

Press release of 28 May 2019

Data society: solidarity is valued but also at risk

According to the second representative survey conducted by the sotomo research centre on behalf of the Sanitas health insurance foundation, the principle of solidarity in society is coming under pressure from digital change. And we are unwittingly exacerbating the problem. The survey reveals who is perceived to be winning from digital transformation, which forms of solidarity are fundamentally important to us, and how people in Switzerland are currently using digital self-tracking.

The data society is characterised not only by technological progress through digital opportunities, but also by a change in social coexistence. Human behaviour is becoming increasingly measurable, leading to ever more comparisons and rankings. But what does this mean for social cohesion? What forms of solidarity are important to us? And how will our increasing transparency affect the principle of solidarity when it comes to insurance? On behalf of the Sanitas health insurance foundation, the sotomo research centre has conducted a second survey on data society and solidarity in 2019, with the aim of examining the social aspects of digital change and using the results to make a contribution to the public debate.

Solidarity under pressure

Generally speaking, the majority of respondents stated that solidarity in society is important. Some 61% of those questioned attached importance to both solidarity of high-earners with low-earners and young people with the elderly, while 56% valued solidarity of the healthy with the sick, and just 39% thought it was important for the elderly to show solidarity with young people. And it's not surprising that the majority of respondents (53%) presume that digital change will have a negative impact on social solidarity. Survey participants stated that this change will result in surveillance, loss of individuality, pressure to perform, more efficient processes and greater opportunities, while the fewest believe it will lead to "greater solidarity".

Clear discrepancy between what we want and how we act

The study clearly shows that people understand and are using the positive aspects of digital change and that they continue to drive forward these developments by using the digital products and services on offer, but at the same time, they have considerable concerns about its impact on social cohesion. 58% of respondents are also convinced that new forms of solidarity, such as mutual support in the sharing economy, will not compensate for the resulting loss of social cohesion.

Greater support for behaviour-dependent insurance models

When asked the question: "Should people who keep themselves fit and eat healthily pay lower health insurance premiums than those who don't?", 49% of respondents were in favour and 46% against. The number of people in favour has increased significantly since the 2018 survey (40%). In other words, the idea of behaviour-dependent health insurance premiums is much more widely accepted than before.

Among people who judge their lifestyle to be healthier than others of the same age, acceptance was even higher, with almost two-thirds (63%) in favour of behaviour-dependent premium discounts. In contrast, of those who stated that they live a less healthy lifestyle, almost two-thirds are against the idea.

Increased life-tracking and knowledge about individual health is therefore increasing the pressure on solidarity when it comes to health, even though respondents generally view solidarity as important.

Digitalisation is increasing pressure to perform

Most respondents agreed that digitalisation is increasing pressure to perform in society and that it is highlighting the gap between winners and losers. Perceived winners include those who are young, flexible, educated and performance-oriented, while the elderly, poor and less well-educated are seen as being disadvantaged by digital change. The performance-oriented character of the digital society is also seen to be increasing stress levels. For example, three-quarters of 18 to 35 year-olds feel under additional pressure as a result of digital life tracking and social media. However, the younger generation is prepared to accept this side effect of digital change in return for new and personalised digital products and services.

How we maintain social solidarity in the digital world is a question that should be increasingly discussed in social and political circles.

About the study

In February 2019 the sotomo research institute questioned 2,074 people online about their attitude to solidarity in the context of digitalisation. Targeted respondent selection and weighting ensure a representative sample that is close to the composition of the Swiss population aged 18 and over. The study is a continuation of the first survey conducted in 2018.

Download the study

The complete report on the 2019 “Data society and solidarity” survey is available here:
www.sanitas.com/foundation-survey

About the Sanitas health insurance foundation

The [Sanitas health insurance foundation](http://www.sanitas.com/foundation-survey) was established in 1958. It is the sole shareholder holding the entire interests in the [Sanitas Group](http://www.sanitas.com). The foundation also focuses on socially relevant issues relating to insurance and health. The Sanitas health insurance foundation intends to conduct the survey once a year to question the Swiss population on their opinion on data society and solidarity, with the aim of making an active contribution to the social debate.

For more information

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