



USA



SINGAPORE

**CREDIT SUISSE**  
**YOUTH BAROMETER**

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



SWITZERLAND



BRAZIL

# WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE THINK

# W

hat do young people consider important in life? What are their views about school, and how do they invest their money? What do they worry about most? How do they see their future unfolding?

The fourth Credit Suisse Youth Barometer provides informative answers and unique insights into the attitudes of the young generation, ages 16 to 25. For the first time, this international survey conducted by the research institute gfs.bern on behalf of Credit Suisse covered four countries and four different cultures: the United States, Brazil, Switzerland, and now Singapore too. The inclusion of the up-and-coming Asian sphere yields an even broader look at the commonalities and differences in values, lifestyle and attitudes among the world's youth.

One striking finding: In all four countries, the protracted economic crisis is affecting young

people's lives. Growing youth unemployment is viewed as the greatest problem everywhere. Furthermore, for the first time, young people in the United States, Brazil and Switzerland are more pessimistic about their future now than in the past three years. Indeed, in Singapore only a minority are optimistic.

These results indicate a reversal of trend and could harbor potential for social tension. For now, however, young people are responding to their uncertain career prospects with pragmatism. The majority express national pride and trust in their government. Only in Brazil is a clear majority demanding reforms, with people already taking to the streets. However, the focus is on striving for security and their own professional careers. School and education are tremendously important, and lifelong learning is indispensable for this generation. But achievement isn't everything; their social environment and contact with family and friends continue to take high priority.

According to the survey, the situation of Swiss youth is exceptional in many respects, thanks to the nation's prosperity and its dual education system. They have a more post-materialistic attitude than their counterparts in the United States and Singapore, and their prospects of making their dreams come true remain extraordinarily high.

Your editorial team

## THE SURVEY

Roughly 1,000 young people ranging between 16 and 25 years of age in Switzerland, the United States, Brazil and Singapore were surveyed for the 2013 Credit Suisse Youth Barometer. The research firm gfs.bern conducted the survey between April and May 2013, primarily online. The Credit Suisse Youth Barometer has been compiled annually since 2010.

The editorial staff evaluated the results for Bulletin.

The country data (pages 32, 35, 40, and 44) comes from the World Bank and is for 2012, with the exception of life expectancy (2011).

## THE COMPLETE STUDY

We summarize the most important and interesting results for you here. For the complete study, with all the questions and responses, see the Credit Suisse Youth Barometer website:

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

## NEW: WITH SINGAPORE

With the addition of Singapore, the Youth Barometer looks for the first time at the trends, lifestyle and attitudes of young people in Asia.

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## **01: LIFE GOALS AND VALUES** P. 33

Shift in young people's attitude toward life: How they view their future, and what goals they have set.

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## **02: SCHOOL, WORK, FINANCES** P. 36

No truants: How they envisage their careers, and where they spend their money.

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## **03: POLITICS AND SOCIETY** P. 41

Strong national pride and some social problems: judging the situation in their country.

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## **04: LIFESTYLE AND LEISURE** P. 45

“Hot or not” is a key concern for youth: Which communication devices and leisure trends are “in” and which are “out”?



## **BRAZIL**

Population: 198.7 million  
GDP (Current USD): 2,253 billion  
GDP growth: 0.87%  
Life expectancy: 73.4 years



**Romulo Souza, 22,  
entrepreneur, São Paulo**

“I would like to be successful  
in whatever I do. God willing,  
my business will do well.”

# 01

## GOALS IN LIFE AND VALUES

Young people's attitude toward life has changed. Shaken by rampant youth unemployment, they are less hopeful than in the past three years. Confidence has clearly fallen in the United States, which scored lowest in this regard. Only one-quarter of young people there are optimistic about the future of their country, representing a complete reversal of the euphoria that came with President Obama's election in 2008. But the spirit of optimism is clouded in Brazil as well, declining for the first time. Interestingly, youth in the booming city-state of Singapore have the greatest confidence in their society's prospects but are most pessimistic about their own future. Hope is strongest in Switzerland, where young people are considerably more positive about their own future than about their society's (65% compared to 29%).

Despite globalization, the survey results show cultural differences. Whereas Swiss youth are the least materialistic and religious in their orientation, their counterparts in the US and especially in Singapore are predominantly focused on career and status. In Brazil, a new system of values seems to be developing; young people are quite materialistic and hedonistic, but are at the same time extremely religious and prize solidarity.

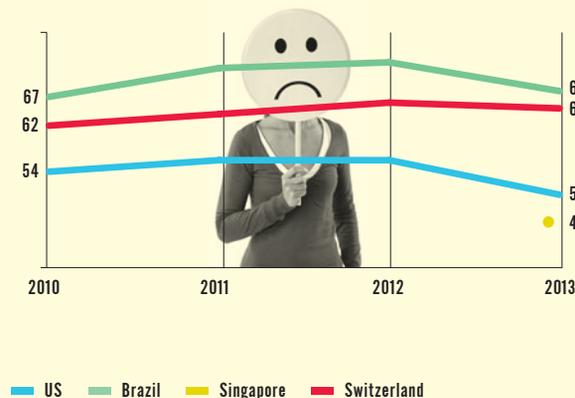
These different values are reflected in concrete ways. What young people around the world share, however, are the goals of owning their own home, following their dreams and achieving a >

Fig. 01.1

### DWINDLING OPTIMISM — ESPECIALLY IN THE US

“What does your own future look like to you? Does it look gloomy, bright, or mixed – or does it vary?”

Answer: “bright”, in percent

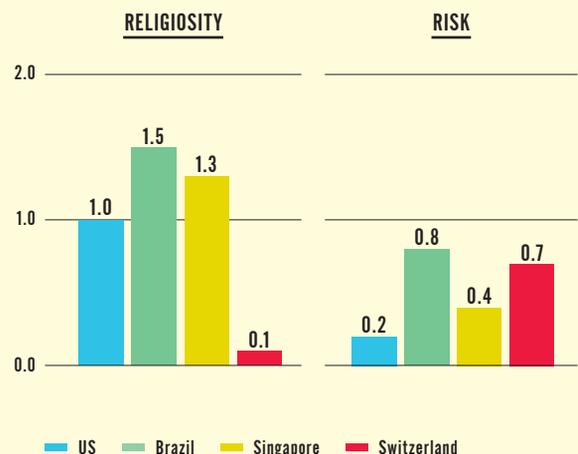


**33%**  
of young Americans regard their society's future as relatively bleak. In 2010, just 20% were pessimistic.

Fig. 01.2

### SWISS YOUTH LESS RELIGIOUS, AMERICANS LESS VENTURESOME

Indices compiled from various questions about values. For example, respondents were asked how often they visit a house of worship, or whether they regard themselves as risk-takers and hungry for success.



good work-life balance. A majority in all four countries want to have a family with children, an aspiration that is particularly common in Brazil and Switzerland (68% in each country).

Characteristic of the upward-mobility mindset that predominates in Singapore and Brazil is the focus on making a career and achieving prosperity. The goals of having a lot of money and being better off than their parents are particularly important in that regard. Brazilian youth also place the greatest emphasis on higher education. They are more likely than their contemporaries elsewhere to value a solid position in society and to fight for social justice.

Young people in Switzerland attach greater importance than others to learning about different cultures, sustainability, and flexibility in planning. Higher education, a career and status are less significant in their vision of the future. Just 27 percent have the goal of being better off than their parents.

