

15

Education and science

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# Educational institutions

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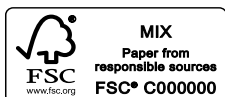
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## Introduction

This brochure presents Switzerland's educational institutions and provides an overview of how they are organised by educational level, responsible authority (public or private sector, government dependent or independent), size and territorial distribution.

Data come from the educational institutions statistics (SBI), the statistics on pupils and students (SDL, SIUS) and the school and university staff statistics (SSP, SIUS). They were based on the academic year 2014/15<sup>1</sup>.

Educational institutions are described by their educational level, from lower primary<sup>2</sup> to tertiary level. As tertiary level educational institutions are not uniformly defined across Switzerland<sup>3</sup>, they are therefore only considered in this brochure in the overview hereafter.

### Educational institutions

An educational institution is defined by its administrative level (the management) and by the educational site(s) (buildings) under its authority. The figures presented in this publication refer to educational sites, except higher education institutions. As some higher education institutions are located in different cantons and/or communes, they cannot be presented at this level of detail as a result.

The concepts of school or establishment in this publication refer to educational sites.

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<sup>1</sup> Excl. two independent private schools from the canton of Vaud, which have not provided data.

<sup>2</sup> In the Swiss Education Statistics, the terms lower primary level (kindergarten, first learning cycle years 1–2) and upper primary level (years 3–8) are now used. The terms "pre-primary/first learning cycle" and "primary" have been modified following the implementation of the HarmoS Agreement in most cantons (Intercantonal Agreement on Harmonisation of Compulsory Education). According to HarmoS, the lower primary level is integrated into compulsory education.

<sup>3</sup> Higher education institutions are only defined at the administrative level. Please also refer to the box above.

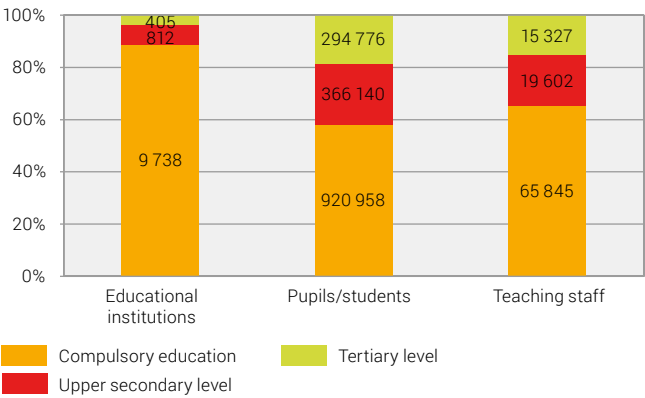
# Overview

In autumn 2014 there were 10,566 educational institutions in Switzerland including all levels<sup>4</sup>.

Most educational institutions are based within compulsory education (89%). They accommodate 58% of all people in education and 65% of teachers<sup>5,6</sup>. Only 7% of schools are for upper secondary level: they accommodate 23% of all people in education and 19% of teachers. At tertiary level, the proportion of educational institutions is 4%. They accommodate 19% of persons in education for 15% of teachers.

**Distribution of educational institutions, pupils/students and teaching staff by educational level, 2014/15**

G 1



Sources: FSO – SBI, SDL, SSP, SIUS

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<sup>4</sup> Without double counting; see explanation in the next chapter.

<sup>5</sup> Teaching staff include personnel who directly teach in the schools (excluding special education personnel) and the professors and other teachers in higher education institutions. To allow comparison with the pupils/students, the figures relating to the teachers correspond to full-time equivalents (FTE) and not persons.

<sup>6</sup> Excluding personnel teaching foreign programmes (2955 FTE). Compulsory education and upper secondary level are concerned.

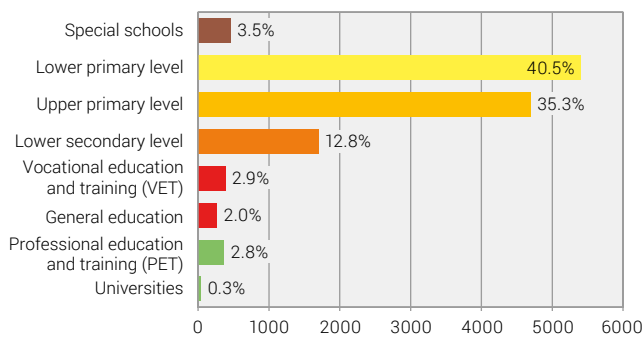
## Educational institutions by educational level

A school's educational level is defined by its student population and the educational programmes in which the students are enrolled. Thus one school that offers an educational programme over several educational levels may be counted several times depending on the level of detail required by the analysis (double counting principle).

