

How is Switzerland doing really?

Helsana Emotions Study

August 2022



SOTGMO

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Helsana Emotions Study

1.1. ABOUT THE STUDY

When people give responses like “not bad”, “it is what it is”, “so-so” or “okay”, etc. to questions about their personal well-being, it would in fact suggest they are not doing that well. People in Switzerland are somewhat reserved when it comes to emotions. So, as a health partner, health insurer Helsana wants to know how Switzerland is really doing. To this end, Helsana hired research institute Sotomo to investigate emotions in Switzerland in three survey waves. In the representative survey carried out between April and July 2022, a total of 5,554 people aged between 18 and 80 were surveyed.

The findings of this study, which are now available, show that Switzerland is doing “so-so”. While many Swiss people are “satisfied”, feelings of being overwhelmed are just as common. Many of the respondents feel “exhausted”, “stressed” and “worried”. This applies particularly to the young adults of Generations Y and Z. Those belonging to this generation, exhausted in the proper sense of the word, are characterised by feelings of being overwhelmed even before reaching the more demanding middle stage of life. The current global situation, marred by the war in Ukraine, is causing worry among the young and old alike. But there are other factors that have a crucial impact on emotional well-being. The study shows that people who actively engage in exercise are not only less stressed, but less exhausted too. Maintaining social relationships has a positive impact on

emotional well-being in all respects, even if people in Switzerland tend to be more reserved when it comes to emotions. And the study clearly indicates that physical closeness in interpersonal relationships has a beneficial effect on well-being. So, even if the Swiss appear reserved at first glance, the Helsana Emotions Study 2022 points towards a diverse emotional profile within the country.

1.2. SUMMARY OF THE KEY FINDINGS

Feelings of being overwhelmed : In the first half of 2022, 41 per cent of Swiss people described themselves as “satisfied”. In the ranking of the most common emotions, this is followed by “exhausted” at 39 per cent, “worried” at 38 per cent and “stressed” at 29 per cent (→Fig. 1). Feelings of being overwhelmed (exhausted, stressed, worried) were widespread in the emotions of people in Switzerland. While overtly negative moods (sad, angry, lonely) were slightly less common, it is striking is that strong positive emotions aren’t really felt more often either. For instance, 20 per cent described themselves as sad and 23 per cent as happy.

An exhausted generation : Both young adults and people at retirement age felt positive emotions most frequently. On the other hand, negative emotions became less and less frequent with increasing age. Around 60 per cent of young adults below the age of 35 today feel exhausted and more than half of them feel stressed. In the over-64s category, this figure is only about 10 and 15 per cent (→Fig. 4). Today’s generation of young adults (Gen Y/Z) is exhausted and stressed, and that’s before reaching the challenging middle stage of life. The widespread perception that people in the middle stage of life in particular are stressed and exhausted due to multiple factors does not hold up here.

How Switzerland is doing really : The study shows that Swiss people prefer to hide their true feelings. Those who classed themselves as somewhere in the middle between “very bad” and “very good” when asked about their well-being were ex-

periencing primarily negative emotions at the time of asking (→Fig. 8). These people often mention being exhausted, worried or stressed. There was almost zero mention of positive emotions from these respondents. This shows that many Swiss people are answering general how-are-you questions with only veiled responses. When asked about specific emotions, however, a clearer image of their emotional state became visible.

What weighs down on those feeling sad and exhausted : In the first half of 2022, by far and away the greatest trigger of negative feelings stated was the state of the world (76%) (→Fig. 9). Nonetheless, the global situation triggered by the war in Ukraine is not the source of an emotional crisis in Switzerland. After all, the state of the world often weighs most heavily on those who generally feel positive emotions. For people that are feeling exhausted, it is often work that triggers negative emotions, whereas this is more of a source of positive emotions for the more energetic individuals. Those who reported feeling sad, on the other hand, experience fewer positive feelings at home and in their leisure time than those who are happy (→Fig. 11).

The positive effect of an active life : Those who are active in their leisure time have a more positive outlook. Those who engage in activities on a regular basis, maintain an intensive social life and exercise and/or actively relax tend to have more positive emotions than those who neglect these areas. Those with the most positive emotions were those who did the most in their spare time. The most negative emotions were experienced by those who had no active social life. Generally speaking, the intensity of an individual's social life made the greatest difference (→Fig. 13). Maintaining social relationships has a positive impact on emotional well-being in all respects (→Fig. 14).

Physical closeness in interpersonal relationships : Not just the intensity of an individual's social life, but also physical closeness in interpersonal relationships has an impact on emotional well-being. It was found that those who receive more hugs are better off. (→Fig. 15). Roughly a third of the respondents had given/received a warm hug on the day of the survey. Another 44 per cent had enjoyed a warm hug at least the week before. Younger people, in particular, would like more hugs. Mainly in friendships, but also within partnerships, some expressed a desire for more physical closeness through hugs (→Fig. 19). Inhibitions and caution are the primary reasons for the lack of hugs (→Fig. 20). Indeed, some respondents – particularly women – had experienced hugs that made them uncomfortable. Italian-speaking Switzerland seems to be the most physical : here, respondents reported warm hugs happening between their extended family and good friends, but also acquaintances, work colleagues and even strangers. In French-speaking Switzerland, warm hugs are generally less common (→Fig. 17).

The best strategies : The most popular strategy in stressful times is actively addressing the problem. It is also the strategy regarded as most helpful by the most people. Seeking emotional support and distraction through sports and travel are other strategies regarded by many as especially helpful (→Fig. 25). However, younger men in particular, at least in comparison to the population as a whole, are increasingly adopting less favourable strategies in dealing with stress : they put aside their thoughts or emotions, or distract themselves with alcohol, drugs, TV and gaming. Young women, on the other hand, are more likely to withdraw than others. At the same time, they are also more likely to seek emotional support (→Fig. 23).

The emotions of the Swiss

How are the Swiss doing emotionally? “So-so” – according to the Helsana Emotions Study. Negative emotions are just as prevalent as positive emotions, and feelings of exhaustion are especially widespread among young adults. We’re talking about an exhausted generation. However, the study also shows that Swiss people prefer to hide their true feelings. Those who classed themselves as “so-so” when asked about their well-being are namely experiencing primarily negative emotions at that moment.

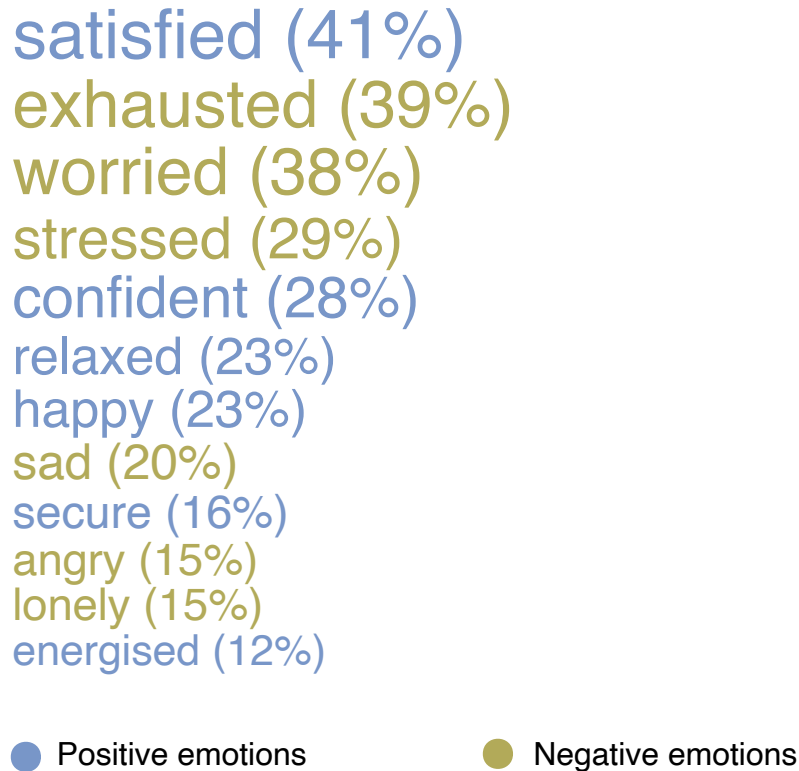
2.1. POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE FEELINGS

Which emotions dominated the daily lives of Swiss people in the first half of 2022? The survey, which was conducted in three waves from April to July, painted a varied picture. Of the twelve key emotions, three were especially prevalent : the most common feelings experienced by people in Switzerland in 2022 were satisfied (41%), exhausted (39%) and/or worried (38%). Furthermore, 29 per cent said they felt stressed in the surveys. The positive emotion of satisfaction ranked at the top. But this was followed by three relatively negative emotional states : exhaustion, worry and stress. On average, the respondents mentioned three emotions that were dominant for them at the time. Here, the re-

spondents' emotional state was characterised by slightly more negative emotions than positive emotions.

Most common emotions in Switzerland (Fig. 1)

"How do you generally feel these days?"



