6. TECHNICAL ANNEX

SAMPLING

The Estonian FFS appears to be the first nationally representative survey in Estonia. Throughout the survey, particular attention was paid to the data quality, which involved procedures to maintain the consistency of definitions, representativeness of the sample, and analysis of non-responses.

In the Estonian FFS, the microdata of the 1989 population census were used as a sample frame. This frame had been prepared by the Estonian Interuniversity Population Research Centre (Katus and Puur, 1993). Addresses of the respondents were updated in the Central Address Bureau. The target population comprised females born in 1924-73, i.e. 20-69 years old in 1994. The selection of cases was performed using a one-stage random procedure with no geographic clustering. Although this implied significantly higher costs during the fieldwork, representativeness considerations made a non-clustered sample preferable.

Extending the upper age limit of the survey population to 69 years involved additional requirements for the whole range of survey procedures. The diversity of life histories increased, necessitating greater effort in maintaining the consistency of concepts, definitions and classifications. The interviewers were given special training and rigorous consistency controls were introduced. The subsequent analysis revealed the efficiency of these procedures and the data quality appears rather even across cohorts.

DATA COLLECTION

The Estonian FFS contracted *Saar Poll* for fieldwork. In the preparation for the fieldwork, interviewer training was given a high priority. All the interviewers had to go through a special two-day seminar conducted by the FFS Working Group and pass a test. The interviews were conducted in either of two languages (Estonian or Russian), and the interviewers were matched to the respondents according to the language preference of the latter. The field period of the Estonian FFS lasted from January to November 1994. In total, 93 interviewers participated, of which 65 worked in Estonian and 28 in the Russian language. The average length of an interview was 87.5 minutes.

REPRESENTATIVENESS OF THE SAMPLE

Table 1 shows the final disposition of cases that were assigned to the survey organization. Of the eligible respondents, 5,021 interviews were completed and 911 were not completed.

Table 6.1 FINAL DISPOSITION OF CASES

Disposition	Number of Cases	Percentage of Cases
Sample	5932	100.0
Interviewed	5021	84.6
Not-interviewed, of which:	911	15.4
Ill/Disabled	117	2.0
Not located	380	6.4
Refused interview	414	7.0

The most common reasons for non-response were refusals and failure to locate the respondent. It is noteworthy that losses from non-location are nearly equal to refusals. Non-location reflects primarily the deficient residence registration, particularly the discrepancy between actual and "official" addresses.

The response rate for the Estonian FFS was 84.6 per cent. Table 36 in the Appendix presents the response and non-response rates as well as the comparison to the reference population, respondents and non-respondents across basic population characteristics. Response rates remained practically stable across cohorts with slightly lower non-response in the older cohorts. The completion rate was higher for native-borns than for foreign-borns. Better-educated respondents had a slightly higher response rate, mostly due to lower prevalence of illness with other reasons being equal. Higher completion rates among rural residents were found along with higher refusal and non-location in the urban areas. Women with more children had a higher completion rate; however, the differences by number of children are relatively small.

The comparison of eligible population with the Estonian FFS respondents reveals high consistency across different characteristics. There seems little evidence of selectivity of the respondents relative to the population from which the sample was drawn. Further analysis of the data does not require any additional weights or adjustments to the survey results to make them more representative of the total population.

With representativeness ensured, the most critical aspect of the data quality relates to the completeness of the life-history information. Concerning the year of events, the non-response was lower than 0.5 per cent, except in the parental home module. Most difficulties for older cohorts were related to questions on marriage dates of parents and birth dates of siblings who had died in early infancy (with the maximum of 4.4 per cent). As to the month of an event, the levels of non-response ranged between 0.5 and 2.1 per cent with the highest related to abortions. Regarding the item-specific non-response, the performance of the older cohorts did not appear inferior to the younger. Compared to recall difficulties, other types of item-specific non-response were exceptional.

Data coding, entry and cleaning had been completed in 1995. The *Methodological Report* and *Standard Tabulations* have been prepared as two basic publications of the survey (EKDK, 1995a; 1995b). The data from the survey are available in the *SPSS-Windows* file format. The experience gained during the Estonian FFS has laid a basis, which has been applied subsequently in other national surveys including the Estonian Labour Force Survey, the Estonian Health Survey and the Estonian Minority Survey.