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Education and Science

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# Continuing education in Switzerland 2011

Swiss Adult Education Survey 2011



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Confederation

Federal Department of Home Affairs FDHA  
Federal Statistical Office FSO

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## Introduction

Continuing education is becoming increasingly important in our society. By helping people update their professional skills, it enables them to remain competitive in the labour market. Outside the work environment, it also enables people to work on personal growth and fulfilment.

This booklet contains the first results of the Swiss Adult Education Survey 2011 (CH-AES 2011). This five-yearly survey, which is part of the Swiss population census programme, provides information on the behaviour of the population in the field of education and training: highest completed level of education, current education and training, non-institutionalised independent education and training.

This brochure presents, through a series of indicators, the participation in continuing education by Switzerland's permanent resident population. It provides information on the share of the population that is pursuing continuing education in an institutionalised context (courses, seminars/workshops, private lessons, etc.) or who are using a self-teaching method to continue their education, as well as on the purpose of continuing education. It also shows the participation rate of employed persons who have benefited from support from their employer, which is a further aspect of society's investment in human capital. In addition, it provides information on the number of activities being pursued as an indicator on the intensity of participation. Lastly, there is a chapter focusing on the differences between the language regions.

Different results are presented for the categories of sex, age, educational level, labour-market status, status in employment and work-time percentage.

The study covers Switzerland's permanent resident population aged 25 to 64. This population group has in principle completed initial training and education and is qualified to practise a profession.

## Definitions

With respect to lifelong learning, UNESCO, the OECD and Eurostat distinguish three types of learning:

1. **Formal education**, which includes all compulsory education, upper secondary level (basic vocational training or upper-secondary specialised school) and tertiary level (e.g. higher education institutions or higher vocational education);
2. **Non-formal education**, which includes activities taking place in a student-teacher context but which are not provided by the formal education system. These may be, for example, courses, conferences, seminars, private courses or on-the-job training.
3. **Informal learning activities**, which include activities undertaken with a specific learning goal but which take place outside of a teaching context. This type of continuing education is very diverse and may range from reading specialist literature to learning with friends or colleagues.

When speaking of continuing education, it is generally non-formal education activities that are referred to. The results published here also focus on this type of activity in particular. Space is also given to informal learning activities. However, the various types of formal education that adults can pursue (apprenticeship, Matura, Advanced Federal PET Diploma, Bachelor or Master's degree, etc.) have not been included in the above definition of continuing education.

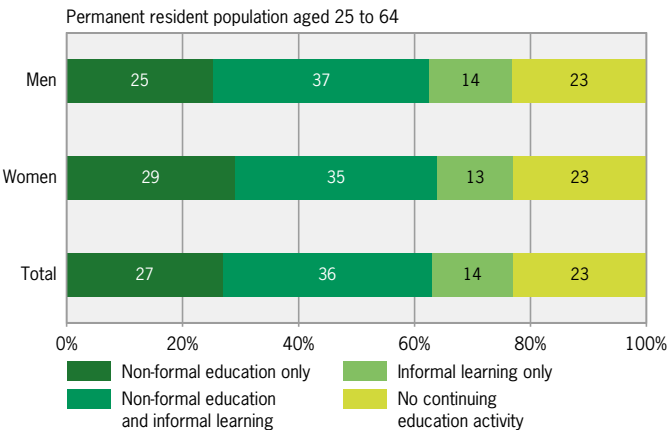
In surveys such as the Swiss Adult Education Survey, it is not always easy for people to distinguish between the three types and a certain amount of overlap cannot be excluded.

# The different types of continuing education

The vast majority of the population participates in continuing education. In 2011, taking into account all types of continuing education – i.e. both non-formal education and informal learning – almost 80% of the Swiss resident population aged 25 to 64 stated that they had carried out at least one continuing education activity during the course of the past 12 months. 36% of persons interviewed take part in non-formal education and informal learning activities at the same time. A smaller share (27%) follows only non-formal education, for example a course or seminar. And lastly, a much smaller percentage (14%) take part in informal learning alone, such as specialised reading or self-taught learning with the aid of a CD-ROM (see graph G1).

