

Results of the March 2023 Apprenticeship Pulse

Other Publication

Author(s):

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

Publication date:

2023-04-05

Permanent link:

<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3929/ethz-b-000614863>

Rights / license:

[In Copyright - Non-Commercial Use Permitted](#)

Originally published in:

Apprenticeship Pulse – Factsheet



« Apprenticeship Pulse » - Fact sheet

Results of the March 2023 Apprenticeship Pulse

April 5, 2023

Team of researchers

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

Research Partners

Urs Casty
Domenica Mauch

Chair of Education Systems, ETH Zurich

Yousty.ch Professional.ch

The Chair of Education Systems at ETH Zurich, in collaboration with the Yousty apprenticeship platform, has been surveying current events in Switzerland's apprenticeship companies for over three years since the COVID-19 pandemic began in April 2020. Until April 2022, the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on apprenticeships in Switzerland was measured on a monthly basis. With the lifting of the measures on April 1, 2022, the surveys continued on a quarterly basis. The focus is on the extent to which possible long-term consequences and future developments of the COVID-19 pandemic are driving up the pulse of apprenticeships. The current March 2023 survey marks the end of the Apprenticeship Pulse project for the time being. The box below shows the most important facts about the project and the sample of three years of Apprenticeship Pulse:

- 29 survey waves
- Average of 2,132 training companies per survey
- Average of 1,453 micro and small companies with up to 50 employees per survey
- Average of 18,525 apprentices per survey
- The occupational fields "Information Technology", "Planning, Construction", "Electrical" and "Metalwork/Machines/Watches" were best represented relative to their respective total number of apprenticeship companies
- The best represented cantons were Appenzell Innerrhoden and Basel-Stadt.
- Medium and large companies with 50+ employees were slightly better represented than small companies.
- 56% of the respondents were vocational trainers or heads of vocational training, 19% HR specialists, personnel specialists or heads, 12% managing directors and 13% others.
- 25 supporting organizations

The Pulse of Apprentices in March 2023 – Main Points

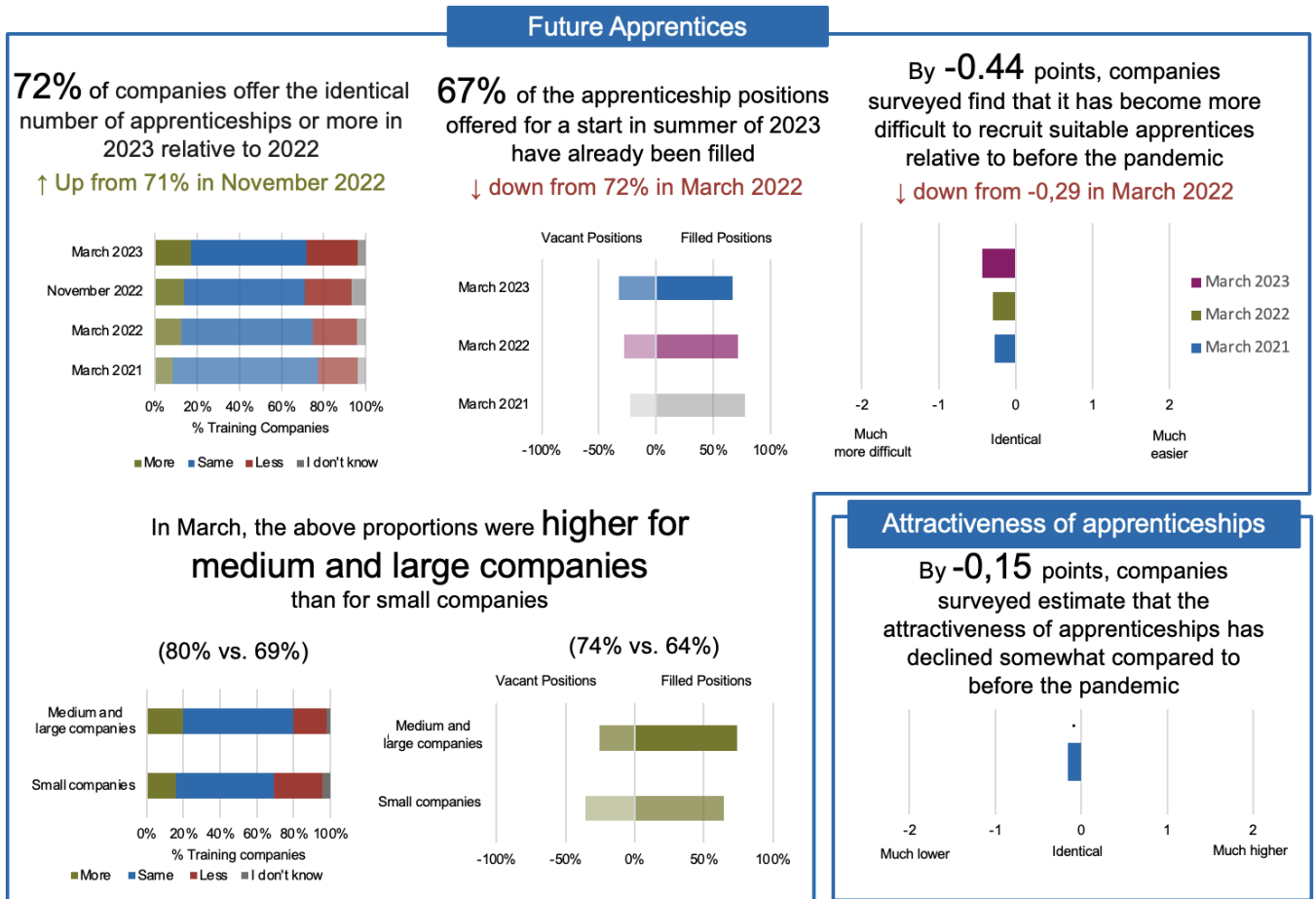


Figure 1: The headlines of the "Apprenticeship Pulse" in March 2023.

