



# Job and Top Sharing in Switzerland

A Survey of Small, Medium-sized and  
Large Organisations in Three Language Regions

Study on behalf of the PTO Association  
(Part-time Optimisation)

Anne Jansen & Ellenor Hunn

## **Imprint**

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# Contents

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<b>Foreword</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Summary</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1 Background</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2 Methodology</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1 Main survey	8
2.1.1 Random sample	8
2.1.2 Questionnaire	9
2.2 Additional survey of organisations with job/top sharing	9
2.2.1 Random sample	9
2.2.2 Questionnaire	9
<b>3 Results</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1 Prevalence	10
3.1.1 Organisations with job or top sharing	10
3.1.2 Organisations without job or top sharing	17
3.2 Composition of job and top sharing pairs	18
3.2.1 Composition of job sharing pairs	18
3.2.2 Composition of the top sharing pairs	20
3.3 Implementation of top sharing	23
3.3.1 Reasons for implementing top sharing	23
3.3.2 Positive and negative experiences with top sharing	24
3.4 Influence of framework conditions	25
3.5 HR-relevant aspects of job/top sharing	26
<b>4 Discussion</b>	<b>27</b>
4.1 Recommendations for action	29
4.2 Limitations and future research	30
4.3 Summary	30
<b>5 Literature</b>	<b>31</b>

# Foreword

Our PTO (Part-time Optimisation) Association aims to promote a better balance in the Swiss professional world – between man and woman, work and family, training and career – for employees, companies and society as a whole.

With the “Go4jobsharing” project financed by the Federal Office for Gender Equality (FOGE), our PTO Association provides employees and employers with information about the practice of job and top sharing in Switzerland (see [www.go4jobsharing.ch](http://www.go4jobsharing.ch)). An initial survey of private companies was carried out in 2014 by the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland FHNW under the mandate of PTO in order to ascertain the practice of job sharing in Switzerland.

The second survey presented here was conducted by the FHNW in collaboration with our PTO Association in 2023–24. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Professor Anne Jansen and Ellenor Hunn (FHNW). The results of these studies show that the model of job and top sharing in Switzerland has made progress in all language regions. The encouraging results of this study strengthen the motivation of our Association to continue its diverse services and accompaniment with even greater commitment. Our aim is to further promote job and top sharing and make it better known. A working model that brings numerous benefits to companies and the active population of our country.

In an ever-changing world of work, where employees are striving for greater flexibility, collaborative work, meaningfulness and dialogue, the job and top sharing model is proving to be a fascinating and multifaceted response. This option also presents itself as a cross-generational solution that appeals to all age groups and genders. The attractiveness of job and top sharing also lies in the fact that it enables knowledge transfer both within private companies and public offices – a decisive aspect for ensuring knowledge transfer in a constantly evolving working environment.



**Dr Irenka Krone-Germann**

Co-founder and Director of the PTO Association;  
April 2024

# Summary

Against the backdrop of an increasing shortage of skilled workers, organisations are increasingly reliant on making work attractive in order to attract and retain workers. Job and top sharing is a working model that meets employees' needs for meaning and work-life balance. Employees who work in job sharing share a full-time position with mutually dependent tasks and joint responsibility. Top sharing refers to job sharing at management level. Job and top sharing can bring a number of benefits for organisations as well as employees, as it allows part-time work even in roles that for a long time were only considered feasible in the context of a full-time position.

The last nationwide survey on the prevalence of job and top sharing took place ten years ago. This study therefore examines how widespread job and top sharing are in organisations in Switzerland and what influence organisational framework conditions have on the implementation of job and top sharing. A letter was sent to a stratified random sample of 5,000 organisations in the public, private and non-profit sector in three language regions of Switzerland, inviting them to take part in an online survey. The results are based on data from 1,064 organisations (response rate 22.5%). In order to gain a better understanding of aspects of job and top sharing relevant to HR management, an additional 148 selected organisations with job/top sharing were surveyed (20% response rate).

The results of the main survey show that job/top sharing exists in 28% of organisations in Switzerland. The prevalence in all three language regions is similar. Large organisations have a significantly higher proportion of job/top sharing than small and medium-sized organisations. A good four-fifths of organisations with this working model implement job sharing and one-third implement top sharing. The data also shows that job/top sharing is currently not only widespread in more organisations in Switzerland, but also that more people are working in this model than ten years ago. In particular, the spread of top sharing has increased. The majority of organisations have positive experiences with top sharing and report fewer negative experiences.

The additional survey makes it clear that HR seems to face challenges in implementing this working model, especially in recruiting job/top sharing pairs. The organisations with job/top sharing do not differ significantly from those without job/top sharing in terms of their organisational framework, i.e. in terms of their gender equality policies, opportunities for flexible working hours, the establishment of agile working and the extent to which they are affected by a shortage of skilled workers. However, organisations implementing job/top sharing appear to be less able to offer their employees local flexibility and the use of digital technologies is on average less widespread than in organisations without job/top sharing. Based on the results, recommendations for action can be derived with the aim of further increasing dissemination and supporting organisations in their implementation by providing targeted information and offers.

# 1 Background

SBB, Swiss Post, HUG, CAP legal expenses insurance, State Secretariat for Migration, Unisanté and, from 2024, the private bank Vontobel at the top management level: all these organisations offer their employees job and top sharing (Aregger, 2023a; Aregger, 2023b; Fiaux, 2019; Gilb, 2023; Handelszeitung, 2023; Severin & Gallarotti, 2020; SRF, 2021). Employees who work under the job or top sharing model share a full-time position with mutually dependent tasks and joint responsibility. This working model was already propagated by Olmsted in the USA in the 1970s as a “new way to work” (Olmsted, 1977, p. 78).

Against the backdrop of an increasing shortage of skilled workers, organisations are reliant on making work attractive in order to attract and retain workers. Job and top sharing is a new work concept, i.e. an approach to work structuring that focuses on employees’ needs for meaning, freedom, and self-determination, enabling interesting activities even with reduced working hours. In practice, job sharing encompasses different ways of dividing working hours and tasks (Baillod, 2001). The term “top sharing” introduced by Kuark (2002) has become established in Switzerland for job sharing in management positions. The PTO (Part-time Optimisation) Association defines top sharing as “[...] job sharing in positions of high responsibility, which also includes employee management” (Krone-Germann et al., 2020, p. 4).

There is still little data for Switzerland on the current spread of this working model. In particular, there are individual reports on organisation websites that portray job or top sharing pairs, e.g. CSS (Morton de Lachapelle, 2021); State Secretariat for Migration (SEM, 2021), Migros (Bauer, 2023), Swiss Post (Iraoui, 2023). Ten years ago, Amstutz and Jochem (2014) investigated the prevalence of job sharing in Switzerland in a study on part-time employment and job sharing. Of the almost 400 organisations of different sizes and industries, 27% said they offered job sharing, of which almost a third also had top sharing. The Swiss Labour Force Survey (SLFS) addresses the question “Do you job share?” (BFS, 2022). The 2021 results show that just under 4% of all employees and just under 10% of all gainfully employed persons work part-time in the job sharing model. Of those in part-time employment, women are more likely to work in job sharing than men (10% versus 7%). Job sharing is most common in the “education and teaching” sector, followed by the hospitality industry and in the “office workers and related occupations” and “intellectual and academic occupations” occupational groups (BFS, 2022).

Job and top sharing models allow part-time work even in positions that for a long time were only considered to be feasible in the context of full-time employment (see Krone-Germann, 2011) and can thus offer a range of benefits for employees and organisations alike. Increased employer attractiveness and the retention of qualified people are often cited as benefits for the organisation (e.g. Crampton et al., 2003; Döös & Wilhelmson, 2021). Job sharing is also often associated with higher productivity (Karlshaus & Kaehler, 2023), the development of innovative solutions (Baillod, 2001; Ellwart et al. 2023) and a better handling of complexity (Ellwart et al., 2023). There may also be benefits in the form of better stand-in arrangements and more capacity balancing options in the event of an increased workload (Baillod, 2001; Karlshaus & Kaehler, 2023).

For people who work under the job or top sharing model, the benefits lie in the better compatibility of work and other areas of life (e.g. Brough et al., 2005; Cooman et al., 2019; Kreysch & Vogel, 2016), the opportunity to also work fewer less in highly qualified positions and in management positions (Baillod, 2001; Döös & Wilhelmson, 2021; Ellwart et al., 2023; Karlshaus & Kaehler, 2023), social support and collegial feedback (Döös & Wilhelmson, 2021; Ellwart et al., 2023). A number of bachelor’s and master’s theses have dealt with job and top sharing in recent years and show that job and top sharing can offer benefits for organisations and employees (e.g. Aschwanden, 2021; Dimitri, 2014; Ljiljanic, 2023; Mülle, 2022).

The available data clearly shows that the job and top sharing working model is used by organisations of various sizes in different sectors and can be associated with benefits for employers and employees. Little is known, however, about the current practice in organisations in Switzerland and the influence of general conditions, such as a shortage of skilled workers or the possibility of working flexibly in terms of time and location, have on the prevalence of job and top sharing.

Against this background, the present study examines the following question:

How widespread are job and top sharing in organisations in Switzerland, and what influence do organisational framework conditions have on the implementation of job and top sharing?

The aim of this study is to provide an overview of the current prevalence and implementation of job and top sharing in small, medium-sized and large organisations in three language regions of Switzerland.

## 2 Methodology

In order to determine the prevalence of job and top sharing in Switzerland, organisations in the private, public and non-profit sectors were contacted by letter in three language regions of Switzerland and invited to take part in an online survey. Job sharing was defined as “[...] two or more employees sharing a full-time position with interdependent duties and shared responsibilities. The term top sharing refers to job sharing in positions of high responsibility, which also includes employee management” (Krone-Germann et al., 2020, p. 4). In order to gain a better understanding of aspects of job and top sharing relevant to HR management, a second survey of selected organisations with job/top sharing was also carried out.

