

# Gender Equality in Austria

Milestones, successes and challenges



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Vienna 2022

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## Introduction

Women's and gender equality policy is a crosscutting issue that requires the commitment and collaboration of all ministries, federal states and holders of political office. The activity of and collaboration with NGOs and civil society is also crucial to achieve gender equality in each and every area of life.

In Austria, the Directorate General for Women and Equality is the national coordination body for women's and gender equality policy and promotes this policy in all political fields. The Women's Directorate General supports, among other things, the implementation of gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting in all departments and at all political levels, and brings a gender equality perspective into national, European and international committees. At the same time, targeted measures to promote women are being put in place, and facilities such as the counselling centres for women and girls or the violence protection centres receive financial support from the Directorate General.

In 2022, the Directorate General for Women and Equality celebrates 25 years since its establishment. Founded in 1997, the Women's Directorate General initially consisted of three departments that were able to achieve progress in terms of equality between women and men in several areas and set milestones. The Directorate General now comprises seven departments, which address the numerous challenges and potential areas of action of a future-oriented gender equality policy.

This brochure provides a brief insight into some central topics of the current situation regarding gender equality in Austria. In addition to the numerous achievements of the past few years, current and future areas of focus will also be discussed.

# Milestones for gender equality

- 1897** Women are admitted as regular students to the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Vienna.
- 1918** Universal suffrage including the right both to vote and stand as a candidate for parliamentary elections is introduced in Austria.
- 1919** The first eight women become Members of the Austrian Parliament.
- 1927** The Austrian Federal Council has a female President, who is the first woman in the world to chair a parliamentary chamber.
- 1948** The first female mayor is elected in Austria.
- 1966** For the first time in Austrian history, a female Minister is appointed.
- 1975** Termination of pregnancy becomes exempt from punishment under certain conditions within the first three months of pregnancy.
- The reform of the Austrian Family Law sets out legal equality between women and men: women are allowed to work without the consent of their husband, to decide where to live and to choose their family name.
- 1976** The Act on Advance Maintenance Payments comes into effect.
- 1977** Comprehensive social reforms are adopted: the increase of the parental leave allowance, the introduction of the mother-child pass, the extension of maternity leave and the one-week carer's leave.

- 1978** Austria's first women's shelter is opened in Vienna.
- 1979** The first female State Secretary for women's affairs is sworn in.  
The Equal Treatment Act of Women and Men with regard to Remuneration is adopted.
- 1981** The first counselling centre for women is opened in Vienna.
- 1982** Austria ratifies the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) of the United Nations.
- 1989** Following the reform of the Law Governing Sexual Offences, rape and sexual coercion in marriage or partnership become punishable under law.
- 1990** The first Minister for Women's Affairs is sworn in.  
The law on paternity leave is adopted.
- 1993** The Equal Treatment Act in the Federal Service is adopted.
- 1997** The Directorate General for Women and Equality is set up in the Federal Chancellery.  
With the Violence Protection Act, emergency barring, restraining and protection orders were introduced as protection measures for women.  
The first Austrian gender equality petition is held.
- 2000** Gender mainstreaming becomes an obligation in the federal administration.

- 2004** The right to take parental part-time is legally established.
- 2006** The Anti-Stalking Law enters into force.  
The National Council has a female President for the first time.
- 2009** A new regulation ensures that the last year of kindergarten is free of charge.  
The Registered Partnership Act is adopted.  
The implementation of gender mainstreaming in the national budgetary policy is enshrined in the federal constitution (gender budgeting).
- 2010** The National Action Plan on Gender Equality in the Labour Market 2010-2013 is published.
- 2011** The Ministerial Council adopts a women's quota for supervisory boards in state-affiliated companies.  
Companies are legally obliged to draw up income reports.
- 2013** The first emergency accommodation is set up for girls and young women who are victims or at risk of becoming victims of forced marriage.  
Austria ratifies the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention).
- 2016** The obligation to provide information to part-time workers about full-time positions that become available enters into force.

**2017**

The Act on Equality between Women and Men in Supervisory Boards is adopted.

The Action Plan on Women's Health is published and is unique in Europe.

The inclusion of the partner's income in emergency assistance is removed.

**2018**

A woman becomes the President of the Constitutional Court for the first time.

**2019**

For the first time in Austrian history, a female Federal Chancellor is appointed.

There is gender parity in the Austrian federal government for the first time.

A financial bonus is introduced for a higher percentage of women in parliamentary groups.

Marriage and civil partnerships are opened up to same-sex and mixed-sex couples.

The right to a month of paternity leave ("Papamonat") is introduced.

**2020**

A right to care leave is introduced.

**2021**

The legislative package on "Online Hate" enters into force.

**2022**

The Austrian Fund for the Empowerment of Women and Girls "LEA – Let's Empower Austria" is founded.

# 1 Gender mainstreaming



Gender mainstreaming is a strategy which aims to achieve the equal treatment of women and men in all areas of life. Equality between women and men is achieved when the different behaviours and needs of women and men are treated and supported as equal. As a gender equality strategy in the areas of policy making and administration, gender mainstreaming supports all actors involved in policy making in this way.

In 2000, the Austrian Federal Government committed itself to implementing the gender mainstreaming strategy and set up the Inter-Ministerial Working Group for Gender Mainstreaming/Gender Budgeting (IMAG GMB). The IMAG GMB is the supporting and accompanying body for the implementation of gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting at a national level and is chaired by the Minister for Women. It comprises the Ministries, the highest organs (Constitutional Court, Supreme Administrative Court, Ombudsman Board, Austrian Court of Audit, Parliament), the Public Service Union of Austria and the federal provinces.

Its main tasks include the exchange of information and best practices, the development of criteria for the implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy and the provision of support and evaluation of current projects, measures and laws on the implementation of gender mainstreaming.

Over various different phases marked by six decisions of the Ministerial Council, the strategy was set out to initially be implemented in pilot projects and eventually in the daily administrative routine. A milestone in this process was the constitutional establishment of gender budgeting as part of the Austrian Federal Budget Reform in 2009:



## Gender budgeting and outcome orientation

Gender budgeting is the fiscal tool of the gender mainstreaming strategy. Since 1 January 2009, gender budgeting has been enshrined as an objective in the Federal Constitution, and the federal, provincial and local authorities are obliged to implement effective equality between women and men as part of Austria's outcome-oriented budget management. This means that public funds are to be used in the fairest way possible to achieve effective gender equality.

Since 1 January 2013 and as a part of Austria's outcome-oriented budget management, all Federal Ministries and the highest national bodies (Parliament, Constitutional Court etc.) are obliged to define a maximum of five outcome objectives for the annual budget (Annual Federal Budget Statement). One of these objectives must be related to gender equality. Furthermore, specific measures for achieving the objective related to gender equality and appropriate indicators to evaluate the results must be defined. Moreover, the National Council receives an annual report on the outcome orientation by 31 October. The report on the consideration of actual equality between women and men as part of the impact orientation is attached to this report.

The aspect of equality is the only outcome-oriented goal that needs to be considered systematically by all ministries. As a result, a higher degree of transparency regarding the aims of policies and an enhanced outcome orientation on the political and administrative level were achieved. By enshrining gender budgeting in the Austrian Constitution, Austria was able to take a pioneering role on the international stage.

