

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work

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Facts and figures

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You can find the full report –in English only- on the Agency's website:

<http://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/TER009009ENview>

More information on the European Union is available on the Internet (<http://europa.eu>).

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## Summary

Almost one fourth of Austrian workers (24%) complain of backache, as shown by the Fourth European Survey on Working Conditions (ESWC), while muscular pain affects 20% of surveyed people.

By age, the prevalence of backache seems to grow with age, even though in the 40-54 age group shows the greatest prevalence (28.9%) followed by those aged 25 to 39 years old (23.7%). As far as muscular pain is concerned, and in line with the findings on backache, workers in the age groups 40-54 and 25-39 report the highest shares: 23.3% and 20.2%, respectively.

Rates are only marginally different between genders: while men seem to be a little more affected by backache than women (24.3% and 23.6%, respectively) the reverse is true for muscular pain: 20.2% among women and 19.9% among men.

Concerning occupations, the highest shares of backache are found among skilled agricultural and fishery workers (ISCO 6) and plant and machine operators and assemblers (ISCO 8): 47.9% and 47.1%, respectively. Regarding muscular pain, and similarly to backache, the highest shares are reported by skilled agricultural and fishery workers (43.8%), followed by craft and related trades workers (32.4%) and plant and machine operators and assemblers (31.4%).

Data broken down by sector reveal that agriculture, construction, transport and communication, and hotels and restaurants report higher than average shares of both backache and muscular pain.

By employment status, a slightly higher prevalence of both backache and muscular pain is found among self-employed workers than among employees. In any case, the differences among both groups are not very wide for any of the indicators.

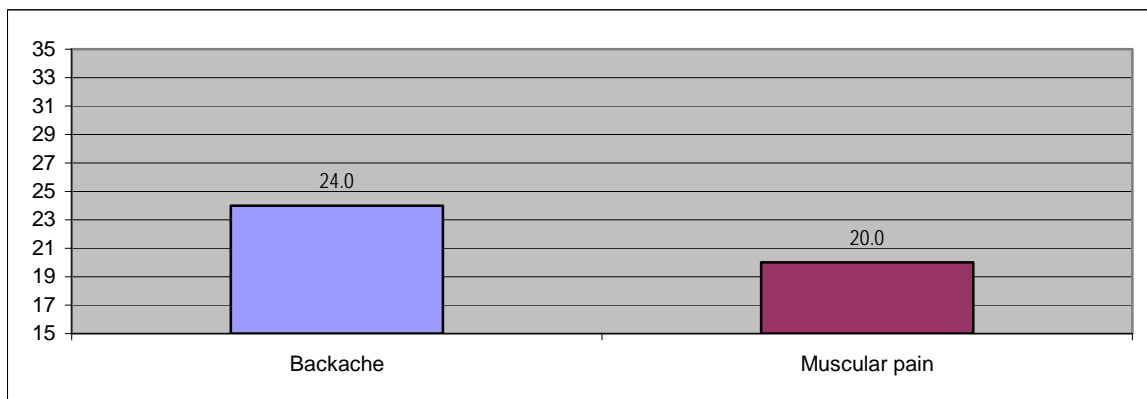
## Source description

Title	European Survey on Working Conditions
Acronym	ESWC
Institution	European Foundation for the Improvement of Working and Living Conditions (Dublin)
Country	EU
Periodicity	Every 5 years: 1991-1996-2000-2005
Type	Employee Survey
URL	<a href="http://www.eurofound.eu.int/working/surveys/index.htm">http://www.eurofound.eu.int/working/surveys/index.htm</a>
Demographic group	Employees, self-employed without personnel and self-employed with less than 10 employees.
Objectives	<p>Monitoring of trends in working conditions for employees and the self-employed throughout the European Union.</p> <p>This Survey provides an opportunity to monitor working conditions in the EU and to analyze specific themes in depth, such as: sector differences, working conditions and gender, age, or employment contracts, work organization, working hours, etc.</p>
Description	Face-to face interviews in all EU countries, with approx. 1,000 people in each country are selected (random walk), structured questionnaire.
Content	This survey describes a broad range of questions in the field of working conditions.
Question	<p>Q.33. Does your work affect your health, or not? (yes, no);</p> <p>Q.33a. How does it affect your health?;</p> <p>Q33a_d Backache (mentioned, not mentioned);</p> <p>Q33a_g Muscular pains -in shoulders, neck and/or upper/lower limbs (mentioned, not mentioned).</p>

## 1 General prevalence

According to the Fourth European Survey on Working Conditions (ESWC), backache is the most prevalent work related MSDs in Austria, reported by almost one fourth (24%) of all respondents, while muscular pain –combined index of pain in shoulders, neck and/or upper/lower limbs- affects one fifth (20%) of surveyed people.

