of internet users in Switzerland (49%) would like to reduce their internet usage. Those particularly affected are 14- to 19-year-olds (82% vs. 21% of those aged 70+) and regular AI users (58% vs. 42% of non-users).

Concerns about privacy violations on the internet

- Concern about online privacy violations is considerable in Switzerland. Almost half of Swiss internet users (47%) are concerned that companies could violate their privacy online.
- Around 4 in 10 users (41%) also express concern about their privacy being violated online by other people.
- The least feared violations of privacy are those by the government. Nevertheless, this concern is shared by around one-third of Swiss internet users (36%). Since 2021, this concern has risen by 9 percentage points.
- Although a majority of Swiss internet users (60%) say they take great care to protect their privacy on the internet, significantly fewer (24%) feel they can control their privacy on the internet. A majority of Swiss internet users (58%) also agree with the statement that they have nothing to hide, and 20% consider concerns about online privacy to be exaggerated.

Chilling effects on information seeking, self-expression, and disclosure of information due to surveillance capabilities on the internet

- Eight out of ten Swiss internet users (82%) say that they are at least rarely deterred by surveillance capabilities on the internet from searching for information on sensitive topics online.
- Around 7 out of 10 internet users (74%) say that surveillance capabilities at least rarely deter them from expressing their own interests, feelings, or opinions on the internet by writing comments.
- In addition, 7 out of 10 (71%) feel deterred from sharing personal information about themselves online.

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:

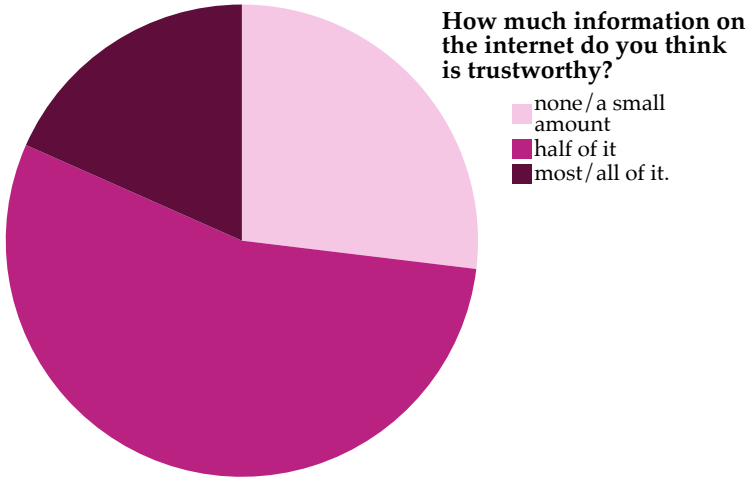
Sample for	2011	2013	2015	2017	2019	2021	2023	2025
Swiss population	1104	1114	1121	1120	1122	1120	-	-
Internet users	851	949	981	1013	1035	1069	1008	1078
Employed internet users	589	587	706	710	737	715	639	722
Non-users	253	165	140	107	85	51	-	-
Proxy users	90	79	56	54	34	11	-	-

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 Trust in Internet Content

Internet content is often criticized for its lack of trustworthiness, partly due to online anonymity and the fact that user-generated content does not usually undergo the professional quality control typical of traditional journalism, even though forms of user oversight are increasingly being established. To what extent does the Swiss online population trust internet content?

Figure 1: Trust in Internet Content



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

7 out of 10 Swiss people consider at least half of the information online to be trustworthy

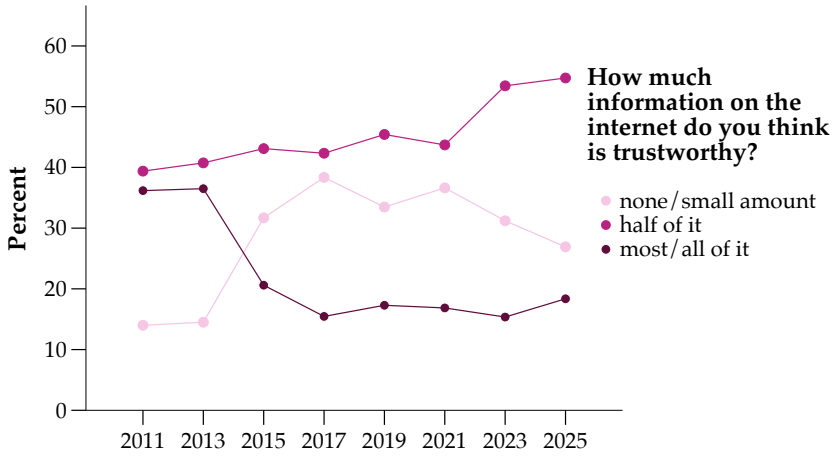
- 73% of the Swiss internet population consider at least half of the information on the internet to be trustworthy: while 55% consider half of the content on the internet to be trustworthy, 18% consider most of it to be trustworthy.
- A quarter of respondents (27%) believe that only a small portion of internet content is trustworthy.

Small age differences

- The trustworthiness of internet content is rated roughly the same across all age groups.

The following section outlines the development of assessments of the credibility of internet content since 2011.

Figure 2: Trust in Internet Content Over Time, 2011–2025



Data basis: Swiss internet users, WIP-CH.

Significant decline in trust after 2013, slight increase since 2017

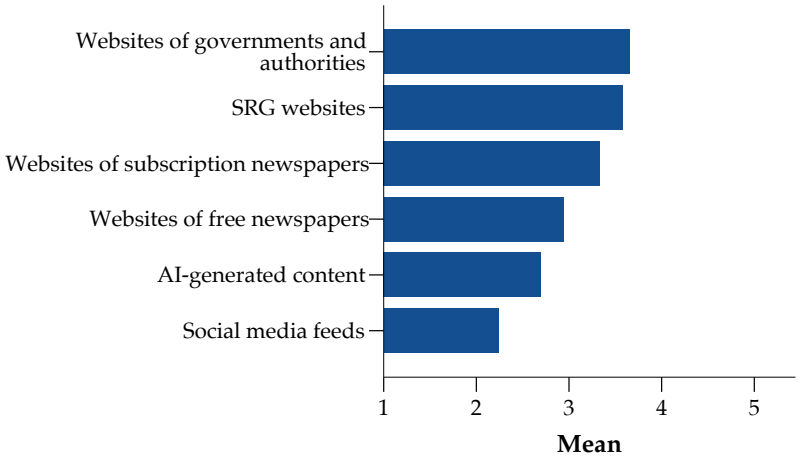
– Overall, trust in information on the internet has declined since 2011. After 2013, there was a clear break in the assessment of the trustworthiness of internet content. Since 2017, there has been a slight increase again.

– In 2011 and 2013, around three-quarters of the Swiss population (76% and 77%, respectively) rated at least half of online content as trustworthy. This proportion fell significantly in 2015 and has since stagnated at around two-thirds to three-quarters (2015: 64%, 2017: 58%, 2019: 63%, 2021: 61%, 2023: 69%, 2025: 73%).

– A quarter of the population (27%) will consider internet content to be untrustworthy or only trustworthy to a small extent in 2025. While around a third of respondents (31–38%) held this opinion between 2015 and 2023, the figure was significantly lower in 2013 and 2011 (15% and 14%, respectively).

The assessment of the trustworthiness of online content varies significantly between information sources. Respondents were asked to assess how much information from different sources is trustworthy, on a scale from none (1) to all (5). Professional information sources are rated as more trustworthy than user-generated content.

Figure 3: Credibility of Internet Content by Information Source



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

Authorities and SRG are the most credible

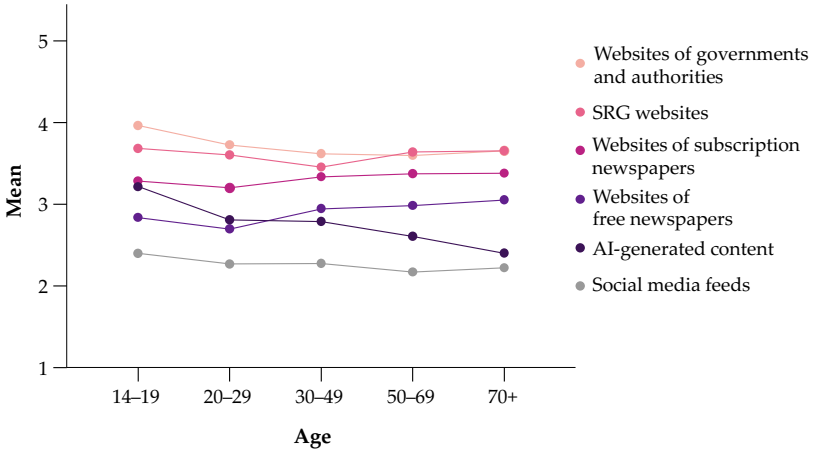
– Internet users trust established sources of information above all, including information on the websites of governments and authorities (m=3.7), the SRG (m=3.6), and newspapers (m=3.3).

