


Apprenticeship Pulse Results August 2021

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Author(s):

[Bolli, Thomas](#) ; [Caves, Katherine Marie](#) ; [Dändliker, Lena](#) ; [Morlet, Guillaume Maxence](#); [Pusterla, Filippo](#) ; [Rageth, Ladina](#) ; [Renold, Ursula](#) ; [Sritharan, Aranya](#)

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Research Team

Thomas Bolli, Katherine M. Caves, Lena Dändliker, Guillaume Maxence Morlet, Filippo Pusterla, Ladina Rageth, Ursula Renold, Aranya Sriitharan

Chair of Education Systems, ETH Zürich, Switzerland

The Apprenticeship Pulse has been surveying the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on basic dual vocational education and training (VET) in Switzerland on a monthly basis since April 2020. The first survey covered the situation during the shutdown, which was gradually relaxed in the following months. After summer 2020 with relatively low case numbers and limited measures, a second wave in October 2020 was followed by a renewed tightening of measures (incl. home office recommendation) and subsequently restaurants, bars as well as cultural, leisure and sports facilities closed again. Teaching at vocational schools continued with hygiene and behavioral rules, and only a few cantons temporarily switched to distance learning.

In January 2021, a nationwide partial shutdown was imposed. This closed stores selling non-daily goods and introduced a home office requirement. However, schools and service providers could remain open. These measures lasted until February 28 and were relaxed in four steps: on March 1, stores were allowed to open; on April 19, outside areas of restaurants and bars as well as leisure, cultural and sports facilities were allowed to open; on May 31, the home-office obligation

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was relaxed, large events were allowed again and inside areas of restaurants were allowed to open; on June 26, 2021, the mask obligation for outdoor areas was lifted, home-office was only recommended and COVID-19 certification became mandatory in discos and at large events. In August, the number of cases increased again; no new measures or relaxations have been introduced since the end of June.

This fact sheet shows the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on apprenticeship companies and apprentices in **August 2021**, reporting on three groups of young people: future apprentices, current apprentices, and apprentices in their final year of apprenticeship. In particular, the results are compared with those of the previous month (July 2021) and a year ago (August 2020). All results are weighted and representative for training companies and apprentices in Switzerland.

