



# Swiss Earnings Structure Survey

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## Description

The Swiss Earnings Structure Survey (ESS) is a written survey, carried out every two years in enterprises in Switzerland. It allows a regular description to be made of the earnings structure in all economic activities of the secondary and tertiary sectors based on representative data. It not only enquires after the economic activity and the size of the enterprise concerned, but also the individual characteristics of employees and their jobs.

The ESS has been carried out since 1994 (reference year). As a result of adaptations which were necessary to meet national and international requirements, the ESS was revised in 2012. Although some variables have been modified, continuity with previous results remains largely ensured.

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## Methodology

### Type of survey

Written, sample survey of approximately 35,000 private and public enterprises or administrations with some 1.6 million employees (situation for the 2014 ESS). Participation in the survey is compulsory for the enterprises.

### Sampling

The survey is based on a complex random sample. For this reason, private sector enterprises, for example, are divided into about 2000 strata (situation in 2014) according to three criteria: business size (3 classes), economic activity (39 classes) and geographic location (7 major regions, 8 cantons and 1 town). The public sector sample was also drawn according to specific criteria. The selection rates are calculated so that the expected dispersion is less than 5% in each stratum. In 2012, the gross response rate was 82%.

### Statistical population

Salaried jobs (according to domestic concept) in secondary and tertiary sector enterprises with at least 3 jobs. Since the start of the ESS (1994), data on wages in the federal administration and enterprises have also been collected. Since 1998, the survey has also provided data on wages in the public sector at cantonal level and since 2006 on communal administration earnings and since 2012 those of churches. Before 2010, the survey did not take into account apprentices, interns, employees working at home, persons paid only on a commission basis, or persons whose professional activities took place mostly abroad as well as persons whose wages were reduced in relation to their work-time percentage (e.g. SUVA, invalidity allowance etc.). From 2012 all these categories of employees are included.

### Characteristics registered:

#### Enterprises:

- Number of employees
- Type of wage agreement

#### Employees:

- AHV/AVS number as key for demographic data such as sex, civil status, age and nationality (Swiss and foreigners by residence permit category)
  - Education
  - Professional position
  - Occupation
  - Date of entry into enterprise
  - Type of contract
  - Working hours
  - Holidays
  - Gross wage in October (basic wage plus allowances for shift work and other hardship premiums)
  - Family allowances
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- Social contributions (employee's part)
  - 13th wage, 14th and subsequent wages
  - Payment of overtime
  - Special payments
  - BER number as key enabling place of work and economic activity of establishments to be identified

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**Degree of regionalisation**

Switzerland and major regions

**Reference period**

Month of October

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**Legal bases**

Federal Statistics Act (FStatA) of 9 October 1992 and ordinance of 30 June 1993 on the Conduct of Federal Statistical Surveys (RS 431.012.1)

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**Organization**

Federal Statistical Office

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[Information on FSO surveys for academic and research purposes: Swiss Centre of expertise in the Social Sciences \(FORS\)](#)

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