

Chapter IV

MARITAL STATUS

A. Introduction

The term "marital status" means the state of being unmarried, married, widowed, separated or divorced. It is "a demographic characteristic involving biological, social, economic, legal, and in many case, religious aspects. Marital status is a most important factor in population dynamics as it affects fertility tremendously and mortality and migration to a lesser extent. Also, its effects on other social and economic characteristics such as school attendance and labour force participation, is very important in the late adolescent and young adult age groups."¹

In view of the importance of the data, the collection and analysis of particulars relating to marital status have been part of all three Nepalese censuses held since 1952/54. In most countries, information on marital status is generally presented for persons above a minimum age in accordance with the usual lower limit of age at marriage obtaining in the respective countries.² In Nepal, particulars regarding marital status were recorded for all persons aged 5 years and over at the 1952/54 census, while in the subsequent censuses held in 1961 and 1971, these particulars were collected in respect of all persons aged 6 years and over.

B. Marriage Customs and Laws

In Nepal, marriage is a universal phenomenon. The commonest form of marriage among all ethnic groups in the country is monogamy. However, polygyny and polyandry have also been practiced to some extent. The people of Tibetan origin residing in the Himalayan areas, particularly the Bhote, have a tradition of polyandry.³ Polygyny appears to have been prevalent to some degree in all other groups, and to a considerable extent among the Hindus. Child

marriage⁴ was a legally and socially acceptable norm and was widely practiced among the Brahmin caste, the Jayapus or farmers, the Buddhist communities in the Terai.

However, the New Law of the Land (*Naya Mulki Ain*) promulgated in August 1963⁵ introduced considerable reforms and restrictions. Possibly because of religious reasons, the new law permits polygyny in a limited sense; a man who has one wife is permitted to take a second only if the first is incurably ill, or has been unable to bear children for 10 years. No reference is made in the code to polyandry. Other provisions prohibit child marriage,⁶ allow inter-caste marriages, grant the right to divorce (previously forbidden to Hindus) and sanction the re-marriage of widows.

Nepalese marriage law dictates that no boy under 18 years and a girl under 16 years of age can marry, and there can be no marriage between a man and a woman whose age difference is more than 20 years. The consent of parents or guardians is not necessary if the male is 21 years or over and the female is 18 years or over. A man and a woman can marry with mutual consent but under no circumstance can they be within the prohibited degrees of consanguinity as specified by law or prevalent in the community.⁷

However, consent and age are not strictly followed in practice, particularly in the rural areas.

"In most groups, marriage – especially a first marriage – has traditionally been an event in which it is taken for granted that parental wishes and family interests overshadow the personal preferences of the bride and bridegroom. Arranged marriages and the employment of intermediaries in the negotiations are common, especially among

the Indo-Nepalese. Some Tibeto-Nepalese, on the other hand, leave considerably wider latitude to their children in the selection of marriage partners – a circumstance which may be related to the comparative economic independence and social initiation enjoyed by women in these groups.¹⁸

Ceremonial marriages performed according to religious rites and rituals are the most traditional and most popular form of marriage. For example, the Pahari sacramental wedding ordinarily takes place out of doors in a temporary pavilion, and the ceremony conducted by a Brahmin priest includes the ritual dipping of water and the circumambulation of a sacred fire by the bridal pair. The ceremony is preceded by a feast hosted by the bride's family and followed the next day by one given by the family of the bridegroom. Common law marriages rank second in importance to ceremonial marriages. Common law marriages are usually preceded by various forms of dating. For instance, a public musical duet between a man and a woman in a village, or a wrestling bout between a Sherpa man and a Sherpa girl are two interesting examples of dating, in which the male must win if a marriage is to follow. The ceremonial and common law marriages are not registered. Registered marriages are of relatively recent origin and as such have gained only limited popularity.

C. Changes in Marital Status

1. Over-all Trends

The numerical and percentage distribution of the population aged 6 years and over by marital status for the three censuses since 1952/54 is given in table 19. It will be observed that the composition of the population by marital status changed very little, if at all, in the course of the

two decades, 1952 to 1971. The proportion of married males increased from 58.6 per cent in 1952/54 to 61.1 per cent in 1961 and remained at this level until 1971. The proportion of widowers recorded a slight decrease while the proportion of widows declined appreciably over the two decades reflecting a greater decline in mortality among married males compared with married females. The proportion of divorced or separated for both sexes also declined during this period.

