

2020



15

Education
and science

Neuchâtel 2020

Educational institutions

2020 edition



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Confederation

Federal Department of Home Affairs FDHA
Federal Statistical Office FSO

Published by: Federal Statistical Office (FSO)

Information: schulstat@bfs.admin.ch

Editor: Sylvie Oeuvray, FSO

Series: Swiss Statistics

Topic: 15 Education and science

Original text: French

Translation: FSO language services

Layout: DIAM Section, Prepress/Print

Graphics: DIAM Section, Prepress/Print

Online: www.statistics.admin.ch

Print: www.statistics.admin.ch
Federal Statistical Office, CH-2010 Neuchâtel,
order@bfs.admin.ch, tel. +41 58 463 60 60
Printed in Switzerland

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FSO number: 1559-2000

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1 Introduction

This brochure presents Switzerland's educational institutions and provides an overview of how they are organised by level of education, size, responsible authority providing financial support (public or private sector), as well as territorial and linguistic distribution.

Most of the data are from the statistics of educational institutions and from the statistics on pupils and students. They refer to the academic year 2018/19.

Educational institutions

An educational institution is a permanent entity with professional teaching staff where one or several types of formal education for pupils/students are organized. Education is provided through direct communication between the teaching staff and pupils/students. An educational institution is defined by its administrative level (the management) and by the educational site(s) (buildings) under its authority. The generic terms of "school" or "establishment" used in this publication correspond to an educational site.

The published figures cover educational institutions from primary¹ to tertiary level, with the exception of higher education institutions², which generally refer to actual educational sites. The degree of detail of the data collected on educational sites (buildings/school centres) and administrative units (administrative level) varies according to the cantonal school organisations.

Tertiary level educational institutions are not uniformly defined throughout Switzerland. Therefore, in this publication, they are only included in graphs that provide an overview of all levels of education (see graphs G1 and G3). However, institutions providing advanced professional education and training are included in the totals and graphs that do not consider the level of education. Further education institutions and places of informal learning are not considered in these statistics.

¹ kindergarten/first learning cycle years 1–2 included; see details in chapter "Educational levels"

² In education statistics, higher education institutions are only defined at the administrative level. As some of them are inter-cantonal, they cannot be presented by canton or by language region.

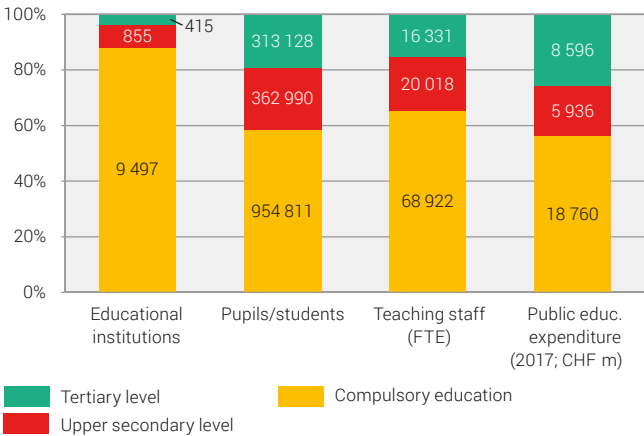
2 Key figures of educational institutions

At the start of the academic year 2018/19, there were 10 310 educational institutions at all levels of education in Switzerland.¹

Compulsory education accounts for the majority of educational institutions (88%). They accommodate 59% of all people in education and 65% of teachers.² More than half of public expenditure on education is spent at this level (56%). Only 8% of schools are at upper secondary level. They include 22% of all people in education and 19% of teachers for about a fifth of public expenditure on education (18%). At tertiary level, the proportion of educational institutions is 4%. They accommodate 19% of all the people in education and 16% of teachers. About a quarter of public expenditure on education³ is spent at this level (26%).

Educational institutions, pupils/students, teaching staff and public education expenditure by educational level, 2018/19

G1



Sources: FSO – SBI, SDL, SSP, SHIS-studex, ÖBA

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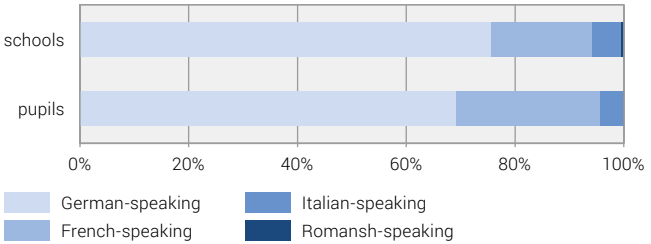
¹ without double counting; see explanation in the next chapter

² Excl. staff teaching a foreign teaching programme (3010 FTE). This concerns compulsory schooling and upper secondary level. This category is described in detail under “Definitions” at the end of the publication.