Less trust in generative AI, especially among non-users and irregular users

– Internet users have comparatively less trust in free newspaper websites (m=2.9) and newer sources of information such as AI-generated content (m=2.7) and social media feeds (m=2.2). Non-users or non-regular users of AI consider AI-generated content to be significantly less credible (m=2.4) than regular users of AI (m=3.1).

There are slight age differences in the assessment of the credibility of various sources of information.

Figure 4: Credibility of Internet Content by Information Source and Age



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

– All age groups trust the websites of governments and authorities, the SRG, and paid newspapers the most (m=3.6–4.0, m=3.5–3.7, and m=3.2–3.4, respectively). Among those under 50, the websites of governments

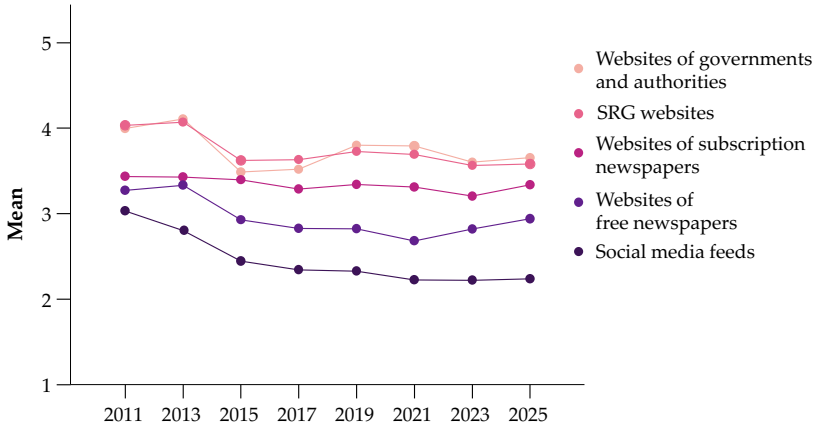
and authorities rank ahead of those of the SRG, while among those over 50, they enjoy roughly the same level of trust.

14–19-year-olds trust AI-generated content as much as they trust newspapers

– While free newspaper websites rank fourth among those over 30 (m=3.0–3.1), they have already been overtaken by AI-generated content among those under 30 (m=2.7–2.8 vs. AI: m=2.8–3.2). This is particularly evident among 14- to 19-year-olds, who trust AI-generated content almost as much as pages from paid newspapers (m=3.2 vs. m=3.3).

– All age groups trust content from social media the least (m=2.2–2.4).

Figure 5: Credibility of Internet Content by Information Source Over Time, 2011–2025



Data basis: Swiss internet users, WIP-CH.

– A comparison over time from 2011 to 2025 shows that trust in internet content has declined overall and has remained fairly stable since 2017.

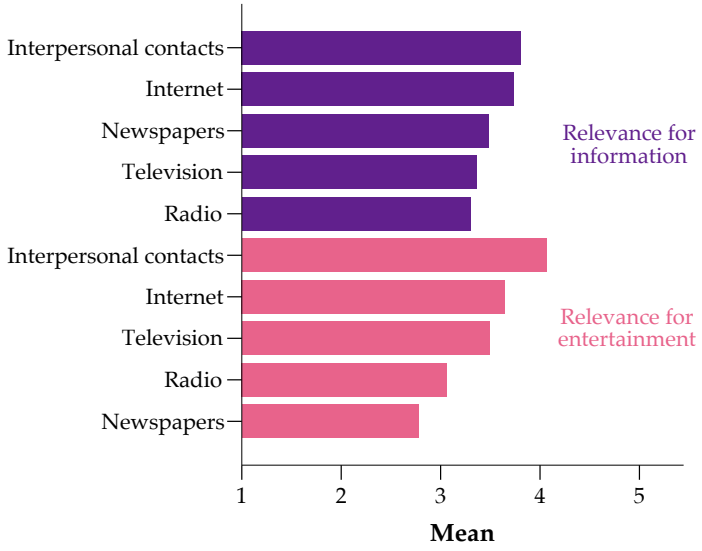
– The ranking of information sources according to credibility has remained stable since 2011: professional information sources are consistently considered more trustworthy than user-generated content.

2 Importance of Sources of Information and Entertainment

Online and offline sources of information and entertainment

Trust in content plays a central role, particularly when it comes to obtaining information. In addition to the internet, other media also serve as sources of information. What importance is attributed to them as information sources? And what role do the internet and other media play as sources of entertainment? This section compares the importance of various information and entertainment sources for the Swiss online population. Importance was measured on a scale from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (very important).

Figure 6: Importance of Information and Entertainment Sources



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

Offline relationships and the internet are the most important sources of information

– The Swiss online population considers interpersonal, non-media-mediated contacts, such as family or friends, to be the most important source of information (m=3.8).
– The internet ranks second (m=3.7) but is roughly equivalent. This is followed by newspapers (m=3.5), television (m=3.4), and radio (m=3.3).

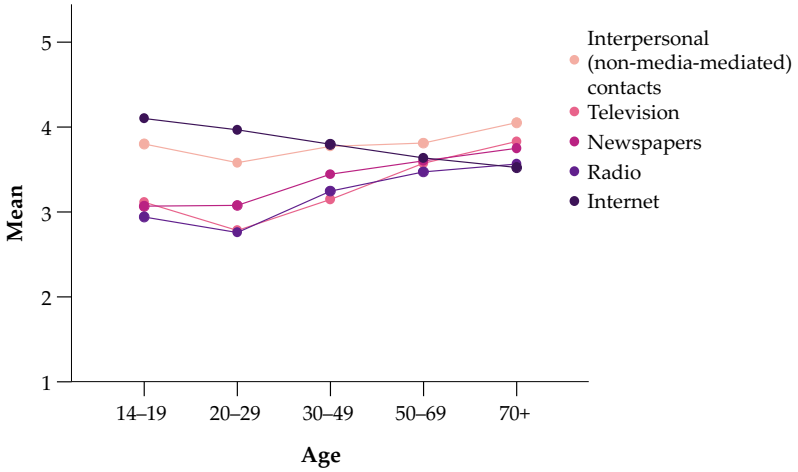
Respondents were asked to rate the importance of various entertainment sources on the same scale.

Interpersonal contacts are the most important source of entertainment, followed by the internet and TV

– Interpersonal contacts not mediated by the media are also the most important for entertainment (m=4.1).
– The internet also ranks second here (m=3.7). Television (m=3.5), radio (m=3.1), and newspapers (m=2.8) are also slightly less important for entertainment.

The assessment of information sources varies according to age.

Figure 7: Importance of Information Sources by Age



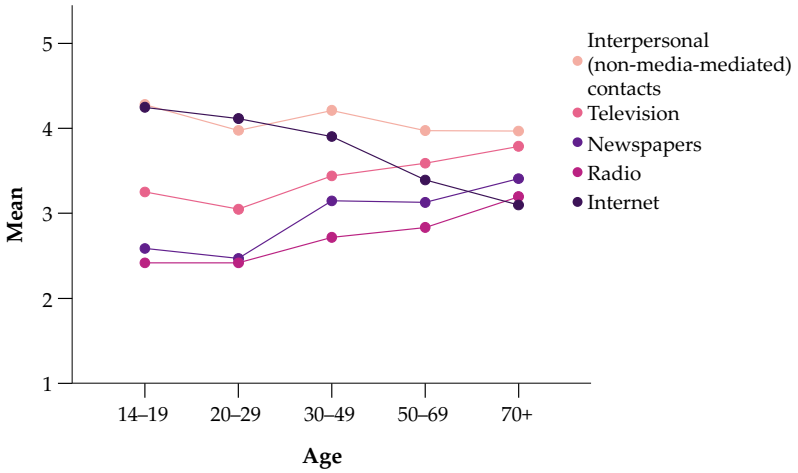
Data basis: Swiss internet users, WIP-CH 2025.

