

6. TECHNICAL ANNEX

For the Austrian Fertility and Family Survey 1996, 6120 respondents were interviewed (4581 women and 1539 men) between December 1995 and May 1996. The sample was stratified disproportionately in order to be representative for each of the nine Austrian Bundesländer, in addition to Austria as a whole, so as to make regional analysis and within-country comparisons possible. Within each Bundesland, the sample was stratified disproportionately according to sex (the aim was to interview 3 women for every 4 respondents), but proportionally according to municipality size. Four classes were defined: up to 2,000 inhabitants; 2,001 - 5,000; 5,001 - 50,000; and more than 50,000 inhabitants. Altogether, samples were then drawn in 354 randomly selected municipalities (for 15 to 25 interviews per municipality) and in all districts of the capital Vienna. Men and women between age 20 and 54 were eligible for the sample. The decision was made not to select single-year cohorts, simply because - due to the general lack of survey data in Austria - the focus was not only on how the data could best be used in combination with life-course methods of analysis, but also on the broadest coverage possible.

The questionnaire was identical for men and women, though the male version lacked questions on abortions and stillbirths. Although non-Austrian citizens were also interviewed, only a German version of the questionnaire was used, because translation and survey costs would otherwise have become prohibitive. As a consequence, non-Austrians not fully familiar with the German language are underrepresented.

Interviewing was done by a private polling institute (INTEGRAL Institute) through personal interviews. Fieldwork staff consisted of 191 interviewers, the majority of whom were women, and 14 supervisors. Usually, but not always, women were interviewed by female and men by male interviewers. The interviews were done using laptop computers, known as BLIP (Bar-coded Lightweight Interview Package). The decision to use CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing) for this survey was driven by three arguments: successful use of that method in earlier surveys; relatively low costs; and permanent and immediate plausibility checks. Built-in filter questions helped to prevent routing errors during the interview; comparison with overall means gave an additional possibility for cross-checking the validity of the results; separate analysis per interviewer and calculation of interviewer biases helped to discover cheating.

As far as the regional distribution is concerned, refusing the interview was most common in larger municipalities. While in Vienna one-third refused to give an interview, this proportion was only 18 per cent in rural areas. As a result, the sample is likely to be biased according to psychological characteristics. After three-quarters of the interviews were in, a comparison between the sample and the number of eligible persons according to census statistics showed that non-response was significantly higher among respondents above age 40 and/or with only lower education. Most, but not all, of

Sampling procedure

Data collection

Sample bias and non-response

the resulting underrepresentation of these groups was corrected by additional interviews during the last month.

The average length of the interview was 45 minutes, but ranged from a minimum of 20 to a maximum of 180 minutes. Though long and eventful biographies have sometimes led to signs of fatigue, in general the motivation and willingness to answer all questions was extremely high. This can be explained by the structure of the interview, during which the respondent could summarise his or her life. The unusual motivation is also reflected in the large proportion (55 per cent) who agreed to be interviewed again in the future, and in the low number of respondents (1.2 per cent only) who broke off the interview.

An interesting result regarding the validity and reliability of the interviews was obtained from interviewing the interviewers. According to their assessment, 27 per cent of the respondents gave very reliable, and another 55 per cent reliable, answers. Ranking the subjects dealt with according to their degree of reliability gives the following picture: questions on children ever had, on fertility preferences, and on the education and occupation biographies were answered with high reliability by some 90 per cent of the respondents (by almost 100 per cent in the case of the birth biography). Regarding the partnership biography and fertility regulation, one-fifth of the answers might not be very reliable, and as far as values and beliefs are concerned, perhaps even one-fourth. The highest degree of unreliability was found on two subjects not analysed in this standard country report: household income (30 per cent), and the distribution of household tasks and child care (34 per cent).