The data from the main survey and the additional survey was evaluated with the statistics software R (R version 4.3.2 (2023-10-31 ucrt)) in Rstudio. The survey package was used to weight the main survey data (Lumley, 2010).

### 2.1 Main survey

The population of the first survey was all organisations in the secondary and tertiary sector with at least ten employees in Switzerland. From this population, a stratified random sample was defined by language region and organisational size. A distinction was made between the German, French and Italian-speaking regions as well as small (10–49 employees), medium-sized (50–249 employees) and large organisations (250 or more employees).

The stratified random sample comprises 5,000 organisations. These organisations were invited to participate in the study by letter. The letter was written in German, French or Italian and was addressed to people familiar with HR issues (e.g. HR managers, managing directors, diversity officers). In addition to information on the objective and duration of the survey, it also included a QR code and a link to an online survey. The survey was implemented in the online survey tool “Tivian”.

In mid-August, all organisations received a second letter thanking them for their participation in the study and asking them to fill in the questionnaire if they had not already done so. The survey period ran from mid-July to mid-September 2023.

#### 2.1.1 Random sample

Of the 5,000 organisations contacted, 139 could not be contacted due to an incorrect address or liquidation. A total of 1,321 completed the questionnaire in full or in part. 122 organisations were excluded from the sample because they had fewer than 10 employees despite preselection and reference in the questionnaire. Finally, 135 organisations were excluded for quality reasons as they either did not answer the first three questions or provided implausible answers.

This leaves 1,064 organisations in the sample. The response rate is therefore 22.5%. HR managers were the most frequent respondents (41%), CEOs/managing directors the second most frequent respondents (25%) and HR employees were the third most frequent respondents (23%). 79% answered in German, 18% in French and 3% in Italian. Small organisations make up 61%, medium-sized organisations 31% and large organisations 8% of the sample. Most organisations (66%) operate in the private sector, 19% in the public sector and 15% in the non-profit sector. The sectors “building trade/construction” (17%), “healthcare and social work” (14%) and “manufacturing sector/manufacture of goods” (13%) are most frequently represented.

Compared to the population, small organisations are under-represented, whereas medium-sized and large organisations are over-represented in the sample. Organisations from German-speaking Switzerland are slightly over-represented, while the other language regions are slightly under-represented. The selected questionnaire language determined the language region. In order to compensate for these under-representations and over-representations and to reflect the structural composition of the population in the sample, the data was weighted by organisation size and language region.

### 2.1.2 Questionnaire

Respondents were able to choose German, French or Italian to begin the online questionnaire. The questionnaire contained questions on the prevalence of job and top sharing and the composition of job sharing pairs (gender, age difference, workload, management level); this was done separately for job and top sharing. With regard to top sharing, questions were also asked about implementation (reasons for introducing it, positive and negative experiences). All respondents were asked about the general conditions in the organisation (possibility to work flexibly in terms of time and location, prevalence of digital technologies and agile working, implementation of gender equality measures, shortage of skilled workers and average age). The questionnaire also included questions on the sector, the size of the organisation and the industry.

## **2.2 Additional survey of organisations with job/top sharing**

In a second survey in November 2023, people were also contacted by e-mail in German, French or Italian who had contact with the PTO (Part-time Optimisation) Association regarding the implementation of job/top sharing. The contact persons were asked to forward the link to the online questionnaire to someone in the organisation who is familiar with HR issues. Everyone who was contacted received a reminder e-mail.

### 2.2.1 Random sample

People from 148 organisations were contacted by e-mail, 110 of whom were reachable. The other people received either an error message stating that the e-mail could not be delivered or an out-of-office message stating that the e-mail was not currently being read. Of those who could be reached, 39 completed the questionnaire. Seventeen were excluded from the sample, either because they did not complete the questionnaire or because there is no (longer) job or top sharing in their organisation. The sample examined includes data from 22 organisations. The response rate is therefore 20%.

64% of the organisations come from the German-speaking region and 18% each from the French and Italian-speaking regions. The largest proportion (41%) is made up of organisations with 2,500 or more people. Organisations from the public sector are most frequently represented (41%), followed by organisations from the private sector (36%) and the non-profit sector (23%).

### 2.2.2 Questionnaire

The questionnaire relating to the additional survey was structured in the same way as the main survey and was supplemented with additional questions. The supplementary questions related to the length of time the job and top sharing pairs stay together as well as HR-relevant aspects such as acceptance in the organisation and the recruitment, support and dissolution of job and top sharing pairs.

# 3 Results

The following chapters present the results on the prevalence, composition and implementation of job and top sharing, as well as the influence of framework conditions. The weighted sample of the main survey is as representative as possible of the population of the organisations. Thus, statements about the population can be derived from the sample. However, as the sample represents only a subset of the total population, these statements are subject to statistical uncertainty.

## 3.1 Prevalence

### 3.1.1 Organisations with job or top sharing

Almost 28% of organisations state that employees work in job/top sharing. In the German-speaking region, just under a third (30%) of organisations have job/top sharing (see Figure 1). In the French-speaking region, the figure is a fifth (21%) and in the Italian-speaking region, it is a quarter (25%). The prevalence of job/top sharing in the language regions does not differ significantly from one another.

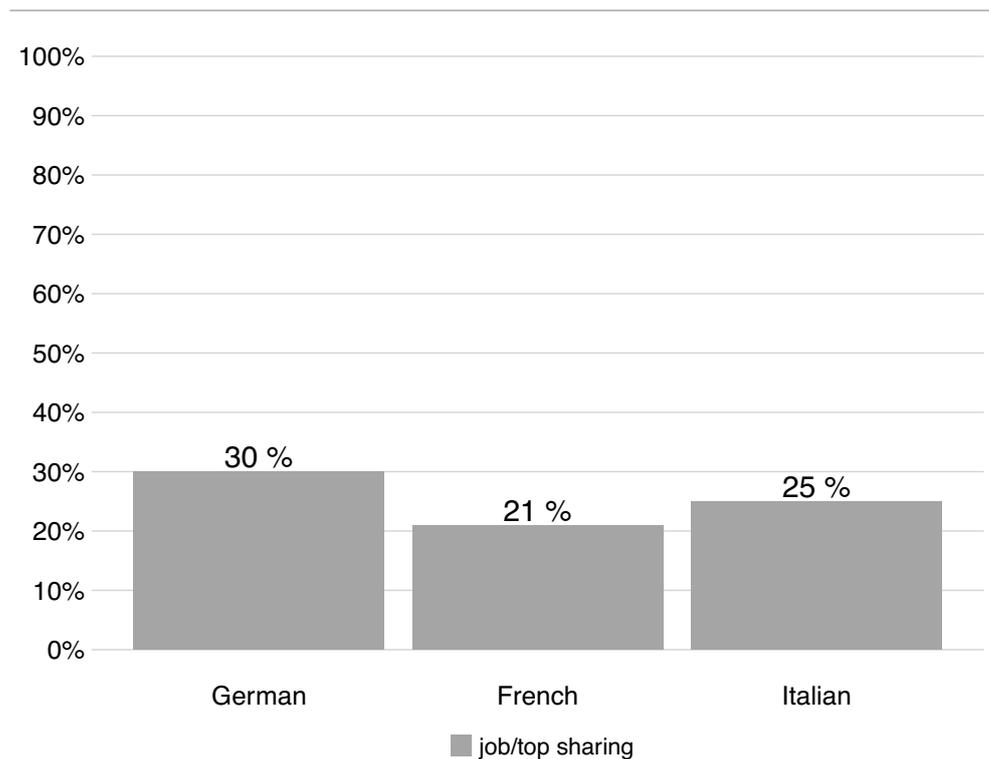
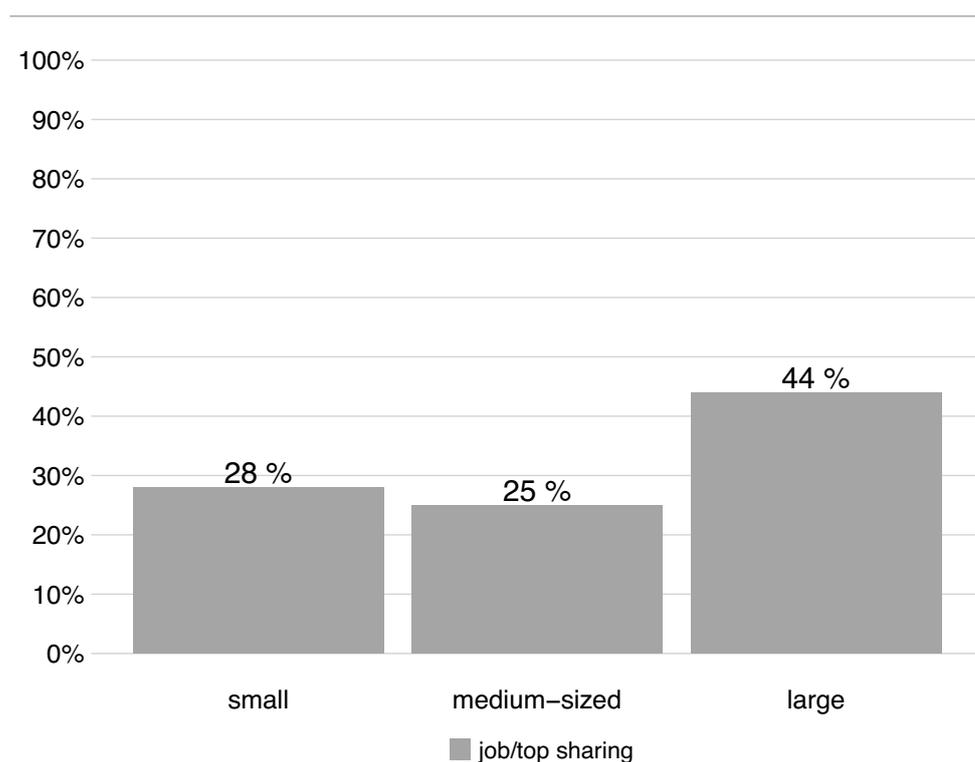


