



# Member State Report Austria

## DATA & STATISTICS

This Member State Report of the EU Energy Poverty Observatory (EPOV) provides an overview of the energy poverty situation in Austria at a glance. With key indicators, policies and publications, it offers an understanding of the key aspects of energy poverty in Austria.

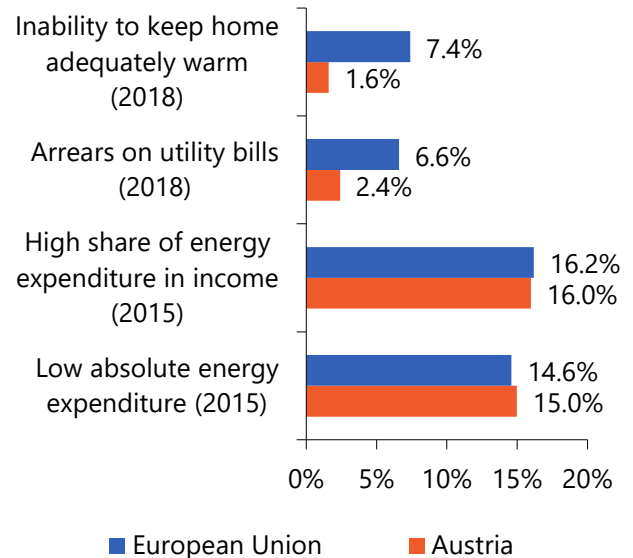
Austria performs much better than the EU average on the population-reported indicators. In a 2018 survey, 1.6% (less than a quarter of the EU average) of the population indicated that they were unable to keep the home adequately warm, and 2.4% (about a third of the EU average) were in arrears on utility bills.

However, Austria's performance in the expenditure-based indicators is close to the EU average; 16.2% of households spend a high share of their income on energy expenditure. The high energy expenditure is likely to put a strain on the household budget and might indicate a poor energy efficiency of the building.

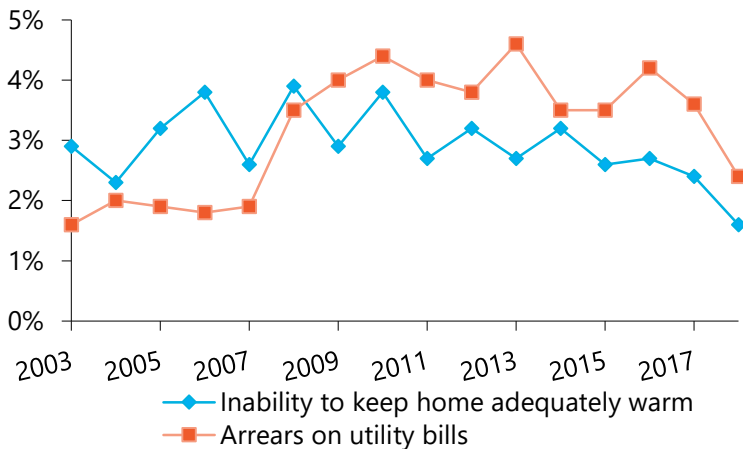
The energy expenditure of 15.0% of households is unusually low. These households might restrict their energy spending below what is necessary to meet their needs.

The drivers behind each of the indicators are investigated on the second page of this report.

### Performance relative to EU average\*



### Performance over time\*



Energy poverty has been fairly stable in Austria. The percentage of people unable to afford adequate warmth has stayed between 2.3% and 3.9% between 2003 and 2017. It declined to 1.6% in 2018.

The number of people who live in households with arrears on utility bills increased from around 2% from 2003 to 2007 to around 4% since 2009, and has been fairly stable since. This increase might be attributed to the financial crisis. Since 2016 both indicators show a decline of energy poverty.

### About the EU Energy Poverty Observatory

The EU Energy Poverty Observatory (EPOV) is an initiative by the European Commission to help Member States in their efforts to combat energy poverty. It exists to improve the measuring, monitoring and sharing of knowledge and best practice on energy poverty. EPOV has been developed by a consortium of 13 organisations. This report was authored by Navigant.

\*Population-reported indicators taken from Eurostat [here](#) and [here](#) on November 19, 2019. Expenditure-based indicators calculated by EPOV based on HBS data. Disaggregated data of population-reported indicators calculated by EPOV based on Eurostat provided data.



