



# Credit Suisse Youth Barometer

What young people think is  
important in life. A major survey targeting  
Brazil, the US and Switzerland.



1.

**Goals in life and values**

Young people are optimistic about their future.

2.

**Work and finances**

Young Swiss are most satisfied with their work; young Americans are deepest in debt.

3.

**Politics and society**

Confidence in the political system is low in Brazil and high in Switzerland.

4.

**Leisure activities and media**

Using smartphones and meeting friends are major pastimes.

# What young people think

Three countries with different cultures, one target group, fascinating insights: The Credit Suisse Youth Barometer gives us a unique look into the life goals and values of young people in Switzerland, the US and Brazil.

How do they view their future? What are really the important things in life for them? Do they have confidence in their countries' governments? What do they like to spend money on? What do they see as the biggest problems? These are just a few of the questions that the research firm gfs.bern is once again asking three groups, each with about 1,000 young people, this year on behalf of Credit Suisse.

One striking insight common across cultures, whether in Brazil, the US or Switzerland, is that in the face of the biggest economic crisis in generations, young people aged 16 to 25 are optimistic and ready to work. They want their own house or apartment, and yearn to be able to pursue their dreams and explore their talents. They want to work at something that fulfills them. Friends and family are very important to them. Honesty and loyalty are crucial values.

These findings contradict the latest media reports of a supposed “generation without qualities,” a generation that has opportunities no other has had, yet does not know what to do with them. “No plan, no nerve, no bite,”

was a sample headline from the German daily Die Welt.

In Switzerland, of all places, just the opposite is true. In place of a tentative, indecisive Generation Maybe primarily interested in the pursuit of pleasure, one could almost speak here of a hands-on generation with a clear idea of where it is going. A career comes in at the very top of their hierarchy of values – and ultimately represents a means for self-actualization. What they desire most is a balance between leisure time and work.

We summarize the most important and interesting results for you here. If you would like to know more about today's young people, you can find the full study with all questions and answers about the Credit Suisse Youth Barometer at:

[www.credit-suisse.com/youthbarometer](http://www.credit-suisse.com/youthbarometer)

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## The survey

Roughly 1,000 young people ranging between 16 and 25 years of age in Switzerland, the US and Brazil were surveyed for the 2012 Credit Suisse Youth Barometer. The research firm gfs.bern conducted the primarily online survey between March and April 2012. The Credit Suisse Youth Barometer has been conducted every year since 2010.

**Photo left**  
*DIMITRI KARAKOSTAS,*  
*24, CANADA*  
“I took the picture in Glasgow in April. In a city where it is often cloudy, pink stands out. And pink hair against a pink wall – I just couldn't pass it up.”

**Photo, previous page**  
*OLIVIA BEE, 18, US*  
“My boyfriend Liam is break dancing on his roof. That was in my sophomore year in high school, back when we were crazy fools – it was great.”

# 1. Goals in life and values

The findings are a surprise, coming as they do during the greatest economic crisis in many generations: Young people from all three countries have an overwhelmingly positive view of their own future. Those in Brazil are the most optimistic.

While the young respondents in Switzerland and the US put realizing their dreams, having their own house, and maintaining a good work-life balance first, their counterparts in the emerging country of Brazil think more about getting a university education and a career.

The young Swiss surveyed have a blueprint for life that is just slightly more post-materialistic than in Brazil or the US – having a lot of money is comparatively less important. Still, they would like to have an exciting career. Ultimately, friends on whom they can rely are most important to these young people. Values like honesty and loyalty rank high on their scale of values.

What is unusual about these young Swiss is that only a clear minority has the feeling that society and the economy rely on them. Their peers in the US, and especially in Brazil, feel significantly more welcome. This suggests an inner distance that should give pause to Swiss politicians and business leaders.

On another interesting note, the young people in both Switzerland and Brazil turn primarily to their parents when things are not going well either financially or at work. More than half of the young Brazilians surveyed trust in their government to protect them, while not even one-fourth of the Swiss respondents do.

Figure 1.01

## Brazilians most optimistic

“In your opinion, what is the outlook for your own future? At the present time, do you see the future bleakly, optimistically or mixed?”

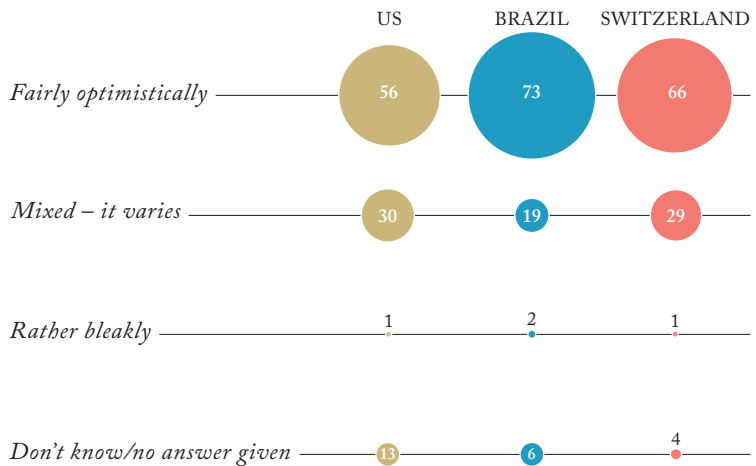


Figure 1.02

## Swiss feel unneeded

“When you think of your life’s plans, how strongly do the following statements reflect your plans for the future?”

