



Hope Barometer 2021

How Resilient is the Population in Times of Corona?

Results for Switzerland

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swissfuture

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Swiss Positive Psychology Association

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Since 2009, the Hope Barometer has been collected annually for the coming year in a large Internet survey supported by the daily newspaper 20 Minuten. Starting in Switzerland, the survey is also conducted in Australia, Colombia, the Czech Republic, France, India, Israel, Italy, Malta, Nigeria, Poland, Portugal, Spain and South Africa in collaboration with renowned universities. This report presents the latest results of the November 2020 Hope Barometer in Switzerland. The public was surveyed about their experiences in the 2020 pandemic year, focusing on perceived stress, personal coping strategies, stress-related growth, personal hopes and sources of hope, as well as the emotional, psychological, and social well-being of the population.

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The most important in a nutshell

With this year's Hope Barometer study, we aim to shift perspectives and draw attention to the strengths, resilience resources, and positive outcomes of the Corona pandemic experience.

1. In November 2020, over 7000 people across Switzerland participated in the Hope Barometer survey. On the occasion of the COVID-19 pandemic, the focus of the survey was perceived stress, personal coping strategies, well-being, hope and stress-related growth.
2. The majority of the Swiss population experienced a moderately level of stress in the Corona crisis year 2020 (1.9 on a scale of 0 to 4).
3. Younger and unmarried people perceived stress more than older and married people. Families with children did not perceive stress significantly higher than families without children.
4. Women experienced significantly higher levels of stress than men but also used stronger coping resources such as positive reframing, self-direction, and emotional support.
5. Satisfaction with one's own life has remained almost constant between 2019 and 2020. In French- and Italian-speaking Switzerland, satisfaction has even increased.
6. While satisfaction with national politics has increased significantly, satisfaction with the economy has declined.
7. Most people have used constructive coping strategies such as acceptance, positive reframing, self-direction, and active coping.
8. Emotion-focused coping styles were more prominent than problem-focused strategies and likely served as the basis for the latter.
9. Hope increased in importance in 2020, and was more pronounced in all three language regions than in 2019.
10. Most people have predominantly more hopes than fears and have a positive attitude towards the future.
11. Hope increases with age, and married people are more hopeful than single people.
12. The most important personal hopes are good health, a happy marriage, family or partnership, a harmonious life, good social relationships, personal self-determination and a meaningful task. These have gained in importance compared to 2019. In contrast, material and hedonistic factors like money and sex have lost importance.
13. The strongest sources of hope are outdoor experiences and support from family and friends, followed by own strengths, general helpfulness and gratitude.
14. While the emotional and psychological well-being of the population has remained constant between 2019 and 2020 and has even increased in some regions, social well-being has slightly declined.
15. With age, well-being also increases in 2020.
16. Many people have grown internally in dealing with the difficulties, uncertainties and challenges of 2020. Thus, positive self-perception, friendly interaction with other people and optimism have gained in importance.
17. All in all, a large majority of the Swiss population showed strong resilience in dealing with the crisis.

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I Introduction

I.1 Background

The year 2020 will go down in history as the COVID19 crisis year. Almost everyone was more or less severely tested by the pandemic and the measures that accompanied it. At the beginning of this study on November 2, 2020, Switzerland was in the middle of the so-called second wave of the global pandemic. Between February and the beginning of November 2020, a total of 180,447 people in Switzerland had contracted the Coronavirus, 7,476 were hospitalized, and 2,341 people died from the disease (BAG 2020a). During November 2020, a new negative peak was reached. Further 146,625 people contracted the virus, 4,636 were hospitalized, and 2,104 people lost their lives, resulting in a total of 327,072 illnesses and 4,445 deaths at the end of our survey period on November 30, 2020 (BAG 2020b).

To contain the spread of the virus and follow the recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO 2020), the Federal Council officially declared a state of emergency in mid-March 2020 and imposed a general lockdown, which was lifted in stages on May 11. The rapid spread and consequences of the virus, as well as the multiple measures taken to contain it, have put every individual, families, the economy, as well as society as a whole, to an unprecedented test. Relevant studies have reported a significant increase in stress-related health problems (de Quervain 2020). Not only the threat of possible contagion, but also related measures such as the closure of companies and educational and cultural institutions, working from home, and distance learning have been multiple sources of stress for the population.

Every crisis results in so-called stress-related stress disorders such as the occurrence of worry, anxiety, insomnia and depression. During the last decades, there has been increased research on the role of positive factors such as personal and social resources to increase *resilience* and to deal with crises *constructively*. In addition, there are now several findings that crises can be a trigger for psychological growth in many people.

I.2 Goal of the Hope Barometer 2021

The goal of this year's Hope Barometer is to explore the diverse *coping strategies* of the Swiss population in dealing with subjective *feelings of stress*, as well as the psychological consequences related to the population's *well-being* and *stress-related growth*.

The study was designed to include variables specifically relevant to the current pandemic situation. On the one hand, the survey includes variables on attitudes (e.g. *optimism/pessimism*) and on the *well-being* of the population that have already been surveyed in the Hope Barometer of previous years. This allows us to compare this year's results with last year's and see how they have developed. On the other hand, special questions were included that relate to the experience and handling of the current crisis and that have not been systematically examined in other recent studies.

In addition to the *perceived stress*, fourteen *coping strategies* and six fields of *stress-related growth* were surveyed. Of particular importance in our study are *personal hopes*, *individual sources of hope*, and the role of *hopeful openness to the future*.

A total of 7,070 people from the three language regions of Switzerland (German, French and Italian) took part in the survey between November 2 and November 30, 2020. Of these, 6,968 completely and correctly completed questionnaires could be evaluated.

It may seem strange that we do not deal with the negative consequences of the crisis - as so many other studies do - but pay special attention to people's resources and to the positive effects. We live in a time of crisis, and there is nothing nice and lovely about a crisis. However, the essential question is how each of us, as well as society at large, deals with this crisis. One can make a bad situation even worse or one can deal constructively with a difficult situation, learn something from it, change and grow from it. We would like to thank our media partner 20 Minuten and all the people who took part in the survey for their support and commitment!

2 Perceived Stress

Introduction

Objective events and negative experiences are perceived as more or less stressful to a certain degree following one's own subjective assessment. This means that one's experience of the crisis is primarily an emotional and subjective reaction to the "objective" situation. Therefore, each person's reaction is not based solely on the intensity or any other objective characteristic of the crisis, but is highly dependent on personal and social factors.

The extent of *perceived stress* basically depends on two personal assessments (Lazarus, 1977): (I) how strongly the situation is judged to be threatening or challenging, and (II) whether one has more or less resources available to cope with the situation. Challenging events are therefore evaluated in light of the available coping resources. It is primarily the subjective appraisal rather than the objective event that determines a person's reactions to a stressful situation.

The stress level of the population was measured with the *Perceived Stress Scale* (PSS) (Cohen et al. 1983). The PSS is one of the most widely used psychological instruments for measuring the perception of stress. The PSS measures the extent to which critical life situations are rated as more or less stressful. The scale includes a series of direct questions about the current level of stress experienced. In addition, other questions capture the causes of stress, namely how unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overloaded respondents perceive their lives to be. These three factors have repeatedly been shown to be key components of stress experience. The questions are formulated to be of a general nature and therefore relatively free of specific life situations. The PSS is particularly well suited for identifying chronic stress under long-lasting life circumstances as well as subjective expectations regarding future events or developments.

The ten questions of the PSS, rated on a scale from 0 (never) to 4 (often), are basically about the respondents' feelings and thoughts during the last few months. In other words, people were asked how often they felt a certain way during the past few months. Based on previous studies, stress levels can be divided into three categories or ranges: (I) low stress levels represent mean values between 0 and 1.3; (II) medium stress levels are characterized by mean values between 1.4 and 2.6; in this case, personal satisfaction and well-being may already be slightly affected; (III) high stress levels or stress overload represent values between 2.7 and 4.0; here, the perception of stress has a strong impact on satisfaction and personal well-being. In the long run, a high stress level can seriously endanger physical and psychological health. The "normal" or common stress level in our Western society often lies at mean values of about 1.3 - 1.4 (Cohen et al. 1997).

2.1 Perceived Stress of the Swiss population

Perceived Stress - selected items

To illustrate the nature of questions and the answers given by respondents, four selected items on *perceived stress* levels and perceptions of *unpredictability*, *uncontrollability*, and *overload* are presented in Figure 1.

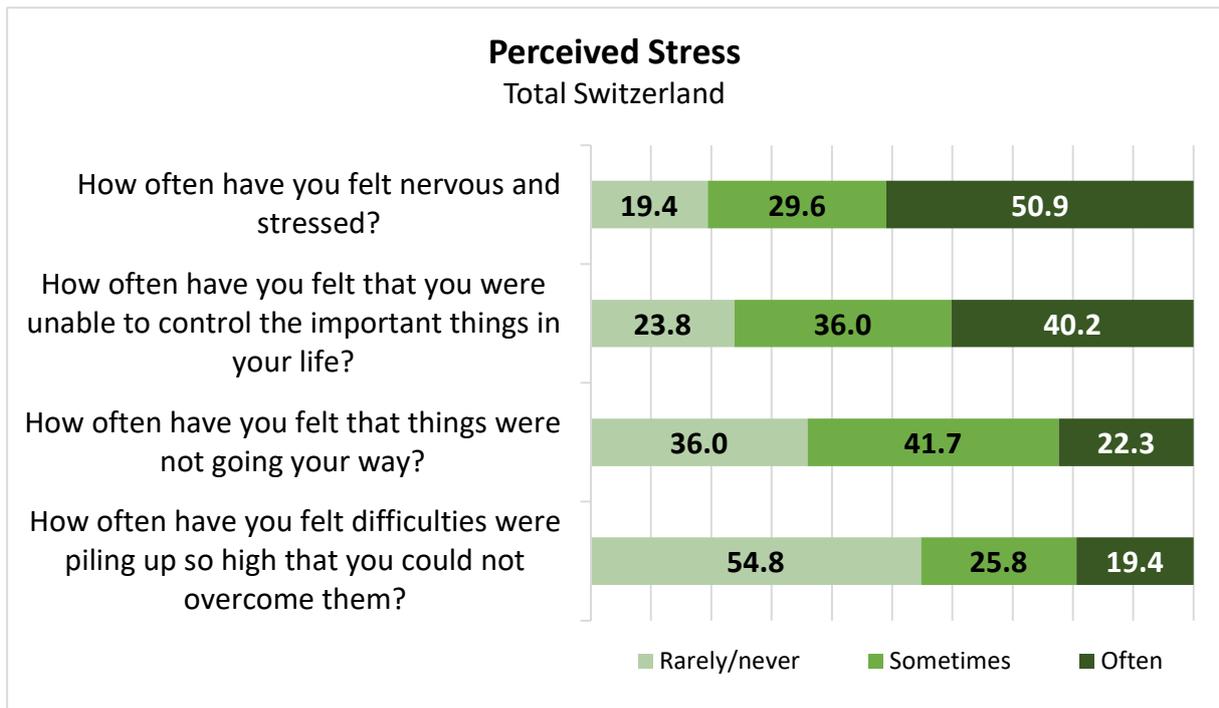


Figure 1: Perceived stress in Switzerland - selected questions - frequencies in percentage

Just over half of the population has felt nervous and stressed frequently or often during the last few months. In recent months, around 40% of people frequently or often had the impression of loss of control because they were unable to influence important things in life. However, only 22.3% of respondents estimate that things (often or frequently) do not turn out the way they want. Almost 55% of the study participants rarely or never felt that problems had piled up to the point that they could no longer manage them. This result already testifies to the fact that the majority of the Swiss population has positive resources and effective coping options to master the negative effects of the crisis.

Perceived stress by language regions

Fig. 2 shows in summarized form the mean values of *perceived stress* in the three language regions of Switzerland. The mean values around 1.9 reflect on average a moderately perceived stress level without significant differences in all three language regions.

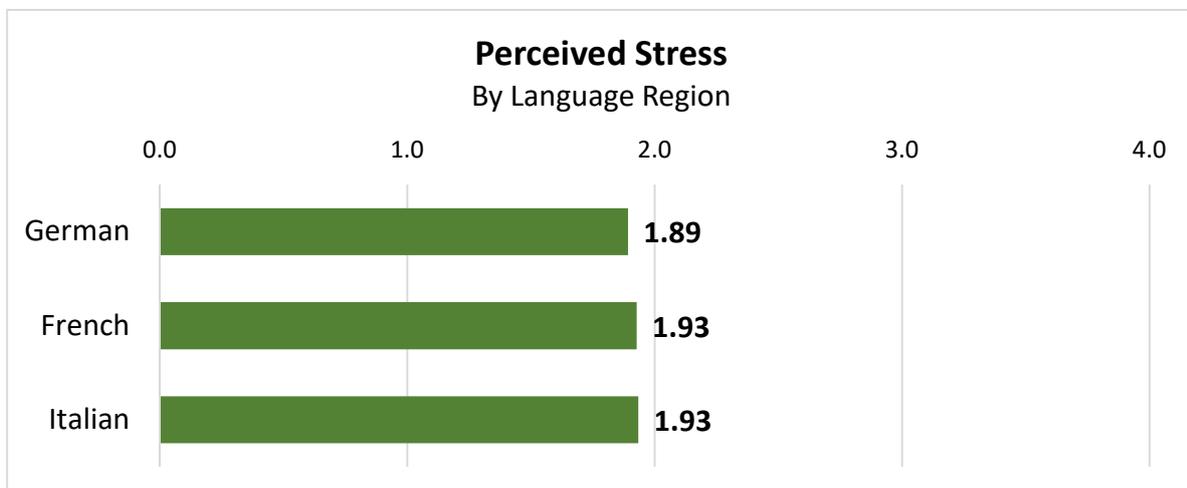


Figure 2: Perceived stress in Switzerland by language region - mean values

Going into a little more detail in Fig. 3, 21% of the total respondents show a low stress level (values between 0 and 1.3), just under two-thirds of respondents have a medium stress level (values between 1.4 and 2.6), and 13.7% of people report a high stress level (values from 2.7 to 4.0). This means that only a minority of the population suffered greatly from stress. For a large majority, the stress level was moderate, which indicates that the situation created by the pandemic affected many people rather moderately.

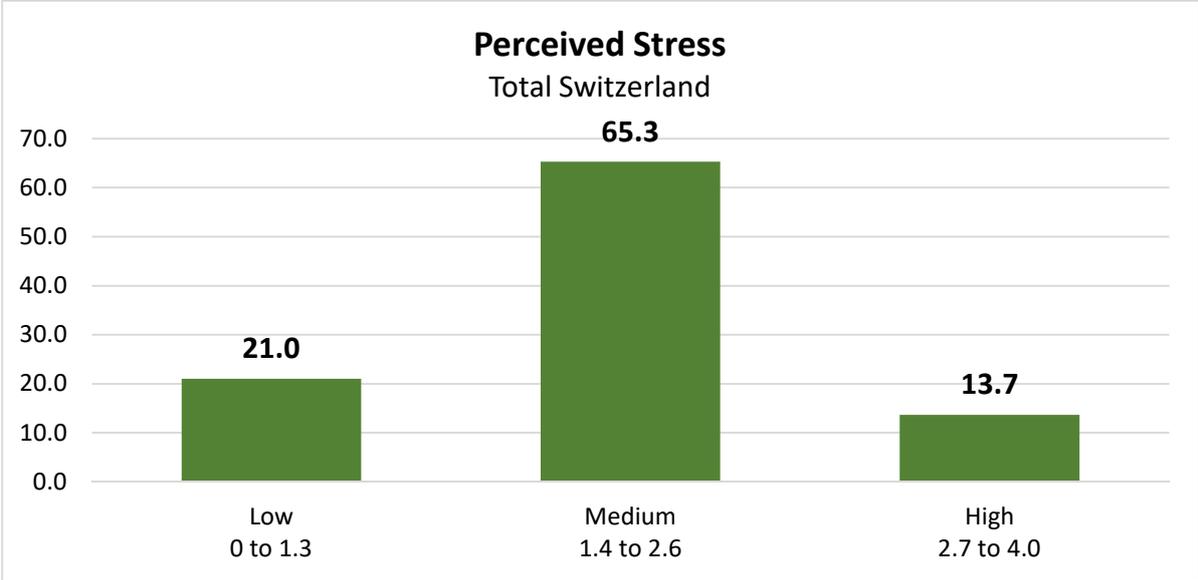


Figure 3: Low, medium and high stress perception in Switzerland - frequencies in percentage

Perceived stress by gender

A comparison between the genders reveals in Fig. 4 that women experienced a significantly higher stress load than men. The reason for this may be multiple burdens at work and at home. However, contrary to our assumption, women or families with children did not show higher levels of stress than women and families without children. Particularly single mothers (unmarried, separated, divorced or widowed) between the ages of 18 and 29 and between 30 and 39 reported significantly higher stress levels ($M=3.10 - 3.40$) (these were 59 women in our sample).



Figure 4: Perceived stress in Switzerland by gender - mean values

Perceived stress by marital status

When evaluated by marital status (Fig. 5), singles and unmarried people (as is often the case) report higher scores of stress than married people and people living in a partnership.

Married women and men with children reported lower levels of stress than married women and men without children (as mentioned before). Therefore, despite challenging situations (e.g. distance learning), children can be not only a burden but above all a resource for coping with stress.