Another element of the outcome orientation is the outcome-oriented impact assessment. With the aim of implementing the outcome orientation goals as widely as possible, there has been a legal requirement for all regulatory provisions (e.g. laws, regulations, major projects) to be examined as regards their outcome in terms of gender equality since 1 January 2013. This means that the prospective outcome of every legislative proposal on the national level and of projects of considerable financial importance needs to be assessed in advance. No later than after five years, every ministry must evaluate if the outcome has turned out as planned.

There is a particular focus on equality-related consequences of: direct payments (e.g. funding of businesses, subsidies); measures taken in the fields of education and employment; and public revenues (taxes, levies and charges). Other factors are also to be considered, such as the distribution of unpaid work, the establishment of and changes in the composition of decision-making bodies and different impacts on the physical and mental health of women and men.

Regular observation and evaluation, transfer of information, analyses and reports are required to further develop this process, which has been initiated with success.

Among others, the website of the IMAG GMB [www.imag-gmb.at](http://www.imag-gmb.at), the annually published report on women and men in Austria – figures, data and facts (formerly the gender index), a database of gender equality-related projects and the series of events “Gleichstellung im Gespräch” (discussions about issues related to gender equality) are available to further raise awareness and support the implementation of gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting. The implementation process is also accompanied by the Gender Budgeting Blog [blog.imag-gendermainstreaming.at](http://blog.imag-gendermainstreaming.at).

# 2 Economy and politics



Strengthening women in leadership positions in the economic, political and public sectors is a high priority in Austria, especially as women are still underrepresented compared to their share of the population. The long-term goal is equal representation of women and men at all levels.

## Women in leadership positions in state-affiliated companies

Based on the decision of the Ministerial Council of 15 March 2011, the Austrian government committed to raise the percentage of women on supervisory boards of companies with a stake of 50% or more held by the federal government to 25% by 31 December 2013. By 31 December 2018, this percentage was to be lifted to 35%. This target was then extended to the end of 2019.

The decision of the Ministerial Council of 3 June 2020 determined that the percentage of women on supervisory boards of companies with a stake of 50% or more held by the federal government should be lifted to 40%.

According to the 2022 Progress Report, the state held a stake of 50% or more in 55 companies in the 2021 reporting period, and appointed 293 supervisory board members, 148 of whom were women. Overall, a total of 341 supervisory board members were appointed by all owners and investors, 159 of whom were women.

The average federal quota for women in state and state-affiliated companies in 2021 was 50.5%, representing an increase of 5.2 percentage points over the previous year. In 2021, 43 companies fulfilled the federal quota for women of

40% or even exceeded it (2020: 38 companies; 2011: 16 companies). The state appointed or newly appointed 65 supervisory board members in 27 companies, 42 of whom were women (64.6%).

In order to emphasize the role model function of the government and to raise awareness of the advantages of greater inclusion of women, the government has committed to evaluate the implementation of this quota policy on an annual basis and to present a progress report to the Ministerial Council every year.

### Percentage of women on supervisory boards of state affiliated companies 2011–2021 (in mandates appointed by the state)



Source: Ministerial Council reports, 2011–2022; own illustration; Percentage of women in mandates appointed by the state.

## Women in leadership positions in the public sector

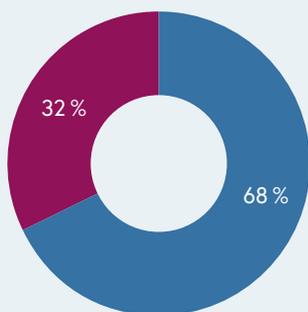
A key question in the context of equality in the working world is the extent to which women are represented in leadership positions. Management responsibility means on the one hand the possibility to make decisions, and on the other hand it correlates with the income level.

In 1993, special measures were created for the promotion of women in the public sector in order to achieve an approximately equal share of women and men, particularly in the upper and leadership positions.

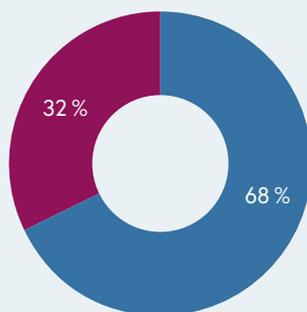
In the beginning, the required percentage of women was 40%; in 2011 it was raised to 50%. This means that female applicants who have the same qualification as the best male applicants have to be prioritised until the 50% quota is reached. This applies to the employment process to the public sector and the professional advancement therein (see chapter 4 on Equal treatment).

Between 2006 and 2020, the share of women in the public sector at a national level increased from 38.7% to 42.6%. In 2020, the percentage of women in the leading positions (e. g. Director General, Head of Directorate or Secretary General) was 32%. In 2006, the share was just 15.8%. Nevertheless, women are still underrepresented taking into account the percentage they make up of all employees in leadership positions at a federal level. The first female rector in one of the currently 22 universities in Austria was appointed in 2007. There are now seven women in this position.

**Rectors at Austrian universities in 2022**



**Highest functions in the public sector in 2020**



Source: Österreichische Universitätenkonferenz; (Universities Austria); Public service, data and facts about federal employees – women and men; A1/7–9 and comparable.

■ Women  
■ Men

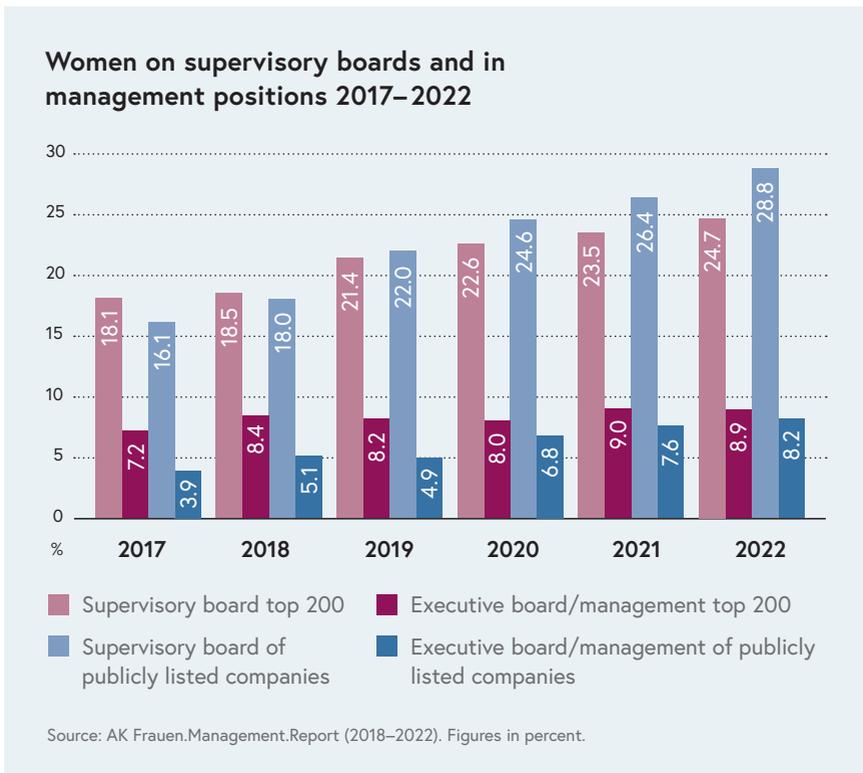
## Women in leadership positions in the private sector

Women are still considerably underrepresented in decision-making bodies and leadership positions in private businesses. In 2022, the share of women on executive boards and in management positions of the 200 Austrian companies with the highest turnover was 8.9%; female participation in supervisory boards was 24.7%.