In order to eliminate the effects of changes in the age composition of the population between 1952/54 and 1971, the percentage distributions by marital status were standardized on the basis of the 1971 age structure of the population. When the age composition is held constant, the proportion of never married males remained almost constant between 1952/54 and 1961, and increased by over 3 percentage points between 1961 and 1971. The proportion of married males declined only slightly, whereas that of married females increased constantly, though modestly. The incidence of female widowhood indicated a considerable decline and male widowhood only a slight decline in the course of the two decades. The proportion of males who were divorced or separated declined substantially while the corresponding proportion for females remained constant between 1952 and 1961 and declined slightly during the next decade.

2. Married Population

The percentage distribution of the married population aged 6 years and over by sex and age groups in 1961 and 1971 and the percentage change in these proportions during 1961-1971 are shown in table 20.

In 1971, the proportions married among males increased from about 6 per cent for those

Table 19. Marital status of population aged 6 years and over by sex, 1952/54, 1961 and 1971

Sex and marital status	1952/54 census ^a			1961 census			1971 census		
	Number	Percent	Standardized percent ^b	Number	Percent	Standardized percent ^b	Number	Percent	Standardized percent ^b
Males									
Never married	1415954	40.3	37.9	1434263	37.7	37.7	1964799	41.0	41.0
Married	1920212	54.7	56.8	2165004	57.0	56.7	2663167	55.6	55.6
Widowed	151206	4.3	4.7	156487	4.1	4.2	151514	3.2	3.2
Divorced or Separated	15635	0.5	0.5	13173	0.3	0.3	11778	0.2	0.2
Unknown	7774	0.2	-	32964	0.9	-	-	-	-
All statuses	3510781	100.0	-	3801891	100.0	-	4791258	100.0	100.0
Females									
Never married	1003804	27.6	26.1	988389	25.2	26.1	1391504	29.8	29.8
Married	2108178	58.0	59.0	2399414	61.0	60.4	2851945	61.2	61.2
Widowed	55138	13.9	14.5	489568	12.5	12.4	407880	8.8	8.8
Divorced or Separated	12364	0.3	0.3	11834	0.3	0.3	11159	0.2	0.2
Unknown	5882	0.2	-	38382	1.0	-	-	-	-
All statuses	3635366	100.0	-	3927587	100.0	-	4662488	100.0	100.0

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, *Population Census 1952/54*, vol. I, part II, table 6; *Population Census 1961*, vol. III, part IV, table 7; and *Population Census 1971*, vol. II, part II, table 15.

a In respect of population aged 5 years and over.

b Standardized on the basis of the 1971 age structure.

aged 10-14 years to about 27 per cent for those in the age group 15-19 years, and to about 66 per cent for those in the next higher age group, reaching a peak of 93 per cent for those aged 35-39 years. Thereafter, the proportions recorded a gradual decline reaching about 79 per cent for the older age group 60 years and over.

A pattern of universal marriage for Nepalese women is evident from table 20. In 1971, the proportion married among females aged 10-14 years was about 13 per cent. This proportion increased sharply to about 60 per cent for those in the next higher age group, 15-19 years. At ages 20-24 years, over 90 per cent of the Nepalese women were married, and at aged 25-34 almost every Nepali woman was married. After age 35, the proportion of married women declined to a low of 44 per cent at ages 60 years and over.⁹ It will also be observed from the table that in both 1961 and 1971 the proportion of females married was higher than the male proportions for all age groups up to 30-34 years; thereafter, the

proportions for males were higher than those for females.

A comparison of the proportions married in 1961 and in 1971 by age groups reveals substantial declines in the proportions for age groups up to 24 years for males, and up to 19 years for females. In terms of percentage points the decline is more marked in the age groups 10-14 and 15-19 years for both males and for females. However, for all age groups beyond 25 years, the 1971 proportions were higher than the corresponding 1961 proportions for both sexes. The decline in the proportions married in the younger age groups may be attributed to the increasing tendency to postpone marriages. The increase in the proportions married at older ages is most probably due to decline in male and female mortality rates at these ages which has resulted in a decline in widowhood proportions and consequent increase in married proportions.