The Pulse of Apprentices in August 2021 – Main Points

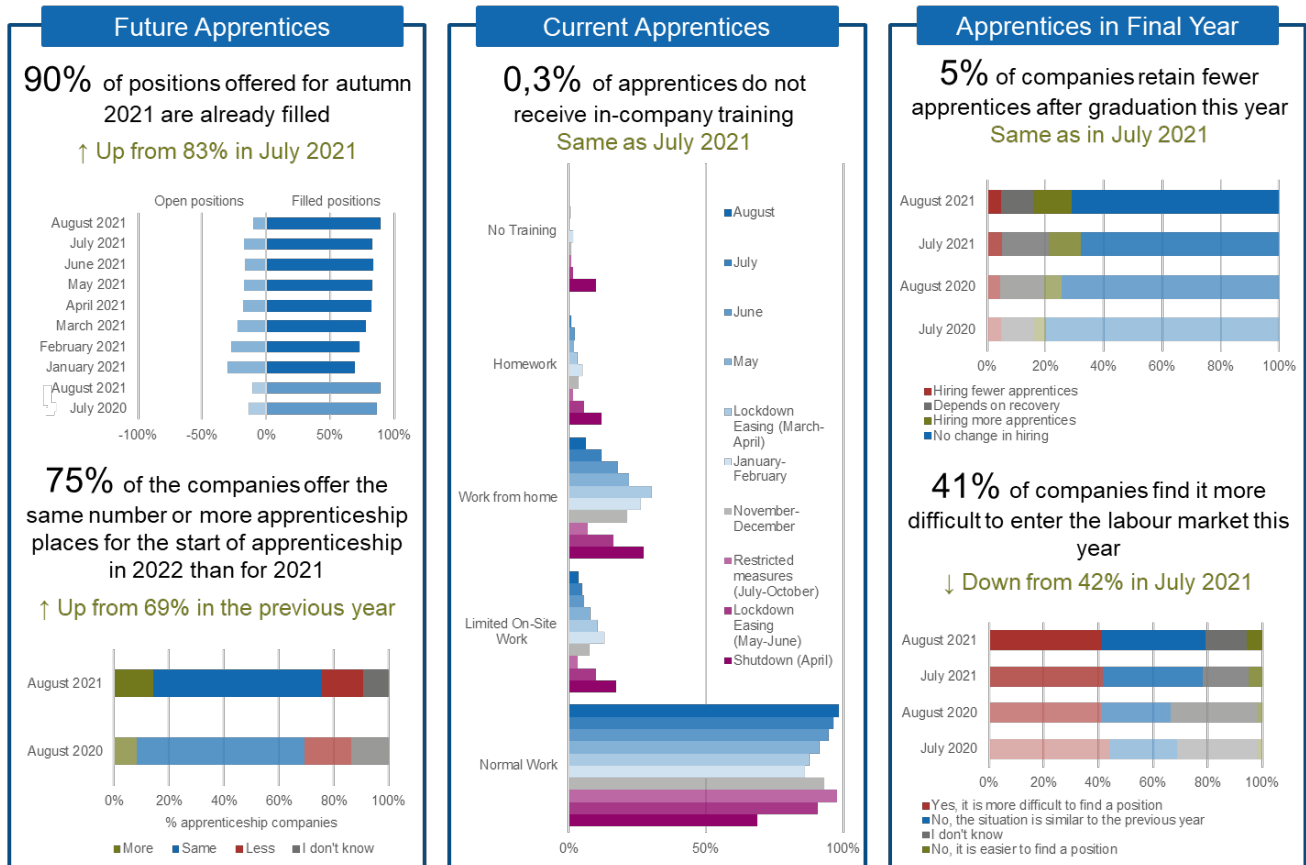


Figure 1: The headlines on Apprenticeship Pulse in August 2021.

Remarks: Results based on weighted data from the monthly Apprenticeship Pulse surveys from April 2020 to August 2021. The box on the left shows the main results for future apprentices, the middle box those for current apprentices (not in the final year) and the right box those for apprentices in the last year apprenticeship year.

Future apprentices (Group 1) begin the application process one year before the start of their apprenticeship in German-speaking Switzerland. In French-speaking Switzerland, this process does not start until spring. In August, 75% of companies reported that they will offer the same number or more apprenticeship positions for the cohort starting in 2022 compared to 2021. A year ago, 69% of companies wanted to offer the same number or more apprenticeships for 2021 than for 2020, with 14% of those wanting to offer more apprenticeships in the following year in August 2021 (8% in August 2020), higher than a year earlier, and those wanting to offer the same number of positions constant at 61%. 15% of companies indicated in August that they will offer fewer apprenticeships in 2022 than in 2021 (17% in August 2020) and 9% of companies are uncertain about offering apprenticeships in the following year which is slightly less than last year (14% in August 2020).

Since the beginning of this year, the Apprenticeship Pulse has been surveying the proportion of open or already filled apprenticeship positions for the cohort starting in 2021 whose recruiting process normally ends in August. According to the companies, 90% of the apprenticeship positions offered for autumn 2021 were already filled in the last month (83% in July), while 10% were still open (17% in July).¹ Thus, the training companies were able to fill some of the apprenticeship positions again in August, and this increase was greater than in the previous year. At that time, 89% of the offered apprenticeship positions could be filled as of August 2020, which was a 3 percent increase compared to the previous month (86% in July 2020). It should be noted that these figures do not include differences in the total number of apprenticeship positions offered at the time of the survey.

¹ The Apprenticeship Pulse analyzes the share of apprenticeship positions that are still open or have already been filled out of the currently offered apprenticeship positions and is therefore not directly comparable with the

completed apprenticeship contracts recorded by the Task Force Perspektive Berufslehre (see <https://taskforce2020.ch/de/monitoring>)

Current apprentices (Group 2) were similarly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in August 2021 as in the previous month. 0.3% did not receive any in-company training (same as in July). A small proportion of apprentices (4%; 5% in July) were at their workplaces to a limited extent, and the proportion of apprentices with homework for the practical training even fell to zero (1% in July). In August, slightly more apprentices (98%) were working on-site under Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH) protective measures than in the previous month (96% in July) and a lower proportion of apprentices were in home office in August (6%; 12% in July). This proportion has steadily decreased over the past few months, with two-thirds of the apprentices who working from home in June 2021 able to return to the training company (18% in June).²

This means that the work situation of apprentices has improved again—especially for those who were in home office. The situation is similar across occupational fields: the proportion of apprentices who were in home office in “Information Technology” has decreased to 31% (37% in July), although it is still much higher than the other occupational fields. In “Business/Administration/Tourism,” 13% of apprentices were in home office in August, which is a slight improvement compared to the previous month (18% in July).

