

One in two Swiss users accepts a lack of privacy on the Internet

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Eighty-five out of every 100 people in Switzerland have access to the internet. Internet usage is on the rise, with even 70 percent of senior citizens going online. However, the concerns about using the internet are still substantial. In general, young people are less worried and women are more concerned about protecting their privacy. These are the results of a study carried out by the Institute of Mass Communication and Media Research at the University of Zurich.

More and more people in Switzerland are using the internet.

"Switzerland ranks amongst the top countries in terms of [internet penetration](#)", says Prof. Michael Latzer from the Media Change & Innovation Division in the IPMZ at the University of Zurich. Together with his team, he has carried out the "World Internet Project – Switzerland" for the second time since 2011. The number of [users](#) using mobile devices to access the internet while on the go has also risen at an above-average rate in the past two years, with around 39 percent of the population and almost half of internet users also using mobile devices to go online. The driver behind this doubling in mobile [internet usage](#) is the smartphone. At home, 44 percent of those surveyed use the internet more for work-related purposes (+13 percentage points). But despite the high penetration levels, when asked if they felt involved in the information society, four out of ten people in Switzerland responded with "not at all or just marginally involved."

Income and education define access to digital

Switzerland

As far as access to the internet is concerned, there is a digital divide in Switzerland that coincides with income (significant in the case of mobile use), education and employment status. Differences based on age and gender have become less significant: "A notable 70 percent of 60 to 74-year olds in Switzerland are now using the internet, and about the same number of women as men on the whole", according to Latzer. Viewed in terms of regions, the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland is lagging behind. Also, a million people in Switzerland (aged 14 years or over) still do not surf the web, giving as their reasons a lack of interest or not seeing any use for it.

Still substantial concerns

Trust in and concerns about using the internet have remained more or less unchanged in Switzerland in recent years: "Three-quarters of the population considers at least half of the content on the internet to be reliable", sums up Prof. Latzer. Professional services – in particular from SRG (Swiss Radio and Television) and the government – are seen as particularly trustworthy, while the content of social online networks and blogs is viewed as the least reliable source. Around 40 percent of users would be "very or extremely concerned" about using their credit cards or bank cards on the internet; five percent have in fact been victims of credit card fraud through the internet.

As far as monitoring data is concerned, companies are still considerably more distrusted (40%) than the government (26%). "Despite the NSA scandal, this opinion has not changed compared with the 2011 survey", according to the media expert. In general, young Swiss people are much less concerned than their older counterparts. The same applies to men in comparison with women. Eight out of ten internet users are very

concerned about protecting their privacy, with 45 to 59-year olds demanding regulatory restrictions on the collection of data by companies more frequently than their younger counterparts. Every second user has resigned him or herself to the view that we have to accept that there is no longer any [privacy](#) on the internet.

Information more important than entertainment

The internet has further expanded its role as a media-based multi-purpose infrastructure for information and entertainment, for doing business and socializing in Switzerland. Once again, in 2013 it is more common for users to use the internet for information purposes, with product and travel information as well as news websites topping the list, than for entertainment, where video and music portals were the most commonly used sources. Social online networks such as Facebook or Twitter are being used much more frequently, with the latter mainly being used by younger users. Almost six out of ten users use social online networks, with two-thirds using them on a daily basis. Private social online networks are three times more popular than professional ones like Xing. E-commerce usage has stagnated at a high level, with 78 percent searching for product information, 67 percent making purchases and 63 percent comparing prices online.

Women less confident than men about their internet skills

Users of different ages use the internet differently. Young people are more active users of interactive applications, content produced by users themselves and entertainment, while older people tend to use the internet more for electronic purchases and online banking. While there is no longer any gender difference in terms of access to the internet, that difference still exists in relation to the intensity of use, how information

and entertainment is used, how users rate their internet skills and whether or not they feel part of the information society - with all of these being less pronounced for female users than for male users.

Internet gaining in significance compared with traditional media

Since 2011, the internet has become a more relevant source of information and entertainment compared with other media. For users, it is the top source of information – ranking equally with newspapers. For young internet users (14 to 29 years old), the internet has overtaken the other media. TV and radio continue to play the dominant role for entertainment, with younger users using more television than internet.

Digital politics with considerable reservations

The widespread skepticism in Switzerland concerning digital participation in political processes has continued. On an international comparison, Switzerland is one of those countries most doubtful about the possibilities of digital democratization, with only a tiny minority of four to seven percent strongly convinced that the internet impacts positively on the quality of democracy. As a result, the internet is not used much for taking part in political discussions. Even amongst internet users, 71 percent only discuss political topics offline. Furthermore, only half of all those surveyed consider it right to be allowed to criticize the government freely on the internet, with one third decidedly against.

Provided by University of Zurich

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