The Act on Equality between Women and Men in Supervisory Boards (GFMA-G) was adopted in June 2017 to raise the share of women in leadership positions. Since 1 January 2018, there must be at least 30% women and 30% men on the supervisory boards of publicly traded companies and companies with more than 1,000 employees provided at least 20% women or men are employed in

the company and the supervisory board has at least six members. The target applies to new appointments, and if not complied with, the position remains unoccupied (“empty chair” rule). This was an important step to achieve balanced and equal representation of women and men in positions with economic decision-making responsibility.

While the percentage of women on supervisory boards of publicly traded companies was still around 16.1% in 2017, the share has risen to 35.1% among the publicly traded companies that were subject to the quota by 2022. However, among the publicly listed companies that were not subject to the quota, this percentage was 18%. Overall, the percentage of women on the supervisory boards of all publicly listed companies is 28.8% and on boards 8.2%.



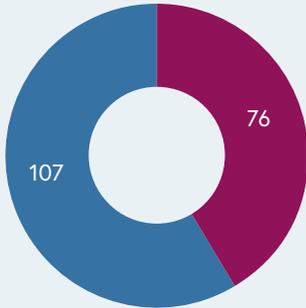
## Political representation

Having reached the year 2022, there has already been a great deal of progress in terms of the political representation of women at a national level in Austria. In 2022, 46.7% of the federal government representatives were women. In addition to this, around 41.5% of the members of the National Council were women, the highest percentage of female members of this body so far. In January 2022, the share of women in the Federal Council, the second chamber of the Austrian parliament, was 41%. In total, the percentage of women in State Parliaments across Austria was 39.7% (January 2022). Women are very much in the minority at the municipality level. According to information provided by the Austrian Association of Municipalities, of a total of 2,093 municipalities in Austria 201 had a female mayor in January 2022. This equals a share of 9.6%.

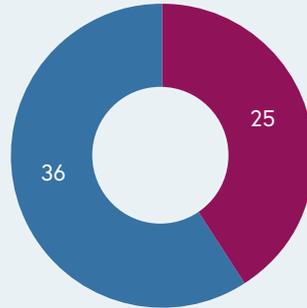
Despite progress when it comes to female representation in Austrian politics, women still remain underrepresented. Neither the two chambers of the Parliament nor the nine State Parliaments have a balanced distribution of female and male members. There is no mandatory quota regulation in force. However, some political parties have set out a voluntary self-commitment, which amounts to 40–50%. In 2019, a financial bonus was introduced for a higher percentage of women in the parliamentary groups.

## Representation of women in selected political bodies in 2022

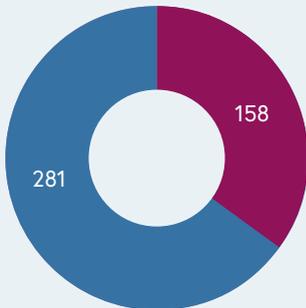
National Council



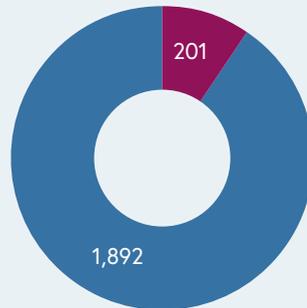
Federal Council



State Parliaments



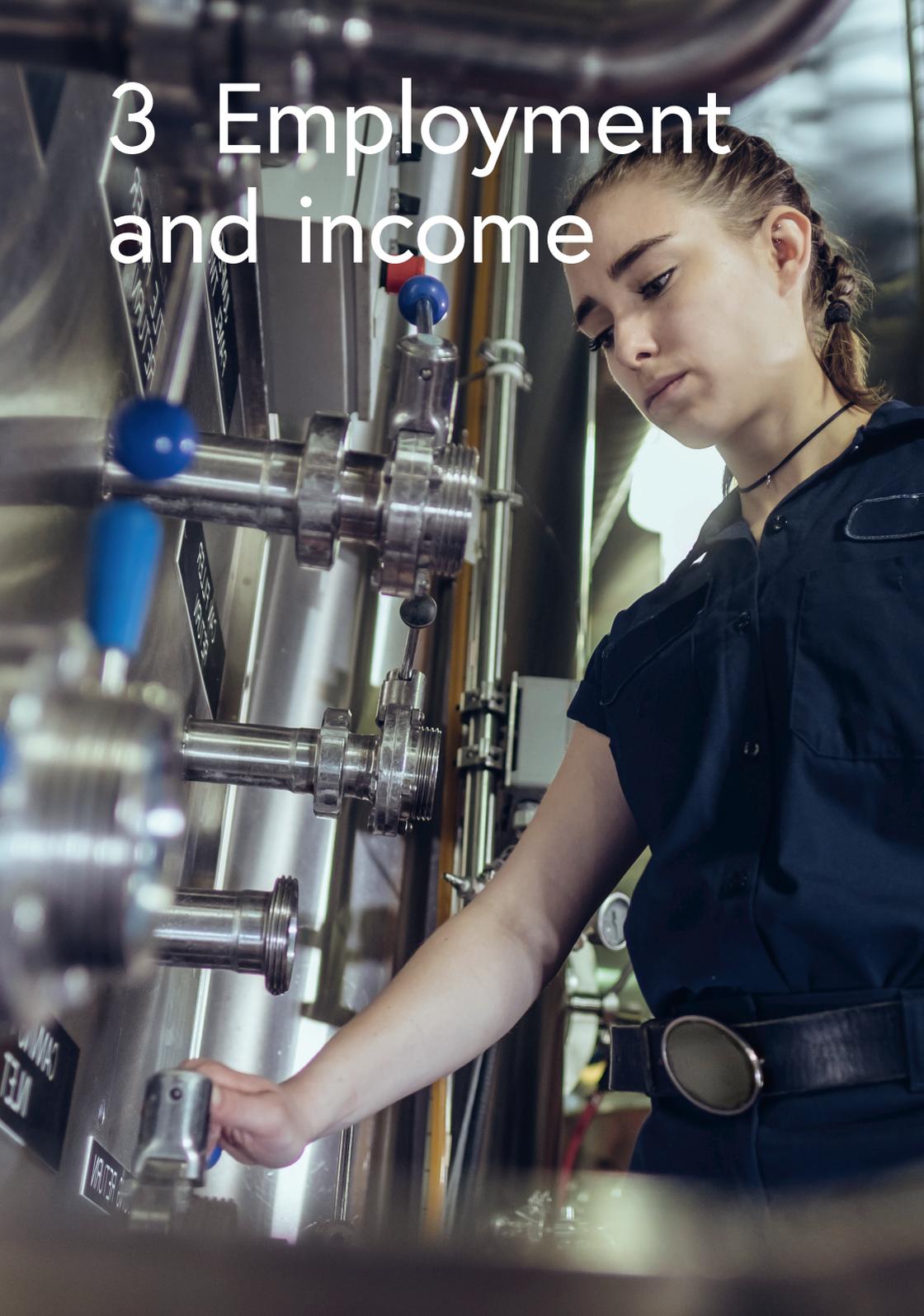
Mayors



Source: website of the Austrian parliament; official websites of the federal states; website of the Austrian Association of Municipalities (as of January 2022).