Internet most important source of information for under-30s

– For the two youngest age groups, the internet is the most important source of information, ahead of interpersonal contacts. For 30- to 49-year-olds, they are equally important. In the other age groups, the opposite is true. People aged 70 and over rate television, radio, and newspapers as more important than the internet. Traditional information media such as newspapers, television, and radio are therefore perceived as more important for information purposes by older population groups than by younger ones.

The assessment of entertainment sources follows a similar pattern, but with greater differences.

Figure 8: Importance of Entertainment Sources by Age



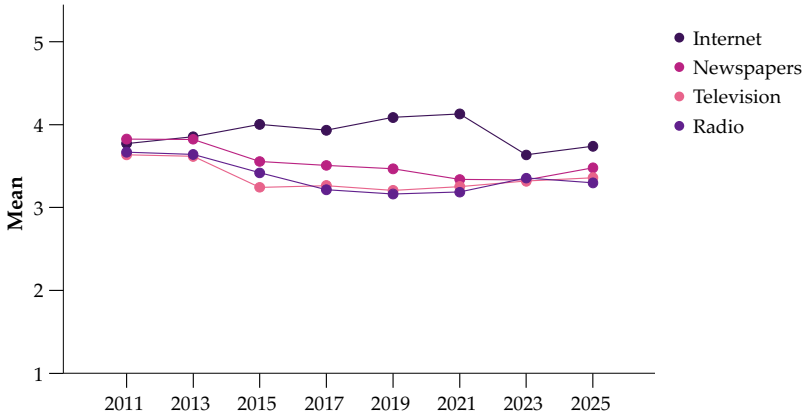
Data basis: Swiss internet users, WIP-CH 2025.

Internet becomes most important source of entertainment for 20–29-year-olds

– The importance of the internet for entertainment varies greatly between age groups: while younger people perceive the internet as very important for entertainment, older people consider it to be significantly less important (14–19: m=4.2 vs. 70+: m=3.1).
– Among 20- to 29-year-olds, the internet is rated as a more important source of entertainment (m=4.1) than interpersonal contacts (m=4.0) for the first time, while offline contacts continue to rank first in all other age groups.

A comparison with 2011 shows that the internet has gained in importance as both a source of entertainment and information, while more traditional media such as newspapers, radio, and television have been rated as less important over time. However, the differences between the years are very small overall.

Figure 9: Importance of Information Sources Over Time, 2011–2025

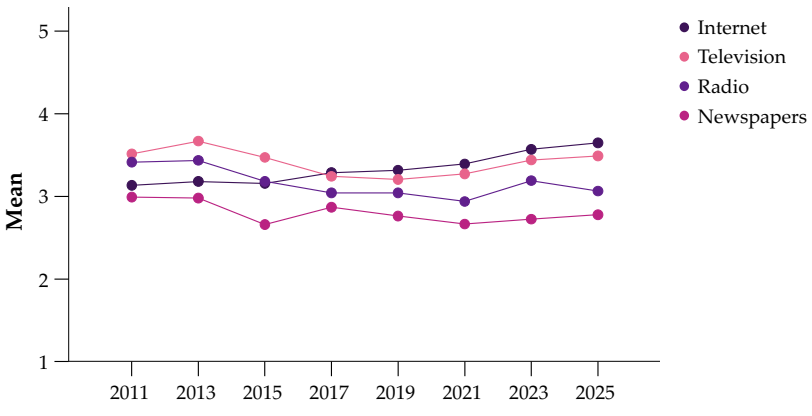


Data basis: Swiss internet users, WIP-CH.

Internet more important than traditional media since 2017

– While the internet was already the most important source of media information in 2013 (m=3.9), since 2017 it has also been the most important source of media entertainment (m=3.3), and its importance has continued to grow through 2025 (m=3.7).

Figure 10: Importance of Entertainment Sources Over Time, 2011–2025

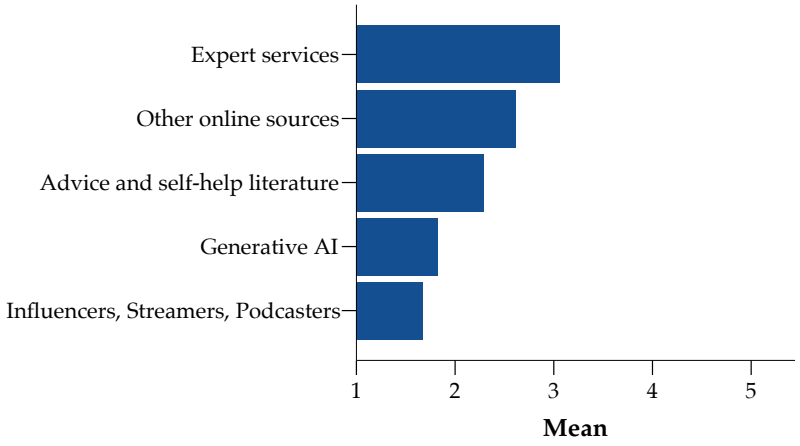


Data basis: Swiss internet users, WIP-CH.

3 Importance of Information Sources for Everyday Decisions

In addition to information and entertainment, other areas of everyday life are increasingly being shaped by a variety of new and traditional sources. In 2025, the Swiss online population was surveyed for the first time on how important different sources of information are to them for a wide range of everyday decisions. The importance of these sources was rated on a scale from 1 (not important at all) to 5 (very important).

Figure 11: Importance of Sources for Everyday Decisions



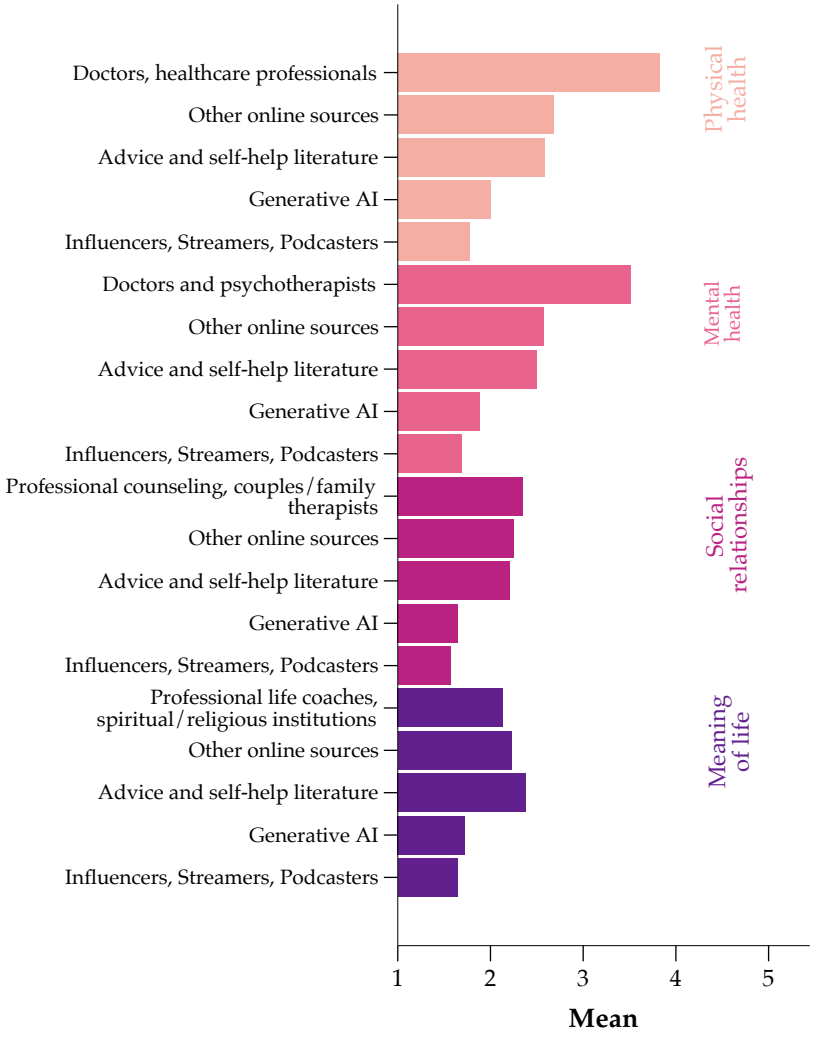
Data basis: Swiss internet users, WIP-CH 2025.