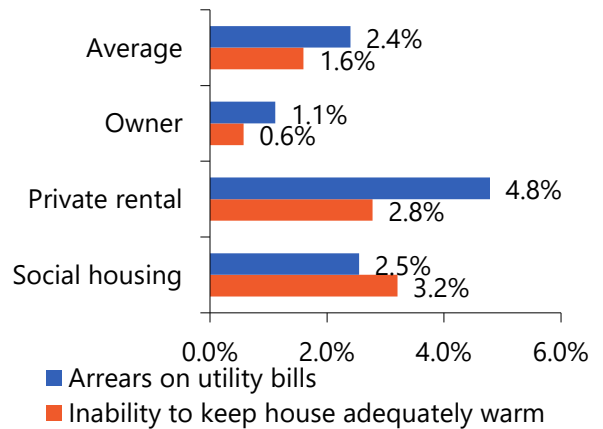
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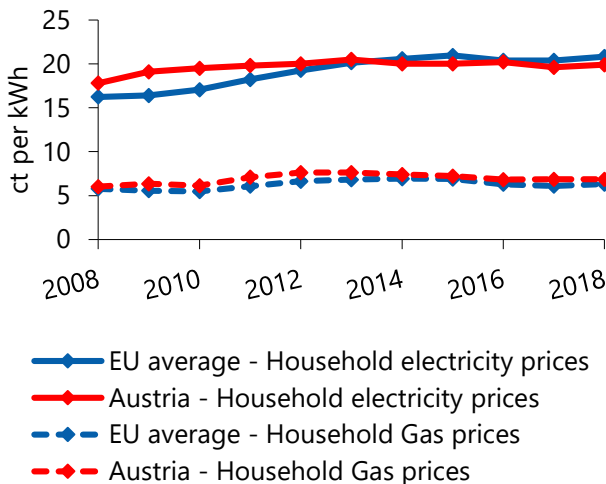
Disaggregated data of the household-reported indicators suggest that the 55% of the Austrian population that live in their own houses are unlikely to be affected by energy poverty. People living in social housing (15% of the population) and rent privately (30%) have a higher chance of having arrears on utility bills at 2.5% and 4.8% respectively and of being unable to keep their home warm at 3.2% and 2.8%.

In addition, disaggregated data indicates that energy poverty is mostly an urban problem in Austria, where the fraction of people who are unable to keep their home adequately warm are between 2 and 3 times higher than in rural or intermediately populated areas.

### Inability to keep home adequately warm (2017)\*



### Household energy costs over time\*

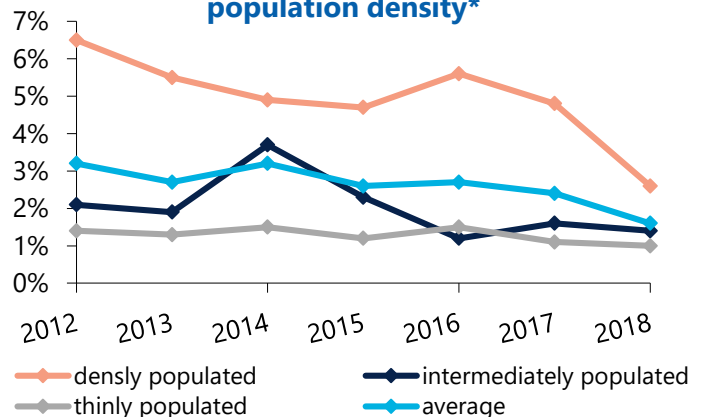


The household electricity prices in Austria have been fairly stable over the last decade. While the EU-average for household electricity prices increased by 28% from 2008 to 2018 the household electricity prices in Austria increased only by 12% in the same time frame.

The Austrian household shows a similar development as the EU-average and has increased by only 13% between 2008 and 2018.

The recent decline in energy poverty can be mainly attributed to improvements in urban areas from 5.6% in 2016 to 2.6% in 2018 (decline by 55%). Energy poverty has been fairly stable in thinly populated areas since 2012 at values between 1% and 1.5%. The inability to keep the home adequately warm peaked for intermediately populated areas at 2014 at 3.7% and declined to a value of 1.4% in 2018.

### Inability to keep home adequately by population density\*



\*Population-reported indicators taken from Eurostat [here](#) and [here](#) on November 19, 2019. Expenditure-based indicators calculated by EPOV based on HBS data. Disaggregated data of population-reported indicators calculated by EPOV based on Eurostat provided data.



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## POLICIES & MEASURES

In Austria, energy poverty has been a topic of discussion in recent years. The media has given the issue considerable attention and in-depth studies have been conducted on the topic. E-Control Austria has carried out several studies focused on the assessment of and measures against energy poverty.

E-Contro developed a definition and measurement of energy poverty in 2013: A household is considered energy poor if its income is below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold and its energy costs are above-average. The paper, which is available online, had undergone an extensive consultation process among stakeholders, including Austrian social care/support organisations such as Caritas Österreich and Volkshilfe Österreich, consumer organisations (Arbeiterkammer Wien, Austrian labour union–ÖGB), energy advice companies and academic experts. In 2019, this definition was used in the Austrian national energy and climate plan.