■ Women  
■ Men

# 3 Employment and income



# Employment

The employment rate is rising for women in Austria. Within ten years, it increased from 65.7% (2010) to 68.3% (2020) among 15 to 64-year-old women.

Along with the rising employment rate, the part-time employment rate of women also rose. In 2010, 43.8% of women were employed part-time, compared to 47.3% in 2020. In 2020, around 80% of all part-time employees were female.

**The working population in full and part-time work (absolute) and part-time quotas 2010–2020**



Source: Statistics Austria (Austrian Microcensus – Labour Force Survey), 2021; own illustration.

In order to support employees who wish to transfer from part-time to full-time, a regulation entered into force on 1 January 2016, obliging employers to inform part-time employees in advance when a job vacancy with a greater number of working hours or a full-time position is advertised.

There are still considerable differences between the share of women and men when it comes to atypical employment. In 2020, this amounted to 52% of women compared to just 15% of men. This means that these women are in part-time work, freelance work, subcontracted work, marginal employment or fixed-term work.

Gender-specific segregation of the labour market also becomes apparent when looking at individual sectors. Women are predominantly employed in the service sector, with the highest percentage in trade and in the health and social services, while men predominantly work in the production of goods, in the building industry and in commerce.

The reduction of horizontal segregation is paralleled by overcoming stereotypical gender roles and the diversification of educational paths. In order to diversify the vocational choice and career paths of women, many programmes have been in place for several years with the aim of encouraging girls and women to choose an apprenticeship or further training, particularly in STEM professions (see chapter 5 on “Education”). At the same time, more and more initiatives have been launched to encourage boys and men to pursue vocational training and careers in the social and care sector.

Gender-specific obstacles which hinder women from participating in economic, social and political life affect women in rural regions more than women in urban areas. Women in rural regions often face particular challenges: fewer opportunities to participate in the labour market, more career interruptions, higher

income disparities compared to urban areas, insufficient provision of social infrastructure, mainly in elderly and childcare, low representation of women in regional political committees and lower mobility compared to urban areas.

The provisions of the active labour market policy are particularly crucial for integrating women into the labour market in a sustainable manner and for raising income opportunities for women. An important step in this direction is the requirement issued to the Austrian Public Employment Service (AMS) that women must be considered for a higher share of expenditure in the active labour market policy. For 2022, the goal is to support women at a rate of four percentage points above their share of the unemployed population.

To implement the EU Recovery and Resilience Facility that has been created to mitigate the impact of the pandemic in the Member States, the Austrian Recovery and Resilience Plan also contains funds for active labour market policy and the promotion of women.

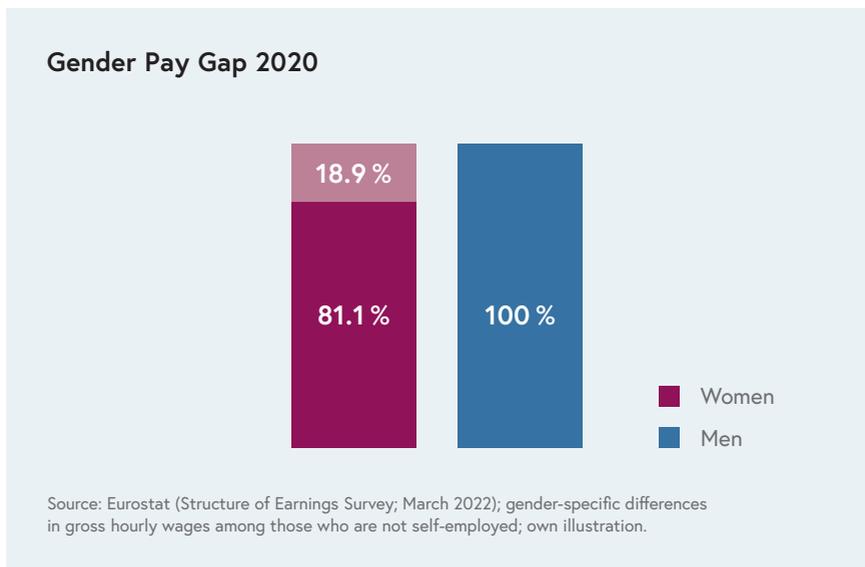
## Income and wage equality

On average, women still earn less than men in Austria. Although the gender-specific wage gap is slowly decreasing, at 18.9% (2020) Austria is still among the EU countries with the largest gender pay gap.

On the one hand, measures have been taken to reduce the structural factors for the high gender pay gap. These include the removal of obstacles for women to carry out a full-time job and the improvement of career prospects for women in all professional sectors.

On the other hand, the increase in income transparency is an important factor when it comes to reducing the gender pay gap. Since 2011, according to the Austrian Equal Treatment Act, job advertisements must include the minimum wage as stipulated in the collective agreement and, where applicable, the willingness to pay more.

Moreover, also since 2011, companies employing a pre-determined number of staff are obliged to draw up a biannual income report. Following gradual implementation, this regulation has affected companies with more than 150 employees since 2014.



A comprehensive tool box is available on [www.einkommensbericht.gv.at](http://www.einkommensbericht.gv.at) to support companies with the preparation of the income reports. The website [www.gehaltsrechner.gv.at](http://www.gehaltsrechner.gv.at) also offers the option to calculate the expected pay for those starting a new job, those rejoining the workforce and those changing role, on the basis of data on wages and salaries actually paid.

At the same time, more measures are needed to eliminate structural disadvantages and wage discrimination against women and to close the pay gap. Awareness-raising initiatives and educational and consulting measures for entrepreneurs, workers councils, employees and the general public contribute significantly to closing the gender pay gap.

## Reconciliation of work and family

Obligations to care for children or dependent adults are a main reason for part-time employment among women, whereas men are usually employed part-time whilst participating in school education or professional training. Unpaid work continues to be undertaken by women rather than men.

It is therefore necessary to further develop high-quality childcare and educational facilities across the whole country and facilitate access to these as well as to strengthen the equal sharing of housework and care responsibilities in order to offer women in Austria equal opportunities when it comes to full-time or almost full-time employment. The first steps in this direction were taken with the introduction of the free kindergarten year in 2009, the agreement between the national and provincial governments to provide more childcare facilities and all-day schools. Additionally, two measures were introduced in 2017 to improve the sharing of childcare by both partners, the so-called “family time bonus” as well as the “partnership bonus” granted in connection with the childcare allowance.