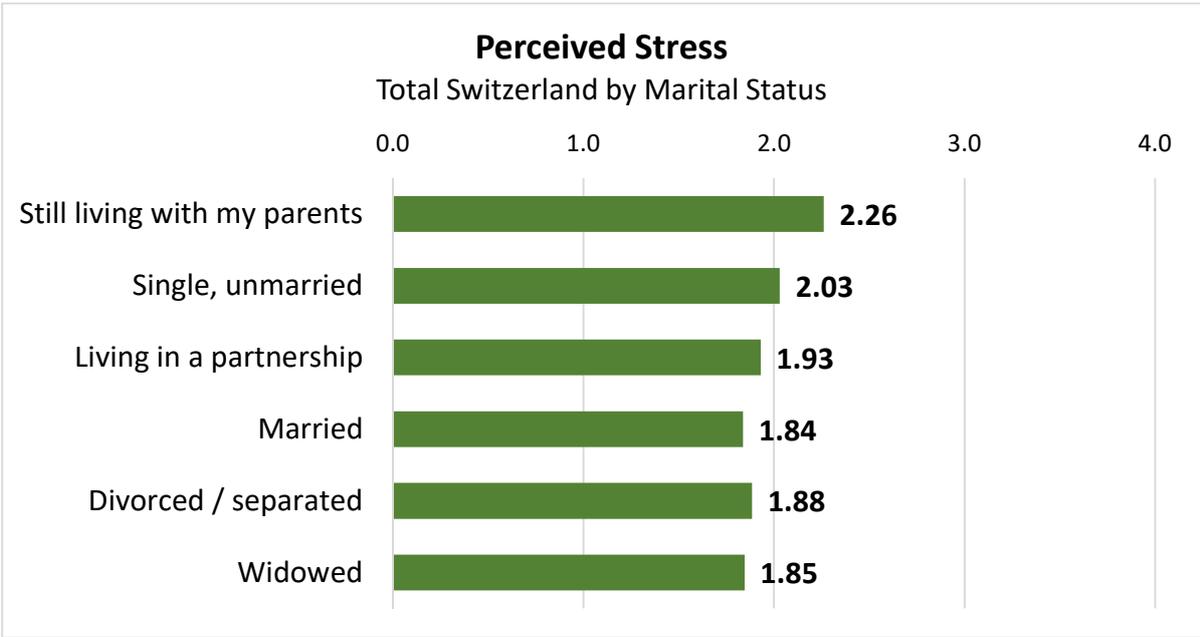


Figure 5: Perceived stress in Switzerland by marital status - mean values

Perceived stress by age

The differences are most pronounced when comparing different age groups. Fig. 6 clearly shows how the perceived stress level continuously decreases with age, although in purely physical terms the health threat is most pronounced for older people (risk group). This is the case even though in our sample with increasing age the ratio between men and women shifted towards men. In the statistical analysis including all demographic variables, age followed by gender are the strongest predictors of perceived stress.

There may be several reasons for this trend: (I) with increasing life experience, critical situations tend to be perceived as less stressful; (II) with advancing age, people generally have more material and social resources (savings, material goods, social network, etc.); (III) among the younger generations, there are more singles than married people.

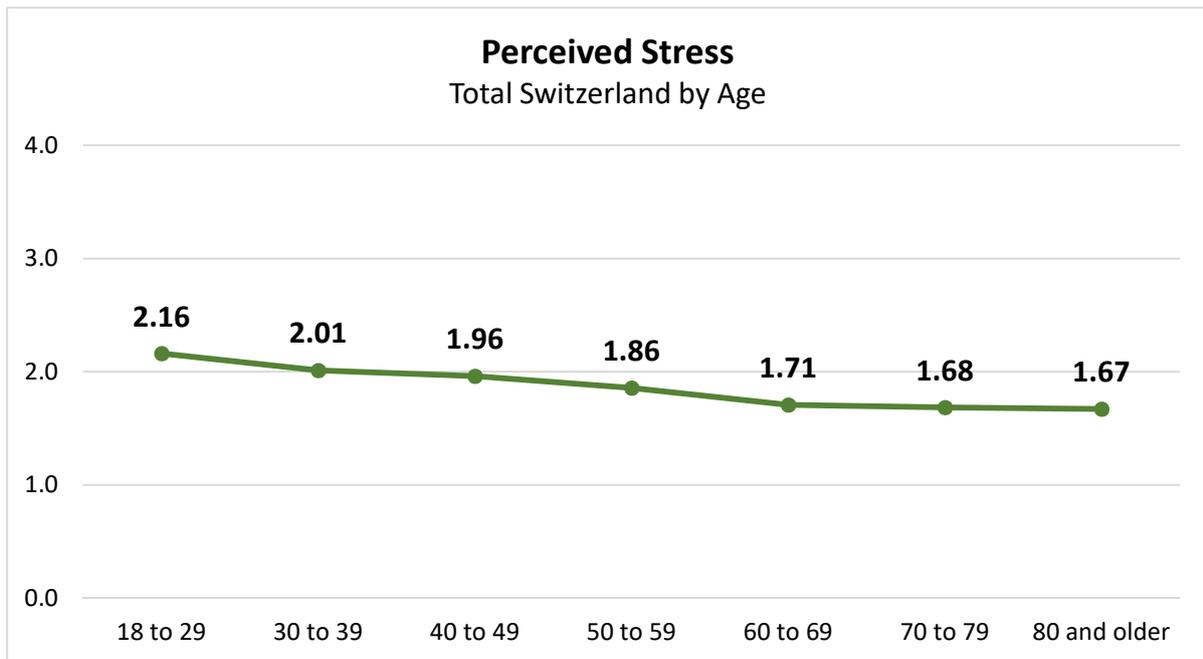


Figure 6: Perceived stress in Switzerland by age - mean values

Summary on the topic of perceived stress

1. The majority of the Swiss population experienced a moderately high level of stress in the Corona crisis year 2020. Only around 14% of the population perceived their personal experiences as highly stressful.
2. All three language regions perceived the stress feeling similarly.
3. The greatest differences occur between age groups: Younger and unmarried persons perceived stress more strongly than older persons. Or to put it another way: the perception of stress decreases with increasing age.
4. Women have significantly higher levels of stress than men. Single mothers in particular have the highest stress levels.
5. Families with children reported slightly lower levels of stress compared to families without children. Even under difficult circumstances, children can be a resource rather than a burden.

2.2 Satisfaction in Different Areas

Crises, stress and stressful experiences can affect people's *personal satisfaction*, health and well-being. *Satisfaction* is understood to be the subjective feeling about the extent to which one's own expectations with regard to certain areas of life (e.g. job satisfaction, satisfaction with the family, etc.) have been met.

As in previous years, we asked people at the beginning of the survey about their satisfaction in different areas (Krafft 2019; Krafft & Walker 2018). Figure 7 compares the 2020 values with the 2019 values for Switzerland. Interestingly, there was no significant difference in satisfaction with one's personal life between 2019 and 2020. Despite the crisis, the Swiss population was similarly satisfied with their lives in 2020 as in 2019. The perceived stress triggered by the health threat and the measures to contain it (social distancing, lockdown, home office, distance learning, etc.) apparently did not have a negative impact on personal satisfaction. How can this be explained? Satisfaction with one's life does not mean that one had a particularly easy or pleasant life. Rather, life satisfaction is characterized by the assessment that one has satisfactorily mastered the tasks that life presents, even in less pleasant situations. This results already testify the resilience and effective coping with the crisis by the population.

Furthermore, there were significant changes in terms of satisfaction with socially relevant areas. In November 2020, the population was still moderately satisfied than average with national politics - but at least more satisfied than in November 2019. During the crisis, as other surveys also report (see Credit Suisse Worry Barometer), the reputation of the government and trust in the Federal Council increased noticeably. However, events in December 2020 (significant increase in COVID19 infections and deaths) may put this assessment somewhat into perspective. Satisfaction with the national economy declined slightly but significantly from the end of 2019 to the end of 2020, reflecting the economic consequences of the lockdown and the situation in the labor market. In the wake of stronger satisfaction with politics, satisfaction with overcoming social challenges and with regard to climate and the environment also increased slightly. In general, it should be noted that in times of crisis, attention is focused on the current threats and other issues temporarily lose importance.

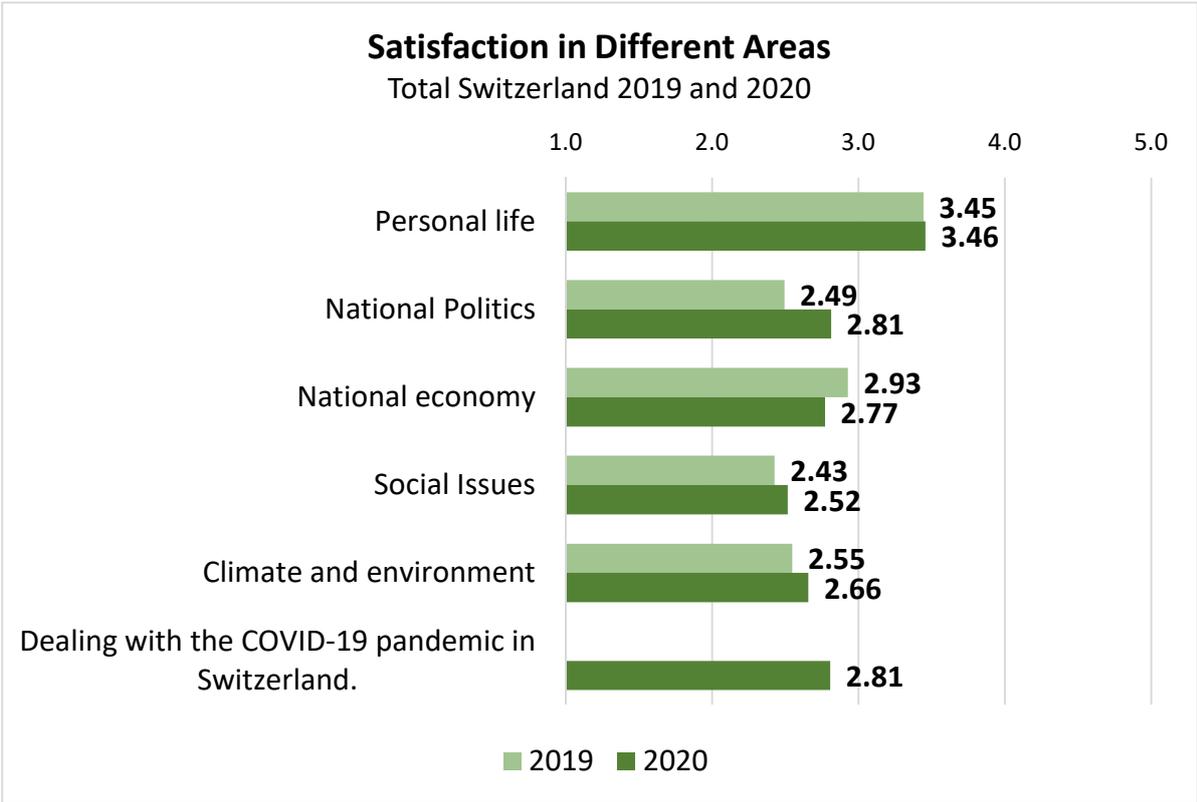


Figure 7: Satisfaction in Switzerland in different areas 2019-2020 - mean values

Life-satisfaction by language region 2019-2020

If we take a more differentiated look at life-satisfaction by language region (see Fig. 8), it is noticeable that the increase in 2020 compared with 2019 took place among the French and Italian populations. In contrast, life satisfaction has decreased slightly in the German-speaking region. These differences cannot be attributed to a different demographic structure of the samples in terms of gender and age. In general, quality of life may have increased during the pandemic period for the following reasons (see de Quervain 2020): more time for family as well as for personal hobbies, for new projects, and for relaxation, as well as more physical activity and less pressure related to professional obligations. This may have had a greater impact in the French- and Italian-speaking populations than in German-speaking Switzerland.

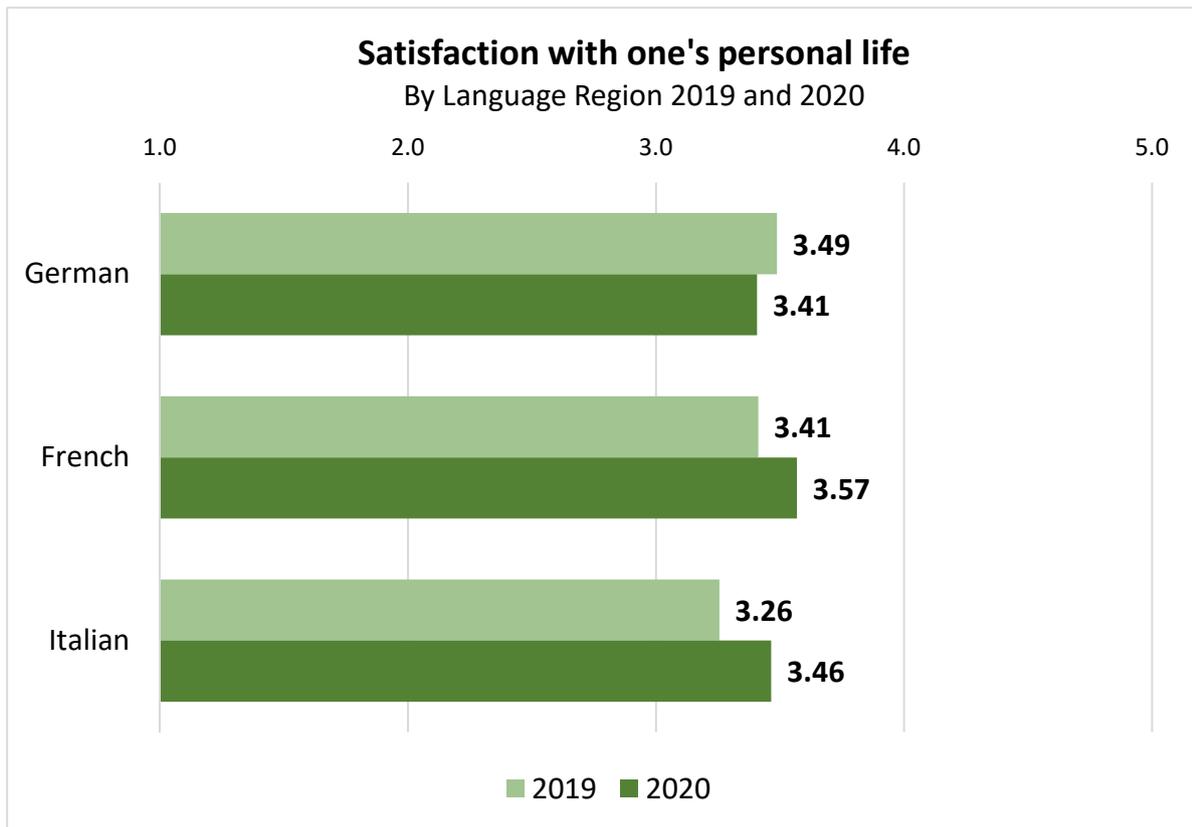


Figure 8: Satisfaction with one's own life in Switzerland by language region 2019-2020 - mean values

Life-satisfaction by gender 2019-2020

The higher level of stress has had an impact on women's life satisfaction, which is slightly but significantly lower than that of men (see fig. 9). Furthermore, women are more satisfied with politics, while men are slightly more satisfied with the economy, dealing with social issues, and the climate and environment. There is no significant difference by gender in the assessment of how the country has dealt with the COVID19 pandemic.

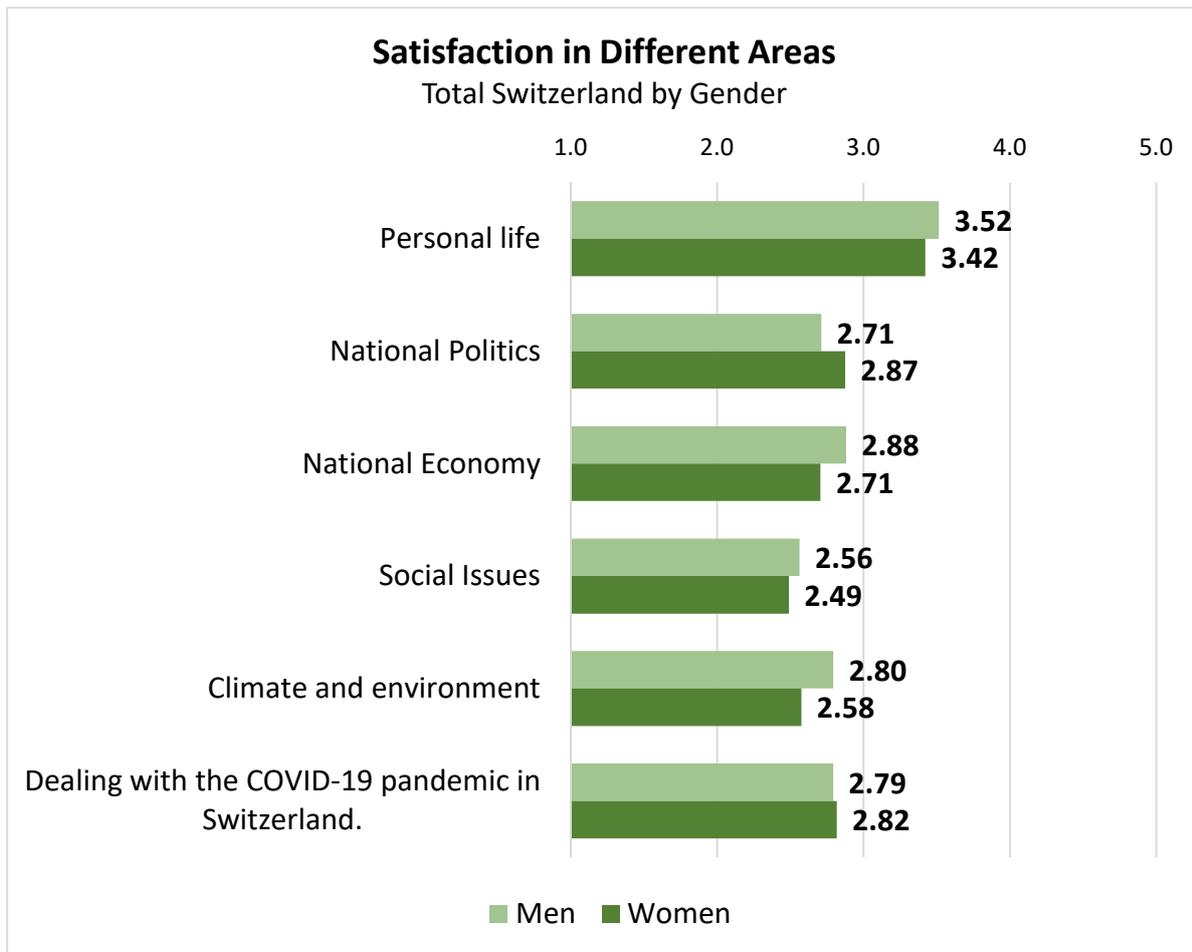


Figure 9: Satisfaction with own life overall Switzerland by gender - mean values

Summary on the topic of satisfaction

1. On average across the country, people's life-satisfaction has barely changed between the end of 2019 and the end of 2020.
2. In French- and Italian-speaking Switzerland, even, life satisfaction increased from one year to the next. In the German-speaking part of Switzerland, it has decreased slightly.
3. In general, year-on-year, people are more satisfied with politics and social areas such as social affairs, climate and the environment, and somewhat less satisfied with the economy.
4. Men are slightly more satisfied with their lives and with the economy than women. In contrast, women are more satisfied with politics.