Remarks: Results are based on weighted data from the Apprenticeship Pulse surveys from April 2020 to March 2023. The large box on the left shows the main results for future apprentices. The small box on the bottom right shows the results on how the apprenticeship companies assess the change in the attractiveness of apprenticeships compared to before the pandemic.

This fact sheet shows what drove apprenticeship companies and apprentices in **March 2023**. We are currently reporting on two groups of young people: **future apprentices** and **current apprentices**. Due to the approaching start of apprenticeships, the focus of this fact sheet is on future apprentices and their recruitment. The results are compared in particular with those from the last survey in November 2022 and with those from one year ago (March 2022) and two years ago (March 2021). In addition, this fact sheet sheds light on the topic of the **attractiveness of apprenticeships** and shows the companies' assessments of how this has changed since the beginning of the pandemic. It also shows the possible reasons for such a change and what measures could be taken to increase the attractiveness of apprenticeships.

Figure 1 shows the main points of the current Apprenticeship Pulse survey. For **future apprentices**, who are planning to start their apprenticeship this summer, the situation regarding the supply of apprenticeship posi-

tions looks similar to November 2022: 72% (71% in November 2022) of the companies are indicating that they will supply either the same amount (55%; 57% in November 2022) or more (17%; 14% in November 2022) apprenticeship positions this summer than in the previous year. However, the share of companies reducing their apprenticeship positions remained at 24% (22% in November 2022).

In the previous year and two years ago, the proportion of companies that reduced their apprenticeship supply was slightly lower. In March 2022, for example, 21% of companies supplied fewer apprenticeship positions for the start in summer 2022 than in 2021, and in March 2021 19% reduced the apprenticeship supply for the start in 2021 compared with 2020.

There are differences in the apprenticeship supply depending on the size of the company. While 80% of medium-sized and large companies supplied the same amount of apprenticeship positions or more in March 2023 compared with the previous year, this proportion

was only 69% for small companies.¹ At the same time, a lower proportion of medium-sized and large companies indicated in March 2023 that they would reduce their apprenticeship supply this summer (18% vs. 26%).

In spring, many companies are already amid recruiting future apprentices to fill their vacancies. In German-speaking Switzerland, the recruitment process often starts a year in advance. In the French-speaking part of Switzerland, recruitment takes place somewhat later in spring. The Apprenticeship Pulse surveys the training companies' already-filled apprenticeship positions and those still vacant.² In March, the proportion of filled positions for the start of apprenticeships in summer was 67%, with 33% still vacant. This is a lower proportion than in the last two years. In March 2022, 72% of the positions supplied for the start of apprenticeship in 2022 were already filled at this time, and in March 2021 the proportion was even at 78%.

There are also differences in the size of training companies when it comes to filling vacancies. In March, medium-sized and large companies were already able to fill 74% of their vacancies for the start of apprenticeships in 2023, while this proportion was only 64% for small companies.

In general, it is not always easy for companies to recruit suitable apprentices. Training companies stated that it had become more difficult to recruit suitable apprentices compared to before the pandemic (-0.44 on a scale of -2 "much more difficult" to 2 "much easier"). A comparison with the previous year's results from March 2022, shows that this problem has increased according to the training companies – and thus coincides with the somewhat lower amount of apprenticeship positions filled this year. Thereby, in March 2022, training companies rated the difficulty of finding suitable apprentices as -0.29 points on average on the scale, compared with -0.28 points in March 2021.

Difficulty in filling vacancies can have many causes. One possibility is that the **attractiveness of apprenticeships** has decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic. This would mean a smaller pool of well-qualified future apprentices. In its current survey, the Apprenticeship Pulse asked companies about this issue. The companies think that the attractiveness of an apprenticeship compared to a general education program (e.g., baccalaureate school "Gymnasium" or upper-secondary specialized school "Fachmittelschule") has slightly decreased since the beginning of the pandemic (-0.15, on a scale from -2 "much lower attractiveness" to 2 "much higher attractiveness").