Parents can take parental leave in turns, and in doing so, they can also share a month together at home. Since 2004, both parents are entitled to claim parental part-time employment under certain conditions or can arrange it with the employer. This provides among other things protection against dismissal and a right to return to the job with the original working hours. Since 2019, fathers have also been legally entitled to a month of paternity leave (“Papapmonat”, early years leave). Moreover, in 2020 the right to care leave was introduced.

Numerous measures have been implemented to raise and strengthen awareness about the reconciliation of work and family, such as projects to support companies.

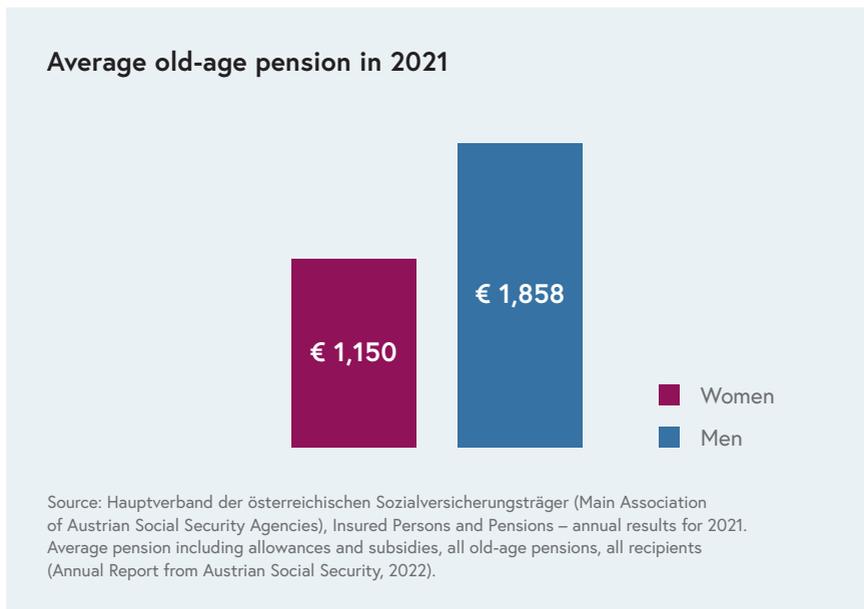
## Pensions

The Austrian statutory pension system is a pay-as-you-go system. The entitlement for the individual retirement benefits depends on the contributions levied from gainful employment and certain periods of time (childcare, care of relatives, unemployment). These periods of time are listed in the individual pension account and can be viewed by the insured person. The retirement age is currently 60 years for women and 65 years for men. From 2024, the retirement age for women will be gradually brought in line with the retirement age for men.

The average pension level of women is lower than that of men, which is mainly due to the lower income of women and the fact that women are more often employed part-time and have more career interruptions. In December 2021, the average monthly old-age pension received by women amounted to 1,150 euros, which is 61.9% of the average pension of men (1,858 euros).

In contrast, women more frequently receive widows' pensions and equalisation supplements than men and receive higher amounts when they do. This can be explained by their higher life expectancy and lower average pensions.

Due to having lower pensions, elderly women, particularly those who live on their own, are more often at risk of poverty. Their at-risk-of-poverty rate (EU-SILC 2020) of 25% is significantly higher than that of male pensioners living alone (19%).



Information materials are published on a regular basis to inform women about the effects of decisions they make in life on their economic independence in old age. Brochures, folders and information videos about women and pensions provide information about the most important elements of the pension system and show options for how to improve the amount of retirement benefits.

The EU project TRAPEZ analysed the gender-specific differences in old-age pensions in detail and showed possible areas for action to reduce these and improve financial security in old age, particularly for women:  
[www.trapez-frauen-pensionen.at](http://www.trapez-frauen-pensionen.at).

## Integration into the labour market

Removing the disadvantages women are facing is one of the key themes of the women's and gender equality policy. Women who have immigrated to Austria are even more affected by structural disadvantages due to their migrant background. A focus of the women's policy is therefore on improving the situation for female migrants.

In 2022, around 17% of all women in Austria were foreign nationals and 20.6% of the women living in Austria were born abroad. In 2020, 24.6% of the total female population (in private households) had a migrant background, which means that they themselves or at least one of their parents was born abroad.

A major challenge for female migrants is finding gainful employment. Women who have immigrated to Austria from a non-EU country are generally less often employed, have a lower net income and are more often unemployed. A major focus of the Austrian Public Employment Service (AMS) is therefore to give these women better opportunities to participate in the labour market.

One of the barriers for accessing the labour market has been the recognition of foreign qualifications. The Act on Recognition and Evaluation of Foreign Educational and Vocational Qualifications was introduced to facilitate integration into the labour market based on qualifications. This includes the simplification of the evaluation and recognition process for foreign qualifications, the creation of an independent recognition portal and the establishment of direct contact points for people who have acquired qualifications abroad.

For female migrants, in particular for those who have fled from war and crisis regions and have come to Austria in recent years, access to and integration into the labour market remain a major challenge. The main focus is therefore on reaching out to female migrants to facilitate their access to the labour market and employment and the identification of factors that foster and hinder this process.

# 4 Equal treatment



Austria has a long tradition as regards legislation concerning gender equality. The Equal Treatment Act of Women and Men with regard to Remuneration in the Working World (private sector) was adopted in 1979. An Equal Treatment Commission was already set up in this original enactment of the law.

Since then, the law has been considerably expanded and all phases starting from the conclusion of a contract of employment to career advancement and ending with the termination of a contract can be investigated for possible discrimination. The offenses of harassment and of sexual harassment were also included.

In 1993, the Equal Treatment Act in the Federal Service was adopted applying to the federal administration, this law mainly differing from the Equal Treatment Act concerning the private sector by including the chapter “Special support measures for women”. For the first time, a “women’s quota” was regulated by law. Among applicants with the same level of qualification, women are to be favoured when being contracted or progressed in the public sector until a percentage of 50% of women is reached in the respective function group. As a means of supporting measures to promote women, each federal ministry is legally obligated to pass promotion schemes for women.

In 2004, the types of discrimination were expanded in both Equal Treatment Acts, the result of which is that, besides discrimination on the grounds of gender, it is now no longer lawful to discriminate based on ethnicity, age, religion or ideology and sexual orientation (with some legal exceptions) in the working world. Outside of the working world, discrimination based on gender or ethnicity is prohibited by law when it comes to access to and the supply of goods and services which are available to the public, including living space.

In order to provide people affected by discrimination in their professional life with the possibility of settling such conflicts out of court, equal treatment commissions were set up for the private and the public sector. The independent members of these expert bodies come from the federal ministries and associations of social partners (employee and employer representatives). The proceedings are free of charge for the persons concerned and no lawyer is required. They are therefore easily accessible compared to a court case.

Every two years, reports on gender equality (one each for the private and the public sector) are submitted to the National Council in order to give information about the situation in Austria regarding gender equality, so that further legal steps can be taken, if necessary.

