Swiss Pensions Accounting Assumptions Survey 2023

An analysis of market trends in pensions accounting

July 2023

Content

Introduction

Key trends for 31 December 2022 IFRS and US GAAP assumptions

There were significant movements in financial markets and economic conditions over 2022. Swiss corporate bond yields reached their highest levels in over ten years. This had the following impacts on pensions IFRS and US GAAP assumptions:

1. discount rates increased by around 195bps on average over the year; and

2. interest credit rates increased by around 123bps on average over the year.

Rising bond yields were coupled with inflation increases, albeit to a lesser extent in Switzerland than in other territories (such as the UK and the Eurozone). Whilst inflation is not a key assumption for Swiss pension valuations, it is often used in determining the salary increase assumption. Our survey revealed an average increase in the salary increase assumption of 50bps over 2022.

The combined impact of the financial assumption changes is that the majority of companies saw significant reductions in the IFRS and US GAAP pension liabilities over 2022.

Companies surveyed

This survey is based on data gathered from publicly listed companies, KPMG clients and other entities where KPMG has been provided with pensions accounting information.

While the majority of companies included within our survey reported under IFRS, we did not observe any significant differences in the assumptions used across different accounting standards.

KPMG comment

This edition of KPMG's Swiss pensions accounting survey looks at trends in accounting assumptions based on the experience of 80 Swiss companies reporting under IFRS or US GAAP as at 31 December 2022.

The survey covers companies advised by a range of actuarial consultancies and includes both domestic Swiss companies and subsidiaries of overseas parents.

Assumtions	Median 31.12.21	Median 31.12.22	Change
Discount rate	0.30%	2.25%	1.95%
Interest credit rate	1.00%	2.23%	1.23%
Salary increases rate	1.25%	1.75%	0.50%
Pension increase rate	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

Source: KPMG Analysis

Overview of entities included in survey			
Type of company	**IFRS**	**US GAAP**	**Total**
SIX listed	39	5	44
Swiss subsidiary	14	4	18
Privately held/other	13	5	18
Total	**66**	**14**	**80**

Source: KPMG Analysis

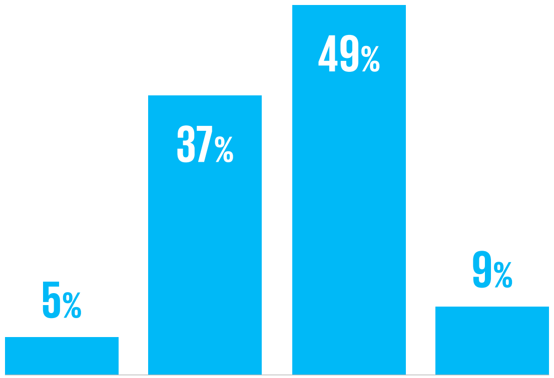
Discount rate

Figure 1:

Discount rates

31 December 2021 median: 0.30%
31 December 2022 median: 2.25%

Percentage of Companies



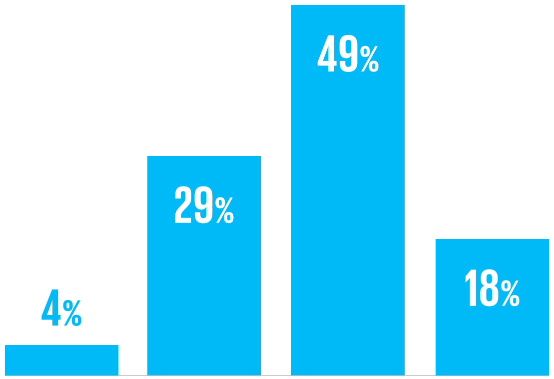
Source: 80 companies

Figure 2:

Increase in discount rates from 31 December 2021 to 31 December 2022

Median increase 2022: 1.95%

Percentage of Companies



Source: 80 companies

KPMG comment

The discount rate is based on corporate bond yields at the end of the reporting period.

IFRS and US GAAP requires the duration of the bonds used to be consistent with the duration of the liabilities. Swiss corporate bond yield curves are relatively flat such that the difference in discount rates by duration is modest.