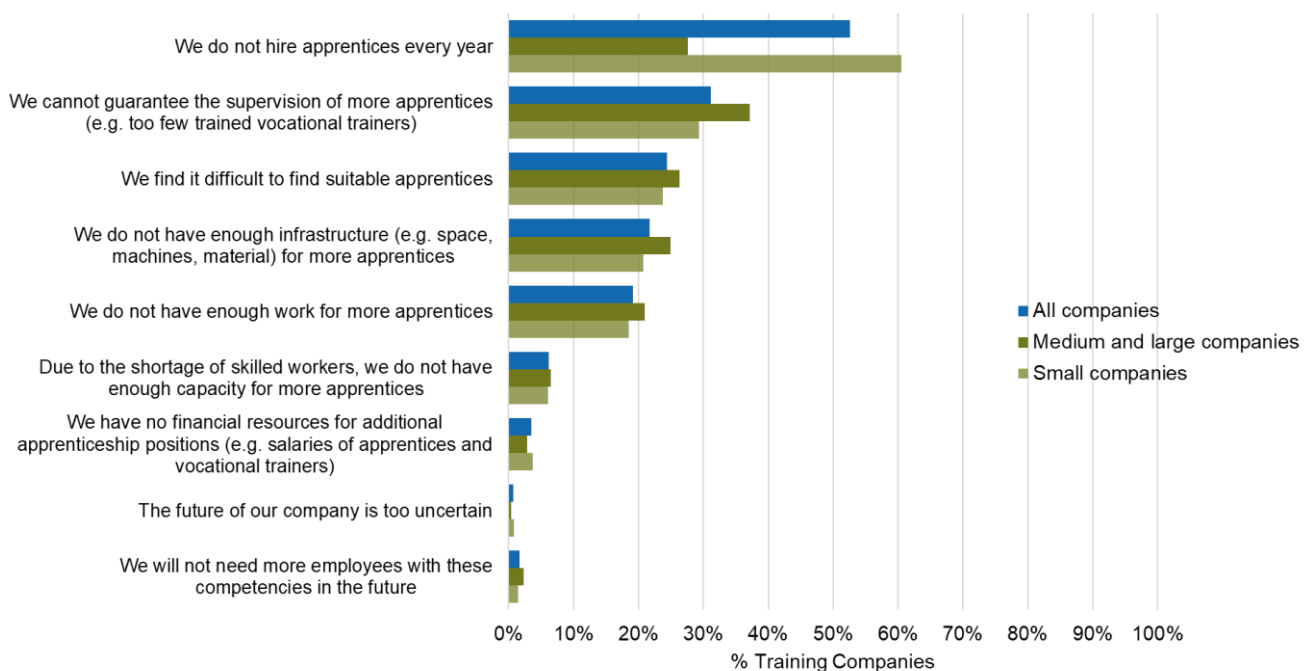


Figure 2: Reasons why training companies will not supply more apprenticeship positions in summer 2023.

Remarks: Results are based on weighted data from the March 2023 "Apprenticeship Pulse" survey. The Figure shows for all companies, for medium-sized and large companies and for small companies different reasons why companies are supplying a constant amount of apprenticeships or reducing their supply of apprenticeships. It shows the values for an average company; multiple responses were possible.

¹ Medium and large companies = 50 and more employees; small companies = less than 50 employees

² The Apprenticeship Pulse analyzes the proportion of apprenticeship positions that are still vacant or have already been filled out of the appren-

ticeship positions currently supplied and is therefore not directly comparable with the numbers on signed apprenticeship contracts recorded by the Tripartite Vocational Education and Training Conference (see tbbk-ctfp.ch).

Detailed Results

Future Apprentices

The Supply of Apprenticeships

With regard to the apprenticeship supply, the picture in March 2023 is similar to that in the last survey in November 2022: 17% (14% in November 2022) of companies said they were expanding their apprenticeship supply for the summer compared to the previous year. At the same time, 24% (22% in November 2022) of companies said they would reduce the amount of apprenticeships supply. 55% (57% in November 2022) are keeping their supply constant and 4% (7% in November 2022) are still unsure how many apprenticeships they will supply in the summer.

The training companies' apprenticeship supply in 2022 looked slightly different. On the one hand, only 12% of companies wanted to supply slightly more apprenticeship positions for the summer of 2022 in March 2022 compared with 2021. On the other hand, a slightly smaller share of companies reduced their supply at that time (21%). Regarding the apprenticeship supply in 2021, both of these shares were slightly lower again in March 2021, whereby the shares of companies with a constant apprenticeship supply was higher (8% increase; 19% reduction; 69% constant supply).

The current results from March 2023 also show that medium-sized and large companies structure their apprenticeship supply differently than small companies. While 20% of medium-sized and large companies are supplying more apprenticeship positions overall, only 16% of small companies are expanding their supply. At the same time, 18% of medium-sized and large companies are reducing their apprenticeship supply, while this proportion is significantly higher among small companies at 26%.

These differences are reflected in the reasons why training companies are maintaining or reducing their apprenticeship supply for the start of training in 2023.³ Figure 2 shows these reasons and compares the responses of all respondents with those of medium-sized and large companies as well as small companies. That said, companies most frequently indicated that they do not hire apprentices every year (53%). The results show that this most frequently mentioned reason is mainly cited by small companies (61%) and less frequently by medium and large companies (28%). For the other reasons, there are much smaller differences between medium-sized and large companies compared to small companies.

