

# 2019



15

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## Educational institutions

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## 1 Introduction

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

Most of the data are from the educational institutions statistics and the statistics on pupils and students. They are based on the academic year 2017/18.

### **Educational institutions**

An educational institution is a permanent entity offering pupils/students one or several types of formal education, provided by teaching staff. Education is conducted on the basis of 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 educational sites.

The published figures concern educational institutions from primary<sup>1</sup> to tertiary level. With the exception of the higher education institutions<sup>2</sup>, they generally refer to actual educational sites. The cantonal school organisations differ in the degree of detail with which data on schools (educational sites/buildings) and administrative units (administrative level) are collected.

Tertiary level educational institutions, which are not uniformly defined across Switzerland, are only considered in this brochure in the overview below (see graphic G 1). Further education institutions and places where informal learning occurs are not considered in these statistics.

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

<sup>2</sup> In education statistics, higher education institutions are only defined at the administrative level. As some of them are intercantonal, they cannot be presented by canton.

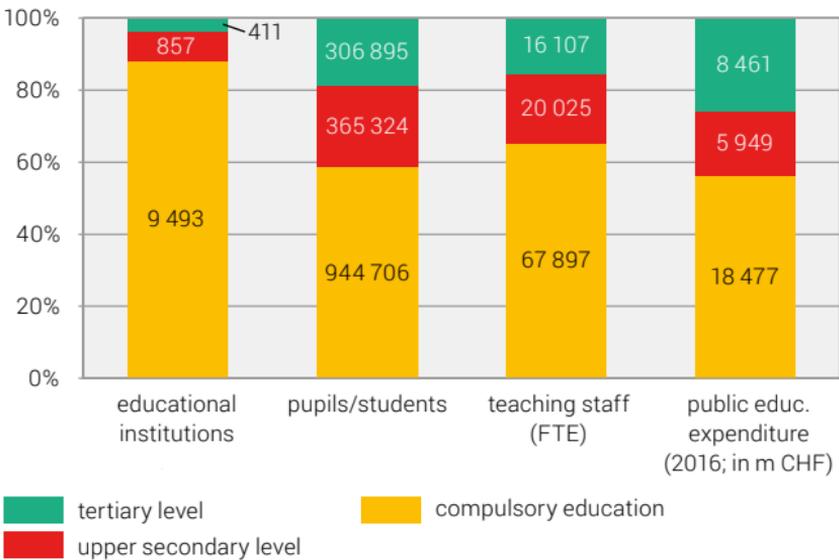
## 2 The key figures of educational institutions

In autumn 2017/18 there were 10 306 educational institutions in Switzerland including all levels.<sup>3</sup>

Compulsory education groups together most educational institutions (88%). They accommodate 58% of all people in education and 65% of teachers<sup>4</sup>. More than half of public expenditure on education is spent at this level (56%). Only 8% of schools are for upper secondary level: they group together 23% of all people in education and 19% of teachers for around a fifth of public expenditure on education (18%). At tertiary level, the proportion of educational institutions is 4%. They accommodate 19% of persons in education for 15% of teachers. A quarter of public expenditure on education<sup>5</sup> is spent at this level (26%).

### Educational institutions, pupils/students, teaching staff and public education expenditure by educational level, 2017/18

G 1



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

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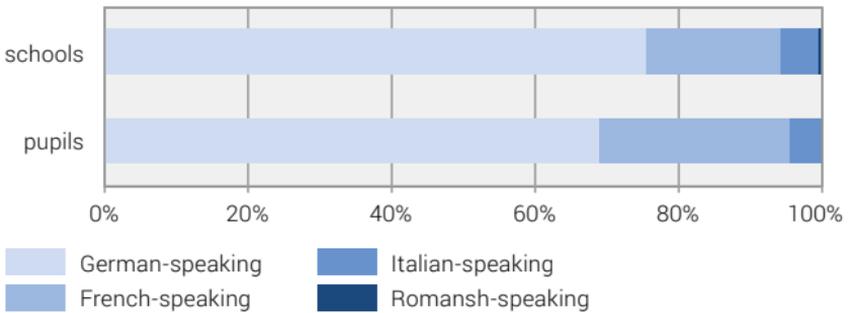
<sup>3</sup> without double counting; see explanation in the next chapter

<sup>4</sup> Excl. staff teaching a foreign teaching programme (3020 FTE). This concerns compulsory schooling and upper secondary level. This category is described in detail under «Definitions» at the end of the publication.