Apprentices in the final year of their apprenticeship (Group3)

Some of the apprentices are employed by their training companies after their apprenticeship. In August, 71% of

companies indicated that they will not change their employment practices this year compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic (68% in July). The proportion of training companies that want to employ more apprenticeship graduates than they did before COVID-19 has also increased slightly (13%; 11% in July). However, 5% of training companies will employ fewer trainees this year (same in July) and 11% have not yet decided (16% in July). This means that the uncertainty regarding the employment of apprentices is slightly lower than in the previous year (15% in August 2020) and the proportion of companies that employ more apprentices is higher (6% in August 2020). In general, a lower proportion of companies changed their employment practices in 2020, while in August 2021 a higher proportion of training plan to employ either more or fewer apprentices (18%; 10% in August 2020).

When asked whether it will be more difficult for apprentices to find a job after graduation this year compared to cohorts before COVID-19, 41% of training companies in August agreed that it will be (42% in July). 38% stated that the situation is comparable to before COVID-19 (37% in July) and 6% of training companies forecast easier entry into the labor market (5% in July). In August 2020, a similar amount of companies predicted more difficult prospects for young professionals (41%), but the uncertainty was greater at the time (15% in August 2021, 32% in August 2020).

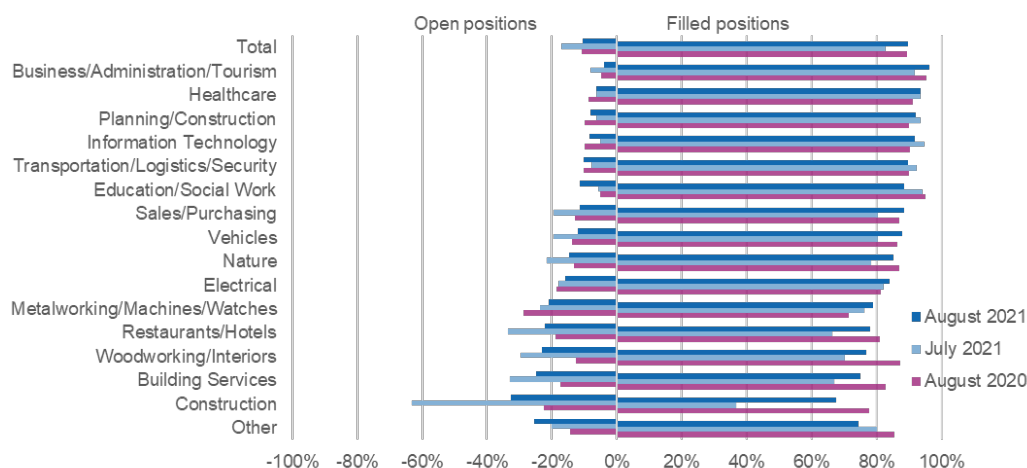


Figure 2: Open and filled apprenticeship positions by occupational field and in comparison with the previous year

Remarks: Results based on weighted data from the Apprenticeship Pulse surveys in August 2021, July 2021 and August 2020. The left-hand side of the graphic shows, overall and for each occupational field, what proportion of the apprenticeship positions are still open; the right side shows which part is already filled. Occupational fields with fewer than 50 apprenticeship companies are grouped under “Others”.

² These proportions do not add up to 100%, as various measures can apply at the same time and not all apprentices in a company always complete the practical training in the same way, i.e. the companies could select several answers.

Detailed Results

Apprentices starting in 2021 (Group 1)

In August, 75% of companies reported that they planned to offer the same number or more apprenticeship positions for the cohort starting in 2022 compared to 2021. This proportion is higher than the previous year: 69% of training companies planned to offer the same amount or more apprenticeship positions for 2021. At the same time, the proportion of training companies offering fewer apprenticeships for the following year is slightly lower than last year (15%; 17% in August 2020). In addition, 9% do not yet know how many apprenticeship positions they will offer next summer compared to 2021 (14% in August 2020). Differences between the language regions are particularly apparent in terms of uncertainty. 8% of companies in German-speaking Switzerland do not yet know how many positions they will offer in 2022 compared to 2021, while this is the case for 19% of companies in Latin-speaking Switzerland³. In addition, the training companies in Latin-speaking Switzerland are slightly more optimistic than in German-speaking Switzerland. 21% of companies states that they intend to offer more apprenticeship positions for 2022 compared to 2021 (13% in German-speaking Switzerland).