In 2014/15, the biggest share of schools within the compulsory education system is accounted for by lower primary<sup>7</sup> level with more than 40%. This is followed by upper primary level<sup>8</sup> (35%). Lower secondary level accounts for 13% of schools, while special schools make up around 4%.

The other 8% include post-compulsory education schools (vocational education and training (VET), general education, professional education and training (PET) and universities).

### Number of schools by educational level, 2014/15 G 2



Source: FSO – SBI

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<sup>7</sup> Lower primary level: kindergarten, first learning cycle years 1–2

<sup>8</sup> Upper primary level: years 3–8

# Particular case: special schools in compulsory education

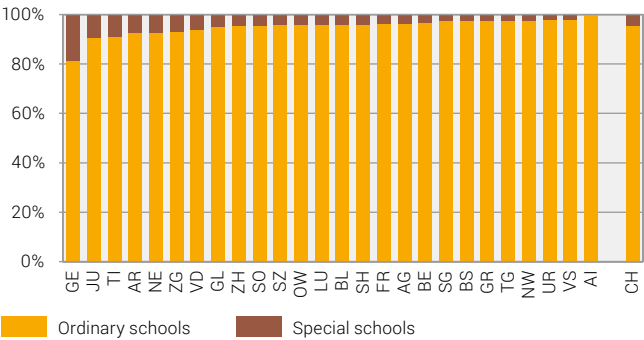
Special schools make up a minority of schools in the Swiss school system (3.5% of all educational institutions). They cover the lower and upper primary levels as well as the lower secondary level. They are a special case in terms of the authority that is responsible for their distribution and organisation in the cantons. This is why they are considered separately here.

In contrast to an ordinary school, a special school is an educational institution for compulsory education that provides teaching that is adapted to different types of disability or to pupils with considerable learning difficulties or severe behavioural problems.

In 2014/2015 there were 459 special schools in Switzerland. The canton of Geneva had the greatest share of special schools (19%). In the three cantons with the highest number (GE, JU, TI), these schools are on average smaller than those in other cantons (fewer than 20 pupils per school). In eight cantons, the proportion of special schools was less than 3%. The canton of Appenzell Inner Rhodes did not have any. The distribution of pupils in special schools is to some extent intercantonal. In the canton of Appenzell Inner Rhodes, pupils attend mainly special schools in Appenzell Outer Rhodes, St. Gallen and Thurgau. Across Switzerland, the share of special schools in compulsory education is 5%.

Share of special schools in compulsory education by canton, 2014/15

G 3



Source: FSO – SBI

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## Educational institutions by responsible authority

All levels combined, 88% of Swiss schools are public, 4% are government dependent private schools and 8% independent private schools.

### **Responsible school authority (status)**

Educational institutions are either public or private. Furthermore, private institutions are classified between government dependent private (public funding of 50% or more) and independent private institutions (public funding of less than 50%).

Public sector schools account for the majority of schools in compulsory education (primary levels (lower + upper): 94%; lower secondary level: 82%). The share of the independent private sector is 6% for the primary level (lower and upper combined) and 17% for lower secondary level. The share of the government dependent private sector is virtually zero (0.3% and 2%). Special schools differ from other levels with a majority of government dependent private schools (63%).

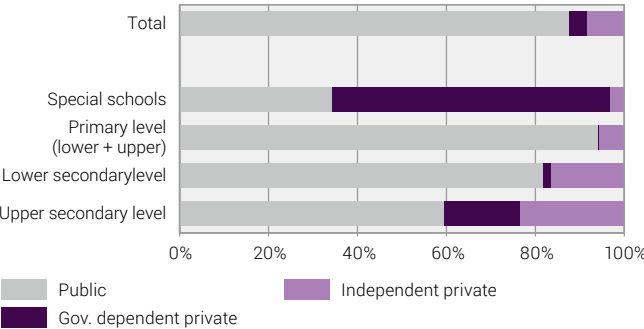
At upper secondary level, the share of the public sector is 60%, that of the government dependent private sector 17% and the remaining quarter independent private schools. The distribution by status of vocational schools and schools providing a general education is quite different: 71% of vocational schools and 54% of general education schools are public, 18% and 9% are government dependent private schools, 12% and 37% are independent private schools.