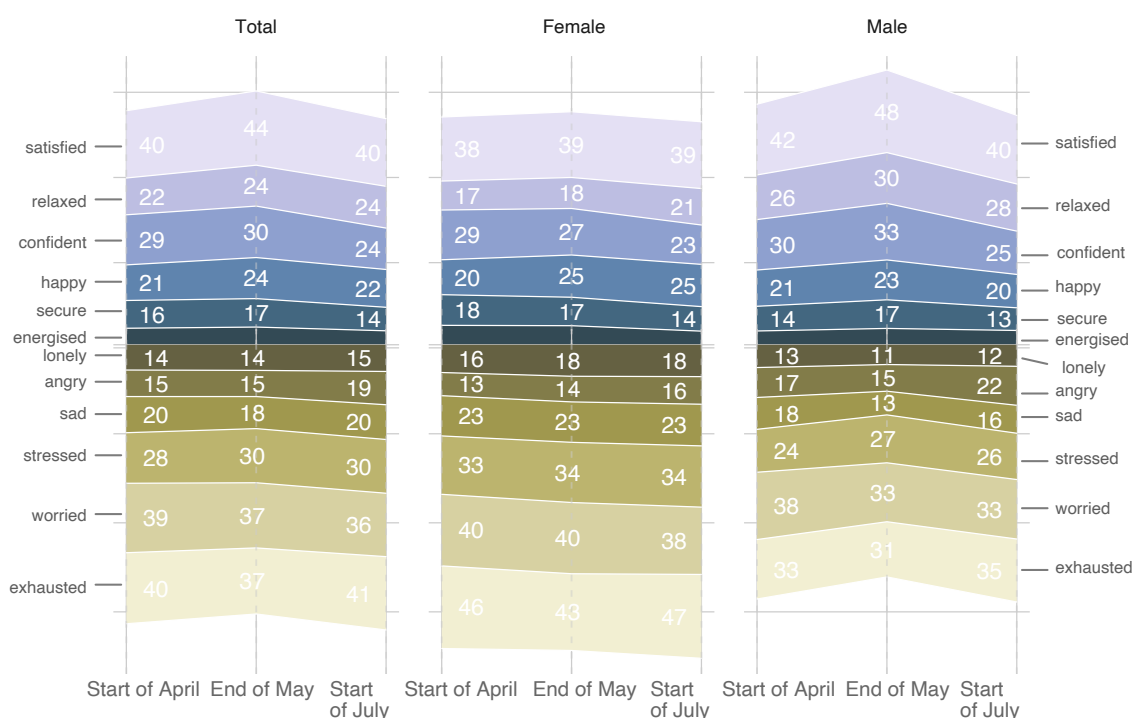
A look at the individual emotions shows that these widespread negative emotions tend more and more towards feelings of being overwhelmed (exhausted, stressed, worried).

Feelings of being
overwhelmed are
widespread.

Emotions associated with overtly negative moods (sad, angry, lonely) were a little less common. One in five respondents reported feeling sad, 15 per cent felt angry and another 15 per cent felt lonely. However, it is striking that strong positive emotions are also less common. Less than a quarter of the Swiss population felt happy and just 12 per cent felt energetic.

Emotions from the start of April to the start of July – by gender (Fig. 2)

“How do you generally feel these days?”

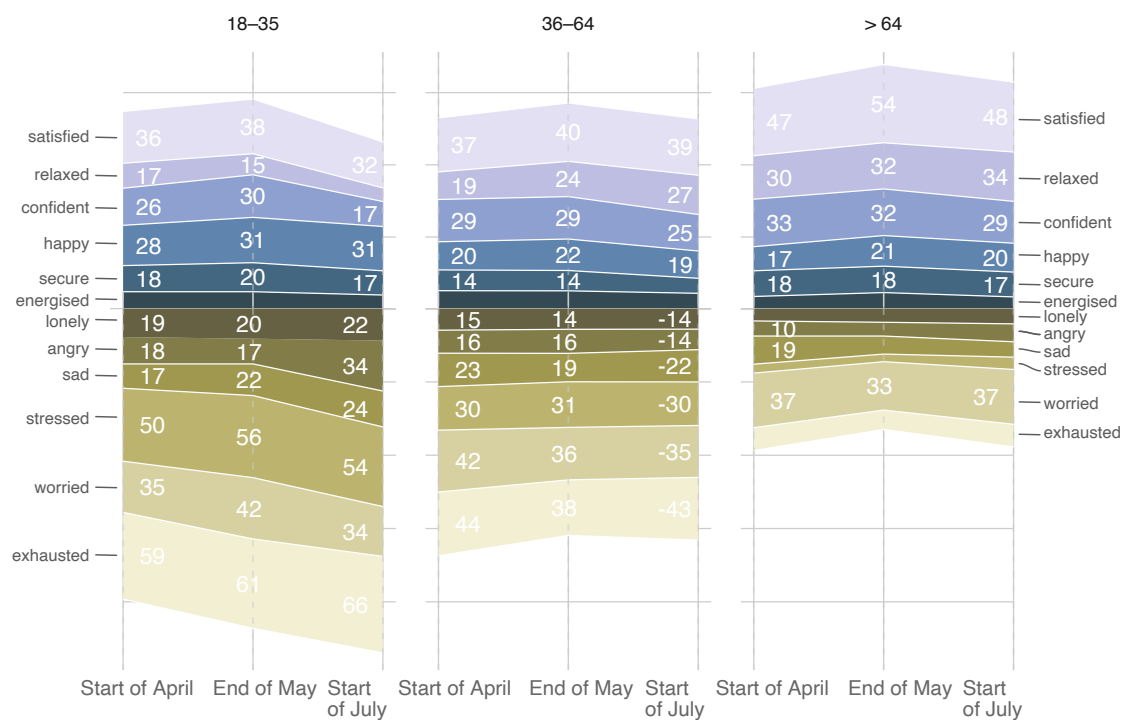


A comparison of the three survey waves from April to July 2022 illustrates just how stable Switzerland's emotional make-up is. The largest shift was with regard to confidence. While 29 and 30 per cent perceived themselves as confident in the first two waves, this figure fell to 24 per cent in the last wave. Despite this and other minor changes, the Helsana Emotions Study shows that even in turbulent times, like the first half of 2022, the emotional well-being of the population continues to reproduce these same feelings rankings over several months. In all three survey waves, the number of negatively-associated emotions was higher among

female respondents than it was among male respondents. When it came to positive emotions, there were less differences between the genders. However, it is striking that, in all three waves, men perceived themselves as relaxed significantly more frequently than women and that the emotional mindset among men changed more dramatically from one survey time to another.

Emotions from the start of April to the start of July – by age (Fig. 3)

“How do you generally feel these days?”



Changing conditions have had barely any impact on the emotions of older age groups.

The differences between the genders were surpassed by those between the young and the old. Young adults experienced significantly more negative emotions than their older counterparts. At the same time, the emotional mindset among young adults in the research period developed more dynamically than that of the older age groups, who are clearly less influenced by changing external conditions.

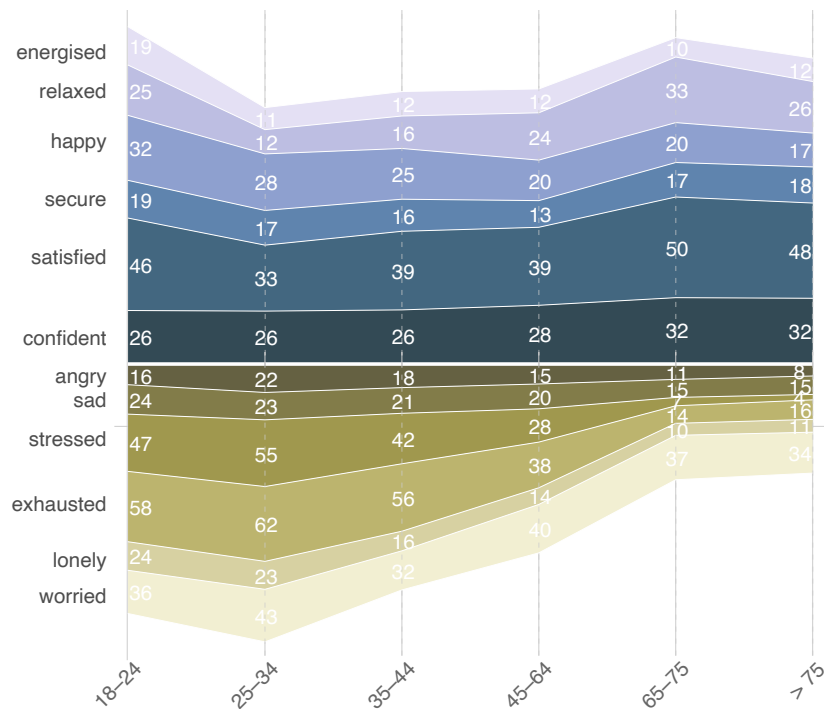
2.2. AN EXHAUSTED GENERATION

How frequent and how common the emotions included in the research were felt depended heavily on the age of the respondents. Here, the positive and negative emotions differed with increasing age. As far as positive emotions are concerned, a somewhat weakly defined U-shaped progression emerges – both young adults and people at retirement age felt positive emotions particularly frequently. Different variations of positive emotions emerged among the young and old : 18 to 24 year-olds frequently report being happy and satisfied, while the over-64s often feel relaxed and satisfied (see Fig. 4). In the taxing mid-life years, characterised by the familiar challenge of balancing job and family, a slight dip emerges; this is especially the case for satisfaction and relaxation, which are not felt as frequently. However, the U-shaped progression of the emotional mood curve is only present for positive emotions. On the other hand, negative emotions became less and less frequent with increasing age. Around 60 per cent of young adults below the age of 35 feel exhausted

and more than half feel stressed. In the over-64s category, this figure is only about 10 and 15 per cent. Negative emotions play an ever-diminishing role in the individual's own mood with increasing age.