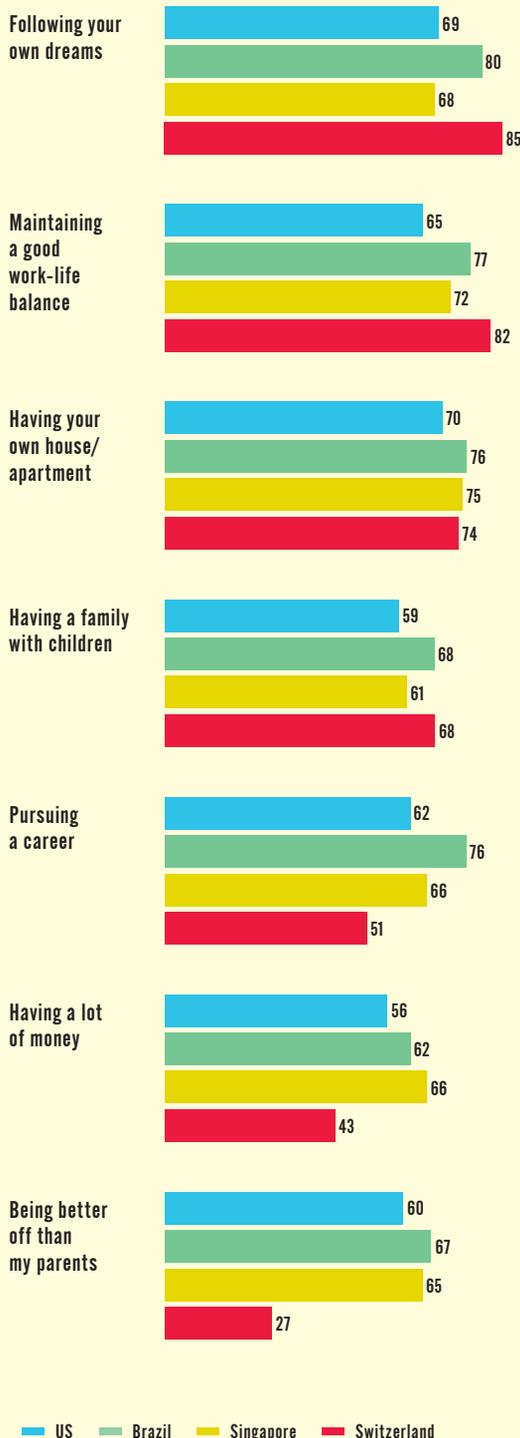
Young people in the United States are closest to the Swiss in their values, although religion is much more important to them. One third of American respondents visit a house of worship at least once a week. Interestingly, the higher their income, the more often they visit a house of worship. Also striking is the difference in willingness to take risks. The American dream notwithstanding, young people in the US are pessimistic and the most likely to shun risk.

Fig. 01.3

### DREAM OF HOME OWNERSHIP

“When you think of goals in your life: what do you strive for above all, what do you not want under any circumstances, and where would you make up your mind depending on the circumstances, and then only in the future?”

In percent



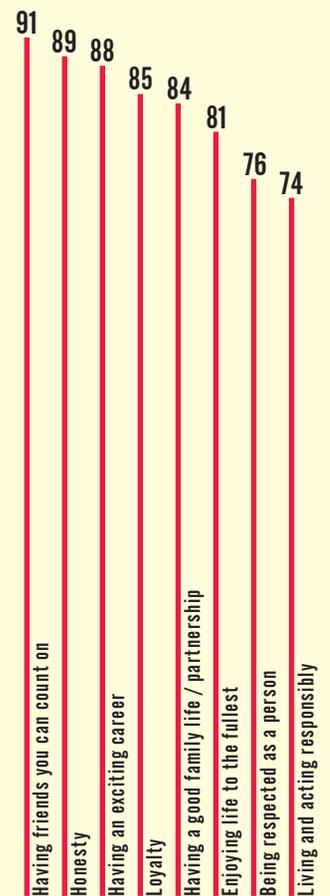
**68%**  
of Brazilians want a university degree (CH: 33%, US: 53%, Singapore: 51%).

Fig. 01.4

### GOALS AND VALUES OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN SWITZERLAND

“When you think about what you are striving for in life: how important are the following things to you personally?”

In percent





## **SINGAPORE**

Population: 5.3 million  
GDP (Current USD): 275 billion  
GDP growth: 1.32 %  
Life expectancy: 81.9 years



**Jamie Lim, 21,  
marketing student,  
Singapore**

“I want to be the person who brings greater relevance to marketing in Singapore. It should become ethical and authentic.”

# 02

## SCHOOL, CAREER, FINANCES

For this generation it's clear: Education is very important and must be a lifelong pursuit. If you don't enjoy your work, you should find a different profession, and if you do enjoy your work, you'll be successful. However, the realities of the labor markets in the US, Brazil and Singapore contradict these precepts because a majority of people in these countries think you should be happy to have a job at all. The situation in Switzerland, with its economic stability and dual system, is unique. Youth unemployment is lower than in other countries, and significantly more young people are happy with their job situation than in other countries.

Switzerland's special situation is also reflected in the extraordinarily high degree of skepticism about a university education. Less than one-third of respondents consider a university degree to be the best foundation for a career, compared to more than two-thirds of people in Singapore (71%) and Brazil (80%). Swiss people are much more critical of education, not least because real work experience can be gained in Switzerland at a younger age. Only 43 percent of Swiss respondents believe that a

person who performs poorly in school will not have good career opportunities. And just 37 percent find school to be good preparation for the working world. In Brazil, the US and Singapore, however, a significant majority agree with these sentiments.

There is a noticeable difference in decisions about education between the two genders. In Switzerland and Singapore, women tend to choose an academic path, while men are more likely to choose a trade (apprenticeship, vocational matriculation examination certificate). In Brazil, there are hardly any differences in this regard, while it is precisely the opposite in the US. At the same time, young women in Switzerland place greater value on a work-life balance (83%), and less on having a career (44%) and earning lots of money (40%) than women in the other countries surveyed. In terms of involvement, young women in Switzerland, Brazil and Singapore are more likely to demonstrate social responsibility and environmental concern than young men. It's alarming that a majority of women in every country feels that women are at a disadvantage in the world of work.

As far as spending money goes, willingness to save is still very high, and it has even increased slightly in comparison to recent years. Swiss young people, however, are by no means the best savers in the world: They only set about half their money aside, while their contemporaries in the US and Brazil save two-thirds, and those in Singapore save three-quarters of their money.

And what are 16- to 25-year-olds saving for? Mostly for their own house and a family, while young Swiss people primarily are saving for hard times. Equities and funds are particularly popular investments in Singapore, and particularly unpopular in Switzerland. Young Swiss people are the most free-spending, and they are willing to spend the most money on vacations. In Singapore and Brazil, as well, young people prefer to spend their money on trips, while cars are a more popular purchase in the US.

Living on credit has decreased slightly over 2012. The greatest financial debt among young people is still found in Brazil and – to a lesser extent than before – the US. Debts are significantly lower in Singapore, and especially in Switzerland.

Fig. 02.1

## YOUNG PEOPLE WANT TO SAVE, SAVE, SAVE

"Let's say someone gives you 10,000 units of your currency.

How would you allocate the money?"

