

Standard-documentation Meta information

(Definitions, comments, methods, quality)

on

Microcensus since 2004 – Labour Force and Housing Survey

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Executive Summary

The Microcensus includes the Labour Force and Housing Survey and is implemented according to the national regulation on Employment and Housing Statistics (Erwerbs- und Wohnungsstatistikverordnung). Since the EU accession of Austria in 1995 the Labour Force Survey is conducted according to the European legal requirements. The European Labour Force Survey is conducted in all Member States of the European Union according to the corresponding EU-regulations and serves as the basis for internationally comparable data on employment and unemployment. The LFS is of great political and economic importance. For example, information from the LFS is used for European labour market indicators and for the UN agenda 2030. Besides, the quarterly and monthly unemployment rate is a key economic and socio-political indicator at European level and is also calculated from the LFS data.

Until 2003, the Microcensus survey took place four times a year. Since March 1995 the questionnaire for the European Labour Force Survey was additionally integrated once a year. At the beginning of 2004, the survey has been modified, and the survey was no longer conducted at certain points in time, but continuously during all weeks of each year. Consequently, most of the information of the LFS refers to the reference weeks, which are distributed evenly throughout the year. A major advantage of this system is that seasonal fluctuations can be better recorded. Despite the continuous surveying of households, the organization of the survey has retained a "quarterly character". Households are contacted on a quarterly basis; anonymized data has to be delivered to Eurostat quarterly; and the national regulation stipulates a publication of the results each quarter of the year.

The Labour Force and Housing Survey is carried out in private households, while institutional homes are not included. Main purpose of the survey is to collect data on employment and unemployment. In addition, the comprehensive questionnaire provides information on several aspects of the population, such as working time, second job, previous employment of inactive persons (i.e. not employed and not unemployed people), job search, and on the educational level of the population. The nature of the survey allows analyzing data on individual as well as on household level.

The ILO concept on the employment status is the central concept of the LFS. It has been developed by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and refined by Eurostat. According to this concept, employment is characterized by having worked for at least one hour in the reference week either for pay, profit or family gain. Alternatively, the person was not at work, but had a job or business from which he or she was temporarily absent due to illness, holiday, industrial dispute, education and training, etc. Persons without work during the reference week, who are available to start work and actively seeking employment, as well as - under certain conditions – persons, who are not working yet but have found a job are classified as unemployed. The implementation of the new EU-regulations in 2021 resulted in a change with respect to the definition of employed and unemployed people. As a consequence of this change, the number of employed people was slightly lower, whereas the number of unemployed people was higher than before.

This definition of unemployment differs from the national definition published by the „Arbeitsmarktservice“- AMS, i.e. Austria's public job centre. As a result, figures on unemployment differ considerably between the two data sources. Furthermore, the number of employed persons in Austria differs from administrative data on employment published by the "Dachverband der Sozialversicherungsträger" – DV, i.e. Main Association of Austrian Social Security Institutions. While the LFS identifies *people*, who are engaged in gainful employment, the HV counts *number of dependent employment contracts* in its monthly statistics. In addition, people in marginal employment are counted as employed persons in the LFS, whereas they are excluded from the statistics of the DV. In addition to the ILO concept, employment according to the "Lebensunterhaltskonzept" – LUK (i.e. Livelihood Concept, self-declared main status), can be constructed with LFS data. According to the LUK concept persons working in marginal jobs do often not declare themselves as employed, resulting in a lower number of employed people compared to the ILO concept. Moreover, the LUK concept does not include restrictions for self-assignment to unemployment. Hence the level of unemployed according to the LUK concept is higher than the one according to the ILO concept.

In addition to the LFS, the Microcensus includes the Housing Survey, focusing on information about the size and structure of the Austrian dwellings (main residences) as well as on the housing-related costs of households. This allows a continuous monitoring of changes in the structure of the housing stock and the housing conditions of the various population groups. A key result of the Housing Survey is the housing-related costs as it is included in the national and European consumer price index. Furthermore, results from the Housing Survey feed into the calculations of the National Accounts.

The questions about the residential situation have been part of the Microcensus for some time. Before 2004 they were asked four times a year in March, June, September and December. Since 2004, they have been surveyed throughout the year, together with the LFS.

The sample of the Microcensus consists of nine approximately equal-sized federal state samples (exceptions: Burgenland with a smaller sample size and Vienna with a larger sample size). Households are the primary sampling unit and they are selected randomly in a one-step sample from the “Zentrales Melderegister” – ZMR (i.e. register of residents). The total sample size per quarter is roughly 23,000 households (selection rate 0.6%). For each household, all household members are surveyed. Due to the timeliness of the ZMR, no additional sample has to be drawn for newly built dwellings. Survey weights are calibrated so that Microcensus results agree with known population totals. Until the 3rd quarter of 2014 those population totals included the population of the respective federal states by age and sex as well as by citizenship groups according to the population statistics database POPREG of Statistic Austria at the beginning of the respective quarter; furthermore household size according to the current household projections of Statistic Austria was included. Since the 4th quarter of 2014 (and the annual average for 2014), a new calculation procedure was applied. This was done, firstly, because new circumstances (e.g. a revision of the population figures on the basis of the 2011 census based on administrative data, changed grouping in the case of citizenship according to recent EU accession) called for an adaptation of the weighting procedure. Secondly, an analysis of survey non-response revealed a bias resulting from non-response. The employed population was slightly overestimated, and the unemployed as well as the inactive population were slightly underestimated. Therefore, the new method of weighting, as a methodological innovation to improve the data quality of the Microcensus, calculates survey weights in a way to compensate for this minor bias with the help of administrative data on the employment status. In addition, the weighting of the household variables has been slightly modified in 2014. Household size in the Microcensus data was aligned with the results from the administrative data census from 2011 and the weighting specifications for household size are now continuously updated with the results of yearly Register-based Labour Market Statistics.

Furthermore, Microcensus results between 2004 and 2014 were revised according to the new weighting procedure. As a result, there has been a slight shift in the level of different employment status and labour market indicators compared to previous publications.

The results of the Microcensus are published via various media, such as the Statistics Austria website, press releases, quarterly reports, and a comprehensive annual report. Separate analysis is done on household and family statistics, as well as on the annually changing modules (until 2021 referred to as ad-hoc-modules) on current labour market and social issues. Detailed analysis on specific topics is published in “Statistische Nachrichten”, the bulletin of Statistics Austria. The results of the housing survey are published in a separate annual publication.

Microcensus since 2004 – Labour Force and Housing Survey – Main Features	
Subject Matter	Labour Force Survey Housing Survey
Population	Austrian resident population in private households
Type of statistics	Primary statistics, sample survey
Data sources/Survey techniques	Continuous survey of households (in person, by telephone, since 2021 also as online survey)
Reference period or due day	Years, quarters and months
Periodicity	Quarterly
Survey participation (in case of a survey)	Compulsory
Main legal acts	EWStV, BGBl. II Nr. 111/2010 idgF (german) Regulation (EU) 2019/1700 Regulation (EU) 2020/257 Regulation (EU) 2020/256 Regulation (EU) 2019/2181 Regulation (EU) 2019/2180 Regulation (EU) 2019/2240 Regulation (EU) 2019/2241
Most detailed regional breakdown	NUTS 2
Availability of results	Final data: t+80 days
Other	Modification of the weighting procedure in the 4 th quarter of 2014 and revision of all results between the 1 st quarter of 2004 and 3 rd quarter of 2004 in March 2015; since 1 st quarter of 2021 implementation of new EU-regulations.

The process of production of Microcensus data

