



## Press release

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# The Swiss health system: Older individuals often go online for information

**The majority of people over 65 years of age in Switzerland take a basically positive view of the Swiss health system. This was one of the findings of a broad-based international survey of the population carried out in 11 countries under the auspices of the Commonwealth Fund foundation and presented in Washington. The survey found that many older people are using the Internet to obtain health-related information. Furthermore, prevention is more often discussed with a healthcare professional in French-speaking Switzerland than in the German-speaking part.**

Over-65s in Switzerland are more than averagely satisfied with the health care they receive. Four-fifths of a total of around 3,200 participants in this age group are satisfied with the quality of care. This once again puts Switzerland in a very good position internationally within the Commonwealth Fund survey: it ranks top for this question, ahead of New Zealand and Norway.

Almost half of those questioned felt that their own health was “good”, one third felt it was “excellent or very good”. One in five people assessed their health as “mediocre or poor”. This puts Switzerland in mid-field in an international comparison. Survey participants in the Netherlands, France and Germany felt that their health was poorer.

It is striking that as many as two-thirds of the older individuals who took part in the survey this year responded online, the remainder by telephone. The survey also shows that more than two-fifths (43%) of survey participants use the Internet to obtain information on health-related topics. One person in ten reads information online or downloads information relating to their own health from the Internet. The proportion is highest in the 65-74 age group. The level of education plays a role here, with people who have a higher level of education obtaining information online more often than those who have only completed compulsory education.

Practically all the people questioned in Switzerland (97%) have a general practitioner. However, there has been a decline in the timely availability of doctors since the 2014 survey was carried out. Three years ago nearly two-thirds of those questioned were given an appointment the same day or one day later; in 2017 the figure was barely half.

One in five survey participants (24%) stated that they had experienced problems with coordinating therapy, such as contradictory information from different healthcare professionals or superfluous medical tests that had already been done. This result is practically identical to the 2014 finding (21%).

Some cantons increased the random sample in the most recent survey to enable them to evaluate the data on a cantonal level (VS, VD, GE, ZH). This revealed a distinct difference with respect to prevention. In the French-speaking cantons more than two-fifths (46%) of survey participants had already discussed healthy eating with a healthcare professional, while in the German-speaking cantons the figure was not even one third (27%).

The situation was different with respect to the question of whether older individuals had informed a person whom they trusted or a healthcare professional about their decisions relating to the end of life. About two-thirds (64%) of the German-speaking participants had done this, a figure slightly above the Swiss average of 60%. In the French-speaking cantons the figure was one half (52%). A good third of those surveyed had put their decisions in writing.

Switzerland has been taking part in the International Health Policy Survey organised by the Commonwealth Fund since 2010. The results of this year's international survey will be presented at a meeting of ministers hosted by the Commonwealth Fund between 15 and 17 November 2017 in Washington. The Commonwealth Fund is a private, non-profit foundation that aims to promote efficient and properly functioning healthcare systems that achieve better access to health insurance and improved quality. The Swiss delegation to the meeting will be led by FOPH Director Pascal Strupler. Switzerland took part in the 2017 International Survey of Older Adults organised by the Commonwealth Fund in New York (USA) alongside Australia, Germany, France, Great Britain, Canada, New Zealand the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the USA. A representative sample of 3,238 people aged 65 and over from the Swiss population were surveyed.

**Further information:**

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**Links:**

Report and slide deck and more information:

<https://www.bag.admin.ch/bag/en/home/service/publikationen/forschungsberichte/forschungsberichte-international-health-policy-survey-ihp-des-commonwealth-fund-laendervergleiche/ihp-befragungen-aeltere-wohnbevoelkerung.html>

Swiss Health Observatory Obsan:

<http://www.obsan.admin.ch/de/publikationen/experience-de-la-population-agee-de-65-ans-et-plus-avec-le-systeme-de-sante>

The Commonwealth Fund Foundation:

<http://www.commonwealthfund.org/interactives-and-data/surveys/international-health-policy-surveys/2017/2017-international-survey>