

Press release of 29 April 2020

2020 “Data society and solidarity” survey: More self-tracking despite concern for solidarity

Surf, log in and leave a data trail: this is the reality of our e-society – even more so in the context of the corona pandemic. What do people see as the opportunities and threats of the data society? What is their attitude to the growing measurement and tracking of our lives? The 2020 “Data society and solidarity” survey shows that people are increasingly internalising digital logic and yet remain ambivalent. They make good use of digital services, but worry about their data being passed on. They are increasingly calling for insurance premiums to be linked to people’s behaviour, and yet still value social solidarity.

Life in our e-society is making the population more granular and more transparent, and individuals are becoming hyper-individualised due to ever increasing self-tracking. The national lockdown in particular has shown the way people rely on solidarity and individual responsibility in times of crisis, but what influence does the new data society have on basic attitudes towards social solidarity in the digital age? And how does this impact the healthcare system and insurance? These are some of the questions posed by the Sanitas health insurance foundation in the third “Data society and solidarity” survey conducted by the sotomo research institute in 2020. The results are intended to encourage public debate in Switzerland.

Digital transformation is gaining credence

In 2018, people were very sceptical about the advance of digitalisation. They were mainly worried about their privacy, surveillance and loss of jobs. The 2020 survey indicates that feelings are changing. Compared with the first survey three years ago, people are now increasingly also associating the data society with positive attributes such as efficiency, opportunities and being informed. These aspects are also connected with self-empowerment and self-optimisation. Of those questioned in the most recent survey, 44% see digital transformation as a source of progress and new opportunities, a belief that is likely to have been accentuated by the corona crisis. In 2018, only 35% of respondents believed that digital change would have a positive impact. Survey participants still believe that agile groups, such as the young, educated, wealthy and achievement-oriented, stand to gain most from digital transformation, while quality of life and, above all, solidarity take a back seat.

Young people worry more than the older generation

When it comes to the contrast between older and younger people, the survey reveals a complex reality. While young people are quicker to make greater use of digital applications than older people, they are also more concerned, with 38% of 18 to 35-year-olds saying they are anxious about the way digital transformation is developing. The figure for over-65s is only 28%. Added to this, older people in particular are taking an increasingly positive view of digitalisation. Similar to climate change, younger people seem to be more affected by the challenges of digitisation, as they have the prospect of being around longer and having to cope with the major AI-driven upheavals in society and the economy.

No end to self-tracking trend

More and more people are starting to record data about their own body and physical activity, with the focus seemingly shifting from a gimmick to personal added value. In 2020, more than a fifth of the population, especially women, now go more frequently or greater distances on foot due to the step counting trend. It is also interesting that 58% of 15 to 35-year-old women already record their cycle digitally. Measurements that can’t be recorded quickly and easily via smartphone are less widespread. Nevertheless, the number of people who take their pulse or measure their heart rate via a fitness tracker or smartwatch has almost doubled from 10 to 19% in two years. New, even more user-friendly equipment and methods of measurement will no doubt accelerate this trend in the future.

Ambivalent attitude towards solidarity

In theory, society attaches great importance to solidarity as one of its basic values. The population places greatest value on the transfer from those who are able to perform to those in need of

protection: from rich to poor, healthy to sick and young to elderly. Support for solidarity in the health sector has even increased significantly since 2019 from 56 to 63%. People tend to associate the following principles with solidarity: Offering personal help to others (49%), helping out family and the local community (45%), welfare state assistance including health insurance (33%), receiving help from others in emergencies (21%) and not being a burden on others (13%) – weighted slightly differently depending on political views. Against this backdrop, it is astonishing that at the same time the idea of linking insurance premiums to people's behaviour is gaining acceptance: The 2020 survey shows for the first time that the majority (51%) of respondents are in favour of lower health insurance premiums for people who keep fit and eat healthily. The percentage of those against the idea fell from 56 to 44%. This reversal shows the transformative power of digitalisation. Despite the perceived stress of health tracking and great reservations about data being passed on, digital performance and measurement tracking is quietly catching on and increasing the call for individual benefits – a new reality of life. In 2020, more people also believe that continuous recording of health data contributes to better medical care.

Politicians losing touch with grass roots?

A special area of interest of the 2020 "Data society and solidarity" survey is how the general public's attitude towards digital change compares to the views of the candidates for the National Council in 2019 (Digitalisierungsmonitor 2019, SWICO, Bern University of Applied Sciences BFH). Despite an improvement in the population's general mood, clear divergences are becoming apparent: More politicians (92%) currently see the effects of digitalisation as positive overall than the general public (70%). Two-thirds of the public, but only 29% of politicians, believe that digitalisation is leading to greater inequality in employment and the economy. This raises the question of whether the government is paying enough attention to the population's concerns, particularly as politicians are driving forward the digital transformation of the state in many areas far faster than supported by the general public.

About the study

In January 2020 the sotomo research institute questioned 2,297 people online about their behaviour and 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. This was the third survey conducted on behalf of the Sanitas health insurance foundation.

Download the study

The complete report on the 2020 "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) was established in 1958. It is the sole shareholder holding the entire interests in the [Sanitas Group](http://www.sanitas.com). It also supports projects and focuses on social aspects with regard to digitalisation, health and insurance. The survey has been conducted once a year since 2018 to poll the Swiss population regarding their opinion on the data society and solidarity, with the aim of making an active contribution to the social debate. The foundation also publishes [articles on the data society and solidarity](#) in cooperation with experts.

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

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