Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies was established in 1967 and is the principal institution carrying out nationwide scientific studies on fertility, mortality, migration and maternal and child health issues in Turkey. Through a series of national household surveys conducted every five years, our Institute has collected highly reliable data nationwide on population characteristics and maternal and child health since 1968. These data have allowed the demographic situation in Turkey to be assessed regularly for about a four-decade period. They have been the basis on which population and health policies have been formed, service plans prepared, and the coverage and impact of these plans monitored.

The 2003 Turkey Demographic and Health Survey (TDHS-2003) is the eighth national survey carried out by the Institute of Population Studies. It is a honor for our Institute to win the general approval and confidence of all people and institutions at national and international level with such a program of continuous high quality data production and successful application.

The seven Demographic and Health Surveys between 1968-1998 were financially supported by various international sources. However, for the first time, the TDHS-2003 was financed by the national budget of Republic of Turkey, and further support was provided by the European Union through the reproductive health programme. This is an indicator of institutionalization and the importance of this issue in our country.

Preparatory activities of the TDHS-2003 began in 2002. In the same year, a qualitative research study was conducted involving in-depth interviews with women on contraceptive use, its dynamics and induced abortion. The results of this research were presented in a meeting in April 2003, in which representatives of various organizations interested in these data participated. In the months that followed, activities relating to sampling and questionnaire design continued. Following the completion of the preparatory activities, listing and fieldwork took place between November 2003 and May 2004. The TDHS-2003 was conducted in 80 provinces and 700 places of residence which were selected in such fashion as to represent our country nationally and at the urban-rural and regional levels. Interviews were carried out with 8,075 ever-married women in 10,836 households. In June 2004, the preliminary report that included some key indicators calculated from the TDHS-2003 was published and disseminated to organizations concerned with population and maternal and child health issues.

The results presented in this report show that there have been important changes in various demographic and health indicators in a more positive direction than expected. The fertility data indicate that Turkey is achieving “replacement” fertility. The survey findings also document improvements in infant and child mortality and progress in mother and child health services.
The contributions of university directors, the directors and experts of the public institutions and personnel of our Institute were instrumental in the realization of various stages of the TDHS-2003. I would like to express my gratitude to them for their much appreciated efforts.

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