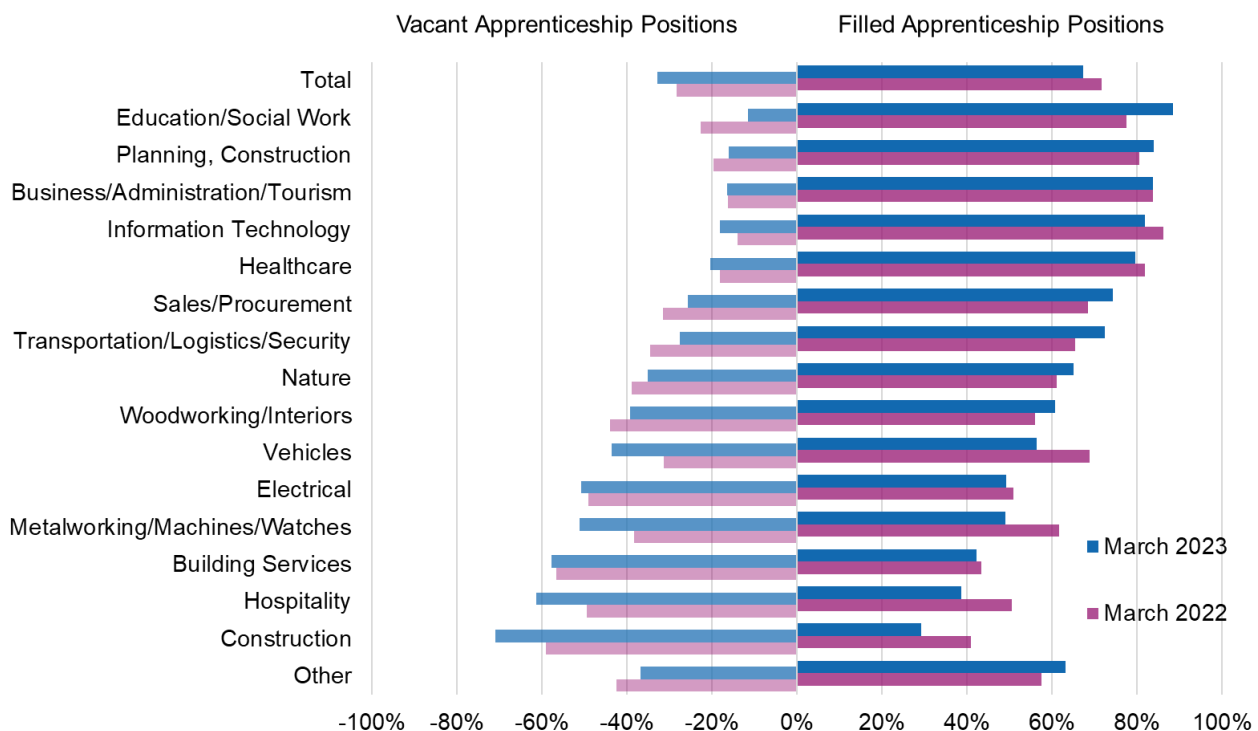


Figure 3: Vacant and filled apprenticeship positions by occupational field compared with the previous year.

Remarks: Results based on weighted data from the March 2022 and March 2023 Apprenticeship Pulse surveys. The left side of the figure shows overall and for each occupational field what proportion of apprenticeship positions are still vacant; the right side shows what share has already been filled. Occupational fields with fewer than 50 apprenticeship companies are grouped under "Other". The figure shows the values for an average company.

³ This question was not asked of those companies that indicated they were expanding their apprenticeship supply for 2023 compared to 2022.

Apprenticeship recruitment

Many training companies are currently in the middle of recruiting apprentices. This is particularly the case for companies in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, while the recruitment process in the French-speaking part of Switzerland starts somewhat later in the spring.

The apprenticeship recruitment is slightly less advanced this year than in the last two years. In March, the proportion of filled apprenticeship positions was 67%, while 33% of the positions supplied for the apprenticeship start were still vacant. A year ago in March 2022, this proportion was higher at 72%, leaving 28% of the positions available for the 2022 apprenticeship start vacant. In March 2021, the share of filled apprenticeship positions for the 2021 apprenticeship start was even at 78%.

Once again, there are differences between medium-sized and large companies compared with small companies. While medium-sized and large companies were already able to fill 74% of their vacancies in March 2023, small companies were only able to fill 64% of their vacancies.

If we look at the number of positions filled in the occupational fields, we see that the gap in the share of positions filled has increased compared to the previous year. Figure 3 illustrates this increase in the range. This range was from 29% to 88% in March 2023, while it only went from 41% to 86% in March of the previous year. Thereby, some occupational fields are already as far along or even further along in their recruitment of

positions this year than they were in the previous year. For example, the occupational fields of "education/social work" (88%; 77% in March 2022), "planning/construction" (84%; 80% in March 2022), "business/administration/tourism" (84%; same as in March 2022), "information technology" (82%; 86% in March 2022) and "healthcare" (80%; 82% in March 2022) were already able to fill more than 80% of their apprenticeship positions supplied for the summer in March 2023. In contrast, the occupational fields "construction" (29%; 41% in March 2022), "hospitality" (39%; 51% in March 2022), "building services" (42%; 43% in March 2022), "Metalworking/machines/watches" (49%; 62% in March 2022) and "electrical" (49%; 51% in March 2022) have not yet been able to fill half of their supplied apprenticeship positions. Their situation has worsened once again compared to the previous year, while the situation for the occupational fields with a good apprenticeship recruitment has remained the same or even improved.