3 Coping Strategies

Introduction

The way people deal with stress is called in psychology *coping strategies*. The perceived stress level in humans is influenced - as we have already seen - by two perceptions: (1) how threatening a particular situation is subjectively perceived to be and (2) what resources and coping possibilities one has available to deal with the situation. The more positively and strongly we assess our coping possibilities, the less threatening the situation appears and the lower the perception of stress.

However, there are both positive and negative forms of coping. For example, while seeking social support is a positive response, excessive alcohol consumption to distract oneself from worries and problems usually has negative effects.

The multidimensional *Coping Inventory* from Carver (1997) contains 14 different coping strategies that are assigned to three categories. The first category is called problem-focused coping. This contains behaviors aimed at solving a specific problem or doing something to influence the source of stress. The second category contains emotion-focused coping strategies. This is aimed at reducing emotional stress. In most cases, people can resort to both coping strategies. Problem-focused coping is used when the person feels that he or she can do something constructive to influence the situation. Emotion-oriented coping predominates when people feel they cannot do anything concrete about the situation, but at the same time do not want to be crushed or discouraged by the given situation. The third category contains so-called dysfunctional strategies, which usually neither solve the problem nor make people feel better about themselves.

The 14 *coping strategies* are described as follows (Carver et al. 1989):

Category I: Problem-focused coping strategies

1. *Active coping*: Active measures are taken to change the situation or mitigate the negative effects of a situation.
2. *Planning*: As long as no concrete measures can be taken yet, possible strategies for action and future steps can be considered and planned.
3. *Self-direction*: One focuses on things that one can influence or do (e.g. one's own tasks in the family or at work). This does not solve the problem immediately, but the focus is directed to what is currently feasible.
4. *Instrumental support*: This involves seeking concrete support from other people. This can be of a material nature (e.g. money) or relate to active help in accomplishing concrete tasks (e.g. caring for children).

Category II: Emotion-focused coping strategies

5. *Emotional support*: The other form of social support is aimed at emotional encouragement or moral support. In difficult situations, people need a sympathetic ear, understanding and human closeness.
6. *Acceptance*: Reality is accepted as it is, which is usually the condition for dealing with it actively and constructively. The opposite of acceptance is denial.
7. *Positive reframing*: A positive reassessment of the situation takes place without denying the negative aspects. For example, not only the problems but also the opportunities are seen in the situation.
8. *Humor*: One takes the situation with a pinch of cheerful serenity. However, the humor must be healthy and not black or fatalistic.
9. *Religion*: For some people, belief in God or a higher power and membership in a religious community are valuable resources for coping with crisis situations.

Category III: Dysfunctional coping strategies

10. *Disengagement*: Disengagement is exactly the opposite of commitment and an expression of lack of courage and help. One refrains from any attempt to change something or to achieve certain goals.
11. *Venting*: Negative feelings are allowed and expressed openly. Such a reaction can be temporarily useful if it makes the person feel relieved. Over a longer period, however, the negative consequences are usually greater.
12. *Denial*: Sometimes looking away can have a positive effect, for example, by making you worry less about the future. Usually, however, denying a reality only creates additional problems, especially if nothing is done to improve the situation.
13. *Self-blame*: In certain situations, some people tend to look for the causes of their problems only in themselves and therefore feel guilty. Especially when self-esteem is low, people tend to blame themselves ("If only I hadn't ..." etc., etc.).
14. *Alcohol consumption and other substances abuse*: In the event of anxiety, worry, loss of control and excessive demands, people sometimes resort to excessive consumption of alcohol and other toxic substances. This only worsens the situation (their own health, social relationships, etc.).

Coping strategies in Switzerland

In Fig. 10, the mean values of the 14 coping strategies are presented in decreasing order. The main findings can be described as follows: Most people have primarily chosen functional coping strategies and only a few people have performed dysfunctional behaviors such as disengagement, denial, self-blame, and alcohol use. Acceptance and positive reframing are the most commonly mentioned coping strategies. They belong to the category of emotion-focused coping. The second block (in the middle range of the scale) is self-control, planning, and active coping, which are classified as problem-oriented strategies. Next mentioned were emotional strategies such as humor, venting, and emotional support.

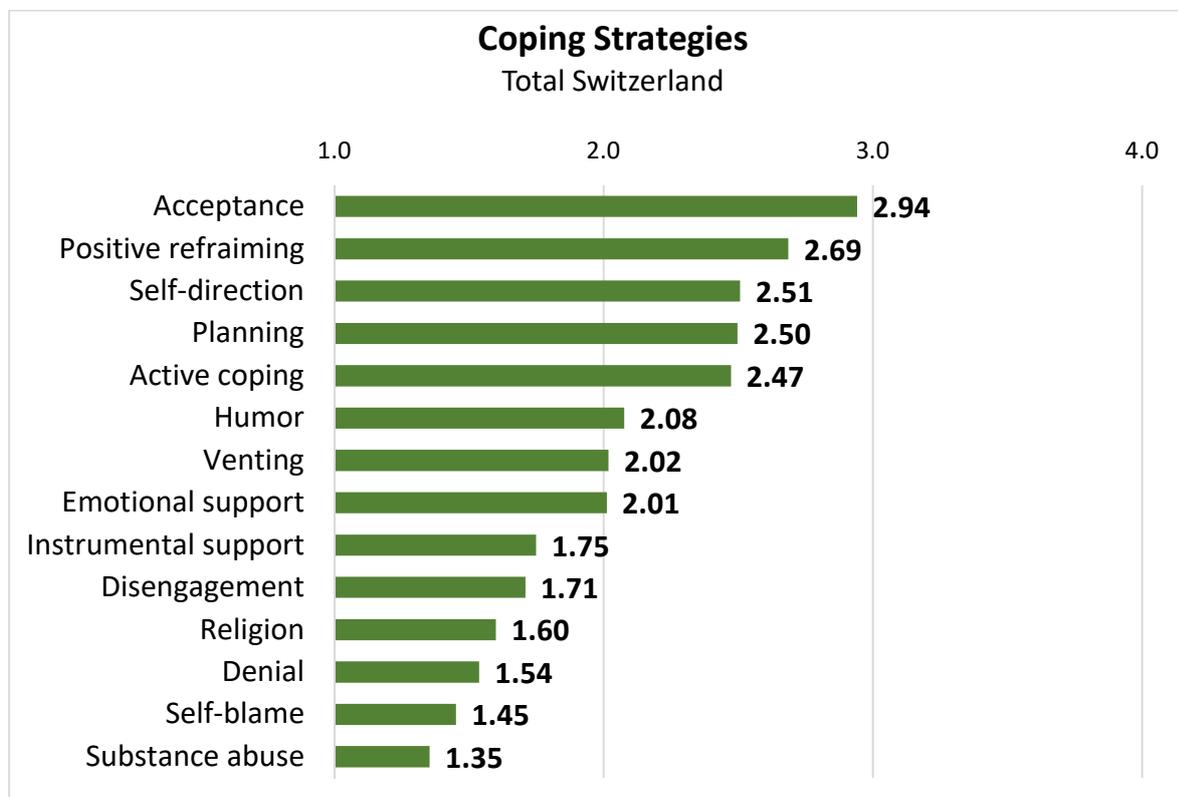


Figure 10: Coping strategies in Switzerland - mean values

Acceptance and Positive Reframing

To better understand how these mean values come about, Fig. 11 looks at the response frequencies of selected items for the two most frequently mentioned coping strategies, *acceptance* and *positive reframing*. More than two-thirds of the Swiss population has come to terms with the pandemic situation and learned to cope with it. In addition, more than 60% of the respondents looked at things from a more positive side and 55% could even find something good in the situation.

With further statistical analyses we were able to further demonstrate the importance and effectiveness of these two emotion-focused coping strategies. Regardless of age, gender, marital status, and level of education, *positive reframing* followed by *acceptance* are the two strongest predictors of lower perceived stress (followed by *humor*). The importance of these two strategies lies primarily in the fact that they often serve as a condition for subsequently using problem-focused forms of coping such as *active coping*, *planning*, and *self-direction*. Positive change, so to speak, happens first in emotions and in the mind, and then in actions.

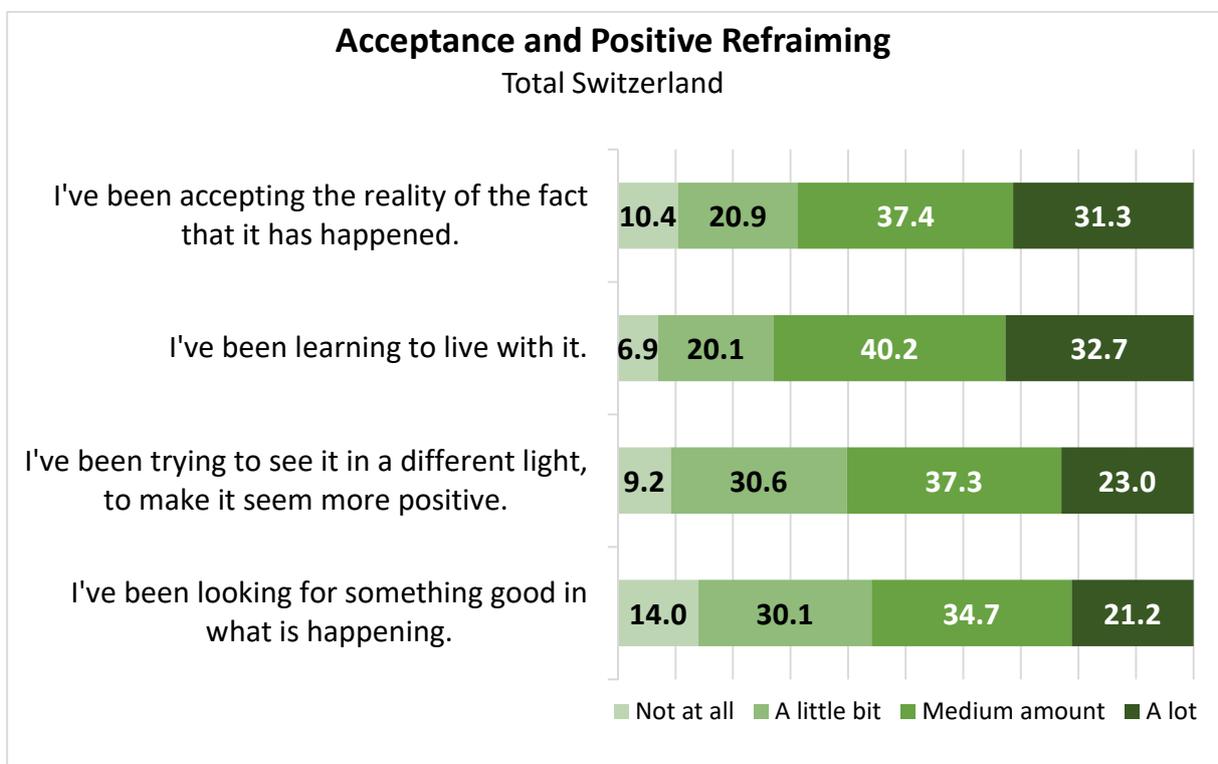


Figure 11: "Acceptance" and "positive reframing" in Switzerland - frequencies in percentage

Coping strategies by language region

A look at the different forms of coping in the various language regions reveals the following selected particularities: People in Italian-speaking Switzerland more often showed *acceptance* and *active coping* and relatively less *disengagement*. In French-speaking Switzerland, people (compared to the other two language regions) *planned* and used *humor* less often and *venting* more often and also *denied reality*. In German-speaking Switzerland, people used *venting* far less (they were better able to process or control their own emotions), sought less *instrumental support*, and also *blamed* themselves less. *Positive reframing* and *emotional support* are similarly pronounced in all three language regions.

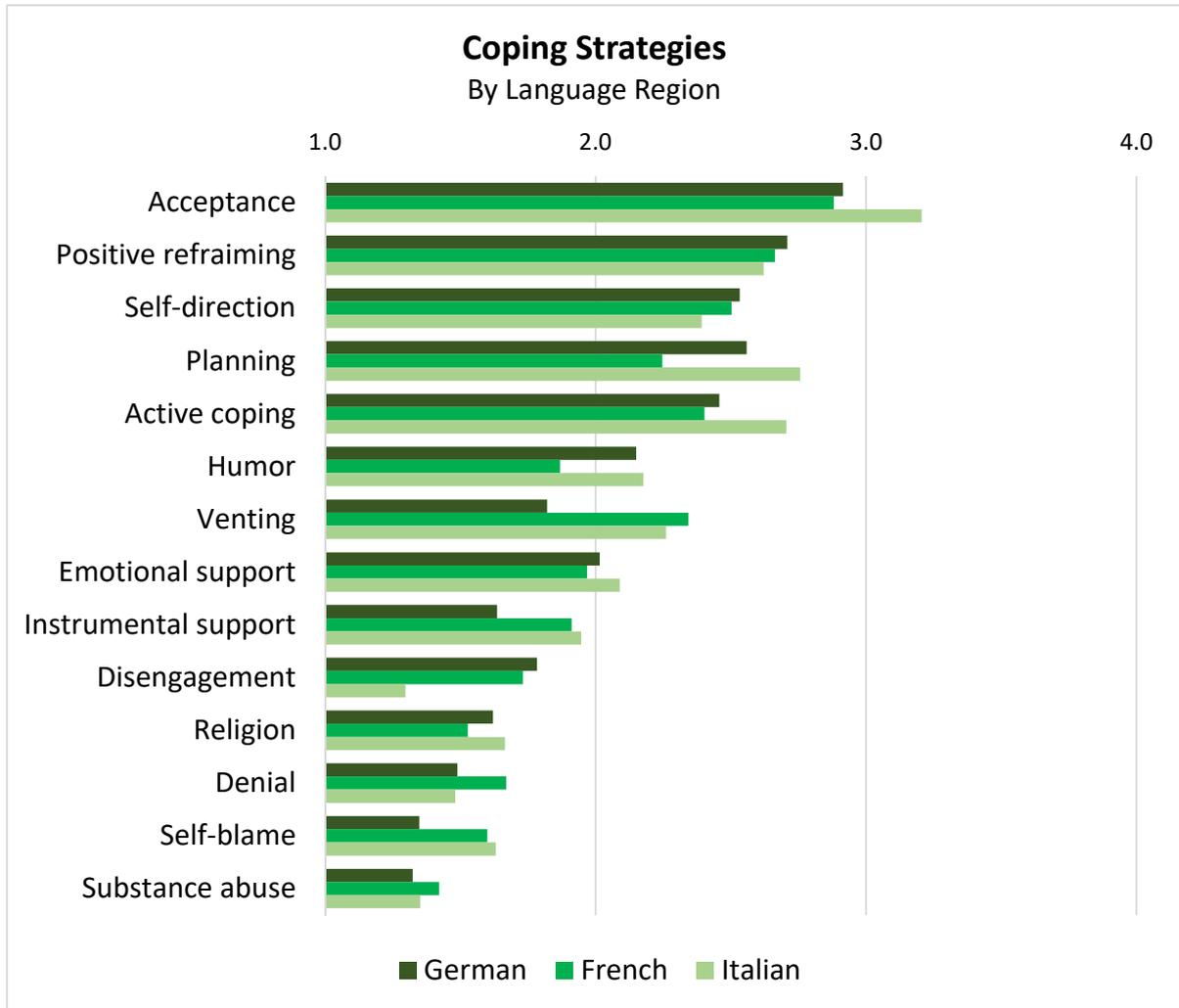


Figure 12: Coping strategies by language region - mean values

Coping strategies by gender

The next question is: Did men and women handle the stress they experienced differently? The answer to this question is yes and no. The results of men and women are almost identical in terms of *acceptance*, *planning* and *active coping* (see Fig. 13). Women more often than men chose (1) *emotional support*, (2) *self-direction*, (3) *venting*, (4) *instrumental support*, (5) *religion*, and (6) *positive reframing*. In contrast, men developed a sense of *humor* and consumed *alcohol* or other substances slightly more often than women.