³ excl. public expenditure on research

The geographical distribution of schools varies by language region. Taking all levels of education⁴ together, three-quarters of schools and 69% of all pupils are located in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. Almost one in five schools (19%) and around a quarter of the pupils (27%) are in French-speaking Switzerland. 5% of schools and 4% of pupils are located in the Italian-speaking part of the country and 0.5% and 0.2% of pupils are in the Romansh-speaking part.

Schools and pupils by language region, 2018/19 G2



Sources: FSO – SBI, SDL

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⁴ excluding higher education institutions, which cannot be allocated to a particular language region

3 Educational levels

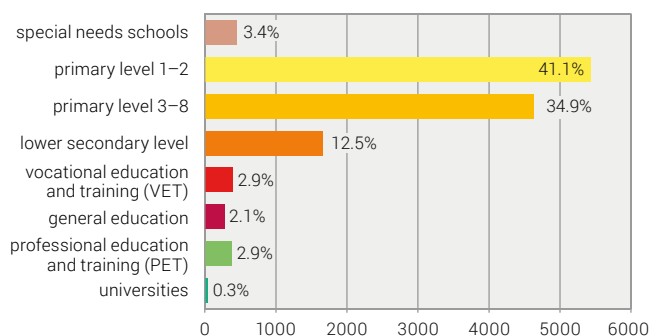
A school's educational level is defined by its student population and by the educational programmes in which the students are enrolled. A school that offers an educational programme over several educational levels may therefore be counted several times, depending on the level of detail required by the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

In Switzerland, compulsory education lasts eleven years and includes primary level and lower secondary level. It generally starts at the age of 4 with kindergarten or the first learning cycle (primary level 1st and 2nd year) and continues at primary level 3–8 (3rd to 8th year). All cantons offer at least one year of kindergarten. In most cantons, two years are compulsory.

In the academic year 2018/19, there were 5440 schools at primary level 1–2 and 4624 at primary level 3–8 spread throughout Switzerland. At lower secondary level, 1656 places of education have been identified nationwide.

Upper secondary level follows compulsory education. Young people either choose initial vocational education and training and attend one of 386 vocational schools, or opt for general education (281 educational institutions). Finally, the tertiary level (professional education and training (PET) and universities) completes Switzerland's education and training offerings with 415 educational institutions.

Schools by educational level, 2018/19

G3


Source: FSO – SBI

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4 In focus: special needs schools

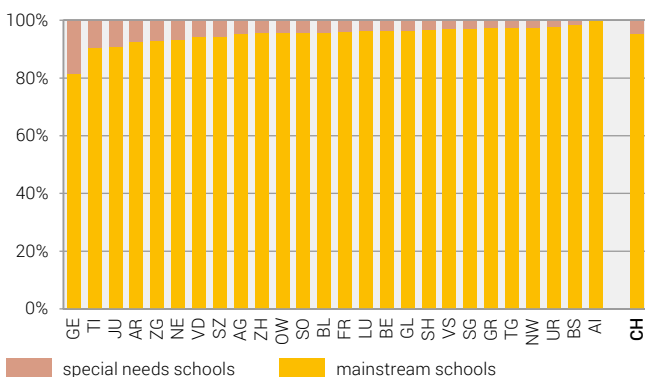
Special needs schools represent a minority in the Swiss school system (3.4% of all educational institutions). They belong to both the primary and lower secondary levels. They differ from other educational institutions with regard to the authority responsible for their funding, their geographical distribution and their organisation within and between cantons. For this reason, they are considered separately here.

In contrast to a mainstream school, a special needs school is an educational institution for compulsory education that provides teaching that is adapted to different types of disability or to pupils with major learning difficulties or severe behavioural problems within the framework of compulsory education.