Participation in different types of continuing education by sex, in 2011

G 1



Source: CH-AES 2011

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Participation rates in continuing education vary according to people's level of education, their labour market status as well as their status in employment. The participation rates of men and women in continuing education, on the other hand, are relatively similar (see table T1).

The percentage of persons participating in continuing education drops sharply once retirement age is reached. In the permanent resident population, the age group 65–74 shows a participation rate of 28% for non-formal education and 35% for informal learning (additional information, not in table T1).

# **T1 Participation in different types of continuing education in 2011** Rate in %

	Non-formal education			Informal learning		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Permanent resident population aged 25 to 64						
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Age group</b>						
25–34 years	66	65	66	54	54	54
35–44 years	66	66	66	50	54	47
45–54 years	65	63	67	49	50	48
55–64 years	54	53	55	46	47	44
<b>Educational level</b>						
Compulsory education	31	32 <sup>a</sup>	30	26	23	28
Upper secondary level	61	58	64	48	49	46
Tertiary level	79	77	82	63	63	63
<b>Labour market status</b>						
Employed persons	68	66	71	52	53	51
Unemployed persons	57 <sup>a</sup>	57 <sup>b</sup>	57 <sup>b</sup>	47 <sup>a</sup>	42 <sup>b</sup>	52 <sup>b</sup>
Economically inactive persons	33	24 <sup>a</sup>	37	38	39 <sup>a</sup>	38

## Employed population aged 25 to 64

<b>Status in employment</b>						
Self-employed	60	58	63	56	60	51
Management, executive	78	76	82	58	57	58
Other employees	66	62	70	48	47	48
<b>Work-time percentage</b>						
Full-time (90% to 100%)	68	67	72	52	52	52
Part time I (50% to 89%)	72	62 <sup>a</sup>	74	53	59 <sup>a</sup>	52
Part time II (less than 50%)	63	43 <sup>b</sup>	65	48	54 <sup>b</sup>	47

Explanatory notes on the precision of estimates

No remark 95% confidence interval <+5 points

<sup>a</sup> 95% confidence interval ≥ ±5 points and < ±10 points

<sup>b</sup> 95% confidence interval ≥ ±10 points and < ±13 points

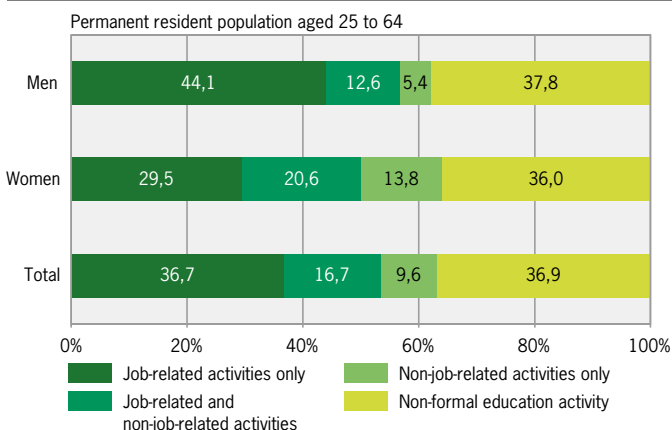
Differences between the graph and the table are due to rounding differences.

## Purpose of participation in non-formal education

In 2011, almost two out of three persons took part in at least one non-formal education activity. However, continuing education is much more frequently undertaken for job-related purposes than for non-job-related reasons. In fact among the population participating in continuing education, 53.4% (36.7%+16.7%) do so for the former, compared with only 26.3% (16.7%+9.6%) for the latter.