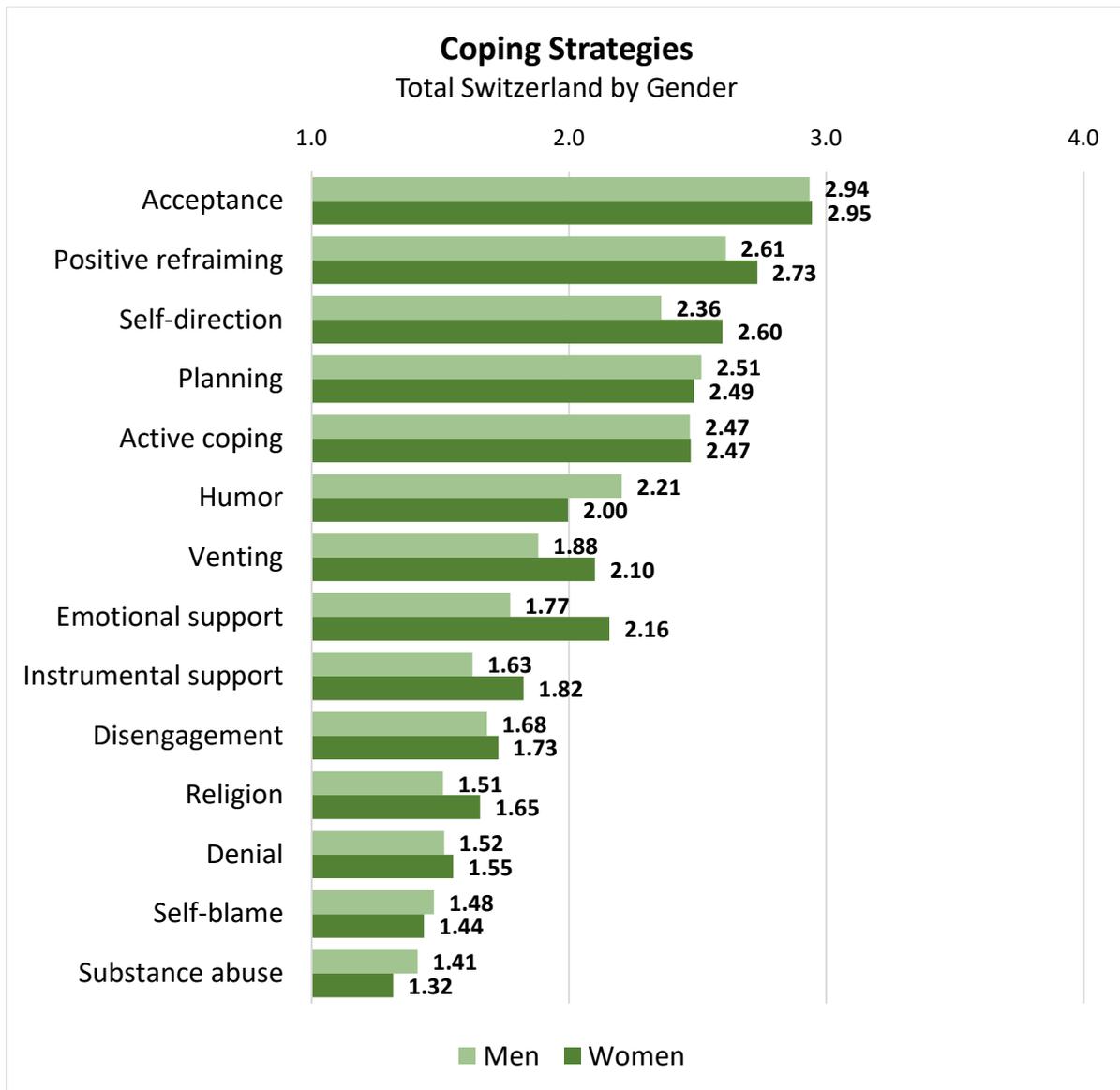


Figure 13: Coping strategies in Switzerland by gender - mean values

Summary on the topic of coping strategies

1. The participants in our study chose mainly *constructive coping strategies* and hardly any *dysfunctional strategies*.
2. *Emotional coping* through *acceptance* and *positive reframing* (positive reappraisal) takes precedence and is usually a condition for problem-focused coping strategies such as *active coping*, *planning*, and *self-direction*.
3. *Emotion-focused coping strategies* such as *social support*, *positive reframing*, and *religion* are used more often by women. Men demonstrated a sense of *humor* more often than women.
4. Italian Switzerland has above-average values of *acceptance*, *planning* and *active coping*.

4 Hope in Times of Crisis

Introduction

Hope is basically about how we look to the future in difficult times. The significance of hope in crisis situations can only be properly understood when we consider the absence of hope, i.e. hopelessness. As soon as there is no hope, people feel helpless and discouraged. The result of hopelessness is anxiety, worry, dejection and despair. In such cases, the situation or even the entire life looks meaningless and hopeless. Hope is therefore most relevant when the situation in life is difficult, when problems and challenges threaten to crush us, i.e. when we are not doing well. It is precisely in such situations that hope flares up and helps people not to give up, to look to the future again with trust and to seek new ways out of the crisis.

Hope in crisis situations basically includes four elements: 1. the *desire* for a better future; 2. the *belief* in new opportunities that the future will provide us; 3. the *awareness* of the difficulties and obstacles; and 4. the *trust* in our own abilities and/or in the abilities and care of others (family, friends, the state, God, etc.) that can cause to seize these opportunities and fulfill our desires despite adverse circumstances. Hope, therefore, is not blind optimism. Hope begins with the recognition of the current difficulties and, on this basis, develops an attitude towards the future, seeing not only the problems but, above all, the opportunities, the possibilities and the available resources. Hope is thus one of the essential conditions for positively coping with and overcoming a crisis.

Against this background, we asked people about their sense of hope. We wanted to know how hopeful they were during the 2020 pandemic year, what their attitude toward the future is, what their particular wishes and hopes are for 2021, and what gives them the most hope, i.e., their sources of hope.

4.1 Perceived Hope, Personal Attitudes and Self-confidence

Perceived hope, personal attitudes and self-confidence - selected items

To elicit hope, we used two validated instruments: The *Perceived Hope Scale* (Krafft et al. 2017) and the *Herth Hope Index* (Herth 1992). Figure 14 presents the responses to selected items on perceived hope. For more than three-quarters of the population, hope is important in their lives. Nearly two-thirds feel that hope improves their quality of life. For more than 60% of respondents, hopes are stronger than fears, and more than half of people can remain hopeful even in difficult times. Only for 15 to 20% of the interviewed people all this is rather or largely not the case. These results related to the difficult and uncertain situation at the end of 2020 are a proof of the great importance and strength of hope.

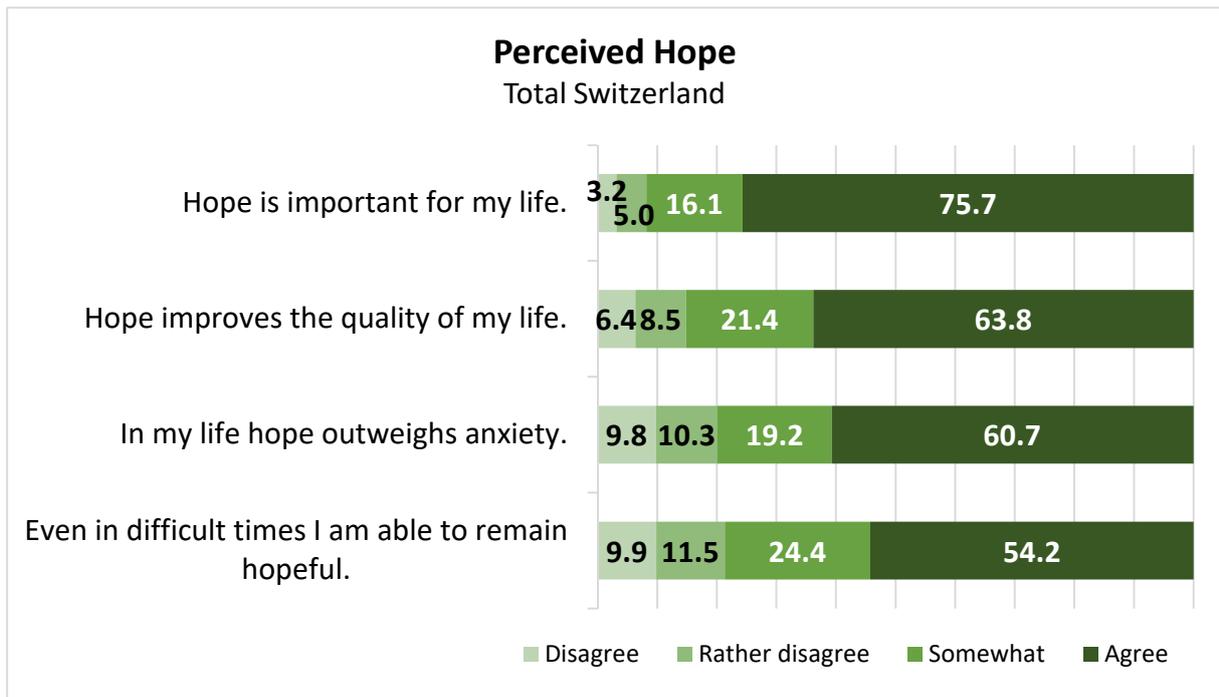


Figure 14: Perceived hope in Switzerland - selected items - Frequencies in percentage

Two essential aspects of hope are *personal attitudes* and one's own *self-confidence*. The results in Fig. 15 show how positive the attitude and how strong the self-confidence of the surveyed people in Switzerland are. Almost 86% of people have a positive attitude toward life. 81% can see a *light at the end of the tunnel* and more than three quarters feel a deep *inner strength*. As a result, two-thirds of people are rather or not at all scared about the future.

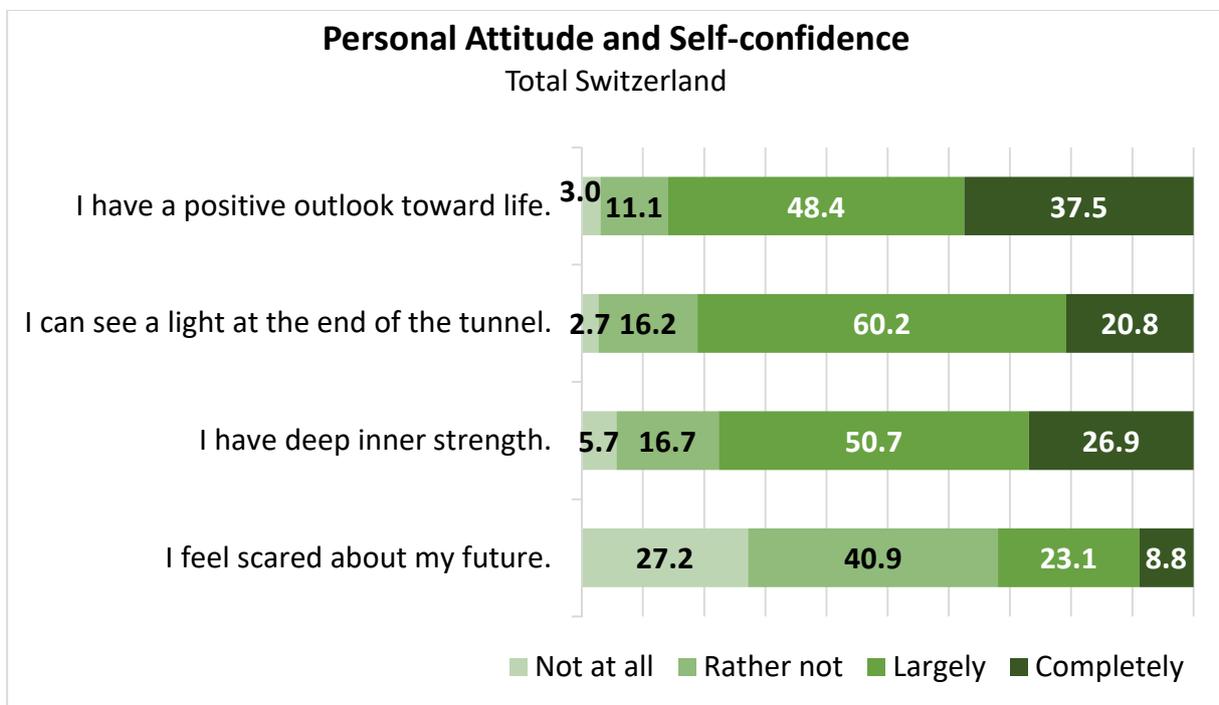


Figure 15: Personal attitude and self-confidence in Switzerland - Selected items - Frequencies in percentage

All these results prove a strongly developed resilience in the crisis of many people. However, there are also people who are not very hopeful, are rather scared about the future and do not have much confidence either in their own strengths or in life. In the following sections, we will see how hope has

developed between the end of 2019 and the end of 2020 and which population groups are particularly hopeful.

Perceived hope by language region in 2019-2020

In many conversations and interviews, we were frequently confronted with the assumption that by 2020 people's hope should have declined. This assumption is wrong, however, because it is based on a mistaken understanding of hope. As explained in the introduction to this chapter, hope is not simply a good feeling, but a positive attitude toward the future against the backdrop of a current difficult situation. Thus, hope is a personal decision that a person makes based on his or her own attitude and perception. Even if it seems paradoxical, hope is particularly valuable and pronounced in crisis situations.

This is impressively confirmed by the results in Fig. 16: The level of hope was significantly higher in all three language regions in November 2020 than in November 2019. It is only in a crisis or a difficult situation that we humans begin to consciously hope. Hope is most pronounced in German- and Italian-speaking Switzerland. The greatest development took place in Italian-speaking Switzerland.

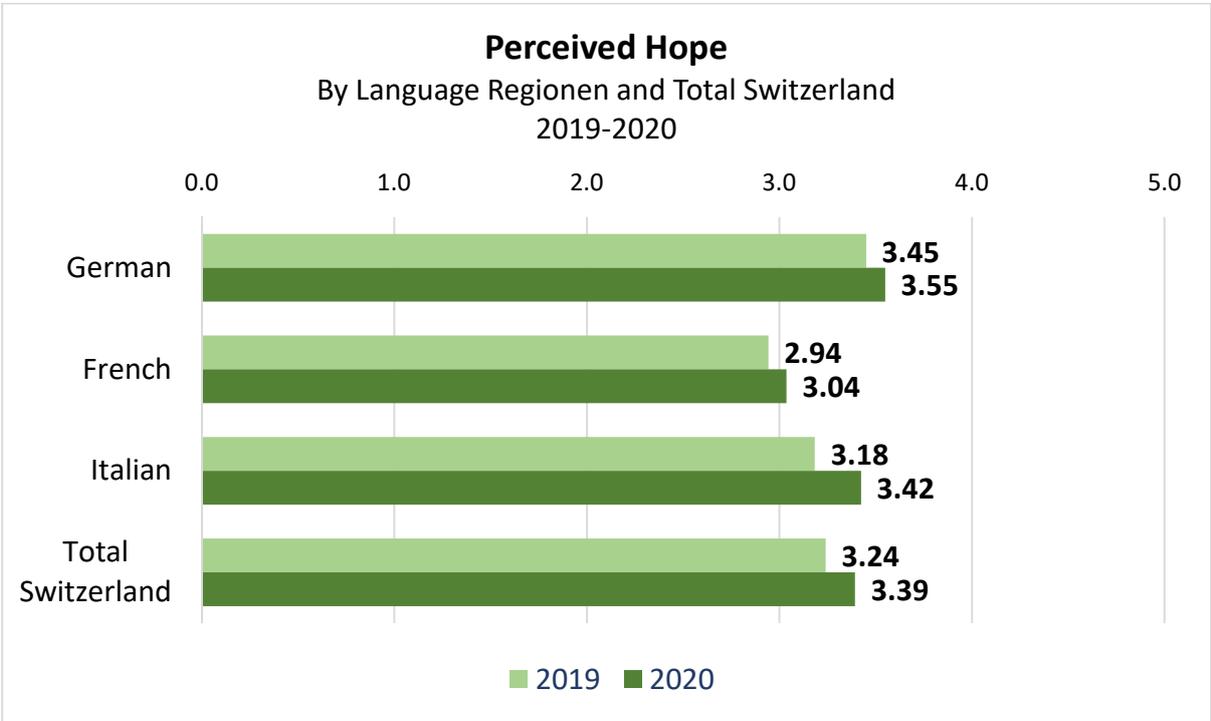


Figure 16: Perceived Hope by language region and total Switzerland 2019- 2020 - mean values

Perceived hope by age

While no significant differences were found between men and women, age and marital status are the two main demographic variables (predictors) associated with perceived hope. As can be seen in Fig. 17, hope clearly increases with age. Again, this result seems paradoxical in these days, when older people are more at risk from the pandemic than younger people. However, it is not. With age, health needs increase, but so do life experience, personal abilities, coping skills and, consequently, serenity.

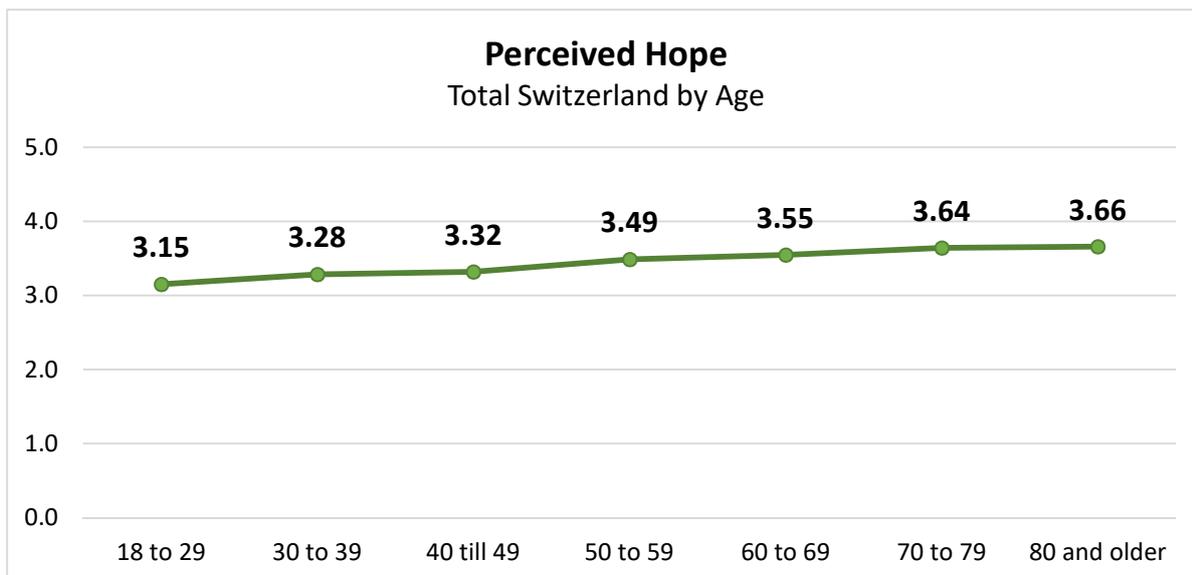


Figure 17: Perceived hope in Switzerland by age - mean values

Perceived hope by marital status

Age is one aspect, family relationships are the other. Married and widowed persons are generally more hopeful than singles (Fig. 18). While age (or life experience) is usually the determining factor for hope among widowed persons, married persons enjoy the caring and reliable social and emotional support of their partner and family. Perceived hope is particularly strong in families with children.

