

Austrians are most concerned about health and long-term care

The OECD's cross-national Risks that Matter survey examines people's perceptions of social and economic risks and how well they feel their government reacts to their concerns. The survey polled a representative sample of 25000 people aged 18 to 64 years old in 25 OECD countries to understand better what citizens want and need from social policy – particularly in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over 80% of respondents in Austria report that their country's economic situation worsened during the pandemic, compared to a cross-national average of 71% (Fig. 1). This economic sentiment is also reflected in the difference in perceptions of household economic insecurity between people whose households lost a job during the pandemic and those who did not; this gap is greater than twenty percentage points in Austria.

Long-term care (LTC) is a common concern in Austria. Just over half of Austrian respondents see good quality LTC for elderly family members as their primary short-term worry, in line with the OECD average. LTC is the most often-cited concern in Austria and the Netherlands, while health and household financial security tend to be the top issues in other countries. Looking beyond the next decade, maintaining good health is the most often-cited concern for around 68% of Austrians (compared to 73% cross-nationally).

Yet almost 60% of Austrians also say they worry about LTC for themselves.

Like respondents in most other countries, Austrians are more likely to count on friends and family than on government to support them through financial difficult (Fig. 2). And over 60% of Austrians say that government should be doing more or much more to support their economic and social security, relative to a 68% average across the OECD.

When evaluating specific social programmes, a slim majority of Austrians agree or strongly agree with having good access to healthcare – a noteworthy outcome considering the health exigencies of the pandemic and the stressors facing healthcare providers in this period. At the same time, nearly seven out of ten Austrians say government should spend *more* on health services (when considering a general rise in taxes to pay for it). When considering a specific cost – 2% of income in taxes and contributions – 49% of Austrians said they would pay more for better provision of pensions (relative to an OECD average of 42%). This may relate to the links between individual contributions and pension benefits.

One possible path to funding the programmes people demand is through more progressive taxation: 67% of Austrians call for more redistribution to reduce income differences via social benefits (Fig. 3).

Fig. 2. Share of respondents identifying personal networks as their primary source of support in case of financial difficulty

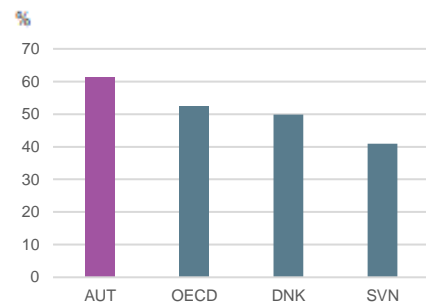


Fig. 3. Share of respondents who answer "more"/"much more" when asked whether government should redistribute more, versus the Gini disposable income

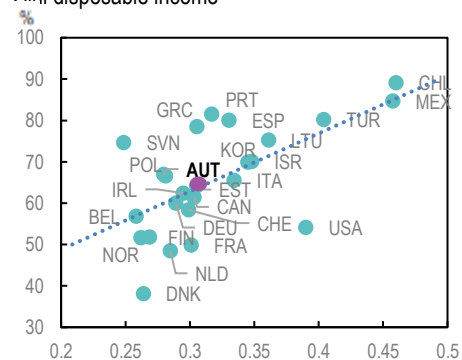
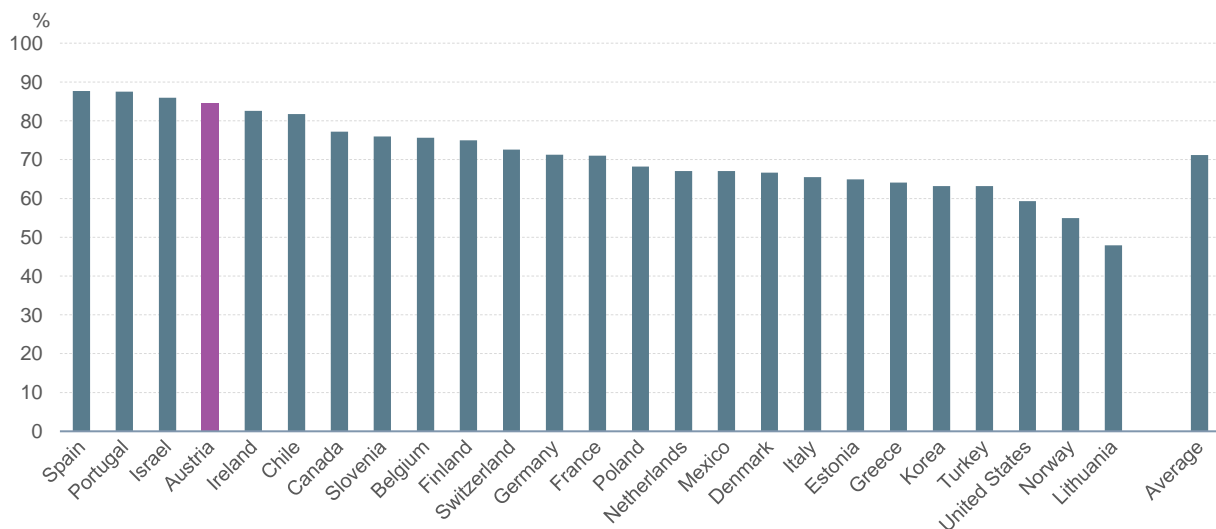


Fig. 1. Distribution of respondents who say that their country's economic situation is worse or much worse than it was in 2019



Note: Respondents were asked "Do you think that your country's economic situation is better than, the same as, or worse than it was twelve months ago?" Answer choices were "much worse," "worse," "about the same," "better," "much better" and "cannot choose." The percentages here are an aggregation of the responses "worse" and "much worse."

Source: OECD Secretariat estimates based on the OECD Risks That Matter 2020 survey, <https://www.oecd.org/social/risks-that-matter.htm>

The OECD Risks that Matter (RTM) survey is a cross-national survey examining people's social and economic concerns, how well they think government responds to their needs and expectations, and what policies they would like to see in the future. The survey was conducted for the first time in 2018 to support the OECD Social Policy Ministerial. The 2020 survey, conducted in September-October 2020, draws on nationally-representative samples in Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Korea, Lithuania, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey and the United States.