

# Sustainability in Invoicing 2023

## Management Summary



Sustainability is the focus of many of today's companies. One important aspect of this is the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

The digitalization of invoicing also contributes to the sustainability of business processes and can have a clearly measurable impact on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

A Swiss specialist in climate protection, carbon accounting and carbon offsetting was tasked by SIX with comparing the carbon footprint of the three most common invoicing methods. The resulting study analyzes the key processes of an eBill, e-mail and paper invoice, and compares the greenhouse gas emissions of the different invoicing methods.

Currently, around 1 billion invoices are sent each year in Switzerland, 59% of which are still sent as paper invoices by post. By switching from traditional paper invoices to eBill, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per invoice can be reduced by 89%.

Digital invoice processing can be shown to have a positive impact on the environmental performance of businesses and consumers.

The aim of SIX as a provider of eBill invoices is to continuously increase the share of eBill invoices in Switzerland. Together, we can make a valuable contribution to protecting the environment while enjoying the practical benefits of digital invoicing.

## Comparison of emissions:

The following emissions analysis is based on data from the “Sustainability in Invoicing 2023” study. The most relevant processes in the value chain were taken into account to calculate the greenhouse gas balance of the different invoicing methods. A representative survey conducted by a renowned political and communications research company collected information on the payment behavior of the Swiss population. The study also clearly sets out the system boundaries and lists the processes that are not taken into account. The CO<sub>2</sub> emissions resulting from the calculations were audited and certified by an independent organization.

### 1. Paper invoices:

The production of paper invoices consumes a significant amount of resources, from the paper and printing ink to the transport of paper invoices by post and the recycling of wastepaper. All these processes are among those included in the emissions calculation. According to the study, the average CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per paper invoice are 38.42 g CO<sub>2</sub>-eq.

### 2. E-mail invoices:

Sending invoices by e-mail reduces paper consumption and transport, and significantly reduces CO<sub>2</sub> emissions compared to paper invoices. However, an e-mail invoice is printed for archiving about twice as often as an eBill invoice. Taking into account the most relevant processes, the average CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of an e-mail invoice are therefore 6.27 g CO<sub>2</sub>-eq.

### 3. eBill invoices:

Compared to the two alternatives examined, seamless invoice processing via eBill is the most environmentally friendly method, as it not only almost eliminates the use of paper, but also reduces the emissions emitted for mailing to virtually zero. The average CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per eBill invoice are only 4.18 g CO<sub>2</sub>-eq.

Processing an eBill invoice therefore reduces CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by an average of 89% in relation to a paper invoice. Even compared to e-mail invoicing, eBill saves 33% of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

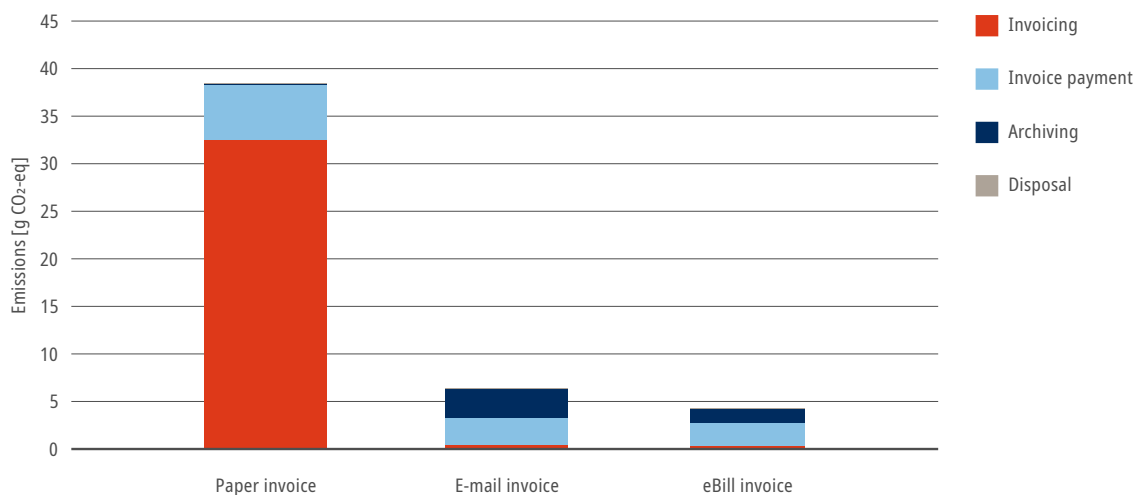


Figure 1: Comparison of emissions by invoicing method

## Outlook:

In 2022, 27,625 t CO<sub>2</sub>-eq (excluding direct debits) were emitted throughout Switzerland as a result of invoice processing. This corresponds to an average emission factor of around 25 g CO<sub>2</sub>-eq per invoice.