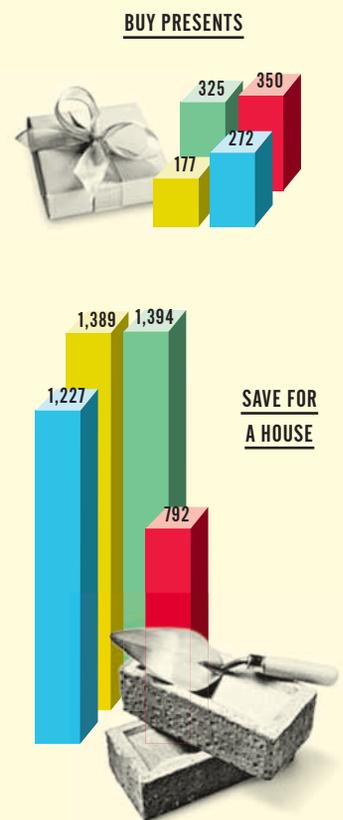
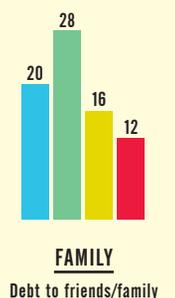


Fig. 02.2

## HIGH TELEPHONE DEBTS, BUT NOT IN SWITZERLAND

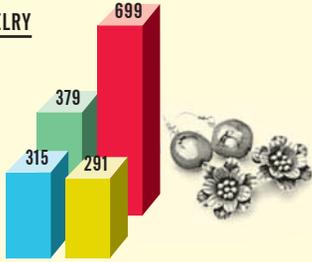
"Do you personally have any of the following liabilities?"

In %



**SAVINGS ACCOUNT**

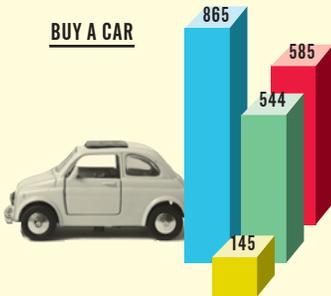
**CLOTHES/JEWELRY**



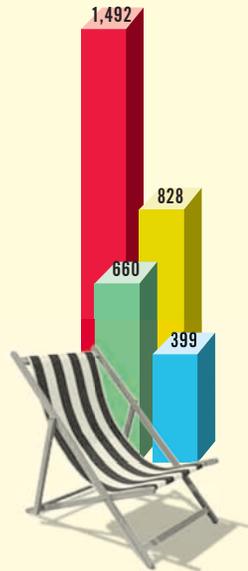
**SPEND ON MY FAMILY**



**BUY A CAR**



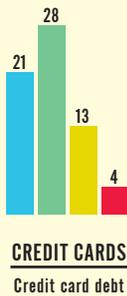
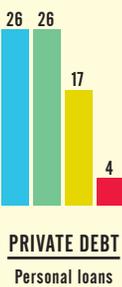
**GO ON VACATION**



**DONATE IT**



US: USD    Brazil: BRL  
Singapore: SGD    Switzerland: CHF



US  
Brazil  
Singapore  
Switzerland

Fig. 02.3

**DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN CONTINUES**

“To what extent do you agree with the following statement? Women are at a disadvantage in the professional world.”

US  
Brazil  
Singapore  
Switzerland



**70%**  
of people in Singapore would like to have a government-related job. In contrast, that figure in the US is only 41% (Brazil: 73%, Switzerland: 52%).

Switzerland

# “YOUNG PEOPLE ARE FEELING THE GLOBAL COMPETITION”

Political scientist Markus Freitag talks about the values of young people in Switzerland and the new generation's rather gloomy attitude toward life.

Interview: Michael Kroboth

**M**r. Freitag, our Youth Barometer surveyed young people on four continents for the first time. Is there a global youth culture these days?

At least as far as the use of new communication media goes. As “digital natives,” today's young people have practically been born into it. In addition, young people combine materialistic and post-materialistic ideology. They know that they need a certain level of prosperity to evolve personally and develop aspirations and visions.

*Why are young people in all four countries less optimistic than those in the last three years' surveys?*

Globalization and the debt crisis are indicators of a jeopardized status. Young people are feeling the competition from a growing number of well-educated immigrants. They are afraid of losing the material foundation of their largely worry-free lifestyle over the course of a long-term, structural economic crisis.

*What makes young Swiss people tick in 2013?*

Compared with Brazil, the US, and Singapore, young people in Switzerland aspire more to intangible personal development and less toward public recognition. They are critical about limitations on individual freedoms and personal development and assign comparatively great importance to values of solidarity and family and friends. Young people in Switzerland appreciate and relish the advantages of their social, political, and economic situation, but are aware of impending threats that could imperil the status they have achieved.

*Did you notice anything in particular about the results?*

The degree of national pride is noteworthy – more than 80 percent of young people are proud of their countries – as is the ongoing high level of satisfaction with the political system, which goes hand in hand with a clear rejection of a need for reform. It is interesting how the fostering of Swiss traditions and culture is accompanied by a push toward foreign countries – in keeping with the slogan “think globally, act locally.” The increasingly pressing issues relating to crime, personal safety, youth violence, and violence at sporting events are alarming.

*Swiss young people are most concerned about foreigners and integration.*

*This has become accentuated in comparison to the last three years.*

For a start, young Swiss people's personal interactions with foreigners continue to be largely positive. Nearly everyone rejects xenophobia and

racism. Immigrants only become a problem for young Swiss people when Switzerland's cultural identity is threatened and – more importantly – when a more challenging economic environment threatens individuals' economic status. Threats can be direct – through competition for housing or jobs – or indirect – through financing and covering the increasing costs of integration. In Singapore as well, the survey revealed that young people are skeptical about foreigners. Growing public resentment over the influx of foreigners and the stiffer competition for jobs and apartments led to a more restrictive immigration policy there in 2012.

*A heavy involvement in politics is not fashionable among young Swiss people. But the survey does show that the majority of young Swiss people oppose a night-time ban on retail alcohol sales. And two-thirds of them are confident they will be able to find ways around the ban.*

Traditional political work is too time-consuming for young people and they don't get enough out of it personally. But as soon as limitations are placed on their opportunities for personal development, they wake up. This was shown by the demonstration in Berne against legal restrictions on the city's nightlife (“Tanz dich frei”) and is reflected in the strong opposition to the ban on retail sales of alcohol.

*Why does religion play such a thoroughly subordinate role in Switzerland, as compared to the US, Brazil and Singapore?*

Religion has always had greater significance in the other countries. Swiss young people are more likely to seek

answers and help from their friends and family than from religion. They attach greater importance to the here and now.

*The specter of youth unemployment haunts this generation. How can it be overcome?*

Fighting youth unemployment is society's core task in the coming decades, because the future of our social solidarity and the coming generation's sense of self-esteem are at stake. It is a difficult undertaking, although Switzerland is doing better than some other countries. Some see a fundamental evil in the strong protection against unwarranted dismissal and the employment guarantee for older workers that is getting out

educational offerings. In addition, the dual system of professional education seems to offer a certain level of security. Even young people with less schooling have an opportunity to get jobs with reasonable pay. Swiss young people do not really see many issues requiring action. This may point to a functioning politico-economic system, but it could also be an expression of rampant indifference to public concerns. In the latter case, young people would do well to remember the words of John F. Kennedy: "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."

**“Swiss people are critical of limitations on personal freedom and development.”**

of hand, which make it more difficult for young people to enter the employment market, while others point to young people's lack of flexibility and a certain amount of complacency on their part. They are interested only in their dream careers, and want to start right away, without having to endure the sacrifices associated with a longer training period.

*Do you think young people will become radicalized?*

It's not out of the question. It's not for nothing that the International Labour Organization (ILO) recently warned that there will be more social unrest in Europe, due in part to youth unemployment.