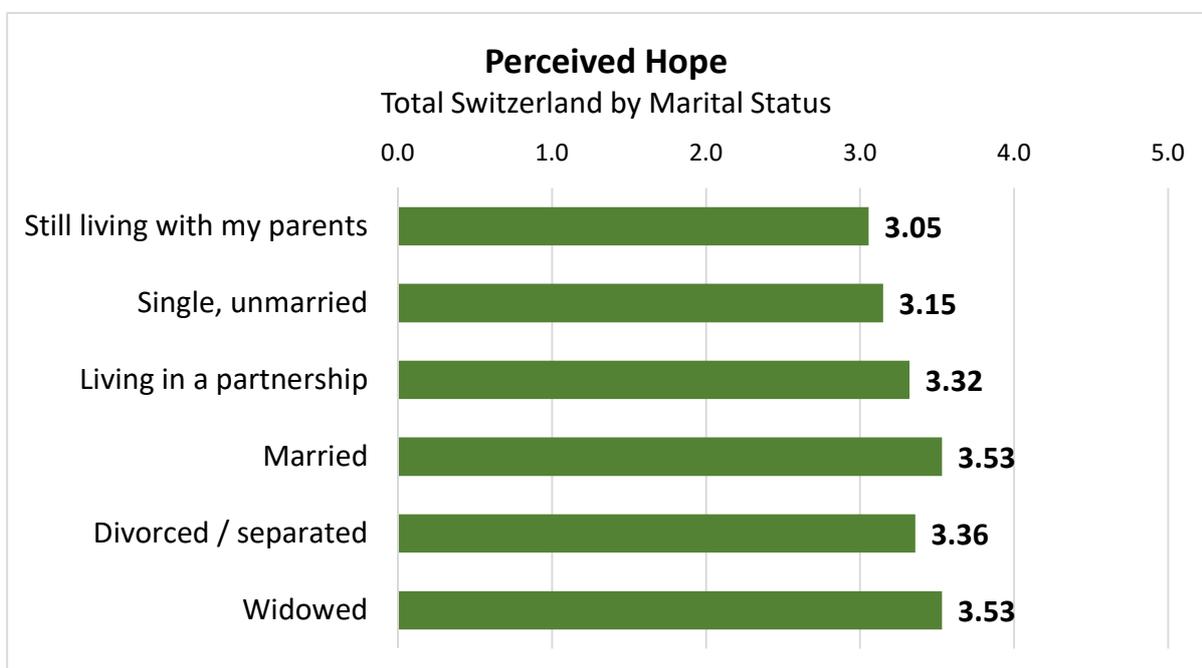


Figure 18: Perceived Hope in Switzerland by marital status - mean values

Connections between hope and coping strategies

The importance of hope in crisis situations is revealed by the correlations between hope and the strategies for coping with stress. Basically, perceived hope correlates strongly negatively with feelings of *anxiety* and *worry*. Therefore, hopeful people are more likely to choose constructive coping strategies such as *positive reframing*, *acceptance*, *active coping*, and *planning* and much less likely to choose dysfunctional strategies such as *disengagement*, *self-blame*, *denial*, and *alcohol use*, which show a positive correlation with *anxiety* and *worry*.

4.2 Personal Hopes for 2021

What do people in Switzerland hope for in 2021? Fig. 19 lists the hopes of the respondents in order of decreasing importance. What is striking is that the crisis has almost not changed the most important hopes and wishes of the Swiss population. As in the past ten years, the top six priorities in people's lives are *good health*, a *happy marriage/family/partnership*, a *harmonious life*, *good and trusting relationships with other people*, *personal independence and self-determination*, and a *meaningful and satisfying job* (see also Krafft 2019; Krafft & Walker 2018).

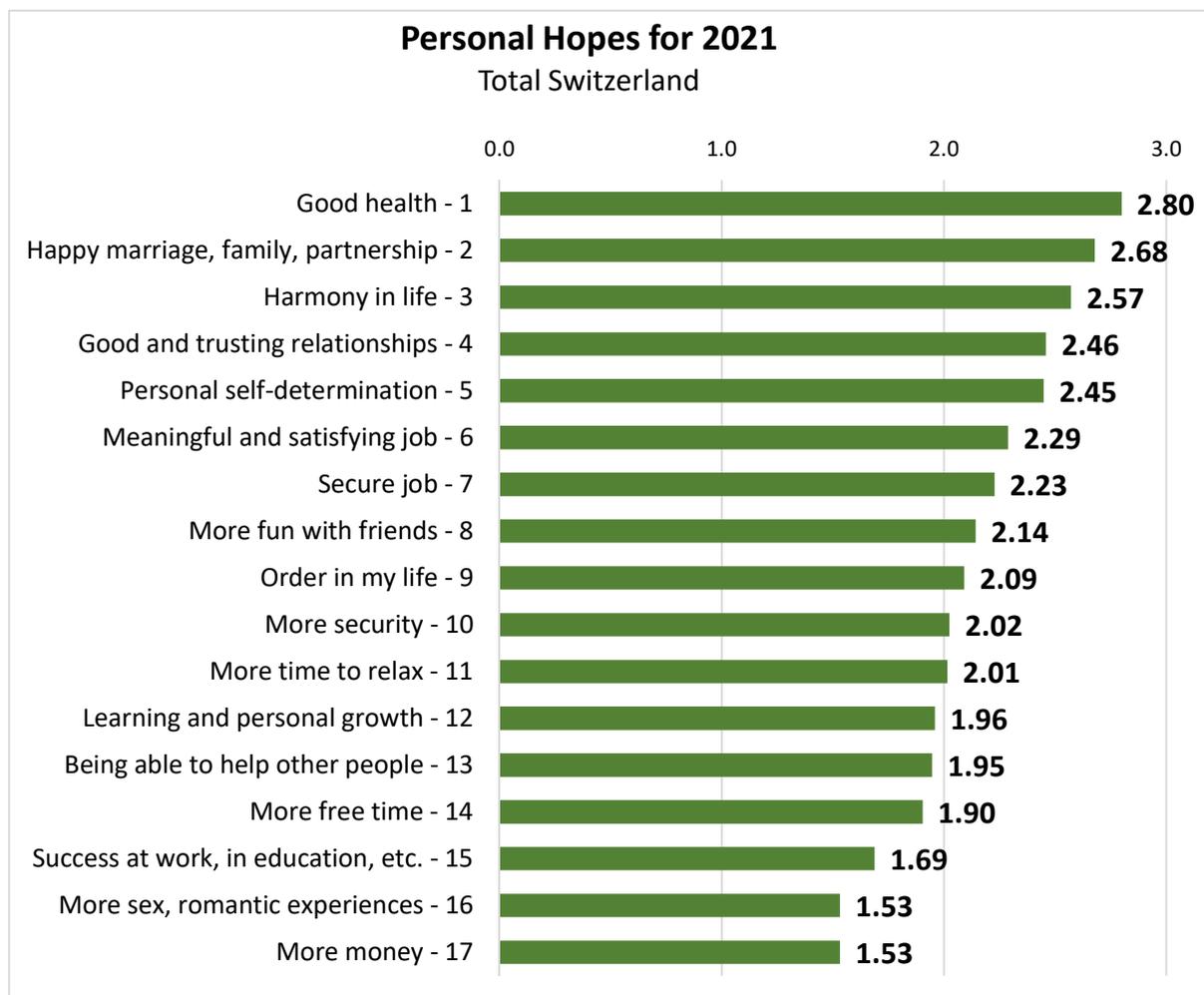


Figure 19: Personal hopes for 2021 in Switzerland - mean values

Personal hopes in the years 2019-2020

If you compare the hopes for the coming year in 2020 with the hopes in 2019, the most striking thing is that the important domains in life have become even more important and that the less important things such as *money*, *sex* and *success* have become even less important. In times of crisis, people revert to what is particularly valuable to them. In addition, two other developments stand out: Hope for a *secure job* has moved up from the 9th place in 2019 to the 7th place in 2020. The more uncertain the outlook in the economy and the labor market, the more important the hope for security becomes. The second aspect is the desire to be *able to help others*. Among the lowest-rated hopes, this is the only item that was significantly rated higher in 2020 than in 2019. When people feel threatened, they stick together the most.

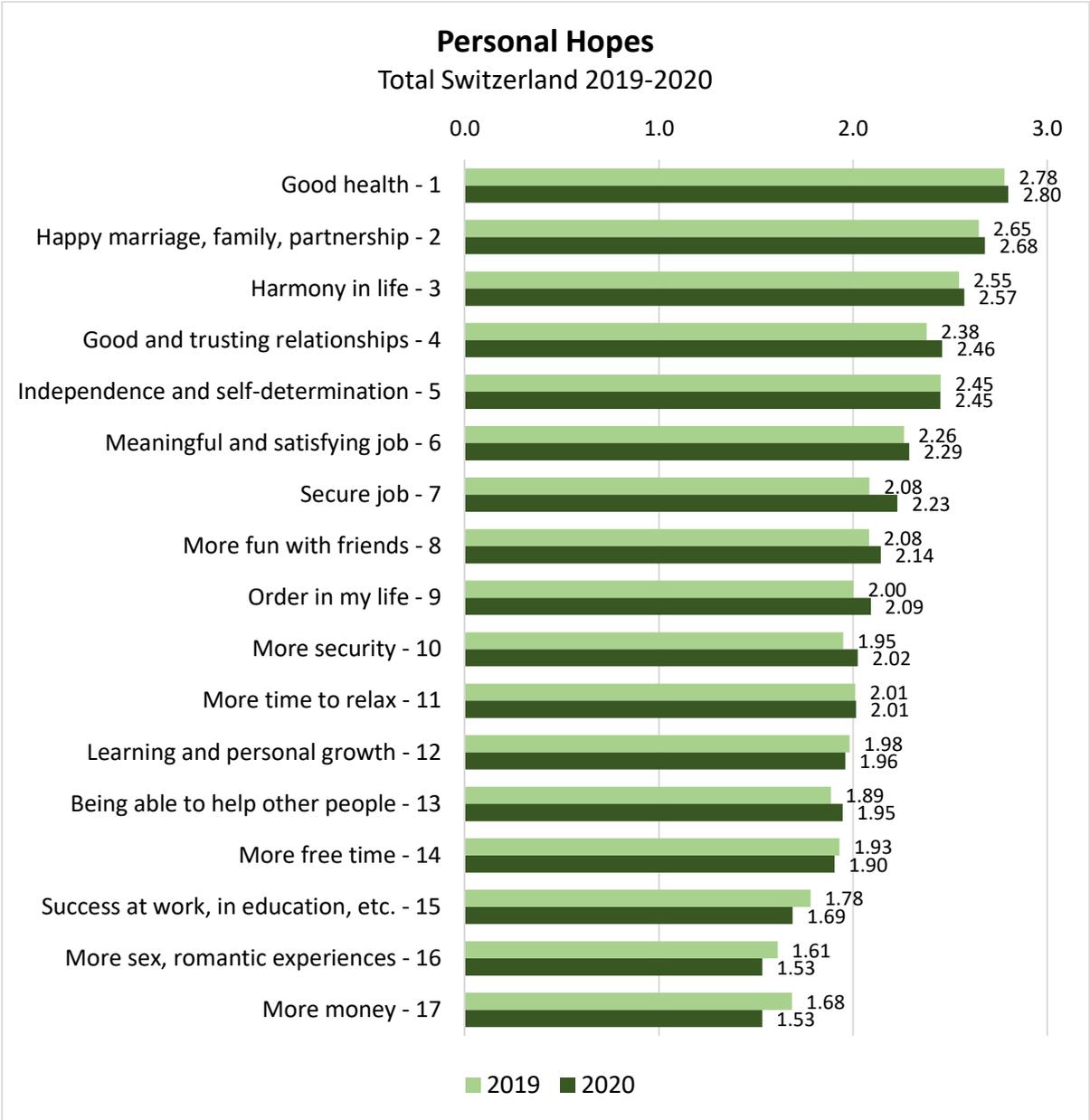


Figure 20: Personal hopes for the coming year in Switzerland 2019-2020 - mean values

Personal hopes by language region

When comparing the groups from the three language regions, many similarities but also some significant differences are noticeable. For the top three hopes, the values of all three language regions are largely similar. Furthermore, people in German-speaking Switzerland hope more for *good and trusting relationships*, for *personal independence and self-determination*, and for a *meaningful task* than the other two national groups. The desire for more *order in life* is relatively low in French-speaking Switzerland (as in previous years). People in Italian-speaking Switzerland attach above-average importance to *learning and personal growth*, as well as *more security*, *more time to relax*, *more leisure time*, *success and money*.

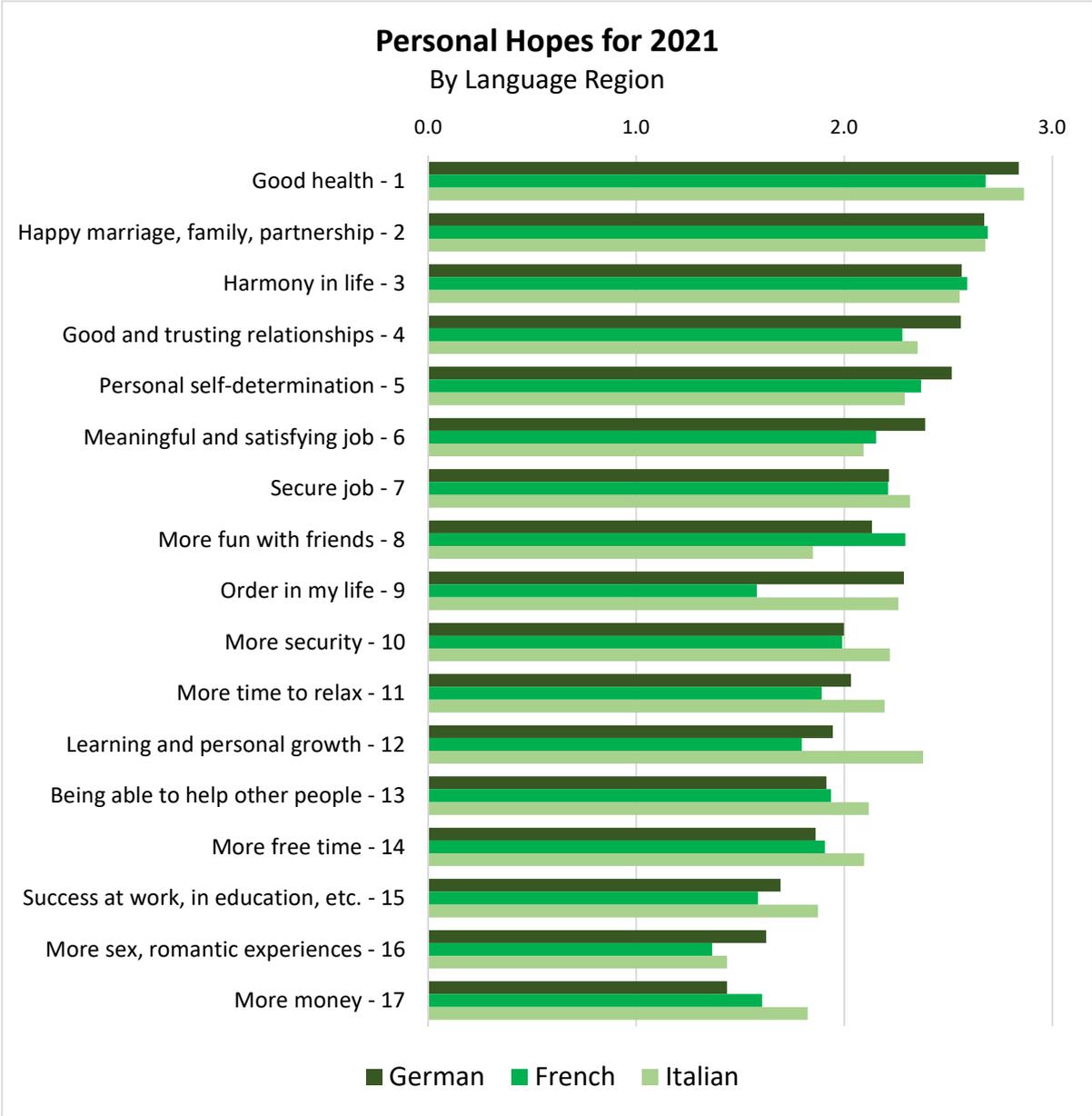


Figure 21: Personal hopes for 2021 by language region - mean values

4.3 Sources of Hope

Where does the Swiss population draw hope from? Sources of hope generally include personal skills, social relationships, positive experiences, and religious or spiritual faith (Krafft 2019; Krafft & Walker 2018). We wanted to learn which conditions or experiences gave people particular hope during the COVID19 pandemic.

At the top of the list of 17 possible sources of hope, *beautiful experiences in the free nature* and the *support of family and friends* clearly stand out. Especially during the lockdown, many people experienced once again what a great source of strength the magnificent *nature*, with its lakes, mountains, forests and meadows, is. In *nature*, many people find *peace* and a connection to a *greater whole*. At the same time, most people became more aware of how important *social relationships*, especially *family* and close *friends*, are in life.

Other sources of hope are *personal abilities* and *positive experiences* related to *helpfulness*, *good deeds* and *gratitude*. Of lesser importance (as in previous years) are *money*, *religious experiences* and *political commitment*.

