FORMATION OF FAMILIES

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Families may have a conjugal or a generational beginning. It means that a new family emerges either with the formation of a marital or non-marital union or with childbirth outside of such union. The current paper is focused on the formation of unions in Estonia.

One possibility to study the process of the formation of unions is to examine vital statistics data which enable to comprehend the whole population in the analysis. However, the fact that the data are strictly bound to the registration of events imposes certain limits to their interpretation: it should be considered that part of unions are not registered and that the registration and the real formation of a union often do not occur at the same time. Those matters may cause substantial deviation of vital statistics data from the real process of the formation of unions. The extent of the deviation depends on the occurrence and duration of non-marital cohabitation.

Another considerable disadvantage of vital statistics data is the impossibility to connect demographic events into a life course. The biographical data used in this paper is collected by a population survey.

Thus, there are two data sets used in the paper: (1) vital marriage statistics of the population of Estonia, (2) sample survey of the population of Tallinn. In the first case the age-specific first marriage rates for the period 1959-1985 have been calculated to measure changes in the timing of marriage. The

quantum of the process is characterized by the total nuptiality rate (the sum of the rates over the relevant age span) calculated for all marriages as well as for first marriages. A general comparison of nuptiality in Estonia and other countries is presented by the crude marriage rate.

In the calculation of the age-specific first marriage rates the number of marriages in an age group is related to the number of population of respective age, not to the number of bachelors or spinsters of respective age as it is more appropriate. The reason for that is the non-availability of age structures by marital status for the years between the censuses. As the number of population is given for the beginning of the year the average number of marriages of two successive years is related to the number of population of respective age.

The survey, data of which is used in this paper, was carried out in Tallinn in 1988. There were 1,522 adult respondents of random sampling: 42.2% males and 57.8% females, 49.7% Estonians and 50.3% non-Estonians, for the age structure of the sample see Appendix 4. Most of the respondents had passed the ages of the most active matrimonial behaviour, thus enabling to analyse family initiation on biograpical data. The survey provides demographic data on non-marital cohabitation for the first time in Estonia.

Of course, the limitation of the survey sample with the population of the capital does not permit to draw comprehensive conclusions for the whole country. However, it can be noted that

almost one third of the population of Estonia lives in the capital and that the approximately equal proportion of Estonians and non-Estonians in Tallinn provides a suitable basis for studying the differences between the two contingents.

The composition of the population of Estonia has thoroughly changed as a result of the intensive immigration in the post-war period. The migrants have come mostly from regions where the demographic transition took place later than in Estonia and their demographic behaviour differs from that of the native Estonian population /Katus, 1988/. It is evident that the matter has its impact on the nuptiality data of the population of Estonia. Consequently, changes in the matrimonial behaviour of Estonians and non-Estonians should be studied separately. In the current paper the differences between the contingents are treated on the basis of the survey data of Tallinn.

The total nuptiality rate is appropriate for measuring the quantum of the process of nuptiality. The tendency of decline is generally characteristic for the dynamics of the rate in the past three decades (see Fig.1). There have been signficant fluctuations in the 1960s, the explanation of which demands analysis of several possible determinants of such phenomenon. The lowest level of nuptiality has been estimated in 1983. Since that year the total nuptiality rate has increased a little, as well as the crude marriage rate. So, comparing the situation to that of previous years, we can get an impression of relatively low intensity of contracting marriages in Estonia in the 1980s.