Positive and negative emotions by age (Fig. 4)

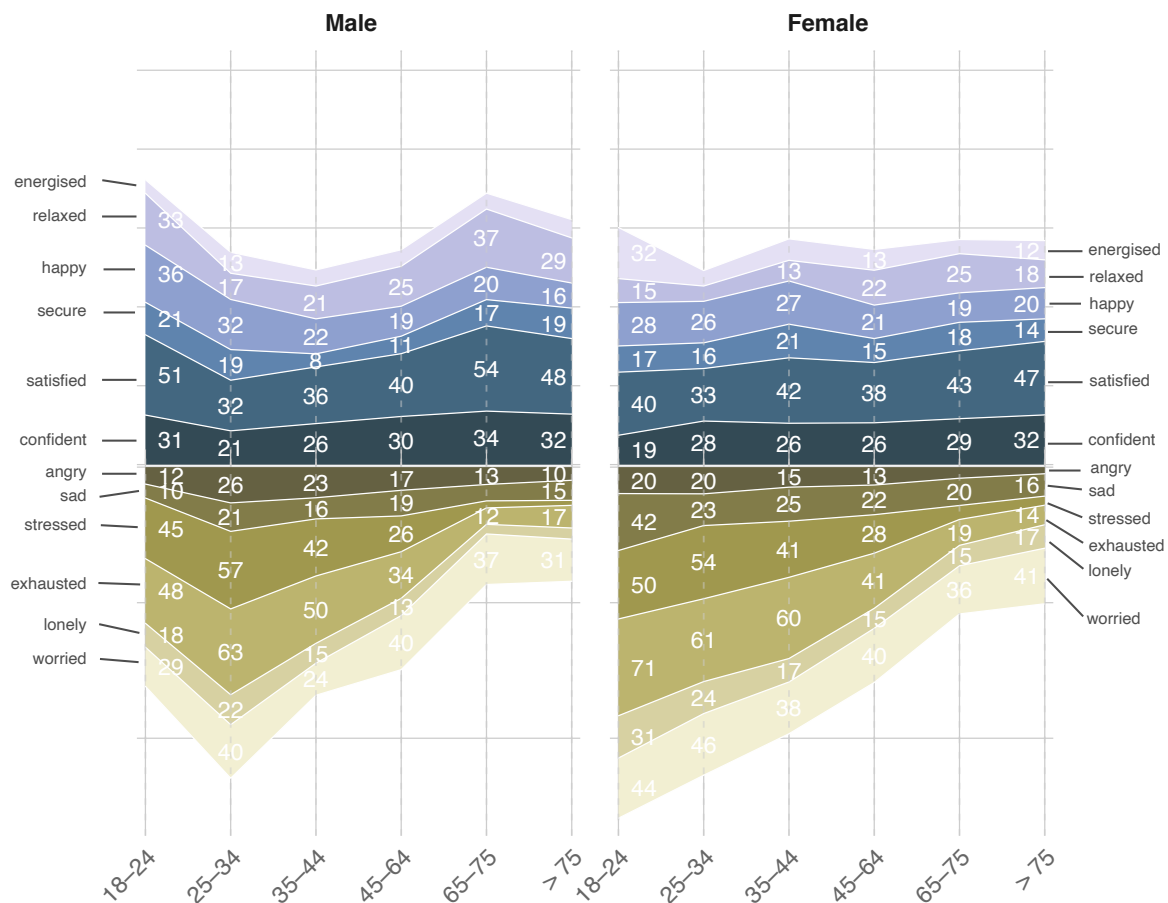
"How do you generally feel these days?"



Young adults cover the broadest emotional spectrum – both in terms of positive and negative emotions. Negative emotions reduce with age, with one exception : young and old experience worry just as often as one another. On the other hand, there is one positive emotion that becomes increasingly rare as life progresses : happiness.

Positive and negative emotions by age and gender (Fig. 5)

‘How do you generally feel these days?’



The emotional age profile of men and women is not congruent. The U-shaped progression for positive emotions exists primarily among men. At the same time, it is young women between the ages of 18 and 24 in particular whose emotional well-being is heavily impacted by negative moods. For instance, 71 per cent of them report being exhausted. Half of them feel stressed and 42 per cent are sad (Fig. 5). Young women in Switzerland do not experience positive emotions any less frequently than their older counterparts, but they are impacted by negative emotions considerably more frequently. The feeling of being exhausted and stressed is particularly pronounced. The study points to-

wards a state of collective exhaustion among young people in Switzerland, young women in particular. The widespread perception that people in the middle stage of life in particular are stressed and exhausted due to multiple factors does not hold up here. Today's generation of young adults (Gen Y/Z) is exhausted and stressed, and that's before reaching the challenging middle stage of life. And it's impossible to say what this means for the near future, when Millennials and Post-Millennials start a family.

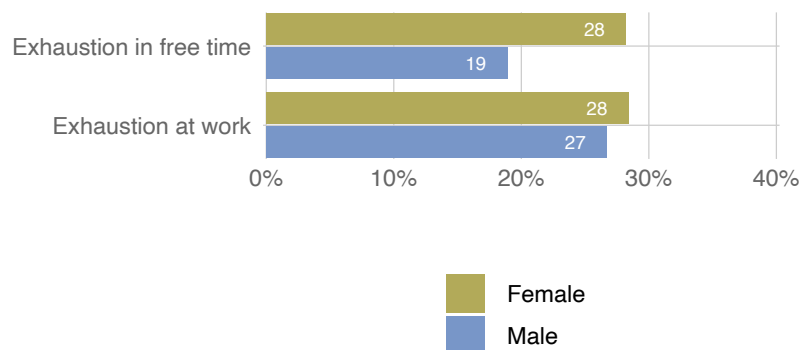
Today's generation of young adults (Gen Y/Z) are exhausted and stressed, and that's before reaching the challenging middle stage of life.

Figure 6 shows that women feel exhausted just as frequently in their free time as they do at work. Men, on the other hand, felt less exhausted during their free time. The double burden of paid work and housework, which still affects women more strongly, seems to be playing a role in this. Another potential explanation for this is that women generally feel a stronger sense of responsibility and, as such, take their feelings of exhaustion from work home with them. Swiss sociologist Franziska Schutzbach also argues that women generally feel exposed to higher social expectations, leaving them under pressure to perform in their free time too¹.

¹see Franziska Schutzbach (2021) : Die Erschöpfung der Frauen. Wider die weibliche Verfügbarkeit, Droemer Knaur Verlag

Exhaustion during free time and at work – by gender (Fig. 6)

“How do you generally feel in your free time?” “How do you generally feel at work?”

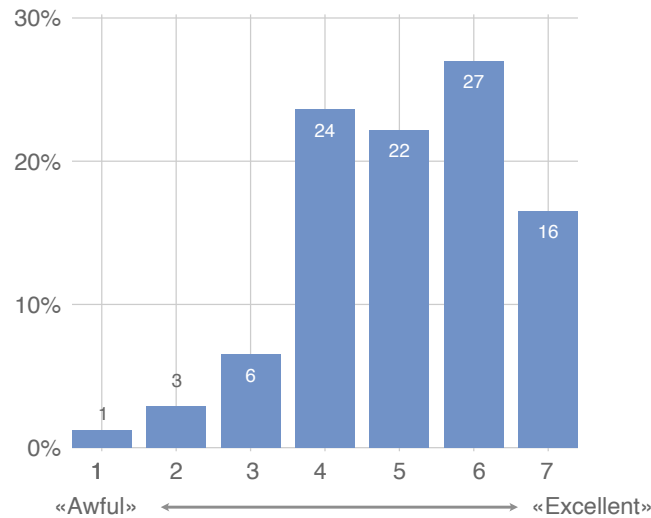


2.3. WHAT “SO-SO” REALLY MEANS

The direct question as to subjective well-being is often used to assess the emotional mood of survey participants. “How do you feel right now?” This question was asked in the three survey waves, with a scale ranging from “Very bad” (1) to “Very good” (7). 65 per cent answered this question with a score of between 5 and 7. An overwhelming majority therefore described how they were feeling as ranging from quite good to very good. By contrast, only 10 per cent reported a score of between 1 and 3. This means that only very few classed how they were feeling as ranging from quite bad to very bad.

Mood among the Swiss when asked “How are you?” (Fig. 7)

“How do you feel right now?”

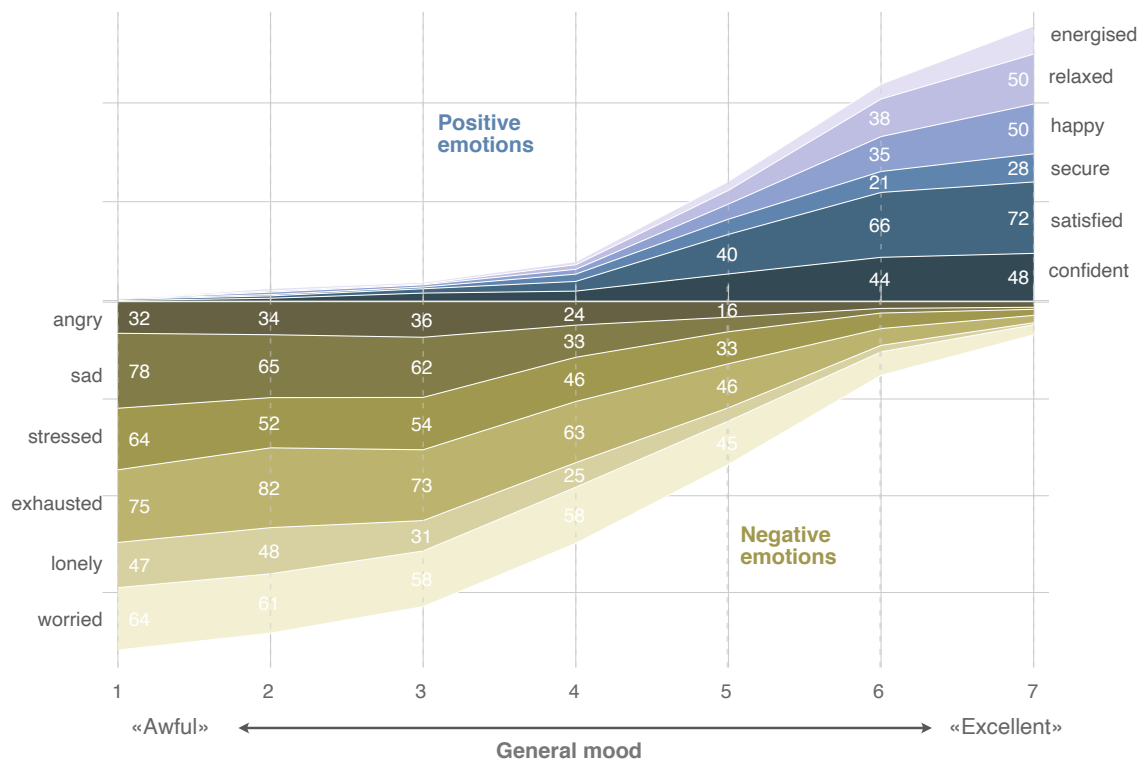


Some interesting insights emerged when comparing general mood with perceived emotions. Figure 8 demonstrates that the frequency of positively and negatively perceived emotions is directly correlated to the general mood/frame of mind. People who say that they are doing very well are frequently satisfied, but are also considerably more relaxed and upbeat than all of the others. People who report feeling very bad are frequently sad, exhausted, stressed, lonely and worried.