The aim is to continuously increase the share of eBill invoices in Switzerland. In the medium term, the goal is to achieve a 50% share of eBill invoices in the Swiss accounting system as a whole. This will reduce annual emissions to around 12,837 t CO<sub>2</sub>-eq by the time this interim target is reached. According to the forecast scenario, this corresponds to a reduction of around 54% in total emissions compared to the baseline from 2022. As a result of this growing digitalization, the emission factor per invoice will be reduced to 11.65 g CO<sub>2</sub>-eq by the time the interim target is reached, assuming that the volume of invoices remains unchanged.

The following conclusions can be drawn based on the results of the study and the predicted increase in the share of eBill invoices in relation to the total volume of invoices:

### - Reduction in emissions:

A significant reduction in overall emissions is expected with a widespread conversion to eBill. If half of the Swiss invoice volume is processed via eBill, Startwert 14 788 t CO<sub>2</sub>-eq will be saved compared to the baseline. This is roughly equivalent to the annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of 1,200 people.\*

### - Efficiency gains:

In addition to reducing emissions, switching to eBill also offers advantages for companies and invoice recipients. Digital invoice processing reduces the administrative workload, speeds up the payment process and minimizes sources of error.

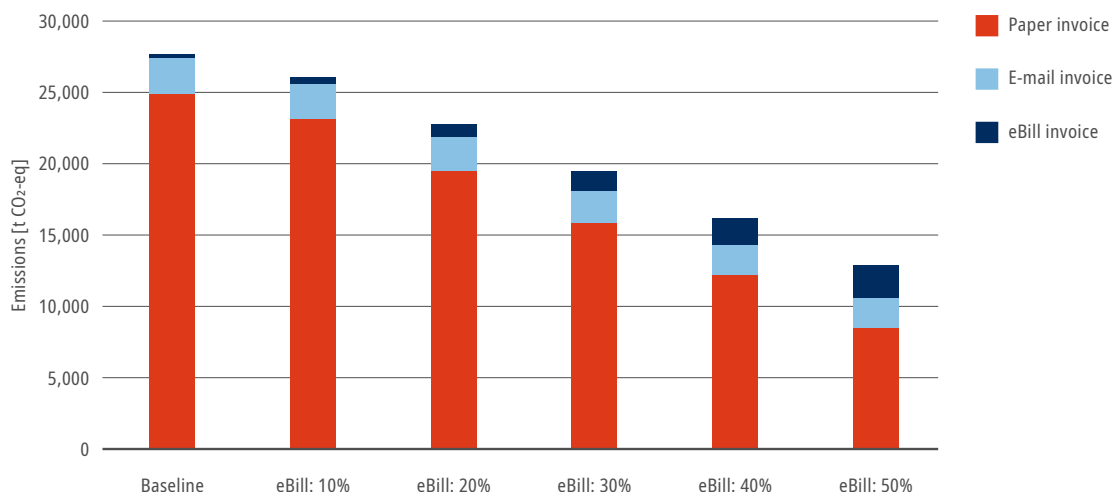


Figure 2: Development of emissions and proportion of invoicing methods

\*Parameters for the Development of Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Switzerland 1990–2021, FOEN, April 2023

## Summary:

- The "Sustainability in Invoicing 2023" study clearly shows that the transition to digital invoicing methods has a positive impact on emissions.
- The significant reduction in emissions and the potential efficiency gains make digital invoicing methods both environmentally and economically sound.
- Compared to traditional paper invoices and e-mail invoices, eBill is the most sustainable invoicing method.
- The switch to eBill leads to a reduction of the carbon footprint and has a positive effect on the environmental performance of companies and consumers.

For in-depth insights and more facts and figures, read the full sustainability study [here](#).

Take the step into a sustainable future with eBill.