5% of companies reported that they can offer additional apprenticeships for those who would otherwise not find

an apprenticeship due to COVID-19 (6% in July). On average, these companies offer 1.45 such additional apprenticeship positions (1.39 in July).

Under special pandemic regulations, apprentices can start the program as late as October in 2021. 82% of companies stated that they will not recruit any further apprentices past the normal August start date, 10% plan to continue recruiting, and 9% do not know. The situation was similar last year, although in August 2020 slightly more companies wanted to stop the recruiting process before October (85%).

According to training companies, 90% of the positions offered for 2021 were already filled in August this year (83% in July). In particular, Latin-speaking Switzerland was able to fill more vacancies in August compared to the previous month (84%; 60% in July). Figure 2 shows the breakdown of filled apprenticeship positions by occupational fields. The highest proportion of filled apprenticeships was observed in the occupational fields of “Business/Administration/Tourism” (96%) and “Health” (94%). “Health” in particular is catching up compared to the previous month and taking over first place (92% in July). Many occupational fields with a lower percentage of filled positions were also able to close gaps compared to July.

	Apprentices at work		Apprentices at home		
	Normal work	Limited on-site presence	Working from home	Homework	No training
Total	98%	4%	6%	0%	0.3%
Construction	100%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Education/Social Work	100%	1%	0%	2%	0%
Electrical Engineering	100%	1%	2%	1%	0%
Vehicles	99%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Hospitality	100%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Building Services	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Healthcare	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Woodworking/Interiors	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Information Technology	91%	10%	31%	0%	1%
Metalworking/Machines/Watches	100%	1%	0%	1%	0%
Nature	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Planing/Construction	99%	1%	7%	1%	0%
Sales/Procurement	99%	3%	3%	0%	0%
Transportation/Logistics/Security	99%	1%	1%	0%	1%
Business/Administration/Tourism	97%	5%	13%	0%	1%
Other	97%	5%	9%	1%	4%

Figure 3: Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the training of apprentices by occupational field.

Remarks: Results based on weighted data from the Apprenticeship Pulse Survey in August 2021. The table shows the proportions (%) of apprentices per measure and occupational field of all apprentices covered by the apprenticeship companies surveyed in the respective occupational field (multiple answers possible). Occupational fields with fewer than 50 apprenticeship companies are grouped under “Others”.

³ Due to the low number of responses in Latin-speaking Switzerland, especially in Ticino, these language regions were combined.