For companies in our survey, discount rates increased by on average 200bps over the period from 31 December 2021 to 31 December 2022 (20bps of increase over 2021).

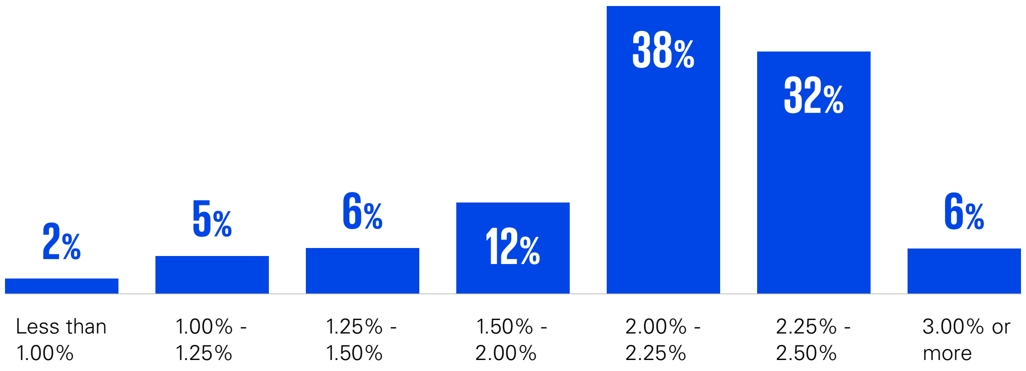
Interest credit rate

Figure 3:

Interest credit rate

31 December 2021 median: 1.00%
31 December 2022 median: 2.23%

Percentage of Companies



Source: 66 companies

KPMG comment

The interest credit rate assumption reflects the rate at which employee savings capital is assumed to be credited with interest in each future year.

The observed median interest credit rate from our survey was 2.23% as at 31 December 2022 (1.00% as at 31 December 2021).

The increase over 2022 reflected increases in future pension fund asset returns. The legal minimum rate remained at 1.00% applicable for 2023.

A wide range of interest credit rate assumptions was observed, with the majority of companies using an assumed rate within the range of 2.00%-2.50%.

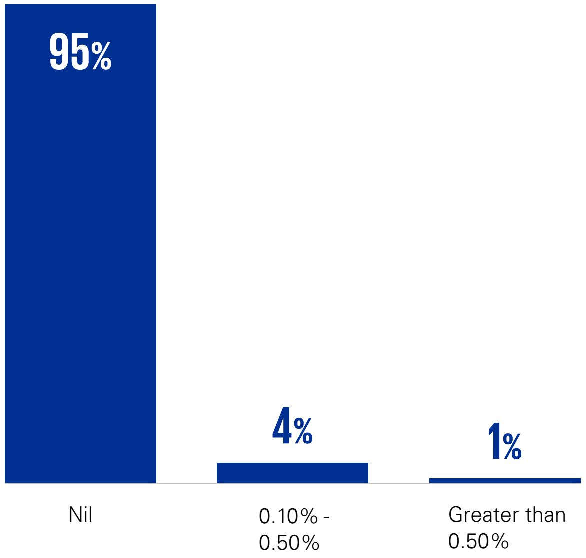
Pension increases

Figure 4:

Pension increases

31 December 2021 median: 0.00%
31 December 2022 median: 0.00%

Percentage of Companies



Source: 78 companies

KPMG comment

Pension increases are not mandatory in Switzerland and are generally only granted when a plan is in a comfortable financial position.

At 31 December 2022, only 5% of companies surveyed made an assumption for future pension increases greater than Nil. Of those assuming future pension increases, an assumed rate within the range of 0.10% - 1.5% pa is made.