<sup>5</sup> excl. public expenditure on research

The distribution of schools on the territory varies by language region. Three-quarters of schools, across all levels of education,<sup>6</sup> are located in German-speaking Switzerland for 69% of pupils, nearly one in five schools in French-speaking Switzerland (19%) for over a quarter of pupils (27%), 5% in Italian-speaking Switzerland (4% of pupils) and 0.5% in the Romansh-speaking part of the country (0.2% of pupils).

## Schools and pupils by language region, 2017/18 G2



Sources: FSO – SBI, SDL

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<sup>6</sup> 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 the educational programmes in which the students are enrolled. Thus one school that offers an educational programme over several educational levels may be counted several times depending on the level of detail required by the analysis (double counting principle).

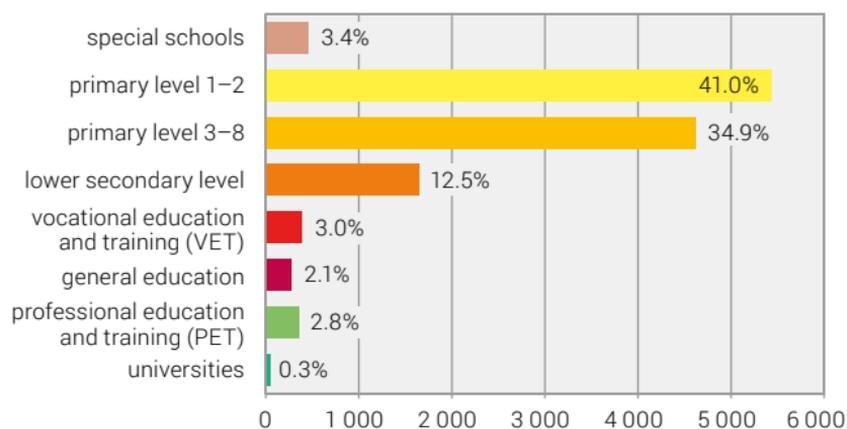
In Switzerland, compulsory education lasts eleven years and includes primary level and lower secondary level. It generally starts at the age of 4 with kindergarten or the first learning cycle (primary level 1st and 2nd year) and continues with the primary level 3–8 (3rd to 8th year). All cantons offer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

Over the 2017/18 academic year, there were 5427 schools at primary level 1–2 and 4620 at primary level 3–8 spread throughout Switzerland. At lower secondary level, 1647 places of education and training were surveyed at national level.

Upper secondary level follows compulsory education. Young people choose an initial vocational education and training course, and attend one of 391 vocational schools or opt for a general education (279 educational institutions). Finally, Switzerland's education and training offerings are completed by the tertiary level (professional education and training (PET) and universities) with 411 educational institutions.

#### Educational institutions by educational level, 2017/18

G3



Source: FSO – SBI

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## 4 In focus: special schools