Table 20. Age-sex-specific proportions of married persons in 1961 and 1971 and percentage changes in proportions married between 1961 and 1971

Age group	Males		Females		Percentage change	
	1961	1971	1961	1971	Males	Females
6-9	3.0	1.2	5.3	2.3	-60.0	-56.6
10-14	10.6	6.2	24.6	13.4	-41.5	-45.5
15-19	35.9	26.6	71.4	60.2	-25.9	-15.7
20-24	69.6	65.6	91.6	91.1	-5.7	-0.5
25-29	85.3	85.7	93.7	95.4	0.5	1.8
30-34	90.4	91.5	91.8	95.0	1.2	3.5
35-39	91.8	93.3	86.7	92.0	1.6	6.1
40-44	91.1	92.9	78.3	86.6	2.0	10.6
45-49	89.5	92.4	68.6	80.6	3.2	17.5
50-54	87.0	90.5	59.2	70.8	4.0	19.6
55-59	84.1	88.5	50.8	66.6	5.2	31.1
60+	73.2	79.0	32.1	44.4	7.9	38.3
All ages	57.0	55.6	61.1	61.2	-2.5	0.2

Source: Same as table 19.

Since no questions on age at marriage were included in the censuses, it is not possible to estimate the average age at married. Marriage registration data are not available in Nepal. However, by applying Hanjal's technique to estimate mean age at marriage, the Central bureau of Statistics estimated the singulated age at marriage as follows:

	Males	Females
1961	20.4	15.7
1971	20.9	16.8

These estimates indicate that between 1961 and 1971, the singulated age at marriage has increased by 0.5 years for males and 1.1 years for females.

3. Unmarried Population

The proportion of unmarried or never married persons to population in each sex in each age group for the year 1961 and 1971 is given in table 21. It will be seen that in both censuses and in each age group, the proportion of unmarried

males is higher than the proportion of unmarried females. It will also be noted that for both males and females the proportion of never-married diminishes with advancing age.

Table 21 also shows that between 1961 and 1971 there was an increase in the proportion of

Table 21. Age-sex-specific proportion of unmarried persons in 1961 and 1971 and percentage changes in proportions unmarried between 1961 and 1971

Age group	Males		Females		Percentage change	
	1961	1971	1961	1971	Males	Females
6-9	97.0	98.9	94.7	97.7	2.0	3.2
10-14	89.3	93.7	75.1	86.6	4.9	15.3
15-19	63.3	73.0	25.7	39.3	15.3	52.9
20-24	26.4	33.1	5.3	7.9	25.4	49.1
25-29	10.2	12.3	1.9	2.6	20.6	36.8
30-34	4.7	5.7	1.0	1.4	21.2	40.0
35-39	2.7	3.3	0.8	1.1	22.2	37.5
40-44	2.1	2.3	0.7	0.9	9.5	28.6
45-49	1.6	1.6	0.6	0.8	-	33.3
50-54	1.5	1.4	0.6	0.7	-6.7	16.7
55-59	1.3	1.2	0.5	0.7	-7.7	40.0
60+	1.0	1.1	0.5	0.6	10.0	20.0
All ages	37.7	41.0	25.2	29.8	8.8	18.3

Source: Same as table 19.

Unmarried or never-married persons in all age groups for females and most age groups for males. In 1961, about 38 out of every 100 males and 25 out of every 100 females aged 6 years and over were unmarried. In 1971, these proportions increased to 41 for males and about 30 for females. The increase in the proportion of unmarried was greater in the case of females than males, and particularly significant in the case of females aged 10-14 years and 15-19 years.¹⁰ In the case of males, the increase in the proportion of unmarried was significant for the 20-24 age group.

The increase in the proportion of unmarried persons between 1961 and 1971 is indicative of a changing marriage pattern, viz., an increasing tendency to postpone marriages. Nevertheless, the

rapidly diminishing proportions with age for both sexes suggest that almost 99 per cent of females and nearly 95 per cent of males got married before the age of 35 in 1961 as well as in 1971.