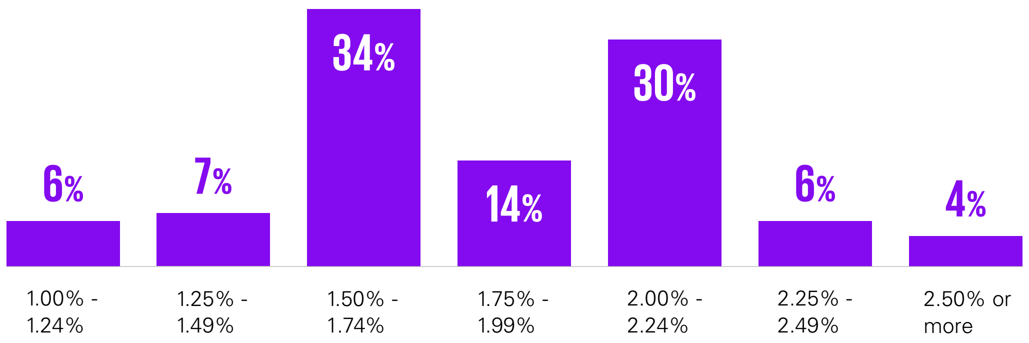
Inflation and Salary increases

Figure 5:

Salary increases

31 December 2021 median: 1.25%
31 December 2022 median: 1.75%

Percentage of Companies



Source: 71 companies

KPMG comment

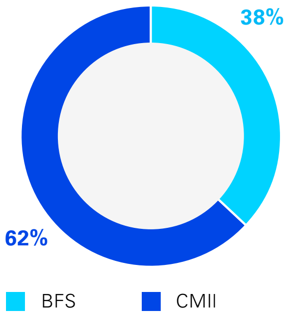
The inflation assumption is generally not a significant assumption for the measurement of Swiss pension liabilities. However, it is often used as a basis for setting the salary increase assumption (which is also not particularly significant for typical Swiss cash balance plans).

Our survey shows an average nominal salary increase assumption of 1.75% as at 31 December 2022 (1.25% at 31 December 2021), with around 80% of the companies adopting an assumption within the range of 1.50%-2.24%.

Mortality

Figures 6 & 7:

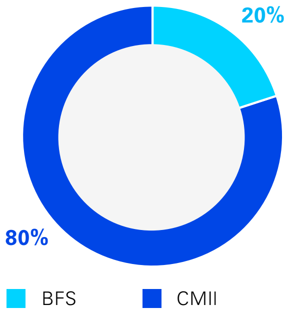
All companies surveyed



Adopted a standard CMI model and assumed a long-term rate of **1.25%**	70%
Adopted a standard CMI model and assumed a long-term rate of **1.50%**	19%
Adopted a standard CMI model and assumed a long-term rate of **1.75%**	4%
Adopted a standard CMI model but the long-term rate used was not known	6%

Source: 76 companies

Listed companies (SMI index)



Adopted a standard CMI model and assumed a long-term rate of **1.25%**	64%
Adopted a standard CMI model and assumed a long-term rate of **1.50%**	18%
Adopted a standard CMI model and assumed a long-term rate of **1.75%**	9%
Adopted a standard CMI model but the long-term rate used was not known	9%

Source: 14 companies

KPMG comment

The most recently published demographic tables in Switzerland are the BVG/LPP 2020 tables. These were first adopted by the majority of companies as at 31 December 2021.

The tables were constructed using data from 15 of the largest Swiss pension plans over the period 2015 to 2019. They provide mortality (base and improvement) rates, employee turnover rates, disability rates, as well as marriage probability rates.

All of the companies in our survey used the BVG/LPP 2020 base mortality tables as at 31 December 2022, with around 60% using the CMI model for mortality improvements.

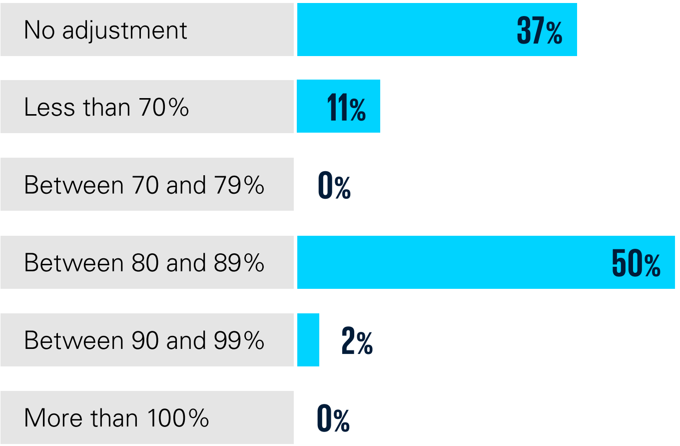
A CMI approach was particularly common amongst large Swiss listed companies (SMI index) where it was used in around 80% of observed.