In 2018/19 there were 448 special needs schools in Switzerland. The proportion of special needs schools in compulsory education is highest in the cantons of Geneva, Ticino and Jura. In these three cantons, these schools are on average smaller than in the other cantons (fewer than 20 pupils per school). In seven cantons, the proportion of special needs schools was less than 3% (VS, SG, GR, TG, NW, UR, BS). The canton of Appenzell Inner Rhodes did not have any. Pupils from the canton of Appenzell Inner Rhodes mainly attend special needs schools in the cantons of Appenzell Outer Rhodes and St. Gallen. Some pupils are therefore enrolled in schools outside their canton of residence. In Switzerland, the proportion of special needs schools in compulsory education is 4.7%, catering for 1.8% of pupils.

Percentage of special needs schools in compulsory education by canton, 2018/19

G4



Source: FSO – SBI

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5 In focus: vocational education and training (VET)

In Switzerland, vocational education and training (VET) can be completed in a training company (dual-track approach) or in a full-time vocational school.

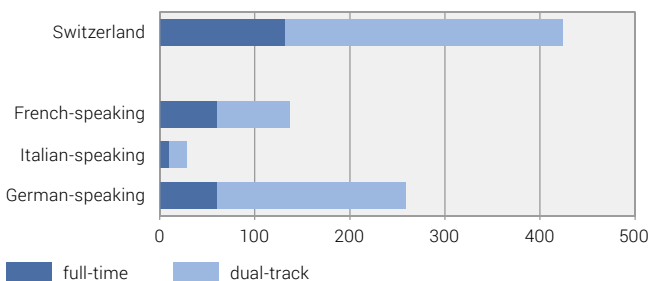
The dual-track approach combines practical training in a company and theoretical training in a vocational school. This dual-track system also exists in Germany, Austria and Liechtenstein. At the Swiss national level, it is the most common form of vocational training (69%) making Switzerland stand out in comparison with the above-mentioned countries.

In French- and Italian-speaking regions, the proportion of schools offering full-time vocational education and training in schools is higher than in German-speaking Switzerland: in 2018/19, this proportion was 45% in French-speaking Switzerland (24% of students), 36% in Italian-speaking Switzerland (28% of students) and 24% in German-speaking Switzerland (4% of students).

A similar trend can be observed in public expenditure on education per person in education: it is higher when the proportion of schools offering full-time vocational education and training is high. Private companies make a large contribution to the funding of dual-track education.

VET schools by organisation of education and language region¹, 2018/19

G5



¹ The Romansh-speaking region is not represented in this graph due to the limited number of vocational schools, with only one school providing dual education.

6 Size of educational institutions

The average size¹ of a school is 30 pupils at primary level 1–2, 110 pupils at primary level 3–8 and 150 pupils at lower secondary level. Special needs schools accommodate an average of 40 pupils. At upper secondary level, there are approx. 600 students in a vocational school and 360 students in a general education school.

Size of an educational institution

The school size is determined by the number of pupils attending. In this brochure, it takes into account the total number of pupils enrolled by level of education. The size of the school may also be defined by the total number of pupils, without taking into account the level of education (see example under “Definitions” at the end of the publication).

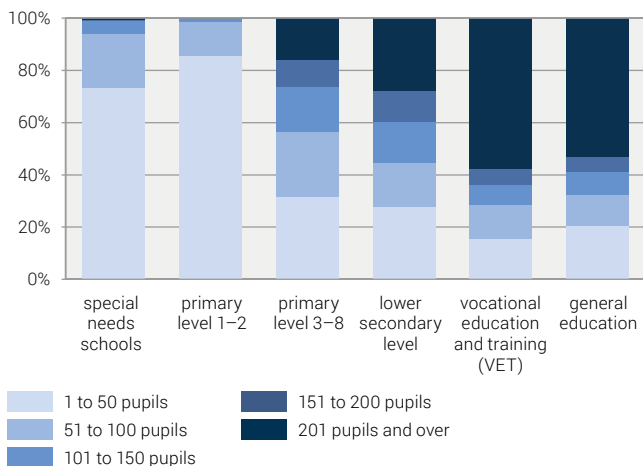
In compulsory education, 73% of special needs schools and 86% of primary level 1–2 schools have a size of 50 pupils or less. At primary level 3–8, 32% of schools are this size. At lower secondary level, the proportion of schools in this size category is 28%, the same as for schools with more than 200 pupils (see graph G6).

¹ To calculate the average size of a school, the total number of pupils enrolled at a given level of education is divided by the total number of schools offering this educational level.

