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Participation in education and training is related to German language level

58.6% of people with German as their first language participate in education and training activities

Vienna, 2024-10-02 – The higher the language level in German, the more frequently people take part in educational activities. This is shown by Statistics Austria's Adult Education Survey 2022/23. 58.6% of respondents aged 25 to 64 with German as their first language attended further education programmes in the year prior to the survey, compared to 41.2% of people with only elementary or extremely limited language skills.

The higher the German language level, the more likely adults are to take part in **formal educational activities**, i.e. school and university education. However, the difference between people with different language levels is even clearer when it comes to **non-formal educational participation** – vocational or private further education: 58.6% of those with German as their first language, around 4.1 million people, had taken part in further education programmes in the twelve months prior to the survey. For people who speak German as an additional language at level B (independent language use), the figure was 34.7%, which corresponds to around 240 000 people. And for persons who only have elementary or extremely limited language skills (level A), the proportion of those who took part in further education activities was 41.2% (around 190 000 people). At 36.8% (around 190 000 people), those who stated that they do not speak German at all – neither as first language nor as additional language – also had a comparatively low rate of further education.

With a participation rate of 52.9% (around 520 000 people), people with language level C (competent language use) are only 5.7 percentage points behind those with German as their first language. In the case of **informal learning**, i.e. non-institutionalised learning in leisure time, no systematic correlation can be observed between the language level and learning activities. Here, only people with language level B (63.9%) show a slightly lower participation level; the other groups have similar informal learning rates (see table 1).

81.0% of 25 to 64-year-olds in Austria have German as their first language

Overall, 81.0% of the Austrian working-age population (25 to 64 years) stated German as their first language. A further 6.4% stated German as an additional language and reported that they are fluent speakers (level C). 4.8% can communicate in German without preparation when it comes to everyday topics or their own interests (level B: independent use of language) and 3.9% are able to make themselves understood in basic German as long as the other person speaks slowly and offers support (level A: elementary use of language). In total, 15.1% of people stated that they speak German as additional language. The remaining 3.7% only understand a few words and sentences in German (level below A, see table 2).

People with little knowledge of German often have a lower level of education

At 53.7%, the proportion of people with German as their first language is lowest among those with at most a compulsory school leaving certificate. Around 35.9% of this group state German as their best second language. In comparison, the proportion of people with German as their first language among university graduates is 80.7%. People who have completed an apprenticeship (87.4%), people who have graduated from a vocational secondary school (90.4%) and people who have graduated from colleges for higher education (84.0%) are even more likely to state German as their first language. There are also significant differences in the language profile according to employment status: while 83.7% of those in employment speak German

as their first language, this figure is only 54.1% for the unemployed and 78.9% for those outside the labour force (retired persons, students, those taking care of children or other family members, and others who are neither working nor seeking work).

Further information on the adult education survey can be found on our [website](#) and in the publication Adult Education 2022/23.

Table 1: Participation in education by language level in German

Characteristics	All persons (25 to 64 years)	Formal education		Non-formal educa- tion		Neither formal nor non-formal educa- tion		Informal learning	
	in 1 000	in 1 000	in %	in 1 000	in %	in 1 000	in %	in 1 000	in %
Total	5 016.3	349.1	7.0	2 784.7	55.5	2 105.5	42.0	3 721.7	74.2
German as a first language	4 061.3	301.0	7.4	2 381.4	58.6	1 569.4	38.6	3 045.8	75.0
German as an additional language									
Level C	321.6	20.7	6.4	170.1	52.9	144.3	44.9	234.8	73.0
Level B	239.3	(13.1)	(5.5)	83.0	34.7	154.1	64.4	153.0	63.9
Level A/ below A	194.3	(4.0)	(2.1)	80.0	41.2	111.1	57.2	148.0	76.2
German neither as a first language nor as an additional language	185.8	(10.3)	(5.6)	68.3	36.8	114.6	61.7	135.3	72.8

S: STATISTICS AUSTRIA, Adult Education Survey (AES) 2022/23. – The figures in brackets () are based on a low number of cases and therefore subject to statistical uncertainty.

Table 2: Language skills in German according to socio-demographic characteristics

Characteristics	All persons (25 to 64 years)	German as a first language		German as an additional language		German neither as a first language nor as an additional language	
	in 1 000	in 1 000	in %	in 1 000	in %	in 1 000	in %
Total	5 016.3	4 061.3	81.0	755.2	15.1	185.8	3.7
Sex							
Men	2 509.5	2 027.5	80.8	383.9	15.3	87.8	3.5
Women	2 506.8	2 033.8	81.1	371.3	14.8	98.0	3.9
Age							
25 to 34 years	1 212.2	973.0	80.3	190.6	15.7	42.9	3.5
35 to 44 years	1 221.1	892.4	73.1	258.9	21.2	68.0	5.6
45 to 54 years	1 250.6	1 015.2	81.2	191.1	15.3	39.1	3.1
55 to 64 years	1 332.3	1 180.7	88.6	114.6	8.6	35.8	2.7
Highest level of education completed							
Compulsory schools	685.6	368.1	53.7	246.0	35.9	66.1	9.6
Vocational schools for apprentices	1 683.8	1 471.7	87.4	174.8	10.4	33.5	2.0
School for intermediate vocational education (BMS)	602.1	544.5	90.4	43.2	7.2	(13.2)	(2.2)
Colleges for higher education (AHS/BHS)	887.0	744.7	84.0	124.9	14.1	(15.5)	(1.7)
University, university of applied sciences,	1 149.8	927.3	80.7	163.5	14.2	57.5	5.0

Characteristics	All persons (25 to 64 years)	German as a first language		German as an additional language		German neither as a first language nor as an addi- tional language	
	in 1 000	in 1 000	in %	in 1 000	in %	in 1 000	in %
university-related training							
Employment status							
Employed	3 607.8	3 018.4	83.7	491.9	13.6	91.0	2.5
Unemployed	275.9	149.4	54.1	90.4	32.8	(36.2)	(13.1)
Outside of the labour force	1 127.8	889.9	78.9	172.9	15.3	57.5	5.1

S: STATISTICS AUSTRIA, Adult Education Survey (AES) 2022/23. – The figures in brackets () are based on a low number of cases and therefore subject to statistical uncertainty.

Information on methods, definitions:

In Austria, the Adult Education Survey (AES) 2022/23 was conducted from October 2022 to March 2023. The reporting period for education and learning activities is the last twelve months prior to the survey. The comparable predecessor survey AES 2016/17 was conducted from October 2016 to March 2017.

Education and training includes both formal and non-formal educational activities.

Formal education activities: Training in the regular school and university system (examples: Apprenticeship, health and nursing school, colleges for higher education, university, college).

Non-formal education activities: Organized learning activities that take place in an institutionalized setting and do not count as formal education. These include courses, seminars, workshops, lectures, workplace training and private lessons. These can be attended for professional or private purposes.

Informal learning: Process that is consciously and not casually pursued for the purpose of learning. Informal learning activities are not institutionalized, are less structured and can take place almost anywhere. Examples of this are Learning from family members, colleagues and friends, reading books or professional journals, learning with the help of electronic devices such as televisions, computers or cell phones.

Language level: The language level was assessed on the basis of the respondents' self-assessment. The formulation of the language levels refers to the European Framework of Reference for Languages: Level A: Elementary language use, Level B: Independent language use, Level C: Competent language use.

First language: The first language (also primary language) is the language that was acquired during primary socialization and was predominantly spoken at home as a child.

Additional language: Additional languages are languages that are spoken in addition to the first language.

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