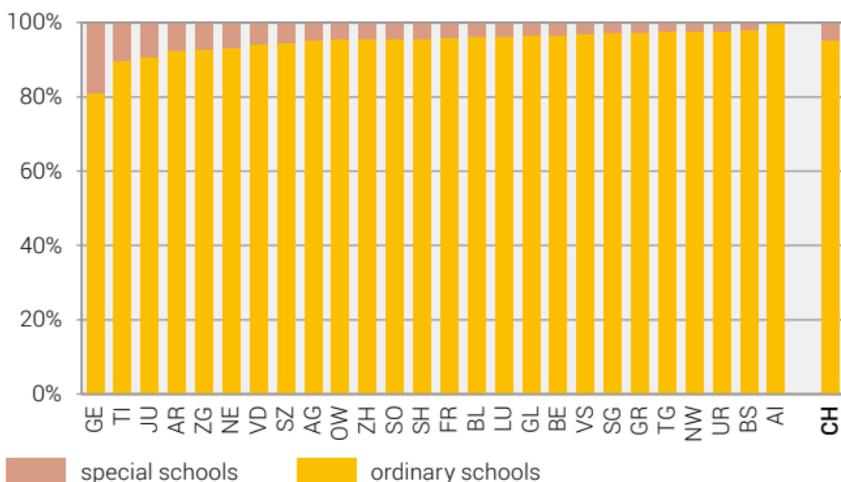
Special schools make up a minority of schools in the Swiss school system (3.4% of all educational institutions). They cover the primary and lower secondary level. They differ greatly from other educational institutions with regard to the authority that is responsible for them and regarding their distribution and organisation in and across the cantons. This is why they are considered separately here.

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

In 2017/18 there were 452 special schools in Switzerland. The canton of Geneva had the greatest share of special schools (19%). In the three cantons with the highest percentage (GE, TI, JU), these schools are on average smaller than those in other cantons (fewer than 20 pupils per school). In seven cantons, the proportion of special schools was less than 3%. The canton of Appenzell Inner Rhodes did not have any. The distribution of pupils in special schools is to some extent intercantonal. In the canton of Appenzell Inner Rhodes, pupils attend mainly special schools in Appenzell Outer Rhodes and in the canton of St. Gallen. Across Switzerland, the share of special schools in compulsory education is 4.4%.

### Share of special schools in compulsory education by canton, 2017/18

G4



Source: FSO – SBI

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## 5 In focus: vocational education and training (VET)

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

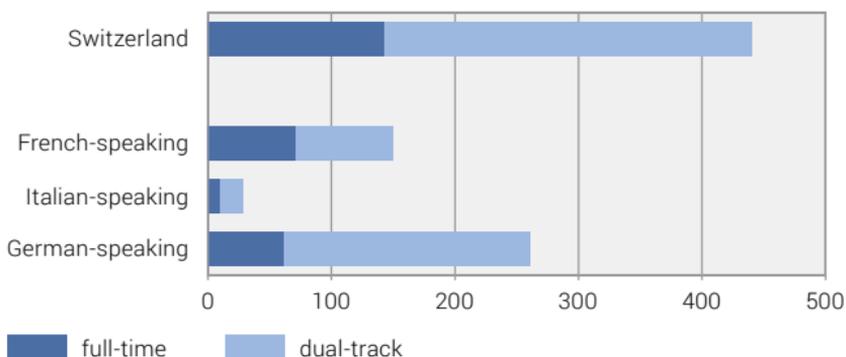
The dual-track approach combines practical training in a company and theoretical training in a vocational school. Switzerland's dual-track system stands out from the vocational education and training of other countries. At national level, the dual-track approach is the most common form of vocational training (68%).

In French- and Italian-speaking regions, the share of schools offering full-time vocational education and training in school is greater than in German-speaking Switzerland: in 2017/18, this share was 47% in French-speaking Switzerland (24% of pupils), 36% in Italian-speaking Switzerland (28% of pupils) and 24% in German-speaking Switzerland (4% of pupils).

The same trend is seen in public expenditure on education per person in education: it is higher when the share of schools offering full-time vocational education and training is greater. Private companies make a large contribution to the funding of dual-track education.

### VET schools by organisation of education and language region<sup>1</sup>, 2017/18

G5



<sup>1</sup> 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 size<sup>7</sup> 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 schools accommodate an average of 40 pupils. At upper secondary level, there are approx. 600 pupils in a vocational school and 360 pupils in a general education school.

### Size of an educational institution

A school's size is determined from the number of pupils following education and training at the school. In this brochure, it takes into account all pupils educated in the establishment by the educational level followed. The size of the school may also be defined by the total number of pupils, without taking into account the education level (see example under "Definitions" at the end of the publication).