*In Switzerland, young people still feel that making an effort is worthwhile and professional dreams can come true.*

*What is working better here?*

Overall, the labor market structure in Switzerland corresponds better to the

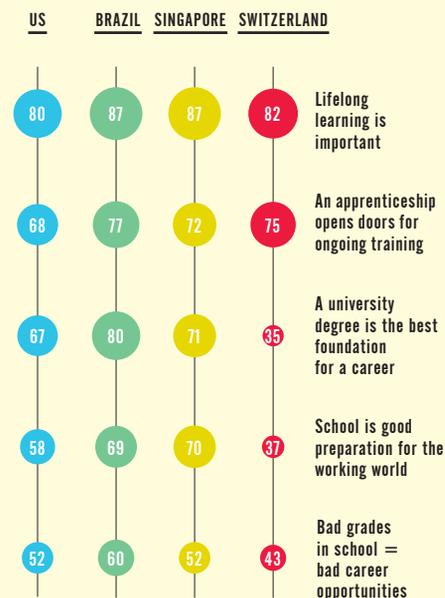


**MARKUS FREITAG** is the director of the Institute of Political Science at the University of Berne, where he holds the chair of political sociology. He has written numerous articles on social and political life in Switzerland and around the world. As part of a pan-European project over the coming years, he is studying the informally imparted conditions of youth unemployment.

**SWITZERLAND A SPECIAL CASE: UNIVERSITY IS NOT COMPULSORY**

“How much do you agree with the following statements about careers and education?”

In percent





## **UNITED STATES**

Population: 313.9 million  
GDP (Current USD): 15,685 billion  
GDP growth: 2.21 %  
Life expectancy: 78.6 years



**Thomas Maxwell Nolen, 25,  
actor, New York City**

“What do I want to be? So far things are going great – I just hope they stay that way.”

# 03

## POLITICS AND SOCIETY

Although young people have historically had a critical relationship with government, today the majority – with the exception of Brazil (39%) – are proud of their countries. National pride is particularly strong among young Swiss people (83%). The attitude toward government failure and the need for reform is along the same lines. While only one-third of those in Switzerland are demanding political reform, that figure is 80 percent in Brazil, as was recently demonstrated by a national protest movement.

Perception of problems is marked by each country's national political discourse, with the main issues remaining relatively stable. A great worry for young people in all four countries is unemployment / youth unemployment. In the United States (54%) and Singapore (42%) it is the greatest worry of all; in Brazil it ranked second (42%) and in Switzerland third (32%).

Surprisingly, retirement provision features among the more important issues, except in the United States. Swiss young people are particularly worried about their own pensions (37%). Demographic trends and the resulting problems of an aging society are a top concern for young Swiss people (71%). In fact, 34 percent think that the relationship between young and old will get worse in the future.

Issues specific to certain countries include the price of oil (44%) and terrorism (33%) in the United States. Brazilian

young people find urban violence (29%) and – more than ever – corruption (63%) to be particularly big problems for their country. In Singapore, economic issues dominate, which is somewhat surprising in light of the booming Asian city-state's economic success: Along with unemployment and retirement provision (26%), young people in Singapore are concerned about inflation (41%) and wage development (38%).

Young Swiss people, in contrast, are less worried than last year about economic issues. A mere 11 percent are still worried about the financial crisis (–8 percentage points) and just 2 percent are worried about inflation (–5 percentage points). Worries about personal safety and youth violence, on the other hand, have increased by 8 percentage points to 26%. There is a greater focus on the issue of immigrants, as compared to 2012. Half of young Swiss people (+6 percentage points) are worried about issues relating to foreigners and integration, with migration representing the biggest problem. At the same time, 72 percent believe that Switzerland benefits from foreign workers. Not only in Switzerland (62%), but also in the United States (58%) and Brazil (52%), a majority believes that the issue of immigration has gotten worse in recent years. It's particularly alarming in Singapore, where 81 percent of respondents are worried about immigrants (for more about this, see page 47).

Internationally speaking, concerns about the environment are quite low. In Brazil (7%), Singapore (9%) and even in the United States (10%), the issue interests only a small minority. Only young Swiss people consider protecting the environment and global warming to be one of the most important issues (27%). Energy issues have also established themselves among the top problems (22%) after the Fukushima incident and the 2011 announcement by politicians of a withdrawal from nuclear power programs.

Fig. 03.1

### NATIONAL PRIDE

“Are you proud/very proud of your country?”

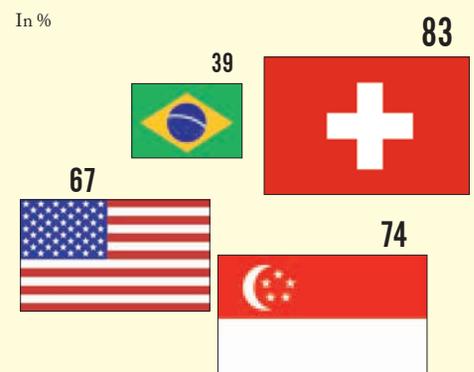


Fig. 03.2

### IMMIGRATION BECOMES AN ISSUE

“Do you agree with the following statement: Problems with immigrants have gotten worse in the last two or three years?”

In %

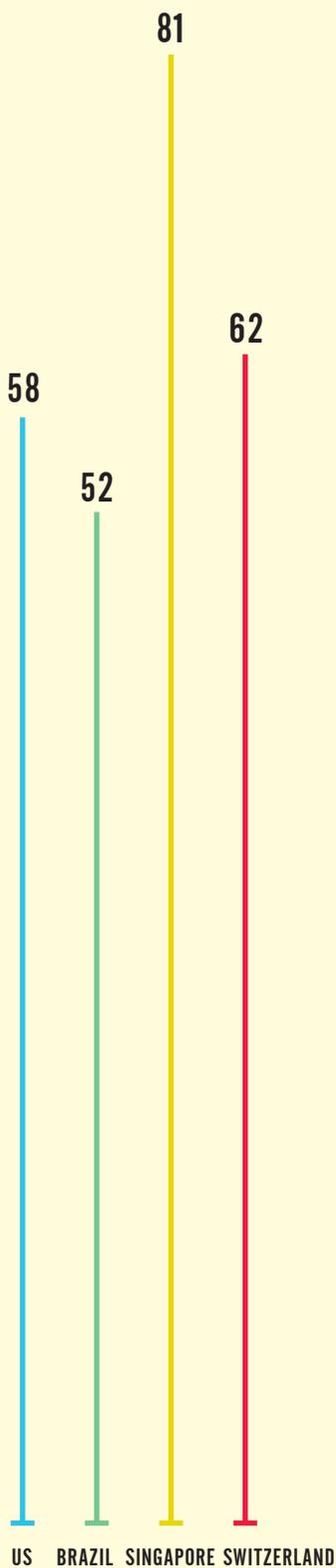


Fig. 03.3

### THE BIGGEST PROBLEMS

“In this list you will see some topics that have been discussed and written about a lot recently. Please look at the whole list, then select from the list the five points that you personally see as the five biggest problems in your country.”