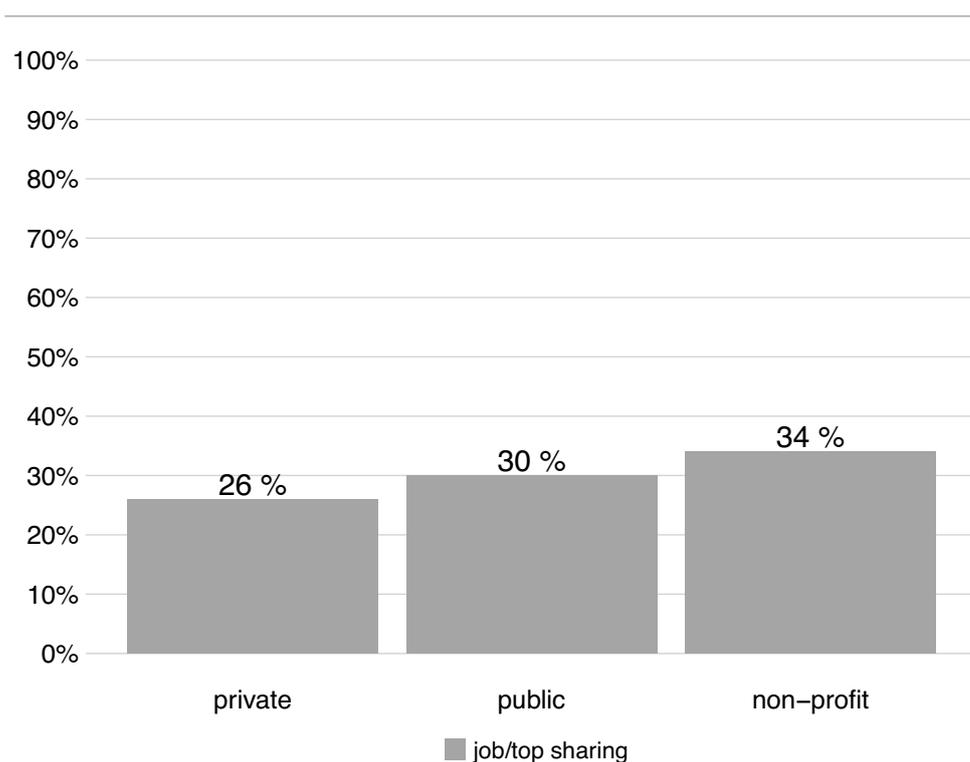
Figure 1: Prevalence of job/top sharing by language region

At 44%, large organisations have a higher proportion of job/top sharing than small (28%) and medium-sized organisations (25%) (see Figure 2). A Chi<sup>2</sup>test shows that the existence of job/top sharing is related to the size of the organisation ( $\chi^2=5.1$ ,  $p=0.01$ ). However, this correlation is weak (Cramer's  $V=0.1$ ).



**Figure 2:** Prevalence of job/top sharing by organisation size

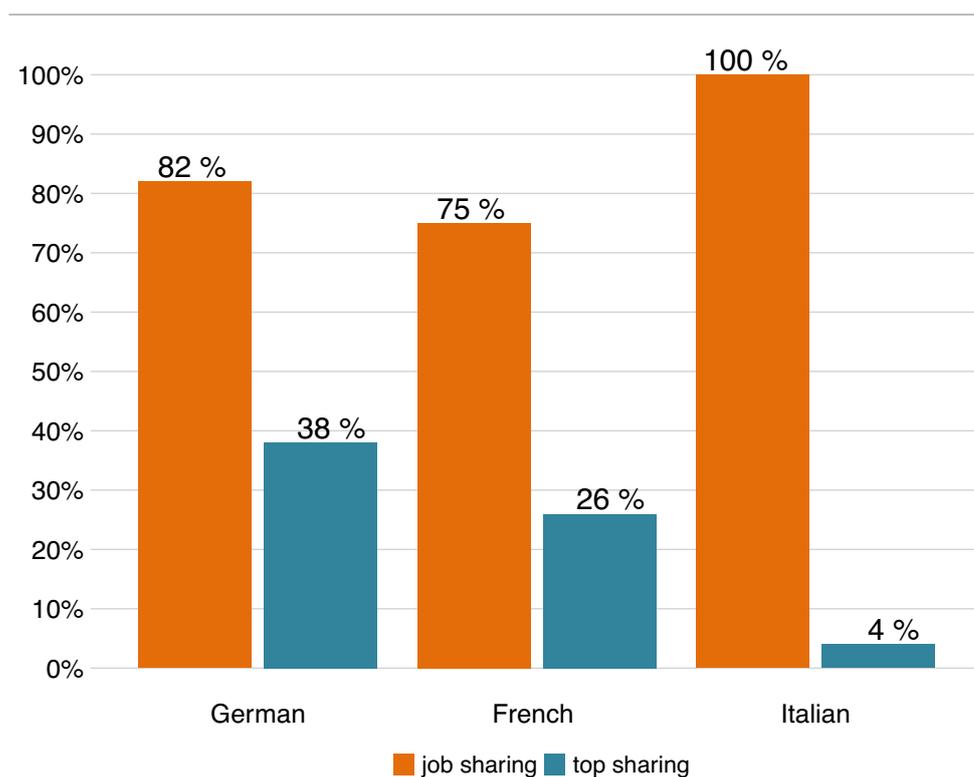
Figure 3 shows the share of job/top sharing in the various sectors. Organisations in the non-profit sector account for the largest share at over a third (34%). The proportion is 26% in private sector organisations and 30% in the public sector.



**Figure 3:** Prevalence of job/top sharing by sector

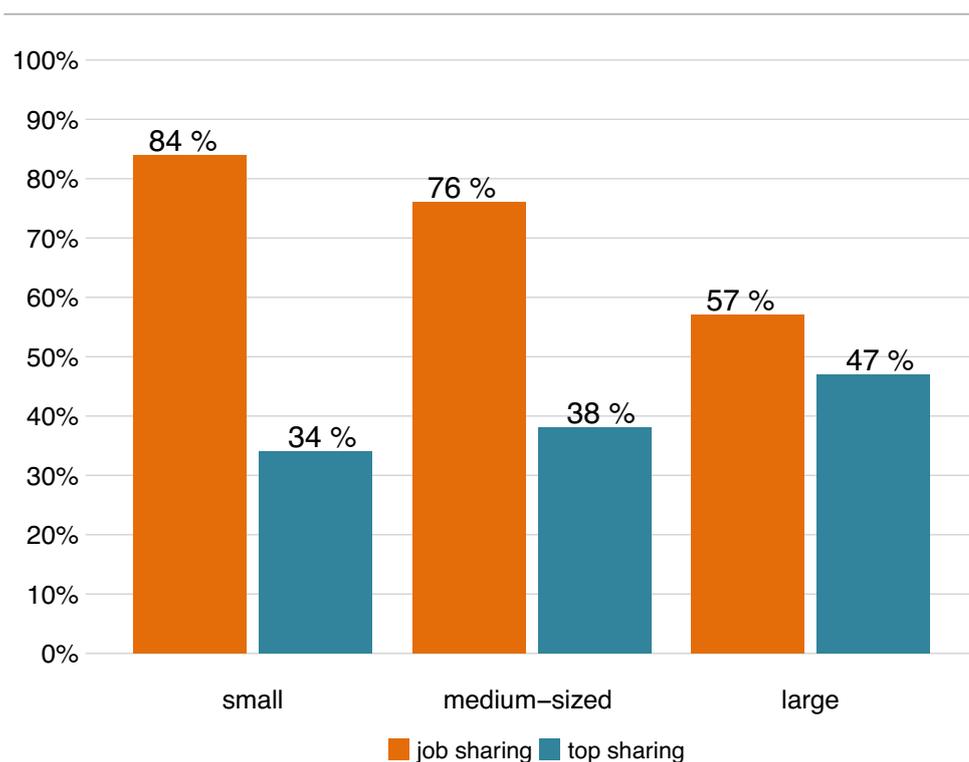
Most organisations (35%) say they have had job/top sharing for ten or more years. In about 20% of the organisations, this has been the case for five to less than ten years and for two to less than five years. 10% of the organisations have been implementing job/top sharing for one to less than two years and 5% for less than one year. 9% of organisations do not know since when job/top sharing has existed in their organisation.

Of those organisations that state that employees work in job/top sharing, 82% have job sharing and 35% have top sharing. In the Italian-speaking region, the presence of employees in job sharing is particularly pronounced at 100% (see Figure 4). The proportion is 82% in the German-speaking region and 75% in the French-speaking region. In contrast, only 4% of organisations in the Italian-speaking region have employees in top sharing. This proportion is 38% for organisations in the German-speaking region and 26% in the French-speaking region.