Difficulties in recruiting suitable apprentices

Companies are sometimes faced with major challenges when it comes to recruiting. One of these challenges is finding suitable apprentices for vacant apprenticeship positions. According to the companies it has become more difficult to recruit suitable apprentices compared to before the pandemic (-0.44 on a scale of -2 "much worse" to 2 "much better"). When the results are compared to March of the previous year and two years ago, it turns out that the companies consider the situation to be more difficult again this year (-0.29 in March 2022; -0.28 in March 2021).

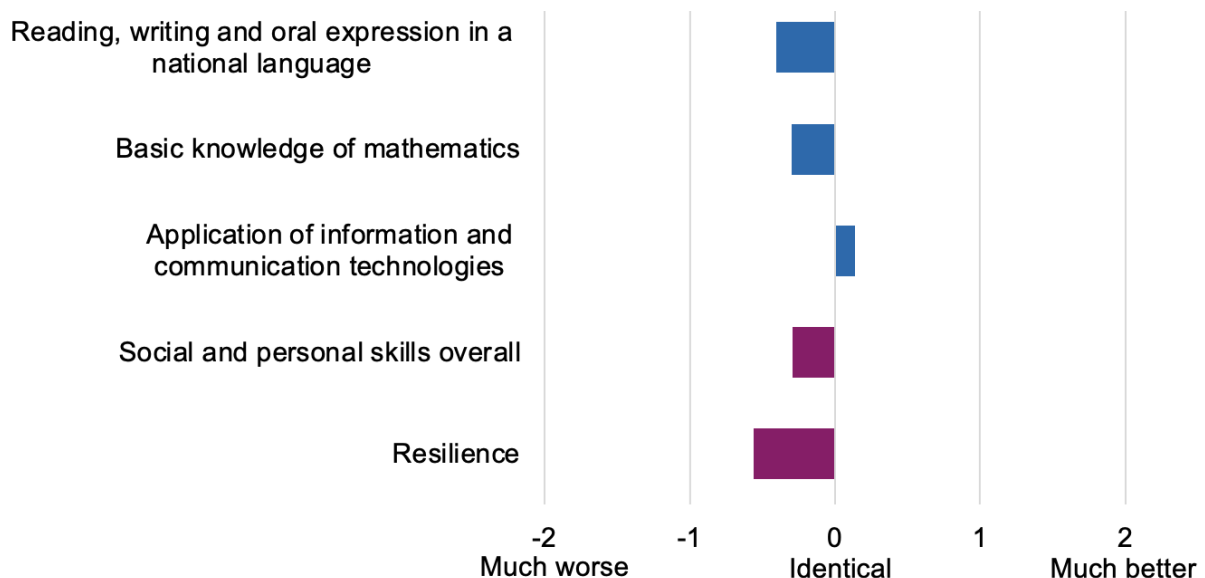


Figure 4: Change in the skills of applicants

Remarks: Results based on weighted data from the Apprenticeship Pulse surveys in March 2023. The figure shows how the apprenticeship companies rate the change in selected skills (general skills: blue; social & personal skills: pink) of their applicants compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic on a scale from -2 "much worse" to 2 "much better". The figure shows the values for an average company.

Similarly to the case of apprenticeship recruitment, the gap between the occupational fields in terms of having recruitment difficulties also widened somewhat compared to the previous year. This can be seen from the range of values on the scale. In March 2022, the values were still between -0.12 and -0.56. In March 2023, this range increased, and the values were between -0.11 ("information technology") and -0.77 ("hospitality"). In line with the fact that the occupational field "information technology" is at the top of this ranking and the occupational field "hospitality" is at the bottom, the occupational field "information technology" was also one of the better apprenticeship recruiters in March 2023, while the occupational field "hospitality" was still catching up (see figure 3).

According to the companies, some of their applicants' skills have changed more than others. Figure 4 shows for selected skills how the companies think these have changed in their applicants compared to before the pandemic. The companies indicated that, both reading, writing and oral expression in a national language (-0.41 on a scale from -2 "much worse" to 2 "much better") and basic knowledge of mathematics (-0.30) have deteriorated somewhat. In contrast, companies stated a slightly better knowledge of the application of information and communication technologies (0.14). The companies reported the greatest reduction in resilience (-0.56), as well as a reduction in social and personal skills overall (-0.29).

Recruitment and advertising tools

In order to recruit suitable apprentices, the companies make use of various recruitment and advertising tools. Almost all companies post job advertisements on well-known portals such as Yousty.ch or LENA (83%). In addition, the companies have a relatively frequent of-line presence, for example at schools or career fairs (42%). 27% rely on print media to advertise jobs, while a similar share uses newer online platforms such as Instagram or TikTok (25%). Further, 23% do online advertising on social media. Less frequently, companies said they recruit new groups of applicants, such as older apprentices or apprenticeship dropouts (9%), and 2% said they offer "quick applications" via smartphone. 11% mentioned other, whereby the most frequently mentioned was the company's own web page for job advertisements.

