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One third notes hate speech online

Social media users more likely to encounter hate speech on the Internet than people who do not use social networks

Correction from 24 October 2023: The beginning of the first sentence of the second paragraph has been corrected. The old text is in square brackets.

Vienna, 2023-10-24 – In 2023, three out of ten persons in Austria report having encountered online content that they perceive as hostile or degrading in the last three months before the survey. People who are active in social networks are confronted with such content much more frequently than people who do not use social networks. This is shown by Statistics Austria's survey on the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in households.

“Insults, threats, discrimination and hate comments are unfortunately not uncommon on so-called social media. Overall, 31% of the population report hostile or demeaning content online. At 39%, social media users are significantly more likely to be exposed to hostile or degrading content towards certain people and groups than Internet users who do not use social networks at 20%. Thematically, this content most often relates to political or social views, religion or ideology, ethnicity, sexual orientation or gender,” explains Statistics Austria General Director Tobias Thomas

Around 95% of the population in Austria use the Internet

Almost [old: four out of five] 95% of all people in Austria between 16 and 74 years old used the Internet in the last three months before the survey, which was conducted from April to July 2023. This means a slight increase compared to the previous year (+1.7%). The majority (around 77%) used the Internet several times a day. But not only the Internet, also social media channels are used by a large part of the population. Overall, 63% of the 16 to 74 years old population is represented on social networks (see table 1).

Hate speech online is most often directed against political and social views

When online comments and postings are directed against individuals or groups and insult, threaten or discriminate against them, this is called hate speech. Overall, around 31% of the Austrian population have encountered online content that they perceive as hostile or degrading towards certain (groups of) people.

Internet users who use social media were particularly likely to report encountering content online that they perceive as hostile or demeaning towards people or groups of people (39%). People who use the Internet but do not use social media are much less likely to encounter such content (20%). How much the increased perception of hostile and degrading content can be explained by a greater use of social media or by a greater awareness of hateful and discriminatory content is not clear from the data.

Thematically, the online content perceived as hostile or degrading most often relates to political or social views. Around one in four people said they had seen such content online (27%). This is followed by religion or belief (22%) and ethnicity (20%) as well as sexual orientation (19%) and gender (17%).

For detailed results and further information on the use of ICT in households and by individuals please refer to our [website](#).

Table 1: Internet use 2023 – in % of all individuals

Characteristics	Individuals who used the internet	
	In the last three months	several times a day
	in % all individuals	
Total	95.3	77.3
Age		
16- to 24-year-olds	99.9	94.1
25- to 34-year-olds	99.4	91.3
35- to 44-year-olds	100.0	88.9
45- to 54-year-olds	98.2	80.6
55- to 64-year-olds	93.2	63.7
65- to 74-year-olds	78.7	43.1
Sex		
Men	96.5	79.5
Women	94.2	75.1

S: STATISTICS AUSTRIA, Survey on the use of ICT in households and by individuals 2023.

Table 2: Hate Speech on the Internet 2023 – in % of all individuals

Characteristics	Individuals who encountered content online which was considered to be hostile or degrading towards groups of person or individuals	
	in % all individuals	
Total	31.4	
Age		
16- to 24-year-olds	45.5	
25- to 34-year-olds	44.8	
35- to 44-year-olds	33.3	
45- to 54-year-olds	25.5	
55- to 64-year-olds	24.6	
65- to 74-year-olds	16.1	
Sex		
Men	32.3	
Women	30.5	

S: STATISTICS AUSTRIA, Survey on the use of ICT in households and by individuals 2023. – Data collection: April to July 2023.

Table 3: Hate Speech on the Internet 2023 – in % all Internet users

Characteristics	Individuals who encountered content online which was considered to be hostile or degrading towards groups of person or individuals	
	with social media usage	without social media usage
	in % all Internet users	
Total	39.2	20.4
Age		
16- to 24-year-olds	47.3	(31.4)
25- to 34-year-olds	46.8	32.7
35- to 44-year-olds	35.5	26.4
45- to 54-year-olds	29.8	19.4
55- to 64-year-olds	34.9	19.0
65- to 74-year-olds	36.0	13.9
Sex		
Men	39.4	23.0
Women	39.1	17.3

S: STATISTICS AUSTRIA, Survey on the use of ICT in households and by individuals 2023. – Values in parentheses reflect data based on less than 50 observations.

Information on methodology, definitions: These are the extrapolated results of the survey on ICT usage in households and by individuals in Austria in 2023. The survey is based on an EU regulation (Regulation (EC) No 2019/1700) which obliges Austria and all other EU member states to deliver specified data, as well as on a Commission Implementing regulation (Regulation (EC) No 2022/1399) and a Commission Delegated Regulation (Regulation (EC) No 2022/2279). Statistics Austria conducted the Austrian survey as a sample survey. The questionnaire, definitions and methodology were standardized across the EU.

Data from approximately 4 400 households and approximately 5 700 individuals was collected via telephone interviews or a web-based questionnaire. Data collection took place from April to July 2023. For household data, the reference period was the time of the survey; for individual data it was the time of the survey or the last three or twelve months prior to the survey. The survey included households with at least one household member between the age of 16 and 74 years and household members within this age bracket.

Besides the main indicators assessed each year (ICT equipment in households, internet use, use of e-government services and online shopping), the questionnaire also included indicators on ICT-related issues that change every year. Since the 2023 survey was conducted in every EU member state, data comparison within the EU will be possible. EU-wide results are expected for the beginning of 2024.

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

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