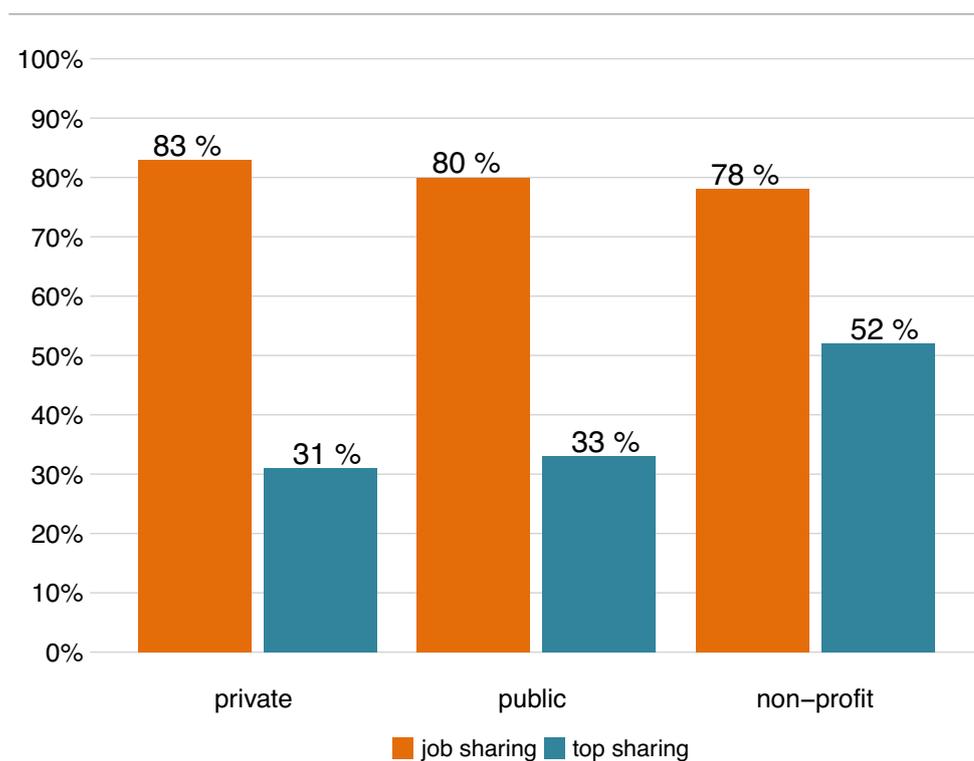
**Figure 4:** Prevalence of job and top sharing by language region

Compared to medium-sized and large organisations, small organisations are the most likely to have employees in job sharing at 84% (see Figure 5). Compared to medium-sized and small organisations, large organisations most often have employees in top sharing (47%).



**Figure 5:** Prevalence of job and top sharing by organisation size

The frequency of organisations with employees in job sharing is similar in all sectors (see Figure 6). 83% of organisations from the private sector, 80% from the public sector and 78% from the non-profit sector have employees in job sharing. With regard to organisations with employees in top sharing, the shares are 31% in the private sector, 33% in the public sector and 52% in the non-profit sector.

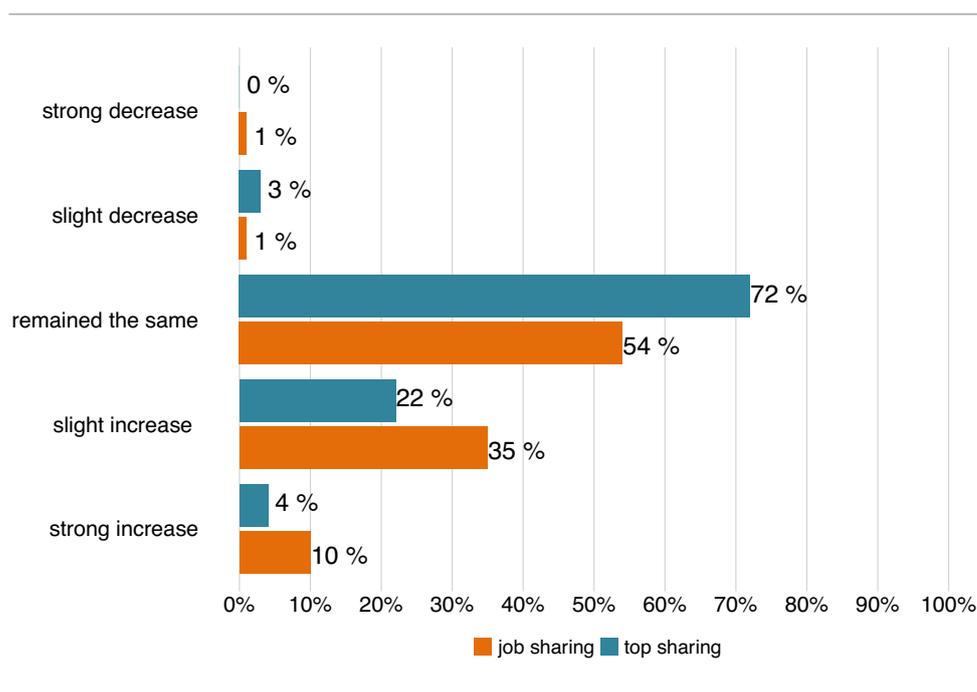


**Figure 6:** Prevalence of job and top sharing by sector

In the organisations with job/top sharing, between 2 and 350 people work in job sharing. This is an average of just under six people ( $M=5.6$ ,  $SD=0.67$ ), i.e. three duos. This number is comparable to that found in the non-profit sector ( $M=6.0$ ,  $SD=1.2$ ). On average, slightly fewer people work in job sharing in the private sector ( $M=4.9$ ,  $SD=0.5$ ), and more in the public sector ( $M=7.4$ ,  $SD=2.8$ ).

In top sharing, between 2 and 140 people work under this working model. This is an average of just under four people ( $M=4.0$ ,  $SD=0.8$ ) and thus two duos. In the non-profit and private sectors, there are slightly fewer people on average ( $M=2.7$ ,  $SD=0.3$  and  $M=3.1$ ,  $SD=0.3$ , respectively). In the public sector, on average, slightly more people work in top sharing ( $M=7.9$ ,  $SD=4.0$ ).

Figure 7 shows that in most organisations, the number of job and top sharing pairs has remained the same over the past decade (54% and 72%, respectively). Some organisations saw a slight increase (35% and 22% respectively) or even a large increase (10% and 4% respectively) in the number of pairs.



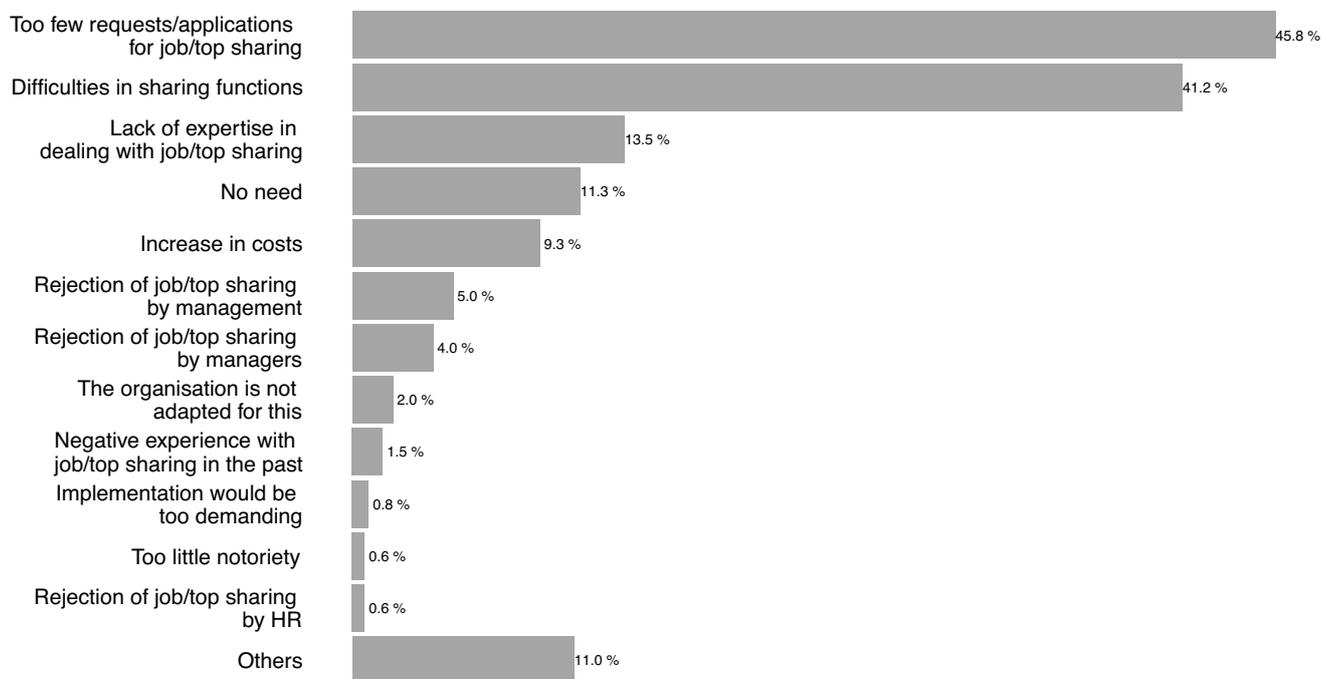
**Figure 7:** Change in number of job and top sharing pairs over the past ten years

Almost a third (30%) of small organisations report a slight increase in the number of job sharing pairs over the past decade. For 11% of these organisations, the number increased sharply. Among medium-sized organisations, 55% expect a slight increase in the number of job sharing pairs over the past ten years. In 4% of these organisations, this figure increased sharply. The situation is similar with large organisations: 48% of these organisations have seen a slight increase over the past 10 years and 6% a strong increase.

The number of top sharing pairs has increased slightly over the past decade in a fifth (20%) of small organisations. In just under 4% of these organisations, this figure increased sharply. 29% of medium-sized organisations recorded a slight increase and 5% a strong increase. 27% of the large organisations report a slight increase in the number of top sharing pairs over the past ten years. In 12% of these organisations, the number has increased sharply.

### 3.1.2 Organisations without job or top sharing

72% of organisations do not have job or top sharing and give various reasons for this. Organisations most often attribute this to too few enquiries/applications for job/top sharing (46%); the second most common reason is difficulties in sharing the role (41%) (see Figure 8). The reasons given least frequently are that job/top sharing is rejected by HR and that job/top sharing is not well known enough (around 1% each). 11% of organisations cited other reasons that could not be clearly assigned to any existing category. The “Other” category includes, for example, the following: “good experience with job splitting”, “employees paid on an hourly basis”, “does not result from the work structure”, “part-time positions are thematically independent”.