What is striking, however, is that the people who classed themselves in the middle of the scale between very good and very bad did not have an even split of positive and negative emotions, but tended primarily towards negative emotions. They are often exhausted, worried and stressed. By contrast, they rarely experienced positive emotions at all. This would suggest that “average” actually means “bad” or at least “not good”.

Emotions felt according to mood (Fig. 8)

“How do you generally feel these days?” “How do you feel right now?”



Those who classed themselves in the middle of the scale between very good and very bad felt almost exclusively negative emotions.

Only in the two top answer categories on the scale of 1 to 7 did the respondents report predominantly positive emotions. This clearly illustrates that the direct question “How are you?” is often answered in code. Responses like “not bad”, “it is what it is”, “so-so” or “okay”, etc. suggest emotional states that, in actual fact, are “not good” or even “bad”. To what extent this type of answering behaviour is associated with a Swiss culture of being reserved cannot be assessed without comparing it to other countries. Nonetheless, it is crucial that responses to general “How-are-you” questions are translated. By asking about specific emotions people are feeling, we can gain a clearer picture of the emotional state of the individual.

How we deal with emotions

The global situation, marred by the war in Ukraine, is causing worry among the majority of Swiss people. But there are other factors that have a crucial impact on emotional well-being. This chapter looks at the factors that are key when it comes to negative or positive emotions. It goes into the tremendous importance of an actively cultivated social life and the positive power of hugs. It also illustrates the resources that can be used to cope with stressful times.

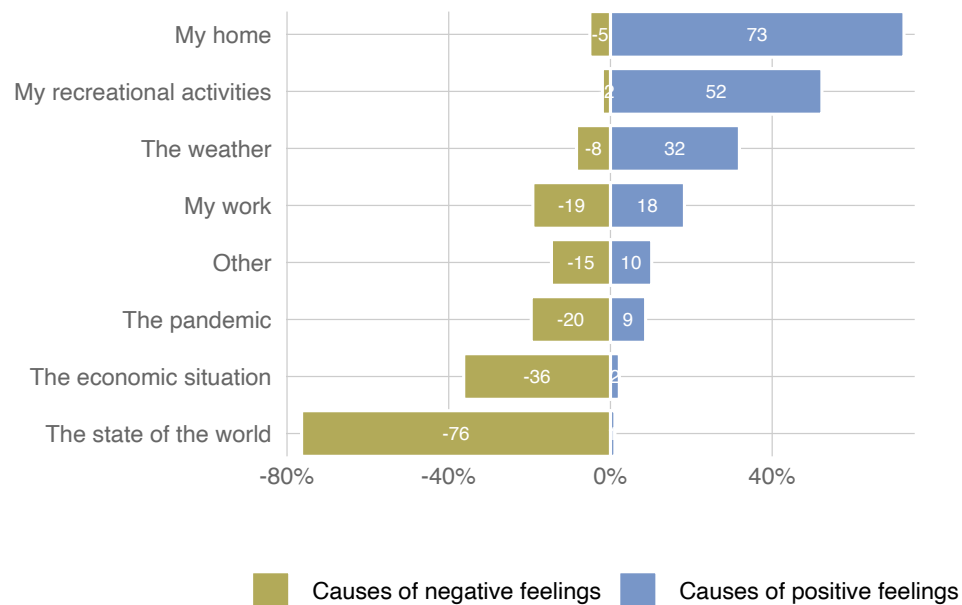
3.1. WHAT WEIGHS DOWN ON THOSE FEELING SAD AND EXHAUSTED

The Swiss population experienced a broad spectrum of positive and negative emotions in the period from the end of March to the start of July 2022. The respondents found these emotions to be shaped equally by their own private environment and social environment. Here, it is noted that the personal environment triggers primarily positive feelings, while the social environment triggers mainly negative feelings. Almost three quarters reported their home as currently triggering positive feelings and slightly more than half feel positive feelings from their leisure activities. On the other hand, the state of the world was by far the most frequently reported (76%) trigger of negative feelings in the three survey waves from April to July 2022. The global situation – mar-

red by the war in Ukraine – seems to be weighing down on the mood of the population. 36 per cent reported the state of the economy as having a negative impact on how they currently feel. As is yet to be shown, while the global situation is indeed a cause for concern, it seems to be of only secondary importance to emotional well-being.

Causes of positive and negative feelings (Fig. 9)

“What triggers the most positive feelings for you at the moment?”
 “What triggers the most negative feelings for you at the moment?”



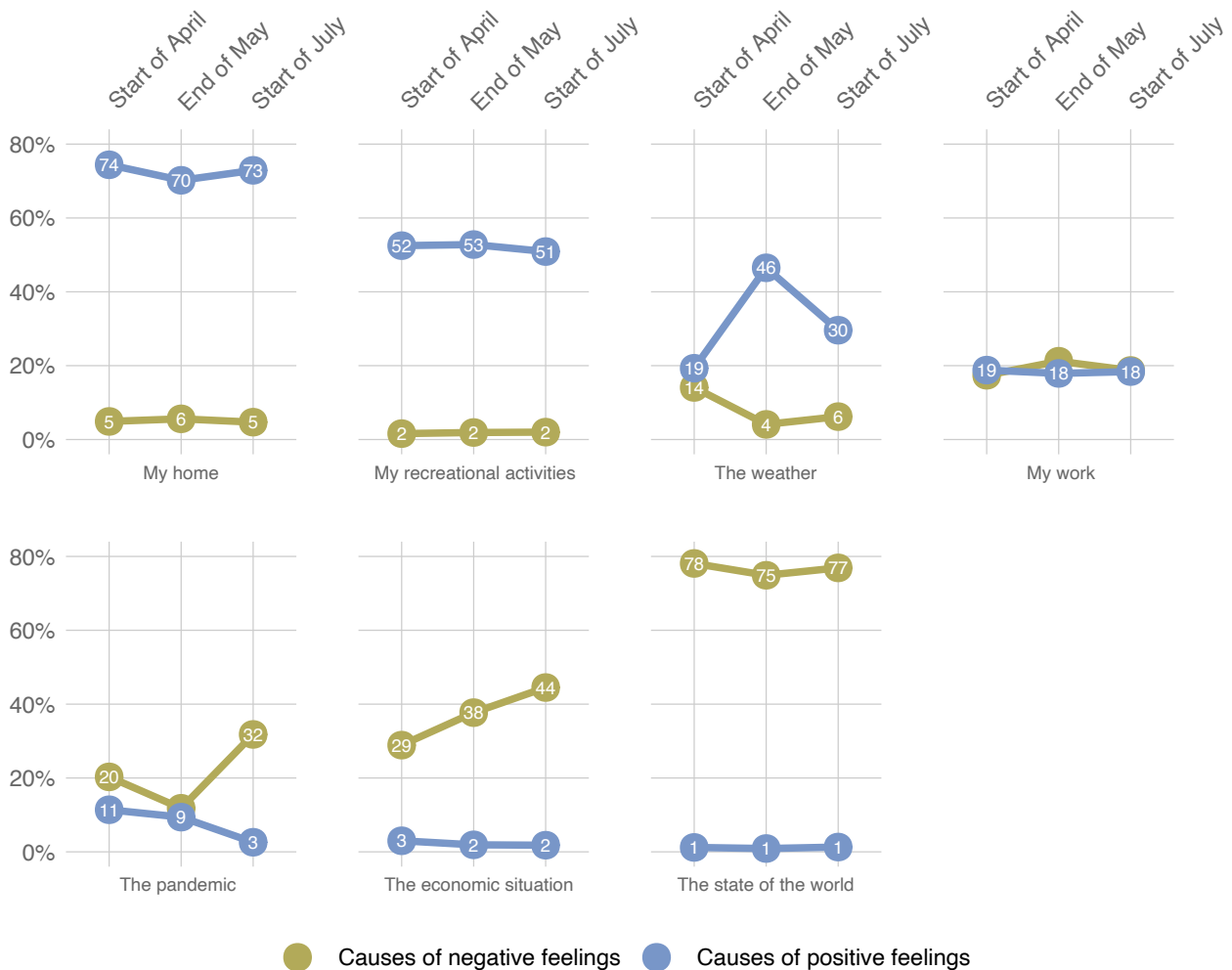
Only one fifth of the population still perceived the course of the pandemic as an emotional stressor during the period of this study. While the private sphere is regarded primarily as a source of positive emotions, many see the wider impersonal context as a source of negative emotions. Work was the only area mentioned as a trigger of both negative and positive emotions alike.

