



News Release

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AI deepens the digital divide between generations

Artificial intelligence is increasingly becoming part of everyday life. Most people in Switzerland are concerned about AI and the next generation of technology, but those who use AI regularly are more optimistic. While younger people spend more time online than they would like, older people and those with low digital literacy are falling behind. These are the latest findings from a representative long-term study by the University of Zurich.

In 2025, people in Switzerland spend an average of 5.7 hours online each day – three times more than in 2011 (1.8 hours) and two hours more than before the Covid pandemic in 2019 (3.6 hours). Among 20- to 29-year-olds, daily internet usage time reaches 8.4 hours. “For this age group, the internet has for the first time become more important than personal contacts – both for information and entertainment”, says study leader Michael Latzer, Professor of Media Change & Innovation at the University of Zurich.

Social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram play a central role in the daily lives of young people (used by 95% of 20- to 29-year-olds), and their use is also increasing among older generations (58% among those aged 70+). The digitalization of everyday life is progressing rapidly: two out of three transactions are cashless, 39% of products are purchased online, and a third of work that can be done remotely is carried out from home.

Almost half of Switzerland uses generative AI regularly

Since the launch of ChatGPT in November 2022, the share of the population that has used generative AI has risen sharply – from 37% in 2023 to 54% in 2024 and 73% in 2025. What began as one-time experimentation has turned into regular use: almost half of the people in Switzerland now use generative AI at least once a month (weekly: 21%, daily: 17%), and among 14- to 19-year-olds, the figure is as high as 84%. “Actual AI use is considerably higher, as AI is increasingly integrated into everyday services such as search engines and chatbots,” says Latzer.

Generative AI is most commonly used in education and work (53%), with two-thirds of 20- to 29-year-olds doing so. Three in ten 14- to 19-year-olds say they use AI to create content they were actually supposed to produce themselves. For regular users, AI has also become an important advisor in everyday decisions, for example, regarding finances and career choices (21% each). However, compared to traditional sources, the overall importance of generative AI and influencers remains low: when it comes to political decisions, only 7% consider AI-generated information important, compared to 27% who rely on classic internet sources.

Surveillance, loss of control, and job fears – a call for AI regulation

Despite widespread use, skepticism and concern about potential risks remain high: while a clear majority (71%) of regular users believe AI helps them complete tasks more efficiently, only one in three thinks it will improve life overall. Six in ten people in Switzerland fear increased surveillance, and one

in three worries that generative AI could spiral out of control or lead to mass unemployment. Accordingly, the demand for regulation is strong: one in two calls for stricter rules on generative AI – significantly more than for the internet in general (36%).

“Artificial General Intelligence” is coming – with negative consequences

Almost half of Swiss internet users believe that generative AI will soon evolve into “Artificial General Intelligence” – a general-purpose application that surpasses humans in nearly all areas of life. More than half of them expect this to happen already within the next five years. Those who use AI regularly are more likely to believe in the emergence of such “Artificial General Intelligence”. However, this belief is accompanied by growing concerns about consequences: 60% of the population and 49% of AI users expect “Artificial General Intelligence” to have mostly negative effects on humanity. In contrast, attitudes toward the internet remain far more positive: 60% believe it is good for society.

Skepticism toward cyborg technologies prevails

The next generation of technology combines internet-, bio-, and nanotechnologies with the aim of enhancing human abilities and overcoming biological limits – for example, through so-called cyborg products. While Silicon Valley has high hopes for such future technologies, the Swiss population remains skeptical: only one-fifth believes in their potential, rising to 30% among AI users. The majority, however, see mainly risks, such as new forms of cybercrime (78%), privacy violations (67%), and social inequality (64%).

AI fuels divides between young and old

Social divides in digitalization follow age and internet skills, reinforced by the use of AI. While 91% of 20- to 29-year-olds in Switzerland rate their internet skills as good to excellent, this applies to only 59% of those aged 70 and above. The difference is even more pronounced when it comes to generative AI: almost half of 14- to 19-year-olds feel comfortable using it, but only 20% of those aged 70 or older do. These differences are reflected in the sense of belonging to the information society. Only 34% of the population feel part of it, 25 percentage points less than in 2015. The sense of inclusion is particularly low among older people (19% among those 70+) and those with lower internet skills (14%), while 20- to 29-year-olds and people with high internet skills feel significantly more integrated (54% each).

While older people and those who do not use AI are falling behind, younger people and AI users are struggling with digital overconsumption. More and more people are spending more time online than they would like (38% vs. 2019: 24%). 82% of 14- to 19-year-olds and 58% of AI users want to reduce their usage time.

World Internet Project Switzerland

The World Internet Project (WIP) is a comparative longitudinal study. It tracks the diffusion and use of the internet in 30 countries and analyzes the social, political, and economic implications of internet development.

The Swiss WIP project has been carried out since 2011 by the Media Change & Innovation Division in the Department of Communication and Media Research (IKMZ) at the University of Zurich under the direction of Prof. Michael Latzer. This year's results are based on a representative online survey of 1,078 Internet users aged 14 and older, conducted by gfs.bern from June to August 2025. Members of the 2025 project team include Noemi Festic, Céline Odermatt, and Alena Birrer.

All thematic reports are available for download at
<http://mediachange.ch/research/wip-ch-2025>

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