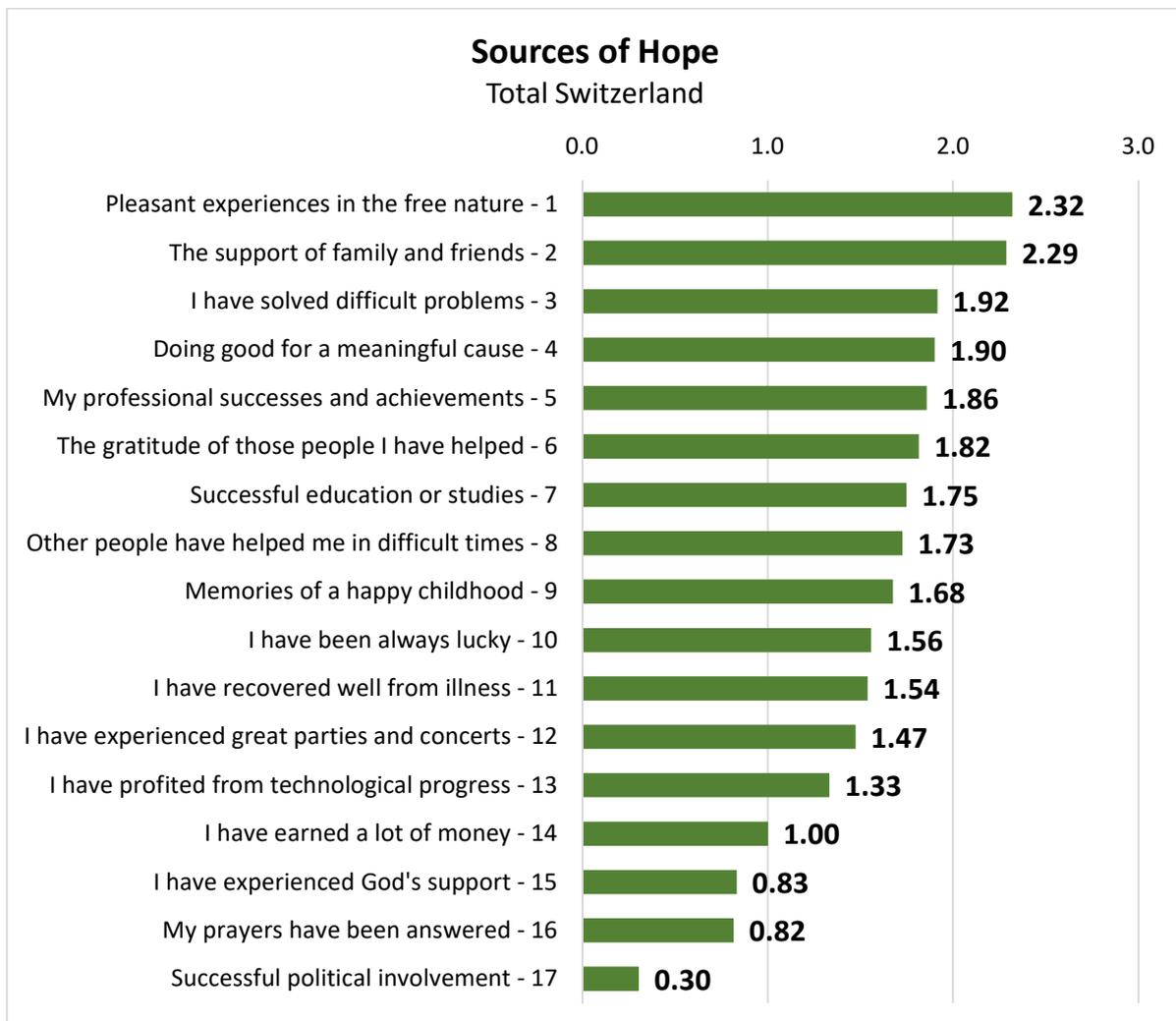


Figure 22: Sources of hope in Switzerland - mean values

Sources of hope by language region

A closer look at the similarities and differences by language regions shown in Fig. 23 reveals that the *beautiful experiences in the free nature* as a source of hope are particularly strong in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. Participants in the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland more often stated that they were *doing good for a meaningful purpose* and that they had always been *lucky*. *God's help* is less important in French-speaking Switzerland than in the other two language regions.

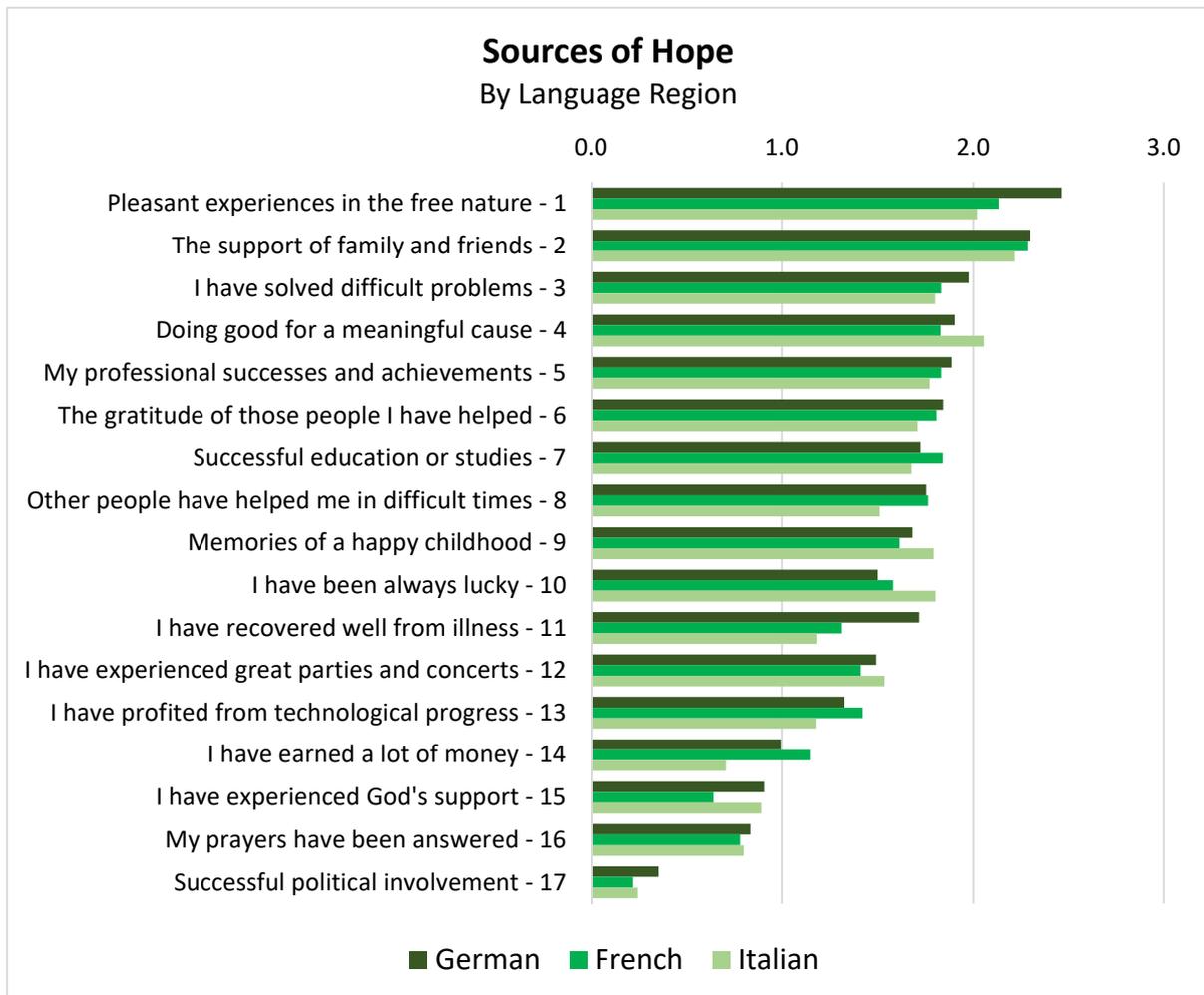


Figure 23: Sources of hope in Switzerland by language region - mean values

Summary on the topic of hope in times of crisis

1. The importance and perception of *hope* increased noticeably in 2020 compared to 2019 in all three language regions of Switzerland.
2. A majority of people have a *positive attitude*, can see *new opportunities* in difficult times and remain *hopeful*, and have more *hopes* than *fears* for the future thanks to *inner strength* and *good social relationships*.
3. With *age*, hope also increases despite greater burdens. This is thanks to the *coping resources* of older people.
4. *Married people* are more *hopeful* than singles. Families with *children* are often more *hopeful* than families without children.

5. In the crisis year 2020, people's most important hopes such as *good health, happy marriage, family and partnership, harmony in life, good relationships with other people, independence and a meaningful task* have become even more important. In contrast, material things like *money* have continued to lose importance. The need for *security* along with *social support* has grown in uncertain times.
6. The most essential sources of hope are of a *socio-emotional nature: beautiful experiences in the free nature and the support of family and friends*. These are followed by *personal strengths* and experiences such as *helpfulness* and *gratitude*.

5 Emotional, Psychological and Social Well-being

Introduction

The next question is how well the population in Switzerland felt in times of Corona. In psychology, a distinction is made between emotional, psychological and social well-being (Keyes 2007). To measure these three aspects of well-being, we used the short form of the widely used *Mental Health Continuum* (Lammers et al. 2011). *Emotional well-being* includes positive feelings such as happiness, life satisfaction, and interest in life. *Psychological well-being* is defined as a state of functioning well in everyday life, i.e., meeting the demands of the environment, performing or contributing well, and experiencing good feelings. *Psychological well-being* is characterized by phenomena such as self-esteem, successfully coping with daily challenges, personal growth, a sense of purpose in life, autonomy, and positive relationships. *Social well-being* refers to the perception of the social environment and connection to society: belonging to a community, one's contribution to society, how society is evolving (positively or negatively), and attitudes toward people and society at large.

Emotional and psychological well-being - selected items

The selected items in Fig. 24 give a first impression of how well (or poorly) people in Switzerland feel *emotionally* and *psychologically*. Almost half of the population feels very happy and just over a third moderately happy. 68.1% of people are able to cope with the obligations of everyday life very well and just under a quarter moderately. A majority of 63.4% have very warm and trusting relationships with others and more than half see direction or meaning in their lives. We will see later to what extent these values have changed compared to 2019.

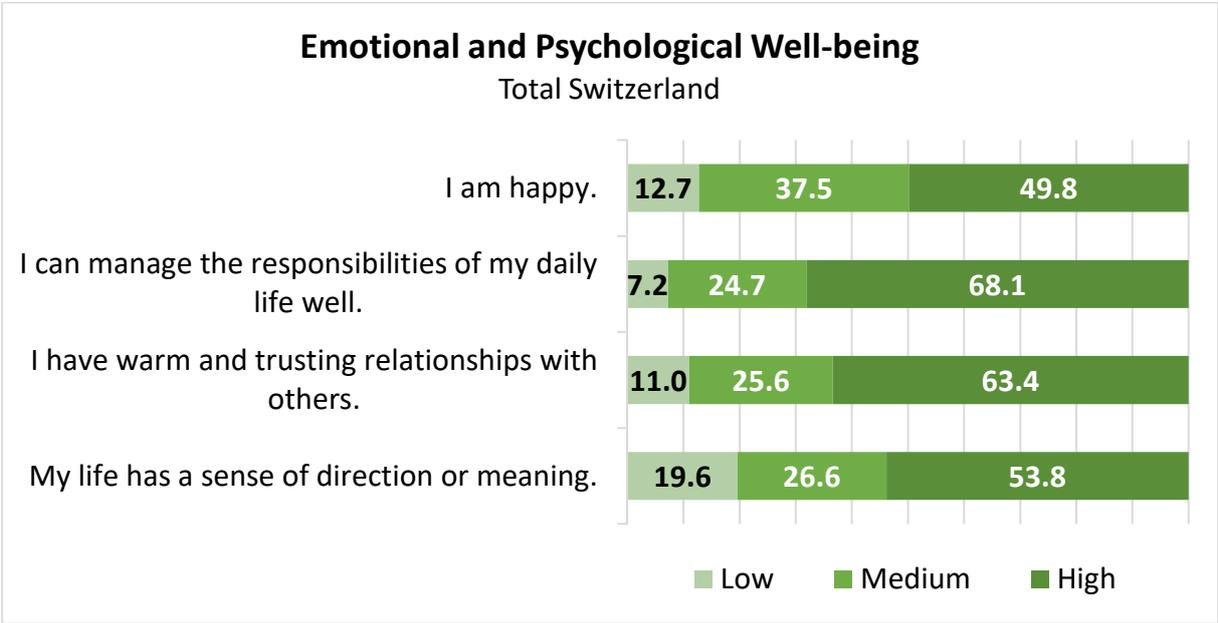


Figure 24: Emotional and psychological well-being in Switzerland - selected items - frequencies in percentage

Social well-being - selected items

The indicators for *social well-being* look quite different. A majority of people find that our society is hardly or only moderately becoming a better place for people, that people are basically good, or that it makes sense how our society functions.



Figure 25: Social well-being in Switzerland - selected items - frequencies in percentage

Emotional, psychological and social well-being by language region

We can observe in Fig. 26 how *emotional* and *psychological well-being* is more pronounced than *social well-being* in all three language regions. For the most part, people feel happy, satisfied and perceive their lives as valuable, challenging and meaningful. In German-speaking Switzerland and Italian-speaking Switzerland, these values are significantly higher than in French-speaking Switzerland. *Social well-being* is strongest in German-speaking Switzerland and weakest in French-speaking Switzerland.

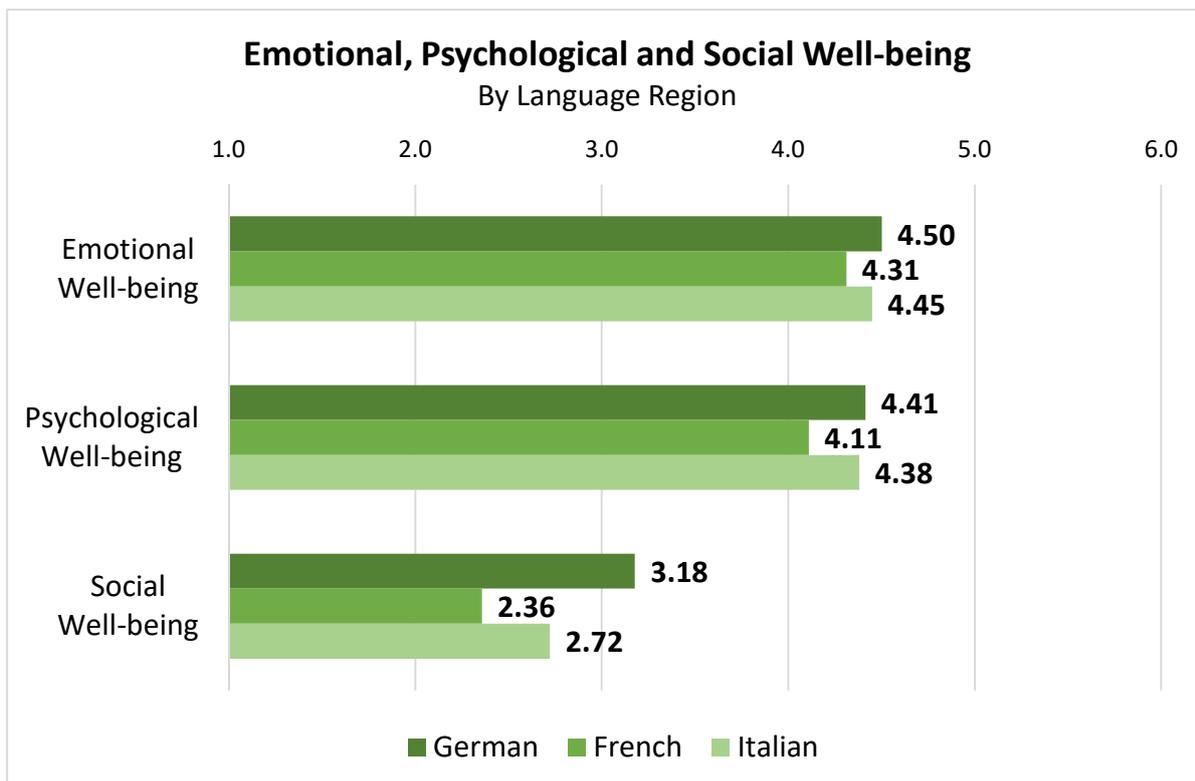


Figure 26: Emotional, psychological and social well-being in Switzerland by language region - mean values

Emotional, psychological, and social well-being by language region 2019-2020.

In Figs. 27 to 29, we can observe how well-being developed in the three language regions from 2019 to 2020. While *emotional well-being* increased significantly in Italian-speaking Switzerland and slightly in French-speaking Switzerland, it decreased slightly in German-speaking Switzerland (Fig. 27).

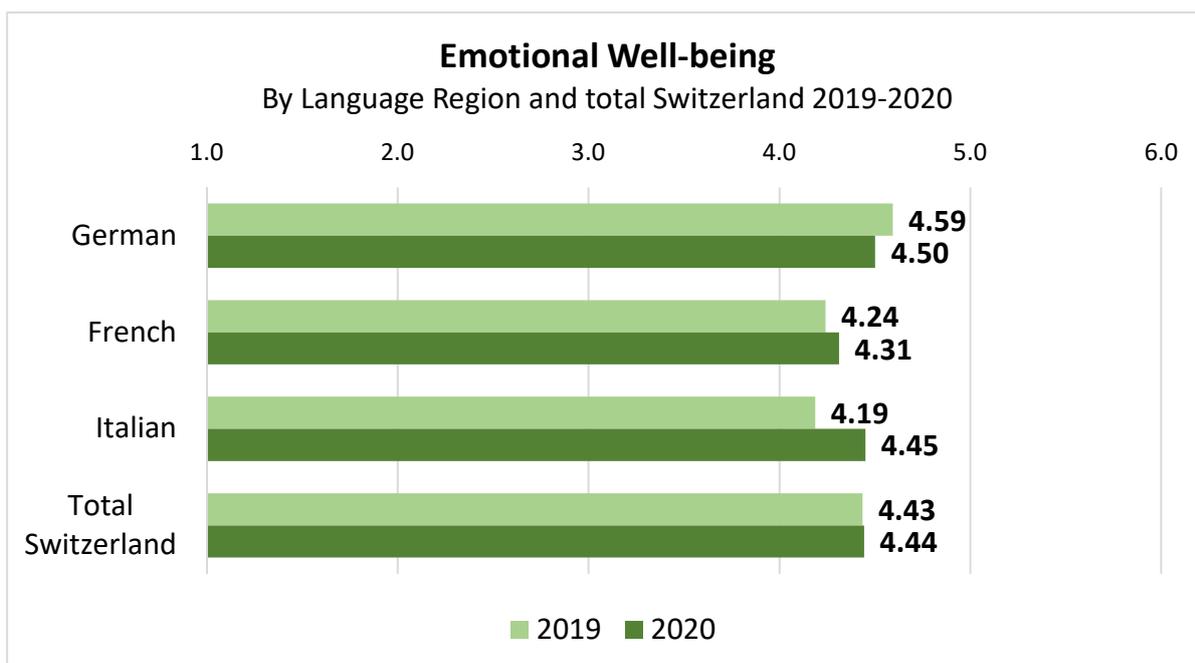


Figure 27: Emotional well-being in Switzerland by language region 2019-2020 - mean values

Psychological well-being increased significantly in Italian-speaking Switzerland, decreased slightly in German-speaking Switzerland, and remained nearly the same in French-speaking Switzerland.