Home and leisure activities were rates equally positively across the three survey waves. The global situation was rated equally negative. Unsurprisingly, the weather was rated far less consistently. It had a positive effect on mood in May in particular. The good weather at the start of July was obviously perceived as being less stimulating than that of May – the spring awakening that heralded the end of the cold time of year. Changed external

conditions were reflected in an increasingly negative perception of the economic situation and the pandemic on the current emotional state.

Causes of positive and negative feelings over time (Fig. 10)

“What triggers the most positive feelings for you at the moment?” “What triggers the most negative feelings for you at the moment?”



In the first half of 2022, by far and away the greatest trigger of negative feelings stated was the state of the world. Nonetheless, the global situation triggered by the war in Ukraine is not the source of a general emotional crisis in Switzerland. As shown in Figure 11, 80 per cent of respondents with a generally happy emotional state reported that the state of the world triggers negative feelings for them. Of those respondents that felt sad, just 68 per cent said that the global situation was having a negative impact on

their feelings. The current state of the world weighs heavily on most people – particular those who generally feel positive emotions. On the other hand, those who describe their mood as sad report work and the course of the pandemic as having a negative impact on their emotional state more than those who describe their mood as happy. Those describing their mood as sad report experiencing fewer positive feelings at home and in their leisure time.

Causes of positive and negative feelings in happy people and sad people (Fig. 11)

“What triggers the most positive feelings for you at the moment?” “What triggers the most negative feelings for you at the moment?” “How do you generally feel these days?”

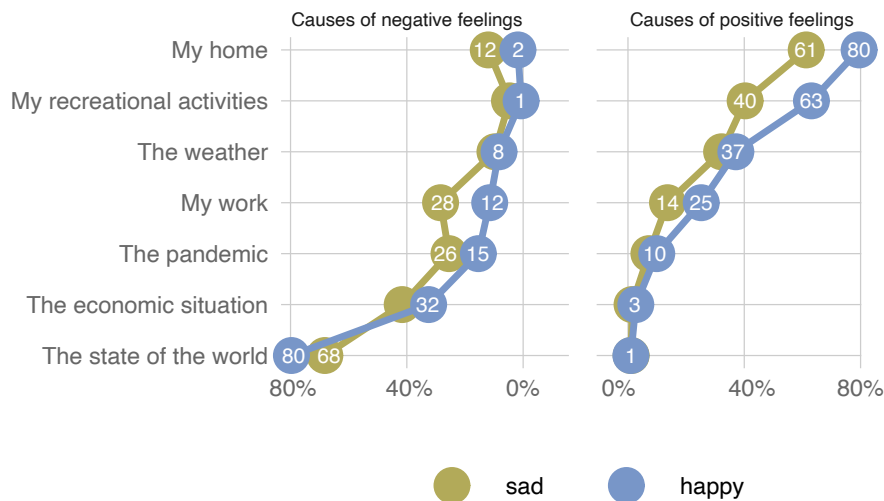
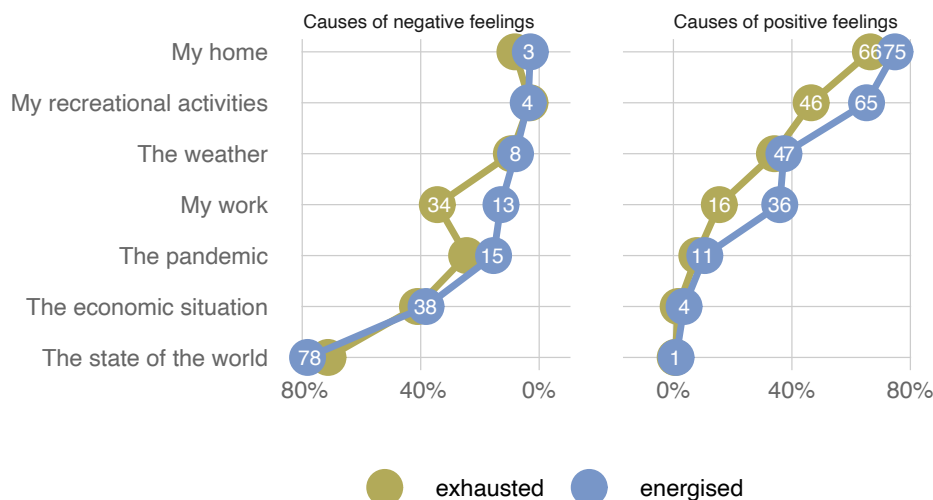


Figure 12 shows which triggers that energetic or exhausted people regarded as being important. The biggest difference here was with regard to work. Those who described themselves as energetic tended to feel more positive emotions at work, whereas those who were exhausted associated work more with negative emotions. A difference was also noted with regard to leisure activities, which clearly have a positive impact on emotional energy levels.

Causes of positive and negative feelings in energetic people and exhausted people (Fig. 12)

“What triggers the most positive emotions for you at the moment?” “What triggers the most negative feelings for you at the moment?” “How do you generally feel these days?”



While the global situation is indeed a cause for concern, it seems to be of only secondary importance to emotional well-being.

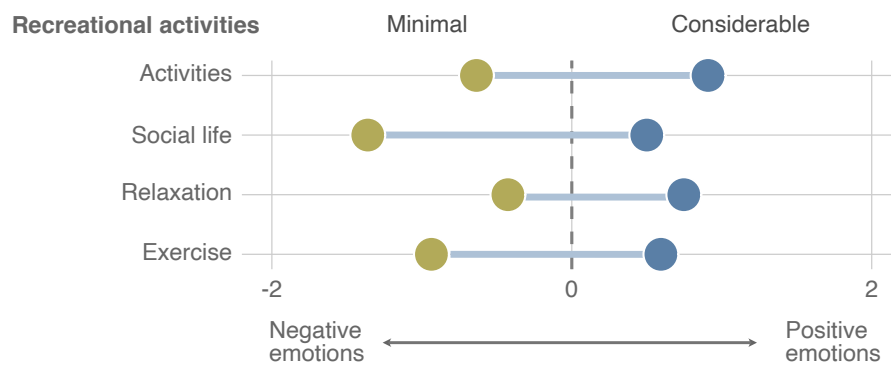
3.2. THE POWER OF STAYING ACTIVE AND PHYSICAL CLOSENESS

Those who are active in their leisure time strengthen their positive emotions. Those who engage in activities on a regular basis, maintain an intensive social life and exercise and/or actively relax tend to have more positive emotions than those who ne-

glect these areas. As Figure 13 shows, the respective emotions score² of active individuals falls within the positive range, while those of a more passive nature falls within the negative range. This means that those who lead a more active lifestyle feel primarily positive emotions, and those with a more passive lifestyle generally feel negative emotions. Those with the most positive emotions were those who did the most in their spare time. The most negative emotions were experienced by those who had no active social life. Generally speaking, the intensity of an individual's social life made the greatest difference.

Leisure activities and emotional state (emotions score) (Fig. 13)

"How much time have you dedicated to the following areas in the last month?" "How do you generally feel these days?"



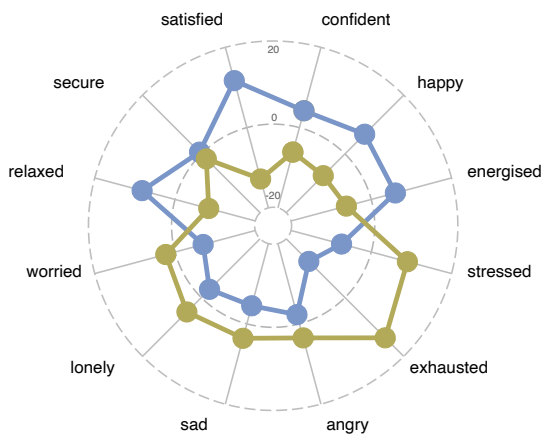
The two web profiles in Figure14 show which emotions selected group categories feel frequently and which they feel rarely. From this, it is evident that respondents who are active in their leisure time feel significantly less stressed and are exhausted less frequently than those who do little exercise. Actively maintaining social relationships has a positive impact on emotional well-being in all respects. This is illustrated in the second web profile in Figure14.

²The emotions score explained : each individual receives a plus point for each positive emotion mentioned, and a minus point for each negative emotion mentioned. Anyone feeling an equal amount of positive and negative emotions receives a score of zero. Any who feels four positive emotions and one negative emotion receives an emotions score of three.

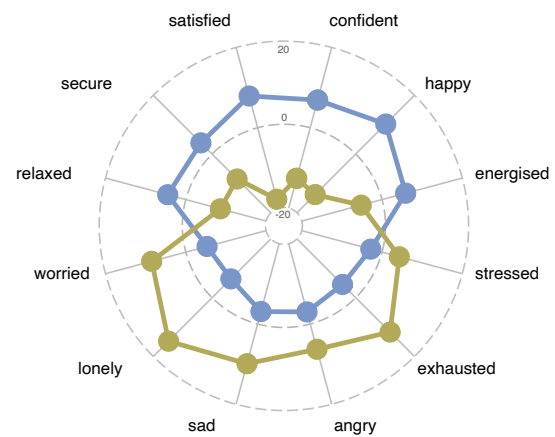
Emotional state as measured by exercise and social life (Fig. 14)

"How much time have you dedicated to the following areas in the last month?" "How do you generally feel these days?"

Exercise



Social life



—●— Considerable
—●— Minimal

Maintaining social relationships has a positive impact on emotional well-being in all respects.

Emotional well-being is crucially dependent on the time individuals dedicate, or can dedicate, to their own social life. How individuals feel is also associated with extent of physical closeness in interpersonal relationships. Figure 15 shows that respondents who received a warm hug on the same day reported positive emotions more frequently. They are significantly more satisfied and upbeat than respondents whose last warm hug was more than a month prior.