### Purpose of participation in non-formal education activities by sex, in 2011

G 2



Source: CH-AES 2011

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Men and women choose to follow continuing education mainly for job-related reasons, but women also show a non-job-related interest in continuing education much more frequently than men. 34% of women took part in at least one continuing education activity for non-job-related reasons, compared with only 18% of men. When considering professional motivation for continuing education, the trend is reversed: 57% for men compared with 50% for women. These differences can, however, be attributed partly to the different integration of the two sexes in the labour market. When only economically active persons are taken into account, one can see that there is no longer a significant difference in men's and women's participation in non-formal education for job-related reasons (61% and 60% respectively).

## T2 Participation in non-formal education by purpose in 2011

Rate in %

	Job-related activities			Non-job-related activities		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Permanent resident population aged 25 to 64						
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Age group</b>						
25–34 years	57	59	55	26	18	34
35–44 years	55	60	51	29	21	37
45–54 years	57	59	55	26	17	34
55–64 years	43	47	39	25	16	32
<b>Educational level</b>						
Compulsory education	24	29 <sup>a</sup>	20	10	5	13
Upper secondary level	50	52	48	27	16	35
Tertiary level	71	72	70	33	24	44
<b>Labour market status</b>						
Employed persons	61	61	60	27	18	36
Unemployed persons	43 <sup>a</sup>	41 <sup>b</sup>	46 <sup>b</sup>	23 <sup>a</sup>	20 <sup>b</sup>	26 <sup>a</sup>
Economically inactive persons	11	12	11	25	15	29
Employed population aged 25 to 64						
<b>Status in employment</b>						
Self-employed	49	52	46	26	18	37
Management, executive	73	73	75	24	19	35
Other employees	58	57	59	28	18	36
<b>Work-time percentage</b>						
Full-time (90% to 100%)	63	62	64	22	18	33
Part time I (50% to 89%)	63	55 <sup>a</sup>	65	35	21 <sup>a</sup>	38
Part time II (less than 50%)	46	39 <sup>b</sup>	47	35	13 <sup>a</sup>	38

Explanatory notes on the precision of estimates

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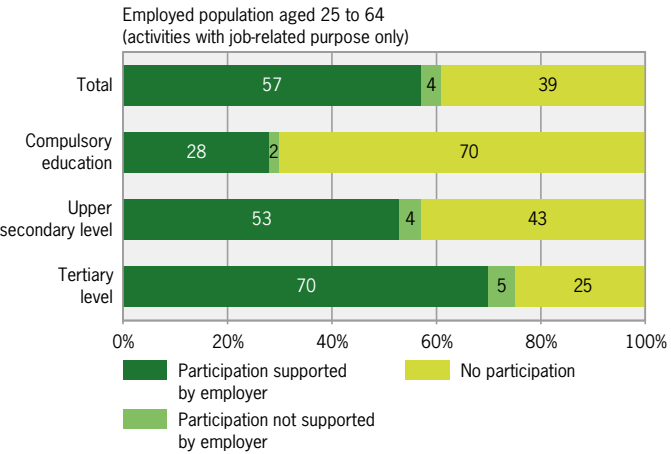
Differences between the graph and the table are due to rounding differences.

## Employer support in continuing education

The support of the employer in continuing education is understood here as support in terms of working hours or financial support. The graph below shows the share of economically active persons who benefited from the support of their employer, either because the latter financed, at least in part, the education activity or because the employee was able to pursue the education activity, at least in part, during working hours. Only non-formal education activities which were undertaken for job-related reasons were included.

In 2011, 61% of economically active persons took part in at least one non-formal education activity for job-related reasons and 57% did so with the support of their employer.

**Participation in non-formal education supported by employer by educational level, in 2011** **G 3**



Source: CH-AES 2011 © FSO

Within this population, well-educated persons as well as those with managerial functions showed higher than average participation rates in non-formal education supported by employers (see graph G3 and table T3). The share of women who benefited from the support of their employer is relatively close to that of men (55% for women compared with 58% for men). The gap between the two is, however, more marked for persons with a work-time percentage between 50 and 89%: Women show a participation rate supported by the employer of 60% compared with 50% for men.