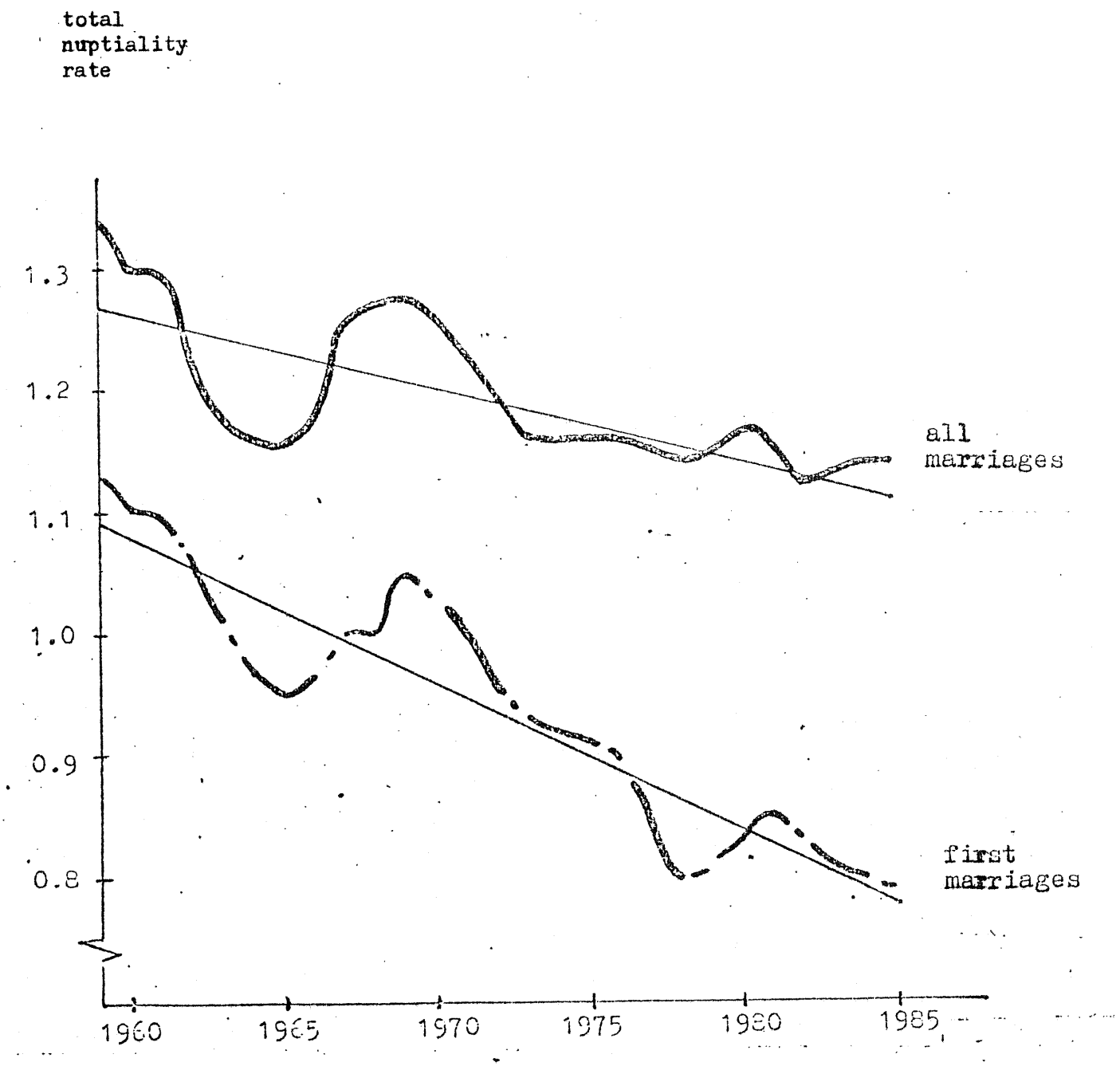

Figure 1. Nuptiality of the population of Estonia 1959-1985.

Researchers of several countries have reported that couples have been forming unions at a constant rate despite a decline in marriage rates, with the difference been made by cohabitation /Bumpass and Sweet, 1989/. This may also be the case for Estonia, as the survey data of Tallinn indicate further in this paper.

In comparison with the rest of Europe, presented on the crude marriage rate in Figure 2, the intensity of contracting marriages in Estonia does not appear low at all. In fact the situation is in the other way round: the index of Estonia is one of the highest in Europe, but lower than in the rest of the USSR (the crude marriage rates of other Soviet republics are higher than those of the Baltic republics presented in Fig.2). The crude marriage rate of some East and South-East European countries is close to that of Estonia, and is rapidly decreasing /Население..., 1988/. The demographic transition in these countries (Romania, Bulgaria, Poland) has not completely ended yet /Катус, 1988/. In the countries which went through the demographic transition approximately at the same time as Estonia the crude nuptiality rate is significantly lower, especially in North European countries.

The above presented comparisons embrace both first and remarriages. Because of the decisive part of first marriages in family formation the following analysis is focused on them.

Besides the total nuptiality rate for all marriages the rate for first marriages is also presented in Figure 1. The decrease of the rate for first marriages is revealed as more substantial.

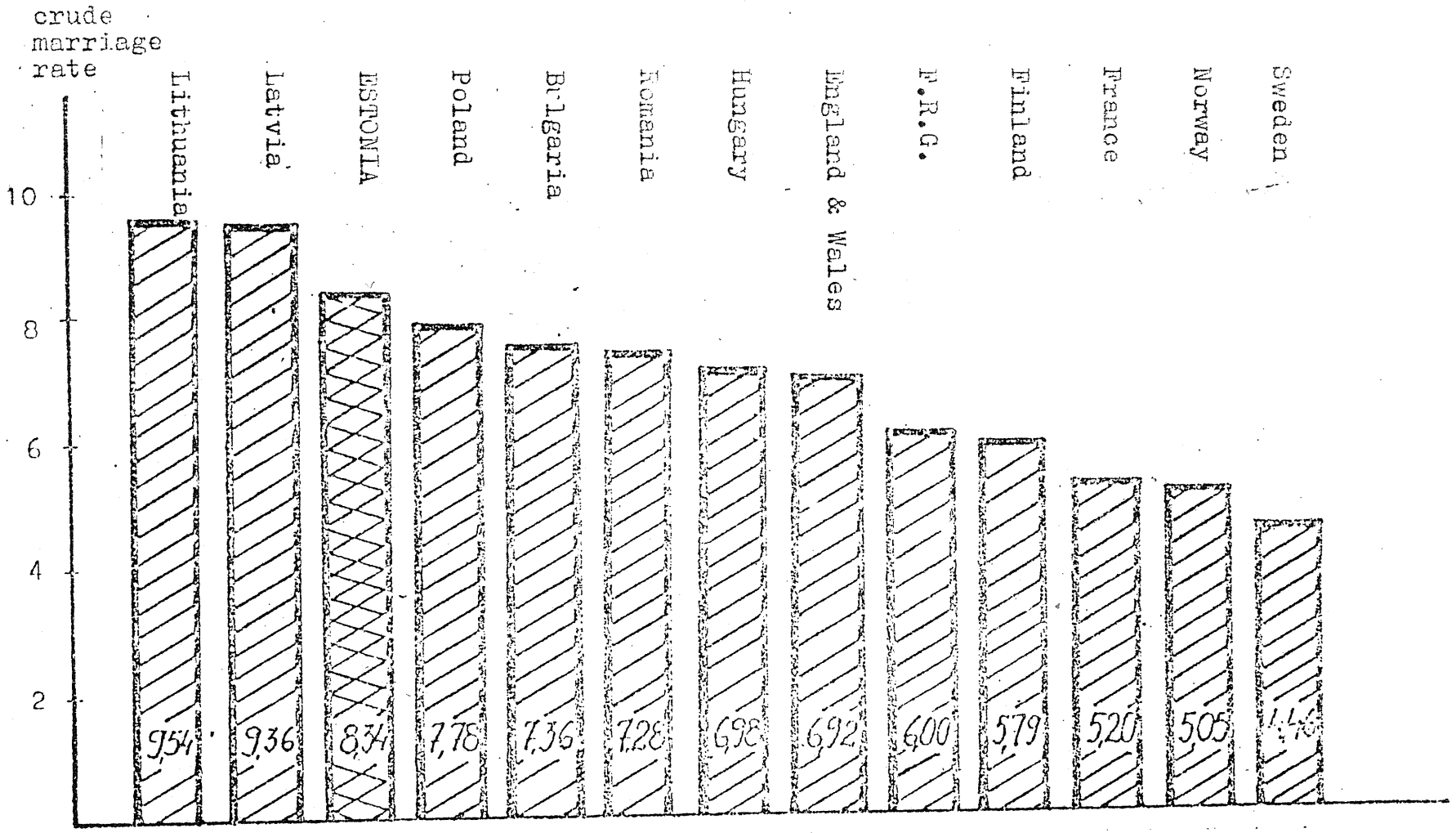

Figure 2. Nuptiality in Estonia and some other European countries.

