Abstract:

BACKGROUND: The number of live births in Germany has decreased by 46.7% from 1,261,614 in 1960 to 672,675 in 2006. The causes for this are manifold. This study attempts to address the possible causes for the delay of birth in Germany in an east-west comparison. METHOD: Within the "Kinderwunschstudie" (survey of desired/intended fertility) 5,143 women in childbed have been interviewed between 1998 and 2000. They were asked questions concerning the delay of this particular birth. Only women and their spouses who were born in Germany, respectively, were included into the analysis. Berlin women in childbed were excluded from the analysis due to the problematic east-west classification. The number of analysable cases finally added up to 2,020 cases in East Germany and 2,193 cases in West Germany. RESULTS: 24.4% of the interviewed women in the East admitted a delay of the last birth compared to 21.2% of those in the West. There are clear differences concerning the reasons for this delay between the old (west) and the new (east) federal states. 34% of the east German women agreed that an insecure income situation was the reason for the delayed realisation of the desired pregnancy / birth, whereas it was only 16% in the west. CONCLUSION: This survey ("Kinderwunschstudie") in fact indicates differences regarding the
reasons for a delay of birth between east and west German women (in childbed). However, it also highlights the generally negative influence of the given social and economic conditions on the number of births and underlines the prospects for an ongoing decrease. As a result, society will in future have to face problems of unknown dimensions.