Table 22. Age-sex-specific proportions of widowed persons, 1961 and 1971

Age group	Males		Females		Percentage change	
	1961	1971	1961	1971	Males	Females
6-9	0.01	0.01	0.04	0.02		-50.0
10-14	0.08	0.04	0.18	0.06	-50.0	-66.7
15-19	0.57	0.24	0.80	0.30	-57.9	-62.5
20-24	1.53	0.90	1.62	0.73	-41.2	-54.9
25-29	2.45	1.59	3.24	1.64	-35.1	-49.4
30-34	3.25	2.35	6.14	3.28	-27.7	-46.6
35-39	4.11	3.05	11.56	6.62	-25.8	-42.7
40-44	5.68	4.40	19.88	12.10	-22.5	-39.1
45-49	7.72	5.67	29.57	18.30	-26.6	-38.1
50-54	10.41	7.79	38.99	28.13	-25.2	-27.9
55-59	13.51	9.99	47.24	32.39	-26.1	-31.4
60+	24.50	19.68	65.73	54.65	-19.7	-16.9
All ages	4.10	3.20	12.40	8.80	-22.0	-29.0

Source: Same as table 19.

4. *Widowed, divorced or separated persons*

Persons who are widowed, as well as those who are divorced or separated from their spouses, constitute that fraction in a state of marital disruption. The proportion of population in these categories is no doubt important demographically, but marital disruption also very seriously affects family life.

The proportion of widowers and widows by age group in 1961 and 1971 is shown in table 22. as is to be expected, the highest proportions of widowed persons are found in the older age groups, the proportion widowed rising gradually with increasing age. It will also be noted that in almost all age groups the proportion of widows were substantially larger than those of widowers. This phenomenon could be attributed to several factors. In the first instance, men usually marry women who are younger than them and this means husbands in general will die earlier than their wives. Secondly, a widowed male has a

better chance of remarried than a widowed female, and thus end his widowhood. Although the 1963 New Civil Code permits the remarriage of widows, religious and social traditions stand firmly against the remarriage of widows.¹¹ According to the orthodox doctrine of Hindu religion, widows have to lead a life of austerity and penance in the name of the dead husband. Thirdly, it is also suspected that the life expectancy of males is generally lower than that of females in Nepal.

It will also be observed from table 22 that in Nepal the incidence of widowhood recorded appreciable declines in all age groups between 1961 and 1971.¹² These declines are more pronounced in the case of females than males, especially in the older age groups. For instance, the proportion of widowed females declined from about 47 per cent in 1961 to about 32 per cent in 1971 at ages 55-59 years, and from about 66 to about 55 per cent at ages 60 years and over, while for males the corresponding declines were from about 14 to 10 per cent and from 25 to 20 per cent respectively. In the age group 45-49 years and 50-54 years, the decline was more marked for females than for males. This change is generally attributed to the decline in mortality rates of males over the decade. The relatively small decline in the proportions of widowhood among males during this period may be attributed to increases in life expectancy of married females and to the increasing tendency among widowers to remarry.

As noted by Daibagya¹³, practically speaking Nepal has no history of divorce laws nor are there statistics on divorces. Until August 1963, apart from a few provisions for the Newar community, divorce as a legal decree, applicable to all citizens alike, was not recognized. Neither the courts nor even society were very concerned about it. However, a written divorce deed¹⁴ from the husband was not uncommon, without any assistance from the court. People accepted such practices as part of their daily life, generally

without expressing any strong views for or against. In the past, the lawmakers were also of the view that such concepts were in keeping with those propagated in the original Hindu jurisprudence, that is, wives were in practice perpetually dominated by their husbands.¹⁵ However, the New Civil Code of 1963 lays down very stringent conditions against divorce and extremely heavy demands on divorcing males.

The proportion of divorced/separated persons in each age group for 1961 and 1971 is shown in table 23. It will be noted that the proportions divorced as a function of age show a more or less

unimodal distribution. This pattern is evident for males in both years and for females in 1961. Compared with those of most western societies, the divorce rates in Nepal are negligible, mainly because of religious sanctions against divorce and remarriage of divorced women, and because of longstanding social permissiveness in the past for polygyny. The divorces or separations without a legal decree have shown a decline over time in all age groups and among both sexes. These declines may be statistically significant but their absolute numbers are quite small.

