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A quarter of young adults are overqualified for their jobs

AHS graduates in particular are unable to fully apply their knowledge

Vienna, 2025-11-27 – According to Statistics Austria, 24.7% of adolescents and young adults aged 15 to 34 believe that they have higher skills than are necessary for their work and could therefore perform more demanding tasks. This proportion is particularly high (46.9%) among people whose highest educational qualification is an academic secondary school (AHS). These are some findings from the "Young people on the labour market" module of the 2024 Microcensus Labour Force Survey.

"Especially at the beginning of one's working life, there are often discrepancies between qualifications and job requirements. While 71.8% of young workers have knowledge and skills that are well suited to their job, one in four under the age of 35 cannot fully utilise the qualifications they have acquired during their training or previous working life in their job," says Manuela Lenk, Director General Statistics of Statistics Austria.

Overqualification particularly high among persons with AHS diploma

The highest level of education completed has a significant influence on whether or not qualifications match the profession practised. People with only compulsory schooling (13.9%) were the least likely to state that their knowledge and skills acquired to date exceeded their job requirements. People with an apprenticeship qualification also considered themselves to be overqualified relatively rarely (20.2%). People who completed an academic secondary school (AHS) as their highest educational qualification were by far the most likely (46.9%) to state that their knowledge was higher than required for their job (see table 2).

Even when AHS graduates were no longer in formal education, they stated that they were overqualified almost as often (45.3%) as those in ongoing education or training (48.6%) who were engaged in minor gainful employment alongside their studies. In particular women who, after completing an AHS, are currently pursuing further education rated their qualifications higher than required for this secondary job (women: 54.3%; men: 42.8%). In general, young employed who work part-time (often alongside their education) show a higher degree of overqualification (34.4%) compared to those in full-time employment (19.2%).

Foreign background associated with a higher degree of overqualification

Significant differences in employment matching qualifications also appear by origin. Persons with a foreign background reported being overqualified significantly more often (30.1%) than those without (21.9%). A more detailed breakdown by migration generation shows that second generation migrants, who were already born in Austria, are significantly less likely (25.7%) to be overqualified than first generation migrants (31.9%). Depending on their foreign background, there are larger differences among young women than among men of the same age (see table 3).

Table 1: Match between skills and requirements of the job for employed and formerly employed under the age of 35

Match between skills and requirements of the job	Total		Men		Women	
	in 1 000	in %	in 1 000	in %	in 1 000	in %
Employed and formerly employed	1 744.1	100.0	900.8	100.0	843.3	100.0
Skills match the requirements of the job	1 252.2	71.8	657.5	73.0	594.7	70.5
Skills are higher than required for the job	431.6	24.7	208.9	23.2	222.7	26.4
Skills are lower than required for the job	60.3	3.5	34.4	3.8	25.9	3.1

S: STATISTICS AUSTRIA, Labour Force Survey (Microcensus) – Module 2024 "Young people on the labour market". – Rounding differences not balanced.

Table 2: Overqualification by highest level of completed education

Highest level of completed education	Total		Men		Women	
	in 1 000	in %	in 1 000	in %	in 1 000	in %
Skills are higher than required for the job	431.6	24.7	208.9	23.2	222.7	26.4
Compulsory school	43.2	13.9	24.2	12.7	19.1	15.7
Apprenticeship	94.6	20.2	60.1	20.8	34.5	19.3
School for intermediate vocational education (BMS)	35.1	25.5	18.1	29.8	17.0	22.1
Academic secondary school (AHS)	86.1	46.9	38.8	45.7	47.2	47.9
College for higher vocational education (BHS)	74.6	28.6	32.3	26.4	42.4	30.5
University, university college	98.0	25.6	35.5	23.1	62.5	27.2

S: STATISTICS AUSTRIA, Labour Force Survey (Microcensus) – Module 2024 "Young people on the labour market". – Rounding differences not balanced.

Table 3: Overqualification by foreign background

Foreign background	Total		Men		Women	
	in 1 000	in %	in 1 000	in %	in 1 000	in %
Skills are higher than required for the job	431.6	24.7	208.9	23.2	222.7	26.4
Without foreign background	247.2	21.9	121.5	20.9	125.6	22.9
With foreign background	184.5	30.1	87.4	27.4	97.1	32.9
First generation migrants	138.0	31.9	65.6	28.9	72.4	35.2
Second generation migrants	46.5	25.7	21.9	23.8	24.6	27.7

S: STATISTICS AUSTRIA, Labour Force Survey (Microcensus) – Module 2024 "Young people on the labour market". – Rounding differences not balanced.

Detailed results and further information on education and employment among people aged 15 to 34 can bei found on our website.

Information on methodology, definitions: The results are derived from the "Young people on the labour market" module, which was funded by the European Union and conducted throughout Europe in addition to the Labour Force Survey (LFS). In Austria, the LFS is carried out as part of the Microcensus, a sample survey of households. It collects information on education and the labour market situation in Austria from randomly selected private households in a standardised form. As part of this module, a total of 7 271 people (net sample) was surveyed throughout 2024. This data was then extrapolated to the population figure.

Target group of the 2024 module: All people in the sample who were between 15 and 34 years old were surveyed. Military and civilian servants were excluded.

Match between skills and requirements of the job: According to own assessment, the skills correspond to the requirements of the job, are higher or lower. This study takes a comprehensive view of skills. Not only the highest level of education attained, but all knowledge and qualifications were taken into account. When answering this question, those currently in employment should refer to their current job, while those formerly in employment should refer to their last job and the qualifications they had at that time.

Overqualification: All knowledge and skills acquired by a person during their education or professional career are, according to their own assessment, higher than those required for their job.

Foreign background: Both parents of persons with a foreign background were born abroad. This group can be divided into migrants of the first (people who were born abroad themselves) and second generation (born in Austria).

Statistics Austria is the central organisation for official data and statistics on society, the economy, the state and the environment. As a national statistical institute, it is committed to the statutory principles of independence, impartiality and objectivity. Statistics Austria is headed by Manuela Lenk, Director General Statistics, and Franz Haslauer, Director General Finance.

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