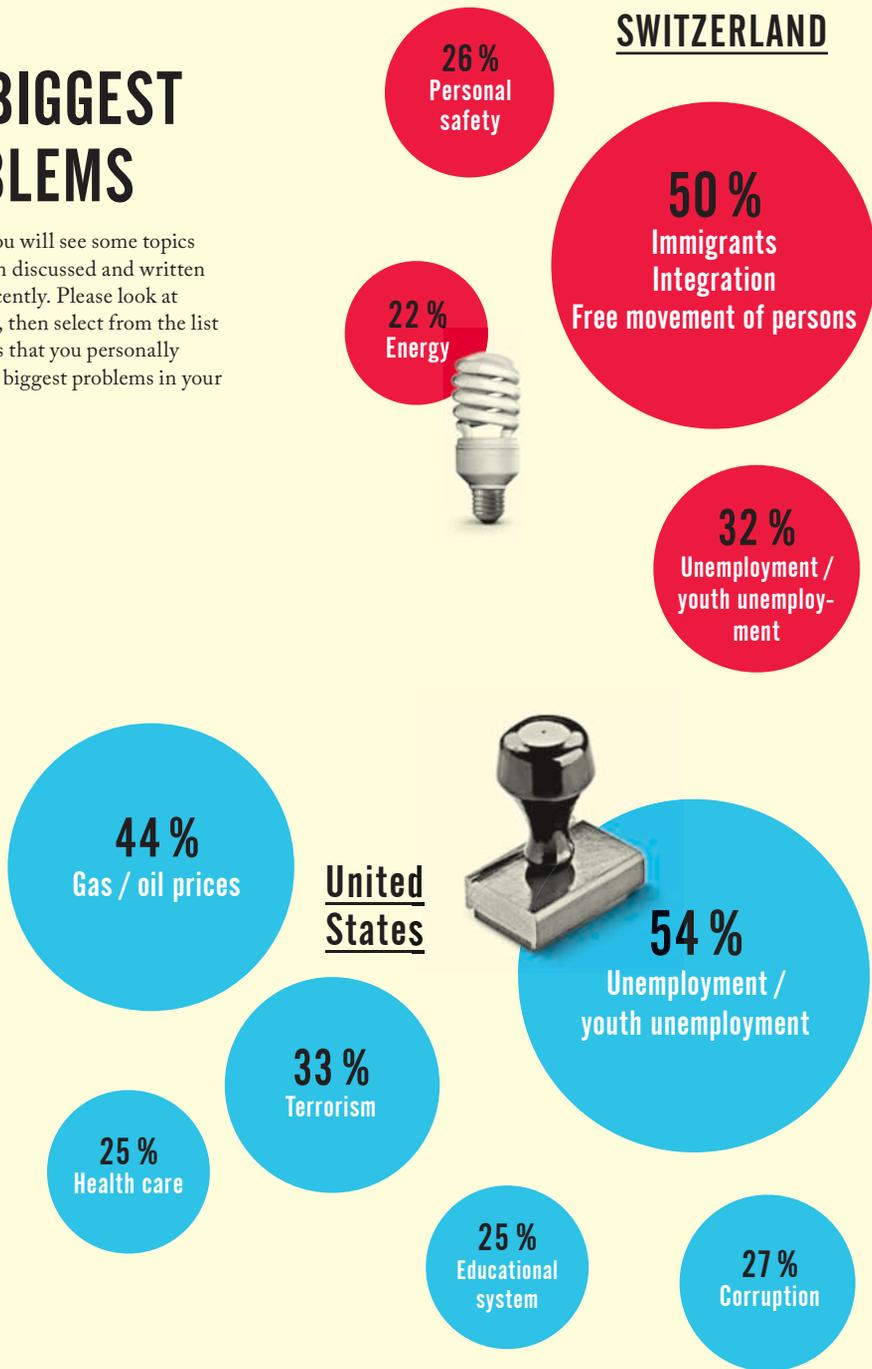
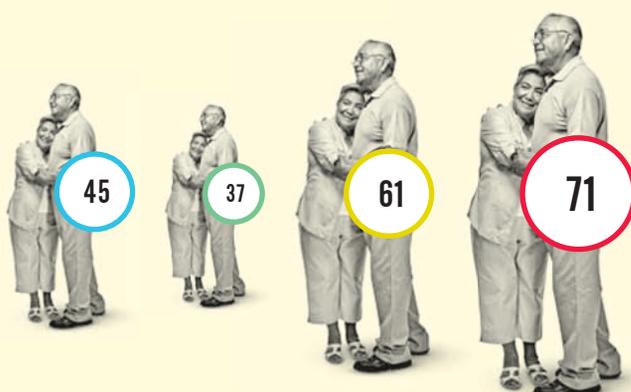


Fig. 03.5

### THE CHALLENGE OF DEMOGRAPHICS

“In the foreseeable future, your country will have more and more older people of retirement age and fewer and fewer young people. Do you consider this to be a big / very big problem?”

In %



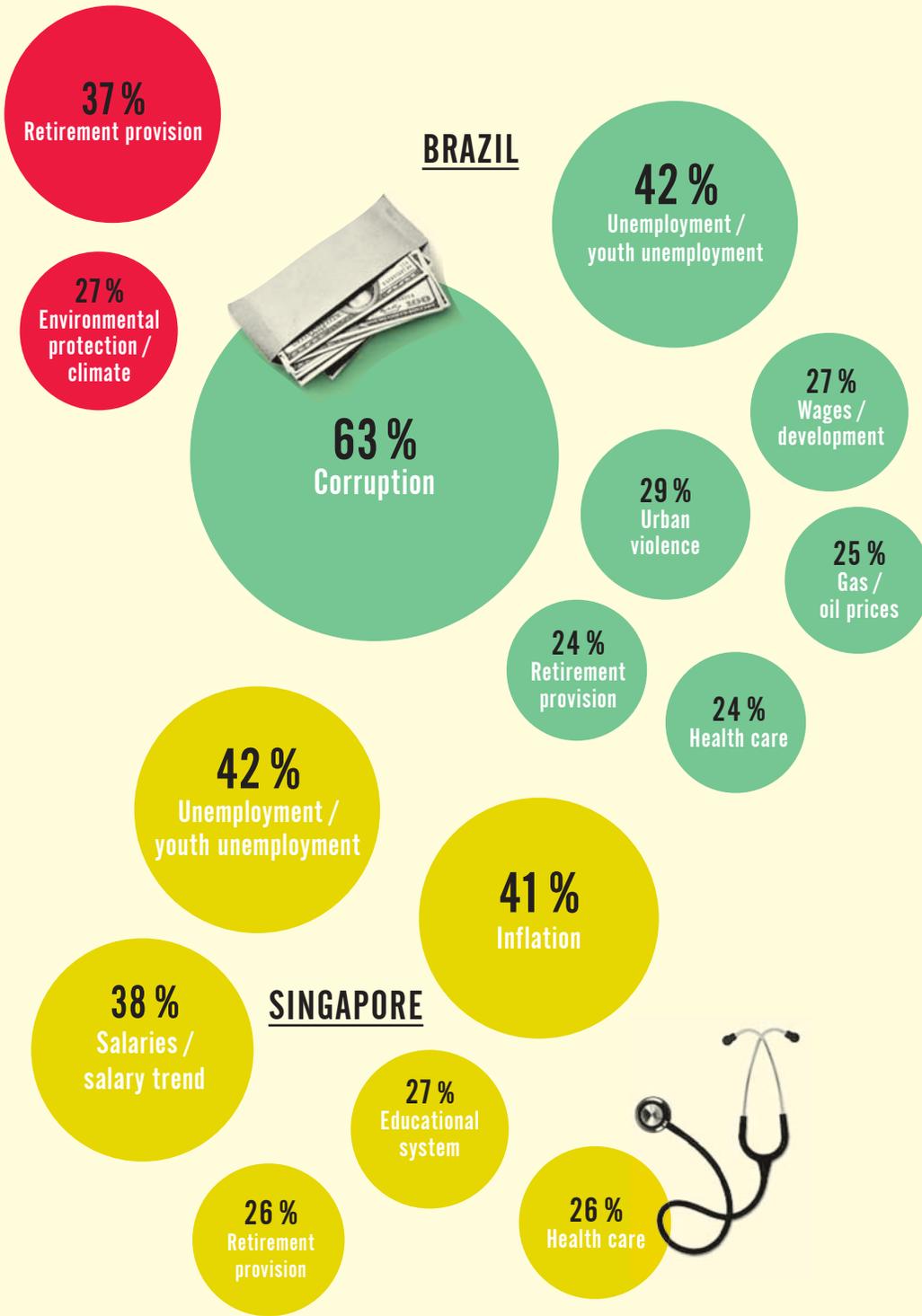
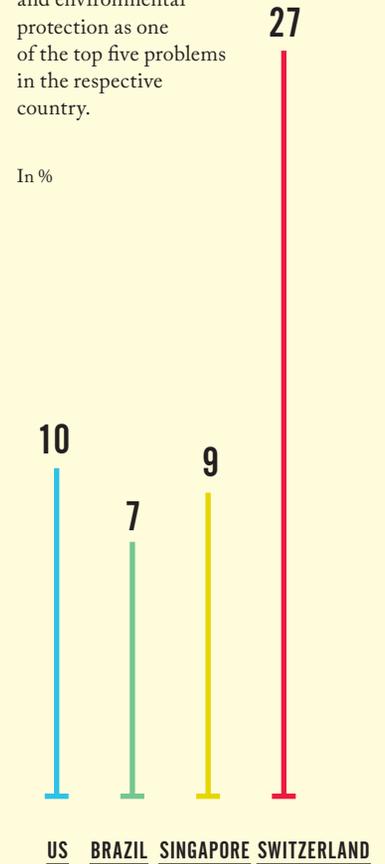