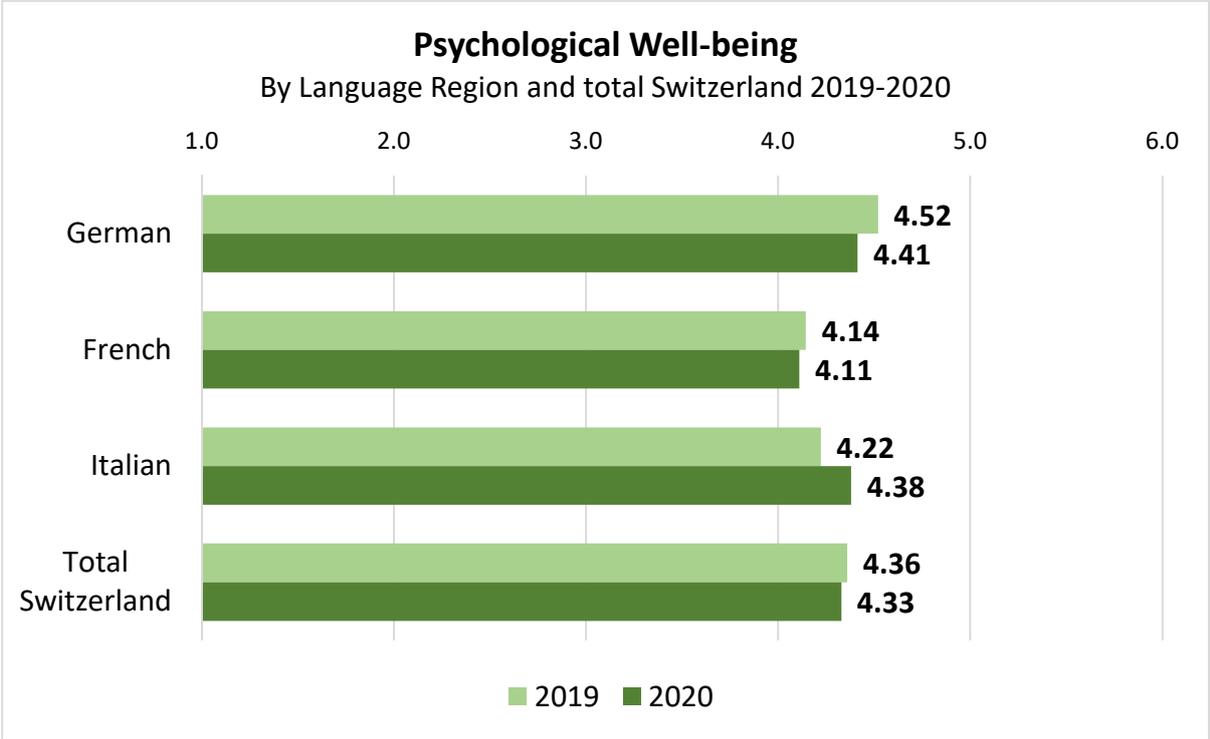


Figure 28: Psychological well-being in Switzerland by language region 2019-2020 - mean values

Social well-being has declined most significantly in the German-speaking and French-speaking parts of Switzerland. This may be a consequence of general uncertainty due to a wide range of negative news in the media as well as circulating conspiracy theories in social networks. In chapter 6, we will provide a counterpoint and report on the positive individual effects of the crisis.

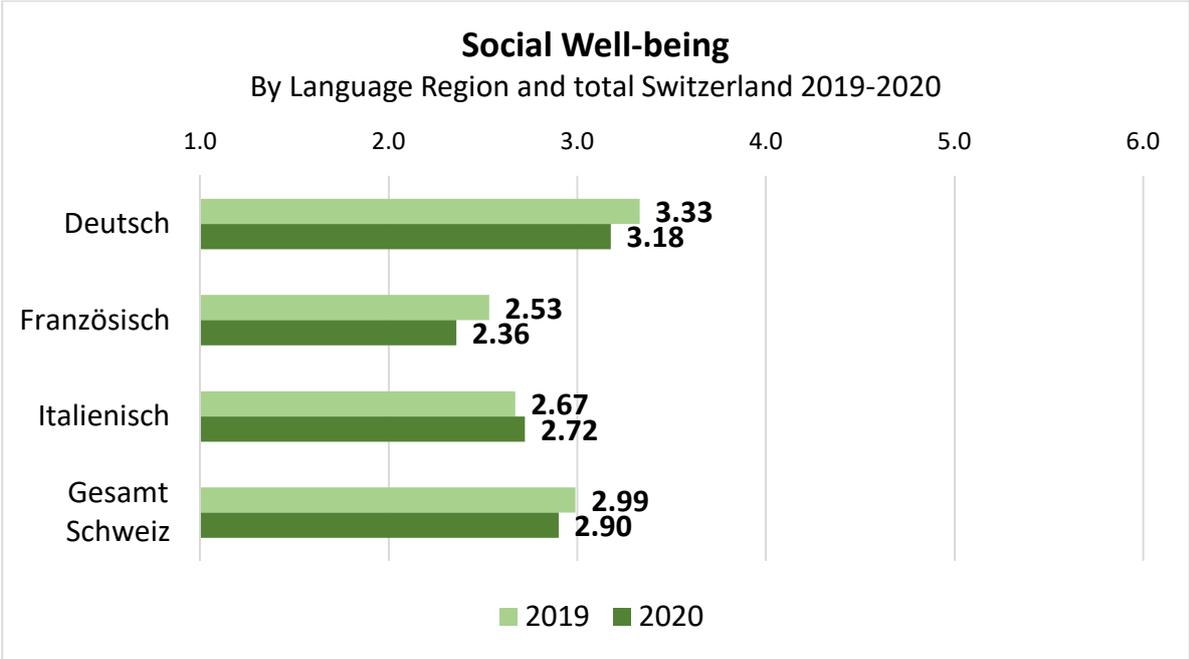


Figure 29: Social well-being in Switzerland by language region 2019-2020 - mean values

Psychological and social well-being by age

While we found no significant differences between men and women in all three well-being categories, well-being increases continuously with age (see Fig. 30). The increase in social well-being is most pronounced with age. Older people no longer view the world and society as negatively as young people. Especially in times of crisis, young people are more critical and feel more insecure than people with longer life experience. (Due to the fact that the trajectories of emotional and psychological well-being are almost identical, for the sake of clarity only psychological well-being was reported).

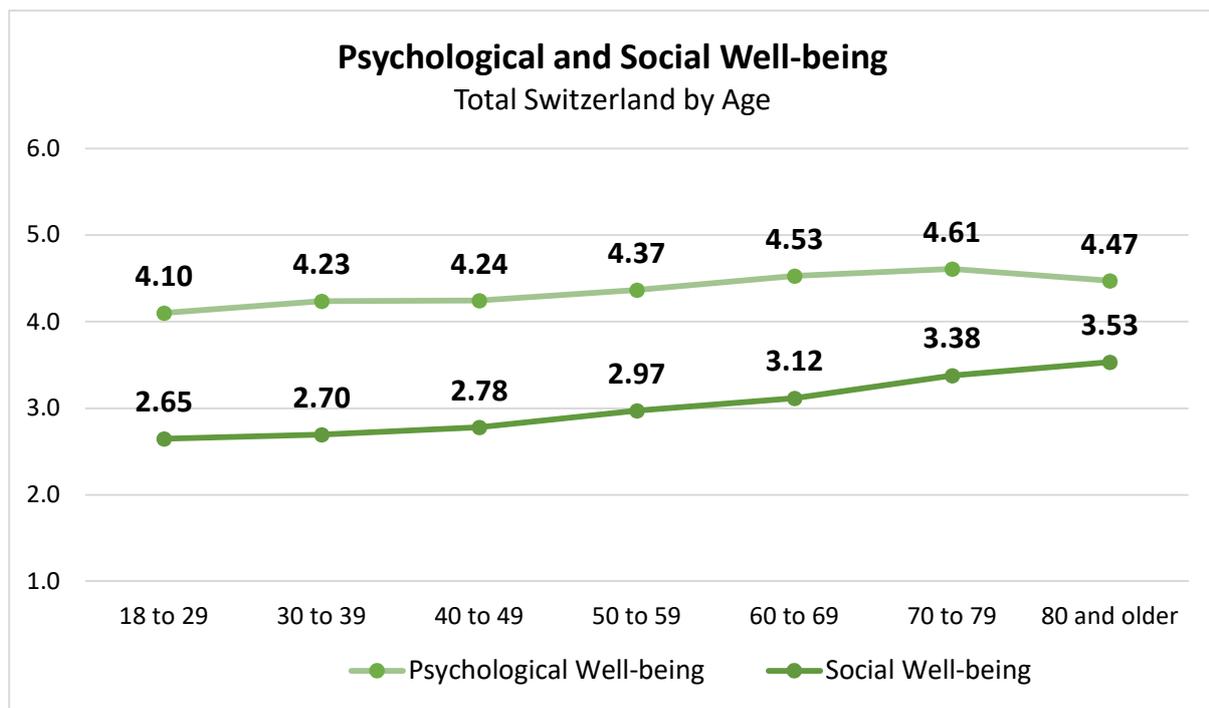


Figure 30: Psychological and social well-being in Switzerland by age - mean values

Summary of the topic of well-being

1. *Emotional* and *psychological well-being* remained nearly constant on average across Switzerland from 2019 to 2020.
2. While *emotional* and *psychological well-being* decreased slightly year-on-year in German-speaking Switzerland and remained almost constant in French-speaking Switzerland, it increased in Italian-speaking Switzerland.
3. *Social well-being* has decreased especially in the German-speaking and French-speaking parts of Switzerland.
4. *Emotional* and *psychological well-being*, but above all *social well-being*, increase continuously with age.
5. Despite higher stress levels in women, there are no significant differences in *emotional*, *psychological* and *social well-being* between men and women. This is evidence of effective *coping strategies* in women.

6 Stress-related Growth

Introduction

Most surveys and studies on the impact of critical life events, including those related to the COVID19 pandemic, have focused primarily on their negative consequences, such as *physical* and *mental illness* (de Quervain 2020). However, the notion that people can also have positive experiences in the aftermath of stressful events and grow from them has been the subject of multiple empirical studies for some time (Tedeschi & Calhoun 1995). Stress-related growth occurs primarily when people are able to deal constructively with stressful events.

Crisis situations have both a direct and an indirect impact on people (Collins et al. 1990). The direct effects are primarily negative because they trigger feelings of vulnerability, threat, loss, overwhelm, fear, and anxiety. The indirect effects occur through the person's response to the event and can lead to positive outcomes, such as recognition of personal strengths or social support. Stress-related growth occurs as a result of struggling with stressful life events. This growth can occur in a variety of domains: Better social relationships, stronger self-confidence, more empathy, or a more positive philosophy of life.

Past studies have found that stress-related growth occurs most often when individuals (a) experience a highly stressful event, (b) have a high level of personal and social resources prior to the event, and (c) use constructive coping strategies (Ameli et al. 2001). The consequences of stress are more positive the more the person engages in *positive reframing* and *active coping* with the event.

In our study, we used the *Stress-Related Growth Questionnaire* by Ameli et al. (2001), which is used to examine both positive and negative effects in the domains of self-understanding, treatment of others, personal strengths, optimism, managing one's own emotions (affect regulation), and belonging to a community. Here are the definitions of each domain:

1. *Self-understanding*: you accept yourself as you are
2. *Treatment of others*: Kindness, helpfulness and respect for the feelings and beliefs of others
3. *Personal strengths*: confidence in one's own strengths, competencies and abilities
4. *Optimism*: looking at things in a positive way
5. *Affect regulation*: positive handling of negative feelings such as anger and impatience
6. *Belonging*: Feeling part of a caring community

Stress-related growth in Switzerland

The results in Fig. 31 show slight positive stress-related growth effects in almost all areas, most notably *self-understanding*, *treatment of others*, and *personal strengths*.

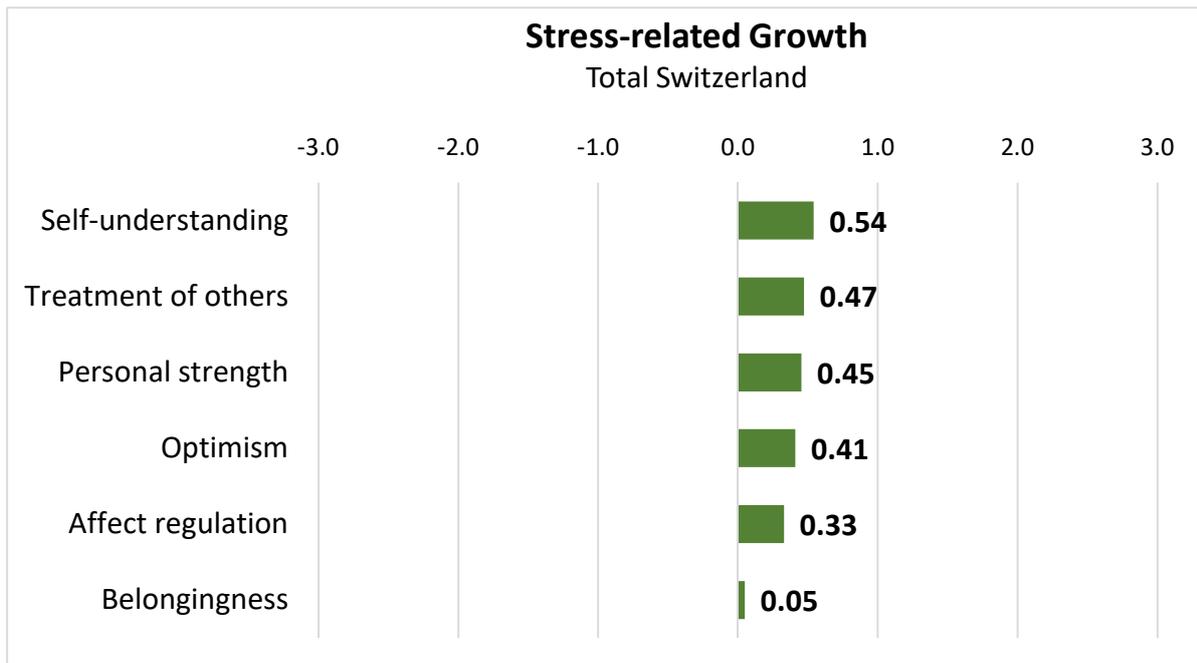


Figure 31: Stress-related growth in Switzerland - mean values

What these results express in detail is exemplified in Figures 32 to 34.

For 43.7% of the respondents, *self-confidence* has increased slightly to strongly as a result of the crisis (Fig. 32). For 46%, there has been no change and for only 10.3%, *confidence* in themselves has decreased. These figures say nothing about how strong people's self-confidence actually is (we examined this in Section 4.1), but merely whether people have noticed a change in themselves as a result of their experiences in recent months.

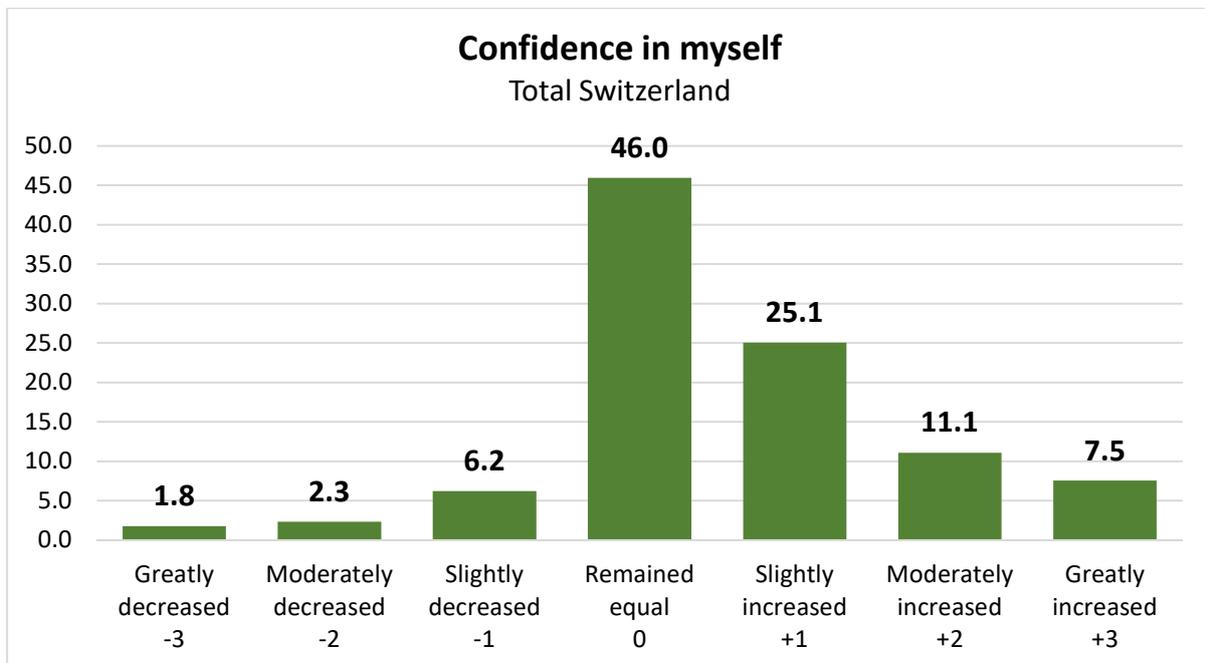


Figure 32: Changes in "Confidence in myself"- frequencies in percentage

Fig. 33 presents the changes in relation to the statement *treat others nicely*. 43.7% of respondents feel that they are now slightly to more willing to treat other people more kindly. Only 8.6% feel that they currently treat other people less kindly. However, this does not mean that they treat people badly in principle, but only that they are less friendly than before.