### T3 Participation in non-formal education supported by employer in 2011

Employed population aged 25 to 64

(Participation in activities with job-related purpose only), rate in %

	Participation supported by employer			Participation not supported by employer		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Age group</b>						
25–34 years	58	59	56	4	3	5
35–44 years	55	57	54	5	4	5
45–54 years	59	60	57	4	2	6
55–64 years	54	56	51	4	2	5
<b>Educational level</b>						
Compulsory education	28	30 <sup>a</sup>	26	2	2	3
Upper secondary level	53	54	52	4	2	6
Tertiary level	70	71	70	5	4	6
<b>Status in employment</b>						
Self-employed	41	45	35	8	6	11
Management, executive	72	71	72	2	1	3
Other employees	54	54	54	4	3	5
<b>Work-time percentage</b>						
Full-time (90% to 100%)	60	60	60	3	3	4
Part time I (50% to 89%)	58	50 <sup>a</sup>	60	5	5	5
Part time II (less than 50%)	37	32 <sup>b</sup>	38	9	7	9

Explanatory notes on the precision of estimates

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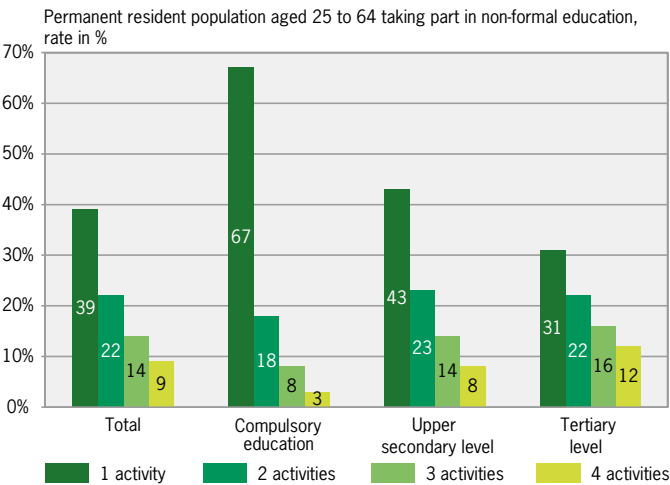
Differences between the graph and the table are due to rounding differences.

# Number of non-formal education activities undertaken

Only persons participating in non-formal education were considered here. Slightly fewer than two out of five persons participated in only one activity during the reference period. The share of persons who attended more than one activity decreases as the number of activities carried out increases. Nevertheless, persons who participated in more than four activities still represent 14% of the total. On average, participants took place in 2.6 non-formal education activities.

Number of non-formal education activities by educational level, in 2011

G 4



Source: CH-AES 2011

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The higher the level of educational attainment, the greater the level of attendance. This can be seen both at participation level (see table T3) as well as in the number of activities carried out: 67% of persons without post-compulsory education preferred to take part in only one activity (see graph G4). On average, these persons carried out 1.7 continuing education activities. This figure rises to 2.4 for persons having completed upper secondary education and to 3 for persons with tertiary level education.

## The different types of non-formal education activity

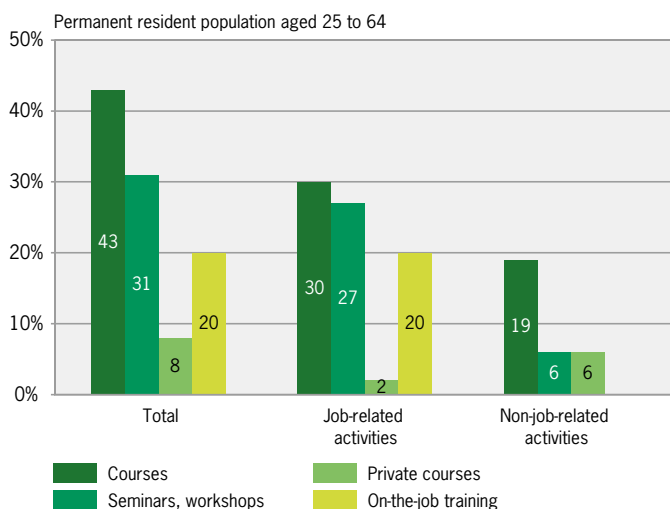
In the Swiss Adult Education Survey, four types of non-formal education activity have been discerned. These are:

- courses;
- seminars, presentations, conferences, congresses, workshops;
- private courses;
- on-the-job training.

Graph G5 shows that courses are most popular (43%) or seminars, workshops etc. (31%) when undertaking a non-formal education activity. These are followed by on-the-job training (20%), and some way behind by private courses (8%).

**Participation in different types of non-formal education activity by purpose, in 2011**

**G 5**



Source: CH-AES 2011

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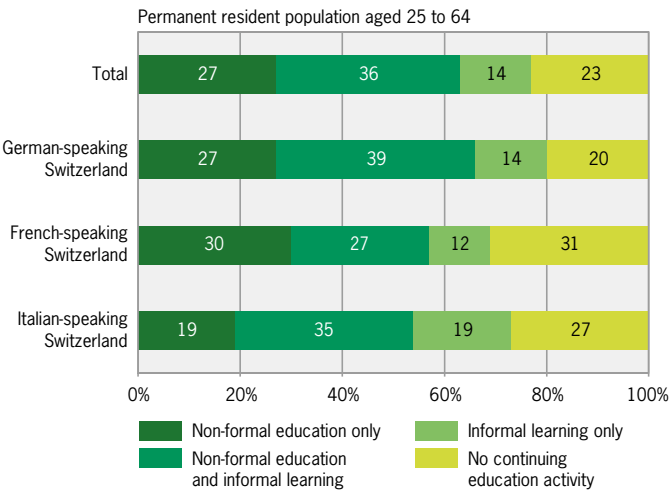
The type of non-formal education undertaken varies depending on the purpose of the activity. Participation rates in courses and seminars/workshops/etc. are similar to those for activities undertaken for job-related reasons. In contrast, there are comparatively few people who take part in seminars/workshops/etc. for non-job-related reasons.

# Differences between language regions

As far as the regions are concerned, the highest participation rates are to be found in German-speaking Switzerland, for both continuing education overall (80%) as well as for non-formal education (66%) and for informal learning – with an identical rate to that of Italian-speaking Switzerland – (53%).

Participation in different types of continuing education by language region, in 2011

G 6



Source: CH-AES 2011

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With a rate of 56% (38% for job-related activities alone and 18% for both job-related and non-job-related activities), participation in non-formal education for job-related reasons is comparatively high in German-speaking Switzerland compared with the other language regions (see table T6). The same can be said for persons who took part in more than one non-formal education activity (63% compared with 53% in French-speaking Switzerland).

The lowest rate of economically active persons having followed a course, workshop or other non-formal education supported by their employer can be found in Italian-speaking Switzerland (45%).