Average level of years 1982-1986.

Sources: Demographic Yearbook 1985. 37th Issue. New York: UN, 1987
Naselenie SSSR. Moskva: Statistika, 1988

Consequently, the remarriage rate has increased during the period.

One of the important characteristics of demographic behaviour is age at first marriage. In the following the dynamics of age-specific first marriage rates for five-year age brackets are discussed. The rate of the age group 15-19 is probably not the most suitable for direct comparison with other age groups, because of the dramatical difference in the number of marriages in the first and second half of the age bracket. But the age structures by five-year groups do not enable to give a more detailed presentation of the behaviour of teenagers.. In spite of that the long-term tendencies in the occurrence of early marriages can be described with sufficient reliability.

For both sexes the intensity of contracting marriages is the highest in the age bracket 20-24 (see Fig. 3 and 4). The marriage rate of 20-24-year-old males has maintained its high level during the three decades while that of females has decreased. As the total intensity of contracting marriages has decreased during the period, decrease could be expected in most age brackets, especially in those with a more sufficient share in all first marriages.

The only age group with clearly opposite dynamics to the general trend is that of teenagers. The most dramatical decrease of marriage rate has taken place among the 25-29-year-old: the rate of males of this age bracket in the middle of the 1980s is less than a half of the level of the beginning of 1960s, among the

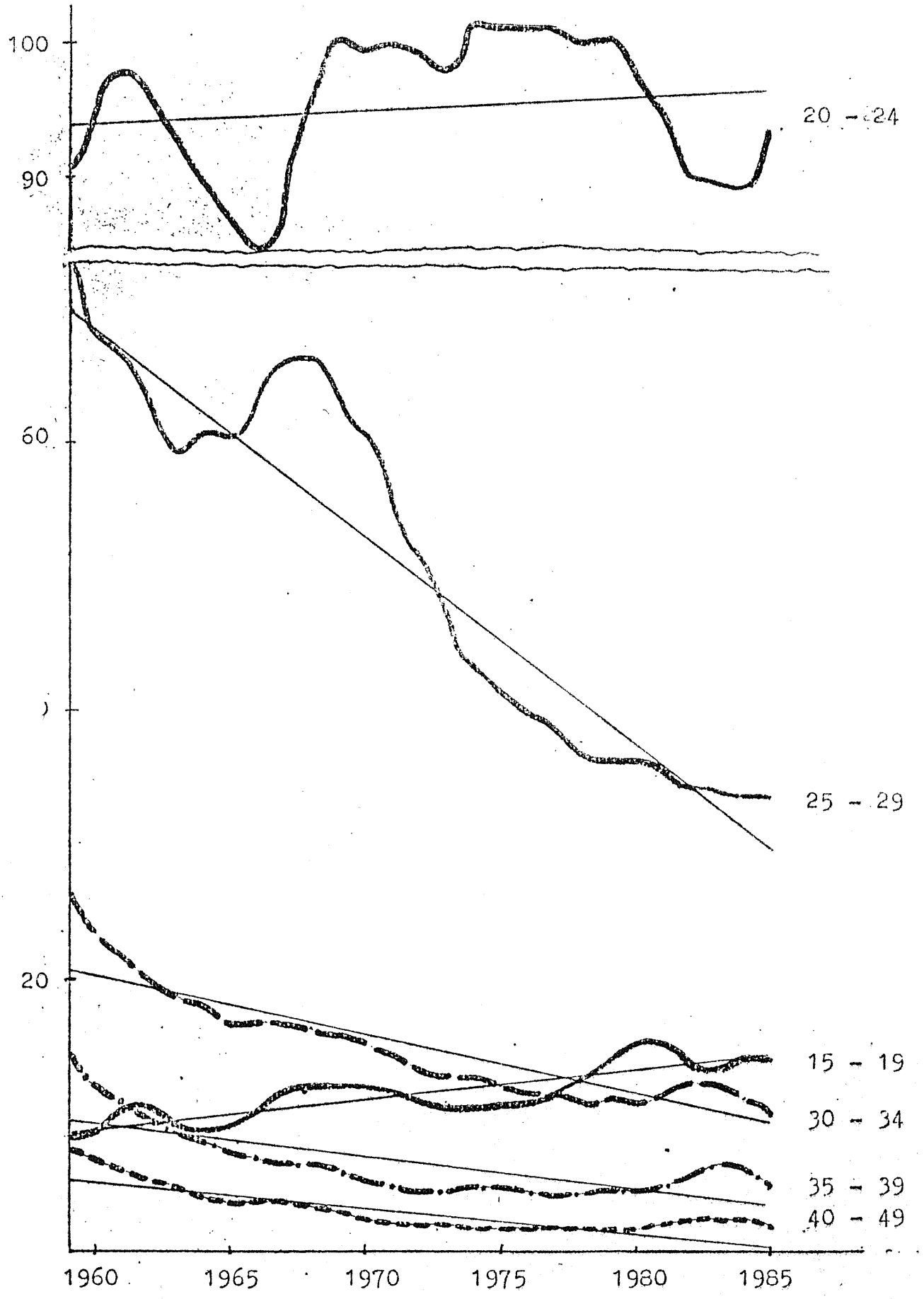

Figure 3. Age specific marriage rates of the male population of Estonia 1959-1985. First marriages.

