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Perceived income losses in the fourth quarter of 2023 lower than in the previous year

3% reported financial problems when buying food

Vienna, 2024-03-26 – According to a survey on social effects of the crisis by Statistics Austria, 28% of respondents stated that they had a loss of income in the past twelve months in the 4th quarter of 2023. This is a decrease of 7 percentage points compared to the previous year. Furthermore, the issue of food poverty was examined in Austria for the first time. Around 3% of the population reported difficulties in being able to afford enough food in the last three months.

“After the numerous crises of the last few years, the mood of people in Austria has brightened somewhat at the end of 2023. Around 28% of those surveyed stated that their income had decreased in the last twelve months, which is around seven percentage points less than at the end of 2022. In addition, more and more people are expecting an improvement in their financial situation: at the end of 2022, around 17% were expecting increasing incomes within the next twelve months, this number increased to almost 22% at the end of last year. Data on food poverty in Austria was collected for the first time at the end of 2023. 3% found it difficult to afford groceries in the past three months,” says Statistics Austria Director General Tobias Thomas.

Perceived loss of income declining

In the third quarter of 2023, 31% of the population aged between 18 and 74 still stated that they had suffered a loss of income in the past 12 months. In the fourth quarter of 2023, this share was 28%. High inflation is still cited as the most important reason for the perceived loss of income (24%), although the figures are lower than in the previous year (Q4/2022: 32%) and previous quarter (Q3/2023: 27%; see table 1).

The proportion of the population reporting difficulties making ends meet with their current income remained stable at around 16% in the fourth quarter of 2023. People from households affected by unemployment (45%) and those with a low household income (44%) continued to state with above-average frequency that they can only cover their expenses with (great) difficulty.

Expenses for food are a particular burden for people on low incomes

Around 44% of those affected by a loss of income are trying to compensate for this by reducing their spendings on food, clothing and other goods and services. Compared to the previous quarter, this share has decreased further (Q3/2023: 50%). In the fourth quarter of 2023, questions on food poverty were asked as part of the survey on the social effects of the crisis. Around 3% of the population aged 18 to 74 were often or sometimes unable to afford enough to eat in the past three months (see table 2). 29% stated that their household could afford enough food, but not always the kind of food they wanted. For 69%, there were no restrictions with regard to the affordability of food.

Vulnerable groups in particular reported financial difficulties when buying food. Among people with a low income, 13% were often or sometimes unable to afford enough food and 10% of people living in households affected by unemployment. Most people who could not afford enough food or could not afford the food

they wanted resorted to special offers or cheaper brands (95%). However, for around a third of those affected, these measures were not enough and they stated that they had reduced or skipped meals altogether.

Slight easing of housing cost burden visible

Housing costs (including energy) were a major financial burden for around 20% of 18- to 74-year-olds at the end of 2023 (see table 3). Compared to the previous year, the situation has eased slightly (Q4/2022: 24%). There was also an improvement for people on low incomes compared to the end of 2022 (Q4/2022: 48%, Q4/2023: 35%). For other vulnerable groups there was no significant improvement over time compared to the previous year: At the end of 2023, 43% of single-parent households and 39% of people in households affected by unemployment reported, that housing costs were a significant burden for them.

Expectations regarding financial situation improved

The results of the survey in the fourth quarter of 2023 show, that expectations regarding future developments at the end of 2023 were more positive than in the previous year (see table 1). For the first time since the survey began at the end of 2021, more people stated that they expected their income to increase (22%) rather than to decrease (21%) over the next 12 months. When asked whether major expenditures were planned in the next 12 months, 41% of respondents stated that they wanted to reduce major expenditures in the future. Compared to the previous year, this proportion has decreased significantly (Q4/2022: 53%).

17% of 18- to 74-year-olds expected payment difficulties with housing costs such as rent, housing loan, ancillary housing costs or operating costs in the next three months. This proportion has fallen since the previous year (Q4/2022: 27%) and has stabilized since the previous quarter (Q3/2023: 19%).