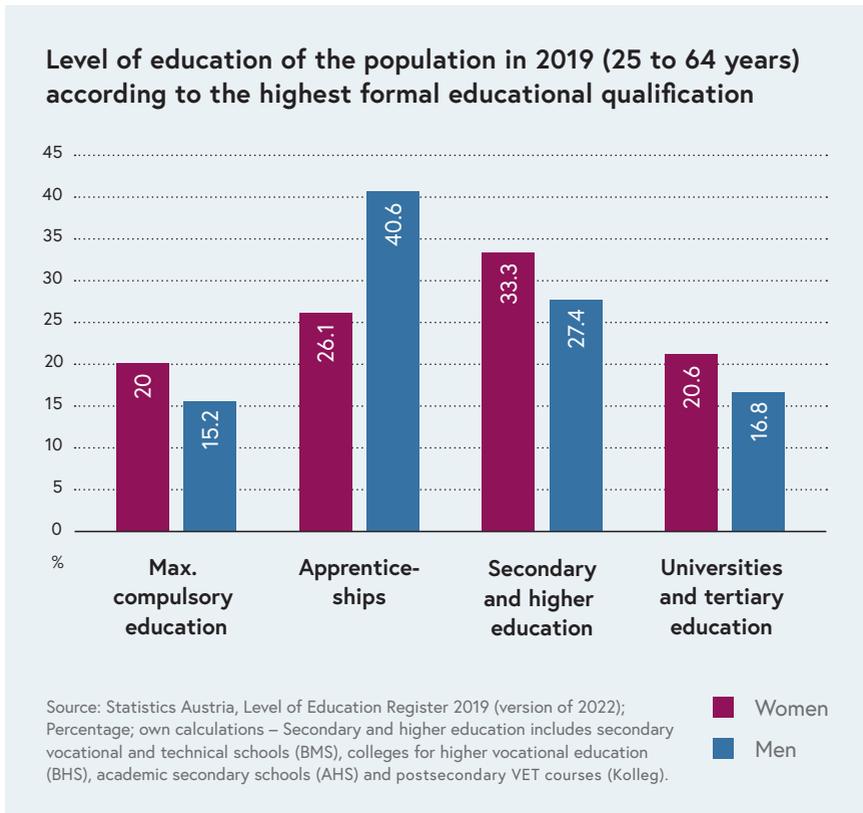
In order to ensure exchange with NGOs working in the area of non-discrimination, it is enshrined in law that the member of the government who is responsible for equal treatment / gender equality needs to invite the relevant organisations to enter into a dialogue on the subject at least once a year.

Moreover, an Ombud for Equal Treatment is legally established to ensure that the right to equal treatment and gender equality is enforced and discrimination is prevented. The ombud can e.g. carry out independent investigations in the field of discrimination and publish reports and recommendations on their findings and provides counselling services and information to employees and companies about enforcing the right on equal treatment.

# 5 Education



Over the last few decades, the educational level of women has significantly increased. For instance, more women than men had an academic degree in 2019.



When it comes to choosing the subject of study or vocational training, there is still a large discrepancy between women and men. In the subjects veterinary medicine (81.3%), humanities (76%) and fine and applied arts (70.7%), the percentage of women is particularly high (academic year 2019/20). In technical subjects, however, there are fewer female students. When it comes to apprenticeships, around half of all female apprentices in Austria opt to train as a retail salesperson, office administrator or hairdresser.

Existing measures therefore specifically aim at overcoming barriers to accessing scientific and technical training courses and professions.

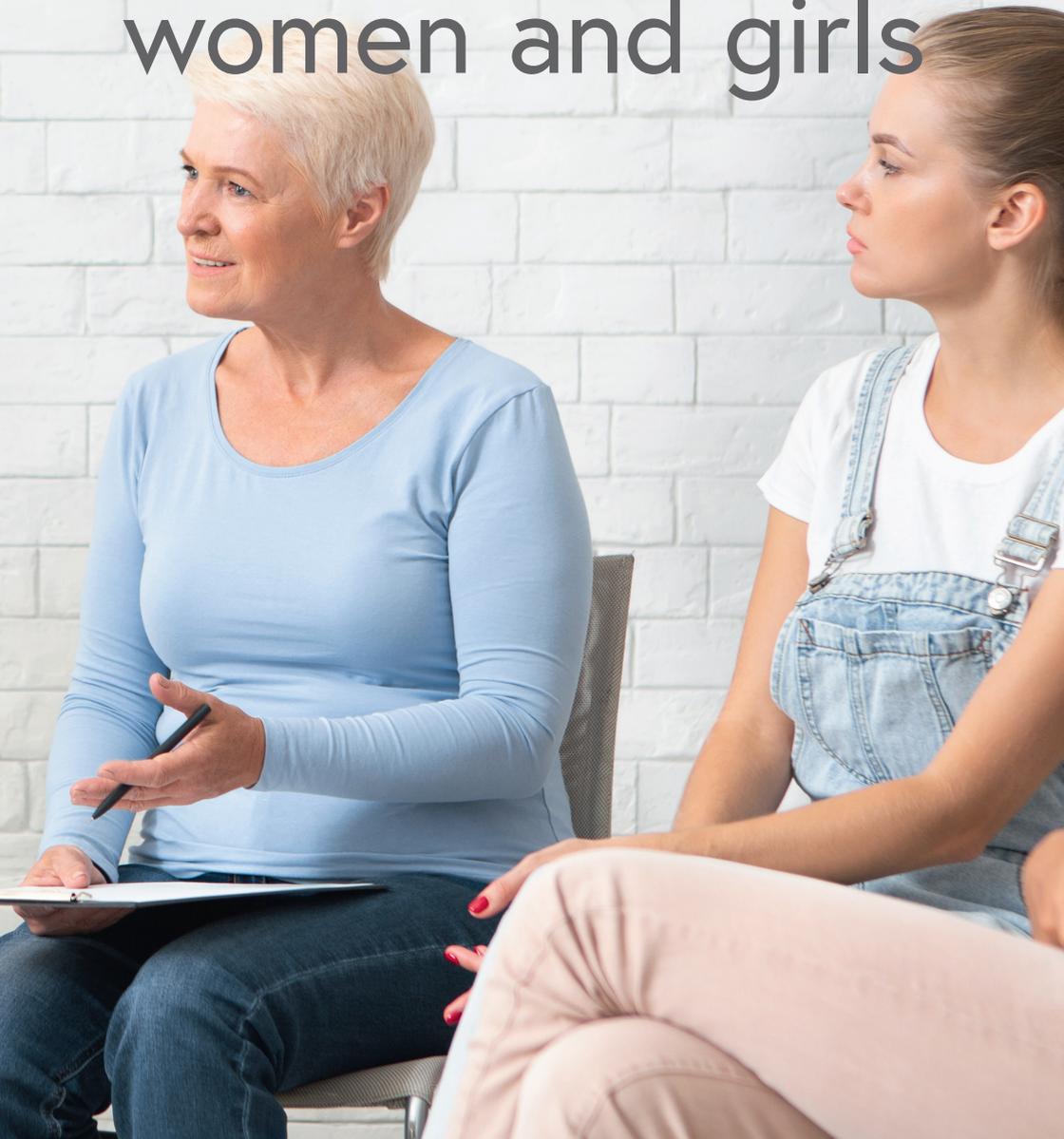
LEA – Let's empower Austria, the Austrian fund founded in 2022 to strengthen and promote women and girls, is a central nationwide point of contact to strengthen women and girls in all areas of life. There is a particular focus on STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths), to inspire young women in particular to take on training and careers in these professions. Gender equality in Austria is also driven forward with many services on offer for women and girls and a knowledge platform on women's policy issues. Further information can be found on <https://letsempoweraustria.at>.