In 2018, a study carried out by the Vienna University of Economics and Business commissioned by the Ministry for Social Affairs developed a new definition of energy poverty that slightly varies from the definition established in 2013. In light of that and with a view to the implementation of Electricity Directive 2019/944, existing approaches concerning energy poverty will be reviewed by the government for the purpose of establishing an official definition of energy poverty. If indicated, further or other criteria for monitoring energy poverty will be used. The Ministry for Climate Action, E-Control and the Ministry for Social Affairs will be in charge of this process.

Nonetheless, a national energy poverty strategy is absent. Energy poverty measures have mostly relied on social policies that provide minimum incomes to households. In addition, some Austrian regions offer a *heating allowance* during the winter period.

The NGO Caritas also operates a national *electricity help fund*, which provides households with energy audits to improve energy efficiency, as well as support with the replacement of household appliances. The measure also provides energy bill support in dire situations.

The Ministry for Sustainability has carried out several projects that provided grants for renovations focused on energy efficiency and replacing oil heating systems. However, these are not targeted specifically at energy poor households and require significant investments from the households themselves.

There has been numerous local projects aimed at reducing energy poverty, and most of these projects have been completed. Such projects include those providing households with financing for energy-efficient appliances and advice on energy use in order to improve energy efficiency. Another project supplied households with wood pellet ovens and pellet supplies. However, most of these pilot projects have not been followed up with large-scale implementation of energy poverty measures.

Selected measures	Type of measure	Organisation	Target groups	Start year	Result
<a href="#">Electricity help fund</a>	Energy audits, Household appliances, Energy bill support	NGO	Low-income households	2009	The measure supports 400 to 500 households per year.
<a href="#">Heating allowance</a>	Energy bill support	Regional government	Low-income households		Financial support to cover costs of heating, eligibility requirements and size of support differ from region to region.
<a href="#">Energy consultations for low income households</a>	Energy audits, Household appliances	Regional government	Low income households	2011	991 consultations were carried out in low-income household from 2011 to 2014.
<a href="#">Prepayment electricity and gas meters for indebted households</a>	Disconnection protection	Regional government	Indebted households		365 households use prepaid-meters for electricity and/or gas in 2011.
<a href="#">Out of Oil Premium</a>	Heating System	National Government	households in semi-detached or detached houses	2019	Households can receive a grant of up to €5000 to replace their oil heating system.
<a href="#">Renovation Check 2018</a>	Building Insulation, Heating System	National Government	No specific target group	2018	Households can receive a grant of up to €6000 to support investments into energy efficiency.

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# Member State Report Austria

## PUBLICATIONS & ORGANISATIONS

This page gives an overview of the most relevant organisations working on energy poverty in Austria and presents publications on energy poverty in Austria.

### Organisation

**Name:** E-Control

**Organisation type:** National government

**Description:**

E-Control is the national regulatory authority for the Austrian electricity market. It monitors the situation of energy poverty and informs the public debate by publishing regular reports on the status of energy poverty. It played a key role in investigating different options and deciding on the energy poverty definition used by the Austrian government.

### Organisation

**Name:** Federal Ministry for Sustainability and Tourism

**Organisation type:** National government

**Description:** The Ministry for Sustainability has carried out several projects that provided grants for renovations focused on energy efficiency. Future projects could specifically focus on energy poor households that would otherwise not be able to afford investments in energy efficiency.

### Publication

**Title:** Initial [Energy poverty in Austria from a socio-technological perspective](#)

**Authors:** Berger, T.

**Year:** 2016

**Description:**

This publication gives an overview of the process how energy poverty was defined in Austria and the situation and discussions regarding energy poverty in Austria. The effects of different policies (such as liberalisation) and technologies (such as the pre-payment meter) on energy poverty is assessed, and energy poverty is discussed from the perspective of environmental justice.

### Publication

**Title:** [Study to investigate a definition on energy poverty in Austria from a socio-economic and energy-economic perspective](#)

**Authors:** Vienna University of Economics and Business

**Year:** 2018

**Description:**

This study was commissioned by the Ministry for Social Affairs. It carried out expert interviews and desk research to investigate options for the definition of energy poverty and suggested a new definition that is currently under review for the purpose of establishing an official governmental definition of energy poverty.

## Other selected publications

- Brunner, K.-M., Spitzer, M., and Christanell, A. (2011) [Sustainable energy consumption and lifestyles in poor and vulnerable households](#) (in German)
- Brunner, K.-M., Spitzer, M. and Christanell, A. (2012) [Experiencing fuel poverty. Coping strategies of low-income households in Vienna/Austria](#)
- E-Control Austria (2013) [Energy poverty in Austria. Definitions and indicators](#) (in German)
- E-Control Austria, Statistik Austria (2017) [Household energy and income with special focus on energy poverty](#) (in German)
- E-Control Austria, Statistik Austria (2019) [Energy Poverty in Austria](#) (in German)

For definitions of the terms used in this report [click here](#). The EPOV website provides an extensive collection of Knowledge & Resources. [Click here](#) for more information and to contribute additional policies, publications and other resources.

This report was completed in February 2020.

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