**Figure 8:** Reasons why organisations do not have job or top sharing

### 3.2 Composition of job and top sharing pairs

The composition of the job and top sharing pairs was investigated using questions on the number of pairs in different combinations. The combinations related to the number of pairs according to sex and age difference. In the case of job sharing, the difference in the workload was also evaluated. In the case of top sharing, the combinations at the various management levels were also surveyed. The number of job and top sharing pairs could be determined using the response categories “none”, “few”, “many” and “all”. Results were analysed using percent frequencies.

#### 3.2.1 Composition of job sharing pairs

44% of organisations have job sharing pairs made up exclusively of women, while 11% of organisations with job sharing do not have any female job sharing pairs at all (see Figure 9). In 2% of organisations, there is only the female-male job sharing combination, while in 65% there is no such pair combination. The male-male job sharing combination is predominant in 3% of organisations, whereas 71% do not have male job sharing pairs.

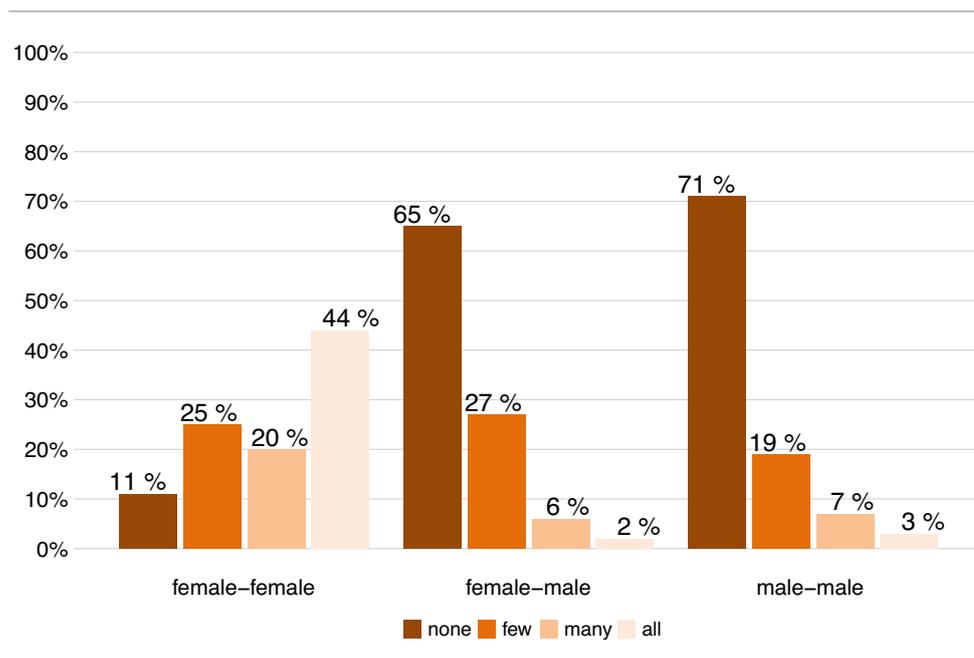
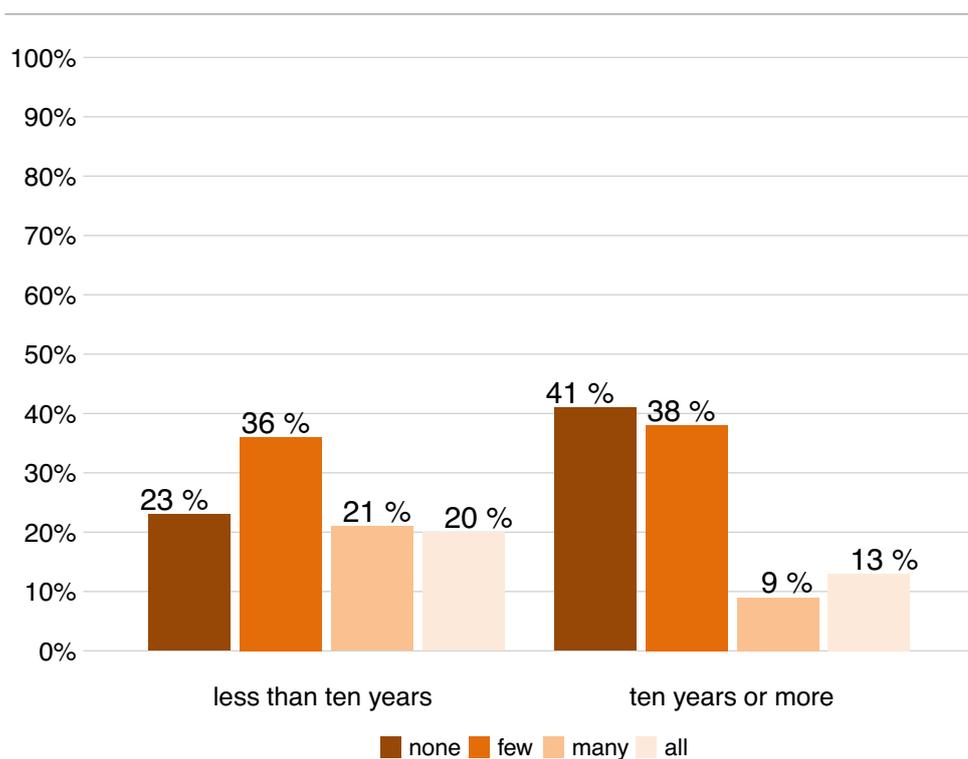


Figure 9: Prevalence of job sharing by gender combination of the pairs

In 13% of organisations, all job sharing pairs have an age difference of ten years or more, and 41% of organisations do not have pairs with this age difference (see Figure 10). A fifth of organisations (20%) only have job sharing pairs with an age difference of less than ten years, while 23% have no such age differences for job sharing pairs.



**Figure 10:** Prevalence of job sharing by age difference

Finally, there are job sharing pairs with different workloads. Only in 9% of organisations do the workloads of all couples differ by more than 20% (e.g. 70%/30%). Most organisations (40%) do not have job sharing pairs with a workload differing by more than 20%.

### 3.2.2 Composition of the top sharing pairs

The top sharing pairs can also be differentiated according to the following management levels: lowest (monitoring work in accordance with precise instructions), lower (execution-oriented management of a sub-section, qualified staff function), middle (section management, senior staff function) and top management level (management or participation in management).

Of those organisations that have top sharing, 69% state that they do not have pairs at the lowest management level (see Figure 11). In contrast, 3% of organisations have all top sharing pairs at the lowest management level. 64% of organisations do not have top sharing pairs at lower management level and 4% only have pairs at this level. More than half of the organisations (55%) have none and 8% all have middle management top sharing pairs. Finally, 30% of organisations state that they do not have any top sharing pairs at the upper management level, while 15% of organisations only have pairs at this level. As many as 49% of organisations say that they have “few” couples at the top management level.

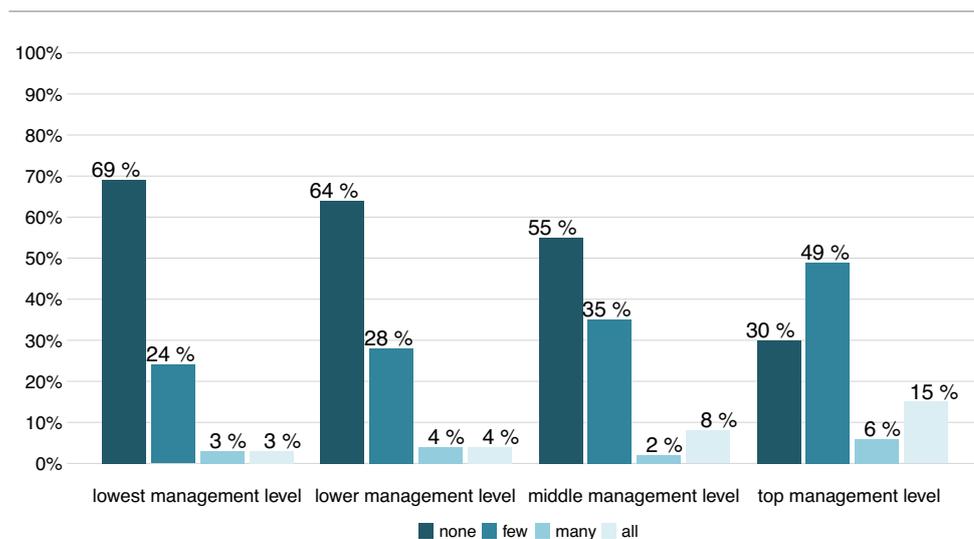
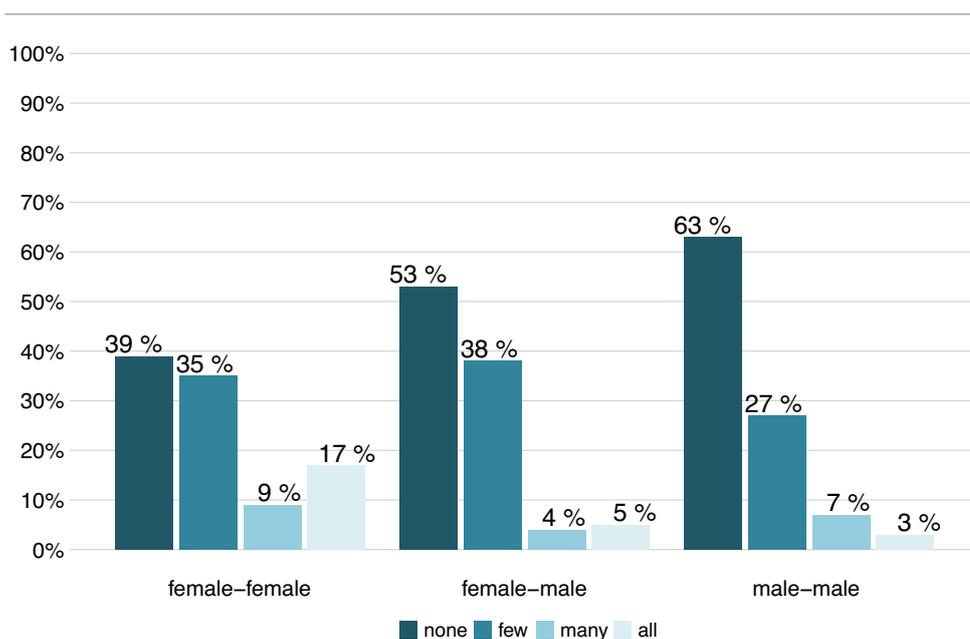