Emotions by time of last hug (Fig. 15)

“When was the last time you experienced a warm hug?”

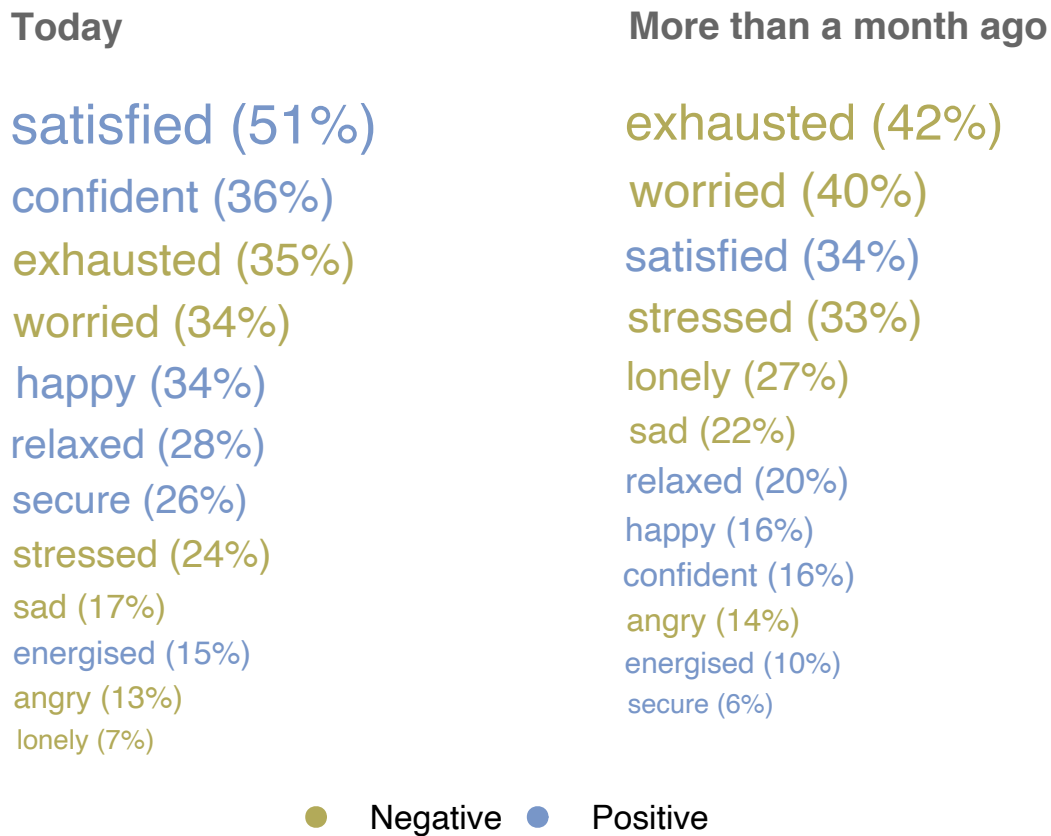


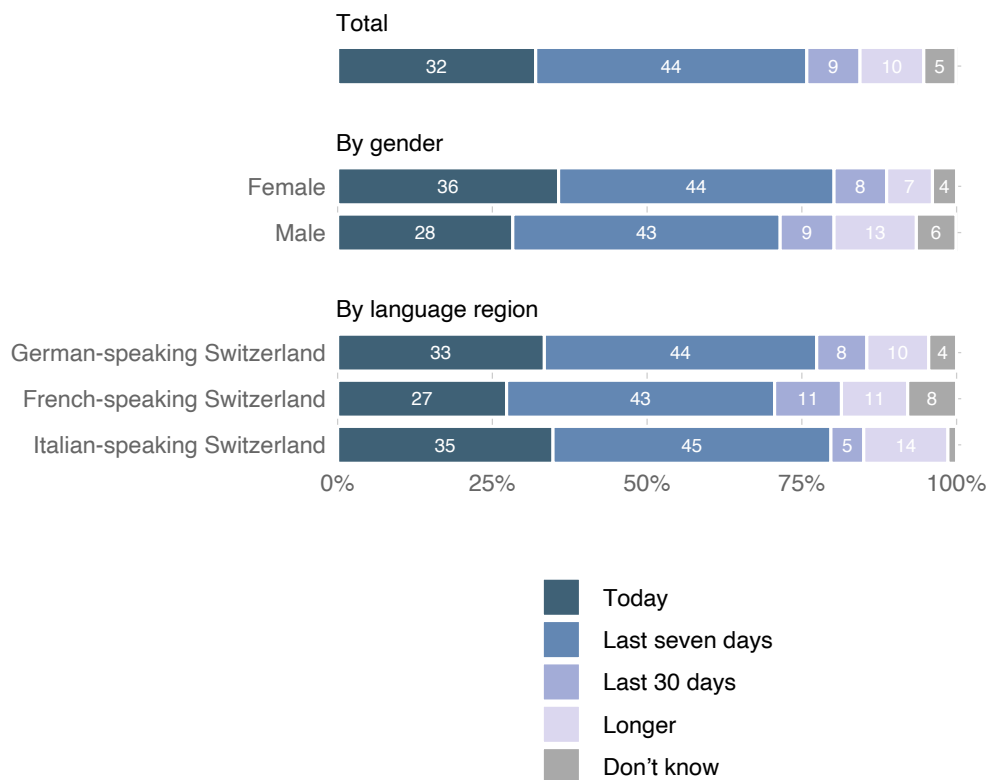
Figure 16 shows that roughly a third of the respondents had received a warm hug from someone that day³ and just ten per cent reported their last hug as having occurred more than a month prior. 44 per cent had enjoyed a warm hug at the least the week before the survey. What is striking is that, in French-speaking Switzerland, the percentage of those who experienced a warm hug that same day is slightly less, and the percentage of those who could not remember is greater. Hugs appear to be less common in French-speaking Switzerland.

³ answer option “Today”

Those who receive more hugs are more satisfied and more upbeat.

When you last experienced a warm hug – by social demographics (Fig. 16)

“When was the last time you experienced a warm hug?”

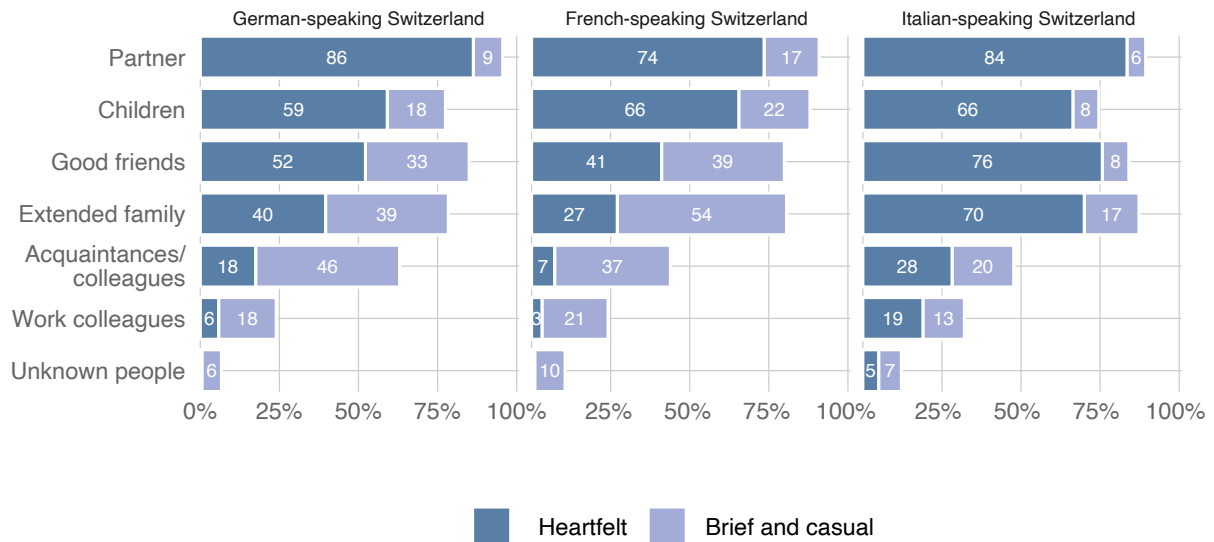


Another interesting insight was who one hugs and how tightly. In Italian-speaking Switzerland, respondents reported more warm hugs between good friends and extended family but also acquaintances, work colleagues and even strangers than in both of the other language regions (Fig. 17). In French-speaking Switzerland, warm hugs are exchanged within circles somewhat less frequently – with the exception of children, who are embraced just as often as in Italian-speaking Switzerland. When

it comes to the intensity of hugs, German-speaking Switzerland is somewhere in the middle between French-speaking and Italian-speaking Switzerland. Children here receive warm hugs less often, but partners more often.

How you hug different people – by language region (Fig. 17)

“How do you generally hug the following people?”