**Figure 1: Effect on health: percentage share of workers reporting backache and muscular pain, 2005.**



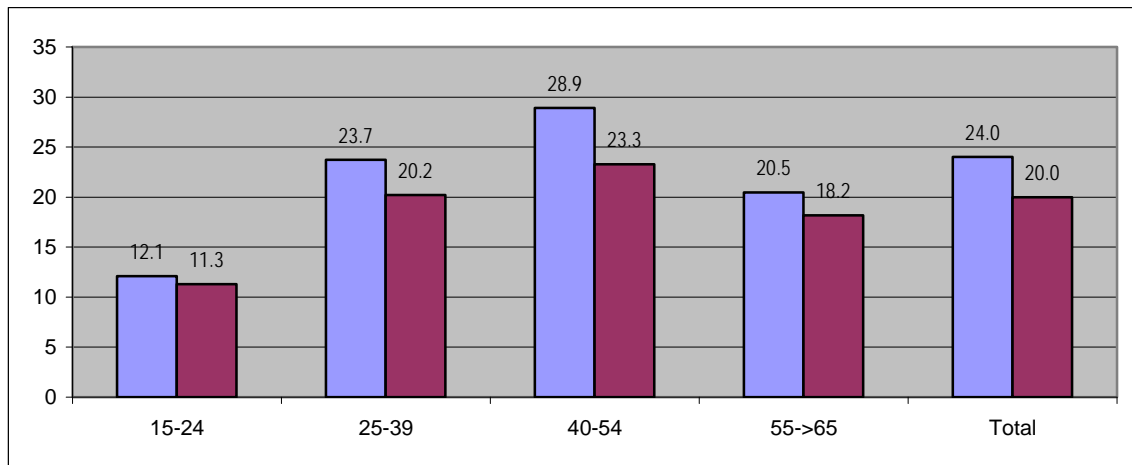
European Survey on Working Conditions, 2005

## 2 By age

Existing data suggest that the prevalence of backache grows with age, even though there has been a slight change in 2005. As opposed to previous surveys (1995, 2000) where the age group 55-65 reported the highest share of backache, in 2005 the 40-54 age group shows the greatest prevalence (28.9%) followed by those aged 25 to 39 years old (23.7%).

As far as muscular pain is concerned, and in line with the findings on backache, workers in the age groups 40-54 and 25-39 report the highest shares: 23.3% and 20.2%, respectively. A comparison with previous years is difficult as the question on muscular pain has been reformulated into one single combined index, but data seem to suggest a slight increase in prevalence across most age groups.

**Figure 2: Effect on health: percentage share of workers reporting backache and muscular pain, by age, 2005**



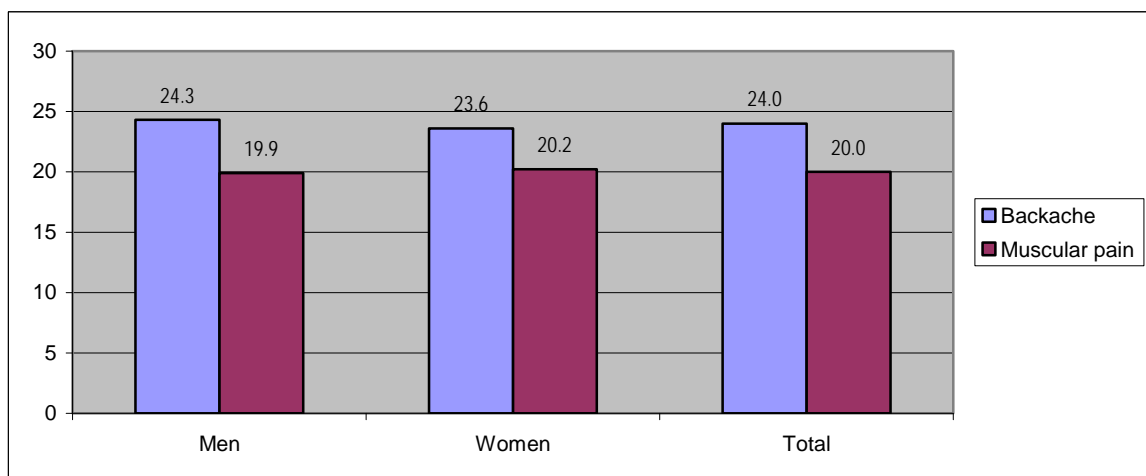
European Survey on Working Conditions, 2005

### 3 By gender

Men seem to be a little more affected by backache than women while the reverse is true for muscular pain. As shown in the graph below, almost one fourth of surveyed men in Austria (24.3%) complained of backache, a share that is only narrowly greater than that found among women: 23.6%.