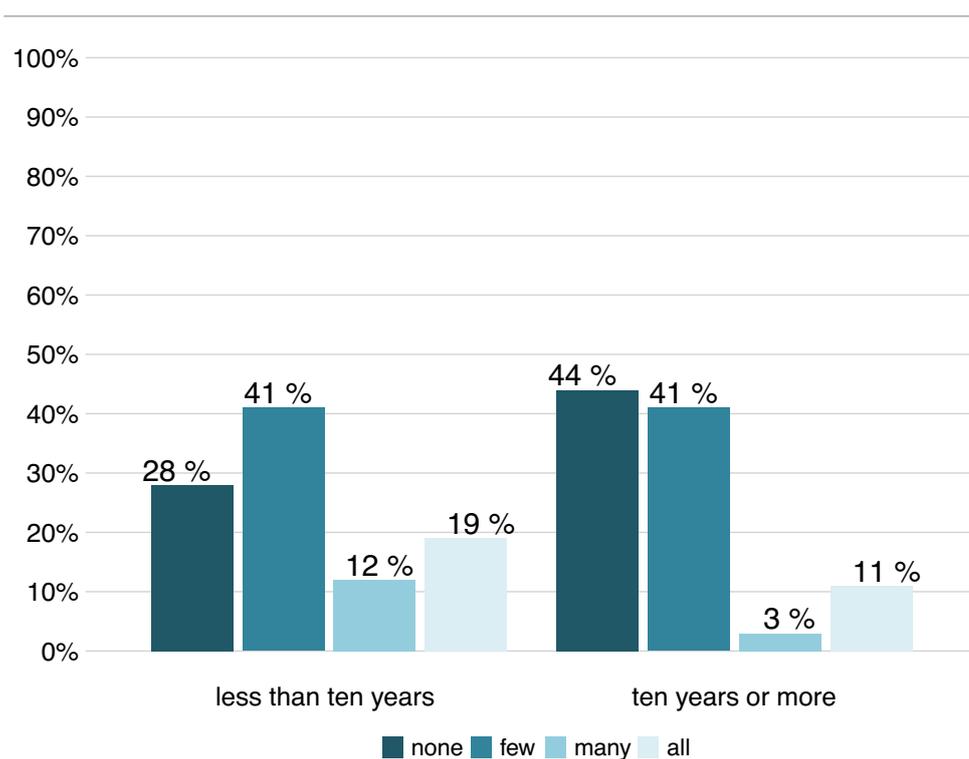
Figure 11: Spread of top sharing by management level

The breakdown of top sharing pairs by gender shows that in a quarter (26%) of organisations, many or all top sharing pairs are made up of women (see Figure 12). The top sharing combination of female and male occurs frequently or always in 9% of organisations and the combination of male and male in 10% of organisations.



**Figure 12:** Prevalence of top sharing by gender combination of the pairs

The top sharing couples are often of a relatively similar age: in 31% of organisations, many or all top sharing pairs have an age difference of less than ten years (see Figure 13). In contrast, 14% of organisations have many or only top sharing pairs with an age difference of more than ten years.



**Figure 13:** Prevalence of top sharing by age difference job

### 3.3 Implementation of top sharing

#### 3.3.1 Reasons for implementing top sharing

The organisations surveyed give different reasons for introducing top sharing (see Figure 14). At just under 67%, the most common reason is to promote a healthy work-life balance. Large organisations cite this reason more often (82%) than small (66%) or medium-sized organisations (60%). In addition, organisations in the public sector cite this reason more often (80%) than organisations in the private sector (64%) or non-profit sector (61%). Promoting CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) is the least frequently cited reason for implementing top sharing (6%).

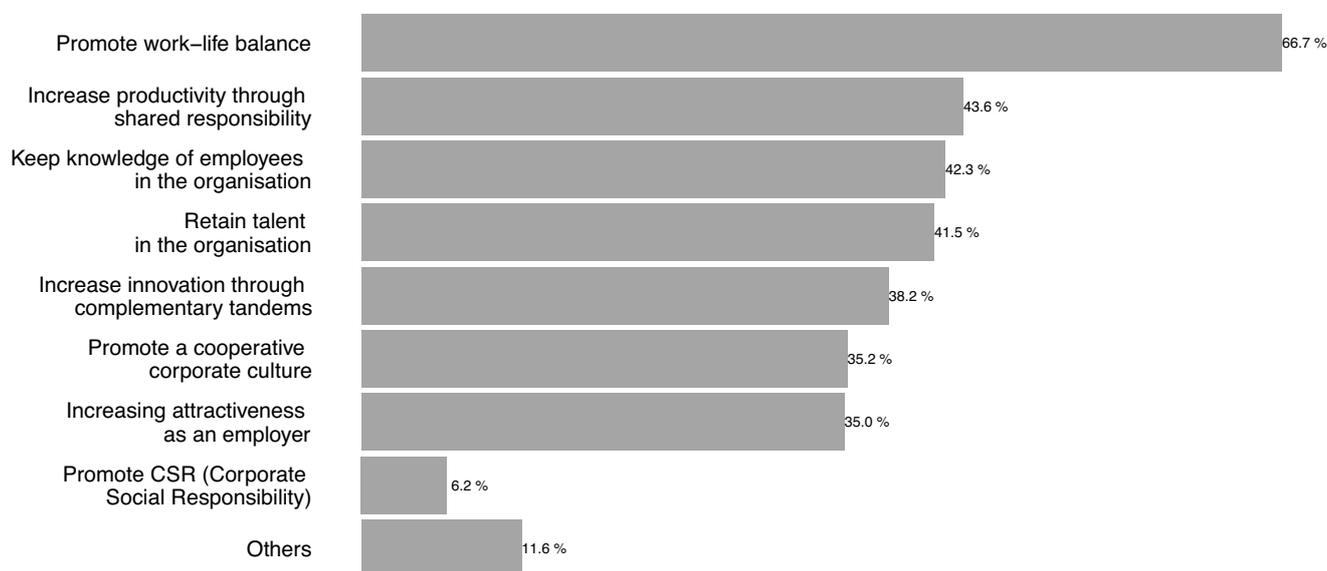


Figure 14: Reasons for implementing top sharing

### 3.3.2 Positive and negative experiences with top sharing

For more than half of the organisations (58%), the higher job satisfaction of the top sharing pairs is one of the positive experiences (see Figure 15). Another positive experience is that top sharing pairs are more motivated, as confirmed by 46% of organisations.

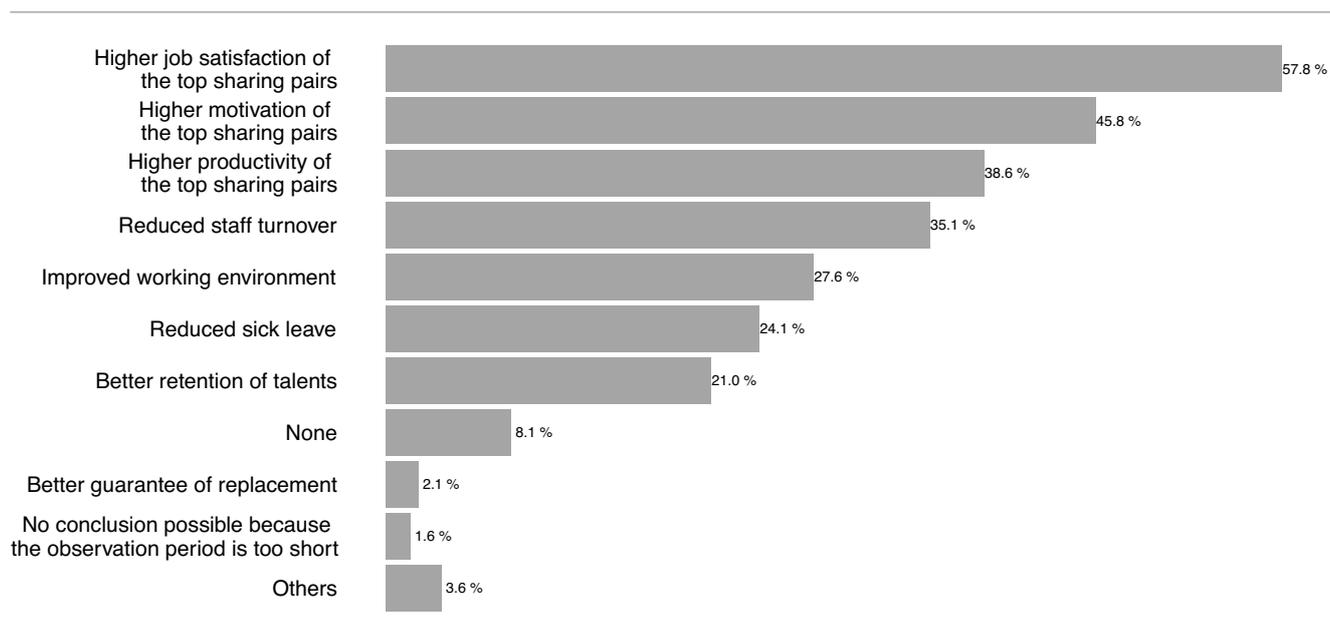


Figure 15: Positive experiences of organisations with top sharing

For just under a third of organisations (32%), communication and coordination problems of the top sharing pairs are associated with a negative experience, and for 26% greater management effort is (see Figure 16). At the same time, 28% of organisations say they do not have any negative experience with top sharing. Organisations are least likely to cite higher training costs as the reason (8%).