At upper secondary level, around half of the schools accommodate more than 200 pupils (58% at vocational schools and 53% at general education schools). In the other size categories, the distribution of vocational schools and general education schools is similar.

Schools by size and educational level, 2018/19

G6



Sources: FSO – SBI, SDL

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7 Authority responsible for educational institutions

In Switzerland, most schools are managed by public authorities: across all levels of education, 87% of schools are public, not including double counts based on the level of education. About one third (35%) of private schools are subsidised by the public sector.

Responsible school authority (status)

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

The organisation and the location of private schools differ from public schools.

In compulsory education, most private schools (91%), whether dependent or independent, accommodate fewer than 100 pupils, while this is the case for 73% of public schools.

Nearly three quarters of independent private schools offer two or more education levels, compared to a quarter of public schools.

At upper secondary level, private schools account for 43% of educational institutions but educate only one sixth of the students, with the majority of private schools having fewer than 100 pupils.

With regard to location, 81% of private schools are located in an urban commune compared to 56% of public schools.

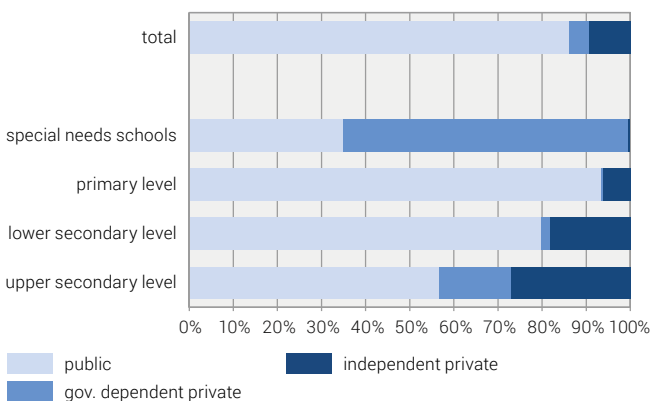
Of all the schools from primary to upper secondary level, public schools in compulsory education account for the vast majority of schools (primary level: 93%; lower secondary level: 79%). At upper secondary level, more than half (57%) of the schools are public.

The proportion of the independent private schools is 7% for the primary level and 19% for the lower secondary level. The proportion of the government-dependent private schools is almost zero (0.2% resp. 2%). Special needs schools differ from other levels of education, with a majority of government-dependent private schools (65%). At upper secondary level, 16% of schools are dependent private and 27% are independent private schools.

The distribution of vocational schools by status (dependent or independent) differs from schools offering general education: 70% of vocational schools and 53% of general education schools are public, 16% and 8% respectively are government-dependent private schools, 13% and 40% respectively are independent private schools.

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

Schools by educational level and status, 2018/19 G 7



Source: FSO – SBI

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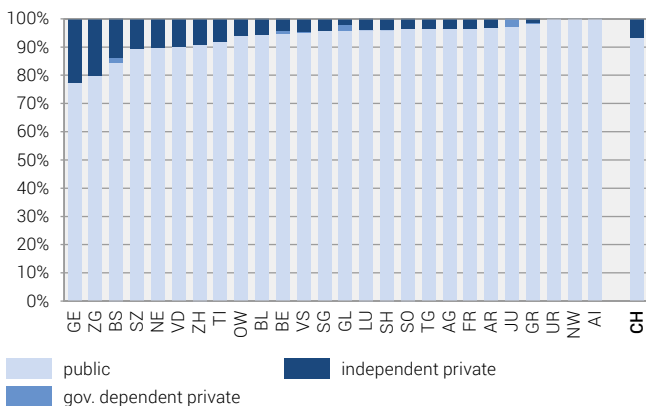
8 In focus: cantonal diversity

The status of an educational institution, defined by the authority responsible for funding, varies not only by educational level but also by canton. Almost half of all private schools at all levels of education are located in three cantons (ZH, VD, BE). The comparison of public and private schools by level of education and by cantons reveals rather contrasting trends.

At primary level, the proportion of government-dependent private schools is very low (less than 3%) or zero in all cantons. The proportion of independent private schools varies between 1% in Graubünden and 23% in the canton of Geneva. Four cantons do not have any schools of this type on their territory (JU, UR, NW, AI).