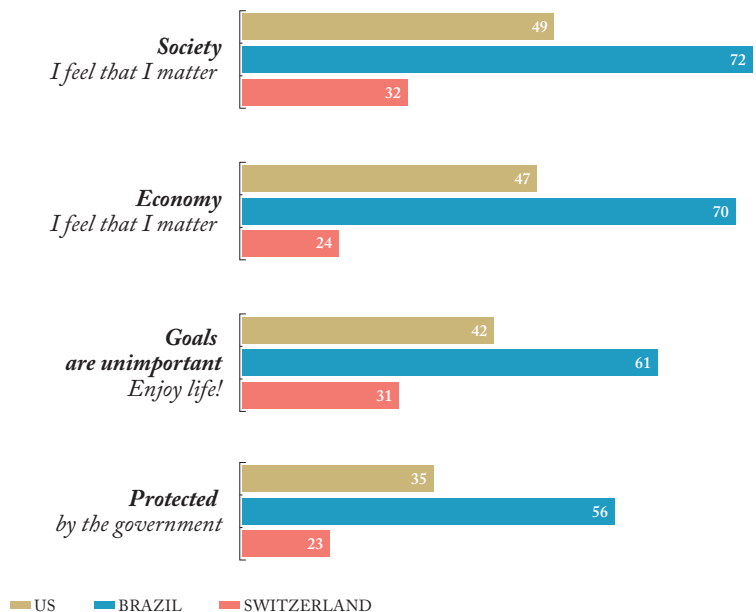


Figure 1.03

### Friends, family and honesty are the most important things in life

“We all have our own attitudes that shape our life and behavior. When you think about what you are striving for in life, how important are the following things to you personally?”

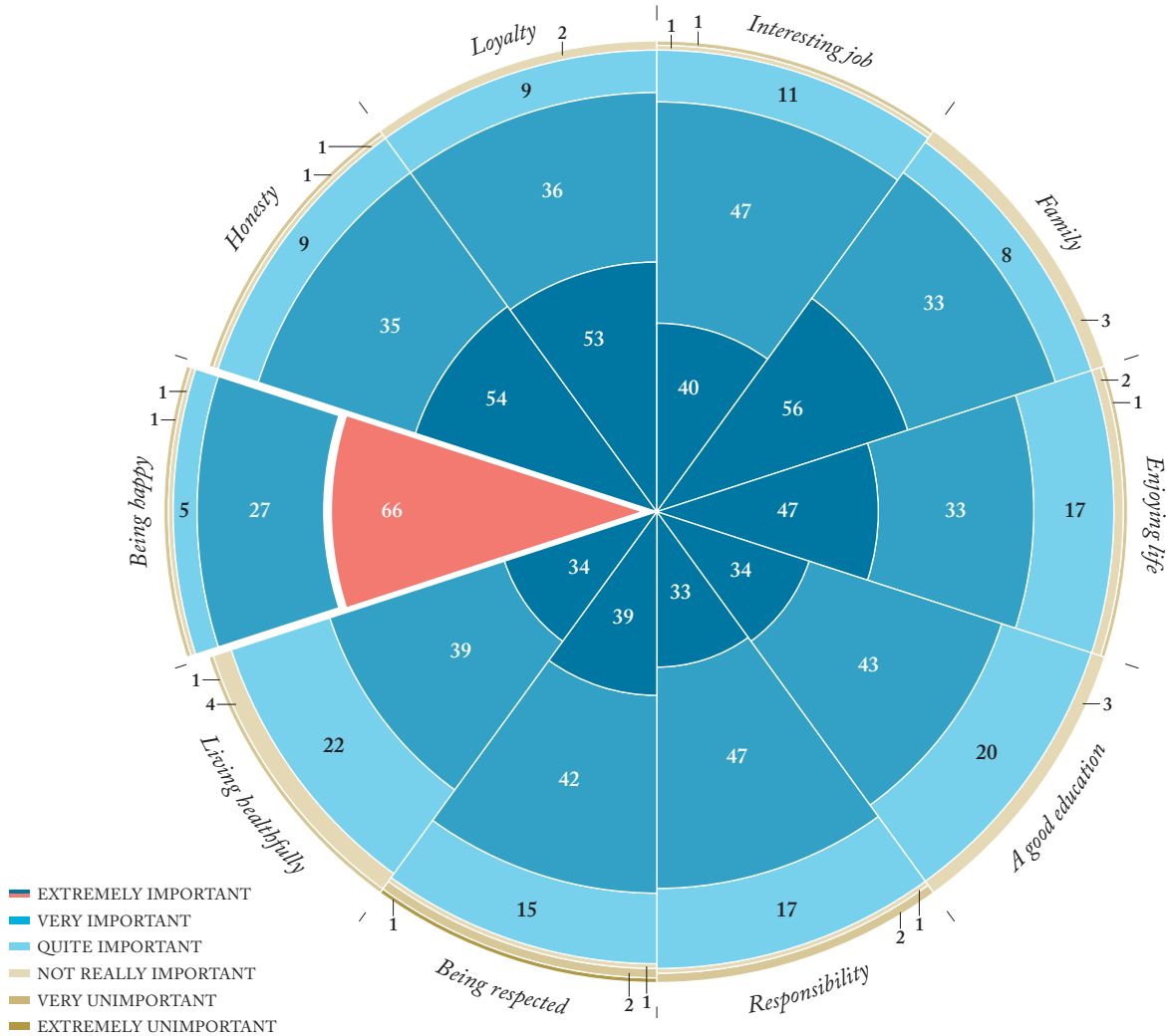
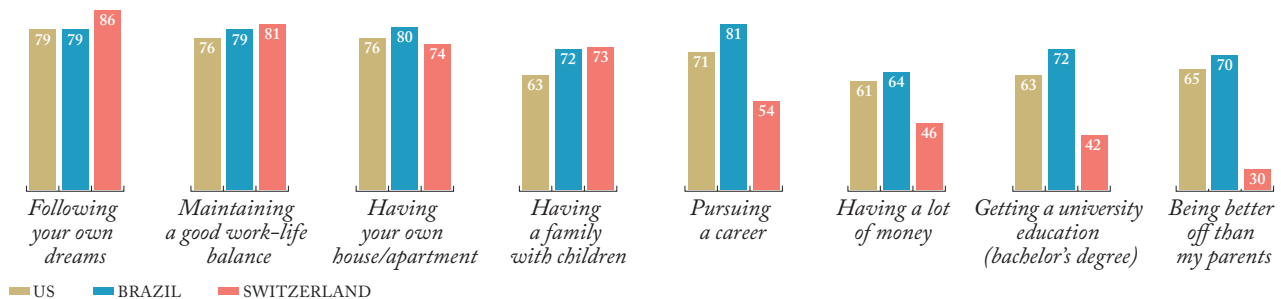


