

Press release: 12.233-073/20

COVID-19 prevalence study: maximum 0.15% of Austrian population infected with SARS-CoV-2

Vienna, 2020-05-04 – In the period from 21 to 24 April 2020, a maximum of 0.15% or up to 10 823 persons in Austrian private households were infected with the coronavirus. This is the result of the nationwide COVID-19 prevalence study conducted by Statistics Austria on behalf of the Ministry of Science (BMBWF) and in cooperation with the Austrian Red Cross (ÖRK) and the Medical University of Vienna.

Up to 10 823 people infected with SARS-CoV-2

With a sample size of 2 800 persons aged 16 years and over living in private households, usable PCR samples were taken from 1 432 persons by means of mouth-nose-throat swabs. One of them tested positive for the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2. Although this result leads to a wide range of variation in the extrapolation, it allows conclusions to be drawn about an upper limit of SARS-CoV-2 infected persons: In the period from 21 to 24 April 2020, a maximum of 0.15% of the persons living in Austria were infected with SARS-CoV-2, which corresponds to 10 823 persons.

Higher prevalence of 0.75% in risk areas

In communities with a relatively large number of known coronavirus infected persons, the prevalence of 0.75% is significantly higher than average, but still low in absolute numbers. This was the result of an experimental study on SARS-CoV-2 antibody tests, which was carried out with a sample size of 540 persons aged 16 and over living in private households. A total of 269 persons in six federal states and nine districts underwent a multipart SARS-CoV-2 test on 25 April 2020. This consisted of a swab of the respiratory tract to check whether a current infection existed by means of PCR analysis, a rapid antibody test and a blood sample for antibody testing in the laboratory.

According to experimental study, 4.71% of people in risk communities have SARS-CoV-2 antibodies

According to extrapolation, 4.71% of the persons in the 27 communities with a relatively high number of known coronavirus infections had SARS-CoV-2 antibodies (mean value of the 95% confidence interval; see methodological information) on the cut-off date of the study on 25 April 2020. This means that an average of 1 884 persons in these communities had a past infection. Whether this leads to sustained immunity to the coronavirus cannot be answered with certainty at the current state of knowledge.

Fear of financial problems; for at-risk group, fear of infection is the main concern

The corona pandemic and its social and economic consequences have an impact on the fears of the Austrian resident population. When asked about possible consequences, 10% of the respondents in the COVID-19 prevalence study stated that they were afraid of financial problems, followed by the fear of infecting themselves (7%) and losing someone in the family due to COVID-19 disease (6%). The fourth most common fear is that there will be an increase in conflicts in the family or in the relationship (5%).

The consequences that are most frequently feared differ according to the current situation of the respondents: Among families with pre-school age children (born in 2015 or later), the most common concern is financial problems (19%) and the second most common concern is an increase in conflicts (14%). Persons who belong to a risk group due to pre-existing health problems, on the other hand, are most often afraid that they themselves will fall seriously ill with coronavirus and that they will

have to stay in hospital for this reason (12%), which was seen as a less likely consequence in all other groups (2%).

Persons with critical pre-existing conditions feel much worse psychologically

Slightly less than two thirds (64%) of the total Austrian population aged 16 and over living in private households reported a rather good mental well-being, i.e. they felt good spirits, peace or relaxation at least most of the time. Looking only at people with pre-school age children, 58% still reported good well-being. Among the persons with critical pre-existing conditions, who are thus classified as a risk group, only about one third (33%) stated that their mental well-being was good.

Measures to contain the pandemic largely considered appropriate

The overwhelming majority of respondents considered the measures taken to contain the pandemic to be adequate. 98% felt that quarantine in crisis areas was appropriate, and 97% each judged keeping a distance, the ban on events and the wearing of a face mask to be appropriate. On the other hand, 44% of those questioned considered the measure of leaving the house only in exceptional cases to be inappropriate – especially for people with pre-school age children (56%).

Detailed explanations (in German only) can be found in the [handout](#) and the [presentation](#) for the press conference on 4 May 2020. Information on the survey procedure is available on the websites for the [COVID-19 prevalence study](#) and the [experimental SARS-CoV-2 antibody test study](#).

Information on methods, definitions: The **COVID-19 prevalence study** tested 1 432 persons aged 16 and over living in private households. The results are subject to a 95% confidence interval, i.e. with a probability of 95%, those infected with SARS-CoV-2 are at most 10 823 persons or 0.15% of the total population aged 16 and over living in private households.

In the **experimental study on SARS-CoV-2 antibody tests**, 269 persons aged 16 and over were tested in 27 risk communities in private households. The results are also subject to a 95% confidence interval, i.e. with a probability of 95%, the number of persons with SARS-CoV-2 antibodies amounts between a minimum value of 543 persons or 1.36% and a maximum value of 3 189 persons or 7.97% of the total population aged 16 and over in private households.

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