Primary level: schools by canton and status, 2018/19

G 8



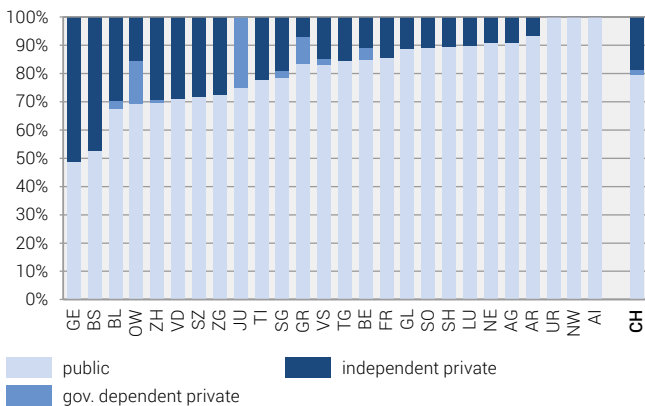
Source: FSO – SBI

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At lower secondary level, the proportion of government-dependent private schools reaches or exceeds 10% in three of the eight cantons that collect this data: Jura (25%), Obwalden (15%) and Graubünden (10%). The canton of Geneva has the highest proportion of independent private schools (51%; see graph G 9).

Lower secondary level: schools by canton and status, 2018/19

G9



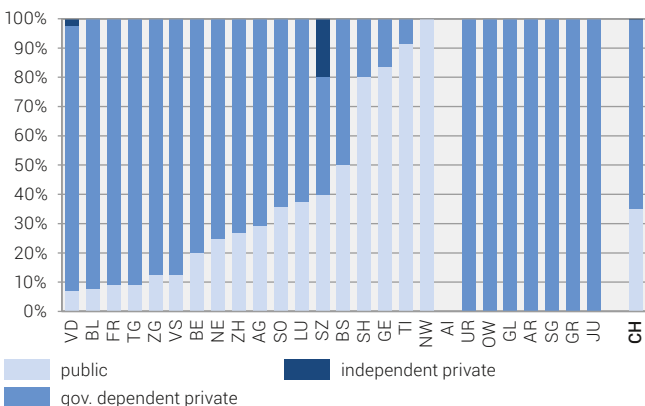
Source: FSO – SBI

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Special needs schools have a particular position in the Swiss school system with regard to the authority responsible for their funding. In most cantons, the majority of these schools are government-dependent private schools. In seven cantons (UR, OW, GL, AR, SG, GR and JU) they are all government-dependent. Only one canton (NW) has no government-dependent private special needs schools.

Special needs schools by canton and status, 2018/19

G10



Source: FSO – SBI

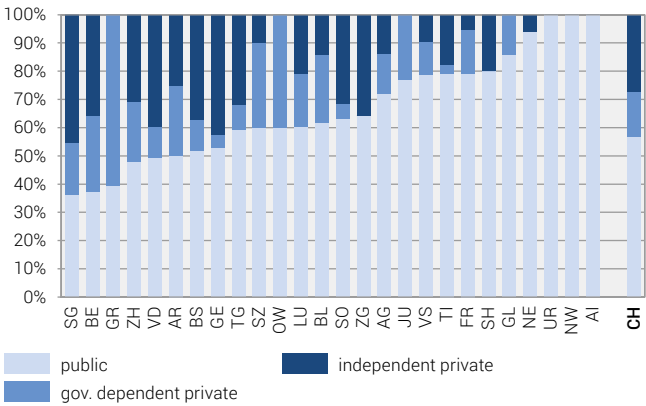
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The majority of upper secondary level schools are public in most cantons. The cantons of St. Gallen, Bern, Graubünden, Zurich and Vaud are exceptions with a majority of private schools (dependent or independent private) at this level. The participation of the cantons in the financing of private vocational schools and of private general education institutions varies widely from one canton to another.

The proportion of independent private schools varies between 45% in the canton of St. Gallen and 5% in the canton of Fribourg. Four cantons do not have any independent private schools at this level (GR, OW, JU, GL) and three cantons only have public schools (UR, NW, AI).