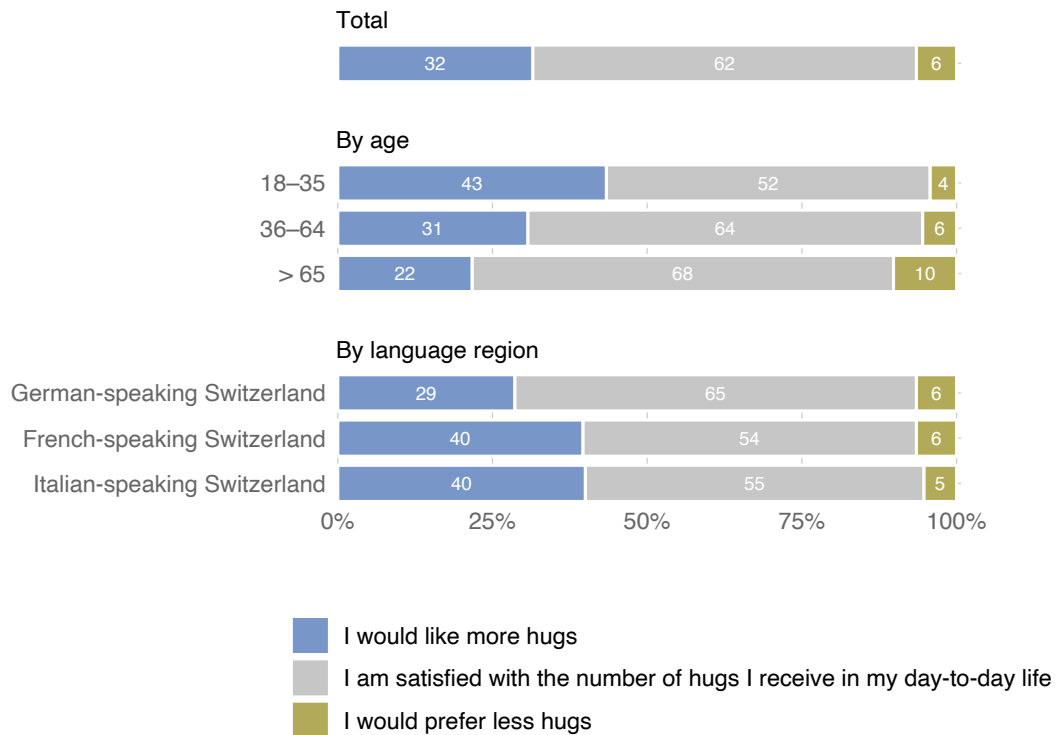
Warm hugs are more common in Italian-speaking Switzerland.

So 76 per cent experienced a warm hug at least within the week prior (Fig. 16). A third of the population (32%) would like more hugs on a day-to-day basis, as indicated by Figure 18. Around 60 per cent are satisfied and only a very small percentage (6%) thought they received too many hugs. Younger people, in particular, expressed a desire for more hugs, but this desire wanes with increasing age. German-speaking Swiss people

were less likely to feel the desire for more hugs than respondents from French-speaking and Italian-speaking Switzerland. Italian-speaking Switzerland hugs as often as German-speaking Switzerland (Fig. 16), but still desires more physical closeness.

Desire for more hugs – by age and language region (Fig. 18)

“Generally speaking, would you prefer more or less hugs?”



Younger people, in particular, would like more hugs.

Among those who desired more hugs, friends and partners were at the top of the list. Almost two-thirds of respondents (63%) stated that they would like to hug good friends more often. It seems the Swiss would prefer more physical closeness in their friendships. But a lack of physical intimacy seems to exist among

couples too : 58 per cent stated that they would like to hug their partner more frequently. A fifth of the respondents also expressed a desire to hug themselves more – in fact, nothing is stopping them from doing so!

Who you would like to hug more? (Fig. 19)

“Who would you like to hug more often?”

Good friends (63%)

Partner (58%)

Extended family (32%)

Children (32%)

Myself (22%)

Acquaintances/colleagues (20%)

Work colleagues (8%)

Unknown people (on the street, on public transport, when leaving) (3%)

Other (2%)

So, why aren't people hugging more when the desire is there? Half of those would like to hug more do not know whether this feeling is reciprocated. 30 per cent would not dare and 21 per cent do not want to appear too emotional. Inhibitions and cautiousness are therefore at the root of the lack of hugs. 18 per cent already know that their counterpart does not want this. Only a fifth stated that they simply forget about it in everyday life.

Reasons for more hugs (Fig. 20)

“What stops you from hugging other people more frequently?”

I do not know if the feeling is reciprocated (51%)

I dare not (30%)

I don't want to appear too emotional (21%)

It has been forgotten in everyday life (21%)

My counterpart does not want me to (18%)

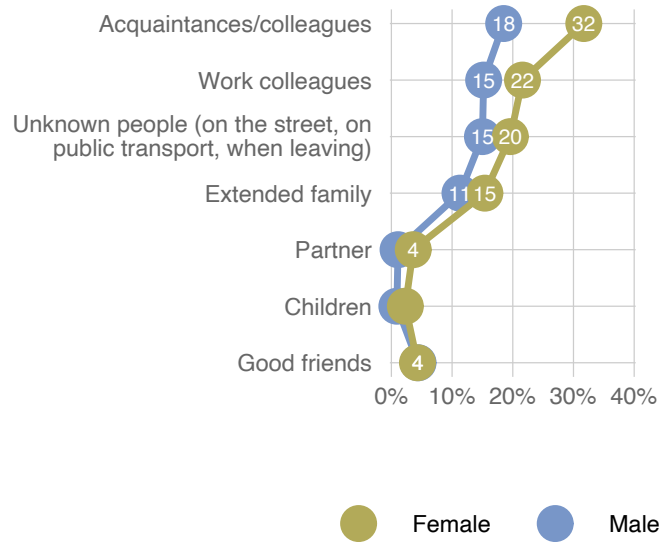
Don't know (13%)

Other (10%)

The great uncertainty with regard to hugging is presumably associated, at least to a certain extent, with the culture of Swiss reservedness. But this is not wholly unjustified – half of all respondents reported having experienced a hug that was uncomfortable at one time or another (Fig. 21). This was most likely to be experienced with acquaintances, colleagues or strangers. Women generally reported unpleasant experiences like this more often than the men. The gender difference was most prominent among acquaintances and colleagues.

From whom hugs can be uncomfortable – by gender (Fig. 21)

“Have you ever found a hug to be uncomfortable? If so, from whom?”

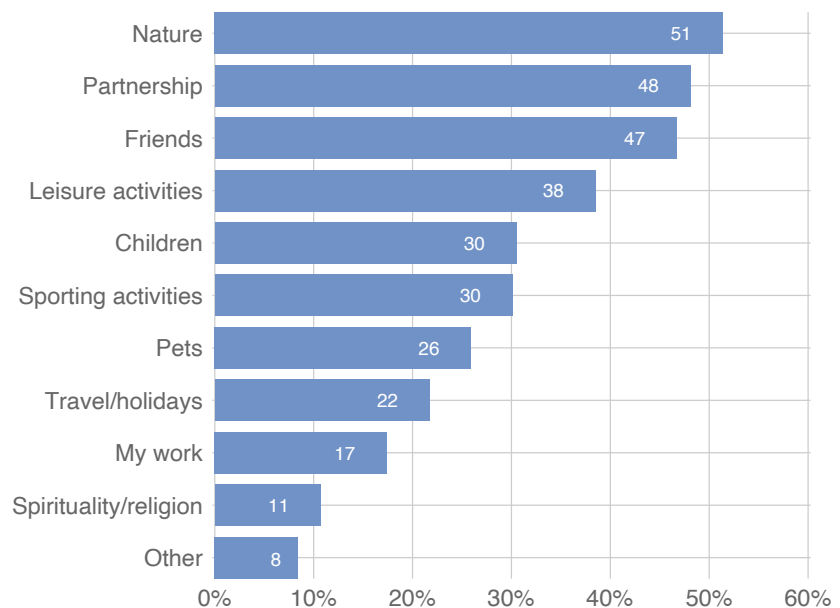


3.3. RESOURCES AND STRATEGIES

Triggers of positive feelings are often things that, if they were not present, would not be easy to come by. In addition, most people have resources at their disposal that would allow them to actively generate positive feelings themselves. Nature and human relationships are at the front line here : nature, partnership and friendships are the three most common resources.

Resources of the Swiss (Fig. 22)

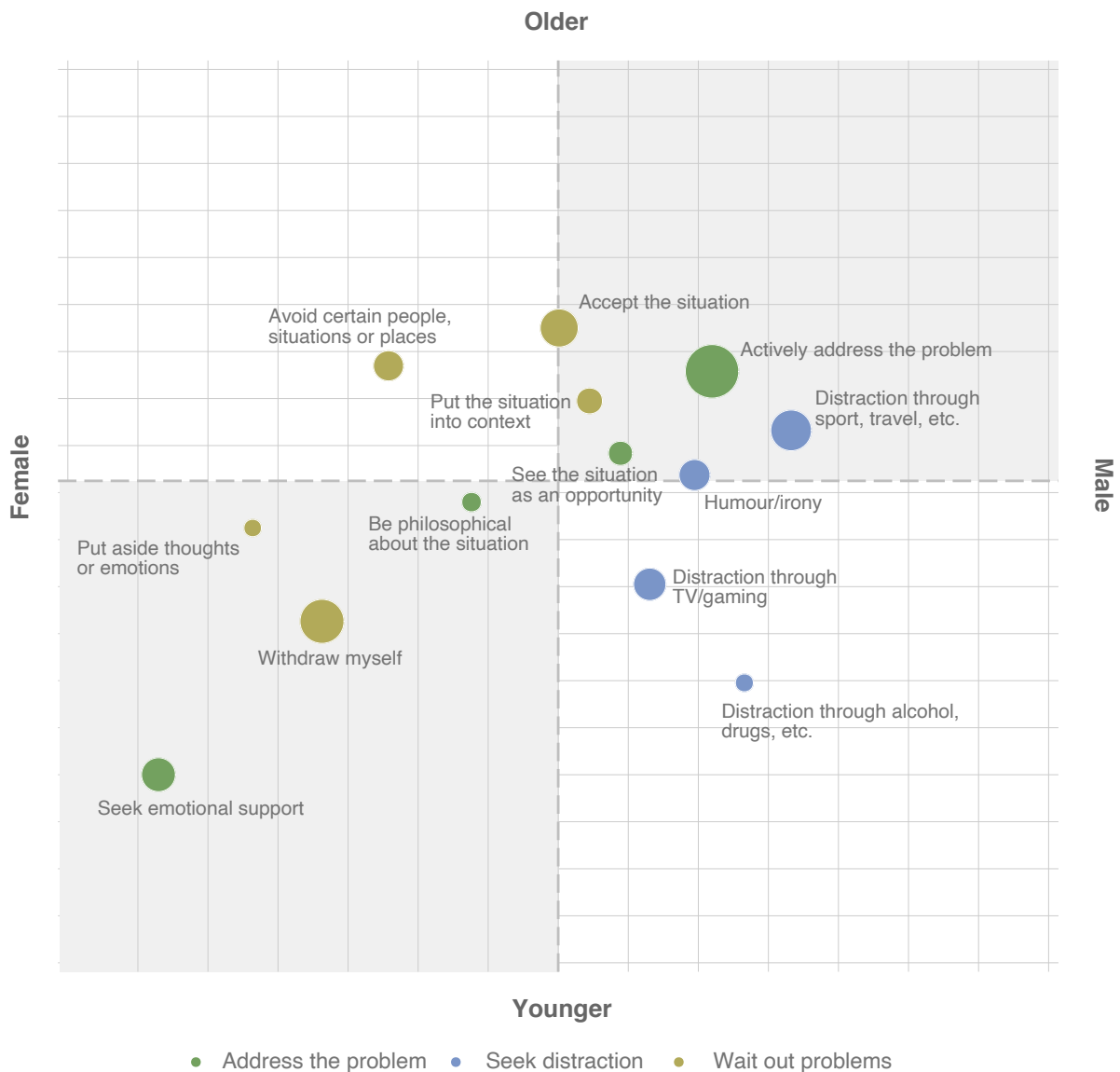
“What do you take the most pleasure in at the moment?”