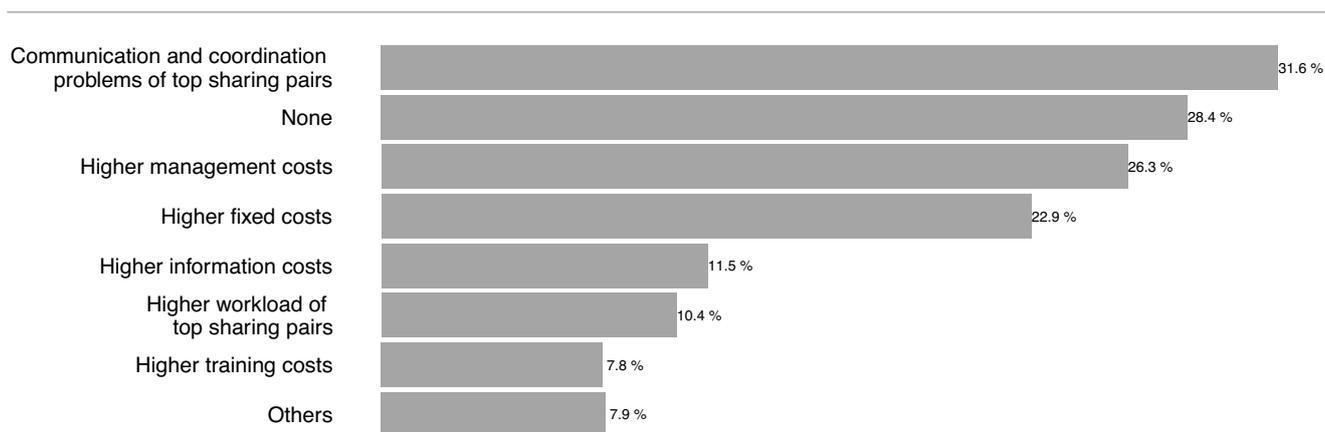


Figure 16: Negative experiences of organisations with top sharing

### 3.4 Influence of framework conditions

In order to examine various factors influencing the implementation of job and top sharing in Switzerland, the framework conditions in the organisations were also examined. The framework conditions examined include the possibility of working flexibly in terms of location and time, the use of digital technologies, gender equality measures, the establishment of agile working, the impact of a shortage of skilled workers and the average age of employees.

The term “*Flexible work in terms of location*” refers to working away from the normal place of work (e.g. working from home). *Flexible working* in terms of time refers to employees being able to determine their working hours themselves (e.g. flexitime, annual working hours). The *use of digital technologies* is widespread in organisations if these technologies are used, for example, in internal and external communication or in work processes. *Gender equality* measures refers to whether, for example, women in management or whether a healthy work-life balance are promoted. The *establishment of agile working* refers to whether the teams are self-organised or use agile techniques and methods, for example.

The general conditions, with the exception of the average age, were surveyed using 5-level scales (1=does not apply, 5=applies). Several T-tests and Chi<sup>2</sup>tests were carried out to check whether organisations with and without job/top sharing differ.

The organisations with job/top sharing do not differ significantly from those without job/top sharing in terms of the framework *conditions of flexible working*, *gender equality measures* and the *establishment of agile working*. Also, organisations with job/top sharing are not significantly more likely to be affected by the shortage of skilled workers than organisations without job/top sharing.

The only difference between organisations with and without job/top sharing is the ability to *work flexibly in terms of location* and the *use of digital technologies*. For example, organisations with job/top sharing have a slightly lower opportunity to *work flexibly in terms of location* ( $M=2.6$ ,  $SD=0.1$ ) than organisations without job/top sharing ( $M=2.9$ ,  $SD=0.1$ ), ( $t=1.99$ ,  $p=0.05$ ). The *use of digital technologies* is also somewhat less widespread in organisations with job/top sharing ( $M=3.6$ ,  $SD=0.1$ ) than in organisations without job/top sharing ( $M=3.8$ ,  $SD=0.1$ ), ( $t=1.97$ ,  $p=0.05$ ). Analysis of the average age of employees does not show any difference between organisations with and without job/top sharing. This means that job/top sharing occurs in organisations with a lower and organisations with a higher average age.

### 3.5 HR-relevant aspects of job/top sharing

Of the organisations with job/top sharing that were additionally surveyed in the second survey, more than half (53%) recorded a slight increase in job sharing pairs over the past ten years. At 5%, the number even increased sharply and at 42%, the number remained the same. The organisations have between four and 16 people (headcount) in job sharing. On average, this is more than eight people, i.e. four duos, in job sharing ( $M=8.7$ ,  $SD=4.6$ ).

The number of top sharing pairs has increased slightly in the past ten years for 43% of these organisations and strongly for 29%. 24% report the same number of top sharing pairs. Between two and 140 people work in top sharing. This corresponds to an average of 18 people, i.e. nine duos, in top sharing ( $M=18.1$ ,  $SD=33.2$ ).

Similar to the main survey, this confirms that promoting a healthy work-life balance is an important reason for implementing top sharing: at 90%, this is the most common reason cited. Also, more organisations report positive experiences than negative ones.

In this survey, additional questions were asked about other HR-relevant aspects of job and top sharing. For instance, those surveyed were asked whether the job/top sharing working model was accepted in their organisation. The vast majority fully agree (52%). For the other organisations, this is partly true (19%) or more likely (29%).

With regard to the recruitment of job/top sharing pairs, there is a wide dispersion. Most organisations say it is not so easy to recruit job/top sharing pairs (37%). In 11% of organisations, it is not easy, in 21% it is partly or fairly easy, and in 11% it is easy. 38% and 52% of organisations respectively say that it is easy or fairly easy to contractually regulate the job/top sharing working model in their organisations. For 5%, the contractual regulation is partly easy or not easy respectively. When it comes to dissolving job/top sharing pairs, most organisations say that dissolution is easy (33%) or quite easy (28%). On the other hand, this is not true for 11%, not quite so for 6% and to some extent for 22%.

The majority of respondents stated that job/top sharing pairs receive professional support (38%). This is more likely to be the case for 10% of organisations, this applies to a certain extent to less than a third (29%), this does not really apply to 10% and it does not apply to 14%.

## 4 Discussion

This study therefore examined how widespread job and top sharing are in organisations in Switzerland and what influence organisational framework conditions have on the implementation of job and top sharing. The results of the study provide an up-to-date overview of how job and top sharing is widespread and implemented in small, medium-sized and large organisations in three language regions of Switzerland.

### Prevalence of job and top sharing

Current data shows that employees work in job/top sharing in 28% of the organisations surveyed. In Switzerland, job/top sharing is thus similar to that in Germany (32%; BMFSFJ, 2019) and more common than in most other European countries (see Eurofound, 2020).

Job/top sharing is similarly common in German-speaking Switzerland, Italian-speaking Switzerland and French-speaking Switzerland at 21% to 30%. Differences can be seen in terms of organisational size: job/top sharing is more common in large organisations. Looking separately at job and top sharing in organisations with job/top sharing, it can be seen that job sharing exists in more than four-fifths of organisations. A good third of the organisations have top sharing. Top sharing is most widespread in the non-profit sector, in large organisations and in German-speaking Switzerland.

Overall, the available data suggests that job and top sharing is more common in Switzerland than it was ten years ago. Although the study by Amstutz and Jochem (2014) already established a prevalence of 27% at that time, the authors noted that their data tended to overestimate existing practice. It should also be noted that a comparison with the 2014 data is only possible to a limited extent, as the surveys are based on different data bases. For example, the public sector was not surveyed in the survey ten years ago, but with the available data it is possible to compare the private, public and non-profit sectors. In the current survey, more than half of the organisations with job/top sharing report that job and top sharing has existed in their organisation for less than ten years. This can be interpreted as an indication of a greater prevalence of job and top sharing.

Over the past decade, not only has the prevalence of this working model in organisations in Switzerland increased, but also the number of job and top sharing pairs. The number of job sharing pairs increased slightly to strongly in almost half of the organisations, while the number of top sharing pairs increased in over a quarter of the organisations. On average, a minority of around three pairs per organisation still work in the job sharing model, although large organisations may also have significantly more job sharing pairs. In the public sector, the number of job sharing pairs is slightly higher than in the private or non-profit sector. The number of top sharing pairs is slightly lower on average compared to job sharing pairs, with organisations in the public sector also having the highest number with an average of just under four top sharing duos. For the majority of organisations, the number of top sharing pairs has remained the same over the past decade. Nevertheless, a quarter of small organisations, a good third of medium-sized organisations and almost 40% of all large organisations report an increase in the number of top sharing pairs.

The main reasons why there is no job/top sharing in organisations have not changed much over the past decade. As was the case ten years ago (see Amstutz & Jochem, 2014), the lack of enquiries/applications for job/top sharing was the main reason, followed by difficulties in sharing roles. Almost a seventh of all organisations without job/top sharing cite a lack of expertise with job/top sharing as the reason. Similar to ten years ago, only 9% cite the higher costs associated with this working model. Also, very few organisations cite the rejection of this working model by stakeholders. On the one hand, it seems to be primarily due to a lack of awareness among employees of the benefits of this working model, which is why organisations do not share job/top sharing. On the other hand, the lack of knowledge in organisations on how to implement this model, e.g. how to share jobs or how to support job/top sharing pairs, seems to discourage organisations from adopting this work model. This is also supported by the fact that the number of job sharing pairs has actually increased even more in organisations that already have employees in job/top sharing and where role models thus exist for their employees as well as experience in implementing them.

### Composition of job and top sharing pairs

Among the organisations that have job/top sharing pairs, it is clear that, as in 2014 (see Amstutz & Jochem), the female-female model is still the most common job sharing model and the male-male model the rarest. The combination of female and female is also most common among top sharing pairs, but less pronounced than among job sharing pairs. Female-male or male-male combinations are more common in top sharing than in job sharing pairs. This may indicate that more men are reconciling both management roles and part-time work.