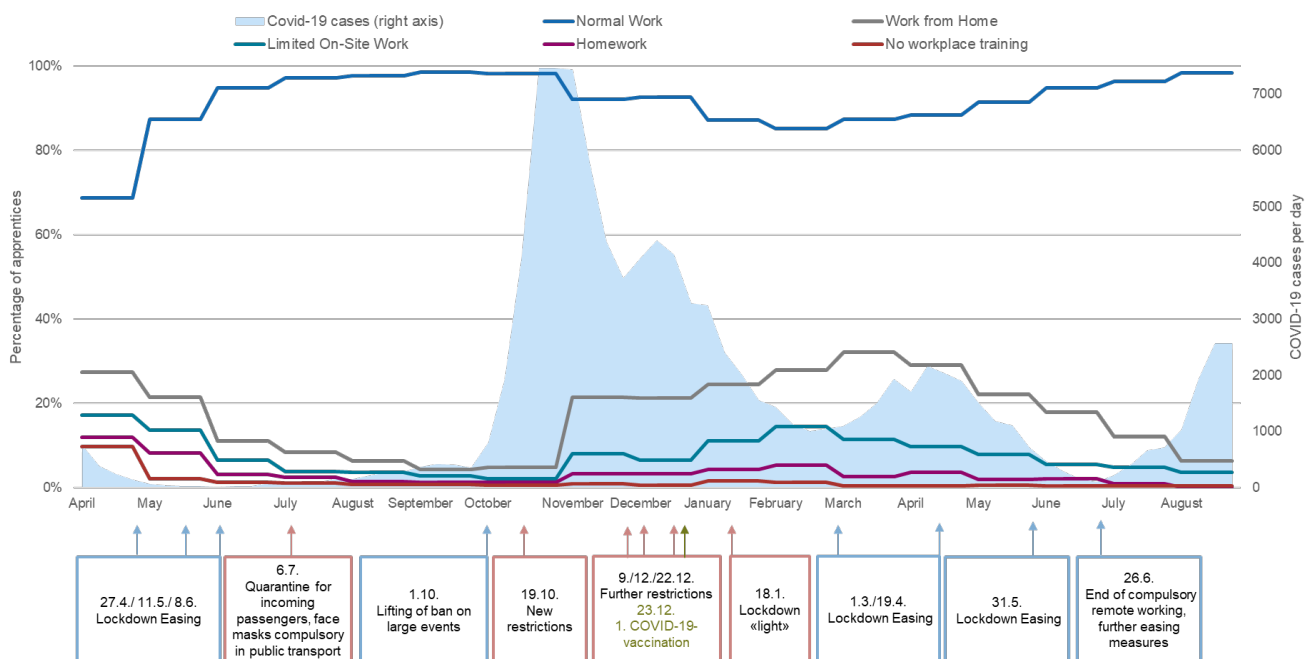


Figure 4: Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on training of apprentices over time.

Remarks: Results based on weighted data from the monthly Apprenticeship Pulse surveys from April 2020 to August 2021. On the left-hand vertical axis, the figure shows the proportions (%) of apprentices per measure for in-company training among all apprentices covered by the apprenticeship companies surveyed (multiple answers possible). The right vertical axis shows the number of COVID-19 cases per day (weekly average) from April 2020 to August 2021.

For example, the occupational field "Restaurants/Hotels" was able to fill 78% of the apprenticeship positions offered in August, much more than the previous month (66%). However, the previous year also shows that slightly more apprenticeship positions were filled in August 2020 (81%). Compared to the previous year, fewer apprenticeship contracts were concluded in the occupational fields of "Construction," "Building Services," "Woodworking/Interiors," and "Education/Social Work."

Current Apprentices (Group 2)

Figure 3 shows the impact of the pandemic on apprentices' training overall and by professional field. With an average of 98% (96% in July), the apprentices in most occupational fields worked normally in the company in August (with FOPH protective measures). 4% of apprentices had a limited on-site work (5% in July), 0% of apprentices had homework instead of training (1% in July) and 0.3% did not receive any company training (same as in July). The percentage of apprentices working from home was lower than in the previous month (6%; 12% in July). However, these values were still high in individual occupational fields in August. In the occupational field of "Information Technology," the proportion of apprentices in home office is almost a one-third (31%; 37% in July) despite a decrease compared to previous month.

As in July, the difference between language regions is evident in the proportion of apprentices in home office (1%

in Latin-speaking Switzerland vs. 7% in German-speaking Switzerland). In the previous month, these percentages were 4% in Latin-speaking Switzerland and 13% in German-speaking Switzerland. Figure 4 shows the development over time of these shares with the daily COVID-19 case numbers and protective measures. Thanks to the gradual easing of the partial shutdown in recent months, the situation for apprentices has improved. In August, fewer apprentices were in home office while other training situations remained stable or slightly improved.

Furthermore, the percentage of companies stated that all apprentices were equally affected by the COVID-19 pandemic rose to 53% compared to the previous month (47% in July). 26% of the companies believe that weaker apprentices were most affected (30% in July). 17% of companies stated that the apprentices in their final year (18% in July) and 7% of the training companies believe the new apprentices are the most affected group (6% in July). Slightly fewer companies than in the previous month believe that the pandemic hit the apprentices who are in the middle of their apprenticeship the most severely (14% (17% in July).

Quarantine measures

Due to the quarantine regulations to protect against COVID-19 infections, apprentices can be confronted

with interruptions in their training. This concern increased in August specifically for apprentices and other employees. 9% of the companies stated that they had quarantined apprentices in the four weeks before the survey from mid/end of July to mid/end of August (4% in July). For the other employees, this was 18% (13% in July). This increase is contrary to the trend, as there was still a continuous decline in amount of companies with apprentices and other employees in quarantine between November 2020 and July 2021. The proportion of companies that had vocational trainers in quarantine was 2% (same in July). However, only a small proportion of apprentices and other employees were in quarantine in these companies (1%; same as in July) and among vocational trainers, this proportion was almost zero as in the previous month.

Compared to the previous month, a lower proportion of quarantined apprentices received homework (16% in August and 25% in July). The proportion of apprentices without practical training also decreased (48%; 57% in July) and more quarantined apprentices were able to complete their training through home office (46% in August and 36% in July).