Fig. 03.4

**GLOBAL WARMING AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION – A SWISS ISSUE**

Number of respondents naming global warming and environmental protection as one of the top five problems in the respective country.



**11%** of Swiss young people are very worried about the economic crisis. A year ago, it was 19 percent (United States: 19 %, Singapore: 14 %, Brazil: 8 %).

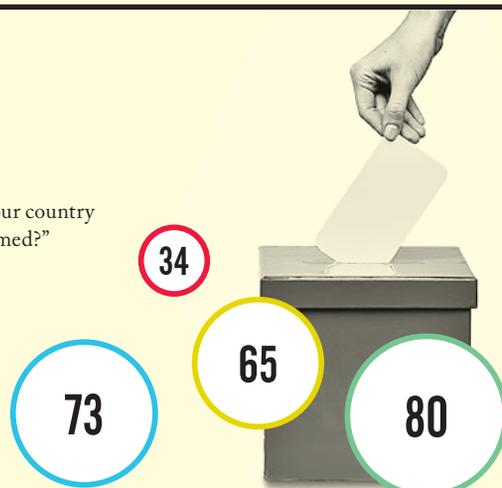
Fig. 03.6

**UNEVEN DESIRE FOR REFORM**

“Does the political system in your country need to be fundamentally reformed?”

In %

- US
- Brazil
- Singapore
- Switzerland





## SWITZERLAND

Population: 7.9 million  
GDP (Current USD): 632 billion  
GDP growth: 0.97 %  
Life expectancy: 82.7 years

### **Andrea Speck, 23, administrator, Oberarth**

“What are my career goals?  
I'd like to be a department head.  
What is my biggest dream?  
Taking a five month trip.”



# 04

## LIFESTYLE AND LEISURE

Nothing unites young people like how they spend their free time. Meeting up with friends and talking to them is important in every country, and for Swiss teenagers it is the most important thing of all (93%). In addition, smartphones have become a dominant lifestyle product since the survey was first started. Usage patterns for them are ever changing, as shown by the way WhatsApp has abruptly squeezed out SMS messaging in Switzerland. Social media remains a core trend, with Facebook continuing to be used a good deal, although it is not as “in” as it once was.

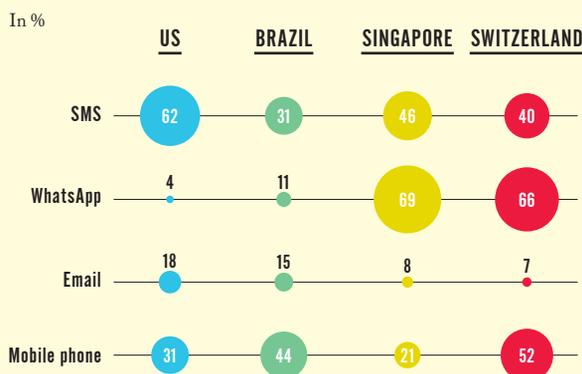
The current debate about internet monitoring makes the survey results about the perceived risk of information being misused particularly interesting. Young Swiss people are most skeptical, with 95 percent of them indicating that they are aware that their Facebook data could end up in the wrong hands. In Brazil this figure was only 54 percent. In the US, a higher-than-average number of young people (46%) said that they had experienced problems such as bullying on Facebook. Swiss teenagers were least likely by far to have had bad experiences of this nature (15%).

The “What’s Out” lists have a major common denominator: Young people are not into smoking or taking illegal and performance-enhancing drugs. Alcohol consumption is likewise out in Singapore and Brazil, but not in the US and Switzerland. In Singapore (39%) and Switzerland (51%) participating in political demonstrations is not cool. The homemaker model does not much appeal >

Fig. 04.1

### WHATSAPP DOMINATES

“Which forms of communication do you use to get in touch with your friends?”



# 28%

of young people in the US like to vacation abroad. Among the Swiss, this figure is 84% (Brazil: 48%, Singapore: 61%).

Fig. 04.2

### SMARTPHONE BOOM

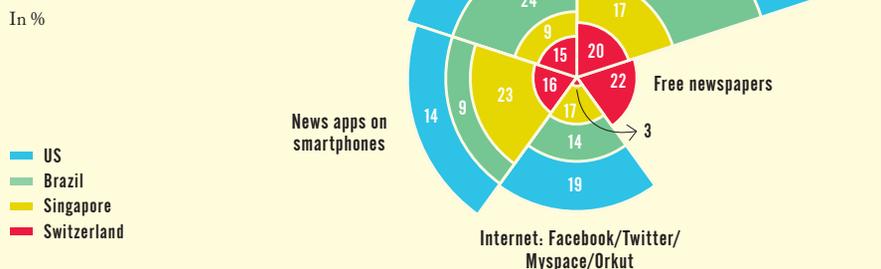
“Are smartphones in with your friends, and do you have one?”



Fig. 04.3

### FREE NEWSPAPERS POPULAR ONLY IN SWITZERLAND

“What is the most important source of information for you?”



to young people in Brazil and Switzerland, while sexual adventures are out in Singapore and Brazil. In the US, two social media platforms, Hi5 und Myspace, are among the top 10 on the out list.

There are greater differences by country in media use than in communication. Although the speed of getting information is universally very high, significant differences appear with the most important information sources. In the US and Brazil, the new media in particular dominate, along with television – and in Singapore it’s smartphone news apps. Young Swiss people have the most traditional focus when it comes to obtaining information. They continue to get most of their information from free newspapers (22%), followed by news websites (20%). News apps for smartphones have become much more popular. They were the most important information source for only 5 percent of respondents in 2010, but this figure has risen to 16 percent today. Paid-for daily newspapers are the most important information source for only 7 percent of young Swiss people.

Today’s young people are especially interested in information about music, brand and product news, computers, games and sports. Only in Switzerland do such traditional news areas as the weather (64%) and regional current events (58%) dominate. Business news is most interesting to Brazilians (41%) and Swiss people (39%). Americans are the least interested in it (22%).