Traditional sources of information are more important than new ones; AI and influencers are least important for everyday decisions

– Overall, the Swiss online population attributes little importance to the surveyed sources of information for everyday decisions.
– Across all everyday decisions, the immediate social environment is the most important source of advice (m=3.6). This is followed in descending order of importance by expert sources (m=3.1), other internet sources such as search engines, apps, and websites (m=2.6), and advice and self-help literature (m=2.3).
– Generative AI such as ChatGPT and Google Gemini (m=1.8) as well as influencers, streamers, and podcasters (m=1.7) play the least important role on average in everyday decisions.

When looking at the importance of sources for specific everyday decisions, a similar pattern emerges overall.

Figure 12: Importance of Information Sources for Decisions Concerning Health, Social Relationships, and the Meaning of Life



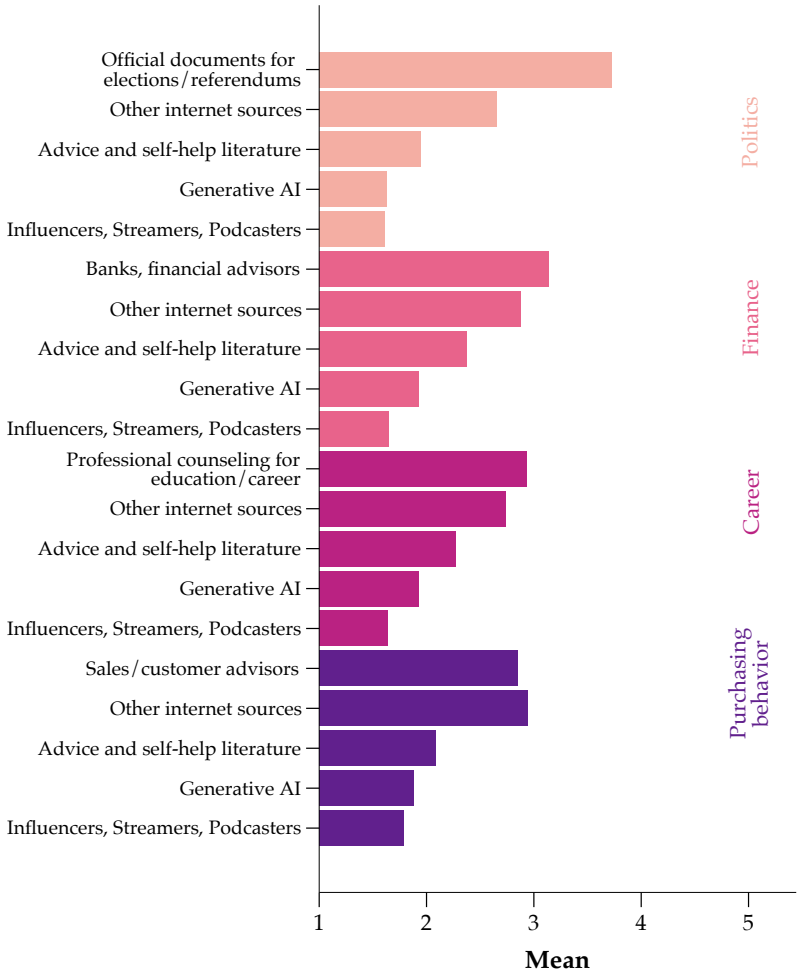
Data basis: Swiss internet users, WIP-CH 2025.

Experts and the internet are the most important sources of information on physical and mental health and social relationships

– When it comes to decisions about physical and mental health, specialists, i.e., experts, are by far the most important sources for Swiss internet users (m=3.8 and m=3.5, respectively). This is followed by internet resources (m=2.7 and 2.6, respectively) and advice and self-help literature (m=2.6 and m=2.5, respectively).
– When making decisions about social relationships and the meaning of life, experts (m=2.4 and m=2.1, respectively), internet resources (m=2.3 and m=2.2, respectively), and advice and self-help literature (m=2.2 and m=2.4, respectively) are considered to be of roughly equal importance.
– For all four areas of everyday life, generative AI (m=1.7–2.0) and influencers, streamers, and podcasters (m=1.6–1.8) are considered the least important.

– Thirteen percent of internet users consider generative AI to be important for decisions regarding their physical health. Twenty-four percent consider other internet sources to be important for this.

Figure 13: Importance of Information Sources for Decisions Concerning Politics, Finances, Career, and Purchasing Behavior



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

Experts and the internet are also the most important sources of information for decisions on politics, finance, career, and purchasing behavior

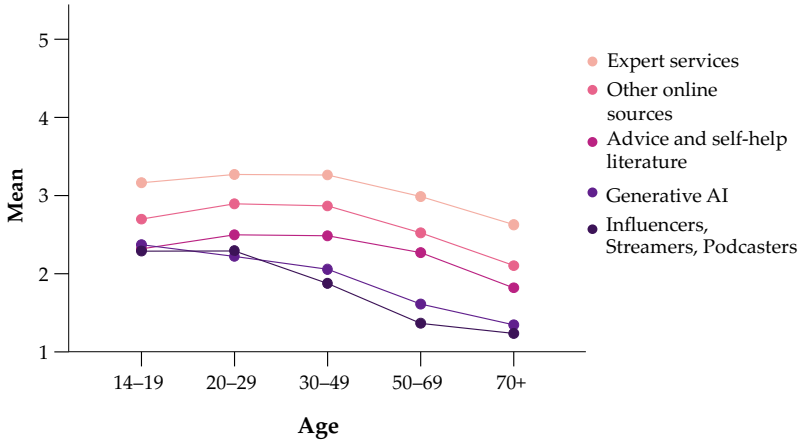
– When it comes to everyday decisions in the areas of politics, finance, career, and purchasing behavior, the Swiss online population also attaches the highest importance to information from experts (m=2.9–3.7) and internet resources (m=2.7–2.9). This is followed by advice and self-help literature (m=1.9–2.4), generative AI (m=1.6–1.9), and influencers, streamers, and podcasters (m=1.6–1.8).

– The difference in the importance of generative AI compared to traditional internet sources is evident, for example, in political decisions and purchasing decisions. For political decisions, AI is important for 7% of internet users (m=1.6), while other internet sources are important for 27% (m=2.7). When it comes to purchasing decisions, AI is important

for 11% (m=1.9), while traditional internet sources are important for 35% (m=2.9).

There are age differences in the perceived importance of the various sources of information for everyday decisions.

Figure 14: Importance of Information Sources for Everyday Decisions by Age



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

– Overall, the importance of all sources of information for everyday decisions is perceived to decrease with age.

New sources of information more important for younger people

– The age groups differ most strongly in their assessment of generative AI, influencers, streamers, and podcasters. While these sources of information play virtually no role in everyday decisions among the over-70s (m=1.3 and m=1.2, respectively), their importance is rated one point higher on average by the youngest respondents (m=2.4 and m=2.3, respectively).

Three in ten 14- to 19-year-olds consider AI important for financial decisions

– The difference is particularly clear in financial decisions. Three in ten (29%) 14- to 19-year-olds rely on generative AI in this area, compared to 4% of the oldest age group. Younger people also tend to rely more on new sources of information when making purchasing decisions. One in five 20- to 29-year-olds (19%) consider generative AI to be important, while the same number of 14- to 19-year-olds (22%) rely on influencers. The latter are also important for younger people when it comes to political decisions: for 2 in 10 (19%) 20- to 29-year-olds, they are an important source.

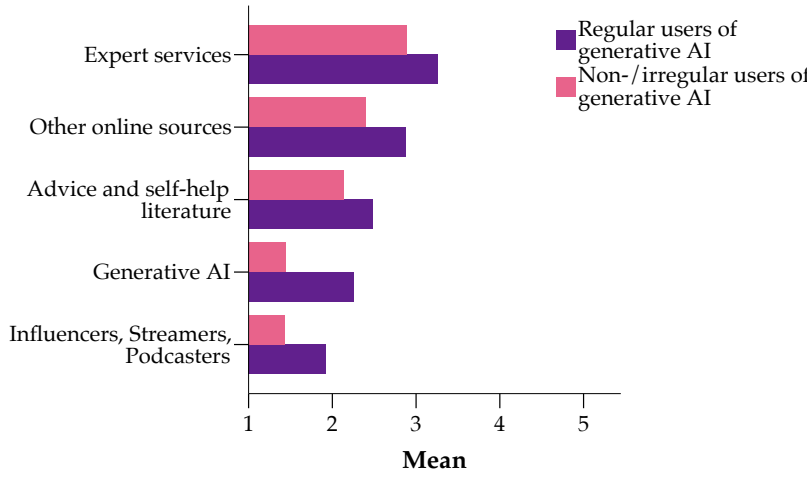
One in five people under 30 trust generative AI with their mental health

– Significant age differences are also evident when it comes to health issues. For 28% of 14- to 19-year-olds, generative AI is important for decisions regarding physical health (vs. 70+: 6%). People under 30 also consider generative AI to be significantly more important for decisions regarding mental health (19–20% vs. 50+: 4–5%).