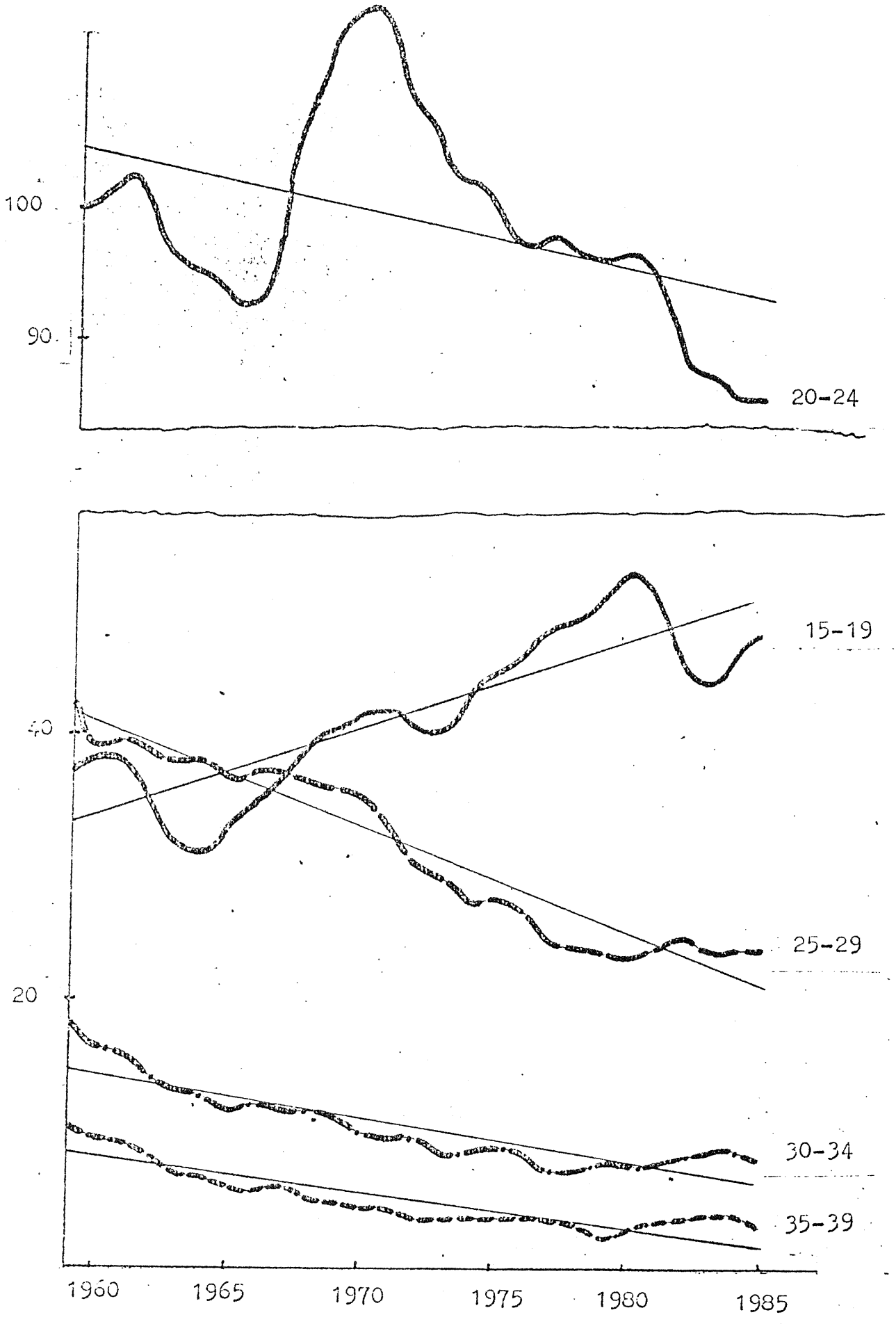

Figure 4. Age specific marriage rates of the female population of Estonia 1959-1985. First marriages.

females it is a little more than a half. The rates of the older age groups of low intensity of contracting first marriages have also shown a general trend towards decrease.

The dynamics of the age-specific rates indicate consistent change towards earlier marriages. As expected, the younger age at marriage of the females is also clearly reflected.

In addition to the mentioned general trend of the period a fluctuation characteristic for all the age groups can be noticed at the beginning of the 1980s: the direction of the curves has turned from the direction of the general trend. It seems reasonable to put forward a hypothesis that the trend towards earlier marriages has stopped as it has happened in most of the countries of Western and Northern Europe in the second half of the 1960s and in the 1970s /Roussel and Festy, 1979/. It can also be suggested that among the Estonians the trend has stopped earlier than the data for the whole population of Estonia indicate. After the age structures of the 1980s are corrected relying on the 1989 census data we shall be able to evaluate the validity of the hypotheses on a more sound basis.

Being aware of the different demographic behaviour of post-war immigrants, differences in the timing of first marriage between them and the native population are expected. Nationality is considered the most appropriate characteristic to identify the contingents of the native and the non-native population, thus in the further analysis the terms "the Estonian" and "the non-Estonian" population are used.

The distribution of ever married population by age at first marriage is chosen for comparison between the two contingents (see Fig.5). Sufficient differences can be noted in the distribution for both sexes. The distribution for females reveals them more clearly.

The data presented in Figure 5 indicate distinctly that the non-Estonians contract their marriages earlier. The share of females contracting their first marriage at their teens is substantially higher among the non-Estonians, such is also the case when the relevant shares of the 20-24-old are compared. Consequently, the share of Estonian women who leave their marriages to their late twenties is almost twice as high as the relevant share of the non-Estonians. The share of Estonians is also higher in the marriages contracted in the thirties and later.

For the male population the two age groups with the highest intensity of contracting marriage are 20-24 and 25-29. The relatively small share of marriages in other age groups permits to draw conclusions mainly relying on the mentioned two. The fact that the share of marriages at the age 20-24 is bigger among the non-Estonians and that at the age of 25-29 among the Estonians, indicates the slightly higher age at marriage of the Estonians. Differences between the two contingents in the shares of males married at their teens and at their thirties or forties do not appear as substantial.