Effects on costs and productivity

The companies surveyed stated that their training costs have risen due to the changes since the shutdown caused by COVID-19, with the average value slightly higher than in June 2021 (0.20 on a scale from -2 "much lower costs" to 2 "much higher costs"; 0.17 in June). The left bar chart in Figure 5 shows that the training companies attribute the largest proportion of this change to the protective measures (40%; 43% in June). 16% attribute it to quarantine measures (15% in June), 12% (14% in June) to new infrastructure (e.g. for home office), 23% to more extensive apprentice supervision (21% in June) and 8% to other reasons (7% in June). The companies also stated that the productivity of apprentices has slightly decreased

since the beginning of the pandemic, although the loss of productivity is slightly lower than in June (-0.25 on a scale from -2 "much lower productivity" to 2 "Much higher productivity"; -0.27 in June). The right-hand side of Figure 5 shows that the change is mostly attributed to the fact that learning content is more difficult to convey in home office (37%; 35% in June). Apprentices' being insecure and demotivated is also very important (31%; 34% in June). The fact that learning content is delayed or not taught at all (17%; 19% in June) and other reasons (15%; 13% in June) are also held responsible for productivity changes. Overall, the proportions of the reasons for both training costs and productivity are similar to those recorded two months ago.

Catching up on missed material

Can the apprentices catch up on the material they have missed due to the COVID-19 pandemic in the remainder of their apprenticeships? Figure 6 shows the results of this question and compares the results with the development of the COVID-19 case numbers and FOPH measures. The training companies still believe that the apprentices cannot fully catch up on *in-company training* (4.24 on a 5-point scale, where 5 means "can certainly be made up"; 4.12 in July), *inter-company courses* (4.19; 4.12 in July), and *school education* (4.00; 3.88 in July). These figures improved in August compared to the previous month. The average value for school education is above 4.00 in August for the first time since September 2020. Companies are also more optimistic when it comes to catching up on in-company training, as the average value in August 2021 is the highest since July, September and October 2020.

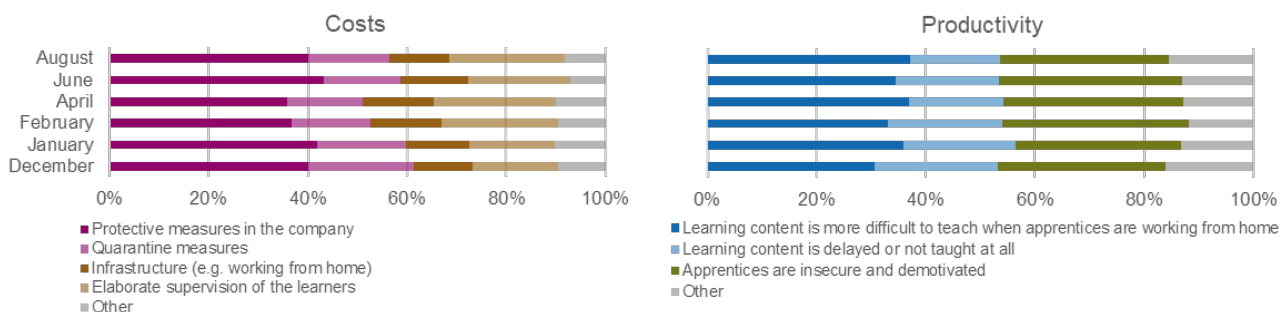


Figure 5: Reasons for the higher training costs and the lower productivity of the apprentices.

Remarks: Results based on weighted data from the Apprenticeship Pulse surveys from December 2020 and January, February, April, June and August 2021. The graphs show the proportions of the various reasons for COVID-related factors for each month and separately for training costs and productivity changes in an average training company.