## T6 Indicators on the participation in continuing education by language region in 2011

Rate in %

	Total	German-speaking Switzerland	French-speaking Switzerland	Italian-speaking Switzerland
Participation in different types of continuing education				
Permanent resident population aged 25 to 64				
Non-formal education only	<b>27</b>	27	30	19
Non-formal education and informal learning	<b>36</b>	39	27	35
Informal learning only	<b>14</b>	14	12	19
No continuing education activity	<b>23</b>	20	31	27
Participation in non-formal education by purpose				
Permanent resident population aged 25 to 64				
Job-related activities only	<b>37</b>	38	35	28
Job-related and non-job-related activities	<b>17</b>	18	12	12
Non-job-related activities only	<b>10</b>	9	9	14
No continuing education activity	<b>37</b>	34	43	47
Number of non-formal education activities undertaken				
Permanent resident population aged 25 to 64 taking part in non-formal education				
1 activity	<b>39</b>	37	47	46 <sup>a</sup>
2 activities	<b>22</b>	23	21	22
3 activities	<b>14</b>	15	14	12
4 activities	<b>9</b>	10	8	7
5 activities or more	<b>14</b>	16	9	13
Participation in different types of non-formal education activity				
Permanent resident population aged 25 to 64				
Courses	<b>43</b>	45	37	31
Seminars, workshops	<b>31</b>	33	26	25
Private courses	<b>8</b>	7	9	7
On-the-job training	<b>20</b>	23	13	15
Participation in non-formal education supported by employer				
Employed population aged 25 to 64 (activities with job-related purpose only)				
Participation supported by employer	<b>57</b>	59	51	45
Participation not supported by employer	<b>4</b>	4	4	3
No participation	<b>39</b>	37	45	53

Explanatory notes on the precision of estimates

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<sup>a</sup> 95% confidence interval ≥ ±5 points and < ±10 points

## Survey

The Swiss Adult Education Survey 2011 (CH-AES 2011) is a five-yearly survey which is part of the Swiss population census programme. It is a sample survey conducted by means of computer assisted telephone interviews (CATI). The survey was carried out in three languages from March 2011 to December 2011.

The study covers Switzerland's permanent resident population aged 15 to 74. The questions relate to continuing education with reference to the 12 months preceding the telephone interview.

## Sample and response rate

A sample of 25,735 persons was randomly selected by the FSO from the sampling frame used for its surveys on individuals and households (SRPH). Of the 16,694 persons who were confirmed as belonging to the target group, 13,616 (82%) took part in the survey. For 8826 persons it was not possible to verify their belonging to the target group (no contact). To take sampling plan and non-response into account, the sample was weighted and calibrated.

## Additional definitions:

### Types of non-formal education

**Group courses:** A group course is defined as a series of planned education activities. The course focuses on a particular subject. The teacher(s) are specialists in their field. It generally takes place in a room intended for teaching.

*Example: management course.*

**Private courses:** A private course or lesson has the same definition as a group course, the only difference being that the learning is more intense due to the limited number of participants. Generally, the teacher is also the organiser.

*Example: private Spanish lessons*

**Short courses:** This is a targeted course which lasts a maximum of several days and which is not reoccurring. It combines theory and practice. It can take the form of a seminar, a presentation, a congress, a conference or a workshop.

*Examples: Quality management workshop, time management seminar*

**On-the-job training:** On-the-job training must meet four criteria. It must be based on the professional activity; it must be organised by the employer; the training periods must be planned; the presence of a teacher is essential.

*Example: course organised by the employer at the place of work and during working hours on new software used in the company.*

### **Unemployed persons (unemployed as defined by ILO)**

These are people

- who were not economically active during the week before the survey,
- who were actively looking for work during the four weeks before the survey,
- who were available for work during the four weeks before the survey.

This definition conforms to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) recommendations and to the EUROSTAT definition.

### **Economically active persons**

These are employed persons and unemployed persons as defined by ILO.

### **Employed persons**

These are persons who worked for at least one hour

- with remuneration during the reference week,
- or who, although temporarily absent from work (absence due to illness, holiday, maternity leave, military service etc.) held a job either as an employee or self-employed,
- or who worked in the family business without being paid.

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<b>Information:</b>	Federal Statistical Office (FSO) Education system Tel. 032 713 66 49 (French) 032 713 62 23 (German) email: <a href="mailto:weiterbildung@bfs.admin.ch">weiterbildung@bfs.admin.ch</a> <a href="http://www.mzb2011.bfs.admin.ch">www.mzb2011.bfs.admin.ch</a>
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