– Nevertheless, established information sources such as experts (e.g., specialists) and traditional internet sources remain the most important points of reference for younger people across all decisions.

The importance of different information sources also differs between regular AI users and people who do not use such services (regularly).

Figure 15: Importance of Information Sources for Everyday Decisions by Use of Generative AI



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

– Overall, regular AI users consider all sources of information to be more important than people who do not use such services (regularly).

– The most significant difference is in the perceived importance of generative AI and influencers, streamers, and podcasters. Regular AI users attach greater importance to these new sources of advice, even if the importance is generally low (AI: m=2.3 and m=1.4, influencers: m=1.9 and m=1.4).

AI important for 2 out of 10 regular users when making decisions about finances, career, and physical health

– Nevertheless, generative AI is an important source of advice for decisions about finances, career, and physical health for one-fifth of regular AI users (21–22% vs. 3–5% for non-users).

The empirical findings show that the internet is a key resource for the Swiss online population, both for information and entertainment purposes and for various everyday decisions. At the same time, internet use can be accompanied by concerns and negative experiences.

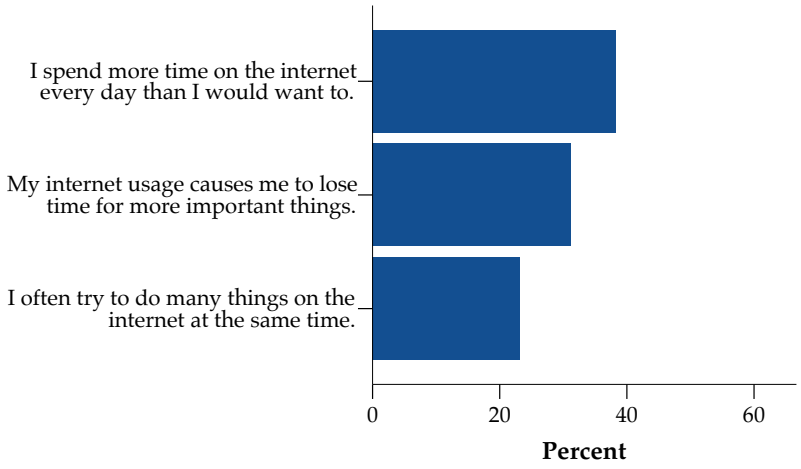
4 Concerns and Negative Experiences in Internet Use

The spread of the internet opens up considerable potential for positive social, cultural, political, and economic change. However, internet use also carries risks. This chapter analyzes the concerns and negative experiences of the Swiss online population with regard to their internet use.

4.1 Digital Overconsumption

Since 2017, internet users in Switzerland have been asked about the challenges in using the internet in everyday life that could affect their digital well-being. As part of digital well-being, the *digital overconsumption* of Swiss internet users was surveyed in particular. They were asked how strongly they believe that their internet use causes them to lose time for more important things, whether they spend more time on the internet every day than they would like to, and to what extent they try to do many things on the internet at the same time. The following outlines the percentage of Swiss internet users who agree with these statements.

Figure 16: Digital Overconsumption

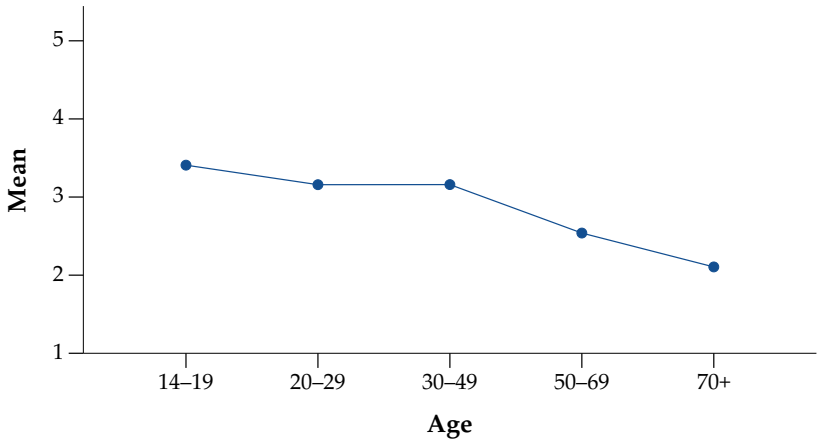


Data basis: Swiss internet users, WIP-CH 2025.

4 out of 10 spend more time on the internet than they would like

– Just under 4 out of 10 Swiss internet users (38%) report spending more time online than they would like.
– One-third of internet users (31%) believe that their internet use causes them to lose time for more important things.
– One in four internet users (23%) say they often try to do many things at once on the internet.

Figure 17: Digital Overconsumption by Age



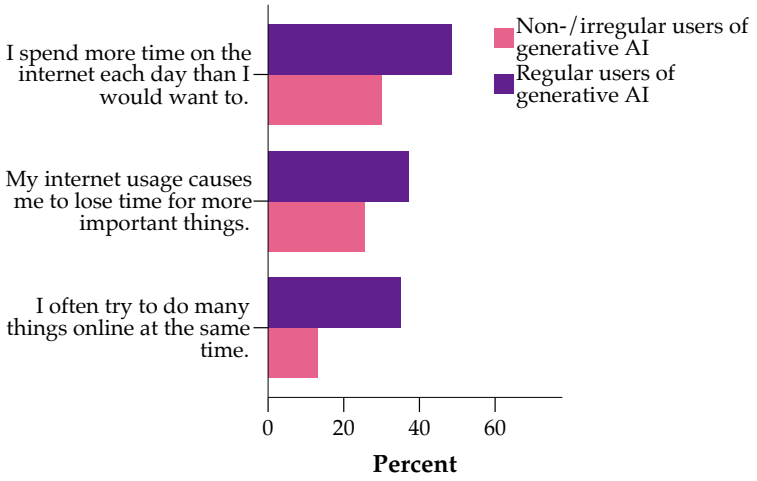
Data basis: Swiss internet users, WIP-CH 2025.

Younger people perceive greater digital overconsumption

– Internet users were asked various questions about digital overconsumption (see Figure 16). These were combined to a mean index.
– Overall, younger people perceive greater digital overconsumption than older people. It is lowest among those over 70 (m=2.1) and highest among 14- to 19-year-olds (m=3.4). As a result, they more often believe that they spend too much time online, lose time for more important things due to their internet use, and often do too many things at once online.

Perceived digital overconsumption also differs according to the use of generative artificial intelligence.

Figure 18: Digital Overconsumption by Use of Generative AI

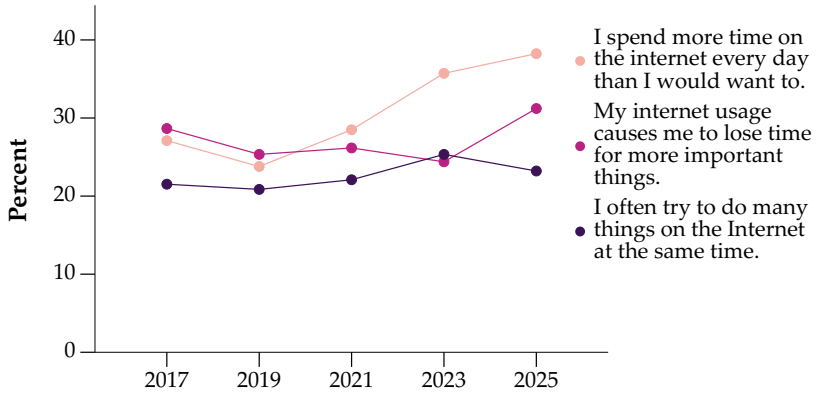


Data basis: Swiss internet users, WIP-CH 2025.

Regular AI users perceive greater digital overconsumption

– People who use generative AI regularly, i.e., at least once a month report digital overconsumption significantly more often than those who do not use such applications (regularly). Almost half of regular users (48%) say they spend more time on the internet than they would like. Around a third lose time for more important things (37%) or often try to do many things at once (35%). Among people who do not use generative AI (regularly), the corresponding figures are significantly lower (30%, 26%, and 13%, respectively).