The share of the government dependent and independent private sectors increases with educational level, with the exception of special schools.



# Schools by educational level and responsible authority, 2014/15

G 4



Source: FSO – SBI

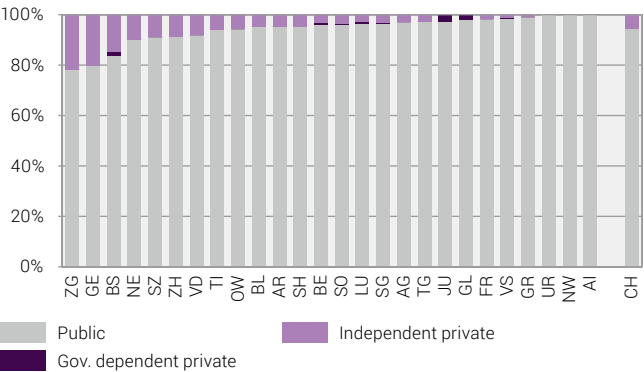
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The responsible authority of educational institutions varies not only with educational level but also by canton.

At primary levels (lower and upper), the share of government dependent private schools in all cantons is very low (less than 3%) or zero. The share of independent private schools varies between 1% in Graubünden and 22% in the canton of Geneva. Five cantons do not have any schools of this type on their territory (JU, GL, UR, NW, AI).

## Primary level (lower + upper): schools by canton and responsible authority, 2014/15

G 5

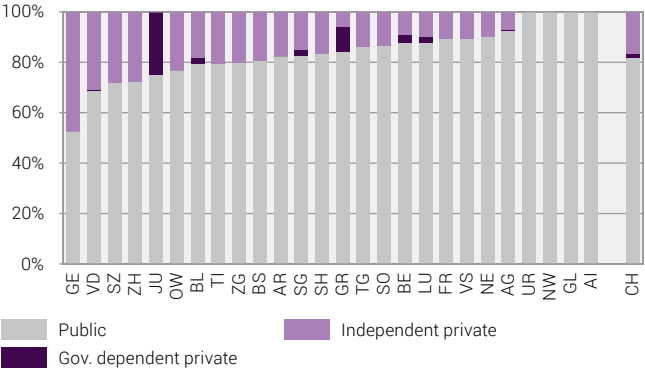


Source: FSO – SBI

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At lower secondary level, the share of government dependent private schools reached or exceeded 10% in two of the eight cantons with such schools: Graubünden (10%) and Jura (25%). The cantons of Geneva (47%) and Vaud (31%) had the greatest share of independent private schools.

**Lower secondary level: schools by canton and responsible authority, 2014/15** **G 6**

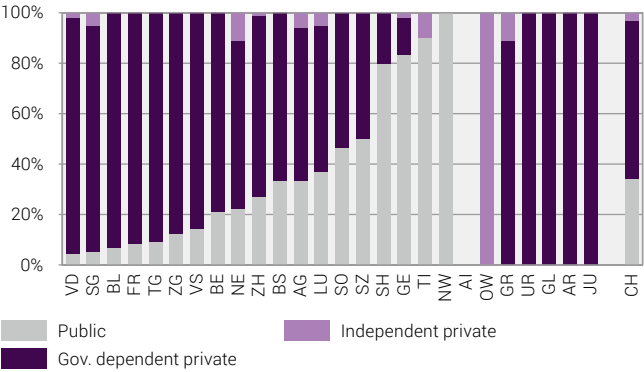


Source: FSO – SB © FSO 2016

Special schools also have a particular position in the Swiss school system with regard to the responsible authority. In most cantons, the majority of these schools are government dependent private schools. Furthermore, in four cantons they have only this status. Only three cantons (TI, NW and OW) do not have government dependent private special schools. In six cantons, there are no public special schools.