Figure 1.04

### Realizing dreams is more important than earning a lot of money

“When you think of your life’s goals, which of the following do you definitely want, which ones do you definitely want to avoid, and which ones do you expect to decide on spontaneously depending on the turns your life takes?”



## 2. Work and finances

When it comes to their work situation, the young Swiss respondents are exceptionally content. An absolute majority say their current job is what they've dreamed of. In contrast, not even one-third of the young Americans surveyed see their job in that light.

Young Swiss can generally do more in the world of work than their peers in Brazil and the US. That most likely has something to do with the dual system of education, which integrates young Swiss into the working world earlier on. Anyone who is doing or has done an apprenticeship knows other young people who are doing one too. This puts young people in Switzer-

land in contact with the working world at a relatively early age.

The importance of a university degree is also given a different weight. Only every third respondent in the Swiss survey sees a degree program as the best basis for a career. Respondents from Brazil (85 percent) and from the US (76 percent) have an entirely different view of this.

Property and wealth are a priority in all three countries. Having one's own house or apartment is an important aspiration – and even the main one in Switzerland. In all three of the countries, more than 70 percent of respondents say they save on a consistent

basis. Credit card use is also widespread among young people.

The differences in financial obligations, on the other hand, are striking, and represent the greatest point of divergence in the entire survey. The Swiss respondents incur almost no debts, and those they do have are to their family or friends. By contrast, living on credit is common for those surveyed in the US and, to a slightly lesser extent, Brazil.

Figure 2.01

### Swiss young people more often have their dream job

“How well do the following statements apply to you? Respond by entering a number from 0 percent to 100 percent.”

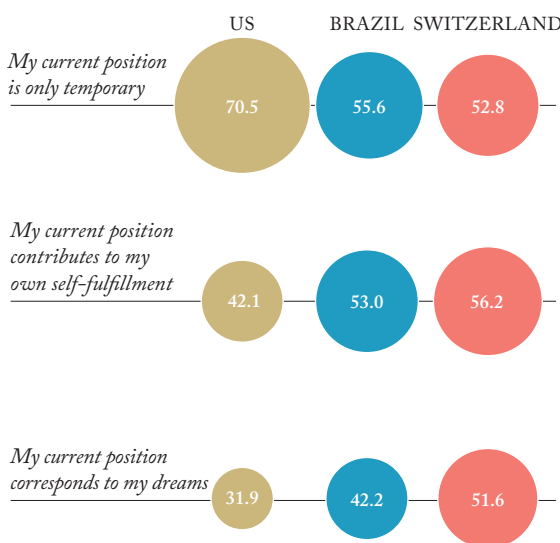


Figure 2.02

### Americans are deepest in debt

“Do you personally have any of the following liabilities?”