Table 23. Age-sex-specific proportions of divorced/separated persons, 1961 and 1971

Age group	Males		Females		Percentage change	
	1961	1971	1961	1971	Males	Females
6-9	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-	-
10-14	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.02	-	-33.3
15-19	0.23	0.13	0.29	0.18	-43.5	37.9
20-24	0.63	0.40	0.45	0.33	-36.5	-26.7
25-29	0.69	0.50	0.45	0.35	-27.5	-22.2
30-34	0.61	0.46	0.43	0.33	-24.6	-23.3
35-39	0.47	0.39	0.46	0.35	-17.0	-23.9
40-44	0.40	0.35	0.46	0.35	-12.5	-23.9
45-49	0.41	0.29	0.42	0.35	-29.3	-16.7
50-54	0.38	0.26	0.38	0.34	-31.6	-10.4
55-59	0.35	0.25	0.41	0.31	-28.6	-24.4
60+	0.39	0.30	0.24	0.36	-23.1	50.0
All ages	0.30	0.20	0.30	0.24	-33.3	-20.0

Source: Same as table 19.

Table 24. Ever-married persons as proportion of total population by age, sex and selected regions, 1971

Age group	Nepal		Mountains		Hills		Kathmandu valley		Terai	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
6-9	1.2	2.4	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.2	0.5	0.8	0.2	4.2
10-14	6.3	13.4	1.8	4.6	1.8	5.1	1.7	3.5	11.4	25.6
15-19	27.0	60.7	15.1	34.8	18.5	51.4	16.2	55.8	38.3	75.1
20-24	66.9	92.1	52.1	75.3	62.8	88.7	52.8	87.3	72.7	96.3
25-29	87.7	97.4	76.6	89.8	86.9	96.6	78.9	93.4	90.0	98.9
30-34	94.4	98.6	88.3	94.3	94.7	98.2	89.5	96.0	95.3	99.5
35-39	96.8	98.9	92.7	96.2	97.2	98.8	92.9	96.5	97.2	99.7
40-44	97.7	99.1	95.2	97.1	98.0	99.1	94.8	97.1	98.0	99.8
45-49	98.4	99.2	97.5	97.5	98.8	99.1	96.5	98.2	98.5	99.8
50-54	98.6	99.3	97.7	97.0	99.0	99.2	96.9	98.2	98.4	99.7
55-59	98.8	99.3	97.3	87.3	99.1	99.3	97.6	98.3	98.7	99.7
60-64	98.9	99.4	97.6	98.5	99.1	99.4	97.9	98.2	98.7	99.7
65+	99.0	99.4	97.9	98.3	99.1	99.3	98.4	98.5	98.0	99.6
All ages 6 years and over	59.0	70.2	51.4	63.3	54.9	66.9	54.9	67.0	62.7	74.4
Standardized ^a 6 years and over	59.0	70.2	53.2	62.1	57.7	67.2	53.6	72.2	61.9	74.3
All ages 15 years and over	80.7	92.2	72.2	82.5	77.7	89.7	73.2	87.0	85.4	95.9
Standardized ^a 15 years and over	80.7	92.2	73.7	83.2	80.1	90.1	74.3	97.0	83.8	95.4

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population, 1971, vol. I, table 15.

a Standardized on the basis of the age structure of the total population of Nepal.

5. Regional Variations

The proportions of ever-married persons by age, sex and selected ecological regions are shown in table 24. It may be noted that at the younger ages up to 19 years, the proportions of married females are, by and large, considerably higher than the corresponding proportions for males. Since the number of males and females in the eligible age groups are more or less equal, there appears to have been an underreporting of male marriages at younger ages.

Nevertheless, it is evident from table 24 that the incidence of marriages at early ages (below 19 years) is substantially higher in the Terai than any other region.

"The differences of ever-married proportions at early ages between the mountain inhabitants and population of the other parts of the country, reflect the differences in social and religious norms among the Buddhists in the north and the Hindus in the south. While the institution of marriage in Hindu Religion

insists on early marriage for girls, these traditions are not followed by the Buddhist."¹⁶

Also, the very low proportions observed in the Kathmandu Valley are probably due to the relatively large urban population among whom early marriages are less common.