Current apprentices

Some apprentices still spend part of their in-company training at home rather than at work. In March 2023, this was the case for 6% of apprentices. Still, there are major differences between occupational fields. High shares of apprentices working from home were found particularly in the occupational fields of "information technology" (32%) and "business, administration, tourism" (13%). In the other occupational fields, 0% to a maximum of 3% of apprentices were working from home.

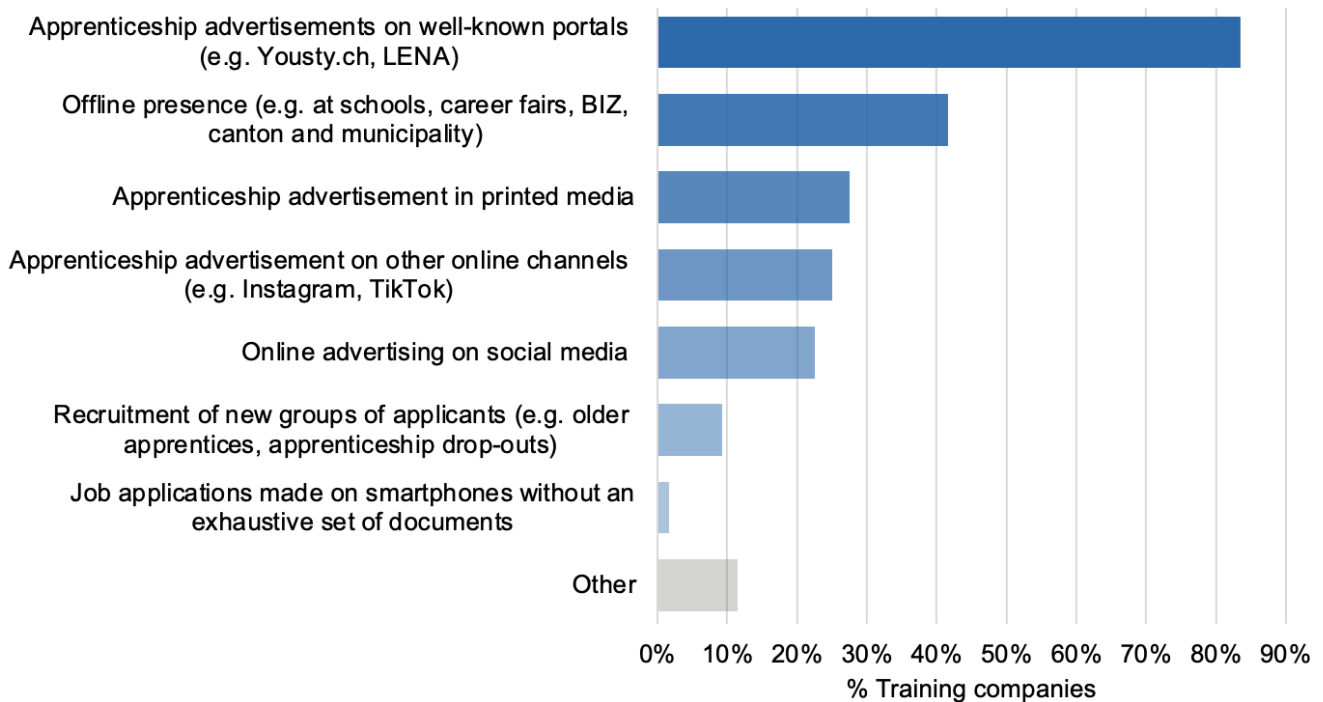


Figure 5: Recruitment and advertising tools to recruit suitable apprentices.

Remarks: Results based on weighted data from the Apprenticeship Pulse survey in March 2023. The figure shows which recruitment and advertising tools the companies use to find suitable apprentices. The figure shows the values for an average company; multiple answers were possible.

Furthermore, students who are in the middle of their apprenticeship or near the end of it have completed a large part of their training during the pandemic. Consequently, they have missed learning content due to COVID-19. The companies are of the opinion that the apprentices will not be able to make up the missed learning content of the in-company training (4.23 on a 5-point scale, where 5 means "can certainly be made up"; 4.35 in November 2022), the school training (4.03; 4.21 in November 2022) and the inter-company courses (4.21; 4.36 in November 2022) in the remaining training period.

The picture is more positive compared to the previous year. In March 2022, companies were even less optimistic that apprentices would be able to catch up on the learning content they had missed during the remainder of their training period (in-company training: 4.16, school training: 3.97, and inter-company courses: 4.12).

Attractiveness of the apprenticeship

"They don't want to get their hands dirty" is a statement that repeatedly appears in the media in connection with the attractiveness of apprenticeships. In its current survey, the Apprenticeship Pulse asked the training companies about the change in this attractiveness since the beginning of the pandemic. According to the companies the attractiveness of apprenticeships compared to a general education program (e.g., baccalaureate school

"Gymnasium" or upper-secondary specialized school "Fachmittelschule") has decreased somewhat since the beginning of the pandemic (-0.15 on a scale of -2 "much lower" to 2 "much higher").