In order to encourage girls early on to conquer new professional fields in the STEM subjects, schoolgirls from the age of six are invited to the Girls' Day which is organized in the public sector each year. This action day focuses on an action- and experience-oriented and thus emotional approach. Since 2006, it has taken place within the federal ministries and the subordinated departments on the basis of a Ministerial Council Decision. The Girls' Day MINI in the public sector has taken place since 2015 and addresses girls in the kindergarten age group of four years and above. Further information about the Girls' Day and the Girls' Day MINI is available at [www.girlsday-austria.at](http://www.girlsday-austria.at).

Various initiatives are also launched to inspire girls and young women to study STEM subjects, such as the STEM Girls' Challenge, see [www.mint-girls.at](http://www.mint-girls.at).

The equivalent Boys' Day focuses on enabling boys to familiarise themselves with professions in social institutions. Further information is available at [www.boysday.at](http://www.boysday.at).

# 6 Counselling centres for women and girls

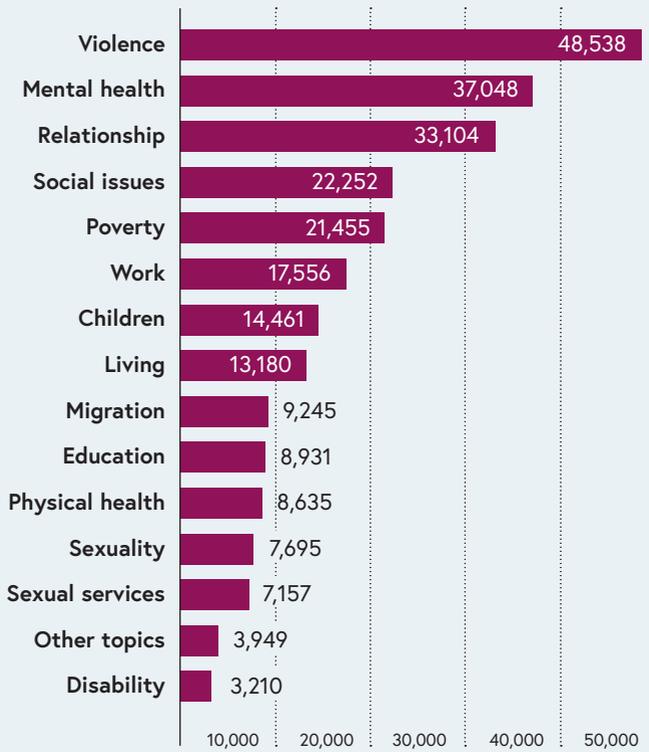


The first counselling centre for women in Austria was established in 1981 in the district of Ottakring, Vienna. The nationwide counselling centres for women and girls act as accessible, holistic first points of contact to advise and support different target groups in the regions.

Today, the Minister for Women and other regional bodies (states, municipalities etc.) provide funding for roughly 150 counselling centres for women and girls all over Austria, nine counselling centres for women who are victims of sexual violence and both an online counselling service and women's helpline against male violence which are available nationwide, as well as women's and emergency shelters.

More than 100,000 women and girls in Austria turn to these accessible, confidential and free counselling services every year, which are open for all women and girls regardless of their age, background, their employment or asylum status and the problems they are confronted with. The main topics raised in the counselling sessions are violence, health and relationships.

## Topics at single sessions in 2020 (number)



# 7 Protection against violence

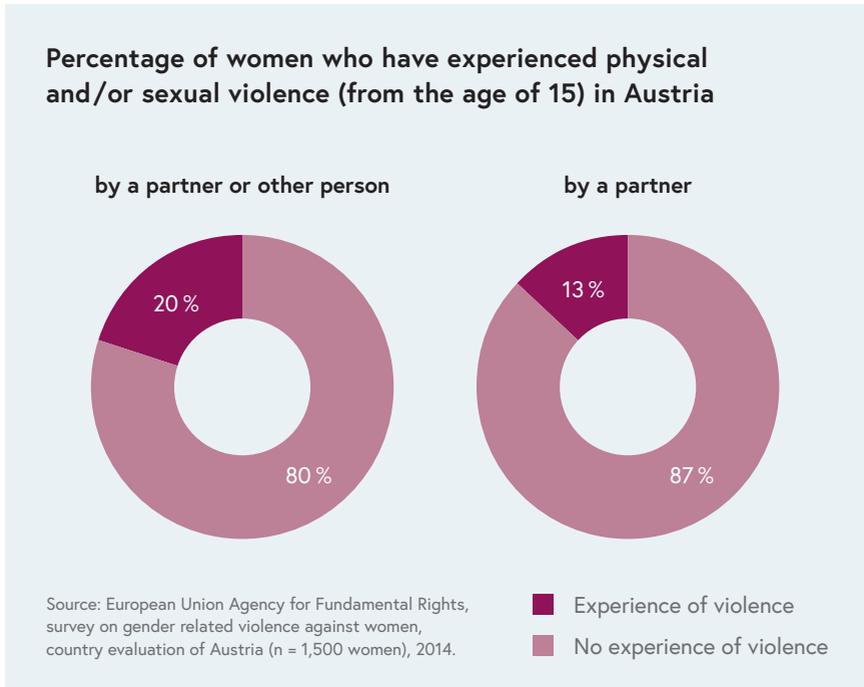


In order to enshrine the right of women and girls to a life free from violence on a lasting basis in our society, effective equality between women and men is indispensable. All efforts to structurally strengthen gender equality in each and every area of society are therefore also measures to prevent violence.

In addition to implementing diverse measures in the field of gender equality, Austria has taken several measures – in particular in the area of domestic violence – to remove taboos regarding violence against women, to implement effective law enforcement and to build up a comprehensive support system for victims. The ratification of the Istanbul Convention (“Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence”) in 2011 has had a further significant impact and has led to legislative improvements in the field of sexual violence, forced marriage and cyber violence.

Despite this progress, there are still many challenges that need to be addressed. Women are most likely to be at risk of becoming victims of sexual, physical or psychological violence from within their own social circle, in many cases the (ex-)partner. Austria is also committed to ensure data collection to grant an insight into the actual prevalence of violence. Furthermore, the removal of taboos surrounding sexual violence is particularly important. Data from the police and judicial data show that only a very small number of acts of violence is reported and an even smaller proportion leads to a conviction of the perpetrator.

Further major challenges are to maintain and expand support services and to improve access for particularly vulnerable women, such as those having physical or mental impairments or women with a migrant or asylum-seeking background. In addition, ensuring economic independence of affected women is a basic prerequisite to be able to leave a violent relationship.