In compulsory education, 73% of special schools and 86% of primary level 1–2 schools have 50 pupils or less. At primary level 3–8, 32% of schools are of this size. At lower secondary level, the share of schools in this size category is 28%, similar to that of schools which accommodate more than 200 pupils (27%; see graph G 6).

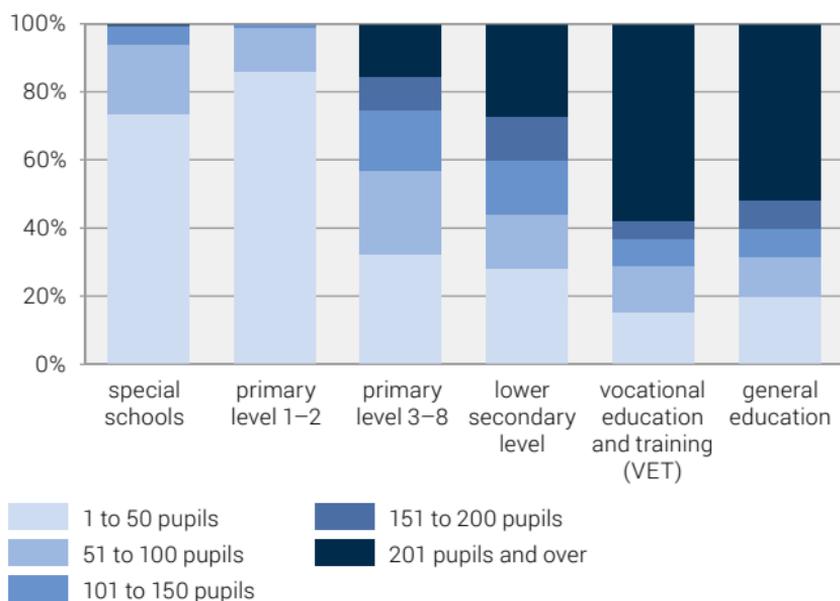
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<sup>7</sup> To calculate the average size of a school, the total number of pupils enrolled at an educational level is simply divided by the total number of schools offering this educational level.

At upper secondary level, around half of schools accommodate more than 200 pupils (58% for vocational schools and 52% for general education schools). The remainder of educational institutions at this level are divided among the other sizes, following a similar trend.

## Schools by size and educational level, 2017/18

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. Furthermore, around one third of private schools are subsidised (36%).

### **Responsible school authority (status)**

Educational institutions are either public or private. Furthermore, private institutions are classified between 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 varies considerably from public schools.

In compulsory education, most private schools accommodate fewer than 100 pupils (90%), while this is the case for 73% of public schools. At upper secondary level, private schools represent 43% of educational institutions but educate only one sixth of pupils with the majority of private schools having fewer than 100 pupils. Three quarters of independent private schools offer two or more education levels from primary level to upper secondary level. This share is 38% for public schools.

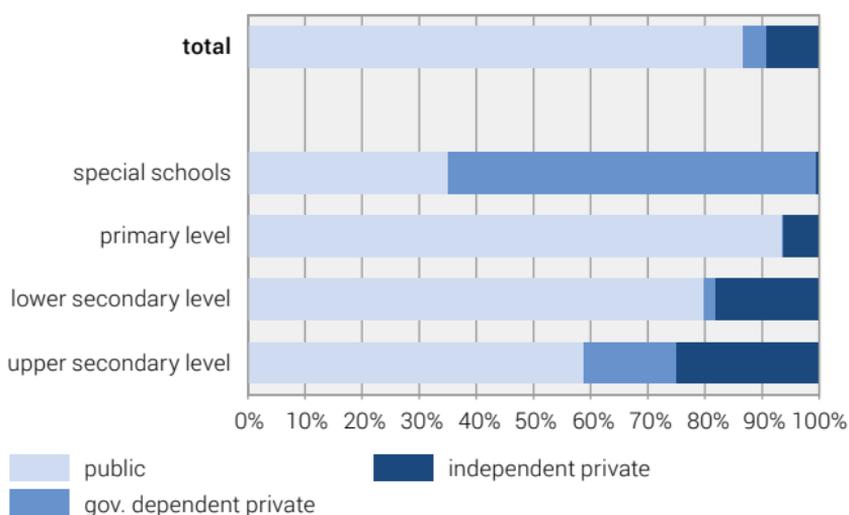
As regards location, 81% of private schools are located in an urban commune compared with 56% of public schools.