The above discussed marriages are all registered and age is

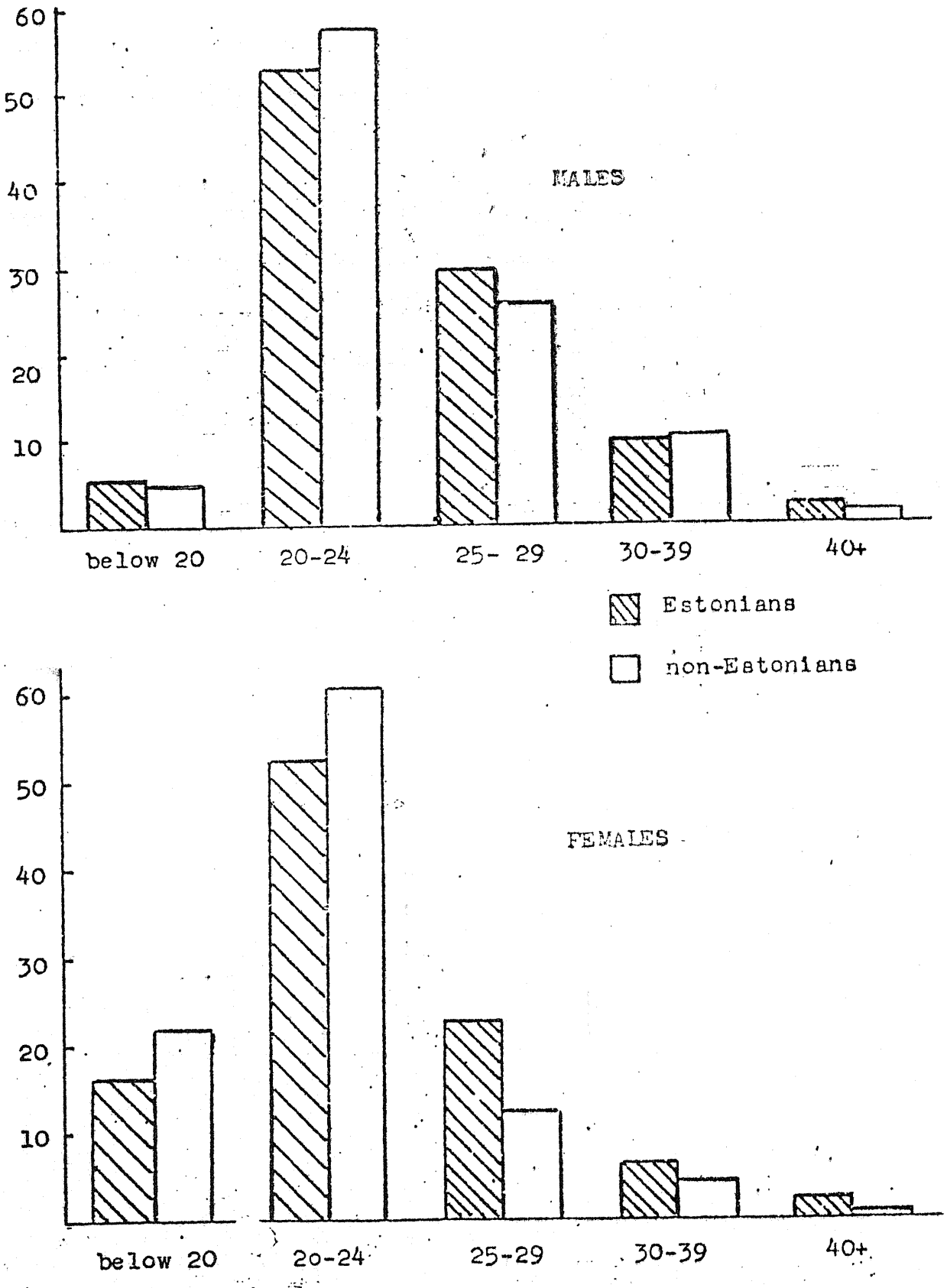

Figure5 . Distribution of ever married population by age at first marriage, %. Data of the survey of the population of Tallinn.

estimated at the moment of registration. In the following, cohabitation out of wedlock will be dealt with in view of its occurrence by birth cohorts and the impact of its premarital duration on the age at marriage.

On the background of the decline of the age at marriage indicated by the vital statistics data it is interesting to note that the share of persons who have lived in a consensual union during their life course has been constantly increasing by birth cohorts (see Fig.6). The cohorts are not treated separately for the Estonians and the non-Estonians because of validity problems connected with too small groups of the sample.

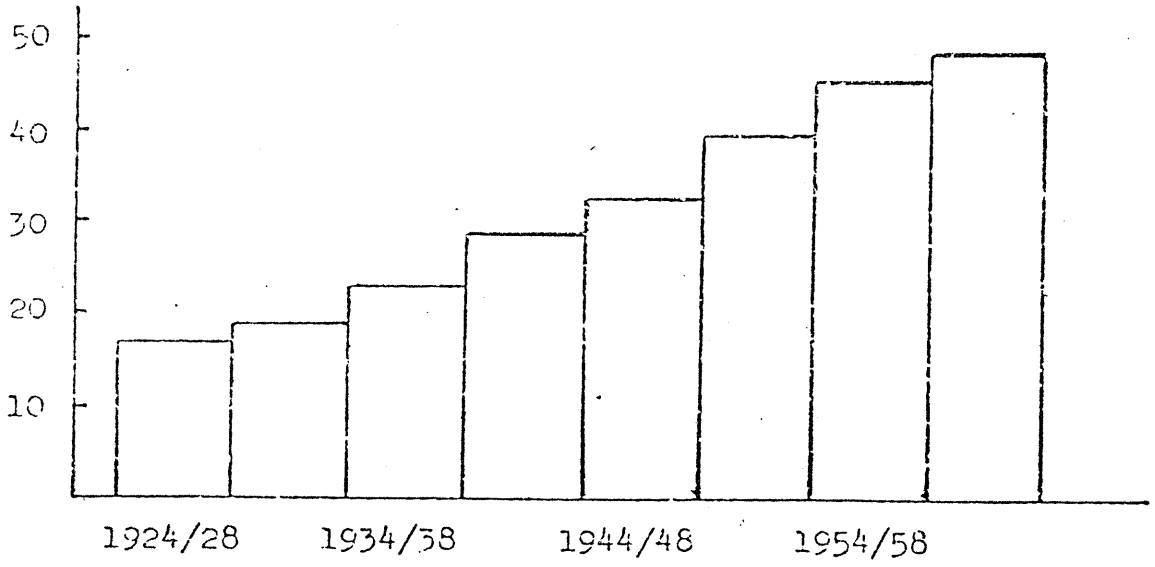

Figure 6. The share of persons who have lived in a consensual union in birth cohorts. Data of the survey of the population of Tallinn.

