

## Management summary

The corona crisis is an exceptional situation in which established routines and patterns of information and communication behaviour are interrupted or called into question. This was particularly the case in the first phase of the lockdown. This study examines the way the Swiss population kept themselves informed and communicated during the first phase of the corona crisis. From 19 to 24 March, 1,005 people (recruited by GfK) were asked to rate various forms of information and communication (editorial media, interpersonal communications, social media) in an online survey. Quota sampling was used to select participants by age and gender (ticked) and the sample can be considered representative of the German-speaking Swiss population aged 15 and over with Internet access. The most important findings regarding information and communication behaviour during the Corona crisis are:

(1) **Relevance:** The German-speaking Swiss considered the information provided by the federal government and Swiss television stations in the corona crisis to be particularly relevant. Interpersonal communication via various channels (face-to-face, SMS/instant messenger, telephony/video telephony) also played a key role. Social media such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram were considered to be of little relevance. Traditional news media play a higher role for older people than for younger people, while the opposite was true for social media. These differences aside, information provided by the Swiss federal government and Swiss television channels were also the most important sources of information for younger people.

(2) **Functions:** The editorial media offerings best fulfil the functions of providing and making sense of information and offer the greatest help in dealing emotionally with the uncertainties associated with the Corona crisis. Compared with the two older age groups (30-59 years, 60-88 years), younger people (16-29 years) were most likely to see dysfunctions in the provision of information and support to process the thoughts and feelings that the corona crisis gave rise to across all forms of communication.

(3) **Scope & tone:** A majority of the German-speaking Swiss felt that the corona crisis was being discussed too much (even at the start of the lockdown). This view was particularly prevalent among younger people. The older the participants, the more appropriate they considered the tone of the editorial media offerings to be. The oldest group, on the other hand, was particularly critical of the way in which the topic was handled in social media, with a fifth perceiving it as having been trivialised.

(4) **Awareness:** At the start of the lockdown, the German-speaking Swiss population considered itself to be well to very well informed about the corona crisis and its significance for them and their everyday lives.

(5) **Trust:** The German-speaking Swiss population had a very high level of trust in Switzerland's public institutions. This included the healthcare system and the FOPH as well as the executive (Federal Council) and the public radio and TV stations. This trust in the system increased slightly with age.

The findings show that Switzerland has a well-functioning communications infrastructure that can reach the general population in times of crisis and keep them informed about the most important measures. They also reveal that the relevant federal institutions and public media services enjoy a high level of trust among the population. To ensure that the population's trust is maintained and to legitimise the scope for action in future crises, it is therefore all the more important that the measures taken by the government and the role of the media are now subjected to critical examination, a process which was to some extent impeded by the pressing need for action during the national crisis.