Public sector schools account for the majority of schools in compulsory education (primary level: 93%; lower secondary level: 80%). The share of the independent private sector is 6% for the primary level and 18% for the lower secondary level. The share of the government dependent private sector is virtually zero (0.3% resp. 2%). Special schools differ from other levels with a majority of government dependent private schools (64%).

At upper secondary level, 59% of schools are public, 16% are dependent private schools and the remaining quarter are independent private schools. The distribution of vocational schools by status is different to that of schools offering general education: 71% of vocational schools and 53% of general education schools are public, 16% and 7% are government dependent private schools, 14% and 40% are independent private schools.

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

## Schools by educational level and status, 2017/18 G7



Source: FSO – SBI

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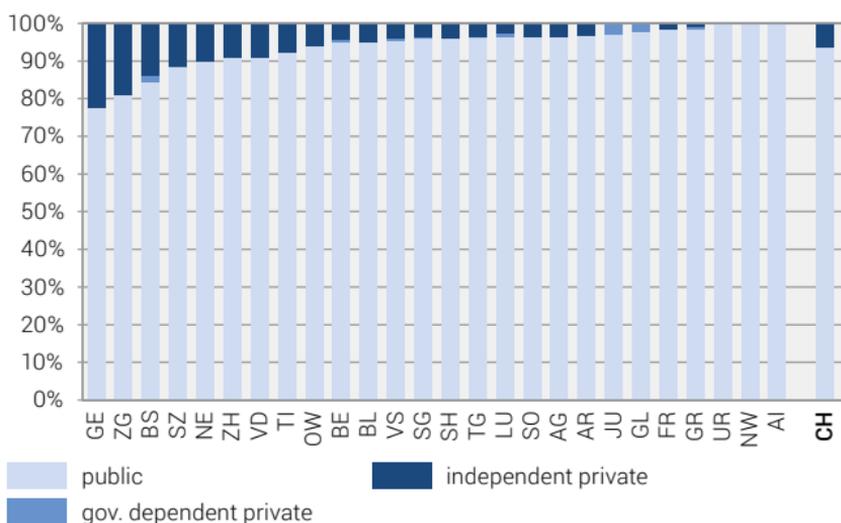
## 8 In focus: cantonal diversity

The status of an educational institution that is defined by the financially responsible authority varies not only by educational level but also by canton. For all education levels considered together, about half of all private schools are located in three cantons (ZH, VD, BE). The comparison between the cantons of public and private schools by education level reveals quite contrasting trends.

At primary level, the share of government dependent private schools in all cantons is very low (less than 3%) or zero. The share of independent private schools varies between 1% in Graubünden and 22% in the canton of Geneva. Five cantons do not have any schools of this type on their territory (JU, GL, UR, NW, AI).