It is also evident from the table that the unstandardized over-all proportion of ever-married population among those aged 6 years and over, as well as those aged 15 years and over, is highest in the Terai region and lowest in the mountains region for both males and females. When the rates for various regions are standardized on the basis of the age structure obtaining for the country as a whole, the highest over-all proportion of married among both male and females aged 6 years and over was again recorded for the Terai region; but in regard to those aged 15 years and over, the highest proportion for males was noted in the Terai and for females in the Kathmandu Valley. The lowest standardized over-all proportions for both males

and females were also recorded for the mountains regions.

As is to be expected, the proportion of ever-married varies as an increasing function of age, starting with the lowest percentage in respect of the first age group and ending with the highest proportion in the last age group. Nearly 50 per cent of Nepalese men in all regions are married once before reaching age 24, while the same proportion of females in all regions are married once before reaching the age of 19 years except in the mountains where the median appears to be 24 years.¹⁷ Thus, apart from the mountains, the median age of getting married for females is about 5 years less than for males. Nearly 95 per cent of males are married once by the time they reach the age group 30-34 in the Terai and 40-44 years in the mountains. In regard to females, the 95 per cent mark is reached by women in the Terai when they are 20-24 years old, and in the mountains at ages 35-39 years.

The data collected from the Nepal Fertility Survey was also analyzed to obtain information regarding differentials in mean age at marriage. It has, however, to be noted that cross-sectional data on age at marriage obtained from a sample of ever-married women are subject to a censoring effect, this effect being more marked in the younger age groups thus resulting in an underestimate of age at marriage. With a view to overcoming this problem, the analysis of differentials in mean age at marriage was carried out in respect of women age 25 years or more who married before the age of 25.¹⁸

It will be seen from table 25 that the mean age at marriage of those women who were married before their twenty-fifth birthday is 15.0 years. The mean age at marriage for women aged 25-34 years was lower than that for women in the 35-49

Table 25. Means age at marriage (in years) of women by current age and region of residence, 1976

Current	Region of residence			
	Hill	Terai	Mountain	Nepal
25-29	15.1	14.6	15.6	14.9
30-34	14.8	14.6	16.1	14.8
35-39	15.6	14.9	15.5	15.3
40-44	15.4	14.4	15.6	15.1
45-49	15.8	14.9	14.5 ^a	15.3
All ages	15.3	14.7	15.5	15.0

Source: *Nepal Fertility Survey 1976, First Report* (Kathmandu, Ministry of Health, Nepal FP/MCH Project, 1977), table 4.2

a Less than 50 cases but more than 30.

age group. "The slight variation is probably reflective of recall problems rather than as indication of any actual historical decline in age at marriage."¹⁹ It is also evident from the table that women in the Terai region tend to get married earlier than their sisters from the hills and mountains.

The proportion of ever-married population aged 6 years and over in 1961 and 1971 for the ten geographic regions adopted in the 1961 census is shown in table 26. It will be observed that in keeping with the national trends, there was a decline in the proportion of ever-married in all ten regions both among males and females. However, the decline was more marked in some regions than in the others. The decline was more pronounced in the eastern Terai and eastern hills regions. Though a declining trend has started to occur in western Hills and western Terai,

"it is most likely that the low rate of literacy and the overwhelming agricultural activities may resist, for some period of time, drastic changes in marital pattern. The decline in the ever-married males and females has occurred in the regions where the proportions were substantially higher than the average."²⁰

Table 26. Proportion of ever-married population 6 years and over by region and sex, 1961 and 1971

Region	1961 ^a		1971		Percentage change	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Eastern hills	57.2	69.0	51.8	63.0	-9.4	-8.7
Eastern inner terai	57.5	70.5	55.6	67.0	-3.3	-5.0
Eastern terai	68.2	80.3	58.0	74.9	-15.0	-6.7
Kathmandu valley	57.8	68.6	54.9	64.3	-5.0	-6.3
Western hills	55.6	72.0	55.1	68.0	-0.9	-5.6
Far western hills	60.2	73.0	58.4	69.1	-3.0	-5.3
Central inner terai	60.4	70.8	58.4	68.8	-3.3	-2.8
Western inner terai	60.3	68.4	57.3	66.3	-5.0	-3.1
Western terai	74.4	82.8	72.2	81.8	-2.9	-1.2
Far western terai	64.4	76.0	60.7	71.2	-5.8	-6.3
Nepal	61.1	73.9	59.0	70.2	-3.4	-5.0

Source: Computed from data given in table 7 in volume 3, part 6 of 1961 census, and table 15 in volume 1 of 1971 census.