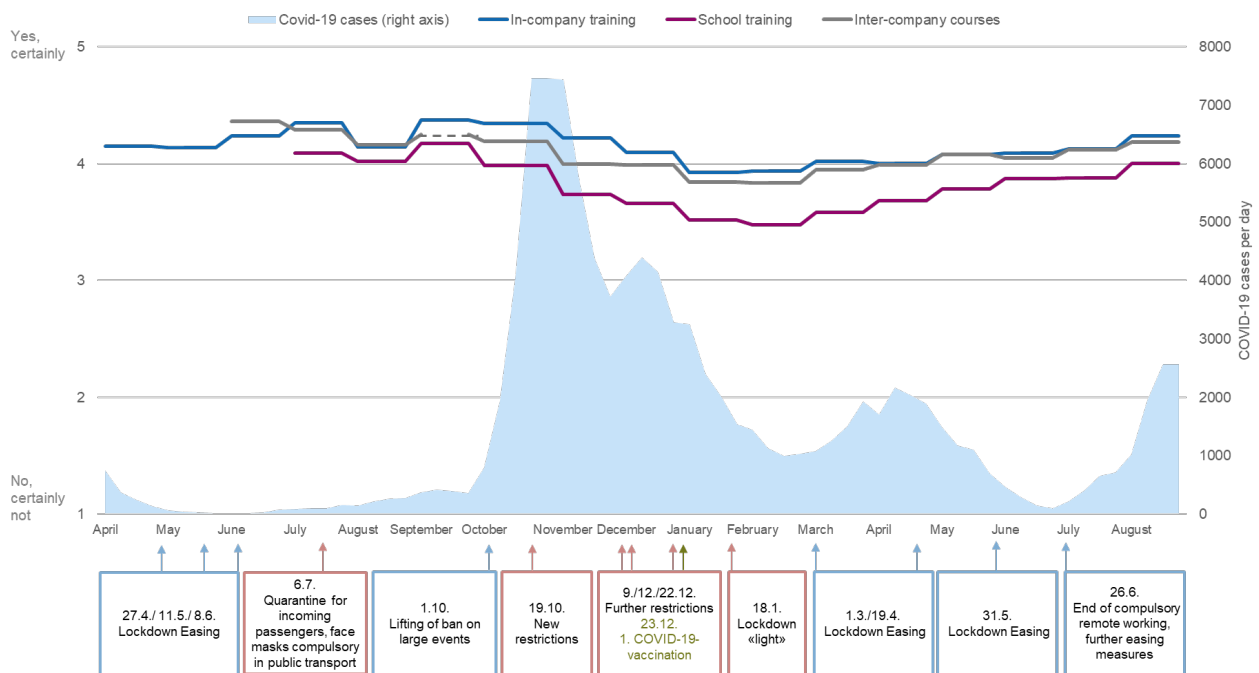


Figure 6: Catching-up on the missed material due to COVID-19 pandemic over time.

Remarks: Results based on weighted data from the monthly Apprenticeship Pulse surveys from April 2020 to August 2021.

The figure shows on the left vertical axis whether the companies think that the apprentices can definitely not (1) or definitely (5) still catch up with the material. The right vertical axis shows the number of COVID-19 cases per day (weekly average) from April 2020 to August 2021.

Apprentices in the last year of apprenticeship (Group 3)

When training companies were asked whether they have changed their employment practices compared to before COVID-19, 71% reported that they will employ the same number of apprentices after graduation (68% in July). The proportion of companies that continue to employ more apprenticeship graduates has also increased slightly (13%; 11% in July), while 5% employ fewer apprentices than the period before COVID-19 (same in July). This means that the proportion of companies reporting a change in their employment practices is 18%, higher than the previous year (10% in August 2020). In August 2020, a higher proportion of companies did not yet know whether they would employ more apprenticeships after graduation than before COVID-19 (11% in August 2021; 15% in August 2020). The most common reason indicated by the training companies for employing more apprentices is that more apprentices are currently needed with these competencies (28%). 19% of training companies want to show solidarity with young people, 14% need more employees with these skills in the future, and 11% had already planned to employ more graduates in 2022.

The proportion of training companies stating that the job search is more difficult this year than before COVID-19 was also high in August and has remained at a relatively constant level over time (41%; 42% in July). Similar to the previous month, 38% of companies think the situation is comparable (37% in July), 15% do not know (17% in July)

and 6% predict an easier entry into the labor market (5% in July). The assessments are similar to those in August 2020, although the uncertainty was greater at that time (32%) and fewer companies found the situation comparable to before the pandemic (26%).

57% of apprentices have received support from their training companies to facilitate their entry into the labor market (58% in July). 36% of training companies either hired all or some of the apprentices as part of a support program or for a limited period in order to facilitate their transition to the labor market. In addition, 67% of the apprentices received support with their applications (65% in July), a slight increase compared to the previous month, and a large increase over 59% a year ago. 56% of the apprentices received a transitional solution of 3-12 months' employment in their training companies (55% in July), 47% got advice on further education and training opportunities (43% in July), 25% got a job offer in their own company or internal labor market (28% in July), 26% got a job placement within the industry (24% in July) and 1% got a job placement abroad with partner companies (2% in July).