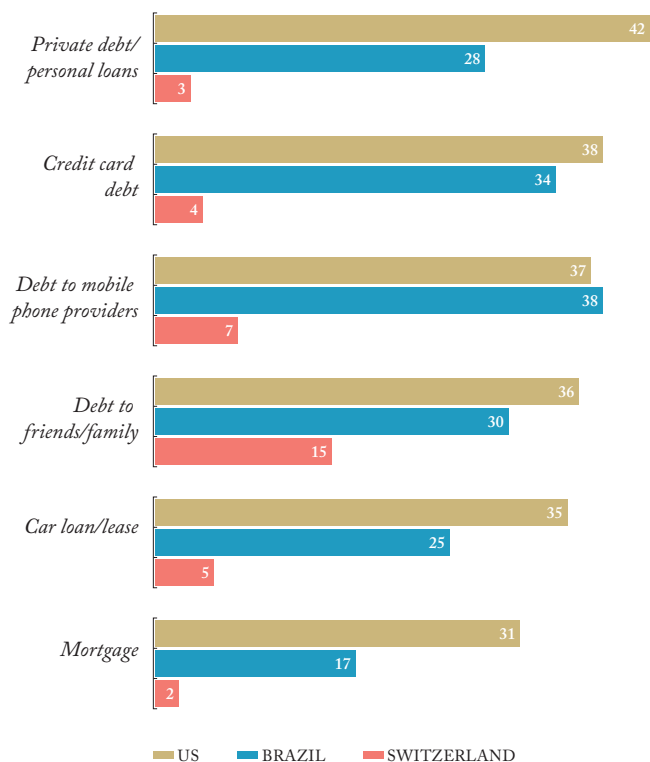
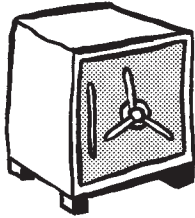


Figure 2.03

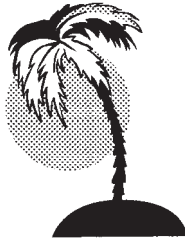
## What would you do with 10,000 Swiss francs?

Question: "If you were given a gift of 10,000 Swiss francs/US dollars/real, what would you do with the money?"



### Savings account

Switzerland: 2,490 Swiss francs  
 US: 3,142 US dollars  
 Brazil: 3,148 real



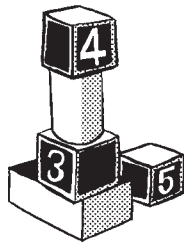
### Go on vacation

Switzerland: 1,540 Swiss francs  
 US: 499 US dollars  
 Brazil: 629 real



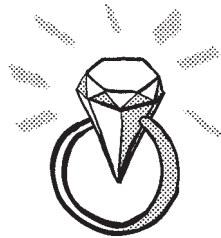
### Save for a house

Switzerland: 816 Swiss francs  
 US: 1,245 US dollars  
 Brazil: 1,275 real



### Spend on my family

Switzerland: 709 Swiss francs  
 US: 828 US dollars  
 Brazil: 628 real



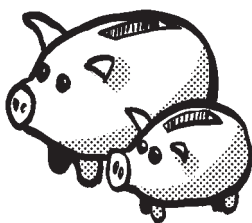
### Clothes/jewelry

Switzerland: 662 Swiss francs  
 US: 448 US dollars  
 Brazil: 453 real



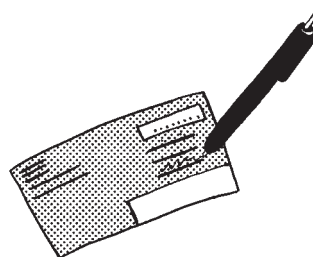
### Buy a car

Switzerland: 620 Swiss francs  
 US: 916 US dollars  
 Brazil: 586 real



### Saving for family

Switzerland: 587 Swiss francs  
 US: 782 US dollars  
 Brazil: 673 real



### Charitable donations

Switzerland: 392 Swiss francs  
 US: 451 US dollars  
 Brazil: 506 real



### Buying presents

Switzerland: 313 Swiss francs  
 US: 242 US dollars  
 Brazil: 322 real

One Swiss franc is equal to approximately 1.05 US dollars and about 2.20 Brazilian real

### 3. Politics and society

Awareness of issues reflects the public debates taking place in each of the three countries. As in prior years, young Swiss name issues involving foreigners and integration as the country's top problem. The question of how refugees and asylum-seekers should be treated has also gained in importance, with 58 percent seeing the relationship between young Swiss and foreigners as "somewhat tense."

In spite of this, about three-quarters of the young people share the attitude that Switzerland benefits from foreign workers. Those who believe the government should do more to integrate foreigners (55 percent) and extend citizenship rights to Swiss-born children with foreign backgrounds together form a slight majority (55 percent).

Unemployment causes less worry than it did in previous years, as do the state of the environment and energy issues. The future of old age pension (AHV) and of social institutions is still one of the most pressing issues. It is striking that concerns about economic development in general are still on the rise and rank among the 10 most critical problems for the first time this year.