# Special schools: schools by canton and responsible authority, 2014/15

G 7

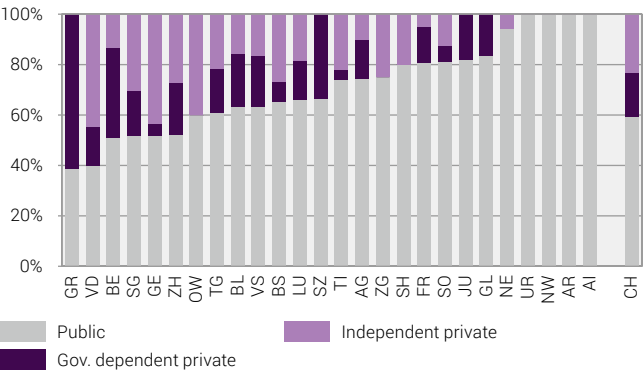


Source: OFS – SBI © FSO 2016

The majority of upper secondary level schools are public in all cantons except for Graubünden. The share of independent private schools varies between 45% in the canton of Vaud and 5% in Fribourg. Seven cantons do not have any independent private schools at this level.

# Upper secondary level: schools by canton and responsible authority, 2014/15

G 8



Source: FSO – SBI © FSO 2016

## Educational institutions by size

The average size of a lower primary level school is 30 pupils, while an upper primary level school has around 100 pupils and a lower secondary level school 155 pupils. Special schools accommodate an average of 40 pupils. At upper secondary level, there are approx. 615 pupils in a vocational school and 360 pupils in a general education school. Apart from special schools, the size of schools also increases with educational level.

### Size of educational institutions

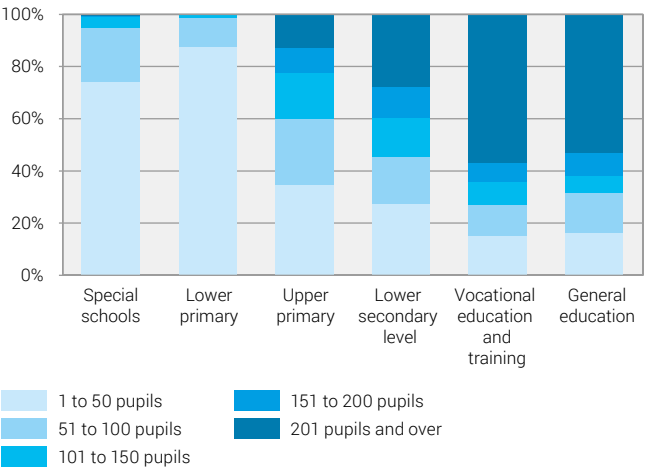
An educational institution's size is calculated by the number of pupils educated in the educational institution.

In compulsory education, more than 70% of special schools, 87% of lower primary level schools and 35% of upper primary level schools have 50 pupils or less. Lower secondary level schools are distributed in a similar way between the different size scales.

At upper secondary level, around half of schools have more than 200 pupils (57% for vocational schools and 53% for general education schools). For the smaller institutions, the distribution of vocational schools also follows the same trends as those of general education schools.

### Schools by size and educational level, 2014/15

G 9



## Territorial distribution of educational institutions

The distribution of educational institutions on Swiss territory is based on the definition of larger urban zones and other urban area categories<sup>9</sup>. The main distribution criteria used are population density, the number of jobs, the link of continuity of the developed area and the minimum number of inhabitants and commuter flows.

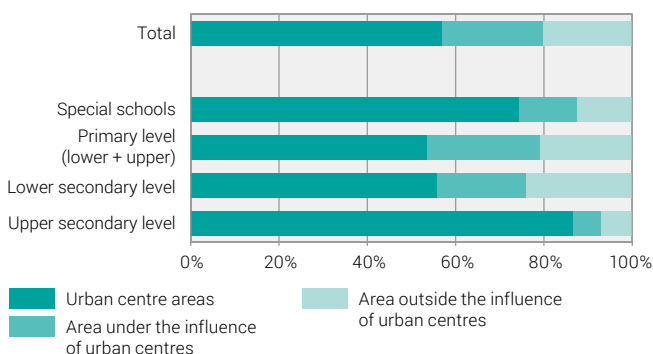
Three urban area categories were created for the analysis in this brochure:

- The **urban centre areas**: communes with high population and employment density;
- The **area under the influence of urban centres**: communes with large commuter flows to urban centres;
- The **area outside the influence of urban centres**: communes with small commuter flows to urban centres;

In 2014/15 more than half of Switzerland's educational institutions were located in urban centre areas (57%), almost one quarter were under the influence of urban centres (23%) and the rest in the area outside the influence of urban centre areas (20%).