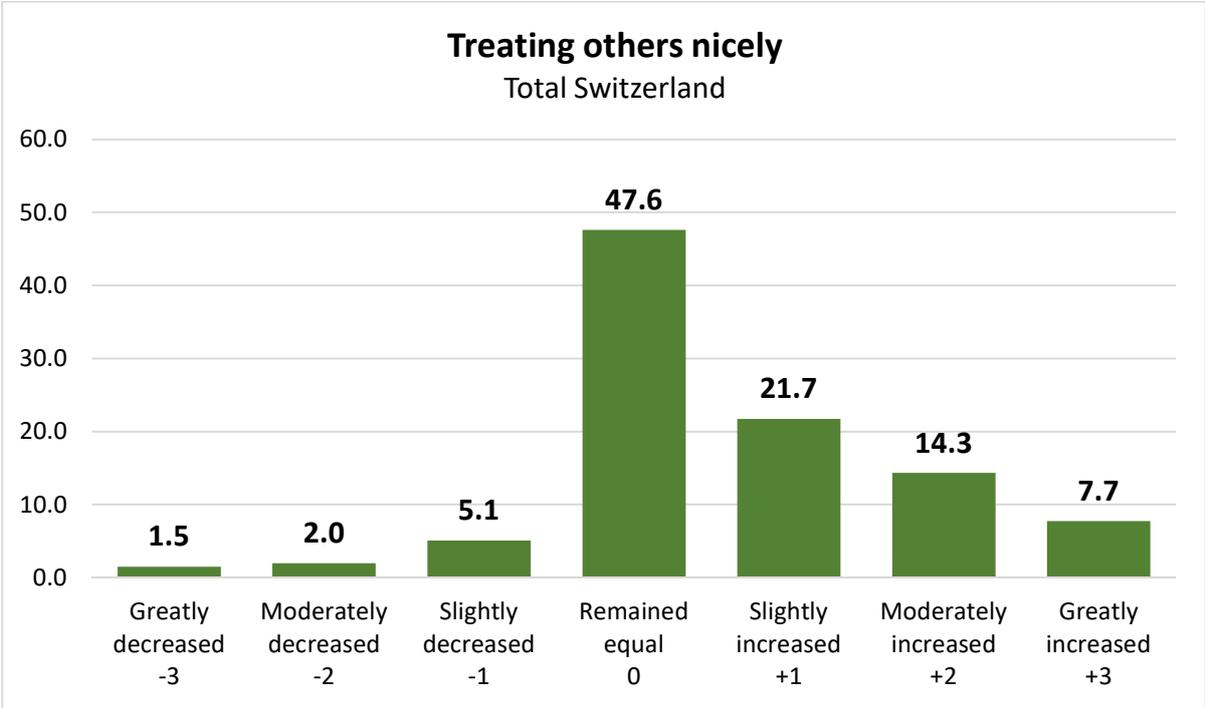


Figure 33: Changes in "Treating others nicely"- frequencies in percentage

Similarly, 54.2% of respondents feel that they are now more willing to help others (Fig. 34). This is in line with the main sources of hope in chapter 4.3.

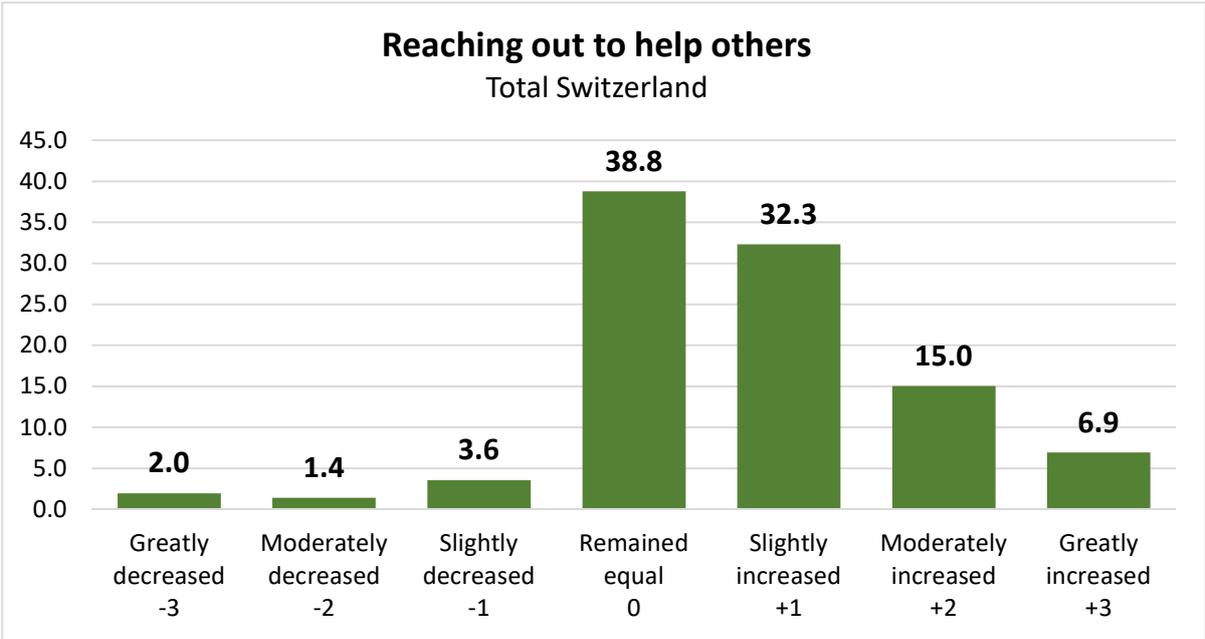


Figure 34: Changes in "Reaching out to help others" - frequencies in percentage

Stress-related growth by language region

If we look at the stress-related growth by language region, it becomes apparent that the development was positive in all three regions (Fig. 35). In the areas of *treatment of other people*, *personal strengths* and *optimism*, growth was slightly stronger in German-speaking and Italian-speaking than in French-speaking Switzerland. People in Italian-speaking Switzerland seem to have experienced slightly higher growth in *dealing with negative emotions* and in *belonging to a community*.

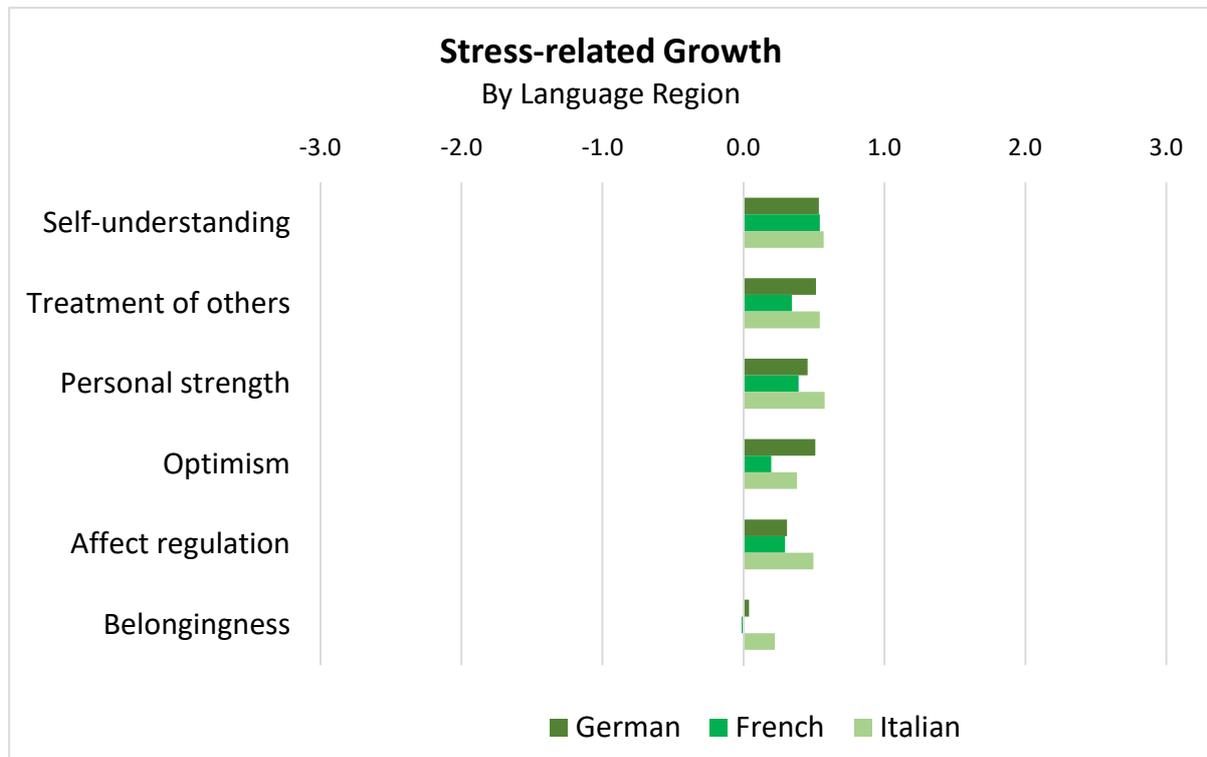


Figure 35: Stress-related growth in Switzerland by language region - mean values

Stress-related growth by gender

Women more often than men experienced growth in better *treatment of other people* (social dimension) (Fig. 36). In contrast, more men than women perceived positive development in *personal strengths*, *optimism* and *dealing with negative emotions*.

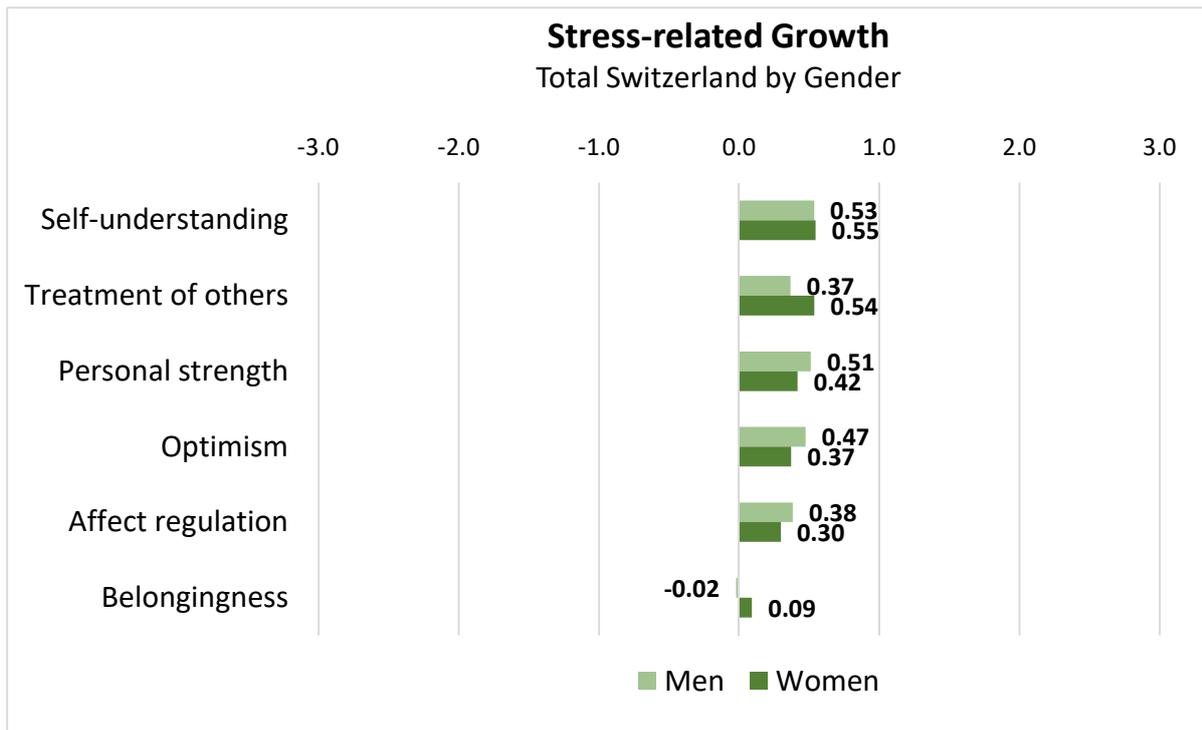


Figure 36: Stress-related growth in Switzerland by gender - mean values

Summary of the topic stress-related growth

1. As a result of the experiences in 2020, about one-third of the population in all three language regions experienced a slight to strong increase in *positive self-understanding*, in *friendly and helpful treatment to other people*, in *confidence in one's own strengths*, and in *optimism and better handling of negative emotions*.
2. Women experienced significantly more noticeable changes in being *kind and helpful to others*.
3. Men were slightly more likely than women to rediscover their *personal strengths*, gain *optimism*, and better manage *negative emotions*.

7 Conclusions

This year's Hope Barometer study was centered on how the Swiss population felt and dealt with the Corona pandemic. The focus was less on the negative effects of the crisis and more on coping strategies, hope for a better future, well-being and personal growth. In every crisis there are as many opportunities as threats, the only question is how people deal with them. It depends on each individual to see the situation from a new perspective and, within the scope of individual possibilities, to make the best out of it. Crises can be understood as life tests that can trigger changes, developments and personal growth in us.

The Corona pandemic put people in Switzerland to a moderately stress test. Most people were able to deal constructively with the uncertainty and the difficulties and challenges in their environment. In particular, people who could revert to robust social relationships (family, friends, etc.) were able to cope well with the general stress. Older people were also able to cope with stress better than younger people because of their life experience and coping resources. As a result, life satisfaction and the emotional and psychological well-being of the population have changed little compared to 2019.

How stressful people perceive stressful situations depends on their subjective assessment and on the personal and social resources they have for coping with them. **Most people in Switzerland were able to deal constructively with the crisis.** They have been able to accept it as such, make a positive reassessment and actively find solutions for the challenges ahead. Only a minority have developed rather harmful behaviors such as disengagement, denial, self-blame and alcohol consumption. Women were able to draw more on emotional support and focus on the positive aspects of the situation. Men were especially eased by (healthy) humor.

While coping with multiple family and professional challenges, most people have never lost hope. The majority of people have been able to retain more hopes than fears and remain hopeful even in difficult times. Hope, however, is neither blind optimism nor a fatalistic attitude. In full awareness of difficulties and obstacles, hope is the desire for a better future, coupled with faith in future possibilities and trust in one's own abilities and resources as well as those of others. Because of their inner strength and good social relationships, most people can see new possibilities for the future even in difficult situations. During uncertain and stressful times, hope is not only important for the future, but it improves the quality of life in the here and now. Because of their life experience, older people can remain more hopeful than the younger generation.

In times of crisis, we become even more aware of the important things in life. Thus, most people hope above all for good health, a happy marriage, family or partnership, a harmonious life, good and trusting relationships with other people, autonomy, and a meaningful task. Other aspects such as success, sex and material factors move even more into the background in such times. In uncertain periods, a secure job becomes increasingly important, as does people's willingness to help each other.

The most prominent sources of hope are beautiful experiences in the free nature and the support of family and friends. Here we can see how important our natural and social environment is for our own inner strength and shaping of the future. Using one's own strengths and abilities to do good, as well as experiencing care and gratitude, are further sources of hope and the best conditions for emotional, psychological and social well-being.

On a personal level, **many people have warm and trusting relationships with others and are able to cope well with the obligations of daily life, which maintains emotional and psychological well-being.** What many people are less enthusiastic about is how society in general is developing, which is why social well-being has suffered, especially in the German-speaking and French-speaking parts of Switzerland, and especially among young people.

Every critical life experience not only brings negative consequences, but also holds potential for personal and social growth. Especially when people do not lose hope in the future and use positive coping strategies, they can both improve their own situation and experience inner growth as a result. In the current COVID situation, too, many people have gotten to know themselves better, further developed friendly and caring interactions with other people, and rediscovered their personal strengths.

To conclude this report, we would like to share some reflections on the current situation in the way of lessons learnt. The question in the current situation is not whether we are in a crisis or not, nor is it whether we like it or not. What is at stake is our very personal attitude towards what is happening and the way we behave in the face of it. We always have a choice: we can make a difficult situation even worse by adopting a negative attitude, or we can look the unpleasant facts in the eyes and let something good come out of it.

The future is not something that happens to us and to which we are at the mercy, for the better or the worse. We can and must actively and positively shape our future. What matters first and foremost is our own willpower. To do this, however, we must know what we really and wholeheartedly wish, what is particularly important to us in life and believe that we are able to achieve this. This does not mean that we always have to do everything on our own and by our own efforts. Current events often take us to the limits of our own possibilities and abilities. They teach us to turn to other people, to trust them and to accept help from them. This is the great power of hope. By being aware of the great problems and difficulties of our times and accepting them as a challenge, we can believe in a good future and at the same time trust that thanks to our own strengths and together with other people we will be able to solve the problems and overcome the difficulties so that eventually our most ardent wishes and desires can be fulfilled. The current study has shown that people in Switzerland are capable of doing this.

Dr. oec. HSG Andreas M. Krafft

St. Gallen, December 2020

8 Structure of the Study

Method:	Online survey
Instrument:	Online questionnaire
Population:	Web- and e-mail-active persons of all age groups in Switzerland
Scope:	A total of 159 closed and 9 socio-demographic questions.
Sample size:	6,968 questionnaires evaluated (complete, accurate, and adult participants).
Representativeness:	Broad-based survey due to cooperation with 20 Minuten as media partner as well as broad presence on various social media platforms
Survey period:	Nov. 02, 2020 – Nov. 30, 2020
Management:	Dr. oec. HSG Andreas M. Krafft
Citation:	Use conceded with citation of source

The following tables show the demographic distribution of the respondent groups.

Language region	Number	%
German	4'205	60.3
French	1'904	27.3
Italian	859	12.3

Gender	Number	%
Male	2'636	37.8
Female	4'332	62.2

Age	Number	%
18-29	886	12.7
30-39	1'249	17.9
40-49	1'442	20.7
50-59	1'734	24.9
60-69	1'202	17.3
70-79	397	5.7
80 and older	58	0.8

Training	Number	%
No completed school education	48	.7
Primary / elementary school	251	3.6
Secondary school without "Matura"	351	5.0
High Scholl with „Matura“ / Baccalaureate	1'468	21.1
Vocational training	2'048	29.4
Higher vocational education with diploma	1'837	26.4
University	965	13.8

Marital status	Number	%
Still living with parents	278	4.0
Single, unmarried	945	13.6
In a partnership but living separately	471	6.8
Living together in a partnership	1'358	19.5
Married	3'118	44.7
Divorced / separated	626	9.0
Widowed	172	2.5

Main occupation	Number	%
In training	253	3.6
Family, housework, raising children	355	5.1
Part-time employment	1'722	24.7
Full-time employment	3'174	45.6
Unemployed	306	4.4
Retired (AHV / IV)	1'158	16.6

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