Figure 19: Digital Overconsumption Over Time, 2017–2025



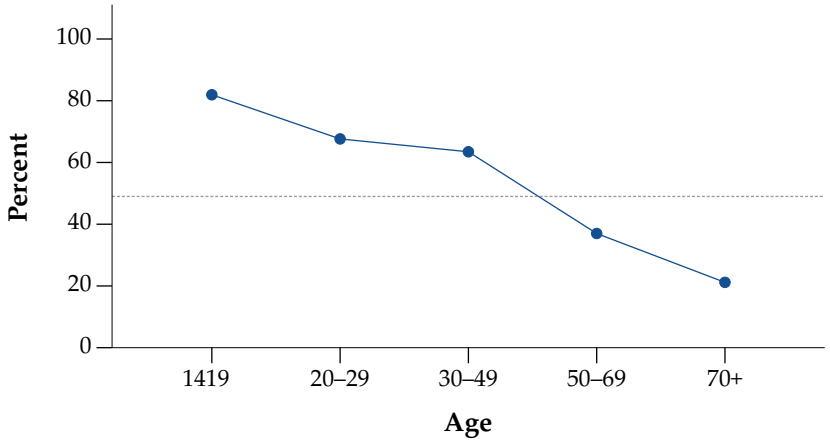
Data basis: Swiss internet users, WIP-CH.

– Swiss internet users are spending more and more time on the internet than they would like (2017: 27%, 2019: 24%, 2021: 29%, 2023: 36%, 2025: 38%).

– The other dimensions of digital overconsumption show smaller differences. Agreement with the statement that internet use causes people to lose time for more important things initially declined slightly after 2017, but rose again slightly from 2023 onwards (2017: 29%, 2019: 25%, 2021: 26%, 2023: 24%, 2025: 31%). The proportion of users who often try to do many things online at the same time has remained stable over the years (2017: 22%, 2019: 21%, 2021: 22%, 2023: 25%, 2025: 23%).

In connection with digital overconsumption, internet users were also asked whether they would like to reduce their daily internet use time.

Figure 20: Desire to Reduce Internet Use Time by Age



Data basis: Swiss internet users, WIP-CH.
Reference line: Average for internet users (49%).

Half would like to reduce their internet use time

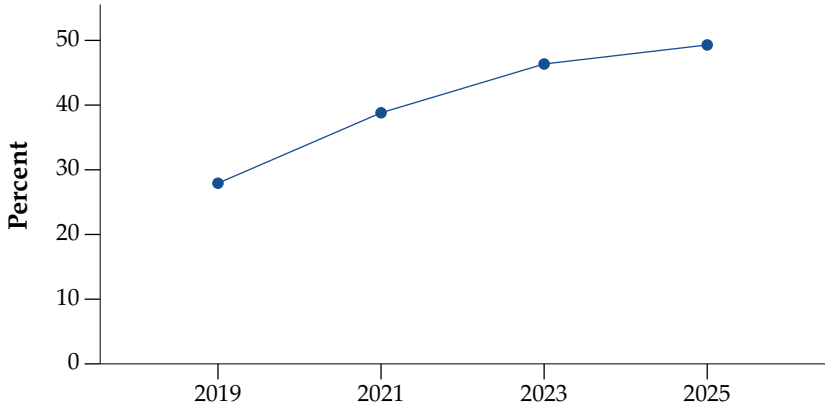
– Half (49%) of Swiss internet users would like to reduce their internet use time.

Desire to reduce decreases with age; greater among regular AI users

– The desire to reduce internet use is strongest among the youngest age group and decreases significantly with age. While 8 out of 10 14- to 19-year-olds (82%) would like to reduce their internet use, the figure is 2 out of 10 (21%) among the over-70s.

– The desire to reduce internet use also differs significantly between regular AI users and those who do not use AI (regularly) (58% vs. 42%).

Figure 21: Desire to Reduce Internet Use Time Over Time, 2019–2025



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

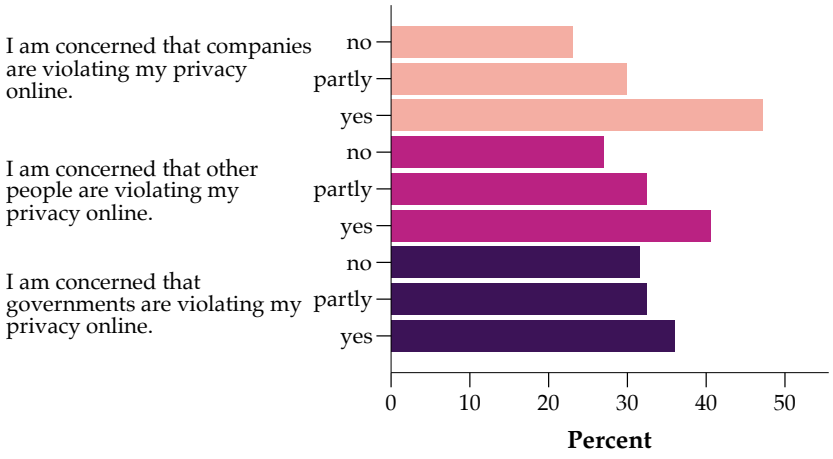
Growing desire to reduce internet use since 2019

– Since 2019, the desire among the Swiss online population to reduce their internet use time has increased significantly (2019: 28%, 2021: 39%, 2023: 46%, 2025: 49%).

4.2 Concerns About Privacy Violations

Internet users were also asked about their concerns regarding privacy violations on the internet. They were asked to rate statements about online privacy on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In this evaluation, ratings of 1 and 2 are summarized as "no," 3 as "partly," and ratings of 4 and 5 as "yes."

Figure 22: Concerns About Privacy Violations on the Internet



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

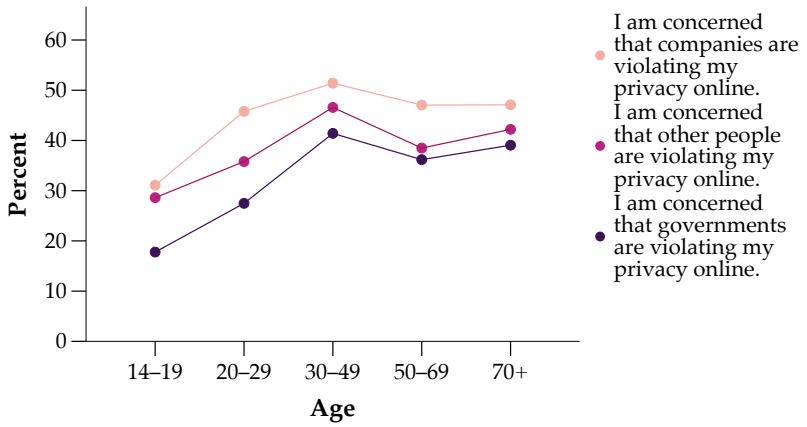
– Concern about privacy violations on the internet is considerable in Switzerland. More internet users are concerned than unconcerned about possible violations of their online privacy by companies, other people, or governments.

47% concerned that companies violate their privacy online

– Just under half of internet users (47%) are somewhat or very concerned that companies are violating their privacy online.
– Four out of ten users (41%) also express concern about their privacy being violated on the internet by other people.
– Users are least concerned about violations of their privacy by the government. Nevertheless, this concern is shared by over a third of Swiss internet users (36%).

There are age differences when it comes to concerns about online privacy violations.

Figure 23: Concerns About Privacy Violations on the Internet by Age



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

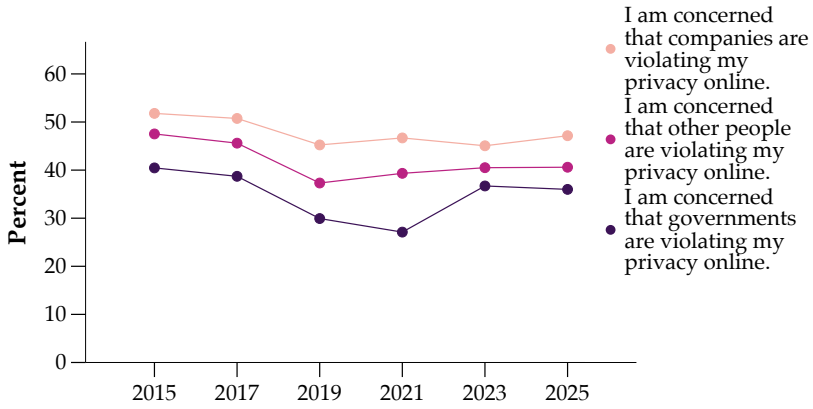
Concern about privacy violations highest among 30- to 49-year-olds

– Concerns about privacy violations are highest among 30- to 49-year-olds in all areas. They are most concerned about such violations by companies (51%), followed by violations by other people (47%), and governments (41%).