In contrast, the issue of (youth) unemployment ranks as one of the most significant problems for young people from the US and Brazil. However, the issue of corruption causes more concern than any other for the Brazilian respondents.

Some of the five most important problems are not even mentioned in Switzerland, such as hunger (27 percent) and urban violence (25 percent). In the US, fuel prices, fear of terrorism and health issues rank alongside unemployment as the top problems.

Politically, 34 percent of the young Swiss classify themselves as on the political right. This figure is five

percentage points higher than two years ago, yielding a hefty increase of 17 percent. The left camp has lost some of its attractiveness; 29 percent of young people count themselves as belonging to it (2010: 31 percent). The center is represented with 11 percent, a bit more than in 2010 (8 percent).

Generally, only a minority of the young people in all three countries are politically active. In the US, 48 percent are very involved or somewhat involved politically; in Brazil 44 percent; and in Switzerland a mere 29 percent. Taking part in political demonstrations is clearly "out" for young Swiss – and is equal to smoking as a source of ridicule, for example.

While politics seems less popular, the confidence young Swiss have in their government has grown steadily over the past two years. Only 30 percent think that the government often fails in crucial decisions. In the US, more than half think so (51 percent), and the figure in Brazil is even higher at 57 percent.

The comparatively good grade earned by the Swiss government may have something to do with Switzerland's economic conditions, which remain healthy despite the euro crisis. A very clear majority also believes that Switzerland enjoys a very good (27 percent) or somewhat good (65 percent) reputation abroad.

34%  
of young Swiss are  
very heavily involved  
in social issues.

50%  
of young Brazilians  
see corruption as  
the most pressing  
problem.

82%  
of young Americans  
believe their political  
system needs a  
complete overhaul.



Figure 3.01

### Young Swiss worry more about the economic crisis

“In the list below you’ll see several topics that have been discussed and written about a great deal recently. Read through the entire list and choose five points that you personally feel are the greatest problems in your country.”  
(Year-on-year change in parentheses)

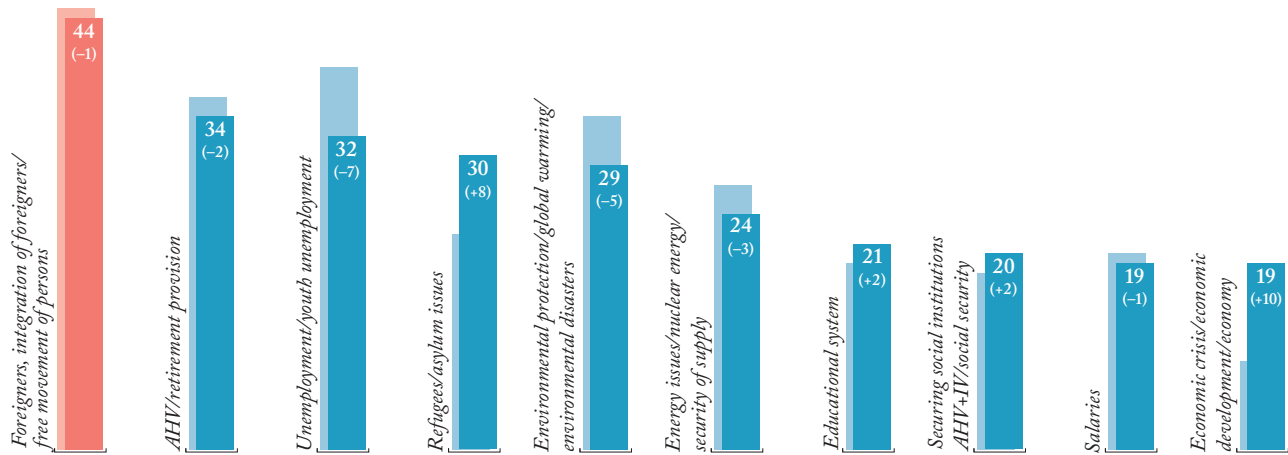


Figure 3.02

### Young Brazilians have little faith in government

“Do you feel that the politics of the government and administration fail when it comes to important issues? Is this frequently true, rarely or never?”

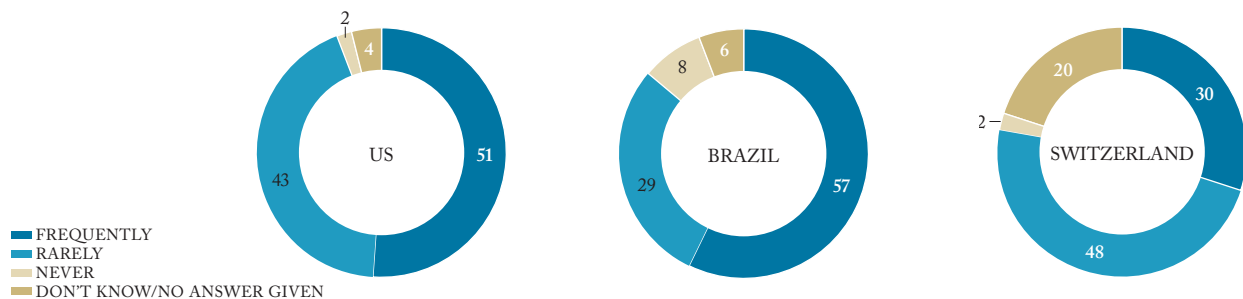
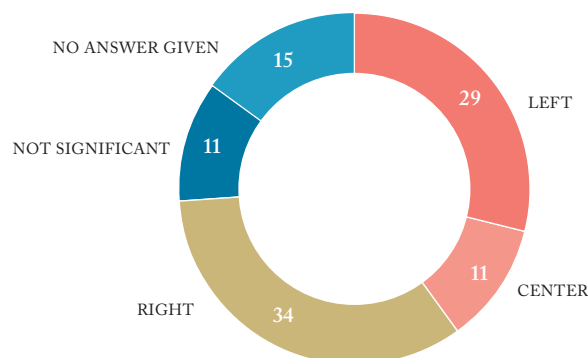