### Schools by type of area and educational level, 2014/15

G 10



Sources: FSO – SBI, Geographical levels

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<sup>9</sup> Urban area in Switzerland in 2012. FSO (2014)

The territorial distribution of schools varies by educational level. Around half of the schools at primary (lower and upper combined) and lower secondary level (54% and 55%), 74% of special schools and 87% of upper secondary level schools are located in urban centre areas.

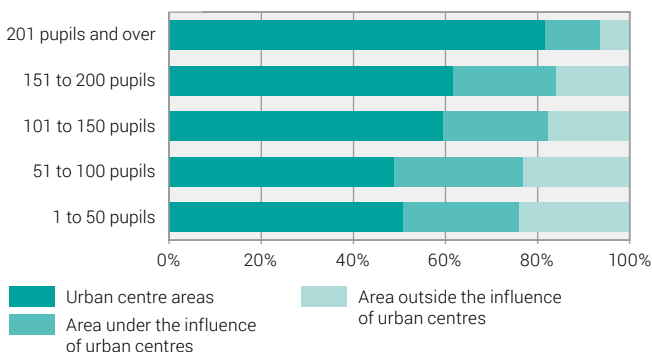
The remaining schools are equally dispersed in the areas under and outside the influence of urban centres (26% and 21% for primary level schools, 20% and 24% for lower secondary level schools, 13% and 12% for special schools, and 6% and 7% for upper secondary level schools).

All levels considered together, half of schools with 100 pupils or under and around two thirds of schools with 101 to 200 pupils are in urban centres (60% for schools with 101 to 150 pupils and 62% for schools with 151 to 200 pupils). The 82% of schools with more than 200 pupils are located in this area.

In the area under the influence of urban centres, each size category represents around one quarter of schools, apart from schools with more than 200 pupils (12%). In the area outside the influence of urban centres, the greatest share is of schools with 50 pupils or under (24%) and the lowest share is of schools with more than 200 pupils (6%).

## Schools by type of area and size, 2014/15

G 11



Sources: FSO – SBI, Geographical levels

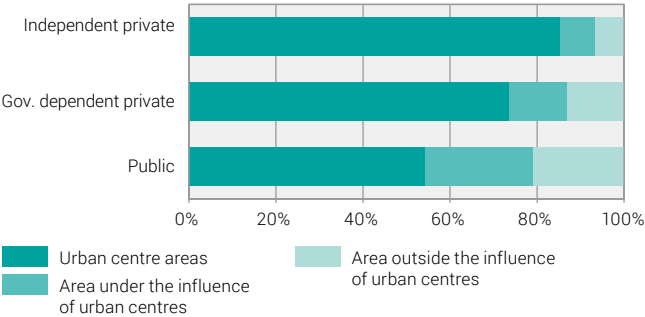
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Dispersed by responsible authority, more than half of public schools (54%), almost three quarters of government dependent private schools (74%) and the vast majority of independent private schools (85%) are located in urban centres.

The remaining schools are almost equally dispersed between areas under and outside the influence of urban centres (25% and 21% for public schools, 13% for government dependent private schools, 8% and 7% for independent private schools).

Schools by type of area and responsible authority, 2014/15

G 12



## Sources

### **Educational institutions statistics (SBI)**

The educational institutions statistics describe educational infrastructure by canton, from lower primary level to tertiary level. All of the ordinary and special educational institutions, public and private with at least one pupil are part of these statistics. The data are collected using the statistics on pupils and students (SDL, SIUS) and are complemented by information from the Business and Enterprise Register (BER).

### **Statistics on pupils and students (SDL)**

The statistics on pupils and students (SDL) group together pupils and students from lower primary level to tertiary level (excluding universities). All people who have followed an educational programme for at least half a year, either full or part-time, are surveyed. Private and public educational institutes are included in the survey.

### **School staff statistics (SSP)**

The school staff statistics (SSP) collect information on those working in all public or private schools in Switzerland, from lower primary level to tertiary level (excluding universities).

### **Swiss university information system (SIUS)**

The Swiss university information system's database (SIUS) contains data relating to students and personnel at higher education institutions (universities, universities of applied sciences and universities of teacher education). It provides information on the situation regarding courses of study, how they are run and on various socio-demographic factors concerning students and personnel.



## Definitions

The definitions presented in this publication are available on the website of the Federal Statistical Office:  
[www.statistics.admin.ch](http://www.statistics.admin.ch).

## Information

Educational institutions statistics:  
[schulstat@bfs.admin.ch](mailto:schulstat@bfs.admin.ch)

For further information concerning educational areas, see:  
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