Detailed results and in-depth analyses on food poverty can be found in the report "So geht's uns heute: Die sozialen Krisenfolgen im 4. Quartal 2023 – Schwerpunkt: Ernährungsarmut", issued jointly by IHS and Statistics Austria. The report is available on our [website](#) along with other detailed results.

Table 1: Financial Situation

Attribute		Q4/2022	Q1/2023	Q2/2023	Q3/2023	Q4/2023	
		in %				in %	in 1 000
Perceived change in income (last 12 months)	Increase	19,9	21,4	22,6	20,5	19,3	1 276
	Unchanged	44,5	45,6	45,8	48,7	52,2	3 449
	Decrease	35,6	33,0	31,7	30,8	28,4	1 876
Expected change in income (next 12 months)	Increase	16,9	15,7	15,5	17,2	21,6	1 426
	Unchanged	52,4	57,3	59,3	59,0	57,5	3 796
	Decrease	30,7	27,0	25,2	23,8	20,9	1 379
Making ends meet with the house-hold income	With great difficulty	7,4	6,2	7,1	6,7	6,1	401
	With difficulty	9,8	10,3	10,0	9,2	9,6	635
	With slight difficulty	27,7	30,0	29,6	32,2	28,0	1 851
	With slight ease	35,0	32,4	33,1	32,3	33,9	2 241
	With ease	13,4	14,4	13,5	13,8	15,8	1 040
	With great ease	6,7	6,7	6,8	5,8	6,5	432
Total		100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	6 601

S: STATISTICS AUSTRIA, Survey "So geht's uns heute". – Data as of 20.03.2024.

Table 2: Non-affordability of food

Attribute	Group	Q4/2023
		in %
Occasional or frequent inability to afford food (in the last three months)	Persons with loss of income in the past 12 months	5,8
	Persons with low income (<€1 000 net monthly income, standardized to a one-person household)	13,3
	Household affected by unemployment	10,0
	Single-parent household	4,3
	Multi-child household	5,6
	Total population	2,7

S: STATISTICS AUSTRIA, Survey "So geht's uns heute". – Data as of 20.03.2024.

Table 3: Burden of housing cost

Attribute	Q4/2022	Q1/2023	Q2/2023	Q3/2023	Q4/2023		
	in %				in %	in 1 000	
Burden of housing cost	Heavy burden	23,6	22,2	22,2	21,2	19,8	1 306
	Some burden	63,8	65,7	63,7	62,5	64,2	4 236
	No burden	12,6	12,1	14,1	16,3	16,0	1 059
Expected difficulties paying for housing cost (in the next 3 months)	Yes	26,8	23,9	18,9	18,8	16,8	1 108
	No	73,2	76,1	81,1	81,2	83,2	5 493
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	6 601

S: STATISTICS AUSTRIA, Survey "So geht's uns heute". – Data as of Datenstand 20.03.2024.

Information on methods, definitions: The ninth wave of the survey "So geht's uns heute" took place in November and December 2023. Approximately 3 200 respondents between 18 and 74 years participated in the survey. Between 2021 and 2023 Austria carried out the project with ten other EU countries and was funded by Eurostat and the Ministry of Social Affairs. From the survey in the first quarter of 2024 onwards, "So geht's uns heute" will be fully funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs. The current results in Austria show the subjective public opinion of the fourth quarter of 2023. The study focuses on personally experienced income losses; the subjective coping with the cost of life, personal well-being, and happiness. The quarterly study aims to identify the social effects of developments in the current crisis as early as possible. The sample was drawn from the Austrian civil register. Register data was not used in order to depict changes in the public opinion in a timely manner. The questionnaire can be found [here](#).

If you have any questions on this topic, please contact:

Janina Enachescu, phone: +43 1 711 28-7076, e-Mail: janina.enachescu@statistik.gv.at
 Lena Wittmann, phone: +43 1 711 28-8077, e-Mail: lena.wittmann@statistik.gv.at
 Franziska Foissner, phone: +43 1 711 28-7715, e-Mail: franziska.foissner@statistik.gv.at

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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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