

Press release: 13 367-133/24

# High burden of housing, energy and food prices despite income growth

## 35% have more difficulties to get by on their income compared to a year ago

Vienna, 2024-06-27 – Almost half of 18 to 74-year-olds in Austria stated in the Statistics Austria survey on the social impact of the crisis in the first quarter of 2024 that their household income had increased in the past twelve months. In the first quarter of the previous year, the proportion of people with income gains was 21%. At the same time, 35% had more difficulties to make ends meet than in the previous year.

“The majority of the population in Austria is more optimistic about their income situation in the future than last year. At the start of 2024, almost half of the population reported income gains in the last twelve months. Nevertheless, inflation remains a challenge for many. More than a third were less well off with their household income in the first quarter of 2024 than a year earlier, citing the rise in housing, energy and food prices as the main reason,” says Statistics Austria Director General Tobias Thomas.

### Just under half reported an increase in household income

For the first time since the end of 2021, more people reported income gains than income losses in the past twelve months: 49% perceived an increase in their household income while 21% of the total population aged 18 to 74 perceived a reduction. Households affected by unemployment were particularly affected by income losses. Around 40% of this group experienced a loss of income in the past twelve months.

### Inflation is a major burden

In the first quarter of 2024, a total of 13% of people aged between 18 and 74 stated that they were only able to cover their household’s current expenses with difficulty or great difficulty. For the first time, respondents were also asked whether they had more or less difficulties to make ends meet at the beginning of 2024 compared to twelve months ago. Around 14% reported to have less or a lot less difficulties to make ends meet, while around half of 18- to 74-year-olds have not noticed any changes in their ability to make ends meet compared to the previous year (see table 2). Although around half of the population perceived an increase in income, 35% found it more difficult or much more difficult to get by on their income than in the previous year. In the group of people who experienced an income increase in the past twelve months, 22% reported that they were nevertheless finding it more difficult to make ends meet than in the previous year. Increased housing, energy and food prices were reported as the main reasons for the greater income difficulties. People who reported to have fewer difficulties to get by compared to the previous twelve months, reported higher wages and increased working hours as the main reasons.

### Stabilisation of housing cost burden

At the beginning of this year, housing costs represented a heavy financial burden for around 19% of 18- to 74-year-olds. This represents a slight decrease compared to the same quarter of the previous year (Q1 2023: 22%). 15% expected payment difficulties with housing costs in the next three months. This represents a significant decrease compared to the previous year (Q1 2023: 24%). Nevertheless, single-parent households (41%) and people on low incomes (39%) in particular continued to perceive a heavy burden by housing costs. People who rent were also significantly more burdened by housing costs (26%) than people who own their home (owners with a current home loan: 19%, owners without a loan: 9%).

### **Greater social vulnerability in households with female main earners**

People living in households in which a woman earns the majority of the income – i.e. women living alone, single mothers or women with a higher income than the male members of their household – are more likely to be at risk of social vulnerability and financial difficulties. 17% of people in households with a female main earner had a low household income, specifically less than 1 200 euros net monthly income, standardised to a one-person household. In comparison, this only applied to around 13% of people in households with a male main earner.

48% of people in households with a female main earner reported difficulties in making ends meet, compared to 39% of people in households with a male main earner. These households were correspondingly more likely to suffer from material deprivation. Almost a third of people in households with a female main earner could not afford to go on vacation for at least a week once a year (compared to 24% of people in households with a male main earner).

There were also differences by sex in terms of mental well-being. Women reported negative feelings such as sadness, despair, anxiety or depression more frequently. 15% of women stated that they had experienced these feelings in the past two weeks, compared to 9% of men.

### **Positive development of expectations for the future**

The positive trends in the expectations for the future from the last quarter of the previous year continued in the first quarter of this year. The share of those expecting a deterioration of the general economic situation in Austria over the next twelve months fell by 4 percentage points to 55% compared to the previous quarter. The majority of the population expected their income situation to improve (17%) or remain the same (64%) over the next twelve months. Compared to the fourth quarter of 2023, however, fewer people expected their income to increase (Q4 2023: 22%) and more people expected their income situation to remain the same (Q4 2023: 58%; see table 1). People from vulnerable groups were less positive about the future. Around 21% of people from households affected by unemployment expected their income to fall in the next twelve months.