People also have to deal with the triggers of negative emotions at first. So, in difficult times, many resort to coping strategies to head these off. Figure 23 shows which strategies are used most frequently in stressful times. The demographic map shows that men are generally more likely to seek distraction than women in stressful times (blue circles). Younger men are typically more likely to seek out unfavourable distraction strategies such as alcohol, drugs, TV and gaming. On the whole, however, these unfavourable strategies are used rather infrequently (the smaller the circle, the less frequently the strategy was mentioned). The older respondents were, the more likely they were to resort to distraction strategies that are generally less problematic. They try to view the problem with humour and irony, or distract themselves with sports and travel.

The most frequently used coping strategies for stress – by age and gender (Fig. 23)

“And which of these coping strategies do you use most frequently when you feel very stressed?”



Women are more likely to ride a problem out (ochre-coloured circles). Young women are more likely to withdraw, or put their thoughts or emotions aside. Older women tend to avoid people, situations or places associated with stress. But while putting a situation into perspective or simply accepting it to fall under this category, these strategies are used equally often by men and women (the closer the circle to the vertical line, the more gender-neutral the strategy). In addition to distractions and riding it out,

there is also the option of actively addressing a situation (green circles). Two favourites emerged here – regardless of gender and age : young women were especially likely to seek emotional support during stressful times, while older men were more likely to actively address the underlying problem. This strategy was the one most commonly adopted among the respondents.

The most frequently used coping strategies for stress – by state of mind (Fig. 24)

“And which of these coping strategies do you use most frequently when you are very stressed?” “How do you feel right now?”

Feeling good

Actively address the problem (23%)

Distraction through sport, travel, etc. (14%)

Accept the situation (11%)

Withdraw myself (10%)

Humour/irony (8%)

Feeling bad

Withdraw myself (35%)

Distraction through alcohol, drugs, etc. (11%)

Actively address the problem (8%)

Seek emotional support (8%)

Be philosophical about the situation (fate, chance, a higher power, etc.) (8%)

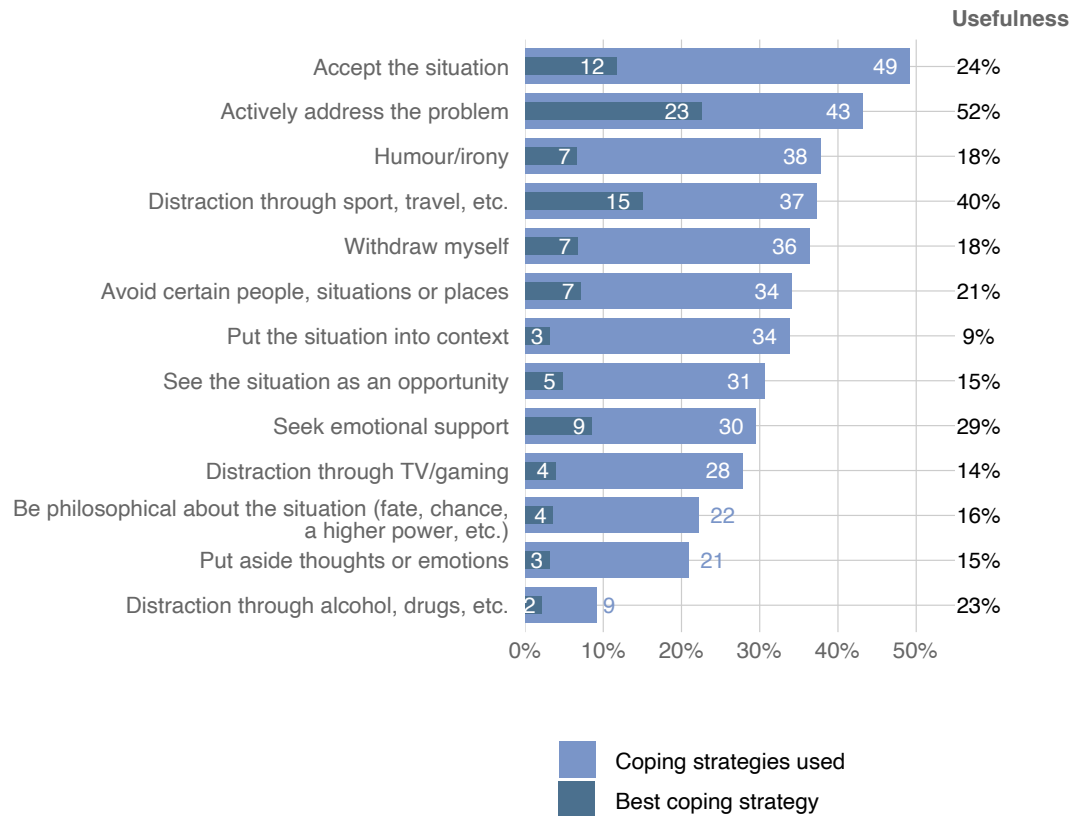
The strategies adopted by individuals also depended on the individual's pre-existing state of mind. Figure 24 shows which strategies were used by respondents in a good emotional state used

and those used by those who were not faring as well.⁴ If an individual is in a generally positive state of mind, they will tend to have the energy to actively address the problem. As such, it is the most popular strategy among respondents in a good state of mind. In second place was the typically more favourable distraction of sports and travel. Among respondents who were not in such a good frame of mind, the most common strategy was withdrawal, followed by the unfavourable distractions of alcohol and drugs. These strategies and a person's well-being probably influence each other mutually. Those who are in a poor state of mind from the outset are less likely to have the energy for active strategies and, conversely, like a vicious cycle, coping strategies such as withdrawal are likely to have a negative impact on well-being.

⁴“Feeling bad” : answer categories 1–3 to the question “How do you feel right now?”.
“Feeling good” : answer categories 6 and 7.

Most common and useful coping strategies for stress (Fig. 25)

“Think back to a time where you had a lot of stress, e.g. as a result of obligations or time pressure. What ways have you found of dealing with stress?” “And which of these coping strategies has proven most effective so far when you have had a lot of stress to deal with?”



But which strategy is truly helpful in the eyes of the respondents? Most respondents found it helpful to actively address the underlying problem (Fig. 25). 43 per cent of respondents have already adopted this strategy at some point. More than half (52%) found this strategy to be the most helpful. Distraction through sports and travel, and seeking emotional support also feature among the more helpful strategies, even if these – with usefulness rates of 40 and 29 per cent respectively – are not quite as helpful as actively addressing the problem. Only a few found it useful to put the situation into perspective (9%) or to try and make sense of it (16%). Personal experience shows that addressing emotions helps.

Data collection and method

4.1. DATA COLLECTION AND RANDOM SAMPLING

Data was collected in three survey waves : the first survey wave took place between 28 March and 2 April, the second between 17 May and 26 May, and the third between 27 June and 3 July. In the second survey wave, the data collected was expanded to include data on hugging and coping strategies. The survey population was made up of the residential population (those integrated from a linguistic point of view) of German-speaking Switzerland, French-speaking Switzerland and Italian-speaking Switzerland, above the age of 18. The survey took place online. The participants were recruited via the web portals of Ringier and Helsana's social media channels, but also via Sotomo online panels. After sorting and reviewing the data, the responses of 5,554 were able to be used for the analysis. The responses of 2,017 people from the second survey wave were able to be used for the analysis focusing on hugging and coping strategies.

4.2. REPRESENTATIVE WEIGHTING

Since the participants in the survey recruited themselves (opt-in), the composition of the random sample is not representative of the survey population. The distortions in the random sample are countered using a statistical weighting procedure. Weighting criteria included gender, age and education as well as the type of household and relationship status. The marginal distributions of these attributes were considered separately for each of the Swiss language regions. This approach guarantees a high socio-demographic representativeness of the random sample. For this overall random sample, the 95 per cent confidence interval (for 50 per cent) is ± 1.3 percentage points. For the data used for hugging and coping strategies, the 95 per cent confidence interval (for 50 per cent) is ± 2.2 percentage points.



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