6. *Other Differentials*

The proportionate distribution of ever-married population by age, sex, literacy status and urban-rural residence for 1961 is given in table 27. It will be observed that the over-all proportions of ever-married are higher in the rural than in urban areas for both males and females. These differences are more marked particularly at the younger ages, particularly 10-14, 15-19 and 30-34 years. It is also evident from the table that at the younger ages, the proportions of ever-married females are much higher than the corresponding proportions for males in both urban and rural areas. The substantial differences in proportions of ever-married between urban and rural areas may be due to the fact that in urban areas the literacy rates are much higher than in rural areas. Also, in the rural areas, female labour is no less important than male labour.

The differentials in marital status composition by literacy status are also quite significant for young females, particularly those aged 10 to 24 years. For instance, while the proportion of ever-married literate females aged 15-19 years was 53.6 per cent, the corresponding proportion of illiterate females was 74.5 per cent. Comparison between literate males and literate females indicates that the former tended to postpone marriage to a greater extent than the latter. This is evident from

the fact that the ever-married proportions for literate males at ages 15-29 years are significantly lower than those for literate females at these ages. After age 35, the proportions of ever-married literate males are higher than the corresponding female proportions. Wide variations also exist in the proportions of ever-married females who are literate and those who are illiterate, the proportions for illiterate females being higher than those for literate females at all ages.

In the case of males, the over-all proportion for the literate is lower than that for the illiterate; however, at ages 10-44 years, the literates have higher proportions than the illiterates. It is also interesting to note that when marital distributions are standardized on the basis of the age structure of the population for the country as a whole, the standardized rates for ever-married literate males are higher than those for illiterate males. In this respect, the economic factor appears to play an important role in that a literate male has a better opportunity of earning a higher income and thus will get married earlier than the illiterate of the same age.

The standardized ever-married rates for all males and females aged 15 years and over show that the literates among both sexes have lower married rates than the illiterate females but higher rates than the illiterate males.

Table 27. Proportion of ever-married persons by age, sex, literacy status and rural-urban residence, 1961

Age group	Males					Females				
	Nepal	Literate	Illiterate	Rural	Urban	Nepal	Literate	Illiterate	Rural	Urban
6-9	3.0	2.9	3.0	3.1	0.6	5.3	2.3	5.3	6.3	1.3
10-14	10.7	14.0	10.1	11.0	3.4	24.9	10.3	32.0	25.3	10.5
15-19	36.7	39.4	36.0	37.4	20.7	74.3	53.6	74.5	74.6	54.7
20-24	73.7	75.2	72.6	74.1	56.1	94.7	85.6	94.8	94.0	86.3
25-29	89.8	91.7	89.2	90.1	80.9	98.1	95.3	98.1	98.2	93.9
30-34	95.3	96.1	95.0	95.4	90.6	99.0	97.3	99.0	99.1	96.2
35-39	97.3	98.1	97.1	97.4	94.2	99.2	96.7	99.2	99.3	97.1
40-44	97.9	98.4	97.8	98.0	95.7	99.3	96.8	99.3	99.4	98.0
45-49	98.4	98.5	98.4	98.5	96.3	99.4	96.8	99.4	99.5	98.0
50-54	98.5	98.5	98.5	98.6	96.6	99.5	96.0	99.5	99.5	98.2
55-59	98.7	98.7	98.7	98.8	98.4	99.5	96.8	99.5	99.6	97.7
60+	99.0	98.5	99.1	99.1	97.8	99.6	96.0	99.6	99.7	97.8
All ages 6 years and over	62.3	70.4	60.5	62.1	59.1	74.8	60.6	74.8	74.7	69.2
Standardized ^a	62.3	63.1	61.7	62.2	55.2	74.8	68.1	75.6	74.9	68.1
All ages 15 years and over	83.9	83.0	84.1	84.3	75.7	95.0	82.3	95.2	95.2	88.8
Standardized ^a	83.9	85.0	83.7	84.3	76.5	95.0	89.4	95.1	95.2	89.5

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, 1961 Census, vol. III, part 6, table 7.

^a Standardized on the basis of the age structure of the population for the country as a whole in 1961.