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Higher educated people live longer and have fewer children

Difference in life expectancy remains high, fertility rates are converging

Vienna, 2024-09-26 – Academics have the highest life expectancy in Austria, while compulsory school graduates have the lowest. The average number of children also differs depending on the level of education: female higher school graduates have the fewest children, those with a compulsory school certificate have the most. This is shown by Statistics Austria's analysis of demographic indicators 2022 according to educational attainment.

“Austria's population is getting older and older. In 2023, the average life expectancy of women was 84.2 years, while that of men was around five years lower at 79.4 years. In addition to the gender differences, however, there is also a clear difference in life expectancy according to educational qualifications: 35-year-old men with a university degree have a life expectancy that is almost seven years higher than men of the same age who have only completed compulsory schooling, while the difference in life expectancy for 35-year-old women depending on education was around four and a half years,” says Tobias Thomas, Director General Statistics at Statistics Austria.

Life expectancy increases with level of education

There are large education-specific differences in life expectancy, with the number of remaining years of life increasing with higher levels of education. An analysis of the demographic indicators for 2022 by educational attainment shows that at the age of 35, when most people have completed their formal education, men with a university degree can expect to be 84.0 years old on average, while those with a compulsory education can only expect to be 77.1 years old on average. The life expectancy of 35-year-old women with compulsory education is 82.8 years, while that of women with a university degree is 87.4 years. The difference in life expectancy between the lowest and highest educational attainment was 6.3 years for men and 3.4 years for women in 2015, and it increased to 6.9 years for men and 4.6 years for women in 2022. The highest increase in life expectancy was recorded for the group of female academics.

For 65-year olds, the remaining life expectancies of educational groups converge, but differences remain. At this age, the life expectancy of men with a university degree is still 4.3 years higher than that of men with only a compulsory education. For women, the difference between the lowest and highest level of education is 3.3 years.

Low fertility among female higher school graduates

The average number of children per woman also differs according to educational level. Between 2015 and 2022, women with higher school diplomas consistently had the lowest total fertility rate, while women without an education beyond compulsory schooling had the highest. Female compulsory school graduates have an average of 1.61 children in 2022, in comparison to 1.24 children for women with higher school degrees; university graduates had the second lowest number of children at 1.34. Nonetheless, opposing trends are also discernible: the birth rate of compulsory school graduates has been falling since 2015, although starting from a high level of 2.00 children. For all other educational qualifications, fertility rates rose until 2021, especially for women with higher school degrees. However, the low starting level in this group with a total fertility rate of only 1.13 children per woman in 2015 has to be noted. For 2022, a decline

in fertility rates can be seen across all groups, most strongly among women with a higher school degree or university degree.

The average fertility age in 2022 is 29.17 years for women with compulsory schooling and increases with higher levels of education. Female academics are on average 33.83 years old at the birth of their children. It is noticeable that the rising the fertility age since 2015 is mainly due to an increase among women with a compulsory school-leaving certificate, whereas the fertility age among the other groups has hardly increased since then.

Further information on demographic indicators 2023 and demographic indicators by educational attainment and employment status 2022 can be found on our [website](#) under “further data”.

Table 1: Longer-term life expectancy at age 35 by educational attainment and sex 2015 to 2022

Educational attainment /sex	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Men	44.21	44.80	45.17	45.20	45.52	44.84	44.73	44.92
Compulsory school	42.14	42.54	42.87	42.73	42.93	41.96	41.65	42.10
Apprenticeship and intermediate vocational school	43.79	44.30	44.94	44.95	45.27	44.58	44.55	44.60
Higher school with “Matura” exam (A level)	46.12	46.96	47.23	47.11	47.34	46.86	46.58	46.86
University and equivalent study programme	48.41	48.77	49.04	49.28	49.32	48.91	49.21	49.00
Women	48.86	49.19	49.47	49.55	49.79	49.34	49.31	49.40
Compulsory school	47.90	48.11	48.35	48.32	48.42	47.82	47.71	47.79
Apprenticeship and intermediate vocational school	49.17	49.46	50.01	50.05	50.26	49.88	49.81	49.89
Higher school with “Matura” exam (A level)	50.03	50.35	50.60	50.98	51.20	50.80	50.69	50.87
University and equivalent study programme	51.31	51.58	51.72	52.08	52.07	51.88	51.86	52.39

S: STATISTICS AUSTRIA, Demographic indicators.

Table 2: Total fertility rate and mean age of mother at birth by educational attainment 2015 to 2022

Educational attainment	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total fertility rate								
Total	1.49	1.53	1.52	1.48	1.46	1.44	1.48	1.41
Compulsory school	2.00	2.03	1.92	1.80	1.77	1.70	1.66	1.61
Apprenticeship	1.44	1.52	1.57	1.54	1.54	1.50	1.53	1.49
Intermediate vocational school	1.47	1.52	1.58	1.55	1.52	1.54	1.58	1.55
Higher school with “Matura” exam (A level)	1.13	1.21	1.30	1.27	1.26	1.27	1.31	1.24
University and equivalent study programme	1.33	1.37	1.40	1.39	1.40	1.35	1.42	1.34
Mean age of mother at birth (in years)								
Total	30.57	30.63	30.72	30.86	31.01	31.02	31.20	31.14
Compulsory school	28.60	28.62	28.81	28.93	29.08	29.05	29.21	29.17
Apprenticeship	29.13	29.08	29.15	29.25	29.25	29.45	29.60	29.38
Intermediate vocational school	30.20	30.15	30.15	30.17	30.26	30.24	30.21	30.31

Educational attainment	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Higher school with "Matura" exam (A level)	32.19	32.28	31.95	32.01	32.07	32.02	32.04	32.05
University and equivalent study programme	33.69	33.63	33.74	33.75	33.66	33.76	33.87	33.83

S: STATISTICS AUSTRIA, Demographic indicators.

Information on methodology, definitions:

Statistics Austria publishes **demographic indicators** broken down **by highest completed level of education and employment status** with a time lag of two years. The indicators on life expectancy, fertility and marriages are calculated on the basis of register data and are available from 2015 onwards, while those on divorces are available from 2018 onwards. The analysis is based on a combination of data on births, deaths, marriages, divorces and registrations as well as dissolutions of registered partnerships with information from the educational attainment register and the register-based employment histories. It should be noted that the analyses are presented from a **period perspective**. This means that it is not considered whether a person obtains further educational qualifications at a later point in time.

The **register-based employment histories** are a complete survey of employment careers that adopts the concepts of the register-based labour force statistics as far as possible. For this purpose, overlap-free and gap-free employment careers are formed from a large number of register data for all persons who appear in at least one of these registers (even if they never had a main residence in Austria). The results come from the base registers of the register-based census and the register-based labour force statistics.

The **educational attainment register** contains information on formal educational qualifications of the Austrian resident population aged 15 and older. It enables a regionally broken-down presentation of the educational attainment and its changes.

Further enquiries:

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