The index of the cohort born in 1964-68 (at the age of 20-24 at the moment of the survey) enables to suggest that the increase of the occurrence of consensual unions is continuing: 41.7% of the cohort has lived in a consensual union which is only a little less than the respective percentage of the cohort born in 1954-58 (45.7), although the members of the former had not passed the ages of most active union formation yet. The cohort with the highest share of those who nave experienced a consensual union - 1959-63 - was at the moment of the survey in such ages (25-29) that their completed data can be expected higher than that presented in the figure. Thus the growth trend is in fact a little stronger than Figure 6 indicates.

It is obvious that the increasing occurrence of consensual unions increases the deviations between the real pattern of union formation and the one depicted by the vital statistics data. The following discussion embraces only those consensual unions which end up in marriage, thus focusing on connections between real and formal age at marriage.

The distribution of the Estonian and the non-Estonian population by the real age at the beginning of cohabitation (or marriage, if there has been no cohabitation preceding marriage) is presented in Figure 7. The differences between the two contingents revealed in the age at marriage show in the age at beginning cohabitation as well, but to a less extent. It turns out that the choice of principals for estimating the beginning of marriage affects most the share of the Estonian women who start cohabitation at their teens. The share is almost 10 points higher when the real

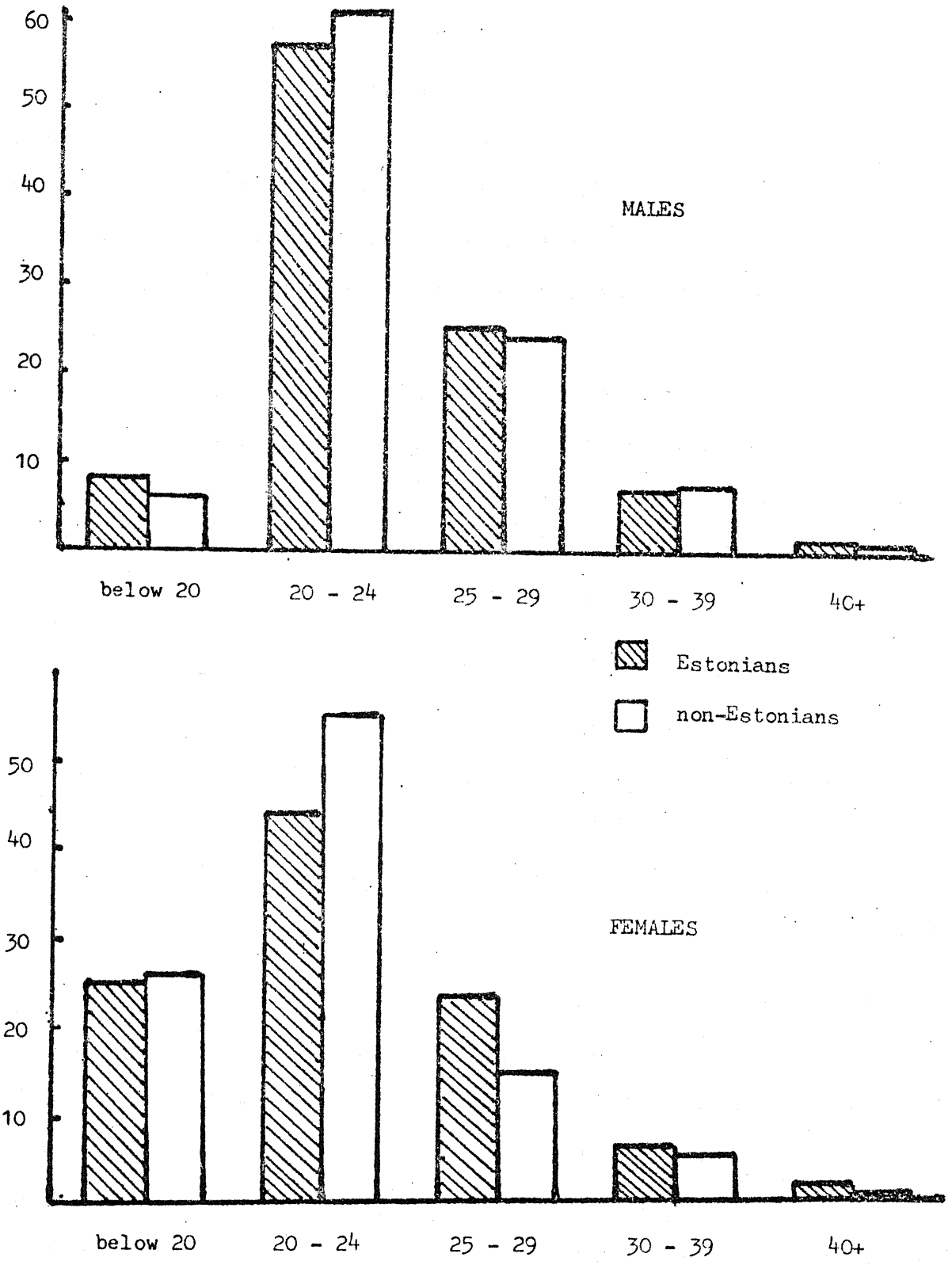

Figure 7. Distribution of ever married population by age at the beginning of cohabitation with future spouse, %. Data of the survey of the population of Tallinn

beginning of cohabitation is considered instead of age at registration. The postponing of the registration of marriage by teenage Estonian women is thus revealed as the main reason for the difference in the share of teenage marriages between the Estonians and the non-Estonians.