Figure 3.03

### Young Swiss lean to the right

“Left, center and right are three terms used frequently to characterize political views. Can you tell me where you yourself stand on a scale in which ‘0’ stands for left, ‘5’ for center, and ‘10’ for right?”



## 4. Leisure activities and media

There is one clear trend common to the young people from all three countries. They are increasingly using the Internet and smartphones like iPhones, Blackberries or Androids. Ninety percent of the young Swiss have Facebook profiles, 85 percent of the Brazilians and 75 percent of the Americans. On an interesting note, in the US, the proportion of Facebook users has seen a sharp drop. This suggests that its attractiveness is waning.

Today's means of communication do not lead to isolation, as is so widely feared. For young people, they primarily represent a way of sharing with friends. In Switzerland, text messaging, mobile phones and social networks are now the most important tools for staying in touch with friends. Meanwhile, the good old landline has almost reached the end of its useful life. Meeting friends and getting to know new people are just as important as smartphones for young Swiss.

The way information is gathered in the three countries shows another interesting difference. In the US and in Brazil, television and new media dominate. Interestingly, more than half of the American respondents rely on news apps on their smartphones. On the other hand, the young Swiss get most of their information from the free tabloid newspapers. Radio also continues to be an important channel for disseminating information.

Figure 4.01

### Friends get in touch by SMS

“What ways do you use to contact your friends? Please list the types of media used for keeping in touch with your friends in the order of importance.”

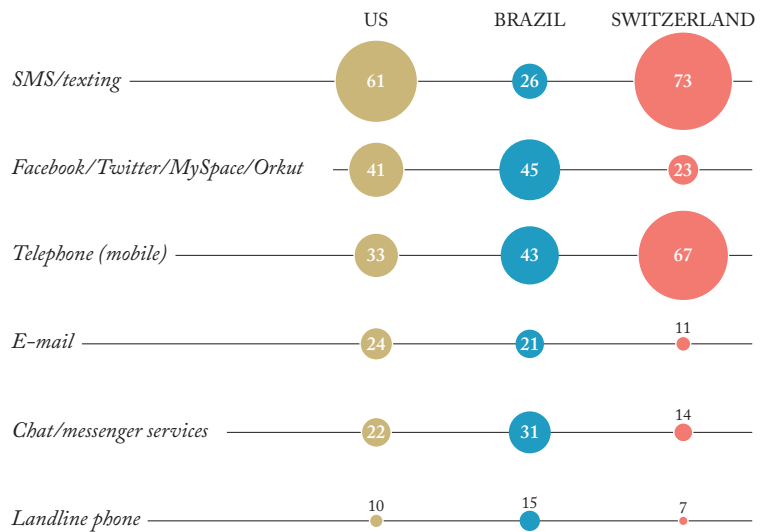


Figure 4.02

### Smartphones are in, electric cars are out

“We have listed some very different activities/attitudes. State whether these are ‘in’ or ‘out’ in your personal life and what your opinion of them is” (Swiss responses)