Upper secondary level: schools by canton and status, 2018/19

G11



Source: FSO – SBI

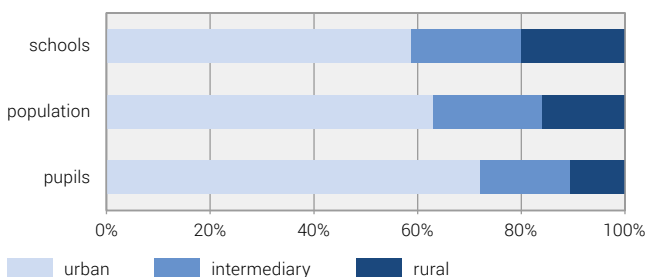
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9 Territorial distribution of educational institutions

The distribution of educational institutions on Swiss territory is based on the urban-rural typology, which classifies the Swiss communes, mainly by the criteria of density and size. This typology consists of three categories: urban, rural and intermediary (with the latter having both urban and rural characteristics).

In the academic year 2018/19, 59% of schools from primary to upper secondary level were located in urban communes, accounting for 63% of the population¹ and 72% of pupils. In turn, 21% of schools were located in intermediary communes, with 21% of the population and 18% of the pupils. Finally, rural communes accommodated 20% of schools with 16% of the population and 10% of the pupils.

Schools, population and pupils by commune type, 2018/19 G12



Sources: FSO – SBI, SDL, STATPOP, Switzerland's geographical levels

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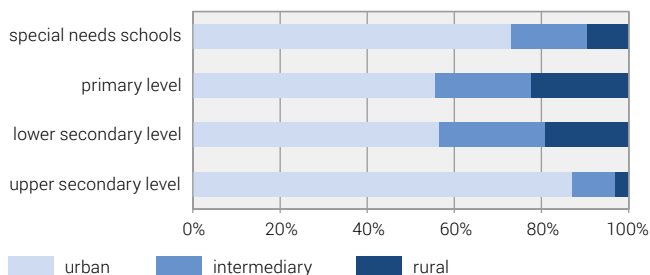
The territorial distribution of schools varies by educational level. While about half of the schools at primary and lower secondary level are located in urban centres (56% and 57%), the proportion of special needs schools in this commune type amounts to 73% and that of upper secondary level schools to 87% (see graph G13).

In intermediary and rural communes, primary schools are distributed in a similar manner (22%). For the other levels of education, schools are more represented in intermediary than in the rural communes (24% and 19% for lower secondary level schools, 17% and 10% for special needs schools, 10% and 3% for upper secondary level schools).

¹ Population and household statistics (STATPOP) on 31 December 2018

Schools by commune type and educational level, 2018/19

G 13



Sources: FSO – SBI, Switzerland's geographical levels

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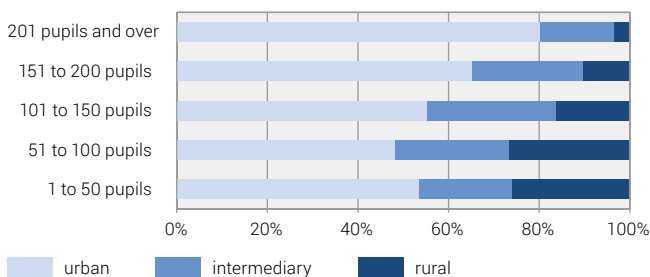
Considering all levels of education together, about half of the schools in a size category of 150 or fewer pupils are located in an urban commune (between 48 and 55%). This proportion is 65% for schools with 151 to 200 pupils, and 80% for schools with more than 200 pupils.

In the intermediary communes, there are about a quarter of schools in each size category between 51 and 200 pupils. This proportion amounts to 20% for schools with 50 pupils or less and to 16% for schools with more than 200 pupils.

In rural communes, schools with a maximum of 50 or 100 pupils are the most common (26% and 27%) and schools with more than 200 pupils are the rarest (3%).

Schools by commune type and size, 2018/19

G 14



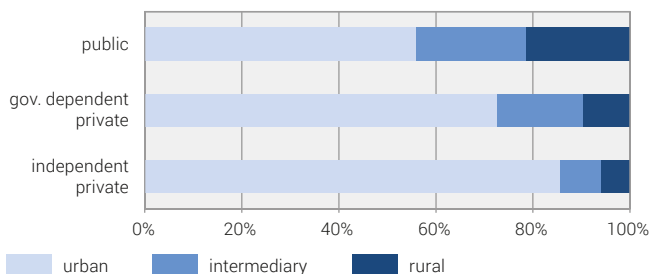
Sources: FSO – SBI, SDL, Switzerland's geographical levels

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Distributed by status, more than half of the public schools (56%), almost three quarters of government-dependent private schools (73%) and 86% of independent private schools are located in an urban commune.