Fig. 04.4

## GENERATION CLICK: DIGITAL IS IN

“We have listed a number of very different things in life. Please tell us if they are in with your friends and if you use them.” (Top 3 in each country)

Both charts in percent

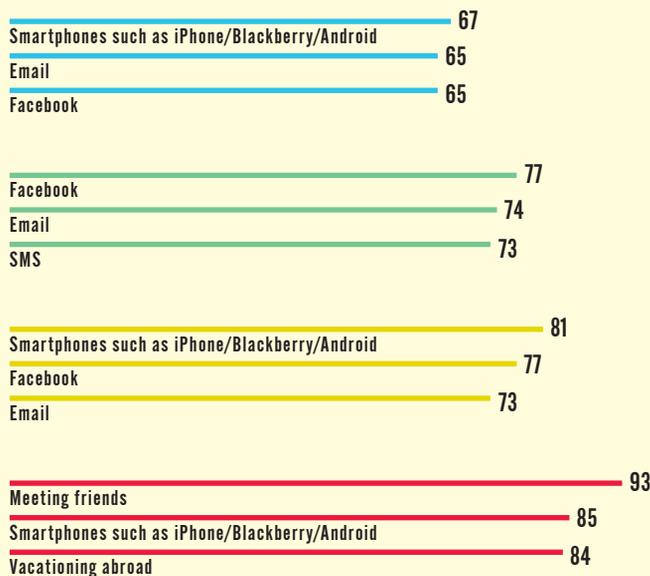
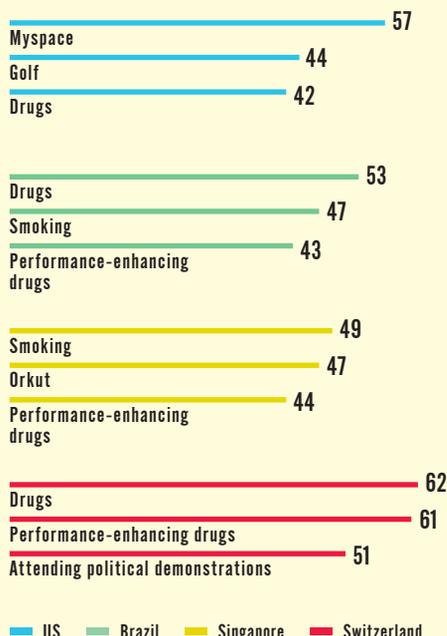


Fig. 04.5

## DRUGS ARE OUT

“We have listed a number of very different things in life. Please tell us if they are out with your friends and if you do *not* do them.” (Top 3 in each country)



Singapore

# ANXIETY ABOUT THE FUTURE IN ASIA'S BOOM COUNTRY

Young people in Singapore are religious and have great national pride, but they are pessimistic about their future. Their goal: earn a lot of money to buy a car and a home.

By Ruth Bossart

**M**ei Jin is burning a bundle of bank notes. She and her office colleagues have set up a metal barrel right in the middle of the street in a side alley of Chinatown. In it, a fire blazes. Slowly, Mei throws play money into the flames. A small altar adorned with incense sticks and food is situated next to the entrance to the advertising agency where she and her colleagues work. It is lunchtime in the city-state of Singapore, and it is Ghost Month. During their break, 23-year-old Mei Jin and her colleagues gather at the altar to pay homage to their deceased ancestors, offering food and burning symbolic money, sticks of incense, clothing and papier-mâché cars in order to make their stay on earth as comfortable as possible. At banquets held in honor of the dead, chairs are kept empty for their spirits. Many Chinese believe that the gates to the realms of heaven and hell are wide open in the seventh lunar month, allowing the innumerable souls of the deceased to travel back to earth.

Like many other young people in Singapore, Mei Jin and her young colleagues are using religious rituals to commemorate the deceased. The Credit Suisse Youth Barometer indicates that

the youth of Singapore are much more religious than their contemporaries in Switzerland. Around one-fifth visit a temple, mosque or church at least once a week. Only six percent never attend a house of worship. For Irene Ng, social scientist at the National University of Singapore, these results are not surprising. In Southeast Asia even young people hold the family in high regard. And since religious rituals frequently take place in

**“We are playing in the first division — that comes at a price.”**

Jayasutha Samuthiran

the context of the family, religion is often tightly interwoven with family tradition.

Sociology professor Ho Kong Chong explains that for many young people religion is also a question of identity. “Religion is closely linked to ethnicity in Singapore.” The majority of Malays are Muslim; most Indians are Hindu, and Chinese, who make up three-quarters of the population, mostly consider themselves Buddhist or Taoist.

Young people of all ethnic groups are very happy to hold a Singaporean passport. In the survey, 74 percent indi-

cated that they were very proud or fairly proud of their young nation, which became independent a mere 48 years ago. Consequently, for the youth of Singapore, it is only natural to adorn their windows, banisters and rear-view mirrors of cars with their country’s red and white flag on August 9, Singapore’s National Day. Every year, hundreds of thousands also watch the military parade, accompanied by folk dances and chants praising the unity of Singapore. In the West, such things smack of totalitarian countries. Jayasutha Samuthiran, a political science student of Indian descent, finds these things normal and necessary. “We are a young nation. We need celebrations like this to reinforce our inner cohesion.”

### **“You are what you own”**

The fact that many young people claim that the economic outlook for Singapore is rosy contradicts the findings of the study, namely that many young people are also worried about their own personal futures. Among the most frequently mentioned problems are the fear of unemployment, inflation, cost-of-living increases, and low wages, which are inadequate to cover the high cost of living in Singapore. Jayasutha Samuthiran certainly understands this. “I don’t want simply to have just enough food on the table. I want more,” says the young >



65 percent growth in twenty years: population growth is driving a housing shortage for young people.

woman, who spends her free time working as a DJ and modeling. With these jobs she earns the spending money she needs to buy expensive name-brand clothes and shoes. Because in Singapore, the rule is, “you are what you own: the clothes you wear, the place you live in, and the car you drive.” The car, an expensive proposition in Singapore with its high taxes and tolls, is an important status symbol. She and her boyfriend, who are 22 and 23 years old respectively, are already saving for a Jaguar. Owning their own home is also on the couple’s wish list. Unfortunately, prices have increased drastically over the last ten years – a two-room apartment in a 30-story building on the outskirts of the city will cost the equivalent of half a million francs. But she would really rather have a house instead of an apartment in a large building. Samantha Kundus, a 25-year-old PR specialist, would also like to buy her own apartment. But this is wishful thinking. Prices are just too high, even to rent. So instead she still lives with her parents.

#### **One in three a foreigner**

Many young people say that the foreigners are to blame for the plight of the

housing market. A number of economic studies showing that immigrants have caused an increase in the price of real estate confirm this. Singapore’s population has grown 65 percent in the last twenty years. Today, one in three of the 5.4 million residents holds a foreign passport. Besides, with an area six times smaller than Switzerland, this island nation has almost no large parcels of land left.

After the embarrassing outcome of the last election two years ago, in part due to their liberal immigration policies, the governing party has tightened its entry requirements for foreign workers. Since then, the city fathers are taking every opportunity to repeat their populist slogan: “Singaporeans First.” Specifically, that means that Singaporeans should be given preference over foreigners in the education system, as well as in the labor and housing markets. Jayasutha Samuthiran believes that this is only fair. Samuthiran says that she sometimes feels like a foreigner in her own country. And she feels frustrated when overcrowded buses simply drive past her bus stop because there is not enough room for another passenger. “Not least, the large numbers of foreigners are to blame for

this.” Migration pressure is also evident in the labor market – in particular because of well-educated immigrants from China and India. Samuthiran talks about fellow students from abroad in technical fields of study who studied incessantly, and then later in their careers even took work home on weekends. “We Singaporeans don’t stand a chance against that.” Young people in Singapore, she says, want a personal life in addition to a career. It does, in fact, seem to be more difficult for young Singaporeans to find suitable jobs. The unemployment rate among 15- to 24-year-olds was 6.7 percent last year, while average unemployment was only 2.8 percent.