The data of the survey indicate that the share of women who leave the beginning of cohabitation to their late twenties or later is significantly bigger among the Estonians. So it can be said that the non-Estonians generally start cohabitation earlier than Estonians, although there is no substantial difference in the share of teenagers.

By comparing Figures 5 and 7 it is revealed that the differences between the age at marriage and the age at beginning cohabitation are essentially more deviating among the Estonians. This refers to the more frequent occurrence and longer duration of premarital cohabitation among the Estonians.

The data presented at Table 1 confirm the suggestion. The share of the non-Estonians married in the same month they started cohabitation is 1.5 times higher than that of the Estonians. The duration of premarital cohabitation is shorter for the non-Estonians. Still, the duration of consensual unions which end up in marriage, is usually less than a year: 63.3% of the Estonians and 71.5% of the non-Estonians who lived in such a consensual union married less than a year after the cohabitation had started.

Table 1

DISTRIBUTION OF THE ESTONIAN AND THE NON-ESTONIAN POPULATION BY THE DURATION BETWEEN THE BEGINNING OF COHABITATION AND MARRIAGE, %

Duration in months	Estonians	Non-Estonians
0	46.9	70.9
1 - 3	7.4	7.9
4 - 6	11.2	6.7
7 - 12	15.0	6.2
13 - 18	5.8	2.7
19 - 24	3.6	1.0
25 - 36	3.8	1.5
37+	6.3	3.2

The presented analysis can be concluded in the following. The pattern of premarital cohabitation of the Estonians and the non-Estonians is rather different. The occurrence of consensual unions among the Estonians is considerably higher and their duration is longer than the relevant characteristics of the non-Estonians. It is one of the determinants of the difference in age at marriage: the extent of differences in the age at forming unions is considerably smaller than those in the age at marriage.

The data presented at Table 2 indicate that the probability of cohabitation preceding a marriage does not depend considerably on the age of the male partner. The age of the female partner between 20 and 24 assumes a little higher probability of

Table 2

DISTRIBUTION OF EVER MARRIED POPULATION CLASSIFIED BY AGE AT MARRIAGE BY THE DURATION BETWEEN THE BEGINNING OF COHABITATION AND MARRIAGE, %

Duration in months	Males			Females		
	20-24	25-29	30+	below 20	20-24	25-29
0	57.1	58.3	59.5	64.5	57.4	64.8
1 - 6	16.3	10.4	13.5	19.4	19.4	15.9
7 - 12	14.3	8.3	2.7	10.8	11.8	5.7
1 - 12	30.6	18.7	16.2	30.2	31.2	21.6
13 - 24	8.2	13.5	5.4	2.2	6.1	4.5
25 - 36	1.5	2.1	5.4	2.2	1.9	4.5
37+	2.6	7.3	10.8	1.1	3.4	4.5
13+	12.3	22.9	21.6	5.5	11.4	13.5

premarital cohabitation, but the duration of most of them is not more than a year as well as in all the other groups by age at marriage.

As expected, earlier age at first marriage is connected with shorter duration of premarital cohabitation. The share of persons married before one year after beginning of cohabitation shows the interdependence between the age at marriage and the duration of cohabitation best. Especially the difference between the group of married teens and others can be pointed out. For the population at the twenties age cannot be treated as avariable determinig the duration of premarital cohabitation, belonging to the Estonian or the non-Estonian population is a factor of stronger influence.

Concluding remarks

The level of nuptiality in Estonia has declined in the post-war years, but the crude marriage rate of the population of Estonia is still considerably higher than in the European countries which passed the demographic transition at the same time with Estonia. Partly it is connected with the changes in the composition of the population of Estonia in the post-war years.

The age at marriage has declined for two decades until the beginning of the 1980s. The validity of the hypotheses that there is no further decline of the age at marriage and that the decline among the Estonians had stopped already earlier has to be evaluated by future research.

The survey data of Tallinn revealed substantial differences in the matrimonial behaviour of the Estonians and the non-Estonians. The non-Estonians contract their marriages earlier and the occurrence of premarital cohabitation among them is less than among the Estonians. Obviously the two phenomena are connected with one another.

The matrimonial behaviour of the Estonians seems rather close to the West and North European countries, as it could be expected relying on the historical background of demographic development. The analysis of the dynamics of the marriage rates of Estonians could provide sufficient evidence for the allegation.

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APPENDICES

1. Total nuptiality rates of the population of Estonia 1959-1985

2. Age-specific first marriage rates of the male population of Estonia 1959-1985

3. Age-specific first marriage rates of the female population of Estonia 1959-1985

4. Age structure of the survey sample

Appendix 1.

TOTAL NUPTIALITY RATES OF THE POPULATION OF ESTONIA 1959 - 1985

Years	All marriages	First marriages
1958/59	1.338	1.129
1959/60	1.304	1.099
1960/61	1.296	1.097
1961/62	1.232	1.045
1962/63	1.180	0.993
1963/64	1.165	0.972
1964/65	1.146	0.952
1965/66	1.177	0.962
1966/67	1.245	1.002
1967/68	1.273	1.004
1968/69	1.276	1.048
1969/70	1.259	1.033
1970/71	1.231	1.000
1971/72	1.187	0.955
1972/73	1.159	0.927
1973/74	1.165	0.924
1974/75	1.164	0.913
1975/76	1.150	0.901
1976/77	1.150	0.855
1977/78	1.145	0.804
1978/79	1.152	0.809
1979/80	1.166	0.826
1980/81	1.156	0.846
1981/82	1.121	0.829
1982/83	1.126	0.808
1983/84	1.141	0.796
1984/85	1.141	0.793

Appendix 2.