Regarding muscular pain, the slightly higher prevalence found among women in recent years is maintained in 2005. And similarly to backache, the gap among genders is very narrow too: a share of 20.2% among women and 19.9% among men.

**Figure 3: Effect on health: backache and muscular pain, by gender**



European Survey on Working Conditions, 2005

## 4 By occupation

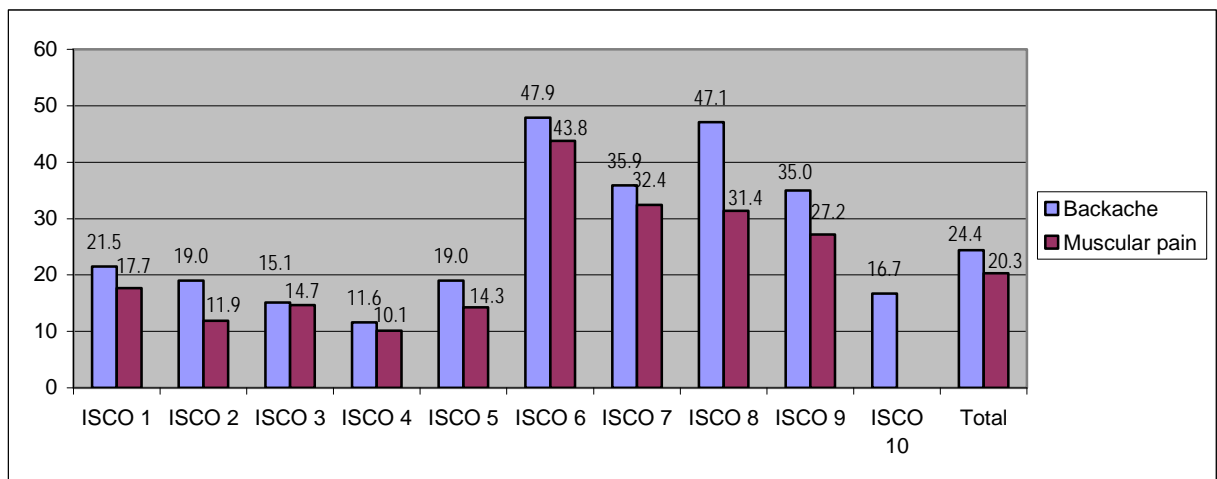
### ISCO Groups of occupation used in tables and figures:

- ISCO 1: Legislators, senior officials and managers;
- ISCO 2: Professionals;
- ISCO 3: Technicians and associate professionals;
- ISCO 4: Clerks;
- ISCO 5: Service workers and shop and market sales workers;
- ISCO 6: Skilled agricultural and fishery workers;
- ISCO 7: Craft and related trades workers;
- ISCO 8: Plant and machine operators and assemblers;
- ISCO 9: Elementary occupations;
- ISCO 10: Armed forces.

The highest shares of backache in Austria are found among skilled agricultural and fishery workers (ISCO 6) and plant and machine operators and assemblers (ISCO 8), with almost half of all workers claiming to suffer from backache: 47.9% and 47.1%, respectively. Craft and related trades workers (35.9%) and elementary occupations (35%) too report a higher than average prevalence of backache.

As far as muscular pain is concerned, and similarly to backache, the highest shares are reported by skilled agricultural and fishery workers (43.8%), followed by craft and related trades workers (32.4%), plant and machine operators and assemblers (31.4%) and elementary occupations (27.2%).