Effects on training companies and

apprentices

The surveyed companies and their apprentices were also affected to varying degrees by the COVID-19 pandemic in August. However, there are only minor changes compared to the previous months. Figure 7 shows that 95% of the companies were working with FOPH protective measures (94% in July). The proportion of companies with staff on short-time work (7%; 9% in July), with staff including apprentices on short-time work (3%; 4% in July)

and with protective measures that particularly affect the apprentices (6%; 7% in July) remained as low as in the previous month. In addition, the proportion of companies with temporary closure orders or risk of bankruptcy is still at a low level. Compared to the previous year, the situation of the training companies has significantly improved, and only slight changes have been evident during the last few months.

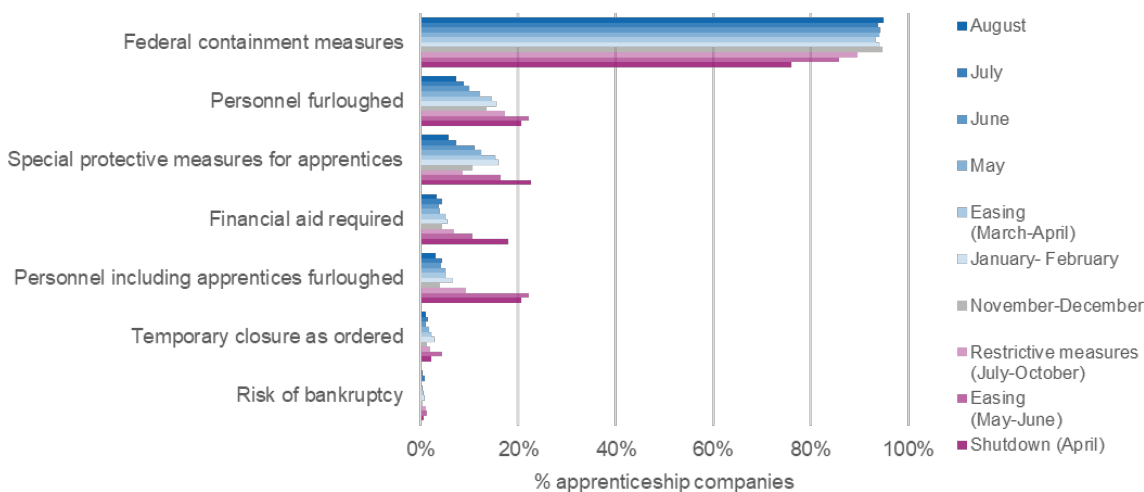


Figure 7: Training companies and their apprentices affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Remarks: Results based on weighted data from the monthly Apprenticeship Pulse surveys from April 2020 to August 2021. The graph shows the proportion of training companies affected (in %) of all training companies surveyed per impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Data and Representativeness

The Apprenticeship Pulse survey in August 2021 includes 1,617 training companies (1,818 in July) of various sizes from all cantons and professional fields. The questions were answered by people with different functions in their respective training companies, with vocational trainers, HR specialists, and managers all represented. Since a total of 44,660 training companies were contacted for the survey, the Apprenticeship Pulse achieved a response rate of 3.62% in August (4.07% in July). However, the calculation of the response rate is not exact because the survey was not only sent directly to these companies, but was also disseminated using other channels.

The training companies surveyed offer 13,988 apprenticeship positions (14,686⁴ in July) in a wide variety of regions and occupational fields. They also cover a total of 1.77% of all training companies in Switzerland (1.99% in July). The coverage for German-speaking Switzerland (2.22%; 2.45% in July) is better than for Latin-speaking

Switzerland (0.34%; 0.54% in July). There are also major differences in the occupational fields. "Information Technology" (4.51%), "Electrical Engineering" (4.46%) and "Transport/Logistics/Security" (4.01) are covered best, while "Vehicles" (1.42%), "Nature" (1.36%) and "Sales/Purchasing" (1.28%) tend to be underrepresented. Large companies were also more likely to be overrepresented than SMEs.

The weighting procedure⁵ used corrects the differences in representativeness by company size, language region and occupational field.

⁴ The number of apprentices in a training company is only asked for the first time they participate in the survey (not in every month). However, this information was collected again from all participating companies from the March survey onwards in order to compensate for fluctuations in the number of apprentices in the meantime.

⁵ The fact sheet "Weighting and Representativeness of the Results" provides more detailed information on the weighting method used: <https://doi.org/10.3929/ethz-b-000454763>

Further information at
www.lehrstellenpuls.ch.

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- Verein Polybau

Contact

ETH Zürich
Prof. Dr. Ursula Renold
Chair of Education System
www.ces.ethz.ch →

Apprenticeship Pulse
info@lehrstellenpuls.ch →
www.lehrstellenpuls.ch →