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One out of five persons working full-time would like to work less

Only 23.6% of the economically inactives aged 55 to 59 would like to work again

Vienna, 2024-03-19 – In 2023, the number of unemployed people, based on the international definition, rose to a total of 240 900 according to the Microcensus labour force survey (LFS) by Statistics Austria, but there were also more people in employment compared to the previous year at 4.5 million. At 206 400, the number of job vacancies remains at a very high, albeit declining, level.

“The domestic labour market is robust despite the weakening economy. Although the number of unemployed rose by 19 700 to 240 900 compared to the previous year, the number of people in employment also increased by 40 400 to just over 4.5 million. Nevertheless, many jobs could still not be filled in 2023. Although the number of vacancies fell in 2023 from its peak in 2022, it remains at a high level with an annual average of 206 400. Due to demographic change, the labour shortage is likely to worsen in the future”, says Statistics Austria Director General Tobias Thomas.

One of five full-time employed persons would like to work less

On average for 2023, a total of 4 483 000 people aged 15 and over were in employment, which was 40 400 or 0.9% more than in 2022 despite the weak economic situation (see table 1). However, majority of this employment growth is due to an increase in part-time workers. The number of full-time employed persons rose by 0.3% (9 700) compared to the previous year, while the number of part-time employed increased by 2.3% (30 800).

In 2023, just over one out of eight men (13.4%) and one out of two working women (50.6%) said they worked part-time. Women cited caring responsibilities as the most common reason for their part-time employment (39.3%). While 61.7% of women (aged 25 to 49) without children work full-time, only 10.4% of women with a child under the age of three do so. Although the proportion of women working full-time increases with the age of the child, it always remains below the level of women without children. This effect cannot be observed for men with children.

Not all of the 1.4 million persons who work part-time do so voluntarily. In 2023, 205 400 part-time employed stated that they would like to increase their working hours. This means that one in seven part-time workers (14.8%) would like to work more. However, the desire to work fewer hours is even more common: 21.3% (659 300) of all full-time employed persons would like to reduce their working hours, even if this meant accepting a financial loss.

76 500 people aged 55 and over would like to return to work

In addition to the high part-time rate, the still below-average employment rate of people over 55 is another structural challenge for the labour market. The employment rate of elder people has risen significantly in recent years: In 2004, just one out of four persons aged 55 to 64 was still working (employment rate: 27.1%); by 2023, this had risen to more than one out of two (57.3%). Overall, the employment rate for 15 to 64-year-olds was 74.1%, while the employment rate for 55 to 64-year-olds remained below this at 57.3% – also in international comparison.

In the current discourse, elder persons are often mentioned as a possible reservoir for overcoming the shortage of labour. However, once a person has left the labour market, it appears to be difficult to attract them to return to work under the current conditions: Only 76 500 of currently economically inactive persons aged between 55 and 74 would want to return to work (see table 2). That is just 5.6%. Even in the group of 55 to 59-year-olds, not even one of four (23.6%) said they wanted to return to work in principle, and among 60 to 64-year-olds it was only one of twenty (5.7%). And not all of them would be able to return to work immediately. Only 23 100 persons (55 to 74) would actually be able to start work within two weeks.

Moderate increase in unemployment

Unemployment according to the international definition rose to a total of 240 900 people in 2023, an increase of 19 700 people or 8.9% compared to the previous year. At 5.1%, the non-seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 0.4 percentage points higher than in the previous year.

Detailed results and further information on all topics of the press conference and the report “Labour market in focus: Can older workers compensate for the labour shortage?” (only available in German) can be found on our [website](#).

Table 1: Main results of the labour market statistics (international definition)

Employment and unemployment (ILO concept)	Unit	Annual average		Changes compared to 2022 (abs. or in % points)
		2023	2022	
Employed (15 years and over)	1 000	4 483.0	4 442.6	40.4
Full-time	1 000	3 095.6	3 085.9	9.7
Part-time	1 000	1 387.4	1 356.7	30.8
Part-time rate ¹	%	30.9	30.5	0.4
Men	%	13.4	12.6	0.8
Women	%	50.6	50.7	-0.1
Employment rate ² (15 to 64 years)	%	74.1	74.0	0.1
Employment rate ² of elder persons (55 to 64 years)	%	57.3	56.4	0.9
Unemployed	1 000	240.9	221.1	19.7
Unemployment rate ³	%	5.1	4.8	0.4

S: STATISTICS AUSTRIA, Labour Force Survey (Microcensus) – International definition according to ILO concept. Rounding differences are not compensated.

1) Part-time employed (self-assignment) as a percentage of employed persons aged 15 years and over. – 2) Employed persons as a percentage of the population of the respective age group. – 3) Unemployed as a percentage of the labour force (employed and unemployed) aged 15 to 74.

Table 2: Economically inactive population with willingness to work by possibility of returning to work, 2023

Age	Economically inactive (55–74 years) in 1 000	Willingness to work		Start of work within the next 2 weeks		
		in 1 000	in %	possible	not possible	thereof due to illness
in 1 000						
Total	1 360.0	76.5	5.6	23.1	53.4	34.1
Age						
55 to 59 years	121.5	28.7	23.6	(5.9)	22.8	17.6
60 to 64 years	408.2	23.3	5.7	7.7	15.7	8.9
65 to 74 years	830.3	24.5	2.9	9.6	14.9	7.6

S: STATISTICS AUSTRIA, Labour Force Survey (Microcensus) – () = Values in brackets are highly randomized due to low number of cases. – Without willingness to work = unknown.

Information on methodology, definitions: The European Labour Force Survey (LFS), which takes place in all EU Member States, collects information on employment and job search in a standardised form from randomly selected private households. In Austria, the LFS is conducted as part of the Microcensus – a sample survey in which about 45 000 persons are surveyed each quarter. These data are extrapolated to the population.

Employed persons: According to the international definition (ILO concept), persons are considered to be employed if they have worked at least one hour in the reference week or if they have not worked due to vacation, illness, etc., but are normally employed. Military and civilian servants are excluded. Results on **part-time** work are based on the direct question about full-time or part-time employment.

Unemployed persons: According to the international definition (ILO concept), persons are considered to be unemployed if they are not employed (see above) and have actively sought work during the reference week or the three preceding weeks. Also considered as unemployed are persons who already have a job offer and start this job within three months. In addition, they must be able to start work within the next two weeks after the reference week.

Economically inactive population: Persons who are neither employed nor unemployed (ILO concept) and have no job confirmation.

If you have any questions on this topic, please contact:

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