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Statistics Austria observes social impact of the Corona Crisis: one out of three is affected by decrease of household income, every sixth person reports an increase

Vienna, 2022-04-05 – By the end of 2021, every third person among the 16 to 69 year olds reported having a lower income than twelve months before. Reduced working time, lower earned income and job loss were the most common reasons for the decrease. High inflation was also often cited as a reason for a subjectively perceived loss of real incomes. On the other hand, every sixth person reported an increase of household income in this period. The main reasons for that were increase in working time or income, a new job or change of jobs. With its new survey, commissioned by Eurostat and the Social Ministry, Statistics Austria obtains a detailed portrait of the social situation in Austria on a quarterly basis.

"Despite a massive expansion of social benefits and subsidies, the Corona Crisis brought along considerable social effects. One out of three persons in working age had to digest a loss of income in 2021 - with partly noticeable consequences on consumption opportunities and life satisfaction. For every sixth person the income situation improved during the same period", explains Statistics Austria Director General Tobias Thomas.

Income losses clearly more frequent than income increases

In total, 33% of the 16 to 69 year olds reported a decrease in household income during the previous 12 months. Income losses were even more frequent among the unemployed (53%) or workers in certain occupations such as services and sales (37%); agricultural occupations (41%); craft and related trades (36%), plant and machine operators and assemblers (45%) and elementary occupations (40%).

On the other hand, 16% of respondents reported an increase in household income. Above average was the percentage of winners among academic professionals (28%), technicians and associate professionals (19%), and managers (25%).

Income losses are associated with reduced consumption and lower life satisfaction

More than 46% of persons with income losses could draw upon savings, borrow money, or compensate their lower income in another way. However, 39% had to curtail their consumption by reducing expenses on food, clothes and other goods and services. About 14% did not take any measure.

The percentage of persons who rarely or never felt happy during the four weeks before the survey was more than twice as high among those with income losses (17%) as among those with income increases (8%). The percentage of people who felt always or most of the time lonely was even three times higher when a loss of income occurred (15%) than when household income increased (5%). The percentage of people with very high life satisfaction (values higher than 7 on a scale from 0 to 10) was considerably higher among income-winners (67%) than income-losers (44%).

Housing cost were a heavy financial burden for 825 000 people in Austria

Regardless of changes in income during the last 12 months, about 14% of respondents reported (strong) difficulties coping with their living costs at the time of the survey. In particular, housing costs were a heavy burden for 13% or 825 000 individuals by the end of 2021. About 12% even expected to be unable to afford their housing costs in the following three months. 7% were already in arrears in the third quarter of 2021.

Information on methods, definitions: The first wave of the infra-annual data collection on living conditions ("So geht's uns heute") took place during November and December 2021. The questionnaire has been answered by 3 531 individuals aged between 16 and 69 years. The study is jointly financed by Eurostat and the Social Ministry. Similar operations are currently undertaken in 11 EU Member States as a pilot study of a quarterly data collection. Current results present the subjective mood around the end of the year 2021. The focus is on personally perceived changes of income; the subjective coping with living costs, and psychological wellbeing and satisfaction. Primary objective of this undertaking is to detect the social impact of the pandemic as early as possible. The sample has been drawn from the Central Population register. The unadjusted response rate amounted to 47%. To ensure a timely picture of the actual mood in the population no register data has been used. The questionnaire has been completed online by 3 015 persons and for 516 individuals a paper version was processed. The online questionnaire comprised 260 questions, of which on average only 100 were completed because of filtering rules. The somewhat shorter paper version comprised a maximum of 75 questions. The complete questionnaire can be downloaded [here](#) (PDF, 1 MB) (in German).

Percentage of persons with changes in household income among selected population groups

	Changes in household income during the last 12 months ¹⁾				Total (=100%)
	Increased income		Reduced income		in 1 000
	in 1 000	Quote in %	in 1 000	Quote in %	
Unemployed	-	-	125	53,2	236
Selected occupations					
Managers	(82)	(25,4)	78	23,9	324
Academic professionals	234	27,7	212	25,0	847
Technicians and associate professionals	169	18,8	245	27,3	897
Clerical workers	(73)	(18,3)	137	34,3	400
Service and sales workers	(74)	(11,5)	241	37,4	646
Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers	-	-	(39)	(41,3)	94
Craft and related trades	(44)	(10,6)	151	36,3	415
Plant and machine operators, and assemblers	-	-	(98)	(45,0)	218
Elementary occupations	(28)	(11,7)	97	40,2	241

Q: STATISTICS AUSTRIA, Infra-annual-data-collection on living conditions: "So geht's uns heute". Data version of 30.3.2022 – Values for which the number of respondents (unweighted) was between 20 and 49 are presented in brackets. Values which are based on less than 20 observations are not displayed. – 1) The percentage of persons whose household income remained unchanged is not represented in this table.

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