

Press release of 20 April 2022

Enthusiasm for digitalisation waning, solidarity strengthened

Results of the 2022 “Data society and solidarity” survey

As we near the end of the pandemic, the 2022 “Data society and solidarity” survey indicates disillusionment with regard to digitalisation for the first time. The population has less faith in progress, expects more inequality economically, and is more cautious when it comes to using digital channels. In contrast, social solidarity between the healthy and sick and within mandatory basic insurance seems to have been strengthened, provided that personal benefits don’t supersede social ones.

Since 2018, the “Data society and solidarity” survey has been pinpointing each year the expectations and fears of the Swiss population with regard to digital transformation. The 2022 edition looks back on two exceptional years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Enthusiasm for digitalisation waning

With enthusiasm for digitalisation previously increasing year-on-year since 2018, with participants seeing it primarily as a source of progress and new opportunities, the 2022 survey sees a decline in this positivity. At 44%, proponents of this trend are now back at the same level as two years ago. The optimism seems to have cooled.

Some 70% of respondents across all age groups expect digital transformation to lead to greater inequality economically, with supporters of the liberal parties GLP and FDP still placing the most hope in progress. In general, those questioned said that digitalisation favours people who are younger, well-educated, affluent and flexible. The people who lose out are perceived to be the older generation and those who are less well-educated, less well-off and inflexible. And this gap has been widening over the last five years.

With the easing of COVID-19 measures, the use of digital channels has passed its peak. Fewer respondents regularly use social media, video telephony, streaming services such as Netflix or cloud storage and instant messaging. And by and large, life tracking of activities and statuses with smartphones also seems to have stabilised.

In 2022, fewer people expect their jobs to be taken over by computers or robots in ten years’ time. The additional pressure to perform as a result of data tracking has continued to decrease in the second year of the pandemic. This development is most striking in the workplace, with a drop of around 75%. It seems that the great hopes and also the great fears of digital transformation have been put into perspective.

Pandemic boosts digital applications for health

In contrast to most other areas, the coronavirus increased confidence in digital healthcare solutions, for example the electronic health record. Although using devices to record our own health data is still relatively uncommon in Switzerland, unlike other tracking solutions, it is steadily increasing. For example, twice as many people track their pulse, heart rate or blood pressure compared to five years ago. And in 2022, for the first time, the most respondents (50%) cite “Better awareness of health” as a result, with fewer respondents citing “stress” (38%).

And who would people consider sharing their recorded health data with? The family doctor remains in first place (86%), followed by medical specialists (70%). And, for the first time, over half of the people questioned said they would share their data with medical research (55%) – perhaps also a result of the pandemic.

Pandemic changes what we understand by solidarity

What we understand by the term solidarity is changing as a result of digitalisation, and the influence of the pandemic is evident here, too: Most people still associate “solidarity” with “doing something personally to help others” (78%). However, there was an eight percentage point increase for the interpretation: “taking care of oneself and not being a burden to others”. And among the principles of

solidarity, the concepts of “healthy with sick” and “old with young” have experienced a significant upswing. It is interesting to note that, at the beginning of 2022, older people in particular found it important to stand in solidarity with the young. This is perhaps due to the fact that they are aware that younger people had to sacrifice a lot for the older generation due to the corona crisis.

Solidarity with people showing a lack of solidarity is high

If someone behaves in a way that is detrimental to their health against their better judgement – for example, if they have a cardiovascular risk but continue to eat unhealthily and get too little exercise – and thus risk high health costs for everyone, a majority of the population feels that this is fundamentally lacking in solidarity. However, three-quarters of respondents are still in favour of these people receiving expensive medical treatment that could have been avoided. The principle of solidarity in basic health insurance seems to be valued and is held in high esteem after the pandemic.

Data sharing out of solidarity or personal gain?

During the pandemic, there was a lot of talk about whether sharing health data should also be seen as a “data donation” or an “act of solidarity” with the community. The 2022 survey participants rated “Trust in the person/organisation” and “Personal gain” as the most important factors for sharing data. “Benefits for the collective good” only made it to number three. The vast majority of respondents agreed that collecting medical data generally leads to better healthcare and lower healthcare costs. But over half of those willing to share their data want to be rewarded for their efforts, for example by being given priority for newly developed drugs. Once again this year, there is ambivalence among the population as to who should benefit in a (digital) healthcare system – the individual, society or both. Two other areas reflect this: People with a healthy lifestyle are still very much in favour of behaviour-based health insurance premiums. And a majority of respondents who have been vaccinated against COVID believe that anyone who has chosen not to be vaccinated should not be treated in intensive care if there is a shortage of beds.

About the study

In January 2022, the sotomo research institute questioned 2,450 people online about their behaviour and attitude to solidarity in the context of digital transformation. Targeted respondent selection and weighting ensure a representative sample that is close to the composition of the Swiss population aged 18 and over. The survey took place for the fifth time in 2022 on behalf of the Sanitas health insurance foundation.

Download study

The complete report on the 2022 “Data society and solidarity” survey is available here:

www.sanitas.com/foundation-survey

Social commitment of 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 of the [Sanitas Group](http://www.sanitas.com). It also supports projects and focuses on social aspects with regard to digitalisation, health and insurance. The foundation also publishes [articles on the data society and solidarity](#) in cooperation with experts.

For information about the foundation's social engagement and the survey

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