The training companies' assessments of the change in attractiveness are closely linked to their assessment of the change in recruitment difficulties. On average, companies in occupational fields with greater difficulties in recruiting suitable apprentices were also more likely to state that the attractiveness of apprenticeships had declined since the start of the pandemic. This observation can be illustrated once again by the example of the occupational fields "information technology" and "hospitality". Thereby, the training companies in the occupational field of "information technology" (-0.03) assessed the attractiveness of the vocational apprenticeship as almost unchanged, while companies in the occupational field of "hospitality" (-0.40) perceived a significant decline.

The companies most frequently mentioned the fact that either parents (53%) or teachers at lower secondary level (39%) had an insufficient level of knowledge about apprenticeships as possible reasons for a decline in attractiveness (Figure 6). Furthermore, 29% stated an insufficient use of career guidance. In comparison, however, a significantly smaller share of companies stated that there was an insufficient offer of career guidance (16%).

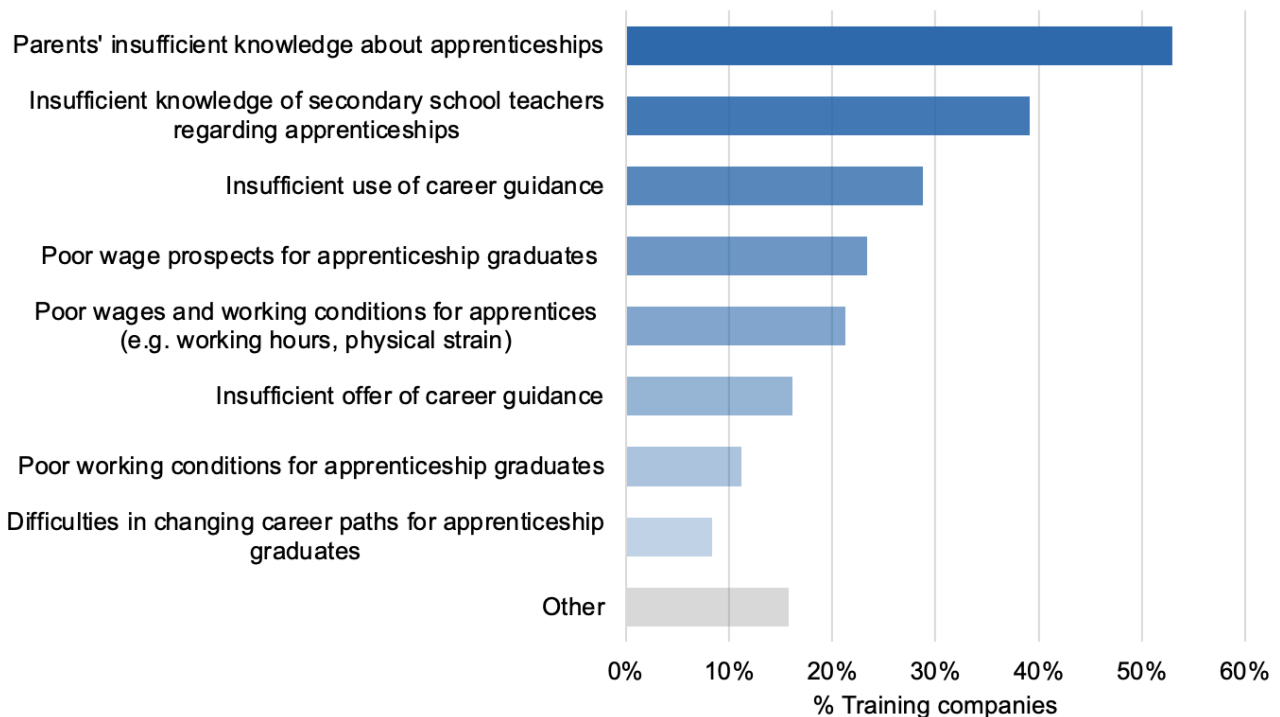


Figure 6: Reasons for lower attractiveness of apprenticeship.

Remarks: Results based on weighted data from the Apprenticeship Pulse survey in March 2023. The figure shows various reasons that could be responsible for a lower attractiveness of apprenticeships and the assessments of the companies in this regard. The figure shows the values for an average company; multiple answers were possible.

23% mentioned poor wage prospects for apprenticeship graduates and 21% poor wages and working conditions for apprentices, such as physical strain or bad working hours. Less frequently, poor working conditions for apprenticeship graduates (11%) or difficulties in changing career paths for apprenticeship graduates (8%) were mentioned as reasons for a lower attractiveness.

The training companies were also asked about suitable measures to increase the attractiveness of apprenticeships (Figure 7). The vast majority were in favor of conducting more campaigns in schools (70%) and on social

media (64%). Other measures were mentioned much less frequently. Some companies indicated that more career guidance services (29%), increasing the permeability of the education system (23%), a stronger promotion of the vocational baccalaureate during the apprenticeship (20%), an increase in apprentices' wages (17%), international titles for apprenticeship diplomas (16%), more emphasis placed on English language skills during apprenticeships (11%) or more annual leave for apprentices (8%) were suitable measures to increase the attractiveness of apprenticeships.

