

# Abstract of the study

## “The Housing Situation and Housing Needs of Single Parents in Vienna”

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The study “The Housing Situation and Housing Needs of Single Parents in Vienna” consists of a qualitative and a quantitative part.

The following research-leading questions constitute the core interest of the study:

- How is the housing situation of single parents in Vienna?
- How are the housing needs of single parents in Vienna?
- What challenges do single parents face during the separation and divorce phase with regard to housing?
- What is the significance of communal types of living for single parents in Vienna?

The quantitative part is based on a survey conducted in Vienna in August / September 2019 among single parents whose child or youngest child was under 19 at the moment of the survey. A total of 348 single parents were interviewed. Of these, 248 single parents were reached via an online questionnaire and 100 people via telephone interviews. The study participants were selected using a quota sample. Based on the quoted characteristics household income and age of the (youngest) child, the results are representative for single parents in Vienna with children or the youngest child up to 18 years. In terms of net household income, which is made up of wages, child maintenance, family allowances, childcare allowance, social welfare and other allowances, three subgroups were defined: up to 1700 euros; from 1701 to 2550 euros and over 2551 euros. The three subgroups regarding the age of the (youngest) child are divided into the categories: 0 to 6 years, 7 to 12 years and 13 to 18 years.

The ten qualitative problem-centered interviews were conducted from June to September 2019 with single parents in Vienna, whose (youngest) child was under 19 years old.

The following results could be worked out on the basis of the study carried out:

In terms of **satisfaction with the current apartment**, a total of 71% of those polled stated that they were satisfied. The breakdown of the three income subgroups clearly shows that with decreasing income satisfaction with the apartment decreases.

The **housing costs** (rent including operating costs plus energy costs) were recorded as the current and target state. It can be seen that single parents of all three income groups generally bear higher housing costs than they could afford. A total of 26% of the respondents stated that housing costs up to a maximum of 500 euros would be suitable for them, but only 21% of the respondents have actual housing costs in this amount. This difference between suitable and current housing costs mainly affects the lowest income group of respondents with a household income of up to 1700 euros. 73% of the single parents surveyed spend **over 30% of their household income on housing**; a threshold that should not be exceeded to guarantee the possibility of social participation.

The topic of **room for privacy** was also dealt with and the related question of the number of rooms was asked: here the clear picture emerges that around a third of single parents in Vienna lives in apartments with at least one room too little.

Specifically, on the one hand, there is a great shortage of affordable 4-room apartments, on the other hand only 10% of those polled consider 2-room apartments to be suitable, but almost a quarter of single parents currently lives in such an apartment.

29% of single parents state that their children do not have their own room. Here, too, there is a clear connection between the amount of household income and the existence of a separate room for the children. A similar picture emerges when asked about the existence of their own parents' bedroom, which is not the living room: 35% of those questioned do not have one.

This lack of retreat in the single-parent family often leads to disputes, lack of privacy, little opportunities for visits, bedrooms shared by parents with their children and a guilty conscience towards the children that they cannot offer them their own room.

When asked about the **move request**, a total of 30% replied that they are currently planning to move. The reasons for moving were given with *too little space / too few rooms* in the first and *too high housing costs* in the second place. This is also reflected in the housing needs. The

most **important factors when looking for an apartment** are the *housing costs*, the *condition of the apartment*, available *open spaces*, like balconies, and the *number of rooms*.

The analysis of the open questions and the qualitative survey also shows that single parents want **long-term housing** solutions and that temporary housing solutions are only suitable shortly after separation or divorce and in emergency situations. Permanent rental apartments are favored. Kitchen-living rooms cannot be used as a suitable equivalent for a separate bedroom.

However, the search for suitable apartments is difficult for many single parents, for financial reasons in particular. When asked about the difficulties in finding a home, the three biggest obstacles were *not affordable current housing costs*, *not affordable estate agent commissions* and *not affordable deposits*.

A comparison of the subgroups with regard to the difficulties in finding accommodation shows that single parents in the lowest income group and single parents with a (youngest) child under the age of 7 are most affected by the above-mentioned difficulties.

In addition, the following difficulties were mentioned several times in the qualitative interviews: lack of financial resources, insufficient time resources for looking for an apartment, incomprehensible refusals of the *Wiener Wohnticket* and the local restriction due to the desired proximity to childcare facilities or schools to not pull children out of their usual social and geographic environment. In addition, respondents often felt disadvantaged when it came to credit approvals and generally on the housing market. 22% of those polled agreed with the statement *Someone already refused an apartment to me because I'm a single parent*.

The **transitional phase of housing during or after the separation** is a sensitive phase with great challenges for everyone involved. The housing solution that is found at that time is crucial for the further biography of single parents and their children. There is often great time pressure here, so suboptimal housing solutions are often found. 9% of single parents, who separated from the child's father and were asked about their housing solution directly after the separation, were temporarily homeless at that time and lived with friends, relatives or in a mother-child house. A total of 21% of all respondents stated that they already have been threatened or affected by **homelessness**.

The lack of suitable housing options often means that separations are delayed. 48% of the respondents agreed with this statement. 34% of the respondents lived with the other parent for a while after the separation because there was no other place to live. Since conflict dynamics often increase immediately after a separation or divorce, further living together can be extremely stressful for everyone involved.

At the time of the survey, 30% of single parents lived in a **subsidized or municipal apartment**. The other single parents were asked why they did not receive a subsidized or municipal apartment or did not apply for such apartments. Here, 20% of those surveyed stated that they have enough living space due to the size of their current apartment, which they cannot afford. 14% said they knew nothing about this possibility and 12% replied that they had to move out earlier and urgently needed a new apartment. In 10% it failed due to the 2-year main residence and 10% did not try it because the application process seemed too complex and time-consuming for them.

The qualitative data also give the picture that the participants perceive the subsidized living environment in Vienna as non-transparent and that single parents often have too little information about the access and possibilities of subsidized apartments.

Especially in subsidized and municipal housing, communal types of living are currently often seen as a solution for single parents. The general **interest in communal living forms** increases with decreasing income and age of the children. When asked about the different forms of communal living, it became clear that the closer or rather more communal a form of living is, the less single parents feel addressed. Shared flats appeal to 23% and individual flats with additional community-rooms in the house appeal to 64% of the single parents surveyed.