In the intermediary and rural communes, the proportion of public schools is similar (22% and 21%). The same applies to independent private schools (9% and 6%). With respect to government-dependent private schools, 18% are located in an intermediary and 10% in a rural commune.

Schools by commune type and status, 2018/19 G 15



Sources: FSO – SBI, Switzerland's geographical levels

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10 Sources

Educational institutions statistics (SBI)

The educational institutions statistics describe educational infrastructure from primary to tertiary level by canton. All of the mainstream and special needs educational institutions, public and private, with at least one pupil are included in these statistics. The data are collected using the statistics on pupils and students (SDL, SHIS-studex) and are supplemented by information from the Business and Enterprise Register (BER).

Statistics on pupils and students (SDL)

The statistics on pupils and students include pupils and students from primary to tertiary levels (excluding universities). All people who have followed an educational programme for at least half a year, either full or part-time, are counted. Both private and public educational institutes are included in this census.

School staff statistics (SSP)

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

Swiss university information system (SHIS)

The database of the Swiss higher education information system contains data relating to students and exams (SHIS-studex) as well as on personnel (SHIS-PERS) at universities, universities of applied sciences and universities of teacher education. It provides information on the study situation, the course of study and on various socio-demographic factors concerning students and staff.

Public education expenditure (ÖBA)

The statistics on public expenditure on education cover the part of the federal administration's public expenditure listed under "Education". It includes expenditure by public authorities from compulsory education to institutions of higher education. It refers to the results of the most recent accounting year (2017).

Switzerland's geographic levels

The geographic levels include the territorial typologies and subdivisions whose basic unit is the commune. They enable spatial analyses and representations based on various territorial divisions, each having their own utility depending on the topics covered or questions asked.

Population and Household statistics (STATPOP)

The Population and Household statistics are part of the annual population census system. They provide information on the size and structure of the resident population at the end of a year as well as the movements of the resident population during the calendar year (31 December).

11 Definitions

Double counting

In the statistics on educational institutions, the same school offering an educational programme over several level of education may be counted several times, depending on the level of detail required by the analysis.

Educational institution

An educational institution is defined by its administrative level (the management) and by the educational site(s) (buildings) under its authority. An educational site usually consists of a single building, although there may be several if a few minutes' walk separates them from each other. In general, the terms "school" or "establishment" correspond to educational sites. An educational institution has permanent teaching staff and a permanent pupil/student population. It is founded on a communal, cantonal or federal law basis and fulfils an explicit educational mandate. The educational institutions are placed under the responsibility of either public authorities (the Confederation, canton, commune or other public body), or a private body.

Language region

The language regions are based on the national language spoken by the majority of the population in a commune. There are four language regions in Switzerland:

- German-speaking region
- French-speaking region
- Italian-speaking region
- Romansh-speaking region

Size

A school's size is determined by the number of pupils attending. The pupils considered in this calculation vary, however, depending on the perspective chosen for the analysis (see double counting principle). The size of the school may thus be calculated on the basis of the total number of pupils enrolled in the school (perspective A) or on the basis of the number of pupils enrolled in a level of education offered by the school (perspective B). For example, a school has 110 pupils with 10 pupils at primary level 1–2 and 100 at primary level 3–8. According to perspective A, this school is classified in the category "101 to 150 pupils" because the entire school population is taken into consideration. According to perspective B, it is classified in the category "1 to 50 pupils" for primary level 1–2 because only the 10 pupils enrolled in primary level 1–2 are counted, and in the category "51 to 100 pupils" for primary level 3–8. In this brochure, the size of the institution is generally calculated according to perspective B.

Teaching staff

In this brochure, teaching staff includes personnel responsible for direct teaching in the schools (excluding personnel teaching a foreign education programme) as well as the professors and other teachers in higher education institutions. In order to allow comparison with the pupils/students, the figures for teachers correspond to full-time equivalents (FTE) and not persons.

Urban-rural typology

The urban-rural typology is derived from the typology of communes in nine categories and consists of three categories: urban, intermediary and rural. The differentiation into nine categories is based on criteria of density, size and accessibility.

The other definitions presented in this publication are available on the website of the Federal Statistical Office (www.statistics.admin.ch).

Information

Educational institutions statistics: schulstat@bfs.admin.ch.
For further information concerning educational areas, see: www.education-stat.admin.ch.

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