– Among 14- to 19-year-olds, concern about privacy violations is lowest in all areas. In this group, the proportion of those who are not concerned about privacy violations by governments (50% vs. 18% concerned), companies (38% vs. 31% concerned), and other people (34% vs. 29% concerned) predominates.

– Concern about privacy violations is highest among users with poor internet skills (48–61%).

Figure 24: Concerns About Privacy Violations on the Internet Over Time, 2015–2025



Data basis: Swiss internet users, WIP-CH.

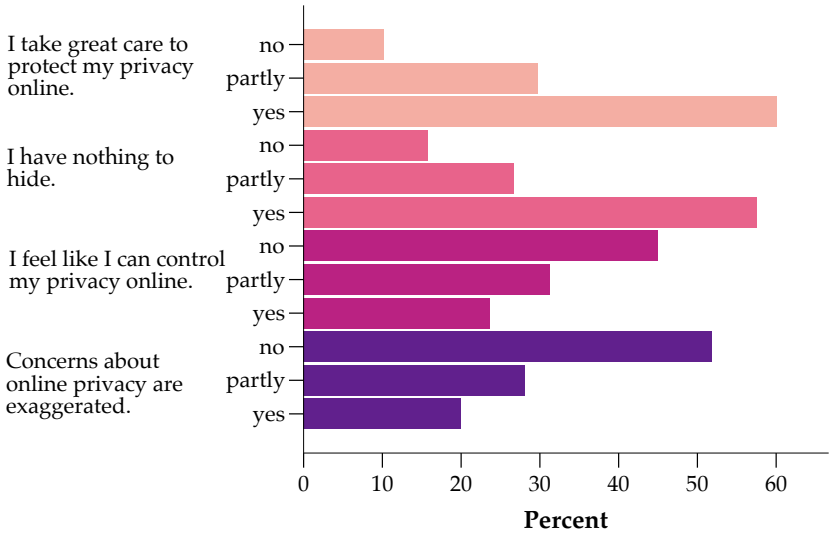
– The concerns of the Swiss online population about privacy violations have been surveyed since 2015 and have declined slightly since then.

– Concerns about privacy violations by companies have fallen since 2015 (52%) and have remained at 45–47% since 2019.
– Concerns about privacy violations by other people also fell initially (2015: 48%) and have risen again by 4 percentage points since 2019 (37%).
– Concerns about privacy violations by governments have also declined since 2015 (41%), but have risen slightly again since 2021 (27%) (+9 percentage points).

Trend reversal in concerns about privacy violations by governments since 2021

In addition to concerns about possible privacy violations by third parties, the attitudes of internet users toward the protection or control of their own privacy are also of interest. The following statements were each rated on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with 1 and 2 again being summarized as "no," 3 as "partly," and 4 and 5 as "yes."

Figure 25: Attitudes Toward Privacy on the Internet



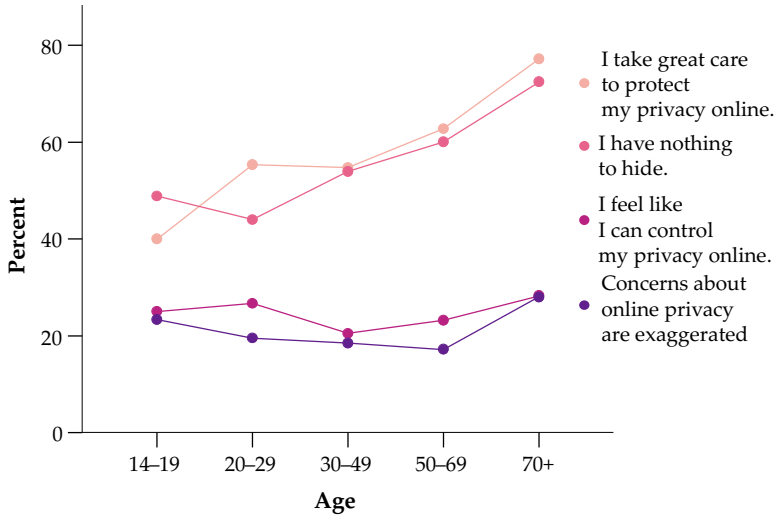
Data basis: Swiss internet users, WIP-CH 2025.

– Six out of ten Swiss internet users (60%) say they take great care to protect their privacy on the internet, while 10% disagree with this statement. This illustrates the great importance attached to privacy in the digital age. Nevertheless, just as many agree that they have nothing to hide (58%).
– Although the majority say they pay close attention to protecting their privacy online, only 24% feel they can control their privacy.
– One-fifth (20%) say they find concerns about online privacy exaggerated. While just under 3 in 10 (28%) are undecided, the largest proportion (52%) do not consider these concerns to be exaggerated.

The majority pay close attention to protecting their privacy on the internet but at the same time have nothing to hide

Attitudes toward privacy when using the internet vary with the age of the respondents.

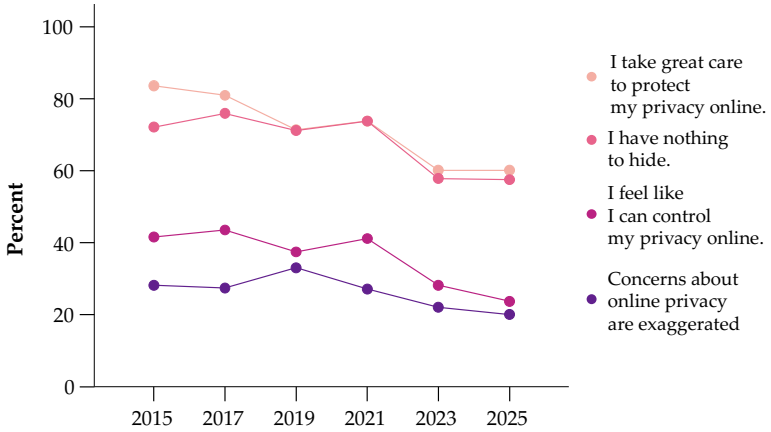
Figure 26: Attitudes Toward Privacy on the Internet by Age



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

– Older internet users are significantly more likely to say that they are very careful about protecting their privacy online. Among those aged 70 and over, the figure is 77%, while among 14- to 19-year-olds it is about half as much (40%).
– The feeling of having nothing to hide increases with age. While this applies to just under half of the two youngest groups (44–49%), it applies to almost three-quarters (72%) of those over 70.
– There are minor age-related differences in the feeling of being able to control one's own privacy online (21–28%).
– Agreement with the statement that concerns about online privacy are exaggerated is also similar across all groups (17–28%).

Figure 27: Attitudes Toward Privacy on the Internet Over Time, 2015–2025



Data basis: Swiss internet users, WIP-CH.

– A year-on-year comparison shows that the proportion of users who say they pay close attention to protecting their privacy on the internet has

fallen by 24 percentage points since 2015 and has remained unchanged since 2023 (2015: 84%, 2017: 81%, 2019: 71%, 2021: 74%, 2023: 60%, 2025: 60%).

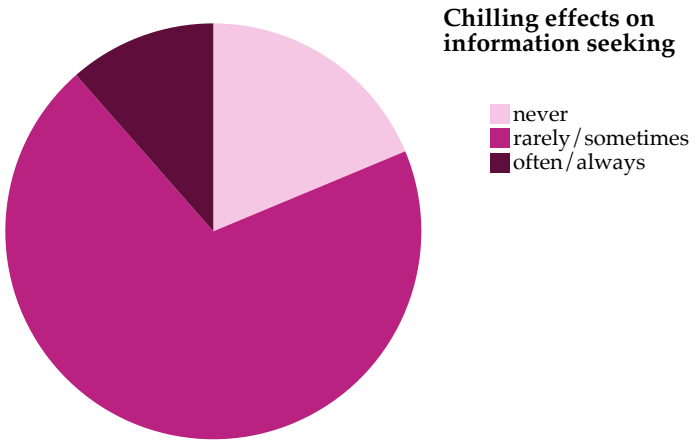
– The situation is similar with regard to the feeling of having nothing to hide. Here, there has been an overall decrease in agreement of 14 percentage points (2015: 72%, 2025: 58%).

