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Hate speech online on the rise

Political views, religion and ethnic origin most frequently targeted

Vienna, 2026-09-15 – In a survey conducted by Statistics Austria in 2025, 37% of 16- to 74-year-olds in Austria stated that they had encountered hate speech online in the past 3 months. This represents a noticeable increase in the perception of hostile or degrading content compared with 2023 (31%). Online hate is most commonly directed at political or societal views, religion or beliefs, and ethnic origin.

“Online hate is on the rise. In 2025, just under 4 in 10 people in Austria reported having come across hostile or degrading content online in the 3 months prior to the survey. 2 years earlier, the proportion of those reporting online hate had been significantly lower, at 31%. Younger, well-educated people and active social media users in particular encountered hate speech online with above-average frequency. According to the respondents, hateful comments most frequently related to political or social views,” says Manuela Lenk, Director General Statistics at Statistics Austria.

Hate comments targeting political views rank first

According to the respondents, hateful comments about political or societal views were the most common. Around one third (32%) of the population reported having encountered such content online. This was followed by content relating to religion or beliefs (26%) and ethnic origin (25%). Around one quarter of the population reported encountering hostile or degrading content relating to sexual orientation or gender identity (24%). 20% observed attacks based on gender, while 17% reported attacks based on physical or mental impairments.

Austria below the EU-27 average

The proportion of people in Austria who had encountered online hate speech stood at 37% in 2025, which was below the EU-27 average of 40%. The highest proportions of persons reporting hate speech online were recorded in Ireland (66%), Hungary (56%) and Finland (56%). The lowest proportions were recorded in Greece (26%), Latvia (28%), Lithuania and Bulgaria (30% each). Reported exposure to hate speech also increased across the EU compared with 2023, with the proportion rising from 34% to 40%.

Every second pupil and student confronted with hate speech

Younger persons reported encountering hate speech online much more frequently than older age groups. Among both 16- to 24-year-olds and 25- to 34-year-olds, 51% reported having encountered such content. The proportion was 40% among 35- to 44-year-olds, compared with a considerably lower 20% among 65- to 74-year-olds.

Clear differences were also evident by level of education. While 25% of persons whose highest level of education was compulsory schooling reported encountering hostile or degrading content, the corresponding proportion among persons with a university degree was 53%. Pupils and students reported such content particularly frequently, at 55%.

Social media play a central role as an environment in which hostile comments are encountered. 68% of the population had used social media in the 3 months preceding the survey. Among social media users, 45% reported having encountered hostile or degrading content online.

Detailed results and methodological notes on the "ICT usage in households 2025" survey can be found on our website. More in-depth analyses on the topic of hate speech are available in the publication "ICT usage in households 2025 – Hate speech on the internet" (available only in German).

Table 1: Perception of hate speech online, 2025

Population group	Persons who perceived hate speech online during the last 3 months in %
Austrian population, aged 16 to 74	37
Social media users in Austria	45
Population of the European Union	40

S: STATISTICS AUSTRIA, Survey on ICT usage in households 2025; Eurostat, Community survey on ICT usage in households and by individuals 2025.

Table 2: Contents of hate speech online

Content of perceived hate speech	Austrian population in %
Political or societal views	32
Religion or beliefs	26
Ethnic origin	25
Sexual orientation or gender identity	24
Sex	20
Physical or mental impairment	17

S: STATISTICS AUSTRIA, Survey on ICT usage in households 2025. Multiple answers possible.

Information on methodology: The results are based on the 2025 survey on the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in households and by individuals. The survey is based on Regulation (EU) 2019/1700, which obliges Austria and all other EU Member States to provide data, as well as Implementing Regulation (EU) 2024/2182 and Delegated Regulation (EU) 2024/2515. Statistics Austria conducts the Austrian survey once a year as a sample survey using a Europe-wide harmonised questionnaire, standardised definitions and a harmonised methodology.

The regulations stipulate that households with at least one household member aged 16 to 74 and the persons in this age group living in these households are surveyed. In 2025, a total of 4,295 households and 5,550 persons were surveyed. Data collection was carried out from April to July 2025 by means of web questionnaires and telephone interviews. The reference period was the time of the survey for households and either the time of the survey or the last 3 or 12 months prior to the survey for individuals.

Unless otherwise stated, the figures presented in this press release refer to internet use by the population aged 16 to 74 during the 3 months preceding the survey.

What is hate speech?

Hate speech online refers to online comments and postings directed against individual persons or groups of persons that insult, threaten or discriminate against them. The perception of such content was measured by asking respondents whether, during the last three months, they had encountered online content such as messages, comments, photos or videos that they perceived as hostile or degrading towards persons or groups of persons.

Who is Statistics Austria?

Statistics Austria is the central organisation for official data and statistics on society, the economy, the state and the environment in Austria. 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 Statis-tics, and Franz Haslauer, Director General Finance.

Further enquiries:
For information on results and methodology, please contact:
Jakob Peterbauer, phone: +43 1 711 28-7392, e-mail: jakob.peterbauer@statistik.gv.at
Gabriela Jank, phone: +43 1 711 28-8413, e-mail: gabriela.jank@statistik.gv.at
For interview requests, please contact the press office: presse@statistik.gv.at

Media owner, producer and publisher:
STATISTICS AUSTRIA | Federal Institution under Public Law | Guglgasse 13 | 1110 Vienna | www.statistik.at
Press: phone: +43 1 711 28-7777 | e-mail: presse@statistik.gv.at

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