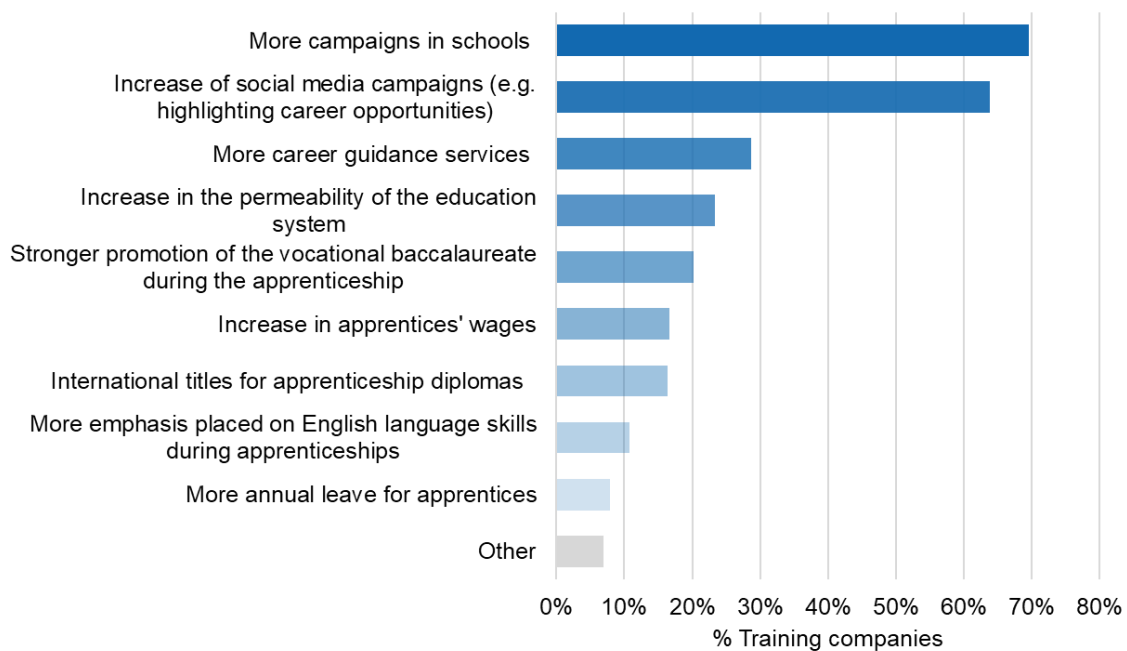


Figure 7: Measures to increase the attractiveness of apprenticeships.

Remarks: Results based on weighted data from the Apprenticeship Pulse survey in March 2023. The figure shows various possible measures to increase the attractiveness of apprenticeships and the companies' assessments of these measures. The figure shows the values for an average company; multiple responses were possible.

Data and Representativeness

In the Apprenticeship Pulse survey from March 2023, participated 1,946 apprenticeship companies (2,269 in November 2022) of various sizes, from all cantons and occupational fields. In these companies, people with different functions answered the questions, with vocational trainers, HR specialists and managing directors being represented. A total of 44,660 training companies were contacted for the survey, and the response rate for the Apprenticeship Pulse in March 2023 was 4.36% (5.09% in November 2022). However, the calculation of the response rate is not entirely precise because the survey was also distributed via other channels.

The companies surveyed in March 2023 employed a total of 14,195 apprentices (15,514 in November 2022) in

various regions and occupational fields, covering 2.13% (2.48% in November 2022) of all apprenticeship companies in Switzerland. Coverage was better in German-speaking Switzerland (2.65%) than in Latin Switzerland (0.59%). Among the occupational fields, "planning, construction" (5.06%), "information technology" (4.84%), "metalwork, machines, watches" (4.47%) and "electrical" (4.01%) were the best represented, while the occupational fields "sales/purchasing" (1.70%) and "nature" (1.79%) in particular were underrepresented. Also, micro companies (1.42%) were underrepresented compared to small companies (2.73%), medium companies (2.26%) and large companies (2.79%). The weighting procedure used corrects for differences in representativeness by company size, language region and occupational field.

More information can be found at

www.lehrstellenpuls.ch.

We would like to thank all the training companies that participated in this survey. We would also like to thank the following organizations for supporting this research project:

- Allpura
- Swiss Professional Automobile Association (UPSA)
- Codoc - Coordination and documentation of forestry training
- GastroSuisse / HotellerieSuisse
- Building envelope Switzerland
- Hotel & Gastro formation
- ICT vocational education and training Switzerland
- Kunststoff Schweiz
- login Vocational Training Ltd.
- MMTS-MultimediaTec Swiss
- Swiss Stewardship OrTra
- OrTra Health
- Swiss Professional Association of Meat (UPSV)
- Swiss Conference of Vocational Education and Training Agencies (SCVET)
- Swiss Conference of Directors of Vocational, Academic and Career Guidance (CDOPU)
- Swiss Employers' Association
- Swiss Society of Contractors
- Swiss and Liechtenstein Association for Building Technology (suissetec)
- Swiss Association for Vocational Training in Logistics (SVBL)
- SPEDLOGSWISS
- Swiss Textiles
- swissmem vocational education and training
- swissceramics, Swiss Ceramics Association
- Polybau Association

Contact

ETH Zurich
Prof. Dr. Ursula Renold
Chair of Educational Systems
www.ces.ethz.ch →

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