**Figure 4: Effect on health: backache and muscular pain, by occupation**



European Survey on Working Conditions, 2005

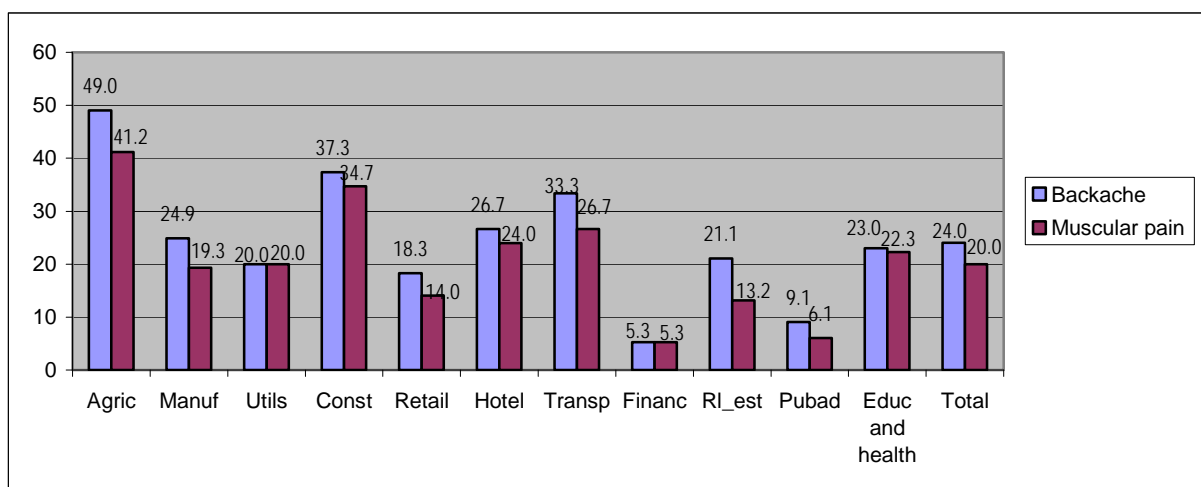
## 5 By activity sector

### Sector groups (sections in NACE Rev 1.1) used in figures:

- A: Agriculture, hunting, forestry;
- B: Fishing;
- C: Mining;
- D: Manufacturing;
- E: Electricity, gas and water;
- F: Construction;
- G: Whole sale and retail, repairs;
- H: Hotels and restaurants;
- I: Transport and communication;
- J: Financial intermediation;
- K: Real estate, business activity;
- L: Public administration and defence;
- M: Education;
- N: Health and social work;
- O: Other community, social and personal service activities;
- P: Activities of households;
- Q: Extra-territorial organizations and bodies.

Data broken down by sector reveal that agriculture, construction, transport and communication, and hotels and restaurants report higher than average shares of both backache and muscular pain. In manufacturing backache is more prevalent than the average too (24.9% vs. 24%) while in education and health muscular pain also exceeds the Austrian average (22.3% vs. 20%).

**Figure 5: Effect on health: backache and muscular pain by activity sector, 2005**

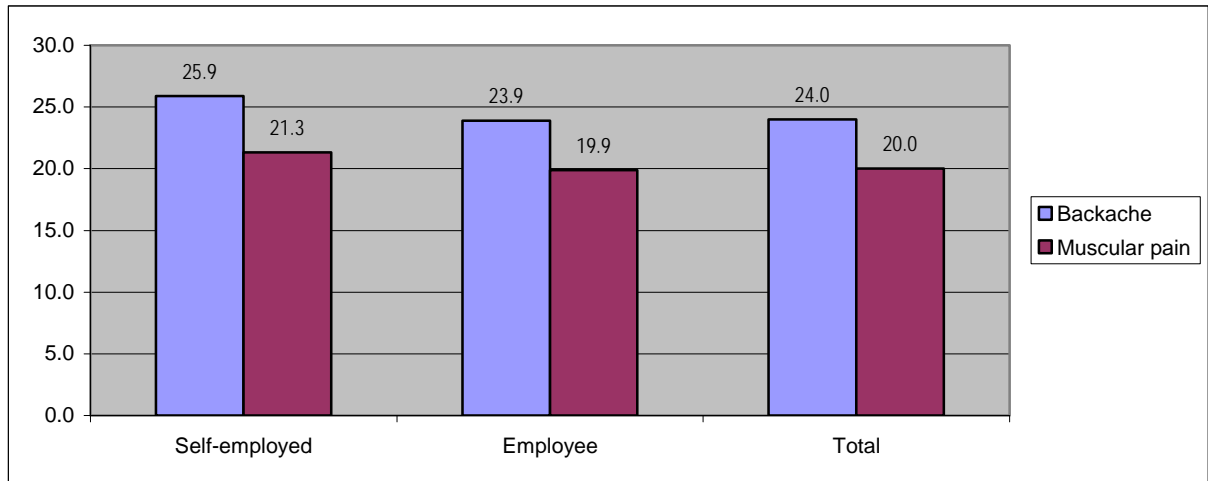


European Survey on Working Conditions, 2005

## 6 By employment status

Information on MSDs broken down by employment status shows a slightly higher prevalence of both backache and muscular pain among self-employed workers than among employees. In any case, the differences among both groups are not very wide for any of the indicators.

**Figure 6: Effect on health: backache and muscular pain by employment status, 2005**



European Survey on Working Conditions, 2005