Xenophobia is widespread among young Singaporeans – in the survey, over two-thirds rated the presence of foreigners in the city state as a problem – and the growing unease is evident on internet forums, where there is frequent critical and even racist commentary. But to date, the internet seems to be one of the few outlets where young people can express their dissatisfaction.

According to the Credit Suisse Youth Barometer, digital communication is omnipresent in day-to-day life.

Four out of five young Singaporeans think smartphones are in, and 69 percent use the WhatsApp app to send free SMS messages via the internet. WhatsApp is the communication tool of choice for 66 percent of young people in Switzerland, 11 percent in Brazil and only 4 percent in the US. Badi Siruno is 21 years old, has just finished his military service and wants to study political science in Europe. “Parents send a WhatsApp message to their kids from the bedroom to remind them to brush their teeth or set the air conditioning.” Then, at the breakfast table, children meticulously check everything that happened on Facebook and Twitter while they were sleeping.

**Strong belief in the state**

In Singapore, there is no place for open criticism, much less political protests. A slew of laws serves the state by nipping rebelliousness in the bud. From childhood on, Singaporeans are conditioned to stay within certain boundaries. Therefore, says Samantha Kudus, who also studied in the US, only a very few will risk causing trouble for themselves and their families by voicing opposition. People are focused on their own worlds, their careers, their families. Jayasutha Samuthiran agrees with them, adding that so far, government leaders have not done a bad job. “Four decades ago we were still a developing country, and today, we are playing in the first division – that comes at a price.”

Ruth Bossart is Southeast Asia correspondent for “NZZ am Sonntag” and Swiss broadcaster SRF.

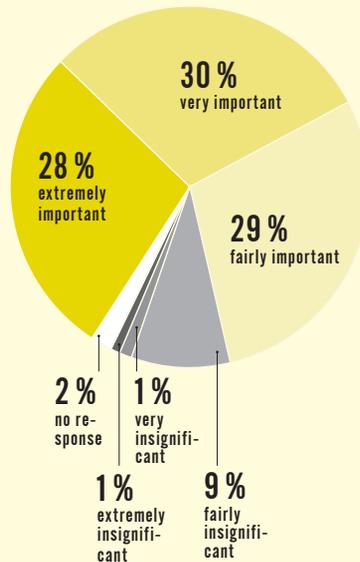
**SINGAPORE**

Around one-third of the approximately 5.4 million residents of Singapore are under the age of 24. The city state spends 3.3 percent of its gross domestic product on education. Around 91 percent of young people successfully complete secondary education. The average age at first marriage is 28 for women and 30 for men.



**SINGAPORE'S MATERIALISTIC YOUTH**

“When you think about what you are striving for in life, how important is it for you personally to have a lot of money?”



**55%**

of youth in Singapore would definitely like to work abroad (Brazil: 55%, US: 43%, Switzerland: 40%).

Brazil

# “YOUNG PEOPLE FEEL EXCLUDED”

For Brazilian philosopher José Arthur Giannotti, his country's younger generation has every reason to be worried about the future.

Interview: Sandro Benini



“Now it remains to be seen how the political system will react”: protests in Rio de Janeiro, June 2013.

**B**razil was shaken last June by social protests in which up to a million people took to the streets across the country. Those protests died down again quickly over the summer. Did that surprise you?

Social protests always come in waves. This is completely normal. No one would expect so many people to protest for months at a time. What is important is the fact that the demonstrations took place at all and that they conveyed the deep frustration prevalent in all regions. Now it remains to be seen how the political system will react to it.

*There were a great many young people among the demonstrators. Why are they dissatisfied when internationally Brazil is considered a model for success?*

Recently international enthusiasm for Brazil has diminished substantially because the country's growth rates have been low and the infrastructure is so poor – the public transportation system, the health system, the schools are all in urgent need of revitalization. Not only do young people feel excluded from politics, they experience daily that almost all state institutions are inadequate and corrupt. The fact that the education system works so badly is particularly serious for young people. The universities are not educating enough engineers and other technical personnel, and the teachers in secondary schools and high schools are poorly educated themselves. In international education comparisons, Brazil's youth always occupy the lowest ranks (see also page 4).

*What is the actual impact of this?*

Someone with a Brazilian qualification applying to an international company, for instance, will not usually land a demanding and well-paid job, but can only hope to eventually be promoted from third undersecretary to second undersecretary.

*The Youth Barometer conducted by Credit Suisse showed that young Brazilian men and women are particularly post-materialistic and religious compared to young people in other countries, but at the same time they are hedonistic. Does this surprise you?*

No, not at all. Between 2003 and 2011, when Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva was in office, around 30 million people rose from poverty to the middle class thanks to the raw materials boom, social programs and higher wages. This triggered a huge wave of enthusiasm for consumption. The state even fanned the flames of this enthusiasm, for example, by making loans more easily available. Home ownership, a car, a career: these are all important to Brazil's youth because they

**“In international education comparisons, Brazil's youth always occupies the lowest ranks.”**

José Arthur Giannotti

are all part of a way of life that until recently seemed unattainable for many. But, anyone who bought a car in recent years soon discovered that getting around the cities with it was impossible because of the hours spent stuck in traffic. The poor public infrastructure shines a bright light on the dark side of the wave of consumption, and this in turn allows post-materialistic values to remain valid.

*Are the youth of Brazil really as religious as they claim to be in the Credit Suisse Youth Barometer?*

This is difficult to determine because, until recently, it was considered good form in Brazil to call yourself devout, especially devoutly Catholic. However, there has been a huge exodus of young people to evangelical free churches. Today, one in four between the ages of 16 and 25 belongs to these churches.

*How do you explain this?*

Here in São Paulo, many cars have a bumper sticker “God is faithful,” but for followers of the evangelical churches, God is mostly about money: You attend services regularly, and for doing so, God rewards you in material ways. In the evangelical free churches, the pursuit of wealth, success and power is absolutely fine. They offer Brazil's youth a perfect opportunity to link their need for religion with the materialistic values of a modern consumer society.

*Pope Francis visited Brazil this summer and generated overwhelming enthusiasm, even among young people. Can he stop, or at least slow, their exodus to the evangelical free churches?*

His humility and his focus on the poor have truly inspired young people. But I doubt whether that is enough to stop people from leaving the Catholic Church in the long term – even more so because many bishops and cardinals in Brazil and other Latin American countries are resisting the new course.

**Sandro Benini** is the Latin American correspondent for the “Tages-Anzeiger” daily newspaper.



**José Arthur Giannotti**, 83, is professor emeritus of the University of São Paulo and is currently regarded as one of Brazil's prominent political observers. He has dedicated several of his publications to the philosophers Karl Marx and Ludwig Wittgenstein. However, he has always distanced himself from Marxist and neo-Marxist currents.

## BRAZIL

Eighty-two million people under the age of 24 live in Brazil, corresponding to 41 percent of the total population of around 200 million. Youth unemployment is at almost 18 percent while total unemployment is at 6 percent – low by Brazilian standards. Because the murder rate is exceptionally high compared to other countries, homicide is the most frequent cause of death for young Brazilians – in neighboring Argentina, homicide only ranks twelfth.



# 39%

**of young people in Brazil believe that their country is perceived abroad as somewhat or very bad; in the US, 47 percent of young people believe this about their country. (Singapore: 13%. Switzerland: 10%)**