### Primary level: schools by canton and status, 2017/18

G8



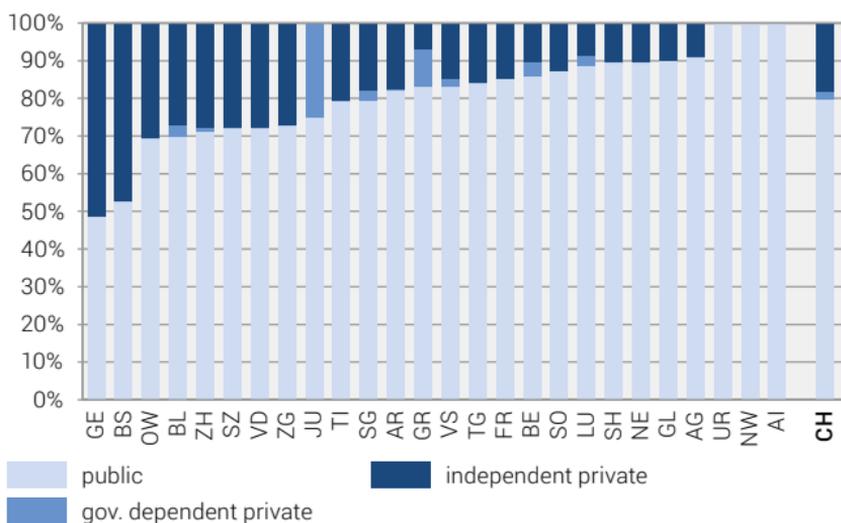
Source: FSO – SBI

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At lower secondary level, the share of government dependent private schools reaches or exceeds 10% in two of the eight cantons that collect this data: Jura (25%) and Graubünden (10%). The canton of Geneva has the greatest share of independent private schools (51%; see graph G9).

## Lower secondary level: schools by canton and status, 2017/18

G9



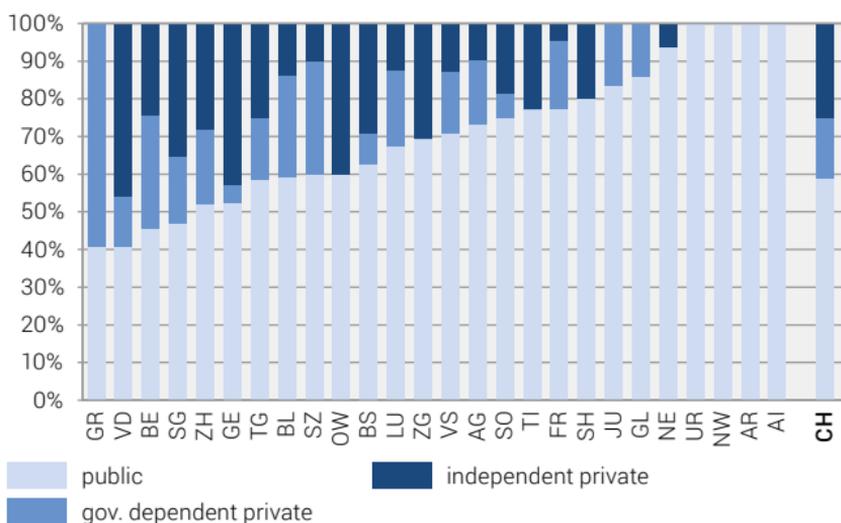
Source: FSO – SBI

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The majority of upper secondary level schools are public in all cantons. The cantons of Graubünden, Vaud, Bern and St. Gallen are exceptions having a majority of private schools (dependent or independent private) at this level. The share of independent private schools varies between 46% in the canton of Vaud and 5% in Fribourg. Three cantons do not have any independent private schools at this level (GR, JU, GL) and four cantons only have public schools (UR, NW, AR, AI).

## Upper secondary level: schools by canton and status, 2017/18

G10



Source: FSO – SBI

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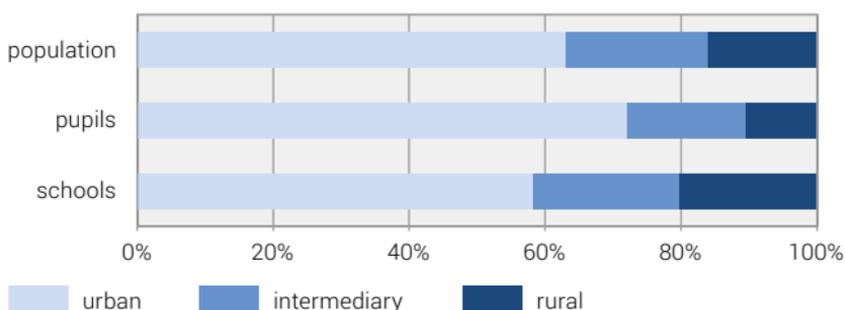
## 9 Territorial distribution of educational institutions

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 comprises three categories: urban, rural and intermediary (with the latter having both urban and rural characteristics).

