

Fertility

## **Reasons of postponement of births: comparison of Estonia and Finland**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Timing of births carries an important message about the vitality environment of countries. Dropping fertility has been accompanied with the rising age of mothers almost in all European countries and postponement of births is often considered to be responsible for decline of fertility and even an increase of infertility. Although this influence is not so clear in conditions of general low completed fertility, postponement of births can contribute to the lower fertility. Therefore analyses of reasons of postponing childbearing can essentially contribute to the knowledge about general fertility behaviour.

**The aim of the study is to analyse reasons of postponement of births in two neighbouring countries - Estonia and Finland - in the end of 1990ies.**

### **DATA AND METHOD**

In our framework a **definition of postponement** of births consists of two components: a wish to have (more) child(ren) and secondly the decision to postpone a birth of a child for some period.

Reasons of postponement of births are derived from two sociological surveys. Questions about the reasons of postponement of a wished child were asked only from those respondents who stated clearly that they would like to have more children, but they are not going to have them in near future. The share of postponers was rather similar in both countries: 21% in Estonia and 26% in Finland. In order to secure comparability, only twelve the most important and similar statements were used for analyses. These statements were divided into four broad theoretical categories: forced, behavioural, partner and health related reasons. In both surveys several reasons of postponement were allowed to mark simultaneously.

### **RESULTS**

Behavioral and forced reasons were prevailing in both countries among reasons of postponement of births. However, in country comparison behavioral reasons were statistically more important in Finland than in Estonia. We did not find expected differences of importance of forced reasons in two countries. Partner related reasons were equally important and on the third position on the list of reasons in both countries Health reasons occupied the fourth position. Empirical analysis found several similarities between countries but also differences. The differences are explained mainly with different fertility behavior and level of public support for families.

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