## Domestic violence

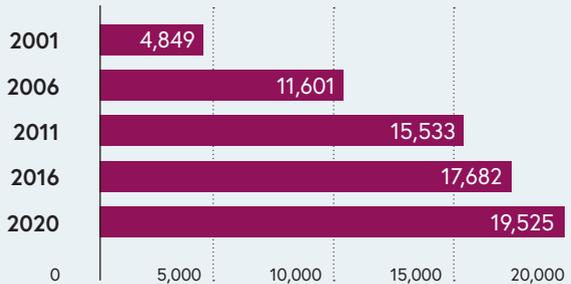
On 1 May 1997, the Violence Protection Act entered into force and established the general principle of “whoever hits, leaves”. Since then, several amendments have further improved the legal protection of victims of domestic violence, who are predominately women.

The Violence Protection Act is based on the pillars “police protection, counselling and prevention”. It authorises the police to issue protection and mobile restraining orders and enables the victim to request a preliminary injunction from the civil court. Additionally, specific centres for protection against violence have been established. They are informed by the police about the issuance of a protection and mobile restraining order and subsequently approach the victim for immediate support. Furthermore, the offender against whom the protection and mobile restraining order has been issued has to attend compulsory violence prevention counselling in specific violence prevention counselling centres.

Overall, the Violence Protection Act has significantly contributed to the removal of taboos surrounding domestic violence. The simultaneous creation of comprehensive support services was a crucial step for its implementation.

One of the remaining key challenges is providing sustainable support to victims of domestic violence, especially when a separation, e.g. due to financial reasons, is not possible or desired. The increase in funding for the violence protection centres in autumn 2021 guarantees among other things more resources for particularly vulnerable victims and enables them to offer proactive follow-up support to break the spiral of violence. The violence prevention counselling centres that have been introduced on 1 September 2021 and provide victim protection-oriented work with perpetrators are thus of particular relevance as well. The aim of work with perpetrators is to teach them to live without violence in the long term while protecting the interests of the victims. Despite these pioneering innovations, protection measures and prevention projects still require constant improvement. In particular, progress is needed in providing support for particularly vulnerable groups, like women with physical or mental impairments.

## Number of consultations in the violence protection centres (2001–2020)



Source: Federal Chancellery, Directorate General for Women and Equality, Department III/4, evaluation of statistics provided by the violence protection centres.

## Sexual violence

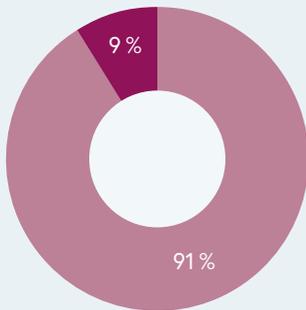
On 1 January 2016, the new provision of “Violation of Sexual Self-determination”, Article 205a of the Austrian Criminal Code, was introduced. It criminalizes sexual intercourse without consent and is an addition to the existing criminal offences of rape and coercion. Through this provision, a recognizable lack of consent, e.g. in case the victim has become petrified, leads to criminal liability. It is now also considered a criminal offence if the victim was made to comply under coercive circumstances or following an act of intimidation.

The legal provisions on sexual harassment under criminal law have also been considerably extended. They go beyond the touching of genitals and provide for more severe penalties when sexual harassment is committed in a group or by taking advantage of a position of authority.

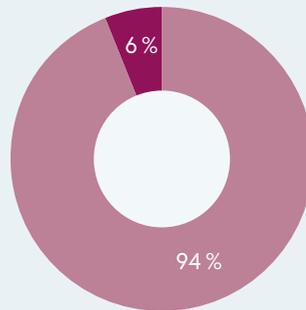
Another significant improvement has been the expansion of specialised women's counselling centres for victims of sexual violence in every federal state. Considering the high prevalence of sexual violence coupled with low conviction rates, a key challenge remains the collection of evidence, which can be used in court proceedings.

### Serious forms of sexual violence (from the age of 15) in Austria

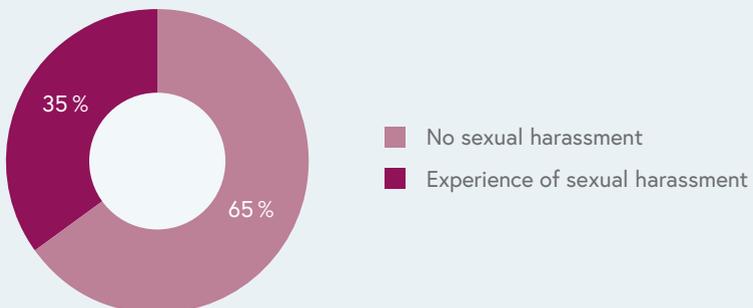
by a partner or other person



by a partner



### Sexual harassment (from the age of 15) in Austria



Source: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, survey on gender related violence against women, country evaluation of Austria (n = 1,500 women), 2014.

## Harmful traditional practices

“Harmful traditional practices” refer to forms of violence, which are based on strong ideas of morality or value that with time have become entrenched as “tradition” in a number of cultures. The fixed nature of these practices as “tradition” makes it particularly hard to sustainably combat these forms of violence. Examples of harmful traditional practices include forced marriage and female genital mutilation, both subject to prosecution in Austria.

Prevention and awareness-raising measures within the affected communities as well as long-term support for victims are particularly important to end these forms of violence.

There is extensive support available for those affected by harmful traditional practices in Austria, and specialised services for those affected by forced marriage and female genital mutilation are also provided. There is also the possibility of accommodation in emergency housing, in order to provide support in acute cases. A strong focus is also being placed on collaborating with the communities to end these practices.

## Victim protection

Over the last few years, considerable progress has been made in Austria with regard to victim protection. The specialised counselling services for victims have been expanded and the procedural rights of victims have been continuously enhanced. In that regard, the free psycho-social and legal court assistance, which victims of violence are entitled to under certain conditions, is of particular importance.

The group of potential beneficiaries of psychological and legal court assistance has been expanded considerably in the past few years: children who have witnessed domestic violence and victims of typical online hate crimes are now also able to claim legal assistance.

The challenges faced comprise above all ensuring that those affected know of and use these services and the continuous development of the existing support services, from counselling services through to court assistance.

# 8 Health



Women and men in Austria face different health risks, show different symptoms in certain illnesses and do not always respond to identical medical treatments in the same way. Women also subjectively perceive their health condition to be slightly worse than men. In 2019, 75.7% of men, but only 73.3% of women graded their health condition as “very good” or “good” (Statistics Austria, Health Survey 2019).

Self-determination of women in all health-related issues and gender-specific aspects of health promotion, prevention and care are important in a caring society. In order to reach equal opportunities in the health system, gender aspects need to be considered in health research and planning as well as in the areas of health promotion, healthcare provision and rehabilitation.

Against this backdrop, the Action Plan on Women’s Health was presented in 2017. Containing 17 outcome-oriented objectives and 40 measures, this action plan constitutes an important step toward improving the health of women in Austria and promoting equal opportunities. The measures are structured according to the different stages in the life of women – youth, working age, old age – and to topics that span all ages. In the spirit of the “Health in All Policies” approach, the health aspects are considered in all policy-making areas.

The action plan is implemented together with the relevant interest groups and the relevant stakeholders of the health system, women’s politics and other policy areas.

The information work is also being strengthened, for example in order to raise awareness of breast cancer screening and to facilitate access to counselling and support services for women under psychological strain.