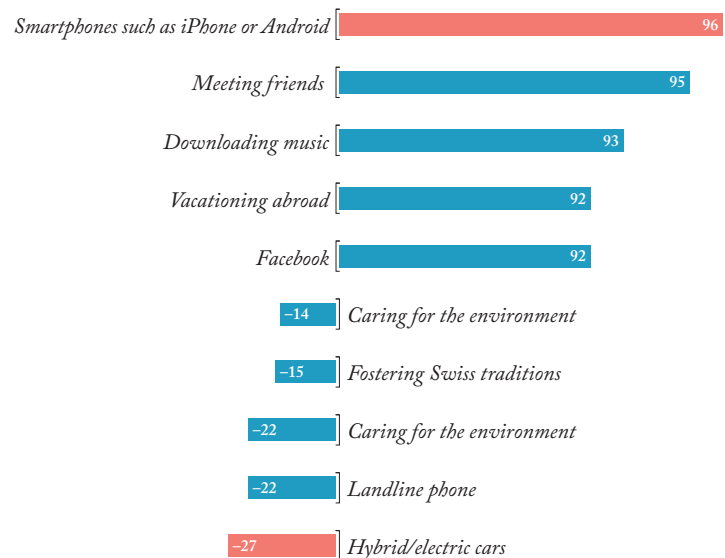
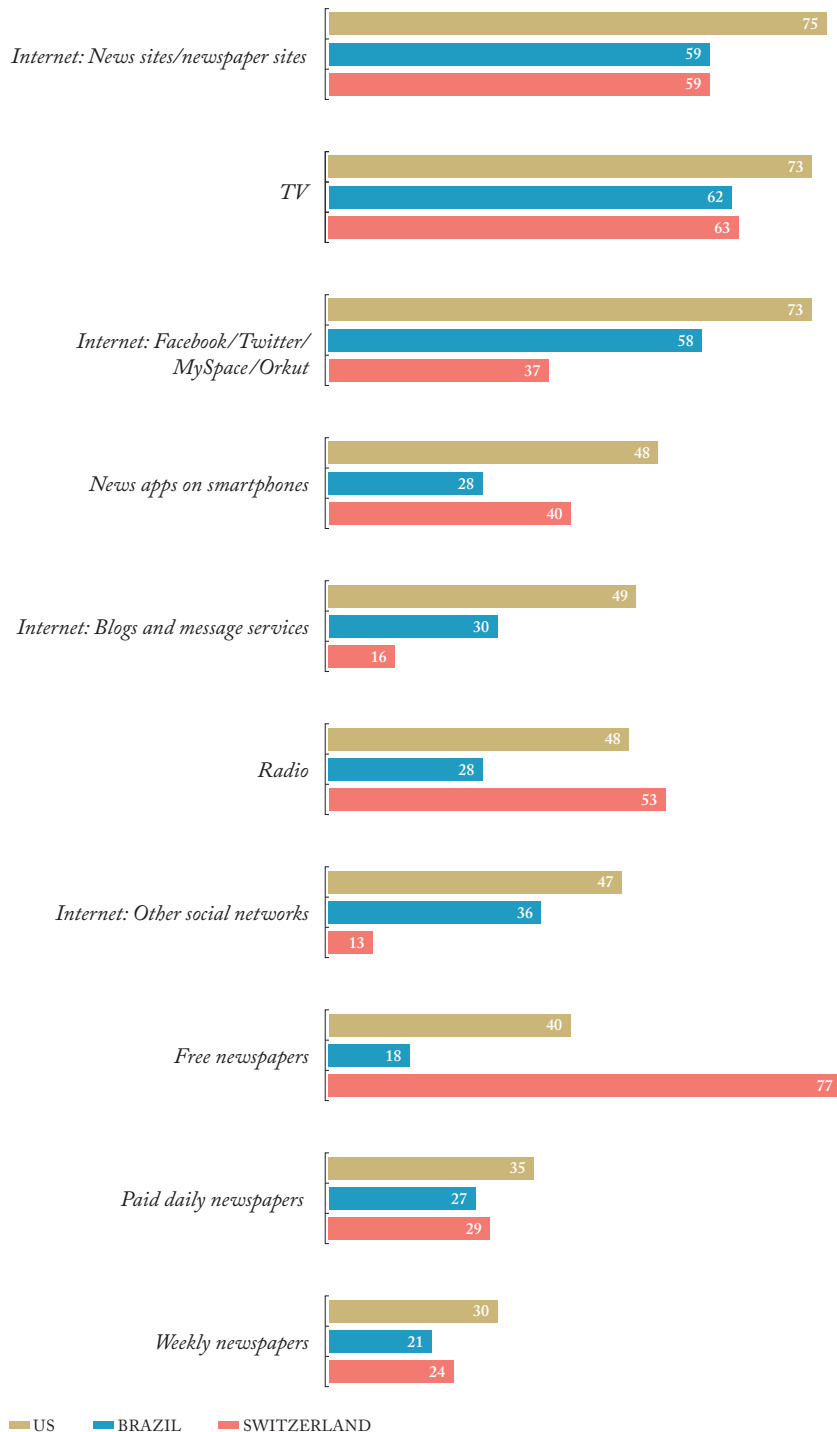


Figure 4.03

### Free tabloids are the main source of information for young Swiss people

“How do you keep informed about daily events?”



94%

of young Swiss are aware that information posted on Facebook could fall into the wrong hands.

39%

of young Americans play more than two hours of computer games every day.

41%

of young Brazilians donate part of their money to charitable causes.

# Brazil could be a model state

Political scientist Lukas Golder on the ambitious and close-knit youth of Brazil, the increasing importance of religion in the US and the career-oriented pragmatism of young Swiss.

By Daniel Ammann

*You surveyed young people not only in Switzerland but also those in the US and Brazil for the Youth Barometer. How do these three countries differ in terms of values?*

Brazil, Switzerland and the US reflect three basically different national patterns. In Protestant Europe, which includes Switzerland, the values of rationalism and the natural sciences have driven modernization. Religion, on the other hand, has taken a back seat. The economic boom following the 1950s also triggered a change in values. Since then, there has been more emphasis on self-actualization, while security purely for the sake of survival has become less important.