More organisations have job/top sharing pairs with a smaller age difference than couples with a larger age difference. Only 23% of job sharing organisations and 28% of organisations with top sharing do not have pairs with an age difference of less than 10 years. In contrast, 41% and 44% of the organisations do not implement intergenerational job/top sharing, i.e. an age difference of ten years or more.

It is also striking that in most organisations both people in a job sharing pairs work a similar (reduced) workload, and differences in workloads of more than 20% are quite rare. This can be explained by the fact that pairs have a high need for communication and coordination.

### Implementation of top sharing

The top sharing working model has gained in importance over the past ten years. As was already the case ten years ago (see Amstutz & Jochem, 2014), top sharing can be found at all management levels. The data from the current survey indicates that organisations implement top sharing primarily at senior management levels. When looking at the reasons given by organisations for introducing top sharing, the most common reason is to promote a healthy work-life balance. In addition to this key benefit for employees, there are other reasons for benefits for the organisation, such as increased productivity through shared responsibility. In times of pronounced shortages of skilled workers, frequently cited reasons include retaining the knowledge of employees in the organisation and retaining talented individuals in the organisation. These reasons reflect the key benefits of this working model cited in the literature (see Cooman et al., 2019; Crampton et al., 2003; Crampton & Mishra, 2005; Ellwart et al., 2023; Karlshaus & Kaehler, 2023; Metz-Kleine, 2018; Peyrer & Sander, 2016).

Organisations with top sharing duos report a variety of positive experiences with the working model. More than half of the organisations cited the higher job satisfaction of the top

sharing pairs as the main reason. As early as ten years ago, half of those surveyed reported this positive experience (Amstutz & Jochem, 2014). For employers, the top sharing working model appears to be profitable in several respects, with almost half reporting a higher level of motivation on the part of the duos and more than a third reporting a higher level of productivity on the part of the duos. Similar findings were made on the latter in the survey conducted by Amstutz and Jochem (2014) and can be explained by the fact that two people contribute different skills, are able to develop more creative solutions and make more informed decisions through dialogue (Ellwart et al., 2023; Himmen et al., 2023). Top sharing also seems to have a positive effect on employee retention: more than a third of the organisations report reduced staff turnover, and better retention of talent is also mentioned by just under a quarter. Employees who want to reduce their workload can remain in positions with top sharing and even develop into management positions as part of the reduced workload.

8% of all organisations with top sharing say they have not had a single positive experience. This may be because there are some challenges to overcome in implementing job and top sharing (see Cooman et al., 2019; Crampton & Mishra, 2005). Organisations that do not report positive experiences do not seem to be able to overcome these challenges. After all, almost a third cite communication and coordination problems of the top sharing pairs as a negative experience. This may indicate a lack of the social skills necessary for job/top sharing (Luong, 2021), inaccurate matching or insufficient onboarding support. However, comparatively few organisations report negative experiences. Almost a third of all organisations with top sharing say they have not had any negative experiences with top sharing at all. These organisations appear to implement the working model in such a way that the associated benefits are fully realised without taking into account the potential drawbacks, such as increased management effort.

From an HR perspective, recruiting job/top sharing pairs in particular seems to be a challenge, as more than a third say it is not easy. On the other hand, the contractual regulation of this model appears to be difficult for very few companies. After all, 11% see the dissolution of the model as a challenge. These organisations could benefit from assistance, e.g. through “good practice” models, in dissolving job/top sharing. A large majority of the additionally surveyed organisations with job/top sharing indicate that the working model is accepted in their organisation. This may indicate that the implementation is managed satisfactorily for all stakeholders

and, for example, that there is always a contact person, that the distribution of work is defined and that there is no duplication or uncertainty. A success factor for successful implementation could therefore be the professional support of the job/top sharing pairs by HR or externally, because it is precisely at the beginning of a job/top sharing relationship that the division of tasks, collaboration and an understanding of values have to be defined.

### **Influence of framework conditions**

This study shows that the framework conditions of organisations with and without job/top sharing do not differ significantly from one another. Job/top sharing is seen as a measure to counteract the shortage of skilled workers, as employees are able to balance their professional and private lives even in demanding roles (Baillod, 2001). However, not all organisations affected by the shortage of skilled workers use job/top sharing as a measure. In this study, organisations that have introduced job/top sharing are affected by the skills shortage just as much as organisations without this working model. Organisations also seem to implement job/top sharing regardless of the average age of employees. Job/top sharing is therefore a measure that can be appropriate both for organisations that want to focus more on retention due to upcoming retirements and for organisations that want to attract qualified specialists in general.

For the implementation of job/top sharing, it does not seem to play a significant role whether organisations have established gender equality measures. Organisations that have not (yet) introduced job/top sharing also state that they support women in management or the reconciliation of work and family life. Likewise, organisations that have established agile working, i.e. have self-organised teams and use agile techniques and methods, do not appear to have introduced this working model to an increasing extent. Organisations with and without job/top sharing also do not differ in terms of the options offered to work flexibly, i.e. even in organisations without job/top sharing, employees can determine their working hours themselves.

In the study by Amstutz and Jochem (2014), teleworking, i.e. flexible working in terms of location, was identified as a precursor of job sharing. Ten years on, job/top sharing seems to be particularly prevalent in organisations where working outside the normal workplace, e.g. from home, is less possible. For employers in particular, who are unable or unwilling to offer their employees the opportunity to work flexibly in terms of location or only to a limited extent, job/top sharing seems to be an opportunity to nonetheless offer them flexi-

bility in the form of this working model.

Digital technologies can make internal and external communication easier or be used to support work processes. Job/top sharing pairs could also benefit from exchanging ideas. Interestingly, the use of digital technologies is significantly less widespread in organisations with job/top sharing than in organisations without job/top sharing. However, the job/top sharing pairs may well use the technologies themselves, even if they are not (yet) widespread throughout the organisation.

### **4.1 Recommendations for action**

A number of recommendations for action can be derived from the results available. Over the past decade, organisations have increasingly used job sharing and, increasingly, top sharing to increase their attractiveness as an employer and give employees the opportunity to do their jobs part-time, thereby improving the balance between work and family life. Reasons such as “too few requests for job/top sharing” or “no need” seem to indicate that employees are not yet sufficiently aware of the benefits and possibilities of this working model. The PTO Association reports on the benefits with testimonials from existing pairs (Krone-Germann et al., 2020), and more and more organisations advertise job/top sharing positions. On the jobs.ch job platform, advertised vacancies can be filtered by job/top sharing options and there are various platforms that support the search for potential job/top sharing partners, such as wejobshare.ch or jobsharing-hub.de. These efforts may have led to an increase in overall prevalence in organisations. However, if employees do not know what exactly job/top sharing means for them, they may not register a need in their organisations. It is also clear that the male-to-male model is still relatively rare. In order to promote job/top sharing and, in particular, the combination of male and male, thus enabling the benefits of this working model across genders, there is a continuing need to educate employees and provide information about job/top sharing role models, as also emphasised by Fischer et al. (2021).

There is also a need for action on the part of the organisations. Many employers still see the dividing up of roles as a major difficulty. In the literature, there are different assessments of separability, particularly in the case of management roles (see Baillod, 2001; Ellwart et al., 2023; Zölch et al., 2002). Targeted information for HR specialists and managers on how roles can be shared therefore appears necessary. The employee life cycle, i.e. the process from recruitment and development to the exit of a job/top sharing duo, has some peculiarities. For example, consideration should be given not only to the person’s suitability for the job, but also to the mat-

ching of the pairs (see Hesmert & Vogel, 2023). HR specialists and managers can benefit from information and practical guides (e.g. which topics should be clarified at the beginning of a job/top sharing partnership), as is already offered by the PTO Association. In particular, the organisations seem to need support in the recruitment of pairs. Fitting interview questions to assess suitability or assessment tasks combined with personality tests can be helpful to help organisations with recruitment. Various companies offer tests or assessment centres that specialise in selecting tandem partners.

The results of this study suggest that organisations do not need to be particularly advanced in the use of digital technologies or offer the flexibility to work flexibly in terms of location in order to introduce job/top sharing. This shows that this working model offers organisations with very different requirements the potential to support their employees in their need for meaning, freedom and self-determination in line with the new work concept.

#### 4.2 Limitations and future research

The results of this study provide an overview of the job and top sharing practices of organisations of different sizes in three language regions in Switzerland. They provide an assessment of how widespread the working model is and how it is generally implemented in organisations. The data from the surveys was collected and analysed according to scientific criteria. As this data is based on a sample, the results are associated with a probability of error. The organisations were contacted by letter or e-mail for the survey. The link for the anonymous survey was the same for all organisations. Although thorough data cleansing has been carried out, it cannot be completely ruled out that organisations have participated more than once. Some feedback also showed that not all organisations have a database of their job/top sharing pairs, so specifically the information on the number of pairs and their composition could be skewed. Due to the intended brevity of the questionnaire, the framework conditions were only recorded with one item at a time. In order to find out which framework conditions in organisations are particularly conducive to or hinder this working model, future research should examine these factors in more detail. The information was also provided by HR or management. In order to determine the specific characteristics of job/top sharing pairs beyond gender distribution, age differences and workload distribution, future research should include the pairs, their supervisors and their subordinates. For example, it is possible to find out what to look out for when managing job/top sharing pairs and how the pairs shape their working relationship to increase job satisfaction and productivity and

avoid communication and coordination problems.

#### 4.3 Summary

Job and top sharing is a working model that has become more widespread over the past decade. Small, medium-sized and large organisations from the private, public and non-profit sectors are successfully using job and top sharing to retain employees and meet their need for a better work-life balance or a career on a part-time basis. Top sharing has become increasingly important and is being implemented at senior management levels, in particular in larger organisations. Organisations with different framework conditions have good experiences with the working model. However, it is also clear that there is still a need for action and that organisations and employees alike can benefit from information and support offers for job/top sharing.

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Study on behalf of the PTO Association (Part-time Optimisation)

April 2024

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