In the academic year 2017/18, 58% of primary to upper secondary schools were located in an urban commune. Meanwhile, 63% of the population<sup>8</sup> lived and 72% of pupils were concentrated in this type of commune. In turn, 22% 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 11% of the pupils.

### Schools, pupils and population by commune type, 2017/18

G11



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

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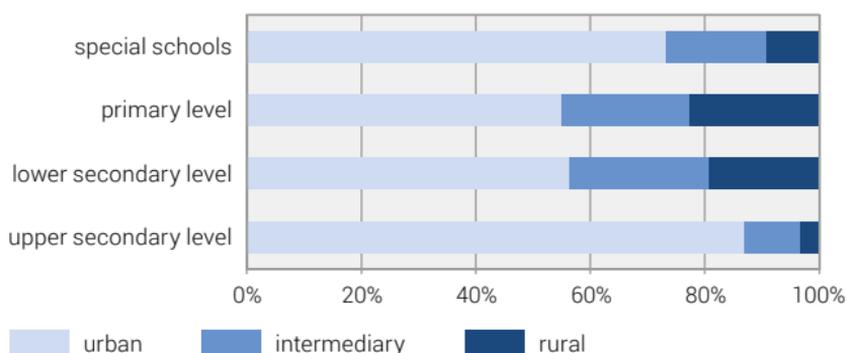
The territorial distribution of schools varies by educational level. Although around half of the schools at primary and lower secondary level are located in urban centres (55% and 56%), the share of special schools in this commune category is 73% and that of upper secondary level schools 87% (see graph G12).

In the intermediary and rural communes, primary schools are distributed in an equivalent manner (22% and 23%). For the remaining education levels, the percentage of schools is greater in the intermediary communes than in the rural communes (17% and 9% for special schools, 24% and 19% for lower secondary level schools, 10% and 3% for upper secondary level schools).

<sup>8</sup> Population and Household statistics (STATPOP) on 31 December 2017

## Schools by commune type and educational level, 2017/18

G12



Sources: FSO – SBI, Switzerland's geographical levels

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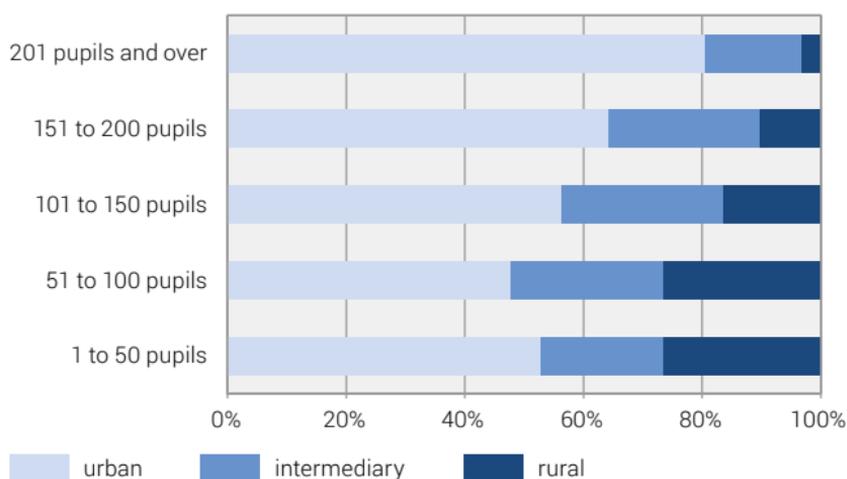
For all education levels considered together, around half of schools with 100 pupils or under and some 60% of schools with 101 to 200 pupils are located in urban communes, as are 80% of schools with more than 200 pupils.

In the intermediary communes, there are around a quarter of schools in each category size between 51 and 200 pupils (26%). This share is 20% for schools with 50 pupils or under and 16% for schools with more than 200 pupils.

In the rural communes, the greatest percentages are those for schools with up to 50 and 100 pupils (27% and 26%) and the lowest is for schools with 200 or more pupils (3%).