Even in Anglo-Saxon countries, the value of self-realization in the sense of the “American Dream” is particularly common, but religion – for example, the phenomenon of independent churches – plays a greater role than in Protestant Europe.

Finally, Latin American nations like Brazil are seeing extreme social dynamism, suggesting changing values. Traditionally, religious values have played a bigger role in these nations, with security and survival taking priority over self-realization.

*Did the survey confirm these different values?*

Overall, yes. In Brazil, traditional values are omnipresent and religion is considered important. The views of young people, however, are shaped by opportunities for social mobility, and



Lukas Golder is on the board of directors at the research firm gfs.bern, which conducts the Youth Barometer survey every year for Credit Suisse. As a political scientist and media scholar, Golder focuses on analyses of communications, campaigns and media effectiveness.

self-realization is becoming extraordinarily significant. Sensuality and body culture play a huge role. However, these young people also show the greatest readiness to take responsibility in the emerging nation, where much is changing. Young people in the US, on the other hand, are much more attuned to the economic downturn. They want to safeguard their property and their national invulnerability, and put greater emphasis on security. If anything, religion is taking on an even more central role in the US. That is an interesting trend – if young people preserve their values, Brazil and the US will be trading places.

*And in Switzerland?*

In Switzerland, traditional ideas carry more weight than ever before. The EU is losing some of its influence. A certain insouciance goes hand-in-hand with a sense of a threat from beyond its borders. Non-economic goals are often especially important here, and young people are pragmatic when it comes to careers. For one thing, a high level of satisfaction lessens the desire to take more responsibility for society.

*What was the biggest surprise for you in the study's findings?*

Despite the wish for greater self-actualization in Brazil, young people show considerably more solidarity with others than their counterparts in the US and Switzerland. I would have expected pushiness from such an ambitious society. But the desire for solidarity predominates. In Switzerland and the US, defending one's own privileges now takes priority.

*What are the biggest differences between the countries?*

Young people in the US still pursue the American Dream of rising from office drone to millionaire, but the crisis has shaken their confidence and frustrates them at times. Almost the opposite is true of Brazil. Young Brazilians also believe in the chance that they will rise to become a millionaire – but they want to live the dream with others, while still enjoying life. In Switzerland, everything is much more concrete. Instead of

dreaming, Swiss young people roll up their sleeves and make their dreams of career success a reality, all the while finding ways to achieve other goals as well.

*With all of these differences, does the survey yield conclusions about globalized youth?*

Yes, there are parallels in certain ideas. In all countries, traditional values about social interaction are of crucial importance to young people. Current trends take shape through communication and social networks such as Facebook, which are truly all-purpose:

### The economic crisis has shaken young Americans' confidence and frustrates them.

They allow young people to stay in touch, share, find tips for leisure activities and gather information of all kinds.

*You often hear that social networks draw young people into politics. What do you think?*

The connection between spontaneous political action organized through social networks and real political engagement is weak, if it exists at all. Particularly in Switzerland, there is little willingness to join together in support of political or social causes. Young people here are comparatively well off, and obviously there is little call for change.

*The Youth Barometer gives the impression that particularly Brazilians, but also Americans, are economically "hungrier" than Swiss. Is that accurate?*

It is a fact that economic awareness as

an index of various attitudes toward the economy is higher in the US and Brazil than in Switzerland. Young people in those two countries are struggling to gain a foothold in their economies. In Switzerland, this is simpler. The economy is, quite simply, normal and part of everyday life. Maintaining a work-life balance is a high priority. The Swiss economy also succeeds in downplaying the fact that young people are a crucial part of it. That is not exactly a motivating factor.

*What impact do young people have on the economic and social future of their countries?*

If Brazil continues to grow and succeeds in combating corruption effectively, a social market economy of a new kind could develop and overcome poverty. A new model state could emerge in the wake of the World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games.

In the US, much depends on the economy. If the country loses ground on the international playing field, its young people will lack prospects in the long run. That increases the risk of social unrest.

Switzerland depends heavily on international events, but conversely is better off than its neighbors. If new challenges present themselves, it will be difficult to adapt and reform quickly, and young Swiss will lack prospects, too.

*What is the single most important thing shaping the values of young people?*

Researchers believe that the innermost circle of friends serves as the main factor shaping the values of young people. While it is true that friends are important to the young people in all three countries, I think economic conditions also contribute

to this. Economic factors significantly affect the way values change from generation to generation. This speaks in favor of incorporating economic considerations into education and debate about education.

### The innermost circle of friends is the main factor shaping the values of young people.

*This is the third time you have conducted the surveys for the Youth Barometer. Can you already identify trends?*

Some trends in values and other long-term indicators will not be visible for several years. What we can say, however, is that communication media is showing the most dynamism. Smartphones are currently showing a drastic rise and social networks are extremely important to young people. What is interesting is that the means of communication are setting more trends than their content is. One could almost sum it up by saying that a new Facebook release sets more trends these days than political shifts do. ■