– Agreement with the other statements concerning privacy on the internet has declined slightly since 2015. Less than half of respondents said they felt they could control their privacy on the internet (2015: 42%, 2025: 24%) and that concerns about online privacy were exaggerated (2015: 28%, 2025: 20%).

5 Chilling Effects on Free Internet Use

Surveillance capabilities on the internet are often discussed in the media, and concern about this issue is widespread among the Swiss population. The feeling of being monitored on the internet can lead users to refrain from certain activities on the internet that are entirely legitimate or even socially desirable. These deterrent effects (also known as *chilling effects*) can occur, for example, when internet users restrict their search for information on a sensitive topic on the internet due to the possibility of being monitored. How often does this apply to Swiss internet users?

Figure 28: Chilling Effects on Information Seeking



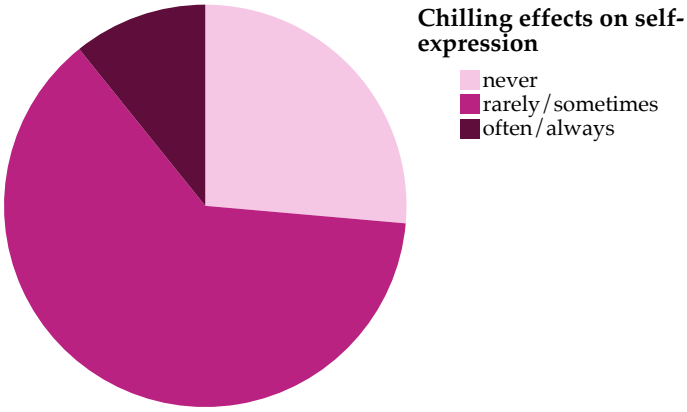
Data basis: Swiss internet users, WIP-CH 2025.

Strong chilling effects on information seeking

- 70% of Swiss internet users say that they are rarely or sometimes deterred by surveillance capabilities when searching for information on a sensitive topic on the internet.
- A further 12% say they often or always experience such chilling effects on information seeking.
- Two out of ten (19%) never feel restricted by surveillance capabilities on the internet when searching for information on a sensitive topic.

Such chilling effects can occur not only when users want to search for information on a sensitive topic on the internet. Internet users may also restrict themselves from expressing their interests, feelings, or opinions on the internet (e.g., writing comments). How often does this apply to Swiss internet users?

Figure 29: Chilling Effects on Self-Expression



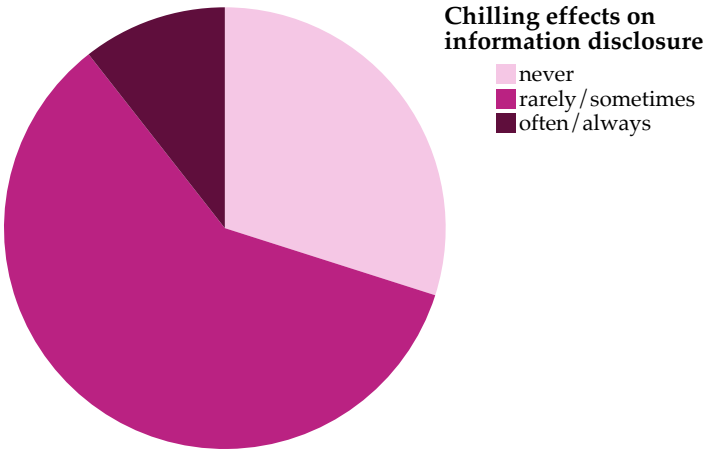
Data basis: Swiss internet users, WIP-CH 2025.

Strong chilling effects on self-expression

– More than half (63%) of Swiss internet users say that they are rarely or sometimes deterred from expressing their feelings, interests, or opinions on the internet due to the possibility of surveillance. One in ten (11%) experience these chilling effects often or always, and a quarter (26%) never experience them.

In addition to chilling effects on information seeking and self-expression, there are also chilling effects on information disclosure. This means that users restrict themselves in terms of what personal information they share about themselves on the internet, e.g., by uploading a picture, sharing their location, or providing information about themselves. How often does this apply to Swiss internet users?

Figure 30: Chilling Effects on Information Disclosure



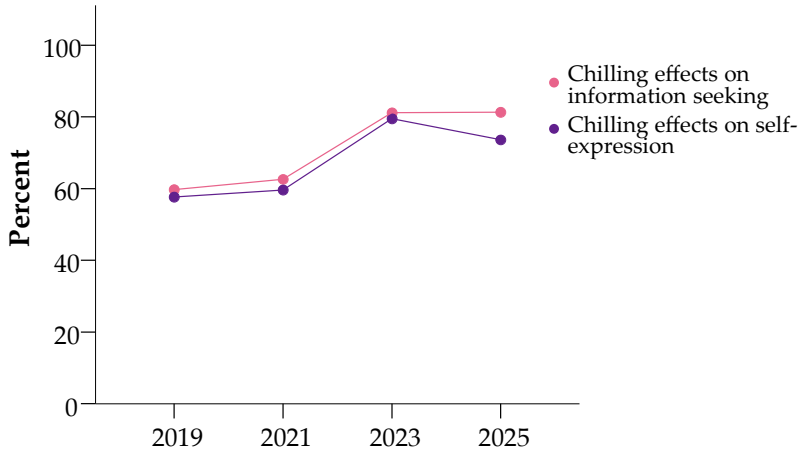
Data basis: Swiss internet users, WIP-CH 2025.

Strong chilling effects on information disclosure

– Six out of ten Swiss internet users (60%) say that they are rarely or sometimes deterred from sharing personal information about themselves on

the internet due to the possibility of surveillance. One in ten (11%) experience these chilling effects often or always, and three out of ten (30%) never experience them.

Figure 31: Chilling Effects Over Time, 2019–2025



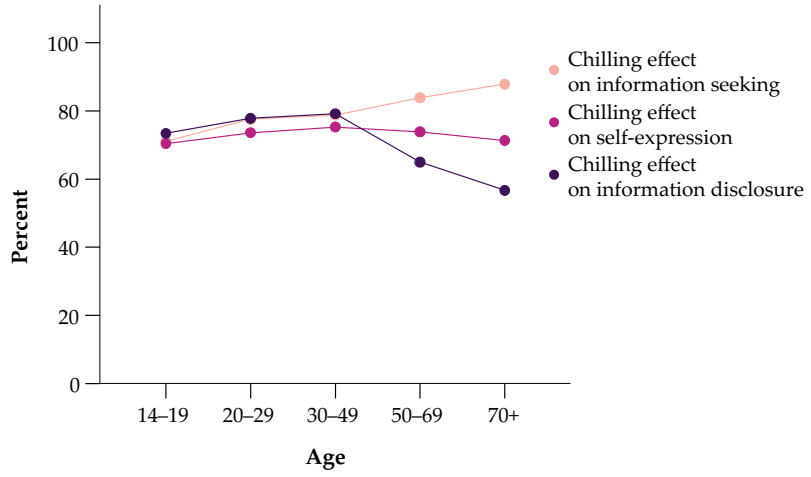
Data basis: Swiss internet users, WIP-CH.

Chilling effects have been increasing since 2019

– A comparison over time shows that chilling effects on information seeking and self-expression have increased since 2019. In 2019, 60% experienced chilling effects on information seeking at least sometimes. In 2021, the figure was 63%, and in 2023 and 2025, it was 81%, respectively. In 2019, 58% experienced chilling effects on self-expression at least sometimes. In 2021, the figure was 60%, in 2023 it was 80%, and in 2025 it is 74%.

– The chilling effects on information disclosure are slightly lower in 2025 (70%) than in 2023 (85%).

Figure 32: Chilling Effects by Age



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

– While a majority in all age groups experiences chilling effects, there are age differences.
– While older people are more deterred from searching for information on sensitive topics (70+: 88% vs. 14–19: 71%), younger age groups are more affected by deterrence effects when it comes to disclosing information (20–49: 78–79% vs. 70+: 57%).
– The chilling effects on self-expression show only slight differences according to age (70–75%).
– There are hardly any differences between genders or educational groups with regard to these chilling effects.

Older people experience chilling effects more when searching for information, younger people when disclosing information

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

Representative survey of Swiss internet users

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.

Since 2023: Switch from telephone to online survey

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).

Recruitment from two online panels

Recruitment for the online survey was carried out using a combination of two different panels (the Polittrends 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.

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**

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