## Schools by commune type and size, 2017/18

G13



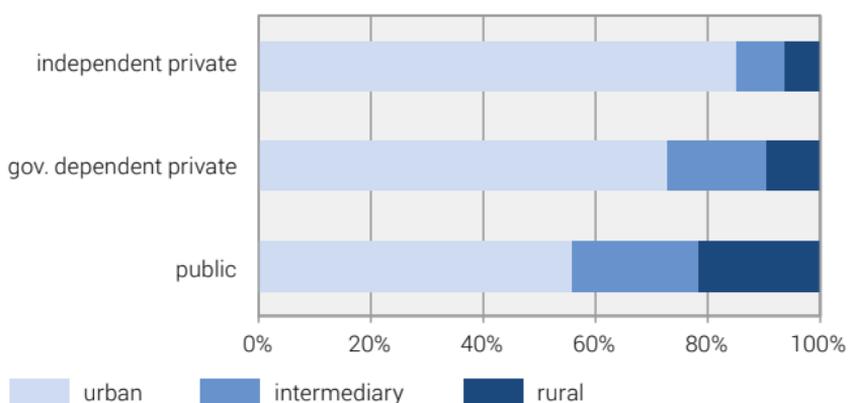
Sources: FSO – SBI, SDL, Switzerland's geographical levels

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Dispersed by their status, more than half of public schools (56%) close to, three quarters of government dependent private schools (73%) and 85% of independent private schools are located in an urban commune.

In the intermediary and rural communes, the share of public schools is similar (23% and 22%). The same also applies for independent private schools (9% and 6%). As regards government dependent private schools, 17% are located in an intermediary commune and 10% in a rural commune.

## Schools by commune type and status, 2017/18 G 14



Sources : FSO – SBI, Switzerland's geographical levels

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## 10 Sources

### **Educational institutions statistics (SBI)**

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

### **Statistics on pupils and students (SDL)**

The statistics on pupils and students group together 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 surveyed. Private and public educational institutes are included in the survey

### **School staff statistics (SSP)**

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

### **Swiss university information system (SIUS)**

The Swiss university information system's database contains data relating to students and exams (SHIS-studex) and personnel (SHIS-PERS) of universities, universities of applied sciences and universities of teacher education. It provides information on the situation regarding courses of study, how they are run and on various socio-demographic factors concerning students and personnel.

## **Public expenditure on education (ÖBA)**

The statistics on public expenditure on education deal with 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 (2016).

## **Switzerland's geographic levels**

The geographic levels include the territorial typologies and subdivisions. The commune is used as the base unit. They enable spatial analyses and representations to be made 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 is part of the annual population census system. It provides information on the state and composition of the resident population at the end of the 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, a school that offers an educational programme over several educational levels 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. It may, however, consist of several buildings if these are only a short walking distance apart. In general, the terms «school» or «establishment» correspond to educational sites. An educational institution constantly receives teaching staff and pupils/students. It is founded on a communal, cantonal or federal law, has an explicit educational mandate and implements this. 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 a commune's population. In Switzerland there are four language regions:

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

## Size

A school's size is determined from the number of pupils following education and training at the educational institution. The pupils considered in this calculation vary, however, according to the perspective chosen for the analysis (see double counting principle). The size of the school may thus be calculated based on the total of pupils enrolled at the school (perspective A) or based on the number of pupils enrolled in an educational level 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 cohort is taken into consideration. According to perspective B, it is classified in the category "1 to 50 pupils" for primary level 1–2 as only 10 pupils enrolled in primary level 1–2 were 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 who directly teach in the schools (excluding personnel teaching a foreign education programme) as well as the professors and other teachers in higher education institutions. To allow comparison with the pupils/students, the figures relating to the 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 nine categories are defined using the following criteria: 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](http://www.statistics.admin.ch)).

## Information

Educational institutions statistics: [schulstat@bfs.admin.ch](mailto:schulstat@bfs.admin.ch)

For further information concerning educational areas, see: [www.education-stat.admin.ch](http://www.education-stat.admin.ch)



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