AGE-SPECIFIC FIRST MARRIAGE RATES OF THE MALE POPULATION OF ESTONIA 1959 - 1985

Years	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-49	50-59	60+
1958/59	8.6	90.7	73.4	26.3	14.2	7.8	3.4	1.2
1959/60	8.8	95.3	68.0	23.7	12.0	7.0	2.8	1.1
1960/61	10.4	97.9	66.3	22.0	11.0	6.1	2.5	1.4
1961/62	10.5	96.1	62.3	20.2	9.6	5.4	2.5	1.3
1962/63	9.3	92.9	59.3	18.7	8.8	4.7	2.4	0.7
1963/64	8.8	89.4	60.7	17.9	8.2	3.9	2.3	0.8
1964/65	9.3	86.6	60.4	16.8	7.2	3.6	2.2	0.8
1965/66	10.4	84.2	63.6	16.7	6.7	3.6	2.1	0.8
1966/67	11.7	89.1	66.1	16.8	6.5	3.5	1.9	0.8
1967/68	12.1	95.7	66.5	16.3	6.5	3.2	1.6	0.8
1968/69	12.0	100.4	63.4	16.1	5.9	2.7	1.4	0.7
1969/70	11.8	99.8	60.4	15.4	5.2	2.3	1.3	0.7
1970/71	11.4	99.9	55.4	14.2	4.9	2.1	1.3	0.8
1971/72	11.0	97.3	51.1	13.1	4.6	2.1	1.9	0.9
1972/73	10.6	98.0	47.1	12.8	4.5	1.9	1.2	0.6
1973/74	10.5	101.1	43.6	12.9	4.6	1.6	1.0	0.5
1974/75	10.8	101.4	41.8	12.0	4.6	1.6	1.0	0.5
1975/76	10.9	101.2	40.2	11.7	4.4	1.7	0.9	0.6
1976/77	11.6	101.1	38.7	11.5	4.1	1.6	0.8	0.7
1977/78	12.9	100.1	36.9	10.9	4.3	1.6	0.8	0.8
1978/79	13.9	100.4	36.4	11.1	4.2	1.6	1.0	0.8
1979/80	15.2	97.8	36.5	10.7	4.3	1.6	0.9	0.6
1980/81	15.2	95.4	35.4	11.4	5.0	2.0	0.8	0.7
1981/82	13.8	90.4	34.3	12.4	5.8	2.3	0.9	0.9
1982/83	13.5	88.7	34.0	12.1	6.2	2.3	0.9	0.9
1983/84	14.1	89.1	33.6	11.2	6.0	2.3	1.0	0.8
1984/85	14.1	92.8	33.5	9.9	4.9	2.0	0.9	0.7

Appendix 3.

AGE-SPECIFIC FIRST MARRIAGE RATES OF THE FEMALE POPULATION OF ESTONIA 1959 - 1985

Years	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-49	50-59	60+
1958/59	37.2	100.0	42.2	18.5	10.5	3.8	1.0	0.3
1959/60	38.3	100.8	39.3	16.6	9.6	3.9	1.0	0.3
1960/61	37.9	102.6	39.7	15.9	9.0	3.7	1.1	0.2
1961/62	34.7	98.5	38.7	14.4	8.3	3.3	1.1	0.3
1962/63	31.5	95.5	38.1	13.1	7.4	3.3	1.0	0.2
1963/64	31.2	94.8	38.1	12.7	6.7	3.2	1.1	0.2
1964/65	33.1	92.6	37.0	11.7	6.1	3.3	0.9	0.2
1965/66	35.0	93.8	37.1	11.8	5.5	3.4	1.0	0.2
1966/67	36.7	102.9	37.0	11.7	5.8	3.4	1.1	0.2
1967/68	39.2	108.9	36.3	11.5	5.2	3.1	1.1	0.2
1968/69	40.4	113.9	35.8	11.1	4.6	2.6	1.0	0.2
1969/70	41.5	115.8	35.2	10.0	4.5	2.4	1.0	0.2
1970/71	42.0	111.4	32.7	9.7	4.4	2.3	1.0	0.2
1971/72	40.5	107.5	30.5	9.1	3.8	2.1	1.0	0.2
1972/73	40.3	103.3	29.1	8.4	3.6	1.9	1.2	0.2
1973/74	43.3	102.1	27.6	8.3	3.8	1.8	1.2	0.2
1974/75	44.8	99.4	27.7	8.8	3.5	1.6	0.9	0.2
1975/76	46.0	97.1	26.7	8.2	3.6	1.5	0.8	0.2
1976/77	48.0	97.9	24.5	7.2	3.5	1.5	0.9	0.2
1977/78	48.9	96.8	24.1	7.1	3.1	1.3	0.9	0.2
1978/79	50.2	96.3	23.7	7.6	2.6	1.2	0.9	0.3
1979/80	52.6	96.8	23.1	7.7	2.7	1.3	0.8	0.3
1980/81	50.5	94.0	24.1	7.6	3.3	1.2	0.6	0.2
1981/82	45.5	88.9	24.7	8.0	3.7	1.1	0.6	0.2
1982/83	44.5	87.2	24.2	8.6	4.0	1.2	0.6	0.2
1983/84	46.5	85.8	23.9	8.8	3.9	1.3	0.6	0.2
1984/85	47.8	85.5	24.1	7.9	3.2	1.3	0.5	0.2

Appendix 4

AGE STRUCTURE OF THE SURVEY SAMPLE, %

Age bracket	Males	Females	Total
15 - 19	0.6	0.9	0.8
20 - 24	6.9	8.3	7.7
25 - 29	11.5	10.9	11.2
30 - 34	11.5	11.9	11.8
35 - 39	17.0	15.3	16.0
40 - 44	12.6	10.7	11.5
45 - 49	10.4	12.0	11.4
50 - 54	10.7	6.8	8.5
55 - 59	8.1	9.1	8.7
60 - 64	6.1	7.3	6.8
65 - 69	2.8	3.9	3.4
70+	1.7	2.8	2.4

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