Detailed results and in-depth analyses on differences between men and women can be found in the report “So geht’s uns heute: Die sozialen Krisenfolgen im 1. Quartal 2024 – Schwerpunkt: Geschlechtsspezifische Unterschiede” (in German language), issued jointly by IHS and Statistics Austria. The report is available on our [website](#) along with other detailed results.

**Table 1: Financial Situation**

Attribute		Q1/2023	Q2/2023	Q3/2023	Q4/2023	Q1/2024	
		in %				in %	in 1 000
Perceived change in income (last twelve months)	Increase	21,4	22,6	20,5	19,3	48,8	3 222
	Unchanged	45,6	45,8	48,7	52,2	30,1	1 989
	Decrease	33,0	31,7	30,8	28,4	21,1	1 394
Expected change in income (next twelve months)	Increase	15,7	15,5	17,2	21,6	17,4	1 147
	Unchanged	57,3	59,3	59,0	57,5	63,8	4 214
	Decrease	27,0	25,2	23,8	20,9	18,8	1 245
Making ends meet with the house-hold income	With great difficulty	6,2	7,1	6,7	6,1	5,0	331
	With difficulty	10,3	10,0	9,2	9,6	7,9	525
	With slight difficulty	30,0	29,6	32,2	28,0	28,6	1 888
	With slight ease	32,4	33,1	32,3	33,9	35,4	2 339
	With ease	14,4	13,5	13,8	15,8	15,2	1 002
	With great ease	6,7	6,8	5,8	6,5	7,9	521
<b>Total</b>			<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>6 606</b>

S: STATISTICS AUSTRIA, Survey "So geht's uns heute". – Data as of 27.06.2024.

**Table 2: Change in financial situation**

Attribute		Q1/2024	
		in %	in 1 000
Change in ability to make ends meet compared to twelve months ago	Much worse	5,8	382
	Slightly worse	28,9	1 911
	Unchanged	51,1	3 373
	Somewhat improved	12,6	833
	Much improved	1,6	107
<b>Total</b>		<b>100,0</b>	<b>6 606</b>

S: STATISTICS AUSTRIA, Survey "So geht's uns heute". – Data as of 27.06.2024.

**Table 3: Burden of housing cost**

Attribute		Q1/2023	Q2/2023	Q3/2023	Q4/2023	Q1/2024	
		in %				in %	in 1 000
Burden of housing cost	Heavy burden	22,2	22,2	21,2	19,8	18,7	1 232
	Some burden	65,7	63,7	62,5	64,2	64,6	4 265
	No burden	12,1	14,1	16,3	16,0	16,8	1 108
Expected difficulties paying for housing cost (in the next three months)	Yes	23,9	18,9	18,8	16,8	14,5	960
	No	76,1	81,1	81,2	83,2	85,5	5 645
<b>Total</b>			<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>6 606</b>

S: STATISTICS AUSTRIA, Survey "So geht's uns heute". – Data as of 27.06.2024.

**Information on methods, definitions:** The tenth wave of the survey “So geht’s uns heute” took place in February and March 2024. Approximately 3 400 respondents between 18 and 74 years participated in the survey. Between 2021 and 2023 Austria carried out the project with ten other EU countries and was funded by Eurostat and the Ministry of Social Affairs. From the survey in the first quarter of 2024 onwards, “So geht’s uns heute” is fully funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs. The current results in Austria show the subjective public opinion of the first quarter of 2024. The study focuses on personally experienced income losses; the subjective coping with the cost of life, personal well-being, and happiness. The quarterly study aims to identify the social effects of developments in the current crisis as early as possible. The sample was drawn from the Austrian civil register. Register data was not used in order to depict changes in the public opinion in a timely manner. The questionnaire can be found [here](#).

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