Disability

Figure 8:

Disability

31 December 2021 median: 85%
31 December 2022 median: 85%



Source: 62 companies

KPMG comment

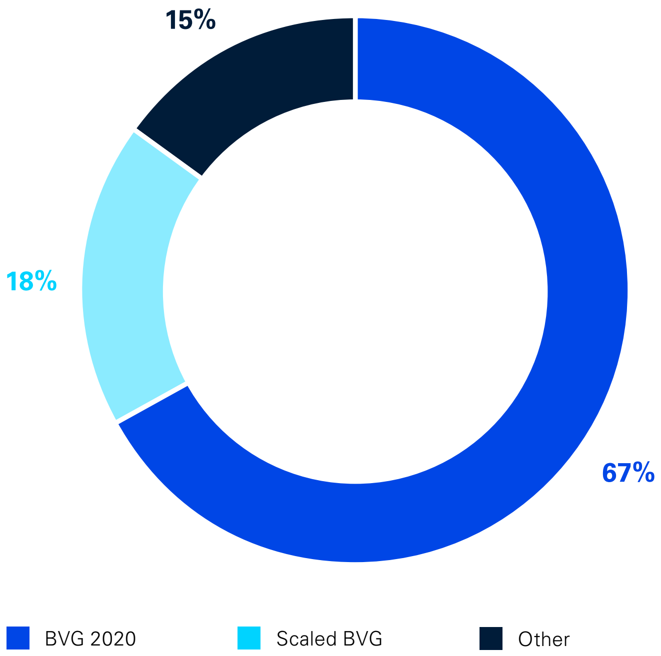
The BVG/LPP standard disability rates include all cases in which individuals have a high enough degree of disability to receive a disability benefit (a degree of disability of 40% or higher).

A number of companies surveyed adjusted the assumed disability rate downwards as a proxy for the fact that some individuals will only receive part of the disability benefit.

Around 60% of companies made such an adjustment and of those that did, the median adjustment was to multiply the standard rates by a factor of 85%.

Employee turnover

Figure 9:



Source: 61 companies

KPMG comment

Around 70% of companies surveyed used the standard BVG/LPP 2020 employee turnover scale with no adjustments.

Other companies used their own scale or applied a fixed percentage increase/ decrease to the BVG/LPP standard tables.

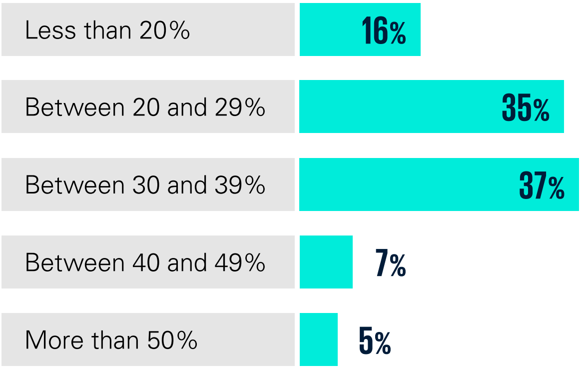
For those applying a percentage increase/ decrease to the BVG/LPP standard tables, the median factor was 120%.

Lump sum

Figure 10:

Lump sum

31 December 2021 median: 25%
31 December 2022 median: 25%



Source: 57 companies

KPMG comment

The median assumption in our survey was that employees would take 25% of their account balance as a lump sum on reaching retirement age.

Some companies used a significantly higher assumption (as high as 70%), while others made no allowance for lump sum take-up.

Contacts

KPMG AG
Badenerstrasse 172
PO Box
CH-8036 Zurich

Leeanne O'Callaghan
Senior Manager
Pensions

+41 58 249 31 78
locallaghan@kpmg.com

Funda Akyol
Senior Manager
Pensions

+41 79 369 66 68
fakyol@kpmg.com

Leticia Cataldi Gaspar
Assistant Manager
Pensions

+41 58 249 41 29
lcataldigaspar@kpmg.com

kpmg.ch/pensions

home.kpmg/socialmedia